This presentation is the result of the 2012 Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad program to China during June and July, 2013. I was a member of a 16-scholar delegation of Social Science professors from across the United States. We represented 14 states and the District of Columbia. The delegation was led by Dr. Stanley Rosen of University of Southern California. Leadership in China was ably provided by Mr. Zhai Guanjun of the Luoyang No. 2 Foreign Language School in Henan Province. Organization in the United States was provided by the National Committee on United States-China Relations (NCUSCR) and in China by the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE). I am an instructor of History and Anthropology at Cochise College in southeastern Arizona. I was honored to have been a member of this delegation.

My curriculum project will discuss Cultural and Historic Preservation in China as China rapidly institutes a program of radical change. Most photos are my own taken during the delegation visit. Those taken by others will be credited in the notes area. Sources for text material will also be credited in the notes area for each slide.

The photograph on the title slide was taken in Shanghai on Nanjing Road.
China has experienced phenomenal growth in the last quarter-century, rising to the second largest economy in the world and predicted to pass the United States soon. This has led to an unparalleled building boom.

In cities like Beijing, Chongqing and Shanghai, high rise apartments fill the skyline and construction cranes are ubiquitous. One-half the cranes in the world are in China and one third of the concrete used in construction is poured there. (Dr. Russell Moses, presentation on June 21, 2013). There is a 12-year plan to move 250 million rural residents into the cities.


Photo: Uthecast.com
Beijing
Chongqing, a major manufacturing and transportation hub, is considered a megacity and one of China’s fastest growing population center (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012 CHAMPS China report, http://country.eiu.com/China). Large scale construction was a hallmark of the Bo Xilai mayoral period and massive housing complexes surround the city center in various stages of construction.

Chongqing
Population in Municipality 28,846,000 (2012 Chongqing Statistics Bureau)
The lifting of economic restrictions in 1991 led to rapid development in Shanghai, and it is now the largest city in China in metropolitan area, the fourth largest city in the world and the busiest container port (Henry Lee presentation, Hong Kong Container Terminal Operators Association Limited, July 16, 2013).

Shanghai skyline with construction cranes. When completed, Shanghai will have three of the world’s five tallest buildings.
Shanghai construction, July 2013.
Shanghai construction, 2013
Shanghai, 2013
But Shanghai, as well as Beijing and Chongqing, have long and rich histories. All can trace their foundations back thousands of years. By 5000 BC Neolithic communities existed in these locations (Kwang-Chih Chang (1968), *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, revised edition, New Haven: Yale University Press). All have historic neighborhoods and state-of-the-art museums.

Shanghai, Yuyuan Garden, photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun
Students in many of the educational institutions we visited presented folkloric shows about their history (Jielong Middle School, Banan District, Chongqing, in photo). More than once when I stated that I was a history professor, students would tell me that China had more than 5000 years of history while the United States had only 200.
That history is highlighted by archaeological finds like this Oracle Bone, a carved ox scapula dating to the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BCE). The carvings were used to predict the future and contain the earliest known script.

Oracle Bone, Shanghai Museum, Shang Dynasty.
The excavation and preservation of Neolithic villages like Banpo village in Xi’an highlight the possibilities for historic preservation in China. The farming village dates to 4000 BCE and is beautifully displayed. The site museum is well done, with interactive displays that are more than just cases of artifacts, but that give a true sense of place to the site.
Banpo Village museum diorama. Photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun.
Many historic structures and artifacts were destroyed in the years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In the movement to get rid of the “Four Olds,” old ideas, culture, customs and habits, buildings and relics of the past centuries were destroyed.


Poster: Wikipedia Commons
This widely published photo shows Red Guards burning Buddha statues ripped from temples.

These Buddha figures we visited near Hechuan City, Chongqing, at Fishing Castle show damage inflicted during the Cultural Revolution.
In today’s China, the rush to modernize has been equated to a second Cultural Revolution with some of the same results for China’s historical monuments. Although the loss of life is certainly not equal, loss of land and village life is one of the main causes of protest in China today.

The need to accommodate large numbers of tourists and highlight a government-orchestrated image has led to a policy that values traffic control and political message above historic preservation. This photo of Tian’anmen Square highlights the large square and the portrait of former leader Mao Zedong. The buildings show rooflines that reflect historic architecture the actual structures have been modified to accommodate the millions of tourists who visit there. The square is named for the Gate of Heavenly Peace, the South Entrance to the Forbidden City. It is the third largest city square in the world at 109 acres. Mao’s Mausoleum is a major focus of the square today. In Western eyes, the name Tian’anmen is most associated with the deadly protests that occurred there in 1989 and a strong police presence keeps protestors at bay today.

