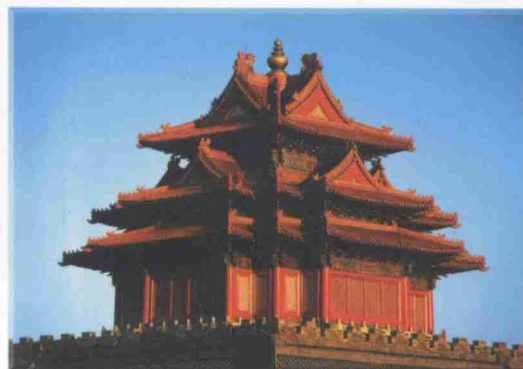
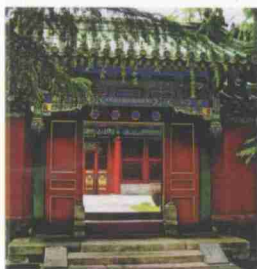


30 Most Famous Chinese Architecture Art Masterpieces You Really Need to Know



**Classics  
Appreciation of  
Chinese  
Visual Arts**



# Building

Editor *Xu Yitao*  
Translator *Wang Rong*



Yellow River Publishing & Media Group Co., Ltd

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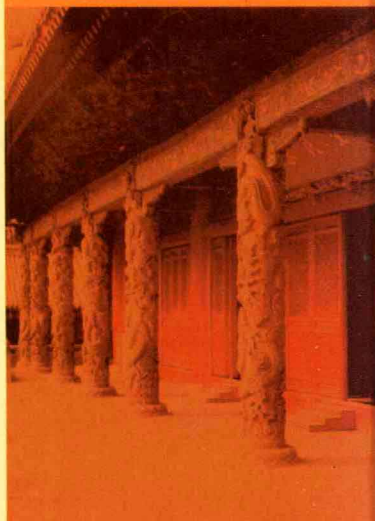
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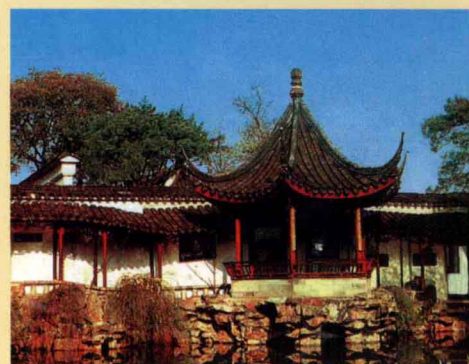
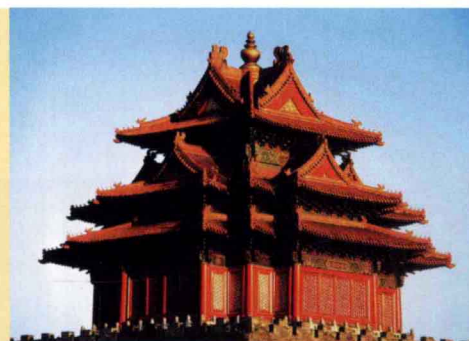
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# SONGYUE TEMPLE PAGODA

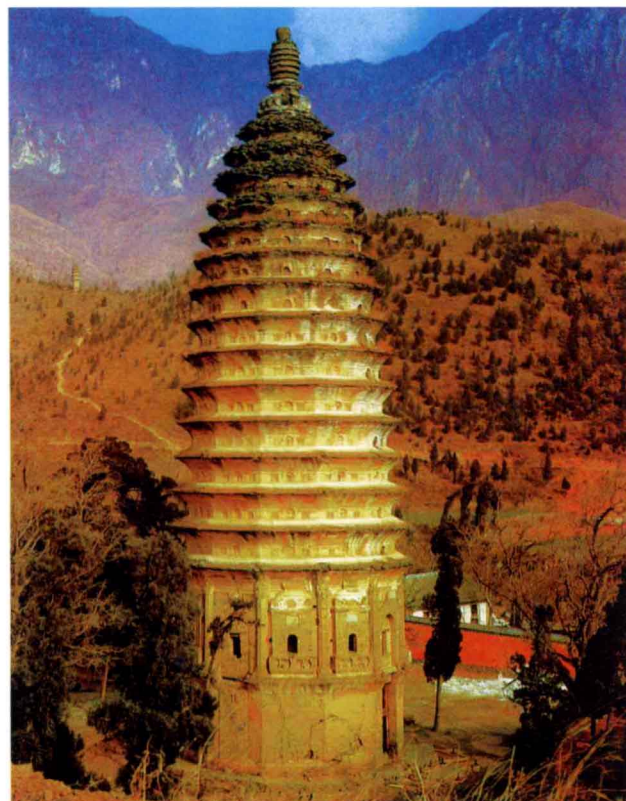
**Location:** Dengfeng City, Henan Province

**Construction Year:** the 4th Year of Zhengguang Period in the Northern Wei Dynasty (523)

**Dimension:** diameter of 10.6 meters, height of 39.5 meters



The Songyue Temple Pagoda is a 15-storey dense-eave brick pagoda built in the Northern Wei Dynasty. It is located at the southern foot of Mount Song in Dengfeng County, Henan Province. It is the oldest surface structure that still exists in China. Its dodecagonal pagoda body is unprecedented in the history of Chinese and foreign architecture. This pagoda is divided into three parts: the pagoda body, the dense eaves and the pagoda top. The lower part of its body is simple and undecorated while the upper part has leaning columns and Buddhist niches as ornaments, which possess apparent decoration styles of the Southern and Northern Dynasties. The dense eaves extended from the pagoda body get smaller layer by layer, forming a mild and graceful contour curve. A delicate spire (the ornaments on the top of the pagoda) is installed at its top. The whole pagoda enjoys a grand shape and looks extremely tall and gorgeous against the lofty Mount Song.



## Do You Know?



### The Pagodas in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties

The Buddhism was widely spread in China in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. At that time a lot of Buddhist temples and pagodas were built. Du Mu, a poet in the Tang Dynasty, once composed a verse to describe the prosperity of Buddhist temples in the Southern Dynasties – "the 480 temples from the Southern Dynasties hide their towers in the smoky blossoms and misty rain". The Buddhist temples in the Northern Dynasties were not surpassed by the ones in the Southern Dynasties. Only in Luoyang, capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty, there were more than 1300 Buddhist temples. At that time most of the Buddhist pagodas were wooden pavilion-shaped towers but the Buddhist pagodas made of bricks and stones had certain development as well.

The bottom floor of the Songyue Temple Pagoda is divided into two parts. The walls of the lower part are plain and thick while the upper part is richly decorated. Each corner has an octagonal column made of bricks. The base of the column takes the shape of an inverted basin while its head is decorated with hanging lotus. A door is opened in each of the east, west, south and north walls of the pagoda's bottom floor. The upper parts of these doors are semicircular arches, with the flame-shaped lines around them. On the top of the gate there are three lotuses, which look beautiful and graceful. The eight sides of the pagoda body which have no gates are respectively decorated with carved Buddhist niches. Each Buddhist niche has two long circular sunken parts at its foot, where small lion sculptures of different and vivid shapes are placed.

## Story Corner



### The Songyue Temple and Empress Dowager Hu

The Songyue Temple was built by Emperor Xuanwu of the Northern Wei Dynasty. At that time it was called "Xianju Temple". After the death of Emperor Xuanwu, the young Emperor Xiaoming inherited the crown and Empress Dowager Hu attended to the state affairs behind the curtain. Before long, the minister who schemed to monopolize the state power colluded with the chief eunuch to stage a coup d'état. Empress Dowager Hu was placed under house arrest and forbidden to meet her son.

Several years later, the chief eunuch planning the coup d'état died and the minister taking the state power indulged himself in wine and women. Empress Dowager Hu secretly met Emperor Xiaoming and a group of ministers. She blamed them to their faces: "You limited my freedom and forbid me to contact with the emperor. Is there any meaning for me to be the empress dowager? It is better to let me become a nun in the Xianju Temple built by the dead emperor!" After saying that, she raised the knife and planned to cut her hair.

