

Cartoons for China's Ancient Science and Technology

Stories of Ancient Architectures

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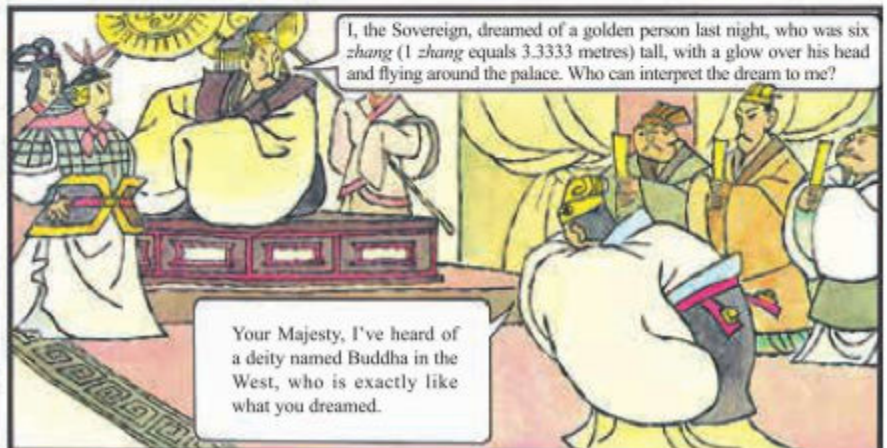
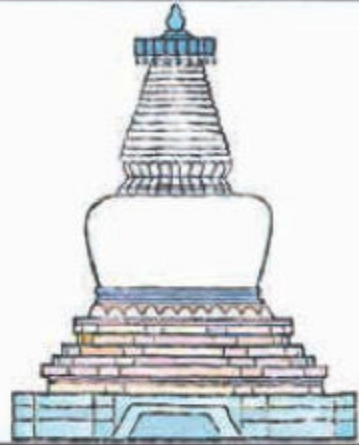
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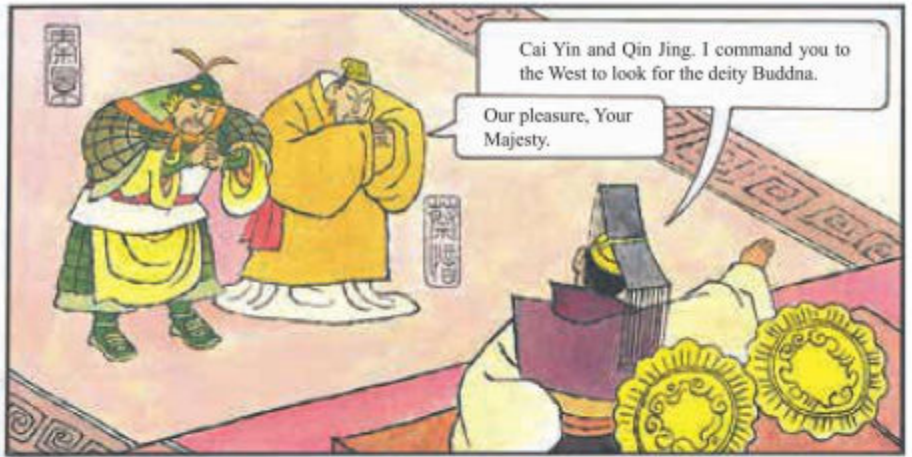
Pagodas and Yu Hao

In about 60 A.D., Emperor Liu Zhuang of the Han Dynasty had a strange dream...



I, the Sovereign, dreamed of a golden person last night, who was six *zhang* (1 *zhang* equals 3.3333 metres) tall, with a glow over his head and flying around the palace. Who can interpret the dream to me?

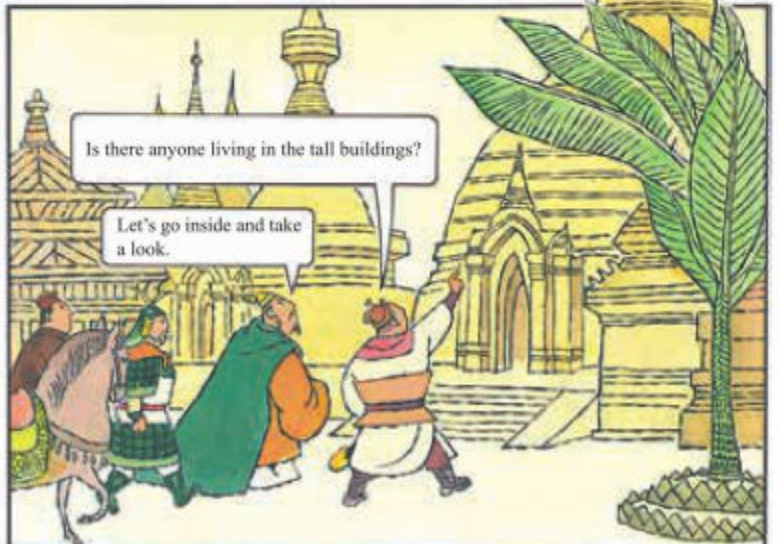
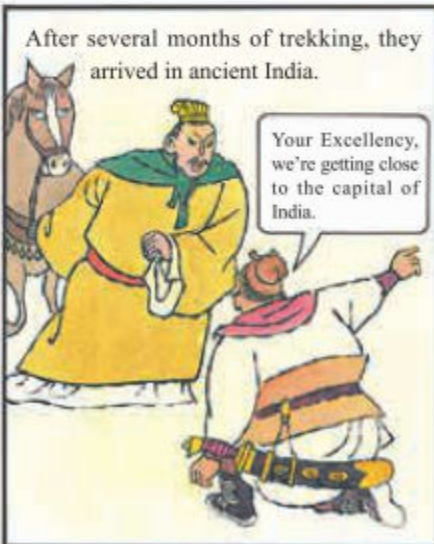
Your Majesty, I've heard of a deity named Buddha in the West, who is exactly like what you dreamed.

