

Skate the Wall

Skateboarding Through Time on The Great Wall of China

Dr. Steven A. Martin



Original Text and Photography by
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About this Presentation

Based on Martin (2002)'s "Skate the Wall: Skateboarding Through Time on the Great Wall of China"

- Beginning in 1995 with my first study abroad program at Peking University in Beijing, I was fascinated with the history and grandeur of the Great Wall.
- My Chinese philosophy professor, Yang Xin, encouraged me to see the Wall from new perspectives: Philosophically, humanistically, artistically and aesthetically.
- After visiting several reconstructed and touristic areas of the Wall that first summer, I learned that there were hundreds of magnificent and unseen sections of the Wall to explore.
- For 20 years, my imagination and exploration continued, uncovering first-hand old and new meaning along the Great Wall.
- The photos and history presented here are part of this story and life experience.



Presentation Topics and Themes (57 Slides)



Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal - 2002

PART I

- Skate the Wall
 - 11 slides

PART II

- Hiking the Wild Wall
 - 19 slides
 - Jinshanling, Simatai, Mutianyu, Huanghuachen, Jaiyuguan Fort

PART III

- History – Why Build a “Great” Wall?
 - 19 slides

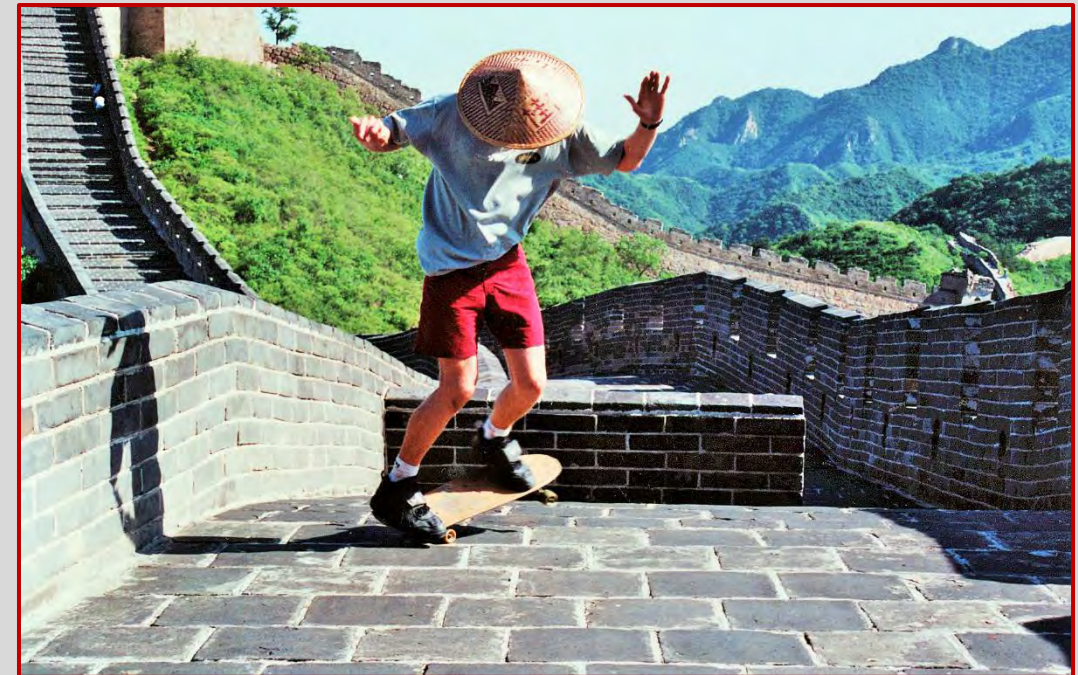
PART IV

- Great Wall Art
 - 9 slides
- Concluding Thought

PART I

Skate the Wall: Skateboarding through time on the Great Wall of China

By Steven A. Martin



Martin, S. A. (2002). Skate the Wall: Skateboarding through time on the Great Wall of China. *Kona Views Magazine*, (pp. 21-22). Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, USA: Kona Media Inc.

About My Article

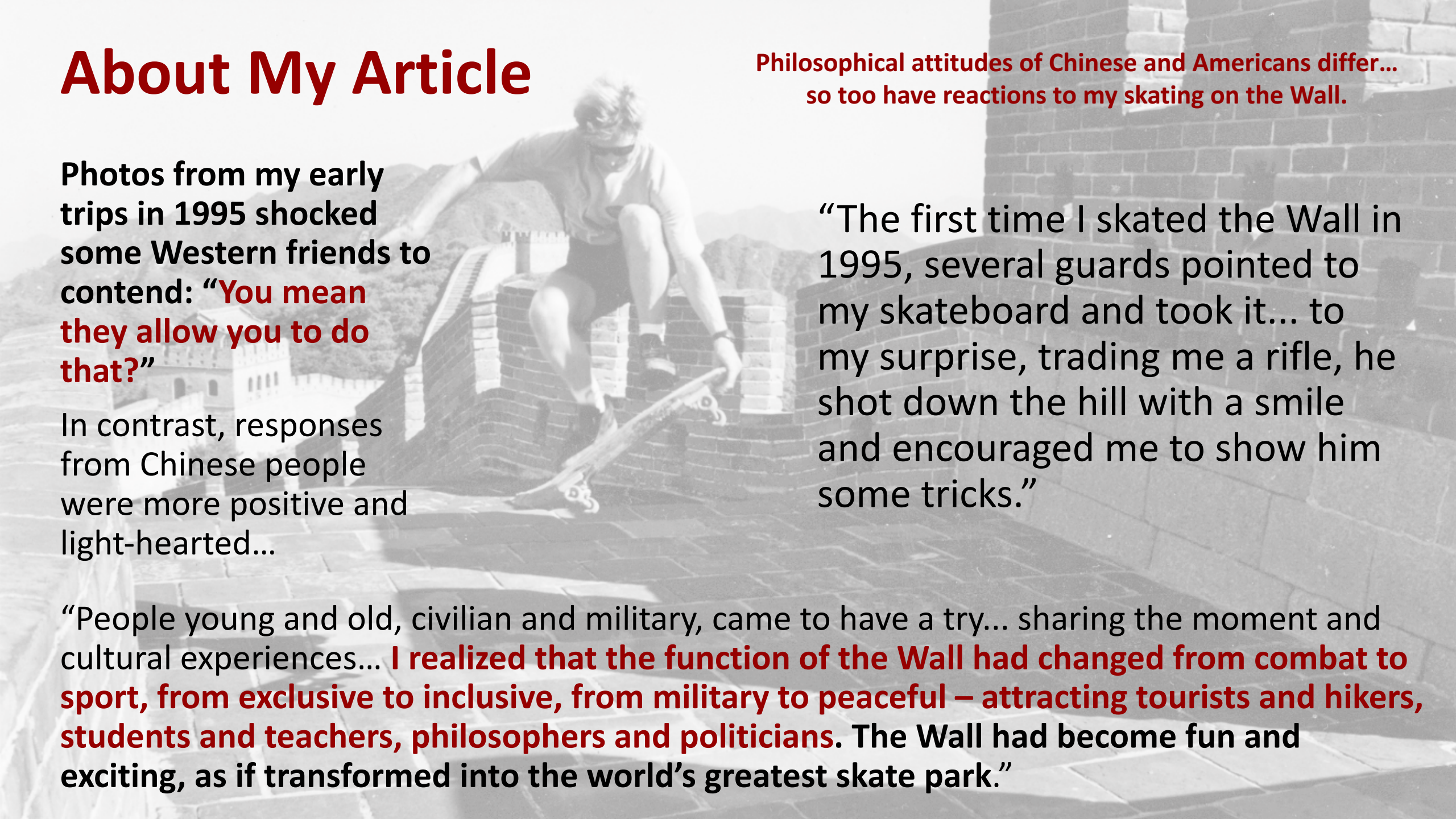
Philosophical attitudes of Chinese and Americans differ...
so too have reactions to my skating on the Wall.

Photos from my early trips in 1995 shocked some Western friends to contend: **“You mean they allow you to do that?”**

In contrast, responses from Chinese people were more positive and light-hearted...

“People young and old, civilian and military, came to have a try... sharing the moment and cultural experiences... **I realized that the function of the Wall had changed from combat to sport, from exclusive to inclusive, from military to peaceful – attracting tourists and hikers, students and teachers, philosophers and politicians.** The Wall had become fun and exciting, as if transformed into the world’s greatest skate park.”

“The first time I skated the Wall in 1995, several guards pointed to my skateboard and took it... to my surprise, trading me a rifle, he shot down the hill with a smile and encouraged me to show him some tricks.”