The ministers and Emperor Xiaoming hurriedly stopped her. But Empress Dowager Hu was unwilling to give up and still wanted to be the nun. In order to stop his mother, Emperor Xiaoming had to stay by Empress Dowager Hu that night. Several days passed and the mother-son relationship was repaired. They worked together and got rid of the minister seizing the power.

Empress Dowager Hu finally returned to the political field of the Northern Wei Dynasty. And the Xianju Temple (whose name was turned into Songyue Temple in the first year of the Sui Dynasty) thus established its fame in the history.



The pagoda body is getting thinner layer by layer from bottom to top, giving the pagoda a tall and plump shape.

The exterior contour of the pagoda body is a regular dodecagon, which is unique among all existing ancient brick pagodas in China.

The plane of the rooms from the 2nd to the 10th floor of the pagoda takes a regular octagon.

The pagoda is 39.5 meters high and thus is very magnificent.

The pagoda top is decorated with stone-made lotus seat, seven alternate rings (a part of the pagoda spire) and so on, which harmoniously match the pagoda body.

The eaves of the pagoda are densely superimposed over each other, which is full of rhythmic aesthetic feelings.

People can ascend to a height in the pagoda, which give them an open visual field for a look into the distance.

Apart from the part above the 15th floor, the rest part of the pagoda is made of yellow-mud bricks. The exterior of the pagoda is painted with lime.

Each two eaves share a very short distance and each floor has a lot of fake windows.

The hollow cylinder structure of the pagoda was a very advanced structure of high buildings at that time.

Eight niches are made, under which vivid small lions are carved.

The corners of the pagoda body under the dense eaves have brick octagonal columns

The column has an inverted basin-shaped base and a lotus-petal-shaped top, which look elegant and graceful.

Four gates connecting to the pagoda chamber are opened in the east, west, south and north walls of the bottom floor.

The pagoda body is built upon a base which is less than one meter tall. Under the base there is an underground palace (a cellar where the Buddha's bones and the relics of hierarchies are buried).

## Brief Background

### Evolution of the Buddhist Pagoda

"Pagoda" means tomb in Sanskrit. It is also translated into "stupa", "boddo", "boundo" and so on. It is said that the pagoda is built to bury the remains of Shakyamuni Buddha. The ancient Indians created this type of structure, whose original shape was a semicircular stone tomb. In the Buddhists' minds, it represented Shakyamuni Buddha.

When the Buddhism was spread into China, more and more pagodas were built in China and their shapes gradually changed. The ancient Chinese believed that "immortals liked living in tall buildings" while the Buddha was considered a god from the West. Therefore, the original Indian Buddhist pagoda representing the Buddha was added onto the top of the Chinese-style wooden pavilion and gradually evolved into the "pagoda spire". The main construction body under the pagoda spire was built with the technologies of traditional Chinese wooden pavilion. Therefore, the Chinese-style Buddhist pagoda came out.

## Quick Link

### Sanch Stupa

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*Most Famous Foreign Buildings You Really Need to Know* in this series.



# ZHAOZHOU BRIDGE

**Location:** Zhao County, Hebei Province

**Construction Year:** The Sui Dynasty (581-618)

**Dimension:** length of 51 meters, width of 9.6 meters, span of 37 meters

**Architect:** Li Chun



The well-shaped Zhaozhou Bridge is also known as the Anji Bridge. It was designed by Li Chun, an architectural craftsman in the Sui Dynasty. It crosses the Xiao River, which lies south of Zhao County, Hebei Province. It is the existing oldest open-spandrel arch bridge in the world.

The central arch of this bridge is made of 28 independent stone slabs, which are closely joint together with iron dovetails. There are two small arches on each side of the central arch, which forms the said "open-spandrel arch bridge". This kind of structure can efficiently reduce the impact of flood on the bridge. In addition, it can reduce the pressure of bridge's weight on its own abutment, which enables the bridge to be more firm and durable. The artful design of Zhaozhou Bridge fully shows the extraordinary creativity of the craftsmen in ancient China.

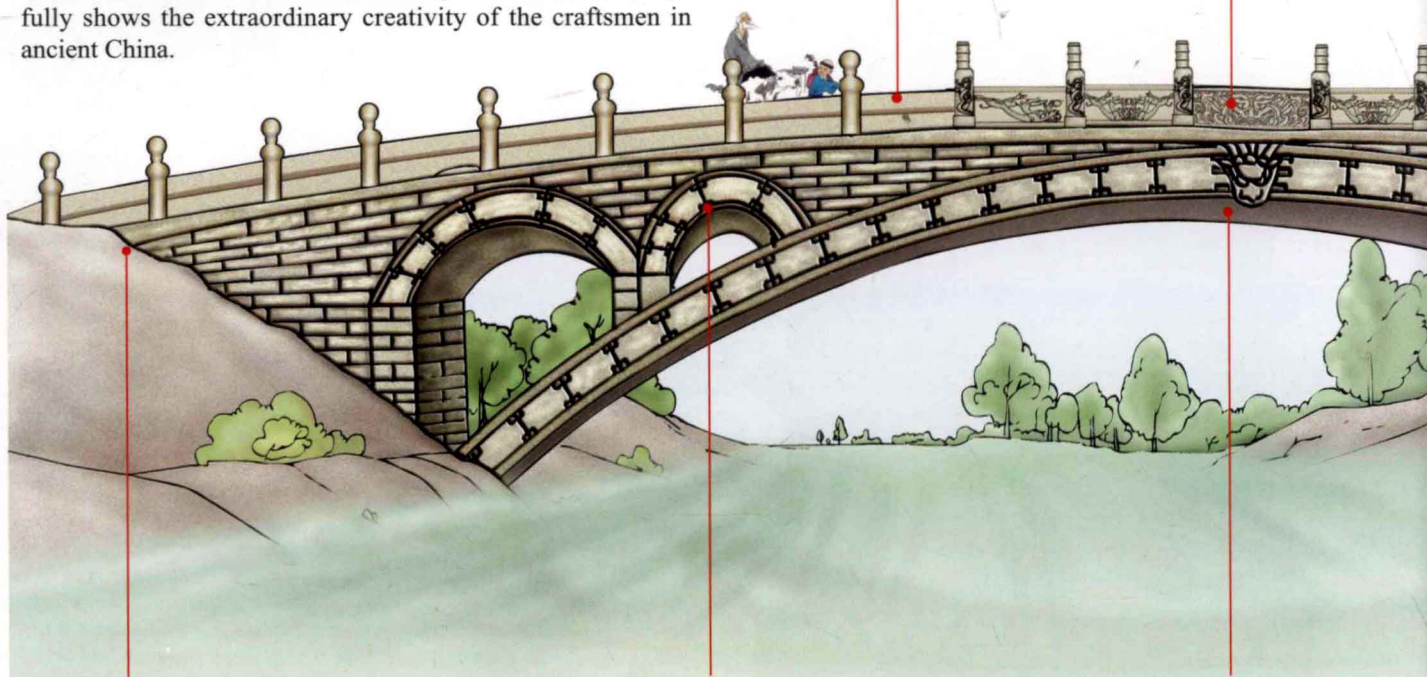
## Li Chun

**Architecture Master**

He was a stonemason in the Sui Dynasty. When he was born and died, and where he came from remain unknown. There are no detailed descriptions about him in the historical records either. Fortunately, Zhang Jiazhen, who was once the head of secretariat (the name of an official position) in the Tang Dynasty wrote inscriptions for the Zhaozhou Bridge, in which there was a sentence meaning that "(the bridge) is a miracle created by Li Chun, a craftsman in the Sui Dynasty". In that way this outstanding folk craftsman could be known by later generations.

