

Dear volunteers:

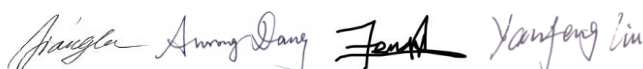
We are writing to express our deep gratitude to you for your support of the field research we did last summer. All of you worked very hard and we achieved a lot.

We documented the Religion Festival in Bai Yun Shan Temple. We had 10 group interviews and 20 individual interviews with the villagers, local government officials, local temple association leaders and festival participants. We have documented the whole festival's ceremony process and related events in Bai Yun Shan, and took hundreds of photographs and video clips. We finished a site plan of the Bai Yun Shan temple and documented inscriptions on stone tablets of each main hall and courtyard. The documentation also includes population data of the festival, religious musical instruments and performance, religious food and preparation process, religious parades and associated art crafts, local operas performed at the festival, and ceremony processes in detail.

We measured fourteen temples around Miao Jia Getai Village during our expedition time and took hundreds of photographs systematically. Although most of the temples look small and plain, they are the settings for active communications between the villagers and the heavenly world of deities who have the religious power to help us to achieve our goals to protect the environment. We interviewed most of the families in Miao Jia Getai Village, as well as some families in the neighbour villages, such as Xing Shu Liang Village and Shang Zhai Village. Our interviews covered topics such as attitudes toward popular religion, religious activities, and their impact on people's lives. And we recorded some legends and stories of popular religion. We also surveyed the natural environment around all the village temples using a vegetation cover index. We interviewed the local government officials about the local economy, the villagers daily lives, public health, medical insurance, and other related issues.

All that we have done achieved our original objectives very well. And our work is very significant in the efforts to promote the studies of vernacular popular religion and its relationship with sustainability in China. When recalling our days in the village, in the field, and in the Bai Yun Shan Temple, we have no idea how many nights we went to sleep after mid-night and how many mornings we got up at 3:30am to observe and document different events. How many of you missed lunch and supper when you worked in the field, and how many of you persisted in spite of heavy rains in the field to finish your project. We have no idea how many miles we walked under the scorching sun to reach those temples in remote villages.

We were grateful for your understanding when our trusted guide led us into wrong directions. And we were also grateful for your understanding when the events' information was not correct when the local temple association had changed their schedule spontaneously. We hope you felt your hardships were compensated for by the beautiful landscape, rich local popular religious culture, friendly people, and delicious meals in the village. Thank you very much for your support and efforts.



Jiang Lu, Anrong Dang, Jin Feng, Yanfeng Liu

EARTHWATCH INSTITUTE ANNUAL FIELD REPORT

Date completed: November 30, 2008

Completed by: Jiang Lv, Anrong Dang, Jin Feng, Yanfeng Liu

Period covered by this report: May 1, 2008 to August 15, 2008

Project title: Chinese Village Traditions

Reporting on research objectives

1. Provide a summary of progress this year towards each of the objectives stated in your most recent research proposal. If work has not yet started on some of these objectives, state when you will start to work on them.

Objective 1: Document the local religious activities

The research team I spent 6 days in Bai Yun Shan temple to document one of the largest popular religious festivals of China: Bai Yun Shan Temple Festival. Nearly all the local religious activities during the festival were recorded.

Work not commenced on this objective:

The team missed the opening ceremony inside the main hall of Bai Yun Shan Temple, which lasted only 7 minutes.

Expected date for commencement of work towards this objective:

The PI will find a time in the future to record it. Hopefully, it can be documented in 2009.

Objective 2: Document the Local Religious Architecture

The research team II had a single research objective to document the temples in the area surrounding the village of Miao Jia Getai. The research team visited and documented 14 village temples in 7 villages. The temples were systematically photographed, measured, and recorded in sketched plans, elevations, and sections. Computer drawings (in AutoCAD format) were produced based on these sketches.

One of the temples was under renovation in which the murals were redone. Visits were not allowed until the ceremony of divination is completed. The newly created murals need to be documented.

We expect that the work will be completed in the field research season in the summer of 2009. The completion of the work only means that the work in this particular location is complete.

Objective 3: Document the local religious legends

The research team III focused on collecting local religious legends by interviewing villagers in Miao Jia Getai village and surrounding villages, as well as some local religious spiritual leaders, and visiting the village temples.

We did not collect enough local religious legends relative to the rich and active religious activities in the area during the limited time in the village. Some villagers who are knowledgeable about the topic were not in the village during the teams stay in the village.

We expect to interview more villagers in Miao Jia Getai village and villagers in neighbour villages for collecting more local religious legends in the 2009 research season.

Objective 4: Document the local nature environment and settings of temples

The research team IV spent more time to document the natural environment of the temples, such as their location, distribution, altitude, landform, land use, land cover, their relations to the religious beliefs and the spatial pattern.

The number of the temples is limited. It would be better if there were more temples recorded to deduce general rules and principles on the relationship between the local natural environment and settings of temples. We expect to visit and record more village temples and try to draw more general conclusions in the next research season.

