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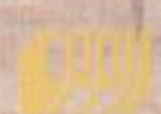
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BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES OF BEIJING



THE CHARM OF BEIJING



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Text by Li Gang

Photographs by Li Gang, Sun Keqin, Fang Xin, et al.

Translated by Wang Yufan



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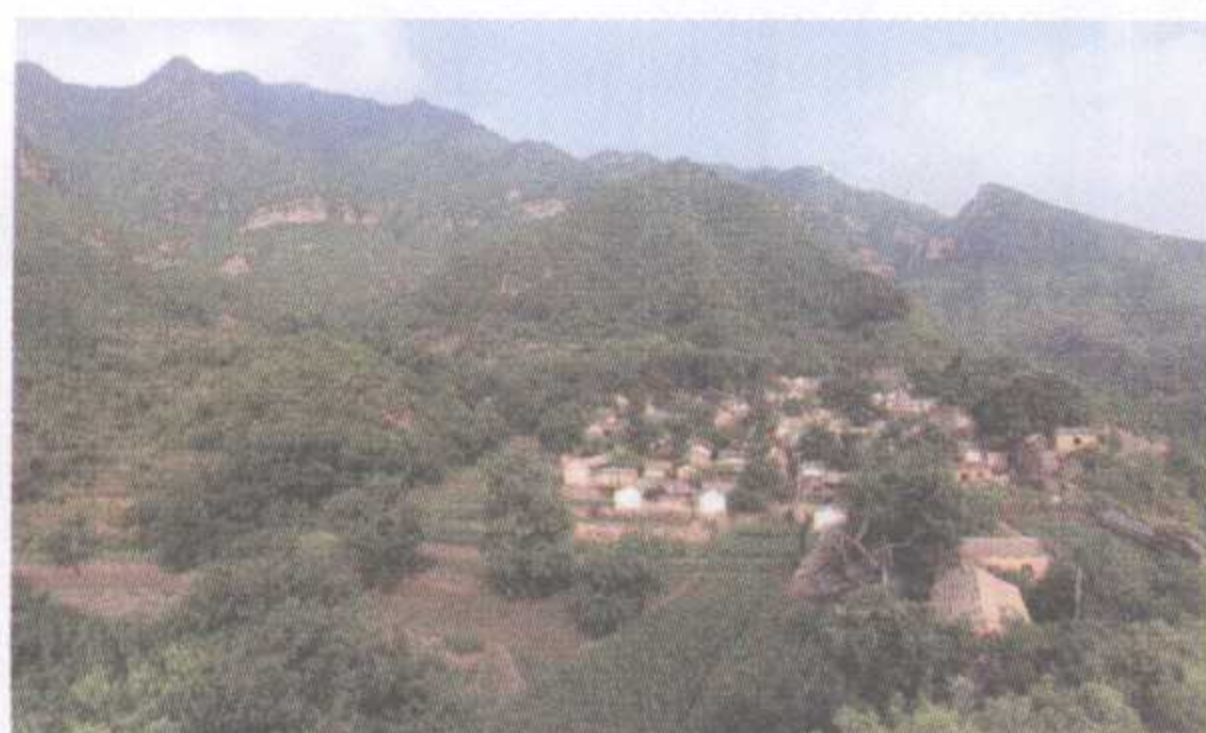
