Architecture of the Pagoda

At just under 55 meters, the pagoda at Tōji is the tallest traditional wooden building in Japan. Although its height makes it susceptible to lightning strikes, it is extremely resistant to earthquakes. In over 1,000 years, none of the pagodas at Tōji have been toppled by an earthquake.

The pagoda is constructed around a central column formed from three tree trunks joined end to end. The column is fixed into the ground beneath the pagoda and supports the ornamental finial that decorates the topmost roof.

The floors of the pagoda are built as independent sections stacked on one another. The timber used in the structure is fitted together with elaborate joints rather than with nails. During an earthquake, the building's center of gravity remains stable because the sections of the pagoda move independently from the central column which acts as a damper and the play between the joints absorbs some of the shaking.