Objective 5: Document the religious belief of the villagers

All research teams documented some aspects of the religious belief of the villagers, especially for team III and team IV. We interviewed villagers by means of questionnaires. Some kinds of primary conclusion could be summarized.

The number of the villagers who participated in our survey is limited because of limited research time. We expect to interview more villagers, not just in Miao Jia Getai Village but more villagers from the surrounding villages, in the next research season.

Project development

1. If you have removed or modified your original objectives please explain why below.

The objectives were not modified.

2. Please list any new objectives below.

Two of our research teams will move to a new location for the next research season in order to collect information on other deities that had not been encountered during the 2008 season.

Non-technical summary of results

1. Give an account of the data collected and results (inputs and data) for the period covered by this report, mentioning any emerging trends.

The research teams visited and documented 14 village temples in 7 villages, such as Miao Jia Ge Tai Village, Xing Shu Liang Village, Fang Ta Village, Zao Shu Liang Village, and so on. The temples were systematically photographed, measured, and recorded in sketched plans, elevations, and sections. Computer drawings (in AutoCAD format) were produced based on sketches. Most of the temples surveyed in the research season are active and a few are newly constructed. For the newly constructed temples, planting trees surrounding the temple appears to be a trend.

At the same time, we documented the Religious Festival in Bai Yun Shan Temple. We had 10 group interviews and 20 individual interviews with the villagers, local government officials, local temple association leaders and festival participants. We have documented the whole

festival's ceremony process and different associated events in Bai Yun Shan Temple, and took hundreds of photographs and video clips.

2. How do these data contribute to achieving **conservation impacts?** (e.g. actions based on results, management plans, site protection)

The collected information about the temple festival, temple architecture, statues, and murals provide the primary data about the local popular religion, and will allow us to have a comprehensive understanding of the religious belief system that has been shown in the collected data to be very dynamic, complex, and multifaceted. The understanding of the system will allow us to further discover and define the vernacular environmentalism deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural tradition. The reiteration of this environmentalism may promote ideological change that may lead to conscious and natural conservation actions and behaviours of the populace.

3. What is/ are the **significance/ benefits** of your research at the following levels?

- Local (to the area of the research site)

Our research about the popular religion and the emphasis on the environmentalism will bring more legitimacy to the local popular religious practice. The artistic value of the village temples and religious arts has not been fully recognized. Our study will bring awareness of the arts. Some of the murals have significant historical values. Our research can help the preservation of the temples.

- National / Regional

The vernacular environmentalism in the research area shares the fundamental values of the cultural tradition of China. Therefore, the research findings and the potential impact on the local population may have similar effects at national scale.

- International

The establishment of the connection between popular religion and environmentalism in China can be inspirational to other nations in the world. The research findings will benefit the international academic community.

Communication of results

Please list all dissemination outputs for the period covered by this report, or outputs soon to be released, for the categories below.

Printed: peer reviewed scientific publications; books / book sections; reports, management plans or policies; fact sheets, brochures, leaflets, pamphlets, posters, academic dissertations, annual reports, proceedings of conferences or workshops; letters; newsletters.

Jin Feng. The Murals of a Village Temple: Heaven, Earth, and People. Museum Anthropology Review, 2008 vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1-26,
<http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/mar/article/view/80/168>

Anrong Dang, Hongyang Lang, Jin Feng. Variation and Conservation of Cave Dwelling Architecture in North of Loess Plateau. World Architecture. 2008(09): pp.90-93.

Jiang Lv, Jin Feng. The Flourishing of Traditional Yulin Architectural Culture in an Environment of Rapid Economic Development. Proceedings of 2008 Chinese Urban Planning Forum, Chong Qing: Chinese Ethic Architecture Association. pp.141-146.

Anrong Dang, Jin Feng, Qiwei Ma. Study on Conservation of Traditional Culture Based on Information Technology. Proceedings of The 5th Annual Conference of the Consortium for Western China Development Studies, Xian, Shaanxi, China, July 22-24, 2008

Digital: database; internet - websites, email group/ blog/forum; CD Rom, e-newsletter

Project website: <http://www.chinalocalculture.net/>

E-magazine edited by Huo Fengling: Earthwatch Project—Chinese Village Traditions

Blog Article edited by Wei Dang: Investigating Village Traditions of Northern Shaanxi, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4cb5fa9501000by3.html

Blog Article edited by Xuemei Sun: Visiting Northern Shaanxi, Diary of Participating Chinese Village Traditions, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_489927c401000a2z.html

Blog Article edited by Wei Dang: Investigating Village Vegetables of Northern Shaanxi, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4cb5fa9501000c2e.html

BBS Article edited by Yalian Liu: Chinese Village Traditions—From the Foreigners' Point of View, <http://bbs.yl.gov.cn/read.php?tid=11561&fpage=&toread=&page=1>

BBS Article edited Weijian Li: Earthwatch Institute Project —Chinese Village Traditions, <http://www.chenghuan.com/news/show.php?id=1266>

Meetings and conferences: presentations/ lectures; conferences; workshops; training sessions; discussions; local community meetings and events.

