

Songshan Shaolin Temple

A journey through the past



By: Uwe Schwenk (Ying Zi Long)



The Shaolin Temple

The original Shaolin Temple, located on Songshan Mountain in Henan Province, China, is legendary for its kung fu. Throughout history, many famous martial arts heroes have come from this temple.

About this Special Edition

This special edition is the result of extensive research and has become a one of a kind document. This document contains a photographic tour through the temple with detailed descriptions. It is a document in its own and was therefore not included as a chapter in any of the manuals and books written by the author.

Design

In the back of each page you will see the shadow of a dragon. This design is meant to reflect the Chinese name Ying Zi Long (Shadow Dragon) given to the author by the Shaolin Temple (The Abbot Shi Wang Heng). Finally, this particular edition does not contain a table of contents, because it is meant to be read as one continuous journey.

This special edition contains:

- A detailed description of the Songshan Temple

Note: All black and white images in the section of the Songshan temple are from before 1928, when the fire destroyed the temple. The color images in the Songshan Temple section are from July 2001. The color images without a date stamp are courtesy <http://www.russbo.com>. This special edition contains a large number of historical images.

The Songshan Shaolin Temple

The original Shaolin Temple, located on Songshan Mountain in Henan Province, China, is legendary for its kung fu. Throughout history, many famous martial arts heroes have come from this temple.

Introduction

There is a Chinese saying that goes: "All martial arts under the sky, started in Shaolin". This is somewhat of an exaggeration, but like many Chinese sayings it does contain a grain of truth. China is a huge land and has since long an enormous population. The land that we know today consists of a mixture of people with many different linguistical and cultural traditions. For centuries they developed independently from each other. If we say that all the martial art systems in China come from one single tradition or temple. But we can't deny that the Shaolin temple did have a big influence on the development all Chinese martial arts. Many say that Buddhism and boxing don't combine. This is true and it is not true at the same time. Buddhism forbids damaging all living beings, but this is contradicted by an edict that teaches tolerance. Tolerance has been one of the biggest strengths of Buddhism for centuries. And this tolerance let to the fact that the martial arts training of the Shaolin temple, including weapontraining, was accepted for over a thousand years.

Although the annals talk about many famous martial monks, its very likely that they were boxers first and lived between the temple monks, like so many other laymen. But still it is strange that Buddhism, know for it's peaceful character, accepted the martial arts and that the Shaolin temple, birthplace of Chan Buddhism, is best known for its martial arts.

The temple was, and still is, located on the countryside and is was important that one could defend oneself in remote areas. Only if you're healthy and strong could you survive; meditation alone was not enough to survive!

The monks went so far as to use weapons to defend themselves. How can they train themselves in killing human beings, when generally speaking monks lead an peaceful and quite life? Some say that the ones that were killed by the monks weren't humans, but demons in the shape of human beings. In many Buddhist legends, monks, or Buddhists kill dozens and dozens of demons, and they use martial arts to do this. In one story the Heavenly Prince Dharmapala kills demons and monsters with his powerful pestle. If one looks it at it that way, than the monks of the Shaolin temple are doing nothing wrong and are the martial arts for them just as important as practicing Chan, some say they ARE one.

The Shaolin temple is situated in Henan province, 13 kilometers outside the village of Dengfeng. It was build in 496 at the foot of Songshan Mountain, under edict of Emperor Xiao Wen of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534).

Songshan Mountain has many peaks and hills. The temple is located at the foot of Wu Ru Feng (Five-breast Peak), North of Shaoshi Mountain. The temple faces the south.



A map showing Dengfeng City, the Shaolin temple and the surroundings

Eastwards lies Taishi Mountain, and to the North one can find the Huanyuanguan path, which was an important passage before the modern roads were paved. In front of the entrance of the temple flows the Shaoxi river (of Shaoshixi), this protects the temple according to the rules of Fengshui against bad influences. The temple is built on the spot where once was a “young forest”. Many say that that's the reason why the temple is called Shaolin Si, which means “Young Forest Temple”. A different explanation for the name says that it stands for the monks living in the temple; like young trees they bend when forced, but they won't break. Yet another explanation can be found in the book “Songshan Mountain” of Jing Rizhen, dating from the early Qing Dynasty: “Shaolin means woods on Shaoshi Mountain inside Songshan Mountain Area”.



Stamps from the Shaolin Temple. First edition from 1995.

The four monks

Four monks who lived in or around the temple when the People's Republic was founded, returned to the temple when Buddhism was reestablished. They were, if I'm not mistaken: Shi Wanheng, Shi Dechan, Shi Suxi and Shi Xingzhen. Shi Suxi is of the 30th generation of monks in the Shaolin temple.

It is from them that the present day fighting monks get their pedigree.



