

Recovering the Sense and Essence of Place:

The Eastern Practice of Feng shui
and its Role in Western Architecture

By

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

THE aim of this thesis is to understand, identify and test the fundamental qualities of feng shui so as to examine its applicability and relevance in western architectural design practice.

While the word "*feng shui*" has gained popularity and even acceptance in North America during the last number of decades its principles are not well understood or integrated in contemporary western architectural practice. This stands in strong contrast to eastern cities such as Hong Kong where very few structures are built without consulting a feng shui expert. Indeed, feng shui has a long history of contributing to the shaping of Chinese culture, where it is a practice that has influenced the form and planning of Chinese cities, palaces, villages and cemeteries alike. Critical to the practice of feng shui is the understanding of its roots, which reach deep into traditional Chinese observations about nature that are at once profoundly spiritual and practical. These observations led to a belief in the existence of a silent dialogue between man and nature that lies beneath the surface of all things. This dialogue is believed to be carried along by the flow of qi, the Chinese name for energy that animates all forms of life. The optimizing of this energy in order to benefit humankind became a key factor in the widespread popularity of feng shui. Based on these underpinnings it is easy to understand both the allure and mystification surrounding feng shui in western culture.

This thesis rests upon the belief that the eastern practice of feng shui offers a long standing alternative approach to the western worldview of architecture, as well as a vastly different way of looking at the relationship between people and the environments they inhabit.

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*The grass is spreading out across the plain,
each year it dies then flourishes again.
It is burnt but not destroyed by prairie fires,
when spring winds blows, they bring it back to life.*

- Bai Ju-Yi (A.D. 772-846)

PREFACE





■ **DRESSED** in every shade of red, the official color of Chinese celebration, children would be surrounded by replicas of firecrackers and Chinese idioms written elegantly on wafer-thin papers. As one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture, Chinese New Year celebrates the welfare of families and the potential auspicious offerings of a coming new year. I recall memories of myself as a young child living in Hong Kong during the usual festivities. As young ones, we would kneel before our elders with a delicate cup of hot tea in our hands in an elaborate offering of good wishes in exchange for the highly anticipated money-filled red pockets. Families would gather together to feast on dishes made especially for the hopes of an auspicious coming year. Mandatory dishes would include fish 魚 (pronounced yu) which sounds like things in abundance; a traditional Chinese dish made with a black, hair-like desert plant 髮菜 (pronounced fat choy) which echoes the promise of wealth 發財; or sweet Chinese stuffed glutinous dumplings 湯丸 (tong yuen) that sounds like the close knit gathering and reunion of families. After an extensive meal, children would indulge in innocent play while the grown-ups gather before the television, eager to learn from feng shui masters about the general luck forecast of the coming year. Information that pertains to certain people in the family were carefully noted and remembered. It was forecasted what colors would enhance luck for people born in the year of the Dog, while those of the Snake years should embrace anything to do with monkeys (later my father, who is born in the year of the Snake, purchased a ceramic coin bank shaped like a cartoon monkey to put on his night stand; it is an object that he still has today). Unfortunately for my younger sister and those born in the year of the Ox, the coming year was anticipated to be a bad year for those born under its stars. Certain precautions must be taken into consideration, and quite soon afterwards a delicate gold necklace with a pendant in the shape of a rabbit was purchased and was swiftly wrapped around my sister's neck in protection of any inauspicious event that may occur. Children take in the actions of their parents and elders while the media bombards the masses with such information and knowledge. Almanac books are sold everywhere from large bookstores to 24-hour convenience stores to newspaper stands on every street corner; good luck trinkets and statues are available in stores; there is even a well-

“Families would gather together to feast on dishes made especially for the hope of an auspicious coming year.”

known street that is flanked by palm and face readers on either side ready to offer their intangible knowledge and wisdom for a price.

These are images and memories of the past. I have not experienced these festivities since my family immigrated to Toronto shortly after my eighth birthday. I have now lived in Canada longer than I have in the place where I was born. With the majority my relatives still in Hong Kong, it is hard to recapture the same feeling of a large family gathering during special holidays; something that I have grown accustomed to during my earlier years. When you are a child in a new environment, you are able to adapt quickly to a new situation; you can pick up a new language immeasurably faster than someone older can ever manage; you do not feel like you have left anything behind when everything now is so new and different. Growing up, there have been signs of an underlying yearning to reconnect with my roots. While I have completely embraced and accepted western society and culture, I am still very much involved with Chinese traditions; I have not lost myself completely to life in the west. For example, I speak English the majority of the time and genuinely enjoy living in North America. Yet, I still speak fluent Cantonese and I read magazines and newspapers from Hong Kong. Also, my main diet remains loyal to Chinese cuisine and I go to the columbarium at the Buddhist temple nearby my house on the 1st and 15ths of every month to visit my grandfather's wooden grave plaque (this plaque was reproduced from an original in Hong Kong, where my grandfather was buried, then blessed in a ceremony and subsequently relocated overseas to Toronto so that my family can continue to pay respect to him here.) However, in hindsight, I lament over all the times I did not listen when my parents urged me to continue to attend Mandarin school on Saturdays; if I had, perhaps I would now be fluent in another Chinese dialect. In the end, I am eternally grateful that I am able to speak and read my mother tongue fluently; however, my Chinese writing leaves something to be desired.

Slowly, but surely, I am beginning to realize that I have a very unique identity; I am a hybrid

“While I have completely embraced and accepted western society and culture, I am still very much involved with Chinese traditions.”

– a mix between East and West. I now have the option of weighing out the best traits of either culture and adopting it to further myself in every aspect, and that is a powerful position to be in. Since I lived in Hong Kong for eight years and was raised with strong traditional Chinese values, it is not something that you can rid yourself of by living in the west. As an increasing number of Chinese people immigrate to places in the West, they bring along their own cultural values, traditions, cuisine and way of life. The popularity of the Chinese culture has slowly been thriving in the last decade in the city of Toronto to the point where it has achieved a firm foothold in the city. Reminiscing upon these family gatherings and Chinese festivities, it becomes apparent that despite the growing acceptance of Chinese culture in the west, there is still a fundamental disconnection between heritage and tradition with the modern notion of progress and improvement. There is a blurred threshold that needs to be clarified in my own identity, as a Chinese female living in the west while trying to preserve my roots in eastern values. How this journey can be incorporated into my education as an architect is important to me as well. I feel that, for lack of better words, some of the credulous aspects of Chinese traditions can be understood by a investigation into the eastern way of thinking. The tradition of Chinese thinking has many different criterion, but above all, their belief in luck, destiny and feng shui are an intrinsic part of the cultural identity. I feel that this way of thinking, free of the bonds of being excessively rational, has a unique place in the world. The practice of feng shui is in a similar situation as the Chinese culture itself, currently in a transitional phase that requires time and effort to truly understand its values before it can garner a comprehensive acceptance in a country foreign to its origins.

As my study of feng shui commenced in the beginning of the year 2007, it is safe to say that I have only discovered the tip of the iceberg. To truly understand and fluently wield the powers of feng shui requires a dedication that goes beyond the years of education involved. As with every profession, the most valuable asset one can obtain is personal experience in the field and no amount of learning from books can ever prepare someone for the reality of a situation. However,

“I feel that this way of thinking, free of the bonds of being excessively stagnant or rational, has its unique place in the world.”

in an attempt to clarify the confusion that surrounds the current practice of feng shui and discover its inherent link to traditional Chinese culture and identity, this is an opportunity to explore the potential of feng shui as a future design tool in my architectural career. Contemporary architecture can be, at times, too rational that has left a void in the equation of design. This void can be filled with a supplementary philosophy that would address the incompatible issue between architecture and the missing sensitivity towards occupants on a metaphysical and intangible level. It is the goal of this thesis to recover and reinterpret feng shui for use in combination with western architectural practices. I believe that designing with the principles of a timeless practice such as feng shui can open up new ways of thinking that expands contemporary architectural practice, potentially rendering designs to be responsive to the unseen energies of the environment.

“I believe that designing with principles of a timeless practice such as feng shui can open up a different realm of thinking that expands upon the rigidity of the architectural practice...”

KELLY LAM



空山不見人，
但聞人語響。
返景入深林，
復照青苔上。

*Hills are empty, no man is seen,
yet the sound of people's voices is heard.
Light is cast into the deep forest,
and shines again on green moss.*

- Wang Wei (A.D. 701-761)

**PART 1:
FENG SHUI**

風水





■ 1.1 OVERVIEW

THE Chinese believed there were five determinants of life. These determinants were all interrelated and they participated in the general make up of a specific person at any one moment in time. Vincent M. Smith, a feng shui teacher and consultant, outlined the five criteria in his book, *Feng Shui: A Practical Guide for Architects and Designers*¹:

1. **Karma** 因果報應 Influential factor from a previous life and actions of one's current life.
2. **Destiny** 命運 The pre-ordained power of the cosmos of a moment in time distilled into the destiny of a person at the moment of birth.
3. **Luck** 運氣 The auspiciousness of different moments in time.
4. **Effort** 努力 A changing and discretionary factor that may impact the outcome of destiny; knowing of what is within one's control and ability and what is not and making an effort to work for it.
5. **Feng Shui** 風水 The environmental determinant of the auspicious potential affecting people's lives.

These five factors in a person's life fall into three distinct categories which form the trinity of luck: heaven luck, mankind luck and earth luck. A person's destiny is determined by his/her *heaven luck* (Karma and what he/she was born with), *human luck* (hard work, education, and good deeds) and *earth luck* (environment and surroundings factors). The practice of feng shui is to improve and enhance people's earth luck. Feng shui falls under one of the categories of the five Chinese Metaphysics: Mountain (study of landforms), Medicine (study of traditional Chinese medicine), Divination (study of I-Ching and the Chinese oracle), and lastly, the art of Chinese Physiognomy which includes areas of study like face reading, palm reading, and feng shui². Physiognomy refers to the observation of appearances through formulas and calculations in order to assess the potential and outcome of a person, or in this case, the outcome of a person living in a certain property or working in a certain space in an office. In a way, the purpose of feng shui is to



foretell the fortune of a building or space and its occupants through observations of the factors in the surrounding environment. The term “feng shui” refers to an ancient form of geomancy – divination by geographic features – a discipline that was revered in many ancient cultures (Celtic, Egyptian, and Chinese) but was progressively forgotten as the ancient civilizations eventually disappeared or evolved. It is composed of the amalgamation of several theories and addresses multiple applications, including timing of construction, building orientation, overall symbolic design and decoration. This created a dynamic science focused on the compatibility of the relationship between a building, its surrounding environment and the occupants of the space. To the ancient Chinese, the art and science of feng shui was preserved through elite scholarship. Only deserving, well-educated scholars were allowed to study and practice it; their service was reserved to those of high social class and, at times, exclusive to the Emperor.

The exact origin of this ancient practice is unclear as multiple systems of feng shui developed in various parts of China during different times. While it is difficult to pin point the precise beginning of the practice of feng shui, it is believed that it was during the T’ang dynasty 唐朝 (618-907 AD) that K’an Yu, as the mother of feng shui, flourished as a science⁴. The ancient term K’an Yu implies the action *“raise the head and observe the sky above. Lower the head and observe the environment around us,”*⁵ – an observation of human beings’ role as mediator between Heaven and Earth. The art of k’an yu, the precursor of the Compass School (discussed later in the text), relies on astrology and numerology as a means of predicting qi on a cosmic scale. Sophisticated feng shui methods were not used officially until the T’ang dynasty, while prior to that feng shui was only an art of site selection or using elemental Yin and Yang methods and theory to choose an optimal burial spot⁶. During this period, under the welfare of political stability, Taoist arts and geomantic sciences were able to thrive. While the compass was used in China as early as 80 AD⁷, it was also during the T’ang dynasty that the luopan 羅盤 was incorporated into the practice of K’an Yu as a professional tool. This circular tool consists of sixteen concentric rings surrounding a compass, with the rings divided into twenty-four segments, or directions. As the popularity of feng shui grew, its integration into traditional Chinese architecture was followed extensively by the rich, and even those of lower rank tried to incorporate their limited knowledge of the practice. Hence, cities in ancient China were planned in a way that ensured both the natural and the build

*It is like the wind, which
you cannot comprehend,
and like water, which you
cannot grasp³.*

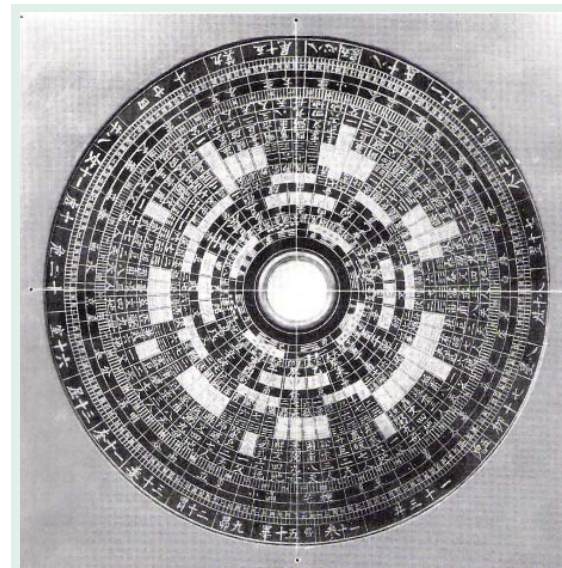
- Ernest J. Eitel

environment could be made to enhance positive energy; this in turn affects people positively. Buildings were constructed to enhance the wellbeing, wealth and relationships of those who live within. Traditional Chinese gardens and landscapes were the epitome of yin-yang interplay, designed in a harmonious balance of the Taoist ideas of yin and yang. Chinese gardens would embody opposite characteristics: void and solid, openness and closeness, curved and straight, fluid and stagnant, water and hill. Emperors insisted on using the principles of feng shui to create environments that were favorable to power and so these palaces, cities and gardens eventually became artifacts of proof of what feng shui masters achieved in ancient China.

While feng shui is mainly rooted in traditional Taoist values where the reverence for nature and belief in the unity of all things, the practice also stemmed from Confucianism 儒學, the ancient Chinese ethical and philosophical system of thought, which, along with Buddhism 佛教 formed the three main teachings of China. The Confucian theory perceived humanity as a small part of the Universe in which they lived. As the universe changes, human beings must also change to adapt for survival. It is a push-pull relationship human beings has with the universe: as the world changes it affects human existence and their well being; at the same time, people's actions also affect the universe in some way or another. Therefore what nature bestowed upon the earth must be respected and preserved.

Classical and traditional feng shui is still considered important in segments of modern Chinese culture, especially in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. Feng shui remained obscure in premodern China because emperors and nobles kept the power of feng shui to themselves, as they believed it helped secure their high positions in society⁸. As a result, feng shui became a guarded secret and the divulgence of its techniques and knowledge were treated with veneration. Those who want to pursue it as a career must meet stringent criteria as it meant persistence, humility and a lifetime of devotion. Even though feng shui originated in China, its practice was actually less common in the People's Republic of China today as it is often thought of as peasant superstition. This is partly due to the Cultural Revolution in the mid-20th century during the leadership of Mao Zedong 毛澤東 that set about destroying most of the old culture of China, making it illegal to practice

Fig. 1.1 A luopan 羅盤.





feng shui on the charge of fraud⁹. The essence and accuracy of the practice has been kept alive in books and practitioners who have escaped to Hong Kong and Taiwan. In traditional feng shui, the virtues of the Taoist and Confucian code of ethics and the tenets of feng shui principles were combined. To feng shui masters, the earth is a living and dynamic life form with its own breath, qi. Man, they believed, formed an essential trinity with Heaven and Earth. Human beings' role was to maintain order and harmony through adherence to moral conduct, ritual observances, and the orientation of man-made structures in alignment with the environment with minimal disruption. In the contemporary sense, feng shui can be seen and used as an art of assessing the quality of life through the observations and analysis of an individual's living environment.

■ 1.2 PRINCIPLES OF FENG SHUI 風水

THE literal meaning of feng shui is wind and water. It stands for the forces that shape the natural environment; the wind and mountain air that prevails and the streams and rain that bring fertility and floods. Their composite meaning points to the dynamism of the world. Feng shui principles and practices aimed to create a harmonized built environment for people to live and work in, representing a traditional Chinese architectural theory of selecting favorable sites as well as designing and planning buildings and cities. For many centuries the Chinese have relied upon this intelligent relationship with nature to ensure their protection and survival in this world. It has been developing throughout the existence of Chinese history and civilization, having its roots from the Taoist philosophies. The primitive knowledge of feng shui was based on the observation from the following: astronomical phenomena, natural phenomena and their effects on human behavior¹⁰.

Feng shui principles were established thousands of years ago from the extensive experience of successive generations of sages and masters meticulously measuring, recording and analyzing the outcomes and potency of human actions. As feng shui is based on the laws of nature, its practice and theories stem from logical conclusions about natural cause and effects that have endured through time and therefore can provide explanations to why certain things happen in people's lives. Even though the effects of feng shui cannot be entirely proven by scientific means, its fundamental

“The literal meaning of feng shui is wind and water.”



ideas, practice and impact on human life can surely be appreciated by those who benefited from the results. The main apparatus used by feng shui practitioners is the feng shui compass, or luopan, which translates the earthly and heavenly situations into concentric rings around a navigational needle. It is in every sense a precise scientific instrument; its design is simply a more complicated version of the compass. Those who study feng shui recognizes that time, space and weather impose adverse influence and creates imbalance in all living things. Therefore, its fundamental principles are derived from the combination of concepts such as qi, the Yin-Yang theory and the productive and destructive cycles of the Five Elements. Chinese philosophy preaches that everything is made of qi, the vital energy in all living things. This energy is further broken up into the five basic Chinese elements, which interact with each other in different ways, thereby producing positive or negative results accordingly. Human beings are affected by the changes of these cosmic and earthly energies and feng shui is a tool for people to harness this type of power for the improvement of people's lives. Formulas and techniques are subsequently developed to counteract the aspects of nature that affect people's welfare and living conditions.

THE YIN-YANG PRINCIPLE 陰陽

Feng shui is rooted in the Chinese philosophy of Taoism 道教, where it gathers insights directly from the phenomena of nature, thereby forming principles that are applied to disciplines of architecture and site planning. Such imperative disciplines were originally adopted by feng shui masters and not architects.

*"Taoist thinkers became disciples of nature: idealizing it, seeking a harmony with the natural way, an identity with the cosmos. Poets, artists, and philosophers alike all yearned to fit into the grand scheme, the harmony and immortality of nature. From this reverence for nature sprang early Chinese religion (Taoism), science (astronomy, geology, magnetism, and alchemy), superstition (astrology, shamanism, fortune-telling), and lastly – a peculiar combination of all three – feng shui."*¹¹

The Tao concept of simplicity and non-interference evolved from ancient Chinese observations of

*"There was a Being already perfect
before the existence of Heaven and
Earth.
It is calm! It is formless!
It stands alone and changes not!
Reaching everywhere and
inexhaustible,
it may be regarded as Mother of the
Universe.
I do not know its name.
For a title we call it the Tao¹²."*

- Lao Tzu

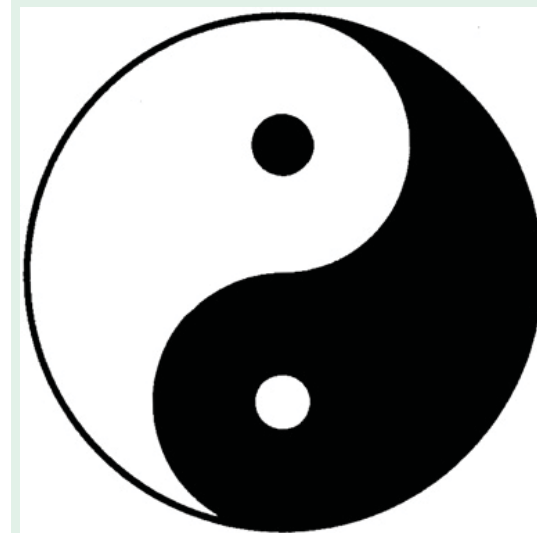


Fig. 1.2 The Great Ultimate *t'ai-ji*.



Fig. 1.3 The Five Elements: Metal, Wood, Fire, Water and Earth.

nature and their identification with it. Taoists observed the cyclical path of nature and the effects on human beings' fates. As a principle, Tao is best understood as a state of equilibrium; a harmonious union of interacting opposites. The Tao is a recurring process of change and creation between opposites like the yearly cycles of summer leading to winter and then returning to summer. Thus, the theory of Yin and Yang, two primal opposing, yet interdependent energies of the universe were derived. It is from this cyclical process that the yin yang symbol, t'ai-ji 太極 – the Great Ultimate – was created. This symbol is used to depict the indefinite movement and ceaseless activity of the universe, with no defined beginning or end. Yin is dark and passive thus representing that of the feminine, while yang is light and active, which embodies the masculine. When united, however, they are in harmony. Each depends on the other, for without cold, the concept of hot does not exist; without old there is no new; and without death there is no life. In Chinese philosophy, the dichotomy of yin and yang is about achieving a balance between the two polarities; yin exists and is born from yang, and yang resides and is born from yin, forever being created and destroyed.

Through the patterns of the Tao, one can begin to grasp the fundamentals of feng shui and seek the balance and equilibrium to achieve harmony with the environment. Taoists acknowledge that their lives and cyclical changes in the human body were intrinsically linked to the environment and the ever-changing aspects of nature.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS 五行

The five elements is an important theory that is vital to the practice of feng shui and underpins all traditional Chinese healing and medicinal practices. The way the Chinese appreciates the five elements is not the same way the ancient Greeks perceived the world to be made up of fire, air, earth and water. Instead, the Chinese identify the five elements as examples of types of underlying energy that constantly change from one element to another. Take the wood element as an example; it represents the energy of vegetation growth. Each of these physical elements are also made up of energies which have their own unique frequency and wavelength, therefore they will react with one another in different ways. The sequence produced from the reactions between

Fig. 1.4a Productive Cycle: Water is essential for plant growth (Wood).

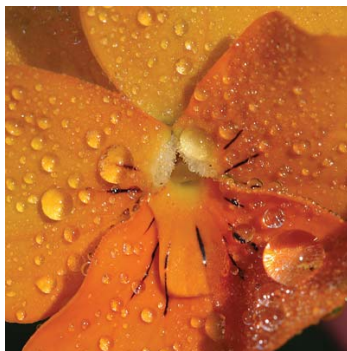


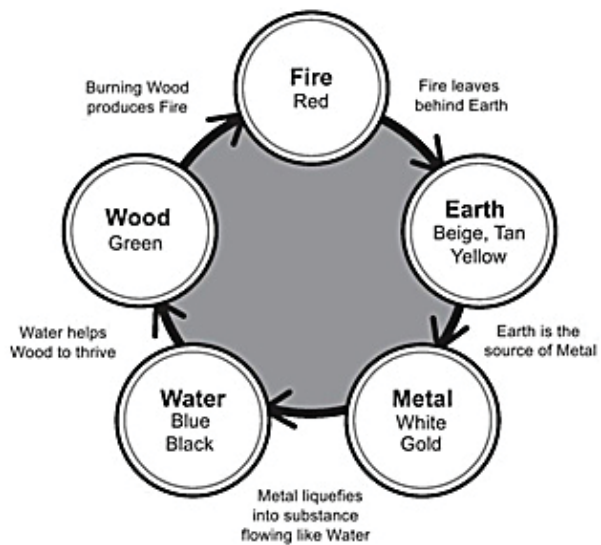
Fig. 1.4b Destructive Cycle: Fire being extinguished by Water.



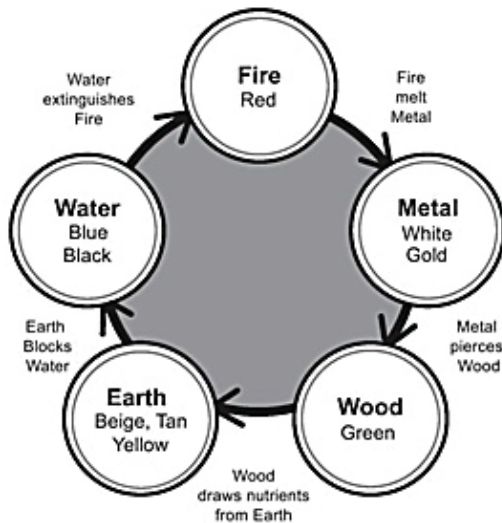
Fig. 1.4c Reductive Cycle: Water generates rust on Metal.



The Productive Cycle



The Domination Cycle



The Reductive Cycle

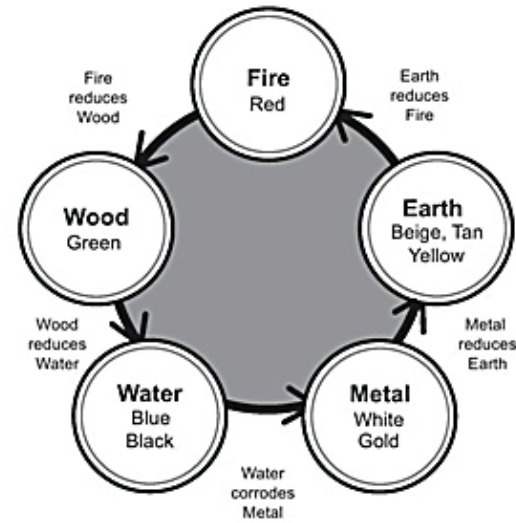


Fig. 1.4d The Productive, Dominating/Destructive and Reductive cycles of the Five Elements. These relationships and the way the energies of the elements interact is one of the main keys in understanding feng shui.

“Feng shui focuses on the more spiritual and energetic sensibility of a place - the genius loci.”

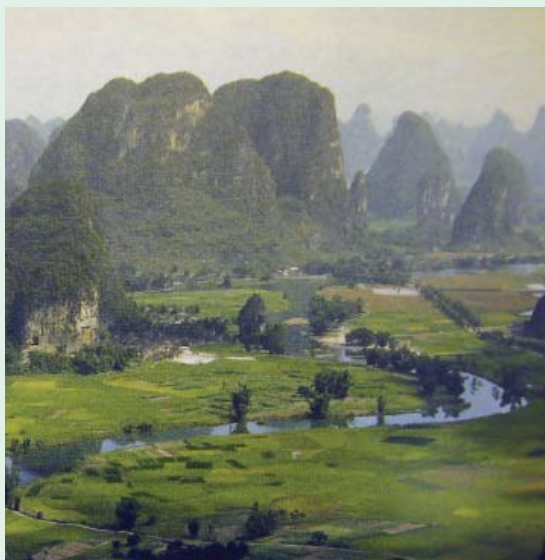


Fig. 1.5 The unique landscape of Guilin is the inspiration of the ideal feng shui model.

the five elements assists feng shui practitioners in analyzing and interpreting the natural energies surrounding and existing within people. It is the concern of feng shui to balance any element that is not in sync with its natural sequence with the other four elements. If any element is lacking or in excess, then the key is to re-balance by draining, controlling or feeding the element with one of the other four. The three reaction cycles on the previous page are crucial in understanding how feng shui can impact the environment. These cycles outline certain directions, colours or materials that certain people should avoid, while others could embrace.

THE ENVIRONMENT 環境

Those who utilize feng shui believe that certain spaces are more sacred than others, and that distinct features of the environment can affect the overall wellbeing of a person. If people applied feng shui principles to their surroundings, they could balance and improve their lives. Feng shui focuses on the more spiritual and energetic sensibility of a place – the genius loci. Feng shui theories recognize that other than essential physical elements such as wind and water, certain intangible energies also permeate the earth and animate the forms of nature.

It was under the reign of the legendary Yellow Emperor that China began the period of agricultural and animal domestication¹³. Through people’s primitive agricultural, building and dwelling experiences, the Chinese started to form the traditional concept of searching for the optimal site to make human settlements a harmonious part of the natural world. The rural farmers in China were aware of the patterns of the universe and were adept at using form and placement to ensure the best harvest of their crops and the safest and most imposing orientation for their homes. These techniques were originally used by farmers in ancient China who lived along the banks of the Yellow River 黃河. Notorious for its occasional flooding force, China’s mother river is both worshipped and feared by those who dwell in its midst; hence the farmers’ primary concern was to shield themselves, their farms and crops from the harsh winds and untamed waters. A site was considered fortunate if it was sheltered from devastation. It was considered most fortunate if the winds were gentle and the water was kept to a gentle meandering, as that would bring

comfort, prosperity and fertility to the dwellers. The ancient Chinese would typically choose to live in a place where it was in close proximity to a river course, which would supply fresh clean water. The dwelling would be facing south with the back towards the north. It is optimal to be located on the northern side of the river bend and built on a raised platform or preferably on a naturally higher ground for irrigation purposes. This orientation would maximize the amount of sunlight penetrating the dwelling in the winter while inviting cool breezes in during the summer as well as ensuring that their crops would catch the last rays of the setting sun. The overall site should optimally have natural landform elements such as mountains, hills or trees, which would provide protection from the harsh winds blowing from the north. Both wind and water were considered to have a spirit of their own, hence this was regarded with a deep reverence by the people. These rudimentary feng shui techniques came to the attention of wandering scholars and sages who then devoted time to refining the principles originated by the country people. Hence, a system of understanding planetary alignments and their effects on the earth's magnetic field was developed. As it was further refined, feng shui dictated design judgment on buildings and burial sites in its orientation, spatial organization and irrigation, which in turn affected the prosperity of people depending on how the earth's latent energy was distributed. The primary concern was the selection of a favorable site and how to maximize the energy of an existing location. Of foremost importance was the external surrounding of a dwelling which included the direction and landform, while the internal environment was of secondary importance. A combination of both would lead to good health and prosperity.

