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3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

The do’s & taboos of the second category, concerning the ‘orientation’ of built spaces, are also of great importance in the Chinese Feng-Shui and the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions. While the do’s & taboos of the first category instruct people to differentiate the auspicious shapes/proportions for the to-be-built spaces from the inauspicious one(s), those of the second category tell people to differentiate between the auspicious and the inauspicious ‘directions of orientation’ for the to-be-built spaces. According to these do’s & taboos, one should, at the outset of building a space, first of all determine which direction(s) of orientation is/are auspicious for this space, since the auspicious direction(s) of orientation is/are thought to be the source of health, wealth and happiness; whereas the inauspicious one(s) to lead to calamities. In the practice of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra, the direction to which the ‘main entrance’ opens or the ‘main façade’ turns is usually supposed to stand for the ‘direction of orientation’ of the whole built space.

In general, these do’s & taboos can be classified into two groups. The first group contains those stipulating that the orientation of a space should be determined according to the spatial system constructed by the ‘cardinal points’. According to these do’s & taboos, the ‘auspicious direction(s) of orientation’ for a built space should be one or more of the four cardinal points (i.e. N, E, S and W) or of the four intermediate points (i.e. NE, SE, SW and NW). Moreover, among these auspicious directions of orientation, some may be considered to be ‘more auspicious’ than others, and there could be a direction which is taken to be the ‘most auspicious’ one. The second group comprises the do’s & taboos prescribing that the orientation of a built space should be determined by reference to the ‘objects dominating the external environment’. In other words, the built space is supposed to be oriented to a particular object which is dominant in the visible natural/built environment where the built space is located. The object I am referring to could be a mountain, a hill, or the center of a residential territory, which is occupied by a temple, a palace or a sacred open space. As long as the built space is pointing to such an object, this built space is considered to have an ‘auspicious direction of orientation’.

In the current chapter, the do’s & taboos concerning the orientation of built spaces will also be compared and analyzed primarily in the frame of the Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross shorter-cycle theme. We will see how these do’s
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and taboos play crucial roles in supporting built spaces to represent cosmic and social realities.
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

3.1 Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’
Support Built Spaces to Represent Their Connections to the Cosmic Structure

3.1.1 Analyzing the Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ in the Frame of the Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross Shorter-cycle Theme

As mentioned earlier, in the practice of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra, the ‘orientation’ of a built space is usually defined according to the direction to which its main entrance opens or its main façade turns. Given that the main entrance and façade are usually on the ‘front side’ of a built space, the orientation of the whole built space can be represented by the orientation of its front side. Furthermore, the built space with a front side also implies that it has a back side. When the built space is oriented to a particular direction, its ‘front-back axis’ is pointing to this direction as well. Consequently, based on this front-back axis, the left and right sides along with the ‘left-right axis’ of the build space can also be defined (Fig. 5). It can be said that the Do’s & Taboos regarding the orientation highlight the built space as an axial structure made up of the front-back and left-right axes. As we have learned in Chapter 2, the two horizontal axes together represent the Cosmic Cross, and the intersection point of the two axes represents the crucial place where the Axis Mundi is erected. Obviously, the Do’s & Taboos regarding the orientation of built spaces are also bound up with the Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross architectural shorter-cycle theme; therefore, this shorter-cycle theme will be used as the primary frame of analysis in this chapter.

Undeniably, the concepts of front, back, left and right are body-based, and as indicated by Aart Mekking, the mental construct of the two horizontal axes of front-back and left-right in the built space is based on the Anthropomorphic long-cycle tradition of worldwide architectural representations.1 This point of view is also supported by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought:

We see from the front, normally move in the direction the front faces, and interact with objects and other people at our fronts. Our backs are opposite our fronts; we don’t typically perceive our own backs, we normally don’t move backwards, and we don’t typically interact with

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1 Mekking 2009, p. 36.
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objects and people at our backs... The concepts front and back are body-based... We have faces and move in the direction in which we see. Our bodies define a set of fundamental spatial orientation that we use not only in orienting ourselves, but in perceiving the relationship of one object to another.\(^2\)

As we know, human beings are born with the sense organs mostly at/towards their fronts, such as eyes, noses, mouths and ears. This could imply that it should be through the front side that we are able to see, to perceive, to communicate, and to establish the relationship between us and our external world. Likewise, as regards the built space, it should also be through the front side that its relationship to the external world could be established. Such a relationship is established on the basis of the orientation of the built space to a particular direction of the external world. In both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, the analogy between the building and the human body is frequently made to explain why the front side of a building is so important, and the main entrance and façade are usually analogous to the mouth and face of a human body.

For instance, in the Feng-Shui text of *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*, it is said that:

*The house that absorbs the cosmic Qi through its main entrance door is like the man that breathes in the air through its mouth. Therefore, the main entrance is also called ‘Mouth of Qi’.\(^3\)*

In another Feng-Shui text, the *Zhaipu Dacheng*, several interesting names are labeled to house buildings according to the anthropomorphic characteristics of their main façades, such as the ‘single-ear house’, the ‘double-ear house, the ‘hair-disheveled house’, etc.\(^4\)

Likewise, in the *Agni Purāna*, a Hindu religious and Vāstu-Shāstra-related text, the following passage can be found:

*The door is to be considered as its aperture of the mouth.\(^5\)*

In another Vāstu-Shāstra text, the *Mānasāra*, we can also find some analogies drawn between the different parts of the front porch of a building and the different parts of a human face:

*For all (the edifices) there should be a front porch... Of the seventeen*

\(^2\) Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 34.

\(^3\) Huang 1998, p. 232.「宅之受氣於門，猶人之受氣於口也，故大門名曰氣口。」

\(^4\) The ‘single-ear house’ (單耳房), the ‘double-ear house’ (雙耳房), and the ‘hair-disheveled house’ (批頭房). See: Wei 1985, pp. 536-542.

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parts of the height of the porch... the ‘neck’ should be one part, and the ‘face’ should be three parts... The ‘nose’ and its supporter should be one part... The ‘eyes’ should be long and broad, and the cheeks round... The ‘ears’ at the end of the ‘cheeks’ should be like those of the elephant.\(^5\)

As we can see, based on the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations, the front of a built space is considered as important as the front of a human body. Of a built space, only when the front side is recognized, the orientation can be determined. And only when the orientation is determined, could the connection between the built space and its external world be established.

3.1.2 The Orientation of Built Space as a Representation of the Connection between Built Spaces and the Cosmic Structure

The do’s & taboos regarding the orientation of built spaces highlight that the built space is an inseparable part of the external world which signifies a ‘wider spatial structure’. It is through the orientation that the connection between the built space and the wider structure can be established. In other words, the orientation is a powerful representation of the connection. Therefore, the ‘cardinal/intermediate point’ or ‘the object dominating the external environment’, to which the built space is oriented, thus serves as a meaningful ‘point of reference’, according to which the connection between the built space and the wider spatial structure can be established. Obviously, the two groups of do’s & taboos regarding the orientation of built spaces imply two kinds of mental construct of the wider structure.

Let us first consider those of the first group that inform people to determine the orientation of a built space by referring to the cardinal points. In this case, the four cardinal points of north, east, south and west are used as the ‘points of reference’. According to the four cardinal points, it can be understood that the wider spatial structure is made up of two horizontal axes, i.e. the E-W and N-S axes. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the two axes are sun-based and usually conceptualized as the *Cosmic Cross* manifested on a world scale. That is to say, the wider structure to which the built space should be stably connected is a representation of the cosmic structure. Therefore, being oriented to one of the four cardinal points can be seen as being connected to the cosmic structure. It

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is also important to note that once the built space is oriented to a cardinal point, the two body-based axes of the built space (i.e. the front-back and left-right axes), in the mental construct, can be in line with the two sun-based axes of the cosmic structure. Accordingly, the built space can also be seen as being located in the cosmic center—the most stable point of the cosmos—from which the *Axis Mundi* rises (Fig. 6).

As regards the do’s & taboos of the second group, obviously, they emphasize that the ‘object dominating the external environment’ should be taken to be the ‘point of reference’ for the built space to be connected to the wider spatial structure. As mentioned earlier, this object can be a natural mountain or hill, or a built territorial center occupied by a temple, a palace or an open space. Given that these objects are usually very prominent and dominant, it is reasonable to assume that they are conceptualized by people as the *Axis Mundi*, or the cosmic center, manifested on the environmental scale. The tangible external environment in which the built space is situated thus can be seen as a representation of the ‘cosmic structure’. Once the built space is oriented to such an object, it can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center (Fig. 7).

As we can see, it is not only the ‘built space’ itself but also the ‘wider spatial structure’ in which the built space is situated that should be considered as a representation of the cosmic structure, and the orientation can be seen as a powerful connection between the two representations of the cosmic structure that are manifested on two different scales. In Chapter 2, I have discussed how the do’s & taboos concerning the ‘configuration’ support the architectural representations of the cosmic structure. In the current chapter, we will further discuss how the do’s & taboos regarding the ‘orientation’ support the representations of the connection between the built space and the cosmic structure mentally constructed on a larger scale.
3.2 **Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Orientation Should Be Determined by the ‘Cardinal Points’**

The do’s & taboos regarding the orientation of the first group, which lead people to orient the built space by referring to the cardinal points, can be easily found in old texts, many of which even survive into the present, still exercising profound influence on the modern practice of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra. These do’s & taboos have many variations: some prescribing that the built space should have four entrance doors on the four sides which open to the four cardinal points respectively, while some others stipulating that the built space should have an only main entrance which opens to one of the four cardinal points. Moreover, in both the Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, we can find some do’s & taboos which emphasize that the determination of the orientation should be made according to the ‘clockwise order’. It is also important to note that, as indicated by some do’s & taboos of the two traditions, some directions of orientation are more auspicious than others; in the Feng-Shui tradition, the south orientation is seen as the most auspicious, while in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, the north orientation and the east orientations are thought to be more auspicious than others. Despite their variations, the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation all play crucial roles in supporting the architectural representations of the connection between the built space and the cosmic structure manifested by the N-S and E-W axes.

3.2.1 **Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Four Entrances on the Four Sides Should Be Oriented to the Four Cardinal Points**

According to Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra texts, some do’s & taboos instruct that the square/rectangular built space should have four entrance doors respectively set on the four sides, and that the four entrance doors should be respectively oriented to the four cardinal points. By means of the four entrance doors oriented to the four cardinal points, the two horizontal orthogonal axes of the built space, which perfectly coincide with the two N-S and E-W axes, are highlighted. Therefore, such a built space can be seen as being positioned at the intersection point of the two sun-based axes that represents the cosmic center where the *Axis Mundi* stands (Fig. 8).
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Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Four Entrances on the Four Sides Should Be Oriented to the Four Cardinal Points

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the 5th-century-BCE Kaogongji provides instructions on how to build a capital city:

*The capital city should be in a square form. Each of the four sides shall measure nine miles and have three entrance gates on it. In the city, there shall be nine east-west roads and nine north-south roads, which connect these entrances gates.*

According to the instructions, an ideal capital city should have four sets of entrance gates on the four sides of its square plan, each set consisting of three gates. Such an ideal city was pictorially depicted as the ‘Wangcheng Diagram’ in the 10th-century Sanlitu (Fig. 124) It is very clear that the four sets of gates along with the many N-S and E-W roads are meant to highlight that the capital city has its four sides firmly connected to the four crucial points of reference of the cosmic structure, so that it can be seen as occupying the cosmic center. As we can understand, a king or an emperor often wants the place of his throne to represent the center of the world. In the 3rd-century-BCE Hanfeizi, a well-known classical work on political philosophy written by Han Fei, the following is said:

*The state affairs in the four directions shall all be conducted by the sage king who resides in the center of the state. When the sage king governs in the center, all nobles and feudal lords from the four directions would come to visit and admire him.*

Based on the same idea, most ancient Chinese capital cities were built to have four sets of entrance gates on the four sides, which faced the four cardinal points. Chang’ an (today known as Xi’an), the capital city of the Tang Dynasty (7th-10th centuries), and Beijing, the capital city of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (15th-20th centuries), are good examples (Fig. 282, 283). Likewise, the royal palaces located in these capital cities are usually constructed in the same way, such as the Daming Palace of Chang’an and the Forbidden City of Beijing (Fig. 149, 150). Apart from these prominent capital cities and royal palaces, many small local towns in China were also built to have four main entrance gates on the four sides oriented to the four cardinal directions, for instance, the small city Xiayi in Henan (Fig. 284).

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7 Wen 1993, p. 130. 「匠人營國，方九里，旁三門。國中九經九緯，經塗九軌。」
8 Han, accessed on 09/12/2010, http://ctext.org/hanfeizi/yang-quan. 「事在四方，要在中央。聖人執要，四方來效。」
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In the Chinese architectural tradition, apart from cities and palaces, some other types of built space like mausoleums, temples and pagodas are also often constructed with four entrances oriented to the four cardinal points, as such sacred and much-revered buildings are usually expected to strongly represent the *Axis Mundi* and the cosmic center, for example, the 7th-century Simen Pagoda of the Shentong Temple, the 18th-century Xuguang Pavilion of the Pule Temple, the 10th-century Manichean Hall of the Longxing Temple, the 11th-century Yongzhao Mausoleum, the 15th-century Tiantan, and the ancient Mingtang (Fig. 167-174). However, it seems that such kinds of perfect representations of the connection between the built space and the cosmic structure are not suitable for the houses of humble humans, and all classical Feng-Shui texts known to us never suggest that an ordinary house should be built with four doors on the four sides respectively oriented to the four cardinal points.

**Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Four Entrances on the Four Sides Should Be Oriented to the Four Cardinal Points**

The do’s & taboos recommending that the built space should have four entrances on the four sides respectively oriented to the four cardinal points can also be found in many old Vāstu-Shāstra texts:

*(For a city/village), there should be made a surrounding ditch and around the outside there should be a wall; four (main) doors should be made on the four sides, namely, the east and the others... [sic]*

(Mānasāra)

*(As regards the temple and palace), four doors should be opened at their four sides... The entrance door should be constructed in the middle (of the length and breath) in the cases of temples and palaces.*

(Mānasāra)

*A town is called ‘ordinary’ when it has four entrances at cardinal points, gateways and ramparts, when it contains shops as well as dwellings for all classes of people and temples for all gods [sic].*

(Mayamatam)

Likewise, these Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos regarding the orientation of the four entrances to the four cardinal points seem to only apply to cities, villages and the scared and much-revered buildings such as temples and

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9 Acharya 1994, p. 68.
10 Ibid., p. 288.
11 Dagens 1994, p. 93.
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palaces, yet not to the houses for ordinary people. These do’s & taboos can be evidenced by numerous Indian cities, temples, stupas and palaces, such as the Dabhoi City in Gujarat, the Jaipur City in Rajasthan, the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho, the Adinatha Temple in Ranakpur, the stupa in Sanchi, and the Diwan-i-Khas of the City Palace in Jaipur (Fig. 155, 195, 196, 208, 286, 287).

3.2.2 Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Main Entrance Should Be Oriented to One of the Four Cardinal Points

As we know, not all built spaces can be ideally built with four entrance doors on the four sides respectively oriented to the four cardinal points, since most of them only have a main entrance door. Therefore, many do’s & taboos of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra recommend people to settle for second best: orienting the only main entrance to ‘one of the four cardinal points’. The built space with only a main entrance oriented to one of the cardinal points, though not as perfect as that with four entrances respectively oriented to the four cardinal points, is good enough to be connected to the cosmic structure. As long as the main entrance is oriented to one of the four cardinal points, the front-back axis of the built space can coincide with one of the sun-based axes—the NS or the EW axis. This could imply that the left-right axis, the other body-based axis of the built space, can be in keeping with the other sun-based axis. Therefore, the built space with an only main entrance oriented to one of the cardinal points, just like the built space with four entrances on the four sides respectively oriented to the four cardinal points, can has its two body-based axes in keeping with the two sun-based axes that represent the Cosmic Cross (Fig. 9). In the mental construct, such a built space can be seen as being positioned at the cosmic center as well.

Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Main Entrance Should Be Oriented to One of the Four Cardinal Points

In the Feng-Shui tradition, we can find a variety of do’s & taboos recommending that the main entrance of a house should be oriented to one of the four cardinal points of east, south, west and north. First of all, let us consider those ask people to orient the main entrance to one of the four directions according to the ‘surname’ of the house owner. In order to understand these do’s & taboos, we should learn some important symbolic systems developed before or in the Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE). As mentioned in
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Chapter 2, the *Yin-Yang* School which suggests a sophisticated cosmology and an interrelationship between Heaven, human beings and all worldly phenomena was founded in the ‘Era of Warring States’ (5th-3rd century BCE). In the Han Dynasty, the philosophy of this school became more systematic and consistent through the elaborate theorization of various concepts such as Qi, Yin & Yang, Wuxing (i.e. Five Elements) and many other symbolic systems. Consequently, many architectural do's & taboos including those regarding the orientation were developed and given explanations on the basis of these significant concepts and symbolic systems. It is important to note that the do's & taboos recommending people to orient the main entrance to one of the four cardinal points are based on the correlation between the symbolic systems of the ‘Five Elements’, the ‘Five Musical Scales’ (五音) and the ‘Five Surnames’ (五姓).12

According to the *Liji*, or *Classic of Rites*, an important Confucian text compiled between the 6th and the 5th centuries BCE and re-worked by many Confucian scholars in the Han Dynasty, the symbolic systems of the Five Elements and the Five Musical Scales can be linked with each other.13 That is to say, the Five Musical Scales of *Shang* (商), *Jue* (角), *Yu* (羽), *Zhi* (徵) and *Gong* (宮) can be respectively associated with the Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth.14 Given the association between the Five Elements and the five directions (west, east, north, south and center) as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Five Musical Scales can be further linked with the five directions in a cosmological spatial scheme: *Shang* with the west, *Jue* with the east, *Yu* with the north, *Zhi* with the south, and *Gong* with the center. Furthermore, the Five Musical Scales were also used to represent the Five Surnames, i.e. the five groups of surnames into which thousands of Chinese surnames can all be categorized. Therefore, such a complicated but systematic correlation between the Five Elements, the Five Musical Scales, the Five Surnames and the five spatial directions was established (Fig. 23).

In the 1st-century *Lunheng*, a wide-ranging text containing critical essays on natural science, mythology, philosophy and literature, we can find the architectural do's & taboos regarding the orientation based on the relations between the above symbolic systems. This text was written by Wang Chong, an outstanding philosopher well-versed in various Chinese classics. Rebellious in nature, Wang usually took a stance against the thoughts and theories of the *Yin-Yang* School. Therefore, the reason why he mentioned these do's & taboos in his work was because he wanted to severely criticize them. Nevertheless, the do's & taboos developed during that time were well documented in the

12 Han 2006, p. 32.
14 Ibid.
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Lunheng:

All houses and all surnames can be categorized into five groups according to the Five Musical Scales... The entrance of the houses belonging to the (people with the) surname of ‘Shang’ should not face south, and the entrance of the houses belonging to (people with the) surname of ‘Zhi’ should not face north. ‘Shang’ represents Metal, but the south is dominated by Fire; ‘Zhi’ represents Fire, but the north is dominated by Water. As Water quenches Fire, and Fire melts Metal, the Qi of ‘Wuxing’ (Five Elements) in these cases cannot function positively. That is why the entrance of the houses belonging to (people with) a particular surname should be oriented to a particular direction.\(^1\)

It is clear that these do’s & taboos were developed on the basis of the so-called ‘inter-generating’ (相生) and ‘inter-overcoming’ (相剋) cycles of the Five Elements, which were quite popular in the philosophy of the Yin-Yang School. The inter-generating cycle means that every element plays a role in generating another element: Wood generates Fire, Fire produces Earth, Earth bears Metal, Metal carries Water, and Water nourishes Wood. On the contrary, the inter-overcoming cycle emphasizes that every element also plays a role in overcoming another element: Wood parts Earth, Earth absorbs Water, Water quenches Fire, Fire melts Metal, and Metal chops Wood.\(^1\)

Therefore, it can be understood that the house of Jue (Wood) should face the north (Water) but never the west (Metal), because Water nourishes Wood, while Metal chops Wood. The house of Zhi (Fire) is supposed to face the east (Wood) but not the north (Water), for Wood generates Fire, while Water quenches Fire. The house of Gong (Earth) should face the south (Fire) but not the east (Wood), as Fire produces Earth, while Wood parts Earth. The house of Yu (Water) should be built to face the west (Metal), given that Metal can carry Water.

So far as the house of Shang (Metal) is concerned, an unavoidable problem arises. Given that Earth bears Metal, the house of Shang is supposed to face the direction represented by Earth. However, what Earth represents is the ‘center’ (Fig. 23). Absolutely, in practice, ‘facing the center’ does not make sense, since the ‘center’ does not indicate any of the four cardinal points. Unfortunately, according to the Lunheng, we cannot understand how such a problem was

\(^{16}\) Lai 2003, pp. 334-346.
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solved by the philosophers of the *Yin-Yang* School at that time.

Nevertheless, these ancient *do’s & taboos* regarding the orientation as based on the association between several symbolic systems have been amazingly well preserved in the Feng-Shui tradition for more than one thousand years. In the 11th-century Feng-Shui text of *Dili Xinshu*, the following passage can be found:

As regards the house of ‘Shang’... it shall face the south and turn its back to the north, because for this house the living Qi is coming from the south, while the deadly Qi is coming from the north. As regards the house of ‘Jue’... it shall face the north and turn its back to the south. As regards the house of ‘Gong’ or that of ‘Yu’... it shall face the west and turn its back to the east. As regards the house of ‘Zhi’... it shall face the east and turn its back to the west... As regards those that do not belong to any surname, such as cities, temples, shrines and government buildings, they shall all face the south as does the house of ‘Shang’.

As we can see, the proper directions of orientation four the houses of the five surname groups mentioned in the 11th-century *Dili Xinshu* are not totally the same as those mentioned in the 1st-century *Lunheng*. In the *Dili Xinshu*, the house of *Shang* is recommended to face the south, but in the *Lunheng*, how to orient the house of *Shang* is not clearly mentioned. Besides, in the *Dili Xinshu*, the reason why the house of *Shang* should be oriented to the south is explained by the concept of the living and deadly Qi but not by that of the inter-generating and inter-overcoming cycles of the Five Elements. It seems that the problem with the orientation of the house of *Shang* has never been completely solved during the long history of the *Yin-Yang* School. As indicated by some contemporary sinologists, the philosophers of this school have never succeeded in establishing a perfect and coherent connection between the symbolic systems of the Five Elements, the Five Musical Scales, and the Five Surnames. Probably because of this, the *do’s & taboos* regarding the orientation as determined according to the Five Surname gradually died out in the Feng-Shui tradition at later stages.

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17 Han 2006, p. 34.
18 Wang 2003, p. 226. 「商姓……即以南為前位，是生氣位，北為後面，是死氣位。角姓……以北為前，以南為後。宮、羽二姓……酉為前，東為後。徵姓……以東為前，酉為後。……州縣寺觀城邑館驛廨宇皆無的主，盡屬商姓。」
Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Main Entrance Should Be Oriented to One of the Four Cardinal Points

In Vastu-Shastra architectural tradition, we can also find the do’s & taboos that ask people to orient the only entrance door of a built space to one of the four cardinal points. The following passage can be found in the Agni Purāna, a Hindu religious text as well as a Vāstu-Shāstra-related text:

*The doors should be made so as to face the cardinal points of the compass, and not as to open on the angular points of the heaven [sic].*

This ambiguous passage can lead to two interpretations. On the one hand, it implies that a temple should have four entrance doors set on the four sides and oriented to the four cardinal points respectively. On the other hand, it can also mean that, no matter how many entrance doors the temple may have, each door should be oriented to one of the cardinal points. If this temple has only one entrance door, it can be oriented either to the east, the south, the west or the north. Just like the Mayamatam and Agni Purāna, the Vishwakarma Vāstu-Shāstram, another Vāstu-Shāstra text, also provide the same do’s & taboos that instruct people to orient the only main entrance of a house or temple to one of the cardinal instead of the intermediate points.

At present, the do’s & taboos of this kind are still followed and endorsed by many Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners, since ‘orienting the only entrance to one of the four cardinal points’ is more feasible than ‘orienting the four entrances on the four sides respectively to the four cardinal points’ for most dwellings. As mentioned by Kathleen Cox, an influential contemporary Western Vāstu-Shāstra expert, in her *The Power of Vāstu Living*:

Many Vāstu consultants insist that the cardinal direction of the entrance to your property or the cardinal direction of the entrance to your home seals your fate... These well-respected texts (of Vāstu-Shāstra) say that an entrance in any (cardinal) direction is acceptable. And if you flip through an illustrated reference of historical Hindu temples that are built according to Vāstu, you will see shrines that face the north or the south or the east or the west. Each direction has positive merits.

Moreover, an interesting variation, incorporated with twelve zodiac signs,
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has been developed by some modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners. For instance, Rohit Arya, another influential contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra practitioner, indicates in his Vāstu: The Indian Art of Placement:

Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces, the door should face the east. Taurus, Virgo or Capricorn, the door should face the south. Gemini, Libra or Aquarius, the door should face the west. Aries, Leo or Sagittarius, the door should face the north.\(^{23}\)

That is to say, the entrance door should be installed in one of the four cardinal directions based upon the ‘zodiac sign of the house owner’, and the twelve zodiac signs can be classified into four groups, each of which is associated with a particular cardinal direction. In some sense, this can be compared with the above-mentioned ancient Feng-Shui do’s & taboos which instruct people that the entrance door should be installed in one of the four cardinal directions according to the ‘surname of the house owner’.

3.2.3 Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Orientation Should Be Based on the ‘Clockwise Order’

In both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, we can find some do’s & taboos which do not only recommend that the built space should be oriented to one of the four cardinal points, but also specify that the determination of which cardinal point to be (or not to be) oriented to should be based on the ‘clockwise order’. As we will see later, given that the clockwise order is a representation of the ‘sunwise order’, these do’s & taboos obviously play roles in supporting the architectural representations of the sun-focused cosmic realities and highlight the built space as being positioned at the cosmic center.

Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Orientation Should Be Based on the ‘Clockwise Order’

In the Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts excavated from a tomb belonging to an administrator of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), we can find some significant architectural taboos regarding the orientation of the house, which are based on the association between the four cardinal directions and the four seasons:

\textit{In spring, the east is very inauspicious. In summer, the south is very inauspicious. In autumn, the west is very inauspicious. In winter, the...}

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\(^{23}\) Arya 2000, p. 73.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

north is very inauspicious... In the three months of spring, one shall not build the house (or room) oriented to the east. In the three months of summer, one shall not build the house (or room) oriented to the summer. In the three months of autumn, one shall not build the house (or room) oriented to the west. In the three months of winter, one shall not build the house (or room) oriented to the north. The house built to break these taboos shall be considered very inauspicious, and its occupants are destined to die.

As indicated by the above passage, the ‘concept of time’ is also involved in the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation of the built space, and the four seasons are respectively correlated with the four cardinal points: spring with east, summer with south, autumn with west and winter with north. Moreover, these taboos seem to imply that, in each season, the harmful and negative force is likely to come from a particular cardinal direction, to which the house should never be oriented. According to the following passage quoted from the 2nd-century-BCE Chunchiu Fanlu, which has been mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, it can be understood that this harmful and negative force is caused by the cosmic Qi of the Five Elements:

Wood occupies the east, dominating the Qi of spring. Fire occupies the south, dominating the Qi of summer. Metal occupies the west, dominating the Qi of autumn. Water occupies the north, dominating the Qi of winter... Earth occupies the center... and shall not belong to any of the four seasons.

As we can see, the Five Elements are not only thought to represent the five directions (east, south, west, north and center) in the ideal cosmic scheme, but are also thought to represent the four seasons. Except for the Earth, the other four Elements of Wood, Fire, Metal and Water can be associated with the four directions of east, south, west and north. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the harmful and negative force in spring, summer, autumn and winter are respectively caused by the Qi of Wood from the east, that of Fire from the south, that of Metal from the west and that of Water from the north, because in each season, the Qi of a particular Element from a particular direction could be too strong for people to bear. In order to prevent the overly strong Qi from

24 Liu, Yue-Xian 1994, p. 83. 「春天，東方大凶。夏天，南方大凶。秋天，西方大凶。冬天，北方大凶。」
25 Ibid., p. 133. 「春三月毋起東鄉（向）室，夏三月毋起南鄉（向）室，秋三月毋起西鄉（向）室，東三月毋起北鄉（向）室，有以者，大凶，必有死者。」
26 Lai 2003, p. 287. 「東方木居東方而主春氣，火居南方而主夏氣，金居西方而主秋氣，水居北方而主冬氣。……土居中央，……不可名以一時之事。」
penetrating into the house, people should not let the house be oriented to the
direction from which the seasonal Qi is supposed to enter.

It is important to note that the connection between the four seasons and the
four cardinal directions, as shown in both the Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts and
the Chunchiu Fanlu, is established on the basis of the clockwise order: the east
connected with the first season, the south connected with the second season,
the west connected with the third season, and the north connected with the
fourth season (Fig. 24). According to the following passage also quoted from
the Chunchiu Fanlu, it can be easily understood that such a clockwise order is a
representation of the ‘sunwise order’:

The Qi of Yang emerges from the northeast and moves southwards,
then having its power fully manifested in the south. Then it turns to
the west and finally goes into the north, hiding and resting there.

It is widely believed that, in the ancient Yin-Yang School, the establishment
of the concept of Yang was based on the observation of the regular motion of
the sun. In Chinese, the sun is usually called Tai-Yang (太陽) which means ‘the
Great Yang’, while the moon is called Tai-Yin (太陰) which means ‘the Great
Yin’. The clockwise flow of the Qi of Yang as mentioned in the above passage
thus can be seen as a representation of the sun’s circuit, as we know that, in
the eyes of the people living in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is always
moving in a clockwise direction (Fig. 25). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the
spatial scheme based on the E-S and N-S axes is an important representation of
the sun-focused cosmic realities, and obviously, such a representation is further
enhanced and strengthened by the clockwise/sunwise order. Undeniably, these
architectural taboos regarding the orientation based on the clockwise order also
highlight the built space as being positioned in the ‘center of the world’ because
it is the center of the world that the sun always clockwise circumambulates.

Amazingly, these architectural taboos found in the 3rd-century Shuihudi
Rishu Bamboo Texts continued to take hold in the Feng-Shui practice for almost
two thousand years, as the following passage can be found in the 16th-century
Huangdi Zhaijing:

In January, February and March (i.e. the three months of spring), the
house is not allowed to be built towards the east... Likewise, in the
months of summer, autumn and winter, the same rule shall apply (i.e.
not be oriented to the south in summer, the west in autumn and the

27 Ibid., p. 305. 『陽氣始出東北而南行，就其位也，西轉而北入，藏其休也。』
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

north in winter).  

Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Orientation Should Be Based on the ‘Clockwise Order’

In old texts of Vāstu-Shāstra, we can also find the architectural do’s & taboos that instruct people to orient the built space to one of the four cardinal points according to the clockwise order. However, what they concern is not the ‘orientation of the main entrance/façade’ but the ‘sloping direction of the site’. That is to say, in the practice of these do’s & taboos, the direction of orientation of the built space is represented by the direction towards which the site slopes down. In the 6th-century Brihat Samhitā, it is said:

*If the ground slopes down towards the north, it is beneficial for Brahmins; towards the east, for Kshatriyas; towards the south, for Vaishyas; towards the west, for Sudras.*  

As indicated by this passage, the auspicious sloping directions of sites for the four castes are not the same. For the highest caste, Brahmins, the site should slope down to the north; for the second caste, Kshatriyas, it should slope down to the east; for the third caste Vaishyas, it should slope down to the south; for the lowest caste, Sudras, it should slope down to the west. As we can see, the four castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras in a hierarchical sequence are respectively correlated with the four cardinal directions of north, east, south and west in a clockwise sequence (Fig. 72). Such an association between the four castes and the four directions as found in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, in some sense, is comparable with the association between the four seasons and the four directions as found in the Feng-Shui tradition, both based on the clockwise order.

It is also reasonable to assume that the clockwise order applied in the Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos regarding the orientation has something to do with the representation of the sunwise order. As we can find in a variety of ancient Hindu texts, the clockwise circumambulation of the sun around Mount Meru is a recurrent theme. For example, in the Bhagavad Gītā, a sacred Hindu scripture and a part of the Mahabharata, it is said that:

*The sun, the foremost of luminaries, always circumnavigates Meru from left to right, as does the moon with its constellations, and the*

29 Zhou 1987, p. 16. 「正月、二月、三月，不得東。……夏及秋冬三個月，敬此為忌。又云，每年有十二月，每月有生氣、死氣之位。」

3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

wind...\(^\text{31}\)

In this verse, Mount Meru situated in the cosmic center is highlighted by the sun that clockwise circumambulates it. As we can also find in some other verses of the \textit{Bhagavad Gita}, the ‘man’ who is clockwise circumambulated is usually considered to be dignified, respectable and is regarded as the ‘center’:

\emph{Then, Yudhisthira, saluting Bhishma again, accepted his words with a bow... Then, after bowing to Drona and clockwise circumambulating him, the king addresses the invincible warrior with a speech aimed to benefit himself... Bowing to Kripa and circumambulating him, the king, the best of those who know words, said these words to that most unassailable warrior: “With your consent, teacher, I shall fight without sin. With your permission, faultless one, I shall conquer all my enemies”... Bowing to Shalya and circumambulating him, the king addressed the invincible hero with words beneficial to himself: “With your permission, unconquerable one, I shall fight without sin. With your permission I shall defeat my enemies.”}\(^\text{32}\)

As is shown in the verses above, Drona (the master of advanced military arts), Kripa (the chief priest at the court of Hastinapura) and Shalya (the ruler of Madra-desa or the kingdom of Madra) are in turn clockwise circumambulated by Yudhishthira (the king of Indraprastha) because they are highly dignified and revered. In order to seek blessings from the three, Yudhishthira practices the ritual of clockwise circumambulation around them, esteeming each of them as respectable as Mount Meru, the \textit{Axis Mundi} and the center of the cosmos. Therefore, it can be understood that the do’s \& taboos with regard to the clockwise order are also meant to imply that the built space is positioned in the cosmic center—the most stable point of the cosmic structure—from which the \textit{Axis Mundi} rises. In the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition, the clockwise order as a representation of the sunwise order is widely influential, as it also forms the basis for the development and formulation of many other do’s \& taboos, such as those concerning the ‘spatial hierarchy’ that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

\(^{31}\) Cherniak 2008, p. 51.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp. 317, 321, 323.
3.2.4 *Do's & Taboos concerning the 'Most Auspicious Orientation'*

In both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, many do's & taboos regarding the architectural orientation are formulated on the basis of the notion of ‘the most auspicious direction’. In the Feng-Shui tradition, it is the south that is usually considered to be the most auspicious direction, and most sacred and much-revered buildings are suggested to have a ‘south orientation’. In the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, the notion of the most auspicious direction is a bit more complicated, as the most auspicious direction of orientation may vary according to the type of building. For temples, the most auspicious direction of orientation is supposed to be the east or the west; in other words, a temple should usually have an ‘east-west orientation’. However, for the other types of buildings, the most auspicious direction of orientation is said to be the east or the north, according to which these buildings should usually have an ‘east orientation’ or ‘north orientation’. Later we will see that the notion of the most auspicious direction of orientation, in both traditions, also plays a crucial role in supporting the architectural representations of the cosmic realities.

**Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos concerning the Most Auspicious ‘South Orientation’**

Among the various Feng-Shui do’s & taboos regarding the orientation as determined with reference to the cardinal points, those instructing that the built space should be oriented to the south are probably most influential, since the south is usually seen as the most auspicious direction, and the south orientation is regarded as the most ideal orientation for the built space. According to those Feng-Shui do’s & taboos regarding the orientation as mentioned before, an ordinary house could be oriented to one of the four cardinal directions in different circumstances. However, the sacred and much-revered buildings should be always oriented to the south. Let us consider the passage quoted from the 11th-century *Dili Xinshu*, which has been mentioned earlier:

*As regards the house of ‘Shang’... it shall face the south and turn its back to the north, because for this house the living Qi is coming from the south, while the deadly Qi is coming from the north. As regards the house of ‘Jue’... it shall face the north and turn its back to the south. As regards the house of ‘Gong’ or that of ‘Yu’... it shall face the west and turn its back to the east. As regards the house of ‘Zhi’...*

33 Du 1995, p. 213.
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

it shall face the east and turn its back to the west... As regards those that do not belong to any surname, such as cities, temples, shrines, palaces, official mansions and government buildings, they shall all face the south as does the house of ‘Shang’.  

As is indicated by this passage, while the houses belonging to the different groups of surnames are supposed to be oriented to different cardinal points, the cities, temples, shrines, palaces, official mansions and government buildings should all be oriented to the south. This means that the orientation of the great, sacred and much-revered built space is not subject to the rule of the ‘Five Surname’, but should always have the most auspicious south orientation. Another passage found in the Dili Xinshu provides an explanation for the most auspicious south orientation in terms of the concept of the cosmic Qi:

For the cities, temples, shrines, palaces, official mansions and government buildings which do not belong to any surname, the south, to which they shall always be oriented to, is the direction where the living-Qi is coming from, and the north to which they should turn their backs is the direction where the deadly-Qi is coming from.

In the 18th-century Zhaipu Dacheng, we can also find a passage which emphasizes that the ancestral shrine should always be built to face the south:

Can an ancestral shrine be built to face the east? No, absolutely not! Because Zhu Xi has said: “In ancient times, the ‘Tai Shrine’, the ‘Zhao Shrine’ and the ‘Mu Shrine’ were all built to face the south.”

In the Chinese architectural tradition, it is not difficult to find a variety of built spaces, especially those thought to be great, sacred and much-revered,
Comparing the Do's & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

which are built to face the south. As mentioned earlier, many ancient Chinese cities, palaces, temples, mausoleums were built with four entrances on the four sides respectively oriented to the four cardinal points, such as the Chang’ an City, the Beijing City, the Daming Palace, the Forbidden City, the Manichean Hall, the Yongzhao Mausoleum and the Tiantan (Fig. 149, 150, 169, 170, 174, 282, 283). It is worth mentioning that, among the four entrances of these built spaces, the primary one is oriented to the south. Besides, there are numerous other Chinese temples, shrines and tombs built with only one entrance gate, and this only entrance door also usually opens to the south, for instance, Zixiao Toaist Temple on the Wudang Mountains, Tayuan Buddhist Temple on Mount Wutai, the ancestral shrine of the Zhang’s clan in Taxia, Fo-Guang-Shan Buddhist Monastery in Taiwan, Thirteen Royal Tombs of the Ming Dynasty located north to Beijing, Confucian Temple in Zhangzhou, and Guangji Buddhist Temple in Beijing (Fig. 161, 162, 164, 165, 178, 180, 183, 192).

As indicated by B. L. Gordon, the ‘southward’ represents the ‘godly view’, and that is why the temples dedicated to gods should have a south orientation, and the palace, throne or mausoleum of the emperor, the ‘Son of Heaven’ (天子), is usually described as facing south.38 In the ancient Confucian canon Li ji, or Book of Rites, the following passage can be found:

When a sage sovereign stood with his face to the south, all the affairs of the kingdom came before him.39

In another Confucian canon, Lunyu (論語), also known as the Analects of Confucius, we can also find an interesting passage:

Confucius said, “As for Yong, he might be qualified to face the south.” 40

Yong, one of the ten most outstanding disciples of Confucius, was renowned for his moral goodness and conscientiousness. For this reason, Confucius thought that Yong could take a leadership role in ruling the country. In this passage, ‘to face the south’ thus implies ‘to be a sage ruler of the country’.

However, why does the southward represent the godly view, and why is south orientation considered holy? According to classical Chinese texts, we can understand that the idea about the south orientation may have something to do with two prominent celestial bodies, the Polaris and the sun.

Let us first consider the Polaris. The following passage can be found in the

40 Zhu 1994, p. 112. 「雍也，可以南面。」
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

above-mentioned Lunyu (the Analects of Confucius):

Confucius said, “He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the Polaris which always keeps its place, and all the other stars move around it.”

This passage indicates that a sage king should be like the Polaris which is unmovable and unshakable and never affected by external influences; if so, his people would all adore and admire him as the center. Beyond doubt, this sage king should keep his place as the most stable and fixed point that represents the cosmic center and highlights the Axis Mundi. As we know, the Polaris lies close to the north celestial pole, and it seems as if the Polaris permanently looks at the south (Fig. 26). Therefore, once sitting upon his throne as the Axis Mundi in the north, the one who exercises government is supposed to be oriented to the south. It is very clear that the do’s & taboos regarding the most auspicious south orientation play roles in supporting the architectural representations of the Polaris-focused cosmic realities, and such cosmic realities also form the basis of the representations of social and political realities.

Besides the Polaris at nighttime, the sun’s motion during the daytime may account for the ideal south orientation, too. In other words, the do’s & taboos regarding the south orientation also support the architectural representations of the sun-focused cosmic realities. As we know, the south indicates the exact point at which the sun comes to the meridian during its daily movement. Accordingly, the south-oriented built space enables the occupants to fully observe the sun’s path and to perceive the sacred balance between the sunrise, which symbolizes the prosperity, and the sunset, which symbolizes the decline (Fig. 27). In such a south-oriented built space, the cosmic power and order revealed by the sun can be fully and perfectly manifested. This way of thinking is well evidenced by the following passage found in the Chunchiu Fanlu:

With the Qi of Yang coming out, all things and beings on Earth awaken. When the Qi of Yang is prosperous, all things and beings on Earth prosper. When the Qi of Yang becomes weaker, they also weaken... Therefore, the Qi of Yang shall be respected. However, the Qi of Yin shall not... The Qi of Yang comes to the summit when arriving in the ‘south’, while the Qi of Yin comes to the summit when arriving in the ‘north’... Therefore, the ‘front side’ shall be towards the south which represents the ‘Grace from Heaven’, while the ‘back side’ shall be towards the north which represents the ‘Punishment

41 Zhu 1994, p. 69. 「為政以德，譬如北辰，居其所而眾星拱之。」
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This passage indicates that the south represents the ‘Grace from Heaven’, in which the positive Qi of Yang is fully manifested, and that the north represents the ‘Punishment from Heaven’, in which the negative Qi of Yin is fully manifested (Fig. 28). As mentioned earlier, in the Chinese Yin-Yang School, the Qi of Yang is a representation of the sun, and hence this passage implies that the power of the sun would reach the summit when it arrives in the south. Surely, the very auspicious south-oriented built space is suitable for those who deserve the full manifestation of the sun-based cosmic power, such as gods and kings.

According to many pieces of archeological evidence, the ‘south-oriented layout’ is a very old building tradition in China, much older than the development of the Yin-Yang School, the Confucianism and the Feng-Shui. For example, the renowned archeological site of Banpo (半坡) in Shaanxi Province in China, discovered in 1953, encompasses several Neolithic settlements dating from approximately 4500 BCE. One of these settlements, situated on an east-bank mesa terrace, was replete with remains of well-organized semi-underground buildings, including an assembly hall with a bigger square plan and around fifty houses with a smaller square or circular plan. Amazingly, most of the buildings were built to face the south. Also in Shaanxi, there is another archeological site, the Fengchu (鳳雛) Site (c. 1000-1300 BCE), some remains of courtyard houses built to face south were unearthed (Fig. 238). Moreover, in the archeological sites of the Chengziya (城子崖) in Shandong Province (c. 2500 BCE) and the Erlitou (二里頭) in Henan Province in China (c. 2000 BCE), we can also find early evidence of the ‘south orientation’ observed in various types of built spaces.

It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned archeological sites are all in North/Central but not in South China. Hence it can be understood that, in very early times, the reason why people preferred to live in south-oriented houses was probably just because they wanted to get more sunlight in cold weather. Later on, with the development of the Yin-Yang School and Feng-Shui, more sacred meanings were given to the practice of the orientation towards the south, and the notion of the auspicious south orientation gradually spread throughout the Chinese cultural sphere. However, as indicated by Bao-De Han, a leading

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42 Lai 2003, pp. 290-291. 「陽始出，物亦始出。陽方盛，物亦方盛。陽初衰，物亦初衰。……以此可見，貴陽而賤陰也。……陽出而南，陰出而北。……前德而後刑也，故曰：陽，天之德，陰，天之刑也。」
45 Liu, Dun-Zhen 1987, pp. 25, 30-35.
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architectural historian specializing in the Chinese architectural history and Feng-Shui, the notion of the south orientation was much more prevalent in North/Central China than in South China. As we can see, the famous Siheyuan courtyard houses in Beijing are usually built to face south (Fig. 232, 233), but the various vernacular houses in South China are not necessarily built in the same fashion. Later we will also see that the orientation of the houses in South China is usually determined according to other Feng-Shui do’s & taboos. Nowadays, in North China, in order for people to enjoy sunlight in the winter and save energy, governments usually make building codes stipulating that houses should be built to face south. Surely, no matter how the south orientation in the Chinese architectural tradition is explained, it can always be seen as a representation of the sun-focused cosmic realities.

Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos concerning the Most Auspicious ‘East-West Orientation’ for Temples and the Most Auspicious ‘East or North Orientation’ for Other Types of Buildings

Concerning the most auspicious direction of orientation in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, two kinds of rules are followed. The first rule that the ‘east-west orientation’ should be seen as the most auspicious only applies to temples. The second rule that the ‘east orientation’ or the ‘north orientation’ should be seen as the most auspicious applies to the other types of buildings, such as houses and palaces.

First of all, let us consider the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation, as based on the first rule and specific to temple buildings. The following paragraph can be found in the Mayamatam:

In settlements such as villages the temple of Isa is oriented towards either the east or the west... The dwelling of Vishnu may be oriented to any direction but is beneficial if turned towards the center of the village. Other (shrines) are oriented towards the east, but that of the Mothers is turned towards the north and the entrance of that of Surya (i.e. Sun God) is in the west.

This paragraph clearly indicates that most temples should be oriented to the east, some should be oriented to the west, the north or the center of a settlement, and no temple can be built to face the south. As we can find in the Indian architectural tradition, the majority of well-known Hindu or Jain temples were

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46 Han 2006, p. 147.
47 Interview with Mr. Zhou (Shanghai, China, 24/03/2008).
48 Dagens 1994, p. 77.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

indeed built to face the east, for example, the 11th-century Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho, the 8th-century Shore Temple in Mamallapuram, the 13th-century Keshava Temple in Somnathpur, the 11th-century Brahmeshvara Temple in Bhubaneshwar, and the 8th-century Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram (Fig. 195, 197-200). As we can also see, many Indian temples were built to face the west, for instance, the 15th-century Adinatha Temple in Ranakpur, the 8th-century Virupaksha Temple in Pattadakal, and the 8th-century Kailash Temple at Ellora (Fig. 196, 201, 202).

It is reasonable to assume that such an east-west orientation for Indian temples, like the south orientation in the Feng-Shui tradition, plays a crucial role in supporting the architectural representations of the sun-focused cosmic realities. As we can understand, once the built space can be constructed to face the east or the west, its body-based axis can exactly coincide with the sun-based east-west axis. Thus its spatial order can be ideally in keeping with the sun-based cosmic order; from the sunrise to the sunset, such a built space from its front to its rear can be fully filled up with the cosmic power revealed by the sun (Fig. 73). Without doubt, the temple dedicated to Surya as referred to in the above passage also highlights the representation of the sun-focused cosmic realities. Since Surya is the Sun God, the temple of Surya thus represents the sun itself. As rising in the east and setting in the west, the sun can be seen as always moving and facing westward, and hence the temple of Surya should be constructed to face the west. Nevertheless, we can still find many Indian temples dedicated to Surya which are not oriented to the west but to the east, such as the Sun Temple in Modhera, Gujarat (Fig. 212).

It is clear that both the south orientation in the Feng-Shui tradition and the east-west orientation in the Vāstu-Shāstra represent people’s desires to have the built space steeped in the sun-based cosmic power and order, although this cosmic power and order are perceived and represented in quite different ways in the two traditions. Moreover, it can be easily found that in many other architectural traditions of the world, the east-west orientation is also often followed and related to the sun-focused cosmic realities. For example, in the Ten Books on Architecture written by the Roman architect Vitruvius in the 1st century BCE, all temples are recommended to be built towards the west, so that when praying and making offerings, people can face the east, the sacred direction of the sunrise.49 Besides, in the South America, the vernacular houses

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49 The following passage can be found in the Ten Books on Architecture: “The quarter toward which temples of the immortal gods ought to face is to be determined on the principle that, if there is no reason to hinder and the choice is free, the temple and the statue placed in the cella should face the western quarter of the sky. This will enable those who approach the altar with offerings or sacrifices to face the direction of the sunrise in fac-
of Tukanoan people usually have two entrances respectively oriented to the east and the west, the two directions that indicate the sunrise and the sunset.50 Furthermore, as B. L. Gordon argues in his Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map (1971) that, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the ‘east-west orientation’ also has been highly revered and applied to the Jewish tabernacle and temples and the Christian churches, and the reverence for the east is likely to derive from the sun worship in ancient times, though both the Jews and the Christians have tried to disassociate the east from the worship of the sun.51

Having discussed the most auspicious east-west orientation for the temple, now we could turn to the do’s & taboos based on the second rule that the east orientation or the north orientation should be seen as the most auspicious. Given that both the east orientation and the north orientation are considered auspicious, the ‘northeast orientation’, as their combination, is also thought to be auspicious. According to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, these do’s & taboos usually apply to houses or king’s palaces.

As instructed in the Arthashāstra, the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra and the Mānasāra, king’s palaces should be oriented to the north or the east:

To the north from the center of the ground inside the fort, the king’s palace, facing either the north or the east shall, as described elsewhere, be constructed, occupying one-ninth of the whole site inside the fort.52 (Arthashāstra)
The Nṛpamandira (a type of king’s palace)... having the residential gate facing the north.53 (Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra)

\[ eq: \text{ing the statue in the temple, and thus those who are undertaking vows look toward the quarter from which the sun comes forth out of the east to look upon them as they pray and sacrifice.} \]


A typical Tukanoan house is usually arranged in accordance with an east-west axis, having an eastward Men’s Door and a westward Women’s Door. The Tukanoans see themselves as the children of the Primal Sun, and according to their myth, they can also trace their origin to another ancestor, the anaconda. As they believe, the anaconda swam west up the rivers from the Water Door of the Milk River, stopping at the ‘waking up places’ where the ancestors of the Tukanoans danced and established their homesites, and hence, the Men’s Door, facing the east, represents the Water Door by which the ancestral anaconda entered. In this case, the journey of the ancestral anaconda represents the sun’s path. Moreover, the Tukanoans also often draw an analogy between the house and the human body, for the Men’s Door, the front entrance, is seen as the mouth, while the Women’s Door, the rear entrance, is seen as the anus. Therefore, the Tukanoan house with an east-west orientation can be seen as a perfect representation of the Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross shorter-cycle theme as based on the Anthropomorphic long-cycle tradition. See: Oliver 2003, p. 177.