The entire bridge is in the shape of a rainbow high up in the sky, which looks light and elegant.

The decorative carvings on the boards on both sides of the bridge are very simple and vivid, owning a very high artistic and aesthetic value.



The stone bridge is built on a 1.5-meter-thick stone basis.

All stone slabs are connected with each other by iron dovetails (components that connect the wooden and stone wares by joining the dented and protruded parts of these wares), creating a firm and stable structure.

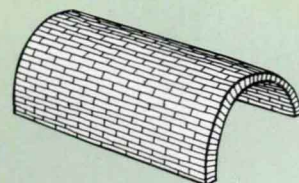
The central arch is an arc less than a semicircle, giving a very reasonable mechanic property to the structure.



## Brief Background

## The Arch

The arch is a structural form of the construction, referring to the semicircle or various kinds of arcs, which are made of bricks, stones and the like, on the vertical plane of a construction. It can decentralize the load that the construction receives vertically and create a bigger indoor space. There are various kinds of arches, such as the semicircle arches of ancient Roman constructions, the ogival arches of Gothic constructions, and the hoof-shaped, ogival, and stalactite-shaped arches of Islamic constructions. Chinese people had mastered relatively developed arch technology in the Eastern Han Dynasty. From the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the arches were largely used in the construction of Buddha towers on top of bridges.







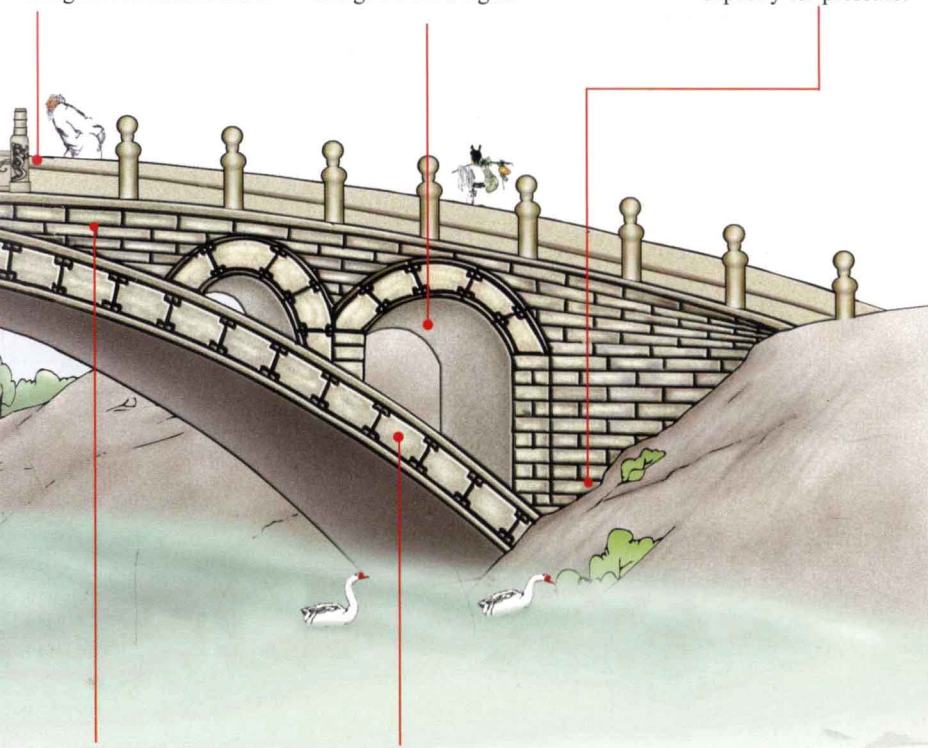
■ The Zhaozhou Bridge is more than 1300 years old and remains completely uninjured till today after going through several earthquakes.

■ This is a picture of "two dragons playing with the pearl" that is carved on the board of the bridge. Two small dragons open their mouths and reveal their teeth. They raise their heads and face each other. The two dragons combine their front claws together. Both of them have powerful and bold shapes as well as nimble gestures. Wave-shaped and lotus-shaped lines are carved around the picture as the ornaments. The carving skill was simple and powerful, creating smooth lines as well as a bold and vigorous style. It is a premier product of stone carving art in the Sui Dynasty.

The middle part of the bridge is thinner and its both ends are thicker. The bridge is 9.6 meters wide.

There are two small arches on each end of the bridge, which is good for draining floods and reducing the bridge's own weight.

The pier of the bridge is wider than the bridge top, which increases its capacity for pressure.



The bridge deck is slightly sloping, which is convenient for carriages to walk on.

28 stone slabs are placed together side by side. All of them are precisely carved.

### Legend about Zhaozhou Bridge Story Corner

The legend says that the Zhaozhou Bridge was built by Lu Ban. After being built, its name spread further and further because it was solid and grand. An immortal named Elder Zhang Guo was not convinced after hearing about the bridge and wanted to have a competition with Lu Ban. He also took Lord Chai and Zhao Kuangyin on the way. When they reached the Zhaozhou Bridge, Elder Zhang Guo said to Lu Ban: "If you can let the three of us pass the bridge safely, I will ride my donkey backwards from now on." Lu Ban said laughingly: "This bridge can hold thousands of soldiers and horses. Your small donkey and carriages are not a problem at all!"

Elder Zhang Guo rode his donkey and went onto the bridge. He was followed by Lord Chai who was pushing a wheelbarrow and Zhao Kuangyin who was pulling a carriage. When they were walking on the bridge, Elder Zhang Guo suddenly turned around and put the sun, the moon and the stars into his bag. Lord Chai and Zhao Kuangyin summoned the Five Great Mountains and placed them into their carriages lightly. The bridge could not hold anymore and began to shake. Upon seeing that, Lu Ban immediately jumped into the river and raised one hand to support the bridge with all his strength. In that way the three immortals could arrive at the other end of the bridge.

Elder Zhang Guo had no choice but to admit his failure. He rode his donkey backwards and returned to the Heaven with Lord Chai and Zhao Kuangyin. However, they left several deep donkey hoof prints and a wheel print on the deck of Zhaozhou Bridge. Lord Chai slipped when he was walking on the bridge and punched a knee-shaped hole on the bridge deck. There was also a big hand print on the bottom of the eastern side of the bridge's vault. It was left by Lu Ban when he supported the bridge.

### Do You Know?



## The Architecture in the Sui and Tang Dynasties

The constructions in the Sui and Tang Dynasties pursued grand and magnificent styles. The wooden components were highly standardized. The constructions owned unprecedented sizes and the technology of building stone bridges got breakthroughs. Professional architects appeared in the Tang Dynasty. The buildings were powerful, grand and solemn. The biggest technological achievements were the improvement of corbel bracket and the maturity of wooden structure system. The brick-and-stone Buddha towers were also very popular in the Tang Dynasty, based on which the brick-and-stone surface constructions got fast development.



# GREAT EAST HALL OF FOGUANG TEMPLE

**Location:** Wutai County, Shanxi Province

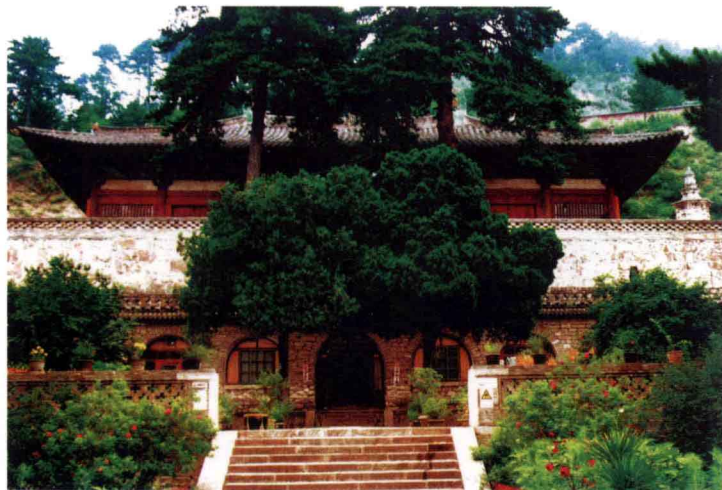
**Construction Year:** the 11th Year of Dazhong Period in the Tang Dynasty (857)

**Dimension:** height of 14 meters, long-side length of 7 rooms or 34 meters, short-side length of 4 rooms or 17.66 meters



The Foguang Temple is located in the mountain fields of Dou Village, Wutai County, Shanxi Province. Its Great East Hall was built in 857 AD. It is both the largest existing wooden structure from the Tang Dynasty and the oldest existing wooden hall in China.

