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Comparing the do's & taboos in Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions

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4. ***Do's & Taboos concerning the 'Spatial Hierarchy' within Built Spaces***

Having discussed the *do's & taboos* regarding the 'configuration' and the 'orientation' of built spaces, we now turn to those regarding the 'spatial hierarchy' within built spaces, which are also extensively practiced in the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions. As pointed out by Mircea Eliade, "*for religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others.*"¹ Likewise, for the practitioners and followers of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra, the inside of a built space is also heterogeneous, as some parts are ranked higher than others. According to these *do's & taboos*, a built space should usually consist of a highest-ranking part, a lowest-ranking part, and a part in between. Of such a built space, the parts ranked higher are also supposed to be more exclusive, more revered, more sacred and therefore provided with more protection than those ranked lower. Surely, the spatial hierarchy is an important kind of mental construction of space, without which the different parts of a built space can never be arranged in an orderly way, and the whole built space would be nothing but a chaotic whole. Hence it is not surprising that the spatial hierarchy can be easily found in a variety of built spaces of different sizes and with different functions, such as cities, villages, temples, houses, altars etc.

¹ Eliade 1987, p. 20.

4.1 Do's & Taboos concerning the 'Spatial Hierarchy' Support Built Spaces to Represent the Cosmic Order

In this chapter, the *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy, as practiced in the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, will be compared and analyzed in the frames of three architectural shorter-cycle themes – the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*, the *Including & Excluding Structures* and the *Holy & Unholy Zones*.

4.1.1 Analyzing the Do's & Taboos concerning the 'Spatial Hierarchy' in the Frame of the Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross Shorter-cycle Theme

Although the typical spatial hierarchy suggested by Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* and that suggested by Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* are rather different, they both are established according to the scheme of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*, and both place emphasis on the 'center' and 'four directions' of a built space. As we have already seen, the center of a built space is the crucial place where the vertical axis representing the *Axis Mundi* should be erected, and the four directions highlight the two orthogonal horizontal axes representing the *Cosmic Cross*. In both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, the hierarchical relationships between different parts of a built space is usually described and determined according to their locations relative to the center and the four directions.

The Center

Since the *Axis Mundi* is considered to be a divine connection between Earth and Heaven and between the micro-cosmos and the macro-cosmos, the center where the *Axis Mundi stands* is conceived as the representation of the cosmic center – the most original and stable point of the entire cosmic structure.² Not surprisingly, in the worldwide architectural traditions, we can easily see that the center is usually respected as the supreme position and the highest-ranking part of a built space (Fig. 15). According to the Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy, the center is also usually thought to be the most exclusive and sacred part, occupied by the most

² Mekking 2009, p. 37; Eliade 1987, pp. 36-39.

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honorable and much-revered human beings or divine beings, and it should be carefully and adequately protected from any evil, pollution and danger.

However, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the 'multi-representation of the *Axis Mundi*' is likely to take place or be mentally constructed in a single built space, and this may lead to the coexistence of more than one center. Theoretically, each built space should have only one center, but in fact, as we can observe in a traditional Chinese or Indian temple or house, there could be several parts that are all treated by people as the 'centers', and each usually characterized by the representation of the *Axis Mundi*. This is because the definition of the center largely depends on the adjustable mental scheme which may change and vary in different circumstances. According to Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra *do's and tanoos*, at least three kinds of centers of a built space should be taken into account—the 'middle of the site', the 'courtyard' and the 'sanctuary'.

Let us first consider the 'middle of the site'. As told in Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra texts, at the very beginning of construction, certain meaningful religious rituals should be performed in the middle of the site. These rituals characterize the middle of the site as the crucial place where the *Axis Mundi* should be erected, thereby highlighting it as the center of the space to be built. As mentioned in Chapter 2, both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions suggest that an ideal and auspicious site should be square or rectangular in shape, and hence the middle of the site can be well identified at the intersection point of the two orthogonal horizontal axes, in which case this center is a 'geometric center'.

The second kind of center—the 'courtyard'—undoubtedly is a very important part for most traditional Chinese and Indian temples or houses. As mentioned in preceding chapters, in a temple or house with an ideal ground plan (i.e. a square/rectangular plan) based upon a Feng-Shui diagram or a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the location of the courtyard should exactly coincide with the central plot of the square diagram or the mandala, where the *Axis Mundi* is supposed to be represented. Obviously, the courtyard can also be seen as a 'geometric center'.

The 'sanctuary' is the third kind of center to be discussed, serving as a holy and much-revered place, as we can always observe in most temples and houses in the Chinese and the Indian architectural traditions. As regards a Chinese temple or house, it is the 'main hall'. In a Chinese temple, the main hall houses the altar of the main deity, and in a Chinese house, the main hall is the room where the altar of deities and ancestors is placed. In an Indian temple, the sanctuary is the *Garbha-griha*, in which the altar, idol or symbol of the main deity is placed. With respect to an Indian house, its sanctuary is the *Puja* room, where various deities are worshipped and daily religious rituals

are performed. Without doubt, the sanctuary should be seen as a center, for it is the place where the *Axis Mundi* is represented, highlighting the connection between the Earth and the Heaven, and between the world of human beings and that of transcendent beings. However, unlike the previous two kinds of centers, the sanctuary is not a center defined or identified according to its geometric position. According to the location of the sanctuary in a temple or a house, we can find that it often does not coincide with the 'geometric center' of the ground plan or with the central plot of the Feng-Shui Diagram or the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala. Nevertheless, according to Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos*, the sanctuary is indeed usually mentally conceptualized by people as a center. Therefore, we may call it the 'conceptual center' in contrast to the 'geometric center'.

Nowadays, how to define the center of a house is still a major concern in the practice of Chinese Feng-Shui and Indian Vāstu-Shāstra. However, as we know, the plans of most modern houses, such as apartment houses or town houses, are very different from those of traditional houses, and people may have problems with how to properly identify the center(s) in them. Therefore, most contemporary Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra manuals and handbooks have been written to help people find the correct place(s) that should be defined as the center(s) of a house. Although these centers of a modern house may be quite different from those of a traditional house, their definitions and identification are based on the ideas of the three above-mentioned centers of a traditional house—the middle of the site, the courtyard and the sanctuary.

The Four Directions

Given that the center is regarded as the supreme position, the other parts of a built space are taken to be less important and lower-ranking. However, this does not mean that all these parts should be treated equally. According to the *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy, within a built space, some parts should be considered superior to the others, and their hierarchical relationships are usually described and determined in terms of the scheme constructed by the four directions, i.e. the body-based 'front, back, left and right' or the sun-based 'east, south, west and north'.

The hierarchical system followed in the Feng-Shui architectural tradition is usually based on the two principles—'the superiority of the front over the back' and 'the superiority of the left over the right'. Obviously, it is established according to the body-based frame of reference (Fig. 42). However, the hierarchical system followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition is usually established according to the sun-based frame of reference, as based on

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another two principles – ‘*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*’ and the ‘*clockwise order*’ (Fig. 89).

As regards the two principles in the Feng-Shui traditions, they perfectly highlight the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations; the built space has, just like the human body, its front, back, left and right sides. According to this long-cycle tradition, we can easily explain the first principle – ‘*the superiority of the front over the back*’. As discussed in Chapter 3, human beings are born with the sense organs mostly at/towards their fronts, such as eyes, noses, mouths and ears, and it should always be through the front side that human beings are able to see, to perceive, to communicate, and to establish the relationship with the external world. Likewise, as regards built spaces, it should also be through the front that their relationship to the external world can be established, and that their orientation can be determined. Accordingly, the main entrance and main opening of a building are usually set on the front side of a building.³ No wonder, as indicated by Aart Mekking, the ‘Façade of Power’ can be found in very different cultural contexts, which can be understood according to the architectural shorter-cycle theme of the *Boasting Façades*.⁴ It can be easily seen that the most impressive and imposing side of a building is usually its front side rather than the other sides. In addition, as instructed by the *do's & taboos* regarding the architectural orientation, the side of a building that should be oriented to an auspicious direction is usually the front side. Not amazingly the front side or section of a built space should be considered superior to the back side or section.

With respect to the second principle, ‘*the superiority of the left over the right*’, first of all, we should understand how the ‘left side’ and the ‘right side’ of a built space are defined. In the Feng-Shui practice, the left and right sides are usually identified from an ‘outward-looking’ perspective. That is, based on the anthropomorphic thinking, the left and right sides of a built space should respectively correspond to the left-hand and right-hand sides of a human body (Fig. 42). However, unlike the previous principle, this principle cannot merely be explained according to the anthropomorphic thinking because in terms of a human body, the superiority of the left-hand side over the right-hand side does not make much sense, especially in the world where the majority of people are right-handed. For this reason, we have to look for another way to explain why the left side is considered superior to the right side.