I-CHING 易經 AND DIVINATION 卜

TO delve down to the very root of feng shui, one must trace back not only to Taoism, but to its roots, which is based on the ancient Chinese oracle called I-Ching the Book of Changes. The history of I-Ching literally rose from the depths of the waters and is connected to a great Chinese sage named Fu Xi 伏羲 who discovered the pattern of He-Tu 河圖 on the back of a horse that rose from the depths of the River He¹⁴. The image of the He-Tu later became the 8 trigrams of the Earlier Heaven Ba-Gua 八卦 used to describe the order of the universe. The images described

Fig. 1.6 The He-Tu on a horse.

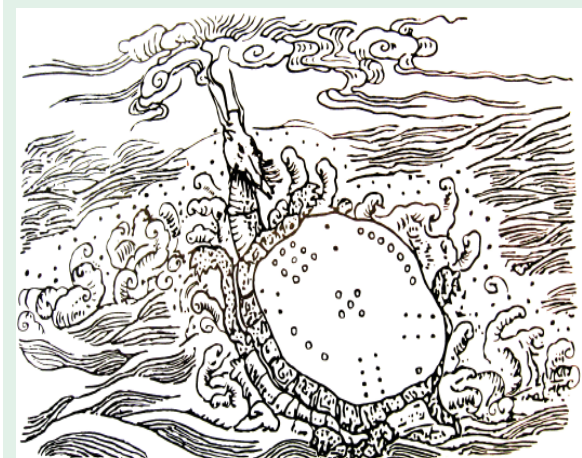


Fig. 1.7 The Lo-Shu on the shell of a tortoise.

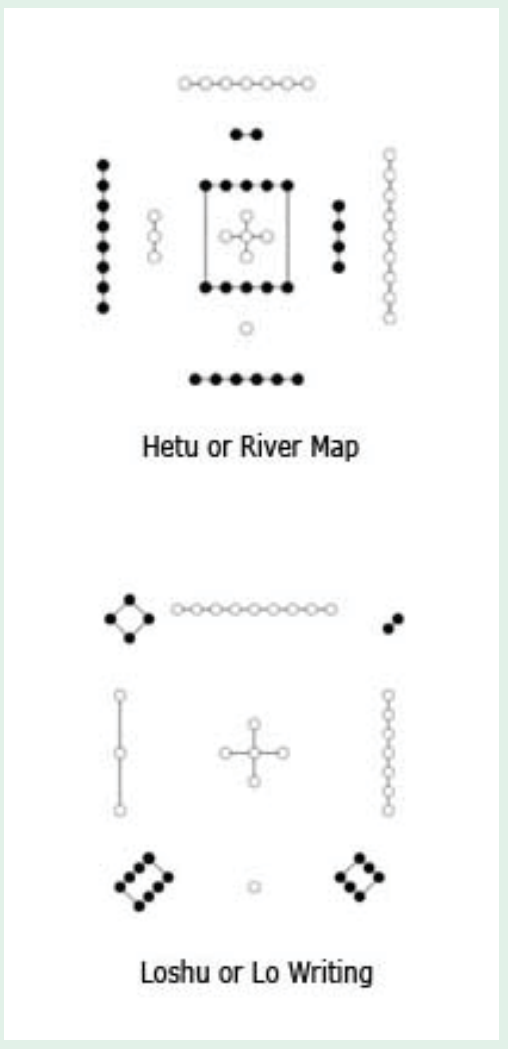


Fig. 1.8 The He-Tu and Lo-Shu.

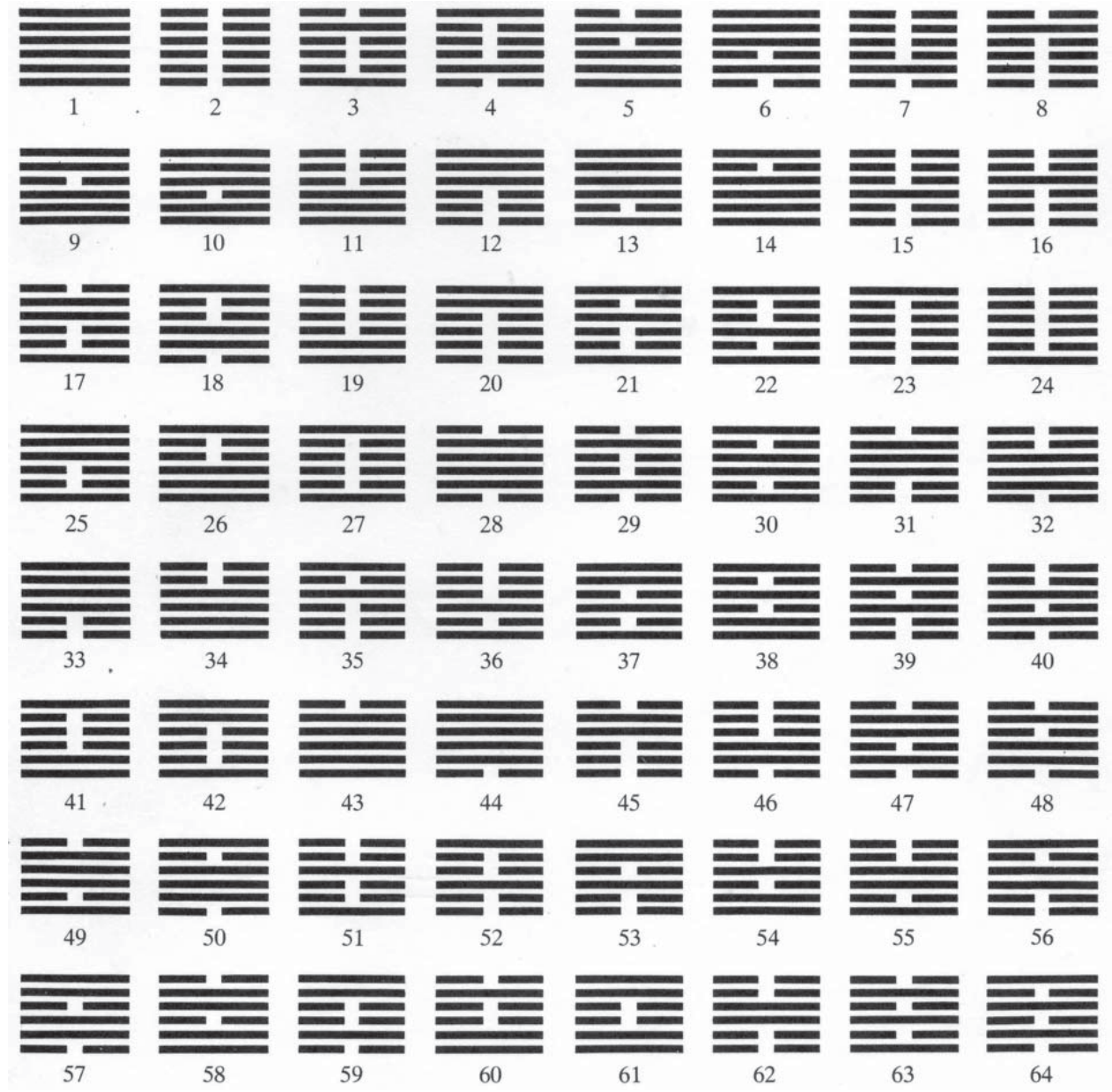


Fig. 1.9 The 64 hexagrams of the I-Ching.



underlying structure and nature of all things, and Fu Xi constructed answers in the form of 64 figures, 6 lines stacked one above the other: solid (yang) is the creative principle, or broken line (yin) is the receptive principle. King Wen 周文王 later discovered a different image on the shell of a sea turtle that emerged from the River Lo¹⁵ hence the image was called Lo-Shu 洛書 – later known as the Later Heaven Ba-Gua, which was used to predict the phenomenon of flux and change¹⁶. Each trigram is associated with a number and a colour, and together they form the traditional sequence of hexagrams used in contemporary versions of the I-Ching. The transformation of the Lo-Shu to the Nine Palaces, a nine-square grid used in the Flying Stars method of feng shui is the key vehicle of divination. Inscribed in the grid, the trigrams are no longer tied to a stationary direction; instead, their positions will change according to the month and year of the Nine Cycles. The workings of the Flying Star system will be discussed in the next section.

Through the surveillance of stars in the skies in reference to the events that naturally unfold on earth, ancient Chinese sages were able to extract information that revealed certain things about the future. Thus this discovery would in due course mark the birth of the ancient divination method of I-Ching, which would eventually lead to the systematic formation of the feng shui practice. The original purpose of the I-Ching was to consult destiny through divination. The hexagrams, each consist of six lines, and represent the actual conditions in the world. Within the hexagrams, however, it is always possible for the individual lines to change and regroup themselves; just as world situations continually change and reconstitute themselves. Each of the 64 hexagrams can change into one another through the movement of one or more of the six lines; they change into their exact opposites. There are 4,096 possible combinations (64 x 64), which is said to represent every possible condition in heaven and on earth. Positive lines are solid, and broken lines are negative and if they have increasing dynamism (changing), they turn into their opposites: a changing yin turns into stable yang and vice versa. Positive lines that change are 9 while negative lines are 6, and non-moving lines that are positive are 7s and negative are 8s. These numbers are crucial to remember in the actual divination process where different methods of random generation are used. The most ancient and most complicated method of I-Ching divination is the yarrow stalk method, a process that involves a complex sorting and re-sorting of 50 yarrow sticks, which is the stalk of the

“There are 4,096 possible combinations, which is said to represent every possible condition in heaven and on earth.”



yarrow plant. In more recent times the Three-Coin casting method was introduced to simplify the process while trying to maintain the same mathematical randomness as the yarrow stalk method. According to Chris J. Lofting, an avid researcher on the relationship between mathematics and the I-Ching, the traditional use of yarrow stalks was biased towards generating more yin than yang lines. This was supposedly a reflection of a dominant yin concept of conservation of energy rather than to expand energy, which is a yang concept. Therefore, utilizing yarrow stalk was considered to be the more accurate and precise method than the tossing of coins¹⁷.

In ancient China, oracles, or privileged individuals with such powers and knowledge, would divine using various methods ranging from the tossing of oracle bones and coins to the scattering of rice and even in the form of dowsing for water. These individuals were special and therefore respected for their divination powers. The desire to consult with destiny is a strong Chinese tradition even to this day, as evident in the vast amounts of almanacs, BaZi 八字 (also known as the Four Pillars of Destiny wherein an individual's exact moment of birth is studied to reveal clues of one's destiny), or palm and face-reading related books. There is a method of divination available in Buddhist temples that involved the use of hollowed-out bamboo as containers to hold a batch of wooden sticks. One would grip this bamboo tube firmly with both hands and wholeheartedly ask the question they want answered while shaking the tube until a single stick falls out. Each stick is assigned a certain number and each falls under one of two categories: up 上 (a good reading) or down 下 (usually an undesirable reading). This stick would then be brought to a nearby wise man or woman to have it decoded according to the question that was asked. This is a common type of divination method available to the masses that still exist in some Hong Kong temples today. The divination aspect of feng shui has diminished, losing some of its authentic flavor having now been consolidated, reducing to the consulting of charts and execution of calculations. The actual divination methods are a completely different realm of study and will not be further expanded upon in this thesis. However, what is important to note is that feng shui ultimately deals with the energetic quality of a place. Within the vicinity of this space, all objects - animate or inanimate - are subjected to the influences of these energies. Feng shui principles have been perfected through thousands of years of experience to be able to divine or foresee the possible energetic qualities of a space through

“The desire to consult with destiny is a strong Chinese tradition even to this day.”

the assessment of many different criteria. Generally when one is dealing with the unknown, there is always an aspect of divination involved, and feng shui is essentially the divination of qi and its influences on people.

■ 1.3 THE CONCEPT OF QI 氣

ONE of the most important and fundamental principles of feng shui is the concept of qi; an invisible energy which is thought to sustain all life forms on earth. The word qi in Chinese pertains to cosmic energy, life force, breath or vapor. Therefore the concept of qi is also vital to other traditional Chinese practices such as acupuncture and martial arts. When the traditional Chinese character of qi 氣 is broken down, it separates into two different characters, eluding its meaning to the steam 气 rising from rice 米 as it cooks. To feng shui, this flow of energy impacts all areas of people's lives and its principles are followed to enhance the flow of energies and to minimize its dissipation; it is believed that everything in the universe consists of subtle patterns of flowing energy. Feng shui is concerned about the balance of qi, yin and yang as well as interactions between the five elements. The most important is the appropriate retention or dissipation of qi as it will have direct impact on the health, wealth, energy level, luck and many other aspects of the occupants of a particular space. Color, shape and the physical location of each item in a space also contribute to the flow of qi by slowing, redirecting or accelerating it, thereby directly affecting the energy level of the occupants. According to the tenets of feng shui, optimal flow of qi occurs when the atmosphere feels like a spring breeze - neither fast and intense, nor sluggish and stagnant. The nature of the flow is affected by both the interior and exterior elements of the physical environment that people's lives revolved around. Depending on the configuration of either the way a building is set within a certain landscape or the internal layout of a building, it will set the tone of the movement of energy. Qi is found everywhere and its impact on those within its immediate vicinity will be the most evident. There are two primary types of qi that concern feng shui: heaven qi or earth qi. Qi of the heaven are the energies that originate from the sky, such as air, the effects of weather and the cosmos. Earth qi are the main energies that feng shui deal with.

Fig. 1.10 A gently meandering river generates the most optimal flow of qi.





Though one cannot control the inherent energy of a site, by utilizing proper feng shui techniques the original nature of qi can be improved. Depending on the characteristics of the land, the nature of earth qi changes and so does its quality. Vibrant and nourishing qi can create a good and healthy physical environment with benefits to people's mental health. On the other hand, qi that is found in places of extreme temperatures or hostile environments are considered to be stagnant and barren which is undesirable in any situation. Any site, by virtue of their natural formations, has inherent energies that are bounded by existing physical elements and the time aspect of potential constructions. It is feng shui's aim to recover the energetic potential of a specific site and harness that power to benefit its occupants. This energy, qi, has distinct characteristics in its movement; therefore it is possible to anticipate its flow around certain objects or within a space.

Qi may be seen as an elusive invisible force that animates all things on earth, but it can also be reasoned with science, as all objects on earth are made up of minuscule particles incessantly in motion. In terms of physics, radiation is energy in the form of waves or moving subatomic particles, while microwaves are electromagnetic waves that have the frequency to penetrate certain objects to create heat. Since every object, even those that appear inanimate to the human eye consist of diminutive components that are energized through the interaction with other objects; thus, the existence of qi should not be difficult to imagine. When the flow of energy is carried through with a gentle current and allowed to cumulate to a healthy resonance, it will convey such energies to the objects and people in its presence, directly affecting human's sensory capabilities. A similar theory was brought to attention by a Japanese scientist, Dr. Masaru Emoto, in his ground breaking book *The Hidden Messages in Water*, who outlined the discovery that crystals formed in frozen water revealed changes when specific, concentrated thoughts were directed toward them. When thoughts of love or positivity are directed at water, its crystals appear as a bright and blossoming flake under the microscope. Conversely, under the influence of negative thoughts, the crystals become muddled and incomplete. When something as imperceptible as the particles of water molecules respond to the resonating energies directed at them, it makes one wonder the extent of power of the invisible energies that permeate the earth. In a parallel comparison to the theory of qi, Dr. Emoto discussed human being's water-based genetic makeup. Water remains pure

“The word qi in Chinese pertains to cosmic energy, life force, breath or vapor.”

when in constant motion, such as water flowing in a river. When water is trapped or wandered off course to end in a stagnant puddle, the life in water dies. As a result, water must be constantly circulated. For example, when blood becomes stuck in the human body, it generates blood clots leading to health complications. When blood ceases to flow altogether, the body will die and decay¹⁸. Ultimately, wind and water as well as qi are fluid elements which are constantly in motion and essential to human survival. It is undeniable that people are energized by certain objects, people, spaces or places.

■ 1.4 SCHOOLS OF FENG SHUI

DURING the time when feng shui was still known as the art of K'an Yu, the practice was still in its infancy, basing its studies only on the Yin and Yang principles and the interactions between the five elements. Over centuries of studies, observations and new findings, Chinese elite scholars have made revisions and additions to the growing knowledge of feng shui. This knowledge was only passed down to those students worthy of knowing. From this refinement period of the practice, the San He 三合 system of feng shui emerged as the prominent ideology. San He is regarded as the oldest form of classical feng shui. This school places great emphasis on the study of the formation of environmental features like terrains, mountains and bodies of water. From these forms, the directions, shape, flow and appearance all need to be considered as part of an overall equation before the construction of a building. As the practice was later refined, the aspect of time became an important issue that was integrated into the equation and eventually became the departure point of a new ideology called San Yuan 三元. Undoubtedly, while the different schools and systems seem to be in conflict with each other, it was always underlined with a measure of mutual respect as they recognized that each had its own unique strengths and specialties. Despite the differences, genuine forms of feng shui are formulated for specific functions. There are three main functions of feng shui¹⁹:

“Despite the differences, genuine forms of feng shui are formulated for specific functions.”



- Corrective: to remedy existing problems
- Constructive: to enhance a current situation or produce a particular outcome
- Predictive: to explain the present or foretell future possibilities

While most forms of feng shui are based on similar fundamental principles and are essentially developed from either San He or San Yuan, the different schools of feng shui were based on different operating levels, approaches and techniques. Most of what is currently being practiced in the west, Black Hat Sect being the most popular, is neither traditional nor classical in the feng shui sense as these systems are not a derivative of either the San He or San Yuan methodologies. This “new-age” feng shui system will be discussed later in the text. Classical feng shui is based on understanding of the way qi flows within landscape in combination with the rudiments of the I-Ching, the Yin-Yang theory and the Five Elements. Another aspect of classical feng shui is its reliance of age-old mathematical formulas based on the development of the human understanding of time cycles, and how it is all related to human beings and their environments. Every classical or authentic school of feng shui involves the reading of natural landforms and the use of a compass, but the various sub-systems are distinct from each other depending on their emphasis on either Form or Compass. The Form School studies the flow of qi in the external environment as dictated by the juxtaposition of mountains, lakes, rivers, natural and artificial landscapes and architecture. The Compass School also has its basis on forms, but incorporates compass directions and the I-Ching trigrams into calculations. The two different schools of feng shui when used in combination with each other provide a more complete and effective method of reading and manipulating the flow of qi.

FORM SCHOOL

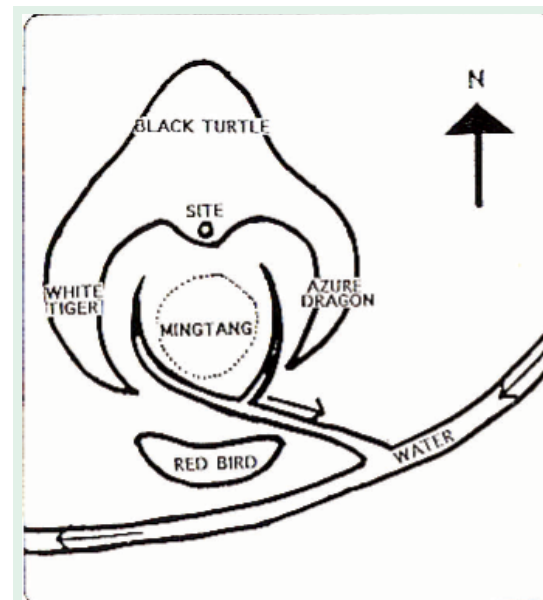
The scenic mountains and hills of rural south western China gave way to the development of the predecessor of modern feng shui which is known as the Form School. The rugged and picturesque topography of the south-western region of China provided the inspiration for finding the most propitious of sites - initially for dwellings and burial sites. The appreciation of the landscape as a living entity charged by the energy of qi became the backbone to traditional Form School feng

“The rugged and picturesque topography of the south-western region of China provided the inspiration for finding the most auspicious of sites.”

shui. With trained experience and intuition, practitioners could detect where this positive qi presented itself to determine where best to locate dwellings or burial sites. This perception of the landscape and human being's immediate environment being a living, harmonious organism is an important underlying philosophy that parallels with the long-lived Chinese appreciation of how human bodies function. Like feng shui, acupuncture is an example of how a skilled practitioner in this field can detect where the qi is blocked or hyperactive within a client. In isolating the problem area, a practitioner can restore this imbalance through appropriate treatment. However, the most important tenet that both practices share is the belief that prevention is better than cure. Nourish and invigorate the body appropriately and it will be of great service; similarly by locating buildings in a well protected yet energizing location it will provide optimal benefits for the inhabitants.

Having a culture in which animals played an important symbolic role, the Chinese associated the ideal feng shui model with four celestial animals: left Azure Dragon, right White Tiger, front Vermilion Bird, rear Black Turtle 左青龍、右白虎、前朱雀、後玄武。 The ideal natural feng shui site should have mountain barriers at the northern part of the site called the Black Turtle 玄武 hill, positioned in the way of the prevailing winter wind direction to preserve and maximize the inherent energy of the site. From this hill two branches or arms should extend to embrace the most favorable feng shui location which should be perched on a gentle slope. Standing on the site and facing the semi-enclosed open space, also referred to as the Ming Tang 明塘, the hill on the left side is called Azure Dragon 青龍, while the earth formation on the right is called White Tiger 白虎。 Together they form a U-shaped armchair to enclose the ideal spot for human habitation. In front of the ming tang, there should be a flow of surface water and on the other side of the water, there should be a slightly higher ground referred to as Red Bird or Vermilion Bird 朱雀²⁰。 The Form School is primarily based on the physical configuration of mountains and watercourses surrounding sites and buildings. Its theory was built upon an understanding of the landscape; topographic contours and sources of rivers correspond to the four cardinal directions of the compass. The practice of the Form School is foremost a visual approach; first observing the land formation and terrain, and then determining the location and orientation of buildings or burial sites in relation to the physical surroundings. This method considers mountain ridges, surrounding hills, watercourses, locations and orientations as

Fig. 1.11 The ideal feng shui model.





the most important terrestrial and celestial elements for human habitation. Since the principles of the Form School were applied to the construction of towns and palaces in ancient China, this school was also used as the prevalent foundation of feng shui principles at a macro cosmic level.

COMPASS SCHOOL

As the Form School was further refined the Compass School of feng shui came into fruition. This school is largely based on the mathematics and numerical logic of I-Ching, evolving alongside the advancement of culture and civilization. This approach was developed in the geographically flat plains of China where it was naturally difficult to use the mountainous landscape guidelines that was the influence and inspiration of Form School feng shui. Even though the two schools of feng shui differ, the Compass School incorporates and credits many aspects of the Form School as it was believed and acknowledged that the environmental analysis was the first practical step to take. Being aware of the characteristic and natured flow of qi within specific spaces as well as how it approaches and leaves the vicinity is still a crucial element of consideration for the Compass School. However, it brings in more depth with the integration of the luopan, an instrument that is scientifically accurate. The Compass School was developed based on founding principles of time and space, while the Form School method was more interested in the physiognomy of the landscape and flow of water in the environment. This particular method is based on metaphysical speculations of Chinese astrology; it also analyzes the directional aspects in terms of the relationship between the Five Elements, Eight Trigrams, along with Heavenly and Earthly factors. Remarkably, all of these determining factors are transcribed onto the feng shui compass and the luopan, all to be taken into consideration with the composed elements of time in space. Auspicious directions are derived according to each individual's birth date, and then the information is further refined with the use of the Ba-Gua. The Ba-Gua is an octagonal apparatus imprinted with the eight I-Ching trigrams, which determines favorable orientations for specific endeavors and other elements based on the respective information of the individual. Depending on one's birth date according to the Chinese lunar calendar (which goes by the changes of the moon rather than the sun), life is believed to unfold accordingly under the influence of the characteristics of the sign associated with that particular year. Practitioners who are

“The Compass School was developed based on founding principles of time and space.”



taught in this school of feng shui will determine the facing direction of a building and how its rooms line up on the compass. Then the overall scope of the analysis is zoomed in on each individual room with a similar directional analysis by performing calculations which decide what activations or remedies are needed to harmonize and optimize energy flow within a space. Some people find comfort in knowing that there are other mathematical approaches in variation of compass use, giving feng shui a more factual assurance instead of a consultant's seemingly random suggestions. The drawback in this system arises when a number of people reside in the same space, as then it would require a decision to be made as to which person's favorable direction will be favored. The following are two of the most well-known and accepted sub-systems of the Compass School, and will be used in the design portion of this thesis.

Flying Star 飛星 Feng Shui

The Flying Star (pronounced *fei xing*) system uses the eight trigrams of the I-Ching, and the Lo-Shu magic square to divide a building or space into nine equal sectors. Each trigram is related to a compass direction, an element, a season of the year, various parts of the body, members in the family, a color and specific shapes. This system embraces a wide range of disciplines and a thorough understanding of the theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, as well as incorporating Chinese astrology and numerology. With the use of a Lo-Pan, a directional reading of a building is determined. This reading is taken into consideration along with a person's birth date as well as the construction date of the building. Once a flying star chart is plotted out, the numbers will reveal the energetic conditions of each specific section of the house. This system is based on scientific observations of energetic patterns and recognizes that energy exists in all things and is in a constant state of change according to specific cycles of time.

Eight Mansion 八宅 or East-West School Feng Shui

The Eight Mansion system (pronounced *ba zhai*) revolves around the eight directions of the compass. According to this method, people are categorized into two groups depending on their birth year; people belong to the East or West Group. The name of the group does not represent its respective

**“[BTB] has been
condemned by a large
number of practitioners
trained in the classical
sense.”**



directions; rather, they are names to define the boundaries of the yin and yang transformations of the Tai-Ji. The East Group represents yang while the West Group is considered yin. Similarly, buildings are either in the East or West group and this is determined by its sitting direction, which is the direction of the back of the building. Each of the eight directions is governed by a star, which in turn reveals a person's best and worst directions to either avoid or support the specific type of activities done within a certain space. This enables one to be aware of their compatibility, or lack thereof, with other individuals as well as certain spaces inside buildings.

1.5 NEW-AGE FENG SHUI

THE most popular and widely accepted form of feng shui currently in the west is a new-age system developed by Thomas Lin Yun called Black Sect Tantric Buddhist Feng Shui, otherwise known as Black Hat Sect or BTB. This system of feng shui is a modern hybrid of many different customs, thoughts and practices; from Indian religious rituals and their concept of karma to Tibetan chant rituals and charms as well as Chinese divination, folk cures and ancestor worship. Sarah Rossbach, a pupil of BTB founder Grand Master Lin Yun, explains the origin of the practice:

"[BTB] arose from the long journey of Buddhism from India through Tibet and finally to China. Along the way, it incorporated religious and philosophical theories, rites and disciplines from the countries it passed through...One outcome – Black Hat feng shui – is a practical eclectic version of feng shui, mostly based on intuition and mystical knowledge."²²

Therefore this branch is not based on traditional Chinese feng shui, but rather an amalgamation of many different aspects of different cultures. Hence, this form of feng shui has been condemned by a large number of practitioners trained in the classical sense. Author and traditional feng shui practitioner Cate Bramble refers to this form of feng shui as *McFengshui*. She writes,

"Feng shui 'lite' (which I call McFengshui) is more of a lifestyle issue or a pseudoscience, which replaces scientific uncertainty with views based on political or religious beliefs and seeks to provide answers for everything. McFengshui uses no instrumentation and cannot

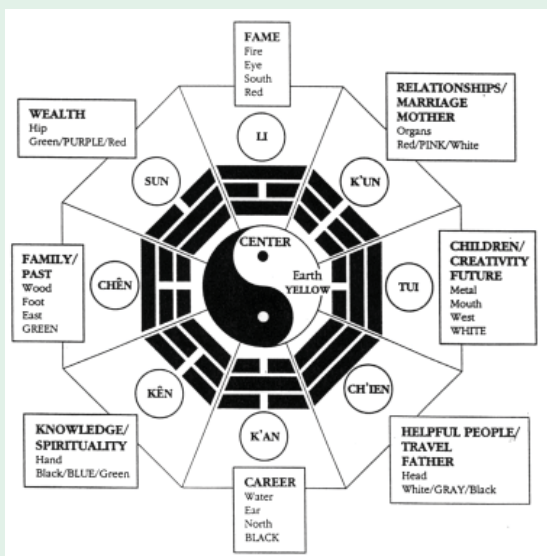


Fig. 1.12 The Black Hat Sect ba-gua.

collect quantitative data. This belief system is forced to rely on its concepts such as 'clutter' and the idea of 'corners' needing 'activation'." ²³

The Black Hat Sect utilizes the Ba-Gua, the eight directions and the centre location to separate a space into their own distinct sectors. These are the 'corners' that Bramble was referring to. In short, the Ba-Gua is super-imposed over the floor plan of a property or space thereby determining where the Eight Aspirations are located. Once these areas are defined, they are assessed to reveal potential imbalances. Subsequently, adjustments or charms are recommended to modify the energy of that particular area. The shapes and colours of interior elements of a space also play a role in BTB, which refers back to the theory of the Five Elements. Due to the simplicity of the Black Hat Sect and the abundance of how-to books on the market, this school is very popular in the West as it is easy to learn and apply and does not require an in-depth understanding of ancient Chinese philosophies.

