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看不见的故宫 The Unseen Palace

004 Preface 序

012 Glorious History 辉煌

058 Ages of Dreams 梦想

112 Mysteries 神秘

158 Songs of Sorrow 悲歌

Anyone who buys a ticket and enters the massive group of ancient structures in the center of Beijing, once called the Forbidden City and now known as the Palace Museum, will not fail to experience its imposing existence. Why, then, is this book titled: *The Unseen Palace*?


To begin with, this is an art book that presents the Forbidden City from angles entirely different from the common experience, but deeply reflective of the aesthetic taste and artistic sensibility of the photographer. It reflects the unique artistic skill of the photographer and the miraculously changing focuses of his camera. As a result, the book raises human aesthetic experience to a new height, both visually and sentimentally. Mr. Li Shaobai, the photographer, moved throughout the Forbidden City for more than a decade, discovering, selecting, capturing, and crystallizing many scenes that give the reader much food for thought. His unique choice of angles to capture of the minute details of the Forbidden City not only give the usually seen objects in the palace a new meaning but also generate a kind of vivid beauty of spirit. Li himself once said that in looking at the Forbidden City, "I have discovered that my camera lens always stubbornly makes daydreams, forgetting the reality of the place. And my angles have been so narrow that they seem to be needles pinpointing the legacy of history..."

Second, this art book expands one's vision. When a visitor goes into the Forbidden City, he or she usually manages a quick tour by following the axis line from the Meridian Gate to the three main halls in the official quarters, then the three rear halls in the living quarters, and further to the Imperial Garden before exiting from the Gate of Divine Might. The mystery and many of the attractions of the Forbidden City, however, also exist in and among the structures along the two sides of the palace. In photo-

graphing the Forbidden City, Li has set foot in all the corners and spaces of the palace, seeing what others do not see and experiencing what others do not experience. Through the clicking of his camera shutter, he has obtained views that tourists normally never encounter.

Third, the book enriches the reader's vision. Ordinary tourists to the Forbidden City only have time to see the most common and obvious, and thus can hardly feel the charm of the place at different hours and in different seasons. Li's photographs include the early birds flying above the eaves of the halls in the early morning, the shadows of tree branches on the vermilion walls at sunset, the glow reflecting from the gilded door decorations in the sun and in the dim lights along the moat of the palace. Through Li's works, the Forbidden City is also seen under different weather conditions and at different times of the year. Every picture portrays the Forbidden City with ever greater detail and more impressive images, making up, to a large degree, for what people cannot see for themselves – the charms of the place at varied times, in varied seasons, and under different conditions of lighting.

Finally the text of the book does not stop at making the usual presentation and introduction from a purely architectural angle, but tries to recreate moments of history that are long gone through the retelling of events that once took place in the palace.

In this book are the scenes people cannot see for themselves in the Palace Museum today no matter how wide they open their eyes. Thus, in this book they will discover a previously Unseen Forbidden City. 

序

事实上,作为一个庞大的建筑群,故宫就矗立在北京城的中心,任何人只要买了门票走进午门,都可以真切地感受到它的存在。而这本画册题名《看不见的故宫》,所谓何也?

首先,这本画册通过摄影家独特的艺术眼光和照相机镜头变幻多端的景别、视角,定格了一个完全不同于常人视角的、深深烙印了摄影家审美趣味和艺术情感的故宫,不论从视觉上,还是从情感上,都提升了人的审美体验。摄影家李少白先生游走、流连于故宫十余年,捕捉、撷取、凝固了许多耐人寻味的场景和画面。角度的独到选择,细节的精心捕捉,不仅使故宫里那些人所未见的物象具有了新鲜的意味,而且洋溢着呼之欲出的情态美。李少白曾经说,面对故宫,“我发现我的镜头是这样的顽固、固执地睁眼说梦,竟渐渐地忘却了故宫的真实;我的视角又是那样的狭窄,窄到有如锥子般,竟慢慢刺进了那历史的沉淀……”正是这种艺术家的眼光和诗人般的激情,使李少白的摄影作品和这本画册所展现的,不是故宫的说明、不是故宫的解释、也不是故宫的报道;而是故宫的感叹,是故宫的暗示与隐喻,是诗是梦,是从紫禁城(故宫又名“紫禁城”)的神秘中吐露出的错综复杂的心声!