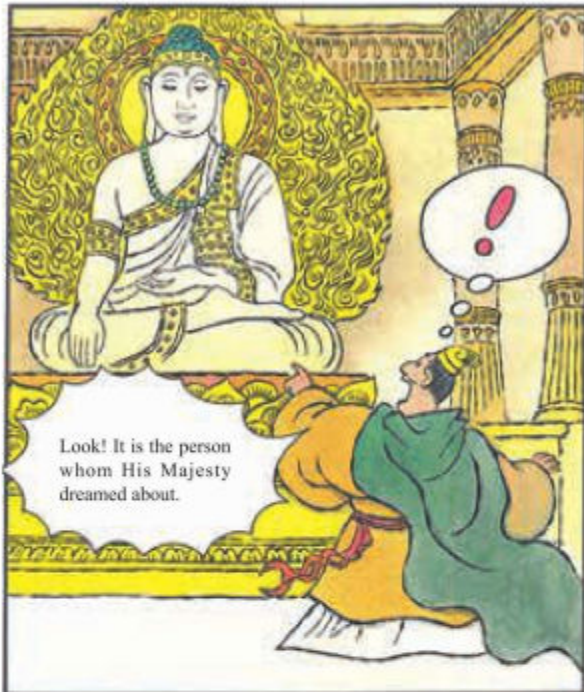


That was the famous "Looking for Buddhist sutras during the Yongping Year" in Chinese Buddhist history, which occurred in 65 A.D..



After several months of trekking, they arrived in ancient India.

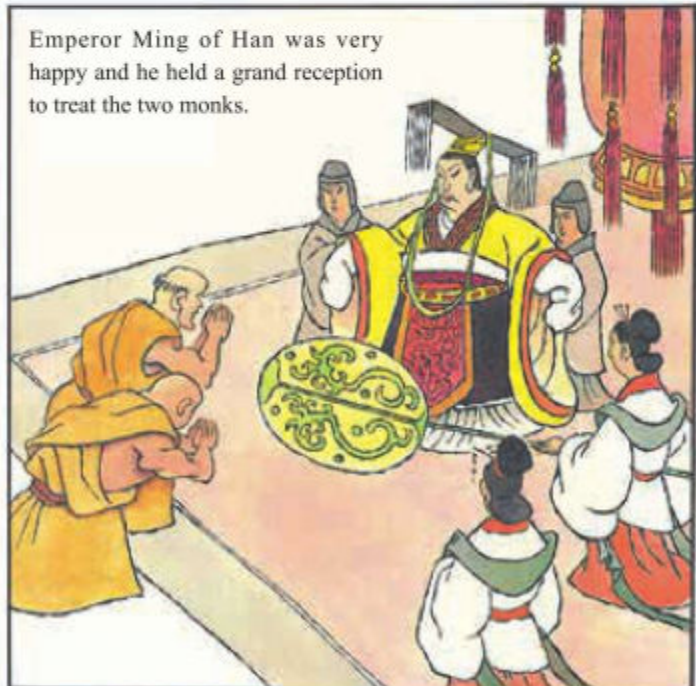
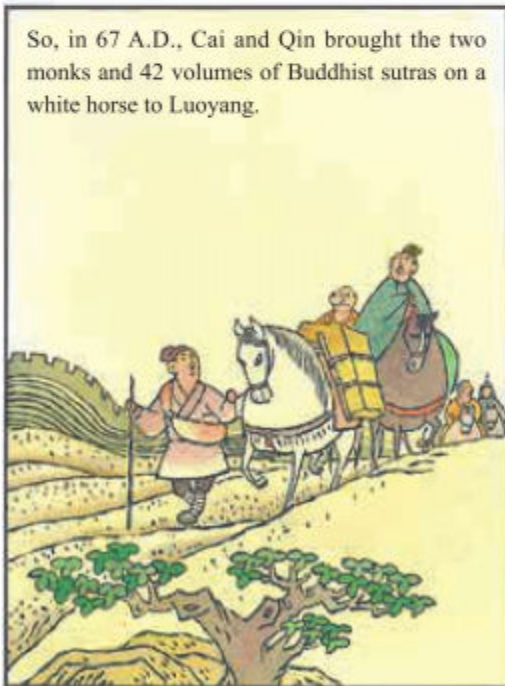
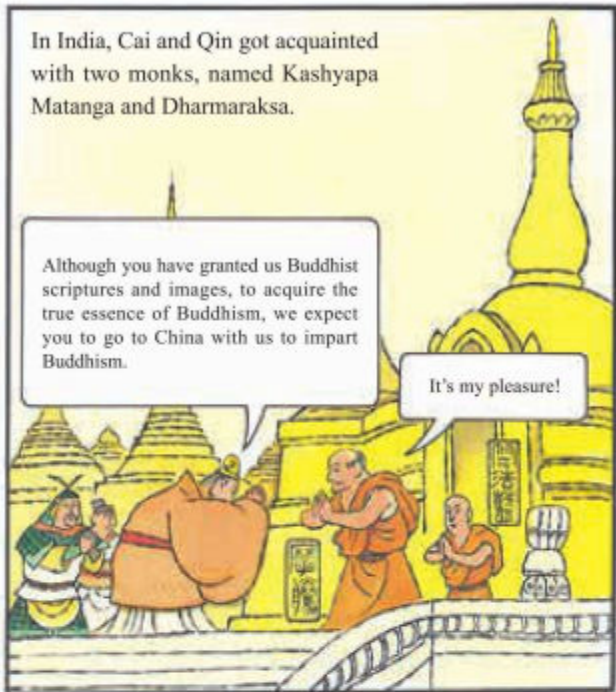




In India, Cai and Qin got acquainted with two monks, named Kashyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksa.

Although you have granted us Buddhist scriptures and images, to acquire the true essence of Buddhism, we expect you to go to China with us to impart Buddhism.