“Due to the simplicity of the Black Hat Sect and the abundance of its how-to books on the market, this school is very popular in the west.”

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0 | FENG SHUI: THE 2 | CHINESE IDENTITY



■ 2.1 THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF FENG SHUI

THE premise of feng shui has remained the same throughout the span of many centuries. Its principles are universal in nature and are mainly supported through its basis of being harmonious with the natural forces of energy. One of the principal concerns of feng shui is the alignment of buildings within the environment. Feng shui alignment has a strong bearing on the planning a city or the construction of a building within a specific environment. This practice was born from the simple observation of the direct relationship nature had on mankind. For this reason it is no surprise that other cultures embraced similar concepts. Intuition led people to believe that certain locations by virtue of their natural formations contained a special energy. The great pyramids of Egypt followed cardinal points to achieve precise positioning that aligned itself with the heavenly constellations¹; the planning concept of Beijing's Forbidden City followed the ideal feng shui model, embracing the revered southern direction of the heavens and the sun; and the monumental stone circle of Stonehenge were positioned according to astronomical occurrences. There is also evidence from other cultures having a reliance on similar information. The Celtic Raurici tribe also discovered the natural guidance of eternal stars by observing the Basel sky and incorporating its patterns into their city more than two thousand years ago². The state architect of the Swiss city of Basel, Carl Fingerhuth, explains the alignment of the city,

*"The orientation of a Celtic cult site – subsequently the site of a Christian cathedral – and the positioning of the street leading to it, provided another example of Celtic geomantic practice. On solstice days, the effects of this orientation can still be experienced. At sunrise, a shaft of light enters precisely through the front cathedral window. At a perfect right angle to this shaft of light lies a Celtic road, whose surface was uncovered during several excavations. This road leads directly from the cathedral hill to the St.Johann Quarter and onward, far into the Alsace."*³

The square as a metaphor of man's earthly beginnings was then projected onto a city's two-dimensional organization, leading to the archetypal structure for the global city. The Forbidden City in China, as well as the country's farming fields, was organized under the influence of a square grid. The importance of the earthly environment which dictates the life of human beings was celebrated. An annual tradition in which the emperor acted as the "first farmer of spring" was held

to pay respect to the fertile earth. The ritual involved plowing the city's inner square, also known as the sacred square⁴. Similarly, Rome was also planned as a square; its position is on a north-south axis as well. Ancient Romans shared a similar earthly ritual as the Chinese. However, in place of a rolling field a pit was dug to receive sacrificial offerings to mark the sacred centre of a settlement. Furthermore, this created a protective shroud which would protect the city from the wandering evils that may emerge from the surrounding countryside. Such use of astronomy in orientation and alignment is not exclusive to city planning. According to Vincent M. Smith,

*"The Greeks, the Egyptians, the Scandinavians and many other cultures embraced similar concepts. Some specific examples are the Delphi and the Parthenon in Greece, the Taj Mahal in India, and the great pyramids of Egypt. An analysis of the homes and structures of the early Indian tribes in the United States also reveals an observance of the same basic ideas."*⁵

Most cultures have similar insights concerning the nature of certain spaces. The ancient realization that patterns of the universe affected the destinies of human beings eventually led city planning to a symbolic yet practical level. Feng shui's basis in the study of natural phenomena makes its practice universally applicable.

2.2 FENG SHUI: CHINA'S PLACEMAKING IDENTITY

CERTAIN locations, by virtue of their natural land formation, contain a special energy. Different cultures have different beliefs, intuitions or traditions concerning the nature of these unique spaces. Romans erected timeless temples for places of worship; the Chinese built the imperial palace in the most optimal location in Beijing; and the search for a spot as a place for self reflection is very common in Native American tradition⁶. This is especially true to the Chinese as pilgrimages were often taken in search of these special energetic places. Through many years of travel and searching, it was discovered that the power of these sacred places was due to their inherent physical qualities. Even today, there is always an inexplicable pleasure in returning to areas of picturesque natural tranquility and away from the fast-paced city life. This is because human beings have an affinity with nature. Likewise, a suburban home is never complete without the haven of green space. For

Fig. 2.1 The Great pyramids of Egypt.

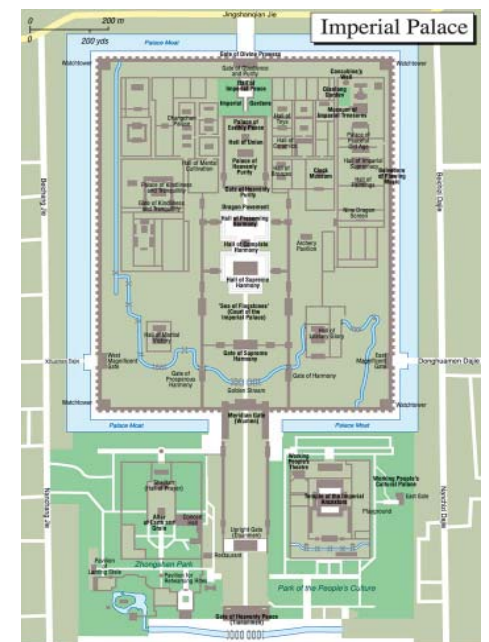


Fig. 2.2 The Forbidden City is designed along a strict North-South axial layout with a strong central axis that is perfectly balanced on both sides.

this reason the value of residential areas increases when parks or natural features are located within close proximity. Often people return from travels with bits and pieces of natural mementoes of rocks and shells which are on special display in homes and offices, as though the power of the place of its origin could be captured and stored in the keepsake. As instinctive creatures, human beings have an innate identification with nature.

The ancient Chinese was aware of this relationship and built cities by following the laws of nature. They utilized feng shui principles which preached a conversion back to basics and harmony, leading to health and prosperity. Its guidelines help with managing the flow of natural earth energies inside a space and in its surrounding environment. Both of these factors have a substantial impact on the human psyche, both consciously and subconsciously. While behavioral scientists do not employ feng shui terminology or methods, their means of analyzing environments in terms of the stimulation they exert concludes the same thing. Whether people are aware of qi or sensory influence, it is in human beings' instinctive nature to seek a comfortable level of stimulation from their settings; one that is neither so low as to induce boredom nor so high as to invite anxiety. Feng shui's understanding of qi allows its principles to create a harmonious environment so that it is both nurturing to the physical body and the emotional sense of the occupant. Qi has the power to cultivate beneficial energy to attract auspicious potential in the spaces that surround people. However, its energy can spiral in a negative direction if not harnessed or used correctly. Like water, if the natural flow of qi is severed or it remains in a stagnant pool for too long, it will negate its positive potential and release harmful qi in that specific area. Although qi is an invisible force, human beings are born with sensory mechanisms that will physically alert the individual if one is attuned to listening to their body. Award-winning journalist and psychology editor at American Health, Winifred Gallagher, reveals this through a scientific perspective,

"The geomantic field of the earth influences the behavior of many living things. [Creatures] sense and react to this mysterious force lurking beneath the thin layer of the biosphere. Migratory animals, including many birds, are particularly responsive; equipped with magnet like organs made up of tiny collections of natural magnetite minerals, they are able to orient themselves and navigate according to the lines of the geomantic field. Although it has not been proven that people sense changes in or are influenced by the

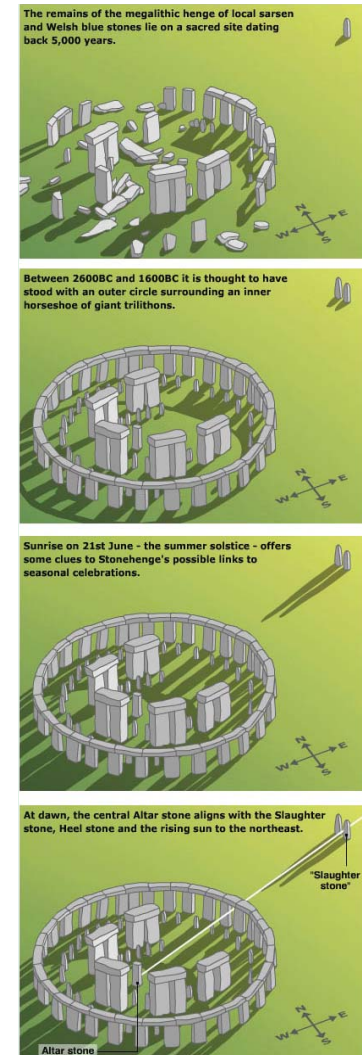


Fig. 2.3 The alignment of the Stonehenge.

"At the very roots of Chinese thinking and feeling there lies the principle of polarity, which is not to be confused with the ideas of opposition or conflict. In the metaphors of other cultures, light is at war with darkness, life with death, good with evil, and the positive with the negative, and thus an idealism to cultivate the former and be ride of the latter flourishes throughout much of the world. To the traditional way of Chinese thinking, this is as incomprehensible as an electric current without positive and negative poles, for polarity is the principle that + and -, north and south, are different aspect of one and the same system, and that the disappearance of either one of them would be the disappearance of the system." 9

- Alan Watts

geomantic field on a regular basis, nor have scientists isolated a human magnetic organ, but the idea of human beings affected by the changes and frequency of the earth's invisible forces is something that makes sense." 7

From the tiny hairs on arms and the back of the neck that stand on ends, to the taste buds on tongues that react to vile tasting substances, it is all part of a system of natural sensors which triggers a response in the brain that notifies an individual instantly when something does not feel right. Dr. Masaru Emoto summarizes the existence of imperceptible energies,

"The entire universe is in a state of vibration, and each thing generates its own frequency, which is unique...science of quantum mechanics generally acknowledges that substance is nothing more than vibration. When we separate something into its smallest parts, we always enter a strange world where all that exists is particles and waves." 8

By using principles of feng shui, negative energies can be eliminated while energies that are positive can be enhanced, or neutralized. Feng shui considers the built environment as a third skin to people, hence a proper fit must be ensured. The place that a person inhabits must have similar qualities in order for a harmonious compatibility to take place. Many unconscious human behavioral patterns that exist in modern society have evolved from the effect of changing stress factors. Negative energies such as irresponsible lifestyles, environmental factors, geopathic energies, or even planetary influences can impact people's daily lives. Feng shui allows people to understand and learn about invisible forces and energies that exist in the universe in a systematic and structured way. In the west there is a similar theory called geomancy. Its philosophies target the effects of geopathic stress fields and its impact on the making of better places for human habitation. Geomancy is similar to a western branch of feng shui, but it concentrates mostly on the effects of stress fields (or the feng shui equivalent of dragons' veins) such as water lines, fault lines and fissures, and their impact on the health of human beings. According to feng shui practitioner Marcia Small located in Oakville, Ontario, dowsing is a method that can be used to isolate the locations of potential stress point. These points are created when bedrocks are exposed to high tectonic stress, forming fault lines, which are also called fissures or stress fields. For example, an underground water source creates a stress field; if a house is built upon this constant

moving energy it will potentially affect the health of people. This is important to note because if these types of geopathic stress fields are present on site, then even the most appropriate feng shui will not be effective.

Many centuries in the making, feng shui has become an undeniable part of the Chinese cultural identity. The ancient practice embodies the history, culture and the specific way of thinking that has led the Chinese to become who they are today. While it is more obscure than it was in ancient China, the principles and impact of feng shui is still very much an important part of Chinese people's lives. Its traditions have lived on and manifested in the modern cemeteries of Hong Kong. Chinese tombs and graves are designed and constructed to embody auspicious feng shui principles to ensure that an abundance of wealth and fortune continues into the afterlife (as Chinese people are deep believers of reincarnation), thereby extending good fortunes to the descendants of the deceased. In the western point of view, these traditional values may be considered superstitious and irrational with no scientific basis, but these thoughts and traditions are undeniably a central part of the Chinese identity. Arguably, as parts of China become increasingly westernized, the strict hold that traditional customs once had on people have diminished. However, the respect for ancient traditions is well integrated into the cultural root of Chinese people; hence it will continue to play an important role in their lives. As an increasing number of Chinese people relocate to the west, they carry their traditions along with them. Like yoga, martial arts, and acupuncture, feng shui came slowly into western society and established a foothold for itself. Eastern ideals have penetrated western society just as the west has penetrated eastern culture. A cross-cultural exchange is necessary to help people understand the importance and intelligence of each other's culture and beliefs. Likewise, feng shui has developed into a more comprehensive system that continues to incorporate the traditional culture and values of the Chinese heritage; it is a small but crucial piece of the Chinese culture that survived. However, the practice needs to be adjusted accordingly to be able to participate within the constraints and parameters of today's society. Its principles need to be renewed according to the demands of existing needs. Its ability to respond to core space-making issues in the current moment makes it a highly flexible and adaptive practice. Roman Malek writes,

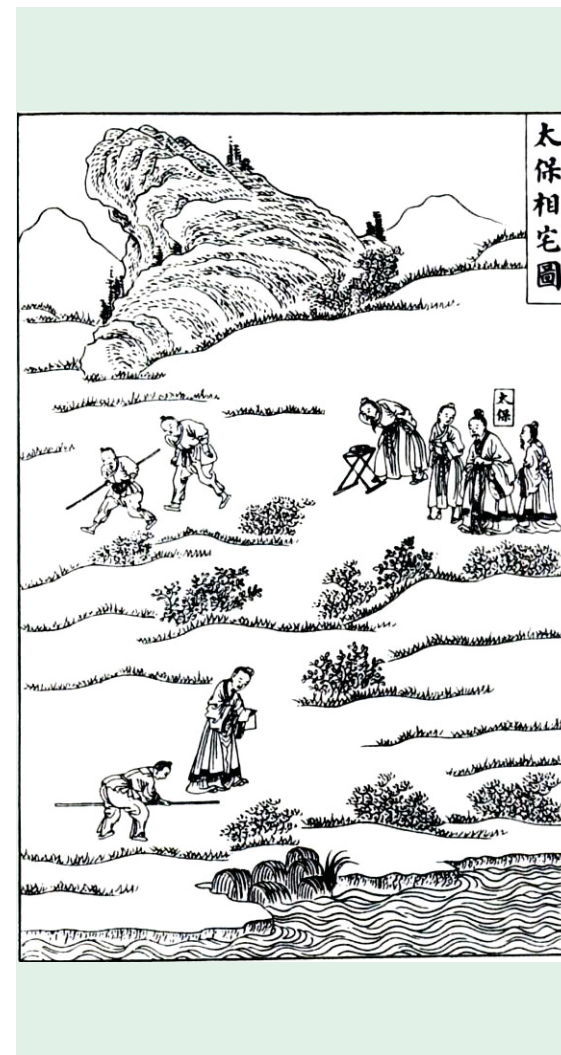


Fig. 2.4 A representation of geomancers consulting his magnetic compass for the site selection of a city.

*"[We must] make a great effort to relate to this traditional Chinese sense of the world. We are so used to seeing the physical world as something 'outside of us,' as a general hostile environment, or as purely material matter (to be exploited), that we can barely grasp the Chinese sense of unity with the universe. Man is part of this unity, only a part, but a true part. Chinese man traditionally sees himself as a being who, although just one manifestation among many in the world, must face others with respect and without any desire to rule over them ... Following nature, allowing oneself to be influenced by it, guiding it at most ... cultivating it and giving it ritual order – this is the ideal Chinese attitude born out of this view of the world. One can only understand it as a transfer of universal norms onto the human and societal dimension."*¹⁰

The sensibility of the primitive understanding of the powerful dialogue a place has with those in its vicinity makes this early philosophy timeless. Feng shui was a major component of Chinese placemaking centuries ago and is still relevant and respected to this day. To the traditional Chinese, this is a transportable part of their culture that can be applied and adapted to many different situations. Feng shui philosophies reveal that the essence of a place is made unique not in its decoration, but more importantly, in the original natural conditions of the environment. Its practice effectively captures the essence of a place by knowing to avoid certain undesirable elements and how to integrate the natural landscape to play an important role in the design process.

"Many centuries in the making, feng shui has become an undeniable part of the Chinese cultural identity."

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1. Carl Fingerhuth. *Learning from China: the Tao of the City*. Germany: Birkhauser - Publishers for Architecture, 2004, page 182.
 2. *Ibid.*, page 180.
 3. *Ibid.*, page 181.
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 8. Emoto, *Op. cit.*, page 39.
 9. Alan Watts. *Tao: The Watercourse Way*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, page 19-20.
 10. Fingerhuth, *Op. cit.*, page 176.

"Men at some time are masters of their fates."

- William Shakespeare

**PART 2:
EASTERN/WESTERN
DICHOTOMIES**



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03 | EASTERN/WESTERN
DICHOTOMIES

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■ 3.1 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

WESTERN culture has always been aware of the integral relationship between figure and ground. However, their emphasis lies more on the figure than on the ground. This is evident in the manifestation of buildings reaching skyward and sculptural museums creating landmarks in Western cities. On the other hand, while the east also recognizes the imperative tension between figure and ground, they developed a system that understands the importance of embracing everything as interdependent elements. The eastern philosophy of Tao is “the way” which unifies everything in life, illustrating the need for nature and human beings to bring all opposing forces into a fluctuating harmony. A similar Western idea is the Big Bang theory. During that event, everything was created in opposites, symmetry and perfect balance: light and dark, hot and cold, heaven and earth. It is under this constant push-pull relationship that the universe achieves harmony and sets itself to run its natural course - by following the Tao. Within the Western dichotomy of good and evil, there is often preference or moral superiority given to one side. In Chinese philosophy, it is about achieving a balance between two polarities; yin exists and is born from yang, and yang resides and is born from yin. It is through understanding the patterns of Tao that one can begin to grasp the fundamentals of feng shui and seek the balance and equilibrium to achieve harmony with the environment. Author and feng shui scholar, Sarah Rossbach summarizes the fundamental understandings of feng shui below:

“It interprets the language articulated by natural forms and phenomena, by man-made buildings and symbols, and by continual workings of the universe, including moon phases and star alignments. Feng shui is the key to understanding the silent dialogue between man and nature, whispered through a cosmic breath of spirit – qi. The Chinese term qi is a life force or energy that ripples water, creates mountains, breathes life into plants, trees and humans, and propels man along a life course. If qi is misguided; man’s life and luck might falter. Man feels and is affected by qi, though he may not know it.”¹

In 1929, psychoanalyst Carl Jung also addressed the subject and penned a foreword for Richard Wilhelm’s translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower: a Chinese Book of Life*,

“Western consciousness is by no means consciousness in general, but rather a historically conditioned, and geographically limited factor, representative of only one part of humanity. The widening of our consciousness ought not to be processed at the expense of other kinds of consciousness, but ought to take place through the development of those elements of our psyche...The invasion of the East was a deed of violence on a great scale, and it has left us the duty to understand the mind of the East. This is perhaps more necessary than we realize at present.”²

People in the west are completely foreign to the Chinese view of a unified world. The western worldview conditioned a very different understanding of human being’s relationship with the universe by unknowingly setting up invisible boundaries between people and the environment. While technological advances increased the efficiency of many things, it also simultaneously removed the connection people once had with the immediate environment they lived in. Under the influence of advancing technology and globalization, it soon became easy to detach oneself from the environment; subsequently, the respect for earth also diminished. In a response to this segregation, the interest in feng shui and its holistic principles has also increased in recent years.

To the western consciousness, the physical world is often thought to be purely material and the rational process of city planning and building construction further solidifies this logical way of thinking. The east interprets the material world as a field of invisible energy with the power to influence people’s well being. The Chinese regarded the intangible side of nature as a way of life. Instead of working against it, they developed a code of assessment to govern human being’s relationship to the environment without damaging its natural flow. For example, in western tradition, a forest may be perceived as a wild place, full of strange and menacing forces³; whereas to the Chinese, the same grove of trees can substitute for the protective function of auspicious landforms in feng shui practice⁴. Another fundamental difference between the east and the west is the attitude towards the makeup of the natural world. Aristotle believed that the world was made up of four distinct elements: earth, air, fire and water⁶. While the east also embraced the idea of basic elements, they observed that everything is in a constant state of transformation, and the primary elements which make up the world are also fleeting conditions in a constant state of flux.

“Man’s place in nature’s enormous expanse and eternal change seems insignificant, ‘a drop of water in a flowing stream.’ Yet, he is also an integral part of the universe, swept along and controlled by its flow. This was expressed in the traditional landscape painting of monolithic mountains looming over streams and crossed by tiny human figures. It was at once a transcendental solace and a humbling thought to know you were part of a huge eternal structure.”⁵

- Sarah Rossbach

The Chinese believed the world consisted of energies from five different elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. Unlike Aristotle's idea of the elements, these five elements are not the actual objects, rather they are thought of as a representation of the elements' inherent energies. Fire transforms wood into earth then produces metal, which in turn generates water, which nourishes wood. This way of thinking between the different cultures is an important element in understanding how an eastern practice such as feng shui can make its way into western society. There needs to be a cross-cultural appreciation of the different world views. As a Westerner who appreciated the ancient Chinese thinking and way of life, Carl Jung, wrote,

*"The ancient Chinese mind contemplates the cosmos in a way comparable to that of the modern physicist, who cannot deny that his model of the world is a decidedly psychophysical structure."*⁷

Feng shui requires a completely different mindset when approaching elements that influence the design of a space. One's immediate environment has intimate effects on the physical and psychological well being of a person. The western study of environmental psychology is evidence of this. Feng shui projects a holistic perspective onto the larger equation of finding a natural harmony within the world. While the western way of thinking is processed in a linear fashion – to get from point A to point B in the most efficient way; eastern thinking is cyclical, similar to a wheel in motion. Each way of thinking has its advantages as well as disadvantages. That is why it is important for the two contrasting cultures to come together in harmony to further enhance each other's benefits. The ancient Chinese were attuned to the pulsations of the earth, doing what was necessary in order to survive and live harmoniously with the disposition of the universe. In doing so, the creation of feng shui inadvertently became a natural extension of a sustainable philosophy towards the way of life. Its principles provided time-honored techniques of environmental protection. This branch of eastern wisdom can be understood as an attempt to re-establish a dialogue between humanity's innate relationship with the long-estranged and much-abused earth. In this regard, the west has only just begun a long journey into a spiritual and mental detour from the rationalistic culture of modernity.

"There needs to be a cross-cultural appreciation of the different world views."

■ 3.2 THE REVIVAL OF TRADITION

DESPITE an official ban on the practice of feng shui in secular China, it has always remained prevalent in private practice. As China opened up to the world and globalization the new government soon embraced the western ideal for change. Determined to turn over a new leaf, this meant that old ideas, customs and traditions were to be abandoned. However, the idea of feng shui was so deeply rooted in the Chinese psyche that it was able to experience a renaissance in modern times. The return to traditional values and ideas are not without a rational explanation. As the growth of modern China continues to accelerate, there is a common worry that this rush could leave people with a spiritual void in their lives. During this vulnerable time, people are more prone to latch onto an idea of hope. Feng shui has guided the formation of dynasties for thousands of years, leading people to have great faith in its effectiveness.

This time feng shui has come back with a vengeance. Not only has it migrated to the west, it resurfaced in the east and into the education system. The prevalence of feng shui in Hong Kong is unrivalled, so it is not surprising that its universities would see the potential value of feng shui in their curriculums. Hong Kong's City University is the first in the world to include a feng shui module in its Master of Building and Engineering degree⁸. The Chinese University of Hong Kong also introduced a course related to the principles of feng shui called *Pursuit of Ideal Living Environment* in its Department of Geography & Resource Management. Likewise, for the first time in history, the Zhongnan branch of the Wuhan University of Science and Technology recently added an elective course called *Architecture and Feng Shui*. The instructor for the course, Mr. Ma Wei, emphasized that the objective of the course is to help students understand traditional Chinese culture from a scientific perspective and how it can be applied to contemporary architecture and building practice. According to Ma,

*"Though many think feng shui is unscientific, many others would more or less take it into consideration when building or renovating a house. If architecture majors gain more insight into the concepts of feng shui, it would be of benefit to their work in society."*⁹

"Hong Kong's City University is the first in the world to include a feng shui module in its Master of Building and Engineering degree."

Other than educating students on the importance and relevance of feng shui to the built environment, large conferences are being held every year, attracting feng shui professionals, professors and students alike. The coming February in 2009 marks the 4th annual International Conference on Scientific Feng Shui & Built Environment of which the Department of Building & Construction at the City University of Hong Kong acts as a co-organizer. Topics and issues that are discussed at the conference are¹⁰:

1. Philosophy of Feng Shui design
2. Theories and practice of Feng Shui design
3. Feng Shui design and architectural theories
4. Feng Shui and town planning & urban design
5. Feng Shui and building design
6. Feng Shui and interior design
7. Feng Shui and ecological sustainable design
8. Feng Shui and green design

As the contemporary east begins to break out of its shell to re-embrace its own ancient philosophy, the west is also going through a state of transformation. Western culture was never conditioned to view the world as an energetic place that held the key to a human being's mental and physical health. However, as the current global energy crisis continues to escalate, this way of respecting people's living environment clearly makes sense. Now, when western minds think of energy in the material world, they will think of the embodied energy within actual materials. Embodied energy refers to the energy required to manufacture and supply - to the point of use - a product, material or service. Western companies that are aware of its energetic consumption may also offer programs where offsetting energy used for their product or service can be funded. This is a revolutionary way of thinking of the world as an energetic place. When people grasp the theory of embodied energy, then it will not be difficult to understand that this energy exists in all things, including the earth itself. While this concept is not identical to the theory of qi in feng shui, it is nevertheless a start in the right direction.

“However, as the current global energy crisis continues to escalate, this way of respecting people’s living environment clearly makes sense.”

“...energy exists in all things, including the earth itself.”

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 2. Richard Wilhelm. *Secret of the Golden Flower : A Chinese Book of Life*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962, page 136-137.
 3. Christian Norberg-Schultz. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York, USA: Rizzoli Intl. Pubns., 1980, page 27.
 4. Feuchtwang, *Op. cit.*, page 127.
 5. Rossback, *Op. cit.*, page 16.
 6. Aristotle (Author) and Renford Bambrough (Contributor). *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Trans. Creed, J.L. and Warden, A.E. New York, USA: Mentor, 1963, page 46.
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4.0 | SUPERSTITIONS + MYTHS
OF FENG SHUI

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■ 4.1 MISCONCEPTIONS OF FENG SHUI

THE goal of feng shui is to achieve harmony and balance within the seemingly chaotic workings of the universe. However, even in harmony there are times of discord. For feng shui, that discord comes in the form of misconceptions and myths, which in turn weakens its authenticity and validity. To begin, it is contrary to popular belief that feng shui is a form of religion or superstition. It is a form of natural science that resulted from a combination of principles and theories. Its goal is to provide an assessable way for human beings to decode nature's hidden language in order to live in harmony with it. Another general misconception is that feng shui is exclusive to interior decorating. The traditional practice of feng shui encompasses a flexibility that allows it to be applied to a wide range of situations. On a macro cosmic scale, feng shui principles can be integrated with the urban planning of neighborhoods and cities to harmonize with the patterns of the earth's energies. Similarly, projects on a smaller scale can also benefit from properly utilized principles by matching occupants to a house or the positioning of furniture. Other misguided myths have to do with feng shui's relationship with symbolism. It is common for the number 4 to be claimed unlucky, while a red door or a three-legged toad is sure to bring luck and prosperity. The notion that one should keep the toilet lid closed when not in use to avoid wealth from being flushed away has been perpetually mistaken as a legitimate feng shui principle. In reality, a number's influence has more to do with the cosmological effects of time and space. Likewise, the colour of an object has the same connection to the five Chinese elements as how on a scientific basis colours have significant influences on people's emotions.

