

Chinese sources. However, scholars interested in reading and understanding Kingston's sources from Chinese culture will find Gao's book clear and helpful as a bridge into the cross-cultural world of Kingston, one of the most read contemporary Chinese-American female writers.

Doris L. W. CHIANG
Fu Jen Catholic University
Taipei

HARRELL, STEVEN, BAMO QUBUMO, and MA ERZI. *Mountain Patterns: The Survival of Nuosu Culture in China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. viii + 64 pages. Color plates, b/w photographs. Paper US\$20.00; ISBN 0-295-97937-2.

Mountain Patterns is a richly and beautifully illustrated catalog—or more accurately, a companion volume—to an exhibit that took place at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Washington, Seattle. The exhibit's purpose was not simply to familiarize the American public with the people and cultural artifacts of a population hidden away in the steep mountains and deep valleys of southwestern China but also to show how their culture adapted and survived within the changes China has undergone in the last few decades. It is fortunate that two of the writers originate from Nuosu culture and that they speak about their culture in a recognizably different tone than the foreign observer. The well balanced mixture of dedicated and keen observation of and personal involvement in this culture makes the volume significantly more attractive.

The first chapter is a general introduction and guide to the country of "Cool Mountains," Liangshan, its physical features, cultural environment, and the web of clans and castes that constitute Nuosu society. This is not a picture of days past: it is one that shows the survival strategies that this independent minded population created in response to the pressures from the Chinese government, especially during the Cultural Revolution, and how after the Cultural Revolution it regained as well as reshaped its own cultural expression within a new China.

It is natural for a museum exhibit to concentrate on artifacts, the tangible products of a culture. Much space is therefore given to such subjects as architecture, clothing and textiles, lacquerware and silverware, and musical instruments. But far from having produced a dry description of the items on exhibit, the authors make a considerable effort to position these things in their cultural environment, to let the readers know how items, such as women's clothing, are made, who makes them, for what purpose they are made, and what they mean for the people who use them. To mention just one example at random, in the chapter on textiles and clothing, one reads about how certain kinds of clothing are made, and then realizes that while learning about the more technical aspects of clothing one also learns much about the complex social system of class and classifications; the reader begins to gain a feeling of how socially important such things as clothing style and the making of clothing are. In such a way, the reader begins to appreciate more fully the craftsmanship visible in a product and to become conscious of its social or symbolic significance in Nuosu society.

The last two chapters deal with a markedly different topic: the world of Nuosu beliefs and religious practices. In the chapter on rituals and their performers, the *bimo*, the author has to restrict himself to introducing just a few examples from the rich heritage of rituals; but, with a practical scheme of classification, the author gives the reader a good impression of the variety of rituals while arranging them in an understandable framework. The final chapter on ghost boards and spirit pictures is the one that captured this reviewer's attention most. Rather

than offering a theoretical discussion of the beliefs in ghosts and spirits, the author describes her adventures in pursuing her study and her often ambiguous feelings towards these objects and the entities they represent. By understanding the author's feelings, we can appreciate to some extent the fear these items and their spirits arouse in people's minds. This account greatly helps the outsider understand what these things may mean for those who make them or have them made.

In summary, this small volume is a well-rounded and convenient introduction to contemporary Nuosu society and life within it. Since the volume is a guide to an exhibit, it was the authors' intention not to burden readers with the ordinary trimmings of a scholarly publication. Although understandable, such a decision is regrettable. A basic bibliography would have been of more help than the advice to contact the authors for more information without giving any hint of where they can be contacted. It is also understandable that the authors chose to use vernacular terms rather than translations that might be misleading, but the reader who is confronted with these terms for the first time will often be puzzled about how to pronounce them. But most regrettable is that no map accompanies the text where so many place names are mentioned. I doubt that most readers could easily locate Nuosu country without the help of even a simple map. The items mentioned may not be essential, but, considering the care that was devoted to the text and illustrations in this volume, their absence is regrettable.

Peter KNECHT

REITER, FLORIAN. *The Aspiration and Standards of Taoist Priests in the Early Tang Period*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998. 241 pages. ISBN 3-447-04086-6.

This book, which provides a concrete and detailed description of the practical life and standards of Daoist priests/monks in the Tang dynasty, is divided into three parts. The first part gives a general overview of the situation of Daoists at the time, dealing with (1) Daoist miracles and imperial support of the religion; (2) Daoist geography, mountains, and domains; (3) the life of the exemplary Daoist master Wang Yuanzhi 王遠知 (seventh century); (4) forms of Daoist practice as described in the seventh-century encyclopedia *Sandon zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (A Bag of Pearls from the Three Caverns); and (5) monastic organization as outlined in the *Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒 (Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao).

The second part focuses primarily on the *Fengdao kejie* and begins with a short discussion of Jin Ming 金明, alias Qizhen 七真, an ecstatic sixth-century visionary who is named in the preface as the author of *Fengdao kejie*. The book next moves on, for well over a hundred pages (55–179), to present a translation of the eighteen sections of the *Fengdao kejie*. A most fascinating document, the text deals with different aspects of monastic life in medieval China: how to build monasteries; how to fashion statues; how to make paper and copy scriptures; how to set up cells, ritual implements, vestments, and other necessities; and how to recite the scriptures and perform the daily religious rituals. The text gives a vivid picture of the actual life of monastics in the early Tang period and is a rare and valuable document indeed.

Part three of Reiter's book discusses three further works associated with Jin Ming. They are a description of three divine figures, including Jin Ming (*Daozang* no. 164); a collection of Daoist rules combined with exorcistic formulas (DZ 674); and a register of the names of celestial generals that afford protection against demons (DZ 1388). The conclusion (204–17) returns to the theme of the overall situation of Daoism in the seventh century and summarizes the description of the religion given in the bibliographic section of the *Suishu* (History