

The Traditional Chinese Architecture Series • Five Books on Ancient Architecture in Beijing

中国古代建筑知识普及与传承系列丛书 • 北京古建筑五书

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

北京天坛 (英文版)



Wang Guixiang

王贵祥 著



清华大学出版社
Tsinghua University Press

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For those interested in traditional Chinese architecture

Planned by Wang Qun and Zhu Wenyi

Presided over by Wang Guixiang and Wang Xiangdong

Executed by the School of Architecture, Tsinghua University

Sponsored by China Resources Snow Breweries Co., Ltd.

General Preface (I)

In early 2008, we finally finished our negotiation with Tsinghua University and held a brief press conference. Faced with perplexed-looking journalists and irrelevant questions, I thought to myself: this cooperative project is really necessary.

Behind all the clamor for “becoming a power” and “the rise of China”, Chinese people do not lack wisdom, determination, enthusiasm, or even fundig. What we lack-and this is essential-is “originality”, both in our products and in our thoughts. Without originality there would be no distinction, and without distinction there would not even be an identity.

The most distinct we have is our culture. The academia says that architecture is the crystallization of a nation’s culture. However, as Mr. Liang Sicheng said, quite politely, “Ancient buildings that have stood for centuries and neighborhoods filled with artistic charms, which are prominent embodiments of a nation’s culture, are often totally sacrificed for so-called ‘improvement’.”

Our purpose is to do something for the dissemination of knowledge about traditional Chinese architecture. We want to help to spread and hand down such knowledge by inviting experts to write books for the public. When we started, we were surprised by two facts because of our ignorance: first, that so many veterans and new talents are working so hard and so fruitfully in this field; second, that research in this field suffers from such a stunning shortage of funds.

We hope that the publication of the Traditional Chinese Architecture Series: Popularization and Continuation will make its due contribution to the spread of such knowledge, give more publicity to the results of the research done by veterans and new talents in the field, provide a means for readers to know more about traditional Chinese architecture, and add to our originality.

Wang Qun

Managing Director of China Resources Snow Breweries Co., Ltd.
Beijing, Jan. 1, 2009

General Preface (II)

One day in 2008, Professor Wang Guixiang told me that the negotiation for a big cooperative project was under way. China Resources Snow Breweries Co., Ltd. was going to invest as much as 10 million yuan in Tsinghua University's efforts to study traditional Chinese architecture and spread knowledge about it. That is an astronomical Figure for such a purely theoretical field. As the president of the school, I took the news seriously and soon followed Professor Wang to the headquarters of CR Snow Breweries, where I met Managing Director Wang Qun in a large conference room. He impressed me as an affable and smiling man.

Even since that day, I had been pondering over a question: how can traditional Chinese architecture be related to beer, which came from the West? Mr. Wang's smile seemed to imply the answer: although there is apparently no relation between architecture and beer, things will change after CR Snow Breweries joins hands with Tsinghua—the study of traditional Chinese architecture will bear the deep mark of Snow Beer.

Shortly after that, a contract-signing ceremony was held at Tsinghua University, which gave me another opportunity to meet Mr. Wang. I still remember one episode of the event: having stamped the seal on the inauguration plaque which symbolizes cooperation, he saw that the ink was rather pale and sighed with regret. All at once I recognized his character—a perfectionist mindful of each and every detail.

A person who is strict with himself represents an enterprising company, which will surely put a strict demand on its partners. This quality is shared by its partner, the Architectural Design & Research Institute of Tsinghua University. Despite its modest size, this team can trace its history to the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture founded eighty years ago with financial assistance from the patriot Zhu Qiqian. Six decades ago, Liang Sicheng brought this undertaking to Tsinghua and wrote the first systematic book on history of Chinese architecture. Today, thanks to the hard work of Professor Wang Guixiang and his colleagues—some his junior and others his senior—as well as all the others in the architectural history community, the study of traditional Chinese architecture has borne a wealth of fruits. This team is yet another powerful force, and its cooperation with an equally powerful company is bound to produce outstanding results.

Managing Director Wang Qun and Professor Wang Guixiang, an entrepreneur and an architect, have brought about a successful marriage between the business field and the culture & education field. I am convinced that this cooperative project will usher in a new era for the study and dissemination of traditional Chinese architecture.

