

Day 8: Thursday, May 23, 2013

Courtney Johnson reflection:

The first place that we went to visit today was a palace built during the Tang Dynasty. This palace was built around a natural hot spring and the main emperor to live there had a very interesting life. Through a long chain of events the emperor ended up falling in love with and marrying his own son's wife, who was known to be extremely charming and beautiful. Her name was Lady Young. After they were married he was so infatuated with his wife that he neglected his political duties. Soon there was a revolt because of his lack of leadership and the people threatened to kill Lady Young. The emperor was forced to kill Lady Young so that he could retain power. Stories say that before they found her she killed herself, but they never recovered the body. It was a very interesting story. When we first arrived we were able to join many Chinese in a tradition of washing your hands in the hot spring near the statue of Lady Young, it was really special to me to be able to come together for such a neat tradition. We toured nearly all the facility including all of the baths that were used. Some were shaped in flower form and others were not. But each one had a special meaning and was only meant for certain people. They were in fantastic condition and were quite amazing to see. We also had the pleasure before we left to watch a traditional Chinese dance about love. The outfits were simply gorgeous and such a pleasure to see.

I think when most people in the United States think about our nation's history, they think about events such as the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World Wars, Lewis and Clark expeditions, and our families immigrating to the United States. All of these historical events happened within the past 300 years, so it is hard for me to wrap my head around the 3000+ years of Chinese history. Being around the Terracotta Warriors and the Hot Spring Palace was amazing. My favorite part of the history here is the stories associated with each place that we visit. And even though I get confused between which of the dynasty's everything was built under and controlled by, I still have great appreciation for every story and every visit. My favorite story of the day was the story of Lady Young. I feel bad that I keep calling it a story when indeed it really happened, but it just seems so fascinating that it occurred so many years ago yet people still can tell it as though it was yesterday. Just amazing.

Aryel Smith reflection:

Before this trip everyone kept saying how this would be a once in a lifetime trip, and while it is, I feel as though it is only the beginning. After visiting the Terracotta Warriors, I began to think about how one small movement of something can change your life entirely. The farmers that initially found the warriors were just doing what they needed to (digging a water well) and because of that, they helped to shape their country as a whole. Most of those going on this trip are going because it will be very beneficial to their future careers, and it is for some a once in a lifetime trip, while for others it might just be that small movement. A movement that triggers something greater than just a study abroad trip to China, bigger than 17 days in some place new, an event that shapes who they will be and what they will do to make a difference in this world. I think that as time moves further along, we will see more connections to the people of China's past than we ever thought. Just as the ancient emperors provided for the needs of their people, as agriculturalists, we will have to provide for the needs of ours.