Sharmasastry 1961, p. 53.
Sharma 2007, Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva 1, p. 137.
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All the main palaces should have their main (doors) towards the east.\(^{54}\) (Mānasāra)

Moreover, according to the Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra, the orientation of houses should be determined by referring to the ‘Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala’:

The house of a Brahmana (i.e. Brahmin) may be established having door occupied by the ‘Mahendra’ (i.e. Indra) being the excellent one [sic]... the door in the front or east, (called) ‘Mahendra’, is laudable and granter of all desires [sic]... To the west side (a door) created known as ‘Pushpadanta’ is excellent and victory endower [sic]. The door in the north of ‘Bhallata’ may be excellent for the house owner [sic].\(^{55}\)

On the 9x9 Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, we can see that the Mahendra, the Pushpadanta and the Bhallata are the names of the deities residing in the plots of east, west and north respectively (Fig. 140). This passage emphasizes that the east is the most auspicious direction, and that the west and the north are the next best things. Besides, this passage also implies that the south is an ominous direction for the house to face. Another passage which suggests that the house should be oriented to the east or the northeast can be found in the Mānasāra:

The due east should be preferred for the building of those who desire salvation (i.e., temples should face the due east). The north-east is preferred for (the building of) those who seek enjoyment (i.e., residential buildings should face north-east). That (building) which faces south-east is the source of all evils: therefore, all (kinds of) buildings with face towards the south-east should be avoided [sic].\(^{56}\)

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the ‘sloping direction’ of the site can also be seen as a representation of the orientation of the built space, and according to Brihat Samhītā, the sites for different castes should slope down to different cardinal points. The site for Brahmins slopes down to the north, the site for Kshatriyas to the east, the site for Vaishyas to the south, and the site for Sudras to the west. However, as indicated by some other Vāstu-Shāstra texts such as the Mānasāra and the Mayamatam, the sloping direction for all the four castes should always be the north or the east:

That site is auspicious for the Brahmins, which is square (in shape), whitish in colour, possessing the fig tree, sloping towards the north,

\(^{54}\) Acharya 1994, p. 427.
and sweet and fragrant in taste. With (the length) exceeding the breath by one-eighth, reddish in colour, with declivity towards the east, bitter in taste, possessing the peepal tree (ficus religiosa), and wide in size: such a site is suitable and prosperous to the Kshatriyas (lit. the kings). With the length exceeding the breath by not more than one-sixth, yellowish in colour, possessing the fig tree (ficus infectoria), with declivity towards the east, and sour in taste: such a site is auspicious and the source of all success to the Vaishyas (lit. the merchant class). With the length exceeding the breath of four parts by one part (i.e. one-fourth), possessing the banyan tree black in colour, pungent in taste, and with declivity towards the east: such a site bears prosperity to the Sudras. Of the sites described above the (first) two are stated to be the best and the (last) two fair [sic].

(Mānasāra)

That chosen after a thorough examination of ... is called the dwelling site; it is different for each caste of men...The site suitable for Brahmins is square, white, without defects, planted with udumbara trees, sloping towards the north, perfect and has an astringent and sweet savour. Such a site is a guarantee of good fortune. The length of the site suitable for kings is one eighth more than its width; it is red in colour and bitter in flavour, it slopes towards the east, is vast and planted with asvattha. Such a site invariably guarantees success. The length of the site suitable for Vaishya is one sixth more than its width; it is yellow, of sour taste and planted with plaksa; it slopes towards the east. Such a site is beneficent. The length of the site suitable to Sudra is one fourth more than its width; it slopes towards the east, is black, has a pungent flavour and is planted with nyagrodha. Such a site is a source of abundant riches and grain.

(Mayamatam)

According to all these passages quoted from various Vāstu-Shāstra texts, it is clear that the north and the east are usually seen as the two most auspicious directions for houses or king’s palaces, towards which the main entrance door should open and the site should slope down, whereas the south is usually seen as the most inauspicious direction. It is worth noting that the north and the east seen as the two most auspicious directions are also substantiated by the configuration of the ‘Vāstu-Purusha Mandala’ as introduced in Chapter 2 (Fig. 136). According to the 6th-century Brihat Samhitā, when lying prone in the confined space, the Vāstu-Purusha has his head, the most vital part of his body,

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turned towards the north-east, a combination of the north and the east. For the Vāstu-Purusha embodies a built space, the direction to which his head is turned represents the suitable direction to which a built should be oriented, i.e. the northeast, or the north and the east. In addition, according to Vāstu-Shāstra texts, we can also find that the thinking of the north, the east and the north-east as the more auspicious directions is commonplace in some other architectural do’s & taboos. For instance, as is informed by the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra, one should carry the building materials (wood or stone) of a place to the north or east of the site, and when hewing, one should also stand facing east or north. Also according to the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra, the Vishwakarma Vāstu-Shāstram and the Mayamatam, after cutting down a tree, one should examine its falling direction. If fallen to the north or the east, this tree is said to be auspicious can be utilized; if fallen to the west or, even worse, the south, it is considered as a bad omen and should be discarded.

As we have learned, the reason why the ‘east-west orientation’ is auspicious for temples lies in the fact that it supports the representations of the sun-focused cosmic realities, which also accounts for why the ‘east’, the direction of the sunrise, is auspicious for houses and king’s palaces. However, why the ‘north’ is also thought to be very auspicious, and why the ‘south’ is thought to be very inauspicious in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition? Seemingly, this can be explained according to the Hindu cosmology and mythology. As indicated by R. F. Gombrich in his Ancient Indian Cosmology (1975), the reason why the north is said to be auspicious is because Mount Meru or Mount Kailash, the abode of gods, is conceptualized as being located in this direction. Therefore, in order to seek the blessings of gods, one had better to orient the house towards the north. On the contrary, in the Hindu mythology, the south is seen as the horizontal equivalent of the underworld, the region of death, and Yama (lord of the dead), is thought to be the guardian of the southern direction. As also shown in a variety of Vāstu-Shāstra Mandalas, Yama always resides in the south (Fig. 137-140). Consequently, the south orientation is supposed to be very inauspicious. Based on such thinking, the north and the south become two directions with opposite meanings in the cosmic scheme: the former is associated with the positive and holy meanings, yet the latter with the negative and unholy meanings (Fig. 74). Surely, this is quite comparable

62 Gombrich 1975, p. 119.
63 Ibid., p. 116.
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with the afore-mentioned opposition between the south and the north in the Feng-Shui tradition (Fig. 28). Interestingly, the south is seen as auspicious in the Feng-Shui tradition, yet inauspicious in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition; on the contrary, the north is considered inauspicious in the Feng-Shui tradition, yet auspicious in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition.

It becomes clear now that the ‘north orientation’ and the ‘east orientation’ have different cosmic meanings, though both considered auspicious in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition. Today, the do’s & taboos that recommend orienting the built space to or setting the entrance door in the north, the east or the northeast are still extensively followed and advocated by many Vāstu-Shāstra consultants nowadays (Fig. 97, 274-276).64 Surely, these consultants also often warn people not to set the main entrance door in the south, for this direction represents Yama and death.65 Given that many modern houses are not necessarily built with a north, east or northeast entrance door, some consultants suggest that such houses should be added with a new ‘correction door’ in one of these auspicious directions (Fig. 75).66 Furthermore, in the current practice of Vāstu-Shāstra, these do’s & taboos do not only apply to temples, houses and king’s palaces but also to all other types of built spaces. For instance, as instructed by some modern Vāstu-Shāstra consultants, the retail shop should also have its main entrance door in the north, east or northeast (Fig. 278).67

It is also noteworthy that some modern Vāstu-Shāstra theoreticians tend to use the concept of the cosmic energy to theorize these do’s & taboos regarding the auspicious and inauspicious directions of orientations. For example, according to Talavane Krishna, an influential Vāstu-Shāstra theoretician and practitioner, there are two opposite flows of cosmic energies, of which the positive one comes from the northeast, while the negative one drifts from the southwest (Fig. 76).68 Therefore, in order to let the positive energy enter the house instead of the negative one, the main entrance door should open towards the north, east or northeast but never towards the south, west or southwest. Also according to the concept of the positive and negative energies, some contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners say that the building should be located in the southwest part of the site, so that the positive energy coming from the northeast can easily enter the site without being blocked, and the negative energy from the southeast would be blocked by the building and thus does not

65 Babu 2003, pp. 11, 40, 73; Dwivedi 2003, p. 175; Dwivedi 2004, pp. 92, 129.
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3.2.5 Taboos Prescribing that the Ordinary Houses Should Not Be Oriented to the Cardinal Points ‘Precisely’

So far, we have seen a variety of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos concerning the orientation as determined by the cardinal points. Among these do’s & taboos, some recommend that the built space should have four entrances on the four sides which are respectively oriented to the four cardinal points; some suggest that the built space can be oriented to any of the four cardinal points; some advise that the built space should be oriented to one of the four cardinal points according to the rules based on the clockwise order; while some stipulate that the built space should always be oriented to the most auspicious cardinal point. Once these do’s & taboos are followed, the built space can have its two body-based axes (i.e. the front-back and left right axes) perfectly in keeping with the two sun-based axes (i.e. the east-west and north-south axes), the most important manifestation of the Cosmic Cross. This built space can thus be seen as occupying the place exactly where the Axis Mundi is erected. In short, these do’s & taboos play crucial roles in supporting the architectural representations of the built space as being fixed at the cosmic center—the most stable point of the entire cosmic structure.

However, in both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, we can also find some taboos which explicitly or implicitly forbid people to orient built spaces to the cardinal points too ‘precisely’, but just ‘approximately’. In some sense, these taboos are meant to prevent the two body-based axes of the built space from exactly coinciding with the two sun-based axes of the world, and consequently, it cannot be ensured that this space is accurately positioned in the cosmic center (Fig. 10). It is important to note that these taboos do not apply to all types of built spaces but only to the ‘ordinary houses’ of normal people. That is, the holy temples dedicated to gods or the majestic palaces of kings are not subject to these taboos. Without doubt, the taboos prescribing that ‘the ordinary houses should not face the cardinal points precisely’ are quite comparable with those stipulating that ‘the ordinary houses should not have an equal-sided square plan’ as mentioned in Chapter 2. The former taboos imply that the humble human beings do not deserve to live in a space occupying the center of the cosmic structure, whilst the latter ones imply that the humble human beings do not deserve to live in a space perfectly representing the cosmic structure.

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Feng-Shui Taboos Prescribing that the Ordinary Houses Should Not Be Oriented to the South Precisely

As mentioned earlier, in the Feng-Shui architectural tradition, the ‘south orientation’ is usually seen as the most auspicious. However, we can still find a significant *taboo* which instructs that the ordinary house should not be oriented to the south precisely. Although this *taboo* is not documented in any old Feng-Shui text known to us, it is widely followed in some places of the Chinese cultural sphere, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to the interviews conducted in Taiwan, people usually believe that the south is very sacred, and the auspicious cosmic force coming from the south is very powerful. However, they also think that, for the ordinary houses, the south is likely to be “over sacred”, and the auspicious cosmic force is likely to be “over powerful”. Therefore, an ordinary house can just be oriented to the south ‘approximately’ instead of ‘precisely’ (Fig. 29). Surely, temples, shrines or official buildings can be oriented to the south precisely, for such buildings are qualified to benefit from the extremely auspicious and powerful cosmic force coming from this cardinal point.

Furthermore, as Su Ming-Feng, a famous contemporary Feng-Shui specialist in Hong Kong, indicates in his *Basic Methods for the Practice of House Feng-Shui* (2006), such ‘over-powerful force’ from the south could become ‘*Sha Qi*’ or ‘killing Qi’, which is very inauspicious for the ordinary house:

*If the house has its main entrance door facing due south, the strongest ‘Sha Qi’ is likely to enter the house. No one should live in such a house for long.*

As mentioned earlier, the Qi from the south ought to be the ‘Qi of Yang’ which ought to be very auspicious and positive. However, for the ordinary houses, such auspicious and positive Qi could become very inauspicious and negative for the ordinary house. Therefore, this *taboo* is against the orientation to the south precisely for the house, while implying that the house is not qualified to be positioned at the cosmic center, and suggesting that the house does not deserve to be a place in which the sun-based cosmic power and order...
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are fully manifested. As we have learned, the ‘Qi of Yang’ is an important representation of the sun, and like the sun, the ‘Qi of Yang’ is supposed to come to the summit when arriving in the south.

Vāstu-Shāstra Taboos Prescribing that the Ordinary Houses Should Not Be Oriented to the East, the North or the West Precisely

In old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, there is no taboo that directly emphasizes that the ordinary house should not be oriented to the cardinal points precisely. Nonetheless, the following prescription found in the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra as mentioned earlier seems to imply a taboo of this kind:

The house of a Brahmana (i.e. Brahmin) may be established having door occupied by the ‘Mahendra’ (i.e. Indra) being the excellent one [sic]. The door in the front or east, (called) ‘Mahendra’, is laudable and granter of all desires [sic]. To the west side (a door) created known as ‘Pushpadanta’ is excellent and victory endower [sic]. The door in the north of ‘Bhallata’ may be excellent for the house owner [sic].

As we have discussed before, this prescription implies that the three cardinal directions of east, the west and the north are all auspicious for its main entrance door to be oriented to, because the three deities—Mahendra, Pushpadanta and Pushpadanta—are located on the east, the west and the north sides of the ‘Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala’ (Fig. 140). However, also according to such a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the plots of the three deities do not exactly represent the three cardinal directions, but rather point to the ‘east by north’, the ‘west by south’ and the ‘north by west’. That is, though the orientations to the east, west or north are auspicious, the main entrance should not be oriented to the three cardinal points too precisely. It is important to note that this prescription found in the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra only applies to ordinary houses but not to temples, palaces or the other types of much-revered constructions.

Today, a small number of Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners have noticed this implicit but significant taboo, thereby suggesting people not to orient the main entrance door of the ordinary house to the cardinal point precisely. For instance, as Sashikala Ananth, (an influential contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra specialist, indicates in her The Penguin Guide to Vaastu: The Classical Indian Science of Architecture and Design, the orientation of the main entrance door

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for religious and public buildings and that for residential buildings should be slightly different. For the religious and public buildings, the main entrance gates should be set in the middle plot of one of the four sides of the ‘Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala’. This means that such entrance gates are oriented to one of the four cardinal points ‘precisely’. However, so far as the ordinary residential buildings are concerned, their main entrances should be set on either side of such a middle plot (Fig. 77). This implies that such entrance doors should not be oriented to one of the four cardinal points precisely but only ‘approximately’ at best.⁷⁵

3.2.6 Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Main Entrance Should be Oriented to One of the Eight Main Directions

The development of Chinese Feng-Shui in the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qin (1644-1912) Dynasties was very important, as various ancient philosophical and religious ideas of Yin-Yang, Five Elements, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism were merged and systematized, forming the basis of many newly formulated Feng-Shui theories.⁷⁶ A large proportion of the old Feng-Shui texts known to us and influential nowadays were written and compiled during this period. As indicated by Bao-De Han, two of the most important schools of Feng-Shui, the ‘Liqi School’ (理氣派), also called ‘Compass School’, and the ‘Luantou School’ (巒頭派), also called ‘Form School’, were established in the Ming Dynasty.⁷⁷ Although both schools applied the concept of cosmic Qi to the explanation of various architectural do’s & taboos, they disagreed on how to detect the Qi and on how to use it to shape the built space. Also in the Ming Dynasty, the ‘Luopan’ (羅盤), i.e. the magnetic compass, began to be widely used in the Feng-Shui practice, especially in the Liqi School, thus given the name Compass School. For the practitioners of this school, the magnetic force was viewed as a manifestation of Qi, and it is by the magnetic compass that the flowing of Qi can be detected. In this section, we will discuss the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation developed in the Liqi School of Feng-Shui, which instruct that the main entrance door of the house should be oriented to one of the eight main directions—the four cardinal ones (N, E, S and W) and the four intermediate ones (NE, SE, SW and NW)—according to the aforementioned

⁷⁶ Luo and He 2004, pp. 150-151.
⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 48.
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‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’ and some other complicated symbolic systems. These do’s & taboos, which are still widely followed in the contemporary Feng-Shui practice, can be easily found in many Feng-Shui texts from the 16th-century, such as the Yangzhai Shishu(16th century), 79 the Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu (17th century), 80 the Bazhai Mingjing (18th century), 81 the Zhaipu Dacheng (18th century), 82 and the Yangzhai Jicheng (18th century). 83

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’ is characterized as a nine-square pattern, of which each peripheral square is attached to one of the eight trigrams of Bagua (Fig. 116). Li represents the south, Kun the southwest, Dui the west, Qian the northwest, Kan the north, Gen the northeast, Zhen the east, and Xun the southeast. Surely, in the Feng-Shui practice of the Liqi School, the eight main directions are supposed to be identified by means of the magnetic Luopan but not by means of the gnomon. Besides being associated with one of the eight directions, each of the eight trigrams can be correlated with Yin or Yang, and signifies one the Five Elements and one of the eight family members (Fig. 30). Kan in the north represents the Water, the Middle Son, and is classified as Yang; Gen in the north-east represents the Earth, the Youngest Son, and is seen as Yang; Zhen in the east represents the Wood, the Eldest Son, and is considered as Yang; Xun in the south-east indicates the Wood, the Eldest Daughter, and is viewed as Yin; Li in the south represents the Fire and the Middle Daughter and is regarded as Yin; Kun in the south-west represents the Earth, the Mother, and is deemed Yin; Dui in the west represents the Metal, the Youngest Daughter, and is held to be Yin; Qian in the north-west represents the Metal, the Father, and is thought of as Yang. 84

In addition to the ‘Bagua’, another important symbolic system, the ‘Qizheng’ (七政) also plays a role in the practice of these do’s & taboos. The seven symbols of Qizheng, as named after the seven stars from the Chinese constellation of Big Dipper, are Shengqi (生氣), Tianyi (天醫), Yannian (延年), Jueming (絕命), Wugui (五鬼), Huohai (禍害) and Liusha (六煞). Among them, the first three symbols of Shengqi, Tianyi and Yannian are regarded as auspicious; whereas the last four symbols of Jueming, Wugui, Huohai and Liusha are thought to be inauspicious (Fig. 31). Similar to the eight trigrams of Bagua, the seven symbols of Qizheng can be attached to the ‘Nine-Square

80 Huang 1998, pp. 82-211.  
82 Wei 1985, pp. 64-116.  
84 Huang 1998, pp. 51-52.
& Eight-Trigram Diagram’. However, different from the arrangement of the eight trigrams of Bagua, the arrangement of the seven symbols of Qizheng on the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’ is not permanent but may vary according to the orientation of the main façade of the house.

