The American architect Louis Kahn contemplated a romantic picture when he designed the Salk Institute (1959–1965), a science laboratory for biological studies in La Jolla, California. In the central plaza, which is bound by two rows of concrete buildings and is open to the infinite Pacific Ocean on the cliff edge, scientists would walk up and down between the laboratory building and the plaza; they would engage in heated debates about the problems of the world; they would pause to “chalk an equation or draw a diagram” on the slabs of slate that Kahn had placed there for their convenience. But as Arthur Danto has observed: “[No]body was ever there . . . nobody but architectural tourists. . . . Kahn was almost hopeless in his romanticism, hoped people would rise to the architecture, but they rarely did or do” (Danto 1999, 202).

Kahn, like any great architect, envisaged life in a building that would unfold according to design. A history of architecture—that of the twentieth century in particular—has proved that this indeed is heroic romanticism, for there is often a poor chance that the intention of the architect, as materialized into a spatial disposition in a building, would be taken in the same way by the inhabitants. The disengagement between architect and inhabitants in the twentieth century has made this “mutual understanding” even more difficult. Despite this near impossibility, and the original intent of the architect, buildings in one way or another still work! Kahn’s Salk Institute will continue to attract architectural tourists and, perhaps, increasingly general tourists. It will eventually become a ruin, like the mysterious Stonehenge (as Danto predicted), where the original intent has long become undecipherable. Although
the Salk Institute never works, like a text, in a didactic manner to illustrate the intention of the architect, Danto obviously hopes that its potency, like an allegory, will increase as it ages, though its meaning remains tacit.

This book is concerned with the workings of architecture. It views the built world, from an individual building to a settlement, as not merely passive templates on which life is staged by itself but meaningful instruments within which the life of the inhabitants may be activated. The instrumental capacity (Evans 1997, 35–91) of a building is often neglected when a history of architecture is only concerned with grandeur and splendor and architecture is only studied and measured by its formal and physical laws. If architecture works, questions then arise: How does life unfold in the man-made habitat? How does a building animate individual as well as social life? The interactive and yet legible relationship between the built world and its inhabitants is the major theme of this book.

The workings of architecture, I should think, depend on an understanding of the meaning of the built world that the inhabitants are able to gain. Before I move into the subject matter of this book—the vernacular architecture of minority groups in southern China—let me first look into the history of how architects and social anthropologists, roughly grouped for the convenience of discussion, have wrestled with this problem from the vantage point of their disciplines.

Form and Meaning

Substantiated by more than a century of anthropological and ethnographic findings, vernacular architecture has commonly been considered among the richest and the most meaningful of architectural forms. Ironically, however, vernacular architecture is not made or designed by individuals or groups intentionally to produce meaning. On the contrary, it is an “architecture without architects” (Rudofsky 1964). While it may be culturally meaningful, it is not seen to be meaningful as a result of conscious design. The architect-designed habitat, by contrast, often takes full credit for abundant meaning.

Architect Bernard Tschumi’s 1987 follies in Parc de la Villette in Paris are an outcome of such conscious design: they were a winning entry of a major international architectural competition that was judged by a panel of renowned architects, architectural historians, and theorists, as well as painters, musicians, and representatives from ministries and the city. Tschumi’s design, among other competition entries, stood out as the most convincing and meaning-laden artifact, for a piece of great architecture must be a great concept that is materialized as spaces and forms. But Michael Benedikt observes after the successful completion of the project: “If you don’t know the critical/theoretical narrative background, [the follies] are simply nice little red Neo-constructivist
buildings upon which to climb—which is how the people of Paris see them” (1991, 1). This statement implies that “sophisticated architecture” is understandable only if people, through text and narrative, know how it was meaningfully conceived. It also suggests that this is a level of understanding, and kind of meaning, that is beyond the abilities of ordinary people, who are, incidentally, the inhabitants of the built world.

This statement also represents a common theoretical position—that the basis for understanding architecture is through a preexisting and superimposed text; that text is regarded as the analogy of architecture and a precursor to a meaningful architecture. Hence the understanding of architecture is seen as explaining, reading, interpreting, and decoding the hidden meanings behind the built form. In other words, architecture is seen to carry, transmit, and communicate meanings in a linguistic sense. The linguistic pairs of “words/signifier” and “referents/signified” are thus arbitrarily associated with “form/meaning” in architecture.