The development of new branches or schools of feng shui that surfaced over the years are adding to the confusion. These types of pseudo-feng shui are much easier to understand by the general public, and therefore more appealing to them. Without the use of a compass or even a real understanding of feng shui fundamentals, all one needs to know is which corner represents what areas of one's life. If an individual is looking for an increase in wealth, perhaps a feng shui how-to book will advise placing a statue of a three-legged toad in the wealth corner of the house. In an article titled *"Beyond Feng Shui"* author Joe Queenan discussed the latest craze to hit Southern California: feng che 風車. The direct translation of the two words literally means wind and vehicle, but together it is the term of a recent *"science of making sure that the traveler is in complete harmony with the physical space"*

he is moving through."¹ A feng che master would go about a living or work space as a feng shui practitioner would, ascertaining the quantity and quality of qi, but using a different diagnostic device called the denkon guagua. It is "an octagonal template on which are printed symbols for each of the eight areas that define human existence (money, sex, fame, power, contacts, fitness, enemies and revenge.)"² By superimposing this device over a scaled diagram of the client's automobile, it would reveal what type of feng che objects (globes, fish, mirrors, figurines...etc.) are required in specific areas of the car in order to maximize beneficial qi. A feng che master may also include the service of devising a route for clients which will bring them from their homes to their workplaces all the while increasing the flow of positive qi into their vehicles and lives. These notions have no basis in feng shui's traditional practices and are similar to an occult ideology in deceptive packaging.

While feng shui practitioners are able to assess outcomes based on the influence of qi upon a particular setting, there is an extent to the effects and ability of feng shui. Contrary to what people like to believe, feng shui is not a cure-all. As the Chinese say: "First Destiny, Second Luck, Third Feng Shui — 命，二運，三風水," it should be noted that feng shui is mentioned last. The Chinese believed that each person is born with a pre-determined capacity in life, which is destiny in Chinese Metaphysics. Joey Yap, a renowned Malaysian feng shui master and teacher, explains the difference between what is pre-determined in the course of a person's life and what can be improved with feng shui,

*"Every person is born with a certain capacity in life, a life path. This capacity governs his or her potential, outcomes and achievements in life. When an individual's capacity is properly analyzed and understood, then it is possible to assist him or her appropriately."*³

It is a common misconception, and shallow definition, that feng shui is merely an art of the placement of objects or cures. On the contrary, feng shui is a discipline that preaches fundamental thoughts and ethics. It strives to teach practical skills of harnessing the powers of the landscape, time and space to benefit an individual's endeavors. If a person's capacity is extensive, then feng shui principles can be incorporated into this person's life to yield greater effects, enhancing his or her ability to fulfill his or her potential, or to avoid perils and downfalls in life; likewise, if an individual has limited capacity, then there is only so much that feng shui can change for this particular person.

*"In spite of the sharp divergence between the positions of Freud and Jung in this sphere, they do have several things in common. Both agree that superstitious beliefs and practices are deeply rooted in man's unconscious mental processes; both held that superstition is not a thing of the past, or confined to the less educated – in fact it is regarded as part and parcel of everybody's mental make-up, liable to come to the surface under certain circumstances."*⁴

- Gustav Jahoda

Under the rational influences of modern society, the complexities and unpredictability of the universe have now been reduced to mathematical equations and scientific breakthroughs. Feng shui re-introduces the aspect of reconnecting with human nature's inner creative roots, where one can search within themselves and in the surrounding natural setting for inspiration and guidance. Andrew Levitt, a Jungian-oriented psychotherapist and architecture professor at the University of Waterloo explains,

"Where we once lived in a symbiotic or harmonious relationship to our natural environment, today we live in a thoroughly built world in which we are rapidly losing the opportunity to gain the deeper self-knowledge that comes from observing the arising and passing away of natural things." ⁵

Another element of feng shui that often leads to confusion is the integration of symbols in its practice. Symbols are utilized to reach to a wide range of audience; the human psyche speaks in images and communicates to the conscious mind through the language of symbols. Myths and superstitions create a bridge for the individual to have a sense of belonging to a less tangible world. During a time when geography dictated human settlement, there was a natural demand for a humble respect for the environment. Mythology as a popular transfer of knowledge was used as a mediating device to connect a person to a place. The instinctive desire for a sense of belonging to the environment will always be a relevant part of the psychology and social behavior of human beings. The primal imagery, rich in storytelling and narrative through the passing along of myths, once held tremendous significance and tradition. The primitive mentality does not invent myth and superstition; on the contrary, these terms merely describe the authentic and personal experience of the human psyche's original revelations before even human beings were conscious of its existence.

The practice of feng shui is gradually gaining recognition and acceptance in the west due to a growing consciousness of environmental harmony, as well as a large number of Chinese immigrating to foreign countries. However, this recent resurgence of feng shui has also generated misconceptions and misuse by those with rudimentary knowledge. In truth, an accomplished feng shui master

Fig. 3.1 The Dragon Tortoise enhances career and longevity luck. When positioned behind you, it can supposedly provide a solid support, replacing the necessary Black Tortoise formation.



Fig. 3.2 Eight Immortals of a Dragon Boat boasts that each one guard one of the eight directions, ensuring all round good feng shui.

Fig. 3.3 Can this representation of a three-legged load really bring prosperity?



**"...rational science
need not always be at
opposition with the
occult."**

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acquires expertise through years of study, apprenticeship and practice. With no real regulation or accreditation program, it became increasingly easy to misinterpret principles and distort theories by integrating foreign elements to feng shui. To those who are unfamiliar with the true nature of the practice, the most visible aspects of feng shui are the use of remedies. The casual use of mirrors, wind chimes and flutes can easily subject feng shui to misinterpretations. Whether feng shui is perceived as superstitious or not, its goal of operating within a natural order and bringing an alternate sensitivity to design is commendable. There are many factors that contribute to the overall situation and circumstances that one may find themselves in. One must understand the correct utilization of energy and its influences in order to take control of one's own destiny. There is a story of Niels Bohr, the Noble Prize winning physicist, who kept an old horseshoe nailed securely on the wall of his office with the open end facing upward in the approved manner, as it was believed to catch good luck and prevent it from spilling out. A secular visitor challenged him by asking whether he really believed a horseshoe above his door brought him luck. Bohr replied, "*Of course not ... but I am told it works even if you don't believe in it.*"⁶; this is a pleasant reminder that rational science need not always be at opposition with the occult.

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1. Joe Queenan. *Beyond Feng Shui*. February 2000 issue of Movieline. www.csicop.org/sb/2002-12/fengshui.html
 2. *Ibid.*
 3. Joey Yap. *BAZI the Destiny Code*. 1st ed., Kuala Lumpur: JY Books Sdn. Bhd., 2006, page 3.
 4. Gustav Jahoda. *The Psychology of Superstition*. Great Britain: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969, page 69.
 5. Andrew Levitt. *The Inner Studio*. Canada: Riverside Architectural Press, 2007, page 3.
 6. Abraham Pais. *Inward Bound: Of Matter and Forces in the Physical World*. USA: Oxford University Press, 1988, page 210.



■ 5.0 PRECEDENTS

PRECEDENTS of how feng shui is incorporated into architectural designs and its effect on the overall process will be analyzed through a range of buildings in the following section. To begin, the Forbidden City of ancient China will be examined to understand the pivotal role feng shui played in its design; its principles determined the overall space planning down to the smallest details on roofs and doors. To analyze a more contemporary example, modern cemeteries in Hong Kong will be studied; it is an excellent example of how Chinese people continue to embrace the timeless principles of feng shui. Hong Kong, a city where the practice of feng shui thrives, is full of examples of how its principles influenced architecture. The HSBC headquarters and the Bank of China in Hong Kong are examples of good and bad feng shui respectively. Both skyscrapers showcase western architectural designs in contemporary China. The main difference between the two projects is that the prior case was designed explicitly around feng shui principles, while the latter underestimated feng shui's importance and was designed without it. To explore a western example of feng shui and architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater served as the final case study. It is a building that exemplifies how a western architect with no feng shui training was able to design a building that was aligned with nature in many ways. Many of its elements satisfied feng shui principles because it was designed as a response to the site and aligned to the flow of the natural setting. This series of case studies is meant to display the integration of feng shui with architecture from a variety of parameters: from ancient to modern times; from what is considered good feng shui to bad feng shui; and from east to west.

■ 5.1 FORBIDDEN CITY, BEIJING, CHINA

CITY OF FENG SHUI

FENG SHUI has long been utilized by Chinese emperors to create an environment favorable to power. Emperors were considered Sons of Heaven, the recipient of the divine mandate¹; hence his every decision would directly affect those under his reign. Magnificent palaces and buildings were constructed to showcase the wealth and power of the ruler. These buildings were surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens, complete with water and hills, a contrasting interplay of yin and yang, void and solidity. These elements were placed in such a manner that yin and yang would be in harmony, continuity, and balance. The most famous of all Chinese palaces, the Forbidden

City of Beijing, was laid out by strictly following the principles of feng shui. This is an example of feng shui used by the Chinese in antiquity when its practice was most prevalent. The palace complex was planned along a north-south axis, as it was believed that the balance of yin (north) and yang (south) would bring universal harmony to the land. The Forbidden City is also known as Zijingcheng 紫禁城, the Purple Forbidden City. The zi 紫 represents the colour purple, which is associated with the Pole star. Hence the name of the palace is a symbol of the emperor's pivotal role between heaven and earth.

The Forbidden City was designed according to a classic feng shui model. The Golden River is the water element that flows just south of the city, while low hills lie on the east and west sides of the site. While the original topography of Beijing did not naturally have a tall mountain to the north of the palace, it was considered necessary to achieve feng shui harmony by creating an artificial mountain. The earth excavated from the moat surrounding the palace was used to make the Coal Hill in hopes to ward off the blistering northern wind and to deflect any other malignant forces². The yin element of the Coal Hill's northern position is balanced by the yang of the Golden River in the south. Similarly, the river also represents the yin indent in the earth, while the hill is the yang protruding form of a mountain. Whenever possible, all the important buildings of the city were built to face south, minimizing on north facing doors or windows. The rectilinear planning of the Forbidden City with its north-south axes was also applied to the internal planning of houses. Important rooms were lined up on the north side so that it would face a central courtyard to the south. Buildings of secondary status were located on the east and west sides. In fact, the only pavilions facing north were reserved for the emperor's rejected concubines. As a result, the main entrance of the imperial palace was located south, allowing for maximum natural sun penetration to fill the complex with yang energy. This also meant that the emperor - Son of Heaven, the shining force on earth - would be facing south, while subjects must bow to the north.

The colours of the Forbidden City was derived from the Five Elements: metal, wood, fire, water, and earth. Red, being the colour of dignity and celebration also represented the southern direction; hence it was the primary colour for the walls of the Forbidden City. The fiery red walls were contrasted by yellow roof tiles. Golden yellow is the official imperial colour chosen to pay homage to the earth; hence the emperor's robes were also made in this traditional imperial yellow. The only roof that was exempted

Fig. 5.1.1 The Coal Hill at the rear.



"It is said that Heaven is round and the Earth is square. Is that true? The square is dark and the round is bright. When yin and yang are in the places that are fitting to them, tranquility and peace reign...Heaven provided the spiritual concept, man brings order and organization to things."³

– Ancient Chinese manuscripts



Fig. 5.1.2 View of a watch tower from across the moat.

from the this colour was the imperial library. Black, being the colour of the north and water – a physical protection against fire – became the colour of the library roof tiles as the preservation of the building and its contents overrode everything else⁴. From the dark stones used to pave the courtyards to the white marble of the terraces, colours were symbolic and contrasted against each other, aesthetically and energetically. The eternal blue sky serves as the backdrop of this majestic setting; spaces are dotted with flowing green willows. The brilliant contrasts of colours are reflected in the ponds in the gardens as well as the protective moat which wraps around its perimeter.

CITY OF SYMBOLS

THE ancient Chinese used the square to represent the earth and a circle to represent the heavens. According to Cate Bramble, before the invention of the magnetic compass the Chinese used astronomy to determine a north-south axis. Early Chinese scholars measured along the celestial equator, which traced out to a circle. This circle crosses the celestial equator at points in the northeast and southwest, indicating the equinoxes. The two points in the southeast and northwest mark the solstices. The two equinoxes and solstices represent the four palaces; by connecting the points they form a perfect square (Fig. 5.1.3). Hence the square is considered as the “flat earth” bounded by the four seasons. The four corners become the anchors of the square within the celestial circle, hence: “Heaven-round, earth-square 天圓地方.”⁵ In simple terms, the ancient Chinese considered the square as the order and knowledge of man, and the circle as chaos and reality of nature. Together, the two shapes are intertwined and locked together in an endless geometric interplay, alluding to the relationship between heaven, earth and human.

The design and planning of the palace was created upon many symbols. As the Son of Heaven, the emperor acknowledged the mandate to maintain harmony between his people and the natural world. The Forbidden City was designed to reflect the chaos of nature and the control of man, with sprawling landscaped gardens within a controlled symmetry of courtyards and buildings. Through the palace, the emperor can connect his city to the divine forces of the universe. Likewise, the emperor’s throne is located in the Hall of Supreme Harmony 太和殿, which is considered to be aligned at the centre of the grid and central to every building in the palace complex. To its left, the sun rises on the east – a commonly revered direction – and therefore reserved for the altar of ancestors, while the altar of the earth is situated on the right where the sun sets on the west side of the palace. Guests and people of importance were received in the foreground, while the more bustle of everyday life like markets and kitchens were located in the background⁶.

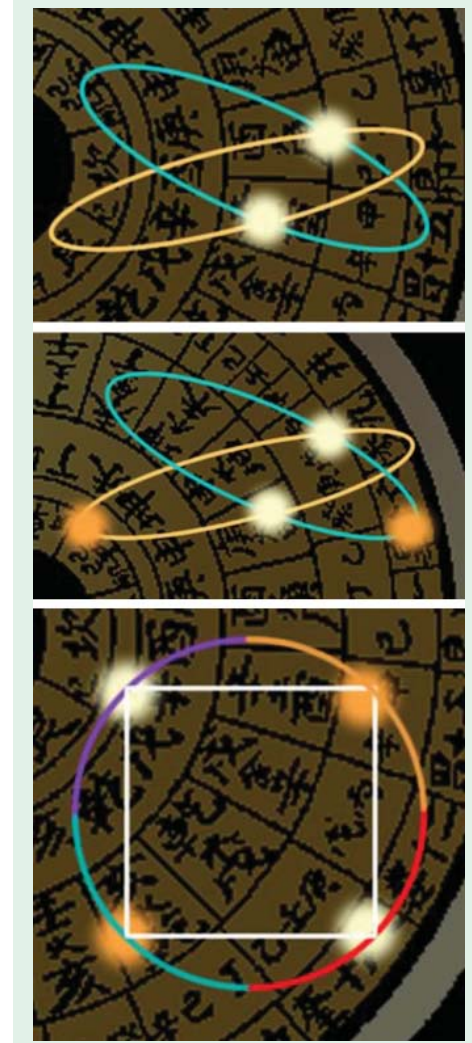


Fig. 5.1.3 Illustrated representation of Heaven-round Earth-square.

Fig. 5.1.4 Fiery red columns have the symbolic meaning of joy.



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Fig. 5.1.5 Roof of the Hall of Supreme Harmony.

Fig. 5.1.6 A typical door in the Forbidden City with nine rows of bolts.

The ancient Chinese also found importance in numbers. Of all the numbers, nine 九 was the most special because it holds the highest value. This is also because nine in Chinese is a homonym for the word 'long' or 'lengthy', therefore it is believed that the emperor should be surrounded by the number nine on as many levels as possible. For example, the number of statuettes on the roofs reveal the power of the person residing within. Roofs that have nine statuettes are reserved for the emperor only. The Hall of Supreme Harmony is the throne hall, hence it is the only building in the whole palace worthy of ten statuettes, a number symbolizing the heaven, indicating the holiest of buildings⁷. Furthermore, the whole palace complex of the Forbidden City is reputed to have a total of 9,999 rooms⁸ and doors were often decorated with nine rows of nine bolts. Of course, this specific number of rooms can be no more or no less because it stands for the rationale to promote the emperor's indisputable role on earth, while still paying homage to the revered number 10,000, which would conflict with a number that symbolized Heaven.

It is clear that every effort was made to ensure the planning of the layout and spaces of the palace would comply with the rules of feng shui. Every decision was made in the hopes to benefit the prosperity of the city and the wellbeing of the emperor. Apart from practical functions and aesthetic consideration, almost every part of the palace was carefully designed to carry a certain message to differentiate between class and rank. Details and colours from roofs, doors, down to windows were meticulously designed to cater to feng shui principles. Its design and history tells a compelling story while aesthetically it displays an incredible sense of grandeur and power. It is a design that is balanced elegantly and harmoniously between buildings and open space, colours and light.

1. Anthony White. *The forbidden city: A short history and guide*. England: Scala Publishers Ltd., 2002, page 2.
2. Evelyn Lip. *What is feng shui?* London; Lanham, MD: Academy Editions; Distributed by National Book Network, Inc., 1997, page 72.
3. Carl Fingerhuth. *Learning from China: the Tao of the City*. Birkhauser – publishers for Architecture, Germany, 2002, page 184.
4. White, Op. cit., page 39.
5. Cate Bramble. 2006. <http://qi-whiz.com/node/1094>
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7. *The Beijing Guide*, 2008, http://www.beijingguide2008.com/forbidden_city/fcc.html
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■ 5.2 CEMETERIES, HONG KONG, CHINA

YIN FENG SHUI

THE hillside cemeteries in Hong Kong are examples of traditional feng shui in contemporary China. The feng shui of burial sites is intimately tied to landforms. Traditional Chinese tombs and graves were designed and constructed to embody auspicious feng shui principles to ensure that the abundance of wealth and fortune continued into the afterlife. This was done in hopes of extending good fate to the descendants of the deceased. The word feng shui first appeared during the Jin Dynasty 晉朝 (265-420 AD). Guo Pu 郭璞, a noted natural historian and writer¹, wrote in his book *The Book of Burial*,

“The dead should take advantage of the Sheng Qi [good qi], the wind will disperse the qi and the water will contain it. The ancients said that one should try to gather the qi so that it will not disperse. The aim is to keep it flowing but contained. Hence it is called Feng Shui.”²

In ancient times people had more freedom to choose where to bury the dead; therefore there was a high degree of sophistication that was developed into burial sites. However, over time cemeteries evolved under strict hygiene and regulation procedures, thereby restricting certain land use.

The history of the crescent shaped grave can be traced to the years of the Northern Song Dynasty 北宋朝 (960-1127 AD)³. The traditional Chinese grave resembles an armchair with a higher turf protecting the three sides. The grave stone is surrounded by earth on the back as well as the left and right sides, leaving the front open to a view of the field or, most preferable, to a view of water. The classic crescent-shaped stone or cement wall that encircles the head of the deceased are usually constructed toward the north; whereas the deceased would face preferably south or east⁴, directions which represent heaven and the sun respectively⁵. The wall of the tomb around the head is circular, symbolizing the influence of the sky or of the spiritual world. The foot of the tomb is square to represent the earth below⁶. In a traditional crescent-shaped grave, the left arm, when facing the panorama in front, should be a long ridge, containing the form of the Azure Dragon, while the shorter ridge of the right arm would represent the White Tiger of the classical

Fig. 5.2.1 Traditional hill-side graves in the armchair formation.



Fig. 5.2.2 Contemporary armchair-shaped graves in Cheung Chau, HK.

Fig. 5.2.3 All the graves are planned to face the most favorable direction with the most open and unobstructed view of water.



“The burial site for the dead is considered to be just as, if not more, important than that of the residence of the living.”

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feng shui model. The situating of urns and graves is of utmost importance and family members will go to great lengths and costs to ensure that the feng shui of the burial site is favorable. Their wish is to ensure the benevolent influence of the site will protect the deceased, so that they in turn will look kindly upon their descendants. The optimal site should be higher up with a commanding view of water and perched on the upper banks of a hill. Unsurprisingly, disturbance of the ground is regarded with strong disapproval⁷. For this reason, the popularity of cremation increased over the last couple of decades, directly affecting the prices of columbarium niches that store the ashes of the deceased. Naturally, niches in favorable areas would come with a higher price. For example, my grandfather’s place at the columbarium is now situated inside a respected local Buddhist temple. The location of his niche was chosen for its unobstructed view of the central aisle where monks gather regularly to perform chants and mantras. Due to this desirable location, my family had to pay the total sum in advance to secure this resting spot for my grandfather. For the Chinese, the burial site for the dead is considered to be just as, if not more, important than that of the residence of the living. In Hong Kong, a favorable spot in a cemetery located within desirable feng shui geography can easily cost upwards of \$80,000 HK dollars⁸. Another reason behind the hefty prices is that private cemeteries will not be disrupted; therefore good feng shui will endure. Unfortunately, public cemeteries let corpses reside for only seven years. After that, remains are dug up which is extremely undesirable on many levels.

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1. Stephen Skinner, K.I.S.S Guide to Feng Shui. Keep it simple series, 1st American Ed. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2001, page 65.
 2. Guo Pu. The Book of Burial (translated by Stephen L. Field), 2003, chapter II.
 3. C.S. Chow and E.K. Teather, Chinese Graves and Gravemarkers in Hong Kong, 2000. <http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz/chinesevoice/ChinConf/S4.html#4.1%20Chinese%20Graves%20and%20Gravemakers%20in%20Hong%20Kong>
 4. Skinner, Op. cit., page 63.
 5. Ibid., page 122.
 6. Ibid., page 63.
 7. Chow and Teather, Op. cit.
 8. Time Magazine. 97 Reasons to Love Hong Kong. <http://www.time.com/time/hongkong/special/best.html>

■ 5.3 HSBC HEADQUARTERS, HONG KONG, CHINA

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND FENG SHUI

RARELY is there a skyscraper that is built in Hong Kong without consulting a feng shui expert, as even skeptical developers, under the pressure of clients and employees, believed it is better safe than sorry. Norman Foster’s headquarters of Hong Kong Bank is no exception. This building is an example of a western architect dealing with the constraints of feng shui in modern China. The Hong Kong landmark is an extravagant and high-tech approach to architecture and a testament to the enduring importance of feng shui in the Chinese culture. This new bank headquarters is known in feng shui circles as an auspicious building located on the prime lot of the old Hong Kong Bank. The plot of land has already established itself as a place of prosperity as it faces out to sea - the water element being synonymous with wealth - in the midst of a mountainous backdrop. The view out to water is so important that the bank actually gave money to the government to build a park across the street to ensure the harbor view remain unobstructed. This way, the building and its occupants can enjoy unimpeded harbour views in exchange for heightened feng shui benefits¹. This desirable location not only accounts for prime real estate value, but it also offers a cooling breeze to the surrounding area. Its location is also considered favorable because it lies on a “dragon’s vein” which runs along the mountain ridge down to the sea from Victoria Peak. The bank stands at the foot of Victoria Peak with lower views out to the Statue Square, while higher up, views goes straight out to the glistening waters of the harbour with the hills of Kowloon off in the distance. All of these natural elements account for the good feng shui of the site. The other school of thought focuses on the symbolic importance of shapes, such as the malignant triangular forms of the nearby headquarters of the Bank of China which is believed to resemble a sword slicing down towards the HSBC building. In an attempt to ward off any additional malice that may be inflicted upon the welfare of the bank, two metal rods that resemble a canon or machine gun were implemented on the left side of the roof of the building. These rods are a feng shui remedy designed to deflect negative energies away and back to its source.

The original Bank headquarters was located on a site that was considered to be one of the most

Fig. 5.3.1 The Hong Kong HSBC headquarters.



Fig. 5.3.2 The HSBC headquarters’ favorable view towards Victoria Harbour.

Fig. 5.3.3 A typical HSBC one hundred Hong Kong dollar bill.

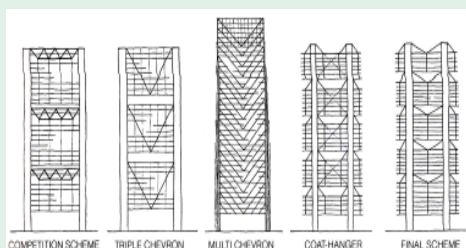


Fig. 5.3.4 Different schemes for the design of the HSBC headquarters.

Fig. 5.3.5 Mock-up of the red diagonal cross-bracing of the Chevron scheme.

favorable sites in Hong Kong. Not only was the bank building itself regarded as a symbol of wealth and prosperity, the emotional attachment that Hong Kong residents had with this particular landmark ran much deeper than that. The much loved building had been a prominent part of the Hong Kong waterfront for many years. The whole character of the building was considered to be significantly synonymous with the stability and prosperity of not only the bank itself, but the well-being of the city as a whole². Therefore it is fitting that its image should be printed on the bank's Hong Kong dollar bills. For that reason, it was an unfortunate coincidence – or was it coincidence? – that the negotiations between the British and Chinese authorities regarding the expiration of British rule in Hong Kong on July 1997 commenced shortly after the old headquarters had been demolished³.

One of the earlier schemes for the bank design competition from Sir Norman Foster was a striking play of color and geometry. The exposed structural elements in the Chevron scheme were the backbone of the design. The structural system was composed of a repetition of red v-shaped diagonal bracings running throughout most of the spaces, attaching to red vertical masts which would dominate the north façade of the building. It was clear to the Chinese members of the Bank's board that the striking red V-shapes pointing downwards were not the luck-inducing sign they wanted⁴. In the end, it was Foster's less feng shui-offending Coat Hanger scheme that won everyone over. However, the feng shui obstacles did not cease just yet. The principle feng shui consultant overlooking the HSBC headquarters project was Lung King Chuen⁵ who advised to the British design team that the original exterior X-bracings necessary for structural support was considered to be a bad omen. It was recommended that *"bamboo be planted in front of the offending elements; [and] it would grow quickly and obscure the unlucky sign."*⁶

Norman Foster, principle designer of this revolutionary office building project, made the wise decision to consult a feng shui adviser at a very early stage. One of the geomancer was Koo Pak Ling, who made a simple but significant sketch of the most favorable location for the entrance of the Bank. This sketch would later influence the way escalators on the Plaza level would be positioned in the final design⁷. The final decision was to hollow out the street level to provide a walkway underneath the building with two large escalators to bring people up a level to enter the bank.

From a commercial standpoint that decision would be considered to be a waste of valuable space. However, this was a feng shui decision made to allow the spiritual dragon from Victoria Peak to run downwards along the streets which would eventually lead the dragon to the sea. The bank would be in the way if its street level was not hollowed out. Hence, feng shui practitioners considered this as a necessary change. Not disrupting the dragon's path will ensure the success of the bank. Eventually, this also led to the re-positioning of the escalators on the podium level. Its original straight position is now angled towards the entrance of the building. This oblique alignment was considered necessary because malevolent spirits travel in a straight manner. Therefore, by angling the escalators along the line of feng shui energy running down from the peak, the accumulation of good qi will prevent waterborne spirits from the nearby Victoria Harbor from entering the building⁸. In its symbolic form, the escalators was thought of to have the motion of guiding good fortune up from ground level, circulating it within the atrium, and finally dispersing it into the core of the bank.

During my last visit to Hong Kong in 2005, I paid a visit to the HSBC headquarters. It was an unmistakable landmark in the midst of the busy financial centre of Hong Kong. As one approached the entrance, the unexpected void acts as an open mouth, drawing the crowd inside. It is easy to understand how the design of the open podium level would be advantageous in accumulating pedestrian activities, creating a positive and open yang atmosphere. This yang energy, as well as pedestrians, would then continue upwards through the building's core. Positive energy and natural sun light was widely distributed and dispersed throughout the internal spaces of the building by the installation of 480 computer-controlled mirrors at the top of the atrium. These mirrors change positions throughout the day to reflect natural light into the atrium⁹ which ultimately travels downwards, illuminating the walkway plaza below. From an architectural perspective, these design details take advantage of what is available on site in a sustainable approach, which is an underlying attitude of feng shui. Additionally, external sun shades are designed to control the amount of sun light entering the building to reduce glare and subsequent heat gain, which would directly impact the required air conditioning. Sensitivity has also been given to the HVAC system; it takes advantage of the sea water from the Victoria's Harbor just off in a distance, using it as a coolant for the air conditioning system.

Fig. 5.3.6 The escalators on the open-air podium level.

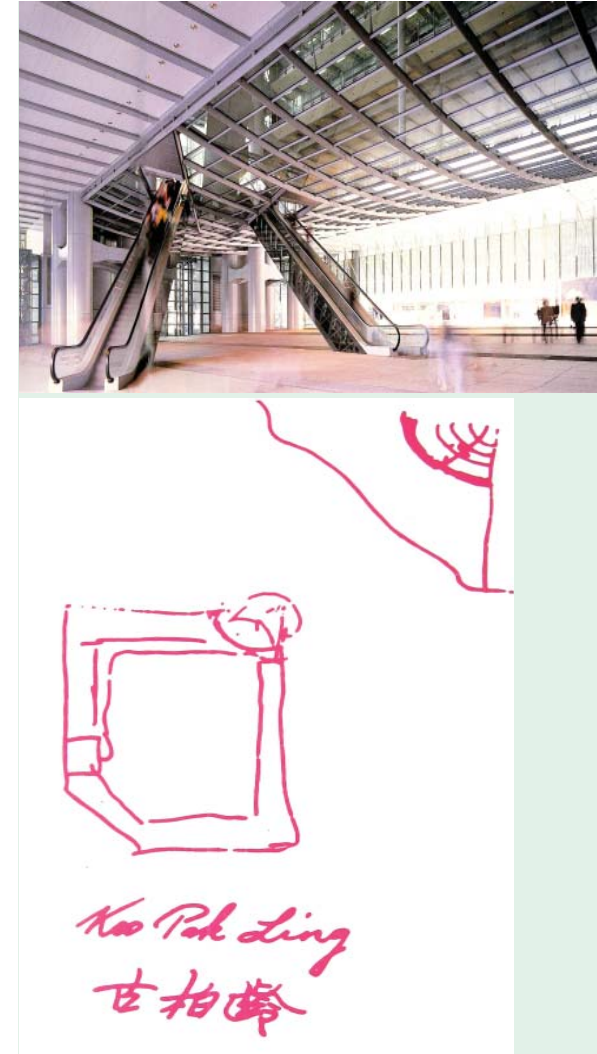


Fig. 5.3.7 Geomancer Koo Pak Ling's sketch of the most favorable entrance.