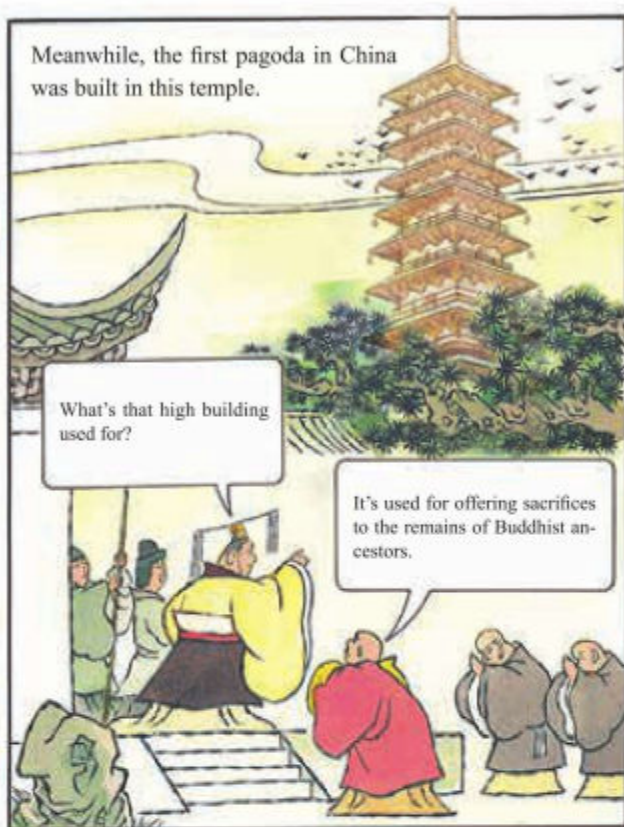
It's my pleasure!



Because the 42 volumes of Buddhist sutras were carried to China by a white horse, a *Baima* (White Horse) Temple was built in Luoyang to commemorate the two monks.



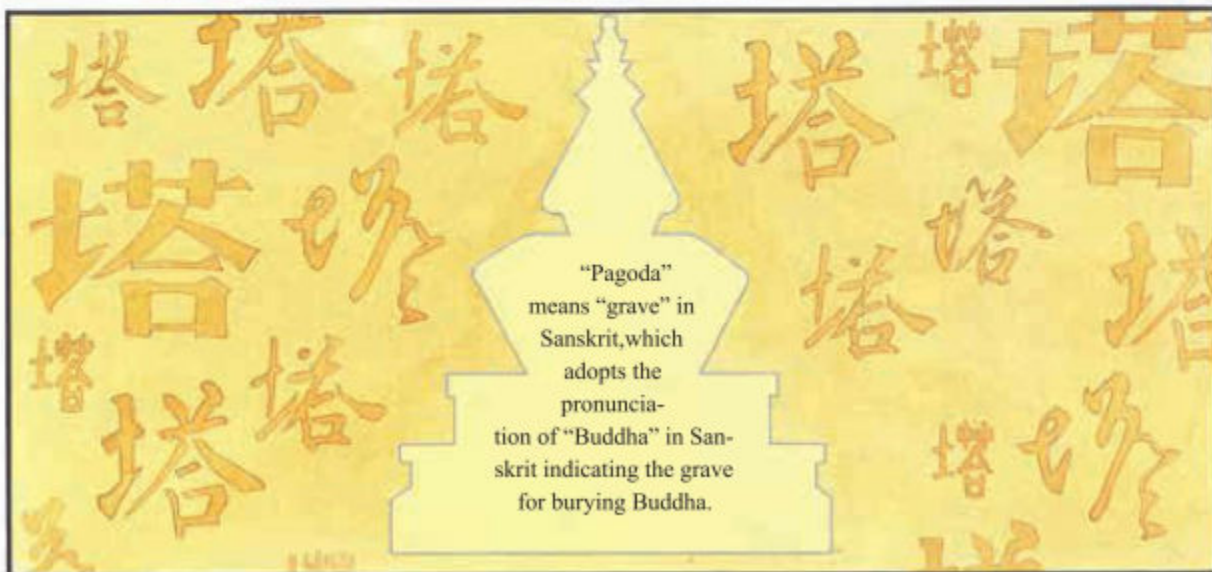
Meanwhile, the first pagoda in China was built in this temple.



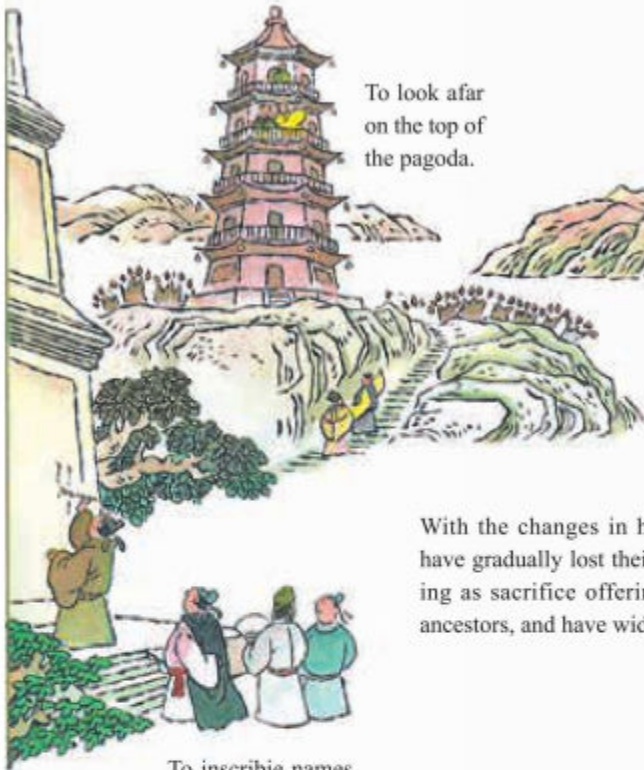
What's that high building used for?

It's used for offering sacrifices to the remains of Buddhist ancestors.

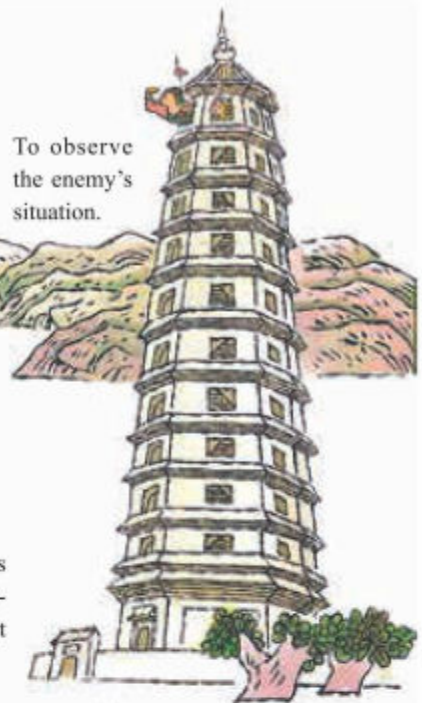
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"Pagoda" means "grave" in Sanskrit, which adopts the pronunciation of "Buddha" in Sanskrit indicating the grave for burying Buddha.