A statue of the four monks inside the Chuipu Hall (Kung Fu Hall) in the temple

Shaolin Si Shan Men - The entrance to the Shaolin Temple

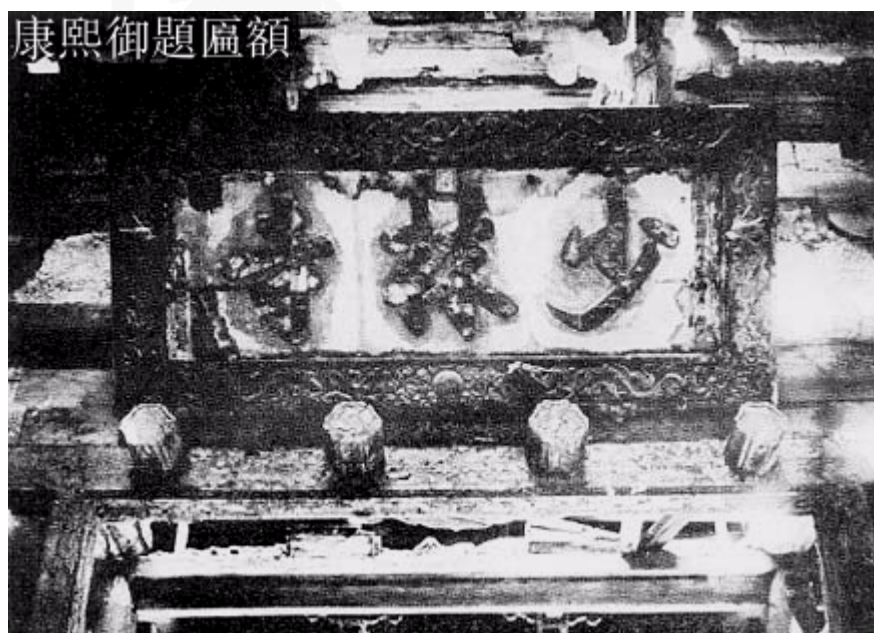
The Entrance to the temple consists of a main gate and two side gates flanking it. The main gate is constructed on a brick terrace (2 meters above ground) with single eaves and an exquisitely modified gable roof. It was build in 1735, in the reign of Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty.



The entrance at the turn of the century. Notice the white colored windows and the absence of the entrance sign.



The Entrance today



The Shao Lin Si Sign

In the early Qing Dynasty a sign board was hung on the outer wall with six chinese characters meaning 'Genuine Birthplace of Buddhism'. Another board with characters, Shao Lin Si (Shaolin temple), written by Emperor Kang Xi, was put up in 1704. It is now above the Entrance of the temple. According to the History of Shaolin Temple, this board used to hang above the front door of the Tianwang Dian; it was removed to the present place after the hall was burnt down. On careful observation, one finds that the brushwork on the present board for the lower parts of the characters 'SHAO' and 'SI' are not harmonious. This is the result of later renovations. That the board survived the fire is already a wonder.



The statue of Maitreya

Passing the Entrance one sees Maitreya smiling his welcome. This clay statue of Maitreya is kept in a shrine behind glass and has a gold color. Up to a few years ago it had lifelike colors.



The statue of Wei Tuo (Skanda)

Behind Maitreya is a figure of Wei Tuo (Skanda) as a principal guard of Buddhism. He too is now enshrined behind glass.



The Stone Lions

On either side of the Entrance is a 1.67 meter high stone lion crouching on a 1.75 meter platform. Adding ancient flavour to the place. Next to each lion is a flagpole.



The two gateways

In front of the Entrance, on the left and right side, stand two gateways constructed in the Ming Dynasty. These two gateways, standing homologously, look the same in appearance. Each has one arch and two pillars, 5.85 meters high and 1.95 meters wide. The tops of both gateways are decorated with carved ridges and tile furrows. Beneath the eaves four modified birch leaf shaped brackets support the tops. The stone horizontal laths, square columns and thresholds imitate the style of wooden structures. The main laths are decorated with relief of 'two lions playing with silk balls' and 'two phoenixes greeting the sun', very popular in the Ming and Qing

Dynasties. The front and back sides of the horizontal laths and columns are carved with inscriptions and antithetical couplets related to the history of the temple. The image shows the archways at the turn of the century: no splay walls yet.



The Eastern part of the archway

On the eastern part of the eastern archway are in horizontal inscriptions 'Fountain Head of Zen'. The couplet reads:

The very centre under Heaven, the topmost noble mountains;

The greatest treasure in the heart, the source of Most-taught Zen

On the western part of the eastern archway is the horizontal inscription 'founded by Ba Tuo' (Ba Tuo or Buddhabadhra was the first eminent Indian monk coming to Shaolin temple. Though not the initiator of Chan sect Buddhism, he was one of its founders.) There is no antithetical couplet on this column.



The eastern part of the west archway

The eastern part of the west archway has the horizontal inscription 'Holy Place of the Great Vehicle'. The 'Great Vehicle' or Mahayana, and the 'Lesser Vehicle' or Hinayana, are two schools under Buddhism. The Chan sect of Buddhism or Zen, taught by Damo in China came from the 'Great Vehicle'. The 'Great Vehicle' is figuratively used for tidings sufferings over to eternal happiness; whereas the 'Lesser Vehicle' stresses on self cultivation and transcendence.

The couplet reads:

The heart's set in the Cave, the knee-deep snow could but illuminate the transient form. It refers to Hui Ke's first meeting with Damo.

The face toward the cliff, in silent night immortals piping drifted to the ear. It refers to Damo's facing the wall meditation.

The western horizontal inscription of the western archway says 'Song Chan Lin' (Shaolin in Songshan, cradle of Chan), followed by the couplet:

Two pairs of jade wells, pure and limped, bathe the ageless moon.

A reference to the four wells caused to be there as a result of the magic touch of Hui Ke's 'tin cudgel' down on the ground. All wells have different tastes.

Three dozen towering peaks, gree, mystic, glorify mid clouds.