Fig. 5.3.8 The two infamous bronze lions guarding the entrance to the bank.



Fig. 5.3.9 Opening ceremony and blessing of the bank tower.

Another notable feng shui aspect of the bank has to do with the two bronze lion statues that guard the entrance of the large bank complex. The two original lion sculptures were commissioned out of feng shui considerations and were cast in Shanghai in 1935 and later brought to Hong Kong. The left lion with the open mouth was named after the Hong Kong branch manager, A.C. Stephen, while the lion on the right with the mouth closed was name after the Shanghai branch manager, G.H. Stitt. When the HSBC tower in Hong Kong was established as the headquarters of the bank, these lions earned their permanent place as the guardian of the bank. They were believed to protect the bank by warding off any misfortunes which would negatively affect the revenue of the bank. The opening ceremony for the building was also important, which was held in the elaborate Chinese fashion, complete with drums and gongs as the harbinger of the arrival of a magnificent golden dragon¹⁰.

1. Stephanie Williams. *Hong Kong Bank: The Building of Norman Foster's Masterpiece*. London, Great Britain: Johnathan Cape Ltd., 1989, page 13.
2. *Ibid.*, page 33.
3. *Ibid.*, page 13.
4. *Ibid.*, page 105.
5. Witold Rybczynski. *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. Viking Canada, 1989, page 18.
6. *Ibid.*, page 19.
7. Williams. *Op. cit.*, page 71.
8. Bruce Chatwin. *What am I doing here?* USA: Penguin (Non-Classical), 1990, page 54.
9. Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank (HSBC) Main Building Review. Copyright ©2008 Fodor's Travel, a division of Random House, Inc. http://www.fodors.com/world/asia/china/hong%20kong/entity_105977.html
10. William. *Op. cit.*, page 265.

■ 5.4 BANK OF CHINA, HONG KONG, CHINA

THE FENG SHUI REBEL

CHINESE-American architect I.M. Pei designed the seventy-storey Bank of China in the financial heart of Hong Kong. From an architectural appreciation perspective, its dynamic geometry and light-catching façade makes it one of the most gracious and elegant of all the towers along Hong Kong's famous waterfront. The Bank of China is a unique example of western architecture by a Chinese architect in contemporary China. However, it is unique because it is one of the very few buildings in Hong Kong designed without feng shui consultation.

The tower was designed to be a prominent landmark representing the aspirations of Chinese people. I.M. Pei's design for the tower was inspired by the structure of bamboo. The asymmetric triangular tube structure made of glass and steel was designed to depict an emerging bamboo stalk, symbolizing the growth, livelihood and strength of the bank. It is situated within the same vicinity as the HSBC headquarters, lying near the same auspicious dragon's vein. Although it does not have the same open view of the sea, it is nevertheless protected by geographically good feng shui. The topping out ceremony was held on August 8, 1988 (08-08-88)¹, which was considered to be a highly auspicious date by feng shui masters. Chinese people have a fascination with the number eight because its pronunciation sounds like the word for prosperity. While its distinctive aesthetics make it one of Hong Kong's most identifiable landmarks, its design was under contrasting controversy at the time of its construction. This was due to the fact that it bypassed a consultation with feng shui masters on matters of design prior to construction.

Pei had many challenges to overcome when designing this project; from maneuvering the building on a small lot adjacent to a busy road to the constraints of feng shui, the building came under heavy criticism. Despite its architectural claim to fame, feng shui critics viewed it under a different light. They argued that the abundance of sharp corners would bring bad luck to neighboring buildings, violating a feng shui rule wherein one should not intentionally bring bad luck to one's neighbors. The triangle is considered to attract negative energies due to its resemblance to a blade and a



Fig. 5.4.1 The Bank of China tower in Hong Kong.

pyramid. The Chinese pronunciation of pyramid sounds like the urns for keeping the remains of the dead, and therefore considered to be unlucky. By an unfortunate coincidence, the triangles on the bank's facade point to the Hong Kong Legislative Council Building and the Government House. Obviously this did not bode well and British writer Simon Winchester compared the bank to 'a dagger aimed at the heart of British rule'². Another example of an undesirable feature of the bank was the two tall and slender rods perched atop of the bank. These antennas came under fire from feng shui experts in contrasting ways. Some believed that it made the building look like a praying mantis, preying on the neighboring buildings; while others thought the two rods resembled incense sticks used as an offering to the dead in Chinese Buddhist culture.

On the other hand, not every element of the Bank was considered to be a bad influence. As I recall my last visit to the Bank of China, there was a picturesque water feature hugging the side of the building to the left of the main entrance to the bank. Architecturally, this feature made clever use of the tight spaces available on site while offering a fresh contrast to the abundance of hard surfaces in the area. Whether this was designed as a feng shui feature, I cannot say for certain. However, this sloped waterfall feature is considered good feng shui as the water is collected in a pool and is prevented from flowing away from the building, synonymous with what most people want money to do. There is a wide and varied range of speculations on the feng shui of the Bank of China. Due to a lack of information on the actual feng shui considerations of this project, I decided to contact a professional. According to feng shui practitioner and architect Helen Doherty, her views on reading the feng shui elements of this building should be done with an open mind and common sense:

*"I doubt that you will be able to find out much information on feng shui done by authentic consultants - they and their work remain anonymous for confidential reasons. Most published information about the feng shui of buildings is just guesswork on the part of the author. Unless the owner of the building employed a feng shui consultant to work alongside Pei, then he probably had no idea of the implications of his design. Renowned architects are hired for their reputation and the prestige that the building will bring, not feng shui. You would have to know very intimate details of the other buildings to determine if the bank had a detrimental effect."*³



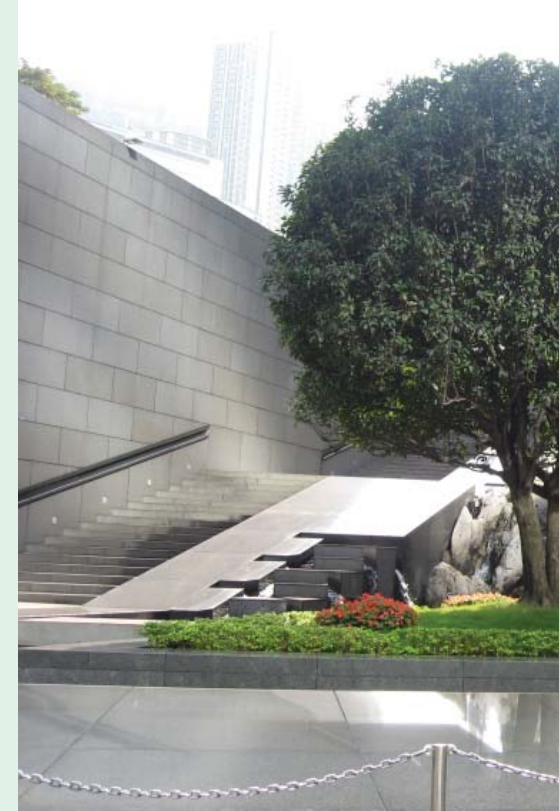
Fig. 5.4.2 A busy road adjacent to the small site of the Bank of China tower.

Despite all the speculations on the feng shui elements of the building, feng shui was actually not a forefront consideration of the design project. This is completely opposite from the HSBC Headquarters in Hong Kong, where the design underwent many revisions due to feng shui concerns. In the book *Conversations with I.M. Pei: Light is the Key*, Pei discussed the Bank of China project and its struggle with feng shui,

"[Feng shui] has its roots in the worship of the forces of nature, which sometimes degenerated into a form of superstition. When you design buildings in Hong Kong, you cannot get away from that problem. There are specialists, feng shui masters, who advise people on all matters of things, especially on the selection of a building site; placement of the building on the site; and the shape and form of the building. I was aware of this, but did not take it seriously. As soon as we made our design public, I was immediately attacked - just as fiercely as I was attacked for the Louvre, but for different reasons. For instance, [the] building had too many sharp corners [which would] bring bad luck to one's neighbours." ⁴

While the effects of certain design features and their implications on feng shui were not originally considered, design changes were made nonetheless to satisfy the clients' concerns of feng shui. I.M. Pei had originally incorporated giant trusses in the shape of X's as wind bracing. The client expressed concerns about the X's being a negative symbol on the welfare and prosperity of the bank, and so with a bit of ingénue the X's were disguised to look like triangles instead⁵. In the end, while this decision was enough to garner acceptance from the client, the triangles were ill-received with feng shui experts. Nevertheless, the Bank of China tower is a landmark and symbol of the Hong Kong skyline. Its design is a story that found a balance between traditional symbolism, like the bamboo motif suggesting upward growth and prosperity, while pioneering in the contemporary as a feat of architecture and engineering, all the while earning its notorious status as one of the major buildings in Hong Kong to bypass a consultation with feng shui experts.

Fig. 5.4.3 A welcomed water feature in the concrete jungle of Central, Hong Kong.





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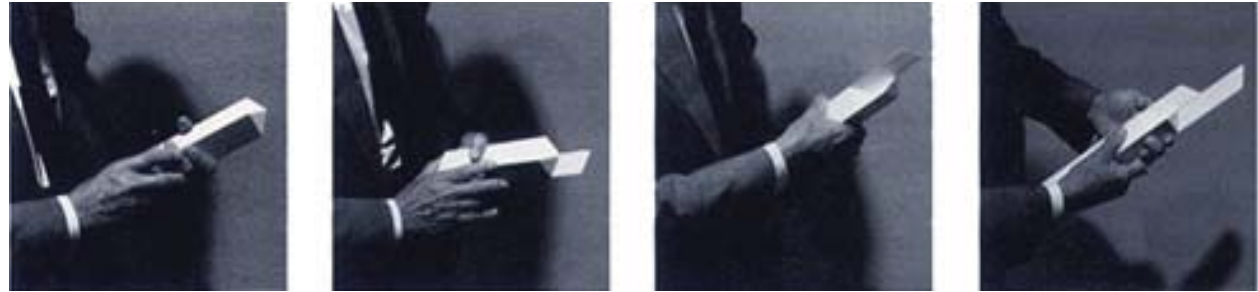


Fig. 5.4.4 I.M. Pei demonstrating how the Bank of China in Hong Kong is joined together in three dimensions.

1. Martin Williams. In the Dragon's Lair: Fung Shui and HK, July 1992 issue of Far East Traveler.
2. Ibid.
3. Quotation taken, with permission, from author's personal emails with Helen Doherty. February 1, 2008.
4. Quotation taken from "Conversations with I.M. Pei: Light is the Key" by Gero von Boehm. http://www.designboom.com/portrait/pei_bank.html
5. Witold Rybczynski. The Most Beautiful House in the World. Viking Canada, 1989, page 19.

■ 5.5 FALLINGWATER, PITTSBURGH, USA

ARCHITECTURE'S ROMANCE WITH NATURE

IN 1935, Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned by the Kaufmann family to build a country house just outside of Pittsburgh. Fallingwater is the ideal example of western architecture designed by a western architect with no feng shui training. The end result was successful from a feng shui viewpoint because it was able to achieve a building that was harmoniously integrated into its surroundings environment.

Wright clearly had an intuitive sense of the energies of nature, which is integral to feng shui. Although he was not exposed to it as a practice, it was inherent in the oriental art and architecture, which he studied and appreciated. Wright observed a harmonious order in the natural landscape and looked for ways to evoke people's desires to once again reunite with nature. He understood that the entire experience of nature can never be completely taken in visually; only snippets of sceneries and framed views can be taken in at one particular moment. Fallingwater is embedded into the earth in the north and allowed to spill over and cascade down the natural sloped topography in the east. From the south the house is seen nestled intimately with the protective shroud of foliage, while large platforms and balconies thrust in and out to create a dynamic movement when viewed from the west. During my visit to the house, I encountered many elements of architectural surprise. The site is densely populated with towering hemlocks and oaks. Visitors have to take a short path on foot from the parking lot towards the house. The house sits upon a rugged stage of sculptural sandstone which guides gentle flowing water to spill over twenty feet below, creating the natural waterfall. As one approaches, the house appears to be so securely integrated and embedded upon the hill and the rocks that the only sign of the waterfall is the constant rushing of the water. It is only when one steps onto the entry footbridge that the dynamic rush of the waterfall has visual impact. Looking over the edge of the bridge, the image of the house appears to be floating on water at the same time as being securely fastened into the landscape. It is a wonderful paradoxical play on the eyes and the mind as well as a clever architectural juxtaposition.

It is unlikely Frank Lloyd Wright was aware of the feng shui implications in his design of the

"There is a beautiful forest with a solid, high rock-ledge rising beside a waterfall, and the natural thing seemed to be to cantilever the house from that rock-bank over the falling water...I think you can hear the waterfall when you look at the design."

- Frank Lloyd Wright



Fig. 5.5.1 Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.



Fig. 5.5.2 The approach towards the house.

house. In my opinion, the architectural appeal of Fallingwater is intimately tied with its responsive relationship to the landscape, a key ingredient of feng shui. Wright's decision to anchor the house to an existing boulder made a very deep connection to the earth. It was the first step towards an intimate relationship between building and site. The massive zigzag retaining walls were constructed using natural stones. This was done to expose the natural roots of the site to those who occupied the house. Further, the house's central structural element was the vertical masonry anchor that aimed towards the sky, which was a gesture that honored the heavens above. Wright then cantilevered multiple terraces that reached out and allowed the occupants of the home to embrace the site's natural beauty. Even though Wright was not aware of the feng shui implications in his design, it achieved good feng shui because his design decisions were responsive to the site. Therefore, regardless of the lack of feng shui training, the design was inspired by the waterfall and the landscape, creating a piece of timeless and responsive architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright proved, by the design of this house, that modern western architecture can share a harmonious coexistence with the natural landscape. Due to his childhood experiences growing up on his family's farm, Wright discovered nature's forms and processes through firsthand experience. Author Lynda S. Waggoner explains,

*"[Wright] recognized nature's duality, its unrestrained seemingly chaotic power in contrast to its subtle, ordered beauty. And he came to understand that it is the dichotomy in nature which accounts for its richness."*¹

The massing and form of Fallingwater is derived from the Bear Run waterfall which highlights water as the metaphor of this structure. Water is fluid and undefined, so Wright echoed the movement of water in the shifting horizontal planes of the house. Water is considered to be synonymous with wealth and prosperity; therefore by having water as the underpinning metaphor of the house not only pays tribute to a fundamental feng shui element, but it also symbolizes the cultivation and invitation of prosperity and vitality into the house. However, it is possible that the living room, which cantilevers over the waterfall, fosters some unstable energy from having no real solid support from the earth. The water element is usually desirable, but on the other hand water constantly moving underneath living quarters can gather aggressive qi, which can harm people in the house. Hence, the decision to build the house close by, but not completely over the waterfall

is good feng shui for the house. In the end, the overall feng shui of the house is quite harmonious because the cantilevering living room is only a small factor within the larger picture. Despite its abstract appearances, the use of materials reflects a more practical side of the design. The glazed areas are carefully placed along the south, while solid stone walls dominate on the north. In terms of orientation, by embedding the house in the north it offers support not only structurally but energetically. It also simultaneously opens the house up towards the southern sunshine and also the direction which represents Heaven.

From a professional perspective, Alex Stark, a Yale-trained architect and feng shui consultant in New York City, shared his assessment of Fallingwater in an interview with I.D. Magazine². Stark believed that the yin and yang of the house is sensitively carried out on many levels, both subtle and obvious. The interior palette of earthy materials and warm wood tones reflects the earthiness of the site and used to break up the separation between inside and out. The yin environment of the low ceiling is counterbalanced and offset by the yang aspect of the multitude of window openings. The floor made use of the rocks from the waterfall ledge, and the darkness of the floor is counterbalanced by bright ceilings; another yin and yang contrast. Not only does the house itself connect to its supporting environment, the interior furniture of the house was designed in a way that seamlessly blended into the house. Tables and shelves appear to grow from the stone walls and a stretch of seating is completely integrated into the wall. The design of the house invites users to connect to both the vertical and horizontal planes of nature. Vertically, the building itself crawls up the sloped terrain, leading upwards to the element of the skylight and onto the terraces and sunlight; downwards, the exterior staircase leads one through the levels and down to a shadow-filled wading pool underneath the house. Horizontally, the cantilevered terraces and transparent windows reach outward towards trees in a distance, allowing breeze to filter through, and inviting nature into the routines of everyday life. Despite being designed in the west, during a time when the practice feng shui was remote, Fallingwater was so intuitively designed that it was able to fulfill many feng shui criteria. The end result was a house that encompasses a nurturing environment to support a harmonious relationship with the site.

Fig. 5.5.3 Aerial view of the site.

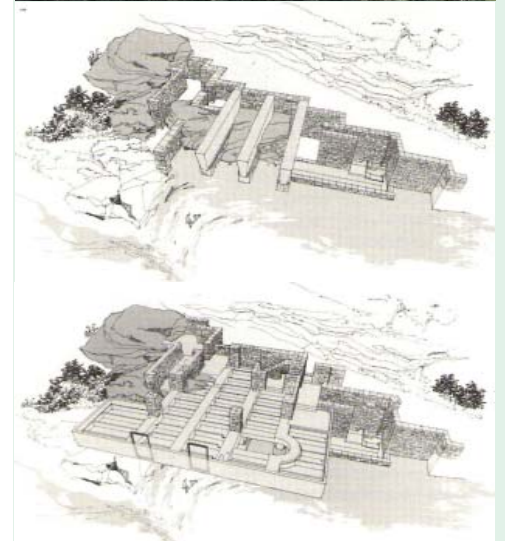
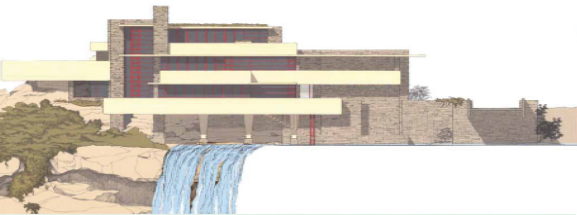


Fig. 5.5.4 The basement level with supports laid in and over boulders.

Fig. 5.5.5 The main cantilevering element brings the living room into midair.

Fig. 5.5.6 The North side of the house is securely embedded into the existing hill-side and boulders, creating a strong earthly tie to the site.



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Fig. 5.5.7 The South façade is most glazed to maximize natural day lighting.

Fig. 5.5.8 Integrated interior seating.

■ 5.6 CONCLUSION

PRECEDENTS reveal history and past concerns; however, more importantly a lesson emerges from them. Examples from both the east and west displayed different approaches to the integration of feng shui and architecture. In the east, consulting a feng shui master during design was essential. The synthesis of feng shui with architectural design spanned from Chinese antiquity to modern day China. The range of buildings feng shui influenced throughout the years also demonstrated a change in design mentality. From a low-lying palace complex to towering skyscrapers, feng shui led architects to depart from an emphasis of figure over ground; instead, its principles were able to adapt to the changes of building styles and a growing architectural profession allowing for a harmonious cohabitation of both figure *and* ground. The case studies also displayed different ways of implementation: from the meticulous application of feng shui principles into every possible design aspect to the intuitively responsive design elements of a building to a specific site, each example is indicative of a certain process of design. While they differ in approach, their goal is ultimately the same: for a harmonious relationship between a building and the environment to ensure the comfort and wellbeing of its occupants.

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1. Lynda S. Waggoner. *Fallingwater Frank Lloyd Wright's Romance with Nature*. Singapore: Universe Publishing, 1996, page 15.
 2. Hilarie M. Sheets. *Cosmic Appraisal*. Alex Stark's feng shui assessment of Fallingwater in I.D. Magazine November 2002, page 74.

"Architecture already favors the reflex, the natural easy attitude, the occult symmetry of the grace and rhythm affirming the easy, grace, and naturalness of natural life."

- Frank Lloyd Wright, 1939

**PART 3:
DESIGN
EXPLORATION**

設計





THE FENG SHUI INTEGRATION

6.1 FENG SHUI-ARCHITECTURE CROSSOVER

AS feng shui begins to gain wider acceptance in the west as a design tool for architects and planners, a critical stance must be taken towards the process of its adoption. Feng shui contains an intuitive approach towards design, engaging the senses by connecting an individual to certain spaces and atmospheric ambience. Architectural design is recognized as a complex and intuitive process that involves the sensitivity of architects to design for a wide range of spatial relationships, from the overall scheme down to the most intimate of details. Therefore, feng shui used in architecture combines design principles with a profound understanding of nature and its processes. It aspires towards a balanced state between the environment and its occupants through the manipulation of vital energies existing in a specific space. Feng shui understands this crucial relationship and its principles can potentially be incorporated into contemporary architecture to create unique spatial qualities for people today. By using feng shui at the onset on a creative project it can best inform architects and designers up front concerning a site's energetic considerations and restrictions. In order for feng shui to work with architectural design, it is best to break the project down into smaller components. This way, design aspects can be compared with applicable feng shui principles in a systematic way. The following are guidelines of crucial elements that must be considered in order to integrate feng shui into architecture projects.

1. Imagine a symbolic world. The feng shui mode of thinking requires a keen sense of imagination to see the built world in terms of images that stimulate the mind. The use of symbols in the built world allows for creative narratives to enhance spatial experiences. When the symbolic meaning behind feng shui is understood, then it becomes a powerful design tool that can be applied in every situation and circumstance that may arise.

2. Humanity lives in a proportionate and parallel universe. The Taoist world view sees the world built in a harmonious interaction of interdependent opposites: yin and yang. Likewise, the theories of feng shui are executed under a concept of parallelism. From the built or natural topography, the balance of the structural massing, or the proportional relationships of interior spaces, the same principle of balance and harmony needs to be applied.

3. The relationship between time, space and fate. The Flying Star method of feng shui takes into account both the time aspect of the stars of the moment and its effect on the atmospheric power of spaces. When an individual is born, he/she receives qi from the universe at the moment of birth. This specific energy is then influenced by the strengths of each of the Five Elements. This chain of reaction is encapsulated forever as destiny in the date of birth, specific down to the year, month, day and hour of birth. As the star changes its favor annually, it is important to take that factor into consideration to keep up with the changes of time and its effect on the destiny of individuals.

4. Feng shui designing modules. While every designer's approach and methodology to a creative challenge is different, it helps to modulate the design process when it comes to incorporating feng shui strategies into an architectural project. By translating a project into four modules, it will become clear how they are all interrelated. Feng shui operates from a large scale to a small scale. Therefore the natural topographic features should be analyzed first as this has the largest overall impact on the well being of occupants. The external layout, such as the landscaping and enclosure or façade of the building, is determined next. Once the exterior is resolved, the interior spatial layout should be designed according to the feng shui aspect corresponding to each individual. Finally, the arrangement of interior elements such as furniture or decoration, materiality and colors should be considered. Lastly, everything needs to be re-evaluated for its compatibility to ensure a harmonious design.

5. Understanding the movement of qi. As an invisible form of energy that permeates the material universe, the course of qi is like that of water and therefore flows in a meandering passage. When its flow is gentle, it will be easy to accumulate beneficial energy. Conversely, if the natural course is obstructed, becoming stagnant and ceases to flow, the abundance of qi and the quality of energy diminishes. Along the same line, where the flow of qi becomes too rapid, its energy will become destructive. Due to this potential harmful power, understanding this fundamental principle is crucial to a thorough handling of the manipulation of qi.

6. The effects of alignment. The energetic dynamics of qi's path of travel can result in either favorable or destructive outcomes. Since the nature of healthy qi is to meander, gentle roads that are neither too straight nor too winding carry the best type of energy. Conversely, a long, straight stretch of highways, roads, or hallways causes qi to gather speed ensuing energetic devastation. In such cases, this negative

"Writers write, painters paint, and sculptors sculpt. Nothing comes between them and their medium. But when the architect creates, it is always at one step removed. He builds, but not on the building site, not with bricks and mortar but with card and balsa wood, with modeling clay and wood block, in a make-believe universe of people three-quarters of an inch high." ¹

- Witold Rybczynski

momentum must be reduced by strategically placing break points or introducing a gentle curve. While curves are a positive thing, being on the outside edge of a curve is hazardous because tension is created from the velocity of the turn, like a sharp 'knife-edge.'² Instead, it is better to be located on the protective inside of a curve. Also, buildings situated at the end of a road are undesirable because qi will accumulate and aim at a target at the very end of its path. Such forces are called 'poison arrows', bringing ill fate to those at the end of its path; however, it can be warded off by shields, such as low lying walls or trees.

7. Shapes and their relationship to the Five Chinese Elements. The formation of harmful qi can also be manifested in specific shapes. Poison arrows mentioned above can be generated by objects that are sharp, such as corners or spikes. When a blunt corner of an adjacent building is directed at a window it will aggravate the person occupying that particular room. Aggressive points such as church spires, antennas or even satellites are not only an affront to Heaven. According to Marcia Small, a feng shui consultant in Oakville, they also affect the atmospheric vibe of the surrounding area within a three-block radius. As well, when a building is dwarfed by an adjacent building, the larger structure exerts a power over the smaller building. Rounded shapes, with its affinity with the heavens, have an overall placid effect on those occupying it or those around it, therefore lending itself to popular usage in Chinese architecture.

8. The relationship between the Five Elements. The five Chinese elements are unlike the western elements of Water, Earth, Fire and Air. These five elements represent types of energy that are in a constant state of flux. For example, when Wood burns it turns into Fire, which ends up as ash, or Earth. From the depths of the Earth, Metals can be found; and when cold its surface forms Water (dew). And of course, Water nourishes the growth of Wood. This is the Productive Cycle, where the energy is nourishing and beneficial to the element next in line. The Destructive Cycle weakens and devastates the other element, so these combinations should be avoided. Water puts out Fire, and the heat from Fire melts Metal. When Metal is wrought into the form of an axe, it has the capacity to cut down the Wood of trees. The roots of trees dig deep and extract nutrients from the Earth, and when Earth infiltrates Water, it loses its clarity and becomes muddled and full of silt.

*"When architects and urban designers do not pay sufficient attention to their intuitive instincts and have no training or knowledge of geomancy, they may make grave errors, which damage the site or landscape's geomantic organism and instill unhealthy vibrations in the buildings or entire urban districts. The aim of incorporating the study of geomancy [or feng shui] in the general curricula for urban planning, architecture, and design would be to avoid the undesired dark sides when culture and nature meet and to promote the constructive aspect [of this interaction]."*³

- Marko Pogacnik

"Modernism's exploration of rationality led to the suppression of spirituality and the gestalt of its cities was therefore shaped by rational energies. Sooner or later in the beyond-the-modern era, a new city gestalt will emerge as well, giving expression to the new energies of our times. Western spirituality is re-emerging with great force nowadays and is connected to our roles in the cosmos. This is creating a new relationship with the universe, to nature, and to landscape." 4

- Carl Fingerhuth

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The interaction between the different elements will occur mostly when choosing materials or colour palettes. Extreme care must be taken when using these sequences to design spaces for specific occupants. It is especially important to first find out which elements are beneficial or undesirable to the occupant's birth element. For example, a Wood person would flourish in a Water-based environment, as opposed to a room with an abundance of Metal. This is done to avoid the potential clashing or the creation of unfavorable situations for the individual.

There will be moments during collaboration where the architect needs to make decisions to bring balance to the creativity of design while working within the constraints of feng shui. Individual acts of creativity has no boundaries, but feng shui principles are governed by rules. Therefore, what generally constitutes "good feng shui" may not be what the architect has in mind. For example, design elements like leaving ceiling beams exposed, overly high ceilings, and odd shapes for the floor plan are typically undesirable in feng shui. From an architect's point of view, by having construction details exposed may be a way to bring character and personality into a space while leaving the design a little more "honest". However, these overhanging elements, especially in a bedroom, can add stress subconsciously to certain people. A floor plan with sharp angles and odd shapes is not balanced which forces qi to reflect off the walls set at arbitrary angles. It also displays a lack of focus and concentration in harnessing positive energies within a particular space. These spaces may be appealing from an architectural perspective, but in the feng shui sense, odd shapes or indulgence in angles or slanted walls do not make a comfortable or practical place to live or work in. Of course, it is easy to outline these situations out on paper, but it is another thing to overcome these obstacles in reality. Therefore, these issues will be put to the test in the design portion of this thesis.

