

Northern Dynasties and Southern Dynasties

The fifth and sixth centuries were as politically tumultuous as the third and fourth. By 439 the last of the Sixteen States had collapsed. Dynasties were fewer in number and larger in territory than in the previous two centuries. The non-Chinese rulers in the North embraced Buddhism as fervently as their southern Chinese counterparts. By the 580s rock-carved cave-temples and monasteries with tall pagodas and image halls spread across the eastern half of the Asian continent. At the same time, architecture that combined the use of earth and wood was almost completely replaced by wood-framed construction. Tombs continued toward simplification so that by the year 600 it was rare to find a tomb with more than two chambers, and usually there was only one.

Cities and Palaces

Most of the Sixteen States fell to Northern Wei, whose predecessors, the Tuoba, a branch of the Xianbei, had built a capital at Shengle in 258. The decision to move their primary capital to Pingcheng in 398 marked the beginning of a century of focused incorporation of Chinese ideas and institutions into a polity that would function in many important ways as a Chinese dynasty. Chinese architecture, particularly Buddhist architecture, was an important force in the process of Sinification of a non-Chinese dynasty.

Three cities and their palace complexes of the fifth and sixth centuries are well known through literary and archaeological documentation: Luoyang of Northern Wei, Ye of Eastern Wei–Northern Qi, and Jiankang of Liu-Song through Chen. Each was linked through history and memory to third- and fourth-century cities at the same sites, to a lesser extent to Pingcheng and Chang’an, and to one another.

Pingcheng

Pingcheng was only 100 kilometers south of Shengle, but the move there by Northern Wei signaled the end of a grasslands empire. Excavation of Pingcheng began in the 1930s and started again in the 1990s, and a fairly complete survey was conducted in the first decade of the twenty-first century.¹ According to *Weishu* (History of Wei), the Northern Wei ruler Tuoba Gui (371–409) had seen Ye, and Pingcheng followed the designs of Ye, Luoyang, and Chang’an.² Excavation confirms that the palace-city was in the north center of Pingcheng’s outer wall, its position in Three Kingdoms Ye.

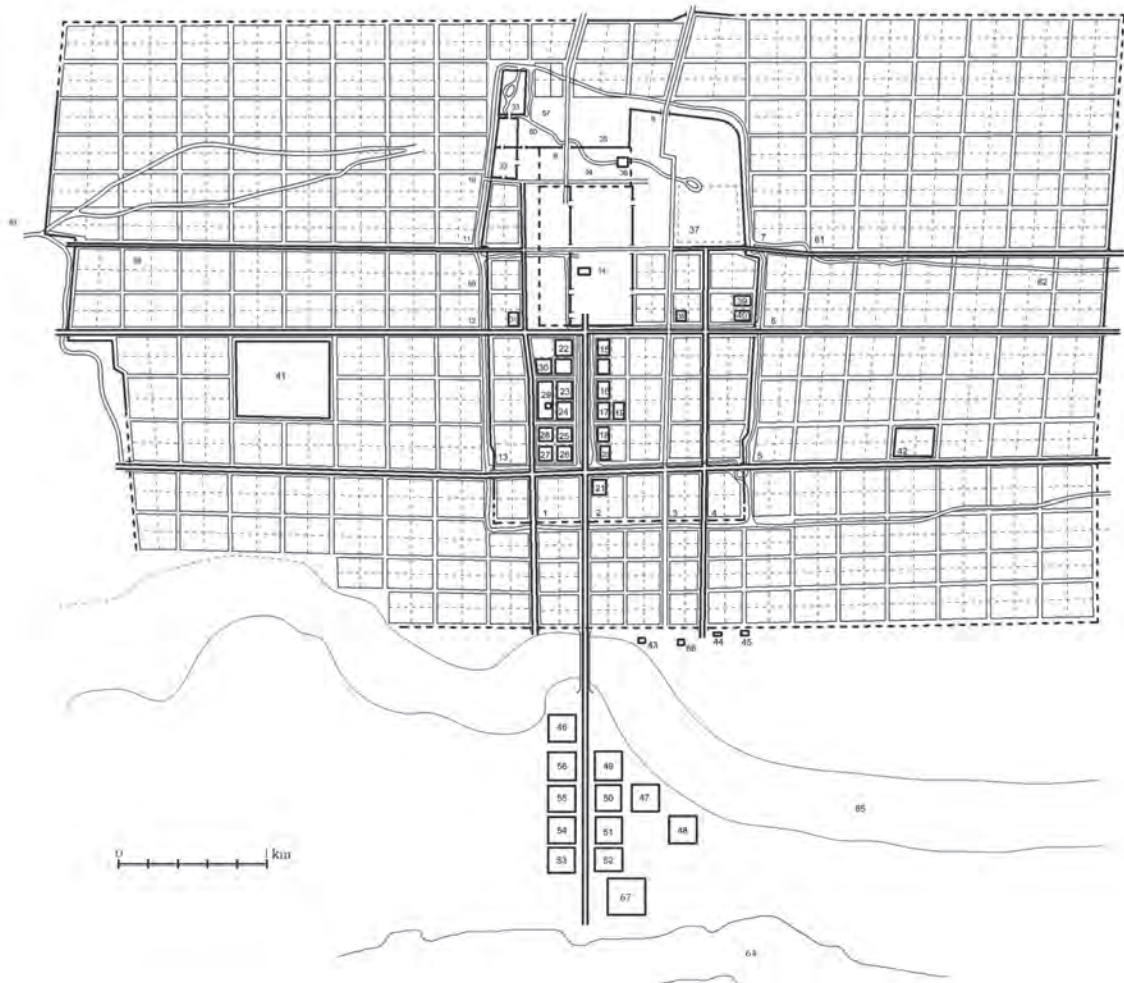
Tuoba Gui launched his building program in 398 by constructing palaces, an ancestral temple, and altars to soil and grain. He also built an arsenal and granaries. There was an eastern palace for the crown prince. South of the palace-city were offices, imperial altars, and aristocratic and nonnoble residences. In 399 a northern garden was begun. By the 420s the palace-city was walled and the area known as the outer city had been built around it. The Pingcheng outer wall had twelve gates, the same number as the Han capitals Chang’an and Luoyang. Beyond the palaces were wards whose populations ranged from sixty to seventy households for the smaller ones and four hundred to five hundred households for the larger ones. Pingcheng’s parks and pools contained exotic beasts, following the tradition of Chinese emperors since the First Emperor.

Between 423 and 471 tens of thousands of people were relocated to Pingcheng, and construction continued in all sections and beyond its walls.³ The 460s also saw construction of five Buddhist caves at Yungang, whose chaitya arches were discussed in chapter 4 (see figure 4.14), about 15 kilometers outside the capital, and in 467 the establishment of Yongning Monastery. In 477 Pingcheng contained nearly one hundred Buddhist establishments with a total of two thousand monks or nuns.⁴ Several of the hundreds of Northern Wei tombs excavated at Pingcheng are discussed below.

Upon assuming the Chinese title emperor, Tuoba Gui began building an ancestral temple, altars to soil and grain, and an altar of the emperor (*dishe*). The ancestral temple was completed in the final lunar month of 399. An altar to heaven was erected on the western side of the city. A round mound and square pool were built from 488 to 489. Between the fourth and tenth lunar months of 491, only two years before the move of the capital to Luoyang, Emperor Xiaowen (Xiaowendi) (r. 471–499) began building a Mingtang that was completed the next year. A site believed to be its remains was excavated in 1995–1996.⁵

Northern Wei Luoyang

Although later historians sometimes attribute the collapse of Northern Wei to Xiaowendi’s move to Luoyang in 493, it was a moment of tremendous optimism. Between 495 and 496 the emperor constructed an ancestral temple, national academy, round mound, and square pool. The official Li Chong, who had guided construction of ritual architecture in Pingcheng, again



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|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Ford Brightness Gate | 15. Office of the Left Guard | 26. Altars of Soil and Grain | 37. Reserve Land for the Eastern Palace | 45. Remains of Eastern Han National Academy | 58. Shouqiu Ward |
| 2. Manifest Brightness Gate | 16. Office of the Minister of Education | 27. Hutong Monastery | 38. Capital Construction Office | 46. Sitong Market | 59. Brightness Canal |
| 3. Peace and Prosperity Gate | 17. National Academy | 28. Station for Issuing Imperial Declaration | 39. Imperial Granary | 47. White Elephant Ward | 60. Gu River |
| 4. Open to Brightness Gate | 18. Office of the Imperial Clan | 29. Yongning Monastery | 40. Imperial Granary and Official Liaison Office | 48. Lion Ward | 61. East Stone Bridge |
| 5. Azure Brightness Gate | 19. Jingle Monastery | 30. Censorate | 41. Luoyang Great Market | 49. Jinling Legation | 62. Seven <i>Li</i> Bridge |
| 6. East Brightness Gate | 20. Ancestral Temple | 31. Armory | 42. Luoyang Small Market | 50. Yanran Legation | 63. Changfen Bridge |
| 7. Establishing Spring Gate | 21. Office of the Capital Protector | 32. Jinyongcheng | 43. Remains of Eastern Han Lingtai | 51. Fusang Legation | 64. Yi River |
| 8. Broad Boundless Gate | 22. Office of the Right Guard | 33. Luoyang Little City | 44. Remains of Eastern Han Biyong | 52. Yanzi Legation | 65. Luo River |
| 9. Great Xia Gate | 23. Office of the Grand Commandant | 34. Flowery Park | | 53. Muvi Ward | 66. Remains of Eastern Han Mingtang |
| 10. Receiving Luminosity Gate | 24. Construction Station | 35. Jinyang Hill from Cao-Wei Times | | 54. Muhua Ward | 67. Round Mound |
| 11. Changhe Gate | 25. Office of the Nine Ranks | 36. Listening to Grievances Lodge | | 55. Guide Ward | |
| 12. West Brightness Gate | | | | 56. Guizheng Ward | |
| 13. West Luminosity Gate | | | | 57. Military Review Field | |
| 14. Palace-city | | | | | |

5.1. Plan of Northern Wei Luoyang showing expansion of Wei-Jin city in east and west directions, 493–534

assisted in the designs. The emperor Xuanwudi (r. 499–515) moved into the new palaces in 502.⁶

A fascinating passage in the *History of Wei (Weishu)* informs us that an official complained that wood intended for use in palace construction was diverted for use in boats for an imperial trip to Ye, and that material such as pounded earth was used for the palaces. Buildings excavated at Northern Wei Luoyang confirm mixed earth-and-wood construction.⁷

The 13-kilometer outer wall of Wei-Jin Luoyang and of Han Luoyang before it initially was maintained by Northern Wei, but the single palace-city was expanded (see figure 3.8). The

city then grew, so that the proportions of the new outer wall extended beyond the Wei-Jin wall in both directions, changing it from 9 by 6 *li* (north-south by east-west) to approximately 15 by 20 *li*, the longer dimension then east to west and the palace area more centered than its north-central position in the past (figure 5.1). Expansion was necessary, for the population exceeded the capacity of the earlier walls, but the Mang mountains and Luo River remained natural boundaries on the north and south, respectively. The area enclosed by Luoyang's outer walled city was about 50.4 square kilometers.⁸ It was divided into 220 four-sided wards where the majority of the city's

population lived, more than 600,000 people, with three major markets, a remarkable 1,367 religious institutions, and government offices that lined the northward approach to Luoyang from south of the Luo River.

One recalls that Luoyang's palaces had been destroyed at the end of Eastern Han, and that when the Cao family returned to Luoyang in the third century, rebuilding as well as expansion occurred at the original site, and that Western Jin had used the Wei palaces. By the time Northern Wei returned to Luoyang nearly 180 years later, Jiankang had a history of lavish imperial construction. Emperor Xiaowendi, who made the move to Luoyang, sent emissaries to Jiankang to see palaces of what was at that time the Southern Qi dynasty (479–502). A similar activity had taken place in the early fourth century when builders of the first Jiankang had turned to Luoyang for models. In a sense, palace architecture of Luoyang now returned home.

Retaining some walls that had existed since the Han period, construction of a new, splendid palace-city began in Luoyang almost immediately after the move in 493. Its outer boundary measured 660 meters east to west by 1,392 meters north to south.⁹ In 492 the emperor had Pingcheng's Taihua Hall dismantled and pieces transferred to Luoyang for reconstruction in Great Ultimate Hall, the most important building in the palace-city. The new building would stand on the ruins of Great Ultimate Hall of Wei-Jin times. Before beginning construction, the official Jiang Shaoyou went south to personally study the palace-city at Jiankang. Further, he erected a model for the hall, a rare piece of evidence about the use of three-dimensional models in fifth-century construction. In the end, the design was not used. Jiang also was involved in renovations at Jinyongcheng, where construction or reconstruction also began upon the move of the capital.¹⁰ Xiaowendi moved into Jinyongcheng while the rest of construction was under way.¹¹ The above-mentioned official Li Chong had been put in charge of conceiving a plan for the capital while the court was still in Pingcheng. He now offered designs and was involved in the construction of the Mingtang, Round Mound, Ancestral Temple, and palaces at Northern Wei Luoyang.¹² Building lasted a full ten years, until 502. Thirty-two years later the palaces would be destroyed. Pieces from them, perhaps some that had earlier been used at Pingcheng, were moved for reuse in Eastern Wei palaces at Ye.

