

to eat instead of waiting until they were ripe in August (p. 180) seems impossible. Persimmons in suburban Beijing in the mid-1970s had to be left until they were almost rotten, usually well into autumn, otherwise their astringency made them impossible to consume. Overall, however, this book deserves to be read and studied as an exemplary examination of local politics and responses. It is a pleasure to read, assisted by being first edited by the author's mother, a professional editor.

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***Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200–600.*** By Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014. Pp. xxix + 465. \$68.00/HKD530.00.

In the most recent addition to a series edited by Ronald G. Knapp and Xing Ruan, *Spatial Habitus: Making and Meaning in Asia's Architecture*, Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, eminent Western historian of Chinese architecture, has crafted an invaluable volume. She chose to undertake a considerable challenge by writing about China's architectural history from 200 to 600, four centuries between the fall of the Han empire and the rise of the Tang. Ironically, as Steinhardt points out, the new archaeological discoveries of the past sixty years provided the impetus to dramatically rewrite architectural history for early periods, particularly from the Xia through Han dynasties (c. 2070 B.C.E.–C.E. 200) (p. xxii). For post-sixth-century architectural history, recent discoveries have not significantly changed the existing comprehensive scholarly narrative on the fundamentals of the architectural development but rather continue to refine the discourse. By focusing on this age of turmoil, 200 to 600, her volume bridges this substantial gap, bringing greater clarity and texture to the diverse creativity of these four hundred years when dozens of cities, as well as many temples, and pagodas, were constructed, destroyed, and rebuilt.

At this time, China endured fleeting dynasties, internecine warfare, and nomadic invasions in the north, while also enjoying flourishing trade with the West and responding to the introduction of Buddhism. When north China fell to nomadic control, the Chinese ruling house fled south, establishing a capital at Jiankang 建康 (present-day Nanjing), which remained the seat of imperial power for a succession of six short, weak dynasties. Undoubtedly, the complexity of this period, variously characterized by Chinese and Western scholars as “Three-Kingdoms-Six Dynasties,” Three Kingdoms, two Jins, and with rubrics such as “the Northern and Southern

Dynasties,” or even the overly simplified “Six Dynasties,” contributed to previous scholarly hesitation about how best to address this pivotal time span.<sup>1</sup> In her ten page Introduction (pp. xix–xxix), Professor Steinhardt articulates a very useful overview of the issues hindering the state and development of architectural scholarship during this age of turmoil; these issues encompass questions about the integrity of the literary sources, uneven scholarly interest, and the impact of the father of Chinese architectural studies, Liang Sicheng 梁思成. Clearly, one of the least recognized issues is that the history of these changing thirty-one dynasties, kingdoms, and states is recorded in eleven standard histories; the uncertainty is compounded by the fact that many of these polities were established by so-called barbarians along the borders, with no reliable historical overviews available (p. xxii). This is in stark contrast to the carefully studied and straightforward documentation preserved in the histories of the Han and Tang empires.

After the Introduction, the book is structured into three larger sections which are subdivided into smaller thematic chapters or sub-sections which relate developments more or less chronologically. “Part One: Background to Architecture in an Age of Turmoil” has two sub-sections or chapters: Sub-section 1, “Division and Reorganization into Visions of the Empire,” provides an overview of the fates of major cities or capitals in northern and southern China from the Three Kingdoms through to the Sui as these centres of power rose, fell, and were rebuilt. Using the cumulative archaeological record, surviving Chinese historical texts, and research by

<sup>1</sup> Over the last thirty-five years, our perception of this four century “hiatus,” once dismissed by many scholars, has experienced a significant shift. Earlier, scholars were prone to “hurry over its complex political, social, and cultural history, barely stopping for breath until they find themselves safely ensconced among the more familiar landmarks of the T’ang.” See *An Anthology of Chinese Verse: Han, Wei, Chin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties*, trans. and annot. J. D. Frodsham with the collaboration of Ch’eng Hsi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. xx. In actuality, there was scholarly interest across the disciplines but applied very unevenly. For the past thirty years, Buddhist art and Buddhist studies have been among the mainstays of scholarship addressing the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Most scholars today, such as the leading historian, Albert Dien and art historian Wu Hung 巫鴻, characterize this period as transformative. See Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 287, and the three volumes edited by Wu Hung, Vol. I: *Han Tang zhi jian de zongjiao yishu yu kaogu* 漢唐之間的宗教藝術與考古 (Between Han and Tang: Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2000); Vol. II: *Han Tang zhi jian wenhua yishu de hudong yu jiaorong* 漢唐之間文化藝術的互動與交融 (Between Han and Tang: Cultural and Artistic Interaction in a Transformative Period) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001); Vol. III: *Han Tang zhi jian de shijue wenhua yu wuzhi wenhua* 漢唐之間的視覺文化與物質文化 (Between Han and Tang: Visual and Material Culture in a Transformative Period) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2003).

scholars in East Asia and the West, the author discusses each city including plans with corresponding numbered keys showing shifts in size and configuration of buildings. Sub-section 2 of Part One focuses on understanding Han capitals, palaces, tombs, and ritual architecture; she clearly conveys the importance of Han's architectural achievements which helped shape the next four hundred years. "Part Two: Four Centuries of Great Monuments," containing chapters (or sub-sections) 3 through 6, guides the reader through surviving major monuments, their context and meaning, such as the emergence of Buddhist architecture, cave-chapels, monasteries, and pagodas, reflecting their connections to the extant architectural remains in Xinjiang, from the third to sixth centuries.