In Chapter 3, we have seen that, in the Chinese architectural tradition, the ‘south orientation’ is particularly favored, which suggests that the ‘front’ of a

³ See: 3.1.1.

⁴ Mekking 2009, pp. 39-41.

built space should be connected to the 'south', the most auspicious direction. As we have also seen, the idea of the south orientation applies to almost all types of built spaces, be they cities, temples, palaces or houses. Given the connection between the front and the south, it is reasonable to assume that the other three body-based directions—back, left and right—should be connected to the three sun-based directions—north, east and west. Accordingly, can we further assume that '*the superiority of the left over the right*' has something to do with the hierarchical relationship between the east and the west? The answer seems to be a "yes". Later we will see that, according to some ancient Feng-Shui texts, the east is indeed considered superior to the west. The east as the direction of the sunrise usually signifies beginning, prosperity and life; whereas the west as the direction of the sunset signifies ending, decline and death. Naturally enough, people tend to express more admiration for the east than for the west. Based on the ideal south orientation, the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' can be seen as a significant result of the notion of '*the superiority of the east over the west*', representing the sun-focused cosmic realities.

Now let us turn to the two principles found in the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition—'*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*' and the '*clockwise order*'. Surely, we have already understood why the north and the east are considered superior to the south and the west, and why the clockwise order is extensively followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition. As mentioned in previous chapters, the north is thought to be the direction in which the holy mountains (i.e. Mount Meru and Mount Kailash) are located, whereas the south is seen as the horizontal equivalent of the underworld, the region of *Yama* (i.e. the lord of the dead). That is why the north should be superior to the south. As regards the east and the west, the former is the direction of the sunrise, representing beginning, prosperity and life, while the latter is the direction of the sunset, representing ending, prosperity and death. Therefore, the east should be superior to the west. This is quite comparable with the principle of '*the superiority of the left (representing the east) over the right (representing the west)*' followed in the Feng-Shui tradition, both supporting the architectural representations of the sun-focused cosmic realities. Moreover, it goes without saying that the '*clockwise order*' is also a significant representation of the sun-focused cosmic realities, as the clockwise direction signifies the sunwise direction.

Having seen the spatial hierarchy established inside, we should also take account of the outside. As mentioned, the spatial hierarchy is established in accordance with the frame of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*. Since this frame only involves the space of the "inside", everything being on the "outside" of a built space should have nothing to do with this frame. That is, the outside is

excluded from the architectural representation of the cosmic structure, and from the perspective of the inside, the outside—a formless expanse surrounding the inside—is an 'out-of-rank space' or the 'lowest-ranking space' (Fig. 16).

4.1.2 Analyzing the *Do's & Taboos* in the Frame of the Including & Excluding Structures Shorter-cycle Theme

The *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy followed in the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, also support the architectural representations in the frame of the *Including & Excluding Structures* shorter-cycle theme. As indicated by Aart Mekking, this shorter-cycle theme, as based on the *Sociomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations, is concerned with family, clan and society-related topological structures.⁵ Later we will see that these *do's & taboos* do not only stipulate the hierarchical relationships between the different parts of a built space, but also tell how these different parts should be allocated to the different groups of human beings or divine beings residing in this built space. According to these *do's & taboos*, the higher-ranking parts should exclusively belong to the higher-class groups, whereas the lower-ranking parts exclusively belong to the lower-class groups.

Therefore, the 'center'—the supreme position—is always reserved for the highest-class and the most revered group. This can be well exemplified by the sanctuary—the main hall of a Chinese temple or the *Griha-nabhi* of an Indian temple, which houses the altar of the main deity whose status is considered higher than the other deities of this temple. The main hall of a Chinese house and the *Puja* room of an Indian house are also good examples, as they are exclusively reserved for the divine deities and ancestors whose status is much higher than temporal human beings. Surely, within a built space, the parts around the center should thus be allocated to the groups with lower status. For instance, within a Chinese or an Indian temple, the rooms beside, around or far from the sanctuary are usually used for worshipping less important deities or the attendants of deities. Within a Chinese house or an Indian house, people can live in most rooms except for the main hall or the *Puja* room because their status is considered lower than that of deities and ancestors. As mentioned earlier, the 'outside', as excluded from the architectural representation of the cosmic structure, is usually seen as an 'out-of-rank space'. Hence it should belong to the 'out-of-rank group' or the 'lowest-ranking group' and be totally excluded from the groups residing inside the built space (Fig. 17).

⁵ Mekking 2009, pp. 41-42, 44.

It is very clear that a topological structure characterized by the distinction between 'them' and 'us' is created according to the spatial hierarchy. As we can imagine, the members from a higher-class group usually treat those from a lower-class as 'them' and normally do not allow 'them' to enter the part exclusive to the higher-class group. Therefore, the social realities regarding the differentiation among the groups with different statuses are also represented by the architectural *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy. Surely, the representations of the social realities are based on the representations of the cosmic realities as mentioned earlier.

4.1.3 Analyzing the *Do's & Taboos* in the Frame of the Holy & Unholy Zones Shorter-cycle Theme

Moreover, the *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy should also be analyzed and compared in the frame of the *Holy & Unholy Zones* shorter-cycle theme of architectural representations. According to Aart Mekking, this shorter-cycle theme contains all tripartite architectural structures, which represents the socio-cosmic spheres of the living and the dead, including the horizontal zoning of ground plans as well as the vertical zoning of the buildings and its façades.⁶ Later we will see that these *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy are indeed concerned with the horizontal zoning, suggesting that there should be the holiest zone, the less holy zone(s) and the unholy zone within a built space. It is important to note that, within a built space, the degree of holiness of each part is usually in accordance with its hierarchical position. That is, the higher a part is ranked, the holier it could be.

Accordingly, the center as the supreme position of a built space is always esteemed as the holiest part. This can be confirmed by the sanctuary of a temple or a house. In a Chinese temple and house, the main hall where the most important altar is located is undoubtedly the holiest room compared to the others. The same goes for the *Griha-nabhi* in an Indian temple and the *Puja* room in an Indian house. As also mentioned, according to Vāstu-Shāstra texts, only the holy temple but not ordinary houses can be built in the center of a city or village. Obviously, this reflects what Mircea Eliade asserts in his *The Sacred and the Profane*: only the holiest site or building with its great cosmological meaning is allowed to be placed in the center of a territory.⁷

⁶ Mekking 2009, pp. 42-43.

⁷ Eliade 1987, pp. 20, 39, 45. "For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively from others... For religious man, this spatial non-homogeneity finds expression in the experience of an

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With respect to the different parts between the center and the outer boundary, their degrees of holiness vary considerably depending on their hierarchical positions conditioned by the *do's & taboos* concerned with the four directions as mentioned earlier. Hence in the Chinese Feng-Shui architectural tradition, the front section of a built space could be holier than the back section, and the left part holier than the right part. In the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, the sections of north, east and northeast could be holier than those of south, west and southwest; also in terms of a clockwise sequence, the preceding position is likely to be holier than the one that follows.

It goes without saying that the space outside the boundary of a built space, as an 'out-of-rank zone' belonging to the 'out-of-rank groups', is usually treated as the most unholy domain (Fig. 18). Later we will see some interesting *do's & taboos* concerned with the location of toilets found in old texts and modern practice of Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra, which perfectly support the idea about the inside and outside. According to these *do's & taboos*, given that the toilets are very unclean and unholy, people had better place them outside the house, and the entrances of houses should never directly face them. However, in modern days, toilets are no longer located outside, and we can find a lot of *do's & taboos* of contemporary Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra that strongly ask people to place toilets in the lower-ranking part of their houses. For example, in the Feng-Shui practice, toilets are instructed to be placed on the right side of the house; in the Vāstu-Shāstra practice, toilets should never be placed in the northeast part of the houses.

4.1.4 The Spatial Hierarchy within Built Spaces as a Representation of the Cosmic Order

As discussed in Chapter 2, the built space with a definable center and two orthogonal horizontal axes can be an architectural representation of the 'cosmic structure', for it highlights the frame of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*. Therefore, the spatial hierarchy created within the built space in accordance

opposition between space that is sacred-the only real and real-ly existing space-and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it... For it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation... The same symbolism of the center explains other series of cosmological images and religious beliefs. Among these the most important are: (a) holy sites and sanctuaries are believed to be situated in the center of the world; (b) temples are replicas of the cosmic mountain and hence constitute the pre-eminent 'link' between earth and heaven... 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."

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with this frame can be seen as an architectural representation of the 'cosmic order'. As we have learned, the cosmic order is thought to be manifested by the sun's motion, by the Polaris, by the imagined holy mountains in the north, etc. The *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy of the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions thus play important roles in supporting such a kind of representation of the cosmic order. Moreover, according to these *do's & taboos*, we can also clearly see the correspondence between the frame the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross* and the frames of the *Including & Excluding Structures* and the *Holy & Unholy Zones*.

