

**XI'AN**  
AN ANCIENT CAPITAL  
OF CHINA



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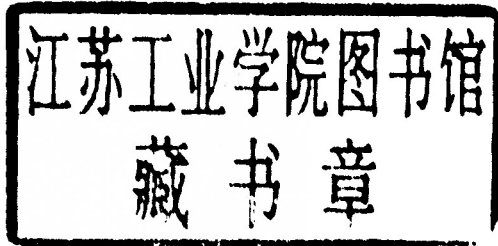
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XI'AN

An Ancient Capital of China



Foreign Languages Press  
The People's Fine Arts Publishing House  
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## Editor's Note

**XI'AN**, an ancient capital of China, has become a major attraction for tourists from both home and abroad.

As soon as you open this volume, you will see from the Map of Archaeological Sites in Xi'an that Xi'an is a city with a long history and a splendid culture. No other city in China has so many historical sites and so rich a cultural heritage as Xi'an.

As early as three thousand years ago Xi'an was a capital. It subsequently was a capital under eleven dynastic houses, from the Zhou down through the Qin, Han, Xin, Early Zhao, Early Qin, Later Qin, Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui and Tang, covering nearly eleven hundred years.

In the eleventh century B.C., in order to send an expedition against the tyrant Zhou and conquer the Shang Dynasty, the Western Zhou Dynasty Emperor Wu Wang built a large city on the banks of the Fenghe River—Haojing—which was later to become the Western Zhou capital for three hundred years.

In 221 B.C. Qin Shi Huang accomplished his great ambition of annexing six states, thus establishing for the first time in the history of China a unified feudal empire with centralized power. Xianyang was the capital of Qin for altogether about 143 years.

Once an enemy state was vanquished, Qin Shi Huang ordered his officers to draw a picture of the palace of that state and then had a similar one constructed in Xianyang. Eventually a total of 270 palaces, known as the palaces of the Six States, were built in Xianyang. Not long afterwards Qin Shi Huang renovated the Xin Palace on the south bank of the Weihe River, extended the famous imperial garden Shanglin Yuan and constructed the magnificent E'pang Palace.

In 202 B.C., immediately after the founding of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang (256-195 B.C.), the first Han Emperor Gao Zu, located his government in Guanzhong and set about constructing a city named Chang'an. With an area of thirty-five square kilometres and a population of over five hundred thousand, Chang'an comprised a group of grand palaces, among which the Weiyang, the Changle and the Jianzhang were the most famous. Actually, Chang'an was one and a half times larger than ancient Rome, which was built five hundred years later.

The Western Han Dynasty was in power for more than two hundred years and made Qin Shi Huang's unified China stronger and more prosperous. During this time the famous Silk Road began, starting in Xi'an and going through Central Asia, West Asia and Europe.

Because of its numerous large and magnificent buildings, Chang'an was

acclaimed as the greatest of the ten largest cities then in existence. In the north was a palatial city in which Taiji Palace, the royal residence, was situated. To its south and closely linked to this complex was an imperial city where government institutions were located. The Daming Palace, the grandest and most magnificent architectural complex in Chang'an, was the political centre of the court during the Tang Dynasty. The largest street in this ancient city was more than 150 metres wide, and between the twenty-five large streets of the city there were 108 chessboardlike blocks where ordinary inhabitants lived and commercial activities and markets took place. The Shanglin Yuan in the north and the Qujiang Hibiscus Garden in the southeast were used only as hunting parks for the emperor's amusement.

Flourishing and splendid, the Tang Dynasty was not only the high point of Chinese feudal culture but also the pinnacle of world culture. The city of Chang'an was both the centre of Tang Dynasty culture and an international metropolis of cultural exchange between China and foreign countries. At that time China maintained friendly relations with more than three hundred countries and regions in Asia, Africa and Europe, and every year a great number of foreign travellers visited Chang'an. In this way Chang'an played an important role in promoting the economy and culture of both China and Western countries. Many famous early buildings, preserved intact up to the present, including the magnificent Greater Wild Goose Pagoda, the exquisitely constructed Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda, the vividly engraved relief of six horses in the Zhaoling, and the imposing stone lions in the Qianling and the Shunling, demonstrate the spirit of the Tang Dynasty.

Although most of the architecture of the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties has disappeared over time and through destruction caused by war, a vast treasury of ancient art and culture, which is now being excavated, exists beneath the earth.

For instance, the Qin terra-cotta figures, buried deep in the earth for over two thousand years, have finally made an appearance for visitors from all over the world.

The Qin painted bronze chariot and horses, unearthed in 1980 at a site west of the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, is another important archaeological discovery.

The scale of the terra-cotta figurines (mainly cavalrymen), known as the Three Thousand Men and Horses, unearthed from the No. 4 Western Han tomb in Yangjiawan, Xianyang, is only a little smaller than that of the Qin terra-cotta figures.

The mural paintings discovered in the tombs of the Tang Dynasty princess Yong Tai and princes Zhang Huai and Yi De are all realistic and exquisite. The paintings are great treasures of early Chinese art.