其次,这本画册从空间上拓展了人的视野。游人游故宫,大多沿午门——前三殿——后三宫——御花园——神武门这条轴线作浮光掠影之游。殊不知,故宫的神奇神秘,也同样存在于两侧的其它建筑和空间里。在醉心于故宫拍摄的十余年里,李少白先生的足迹踏遍了故宫的边边角角,至人所罕至,见人所罕见,频频按动快门,捕捉、拍摄了大量游人难得一见的故宫景象。

再次,这本画册从时间上丰富了人的视野。游人游故宫,大多在一朝一夕之间走马观花,很难领略到故宫在不同时间、不同季节的不同魅力。而李少白的故宫摄影作品中,既有晨曦中殿角边鸟的飞环,也有夕照里红墙上斑驳的树影;既有烈日打在鎏金门环上的光芒,也有护城河畔寂寥的灯火,一日各时,尽在眼底。不同季节、不同天气情况下的故宫,在李少白的作品中,也多有展现。春日里疯长的野花,秋月里颓败的衰草,夏荷间嬉戏的金鱼,冬雪遮面的雄狮,更有那雾霭中依稀隐约的太和殿轮廓,漫天飞雪掩映中的御道红墙……这些照片,无一不在展现一个细节更加丰富、形象更为饱满的故宫,在很大程度上弥补了人们难以在不同时间、不同季节、不同光影条件下领略故宫魅力的遗憾。

最后,本画册的文字部分,并未停留于从单纯建筑的角度进行惯常铺陈与介绍的层面,而是试图结合摄影作品的画面,重现那些和时光一同逝去的历史瞬间和宫廷旧事,捕捉那些淹没在红墙内外往日的情绪、情感。

以上这些,是在故宫里无论怎么睁大眼睛,也很难看见的,但却尽情地包含于这本画册里,是为“看不见的故宫”。

以上这些,是在故宫里无论怎么睁大眼睛,也很难看见的,但却尽情地包含于这本画册里,是为“看不见的故宫”。


To Feel the
Forbidden
City

On October 10, 1925, a grand ceremony was held in the square in front of the Gate of Celestial Purity by the Caretaker Committee of the Qing Dynasty Imperial Family in order to announce the official founding of the Palace Museum. From that day, the mysterious palace was opened to those interested in finding out about the life inside the imperial court.

One after another magnificent scenes unfolded in front of the visitors who saw the palatial structures for the first time, the vermilion walls and yellow glazed tiles, the painted beams and sculpted pillars, the towers, terraces, and pavilions nicely setting off and magnificently complementing each other. Whether the ten-meter-tall surrounding walls, or the 52-meter-wide city moat, or the front palace dominated by the three great halls respectively named the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony and the Hall of Preserved Harmony, or the rear palace centered on the Palace of Celestial Purity, the Hall of Celestial and Terrestrial Union and the Palace of Terrestrial Tranquility, each structure was hailed as the acme of perfection.

The Forbidden City, however, did not exist purely in its architecture. It was also the nerve center for the rulers of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In a way, the place was a spiritual product of a complicated history in times of great change.

