



FUJIAN TULOOU

A Treasure of
Chinese Traditional Civilian Residence

Huang Hanmin

Translated by Yang Yan



SDX Joint Publishing Company



Fujian Tulou

A Treasure of
Chinese Traditional
Civilian Residence

Huang Hanmin
Translated by Yang Yan

SDX Joint Publishing Company

Fujian Tulou:

A Treasure of Chinese Traditional Civilian Residence

Huang Hanmin, translated by Yang Yan

Copyright © 2009 by SDX Joint Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher.

For more information, please contact the publishing company:

22 Meishuguang Dongjie, Beijing, China, 100010.

E-mail: sdxrights@vip.sina.com

Designed by Qu Xiaohua, edited by Xu Guoqiang

93,000 words, 519 photos

First edition 2010

Printed and bound in China

ISBN 978-7-108-03306-2

Price: 98.00 Yuan

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Foreword | 5 |
| Preface | 9 |
| Chapter 1 The <i>Tulou</i> Study: a Historical Review | 17 |
| 1. Fujian <i>Tulou</i> : a History of Rediscovery | 17 |
| 2. Fujian <i>Tulou</i> : Research History | 24 |
| Chapter 2 A Rich Variety of <i>Tulou</i> Forms | 35 |
| 1. Circular <i>Tulou</i> | 37 |
| 2. Square <i>Tulou</i> | 55 |
| 3. Five-phoenix <i>Tulou</i> | 72 |
| 4. Other Variety of Forms | 79 |
| Chapter 3 Fujian <i>Tulou</i> : a Concept | 109 |
| Chapter 4 The Communal Nature of Fujian <i>Tulou</i> | 115 |
| 1. Close-knit Community: a Common Feature of the Han Nationality | 115 |
| 2. Peculiarity in the Pattern of Fujian <i>Tulou</i> | 116 |
| Chapter 5 Outstanding Marvels of Fujian <i>Tulou</i> | 121 |
| 1. The Most Famous <i>Tulou</i> | 121 |
| 2. The First <i>Tulou</i> under the "National Preservation Project" | 127 |
| 3. The Largest <i>Tulou</i> | 139 |
| 4. The Smallest in Diameter of the Circular <i>Tulou</i> | 151 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 5. The Earliest <i>Tulou</i> | 154 |
| 6. The Tallest <i>Tulou</i> | 157 |
| 7. The Most Spectacular <i>Tulou</i> | 166 |
| 8. The Fanciest <i>Tulou</i> | 170 |
| 9. The Most Resplendent <i>Tulou</i> | 175 |
| 10. The First <i>Tulou</i> Hotel | 180 |
| Chapter 6 Harmony and Unification Between Man and Nature | 183 |
| 1. Harmonious and Comfortable Dwelling: Er Yi Lou | 184 |
| 2. As Amazing as the "UFO": Tianluokeng | 187 |
| 3. Beautiful and Talented: Hongkeng Village | 189 |
| 4. Rustic Picturesque: Shiqiao Village | 195 |
| 5. Realism, Expressionism, Imagism: An Ascensional Power | 203 |
| Chapter 7 Home Impregnable: Defense Mechanism | 213 |
| 1. Peculiar Social Environment | 213 |
| 2. Adaptable Layout for Defense | 216 |
| 3. Indestructible Outer wall | 218 |
| 4. Ingenious Holes: Openings for Defense | 219 |
| 5. Mysterious Speaking Channel & Escaping Tunnel | 224 |
| 6. Firm and Reliable Defensive Systems | 225 |
| Chapter 8 Ancient and Unique Construction Techniques | 227 |
| 1. Construction Procedure of Fujian <i>Tulou</i> | 227 |
| 2. Ramming and Tiling Techniques | 240 |
| Chapter 9 Habitable Inner Environment | 247 |
