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## **Feng shui: Changing Rules and Meanings**

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## **Abstract**

Feng shui is both traditional and it is modern. Today its current practices remind us how a cultural specific subject dating back thousands of years evolves over time. By concentrating on landscape related issues, this study does not only provide a critical history, but also reveals how feng shui has become so current. The fact that today feng shui is being perceived as a reflection of popular culture in place making activities is likely to remind us that a place can be somewhere we simply walk past or live in, but to which we may also feel some attachment as a result of which it provided with a sense of belief. By means of both a historical and contemporary review of practices, this study reviews feng shui in different socio-cultural contexts. This enables us to understand that ‘traditionalism’ in feng shui is a relative concept. Instead, the only constant in feng shui is its adaptability, which is why it has retained its relevance both past and present. A new perspective to understanding feng shui is provided by investigating its participants, whom were visited, interviewed, and observed, both in rural and urban environment in China. By comparing revived practices in the countryside, and re-invented practices in the city, it is revealed that the survival and adaptability of feng shui are granted by both its practitioners and its participants, who reflect the varying people’s needs of both identity and belonging in place making activities.



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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research Background.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Methodology and Methods.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Thesis Structure .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Translation and References .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>A Historic Timeline of Feng shui.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Glossary of terms.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Chapter 2. From Bu to Xiang: the Rise of a Belief in Place Making.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Power Claims in Place Making: Bu, Xiang and the Centre.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>From Chengzhou to Helv: Developed Skills of Xiang .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Remembering the Tomb: from ‘Mu’ to ‘Fen’ .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Significance of Tomb Surroundings .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Changed and Unchanged Conceptions of Kanyu: Uniting Regions and Social</b>	
<b>Groups .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>89</b>

<b>Kanyu: Its Change of Terminology and Social Perceptions .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>From the Plain to the Mountains: Changing Burial Site Preferences.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Pursuing Scenery: Evolving Relationship between the Culture of the Gentry and Kanyu.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Summarising the Preferences into a Common Belief: the Development of Kanyu Drawings ...</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Kanyu Practitioners: Who Were They and How Did They Work?.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Chapter 4. From Kanyu to Feng shui: Its Rise and Fall.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Kanyu in Late Imperial Society: a Continuing Custom .....</b>	<b>128</b>
Kanyu and Feng shui: What Were the Differences?.....	150
<b>From Every Day to Superstitious: the Re-interpretation of Feng shui in China in the Republican Period (1912-1949) .....</b>	<b>152</b>
The Relationship of Feng shui to ‘Superstition’ .....	156
<b>To Destroy the Old: National Policy on Feng shui in the Early People’s Republic of China (1949- 1978) .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Current Feng shui Practices in China .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Feng shui Xiansheng and Feng shui Dashi: a Background .....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Traditional Feng shui Practitioners and His Works.....</b>	<b>176</b>
Kan Yangzhai: House Design and Neighbourhood Planning.....	182
Tomb Evaluation .....	192
<b>Introducing ‘Modern’ Feng shui Dashi.....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Modern Feng shui Masters and Their Practices .....</b>	<b>203</b>



Conclusion .....	214
<b>Chapter 6. Preservation and Re-invention: A discussion on rural and urban feng shui ...</b>	<b>219</b>
Introduction .....	219
Rural Feng shui: a 'Legal' Tradition in the New Countryside.....	220
Urban Feng shui: Struggle to Survive .....	232
Feng shui Dashi and Their Path to Legitimacy .....	237
Urban Feng shui: a Solution or an Issue? .....	244
Conclusion .....	252
<b>Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>255</b>
Discussion.....	255
Conclusion .....	264
Significance and Recommendations for Future Research.....	268
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>270</b>
Chinese.....	270
Western .....	287
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>296</b>
Ethics Approval Letter .....	296

## Figures

- Figure 1. The sharps edges of the Bank of China building (1) were questioned for its aggressive feng shui and have impacted the design of the Cheung Kong Centre (3) and the HSBC building (2), which imitated a shield and a canon respectively. (Source: ‘Dialogue with the Master: I.M Pei Interview’, pp. 27-28. Remade by the author.) ..... 5
- Figure 2. External water feature of the BOC building was designed as a pool instead of a running stream in to reserve fortune as advised by feng shui principles. (Source: [https://www.soniapiazzini.it/archiblog\\_art.php?id\\_news=1128182114#GAF](https://www.soniapiazzini.it/archiblog_art.php?id_news=1128182114#GAF).) ..... 5
- Figure 3. A rural feng shui practitioner reading his feng shui compass to guide the construction of a house. (Photographed by the author, 2017.) ..... 7
- Figure 4. A feng shui practitioner presenting an amulet at the opening event of a real estate which adhered the effectiveness of feng shui ritual to its business. (Source: photographed by the author, 2014.) ..... 7
- Figure 5. ‘Bai Pi Xiang Yi Tu two/百辟享仪图二’ (1616-1912) described the king sitting on a square terrace in the center of the kingdom while the ambassadors from neighbouring tribes came and made their obeisance. (Source: *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*.) ..... 44

Figure 6. ‘Tai Bao Xiang Zhai Tu/太保相宅图’ (1616-1912), a Qing-dynasty produced illustration describing the King’s grand guardian’s site survey skills of observing surrounding environment, the soil and water flows. (Source: *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*, recreated by the author.) ..... 49

Figure 7. ‘Luo Yi Cheng Wei Tu/洛邑成位图’ (1616-1912), a Qing-dynasty produced illustration describing city making activities performed by the artisans, which were much different to what the Zhou dukes performed. (Source: *Shi Jing Tu Shuo*, recreated by the author.) ..... 58

Figure 8. ‘A map of Pingjiang city/平江图’ (1229) demonstrates the missing of the Helv city’s eastern gate. (Source: Suzhou library.) ..... 59

Figure 9. Map of the states in Spring and Autumn period, indicating the Yangtze River a rough geographical boundary of the different perceptions of early feng shui. (Source: *History of in Spring and Autumn period*, p. 12.) ..... 61

Figure 10. ‘All Under Heaven/天下图’ (206 BC–220 AD) in the *Shanhai Jing* described the sacred islands in an exaggerated scale, making these islands much bigger than the middle kingdom, that was, China. (Source: *Commentary of Shanhai Jing*, 2014.) ..... 65

Figure 11. Bi Wan’s reconstructed image of the JiangZhang palace (1776) demonstrated the garden pattern of ‘one pond and three mountains’ which located at the northwest of the palace. (Source: recreated by author from *GuanZhongShengJiTuzhi* / 关中胜迹图志, Volume32, p. 132.) ..... 65

Figure 12. The carved pattern on a Western Han dynasty bronze Mountain Censer (206BC-AD220) indicated that the scared mountains were associated with immortality. (Source: *ManCheng Han Mu Fajue Baogao*, (Beijing: WenWu Chubanshe, 1980), fig. 3, p. 64.) ..... 66

Figure 13. Tomb mound of YangLing, the tomb of emperor Jing (188-141BC) of the Western Han, imitates the shape of a jade seal. (Source: <http://www.hylae.com/list.asp?id=177>.) ..... 74

Figure 14. The jade seal of Zhao Mei (176-125BC), the king of the Nanyue State in the Western Han, demonstrates the common form of a jade seal which was imitated by royal tomb mounds. (Source: Museum of the Mausoleum of the Nanyue King.) ..... 74

Figure 15. A Western Han shi pan (202BC-AD8) unearthed in 1978 in Anhui province consisted of a round heaven disc and a square earth disc, carved with indications of orientation, time, and geomancy results. (Source: Anhui museum.) ..... 82

Figure 16. The ideal tomb surrounding for an Eastern Han scholar as described in Zhang Heng's ode consisted of pogoda trees, surrounding mountains, rivers, and a boundary identified by stones. (Source: created by the author.)..... 85

Figure 17. Records of Kanyu in the *DuHuang ZhaiJing* have suggested that social perceptions of geomancy in the Tang dynasty (618-907) reached to the far northwest part of the Tang state. (Source: created by the author.)..... 94

Figure 18. A surviving southern dynasty royal tomb was proved located in the mountainous area near to today's Nanjing by identifying the location of its remaining ritual tomb sculpture. (Source: Zhu Xie, *the Pictured Report of the Six Dynasties Period Tombs Location Investigation* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006), p. 46.) ..... 102

Figure 19. A reconstructive illustration of Jin's royal tomb which indicates the relationship between ritual tomb sculptures and the actual tomb site. (Source: Recreated by author, based on Cunjia Duoshi, 'Tomb Site Selection of the Southern Dynasty', in *Collection of Archaeology Studies*, ed. by Wanggan Shanjiao (Kyoto: Wanggan Shanjiao Commemoration, 1988).)..... 102

Figure 20. Jingling, a surviving northern dynasty royal tomb facing south, indicates a typical tomb mound. (Source: <https://baike.baidu.com/pic/%E5%8C%97%E9%AD%8F%E6%99%AF%E9%99%B5/4>

655382/0/b6045da91ecd81a21f17a2ef?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=b6045da91ecd81a21f17a2ef.) ..... 103

Figure 21. A picture demonstrating the favoured terrains around Jiankang city (1516). (Source: recreated by author, based on Chen Xin, *JinLingGuJinTuKao*.)..... 105

Figure 22. Locations of Western Han (202BC-8) and Tang (618-907) royal tombs showing Tang's royal tombs' mountainous locations in comparison to Han's tomb site preference of plain. (Source: created by the author.)..... 107

Figure 23. Tailing was constructed as a part of the mountain Jinli, hidden in the mountain ranges. (Source: Zhang Jianlin and others, 'Archaeological Report of Tailing', *Archaeology and Cultural Relics* (03) 2011, pp. 3-11 (4).)..... 107

Figure 24. A Song dynasty (960-1279) replica of the Luoshen Appraisal Painting /洛神赋图卷 originally created in the Jin dynasty (266-420) showing landscapes were merely the painting's embellishment. (Source: National Palace Museum.)..... 109

Figure 25. Li Sixun's hanging scroll (651-716) highlighted mountains instead of human figures, suggesting scholar-bureaucrats' rising appreciation to natural landscapes. (Source: National Palace Museum, Taipei.) ..... 109

Figure 26. A Song dynasty replica of ‘A Picture of Wangchuan’/輞川圖 (960-1279), the painter described his ideal habitat which was surrounded by waters and continuous mountains. (Source: National Palace Museum.)..... 110

Figure 27-28. Location differences between the capitals of the Northern and the Southern Song capital might be one of the reasons that the central governments preferred different burial rules. (Source: recreated by the author) ..... 113

Figure 29 . The Picture of Six Royal Tombs in the Song/南宋六陵图 (1616-1912) demonstrates Yongmaoling’s location in relation with the original site of the Taining Temple. (Source: Recreated by author, based on Xu Wei, *Local history of Kuaiji County in the time of Emperor Kangxi.*) ..... 115

Figure 30. An illustration in Qing dynasty edited *Hanlong Jing* indicated surrounding mountain forms of so called ‘ideal burial sites’ to provide instructions to its readers. (Source: *Hanlong Jing*, SuZhou Library.)..... 121

Figure 31. A Song dynasty tomb figure of kanyu practitioner holding a geomancy compass/宋执罗盘俑(960-1279) reflects the decreased social status and working methods of contemporary Song kanyu practitioners. (Source: China Maritime Museum.) ..... 124

Figure 32. ‘Picture of the Ming royal tombs /明十三陵图’ (1736) demonstrates the relationship between the Ming royal tombs and the Tianshou mountain range. (Source: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7822m.ct003414/>, accessed on 12/09/2017.) ..... 133

Figure 33. Illustrations in the *DiliCanZanXuanJiXianPoJi* (地理参赞玄机仙婆集) (1587) depicted the context of the family’s achievements, being recorded to claim the family’s social status. (Source: Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:1191948>. Accessed on 12/09/2016.) ..... 134

Figure 34. ‘Painting of Yongling of Qing/永陵图’ (1711-1799) claimed the legitimacy of the Qing royal clan by exaggerating surrounding mountains as it proved an ideal feng shui. (Source: The Palace Museum.) ..... 138

Figure 35. ‘Painting of Fuling of Qing/福陵图’ (1711-1799) indicated great similarity to the Painting of Yongling regardless their differences in reality. (Source: The Palace Museum.) ..... 138

Figure 36. Yangshi Lei’s (1875-1912) ‘Illustration of Huiling/惠陵图 (1875-1912) was arranged in north-south direction, showing the relationship between Huiling’s ritual buildings and surrounding mountains, or so called ‘xing shi’. (Source:大田省一,井上直



美, 東京大学東洋文化研究所所蔵清朝建築図様図録 (東洋文化研究所報告 山愛書院), 2005.)..... 139

Figure 37. ‘Buildings of Huiling in the central axis / 清惠陵中一路立样手卷设色纸本’ (1845-1907) presented the east elevation of huiling’s ritual buildings in relation to the mountain on the north end. (Source: Artron audition online catalogue, 2013. <http://auction.artron.net/paimai-art5034390005/>. Accessed on 09 August 2016.)..... 140

Figure 38. The actual view of the mountain on the north of Huiling when one standing in the central axis. (Source: recreated by the author.)..... 140

Figure 39. In Yangshi Lei’s (1616-1912) ‘A feng shui drawing of Dongling/东陵风水形势全图’ (1616-1912), mountains of good feng shui were marked by red notes in relation to royal tomb sites, which were marked by yellow notes. (Source: 中国国家图书馆 <<http://www.nlc.cn/nmcb/gcjpdz/yyl/>> [accessed on 28 July 2017].)..... 141

Figure 40. The report of Ying Nian to the court (1891) described how the kanyu of the Summer Palace should be performed with a clear explanation of when the actions should be taken. (Source: *Official Guangxu Memorial, Reports on Constructions*, 1891, p627.)..... 144

Figure 41. The main gate of Jinan grand exam hall (c.1906), constructed in a standard exam hall format, might have provided a reference to the Hangzhou grand examination hall

which was not recorded by illustrations. (Source: Ernst Boerschmann, *Picturesque China: Architecture and Landscape*.)..... 149

Figure 42. The main gate of Guangzhou grand exam hall (c.1894) was named ‘Longmen’, the dragon gate, which reflected its geomancy value to the candidates. (Source: <[http://www.sohu.com/a/140905958\\_526351](http://www.sohu.com/a/140905958_526351)>.)..... 149

Figure 43. A diviner (middle) sit in between of a barber and a peddler in the late Qing dynasty, suggesting both his limited social status and the profession’s wide social acceptance. (Source: John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), Vol. 3, No. 25, ‘Street Groups, Kiu-Kiang’. ) ..... 149

Figure 44. A kanyu practitioner holding geomancy devices in his hands when working for a local gentry (1908-1924). (Source: George Bradford Neumann, *China in Transition: Pictures of life in China during the transition from the last dynasty to the modern world*.) ..... 150

Figure 45. Frequency of use of the terms of ‘zhishi’ (knowledge), ‘changshi’ (common sense), and ‘mixin’ (superstition) from 1875-1915 indicates that they were only widely used after the 20th century (‘From Gewuzhizhi to Kexue and Shengchanli: A Study of Knowledge Systems and Cultural Relationships from the Perspective of Intellectual History’, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica*, p129.)..... 159

- Figure 46. Jiangnan area is an important economic and cultural center in southern China as well as where the attempt of defending feng shui was rised during the Republican period (1925-1948). (Source: drawn by the author.)..... 160
- Figure 47. A republican feng shui book (1926) summarised and named mountain forms in relation to burial feng shui comprehensively, giving convenience to the practitioners and other users. (Source: Suzhou library, photographed by the author, 2015.) ..... 167
- Figure 48. An advertisement on Shen Bao in 1928 introduced the length and fee required for an accredited feng shui course was listed among medicine advertisements. (Source: Shen Bao/ 申 报 , issue 12, 1928, p. 12. Online database of Shen Bao, <<http://shenbao.dachengdata.com/tuijian/showTuijianList.action>>, [accessed on 01 September 2016].)..... 167
- Figure 49. An illustration of ‘destroy astrology’ (1928) published on Pictured Jing Bao indicated Republican government’s determination to suppress feng shui. (Source: Pictured Jing Bao/图画京报, issue 23, 1928, p. 2.)..... 168
- Figure 50. A diviner and his clients in Meixian (today’s Meixian district in Guangzhou city), Guangdong province interacting openly in early communist period (1946-1951)..... 169

Figure 51. Wuyi is a mountainous city which locates in the middle Zhejiang Province, approximately 205km to the provincial capital Hangzhou. (Source: Created by the author.) ..... 178

Figure 52. The writings on the front wall of Tao’s living room indicate Tao’s family ‘tang hao’, a special title that was past among the household for generations and proves his heritage as a feng shui practitioner. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 181

Figure 53. Tao’s feng shui book *Bai Nian Jing* was passed down from his family, whose high literacy was demonstrated by the handwriting on the book’s front page. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 181

Figure 54. Tao travels from Tao village to Daxikou village driving his electric tricycle, a common transport among local rural residents. (Source: photographed by author, 2016.) ..... 183

Figure 55. Jin Chengyi’s site in relation to his neighbours Yang and Jin Zan’s houses. (Source: created by the author, 2016.) ..... 187

Figure 56. Jin’s site was an empty area locates at the west of Yang’s house, which’s gate was pointed to by the southeast corner of the site. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 187

Figure 57. Tao reading the indication on his ritual ruler when putting in on the southeast corner of Jin’s proposed house plan and suggested the design was auspicious for Jin but harmful to Young’s family. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 188

Figure 58. Tao’s profession as a feng shui practitioner requires him to work as a mediator for local communities by developing negotiations between neighbours. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 188

Figure 59. Jin Chengyi’s neighbour adjusting his chimney direction under Tao’s instruction to avoid possible harm to Jin’s new house. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)189

Figure 60. Tao, acted as the agent between the house owner and the God of the Earth, writing a ‘Qishu’ which was believed to be an official contract between the two parties. (Source: photographed by author, 2016.) ..... 189

Figure 61. Hong Fu’s house in relationship to her neighbour’s and surrounding buildings. (Source: Created by the author, 2016.) ..... 191

Figure 62. Chang Shou covered her yard as advised by Tao so that her bedrooms can be protected from the aggressive Qi which was brought by the neighbour’s building. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 192

Figure 63. Tao reading instructions on his feng shui compass while standing in front of one of the potential tomb site adjusting himself as well as the compass constantly to get a precise result. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)..... 197

Figure 64. Tao explaining the mountain forms in front of the decided tomb site and suggested that by burying the deceased on the site the family will benefit from fortune. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 197

Figure 65. Wu giving feng shui advice to his client’s house plan by operating on his computer, which was installed with various feng shui software that calculates dates and orientation in accordance with Chinese astrology. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.).. 201

Figure 66. Wu used Google Earth to demonstrat an auspicious burial site which was chosen for a powerful local family whose achievements validated his ability to conduct proper feng shui burial. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.) ..... 201

Figure 67. One of Liu’s certificates which indicates his appointment as a vice dean at the International *I-Ching* Research Institute. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.) ..... 208

Figure 68. Liu’s office was also the living room of his apartment, in which various feng shui objects were displayed for sale. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.) ..... 208

Figure 69. A feng shui fountain displayed at Liu’s was believed to be able to attract fortune to one’s house. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)..... 208

Figure 70. Each amulet displayed at Liu’s was believed to have feng shui effect on one’s house and garden, although amulets are Daoism objects rather than feng shui historically. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)..... 209

Figure 71. Liu analysing the house plan on his computer for two clients, indicating the popularity of feng shui software. (Source: Photographed by the author, 2015.)..... 209

Figure 72. Xian and Du’s store background demonstrates both a Bodhisattva and a Daoist Ba Gua, indicating the practitioners’ complicated belief background. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)..... 213

Figure 73. Du’s feng shui practice for a new apartment depended on compass reading and computer analysis of the householders’ date of birth. (Source: Du Jinliang, 2015.).... 213

Figure 74. Teng’s skill of drawing amulets by hand for different client requirements was considered proof of his great capability. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)214

Figure 75-76. The wide participation of registered local churches’ religious events has become the new norm in rural China, overcoming the social importance of other local Chinese

religions. (Source: Chinese Seventh-day Adventists website, <<http://www.zgaxr.com/Item/1446.aspx>> [accessed on 02 September 2017].)..... 232

Figure 77. The news report of government officials being dismissed due to ‘feng shui gate’, published in 2013, was a reflection of the central government’s attitude towards party members’ involvements in feng shui. (Source: *People’s Daily Online*, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1025/13216723.html> > [Accessed on 09 May 2017].) ..... 237

Figure 78. Despite the central government’s tight control, feng shui was carried out on the roof of a local court building in Changchun, Jilin province, aiming to spare the court from being interrogated by the procuratorate. (Source: *People’s Daily Online*, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1025/13216723.html> > [Accessed on 09 May 2017].) ..... 237

Figure 79. Prices of feng shui services have clear indications and range from few thousands Chinese Yuan to tens of thousands. (Source: the Chinese Feng shui committee website <<http://www.zgfs58.com/>> [Accessed on 12 August 2016].) ..... 244

Figure 80. Ma Yansong’s Shanshui City project echoed traditional Chinese landscape aesthetics but had no relevance to feng shui. (Source: ‘Shanshui City’, Ma Yansong, 2014, MAD Architects, photographed by Laurian Ghinitoiu.).....252



Figure 81. A view between the mall building which has sharp decorations pointing directly towards the hospital and the round-edged hospital building explained the feng shui confliction between the two buildings. (Source: photographed by the author, 2014.).....252



# Chapter 1. Introduction

Today the impact of feng shui is felt widely in China and elsewhere. The subject has been constantly reformed in response to changes in the social environment, demonstrating its adaptability in dealing with outdoor spaces including site selection, orienting, and burial. This study therefore looks at feng shui's long evolution and development into its modern form in relation to place making activities.

Feng shui (风水. 风: wind; 水: water), the Chinese geomancy, is believed to be able to harmonise man and surrounding environment by manipulating Qi (气, air), the core energy of the universe. The history of feng shui can be dated back to the Warring States Period (ca. 475-221 BCE), yet regardless of time and location, the aim of feng shui remains the same, that is, to attract Qi to dwellings and graves. By doing this it is believed that people and their descendants can achieve fortune which particularly highlights wealth and fertility. The performance of feng shui is not a specific function dealing with the making of dwellings and graves alone, but part of a broad action of creating an auspicious place that affects the site and its surroundings. The practice of feng shui is made by feng shui practitioners, who are specifically trained either by apprenticeship or feng shui courses. A feng shui practitioner reads the instruction on feng shui compass, a traditional instrument which consists of concentric rings arranged around a magnetic needle, to determine if a specific orientation is auspicious. Besides compass reading, a practitioner's initial observations and reading of a place are also of great importance to feng shui practice. Feng shui is long considered important to Chinese

architecture and planning, while its social and anthropological values as a popular religion are also noticed during the past few decades. Although feng shui was declared ‘superstitious’ and determined illegal during the early communist era (1960’s to late 1970’s), it has been revived after the Reform and Opening Up in 1978.

Today feng shui has been popularised globally, but the centre of its practice remains in China, while the Chinese remain the most influential participants. I.M.Pei’s experience in designing the Bank of China building in Hong Kong (1985) provides an illustration of the impact of feng shui in modern Chinese culture. The leading American architect’s design was challenged by feng shui concepts which required him to provide alternatives to his design. Reactions to Pei’s design were centred on its ‘feng shui issues’. One of the most widely reported responses was by David Clive Wilson, then the governor of Hong Kong, who planted willow trees in the government house garden to ‘defend [against] the aggressive energy brought by the BOC building’.<sup>1</sup> The willow trees died later, which was interpreted as proof of the efficiency of feng shui. Although Pei considered feng shui issues a hindrance to his vision, a compromise was almost inevitable. Pei had to work with the belief that the positioning and arrangement of a building should adhere to certain rules, not necessarily rational, in order to ‘ensure good fortune’ for its occupiers. This wouldn’t be so surprising if concerns about feng shui had been raised by local society and those who lived in Hong Kong. But Pei’s client, the Bank of China, were

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<sup>1</sup> 凤凰卫视, <与大师对话 – 杨澜访谈贝律铭>, 《文汇报》, 2005, 页 27-28. / Phoenix Satellite Television, Dialogue with the Master: I.M Pei Interview, *Wenhui Newspaper*, 2005, pp. 27-28.

attentive to these matters even though they had been forbidden from employing feng shui by government decree in 1985. Pei's initial design, with huge crosses on the building's surface and sharp edges, was criticized by local feng shui culture. The crosses were believed to be associated with death, and so negative for the occupiers, while the sharp edges might harm surrounding buildings. When asked by the BOC, Pei removed most of the crosses, but the edges remained. After the building was completed in 1990, the adjacent HSBC building was provided with two canon-like features in 1991 on the roof to defend it against BOC building's aggressive energy. The Cheung Kong Centre in the middle was designed in 1995 and completed in 1999. It was designed in the shape of shields to defend the aggressive energy from both its neighbour buildings. Figure 1 demonstrates the looks and relationship between the BOC building (1), the HSBC building (2), and the Cheung Kong Centre (3).

Within the BOC building courtyard, local feng shui practitioners proposed a pond to stop the water flow alongside the building (Figure 2). Pei's initial plan for flowing water across the building from the back gate to the front was replaced by a pond at the back to suit the feng shui rule. In this way water, which feng shui considers represents wealth, was reserved by the pond and no longer running away from the bank building. In this case Pei credited the feng shui master's knowledge and described the requirement as 'reasonable'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 凤凰卫视, < 与大师对话 – 杨澜访谈贝律铭 >, 页 27-28. / 'Dialogue with the Master: I.M Pei Interview', pp. 27-28.

This example shows feng shui being applied in a modern context. A professional had to work with the public and pushed his idea against local culture. It is not the intention of this thesis to prove that I.M.Pei and David Clive Wilson actually believed in the effectiveness of feng shui. On the contrary, they can be identified as typical non-believers whose involvement only shows feng shui being treated as a useful societal construct. This is illustrated by Pei's negotiation with feng shui, in which he demonstrated a western designer's doubt as to the rationality of the theories. He described Hong Kong residents as 'the most superstitious people one could ever know', saying that for him, it 'was not possible to believe in feng shui, however it is part of architecture'.<sup>3</sup> Since its adoption for such large building projects, feng shui has developed a wider appeal, not only in China but also in the west, where it has been understood as not just introducing specific features, but also the decluttering of interior spaces, incorporating western perceptions of Chinese religions and linked to populist notions of modernism that also saw a revival in the 1980s and '90s.

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<sup>3</sup> <与大师对话 – 杨澜访谈贝律铭>, 页 27-28. / 'Dialogue with the Master: I.M Pei Interview', pp. 27-28.

*Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.*

**Figure 1. The sharp edges of the Bank of China building (1) were questioned for its aggressive feng shui and have impacted the design of the Cheung Kong Centre (3) and the HSBC building (2), which imitated a shield and a canon respectively. (Source: 'Dialogue with the Master: I.M Pei Interview', pp. 27-28.)**

*Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.*

**Figure 2. External water feature of the BOC building was designed as a pool instead of a running stream in to reserve fortune as advised by feng shui principles. (Source: [https://www.soniapiazzini.it/archiblog\\_art.php?id\\_news=1128182114#GAF](https://www.soniapiazzini.it/archiblog_art.php?id_news=1128182114#GAF).)**

Though not always known as feng shui but as xiang zhai (Chinese: 相宅), xiang di (Chinese: 相地) and kanyu (Chinese: 堪輿), the discipline was mainly used for two purposes, including the pursuit of wealth and fertility, since the Warring States Period (475–221). In the west these practices have been associated with superstition since the nineteenth century, particularly by the Christian missionaries in China, who associated it with similar practices in the West. Influenced by this, feng shui fell out of official use in China during the Republican period (1912-49) while still maintaining its popular appeal. It was later prohibited during the early Communist era (1949-78), when the subject was actively suppressed and virtually disappeared. After the Reform and Opening-up policy which was launched in 1978, feng shui has seen a gradual revival in mainland China, while in places like Hong Kong and Taiwan the practice was never really eradicated.

The origins of current feng shui practices require particular care to be understood because of the period of suppression in mainland China. A feature of modern practice to be noted is the diversity of current interpretation, which seems to be a response to the modern social environment rather than a manifestation of its traditional form. The adaptability and transformation of current practice is a main focus of this research. In mainland China, feng shui was preserved and revived in the countryside, where feng shui masters had to hide their tools during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). It had mainly been used for determining grave sites, the orientation of domestic buildings and village planning. It was also re-invented in cities, where it has been adapted in order to enhance people's good fortune, and where certain interior decorations provide evidence of the occupiers' ethics.

This is not the way feng shui has been conceived in academic studies, where there has been great emphasis on issues related to landscape, planning and architecture. The majority of modern studies have attempted to reinforce and enhance its credibility, even though it is linked to popular beliefs. In China feng shui's credibility has been increased by emphasising innovation, with the practice renamed as scientific feng shui, though this description has little relevance to its original notions. Both research into and the practice of current feng shui have been influenced by the notions of scientific feng shui about the way it is perceived and used. By concentrating on urban environments, many of the old practices and the discipline's overarching concern for the ways in which this linked to people's lives and their relationship with the land, are now poorly understood, even though there is an emphasis on this in historic research. In many cases there is a lack of understanding how feng shui related to daily life, and it is seen instead as something odd or extraordinary.



The present revival and modern re-invention are contextualised here with respect to historic practice, in order to assess the validity modern conduct, and assessing whether feng shui is now a luxury, or whether it continues to be an integral part of people's thinking and life. In rural China, feng shui remains a strong association to its historic form. Such traditional practice is tolerated by local government and continues to guide daily construction activities (Figure 3). Through feng shui, local residents have developed a strong sense of 'community'. In urban environment, however, feng shui struggles to be legalised. This has impelled the participants of feng shui to re-invent of the subject. As a result the practice of feng shui has very little relevance to its historic rules but has become a reflection of contemporary popular beliefs (Figure 4). These on-going issues are essential to the understanding of feng shui but are neglected in existing studies.



**Figure 3. A rural feng shui practitioner reading his feng shui compass to guide the construction of a house. (Photographed by the author, 2017.)**

*Figure removed in accordance to consent.*

**Figure 4. A feng shui practitioner presenting an amulet at the opening event of a real estate which adhered the effectiveness of feng shui ritual to its business. (Source: photographed by the author, 2014.)**

This thesis attempts to re-evaluate feng shui practice from a human perspective, to try and understand how it has influenced and is influencing people's lives, and how this has affected the way landscapes have been designed and conceived, for the living and for the afterlife, in the belief that good fortune will come to those who have commissioned these practices. In order to do this, it is important to first have a basic understanding of how the practice arose, why, and by whom it was practiced, and how it evolved over time as a popular belief, in a series of chapters dealing with the history of the practice. When reviewing current feng shui practice, the same questions will be explored, borrowing methods from anthropology. Through observations and interviewing, these chapters highlight a concern amongst individuals and their interpretations of feng shui in different contexts, as well as their experiences in the process of practising it.

Overall this study intends to provide a new perspective which places feng shui in relevant social contexts and develops an understanding of the reason it is (and was) needed. The modern evolution of feng shui has been encouraged by the negotiation between the state and reviving popular beliefs. Therefore this study is nourished by the knowledge that feng shui as a place making method can be extended, re-interpreted and practised as a socio-cultural expression in corresponding to changing social environment. To understand how feng shui practice in place making activities is perceived in current social context, and how its interpretation can be amended to correspond with a changing environment are the two fundamental motivations of this study.

## Research Background

Feng shui is treated as the foundation of Chinese historical planning, a popular religion, and a living tradition by existing studies. But it remains unexplored how the subject interacts with outdoor place making activities both historically and currently, despite various existing studies that attempted to address its architectural significance. Below discussed literature analyse existing feng shui studies to further identify this research gap.

Research on feng shui, a local Chinese subject, was first carried out by westerners in the nineteenth century. Contemporary Missionaries actively recorded feng shui in the descriptions of events which they either participated in or observed in China. These studies introduced feng shui for the purpose of denying it, believing that it was to blame for difficulties in promoting Christianity in China, in promoting trade and the 'gospel of natural science'.<sup>4</sup> That feng shui was treated by those missionaries as a source of superstitions in China was unsurprising. Reverend J. Edkins, for instance, was 'outraged' by the popularity of feng shui and commented that 'the Feng-shui of China deserves to be examined for it is one of the great obstacles to the progress of civilization.'<sup>5</sup> E.J. Eitel, who had worked in Hong Kong, described how feng shui was used as a tool against projects led by the westerners:

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<sup>4</sup> E. J. Dukes, *Everyday Life in China* (London: The Religious tract society, 1885), p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Edkins, 'Feng shui', *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, 4 (1872), 272-81.

‘When the Hong Kong government cut a road, now known as the Gap, to the Happy Valley, the Chinese community was thrown into a state of abject terror and fright, on account of disturbances which this amputation of the dragon’s vein would cause to the feng shui of Hong Kong; and when many of the engineers employed at the cutting died of Hong Kong fever, and the foreign houses built in the Happy Valley had to be deserted on account of malaria, the Chinese triumphantly declared that it was an act of retributory justice on the part of feng shui.’<sup>6</sup>

Eitel was outraged by the power of feng shui among Chinese people. He believed that feng shui was nothing but a ‘black art’ had driven the Chinese to be ‘deeply devoted rather than the obscure answer of wind and water’.<sup>7</sup> But the subject’s social significance was evident in their accounts, nevertheless.

Feng shui was investigated as a design method by following western studies in the mid-twentieth century. Academic interests toward feng shui tended to centered on what were designed under the guidance of the subject as they ‘embodied an aesthetic component which accounted for great beauty in the siting of farms, houses, and villages throughout China’.<sup>8</sup> A

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<sup>6</sup> E. J. Eitel, *Feng-Shui: The Science of Sacred Landscape in Old China* (London: Synergetic Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Needham and Ling Wang, *Science and Civilization in China*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 363.

feng shui site, according to Andrew March, ‘could be attractive even to the western scoffers.’<sup>9</sup> He quoted F.S.T’s description of feng shui site as a reference:

‘In some mountain valley the traveller remarks a handsome, well-kept tomb of a horseshoe shape, resting against the side of a rounded hill, backed by loftier heights and flanked by declivities gently falling on either hand into the plain, over which a broad and silvery stream meanders. The beauty and peacefulness of the retired scene impresses his mind and he muses half-aloud: “There must be poetry in the Chinese soul after all. Was I a native of the land, just such a spot could I select for my last resting-place, and here, when my sorrowing friends could come to mourn my loss, the soothing influence of nature’s everlasting strength and calm would breathe an undefined sense of consolation to their breasts”. But his guide annihilates his kindling sympathies by the information that either affection or poetry, but feng shui fixed upon this hillside for the grave’.<sup>10</sup>

Although these feng shui plannings were initially described as an important breakthrough in the field of Chinese architecture,<sup>11</sup> the subject’s interaction with outdoor space was noticed. The Ming royal tombs, for instance, was considered ‘the most meaningful and influential

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew. L. March, ‘An Appreciation of Chinese Geomancy’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 27 (1968), 253-267 (p. 255).

<sup>10</sup> F.S.T., ‘Feng-Shui’, *Cornhill Magazine*, 29 (1874), 338.

<sup>11</sup> *Science and Civilization in China*, p. 363.

example for the combination of architecture and landscape'.<sup>12</sup> For Abercrombie, the beauty of feng shui is particularly associated with its emphasis on place and site, as well as its highlight in one's spiritual experience<sup>13</sup>: 'the Chinese have always looked to the countryside as their home. They definitely attempted so to harmonise human additions with natural features that a new and complex landscape might result, a fusion of conscious art with nature.'<sup>14</sup> The association between feng shui and outdoor construction activities was noticed.

Asian feng shui studies, although only started in the late 1970's in response to western interests, has explored the subject in relation to a comprehensive historical and cultural context. Although Feng shui's influence radiates to Asian countries such as Japan and Korea, China remained the center of early feng shui research. Since the Reform and Opening-up policy which was initiated in 1978, academic discussion on feng shui was cautiously developed. Investigations of historical feng shui have established a wide acknowledgment of the subject's significance to Chinese architectural history. This was demonstrated by multiple studies since the 1990's such as He Xiaoxin's *Feng shui Tan Yuan*, *The Source of Feng shui* and *Zhong Guo Feng shui Shi*, *The History of Feng shui*. Feng shui's general history was explored comprehensively. It was evidenced that feng shui has not only shaped village layouts

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> David Matless, 'Appropriate Geomancy: Patrick Abercrombie and the Energy of the World', *Journal of Design History*, 3 (1993), 167-178 (p.167).

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Abercrombie, *Town and Country Planning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.230.

particularly in Southeast China<sup>15</sup> but also guided the Chinese in choosing a habit in general. For some studies, feng shui's history could be dated back as early as BC 6700 – BC 5600.<sup>16</sup> The cave dwelling on the loess plateau of northern China, for instance, was considered the origin of feng shui due to its north-south facing settlement pattern.<sup>17</sup> Although no further corroborating evidence were identified to support the conclusion, the north-south facing pattern was often considered a proof of feng shui's age as well as its association to science – which are, as suggested, the 'worthy value' of the subject.<sup>18</sup> One will easily notice the enthusiasm for defining feng shui's as a natural science in most late twentieth-century feng shui studies. This attempt, resulted by the ideological resistance to 'superstition', could be considered a direct response to Eitel and Needham's comments which described the subject as 'another name of natural science'<sup>19</sup> and a 'pseudo-science'.<sup>20</sup> This limitation was resulted by the particular historical background of these studies, they were written in an era when the acknowledgment of popular beliefs was very sensitive after the Cultural Revolution.

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<sup>15</sup> 何晓昕, 《风水探源》(南京: 东南大学出版社, 1990), 页 186-215. / Xiaoxin He, *The Source of Feng shui* (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 1990), pp. 186-215.

<sup>16</sup> 于希贤, 《人居环境与风水》(北京: 中央编译出版社, 2010). / Xixian Yu, *Living Environment and Feng shui* (Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Hong-key Yoon, 'Towards a Theory on the Origin of Geomancy, Environment and Quality of Life in Centre Europe: Problem of Transition', in *Proceedings, International Geographical Union, Regional Conference* (Prague, 22-26 August 1994).

<sup>18</sup> 于希贤, 《人居环境与风水》(北京: 中央编译出版社, 2010). / Xixian Yu, *Living Environment and Feng shui* (Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> E. J. Eitel, *Feng shui: The Science of Sacred Landscape in Old China* (London: Synergetic Press, 1984), p.3.

<sup>20</sup> *Science and Civilization in China*, p.360.

But the noticeable absence of social and anthropological understandings of feng shui continued and has become a remaining shortcoming in Chinese feng shui discourse. Until the early twenty-first century, the most elaborate discussion of feng shui's spiritual value in Chinese architectural study divided it into 'cultural beliefs' and 'superstitions' consciously,<sup>21</sup> responding the leading methodology in contemporary Chinese feng shui study which decided to 'select and preserve feng shui's rationales, meanwhile carefully reject the superstitions'.<sup>22</sup> This was particularly represented by *Feng shui and Architecture, Living Environment and Feng shui*, and the edited book *Research on Feng shui Theories*. A further attempt to prove feng shui's rationality was the trend of scientific feng shui, rised in the early twenty-first century, which considers feng shui an equivalent to ecology in build environment.<sup>23</sup> But this is outlying to this study's argument.

Although feng shui's applications were widely discussed, the subject's spiritual value was either deliberately neglected or being roughly concluded as superstition. Studies avoided the subject's social and anthropological significance but merely described its impact on physical designs including cities, dwellings, and tombs. As a matter of fact feng shui was negligible folklore that was not worthy of academic pursuits even for the Western-trained Chinese

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<sup>21</sup> 程建军, 孔尚朴, 《风水与建筑》(南昌: 江西科学技术出版社, 2005), 页 167-171. / Jianjun Cheng and Shangpu Kong, *Feng shui and Architecture* (Nanchang: Jiangxi Science and Technology Press, 2005), pp. 167-71.

<sup>22</sup> 王其亨主编, 《风水理论研究》(天津: 天津大学出版社, 1992), 页 13-14. / *Research of Feng shui Theory*, ed. by Qiheng Wang and others (TianJin: TianJin University Press, 1992), pp.13-14.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Y. Mak and Albert T. Do, *Scientific Feng shui for the Built Environment* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2011).



sociologists in the mid-twentieth century. It was merely a superstitious attachment of Chinese religions and worships. For instance, in C.K. Yang's classic *Religion in Chinese Society*, feng shui was briefly included as a spiritual extension of Chinese religions.<sup>24</sup> As a result feng shui was isolated from a wider social context. This is unsatisfactory to this study.

Feng shui is changeable, and it had been changed in modern times. Andrew March paid attention to the interpretations feng shui (what he referred as Chinese geomancy) accounts, but by considering feng shui as an integral experience he suggested that the human experience of feng shui and its meaning was 'the main concern' of the matter.<sup>25</sup> In his discussion the subject was not necessarily considered as something that needed to be defined as a science or a religion. This understanding corresponded to the rising contemporary western anthropological studies which explored feng shui as a human expression of China's socio-cultural contexts. Maurice Freedman, for instance, focused on professional geomancers in rural areas when he was observing geomancy in Hong Kong. He was therefore aware of the difference between the views of geomancy practitioners and those of the people they served, who 'manipulated feng shui for the selfish benefit of their descendants'.<sup>26</sup> Such observation led him to the conclusion which suggested that feng shui is a system which explains fortune as an alternative to other

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<sup>24</sup> C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Andrew L. March, 'An Appreciation of Chinese Geomancy', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 27 (1968), 253-67 (p. 267).

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Freedman, 'Geomancy', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1968), 5-15. Reprinted in *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman*. Stanford UP, 1979.

religions.<sup>27</sup> Feuchtwang's *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy* then contributed to the understanding of feng shui as a conglomerate tradition by investigating it as an expression of changing social and cultural identities. Feng shui beliefs are a means of self-identification to Feuchtwang, who suggested that 'one is differentiated from others by choice of location on the ground (by performing feng shui)'.<sup>28</sup> Viewed this way, feng shui was a model which explained both natural and social reality to individuals and to kinship groups, while there contained no proofs in this model but only metaphoric descriptions of life. In modern rural Hong Kong, it was evident that feng shui has become more significant to personal lives as a popular religion and less powerful as a social consensus.<sup>29</sup> It is likely the reason that the modern rules and interpretations of feng shui have become considerable diverse. Bruun, who explored feng shui in rural China after the Reform and Opening up in 1978 in mainland China, saw the subject as a living tradition. By this he also acknowledged the changes in modern feng shui:

'Living traditions change over time. We must refuse to see the survival of the feng shui tradition as merely an unconscious act on the part of the people who use it, such as is implied in the Chinese term 'feudal superstition'. Instead, I contend that it has

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<sup>27</sup> Maurice Freedman, *The Study of Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), p.331.

<sup>28</sup> Stephan Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2002), pp. 240-42.

<sup>29</sup> James Watsons and Rubie Watsons, 'Geomancy, Politics, and Colonial Encounters in Rural Hong Kong', ed. by Frances Pine and Joao de Pina-Cabral, *On the Margins of Religion*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp.205-232.

continued because it serves a purpose, one for which each generation finds it relevant.<sup>30</sup>

Building on the foundation of above studies, this study has given attention to the interactions between feng shui and place making, meanwhile attempts to draw references to other place making studies. Above discussed anthropological studies have demonstrated feng shui's relationship with the state's power and local religions. These are, as this study considers, the larger forces that may deliberately or unintentionally shape landscapes.<sup>31</sup> In the following discussion of this study, People's Republic of China's religious policies and new rural planning initiative, the 'Building a New Socialist Countryside (BNSC)', are particularly relevant.

Compares to parallel place making approaches feng shui has a strong spiritual value which is not only crucial to its evolvement and survival but also essential in developing a shared place interpretation. What needs to be noticed is that feng shui landscapes are not the same to those spiritual landscapes of, for instance, Christianity, which requires pilgrimage. In ancient time, certain feng shui landscapes obtained noticeable sacredness which was widely recognised. For instance, landscapes in a royal burial area were attached with political significance, claiming the legitimacy of the royal lineage. But such sacredness was only given by the society's shared

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<sup>30</sup> Ole Bruun, *Feng shui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Baxstrom, *Houses in motion: The experience of place and the problem of belief in urban Malaysia*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

interpretation of landscapes, not rituals. Others, which were probably the vast majority, such as landscapes in a burial area of a clan, did not necessarily need to be paid with particular respect, reverence, and ritual,<sup>32</sup> even though they were considered sacred for the clan. Instead they interacted with daily life. This could be considered a reflection of the difference between eastern and western religions, for one being diffused and one being institutional.<sup>33</sup> In late modern times and modern times, feng shui was used to preserve the local environment against new constructions in Hong Kong by claiming these areas sacred,<sup>34</sup> although no special rituals were paid to these areas. Understanding feng shui landscapes therefore require long-term observation, with due attention paid to the practices and related landscape interpretations. This is missing in existing studies.

Historical feng shui communicated with its participants by developing the senses of outdoor space. These included orientations, boundaries, and more importantly, auspicious landscapes. For those who followed the rules of feng shui, landscapes were ‘auspicious’ because they were interpreted in a particular way. In other words, feng shui affected on the perceptions of landscapes. As a result the distinction between natural and cultural landscape was blurred.<sup>35</sup> This allowed feng shui to create an ideal ‘Di’ (地, literally translates as ‘earth’), a united

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<sup>32</sup> Catherine Allerton, ‘Introduction: Spiritual Landscapes of Southeast Asia’, *Anthropological Forum*, 19 (2009), 235-51 (p. 242).

<sup>33</sup> *Religion in Chinese Society*, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Freedman, *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays*. (California: Stanford University Press, 1979), pp.203-206.

<sup>35</sup> Tim Ingold, *The perception of the environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. (London: Routledge, 2000), p.189.

concept incorporating the surrounding views of a place in the traditional Chinese context. To the participants of feng shui, a 'Di', either chosen or perfected by feng shui, was considered unique and tended to have its own identity.<sup>36</sup> Today feng shui still creates senses of place<sup>37</sup> which is readable to its participants but not to the general public. In mainland China, although it has lost its impact on national and city level, it remained significant particularly to agrarian inhabitants in rural areas as above-mentioned anthropological studies demonstrated. Through landscape readings and ritual performances, feng shui does not just facilitate the making of single houses and tombs, but also those of 'home places' where shared identities were developed.<sup>38</sup> Daily experiences of feng shui landscapes as a combination of identity and memory develop a personal sense of belonging.<sup>39</sup> As such, feng shui strengthens the bonds between people and local build environment.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, urban feng shui is a 'booming' subject, one that is 'becoming an urban phenomenon'.<sup>41</sup> It can be expected that the meaning of urban feng shui is reflected in the way it deals with the making of various spaces in response to rising urban issues. The main concern of feng shui in place making activities remains related to urban

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<sup>36</sup> Derk Jan Stobbelaar and Bas Pedrol, 'Perspectives on landscape Identity: A conceptual challenge', *Landscape Research*, 36(2011), 321–339.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard, *People and Place: the extraordinary geographies of everyday life*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.82.

<sup>38</sup> Hugh Barton, Marcus Grant, and Richard Guise, *Shaping Neighbourhoods: For Local Health and Global Sustainability*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p.32.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose, *Deterritorialisations. . . Revisioning Landscapes and Politics*, (London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2003), p.254.

<sup>40</sup> Kelly Main and Gerardo Francisco Sandoval, 'Place making in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency', *Urban Studies*, 52 (2015), 71-86 (74).

<sup>41</sup> *Feng shui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion*, p. XVIII.

residents' changing identities<sup>42</sup>, and its meanings in addition to the designed place itself. However, although urban feng shui is described as a revival, it probably has very little association to its historical rules which required vast open outdoor space but to the making and interpretation of daily landscape encounters in urban life. Therefore, whether 'revival' is the precise description is open to further investigation.

Overall the questions of how feng shui impacts on place making activities and how people have encouraged the changing rules of feng shui during the process remain. These questions arose from the observed feng shui revival both in rural and urban China. It was believed the influence of feng shui had been overwhelming in the less developed period and has become weaker in modern China.<sup>43</sup> This research, which focuses on the constant involvement and adaptability of feng shui, particularly as expressed in outdoor place design, will attempt to challenge the conclusion.

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<sup>42</sup> Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction: Identity, place, landscape and heritage', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11(2006), 7–32.

<sup>43</sup> Hong-key Yoon, 'The Image of Nature in Geomancy', *GeoJournal*, 4 (1980), 341-48.

## **Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions**

This thesis aims to identify the interactions between feng shui and place making activities by investigating its diverse practices. It will be argued that feng shui is an evolving method of combining contemporary popular beliefs and place making in corresponding to the changing social environment rather than an unchanging theory, while the subject's participants are crucial to its evolution and survival.

One of this study's main objectives tends to question how and why it evolved instead of discussing feng shui's general development. First, a historical understanding of feng shui which highlights noticeable changes during its evolution will be developed. A critical review of the revival and re-invention of feng shui in the modern context then follows. It is also this thesis's objective to address perceptions and interpretations of current feng shui practices from human perspectives which further support the understanding of feng shui's association with place making activities.