In today's Forbidden City, as we come face to face with the rusty locks on the peeling doors of the palace, we come into contact with secret stories sealed for years deep in the palace halls. As we notice little yellow flowers stubbornly growing up between pieces of stone on the palace grounds, we perhaps find some of the lost dreams of palace maids. When we cast our eyes on the darting swallows flying over the gruesome towering walls and among the magnificent-looking halls, we resign ourselves to being unable to avoid experiencing in our mind's eye the dejected and resentful and yet hopeful eyes of the eunuchs. The imperial air hidden in the carved railings and sculpted woodworks, the battle cries scattered among the dying grass and debris of old structures, the bitterness hidden in the ancient well and intricate houses, and the laughing and crying crystallized by the flowers and grass now come to us through the tunnel of time.

In the Unseen Forbidden City, we listen, touch, imagine, and feel with our hearts 

1925年10月10日，“清室善后委员会”在乾清门前广场举行盛大典礼，宣布故宫博物院正式成立。从此，紫禁城这座神秘的皇宫城门洞开，迎来了一波又一波探秘访幽的人群。一幅壮观雄美的画卷在人们眼前铺展开来。人们看见了故宫，红墙黄瓦，画栋雕梁，金碧辉煌。殿宇楼台，高低错落，壮观雄伟。不论是环围四周10米高的城墙和52米宽的护城河，还是以太和、中和、保和三大殿为中心的“前朝”，抑或是以乾清、交泰、坤宁三宫为中心的“后寝”，莫不令人叹为观止。

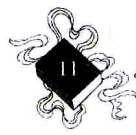
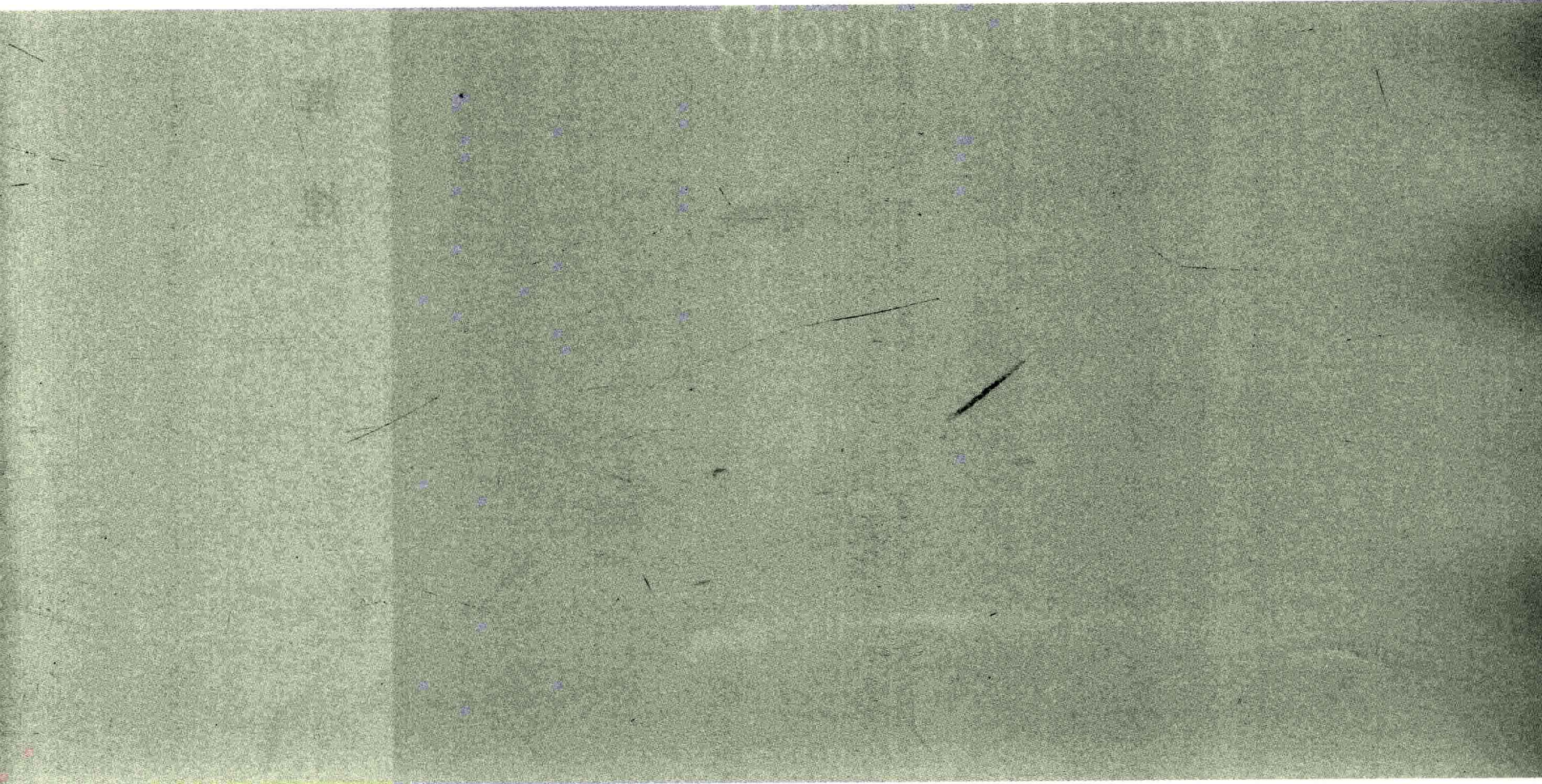
然而，故宫并不仅仅是作为建筑以物质产品的形态存在的。作为明、清两代封建王朝的统治中枢，作为封建帝王发号施令和朝夕生活的居所，故宫更是承载了太多历史沧桑和世事变迁的精神产品。