Arguably the separation of form from meaning only occurred in the late eighteenth century, and architecture ever since has become a formal problem for architects (Vesely 1985). It is all too easy to be impressed by the architecture of antiquity, and the classical periods in Europe, simply because of their grandeur and splendor. Monumentality, to use architectural jargon, is usually how our contemporary eyes perceive the history of architecture. To take a cynical view, monumentality heightens not only our awareness of the built world but also our vanity. But the architecture of the ancient world could have served other purposes. Some argue that the emergence of modern science—an instrumental, or mathematical, representation of the universe—in the seventeenth century replaced the role of architecture in Europe, which used to play a role in reconciling the transcendent and the world, or the cosmos and man (Pérez-Gómez 1983). Science, however, is only a partial representation of reality; the transcendental and symbolic aspects of science often are not fully acknowledged. If architecture no longer plays a critical role in this “reconciliation,” one must admit that it has retreated into the realm of technology and aesthetics. (Nietzsche sees their affinities for the will and the pleasure to power.) The formal problem in eighteenth-century Europe, to take the extreme case of Jacques-Nicolas-Louis Durand’s teaching as an example, is that of economy and efficiency. A round plan, for Durand, is the ideal prototype, for it is the most economical and efficient plan type in terms of its floor area and hence should be aesthetically most pleasing. Technology and aesthetics thus fit each other. Meaning and form remain a pair.

The good intention of structuralism in the 1960s (Lévi-Strauss 1963) in its faith in a culturally independent human common ground, a deep structure so to speak, has had a crude reception in architecture, for it coincided with the modern belief in architecture as a formal problem. Architecture,
following the easy analogy of a language (which itself comes from linguistic
structuralism), becomes a spatial “syntax.” When reaching this point, the
formal problem of architecture is already devoid of any worldly meaning,
for in a syntactic structure, like the grammar of a language, any meanings
that remain are abstract. What then can be said about the “formal language”
of a building? Can one only decipher void, solid, recession, oblique, or fron-
tality, as suggested by Peter Eisenman (1971)? What then can be pursued in
the realm of a formal language? Newness! Artistic endeavor, in the twentieth
century in particular, has been a business of denying the past and inventing
the new.

Newness or novelty thus becomes the only measure of art—rather than a
pursuit of instrumental virtuosity, or morality, which any artwork inevitably
carries (Gell 1998; 1999, 159–186). Architecture has been no exception in this
regard since it is clear that the invention of new form has almost exclusively
occupied architects over the past century. When artists and architects were
busy in their revolutionary invention of new forms, genres, styles, or what-
ever they might be termed, social anthropologists quietly went into the “field”
to examine preindustrial and nonliterate societies (“primitive societies” as
they once were called). One of their discoveries was that, in addition to imi-
tating the universe, buildings actually imitated their inhabitants. A house,
for example, could be seen as society at the macro level, and it embodies its
occupier at the micro level.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the
twentieth, social anthropologists saw the built fabric of “primitive societies”
as a reflection of their social structures. This view was largely due to the
continuing legacy of European modern science since the seventeenth cen-
tury. The “scientific absolute” in social theories had been replaced by social
organization, social structure, and cosmology (Durkheim and Mauss 1963).
The concept of “primitive communism,” for example, was deduced from
aboriginal housing forms, simply because those dwellings made it possible for
a large number of household members to produce and consume food jointly
(Morgan 1965). For social scientists, society—in terms of kinship structures
and social organization—was actually represented by architecture, the built
form. Thus a conclusion could be reached that the larger winter houses of
Eskimos were caused by the need to accommodate a collective intensification
of ritual during the winter months, rather than by explanations such as the
conservation of heat, diffusion of technology, or requirements of collective
hunting (Mauss and Beuchat 1979). No matter what the cause was, the ritual
practice became the cultural meaning of the larger winter houses, and this
was inferred from the house form itself. Even for social anthropologists, it
seemed that the appeal of an austerity of the scientific truth, and its conse-
quential splendor, were just too irresistible.
Beginning after World War II and continuing to the present, architects have evinced an increasing interest in the vernacular built world. In part, this interest is due to a widespread disappointment with modernist architectural solutions, which are largely based on faith in efficiency and efficacy. It is also due to an increasing fascination with the powerful, often “organic,” formal qualities of vernacular architecture in premodern societies. But this interest has been predominantly visual, which is evident in the effective use of photographic and architectural drawing techniques. They capture, rather subconsciously, only the picturesque and idyllic images of romanticism and nostalgia. Cultural, climatic, economic, and social facets are mentioned, but often without sufficient elaboration. The most representative example of such visual admiration of the vernacular built world is Bernard Rudofsky’s *Architecture Without Architects* (1964), a collection of striking black and white photographs, selected by the cultivated eye of a modernist architectural taste, of vernacular built environments around the world. First published as a catalogue of a photographic exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from 1964 to 1965, it has since seen five printings. In a similar vein, Le Corbusier’s travelogue, *Journey to the East* (1987), which recorded his tour of the exotic “oriental world” in 1911, would be incomplete if it were not accompanied with his masterful sketches of architecture.