From the smaller words between the horizontal inscriptions we get to know that the east archway was built in the fifth month of the twentysecond year during the reign of Emperor Jia Jing in the Ming Dynasty (1543), and the west archway was built in the autumn of the thirtyfourth year of the same reign (1555).



Part of an outer boundary wall

The Shaoxi bridge (No picture available).

The Shaoxi bridge spans over the Shaoxi stream, with the Entrance looking upon it. An single span arch structure standing 5.55 meters above water and stretching 60 meters in length, its 4.29 meter high arch is further made into two curvatures. A

dragoons head is carved on the west of the arch, its eyes widening, its mouth opening in readiness of drinking in all torrential floods. On either face of the arch is engraved an inscription, Built in the ninth month of Emperor Xuan Zong (about 1856).

Beilin - Forest of Stelae



The forest of stealea

The scenery is lovely outside, while inside stelae are like forest. After entering, you will find a large number of stelea, or tablets, tall and short, in perfect order on both sides, as if welcoming visitors. A poem from Jing Rizhen (Qing Dynasty):

Ancient steleat crowd the yard as if to comb the skies
Some tall, some short, some lean or slant, all boast great memories.
Dim light 'neath shades of pines come flick'ring o'er th mystic lands
Believe or not, here most inscriptions came from masters hands



The stelea today

The stelea tells the visitor about important events from the past, poems about the temple, its surroundings and its martial arts and stelea in memory of master monks. There is a stelea that was unearthed in front of the Daxiong Hall in 1980.

ChuiPu Tang - Kung Fu Hall



ChuiPu Hall

ChuiPu Hall was built in 1984. It occupies an area of 870 square meter. Inside the hall there are altogether 236 wooden figures, clay figures and plaster figures showing Shaolin martial arts and the historical stories of the temple. These figures are divided into 14 groups. Below you will find a selection of the historical figures.





Tianwang Dian - Hall of Heavenly Kings



The hall of the heavenly kings

This hall was at the end of the Forest of Stelae. Behind it are the Daxiong Hall and Cangjing Ge. They add radiance and beauty to each other, and had an imposing appearance. They are often referred to as the 'Three Great Halls'. It is a pity that these important buildings were burnt down in a fire caused by warlord Shi Yousan in 1928. The story goes that the fire lasted over 40 days; many other buildings nearby were also destroyed. This fire is said to be the most disastrous one after the Sui-to-Qing dynasties. Tianwang Dian is a Qing style structure. Its two sidedoors correspond tot the sidegates at the Entrance. Only 30 carved pillar pedestals and the stone threshold remained after the fire.

According to the pictures of the building before the fire, it was a five-room structure with double eaves. This is consistent with the pictures drawn in the book History of the Shaolin Temple and with the murals painted on the wall of the White Robe Hall.

According to the History of the Shaolin Temple, there used to be two groups of statues inside, two Vajras (Buddha's warrior attendants) in front of the door and four Heavenly Kings guarding behind the door.



The building is now reconstructed, as are all the statues in it.



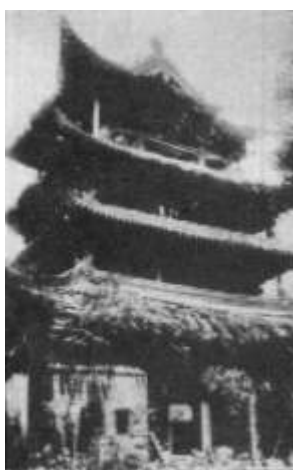
Two Vajras (Buddha's warrior attendants)



The four heavenly kings

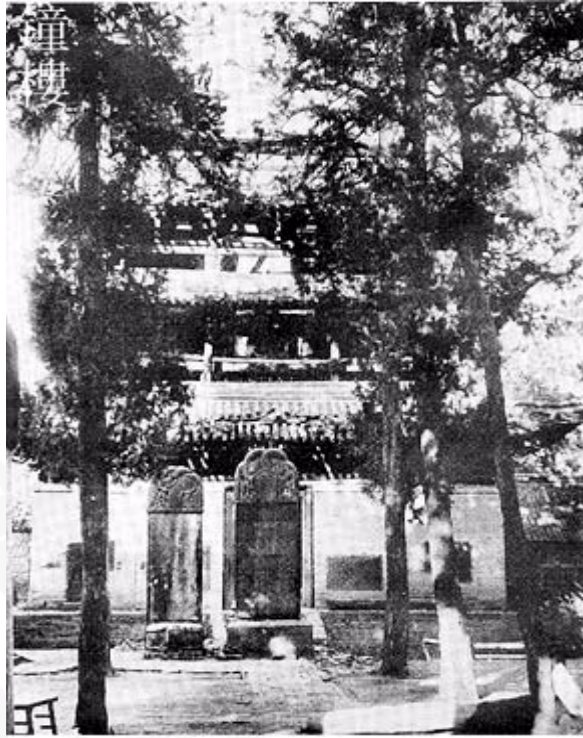
The four Heavenly Kings were gods in an ancient Indian myth, which said that in the midst of Mount Sumeru (considered to be the central point of the human world), the four Heavenly Kings were guarding the first of a series of six skies. Buddhism adopts this myth by asserting the the four gods were four heavenly guardians, each in charge of one quarter of the world. They were respectively called Chiguo (State Guardian) in the east (dressed in white and holding a pipa) Guangmu (Sharp seer) in the west (dressed in red, a silk rope in his hand, Zhengzhang (Growth protector) in the south (dressed in black, holding a sword) and Duowen (Knowledge preserver) in the north (dressed in green holding a stone pillar).