| 1. Temperature & Humidity Adjustment: Effective Earth Wall | 247 |
| 2. Sanitary Habitation: Adaptable Floor Layout | 249 |
| 3. Practicality and Ingenuity: Kitchen Design | 253 |
| 4. Humane Geniality Courtyard | 254 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5. Faultfinding: Imperfection as Habitation | 260 |
| Chapter 10 A Centripetal Order: Architectural Space | 261 |
| 1. Sharp Scapling Contrast: Inner and Outer Spaces | 261 |
| 2. Acknowledging the Feudal Rites: Spatial Order in <i>Tulou</i> | 263 |
| 3. The Introversive and Concentric Space in <i>Tulou</i> | 265 |
| 4. Vertical Distribution and Linear Connection | 268 |
| 5. Spatial Integrity and Uniformity in Hakka Circular <i>Tulou</i> | 268 |
| 6. Privacy and Gradation: Definite Space in <i>Tulou</i> in Southern Fujian | 269 |
| Chapter 11 Perfection and Architectural Treatment | 273 |
| 1. Huge and Majestic Roof | 273 |
| 2. Plain and Rough Walls | 278 |
| 3. Lively and Unified Windows | 279 |
| 4. Dignified and Prominent Entrance | 282 |
| 5. Rhythmic Timber Structure | 283 |
| 6. A Cleverly-joined Well Platform | 286 |
| 7. Beautifully-decorated Ancestral Halls | 286 |
| Chapter 12 Solving Mystique: Success of the Circular Building | 293 |
| 1. A Century-old Mystique of the Circular Buildings in Fujian | 293 |
| 2. A Comparative Study: <i>Tulou</i> in Guangdong and Jiangxi | 295 |
| 3. Hakka <i>Tulou</i> 's Transition: from Square to Circular | 299 |
| 4. Zhaozhou: the Root of Circular <i>Tulou</i> | 302 |
| 5. An Evolution: from Castle and Fastness to Circular Building | 308 |
| 6. Mystique Revealed Circular <i>Tulou</i> in Fujian | 315 |
| Chapter 13 An Inspiration: <i>Tulou</i> Tablets and Couplets | 317 |
| Chapter 14 A Fantasy Land: Legends and Tales | 323 |
| 1. The Legend of Lady Yu | 324 |
| 2. A Funny Story of Two Sisters | 325 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3. A Record of Defense against Enemies | 326 |
| 4. Stories about <i>Tulou</i> Constructions | 328 |
| 5. The <i>Fengshui</i> Master's Story | 329 |
| 6. Anecdotes of <i>Tulou</i> 's Rice and Fall | 329 |
| 7. <i>Tulou</i> Settles down in Peru | 331 |
| 8. Jokes within the Walls of <i>Tulou</i> | 332 |
| 9. Kinship Ties: the Mainland and Taiwan | 332 |
| Chapter 15 A Pressing Matter: Protection and Development of <i>Tulou</i> .. | 335 |
| 1. The Importance of Scientific General Survey | 335 |
| 2. Promoting Multi-disciplinary Research | 336 |
| 3. Urgent Salvage and Protection | 339 |
| 4. "World Heritage Site" Application and <i>Tulou</i> Protection | 340 |
| 5. <i>Tulou</i> Tourism and <i>Tulou</i> Protection | 342 |
| Conclusion Fujian <i>Tulou</i> in the Future | 347 |
| Table of Typical <i>Tulou</i> in Fujian | 354 |
| Distribution Map of Typical Fujian <i>Tulou</i> | 356 |
| Appendix I The History of Beehive-shaped Homes | 357 |
| Appendix II Earth Construction Experiments | 362 |
| Bibliography | 366 |
| Postscript | 367 |
| Afterword to the Revised Edition | 368 |

