

= Zhenguo Temple =

Zhenguo Temple (Chinese : 正觉寺) is a Buddhist temple located 10 km from Pingyao in the village of Hadongcun , in Shanxi Province , China . The temple 's oldest hall , the Wanfo Hall , was built in 963 during the Northern Han dynasty , and is notable for featuring very large brackets that hold up the roof and flying eaves . The sculptures inside the hall are among the only examples of 10th century Buddhist sculpture in China .

= History =

The history of the temple begins in 963 , when it was recorded that Ten @-@ Thousand Buddha Hall (Wànfó diàn 万佛殿) was built . The date is written on a beam in the hall , and is also the date given by a local history of Pingyao county written in the 19th century . A stela written in 1819 also confirms this date . Wanfo Hall is the oldest building at Zhenguo temple , and is the only surviving building that dates from the short @-@ lived Northern Han dynasty . Although little is known of the temple 's history , stelae record that it was renovated in 1540 and in 1816 . In 1997 , along with Pingyao city and Shuanglin Temple , the Zhenguo temple was inscribed on the World Heritage list as ? Ancient City of Pingyao ? .

= Layout =

The temple contains two main halls and a gate , with two courtyards in between the three buildings . There is a wall surrounding the entire complex . The temple opens to the south , with the Tianwang Hall (天王殿) acting as the temple 's gate . The next hall , to the north , is the Ten @-@ Thousand Buddha Hall , and the final hall is called Sanfo Hall (三佛殿) , which dates from the Qing Dynasty . The northern courtyard also features two minor halls facing to the east and west called the Guanyin (观音殿) and Dizang Halls (地藏殿) , which both date from the Ming Dynasty . There are also two bell towers located on either side of the Tianwang Hall .

= Ten @-@ Thousand Buddha Hall =

The most important hall in the temple is Ten @-@ Thousand Buddha Hall (Wànfó diàn 万佛殿) , one of China 's oldest wooden buildings . It is a three @-@ bay single @-@ eaves hip and gabled hall that is nearly square in shape , measures 11 @-@ 6 by 10 @-@ 8 meters , and is 8 @-@ 8 m high . Despite the building 's small size , and features that would identify it as a regular hall (such as pillars that have been implanted directly into the floor instead of on a stone pedestal) , the structure is quite complex . There are doors at the front and back of the hall . In addition , the front of the hall has two windows on either side of the door . There are twelve pillars supporting the structure . The corner and column @-@ top brackets holding up the roof are of the 7th degree , one of the most complex and large types according to Yingzao Fashi . These bracket sets are nearly 2 @-@ 5 meters high ? 70 % the height of the columns . Inter @-@ columnar brackets that occur between every two pillars are of the 5th degree . The hall has no ceiling , and the upper and lower set of rafters are exposed . Nancy Steinhardt speculates that the complex brackets on what would have been a humble structure were an attempt by the Northern Han rulers to build a magnificent structure with limited resources .

The hall contains eleven sculptures from the Northern Han period . These are the only Chinese sculptures from the period that survive from outside the Mogao Grottoes . There is a main statue of Sakyamuni flanked by Bodhisattvas and the Heavenly Kings .