To look afar
on the top of
the pagoda.



To observe
the enemy's
situation.

With the changes in history, pagodas
have gradually lost their original mean-
ing as sacrifice offerings to Buddhist
ancestors, and have wider uses.

To inscribie names
on the pagoda.



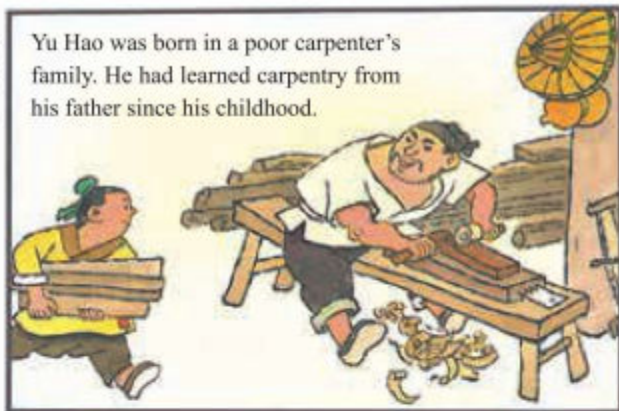
To help navigate
and pilot ships.

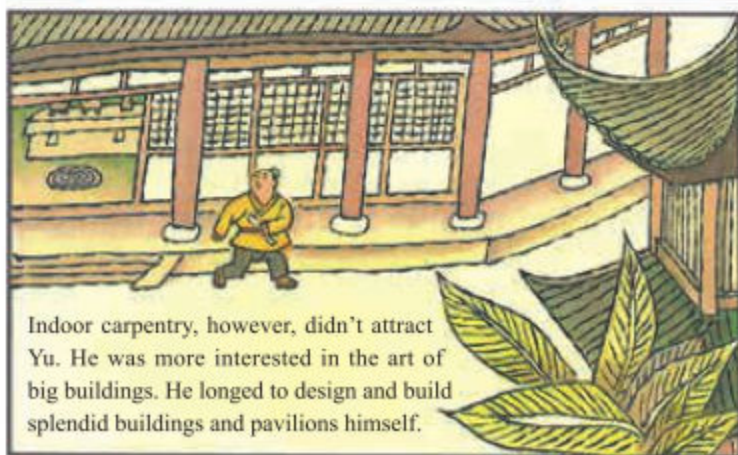
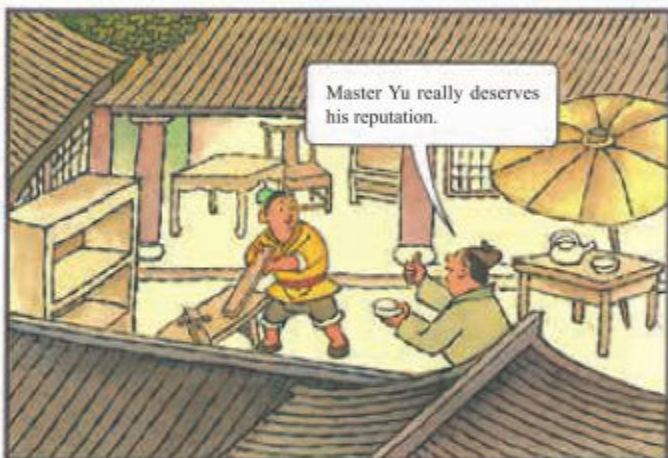
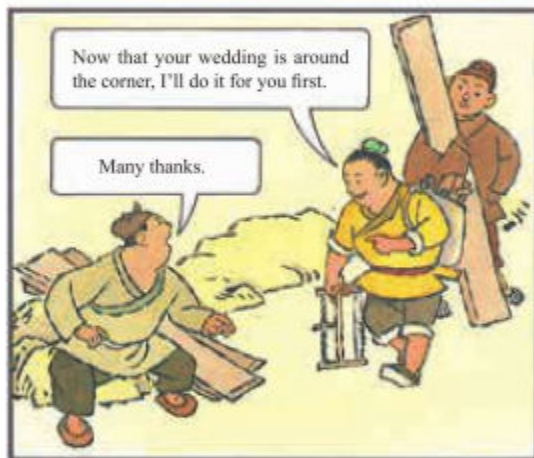
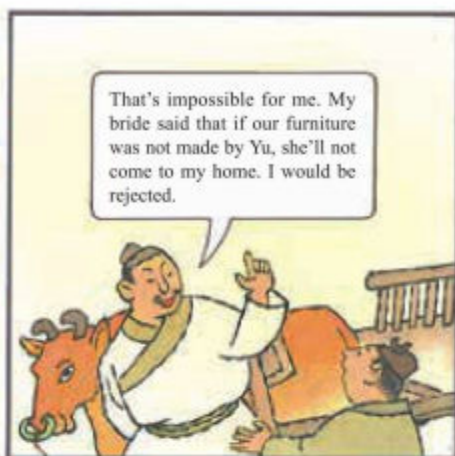
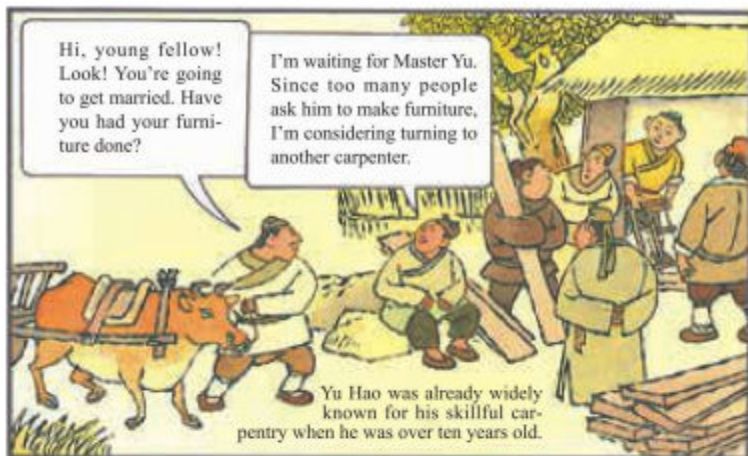


To beautify the land
of the country.