如今的故宫里，虽然早已看不见皇帝大悦或震怒的龙颜，早已看不见大臣们响叩青砖的卑微面额，早已看不见胭脂花粉后面嫔妃们幽怨的眼神，早已看不见宫女们寂寞怀情的青春，早已看不见大小太监们沿着高大的宫墙匆匆奔走的身影，但当我们面对着油漆斑驳的宫门上那锈迹斑斑沉重铁锁时，分明是遭遇了尘封多年的宫闱密闻，当我们留连于青石墙缝里一簇固执盛开的黄色小花时，分明是捡拾到了一个至今还未醒转的宫女之梦，当我们的目光追随着那些越过阴森的宫墙、巍峨的殿柱、飞翔盘桓的燕雀，恐怕无法躲开太监们哀怨又充满渴望的目光……

那些掩映在雕栏玉砌间的帝王气象，流落在衰草碎瓦间的征战杀伐，淹没在古井雕栏间的深宫幽怨，凝结在草木花丛间的欢笑泪滴，就这样穿越时光，奔袭而来。

看不见的故宫里，我们倾听，我们触摸，我们幻想，我们用心体会……





The
Unseen
Palace

辉煌

故宫是中国最后两个封建王朝明清两代的皇宫，从公元

1420年建成到1911年中国封建王朝终结，近五百年中，

先后有24位皇帝在此居住、处理朝政。他们在这里发

号施令，对全国行使封建皇帝的最高权力。

作为中国封建时代的帝王宫阙，故宫不仅浓缩了那个时