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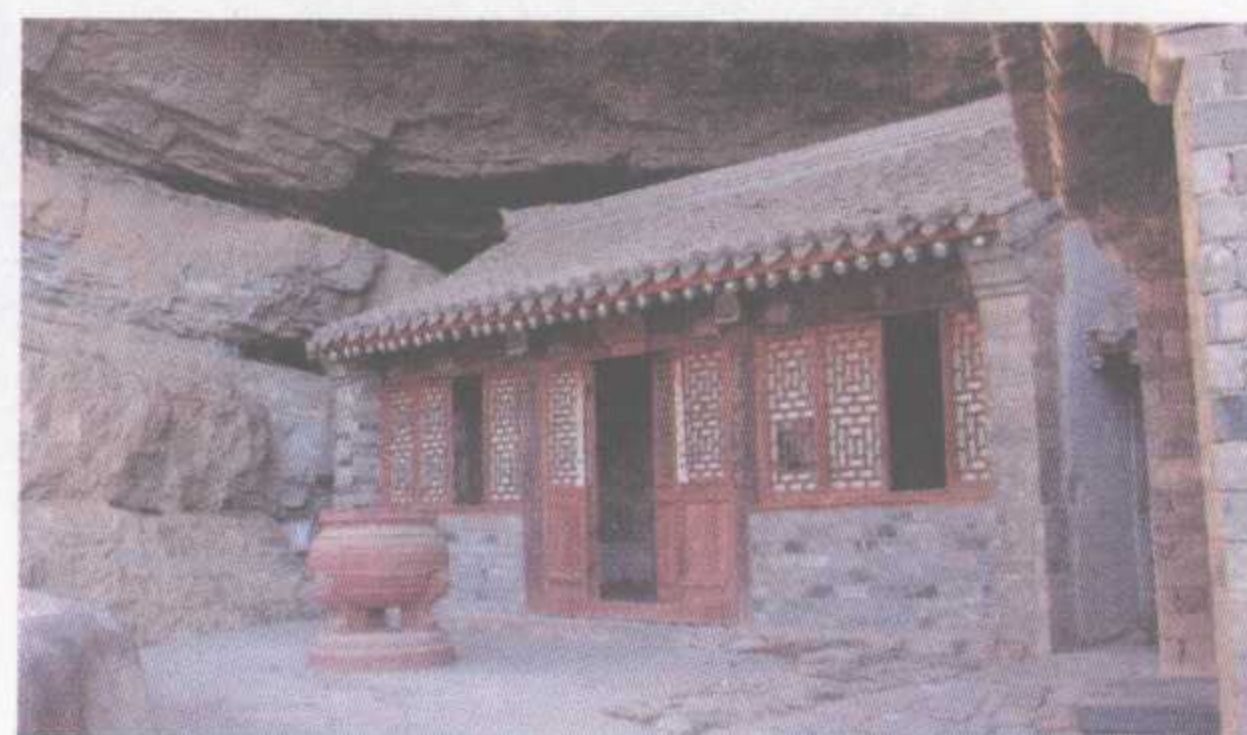
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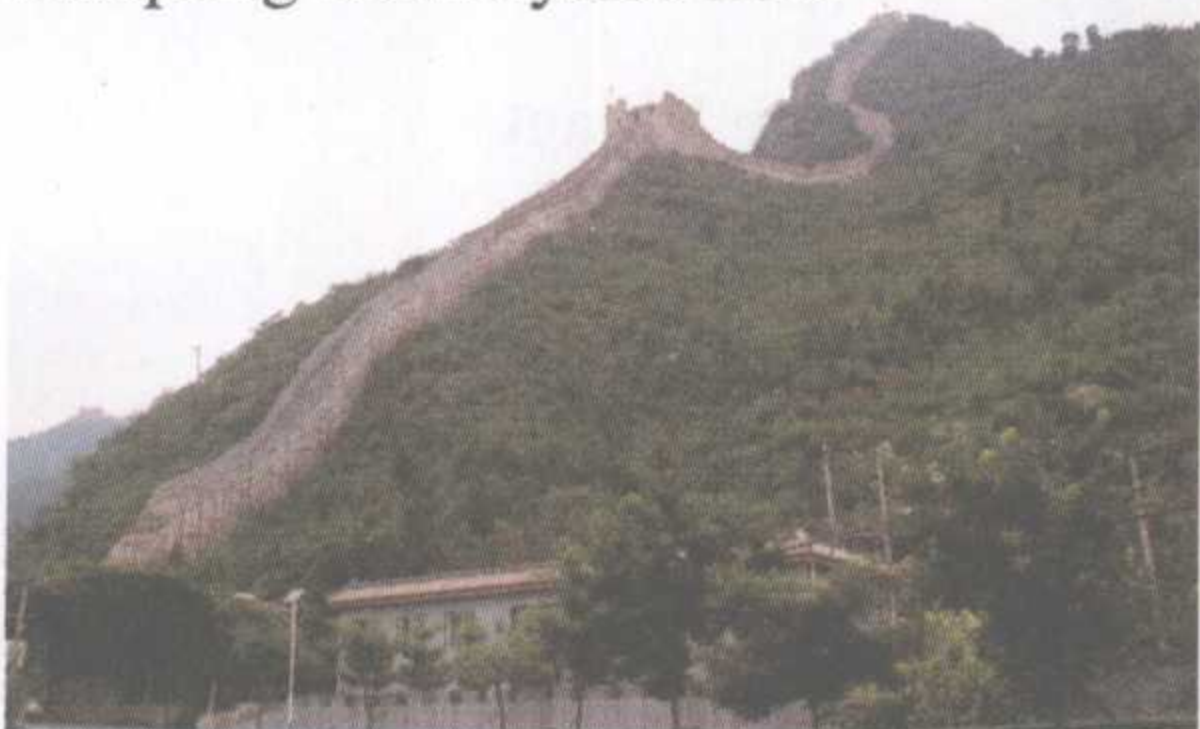
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