In this chapter, the discussion and comparison of these *do's & taboos* will be conducted in the three frames of architectural shorter-cycle themes – the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*, the *Including & Excluding Structures* and the *Holy & Unholy Zones*. 4.2 will focus on the principle of '*the center as the supreme position*', 4.3 will deal with the two principles followed in the Feng-Shui architectural tradition – '*the superiority of the front over the back*' and '*the superiority of the left over the right*', and 4.4 will focus upon the two principles followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition – '*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*' and the '*clockwise order*'.

4.2 *Do's & Taboos Supporting the Principle of 'the Center as the Supreme Position'*

According to the *do's & taboos* concerned with the spatial hierarchy, three kinds of centers should be taken into account: the 'middle of the site', the 'courtyard' and the 'sanctuary'. The two former centers are usually 'geometric centers', whilst the latter is usually a 'conceptual center'. In many Chinese and Indian temples and houses, we can observe the coexistence of the three kinds of centers. In spite of some differences in terms of their definitions, the three kinds of centers all highlight their locations as the places where the *Axis Mundi* is represented.

4.2.1 *The Middle of the Site*

The Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* regarding the middle of the site as the center usually put emphasis on certain kinds of religious ceremonies that should be performed at this crucial place at the very beginning of the construction work. By means of these ceremonies, the *Axis Mundi* and the cosmic center can be well represented in the middle of the site. Since an ideal and auspicious site should be a square or rectangle that can fit a Feng-Shui Diagram or a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the middle of the site usually coincides with the central plot of this diagram or mandala. Therefore, it should be seen as a geometric center.

Feng-Shui Do's & Taboos concerning the Middle of the Site

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the 11th-century *Dili Xinshu* instructs people to erect a pole, the *Dugui*, in the middle of the site at the initial stage of the construction work.⁸ Undoubtedly, this pole marks the middle of the site

⁸ Wang 2003, pp. 25-33. "Before the construction work, one shall make sure that the site has its four sides oriented to the four cardinal directions... For countries, there shall be cities; for people, there shall be dwellings; for deities and ghosts, there shall be temples and shrines. In the Zhou Dynasty, the official of Tufang (in charge of the land survey and planning) usually applied the so-called *Dugui* (a sundial-like pole) to check the shadows cast by the sun so that he could define the different directions of the site... In order to define the east and the west, in the daytime, one shall examine the shadows cast by the sun at different hours, and in the nighttime, one shall examine where the *Polaris* is... At sunrise, the shadow of the *Dugui* points to the west; at sun-set, it points to the east... After making sure that the site (or ground plan) has its four sides oriented to the four cardinal directions, one shall erect another four poles at the four corners of the site (or ground plan)." (將欲營地事，必先正四方。……於邦國則有都鄙，於人民則有居處，於

as the crucial center of the space to be built, representing the *Axis Mundi* and highlighting the cosmic center as the original point of the cosmos.

Another meaningful ceremony concerning the middle of the site is recorded in the 18th-century *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

Before the commencement of a construction work, a wooden pole shall be erected at the 'Central Square' of the site, and accordingly, the twenty-four primary directions can be defined. On this pole, a tablet with the word 'Benfang' (which means the 'Central Place') shall be nailed. With the pole (as a point of reference), the entire ground plan consisting of the courtyard, rooms and doors can be well arranged in a regular way.⁹

This passage instructs that the 'Nine-Square Diagram' should be mapped onto the building site before the construction begins, and the wooden pole erected at the 'Central Square' of this diagram thus highlights the middle of the site as the center of the to-be-built space. This wooden pole as a representation of the *Axis Mundi* also implies that the middle of the site—the 'first fixed point'—should represent the 'original point' of the cosmos, that is to say the cosmic center. Without the identification of the middle of the site as the center, no space can be built to represent the cosmic structure on the site. Surely, in terms of the spatial hierarchy, the center is superior to any other part of the site.

Moreover, in the 16th-century *Huitu Lubanjing*, we can find another passage saying that, at the very beginning of the construction work, a temporary altar should be built at the site's center in order to seek protection from the divine power for the future construction work:

Before starting to establish the primary pillar and beam of the house, the master carpenter shall, at an auspicious time of an auspicious day, set a temporary altar in the middle of the site... He shall then worship and make sacrifices to the 'lords of land' of the three realms (i.e. of the heavenly realm, the terrestrial realm and the inferno realm), the 'gods of house' residing in the five directions (i.e. center, north, east, south and west), the master Luban (i.e. the patron deity of carpenters and other craftsmen), and the other Taoist immortals.¹⁰

⁹ 鬼神則有祠廟。……周官土方氏掌土圭之法，以致日影，以土地相宅。…晝參諸日中之影，夜考之極星，以正朝夕。……立表於中，日初出之時度其表影以知西，日初入之時以之東。……既正四方，據其位置，於四角各立一表。）

Wei 1985, pp. 56-57. 「中宮所在之處，定一高樁，然後長牽一線，析定二十四方位。用扁樁寫「本方」字樣釘之。逐一清楚，以便排層間天井開門放水合法等處。一一准定，方得照局式而起造。」

¹⁰ *Huitu Lubanjing* 1998, p. 58. 「凡造作立木上樑候吉日良時，可立一香案於中亭設安。……匠師拜請三界地主、五方宅神、魯班三郎、十極高真。」

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Obviously, this temporary altar is a representation of the *Axis Mundi*, which should be erected in the middle of the site—the center of the to-be-built space—before the construction begins. Through this *Axis Mundi*, people can propitiate and communicate with various divine beings in Heaven or the Underworld, seeking their blessing and protection for the space about to be built. Since the middle of the site is the place where various divine beings are asked to gather, this place should be seen as the supreme position of the site.

Nowadays, in Taiwan, Hong Kong as well as many other areas of the Chinese cultural sphere, people still tend to hold a 'ground-breaking ceremony' at the initial stage of a building construction, and this ceremony usually consists of two primary parts which correspond to the above prescriptions in the *Zhai pu Dacheng* and the *Huitu Lubanjing*. First, in the middle of the site, people have to build a square earth mound with its four sides oriented to the four cardinal points, and erect a square wooden pole onto the middle of the square mound (Fig. 186). Second, next to this mound, people ought to build a temporary altar on which various offerings to the lords of land, various deities in Heaven, and *Luban* as the patron deity of craftsmen are prepared (Fig. 187). It is important to note that this altar should be oriented to the central mound and pole, so that people are able to face the central mound and pole when making offerings before the altar. After the offerings are made, a group of people including the owner of the site, the architect, the contractor and all others involved in the construction work should break the mound with spades together, and then the construction work is pronounced to begin officially (Fig. 188).

Vāstu-Shāstra Do's & Taboos concerning the Middle of the Site

Likewise, what should be done/performed and how should they be done/performed in the middle of the site at the initial stage of the building construction are also important subject matters in the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition. In the previous chapter, we have seen some Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* concerned with the wooden pole as a gnomon that should be erected in the middle of the site, according to which the four directions can be defined. As we have also discussed, this gnomon is quite comparable with the *Dugui* mentioned in Feng-Shui texts, both of them representing the *Axis Mundi* and highlighting the middle of the site as the supreme center of the to-be-built space.

In addition, more prescriptions concerning the middle of the site can be found in some Vāstu-Shāstra texts. In the *Mayamatam*, a passage about the 'square pit dug in the middle of the site' is recorded:

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

Next, at the center of the site a square piece of land orientated to the cardinal points must be dug out to the depth of one cubit... The wise man should fill it with water at nightfall. Then, after purifying himself and concentrating his mind, he lies down on the ground beside the pit facing east and he begins his fast by pronouncing this formula: "Earth, at this site, prosper in riches and in harvests! Be fecund! Salutations to Thee! Be Propitious! At day break the wise architect examines the pit; if he sees a small residue of water he is to consider this as a guarantee of success; if the pit is damp, buildings will be destroyed and if it is dry harvests and riches will disappear. When the hole is filled up with its own earth the site is of average quality... if it overflows with earth the site will prove excellent and if it is not packed full with earth it is of inferior quality."¹¹

As is shown in the quote, the purpose of digging this central pit is to examine the soil of the site; whether the soil is qualified and auspicious can be judged according to its water retention capability. Similar prescriptions about digging a pit in the middle of the site can also be found in some other texts, such as the *Mānasāra*,¹² the *Kāshyapashilpa*¹³ and the *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*.¹⁴ These prescriptions raise the following questions: Why should people dig this meaningful pit in the middle of the site? Why should this pit be square in shape with its four sides oriented to the four cardinal directions?

