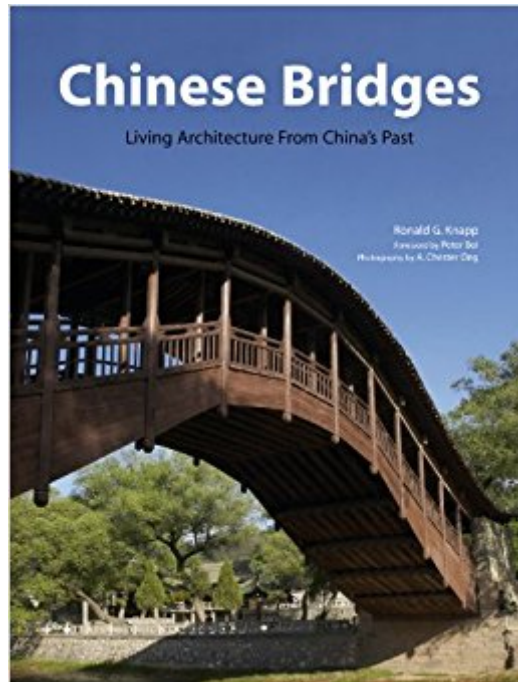




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Chinese Bridges: Living Architecture From China's Past



Synopsis

Bridges, the least known and understood of China's many wonders, are one of its most striking and resilient feats of architectural prowess. Chinese Bridges brings together a thorough look at the marvels of Chinese bridge design from one of the world's leading experts on Chinese culture and historical geography, Ronald G. Knapp. While many consider bridges to be merely utilitarian civil engineering, the bridges of China move beyond that stereotype, as many are undeniably dramatic, even majestic and daring. Chinese Bridges illustrates in detail 20 well-preserved ancient bridges along with descriptions and essays on the distinctive architectural elements shared by the various designs. For the first time in an English-language book, Chinese Bridges records scores of newly discovered bridges across China's vast landscape, illustrated with over 400 color photographs, as well as woodblock prints, historic images, paintings and line drawings.

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Customer Reviews

"This exquisitely illustrated volume gives more insight into the cultural and philosophical systems undergirding all forms of Chinese architecture than any book in recent years."

—ArchNewsNow.com "Splendid [Chinese Bridges] is necessary reading for all who are interested in Chinese architecture, history and culture."

—CHOICE "[Chinese Bridges] definitely changes a person's view on what China is truly all about. It's truly worth checking it out!"

—Aisha Kristine blog "Getting a copy of Knapp's book CHINESE BRIDGES: A LIVING ARCHITECTURE FROM CHINA'S PAST is a must for anyone who has passion to create living

utilities" •Woman Elan Vital blog "This is the kind of book that even if you have already finished reading you will never get tired of re-reading" •Style Diaries blog "Scholarly, detailed, beautifully illustrated." •Library Journal "This exquisitely illustrated volume gives more insight into the cultural and philosophical systems undergirding all forms of Chinese architecture than any book in recent years." •ArchNewsNow.com

Ronald G. Knapp has been carrying out research on cultural and historical geography in China's countryside since 1965. Currently SUNY Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York, New Paltz, he is the author or contributing editor of more than a dozen books, including the award-winning *Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation*.

If there ever were structures that should follow the maxim that form follows function it would have to be bridges. It is impossible to imagine a more practical structure. Yet, "Chinese Bridges" shows what happens when the Chinese bring their own romantic, over the top aesthetic to the art of bridge building. The result is architectural intoxication of the highest order. "Chinese Bridges" begins by cataloging the different styles of bridges and then moves to the spiritual dimensions the Chinese imbued in their bridges. It concludes with detailed studies of individual bridges. These bridges range from humble vernacular bridges in China's heartland to the beautifully ornate bridges of the country's elites. Ronald Knapp has been studying the rural architecture of China since 1965 and is one of the foremost historians of China's vernacular architecture. He is a strong writer and his text is well complimented by Chester Ong's beautiful photographs. "Chinese Bridges" is a complementary volume to Knapp's "Chinese Houses". Both are beautifully produced volumes and are a must purchase for fans of Chinese and vernacular architecture. These are two of the finest books in my collection. Highly recommended.

This most unusual book is my very favorite of all the China books in my collection! Ronald G. Knapp always turns out lovely books but this time he's outdone himself. China is full of marvelous and unique bridges and this book has gorgeous photos of many of them. What a visual feast. I am an artist and have visited China twice. Although I have LOTS of my own photos, this book will provide inspiration for years to come. Magnificent photography - photos I've never seen before. I was so sorry to get to the end of the book, I went back to the beginning and looked through it again! I love this book. If you love China and Chinese things, you'll love it too.

This has got to be one of my favorite book! The book has pages and pages of different chinese bridges from different dynasty and time period. It is a great book to add to my library! i absolutely love it, and would recommend this book to anyone!

Great book with famous Chinese bridges! Having made a recent visit they represent many of the major landmark bridges.

As a professor of Geography and Asian Studies, I have long admired Ron Knapp's extensive and unparalleled work on China's vernacular architecture and village landscapes. This book is extraordinarily detailed and lavishly illustrated with both landscape paintings and Chester Ong's stunning photographs. The text and graphics are expertly and painstakingly paired, and the author and photographer know their subject extremely well, having taken the time to travel widely but also dig deeply into local bridge construction techniques and associated rituals and culture history. After a thorough survey of seven major types of bridges - step on block bridges, beam bridges, floating bridges, cantilevered bridges, arch bridges (of multiple kinds), covered bridges, and garden bridges, the geographer and the photographer take us on a tour of bridges in Chinese folk culture and through Chinese history. A close examination of 21 specific bridges or regional styles of bridges provides the most in-depth exploration of the breadth and depth of bridge building knowledge and culture in China that I have ever seen or head of. I recommend this book for people of all levels of expertise and interest in China's culture history - it is a delight to the senses and a very mindful approach to architectural features which combine practical utility with place magic. As Martin Heidegger noted, the bridge brings earth and sky, humans and divinities together. This book shows how and why this has been true for so many communities in China for such a long time.

Chinese Bridges renders a substantive discussion of the structure, functions, and cultural relevance of traditional Chinese bridges accompanied by beautifully photographed images directly relevant to the textual discussion. This is an extraordinary integration of scholarly discussion and gorgeous photography. The book is divided into three parts: a discussion of the structural features of vernacular Chinese bridges featuring the traditional engineering that went into the building of these structures. This is followed by a section explaining the relationship of the bridge-building process and the final structure to local culture and religious beliefs. Knapp deftly illustrates the relevance of geomancy, local ritual traditions, and prophylactic magic to the construction and maintenance of these bridges, many of which are still in use deep in the Chinese countryside. The third section is a

regionally based survey covering North China, the Lower Yangzi Region, the Southeast Coast, and Guangxi Province. My favorites are the ornate covered wooden bridges found in the Southeast Coast and Guangxi - all uniquely expressive of their respective regional cultures. Knapp and Ong note in the "Acknowledgements" that this book is "... the first full treatment in English of China's remarkable covered [wooden] bridges..." This book also brings to the fore the function of bridges as integral parts of a pre-industrial world of travel and commerce. The bridges were (and to some extent still are) nodes in a network of overland roads, villages, and towns. Architecture, photographic beauty, and material culture are all brought to a stunning focus in this excellent text.

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