

R E V I E W S

The reviews in Internationales Asienforum try to give a brief evaluation of recent German publications.

Gabriele Jettmar, Die Holztempel des oberen Kulutals in ihren historischen, religiösen und kunstgeschichtlichen Zusammenhängen, (Beiträge zur Süd-asienforschung Band 2), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974, 133 pages

References on the art and architecture in the Himalayas are scarce. One of the recent contributions to this subject is the study by Gabriele Jettmar, which investigates the Wooden Temples of the upper Kulu Valley - a follow up of the studies by GÖTZ (1955) on the early wooden temples of Chamba State.

After a synopsis of the historical and religious background of the Kulu Valley the author gives a detailed analysis of temple buildings and temple decoration. Then she illustrates the main types of wooden temples found in Kulu Valley by appropriately selected examples. These types are compared with the more recent stone structures, which, however, never succeeded in becoming popular with the native population. In the context of profane and religious architecture in the Himalayas as a whole, the emphasis placed on relationships with the traditional rural architecture is a very valuable feature of the study. The combined construction of stone and timber, surveyed in the rural houses of the neighbouring areas by former scholars (SIMSON 1882, DEUSTER 1939) is also typical of most of the stone structures in Kulu Valley.

The author comes to the conclusion that the Kulu Valley ranks as a prototype area for the survival of tribal cults under the cloak of Hinduism, an observation which is true also of other parts of the Indian Himalayas and of Nepal as well. The author's conclusion that since the beginning of the 20th century a remarkable decline in the traditional crafts (especially the art of carving) can be observed, recalls the decline of traditional skills and crafts in Nepal, for example the art of carving by the Newars in the Kathmandu Valley.

The study is a very valuable contribution towards filling the blank spots on the map of the traditional art and architecture in the Himalayas.

Christian Kleinert