Zhong Lou - Bell Tower



The Bell Tower

The Bell Tower was one of the tallest buildings in the temple. From the picture on the back of the tablet Deeds of Dharmapala, the wall paintings in White Robe Hall and pictures taken before it was destroyed by fire, the Bell Tower was pavilion style structure, approximately 9x15 in size, four layers of flying eaves. It measured 10 zhang (more than 33 meters) in height and looked very lofty.



The bell tower from the front



The Bell

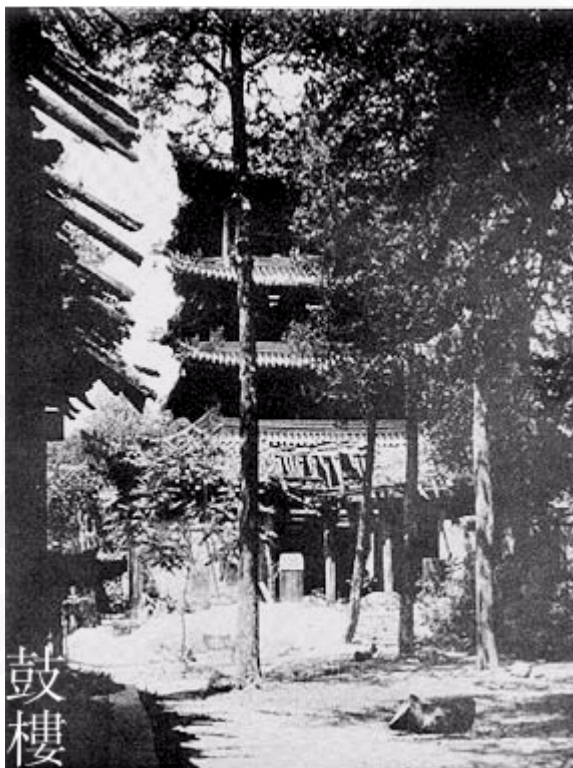
The iron bell hanging in the top room of the tower crashed down to the ground when the tower was burnt. It now rests next to the newly build Bell Tower. The inscriptions on the bell say that it was cast in 1204. The bell is 200cm high, 170cm in calibre and its wall is 4 to 12cm thick from top to bottom. The bell weighs 5500kg. There are eight lips along the edge (for striking). The Eight Diagrams cast on the bell indicate the hanging positions. According to the History of the Shaolin Temple the bell could be heard 30 li (15 km) away.

There are two other relics on the ruins of the Bell Tower. One is the statue of Ksitigarba cast in 148, 175cm high. He is bald headed, sitting with his legs crossing in the lotus-shaped pedestal, his kasaya over his shoulders: but his chest is not covered. The other is a tablet named Inscription on the Casting of the Copper Statue of Maitreya, standing in the northwest corner. It is 138cm high, 61cm wide and 17.5cm thick, cast in the same year as the statue of Ksitigarba.

Present day information board attached to the building says this:

"The Bell Tower is a spacious pavilion - style structure at the foot of the mountain, with four layers of flying eaves. It is one of the major building in the temple, more than 33 meters high. The original building was destroyed in 1928 and was rebuilt in 1994 after the old model. The bell hanging in the tower weighs about 6500 kg. The statue of Bodhissattva Dizang (Ksitigarbha) was cast in the first year of Emperor Hongzhi of the Ming Dynasty. It is 1.7 meters tall, weighing more than 5000 kg."

Gu Lou - Drum Tower



The Drum Tower

The Drum Tower is situated to the north west of the Tianwang Hall, opposite to the Bell Tower. It was first built in 1300 (in the reign of Emperor Cheng Zong of the Yuan Dynasty) After the fire only the broken carved stone columns, carved pedestals and the stone threshold remained. According to records of the ancient tablets, the murals and especially the pictures of the building before it was destroyed, the shape and dimensions of this tower were quite large and magnificent.



Image of Buddha inside the Drum Tower

Between the Bell Tower and the Drum tower there are five tablets standing in one line:

- 1 Inscription on Repairing Shaolin Temple, by Yang Guozhen in 1829;
- 2 Inscription on Renovating 1000 Buddha Hall, by Zheng Youren in 1776;
- 3 Poem Tablet; Ode to Songshan Mountain & Shaolin, by Wang Shangjiong, Ming Dynasty;
- 4 Damo Ferrying the Changjiang (Yangtze) River by Reed & devil subduing deity Zong Kui, illustration, by Lang Jianting in 1624.
- 5 Imperial book about the Genealogy of Five Schools of Chan Sect Buddhism. It is a genealogical table of Buddhism successors in Shaolin temple since Damo. This tablet is very important for the study of the history of Shaolin temple.

Present day information board attached to the building says this:

"The Drum Tower was a building of the Yuan Dynasty. It was destroyed in 1928 and was rebuilt in 1996 after the old model. It is a magnificent and spacious pavilion - style structure at the foot of the mountain, with a height of more than 33 metres. Inside the tower is stored China's biggest handicraft drum. The Drum Tower is just opposite to the Bell Tower. When both the drum and bell are sounding simultaneously, they can be heard as far as more than 30 li away."

Jinnaluo Tang - Kimnara Hall



Kimnara Hall

This hall is situated to the east of Ducting Hall, north of the Bell Tower. It used to be a three-room structure. Three statues of Jin Na Luo ((Kimnara) were once consecrated in it.