In the final section, "Part Three: Understanding and Resolution of Architecture in an Age of Turmoil," sub-section 7, "Patterns and Achievements of Third-through-Sixth-Century Architecture," analyses, contextualizes, and synthesizes major trends, such as planned spaces, structural components, and decoration, discussed in reference to individual buildings or regions—eliciting significant themes. Professor Shatzman again underscores that "so much third-through-sixth-century architecture traces to Han construction" (p. 251). All the political instability, influences from Buddhism and from the nomadic cultures, failed to destroy the Chinese architectural system—a set of principles that was exported intact to the southern part of the Korean peninsula and Japan (p. 247). The final chapter, sub-section 8, "Seeing China through Korea and Japan," aptly utilizes the surviving literary sources and buildings, particularly Buddhist temples and pagodas which are the oldest wooden architecture surviving in East Asia and are preserved in Korea and Japan, to deepen our understanding of China's architectural development during this four-hundred-year gap. According to Professor Steinhardt, one theme that remains constant and is verbally and visually reiterated throughout, was that the translation of wooden architectural forms of the Chinese architectural system was consistently adopted and adapted into other cultural contexts and materials, carved in stone or painted on the walls in Buddhist caves, in brick, stone or paint in tomb chambers or sarcophagi.

The Chinese construction system survived even during four tumultuous centuries when the concepts of Chinese empire and Chinese value systems were tenuous. This set of architectural principles was ingeniously simple, modular, adaptable, and flexible: wooden frame buildings that required just two features, columns and roof, and sometimes a third feature, a beam. The system was easily adaptable by non-Chinese rulers and populations as well (p. xxv). These principles were clearly integral to China's cultural and political identity.

This idea harks back to a very pointed observation by the author, illustrated by two images in the Introduction (pp. xxvi–xxviii). There are two buildings painted on the walls of the front chamber of Dingjiazha 丁家閣 tomb 5 in Jiuquan 酒泉, Gansu, depicting the owner, an aristocrat of the non-Chinese Liang Kingdoms who "chose to

be portrayed for all eternity under a Chinese roof, even though the architecture that enclosed him in life was built with local mud-brick” (p. xxviii).

However, this treasury of information would be easier to use if the comprehensive and complex endnotes could have been placed at the end of each chapter; understandably, as is often the practice today, the endnotes are grouped at the close of the book’s main text and the corresponding pages are indicated to facilitate finding a reference footnoted in the text. Here, the clean elegant design of the endnote pages is divided into chapter headings and places the page references at the bottom near the page number, e.g. “Notes to Pages 6–12,” rather than at the top of each page which might be seen more quickly. For scholars not fluent in architectural terminology, a modest glossary would have added value (and pages) to this already substantial book.

Occasionally, there are very minor errors which can be confusing. For example, on page 257, in a discussion of pilasters, there is a brief mention that four elaborate pilasters were discovered in the back chamber of Sima Jinlong’s 司馬金龍 tomb dated 484 in Datong 大同, Shanxi; these are not illustrated in the text, and the figure number cited at the end of the sentence references an image of one of the stone column bases of the same tomb. On page 166 are two images from the Buddhist caves at Binglingsi 炳靈寺, Gansu; the top image shows and identifies a detail from cave 169, dated 424; although the image below is also from a different, less commonly known Northern Wei Binglingsi cave, the lower caption does not include the cave number which is 132; the number appears only in the text of the preceding page.

Overall, the text brings together a broad range of material from tombs, Buddhist temples, pagodas, ritual architecture and more, liberally illustrated with maps, plans, elevations, and colour and black and white images. It is clear from the photographic credits that the author has been assiduously assembling a photographic archive of images, many taken by the author herself; other images come from Chinese and Western scholars and Chinese publications. As might be expected of images drawn from such a diverse group of sources, the photographs range from the glorious to the unavoidably dismal and grainy views extracted from Chinese archaeological journals. This photographic record provides images of both familiar monuments and of lesser known architectural structures of unrecognized importance, often including exceptional and, at times, surprising details.

This book is a critical addition to the literature of China’s architectural history. Professor Steinhardt’s volume offers not only a valuable scholarly reference and resource but also serves as a foundation to build upon and refine as new discoveries continue to emerge.

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