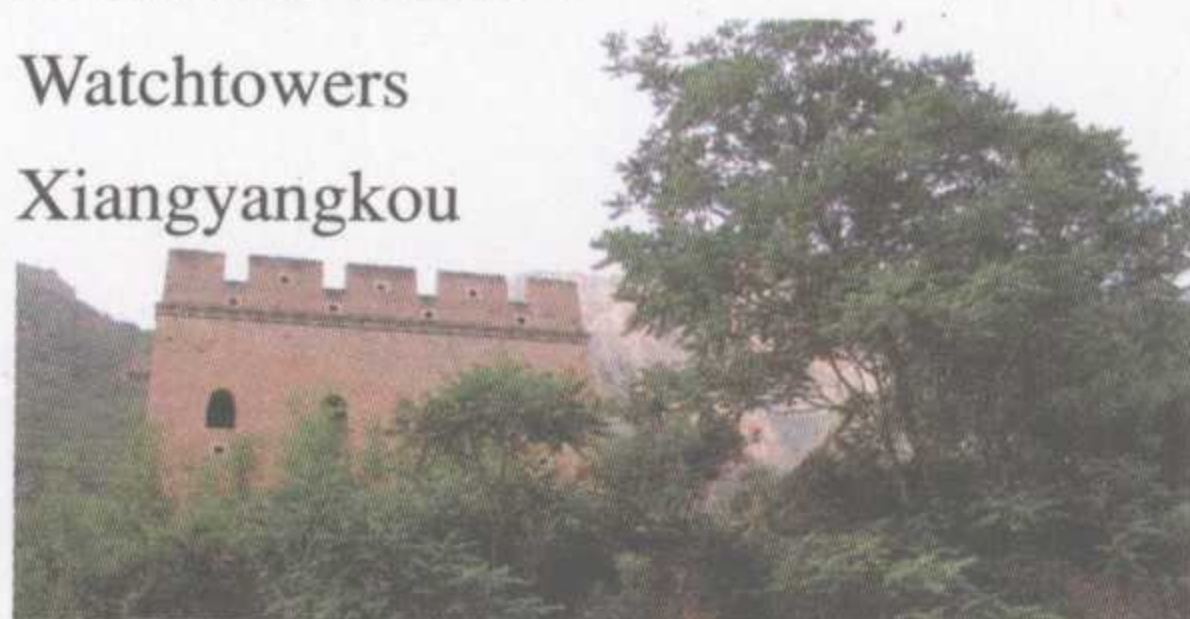
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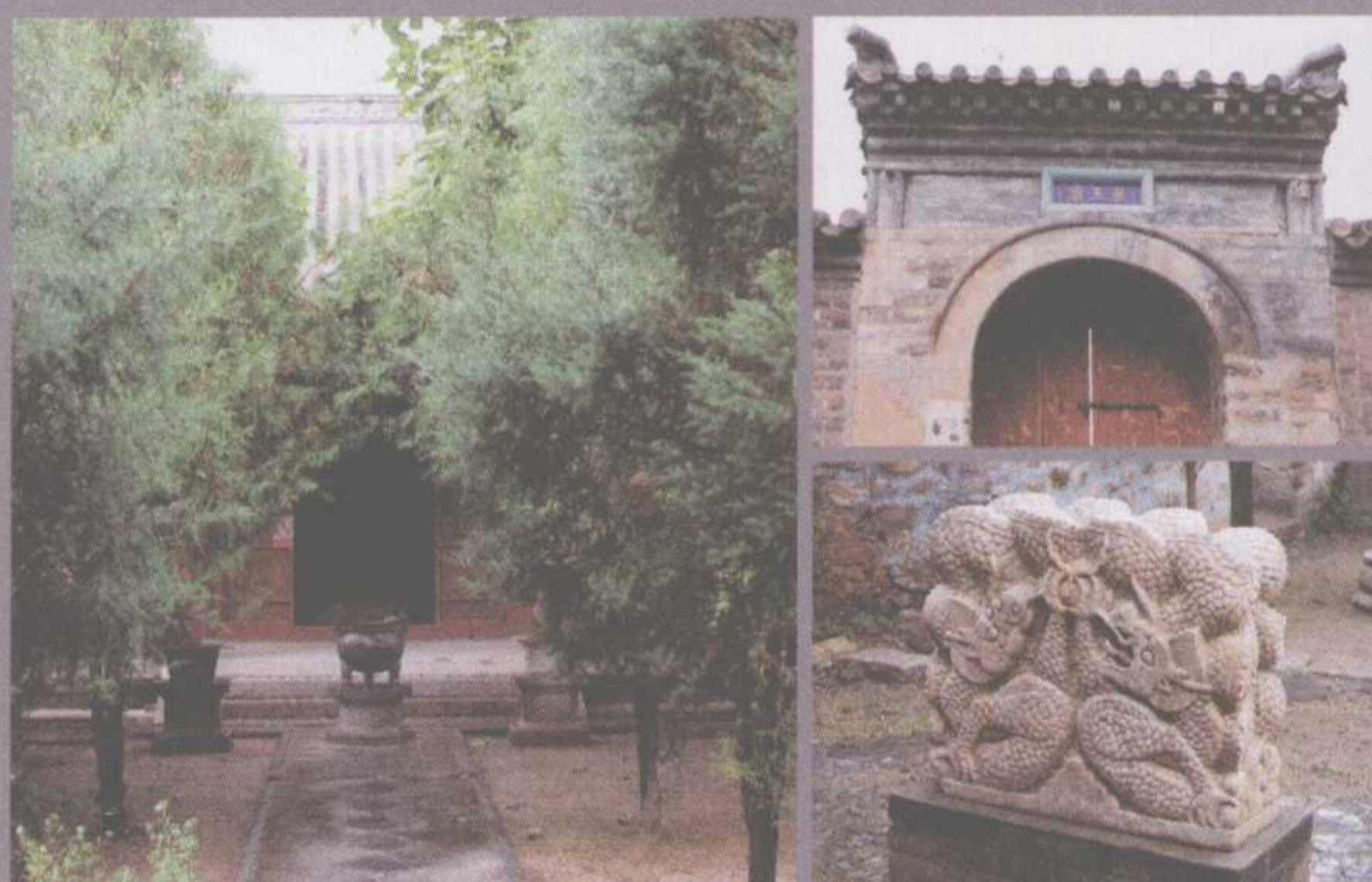
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A ONCE FORMIDABLE FORTRESS — GUBEIKOU