The room entrance

The one in the middle was a rattan statue; the left one was cast of copper, and the right one of iron. They were all wonderfully shaped. Kimnara was regarded as one of the protecting deities of the temple; and according to the Buddhist doctrine, he is also one of the eight deities protecting Buddhism.



The copper statue



The Rattan statue



The iron statue



The three new recast statues of Prince Kimnara

Prince Kimnara, surnamed Xu, became a Buddhist monk of Shaolin in the Yuan Dynasty. After hard learning and devoted practice, he finally succeeded in becoming a Guardian Bodhissattva of Shaolin Temple. There used to be three statues of Prince Kimnara in the hall, one made of rattan, one cast in bronze and one in iron, and on both sides there used to be two stones tablets with Kinmara's image engraved on them during the Northern Period. The original hall was destroyed by war in 1928. It was rebuild and repainted in 1982 after the original model. Three new statues of Prince Kimnara were recast.

Daxiong Baodian - Daxiong Hall



Daxiong Hall

This is the centre of all buildings in the temple, where the monks do most of their services. It is often called 'Main Hall' or 'Great Hall'. The hall used to be a five room building with double eaves. After the fire only the platform, the stone columns and three of the wall were among the things that remained.



The statues of Sakyamuni, Amitayas (Amida Buddha) and Bhaisajyagura

Before it was destroyed, it had enshrined the statues of Sakyamuni, Amitayas (Amida Buddha) and Bhaisajyagura.



Against the gabled wall were laid the Buddhist boards, staffs and various weapons



Inside the original Daxiong Hall before the fires of 1928



Inside the original Daxiong Hall before the fires of 1928



Shaolin's army of those days

Above the lintel inside was hung a horizontal board, on which were the words 'Treasured Trees, Fragrant Lotuses', with the script done by Emperor Kang Xi in 1704. In each of the three middle rooms, four partition boards were arranged. The sign board, Daxiong Bedouin, was under the eaves of the middle room. The Daxiong Baodian was repaired in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. So most of the relics were the work of this period. As to the age of the hall, a sections of the brick wall and an inlaid stone inscription unearthed give the hint that it might be first build as far back as in 1169.

Present day information board attached to the building says this:

"Daxiong Hall was destroyed by war in 1928 and was rebuilt after the old model in 1985. It is a magnificent building with double eaves green glazed tile roof. Inside the hall are enshrined the statues of the three great Buddha's and of the founder of Chanzong Bodhidharma and the guardian deity Kimnare. Besides, on the right & left side walls are enshrined the statues of the 18 Arhats covered in gold leaf. Daxiong Hall is the main place for Shaolin Buddhists to carry out their religious activities."

Cangjing Ge - Canjing Hall (Dharma Hall)



Canjing Hall

Another name for this hall is Fa Tang (Dharma Hall). It was a building for storing Buddhist scriptures and for eminent monks to preach. It was a single-eave structure with modified gable roofs, approximately 15x15 in size, first constructed in the Ming Dynasty and renovated in the Qing Dynasty.



Copper-plate Buddhist scriptures

Before the fire, copper-plate Buddhist scriptures were kept in it. History of the Shaolin Temple says that "In 1743, the hall started to house Buddhist scriptures Bodhidharma's 'Shadow Rock' together with illustrated books and Buddhist staffs were stored here.



The statue of Damo inside the Dharma Hall



The iron cauldron

On the east side of the path in front of the hall there is a large iron caldron 167cm in diameter and 84 centimeters deep, its wall being 2cm in thickness. On its 7-centimeter rim are words showing that the caldron was cast in November 1577 and its weight was 1300 jin (650 kg). It has five ears on the outside wall. Opposite the caldron, a large millstone is put on the west side of the path, the upper stone bearing the words 'made in 1565'.

Liu Zu Tang - Six Saints Hall



The Six Saints Hall

This hall was rebuilt on its original site opposite to Kimnara Hall. It is also a threeroom building.



The Saints

Formerly, figures of Shaolin Saints Bodhidharma, Hui Ke, Seng Jie, Dao Xin, Hong Ren and Hui Neng were cast around the statue of Avolakitesvara, a famous Bodhisattva. Such was Six Saints at an Audience with Avolokitesvara in the hall burnt in 1928 .



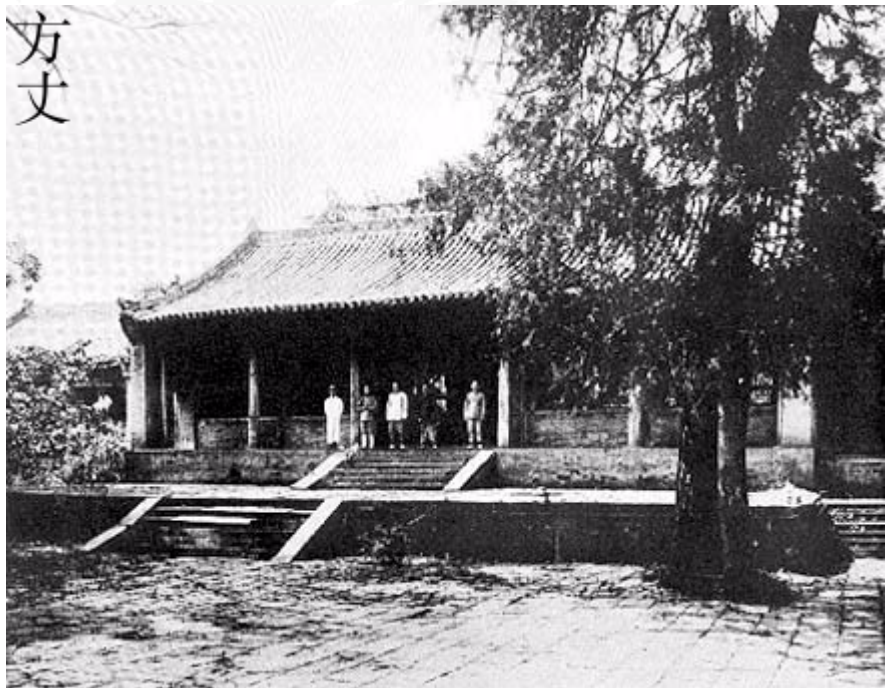
The 29 Monks (A)