This visual appreciation of vernacular architecture continued with much popularity in the second half of the twentieth century. African villages and their huts, for example, were depicted with meticulous architectural drawings (Prussin 1969). More works were produced, and attempts were also made to include vernacular architecture in the writing of orthodox architectural history (Oliver 1969, 1971, 1975). The scope of the survey, assisted by color and more sophisticated photographic techniques, expanded to every corner of the world (Oliver 1987, 1997; Guidoni 1978). Chinese architects, too, showed great admiration for their vernacular forms, as well as their housing types (Liu 1957), while the study of imperial and religious architecture was in vogue in the first half of the twentieth century. The trend was resumed in the 1980s after the Cultural Revolution and reached a level of prosperity in the late 1980s when the China Architecture and Building Press published a book series of regional surveys of vernacular architecture in China (Knapp 2000, 7–18). The value of the survey material notwithstanding, these books, filled with ample illustrations of architectural drawings and sketches, to my mind, became a “beauty contest” among the pictorial vernacular buildings (as well as the drawing skills of the architects who recorded them).

Surely not all architects in the modern period are merely “visual animals.” Social and anthropological angles have, to a certain degree, infiltrated their minds. English architect William Lethaby’s nineteenth-century book *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth* (1974) showed a great “anthropological”
fascination with symbolic expressions in architectural forms. Unlike anthropologists and ethnographers, Lethaby used only secondhand material rather than fieldwork observations. Although this book has remained relatively obscure among architects, Lethaby nonetheless has a kindred spirit in our time. Joseph Rykwert’s *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy, and the Ancient World* (1988) reminded architects and planners that there was a mutual and yet symbolic understanding between citizens and town patterns in the ancient world. The book in fact was conceived and first published in the late 1950s as a special issue of the Dutch magazine *Forum*, which was edited by architect Aldo van Eyck. Incidentally, it was a time when city planning and building design were considered rational outcomes of production, marketing, traffic circulation, and hygiene; the idea of an interactive and symbolic relationship between the inhabitants and their built world was, not surprisingly, seen as “ridiculously passé” (Rykwert 1988). Since the publication of that book, Rykwert has continued to remind architects of the humane aspects of the ancient built world, where the fabrication of buildings and societies were engaged with each other, and in particular the salutary power of myth in a meaningful negotiation between people and their built world (Rykwert 1996).

Although architects have been preoccupied by formal problems for more than two centuries, they have also attempted to deal with a variety of vernacular built forms from sociocultural perspectives. Questions are asked: Why are forms different? What meanings might be responsible for the variation? In his *House Form and Culture* Amos Rapoport (1969b) makes an explicit statement that the integration of all cultural, material, spiritual, and social aspects shapes built form and, moreover, that such factors best explain variations in such forms. For Rapoport, the deterministic “cause” of built form should be seen as arising not from a single factor but from multidimensional aspects. While believing that built form responds both to climatic conditions and to limitations in construction materials and methods, for him the sociocultural causes are paramount.

