

41 colour plates of carpets from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries, a glossary of Tibetan and English terms, and drawings of weaving techniques it provides an excellent survey of Tibetan carpet tradition, and also contributes to Tibetan studies on material culture and lexicography. The English version omits to translate “Schlinge” as “loop” in the drawings of the weaving techniques, a small flaw that does not detract from its overall merit.

Considering the tremendous changes on the Tibetan plateau, this study appeared just in time to preserve oral knowledge and ancient techniques.

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Li Jin: *Jiawu he Gyarong shehui jiegou*

**[Houses and social structure of Jiarong (Gyarong) Tibetans].
Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe (Social
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After Lévi-Strauss proposed the concept of the house society, anthropological studies on houses have oscillated between kinship systems, social structures, and symbolic systems. The vague concept of houses can be interpreted with considerable flexibility within the complex society of south-west China. Thus, since Lin Yaohua’s study of the names of houses among the Gyarong Tibetans in the 1940s, research on houses in south-west China has attracted considerable attention. Li Jin’s recent book *Jiawu he Gyarong shehui jiegou* [Houses and social structure of Jiarong (Gyarong) Tibetans] is one of the recent important works in house studies. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Dzinya (Yaoji) Tibetan township, Baoxing County, Ya’an City of Sichuan Province, the book focuses on how houses provide the internal logic of spatial social organization. Li Jin describes how houses, as a socio-economic structure, engage in social construction and organization through spatial structures and practices. Ultimately, this structure achieves social cohesion. This explanation of how spatially organized social structures form and function according to certain rules marks a significant breakthrough in the study of house societies.

In Sichuan Province, Gyarong people, officially classified as Tibetan, reside in the valleys of the Dadu (Gyarong Gyelmo Ngülchu) River and Min River. The population is approximately 210,000. The key to understanding the social structure of Gyarong Tibetans lies in understanding the role of house names, known as *fangming*. According to historical records, when the *tusi* (indigenous chieftains) system was established in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), house names in the Gyarong region became the central organizing principle of their society. Under the *tusi* system, Gyarong Tibetan society operated as a strict hierarchical structure. The upper echelon, consisting of indigenous leaders, owned all of the land and enforced strict endogamy. The lower strata of Gyarong people cultivated allocated lands and performed corvée labour. The rights and obligations related



to these lands and services were borne by individuals inheriting the house name. In traditional Gyarong Tibetan society, all individuals (*rongpa*) who received a piece of land from indigenous leaders had house names. Those who worked as labourers without land or had to lease land from others did not have house names. When the owner of a house name left or had no heirs, the indigenous leader could designate another individual (*rongpa*) to take over the house name; alternatively, the leader could accept individuals who purchased land to inherit the house name.

During the implementation of the *tusi* system in Dzinya, the significance of house names is as follows: first, house names were connected to the land allocation system. Each house name was associated with a piece of allocated land; moreover, the individuals inheriting these house names also bore corresponding corvée duties. Second, for various reasons – such as family migration or the absence of heirs – individuals moving into a house would inherit both the allocated land and corvée duties. That is, they would maintain the same house name while the occupants of the house changed. Even if individuals relocated and rebuilt a new house on the original site, they would still use the original house name. House names did not necessarily reflect blood ties among the residents.

Third, within a family, one son might inherit his own house name, while another might move to a different family and inherit another person's house name. Therefore, different house names often had close blood ties, and intermarriage depended on specific circumstances.

Fourth, the inheritance of house names typically occurred through patrilineal relatives. However, if there were no heirs among paternal relatives, matrilineal relatives could inherit. This created a flexible binary inheritance relationship. Therefore, under the *tusi* system, the house names of Gyarong Tibetans served as both a familial structure and a socio-economic structure based on land allocation. As such, house names became the most crucial units in the social structure of Gyarong Tibetan society.

Similarly, house names also facilitated population mobility and social mobility in Gyarong Tibetan society. Because the house name system allowed incoming populations to acquire resources by “taking over house names”, there was a relatively rapid population movement in Gyarong region. Many families with large populations alleviated poverty by having their sons take over house names. Although there was a traditional practice of endogamy within the community, individuals from other ethnic groups were historically integrated into Gyarong society through methods such as marriage and taking over house names. In fact, this has made Gyarong society relatively open.

From this perspective, the house names of Gyarong Tibetans constitute the fundamental units of this society. Indeed, Gyarong house names hold an equally significant status as the concept of “*jia*” (family) in Han Chinese society or the “*iemoto*” (literally foundation or head of a household) in Japanese society. The study of the inherent logic of spatial social organization in Gyarong Tibetan houses reveals that the house society itself, as a socio-economic structure, was highly stable. This significantly mitigates the ambiguity proposed by Lévi-Strauss regarding house societies as a social type. Furthermore, it propels further discussions on societal cohesion, emphasizing the central role of houses in understanding social integration.

The book will be of great interest to scholars in the fields of anthropology, Tibetan studies, cultural studies, and sociology. Scholars interested in understanding the interplay between spatial structures, social construction, and organization within a specific cultural context, particularly focusing on house societies, would find this book valuable.