Panlong Mountain.

Gubeikou is an ancient hidden pass near Miyun (just north of Beijing), with Panlong (Twining Dragon) Mountain in the east and Wohu (Crouching Tiger) Mountain in the west. The Chaohe River passes through it, and the Great Wall makes a turn here and continues northwestward.

Viewed from a higher position, verdant trees and blooming flowers set off the Great Wall and the pass, with cooking smoke rises lazily from the houses dotted across the picturesque landscape. While retaining its historical appearance, Gubeikou also presents a modern view.

Dangerous Beauty

Gubeikou is located in a foothill of the Yanshan Mountains northeast of Miyun County. The Chaohe River passes its northern valley before emptying into the Miyun Reservoir. Occupying a precipitous, strategic position near the midpoint between Shanhaiguan Pass



and Juyongguan Pass, less than 100 kilometers from urban Beijing, Gubeikou was considered Beijing's northeast gateway in ancient times.

Gubeikou is richly endowed with enchanting natural landscapes and places of interest. During the Qing Dynasty, camps and temporary palaces were constructed here, serving the emperors when they stopped on northeastward tours to offer ancestral sacrifices, hunt, and to carry out inspections. Emperor Kangxi came here to escape the summer heat, and Emperor Qianlong once reviewed military troops here.

As one of the most important passes along the Great Wall, Gubeikou was first constructed during the reign of the Ming Emperor Hongwu. Following the contours of the mountain, the pass takes an irregular, multi-angled shape, from which it's "bird's nest" name is derived. Ming Dynasty poet Tang Shunzhi once wrote the following verses in praise of Gubeikou: "The entire city lies in the mountain, overlooked by this pass like a bird's nest. Visitors here would think of those heroes, who pull the bow towards the sky."

Flowing through Gubeikou Pass between Panlong Mountain in the east and Wohu Mountain in the west is the Chaohe River. The adjacent road is very narrow and can only accommodate one vehicle. During the Jin Dynasty a defensive iron gate was built here, giving rise to another name for the pass — the "Iron Gate Pass." During the Qing period, in nearby Hexi Village, the court established military camps, constructed a commander's office, opened an imperial road, built a temporary palace, and stationed troops to defend the pass. The world-renowned Simatai section of the Great Wall, a part of The Wall at Gubeikou, is described by Professor Luo Zhewen, a prominent Great Wall scholar, as "dangerous, precipitous, and wondrous".

Stone steps leading to the Great Wall.



Rich History

Gubeikou Town, in Miyun County, has a history of more than 2,000 years. In earlier times there was no Great Wall here, with the defensive wall of the Warring States Period and the Qin and Han Dynasties built far to the north. In 555 during the Northern Qi period, the defensive wall which stretched from the West River (present-day Yulin River in Shaanxi Province) to Shanhaiguan Pass for nearly 2,000 kilometers was constructed and passed through here. But the Northern Qi Wall was low and piled with earth and stones, with ruins rarely seen today.

From the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.1100-771 B.C.) till the Warring States Period (770 B.C.-221 B.C.), defensive structures were constructed in Gubeikou. During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), to protect the northern frontier from being invaded by the Hsiung-Nu people, Emperor Wudi ordered the construction of a military fortress at Gubeikou, and this place later witnessed many battles between the Han and Hsing-Nu troops. In the following dynasties, Gubeikou was further built up as the bridgehead for the Central Plains.

In the early Ming Dynasty, claiming to “rid the emperor of evil ministers,” Yan Prince Zhu Di usurped power from his nephew, the then Emperor Jianwen. After assuming the throne as the third Ming emperor, he moved the Chinese capital from Nanjing to Beijing. At

that time the Ming’s enemies were mostly based on the vast grasslands and deserts in the north, so Gubeikou was of special military significance to the northern defense.

In 1427 a troop of Tartars (a northern nomadic nationality) tried to invade through Gubeikou, but finally failed because of the



Beacon towers, viewed from afar.



Ming garrison's successful defense. In 1550 a Mongol cavalry of nearly 10,000 attacked Gubeikou, but was again defeated. During the early reign of Emperor Longqing, northeastern nomadic people often assaulted the Ming frontier, so the emperor transferred his accomplished general Qi Jiguang from the eastern coastal area to administer military training and defensive affairs in Jizhou, Changping, and Baoding Towns near Beijing. On the foundations of the walls constructed during the Warring States Period and in the early Ming, Qi Jiguang constructed a defensive wall extending to Juyongguan in the west and Shanhaiguan in the east. Spanning Simatai, Jinshanling, and Mutianyu, this section of the Great wall, now considered as a monumental masterpiece, effectively safeguarded the Ming at that time.