This study will center on one research question. How does feng shui affect outdoor place making activities over time? In investigating this question, a focus will be put on feng shui's 'adaptability', which is the way feng shui evolves by negotiating with the changing social context.

## Methodology and Methods

Qualitative research methodology was applied in this study. An in-depth exploration of feng shui's impact on outdoor place making, historic or current, was raised through methods of archival study, interview, and ethnographic observation.

This study was initially proposed to investigate feng shui's historical evolvments. Historic methods including literature review and archival study were proposed. Evidence including old literature, illustrations, and landscape paintings were considered the main sources. In particular, official historical records were considered the important sources of this thesis, which refer to those which were written, edited, and published by the government in each dynasty such as the *Book of Jin* (晋书), the *Book of Tang* (唐书), and the *Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature* (四库全书) etc. Due to the nature of official history, feng shui accounts included in these books not only have reflected contemporary mainstream perceptions but also tend to be well preserved. Historical site survey maps were abstracted from the same source. Unofficial historical records such as diaries and biographies were also considered as a source of evidence when exploring the personal view of either a practitioner or a participant. Time period discussed in this study was designed from the Warring States Period, the period when early feng shui practices started to be recorded by written records, to the Qing dynasty (1616-1912). Qing was the last Chinese imperial dynasty as well as the latest period that a wide appreciation of feng shui was recorded in contemporary official history. The majority of official and unofficial historical materials were accessed via local libraries including Zhejiang Library, Suzhou Library, and the Beijing University Library. The rest were retained through



online collections of national libraries and museums. Unofficial historical sources were later widely used to explore feng shui culture in the Republican period (1912-1945) and onwards, as feng shui was determined a 'superstition' and was nationally banned. The subject was no longer included in mainstream publications but appeared on popular materials such as newspaper articles, advertisements, and photographs, especially those taken by westerners.

However, historical research methods had become insufficient when the research evolved. This was because a strong on-going interest towards feng shui was noticed during the data collection process. The author was frequently required to either offer feng shui advice or evaluate the feng shui of a place by research participants, colleagues, and families, regardless the fact that the author was not trained as a feng shui practitioner. This led to the development of a small survey from July to August in 2015, when the attempt to investigate the rate of having direct interaction with feng shui activities was raised. The survey started from family connections, then to the participants who were referred by these connections. Through informal interviews and discussions with eighteen households, it was noticed that feng shui remained an active subject in the author's survey region, which is Zhejiang, a southeast province in China. This was indicated by the fact that four households have direct connections to feng shui practitioners, while three households have either regular or occasional interactions with feng shui rituals. It was understood that a household tends to build a regular connection with only one feng shui practitioner, therefore the connection between a household and a practitioner often tend to be long-term. It was also unlikely that family members in the same household would consult to different practitioners, regardless of family population. An important finding in this survey was the implication that the need of feng shui has remained; it is, however, 'unspoken' due to

China's particular social environment. Therefore the overall aim of this study was adjusted to include an investigation of on-going feng shui. This was reflected by the third research objective: to address perceptions and interpretations of current feng shui practices from human perspectives.

Primary data were collected through interviews and observations. These two methods were proposed for the following reasons: 1). Existing Chinese studies merely focus on the history of feng shui and ignore its on-going practices as it is declared 'superstition'. This study expanded the debate on feng shui beyond historical research. In this study, feng shui practitioners, being 'trained experts', were considered a source of information<sup>44</sup> as attempted by recent Western anthropological studies. Evidences provided by practitioners' interviews were expected to uncover the background of current feng shui, while interviews of feng shui participants were expected to support the understanding of related place interpretations. 2). Feng shui's spiritual meanings are diffused in individuals' daily place encounters. One, as an outsider, can barely walk into a place and determine if it is feng shui, or even if there is feng shui. The understanding of feng shui's impact is only complete if the interactions between feng shui practice, a place, and its participants are investigated. This would require an ethnographic understanding of feng shui as a place making approach and a part of daily life. Participants

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<sup>44</sup> Jochen Glaser and Grit Laudel, 'On Interviewing "good" and "bad" Experts', ed. by Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig and Wolfgang Menz, *Interviewing Experts*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.117-118.

observation was proposed as the main method to develop an ethnographic study.<sup>45</sup> Among many feng shui studies, Bruun, who investigated feng shui's negotiation with local government in mainland China, applied a similar combination of historical and anthropological methods. While Bruun interacted with feng shui specialists and local government officials to uncover the history and politics of feng shui, his study did not require in-depth observation to specific practices, nor was the research focus put on places and place making participants. Advantages of this study were given by the author's identity both as a native researcher and an outsider.<sup>46</sup> It was expected that in-depth data will be gained while keeping a relatively objective and distanced stand.

Practicality issues of interview and observation were anticipated in recruiting participants as well as in-depth conversations, as feng shui remains a sensitive topic. In response to the restriction, fieldwork sites were set in the Zhejiang province. First, the above survey had developed a foundation of participants recruitment. Secondly, Zhejiang region has a long history of embracing feng shui due to its geographic condition. The province consists mostly of hills whilst valleys and plains are found along the rivers, which has given convenience to the market's need since the very early stage of feng shui. This situation now continues. The overall noticeable influence of popular beliefs in the Zhejiang region was also indicated by national surveys. In 2015 China Religion Survey, it was suggested that 'popular beliefs obtain

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley, 'Ethnography and participant observation', ed. by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (London: Sage, 2000), pp.248-261.

<sup>46</sup> Kirin Narayan, 'How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist?', in *American Anthropologist*, (95)1993, pp.671-682.

great influence in Zhejiang. Both its impacted region and numbers of worship places exceed the five main religions.<sup>47</sup> Feng shui is included within the catalogue.

Expert interviews were semi-structured. On the foundation of the above survey, a total of ten interviewees were contacted and interviewed from August 2015 to February 2016. In addition to nine feng shui practitioners, three university lecturers who involve in feng shui activities on a regular basis were also contacted. But only one of these three lecturers consented to interview as feng shui remains sensitive. Contacts with these practitioners mostly relied on referrals, as being interviewed on the topic remains sensitive in China. Besides family connections, master-apprentice relationship was also proved an effective method of gaining referrals. Two of the interviewed practitioners were approached through the recommendations of their apprentices. In these two cases, the author was required to provide the date of birth for the practitioners to calculate ‘if this relationship was meant to happen, as well as if the contact will lead to a good result’.<sup>48</sup> Although all practitioners were approached through some form of connection, it was anticipated that in-depth discussions were unlikely to occur within a short time period. Therefore all interviewees were interviewed multiple times. This study also tended to

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<sup>47</sup> 陈进国, 林敏霞, <如何走向“善治”: 浙江省民间信仰“社会治理”转型的反思>, 出自 邱永辉编 《中国宗教报告-宗教蓝皮书 2015》(北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2016) <<http://www.rujiag.com/article/id/9953/>> [2017年9月19日]. / Jinguo Chen and Minxia Lin, ‘How to Go to “Good Government”: Reflection on the Transformation of Folk Belief on “Social Governance” in Zhejiang Province’, in *Chinese Religious Report – Religious Blue Book 2015*, ed. by Yonghui Qiu (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2016) <<http://www.rujiag.com/article/id/9953/>> [accessed on 19 September 2017].

<sup>48</sup> This is summarised by the author based on the interview of Teng Chouyuan, master of interviewee Du Jinliang, 17th of November 2015.

distinguish the research question and interview questions carefully in response to this issue.<sup>49</sup> For instance, instead of directly asking ‘what does this means’ which was likely to alarm a practitioner, the author tended to question the reasons for their actions. All expert interviews were gradually developed from lightly structured to heavily structured as understandings developed. On the other hand, in the studied villages, on-site interviews of practitioner and villagers were developed. These interviews started with no deliberate structure and then developed into a natural conversational interview.<sup>50</sup> Photographic and textual records were taken during interviews with the interviewees’ permission, with the intention of transcribing formal interviews. Evidence acquired from interviews had enabled a basic understanding of feng shui’s current interaction with place making, including what kind of place making activities does feng shui impact on and to what extent does it intervene. An understanding of feng shui practitioners and participants’ social backgrounds was also acquired.

Among the ten interviewees, four gave consent to participant observation. They complied to two major categories of feng shui practitioners based on the analysis of interviews, which were the traditional practitioners in rural areas and ‘modernised’ practitioners in cities. All feng shui-related information was considered the ‘focus’ of fieldwork, and they were recorded by

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<sup>49</sup> Tom Wengraf, ‘Lightly and Heavily Structured Depth Interviewing: Theory-Questions and Interviewer-Questions’ in *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: SAGE, 2011), P 155.

<sup>50</sup> Tony Whitehead, ‘Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods: Secondary Data Analysis, Fieldwork, Observation/Participant Observation, and Informal and Semi Structured Interviewing’, *Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural Assessment Research (EICCARS) Working Paper Series Source*, 2005, 16-17 <<http://www.cusag.umd.edu/documents/WorkingPapers/ClassicalEthnoMethods.pdf>> [accessed 29 September 2017].

photographs, videos, and fieldwork notes.<sup>51</sup> Besides questioning what feng shui is, ‘natural inquiries’ including who were involved in feng shui practice, how were they involved, where did they practice, and on what occasion was feng shui required, were also proposed during observation. The first few observations were purely passive participation: the author focused on understanding the practitioners’ working patterns, observing the interactions between a practitioner and the participants, as well as gaining trust and fitting in. After being accepted to a certain degree,<sup>52</sup> the author’s participation in the field then gradually developed into what described as ‘moderate’.<sup>53</sup> While the field works still included more observation than participation, the author’s involvement was overall advanced. This included the participation to activities such as holding the practitioner’s compass, assisted rituals, and participating in the search of an ideal site.

All observations depended on the practitioners’ work arrangements which often occurred at very short notice, particular for those urban practitioners who own an open business and provide walk-in consultancy. Due to time and geographic limit, the condition to fully ground the work in the lives of these participants was not provided. But the author attempted to integrate into local lives as much as possible. From September 2015 to February 2017, the author stayed in the studied villages and cities for 14 weeks in total. Each case observed in this

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<sup>51</sup> James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, (Belmont: Thomason Learning, 1980), p107.

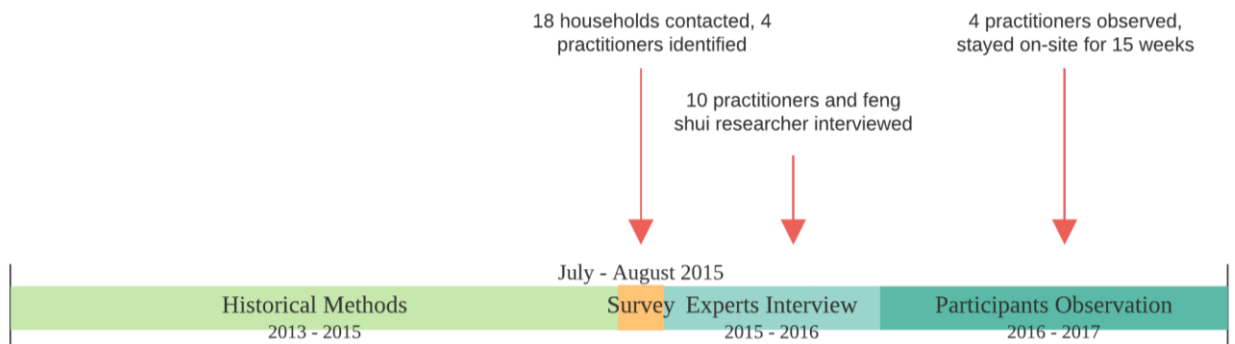
<sup>52</sup> Stephen Schensul, Jean Schensul, and Margaret D. LeCompte, *Essential ethnographic methods: observations, interviews, and questionnaires*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 60.

study is unique, but the author tried to balance case studies and generalisations. Based on preliminary analysis, i.e, how complete the observation was, whether the case showed a connection with the others, three observed cases were included in this thesis. A timeline of interview and observation is demonstrated below.

Additionally, site plans were produced to support case observations. Studied village sites and house plans were measured, recorded and reproduced as plans in order to indicate the actions of observed feng shui practitioners more effectively. However, studied cemetery was not measured as advised by local residents as it was considered disrespectful.

Participants of this study were well-informed and consented to the use of pictures, descriptions and interview materials. Contents of semi-structured interviews and observation strategies were scrutinised to meet the conditions of research ethics in accordance with the Department of Landscape Ethics Review Committee. Ethics application and approval letter are attached in Appendix A.



## **Thesis Structure**

This thesis consists of eight chapters in all, this introductory chapter 1, the chapters of contents (2-6), and the conclusion (7).

An account which explores the evolution of historical feng shui are presented in chapter 2 and 3. The account is composed on the basis of cases related to geomancy. Additionally, an acknowledgement of historical feng shui practitioners and their impact on outdoor place making activities is provided in case studies. In chapter 2 there is a discussion of how early geomancy abstracted knowledge from ritual activities and popularised its practices. The chapter starts by elaborating the rules and techniques of urban-based ritual constructions, followed by an investigation of the social groups which participated in these activities. Chapter 3 explores how feng shui was re-developed in negotiation between different social ideologies. Selected cases are analysed to demonstrate the changing feng shui rules resulting from the cooperation and comprises between geomancers, the emperor and other people.

Current feng shui practice has been examined in relation to changing social contexts in the next section of this research, which aims to explore how and why feng shui was ‘modernised’. In chapter 4, a brief summary of feng shui in mid to late imperial period during 1368-1912 will be provided. Feng shui’s suppression during the republican period (1912-1945) and up to 1978 is then discussed. This deals with one of the fundamental interests of the research, to understand why and how feng shui survived nationwide suppression.



Chapter 5 and 6 are developed in response to the adjusted thesis theme and research methods. Current practice of feng shui in China, both rural and urban, is highlighted in chapter 5 through various case studies. The chapter first discusses feng shui practice in rural environments through in-the-field observations, which acknowledge the preservation of feng shui by traditional practitioners. Investigation of feng shui practice and participants follows, entailing the anthropological understanding of changing social perceptions. The chapter then highlights the observation of urban feng shui which is being re-interpreted in response to state policy and the social trend of pursuing ‘scientific development’. This has resulted in the old feng shui rules being compromised, replacing and redeveloping traditional practice.

Chapter 6 addresses social and cultural issues relate to current feng shui. Discussion will centred on how current revived feng shui is perceived, what cultural policies were developed, and how feng shui responds to these perceptions in order to survive. Firstly, the ‘legalisation’ of rural feng shui will be discussed, explaining why traditional feng shui was preserved and revived. Policies relating to urban feng shui will then be explored. To follow with, urban feng shui practitioners and their path to legitimacy will be demonstrated. While both rural and urban feng shui will be related to local cultural identity and current urban issues.

Chapter 7 concludes with an overview of the findings, reflection on research questions and methods, research rationales and future research.

## Translation and References

Chinese names, places and specific terms in this text are rendered in Pinyin Romanized form, for example, Tao Zhencheng (name), Shanghai (place) and Xiang Zhai (specific term). Names of Chinese historical accounts will appear both in Pinyin and English translation when they are first mentioned, then indicated by translated name for convenience in reading. For instance, the *Book of Burial* will first appear as ‘*Zang Jing* (葬经), the Book of Burial’, then as the *Book of Burial* in what follows.

This thesis applies the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) footnotes referencing style. When a Chinese name appears in text and in bibliography, it will be put in the original order of family name before given name, rather than the general European practice with given name before family name.

## A Historic Timeline of Feng shui

Although this thesis is constructed in chronological order, it does not discuss every dynasty but focuses on noticeable changes during feng shui's evolvment. A timeline of Chinese dynasties is listed below, with discussed dynasties addressed in relation to terms applied and thesis structure. A glossary of terms is provided in the following section.

Dynasty		Date	In this thesis:
Feudal dynasties	Zhou	ca. 1046-256 BCE	Chapter 2 Terms applied: Bu and Xiang
	Western Zhou (ca. 1046-771 BCE)		
	Eastern Zhou (ca. 771-256 BCE)		
	Spring and Autumn Period (770-ca. 475 BCE)		
	Warring States Period (ca. 475-221 BCE)		
Imperial dynasties	Qin	221-206 BCE	
	Han	206 BCE-220 CE	
	Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE)		
	Eastern Han (25-220 CE)		
	Six Dynasties Period	220-589 CE	

	Three Kingdoms (220-265 CE)		Chapter 3 Term applied: Kanyu
	Jin Dynasty (265-420 CE)		
	Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-589 CE)		
	Sui	581-618 CE	
	Tang	618-906 CE	
	Five Dynasties Period	907-960 CE	
	Song	960-1279	
	Northern Song (960-1127)		
	Southern Song (1127-1279)		
	Yuan	1279-1368	
Ming	1368-1644		
Qing	1644-1912		
Modern China	Republic Period	1912-1949	
	People's Republic of China	1949-present	Chapter 5, chapter 6

## Glossary of terms

The naming of feng shui has changed over time. The terms for it used in this thesis have been collected from official historical records of the dynasties. Each term contains slightly different meanings and is corresponded to specific time period. This study has also included terms which are specific to feng shui context. Below is a glossary of these terms.

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**Bu ( 卜 ):** Divining. Bu was an ancient divining activity performed by the state's master diviners, who were also the rulers of the state. Bu was often practised through the reading of the cracks on burnt turtle shells. In place making activities such as capital planning, bu was practised to recognise auspicious orientation in place making. This term will be found in chapter 2.

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**Dragon vein ( 龙脉 ):** The feng shui sense of auspicious mountain range, or where the continuous mountains channel the flowing Qi. This term often appears together with the term 'Xingshi' and 'Xue', which will be explained in below.

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**Geomancy:** Twentieth century western studies translated feng shui in various different ways. The word 'geomancy' used by Joseph Needham was widely accepted,<sup>54</sup> though differences in the concepts were noted. In some Asian studies, for instance, Hong-key Yoon's work, the term

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<sup>54</sup> *Science and Civilization in China*, pp. 356-59.

geomancy was applied instead of feng shui, as the subject is described differently in countries such as Japan and Korea. The term will be used as a replacement for bu, xiang, kanyu, and feng shui for practical reasons.

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**Feng shui (风水):** Literally translates as ‘wind and water’. The currently used term feng shui has only become popular since the mid-Qing dynasty (1616-1912). It was only with the New Culture Movement (1915 – c.1925) that ‘feng shui’ started replacing ‘Kanyu’ in response to nineteenth century western criticisms, in which the term was spelt Feng-shui. Feng shui will therefore appear from chapter 4 onwards.

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**Kanyu (堪輿):** Literally translates as ‘the highs and lows (of the terrain)’. In official history books, Kanyu was used as the generic description for geomancy activities from Song dynasty (960 - 1279)<sup>55</sup> to the Qing (1616 - 1912). The term of Kanyu will be applied in the discussions of established geomancy theory and related activities in chapter 3.

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<sup>55</sup> 关长龙, 《敦煌本堪輿文书研究》(北京: 中华书局, 2013), 页 5. / Changlong Guan, *Study of Literature on Kanyu in Dunhuang* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2013), P. 5.

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**Qi (气):** literally translates as air. Qi was considered the life energy of the universe. Qi flows in the ground and there appear mountain ranges; where Qi stays still and being preserved, there appears a Xue.

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**Xiang (相):** Seeing (in the divining sense). Same to ‘Bu’, Xiang refers to early geomancy in accounts dating from the Western Zhou dynasty (1046 - 771BC) to the Qin dynasty (221-207BC). Related terms include Xiang Di (相地, Di: earth), literally translates as observing the earth, describing a wide concept of geomancy; Xiang Zhai (Zhai: house), house geomancy; and Xiang Mu (相墓, Mu: tomb), tomb geomancy. These terms will be found in chapter 2.

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**Xingshi (形势):** Form. literally translates as ‘form and shape’. In feng shui, ‘Xingshi’ particularly refers to the dynamic of mountain ranges and the shapes of surrounding mountains. Often, the way to identify a Dragon vein is to observe the Xingshi of mountain ranges.

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**Xue (穴):** The feng shui sense of auspicious site, particularly for burial. The word literally translates as ‘spot’ or ‘cave’. A Xue must locates on a Dragon vein. One of the most important tasks for a feng shui practitioner would be looking for xue.

# Chapter 2. From Bu to Xiang: the Rise of a

## Belief in Place Making

### Introduction

This chapter explores the evolution from bu (Chinese: 卜) to xiang (Chinese: 相), the two early geomancy activities, abstracting evidence from literatures and illustrations of the time. These two terms, xiang and bu, suggest different meanings. While bu was a pure divining activity, xiang included the action of going to a site and gaining understanding by observing the place. This had raised the early awareness of certain preferred outdoor space. The emergence of xiang was the result of site survey skills allowing its independence from divination while maintaining an association with rites.<sup>56</sup> The discussions is an analytic explanation of the making of the living and burial environments. Within each part, examples of bu and xiang performed by various members of society will be analysed.

Firstly, it will be argued that the earliest relationship between belief and city making activity was contributed by the performance of bu and was closely related to the state's claim of power,

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<sup>56</sup> 何晓昕, 罗隽, 《中国风水史》(北京: 九州出版社, 2008), 页 9-11. / Xiaoxin He and Jun Luo, *History of Chinese Feng shui* (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2008), pp. 9-11.



then that in place making activity bu was performed by diviners as part of the state's ritual performances. The example of the holy city Chengzhou will be analysed to illustrate this. Following discussions will analyse the process by which knowledge of bu was shared and passed to other social classes, encouraging the transformation of divining and ritual related skills into a more specific early geomancy performance, xiang. The case of Helv city provides early evidence of the performance of xiang. The skills of xiang, mostly conducted by the state's officials and recorded in the *Zhouli* (Chinese: 周礼) will be discussed, and evidence will be presented of the use of bu and xiang in housing for people of lower social status from the *Book of Date*, which contains accounts of the orientation of a house being of significance. The differences between bu and xiang will be identified.

The next section of this chapter describes the use of bu and xiang in burial activities. The orientation and form of a tomb only became significant in burial when a transition of tomb forms was completed. Examination of records in *Zhouli* and related archaeological findings show that both of these features were required by rites rather than popular belief at this stage. A closer relationship between burial and xiang emerged under the influence of changing burial principles, in which orientation was less valued than location.

This chapter addresses a fundamental question: how relevant were bu and xiang to rites and to popular beliefs? How are they related? By exploring the evolution of bu to xiang, we can form a greater understanding of the nature of early geomancy. An understanding of the transformation from bu to xiang will show how ritual and belief were separated at different levels of society.

## Power Claims in Place Making: Bu, Xiang and the Centre

The origins of geomancy may lay in early attitudes to the choice of an auspicious place to live, which sometimes include the performance of ritual activities. These were often considered the leader's responsibility, not only political leaders but also the master diviners of the tribe.<sup>57</sup> These diviners and political leaders made sure the use of bu carried both belief and ritual meanings.

The very early expressions of a belief in place making activities were efforts to manage orientation. In the limited documented history of Western Zhou, Shang and earlier times, ritual activities related to place making were conducted by a particular social group, diviners and court officials who possessed knowledge and high social status. They consciously blended ritual and orientation with an emphasis on notions of great significance, allowing people to be located in specific places. In the Yin Ruins' Oracle-Bone Inscriptions which dated back to 1571-1046 BC in the Shang dynasty, the first documented Chinese dynasty, bu was used to confirm the desirability of a potential site. For example, 'the king intends to build a new city. On the day of Yimao, the third day of the month, the diviner performed bu and enquire the result to Di, the main god. The divination suggested that Di agreed with the choice.'<sup>58</sup> This

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<sup>57</sup> 陳夢家, <商代的神話與巫術>, 《燕京學報》, 20 (1936), 页 485-576 (第 535 页). / Mengjia Chen, 'The Myth and Witchcraft of the Shang Dynasty', *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*, 20 (1936), 485-576 (p. 535).

<sup>58</sup> 陳夢家, 《殷墟卜辭》, 乙卷 (北京: 科学出版社, 1953), 页 570. / Mengjia Chen, *The Inscriptions of Yin Ruins*, II (Beijing: Science Press, 1956), p. 570.

record shows that the choice of a place to live by communicating with the main god was not only part of the king's responsibility (although he apparently trusted it to the diviner), but also guaranteed his holy power. Bu, consulting the god, was accomplished by reading patterns from burnt animal bones,<sup>59</sup> so it had very little relationship to the site itself. It was likely that a site was inspected before bu was applied, before the kings and diviners consulted with Di, but it is not known how a site was chosen in the first place.

The diviners were a medium between the king and the gods in the use of Bu. They had to recognise the four directions and perform sacrifices to the gods too each,<sup>60</sup> an early link between ritual and orientation. The east and the west were distinguished by measuring shadow length; once the orientation was recognised, the diviners sacrificed animals to the appropriate gods.<sup>61</sup>

Of all the directions, the centre had particular ritual significance in recognising directions, particularly when constructing cities. Finding the centre of the earth was believed possible, and is supposed to date back to the Xia dynasty (c. 2070 – c. 1600 BC), although there were

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<sup>59</sup> 朱彦民, <论商族骨卜习俗的来源与发展>, 《中国社会历史评论》, 9 (2008), 页 5-6 摘取自网页 <<https://www.sinoss.net/qikan/uploadfile/2010/1130/9414.pdf>> [摘取日期 2017 年 2 月 9 日] / Yanmin Zhu, 'Origin and Development of the Practice of Bone Augury of the Shang', *Chinese Social History Review*, 9 (2008), 5-6 <<https://www.sinoss.net/qikan/uploadfile/2010/1130/9414.pdf>> [accessed 9 February 2017].

<sup>60</sup> 郑慧生, <商代卜辞四方神名、风名与后世春夏秋冬四时之关系>, 《史学月刊》, 06 (1984), 页 9-14. / Huisheng Zheng, 'The Names of the Gods and Winds of the Four Directions in the Shang Oracle Bone Inscriptions and Their Relationship to the Names of the Four Seasons in Later Eras', *Journal of Historical Science*, 6 (1984), 9-14.

<sup>61</sup> 胡厚宣, <殷代之天神崇拜>, 《甲骨学商史论丛初集》, 民国丛书第一编, 82 (1989), 页 22-24. / Houxuan Hu, 'The Worship of Shang Dynasty's Gods', *The Collection of Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones*, 82 (1989), 22-24.

written records to confirm this.<sup>62</sup> As the earth was considered flat, there could be only one centre, so by claiming the centre the kingdom became legitimate. Claiming that a place was the centre was done by those who were noble and respected, assuring the sacredness of the selection. The skills of finding the centre, like that of recognising the four directions, were probably carried out by the diviners, with the kings involved to provide the selections with symbolic meaning. A sense of orientation was indicated by the diviners, who were highly respected as they were believed to be able to communicate to the gods.

A Western Zhou leader or master diviner during 1046 - 221BC also engaged ritual activities which associated orientation with divination. The Western Zhou's claim to power as a legitimate kingdom was expressed by locating the capital at a site believed to be the centre of the earth. King Cheng, the second Zhou king, was assisted by his uncle the Duke of Zhou in consolidating royal power. The new kingdom expanded towards the east, requiring a capital at the new centre, one which could ensure the control of the whole realm. Finding the realm's centre therefore had political and ritual importance. Records carved on a ritual wine vessel, HeZun,<sup>63</sup> provide evidence of the making of Chengzhou as the new capital:

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<sup>62</sup> 何弩, < 陶寺圭尺“中”与“中国”概念由来新探 >, 《三代考古》, 4 (2011), 页 85-128. / Nu He, 'The Lacquer Stick from Taosi and Origin of "Zhong" and "Zhongguo" Concepts', *Archaeology of Three Dynasty*, 4 (2011), 85-128.

<sup>63</sup> HeZun is a ritual wine vessel dated back to c. 11 century, unearthed in 1963, Baoji, Shanxi province. H.39cm, R.28.6cm, W.14.6kg.

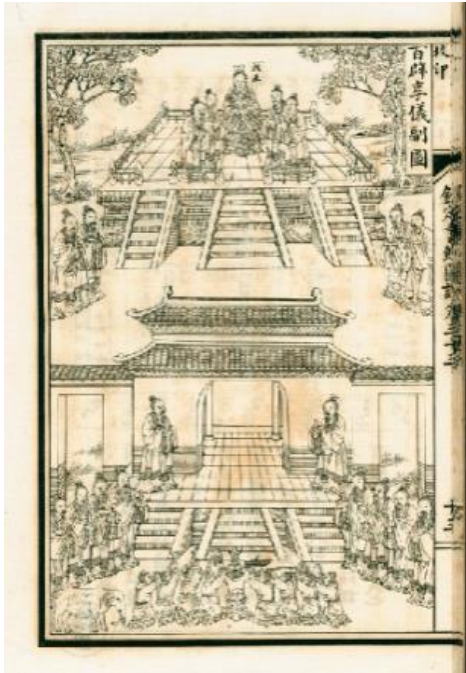
‘When King Cheng began to establish his residence and therefore went to Chengzhou, he, the son of King Wu, prayed on BingXu [the twenty-third] day of the fourth month to heaven for great luck [the feng fu ritual]. The King said to He, a son of his clan: When my father the King conquered the Shang, it was his intention to find the earth’s centre. Reporting to heaven, the King said: it remains for me to establish my residence in the centre of the kingdom (Zhong Guo) in order to rule over the people.’<sup>64</sup>

In this way, the rulers of Zhou became the legitimate representatives of mankind, while Chengzhou became a tool for attracting the assistance of natural forces for the benefit of the ruling dynasty and its people. The term ‘Zhong Guo’ (Chinese: 中国, China), the middle kingdom, appeared for the first time. In the *Book of Zhou, the making of Luo*, (逸周书, 作雒解), the Duke of Zhou was concerned about the heirs of the kingdom and said: ‘I’m worried whether our kingdom will maintain its prosperity forever, so I propose the new capital at the centre of the world.’ Chengzhou was given a ritual importance by claiming to be the earth’s centre. Many people, from those who designed it to neighbouring tribes, recognised Chengzhou as the centre of the world. This event was reflected by the illustration of the ‘Bai Pi Xiang Yi Tu’(百辟享仪图), ambassadors of neighbouring tribes make a pilgrimage to the king in the Qing dynasty book collection *Shi Jing Tu Shuo* (1616-1912). The illustration demonstrated the description in *Zhouli*, which suggested that ‘the king sitting at the centre of

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<sup>64</sup> Translated according to the transcription of the Records Carved on HeZun.

the world while facing south, allowing every man in the kingdom to make a pilgrimage’ (Figure 5).<sup>65</sup>



**Figure 5. ‘Bai Pi Xiang Yi Tu two/百辟享仪图二’ (1616-1912) described the king sitting on a square terrace in the center of the kingdom while the ambassadors from neighbouring tribes came and made their obeisance. (Source: *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*.)**

Since the centre had political and ritual importance, the methods for confirming that it was the centre reflected belief in early place making activities. According to the *Book of Zhou*, Chengzhou was surveyed and designed by the Duke of Shao, who acted as Taibao (太保), the

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<sup>65</sup> 《周礼》, 770 to 476 BC. / *ZhouLi*, c. 770 to 476 BC.

King's grand guardian, and the Duke of Zhou, King Wu's brother, the prince regent. Both were highly respected and played major roles in consolidating the kingdom. The *Book of Zhou* describes how the dukes of Zhou cooperated in the choosing of the potential site for the capital. 'In the third month the Duke of Shao first surveyed the location for the new capital in Luo.' The actions of the Duke of Shao, referred to as 'xiang' (Chinese: 相) in the text, depended on the duke's personal interpretation of the site, and the word xiang referred to both the observation and appearance of men and objects.

Divination remained of significance in site selection, although it was clearly separated with the activity of xiang. As in the Shang, potential locations were observed in advance, and the divination was to report the options to the gods for approval rather than to find it. The results gained by the Duke of Shao were divined by the Duke of Zhou:

'The Guardian went before the Duke of Zhou to inspect the localities, and in the third month (of 1036 BC), the third day after the new moon, came in the morning to Luo. He consulted the tortoise about the localities, and having obtained favoured indications, he set about laying the plans. The third day after, he led the people of Yin to prepare the various sites on the north of the Luo; and his work was completed on the fifth day. On the following day, the Duke of Zhou came in the morning to Luo and thoroughly surveyed the plans for the city. The third day after, he offered two bulls as victims in the (future) suburbs (of the planned city), and on the morrow at the altar of the spirit of the land in the new city, he sacrificed a bull, a goat, and a pig. After seven days in the

morning, from his written specifications he gave the several charges to the people of Yin. When they had thus received their orders, they rose with vigour to do their work'<sup>66</sup>.

The Duke of Zhou then reported to the King about his divination:

'I came after the Guardian and surveyed the plain of river Luo. I arrived at the city of LuoYi on the morning on the day of Yimao. I first divined the north area of the Yellow River, then the east of River Jian and west of River Chan. Only the plain of River Luo is indicated in the divining results. I then divined on the east of river Chan, again the plain of river Luo is the only site suggested by the divining result.'<sup>67</sup>

The Duke of Zhou's actions were again referred as 'bu', as were purely divining activity. Although the site of Chengzhou remained decided by the Duke of Zhou, the master diviner of the kingdom, the performance of xiang was almost equally important.<sup>68</sup> What the dukes did in the construction of Chengzhou was recorded in the painting of Tai Bao Xiang Zhai Tu included in the *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*,<sup>69</sup> which was published in the late Qing dynasty. The representation

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<sup>66</sup> Alfred Shinz, *The Magic Square* (London: Edition Axel Menges, 1996), p. 64.

<sup>67</sup> 《浩诰》. / *Book of Documents*.

<sup>68</sup> 吴文璋, 《巫师傳統和儒家的深層結構: 以先秦到西漢的儒家為研究對象》 (高雄: 復文圖書出版社, 2001), 页 373-423. / Wenzhang Wu, *The Tradition of the Wizard and the Structure of Confucianism* (Kaohsiung: Fuwen Books Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 373-423.

<sup>69</sup> 孙家鼐等编, 《钦定书经图说》 (北京: 京师大学堂编书局, 1905). / *Illustrated Explanation of the Historical Classic Made on Imperial Order*, ed. by Jianai Sun and others (Beijing: Daxuetang Bianshujū, 1905).



of the techniques carried out by the artisans and the Duke of Shao in the picture were based on Qing interpretations of *Zhouli*, a work describing the Western Zhou court written in 770-476 BC in the Eastern Zhou. Modern studies like those of Qian Mu, Gu Zegang and many others have suggested that the book was written during the Eastern Zhou dynasty,<sup>70</sup> so although the narrative of *Zhouli* represents an image of Western Zhou, we should bear in mind that the pictured skills may only have occurred during Eastern Zhou dynasty or later. For example, Needham points out that the compass showed in the picture (held by the Duke of Shao) was made no earlier than the Song dynasty. But the majority of the evidence of *xiang* in the *Tai Bao Xiang zhai Tu* might still be realistic. For instance, in the picture the duke and his assistants observe the earth and the waters. This parallels records in the *Classic of Odes, Liu the Duke* (1042-1021 BC)<sup>71</sup>, in which practical methods and strategies of pre-Zhou habitat site selection are described. The record provides accounts of his site survey activities on the way to Bin:

‘Liu the Duke, the royal and honest man, ancestor of the people of Zhou, stopped at springs on his way to BaiQuan. Climbing onto the southern ridge, he gazed at this water-surrounded plain. Climbing onto the high mountain and measuring the shadows,

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<sup>70</sup> 常佩雨, <周礼成书年代、作者及其价值论略>, 《湖北工程学院学报》, 34 (2004), 页 19-23. / Peiyu Chang, ‘Research on ZhouLi’s Written era, Author and Value’, *Journal of Hubei Engineering University*, 34 (2004), 19-23.

<sup>71</sup> It should be noticed that although site survey skills were long possessed by the early Zhou people, whether they were related to rituals are open to question. One of the few available sources of the Western Zhou, the *Classic of Odes*, contains chronological poems of the Zhou dynasty. The majority of the *Odes* dated back to the Western Zhou period (1046–771 BC), the rest were composed during the early Eastern Zhou (770-746 BC). Whatever the origins of the various poems, they ‘all seem to have passed through the hands of men of letters at the royal Zhou court’. The *Liu the Duke* was composed to praise Liu, an early Zhou tribe leader.

he investigated the orientations, the Yin Yang<sup>72</sup>, the flow of rivers...here he let his people settle.’

Evidence of rituals are not identified in the song, which suggests that the early Zhou as a tribe may not have had the knowledge or hierarchy to perform it during their move. What the song reflects was the skills employed in conducting geographical survey activity. Many previous studies, particularly architectural studies of the 1980’s, have treated the record as a reflection of early feng shui activity, but what Liu the Duke did seem to have been an act based on purely agricultural understandings. The ode of *Liu the Duke* was composed at the time of the building of Chengzhou city, but it is not certain that these skills were actually practised by Liu; they are, though, reflections of contemporary xiang. What is certain is that the Chengzhou’s xiang involved observation of the surrounding environment, the soil and water flows. These skills recorded were later reflected by a series Qing dynasty (1616-1912) illustrations in the *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*. For instance, the ‘Tai Bao Xiang Zhai Tu’ (太保相宅图), the illustration of the King’s grand guardian surveying the location of Chengzhou, demonstrated the possible skills that the Zhou dukes practised while performing xiang (Figure 6). Combining the descriptions in the *Classic of Odes*, it is plausible to conclude that the King’s grand guardian, as demonstrated in the illustration, is standing on the south of the ridge and on the north of the river. Mind that one of the skills demonstrated in the illustration, compass reading, did not actually exist in the

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<sup>72</sup> Yin, according to the *Book of Words*, is the shadow, southern side of water and northern side of mountains. Yang, the place of highlight, opposite side of Yin.

Zhou dynasty as geomancy compass was yet to be invented. This error was an assumption made by the Qing dynasty (1616-1912) painters.



The Grand Guardian (middle)  
observing the place



The Grand Guardian's assistant  
reading the compass



The Grand Guardian's assistant  
measuring the site

Figure 6. 'Tai Bao Xiang Zhai Tu/太保相宅圖' (1616-1912), a Qing-dynasty produced illustration describing the King's grand guardian's site survey skills of observing surrounding environment, the soil and water flows. (Source: *Shu Jing Tu Shu*, recreated by the author.)

## From Chengzhou to Helv: Developed Skills of Xiang

The Duke of Shao was not the only one who could apply xiang, although that of a city like Chengzhou depended on a respectful social hierarchy. Early attempts to combine rites and place making activity were carried out by the court officials. The origins of these officials could be traced to diviners in the Western Zhou, namely, wu (Chinese: 巫, the witch), zhu (Chinese: 祝, the priest), bu (Chinese: 卜, the diviner) and shi (Chinese: 史, the historian). Wu, zhu, bu, shi consisted of the majority of the intellectuals of Western Zhou and earlier times.<sup>73</sup> The positions of these diviners were most likely allocated to specific positions in a hierarchy. Although there was a decrease in social hierarchies compared to those of the Shang and earlier times,<sup>74</sup> the diviners remained responsible for ‘passing heaven and the king’s orders [to others]’.<sup>75</sup> In particular, shi, the historians, were those who connected to heaven and recorded their indications. They later became responsible for both divination and event recording.<sup>76</sup> Shi will be mentioned again later as a court position responsible for site selection. In *Zhouli*, written during the Eastern Zhou, shi, wu, zhu, bu were described as middle-ranking court officials. They were responsible for place making activities, mostly the establishment of cities, tombs

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<sup>73</sup> 史仲文, 胡晓琳, 《中国全史-第十五卷春秋战国宗教史》(北京: 人民出版社, 1994), 页 367-72. / *China Complete History – The History of Religions from the Spring and Autumn Period*, ed. by Zhongwen Shi and Xiaolin Hu, 10 vols (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1994), pp. 367-72.

<sup>74</sup> 唐兰, 《西周青铜器铭文史征》(上海: 上海古籍出版社, 2016), 页 457. / Lan Tang, *Bronze Inscriptions of the Western Zhou Dynasty* (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Works Publishing House, 2016), p. 457.

<sup>75</sup> Qiang Basin, dated 1019-936 BC, unearthed in 1976, BaoJi city, ShanXi province.

<sup>76</sup> 李宗侗编, 《史学概要》(台北: 中华书局, 1968), 页 19. / *Essentials of History*, ed. by Zongtong Li (Taipei: Zhonghua Publishing House, 1968), p. 19.

and to levy taxes, which required them to observe local geographical conditions, mostly the soil, to make the tax standards.

The monopoly of divining knowledge broke down when the privileged social group of diviners was dissolved by the end of Western Zhou. Former court diviners had to seek their living by practicing their professional skills, and one of the most appealing options for them was to serve the local lords, who claimed legitimacy for their rule over others by employing ritual knowledge. The use of *bu* was no longer exclusive, nor was it as respected as before. The diviners were challenged by the rising cultural elites, referred to as the Hundreds of Schools, who devoted their knowledge to political ends. The term, Hundreds of Schools, described the many physical schools that developed with the aim of curing society and understanding the world. Representatives of these Hundreds of Schools were known by many, for instance, Confucius, Laozi (Daoism) and many others. These new scholars, particularly those of Confucianism, Daoism and the Mohism, partly absorbed their knowledge from traditional religion and rites, and developed it into socialised understandings.<sup>77</sup> This hugely accelerated the differences between divining and place making practices, and between *bu* and *xiang*.

During the era period of 770-476 BC in the Spring and Autumn period, the former kingdom of Western Zhou was divided into hundreds of states which competed intensely when the royal lineage lost power. During this time, local lords and whoever could afford them recruited

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<sup>77</sup> *China Complete History*, pp. 367-72.

diviners to serve their courts, in order to further assert their legitimacy, and scholars were recruited to strengthen their political power. By the end of the era, only four states remained. As *Zhouli* is likely to have been written during this time period, officials described in the book probably reflect the ideas of contemporary intellectuals. Although the methods and skills performed by them, were affected by Eastern Zhou society's 'orthodoxy', expressed contemporary requirements for place making. An overall trend of separating divination and place making activities can be observed in these descriptions of court officials, who were:

- *Officials of the Heaven* (天官冢宰, Ministry of State) on general governance;
- *Officials of the Earth* (地官司徒, Ministry of Education) on taxation, divining and agriculture;
- *Officials of the Spring* (春官宗伯, Ministry of Ritual) on social and religious institutions;
- *Officials of the Summer* (夏官司馬, Ministry of War) on the military;
- *Officials of the Autumn* (秋官司寇, Ministry of Justice) on justice;
- *Artificer's Record* (考工記) on craftwork.

Those described in the *Offices of the Earth*, *Offices of the Spring*, and *Artificer's Record* were particularly relevant to place making activities. Overall, the *Officials of the Earth* indicated geographic technologies and skills applied in urban-based planning. The *Offices of the Spring* indicated certain divining activities which were related to various planning activities and burials which will be discussed later. The *Artificer's Record* was added later, and provided evidence of the most practical skills of construction. The *Artificer's Record* was originally

written as an independent work during the similar time period of *Zhouli*. It was later included to the *Zhouli* in replacement to the missing chapter of *Officials of the Wither*, which described the Ministry of Construction.

The officials of the earth conducted geographically related activities in the kingdom to ‘assure the rule of the King’. Their practices are described in *Zhouli* and were developed on the basis of agricultural methods. For instance, *The Grand Situ* (Chinese: 大司徒) ‘surveys the land of kingdom and proposes the ideal location for capital so that orders can be endowed on the country and its people’. From this description his character was related to that of the Western Zhou diviners. What distinguished him from earlier diviners was his responsibility for proposing ‘the methods of Tuhui, Tugui, Tujun, Tuhui’.<sup>78</sup> These methods were closely associated with xiang, ritual observation, rather than bu.

‘Tuyi’: Distinguishing different kinds of crops by cataloguing twelve kinds of soil. ‘Tuyi’ suggested that the observation of earth should take the phenomena visible in the sky into consideration. This may have suggested that the xiang of the Duke of Shao was also somehow related to the heavenly signs, although the details remained unknown.

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<sup>78</sup> 《周礼·大司徒》 / *Zhouli, the Grand Situ*.

‘Tugui’: locating the centre by measuring the visible length of gui, the ritual ruler.

‘Tujun’: Distinguishing soil qualities by measuring their weight so that the court can set tax policy by marking soil quality.

‘Tuhui’: The method of recognising the characters of lands, plants, animals and man by observing soil and water. It was believed that the mountainous areas produced furry animals and early-ripening agricultural products, and that the people who lived there were usually strong and hairy; the rivers and lakes produced scaly animals, salicaceae (or seedy) plants and tanned people; hilly land was the motherland of birds, fruit-producing plants and tall people; the water side and wet land was the home of crustaceans and pods, where the residents were tall, thin and pale; the plain and lower land produced short furry animals and tussock plants like reeds, and people who grew up on the land were thought to be short and tubby.

These methods were part of the further involvements of xiang, which remained a combination of agricultural skills and ritual performances, but which developed detailed methods of looking for the centre. Soil and water were of significance for xiang, and their evaluation was likely to be undertaken by officials who, although they remained among the privileged, were no longer considered sacred.

Xiang, the observation of a site, could be considered early geomancy. The practice of xiang required cooperation with other construction activities, which were commonly carried out by artisans. The artisans were not originally listed in the *Zhouli* as they had far lower status than



the officials; they were described in a later edited chapter in place of the missing *Officials of the Winter*. Their work was described as a series practical activity when constructing Chengzhou:

‘The artisans are tracing the layout of the royal capital. They form a walled square which has nine *Li* as the length of each side, and each side has three gates which divide the wall to three equal lengths. There are nine lengthwise and nine crosswise avenues, each lengthwise width at nine chariot-tracks. On the left side there stands the Ancestral Hall, while on the right side there is the Alter of Soil. In front of the palace there is the Audience Hall, the market is located at the back. They also observed water level to certain the ground is level. Hang ropes as a reference to set vertical stumps so that shadows can be observed, and orientations could be recognized. Draw circle on the ground using these stumps as the circle centre and record shadow position of both sunrise and sun set. They refer to the shadow position in mid-noon and the Polaris so that east and west could be ascertained.’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> 《周礼·考工记》 / *Zhouli, Artificer's Record*

This event was reflected by the illustration of ‘Luo Nei Cheng Wei Tu’ (洛内成位图) in the *Shu Jing Tu Shuo*. The illustration shows construction activities in Chengzhou the holy city by the river Luo, which were carried out by artisans.

One of the most noticeable differences between the artisans and other place making officials would be the absence of ritual meanings in their skills. These artisans, described by the *Artificer’s Record*, were surely not among the court officials; they were more likely only subjects under the supervision of the officials of the winter, who were the administrators of the kingdom’s constructions. Social status of the artisans was barely comparable to other officials mentioned in *Zhouli*, so they were unlikely to have contact with ritual events. Outdoor place making activities performed by these artisans were also described in the *Shi Jing Tu Shuo*, providing comparison to the Zhou dukes’ site observations (Figure 7). As can be seen, their activities had no relevance to rituals.

Since *Zhouli* was a description of the Western Zhou court, which the book considered the perfect example of ‘orthodoxy’, the actual contemporary practices of xiang may have been carried out in a rather different form. One example survives in the records of Wu Zixun (559-484 BC), constructing the city of Helv (today’s Suzhou city) in the State of Wu, contemporary with the composition of the *Artificer’s Record*. The purpose of designing Helv was discussed by the King of the State of Wu and Wu Zixun:

The King asked Wu Zixun: ‘When planning a capital, one should observe the topography and thus consider whether a place is suitable for living. How would

heaven's will or Qi be relevant to the process?' Wu Zixun answered, 'they indeed do.'  
The King then said, 'if this is the case, I'll trust you with the planning of Helv'.

Although this conversation shows the King of Wu questioning xiang, he does not deny the effectiveness of xiang, rather he seems keen to confirm it. When selecting the site, Wu Zixun, the king's grand guardian says, 'xiang the earth and taste the water'; when designing the city plan he 'imitated the patterns of the heaven and the earth'.<sup>80</sup> These methods were not much different to those practiced by the Duke of Shao or the court officials described by the *Zhouli*. What separated Wu Zixun's actions with previously discussed cases was his acceptance of popular beliefs of which he and many others were deeply convinced. He designed eight gates for the external city wall and eight water gates, a representation of the eight winds from heaven and eight water gates representing the eight directions of the earth. When he was designing the palace city within Helv, he set up three gates, one each on the north, the south, the west sides, but not the east. This was because the State of Yue, the enemy state neighbouring the State of Wu, was located to its southeast. By leaving the east wall of palace city closed, Wu believed that the State of Yue could no longer offend. Wu named the southern gate of the palace city the snake gate, as the southeastern direction was represented by snake in the zodiac. On the top corners of the snake gate he designed two wooden snakes with their heads toward to the north, implying that the snake (the State of Yue) obeys the north (the State of Wu). These actions were a detailed combination of popular beliefs applied to city making activities. This shows

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<sup>80</sup> 《吴越春秋·卷第四》，页 25-220。 / *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue*, pp. 25-220.

that xiang could be impacted by human interpretation as well as local culture, so a city's form had specific meaning for those who could understand it. Although the actual form of Helv city was not recorded by illustrations, a map of the city in 1229 might have reflected its basic form. In the map it could still be seen that the eastern wall of inner city remained closed, which fitted in the description of Helv. The three city gates, the northern, the western, and the southern, were indicated in the illustration; while the eastern city wall was enclosed, which has resulted an unusual asymmetrical city plan (Figure 8).