The 29 Monks (B)

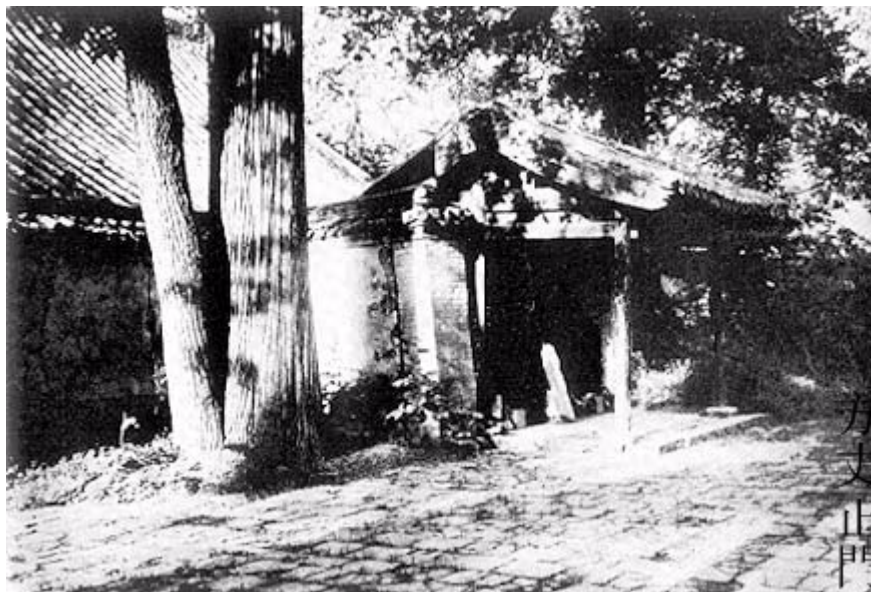
Besides, there used to be 29 portraits of famous Shaolin monks on the wall. None of these are now in existence.

Fangzhang - Abbot's Room



The Abbots Room

The Abbots Room is to the north of Dharma Hall. In 1750, when visiting Mount Song, Emperor Gao Zong of Qing Dynasty visited the temple he lodged in this room. After that the room was also known as the Dragon hall, since the dragon is the symbol of the emperor.



The Abbots Room



The Abbots Room

An iron bell cast in 1336 and weighing 325 kg, is hanging on the east end of the front eave, on which the names of Abbot Xi An and a Japanese monk, Shoogen, are cut. Since Shoogen worked in this temple as a secretary, he was often called Secretary Shoogen. To the west of the Abbot's Room is a lounge where the elder abbots can rest; and to the east is another house built in the Ming Dynasty, originally

called Kuo Ran Tang (Quit Hall). It has gone through quite a number of repairs and is now called Jing Zhong Jing (More Quiet Than Quiet). The wing rooms are monk's dwelling places. Opposite the Abbot's Room there used to be an carved arch built in the Qing Dynasty. It was the last building destroyed by the fire in 1928.

In the south-room walls of the Abbot's Yard are inlaid more than 20 pieces of stone engraved images and poems left by visitors. Tablets with images of Hui Ke, Damo with one show, poems about Hui Ke, inscriptions and an eulogy of Guanyin.

The Abbot's Room is the place where the abbot lives and executes his daily affairs. It was built during the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1750). In September when Emperor Gao Zong of the Qing Dynasty paid a visit to this room, he lodged in this very room. That is way this room is also called 'Long Ting' (The Dragon Hall). The bronze statue of Dhama enshrined inside is was presented by monks from Japan's Shaolin Temple.

Dizang Dian - Ksitigarbha Hall



Ksitigarbha Hall

Di Zang (Ksitigarbha) Hall, standing to the west of the 1000 Buddha Hall', used to be in the Qing architectural style. It was repaired more than 20 years ago. In the shrine, statues of Bodhisvattva Ksitigarbha and his two attendants (flanking him) were cast. There were murals on the walls, which peeled of long ago.



The Ten Princes of Hades (A)



The Ten Princes of Hades (B)

Dizang (Ksitigarbha) Hall was a building of the Qing Dynasty. It was renovated in 1979 after the old model. Inside the hall a statue of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha is enshrined, with his two attendants Dao Ming and Min Hua flanking him. Because Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha once said, "I will never become a Buddha until the Hell is emptied", he is renowned as "the Truly Magnanimous". On the north and south walls is are mounted pictures of the Ten Princes of Hades and on the back wall a mural is painted of the Twenty-four Filial Persons in the Confucian tradition.