The PI chaired a panel of the international conference of American Folklore Society on Oct.22-26 2008, Louisville of Kentucky. The panel is titled “The legacy of the folk performing arts on the Loess plateau of northern Shaanxi province.”

Paper presentation by Jin Feng: “The Architectural Setting of Musical and Theatrical Performance” American Folklore Society 2008 Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky.

Paper presentation by Jiang Lv: “The Fashion of Dwelling of the Northern Shaanxi Countryside.” American Folklore Society 2008 Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky.

Paper presentation by Anrong Dang: “Red From East -- Branding of Local Tourism with a Folk Song.” American Folklore Society 2008 Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky.

Paper presentation by Yanfeng Liu: “Preservation of the Northern Shaanxi Folk Song.” American Folklore Society 2008 Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky.

Paper presentation by Anrong Dang: “Study on Conservation of Traditional Culture Based on Information Technology.” The 5th Annual Conference of the Consortium for Western China Development Studies. Xian, Shaanxi, China. July 22-24, 2008

Paper presentation by Anrong Dang: "Study on Conservation of Culture Heritage Based on Information Technology." Canada-China Digital Heritage Symposium--Securing the Intangible through the Virtual, Beijing, China, August 2-3, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Anrong Dang: "Conservation of Traditional Culture and New Village Development." School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. Nov. 17, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Jiang Lu: "Ethnological Study of the Art of Traditional Chinese Architecture Ornaments" School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. June 25, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Feng Jin: "Harmonious Existence of Tradition and Modern" School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. June 25, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Jiang Lu: "Decoration Art of Traditional Chinese Architecture" School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. June 6, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Anrong Dang: "Progress of Chinese Village Traditions Project." School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. June 6, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Anrong Dang: "Characteristics of Yulin Local Culture from the International Point of View." Yulin College, Shaanxi, China. April 30, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Mary Pate: "Earthwatch and the Chinese Village Traditions Project", The New Horizons Class of The University of Alabama at Birmingham Senior Citizen Enrichment Class, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, January 8 2008.

Lecture presentation by Fengling Huo: "Viewing Northern Shaanxi Scenery, and Experiencing Yulin Local Culture", Dongbei University of Finance & Economics, Dalian, China, September 12, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Pengfei Wang: "The Different Traditions between Villages in Northwest and Northeast China. Liao Ning University, Sheng Yang, Liao Ning, China. September 20, 2008

Lecture presentation by Dan Chong: "Harvest-- the experience in the expedition of Earthwatch Project, Chinese Village Traditions", Chong Qing University, China. Oct. 28, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Judi Barr: "Being Volunteering with Earthwatch project, Chinese Village Traditions. ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) class at Portland Community College, Oregon, USA, October 31st. 2008.

Lecture presentation by Fengling Huo: "One of the traditional Chinese Culture: Paper Cutting from Northern Shaanxi", Dongbei University of Finance & Economics, Dalian, China, November 12, 2008.

Lecture presentation by Qingfeng Jin: Earthwatch and Chinese Village Tradition Project, Department of Environmental Science, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, September 20, 2008.

Educational Opportunities

1. Does your project directly or indirectly involve the following groups in your research topic?

- Local communities

The research team interviewed villagers about their village temples and religious activities.

- Students

The research team included student helpers from the local community. And seven Chinese university students joined us as the HSBC fellowship winners.

- Early career scientists

The research team staff members are graduate students starting doing research.

2. How does your research help these groups better understand and act towards the conservation of a sustainable environment? (Please provide specific examples of any activities you are aware of.)

The research team visited villagers in their homes and had a meeting with the village council. In the interviews, the research team and the villagers exchanged ideas about the current situation of the village and religious activities. This interaction helped to disseminate the ideas of cultural and environmental conservation.

The student helpers from the local community participated in the field research in which they learned the objectives of the project and obtained new insights about the cultural tradition they have been taking for granted. They learned a lot of the traditional way of life in the village they had never heard before.

The graduate students serving as team staff obtained field research experience, and found their research topics.

3. Has your project contributed to the completion of Masters' or PhD theses or degrees, or other educational research findings?

The two graduate students serving as team staff are working on their theses, one Master's and one PhD. They will use data collected during the field work season. Supported by HSBC, seven Chinese university students joined us and will finish related study based on the expedition experience.

Other

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?

Our research activities awakened the consciousness of the local people (both the local officials and villagers) to conserve the village traditions as an important part of the traditional local culture.

Acknowledgements

The success of the 2008 research season for all research teams depends on the hard work of all the research team members, the support of Bai Yuan Shan temple committee, the support of the villagers, especially the host family in the village of Miao Jia Getai, and the support of the local government offices in Yulin City and Jiaxian County. Thanks to all those persons and organizations that have support us.