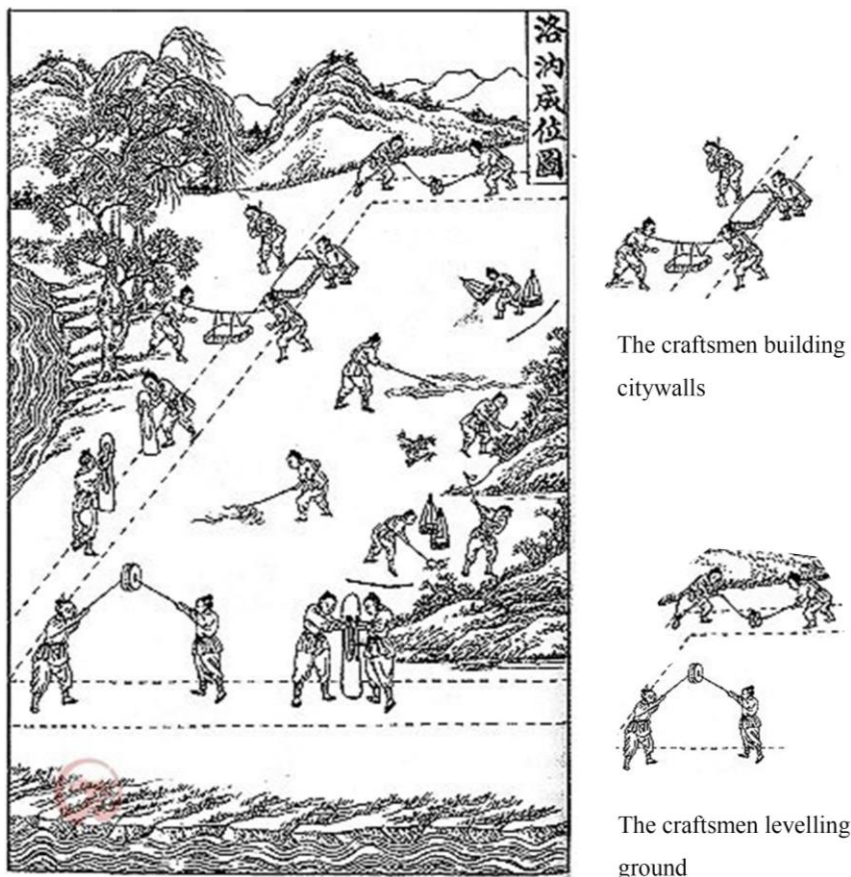


Figure 7. 'Luo Yi Cheng Wei Tu/洛邑成位图' (1616-1912), a Qing-dynasty produced illustration describing city making activities performed by the artisans, which were much different to what the Zhou dukes performed. (Source: *Shi Jing Tu Shuo*, recreated by the author.)

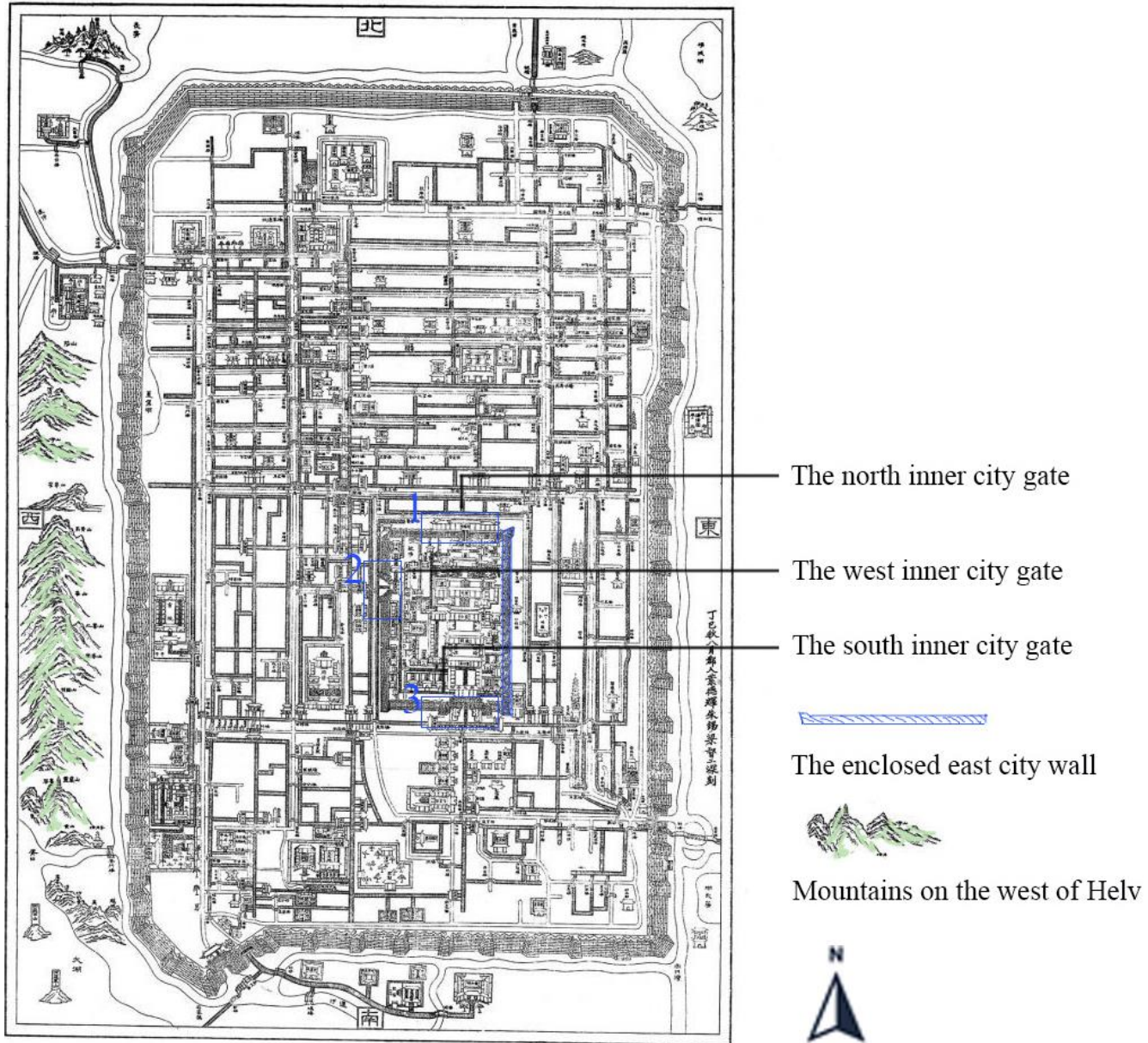


Figure 8. ‘A map of Pingjiang city/ 平江图’ (1229) demonstrates the missing of the Helv city’s eastern gate.

(Source: Suzhou library.)

Though the methods and skills of place making mentioned in *Zhouli* expressed orthodoxy, the design of the Helv city shows attention to popular beliefs in its xiang. This contradiction may suggest that although xiang first appeared as the state’s ritual behaviour, its later practice in

local states was affected by regional cultures rather than the rules indicated by the book, particularly in southern China. One of the greatest supports of its aims was Confucianism, which emphasised the importance of a carefully constructed social order. ‘Confucius did not talk about prodigies, forces, disorders and gods’<sup>81</sup>; its attitude towards popular beliefs showed a conscious avoiding of these concepts, although there was no denial of them. Wu Zixun’s biography revealed the reason for his fondness for popular beliefs. Wu came from the state of Chu, southwest of the Eastern Zhou realm, roughly in today’s Hubei province. The Chu culture radiated to other states in southern China including the States of Wu and Yue. The ‘prodigies, forces, disorders and gods’ that Confucianism avoided were favoured in Chu culture, where a stronger association between popular beliefs and the xiang of Helv was almost inevitable. While Wu Zixun’s understanding of combining beliefs while making place, or rather the fond, must was much considerable. This geographical difference can be roughly bounded by the Yangtze River: north of the Yangtze River, discussions of prodigies, forces, disorders and gods were avoided; while south of the river, popular beliefs retained a great social influence. The different perceptions of belief place making among the two regions so far remains a rough deduction and will be further discussed in next chapter. The states of Wu and Chu were important parts of southern China; while the states of Qi and Lu, where Confucius developed his dominating philosophy, consisted the central part of norther China (Figure 9).

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<sup>81</sup> 《论语》, 770-476 BC. / Analects, 770-476 BC.



By understanding the historical performances of bu and xiang, it could be seen that early feng shui was different with actions of making Loess Plateau cave which has been suggested by previous studies. Therefore, this study suggested that the earliest written evidence of feng shui is about 2700 years old, in Wu Zixun's (c.6 century – 484 BC) activity at Helv city and the *Chu Slips* (c. 475 to 221 BC). The distribution of texts that were copied and widely disseminated within certain classes, meant that from this point there was a more consistent approach, the evidence of which can be seen which delayed the evolutionary processes that had played such an important part previously.



Figure 9. Map of the states in Spring and Autumn period, indicating the Yangtze River a rough geographical boundary of the different perceptions of early feng shui. (Source: *History of in Spring and Autumn period*, p. 12.)

Reviewing the cases of the Zhou dukes and Wu Zixu, it should be noted that the practice of xiang remained important to one's social status. In particular, their status qualified them to conduct xiang, and their knowledge, which came from the education due to their status, allowed their work to be socially approved. Participation in xiang by the wider population was

encouraged by the diviners who practised their skills to serve the needs of daily life, though the term, *xiang*, was not widely used. These activities were commonly directed by contemporary popular beliefs. Rather than being recruited by the local states, many of the diviners became the newly emerged *fang shi* (方士), who were practitioners of ritual activities in various daily events such as marriage, burial and construction.<sup>82</sup> The word ‘Fang Shi’ literally means the ‘method master’, first appeared in the *Records of the Grand Historian* in the Western Han dynasty (202 BC – AD8). Their history reached back to Zhou diviners, witches and persists. Their knowledge of *fang shi* came from many sources including divining, medicine, early Daoism and others. They managed to transfer these theories to practices which did not have to be philosophical or accurate, but rather easier to be accept.

The *fang shi* promoted ideas of immortality by transforming the diviners’ medical knowledge and through early Yin-Yangism, which was developed by Zou Yan (305 - 240 BC) in the State of Qi. Although the *fang shi* applied theories of Yin-Yang and five phases to explain their practices, it was highly likely that the history of their practices reached back far earlier. The first *fang shi* to appear in the written record was Chang Hong, a Western Zhou court official who performed witchcraft for the Zhou kings. The idea that one’s soul could be preserved even when the body was dissolved which *fang shi* promoted soon became popular among the upper

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<sup>82</sup> *China Complete History*, pp. 367-72.



classes, while the action of finding sacred places was particularly encouraged. The Fang shi could bridge the gap between philosophical theories and daily place making practices.

The literacy of the fang shi and their propensity for geographical narrative were particularly influential on the early interpretations of sacred places. Some of the fang shi travelled and possessed some geographical knowledge. They were credited with the production of *Shanhai Jing* (山海经), the *Classic of the Mountains and Seas*, which was initially a wide range collection of geography findings, fairytales (志怪), medicine and alchemy technologies written and recorded during the warring states period. The variety of its contents is a reflection of the interests of fang shi, which were not limited to the formal features of the narrative but also incorporate a semi-visionary understanding of the world.<sup>83</sup> The world described in *Shanhai Jing* was flat, and divided into a pattern with five orientations, mountain ranges to the south, north, east and west and the remote wilderness. While drawing up their understanding of China in the *Shanhai Jing*, diviners and the fang shi imagined various sacred mountains and the outside world as well as ideas of immortality. An example of this is their description of the sacred islands of the Kunlun (昆仑), Penglai (蓬莱) and Yingzhou (瀛洲) in the far eastern sea,<sup>84</sup> which are described as the gods' residences. The idea that there was an elixir of life on

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<sup>83</sup> Kenneth J. Dewoskin, 'Fangshi', in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. by William H. Nienhauser, 1 (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 378-80.

<sup>84</sup> Early Fangshi claimed to know of three divine mountains where the elixir of immortality existed, Penglai 蓬莱, Fangzhang 方丈, and Yingzhou 瀛洲 in the Bohai Sea, recorded in LieZi. The pattern of three mountains was widely accepted by Chinese garden design.

these sacred islands soon became of social importance, a reflection of the needs of the contemporary upper-class. The pattern of sea and sacred islands later became a feature of imperial garden design, a means of praying for immortality. The Qin emperor Qinshihuang's Palace of Orchard Pond (259-210BC) is thought to be the earliest example to practise the pattern.<sup>85</sup> Xiang was affected by the rise of fang shi culture as the activity became linked to popular beliefs and less associated with rites. Illustrations in the *Shanhai Jing* presented this semi-imaginary world, where the sacred islands in the far east sea were emphasised by an exaggerated scale, indicating their considerable significance (Figure 10). A physical evidence of this popular culture was the garden of the Jianzhang palace in the Western Han, located in the Han capital Chang'an (today's Xi'an city), where the pattern of 'one pond and three mountains' was demonstrated. Three artificial hills, namely Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou, were constructed in the lake of Taiye (Figure 11).<sup>86</sup> They implied the three legendary sacred mountains and the east sea as described in *Shanhai Jing*. This example had expressed the widely accepted fang shi culture in relation to making a place. The same pattern was also reflected by the carved pattern on contemporary Western Han censer (博山炉), which shows the sacred mountains and islands.<sup>87</sup> When smoke rises during the burning of incense, it creates

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<sup>85</sup> 周维权, 《中国古典园林史》(北京: 清华大学出版社, 1989), 页 45. / Weiquan Zhou, *History of Classical Chinese Gardens* (Beijing: TsingHua University Press, 1989), p. 45.

<sup>86</sup> 司马迁, 《史记·孝武本纪》(91BC). / Qian Sima, *Grand Historian's Records* (91BC).

<sup>87</sup> Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization of China*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 582.

an impression of the immortal place where the sacred mountains were surrounded by fog (Figure 12).

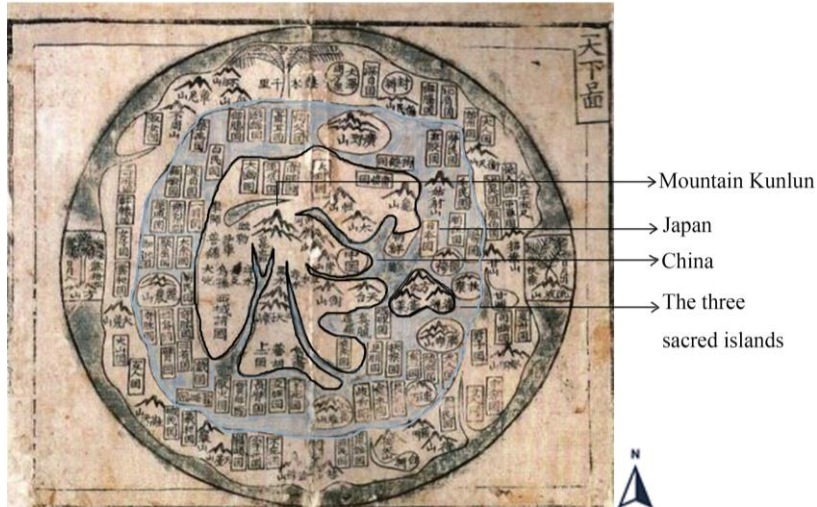


Figure 10. ‘All Under Heaven/天下图’ (206 BC–220 AD) in the *Shanhai Jing* described the sacred islands in an exaggerated scale, making these islands much bigger than the middle kingdom, that was, China. (Source: *Commentary of Shanhai Jing*, 2014.)

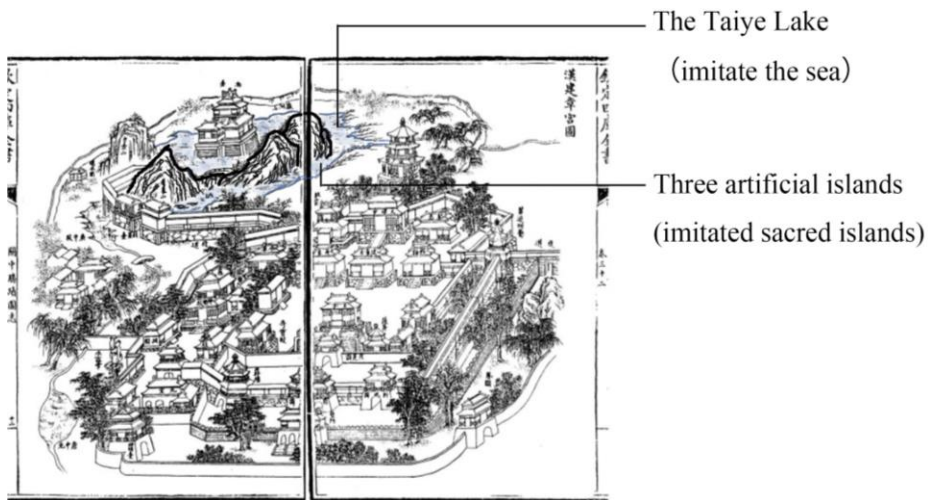


Figure 11. Bi Wan’s reconstructed image of the JiangZhang palace (1776) demonstrated the garden pattern of ‘one pond and three mountains’ which located at the northwest of the palace. (Source: recreated by author from *GuanZhongShengJiTuZhi* / 关中胜迹图志, Volume32, p. 132.)



**Figure 12. The carved pattern on a Western Han dynasty bronze Mountain Censer (206BC-AD220) indicated that the scared mountains were associated with immortality. (Source: *ManCheng Han Mu Fajue Baogao*, (Beijing: WenWu Chubanshe, 1980), fig. 3, p. 64.)**

Often found in association with fang shi was ru sheng (儒生), the followers of the Hundreds of Schools. Fang shi and the ru sheng could not be completely separated from each other as their knowledge often overlaps. The blurred boundary between these two groups allowed more intellectuals to be involved in belief activities. Ru sheng promoted the ‘orthodox’ performance of xiang. They were deep fond of the form of Chengzhou city, seeing it as a representative of orthodox. Since the emperor Wu of Han (157-87BC) claimed the Confucianism as the state’s orthodox, the term ru sheng specifically referred to those who studied Confucianism and were supported by the state after Confucianism was established as the state’s official philosophy, and they were often employed by the court as officials. Ru (儒) the word, also related to the theory of Confucianism, namely, ru xue (儒学; 学, study). Because of the increasing impact of Confucianism, ru sheng and fang shi became less connected to the courts, particularly those of high status.

The selection of the site of capitals in later times would suggest that the performance of xiang during the Han had a specific format, not just the simple ritual purpose of finding the centre. Finding the centre remained important but was no longer the most crucial element. For instance, Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han (202BC – AD220), intended to choose the city of Luoyang (previously Chengzhou) as the capital as it was the centre of the earth, but Liu Bang's proposal was rejected by his advisors, who suggested that the site of Chang'an was more suitable due to its military advantages.<sup>88</sup> So the choice of the site of a city was no longer decided by its centrality, or any other results of bu, but by a comprehensive understanding of its condition, sometimes in relation to other sites. This is also seen in the making of Helv city, where there was a strong motivation to defeat its enemy. As xiang and bu evolved, the rules for evaluating the soil and water replaced the pursuit of the centre and had become the essential skills in making cities. Daxing city, the Sui capital, is another example showing how these rules further highlighted the significance of scenery, waters, and vegetations. Records suggest that Chang'an city was badly damaged during a series of civil wars at the end of the Han dynasty, and its living conditions were significantly diminished. The Sui court announced the planning a new capital, saying, 'the water in Chang'an is salty and bitter, so it is not suitable for human living.'<sup>89</sup> On the site of the new capital, the plain of the Dragon Head Mountain (a mountain range on the south of the Xianyang plain), 'the scenery is beautiful and the plants are lush; the place is prosperous and people are kind. When observing the earth (original text: bu)

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<sup>88</sup> 司马光, 《资治通鉴》, (1019-1086). / Guang Sima, *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance*, (1019-1086).

<sup>89</sup> 《隋書·高祖紀上》, (636). / *The Book of Sui*, (636).

and divining (original text: xiang) the location was suggested as ideal for the new capital'.<sup>90</sup> Later, these skills were obtained by the geomancers.

But overall these activities were only considered an attachment of city planning. The construction of Daxing was carried out by court officials who had high status. A specific court position was created for the main designer Yuwen Kai, who was later appointed JiangZuoDaJiang (将作大匠), the head official of the state's constructions.<sup>91</sup> A JiangZuoDaJiang was paid two thousand shi (shi, Chinese:石, weight measure of Han coin) a year by the court, a generous payment.

How did bu and xiang interact with the process of deciding where and how to make a city? Examples of both in early capital planning have been shown in Chengzhou, Helv and Daxing: all these were initially established to assert their ruler's legitimacy, established by bu and therefore perceived as a ritual part of the process. The performance and meaning of bu remained under the control of the state. Xiang was part of the place making activity after bu, and expressed popular beliefs, so xiang is often a changeable subject, varying as long as it

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<sup>90</sup> 《隋書·高祖紀上》, (636). / *The Book of Sui*, (636).

<sup>91</sup> The position appeared no later than the Qin dynasty in the name of JiangZuoShaoFu (Chinese: 将作少府). During the Han, the name was changed to JiangZuoDaJiang.

serves the majority. This difference between bu and xiang should always be borne in mind and will be crucial in understanding the evolution of geomancy.

## **Remembering the Tomb: from ‘Mu’ to ‘Fen’**

Differences between bu and xiang were also reflected in burial activities, which were, on a certain level, more important than the making of cities and houses to Chinese people. This was because the ancient Chinese believe that qi connects the living and the dead, while a properly constructed tomb allows the dead to be benefited by qi, hence to benefit the living. The carrying out of bu in early burial was a ritual expression. *Zhouli* describes how bu was practised in royal burial: ‘the king will be buried seven months since his death. Before the burial (the diviners) bu the location and boundary of his grave.’


Other officials described in *Zhouli*, the Officials of Spring, carried out the state’s burial and ritual activities. They chose particular orientations for burial as well as defining the specific construction timing for graves by sacrifices, divining and predicting. These officials were middle-ranked by the court, with responsibilities clearly divided:

Dabu (大卜), the grand diviner: they read the signs shown on divining bones when hosting burial events.

Xiaoshi (小史), the minor historian: recognise the royal family trees and arrange the graves following the Zhao-Mu system. (Zhao-Mu was the ritual burial system which allocates graves

according to a specific order related to generations. It was named after two kings of Western Zhou, though how much it owed to the traditional practice of the early kings of Western Zhou is open to question.)

Zhongren (冢人), the official of tombs: Zhongren surveyed the graveyard and mapped the area. To locate the first king in the middle, rest of the kings are placed in the order of the Zhao-Mu system. Dukes are buried in front, officials in behind them. People who died in wars should not be buried in the area. A Zhao-Mu burial was planned as below:

**Middle** (facing east) 

The ancestor: *King Ji*

**Mu** (facing north)

**Zhao** (facing south)

The second king: King Wu

The first king: King Wen

The fourth king: King Kang

The third king: King Cheng

The sixth king: King Mu

The fifth king: King Zhao



Mudafu (墓大夫), the tomb official: monitors graveyards and tombs, confirms their territories.

These officials were the grave yard planners. Their work was not named bu except that which was performed by Dabu, the grand diviner: bu was a single action accomplished by the diviners alone. Establishing the positions of Zhongren and Mudafu, or at least the attempt to do so, shows that the officials were required to be able to plan graveyard boundary and orientations for the burials of kings, nobles and court officials. They were also responsible for decisions about burial locations in relation to other burials, and for arranging the graves according to the social standing of the deceased.

Burial rules in the late Eastern Zhou were not yet associated with divining. The fundamental burial rules of being located high and surrounded by open fields were required by *Lüshi Chunqiu* (Chinese: 吕氏春秋) (r. 239 BC), an encyclopaedic Chinese classic text compiled during the Qin (221-206BC) by Chancellor Lü Buwei. A clear rule was developed because of concern for the preservation of the tomb.:

‘The Dead can only rest in peace when they are buried on an open plain or on a high mountain. This was because the key to burial was to hide. Bury someone too shallow under the earth, then the beasts would disturb the dead. Bury someone too deep in the

earth, then underground water would inundate the dead. Thus burial must be performed on a high ground.’<sup>92</sup>

An early awareness to relate tomb location to the future was demonstrated by the record of ChuLizi (?-300BC), a royal person in the state of the Qin during the late Eastern Zhou in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (91 BC). In this Western Han (206 BC - AD 8) record, ChuLizi, an important political figure, was mostly recorded as someone who could predict the future by observing tomb sites. For instance, ChuLizi ‘predicted that his tomb will be surrounded by two palaces a hundred years after his burial’. While his prediction ‘was proved in the early Han (which was roughly a hundred years later) as his tomb was surrounded by the Palace of Changle in the east and the Palace of Weiyang in the west’.<sup>93</sup> How he made this prediction was never recorded: he might have had to decide the site, as he had high enough status to do so; or he might have had *xiang*, which required him to observe site surrounding more closely. Nevertheless, this reflected that tomb making were of particular significance to contemporary people.

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<sup>92</sup> Lü Buwei, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, c. 239 BC.

<sup>93</sup> 司马迁, 《史记·樗里子甘茂列传》(91BC). / Qian Sima, *Records of the Grand Historian, The biography of Chulizi*, (91BC).

The shape and size of a tomb had been decided by rites since the Eastern Zhou. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, clear hierarchies of tombs were demonstrated:

‘The height of a king’s tomb is three “ren”, in the graveyard pine trees should be planted. The height of a duke’s tomb is half of the king’s, and in the graveyard cypress should be planted. The height of a lord’s tomb is eight feet, and in the graveyard goldenrain trees should be planted. The height of a scholar’s tomb is four feet, and in the graveyard pagoda trees should be planted. The commoners shall not have mound tomb, and in their burial place willows should be planted.’<sup>94</sup>

However, these rules were not associated with bu or xiang but purely ritual. The actual rising awareness of tomb siting was triggered by the emergence of feng shu burial (封树), a burial method using a mound to show the owner’s social standing. Feng (封), referred to building a mound on the tomb; Shu (树), referred to planting trees around a grave yard in a ritual manner. The system resulted in the transformation from Mu (墓), the flat grave, to Fen (坟), the mound tomb, although the word Mu remained a generic term. Other terms for tomb such as Qiu (丘), Zhong (冢), all imply a raised mound. The tombs of the emperors were named Ling after the Qin dynasty, and others were named Fen, Zhong or Qiu; all suggested a form of raised mound. Social classes including small nobles and scholar-officials were also entitled to have a tomb

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<sup>94</sup> *Spring and Autumn Annals*, later Eastern Zhou.

mound after the Western Han.<sup>95</sup> The mound tomb became available to more of the population. Having a mound meant that the location of a tomb could be remembered. When tombs became more permanent, site selection and the planning of burial became of importance to the majority of the society. For instance, the tomb mound of Yangling, the tomb of emperor Jing (188-141BC), demonstrated a usual shape of a Western Han tomb mound, which was an impression of jade seal (Figure 13-14).



**Figure 13. Tomb mound of YangLing, the tomb of emperor Jing (188-141BC) of the Western Han, imitates the shape of a jade seal. (Source: <http://www.hylae.com/list.asp?id=177>.)**

**Figure 14. The jade seal of Zhao Mei (176-125BC), the king of the Nanyue State in the Western Han, demonstrates the common form of a jade seal which was imitated by royal tomb mounds. (Source: Museum of the Mausoleum of the Nanyue King.)**

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<sup>95</sup> 《汉书·葬律》. / *The Book of Han, Chapter on Burial.*

The further extension of the mound tomb during the Han meant that site selection and planning of the burial place became of greater importance.<sup>96</sup> Of these, tomb site selection particularly demonstrated a relevance to xiang, while the tomb shape was decided by carefully crafted burial rites. In the Han records, the action of deciding on a tomb site was named bu. The bu of a Han tomb was carried out by specific practitioners who were able to decide on the auspicious tomb's precise location by combining divining and on-site measurements. The process was favoured by many classes besides those who were privileged, as suggested by many early Han epitaphs which describe how the tomb site was chosen.<sup>97</sup> The cultural importance of bu in burial activities resulted from the Confucian idea of filial piety and Yin-Yang theory. Under the influence of these ideas the Han people gave great respect to their ancestors, which encouraged elaborate funerals. Qi, the core energy of the universe, was believed to connect the heaven, the earth, the living and the dead and to unite them as one. So to bury the dead properly became of social importance since it was considered beneficial not only to one's afterlife, but also one's descendants. One would naturally pay great attention to burial. The perception of the benefits of proper burial were not restricted to the Han but have lasted to modern times.

The record of ChuLizi mentioned above showed that the site of a tomb had been associated with divination since the late Eastern Zhou, while the surrounding view of the tomb was

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<sup>96</sup> 张齐明, < 两汉时期丧葬风水信仰 >, 《南都学坛》, 27 (2007). / Qiming Zhang, 'Tentative Investigation of the Belief on Funeral Feng shui in the Han Dynasty', *Academic Forum of Nandu*, 27 (2007).

<sup>97</sup> 艾俊川, < 鲁潜墓志的风水家言钩沉 >, 《六合丛书: 文中象外》(杭州: 浙江大学出版社, 2012). / Junchuan Ai, 'Feng shui and Inscription on Luqian Tomb', in *Collection of Liuhe: In and Beyond Literature* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2012).

probably only considered influential for one's descendants after the late Qin. Some Western Han records suggest that the space around a tomb was relevant to one's future achievement as in *The Records of the Grand Historian*, in which the proper interment of Han Xin's mother was one of the reasons for Han Xin's successes. Han Xin, the military general who contributed so much to the founding of the Han dynasty, was born in the late Qin dynasty and 'was poor and humble but very ambitious. He buried his mother on high land whose surroundings were large and empty'.<sup>98</sup> The author of the *Records of the Grand Historian* commented that, 'the tomb of his mother was observed by me and indeed it was as described.' This record shows that the location and surroundings of a tomb were already considered relevant to geomancy during the late Qin to the early Han dynasty, and that the rules of 'being located high and surrounded by open field' were particularly appreciated.<sup>99</sup> The concepts 'large' and 'tall' (of a site), were associated not only with one's status but also with a possible 'reward' (in the afterlife or for descendants) received from the burial. Han Xin's action in choosing the site apparently was decided by his observation. This echoes the practices of many Han practitioners like the previously mentioned Xingfajia, who xiang a place by observing Qi and forms.

Although the tomb of Han Xin's mother is not available for study today, surviving Han royal tombs offered evidence of similar location methods being applied. The Han royal tombs were

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<sup>98</sup> 司马迁, 《史记·淮阴侯列传》(91BC). / Qian Sima, *Records of the Grand Historian, The biography of Huaiyin Liehou*, (91BC).

<sup>99</sup> 焦南峰, 马永赢, <西汉帝陵选址研究>, 《考古》, 11 (2011), 页 76-82. / Nanfeng Jiao and Yongying Ma, 'Imperial Mausoleums of the West and Han Dynasty', *Archaeology*, 11 (2011), 76-82.

located on the Xianyang plain on the northern banks of the Wei River and in the north-west of the Han capital city Chang'an (today's Xi'an city) (Figure 26).<sup>100</sup> The choice of location on Xianyang Plain was recorded by various Han historical accounts.<sup>101</sup> For instance, the *Book of Han* recorded court officials' suggestion with regard to his tomb design to the Emperor of Cheng (BC51-7): 'The royal tomb should take advantage of the mountains. Your Majesty should allocate the tomb high and let it be surrounded by open plain, make it near to the ancestors so that the tomb can be blessed.'<sup>102</sup> Similarly, the *Book of Later Han* (398-445), *Biography of Feng Yan* describes the tomb of Emperor Ai of Han (BC21-BC1) as occupying a general's tomb site due to its ideal surrounding: 'General Feng Fengshi (?- BC39) was initially buried in Weiling. When the Emperor Ai died, the place was turned into the emperor's cemetery, located to the east of the county of Xinfeng (a part of today's Xi'an city): the place was high and open. To the south there was the mountain Li, to the north there were rivers. The view reached afar, where you could only just see the capital. Therefore, the Weiling was located here.'<sup>103</sup>

These records show that in the Western Han, the choice to locate a tomb on open high ground was intentional and had geomancy meaning. Although there was no written record suggested that the general was aware of the site, it was highly plausible that he was also affected by the

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<sup>100</sup> 王子今, <说“高敞”: 西汉帝陵选址的防水因素>, 《考古与文物》, 1 (2005), 页 33-37. / Zijin Wang, 'Expounding "Gao Chang" Waterproof Factors While Mausoleum Sites in the Western Dynasty Had Been Selected', *Archaeology and Cultural Relics*, 1 (2005), 33-37.

<sup>101</sup> 'Imperial Mausoleums of the West and Han Dynasty', pp. 76-82.

<sup>102</sup> 《汉书·冯衍传》. / *The Book of Han, Biography of Feng Yan*.

<sup>103</sup> 《汉书·冯衍传》. / *The Book of Han, Biography of Feng Yan*.

trend as above records suggested that these rules was much noticed by many different social members. The decision to choose such an auspicious site was not made by divining but observing the place.

It was learnt from relevant royal tombs accounts about choosing their tomb sites, like those of Emperor of Cheng and Ai of Han, that the emperor was not responsible for the design and construction of his tomb. The process was led by court officials, probably with assistance of geomancy practitioners. This will be further discussed in the following section.

## **Significance of Tomb Surroundings**

It is now understood how the location, the shape, and the orientation of a tomb were decided. But if the surrounding of a tomb was included in contemporary geomancy remained unknown. What could be understood so far is that geomancy throughout the Han dynasty was an established subject carried out by Rizhe (日者), the diviners. In contemporary Han records, the term of Rizhi seemed to include aforementioned fang shi. They had a certain social status, at least according to Sima Qian (c.145 – 86 BC), a Western Han historian, who said the group served the Western Han's emperors:

‘The Xiaowu emperor summoned his consults and asked whether a day is suitable for marriage. Some of them agreed, some disagreed; some said that the date was with bad luck, some said it was with great unfortunate; some said it was with slight unfortunate, some said it was with slight luck, some said it was with great luck. The argument could



not be stopped until it was justified by the emperor himself. He decided to take suggestion from the group of yin-yangjia, who promoted yin-yang theory in their practices.’<sup>104</sup>

The description contains a subtle sarcasm, showing readers that the theories and practices of these Rizhe don’t agree with each other. This was a scholar’s view of the Rizhe: some of them had sacred knowledge, but some were questionable.

In this short account Rizhe’s practices seemed to be very relevant to housing and daily ritual, however there is no further written evidences suggest their interactions with tomb making. However, Shipan (式盘), what Rizhe operated in their practices, was highly likely to be an evidence of their contribution to outdoor geomancy. Shi pan the geomancy compass<sup>105</sup> is the earliest format of geomancy compass discovered so far. As a Rizhe’s work did not have to be divided into the separate functions of city planning, housing, and burial, these compasses were highly likely to be used outdoors. The emergence of shi pan must have been prompted by the developing importance of xiang, as it allowed a practitioner to obtain his results on site more easily.<sup>106</sup> Similar divining devices already existed in Zhou and earlier times. The rituals for

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<sup>104</sup> 司马迁, 《史记日者列传》, (91BC). / Qian Sima, *Records of the Grand Historian*, Biography of Rizhe, (91 BC).

<sup>105</sup> In his book *Science and Civilizations of China*, Joseph Needham applied the term ‘diviner’s compass’; Donald Harper on the other hand, translated it as ‘Cosmic Board’ in *The Han Cosmic Board: A response to Christopher Cullern*.

<sup>106</sup> The Western Han Shi compasses can be reviewed today through 1977 archaeological discovery of the tomb of RuYin Duke, these were the LiuRen (Chinese: 六壬) compass and the TaiYi (Chinese: 太乙) compass. Both LiuRen and TaiYi were

using divine instruments required the examination of phenomena in the sky by which the devices were set and their position adjusted.<sup>107</sup> In comparison to earlier diviners, Rizhe appeared to be a much bigger group, while the access to geomancy devices has increased. A shi pan, as demonstrated in figure 15, was constructed in two parts with an upper round part, the disc of heaven, and a lower square part, the disc of the earth.<sup>108</sup> Instructions on the discs might differ in various types of shi pan, yet they were all related to orientation and time. The heaven disc of a shi pan was a round disc divided into eight even segments, indicating the names of four different social groups including the emperor, the chancellor, the general, and the commons. From the inner layer out, two concentric squares were carved on the earth disc of a shi pan. Between these two squares, there indicate four important solar terms the four corners, which are spring begins, summer begins, autumn begins, and winter begins. Another four solar terms are found at the mid-point of each side, which are the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice. Divining results were indicated within the inner square. Although the results of operating the shi pan could be limited in certain combinations, but a significant evolution is evident compared to previous geomancy methods.<sup>109</sup>

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astronomical terms, which proved its initial relevance with cosmic. The plan and possible meanings of the LiuRen Shi compass was interpreted by previous literature, for instances, Ngo (1974) and Micheal Loewe (1979).

<sup>107</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (New York: SUNY Press, 2005), p. 275.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise: The Chinese Quest for Immortality* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp.76-77.

<sup>109</sup> 孙基然, < 西汉汝阴侯墓所出太一九宫式盘相关问题的研究 >, 《考古》, 6 (2009), 页 77-87. / Jiran Sun, 'Study on Taiyi Jiugong Shipan from the Tomb of Marquis of Ruyin of the Western Han Dynasty', *Archaeology*, 6 (2009), 77-87.

Sima Qian described the execution of a shi pan respectfully. He wrote: ‘read the signs from the heaven and the earth, they give ethical suggestions for one to follow; operating the discs and turning the handles they predict the results of whatever is upcoming’.<sup>110</sup> Loewe explained the way to operate shi pan in more detail:

‘The operator revolved the circular disc, so that its position corresponded with the point by the sun in the heavens, as measured from the celestial equator. In this way he was taking heaven as his model. The operator set the square board to correspond with the four cardinal points of the compass; in this way he was taking earth as his model. The handle of the Plough engraved in the centre of the circular disc indicated the result of divination, by pointing in a particular direction or selection one of a number of animals.’<sup>111</sup>

If a shi pan was operated in tomb making, then a tomb must be constructed in relation to precise orientation. Rizhe’s social status suggests that the application of their services, or this precise arrangement of tomb orientation, was likely available to not just those who had high social status.

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<sup>110</sup> Qian Sima, *Records of the Grand Historian, Biography of Rizhe*, (91 BC).

<sup>111</sup> Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise: The Chinese Quest for Immortality* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 78.



**Figure 15. A Western Han shi pan (202BC-AD8) unearthed in 1978 in Anhui province consisted of a round heaven disc and a square earth disc, carved with indications of orientation, time, and geomancy results. (Source: Anhui museum.)**

Records of another independent group described in Western Han accounts, Xingfajia (形法家 . Xing: form, fa: rule), have demonstrated greater relevance to the xiang of outdoor space. For instance, accounts in the Book of Han say that the Xingfajia ‘perform xiang on all things. They observe objects, man, places and cities and understand their inner quality by reading the Qi. They suggest that Qi was the energy that formed everything.’<sup>112</sup> As brief as the records are, practices of the Xingfajia highlighted the significance of observing outdoor places, which remained similar to the performances of the Zhou dukes, Wu Zixu, more so than those of the Rizhe. The objectives that Xingfajia studied were considered relevant to ‘nature’, and it is possible to conclude that observing was one of their most basic skills. Yet how did they justify Qi? How did they decide what forms were good while others were not? These questions have

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<sup>112</sup> 班固, 《汉书艺文志》, (32-92AD). / Gu Ban, *The Book of Han, Treatise on Literature*, (32-92AD).

to be left for discussion in the next chapter. Overall it can be concluded that the xiang of tomb surroundings was highly likely to involve specialists such as Rizhe and Xingfajia, who not only has clear social identity but also obtained considerable skills in operating geomancy devices.

Bu and xiang became less frequently mentioned in the records after Western Han. Rather than considering this a sign of their decreased influence, it may be that the observation of a site and divining results, especially xiang, became so widely accepted that they were not considered worthy of note. Scholars-officals involved in xiang were particularly subtle about the matter, and their xiang showed a delicate understanding of the environment. Zhang Heng (78-139), a well-respected scholar in the Eastern Han known for his contribution to astronomy, described an environment for a tomb which received wide appreciation in his work *The Ode of Tomb*:

‘[To build a tomb] one must observe the earth and the dynamics of the terrain, where the land achieves a balance of high and low, one can feel reassured ...on the back of the tomb there is a high hill, in front of the tomb there is a plain. Use stones to surround its boundary, use plants to make the place lush. Dig winding ditches to surround the tomb and to connect the waterways. The tomb is now complete and follows all the

rules. Since the tomb is beautiful, the ghosts rest in peace, and the livings are being blessed.’<sup>113</sup>

The ode provided evidences to the gradually changing burial preference not only among high status tombs known today, but also for the upper-middle class scholars. What Zhang Heng described was an ideal scenery around the tomb for those who had a certain social position. It included: an ideal terrain which is slightly higher than the surroundings, lush plants, surrounding waters, and a favoured tomb orientation of north-south. While considering Zhang’s social hierarchy as a court official, it was plausible that he followed contemporary burial rites which were recorded by the the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the Eastern Zhou. This means the plants in Zhang’s graveyard were highly likely to be pagoda trees, and the height of his tomb was four feet (approximately 1.2 metres) as indicated in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*: ‘the height of a scholar’s tomb is four feet. In the graveyard of a scholar, pagoda trees should be planted’.<sup>114</sup> Tombstone did not seem to be required both in the ode and in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

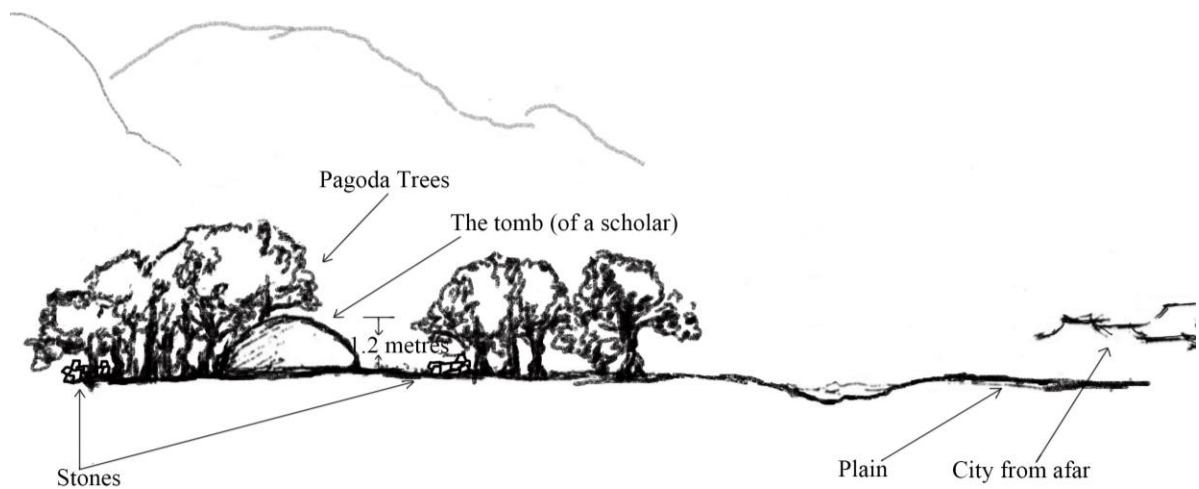
Zhang also specifically acknowledges a preferred view ‘having the plain to the north and a mountain to the south’. This differed from the east-west preference of the Western Han. Mostly

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<sup>113</sup> 张衡, 冢赋, (78-139AD). / Zhang Heng, *The Ode of Tomb*, (78-139AD).

<sup>114</sup> *Spring and Autumn Annals*, later Eastern Zhou.

importantly, a tomb's surrounding was evaluated in terms of an accepted standard of 'beauty'. In Zhang's ode, this beauty seemed to be a collaborative result of a right topography which has a hill on the back and a plain in the front, a clearly tomb boundary, a lush vegetation, and an appropriate distance to the habitats. Words in the ode, for instances, 'ling' (灵), 'mei' (美), 'li' (丽), gave the impression of mildness and elegance, and were constantly used in later geomancy writing. Although Zhang described the scenery around the tomb in an almost poetic way, the purpose of these requirements remained that 'the ghosts rest in peace, and the living are being blessed', so the fundamental basis of his requirements can still be called xiang. This description on ideal tomb surroundings was reconstructed in figure 16.



**Figure 16.** The ideal tomb surrounding for an Eastern Han scholar as described in Zhang Heng's ode consisted of pogoda trees, surrounding mountains, rivers, and a boundary identified by stones. (Source: created by the author.)

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed bu (卜) and xiang (相) separately in order to understand their relationship with rites and popular beliefs. Relevant cases were investigated, relating to choosing living places and burial sites.

By analysing the differences between bu and xiang, it was concluded that they were related at first. Bu was a ritual performance conducted by diviners while confirming a site. Bu was carried out by reading signs observed on tortoise shells. Bu was used to confirm that the site of Chengzhou was legitimate; *Zhouli* also suggested that graveyards of royals and nobles in the Eastern Zhou were accomplished according to bu, expressing a certain preference of orientation. In the descriptions of *Zhouli* bu was also used as the name for certain court officials who were responsible for divination during burial.

Xiang has a long history and was associated with the observation of a site, like that the dukes of Zhou selected for Chengzhou. The Duke Liu used ‘xiang to establish the yin-yang of the land and observe the waters.’ The action of xiang first appeared to have a ritual importance, however implied a strong skill-led nature, which meant often developed during actual practices. In the early stages bu and xiang were sometimes two overlapping concepts.

As the techniques developed and knowledge was shared, the diviners were called fang shi, rizhe and xingfajia, each group with differentiated ideas and skills. Xiang developed into an independent divining practice by these groups. Practitioners obtained divination results by



observing the earth and the terrain in a particular way instead of reading signs from tortoise shells. For example, the Xingfajia in the Western Han were said to be able to perform xiang by reading the inner Qi of all things. The association between xiang and rites was noticeably weakened at this stage, resulting in practices which reflected popular beliefs in place making activities. The theory and practice of xiang was rather adaptable and corresponded to changing social culture, as well as human interpretation.

All the cases discussed in this chapter support an understanding of the practitioners and participants. The identities, social hierarchies and working methods of those who practiced early geomancy were explored with an intention to reveal their practice methods. First, the diviners, as those who possessed earliest knowledge and ruled the country, were investigated. When their sacred position was lost, orthodox was re-developed following the breaking down of knowledge monopoly, while methods and skills of ritual place making were able to be possessed by wider social classes. Therefore, Bu had become xiang. It was discussed that the fang shi and ru sheng were those who continued the knowledge and practice the association between popular beliefs and place making activities, they transformed these theories into daily practices, and were able to bridge the gap between the privileged and the others. The favour of the pattern of sacred mountains was one of its most noted reflection. The interactions between diviners, court officials, ru sheng and fang shi contributed significantly to the development of xiang. Their attempts of combining leading ideologies, popular beliefs and their own interpretations of the world resulted the practices of xiang became of great diversity.

Overall, this chapter has argued that the separation of bu and xiang was one in which the state's orthodox conventions moved down to the middle and common classes and became an expression of popular belief in place making. It has been suggested that the development from bu to xiang was accomplished by various social changes, among which the breaking down of monopolising religion and the rise of the intellectuals were the most influential. When expressed in place making activities, these changes were reflected by a changing preference from simple pursuit of the centre and orientation to a demanding for an auspicious site, site surrounding and popular beliefs.

# **Chapter 3. Changed and Unchanged**

## **Conceptions of Kanyu: Uniting Regions and Social Groups**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to understand the evolution of practice from xiang to the establishment of kanyu (堪輿, to observe the heaven and the earth) between the Wei and Jin dynasties (220-589) and the late Song (1127-1279). Instead of describing kanyu's general development or its characteristics, which has been accomplished by previous studies, this chapter will aim to focus on one fundamental question: how did kanyu become acceptable to the majority of imperial society? To answer this question, it is necessary to highlight relevant elements of the socio-cultural contexts of kanyu corresponding to its development.

Two elements are of particular significance in this chapter. Firstly, the changes to the rules and practices of kanyu under the influence of the rising culture of scholar-officials and gentry. Secondly, the anthropology and communication of kanyu among different levels of society, particularly between the practitioners and the cultural elite which was the leading social power of the period. The main focus of this chapter will be on the kanyu of burial and city making, as they have a greater relationship to outdoor place making activities. Xiang zhai, house

geomancy, continued to be applied to house orientation, the domestic environment and popular beliefs but became less closely associated with this study's focus, so it will only be briefly summarised in the discussion as supportive material.

