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China Has More People and Places Than Palms

MELVIN W. SNEED

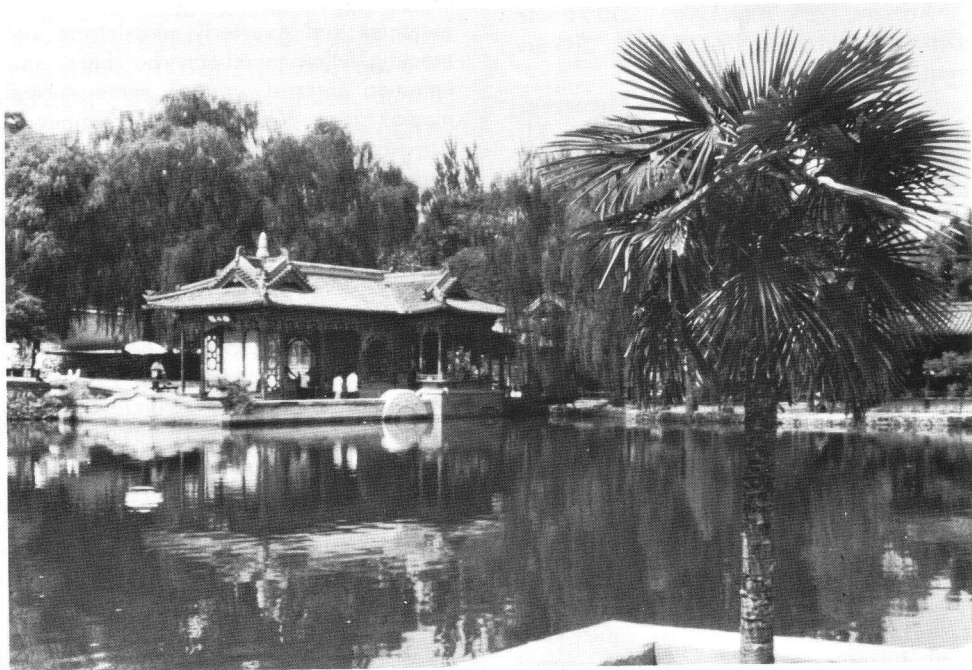
8107 S.W. 72nd Avenue, Apt. 113 E, Miami, FL 33143

For a great many years, longer than the Palm Society has existed, it was not possible for ordinary tourists to obtain legitimate visas for travel into China. In fact travel there had been prohibited by the U.S. Department of State. There were many reasons for this hiatus but, in time, the reasons have paled into insignificance. More recently things have "opened up" so travelers with a yen to know more about the existence of palms and other plant life, as well as the way of life in this great nation (which has over one-fourth, one bil-

lion, of the world's population) have been welcomed.

Every palm enthusiast has experienced the beautiful *Livistona chinensis*, indigenous to "Central China." Where is "Central China"? We flew over it, rode trains and buses through it, yet never saw anything resembling an indigenous stand of this palm. Perhaps we got there a bit late.

The People's Republic of China embraces a huge area of South Central Asia. It is larger than the continental U.S.



1. *Trachycarpus* near Xian, Central China, Hua Qing.



2. *Trachycarpus* specimen, downtown Xian. The palm withstands extremely cold weather here.

If one superimposed a map of China, Peking in the northeast would straddle New York City, while Urumqi, capital of the far western region, would engulf Portland, Oregon. We traveled such an area in some 26 days during summer 1961.

At this writing, most would-be palm travelers cannot, and should not, on their own, attempt to explore China. Even if one can get an entry visa, he would get nowhere without a mastery of the Chinese language and its dialects. English is not generally used nor even understood in the major cities, much less in the outer reaches of China.

We went on a Lindblad Tour, with only a small group, originating in Hong Kong, hence into China via railroad to Canton. This southwestern metropolis almost straddles the Tropic of Cancer. Off the coast here, in the South China Sea, is Hai-

nan Island, location of The Institute of Southern China for Tropical Plants. The southern area of China, particularly Hainan, has the palm populations which are most exciting. Due to our group tour itinerary and some of its exacting time schedules, we were unable to visit Hainan and had precious little time in Canton, which has a worthwhile botanic garden.

North of these areas, one traveling the breadth of China will frequently see palms around public places such as temples, pagodas, parks, hotels and even markets. Most of these are in pots which can be moved into sheltered areas to weather the severe cold which hits much of China during the winter. Often these are old specimens in huge, attractive earthen or wooden containers. *Trachycarpus* (indigenous to China) was frequently seen growing outdoors as far north as Xian, in central China. See specimen at nearby Hua Qing Hot Springs, (Fig. 1), where the trees were prominent in landscaping of the pavilions surrounding the springs, whose therapeutic waters are visited by natives and tourists alike. Local people brought small, round vials which were lowered into the tubular openings of the spas, held by cords, which they pulled up for a quaff of the liquid. The warm, mineral-like taste did not appeal to us, even though we were hot and thirsty.

A little farther on, same area in the city of Xian, we thought we saw a different species of palm growing in the open. It was lovely (Fig. 2) but proved to be another *Trachycarpus*.

