ABSTRACT
The Aesthetics of the Arch Form in Stone Bridges:
A Consideration of Western and Eastern Models

Stone arch bridges have captivated the attention of Man for more than ten centuries ever since prehistoric times. What is it about this stone arch that is so appealing and attractive apart from the fact that it has lasting value. Stone arch bridges can be considered as one of the most charming, beautiful and aesthetic forms that Man has created. What informs this beauty?

This dissertation seeks to discover how the aesthetics of the stone arch bridge is informed through time and place. How can one begin to appreciate the aesthetics of these arch bridges and by so appreciating, how can one begin to learn the intrinsic meaning these 'timeless' arches possess which in turn could even reflect Man's condition. It is as if through discovering the stone arches that Man begins to discover more about himself.

Of interest would then be the consideration of the Western(Europe) and Eastern(China) stone arches and the underlying influence that informs the aesthetics of each.

The Western stone arch is observed to develop out of a need to keep up with time such that not only the general arch curvature changes, other parts of the arch also change. Part of the appreciation of this aesthetic goes with the understanding of this change.

The Eastern stone arch however appears to remain fairly consistent even through the various Dynasties. The arch curvature and main features remain constant through the passage of time. The aesthetics of this permanence can be understood in terms of place.

Through the understanding of this aesthetics will Man then be able to discover the inherent qualities these stone arches possess. And if they are regarded as 'timeless treasures of the past', what are these timeless qualities they possess despite their limitation as a compressive element.