Definitely, these questions can be easily answered if we see the middle of the site as the crucial place where the *Axis Mundi* should be represented. As a place where the *Axis Mundi* is represented, this central pit should be located at the intersection point of the two orthogonal horizontal axes representing the *Cosmic Cross*. The square shape of the pit with its four sides oriented to the four cardinal points thus highlight the east-west and north-south axes as coinciding with the two orthogonal horizontal axes of the site that represent the *Cosmic Cross*. Furthermore, this central pit also signifies the first fixed point of the space, a representation of the 'original point' of the cosmic, and hence the quality of the soil from it should be much more important and critical than that from any other part of the site.

Nowadays, such kind of square hole dug in the center of the site still can be observed in the ground-breaking ceremony in India, though it is not necessarily meant for the examination of the quality of the soil. For instance,

¹¹ Dagens 1994, p. 19.

¹² Acharya 1994, pp. 17-18.

¹³ Ślaczka 2006, pp. 32-38.

¹⁴ Sharma 2007, *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva I*, pp. 71-73.

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a ground-breaking ceremony of the Renault-Nissan Automotive India car manufacturing plant is performed at Oragadam near Chennai, and the Japanese Vice-President of this company is filling up a square hole dug in the middle of the site (Fig. 220).

Moreover, many Vāstu-Shāstra texts also instruct that, at the initial stage of the construction work, certain offerings should be made to the deities thought to reside on the site. The following two passages are found in the *Mayamatam* and the *Mānasāra*:

It is prescribed that offerings should be made to each god in his own place; individual and common offerings are made starting with that to Brahma.¹⁵ (Mayamatam)

(At first) the ground should be cleansed and then the plots of gods should be marked either in the Manduka plan (i.e. 8x8 Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala) or in the Parama-sayika plan (9x9 Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala). Offerings should be made to Brahma and other gods as well as to the Rakshasas (demons)... Amidst all auspicious sounds, the offerings should be made to Brahma and all gods in order by pronouncing their names separately with the mystic syllable 'Om' at the beginning and 'Namah' in conclusion... The deities beginning with Brahma and ending in Apava are placed in the plots assigned to the gods (in the interior). And all other gods should always be outside this part... If all details of the ground-plan be arranged without making these offerings, the site will be destroyed by the terrible demons; to avoid this defect, the sacrificial offerings must be made.¹⁶ (Mānasāra)

As indicated by the two passages, since the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala is used as the basis of the site, the arrangement of deities on the site should be the same as their arrangement in the mandala. Moreover, given that *Brahma*, residing in the middle of the site, is superior to all the other deities, people should firstly make offerings to him. Besides, the passage found in the *Mānasāra* also implies a significant principle regarding the spatial hierarchy: '*the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked*'. As we can see, after having made offerings to *Brahma* in the center of the mandala, people should make offerings to the inner deities surrounding *Brahma*, and then to the outer deities. As we can see, after having made offerings to *Brahma*, people should made offerings to the inner deities, and then to the outer deities. It goes without saying that the *Rakshasas*, who

¹⁵ Dagens 1994, p. 51.

¹⁶ Acharya 1994, pp. 59-62.

are treated as the evil “others” and are kept outside the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, should be the last ones for people to make offerings to.

4.2.2 The Courtyard as the Center

According to Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the ground plan of a built space, just like the site, should be arranged on the basis of Feng-Shui Diagrams and Vāstu-Shāstra Mandalas. In this case, the central plot of the diagram or mandala should coincide with the location of the courtyard. In the old texts of both Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra, we can find many prescriptions regarding the courtyard as the center of a built space.

Feng-Shui Do's & Taboos regarding the Courtyard as the Center of the Ground Plan

The following two passages can be found in the *Zhai pu Dacheng* and the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*:

*One shall imagine that there is a cross in the courtyard, and in the center of the cross he shall place the compass.¹⁷ (Zhai pu Dacheng)
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.¹⁸ (Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu)*

The first passage shows that the *Cosmic Cross* should be represented in the courtyard, and the center of the *Cosmic Cross*, where the *Axis Mundi* is erected, should be the place of the compass. With such a compass, the center of the courtyard thus serves as a point of reference by which the different directions can be defined. According to this passage, the courtyard should be seen as the center of the whole ground plan of the house.

In the second passage, the courtyard is referred to as the *Mingtang*, an important symbol as mentioned several times before, which represents the holies place where Earth meets Heaven and, surely, the *Axis Mundi*. As having been discussed in Chapter 3, the ‘orientation’ can be seen as a powerful ‘connection’. Therefore, once the rooms and halls are built to face and surround the courtyard, they are also connected to the *Axis Mundi*, through

¹⁷ Wei 1985, p. 114. 「以天井十字中心，下羅經。」

¹⁸ Huang 1998, p. 12. 「凡房與內廳、外廳，俱以天井為明堂，財祿之所自也。」

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which the heavenly grace may come down to these rooms and halls of the house. Besides, in the Chinese architectural tradition, the courtyard is also often called 'tianjing' (天井) which literally means 'sky-well',¹⁹ or the 'well towards Heaven', because the courtyard surrounded by buildings is similar to a well with its opening towards the sky. So far, it is very clear that, in the Feng-Shui architectural tradition, the courtyard as a representation of the *Axis Mundi* is often conceptualized as the center of the ground plan. In the Chinese architectural tradition, the courtyard as the center of the house plan can be found in numerous examples (Fig. 232-238, 242, 243, 249, 250). Later we will see more Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* regarding the protection of the courtyard.

Vāstu-Shāstra Do's & Taboos regarding the Courtyard as the Center of the Ground Plan

In many ancient Vāstu-Shāstra texts, we can also find the prescriptions regarding the courtyard as the center of a built space. For instance, it is said in the *Mānasāra*:

*A courtyard should be furnished in the central part of a dwelling...*²⁰

Moreover, as is also shown in the *Mānasāra*, house plans should be arranged on the basis of Vāstu-Shāstra Mandalas, and the courtyard of a house plan is supposed to be represented by the central square, namely the 'Brahma Square' (Fig. 141). Accordingly, the fact that the courtyard is seen as the supreme center in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition is beyond question. It is not difficult to see in the Indian architectural practice that many traditional houses have a courtyard as the center of the ground plan (Fig. 270-272).

Besides, in the *Vishwakarma Vāstu-Shāstram*, the importance of the central courtyard is also highlighted in terms of the parallel between the house building and the human body: the courtyard of the house should be compared to the 'human eye', and hence a house without a courtyard at its center is like a blind man.²¹ According to this parallel, we again see the influence of the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition on the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition. Since the eye signifies 'to see' and the courtyard has its opening upwards, this parallel implies that, through the courtyard, the house can see, and thus can be connected to Heaven. In this sense, the courtyard of Indian houses and that of Chinese houses are very comparable. As mentioned earlier, in the Chinese architectural tradition, the courtyard is usually called 'tianjing' which

¹⁹ Faure 2005, pp. 282-283.

²⁰ Acharya 1994, p. 192.

²¹ Sastri 1958, p. lvii.

means 'the well towards Heaven', according to which the courtyard is supposed to be the place where the connection between house and Heaven should be established. It is clear that the *Axis Mundi* as the connection between the center of the house and the center of Heaven is represented in the courtyard.

4.2.3 The Sanctuary as the Center

The sanctuary, as its name suggests, is the crucial part that represents the holy of holies in a built space. In a temple, it is usually the magnificent room in which the main deity is worshipped; in a house, it is usually the room for the divine beings but not for the human beings to reside in. In both the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra traditions, we can find many *do's & taboos* that regard the sanctuary as the supreme center of a built space.

Feng-Shui Do's & Taboos regarding the Main Hall as the Center of the Ground Plan

In the Chinese architectural tradition, the 'main hall' usually plays the role as the sanctuary in the temple or house. However, what most old Feng-Shui texts are concerned with is the main hall of the house rather than that of the temple, and hence the *do's & taboos* we are going to discuss all deal with the main hall as the center of the house. The main hall of the house is usually used as the family shrine and regarded as the inner sanctum of the family, in which deities and ancestors are worshipped together.²² Therefore, the main hall is also called 'the hall of ancestors' (祖先廳) or 'the hall of deities' (神明廳). It is important to note that such a main hall must be located in the middle of the central wing and always faces the front side of the house (Fig. 232-236). By superimposing the house plan onto the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram', we can see that the main hall is represented by the square of the 'Principal Position' (伏位), but not the central square (Fig. 43). As we know, the central square should coincide with the courtyard. Therefore, the courtyard is seen as a 'geometric center', while the main hall should be seen as a 'conceptual center'.

Let us take the '*Kan House*' (i.e. the south-oriented house) as an example (Fig. 44). As we can see, in such a house, the main hall, facing the south, is located in the 'Square of *Kan*' which represents the 'Principal Position' in the north. In the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*, a passage concerning the main hall of the

²² Flath 2005, pp. 343-345.