It is important to note that, in the Feng-Shui practice of the Liqi School, all houses are usually categorized into eight groups according to the orientation of their main façades, and each group is named after one of the eight trigrams of the Bagua. Furthermore, the house is not directly named after the trigram representing the direction that the façade faces, but rather, after the trigram representing the ‘opposite direction’ thereof. This can be understood in terms of the Anthropomorphic long-cycle tradition. Let us take the ‘south-oriented house’ as an example. In the cosmic spatial scheme, the south-oriented house can be seen as a human body sitting north while facing south, so that the north can be seen as the ‘principle position’ for such a house. As the north is represented by the trigram of Kan, the south-oriented house is called ‘Kan House’ (Fig. 32). According to the same rule, the southwest-oriented house is called ‘Gen House, the west-oriented one ‘Zhen House’, the northwest-oriented one ‘Xun House’, the north-oriented one ‘Li House’, the northeast-oriented one ‘Kun House’, the east-oriented one ‘Dui House’, and the southeast-oriented one ‘Qian House’.

In practice, each of the eight groups of houses has its own ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’ on which the symbol of ‘Principal Position’ (伏位) along with the seven symbols of Qizheng should be arranged in a particular way. Take the south-oriented ‘Kan House’ as an example again (Fig. 129). In the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’ for the Kan House, the square of Kan (north) should be labeled as the ‘Principal Position’, as this house is thought to occupy the north as a host. Based on such a scheme, the seven symbols of Qizheng are labeled on the other seven peripheral squares respectively, Wugui on Gen (NE), Tianyi on Zhen (E), Shengqi on Xun (SE), Yannian on Li (S), Jueming on Kun (SW), Huohai on Dui (W) and Liusha on Qian (NW). There are eight kinds of ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagrams’ respectively applying to the eight groups of houses of Kan (S-oriented), Gen (SW-oriented), Zhen (W-oriented), Xun (NW-oriented), Li (N-oriented), Kun (NE-oriented), Dui (E-oriented) and Qian (SE-oriented), in which the ‘Principal Position’ along with the seven symbols of Qizheng are differently arranged (Fig. 130).

Among the seven symbols of Qizheng, as mentioned earlier, the three of Shengqi, Tianyi and Yannian are auspicious, and the four of Jueming, Wugui, Huohai and Liusha are inauspicious. In a house plan as based on the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’, the locations of these auspicious and
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inauspicious symbols also highlight the auspicious and inauspicious directions for the main entrance of the house. In short, the main entrance of a house should be oriented to, or installed in, one of the three auspicious directions represented by the three auspicious symbols. For instance, in the Kan House as based on its own ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’, the three auspicious symbols of Shengqi, Yannian and Tianyi are respectively located in the squares of Xun (SE), Li (S) and Zhen (E). Therefore, the entrance door of the Kan House should be set in, or oriented to, one of the three directions. On the contrary, as the four inauspicious symbols of Jueming, Huohai, Liusha and Wugui are respectively labeled in the squares of Kun (SW), Dui (W), Qian (NW) and Gen (NE), the entrance door should never be set in, or oriented to, one of the four directions. Simply put, for each group of houses with their ‘main façades’ oriented to a particular direction, there are at least three suitable directions for their ‘main entrances’ to be set in, or oriented to.

Furthermore, among the three auspicious directions, it is possible to select the best one after a complicated examination procedure according to the ‘attributes’ of the eight trigrams of Bagua. As mentioned earlier, each trigram can be associated with certain attributes concerned with the Five Elements, the Family Members and the Yin-Yang (Fig. 30). On the one hand, since the house with the main façade oriented to a particular direction has been named after one trigram, according this trigram, the ‘attributes of the house’ are evident. On the other hand, since the three auspicious directions for the main entrance can also be associated with three trigrams of Bagua, the ‘attributes of the three possible main entrances’ can be discerned as well. According to Feng-Shui texts, the relationship between the attributes of the house and those of the main entrance should be harmonious and positive. In the Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu, it is said:

The door shall be set in one of the three auspicious directions. Besides, the harmonious relationship between the house and the main entrance according to the ‘Yin-Yang’ shall be taken into account. Given that a husband shall be paired with a wife, the house of Yang shall be paired with the main entrance of Yin. Likewise, the house of Yin shall be paired with the main entrance of Yang. Owing to the harmony between the Yang and the Yin, the family can be prosperous. Moreover, as an old husband had better be paired with an old wife, and a young husband had better be paired with a young wife, the best direction among the three auspicious ones (for the main entrance to be installed in) can be found...

85 Huang 1998, p. 53.
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The main entrance door cannot be seen as very auspicious if its attributes do not have a positive relationship with those of the house, according to the Yin or Yang, the young or old, and (the inter-generating and inter-overcoming cycles of) the Wuxing.\(^{86}\)

Take the south-oriented Kan House as an example, of which the three auspicious directions for the main entrance to be set in are the east (Tianyi), the south (Yannian) and the southeast (Shengqi) (Fig. 129). As we can see, such a house is given the attributes of Water (Wuxing), Middle Son (Family Member) and Yang (Fig. 30). Besides, the three directions are respectively associated with the three trigrams of the Bagua, i.e. Zhen, Li and Xun. According to the trigrams, the entrance in the east (Zhen) may have the attributes of Wood, Eldest Son and Yang, the entrance in the south (Li) may have the attributes of Fire, Middle Daughter and Yin, and the entrance in the southeast (Xun) may have the attributes of Wood, Eldest Daughter and Yin (Fig. 30). Based upon these attributes, a comparison between the three auspicious entrance doors can be made. First, in terms of ‘Yin-Yang’, as the Kan house has the attribute of Yang which should be paired with Yin, the entrance doors in the south (Yin) and the southeast (Yin) are better than that in the east (Yang). Second, in terms of the ‘Family Members’, since the Kan House represents Middle Son which should be paired with a female wife, the entrance doors in the south (Middle Daughter) and the southeast (Eldest Daughter) and are evidently better than that in the east (Eldest Son). Third, in terms of the ‘inter-generating and inter-overcoming cycles of the Five Elements’, as the Kan House has the attribute of Water, the doors in the east (Wood) and the southeast (Wood) are more suitable than that in the south (Fire).\(^{87}\) To sum up, among the three directions, the most auspicious direction is the southeast one because the attributes of the door in the southeast—Yin, Eldest Daughter, and Wood—can be in harmony with the attributes of the Kan house—Yang, Middle Son, and Water.

Just like the south-oriented Kan House, the other seven kinds of houses all have their own most auspicious directions for their main entrance doors to be set in. The following passage can also be found in the Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu:

\begin{quote}
The Qian House (oriented to SE) shall have the Kun Door (opening to SW); the Kun House (oriented to NE) shall have the Qian Door (opening to NW); the Gen House (oriented to SW) shall have the Dui
\end{quote}

\(^{86}\) Ibid. ‘然或陰陽不配，或配合不稱，或星宮相剋，皆非全吉也。’

\(^{87}\) According to the inter-generating and inter-overcoming cycles of the Five Elements, ‘Water’ nourishes ‘Wood’ yet quenches ‘Fire’.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

Door (opening to W); the Dui House (oriented to E) shall have the Gen Door (opening to NE); the Kan House (oriented to S) shall have the Xun Door (opening to SE); the Xun House (oriented to NW) shall have the Kan Door (opening to N); the Zhen House (oriented to W) shall have the Li Door (opening to S); the Li House (oriented to N) shall have the Zhen Door (opening to E).

Obviously, as developed in the Liqi School of Feng-Shui in the Ming Dynasty, these do’s & taboos highlight some significant changes in the notion of the orientation. First, the ‘main entrance’ and the ‘main façade’ are not necessarily oriented to the same direction. In other words, the orientation of the whole built space is not necessarily represented by the orientation of the ‘main entrance’, but by that of the ‘main façade’. Second, these do’s & taboos also imply that it is more crucial to find out an auspicious direction for the entrance door to be set in than to decide on an auspicious direction for the whole built space to face. As we have seen, a house is allowed to face any of the eight directions with its main façade, but there are only three satisfactory directions for its main entrance to be oriented to.

These changes in the notion of the orientation probably are results of the physical change of the built environment and the rapid urbanization since the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). According to Chinese architectural and urban historians, due to political, economic and social factors in this period, a great number of new cities were developed, especially in southern China. As we can imagine, for the people living in a more and more high-density and complex urban environment, it is more and more difficult to orient the house building at will, and it is sometimes unavoidable to build the house with the orientation to an inauspicious direction, such as the north. However, according to these do’s & taboos developed in the Liqi School of Feng-Shui, people do not need to worry about how to orient the whole house buildings, but only need to be concerned about how to set the main entrances in an auspicious direction. No matter which direction the house buildings along with their main façades are oriented to, there are at least three choices of auspicious directions for their main entrances.

Yet the observance of these do’s & taboos does not mean that people started to ignore or abandon other important do’s & taboos regarding the orientation. In many cases, when people try to set the main entrance according to the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’, they still want to orient the house along with its main façade to the most auspicious south. This can be

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88 Huang 1998, p. 70.
89 Liu, Dun-Zhen 1987, pp. 177-178; Liu, Zhi-Ping 2001, p. 114.
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

epitomized by the traditional Siheyuan courtyard house in Beijing (Fig. 232, 233). As we can easily find, Siheyuan houses are usually built to face the south, and that is, they should be categorized as the ‘Kan House’. As mentioned earlier, such a Kan House is supposed to have a ‘Xun Door’, and hence these Siheyuan houses usually have their main entrance doors in the southeast. Another good example is the Zhaixing Mansion in Tanzi, Taiwan, a great courtyard house built by the Lin’s family in 1879 (Fig. 251, 252). While the house compound is built to face the most auspicious south, its main entrance gate is set in and opens to the southeast. Undeniably, such an association between the ‘south-oriented house’ and the ‘southeast-oriented entrance’ is based on the prescription that ‘a Kan House should have a Xun Door’. ⁹⁰


Comparing the Do's & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

3.3 Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that the Orientation Should Be Determined by the ‘Objects Dominating the External Environment’

Having seen many do’s & taboos of the first group, which recommend that the orientation of built spaces should be determined by the ‘cardinal points’, now we turn to those of the second group, which prescribe that the orientation of built spaces should be determined by the ‘objects dominating the external environment’. Like those of the first group, the do’s & taboos of the second group also play roles in the architectural representations of the connection between the built space and the cosmic structure. Later we will see that, in both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, these objects in the external environment are usually conceptualized by people as the manifestations of the Axis Mundi. Accordingly, once the built space is oriented to one of these objects, it can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center, the most fixed point of the cosmic structure. It is notable that these do’s & taboos also have many variations, some asking people to orient the built space to the ‘natural objects’ such as the mountains, the hills or the higher ground, some asking people to orient the built space to the ‘built objects’ such as the building or the open space that occupies the center of the residential territory.

3.3.1 Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be Oriented to the ‘Natural Objects Dominating the External Environment’

As Mircea Eliade expounds in his famous work, The Sacred and the Profane, in worldwide cultures, various sacred and mythical mountains are often perceived as the representations of the Axis Mundi, such as the legendary mountain of Haraberezaiti in Iran, the Mount Gerizim in Palestine and the Mount Meru in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Each of these mountains is deemed to be the cosmic center, around which the sun, the moon and stars regularly revolve. Besides, all religious men have always sought to fix their settlements to this cosmic center. Also according to Aart Mekking, the conceptualization of the mountain’s vertical axiability as the Axis Mundi belongs to the architectural Physiomorphic long-cycle tradition, and the high-rising parts of worldwide architectural complexes are usually mountain-shaped as in

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91 Eliade 1987, p. 38.
92 Ibid., p. 22.
the case of Angkor, which are all clear representations of nature.\(^{93}\)

It is reasonable to assume that the *do’s & taboos* instructing people to orient the built space to the mountains or hills are meant to ensure that the built space can be connected to the *Axis Mundi* (Fig. 11). Although these mountains and hills are usually those found around the built space but not as famous as the sacred and mythical mountains, they are the most dominant objects in the visible external environment. According to some old texts, such local mountains or hills are often regarded as part of the extension of the sacred and mythical mountains, thereby indirectly or partially representing the *Axis Mundi*. Furthermore, the higher ground, though not much of a mountain or hill, is also seen as a representation of mountains or hills. Therefore, as prescribed by some *do’s & taboos*, the built space could/should be oriented to the higher ground, if there is no noticeable mountain or hill nearby. Interestingly enough, in both the Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, the ‘man-made mountain’, which could be a mound or a tower, also often plays an important role in substituting or representing the genuine mountain for the built space to be oriented to.

It is important to note that, apart from the *do’s & taboos* stipulating that the ‘front’ of the built space should be oriented to the mountains or hills, there are also some *do’s & taboos* prescribing that the ‘back’ of the built space should be oriented in the same way (Fig. 12). Nevertheless, whether it is the front or the back that is oriented to the mountains or hills, the built space has its ‘front-back axis’ firmly connected to the *Axis Mundi*.

**Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be Oriented to Mountains and Water**

Regarding the orientation of the ‘front’ of the built space to mountains, the following passage can be found in the 16\(^{\text{th}}\)-century *Dili Renzi Xuzhi*:

*Both the ‘Chao Mountain’ and the ‘Ann Mountain’ shall be present in front of a site... the Ann Mountain is smaller and closer to the site, while the Chao Mountain is higher and distant... Though the Ann Mountain is closer to the site, it shall not be too close. Otherwise it may overwhelm the site and cause calamities... If the Chao Mountain looks gorgeous and majestic, it is very auspicious.*\(^{94}\)

\(^{93}\) Mekking 2009, p. 38.

\(^{94}\) Xu 2007, pp. 19-3, 19-4. 「夫曰朝曰案，皆穴前之山。……案山近小，而朝山高遠也。……案山逼迫人凶頑，又不可使之突兀當前。……以尖圓秀麗之峰巒，便為朝山之吉。」
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

According to this passage, the built space should be built to face the mountains, and the mountains at the front can be classified into two kinds: the ‘Ann Mountain’ (案山) which is relatively smaller and closer to the site, and the ‘Chao Mountain’ (朝山) which is relatively higher and far from the site (Fig. 33). Needless to say, both the Ann Mountain and the Chao Mountain can be seen as representations of the Axis Mundi, and by facing them, the built space can be connected to the cosmic center. As mentioned before, in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), two of the most important schools of Feng-Shui were established—the ‘Liqi School’ and the ‘Luantou School’. While the Liqi School suggests that the cosmic Qi can be manifested by the magnetic force, the Luantou School usually holds that the cosmic Qi can be manifested by the topographic characteristics and detected by the examination of the various forms of landscapes such as mountains, hills, plateaus, planes, rivers, lakes, ponds, etc. That is why the Luantou School is also called ‘Form School’. Obviously, the do’s & taboos that recommend orienting the front of the built space to the Ann Mountain and the Chao Mountain are advocated by the practitioners of the Luantou School.

