

<<万里长城 百年回望 (画册) >>

图书基本信息

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版权页：插图： Each segment presents itself as very tangible evidence of a protracted and violent cultural conflict that raged between China and neighbouring mabel guajia, or states on horseback. But was the sole purpose of each Great Wall military defence? They did have other important functions, a major one being communication of military information (see below). But perhaps the psychological need for the Chinese to live behind walls is equally as important. Origins of Wall Building Early settlements in China developed along the middle reaches of the Yellow River Valley, the so-called Cradle of Chinese Civilization, and possessed three functional characteristics. They provided shelter under roofs, sustenance with food production, and collective safety for inhabitants and the granary behind an encircling wall. The Chinese character for 'city' and 'wall' is one and the same pictograph-城 (cheng), stressing that in the Chinese mind a settlement was a safe place behind a wall, and a wall was a structure to safeguard a village, town or city. The leap from construction of relatively short walls enclosing settlements to linear structures of several hundred kilometres in length running across open country was an enormous one, made possible by an industrial revolution. Enclosing walls of perhaps several hundred metres' length were manageable projects, even with primitive tools made of wood and stone. Most were rammed-earth walls, or 'soft walls', evidenced by archaeological excavations and also by the use of the tu radical, meaning earth, (a root component of a Chinese character) at the left-hand side of the cheng character. Extraordinarily long walls of several hundred kilometres, some of them in whole or part made of stones - 'hard walls' - only became feasible during the first century of the Iron Age, c. 500 B.C., with the emergence of many regional centres producing cast iron. This metallurgical breakthrough revolutionized the scale of wall building by making available large quantities of iron tools. Placed in the hands of hundreds of thousands of labourers, axes to cut rock and shovels to move earth made it possible to build in a much quicker time. The first new-scale defensive works were initiated by the kings of states who retained the paternal obligation to provide their populations with safety behind walls, whatever the investment in manpower. During the third century B.C. at least seven changcheng, or long walls were constructed, three of which functioned as defences against northern nomads. After the Qin unification in 221 B.C. the three northern walls of the Zhao, Yan and Qin states were of continued use, although the gaps between them needed filling in. As for the others further south, now the heartland of the new empire, they were redundant barriers, but potentially useful installations to rebellious factions that might in future attempt to split the new empire. Hence they were dismantled.

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