Steven Martin 2001



Steven Martin 1995



Steven Martin 1995

Great Wall Factoids

- Fortifications that began in isolated and strategic mountain passes over 2,500 years ago
- **A continuous project**, the Wall stretches 4,000 miles, from Heilongjiang Province in northeast China and winding westward to the Gobi Desert region of Gansu Province
- Supreme guardian of the fertile river-valleys and plains of the south from invasion by the marauding bandits of the Mongolian plateau
- The northern face of the Wall is always sheer, often 30 feet tall or perched on the rim of a high cliff, yet the southern face is sometimes only ground level



Martin (2002) Skate the Wall

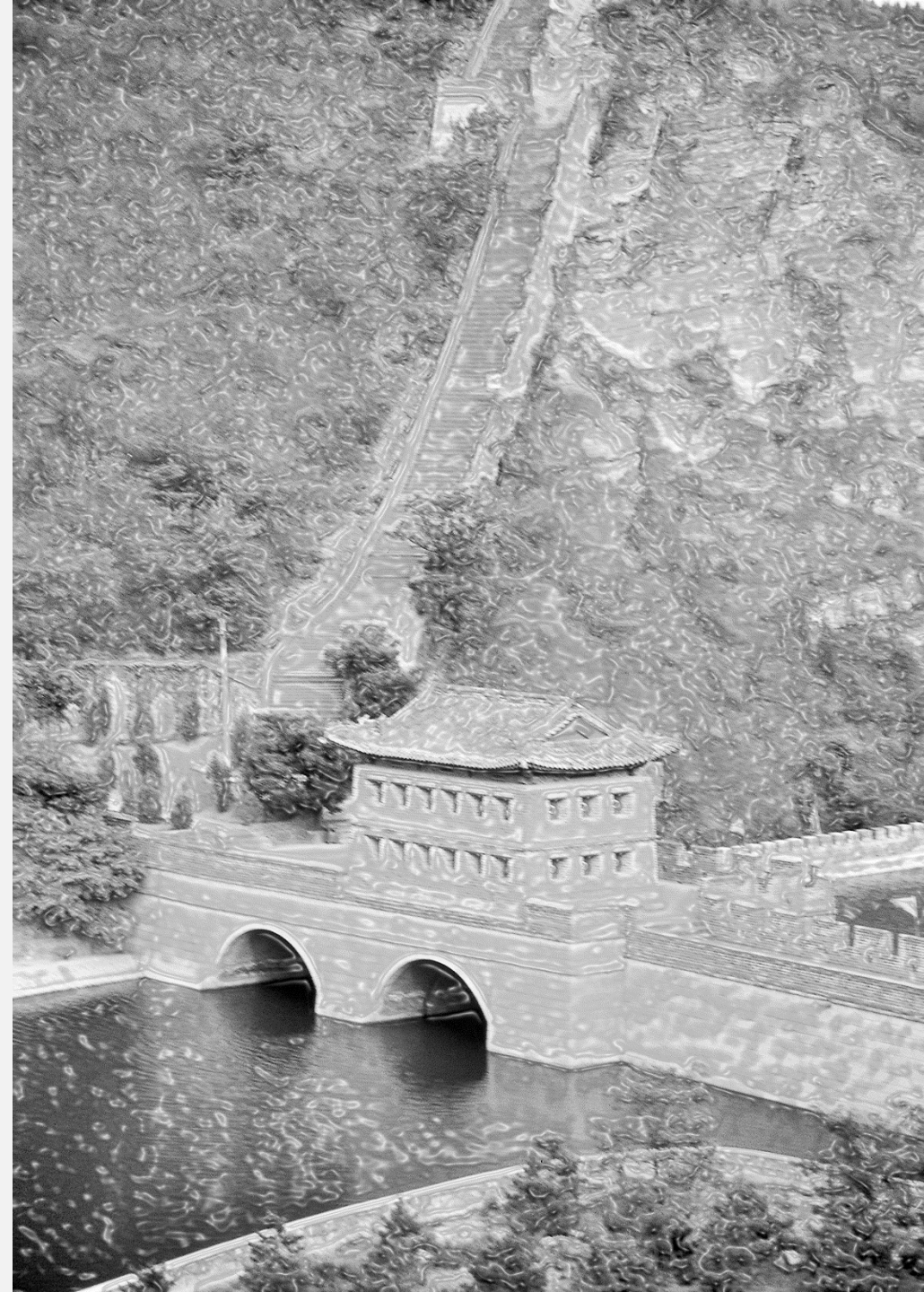
Acuity and Continuity

“Layers of architecture attest to the acuity and continuity of Chinese culture and philosophy as the wall, like the art of the earth, rises in chronological order from a subterranean foundation...

I have stood at sections where the base was built during Chin Dynasty, the middle during Han, the upper during Ming, the watchtowers Qing, while the surface was only one week old.

I’ve observed farmers loading donkey carts with bricks they bashed off the Wall with sledgehammers, while in the distance I could see contemporary building crews adding a fresh face for tourists.”

Martin (2002) Skate the Wall



Aesthetics

“The Wall looks like a coiling dragon, reaching to the sky, riding on the backs of mountains”

We can interpret the Wall from many perspectives...

- There are very different sections of the Wall, some like Disneyland with superhighways to bring busy tourists, such as Mutianyu and Badaling
 - Others more mysterious and less revealed
- Resembling a growing plant, it fits into the earth's natural curves, its aspects constantly being altered by seasonal changes
 - **Feng Shui**
- Grandeur and spiritual aspects
- A symbol of both China and the human race
- Can causes us to search deeply within ourselves

Martin (2002) Skate the Wall

Why “Great” Wall?

I once asked Professor Yang Xin of Beijing University, “Why is it named Great Wall?”

He explained:

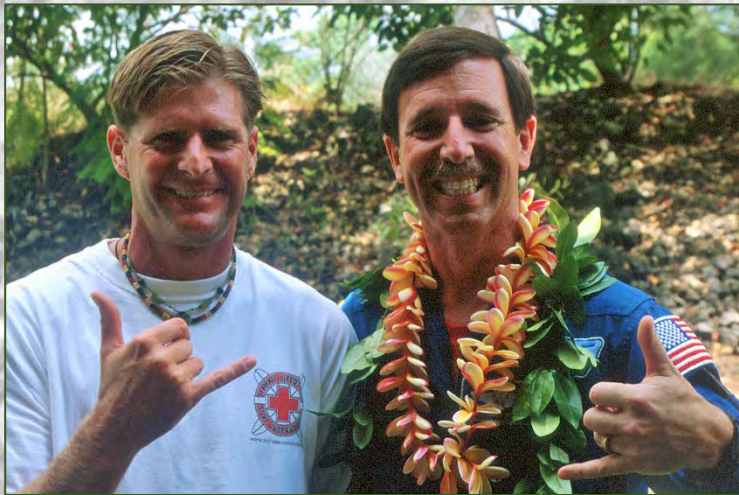
“Although the original name may have implied long wall (wall of 10,000 Li), the significance matured and greatness was attributed. One brick is only one, with function limited, yet when they combine, a great animation is formed, just like the Chinese culture... The Wall unifies mankind with heavenly forces, as if an enormous composition of cursive calligraphy.”

Martin (2002) Skate the Wall

**Professor Yang Xin
Beijing University**



Can we see the Wall from Space?



Steven Martin interviews Colonel Scott Horowitz in Hawaii...

Martin (2002) Skate the Wall

Is the Great Wall is the only manmade structure recognized from space?

- Colonel Scott Horowitz, USAF, who has commanded the Space Shuttle, told me:

“It is nearly impossible to see the Great Wall, even from low orbit, because the color of the bricks matches the color of the corresponding landscape, and also due to the heavily polluted skies over China...”

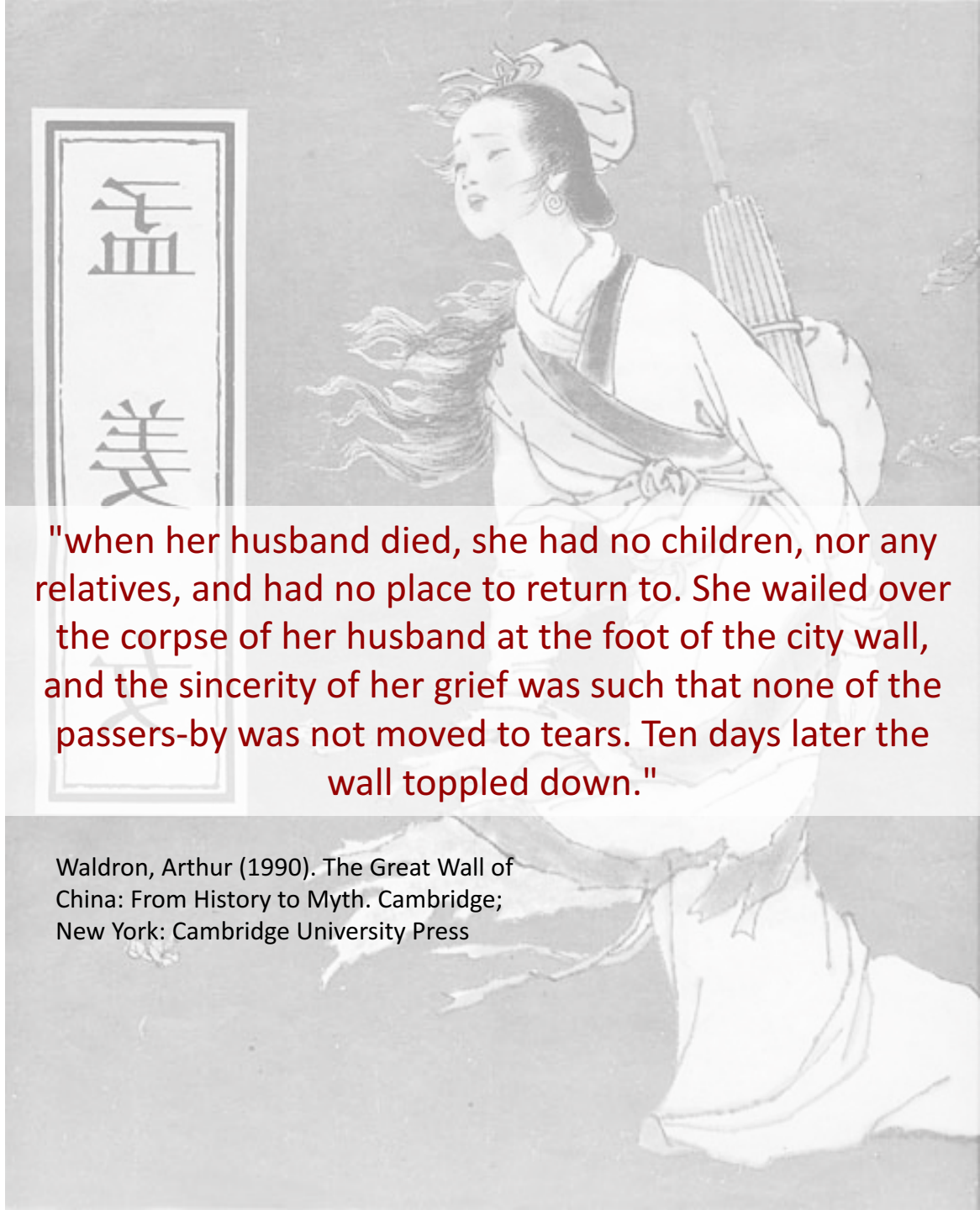
...the Great Pyramid is most visible because of its shadow, yet the Wall is possible to discern with a little imagination on a crystal-clear day

