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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/491/2021_2022__E5_8C_97_E4_BA_AC_E5_8D_81_E4_c67_491999.htm At a distance of 50 km northwest of Beijing stands an arc-shaped cluster of hills fronted by a small plain. Here is where 13 emperors of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) were buried, and the area is known as the Ming Tombs. Construction of the tombs started in 1409 and ended with the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. In over 200 years tombs were built over an area of 40 square kilometres, which is surrounded by walls totalling 40 kilometres. Each tomb is located at the foot of a separate hill and is linked with the other tombs by a road called the Sacred Way. The stone archway at the southern end of the Sacred Way, built in 1540, is 14 metres high and 19 metres wide, and is decorated with designs of clouds, waves and divine animals. Different Views on Death Beijing served as the national capital during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Unlike Ming and Qing rulers who all built massive tombs for themselves, Yuan rulers left no similar burial grounds. Why the difference? This has to do with peoples different views on death. Beijing nomads came from the Mongolian steppe. Mongols who established the Yuan Dynasty held the belief that they had come from: earth. they adopted a simple funeral method: the dead was placed inside a hollowed nanmu tree, which was then buried under grassland. Growth of grass soon left no traces of the tombs. By contrast, during the Ming Dynasty established by Han Chinese coming from an agricultural society in central China, people

believed the existence of an after-world, where the dead "lived" a life similar to that of the living. Ming emperor, therefore, has grand mausoleums built for themselves. Qing rulers did likewise.

Stone Archway The stone archway at the southern end of the Sacred Way, built in 1540, is 14 metres high and 19 metres wide, and is decorated with designs of clouds, waves and divine animals. Well-proportioned and finely carved, the archway is one of the best preserved specimens of its kind in the Ming Dynasty. It is also the largest ancient stone archway in China.

Stele Pavilion The Stele Pavilion, not far from the Great Palace Gate, is actually a pavilion with a double-eaved roof. On the back of the stele is carved poetry written by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty when he visited the Ming Tombs.

Sacred Way The Sacred Way inside the gate of the Ming Tomb is lined with 18 pairs of stone human figures and animals. These include four each of three types of officials: civil, military and meritorious officials, symbolizing those who assist the emperor in the administration of the state, plus four each of six types of animals: lion, griffin, camel, elephant, unicorn and horse.

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