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1. Witold Rybczynski. *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. Viking Canada, 1989, page 24.
 2. Stephen Skinner. *K.I.S.S Guide to Feng Shui*. Keep it simple series, 1st American Ed. New York, USA: DK Publishing, Inc., 2001, page 88.
 3. Fingerhuth, *Op. cit.*, page 196. Quote taken from Marko Pogacnik.
 4. Fingerhuth, *Op. cit.*, page 188.



7.0 | DESIGN PROJECT:
FENG SHUI HOUSE

7.0 INTRODUCTION

THE design portion of this thesis is to be understood as an extension of the earlier research; it is an opportunity to take feng shui principles and apply it to a design project. This exploration is focused on bringing feng shui sensibility to the design of a house, effectively channeling the surrounding energies of a site. This also has direct impact on the spaces inside the house. The primary aim is for the house to become the vehicle in which a structure set in a natural landscape can reflect balance and tranquility onto those who occupy the spaces. A house responds to the intimate and personal needs of its occupants, embodying a distinct quality that is delicate, tangible and – most importantly – a private representation of an individual’s spirit. These characteristics correspond to the reflective nature of feng shui to respond to a space’s connection to specific individuals. In the following design exercise, the feng shui house will be a building that is designed to provide shelter from natural elements, as well as a comfortable and relaxing setting for human activity. In feng shui terms, it is about linking man and his destiny with his surroundings, be it natural or man-made, cosmic or local. The goal is to feel a sense of completeness and belonging to a space and to feel at ease and at one with the. The results of feng shui are not miracles; rather they are natural manifestations of a balanced and supportive environment to the lifestyle of the occupant. Using the principles of traditional feng shui, the existing life-force energy of the environment can be positively channeled through the building, creating a holistic and healthy environment in which to live and work.

7.1 THE BEGINNING

TO begin this design project there must be a client. After much consideration and inquiries, a name came of mind: Professor Lloyd Hunt, an avid, self-taught student of the Chinese language and culture with a wealth of knowledge on geomancy. I felt that he would understand and appreciate my idea for this project, so I approached him with a proposal. When he revealed to me that he has recently purchased a property close to where he lived in northern Ontario, I asked to see the site

plans and drawings. Luck would have it that he happened to have carried the set of drawings with him. After reviewing the contour drawings of the site, I realized that this was a sign and it amazed me how everything fell into place after that. From Lloyd, I was able to gather the following information:

Birth Date: November 4th, 1959 at 1:30pm

Birth Place: Markdale, Ontario

Sex: Male

With this information, the following feng shui constituents are revealed:

Personal Trigram: KUN 坤

Birth Year Element: Earth 土; individuals born under this element can be characterized as nurturing and supportive

Birth Animal: Year of the Pig 豬年

Trigram Compass: West Group 西命 person (Yin group) – this will reveal the specific orientation that will be either beneficial or harmful to certain activities that Lloyd partake in.

Once Lloyd has agreed to take on the role of the Client, he was also able to provide a program for the house. The house requirements are as follows:

- Garage has be to part of the basement plan for site to work
- Lower level: garage, workspace, storage, entry mud room
- First floor: living room, dining room, and kitchen as one space; 3-piece bathroom and bedroom
- Second floor: 2 bedrooms, 3-piece bathroom and an open loft area
- May have attic loft space
- May have opportunity to bridge to upper banks
- The building should be tall and made from concrete walls or ICF (insulated concrete forms) so that in the event when a tree falls it will not slice through the house as easily



Fig. 7.1 Photos of the heavy growth on Lloyd's property in May 2008.

■ 7.2 THE SITE

AS if fate and destiny had a hand in it, Lloyd had recently purchased a plot of land just east of Collingwood. A site visit was planned shortly after that initial meeting. The site is surrounded by a scenic landscape which hugs the gently curving County Road 9 in the Dunedin community within the Clearview Township, a municipality of the Simcoe County in the province of Ontario. Upon arrival at the site, the road curve slightly to reveal a clearing ahead on the left, offset by a fortress of trees emerging from a sloped hill on the right; the landforms showcased a natural interplay between the yin of the open void and the yang form of the hill. Across the road from Lloyd's property, there stands a picturesque little house with the Noisy River flowing in front and a small footbridge as access. It was at the perfect juncture to pause and slow down to admire the nearby juxtaposition of the clearing and the picturesque little house; Lloyd's new property is located on a slope across the road. With heavy tree growth on site, it was hard to see beyond the forefront wall of bare trees trunks. It is a large plot of land; 1.3 acres of untamed landscape. Luckily, the initial slope evens out to a relatively workable area on the northeast corner of the site. A flat area for the house with a slope at the back has the inner workings of good feng shui.





Fig. 7.2 View across the main road in May 2008; photo taken from driveway entrance.



Fig. 7.3 View across the main road from the site in November 2007.



Fig. 7.4 Photo of property with driveway opening on the left; taken in May 2008.



Fig. 7.5 Site of property with Noisy River across the road in November 2007.

The soft crunching of leaves can be heard as we walk, complimented by the continuous gurgling of the Noisy River across the road. The little house across the road can be made out vaguely through the tree trunks while the clearing southwest of the site brought in a brightness and openness that counter-balanced the deeply private grove of the site. I begin to understand what attracted Lloyd to purchase this plot of land. The landscape embodies many different aspects that pertain to the site locally, yet its topographic features have the makings of a rural site in China. The western corner of the site presented itself as an untouchable section; it was especially heavy with foliage and its steep incline discouraged any type of construction. While it is true that the acuteness of the slope rendered it rather hard to build upon and perhaps considered wasted space, this natural topographic feature fits the ideal feng shui model very well. The slope can be manifested into the Black Turtle formation that offers physical and spiritual protection to the overall site. As we continue to climb up the slope, we arrived at a small clearing where pools of November sunlight filtered through the branches, washing light upon the leaves-scattered floor, its crisp fresh scent being released as it crunched underfoot. It was one of those moments where everything external to the site fell away and the feeling of being entirely enveloped by the raw beauty and benevolence of the site made one forget about everything else. A sense of serenity spread over me, and I know this was a section of the site that held significance.

Later, it was decided that I would revisit the site in the middle of May. The experience of the site was entirely different during the warmer months. Leaves had begun to sprout on the branches and a carpet of grass and tree saplings had managed to push its way up from the once frozen soil. The constant rustling of leaves moved in sync to the flowing play of daylight, filtering through the trees. Despite the scenic picture, it soon became very clear this visit had a very evident difference from the last visit; flies were everywhere! Lloyd had given warning beforehand on the hazards of black fly season. Black flies tend to congregate where there is running water because that is where they lay their eggs. Once the thawing of the snow begins, they start to appear approximately mid-May. Usually after the first three consecutive days of temperature ranging from 26-27°C the black fly colony would meet their demise. This site visit was my first and foremost introduction to these bothersome pests and will be recorded as a criterion to be considered.

Fig. 7.6 View of winding laneway at entrance. Photo set taken in October 2008.



Fig. 7.7 Looking down the driving lane.

Fig. 7.8 The location of the house.



Fig. 7.9 View through tree trunks to the driveway below from upper banks.

Fig. 7.10 View of property from driveway entrance.



Fig. 7.11 View down the laneway from the house.

7.3 THE DESIGN

THE most important step is the initial assessment of the natural environments of the site. The natural characteristics and physical elements have been discussed in the previous section. What is required now is a compass reading of the orientation of the site. On a sloped site such as Lloyd's property, any house built will have a facing direction towards the downward slope to the road. An accurate compass reading is required to record the facing and sitting orientation with the luopan. A simplified version of the traditional luopan (Fig. 7.18) was used for the purpose of this exercise (*note*: this simplified version has only the directional rings; it is in every way still just as accurate as its full version). The site faces south-east at 150°, which translates to the direction of SSU under the third section of the south-east quadrant (SE3) on the luopan. This immediately implies that the sitting position of the site, which is directly opposite from the facing orientation, falls under NW3, which is the direction of HAI facing north-west at 330°. The overall elements on the site formed a pleasantly favorable feng shui condition, but because the site itself is mostly a slope, the precise location of the house will be dictated by what is naturally the most feasible to work with. From initial observations, the house should be located on the only relatively flat part of the site. Basic and general guidelines are that feng shui form overrides formula, as the inherent and existing energies of a space is more powerful than anything done in hindsight. Therefore, once the location of the house has been set from a topographic standpoint, it must be analyzed through feng shui to see if it is a compatible choice. Throughout this design portion, two formulas will be used: Eight Mansion and Flying Star Feng Shui. In terms of which formula to use depends on what needs to be accomplished. Generally Eight Mansion overrides the Flying Star method because the former is concerned with directions whereas the latter is about timing. In addition, they each have their respective strengths and weaknesses. Hence, the Eight Mansion formula will be used as a guideline for the orientation of the house and the space distribution of the design. Meanwhile, the Flying Star method will be used to determine the more intimate layout for each individual room.

According to Lloyd's birthday, he belongs to the West Group. An Eight Mansion directional wheel (Fig. 7.19) is subsequently drawn up as the underlying template upon which the overall house will

Fig. 7.12 Noisy River and the open clearing across the site.



Fig. 7.13 The flat part of the site - where the house will be located.

Fig. 7.14 Steep slope of the western part of the site.

Fig. 7.15 Terrain of site and surrounding area.

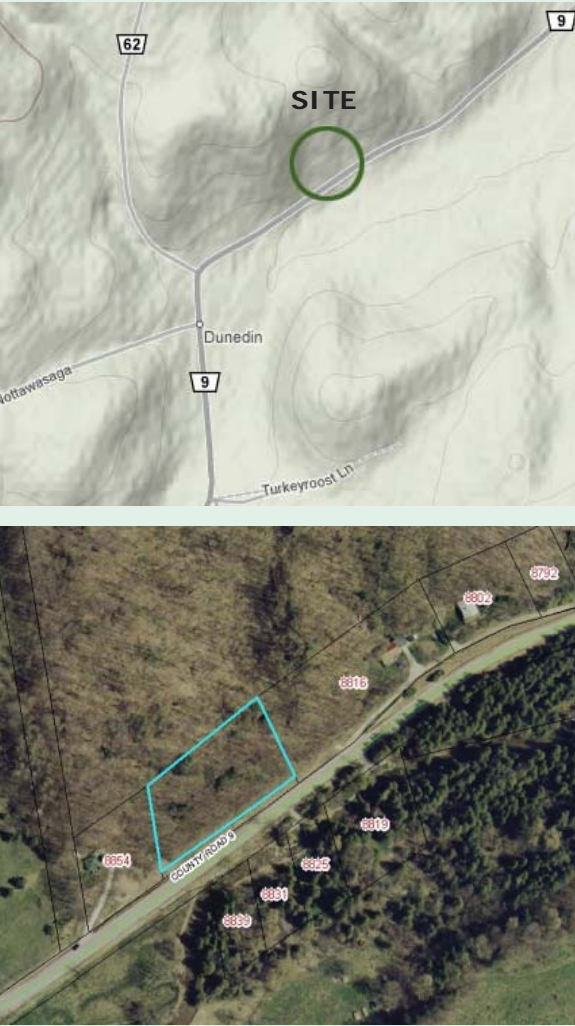


Fig. 7.16 Aerial plan of site property.

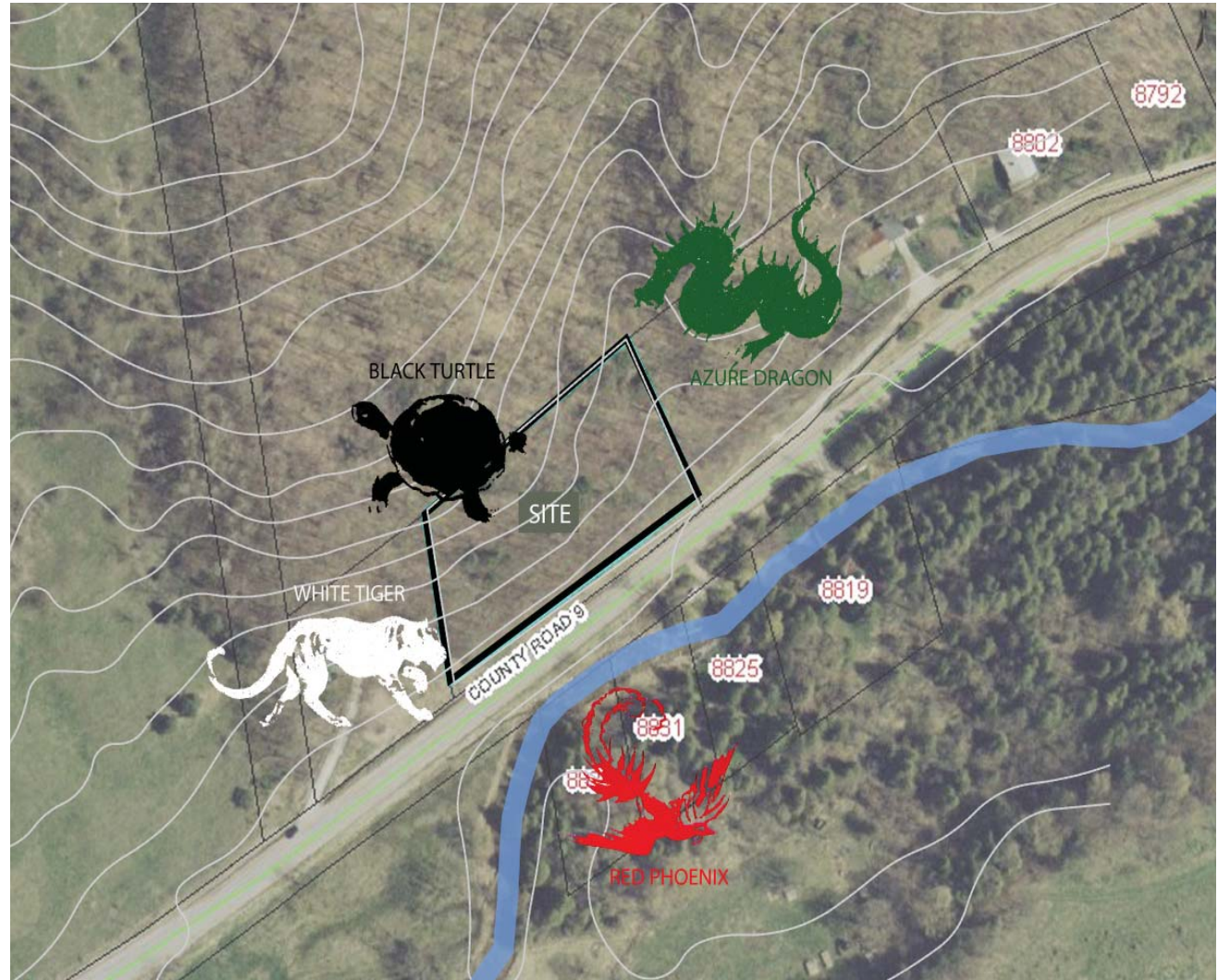


Fig. 7.17 Landform feng shui of site on a macro scale.

be designed. The house can be built on the north-east section of the site, which coincides with the AA direction, the optimal direction for Lloyd. This direction is surrounded by qi of great vitality and it bodes well for success and fortune. This direction will enhance the overall vitality of the spaces and will ensure a good restful sleep. It is a favorable direction for a well-respected person in the community as well as an excellent academic; the reading for this direction is quite fitting. Since the steepest slope originates from the western corner, the movement of qi will flow down from there so the house needs to be designed to capture this mass of energy. In terms of providing an access route or driving lane that leads to the house, there is only one technically feasible solution: a long, gently winding road that curves up the initial slope. It has to satisfy the building code's minimum of a twelve meter turning radius, enough for a fire truck and also the maximum slope of 1:12 for automobiles. Since the house is to be located on the north-east corner of the site, the entrance to the drive way will be at the southern edge, marked by an opening in the bank of trees which line the front edge of the property. Lloyd's birth element is Earth, so anything reflecting the sign of Earth or Fire (because the Fire element is productive of Earth from the production cycle) will be able to reinforce a favorable amount of energies within the spaces of the house as well as the surrounding environment. The Chinese represented the earth with the square; therefore a rectilinear structure would be considered an Earth house. I was inspired by the simplicity of the square and its sacred meaning; therefore it became the main elemental shape of the house. A rectilinear house would also act as a counter balance towards the natural fluidity and unhindered movement of the site to rebalance the yin against the yang. Surrounding the building and its vicinity with earthly elements will enhance and encourage the formation of supportive energies.

Now that feng shui principles have established some preliminary design parameters, the design needs to be examined from an architectural standpoint. The site embodies a raw quality to it that contrasts sharply with the clean lines of the house. The house is nestled amongst fallen leaves and veiled by the trunks of the trees, while it backs onto a lush forest that slopes towards the house. A gently curved sloping lane way guides the flow of traffic through. The long driving lane delays the final reveal of the house, but enhances the anticipation. Technically, the long and winding road is the only possible way to create access from the main road to the house while still adhering to the building code. This works to benefit the feng shui of the site because straight lines can result in

Fig. 7.18 Simplified luopan.

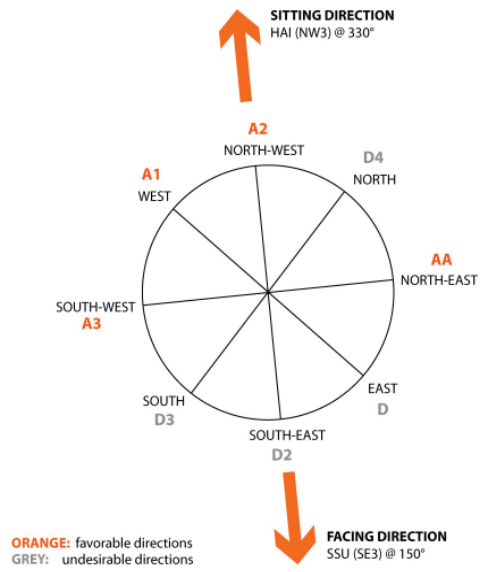


Fig. 7.19 Eight Mansion directional wheel for the house.

THE GRADE OF QI

<p>AA – Sheng Qi 上氣 This most favorable grade alludes to fresh and highly vital energy and smooth flowing qi. Enhances sleeping positions in this area, enhances vitality, intuition and good communication with your spirit guides. This position brings good luck, success and fortune. This area supports an excellent political career, a well-respected position in the community or academic excellence.</p>	<p>D1 – Woh Hai 禍害 This is the best of the unfavorable areas. <i>Woh Hai</i> means accidents and mishaps. This location may cause minor disasters, small lawsuits, losing some money, minor car accidents, and loss of a job or a failed small examination.</p>
<p>A1 – Tien Yi 天醫 <i>Tien Yi</i> means universal or divine healing or “doctor from heaven.” This qi is healing and full of love energy. The entrances of the house and bedrooms and the sleeping position in this area enhance good health, healing and safety. This location is good for those with health problems or low vitality. This area also brings prosperity and wealth to the upper middle class.</p>	<p>D2 – Wu Kuei 五鬼 <i>Wu Kuei</i> means “five ghosts.” This is the second least favorable location. Aligning important workplaces and sleeping quarters in this location often results in disharmony as well as frequent quarrels in the office and with the family. Fire and burglary may also occur. Those living in a space with weak vitality may suffer from long depression or illness. Normally, the toilet and storeroom or rooms seldom used are placed in this location.</p>
<p>A2 – Yien Nien 延年 <i>Yien Nien</i> means extending the time and year of. This area enhances family tolerance and harmony and promotes goodwill. Excellent location for the entrance to family room or bedroom to enhance family harmony. Those with relationship problems and harmony problems with children or parents should locate their living room entrance or bedroom in this location. This location enhances early marriage and the development of wealth and success in life. If the family wants children, it would be helpful to location their bedroom in this area.</p>	<p>D3 – Liu Shah 六煞 <i>Liu Shah</i> means “six killings” or “sufferings.” This is the third worst location. If entrances or bedrooms are in this location, it may result in arguments, divorces and disharmony in the home or office. Legal problems in the family and an unprofitable business are common. The business may fail or a member of the family may be affected by the negative influences.</p>
<p>A3 – Fu Wei 伏位 This location enhances personal abilities and capabilities and develops the power to progress well in one’s job and career. This position is excellent for professional people and managers. This location also enhances clear-headedness, peace and good management of affairs, giving occupants a good, but not necessarily wealthy, life.</p>	<p>D4 – Chueh Ming 絕命 <i>Chueh Ming</i> means “total loss of life” or “life threatening” and is the least favorable area. It is commonly associated with robberies, loss of property, incurable diseases, bankruptcy, loss of children (especially male) and a continuous stretch of bad luck and ill-health in the family. Avoid placing the main door, bedroom and important working positions in this area to prevent attracting negative energy and bad luck.</p>

Fig. 7.20 Explanation to the different grades of qi.

the accumulation of uncontrollably potent qi. This is why Chinese gardens are full of twisting forms and sinuous paths. Through the heavily wooded slope, images and colours of the house begin to reveal itself through the vertical slits created by the tall slender trunks of the assorted arrays of maple, birch, and cherry. In terms of the overall space distribution of the house, Lloyd has already laid down some guidelines. Together with the feng shui placement of specific rooms it will solidify the overall design. The following are some space distributions set by feng shui parameters:

Lower Level: This level is the closest to the ground, and therefore has the highest concentration of earth energy. This level will be especially nourishing to people born under the sign of Earth, which is Lloyd's birth element. His office should be located on this level to absorb the maximum amount of this earthly energy available on site. The logical location for the design office would be away from the garage (which needs to be located at the eastern corner of the house as a technicality of connecting with the lane way) and should have an open view towards the downward slope. Therefore, the office will be located near the southern D3 corner. However, as long as the actual workspace is out of the D3 zone, it will be considered a part of the A3 zone towards the south-west. All of the utility and storage rooms are located in the back of the house and used as buffer zones to reflect the stale qi that might be accumulating in the garage.

Ground Floor: The main entrance to the house is placed in the best area (AA) for a west group person. The guest bedroom is to be placed at one of the favorable areas of the house to avoid the interference of malicious qi. The living quarters should be designed accordingly so that while being an open concept as Lloyd requested, it should still have its own distinct boundaries to avoid the muddling of qi. Perhaps an outdoor patio space can be planned to bring the yang energies of the outdoor sunshine inside to balance the potential yin shadows of the house.

Second Floor: This is the private level of the house. Sleeping quarters are to be located in the locations most favorable to ensure restful sleep. The bedroom is where one spends a large portion of the day therefore the quality of qi in this room can greatly affect the wellbeing of a person. An open area for common lounging can revitalize the energy of a level that may be too isolated and private; this can be treated as a secondary space due to its less frequent usage.

Fig. 7.21 Flow of qi on the original site.

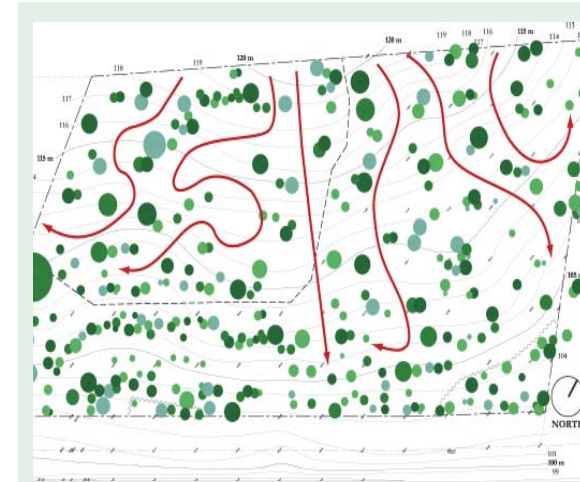


Fig. 7.22 Flow of qi on the site with house.

Fig. 7.23 Flow of qi of the site around the house's immediate environment.

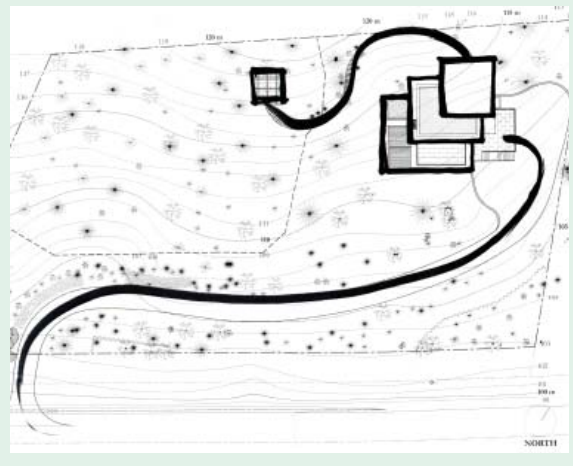
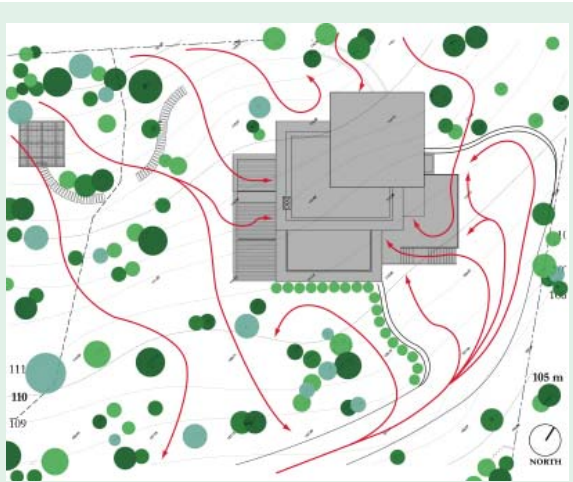


Fig. 7.24 Sketch of overall schematic of house and pathway of movement through the site.

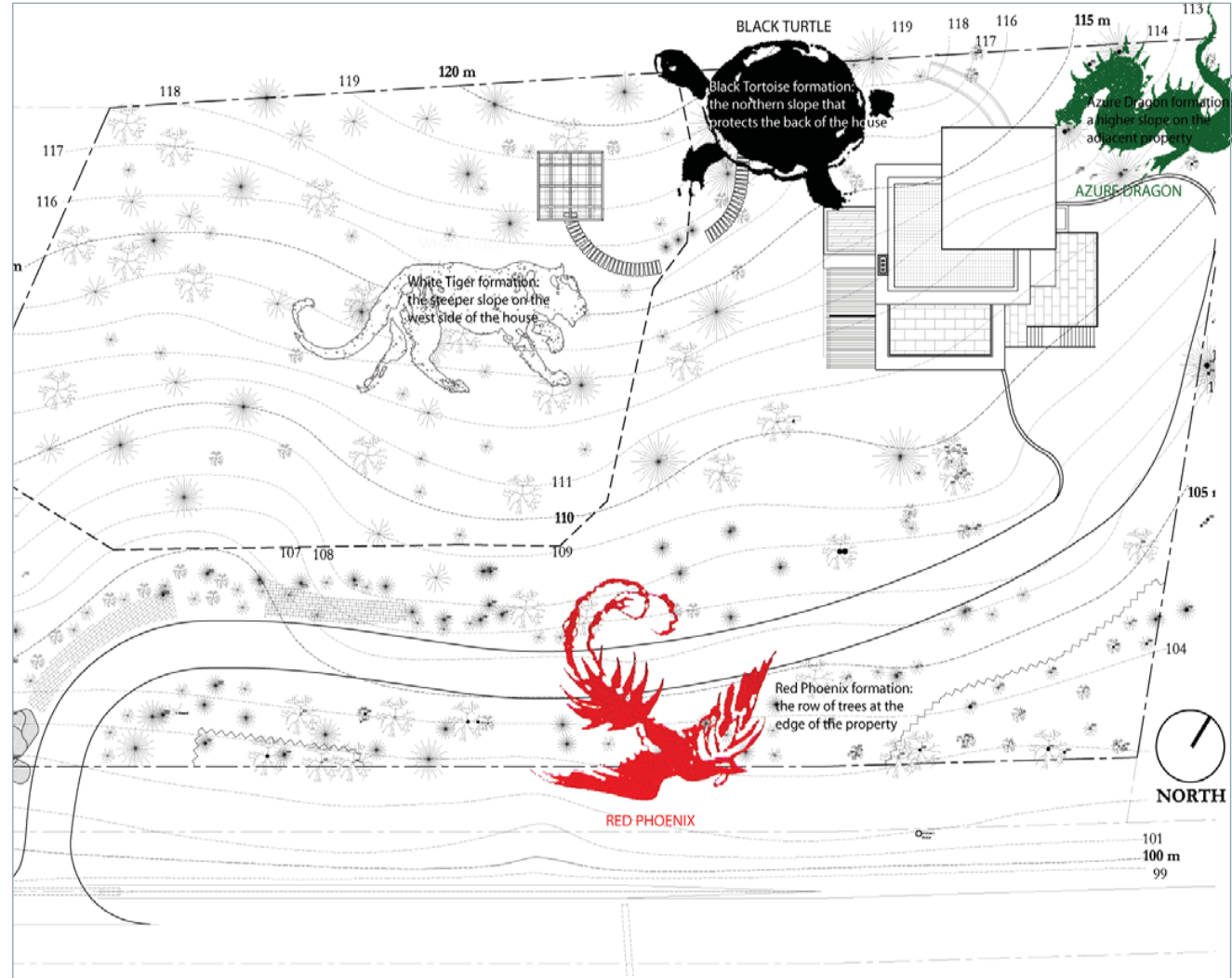


Fig. 7.25 Landform feng shui of the site on a micro scale.