孟姜女 Mèng Jiāng Nǚ

Sometimes called the world's longest cemetery, the Great Wall was a place where men were sent to toil and suffer until their expired bodies were buried along the Wall

- Poems, music, and modest temples throughout China, Korea, and Japan honor the story of Meng Jiang Nu
- A woman who searched the entire length before finding her beloved dying husband
- The legend states that she cried so hard the wall collapsed where she found him
- Attests to the seriousness of the Great wall

Martin (2002) Skate the Wall



"when her husband died, she had no children, nor any relatives, and had no place to return to. She wailed over the corpse of her husband at the foot of the city wall, and the sincerity of her grief was such that none of the passers-by was not moved to tears. Ten days later the wall toppled down."

Waldron, Arthur (1990). *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press

PART II

Hiking the Wild Wall

- Arranging taxis the night before
- Leaving before city traffic
- Being dropped-off at one location
- Getting picked up at another location
- Averaging 10 km hiking distance per day

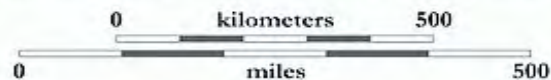


Photos: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 2001

The Great Wall of China

万里长城

The Great Wall of China is the longest building on earth with a length of 6350 kilometers (3945 miles), of which the main wall spans 2400 km (1500 mi). It consists of a system of several sections, sometimes not connected, that differ in age and construction method.



Construction of the Great Wall during Chinese history

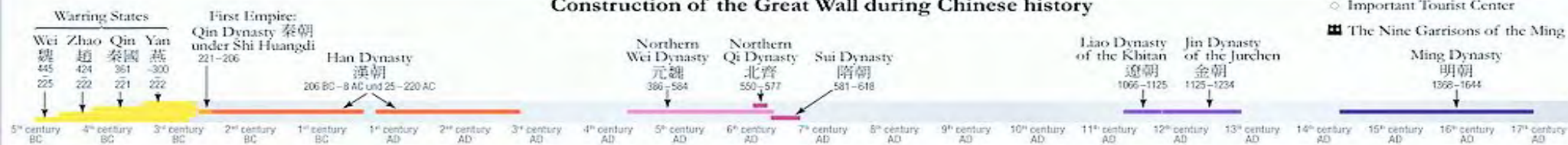




Photo: Steven Martin



Photo: Open Source

Jin Shan Ling – University of Hawaii Students

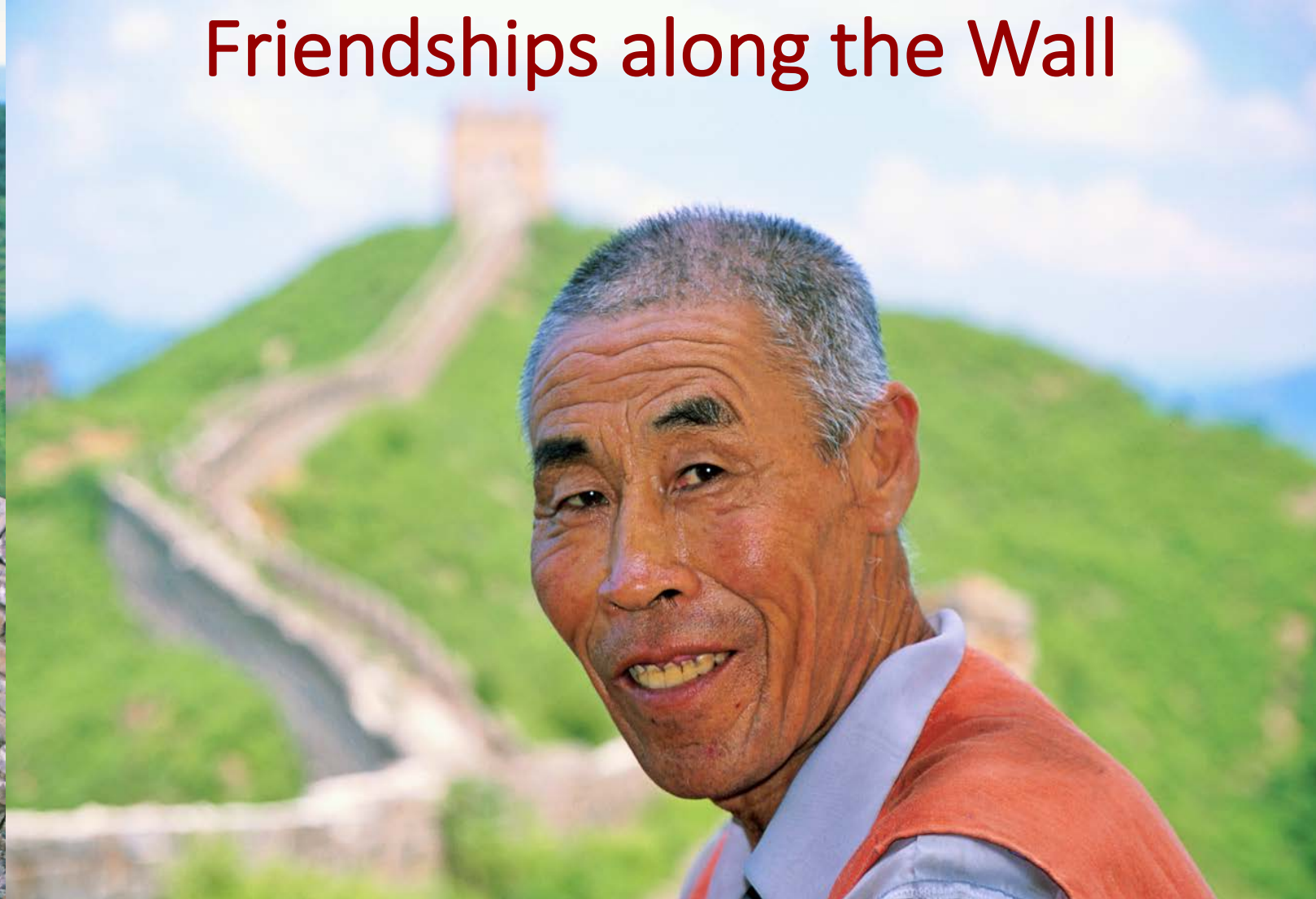


Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 2000



Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 2002

Friendships along the Wall



Photos: Steven Martin – Study Abroad Journal



Great Wall Hike 2002



Photos: Steven Martin – Study Abroad Journal

金山嶺

Jin Shan Ling Great Wall

- 125 km northeast of Beijing
- 10.5 km long
- 5 passes
- 67 towers
- 3 beacon towers





