

Sorting through the Feng Shui "Schools"

by Charlene P. Weaver

Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, began its rise in popularity throughout the United States in the early 1980s. An authority on Feng Shui from the perspective of Black Sect Tantric Buddhism, Professor Thomas Lin Yun is credited with introducing the concepts to the Western world. Attributed with the ability to create balance and harmony in a given space, Feng Shui techniques are many, and confusion abounds.

It has become clear to me that there is a need for unbiased information meant to inform and educate the general public, not to sell a specific school of thought or service. It is my sincere intention that the following provide insight into the varied techniques used to create harmonious environments based on the Chinese principles of Feng Shui.



There are several different "schools" of Feng Shui, and although all work with environmental *ch'i* (life force), it is the use of different techniques that separate the schools and can lead to confusion. I will look at the four most popular "schools" practiced in the United States. The first three are most often referred to as "traditional" schools and adhere to the time-proven principles of the Tao, the *I Ching*, Chinese Five-Element theory, and *ch'i*. The fourth maintains the original proven principles but also incorporates modern Western knowledge, thus creating a contemporary form of Feng Shui.

Landform

The primary principle of the Landform school is to identify or create specific landscape features, or landforms, known as the four celestial animals. It is ideal to have a mountain (the tortoise) behind you, two hills (the dragon and the tiger) to your left and right, and water (the phoenix) in front. This configuration is also referred to as an armchair with a supportive back, two armrests, and a footstool. The house, located in the center, is then properly positioned in the power, or energy, spot.

This configuration also holds true for the primary locations within a home or business. When sitting at a desk, you should have a wall behind you, a wall to each side, and the door within your

line of sight. This layout continues in the bedroom: the head of the bed is placed against the wall, there is a wall on both sides, and the door in front. In the above scenarios, a desk or bed on the same wall as the door is considered unfavorable. Although this method appears quite simple, there are specific techniques used to recreate the four celestial animals both inside and outside a building.

Eight Mansions

This school, often referred to as the East West Theory, is unique due to the inclusion of birth data in the calculation. A *Lou Pan*, known in the West as a compass, is used to determine the exact direction the building in question "sits." A pie-shaped chart is placed over the floor plan, with one of the eight directions assigned to each piece of the pie. Based on the sitting direction, four pieces are believed to carry auspicious ch'i, while the remaining four carry inauspicious ch'i.

The second calculation takes the birth year into consideration. Upon completing the calculation, you are left with a single digit between one and nine, which correlates to a specific direction. Four numbers are placed in the East Life Group, with the other four allocated to the West Life Group.

The goal of Eight Mansions Feng Shui is to live in a house associated with the same life group as that to which your birth data equates. An East person should reside in an East house, while West people should dwell in a West house. Unfavorable locations in the house should be delegated to storage areas or rooms that require less use. When an unfavorable area must be used on a daily basis, the direction the person faces is then utilized. If an adjustment is needed to correct an unfavorable energy, the five element cycles are used.

Flying Star

While most schools of Feng Shui are static in nature and analyze only a given area/home or direction, Flying Star is considered a complete system that includes time and direction as well as the environment, interior design, and forms. Flying Star Feng Shui requires accurate compass readings, exact construction dates, correct identification of all exterior landforms, and various mathematical and spatial calculations to correctly analyze the structure in question. Additionally, the internal environment must be considered, including the shape of the house; its general appearance and style; and the floor plan, including the entrance, corridors, stairways, and the positions of the kitchen, bedrooms, and more.

The Flying Star method utilizes nine special influences, referred to as "Stars," which are energetic qualities or influences of nature. These Stars reveal visible and invisible influences affecting living environments. The powerful combination of time and direction creates an energy field in a building, and while the direction is constant, the time factor changes monthly, yearly, and in conjunction with the total of nine twenty-year "cycles" that occur within the three sixty-year "eras." (Without going into too much detail, each sixty-year cycle is an era. Different patterns of energy accompany each of the three eras: the Upper Era, Middle Era, and the Lower Era. Each era consists of three twenty-year cycles; hence the nine cycles.)

Additionally, the attributes of the Stars change with the cycles of time. A Star that is favorable in cycle 7 may become unfavorable in cycle 8. The Five Elements are the foundation of Flying Star Feng Shui, and hold the key to remedying unfavorable situations. This school is believed by

some to be the ultimate in the practice of Feng Shui, and requires extensive training to correctly "read the Stars."

Black Sect Tantric Buddhism Feng Shui

Grandmaster Professor Lin Yun introduced the ancient art of Feng Shui from the perspective of Black Sect Tantric Buddhism to the West in the late 1970s. By incorporating time-proven Eastern principles with modern Western knowledge of medicine, physiology, psychology, architecture, ecology, the study of colors, and social sciences, Professor Lin Yun has been able to clarify and expand the ancient Buddhist teachings.

Black Sect Tantric Buddhist Feng Shui differs from the traditional schools in that it uses the architecturally designed front door — as opposed to a compass — to place the *bagua*, an overlay used to locate the life situations within the home or business. Unlike other Feng Shui schools, Black Sect Tantric Buddhism operates on two separate levels, *syng* and *yi*.

Syng encompasses the tangible environmental factors, where both interior and exterior design elements are analyzed to determine the condition of ch'i and the manner in which it flows through the space in question. Unfavorable conditions are addressed by using the nine basic cures, which include bright or light-refracting objects; sound; and living objects, including plants, bonsai, and flowers.

Additionally, the use of water features, moving objects, heavy and electrically powered objects, bamboo flutes, and color may be used to alleviate design imperfections and facilitate favorable ch'i flow. The placement of furniture within and landscaping elements without are extremely important to a thorough analysis.

Yi — loosely translated as wish, will, or intention — is a vital but intangible piece of the adjustment process. Unique to Black Sect Tantric Buddhist Feng Shui is the ability to adjust personal ch'i that has been negatively influenced by inauspicious environmental ch'i. Use of these techniques by a trained professional will most certainly help in creating a balanced and harmonious life.

Choosing a Feng Shui Professional

In summary, the majority of Feng Shui methods practiced in the United States today are based on exactly the same ancient principles, including the Tao, *I Ching*, the Five Elements, and yin/yang. Although the techniques may differ, they all take the shape of a structure and the placement of its interior and exterior objects into consideration, and all are capable of helping to create harmonious, balanced environments. Extensive training and experience is required to perform an accurate analysis, and contrary to popular belief, none can stand on intuition alone.

As Feng Shui becomes increasingly popular, so do the number of those professing to practice on a professional level. As of this writing, there are no educational requirements, professional guidelines, or professional organizations governing the industry. Too often, the only education acquired is by reading a book or two, or perhaps attending a weekend seminar. It is therefore the responsibility of each individual to thoroughly investigate a practitioner's background prior to a consultation.

It is commonly suggested that when seeking the expertise of a Feng Shui consultant, a detailed

curriculum vitae or personal profile be required. The information received should include class date, topic, and length of class taken. The instructor's name and an overview of his or her experience in the field will help to determine the practitioner's knowledge level. Above all, don't hesitate to request the phone numbers of those the person has studied with so that you may verify the information received.

And always remember, "Feng Shui doesn't tell your future; it creates it!"

Charlene P. Weaver is one of Seattle's leading Feng Shui consultants. Owner of the Feng Shui Design Group and director of the Feng Shui Académie, she is highly experienced in the above-mentioned Feng Shui schools, having trained with numerous masters across the United States. She may be reached at (206) 284-5600 or <<http://www.FengShuiacademe.com/>>.

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