The Forbidden City was first constructed as a royal palace during the Ming dynasty and served that role through the Qing dynasty (1421-1912). Much of the city is constructed of wood and constitutes the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world. Most of the treasures once housed there were removed during World War II and then taken to Taiwan in 1948 under orders of Chiang Kai-shek. Restoration is ongoing but years of neglect and politically motivated demolition to make room for government institutions and for commercial enterprises such as Starbucks are detrimental to preserving its historical integrity. The traffic of 8 million visitors a year also impact the structure.

Also constructed during the Ming dynasty, the Temple of Heaven is a symbol for China. Located on a 600 acre park south of Tian’anmen Square, the site is even more visited than the Forbidden City with 12 million people visiting annually. Originally built for annual ceremonies to insure a good harvest, today the pressure of an average of 40,000 visitors a day is evident in the types of materials that have been used in restoration.

Harper, 2001, pp. 74-75

Photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun, Temple of Heaven, Beijing
Hall of Prayer at Temple of Heaven.

Photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun, Temple of Heaven, Beijing
The Olympic Games, held in Beijing in 2008, were promoted as a way to show that Beijing was ready to be recognized on the world stage. The city underwent massive renovation and the area used for the Games involved the displacement of more than 1.25 million citizens. 512,000 homes were leveled. Many of those areas were in historic neighborhoods. No effort was made to survey the properties, record their histories and complete ground surveys archaeological and cultural remains.

Delegation at the Olympic Stadium, photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun
The few historic neighborhoods that remain are known as Hutongs. Characterized by narrow streets and traditional courtyard residences, their numbers have declined dramatically in the last 50 years to make way for modern construction. Recently, some have been designated as protected areas in part because they are popular tourist destinations. But even in these protected areas, many of the structures are undergoing “protective demolition” to rebuild them in what is deemed a more attractive construction.

“Protective Demolishment” was a name given to the rebuilding process by Dr. Zhang Zhexin in his presentation at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, July 10, 2013.

Hutong, photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun
The Hutongs are a growing attraction for visitors to Beijing. They offer rides on pedicabs through narrow alleys to quaint restaurants and shops with memorabilia.
Still home to thousands of people, the structures show the clash between the attempt to preserve a flavor of the past and requirements of modern life.
The result is often new construction that reflects a modern vision of the past.
Perhaps the most famous cultural heritage site in the world, China’s Great Wall is emblematic of the challenges China faces in balancing economic development and historical preservation.

Photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun, Great Wall
Not one wall but a network of defensive structures stretching 4,000 miles and built over a more than one thousand year period, the most recognizable span lies within easy reach of the capital city, Beijing.

We visited the Mutianyu section of the wall. One can climb up or take a cable car to the open section. This section, less visited than the Badaling area, still sees millions of visitors each year. In 2010, 56 million foreign and internal tourists visited sites in China, and the Great Wall was a major destination. 75% of tourists visit the wall. The impact of that many people is difficult to calculate. Although more than 20 sections of the wall are open to the public, the majority visit the Badaling section.

Statistics: China National Tourism Office
Photo by Mr. Zhai Guanjun
The science of preservation emphasizes the use of materials as closely related to the original structure as possible. The pressure of millions of visitors with limited resources for preservation challenges those who work to keep the wall standing. In outlying areas, centuries of neglect and the mining of building materials has demolished long sections of the wall. In other communities, the desire to draw tourists has led to reconstruction than owes little to the original wall. In one community, a large section was bulldozed and a concrete fantasy version of the wall rebuilt.

The Great Wall has long been a destination for tourists.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Wall
With tourism as a major economic resource for the nation and as Chinese citizens have the resources to travel, the struggle to balance visitation with protection often goes in the direction of increased visitation. Other World Heritage Sites often limit or restrict traffic on imperiled sites, but the Great Wall has not seen any restrictions. Few staff are present to patrol and oversee the long sections of wall. Lack of protection is evident in the pervasive graffiti.

Xinghuanet photo
56 M visitors in 2010 – Third leading destination in the world.
Great Wall sees an average of 53,000/Day at Badaling (http://www.eHow.com)
The story of well-digging farmers discovering the guardian terracotta warrior figures of Emperor Qinshihuang’s tomb near Xi’an in 1974 is legendary. Today, more than 10 million visitors a year view the more than 8,000 figures that were ranked under wood roofed shelters that eventually collapsed and buried the statues, preserving them for centuries.

