



Contemporary Architectural Design

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Many people are interested in applying Feng Shui principles when they are designing a new house or an addition. They are curious about the process employed when first approaching a new site or when analyzing an existing structure to improve the Feng Shui. The thought of using seemingly foreign concepts may seem a bit daunting at first, but Feng Shui solutions are truly accessible to everyone.

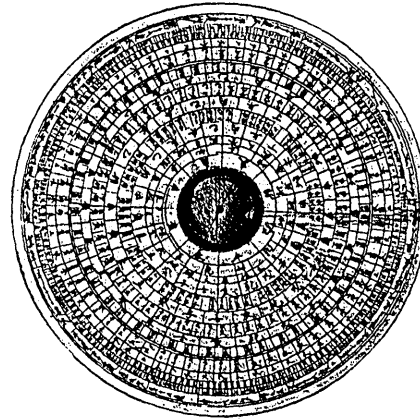
There are several schools of Feng Shui, the most common being Form School and Compass School. A more recent practice is that of Black Sect taught by Professor Lin Yun. Although the various approaches draw upon the same theoretical foundation of Chinese philosophy, they are very different and do not always come to the same conclusions. People often ask which school is the most effective. In truth, each has merit; they complement one another and are useful for different things. Working with a knowledge of the various systems provides a greater understanding of the ways in which Chi behaves in any particular space.

The use of these different systems of Feng Shui is analogous to the way an architectural space must be analyzed from a number of viewpoints to arrive at a design that satisfies all the needs to be consolidated in one building. The designer must create a sound structure, rooms of dimensions appropriate to their projected use, and a proper circulation pattern. Plumbing, wiring, and venting must be routed to deliver water, electricity, and heat to their intended destinations. Any of these concerns could be the focus of a separate study, yet the real challenge lies in combining all of these systems into an aesthetically pleasing and supportive environment for people to live, study, or conduct their business.

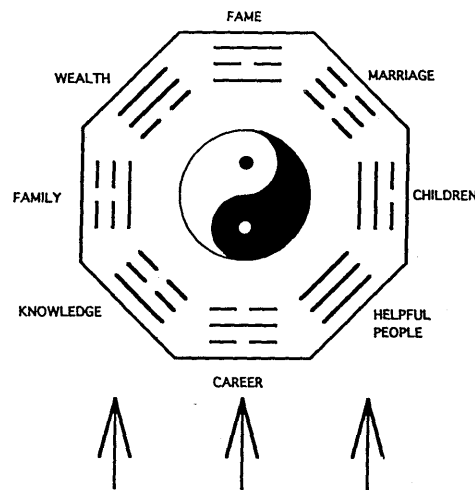
Each school of Feng Shui focuses in a slightly different manner on the ways in which Chi effects the quality of human life.

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Compass School uses a magnetic compass called the loupan to orient buildings, aligning the new structure with overarching geophysical forms and energetic patterns.



Form School looks more closely at the effect the placement, shape of land forms, and structures may have on the building or lot under consideration.



Black Sect Feng Shui incorporates many traditional Form School concepts. It also analyzes places by the application of the Bagua¹ diagram, which represents the essential energy patterns of life applied to where human activity enters.

If there is a door along this wall, at any of these three positions, the Bagua is applied over your floor plan as shown.

In architectural terms, it could be said that these different schools are all capable of operating at different levels. They can examine the patterns of an entire region, the larger context of a site, and the specific locale of a building, as well as the interior environment. By incorporating the techniques of more than one school, you can design for the optimum Feng Shui effect.

¹ Please refer to "The Bagua," p. 153.