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Kan House can be found:

*As regards the Kan House, it shall have the ancestral hall located in the Square of Kan (i.e. the northern square)... In this case, the 'Square of Kan' shall be regarded as the 'Principal Position', which is the most auspicious square (among the eight periphery squares of the diagram)... As the most auspicious square, the 'Principal Position' shall be the location for the ancestral hall. If there is no need to have an ancestral hall in the house, it shall be the location for the master bedroom.*²³

As shown in this passage, the 'Principal Position' occupied by the main hall should be seen as the most auspicious one among the eight periphery squares represented by the eight trigrams of *Bagua*. Besides representing the most auspicious direction, the main hall is also thought to be the most vital part of the house, as indicated by the two following passages found in the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu* and the *Zhaiyu Dacheng*:

*In an auspicious house, there must be a main hall. The house without a main hall is like a man without the soul. If the main hall is not situated in the center (of the central wing), it is not auspicious.*²⁴
(*Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*)

*(Of a house), the central main wing is like the householder of a family and like the trunk of a human body, while the two side wings are like the servants of the master and like the limbs attached to the trunk.*²⁵
(*Zhaiyu Dacheng*)

The two passages again demonstrate how the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations exerts its influence on the Feng-Shui tradition. As suggested by the first passage, the importance of the main hall for a house can be compared with the importance of the soul for a human being. Without souls, human beings are mere dead bodies; without the main hall, the houses are nothing more than dead spaces. The second passage, referring to the 'main wing' as the trunk and the 'side wings' as the limbs, implies that the main hall situated in the middle of the central wing can be compared to the head of a human body (Fig. 32). The names of the different parts of the Taiwanese *Sanheyuan* house also support this kind of *Anthropomorphic* tradition. In such a

²³ Huang 1998, pp. 100, 106-107. 「(坎宅)祖堂宜坎。……伏位在坎，上吉。……伏位上吉不安祖宗，則作臥房。」

²⁴ Huang 1998, p. 26. 「每棟之中，必要一廳乃吉，無廳者，無元神，不吉。廳不居正中者凶。」

²⁵ Wei 1985, p. 576. 「曰正屋為主人，為本身。兩廊為僕，從為手足。」

traditional courtyard house, the central wing is usually called *Tsiann-Sin* (正身) which denotes the 'body trunk', and the side wings (i.e. left and right wings) are usually called *Tshun-Tshiu* (伸手) which means the 'stretching arms' (Fig. 45).²⁶ Besides, we can also find in the traditional *Siheyuan* houses in Beijing such a kind of analogy between the building and the human body. Of a *Siheyuan* house, the two rooms next to the main hall are usually called *Er-Fang* (耳房) meaning 'ear rooms'.²⁷ Undoubtedly, both the *Tshun-Tshiu* of the *Sanheyuan* house and the *Er-Fang* of the *Siheyuan* house imply that the main hall should be regarded as the 'head'.

According to another two passages found in the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*, we can understand why the main hall that functions as the family shrine should be regarded as the center of a house:

*(When planning a house), one shall first consider the hall of ancestors (i.e. main hall) and then the bedrooms. This is an important principle emphasized by most texts (of Feng-Shui). The prosperity of the family and its descendants depends heavily on the protection provided by their ancestors, and the individual's destiny is determined by his/her bedroom.*²⁸

*The 'small ancestral shrine' (i.e. the ancestral hall for a family) is the core of a house... The 'big ancestral shrine' (i.e. the ancestral shrine for a whole clan) is the very core of a village.*²⁹

The first passage shows that the main hall as a family shrine should be the top priority in the house planning. As a place where ancestors and deities are worshipped, the main hall is undoubtedly the holiest zone of the house. Unlike the courtyard just reminding people of the ancient *Mingtang*, the main hall is a really existing holy space in which religious rituals are performed regularly. In a typical main hall, we can always find some significant elements highlighting that this *Holy Zone* is also a place where the *Axis Mundi* as well as the cosmic center is represented. Among these elements, the most prominent one is probably the '*Zhongliang Bagua*' (中樑八卦), namely 'the *Bagua* on the central beam' (Fig. 261). This '*Zhongliang Bagua*' is basically identical with the well-known '*Taiji-Bagua Diagram*' of which the center as the *Taiji* represents the 'Supreme Ultimate' and the eight trigrams of *Bagua* represent the eight main directions (Fig. 132). As we can understand, this diagram also clearly represents

²⁶ Chen 1993, p. 40.

²⁷ Li, Qian-Lang 2007, pp. 36-37.

²⁸ Huang 1998, p. 10. 「先祖宗，重臥房，宅書要語，蓋祖宗蔭子孫之榮瘁，臥房關個人之休咎。」

²⁹ Huang 1998, p. 21. 「小祖堂乃一居根本……大祠堂乃合族根本。」

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the cosmos and its center. The only difference between the *Zhongliang Bagua* and the *Taiji-Bagua* Diagram is that, in the former, the *Taiji* is presented in words, but in the latter, the *Taiji* is presented in a symbolic form. As being always attached to the middle of the central beam of the main, this *Zhongliang Bagua* undoubtedly implies that the main hall is the place where the cosmic center should be represented,³⁰ and that the *Axis Mundi* as the connection between the center of Earth and that of Heaven is thought to pass through the middle of the main hall-the center of the house.

According to the second passage as mentioned above, the ancestral hall as the core of the house can be compared with the ancestral shrine as the core of the village. In southern China, there are a lot of the so-called 'single-surname villages', each only containing the families from the same lineage and clan. That is to say, these families from the same village have common ancestors. Therefore, they usually tend to build an independent ancestral shrine in their village for the worship of their common ancestors. In some sense, the ancestral shrines in Chinese villages stand prominently like the churches in medieval towns in Europe,³¹ in that they all represent the center and the *Axis Mundi* of the residential territory. For example, the ancestral shrine of the Zhang's clan is built at the highest and most auspicious place of the village of Taxia, facing a river while being backed by a gorgeous hill (Fig. 164).

Vāstu-Shāstra Do's & Taboos regarding the Altar as the Center of a House and regarding the Temple as the Center of a City/Village

In old *Vāstu-Shāstra* texts, we can also find many *do's & taboos* regarding the sanctuary as the center of a built space. For a house, the sanctuary should be an altar, and for a city or a village, the sanctuary should be a temple.

Let us first consider the family altar as the center of the house plan. The following two passages can be found in the *Mānasāra* and the *Mayamatam*:

(In a house), near the Brahma quarter (central plot) should be the pavilion for wedding and other ceremonies.³² (Mānasāra)

Only for Brahmins, kings, and Vaishyas is there a platform in the center (of a house); offerings are made there three times a day and it is honored with flower, perfume, etc. Its height is three spans as is its width. In its center is an altar to Brahma with dimensions half those of the platform... No platform (nor altar) to Brahma should be set up

³⁰ Dong 1996, p.38.

³¹ Ho 2005, p. 297.

³² Acharya 1994, p. 401.

*for Sudra or other (low) castes.*³³ (*Mayamatam*)

The two passages point out that, in a house, there should be a pavilion or platform serving as the family altar built in the center which is represented by the 'Brahma Square' of the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala. For both the courtyard and this family altar occupy the same place represented by the central 'Brahma Square', it is reasonable to assume that the family altar is located in the central courtyard as well. In this case, the family altar of the Indian house is precisely located at the 'geometric center', unlike the main hall of the Chinese house that can merely be seen as a 'conceptual center'. As we can imagine, with this altar as a place for human beings to meet Heavenly divine beings, the representation of the *Axis Mundi* in the courtyard will be much stronger and more complete, and this courtyard, consequently, should also be seen as a holy space. However, as mentioned in the second passage, only the three higher castes, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, but never the other lower castes are allowed to build such a family altar in the center of their houses. This fact seems to imply that neither the *Axis Mundi* nor the *Holy Zone* is allowed to be represented in the houses of the 'polluted and unholy people'. The prescription regarding the pavilion or altar to be established in the center of the house plan also applies to the king's palace (Fig. 142), as the following passage can be found in the *Mayamatam*:

*There is an altar in the very center of the palace with a height and a width of half a pole; the platform of 'Saha' (i.e. Brahma), upon which this altar rests, is larger than it by one pole all around.*³⁴

This can be well exemplified by the palace compound in Jaipur City, which is known as the City Palace today. As we can see, the pavilion-like 'Diwan-i-Khas' is situated in the center of the courtyard of this palace compound, which serves as a grand ceremonial 'Hall of Public Audience'.³⁵ Though not specifically used as an altar, it seemed to be built to respond the above prescription as mentioned in ancient Vāstu-Shāstra texts.