The names and functions of many pre-Northern Wei buildings at Luoyang were retained: Changhe Gate remained the main entry to the palace area; Great Ultimate Hall is believed to have been one bay wider than its counterpart at Jiankang,¹³ the palace-city Li Chong had traveled south to study. One might thus say that he was using architecture to assert the supremacy of Northern Wei and its new capital. Construction lasted until 513. Two features that cannot be documented in earlier extant architecture are a wooden balustrade, approached by more than one set of stairs from the front at Great Ultimate Hall; and an auxiliary structure, presumably with pillars across the front, that was attached to the front and functioned like a porch (*fujie*). Both would be retained in Hanyuan Hall, the counterpart to Great Ultimate Hall in Tang dynasty (618–907) Chang'an.

Four residential palaces stood directly behind Great Ultimate Hall: each had a pair of smaller halls to the sides. This arrangement had been used at Wei-Jin Luoyang and at Jiankang. The Hall of State (Chaotang) complex at Northern Wei Luoyang also was relatively unchanged from the past. West of Great Ultimate Hall were additional palaces and parkland. Ye of the third century also had parkland adjacent to the palaces on the west (see figure 4.1). A stone whale that seemed to be jumping up from the ground and flying down at the same time backed against Angler's Terrace, where the emperor came to escape heat in the summer.¹⁴

Another feature of Northern Wei Luoyang that existed in earlier imperial capitals was the span of streets across the palace-city. Four east-west streets and one north-south street ran the entire width and length, respectively. Luoyang in Wei times had three streets that stretched from the eastern to western palace-city walls; the fourth street (the northernmost) was added under Northern Wei. Both cities had only one continuous north-south thoroughfare on the western side of the city. At the Jiankang palace-city of the fourth and fifth centuries, an east-west street sequestered Great Ultimate Hall and the two palace compounds behind it from the rest of the city. At Northern Wei Luoyang, thoroughfares crossed the imperial audience and residential sectors. Because of the division, the courtyards and hall complexes behind Great Ultimate were known as North Palace. The street that divided them from South Palace was named Eternity Lane.

Emperor Xiaowen built a new ancestral temple south of his palaces, just south of the ancestral temple of Western Jin and

opposite the altars to soil and grain. The ancestral temple and twin altars stood in a row of government offices and religious buildings that lined the approach to the palace-city from the south. The same configuration would be used in the Beijing Forbidden City.

The events that led to the fall of Luoyang began in the 520s. Between 523 and 525 non-Chinese groups in the North secured a foothold in the capital. The Erzhu were among them. The death of Emperor Xiaoming in 528 gave Erzhu Rong an opportunity to enter the capital. In the fourth lunar month of that year, thousands of Northern Wei aristocrats and their families were massacred and the empress dowager and her child were thrown into the Yellow River. Xiaoming's successor killed Erzhu Rong in 530 but died himself only a few months later. At this moment, a stronger force, Gao Huan (496–547), managed to conquer much of northern Hebei and Shanxi, taking Ye as his power base by 532. He placed a descendant of the Northern Wei emperor on the throne while he completed his sweep of the remaining Erzhu. He then headed east, eventually establishing himself and the last Northern Wei leadership, who were under his control, at Ye in 534. At this point, the dynasty that had been called Northern Wei ceased to exist, and the aspiring rulers and much of the former population split into Eastern Wei (534–550), whose capital would be at Ye, and Western Wei (535–557), whose capital would be in Chang'an. Four hundred thousand households moved from Luoyang to Ye. In 535 pieces of the Luoyang palaces were disassembled and transferred for use at Ye. In 537 Luoyang was largely demolished. Gao Huan ordered the final destruction in 538.

Ye

When Gao Huan arrived in Ye, the former capitals lay in ruins. He set himself up in temporary quarters as he transferred buildings and materials from Luoyang. The northern part of Ye was to maintain elements of the previous capitals, but the new city to the south would be more a reflection of Northern Wei Luoyang. For this fusion, Gao Huan asked a scholar named Li Yexing to investigate old records.¹⁵ The palaces and ancestral temple were built before Ye was walled. During a two-year period, 100,000 men are said to have worked nonstop on the imperial residences.¹⁶ In the first lunar month of 540, after five years of construction, Gao Huan and the court moved into his new city, thereafter referred to as South City. Seventeen years later, Eastern Wei was replaced by Northern

Qi, and the Gao family officially ascended the throne. Ye became Northern Qi's primary capital, and Jinyang, today Taiyuan, in central Shanxi, the city of Gao Huan's birth, became the northern capital.

The strong influence of the original Northern Wei Luoyang on sixth-century Ye is confirmed by excavation. The first correspondence is the proportion of roughly 3:2 for the north-south to east-west dimensions. Measuring 3.46 kilometers north to south by 2.8 kilometers east to west, the outer wall of Ye was heavily fortified. It was surrounded by a moat and had fourteen gates, four at the east and west and three on the north and south. Major avenues joined all four gates of the eastern and western walls, blocked only by the palace-city or parkland. A major north-south axis through the city led from Vermilion Luminescence Gate of the south wall to the south-center entrance of the palace-city, and from the north outer wall gate, a road continued straight northward. Parkland extended the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi city into the North City. Twenty-eight government bureaus, all named after offices at Northern Wei Luoyang and Jiankang, were inside and outside Ye's palace-city. North City now also had an arsenal. The population of Ye resided in 400 wards, 180 more than Northern Wei Luoyang even after its expansion to 20 by 15 *li*. Mansions of the wealthy were inside Ye. Gao Huan's oldest son, Gao Cheng (521–549), had a mansion, as did imperial concubines and powerful officials. From 556 to 558, 300,000 craftsmen repaired palaces and the Santai area of North City. If records can be trusted, Northern Qi Ye had four thousand religious establishments and eighty thousand male and female members of the clergy.¹⁷ These staggering numbers, even if exaggerated, probably indicate that men and women of the cloth, if not their establishments, moved with the transfer of the capital from Luoyang.

The palace-city of sixth-century Ye followed the palatial axis of Ye of the third and fourth centuries, but like the outer city, its proportions resembled those of Northern Wei Luoyang, from which building parts had been taken. The dimensions were about 780 meters east to west by 1,500 meters north to south. As at Northern Wei and Wei-Jin Luoyang, a gate was named Changhe. Also in the manner of Northern Wei Luoyang, Eastern Wei Ye's palace-city had three concentrically enclosed spaces: the innermost containing Great Ultimate Hall and the main palaces; the second housing government offices; and the outermost featuring parkland and places of

still undetermined purposes. The gates of the eastern and western walls of the second enclosure were termini for wheeled vehicles. Ye also had the three-side-by-side-hall arrangement of palaces, five sets of them. Both Luoyang's and Ye's palace-cities began at Duan (Uprightness) Gate.

Gao Huan never became emperor, but the city he designed made his aspirations clear: a tower above Changhe Gate could hold a thousand men; Great Ultimate Hall was enclosed by 120 pillars; and the gates and windows of its perimeter arcade were decorated with silver and gold. Although little is known about the ancestral temples of Eastern Wei and Northern Qi in the southeastern part of Ye, much is known about a ceremonial complex built following the death of Gao Huan in 547. It comprised four rooms of two bays each plus two additional bays on each side, all with hip-gable roofs and a corridor that wound around the complex. A main gate and two side gates were in front. Enclosed by two sets of walls, the buildings included an abstinence hall (presumably where descendants prepared for sacrifices), ritual shrines, kitchens, a residence for the temple master, and storage for vehicles and wheels.¹⁸

Chang'an

Chang'an had been a capital during the Sixteen States period, and Northern Wei had built a small, walled town there. In 534 Emperor Xiaowudi (r. 532–534) of Northern Wei fled westward and established himself in Chang'an as emperor of Western Wei. In 557 Western Wei fell to Northern Zhou (557–581). During the first fifteen years of Northern Zhou rule, palaces, ritual spaces, and gardens were constructed. In 572 Emperor Wudi (543–578) executed his regent uncle and others and destroyed many of the buildings constructed during the period of their protectorship. Promulgating a policy that was opposed to excessive decoration, Wudi urged a return to past buildings and encouraged construction in earth and wood. Wudi's successor reigned for only about a year, between 578 and 580, and encouraged the same kind of modest construction.¹⁹ The final emperor of Northern Zhou relinquished control to his father-in-law Yang Jian (585–618), who served as regent for the emperor's son. In 581 Yang Jian took power and established the capital of his dynasty Sui in Chang'an. It is not known how much of Western Han, Former Qin, or Later Zhao Chang'an remained when Yang Jian took control, but both Western Wei and Northern Zhou Chang'an were smaller than the Han city.

As had already become institutionalized, the crown prince lived in a palace to the east of the main palace. The emperor's palace-city was enclosed by five gates.²⁰

Jiankang

The other important imperial architecture of the fifth and sixth centuries was in Jiankang. Hall and gate names were among the few changes from one dynasty to the next. Initially when Liu-Song established itself at Jiankang in 420, the rulers used the Eastern Jin palaces. In 443 the emperor Wendi began construction of two new gates; in 446 he built a park.²¹ In 480, under Southern Qi rule, three gates were added and towers were repaired.²² Under both dynasties, imperial audiences were held in Great Ultimate Hall and the private chambers of royalty were in courtyards behind it, the front for the emperor and back for the empress. In 513 Emperor Wudi of the Liang dynasty (502–557) built a Mingtang for his palace-city and expanded Great Ultimate Hall to thirteen bays, thus increasing its size to that of the corresponding hall in Luoyang. The major emendations to the city under Chen (557–589) rule were improvements to mansions by wealthy aristocrats.

Looking at Luoyang, Ye, and Jiankang together, several characteristics of Chinese imperial urbanism on the eve of unification by Sui in the 580s are notable. First is the strong division between the area of the palace-city focused on Great Ultimate Hall and the area south of it by a wide east-west thoroughfare. Second, the Hall of State and Secretariat were together in a precinct southeast of the palaces but within the palace-city. Third was concentric walling, with two walls at Jiankang and three at Luoyang and Ye, and with the imperial administrative sector always inside the second enclosure.

Ye's importance would wane upon unification. Luoyang and Jiankang's successor, Nanjing, would remain large cities and at times be secondary capitals or very briefly primary imperial cities. Chang'an, only occasionally significant in the period between Han and Sui, would for three hundred years be the greatest capital China had ever seen.

Tombs of Royalty

If palaces and ritual architecture of China's most important capitals of the fifth and sixth centuries give the impression that buildings and urban planning were shared across China, then,



5.2. Detail of archway, Yongguling, City Museum, Datong, Shanxi, 490

5.3. Sculpture from spirit path of Xiao Jing (477–523), marquis of Liang dynasty (502–557), Ganjiaxiang, Qixia, Nanjing

as had been the case in the third and fourth centuries from Koguryō to Gansu, tomb architecture emphasizes this point.

Tomb of Empress Dowager Wenming

When the Northern Wei emperor abdicated the throne in 471, Empress Dowager Wenming (née Feng) (d. 490) held tight control over the new emperor, her foster grandson Xiaowendi. The dowager's influence lasted until her death. She was entombed north of Pingcheng at a site she named Yongguling (Eternally Solid Tomb), a name that suggests the permanence of funerary construction, in hills known as Fangshan, about 5 kilometers north of Datong.

She selected the site while taking a walk with her grandson in the fourth lunar month of 481.²³ Two stone buildings, Wenshishi (Chamber with Writings on Stone) and Lingquan (Spirit Spring) Hall, already stood there in 479. Xiaowendi built Jingxuan (Mirror of Darkness) Hall. It is unknown what these poetically named buildings looked like.

Eternally Solid Tomb was excavated in 1976. The underground portion consists of two chambers joined by a passageway, the plan used in Gansu and Koguryō in the fourth century. Covered at ground level by an earthen mound whose base dimensions are 124 by 117 meters and of which 22.87 meters in height remain today, the total underground length, including an entry passageway, is 23.5 meters. The vaulted back burial chamber rises 7.3 meters. The tomb was robbed at least three times, but underground brickwork and relief carving remained intact (figure 5.2).²⁴ Eternally Solid Tomb was the last architectural project of the Northern Wei ruling family in Pingcheng. When the dowager's grandson died in 499, he was buried in Luoyang.

Tombs of Jiankang Royalty

Monumental stone mythological beasts, pillars, and tablets erected along the approach known as *shendao* (spirit path) are the dominant image of a Southern Dynasties tomb (figure 5.3). Often the columns are fluted. Royal tombs of Eastern Jin and Liu-Song are believed to be similar to the burials discussed here.