Studio Level: This top level is designed as a retreat for Lloyd during times when he needs inspiration and relaxation. This level of the house should have some formal vertical gesture towards the heavens above, and a physical or visual connection to the outdoor addresses its lofty position in the landscape. This space can be minimally furnished to provide a larger opportunity for creativeness in the use of the space. The openness of this space will also be used to harness the flow of qi and subsequently it can filter down the levels through the connective element of the stairwell.

7.4 DESIGN ALTERATIONS

THE preliminary design parameters are set by following simple feng shui rules set by the Eight Mansion method. The next task will be to integrate these parameters with architectural design. As with any design project, it is inevitable that there be several design phases, but that is a natural part of a design process and it should not be any different with the incorporation of feng shui principles. For this house, there were many phases of design, but three significant stages of change were documented. Each design represents and showcases a different thinking process that displayed the correspondence between feng shui principles and architectural design.

First Design Iteration:

This design was originally inspired by the elemental shapes of the circle and square as the representations of heaven and earth. The design began in plan with a square intersecting a circle until an even proportion was reached; each shape was combined with half of the other component. The south-western curved wall acts as a protective arm on the side of the house where the outdoor patio is located. The patio connects to a grand cascading staircase leading down to ground level, opening the house to a view down the slope. However, as space planning was incorporated further, it soon became clear that the square volume was not sufficient to house all of the necessary components that Lloyd requested, so the square soon stretched out to a rectangle that extended towards the back of the site. This extended volume housed the guest and master bedrooms; it was intended for these two rooms to nestle against the slope of the site as a connection to the earth. The house itself was oriented on an angle so that the entrance was directly facing the AA direction of north-east. The

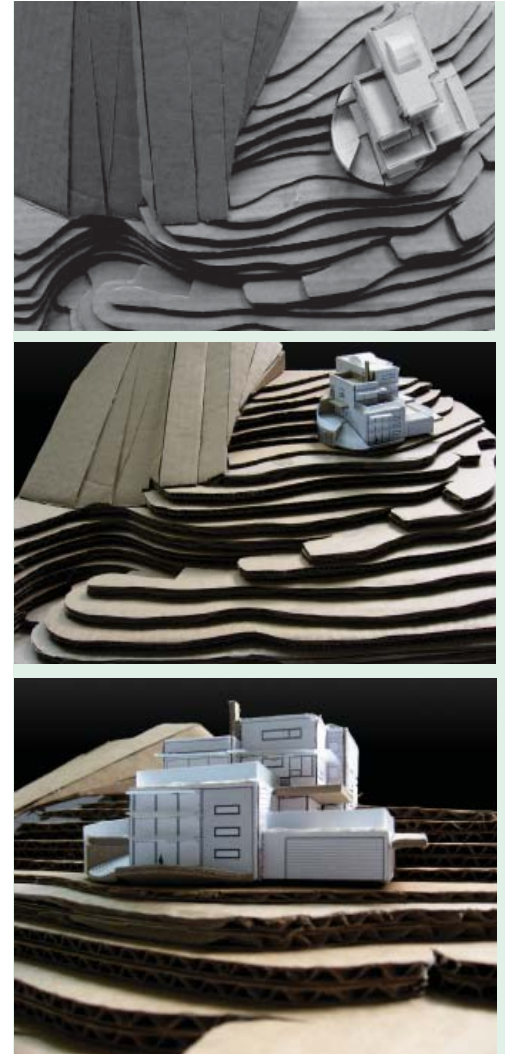


Fig. 7.26 Photos of the 1st design iteration.



Fig. 7.27 Photos of the 2nd design iteration.

massing of the house is an immediate response to the sloped landscape of the site, which inspired the varying levels of rooftops, outdoor terraces, balconies and overhangs. Another design element is the attempt to have all the different levels of the house visually connected to one another, creating an interior vertical dialogue. Openings and cut outs are implemented from the lower level all the way to the second floor. In a final vertical visual connection, the highest level of the house is covered by an arched glass roof offering an unobstructed view of the sky above.

Second Design Iteration:

The semi-circular gravestone used in many Chinese cemeteries is the modern manifestation of the feng shui ideal. With raised turf on either side of the protected area in front and embraced within solid retaining walls, it is regarded as a model of the desired landforms that would bring optimal energies to a site. The second iteration of design is based upon this curved retaining wall element as it is a feature that would work well with the slope of the site. The two curved arms will envelope the two large outdoor spaces; the patio and the entrance porch area. Making the most out of every inch available, the space under the south-western outdoor patio is now utilized as the library which connects to Lloyd's office space. It will be a cozy room that can house Lloyd's book collection with a wood-burning fireplace. It can also serve as a quiet area for brainstorming, with views to the planting just outside the window. In retrospect, the overall plan of the first iteration of design seemed too spacious. Many of the spaces were deemed too generous so the overall scale of the house became smaller to preserve the idea of designing to a scale that is more personable and appropriate for the occupants of the house. The layout is generally the same but the exterior volumes have changed. The tallest element which included the studio space now acted as a tower that anchored the rest of the house into the ground. From this tower, the rest of the platforms cascade down in varying levels. Instead of a transparent glazed roof that opens to the sky above, the four sides that enclose the studio level will be completely transparent to the immediate surroundings. With a 360° view of the exterior, the experience will transform the outside to the inside without leaving the studio space. As well, this is the level where access to the upper banks of the slope will be made available. The studio level will be connected to the upper banks by a short footbridge which connects to a flat area at the top of the property. Here, a foot path will be made visible with stepping stones down the slope and then over a small ridge leading the path up towards a pavilion. The pavilion is a light structure

set on the landscape, a stark contrast to the grounded structure of the house. It has a minimal footprint on the earth as its design is a wooden platform elevated off the ground on stilts. Its roof is a simple trellis construction that will support and highlight the growth of plants found on the site. As the season changes, this roof will change accordingly. As climbing foliage grows during the spring and summer months, it will provide a natural green shade for the pavilion. When these plants die during the colder months of the year, the pavilion roof will collect fallen leaves and open up to allow natural sunlight to penetrate through. This pavilion is the final destination of the journey through the site. The overall movement of the site starts at the foot of the hill, with the path leading one up the gently curving lane. As one approaches the house its façade is filtered through the trunks of the trees. Once inside the house, it offers many opportunities to view the surrounding environment; through glazing, outdoor patios, balconies or terraces. Traveling upward through the house, the top level reveals a space that blurs the distinction between indoor and outdoor; it is a space that can easily lend itself to be used as an observatory of nature.

Third Design Iteration:

During design meetings, it was discussed that perhaps the element of curved walls on either side of the house were too literal to relate to the site. There already exists a natural flowing movement that begins from the driving lane leading up to the house. Instead of incorporating actual curved elements to the exterior of the house, this flowing movement is represented in the circulation inside the house. This way, the overall rectilinear design of the house can play contrast to the fluidity of the site and establishes a dynamic picture of a solid Earth structure in the landscape. The rectilinear design is also reflected in plan. The house will appear to be three overlapping squares. During a conversation with Lloyd, he explained the idea behind the design for his business card. The design was simple and succinct three squares perfectly aligned like this: $\square \square \square$. The design was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's symbol of a single red square, as well as the use of three squares by Scottish architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In Lloyd's logo, the space between the squares is symbolic of the golden section. Hence, these three squares, representative of so many things, are applied to the plan of the house. The addition of a separate entrance for clients to enter into Lloyd's business office allows for the upper floors to remain entirely private. The separation between the clients' entrance and Lloyd's work space will be made of a translucent material to allow natural lighting from



Fig. 7.28 Photos of the 2nd design iteration.

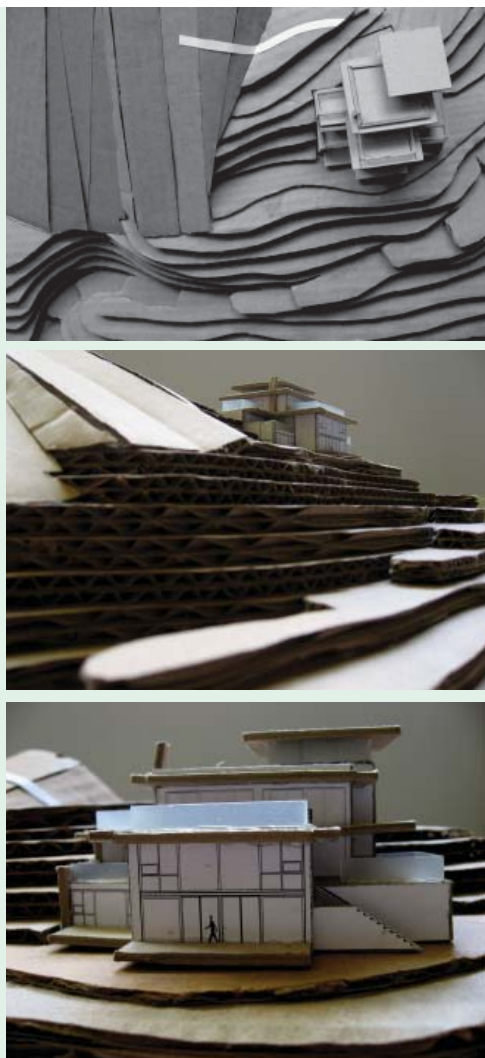


Fig. 7.29 Photos of the 3rd design iteration.

the office to filter through the material and into the corridor. The house was further reduced in scale to create a more intimate interior atmosphere but with extensive open views to the exterior. This will allow a visual connection with the outdoors, drawing nature inside. Most of the space planning has remained the same but the circulation corridor and the stairwell has solidified into a more cohesive and simplified course. The major change to the design is the location of the stairwell; it has been relocated towards the back of the house, forming a link with the shadows of the earth. The hallway which connects to the stairwell will guide movement through the main circulation of the house in a north-south axis, always guiding one towards the large expanse of glazing on the south-eastern façade and back to the solid wall of the north. It becomes a continuous interplay of opposites; light and dark, transparent and opaque; as well as the horizontal movement of the hallway and the verticality of the stairwell. The hallway is planned to be wider than most, as feng shui ruled that a long, narrow and dark hallway must be avoided at all costs. The stairwell, being the main vertical connection in the house, connects from the lower level all the way up to the studio floor. By using a translucent material for the staircase it will allow natural sunlight to filter from the top level all the way to the bottom. This invites a natural yang element to penetrate through the house down to the yin of the shadows of the lower levels. The transparent quality of the studio level remains unchanged. Within the transparent space of the studio, there is a complete 360° of uninterrupted views to the outdoors. On the roof of the second floor is a private roof top garden, accessible only from the studio level. This green space creates an unexpected earthly connection with the highest level of the house. Since the house is built on a slope, the energy of the site comes from the highest point and flows down to the bottom. Helen Doherty, a feng shui practitioner who I have been corresponding with, advised me that to effectively catch this natural-flowing energy, the use of materials for the railings that encloses the outdoor areas must be designed accordingly. A more solid material with no openings, such as opaque or frost glass can be used as railings to collect a pool of qi at the front porch and entrance. These two outdoor spaces are on the lowest level of the house, and therefore the in the pathway of the qi and should have the solid railings; other railings are exempted from this change. The narrative of the house has become the continuation of the flow of energy from the site. The movement of energy spirals upward through the interior levels until it exits at the top level to continue its natural flow outdoors. With a large expanse of glazing on the south-eastern façade, it takes advantage of its orientation to invite natural sunlight into the interior spaces. These



Fig. 7.30 Illustration of southern corner of the house.



Fig. 7.31 Photos of the 3rd design iteration.

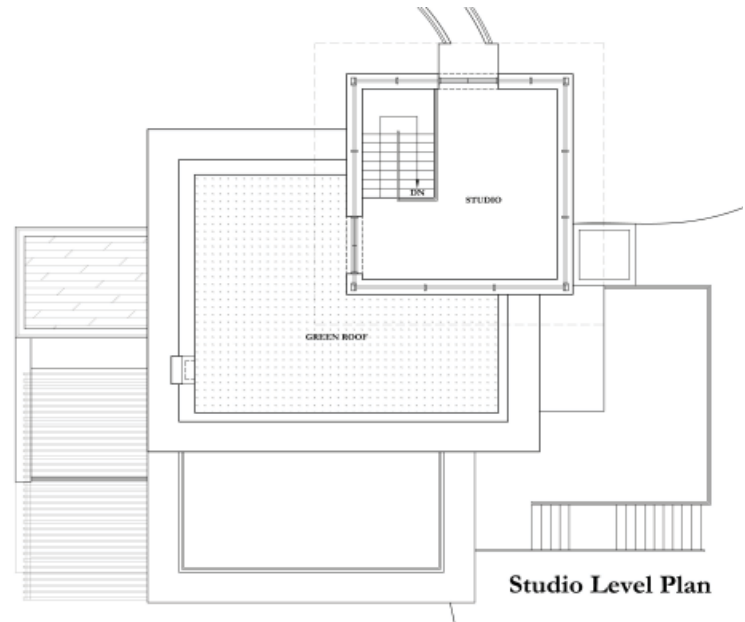


Fig. 7.32 Floor plans of the house.

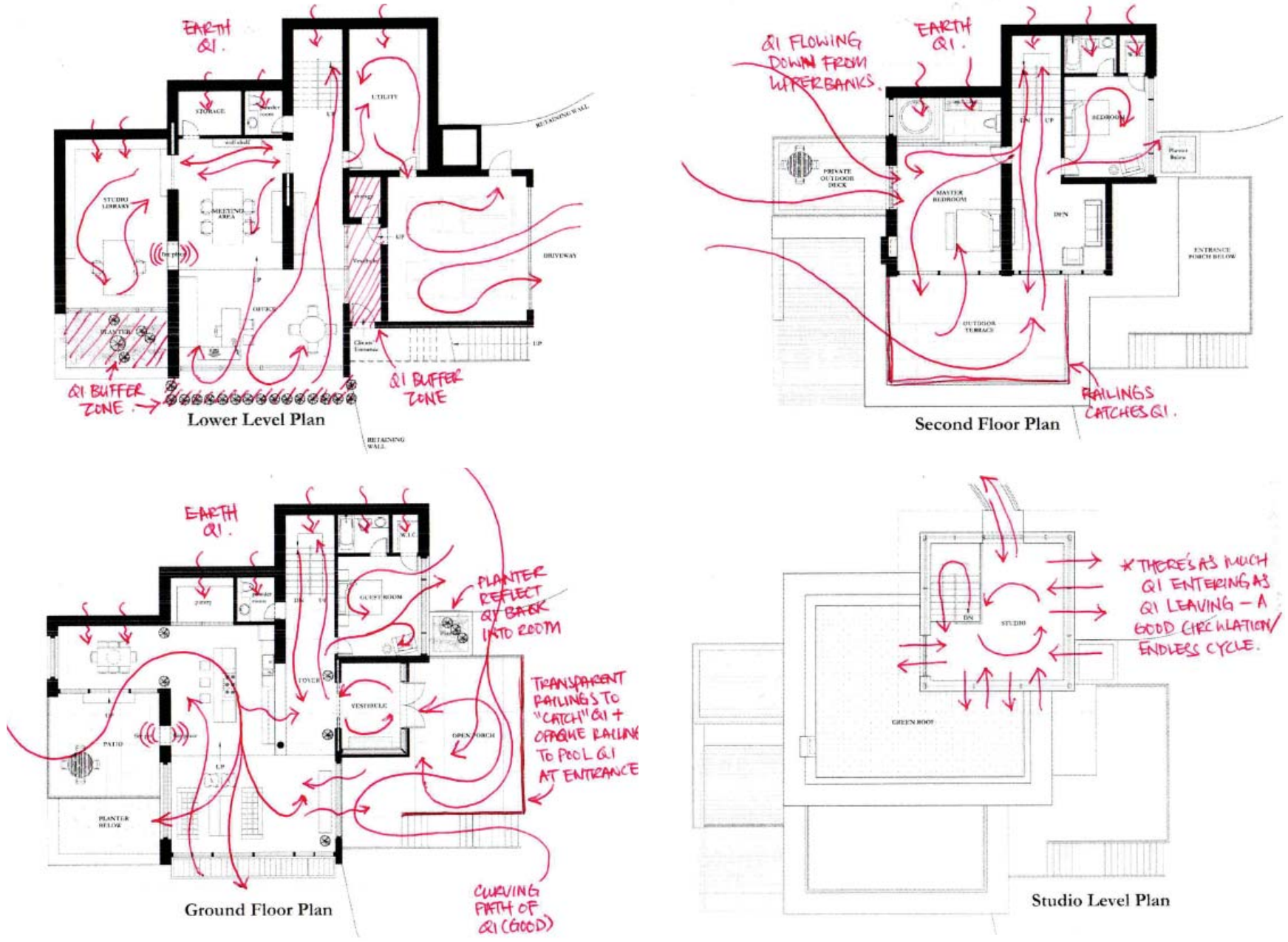
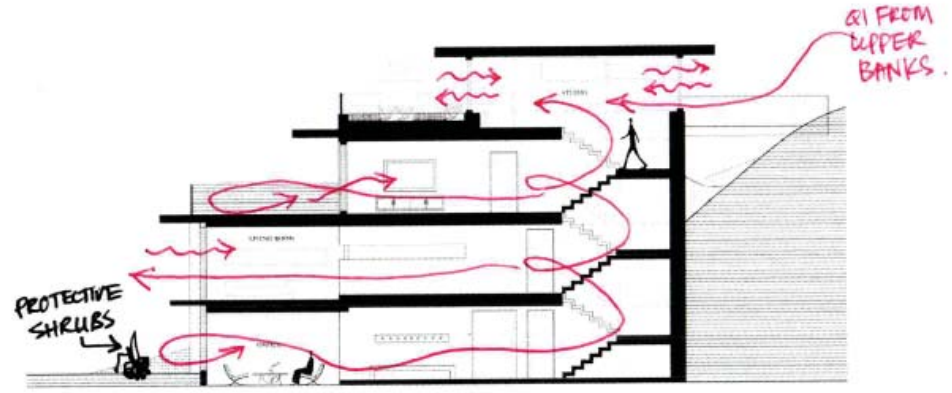
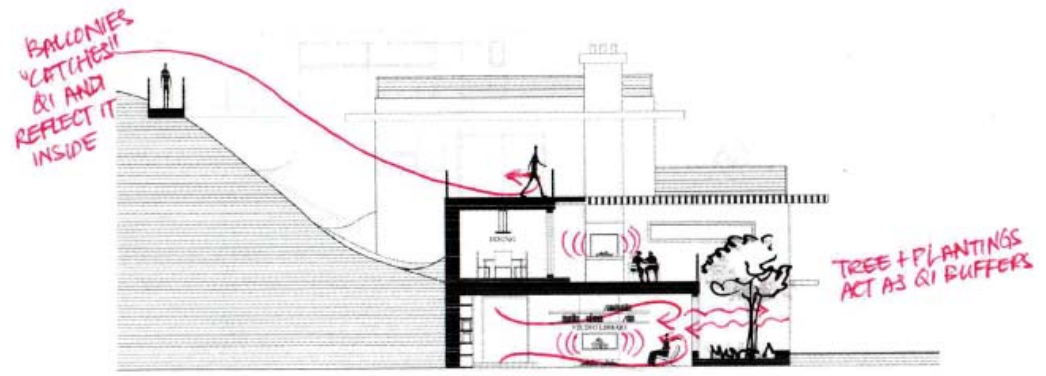


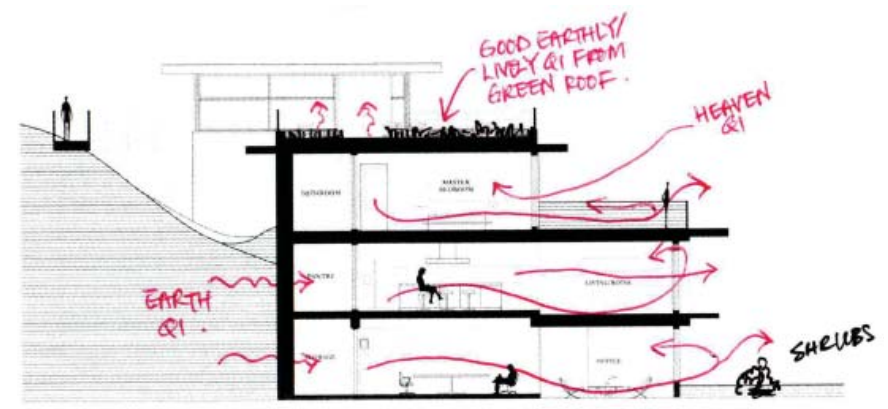
Fig. 7.33 Sketches of qi flow inside and around the house.



Section A-A



Section B-B



Section C-C

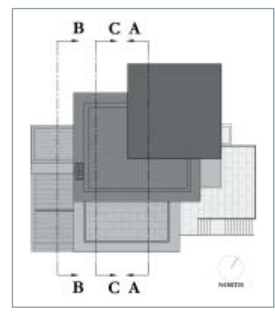


Fig. 7.34 House sections and sketches of qi flow.

glazed facades are all installed with operable windows to encourage natural air flow inside the house. This not only increases air circulation indoors, it also invites a flow of qi to invigorate an interior atmosphere that may have become stagnant overtime. To prevent from overheating, overhangs and trellises are placed strategically where necessary.

7.5 FLYING STAR GEOMANTIC CHART

NOW that the overall building design has been confirmed and the space distribution is completed according to the favorable directions derived from the Eight Mansion feng shui, the next step deals with the more local scale of the interior elements. A Flying Star chart needs to be drawn up to decode the condition of the different areas of the house. It is most optimal to have a south-facing house, which will coincide with Lloyd’s personal trigram of KUN 坤, the trigram of the southern direction. Next, a geomantic chart in a 3x3 grid needs to be drawn up to understand the patterns of energy that flow within a building. In a completed chart, there will be three different numbers in each of the squares or the Nine Palaces. The bottom number is the Earth Base star, which represents the energy of the cycle in which a house is completed. To lay out the appropriate Flying Star chart, an approximate date of construction is needed. For the purpose of this exercise, it has been hypothetically decided that the house is constructed in the year of 2008, meaning that this house belongs to the eight cycle of the Lower Era, which runs from the year 2004 to 2023. Therefore the Earth Base star of the house is 8, and this number is then placed into the Central Palace – the centre square of the Nine Palace grid. Due to the fact that there are a total of nine squares, the numbers from 1 to 9 will be filled out accordingly. To do so, one follows the pathway of the Nine Palaces, as shown in Fig. 7.36. This sequence of numbering can go either forward (yang movement) or backward (yin movement) depending on the nature of the stars. To complete the rest of the geomantic chart, we need to look up how the Facing and Sitting directions corresponds to the Mountain and Facing stars of the Flying Star method. The Mountain stars represent energy associated with the mountain direction, or the back of a house. From the initial reading of the site, the Facing direction is SSU and the Sitting direction is HAI. First, the facing direction of HAI is shown in the Cycle 8 diagram in Fig. 7.37. By locating the

Fig. 7.35 The 3 Eras and 9 Cycles.

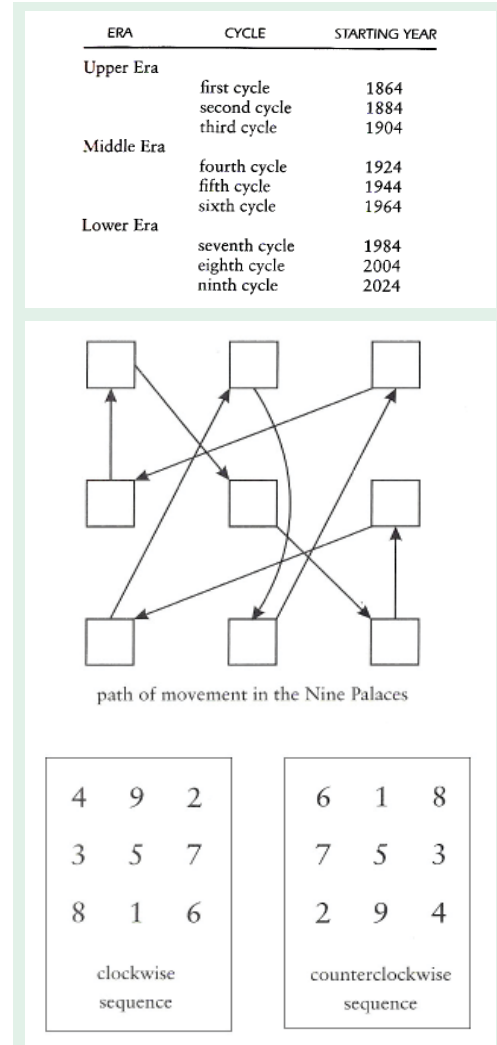


Fig. 7.36 The pathway of the Nine Palaces.

Fig. 7.37 The Cycle 8 diagram.

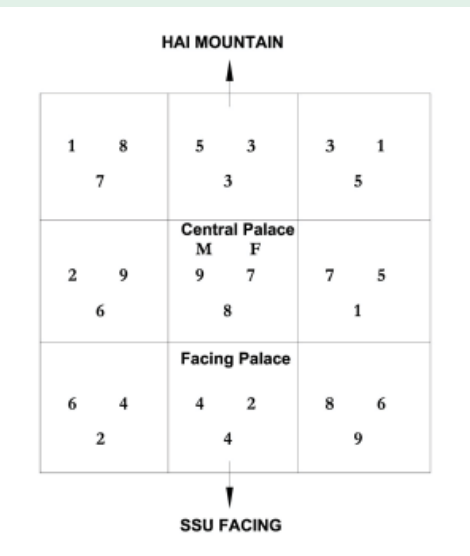
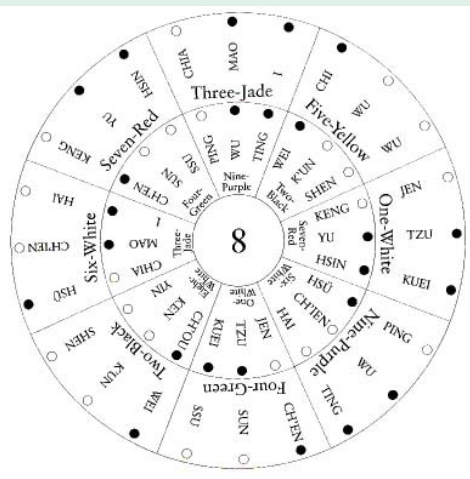


Fig. 7.38 The Flying Star geomantic chart for Lloyd's house.

HAI direction on the inner ring of numbers, it is revealed that it lies in the segment Six-White. Working outward from the HAI position is the Nine-Purple segment in the outer ring; therefore the number 9 is the Mountain Star that will go into the Central Palace in the Mountain Star position on the upper left. To find out whether the Mountain Star has a yin or yang movement, the cycle 8 diagram needs to be reviewed. In line with HAI on the outer ring is TING and beside it is a filled circle; this depicts a yin movement. A yin movement means that when filling out the Nine Palaces the pathway is filled out in a backward sequence; from 9, it is followed by 8 down to 1. The pathway remains the same in both yin and yang movement, only the numbering sequence changes either forward or backward. Since the Mountain Stars have a yin movement, the rest of the palaces are filled out. Next is the Facing Stars; since the Facing direction is SSU, it is located on the cycle 8 diagram and it shows that it is Four-Green on the inner ring and Seven-Red on the outer with a filled circle beside it. Therefore the Facing Star 7 has a yin movement, hence that is filled in the Central Palace and the rest is filled out according to the movement of the pathway in a backwards order. Fig. 7.38 shows the end result of the Flying Stars geomantic chart that will be utilized on the house for the remainder of this design process. This chart can now be applied to the house in all varying scales, but for this exercise this chart will be used on the internal organization of all the rooms in the house.

