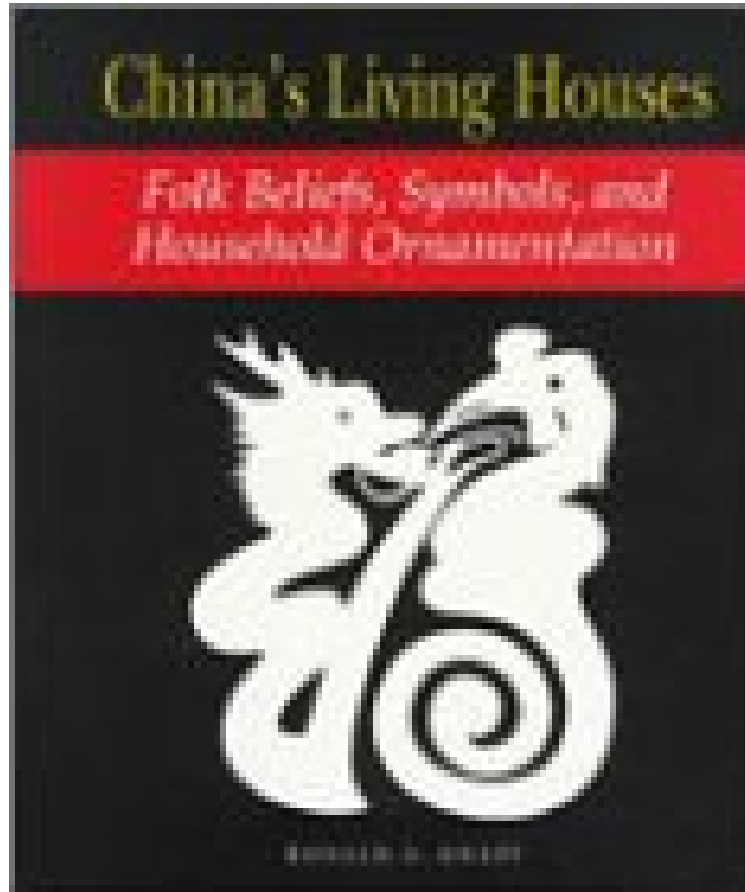


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China's Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation

Ronald G. Knapp

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Fortune" (pp. 79-171), consists of very interesting four essays dealing with concrete Chinese efforts to attract good fortune, longevity, wealth, health, business success and other desirable qualities to the house and house owner's family. The authors directs our attention to various manifestations of this eternal Chinese desire for happiness; he also gives us a comprehensive overview of various methods of how to obtain it. As he rightly stresses, the majority of traditional building ornamentation is "positively" determined, i.e. it is meant to summon good things, and only a minority is directed toward warding off evil spirits. Many pages are dedicated to the so-called New Year pictures, prints, papercuts, calligraphy and the other forms of folk art, all of which employ metaphor, allegory, and word-play, based on the homophony of the Chinese language and the structural principles of its written form. It must be stressed that all parts of the text are informative and well documented. Worth mentioning as well is the fact that the Chinese characters are typed directly in the text, which is clearly organized and thus very useful for Sinologists. To sum up, the book is warmly recommended to all students of Chinese architecture, folklore and living traditions, as well as to all of you who make plans for visiting China, especially Chinese coastal regions.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. If you plan to visit China, read this book!

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It has been said that for the Chinese "a house is a living symbol", one endowed with meaning and the result of conscious action. This text reveals dwellings as the dynamic entities that express the vitality of Chinese families as each journeys through life. Ronald Knapp argues that the spaces and structures that comprise dwellings throughout China are replete with striking meanings, echoing the most fundamental aspects of Chinese culture. This book explores the complex links among folk beliefs and household ornamentation across time, space and social class.