Gubeikou
Great Wall



金山岭长城导览图

The Guide Map of JinShanLing Great Wall

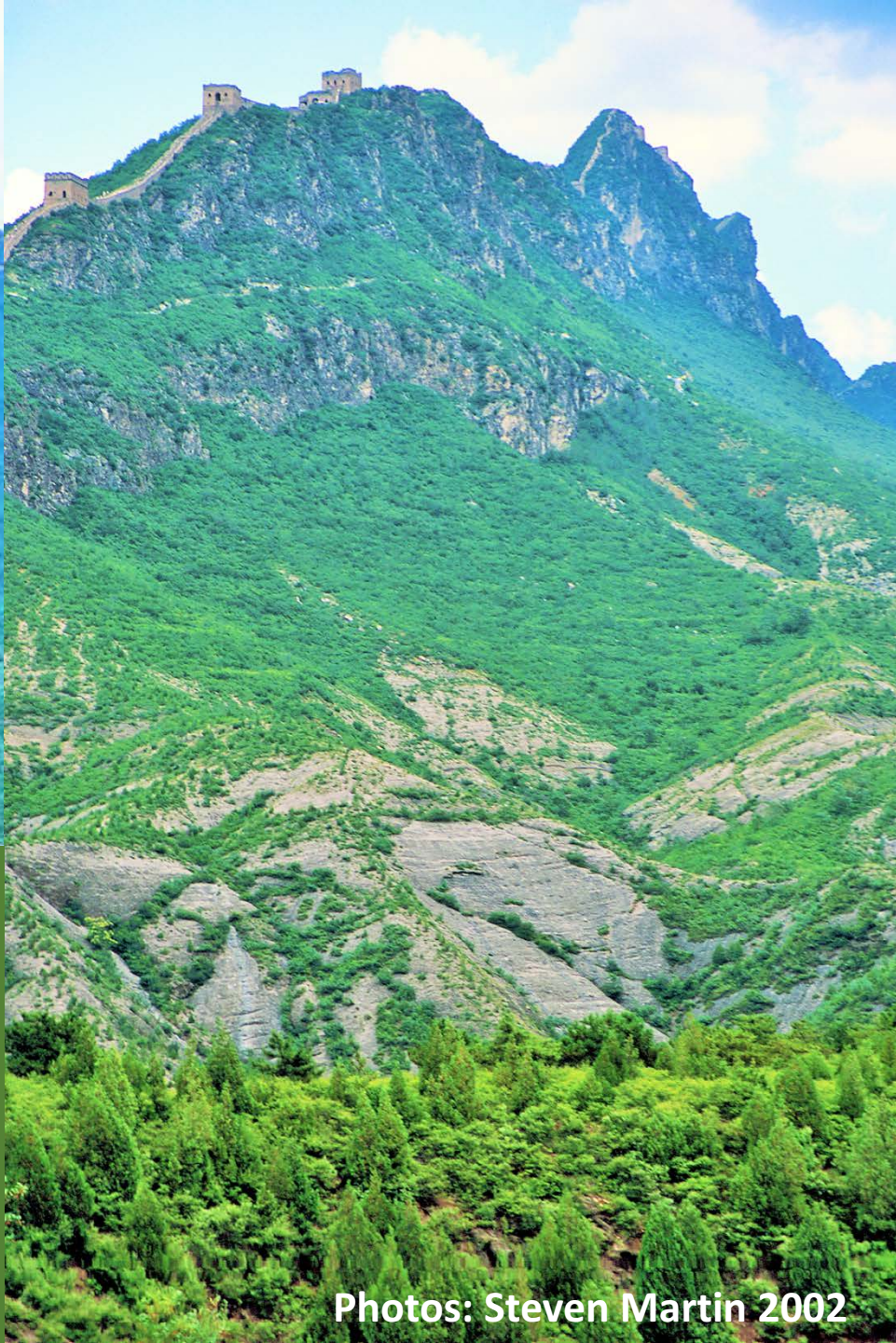


Jin Shan Ling



Photo: Steven Martin 2002

Simatai Great Wall



- 5.4 km long
- 35 beacon towers
- 120 km northeast of Beijing
- UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site
- Originally built during the Northern Qi Dynasty (550–577)
- Rebuilt in Ming Dynasty

司馬臺

Photos: Steven Martin 2002

Mutianyu Great Wall 慕田峪

• XXXXXX

“Chinese Disneyland”



Mutianyu Great Wall

慕田峪

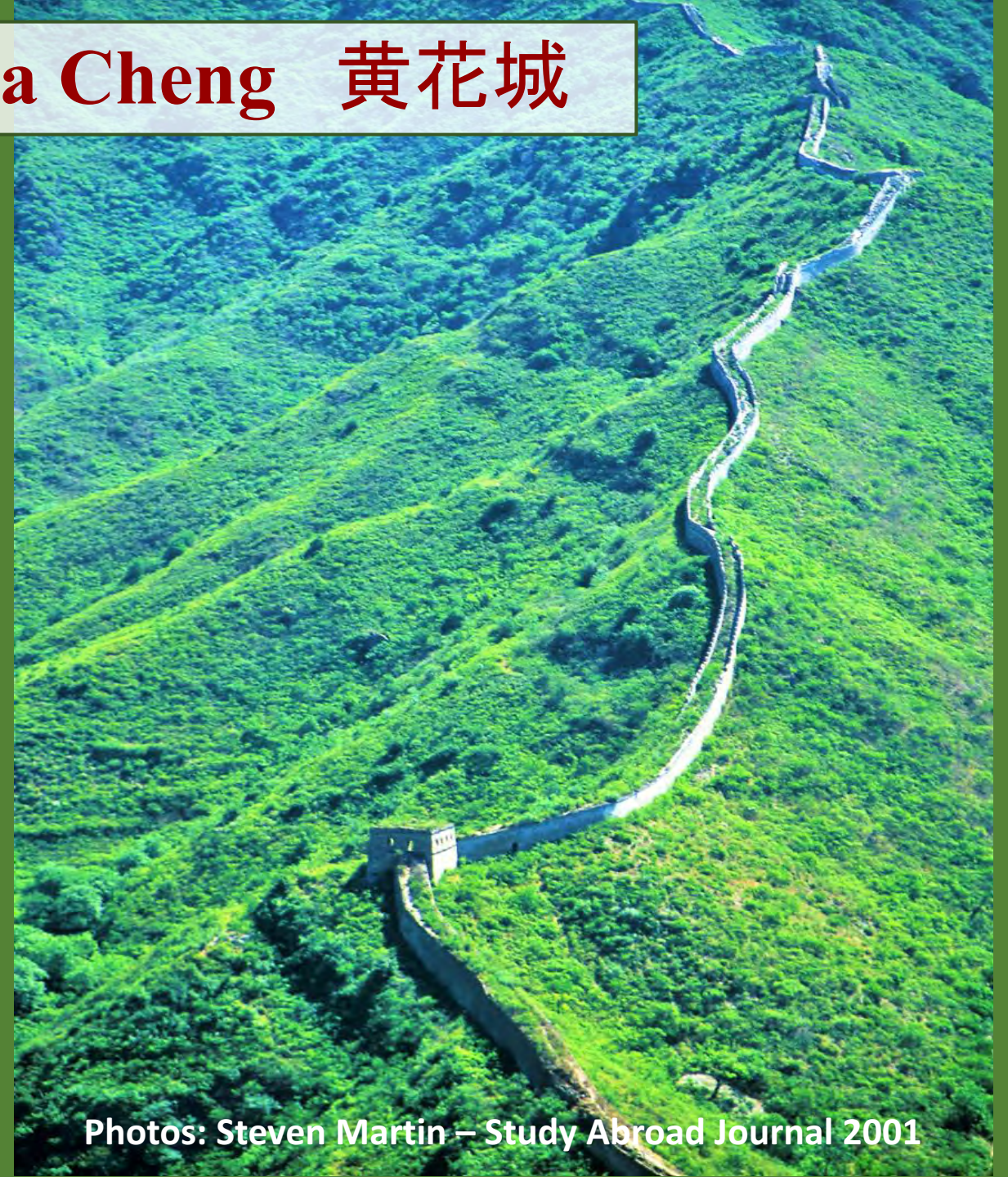
- 70 km northeast of central Beijing
- Mid-6th century (Northern Qi)
- Reconstructed in the Ming Dynasty
- Older than the Badaling
- Large construction scale, 4-5 meters wide, high quality
- Constructed with granite
- 22 watchtowers along the 2,250-meter-long stretch

Mutianyu Great Wall

慕田峪



Huang Hua Cheng 黄花城



Photos: Steven Martin — Study Abroad Journal 2001

Jaiyuguan Great Wall

- Ming Dynasty
- Western Frontier
 - “Jiayu Pass”
- Western terminus of the Great Wall in the Gobi Desert
- During the Ming construction of Jaiyuguan Fort, the a general was said to have ordered a massive and specific number of bricks.
- When the complex was completed, only one brick remained, a testament to Chinese ingenuity.
- Four characters inscribed near the front gate affirm:
Strongest Fort Under Heaven.