Rapoport, however, warns scholars to be careful “not to speak of forces determining form.” He suggests that, instead of causal relations, “coincidences” be used because “the complexity of forces precludes our being able to attribute form to given forces or variables” (1969b, 17). Nevertheless, he proposes a comprehensive conceptual framework to explain the variety of house types and forms and the forces that affect them. He also attempts to reach a better understanding of formal determinants of dwellings. As he proceeds to point out:

The specific task, then, becomes to select those features of the house which seem most universal, and to examine them in different contexts
so that we can best understand what it is that affects the forms taken
by dwellings and groups of dwellings, and also what it is that so easily
enables us to tell, often at a glance, the area, culture, or even subculture
to which a dwelling or settlement belongs. Instead of trying to describe
or classify differences in house forms, their materials, and parts, I will
ask to what these differences can be attributed, and will try to relate
them to the way of life, the image of the good life, social organization,
concepts of territoriality, way of handling "basic needs," the link between
the dwelling and the settlement pattern, and so forth. [1969b, 17]

Despite being an architect, Rapoport, like Rykwert, begins to ponder the
impact of built form on the invisible, such as way of life and social organi-
sation. Social anthropologists, naturally, are more concerned with the concep-
tual attributes of built form than with the physical laws of the man-made
habitat. The symbolic approaches, interpreting built form as a representation
or expression of a cultural code system, are perhaps the most developed ones.
For most symbolic theorists, meanings encompass cultural aspects such as
cosmology, myth, or social structure, intangible cultural abstractions that are
often hard to grasp. For such theorists, the role of architecture is to com-
unicate or transmit these intangible meanings by giving them tangible and
concrete form.

Most symbolic approaches are deeply rooted in structuralist thinking that
is concerned with finding out the facts that are true of the human mind,
rather than facts about the organization of any particular society or class of
societies. The structured collective unconsciousness is in fact a hypothetical
mental structure. This mental structure is seen to be capable of generating
patterned cultural behavior, including built forms (Lévi-Strauss 1963). At the
same time, this mental structure can be understood and realized through a
myriad of sociocultural manifestations such as architecture. Drawing on this
approach, built form and architecture most commonly are considered as a
reflection of conceptual ideas.

To interpret and decode implicit meanings, architectural semiotics is
probably the most extreme strategy. As a method, it reduces architectural
characteristics to systems of signs or codes. Despite the acknowledgment that
architectural elements have no linguistic functions, may not be analogous to
linguistic signs, and are more complex to interpret (Eco 1972), built form in
this approach often is assumed to have a cultural function similar to that of a
language, with symbols becoming signs. As the next step, it is not difficult to
propose that space be seen as a text that can be read (Moore 1986).

Taking the position of culture as abstraction and architecture as represen-
tation, James Fernandez sees metaphor as a medium to move culture from
the abstract and inchoate to the concrete, tangible, and reachable. These
metaphors are what Fernandez calls “cultural architectonics.” In Fang Architectonics, he writes:

How have they built themselves into the spaces available to them and what is represented in the “buildings”? We shall concentrate on the buildings in the literal sense of the term but we shall argue that these buildings cannot be completely understood without a large sense of the architectonics of Fang culture and Fang culture history. Cosmology and legend are, thus, essential parts of Fang architectonics. [1977, 1]

In conclusion, the symbolic and metaphoric analysis of built environment “merges the strength of cultural meanings and interpretation with concrete architecture. The built form thus becomes a vehicle for expressing and communicating cultural meaning—that is, a meaning system itself that is interpreted within the context of isomorphic meanings of body, personhood, and social structure” (Lawrence and Low 1990, 473–474).

For architects, the role of built form as a reflection of cultural meanings remains nonetheless dubious. Kahn obviously could not stand in front of his Salk Institute to tell people how the building was meant to be inhabited. A building, after all, is mute. Its social life, after it leaves the hands of the architect, is unpredictable. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) sees this problem, but he tackles it from his field of ethnography and sociology. He asks: how does one act in social as well as physical space? Bourdieu realizes that human beings act neither like mechanical puppets nor like calculating game players in space. The clever Frenchman then reinvented the practice-based notion of “habitus” to replace a linguistic conceptualization. His ethnographic findings prove that “natives” (in his own words) use habitus to reproduce existing structures without being fully aware of how these structures are in turn affected. In generating practices—say building a building—habitus reproduces the conditions that gave rise to it initially; habitus, therefore, is both the product and the producer of history. Instead of a linguistic reading, the process in practice is emphasized to remind people that inhabitation combines mind and body. Bourdieu may not solve the problems of the modern architect, but he offers hope that a meaningful relationship between the built world and its inhabitants does exist.

