

from agricultural villages in Okinawa. Wacker also examines the *nuru* (*noro*) cult groups of the religion at the state level, using examples from Kudaka, Izena, Hateruma, and Ishigaki (Shiraho). Finally, she investigates the hierarchy of the state religion with the *chifijin* or *kihoe-ōgimi* as the highest priestess of the kingdom.

As results of these studies, Wacker postulates that an ambi-lineal kinship organization (which in different parts of the island chain is referred to as *wēkā*, *utuza-mūri*, or *harōji*) may be seen as a basic social structure, which later, after the fifteenth century (and in agricultural villages even later), was overlaid by a unilineal or patrilineal clan system (*hiki*). I agree with Wacker that we have to reckon with these two different kinship organizations, but I would also take into consideration similar organizations in Fujian and other parts of China. The *munchu*-system of patrilineal kinship groups, for example, is never mentioned by Wacker, so that one can only guess as to its relation to the *hiki*. In regards to Wacker's historical reconstruction as a whole, I am quite skeptical.

The analysis of the succession line of the *chifijin* is I think the most valuable part of the study. Time and again it has been reiterated that the highest priestess of the kingdom is the sister of the king. Wacker proves, however, that this was not the case even as an ideal form; on the contrary, many priestesses have been wives, widows, or mothers of the kings. This finding corresponds to what Wacker found in her field studies at the village level, and to what I had already pointed out in the early 1960s for Kakaroma Island. A much earlier study by Steward Spencer ("The Noro or priestesses of Loochoo," in *TASJ*, second series, vol. VIII, 1931, 94–112) also reports a similar finding in agricultural villages of Okinawa.

To conclude, Wacker's book is a very impressive first study of the system of beliefs of *onarigami* (female tutelary deities), and its social background in the Ryūkyūan islands. It provides a thorough analysis of field data as well as of historical material. One may only hope that her thesis, written in German, will receive attention in international discussions on Ryūkyūan culture as well as on the role of females in society and religion.

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## CHINA

KNAPP, RONALD G. *China's Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. xi + 185 pages. Numerous illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$62.00; ISBN 0-8248-1998-5. Paper US\$34.95; ISBN 0-8248-2079-7.

Families and households are controversial social units among scholars of Chinese society. Every researcher agrees with their importance, but each has a somewhat different opinion on how to define their contents and boundaries. Regardless of opinions, however, Chinese houses are undoubtedly physical structures more clearly perceived by outsiders than by insiders that provide us with knowledge on the many social meanings with which Chinese people live their lives.

As a scholar of geography, Knapp shows us a variety of Chinese houses across time, space, and social class. In Part I, "In Quest of Spatial Harmony," he explores the ways in which Chinese families structure their dwellings as templates for social harmony and for asserting hierarchical distinctions. When we deal with Chinese houses we have to recognize that there is a core room in each house. Knapp states that "this core room is always symbolic

unity and continuity if it contains the ancestral tablets of the family”(21). In my opinion ancestor worship is the core of Chinese religious belief. So it is no wonder that the room equipped with the altar of the household’s ancestors plays a central role in Chinese social life. In the core room periodic ceremonies and domestic rituals such as marriages and funerals are performed. And more importantly, Knapp states, “For most Chinese families, it is a multi-purpose room in which meals are taken, guests are entertained, children play, farm equipment, tools, and crops are stored, and work is carried out”(21).

In chapter 3, “*Fengshui*” (Chinese geomancy), Knapp presents the essential elements of *fengshui* that relate to Chinese houses. In chapter 4 he describes Chinese ritualized “building magic” such as offerings, charms, and talismans whose purpose is to ensure harmony, prevent adversity, and summon good fortune. Chapters 5 through 8 make up the heart of this book. Each chapter focuses on the abundant ornamentation of Chinese dwellings. Chapter 5, “Building Sorcery and Defensive Measures,” is unique and important, because Knapp surveys “a range of calligraphic and noncalligraphic totems used as preemptive measures to gain an advantage over hostile forces and to guarantee spatial harmony” (3). I suppose that for Chinese there is a clear conceptual boundary between their own world and the outer world. In the smallest world, they have their *fang* (namely, bedrooms occupied by nuclear families), and they extend their world to their houses, and to their villages. Because houses are the most definitive social units, we find many varieties of ornamental symbols that are believed to defend household members from hostile forces. We also find walled villages that actually were built for the practical purpose of protecting villages from enemies, as is shown in Knapp’s previous edited book *Chinese Landscapes*.