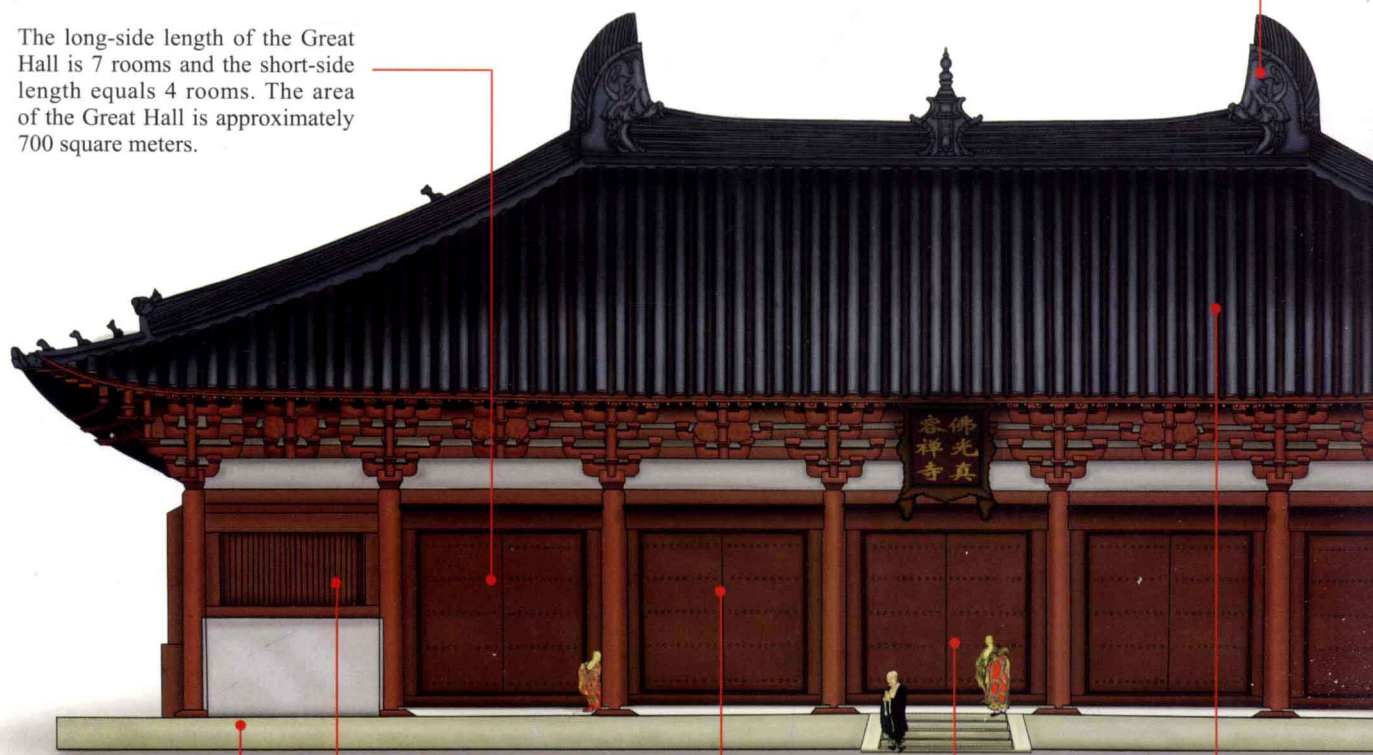
The hall enjoys a simple and solemn shape, as well as a grand and magnificent grace. The great dougong brackets, as well as the simple and mighty frames, own typical features of the Tang Dynasty. Especially the use of dougong brackets could be considered as marvelous craftsmanship excelling the nature. The inside of the great hall is broad and open. The beams and pillars are firm and neat, full of inherent strain. A group of well-shaped Buddhist sculptures from the Tang Dynasty is completely preserved inside the hall. These precious sculptures are gems of the Chinese ancient art, just like the great hall.



■ The Great East Hall is built on the platform at the third stage of Foguang Temple. Its façade gives people a graceful and simple aesthetic feeling.

The grand tile ornamentations in the shape of the Chinese legendary animal Chiwen (on both sides of the main ridge) add some solemnity to the hall.

The long-side length of the Great Hall is 7 rooms and the short-side length equals 4 rooms. The area of the Great Hall is approximately 700 square meters.



The base of the hall is big and deep.

The plate doors and mullion windows are simple in their styles and have clear architectural features of the Tang Dynasty.

The façade of the Great hall is solemn and stable, implying a sense of stateliness.

The plain strip-shaped tile ridges on the roof display a sense of gravity.





## Mount Wutai and Foguang Temple

Mount Wutai is one of the four sacred mountains in the Chinese Buddhism. It got its name because of its five peaks similar to "terraces made of earth". People began to build Buddhist temples here in the Eastern Han Dynasty and the construction of temples was never ceased in the following dynasties. It is said that there were more than 360 temples in Mount Wutai in its heyday. Presently, there are about 100 temples too.

The Foguang Temple is one of the ten most famous temples in the history of Mount Wutai. It was initially built during the ruling period of Emperor Xiaowen in the Northern Wei Dynasty (471-499) and was destroyed in the ruling period of Emperor Wu of the Tang Dynasty before being rebuilt later. The main part of the temple is built against the mountain and faces the west. Apart from the Great East Hall, there are also the Zushi Pagoda with the architectural styles of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the Pavilion of Sutras from the Tang Dynasty, the Hall of Manjusri built at the beginning of the Jin Dynasty and other precious structures in the temple.

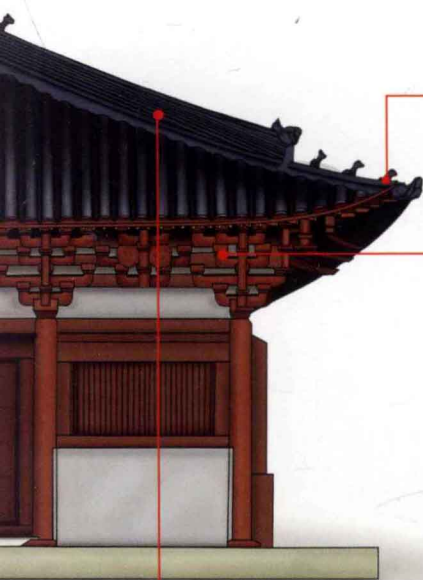


■ The Great East Hall of Foguang Temple has the dougong brackets with the largest number of layers and the longest extension among all the existing ancient structures in China. Their combination pattern is comparatively more advanced with two layers of "ang" (wedge-shaped wooden strips). People watching from a distance can see that the grand and strong dougong brackets are placed upon each other layer by layer. They are extended outward and upward so that they can fill the space under the eaves and catch people's attention.

### The Discovery of the Great East Hall Story Corner of Foguang Temple

Japanese scholars were the earliest to review and research the ancient Chinese architecture with modern scientific viewpoints. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Japanese scholars thought that there were no wooden structures from the Tang Dynasty in China.

