



Marko Polo's Diary

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Following Marko Polo's tracks to China

Marko Polo's itinerary served as a great inspiration to many scholars, tradesmen, and surely, to later travel writers. He brought from China examples of wooden letters, their images being printed onto paper and Gutenberg used them as a basis of his first printing machine. To a medical historian a travel to China is of particular attraction, because Chinese medicine has often been highly praised as ancient and timeless. In contrast to Western medicine, traditional values and texts have counted much in Chinese medical tradition as much as in Chinese intellectual culture and life. I followed Polo's steps and crossed the bridge that still bears his name, located 15 kilometers southwest of Beijing proper. Once there was a Yongding River flowing under it, which is totally dried up today. To the contrary the endless battering of the torrential current has left no mark on the marble bridge across its banks. Its 235-meter long marble construction consists of 11 arches and two rows of carved white marble balustrades, and is topped by posts carved with figures of lions. Beyond those marble lion heads, rural parts of China sprawled before my eyes, parts that, unlike big cities, have not yet started to be rapidly transformed. The air was vibrating, infused by a mixture of smells of stone, wood, plants, dried river dust and hot green tea from the nearby teahouse. The bridge ended in the area of an almost empty local market with a bunch of people desperately trying to sell all kinds of items from statuettes of *pi xiu* to communist symbols, caps, red stars and similar equipment. The picture

of the soil faded in the sun stuck to my memory as much as the golden wrinkled skin of old Chinese who sold me the hand made souvenirs.

IX International Congress of dermatology: Beijing May 19-22, 2004.

The congress was organized by the Chinese Society of Dermatology of the Chinese Medical Association. It's scientific program explored diverse topics and provided an exciting forum for participants to exchange the latest experience and knowledge in dermatology at a global scale. History was also included in the program and was dedicated to European and American dermatology: life and legacy of Aldo Castellani; dermatological iconography in Europe and in America, as well as to major historical contributions to dermatology by Chinese physicians in the past twenty centuries. It was again a pleasure to meet the colleagues from all over the world: Coleman Jacobson the president of International Society of dermatology in a marvelous shape, Steve Emmet with his wife Yuki, Thomas Ruzicka, Jana Hercogova, Shin –Chak Chiu, Vincent Cipolaro and his wife, David Lambert and many others. I saw the Ming tombs and I climbed the Great Wall, the latter also Marco Polo saw, the former did not exist by then. The Great Wall erected during many dynasties with a purpose to protect the country against invaders. Today it hosts million of tourists a year and serves commerce not defense, an advantage that should be treasured. Tours to the Tian an men Square, the largest square in the world, then the Forbidden City, where 24 emperors lived and

ruled China, were adorned by marvellous meals. We dropped into a factory of the traditional Chinese stone of Jade which was followed by a visit to the Temple of Heaven, which is considered one of the finest buildings ever constructed in ancient China. Women were singing in its courtyard and their voices flew up to the tree tops and came down again to us. No language knowledge was necessary to understand the magic of their melody. I went back home through Shanghai, the commercial center and one of the most sophisticated cities in China. Truly a lot of work was waiting for me at home, yet the silky fascination with China gave me strength and encouraged further my enthusiasm.

Symposium: Scientific Journals: Editorial Responsibilities and Dilemmas, June 9, 2004

An international symposium entitled Scientific Journals: Editorial Responsibilities and Dilemmas, organized by the Croatian Medical Journal (Ana Marušić) and Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Stella Fatović-Ferenčić) gathered a panel of prominent editors of most esteemed international journals. It was an extraordinary opportunity to meet such a group of experts and to hear their opinion on different issues busying editors all over the world. We heard extensive presentations from Catherine DeAngelis, Editor-in-Chief of JAMA; Christine Laine,

Editor of Annals of Internal Medicine; Jocalyn Clark, Editor of British Medical Journal; John Hoey, Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Medical Association Journal; Sheldon Kotzin, Head of the Bibliographic Services Division, National Library of Medicine in Bethesda; Harold C. Sox, Editor-in-Chief of Annals of Internal Medicine; Bruce Squires, Secretary of the World Association of Medical Editors; and Martin Van Der Weyden, Editor-in-Chief of Medical Journal of Australia. A most competent group of experts and no wonder that the issues brought before the audience, such as research integrity, media and medicine, rights and responsibilities of editors, advice to prospective and newly appointed editors, uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals, provoked vivid discussion. Acquiring knowledge surely brings a variety of opportunities to visit the most remote corners of the world, yet as felt during the Symposium, it works in the other direction too. The world was with us then, closer and smaller, and believe it or not Croatia was a particularly shiny part of it then.

The world is waiting, Bon voyage!

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