After the Manchu Qing crossed the Great Wall and moved their capital to Beijing in 1644, the imperial family would spend every summer in the Mountain Resort of Chengde, hundreds of kilometers from Beijing, hunting and enjoying the cooler weather. Gubeikou was on the route from Beijing to Chengde and therefore passed through every year by the imperial party, and camps responsible for the party's safety were constructed here. Today the palace and the camps have already disappeared, but descendants of the historically stationed Eight Banner soldiers that settled down have witnessed the last 300 years of history from Gubeikou.

Great Wall Battlefield

Gubeikou was one of the major battlefields during the war against Japanese invaders in 1933.

On March 6, 1933, Division 107 of the No.67 Corps of the Northeast Army fought with Japanese invaders in Qingshiliang. In the following three days, Division 112 of the No.67 Corps struggled hard on the Great Wall, and commander of No.635 Regiment Bai Yulin sacrificed his life. On March 10, upon the arrival of reinforcements in Gubeikou, they endured Japanese aerial bombardment.

At dawn on March 11, the Japanese army launched a general attack at Gubeikou and occupied it by around 10 a.m.

The next morning, deploying dozens of planes and heavy guns, the Japanese army



The cemetery of Gubeikou Battle martyrs.

began an even fiercer attack on the northern bank of the Chaohe River. Under the command of Guan Linzheng, Chinese troops of Division 25 counterattacked desperately and finally won a victory. During the battle, Guan Linzheng was severely injured, and commander of Regiment 149 Wang Runbo died. Then, acting division commander Du Yuming continued to fight for another three days and nights, eventually killing and wounding more than 2,000 enemy soldiers at a cost of 4,000 Chinese soldiers. The next day, with the reinforcement of another troop, Division 25 retreated to Miyun County for rest and reorganization.

After defeat at Gubeikou, the Japanese troops were discouraged from further attacks for nearly 40 days, and were forced to re-deploy and bring up stronger numbers.

Today, like many other Chinese cities and towns, Gubeikou changes with each passing day.



A cave housing a hundred-meter-deep pool.



Façade of a an ancient stone block.

Colorful Culture

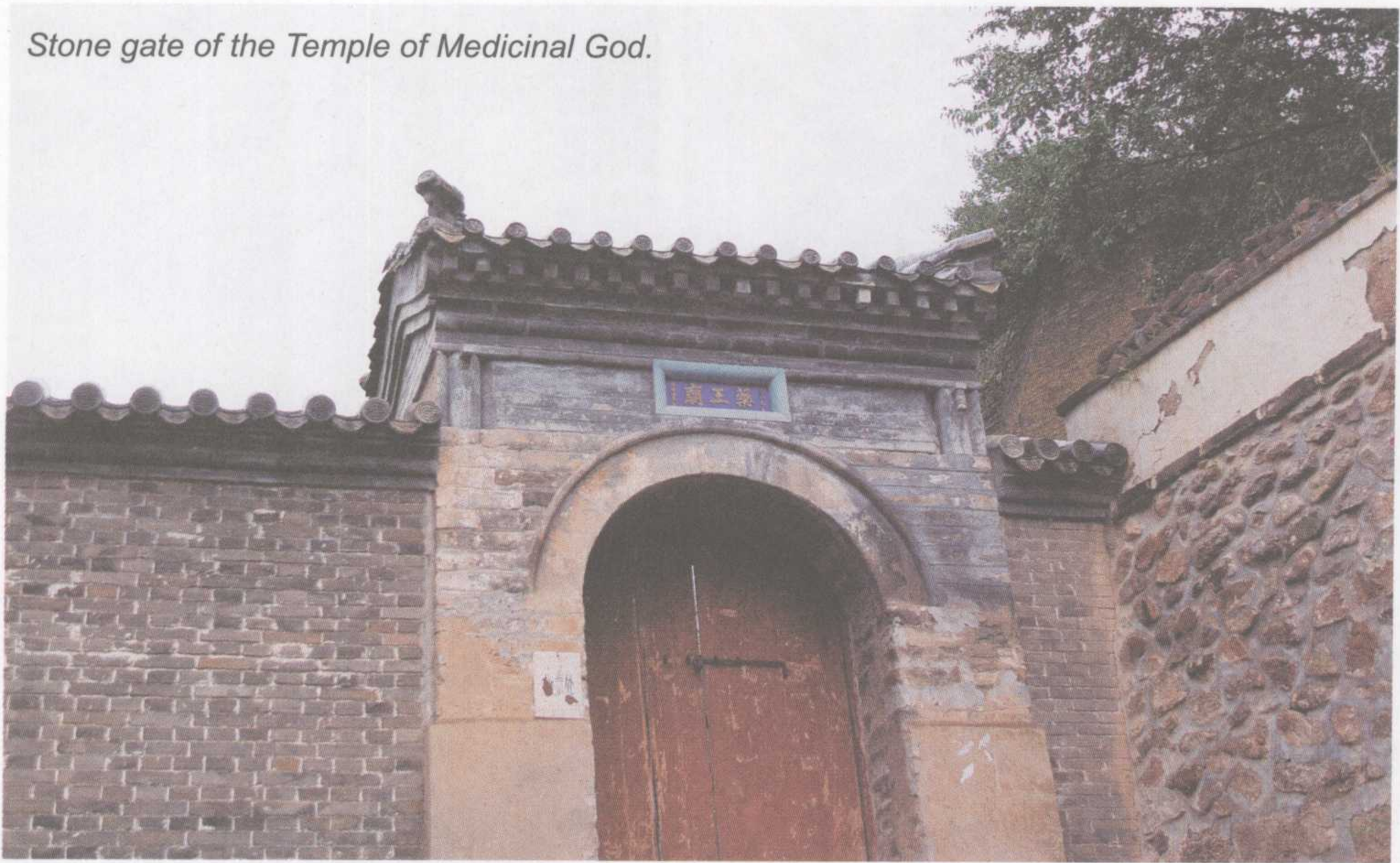
Based on more than 2,000 years of history, Gubeikou has formed a colorful and distinctive culture. Cultural attractions can be found everywhere within its natural landscapes - the most famous of these are the “Three-Borehole Well,” the “Three Temples in Two Steps,” and the “Glazed Screen Wall.”