In the 1930s, Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, Liu Dunzhen and other Chinese scholars began to make field reviews of the remaining ancient architectures in China. Liang Sicheng learnt that there was a temple in Mount Wutai sharing the same name with the famous Foguang Temple in the Tang Dynasty by studying the documents and fine arts materials in Dunhuang. Are they the same structure? Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin and other people, whose hearts were filled with hope and longing, took the donkey-pulled carriage and bumped in the lofty mountains and high ranges of Mount Wutai, starting the search for the sacred temple in their hearts. After arduous surveys, the mist of history finally faded away: the Great East Hall of Foguang Temple in Mount Wutai was just a wooden structure from the Tang Dynasty! At that time, the Japanese invaders launched the war of invading North China and the famous "July 7 Incident" broke out.

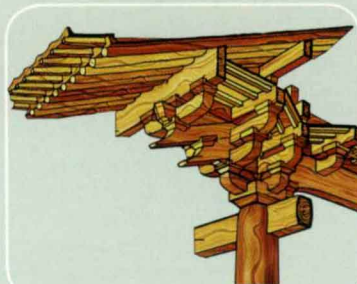


The prominent projecting eaves create a spatial perception and delicate beauty.

The dougong brackets are grand and exquisite, showing the profile of a powerful country.

The roof slopes gently with clear tile marks.

### Dougong Brackets



They are the most representative components of the ancient Chinese architecture. They were called "puzuo" in the Song Dynasty. They are mainly formed by overlapping and interlocking some wooden strips (gong) and wooden blocks (dou). Some complicated dougong brackets also have a kind of inclined wedge-shaped wooden strips named "ang". The dougong brackets are mainly installed between the column top and eaves and their function is to support the projecting eaves and highlight the status of the structure.

### Brief Background





# BIG WILD GOOSE PAGODA

Vision Platform



**Location:** Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province

**Construction Year:** the Chang'an Period of the Zhou Dynasty founded by Empress Wu Zetian (701-704)

**Dimension:** height of 59.9 meters, side length of 25 meters



The Big Wild Goose Pagoda is also known as the Pagoda of Ci'en Temple. It is a 7-storey pavilion-shaped brick pagoda located in the city of Xi'an. It was initially built in the 3rd year of Yonghui Period in the Tang Dynasty (652). The construction of the pagoda was prepared by Master Xuanzang, abbot of the Ci'en Temple, to preserve the Buddhist sutras he took from India. The existing Big Wild Goose Pagoda was rebuilt during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian.

The pagoda is built on a big and wide square base which is 4.2 meters in height and 48 meters in side length. It takes a square shape and gradually gets thinner from bottom to top. The exterior is decorated with simple wood-simulation carvings. Inside the pagoda body there are floors and staircases, through which people can climb the pagoda. Its entire style is vigorous, powerful, graceful and fresh. With a solemn and lofty religious circumstance, it is a typical representative of the structures from the Tang Dynasty.



■ An exquisite line-carved picture of Buddhist hall of the Tang Dynasty was preserved on the lintel of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda's gate. It provides important historical materials for the study of the evolution of wooden structures in the early and middle period of the Tang Dynasty.



## Do You Know?

### The Rise and Decline of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda

In the history, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda went through several rises and declines. It was only a 5-storey solid pagoda when it was initially built in the 3rd Year of Yonghui Period in the Tang Dynasty (652). During the reign of Empress Wu Zetian, it was rebuilt into a 10-storey hollow pavilion-shaped brick pagoda. Later it was damaged in the war with the top three floors being destroyed. After several repairs in the Five Dynasties and the Ming Dynasty, the current shape of the pagoda was formed.

In the Tang Dynasty, the Pagoda of Ci'en Temple was a place of interest where both royal families and ordinary civilians could climb high to fully enjoy the beautiful scenes of Chang'an. Especially in the middle and late period of the Tang Dynasty, the scholars having newly passed the state-level imperial exams must ascend the Big Wild Goose Pagoda to watch the wonderful scenes of Chang'an, write poems and give their autographs after attending the dinner held by the emperor – this is the said "giving autographs in the Big Wild Goose Pagoda".

Nowadays, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda has become the symbol of the ancient city Xi'an.

## Ci'en Temple

The Ci'en Temple was originally called Wulou Temple. It was initially established in the Sui Dynasty. In the 22nd Year of Zhenguan Period in the Tang Dynasty (648), the crown prince Li Zhi, who later became Emperor Gao of Tang, expanded this temple to commemorate his dead mother Empress Wende. He also gave this temple the name as "Big Ci'en Temple", which meant that Li Zhi wanted to requite his benevolent mother's favor of raising him. According to the record, the temple was very magnificent and luxurious at that time. It had 1897 rooms. After being built, Master Xuanzang was invited to take the abbot of the temple, where he explained the Buddhist doctrines of Vijnaptimātratā School and the like. Thus it is considered the "ancestor temple" (the original place) of the Vijnaptimātratā School. The existing halls and their layout are a result of rebuilding in the Ming Dynasty.



The exterior wall of each floor has square brick wood-imitation columns.

The comparatively smaller brick arches form a sharp contrast with the massive and right-angled pagoda body.

Each floor has corbelled projecting eaves (the bricks overlap each other and are extended layer by layer). The corners of the eaves take the shape of a serrated edge.

The bluestone lintels, frames and thresholds of the arches on the four sides of the bottom floor are decorated with line carvings of the Tang Dynasty.



## Dense-eave Pagodas and Pavilion-shaped Pagodas

They are the two most common types of ancient Buddhist pagodas in China. The "pavilion-shaped pagoda" is similar to a pavilion and people usually can climb to every floor of it. The "dense-eave pagoda" has overlapping and dense eaves and the space between every two eaves is much smaller than the ordinary floor. Thus people cannot climb the pagoda floor by floor.

The top of the pagoda takes the shape of a decent and simple sacred bottle.

There are wooden staircases inside the pagoda leading to the top floor.

The exterior of the pagoda was covered with rubbed bricks when it was repaired in the Ming Dynasty.

Brick arches are opened on the four sides of each floor, through which people can lean against the railings and look far into the distance.

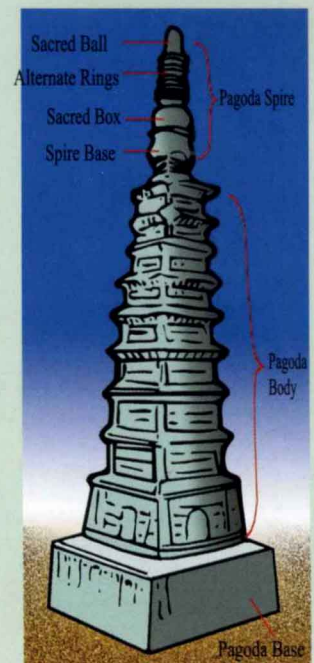
Each of the four sides of the pagoda's first floor is more than 25 meters long. The base is solid and firm.

The shape of the pagoda is grand, decent, simple, unsophisticated, stable and firm.

## General Knowledge

### The Names of the Pagoda's Different Parts

A pagoda is fundamentally divided into three parts: the pagoda base, the pagoda body and the pagoda spire. The pagoda spire usually consists of a base, a sacred box, alternate rings and so on. The specific styles of pagoda body's different parts vary significantly with times and locations.