This relationship indeed exists in the vernacular built world, where inhabitants still build for themselves and the processes of making and inhabiting the habitat are still engaged with each other. Drawing on firsthand fieldwork experience, social anthropologists and cultural geographers increasingly shift their focus from mere objects to more fluid but lively social relations. In the case of the human habitat, it is a conceptual interest in the symbolic and ritualistic engagement between the inhabitants and the built world. In her
book *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia,* Roxana Waterson (1990) believes that inhabited spaces are not neutral but rather are cultural constructions of one kind or another. In her own words: “Any building, in any culture, must inevitably carry some symbolic load” (p. xvi). As an approach, she chooses the house as a fully saturated cultural embodiment and goes on to examine and reveal the ideas and beliefs enacted in building and living in such a house. These social and symbolic aspects of architecture include kinship systems, gender symbolism, and cosmological ideas. For Waterson, it is the meaningful relationship between the creators and their creations that matters.

In a similar vein, and for a period of over thirty years, Ronald Knapp has written extensively on China’s vernacular architecture in terms of its living state (1986, 1989, 1999, 2000). In *China’s Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation* (1999), Knapp demonstrates that, much more than merely a shelter against the elements, a house plays a vital role in enshrining the hopes and fears of its inhabitants when they are able to symbolically engage with it. Although he does not use them in any simplistic sense, for Knapp the workings of a house in its living state can even be didactic in guiding the proper behavior of its occupiers.

**Legibility and Instrumental Form**

The architect studies the physical laws of built fabric without being fully aware that his behavior may have been affected by a spatial disposition; the social anthropologist speculates with anxiety about how the human figure acts in space without much knowledge of the artifice of built form and its contribution to social space. My approach in this book, rather, is to contest formal analysis in a social milieu. In order to make the book “manageable,” in the sense that the material receives due loving care (through both literature and fieldwork research), this book focuses on a range of architecture of the minority groups in southern China—that of the Dong nationality in particular. But the main reason for focusing primarily on Dong architectonics is that, despite its striking visual radiance, Dong architecture is tremendously instrumental, beyond its picturesqueness, in animating their social life. Architectonics in this book is used in a literal sense to refer to a wide range of elements that construct the built world of minority groups in southern China. These elements include village patterns (blocks, streets, compounds, and plazas), landscape ensembles, houses, public building structures (opera stages, bridges, and towers), graves, shrines, gates, thresholds, doors, windows, and floor plans and sections. My purpose is to expand the conventional confinement of architecture that may refer only to individual buildings.

Chinese terminology defines the world in terms of Han—the majority
population—and non-Han relations. There are fifty-five officially acknowledged “minority nationalities” (shaoshu minzu) and thus fifty-six “nationalities” (minzu) including the Han. The Dong, one of these minority nationalities, belong to one of the six Tai linguistic groups in southern China that are related to the Austronesian cultures found elsewhere in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific region. Although the focus of the book is the architectonics of the Dong and other related minorities in southern China—which, geographically, includes Guangxi, Guizhou, Hunan, and Yunnan provinces—the context throughout the book covers Han architecture and indigenous architecture in Southeast Asia, as well as Western architectural modernity in the twentieth century.

Having coexisted with the Han for many thousands of years, the minorities in southern China remain largely nonliterate; but they make and inhabit, to a “cultivated” eye, a strikingly picturesque built world. The public structures of the Dong, for example, include splendid drum towers and roofed wind-and-rain bridges. Despite their relatively poor economic and, arguably, inferior political status in the context of the majority Han in China, the minority groups in southern China still invest enormously in their built world. They do so, clearly, to make tangible their ethnic identity. But going beyond the picturesque splendor of Dong architecture, this book focuses on the instrumental role their architecture plays in making lively their own social life.

In fact, in addition to representing, or expressing, its inhabitants to the Han and others, minority architecture in southern China also symbolically resembles its inhabitants in many ways. It is an architecture that “speaks” to them, and it is an architecture that is primarily for its inhabitants. The built world indeed is the extension of their body and mind; their experience with architecture is figurative, and their understanding of the built world is allegorical. Allegorical architecture does not merely represent, or symbolize, something else; rather, it is a story about its makers and inhabitants. Unlike the symbolism of historical architecture, which needs to be decoded through a speculative reconstruction of the past, among the minority groups in southern China stories about inhabitants are made legible in a living state—that is, the recurrent process of the ritualistic making and inhabiting of their built world. This book thus offers architectural analysis of both spatial dispositions (building types) and social life (the workings of the buildings). It is, in other words, a figurative experience that reconciles the inhabitants with their built world and, as well, the objectification of this experience as myth and architectonics.