The Three-Borehole Well dates back centuries. It is said that one year during the 18th Century, on a tour back to Beijing from the imperial summer resort in Chengde, the Qing Emperor Qianlong stopped for a break in Gubeikou. When he drank water drawn from the well, the emperor sensed varying tastes, but his officials did not. One exception was Minister He Shen, who echoed positively. So, the emperor ordered He Shen to draw water from the well for all the officials and soldiers. He Shen had no choice but to follow the instruction, working



Temple of Medicinal God.

Stone gate of the Temple of Medicinal God.



throughout the night to the point of exhaustion.

The Three Temples in Two Steps refers to the Temple of Guan Yu, the Temple of the Medicinal God, and the Temple of Bodhisattva constructed within one courtyard, demonstrating a peaceful coexistence of Buddhism and Taoism. The Glazed Screen Wall by the Imperial Path is considered a masterpiece of architecture and art, on which two dragons playing with a pearl come alive within the exquisite design.

Particularly notable among the cultural heritages of Gubeikou is the Temple of Yang Jiye. A highly revered general of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Yang Jiye committed suicide after being defeated near Liling Stele. Admiring Yang's heroic spirit, his enemy, Emperor Taizu of the Liao, built a temple here to honor him and his sons. Up until the early 20th Century, the temple was very dilapidated. When General Feng Yuxiang was stationed in Gubeikou for national defense, he repaired the temple at his own expense. However, the temple was unfortunately damaged again in the late 20th Century. In recent years, the government of Gubeikou Town has not only renovated the temple, but has also re-erected statues of the heroic generals of the Yang Family, and added images of She Taijun, Mu



Inside the Temple of the Yang Family



Temple of the Yang Family.



An ancient stone block.

Guiying, and other female generals of the Yang Family.

It is said that a tomb of Yang Qilang, the seventh son of Yang Jiye, was built on Wohu Mountain in Hexi Village, Gubeikou Town. Legend has it that after being shot dead by Pan Renmei, Yang Qilang was torn apart by five horses, and one of his limbs flew against the river current to send a message to his father and brothers in siege. When his limb reached Gubeikou and was discovered by the locals, it was laid out on the bank for preservation. The villagers then built a tomb and temple in honor of this heroic general.