



Through the Lens of Tianyu Wang: Shaanxi Province in the 1960s-2000s

Suggested Resources for Further Learning



Tianyu Wang was an award-winning photographer, author, and journalist (born 1939, Baoji, China – died 2024, Xi'an, China). The eighteen photos on display present a firsthand account of the people's daily lives, places, and cultural traditions of Shaanxi Province, China from the 1960s-2000s

Visitors to this gallery are invited to consider the significance and meaning of the images, as well as to reflect on the intersection of photography as art form and historical record. Viewers are further invited to explore the exhibition to engage in cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogue.

These decades were a time of dramatic change in China's modern history. To gain cultural and historical context for the people and places depicted in the photos, some of the most noteworthy events during this time period include:

- Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) - This sociopolitical movement was initiated by Chairman Mao Zedong to promote communist ideals and purge capitalist and traditional elements of Chinese society. This resulted in widespread casualties, disruption to the economy and education system, and a loss of cultural artworks and artifacts.
- US-China diplomatic relations established (1970s-1980s) - US-China diplomatic relations were established under Richard Nixon's presidential administration and the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Chinese vice premier and vice chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. Trade was opened between China and Western countries.
- Economic growth and development (1978 and beyond) - China experiences economic growth and modernization.

At the local level, in Shaanxi Province, the Terracotta Warriors were discovered in 1974. Emperor Qin Shi Huang (Qin dynasty, 221–206 BCE) ordered the creation of over thousands of life-size clay warriors to accompany his burial site. This preserved army of clay statues was named as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi Province, emerged as a hub for tourism, science and technology, industry, and cultural development. Ongoing efforts continue to balance the preservation of historical sites with urban development.