

= Beiyue Temple =

Beiyue Temple (Chinese : 北岳庙) is a Daoist temple located in Quyang , Hebei Province , China . The temple was used to make sacrifices to Mount Heng by the emperors of the Song Dynasty while the mountain was occupied by the Liao Dynasty . The Dening Hall of the temple is the largest , earliest and one of the most important extant wooden buildings built in the Yuan Dynasty . The temple also contains three gates , an octagonal pavilion and many ancient stelae .

= History =

The Beiyue Temple was first established either during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 @-@ 584) or the Tang Dynasty (618 @-@ 907) , but the site may have been in use as early as the 2nd century BCE of the Han Dynasty . The temple has been rebuilt twice , first in 991 after having been destroyed by the Khitan during the 950s , and then in 1270 . According to a surviving image of the temple dating from a local history of Quyang written in 1672 , the temple had by this time achieved its present layout .

During the Song Dynasty , Beiyue Temple was used as an alternate site to make sacrifices to the Northern Peak , Mount Heng , one of the sacred mountains of Daoism . During this time , Mount Heng was controlled by the Liao Dynasty (916 @-@ 1125) . In order to maintain political legitimacy and receive Daoist support , Beiyue Temple was chosen by the Song Emperor as the location to make sacrifices to Hengshan . Even though the mountain was not controlled by the Song , they believed that a ' geomantic vein ' that would direct their sacrifices could be cut through enemy @-@ controlled territory and reach it .

= Architecture =

The Beiyue temple is laid out on a north @-@ south axis featuring six extant buildings . From south to north , the buildings are : a gate , an octagonal building called the Tianyi Pavilion (???) that was built during the Ming Dynasty , two more gates , and the Dening Hall (???) . A large platform in front of the Dening Hall now features the remains of stone sculptures , but was formerly the site of another hall . According to signs at the temple , many of the buildings were rebuilt in the late 20th century .

The wall surrounding the temple was formerly part of a city wall that surrounded Quyang . The south gate of the temple once served as one of the main gates for the town . Apart from the remnant that is part of the temple , nothing more survives of this wall . The temple grounds are also home to over 137 stelae , dating from the Northern Wei Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty .

= Dening Hall =

The Dening Hall is the main hall of the temple , and was built in 1270 during the Yuan Dynasty . The hall is fronted by a massive platform known as a yuetai (?? , literally moon platform) , which measures 25 by 20 meters . Built on a very high platform itself , the Dening Hall can be accessed by either a center front staircases or one of two side staircases attached to the yuetai . Enclosing the perimeter of the platform is a white marble balustrade capped by lions . The hall itself measures seven by four bays and is surrounded by a covered arcade . According to the Yingzao Fashi , a Song Dynasty architectural treatise , the Dening Hall has 6th puzuo type column bracketing to support its roof . This type of bracketing has three transverse and three horizontal bracket arms . The 6th puzuo brackets are the most complex that survive from the Yuan Dynasty . Based on the complex bracketing , the marble balustrade and the height of the platform , Steinhardt identifies the Dening Hall as one of the two most eminent and important extant wooden halls that date from the Yuan period . These characteristics also closely match descriptions of the architecture at the capital , meaning that Dening Hall is representative of the architecture at the Yuan dynasty capital of Dadu (currently Beijing) .

The Dening Hall has Daoist murals painted on three of its walls . The western wall 's mural , said to have been painted in the Tang Dynasty , measures 17 by 7 meters and features a local water deity with a winged being at the top . With similar dimensions to the western mural , the eastern mural portrays the Dragon King . The hall contains nine statues , all dating from a more recent period than the hall .