Foreword

As a native of Fujian Province, Huang Hanmin completed his master degree thesis on Fujian civilian residence in 1982, adding contributions in the field of architecture. He has traveled in Fujian Province frequently and has had many research published since then. I once visited him in Fuzhou ten years ago. He showed me a pile of research documents. I remember very well how he talked about the local features of civilian residence in Fujian. Recently, I received from him a manuscript with the title *Fujian Tulou: a Treasure of Chinese Traditional Civilian Residence*. I ended up finishing it at one sitting. It is the most detailed, the most completed and the most profound book on *tulou* at present. It is not only a valuable achievement for research on Chinese civilian residence but for the Chinese architectural study as well. I was so enthralled with it that I decided to write a few words for the book at right away.

It is a book of vast investigation, visit, and research effort. How did Huang Hanmin manage it? As the head and architect in chief of Fujian Provincial Research Institute of Architectural Design for several years, he is responsible for both administration and design, as well as many other incredible trifles.

How could he do his academic study so scrupulously, for it would be exhaustive enough as both an administrative head and an architect.

Huang Hanmin is a person of efficient and unhurried manner. Always neatly dressed and holding himself upright, he talks calmly and has a smile on his face whenever you see him. Huang Yongsong, art director of the magazine, *Voice of Han*, and famous artist in book design, told me that he accompanied Huang Hanmin to do some investigation of *tulou*. They ran up and down in the buildings to take photographs. He got mud on his face and wrinkled clothes, while Huang Hanmin, entering and coming out of the kitchens, toilets, pigsties and that kind of places for drawing pictures, was able to stay spotless with neat clothes, and clean and tidy hair.

Huang Hanmin is a careful and methodical person. Friends in architecture field from Hong Kong and Taiwan all know of a person named Huang Hanmin in Fujian. Whenever they go to visit there, they are treated warmly and considerately; sometimes they would be accompanied by him personally. We made three research subjects in Fujian all introduced by him. He found the proper

persons to take good care of our food, hotel and traffic, and often gave us a call to inquire about any details. Once we hired a farm vehicle and went back to Fuzhou in order not to bother him, but he said seriously when he heard of it later: why did you not tell me to send a car for you? If you had ran into any trouble with the farm vehicle, how could I justify myself? In Yong'an County, we did not call him for fear of bothering him, but he unexpectedly arrived at the railway station in Fuzhou early in the morning, waiting for us at the exit. He also made a detailed schedule for that day and sent us to the airport on time, whereas he himself actually had to fly to Hong Kong in the afternoon.

He traveled everywhere in the countryside of Fujian Province, conducting down-to-earth surveys that had proven to be of great academic value. It certainly has to do with his enthusiasm and belief in the academic work. Huang Hanmin's wife has not been in a good health, but he always continues his work for several hours in the office after the hours every day. He was hospitalized several times during the late 1990s because of overwork. His illness weighted heavily on us because we were worried about not only his health, but also the continuation of his research work. The various and characteristic buildings in Fujian are rare even among Chinese civilian residence, and although they have been well protected they are disappearing rapidly. In his book *Fujian Tulou: a Treasure of Chinese Traditional Civilian Residence*, there is a chapter "Fujian Tulou: a history of its rediscovery." He never mentioned how hard he had worked, but just recalled with interests how he had ridden by bike twenty years ago to find two typical *tulou* in Shuyang Town of Nanjing county, which were not yet known among researchers. I went to see the two buildings with him in the winter of the year before last. I was sure that he did not go there all the way by bike; instead he must have mostly to wheel his bike up and down the sloppy way.

Huang Hanmin has finished the book on Fujian *tulou*. We may not know how many nights and weekends it had cost him, but can only acknowledge the book's high level of research value on *tulou*. It is a thorough study with width and depth, stretching from the micro and macro, from the scientific to folk, from the technical to cultural, and from physical to psychological studies.

The most difficult thing in writing the book is not the static description of *tulou*, but to answer a series of questions on the characteristics of *tulou*, on its origin, development, and rise to prominence, which Huang Hanmin calls the "mystery." Trying to explain the mystery in the book at a great length is, as he said, like "uncovering a mystery." To do this, he questions strongly the simplified idea of single factor, and analyzes synthetically the factors from the historical, geographical, economical, military, social, cultural and psychological aspects. His analysis is based on documents, historical materials, surveys, and object comparison, etc., and is so convincing that it is almost impossible to rebut. For instance, his judgment on circular *tulou*'s origin in Zhangzhou has been proven and has an important academic value.

Huang Hanmin has sent the manuscript to me and told me on the phone that he is preparing to draw some illustrations. His free hand drawings illustrated in his master degree thesis twenty years

ago were the first-class and have been used as teaching materials for as many years. Huang Yong-song likes his drawings very much and said to us again and again why you never made drawings like Huang Hanmin. We answered in desperation that we could not make that kind of drawings because our drawings are made by the help of computer. Although quite efficient, computerized drawings are always rather rigid. Those precise and lively free hand drawings by Huang Hanmin might never be seen again.

I have greater expectations for Huang Hanmin: maybe he could one day complete another book on the civilian residence in every area in Fujian Province.