In Chinese history, many pagoda-building experts have emerged. Yu Hao, who lived in the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, was an excellent one among them.





Oh, my god! My sour neck! Why not lie on my back to watch it?

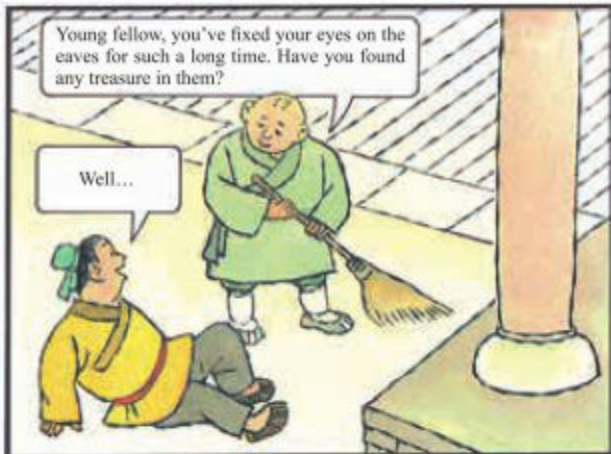


I see, pieces of wood are inlaid together layer upon layer...

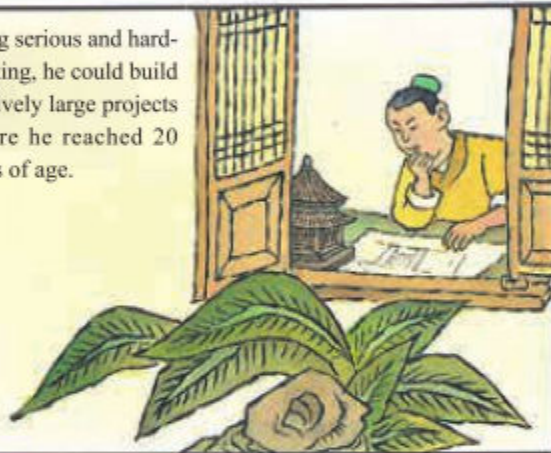


Young fellow, you've fixed your eyes on the eaves for such a long time. Have you found any treasure in them?

Well...

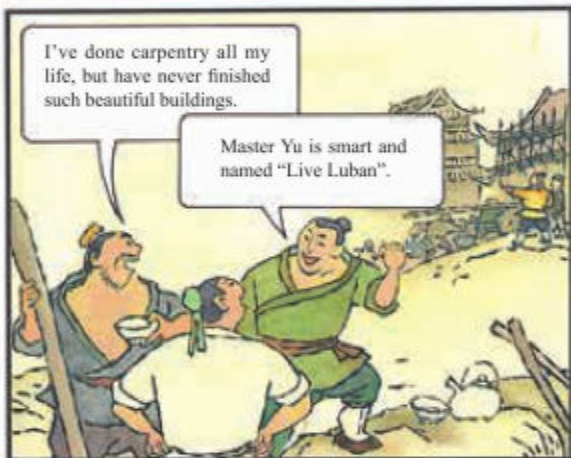


Being serious and hard-working, he could build relatively large projects before he reached 20 years of age.

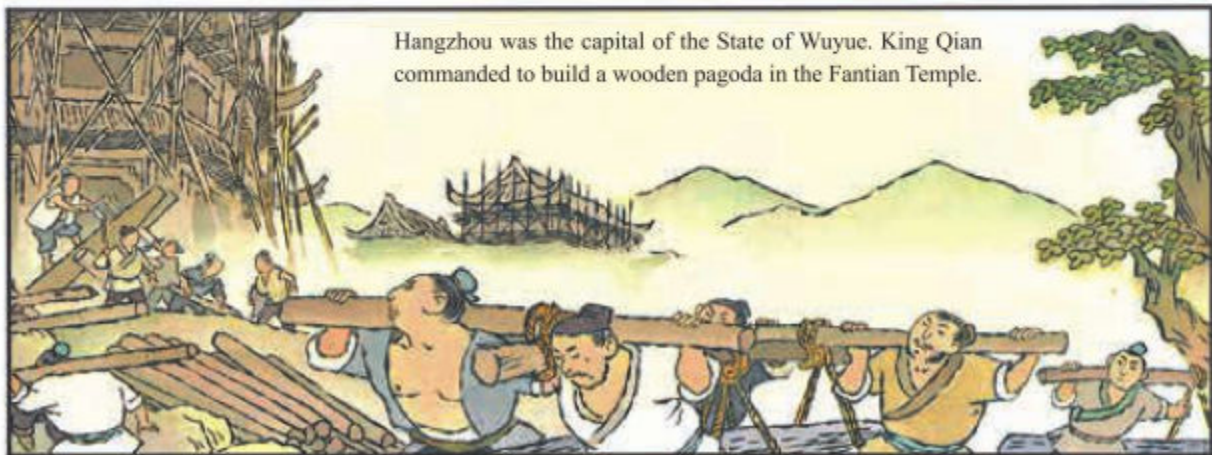


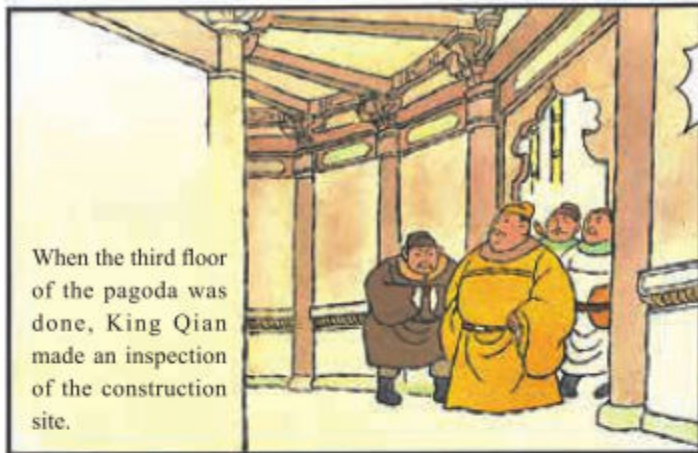
I've done carpentry all my life, but have never finished such beautiful buildings.

Master Yu is smart and named "Live Luban".



Hangzhou was the capital of the State of Wuyue. King Qian commanded to build a wooden pagoda in the Fantian Temple.