Going on, we flew some 2,000 miles northwest to Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China's most western province. We looked down on undulating hills of loess and saw snow-capped mountains in the distance. But we saw no palms. In this area few, if any, could survive the winters except those grown in containers which can be shoved under protective cover. But see the fine



3. Potted palms and guardian lion.

potted palms vying with guardian lion in Fig. 3, which may be typical of palm culture over much of northern China.

Palms notwithstanding, Urumqi is the center of an extremely fascinating region. Its population is comprised of some 15 different ethnic groups. Fanning out of there we went into the Southern Mountains, where Khazakh herders* gave us a superb performance on horseback, and to the Heavenly Lake where in the cool, alpine-like setting we saw people gathering mushrooms and a strange, lotus-like dried flower which was called to our attention by a very helpful young lady who had been collecting them. We were told the flower was used medicinally. Another day we went to the edge of the Gobi Desert at Turpan, an oasis and the lowest place below sea level on earth except for the Dead Sea.

We visited other provincial capitals on

our return trip across northern China as we went east to Peking. Here again the palms mostly were in pots. Most interesting, perhaps, were the plantings in the Imperial Gardens at the rear of the palaces in the Forbidden City. Palms were here in some numbers, especially *Raphis*, and some of them in this sheltered area may not have been in pots (Fig. 4).

Our Lindblad Tour group left us in Peking and went back to the States, so we bid adieu to our friends with whom we had shared experiences in our travels over some of the vast expanses of the People's Republic of China. All of us felt we had acquired new friends and an understanding of China's aspirations.

When we were asked by our very helpful guides of the China Travel Agency how we desired to spend an extra day in Peking awaiting the scheduled flight with Swiss Air, which would take us westward to



4. Palms in the Forbidden City, Peking.



5. Miss Zhang, our guide, Phyllis and Mr. Liu, at Institute of Botany and Botanic Garden, Peking.

Bombay and then to Europe, we said, spontaneously, "We have heard that Peking has a botanical garden, so we would like to see it." But our very professional and knowledgeable guides knew nothing about that as, apparently, no tourists ever had been taken to the place. They would look into the matter.

Early next morning, at breakfast, in marched our smiling guide to announce that "The car is waiting to take you to the botanic garden." Later she added, "We have located a person there who can speak English. Never before have we taken a visitor there, nor have I visited it."

The trip was perhaps an hour's drive from the Peking Airport area of our hotel. Mr. Liu, (see Fig. 5) of the Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, greeted and briefed us about the fine developing garden, established in 1956. New structures are being built to house

the research laboratories and other facilities for introduction and acclimatization of plants from all over China and, perhaps, the world. Half of the nearly 3,000 species of plants were in greenhouses. First and foremost (to us) of the ten rooms under glass was the "Tropical Palm Room." Here we saw specimens of *Caryota ochlandra*, *Phoenix dactylifera*, *P. roebelenii*, *Elaeis guineensis*, *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis*, *Livistona saribus*, *L. chinensis*, *Cha-*

maedorea elegans, *Cocos*, *Arecastrum romanzoffianum*, *Archontophoenix alexandrae*, and *Chrysalidocarpus*, among others.

The Peking Garden is only in its beginning stages. We feel confident that the Chinese government will support its future development. Certainly we appreciated their hospitality and courtesy in permitting us to visit it.

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

(Continued)

gardens. In addition to the palms, both gardens have extensive bromeliad collections and assorted cycads. Rain dampened the occasion, but not the enthusiasm and the tours were greatly appreciated by all.

We were honored to have Mr. Richard Douglas, Palm Society President, and Mr. Paul Drummond, immediate past President, in attendance. Mr. Douglas gave a very interesting slide presentation on cold hardiness of palms in California and hybridization of *Chamaedorea*.

The nominating committee, headed by Mr. Gordon Smith, reported on candidates for The Central Florida Palm Society. Mr. Tom Pavlucik, Mr. Joe Alf, and Mr. Hersh Womble were elected to President, First Vice President, and Second Vice President, respectively. Nancy and Ed Hall were elected to Secretary and Treasurer and Frank Radosta to Editor of The Newsletter.

Ed Hall donated a beautiful specimen of *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* for a door prize and a hybrid *Chamaedorea*, created by Richard Douglas and donated by U. A. Young, was auctioned, with the proceeds added to the Society Treasury. The door prize was won by Jerry Poklepovic and the *Chamaedorea* hybrid was purchased by Jane McArthur.

NANCY HALL

Palm Society Nominating Committee Notice

The Palm Society Nominating Committee consists of: Donn W. Carlsmith, Hawaii; Dennis V. Johnson, Texas; and Paul A. Drummond, Florida, Chairman.

In 1984 we will be electing a new president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and about eight directors.

Your ballots will be mailed to you in the spring of 1984 in ample time for their return and compilation before the 1984 Biennial Convention in Northern California in the summer of 1984.

Individuals who wish to make their own nominations for positions of officers or members of the Board of Directors of the Society may do so by obtaining the written permission of the nominee, and the written endorsement of another Society member, and mailing these with your own written endorsement of the nominee to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. These must be received by the chairman by March 1, 1984 to be eligible for consideration.

PAUL A. DRUMMOND, CHAIRMAN
9540 Old Cutler Rd.
Miami, FL 33156