Southern Qi emperors were buried in Danyang county east of Nanjing.²⁵ The tomb of Xiao Daosheng (Southern Qi emperor Gaodi) was excavated in 1965. Measuring 15 by 6.2 meters and made of brick, the tomb includes an ovoid subterranean burial chamber, 9.4 by 4.9 meters with a 4.5-meter-high vaulted ceiling. The walls are constructed in nine layers. Two stone doors make the main burial chamber accessible from



5.4. Pillar from spirit path of Xiao Jing, marquis of Liang dynasty (502–557), Ganjiaxiang, Qixia, Nanjing

the underground passageway. Above the doors and below the archway is the inverted-V-shaped brace that is so characteristic of architecture of the period. Mythical winged beasts known as *tianlu* and *qilin* survive from the spirit path. The entries to the tombs of several royalty of the Xiao family also have inverted-V-shaped braces decorating the lintels above them. A tomb in Huqiao village in Danyang, believed to belong to Xiao Baorong (488–502), is of the same plan and almost the same size, but with straighter interior walls defining a four-sided main chamber with truncated corners. The famous relief sculptures of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove and Confucian Rong Qiqi in museums in Nanjing come from one-chamber tombs dated to the fifth century or earlier in this region. Tombs of princes of the Liang dynasty (502–557) uncovered at Ganjiaxiang, Qixia township, the location of figures 5.3 and 5.4, all have one long, main chamber.

The tombs of Xiao Yan (Emperor Wu) (r. 502–549) and his successor Xiao Gang (Emperor Jianwen) (r. 549–551) are north and south of each other within the Danyang city limits. The tomb of Xiao Xiu (d. 518) is among a group of thirty-eight burials in Ganjia hamlet. At least four of the five Chen emperors received royal burial. Two Chen imperial tombs near Nanjing have been opened. Chen emperor Xu's (Xuandi) tomb was dug

into a hill and entered via flat ground from the north. During construction, a 45-by-9-meter area was carved into the rock, most of it the passageway into the tomb with a drainage ditch at its center. The antechamber and tomb were lined with five layers of mud brick. The main room was ovoid, 10 meters long, 6.7 meters wide, and 6.7 meters high. The ceiling was a simple barrel vault. The lintel above the entry had an inverted-V-shaped brace. Murals covered the interior walls and ceiling. Chen emperor Wudi's tomb was of the same form.

A few sixth-century spirit paths of Jiankang royalty have pillars supporting lion capitals (see figure 5.4). The sources of the pillars may be columns erected in India by the Buddhist king Aśoka (ca. 269–232 BCE). The lions might also be the kinds of decoration inspired by Buddhist art but without clear understanding of the Buddhist context, such as had been used in Chinese funerary art in the Han dynasty.

Northern Wei, Eastern and Western Wei, Northern Qi, and Northern Zhou Tombs

Like rulers of Eastern Han and Western Jin, emperors of Northern Wei were laid to rest beneath mounds in the Mang mountains north of Luoyang. The tomb of Emperor Xuanwu (483–515) was dug deeply into a hill. Named Jingling, the brick burial chamber has a domed ceiling, stone doors, and a paved stone floor (figure 5.5). Tombs of his predecessor, a successor, and a fourth tomb believed to belong to a relative are in the same group. Xuanwudi's tomb has a brick obstruction named sealing door (*fengmen*) that appears in imperial burials by this time. It is part of the seven-component progression from the exterior entry to the innermost chamber: a long earthen ramp, a much shorter brick passageway, sealing door, the front entry path, second sealing door, back entry path, and finally a door for entry into the single tomb chamber. The number of doors and passageways is greater than those of earlier imperial burials, including the tomb of Dowager Wenming in Fangshan and Southern Dynasties tombs. The approach may have been intended to deter grave robbers, although, like most tombs excavated to date, this one had been looted. This reduction to one chamber, compared with the Fangshan tomb, had already taken place in the South and would be the norm among burials discussed below.

The one- and two-room tombs of fifth- and sixth-century royalty pale in comparison with the expansive burials of Han emperors and officials. These more compact burials, like those

5.5. Interior of Jingling, tomb of Emperor Xuanwu, d. 515, Mang mountains, north of Luoyang



observed in Gansu and Koguryō of the previous two centuries, some of which may also belong to royalty, might be explained by short reigns, but other factors must have been at work. By the fifth century, many rulers had turned some of their patronage to Buddhism.

When Gao Huan died, his son Gao Cheng buried him at Foding (Buddha Ceiling) in the hills of Gushan where Gao Huan had built a villa for the ailing consort of the only Eastern Wei emperor, Xiao Jingdi (r. 534–550). Gao Cheng made a pretense of burying his father elsewhere and then secretly carved a grotto on the side of a cave in Gushan, placed the coffin inside, and sealed it, upon which the son had all the workers executed. Following the fall of Northern Qi, the son of one of those workers removed the stone that sealed the burial, took gold from inside the tomb, and fled.²⁶ The *Bei Qishu* (History of Northern Qi) records that Gao Huan's death was kept secret for six months, a statement that seems to support the possibility that in those months a tomb was surreptitiously carved at Gushan. Those who are skeptical believe Gao Huan's remains lie in Ci county, adjacent to Ye in Hebei province, where other Eastern Wei and Northern Qi

rulers and aristocrats, whose other architecture is discussed below, are buried.²⁷

Empress Yifu (d. 540), wife of Western Wei's first emperor, Wendi (r. 535–551), and two attendants were buried beneath cave 43 at Maijishan near Tianshui in eastern Gansu province. The cave has a uniquely elaborated facade with a Buddha image and two Buddhist guardians above the entry (figure 5.6).

It has been known through the ages that the Northern Zhou emperors are buried in the vicinity of Chang'an. Confession by a grave robber in 1993 led archaeologists to the tomb of one of them, the joint burial of Wudi and his wife in Xianyang, the city north of Chang'an where the First Emperor of Qin had built his capital in the late third century BCE.²⁸ Oriented 10 degrees east of north, the tomb consists of a 3.9-meter ramp followed by five air shafts; pairs of side niches for the deposit of grave goods between the fourth and fifth air shafts; sealing door; large, rectangular main burial chamber; and back niche.

In the second half of the sixth century, lesser royalty and high-ranking officials are buried in subterranean, single-chamber tombs with long approach ramps. Sometimes the tombs



5.6. Facade of cave 43, Maijishan, Gansu, location of burial of Western Wei empress Yifu, d. 540

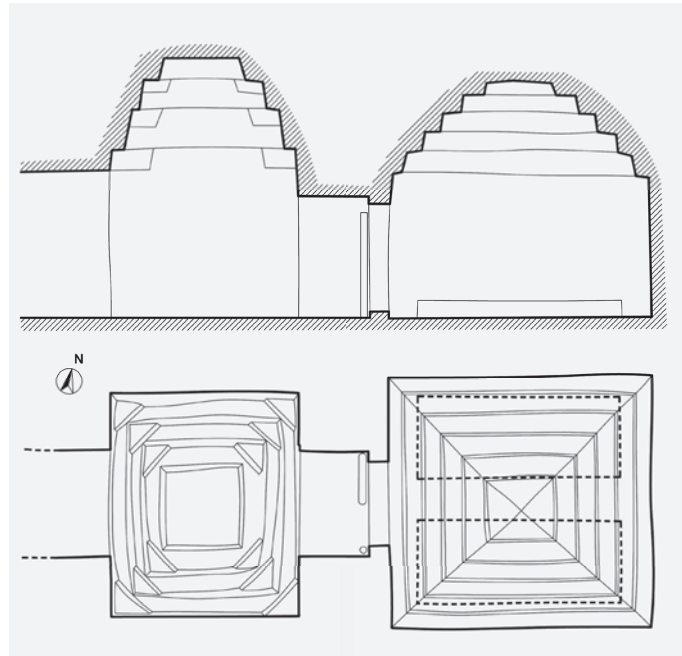
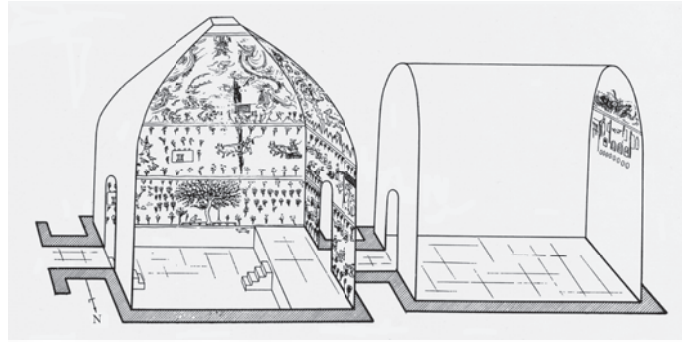
have niches at the sides or back. Some of these tombs are known for complicated mural programs that offer a sharp contrast to the simple architecture. They include the tombs of Northern Qi official Han Yi in Qi county of Shanxi; the Ruru princess in Ci county, Hebei; official Xu Xianxiu and the emperor's brother-in-law Lou Rui, both in the suburbs of Taiyuan; official Li Xian in Guyuan, Ningxia; Sogdian official Yu Hong in Chang'an; and official Cui Fen in Linfen, Shandong, whose tomb has an unusually short approach ramp. Most of the tombs are joint husband-and-wife burials, and those interred are of both Chinese and non-Chinese ethnicities.

Tombs in Gansu, Koguryō, and Datong

As in the South, tombs that belong to royalty and in some cases to high-ranking officials in North China have one room or two chambers joined by an arcade. The standardized architecture and number of shared subjects in the murals are such that only a very localized detail such as a figure's headgear might indicate a tomb's location. The unity in architectural style is especially impressive when one realizes that the same tomb plans, ceiling types, and decoration are used from the Sixteen States through the sixth century from western China to Korea.

Jiuquan and Ji'an

Dingjiazha tomb 5, 8 kilometers northwest of the center of Jiuquan in Gansu province of western China, and Changchuan tomb 1, about 22 kilometers northeast of Ji'an in Jilin province near China's border with Korea, are as similar as any two tombs of the period.²⁹ The tomb near Jiuquan is dated ca. 400 and believed to be the product of one of the Liang states of the Sixteen. Changchuan tomb 1 is from the Koguryō kingdom and probably dates to the fifth century. Both tombs consist of two chambers joined by an arcade, and in each tomb, a different kind of vaulted ceiling covers each room: a truncated pyramid and barrel vault in Gansu and layered ceilings of different numbers and sizes of layers in Jilin (figures 5.7, 5.8).



5.7. Line drawing of interior of tomb 5, Dingjiazha, Gansu, showing murals on south and west walls of chambers, ca. 400

5.8. Side elevation and plan of tomb 1, Changchuan tomb 1, Ji'an, ca. fifth century

Changchuan tomb 1 is smaller than Dingjiazha tomb 5, about 6.5 meters between the far sides of the front and back rooms compared to 8.64 meters at Changchuan tomb 1.

Paintings are as similar as the architecture. Most prominent in each tomb is a deity who occupies a high, central position opposite the underground entry: in Dingjiazha tomb 5 it is the Queen Mother of the West and in Changchuan tomb 1 it is the Buddha. Local elements such as mud-earth structures with crenellations identify the desert environment in Gansu (see figure 4.5), and spotted, fur-bordered garments identify dancers of Koguryō in Changchuan tomb 1. The tomb occupant, food service and entertainment for him, life on his land, and the ethereal, godly world are painted in both tombs. These worlds are presented along horizontal registers with the human world below the heavenly. A prominent, flowering tree appears in both tombs. Every motif has sources in funerary decoration of Han China.

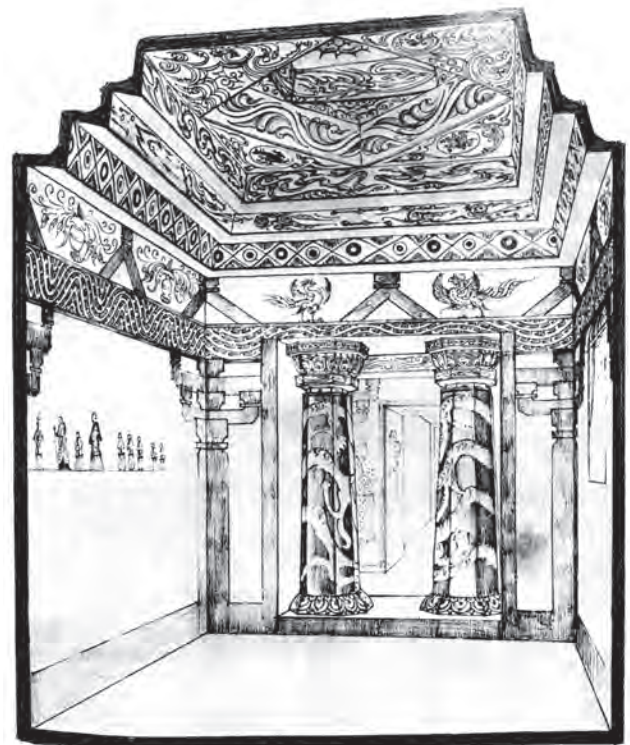
5.9. Ceiling of main chamber, Tomb of the Stars 1, South P'yöngan, North Korea, ca. late fifth century



Among approximately 130 Koguryö tombs with murals, only Anak tomb 3 and the Tökhüngni tomb are dated (see figures 4.24, 4.25). The majority of Koguryö tombs have only one main chamber, yet ceilings are multilevel and complicated. Quadrilaterals and octagons routinely form cupolas and lanterns, sometimes positioned in stepped, pyramidal spaces with truncated corners. The ceilings of Tombs of the Stars 1 and 2 and Twin Pillars Tomb, all in North Korea, and Tomb of the Dancers in Ji'an are examples (figures 5.9, 5.10). Twin Pillars Tomb is among the many in which alternating one-step bracket sets and inverted-V-shaped braces are painted on the walls to re-create an interior architectural environment, and triangular shapes with decorated edges rise above lintels. All are features found in Buddhist cave-temples from the same time (see figure 5.19).