Zhu Wenyi

Dean of the School of Architecture, Tsinghua University
The campus of Tsinghua, dawn of Jan. 22, 2009



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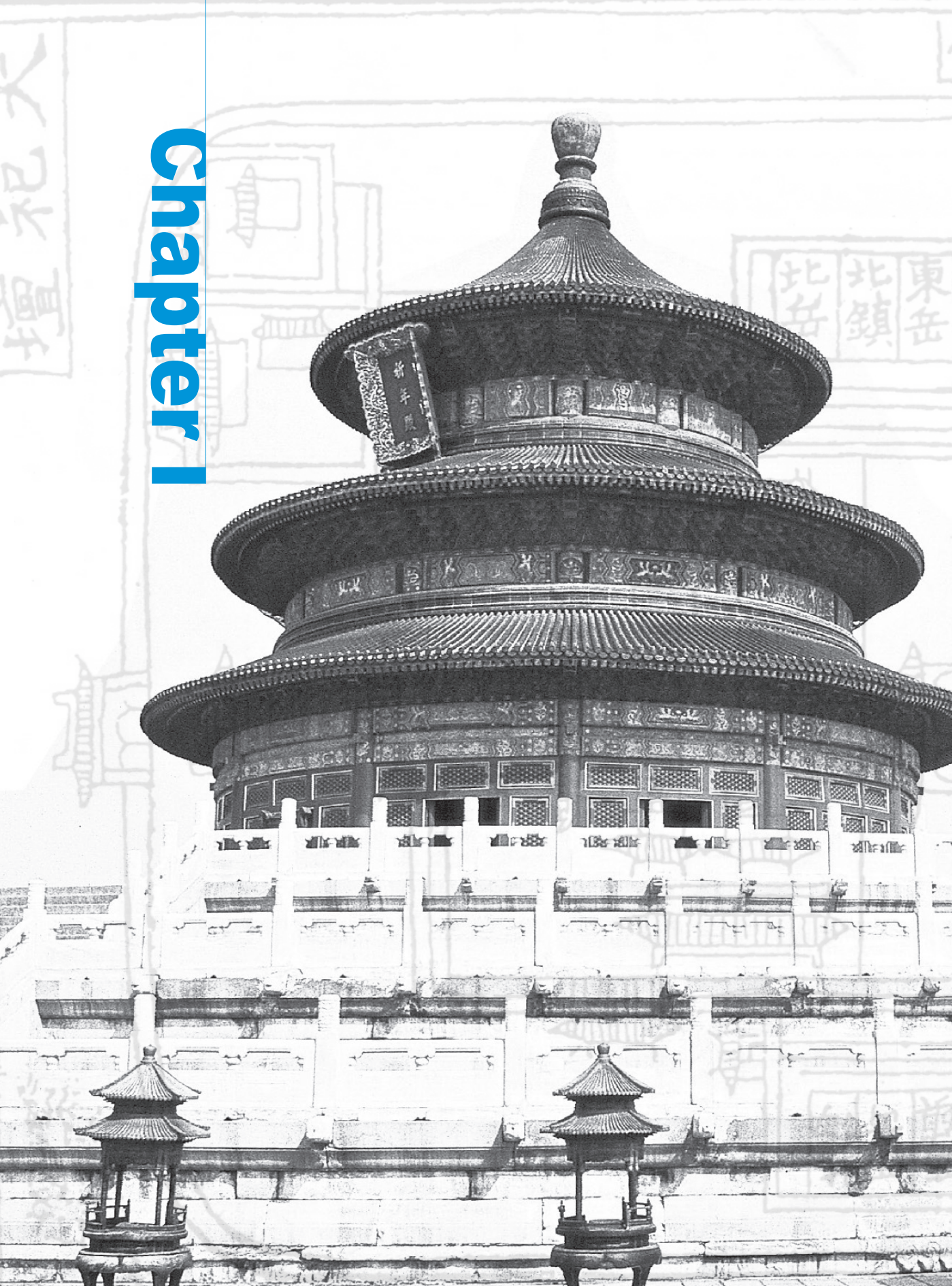
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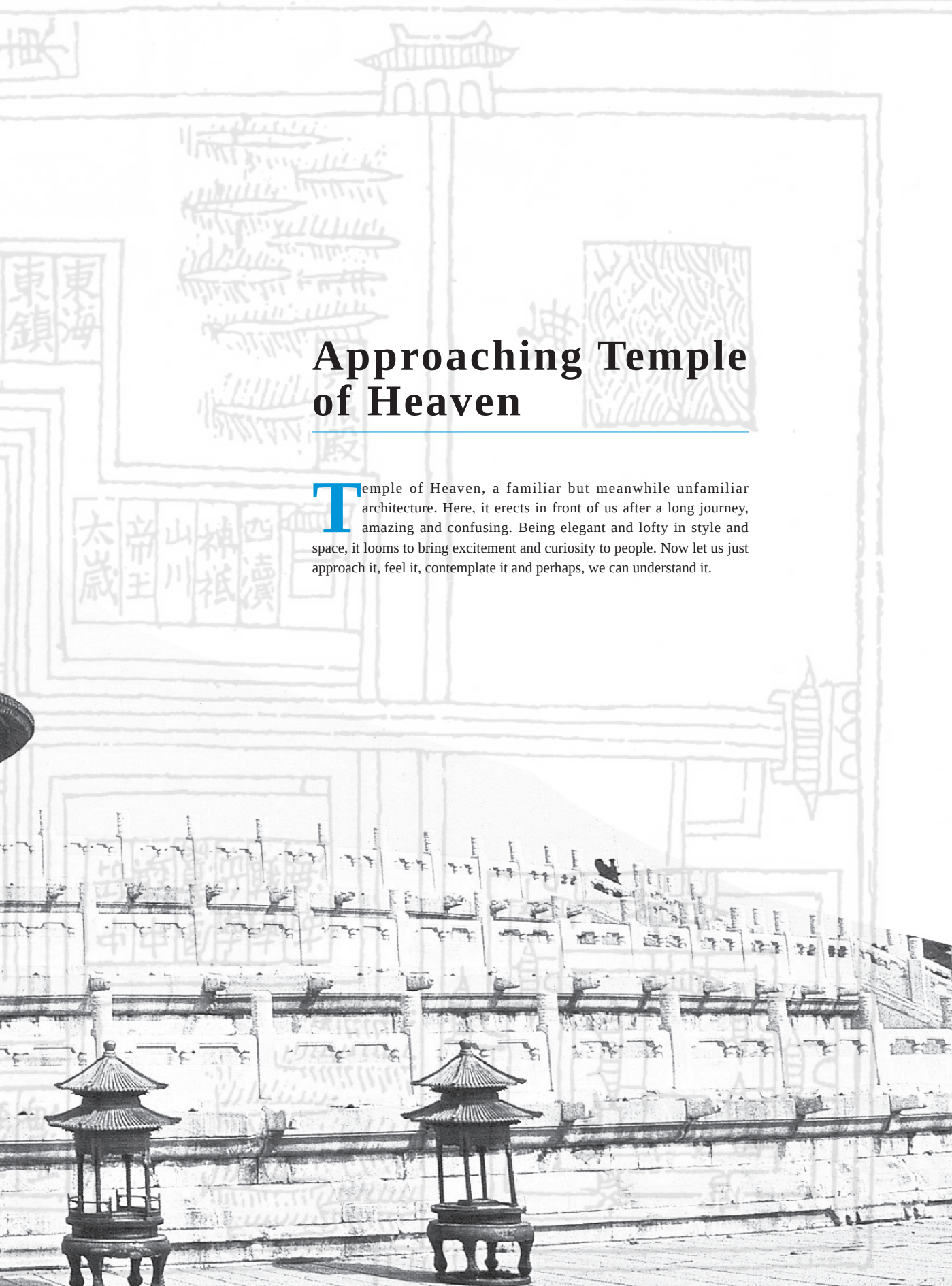
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Chapter 1