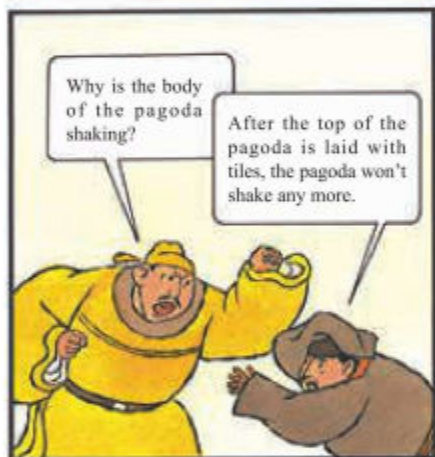
When the third floor of the pagoda was done, King Qian made an inspection of the construction site.



Gosh! How come the ground is shaking?

King, please go down quickly.

Oh, my god! This pagoda is falling down!

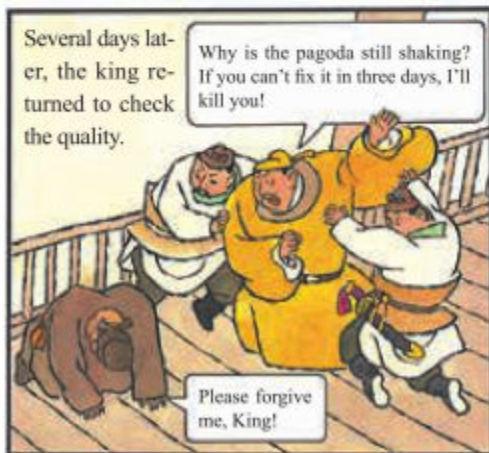


Why is the body of the pagoda shaking?

After the top of the pagoda is laid with tiles, the pagoda won't shake any more.



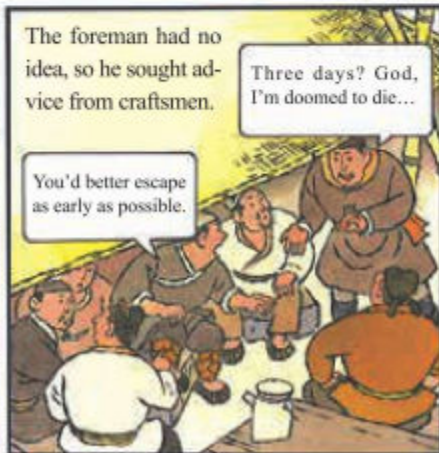
Take action! I'll be back.



Several days later, the king returned to check the quality.

Why is the pagoda still shaking? If you can't fix it in three days, I'll kill you!

Please forgive me, King!



The foreman had no idea, so he sought advice from craftsmen.

You'd better escape as early as possible.

Three days? God, I'm doomed to die...



Why not turn to Yu Hao? Perhaps he has some solutions.

The carpenter went back home and made his wife consult Yu.

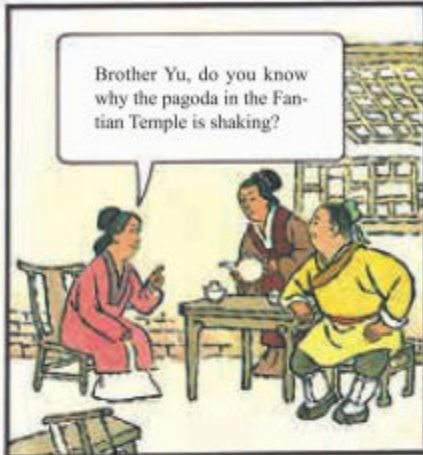
Please go to ask Yu how to solve the problem of the pagoda's shaking.



Is Yu in?



Brother Yu, do you know why the pagoda in the Fantian Temple is shaking?



I have already seen the pagoda. It won't shake as long as wood planks at each layer are nailed tightly to the horizontal beams. The planks were temporarily put up, with inadequate cross tension force. It was the reason why it shook when King Qian stood on it.

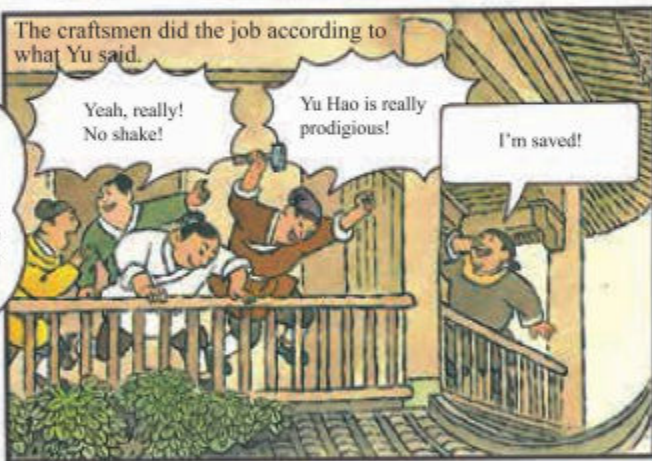


The craftsmen did the job according to what Yu said.

Yeah, really! No shake!

Yu Hao is really prodigious!

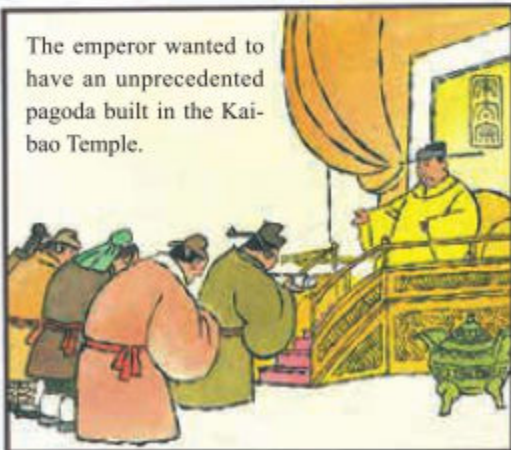
I'm saved!