Part II, “In Pursuit of Good Fortune,” consists of chapters 6 through 9. In chapters 6 and 7 Knapp argues on the basis of abundant evidence that the pursuit of good fortune continues to be a predominant sentiment in Chinese life. I emphasize the importance of Zaojun, the Stove God. Because Zaojun is the most popular god among Chinese people, Knapp states that “His image was found in imperial palaces as well as humble huts, with offerings presented to him by scholars as well as the illiterate” (84). And he also states that “When brothers divide the family estate, creating separate stoves for each brother’s household, new images of Zaojun are hung up in each kitchen because his presence in effect defines a nuclear household. Like ancestral tablets, images of Zaojun and his consort are symbols of a family’s unity and quest for order”(91). So we realize that a kitchen sanctified with Zaojun is the second key room in a Chinese house. Without the core room Chinese cannot perform rituals and without a kitchen they cannot sustain their lives. Therefore we can safely say that the Chinese house consists of three components: namely, the core room, a kitchen, and bedrooms. A kitchen has complementary characteristics in comparison with the core room. It is a woman’s domain and has the most private character in a house.

In chapter 8 Knapp suggests that an important component of household ornamentation is the use of didactic narrative tales to communicate moral principles as well as to express the elements of a happy family life. He mentions Fu Lu Shou, or the Stellar Triad and Baxian, or the Eight Immortals as folk heroes. In regard to Baxian I have to point out that similarities exist between the core room and a *miao*, or Chinese shrine. Almost every house has Baxian clothing, which is used as a ritual instrument covering a desk. And almost every *miao* also has the same kind of Baxian clothing for the same function. We also find the similarity of spatial disposition between them. So we can anticipate that any core room can be transformed into a *miao*. Actually we find many such examples in which an ordinary house is transformed into a private *miao* worshiped by some believers. Even though Knapp does not say anything about *miao*, we may regard the *miao* as a building that developed from the core room. I would guess that the ancestral hall is also a building developed from the core room.

If we analyze Chinese society by the two axioms of continuity and differentiation, we find there is strong continuity in Chinese houses and great varieties of differentiation among *miaos* and ancestral halls. In chapter 9 Knapp treats modern modification of household ornaments. He shows us political slogans and Disney characters as symbols used to invite fortune to households.

Knapp collected by himself various data from Qih, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, Hong Kong, Guangxi, and Jiangxi. Almost all the photos were taken by Knapp himself during his thirty years of fieldwork. It seems quite natural that the societies of Taiwan and Hong Kong are treated on a par with the society of the mainland. And in captions he kindly provided the names of places, indicating their *cun* (village), *xiang* (district), *xian* (county), and *sheng* (province). Roughly a third of the photographs were taken in Zhejiang, more than any other province. In addition to photographs, Knapp also uses many illustrations from various written sources. On almost every page we really encounter the ornaments of "Chinese living houses." By using the book's index, we can survey the data from a particular province.

Knapp not only shows us physical ornaments but also tries to interpret their social meanings by using various social studies on Chinese society. In his bibliography more than half of the references are written in Chinese. For those who cannot understand Chinese characters and language, this book is a good guidebook for translating the mystical Chinese into a more intelligible world. Knapp convinces us that Chinese have lived with a variety of symbols and ornaments that have been thought to bring them happiness, prosperity, and longevity. However, rapid modernization and urbanization has changed Chinese society drastically. Especially in mainland China, where traditional beliefs are strictly circumscribed, how can Chinese people feel peace of mind in everyday life without *miao* and ancestral halls in communities and without ancestral tablets and Zaojun in houses? If they do not have concrete material, they need some kind of spiritual elements in their lives. It therefore does not seem odd to me that the movement Falun Gong (a healthful exercise with a religious flavor and organizational character) is flourishing and considered appealing by some Chinese.

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