Jaiyuguan Great Wall

Ming Dynasty
1539



Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 2001

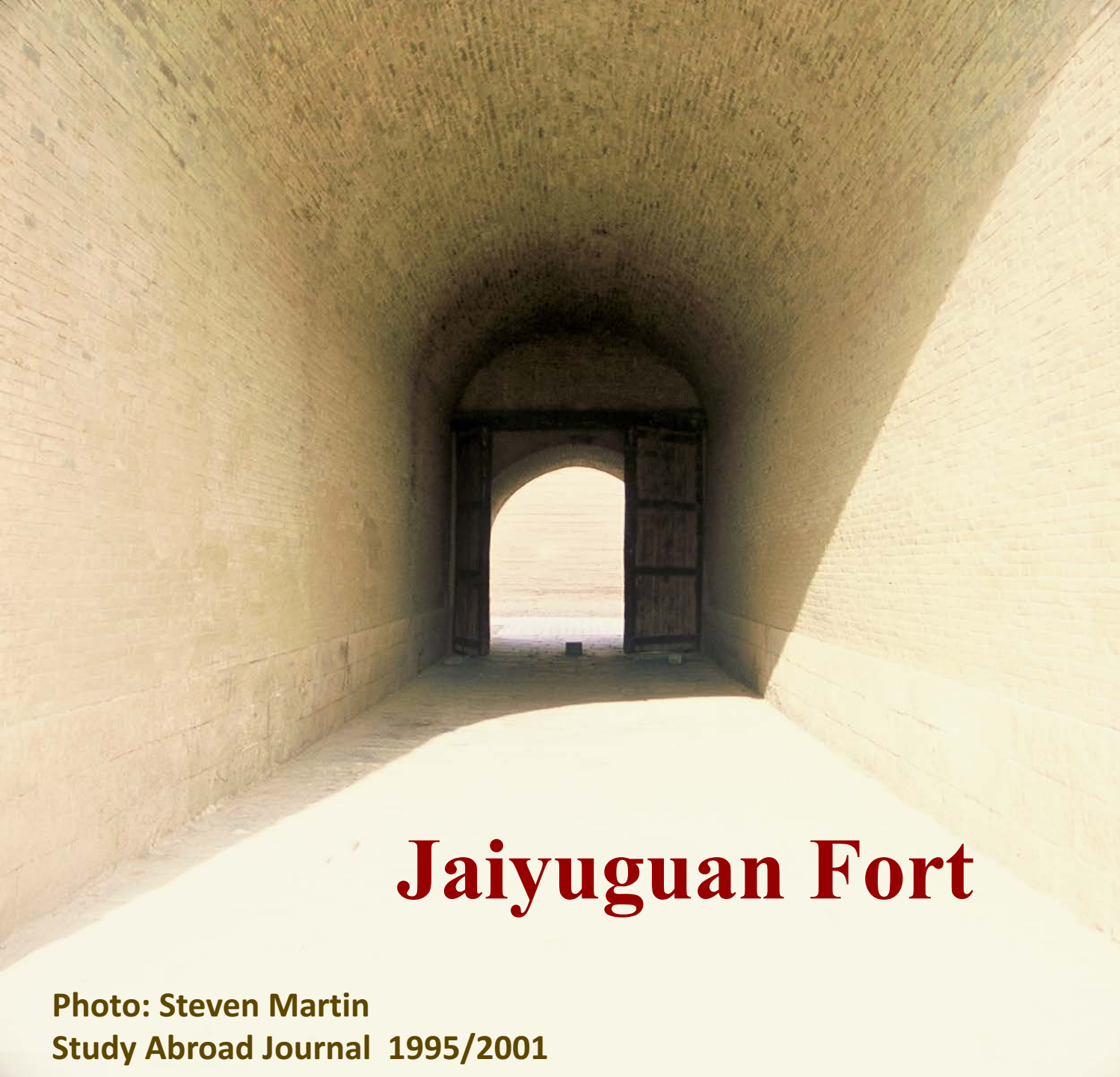


Jaiyuguan Fort

The Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644)

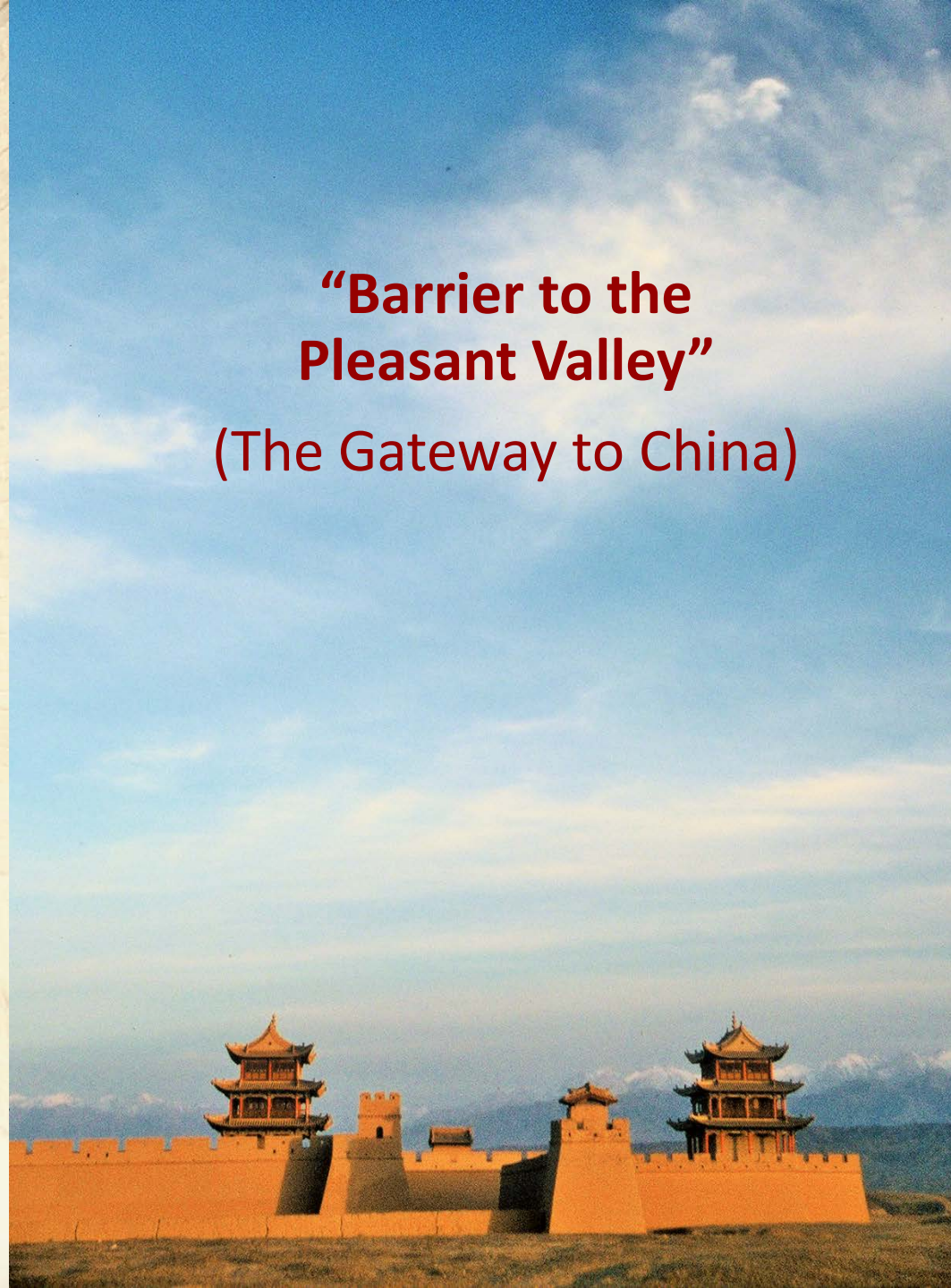
“Earned the reputation for hosting China’s most masterful wall builders, creating faultless square-cut bricks, which still appear clean, tight, and engineered into perfect function”

(Martin, 2002)



Jaiyuguan Fort

Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 1995/2001

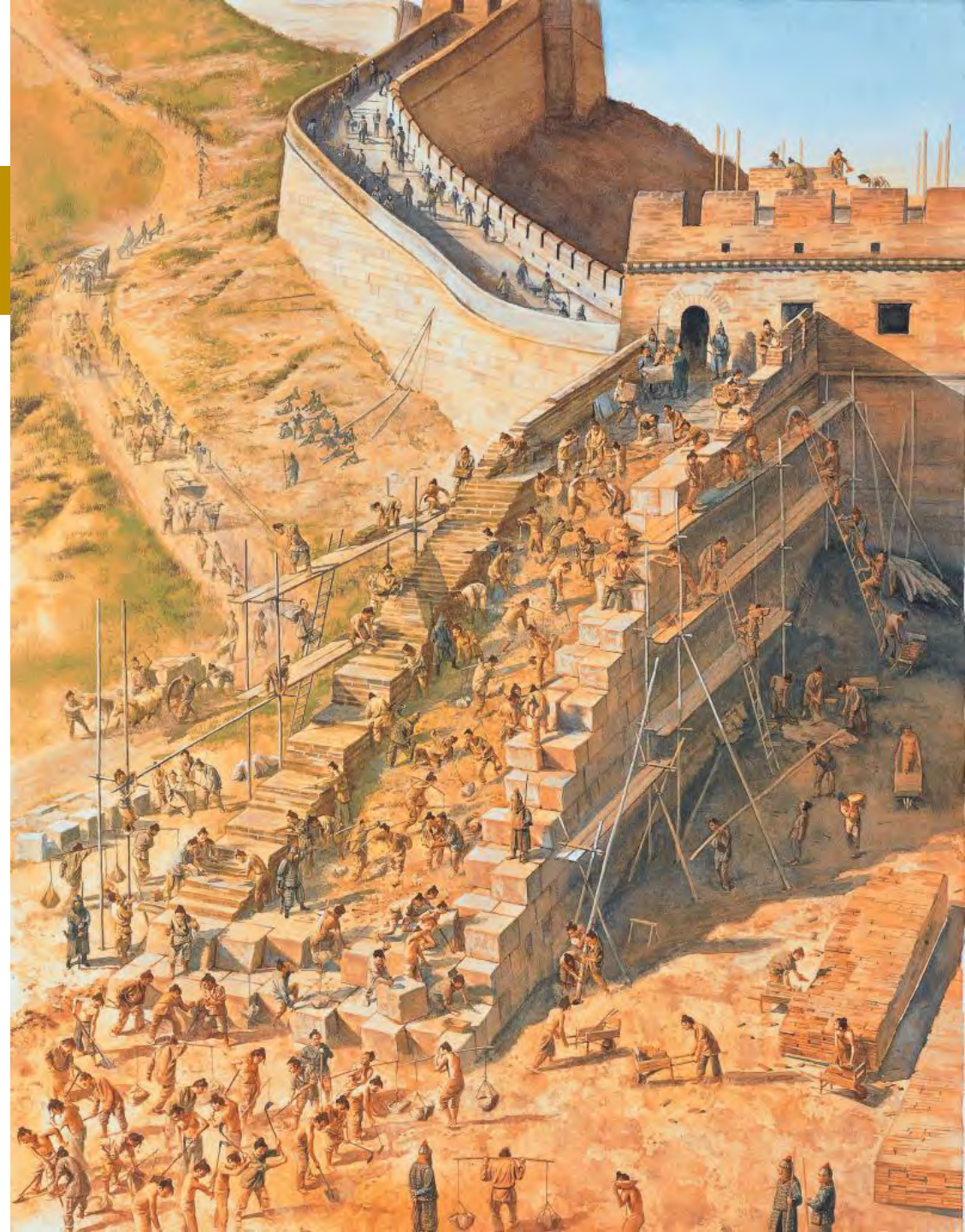


**“Barrier to the
Pleasant Valley”**
(The Gateway to China)

PART III

Why build a “Great” Wall

- **Generally built along an east-to-west line across the historical northern borders of China**
 - Protecting Chinese states and empires against the nomadic groups of the Eurasian Steppe
- **A series of fortifications made of stone, brick, tamped earth, wood, and other materials**
 - Use of local materials
 - Matches the corresponding landscape
- **Pragmatic purposes**
 - Communication highway (the first internet?)
 - Smoke by day and fire by night
 - Border control
 - Regulation on trade
 - The Silk Road