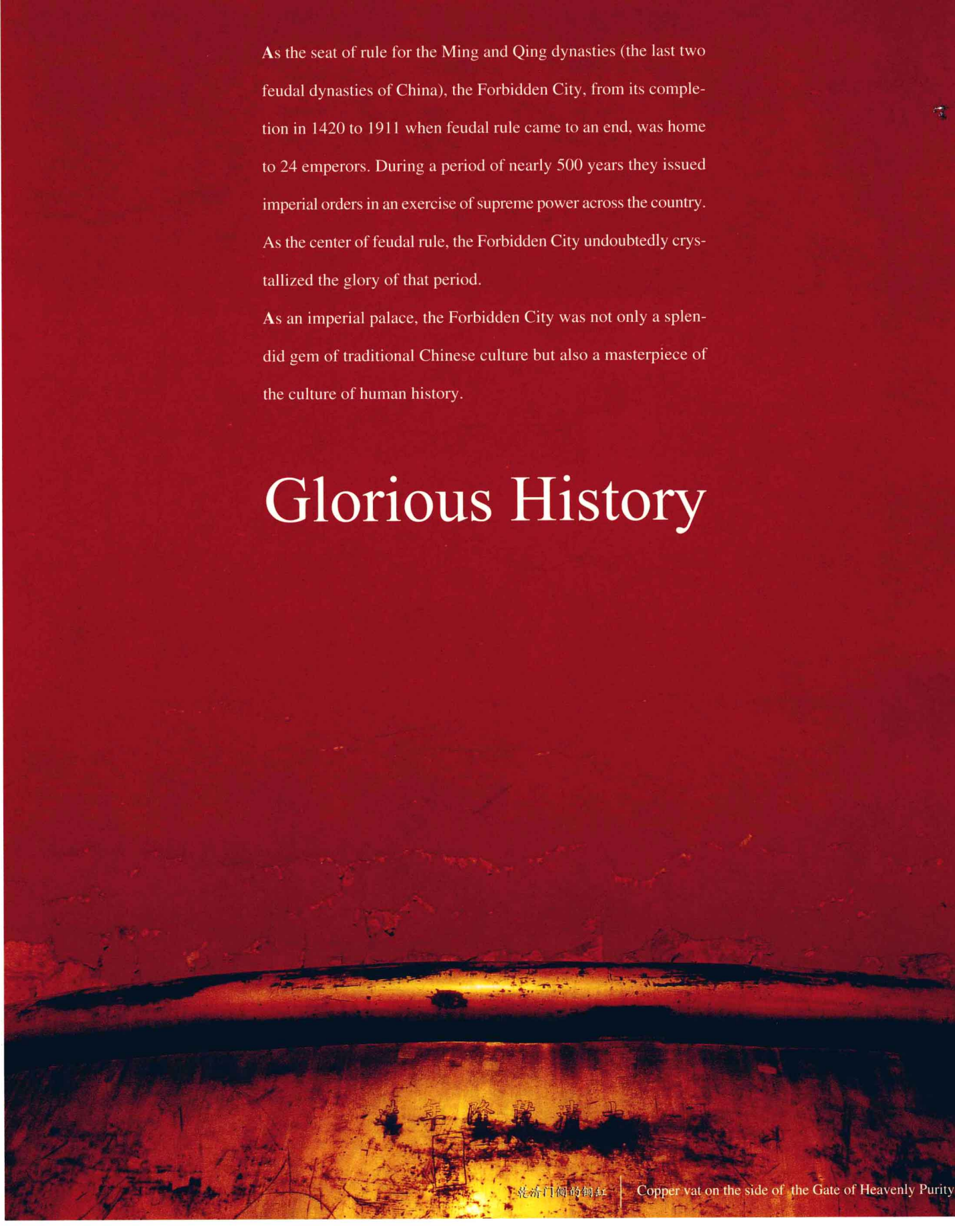
代的辉煌，成为中国灿烂的传统中华文化珍品，而且也是人

类文化历史上具有代表性的杰作。

As the seat of rule for the Ming and Qing dynasties (the last two feudal dynasties of China), the Forbidden City, from its completion in 1420 to 1911 when feudal rule came to an end, was home to 24 emperors. During a period of nearly 500 years they issued imperial orders in an exercise of supreme power across the country. As the center of feudal rule, the Forbidden City undoubtedly crystallized the glory of that period.

