

It makes little sense to challenge this interpretation, based on analogy, with empirical questions. It is unlikely that Shepherd or anyone else can give decisive answers to such questions as, "What were the social and cultural circumstances that caused the Siraya to hold such 'extreme' notions?" As he states, what led to this extremity is a historical problem "buried in a past that lies beyond our reach" (66). The above-mentioned approach of comparing customs on abortion among other Taiwanese aboriginal groups with those of the ancient Siraya is limited, since materials on abortion are, as far as I know, exceedingly scarce in the ethnographies on Taiwanese aborigines. Records from the Japanese colonial period mention abortions performed on women who have conceived illegitimate children (OKAMATSU 1918–21, IDE 1932), but such data are too fragmentary to base firm conclusions upon. Is the answer to this problem, too, "buried in a past that lies beyond our reach"?

Comparing Shepherd's two books, I find *Statecraft and Political Economy* more substantial in many respects than *Marriage and Mandatory Abortion*, which is an anthropological study. But I find the latter more intriguing.

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ZHU LIANGWEN (assisted by FU QIN and SUN RUYAN). *The Dai or the Tai and Their Architecture and Customs in South China*. Bangkok: DD Books and Kunming: The Science Technology Press of Yunnan, 1992. xi + 140 pages. Map, line drawings, mono- and polychrome photographic plates, references, index. Soft cover n.p.; ISBN 974-88747-8-8.

This sensitively written and lavishly illustrated volume is a most welcome addition to the English-language literature on the Tai-speaking peoples of Southwest China; it is likely to prove especially useful to scholars of traditional Southeast Asian architecture, as well as to socio-cultural anthropologists who specialize in the Tai peoples and their immediate neighbors.

The principal author is dean of architecture in the Yunnan Institute of Technology, and the work was published first in Chinese. Its appearance in an English-language edition (translated by Zhang Hongwei and meticulously edited by Geoffrey Walton) is the consequence of a happy cooperation between the Kunming publishers and DD Books of Bangkok. We can only hope that this collaboration will lead to further English-language publications from the huge corpus of National Minority research that is now being produced by Chinese scholars.

There are still too few English-language works that deal not only with the architecture

of Tai domestic houses but also with village sites and ritual edifices (as this reviewer has repeatedly discovered when searching for Tai parallels or prototypes for Lahu architectural traditions). This book, though by no means the last word on the subject, certainly helps clarify the picture so far as the Xishuangbanna (Seepsong Panna) and Dehong Tai peoples are concerned.

The great value of this book for students of Tai cultural and social institutions is that it goes far beyond the mere technology of Tai architecture and seeks to adumbrate also the mythology, history, social institutions, and metaphysical ideologies encapsulated in the various architectural forms. For example, the first chapter, "Religious Belief Patterns and the Village," presents valuable ethnographic data on the significance of the non-Buddhist folk religion as well as Hīnayāna Buddhism (it's a pity Theravāda was not the preferred usage) in establishing the layout of a Tai village. There is significant information here (seldom detailed elsewhere) on the nature and location of the shrine to the village guardian spirit, on the layout and function of the four village gates, on the positioning of the Buddhist monastery, and on the orientation of the domestic dwellings in relation to this sacred complex.

The second chapter, "Hīnayana Buddhism and Dai Temples," helps mightily to fill the gaps in our knowledge of the symbolism of Xishuangbanna and Dehong Tai temple architecture and furnishings, offering also exquisite supporting photographic documentation and architectural sketches. There are useful comments here on the hierarchy of monastic complexes, from the grand senior temple of the state (*müang*) to the humble village building, and on the significance of the Buddhist temple in Tai village society.

The third chapter deals with domestic architecture and the final chapter with "small structures" (village wells, travelers' rests, field huts/houses, and the like). Again, care is taken to adumbrate the cultural and social matrices of these architectural features. Thus we are informed of the mythical charter for the Xishuangbanna house style, of the use of auspicious odd numbers for house stairs, of the preference for nuclear family domestic arrangements and female ultimogeniture, and of the symbolic importance of water. There are also such nicely textured observations as, "While the house spirits in the village are said to be disturbed by amorous play between unmarried couples within their walls, the field and forest spirits around the vicinity of the [field] huts are never known to voice such objections" (126).

There is much that this reviewer would still like to know about Tai architectural symbolism that is left unexplained. What, for example, is the precise symbolic connotation of the four carved posts of the village guardian's shrine (fig. 11) and of the banners in the *vihāra* (fig. 66)? I would also like to have had greater detail on the shrines for the guardian spirits of monastic complexes (excellent examples of the Tai genius for ritual syncretism) and on more of the individual components of the ritual paraphernalia in Xishuangbanna Tai temples, such as the wooden or plaster horses and elephants, papercuts of human and animal forms, replica spears and lances, etc. But Professor Zhu's book is an excellent beginning, for which we must offer him many congratulations. Thanks are also due to the Chinese and Thai publishers, for aside from a few misrenderings of Pinyin transcriptions (e.g., *Genma* for *Gengma*, *Jinpo* for *Jingpo*, *Jing Go* for *Jinggu*) this is a well-produced and handsome volume. Further cooperative efforts of this kind will be most welcome.

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