# SAINT MOTHER HALL OF JINCI TEMPLE

**Location:** Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province

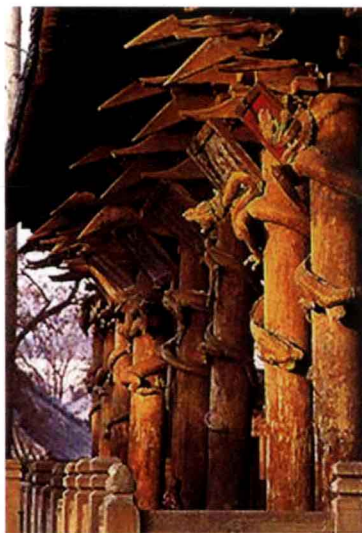
**Construction Year:** initially built in the Tiansheng Period of the Northern Song Dynasty (1023-1032), rebuilt in the 1st Year of Chongning Period (1102)

**Dimension:** height of 19 meters, long-side length of 7 rooms, short-side length of 6 rooms



The Saint Mother Hall is the oldest existing structure of Jinci Temple. It was built in the Northern Song Dynasty and thus has typical features of the structures from the Song Dynasty. The hall, which is solemn and stately, is established on a big and wide stone base. "Surrounding Corridors" are set up around the hall. The front corridor is very deep. The eight columns in the corridor are decorated with carvings of curled-up dragons. The double-layer eaves highly turn upward and the dougong brackets are majestic and simple. The inside of the hall is very tall and open. The statue of "Saint Mother", i.e. Tang Shuyu's mother Yi Jiang, was erected and worshipped in the center of the hall. There are 42 statues of her ladies-in-waiting standing on her left and right sides. All of them are the original artifacts from the Song Dynasty.

The Saint Mother Hall of Jinci Temple is the only existing structure from the Song Dynasty with "dragon-twined columns". The front of the hall has eight columns, each of which has an exquisitely-carved curled-up dragon twined around it. The livid and clear-cut dragons raise their heads highly and take different poses. These dragon-carved corridor columns look very majestic, adding sacred and solemn air to the grand hall.



## Vision Platform

## Jinci Temple

Also called "Tang Shuyu Temple", it is located at the foot of Xuanweng Mountain which is 25 kilometers southwest of Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province.

"Shuyu" was the second son of Emperor Wu of Zhou. He was titled as the "Marquis of Tang" and his fiefdom, the State of Tang, was in the present-day Shanxi Province. The Marquis of Tang was diligent in governance and loved his people. Therefore people built this temple to commemorate him. Later, the State of Tang changed its name into "Jin" because of the "Jinshui" River flowing across it. The Tang Shuyu Temple was built in the place which was the source of Jinshui River. Therefore it was also called the "Temple of Lord Jin" or "Jinci Temple" in short.

The Jinci Temple has a long history. It was initially built before the Northern Wei Dynasty and went through reconstructions and expansions in all the following dynasties. In the present-day Jinci Temple there are memorial archways, towers above gates, opera stages, stupas, Wenchang Palace, Xian Hall, Yu Zhao & Fei Liang, Saint Mother Hall and so on. An old tree named Zhou Bai and the famous Nanlao Spring can be found inside the temple as well. They have already become a temple-related architectural complex with the styles of gardens. The Saint Mother Hall is the largest and most important structure in the entire Jinci Temple.



The appearance of the Saint Mother Hall



There is a square pool named "Yu Zhao" (Fish Pool) in front of the Saint Mother Hall. A cross-shaped bridge is built above the pool, which connects the four banks of the pool. The bridge is called "Fei Liang" (Flying Bridge). The pool and the bridge form a platform in front of the grand hall and artfully create a changeful spatial circumstance. This well-shaped stone bridge was occasionally shown in the paintings of ancient China while this is the only object.



The corridor columns are sparsely distributed so the place is not cramped or crowded.



## Do You Know?



### The Architecture in the Song Dynasty

The construction skills of the architecture in the Song Dynasty got a very significant progress. The construction style is beautiful, delicate and exquisite. The large constructions have complicated dimensions and are full of changes and flexibilities. Compared with the structures in the Tang Dynasty, the structures in the Song Dynasty have a kind of feminine beauty.

## Brief Background



### Surrounding Corridor

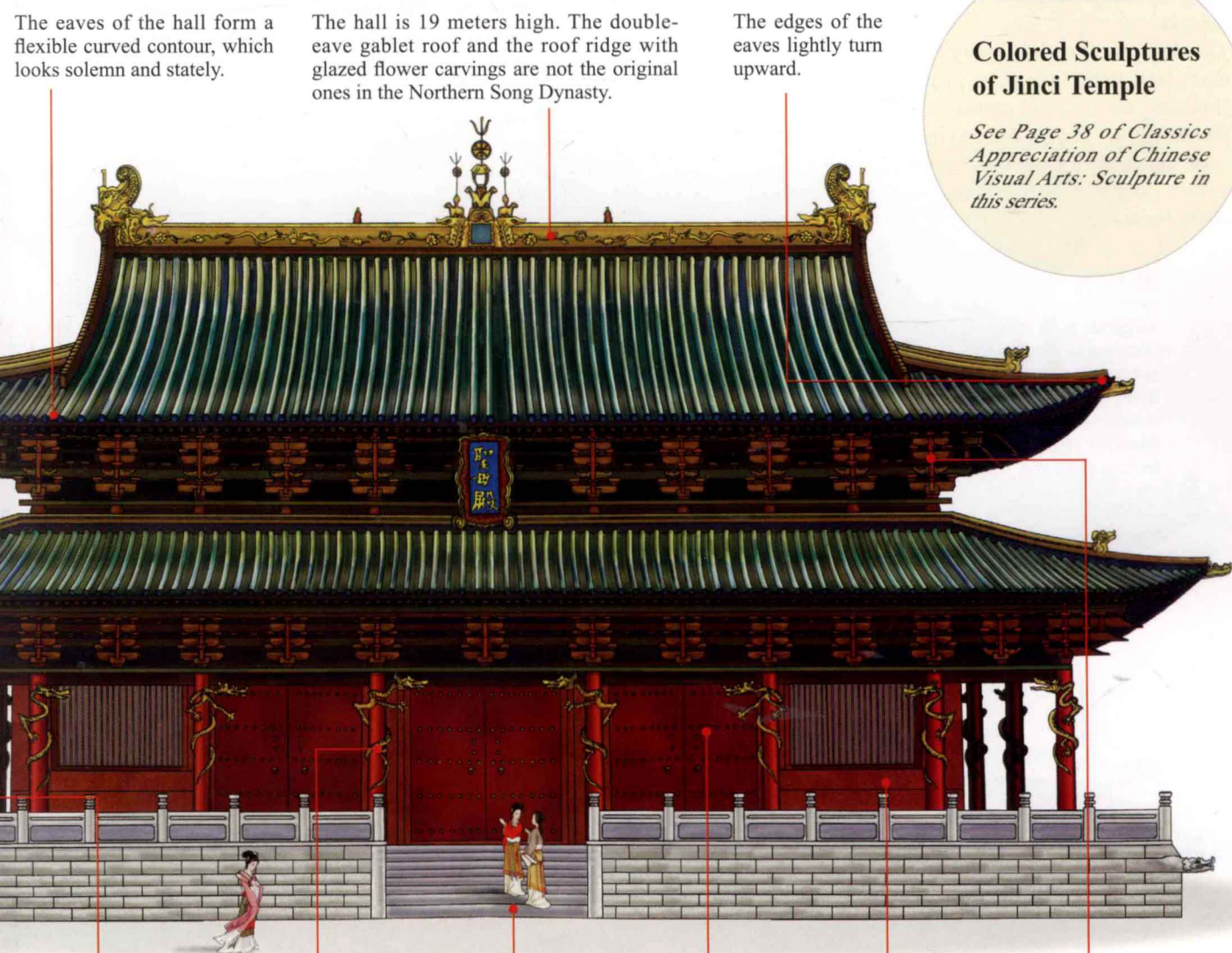
It is also called "Fu Jie Zhou Za" (literally meaning the surrounding peripheral steps). It is a kind of structure in the ancient Chinese architecture. The "Fu Jie" refers to the peripheral corridor of the building and the "Zhou Za" means surrounding. The whole phrase refers to the peripheral corridor that surrounds the four sides of the main part of the building. It could increase the size of the construction and enrich the shape of the structure. In addition, it makes the construction look tall and grand. In ancient China, only a few high-class buildings were allowed to use this pattern. The Saint Mother Hall of Jinci Temple is the earliest existing ancient structure with "surrounding corridors" in China.

