

volume are a precious source of inspiration for anyone interested in these areas of Chinese popular culture.

REFERENCE CITED:

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KNAPP, RONALD C. *China's Vernacular Architecture: House Form and Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. xiv+195 pages. Illustrations, map, glossary of Chinese terms, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$38.00; ISBN 0-8248-1204-2.

In his previous book, Knapp discussed vernacular architecture throughout rural China. In the course of his fieldwork in cultural geography, his research drew him for various reasons (stated in the introductory chapter of the present volume) to Zhejiang province in eastern China. The present book is the result of his field surveys in that province. While his previous book can be considered a general introduction to the study of vernacular architecture in China, the book under review is the first step toward intensive treatment of the same subject on a regional basis.

As elsewhere in the world, despite the obvious distinctions between rural and urban architecture, the majority of elements are shared. This includes the basic forms of the dwelling, the building materials and elementary spatial concepts, as well as underlying non-material aspects such as the world view and various religious and quasi-religious notions. For this reason, this book does not equate the terms "vernacular architecture" and "rural architecture," but rather identifies vernacular architecture as the spontaneous and generally traditional domestic architecture that stems from various cultural sources and that is adapted to the climatic and environmental factors. Structures influenced by the "great tradition," such as temples and palaces, are not defined in terms of vernacular architecture in the strict sense of the word and are thus excluded from the present volume, although the author acknowledges that there is often a thin line distinguishing simple rural dwellings from the lavish urban houses of wealthy Chinese.

Utilizing the cultural-geographic approach to the study of vernacular architecture pioneered by A. Rapoport, which is multidisciplinary in its essence as it draws data from cultural anthropology, architecture, physical geography, art history, and folklore, the present work attaches equal importance to material and non-material aspects of the dwelling. This allows the reader to appreciate the web of relationships that bind the two aspects into an integral whole, in which the various features of the dwelling make sense only when seen within the framework of this bilateral relationship. This two-sided approach guides the discussion in each of the major chapters of the book.

The first chapter, "Settlement," deals with the geographical background of Zhejiang province and the types of settlements within it, as well as with the general features of *fengshui* 風水, the Chinese system of geomancy (termed "mystical ecology" or "esoteric cosmology" by the author) that is of great importance in site selection and

orientation. Likewise, the second chapter, "Space," deals with the material aspects, that is, the spatial concept of *jian* that is essential to the division of the living space into rooms and the distribution of space in the dwelling in general, including such architectural features as courtyards, skywells, and verandas; as well as with its relation to its designers and users, that is the *jia* 家 (family). There is, however, no discussion of the growth of an extended family and the consequent physical expansion of the dwelling; this is perhaps due to the modern emphasis on small nuclear families.

Chapter 3, "Structure," is the most technical one in the book, dealing with foundations, framework, and the roof of the dwelling, including the building materials; nevertheless, the human aspect is present here, too, with a large number of instances of folk terminology and traditions that explain the architectural features. Chapter 4, "Detail," discusses various decorative elements of Zhejiang dwellings against their art-historical background.

Finally, Chapter 5, "Tradition," focuses on folk religion and folk knowledge, which account for regulations concerning the stages and rituals of the house construction and practices that ensure the well-being of the dwelling and its inhabitants and ward off misfortune. This chapter is the most interpretative, and the author combines in it his own data with those obtained by other researchers. While many works on the Chinese architectural and spatial symbolism heavily concentrate on the *fengshui* rules, which often tend to be ideal and in reality difficult to apply, this chapter goes well beyond the *fengshui* prescriptions to interpret the non-material aspects of the dwelling broadly in a wide spectrum of the "little tradition" of Chinese folk culture.

Another feature that permeates the present book is the discussion of change in Chinese vernacular architecture. Each of the five chapters contains an overview of various transitions that have occurred in recent times, indicating the continuity and transformation of traditional aspects of Zhejiang dwellings.

The book is richly illustrated by photographs (mostly the author's own) and drawings; it may be said that roughly equal space is devoted to illustrations and to the text. All the Chinese terms are in the *pinyin* transcription, and they are listed, along with their original form in Chinese characters and the English translation, in the glossary section.

After this first step of a comprehensive region-by-region treatise of the Chinese vernacular architecture, it is hoped that studies of dwellings in other provinces of China will follow, especially in the format of this book by Knapp.

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#### VIETNAM

TERADA, ALICE M. *Under the Starfruit Tree: Folktales from Vietnam*. Illustrations by Janet Larsen. Introduction and notes by Mary C. Austin. A Kolowalu Book. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. xv+136 pages. Cloth US\$15.95; ISBN 0-8248-1252-2.

*Under the Starfruit Tree* is a handsome volume of some twenty-eight folktales, printed in large type on high-quality paper. Each story averages five pages; the longest is eight. Ten full-page line drawings in black and white illustrate some of the selection, giving the reader some notion of the variety and depth of Vietnamese imagination.