When a building is constructed, the energy on the site is subsequently captured inside the structure. By calculating a geomantic chart, it can reveal the pattern of energy that flows within a house or a particular space. Now that the chart for Lloyd's house is complete, the message in the Nine Palaces needs to be translated. First, from the yin movements of the Facing and Mountain stars of the site, a general relationship between the house and its relative position to water can be determined. When both the Facing and Mountain stars have a yin movement, this is called Backward Mountain/Facing Chart, meaning this house will have good fortunes regardless of its position relative to mountains and water. Next, the conditional interactions are examined because they have priority over the unconditional interactions. Conditional interaction refers to the interaction between the Earth Base and the Facing Star in the Facing Palace only in combination with the direction these stars are located in. There are different meanings between special combinations of numbers. For example, if the Earth Base and the Facing star in the east have a combination of 1 and 6, then this is an increasing energy which yields successful scholarly

pursuits especially in children. However, no conditional interactions are found in the chart for Lloyd's house, so now the unconditional interactions must be looked at. Unconditional interactions do not depend on special circumstances and its affects will occur only when specific numerical combinations of the Earth Base and Facing Star appear. Interactions found in the central palace will affect everyone in the household, while other combinations found in other sectors of the home will affect the activities in those rooms and the individuals using them. Unlike the conditional interactions, it is necessary to distinguish which number is associated with the Earth Base and Facing Star. For example, an 8-6 combination supports success in scholarly or artistic endeavors; the first number always refers to the Earth Base and the second number refers to the Facing Star. However, the chart for Lloyd's house does not contain any unconditional interactions either. In this situation, a third and final process must be done to interpret the chart for an accurate feng shui reading on the spaces inside the house. In the palaces of the geomantic chart where there are no conditional or unconditional interactions, the additive effects of the Earth Base, Facing Star and Mountain star need to be evaluated. This will be done for Lloyd's chart. The Facing Star embodies the highest level of energy, and the Earth Base imparts a mediocre level of energy, while the Mountain star's energy level is the lowest. The general rules for evaluating the additive effects of these three stars are listed below:

- A benevolent Earth base can neutralize a malevolent Mountain Star.
- A benevolent Facing Star can neutralize a malevolent Mountain Star with residual benefits.
- A benevolent Facing Star can neutralize a malevolent Earth Base.
- Both a benevolent Earth Base and Mountain Star are required to neutralize a malevolent Facing Star.
- Star that are neutral do not have influence over other stars.
- When stars are not used to neutralize the effects of other stars, their benefits are additive.
- If a star is used to neutralize a malevolent star in the same palace, its energy is tied up and cannot be used for other purposes.

The stars of the Nine Palaces and their effects are shown in Fig. 7.41. The overall Flying Star reading of Lloyd's house is shown below and on the next page:

Conditional Interactions: none

Unconditional Interactions: none

Fig. 7.39 The stars of the Nine Palaces and their effects.

PALACE STAR	EFFECT
one-white	benevolent
two-black	malevolent
three-jade	neutral
four-green	benevolent
five-yellow	malevolent
six-white	benevolent
seven-red	neutral
eight-white	benevolent
nine-purple	neutral in the company of neutral and benevolent stars malevolent in the company of malevolent stars

Additive Effects: numbers in this order: Earth Base (medium level of energy)/ Facing Star (highest level)/ Mountain Star (lowest level)

1st Row (at the top, from left to right):

7/ 8/ 1: neutral/ benevolent/ benevolent = very high level of positive energy

3/ 3/ 5: neutral/ neutral/ malevolent = low level of negative energy

5/ 1/ 3: malevolent/ benevolent/ neutral = medium level of benevolent energy

2nd Row:

6/ 9/ 2: benevolent/ 9-neutral/ malevolent = neutral (the 9 star is neutral in the presence of neutral or benevolent stars)

8/ 7/ 9: (Central Palace) benevolent/ neutral/ 9-neutral = medium level of good energy

1/ 5/ 7: benevolent/ malevolent/ neutral = there's a small amount of residual negative energy

3rd Row:

2/ 4/ 6: malevolent/ benevolent/ benevolent = medium level of benevolent energy

4/ 2/ 4: benevolent/ malevolent/ benevolent = neutral

9/ 6/ 8: 9-neutral/ benevolent/ benevolent = very high level of positive energy

By overlaying this chart on top of each and every room in the house, the rooms can be divided into nine squares similar to the chart and in order to distinguish the areas inside the rooms where the energy is beneficial for those who occupy the space. Of course, this chart is based upon the specific facing and sitting directions as well as the construction year of the house, so every chart will vary. There is a more advanced Flying Star method where it is concerned with another special relationship a building has with a unique star each year, aptly called the annual star. If it suits the owners of the house to do so, furniture or outdoor arrangements can be adjusted to the new chart calculated every year to ensure the best positioning according to the changes of time and its effects on the feng shui of the house.

**All information for the Flying Star charts is taken from Eva Wong's book, A Mater Course in Feng Shui.*

“This chart is based upon the specific facing and sitting directions as well as the construction year of the house, so every chart will vary.”

7.6 COLOURS

ELEMENTAL relationships are the main concern when it comes to the colour scheme of specific rooms in the house. Depending on the purpose of the room and the people that occupy the space the most, it is best suited to consult the interactions between the Five Elements to ensure a harmonic balance.

Foyer

The foyer is one of the most important spaces in a home, both architecturally and according to feng shui. It is the threshold to the initial experience of a home; its shape and colour can affect how it receives guests and incoming energies. It can also influence the general route of how the qi may be distributed. Foyers should generally be well lit so that qi can be positively altered to create a pleasant space that revitalizes low energy levels. It would be against feng shui principles to have a dark brown foyer for Lloyd even though it would pertain to the Earth element. Instead, having a lighter shade of blue (Earth controls the blue of Water), warm red tones (the red of Fire is productive of Earth), or white (Earth is productive of Metal) would be aesthetically pleasing as well as satisfying the elemental interactions. Using indoor plants to adorn the welcoming area of the home is not only visually engaging, it is also effective as a regenerator of qi or oxygen.

Living Room

As the public space that entertains guests, the living room should have visual stimuli to bring a lively and diverse atmosphere to the room. Lloyd's living room is directly adjacent to a large expanse of glazing which frames the ever changing scenes of nature. It creates a visual tie with the exterior while bringing a variety of colours and textures into the room itself. Living rooms can be many different colours; however using muted browns and bright yellows can help align the living room with the Earth element and link it metaphorically to being the central position of a house.

Kitchen

In feng shui, the kitchen is considered to be one of the most important spaces in a home, as people tend to spend a large amount of time there. It will be beneficial for Lloyd's kitchen to be decorated

Fig. 7.40 A brightly lit foyer with warm, inviting colours attracts positive energy.



Fig. 7.41 Using browns and yellows in the living aligns it metaphorically to the Earth element.

Fig. 7.42 Earth and Metal elements are suitable in the kitchen of this Earth house.



Fig. 7.43 The stars of the Nine Palaces and their effects.

in colours from the Metal or Earth element because fire dominates Metal and fire is productive towards Earth. This relationship is favorable in the kitchen because of the heat involved in cooking, and fire energy can be enhanced with white walls or accents from a metallic palette. Meanwhile, using earth-tone colours is an effective method of bringing an earthly element to spaces most frequently used. It is not advisable to have a red kitchen, as it will enhance too much of the fire element or, have too much black as that is synonymous with the element of Water. While it is not beneficial for Lloyd to use too much red or black, using these two colours as accents in small quantities will not affect the overall outcome of the energy of the kitchen. The Wood element is productive of Fire; therefore small amounts of wood furniture are also suitable.

Dining Room

Like the kitchen, the dining room is where families gather for socializing around food. However, instead of a Fire element that needs to be controlled, the dining room needs to cater to the stimulation of the palate, and light and bright colours are adept at that function. A blue-green, mint or aqua is the best colour to complement Lloyd's dining room space because it is closely aligned to the colours of nature and spring. It is the combination of blue and green, which by themselves are great colours for dining rooms, but because these two shades are associated with the Wood element and Wood dominates Lloyd's Earth element, a more balanced option of the two will be more beneficial for Lloyd. As well, blue or indigo actually have dual meanings. While blue can be associated with Wood or Water, it is also a mourning colour – secondary to white - for the Chinese¹.

Library

Lloyd's library is set on the lower level, close to the ground to embrace the quiet shadows and the beneficial qualities of earthly qi. Its location being closer to the ground allows natural foliage to act as screens which controls the amount of natural sunlight penetrating the room. This is helpful as strong sunlight can progressively destroy colour pigment in prints and therefore should be avoided. While a library should have a quiet atmosphere, it is not a meditative space, so its colour and decoration depends on the type of books that Lloyd plans to house. Since Lloyd prefers intellectual books, a warm brown or beige is an appropriate colour of his library as this colour symbolizes

depth, endurance and elegance. However, in a relatively yin room, the space can be balanced with the usage of the wood-burning fireplace. The room can be painted in rich brown with reddish hues to warm up the interiors of a space where sunlight can't penetrate.

Office

The use of colours in an office is especially influential on the effectiveness of work and business. In Lloyd's case, as a practicing architect, it is important to be well-rounded and open to ideas and inspirations to effectively develop long term relationships with clients. Using blues or greens are desirable as both colours symbolize growth. However, the better option is to surround the architect's work space with all the colours from the Five elements to achieve feng shui harmony while increasing business and creative output. A neutral green carpet can be laid as a continuation from the grass outside. Meanwhile, a simple white ceiling can reflect light downwards onto the workspace furnished with black furniture. Golden-yellow coloured walls create a warm and bright visual stimulus to enhance the imagination while red elements can be used in smaller amounts as a focal wall or decorating accents.

Bathroom

Due to its relationship with water, bathrooms can be a mixture of black and white, as the white Metal is beneficial to Water from the elemental production cycle; or it can be a combination of both in a soft dove gray. The neutral overall colours can be accented with towels or other objects in a brighter and intense shade of any colour for visual interest.

Bedroom

The colour of the bedroom depends on the person who occupies the space most and what goals they have or what they want to achieve. Since there are two guest bedrooms in Lloyd's house, the occupant is unknown and therefore a colour that is generally good for most people can be applied, such as light green or blue, being colours of hope and cultivation. Once a more permanent resident moves in, the colour can be changed and updated accordingly. For example, if it is a child that occupies that particular bedroom, education may be a primary concern and therefore green with some black accents will be able to promote inner growth and encourage deep thoughts.

Fig. 7.44 Using colours from all five elements to achieve feng shui harmony in the work space.



Fig. 7.45 A bathroom with grey walls is representative of the Water element.

Fig. 7.46 Warm colours and earthy materials are auspicious for the master bedroom.



“This particular dynamic composition of physical materials and their feng shui elements are combined to create a complete and continuous cycle of energy.”

■ 7.7 MATERIALITY

TO determine the appropriate usage of materials, their colour and elemental representation, the Five Element colour cycle and its principles should be utilized. One of the most auspicious cures to improve the overall qi of the house is to use all the colours of the Five Elements in a mutually “destructive” colour sequence². The destructive sequence refers to the cancelation of harmful energies; it does not mean that it is destructive to the atmosphere or the occupants inside the house. The elemental colour sequence is manifested into actual materials that are applied to the house from top to bottom. This particular dynamic composition of physical materials and their corresponding feng shui elements combined create a complete and continuous cycle of energy. To represent the Water element, a black or grey material can be used on the roof; working downward, certain elements should be red for Fire which will contrast with white or pale coloured exterior walls (for Metal). Low-lying green shrubs near the base of the house will be the Wood element, while the driveway remains connected to the Earth element with stone paving in an earth tone or with the use of gravel.

Another concern is the sustainable aspect of these materials. In selecting the company to purchase these materials from, the proximity of their plant or quarries to the building site plays a factor into the overall consideration of specific material choices. For a light façade, there are stone quarries in the area that specializes in limestone, which is a very common building product in this region. Limestone can be applied to the façade with a smooth finish, while the more natural rough textures can be used for low retaining walls for flower beds and also large steps in the garden. Owen Sound Ledgerock Ltd. is located about 82 km northwest of the building site. This equates to approximately 1.5 hours of transportation time to get materials from the quarry directly to the site. Another company called Ebel Quarries is located about one and a half miles west of Warton on Bruce Road 13 on the picturesque Bruce Peninsula of the Niagara Escarpment. This company specializes in dolomite limestone, also known as dolostone, which is a type of rock similar to limestone containing magnesium and is more durable. This quarry is 118 km away from the site, which translates to almost 2 hours of transportation time. Both of these companies will be able to provide a local

material that matches the light façade required to satisfy the feng shui balance of the colours and elements of the exterior of the house. The concrete material required for the foundation, overall structure and roof will be provided by Lafarge with their ready-mix plant in Barrie which is located 55km away. Another option is their other plant in Orillia, 74km from the site. The driveway can be simply laid down with gravel for a more raw and earthy approach. The wood pavilion can be constructed with salvaged timber from the clearing of the site.

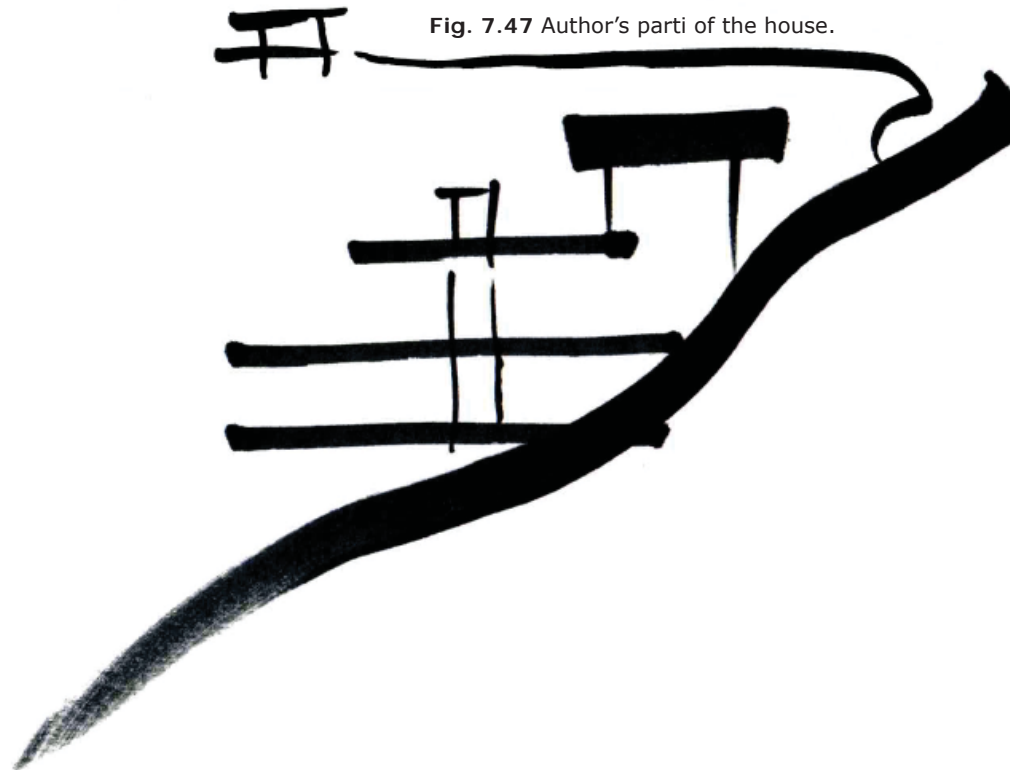


Fig. 7.47 Author's parti of the house.

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1. Sarah Rossbach. *Living Colour – Master Lin Yun's Guide to Feng Shui and the Art of Colour*. USA: Kodansha America, Inc., 1994, page 46.
 2. *Ibid.*, page 68.



Fig. 7.48 Southeast elevation.



Fig. 7.49 Northeast elevation.



Fig. 7.50 Northwest elevation.



Fig. 7.51 Southwest elevation.

Fig. 7.52 Looking up at the pavilion roof .

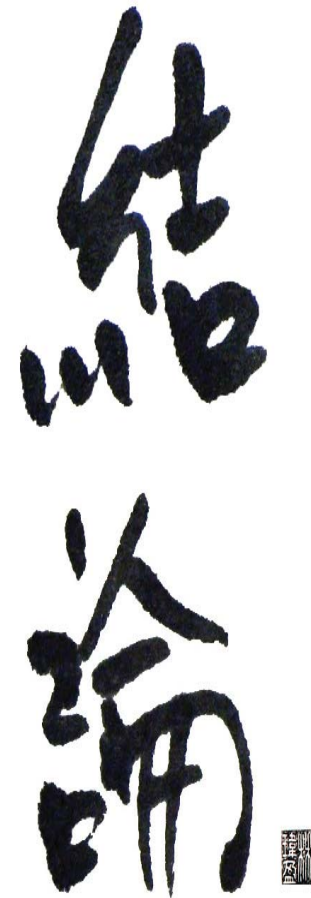


Fig. 7.53 The pavilion.

*Living in retirement beyond the World, silently
enjoying isolation. I pull the rope of my door tighter,
and bind firmly this cracked jar.
My spirit is tuned to the Spring-season;
at the fall of the year there is autumn in my heart.
Thus imitating cosmic changes, my cottage becomes
a Universe.*

- Lu Yun

CONCLUSION





■ 8.0 CONCLUSION: THE NATURE OF FENG SHUI

THE main purpose of this thesis is to explore the eastern philosophy of feng shui and to understand what role, if any, it should have in western architectural practices. Western culture has never been exposed to the eastern appreciation of the world as a place alive with unseen energies. The eastern approach envisions a reality where every space contains a distinctive energy that not only affects the well being of a person but the outcome of events. In the east, feng shui professionals manipulate the energetic essence of the built world. As the profession of feng shui is not prevalent in the west, this task naturally falls upon architects, planners and landscape architects. An architect who has been trained in the fundamentals of feng shui are able to visualize space with an alternate perspective. However, how can feng shui collaborate with western architectural practice? One option is going straight to the source of creative design and into the education of architects. The integration of feng shui with architecture results in a framework that holds a delicate balance between rational design and the world as an energetic place. With a distinct way of observing and respecting the environment, feng shui offers immense value to western culture and architectural design. Harnessing positive energy is a key principle in feng shui and therefore will be beneficial in any situation. If feng shui can be incorporated into the curricula of universities in China, why not apply this approach in the west? Perhaps now is the optimal time for schools of architecture to push the envelope by adding feng shui to new curricula. *"Fish cannot grow bigger if it is not transferred to a larger pond"* - 魚不過塘不會大的; this is a Chinese proverb portraying that one cannot grow, both physically and mentally, if one were to remain in the same environment. The appearance of feng shui in the west has introduced its philosophies to those outside Asia, offering a new approach to the problems of life; while the extensive use of feng shui in China has corrupted the practice. Through the rebirth of feng shui practices in western countries, new insights may be discovered due to differences in the understanding of feng shui fundamentals. In this case, the adoption of feng shui in the west creates a collaboration that is beneficial to both the east and west.

It is important to note that the study of feng shui should not be taken lightly. Any modification to the energy of a site may have substantial impact on those within the surrounding vicinity. In order

to have a solid grasp of all the fundamental theories of feng shui, one requires years of education and experience as well as an apprenticeship under a feng shui master. This thesis presents a general overview of how basic feng shui principles can influence the process of architectural design and how both approaches can work collectively to achieve a practical and energetic synthesis.

Feng shui and architecture share many similar considerations such as determining ideal building sites in the landscape, finding optimal orientation within these sites and coordinating the program, massing and layout of structures. However, the process of integrating traditional feng shui principles into western architectural profession will require redefinition of the understanding and application of several aspects of the practice:

1. Modern Influences of Qi: Due to changes in time and context of the contemporary living environment, the nature of qi is affected by many factors that were non-existent thousands of years ago when the practice of feng shui first came into being. For example, today's power lines or magnetic fields will affect the flow of qi thus changing its inherent nature. Therefore, certain ways of application will need to be expanded to adapt to the current urban setting. Despite these obvious changes in the world, the underlying forces of invisible energies in the universe remain an unchangeable fact.

2. Expansion of the Feng Shui Practice: Due to similarities between feng shui principles and sustainable design, there may be a possibility for the expansion of feng shui practices to include green strategies. With sustainable design quickly branching out to a wider audience, it is mandatory to determine which aspects of feng shui could be incorporated with its practice. The design of HVAC systems is a prime example. Conventionally, HVAC systems are used to guide the flow of conditioned air through the spaces of a building. By studying the technical aspects of HVAC systems, one may potentially discover a more scientific method of capturing and guiding the flow of qi. As both forms of energy ultimately affect the degree of comfort of a space, there may be a possibility of integrating feng shui to HVAC designs.

3. Feng Shui Education: Education of the basic principles of feng shui should be made a priority. Case studies and excursions to locations that embody feng shui elements will allow students to

"We no longer need to be delivered from evil, but rather released from the bonds of too rational an understanding of the world."

- Carl Fingerhuth



understand the broader sense of the practice. Recognizing how these basic principles can influence the way students observe a site will inherently affect the way they perceive the relationship between a site and a building. Subsequent portions of the course may focus on details of specific rules, methods and calculation of feng shui formulas. This delves into the technical aspect of feng shui and should be taught to compliment the basic principles.

4. Belief in Feng Shui: For westerners to believe in feng shui may prove to be a difficult task. The complex and unscientific nature of feng shui has been a subject of confusion and uncertainty even to contemporary Asian architects. Belief in its principles or practice does not contribute to the outcome of feng shui; instead, it only makes the outcome more meaningful. One of the most important aspects about this thesis is recognizing the value of being open to new ideas. As Andrew Levitt wrote in his book *The Inner Studio*, *"...in order for you to be receptive, you have to risk being vulnerable. To be open means letting go of self-judgment and criticism and just allowing something to happen. It means being willing to learn from what you encounter."*

5. Outcome of Feng Shui: There is a philosophical question regarding the observation and knowledge of reality, *"If a tree falls in the forest and no one is present to hear it, does it make a sound or does this tree exist?"* Even if no one is in the tree's vicinity to witness the fall and hear it, the tree still exists. Likewise, if there is no way of measuring the outcome or effects of feng shui, is feng shui then not effective? Practically speaking, if the individual experiences change in certain aspects of their life, then that is the best possible measured outcome of feng shui.

6. Enhancing the Senses: The exploration of feng shui principles in contemporary architecture should be centered on another way of perceiving and respecting the environment. This will serve to enhance one's personal senses and awareness of immeasurable energies that compose people's lives. Feng shui principles should not be regarded as restrictions; rather, they provide an enlightened philosophical underpinning that support and extends the creative senses of an architect.

The modern translation of feng shui into architecture will vary depending on the individuals' personal adaptation to the ancient principles, amounting to a new methodology that offers architects a tool

"To be open means letting go of self-judgement and criticism and just allowing something to happen. It means being willing to learn from what you encounter."

“Due to the underlying goals of feng shui principles, it can be considered an aspect of good building practice.”

to optimize design situations. The purpose of feng shui’s integration into architecture is not to replicate the structure of this ancient practice, but to explore how the knowledge of the energetic quality of a space can be applied to enhance peoples’ lives. In many ways, the principles of feng shui provide guidelines for designers to ensure that the spatial qualities and formal organization are aligned to harness positive energy. This energy will then be matched specifically to occupants and their particular needs. Due to the underlying goals of feng shui principles, it can be considered an aspect of good building practice.

During the research and design exercises, the most apparent obstacle was the difficulty in condensing the vast scope of feng shui into manageable components for design. In truth, feng shui principles are simply too broad for a novice to apprehend. It is crucial to have ample time and a mentor who can offer their expertise and guidance through the rigorous learning process. Without either, one can be left feeling overwhelmed. At times, it was difficult to maintain a balance between feng shui and architectural intuition because it is easy to lose oneself in the dogma of the methodology of feng shui. In doing so, the practice of feng shui only becomes a sequence of steps causing the designer to lose out on the symbolic world of invisible energies and impairing the architectural design potential in the process. Despite difficulties, it has proven to be a valuable journey. The path of feng shui learning is a humbling experience, realizing and coming to terms with the fact that human beings are a very small yet crucial part of a vast natural order. Through the practice of feng shui, the ancient Chinese developed a symbolic understanding of a respectful and nurturing attitude towards the unseen energies of the natural environment. Its philosophies teach the importance of balance and help form a cohesive relationship between Humans, Earth and Heaven. There are invisible boundaries between people’s lives and nature that should be eliminated making it essential to transform the differences between the rationality of cities and the unpredictability of nature into mutual respect. Only then may all elements can once again work together to form a harmonious platform for coexistence.

Feng shui has been a fundamental pillar upon which the Chinese culture was built, inspiring some of the most important architecture in the east. As the birthplace of feng shui becomes increasingly



westernized, the role of its practice is questioned, thus requiring new insights in order to regain a foothold in modern society. Feng shui is the eastern interpretation of Marguerite Yourcenar's quote in *The Memoirs of Hadrian*, "To build is to collaborate with the earth." The aim of feng shui is to recover the essence of a place and to create a more responsive relationship between a building, its occupants and the immediate environment. By respecting and manipulating the energies of the environment, occupants will be able to reap its benefits. With the creation of such spaces, people may once again experience nature and their surroundings more intimately. Regardless of whether feng shui is considered an impractical superstition, an ancient earth-centered practice or merely a popular trend, its current acceptance indicates a possibility for this practice to have a legitimate place in contemporary architecture, particularly for those who find value in its timeless principles.

Fig. 8.1 Juxtaposition of man and nature on the site.

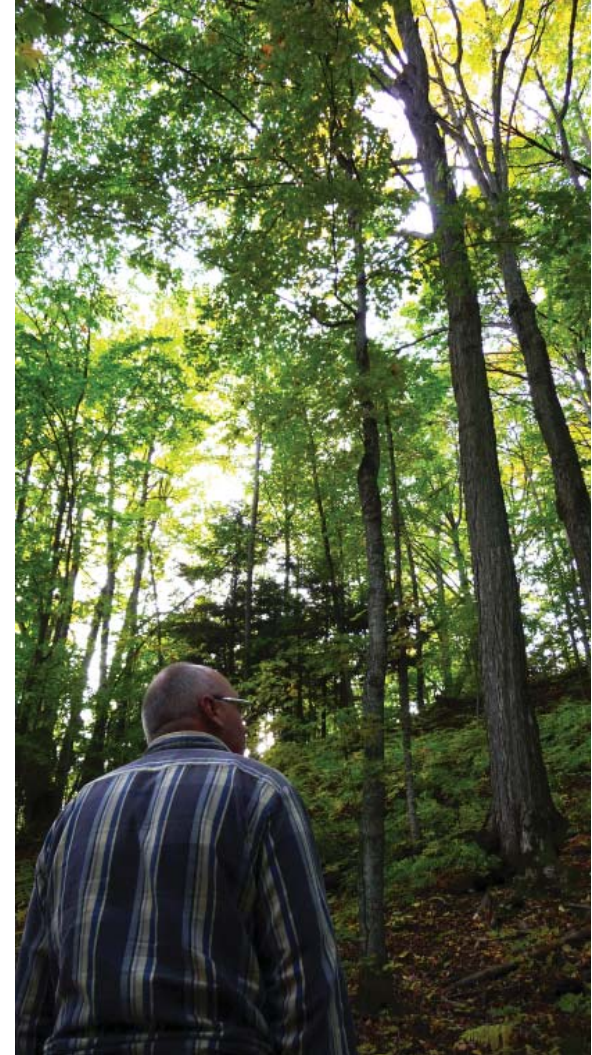


Fig. 8.2 Brilliant red maple leaves;
photograph taken in author's backyard.



Fig. 8.3 The view outside author's bedroom
window.

■ 8.1 EPILOGUE

OUTSIDE the window, golden leaves are swaying in the crisp autumn breeze. A large gust of wind sweeps over the trees and clusters of leaves shower to the ground. This picturesque scene is reminiscent of the poem that introduced this thesis. Unexpectedly, an alternative translation of the poem was found:

*Green green the grass upon the plain,
That each year dies to flourish anew,
That's scorched by flames yet unsubdued,
Surging back when spring winds blow.
Its fresh fragrance over runs the ancient roads;
Its sun filled greenness meets the ruined city's walls.
When once again we meet to say adieu,
Deep green are these parting thoughts of you.*

It is only at the end of this journey that the name of this poem was discovered – *The Grass upon the Ancient Plain: A Song of Parting*. In the end, the beginning is found; hence it is the end of a complete cycle. Although these words differ from the poem at the beginning of this thesis, it ultimately points to the same irrepressible nature of revolution. If channeled properly, feng shui can have a considerable impact on western architecture. Much the same as the prairie grass in the poem, buildings can be taken over by feng shui and rebuilt with a greater connection to qi and the environment. Caught in the turmoil of modern preoccupations, people are easily blind to the underlying simplicity of life. Feng shui preaches the importance of the natural cycles of this world, reminding people that this unchangeable truth must be respected. It does not matter what language is used in its explanation, where it is applied or how it is integrated; the key is for one to grasp the fundamental meaning of feng shui.

If this thesis has sparked the interest of at least one student, professor or architect, then its purpose has been served.

*You ask for what reason I stay on the green mountain,
I smile, but do not answer, my heart is at leisure.
Peach blossom is carried far off by flowing water,
For I have heaven and earth apart from the human world.*

- Li Bai

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www.malcanarrol.com

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www.fengshuicanada.net

Joseph Yu, **Feng Shui Research Center**, Richmond Hill, Ontario
www.josephyu.com
www.astro-fengshui.com

Helen Williams, **Place Right**, Toronto, Ontario
www.placeright.com

For other practitioners certified under The Feng Shui Association of Canada, consult this listing:
www.fengshuiassociationofcanada.ca/cert_members.html

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