The Big Picture

How do you choose a site, design a house, or adjust an existing building in order to create good Feng Shui? Professor Lin Yun provides a basic guideline by quoting the Chinese saying:

風和，日麗，水清，樹茂

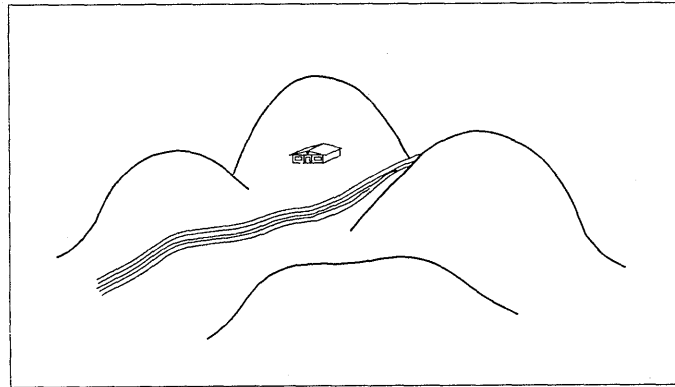
**“Feng he, ri li, shui qing, shu mao,” which means
“Mild wind, warm sun, clear water, lush vegetation,
the essential ingredients for a site with good Feng Shui.”**

In effect, look for a site and specific building location with Chi that will support and enhance life, where humans will thrive. Important first questions to ask are: What are the major land forms? Which direction does the site face? How does a person enter the site? What are the shapes of other land forms and buildings adjacent to the site?

Look to see if the site has the backing of a mountain or a large land form and flanking hills to either side. These elements will provide a sense of support, enclosure, and balance. It is also important that there is an open, relatively level area to the front such as a lawn, a field, or a pond that will allow the Chi to accumulate and benefit the dwelling. In traditional Feng Shui, this is called the Ming Tang or bright hall. Ideally there should also be a smaller hill, building, or landscape feature slightly beyond this area that will serve to contain good Chi in the Ming Tang. This will provide a good view and point of visual interest in the near distance.

Sites with the best Feng Shui are those where a beneficial armchair-shaped enclosure is created by mountains wrapping around the back of the site.¹

¹ Graphic: *Earth Design: The Added Dimension*



The direction this enclosure faces is also important. Traditionally, south was considered ideal. This is also consistent with the modern design placement for passive solar heating in temperate climates and for protection against the prevailing winter winds. When facing other directions, this *armchair* might not contribute the same climatic benefits, although it would still be considered auspicious as it provides a psychologically comforting sense of protection.

How people enter a site also impacts the Feng Shui. Approaching roads, driveways, and walkways that meander like a Chinese garden path allow for gentle Chi flow. Long, straight roads aimed directly at the site are considered inauspicious as Chi may become too sharp or injurious.

Places of power such as temples, churches, palaces, or political seats are the exception to this rule. Long, straight paths function as a way of concentrating Chi at the terminal point, which often houses the altar or the seat of the most important person. Care must still be taken to prevent fast moving Chi from negatively affecting its surroundings. Architectural elements or objects such as incense burners, statues, decorative screens, or fountains should be placed along the path so that Chi is forced to flow around them and become more manageable.

Shapes of other land forms or buildings seen from the site influence it by symbolic association with the energy their shape resembles. For example, the Chinese village of Canpo is thought to produce scholars because of the influence of a nearby mountain range shaped like a writing-brush stand. This beneficial influence has been reinforced by the villagers, who laid out a road in the town called Writing Brush Lane, which is aligned

to appear as a brush resting in the crook of the mountain. To further augment this scholarly analogy, they lined the sides of the road with large stones in the shape of ink sticks.

Adapting to a Smaller Scale

These same Feng Shui concepts can be applied with some adaptations to suit the smaller scale. A good example of this is the Ming Tang or the open area to the front of the building where good Chi can accumulate. In cities that were designed using Feng Shui, such as Beijing or Seoul, the Ming Tang is a large plane bounded by mountains. The Ming Tang for a temple complex or house would be proportionally smaller. Its purpose is to provide a pool or source of good Chi that will benefit the people occupying the city, sacred or governmental structure, corporate building, or home. Even on the scale of an office or a study, there should be a Ming Tang area in front of the desk.