Civilized vs. Barbarian

Nei Ren (inner-persons)

Wai Ren (outer-persons)

中
国

- **Cooked (Sinicized)**

- shufan 熟番

- **Raw (Barbarian)**

- shengfan 生番

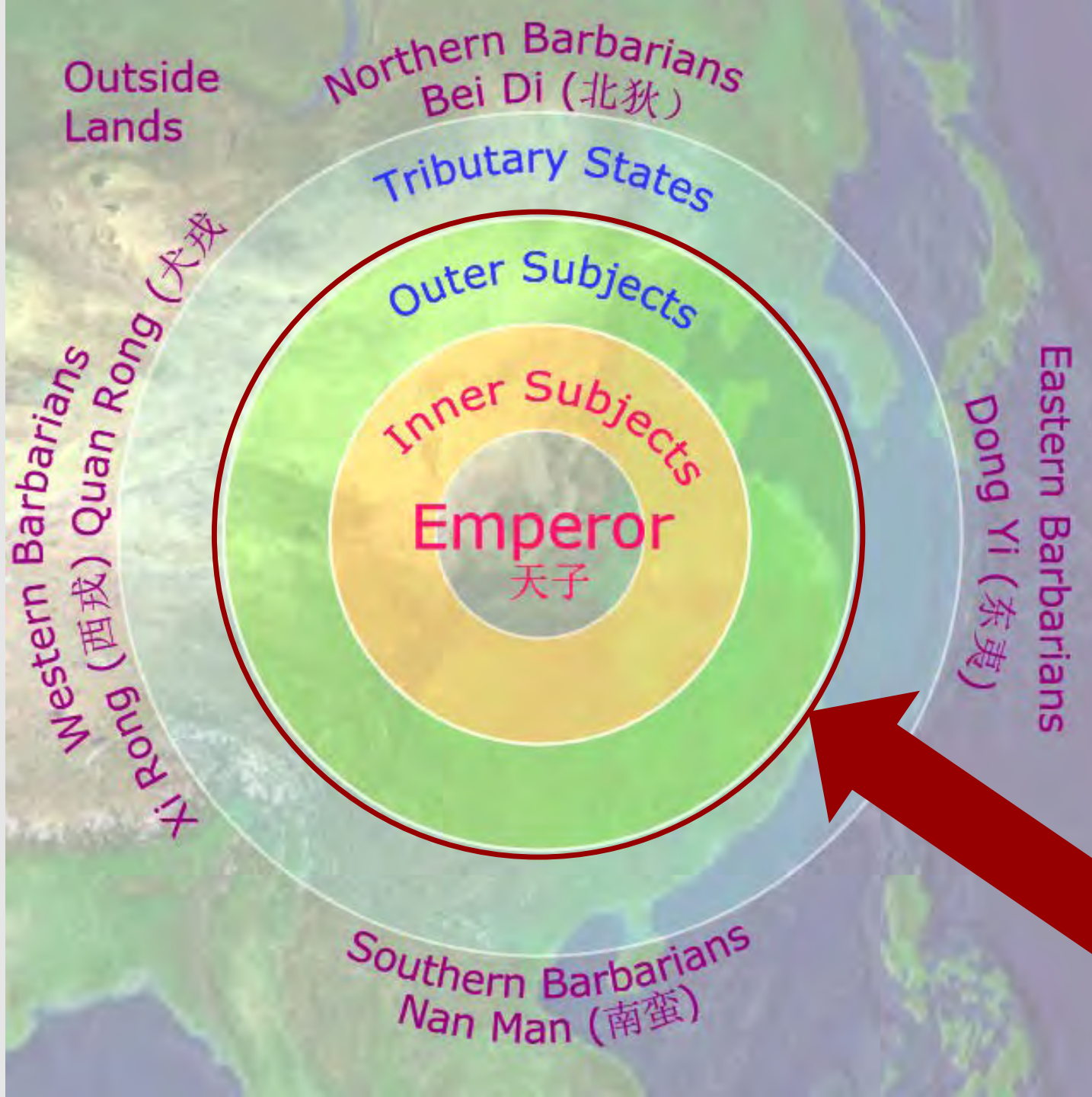


“In Weicheng, the central town,
it rains lightly in the morning...

All the houses and the willows
look fresh after the rain...

I suggest you have another cup
of wine, because as soon as you
leave Yangguan Pass, there are
no friends...”

Tang Dynasty Poem by Wang Wei



Han-centric cosmos

Zhongguo
Middle Kingdom

中国

**Great Wall is
Here**

English	Chinese	Pinyin	Dates	Length	Comments
Xia	夏	Xià	2070–1600 BC	470	
Shang	商	Shāng	1600–1046 BC	554	“business”; oracle bone script; <i>Yi Ching</i>
Western Zhou	西周	Xī Zhōu	1046–771 BC	275	Sage kings; Duke of Chou The Book of Songs (Book of Odes) (+-)
Eastern Zhou Spring and Autumn Period Warring States Period	東周 / 东周 春秋 戰國 / 战国	Dōng Zhōu Chūn Qiū Zhàn Guó	770–256 BC 722–476 BC 475–221 BC	514 246 254	The ‘Classic Period’ Confucius & Mencius Laozi & Chuangzi Xunzi Han Fei Zi (Legalism)
Qin	秦	Qín	221–206 BC	15	Great Wall Terracotta Warriors
Western Han	西漢 / 西汉	Xī Hàn	206 BC–AD 9	215	Han Culture — Han People State Confucianism Zhan Qian explores the Western regions First Imperial Dynasty
Eastern Han	東漢 / 东汉	Dōng Hàn	25–220	195	Continuation of Western Han Struggle to control Chinese Turkistan
Three Kingdoms	三國 / 三国	Sān Guó	220–265	45	War; Rebellion; Technology
Western Jin	西晉 / 西晋	Xī Jīn	265–317	52	A reunification of China followed by civil war; Era of green celadon porcelain wares
Eastern Jin	東晉 / 东晋	Dōng Jīn	317–420	103	Fa Xian explores the Silk Road
Southern & Northern	南北朝	Nán Běi Cháo	420–589	169	Art; culture; spread of Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism; development of the Chinese pagoda tower
Sui	隋	Suí	581–618	37	Intellectual Buddhism Imperial Examination
Tang	唐	Táng	618–907	289	Golden age of philosophy Chang-an is capital Xuan Zhang’s Journey to the West
Five Dynasties & Ten Kingdoms	五代十國 / 五代十国	Wǔ Dài Shí Guó	907–960	53	Era of political disorder between the Tang and Song periods; China fractures into 5 dynasties in the north and 10 kingdoms in the south
Northern Song	北宋	Běi Sòng	960–1127	167	Early Neo-Confucianism
Southern Song	南宋	Nán Sòng	1127–1279	152	Zu Xi & The 4 Books The Confucian Canon & National Standards (Bureaucratic exam system)
Liao	遼 / 辽	Liáo	916–1125	209	United rule in the Mongolia region
Jin	金	Jīn	1115–1234	119	United rule in the Manchuria region
Yuan	元	Yuán	1271–1368	97	Mongolian rule under Genghis Khan Beijing as capital Marco Polo <i>Outlaws of the Marsh (Water Margin)</i> (+-)
Ming	明	Míng	1368–1644	276	Great walls, trade, porcelain, culture “Monkey King” <i>Journey to the West</i> <i>Romance of the Three Kingdoms</i>
Qing	清	Qīng	1644–1911	268	Manchurian rule; Empress Dowager & <i>The Last Emperor</i> Sun Yet San <i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>