According to the theories of the Luantou School, such front-side mountains are clear manifestations of the powerful and propitious cosmic Qi, and this cosmic Qi can be absorbed into the built space that faces these mountains. Besides, the mountain with its diverse shapes is also often compared to the mythical dragon. Let us consider the passage quoted from the Dili Renzi Xuzhi:

Why do geomancers usually see mountains as dragons? Because mountains come in countless external forms as do dragons: great, small, rising, falling, cliffy, smooth, clear or obscure... What are the so-called veins of bodies? They are the internal channels whereby the Qi can circulate... An experienced doctor should be adept at examining the Qi that flows in the veins inside human bodies, so that he can make correct diagnoses. Likewise, a sophisticated geomancer should also be adroit at examining the Qi that flows in the veins inside mountains, so that he can understand whether building sites near mountains are auspicious or not... The dragons and the veins (inside mountains) have a close interrelationship... The visible dragons can be seen as the external manifestations of Qi, while the invisible veins are the internal channels for Qi to flow... A building site is like an acupuncture point... How to determine an auspicious building site can be seen as how to locate an acupuncture point, since

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95 Han 2006, pp. 27, 33 & 44.
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

both requires accuracy.96

Based upon the notion of the cosmic Qi, the analogies between the ‘mountain’ and the ‘dragon’ and between the ‘mountain’ and the ‘human body’ are vividly and logically drawn in this passage. The external forms of mountains can be seen as manifestations of Qi, while the internal veins inside mountains for Qi to flow and circulate can be compared to the internal veins inside human bodies. In order to look for an auspicious building site where the dwellers can benefit from the cosmic Qi, they have to both examine the external forms of mountains and speculate on how the internal veins go inside mountains, because an auspicious site resembles a correct acupuncture point.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, in the Feng-Shui tradition, the Five Elements can be represented respectively by five kinds of shapes: Metal is represented by the circle, Wood by the rectangle, Water by the curve, Fire by the triangle, and Earth by the square. In the Luantou School, the association between the Five Elements and the five kinds of shapes also applies to the mountains. As we can find in the Dili Renzi Xuzhi, there is an interesting illustration that shows such kind of association (Fig. 131).97 The round mountain represents Metal, the rectangular one Wood, the curved one Water, the triangular one Fire, and the flat one Earth. Based upon this association, the mountains of different shapes are thought to release different kinds of cosmic Qi, that is to say, Qi of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire or Earth, and thus may cause different effects on the built space oriented to these mountains.98

In addition to the do’s & taboos suggesting that the ‘front’ of the built space should be oriented to the mountains, we can find many other do’s & taboos instructing that the ‘back’ of the built space should be turned to the mountains or higher ground, which are documented in numerous Feng-Shui texts throughout history:

If the house faces the higher ground, with its back turned to the lower ground, the family is destined for doom. On the contrary, if the house faces the lower ground, with its back turned to the higher ground, the family will prosper and have a lot of livestock.99 (Dili Xinshe, 11th-


97 Xu 2007, p. 11-2.

98 Ibid., pp. 11-1 ~ 11-6.

99 Wang 2003, p. 78.「前高後下，絕無門戶。後高前下，多足牛馬。」
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

century)
Of a house, if the front ground is lower than the back ground, outstanding persons will be born into the family. However, if it is the other way around, all the family members will be fatuous.\(^\text{100}\) (Yangzhai Shishu, 16th century)

If the house faces the flat ground, the family will be prosperous and reputable... If there are high mountains in front of and close to the house, the family will often fall ill... If there are high mountains on the back of and close to the house, the family will be wealthy forever...

If there are high mountains as protective shelters at the back of the house, the family will have ample food and clothing and prosper\(^\text{101}\) (Zhaipu Dacheng, 18th century)

As indicated by these do’s & taboos, the house should not only have its back turned to the mountains or higher ground, it should also be very close to the mountain foot or even directly located on the mountain slope. Given that the mountain is a representation of the Axis Mundi, the built space with the back turned to the mountain, like that with the front facing the mountain, can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center. Furthermore, as the mountain on the back is very close to the built space, the built space can be seen as closely attached to the cosmic center (Fig. 34). As people may think, the closer the built space is to the cosmic center, the more stable it is supposed to be fixed in the cosmic structure. The mountain immediately behind the building site seems to play two important roles. On the one hand, a site close to mountains, such as one at the foot of mountains, should be chosen, given that the cosmic Qi coming through mountains will also flow through this site. On the other hand, the back of the built space should be turned towards the mountains, since the back side is deemed weaker than the front side, and thus needs protection from the mountains empowered by the cosmic Qi. From an Anthropomorphic perspective, the rear part of the built space, just like that of the human body, is usually thought to be less protected than the front part.

Furthermore, as we can imagine, in the natural environment, once the built space has its back turned to the mountains or higher ground, its front is often likely to face water, such as a river, a lake or a sea. Indeed, there are also many Feng-Shui do’s & taboos recommending that the built space should have its front oriented to water. For example, the following passage can be found in the 17th-century Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu:

\(^{100}\) Wang 1996, p. 8. 「凡宅，前低後高，世出英豪；前高後低，長幼昏迷。」

\(^{101}\) Wei 1985, pp. 436-438. 「門前般平，富貴聲名；……前山壓身，常病損人；……後起高嶂，祿享千鐘；……後列屏障，溫飽興旺。」
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

A half-moon-like pond in front of the house brings success to the male members of the family, while a crescent-shaped pond in front of the house bodes is good for the female members. All such auspicious ponds should be located in front of the house.\textsuperscript{102}

Traditionally, Chinese people think that the mountain and the water are the two most important elements of the natural landscape. For instance, the traditional Chinese paintings that involve or depict scenery or natural landscapes from the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD) are usually called ‘Shan-Shui Painting’ (山水畫), which literally denotes ‘Mountain-Water Painting’, and in which mountains, hills, rivers and waterfalls are often prominent. It is very likely that such a notion of pairing the mountain and the water was absorbed into the theories of the Luantou School, and then gave rise to a very important Feng-Shui prescription regarding the architectural orientation: ‘turning the back to the mountain, while orienting the front to the water’ (背山面水) (Fig. 35). According to this prescription, the site with the water at its front and the mountain at its back is usually considered an ideal and auspicious site.\textsuperscript{103}

It is important to note that a significant explanation based on the notion of the cosmic $Qi$ has also been given for the role of the water, as well as for that of the mountain, and this explanation can be traced back to the well-known passage found in the Zangshu,\textsuperscript{104} or Book of Burial, written by Guo Pu in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century CE:

\textit{The Qi can be dispersed by the ‘Feng’ (i.e. wind) and gathered by the ‘Shui’ (i.e. water). Ancient wise men always tried to gather it, preventing it from being dispersed, and carefully conducted it, letting it stop at the right place. That is why this (knowledge about the Qi) is called ‘Feng-Shui’. In the practice of Feng-Shui, the top priority is to understand where the ‘Shui’ (i.e. water) is coming from, and the second priority is to break the ‘Feng’ (i.e. wind).}\textsuperscript{105}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Huang 1998, p. 38. 「塘如片月，福應在男。額眉細長，女貴之象。此言塘之吉者，皆門前塘也。」
\item \textsuperscript{103} Luo and He 2004, pp. 191-211. Yi, Yu and Hung 1999, p. 98.
\item \textsuperscript{104} The Zangshu (葬書) is one of the most authoritative texts in the Chinese Feng-Shui tradition, because it is the book in which the term ‘Feng-Shui’ was first mentioned. ‘Feng’ and ‘Shui’ literally mean ‘wind’ and ‘water’ respectively. This is a book telling people how to find a suitable burial site by means of examining wind and water. Besides, the notions in the Zangshu are said to have greatly influenced the development of the Luantou School of Feng-Shui, considering the fact that not only wind or water but also many other topographic characteristics like mountains and hills are also taken into account. See: Han 2006, pp. 23-27.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Guo, accessed on 03/01/2011, http://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/葬書/內篇。「氣乘風則散，界水則止。古人聚之使不散，行之使有止，故謂之風水。風水之法，得水為上，藏風次之。」
\end{itemize}
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

This passage indicates that the water is supposed to play a positive role as it can gather the Qi, while the wind could play a negative role as it may disperse the Qi. Therefore, the building site had better to be located near the water, so that the Qi can be easily gathered around it. Based upon the same idea, the following passages can be found in the 16th-century Dili Renzi Xinshu:

When the Qi is flowing, it can be conducted by the water; when the Qi stops, it is usually stopped by the water. If the Qi fails to gather, it will be dispersed by the wind. That is why people usually say: “finding a site near the water and protect it against the wind.”

Besides, as we can find in the 17th-century Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu, a passage shows that the Qi supposed to be gathered and stopped by the water is the ‘Qi of the dragon’:

If the building site is very spacious, one shall examine where the nearby river is and how it flows. If the site is embraced by a river, it must be an auspicious place where the ‘Qi of the dragon’ will gather.

As we have learned before, according to the Luantou School, the mountain as a manifestation of the cosmic Qi is usually compared to the ‘dragon’, and hence the ‘Qi of the dragon’ can be understood as the ‘Qi coming from the mountain’. Therefore, an ideal building site should be located between the mountain and the water, as the cosmic Qi coming from the mountain is likely to stop before the water. Surely, when the built space has its back turned to the mountain, it should face the water. Besides, according to some Feng-Shui texts, the mountains in front of the site (i.e. the Ann Mountain and the Chao Mountain) also play a similar role in stopping and gathering the Qi coming from the mountains behind the site. For instance, the following passage can be found in the Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu:

As regards the building site, if its back is turned to the high mountain, and its front is oriented to the Ann Mountain, this site will be replete with positive Qi from dragons (i.e. mountains).

This passage implies that the front mountain should be as important as the back mountain; the mountain in front not only brings more Qi to the site but

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106 Xu 2007, p. 1-5. 「氣之來，有水以導之。氣之止，有水以界之。氣之聚無，風以散之。故曰，要得水，要藏風。」
107 Huang 1998, p. 6. 「其基既闊，宜以河水辨之，河水之所灣泊，乃龍氣之所會聚也。」
108 Ibid., p. 2. 「後座高峰，前對案堂，則龍之精氣盡聚於此。」

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also helps to retain the Qi coming from the high mountain at the back. Both the front and the back mountains are the facilitators of the flowing Qi to be gathered in the building site. Therefore, a good site is supposed to have its front and back turned to mountains (Fig. 36). Although both the front and the back mountains are very important to the built space, in the Feng-Shui practice, people seem to be concerned about the back mountain more than the front mountain. That is to say, regarding the built space, it is more crucial to turn its back to mountains than to orient its front to mountains.

Thanks to the Luantou School of Feng-Shui, an ideal model of the architectural orientation was established: ‘the front oriented to the water or lower ground, and the back turned to the mountains, hills or higher ground’. Up to now, many do’s & taboos with regard to this model are still extensively followed by people and strongly advocated by contemporary Feng-Shui practitioners.\(^{109}\) Surely, this ideal model can be exemplified by numerous Chinese houses, palaces, temples and mausoleums built both in the past and at present. In some of them, we can also find that the ‘artificial mountains and water’, used to remedy the lack of nearby ‘natural mountains and water’, are often set behind and in front of the built space.

First of all, let us consider the orientations of many settlements in Kinmen which is a small island off the coast of Fujian (Fig. 257). In the eastern part of this island, there is a mountain located, known as ‘Taiwu Mountain’, and there are several villages located around this mountain. It is notable that most of the houses in each village are oriented in an identical manner: their backs are turned to the Taiwu Mountain, while their fronts are oriented to the sea.\(^{110}\) Obviously, the orientations of the houses on this island are substantially determined by the Taiwu Mountain as the most dominant object in the visible external environment, but not by the cardinal points.

The Weilongwu (圍龍屋), a famous type of vernacular house widespread in Guangdong, China, is also a good example, whose name literally means ‘house embraced/surrounded by the dragon’ (Fig. 258). Guangdong, like other provinces in south China, is a topographically diverse area and full of mountains, hills and rivers. Consequently, the orientations of the vernacular houses in this area are often determined by these natural objects found in the external environment. In general, such a Weilongwu house is usually built at the foot of mountains or hills, while facing rivers or flat paddy fields. It is very conspicuous that, at its rear part, there is usually a semi-circular wing said to represent a winding dragon embracing and protecting the back of the entire

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\(^{110}\) Jiang 2003, pp. 18, 40-41, 64, 80-81, 96, 124-125, 136.
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house complex; hence the name of Weilongwu. As mentioned, according to the Luantou School, mountains and hills are manifestations of Qi, and Qi may thus come from mountains and hills. For this reason, in order to let the Qi from the back mountains or hills easily enter the house compound without being blocked, the residents of the Weilongwu usually tend to empty the room at the top center of the semi-circular wing, and this room is named as ‘Dragon Hall’ (龍廳). This name carries double meanings. On the one hand, this room represents the central part, the most important part, of the semi-circular wing that symbolizes a dragon. On the other hand, it serves as a crucial linkage between the house compound and the back mountains/hills that also symbolize dragons. Furthermore, as we can imagine, not all the houses sitting at the foot of mountains/hills can luckily face the natural river because the river is often likely to be far from the building site. In such a circumstance, people usually tend to dig a ‘semi-circular pond’ as artificial water in front of the Weilongwu house. Therefore, the beneficial Qi coming from the back mountains or hills can be stopped before the front water and kept in the house compound. Moreover, by virtue of the semi-circular pond on the front side and the semi-circular wing on the back side, the square/rectangular building plan can be seen as being bounded in a circle (Fig. 258). Hence the Weilongwu house complex also comes to represent the Chinese cosmology—‘round Heaven and square Earth’.

Actually, such a kind of man-made semi-circular pond is not a feature specific to the Weilongwu in Guangdong, but also often applied to many other types of houses and temples elsewhere in China and Taiwan. For example, many Taiwanese Sanheyuan courtyard houses are built with a semi-circular pond in the front (Fig. 234), such as the Zhaixing Mansion in Taichung (Fig. 251, 252). Besides, the ancestral shrine of the Zhang’s clan in Taxia, China, and the Confucian Temple in Tainan, Taiwan were also built to have a semi-circular pond on the front side (Fig. 164, 179).

Like the water, the mountain can also be man-made, which is used as a remedy for the lack of the nearby natural mountains, hills or higher ground. Let us take the house of the Ke’s family in Dacheng, Taiwan as an example (Fig. 244-248). As mentioned, this house was built in 1994, and the Ke’s family ever consulted a Feng-Shui practitioner during the construction of their houses. As told by Jun-Cheng Ke, the eldest son of this family, this house was built to face the main road on the west side of the site. Since Dacheng is a flat coastal area, and the coastline is just located to the west of this area, this house can be seen as also facing the water without a doubt. However, because there is no

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112 Interview with Jun-Cheng Ke (Tainan, Taiwan, 20/02/2010)
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mountain or hill in the vicinity of this area, it is impossible for the Ke’s house
to have its back turned to mountains or hills. Given this situation, as also told
by Jun-Cheng Ke, the Feng-Shui consultant advised them to build a mound as
an artificial mountain in the backyard and directly behind the house building, so
that the house can be seen as being backed by the mountain (Fig. 248).

Moreover, the Forbidden City in Beijing, the royal palace of the Ming and
Qing Dynasties built in the 15th century, is also a very good example, in which
both the man-made mountain and the man-made water play crucial roles (Fig.
152). As mentioned before, this majestic palace complex was planned in strict
accordance with the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation as determined
by the cardinal points, built with the four sides respectively oriented to the
directions of east, south, west and north, and having its main entrance gate
facing the most auspicious south. However, it is unfortunate that the nearest
natural mountain and river are a bit far from its site. Given this situation,
given historical records, the planner of the Forbidden City decided to
build a man-made mountain, the ‘Jing Mountain’ (景山), on the back (north)
side, and moreover, to dig two man-made rivers, the ‘Inner-Jinshui River’ (内
金水河) and the ‘Outer-Jinshui River’ (外金水河), on the front (south) side.\(^\text{113}\)
Therefore, the Forbidden City can be seen as facing the water while being
backed by the mountain.

Just like Chinese houses and palaces, numerous temples and tombs are
also constructed to face the water or lower ground with the back towards the
mountains or higher ground. Traditionally, Chinese people prefer to build the
temple and tomb in or close to mountains, for mountains are usually thought
to be the places full of cosmic Qi and the abodes of deities and other divine
beings. That is why we can find many temples and tombs which are built at the
mountain foot or on the mountain slope. For instance, the Zixiao Toaist Temple
in Hubei, the Jinci Toaist Temple in Shanxi, the Fo-Guang-Shan Buddhist
Monastery in Taiwan, the Thirteen Tombs of the Ming Dynasty (明十三
陵) north to Beijing, and the tombs in the Lingshan Cemetery (靈山聖墓) in
Quanzhou are all built in this manner (Fig. 161, 163, 178, 180, 181).