## Quick Link



### Colored Sculptures of Jinci Temple

See Page 38 of *Classics Appreciation of Chinese Visual Arts: Sculpture in this series.*



The eaves of the hall form a flexible curved contour, which looks solemn and stately.

The hall is 19 meters high. The double-eave gabled roof and the roof ridge with glazed flower carvings are not the original ones in the Northern Song Dynasty.

The edges of the eaves lightly turn upward.

Cloisters are set up around the area under the eaves.

Vivid wooden curled-up dragons are carved on the corridor columns.

The stone-made base is very solid.

The long-side length equals 7 rooms while the short-side length reaches 6 rooms.

The front corridor has a big short-side length and thus it is very wide.

Huge dougong brackets are used under the eaves to support the prominent projecting eaves.



# GUANYIN PAVILION OF DULE TEMPLE

**Location:** Ji County, Tianjin

**Construction Year:** the 2nd Year of Tonghe Period in the Liao Dynasty (984)

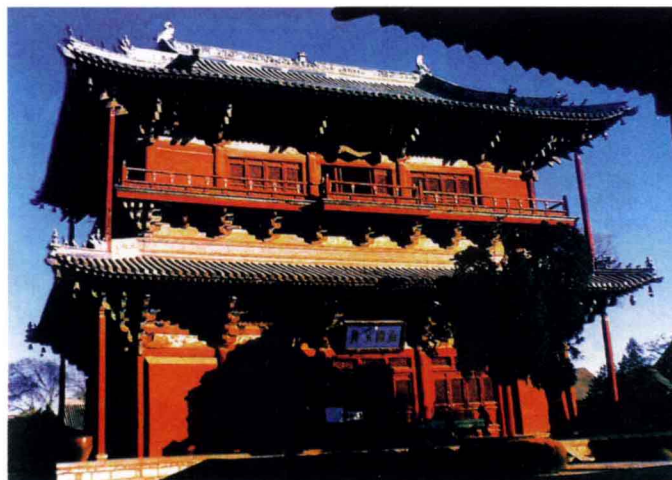
**Dimension:** height of 23 meters, long-side length of 5 rooms or 20 meters, short-side length of 4 rooms or 14 meters.



The Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Temple in Ji County, Tianjin is the earliest existing pavilion in China. It was famous for the statue of Guanyin Bodhisattva (Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit) inside it. It has prominent projecting eaves and grand dougong brackets. Though it was built in the Liao Dynasty, it still retained the features of the architecture of the Tang Dynasty, which is majestic, striking, tall and straight.

The designers of the Guanyin Pavilion exclusively exercised their inventive minds. Judged from the structure, the pavilion seems to have only two floors. But actually it can be divided into three parts: the first floor, the hidden floor and the top floor. The setup of hidden floor greatly improved the anti-seismic ability of the building.

Inside the Guanyin Pavilion there is a hexagonal space that connects the upper part to the lower part. A 16-meter-high standing statue of One-thousand-hand Guanyin is erected and worshipped there. People can not only worship and look up at the statue on the first floor, but also climb to the upper floor to watch the delicate statue. The head of the One-thousand-hand Guanyin statue has ten smaller Buddha heads, which have gentle and solemn expressions and look very mysterious in the dim light inside the pavilion. It is said to be the tallest existing Guanyin statue in China. Given the deformation of Guanyin's face for people who look up at the statue, the craftsmen purposely made the statue incline forward when building it.



In the past 1000 years, the Guanyin Pavilion went through several big earthquakes but still remained standing, containing a striking and imposing force.



The roof slopes gently and looks simple, light and stretched.

The double-layer eaves and the central cloister-like projecting platform (flat seats) are supported by dougong brackets.



said that An Lushan staged the revolt against the Tang Dynasty here. He wanted to monopolize the joy in the world and therefore changed the temple's name into "Dule Temple" (Temple of Solitary Joy). The gate tower of the temple is also a construction from the Liao Dynasty. It has sturdy peripheral columns, majestic dougong brackets and prominent projecting eaves. It is the oldest existing building with a hip roof in China. The study into the Guanyin Pavilion marked the start of the Chinese modern and contemporary architecture history.

Vision Platform



## Dule Temple

The Dule Temple is located inside Ji County, Tianjin. It was estimated to be initially built in the Tang Dynasty. The folk legends



### Do You Know?



## The Architecture in the Liao Dynasty

The architecture in the early Liao Dynasty was deeply influenced by the architecture from the Tang Dynasty. The constructions were grand and majestic. The details of constructions had some features of the architecture from the Five Dynasties. In the middle and late period, the architecture of the Song Dynasty began to influence the constructions in the Liao Dynasty, which gradually became refined and delicate.

The columns among first, hidden and top floors are not the same straight columns; instead, they are independent from each other. Among them, the columns supporting the hidden floor and the top floor are established on the dougong brackets of the floors below them. This construction pattern was called "Forked Column Construction" in the ancient times.