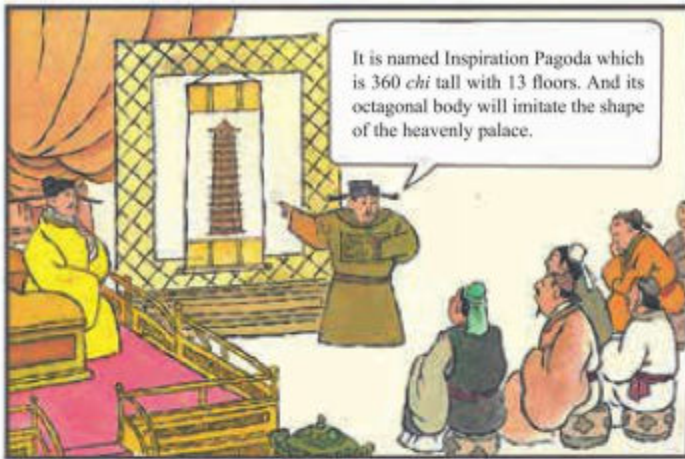


At the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, Emperor Tai Zong went in for large-scale construction in Bianjing (present-day Kaifeng), and had many Buddhist temples built. Yu Hao came to Bianjing in response to the imperial edict.

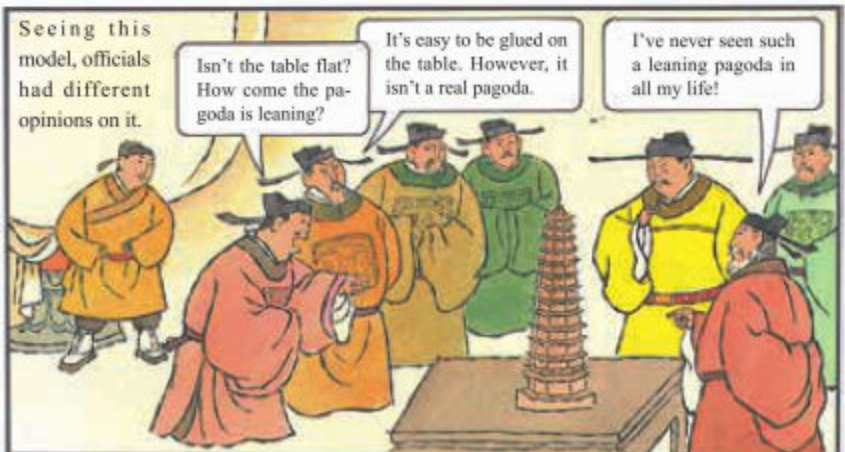
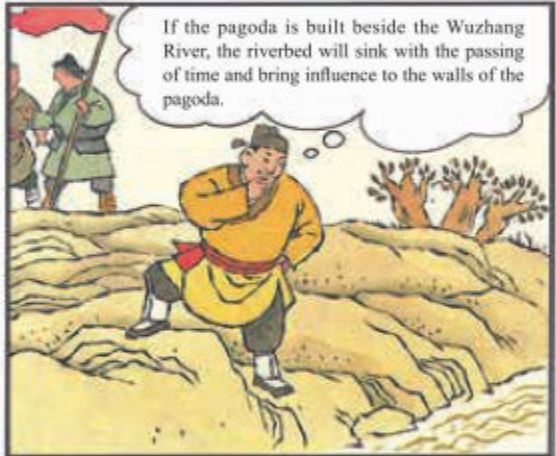


The emperor wanted to have an unprecedented pagoda built in the Kai-bao Temple.





After accepting this task, Yu led a group of craftsmen to make a field investigation survey of the construction site.



Your Majesty, I've designed this leaning pagoda on purpose.

Why?

The ground north of the pagoda is a little bit higher, but with the passing of time and sinking of the Wuzhang's riverbed, the pagoda will gradually return to normal. This pagoda is designed to lean towards the northwest for the reason that northwestern winds will blow it straight. Your Majesty, this is to prolong the pagoda's life.

If many people stand in the leaning pagoda, will it fall down?

The pagoda is entirely inlaid with wood, and it won't fall down with its allowable leaning angle.

Emperor Taizong accepted the plan of the leaning pagoda. Yu Hao immediately took up the job with his craftsmen.

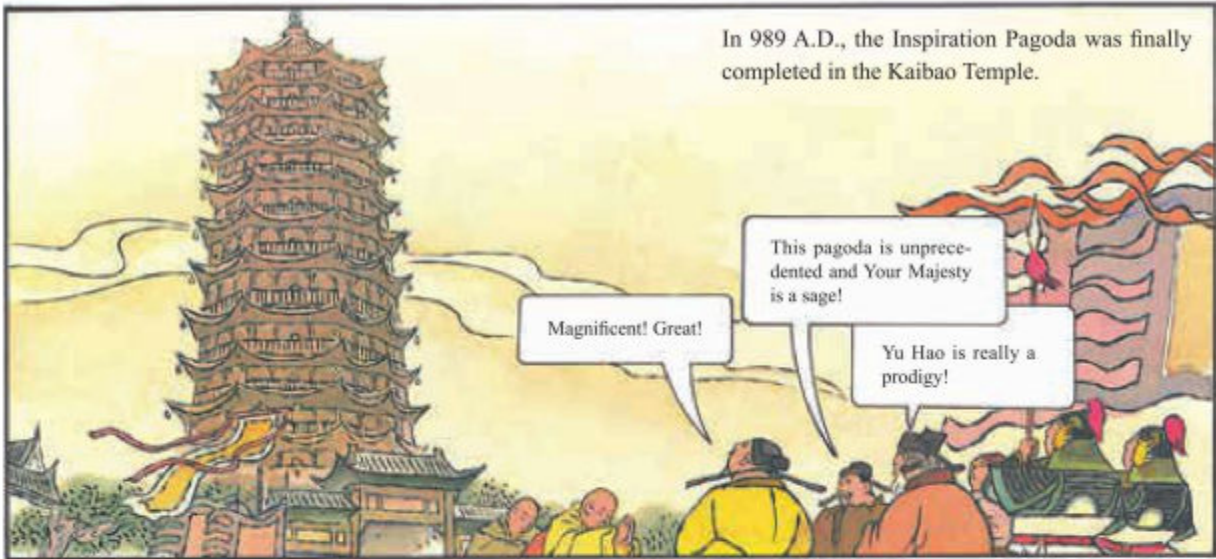
When the pagoda was built to the seventh and eighth floors, its slanting angle was visible to the naked eye.

Oh, my god! I don't feel that this pagoda is leaning on its top. But seen from the foot of it, it is slanting obviously.

