Portal to Divinity: Imperial Ancestor Worship & Modern Tourism at the Temple of Heaven

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EACS 186
Presentation
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...the largest existing architectural complex in the world for the purpose of praying to heaven for good harvests.
Son of Heaven

天子

Constructed from 1406 to 1420 during the reign of Yongle Emperor (永樂帝) who also constructed the Forbidden City

Intermediary between Earth and Heaven

Only the Emperor was allowed to directly worship heaven; imperial subjects were permitted to only worship ancestors and river and mountain gods.
Winter Solstice Ceremony – Prayer for Good Harvest

Emperor fasts for three (3) days

Enter into the Temple of Heaven a day before Winter Solstice (forbidden to commoners)

Meditate in the Imperial Vault of Heaven (皇穹宇)

Spend a night at the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests (祈年殿)

Animal sacrifices before the Throne of Heaven at the Round Altar (圜丘坛)

Perfection is a must, or it’s a bad omen for the rest of the year

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGhOHB_sT-8
Speaking of **bad omens**...

The Hall of Prayer was destroyed by a lightning strike in 1889.
Symbolism in the Temple of Heaven

Earth = square
Heaven = circle
Numerology at play
The **Temple of Heaven** is the grandest of four (4) temples in Beijing, the others being the **Temple of the Sun** in the east, the **Temple of the Earth** in the north, and the **Temple of the Moon** in the west.
Beijing (北京) Tourism

Statistics:
China is expected to replace France as the world’s top tourism destination by 2014.
- First six (6) months 2009: 84.5 tourists visited Beijing.
- Tourism income of 127.1 billion yuan ($18.7 billion USD)
Temple of Heaven Tourist Map

The Imperial Vault of Heaven
The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests
The Temple of Heaven - 'Branded'

Entrance Ticket = RMB ¥30

More than 10 shopping areas in the park

Hotels:
- Holiday Inn Temple of Heaven Beijing
- Beijing Tiantan (Temple of Heaven) Hotel

Temple of Heaven Balm

Temple of Heaven Green Tea

Bus and Metro Stops

Beijing Tiantan Hospital
Class significance:
- largest existing architectural complex in the world for rituals to pay homage to heaven
- Chinese pride
- "Branded"
- Tourist site that brings money to the nation
- 1998: Recognized as one of the human heritages in the world by UNESCO
Thank you!

Any questions?