Martin, 2016

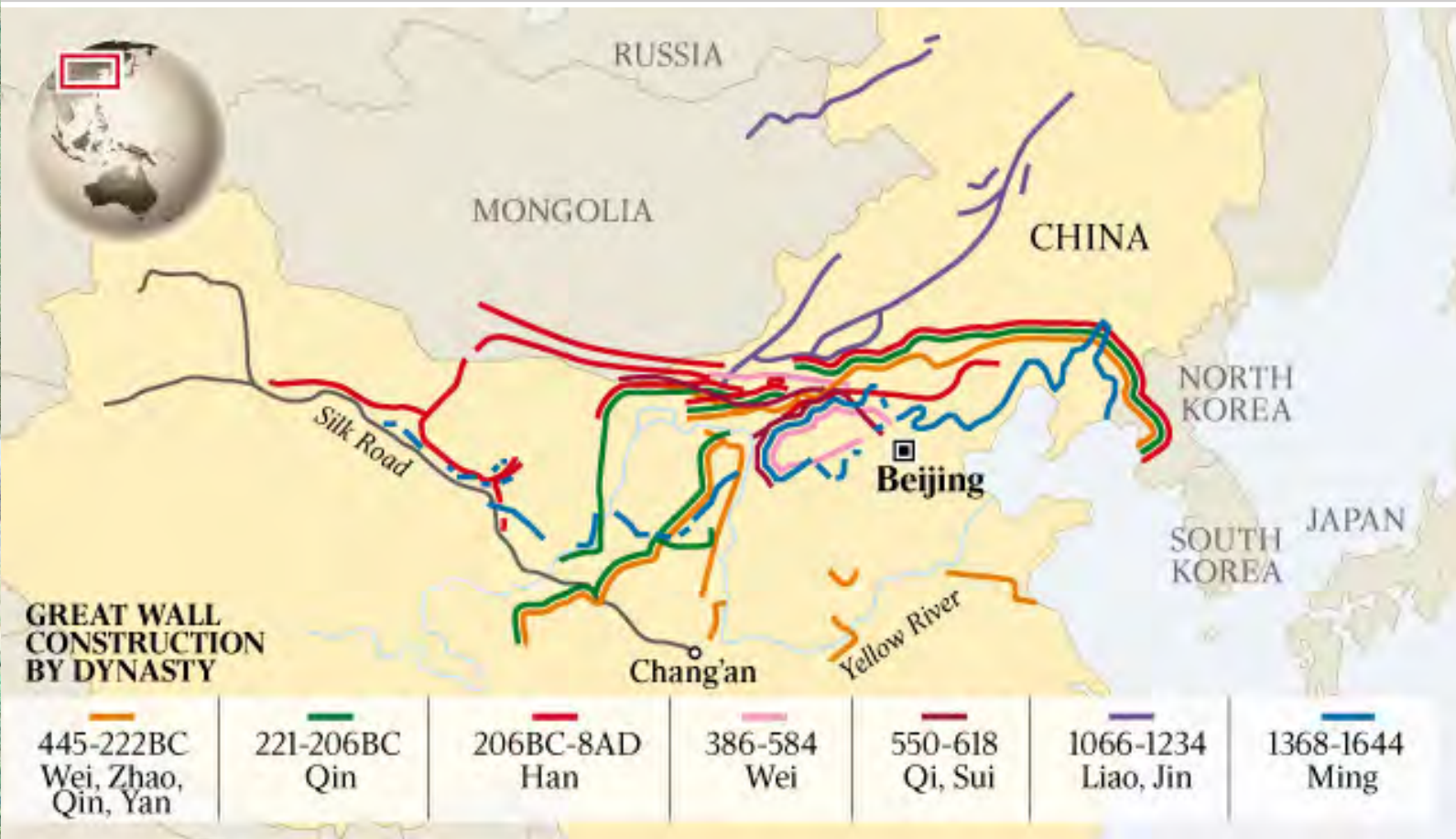
Dynastic Periods and The Great Wall

A garrison of the Great Wall from the Han Dynasty still towers above in the Gobi Desert



Photo: Steven Martin
Study Abroad Journal 2001

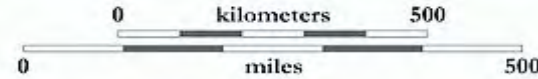
Dynastic Periods and The Great Wall



The Great Wall of China

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Construction of the Great Wall during Chinese history





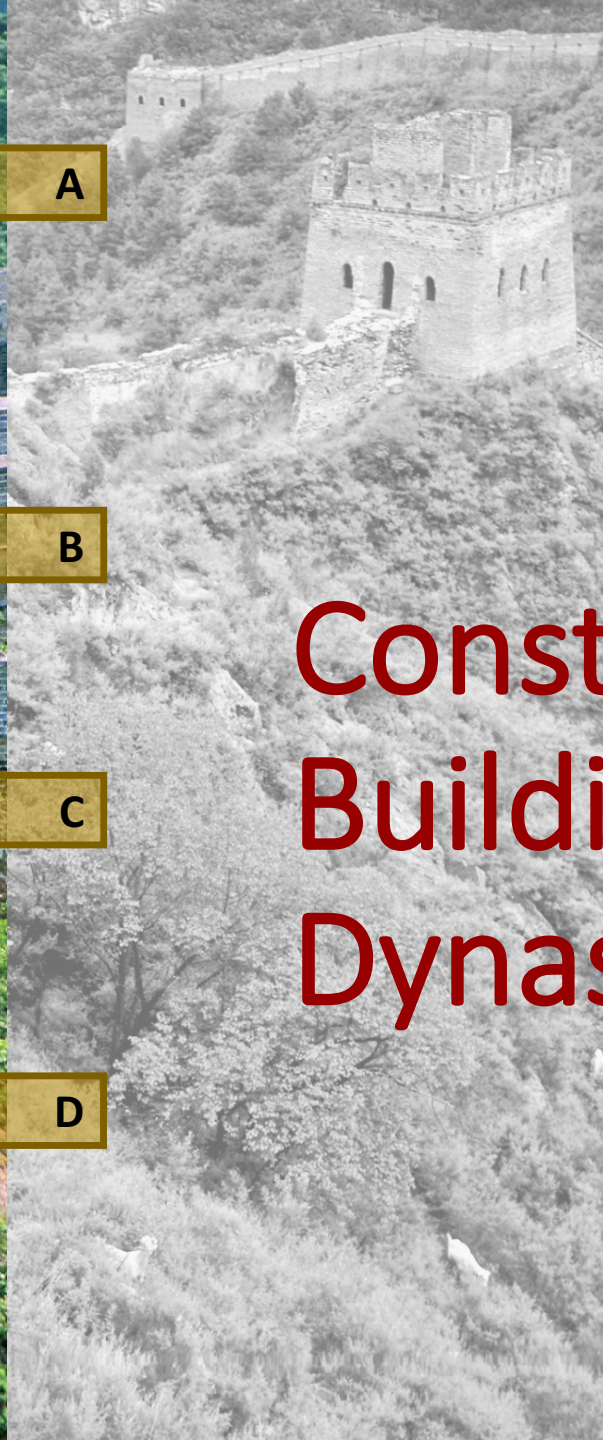
Photo: Steven Martin 2002

The Great Wall – Always in Construction!

- **Restoration Policy?**
 - **Rebuilding and reinforcing**
 - International tourism
 - Domestic Tourism
 - Began with Mao Tze Tung and National Pride

Threats to the conservation of the heritage

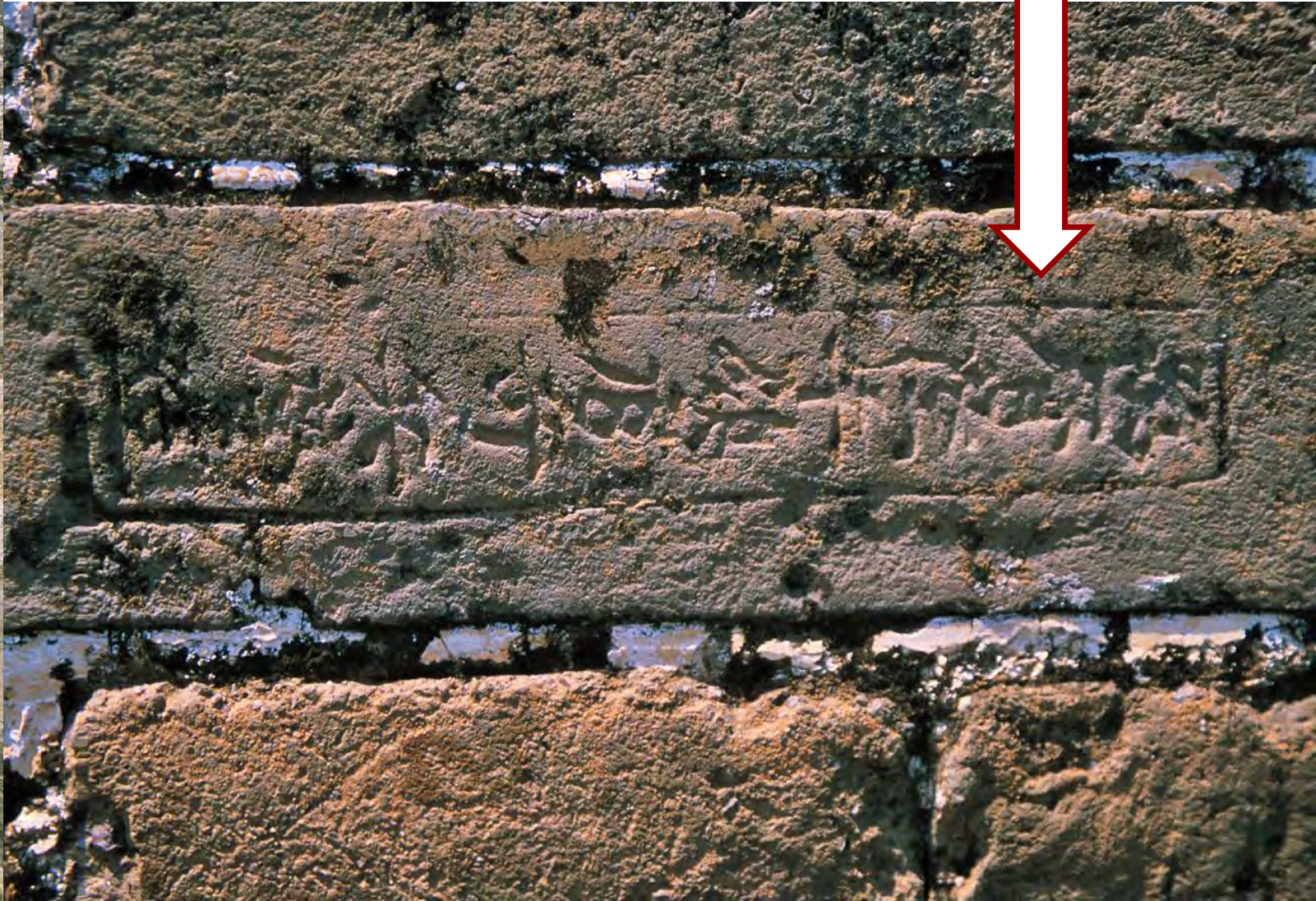
- **Dismantling for building materials**
 - Illegal trade
 - Stealing bricks
- **Rebuilding and reinforcing**