Chen Zhihua

At the eve of the year of snake, February 2002





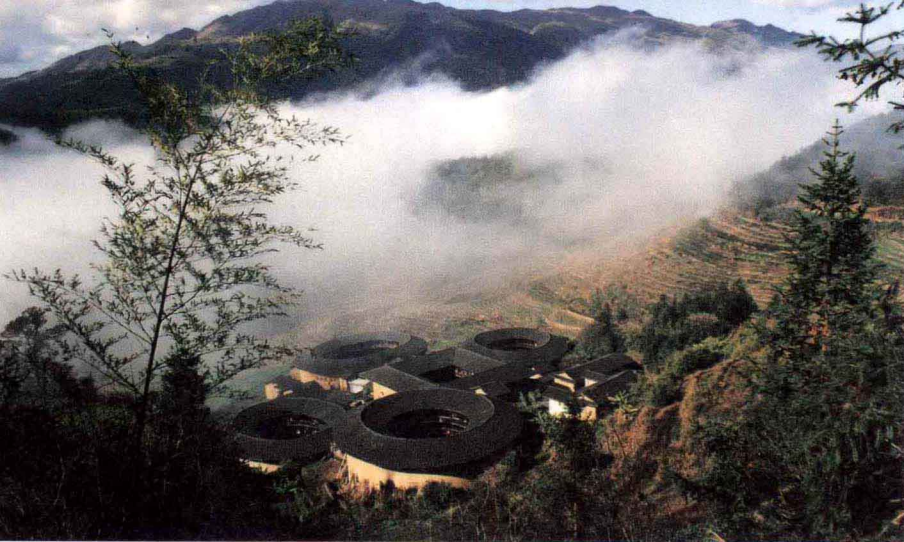
Preface

Tulou all across the mountainous areas in southern Fujian Province were created by the Hakka and the other peoples of southern Fujian, and are constructed with rammed earth, quite a peculiar feather for they are a gigantic buildings. Although not built for show, people all over the world wonder at their shape. A UNESCO consultant highly praised it as “a unique fabulous rural mountainous architecture example in the world!” It is also known as “a dazzling pearl of Eastern civilization.” This “legend in Southern mountains of China” attracts many Japanese and European scholars and tourists to come over for a visit from far away. People who take an interest in it are not only architects, photographers, or painters, but also specialists in the fields of history, geography, anthropology, and folklore.

Fujian *tulou* has been the focus of my life for more than twenty years. Accompanied by a lot of friends, specialists and scholars at home and abroad I have visited it again and again, and gone through all the villages where marvelous *tulou* are located. I often wonder at and think about the charms of Fujian *tulou*, about what could have allured so many people. Is it because of its unique architectural form or scale? Is it because of its superb craftsmanship in architectural techniques or art? Or, is it that because of its rich embodiment of profound civilization of the Chinese nation?

Fujian *tulou* was formally listed as a World Heritage site in July 2008; since then the *tulou* tour has boomed, and *tulou* research has steadily intensified. Many experts have come to explore and study the Fujian *tulou*. No one could help from being overwhelmed being standing in front of a *tulou* that has endured for centuries. It seems as if one were hearing an old man tell-

Tulou cluster at Hekeng Village of Shuyang Town, Nanjing County, Fujian Province. It is well known as “a unique and mystical architectural mode in mountainous areas.” (The photos in the book are all taken by Huang Hanmin unless otherwise indicated.)



ing him a story about a world of changes, joys and sorrows. It is an awesome feeling to enter a *tulou*; such a peculiar building! Made out of the most primitive and the simplest having materials but having sheltered the human beings and protected them from enemies for hundreds of or a thousand years, they are still standing high, even though many times destroyed by fire or damaged by thunder. Such splendid magnificence! It is beyond one's wildest imagination. Many tourists are so impressed by *tulou* that they praise it as "a masterpiece in Chinese ancient architecture," or "a cultural treasure to both Chinese people and the people all over the world." They hope to know more about the mystery of the Fujian *tulou*, and how so peculiar types of dwelling building came into being.

This book attempts to present a complete picture on the various types of Fujian *tulou* and their specialties by exemplifying typical Fujian *tulou* and their settlement, by showing the people living a real life in the world the World Heritage Site, by excavating Chinese folk and cultural precious "living fossil," and by approaching the way of living in a compact community, its defensive system, constructing techniques, special features, folklores and historical causes. It is to reveal the in-depth meanings of the unique architectural culture, Fujian *tulou*.



Tulou cluster at Tianluokeng Village of Shuyang Town, Nanjing County, Fujian Province. Prof. Keiichi Mogi of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music describes it as UFO's flying down from the Heaven and "mushrooms" rising up from the earth. No matter how it is described, it is best to see for oneself, to experience the real wonder. (Photo by Zhuang Wenguo)

The inner courtyard in Er Yi Lou at Dadi Village of Xiandu Town, Hua'an County, Fujian Province. It is the first of its kind to be protected as a major historical and cultural site at the national level.

