

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO FENG SHUI

What is Feng Shui?

Original sources on the traditional way on Feng Shui are very obscure, since the practice was kept secret among the practitioners who traditionally, passed on the knowledge only to their offspring or chosen apprentices. Moreover, the real knowledge of Feng Shui is highly complex and esoteric; hence it is not practical to lay out the traditional teaching in any detail here. Therefore I have chosen a number of texts which popularize and provide source of basic understandings of Feng Shui from various modern sources.

According to Peter Walter:

Feng Shui is the insight that there is one more synergetic relationship with nature, one more interaction of man with his environment that is not yet seen by the other disciplines of Chinese wisdom: it is the fact that the forms and the design the landscape and human constructions represent have an energetic influence on our life, our health, our fortune, with one word, our destiny. As a logical consequence of this astonishing observation, Feng Shui teaches us how

to interact with nature and our environment in a way to positively influence our destiny.²

There are many ways in which Feng Shui has been described in books and other sources. The above is one of the interesting descriptions of Feng Shui that I have found. The followings are the several interpretations which explains the traditional and the modern way of Feng Shui. Because of its complexity, I have obtained versions of uncomplicated definitions of Feng Shui, mostly from Lillian too, who describes Feng Shui very clearly.

Feng Shui offers a method of living life in harmonious relationship with the earth's environment and with its energy lines. Its practice is believed to enhance your good fortune in many areas of your life, including your family relationships, your career and your business. Feng Shui is described variously as a philosophy, an art, and a science. However, in most of the sources it is referred to as a science. Here is a definition of Feng Shui given as both a science and an art:

² Walter, Peter F. Dr., "Life is Energy, The truth behind Feng Shui", 1999 Available at <http://www.autohuna.com/integral/lifeneng.html>

'Feng Shui can be stated as a form of "Geomancy" or "Earth Wisdom." and it has evolved to be both a Science and an Art. The science comes from the calculations and methodology used in analyzing a property. The art of Feng Shui is the wisdom acquired from performing a multitude of analysis and knowing the exact degree to which the remedies (which are the results of the scientific analysis) are prescribed.'³

According to another source, Feng Shui is known as *Kanyu*, which is described as:

'A science deeply rooted in Chinese culture, involving the understanding of the Confucian classics such as the I Ching (the book of Changes) and the meaning of yin and yang (the theory of negative and positive forces): the application of Chinese symbolism of buildings, the knowledge of the theory of magnetism and the understanding of the working of ecology; the grasp of the science of landscaping and garden design as well as the understanding of the technical skill in treating the interior and exterior of a building.'⁴

The practice of Feng Shui becomes very complex when it comes to mastering it. It involves careful study of topography and other elements, which is essential to the real understanding of how to analyze the environment and the changes to be made. Feng Shui masters are grounded in the basic fundamentals, and their interpretations of the

³ What is Feng Shui? Available at <http://www.168fengshui.com>, pp.1-2.

⁴ Evelyn Lip, *Feng Shui* (London, Academy Editions, 1995), p.61.

ancient texts are often based on years of practical experience, turning their own interpretation into practice.

Nevertheless, the essential element is the balance. The practice of Feng Shui requires a fundamental understanding of the Chinese view of the universe, which is the beliefs of two cosmic forces, two opposing yet complementary energies that shape the universe and everything in it. It involves an appreciation of the principles of yin and yang forces, which brings the cosmic breath (Chi) and the relationships of the five elements and their productive and destructive cycles.

The important symbols are the eight-sided Pa Kua and the nine-sector grid-the Lo Shu square and the I Ching (Book of Changes), all are fundamental to understanding the Chinese view of the universe and the forces that affect human destiny.

'In modern Feng Shui practice, buildings and roads can stand in for the hills, mountains, and roads of the ancient masters. There are, however, many pitfalls to avoid, and man-made structures need to be analyzed with care, for many represent more of a threat than a benefit. In Feng Shui, anything straight that is pointed at the land or home should be avoided.'⁵

In addition, 'blending buildings harmoniously with natural and artificial

⁵ Lillian Too, *The Complete illustrated Guide to Feng Shui*, (Shaftesbury, Element Books Limited, 1997), p.122.

structures in the landscape, following Feng Shui guidelines, and taking proper note heights, and hills other buildings, roads and waterways promises food fortunes, health, and happiness'.⁶

Ultimately, one has to put into consideration that forces that determine environmental balance are continually changing, and when alterations are made, caused either by natural phenomena or by man-made influence, Feng Shui has to be also modified. Feng Shui is not a static science. Subsequently, Lo, a well known professional Feng Shui practitioner from Hong Kong, describes Feng Shui as follows:

'Feng Shui is a study of the living environment, which includes our earth, the landscape, the sea, the rivers and the houses in which man takes shelter. Traditional Chinese believe that man is a member of the universe and is thus very much influenced by the universe in our daily lives. The universe is our environment. Such forces of nature are able to affect our destiny.'⁷

However, there are more elaborate procedures to be followed in order to make use of Feng Shui effectively. One authentic way to practice any kind of Feng Shui is to first analyze one's birth chart, which is popularly known as the

⁶ Lillian Too, Feng Shui Fundamentals/ Education, (Shaftesbury, Element Books Limited, 1997), p.6.

⁷ Raymond Lo, Feng Shui & Destiny for Managers, (Singapore, Times Editions Pte Ltd., 1996), p.61.

Four Pillars of Destiny; a profound system of human destiny analysis.

'From the birth data, we have obtained the Four Pillars of Destiny, which are the birth year, month, day and the hour of a person. This set of four pillars represents the components of the destiny of a person. However, it only shows us the inborn qualities, character, potential and environment of a person. When life begins, the person will receive the influences from the universe in the form of the five elements, which will prevail all through his life path and interact with his original set of Four Pillars of Destiny to cause ups and downs in life.'⁸

To analyze the Four Pillars of Destiny, it requires a lot of effort to calculate and many years of experience.

Therefore, an experienced and respected Feng Shui master is more popular and is more expensive. In addition to the analysis of the birth chart, the master will also study the residence, office or any location that has been inquired by the customer and then apply the fundamentals of Feng Shui. In other words, every individual has their own Feng Shui application in order to take effect.

Much of the extensive literature written on Feng Shui was available only in Chinese and the principles were not well known in the West. However much of this literature is

⁸ Raymond Lo, *Feng Shui & Destiny for Managers*, (Singapore, Times Editions Pte Ltd., 1996), p.28.

now freely available in Taiwan and Hong Kong where Feng Shui is regarded as a vital part of everyday life.

The origin of these texts goes back at least to the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) in China. Master Yang Yun-Sang is the universally acknowledged founder of Feng Shui. Feng Shui then was confined to the ruling classes more notably to the emperor and his ministers:

'Many of the early records and ancient texts were (and remain) obscure. Their definitions were hidden in archaic language; their meanings locked in symbolic explanations that sometimes give rise to multiple interpretations. Court advisors had to pass imperial examinations that involved acquiring a profound knowledge of the classical Chinese texts. One of these was the I Ching- known in the sought to attain high positions had to be able to interpret the divinations and predictions revealed in the I Ching, an important component of which entailed knowledge of Feng Shui.'⁹

In recent years, there are many books and a lot of information concerning this subject. Some of the books introduce the basics of Feng Shui and the others explain how to apply this metaphysics. However, some of them are very commercial and are too much related just to interior decoration. Furthermore, Feng Shui is classified under different library headings such as, philosophy, art,

⁹ Lillian Too, *The Complete illustrated Guide to Feng Shui*, (Shaftesbury, Element Books Limited, 1997), p.18.

science, geomancy, and another name in Chinese, which is *Kanyu*. Therefore, how does a dictionary on Chinese Symbols have to define Feng Shui?

'For two thousand years geomancy was the science of 'Wind and 'Water' (feng shui). No one would build a house or select a burial spot without consulting the geomancer before hand. In dire necessity, one would make do without advice from the - astrologer or from the adept at interpreting - oracles; but the feng shui expert who today might be described as an ecologist-could not be ignored.

'Ensure harmony in the - Middle', we are told in the 'Book of Rites' (Li-ji), 'and - heaven and - earth take their rightful places and all things flourish.' What mattered was so to channel and organize natural forces that these would exercise as favorable an influence as possible; so houses, bridges, walls, copses, etc., had to be planned and sited with extreme care. Feng Shui required knowledge of the earth's surface (di-li, which is the modern term for 'geography'), the study of - yin and - yang and mastery of a specific technology.'¹⁰

Preferably, it is interesting to observe how Feng Shui became popular in recent years, not only in the countries where Feng Shui was already familiar, but also in the West where the oriental philosophy and traditions are regarded as trendy and mystical. Today there are various sources concerning Feng Shui in English and some are simplified enough for everyone to comprehend. As in former times, in order to seek knowledge on this subject, the Chinese

¹⁰ Wolfram Eberhard, A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols. (NY, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1996), p.125

language was essential to proceed with the understanding of Feng Shui and everything related to it.