Talin - The burialplace of the Shaolin Temple

塔林



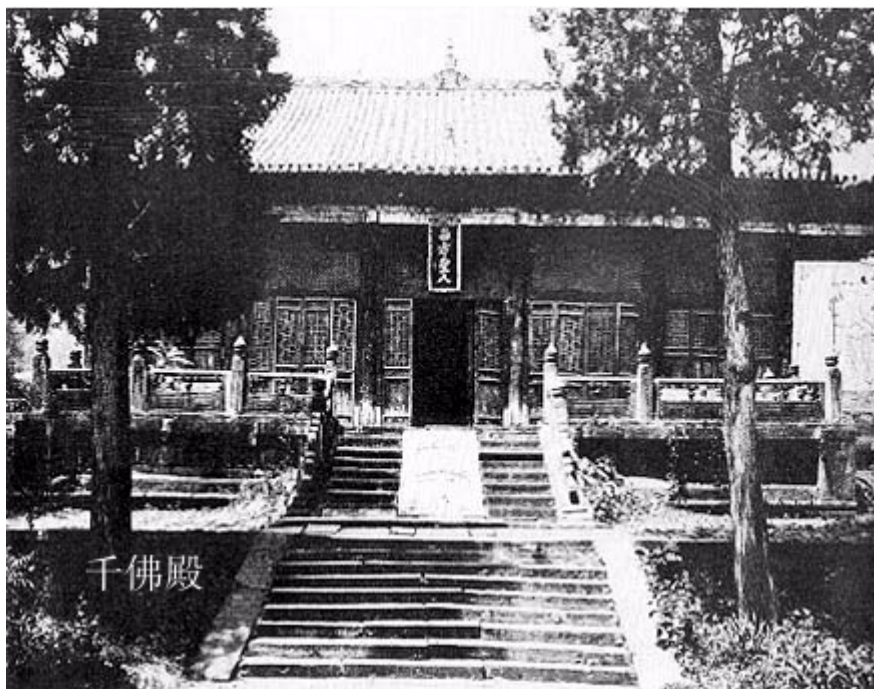
The Forest of the Pagodas

The Forest of Pagodas is situated on the north bank of Shaoxi Stream, covering an area of over 21,000 square meters. There are 230 pagodas built in the Tang, Song, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is the largest forest of pagoda's known in China.

Pagoda means tomb in ancient India. The pagodas in this cemetery are of brick, stone and brick and stone structures. Two of them were built in the Tang Dynasty; two in the Song Dynasty, ten in the Jin, 46 in the Yuan and 148 in the Ming Dynasty. The rest of them were built either in the Qing Dynasty or other unknown dynasties. Architecturally, they are classed as one-story with single eaves, one story with multiple eaves, stupas and various types of Lamaist pagoda's. This grand architectural complex indeed provides valuable material for studying the history of Chinese architecture, art and religion; and it is also a famous scenic spot.

The oldest brick pagoda was built for Master Fa Wan, built in the Tang Dynasty (791). He was from Jing'ai Temple in Luoyang. There are many interesting pagodas to be found: too many to describe here. Many other pagoda's from later periods can be found in the yard. Recently deceased eminent monks also found their resting place here. Abbot of the Southern Shaojing temple and one of the oldest Shaojing monks alive today, Shi Suxi, is having a pagoda built in preparation.

Pilu Dian - The '1000 Buddha Hall'



The Hall of the 1000 Buddhas

1000 Buddha Hall, also named Pilu Pavilion, is to the north of Li Xue Ting. It was built in 1588 in the Ming Dynasty with the construction materials of other buildings dismantled by order of Empress Dowager Ci Sheng. Twice repaired in 1639 and 1775, it has been left with the architectural style. On the back of a glazed tablet set in the middle of the Great Ridge are thirteen characters meaning ' This 1000 Buddha Hall was renovated in mid autumn, 40th year in the reign of Emperor Qian Long' (1775) Elegant carvings decorate the entire bridge.