Datong

The Northern Wei capital Pingcheng lies between Koguryö and Gansu. Its fourth- and fifth-century tombs and their decoration are almost indistinguishable from those to the east and west. Among more than two hundred tombs studied by 2008, not one has more than two rooms.³⁰ The tomb of Sima Jinlong, a member of a royal family who died in 484, has two main chambers and a side niche.³¹ The tomb of Song Shaozu, who died in 477, has one chamber and an extremely long approach ramp.³² Both tombs are known for expensive objects: Sima



5.10. Ling drawing of interior of Twin Pillars Tomb, South P'yöngan, North Korea, ca. fifth century



5.11. Interior of two-chamber tomb, Hudong, Datong, Shanxi, Northern Wei



5.12. Interior of Mogao cave 254, Gansu, Northern Wei

Jinlong's for a lacquer screen illustrated with scenes from the "Admonitions of the Court Instructress," a text instructing the behavior of women of the court; Song Shaozu was buried in a sarcophagus discussed below (see figure 5.36). A Northern Wei tomb found in Shaling, Datong, in 2006 similarly had both a lacquer wooden sarcophagus and murals of a quality previously unknown from the Pingcheng period of Northern Wei rule, yet it too has only one main chamber.³³ A two-chamber tomb similar in plan to Song Shaozu's was uncovered at Hudong, in Datong (figure 5.11). This tomb also had a lacquer sarcophagus

and murals.³⁴ The core group of scenes on the walls and on sarcophaguses in Datong are those on the walls of Koguryŏ tombs and on a stone sarcophagus found in 1997 in a tomb in Zhijiabu, south of Pingcheng.³⁵ A single-chamber tomb in Beichen village of Luoyang, uncovered in 1989, has the same imagery.³⁶ One surmises that the owner of a tomb with murals had higher status than one without them. One anticipates that murals will be found in tombs still to be excavated of royalty of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, and that they will have no more than two main rooms.

Great Age of Buddhist Cave-Chapels

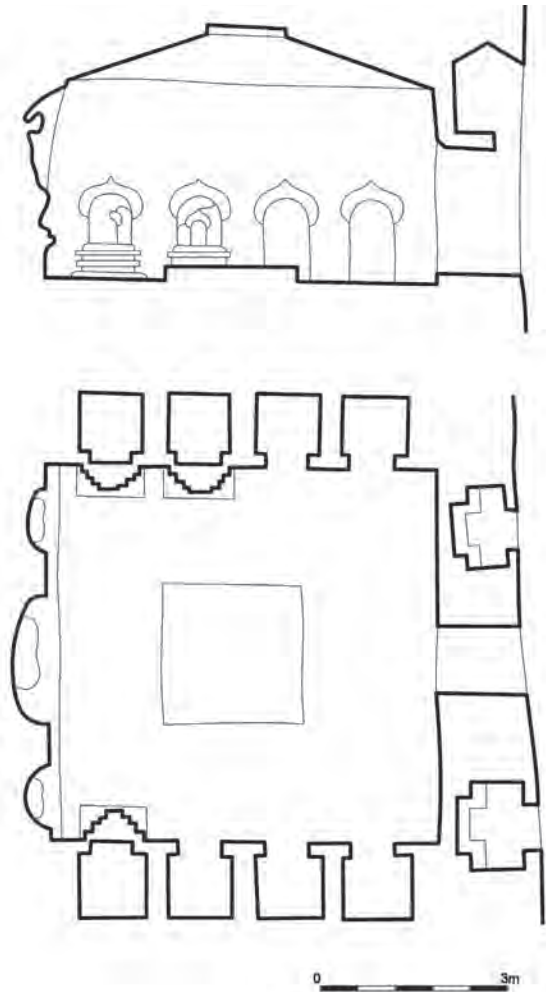
In spite of the myriad tombs and splendid imperial capitals built in the fifth and sixth centuries, the architectural legacy of the two hundred years from Northern Wei to Sui is the Buddhist rock-carved worship cave. The three early Mogao caves discussed in chapter 4 are among the smallest of the nearly five hundred grottoes at the site, even though meditation, worship, and lecture remain three of the fundamental purposes of Buddhist cave-carving in China.

One of the most important cave forms in fifth-century China is the central-pillar or central-pillar-pagoda cave. In South Asian Buddhist architecture, the pillar symbolizes the stupa and can be circumambulated in a cave interior as one would progress around a freestanding relic mound. A fifth-century, central-pillar cave in China sometimes has an anteroom with its own ceiling and side niches. Mogao caves 254 and 257 are examples (figure 5.12). A central-pillar cave may also have a simple quadrilateral floor plan and a flat ceiling. The form of the pillar varies.

After the central pillar, the most frequently constructed cave type in fifth- and sixth-century China takes the *vihara* plan and is named *vihara*-style to recognize the early Indian monastery in which monks have cells for meditation and residence. Alternatively, this kind of cave is named after its purpose, *sengfangku* (monk's residence cave). Mogao cave 285, dated to Western Wei, is an example of a grotto in which monks' niches are along the perimeter (figure 5.13). As with the central-pillar cave, there is variety in the perimeter cells. Sometimes, for instance, a Buddha image or a stupa is placed in a niche.

Big Buddha caves continue to be constructed in the fifth century. The monumental Buddhist statue may be positioned on the back wall or it might be incorporated onto the central pillar. Some Big Buddha caves are carved so that the main image is visible before entering.

Buddha altar caves have altars with images, often U-shaped, usually near the back of the cave but not touching any wall. Another cave type named for interior construction is the screen cave (*beipingku*) in which a screen is somewhere near the back. Most screen caves date to the ninth century or later. *Niepanku* (*parinirvāṇa* cave) is named for the standard portrayal of the historical Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama



5.13. Section and plan of Mogao cave 285, Gansu, Western Wei

at the time of death. He is shown on his side surrounded by mourners. The *fudou* (inverted ladle) cave is named for its truncated pyramidal ceiling.³⁷ It is as common in cave-temples as it is in tombs. Often, as in Mogao cave 285, a lotus is painted or carved on the apex (figure 5.14).

Accommodations to the Chinese architectural system were inevitable when Indian Buddhist gods entered interior spaces. The lure of stone as a permanent material had been recognized for tomb construction in China before the arrival of Buddhism. The transformation of the Indian chaitya hall into a Chinese cave-chapel was an opportunity to reconfigure existing construction, for China would not abandon timber framing any more than had been the case in subterranean tombs in which architectural components were carved, sculpted, or painted. The result of this convergence was that some of the best fifth- and sixth-century examples of rock-carved imitations of wooden building components, *fangmugou*, survive in early cave-temples. Occasionally, real wooden pieces were used, but usually paint and plaster combined to imitate a timber frame and



5.14. Interior of Mogao cave 285, Gansu, Western Wei

thereby establish that the house of the gods was a Chinese one.

Gansu province is replete with Buddhist cave-temples that confirm the structural types found in Mogao caves. In some cases, evidence from the Hexi Corridor is earlier than comparable examples in the Dunhuang region. The period from the rise of the state of Northern Liang in 398 to the fall of the Western Qin state in 431 is especially important. Binglingsi, about 35 kilometers southwest of Yongjing near Gansu's border with Qinghai, is one of the most important sites for this period. Cave 169, dated to the early 420s, is a massive cave, 26.75 by 8.56 meters and 15 meters high (figure 5.15). It is one among the 183 grottoes, 694 rock-carved images, 82 stucco statues, and more than 900 square meters of wall painting. Cave 1 also dates to Western Qin; caves 124, 125, 126, 128, and 132 are dated Northern Wei.³⁸

Yungang

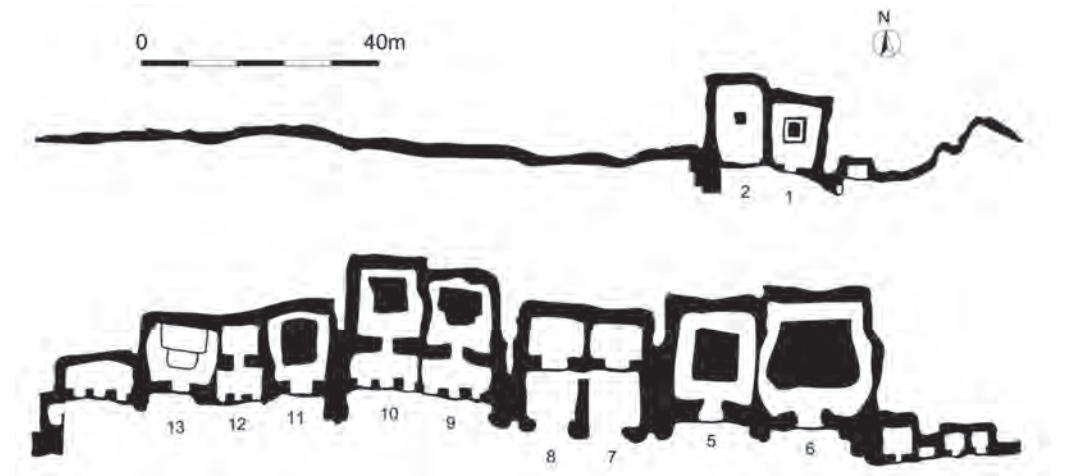
Yungang has long been recognized as one of the major repositories of early Chinese Buddhist art and architecture. Located 22 kilometers west of Datong, the caves flourished under Northern Wei patronage when the capital was at Pingcheng. The Buddhist monk Tanyao was charged by the emperor with supervising the carving of five caves in the 460s. They are nos. 16–20. Each has an enormous Buddha associated with one of the Northern Wei emperors who ruled from Pingcheng.

Four sets of Yungang caves that have associations with Northern Wei royal patrons were carved as commemorative pairs: caves 7 and 8 for Emperor Wencheng and his wife in 465 by their son; caves 9 and 10 for Emperor Xianwen and his wife by their son; caves 1 and 2, dedicated by Prince Liu Cheng of the Liu-Song court at Jiankang, who had come north, for his parents; and caves 5 and 6 by Empress Dowager Wenming

5.15. Interior of cave 169, Binglingsi, Gansu, Western Qin, 420–424



5.16. Plans of caves 1–3 and 5–13, Yungang, fifth century



(interred in Yongguling), for her father and herself.³⁹ Each of the pair shares a plan with its mate, but there are three different plans among the four pairs. The three plans are: a single chamber with a central pillar; two chambers joined by a corridor; and two chambers joined by a corridor with a central pillar in the back room (figure 5.16). Each form is also found in Mogao caves.

Two styles of pagoda, in relief or as central pillars, two types of archways, one ceiling style, and inverted-V-shaped bracket sets characterize Yungang cave interiors. Except for a very few single-story structures, pagodas are multistory with replicas of ceramic-tile roof eaves on each story. The distinguishing feature of the two types of pagoda is whether the stories are of uniform size from base to top or if the profile tapers toward the top (figures 5.17, 5.18). Archways are either segmented, a style also observed in cave-temples near Luoyang

discussed below, or of the ogee style derived from Indian chaitya halls already observed in Yungang caves (see figures 4.14, 5.18). Roofs are hipped with parallel rafters, their under-eaves supported by rafters that are four-sided or circular in section, sometimes with both types, and sometimes with lotus patterns on the ends (figure 5.19). Northern Wei patronage at Yungang dropped off sharply after the move of the capital to Luoyang in 493.

Like Yungang in the fifth century, the most splendid cave-temples of sixth-century China received imperial patronage. They are located near the capitals of Luoyang, Ye, and Jinyang (Taiyuan).