More than forty-five hundred tombs have been excavated in Xi'an. Beneath practically every stretch of yellow earth in the vast Guanzhong Plain northwest of Xi'an are buried even more bones of ancient emperors, queens and high officials or precious antiquities.

In short, Xi'an has become one of the wonders of the world. As modern hotels and restaurants appear in the city one after the other, invaluable assets buried underground for hundreds and even thousands of years are being discovered almost daily.

We have tried our best to condense the geography and history of Xi'an for this album and tried to illustrate the changes in the city during the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties and the city's brilliant cultural wealth. The cultural objects and historical relics we have photographed and illustrated in this album are masterpieces of their kind, and many of the historical sites we have introduced are ones tourists may easily neglect or have difficulty finding.

In an attempt to combine history with art, we have tried to make our publication informative and attractive, so that readers will gain an indelible impression of Xi'an.

The author of the text is a noted scholar familiar with the history, geography, cultural objects and historical relics she has fervently studied. Instead of a poor written stereotyped guidebook, you will find something fresh and new in this album.

We sincerely hope that this first edition of *Xi'an—An Ancient Capital of China* will become the ideal souvenir for tourists and a find for book collectors.



## Contents

Map of Archaeological Sites in Xi'an	6
A Setting of Mountains and Rivers	16
Primitive Wisdom in the Flames of Fire	17
Rest in Peace, Yellow Emperor	19
Bronze Utensils	30
Xianyang, Capital of Qin	36
The Armies of the Qin Dynasty	40
Bronze Chariots and Horses at Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum	58
The Starting Point of the Silk Road	63
Han Dynasty Imperial Tombs	64
The Memorial Tablet to General Huo	68
Sima Qian and His <i>Records of the Historian</i>	70
Han Dynasty Drawings in Shangjun	78
Kumarajiva and the Caotang Temple	82
If These Palaces Still Existed	82
Pottery Figurines	95
Bronze Mirrors	109
The Historical Footsteps of Friendly Exchanges	112
Eighteen Cloud-Piercing Peaks and Their Stone Sculptures	126
Louguan Terrace	140
Sun Simiao and His Alchemy	142
Tang Dynasty Tomb Murals	143
Temples and Pagodas	154
The Dim Shadow of the Heavenly Kingdom	157
The Forest of Stone Tablets	162
Tang Dynasty Tricoloured Pottery	172
Popular Folk Songs of Lintong	178
Customs and Local Products of Guanzhong	182



# Map of Archaeological Sites in Xi'an







图例 Legend	
	省会、市政府驻地 地区行政公署驻地
	County, town
	河流、堤坝、时令河、湖
	水库、灌渠、泉
	省界
	铁路、建筑中铁路
	干线、支线路
	ancient remains
	古陵墓、石刻、碑碣
	Ancient tomb 古建筑、寺、庙、祠
	Ancient remains

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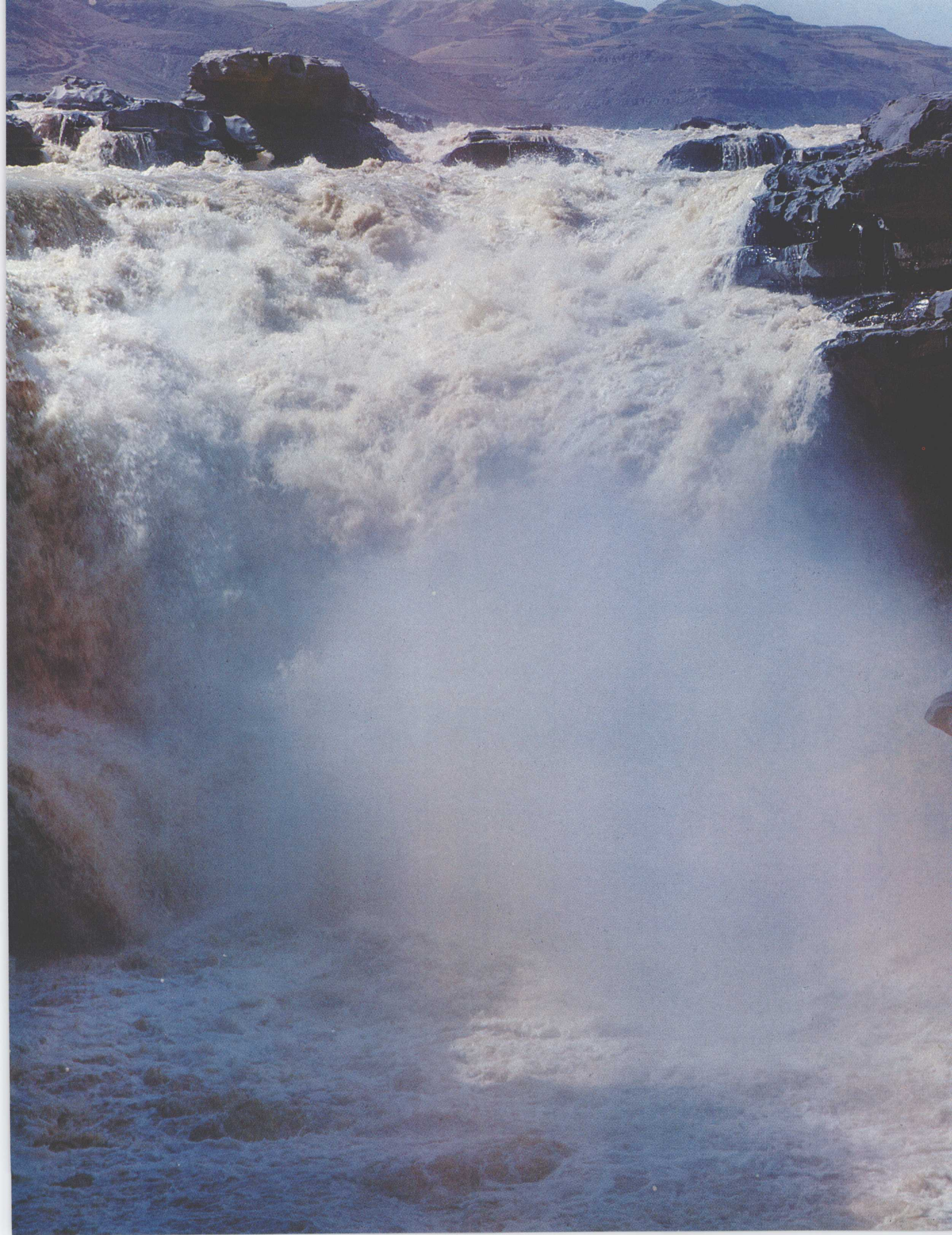
















