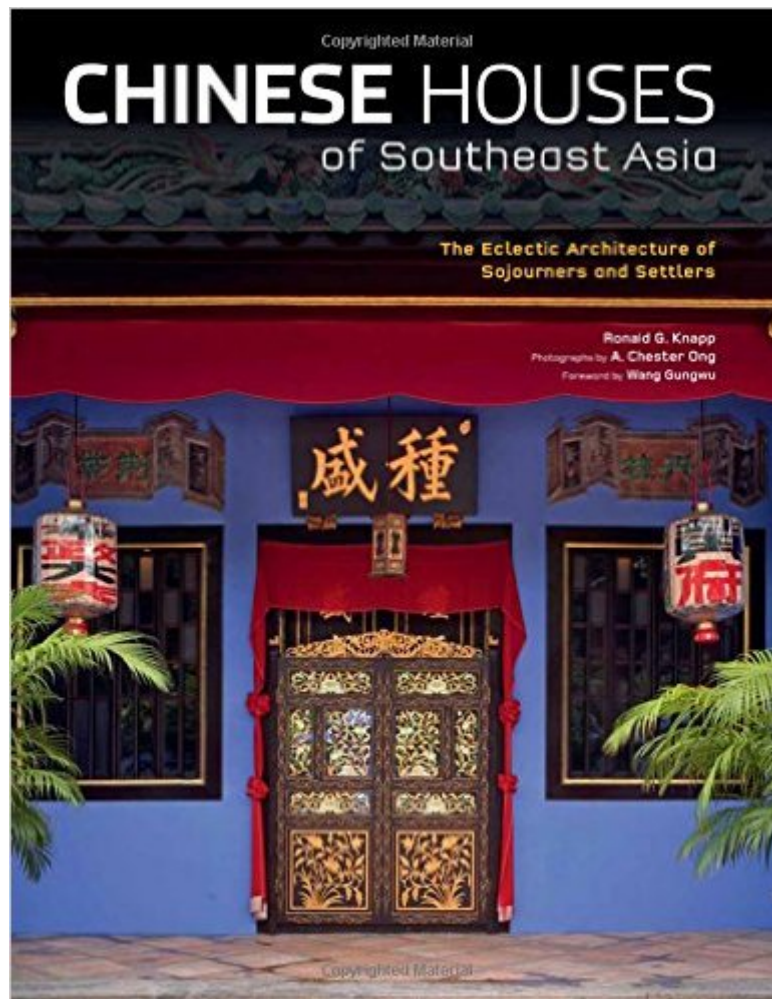


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# Chinese Houses Of Southeast Asia: The Eclectic Architecture Of Sojourners And Settlers



## Synopsis

Featuring over 350 beautiful photographs, *Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia* captures the architectural heritage of a vibrant community. The multiple Chinese migrations from southeastern China to Southeast Asia have had important implications for both regions. In Southeast Asia this influence can be seen in the architecturally eclectic homes these migrants and their descendants built as they became successful; homes that combined Chinese, European and local influences, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia* strives not only to be an informative but also an authoritative book on the subject of hybrid architecture—filled with stunning color photographs and essays on nearly thirty well-preserved homes. An introductory essay portrays the historical circumstances that gave rise to Chinese houses overseas, and includes historic images, color photographs, paintings and line drawings. At the core of the book is a comprehensive set of stunning color photographs of nearly thirty well-preserved homes built by Chinese immigrants and their descendants in various countries of Southeast Asia. Images and drawings from southeastern China help clarify similarities and differences. For each home, extensive captions accompany the photographs and the essay supplies background information concerning the individual and family who built and resided in each house. The historical context, nature of the building, and the restoration history of the home is included. Extensive information about the symbolism implicit in the decorative elements that make up each of the homes is presented. This includes an examination of ornamental elements that are Chinese in origin as well as those decorative components that are Western. *Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia* has been written in a nontechnical style, accessible to lay readers who are interested in the extraordinary architectural heritage of China, much of which is only now beginning to be appreciated.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hanoi, Malacca, Singapore all these towns, and many others, are (or at least were) filled with Chinese old houses, which often are called shop houses. A better word would be town houses. The cover of the book shows a Singaporean town house, which is now a museum. It is situated next to a very big ugly modern road, but once this street was millionaire's row in Singapore - just some stone throws to the train station with regular service to Kuala Lumpur. How time change. The houses presented in this book are stunningly beautiful and probably never looked as good as they do today, but most of these houses have been reduced to rubble in the name of modernisation. The text is pretty interesting. We get an introduction to why the Chinese houses in the South-East Asian region all look so similar. We also get a description of the houses, but we do not really get a deeper understanding of how these houses were designed or how (if) they assimilated any of the local culture present at the time. This book could also be interesting for people interested in interior design. I would also recommend the author's Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation describing old houses in China. Staying within the SE Asia region Davison's Black and White: The Singapore House 1898-1941 looks at the Singaporean (and Malaysian - but not covered in the book) British colonial architecture around the same time.

Ronald Knapp has done it again! Once again, Knapp has written a book which is as beautiful as it is informative, thanks to the beautiful photographs by A. Chester Ong, and Knapp's excellent research. This work, Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia: The Eclectic Architecture of Sojourners and Settlers, takes the reader on a fascinating journey through Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam in order to paint a picture of the lives of the Chinese diaspora in these distant lands. Following a very informative and meticulously researched introduction, which traces both the history of the Chinese diaspora in South Asia, and how it is reflected architecturally in the region, Knapp's book takes us on a journey to thirty-seven of these dwellings (shophouses, bungalows, villas, and mansions), presenting a photo essay on each. The story of cultural fusion is as beautiful as the houses themselves. Ronald Knapp's work is also timely, as the vast majority of Chinese diasporic houses have not survived into the twenty-first century.

Knapp is the author of many wonderful books on Chinese houses, all of which are well illustrated and informative. This latest book by him breaks a new ground by presenting the wonderful images of Chinese houses outside China. Illustrated with fine photographs, the book shows the material culture of Chinese diaspora communities in Southeast Asia and traces its roots to the coastal region of Fujian. One particularly interesting concept discussed in the book is the sojourners' house. The Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia were business sojourners who maintained close connections to the lands of their ancestry. This book full of historical details appeals to general readers as well as scholars of Chinese diaspora. It is a path-breaking book that will make China scholars rethink the scope of Chinese studies.

Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia is a seriously researched book which takes a historical approach to investigate 37 private residences of Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs who left their villages in Southern China and voyaged to Southeast Asia in the hope of finding a better life. Knapp's narratives skillfully paint a picture of the cultural landscape of Southeast Asia, its vast array and complexity of cultural diffusion, assimilation, and interactions that resulted in these hybrid houses combining Chinese, European, as well as indigenous architectural styles and features. Knapp comprehensively documented his findings from historical records as well as his meticulous observations of the rise, fall, and transformation of the life of each family and their residence. The research efforts put into the book by the author, and the beautifully illustrated photographs by Ong, is astonishing, beyond anyone's expectation.

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