Construction styles
Building materials
Dynastic periods

Bricks in the Wall

Location/kiln of
manufacture



Lady Meng Jiang 孟姜女 Mèng Jiāng Nǚ





Qin dynasty (221BC-206BC)

The most famous and widespread folk tale about the Great Wall – Passed down through oral and written history

- The separation of a loving couple and their heart-break and tragic ending as a result of building the Wall
 - Her husband, Fan Qiliang, was unjustly sent to build the Great Wall and died

Represents

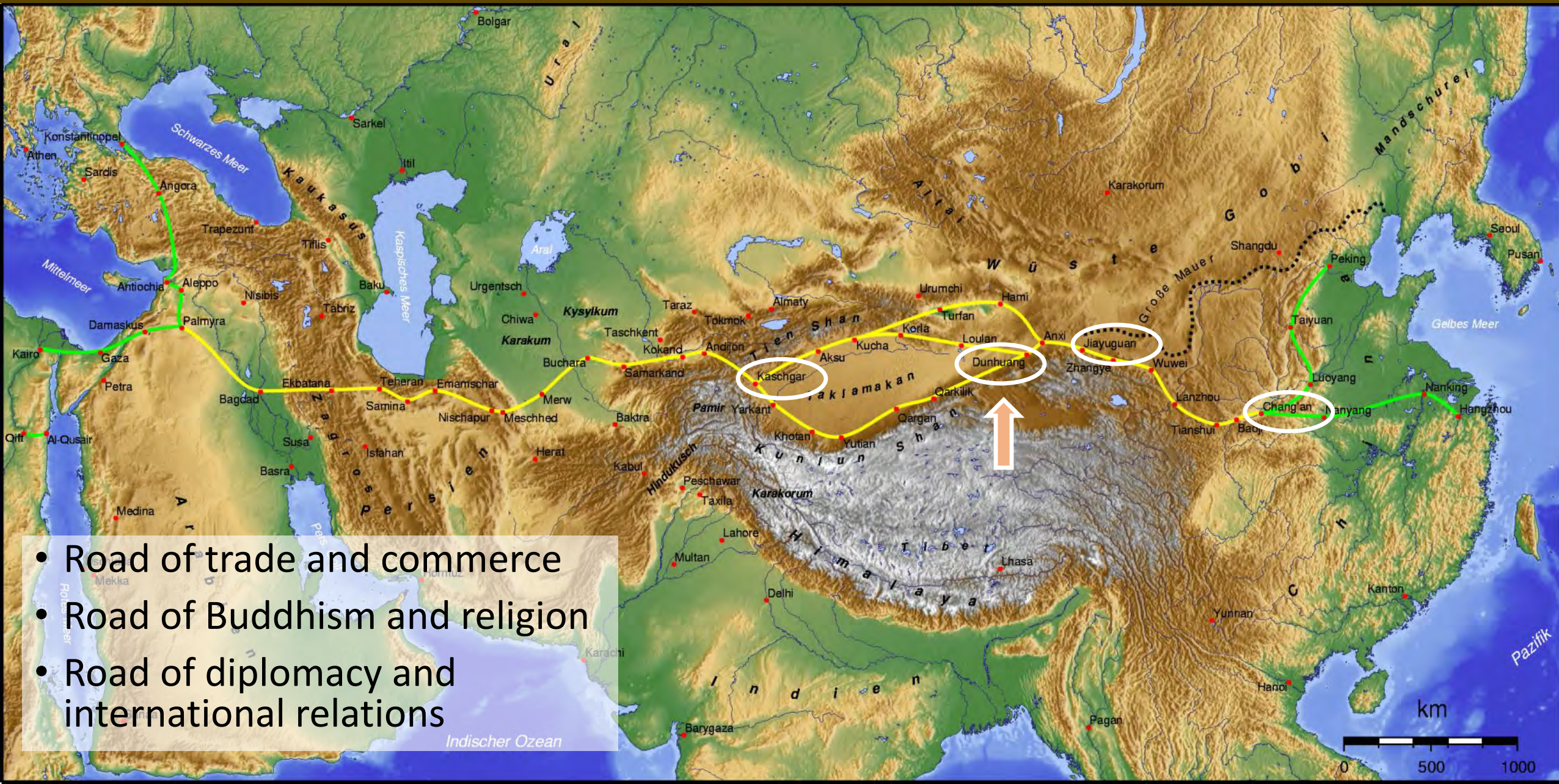
- The ruthlessness of the emperor and the army
- The kindness of ancient women
- The torture brought on by war
- The tragedy of the Great Wall

Meng Chen's Journey to the Great Wall



3 July
1871

Great Wall and the Silk Road: An Economic Powerline



- Road of trade and commerce
- Road of Buddhism and religion
- Road of diplomacy and international relations

PART IV – Great Wall Art









萬里長城 李在華 辛卯年夏月 題并畫 弘





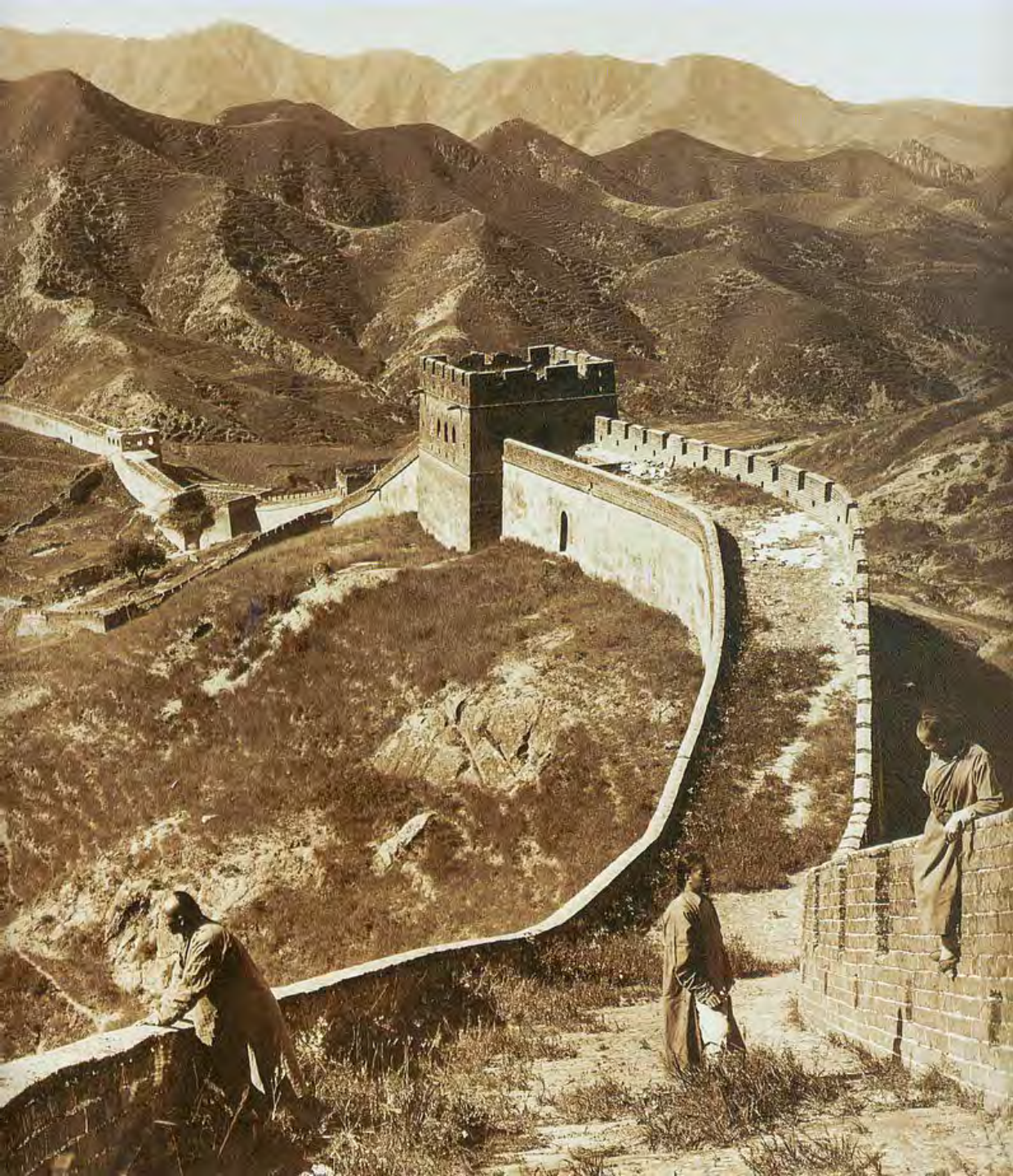
Thomas Allom 1845

English architect and topographical
illustrator wrote *China Illustrated*,
published in 1845





Great Wall 1900



Concluding Thought



**“The greatness of the Great Wall
stands for the greatness of humanity
as well as the suffering of humanity
– we’re all just bricks in the Wall”**

Steven A. Martin

StevenAndrewMartin.com

<http://www.stevenandrewmartin.com/>