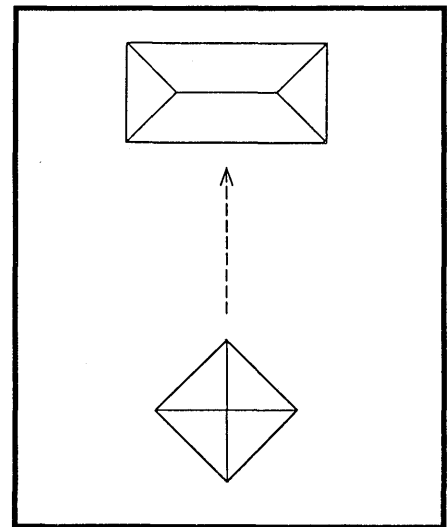
For urban sites, apply nature's principles to man-made objects. Consider buildings as mountains and roads as rivers. In an ideal location, the building you want to buy or build would have a larger supportive structure or building to the back (mountains) with balanced buildings of a slightly smaller size to the right and left. A well proportioned Ming Tang or open area would have roads that curve to embrace the site at the front (rivers), and a tree in a park beyond.

Since not all sites have these ideal configurations, pay close attention to the way the land slopes in relation to the building. Where the land falls away from the back of a building, you will need to compensate for the lack of support that a mountain or taller building would have provided. A stand of large upright trees, vertical architectural elements, terracing, or fences in the back yard could provide this support and keep Chi as well as money and opportunity from slipping away. The Feng Shui principle, *mountain to the back and water to the front*, is a good guideline when examining the relationship of water, roads, and circulation pathways to the building.

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Ask about the previous uses of the structure and fate of the former occupants. This offers insight to the predecessor's Chi, how the Feng Shui impacted them as well as what energies the site or building still contains from the past.³

Check for any *secret arrows* or lines of unseen negative energy aimed at the site. These can have a hidden yet strong influence. Secret arrows could be pointed shapes, sharp edges of neighboring buildings, like corners, ridges, and eaves, or landscape features.



**Secret Arrow Created by
Corner of Neighboring
Building**

When building, if it is not possible to avoid these lines, care should be taken not to locate windows or doors in their path.

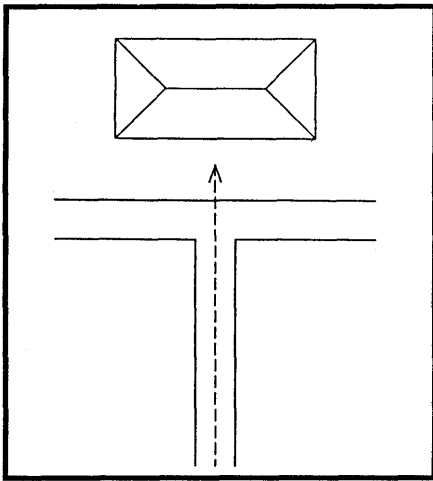
Face secret arrows with solid walls or deflecting forms, or place landscape features such as solid stone features in their path. This clearly illustrates the Taoist concept of *one ounce deflecting one thousand pounds*.

³ For information on a clearing ritual, please refer to "The Bones of Your Home," p. 399.

Assessing the Body of a Space

The layout, shape, structure, and elements of a building create what can be called its *bones*.⁴ Building elements are one area where there is general agreement between the various schools of Feng Shui and sensible design practice.

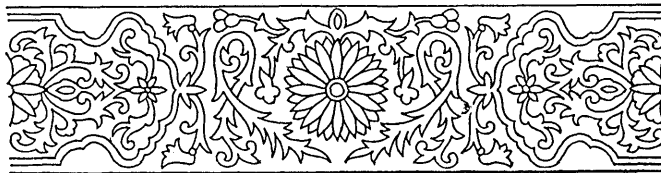
Doors are the Mouths of a Building:



Avoid locating a door facing a secret arrow.

A secret arrow created by a straight road is also called a T-intersection.

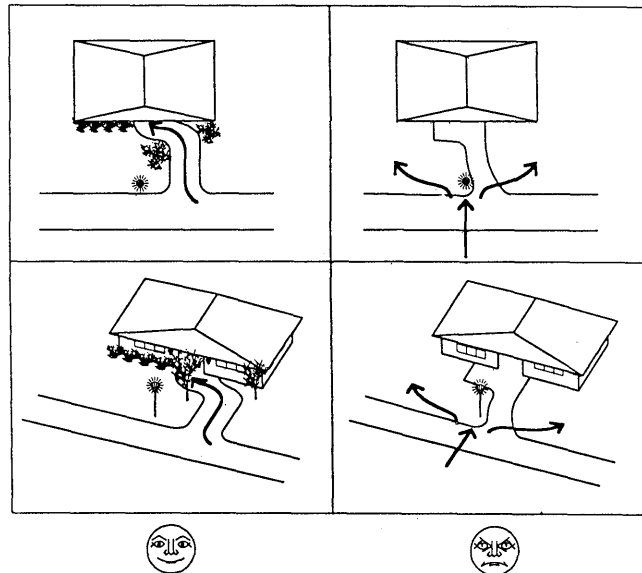
Provide a welcoming open entrance.