Now we turn to the *do's & taboos* regarding the temple as the sanctuary and the center of a city or village. The following passages can be found in the *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*, the *Mayamatam* and the *Mānasāra*:

*In the center of the town deserves to be created the temple of the one born of the lotus i.e. Brahma...*³⁶ (*Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*)

³³ Dagens 1994, p. 579.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 627.

³⁵ Sachdev & Tillotson 2002, pp. 67-68.

³⁶ Sharma 2007, *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva 1*, p. 106.

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(In a village), a temple or an altar is installed at the center which is called the place of Brahma.³⁷ (Mayamatam)

Pavilions should be built in holy places, in pleasure gardens, in the center of villages and such other architectural objects (e.g. towns)...³⁸ (Mānasāra)

As shown by the three passages and the illustrations in the *Mānasāra* (Fig. 144), we can clearly see that a temple (or an altar or pavilion) should be built in the center of a city or village, occupying the 'Brahma Square'. Obviously, the temple built in the center of a city or village is quite comparable with the altar built in the center of a house, both representing the central *Holy Zone* and the *Axis Mundi*. However, it is hard to find an existing city or village of which there is a temple built exactly at the 'geometric center' represented by the *Brahma Square*. Nonetheless, we still can find in some cities or villages that a great temple is 'mentally constructed' as occupying the center; the location of this temple is a 'conceptual center'.

The most impressive instance is probably the sacred city of Varanasi which is said to represent the original point of the cosmos, or the cosmic center. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Vishvanath Temple dedicated to *Shiva* as the ending and the focal point of the *Panch-Kosi* pilgrimage route is usually thought to represent the center of Varanasi.³⁹ However, according to the Varanasi's map in scale, we can clearly see that the Vishvanath Temple does not really occupy the 'geometric center' but just represents the 'conceptual center' of the city, as it is located in the city's eastern part and on the bank of the Ganges (Fig. 289).

Moreover, as indicated by some other *Vāstu-Shāstra* texts, in the center of a city or a village, it is not the temple that should always be built. For example, in the *Vishwakarma Vāstu-Shāstram*, we can find the prescriptions that the king's palace should be built in the center of some types of cities.⁴⁰ According to this text, a city belonging to the types of *Prastaranagara*, *Swastika*, *Jalanagara* and *Astamukha Nagara* should have a king's palace but not a temple built in its center. Besides, it is also mentioned in the *Mayamatam* that, while most palaces of 'kings' should be built in the western or southern part of a city, the palace of the 'emperor' or the 'highest class king' should be built in the center of a city.⁴¹ Apparently, there is a conflict between these instructions and those mentioned earlier, as the city center can not be occupied by the temple and the royal palace

³⁷ Dagens 1994, p. 65.

³⁸ Acharya 1994, p. 340.

³⁹ See: 2.2.2.

⁴⁰ Sastri 1958, pp. xxviii-xxxiii.

⁴¹ Dagens 1994, p. 623.

at the same time. This conflict is probably a reflection of the ambiguous role of the king in the tradition of Hindu political theology, as mentioned in Chapter 2. On the one hand, a king, who is also a Kshatriya, should merely be seen as a human being; hence he should not be seen as higher as a god.⁴² Consequently, it is not suitable for the king's palace to be situated in the city center, the supreme and most sacred place that represents the *Axis Mundi*. On the other hand, a king is also regarded as a divine being and often claims himself to be an embodiment of a particular god.⁴³ In this case, the king's palace should be seen as supreme and sacred as a temple and thus can be built in the city center.

The king's palace in the city center can be exemplified by the palace compound of Sawai Jai Singh, which occupies the central quarter of Jaipur City with its plan based on a 9x9 Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala (Fig. 287). According to historical records, in 1708, a time of the waning Mughal authority and the resurgent Rajput power, the Hindu king Sawai Jai Singh publicly performed a particular Vedic ritual, the 'Vajapeya Yajna', an ancient rite associated exclusively with the universal ruler, namely the king of the highest order, as if declaring his rights as a paramount sovereign and having obtained the title of 'Samrat' (i.e. emperor).⁴⁴ Therefore, no one could challenge his authority to build his palace compound in the center of his city.

Moreover, as regarding the center of the city, the following passage that highlights the principle of '*the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked*' can be found in the *Mānasāra*:

*Except the Brahma (central) plot all other plots are suitable for all kinds of dwelling houses. It would be prosperous to build the main houses of the twice-born in the four plots, namely, the Aryaka, the Vivasvat, the Mitra, and the Bhudhara. In the plots of Vivasvat, Mitra, and Bhudhara should be built the main houses of the kings (i.e. the Kshatriyas); they are not suitable for the (houses of) the people of the other castes.*⁴⁵

As we can see in the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the *Aryaka*, the *Vivasvat*, the *Mitra* and the *Bhudhara* are the four plots surrounding and most close to the central plot of *Brahma*, respectively to its east, south, west and north. In terms of the spatial hierarchy, the four plots are inferior to the central plot but superior to all the other plots of the mandala (Fig. 140). For this reason, only the people of higher caste, who are seen as the twice-born, but never those of

⁴² Flood 2004, pp. 67-74.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Sachdev & Tillotson 2002, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁵ Acharya 1994, p. 399.

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the other lower castes are allowed to reside in the four plots. Obviously, this also highlights the *Including & Excluding Structures* shorter-cycle theme of architectural representation which is based on the *Sociomorphic* long-cycle tradition.

Surely, the most polluted and lowest outcaste people should live as far as possible from the center and, if possible, should be kept outside the boundary of a city or village. For example, the 'Chandalas', as born from the union of Sudra women with Brahmin men, are said to be the lowest social group and the 'Untouchables'. The Chandalas with a nature of impurity and the Brahmins with a nature of purity are at the opposite ends of the status hierarchy.⁴⁶ According to the *Manu Smṛti* (i.e. the Laws of Manu)⁴⁷, as the outcaste beyond the system of the four classes (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra), the Chandalas have no place within the higher social orders and should dwell outside villages or cities and live by performing menial and polluting tasks such as sweeping excrement from the village.⁴⁸

As mentioned in the *Arthashāstra*, "Either to the north or the east, burial or cremation grounds shall be situated; but that of the people of the highest caste shall be to the south of the city... Heretics and Chandalas shall live beyond the burial grounds."⁴⁹ In the Hindu tradition, death is thought to be inauspicious and fraught with the danger of pollution for the bereaved and the danger of being haunted by a malevolent ghost.⁵⁰ Hence, the cremation or burial grounds are usually located outside villages or cities. Asking Chandalas as well as heretics to live beyond the burial grounds implies that they are more dangerous and polluting than the burial grounds.

4.2.4 Two Centers of the Temple Plan

As we have seen, at the initial stage of the building construction, there should be only one center, that is to say the 'middle of the site', considered to

⁴⁶ Flood 2004, p. 61.

⁴⁷ The *Manu Smṛti* is the most important and earliest metrical work of the Dharma Shastra textual tradition of Hinduism, composed between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Like other Dharma Shastras, the *Manu Smṛti* contains a doctrine of *dharma* as a universal, all-encompassing law, which is yet flexible and adaptable to different circumstances and a variety of situations. These Dharma Shastras were used by assemblies of Brahmins throughout the history of Hinduism to help decide legal matters. See: Flood 2004, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Flood 2004, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Sharmasastry 1961, p. 54.

⁵⁰ Flood 2004, pp. 206-207.

be the center of the to-be-built space. Once the building construction has been completed, and the to-be-built space has become the built space, there could be two centers at the same time identified in the ground plan of a built space, the courtyard and the sanctuary, both highlighting the representation of the *Axis Mundi*. In some cases, the location of the courtyard and that of the sanctuary may coincide; however, in many other cases, they do not coincide with each other. Therefore, in the ground plan of a built space, we can often observe the coexistence of the 'geometric center' and the 'conceptual center'. Surely, the two kinds of centers can also be observed in Chinese and Indian temples, although Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy are less concerned with them.

Two Centers of the Chinese Temple

Just like a traditional Chinese courtyard house, a traditional Chinese temple also has two centers—the 'courtyard' and the 'main hall' (i.e. the sanctuary). The former one usually occupies the geometric center of the temple plan, while the latter one is just a conceptual center (Fig. 46).

Let us first consider the 'courtyard' of a temple. In the middle (or at the approximate middle) of the courtyard and in front of the main hall, there is usually an important element, the *Tiangonglu* (天公爐), a big incense burner of which the incense is burnt for *Tiangong* (天公), namely the Grand Heavenly Father. In Taoism, *Tiangong* is usually represented by the 'Jade Emperor' (玉皇大帝), the supreme deity regarded as being higher than all the other ones in the divine hierarchy.⁵¹ Such a *Tiangonglu* clearly puts an emphasis on the courtyard as the center of a temple plan, where the *Axis Mundi* as the connection between Earth and Heaven is represented. Apparently, as being occupied by the *Tiangonglu* that represents the supreme deity, the courtyard should be seen as the supreme position of a temple plan.

