

My Thoughts on the Great Wall of China

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An article on John Chow's reminiscence on his first visit to the Great Wall of China
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For a bus ride of an hour, you can reach the Great Wall. Yes, the Great Wall – a small part of it though. This part is one of the most convenient part to visit because it caters for tourists. It is called the “Great Wall at Badaling”.

I thought it was just a wall, something to keep the invaders out. But what I saw was most inspiring. The wall, some parts of it several metres high, and therefore difficult to build, is erected on the ridges of hills and mountains, some of which are very steep.

It would have been a mammoth task for the planners just to map out the route of the wall, and I certainly could not even properly trace out the route of the wall before me - not only because of its sheer size and length, but also, it winds up and down slopes endlessly, from hill to hill to hill. It would be terrifically difficult for the labourers to carry the stones all the way up the slopes to where they have to then erect the wall. How terrible a task. What great toil. The sweat and blood can not be counted. The diseases and illnesses they have to suffer in this remote area, subject to harsh weather climate, cold winds that cut into the skin in Winters, hot unforgiving Summers. The injuries sustained at work. Medical help is too far away. And the barbaric hordes who frequently ride in to pillage are not far away. The hot merciless Summers, and the equally cold merciless Winters on the slopes.

How many would have died. Tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands. The loneliness. The desolation. How much tears have flowed. How much sorrow and anguish in the hearts of both labourers, planners, guards, generals, cooks etc. What little food they ate. Certainly not good nourishing food. How they never see their families ever again. How they died alone, unknown to their families, graves unmarked, and many say, buried inside the very wall they had been building.

I felt great sadness for them. This wall which protected the Chinese people and the Chinese nation was built by the great sweat, blood, suffering and anguish of our own people! This wall protected us for centuries and ensured continuation of our people. The people who built this wall are great heroes! They are awesome! I silently prayed that they be liberated from their great suffering. From thought patterns of holding their great anguish. This wall protected us, and we are here today, alive, because of this Great Wall. We should be most grateful to them.

The sight of the wall built on the high ridges of mountain slopes hardly assessable even today, winding up and down enormous hills, disappearing and re-appearing again was incredible. I recalled how our ancestors had to live in terrible times of war and invasion, and how our rulers had to protect their own tiny kingdoms from encroachment from rival kingdoms. How they had to fend off hordes of barbaric invaders. I shed a tear for the blood, sweat, toil and labour and the suffering they had to endure. It was both sad and inspiring at the same time. Blood, sweat, suffering, survival.

It was no easy feat to build such an enormous structure. Even walking casually on the wall was difficult enough. Imagine having to carry huge stones! Yes, some of the stones were more than 2 feet in length. A horse would need to struggle up the steep slopes. Imagine having to erect a steep tall wall and make it stand up on a high hill – the ridge of the hill. It is difficult even today! How the ancient architects toiled to map out which route to take, which hill to build the wall, where to build the guardhouse. It was a super human effort. All blood and sweat.

Without the terrible great sacrifices of our generals, foremen, architects, captains, labourers, cooks, etc, these would not have been possible. The fact that we are here, and alive today, is the **LIVING PROOF** that these people did such a wonderfully great job to protect our ancestors, and thus ensure their survival, and give birth to the generations today. **A TOSS TO THEM! A TOSS OF GRATITUDE TO THEM! MAY GOD BLESS THEM ALL AND REWARD THEM JUSTLY FOR THE SACRIFICES AND SUFFERING.**

Even after the wall has been built, the government needed to send soldiers to these remote outposts to guard the walls. The soldiers would be stationed at the guardhouse which is a few kilometre from each other, and literally, that is almost their living quarters because there is nothing in these most remote of regions - the ends of the great Chinese Empire. No entertainment, no restaurants, no cinemas, no towns, no women, no wine, and the worst of all food, weather, diseases, medical supplies, etc. All they have is a compound to lit a small fire to warm themselves in the bitter Winters, and to cook their food. Probably these soldiers never have a chance to ever marry. Almost condemned to a harsh life. What a terrible life! All to protect the empire and the people of the empire. We, the descendents of the Chinese people who are the beneficiaries of the sweat, blood, suffering and anguish of these soldiers should be grateful and pay respects to them as great benefactors and heroes.

This Great Wall was a great inspiration to me as an ethnic Chinese. I think Chinese people should go to the Great Wall and pay their deep respects to our ancestors who toiled and suffered so much in order to protect the nation and people's lives. Chinese people should not simply treat the Great Wall as a tourist venue and something of a curiosity. It should not even be considered as a merely cultural item. It is something which much blood and sweat had been shed. It was a means and symbol of our survival. It was built upon much suffering, anguish, hopes and aspirations of the Chinese people. We would not have been here and alive here today if our ancestors had not built the Great Wall. I bow deeply to all of these people in gratitude.

The Jews have the Wailing Wall, which every orthodox Jew prays in front of when passing through Jerusalem. It is considered a religious and cultural obligation to do so. Why should the Chinese people be so shy, coy or embarrassed about praying at the Great Wall – the wall that saved the nation and people from invasion subjugation? This wall, to me, is more real than any other religious building. It saved our ancestors. The Great Wall is a symbol of the Chinese people's determination to survive from hostile foreign forces and intentions. As was a few thousand years ago, so is now. Because of this, I sincerely encourage all Chinese people to make a pilgrimage to the Great Wall of China.

Some pictures of the Great Wall are below.

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Some links on the Great Wall of China

<http://www.chinavista.com/travel/greatwall/greatwall.html>

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/china_great_wall/scene/beijing/

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/beijing/greatwallindex.htm>

<http://www.beijingtrip.com/attractions/greatwall/>



See the wall is built on the ridges of hill slopes.



High hills and mountains - desolate and barren, beside the Great Wall at Badaling.



Posing with one of my Arnis students on the Great Wall.
Note the guardhouse in the background. That is where the soldiers keep a look out for invaders. The signal for enemy Invaders approaching is to lit a fire that has lots of smoke which Is a signal to the next guardhouse, which again relays the message to the next guardhouse and finally reaching the main army.



A shop at the entrance of the Great Wall – in ancient Chinese architectural style.

I received the following nice pictures of the Great Wall from a Brandon Tang:-