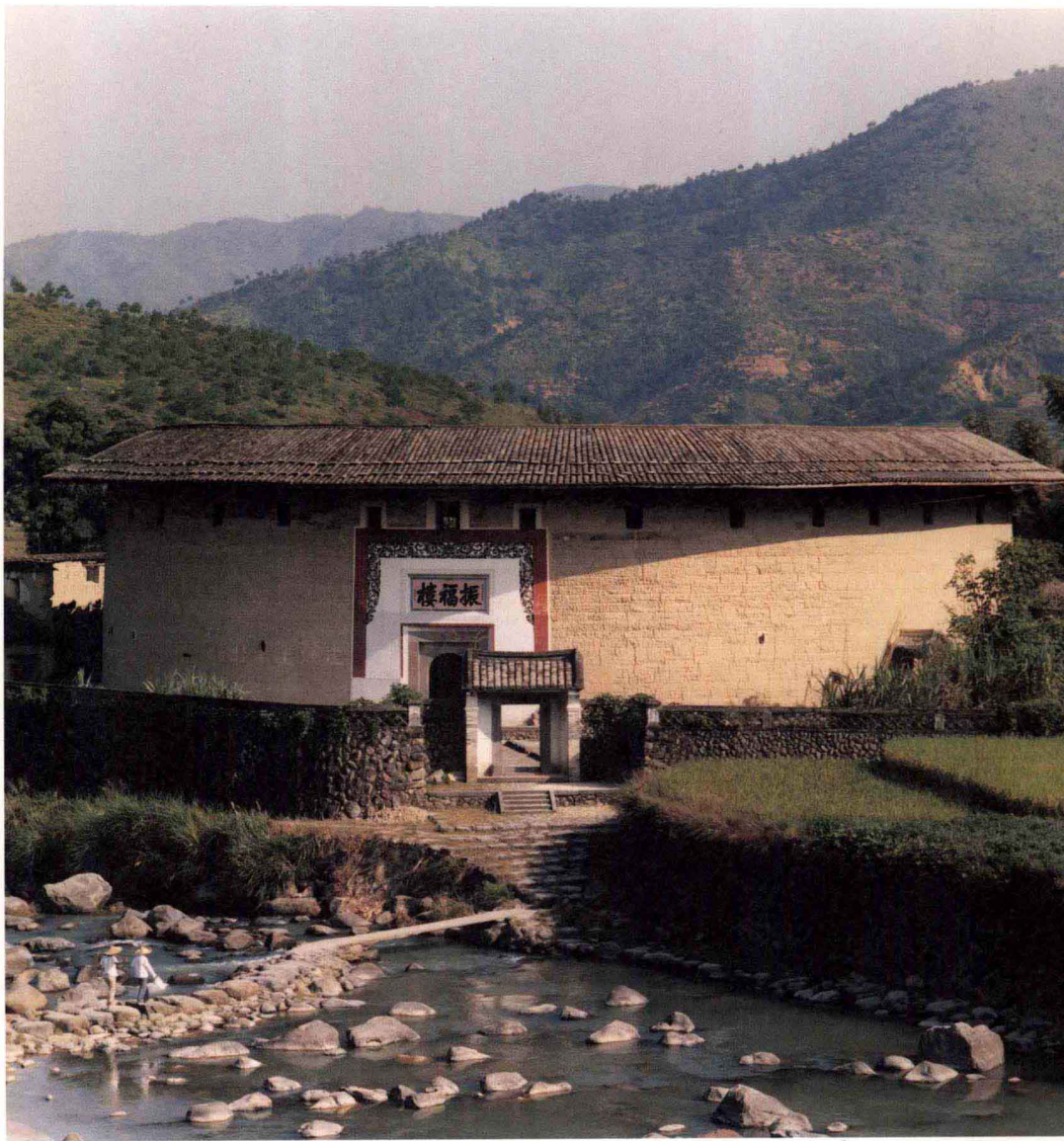




The ornamental clay sculpture, "lion's head with a sword in the mouth" on the wall in Wu Shi Lou at Guzhu Town of Yongding County. Is this ornament used for protection against the evil or *fengshui* principles? Mystic Fujian *tulou* is waiting for you to solve numerous mysteries.

The cassava harvest season, with women in Er Yi Lou busy drying and airing the cassava powder. It shows a lively life scene in *tulou*. (Photo by Huang Yongsong)





Zhen Fu Lou, the circular *tulou* which lies by Jinfeng Stream in Yongding County. (Photo by Edmund)