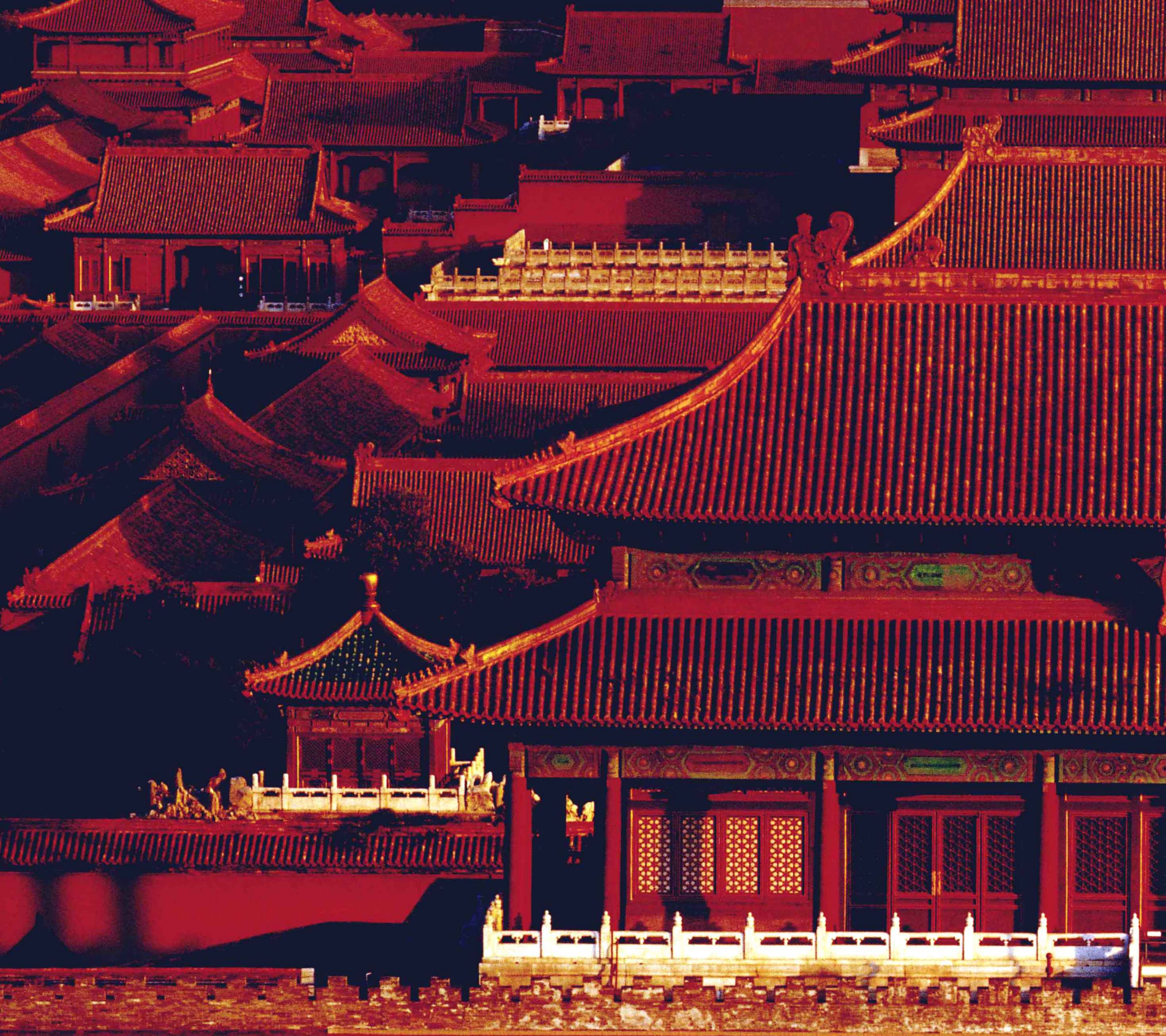
As an imperial palace, the Forbidden City was not only a splendid gem of traditional Chinese culture but also a masterpiece of the culture of human history.

Glorious History



是清门阙的铜缸

Copper vat on the side of the Gate of Heavenly Purity





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