

Ronald G. Knapp

In 2013 the Executive Board of the New York Conference on Asian Studies (NYCAS) created the Ronald G. Knapp Award for Distinguished Service to Asian Studies in New York State to honor the contributions of Professor Knapp to NYCAS and to Asian Studies in general. Professor Knapp is the first recipient of the award.

After earning a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Pittsburgh, Professor Knapp taught at the State University of New York, New Paltz, from 1968 to 2001, retiring with the rank of SUNY Distinguished Professor. He was instrumental in establishing and developing New Paltz's Asian Studies program. He was also an adjunct professor at Columbia University's Teachers College where he taught an online course, *East Asia: Geographic Perspectives*, for five years. He was the faculty consultant for Columbia University's Asia for Educators *East Asia in Geographic Perspective* website.

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

Professor Knapp lectures widely, including regularly at China Institute in New York City and universities throughout the United States. In recent years, he also has lectured in Hong Kong under the sponsorship of the Asia Society, as well as in Shanghai, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta. He often presents lectures and workshops for teachers interested in learning about the Geographic factors necessary in understanding China specifically and Asia more broadly.

Professor Knapp is the author, editor, or contributor to more than 20 books, including ***China's Traditional Rural Architecture: A Cultural Geography of the Common House*** (1986), which was the first book in English to introduce Chinese vernacular architecture to Western readers. It is remarkable that this pioneering book appeared fully one hundred years after Japanese vernacular architecture was introduced to the English-speaking world.

Drawing on the work of leading scholars throughout the world in the fields of anthropology, architecture, art, art history, geography, and history, he co-edited ***House Home Family: Living and Being Chinese*** (2005) with Kai-Yin Lo. This wide-ranging book explores and analyzes the functional, social, and symbolic attributes of Chinese dwellings from many perspectives. A Chinese language edition 家 -- 中國人的居家文化 was published in Beijing in Fall 2011.

In recent years, he has worked with the well-known photographer A. Chester Ong on a growing family of books published by Periplus/Tuttle that combine fine photography with authoritative texts. ***Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation*** (2005), which featured Knapp's 'favorite'

twenty old Chinese homes, won ForeWord Magazine's *Book of the Year* award in the Architecture Category. ***Chinese Houses*** and ***House Home Family*** were together awarded the Henry Glassie Award of the Vernacular Architecture Forum in 2008. ***Chinese Bridges: Living Architecture from China's Past*** (2008) brings together a comprehensive look at the country's bridges, the least known and understood of China's many wonders, with many never before illustrated or written about in English. In January 2010, *Choice* magazine listed ***Chinese Bridges*** as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2009.

Knapp and Ong's ***Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia: The Eclectic Architecture of Sojourners and Settlers*** (2010) focused on the architecturally eclectic homes—shophouses, bungalows, villas, and mansions—built by Chinese migrants and their descendants from the late eighteenth into the early twentieth century in six countries. A follow-up book ***The Peranakan Chinese Home: Art and Culture in Daily Life*** (2012) takes an explicitly comparative approach, rather than the episodic house-by-house approach of the earlier book, in order to focus on generalizations that help illuminate similarities and differences using a room-by-room view of Peranakan homes.

In 2011 Professor Knapp published ***Things Chinese: Antiques – Crafts – Collectibles*** with images by the celebrated photographer Michael Freeman. Working again with Chester Ong, he has completed a book with Terry Miller titled ***America's Covered Bridges: From Practical Crossings to Nostalgic Icons***, which was published in late 2013. This is his first book outside Asia.

With Professor RUAN Xing of the University of New South Wales, Australia, he is the co-editor of a series titled *Spatial Habitus: Making and Meaning in Asia's Architecture*.

In addition to his outstanding research record and his contributions to Asian Studies at New Paltz and Columbia, Professor Knapp has devoted countless hours to the New York Conference on Asian Studies. He was co-chair for three NYCAS annual meetings at New Paltz (1980, 1986, and 1998) and served on the Executive Board from 1979 to 1986 and again from 1996 to 2004. He represented NYCAS on the Association for Asian Studies Council of Conferences from 1984 to 1987 and again from 1996 to 1999. Between 1999 and 2013, he served as NYCAS Executive Secretary, establishing many of the procedures and practices that mark NYCAS as one of the most successful regional Asian studies conferences in the United States.

For his work as scholar, teacher, administrator, and mentor, the NYCAS Executive Board is delighted to establish this award in his honor.