⁴ Please refer to "The Bones of Your Home," p. 399.

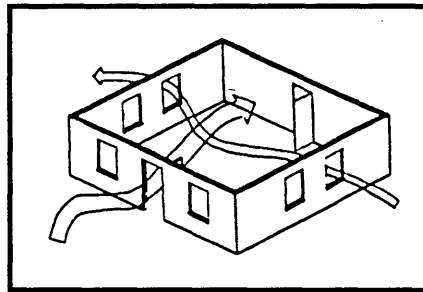
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Avoid elements that block, like trees or telephone poles.⁵



This allows for good Chi to flow in from the Ming Tang while keeping opportunities out in the world easily accessible to the occupants. Avoid a direct line between the front and back doors.

Windows Are the Eyes of a Building:



Windows should be located to provide good flow, natural light, and ventilation, and should be properly distributed so as to not create a glare or an imbalanced lighting situation.

The windows should be located to take full advantage of beautiful views and scenes and to avoid any emphasis of views with negative connotations.⁶

⁵ Graphic: *Earth Design: The Added Dimension*.

⁶ Graphic: *Earth Design: The Added Dimension*

Pathways Set up Movement Patterns and Chi Flow:

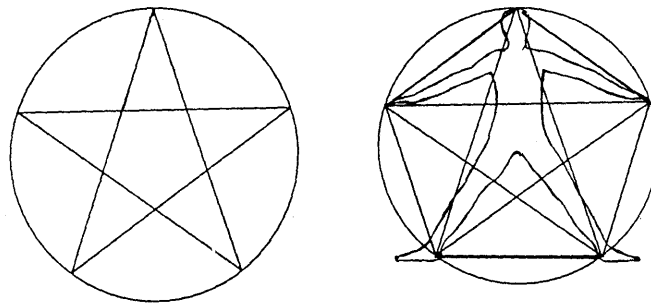
The winding garden path is a good model. Long, straight, and narrow corridors create a poor quality Chi, causing problems at their termination point. They also divide a space into sides, preventing the desired interplay of yin and yang, one of the fundamental goals of good Feng Shui design.

Stairs Create Strong Downward Flowing Patterns of Chi:

Structures with stairs directly facing the exterior doors can lose Chi to the outside. It is best to locate the stairs so they send Chi to an area where an augmentation will benefit the occupants, such as a kitchen, living room, or study.

Proportion and Dimensions Are Extremely Important:

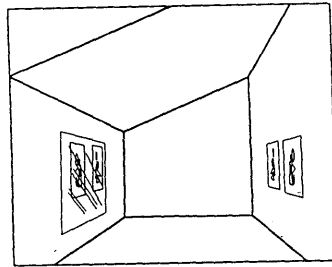
The dimensions of buildings, rooms, and elevation composition are critical from both a Feng Shui and an architectural perspective. Use proportional shapes and ratios such as the Golden Mean or Pi. Chinese geomancy rules of dimensions help establish the proper proportion of width to length to height and the proper composition of buildings, rooms, built-ins, doors, windows, and trim details.



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Structural Elements Impact the Space:

Beams, columns, floors, ceilings, and roofs can impact the Feng Shui of a space. As a general rule, avoid beams over important areas. Columns can be used to define a space, but their location should not block Chi flow. Sharp edges of columns and outside corners should be in areas that do not cause problems; otherwise, they should be rounded or modified to soften their effect.



Avoid ceilings that slope in a single direction, or balance them with opposing forms.⁷

Materials Provide Balance:

Materials and colors⁸ have qualities like hard and soft, warm and cool, rough and smooth. These polarities can be viewed in terms of yin and yang, which can be utilized to balance Chi in architectural spaces and should be chosen appropriately.

