

天坛 – Temple of Heaven

Similar to many ancient and medieval cultures, the emperor was regarded as having his authority from heaven. In China, he was referred to as the “Son of Heaven.” The Temple of Heaven was built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) around 1410 A.D. At the same time, emperor Yongledi (永乐帝), also built the Forbidden City. The temple was dedicated to praying for good harvests, and the Ming and Qing dynasty emperors would visit the temple for a formal ceremony twice a year. The emperors would start a procession from the Forbidden City to the Temple of Heaven. However, unlike processions of many ancient and medieval cultures, ordinary citizens were not allowed to view the procession.

The base of the temple is built out of three levels of marble. The circular shape of the temple symbolizes heaven. The three level citadel was reconstructed in 1889 when it was burned down by fire caused by lightning. The citadel is a wooden structure that was built with no nails. Around the Temple of Heaven are three main halls. To the south of the temple is another circular three level platform built out of marble known as the Circular Mound Altar(圜丘坛).