From this perspective, the next section will include the development of Feng Shui from China to the neighboring countries, to the West and then to Thai society.

Feng Shui in Other Regions

Lillian Too, one of the leading authorities in Feng Shui today for her numerous publications related to this subject, mentions that migration has been a constant theme throughout the long history of the Chinese people. Chinese people have moved from their original homeland to settle in another, and they have arranged the directions of their homes, and the rooms according to Feng Shui guidelines. Furthermore, most of the Chinese people living in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, and even those who have migrated to America, Canada, and Australia, unconsciously practice some forms of Feng Shui which were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth.

'That it has survived the centuries, and is today widely practiced by Chinese businessmen in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia, is a powerful testament to its efficacy and potency.'¹¹

In Asia, Feng Shui is being practiced in business and in dealing with human relation. As an example, in Taiwan when General Chiang Kai-Shek fled to the island from the Communists in China in 1949, it is believed that he took many of the rich heritages of Feng Shui textbooks. This is how they perpetuate dealing with this science:

'Today Feng Shui is taken very much for granted and the science is so advanced that many of the detailed and very potent advanced formulas of Feng Shui are practiced. It is no coincidence that Taiwan today stands among the richest and wealthiest nations of the world, with foreign reserves larger than the whole of Mainland China and a per capita income that easily matches that of the developed world.'¹²

A slightly different case would be that of Japan, where in recent years there is an increasing number of books written about Feng Shui and various TV programs are devoted to the issue. Feng Shui in Japan is seen as an ancient Chinese science, which assists the individual's goals such as good fortune in wealth, work, and health (even in dieting), by adapting interior decorating arrangements to provide good Feng Shui. The reason of this

¹¹ The information is from Lillian Too, *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Feng Shui*, 1997, p.14.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.19.

popularity seems to be the social desperation experienced by the people.

'In Japan, the country has developed economically while leaving human relationship in jeopardy, as cases of divorce, child bullying, mental illness and environmental problems in the modern Japanese society increases. In response, Feng Shui is practiced to correct the jeopardized condition of the Japanese society. The practice is based upon the arrangements of interior according to a Feng Shui professional in Japan.'¹³

Moreover, Lillian Too mentions that the knowledge of Feng Shui has been slowly crossing the waters to the West, through the executive expatriates who find themselves surrounded by Feng Shui. 'As an example, she mentions expatriates from western companies (which are Citibank, N. M. Rothschild, Shell, and Sime Darby,)'¹⁴ with subsidiaries in Hong Kong practicing Feng Shui and eventually becoming such strong advocates of the practice. They take the practice back with them and follow the basic principles picked up during their stay, or even keep in touch with the Feng Shui consultants even after they leave the country.

Furthermore, another indication of its popularity, which may be noticed in the West, is the number of websites on the internet. About 103 sites were related to this

¹³ KyuRei, Ou, Happy Feng Shui. (Tokyo, TV Asahi, 1996), Intro. Translated.

¹⁴ Lillian Too, The Complete illustrated Guide to Feng Shui, (Shaftesbury, Element Books Limited, 1997),p.16.

subject. The sites were from yahoo.com, which I have first searched in October 1998. However, in the following year there were 162 sites. The sites ranged from descriptions and history of Feng Shui; consultations and seminars with Chat rooms regarding the art; interior decorations and gardening according to Feng Shui; shops for books and enchanting objects, and many more. One of the homepages mentioned that Feng Shui has become more prevalent in the West thus attributing to more and more people becoming aware of how their environment affects them. 'The health effects of high-tension power lines are but one example of how people are becoming cognizant of their environment and its relationship to their health and prosperity.'¹⁵

Feng Shui in Bangkok

According to the English Abstract of a Master thesis by Natthida Sukmanas, titled "The Beliefs in Feng Shui as a Way of Life of Chinese Thais in Bangkok", she states:

'The belief in Feng Shui had diffused to Thai society by Chinese population, and has impacted way of life of Chinese descendents. Most of the Chinese descendents do not know the

¹⁵ What is Feng Shui? Available at <http://www.168fengshui.com>, p.8.

philosophy and the practices, and depend on the "professional" for advice. Socio-economic status also influences the decision to follow Feng Shui practice or not.¹⁶

The thesis also mentions that there are two kinds of Feng Shui. One is related to the burial ground, which represents lineage continuity and unity; while Feng Shui of living abodes represent security, safety and prosperity. According to this, the Chinese Thais in Bangkok practice Feng Shui and they depend on "professionals" for advice.

