

<<北京历史与文化>>

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前言

Beijing is a national capital with a thousand years of history. It enjoys being a much visited world-renowned tourist center. If you are exploring the famous palace, strolling through the imperial garden, being mesmerized by the awe inspiring temples or even wandering around the hundreds of Hutong (alleys), you cannot help but feel amazed and astonished as well as drawn in by the millennia old mystique. Your curiosity can't stop being piqued at the immensity of the history, the depth and breadth of stories and you naturally, almost unknowingly, develop a thirst to know the meaning behind the ancient relics that form the backbone of this metropolis. This book will lead back through the history of Beijing, a long and abundant gallery, along which we can walk back several thousands of years or even in some cases hundreds of thousands of years. During the Paleolithic Age, about five hundred thousand years ago, the first representative Beijingers presented themselves in the mountain forest, and declared their existence to the celestial bodies. These were the Sinanthropus better known as "Peking Man" (北人). As they evolved they developed the ability to manufacture various kinds of tools and mastered some production technologies, and finally developed into the Paleoanthropic whose intelligence level is considered similar to that of modern human beings. They have, through skulls and fossils, seashells, stone implements and pottery, left a trail for us to follow and discover the evolutionary processes of their life. In the 21st Century BCE, China entered the age of recorded history, at that time two small countries formed in the regions around Beijing - Ji (蓟) and Yah (燕). In the 11th Century BCE, the Zhou Dynasty (周朝, or Chou Dynasty) was founded, thus establishing the Kingdom of Yan (燕, also Yen) unifying the two small countries. As Yan became more and more powerful, it became one of the eponymous seven powerful states of the Warring States Period (战国). In 221 BCE, the Qin Dynasty (秦朝, or Chin Dynasty) unified the whole country, and the region of Beijing became a province (county). From then on, over a thousand years, Beijing was always a capital for territorial states, and a town of military importance. This was because of its location: to the north and west of Beijing are Yanshan and Taihang mountains; to the east of city is Liaodong (辽东). These made the city the frontline of defence during the frequent invasions from the northern nomads. At the same time, the North China Plain to the south and Bohai Bay to the southeast provided convenient routes for traffic and material supply. The cradle for the development of China was mainly along the Yellow River valley; therefore, the first national capitals were Chang'an (长安) (now known as Xi'an), Luoyang (洛阳) and Kaifeng (开封). However, with economic development, and with growing social contact and harmony between different nationalities, the influence and border of China began to widen. During the Yuan Dynasty (元朝), which was established by Mongolians, in order to control the whole country, the emperor moved the capital from Mongolia to Beijing, making it the national capital for the first of many times. In the Ming Dynasty (明朝), for the purpose of resisting the northern minorities (remnants of the Yuan Dynasty) and strengthening control of the Liaodong Area, the emperor moved the capital from Nanjing (南, or Nanking) to Beijing. For the same reason, this tradition was also adopted by Qing Dynasty emperors. So we can draw the conclusion that Beijing's selection as a capital, as far back as the Middle Ages, was not accidental but rather virtually historic inevitability. After such a long history, there are so many cultural relics and places of interest that are preserved in the city that they clearly and authentically record the historical development of Beijing; shouting out the changes of the times, and demonstrating the traditional Chinese culture. For instance, why ramparts are square; why the principal room in a courtyard must face south; why the imperial palace was called the Forbidden City; what kind of world view it reflects of ancient China; and what kind of national feeling leads to the wide dissemination of Buddhism. All the answers can be found in this book. "To understand the world today, one must understand China, and to understand China, one must understand its past."

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内容概要

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