Imperial Caves near Luoyang

Northern Wei emperor Xuanwudi (r. 499–515), a devout Buddhist, gave the initial order for cave excavation at Yique,



5.19. Detail of Yungang cave 9 showing hip-roofed structure with parallel rafters, under-eave circular rafters with lotus patterns, alternating single-step bracket sets and inverted-V-shaped braces, and segmented arch above Buddha image on either side, 470–493



to be known as Longmen, 13 kilometers south of Luoyang. He began with Guyang Cave, a large, ovoid room with a small antechamber, a plan seen in many cave-temples and tombs in North and South China. The configuration of the Binyang caves is more noteworthy. At first two caves were planned, one for each of Xuanwudi's deceased parents. A third cave, for the emperor himself, was initiated by the palace official Liu Teng between 508 and 512.⁴⁰

Several features are typical of Longmen caves of the Northern Wei period. One is the segmented archway, also observed at Yungang. Second is the disappearance of central pillars. Northern Wei does not mark the termination of these columns. Rather, it seems that at Longmen one observes a desire for large, open spaces from which worshipers can view all the wall imagery. Third is the central ceiling lotus. It can dominate a flat ceiling or may appear in a truncated pyramidal ceiling, caisson ceiling, or ceiling whose structure includes imitation wooden members as observed in Mogao caves and tombs.

Northern Wei Longmen caves also contain examples of timber-frame architecture replicated in stone (figure 5.20). Detail from a niche in Guyang Cave shows a hip-gable roof, inverted-V-shaped braces alternating with bracket sets, and a beast emblazoned atop the main roof ridge. These are familiar features in Yungang caves, but in this late-fifth-century structure the braces now have a strut bisecting the angle of



5.17. Central-pillar pagoda, interior of cave 2, Yungang, Northern Wei

5.18. Pagoda whose layers taper from base to highest, cave 6, Yungang, Northern Wei

5.20. Niche showing pillar-supported structure with alternating inverted-V-shaped braces and bracket sets beneath hip-gable roof, Guyang Cave, Longmen, ca. 490s



the V, bracket sets have two tiers of arms, and a hip-gable roof contrasts with the simple hipped roofs that dominate relief sculpture at Yungang.

The five cave-temples at Gongxian, about 50 kilometers east of Longmen, were completed as a group under Emperor Xiaowen, who, according to a stele at the site, was inspired to commission them when he stopped here in a rainstorm.⁴¹ In contrast to the Longmen caves, four of the five at Gongxian have central pillars. Both pointed, horseshoe-shaped (*chaitya*) arches and five-segmented arches crown images, and ceilings may have imitation lattices and or central lotuses.

Xiangtangshan

Xiangtangshan refers to two groups of caves, north and south, in the region of Gushan near the Ye capital in southern Hebei province. The cave-temples date to Eastern Wei and Northern Qi. The northern and southern groups are the most extensive and elaborate. A small cave site in the vicinity known as Shuiyusi may have been part of the original conception. The northern cave group is closely associated with Gao Huan, who built the above-mentioned villa for the consort of the Eastern Wei emperor at Gushan.

Three of the nine northern caves are dated to the Northern Qi period. They are referred to as North, Middle, and South. Two have central pillars. North Cave dominates the three. It has been proposed as the location of Gao Huan's burial. Some 12 meters square and 11 meters in height, the cave features a central pillar and every niche elaborated with motifs found nowhere else in China. They suggest sources far to the west (figure 5.21). Floral and flame patterns find comparisons among Sasanian relief of the same century and a century earlier. Other sections display scroll and vine and other floriated motifs observed in Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia in the fifth century.⁴² Middle Cave of the three at North Xiangtangshan has a unique structural feature: four octagonal pillars stand in two pairs on either side of the entry chamber. Today concealed, the columns recall earlier construction in stone at Yi'nan tomb 1 and Anak tomb 3

5.21. Detail of south wall, North Cave, North Xiangtangshan, Hebei, Northern Qi

5.22. Pagodas carved in relief with high *cha(tra)*, chaitya archways, and, on left, lotus petals emerging from two sides of band on columns, Baoshan, Anyang county, Henan, second half of sixth century



5.23. Ceiling of Middle Cave, Xiaonanhai, Anyang county, Henan, second half of sixth century

(see figures 3.22, 4.24). They are also found at cave-temples at Tianlongshan, discussed below.

The seven caves of South Xiangtangshan are arranged in upper and lower levels. A wooden structure above the second row suggests there may at one time have been a third tier. It is possible the intent was to display multistory architecture such as pagodas on the cave facade. Decoration at South Xiangtangshan includes floriated flames and flowers of the kind carved at North Xiangtangshan. A lotus that emerges from two sides of a band, observed in other sixth-century decoration, also is found here.

In nearby Anyang county, the location of the tombs of Shang kings, cave-temples with similar decoration are among approximately two hundred grottoes carved in the Northern Qi or Sui periods on facing sides of the Baoshan mountain range. The facades and interiors are small and focused and display highly decorated pagodas with prominent spires (*cha[tras]*), chaitya arches above the entries, and bundled lotus petals emerging from both ends of bands



5.24. Entryway showing alternating inverted-V-shaped braces with single-arm bracket sets and red-brown rafters painted under eaves, cave 16, Tianlongshan, sixth century with later repairs

on columns of the kind found in the Xiangtangshan grottoes (figure 5.22).⁴³ When ceramic-tile roofs are indicated, inverted-V-shaped braces often alternate with simple one-tier bracket sets.

The Daliusheng cave-temple group, dated 546, and Dazhusheng group, dated 589, also are in Anyang county. Three small grottoes of Xiaonanhai are about 5 kilometers from Baoshan. Not as elaborated as Xiangtangshan caves or the facades of the Baoshan cliffs, each chapel is a single-chamber structure with an inverted-ladle-shaped ceiling with a lotus at its center (figure 5.23).⁴⁴

Tianlongshan

Tianlongshan is located about 36 kilometers southwest of Taiyuan. Twenty-five caves spread about 0.5 kilometer across the Tianlong (Heavenly Dragon) mountains on more than one level, divided roughly evenly as thirteen on the western side and twelve on the eastern side. Six caves date from late Northern Wei to Northern Qi.⁴⁵ Each has a front facade believed to resemble timber-frame architecture of the period, with inverted-V-shaped braces alternating with single-step brackets across the lintel, a chaitya-style arch above the entry into the cave, eight-sided columns supporting the lintel, and imitation ceramic-tile roofs among its features. Sometimes the rafters that support the undersides of eaves are painted red-brown (figure 5.24).

Most of the pre-Sui cave-temples at Tianlongshan have a single chamber with an entry but not complete antechamber. Sometimes with an altar but never a central pillar, and with niches for images in walls, this plan is the most common in the second half of the sixth century except at Xiangtangshan. Curtains and canopies decorate Buddha niches at Tianlongshan,

but not as elaborately as at Xiangtangshan. Tianlongshan cave 9 contains a Big Buddha. Dated to the Tang period, the statue dominates the cave-temple complex as do similar statues at many Tang-period cave-temple sites.

Cave 8 is the largest Tianlongshan cave. It has a central pillar and is dated by inscription to 584. With an antechamber that measures 4.3 meters across the front, 1.7 meters in depth, and 3 meters high, the main chamber is approximately 4 meters square.

Maijishan

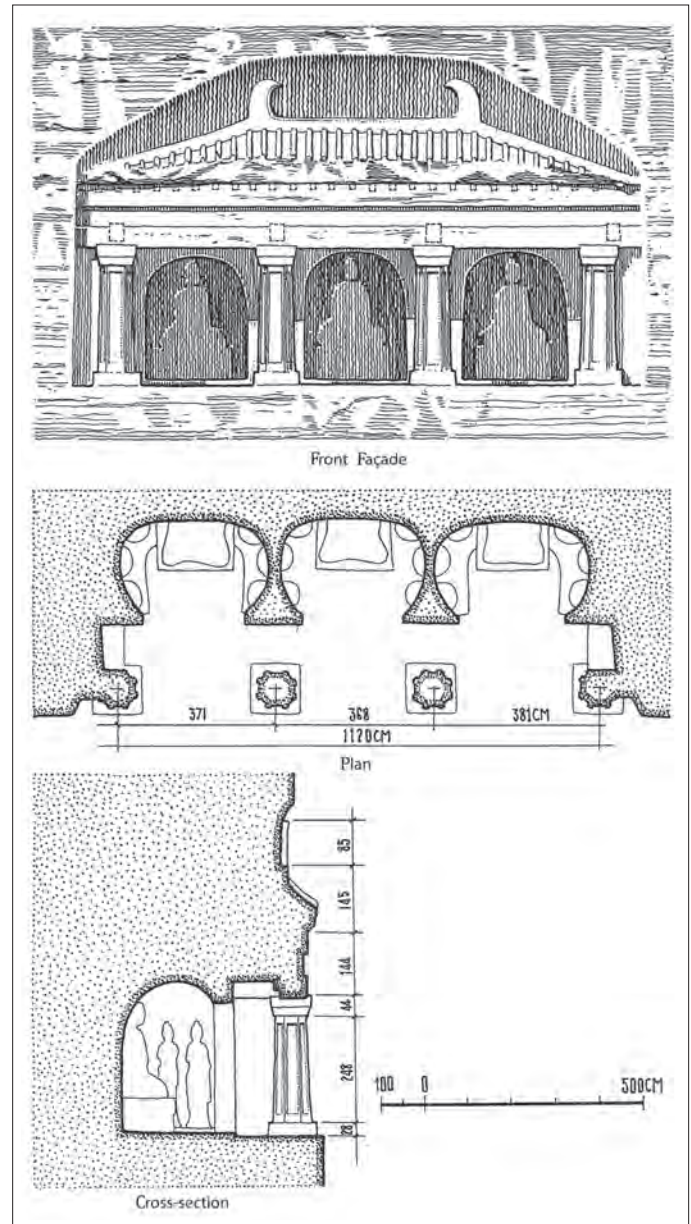
The rock-carved grottoes at Maijishan, about 45 kilometers southeast of Tianshui in eastern Gansu province, are one of the most important sources of information about Chinese architecture before the Tang dynasty. Maijishan originally was a monolith whose grottoes and niches were carved more than 80 meters above the ground. In 734 an earthquake divided the rock into eastern and western cliffs. Fifty-four caves are on the east and 140 are on the west. Another fifteen grottoes, sometimes considered part of the site, yield a total number of 209.⁴⁶

Maijishan's six oldest cave-temples are single chamber and squarish, with U-shaped altars and Buddha niches but no central pillars. They date to Later Qin and Western Qin of the Sixteen States. Ninety-two caves are dated to the Northern Wei period. Cave 1 is a three-bay hall whose front facade is defined by four eight-sided pillars. Inside, a U-shaped altar spans the back wall to accommodate a Buddha in *parinirvāṇa*. Maijishan cave 28 pairs with cave 30, the latter dated to the Western Wei period. Both have facades like those of cave 1: four eight-sided columns capped by three layers of plates, the top plate the widest, define a three-bay structure, and a hipped roof designates superior

status (figure 5.25). Also like cave 1, the pillars are of four wider and four more narrow faces, a feature traceable to Eastern Han stone tomb and shrine architecture such as Yi'an tomb 1 or Zhu Wei's shrine (see figure 3.22). The interiors of caves 28 and 30 are different from any interior structure discussed thus far: three nearly oval spaces, each displaying a Buddha on a platform, are behind a wide, rectangular antechamber.

Cave 15 at Maijishan displays a triangular roof truss, like the one in Digengpo tomb 1 (see figure 4.21), and a vaulted ceiling framed by parallel rafters that join a main ridge along the center of the interior, a feature also found in Mogao cave 259. The ceiling of Maijishan cave 127 is the popular form in Northern Wei Mogao caves, the *fudou*, or truncated pyramid (see figure 5.14). The eight cylinders that frame this ceiling are decorated with bands with lotus petals emerging from either end. Observed at Xiangtangshan, the feature is found in secular and religious architecture of the fifth and sixth centuries. The multistructure complex with two hipped roofs, front and side gates with triple eaves, triple-eave corner towers, and triple-eave towers between the gates and corner towers that has been compared with the city of Ye is inside the frame (see figure 4.3). Cave 140 has a very early example of the "suspended fish" (*xuanyu*), a decorative piece hanging from the top of the gable end of the roof.

Fifteen Maijishan caves date between 500 and 515, thirty-two date 516 to 534, seven have Western Wei dates, fourteen are dated Northern Zhou, and seven have Sui dates. The facade of Maijishan cave 4 provides extremely important information about sixth-century architecture. Dated to Northern Zhou, cave 4 presents the frontal view of a seven-bay hall with a simple hipped roof and a one-bay-deep porch (figure 5.26). The missing front row of pillars stood on octagonal pilasters whose traces are still visible. The ceiling of the entry, now exposed, is latticed. Curtains sculpted to hang from the tops and at the sides of the seven entrances are similar to their counterparts at Tianlongshan. Three triangles decorated with flame-like patterns recall those in the tombs of the Wrestlers and Dancers and Twin Pillars and in cave-temples in Yungang (see figures 5.10, 5.19). The interior ceiling of cave 4 is pyramidal with lotus petals emerging from two sides of bands and balls ornamented with two levels of lotus petals at the five joining points. Curtain-like rows of



5.25. Reconstruction of front facade, plan, and cross-section of cave 30, Maijishan, Gansu

deities "hang" from the pole-like features carved along the tops of the four walls.