Moreover, in relation to this thesis, and to a recent research, Feng Shui in Bangkok was known mostly to the Chinese Thais and was not as wide-spread before the 1988s. More accurately, according to data of publications of Thai books related to Feng Shui, the number of books on the subject began to escalate from the 1994s and onwards. More details will be provided in the following section. Furthermore, as Feng Shui became popularized in recent years, it became more related towards the Feng Shui of the living abodes; in other words less attention was given to the Feng Shui of the burial ground.

¹⁶ Natthida Sukmanas, *The Beliefs in Feng Shui as a Way of Life of Chinese Thais in Bangkok*, M. A. Thesis, Abstract, 1996, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Chulalongkorn University.

Considering these reasons of the practice of Feng Shui in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and in the Western countries, one ponders whether Feng Shui in Thailand is a result of natural knowledge passed on from generation to generation, or whether the people are following the trend of those countries, which have succeeded, to a certain level, or is it because of similar reasons as of Japan? Is it due to the influence of the Thais who studied abroad, and came back with the interest of applying the knowledge through the media in the West?

Is Feng Shui a recent trend in Thailand?

Partial reasons of why the people became more interested in practicing Feng Shui in Thailand in recent years will be analyzed accordingly to the interviews following this chapter.

Recent Research

The research for this thesis started from the year 1997 onwards. At the time, it was difficult to know the actual information on the number of books published related to this subject. Even through the library achieves, the

listed books were too limited to make any assumptions, and the best way to do the research was through the interviews.

However, as I was collecting most recent data to show the popularity of Feng Shui during the recent years, I obtained a number of books related to Feng Shui from two of the major bookstores in Bangkok. One is the Kinokuniya Bookstore at Emporium Shopping Complex, and the other is the Chulalongkorn Bookstore at the University campus.

The system of searching through the computer is a more precise way to find the number of books and the year in which they were published. At the Kinokuniya Bookstore mainly retailing English books, I obtained an index from a CD-ROM of their main supplier (Baker & Taylor) of The United States.

Unfortunately, I could only acquire the information at the store, and no printouts of the list were allowed. Likewise, the manager of the bookstore could not obtain a list of the numbers of how many books were retailed on Feng Shui and in during what years.

Through the CD-ROM from this supplier, there were 550 books concerning the subject on Feng Shui. Most of them were published in The United States, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. The list is from the years 1986 to 2000.

The following is the list of the years, and the number of books, sorted and searched according to date published:

Year of Publication	Number of books related to Feng Shui
1986	2
1987	1
1988	3
1989	4
1990	3
1991	10
1992	2
1993	2
1994	12
1995	17
1996	49
1997	90
1998	145
1999	208
2000	5...

From the 550 books that were listed, Lillian Too wrote 84. The books are from the years 1995 to 1999:

Year of Publication	Number of books by Lillian Too
1995	3
1996	7
1997	23
1998	27
1999	24

Lillian Too's books include basic Feng Shui for beginners to a more advanced series. She has written many hard cover books which appears to be more like 'coffee table books', nonetheless, with a lot of information

written in a simple fashion for everyone to understand. Her other books are mini-series, which are divided in subjects, such as Feng Shui for children, careers, fame, networking and etc.

I consider that her books may partially be one of the triggers of the popularity on this subject not only in Thailand but also in many other countries. In my opinion, the reasons are due to her flashy covers, with many illustrations (photographs) in order to clearly comprehend the content, and most of all easy to read and perceive the basic essence of Feng Shui.

The next data is from Chulalongkorn Bookstore which is one of the major bookstores in Bangkok retailing books written in various languages but mainly books in Thai. According to their data bank from their own website, There were 103 books related to Feng Shui written in Thai. There were from the year 1987 (2530) to year 2000(2543).

Year of Publication	Number of books written in Thai on Feng Shui
1987 (2530)	1
1993 (2536)	4
1994 (2537)	10
1995 (2538)	18
1996 (2539)	13
1997 (2540)	17
1998 (2541)	19
1999 (2542)	13
2000 (2543)	8

- *The tables above are only from the years 1980s and beyond, which is not a full list of books related to Feng Shui.*

Through these recent data, the publications of books related to Feng Shui has been increasingly rising from the years 1994s onwards. Today, numerous books and websites related to Feng Shui can be found through the internet. As for example' there were 14,267 Web search results most relevant to "Feng Shui" at <http://www.infoseek.go.com>, and at <http://www.altavista.com>, there were 29838 Web pages during October 1999. Following other search websites, as <http://yahoo.com>, bookstore sites as <http://www.amazon.com> are increasing in numbers with books relevant to this subject "Feng Shui".