The first section of this chapter sets out to answer a long-neglected question, about where and with whom kanyu started to become popular. It is crucial to explore this, not only because it is relevant to the following discussion of changes to the rules of kanyu, but also because it contributes to our understanding of modern feng shui culture. This section will first evaluate evidence from literature and illustrations, then examine a series of maps in order to come to a conclusion.

The second section aims to identify the reasons behind the establishment of kanyu's rules. The materials selected for analysis are those relevant to an outdoor environment, including site selection for cities and tombs, and we will examine how the practices chose or changed their outdoor environment. The preferences for tomb sites among the privileged changed, and the reasons for this will be particularly highlighted.

The third section examines *Hanlong Jin*, a representative kanyu book from the period following the Tang dynasty. It has been chosen because of its remarkable popularity for outdoor practice. Analysis of the book contents compensates for the lack of physical evidence, which makes it barely possible to review the making of common tombs and small cities. The practices and rules of kanyu described by the book will be explored, in particular the changes which were a response to the new preferences of the privileged classes.

The discussion of kanyu will then be concluded by an anthropological examination of its participants. The section aims to understand who was involved in kanyu application and how, the social status of kanyu practitioners and how they retained their professional knowledge. Recorded participants and the social influences on geomancy during this period will be summarised and analysed.

Finally, this chapter examines the evolution of kanyu, both in different regions and among various social classes. It will be argued that awareness of burial kanyu moved from the south to the north, while established kanyu practices, particularly those performed outdoors, were greatly affected by the mainstream ideology of the scholar-officials and the gentry during this period.

## **Kanyu: Its Change of Terminology and Social Perceptions**

In a general sense xiang and kanyu can be considered as having the same basis, as both terms describe the activity of looking for an auspicious place by performing divining-related skills. Before the Tang, the term kanyu was not established as a description of these activities,<sup>115</sup> and the term's development was a reflection of changing perceptions of the subject.

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<sup>115</sup> 刘祥光, < 宋代风水文化的扩展 >, 《台大历史学报》, 45 (2010), 页 1-78 (第 5 页). / Hsiang-Kwang Liu, 'Development of the Culture of Geomancy in Song China', *Historical Inquiry*, 45 (2010), 1-78 (p. 5).

The previous chapter described the distinction between xiang and bu, as xiang became an independent discipline related to place making activities. By the early Han dynasty xiang was widely practiced, though it was not described by this term in many contexts, including Zhang Heng's *Ode of Tomb*. Xiang seems to have been perceived as an action rather than as an established theory. For instance, it was often noticed in literature that someone practiced 'xiang' to a place, but the definition or comprehensive rules of xiang were barely acknowledged.

In the aforementioned illustration of TaiBaoXiangZhaiTu (太保相宅图), skills performed by the Duke of Zhou, including finding the earth's centre and observing the earth, are considered an evidence of early xiang. These skills were only possessed by the leaders and master diviners of the state, which meant that knowledge of xiang was limited to certain privileged groups. While the unearthed Chu slips suggest that awareness of xiang was shared by many by the time of 770-256 BC in the late Eastern Zhou, particularly in southern China.

The *Grand Historian's Record* provided its readers with an awareness of the many contemporary geomancy practitioners in the Han period, amongst whom one kind was named 'kanyu jia', practitioners of kanyu. In the book's description of rizhe, kanyu jia was not the most influential. The argument about primacy between geomancy practitioners was eventually judged by the emperor, who decided to take up the suggestion of another group of practitioners.

The term kanyu gradually became more common in Han (202BC-AD220) geomancy books.

Yan Shigu (581-645), a Tang scholar, explained the term as 'kan, the rule of heaven; yu, the

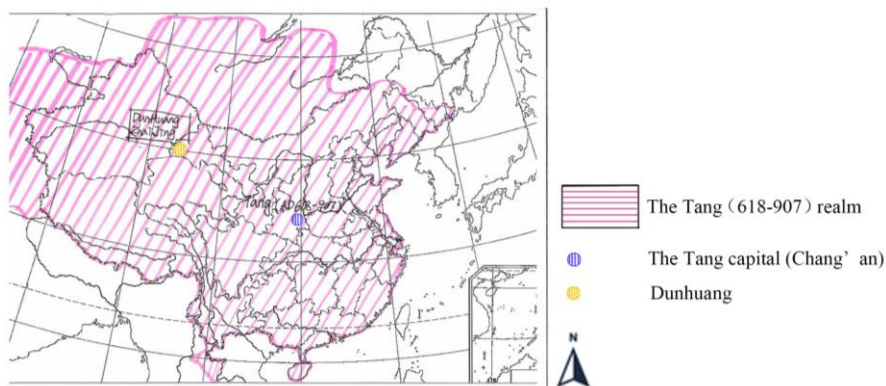
rule of the earth' in his commentary in the *Book of the Han*.<sup>116</sup> Yan's commentary was rather obscure because of his understanding of the subject: in Chinese the literal sense of kanyu also implies the action of observing terrains. So, the term kanyu only became recognised as the generic term for this subject when the skills of xiang fully developed.

No later than the Tang (618-907) dynasty, kanyu was the generally accepted term across China. (figure 28) An example by Lv Cai (600 - 665), a Tang court official who was appointed to edit existing geomancy books by the emperor Taizong of Tang (598 - 649), is recorded in the *Book of Tang*. This suggests that the central government was aware of the influence of kanyu, as it attempted to obtain control over the subject. Even Dunhuang, a far northwest city of the Tang empire, was also impacted by the subject: hand written manuscripts including the *DuHuang ZhaiJing* (敦煌宅经), and the *Book of House*, were discovered in Cave no.19, known as the library cave, in MoGaoKu, Dunhuang. Reviewing the contents of these manuscripts, it could be said that although the purposes of conducting kanyu were many, they could all be summarized as two elements: praying for fertility and for wealth. Meanwhile, by identifying the social awareness of geometry, a corresponding map is produced in below. Dunhuang and the Tang capital city Chang'an are marked respectively (Figure 17). It can be concluded that kanyu was established no later than the Tang, and that knowledge of it was national and

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<sup>116</sup> 颜师古, 汉书注释, (581-645). / Shigu Yan, *Commentary on the Book of Han*, (581-645).

reached across the various social classes. So how did xiang evolve into kanyu, and how did the perception of it develop?



**Figure 17.** Records of Kanyu in the *DuHuang ZhaiJing* have suggested that social perceptions of geomancy in the Tang dynasty (618-907) reached to the far northwest part of the Tang state. (Source: created by the author.)

## **From the Plain to the Mountains: Changing Burial Site**

### **Preferences**

The rising preference for ritual tomb mounts had encouraged people to consider the orientation of their tombs, something which had always been a ritual expression. How a tomb related to others was an indication of the tomb owner's status. A decline in the preference for tomb mounds led to the emergence of burial kanyu, which valued the site and surroundings of a tomb over its orientation. So the discussion of kanyu in this chapter begins with the changes in burial preferences. Kanyu affected burial activities in various social classes, but royal burials are the most accessible for study as both literal records and physical cases have been preserved.



A normal Han royal tomb mound reached a height of 30 metres, while a tomb mound for nobles could reach 10-20 metres.<sup>117</sup> The construction of a huge ritual tomb mound on a plain was expensive in both time and money. In the late Western Han, the construction of royal tombs often caused serious social issues because of their unbelievably high cost, so the majority of the royal tombs in the Eastern Han constructed the tomb mound in a hill-like round shape, Pi Chi (Chinese: 陂池).<sup>118</sup> When the royal tombs became round, their orientation was no longer significant.

Tomb mounds continued to lose their importance in the succeeding dynasties. In particular, it was noticed that a tomb mound, which often indicated considerable wealth buried inside, brought a great risk of robbery. Cao Cao (155 - 220), the first emperor of the state of Wei in the Three Kingdoms period (220 - 280), gave this order about his own tomb:

‘In ancient times, burial was conducted in the wild. Follow this and bury me in the plain to the west of the city Ye (Chinese: 邳城), locate the tomb on high land but do not construct a tomb mound’.

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<sup>117</sup> 《汉书·葬律》. / *The Book of Han, Chapter on Burial*.

<sup>118</sup> 严辉, 张鸿亮, 卢青峰, < 洛阳孟津朱仓东汉帝陵陵园遗址相关问题的思考 >, 《文物》, 9 (2011), 页 69-72. / Hui Yan, Hongliang Zhang and Qingfeng Lu, ‘On the Zhucang Graveyard Site of the Eastern Han Imperial Mausolea in Mengjin, Luoyang’, *Cultural Relics*, 9 (2011), 69-72.

This trend to abandon the tomb mound<sup>119</sup> was soon followed by others who were wealthy and powerful,<sup>120</sup> who were, like Cao, concerned by the risk of tomb robbery same as Cao. The loss of the tomb mound was particularly apparent in the southern dynasties such as the Jin (265-420) and the Song (420-479) and evolved into a notable preference for being able to see mountains and take on their Qi. This was mostly likely due to the geographic conditions: siting the tomb within the mountains brought multiple benefits so the tomb shape and orientation no longer mattered, leaving the site and surrounding environment as the only aspects of concern.

As the shape and orientation of a tomb had been decided by rite in earlier times, geomancers only became important to burial when the site and surroundings of a tomb were valued, as they were after the collapse of the ritual tomb mound system. During this period many records of xiang in the southern dynasties took place in mountainous country and emphasised on the observing of Qi.<sup>121</sup> In records of Guan Lu (209-256) the diviner acknowledged the symbolic requirements of a tomb's surroundings by using this four-god analogy:

‘[Guan commented on a tomb:] the XuanWu (the north god) bows its head and the Dragon (the east god) hides its feet, the White tiger (the west god) looks like it is biting

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<sup>119</sup> 齐东方, < 中国古代丧葬中的晋制研究 >, 《考古学报》, 3 (2015), 页 45-65. / Dongfang Qi, ‘The Study on the “Jin System” of the Funeral Systems in Ancient China’, *Acta Archaeologica Sinica*, 3 (2015), 45-65.

<sup>120</sup> 吴桂兵, < 晋代墓葬制度与两晋变迁 >, 《东南文化》, 3 (2009), 页 58-63. / Guibing Wu, ‘The Grave System of Jin Dynasty and the Transition from the Western Jin to Eastern Jin’, *Southeast Culture*, 3 (2009), 58-63.

<sup>121</sup> 朱偁, 《建康蘭陵六朝陵墓圖考》(上海: 商務印書館, 1936). / Xie Zhu, *Investigation of Jiankang (Nanjing) Lanling's Mausoleums of the Six Dynasties Period* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936).

(people) and the Firebird (the south god) looks like it is weeping (for the tomb owner). In this way the tomb is threatened by great dangers, the family will suffer great misfortune.’

The same account then says that after two years, Guan’s prediction was proved.<sup>122</sup> Using the analogy of the four-gods when describing the surrounding environment became a common method of later kanyu practitioners, though they only served the purpose of indicating orientations.

Guo Pu (276 - 324), another well-known diviner of the period, also addressed the issue of tomb location and its relationship to the surrounding environment. The *Book of Jin*, written in 648, records various stories of him controlling burial activities. Two accounts of his work showed the simple rules of burial geomancy. The first described Guo observing the location and planning to bury his mother far away from a river, a choice which was unusual at the time and questioned by others. Guo insisted on his choice, and when the river flooded soon after Guo’s mother was buried there, the tomb was right next to the water but not inundated.<sup>123</sup> Another story about Guo recorded that the emperor Yuan of Jin (276-323) hid his identity in order to visit a tomb being planned by Guo. The emperor questioned the location of the tomb with the family of the tomb owner, commenting that it was on ‘the horn of the dragon, which would

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<sup>122</sup> 魏收, 《魏书管辂传》, (550-577). / Shou Wei, *The Book of Wei, Biography of Guan Lu*, (550-577).

<sup>123</sup> 晋书, 郭璞传, 648. / Biograph of Guo Pu, *Book of Jin*, 648.

bring the family great misfortune'. The family then answered, 'Guo said that this was the ear of the dragon, about which the emperor will enquire in three years' time'.<sup>124</sup> It seems that it was widely believed that the relationship between the location of the tomb and the 'dragon' would play a part in the descendants' future, but not the orientation. These understandings of basic geomancy rules seemed to be possessed by a wide range of social groups.

Guo Pu's records suggest that the emperor saw the importance of geomancy, which we can read as a sign that burial geomancy carried political meaning. There is more evidence of this later, for example in Emperor of Songming's (439- 472) order to re-bury the Queen Mother of Chongxian. Royal tombs were constructed either in the mountains or foothills at this time,<sup>125</sup> but their orientation did not seem to follow any rules.<sup>126</sup> The official order of the Emperor announced:

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> 许嵩, 《建康实录》(北京:中华书局, 1986), p. 67. / Song Xu, *The Records of Jiankang* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), p. 67.

<sup>126</sup> 朱偁, <六朝陵墓总说>, 《六朝陵墓调查报告》, 朱希祖等主编(南京: 中央古物保管委员会, 1935), 页 91. / Xie Zhu, 'Tombs of Six Dynasties', in *Report of the Six Dynasties Period Tombs Investigation*, ed. by Xizu Zhu and others (Nanjing: Committee of Central Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities, 1935), p. 91.

‘Let the historians read the signs of divining and choose the right timing for construction. The location must be indicated by observing the surrounding environment thus an ideal spot can be found.’<sup>127</sup>

What the emperor Songming required for the Queen Mother’s interment was similar to the requirements of Han dynasty xing fa theory as well as the more recent practice of Guan and Guo. The emperor’s belief in burial geomancy was widely noted. He was also known for destroying Xiao Daocheng’s (427-482) family tombs when a geomancer reported to him that ‘Xiao’s family tombs were surrounded by colourful clouds and dragons (which was the sign of the rising of a true emperor).’ To emperor Songming, the sign appeared in Xiao’s family tomb was alarming as it indicated a rising of political rival, while destroying the tomb would no doubt assure his sacred power.<sup>128</sup>

The exact sites of the southern dynasties royal tombs remained unidentified until now, as they were designed as part of the mountains. But in *the Pictured Report of the Six Dynasties Period Tombs Location Investigation* first published in 1936, Zhu Xie managed to locate the possible Jin royal tomb locations by identifying the tombs’ remaining ritual tomb sculptures, which were located along the both sides of the path with leads to a royal tomb as required by rites.

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<sup>127</sup> 宋明帝, 《改葬崇宪太后诏》, 468年。/ Emperor Songming, The Order of Rebury Queen Mother of Chongxian, (468).

<sup>128</sup> 萧子显, 《南齐书》(北京: 中华书局, 1972), 页 352。/ Zixian Xiao, *Book of Qi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1972), p. 352.

These sculptures were designed to protect the royal tomb, meaning their distances to the actual tomb were not too far. Zhu was therefore able to conclude that the southern dynasty royal tombs were located in a mountainous area near today's Nanjing, hidden in the mountains to be secured from tomb robbery (Figure 18). While for Japanese geomancy researches in the late 1980's such as Cunjia Duoshi's study, the hidden royal tombs of the southern dynasty have demonstrated an ideal pattern for tomb sites which implies a female part.<sup>129</sup> This seems rather far-fetched as the conclusion is drawn purely from reconstructive drawings produced by these authors to fit in their ideas. However, a re-constructed illustration based on Cunjia's study demonstrates the relationship between a royal tomb and its ritual tomb sculptures clearly, supporting Zhu Xie's conclusions (Figure 19). The illustration also shows the idea of hiding the tomb in the mountainous explicitly. For these Jin royal tombs, it was important to build the tomb in the mountains. Orientations were not of great concern.

After the period of the Jin dynasty, burial activities in southern China relied on geomancy rules which encouraged the evaluation of tomb surroundings and Qi. The requirements for burial surroundings depended greatly on local geographical conditions and were believed to have an influence on one's descendants. During this period, political importance was attributed to burial geomancy on the basis that it was openly required for royal burials.

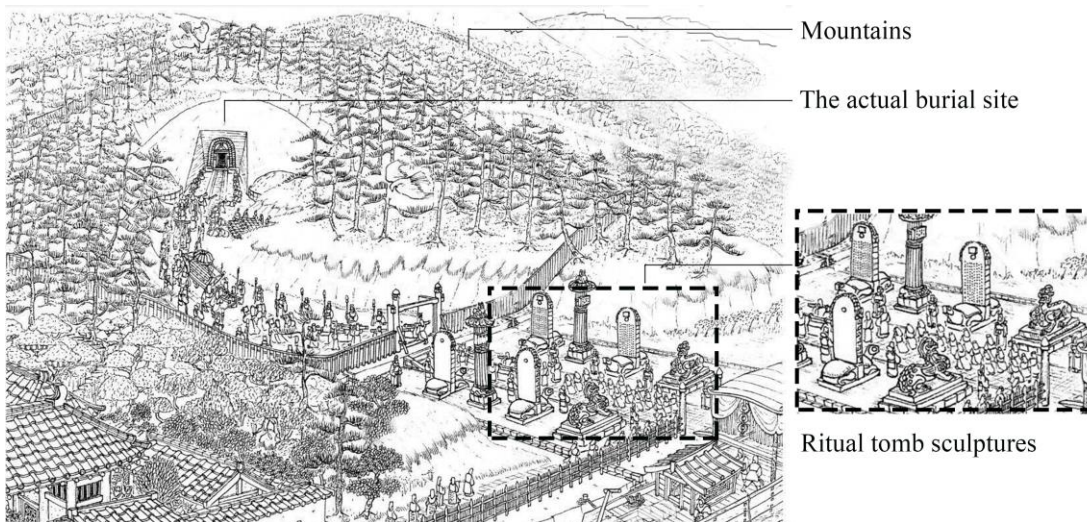
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<sup>129</sup> 村加多史, <南朝陵墓選地考>, 《網干善教先生華甲紀念考古學論集》(京都: 網干善教先生華甲紀念會, 1988). / Cunjia Duoshi, 'Tomb Site Selection of the Southern Dynasty', in *Collection of Archaeology Studies*, ed. by Wanggan Shanjiao (Kyoto: Wanggan Shanjiao Commemoration, 1988).

While southern China's preference for tomb surroundings in mountainous sites was, considering their regional conditions, rather natural, the northern dynasties preferred to keep tomb mounds. The previous 'orthodox' tomb style was still influential on those who lived in the north, which was the political centre of the previous Han dynasty. In comparison to the southern China, mountains were simply not available as burial sites for these northern dynasties. Jingling of the Northern Wei (386-534) for instance, was one of the many northern dynasty tombs that were identified by its ritual mound (Figure 20).



**Figure 18.** A surviving southern dynasty royal tomb was proved located in the mountainous area near to today's Nanjing by identifying the location of its remaining ritual tomb sculpture. (Source: Zhu Xie, *the Pictured Report of the Six Dynasties Period Tombs Location Investigation* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006), p. 46.)



**Figure 19.** A reconstructive illustration of Jin's royal tomb which indicates the relationship between ritual tomb sculptures and the actual tomb site. (Source: Recreated by author, based on Cunjia Duoshi, 'Tomb Site Selection of the Southern Dynasty', in *Collection of Archaeology Studies*, ed. by Wanggan Shanjiao (Kyoto: Wanggan Shanjiao Commemoration, 1988).)





**Figure 20. Jingling, a surviving northern dynasty royal tomb facing south, indicates a typical tomb mound.**

(Source:

<https://baike.baidu.com/pic/%E5%8C%97%E9%AD%8F%E6%99%AF%E9%99%B5/4655382/0/b6045da91ecd81a21f17a2ef?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=b6045da91ecd81a21f17a2ef.>)

Overall it could be concluded that the southern part of China showed an earlier and probably stronger interest in tomb geomancy than the northern part, particularly in relation to evidences of requiring tomb surroundings, as seen in the records of Guan Lu, Guo Pu, Emperor Songming, and the surviving royal tombs in the southern and northern dynasties. Southern regional perceptions and their preference for requiring mountain burials was also reflected in southern practice when choosing auspicious sites for cities and villages. Although the scale of a city was much bigger, similar methods to those of burial geomancy can be found in relation to the choice of city and village sites: all of these activities acknowledged principles dictating how to find an ideal place and what to look for. Observing the surrounding environment and interpreting it in terms of geomancy were required skills. The evidence supports the conclusion that the appreciation of surrounding natural forms passed from the south to the north. For instance, the picture of Eastern Jin capital Jiankang city shows areas of importance around the city, some of which were named, like Xuanwu (literally meant the black turtle) lake to the

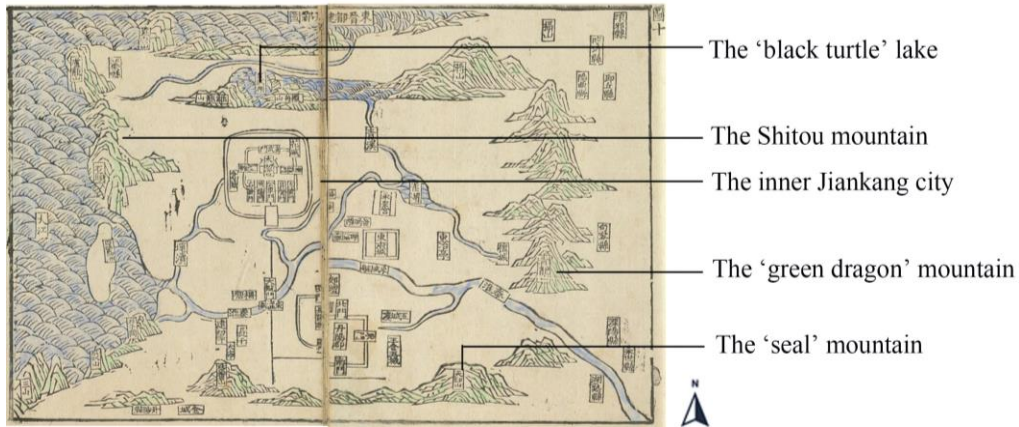
south, Qinglong (literally meant the green dragon) mountain to the west, Shitou mountain to the east, and the Tianyin (god's seal) mountain to the north (Figure 21). These names suggest that the city site was probably associated with geomancy. In supportive of this assumption is a contemporary Jin account which recorded that 'Zhuge Liang was appointed a duty to the Jiankang city; when observing the mountains in the city, he was amazed and said: Zhong mountain was protected by dragons, Shitou mountain is the tiger, this is indeed an emperor's residence'.<sup>130</sup>

In contemporary southeast China, similar geomancy methods were widely applied in choosing village site, refining surrounding environment, and arrange village plan.<sup>131</sup> In particular, geomancy was closely associated with the reading of a site's surrounding mountains and waters. Choosing an ideal village site and perfecting its surroundings might be a joint effort of a clan's leaders and geomancy practitioners during the process of migration, not unusual given the many civil wars in Chinese history. These migrations were most frequently from the north to the south, as the southern mountainous areas were far from the political centre and provided natural conditions which helped to avoid the chaos outside. Geomancy's impact on rural place making particularly in the southern China had lasted for centuries ever since.

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<sup>130</sup> 吴勃, 《吴录》, 晋. / Bo Wu, *Wu Lu*, Jin Dynasty.

<sup>131</sup> 何晓昕, 《风水探源》(南京: 东南大学出版社, 1990). / Xiaoxin He, *The Source of Feng shui* (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 1990).



**Figure 21. A picture demonstrating the favoured terrains around Jiankang city (1516). (Source: recreated by author, based on Chen Xin, *JinLingGuJinTuKao*.)**

## **Pursuing Scenery: Evolving Relationship between the Culture of the Gentry and Kanyu**

This section explores how kanyu rules in the Tang evolved by changing burial culture and what were its noticeable evolvments. Kanyu will be the term used from this point.

Royal tomb sites were located in mountainous areas rather than on the plain after the Tang dynasty. As discussed in previous sections, this may be because the influence of kanyu culture reached the central government, located in northern China. The change became the mainstream preference by the mid-Tang, when the empire was strong and wealthy enough to afford construction activities of considerable size as tombs and ritual tomb mounds were replaced across the country. In figure 22, it was demonstrated that the royal tombs of the Tang were all located in mountainous areas to the north of the capital city; by contrast, the royal tombs of the

Western Han were located on the plain and designed with a ritual mound. Royal burial site selection during the following dynasties (except the Yuan, in which they followed the specific method of a ‘hidden burial’, bury people without a mound tomb or any mark) all display this consistent preference. A site selection comparison between the Western Han royal and the Tang royal tombs is demonstrated in figure 22. The Tang court, although located its capital on the northern plain, planned royal burials in mountainous area to the north of capital city.

Tailing of the Tang dynasty was designed as part of the mountain range to the north of the Tang capital city Chang’an during the time period between 729-762. The design shows the earliest surviving record of a mountain forms being required for a royal burial. It was recorded in the *Old Book of Tang* that the Emperor Xuanzong (AD685-762) visited the Qiaoling, tomb of his father, the Emperor Rui, in 729. When he saw the mountain Jinli, the emperor ‘told the officials with him that the mountains looked like a flying dragon and phoenix. He thought that these mountains were not only beautiful and magnificent, but that the place was also close to the Qiaoling, where his father was buried. So the Emperor Xuan decided to be buried here.’<sup>132</sup>

Although this record does not appear to take account of the newly emerging kanyu standards in choosing royal burial site, a clear preference was stated. Being close to ancestors had remained an unchanging rule since the Han, on the basis that the knowledge of ancestors was

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<sup>132</sup> 刘昫, 《后唐书玄宗本纪》(北京:中华书局, 1975), 第 1221 页. / Xu Liu, *Old Book of Tang, biography of Emperor Xuanzong* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975), p. 1221.

connected to their descendants. To be buried near to one's ancestors was a reflection of filial piety. Instead of being placed in high and open ground, having mountains visible in the area became one of the fundamental rules, so the burial preference of previous southern dynasties such as Jin and Song seemed to be accepted (Figure 23).



**Figure 22. Locations of Western Han (202BC-8) and Tang (618-907) royal tombs showing Tang's royal tombs' mountainous locations in comparison to Han's tomb site preference of plain. (Source: created by the author.)**

*Figure removed due to copyright restrictions.*

**Figure 23. Tailing was constructed as a part of the mountain Jinli, hidden in the mountain ranges. (Source: Zhang Jianlin and others, 'Archaeological Report of Tailing', *Archaeology and Cultural Relics* (03) 2011, pp. 3-11 (4).)**

But there must have been a stronger reason pushing the emperor to develop his specific requirements on mountain forms than simply assimilation southern burial culture. Emperor Xuanzong of Tang was known for his personal appreciation of landscape paintings; Li Sixun

(651-716), a contemporary landscape painter, was openly praised by the emperor himself.<sup>133</sup> It is possible that these painters affected his aesthetic standards and was involved his decision of a tomb site. We can know about the developing perceptions of mountains by reviewing series of paintings, for instance, the Luoshen Appraisal Painting, originally created in the Jin, described the story of Cao Zhi, a prince of Weij, meeting Luoshen, the goddess of River Luo. Mountains, although beautifully presented, were merely an embellishment in the painting (Figure 24). While in Li Sixun's hanging scroll, which was created in between 651-716 and Wang Wei's (701-761) painting of Wangchuan, mountains were highlighted to express the painters' aesthetic tastes. Wang was credited with contributing to the development of 'literati painting', the painting style of the scholar-bureaucrats, also known as the Southern School. The art should 'cultivate a more intimate style of landscape bathed in cloud and mist, in which pleasing calligraphic forms tend to take the place of conventions established for the representation of rocks, trees, etc.'<sup>134</sup> Numerous scholars adopted this aesthetic standard for the representation of scenery, capturing a spirit of hiding from society and being surrounded by nature (Figure 25-26).

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<sup>133</sup> 朱景元, 《唐朝名画录》, 唐. / Jingyuan Zhu, *Famous Paintings of Tang Dynasty*, Tang.

<sup>134</sup> William Watson, *Style in the Arts of China* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).



**Figure 24. A Song dynasty (960-1279) replica of the Luoshen Appraisal Painting /洛神赋图卷 originally created in the Jin dynasty (266-420) showing landscapes were merely the painting's embellishment. (Source: National Palace Museum.)**



**Figure 25. Li Sixun's hanging scroll (651-716) highlighted mountains instead of human figures, suggesting scholar-bureaucrats' rising appreciation to natural landscapes. (Source: National Palace Museum, Taipei.)**



**Figure 26. A Song dynasty replica of ‘A Picture of Wangchuan’/輞川圖 (960-1279), the painter described his ideal habitat which was surrounded by waters and continuous mountains. (Source: National Palace Museum.)**

The suggestion that the emperor’s preferences for his burial site may have been affected by paintings may seem rash, but there is further evidence to support the claim in the relationship between the emperor and the rising power of scholar-officials and the gentry.

Landscape painting was a particular product of the class of scholars and the nobles. Li Sixun was a member of the Tang royal clan, while Wang Wei was recognised as one of the greatest contemporary poets. Scholars as a generic class were first influential in the Han, when the establishment of the imperial examination system gave them opportunities to enter the court as scholar-officials (士大夫). During the Tang dynasty, the power of the group advanced. Scholar-officials were at the top level of the scholar-gentry class: although the scholar-gentry were often wealthy and influential, they only became members of the ruling class after becoming officials and gaining academic degrees by passing the imperial examinations. Since only a few could become court or local officials, the majority of the scholar-gentry remained



in villages or cities as social leaders. A wider concept of the scholar could include members besides the scholar-officials, the gentry or local elites. Once a family member had established the status of his line by passing the national examination. Scholar-officials, the gentry and local elites formed a natural alliance with each other. In most cases they shared a common language and culture, and they shared power. The superior of these groups often has a social continuity,<sup>135</sup> which meant their influence can barely be replaced.

Scholar-officials were servants of the state first, rather than servants of the emperor, though they were representatives of the emperor. This meant that the class of scholars did not always compromise with the emperor or follow their instructions. When the emperor accepted political power, they became a representative of the state's moral standard. As part of the continual negotiation between imperial power and the scholars, one emperor's gesture to the scholars was to accept their view of orthodoxy. In terms of place making, this pattern can be seen at work in the fondness for the pattern of Chengzhou, which had initially been proposed by Confucius and then became the perfect example favoured by emperors.

If the Tang emperor Xuanzong's perception of ideal surroundings for his tomb was not just affected by landscape paintings, he would still have been impacted by the scholars' preferences. The scholars' taste in surrounding scenery was long held: Zhang Heng's Ode of

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<sup>135</sup> *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*, ed. by J. Esherick and M. B. Rankin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 307.

Tomb provides direct evidence. Composed during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), Zhang's Ode shows that 'the emphasis on terrains and surroundings in the ode were much like what kanyu practitioners are performing today.'<sup>136</sup>

An interesting opposite evidence was provided the Northern Song (960-1127), which practiced Wuyin in royal burial. The Wuyi theory suggested that all family names could be divided in to five different kinds according to their pronunciations, while houses and tombs should be placed facing to whichever orientation that corresponded to the pronunciation.<sup>137</sup> It might due to the awareness raise by the fact that these tombs were badly damaged and robbed later in the civil war, or simply a respect of local regional conditions like the other southern dynasties, Wuyin was abandoned in the Southern Song (1127-1279) royal burial (Figure 27-28).

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<sup>136</sup> 张齐明, <两汉时期丧葬风水信仰>, 《南都学坛》, 6 (2007), 页 10-15. / Qiming Zhang, 'Tentative Investigation of the Belief on Funeral Feng shui in the Han Dynasty', *Academic Forum of Nandu*, 6 (2007), 10-15.

<sup>137</sup> 关长龙, 《敦煌本堪舆文书研究》(北京: 中华书局, 2013). / Changlong Guan, *Study of Kanyu Manuscripts of Dunhuang* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2013).



**Figure 27-28. Location differences between the capitals of the Northern and the Southern Song capital might be one of the reasons that the central governments preferred different burial rules. (Source: recreated by the author)**

Further interpretations of the requirements of scenery around a tomb were offered by the court officials in the Southern Song. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a respected Confucian scholar of the Southern Song, challenged the favour of burial orientations in his official report to the emperor regard to the location selection of royal tomb. In the report, Zhu insisted that: ‘it is the mountains that decide geomancy, thus the Wuyin theory, which suggested one’s family name matter to kanyu, is not worthy; it is now abandoned even among the commons’.<sup>138</sup> Zhu’s report suggested that the scholars not only agreed on a shared opinion that kanyu should emphasis on the mountain forms, but also intended to involve in royal burial kanyu directly. Southern song royal lineage thus comprised and built the royal tombs in mountainous areas – although a

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<sup>138</sup> 朱熹, 《山陵奏议》 (1172) / Xi Zhu, *A Report on Royal Tomb* (1172).

similarity to northern tomb style remained. In the making of the Yongmaoling, the tomb of Emperor Ningzong of the Southern Song, its kanyu clearly required on readings of the forms of surrounding components. Kanyu evaluation of the tomb site was accomplished by Yang Hua, the assistant head official of the ministry of personnel. Yang reported to the emperor on his readings of the site:

‘On the west of the Taining temple, the mountain forms are magnificent. There are five peaks standing in front, many others surrounding them. There are many layers of mountains surround each other as if they are connected. The Qi of the site is strong and prosper, the forests there are lush.’<sup>139</sup>

The emperor therefore ordered the construction to begin. The tomb was constructed on the original location of the Taining temple, namely, the Yongmaoling (literally means the tomb of eternal prosper).<sup>140</sup> Thirty miles around the site was announced forbidden to the public.

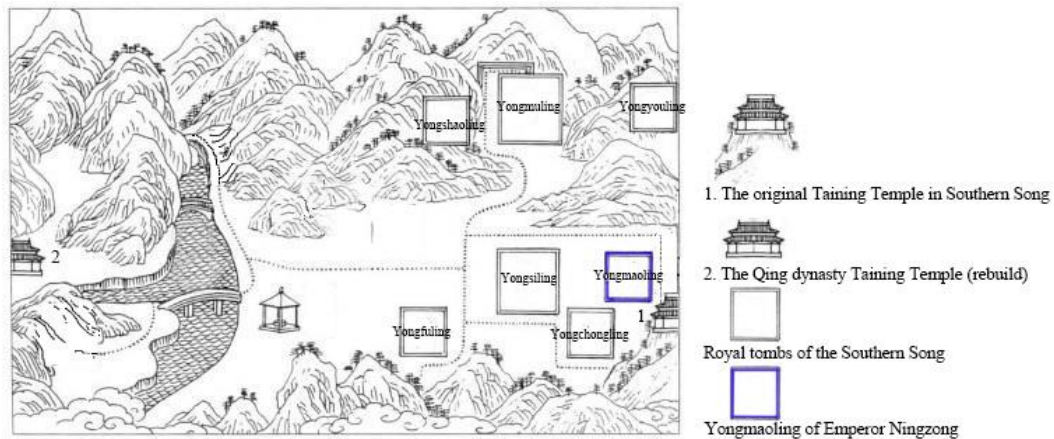
The ministry of personnel as a court department indicated no relevance to the state’s ritual practise. Then why Yang was appointed? Was it possible that he among all was the one who possessed kanyu skills? Yang’s biography was not preserved, thus these questions remained. But these evidences overall proved that the conception of forms was established in burial

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<sup>139</sup> 《宋史, 绍兴府志》, (1343). / *Book of Song*, (1343).

<sup>140</sup> 《越中杂识》. / *Yue Zhong Za Zhi*.

geomancy and accepted by the majority of Southern Song scholars as well as the royal. For instance, in a Qing dynasty reconstruction picture of the Southern Song royal tombs, the location and mountainous surrounding of the tombs were clearly reflected (Figure 29). The original location of the Taining temple, later the site of the Yongmaoling, is highlighted in yellow.



**Figure 29.** The Picture of Six Royal Tombs in the Song/南宋六陵图 (1616-1912) demonstrates Yongmaoling’s location in relation with the original site of the Taining Temple. (Source: Recreated by the author, based on Xu Wei, *Local history of Kuaiji County in the time of Emperor Kangxi.*)

The cases of Tailing and Yongmaoling were only recorded briefly, yet they reveal a good deal of information about changing burial site preferences. There are no accounts suggesting a direct interaction between the designs of Tailing, Yongmaoling and kanyu rules, nor are there any references to the requirements of orientation. Although the making of Yongmaoling was suggested by Yang Hua’s geomancy, his biography suggested that his court position had no relevance to kanyu or ritual affairs. This is quite unusual for a royal burial, always one of the

most important matters for an emperor in feudal society. It is possible that previous kanyu rules were abandoned because their emphasis on ‘high and open ground’ and orientation were no longer appropriate, given the change in burial culture. This particularly affected the upper classes, leaving the emperor to rely on the standards created by the scholars. There will be further discussion of this case in the next section.

## **Summarising the Preferences into a Common Belief: the Development of Kanyu Drawings**

Although kanyu practitioners were not a new group – their story dated back to the Han dynasty’s *rizhe* and *xingfajia* – their theories and practice were greatly affected by the changes in burial preferences.

The argument of this chapter would be incomplete if it only aimed to show that expressions of kanyu were similar to the gentry culture’s preferences. Several previous studies have accomplished detailed comparison between kanyu and landscape painting: for example, Shi Zhen correlated feng shui requirements for forms to landscape paintings; and Stephan Feuchtwang also acknowledged the association between the two subjects. Rather, this chapter aims to show how these similarities were produced.

It is first necessary to realise that the rules of kanyu in the early Tang dynasty were probably not similar to abovementioned upper classes preferences which centered on landscape forms. Evidence that the preferences of kanyu and upper classes were led by different standards during

this time period can be found in the Dunhuang manuscripts, which suggest that kanyu in the early Tang was dominated by Wuyin theory. In Wuyin theory, geomancy practice focused on the arrangement of orientation, which was decided by the pronunciation of one's surname. Considering the Dunhuang manuscripts were geomancy collections that widely spread among the commons, it could be certain that Wuyin was favoured by the general public. While the fact of the Northern Song (960-1127) royal burial practiced Wuyin suggests that its popularity did not disappear suddenly and retained among certain people. Although Forms, xing shi and other issues relating to the surroundings of tombs were addressed in records such as Guan Lu and Guo Pu during the Jin dynasty (266-420), they were not a well-developed subject of established rules. Guan and Guo's reading of kanyu was rather abstract, probably due to their background as talented diviners. This allowed them to offer very personal interpretations which were accepted by the public, something that could not be learnt by others. Due to the differences between geographical conditions between the northern and the southern China, contemporary Kanyu preferences in the Jin dynasty represented by these practitioners were restricted in the south. The spreading of this fond of landscape forms in burial took nearly two centuries. It was only to the Tang dynasty that the scholars tended to prefer the pursuit of scenery over contemporary Wuyin rules when making tombs regardless their locations, with clear written records to support this fond. The criticism of Wuyin theory made by Lv Cai (606-665) in his commentaries when editing *ZhaiJing* (641) for the court reflected a scholar-official's perception of the Wuyin rules:

‘The Wuyin theory and its related kanyu rules were not recorded in classics; nor were they supported by Yin-Yang books. They were passed between the practitioners without having trustworthy origins.’<sup>141</sup>

Lv’s editing of the kanyu books embodies the views of his scholar peers, as well as those of the central government and the state’s orthodoxy. The records remind the fact that central government wanted to tighten control over kanyu because of its wide influence across the state; it was also a signal that the leading social power was beginning to express its disagreement with contemporary kanyu. The date of Lv’s comments, made in 641, was decades before the design of Tailing in 729, long enough before it for a later emperor to have developed the view that the scenery around his tomb mattered. Combining Zhu Xi’s strong opinion against the Wuyi theory in 1172, these evidences, although not explicit, might have suggested that the new preferences for burial did not start from the common classes and was not led by practitioners, but came rather from the scholars.

It is now understood that royal burials and scholars adopted the new burial preferences earlier than the others; they were the first to show the changed burial culture. It might be possible to speculate that the similarities between kanyu and mainstream which many studies have observed did not always exist but must have been later passed to other social members. There are

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<sup>141</sup> 刘昫, 《旧唐书·吕才传》(北京:中华书局, 1975), 第 2724 页。/ Xu Liu, *Old book of Tang* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975), p. 2724.



now new questions: were these preferences only for royal (or upper class) burial? If not, how did they become widely-spread kanyu rules which were communicated through different social hierarchies? It was plausible that aforementioned preferences in burial transferred to kanyu practices, as the scholar-officials and gentries, or whoever produced landscape paintings apparently were not those who practiced kanyu.

An evidence to support above surmise is the drawings in *Hanlong Jing*, a kanyu manuscript which was widely recognised since the Song dynasty. Although the book was believed to have been written by Yang Junsong, a reputed Tang kanyu practitioner, it was actually not mentioned in Tang (618-907) records. It was only later mentioned as a representative kanyu book by a Southern Song (1127-1279) scholar Zheng Suonan between 1241 and 1318.<sup>142</sup> The fact that Zheng described the book as a kanyu classic suggests that it had already been circulating among practitioners and the public for a considerable time in the Southern Song. The book was structured as an ode, supported by various drawings. This was a common form of kanyu book, as the form was convenient to pass among people. Rules in the book highlighted on the forms of mountain and mountain ranges, making them closely related to the xingfa theory of the Han dynasty and contemporary burial preferences. The drawings in *Hanlong Jing* are worthy of note, though their history and nature remain unexplored. It is possible that these drawings were produced by practitioners during their practice. Although the earliest kanyu book could not be identified and reviewed, it can be presumed that the appearing of these

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<sup>142</sup> Hsiang-Kwang Liu, p. 6.

drawings must have been encouraged by the popularity of kanyu during its development;<sup>143</sup> its purpose was to further simplify geomancy knowledge. For instance, an illustration of the family tombs of a Huiyuan's (会元, the campaign of provincial imperialism examination) included in the *Hanlong Ching* was a detailed conclusion of the tomb surroundings (Figure 30). This surely provided simplified guidance for the practitioners. Although the Qing dynasty's *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* version of *Hanlong Jing* did not include any of these drawings, as they were considered 'superficial' by the court editors,<sup>144</sup> common versions which were passed among practitioners and common classes still include these illustrations. By reviewing the content of these writings and drawings, it could be seen that they provided guidance to one on how and what to look for in a natural environment.

To summarise, kanyu and related knowledge provided guidance on reading the outdoor environment in order to find auspicious sites, regardless if it was royal burial or daily practice among ordinary people, in literature or in paintings. According to above discussion, it seems that the change of kanyu preference in burial did not simply start from up to down but started from the upper-middle class represented by the scholar-gentry. The changed kanyu rules were then passed to both royals and to the commoners. Therefore, a process establishing re-developed kanyu rules during the period was highly likely to be that the scholars agreed on a shared

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<sup>143</sup> 何伟, 《近代江南堪舆书市场研究》(未发表博士论文, 苏州大学, 2015). / Wei He, 'The Study of Geomancy Industry in Modern Jiangnan' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Soochow University, 2015).

<sup>144</sup> 纪昀, 《四库全书堪舆部版本绪论》(1773-1782). / Yun Ji, *Siku Quanshu*, 1773-1782).

standard, then the scholars influenced royal burials, and finally the practitioners summarised the changes by amending kanyu rules.



**Figure 30. An illustration in Qing dynasty edited *Hanlong Jing* indicated surrounding mountain forms of so called ‘ideal burial sites’ to provide instructions to its readers. (Source: *Hanlong Jing*, SuZhou Library.)**

## **Kanyu Practitioners: Who Were They and How Did They Work?**

As previously discussed, diviners suffered from a continual decrease in their social status. Fangshi, rizhe, xingfajia or kanyu practitioners had a low status, and were not recognised specialists unless appointed by the court, which was only rarely the case in following dynasties.

*HanLong Jing* reflects on the kanyu practitioner’s social status. Its supposed author, Yang Junsong, was not mentioned in the official history of the Tang dynasty. He was only mentioned in an early Yuan dynasty diary (1241 – 1318), and later the *Book of Song* (1314 – 1355) described him a court official in the late Tang court. According to the *Book of Song*, Yang ‘brought court kanyu books with him when he travelled to southern China during a rebellion

in the late Tang'. In the *Book of Song* described him as a high-ranking official in the court, a position that ought to be identifiable in the Tang records, though this apparently not the case. Therefore, the authorship of *Hanlong Jing* was likely to be created due to its great popularity as many other renowned kanyu books such as the *Book of Burial*, which was credited to Guo Pu. This likely reminded the fact that kanyu overall needed to be approved by the mainstream. Thus, it was necessary for the practitioners to either credit the book to someone legendary, or noble enough to represent orthodox, such as Yang.

A Song dynasty (960-1279) tomb figure of kanyu practitioner also reflected kanyu practitioner's social hierarchy (Figure 31). The figured kanyu practitioner dressed similar to a Daoist. It was known that dressing rules were carefully crafted in the precisely hierarchised Chinese society. Therefore, it would be plausible to conclude that social status of the kanyu practitioners were similar to religious practitioners, as well as the common perceptions on them. Similar figures were often discovered in the tombs of small noble or wealthy commons in the southern China, functioning as a burial charm in the aim of blessing the tomb.<sup>145</sup> This suggested that kanyu became rather common in contemporary society. The fact the figure is holding a geomancy compass means that as discussed in previous chapter, the usage of

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<sup>145</sup> 刘祥光, <宋代风水文化的扩展>, 《台大历史学报》, 45 (2010), 页 1-78 (第 5 页). / Hsiang-Kwang Liu, 'Development of the Culture of Geomancy in Song China', *Historical Inquiry*, 45 (2010), 1-78 (p. 26).

geomancy compass was not restricted in housing geomancy, and a kanyu practitioner's practices were necessarily divided into outdoor and indoor, but rather a united concept.

In the Dunhuang manuscripts, kanyu was clearly divided into theories about tombs and theories about houses,<sup>146</sup> but it is hard to image that the actual practices were so clearly separated. A kanyu practitioner would have been able to perform both of these subjects. Kanyu suggested that one's destiny could be predicted and manipulated by operating certain skills in the construction of tombs or houses. Mainstream ideology represented by Confucism offered a partially critical perspective with regard to the conception of xiang zhai, and there were many challenges to xiang zhai. For example, in a contemporary Tang record, kanyu practitioner Chai Yueming refused to practise house kanyu for the emperor's palace as 'the emperor was protected by the gods and his residences did not need to be guided by kanyu.'<sup>147</sup> Whether palace buildings were actually designed completely without the application of kanyu is questionable; this record seems to imply an attention to suggest its readers to remain critical to those who practiced house kanyu, just like the emperor eventually did. Even among the kanyu practitioners, status differed. Those who highlighted xing shi were always more tolerated by the mainstream ideology.

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<sup>146</sup> 金身佳, 《敦煌写本宅经葬书研究》(未发表博士论文, 兰州大学, 2006). / Shenjia Jin, 'On the Sitting Documents of House and Grave of Dunhuang Manuscripts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Lanzhou University, 2006).

<sup>147</sup> 裴庭裕, 《东观奏记》(北京:中华书局,1994), p. 336. / Tingyu Pei, *Records of Dong Guan* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1994), p. 336.



**Figure 31. A Song dynasty tomb figure of kanyu practitioner holding a geomancy compass/宋执罗盘俑 (960-1279) reflects the decreased social status and working methods of contemporary Song kanyu practitioners. (Source: China Maritime Museum, <http://www.portmuseum.cn/doc/cp/gcjp/zx/27729.shtml>.)**

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided new understandings of kanyu by questioning its pattern of spreading both regionally and socially. The subject's associations with burial and city/village making were the main focuses of discussion. Although kanyu practices in cities and villages served to the livings same as xiang zhai, its perceptions and methods were considered more related to burial kanyu, particular the trend of xing shi. Both of the practices could all be concluded as the products of human interpretations of surrounding natural environment while choosing and making outdoor places in cooperation to regional features.

First, it was discussed how the perception of burial kanyu was raised, spread and accepted across the state. Since the collapse of Han, southern dynasties such as Jin and Song changed

their burial preference by fully adapting regional geographical conditions. During the process awareness of burial kanyu was developed, but overall restricted in the south. It was thus argued that Kanyu, particular those of burial and cities, spread its influences from the south to the north. To the early Tang kanyu as a subject was aware by the whole state, for instances, not only a massive amount of kanyu books were preserved in caves in the far west city Dunhuang, the central government also stated an attempt to keep kanyu under careful control by ordering the scholars to edit kanyu books.

When royal burials were preferred to be allocated in mountainous area rather than on the plains, the site of a tomb became essential rather than its orientation. This provided the foundation of pursuing scenery in burial. The raising class of scholar, who was the leading power of contemporary society, established a shared taste of scenery – landscape painting was one of its expressions, while requiring environment around tomb was another. In the meanwhile, contemporary burial kanyu rules were led by Wuyin theory, which remained focused on orientation.

It was then investigated how and when kanyu rules were amended to echo above preferences. As Kanyu books provided comprehensive guidance to the practitioners, the reviewing of these books allowed an understanding of established kanyu rules. The analysis of *Hanlong Jing* indicated a possibility that these kanyu knowledge was a combination of contemporary mainstream preferences and the skills of Han dynasty's xingfajia, who operated geomancy by overserving Qi. Xing shi, an evolved kanyu theory which highlighted forms of mountains and waters reflected by the *Hanlong Jing*, was established by catering for main stream ideology.