Cave 5 at Maijishan is dated to the Sui period. Its facade is simpler than cave 4's, a three-bay structure with a large, central bay and smaller side bays. The chaitya arches above the entries and the alternating inverted-V-shaped braces and single-tier bracket sets have been observed in cave-temples and tombs across China. However, a new feature is present. Emerging perpendicular to the building plane from the center of each bracket set is a pointed projection. It is an early example of the *shuatou* (trifling head) that projects at the top of a bracket set from the cap-block or from a bracket-arm (see figure 5.26). Cave 3 has several features that



5.26. Front facade of caves 4 and 5, Maijishan, Gansu, sixth century

are found in later Chinese wooden architecture. First is the curved beam. Second is a type of brace named *timu*, a brace that in its wooden form joins two components to help support a purlin.

Additional Buddhist Cave-Temples

Northern Wei royalty also built cave-temples in Liaoning. The site at Wanfofang (Ten Thousand Buddhas Halls) has seventeen caves.⁴⁷ Emperor Xiaowen, who moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang, opened Wanfofang between 495 and 502. Cave 1 is a central-pillar cave with nine perimeter niches, three on each side except the southern entrance. A column marks each corner of the four-sided structure. An image identified as the Buddhist layman Vimalakīrti framed by pillars and beams and an inverted-V-shaped brace that supports the roof frame are in cave 4. There is a triplet cave group at Wanfofang, as well.

The Qixiasi cave-temples are dug into small hills adjacent to the monastery of that name about 22 kilometers northeast of Nanjing. The first niches were carved in 484 by a scholar-recluse who had served both the Liu-Song and Southern Qi courts. After his death in 485, a Buddhist monk carried on the work. Most of the 294 grottoes are small, single rooms

with only a few images per cave.⁴⁸ Some believe that the monks involved in Qixiasi had seen the Yungang caves.⁴⁹

The cave-temples at Xumishan, approximately 55 kilometers northwest of Guyuan in Ningxia, are not precisely dated, but they include grottoes from the Northern Wei and Northern Zhou as well as later periods.⁵⁰ The Northern Wei cave-temples have one- and two-chamber interiors with central pillars of as many as seven tiers of images on all four sides. Northern Zhou caves include central pillars and truncated pyramidal ceilings.

The major cave-temple groups in eastern Gansu are the North Shikusi (rock-carved cave-temples), located about 150 kilometers northeast of Maijishan, a set of 282 caves of which 165 are dated to late Northern Wei and the latest date to the Song dynasty (960–1279), and a southern group known as Lotus Monastery cave-temples.⁵¹

Cave excavation continued to flourish in Xinjiang. Fifth-century Kizil caves have one or two chambers, often extraordinary ceilings, and sometimes central pillars. Ceilings in caves 165, 166, and 167, all probably dated later than the fifth or sixth century, have five or six layers of superimposed quadrilaterals. As in tombs of the Koguryō kingdom where such ceilings proliferate, the elaboration is a sharp contrast to the simple spaces underneath them. Subashi, on the eastern and western sides of



5.27. Stone pagoda, Northern Liang. Jiuquan City Museum

the Kuche River, east of Kizil and northeast of Kumtura, has remains of stupas, courtyards, and cave-temples that may date to the sixth century. Simsim, about 45 kilometers northeast of Kuche, preserves ceilings similar to those of GK 20 and 21 at Kumtura and cave 167 at Kizil. Barrel-vaults, domes, and rib-vaults are among the Simsim ceilings and at the Aai caves, east of Simsim.

China's Earliest Pagodas

Miniature pagodas have been found in large numbers in the Liangzhou region of Gansu, where tombs and cave architecture flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries under the Liang kingdoms. Most of the small pagodas are stone and portable, presumably carried across Asia by monks or others who practiced Buddhism. It is not known if the small objects were brought to Liangzhou from points west, if they traveled eastward from Liangzhou, if they were made locally based on forms seen by Gansu craftsmen, or if they influenced central-pillars in caves and pagodas painted or sculpted on walls; all are possible. Some portable pagodas dated to the Northern Liang period consist of four layers: an octagonal base with an image on each side; a circular section above it with an inscription;

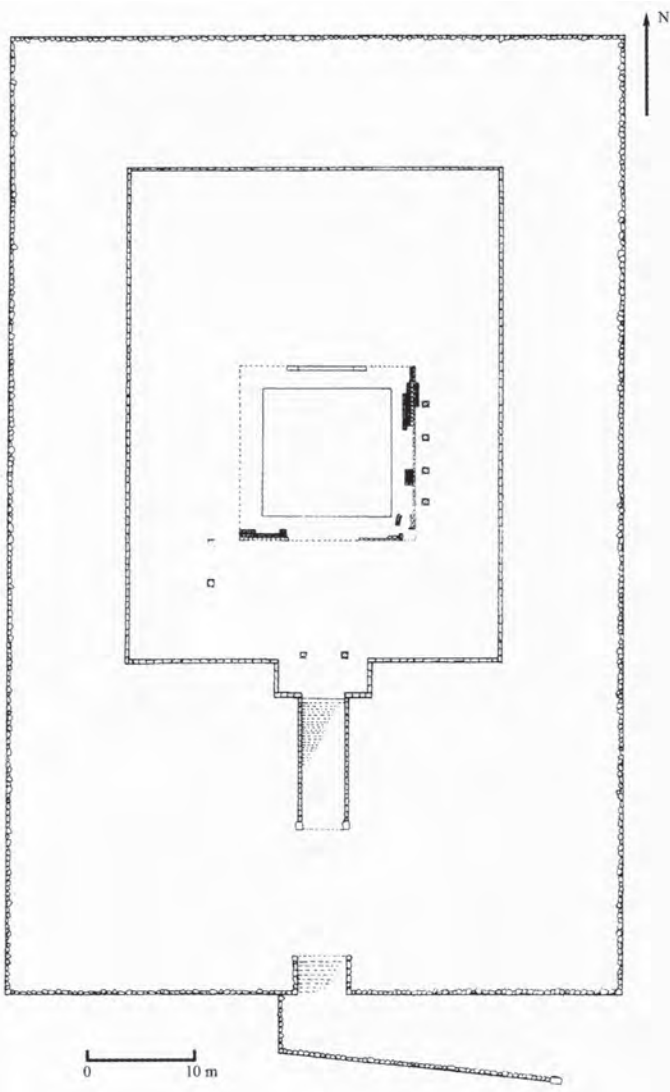


5.28. Cao Tiandu pagoda, lower part, stone, 466. Taipei History Museum

another circular section with eight Buddhist deities; and a thirteen-layer top capped by a dome. The arches that frame the eight deities are often *chaitya*-style. Pointed arches with decorated top extensions that outline lotus petals above the row of Buddha images are found as well (figure 5.27).⁵²

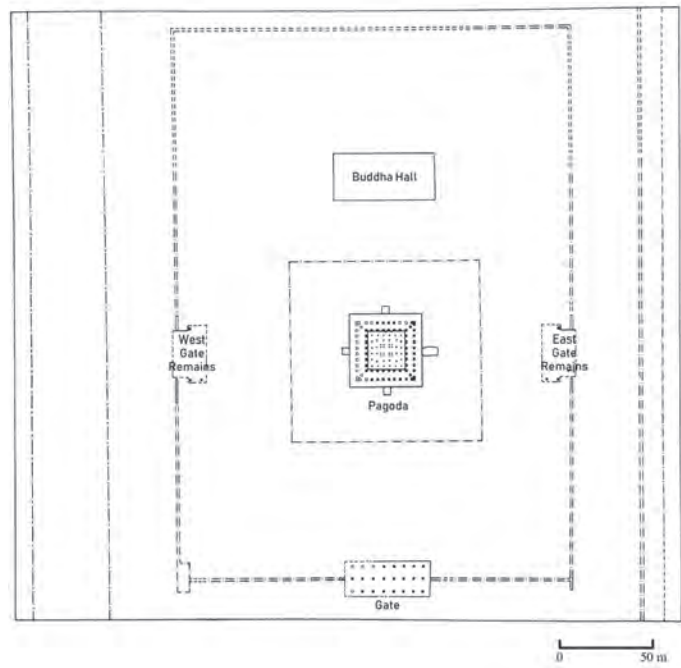
Four-sided votive pagodas also were made. Most possess an unmistakable feature of fifth-century Chinese architecture: parallel roof rafters on each roof tier beneath an imitation ceramic-tile roof. The form is a sharp contrast to the pagodas with octagonal and circular drums. The coexistence of similarly sized objects for the same purpose of two such different forms suggests both types stood in Liangzhou in the fifth century.

Several of the four-sided stone votive stupas have dated inscriptions. Cao Tiandu donated a four-sided, nine-story votive pagoda in 466 (figure 5.28). The date places it in the



5.29. Plan of building remains, probably pagoda, from Siyuan Buddhist Monastery, Fangshan, Shanxi, Northern Wei

same decade as the carving of Yungang caves 16 to 20, and the form is similar to pagodas in the round and in relief on the walls of Yungang grottoes from a decade or two later (see figures 5.17, 5.18). Early in the twentieth century this pagoda was housed in the Chongfu Monastery in Shuo county, Shanxi. In the late 1940s the lower portion was taken to Taipei, while the 49.5-centimeter top remained at the monastery in China.⁵³ Another four-sided stone votive stupa was dedicated by Cao Tianhu in 496. There is no evidence the two Caos were related. The Cao Tianhu pagoda is three stories with a main Buddha image beneath a *chaitya* arch at the center of each side of each story, and one or two deities to each Buddha's sides. In addition to parallel roof rafters and pillars that define bays on each level of the pagodas, the four corner pillars on the base are transformed into miniature towers, similar to those in the building complex painted in Maijishan cave 127 (see figure 4.3).



5.30. Plan of central core of Yongning Monastery, Luoyang, 516-534

By 2017 ongoing excavation in the vicinity of the Pingcheng capital had identified several monasteries near or on top of the Yungang caves. Siyuan Buddha Monastery, north of the Pingcheng capital and south of Empress Dowager Wenming's Yongguling in Fangshan, had been uncovered some ten years earlier.⁵⁴ At Siyuan Buddha Monastery, a pagoda was centrally positioned on a double-layer platform, enclosed by two walls (figure 5.29). The plan is a logical successor to towering pagodas centered in their own courtyards in third-century Xinjiang (see figures 4.9, 4.10). Ceramic roof tiles and pieces of Buddhist sculpture uncovered at the site date to Northern Wei.

Yongning (Eternal Quietude) Monastery is the first Buddhist establishment discussed in Yang Xuanzhi's *Record of Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang*, the treatise that informs us that Luoyang had 1,367 religious institutions. Yongningsi was the most important imperial monastery in the Northern Wei capital. It has been more extensively excavated than any other Northern Wei monastery. The core ground plan can be confirmed: a front gate, pagoda, and Buddha hall on a north-south line (figure 5.30). The monastery was constructed by Empress Dowager Hu (d. 528) in 516. It stood opposite the Office of the Grand Commandant on the west side of the imperial way, about 0.5 kilometer from the entrance to the palace-city (see figure 5.1-29).⁵⁵ *Record of Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang* describes more than a thousand monks' courtyards with single- and multistory halls painted in blue, all with carved windows, located amid greenery so that even the dwellings of Buddha's paradise were no match for it.⁵⁶ The pagoda, we are told, was four-sided and rose nine stories to a height of 40 *zhang* (about 100 meters!). The *chatra* was

composed of thirty golden plates capped by a golden jar inlaid with precious stones. Chains from which golden bells were suspended joined it to the pagoda. Each story of the pagoda had its own roof, with a total of 120 bells hanging from each of them. Each side had three vermilion, double-panel doors with golden knockers and six windows. Each door had five rows of golden nails, 5,400 in total. Today only a quadrilateral earthen mound nearly 100 meters square survives as the base of a 38.2-meter-square pagoda. Yongning Monastery burned to the ground in 534.

Surviving Pagodas

The pagoda has long been recognized as the structure through which one observes how builders of a millennial-old architectural system of four-sided, wooden structures accommodated worship requirements from outside China. Since the pagoda was often made of materials such as brick or stone, it is not a coincidence that two of China's oldest extant buildings are pagodas. By the sixth century pagodas were commonplace in cave-temples and in China's cities and countryside. Nevertheless, for as long as pagodas were built, they would be the structures in a Chinese religious setting that signaled the foreign origins of Buddhism. In contrast to the Buddha image hall, which, once it became part of the core of a monastery, never left a central position, even if there was more than one, the shape of the pagoda and its locations in a monastery changed over the long history of the religion in China.