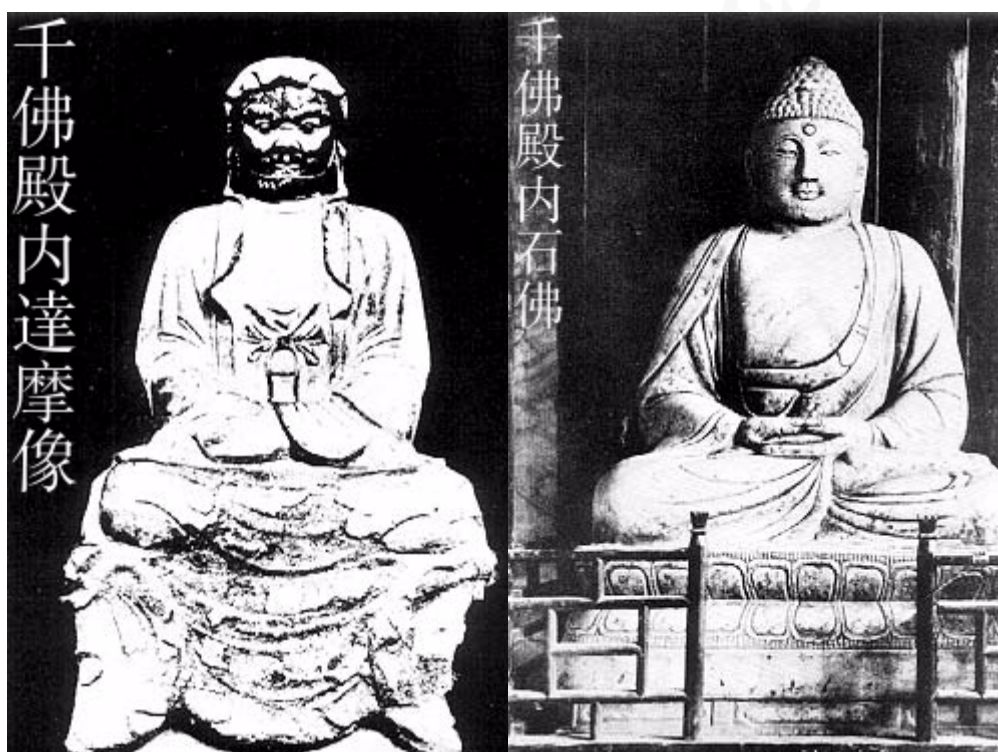
Buddha Pilu

In the middle of the Hall a bronze statue of Buddha Pilu is sitting on a throne of lotus blossoms consecrated in a shrine. In the eastern part of the hall was a table, on which stands Amida Buddha carved in white marble and vouchsafed by the prince on Zhou in 1409. Bodhidharma's 'Shadow Rock' was once kept here as well.



Five Hundred Arhats worshipping Pilu

Five Hundred Arhats Worshipping Pilu, a drawing of about 320 square meters in size, is frescoed on the east, west and north walls of the hall; the background of the drawing is made with mountains, waters, floating clouds and mist. The five hundred Arhats are presented in three sections: upper, middle and lower, each consisting of a number of figures. Some of the Arhats are seen subduing dragons and tigers, others are indulging themselves in animated talking, a few holding their alms bowls casting a spell, and still others are all ears in audience with their master. All are vivid and lifelike in their various postures. Arhur, a sound transliterated from Sanskrit, means a monk who has cultivated himself in Buddhism so well that he has at last risen from the mortals. In the Buddhist world an arhat is next only to a Bodhisattva, the mural was painted in strong color, the lines are very neat and vigorous. Such a view is rarely seen among murals of the same kind in China. No chronological record or inscriptions are found on it. Most people regard it as a Ming Dynasty work.



An image of Damo and Buddha that were once kept inside the 1000 Buddha Hall

Chuzu An - Damo Pavilion



Damo Pavillion

Damo Pavilion is situated on a hill at the front of Wu Ru Feng (Five Breast Peak), a small scaled architectural complex, set up in the Song Dynasty in memory of Damo's mediation here. Some people say that it was here that he sat in meditation. For example the inscription on the tablet Boundless Beneficence set up in 1605 says, This pavilion marks the place where our Buddhist saint meditated facing the wall.



The Stone Path

From the Shaolin temple to the Damo Pavilion there is section that has a stone path 170 meters long, built by a monk, about 80 years old, named Xing Xa. He also paved a 190 meter path from Damo Pavilion to the Damo Cave. Xing Xa died in 1979, but the path will remain.

Damo Pavilion is bordered by gullies on three sides, with Wu Ru Feng behind it. It is a quiet, tasteful place.

The construction made full use of the topographical advantages. The Entrance, the Big Hall and the Thousand Buddha Pavilion, all stand in the northern Song Dynasty; other buildings have been rebuild by later generations. Behind the Big Hall there are two small pavilions. Today, over 40 inscriptions are preserved in Damo Pavilion.



The Pillars

According to ancient Chinese architecture the style of Damo Pavilion belongs to what is called the 'nine ridge pavilion'. Its plan is nearly square. It has 12 carved pillars. Inside there are 4 more pillars carved with portraits of Heavenly Kings. In between the 4 pillars stands a carved stone stage. Inside the wooden shrine on the stage is consecrated a statue of Damo. Both the frame work of the building and the proportion of the brackets tell of its antique features. Most attractive are the pillars propping the eaves, the inside pillars, the carved stones supporting the wall and the exquisite relief's around the stage.



The carvings

The pillars propping up the eaves are octagonal. Three of the inner sides, as well as three outer ones, can be seen, and they all follow a unified pattern. The pillars on both sides of the front door are carved with dancers and singers, with flowers of pomegranate twining round the twigs. Such pattern is among the noblest of Buddhist designs. The front sides of both pillars are carved into life like dancing gods playing the pipa, cymbal, sheng (Chinese wind pipe), xiao (Chinese vertical flute) etc.

On the foundation stones of the east, west and north walls, both inside and outside the hall, are also carved exquisite pictures of human figures, animals, gods and devils and treasured mountains, with water waves serving as foils. Most of the pictures of animals are outside the hall; while pictures with human forms are mostly on the walls inside the hall.



Small Pavillion 1



Small Pavillion 2

To the north of Damo Pavilion are two small ones, square in shape, standing side by side. It is said that the one lying west is the place where Damo meditated facing the wall, and that the east pavilion one housed the images of his venerable parents.

Over 40 ancient tablets are kept in Damo Pavilion, such as; Eulogy on Damo, tablet with inscription Convent where Damo meditated, tablet with the image of Guanyin, tablet inscribed with Buddhist scriptures in Sanskrit and an image of Damo and a tablet of Hui Neng Planting a cypress. Damo Pavilion is now inhabited by nuns of Shaolin.



The Damo statue inside the Pavillion