Drawings in kanyu books also served as a tool, which always indicated association to landscape paintings. Therefore, it was concluded kanyu practitioners managed to establish and develop specific rules by summarising upper class preferences, as a result burial kanyu succeeded in continue gaining favours of upper classes by changing its emphasis from orientation to forms, or the xing shi.

Then, when these changes of kanyu actually happened was further explored by investigating *Hanlong Jing*'s forged authorship. By reviewing evidences in the Tang and Song together with an investigation towards the written time of *Hanlong Jing*, it was argued that kanyu's transformation from orientation to surrounding forms happened no later than the Song. During this time period rules of kanyu was modified in corresponding to changed burial preferences roughly between mid to late Tang dynasty.

In conclusion, this chapter explored how kanyu rules were re-developed and what resulted these changes. It was argued that the awareness of burial kanyu started from southern China, and gradually reached it influences to the north. The trend and standards of a changed burial kanyu were first developed and encouraged by gentry culture. It was highly plausible that the practitioners accepted and concluded these changes, practiced them in daily life of the general public which allowed kanyu to continue flourishing.



# **Chapter 4. From Kanyu to Feng shui: Its Rise and Fall**

Kanyu, which had been favoured by imperial society, was repressed from the Republican period (1912-1949) until the early stage of the People's Republic China (1949-1978). This chapter begins by providing a brief discussion of imperial society's practices and social perception of kanyu. As many previous studies have provided comprehensive analysis of kanyu from 1368 to 1912, the Ming and Qing dynasties, this section does not elaborate kanyu's general history in detail but does take into account the ways in which the subject was perceived from the late eighteenth century onwards.

The following section discusses the transformation from kanyu to feng shui under western pressure between 1912-1949. First, differences in geomancy terminology will be identified and explained, and the notion of 'mixin', superstition, will be introduced. We will examine the way the association between feng shui and mixin affected contemporary perceptions and practice. The analysis argues that the greatest challenge facing feng shui after the republican era came from the social trends to 'destroy the traditional' and 'pursue the scientific', which began roughly at the time of the founding of the New Culture Movement (mid 1910s to 1920s).

Resistance to feng shui culture in the republican era, as the government attempted to modernise society will be discussed. The response of feng shui practitioners to the challenge will

particularly be highlighted. This will include early attempts to explain feng shui using scientific approaches and the extension of feng shui education. The analysis focuses on southern China, which was the centre of feng shui culture.

The following discussion centres on national policies in the early stage of the People's Republic of China (before the opening-up policy of 1978) which strictly suppressed feng shui at a national level. The campaign to 'destroy the old' and its impact on feng shui will be elaborated through oral histories and illustrations. The damage to feng shui will be addressed, and we will also see that 'destroying the old' was not so effective, that that feng shui managed to survive in certain areas and was later revived.

## **Kanyu in Late Imperial Society: a Continuing Custom**

The rules for outdoor kanyu rules emerged, as explained previously, from scholar-gentry preferences in the period 618-1279. Reflecting the social continuity of gentry culture, this shared taste barely changed, and with it, social appreciation of kanyu, particularly those of outdoor and highlighted surrounding forms, was hardly changed too. Its influence extended and it became of significance to imperial society. Many records show that kanyu practitioners participated in royal projects and took the lead in giving opinions on their place making activities.

A court official who possessed expertise in kanyu could be trusted with the duty of planning a capital city. Liu Binzhong (1216-1274), the emperor's grand guardian, planned the Yuan

(1271-1368) capital, Dadu, by interpreting kanyu rules.<sup>148</sup> This performance was recorded in his fellow court official Zhao Binwen's (1222-1293) report to the emperor: 'Liu and I observed (original text: xiang) the capital together. Liu first mapped surrounding mountains and terrains, and then arranged the palace city plan according to the *Zhouli*.'<sup>149</sup> This description shows that Liu's method of carrying out xiang consisted of the observation of forms and modelling his plans on the pattern of Chengzhou city.

The Imperial court had positions for diviners, although they were called different names, after the Zhou dynasty (1046-256BC). In the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), governmental recognised kanyu practitioners were under the supervision of the yin-yang official (阴阳生), a minor court position in charge of local kanyu performances.<sup>150</sup> This means kanyu, being separated from other divining activities, was recognised as a type of national affairs. However, these practitioners only seemed responsible for local kanyu practices due to their low social status. Kanyu plans for capital cities remained accomplished by specific court officials to guarantee its sacredness, so were those of royal burial. Although practitioners of royal burial kanyu might not be court officials or the emperor themselves, officials tended to obtain great power in

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<sup>148</sup> 白寿彝编,《中国通史》,12卷(上海:上海人民出版社,1989),第8卷。/ *General History of China*, ed. by Shouyi Bai, 12 vols (Shanghai: Shanghai People Publishing House, 1989), VIII.

<sup>149</sup> 黄建军,于希贤,〈《周礼·考工记》与元大都规划〉,《文博》,15(2002),页41-45。/ Jianjun Huang and Xixian Yu, 'Kao Gong Ji of Zhou Li and Yuan Dadu Planning', *Relics and Museology*, 15 (2002), 41-45.

<sup>150</sup> 宋濂,《元史》,志第三十一选举一(1370)。/ *History of Yuan*, ed. by Song Lian, Treatise thirty first (1370).

decision making. A kanyu practitioner, if considered qualified, could be appointed for royal burial within an appointed group consisting of high-status court officials. Although practitioners were those who gave actual instructions, the cooperation between the people involved in the process was commonly led by the court officials, who also had the power of confirming that a particular site was auspicious. There are two records of cases of kanyu practise for royal burials in the official histories of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the record of the selection of the Ming royal tomb sites in 1409, and the making of the Qing Huiling in 1875. All these royal tombs were located in the mountainous areas next to today's Beijing.

Zhao Gong (date of birth unknown), the head administrator of the Ministry of Rites, was appointed by the Yongle emperor (1360-1424) to select his future tomb site in Beijing in 1408. Considering his court position, royal burial was certainly was an important part of his duties, though he himself did not possess kanyu skills like Liu Binzhong and Yang Hua. In March (lunar calendar, rest are the same) the next year (1409), the kanyu practitioner Liao Junqing (1350-1413) was appointed to the task. In his official report to the emperor regarding the site's selection, *Chao Xian Shan Tu Biao Zhang* (朝献山图标章), Liao suggested to the emperor that he should consider the Huangtu (the mountain of Yellow Earth) mountain range in Changping county as the most auspicious site. He said:

‘The mountain on the east of Changping county, namely the mountain of Huangtu, was the most blessed site. Its mountain range is magnificent, with many star peaks standing. The form of the main mountain is like a flying phoenix.’<sup>151</sup>

Liao’s suggestion was accepted by the court. In April, the emperor visited Huangtu mountain and in May he named it Tianshou, the mountain of longevity. Liao, who was a non-noble kanyu practitioner, was rewarded with appointment to the court position of ‘Lingtai lang’ (灵台郎), a middle ranking position in charge of the state’s divining matters.<sup>152</sup>

The choice of Tianshou mountain seems to have been appreciated by many. The contemporary court record, the *Records on the Great Ming’s Territory* (1461), described the scholar’s liking for the Tianshou mountain range:

‘The main mountains like dragons and phoenixes flying in the sky, as if the mountain range is connected to Kunlun mountain. The surrounding mountains closing up as if they are protecting the main mountain...this is indeed where the longevity of the kingdom will be granted.’<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> 廖均卿, 《行程记》, (1409). / Junqing Liao, *Progress Dairy*, (1409).

<sup>152</sup> 顾炎武, 《昌平山水记》, (1644) . / Yanwu Gu, *Record on Changping Landscapes*, (1644).

<sup>153</sup> 李贤, 《大明一统志》, 90 卷 (1461 年). / Xian Li, *Records of the Unity of the Great Ming*, 90 vol (1461).

This record suggests that contemporary kanyu rules for selecting forms became a widely shared taste. The mountain range of Tianshou was drawn in detail in the *Picture of the Ming Royal Tombs* (1736) (Figure 32) and illustrates Needham's comment in *Science and Civilization in China*, 1958: 'an important breakthrough in the field of Chinese architecture. It is, to some extent, the most meaningful and influential example for the combination of architecture and landscape.'<sup>154</sup>

Kanyu culture from fourteenth century onwards seemed became a subject that interests the majority of the society but not just the royals. For instance, the *DiliCanZanXuanJiXianPoJi* (地理参赞玄机仙婆集) written in 1587, provided a reflection of the popularity of kanyu in the Ming dynasty (Figure 34). The book foreword described its history and background, explaining that it was ordered to be written by the emperor himself in 1587. Zhang Mingfeng, a contemporary court official rewarded by the degree of Jinshi in the imperial examination was appointed editor. Lv Ben the grand secretary of the court composed the book's foreword. Lv's relationship to the book went beyond this: as a top status court official, Lv's mother had been rewarded by the court. When she died in 1587, the emperor ordered that an ideal tomb site should be found for her as a gesture to Lv, and this also motivated the proposal to publish this book. Illustrations in the book were widely distributed, and would have been of educational

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<sup>154</sup> Joseph Needham and Ling Wang, *Science and civilization in China*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954-2015), II (1956), p. 363.

value, not just to a general well-educated audience, but also to practitioners of feng shui who would have used them as guidance for their practice.

The significance of kanyu was not only social but also political. Although its practices had little association with established rites, it was ritualised and given great importance. In the imperial society, the use of feng shui brought power. It was considered true, so it needed to be contained. It was due to this that the Emperor of Songming ordered to destroy his political enemy's family tomb which indicated great feng shui.



**Figure 32. 'Picture of the Ming royal tombs /明十三陵图' (1736) demonstrates the relationship between the Ming royal tombs and the Tianshou mountain range. (Source: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7822m.ct003414/>, accessed on 12/09/2017.)**

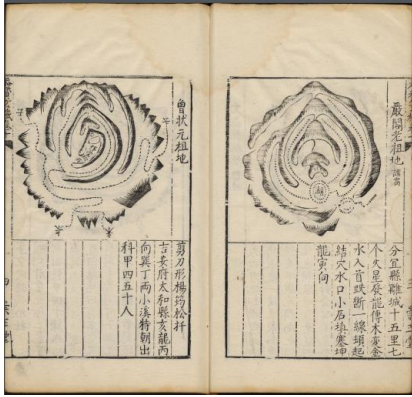


Figure 33. Illustrations in the *DiliCanZanXuanJiXianPoJi* (地理參贊玄機仙婆集) (1587) depicted the context of the family’s achievements, being recorded to claim the family’s social status. (Source: Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:1191948>. Accessed on 12/09/2016.)

Since the Ming dynasty, kanyu practice in the royal burial process was ritualised constantly, but the fundamental organisation and process remained similar. The Qing royal clan also tended to claim the legitimacy of their rule by demonstrating the ideal burial feng shui of their ancestors’. For instances, the noticeable similarity indicated in the painting of Yongling (1711-1799) and the painting of Fuling (1711-1799) were highly likely to be resulted from the intentional exaggeration of two royal tombs’ surrounding mountain forms (Figure 34-35). In this way these two royal tombs, which belonged to the ancestors of the Qing royal clan, were described as being located in a place with perfect feng shui, hence the Qing’s legitimacy was affirmed. These cases reflect of both the ritualisation of kanyu practice in royal affairs and its wide social acceptance.



Later there were detailed records regarding Kanyu in place making activities, particularly in royal burial. Kanyu practice for the making of Huiling (1875-1880), the tomb of Emperor Tongzhi (1856-1875), was recorded in the diary of Weng Tonghe (1830-1904), one of the five main officials appointed for the project by the queen mother. Huiling located in the east side in the Dongling (东陵), or the Eastern Royal Tombs Complex of the Qing, one of the two royal burial areas of the Qing clan located in the mountainous area of Zunhua 125 kilometres northeast of today's Beijing. In his diary in 1875, Weng described he and his peer officials, all high ranking, appointed another five court officials who possessed kanyu skills to assist in the duty. Of the five kanyu officials, four practiced the theory of 'xing shi' which promoted form landscape reading, while the other preferred the theory of recognising orientation, similar to previous discussed Wuyin theory.<sup>155</sup> Weng Tonghe wrote: 'In kanyu practices, xing shi should be the most valued, others are not as good'.<sup>156</sup> One would further understand the standard of auspicious kanyu of Huiling in relation to its xing shi by looking at the view of the mountain by the north end of the tomb's central axis. The symmetrical and smooth form of the mountain was considered to have good kanyu by the officials.<sup>157</sup> The royal tomb was built along the same axis as the mountain as shown in figure 36, on which it was also indicated that besides having a mountain in behind, the tomb was also surrounded by mountains and hills on its east. A

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<sup>155</sup> 史箴, 汪江华, <清惠陵选址史实探赜>, 《建筑师》, 6 (2004), 页 92-100. / Zhen Shi and Jianghua Wang, 'Site Selection of Hui Tomb, the Royal Imperial Mausoleum, and Feng shui Theory', *The Architect*, 6 (2004), 92-100.

<sup>156</sup> 翁同龢著, 陈义杰编, 《翁同龢日记》, 第三册 (北京: 中华书局, 1989), 页 1097. / Tonghe Weng, *The Diary of Weng Tonghe*, ed. by Yijie Chen (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1989), P. 1097.

<sup>157</sup> *The Diary of Weng Tonghe*, p. 1111.

painting by Lei Tingchang (1845-1907) the heard architect of contemporary Qing court further demonstrated the relationship between the tomb buildings and the mountain in behind, which is the north end of the axis (Figure 37). While according to Wen's diary, Lei Tingchang's father Lei Siqi participated in the site selection of Huiling as head royal architect. Lei Siqi affected a feng shui decision by offering his opinion as an architect during the site choosing process for Huiling.<sup>158</sup> When Weng Tonghe recorded the making of Huiling in his dairies, he appreciated the cooperation between Lei and other four feng shui officials. Weng said:

‘When we were surveying the feng shui of a place next to the Zhangge Village, Liao (practised his theory of choosing site by evaluation orientation) and suggested the site could be used for the royal tomb. Other four feng shui officials did not agree. Lei Siqi also strongly disagree Liao's suggestion and insisted the place did not have the possible scale to building the tomb.’<sup>159</sup>

This was probably the earliest recorded interaction between an architectural professional and kanyu activities.

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<sup>158</sup> *ibid*, p. 1119.

<sup>159</sup> 翁同龢著, 陈义杰编, 《翁同龢日记》, 第三册 (北京: 中华书局, 1989), 页 1111. / Tonghe Weng, *The Diary of Weng Tonghe*, ed. by Yijie Chen (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1989), p. 1111.

The concept of architecture specialist did not occur in China until the Qing dynasty. Before this the constructions activities were left to specialists such as the craftsman and geomancy practitioners entirely. Modern studies suggested that most of royal architects in the Qing, represented by the Lei family, obtained sound understanding of feng shui.<sup>160</sup> They, as indicated by Weng Tonghe's records, often worked in cooperation with feng shui practitioners. This kind of cooperation particularly applied to royal burials, when they had to record feng shui practitioner's reading of a burial site in illustrations. For instance, the initial function of figure 39 was as a master map of the sites, but it was presented in the same way as the landscape paintings and feng shui drawings reviewed in previous chapters. Titled 'A feng shui drawing of Dongling (the Eastern Royal Tombs Complex of the Qing)', the painting highlighted the association between royal tomb sites and feng shui rules by marking the tomb sites in bright yellow (which can only be used by the royal lineage) and mountains that were of good feng shui in red. It can be imaged that Lei Siqi must have had worked in this way when he participated in the making of Huiling. Together with these records of Lei Siqi's participation in the making of Huiling, these materials provide a reference of an architectural professional's attempted of understanding feng shui in his own favour in eighteenth century.

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<sup>160</sup> 史箴, 汪江华, <清惠陵选址史实探赜>, 《建筑师》, 6 (2004), 页 92-100. / Zhen Shi and Jianghua Wang, 'Site Selection of Hui Tomb, the Royal Imperial Mausoleum, and Feng shui Theory', *The Architect*, 6 (2004), 92-100.

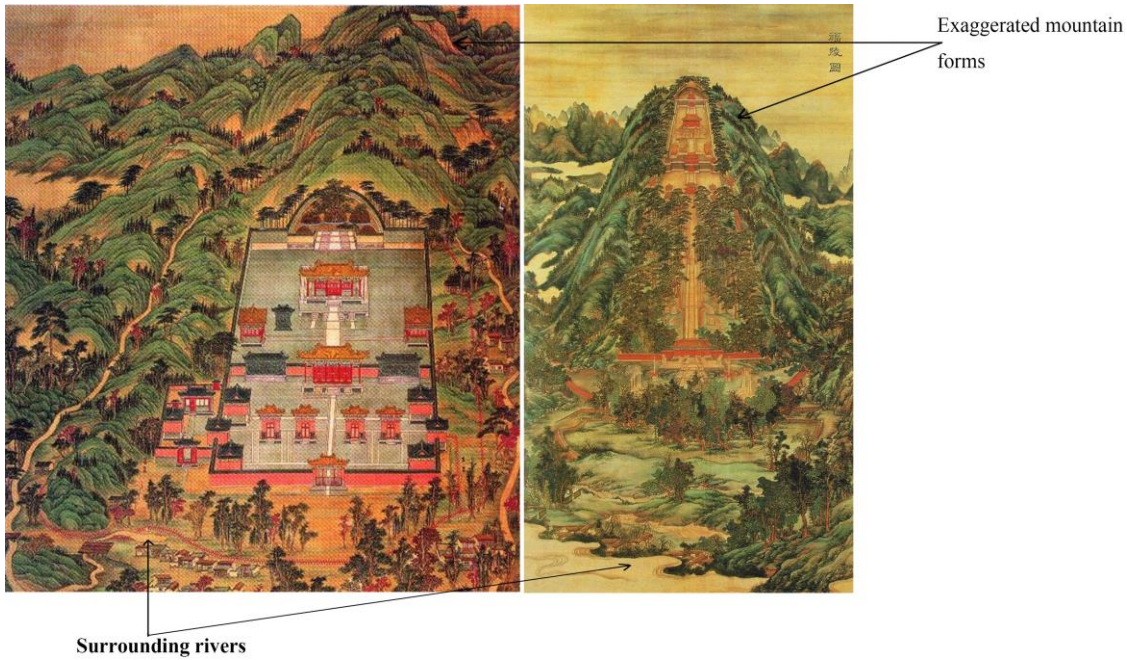


Figure 34. 'Painting of Yongling of Qing/永陵图' (1711-1799) claimed the legitimacy of the Qing royal clan by exaggerating the forms of surrounding mountains as they proved an ideal feng shui. (Source: The Palace Museum.)

Figure 35. 'Painting of Fuling of Qing/福陵图' (1711-1799) indicated a great similarity to the Painting of Yongling regardless their differences in reality. (Source: The Palace Museum.)

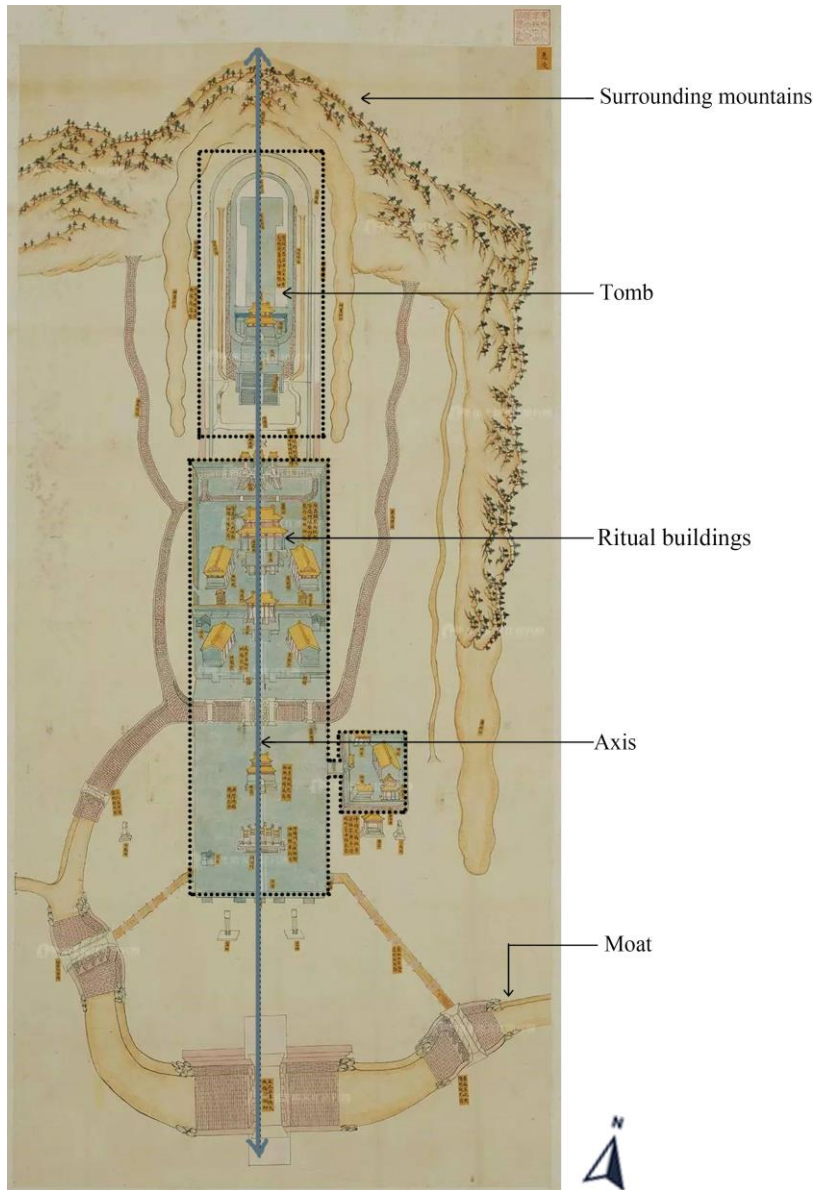


Figure 36. Yangshi Lei's (1875-1912) 'Illustration of Huiling/惠陵图 (1875-1912) was arranged in north-south direction, showing the relationship between Huiling's ritual buildings and surrounding mountains, or so called 'xing shi'. (Source: 大田省一, 井上直美, 東京大学東洋文化研究所所蔵清朝建築図様図録 (東洋文化研究所報告 山愛書院), 2005.)

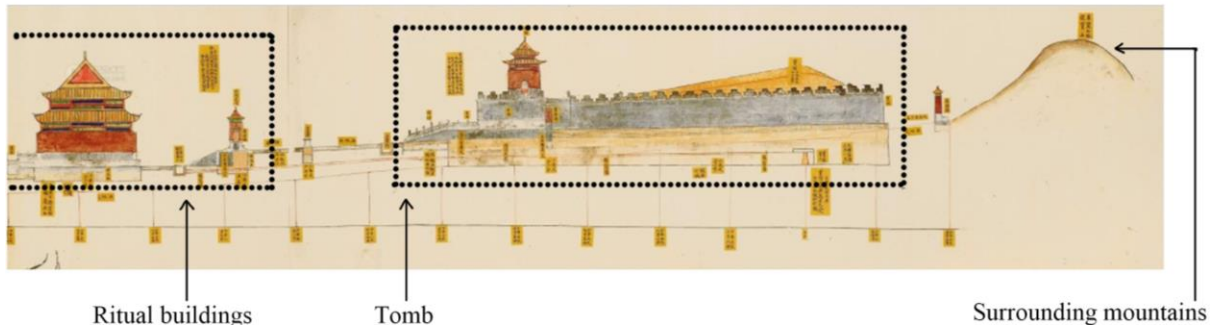


Figure 37. ‘Buildings of Huling in the central axis / 清惠陵中一路立样手卷设色纸本’ (1845-1907) presented the east elevation of huling’s ritual buildings in relation to the mountain on the north end. (Source: Artron auction online catalogue, 2013. <http://auction.artron.net/paimai-art5034390005/>. Accessed on 09 August 2016.)



Figure 38. The actual view of the mountain on the north of Huling when one standing in the central axis. (Source: recreated by the author.)



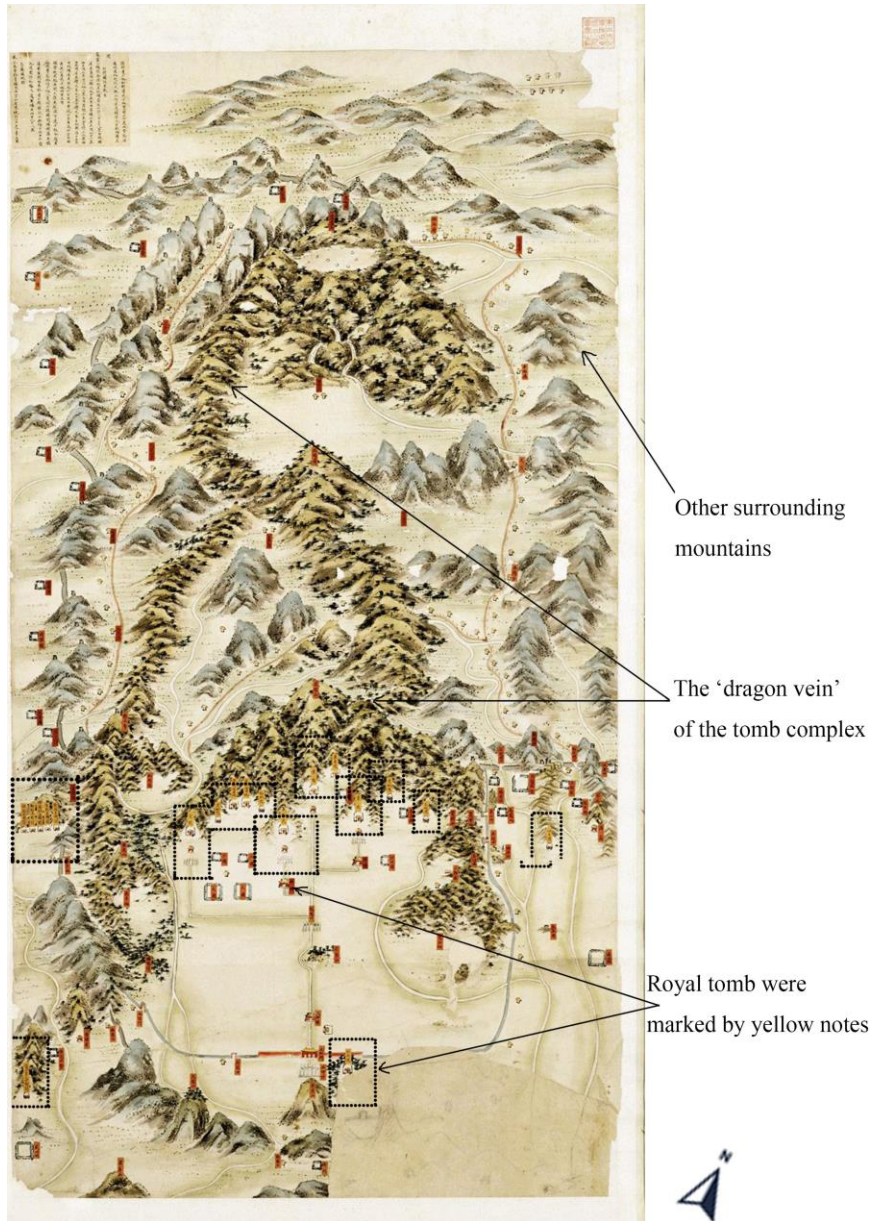


Figure 39. In Yangshi Lei's (1616-1912) 'A feng shui drawing of Dongling/东陵风水形势全图' (1616-1912), mountains of good feng shui were marked by red notes in relation to royal tomb sites, which were marked by yellow notes. (Source: 中国国家图书馆 <<http://www.nlc.cn/nmcb/gcjpgdz/yxl/>> [accessed on 28 July 2017].)

Physical cases of kanyu since the late Qing (late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century), particularly those of large-scale burial, are rarely available for review today, because the royal family could no longer afford constructions like the Forbidden City and older royal tombs due to the weakening of imperial power. Meanwhile the degeneration of imperial power and the turmoil in society have caused the scholar gentry class to gradually lose enthusiasm for the original aesthetic values and the state's affairs. Instead they turned to a great attention of their own destiny. Therefore, kanyu practices among the scholar gentry also tended to be reflected on a smaller scale, and there was a stronger association with divining.<sup>161</sup> However, the numbers of kanyu records remains considerable, suggesting that its general acceptance in wider society continued.

The decline of imperial power resulted in kanyu of the xing shi, which often required greater space, for which there were limited opportunities. So the daily practice of kanyu tended to have a closer relationship with popular beliefs. This was demonstrated by the increasing number of appearances of kanyu in late Qing private accounts, showing how kanyu was related to daily activities. For instance, Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), a military general, wrote to his younger brother in 1866 telling him that 'kanyu is related to house and burial. It is something we have to believe in for some inexplicable reason.'<sup>162</sup> There are few Chinese works which describe the

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<sup>161</sup> 熊月之, <近代中国读书人的命理世界>, 《学术月刊》, 9 (2015), 页 147-160 (第 148 页). / Yuezhi Xiong, 'The Modern Chinese Intellectuals and the Numerology', *Academic Monthly*, 9 (2015), 147-160 (p. 148).

<sup>162</sup> 曾国藩, <致沅弟>, 出自《曾国藩全集·家书》(长沙:岳麓书社, 1985), 页 419. / Guofan Zeng, 'To Brother Yuan', in *Complete Collection of Zeng Guofan - Letters to Home* (Changsha: Yuelu Bookstore, 1985), p. 419.



perception of kanyu in the later Qing, and Xiong Yuezhi suggested that many late Qing intellectuals avoided expressing their association with it.<sup>163</sup> But Xiong's study does say that those who questioned kanyu appeared to be in the minority. Xiong also remarked that Zeng Guofan did not believe in kanyu in his earlier years.

Kanyu is described as a method for perfect places in accounts of the making of imperial gardens like that at the Summer Palace in Chengde (or known as the Chengde Mountain Resort), indicating continuing royal favour. For instance, in the Official Memorials of the Emperor Guangxu (1891), court official Ying Nian suggested various decorations such as screen walls, wells and stairs in directions to refine the kanyu of a garden at the Summer Palace. The report did not indicate the actual functions of these wells and stairs, but it shows that it was still common for officials to possess kanyu skills, even if their service was no longer applied on a large scale. The kanyu practice of local courts seems to have been purely a matter of belief rather than a place making activity. For instance, He Wei described a kanyu performance before the newly appointed local governor of Shanghai when he arrived at the Yamen, the local court building, in 1877:

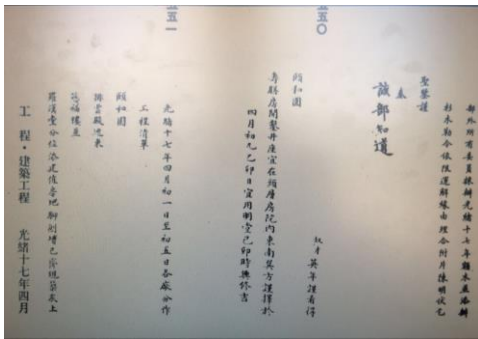
‘When the new governor came, he did not enter the Yamen directly. He first walked all the way down to the west, then turned and walked straight to the south-east. At the end of the road he again turned and walked to the south and turned again to walk to the

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<sup>163</sup> Yuezhi Xiong, ‘The Modern Chinese Intellectuals and the Numerology’, p. 149.

north. He eventually entered the Yamen from its east door, as this was the gate of the green dragon.<sup>164</sup>

This record shows that instead of arranging architectures or amending surrounding environment, kanyu could become a performance which did not necessarily interact with the place itself. For instance, the report of Ying Nian to the court in 1891 suggested that ‘a well should be constructed to the south-east, in the garden of the imperial kitchen. Ying Nian also advised that the construction time should be at the time of Yimao (5-7am) on the ninth of April’ (Figure 40).<sup>165</sup>



**Figure 40. The report of Ying Nian to the court (1891) described how the kanyu of the Summer Palace garden should be performed with a clear explanation of when the actions should be taken. (Source: *Official Guangxu Memorial, Reports on Constructions*, 1891, p627.)**

<sup>164</sup> 何伟, 《近代江南堪輿书市场研究》(未发表博士论文, 苏州大学, 2015)。/ Wei He, ‘The Study of Geomancy Industry in Modern Jiangnan’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Soochow University, 2015).

<sup>165</sup> 《光绪朝朱批奏折, 工程卷》(光绪十七年), p. 627。/ *Official Guangxu Memorial, Reports on Constructions* (1891), p. 627.

Evidence of the general public's involvement in kanyu can be found in numerous late Qing dairies, sketch books and other accounts. For instance, the late Qing scholar Chen Qiyuan (1812-1881) recorded a notable feng shui event (the term used in the original context) in Hangzhou. Chen wrote:

'Local Hangzhou scholars' imperial examination results had always been top of the whole province. But since the time of emperors Jiangqing (1760-1820) and Daoguang (1821-1850), Hangzhou's provincial examination (the imperial exam at the provincial level) results were often exceeded by Shaoxing; and in the time of emperors Xianfeng (1851-1861) and Tongzhi (1862-1875), Hangzhou's results were even exceeded by Ningbo. The magistrate of Hangzhou, Ding Songsheng, suggested that it was due to the failings of Hangzhou grand examination hall's Feng shui. Ding ordered the re-orientation of the hall gate and re-decorated the pavilion in front of the gate under the approval of his supervisor. On the examination day, the new gate was completed. Ding set off thirty-three firecrackers when the candidates entered the hall, in order to encourage the Qi. When the examination results came out, in total thirty Hangzhou candidates were appointed JuRen (举人, a rewarded degree qualifying them to become

bureau officials). The efficiency of kanyu in this case was so great but meanwhile almost impossible to explain.’<sup>166</sup>

The importance of the grand examination hall came from its use for the imperial examination, which was the civil service examination system that allowed a common gentry who pass the examination to become a member of the court. The path was the one and only method for intellectuals to be appreciated by the bureau and became a scholar-official, frequently the ultimate goal of a Chinese intellectual. When they held the degree of JuRen, they would be considered a member of the privileged class. In the palace examination, the final examination of the process, a JuRen was offered the opportunity to become a Jinshi (进士, the highest rewarded degree in the examination system) and being officially appointed by the government, or in some cases, by the emperor himself. So the action of re-orienting the examination hall gate was of great significance as it impacted on the most desired achievement of all local intellectuals.

Chen Qiyuan himself, as a noted scholar from Hangzhou area, surely must have related to this event. He credits the remarkable achievement of the year’s Hangzhou candidates to Ding’s decision to performing kanyu. The plans and forms of the Hangzhou grand examination hall

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<sup>166</sup> 陈其元, <堪輿奇验>, 出自《庸闲斋笔记》(上海: 上海检古斋石印本, 清光绪十五年). / Qiyuan Chen, ‘The Legendary Story of Kanyu’, in *Notes from the Study of Commonplace Leisure*, trans. by the Author (Shanghai: Shanghai Jianguzhai Lithographed Edition, 1889) <<http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=3102&remap=gb>> [accessed on 09 October 2017].

have not survived, but other grand examination halls in China have a similar basic format, for instance, the Jinan and Guangzhou grand examination hall gates (Figure 41-42). As it was a wooden non-permanent structure with extension walls, Ding's proposal to re-orient it was a realistic proposal. While the Guangzhou grand examination hall gate was a wooden structure attached to extension walls, 'the dragon gate' (龙门), as demonstrated by Figure 43. The Chinese believed that once a fish jumps past the gate, it will become a dragon. When a candidate passed the national examination and became a scholar-official, one was considered a member of privileged class and commonly described as 'jumped over the dragon gate'. So the gate name itself was an explicit reflection of popular belief which many might call kanyu. This was not much different to what Ding proposed for the Hang Zhou exam hall.

The late Qing diviners were not only recorded by words but also westerners' photography, as they often see these diviners as the most bizarre group of old China (Figure 43). In John Thomson's picture a diviner was someone who sit among some other characters who were usually considered among the 'humble professionals', included a barber on the right and a peddler on the left. The diviner was described as a despicable character by the photographer:

'The gentleman in the centre...combines the avocations of a fortune-teller and physician with that of a penman...He will also select the lucky day for a wedding, and raise, if required, the curtain of the future, so as to afford his dupe a sunny glimpse into the regions of the unknown. He is a crafty old rogue, and trades on human credulity with

astounding success. His table, chair, and apparatus are of the most portable kind; and these he folds up at night and carries away with him under his arm.’<sup>167</sup>

George Bradford Neumann also recorded a kanyu practitioner in between 1908-1924, the very end of the Qing dynasty (Figure 44). According to his descriptions, although the practitioner did not carry a compass, he has the measuring tools associated with a man who ‘kan di’ (看地 . Kan: see.), see the land.<sup>168</sup> From the background and their costumes, it is highly likely that the practitioner was hired by a member of the local gentry. The picture dates from the early twentieth century.

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<sup>167</sup> John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People, 1873-1874* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), in Vol. 3, No. 25, ‘Street Groups, Kiu-Kiang’.

<sup>168</sup> George Bradford Neumann, *China in Transition: Pictures of life in China during the transition from the last dynasty to the modern world, 1908-1924* < <http://stan-neumann.com/China/index.htm> > [accessed on 04 June 2017].



Figure 41. The main gate of Jinan grand exam hall (c.1906), constructed in a standard exam hall format, might have provided a reference to the Hangzhou grand examination hall which was not recorded by illustrations. (Source: Ernst Boerschmann, *Picturesque China: Architecture and Landscape*.)



Figure 42. The main gate of Guangzhou grand exam hall (c.1894) was named 'Longmen', the dragon gate, which reflected its geomancy value to the candidates. (Source: <[http://www.sohu.com/a/140905958\\_526351](http://www.sohu.com/a/140905958_526351)>.)

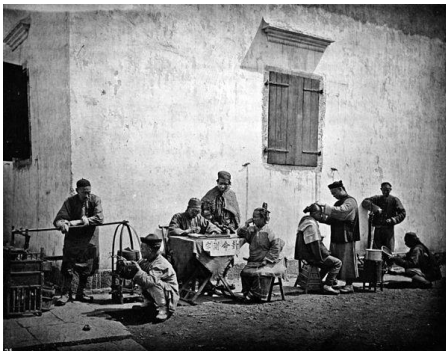


Figure 43. A diviner (middle) sit in between of a barber and a peddler in the late Qing dynasty, suggesting both his limited social status and the profession's wide social acceptance. (Source: John Thomson,

*Illustrations of China and Its People*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), Vol. 3, No. 25, 'Street Groups, Kiu-Kiang'. )



Figure 44. A kanyu practitioner holding geomancy devices in his hands while working for a local gentry (1908-1924). (Source: George Bradford Neumann, *China in Transition: Pictures of life in China during the transition from the last dynasty to the modern world.*)

### **Kanyu and Feng shui: What Were the Differences?**

The change from kanyu to feng shui hardly related to their content but was rather a reflection of changed perceptions. After the Republican period, the historic term kanyu was gradually replaced by feng shui (风水. 风: wind; 水: water), a more modern concept which had been approved in missionaries' reports and Chinese cultural movements since the nineteenth century. The replacement of kanyu by feng shui reflects the intervention of western perceptions, which precipitated the path to modernism. To understand this transition, it is necessary to understand what kanyu and feng shui were and why the term was replaced.



The term kanyu first appeared in Western Han (202 BC–AD 08) accounts and developed as the generic term for geomancy activities no later than the Tang dynasty (618-907).<sup>169</sup> The broad concept of kanyu became representative of all relevant geomancy activities during the process of the term being widely recognised. Feng shui appeared in the *Book of Burial*, written in the Jin dynasty (265-420), but was less used until the mid-Qing dynasty, when kanyu remained the preferred generic term in the state's official history books and announcements, such as the *Complete Library in Four Sections*. The concept of feng shui, 'hide the wind and stop the water flow (thus to preserve the Qi)'<sup>170</sup>, particularly intrigued westerners. Earlier western studies since the sixteenth century had used the term feng shui, though there does not seem to have been any particular reason why they preferred it to kanyu: perhaps the expressions of 'wind, water and Qi' sounded more explicit to outsiders? This preference later encouraged the use of feng shui among Chinese society when it became fashionable to adopt western ideas and practice.

Westerners' involvements and comments on geomancy became more influential, though only among western readers, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Various examples can be found, in which missionaries mention feng shui and express a critical attitude towards it. De Groot, in *The Religious System of China*, defined feng shui art as 'a ridiculous caricature of

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<sup>169</sup> 刘祥光, <宋代风水文化的扩展>, 《台大历史学报》, 45 (2010), 页 1-78 (第 6 页). / Hsiang-Kwang Liu, 'Development of the Culture of Geomancy in Song China', *Historical Inquiry*, 45 (2010), 1-78 (p. 6).

<sup>170</sup> 郭璞, 葬经, 东晋. / Pu Guo, the *Book of Burial* (276-324).

science’, a ‘farrago of absurdities’, and ‘a quasi-scientific system’.<sup>171</sup> The subject was likely to impress the missionaries on first encounter as a ‘baffling and silly mishmash of things better sorted out as physical science, religion, etc’.<sup>172</sup> The observations and comments of the missionaries failed in challenging the regard for kanyu (what they were calling Feng-shui) among Chinese society, as the feudal government and local ideology still retained strong control over its people, and the legitimacy and efficiency of kanyu was accepted by the majority.

## **From Every Day to Superstitious: the Re-interpretation of Feng shui in China in the Republican Period (1912-1949)**

The founding of the new republican government in 1912 officially marked the end of the making of royal burials and palaces, and the end of kanyu practice on a large scale. Constant civil wars greatly decreased the possibility of kanyu evidence being preserved in other parts of society, so there is very little physical evidence from this time period. It is highly likely that kanyu remained widely practised, though, evidenced by active social discussions and its rapid involvement in corresponding to the new government’s suppression. Kanyu coped with these

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<sup>171</sup> J.J.M de Groot, *The Religious System of China: Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith*, 6 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1892-1910), III (1982).

<sup>172</sup> Andrew L. March, ‘An Appreciation of Chinese Geomancy’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 27 (1968), 253-267 (p. 253).

challenges and survived.<sup>173</sup> The discussion which follows centres on the response of kanyu culture to modernisation.

Kanyu in the republican period was developed to be more closely related to the public rather than to the gentries.<sup>174</sup> In the past, kanyu knowledge had tended to be kept secret to ensure the authority of its practitioners. It was also considered relevant to social beliefs, ritual and hierarchy of everyday life. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the new government raised determination to modernise the society, and kanyu became one of the obstacles to be destroyed. So kanyu practitioners felt the urge to obtain a stronger social connection with others. Their objective was to explain and extend the knowledge to the public, so as to be supported by their understanding and sympathy.

Doubts about kanyu during the period were triggered by various reasons, the most fundamental of which was the conflict between western and Chinese ideologies. Contemporary China, which had just succeeded in overthrowing imperial rule, felt the urge to learn from the west, and traditionalism was considered the greatest obstacle to achieving this goal. The enthusiasm for learning from the west greatly encouraged the wish of Chinese people to save their country

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<sup>173</sup> 方兴, 《清代堪舆与社会认同》(未发表博士论文, 中国人民大学, 2011), p. 197. / Xing Fang, 'Geomancy and Social Identity in Qing Dynasty' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Renmin University of China, 2011), p. 197.

<sup>174</sup> 何伟, <近代江南堪舆书市场研究>, 《图书馆理论与实践》, 9 (2015), 页 90-95. / Wei He, 'The Study of Geomancy Publishing Market in Modern Jiangnan', *Library Theory and Practice*, 9 (2015), pp. 90-95.

by pursuing advanced ideology, but also resulted in the rapid decline of traditional culture, which was considered corrupt and outdated.

Like much of the intellectual history of the Republican period, social movements during this time period centred on the conflicting views within China of how it should respond to foreign pressures. Educated Chinese people started to question tradition aggressively, through the New Culture Movement (mid 1910 - mid 1920) and there was social discussion of ‘Wholesale westernization’ and ‘Wholehearted modernization’<sup>175</sup> between the 1920’s to the 1930’s. Wholesale westernization suggested that western culture should be absorbed by all means, while Wholehearted modernization was a more cautious concept developed later, by Hu, in 1935, which attempted to retain a similar basic concept but avoid conflict on the wording. The majority of republican scholars agreed on the pursuit of modernity. These social members, who had great influences in the establishing of modern knowledge system, guaranteed an association between kanyu and what they considered as rotten tradition.

A quotation from the article, *A Letter to Youth* (敬告青年) by Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) in the first issue of *La Jeunesse* (or *New Youth*, 新青年), described the perception of feng shui among

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<sup>175</sup> Shi Hu, ‘The Cultural Conflict in China’, in *The China Cristian Yearbook* (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1930).

the cultural elite during the period of the New Culture Movement. *A Letter to Youth* contained six solutions in response to the social issues of Chinese society:

‘When scholars were not educated by science, they believed in yin-yang and feng shui, ridiculously hoping that it would benefit them by manipulating Qi and burial, but not science and democracy...So you youth of China, if one wants to save the country, be independent but not enslaved; be progressive but not conservative; be in the forefront but not lagging behind; be internationalist but not isolationist; be practical but not rhetorical; be scientific but not superstitious.’<sup>176</sup>

Abandoning the belief in feng shui was, said Chen, basic decency for a modern scholar. This was a powerful statement separating feng shui from elite culture.

Among the six suggestions proposed by Chen, the last had a direct influence on the perception of kanyu, which he referred to as feng shui, which soon became the common term. The magazine was of importance, particularly among educated young people, and its influence has lasted among later generations; it may have had an impact on the later strengthening of the determination to destroy tradition. Chinese perception of feng shui, particularly among the younger generations, can be divided into two periods, marked by the establishment of the

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<sup>176</sup> 陈独秀, <敬告青年>, 《青年杂志》, 1 (1915). / Duxiu Chen, ‘Warning the Youth’, *La Jeunesse (New Youth)*, 1 (1915).

movement. One being the historical concept of kanyu, another one being feng shui, an amended and modernised negative perception. Although feng shui became the term picked up by these movements and sometimes the state, kanyu remained widely used especially among the practitioners. It remained uncertain that if the usage of feng shui as a generic term in these movements was an action to respond earlier western studies, which applied Feng-shui while describing the subject. But the overall usage of the term feng shui became more frequent since the movements as will be elaborated in the following discussion. For the convenience of writing, below discussion will use feng shui onwards to correspond to the changing social perception as well as the state's usage.

### **The Relationship of Feng shui to ‘Superstition’**

Although physical cases from the Republican period were rare because of the government's determination to reject superstition and because of the turbulent social environment, other evidences were preserved in written accounts. What impact did the national suppressions have on feng shui? What can be confirmed so far is that various social movements like the New Cultural Movement succeeded in associating the subject with ‘superstition’ among certain groups, including the educated young generation. A negative association of feng shui was raised – which prompted the practitioners to start their resistance, represented by the raising of the ‘scientific approaches’ of understanding feng shui.

The earliest modern definition of feng shui was made by the first edition of *Cihai*, (辞海), the comprehensive dictionary published in 1936. It says feng shui is ‘a superstition in old

China'.<sup>177</sup> This definition has held sway since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. For instance, the 1991 version of *CiHai* still describes feng shui as 'a superstition in ancient China, according to which the surrounding situation of residences and graves can decide the fortune of the residents and the offspring of the dead'.<sup>178</sup> Comparing these definitions, it can be seen that the relationship between 'feng shui' and 'superstition' continues to be emphasised. It is necessary to explore how the concept of 'superstition' and its relevance to Feng shui evolved.

What is superstition? According to the *Xinhua Cidian* (新华辞典), the word contains two meanings: belief in folk gods, sprites and ghosts; and the blind belief in any religion and cult.<sup>179</sup> Both meanings seem to lead to the criticism of enthusiasm for 'non-orthodox' beliefs and rituals. Historically, the Chinese word for superstition, 'mixin', (迷信) stood for 'deep belief in (non-orthodox) religions', was originally used to refer to simply an action or attitude in its very few applications.<sup>180</sup> For instance, a Tang dynasty tomb epitaph described the tomb owner as someone who was 'mixin' in Buddhism. This word was not commonly used in traditional Chinese. In the twentieth century, 'mixin' was gradually adopted to criticise

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<sup>177</sup> 舒新城,《辞海》(南京:中华书局,1936),p1332. / Xincheng Shu, *Cihai*, (Nanjing: Zhonghua Book Company,1936), p.1332.

<sup>178</sup> 《辞海》,1991,页765. / *Cihai*, 1991, p765.

<sup>179</sup> 中国社会科学院语言研究所,《新华字典》(北京:商务印书馆,2011),页1817. / The Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Xinhua Dictionary* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2011), p. 1817.

<sup>180</sup> 鈴木貞美,劉建輝編,黃克武著,〈中国近代思想中的“迷信”〉,出自《東アジアにおける知的交流》(日本京都:國際日本文化研究センター,2013),页185-200. / Ko-wu Huang, 'Superstition in Modern Thoughts in China', in *Intellectual Exchange in East Asia* (Kyoto: International Centre for Japanese Culture Research, 2013), pp. 185-200.