A sea of clouds on Mount Huashan.

Hukou Waterfall is located in Yichuan County, Shaanxi Province, on the middle reaches of the Yellow River. The water pours down as if out of the spout of a kettle, hence the name Hukou (Kettle Spout).

(Page 9) The roaring Yellow River has nurtured the Chinese people throughout history.





Noted for its rugged beauty and grandeur, Mount Huashan, one of China's five sacred mountains, is situated in Huaying County, 120 kilometres east of Xi'an. It is a well-known scenic and tourist spot.

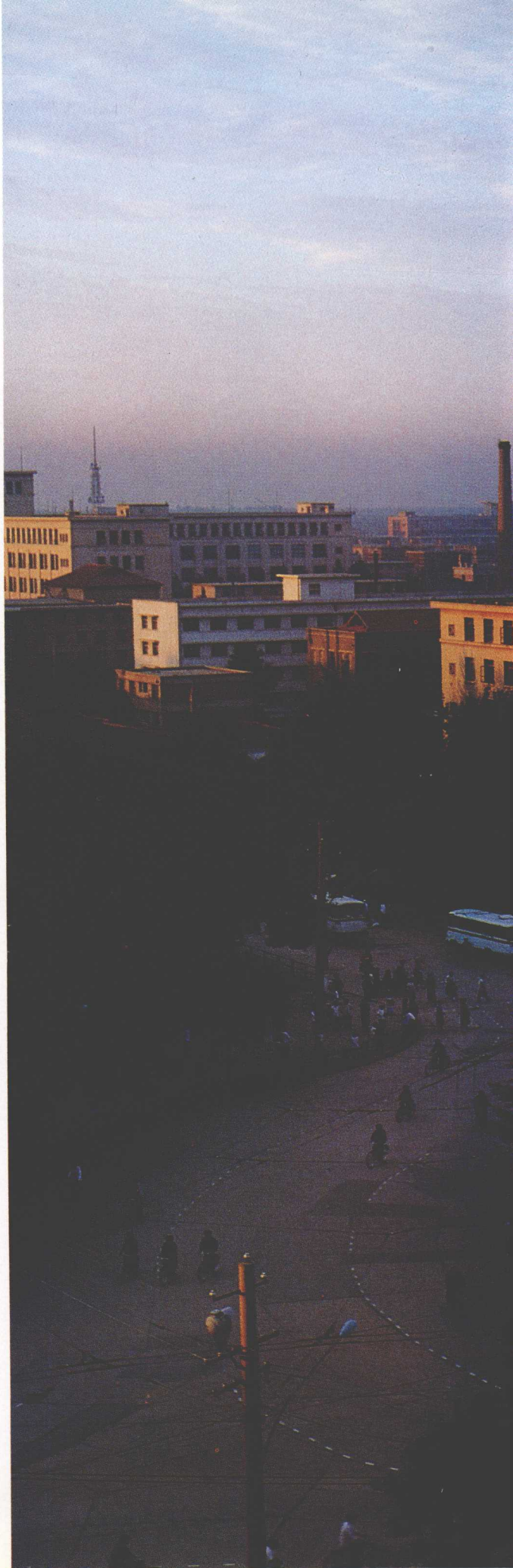




Canglong Ridge on Mount Huashan.



Bell Tower at Sunset.



Greater Wild Goose Pagoda at dawn.