The brick pagoda of Songyue Monastery is dated 523 (figure 5.31). It is the only dodecagonal building in China. Extensively repaired and refaced with plaster in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it is the earliest freestanding example of *miyan*, or densely piled eaves-style architecture, a structural type with a tall shaft and very closely positioned, narrow eaves above it. The fifteen layers of eaves span more than 20 meters of the 39.8-meter structure. The shaft above the twelve-sided platform is about 10 meters. Next is another twelve-sided section marked by four large *chaitya*-arched entrances at the four cardinal directions and eight smaller, similarly shaped false entries. Before recent restoration, each face was divided from those it joins by a replica of an octagonal column with a lotus-shaped base and lotus-shaped capital. The narrow layers have window frames flanking each prominent entry but not actual windows. The top layer has



5.31. Pagoda, Songyue Monastery, Mount Song, Henan, brick, 523 with extensive refacing and restoration in late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries

a *chaitya*-arched double door on four sides and single-door frames on the other eight.

During repair work of the 1980s, a *digong* was uncovered. Literally “underground palace,” *digong* can mean a subterranean tomb or a reliquary deposit beneath a pagoda. Here it is the depository. Materials found beneath the pagoda confirm the sixth-century date. The Songyuesi *digong* is a two-chamber space, similar in plan to cave-temples at Dunhuang, Maijishan, and Yungang and to tombs in Jiuquan, Pingcheng, and Koguryō. In other words, the two-chamber configuration that dominates fifth-century worship and funerary space is employed in the next century in a reliquary space whose objects glorify Buddhist death; and it anticipates a temple with an antechamber and worship space behind it or two freestanding buildings, worship hall in front and pagoda behind. Entered from the south side of the base, the original door to the Songyuesi *digong* is missing. A lintel about 12 centimeters wide and a segmented arch 32 centimeters in width with carvings of birds and floral patterns remains. Images and names of two monks are on the west wall of the *digong* along with inverted-V-shaped braces alternating with single-tier bracket sets, features that also decorate tomb interiors.



5.32. Simenta, Shentong Monastery, Licheng, Shandong, granite, rebuilt in 611

Two *tiangong* also were found during repair of Songyue Monastery pagoda. Literally “heavenly palaces,” these repositories for relics are inside the *chatra*. One is positioned in the top section and the second is in the shaft. The *tiangong* relics date to the Song dynasty (960–1279). The dates do not change the Northern Wei date of the pagoda.

This early brick pagoda of twelve sides may be a vestige of Chinese builders’ initial attempts to construct an Indian stupa. The earliest stupas, of course, were circular. Perhaps Empress Dowager Hu intended this towering monument on a sacred peak to recall or even replicate a South Asian source, but in brick, with pillars of the Chinese building system decorating the joining points of sides, it was accomplished in twelve segments. If there was a model, a portable stupa of Northern Liang such as figure 5.27 is a possibility, even if the closest existing template is octagonal.

If the pagoda at Songyue Monastery mimicked a circular shape reminiscent of India’s early stupas, China’s other two earliest pagodas, Simenta (Four Entry Pagoda) in Licheng, Shandong, and the pagoda at Xiuding Monastery in Anyang county, suggest different, but ultimately also South Asian, sources. Buddhism was in China to stay, but China was far from consensus about how to build architecture to glorify the faith.

Simenta (Four Entry Pagoda) is a granite structure elevated on a stone platform (figure 5.32). It is approached and, as the

name informs us, can be entered from all sides. Inside, the pagoda has a central pillar with Buddhist imagery on each face. The monastery of which it is a part, Shentongsi, was established by a monk in 351 during the rule of Former Qin. It is believed to be Shandong province’s oldest monastery. The monastery and the town of Licheng remained a regional center of Buddhism through the Tang dynasty. A Tang-period pagoda from Licheng is discussed in chapter 6. An inscription inside Simenta is dated 544. At one time it was believed to indicate the construction date, but during repairs of 1972, the year 611 was found carved into a brick at the top. The later date is assigned to the building.

The plan and structure of Simenta resonate with architectural sources in central India, buildings only slightly earlier than it. The buildings are Brahmanical (Hindu). The Daśavatāra temple dedicated to Viṣṇu in Deogarh in Uttar Pradesh, dated to the first half of the sixth century, and the contemporary Pārvatī temple in Nachna Kuthara, Madhya Pradesh, are four-sided, stone buildings with central pillars containing imagery, but with one entry and windows on the other three sides. From the outside and in plan, both offer more formal similarities with Simenta than do known buildings that predate it in China. The *chatra* of Simenta recalls a form employed in painting and relief sculpture in fifth-century Mogao and Yungang caves, a base with corner projections (see figure 5.18); at Lingyan Monastery pagoda in Shandong, discussed in the



5.33. Pagoda, Xiuding Monastery, Anyang county, Henan, sixth century with later repairs and changes

next chapter, the *chatra* has expanded to eight projections resembling lotus petals.

Simanta also suggests reasons for considering the four-sided, brick-faced pagoda at Xiuding Monastery in Anyang county to date no later than early Tang (figure 5.33) and thus be China's third-earliest full-size pagoda. The first monastery on this site was founded by a monk in 494. During the Eastern Wei period, it was named Xiudingsi.⁵⁷ The monastery was destroyed during Buddhist persecutions of 577 by Northern Zhou emperor Wudi. Buddhism returned to the region in the Sui dynasty. The current pagoda was rebuilt based on its sixth-century form between 627 and 650.

Xiuding Monastery pagoda has an early-twentieth-century history that sadly is not unique for Chinese religious architecture. In the 1920s many of the exterior tiles were sold, eventually to make their ways to museums worldwide. By 1961, when the Chinese Cultural Relics Bureau noted the pagoda in a survey of the region, its exterior had been plastered over. Restoration between 1973 and 1978 produced the pagoda one sees today. The exterior relief sculpture includes figures and creatures that suggest comparison with sixth- and seventh-century imagery from Central and West Asia. The current roof is a truncated pyramid whose original underside is believed

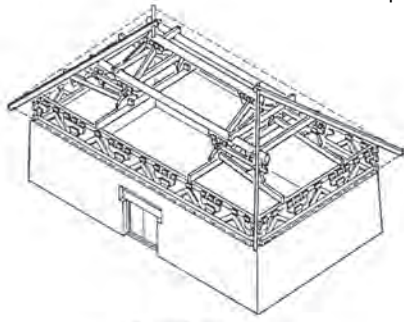
to have had a ladle-shaped ceiling of the kind observed in sixth-century Mogao caves.

The pagodas at Songyue, Shentong, and Xiuding Monasteries all retain or point to forms that would wane in popularity by the early Tang period, and they all trace to India. The link with South Asia does not raise doubt about the transmission of early Indian stupas across Xinjiang in the third century. Rather, it emphasizes the continued transmission of structures and, of course, ideas. Eastern Han Buddhists may have known about Indian stupas, pagodas in Xinjiang may remain evidence of South Asian sources, and portable, votive, stone pagodas may have inspired Songyue Monastery pagoda. The pagodas in Licheng and Anyang confirm that newer, current architectural forms from India, from the period when Brahmanical construction flourished, made their way eastward across Asia. This first century of extant Buddhist monumental construction in China, from the 520s to the 620s, confirms that the pagoda was fully implanted in China even though no single pagoda style was preferred.

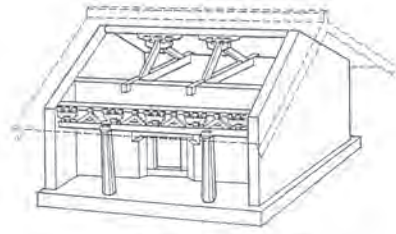
Northern Qi Monasteries with Pagodas

The dominance of a pagoda in fifth- and early-sixth-century monasteries in Pingcheng, Luoyang, and on Mount Song is consistent with deep-rooted notions about the role of the stupa in early Buddhist architecture both in South Asia and in third-century Xinjiang. The Buddha hall has no counterpart in South Asian Buddhist architecture, but like cave-temples at Maijishan and Tianlongshan, the Chinese Buddha hall would house images on altars in a position comparable to the dais on which an emperor was enthroned. By the mid-sixth century, even as pagodas continued to soar above monasteries in cities and on mountains, Buddha halls were constructed on increasingly larger scale both near cave-temples and at locations where cave architecture was impossible. Evidence for this transformation is found in the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi capitals at Ye and Jinyang (Taiyuan).

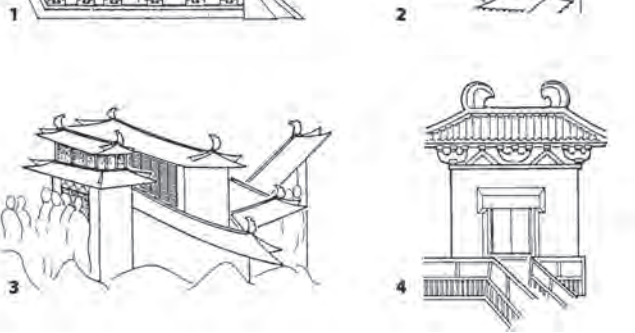
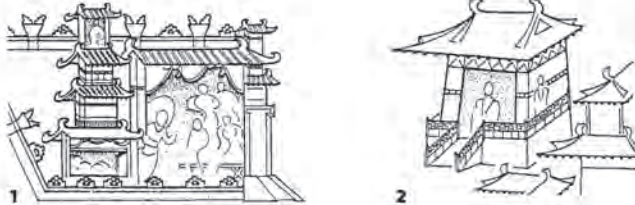
A rammed-earthen platform about 45 meters square and 4.5 meters in height was uncovered 1.3 kilometers south of wall remains of Eastern Wei–Northern Qi Ye in 2002. A central pillar rose from a subterranean pilaster into which it was implanted.⁵⁸ Beyond the central core were two more concentric enclosures, the inner probably supported by twelve pillars (four on each side) and the outer, from which remains are less clear, by perhaps twenty pillars defining five bays on each side. Each side



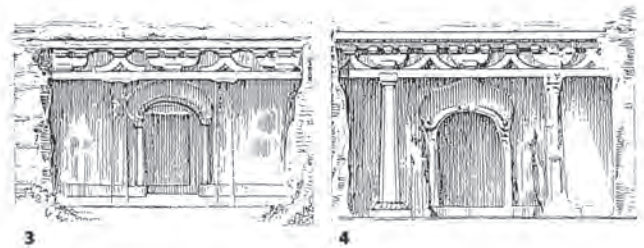
Type I Construction



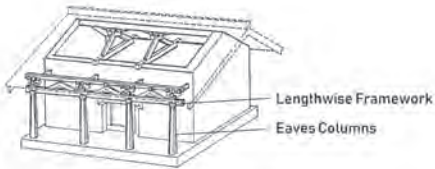
Type II Construction



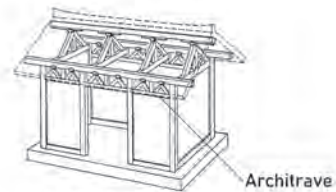
- Type I: Combination earth and wood construction
 1. Mogao cave 257, Dunhuang, Northern Wei
 2. Mogao cave 285, Dunhuang, Western Wei
 3. Mogao cave 296, Dunhuang, Northern Zhou
 4. Yungang cave 6, Northern Wei



- Type II: Mud-earth side and back walls and timber-frame front
 1. Yungang cave 10, Northern Wei
 2. Yungang cave 10, Northern Wei
 3. Tianlongshan cave 1, Northern Qi
 4. Tianlongshan cave 16, Northern Qi



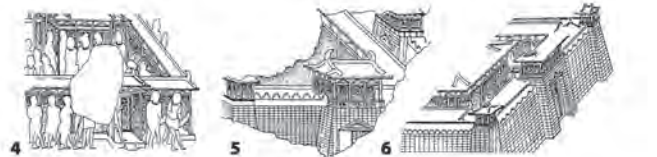
Type III Construction



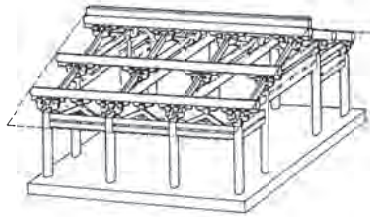
Type IV Construction



- Type III: Columns support a wooden framework, often including a front gallery
 1. Maijishan cave 4, Northern Zhou
 2. Maijishan cave 28, Northern Wei
 3. Maijishan cave 30, Northern Wei
 4. Guyang Cave, Longmen, Northern Wei
 5. South Xiangtangshan cave 3, Northern Qi
 6. South Xiangtangshan caves 1 and 2, Northern Qi
 7. Central pillar pagoda, Yungang cave 21, Northern Wei



- Type IV: Timber frame with purlins or architraves on top of columns and inverted V-shaped braces
 1. Ning Mao sarcophagus, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
 2. Carving on stele, Qinyang, Henan, Eastern Wei
 3. Tianlongshan cave 8, Northern Qi
 4. Maijishan cave 4, Northern Zhou
 5. Maijishan cave 4, Northern Zhou
 6. Maijishan cave 27, Northern Zhou



Type V Construction



Type V: Fully developed timber frame with wooden columns on all four sides of structure and bracket sets atop columns as well as between them on architrave
1. Mogao cave 420, Dunhuang, Sui
2. Longmen, Northern Wei
3. Miniature pottery structure found in Sui tomb, Henan
4. Maijishan cave 5, Sui

5.34. Transformation from mud-earth construction to timber-frame construction, fifth to sixth centuries

of the pagoda was about 30 meters. The pagoda was approached from the south via a ramp about 2.3 meters in width with a brick apron on its south side. It is known as Zhaopengcheng Pagoda after the town where it was found. The monastery spanned between 432 or 453 meters on each of its four sides and was enclosed by a moat. The pagoda was centered from east to west and positioned about one-third of the way north along the north-south span of its enclosure. A courtyard of about 110 meters square was in the southwestern corner, and a symmetrical courtyard was on the southeast. The courtyards may have contained twin pagodas or bell and drum towers.