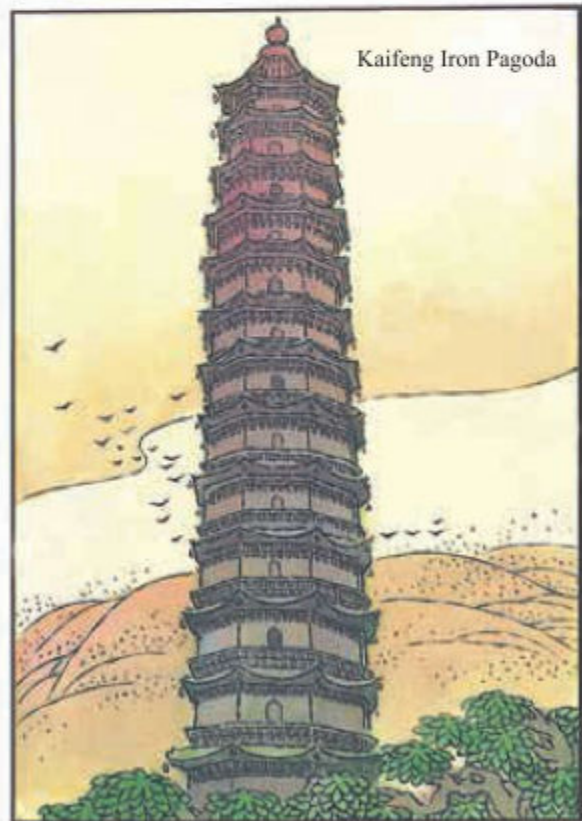
I have three children. I quit!

Coward, Yu is working on the top of the pagoda every day. If the pagoda falls down, why doesn't he run away first?

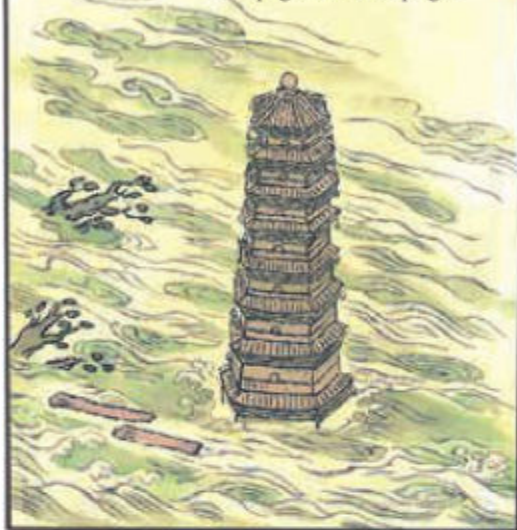
Led by Yu Hao, construction of this project proceeded smoothly.



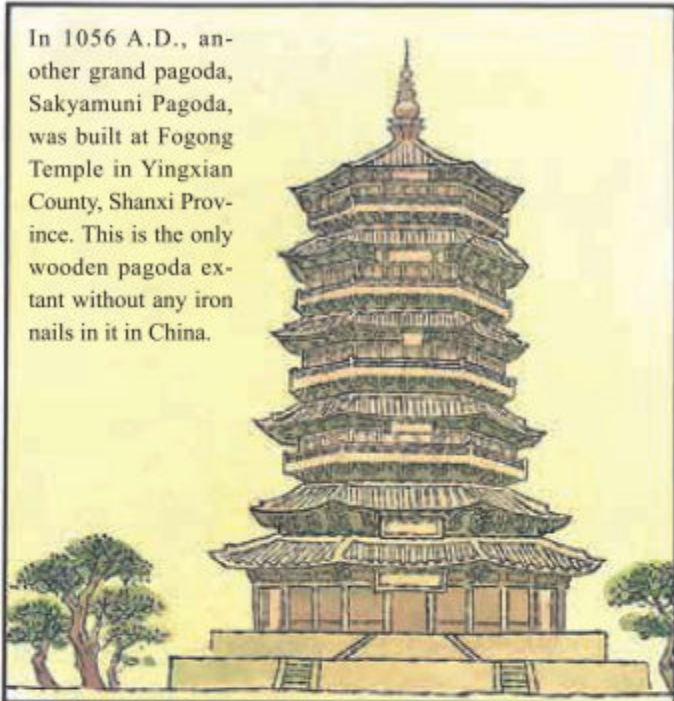
The Inspiration Pagoda, which Yu estimated would stand for seven hundred years, was unfortunately struck by lightning and burned to ashes in 1044 A.D.. The whole state was shocked at the news that the Inspiration Pagoda was ruined. In 1049 A.D., a glazed pagoda, in imitation of the architectural style of the Inspiration Pagoda, was built in the Youguo Temple of Kaifeng. For the pagoda was covered with red-brown glazed tiles, which looked like iron when seen from afar, it was called "Kaifeng Iron Pagoda" for nine hundred years.



In 1841 A.D., the Yellow River ran rampant, and Kaifeng was flooded. Youguo Temple was drowned by water, but only the iron pagoda stood upright.



In 1056 A.D., another grand pagoda, Sakyamuni Pagoda, was built at Fogong Temple in Yingxian County, Shanxi Province. This is the only wooden pagoda extant without any iron nails in it in China.



The Brick Pagoda at Songyue Temple



The Sarira-stupa Stone Pagoda at Qixia Temple



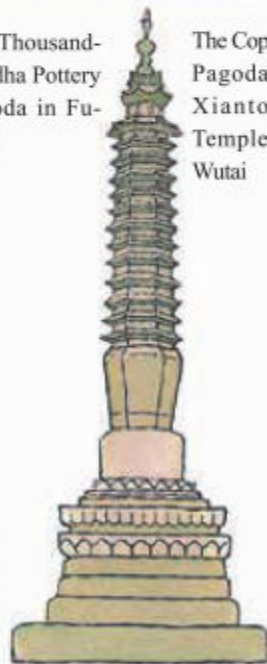
The Glazed Pagoda of Abundant Treasures



The Thousand-Buddha Pottery Pagoda in Fuzhou



The Copper Pagoda at Xiantong Temple in Wutai



Because wooden pagodas were easily corroded, eaten by insects and burnt, many sorts of pagodas made of brick, stone, metal, pottery and glazes were built, one after another, since the Song Dynasty.