Edges and Borders, Yin and Yang in Play:

The transition between a building and the garden area⁹ can be made with roof overhangs, decks, steps, or curbs to allow the most interplay of yin and yang: in and out, light and shade. Other conditions, such as a bathroom next to a kitchen, which are common because of practical plumbing considerations, would require a strong, definite separation. A solid, sound insulated wall with the door located away from the border area is one solution.

⁷ Graphic: *Earth Design: The Added Dimension*

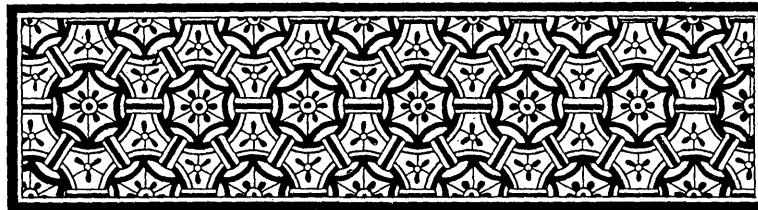
⁸ Please refer to *Earth Design: The Added Dimension*.

⁹ Please refer to "Turn Signals for the Unconscious," p. 171.

This separates the energy of the kitchen and its life-absorbing principle from the energy of the bathroom and its energy-eliminating principle. In using the elements, keep the fire and earth of the kitchen away from the water of the bathroom.

The layout of rooms in a building can also be approached from a yin and yang perspective. The front of a building is considered yang: symbolically south, outer world, public. Toward the rear of a building, it becomes more yin: symbolically north, inner world, private. This concept is developed to an extremely high degree in the emperor's palace in the Forbidden City in Beijing, perhaps the most consciously Feng Shui designed space in the world.

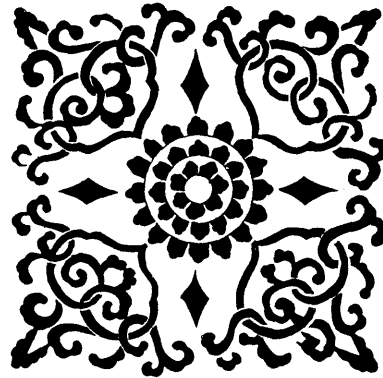
The front of the building is more public, like the entry hall and living room. The rear of a building, or areas most remote from the front door, are more private and are a better location for bedrooms. There are always exceptions to these rules. Good design and Feng Shui principles consider other issues such as site, occupant Chi, and time factors.



Yin and yang also bestow energetic personalities to the sides of a building. Left is considered symbolically east or yang, and right is symbolically west and yin. The sides of a building should reflect a balance of yang and yin just as the ideal site has balancing land forms to the left and right. The center position of a building represents the *Tai Chi* position. Locating a kitchen or bathroom in this position is strongly discouraged as all good energy gets pulled down the center drain.

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The Bagua associations¹⁰ of Black Sect Feng Shui provides a useful framework for analyzing the energies of various areas of the building. Compass points¹¹ are helpful in determining the layout of the building. When the shadings of yin and yang through the building are derived from the true magnetic directions, they have an actual relationship to the sun and nature. An example of this orientation is to locate rooms that would most benefit from the energy of the rising sun to the east.



As with architecture, the highest practice of Feng Shui consists of much more than merely applying an amalgam of rules or of problem solving through just one discipline. Feng Shui transcends the practical solutions to problems to create a pleasing and harmonious blend of space and form and of light and shadow. The practice of Feng Shui and the deepest understanding of this complex system add up to the simplest division: Chi and the nature of yin and yang.

¹⁰ Please refer to "The Bagua," p. 35.

¹¹ Please refer to "The Seven Portents," p. 93.

Excerpted from
The Feng Shui Anthology

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In *The Feng Shui Anthology*, when the **Bagua** is discussed, **only the Life-Aspiration Energies are mentioned** (except in Derek Walter's article.). **To work with the Bagua and to maximize your Feng Shui with the information of all the masters, you must include your 8) Best Directions and 9) Flying Star Energies.**

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