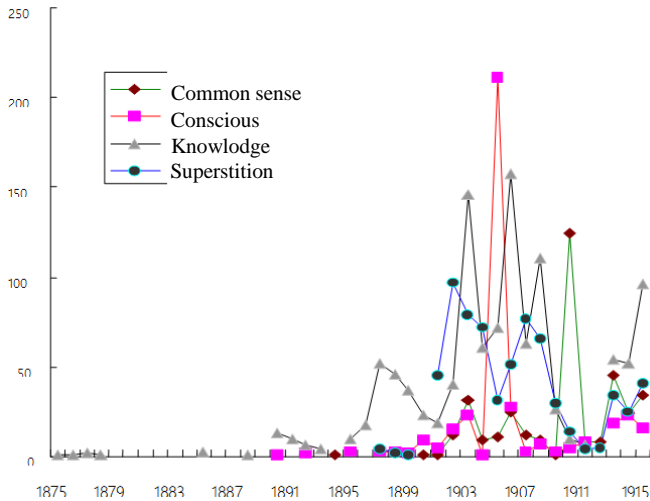
religious activities.<sup>181</sup> The modern use of *mixin* is a reformed concept in response to the social trend of the Republican period, challenging popular beliefs and religions. In 1908, *mixin* was first corresponded with the English word ‘superstition’ in the *Yin Hua Da Ci Dian*, English and Chinese Standard Dictionary, edited by Yan Huiqing. The use of *mixin* was gradually attached to criticism during the frequent comparisons with Western science and civilization, social movements such as the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement (1919) further assured such impressions. In the enthusiasm for pursuing modern science and democracy, *mixin*, or superstition, was considered the negative opposite of ‘science’. Intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu and his peers proposed an anti-*mixin* movement as one of the core topics in their proposed cultural movements. The definition of *mixin* has remained as ‘a blind belief’ since then, and has been used in national campaign slogans, for instance, ‘destroy *mixin*, free minds’ (破除迷信, 解放思想). During this time period the usage of ‘*mixin*’, together with ‘*zhishi*’ (knowledge) and ‘*changshi*’ (common sense), became of common (Figure 45).<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> 沈洁, <“反迷信”话语及其现代起源>, 《史林》, 2 (2006), 页 30-42. / Jie Shen, ‘“Anti-superstition” Discourse and Its Modern Origin’, *Historical Review*, 2 (2006), 30-42.

<sup>182</sup> 金观涛, 刘青峰, <從格物致知到科學、生產力—知識體系和文化關係的思想史研究>, 出自《中央研究院近代史研究所集刊》, 46 (2004), 页 105-157 (第 129 页). / Guantao Jin and Qingfeng Liu, ‘From *Gewu Zhizhi* to *Kexue* and *Shengchanli*: A Study of Knowledge Systems and Cultural Relationships from the Perspective of Intellectual History’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica*, 46 (2004), 105-157 (p. 129).





**Figure 45. Frequency of use of the terms of ‘zhishi’ (knowledge), ‘changshi’ (common sense), and ‘mixin’ (superstition) from 1875-1915 indicates that they were only widely used after the 20<sup>th</sup> century (‘From Gewuzhizhi to Kexue and Shengchanli: A Study of Knowledge Systems and Cultural Relationships from the Perspective of Intellectual History’, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica*, p129.)**

Perceptions of feng shui were greatly affected by these modern social movements: to destroy superstition was considered one of the most significant actions they could take. Feng shui, as a typical ‘superstition’, was widely criticised, particularly by intellectuals. However, social attention of feng shui during the republican period was much noticed as many other social members, particular the feng shui practitioners, conducted responding actions to defend the subject. These actions were an evidence of feng shui culture remained liked by the majority of the society. The most noticeable influence brought by the western ideologies to feng shui practitioners and enthusiast was the attempt of re-interpret the subject by modern approaches. Therefore, it could be suggested that a new method of adapting feng shui was intrigued by aforementioned raised social challenges.

The evolution of feng shui during the republican period centred on its negotiation with the anti-superstition movements. Feng shui culture in the Shanghai and Jiangnan area, the southern of the Yangtze River, was particularly representative (Figure 46). The Jiangnan area has been considered the centre of the feng shui industry because of its flourishing economy and culture. The area is close to Fujian and Jiangxi provinces, considered the two places where feng shui culture developed; and residences in the Jiangnan area were wealthy enough to require feng shui in daily life. The region, the most developed in China throughout most of its history, was where first contact was made with imported Western civilisation. Reactions to the challenges of western ideologies and anti-superstition social movements were first (and mostly) established by Jiangnan feng shui practitioners and scholars. It will be argued below that those who practiced (or learnt) feng shui in the Jiangnan area moved further south, making their influence felt in GuangDong and Hong Kong. During the Cultural Revolution, these practitioners were able to preserve feng shui due to these places' relatively open social environment, particularly in Hong Kong.



**Figure 46. Jiangnan area is an important economic and cultural center in southern China as well as where the attempt of defending feng shui was risen during the Republican period (1925-1948). (Source: drawn by the author.)**

The national anti-superstition movements of the Republican government (1925-1948) started in the late 1920's and lasted for nearly a decade. For instance, the Shanghai government released the *Policy and Methods of Destroy Minxin* (擬具破除迷信辦法) in 1928, and feng shui soon became one of the main targets in these movements.<sup>183</sup> Later, the Republican government announced a national regulation, 'Destroy divining, astrology, witchcraft and Kanyu' in Nanjing<sup>184</sup>. The regulation was one of many ways in which the government took action to destroy feng shui at a national level. It ordered 'Kanyu practitioners, together with those who of divining and astrology' are required to 'quit operating superstitious activities within three months of the announcement'. In these government announcements and many feng shui publications, the subject was considered among astrology.

The earliest attempt to read feng shui scientifically aimed to respond to these national suppressions. In particular, the number of feng shui practitioners in the Jiangnan area was considerable, offering a basis for resistance. The same year that the 'Destroy divining, astrology, witchcraft and Kanyu' direction was published, the Shanghai Institute of Divining and Astrology (上海星相公所) conducted a survey of practitioners in the Shanghai region which acknowledged 'more than twenty-three thousand, four hundred diviners in the Shanghai

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<sup>183</sup> 王成,邵雍, <从申报看上海地方政府反迷信措施>, 出自邵雍主编《近代會黨與民間信仰研究》(台北: 秀威出版, 2011), 页 269. / Cheng Wang and Yong Shao, 'On the Anti-superstition Measures of Shanghai Local Government from Shun Pao', in *A Study of Modern Party and Folk Belief*, ed. by Yong Shao (Taipei: Xiuwei Publishing, 2011), p. 269.

<sup>184</sup> 国民政府内政部, 《废除卜筮星相巫覡堪輿办法》, 1928年10月颁布. / The Ministry of the Interior of the National Government, *The Abolition of the Divination of Stars and Witchcraft and Geomancy approaches*, October 1928.

area...if each family has four people, then the total population which rely on astrology is above eighty-thousand.<sup>185</sup> The result, which might be slightly exaggerated, seems to have been a response to the newly published regulation. Among these twenty-three thousand diviners, feng shui practitioners were believed to be a considerable percentage. These Feng shui practitioners, together with other missionaries and scholars who supported traditional culture, applied scientific approaches to re-interpret Feng shui in order to encourage the preservation of the subject, and there were a few feng shui publications which linked the subject to science. For instance, *New Approaches of Kanyu* discussed feng shui in relation to modern sciences such as geography and physics.<sup>186</sup> Yuan Shushan's (1881-1952) edited work *Divining, Astrology and Other Subjects* attempted to 'explore all divining subjects by scientific approaches', and the chapter on feng shui suggested that the subject shared some methods with geography.<sup>187</sup> Most publications which related science and feng shui were written by practitioners in the Jiangnan region. Yuan Shushan was from Shanghai, Yu Renyu, the author of *New Approaches of Kanyu*, was from Zhejiang, both are important areas in the Jiangnan region. This may reflect cultural exchange between the local area and the west. Content wise, although these works

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<sup>185</sup> 萧湘居士, <星相家大宴新闻界>, 出自《申报》, 第2版, 1928年8月27日。/ Xiang Xiao, 'Astrology and Press', *Shun Pao*, 27 August 1928, section 2.

<sup>186</sup> 俞仁宇, 《地理學新義》(余姚: 文明书局, 1935)。/ Renyu Yu, *New Approaches of Kanyu* (Yuyao: Wenming Bookstore, 1935).

<sup>187</sup> 張觀青, <堪輿之理實與科學相通>, 出自袁樹珊編《述卜筮星相學》(鎮江: 潤德堂木刻板, 1929), 第三卷, 頁19-20。/ Guanqing Zhang, 'The Shared Foundation of Geomancy and Science', in *The Divination of the Stars*, ed. by Shushan Yuan (Zhenjiang: Rundetang Woodcut Block Printing, 1929), III, pp. 19-20.

explained feng shui by scientific approaches, they did not try to prove that feng shui was a science.

The continuing popularity of feng shui in the Jiangnan area during the 1920s to 1940s was also apparent in the notable expansion of its book market. On one hand, the practitioners, whose population may have reached to twenty thousand as previous indicated, were keen in publishing feng shui books as a way to gain social recognition; on the other hand, the need for kanyu books increased rapidly due as feng shui became thought of as an understandable subject. An increase in the influence of feng shui culture was thus enabled.<sup>188</sup> Qian Wenxuan's (1874-1957) catalogue of feng shui books included 160 feng shui books which Qian personally selected and commented on as 'with value'.<sup>189</sup> Although this was Qian's private book collection, the number was rather considerable. The trend was based on the belief that feng shui could be summarised and explained to the public by using modern methods, so these books did not have to be professional or be exclusively for practitioners; instead they could be rather simple for the general public, and in the format of handbooks. For instance, the book page demonstrated by figure 47, published in 1931, summarised mountain forms in relation to burial feng shui comprehensively. Each form was given a name. One can simply relate these instructions to an actual place like using a handbook. In comparison to kanyu drawings of

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<sup>188</sup> 何伟, <近代江南堪輿书市场研究>, 《图书馆理论与实践》, 9 (2015), 页 90-95. / Wei He, 'The Study of Geomancy Publishing Market in Modern Jiangnan', *Library Theory and Practice*, 9 (2015), pp. 90-95.

<sup>189</sup> 錢文選, 《錢氏所藏堪輿書提要》(北京:中华书局, 1942). / Wenxuan Qian, *Qian's Collection of Books in Geomancy* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1942).

earlier time which demonstrated ideal burial sites in reference to the families' achievements, this clearly reflects the contemporary trend to make feng shui books more 'functional'.

Another method of the Republican era in defence of feng shui was to formalise and extend feng shui training. Spreading feng shui knowledge by launching legitimate schools shows that there was the possibility of further promoting the association between feng shui and general public. The first modern feng shui training school was established in 1922 in Shanghai, the Sanyuan Thaumaturgy Study Association (三元奇术研究社, 1922-c.1947). In its published advertising, Tan Yangwu (1890-?), the founder of the association, said that the course 'teaches in an efficient method which overall lasts for half year, tuition fee two yuan per month.' That year, the average monthly income of a Shanghai citizen was thirty yuan,<sup>190</sup> which suggests that the tuition fee was affordable for many. An advertisement of the Sanyuan Thaumaturgy Study Association in *Shen Bao*, daily newspaper in Shanghai, 1928 provided evidence for this matter. The advertisement was simply entitled 'feng shui', and its content described the course length and tuition fee of two yuan per month (Figure 48). *Shen Bao*, published between 1872 to 1949, was one of the most influential contemporary newspapers in Shanghai and Jiangnan region.<sup>191</sup> These evidences suggest that feng shui culture introduced notable changes by encouraging the

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<sup>190</sup> 何伟, <近代江南堪舆书市场研究>, 《图书馆理论与实践》, 9 (2015), 页 90-95. / Wei He, 'The Study of Geomancy Publishing Market in Modern Jiangnan', *Library Theory and Practice*, 9 (2015), 90-95.

<sup>191</sup> 牛道慧, <二十世纪二十年代上海报纸广告之研究-以 1921 年申报广告为对象的探讨>, 《龙华科技大学学报》, 29 (2010), 页 137-165 (第 138 页). / Tao-Hu Niu, 'Research of Newspaper Advertisement in Shanghai during 20S of 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Investigation Taking 1921 San-Po Advertisement as the Target', *Journal of Lunghwa University of Science and Technology*, 29 (2010), 137-165 (p. 138).

extension of its training. The contents of feng shui were carefully structured into a framework which might be more suitable for group teaching. The purpose of conducting feng shui and feng shui education became more clearly profit-driven, and its spread was encouraged, where the old approach in imperial China had been that it should be carefully controlled by the state. These made feng shui knowledge less mysterious for the general public, and significantly increased the number of participants in feng shui activities. New practitioners were trained by schools like the Sanyuan Thaumaturgy Study Association and were of particular importance to the later preservation of feng shui culture during the early communist era.

But this does not mean that the Republican government did not attempt to suppress feng shui but only proved that such attempt was not effectively executed in the southern China where feng shui was supported by solid social foundation. For instance, an illustration which was published in one of the most influential contemporary newspapers in Beijing reflected the attitude toward divining subjects held by the Republican government (Figure 49), which described astrology a ‘stubborn superstition which was nothing but a scam. Anyone with a scientific mind would not allow the existence of diviners.’<sup>192</sup> In contrast was contemporary feng shui practitioners in south establishing a union of divining subjects to resist the

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<sup>192</sup> Xiu Tang, ‘Destroy Astrology’, *Pictured Weekly, Jing Bao*, 23 (1928), p. 2.

suppression.<sup>193</sup> The union of divining subjects, including divining, astrology, and geomancy, was launched in Chengdu in 1929, approved and announced by the government.

The social movements within the cultural elite which aimed at destroying traditionalism did not accomplish their purpose completely, and feng shui still maintained a solid social foundation. The Republican period only lasted for thirty-seven years in all, of which a great deal was constant war. So although there were criticisms of the subject, feng shui culture was not greatly challenged. On the contrary, new possibilities of further extending the subject were to be found among certain groups. A more effective suppression of feng shui was accomplished by the restrictive policies of the People's Republic of China during 1960's to 70's. All abovementioned methods and trends of either modernise or formalise feng shui, although might have specific time and regional background, provided references to today's feng shui culture which will be further analysed in chapter 5 and 6.

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<sup>193</sup> <批星相卜筮代表王桂森等為設立星相卜筮術學研究會協懇准予立案一案文>, 出自《成都市市政公報》, 第三期, 1929年, 頁150-152. / 'Response to the Application of Establishing Divination and Witchcraft Study Association Represented by Guisen Wang and Others', *Chengdu Municipal Publications*, 1929, pp. 150-152.



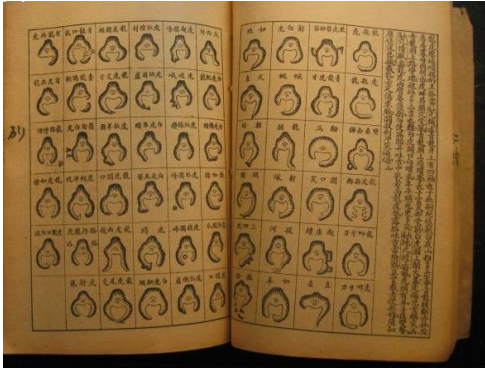


Figure 47. A republican feng shui book (1926) summarised and named various mountain forms in relation to burial feng shui, giving convenience to the practitioners and other users. (Source: Suzhou library, photographed by author, 2015.)



Figure 48. An advertisement on Shen Bao in 1928 introduced the length and fee required for an accredited feng shui course was listed among medicine advertisements. (Source: Shen Bao/申報, issue 12, 1928, p. 12.

Online database of Shen Bao, <<http://shenbao.dachengdata.com/tuijian/showTuijianList.action>>, [accessed on 01 September 2016].)

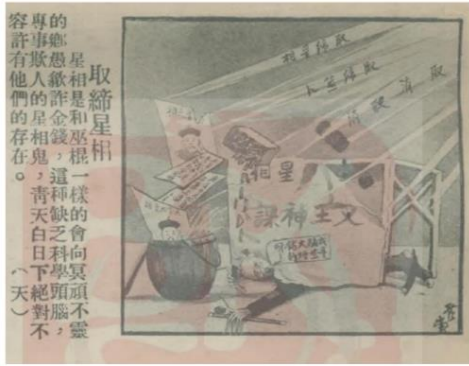


Figure 49. An illustration of ‘destroy astrology’ (1928) published on Pictured Jing Bao indicated Republican government’s determination to suppress feng shui. (Source: Pictured Jing Bao/图画京报, issue 23, 1928, p. 2.)

## To Destroy the Old: National Policy on Feng shui in the Early People’s Republic of China (1949-1978)

This section moves forward to the early period of the People’s Republic of China, when the connection between feng shui and superstition was further confirmed and eventually resulted in its national suppression. The movement to destroy traditional culture became aggressive during 1960’s-70’s in the People’s Republic of China, for example in the campaign of ‘Destroy the Four Olds’ of the Cultural Revolution. The Four Olds (四旧) had clear definitions, which included the Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. By identifying these four olds, the communist government was determined to destroy them by all means. In Jun 1996, Chen Boda first brought up the term in his editorial on the *People's Daily*. Chen suggested that these four olds should be sweep away, as they have done nothing but poisoned the Chinses society and its people. A dangerous result brought by Chen’s definition was that it in fact the traditionism was associated with was Chen referred as ‘monsters and demons’ is a broad sense,

168

as what exactly should be considered as old customs, cultures, habits, and ideas were never clearly defined.<sup>194</sup> The campaign of Destroy of four olds, accelerated the social tension during the Culture Revolution. Therefore, anything relevant to beliefs was declared among ‘monsters and demons’ and decided illegal, so feng shui was certainly in the category. The movement became the aggressive Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which almost completely destroyed the public use of feng shui. The survival of feng shui during this time period can only be understood through pictures and oral history. In the very few descriptions preserved, it seems that feng shui was secretly preserved in rural areas by those who survived the revolution. For instance, in figure 50, a diviner (middle) was presenting his book which probably contained his divining instructions to his clients. This photo was taken in Guangzhou, the very southern part of China, between the republican era and two years after the foundation of the PRC. He could be an astrologist or a geomancy practitioner, as both professions involved similar action. Divining activities did not seem to suffer from restrictions.

*Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.*

**Figure 50. A diviner and his clients in Meixian (today’s Meixian district in Guangzhou city), Guangdong province interacting openly in early communist period (1946-1951).**

Access to the materials used for feng shui culture remained very limited during the Cultural

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<sup>194</sup> Xing Lu, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 61–62.

Revolution. Although rural residences seem to be the most likely place to gain an understanding, access to these is often limited. Bruun believed that what happened to feng shui and feng shui practitioners was typical for everywhere in China; he was probably right. We know of a feng shui practitioner who was ‘almost beaten to death’ during the Four Olds campaign in 1968 for locating collective graves for students.<sup>195</sup> Although the movements of Cultural Revolution radiated from the cities to the rural areas and was mostly put into effect by students, even the most limited preservation of feng shui in rural was not an easy achievement.

The Cultural Revolution changed feng shui not just by forbidding the practice, but also by destroying traditional culture. This impacted on feng shui in the most fundamental way, as those who developed the philosophy of feng shui and had encouraged its acceptance by the mainstream ideology had not survived. The preservation of feng shui was almost entirely accomplished by its practitioners.

Feng shui books, studies and related activities were banned until the introduction of reform and opening-up policy (改革开放) in December 1978. Regardless of the finishing of activities against traditional practices, feng shui related subjects are yet to be declared legal. Current religion laws and policies grant certain freedoms to the general public, and allow feng shui to

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<sup>195</sup> Ken Ling, *The Revenge of Heaven* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1972), pp. 362-63.

be ‘reasonably applied’ on certain occasions, will be discussed in the following section.

The 1975 Chinese constitution gave a simple indication of the citizen’s religious freedom: ‘citizens have the freedom of believing in a religion, also the freedom of not believing in religions and promoting Atheism.’ This remained unchanged in the 1978 constitution. Religious freedom was almost not allowed in these two versions of constitutions, when Atheism was much more encouraged by the state.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has traced feng shui suppression, near-destruction and its recent revival. It is now understood that feng shui, or kanyu, has experienced different receptions throughout history, being recognised as a part of everyday life in the imperial period; and being criticised as superstitious in the Republican and early People’s Republic period from 1912 to 1978.

This chapter has shown that feng shui experienced suppression by both the Republican and the PRC governments. The resistance of feng shui culture during the Republican period and during the Cultural Revolution were discussed. It was thus argued that Feng shui was barely destroyed but survived in various ways in response to the changing social policies.

During the republican period, the resistance of practitioners emerged at almost the same time as the state’s suppression. Although there is little physical evidence, testimony suggests that feng shui remained part of daily practice, guaranteeing feng shui a considerable social

foundation. Its methods of adapting to challenges have included attempts to raise scientific approaches and the extension education. Attempts to re-interpret feng shui by scientific approaches were the direct consequence of various anti-traditionalism social movements and were first encouraged by practitioners and scholars to resist the challenges of western ideologies during the Republican period, but circumstances limited the effectiveness of the government's action. What became evident was that scientific attempts during the republican period was a proposed method of explaining feng shui to the public as well as to the state. But it was not an attempt to re-interpret the subject.

The state's attempt to suppress feng shui was only effective in the early stage of the People's Republic of China, when aggressive methods of forbidding old traditions were enacted. The actions of the PRC government eventually caused the break down of feng shui, both as theory and in practice, requiring re-invention later, particularly in the urban environment. The movement, which lasted for ten years, was not simply an attempt to suppress traditional culture. It was conducted in an aggressive manner, possible as the united nation and greater government power allowed national policies to be executed thoroughly. Was feng shui forgotten? If not, what provided feng shui with the possibility of preservation? Oral histories will provide evidence in the next chapter.

The southern part of China seems to have been less aggressive in the destruction of feng shui related subjects, resulting Guangdong and Hong Kong the main areas of preserving feng shui culture. Without the interruption of the Cultural Revolution, feng shui culture in the Hong Kong and Tai Wan areas would have been more closely associated with astrology, though feng

shui in mainland China, particularly in architectural study in the 1980's clearly separated itself from divining subjects.

Since the republican period feng shui was being considered a superstition, a folk practice. Feng shui became a subject driven only by preserved practices. Yet were those practices which were led by former gentry culture necessary a better understanding of feng shui than the 'folk' practitioners? Following chapters will aim to argue the question.

# **Chapter 5. Current Feng shui Practices in**

## **China**

### **Introduction**

What is current feng shui like? Who are the participants of feng shui activities? To explore these two questions, this chapter discusses the practice of feng shui in the current Chinese context. The practice of feng shui has been a notable social phenomenon since the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978. Although the subject has drawn great attention which allows the publication of studies, reports as well as social debates, little of its practice or of the social groups involved has been explored, regardless of the fact that these now have an important social impact. In corresponding to the gap, this chapter presents the perspectives of those who are currently involved in feng shui practices.

The chapter aims to explore the relationship between feng shui practice, both rural and urban, and outdoor place making activities such as burial and house making. The chapter starts with an exploration of feng shui practitioners' backgrounds and their ideas of their own objectives. Five feng shui practitioners, both rural and urban, and their works will be analysed by semi-structured interviews and observations. As a result the 'traditional' and 'modern' contexts of feng shui will be demonstrated. In this chapter concepts of rural and urban contexts are distinguished as different interpretations and practices of feng shui were observed. Even



though, this division only serves the purpose of providing an easier understanding in this study. The practices and perceptions of four practitioners in urban and rural areas discussed below, occasionally overlap, and this trend seems to be rising.

The discussion which follows highlights the actual practice of feng shui, with less attention paid to its theoretical framework. It does not mean that current feng shui does not have a theory following the assault on it by the PRC and especially the Cultural Revolution; on the contrary, this chapter argues that feng shui remains an evolving subject and that its philosophy is reflected in its changing practices, preserving by its practitioners. The relationship between these four feng shui practitioners and their place making activities will be examined. This will make a particular concern on how their interpretations preserve and develop the subject. The way in which feng shui is perceived by local residents will also be reflected.

## **Feng shui Xiansheng and Feng shui Dashi: a Background**

Chinese feng shui practitioners are referred in different ways depending on the context. This terminology is evidence that rural feng shui is perceived in a relatively ‘old’ way while urban feng shui is rather ‘new’. Feng shui xiansheng (风水先生) and feng shui dashi (风水大师) are the two common terms applied in current Chinese contexts. The term feng shui xiansheng occurred most frequently during fieldwork conducted in rural areas, while the term feng shui dashi was more often used in urban environments. ‘Xiansheng’ has been a common term to show respect to people who possess certain expertise, for instance, jiao shu xiansheng (教书先生), the teaching master; Zhang fang xiansheng (账房先生), the accounting master, and feng

shui xiansheng, the feng shui master. By contrast, ‘Dashi’, grand master, seems to be a more modern term found mostly in urban fieldwork. Although feng shui practice has overall revived since the late 1980s following the Reform and Opening-up policies, differences could be identified between traditional feng shui xiansheng and feng shui dashi. The concepts of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ are distinguished by this study by considering the ways these practitioners gain their professional knowledge. Because of the gap created by the Cultural Revolution, the heritage and origins of current feng shui practitioners vary considerably. The rural feng shui xiansheng commonly obtain their knowledge from family heritage and mainly work in villages and suburbs; the urban feng shui masters are trained through apprenticeships and feng shui training courses. Their market lies in the cities. Traditional (rural) feng shui xiansheng have revived feng shui knowledge in their practices, preserving and passing the subject secretly during suppression. The majority of (urban) feng shui dashi have, by contrast, emerged in response to the increasing market demand and social need. This is not an absolute rule, but a general observation based on the training methods and working emphasis of the two kinds of the practitioners. There are also, as observed, quite some practitioners in between. They tend to be trained through apprenticeship and work in urban environment. In most cases they seem to prefer to be defined as traditional practitioners.

## **Traditional Feng shui Practitioners and His Works**

This section describes traditional feng shui practices performed by feng shui xiansheng in rural Zhejiang province. The relatively ‘traditional’ context, with some reverence for historical feng shui culture should be noted.

The activity of conducting feng shui is referred 'kan feng shui' (看风水) in Chinese literal language. Kan, literally means see. Therefore, the term can be considered the developed version of Xiang. Tao Zhencheng, currently aged thirty-nine, is the only feng shui xiansheng in Tao village (陶村, Taocun) which is located in the rural area around Wuyi, a city in southern Zhejiang province (Figure 51). In the 2015 China Religion Survey, it was indicated that 'popular beliefs obtain great influence in Zhejiang. Both its impacted region and numbers of worship places exceed the five main religions.'<sup>196</sup> This suggested that it is highly likely that feng shui remains active in the area.

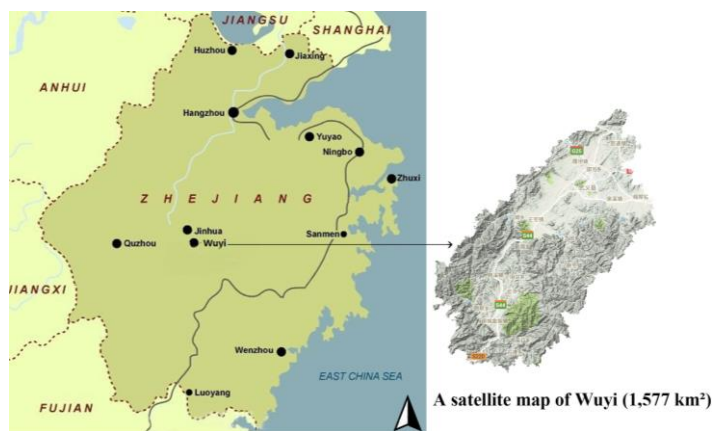
Tao Zhencheng has a good reputation in Wuyi and surrounding villages. His family has been practicing feng shui in the area for at least five generations. Tao was trained by his father Tao Laosan (which literally means the third son of Tao) since 1985 when he was eight years old. Of three siblings, Tao Zhencheng was the only one who took on his father's career. For him, the only way to pass his knowledge remains the same as for his elders, by taking his child as his apprentice.

Tao's role in the village is that of a craftsman (手艺人), someone who performs a specific skill. Although his work occasionally covers other divining matters such as naming and telling the

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<sup>196</sup> 陈进国, 林敏霞, <如何走向“善治”：浙江省民间信仰“社会治理”转型的反思>, 出自 邱永辉编 《中国宗教报告-宗教蓝皮书 2015》(北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2016) <<http://www.rujiagz.com/article/id/9953/>> [2017年9月19日]. / Jinguo Chen and Minxia Lin, 'How to Go to "Good Government": Reflection on the Transformation of Folk Belief on "Social Governance" in Zhejiang Province', in *Chinese Religious Report – Religious Blue Book 2015*, ed. by Yonghui Qiu (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2016) <<http://www.rujiagz.com/article/id/9953/>> [accessed on 19 September 2017].

future when required, ‘kan feng shui’ is Tao Zhencheng’s main job. Kan feng shui includes two elements: kan yangzhai (看阳宅), carrying out feng shui for the house of Yang, that is the house of the living; and kan yinzhai (看阴宅), carrying out feng shui for the house of Yin, that is, the house of the deceased, or the tombs. The description ‘kan feng shui’ acknowledges its close association with the historic term ‘xiang di’.



**Figure 51. Wuyi is a mountainous city which locates in the middle Zhejiang Province, approximately 205km to the provincial capital Hangzhou. (Source: Created by the author.)**

Tao is usually only reachable by client recommendation. As mysterious as this sounds, he is in fact known to many local residences, particularly in the nearby villages. These clients either recommend Tao to each other, their families and neighbours, or they used to be clients of his father’s. Tao’s business is not restricted to the rural areas, and for many years he and his father have been invited to cities for consultations. In 2005 and 2007 respectively Tao produced business cards, noting ‘Tao Zhencheng, feng shui xiansheng, (whose) family have practiced feng shui for generations.’ This exposure reveals that by that stage feng shui had become more

accepted, regardless of it not being officially permitted. How they became known to clients in cities is not known to the author, but it is most likely that they were referred by others, like their other clients. In respect of the frequency of their visits to cities, Tao's neighbours said that 'they are often picked up by private cars from cities.' They added that 'it is not surprising, we all trust them. They know how to do true feng shui and they have been doing it for so long.'<sup>197</sup> He is widely known and has the reputation of being 'trustworthy', but Tao is the only remaining feng shui xiansheng in his village and its area. He says that years ago he was acquainted with another feng shui xiansheng Yang Chengkang, who based in the nearby Wangzhai village in Wuyi. But Yang had given up the practice of feng shui and moved to the nearby city with his children, leaving Tao the only practitioner. Tao's brothers are farmers and have no intention of participating in feng shui.

Tao first became involved in feng shui activities as his father's apprentice, mostly observing his father's work and carrying his compass, but he had not been allowed to operate it himself. When he was fifteen, he was allowed to assist his father in the reading of the compass, but he did not begin carrying out feng shui independently until three years later. Tao told the story of how he became recognised as an independent practitioner: 'At first the villagers did not want to hire me, they always went to my father. Then I solved a man's difficulties by re-arranging his parents' tomb. The man had a big firm but suddenly suffered divorce and great failure in business in three years after his parents died. He realised there was something wrong with his

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<sup>197</sup> Recorded in an informal interview with local residents in Taocun, 27 August 2016.

parents' tombs so he hired many feng shui xiansheng to figure out the problem, but did not find a solution. Eventually he came and found my father, but he was away. So I took the job and I discovered that his parents' tomb was orientated to the wrong direction as it did not match their date of birth. I re-buried them, and the man's life became tremendously better in a short time: he remarried and opened four new businesses. After this people started to trust me and my father was able to retire. That was when I was twenty-two.' This dramatic success allowed Tao started building his reputation. Tao did not reveal a specific figure for his regular income, but he confirmed that it is 'better than average', which according to the newly published survey, was 22,866 Chinese yuan (CNY) a year in 2016 (approximately 2540 pound sterling).<sup>198</sup>

The author was allowed to visit Tao at his home in the Tao village. The front wall of Tao Zhencheng's living room was, as Tao said, 'what a traditional feng shui xiansheng should honour'. In Figure 52, the golden characters on the front wall were Tao's family 'tang hao' (堂号), a particular title which passes through the family for several generations. For a feng shui xiansheng, 'tang hao' is much valued as an expression of identity. The symbol in the middle of the wall stands for prosperity, richness, luck and longevity. Tao then produced his feng shui book from a cloth pack, which also contained his compass. He made sure the pack was always with him when he was out on site. From the book, Tao showed the instructions for choosing a date and predicting future fortune. The book had been published in the fifth year of Emperor

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<sup>198</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, *National Income Survey*, 11 February 2017 <[http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-02/11/content\\_5167301.htm#1](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-02/11/content_5167301.htm#1)> [accessed on 30 September 2017].

Guangxu, 1879 in the late Qing dynasty, and had passed down through Tao's family, whose name was written on its cover. His writing demonstrated his high-level of literacy, which was, and remains a fundamental requirement for a feng shui practitioner (Figure 53).



**Figure 52.** The writings on the front wall of Tao's living room indicate Tao's family 'tang hao', a special title that was past among the household for generations and proves his heritage as a feng shui practitioner. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)



**Figure 53.** Tao's feng shui book *Bai Nian Jing* was passed down from his family, whose high literacy was demonstrated by the handwriting on the book's front page. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)

## **Kan Yangzhai: House Design and Neighbourhood Planning**

Tao's work is divided into kan yangzhai and kan yinzhai, house and tomb geomancy. This section deals with his work on kan yangzhai, house geomancy. Traditional Chinese divining theory considers every sixty years a complete cycle of time, namely, a 'Jiazi' (甲子). As a Jiazi passes, one's luck changes completely. A Jiazi is divided into three equal 'yuan' (元), each of which lasts for twenty years. Feng shui follows this pattern and suggests that adjustments to a house plan should be made in every yuan so that the householder can retain the best of luck. This idea of changing luck also greatly encourages the popularity of feng shui.

When carrying out feng shui Tao explained that 'when a house is being constructed, the first action is sacred. We have to make sure that no god is offended when the soil is being dug. The construction date is important, you can tell whether it is a good date or not by referencing the book of dates.' 'The orientation of the gate is the most important thing to do in a house, and then it comes to the orientation of the hearth.' 'Far in front of your house it is best for there to be a small mountain because it stands for richness.' His descriptions gave justifying explanations of his work: instead of producing new buildings and landscapes, surely less affordable, he always aims to choose an ideal location for a house as well as arranging its plan by observing the surrounding environment, including the neighbours' houses.

On another day, Tao Zhencheng was invited to consult on the reconstruction of the house of one of the villagers, Jin Chengyi, in Daxikou village, Zhejiang province, and the author was allowed to observe. The distance from Tao village, Tao's base was approximately 30



kilometres. It is usual for Tao to either drive his own vehicle or take a short-distance coach to the site in the Wuyi area. The studied area has approximately 800 residents, filled with local residents' old houses (or as recognised as 'family houses' by the residents). Few hundred metres away there lies another habitat center which accommodates around 1,500 residents. This new area was developed by the local government in 2011.

Warmly welcomed by the villagers, Tao was offered fine wine and cigarettes. Jin's old house had been torn down a year earlier. He described his life in the past few years as 'not too bad but not well either': He has two daughters but no son, which he considered not perfect; his older daughter just got married, and it is now one of his greatest wishes to grant his daughter a son by planning the new house correctly. Jin Chengyi explained his intention to rebuilding the house: 'The first few decades living in my old house my luck was good, but in recent years it turned down. I think it was because decades have passed, and my luck has changed now. It is necessary to build a new house which suits my new luck.'



**Figure 54. Tao travels from Tao village to Daxikou village driving his electric tricycle, a common transport among local rural residents. (Source: photographed by author, 2016.)**

On arrival at the site, it was seen that half of Jin Chengyi's previous house had been demolished while the other half remained. The original house plan, now an empty area, locates at the west of this community which consisted of nine households. Jin now planned to make full use of the site and build a new house on the site. Figure 55 and 56 demonstrate the relationship between Jin's site and his neighbours' houses. Jin asked all his neighbours, six households in total, to be present when Tao Zhencheng came to consult on the new house plan. One of Jin's neighbours, the Yang family, complained to Tao about Jin's new house plan as their gate would be pointed to directly by the southeast corner of Jin's house, which would result in harmful feng shui for them. Five generations of the Yang family live together in the house. The house was designed by Tao's father, Tao Laosan, thirteen years ago. Tao was asked to solve this confliction while he designing Jin's new house. He had to work carefully in this case, otherwise his actions might considered disrespectful to his father's work.

First, Tao put a ritual ruler at the southeast corner of the proposed house, observed its reading, recorded it, and explained it to the neighbours (Figure 57). He then used his feng shui ruler, which was used to measure houses and site, to determin a new spot. The length of Tao's feng shui ruler was 0.32 m. From the initial proposed corner, he put the ruler down on the ground for 8 times and found the new spot at the 8<sup>th</sup> time. Then he put the ritual ruler on this spot which was 2.4 metres behind the previous one, again observed the reading and recorded. Tao then operated his compass on each potential house corner. His readings confirmed that the previous plan he had proposed was to only Jin's benefit but harmful to the Yang family. Hence, he decided to move Jin's house back 2.4 metres so that the house corner no longer points directly to the Yang's gate. This was agreed by both Jin and Yang's family (Figure 58). The

Yang family were not the only neighbours involved in Jin's feng shui event. Jin Chengyi's other neighbour Jin Zan, also close to him, had to adjust his chimney, as otherwise it would be pointing directly to Jin's new house. According to Tao's instruction, this would bring great harm to the householder. The neighbour dealt with this requirement immediately (Figure 59).

Tao later also investigated an alternative site for Jin's house which had been recommended by Jin's neighbours as they were still not entirely happy with the newly proposed house plan. Tao did not operate his compass but observed the surroundings. He said that the site has good feng shui as the mountain view behind the site was beautiful, but that the site could not attract as much luck as the previous site as it was away from the centre of habitation. During the event it seemed that many of the villagers knew Tao, as he had previously guided their own house constructions. Tao knew their names and family backgrounds in detail. One lady approached when Tao was reading his compass, telling the author that Tao helped her family to have two sons. Jin's other neighbour, Feng Jianhua, also came and introduced his house which had been constructed under feng shui instructions from Tao. He said that he 'has been expressing an interest in becoming Tao's apprentice for several years.'<sup>199</sup>

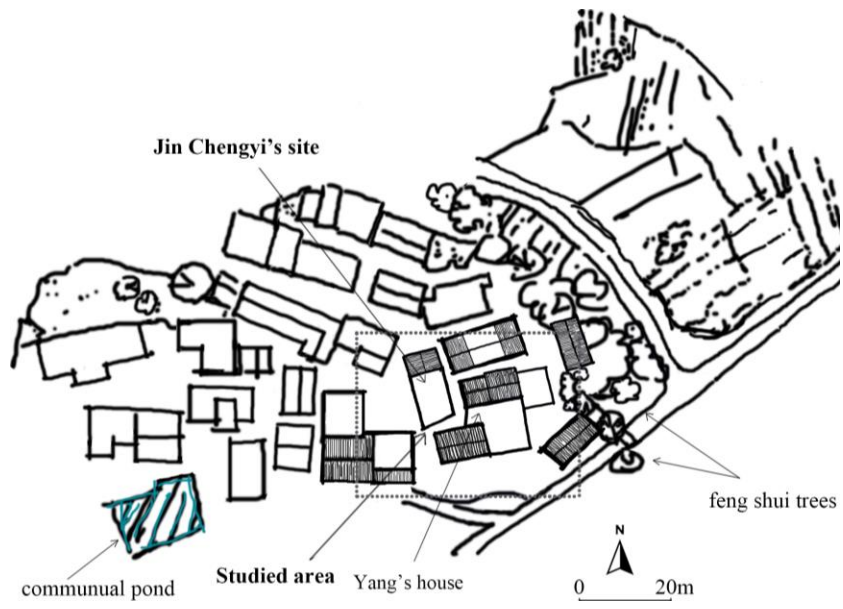
After his on-site activity, Tao consulted on an auspicious date for construction in a 'Huangli' (黄历), a book of date, calculated and hand-written by himself. A Huangli gives a suitable date

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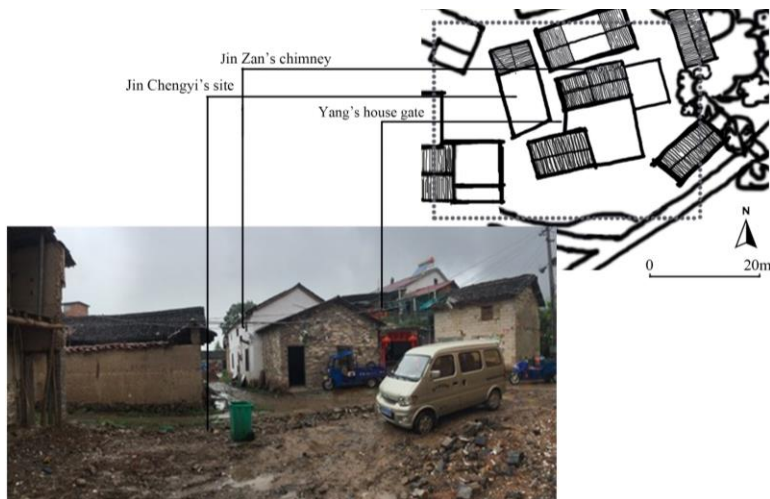
<sup>199</sup> Recorded in on-site information interview on 04 September 2016.

for one's activities. Tao learned the skill of calculating Huangli from his father. When he finishes finding a suitable date on the Huangli, he can conduct the final step of his consultation. Once the date had been confirmed, Tao wrote a 'Qishu' (契书), an official earth contract, on a sheet of red paper (Figure 60). The writing was described as a report to the God of earth, showing who chose the site and when construction will start. This was the final step of Tao's site evaluation. After this, the owner of the house has to perform a ritual on the date selected, and his letter will be burned on site at the time Tao has chosen.

At midday Tao was invited to lunch by Jin's family after finishing the house evaluation. This is a common courtesy in rural areas, to show respect and welcome to a feng shui xiansheng. Tao was paid 300 Yuan (approximately 30 pounds) for the morning's service, approximately half a week's income for a common local resident. Average income in the village ranges from 2000-3500 Yuan per month. Tao does not set up a regular rate for his charges, as he believes that 'payment is completely depending on my client's wish, I'm usually happy with any number. If one can't afford much, then I take less.'



**Figure 55. Jin Chengyi's site in relation to his neighbours Yang and Jin Zan's houses. (Source: created by the author, 2016.)<sup>200</sup>**



**Figure 56. Jin's site was an empty area locates at the west of Yang's house, which's gate was pointed to by the southeast corner of the site. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**

<sup>200</sup> This plan was developed based on author's field work notes and sketches in Daxikou village in September 2016.



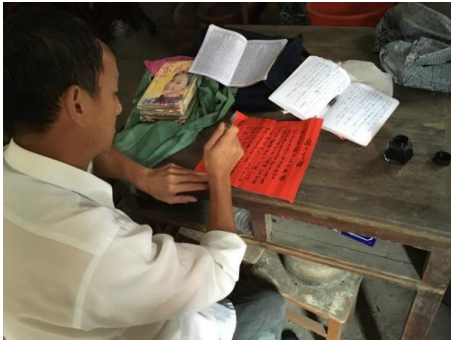
**Figure 57. Tao reading the indication on his ritual ruler when putting in on the southeast corner of Jin's proposed house plan and suggested the design was auspicious for Jin but harmful to Young's family. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**



**Figure 58. Tao's profession as a feng shui practitioner requires him to work as a mediator for local communities by developing negotiations between neighbours. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**



**Figure 59. Jin Chengyi's neighbour adjusting his chimney direction under Tao's instruction to avoid possible harm to Jin's new house. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**



**Figure 60. Tao acted as the agent between the house owner and the God of the Earth while writing a 'Qishu'. (Source: photographed by author, 2016.)**

Another day early in 2016, Tao introduced a house which he helped re-designed in the centre of Wuyi, on a casual visit. A small community here consisted of seven households, surrounded by newly planned streets and buildings (Figure 61). The householder, Hong Fu, had experienced a series of minor health problems in the past year. Hong was in her 80's but remained very healthy until the construction of her neighbour's new house wing. Tao suggested it was because the new building was too tall and too close, bringing aggressive energy to the householder. Tao suggested a shield to cover the yard so that the householder's bedrooms would not be pointing to by the corner of the neighbour's building. Even though this would

take away all the sunlight in the yard, the householder took Tao's suggestions unconditionally. Tao also suggested that the householder should tie a mirror, a ruler and scissors together and hang them on the wall, believing that it would offer protection to the house (Figure 62). The origin of this charm seemed to remain unexplored. One of the few references was contributed by a record of a traditional architectural ritual in the Wuzhou area, a broad regional concept including Wuyi. In the description, the charm will be placed in the middle of a house beam when first attaching it to the house.<sup>201</sup> The purpose of doing so was similar to Tao's. Tao was paid 500 Yuan for his work and was also treated to lunch as a courtesy. The householder, who was re-visited in September 2016, said that she had been very healthy ever since she took Tao's feng shui advice.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> 黄续, 黄斌, 《婺州民居传统营造技艺》(合肥: 安徽科学技术出版社, 2013), 页 291-93. / Xu Huang and Bin Huang, *Traditional Architectural Culture of Wuzhou Dwelling* (Hefei: Anhui Science and Technology Press, 2013), pp. 291-93.

<sup>202</sup> From householder Mrs. Hong's informal interview 19 September 2016.





**Figure 61. Hong Fu's house in relationship to her neighbour's and surrounding buildings. (Source: Created by the author, 2016.)<sup>203</sup>**



**Figure 62. Chang Shou covered her yard as advised by Tao so that her bedrooms can be protected from the aggressive Qi which was brought by the neighbour's building. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**

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<sup>203</sup> This plan was developed based on author's field work notes and sketches in Wuyi in September 2016.

## Tomb Evaluation

A month later, the author was allowed to observe another kind of Tao Zhencheng's work, kan yinzhai (看阴宅), tomb geomancy evaluation. The tomb was in Xitou village, near the city of JinHua. The village is approximately 70 kilometres from the city, right on the very edge of the city's administrative division. Like most Chinese villages today, most of the population of Xitou village are older people, as the young ones have left for work opportunities in the cities. For most of the population in Xitou village, a proper burial is considered of great importance. Not only do they consider that tomb feng shui can provide them with a peaceful afterlife, but it is also believed that their future generations can benefit, so consulting a feng shui master in this process happens regularly.<sup>204</sup>

Whether they are capable of evaluating a tomb properly is considered the most crucial criterion by which to judge a feng shui practitioner, and it is what Tao and his clients believe 'separates good feng shui practitioner from the others', as 'housing feng shui will harm the owners if it is done poorly, but tomb feng shui will also harm future generations and the feng shui master if it is not designed properly'.<sup>205</sup> It is believed that traditional feng shui xiansheng usually possesses more of the necessary skills than modern trained professionals. The belief that inappropriately performed tomb feng shui might harm the feng shui master seems to be widely

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<sup>204</sup> Emily M. Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 187.

<sup>205</sup> Quoted from Tao Zhencheng's interview, 15 September 2016.

recognised, particularly among the practitioners interviewed. The origin of this belief can be traced back to the Tang dynasty, when, in the *DunHuang* manuscripts, it was suggested that ‘if a tomb was orientated inappropriately, the practitioner and his family will be harmed’.<sup>206</sup> So some of the practitioners mentioned below often refuse to carry out such jobs.

The practitioners name the activity of finding an ideal burial spot as Dianxue (点穴, xian: point; xue: spot), ‘point the spot’. It is believed that qi flows within mountain ranges, from high to low; at places where it gathers there appears a ‘Xue’ (穴), the feng shui notion of an ideal site. By constructing a tomb on a ‘Xue’, it is believed that both the tomb owner and his or her descendants can obtain long-lasting prosperity. This theory thus encourages burial in places outside dedicated cemeteries. To find a good ‘Xue’, feng shui practitioners tend to visit various places in the countryside and decide which is most suitable by observing the surrounding environment, reading the compass and calculating the owner’s date of birth. Historically, dianxue was considered the most important part of feng shui. The pursuit of an ideal ‘Xue’ is closely associated with the feng shui evaluation system which emphasised the form, orientation and surrounding environment of a place. Although practitioners who conduct Dianxue are few, it remains highly regarded.

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<sup>206</sup> 《敦煌宅经第一—五六卷》 (618-907). / *DunHuang Zhai Jing*, vol 1156 (618-907).

Dianxue does not seem to be prevented by the current burial laws, which mostly forbid private burial, which was the most fundamental part of Dianxue practice. The 1997 *National Burial Law* declared that ‘no burial activities shall be performed in wild’.<sup>207</sup> These regulations have been in place nationally for decades, so current burial activities in rural areas have been standardized. In cities and most rural areas, public burial systems are strictly carried out. Private burial in the wild still happens occasionally, it is only rarely that burial feng shui can be carried out in the wild as it was in the old days. Although the state’s burial laws and public burial system have limited the possibility of conducting traditional Dianxue, a tomb can still be evaluated by the feng shui system based on its location, orientation, burial time and surrounding views within a burial ground. Being able to choose a good tomb spot among the many others seems to encourage the market by giving an impression of granted good fortune (and likely better than the others) for those who have conducted burial feng shui. So the popularity of feng shui has survived in rural areas. Such activities are conducted more openly in rural areas, for instance, in Xitou village, where a generally positive attitude toward feng shui tomb evaluation activities was observed.