The remnant of the monastery Tongzisi is in the western hills of Taiyuan.⁵⁹ It was founded in 556, destroyed in 1117, and rebuilt or repaired several times since then. Today a *randengta* (burning lantern pagoda), a hexagonal stone structure on a tall base, is the only remaining building. It stands about 65 meters northeast of the ruins of the monastery. Like the Zhaopengcheng monastery, Tongzisi consists of a front gate

flanked by symmetrical buildings, an approach to the main hall, and side buildings along the enclosing arcade. Life-size Buddha images are carved into cliffs behind the pagoda and other freestanding Buddhist images remain in heavily damaged condition. The Tongzisi Monastery site is evidence of the use of rock-carved and freestanding architecture together with sculpture and wooden halls in sixth-century Chinese Buddhist monasteries. According to *History of the Northern Qi Dynasty*, Gao Huan's son Gao Yang (529–559) climbed to Tongzisi and ordered the excavation of a great Buddha into the cliff.⁶⁰

By the second half of the sixth century, image halls thus were positioned along the main axial building lines of monasteries, where the most important structures in palatial architecture such as the Great Ultimate Hall and emperor's residences stood in palace-cities, and the importance of the pagoda was shared with that of the Buddha hall.

Toward a Timber Frame

The transformation into a building system supported by timber framing occurred by the end of the sixth century. The process can be seen in five stages. From the period of the Sixteen States to Northern Wei, walls were made of rammed earth or earthen blocks, sometimes with timbers embedded in them. The timbers were known as *bizhu* (wall pillars) when they were placed vertically and *bidai* (wall belts) when they were positioned horizontally. This type of structure has thick walls into which framed doors and windows are fit. Inside, the timber frame is set lengthwise (across the building from side to side). Bracket sets and inverted-V-shaped braces are placed on top of the earthen walls (figure 5.34-1). Examples of this kind of construction are found in Mogao caves 257, 285, and 296, dated to the Northern Wei, Western Wei, and Northern Zhou periods, respectively (figure 5.14). The second stage occurs at the end of the fifth century when it is seen in relief in caves 9 and 10 at Yungang. It continues for a century, occurring at the entrances to Northern Qi caves 1 and 16 at Tianlongshan (see figures 5.24, 5.34-2). During this stage of development, the sides and back of the structure are still thick, mud-based walls, but the front uses a lengthwise framework with bracket sets and inverted-V-shaped braces that runs parallel to the eaves along the entire length of the building. Both ends of the framework are supported on the



5.35. Yicihui Pillar, Shizhu village, Dingxing county, Hebei, 570

gable walls, whereas the central part is propped up by one or two columns. The back and side walls are load bearing. In the third stage of development, columns are found only in the front of the building, but they support the lengthwise framework including a gallery across the front of the building. The facades of caves 4, 28, and 30 at Maijishan, caves 1, 2, and 3 at South Xiangtangshan, and the central pillar pagoda in cave 21 at Yungang are examples. All date from the Northern Wei to Northern Qi periods (see figures 5.34–3, 5.25). In the fourth phase, structures are supported exclusively by timber frames. This does not occur until the sixth century. By this point the front columns extend upward directly onto the eave purlin, dividing the lengthwise framework into several one-bay sections. The architrave, which was a one-piece component in the second and third stages, is now several one-bay timbers, and it has moved downward from a position inside the mortise hole of the column-top cap-block. The architrave now provides bracing between columns. Buildings of this type are pure, timber-frame architecture or facsimiles of it (see figure 5.34–4). Examples include the Ning Mao sarcophagus, front facade of Tianlongshan cave

8, and details of murals in caves 4 and 27 at Maijishan (see figures 4.3, 5.37). The final stage is a fully developed timber-frame building in which wooden pillars are used on all four sides. As in the fourth stage, the architrave consists of several one-bay timbers lodged between column shafts. Bracket sets on top of columns are in the form of three-arms-on-one-block or more complex forms; intercolumnar bracket sets consist of inverted-V-shaped braces and dwarf columns atop the architrave in each bay. Together with the column-top joist and the eave purlin, bracketing forms a lengthwise framework to support the roof structure (see figure 5.34–5).⁶¹ A detail of a mural in Mogao cave 420 also is an example. In the Song dynasty, we shall see that the framework shifts from lengthwise to crosswise.

A Buddhist Monument to Pious Deeds

Another type of Buddhist structure stood in China in the Northern Qi period. Yicihui (Righteousness, Kindness, and Beneficence) Pillar was erected in Dingxing county of Hebei province in 570 to commemorate pious acts of the 520s through 550s. It stands 6.6 meters (figure 5.35).⁶²

The years 525 to 528 witnessed the relocation of populations of North China and slaying, execution, destruction, and other tragedy. Dingxing suffered horrendously. When calm was restored, seven men gathered the human remains and gave them proper burial. This was the initial act of kindness. Thereafter acts of human kindness increased almost daily. Soon monks' quarters and a place for education of young monks were constructed in order to foster acts of beneficence. This gave way to a society of aid for Buddhist believers. In 552 a pagoda and Buddha halls were erected. The years 555 and 557 again were times of desperation, yet relief continued. In 559 a local official presented a memorial to the emperor requesting that the society of relievers be praised and commended. In 567 the stone pillar was erected.

Atop the pillar is another base, 1.26 by 1.05 meters and 28 centimeters in height. It supports a three-by-two-bay stone chamber, 79 by 69 centimeters at the base and with a four-slope roof. The 35-centimeter-high pillars of the small structure have clear evidence of entasis, a feature we observed in the fourth century. Each pillar has a cap-block supporting a plate above it, but there are no bracket sets. There are, however, a tie-beam that penetrates the columns, then an



5.36. Sarcophagus of Song Shaozu, excavated in Datong, Shanxi, 477. Shanxi Provincial Museum

architrave, next a column-top tie-beam, and last a brace that cushions the roof frame with decorative molding at the ends. Four-sided and circular-sectioned, decorated, parallel eave rafters and decorated ceramic roof tiles are carved into the stone. A Buddha sits in an open niche beneath a *chairya*-style arch. It is unknown if commemorative pillars were widespread at this time or other times in China. For now, Yichui Pillar is a unique monument that finds its closest structural parallels in pillars erected at the approaches to tombs (see figure 5.4).

Sarcophagus as Architecture

Lacquer and stone sarcophaguses had imitated wooden architecture in China since the Warring States and Han periods. Several fifth- and sixth-century sarcophaguses exhibit features of timber-frame architecture that do not survive in wood until the Tang period and thus suggest that those details were part of fifth- and sixth-century construction.

Song Shaozu and his wife were buried southeast of Datong in 477 in a 2.4-meter-high stone structure that is 3.48 meters across the front. It presents as a three-by-two-bay building (with a front portico), of type II described above (figures

5.36 and 5.34–2).⁶³ The four front columns are eight-sided, the shape used in late Eastern Han stone tombs, Anak tomb 3 of the Koguryŏ kingdom, and Tianlongshan and Maijishan grottoes (see figures 3.22, 4.23, 5.6, 5.24, 5.25, 5.26). Above the columns is a lintel into which the cap-blocks of pillar-top bracket sets are joined. The bracket sets are single-step, and an inverted-V-shaped brace is positioned between the central two. The five roof purlins support a main roof ridge and a tripartite roof of which two sections are evenly positioned above the five rafters and a shorter section covers the front portico. The exterior of the sarcophagus is embellished with twenty-two animal-faced door knockers and about a hundred circular bosses.

The sarcophagus of Ning Mao, who died in 527, is in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (figure 5.37).⁶⁴ Representative of the fourth phase of structural evolution in which the architrave provides bracing between columns, the coffin copies the three distinct sections and the three interlocking timber layers of a wooden Chinese building: elevation platform, weight-bearing pillars, and ceramic-tile roof; and pillar layer, bracket-set layer, and roof frame, respectively (see figure i.7). The roof is the type known as overhanging eaves in which two eaves emerge from a main ridgepole and extend over the front



5.37. Sarcophagus of Ning Mao, excavated near Luoyang, 527. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



5.38. Back side of sarcophagus of Master Shi, excavated in Xi'an, 579

and back walls. Parallel rafters are positioned under the eaves and concealed except at the ends. Short purlins are perpendicular to the side ridges.

The Xianbei official Shedi Huiluo and his wife were buried in a wooden sarcophagus in the 560s. The sarcophagus was elevated on a platform of 3.82 by 3.04 meters with twelve pillars lodged into the holes around the edge of the base to define a three-bay-square structure.⁶⁵ The pillars were eight-sided with corner pillars thicker than those on the sides. Simple cap-blocks were tenoned on top of the pillars, those on the corner pillars larger than those on the other columns.

Cushion braces of the kind carved on the structure atop Yicahui Pillar were used. Bracket sets were single step, with a block above each of three arms, a form known as “one set, three rises.” Further above them was the brace named *timu*. Inverted-V-shaped braces occurred between all the bracket sets above the lintel, those both above columns and between columns. Corner bracket sets were the most complicated. Finally, a decorative, inverted-V-shaped brace is added to each gable side and a suspended fish (*xuanyu*) hangs in front of the gable-end braces. These last two features are found on the Song Shaozu sarcophagus, in the tomb at Digengpo, and

the mural in Maijishan cave 127 (see figures 4.3, 4.21, 5.36). The sarcophagus was found in pieces and has only been theoretically reconstructed.

Several sixth-century sarcophaguses in the shapes of buildings were made for men with the title *sabao*, a Sogdian in the service of the Sui and then Tang government. The stone sarcophagus of Yu Hong, who died in Taiyuan in 592, was a simple, cubic structure with a hip-gable roof and relief sculpture that confirms his West Asian ethnicity. The coffin of Master Shi, who died in Xi'an in 579, presents imagery that confirms his Sogdian ethnicity, but its structure is more significant (figure 5.38). The stone sarcophagus has pillars and two-tier, pillar-top bracket sets on all four sides. The earliest extant timber-frame buildings with this kind of bracket sets date to the eighth century. Every block, the ones that cap a column and those at the ends of bracket-arms, has an additional plate known as a *mindou* on top of it. The roof is hip-gable.

Architectural detail also is present on Sogdian funerary couches. Two couches, one in the Miho Museum and the other excavated in Anyang county, have mother-and-child *que* at the front. The funerary bed of *sabao* An Qie (d. 572) of Northern Zhou, excavated in Xi'an, has architecture on eight of its twelve panels. The structures range from timber frame to tent, identifiably Chinese to markedly non-Chinese (figure 5.39). When the Chinese system is rendered, as in figure 5.39, its details are clear and specific: hip-gable roofs, two sets of roof rafters, one circular and the other four-sided in section, and single-step bracket sets that alternate with inverted-V-shaped columns provide a framework for An Qie and his wife. Yet a tent is present on another panel. On the eve of reunification, architecture defined China even as its decoration alluded to the foreign origins of men who had controlled the North for three and a half centuries.⁶⁶



5.39. Detail of funerary couch of An Qie showing Chinese structure with inverted-V-shaped braces and single-step bracket sets, excavated in Xi'an, 571

the most important monastery space with Buddha halls that were modeled after imperial palaces. For the next three hundred years this unified Chinese building system would flourish not just from Xinjiang to Korea but in Japan and Mongolia as well. And it is preserved in wood.

At the end of the sixth century a unified building system, as unified as it had been under Han rule, stretched from Xinjiang to Korea, a Chinese one that was blind to the ethnicities or histories of those who implemented it. South Asian stupas and chaitya arches had been integrated into the Chinese system of columns with entasis, bracket sets, inverted-V-shaped braces, trusses, circular and four-sided roof rafters, hipped and hip-gable ceramic tile roofs, and, of course, pillars. Pagodas were in most cases four-sided, and before the year 600 they shared