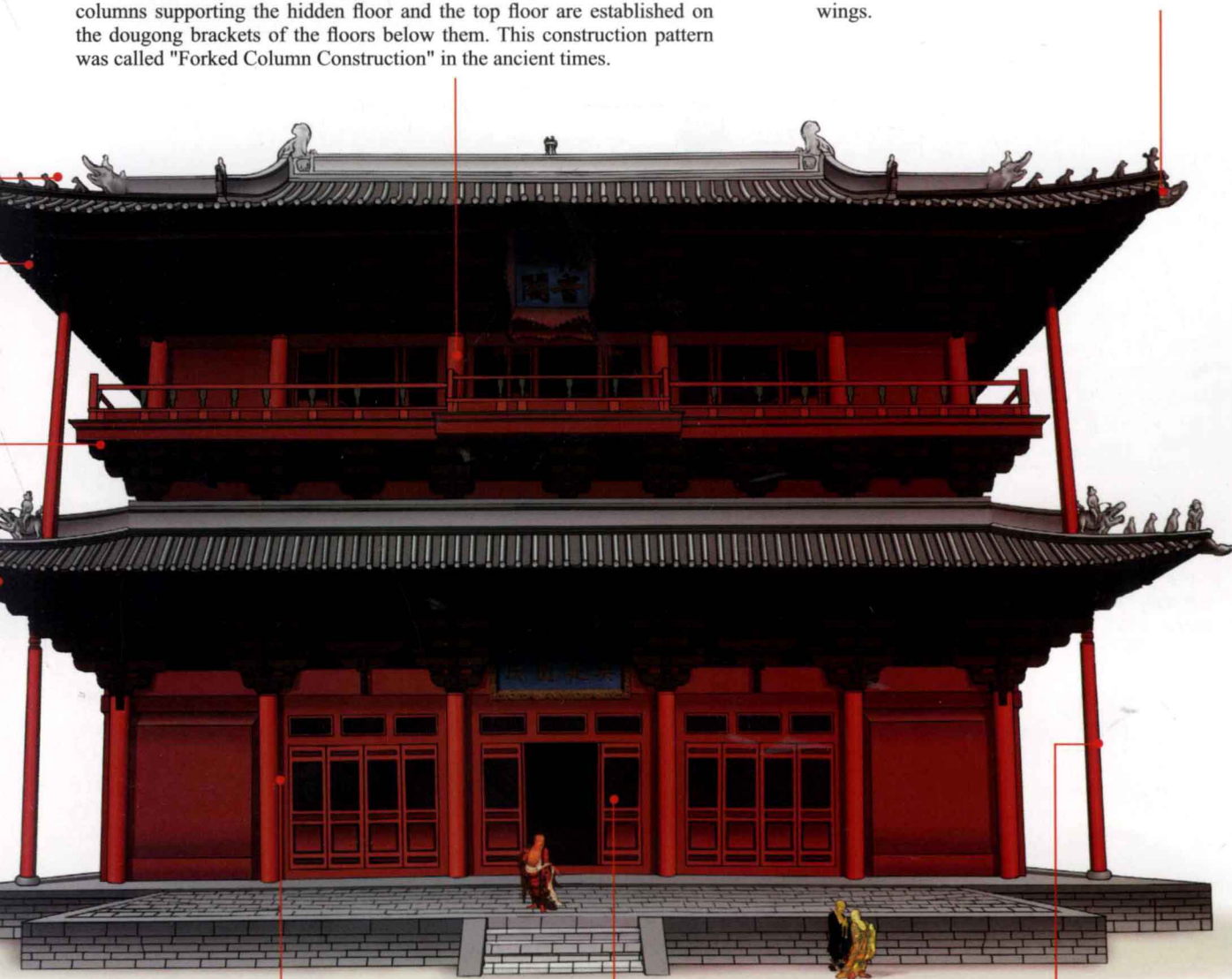
### Brief Background



## Pavilions

In ancient China, the wooden structures with two floors or more were called pavilions. They first came out in the Spring and Autumn Period and began to be popular in the Western Han Dynasty. They had become very common by the Eastern Han Dynasty. After the Three-Kingdom Period, the pavilions were combined with towers and got great development. From then on, a lot of famous pavilions were built in different dynasties. These grand and magnificent buildings were mainly used in the palaces and temples.

The dougong brackets at the corners support the eaves, making them look like unfolded wings.



The pavilion is 23 meters high from bottom to top and 43 meters away from the gate tower of the temple. This distance gives the best visual angle to watch the Guanyin Pavilion from the gate tower.

The entire construction is stable and solemn. It seems to contain unlimited power.

People of later generations worried that the eaves which projected too much might collapse, so they specially added columns (eave-supporting columns) to support the eaves at the corners.



# WOODEN PAGODA IN YING COUNTY

**Location:** Ying County, Shanxi Province

**Construction Year:** the 2nd Year of Qingning Period in the Liao Dynasty (1056)

**Dimension:** height of 67 meters, bottom diameter of 30 meters



The Wooden Pagoda in Ying County was originally called the "Shakya Pagoda of Fogong Temple". It was built in the 2nd Year of Qingning Period in the Liao Dynasty (1056). Its total height reaches 67 meters. It is the only existing big wooden ancient pagoda in China and also the highest existing wooden structure in the world.

The pagoda takes the shape of a pavilion. From the outside people can see 5 floors but actually the pagoda has additional 4 hidden floors inside it. Therefore it has 9 floors. The pagoda body takes the shape of an octagon and each side is 3 rooms in side length. A circle of wide exterior corridor is added outside the first floor. Each open floor inside the Wooden Pagoda has Buddhist statues consecrated. Plaques of different dynasties are hung under the eaves of each floor. The entire building looks stable and massive, owning an unparalleled momentum.

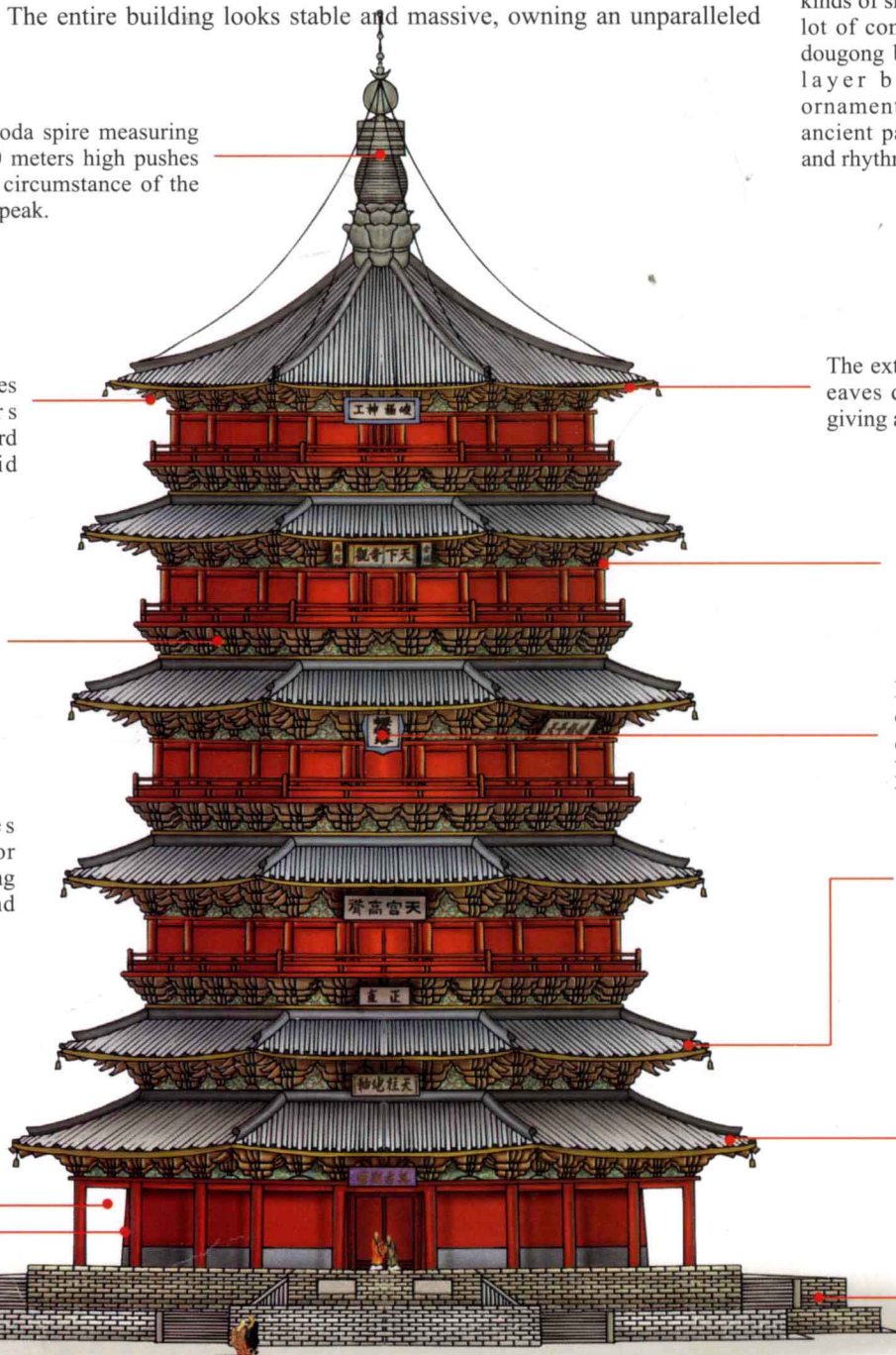
The iron pagoda spire measuring more than 10 meters high pushes the religious circumstance of the pagoda to its peak.

The edges of eaves at the corners slightly turn upward and share a vivid shape.

The body of the pagoda is grand, straight, graceful and majestic.

A cloister twines around the first floor of the pagoda, making it look both open and stable.

The diameter of the bottom floor amounts to 30 meters, largest among all existing ancient pagodas in China.



The dougong brackets of the Wooden Pagoda in Ying County are grand and imposing, showing an extremely moving aesthetic perception. They have numerous kinds of shapes and forms, forming a lot of complicated complexes. The dougong brackets which project out layer by layer have strong ornamental meanings, filling the ancient pagoda with great glamour and rhythms.

The extents of the protrusion of eaves decrease floor by floor, giving a strong sense of rhythm.

There are about 60 kinds of dougong brackets. It is very rare to see such a great variety.

Plaques with inscriptions of famous people from different dynasties are hung on the pagoda body.

The double-layer eaves of the bottom floor are both beautiful and practical.

The plane of the pagoda body is an octagon.

The double-layer stone base, which is more than 4 meters high, is decorated with crouching lions carved in the Liao Dynasty.

