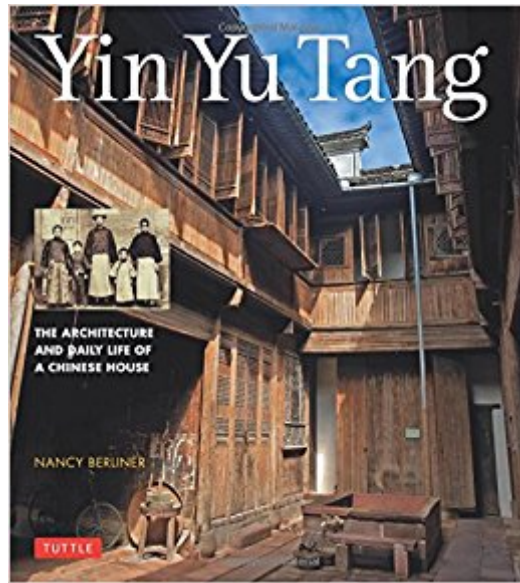


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# Yin Yu Tang: The Architecture And Daily Life Of A Chinese House



## Synopsis

With hundreds of photographs and a wealth of information Yin Yu Tang tells the history of a traditional Chinese house and the fascinating stories of its occupants. In the late Qing dynasty, around the year 1800, a prosperous Chinese merchant named Huang built a house for his family in a remote village southwest of Shanghai. He named the house Yin Yu Tang which means Hall of Abundant Shelter—implying his desire for the building to shelter many of his descendants. For seven generations, members of the Huang family ate, slept, laughed, cried, married and gave birth in the house. By the mid-1990s, the surviving members of the Huang family had moved away from Yin Yu Tang to take jobs in the cities. In 2003 the house found a new home as a permanent exhibit in the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. This book, with its room-by-room, generation-by-generation documentation of life in the house, serves as a unique and invaluable introduction to traditional Chinese family and village life. Nancy Berliner, one of the country's foremost experts on Chinese furniture and arts, takes the reader on a tour of this unique homestead providing detail on Chinese architecture, construction methods, decoration, furniture and family heirlooms. She weaves a story of domestic life in Chinese culture by explaining the traditions of the family who lived here—especially their love and respect for family and ancestors. She also documents the remarkable restoration and reconstruction of Yin Yu Tang, truly a treasure trove of Chinese history. With hundreds of photographs, scores of primary documents, and thousands of fascinating details, Yin Yu Tang: The Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House offers a vivid portrait of everyday life in traditional China.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The complex tale of Yin Yu Tang's salvation, careful dismantling, painstaking reconstruction and authentic refurnishing at the New England institution is alluded to in a brief epilogue. But it is the profoundly moving saga of the Huang family, generations of whom lived and died in Yin Yu Tang, that raises this above a routine preservation success story. Their touching and uplifting stories, told in the first person through letters, diaries and interviews, confirm how the psychic relationship between house and home is by far the most elemental function of architecture." *—The New York Times* "If only walls could talk? Well, Yin Yu Tang's did, and what a story they have to tell." *—Asian Review of Books* "This book is recommended for the Chinese history and culture sections of both public and academic libraries." *—Library Journal* "When architecture is viewed as an art, it marks the beginning of civilization Echoed with traditional music, it is a history book written with wood and stone." *—Luo Zhewen, architectural historian and author of Ancient Pagodas in China and China's Imperial Tombs and Mausoleums* "Oh, if a house could talk!" Thanks to the Peabody Essex Museum and this book, Yin Yu Tang is speaking volumes about its fascinating two hundred-year history. As a correspondent for CBS News Sunday Morning, I've gotten to do some amazing stories, but it isn't often one completely captivates me the way this one did. The story of Yin Yu Tang, the house that left home, is magical." *—Martha Teichner, CBS News*

Nancy Berliner is currently the Wu Tung Curator of Chinese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She previously held the position of curator of Chinese art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, where she spearheaded and curated the Yin Yu Tang house project. She also serves as a consultant to the World Monuments Fund on the Forbidden City's Qianlong Garden conservation project. She has lectured throughout the world including at Harvard University, Dartmouth College, University of California at Berkeley, Asia Society, La Sorbonne in Paris, Tel Aviv University, Palace Museum and World Art Museum in Beijing. She has written for the New York Times, Asian Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Asian Art, and Orientations magazines.

If you have yet to tour this Chinese house moved to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, put it on your itinerary. We toured the home on two separate occasions, because it is so fascinating. I am pleased to find this book available as an e-book for my Kindle. It was published around 2003, when

the home was opened to the public at the Museum. Since they allow no picture taking in the home, the pictures in this book are very helpful. I enjoy reading the book, and submit this review before I've read all of it. It would be nice if they'd update the title to include more features that I've noticed during my tours of the home. Like the use of the giant bamboo to provide downspouts for rain runoff, which winds up in the two sisterns inside the courtyard. The tour guides also explained the security measures of the home, and how the women who resided there while the men of the family were away as merchants traveling all over the world. How the grandmother was head of the family then. I loved the enclosed courtyard and the two and three stories of the house, the use of shutters and the use of folding door panels and bed hangings to provide privacy and warmth as conditions required. The book explains the circumstances which led to the men becoming merchants and not farmers, and why it was a home composed primarily of women. Read about one family surviving many periods--centuries really--of Chinese history, which includes troubled times of the more recent generations. The home survives to tell the tale. Well worth understanding what this book offers.

Nancy Berliner has written a marvelous book about the finding of an architectural gem in China and the journey that took both the writer and the building to their new home in the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem Massachusetts! For those of us who are lucky enough to live in the area...the Yin Yu Tang House offers a step back into the rural history of China. Walking through the house and listening to the excellent narrative provided by the author, really makes the house come alive. The architecture is a wonder to Western eyes...the scale of it, the light and dark of it, the tiny cramped kitchen, the open roof with pools and plantings below, the second story balcony that wraps around the open space and provides access to the bedrooms, all make for a personal experience of a life and time long gone. But it is not just experiencing the house itself...but learning how the many generations lived in it and the traditions of their times. If you can't walk through the house in person, this book will do a darned good job of bringing it to you...everything that happened before ( and it is a pretty amazing story ) to what is happening now. For anyone who is interested in the social history of architecture and wants to read about a creative curator who really understands the value of what it can teach us about the past...this is the book for you!

If you visit the Peabody Essex Museum and want to know more about the Chinese house, this is the book for you. It has lots of pictures of the house as it was in China when it was purchased and tells the story of the family who lived in the house and were its primary owners. I love visiting this house and bringing my friends and family to see such an interesting historical setting. It brings alive

Chinese history as one looks at the Mao posters and sees the intricate carvings of the windows. The baby minder is especially ingenuous.

Interesting book on Chinese culture

Good book in excellent condition.

Must BUY- even go visit- this is a book to go with an exhibit at the Essex Peabody Museum in Mass. They found an actual intact building from a Chinese family that had seen generations of use- Fascinating

Quite scholarly, but interesting. Not exactly what I was expecting. Thought there would be more discussion of daily life and customs.

Reading this book and looking at the wonderful photographs, provides a glimpse of a way of life that existed with little change for many hundreds of years but it now quickly vanishing with China's headlong rush into the 21st Century. I was reminded again and again of the close ties between culture and the built environment, how each influences the other. If you or somebody you know is fascinated by traditional Chinese culture, or even just interested in residential architecture, this book is one to treasure and enjoy.

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