Next, the 'main hall' of a temple, just like the main hall of the house, is also a conceptual center in the ground plan. As we can see, it is located at the 'Principal Position' but not the 'Central Square' in terms of the superimposition of the temple plan onto the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram'. In this main hall, there should be the altar dedicated to the main deity which is superior to any other deity in this temple. In the temple compound, the building that houses the main hall is always the most lofty and prominent one. Undeniably, the main hall is also a place which highlights the representation of the *Axis Mundi* and the connection between Earth and Heaven.

⁵¹ Li, Xiu-E. 2003, pp. 36-39.

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Let us take the Thian Hock Keng Temple (天福宮) in Singapore as an example. It is a temple representing the hybrid of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, in which various Taoist deities, Buddhist Bodhisattva and Confucius are worshipped together. Among these divine beings, the Taoist goddess *Mazu* (媽祖) is the one that is regarded as the main deity of this temple, and, hence, her altar is placed in the main hall. Going inside this temple, we can find an information board (Fig. 157) which shows the ground plan of the temple and instructs how people should worship various deities as well as Bodhisattva and Confucius in a proper sequence, as they are all arranged according to their rankings: higher-ranking deities at higher-ranking places, lower-ranking deities at lower-ranking places. In principle, people should first go to worship the highest-ranking deity before the lower-ranking deities. As the main deity (No. 1) arranged in the middle of the main hall, *Mazu* is the one people should worship first. Moreover, as we can also find, there is a *Tiangonglu* located at the approximate middle of the courtyard and in front of the main hall (Fig. 156). It is important to note that although the *Tiangonglu* is not given a number on the information board, people usually go there to burn incense for the Grand Heavenly Father before entering the main hall to worship *Mazu*.

As we can see, in such a temple, there are two 'centers': one is represented by the main hall in which the altar of the main deity is located, while the other represented by the courtyard in which the *Tiangonglu* of the supreme Grand Heavenly Father is placed. However, which center should be seen as the superior one? It is not an easy question to answer. According to many informants in Singapore, Taiwan and China, who often go worshipping in temples, it seems that people usually have never tried to make it clear regarding the hierarchical relationship between the two crucial places. For these people, both are important 'centers', and there is no need to clarify the hierarchical relationship between them.⁵²

Two Centers of the Indian Temple

Likewise, in an Indian temple, we can at least find two places that can be seen as the 'centers' of the ground plan. One is the *Garbha-griha* – the 'sanctum sanctorum', and the other is the *Mandapa* – a pillared pavilion used for public rituals and religious dancing and music. As shown in Vāstu-Shāstra texts and exemplified by many temples, the *Mandapa* should be built in front of the

⁵² Interviews with Mr. Zhou (Shanghai, China, 24/03/2008), Mr. Chang (Taxia, Fujian, China, 01/05/2008), Mr. Wu (Taipei, Taiwan, 11/01/2006), Mr. Xie (Taipei, Taiwan, 27/01/2006), Ms. Xu (Puli, Nantou, Taiwan, 03/12/2006), Ms. Cai (Xikou, Chiayi, Taiwan, 30/12/2006) and Ms. Chuang (Singapore, 11/03/2008).

Garbha-griha, and both of them are precisely situated on the central front-back axis of the temple plan (Fig. 143, 221).⁵³ In terms of their relative locations, the *Garbha-griha* and the *Mandapa* as two centers of an Indian temple are quite comparable with the 'main hall' and the '*Tiangonglu*' as the two centers of a Chinese temple.

Given that the *Garbha-griha* serves as the place where the main deity is worshipped, it resembles the main hall of the Chinese temple. According to Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the *Garbha-griha* should have its plan based on a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala.⁵⁴ Hence, the middle of the *Garbha-griha*, at which the altar or symbol of the main deity is placed, must coincide with the central '*Brahma Square*' (Fig. 67), and this implies that the middle of the *Garbha-griha* should be the supreme position where the *Axis Mundi* is represented.

The crucial role of the *Garbha-griha* in an Indian temple is also highlighted in the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations. In Sanskrit, the term *Garbha-griha* literally means 'the chamber of womb'⁵⁵, which implies that it should be regarded as the 'original point' of the whole temple space and structure. Besides, in the *Agni Purāna*, the *Garbha-griha* of a temple is also compared to the 'heart' of a human body:

*The consecration of such a temple consists in the act of consecrating its heart.*⁵⁶

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the *Shikhara*, a prominent tower representing the holy Mount Meru or Mount Kailash, is usually built on the roof of the *Garbha-griha* of temples (Fig. 83). Therefore, the important meaning of the *Garbha-griha* can also be explained from the perspective of the *Physiomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations. As a place exclusively reserved for the main deity and as a representation of the holy mountain or the human womb/heart, undeniably, the *Garbha-griha* should be seen as the supreme center of the temple plan, which also highlights the representations of the *Axis Mundi* and the *Holy Zone*. Just like the main hall of a Chinese temple, the *Garbha-griha* of the Indian temple is usually not situated in the geometric center but at the rear part of the temple plan (Fig. 143, 195, 199-202, 221). Only in a small number of cases, the *Garbha-griha* is located in the geometric center (Fig. 196). Therefore, it should be considered to be a conceptual center.

Unlike the *Garbha-griha*, the *Mandapa* is usually located in the geometric

⁵³ Acharya 1994, pp. 226, 233, 241-243; Dagens 1994, p. 519.

⁵⁴ Acharya 1994, pp. 198-201; Stierlin 1998, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁵ Tadjell 1994, p. 302.

⁵⁶ Shastri 1967, p. 221.

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center of the temple compound, precisely or approximately (Fig. 143, 195, 200-202). Besides, the location of the *Mandapa* along with the configuration of the temple plan also highlights the representation of the *Axis Mundi* & *Cosmic Cross*. As we can see in the plan of the Kailash Temple at Ellora, the *Mandapa* is exactly located at the intersection point of the two orthogonal horizontal axes of the temple plan, and the *Axis Mundi* represented by the *Mandapa* and the *Cosmic Cross* represented by the temple's cross-plan become very clear (Fig. 202). In addition, regarding the same temple, the roof above the *Mandapa* is embellished by a lotus carved in concentric rings, topped by four divine lions pointing to the directions of NS, SE, SW and NW (Fig. 205). All these characteristics imply that the *Mandapa* is a place where the cosmic structure and the cosmic directions should be well represented. Consequently, the center of the *Mandapa* plays a role in representing the cosmic center.

Moreover, in the same temple, it seems that the *Axis Mundi* is not only represented by the *Garbha-griha* and the *Mandapa*, but is also represented by other two prominent constructions—the *Nandi* pavilion (where the *Nandi* bull, the mount of *Shiva*, is enshrined) and the *Gopuram* (i.e. gateway) (Fig. 206, 207). Although the *Nandi* pavilion and the *Gopuram* are hardly to be seen as 'centers' of the temple on account of their functions and meanings, they can be seen as representations of the *Axis Mundi* on account of their physical characteristics. Therefore, the four important building elements from the front to the rear—the *Gopuram*, the *Nandi* pavilion, the *Mandapa* and the *Garbha-griha*—together highlight the 'multi-representation' of the *Axis Mundi* on the front-back axis of a temple plan. Since this front-back axis is in keeping with the east-west axis, such a multi-representation of the *Axis Mundi* also well represents the sun-focused cosmic reality. That is to say, in an east-west oriented temple, the great sun-revealed cosmic power is manifested by a series of representations of the *Axis Mundi*.

4.2.5 The Many Centers of the House in Today's Practice of Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra

We have seen that, in a to-be-built space or a built space, the center could be the 'middle of the site', the 'courtyard' or the 'sanctuary', and it could be a 'geometric center' or a 'conceptual center'. In a traditional temple or house, people usually do not have problems with how to define its center(s), as such a traditional temple or house usually has a well defined site, a courtyard and a sanctuary. However, the modern houses built in the urban environment are usually the row houses or the high-rise apartments which often do not

have courtyards or sanctuaries. Besides, for the occupants of the high-rise apartments, the site on the ground is far from their living floors; hence they are usually not very conscious of where the boundary and the middle of the site are. Therefore, as it can be imagined, the people living in modern houses are very likely to be confused about how to correctly define the center(s) of a house plan. Surely, the definition of the center(s) is still a great concern in contemporary practice of both Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra, and many meaningful *do's & taboos* regarding the definition of the center(s) of the modern house can be found in contemporary Feng-Shui and Vāstu-Shāstra manuals and handbooks.