My basic approach to the study of the built world is to offer “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of Dong architectonics in an effort to understand
the workings of architecture in the social world. The focus on Dong architectonics within its regional as well as the global context makes it possible to combine detailed formal analysis of building types and their spatial dispositions with their effects in a social context. Architecture is assumed to be an art form in which the feelings and lives of its makers and inhabitants are embodied. The artifice of architecture—its physical laws—is thus analyzed and contested in terms of its instrumental capacity. The “biographical” undertone of Dong architectonics by no means results in a monograph. On the contrary, it uses the Dong as a case study in order to play out the paradox of universal human conditions and ethnic specificity. My aim, therefore, is to provide an “intermediate writing” that “incorporates ethnography but is not subordinated to it” (Thomas 1991, 316). It is this human common ground that transcends culture and ethnicity; it ensures that no society at any point in history is immune to the desire for progress—and now the overarching Western modernity. Progress and modernity surely have not bypassed rural societies of the minority groups in southern China. The writing of the book thus carries this ambivalence: romanticism and cultural renewal. For minority groups in southern China, romanticism, materialized via architectonics, is a necessity for making a home and identity in the Han and global cosmos; it is in the meantime desired by the Han and others as an exotic cultural counterpart. Progress and cultural renewal inevitably infiltrate into the rural areas but are usually disguised by the mask of ethnicity.

Analogous to this approach is a nondiscriminative and yet strategic juxtaposition of “secondhand” literature and “firsthand” fieldwork observations throughout the book in order to offer not only a personal but hopefully also a discerning view on the workings of architecture. Since the book is neither a monograph on one type of vernacular architecture, nor a comprehensive survey of several of them, the selective use of material serves, in my own conceptual frame, to address the workings of architecture and our built world in general. I begin by outlining a historical and political context of the minority groups in southern China against the background of the majority population Han. The history and ethnicity of the Dong, for example, have been for thousands of years under recurrent fabrications by the Han majority and other groups. These fabrications, however, are only objectified meaningfully through Dong architectonics and their built world—ranging from small shrines to housing, from public structures to settlement patterns.

A settlement pattern in southern China often assumes a posture of human or animal bodies. For the Dong and other minority groups in southern China, an intimate sense of home, and belonging to such a place amid the preeminent Han world, is achieved through ritualistic engagement with their settlements. The myths of migration, ancestors, and their worldviews
are in this way allegorically materialized. A settlement pattern enacts figu-
rate imaginative in which the extraordinary Dong wind-and-rain bridge is
symbolically reified.

The artifice and the symbolic honor of the highly elaborate Dong drum
tower, as well as other public structures, are examined in detail from three
sources: historical literature, archaeological evidence, and their living state
in the process of making and inhabiting. The paradoxical role of the drum
tower as both the hearth and the mask of the Dong is made knowable as
“choral symbolic power,” and in this sense it is empowering in the structur-
ing of Dong society.

As a building type, the pile-built dwellings—houses that are elevated
above the ground on timber posts—are widely found throughout southern
China, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific region. The universal meaning and its
ethnic specificity are placed in such a context to examine the relationship
between a building type and its heterogeneity. The way a type is inhabited
makes slight differences significant among the similarities within one par-
ticular building type and indeed gives life to such a type.

Through a series of self-initiated events in promoting Dong culture, the
role of architecture in driving an ethnicity is, rather accidentally, realized by
the minority groups in southern China. “Ancient” allegories are seen as sym-
thetic justifications for cultural renewal and progress. “Origin” is reinvented
out of time, since many of the old building types continue to be made by the
Dong and others in southern China. Political fabrications and textualizations
from the Han, the presence of anthropologists and architects in the region,
and the transformation from honor to capital in tourism are discussed in
relation to the making of architecture in southern China.

If social scientists and anthropologists are led by habitus to examine the
interactive relationship between human beings and their built world, a larger
purpose of this book is to ask whether the constitution of a human person,
in an anthropological sense, is also an essential task of architects, planners,
and environmental designers.