\textit{Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be
Oriented to Mountains}

In old Vāstu-Shāstra texts or the modern Vāstu-Shāstra practice, we cannot
find the do’s & taboos that directly instruct people to orient the built space to
mountains. Nevertheless, both the ideas of ‘facing the mountain’ and of ‘being

\(^{113}\) Yi, Yu and Hung 1999, p. 172.
backed by the mountain’ have, to a large extent, found expression in the do’s & taboos regarding the orientation as determined by reference to the cardinal points as well as in the characteristics of Indian temples.

As mentioned before, the east and the north are usually regarded as the two most auspicious directions for the built space along with its entrance to be oriented to. Concerning the east, it is the direction in which the sun rises daily. As for the north, it is the direction in which the holy mountain—Mount Meru or Mount Kailash—is thought to be located. Accordingly, ‘facing the north’ implies ‘facing Mount Meru or Mount Kailash’, and the do’s & taboos recommending the north orientation can be seen as the do’s & taboos recommending the orientation of the front of the built space to the mountain (Fig. 78). Undeniably, such Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos are quite comparable with the aforesaid Feng-Shui do’s & taboos that instruct people to orient the front of the built space to the Ann and the Chao Mountains (Fig. 33). All these Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos significantly support the architectural representations of the connection between the built space and the Axis Mundi represented by the mountain.

Surely, there are still some differences between the Feng-Shui do’s & taboos regarding the orientation to the Ann and the Chao Mountains and the Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos regarding the orientation to the holy mountain in the north. In the Feng-Shui practice, the Ann or the Chao Mountain does not refer to a specific mountain but can be any mountain or hill noticeable in the external environment; hence, it is possibly located in any direction from the perfective of the built space. However, in the Hindu traditions, Mount Meru or Mount Kailash is thought to be “always” in the north, and that is why the north is “always” auspicious. As indicated by Axel Michaels, for the Hindus, the holy direction is usually great and absolute, but not relative to the location; for instance, the Mount Kailash is always in the north, no matter whether one is south, north, west or east of it.114

Now we turn to the idea of ‘having the mountain or higher ground at the back’, which forms the basis of many Feng-Shui do’s & taboos regarding the orientation as we have seen. However, just like that of ‘facing the mountain’, this idea is not directly referred to in any old Vāstu-Shāstra text. Nonetheless, such an idea has also found expression in some of the do’s & taboos concerning the orientation as determined by the cardinal points, that is to say, those with regard to the ‘sloping direction of the site’.

As mentioned before, according to the Brihat Samhitā, the housing sites of different castes should slope down towards different cardinal directions:

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114 Michaels 2004, p. 286.
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

Brahmins’ sites slope down towards the north; Kshatriyas’ sites the east; Vaishyas’ sites the south; Sudras’ sites the west.\textsuperscript{115} Also according to the \textit{Mānasāra} and the \textit{Mayamatam}, except for the sites of Brahmins that should slope down towards the north, the sites of the three other castes should slope down towards the east.\textsuperscript{116} Obviously, the ‘sloping direction of the site’ is identical with, or can be seen as a representation of, the ‘orientation of the built space’ (Fig. 79). Therefore, the do’s & taboos regarding the sloping direction of the site can also imply that the built space should face the lower ground while having the higher ground at the back.

Moreover, according to some old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the four castes should live in the different quarters of a city or village, Brahmins in the north, Kshatriyas in the east, Vaishyas in the south, and Sudras in the west:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The houses of Brahmins and other classes should be located in the northern, eastern, southern and western parts respectively of villages and towns.}\textsuperscript{117} (Brihat Samhitā)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{The houses of Brahmans, monks, and other holy personages should be in the northern quarter of the town... The Kshatriyas should dwell in the eastern part... The Vaishyas should occupy the southern part... The Sudras should make the western quarter.}\textsuperscript{118} (Agni Purāna)
\end{quote}

It is important to note that, based on both the prescription regarding the different living quarters for the four castes and the prescription regarding the different sloping directions of the sites for the four castes according to the 
\textit{Brihat Samhitā}, the \textit{Axis Mundi} can be highlighted in the center of the residential territory such as a city or village (Fig. 80). As we can imagine, in a city or village, as long as the Brahmin’s quarter is located in and slopes down to the north, the Kshatriya’s quarter the east, the Vaishya’s quarter the south, and the Sudra’s quarter the west, the center of the city or village would be the highest place. The center as the highest place thus highlights the representation of the \textit{Axis Mundi}. Therefore, the houses of the four castes located in the four quarters, which all have their backs towards the highest place, can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center.

In addition to the do’s & taboos concerning the sloping direction of the site, many Indian temples also manifest the model of ‘facing the lower ground, while having the mountain or higher ground at the back’. First of all, let us consider the well-known Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta, constructed between

\textsuperscript{115} Bhat 1986, p. 485.
\textsuperscript{116} Acharya 1994, p. 12; Dagens 1994, pp. 7-9.
\textsuperscript{117} Bhat 1986, p. 476.
\textsuperscript{118} Shastri 1967, p. 430.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

the 2nd century BCE and the 7th century CE (Fig. 213, 214). As we can see, all the cave temples were built to face the outer lower ground and the river and have their backs turned to and embedded in the rocks of hills. Obviously, their orientations are determined primarily according to the natural environment, but less according to the aforesaid Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos prescribing that the temple should always have an east-west orientation. Consequently, among these cave temples, some face the east, some the west, and some the south. Whichever direction such a cave temple faces, as long as its rear part is turned to and embedded in hills, it can be seen as being firmly attached to the Axis Mundi represented by hills (Fig. 81).

Just like those at Ajanta, the cave temples at Ellora (5th-10th centuries CE) were constructed in the same mode: some belonging to the Buddhism, some the Hinduism, and the others the Jainism (Fig. 215, 216). These cave temples are all located on the west side of hills, with their front entrances facing the lower ground and their rear parts embedded in rocks. Therefore, their orientations are not only in accordance with the natural environment but also in accordance with the do’s & taboos suggesting that the temple should have an east-west orientation. Surely, we can hardly know whether consciously or not, people built these cave temples on the west side of hills, so that they all can have an east-west orientation.

Furthermore, among the dozens of temples at Ellora, the Kailash Hindu Temple, constructed in the 8th century CE, is quite distinctive (Fig. 202-204). Different from the others, it is not a cave temple but a rock-cut temple. This temple has a magnificent roof tower, called Shikhara, erected on the top of the innermost Garbha-griha (i.e. the sanctum) at the rearmost part of its front-back axis. As its name suggests, this roof tower is said to symbolize Mount Kailash, the holy mountain in the north as the abode of deities. Therefore, behind the Kailash Temple, there are two representations of the Axis Mundi: one is the roof tower, the other the hill. The Kailash Temple thus can be seen as being connected to the Axis Mundi ‘two times’ (Fig. 82). In some sense, such a double representations of the Axis Mundi can be compared with the case of the Ann and Chao Mountains in the Feng-Shui tradition, as the two mountains for a built space to face are both representations of the Axis Mundi (Fig. 33).

Not only the Kailash Temple but many other Indian temples are also constructed to have such a roof tower on the top of the Garbha-griha, which represents the holy mountain as the Axis Mundi and the cosmic center. As exemplified by the 8th-century Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and the 11th-century Brahmeshvara Temple at Bhubaneshwar, the former has a decorated

3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

stepped roof tower said to symbolize Mount Kailash as well, and the latter has a curved roof tower which represents another holy mountain — Mount Meru (Fig. 197, 199). It goes without saying that numerous other Indian temples are also built with a roof tower at the rear, such as the Keshava Temple in Somnathpur, the Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram, the Virupaksha Hindu Temple in Pattadakal, the Sun Temple in Modhera, and the small temple in Dabhoi (Fig. 198, 200, 201, 212, 219). By virtue of this roof tower, the temple can be seen as being attached to the Axis Mundi or, as we can also say, incorporating the Axis Mundi into its rear part (Fig. 83). It is worth noting that these roof towers of Indian temples are quite comparable with those artificial mounds built behind the Chinese palaces and houses as mentioned earlier (Fig. 150, 152, 248). Both the roof tower and the artificial mound can be seen as the man-made mountains used to represent or substitute the real mountains.

3.3.2 Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be Oriented to the ‘Built Objects Dominating the External Environment’

Not only the ‘natural objects’, but the ‘built objects’ that dominate the external environment are also likely to represent the Axis Mundi. Such a built object could be a building or an open space, and it usually occupies the center of the residential territory such as a city or a village. That is to say, the residential territory is a representation of the cosmic structure, and the dominant object (along with its location) is a representation of the center of the cosmic structure. As indicated by Mircea Eliade in The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religions, in numerous cultural traditions, some built objects are often mentally constructed by people as the Axis Mundi, or the cosmic center, such as holy sites, sanctuaries, temples, ceremonial houses, or the open space that occupies the middle of the village. Therefore, whether the built object is a building or an open space, ‘being oriented to the dominant built object’, just like ‘being oriented to the dominant natural object’, can be seen as ‘being connected to the cosmic center’ (Fig. 13, 14). The idea about orienting the human space to the built object occupying the territorial center can be found in both Chinese and Indian architectural traditions.

120 Stierlin 1998, pp. 36-37, 114-115.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

Feng-Shui Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be Oriented to the ‘Built Object Occupying the Territorial Center’

As regards the idea about the orientation to the territorial center in the Chinese architectural tradition, first of all, it can be exemplified by the ancient settlement excavated at the Jiangzhai archaeological site in Shaanxi, which belongs to the ‘Yangshao Culture’, a Neolithic culture dated from around 5000 to 3000 BCE. As indicated by archeologists, the houses of this settlement were arranged in a particular way, all built to surround and face the central area of the settlement, which seemed to be an open space without any construction built on it. It appears that this central open space was intended to be the place where religious ceremonies and assemblies were held, just like what Mircea Eliade has pointed out, “a space is often left empty in the middle of the village; there the ceremonial house will later be built, with its roof symbolically representing Heaven.” In other words, it is the very place where the linkage between the Earth and the Heaven is supposed to be established, thus representing the cosmic center where the Axis Mundi is supposed to rise. By virtue of being oriented to this central open space, the houses of this settlement can be regarded as being tied to the cosmic pillar erected at the cosmic center.

Moreover, the concept of the ‘center-orientation’ can also be found in ancient Chinese thoughts and political philosophy. As mentioned before, in the 3rd-century-BCE Hanfeizi, a classical work on political philosophy, it is said that:

*The state affairs in the four directions shall all be conducted by the sage king who resides in the center of the state. When the sage king governs in the center, all nobles and feudal lords from the four directions would come to visit and admire him.*

This passage, besides highlighting the center as the supreme and dominant position in a territory, also implies that those situated around the center in different directions within the territory should all venerate and turn towards the center that represents the *Axis Mundi*.

However, such an idea about the center-orientation seems not to have been completely absorbed into the Feng-Shui tradition developed later, as in old Feng-Shui texts, we cannot find the *do’s & taboos* that explicitly instruct people

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123 Eliade 1987, p. 45.
124 Han, accessed on 09/12/2010, http://ctext.org/hanfeizi/yang-quan.「事在四方，要在中央。聖人執要，四方來效。」
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to orient the houses to the middle of a city or village. Nevertheless, in some do’s & taboos, the idea about ‘orienting the built space to the territorial center’ still can be perceived, although the territory that these do’s & taboos concern is not the large-sized village or city, but the relatively small house compound. The following passage can be found in the Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu:

Of a house, the rooms (of wings), the inner hall and the outer hall shall all be arranged to face the courtyard that is seen as the ‘Mingtang’, so that the family will be prosperous.\(^{125}\) (Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu)

As we have learned before, the Mingtang signifies the sacred place where ancient emperors made sacrifices to Heaven, thus representing the center of Earth from which the Axis Mundi rises. As also mentioned, a typical courtyard house is usually supposed to have its plan based on the ‘Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram’, and the courtyard is represented by the central square of this diagram. Therefore, the courtyard should be seen as the center of the house. While the house represents the entire cosmic structure, its courtyard represents the cosmic center. By virtue of facing the courtyard, the halls and rooms can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center (Fig. 37). Obviously, the courtyard of the house compound can be compared with the above-mentioned open space of the village.

In the Chinese architectural tradition, the idea about ‘orienting the halls and rooms to the central courtyard’ can be exemplified by numerous types of traditional courtyard houses, such as the Siheyuan courtyard house in Beijing, the Sanheyuan courtyard house in Taiwan and many others elsewhere (Fig. 232-236, 242, 243). In addition to the courtyard house with a square/rectangular plan, the round Tulou houses in Fujian are also built in the same manner (Fig. 249, 250). Nowadays, many apartment buildings are built with a large central courtyard, and the apartment units are also often arranged to face this central courtyard (Fig. 254). Surely, most traditional temples, just like traditional houses, are built to have their rooms towards the central courtyard (Fig. 157, 161, 165, 178, 183, 185, 192-194).

\(^{125}\) Huang 1998, p. 12.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

Vāstu-Shāstra Do’s & Taboos Prescribing that Built Spaces Should Be Oriented to the ‘Built Object Occupying the Territorial Center’

In old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, we can find many do’s & taboos giving explicit instructions that the built space should be oriented to the center of the territory, and such a territory can be as large as a city or as small as a building compound. First of all, let us consider the following passage from the Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra:

*(In a city or village), the architects may create temples of gods... In the east having faces westward and in the west having faces facing the east...* [sic]

At first glance, this passage seems to recommend that the temple should have an east-west orientation as mentioned before. However, it also indicates that the temples should face the center of the city or village, be they located in the east or the west. As we know, the city or village is a representation of the cosmic structure, and its center represents the cosmic center, at which the Axis Mundi is erected (Fig. 84). Furthermore, as mentioned by many Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the center of a city or village is usually supposed to be occupied by a temple, an altar, a pavilion or a king’s palace:

*In the center of the town deserves to be created the temple of the one born of the lotus i.e. Brahma.* [127] *(Samarāṅgana-Sūtradhāra)*  
*(In a village), a temple or an altar is installed in the center which is called the place of Brahma.* [128] *(Mayamatam)*  
*An emperor’s palace is in the center of a town...* [129] *(Mayamatam)*  
*Pavilions should be built in holy places, in pleasure gardens, in the center of villages and such other architectural objects (e.g. towns)...* [130] *(Mānasāra)*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, cities or villages as well as temples or houses should all have their plans based on the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandalas (Fig. 137-140). In each kind of Vāstu-Shāstra Mandalas, the center is always the place where the Creator Brahma resides, and hence this center can be seen as a representation of the ‘original point’ of the cosmos. Therefore, it can be understood that the temple, altar, pavilion or king’s palace located in the center

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[127] Ibid., p. 106.  
[129] Ibid., p. 623.  
of the city or village, with its magnificent vertical feature, assumes an important role in representing the *Axis Mundi* of the city or village.

The idea about orienting the built space to the city’s center can be well exemplified by two temples in Jaipur. As introduced before, Jaipur is a city with its plan based on the 3x3 Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, and its central area is occupied by the king’s palace compound. To the southeast and the southwest of this central area respectively, there are two important temples, the Lakshmi-Narayan Temple dedicated to *Vishnu*, and the Sita-Rama Temple dedicated to the god-king *Rama* and his consort *Sita* (Fig. 85, 287). It is important to note that the Lakshmi-Narayan Temple located in the east faces the west, while the Sita-Rama Temple located in the west faces the east. Obviously, besides having an east-west orientation as suggested by Vāstu-Shāstra texts, both the temples can also be seen as facing the city’s center occupied by the king’s palace.

Another intriguing example is the *Kashidarpana*, a city map of Varanasi made in the 9th century (Fig. 290). As we have learned in Chapter 2, this map can be seen as a mental construction, in which the sacred Varanasi is depicted as a round city, and the city center as a representation of the cosmic center is highlighted. As shown in this map, all the temples located on the periphery the Varanasi are all oriented to the city center, though that is not the case in reality. The idea about the center-orientation, besides its application to the city or village, also applies to the building compound. The following passage can be found in the *Mayamatam*:

> There is an altar in the very center of the palace... buildings situated in the east must have their doors to the west, those in the north, south [sic].

This passage indicates that, in a palace compound, the center should be occupied by a sacred altar, and buildings in different directions should all face it. Without a doubt, the altar occupying the center is a clear representation of the *Axis Mundi*, and the buildings oriented it can be seen as being connected to the cosmic center. Obviously, the arrangement of the buildings in the City Palace of Jaipur is such a case, although the center of this palace is not an altar but the magnificent Diwan-i-Khas (i.e. Hall of Public Audience) (Fig. 153-155). As well as the houses in the Chinese architectural tradition, the central courtyard is typical of those in the Indian architectural tradition. In these Indian courtyard houses, the wings and rooms are also often arranged to face the courtyard as the center of the house compound (Fig. 270-272).

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132 Dagens 1994, pp. 627, 635.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

3.4 Should the Orientation Be Determined by the ‘Cardinal Points’, by the ‘Objects Dominating the External Environment’, or by Both?