Chen’s family recently lost their oldest member. To assure an ideal ‘new home’ for him,<sup>208</sup> the Chens invited Tao Zhencheng through a neighbour’s recommendation to find a good tomb spot. Although it is a small village, Xitou implements the modern public burial system

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<sup>207</sup> 中华人民共和国民政部, 《殡葬管理条例》, 1997年7月11日。/ Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Funeral Management Regulations*, 11 July 1997.

<sup>208</sup> Transcribed from Chen’s interview at Tao ZhenchengYuan village, conducted in September 2016.

comprehensively, but feng shui is considered necessary in burial, regardless. Tao's second visit to the potential tomb site was observed. The first time, Tao had calculated a preferred orientation by analysing the deceased's date of birth. For this visit, he intended to further decide the location of the tomb and a precise burial time. This would require the reading of the compass on-field and the reading of the surroundings based on Tao's personal perceptions. Tao did not indicate what feng shui theory he was applying, but what he did was built on an honest application of his family knowledge and his own understanding. In the discussion below it will be seen that xing shi, the feng shui theory of reading form (which allows the evaluation of feng shui) has an obvious influence on his work.

The official burial area of Xitou village, constructed and managed by the village government, is at the north-eastern end of the village, west of the Chens' house. The three proposed tomb sites, each of 1.3m x 1.3m, were located in the same row of the public burial ground, orientated to the same direction but facing slightly different views. More than half of the family's members gathered to watch this procedure, as choosing the tomb site was considered important for the whole family. When arriving at the site, Tao first adjusted his position in relation to the compass, the tomb and the hills in front. He then read instructions on his feng shui compass to evaluate the tomb orientation and best burial time by standing in front of the tomb and keeping in the same direction with it. He had to slightly adjust the compass several times to acquire a precise reading (Figure 63). When he finished the compass reading, he confirmed with the family that the proposed burial time, nine days later, was suitable.

Then Tao had to decide exactly which tomb site to choose of the three available. He read the surrounding environment of each site, suggesting that the more layers of mountains there are in front of the tomb, the better feng shui there is. Tao explained to the family that layers of mountains implied strength of qi, this process was reflected in figure 64, which several images were combined together to indicate Tao's position in relation to the mountains and his readings. He chose the tomb which was located closest to the eastern side of the burial ground, as it faced five layers of mountains. Tao and the Chen's family also particularly appreciated the small hill in front of the tomb site and the mountains behind it, as together these hills and mountains formed a shape like a Chinese ingot and were surrounded by a river. Tao suggested this feng shui would bring the family fortune and wealth. The Chen family members were happy with the site. 'When you build your new house, you should carefully choose a good feng shui. Similarly, when we bury our father, we have to make sure he is resting well in his new 'home'. Here we find the view beautiful, our father must have been happy about this', said the eldest son of the Chen family.<sup>209</sup>

In this case, it can be said that Tao has preserved a considerable amount of historical feng shui skill and rules, as his theories can easily be traced to certain historical origins. For instance, his readings of mountain forms reminded us of the pursuit of xing shi. Tao's abilities in reading and understanding forms apparently require many years of training and hard work. In many cases, Tao was able to summarise his own conclusions as well as those suggested by his feng

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<sup>209</sup> Transcribed from Chens' interview at Xitou village, Wuyi, conducted in September 2016.

shui books. When he has completed a case using interpretations not suggested by the book, he writes down the rules in his own handbook, which he keeps for recording purpose.



**Figure 63. Tao reading instructions on his feng shui compass while standing in front of one of the potential tomb site adjusting himself as well as the compass constantly to get a precise result. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**



**Figure 64. Tao explaining the mountain forms in front of the decided tomb site and suggested that by burying the deceased on the site the family will benefit from fortune. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**

Tao's considerable popularity in Wuyi and surrounding areas has provided him with the conditions to move into an urban environment. Tao's nephew is employed by the civil service in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province. He had suggested that Tao should work in the city and expand his business there many times, but Tao did not do so. 'I do occasionally work in the cities, I've consulted for many companies and government officials. But I do not want to open a business there. I do not want to leave my home', said Tao. He is still expecting his son to study his skills, otherwise he will have to burn his books and tools and end the family's business, as his father told him. Tao Zhencheng's father Tao Laosan was once one of several feng shui xiansheng in the Wuyi area; now Tao is the only one who carries on this role in several nearby counties. Tao's only child, born in 2005, wants to pursue higher education in the city and dreams of becoming a permanent city resident, like most of the younger generation in rural areas. Although it might be too early to jump to a conclusion, it is worth bearing in mind that Tao himself started his apprenticeship at a much younger age. Among most feng shui xiansheng, the subject can only be passed within the family. This tradition became the mainstream way of passing feng shui knowledge in no later than the time period between 960-1279 in the Song dynasty.<sup>210</sup> Tao is unlikely to take an apprentice, otherwise he would have taken on Jin's neighbour, the who had been asking for years.

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<sup>210</sup> 刘祥光, <宋代风水文化的扩展>, 《台大历史学报》, 45 (2010), 页 1-78 (第 19 页). / Hsiang-Kwang Liu, 'Development of the Culture of Geomancy in Song China', *Historical Inquiry*, 45 (2010), 1-78 (p. 19).



There are others that associate themselves with traditional feng shui, although their practices are divided from rural environment. Wu Lian, a feng shui practitioner who now works in the city of Hangzhou, had a slightly different profession path to Tao's. Wu was recommended by one of the author's family friends, who had entrusted Wu with selecting their family tomb sites. He was described as 'someone who practices real feng shui' by the author's contact. An interview was proposed in September 2015, several then followed in the following two years.

Owning a consultancy store in Hangzhou, what Wu considers separates him from other 'new' feng shui practitioners was that he was trained by years of apprenticeship rather than being taught at feng shui training classes. His masters had many apprentices, yet in the end only a very few of them managed to become qualified feng shui practitioners. Wu turned out to be one of his master's most outstanding apprentices as he inherited his master's old feng shui books and tools, almost as if he was accredited. On the book's front page, the handwriting says: '(the book) did not come easily'. Wu only presented these books and tools on important occasions. His personal background might also have helped him become more qualified than other practitioners as his great uncle was also a well-known feng shui xiansheng in his region, a small city in northern Henan province. Wu described his great uncle as able to tell one's personality and basic background by simply listening to one's voice. It seems that among feng shui practitioners, a family tradition in feng shui would always indicate talent that could not be gained by other training. His background meant that Wu did not see himself as another modern feng shui master, but a traditional one. He is not a member of any profession network.

Wu first worked in Henan province after he completed his apprenticeship. He moved to the south on the recommendation of some clients, who suggested that ‘the market there is much bigger than the north’. After several years working as a freelance practitioner, Wu was able to open his store in the city of Hangzhou in 2010 and started accepting walk-in cases. In most site evaluation cases, including building and tomb site selection, Wu goes on-field with his compass. He regularly tackles domestic cases by analysis in-store using software. The author was only allowed to observe one of his domestic consultancy cases in store (Figure 65). When consulting the building plan, Wu suggested various solutions to the house’s feng shui flaws. He said that he ‘often prefers to see the ground plan of the building first before goes to the site, so a basic feng shui understanding of the place can be obtained in advance.’<sup>211</sup>

What Wu considers distinguished him from modern feng shui practitioners is beyond his training background. His skills in conducting tomb feng shi is a much more significant proof of his genuine knowledge. Similar to Tao, Wu conducts filed work to choose an ideal site. However, owning cars and a smartphone, Wu’s fieldwork techniques are much different. Under most circumstances, Wu would choose potential sites in advance to his field work by operating Google Earth. This, as Wu suggested, can help him to identify dragon veins from a bigger scope. Wu has a list of potential sites. Upon on a client’s require, Wu would choose a site to visit depends on the client’s requirements: some of the sites he calls ‘small Xue’ (小穴),

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<sup>211</sup> Summarised from Wu’s interview, conducted in September 2014.

which he suggests that will ‘bring wealth and fertility to the families’; some he calls ‘big Xue’ (大穴), which grant a family ‘great benefits’ – especially political power. The big and small here do not refer to the scale of a site, but the quality of feng shui, or the strength of Qi. In figure 66 Wu demonstrated an auspicious burial site on his phone using Google Earth, which was chosen for a powerful local family whose achievements validated his ability to conduct proper feng shui burial. But the author was not allowed to observe the actual tomb making as this is considered the most important operation of the family which affects the family’s future.



**Figure 65. Wu giving feng shui advice to his client’s house plan by operating on his computer, which was installed with various feng shui software that calculates dates and orientation in accordance with Chinese astrology. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**

**Figure 66. Wu used Google Earth to demonstrat an auspicious burial site which was chosen for a powerful local family whose achievements validated his ability to conduct proper feng shui burial. (Source: photographed by the author, 2016.)**

## **Introducing ‘Modern’ Feng shui Dashi**

Traditional feng shui is declining, leaving cities as the centre of contemporary feng shui culture. To elaborate the argument, another kind of feng shui practitioners, those trained by a ‘modern’ system, will be investigated in this section. The practices and perceptions of feng shui in the current Chinese urban environment will be explored again using anthropological methods including observation and semi-structured interviews. Then, questions about its future will be raised. In exploring these feng shui practitioners’ background, training methods and particular methods of interpreting feng shui, we will find contradictions between their work and that of the traditional practitioners. Overall, below case studies echo Bruun’s description of the urban feng shui revival, but the matter will be investigate in detail with cases to support the argument.

Although traditional feng shui xiansheng is much respected by their clients, there are too few of them to meet the market demand, which has increased rapidly in recent decades. Modern feng shui practitioners emerged to fulfill these gaps. In Chinese, they are called feng shui dashi, which means grand master of feng shui. Trained in a modernised feng shui education system, they form the majority of current feng shui practitioners. By identifying their background and their working methods from both social and anthropological perspectives in below discussions, we can reach a further understanding of the feng shui dashi.

Feng shui dashi commonly gain their knowledge from various sources, though feng shui training courses seemed to be the most common. Two training methods were regularly noticed

during fieldwork: apprenticeship to a senior feng shui practitioner, and training courses provided by feng shui institutions, usually lasting between one to several weeks. Apprenticeship always lasts for a considerable period, months or years. Those who are qualified by feng shui training classes seems to be the majority, as this system not only offers an efficient method of becoming professional but also comes with various ‘legitimate’ qualifications. The established chain of formalised training and feng shui practice creates both great profit and a way in which feng shui can be rapidly accepted by the general public. As a result, the number of feng shui practitioners in the urban environment is large, the competition among them is high, and their theories diverse. This has resulted in urban feng shui practice making a direct challenge to current place design and planning, as the practitioners commonly carry out strong actions, importing or adjusting certain features. The case studies which follow will elaborate on this argument.

## **Modern Feng shui Masters and Their Practices**

Liu, a feng shui dashi in his early forties, has been practising for two decades in the city of Jinhua, which has a population of five million and is located in the south of Zhejiang province. The author visited Liu’s home in September 2015 with the help of a local contact, who constantly consults with Liu. Clients’ connections with Liu are usually built by common contacts, most often former clients. Liu’s office is in his own home, located in a quiet community with no signs outside: finding it requires the guidance of someone who knows.

Liu did not say how he became a feng shui master; he simply said that he ‘felt a connection with feng shui since very young and self-trained himself’. Now Liu is a member of the International *I-Ching* study committee, a national organisation of the *Book of Change* group registered in Hong Kong. He has been appointed a senior feng shui planner by the *Chinese I-Ching career management center* and the *Global I-Ching Experts Committee* (Figure 67). Being accepted by these organisations, ‘gives credit to one’s professional abilities’, says Liu.<sup>212</sup>

Liu’s office, also the living room of his house, is designed as a multi-function space. The living room is an area in which various products, including feng shui products, religious symbols, and traditional medicines, are displayed (Figure 68). He conducts his consultancy in his study room. The feng shui products sold by Liu are formed into decorations which suit both indoor and outdoor use and include amulets which can be seen in the illustration (Figure 69-70). These decorations seem to be re-interpretations of feng shui rules rather than in accord with historical use. For instance, a stone fountain was believed to be able to attract fortune and wealth. This must relate to the historic feng shui ideas of water as the container of qi, and of water flow representing wealth. A stone dragon, which Liu suggested was a protector of the house, seemed to relate to the four-god system of dragon, tiger, Firebird and Xuanwu (a sacred animal of Chinese mythology, a combination of a turtle and a snake). These features were expensive: a feng shui dragon sculpture which Liu suggested provides protection for a house and defends against bad luck was priced at 3000 yuan (approximately 300 pound stirlings). A feng shui

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<sup>212</sup> From Liu’s interview, conducted in September 2015, summarised by the author.

fountain that 'brings richness into the house and can be placed in front of one's house, in the garden or in the corridor' was priced 3800 yuan. While the amulets offered various functions, they could be either used indoor or outdoor. Depending on their different functions, amulets were priced from 88 yuan to 500 yuan each. An amulet is a Daoist charm barely used in historic feng shui practice, but Liu suggested that they were a favourite product among his clients. The functions of these amulets were various, but those which prayed for health, safety and success were the most popular. These products were to be applied as attachments to places: putting them in different areas of either a house or a garden would provide symbolic belief meaning. For instance, putting a feng shui fountain by the entrance of a house is believed to be able to attract fortune to the house, while putting up an amulet either inside or outside of a house is believed to be able to fulfill the householder's various wishes depends on the amulet's contents.

Tao Zhencheng's cases suggested that traditional feng shui theory can be practiced almost without amending the rules in southern rural areas, which are mostly mountainous, and where there is enough space. Although urbanism has changed the living environment tremendously, feng shui theory could adapt itself in practices. Traditional feng shui rules suggested the reading of surroundings, mainly mountains, water, trees, and the roads. In today's feng shui practice, these elements have been amended so that the objects are mostly buildings. The process of negotiating with the state has formed feng shui into a framework which carefully applies popular social beliefs into place making activities. So it was observed that traditional feng shui rules are reformed into (or even replaced by) symbolic features, for instances, amulet

and ornament. These symbolic substitutions are a significant response to cultural stress.<sup>213</sup> Religious symbols represented by feng shui decorations are widely applied in urban feng shui practitioners' work in place making activities, and during the process of applying those the practitioners are changing the perception of a place by applying popular beliefs, rather than creating a physical place.

Regardless of the fact that Liu described himself as a practitioner who was 'self-trained three decades ago', he would also like to develop a connection with traditional feng shui. His old feng shui book collection was a signal of this. According to these books' front pages, they were published in the Republican era (1912-1945). But his feng shui compass is his second choice in practice: he is, as he said in his interview, 'a man of software.'<sup>214</sup> Liu used old feng shui books for reference when teaching new members of his *I-Ching* committee, but overall he believed that 'feng shui software is more accurate and efficient because it is scientific.'<sup>215</sup> Liu's feng shui software was a common online system which calculates one's Chinese astrology which is believed to be able to reveal one's life path.

On the author's second visit to Liu, his practice of domestic feng shui was observed. The two clients were concerned about their children's study and believed this was due to their new

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<sup>213</sup> Lester B. Rowntree and Margaret M. Conkey, 'Symbolism and the Cultural Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 70 (1980), 459-74.

<sup>214</sup> Summarised from Liu's interview, conducted in September 2015.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*



house, which had been constructed without consultation with a feng shui dashi. Liu analysed the dates of birth using feng shui software, suggested that their house was orientated poorly and that the children in the house were ‘trapped by a nest’. Liu was then invited to amend the client’s house, but the author was not invited to observe as Liu said that he preferred to keep his practice confidential (Figure 71).

Liu later showed the author a tomb which was ‘with perfect feng shui’ during one of his site visits. The tomb, facing mountains and with a river in front, was believed to be owned by a ‘Zhuangyuan’ (状元), the champion of national examinations in the Chinese imperial examination system. A Zhuangyuan is often described as the representative of Wen Qu Xing, God of Literature, among humans. Liu believed it was the perfect feng shui of this tomb which resulted in this great success. He described the mountain in front as a mirror, while describing the hills on the right and left ‘as if they were protecting the tomb’. Although he was confident with his tomb evaluating knowledge, Liu does not offer tomb site selection or related business as he is rather in ‘fear of the tombs’. The main parts of his job focus on the space design of clients’ houses. In many cases Liu receives his clients at home and accomplishes his work on his computer, using the feng shui software which is now widely available. By knowing the client’s name and detailed date of birth, Liu can calculate whether a house plan was ideal for its owners and what needed to be amended. Any problems indicated can usually be solved by these products.



**Figure 67. One of Liu’s certificates which indicates his appointment as a vice dean at the International I-Ching Research Institute. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**



**Figure 68. Liu’s office was also the living room of his apartment, in which various feng shui objects were displayed for sale. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**



**Figure 69. A feng shui fountain displayed at Liu’s was believed to be able to attract fortune to one’s house. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**



**Figure 70. Each amulet displayed at Liu’s was believed to have feng shui effect on one’s house and garden, although amulets are Daoism objects rather than feng shui historically. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**



**Figure 71. Liu analysing the house plan on his computer for two clients, indicating the popularity of feng shui software. (Source: Photographed by the author, 2015.)**

In the same city, other two feng shui masters, Xian He, and Du Jinliang are referred by the author’s contact. Xian and Du have opened a feng shui consultancy store together and are the first feng shui masters to establish ‘government approved’ of their business in the town since 2005. This seems to grant them a superior status over other professionals in the area. The store is intended to be an easy point of contact for any potential clients. Like Liu, Xian and Du were also able to accomplish most requirements in store by using software and compass reading.

Like Liu, they do not include burial feng shui in their professional service. Both of them explained that burial feng shui might result in negative consequences to the practitioner himself/herself if it was performed inappropriately. This perception seems to echo Wu's opinion which considered his skills of burial feng shui a distinction.

All the feng shui dashi observed for this study have complex beliefs, of which Daoism and Buddhism seemed to be the most influential. Confucianism is no longer considered a religion by most twentieth-century studies such as suggested in the Confucianism and Chinese religious traditions<sup>216</sup> and its influence on practitioners appeared to resemble a belief, reflecting their pursuit of Confucian ethical behaviours such as virtue and filial piety. Their own belief background was a footnote for the current urban religious environment: as they do not have unconditional religious freedom, they avoid claiming a deep belief in one specific religion but tend to absorb many features from multiple belief systems. In their practice they treat feng shui as a carrier for various beliefs (Figure 72).

Xian was a businesswoman before training at feng shui classes in 2002; she was the first and only female feng shui consultant the author made contact with. In China, feng shui was an absolutely male-dominated career traditionally. In most families with a feng shui heritage, only sons were allowed to participate in feng shui learning. Although the current market

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<sup>216</sup>陈咏明, 《儒学与中国宗教传统》(北京: 宗教文化出版社, 2003). / Yongming Chen, *Confucianism and Chinese Religious Traditions* (Beijing: Religion Culture Publishing House, 2003).

environment offers the possibility of becoming a feng shui master more easily, the emergence of female professionals is very new. Du became a feng shui dashi in the same year. He was first trained by course and then a senior master who taught him and five other apprentices for three weeks.

The expertise of these feng shui dashi practitioners lies in the areas of feng shui teaching, domestic design, and building orientation. While rural areas have landscape conditions which provide the opportunity to apply traditional feng shui rules, this is not possible in the urban environment. Practitioners have adapted the rules and principles of feng shui have been to adjust to the higher density, smaller space and increasing presence of popular beliefs. Liu, Du and Xian's practice has converted the elements of mountain and water into the surrounding buildings. Some evidence of this emerged when Du led the author to two of his on-going projects. He asked that the locations and names of the clients should not be disclosed. During these observations it was noticed that in individual practice, urban feng shui maintains a strong effort to integrate symbolic features, while larger and outdoor projects emphasise orientation.

The first case required Du to decide the orientation of a factory building. He observed the orientation of the site and decided how future buildings should be orientated by reading his compass. During the process Du explained that the surrounding buildings will be the 'mountains', and the new factory building must be the tallest building and face the south, so that it can overcome the surrounding qi, meaning that the factory owner can also overcome his competitors. In the second case Du's mission was to decide whether an apartment should be purchased. He first analysed the prospective householder's date of birth, then evaluated the

apartment by operating his feng shui compass. He suggested that the apartment would benefit female better but did not explain why (Figure 73).

Du later took the author to visit his master, Teng Chouyuan, a renowned feng shui dashi who was visiting Hangzhou for business. He only met the author as he ‘calculated the author’s name and noticed a connection (between the author and himself)’. Teng allowed the author to observe one of his feng shui consultations for a newly built house, in which he was able to draw an amulet which he advised his client to attach to a certain position on the external wall when he moved in. He also suggested that the client should bury a stone outside the house, in the point where the householder’s private path and the main road meet. Teng suggested that feng shui of the house will be cleansed and protected from outside harm by doing so (Figure 74).

Xian told the author about one of her early cases which had helped her establish her reputation, during an interview in 2015. Her experience was that she also focused on the functions of house orientation and surrounding architectures. Xian said:

In 2003 I was required by a client to solve a feng shui problem. Their business was getting worse and they did everything to help. When I went to their store I realised that a new tower had been built to the west of their building, resulting in my client’s qi being suppressed by their qi. The west side is the direction of the white tiger, suggesting their qi is strong and harmful. No one could solve the problem because the building could not be moved, but I suggested my clients should close their main entrance and use the east

side entrance as the main one. In this way the tower was to their north, which means it backs up my client's store. Soon their business bloomed.<sup>217</sup>

Both Du and Xian were heavily occupied by clients and lectures, but it was difficult to investigate their practices as they were cautious about answering detailed questions. As a result, only a general understanding of these urban practitioners can be shown here.



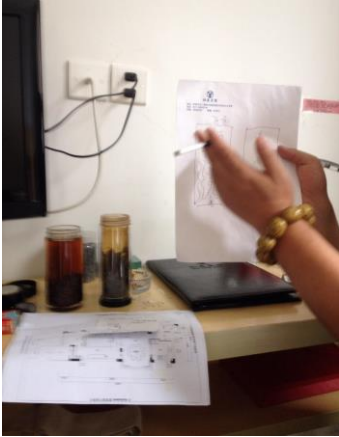
**Figure 72. Xian and Du's store background demonstrates both a Bodhisattva and a Daoist Ba Gua, indicating the practitioners' complicated belief background. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**

*Figure removed due to copyright restriction.*

**Figure 73. Du's feng shui practice for a new apartment depended on compass reading and computer analysis of the householders' date of birth. (Source: Du Jinliang, 2015.)**

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<sup>217</sup> Interview with Xian He, September 2015.



**Figure 74. Teng's skill of drawing amulets by hand for different client requirements was considered proof of his great capability. (Source: photographed by the author, 2015.)**

## **Conclusion**

In the Zhejiang area, where this study was based, feng shui belief remains general both in rural and urban environment regardless of the fact that the subject used to be prohibited nationally. By reviewing the above cases, differences between rural and urban feng shui can be distinguished.

Tao's use of feng shui demonstrated many similarities to historical feng shui rules. In these investigated rural cases, places are chosen, formed and connected by feng shui rules. Kan feng shui in rural area is often a communal activity which involves the community. By believing in feng shui together, a sense of attachment between man and place was made, as its participants interpret a place not only by evaluating physical conditions but also by considering how one will relate to it spiritually.



For residents in villages like Daxikou and Xitou, feng shui is not considered a performance of particularity but rather a part of everyday life. Feng shui xiansheng preserved regional belief culture and became the instructors of various daily construction activities. Tao, for instance, is often the architect, landscape designers and planners in above-mentioned villages. It is often a feng shui xiansheng's personal interpretations that set the rules for both indoor and outdoor environment, not just for individuals but for the family. Feng shui xiansheng, therefore, manifests a shared awareness of local identity. During their practice they developed a sense that allowed local residents to not just see a place, but 'seeing'.<sup>218</sup>

Feng shui xiansheng as a group is heavily based on local villages and often disconnected to urban environment or residents. This likely to be the main reason that traditionalism is well preserved in their practices. It is also because of the 'isolation' that rural feng shui xiansheng as a profession is either neglected or misunderstood by researchers. An exception, one of the few reports which explored the group, described feng shui xiansheng in a skeptical way:

'These feng shui xiansheng, came from in the rural area and work in suburbs, consist of the majority of feng shui practitioners in contemporary China. They are undereducated, nor were they trained properly by traditional culture, their experience and talk are what they rely on. They are the bottom hierarchy among all the feng shui

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<sup>218</sup> Ken Taylor, 'Landscape and Memory: Cultural Landscapes, Intangible Values and Some Thoughts on Asia', in *16th ICOMOS General Assembly and International Symposium: 'Finding the spirit of place – between the tangible and the intangible'* (Quebec, Canada: 2008).

practitioners.’<sup>219</sup>

The roughness of this conclusion was likely resulted by the strong intention to ‘recognise the worthy values of feng shui culture’<sup>220</sup>, which remains the leading thought in perceiving feng shui – at least officially.

Therefore, in rural areas, feng shui can be seen as something that is ‘revived’. Its rules hardly changed, and the practice has remained a part of everyday life for local residents. Tao and his peer practitioners in rural areas are not only needed but also seemed to be well respected. In many cases, feng shui xiansheng will be solving important issues and participate in communal events. The challenge to the preservation of rural aesthetics and meanings represented by Tao and his clients is the inevitable urbanism, which leads to the decline of traditional feng shui both as a theory and a particular practitioner group, not because this culture of making places is disapproved of, but simply because rural areas are disappearing due to China’s current rapid urbanism.

In reviewing the cases of four urban feng shui practitioners, it has been shown that the background and practises of urban feng shui practitioners’ divers. These practitioners emerge

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<sup>219</sup> 刘心印, 李好航, <当代风水师真相揭秘>, 出自《决策与信息》, 7 (2010), 页 50-53. / Xinyin Liu and Yuhang Li, ‘The Truth of Contemporary Feng shui Master’, *Decision and Information*, 7 (2010), 50-53.

<sup>220</sup> Xinyin Liu and Yuhang Li, p. 52.

in corresponding to the raising market, suggesting the popularity of feng shui has revived, but the perception of the subject is almost completely re-invented. Urban feng shui practices have different focus compare to rural ones. The general absence of burial feng shui is noticeable, although if one can perform burial feng shui remains of importance in assessing a practitioner. For instance, between Wu's practices of homemaking and tombmaking, the latter one remains a significant measurement of his professional skills. Wu's cases also demonstrated that a traditional background is a great advantage to a practitioner, even though, one has to adjust to the urban environment.

Overall urban feng shui practitioners were able to pick up social needs and re-create feng shui rules correspondingly, led to a situation in which many feng shui rules have often tended to be function-driven. During actual practice, as data obtained from above field works have shown, urban feng shui is expressed as a carrier of various popular social beliefs rather than as a revived place making method. That is to say, feng shui in daily practice is a religious requirement that intervenes with place making activities with little concern for the place itself, so its use in place making activities often reveals more of a challenge than cooperation. Feng shui is either interpreted as a science or a symbol of traditional aesthetics in place making, and both are attempts at re-invention. Evidence demonstrated in this chapter also indicate a rising interest in lecturing and applying technologies among urban feng shui practitioners. These methods share the same aim, which is to promote feng shui's relevance to science.

Cases investigated in this chapter may only represent the Jiangnan region; it is possible that in other parts of China, particularly in the north, patterns of traditional belief are performed differently.

# **Chapter 6. Preservation and Re-invention: A discussion on rural and urban feng shui**

## **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the social contexts of current feng shui in corresponding to the case studies demonstrated in the previous chapter. In particular, this chapter addresses below questions: What are the impacts of feng shui on rural and urban place making activities in relation to China's rapid urbanism? How is feng shui's adaptability developed and why?

First, the chapter will examine PRC's rural development initiative and discuss the ways in which rural areas are affected. In Zhejiang, most villages are being planned and developed into 'modern style'. However feng shui continues to be favoured, regardless. It will be discussed that this is rural residents' response to gradually urbanised environment and the losing of place identity. Rural feng shui will then be discussed in relation to China's religious policies. The subject has been treated as a folk belief, 'under defined' and resisted by the state, but given the increasing influence of western religions in rural areas, the state is showing a greater tolerance, even passive support, for rural feng shui as it is now being seen as a tool with which to defend local culture. In some regions, feng shui culture has been recognised as intangible cultural heritage by local governments, suggesting the urge to re-build the local belief system.

The following discussion will explore why feng shui is required in urban environment and how these activities struggle with their legitimacy. History of feng shui since the early 1980s will be analysed in order to further develop a critical understanding of the subject. By discussing its evolution from 1978 and to the present, it will be argued that urban feng shui was regarded as a representative of tradition but that its concepts were transformed into something different. There then follows an exploration of the social paradigms that allowed the emergence of urban practitioners. It will be suggested that urban feng shui is being cautiously developed under the state's religious policies and the current social trend of reviving traditional culture. The emerging new methods of practising urban feng shui as observed from the previous chapter will be discussed by taking this social context into consideration.

Conflicts between the re-invented feng shui and current design theories observed in the urban environment will be discussed in the final section, demonstrating an awareness of the ways in which popular belief can intervene in place making activities. Both theoretical and practical efforts to reach some cohesion between feng shui and outdoor design methods will be investigated.

## **Rural Feng shui: a 'Legal' Tradition in the New Countryside**

Rural feng shui has revived. Various anti-superstition campaigns during the Republican period have resulted in the failure of religions and beliefs in China, while the aggressive 'Destroy the

Four Olds' had further ceased feng shui practices. However, the preservation of popular beliefs during the suppressions might have been secretly achieved in rural areas. Feng shui, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, was passed among practitioners' households. In urban environment these suppressions were effective as these campaigns all started in cities, led by the educated younger generation.

Today Zhejiang's rural areas are well-developed under the guidance of 'The Socialist New Countryside', a concept on rural development first appeared in the Fifth Plenum of the 16th CPC Central Committee in 2005. In March 2006, China's National People's Congress officially promulgated the initiative, saying that the 'new countryside' should feature 'advanced production, a well-to-do life, civilized folkways, a neat look, and democratic management'. As part of the campaign, the central authorities are reorienting public finance to support rural development programs.<sup>221</sup> Therefore in Tao's cases, it was seen that many rural feng shui practices were performed in well-developed, semi-natural build environment. For instance, Tao's feng shui burial practice was performed in a village that is located in a mountainous area far away from Wuyi city and merely consists of few thousands of residents. But burial area was developed into a modern cemetery and well managed by the local government, indicating the village's achievement of introducing modernity to village planning. But these restrictions did not stop the performance of traditional feng shui. Tao and his participants maintained their

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<sup>221</sup> Anna Ahlers and Gunter Schubert, "Building a New Socialist Countryside' – Only a Political Slogan?", *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 38 (2009), pp. 35–62.

strong focus on the surrounding landscape by choosing the tomb orientation carefully.

In performing housing feng shui, Tao's importance as a feng shui practitioner was not only given by his professional reading of outdoor space but also his mediation between local residents. For instance, in Daxikou village, although Tao's feng shui advice eventually guided the construction of a house, the practice did not deal with a single house alone but a community consisted of several households, one with five generations live together. First, it should be recognised that although Daxikou village has a 'modern' habitation only a few hundreds of metres away from the site studied. Similar habitations are not unusual in rural Zhejiang today as a noticeable achievement of 'The Socialist New Countryside'. However, it is also usual that rural residents chose to keep their old dwellings and continue to rebuild on the old habitation. The studied site in Daxikou village being one of them. With many elderlies and big families living in the studied area, local residents in Daxikou village have particular strong emotional connections to the site. Therefore the identity of Daxikou village exists in the old habitation. The Area which was developed and planned by the 'new countryside' initiative, although widely accepted, does not challenge the importance of the village's 'old site'. The constant rebuild of the studied area has resulted in a high density, with the foundations of houses relatively close to each other, as shown in the site plan in chapter 5. For local residents, it is natural that feng shui is needed to avoid conflicts. But it must be realised that behind the recognition of feng shui being essential in daily placemaking activities is residents' attachment to the site. Feng shui's significance is expressed by its impact of 'the perceived uniqueness of



a place',<sup>222</sup> yet the process of performing and participating feng shui is equally important. As such, it is safe to conclude that the wide participation of feng shui among these residents is driven by this sense of place identity, a shared consensus of 'this is home for all of us'. Similarly was Tao's another housing feng shui case in Wuyi, where his performance was practised in the remaining old area of the city.

Compare to Watson's observation in rural Hong Kong which suggested that the subject has turned similar to those of the urbanite,<sup>223</sup> rural feng shui investigated in the previous chapter still have noticeable distinctions. Feng shui did not just make a home or a tomb alone but rather has drawn an association between different houses, or between a tomb and natural landscapes. Although feng shui served individual purposes in observed cases as it always was, it also extended its impact on local community and created shared spaces that accommodate daily interactions, where do not seem to be used by local residents for high-intensity contacts but merely seeing, hearing, and developing short chats with neighbours.<sup>224</sup> Although they are different from the concept of 'public space' in urban context where parks, playgrounds, squares, and streets were developed, the concept of 'communal space' was established. It is apparent that those observed rural residents have different expectations concerning what a place should

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<sup>222</sup> Derk Jan Stobbelaar and Bas Pedroli, 'Perspectives on Landscape Identity: A Conceptual Challenge', *Landscape Research*, 36 (2011), 321-339.

<sup>223</sup> James Watsons and Rubie Watsons, 'Geomancy, Politics, and Colonial Encounters in Rural Hong Kong', ed. by Frances Pine and Joao de Pina-Cabral, *On the Margins of Religion*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), p.225.

<sup>224</sup> Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*, (Washington DC: Island Press, 2011), p12.

be like and how it should be made compare to urbanite, regardless the fact that the characteristics of rural and urban landscapes have become blurred under the rapid establishment of The Socialist New Countryside.<sup>225</sup> The wide participation of rural residents in the place making process should be considered a response to this trend.

To further understand rural feng shui in the current Chinese context, it is also crucial to understand how it is recognised by the state's religious policies. Although the 1978 Chinese constitution remained strict about the citizen's basic right to be religious in its policy that 'citizens have the freedom to believe in a religion, also the freedom to not believe in religions and promote Atheism', the social trend of acquiring religions and beliefs has been clear.<sup>226</sup> For instance, an open statement was submitted to the government in 1980 by Religion Alliance representatives including the 10th Panchen Lama and K. H. Ting, the leaders of Tibetan Buddhism and the China Christian Council. The statement suggested that the religious policy of the 1978 constitution should be revised in order to 'precisely reflect the government's tolerance in respect of citizen's religious freedom'.<sup>227</sup> The statement was considered a powerful strike which encouraged the authorities to open up its religious restrictions, as

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<sup>225</sup> Katriina Soini, Hanne Vaarala, Eija Pouta, 'Residents' sense of place and landscape perceptions at the rural-urban interface', *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 104 (2012), 124-134 (p. 124).

<sup>226</sup> 刘祎, 李珍, < 八二宪法之宗教信仰自由条款的形成及其教益 >, < <http://www.pacilution.com/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=5512>> [2017年9月30日]. / Yi Liu and Zhen Li, 'The Formation and Teaching of the Freedom of Religious Belief in the Constitution of Ba Er', < <http://www.pacilution.com/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=5512>> [accessed 30 September 2017].

<sup>227</sup> 柯若朴, < 民間信仰在中華人民共和國近來研究中的概念化過程 >, 《媽祖與華人民間信仰國際研討會論文集》2014年, 页 393. / Philip Clart, 'Conceptualizations of "Popular Religion" in Recent Research in the People's Republic of China', *International Symposium on Mazu and Chinese Folk Religion* (Taipei, 2014), p. 393.

noticeable progress was soon noted in the content of 1982 constitution, which acknowledged that ‘a citizen’s religious right is a private matter and should be protected’.<sup>228</sup>

The established religious rules could not, however, cover the full range of worship and belief in China, including feng shui, a wide conception called 民间信仰 (pronunciation: minjian Xinyang), ‘folk belief’. None of these terms, ‘popular religion’, ‘popular belief’ and ‘folk belief’, were present in old Chinese usage. The earliest use of the term ‘folk belief’ was only in the 1930s.<sup>229</sup> It later became more common and was used during the 1990s and the early twenty-first century by mainland Chinese scholars including Wang Mingming and others.<sup>230</sup>

A western perspective might call feng shui a popular religion, but it is thought about differently by Chinese people. The translation of words like religion and belief generates confusion because of the different nature of ‘religion’ (宗教, zongjiao) in China and in the west. Clart explained the issue between religion and belief in a study in 2014:

‘The Taiwanese translator of my paper chose to render popular religion literally as minjian zongjiao 民间宗教. The immediate association this term caused in the minds of

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<sup>228</sup> 《中华人民共和国宪法》, 1982. / *Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*, 1982.

<sup>229</sup> 陶思炎, 何燕生, <迷信与俗信>. 《开放时代》, 3 (1998), 页 123-24. / Siyan Tao and Yansheng He, ‘On Superstition and Folk Belief’, *Open Times*, 3 (1998), 123-24.

<sup>230</sup> 王铭铭, 《社会人类学与中国研究》(北京: 三联书店, 1997). / Mingming Wang, *Social Anthropology and Chinese Studies* (Beijing: Joint Publishing, 1997).

many Taiwanese and practically all mainland Chinese participants in the conference was of popular sects (minjian jiaopai 民间教派), rather than the local and communal religious life... A better translation would have been minjian xinyang 民间信仰, which retranslates literally as popular belief.<sup>231</sup>

For most Chinese academics the term ‘religion’ often implies a highly institutional structure, with its beliefs clearly stated,<sup>232</sup> such as Christianity. But this is the form of western religions, not Chinese ones. In China, religion has a ‘diffused’ pattern (non-institutional) as described in C. K. Yang’s *Religion in Chinese Society*,<sup>233</sup> let alone many folk beliefs, which their perceptions were often blurred with daily rituals. Supported by this description of diffused religion, many current studies have further broadened the definition of folk belief, suggesting that ‘it’s definition does not need to be precise, and its boundary can be blurred’.<sup>234</sup>

Some later studies have questioned the definition of ‘folk’, and used ‘popular’ instead, for example Fan and Chen in 2013 and Clart in 2014. In the Chinese language, these two mean

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<sup>231</sup> Philip Clart, ‘Conceptualizations of “Popular Religion” in Recent Research in the People’s Republic of China’, in *New Trends in the Study of Chinese Popular Religion(s)*, 1-2 October 2010.

<sup>232</sup> Philip Clart, ‘Conceptualizations of “Popular Religion” in Recent Research in the People’s Republic of China’, in *New Trends in the Study of Chinese Popular Religion(s)*, 1-2 October 2010.

<sup>233</sup> C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1991), p. 20.

<sup>234</sup> 陈勤建, 衣晓龙, <当代民间信仰研究的现状和走向思考>, 《西北民族研究》, 2 (2009), 页 115-23 (第 119 页). / Qinjian Chen and Xiaolong Yi, ‘On Current Research Situation and Prospect of Folk Belief’, *North West Minorities Research*, 2 (2009), 115-23 (p. 119).

slightly different things: ‘folk’ implies ‘rural’ and ‘tradition’, while ‘popular belief’ has a sense of being contemporary. This study treats ‘folk belief’ and ‘popular belief’ as two similar concepts but will use folk belief in this (rural) chapter, and popular belief in the next to better distinguish feng shui perceptions in different contexts.

Although feng shui might be described as a ‘popular religion’ or ‘folk religion’ (or ‘popular belief’ as suggested by Clart) by a western mind, it is definitely not seen as a ‘zongjiao’ by the Chinese, but rather a ‘xinyang’ (belief). So, although such subjects are generally supervised by the state under the guidelines reflecting religious policies, it is not equal to religion, nor does it have clear regulation. Feng shui has been left in a grey area.

Although the definition of feng shui and attention to it was always underdeveloped, the state’s perception of rural feng shui has changed, not just because of a better understanding of the subject as a part of Chinese cultural identity, but also because of its caution about other religions. The state’s policies on religious affairs since the 1980s give some insight into the reasons for its changing attitude to feng shui. In 1982, the Communist Party formulated its religious policy in ‘Document 19’ (中共中央文件 19 号), a statement which on one hand allowed certain religious liberation, on the other hand declared the government’s ultimate control to any related affairs.<sup>235</sup> Regardless of the opening up policies of 1978, religions

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<sup>235</sup> *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian 19 Hao: ‘Guanyu Woguo Shehuizhuyi Shiqi Zongjiao Wentidi Jiben Guandian He Jiben Zhengce’* Di Tongzhi (1982), trans. by Christian Communications Ltd (Hong Kong, 1983).

remained highly politicised and remain a strong focus to maintain social stability by controlling religious affairs, as indicated in the document. The five major religions active in China, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, were given strictly limited toleration. All of these religions were suggested by the state to be led by patriotic members to ensure their loyalty to the government.<sup>236</sup>

At this stage feng shui was disliked by the government. Although it was no longer among the ‘demons and freaks’, it was still considered a superstition. Document 19 distinguished between religion and superstition, saying that ‘religious freedom does not mean less emphasis on scientific education; on the contrary, it should be further highlighted, and anti-superstitious activities should not stop. In the whole population, those who worship spirits and folk gods are many, yet those who actually believe in religion are few.’ In this way the document separates folk beliefs from legal religions and continued its suppression of them. The document says,

‘All citizens who practice divining, feng shui and astrology should be educated and supervised. Related government officials should encourage and assist them to find other employment, rather than continue their superstitious ones. If they do not follow, such activities shall be legally banned.’

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<sup>236</sup> Tony Lambert, ‘The Present Religious Policy of the Chinese Communist Party’, *Religion, State & Society*, 29 (2001), 122-129 (p. 123).

Despite this statement, a ban was not actually enforced. In fact, as Fan and Chen said:

‘...since the 1980s, the central government has focused primarily on the modernization of large cities; the rural areas have frequently enjoyed considerable autonomy. With the demolition of the people’s commune system, the government moved to a policy of benign neglect or wu wei (无为) in regard to rural community life in recent years...these factors have given certain space for folk beliefs to develop.’<sup>237</sup>

But the recent change in the perception of feng shui may also be a consequence of another factor, which has encouraged some local governments to give great tolerance to indigenous beliefs by considering them as part of the local intangible culture. This was not so much benign neglect as ‘passive supportive’. Taking Zhejiang province, where this chapter’s fieldwork was based, as an example, the local government enacted the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of Zhejiang Province* in May 2007. This law says that ‘traditional practices, folk activities and knowledge are all considered among intangible cultural heritage; local governments and

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<sup>237</sup> Lizhu Fan and Na Chen, ‘Resurgence of Indigenous Religion in China’, *China Watch*, 2013, p. 8 <[http://fudan-uc.ucsd.edu/\\_files/201306\\_China\\_Watch\\_Fan\\_Chen.pdf](http://fudan-uc.ucsd.edu/_files/201306_China_Watch_Fan_Chen.pdf)> [accessed on 07 September 2017].

related organisations shall guide their application if appropriate’,<sup>238</sup> which has greatly encouraged local folk beliefs to claim that they are rational and legitimate.<sup>239</sup>

This is likely to be encouraged by concern about the rapidly increasing influence of Christianity in rural areas, which alarms the PRC government as a foreign intrusion. It has been reported that after the Cultural Revolution, the breaking down of the local belief system resulted in house-church Protestants and underground Catholics became of great popularity in the country due to the failure of local religions. This was an issue which had long concerned the government. For example, when addressing the state’s attitude towards the rising number of unregistered house-churches, Document 19 states:

‘So far as Christians undertaking religious activities in home-meetings are concerned, these should not, in principle, be permitted. But they should not be rigidly prohibited. The religious masses should be persuaded through the work of patriotic religious workers to make other suitable arrangements’.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *The Zhejiang Government, Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of Zhejiang Province*, May 2017.

<sup>239</sup> 陈进国, 林敏霞, <如何走向“善治”: 浙江省民间信仰“社会治理”转型的反思>, 出自 邱永辉编 《中国宗教报告-宗教蓝皮书 2015》(北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2016) <<http://www.rujiag.com/article/id/9953/>> [2017年9月19日]. / Jinguo Chen and Minxia Lin, ‘How to Go to “Good Government”: Reflection on the Transformation of Folk Belief on “Social Governance” in Zhejiang Province’, in *Chinese Religious Report – Religious Blue Book 2015*, ed. by Yonghui Qiu (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2016) <<http://www.rujiag.com/article/id/9953/>> [accessed on 19 September 2017].

<sup>240</sup> Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian 19 Hao: ‘Guanyu Woguo Shehuizhuyi Shiqi Zongjiao Wentidi Jiben Guandian He Jiben Zhengce’ Di Tongzhi (1982), trans. by Christian Communications Ltd (Hong Kong, 1983).



But now the government's concerns are far heavier those described in the document, as it was reported in 2016 that in rural areas, particularly in northern China, the breakdown of local folk belief systems has resulted in Christianity 'becoming of great significance'.<sup>241</sup>

The trend for feng shui to be tolerated or even approved by the state may result from the government's effort to balance the situation. Of course, this does not mean that the government actually supports feng shui or any related activities, but that it believes that by supporting beliefs that are 'local', or 'traditional', it can retain the local belief system. In Wuyi, which is one of the main areas where this study's field works were proposed, a total of 65 registered religious places were recorded by the government, of which 44 were churches and 21 were temples (Figure 75-76).<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> 董磊明, 杨华, <西方宗教在中国农村的传播现状-修远基金会研究报告>, 《文化纵横杂志》, 2014年6月5日。/ Leiming Dong and Hua Yang, 'The Dissemination of Western Religions in China's Rural Areas – Longway Foundation Research Report', *Beijing Cultural Review*, 5 June 2014.

<sup>242</sup> 张莹, <浙江武义县人大常委会主任陈增加一行视察宗教工作>, 《武义新闻网》, 2010年05月31日 <[http://news.fjnet.com/zfgz/201005/t20100531\\_156923.htm](http://news.fjnet.com/zfgz/201005/t20100531_156923.htm)> [2017年9月5日]。/ Ying Zhang, 'Inspection of Religious Work by Chen Zengjia and others from Zhejiang Wuyi County People's Congress Standing Committee', *Wuyi News*, 31 May 2010 <[http://news.fjnet.com/zfgz/201005/t20100531\\_156923.htm](http://news.fjnet.com/zfgz/201005/t20100531_156923.htm)> [accessed on 5 September 2017].



**Figure 75-76. The wide participation of registered local churches' religious events has become the new norm in rural China, overcoming the social importance of other local Chinese religions. (Source: Chinese Seventh-day Adventists website, <<http://www.zgaxr.com/Item/1446.aspx>> [accessed on 02 September 2017].)**

## **Urban Feng shui: Struggle to Survive**

It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that 'urban feng shui revival' is a questionable concept, as a great part of the subject has been re-invented due to outside pressure. Based on this conclusion, it is now important to define how urban feng shui is perceived in the changing social context.

The recall of feng shui began in the 1980s, when various studies first attempted to explore its history in relation to architecture and to clear its name of being a superstition. These attempts were only relevant to academics and had very little impact on contemporary feng shui. Following the reform and opening-up policy of 1978, the social environment did not tolerate feng shui practice immediately, and the earliest attempts could only be found in research. The subject became only practical again after about 2000 when popular beliefs became less

offensive to the central government: feng shui became noticed again, often presented as a scientific design theory under the influence of these research studies.

Feng shui's close association with popular social beliefs and regional cultural identity may have been the driving power of the subject being recalled, but studies since the 1980's have attempted to define it as a scientific architectural theory. Compared to current rural area's opening-up social tolerance to feng shui, using feng shui remained sensitive to most urban residences. In rural areas, belief in feng shui incorporates a connection with intangible folk culture; yet, in the urban environment, people might claim to be a believer of any of the five major religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism) rather than an enthusiast of feng shui, as perceptions of it are that it is far from being legitimate.

Chinese religions became 'legal and respectful'<sup>243</sup> providing they cooperated with the state's fundamental policies of maintaining a socialist society.<sup>244</sup> As discussed above, the state's religion policies do not make provision for feng shui, only offering an acknowledgment of the general social religious context. Current urban feng shui is controlled by these policies, but the restrictions on it go beyond its rules. *Document 19* and other religious laws remain influential where citizen's religious activities are concerned. For example, the third document of the

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<sup>243</sup> 中华人民共和国国务院,《宗教事务条例》,2004年7月7日。/ The State Council of People's Republic of China, *Regulations on Religious Affairs*, 7 July 2004.

<sup>244</sup> Which includes but not restrict to adhere to Marxism, firmly support the PRC party and the country, and resolutely refuse foreign force instigation.