The incredible army is a “must see” on anyone’s list of places to visit in China. But the army and its display are an example of policies that are designed to maximize tourism while losing historical context.
In the rush to expose the massive army, the brilliant colors that once decorated the figures disappeared when exposed to the air. Exposure of the figures has slowed as scientists work to find ways to preserve the color but the pressure to excavate is high. Although the organization that oversees archaeology in China, the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IA CASS), works to protect the cultural resources of the nation, they face a Herculean task.
Balancing the needs of economic development with historic preservation is a challenge for all nations. A nation growing as rapidly as China is even more pressured. The difficult decisions that surround preservation vs. development are still being contested even in countries with strong legal protections for historic sites.
To channel the millions of visitors and protect the exposed excavations, airplane hanger-like structures were constructed over the three pits open to the public. The exteriors lack little sense of place and the tomb of the Emperor nearby is completely blocked from view.
The structures bear no resemblance to the shelters that would have covered the figures when they were constructed. The tomb of the Emperor Qinshihuang and the focus of the terracotta figures is not visible from the buildings. Any sense of place is muffled by the modern facilities.
In central Xi’an, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, originally constructed in 648 CE, is now restored to early grandeur.
Its popularity as a tourist attraction in Xi’an led Chongqing to recreate a model in its “ancient village” built in 2012.
“Farmer’s Villages” like this one that our delegation visited near Xi’an bear little resemblance to a farming community. The village built to house displaced farmers is made up almost entirely of guest houses built to look exactly alike. The farmers who live there are happy with their new homes but struggle with problems of too much competition and inadequate infrastructure. The village often lacks water and power. During our visit, the water storage was nearly empty and water was rationed to short periods each day.
Not only does modern construction threaten the historic preservation of thousands of sites, the growing market for archaeological artifacts has led to massive looting. Estimates are there are more than 100,000 looters in China. More than 400,000 sites have been looted in the last 20 years.

The high prices for ancient artifacts on the world market have led many to illegal tomb robbing. Rural residents with few resources and incomes at poverty level often see this an easy way to supplement their income. A successful tomb raider can make a year’s salary in one night.

Shanghai is another example of massive and rapid development. New industrial centers surround the city. When I inquired about the former residents, I was told one historic village was being “preserved” but would be torn down and rebuilt in historic style.
Shanghai’s soaring skyline lies across the river from...
The historic Bund district, the section of foreign concession shops, hotels and houses from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries.
In Shanghai, the district surrounding Yuyuan Garden has been rebuilt as an historic theme neighborhood, full of shops including Starbucks and McDonalds. The gardens have been lovingly restored. The mix of modern protecting an historic core could be a model for preservation that addresses both the need for tourism-fueled economic development and the preservation of historic sites, creating a buffer zone from the rapidly growing city.
Shanghai has also recognized the value of protecting historic structures. This building was one of the first “factories,” trading companies built by British businesses to exploit local residents. Slated for demolition in a neighborhood in the process of high rise development, protesters from the nearby arts district managed to protect the building and plans to restore it are in progress.
Our journey through China with the Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad brought me a new understanding of the precarious balancing act between historic preservation and economic development. Although I believe China needs to develop strong preservation standards to protect the many irreplaceable treasures in its patrimony, the needs of 1.4 billion people must be balanced against those policies. China’s rapidly growing internal and external tourism markets can help underline the need for protection. As tourists visit and support sites which demonstrate strong sense of place and time, the push to preserve and display those sites will increase. China already has found that balance in many sites with 45 areas named as World Heritage Sites. The implementation of standards already developed by the World Heritage designation with UN oversight can help slow the destruction of China’s historic and cultural past.

UNESCO Convention Concerning Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage: http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/

Discussion or Essay Questions

• How does cultural and historic preservation in China compare to that in the United States? In your local community?

• What unique pressures affect cultural and historical preservation in China? How are they different from those affecting sites in the US or in Europe?

• With the numbers of outbound tourists from China reaching record levels, do you think those returning to their homeland will bring changed expectations for historic preservation? Do you think that might create a desire for stricter protections for sites in China?
Discussion Questions, continued

• The balancing act between the needs of a growing population, the move to urbanization and an ideal of historic and cultural preservation face all countries of the world today. What are your thoughts on how this can be achieved?

• Our own idealized vision of our history (for example, our view of the Founding Fathers and the Revolution) skim areas that do not match the heroic image we are taught. China also presents its own history in light of its need to create a unified national vision. How is our idealization of the past similar to China’s promotion of their history? How can the past and the vision be balanced?
Discussion questions, continued

- China has accomplished an amazing feat in bringing much of its population out of extreme poverty. It is continuing those efforts. Often the price is the destruction of historic structures in order to build housing that has the features needed to insure the health and comfort of the residents—running water, sanitary facilities, heating and cooking facilities that use cleaner fuels. How can nations balance the needs of the population with historic preservation?