



East Hall. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

# Foguang Temple, China

## A Tang Dynasty Treasure

### Site Significance

Built during the Tang Dynasty (7th-10th centuries AD), Foguang Temple is a tribute to the peak of Chinese Buddhist art and architecture. Its main structure, the Grand East Hall is the second oldest and one of the most important remaining wooden architectural jewels of ancient Chinese civilization. The Grand East Hall also contains previous wall paintings and polychrome statues from the Tang Dynasty. However, the temple was forgotten for centuries and was rediscovered by the great architectural historian Liang Sicheng in 1937, based on a wall painting from Mogao Grotto, depicting the location of the temple in Wutai Mountain. The temple has not been repaired or conserved since the 17th century, and extensive structural damage from falling rocks and rotting roofing, beams and pillars is threatening irreparable damage.

### Project Goals

GHF is providing funding and expertise for the investigation, planning and scientific conservation of this 1,200-year old temple in the environs of sacred Wutai Mountain by working with Shanxi Province's Cultural Relics Bureau on the investigation and planning for Foguang Temple's conservation requirements.

### Preservation by Design®

#### Planning

GHF is working with the Bureau of Cultural Relics to develop a comprehensive site conservation plan, budget and milestones for protection and restoration. This first phase includes complete measurement, mapping, documentation and threat assessment.



#### Threats

Deterioration of structures  
Mountainslides  
Vandalism  
Earthquakes

Completed Date  
2009



### Project Partnerships

- Shanxi Cultural Relics Bureau
- Tsinghua University, Beijing
- Shanxi Institute of Architectural Preservation

### Conservation Science

GHF will fund a multi-year conservation effort with secured matching funding from the provincial and federal government and private donors. GHF has established an International

Technical Expert Committee to review all plans and conservation work to ensure the highest levels of conservation excellence.

### Community

GHF is working with local and provincial authorities to develop regional linkages and improve access to the site, improve roads and infrastructure, and fund site maintenance and enhanced security.

### Recent Accomplishments

- Completion of the Master Conservation Plan and its approval from the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH).
- Completion of repairs to all auxiliary buildings except the grand East Hall.
- Investigation of the Grand East Hall to analyze structural changes since 1994 in order to devise appropriate conservation treatment.
- Restoration of the Master's Tomb Pagoda adjacent to the Grand East Hall, which contains the remains of the founder of Foguang temple.
- Emergency support installation for the northeast and northwest corners of the Grand East Hall.
- Upgrading of infrastructure at the temple complex, including security systems, flush toilets, improved drainage and flood prevention and fire escape routes.
- Investigative trip by UNESCO advisory member in regards to its nomination status as World Heritage Site.
- Installation of exhibition spaces and archives where relevant documents are being collected, organized and studied.
- Lectures presented by GHF Director of Conservation John Hurd and China Program Manager Kuanghan Li on the subject of conservation to Shanxi Institute of Ancient Architecture Conservation and Research (SIAACR) staff.



South facade of the Entrance Gate under restoration. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund



Finished restored interior according to the original pattern. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

**Foguang, an architectural jewel of Chinese civilization, is one of the only two remaining significant wooden buildings from the Tang Dynasty**



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