*Decision of State Council of the People's Republic of China on developing Religious Affairs* published in 2002 said that ‘any member of our party shall not have a religious belief so that one’s faith in communism will not be distracted. Anyone who uses the convenience of their position to encourage the approval of religions shall be investigated’. This is a really explicit reflection of the government’s policy toward party members, which expressed their intention that party member’s liberality in regard to religions should not overcome their commitment to the state.<sup>245</sup> Because of these policies, employees in public institutions, for instance, members of civil service, universities and nationally owned companies are forbidden from being involved in feng shui. Believing in feng shui is treated as one of the typical corruptions of these government officials.<sup>246</sup> In a news report published initially by the *People’s Daily Online*, an official medium of the Communist Party in 2013, ‘feng shui gate’ relating to officials was reported at considerable length (11 cases, 27 pages) to criticise their behaviour (Figure 77). The report criticised officials who ‘do not pay attention to the society, but put hope in feng shui’.<sup>247</sup> In these reported cases feng shui were being interpreted in a very practical way. For instance, in one reported case, there proposed sculptures of a ball, an arrow, and a sword on the roof of a local court building, all facing to the south which is the direction of the local procuratorate (Figure 78). These feng shui sculptures were, according to the report, ‘designed to defend local

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<sup>245</sup> Tony Lambert, pp. 123-24.

<sup>246</sup> 李春秋, 高娟, <贪腐官员“风水”迷信情结剖析>, 《科学与无神论》, 3 (2015), 页 62-64. / Chunqiu Li and Juan Gao, ‘An Analysis of the Superstition on “Feng shui” by Corrupted Officials’, *Science and Atheism*, 3 (2015), pp. 62-64.

<sup>247</sup> ‘Feng shui gate’, *People’s Daily Online*, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1025/13216723.html>, Accessed on 09 May 2017.

court officials from being interrogated by the procuratorate'. This surely had very little association with traditional feng shui, but rather a form of contemporary popular belief. A certain freedom is allowed among non-party members, and these regulations can be negotiated if involvement in feng shui is declared as taking place within a carefully defined area of 'personal' or 'private' business.

Although involvement with feng shui in the urban environment is often done cautiously, the sensitivity about using feng shui does not necessarily indicate that urban residents have less interest in it. On the contrary, the urge to believe seems to be indestructible. According to the China Religion Survey (CRS) published in 2015, although 90% of current Chinese religious activities started only after 1982, 31.4% of the whole population has a 'religious belief', and among them, 26.6% of this group hold a 'folk belief'.<sup>248</sup> Although the report did not offer a definition of 'folk belief', feng shui is highly likely to have been included in this category. It is worth questioning the figure of 26.6%, which seems much lower than one might expect. For one thing, the expression, 'believing in folk belief' is a blurred concept: unlike religions, the definition of folk belief can be confusing in common use.<sup>249</sup> And it is likely that the result was affected by national or local policies which reflect general concerns amongst the Chinese population about indicating their beliefs, particularly when they are not 'orthodox'. Overall it

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<sup>248</sup> 中国人民大学, 《中国宗教调查报告 2015》(北京: 2015). / Renmin University of China, *China Religion Survey 2015* (Beijing: 2015).

<sup>249</sup> Philip Clart, 'Conceptualizations of "Popular Religion" in Recent Research in the People's Republic of China', p. 397.

became evident that religious affairs have become an ‘important and growing reality’<sup>250</sup> in contemporary China. This suggested that our understanding of current feng shui will not be complete if not taking these social contexts into consideration.

Current Chinese religions struggled in dealing with its association with superstition, which has resulted a restriction in understanding its ‘most interesting thoughts’,<sup>251</sup> feng shui is the same. The nationwide destruction of feng shui culture by the New Culture Movement and in the Cultural Revolution has left feng shui needing to re-create its social perception, one that allows it to receive greater approval from the state. The trend for scientific feng shui has been particularly helpful in this respect, and certain elements of feng shui might be abstracted and elevated by science. Modern urban feng shui practice is keen to associate the subject with certain scientific values, for instance, ecology and sustainability. On the other hand, the discourse indicates very little concern about burial, town planning, or other place making activities which were historically related to feng shui.

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<sup>250</sup> Daniel L. Overmayer, ‘Religion in China Today: Introduction’, in *Religion in China Today (The China Quarterly Special Issues No. 3)*, ed. by Daniel L. Overmayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>251</sup> Maurice Freedman, *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays*, selected and introduced by G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), p. 316.



Figure 76. The news report of government officials being dismissed due to ‘feng shui gate’, published in 2013, was a reflection of the central government’s attitude towards party members’ involvements in feng shui. (Source: *People’s Daily Online*, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1025/13216723.html> > [Accessed on 09 May 2017].)



Figure 77. Despite the central government’s tight control, feng shui was carried out on the roof of a local court building in Changchun, Jilin province, aiming to spare the court from being interrogated by the procuratorate. (Source: *People’s Daily Online*, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1025/13216723.html> > [Accessed on 09 May 2017].)

## Feng shui Dashi and Their Path to Legitimacy

Many studies have already explored various aspects of Chinese divining, including its knowledge system, how it functions in the society, as well as its explanation in dealing with

fate. While the divination practitioners, who is providing a model of ‘doing religion’ in China,<sup>252</sup> are yet to be explored. Although the diviners are a newly revived group in China, their intention to negotiate with the state’s power to gain legitimacy is acknowledged by some studies. For instance, it was suggested that by discussing the pattern of diviners gaining legitimacy, an approach to understand the relationship between religion and the state can be provided.<sup>253</sup> The diviners’ declarations of their legitimacy can be seen as a reflection of religion’s need to obtain further political recognition in China,<sup>254</sup> and the same thing applies to feng shui dashi. By analysing their actions designed to gain legitimacy, we can see how they interact with the current religious environment, and what they believe the benefit of their social acceptance will be.

In mainland China, the trend for feng shui to become an open profession only seems to have developed in the last two decades, as shown by the case studies. Today’s urban feng shui practitioners’ path to legitimacy reminds us of its great similarity with the resistance to feng shui culture between 1912-1945, in the Republican period. Negotiating with the state is always highlighted in the process of feng shui practitioner gaining social recognition, during which they managed to develop various methods to deal with the state’s pressure. Currently these

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<sup>252</sup> Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>253</sup> Adam Yuet Chau, ‘Modalities of Doing Religion and Ritual Polytypy: Evaluating the Religious Market Model from the Perspective of Chinese Religious History’, *Religion*, 41 (2011), 547-68.

<sup>254</sup> Geng Li, ‘Diviners with Membership and Certificates: an Inquiry into the Legitimation and Professionalization of Chinese Diviners’, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 16 (2015), 244-59 (p. 245).



purposes rely on their association with other subjects which provided them with a stronger social foundation or better social recognition. Modern feng shui practitioners have tended to merge with other diviners and ally themselves in a well organised, legitimate organisation, usually associated with the study of *I-Ching*, the Book of Chang (易经), which dates back to 1000–750 BC. The feng shui dashi are often hugely involved in other divining activities, such as naming and future telling. Xian and Du’s business was entitled ‘I-Ching, feng shui and naming’. They seem to be able to deliver feng shui in a strong relationship with traditional beliefs, but less related to place making skills.

There is always ‘precariousness’<sup>255</sup> in the legitimacy and reputation of modern diviners, which has probably driven them to connect with those who are more acceptable. For urban feng shui, it is its association with *I-Ching* that has allowed a better perception of feng shui, although *I-Ching* was not especially present in feng shui practice historically. In her interview, Xian said that she was the local branch chair of the *National I-Ching Study Committee*, and also has teaching duties to the new members of the committee. Du was also a senior member of the committee. Liu belonged to similar organisations, including the International I-Ching Study Committee. They were more comfortable showing these certificates than being seen at work, and apparently being associated with *I-Ching* study is trendy among feng shui practitioners. A direct benefit of the connection is that they are invited to feng shui lectures and workshops,

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<sup>255</sup> Geng Li, ‘Diviners with Membership and Certificates’, p. 244.

which are an important aspect of many urban feng shui practitioners' business. *I-Ching* is much associated with traditional culture, and related activities were often recognised as academic.

Opening a legitimate business is a rising trend among feng shui dashi, but so far only a few have managed to do it. Declaring the legitimacy of their business occupation also seems to imply that they are more qualified than the others. Although the aforementioned feng shui practitioner Wu did not recognise himself a member of any organisation. But most feng shui dashi working in the city are keen to ally themselves with other professionals. There is a process of negotiation between popular practice and the state, which according to Geng Li, 'has occurred against a backdrop of modernisation and state socialism'.<sup>256</sup> The majority of current feng shui dashi adopt two strategies in this process: first, attaching themselves to feng shui related organisations; and promoting feng shui practices as either scientific or academic in order for them to be acceptable to the authority.

To further explore the practitioners' path towards legitimacy, an investigation of current feng shui organisations is proposed. The concepts of a 'legal organisation' and 'offshore organisations' (离岸社团) is important in understanding the matter, as the majority of current *I-Ching* and feng shui related organisations are registered overseas. These organisations, like many others, are specifically defined by the Ministry of Civil Affairs as offshore organisations,

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<sup>256</sup> Geng Li, 'Diviners with Membership and Certificates', p. 246.

so they need to be monitored when active within China.<sup>257</sup> The Ministry of Civil Affairs says that these offshore communities are ‘in fact companies which are registered overseas or in Hong Kong, yet active and gain profit within the country.’<sup>258</sup> Of the 1287 offshore communities and organisations listed at the end of 2016, 32 were relevant to *I-Ching* study; 47 were relevant to feng shui. Feng shui and other divining-related organisations total 119, nearly a tenth of the total number.<sup>259</sup> The popularity of feng shui communities can be reflected by this number.

Although the number is considerable, their relationship with the authorities, as well as with the public, has been explored. If all 119 feng shui communities listed were illegal, then how many of the rest in society are legal? The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ official website, the China Social Organisation website, provides a platform for the public to inquire about legitimate non-profit organisations which have been approved and registered by the ministry (as a way of preventing offshore communities). A quick search found those named as relating to feng shui. As can be seen, very few divining organisations are recognised by the government: no feng shui organisation was named when enquiring nationwide; regionally, a total of four feng shui

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<sup>257</sup> 全国人民代表大会常务委员会, 《中华人民共和国境外非政府组织境内活动管理法》, 2016年4月28日。/ National People’s Congress Standing Committee, *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Administration of Domestic Activities in Non-governmental Organisations*, 28 April 2016.

<sup>258</sup> National People’s Congress Standing Committee, 2016.

<sup>259</sup> 中华人民共和国民政部, <民政部公布第十三批“离岸社团”“山寨社团”名单>, 来自《民政部公开报告》, 2016年10月12日 <<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201610/20161000002063.shtml>> [2017年9月12日]。/ Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Ministry of Civil Affairs Announced the 13<sup>th</sup> “Offshore Community” and “Counterfeit Community” List’, in *Ministry of Civil Affairs Open Report*, 12 October 2016 <<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201610/20161000002063.shtml>> [accessed on 12 September 2017].

organisations were approved. By comparison with feng shui, *I-Ching* seems to be a more popular subject, as 91 regional *I-Ching* study communities were listed by the ministry.<sup>260</sup> On the basis of these statistics, it is possible to presume that current feng shui practitioners' action of allying themselves with *I-Ching* study represents an accurate understanding of the government's attitude.

It also raises the question of which qualifications are required to become a member of one of these organisations and committees. Can the skills of feng shui be evaluated? These questions are closely associated with today's feng shui training system. Taking the Chinese Feng shui Committee, one of the biggest offshore feng shui organisations, as an example, we can see a common pattern of feng shui practitioner being allied to others. The organisation claims to be 'an international study organisation which consists of volunteer researchers and amateurs.' To be a member, one must 'show enthusiasm for feng shui and *I-Ching* study, and prove oneself capable of learning feng shui scientifically.'<sup>261</sup> Here the focus on scientific learning shows a link to the state's policies. Most qualifications are approved by senior committee members such as Xian and Du, and a certificate was often provided once one becomes a registered member. Certificate provided by the China Feng shui Study Association is similar to those

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<sup>260</sup> 中华人民共和国民政部, <民政部公布第六批“离岸社团”“山寨社团”名单>, 来自《民政部公开报告》, 2016年5月10日 <<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201605/20160500000264.shtml>> [2017年9月12日]. / Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Ministry of Civil Affairs Announced the 6<sup>th</sup> "Offshore Community" and "Counterfeit Community" List', in *Ministry of Civil Affairs Open Report*, 10 May 2016 <<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201605/20160500000264.shtml>> [accessed on 12 September 2017].

<sup>261</sup> Chinese Feng shui Committee website <<http://www.zgfs58.com/>> [accessed on 03 March 2017].

provided by Liu, Xian, and Du. Having a certificate gives a practitioner much credit, as a 'scientific understanding' of feng shui can be appealing to many of their clients.

Urban feng shui is an expensive business. The prices of various feng shui services listed on the website of the China Feng shui Study Association provide explicit evidence of this. The feng shui consultancy fee for real-estate site selection starts from 30000 Chinese yuan and above (approximately 3000 pounds), home site selecting 5000 Chinese yuan and above. Compared to Tao's usual rate, this is a much higher level of charge (Figure 79). Feng shui was considered a preoccupation with success by Maurice Freedman, and only one's pursuit of further success would demand the subject. Freedman said: 'fung shui is not for the very poor. It is when a man begins to think of the possibility of success for himself and his issue, a measure of prosperity already having been achieved, that he takes to a concern with geomancy.'<sup>262</sup> This conclusion remains generally appropriate in the current urban context, where for instance, feng shui consultations for real estate companies, factories, and new apartments, the current main demands, were usually charged a very high price. Although rural feng shui practitioners seem to offer their clients a method of improving their unsatisfactory conditions, urban feng shui is too expensive to be an option for the unlucky ones.

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<sup>262</sup> Maurice Freedman, *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays*, p. 195.

❑ 资费标准			
类别	项目	资费标准 Price (CNY)	说明
Site selecting 选址	楼盘、工厂选址 Factory	30000元起 From 30,000	可有二个备选地址，100亩以内，超过二个备选地址，另收5000元/个
	酒店选址 Hotel	15000元起 From 15,000	三个备选地址，超过三个备选地址，另收2000元/个
	办公、商铺选址 Store	10000元起 From 10,000	三个备选地址，100m <sup>2</sup> 内，超过三个备选地址另收1000元/个，超100m <sup>2</sup> 以外按28元/m <sup>2</sup> 另收
	家居选址 House	5000元起 From 5,000	三个备选地址，100m <sup>2</sup> 内，超过三个备选地址另收800元/个，100m <sup>2</sup> 以外按28元/m <sup>2</sup> 另收
Interior space 风水设计调整	楼盘、工厂风水设计调理	18元/m <sup>2</sup> 18/ m <sup>2</sup>	10万元起
	酒店风水设计调理	20元/m <sup>2</sup> 20/ m <sup>2</sup>	5000元起
	办公、商铺风水设计调理	20元/m <sup>2</sup> 20/ m <sup>2</sup>	5000元起
	家庭装修风水设计调理	20元/m <sup>2</sup> 20/ m <sup>2</sup>	1880元起
公墓 Tomb	公墓选择、点穴、取向 Tomb orientating	18000元起价 From 18,000	二个公墓内，多走一个公墓加收1200元

Figure 78. Prices of feng shui services have clear indications and range from few thousands Chinese Yuan to tens of thousands. (Source: the Chinese Feng shui committee website <<http://www.zgfs58.com/>> [Accessed on 12 August 2016].)

## Urban Feng shui: a Solution or an Issue?

It has been indicated above that rural architecture and landscapes could be guided by feng shui rules, and that it functioned as an equivalent of ‘design’ or ‘planning’. Urban feng shui is not perceived in the same way, it is an intervention, an attachment or a refinement for a place and its designers. To understand the relationship between urban place making activities and feng shui practices it needs to ask whether design rules overcome, negotiate or compromise with imported feng shui principles? How is feng shui being interpreted by urban place making activities? To answer these questions, the gaps and cooperation between feng shui practices and current theories must be studied.

Cases of urban feng shui practices have shown that the value of urban feng shui did not just come from popular beliefs but was also encouraged by other social conditions. Current housing

issues in Chinese cities have greatly encouraged the blooming of feng shui culture. The fact that all these practitioners focused on housing feng shui rather than outdoor space has suggested that feng shui has been taken as a solution to individual housing issues. The general importance of their house to urban residents is unquestionable, apparent in the constantly rising house prices. For the majority of urban residents, their apartment or a house could be the purchase of a lifetime. Requiring feng shui in housing activities allowed one to be reassured in making such an important decision.

Greater awareness of isolation as a problem in the urban environment, both socially and psychologically, has also encouraged the popularity and transformation of feng shui. This sense of isolation can lead a person to rely less on social connections, but on the individual. Xiong suggested that the growth in divining culture might provide a solution for this disconnection with society by which one could solve issues or gain benefit by relying on a diviner's advice and practice.<sup>263</sup> For many urban residents, feng shui seems to provide them a convenient means with which to face the challenges of modernisation, by placing an amulet, burying a stone outside the house, or simply by listening to a feng shui dashi before purchasing an apartment. This capacity of urban feng shui is unlike the practice in rural areas, which considers bonding with the community as one of its most important functions.

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<sup>263</sup> Yuezhi Xiong, 'The Modern Chinese Intellectuals and the Numerology', p. 148.

When the general interest in feng shui evolved into a popular belief, the primary focus of the subject was still its relevance to architectural, domestic and landscape design. The main design methods of feng shui are still to adjust house layouts, orientations and apply symbolic decorations, although these practices have greater connections with popular beliefs than before. The expressions of current feng shui landscape features are of great diversity depends on the subjective projection of the feng shui practitioners. How far these skills require the involvement of designers is questionable since such work has been accomplished by feng shui practitioners alone in the past. A notable nature of current feng shui is identified: it creates a feature, a symbol or a sense of direction which does not necessarily take the place into consideration but evaluates the client's specific needs and performs corresponding actions.

Although current urban feng shui is closely related to house orientation and domestic plans, modern feng shui studies such as those of Yu Xixian, Wang Qiheng and Michael Mak suggested that feng shui rules which were being practiced outdoor, particularly xing shi, contained a great value. Feng shui's emphasis on surrounding forms was highlighted by these studies, so the current theory and practice of feng shui are clearly divided. The attempts to unify feng shui with landscape and planning theories began as early as in the 1990s, namely, 'Shanshui City (山水城市)'. Literally means the city of mountains and waters, the theory of Shanshui City enabled one of the earliest attempts to recover traditional aesthetics in city design. The idea was first developed by Qian Xuesen in 1990, in an attempt to raise the possibility of practising landscape painting theories and feng shui methods in modern city planning. In his letter to Wu Liangyong in July 1990, a renowned urban planner, Xian proposed that: 'if we could make the cities as if we are making poems, landscape paintings and classic



gardens...then we might be able to build the concept of shan shui cheng shi’<sup>264</sup> Qian’s conception was not directly connected to feng shui, but his idea suggested an association between the two subjects. After three years of development, Shanshui City is now a conception that has been built upon the foundation of feng shui. *Apply Planning Protocols of Chinese Environmental Feng shui to Shanshui City*, published in 2011, describes ‘traditional Chinese feng shui planning protocols in Shanshui City planning context’.<sup>265</sup> While Yang Liu’s understanding of Shanshui City was developed purely on historical feng shui city planning, it reminded its readers how feng shui could be equal to contemporary design methodologies.<sup>266</sup> But attempts to create cities that fits in the conception of the Shanshui City theory have so far remained theoretical, and accomplished projects have shown little relevance to feng shui. Ma Yansong’s attempt to create a Shanshui City in 2015, for instance, could barely be associated with feng shui, as only the soft outlines of the architectures reminded an association to traditional landscape aesthetics (Figure 80).

The development of Shanshui City theory suggests that feng shui might have become a specific expression of cultural identity, a symbol of lost traditional preferences rather than the practice itself. Yu Kongjian, a contemporary landscape designer and researcher at the Beijing

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<sup>264</sup> 《钱学森论山水城市》，鲍世行编（北京：中国建筑工业出版社，2010），第 133 页。 / *Xuesen Qian and Shan Shui City*, ed. by Shixing Bao (Beijing: China Construction Industry Publishing House, 2010), p. 133.

<sup>265</sup> 张效通, 钱学陶, 曹永圣, <应用中国环境风水原则规划“山水城市”>, 《城市发展研究》, 01 (2011), 页 24-30. / Hsiao-tung Chang, Hsueh-tao Chien and Yungsheng Tsao, ‘Apply Planning Protocols of Chinese Environmental Feng shui to Shan Shui City’, *Urban Development Studies*, 01 (2011), 24-30.

<sup>266</sup> 杨柳, 《风水思想与古代山水城市营建研究》(未发表博士论文, 重庆大学, 2005). / Liu Yang, ‘The Research of Feng shui Theory and the Building of Ancient Shan Shui Cities’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Chongqing University, 2005).

University, was aware of the changing concept of feng shui in current outdoor design. He describes feng shui in a poetic way which does not necessarily agree with today's urban environment but provides a philosophy for city development, for him, feng shui was a completely new conception:

‘When we combine modern science and the ethics of the earth, a feng shui is created to save today's urban environment and whoever habit in it...feng shui is a connection between man and the earth, today we must rebuild such a connection in this way we rebuild feng shui.’<sup>267</sup>

Similarly, Wang Shaozeng used feng shui to structure his understanding of a living environment system in his lecture at the Chinese Society of Landscape Architecture Annual Meeting in 2009, in which he suggested a framework which aims to break down the ‘superstition’ about a modern landscape system in order to build an alternative landscape architecture system with a Chinese character, the (outdoor-) Living Environment. The system related to feng shui but also had a philosophical manner: it is a foundation theory framework which encourages ‘organic development’. Wang suggested that Yin Yang and the Five Phase theories are relevant to the framework; so was the traditional Chinese cosmic theory which emphasises the relationship between the environment and men. It was a system which

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<sup>267</sup> 俞孔坚, <风水: 中国城市的宜居梦想>, 《中国国家地理》, 01 (2011), 页 170-76. / Kongjian Yu, ‘Feng shui: the Livable Dreams of Chinese Cities’, *Chinese National Geography*, 01 (2011), 170-76.

harmonises the relationship between man and earth. Wang suggested that a ‘noble’ feng shui theory should be valued, and feng shui activities which are profit-orientated should be subjected to conceptual criticism. There should be an exploration of possible risks and disadvantages of the relationship between future city and man, and an attempt to develop ‘a Chinese style exploration’ to current living environment making.<sup>268</sup> Wang’s framework of (outdoor-) Living Environment addressed the importance of feng shui by considering it as an abstract conception of ecology. In all these attempts feng shui was introduced as a representative of appreciating natural landscapes, or even the lifestyle of living close to nature. This was believed to be able to resolve current ‘urban diseases’ resulted from the rising human-land conflict, which are causing various environmental concerns. What these perceptions have provided reminds of the fact that different feng shui can be interpreted by different social members for different purposes, although at the same time.

Academic interest in feng shui is steadily penetrating into the public domain, particularly architectural education. Brunn was generally positive about the possibility of encouraging feng shui to become formalised, as he believed that by introducing a foreign appreciation of feng shui it was likely that Chinese perception will be changed. He said:

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<sup>268</sup> Wang Shaozeng, ‘Towards an Outdoor Living Environment’, in *Chinese Society of Landscape Architecture*, translated by the author (Beijing: Tsinghua University, 2009).

‘But when it comes to establishing it as a standard academic subject the authorities usually stall, as when in 2005 Nanjing University had to retract from a planned course...Notwithstanding official policy a range of ordinary university professors now openly study and publish on feng shui at universities in, for instance, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, Nanjing and Xiamen. When foreign universities like the University of Wisconsin Madison arrange courses in China on feng shui’s impact on Chinese art, design, culture, and society, it certainly contributes to normalizing the subject.’<sup>269</sup>

Yet this process of ‘clearing feng shui’s name’ with the public might not be as easy as Brunn would expect. Although scholars like Yu Xixian have described their positive experience of promoting feng shui outside of the country, feng shui lectures in universities remain not allowed.<sup>270</sup>

But the scholars’ attempt to refine feng shui has not stopped. Before ending this chapter, a feng shui practice performed by a local scholar in the city of Hangzhou is worth noting. The practitioner San holds a professorship from a renowned local university. His research expertise in the *I-Ching* and Confucianism provides him with an understanding of feng shui culture, although he has never given lectures on feng shui. In 2014, when the author first contacted

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<sup>269</sup> Ole Bruun, *Feng shui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), XIX.

<sup>270</sup> 宫靖, <南大教授开设风水班引发激辩 - 被指传播封建迷信>, 《新京报》, 2005年9月12日. / Jing Gong, ‘Disputes on Professor from Nanjing University Starting a Feng shui Class: Accused of Spreading Superstition’, *Beijing News*, 12 September 2005.

San, he was preparing a book on feng shui and the author was invited to participate in editing it. In 2015, the draft book was examined by the university, and he was told that ‘it will be more appropriate if the book can be published after your retirement’.

Although academic interest was restricted, San’s practices, however, were not interrupted. At the same university which suggested delaying the publication of his feng shui research, he was known for his feng shui skills. When he was first introduced to the author he was described as someone who can ‘kan feng shui’ by the author’s contact, who is a lecturer in another local university. In an interview with San in 2014, he indicated that most of his consultations were for colleagues and friends, although in public they agreed on their shared confidentiality on this matter. But a case where he amended feng shui for the largest local hospital in 2004 suggested that his reputation was much greater than he’d expected.

The hospital was planning a new building when consulting San about its feng shui. Its initial design gave a simple square structure. In preparing the construction of the new building, a newly designed mall building located opposite it opened. The building external was full of sharp decorations which pointed directly towards the hospital. On the day of the mall’s opening, the hospital had nine failed surgeries. This was immediately treated as a feng shui issue, as a sharp shape is widely considered harmful. Although it was a huge project to change the hospital building, coping with this issue was necessary. When San consulted with them, he proposed building a round shape as a solution, by which the harm from the mall building ‘could be dissolved’ (Figure 81). Despite many other practitioners offering suggestions to the hospital, San was the only consultant the hospital contacted. Even San himself suggested that this was

‘not because his skills were necessary more advanced than other practitioners’, but simply because feng shui interpretation from someone who has a scholarly background would receive more credit.

*Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.*

**Figure 80. Ma Yansong’s Shanshui City project echoed traditional Chinese landscape aesthetics but had no relevance to feng shui. (Source: ‘Shanshui City’, Ma Yansong, 2014, MAD Architects, photographed by Laurian Ghinitoiu.)**



**Figure 81. A view between the mall building which has sharp decorations pointing directly towards the hospital and the round-edged hospital building explained the feng shui conflict between the two buildings. (Source: Created by the author, 2014.)**

## Conclusion

Although being recognised as ‘rural area’, studied areas in this study are either planned into modern style or being surrounded by newly planned habitations. As rural areas are increasingly utilised under the strong impact of the Socialist New Countryside initiative, and as China’s

population continues to migrate from rural to urban areas, rural residents' spiritual entanglements with feng shui place making have become a strong claim of local identity.

Feng shui was long suppressed and neglected by the central government, even after 1978. But farmers, who are the absolute majority of the population in rural areas, retain more freedom to participate in feng shui and other belief related activities compared to urban residents. Following the rapid rise of western religion, especially Christianity, in rural areas, the government has further provided considerable freedom to feng shui culture even though the initial purpose of their policies were not necessarily intended to support feng shui but rather to balance the influence of Christianity.

In reviewing the history of urban feng shui revival, it has been argued that feng shui was re-invented rather than revived in response to the changing urban social context. Instead of signaling the demise of traditional beliefs, China's economic development in recent decades has brought a spiritual renewal for feng shui culture. The blooming of urban feng shui culture in the past three decades shows a strong interest in its values, which were particularly associated with popular belief and authentic identities, but not its association with science. However, the state's policies toward feng shui and other popular belief matters in the urban environment remained impacted by religious policies like the Document 19. The perception of feng shui as a superstition, which started in the late modern period, impacts on current urban context more than in rural areas, regardless of the state's claim of religious freedom. This was also the case during the Republican period as various anti-superstition movements during the 1910s to the 1930s started in the cities, led by the educated young generation. Tighter policies

in modern China regarding feng shui and other popular beliefs have triggered feng shui to adapt both its practices and theory.

In response to this social environment, perceptions and promotion of urban feng shui have strong intentions in relating the subject to science, although in practice this was not the case at all. For certain groups, the perception of feng shui as scientific is more likely to grant them a certain freedom to get involved, as preferred by the government. But the ‘nationality’ that current feng shui claims are hardly what made it become of significant again, as the need of feng shui is recalled by various reasons, among which a wide social need of obtaining popular belief might be the most relevant. In particular, feng shui practice’s close relation to popular beliefs is helpful in tackling urban isolation. Therefore, despite the fact that suppression towards feng shui continues in the urban environment, feng shui remains a strong need and has become a luxury placemaking activity.

It was then demonstrated that the interest in feng shui in contemporary studies remains a largely theoretical understanding of the subject, rather than a study of actual practice. Academic studies provide an understanding of feng shui’s value in forming a cultural identity, but the trend is towards a re-invention of the subject. As the actual feng shui practices are led by the practitioners and specific individual needs, a noticeable gap between the perceptions of feng shui has been resulted.



## **Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the key findings in response to research questions, literature review, and research methods. Conclusions then follow.

### **Discussion**

Feng shui is not something that can be ‘analysed’ but something that could be felt, observed, explained, and understood. By highlighting the cultural and spiritual sense of places and landscapes, feng shui as a consensus affects on the way they are understood. Often the subject is considered unchanged by existing literature which tend to investigate its long history and rules. This makes historical research methods the dominant approach in feng shui related studies. Instead of repeating historical feng shui studies, this study was developed to explore the continuous interaction between feng shui and outdoor place making activities. Both historical and anthropological research methods were applied to investigate this.

When compared to existing historical studies, this study paid attention to not just official histories but also biographies and popular materials. By doing this, feng shui’s changing social perception was indicated. A historical study first proved that the rules and practices during feng shui’s long evolvement have many differences. Bu, xiang, kanyu and feng shui is considered the same subject as it is essentially the reflection of the contemporary social culture in place making activities, but it was pointed out that the rules and practices of the subject change alongside mainstream preferences in order to survive. Bu and Xiang, the early

geomancy, was a re-interpretation of rituals which associated orientation to the king's power. Due to knowledge monopoly, bu and xiang were performed by those who obtained relatively high social status, for instance, the diviners. Records in official histories such as the *Zhouli* proved that both bu and xiang, considered national affairs, were parts of the state's orthodox. In the Han dynasty, Bu and Xiang were gradually developed into an independent subject namely kanyu. Early kanyu remained its emphasis on orientation which was later replaced by the favour of the forms of landscapes during the period from the end of Han dynasty to the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties. This was a response to the preference of the rising scholar-gentry class, who expressed their dominating aesthetic value in paintings, poems, and literature. Kanyu's re-developed focus on landscape form imitated this value and had made the subject remained more or less orthodox. Compare to Bu and Xiang, the records of Kanyu were no longer highlighted in the main bodies of history books but in attached biographies. Therefore, court edited history books remained the main research materials in exploring Kanyu, while landscape paintings, literature, and site survey maps have also become of significance. Research materials of late modern feng shui then dramatically changed from official histories and court edited books to so-called 'popular materials'. This directly reflects the change of feng shui's social perception. Since the Republican period feng shui is no longer considered sacred by the government but a superstition, resulting in the subject become popular culture, a tradition of the masse. Although written records of feng shui during this period were limited compared to imperial China, the analysis was able to be developed by reviewing newspaper, government reports and old photographs. Evidence abstracted from government reports have demonstrated a national suppression towards feng shui which not only replaced the traditional term of 'kanyu' but also related the subject with superstition. On the other hand, reviewed news

reports and photographs have indicated feng shui's wide social foundation. Contents of these materials have explained why 'scientific value' has become the focus of feng shui studies since the late twentieth century. Feng shui's evolvement in the late modern period is neglected in existing studies, but it is of significance as it provides a reference to the understanding of current scientific feng shui, which is essentially an evolved attempted in respond to PRC's restrict religious policies.

Historical research has also related 'Di', the vaguely defined concept of 'place' in the Chinese sense, to feng shui activities. This was a response to the shortcoming in current feng shui architectural studies which ignored the significance of feng shui in developing landscape interpretations. 'Di' was a united concept incorporating topography, orientation, and surrounding views of outdoor space. While 'xiang di', an early geomancy term meaning 'observing earth', concerns the human interpretation of a place as well as all the above criteria. The successful creation of a 'Di' could be considered an equivalent of what is called place making today. This was not considered by existing studies. In geomancy, an auspicious place was described as certain outdoor environment preferences which heavily relied on human interpretations. Geomancy practitioners, seeking out an ideal site for a city, a grave, or a home, were those who summarised certain preferences and combined them with popular beliefs in their practices. But they were not those who developed these preferences. The historical analysis suggested that the overall social status of geomancy practitioners constantly declined, excepted early diviners in the Zhou dynasty who were often the rulers of the kingdom. Discussed burial cases such as the royal tombs in the Jin, Tang Ming, and Qing dynasties have suggested that the evaluating of outdoor space was a shared aesthetics value which was

developed by the scholar-gentry class and absorbed by geomancy. Once so, these values and preferences had become a widely accepted consensus in place making activities. Even for professional architects such as the Lei family who appeared in the Mid-Qing dynasty, their work often overlapped kanyu.<sup>271</sup> Although the survey maps of the Lei family have been very professional in showing the proportion and structure of the buildings, the depiction of the landscapes still has obvious traces of landscape painting to highlight the site's feng shui. Another research material used in the historical review is the photos of contemporary feng shui practitioners taken by Westerners who came to China at the time, which has reflected their social status and living conditions. These materials were not used in existing research. Overall, reviewing various historical materials have allowed feng shui's noticeable adaptability and feng shui participants' impact on historical place making to be identified. It is not the intention of this study to infer the rationality of feng shui by discovering the similarities between mainstream aesthetics and fundamental feng shui rules. Instead, it tends to critically investigate why these similarities exist.

Proving feng shui can be adjusted or re-invented in respond to the changing social needs has raised the attempt of investigating current feng shui. Although the stereotype of feng shui being a superstition was developed since the Republican period, in-depth understanding of the subject was gained from interviews and ethnographic observations. These findings of current

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<sup>271</sup> Wang Jianghua, *The Total Research on Hui Tomb of Qing Dynasty*, unpublished PhD thesis, (Tianjin: Tianjin University, 2006).

feng shui challenges the perception that feng shui is less favoured in modern China.<sup>272</sup> Although it discusses feng shui from the perspective of place making, this study challenges the current trend of scientific feng shui which associates feng shui with ecology. Instead, this study considers the significance of feng shui in relation to the way it deals with identity and beliefs in place making activities. Hence, methods and findings in this study echo some recent anthropological understandings of feng shui.

As a 'native researcher' who speaks local dialects and introduced by local guides, the author was able to be accepted by rural residents in the studied areas. The attempt to conduct in-depth interviews and observations was therefore achieved. Meanwhile the author's identity remained as an 'outsider' to these residents. As such, a relatively objective stand was taken particularly in conducting villagers' interviews. But such objective stand was often challenged during observation, as will be elaborated on below. In urban fieldworks, the same identity of combined 'insider' and 'outsider' allowed connections to be quickly built. This had led to a different result between existing anthropological studies and this study. But an in-depth ethnographic understanding struggled to be developed. Cases analysed in this study represented the most

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<sup>272</sup> Hong-key Yoon, 'The Image of Nature in Geomancy', *GeoJournal*, 4 (1980), pp.341-348.

traditional practices in the rural area, the ‘modernised’ practices in the cities, and a case of Wu Dashi that is somewhere in between.

Understandings of rural feng shui were developed on the foundation of Tao’s cases. Tao’s family has settled in Wuyi for generations, survived the Cultural Revolution and resumed their practices in the late 1980s. Although Tao is often invited to cities, he kept the focus of his practices on local villages. Due to Tao’s open attitude towards his profession, the author was able to explore his family history during the visits to his families and neighbours in the Tao village. A close connection was built between Tao’s family and local residents, allowing information of Tao and his family practice to be abstracted not only from Tao’s interviews but also from those of villagers’. Evidence abstracted from interviews have led to the conclusion that the number of rural feng shui practitioners is small, and their backgrounds are similar. In most cases they are local residents who learned feng shui through the household, and they serve the surrounding villages. In comparison, urban feng shui practitioners are large in number and come from complex backgrounds – a response to the booming market which irritates the state. Urban feng shui practitioners investigated in this study have different working methods and heritage. All of these practitioners were referred by some sort of connection, either family, social, or apprentice-master relationship. However, they remained cautious about questions and observations throughout the research process. Besides a low response rate regarding observation requests, the etiquette of communicating with urban practitioners was far more complicated than those with rural practitioners. For instance, the author was required to provide the date of birth to two of the practitioners, as it was ‘necessary to confirm if the author’s destiny is meant to cross with the master’s.’ Besides the general concern of China’s religious

environment, interviewees in urban environment tended to reserve key information to prevent potential peer competition. Most of the interviewees directly questioned the author's background during the first few interviews, i.e, if the author was a trained feng shui practitioner. These responses probably evident China's tight religious policies which required the practitioners to stay cautious to outside investigations. Similarly, urban feng shui practices tended to be 'scientific' in order to be tolerated by the state. Practitioners in cities had to promote the subject in various ways, from their education modes to its theoretical framework, all to be recognised a 'modern' subject, either modern or scientific. Investigations of the feng shui organisations, services charges, and qualifications of urban feng shui practitioners suggest that it shares the pattern of other popular beliefs in China.

Observations in this study were developed from the perspective of feng shui practitioners. This was also the perspective took by Maurice Freedman in his anthropological fieldwork in Hong Kong. But the extent of participation in this study was greater than what was of Freedman's. The author received a higher acceptance with naturally triggered certain participations as a native. Being able to speak dialects was particularly helpful in building connections. As a result, 'moderate' participation in feng shui activities were achieved. Two studied village sites were also measured except a studied cemetery. But there also arose difficulties in avoiding researcher bias in rural field work which was brought by such considerable extent of

participation or being ‘over participate’, particularly during participants observations.<sup>273</sup> For instance, when being hosted at villagers’ homes after assisting feng shui practices, the author was hardly detached from studied scenarios. As a result, the author’s position of neutrality needs to be reminded.

Twenty-first century Chinese feng shui studies, such as *Research of Feng shui Theory*, *History of Chinese Feng shui*, and *Scientific Feng shui for Build Environment*, have kept the investigation of the history and nationality of feng shui as their main focuses. While this study has proved feng shui’s current values by exploring on-going feng shui and its interactions with place making activities. Feng shui’s overall continuation in modern Chinese contexts is believed to be driven by its negotiation with the state’s power, while feng shui participants’ responses to the state’s policies are particularly significant to such negotiation.<sup>274</sup> This is supportive of the evidence presented in chapter 6, where there developed discussions in relation to China’s current religious policies, housing issues, and the ‘Building a New Socialist Countryside’. These policies and initiatives were considered the ‘large forces’ that shaped current feng shui landscapes. The fact that feng shui place making remained spiritual in both rural and urban areas has explained the inevitable careful facilitation from the state. Therefore analysis in this study has also drawn references to China’s religious policies. Besides reviewing policies and governmental documents, the study took news reports as another research source

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<sup>273</sup> Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt, ‘Participant observation’, ed. by H. Russell Bernard, *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), pp.259-300.

<sup>274</sup> *Feng shui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion*, pp. 255-56.



to enhance the understanding of PRC's attitude towards feng shui. Corresponding to other Asian spiritual landscape studies, this study has proved that places and landscapes made by feng shui do not require institutional ritual or pilgrimage, their meanings are diffused in daily life. In rural areas, the wide application of feng shui impacts on landscape and its participants at the same time; its spiritual meaning does not just develop interaction between people and places but also between a family or between the neighbours. Residents live with these landscapes, as these landscapes are part of local lives.<sup>275</sup> Therefore local governments tend to consider feng shui an expression of local identity which contributes to the resistance of the rising impact of western religions, or so it is hoped. This is tolerated by the state, even liked by local governments. Several results here can be related to Adam Chau's ethnographical study in northern China, where he realised that '(in the village) the police almost never crack down on popular religions.'<sup>276</sup> In urban areas it is different, as popular religions are still under tight control. But feng shui has become popular again, regardless. Urban feng shui has become more about individuals rather than a clan, a community, or a city.<sup>277</sup> It was considered important in a 'high-tension, low-trust environment'<sup>278</sup> where the state lost its reliability. This is probably only partially true. Evidence in this study suggested urban feng shui is taken as a response to the rising feeling of 'non-place', or a solution to a perfect living environment when a house is too expensive to be replaced. Therefore current urban feng shui practices retain a considerable

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<sup>275</sup> *The perception of the environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*, p. 190.

<sup>276</sup> *Miraculous response: doing popular religion in contemporary China*, p. 212.

<sup>277</sup> *On the Margins of Religion*, pp.205-232.

<sup>278</sup> *Feng shui in China: Geomantic Divination Between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion*, p. 259.

impact on place making activities regardless of the fact that the subject now has little similarity to its historical format but are guided by various popular beliefs instead.

## **Conclusion**

The applicability of feng shui is developed in response to China's changing socio-cultural contexts. Relevant practices and rituals that have been given a variety of names and have evolved over time. In order, they are bu, xiang, kanyu, and feng shui. The changes and evolutions of the subject have been constant, and the forms of the subject have often been re-developed, with consequent changes in its meaning and practice. Feng shui has focused particularly on various stages of human life: not birth, marriage, or plentiful harvest (for which there were other rituals), but site choosing, orienting, city planning, and burial, things covered by the concept of outdoor place used by this study. An auspicious place had to fulfill various criteria: it either had to be oriented in a way that benefited householders or is in a form that encouraged the right 'Qi'. Of course, these criteria also provide evidence of common sense like facing the south to get more sunlight, but by ritualising these practices, participants provided easy concepts that were generally accepted and had a shared understanding and recognition. By practicing feng shui a place can go beyond its physical forms and become a place which is a spiritual reflection of the environment which is consistent in a certain socio-cultural environment.

Historical feng shui, or kanyu, was part of imperial daily life and was present in interactions between scholar-gentry and popular culture where it provided a balance which negotiated

between the orthodox and the popular. Feng shui knowledge was under the state's careful control, while feng shui practices of the outdoor environment, burial, in particular, were considered a part of 'orthodoxy' culture. The requirement for mountain forms around a tomb was a development of the gentry's aesthetic standards, which were powerful enough to transmit their preferences to the imperial court. It is safe to conclude that the stability of kan yu's theory and practice came from its similarity with mainstream literati preferences which were developed by the gentry scholars. As gentry culture had great social continuity, its established shared taste of orthodox, beauty and philosophical interpretation of the world could hardly be changed. This situation remained until China's imperialism was destroyed by the establishment of Republican China in 1911.

In modern times, there has not been an equal competition between feng shui and orthodox, as the state's power had much more impact on the subject, which changed both its theory and practices. It might still be interesting to most people today that how feng shui survived against national policy during the Republican era as later in the Cultural Revolution the state's tightening policies were undoubtedly effective. Feng shui evolution during the Republican era happened under the joint effort of those who were westernised and those who intended to preserve traditionalism. Attempts of modernising feng shui during the time period were reflected as a series of methods including extend its social foundation and explain its framework by introducing scientific approaches. These actions could not be entirely equalled to today's scientific feng shui, as the latter one is an entirely new interpretation of the subject. While the Cultural Revolution destroyed feng shui more effectively, in far less time than the Republican government spent trying, showing how the state's power could impact on feng shui.

The communist government's harsh policies toward feng shui during the decade were called 'Destroy the Four Olds' (破四旧) and 'Sweep away all the demons and freaks' (横扫一切牛鬼蛇神). Feng shui has been might be secretly preserved in some rural areas but was completely destroyed in the urban environment as all these movements started from the cities.

Since the Cultural Revolution, feng shui can no longer rely on the forces which used to support it. The loss of gentry culture and the broad social consensus has forced feng shui to reform itself in order to receive acceptance from the state. This situation remained even after the Reform and Opening up in 1978. Feng shui was no longer negotiating with the state but instead had to obey to survive. Nowadays rural feng shui is tolerated, or even passively encouraged because it is local; compared to imported western beliefs it is within the government's control. Evidence abstracted from Tao's cases has suggested that it is also communal, as the practice of feng shui in rural areas often involves clans, families, and neighbours. Its nature as a community belief makes it a way to resist the rapidly increasing family churches and underground Christianity organisations in rural areas which alarm the state as foreign intervention. Modern feng shui is valued by its participants and clients, but not necessarily by the state. Urban feng shui practitioners' attempts to gain legitimacy have required little effort. Although there are many organisations founded, they are still not tolerated by the state. While the theoretical attempts of feng shui, which either define it as a science or a traditional aesthetics, are hardly successful negotiation but an obedience awareness of feng shui managed, allowing it to be revived or re-invented after 1978. This has reminded the fact that research on feng shui should not be isolated from China's social and political environment.

The review of on-going feng shui has proved that feng shui continues to mediate the negotiation between place making activities and feng shui participants' specific needs, which has encouraged the adaptability of feng shui both in the rural and urban environment. In today's rural China, feng shui is preserved and perceived as part of daily life in dealing with various place making performances, remaining its considerable impact on rural planning, landscape design, and architecture. Some traditional practices have been revived in the countryside and have enabled an understanding of age-old rituals. Through these practices rural residents not only develop social ties but also express their place attachments. Feng shui practitioners have again become the architects, designers, and planners of rural areas same as historic geomancy practitioners, though there is a feeling that these are now in their last generation due to rapid urbanisation.

In an urban environment, feng shui is taken as a solution to various urban issues relating to house price and urban isolation. The current urban environment imposes various constraints on an otherwise fairly flexible practice, which now concentrates on interiors and responds to the material culture in providing 'auspicious features'. The practice of current urban feng shui also tended to be 'scientific' in order to be tolerated by the state. Practitioners in cities had to promote the subject in various ways, from their education modes to its theoretical framework, all to be recognised a 'modern' subject, either modern or scientific. But in reality involvement with feng shui remains a sensitive issue for certain groups because feng shui's fundamental social perception is still that it is a popular belief. This has explained the current gap between feng shui studies and practice, in which studies attempt to present feng shui as a rational design culture, though its practice is seen as profit-driven.

Today existing studies consider feng shui a science, a religion, or a living tradition. But this study has treated it as a place making approach. Feng shui's nature of being adaptive to different social contexts has been demonstrated by the exploration of on-going feng shui practices. It is hoped that the focus could be drawn onto its current value, not just its past. The recalling of feng shui, either revived or re-invented, has become a notable social phenomenon over two decades, resulted by not only its association with traditional Chinese culture but also the common social need for place identities. Therefore in this study it has been asked, what is the impact of feng shui on different places? how did feng shui's negotiations with the orthodox evolve? A western mind, past or current, might find feng shui confusing, as those who use it have believed deeply in its power without giving quantified reasons: they simply see feng shui as truth from a cognitive point of view. Accepting feng shui in place making activities has allowed whoever controlled it carrying out to obtain the power to lead participants' interpretations of places. By attaching special meanings to ordinary landscapes, feng shui has succeeded in developing bonds between human and place. The remaining significance of feng shui reminds landscape researchers and designers that place making can be impacted by larger social forces as well as unspoken social needs.

## **Significance and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has extended the understanding of the relationship between feng shui and outdoor place making activities both historically and contemporary. The main contribution of this study lies in its demonstration of a contemporary understanding of the interaction between on-going popular belief and place making in both rural and urban environments. Findings in this study

are particularly valuable in responding to China's rapid urbanism and declining place identity. Under the fast progressions of initiatives such as the 'Building a New Socialist Countryside', this study has provided reflections to rural conservation and development.

Current research gaps have been bridged by investigating feng shui practices from a human perspective, highlighting the adaptability of feng shui and explaining its survival, and contributing a reflection on how people react to their changing social environment by creating and reading places in a spiritual way. Our understanding of feng shui can provide references for a general understanding of the relationship between man, belief landscape and changing social environment. Therefore this study would also be interesting to landscape researchers who concerns the lack of awareness of 'place' in related Chinese studies, which is a noticeable shortcoming due to historical reasons.

The understanding of this study will be further enhanced if there is an exploration of feng shui preservation in Hong Kong and Taiwan, particularly during the time from the Republican period to the early stage of the PRC, before 1978. Any future studies that further resolve the remaining questions would extend this study's understandings.

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# Appendix A

## Ethics Approval Letter



Downloaded: 18/10/2017  
Approved: 05/01/2015

Youcao Ren  
Registration number: 130120009  
Landscape  
Programme: phd landscape

Dear Youcao

**PROJECT TITLE:** Feng Shui and Landscape: A Study of Changing Rules and Meanings  
**APPLICATION:** Reference Number 001190

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 05/01/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 001190 (dated 18/07/2014).
- Participant information sheet 002090 version 1 (16/07/2014).
- Participant information sheet 002091 version 1 (16/07/2014).
- Participant consent form 002143 version 1 (18/07/2014).
- Participant consent form 002144 version 1 (18/07/2014).
- Participant consent form 002145 version 1 (18/07/2014).
- Participant consent form 002146 version 1 (18/07/2014).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

*Please see comments above.*

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Sorrill  
Ethics Administrator  
Landscape