Approaching Temple of Heaven

Temple of Heaven, a familiar but meanwhile unfamiliar architecture. Here, it erects in front of us after a long journey, amazing and confusing. Being elegant and lofty in style and space, it looms to bring excitement and curiosity to people. Now let us just approach it, feel it, contemplate it and perhaps, we can understand it.



Heavenly Shrines

Temple of Heaven, a familiar but meanwhile unfamiliar architecture. Here, it erects in front of us after a long journey, amazing and confusing. Being elegant and lofty in style and space, it looms to bring excitement and curiosity to people. Now let us just approach it, feel it, contemplate it and perhaps, we can understand it.



The architectural complexities of the Temple of Heaven, sharing a worldwide reputation for its divinity and purity, serves as an essential part of ancient Chinese architecture. Surrounded by altar walls and contrasted by green trees, its stretching three-story altar of white marble appears

magnificent and elegant. Standing on the altar, you might have a feeling of touching the vault of the Heaven. The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests opposite the Altar appears particularly noble, elegant and pure with its round blue glaze-tiled roof. Well, let us just approach this magnificent architecture and



(Fig. 1.1) A bird's-eye view of Temple of Heaven

wander through its long—standing history (Fig. 1.1 A bird’s-eye view of Temple of Heaven; Fig. 1.2 Tongzhi Emperor in the Qing Dynasty held ceremonies in the Temple of Heaven; Fig. 1.3 Overview of Temple of Heaven). If only we have read a little about western history and culture, it is not difficult to find that in western tradition, the most holy places are always related with Heaven, say, the holy city of Jerusalem, Palestine shared by Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In western historical references, it is referred to as “Heavenly Jerusalem”. The Judaism holy temple in Jerusalem, built by King Solomon as recorded in Old Testament, is usually called “Heavenly Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem”. Furthermore, the temple has been the prototype of Christian churches in history. Similarly, there also exists such an ancient Chinese building admired by the world for its divinity, nobility and elegance. Not only did ancient Chinese emperors make

a fetish of it, but westerners also showed much respect for it as they called it “Temple of Heaven”. That is Temple of Heaven in Beijing. It is said that an event to select the most beautiful buildings worldwide was held in Paris, France in the 1980s, and Temple of Heaven was among the 30 most beautiful buildings in the world. According to the criteria for World Culture Heritage, Temple of Heaven of China was inscribed on the World Heritage List (No. 200-021) in 1994. World Heritage Committee gave such a comment to Temple of Heaven:

The Temple of Heaven, founded 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, and also the



(Fig. 1.2) Tongzhi Emperor in the Qing Dynasty held ceremonies in the Temple of Heaven