

## 法門寺 **FAMENSI** Notes

- Originally "Pagoda of King A-Yu" to hold relics sent by King Ashok
- Origins may go back to Eastern Han (25-220 CE)
- Record that in the second year of Yuan-Wei (元魏 495? CE), Tuoba ruler dedicated the pagoda to Buddhism
- During the Sui Dynasty (589-618) in 602, pagoda re-confirmed as Buddhist Pagoda; Emperor Wendi (541-604) changes its name to Chengsi Rites.
- 660 CE Tang Emperor Gaozong (r. 649-683) sponsors ceremony to receive the fingerbones of the Buddha (temple is renovated)
- 704 CE Empress Wu Zetian places the *sarira* in newly built "Ming Hall" together with 700 pieces of silk fabric [excavated and now recognised as the earliest silk brocade existing in the world today]
- 760 "the genuine *sarira*" is placed in the treasure chamber
- 790 *sarira* sent to Beijing to be honored
- 819 Emperor Xianzong (r. 805-820) receives "genuine *sarira* and changes the name to Hu-Guo Genuine Sarira Pagoda
- 844 Major Buddhist Persecution; pagoda? and crypt destroyed
- 871 *sarira* re-found in NW corner of tunnel
- 873-874 major ceremony; 875 stele recording donors' names
- During Period of Five Dynasties (907-960) pagoda undergoes large-scale construction
- 901 a king of the Later Jin Dynasty (Li Mao) topped the pagoda with a reincarnation wheel and covered the roof with green glazed tiles
- During the Ming Dynasty under Emperor Wanli (r. 1572-1620) the wooden pagoda collapsed.
- 1579 funds gathered to rebuild on the site an octagonal 13-storey brick pagoda 47M high with 88 niches for Buddhist sculpture
- By mid-1800s, the brick pagoda was leaning and had collapsed due to weathering and earthquakes
- During Japanese occupation, site guarded from destruction
- During Cultural Revolution, site guarded from destruction (Master Liangqing immolated self)
- 1978 earthquake, pagoda opened and plans made for repair
- Aug. 24, 1981 the pagoda collapsed again
- October 1986 funds collected again for temple repair
- April 8, 1987 the crypt and its treasures found
- April 23-Sept. 18, 1988 new temple built together with a "Tang-style" museum



### **AMONGST THE TREASURES:**

- The *sarira*: 4 fingerbone relics discovered (1 genuine, 3 "shadow bones")
- 121 gold and silver wares including contains, musical instruments, Buddhist statues, incense burners, metal flowers, lanterns, tea utensils
- Kneeling bodhisattva with gold tray: 65 Chinese characters say that the figure was made by order of Emperor Xiantong to carry the Buddha's *sarira*. Base has 4 devarajas, below 8 "petals" with images of 3-headed, 6-armed deities. 21 cm high
- Two Buddhist staffs, one with 2 wheels and 12 rings, one with 1 wheel and 12 rings
- 3-4C glass (from the Eastern Roman Empire or Middle East)
- "Secret" (秘色 *mise*) porcelain wares from circa 874 CE – "the colour of sky after rain"
- Tea-making equipment: wares for baking, grinding shifting, cooking, drinking, storing
- Patterns showing wild swan-geese, a favourite Tang emblem; excellent example on gilded silver box
- A *Mojie* (摩羯魚), a mythological dragon-headed fish
- 1000 Sutras
- Gold alms bowl, gilded silver ruyi, gold & silver tortoise box....