So far we have seen the two groups of do’s & taboos concerning the orientation in Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra traditions: one concerning the orientation determined by reference to the ‘cardinal points’, the other concerning the orientation determined by reference to the ‘objects dominating the external environment’. Both groups of do’s & taboos play important roles in supporting architectural representations of cosmic and social realities. However, as we can imagine, it is very likely that, in determining the orientation of a built space, people may be confronted with the ‘conflict’ between the do’s & taboos of the first group and those of the second group. For instance, so far as the Feng-Shui practice is concerned, when a house is deliberately built to face the most auspicious south, there is not necessarily a mountain located in the north, that is, at its back. Likewise, when a house is built to back on to a mountain on purpose, its front side does not necessarily face the most auspicious south. When should the orientation be determined by reference to the cardinal points, and when should it be determined by reference to the objects dominating the external environment? Furthermore, is it possible to create an ideal situation, in which the orientation of built spaces is determined by the ‘cardinal points’ and the ‘objects dominating the external environment’ at the same time?

3.4.1 ‘Facing the South with the Back towards the North’ vs. ‘Facing the Water with the Back towards the Mountain’ in Chinese Feng-Shui Architectural Tradition

In the Feng-Shui tradition, as we have learned, ‘facing the south with the back towards the north’ is probably the most profound idea in the architectural-orientation do’s & taboos concerned with the cardinal points, while ‘facing the water with the back towards the mountain’ in those concerned with the objects dominating the external environment. Surely, in the Feng-Shui practice, the two ideas are often likely to be in conflict with each other, and people might be caught in a dilemma of choosing between them. According to some texts, we can find that such a problem was not strange to the Feng-Shui practitioners in old times, and they have established a significant guiding principle for solving this kind of dilemma. For example, in the 17th-century Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu, it is said that:
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As regards the building situated in the valley and surrounded by mountains and hills, the orientation of its main entrance shall be determined by the topographic characteristics in the first place, and then by the geographic directions. As for the building located in the urban environment, in determining the orientation of its main entrance, one shall pay attention to the geographic directions more than to the topographic characteristics.133

That is, for the building sited in the rural environment where mountains, hills and rivers abound, the architectural-orientation do’s & taboos concerned with the objects in the external environment should take precedence over those with regard to the cardinal points. In this case, ‘facing the water with the back towards the mountain’ is more crucial than ‘facing the south with the back towards the north’. By contrast, for the building located in the urban environment where mountains, hills and rivers cannot be easily perceived, it is totally the other way around; hence ‘facing the south with the back towards the north’ should be placed at a higher priority than ‘facing the water with the back towards the mountain’.

The practice of this guiding principle can be well exemplified by two famous temples in Zhangzhou of Fujian Province in China. One is the Confucian Temple, originally built in the 11th century and rebuilt several times in history. With some distant mountains to its north, it is located in the old city center and on the north bank of the Jiulong River (Fig. 182, 183). The other one is the Nanshan Buddhist Temple, originally built in the 8th century and rebuilt in the 14th century. With some nearby hills to its south, it is located outside the old city center and on the south bank of the Jiulong River (Fig. 184, 185).

Interestingly enough, the two temples have utterly different orientations: the Confucian Temple faces south, while the Nanshan Temple faces north (Fig. 38). As the Confucian Temple is located in the old city center, it can be thought of as built in the ‘urban environment’. Therefore, its orientation was primarily determined by the cardinal points, that is, ‘facing the south with the back towards the north’. However, as regards the Nanshan Temple, for it is located outside the old city area, it can be considered built in the ‘rural environment’. Therefore, its orientation should be determined according to the idea about ‘facing the water with the back towards the mountain’ rather than the idea about ‘facing the south with the back towards the north’. As a consequence, the Nanshan Temple was built to have its back towards the hills in the south, and to face the Jiulong River in the north, even though ‘facing north’ is thought to be

133 Huang 1998, p. 15.「山谷大門，先論形局，後參方位。城市大門，先取方位，亦要形局圓聚。」
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

unfavorable and inauspicious in Feng-Shui tradition.

Undeniably, if the orientation of a built space can be determined by both the ‘cardinal points’ and the ‘objects dominating the external environment’, such an orientation should be very ideal. Indeed, in the Feng-Shui tradition, an important notion about the most ideal architectural orientation can be found: ‘embracing the Yang while rejecting the Yin, and facing the water while having the mountain at the back’.\(^{134}\) As mentioned before, according to the ancient Yin-Yang School, the \(Qi\) of Yang and the \(Qi\) of Yin are thought to come to the summit when they arrive in the south and the north respectively; hence the Yang is usually related to the south, and the Yin the north. Therefore, this notion can be explained as follows: A built space should not only face the south with the back towards the north, but also face the water with the back towards the mountain. That is, the river, lake, pond or sea should be located in front, as well as to the south, of the site; the chain of mountains or hills in back, as well as to the north, of the site (Fig. 39). Surely, the Ann and Chao Mountains, which are supposed to be situated in front of the site, should also be in the south.

More often than not, only palaces, temples, shrines and mansions for nobles and dignitaries are privileged to be built in accordance with the notion of the most ideal orientation, facing the water in the south and being backed by the mountain in the north. For instance, with two artificial rivers in front and an artificial mountain at the back, the south-oriented Forbidden City in Beijing undoubtedly reflects such a notion. The above-mentioned Confucian Temple in Zhangzhou is also a good example, because besides facing the south with the back towards the north, it also faces the Jiulong River in the south and has its back turned to a mountain in the north (Fig. 38). Certainly, the hill on the other side of the Jiulong River, to which the Confucian Temple is also oriented, can be seen as the Ann Mountain in the south. Another instance is the ancestral shrine of the Zhang’s clan in Taxia in China as mentioned before (Fig. 164, 165). As we can see, this shrine is oriented to a small stream to its south, and is backed by a hill in the north; in addition, it was also built with an artificial semi-circular pond on its front/south side. Just like the ancestral shrine of the Zhang’s clan, the Zhaixing Mansion in Tanzi in Taiwan as mentioned earlier was deliberately built to face the south with the back towards the north, and face the water (including a natural stream and a man-made semi-circular pond) with the back towards the hill (Fig. 251, 252).

\(^{134}\) Yi, Yu & Hung 1999, p. 98. 「負陰抱陽，背山面水」。
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3.4.2 ‘Facing Mount Meru in the North’ and ‘Facing the East or the West and Having a Rear Tower’ in Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architecture Tradition

In the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition, we can also find the idea that the orientation should be determined both by the ‘cardinal points’ and the ‘objects dominating the external environment’, although such an idea is expressed less clearly in Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos.

First, as mentioned earlier, being oriented to the auspicious north can also be conceived of as being oriented to the holy Mount Meru, for Mount Meru is always situated in the north. In this sense, both the ‘north’ and ‘Mount Meru’ are the points of reference for the architectural orientation (Fig. 78). On the one hand, by virtue of the orientation to the north, the front-back and left-right axes of the built space can coincide with the north-south and east-west axes that constitute the Cosmic Cross, and the built space can thus be conceptualized as being located at the cosmic center from which the Axis Mundi rises. On the other hand, by virtue of the orientation to Mount Meru as another representation of the Axis Mundi, the built space can also be conceptualized as being connected to the cosmic center.

Second, as we have learned, according to Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos, the temple should usually be built to face the east or the west. If so, the front-back and left-right axes of the temple can be identical with the east-west and north-south axes; hence the location of the temple can be regarded as the place where the Axis Mundi stands. As we have also learned, Indian temples are often built with roof towers at their rears, and the roof tower of this kind is usually said to symbolize the holy mountain—Mount Meru or Mount Kailash—that represents the Axis Mundi as well. Therefore, ‘facing the east or the west and having a rear tower’ can be seen as ‘occupying the cosmic center’ and ‘being connected to the cosmic center’ at once. As we can see, numerous Indian temples were constructed in this way, such as the east-oriented Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho, the east-oriented Keshava Hindu Temple in Somnathpur, the east-oriented Brahma Shvara Temple in Bhubaneswar, the east-oriented Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram, the west-oriented Virupaksha Temple in Pattadakal, the west-oriented Kailash Hindu Temple at Ellora, and the east-oriented Sun Temple in Modhera, all of which have a prominent roof tower at the rear (Fig. 195, 198-202, 212).
3.4.3 The ‘More Connections’ to the Axis Mundi, the ‘More Fixed’ in the Cosmic Structure

So far, in the frame of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross* shorter-cycle theme of worldwide architectural representations, we have analyzed a variety of do’s & taboos concerning the orientation of built spaces. Some stipulate that the cardinal points should be used as the points of reference for determining the orientation, while others prescribe that the points of reference should be the visible objects in the external environment. Whatever the points of reference are, they all imply the representations of the *Axis Mundi* for the built space to be connected to. As we have seen, the orientation to a cardinal point implies that the *Axis Mundi* is represented exactly on the site of the built space, and the orientation to an object in the external environment implies that this object is a representation of the *Axis Mundi*. By virtue of the connection to the represented *Axis Mundi*, the built space can be regarded as being fixed in the cosmic structure. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume: if there are ‘more connections’ to the represented *Axis Mundi*, the built space can be ‘more fixed’ in the cosmic structure.

Undoubtedly, the ‘most ideal orientation’ in the Feng-Shui tradition—facing the water in the south and being backed by the mountain in the north—is a good example because it implies that the built space is connected to two representations of the *Axis Mundi* (Fig. 40). As the front-back and left-right axes of the built space are adjusted to coincide with the north-south and east-west axes, the 1st representation of the *Axis Mundi* takes place in the center of the built space. Moreover, the mountain, to which the back of the built space is oriented, can be regarded as the 2nd representation of the *Axis Mundi*. It should also be noted that the two representations of the *Axis Mundi* are connected with each other as well.

The following passage, found in the 16th-century *Dili Renzi Xuzhi*, provides an interesting explanation for why the built space should have its back towards the mountain in the north, in which we can see more than two times of the representations of the *Axis Mundi*:

*Mount Sumeru gives birth to four dragons (i.e. four mountain chains), and the south chain turns into Mount Kunlun... Mount Sumeru rises from the middle of Earth and supports the middle of Heaven. Mount Sumeru is so great, as its four chains divide the world into four quarters. Only the south dragon (i.e. the south mountain chain) stretches into China. Having turned into Mount Kunlun, this south dragon also gives birth to numerous sons and grandsons (i.e.*
3. Do’s & Taboos concerning the ‘Orientation’ of Built Spaces

numerous smaller mountains and hills)... Located in the northwest (of China), Mount Kunlun is the origin of all mountains and hills in the land of China... That is why most mountains in China extend from the northwest to the southeast.\textsuperscript{135}

Mount Sumeru (須彌山) as mentioned here is the name of the central world-mountain in Buddhist cosmology. The word ‘Sumera’ is derived from the word ‘Meru’, to which it is added the prefix ‘su-’, resulting in the meaning ‘excellent Meru’ or ‘wonderful Meru’. To put it simple, the Mount Sumeru in Buddhist cosmology is identical with the Mount Meru in Hindu cosmology. With the spread of Buddhism, the concept of ‘Mount Sumeru as the center of the world’ was brought into China in about the 5\textsuperscript{th} century CE.\textsuperscript{136} Interestingly enough, because of the influence of Buddhism, Mount Sumeru/Meru began to be regarded as the \textit{Axis Mundi} in the Chinese Feng-Shui tradition of later periods as well as in the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra tradition.\textsuperscript{137} As we have learned, in Indian Hinduism, the mythical Mount Meru is thought to be always in the north, for it probably represents the Himalayas that lie to the north of the Indian subcontinent. Accordingly, in Chinese Buddhism, Mount Sumeru ought to be thought to be located in the west, given that the Himalayas lie to the west of the land of China. However, it is not; but just like Mount Meru in Indian Hinduism, Mount Sumeru in Chinese Buddhism is also conceptualized as being located in the far north. Furthermore, the south chain of Mount Sumeru stretches into China, and then turns into Mount Kunlun (崑崙山) in the northwest of China, which also becomes the origin of numerous other mountains and hills.

In such a scheme of the world, the built space with the most auspicious orientation (i.e. facing the south and being backed by a mountain in the north) can be connected to the represented \textit{Axis Mundi} ‘many times’ (Fig. 41). First of all, since the two body-based axes of the built space coincide with the north-south and east-west axes, the 1\textsuperscript{st} representation of the \textit{Axis Mundi} can take place in the center of the built space. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} representation of the \textit{Axis Mundi} is the mountain behind the built space, to which the built space is also connected directly. Given that all mountains and hills in China originate from

\textsuperscript{135} Xu 2007, p. 2-1.「須彌山生四龍，崑崙特其南肢。⋯⋯須彌山是天地骨中，鎮天心，為巨物，四肢分作四世界，惟有南龍入中國。南龍入自崑崙山，龍子龍孫皆可別。⋯⋯崑崙山誠諸山之祖，在中國之西北。⋯⋯中國山勢岡脊大抵皆自西北而來。」

\textsuperscript{136} In the \textit{Chang Ahanjing (Dirgha Agama)}, an early Chinese Buddhist text compiled in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century CE, the description of Mount Sumeru as the central world-mountain can be found. See: \textit{Chang Ahanjing}, accessed on 18/01/2011, http://cbeta.org/result/T01/T01n0001.htm.

\textsuperscript{137} As long as Mount Sumeru is the representation of the \textit{Axis Mundi}, the four mountains chains extending from it can be seen as the representation of the \textit{Cosmic Cross}.
Comparing the Do’s & Taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Traditions

Mount Kunlun in the northwest, the built space can be seen as being indirectly connected to Mount Kunlun as the 3rd representation of the Axis Mundi. Last but not least, it is Mount Sumeru from which the Mount Kunlun originates; by virtue of being connected to any mountain at back, the built space can be eventually connected to Mount Sumeru as the 4th representation of the Axis Mundi. Surely, Mount Sumeru is not only a representation of the Axis Mundi, because it is usually esteemed as the genuine Axis Mundi of the world in the Buddhist cosmology. Moreover, as long as the built space is also oriented to the Ann Mountain and the Chao Mountain in front of it, this built space can be seen as being connected to the 5th and the 6th representations of the Axis Mundi.

Such ideas about the ‘multi-representation of the Axis Mundi’ and the ‘multi-connection to the Axis Mundi’ can be found in the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition. For instance, both the modes of ‘facing Mount Meru in the north’ and ‘building an east- or west-oriented temple with a rear tower’ as mentioned earlier highlight the double-representations of the Axis Mundi and the double-connections to the Axis Mundi (Fig. 86, 87). Obviously, they are quite comparable with the mode of ‘being backed by the mountain in the north’ in the Feng-Shui architectural tradition (Fig. 40).

Moreover, let us assume a very ideal mode of architectural orientation, according to which the east-oriented temple located in the west of a city/village can be connected to the Axis Mundi more than twice (Fig. 88). First of all, with its two body-based axes coinciding with the east-west and north-south axes, the 1st representation of the Axis Mundi takes place in the center of the temple. The 2nd representation of the Axis Mundi would be the rear tower of the temple without doubt. According to the aforesaid Vāstu-Shāstra do’s & taboos, the temple located in the west of the city/village should be oriented to the east, that is, oriented to the center of the city/village, and it is often the king’s palace that occupies this center. Hence the temple can also be connected to the king’s palace as the 3rd representation of the Axis Mundi. Also according to some do’s & taboos, it is auspicious for the king’s palace to face the north, in which Mount Meru is always situated. Therefore, this temple oriented to the king’s palace is likely to be further connected to Mount Meru as the 4th representation of the Axis Mundi. It goes without saying that Mount Meru is not only a representation of the Axis Mundi, since it is usually seen as the genuine Axis Mundi of the cosmos in the Hindu cosmology.

So far, we have seen how the various do’s & taboos concerning the orientation play important roles in supporting architectural representations of the connection between the built space and the cosmic structure. If the orientation of a built space is determined by reference to both the ‘cardinal points’ and the ‘objects dominating the external environment’, the built space
can be more fixed in the cosmic structure because it is connected to the *Axis Mundi* twice or more times. However, only the sacred, distinguished and most revered buildings, such as temples, palaces, mausoleums and noble mansions, are usually asked and allowed to have a very ideal orientation, facing an auspicious cardinal point as well as being oriented to a dominant object in the external environment. Therefore, in the practice of these *do's & taboos*, we can also observe the representations of ‘social realities’ as based on the representations of ‘cosmic realities’.

It is important to note that the idea about ‘the more connections to the *Axis Mundi*, the more fixed in the cosmic structure’ highlights the possibility of the ‘multi-representation of the *Axis Mundi*’. However, as we can understand, in a set of mental construct of the cosmic structure, there should be one and only *Axis Mundi*. Hence the ‘multi-representation of the *Axis Mundi*’ implies the possibility of the ‘multi-mental-construct of the cosmic structure’. Through the architectural representations, the many mentally constructed cosmic structures can be projected onto the same physically built environment, and the many representations of the *Axis Mundi* can also coexist in this built environment. Moreover, the ‘multi-representation of the *Axis Mundi*’ is not only highlighted by the *do's & taboos* concerning the ‘orientation’ of built spaces, but also in those regarding the ‘spatial hierarchy’ within built spaces, which will be discussed in the following chapter.