

<<北京的世界文化遗产>>

图书基本信息

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内容概要

The Temple of Heaven, built in the first half of the 15th century, is a dignified complex of fine cult buildings set in gardens and surrounded by historic pine woods. In its overall layout and that of its individual buildings, it symbolizes the relationship between earth and heaven—the human world and God's world — which stands at the heart of Chinese cosmogony, as well as the special role played by the emperors within that relationship. Seat of supreme power for over five centuries (1416-1911), the Forbidden City in Beijing, with its landscaped gardens and many buildings (whose nearly 10000 rooms contain furniture and works of art) , constitutes a priceless testimony to Chinese civilization during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Summer Palace in Beijing — first built in 1750, largely destroyed in the war of 1860 and restored on its original foundations in 1886—is a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design. The natural landscape of hills and open water is combined with artificial features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples and bridges to form a harmonious ensemble of outstanding aesthetic value. Scientific work at the site, which lies 48 km southwest of Beijing, is still underway. So far, it has led to the discovery of the remains of *Sinanthropus pekinensis*, who lived in the Middle Pleistocene, along with various objects, and remains of *Homo sapiens* dating as far back as 18000-11000 B.C. The site is not only an exceptional reminder of the pre-historical human societies of the Asian continent, but also illustrates the process of evolution.

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插图：Grand sacrificial ceremonies were also known as "Fengshan Sacrifices." In ancient times, Mount Tai in Shandong Province of east China was the only place where emperors would pay homage to heaven on its summit and earth at its foot. Few emperors since Emperor Zhenzong of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) continued to perform this costly ceremony at Mount Tai. When Ming Emperor Yongle had the Temple of Heaven and Earth (predecessor of the Temple of Heaven) constructed in 1420 in Beijing, the capital of his empire, worship of heaven and earth began to be conducted here. Later, the Temple of Earth was built in the northern suburbs of Beijing, so heaven and earth were separately worshipped. The Temple of Heaven and Earth, accordingly, was renamed the Temple of Heaven, which had ever since been used specially to offer sacrifices to heaven alone and pray for good harvests. The emperors visited the temple three times a year: the first lunar month to pray for a good harvest; the summer solstice to pray for rain; and the winter solstice to give thanks for a good harvest. The Circular Mound Altar was used to worship heaven and the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests was used to pray for bumper crops and abundant rainfall. Over the centuries, this large sacrificial complex has become well-known under the general name of the Temple of Heaven.

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