The Many Centers of the House in Today's Feng-Shui Practice

Most Feng-Shui practitioners nowadays no longer instruct that the courtyard, the main hall or the middle of the site should be seen as the center of the house. However, this does not mean that the aforesaid *do's & taboos* recorded in old Feng-Shui texts are all thrown away and lose their influence in today's Feng-Shui practice. It should be said that these *do's & taboos* have been gradually reformulated so that they can be adapted for the modern built environment.

Regarding the 'courtyard', traditionally, it represents the center of the 'family life'. The courtyard serves as a space for many domestic activities, and in southern China and Taiwan, it is also generally used as a space for drying harvested rice in the sun (Fig. 237).⁵⁷ This implies that the courtyard is an important space where family members meet each other and work together, and it can be seen as the crucial center of the 'family life'. Nowadays, the courtyard, to a large extent, is substituted by the 'living room' of most modern houses, which becomes the new center of the family life. Therefore, in the contemporary manuals and newspaper columns of Feng-Shui, we can find many *do's & taboos* which recommend that the living room should be carefully arranged, for it serves as the center of a house.⁵⁸ However, unlike the courtyard of a traditional house, the living room of a modern house is often not a 'geometric center' but just a 'conceptual center', for it is likely not to be located on the intersection point of the two horizontal axes of the house plan. In order to highlight the living room as a center, though it is a conceptual center, many Feng-Shui practitioners strongly suggest that the 'main light' should hang from the middle of the ceiling of the living room.⁵⁹ It appears that this main light is

⁵⁷ Cohen 2005, pp. 241-242.

⁵⁸ Ou-Yang 2004, *Ensuring the Prosperity of Human Beings and Homes: A Practical Manual of House Feng-Shui*, p. 49; Too 2006, p. 30.

⁵⁹ *United Daily News (Taiwan)*, accessed on 12/01/2010, http://money.udn.com/house/storypage.jsp?f_MAIN_ID=416&f_SUB_ID=4073&f_ART_ID=202913,

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an element strongly reminiscent of the aforesaid 'Zhongliang Bagua' that, in a traditional house, is always pasted onto the middle of the central beam of the main hall (Fig. 261). In this sense, the living room can also be compared to the main hall – the sanctuary – of the traditional house. This main light also implies that modern Chinese people still want the *Axis Mundi* to be clearly represented in the center of the house.

Moreover, knowing that the courtyard is of great importance to traditional houses, and that a modern apartment unit usually cannot have a courtyard, many contemporary Feng-Shui consultants provide a solution: the apartment buildings of the same group can be arranged in a concentric or U-shaped layout so that a big courtyard can be created to be shared by all the apartment units.⁶⁰ Nowadays, such a kind of concentric or U-shaped layout for apartment buildings is very popular in Taiwan, Hong Kong and many other cities in China (Fig. 254).

As for the 'main hall', just like the courtyard, it is also no longer a necessary part for most modern houses, because modern apartment houses are often too small to be built with a prominent room used as the main hall, and more and more modern Chinese people do not worship ancestors and deities at home. Nonetheless, for the row houses, it is still possible to be built with an independent room used as the 'family shrine'. This room in a row house, to a certain degree, bears similarities to the main hall in a traditional courtyard house, and hence it is also regarded as the sanctuary – a 'conceptual center' – of the row house. However, for the modern apartments in big cities, it is often only possible to have a small 'family altar' placed in the living room or dining room rather than an independent room used as the family shrine. This family altar, usually just a small table placed against or hanging on the wall, is noticeably less prominent than the traditional 'main hall' and hardly can be seen as the center of a house, even though it still represents the *Holy Zone* of a house (Fig. 262).

It is noteworthy that many *do's & taboos* followed in today's Feng-Shui practice are concerned with the 'family shrine' in a row house or the 'family altar' in an apartment house. Among them, the most interesting one is probably the prescription that '*the family shrine or the family altar must be oriented to the front side or the front entrance of the house.*'⁶¹ Although old Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* never clearly mention that the main hall should face the front of the house, as we can see in the ground plans of most traditional courtyard houses, the main hall is indeed built to face the front side (Fig. 232-236, 242, 243). That

⁶⁰ Ou-Yang 2004, *Illustrated Architectural Taboos and Solutions in Modern Dwellings*, p. 9.

⁶¹ Wong 2005, p. 74; Qu 2003, p. 42; Too 2004, p. 116.

is why the main hall can be compared with the head of a human body, of which the face is always directed to the front (Fig. 32, 45). Besides, some people tend to give it an interesting explanation: “*Because the ancestors and deities are the masters of our family, and they are also like the head and eyes of our house, we have to let them be able to see the front side and the outside. If their views of the outside are blocked, the house is can be like a blind man.*”⁶² According to this explanation, first of all, we can find that the *Anthropomorphic* tradition never loses its influence on the architectural representations of realities even in modern days.

In a row house, in order to enable the ancestors and deities to see the front and the outside, the family shrine is usually placed in the first room from the front side (Fig. 240, 241). Interestingly enough, some people also think that the ancestors and deities like to see as far as possible; hence, they tend to place the family shrine on the top floor.⁶³ Given that such a family shrine is usually positioned on the foremost part of a row house, it is no longer like the main hall of a traditional courtyard house that is usually located at the ‘Principal Position’ (Fig. 45).

Furthermore, in some row houses built with a family shrine, the aforementioned principle concerned with the spatial hierarchy is highlighted: ‘*the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked*’. For instance, in the row house of the Chen’s family in Tianchong, Taiwan, we can clearly see how the family shrine and the rooms for the three brothers are arranged according to this principle (Fig. 240). As we know, in a traditional Chinese house, all the members should have their own places according to their ranks, be they deities, deceased ancestors or living human beings. Under the ‘pecking order’ of traditional Chinese families, the deities and deceased ancestors are considered superior to the living human beings, and among the living human beings, the elder brothers along with their own sub-families are superior to the younger brothers along with their own sub-families. Therefore, in this house, the family shrine exclusively reserved for deities and ancestors, occupying the first room on the top floor, should be regarded as the highest-ranking part as well as a conceptual center of the house (No. 6). Immediately behind the family shrine, we can find three rooms belonging to the eldest brother, his wife and his children (No. 7 - 9). After the three rooms, there are two rooms respectively belonging to the second and the youngest (fifth) brothers (No. 10 & 11). At the rearmost part, it is the room prepared for the guests, as they are usually seen as the “others” for the family and should thus be kept from the family shrine-a

⁶² Interviews with Mr. Wu and Ms. Guo (Taipei, Taiwan, 10/01/2007).

⁶³ Ibid.

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conceptual center—as far as possible.

Regarding the 'family altar' in a modern apartment, it is less likely to be seen as the conceptual center but, at best, a *Holy Zone*, for the architectural representation of the *Axis Mundi* in it is considerably weak. Nevertheless, how to properly orient the family altar to the 'front side' is still of great concern in today's Feng-Shui practice. However, it can be imagined that, living in apartments with the so-called modernist 'free plan', people are often confused about how to properly define the front side as well as the back, left and right sides of the house. For some people, the direction that the 'main entrance' points to is seen as the front, while for others, the front is represented by the direction, to which the 'main opening', usually a set of French windows opening onto a balcony, is oriented.⁶⁴ Take the plan of an apartment house in Taipei as an example, of which the main entrance and the main opening are located on two different sides (Fig. 255). Hence there could be two kinds of 'fronts' for the occupants to follow, when they determine the orientation of the family altar. For the people who tend to treat the main entrance as the front side, it is proper to position the family altar at the place of No. 7, while for those who tend to see the main opening as the front side, it is proper to position the family altar at the place of No. 8.

Interestingly, in a small number of cases of modern houses, it can be clearly seen that people still tend to build a center which represents both the traditional 'main hall' and 'courtyard' at the same time. The house of the Ke's family as mentioned in previous chapters is one of these cases (Fig. 245, 246). According to its original plan as based on the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram', the 'Central Square' that used to be the courtyard of a traditional house is planned to serve as both the living room and the family shrine (Fig. 245). On the one hand, this shows the attempt to combine the modern living room and the traditional courtyard, as they both represent the center of family life. On the other hand, as we know, the family shrine that used to be represented by the main hall of a traditional house is usually situated at the 'Principal Position'. However, in this case, the family shrine is moved to the 'Central Square'. In a traditional house with a courtyard, the deities and ancestors residing in the main hall can easily see the front and the outside, but in a modern house without a courtyard, they should be moved to a place closer to the front entrance so as to easily see the front and the outside. Therefore, in this house plan, the family shrine is not just a 'conceptual center', for it is also exactly located at the 'geometric center'. It is important to note that, based on

⁶⁴ Interviews with Mr. Xie (Taipei, Taiwan, 27/10/2006), Ms. Fan (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006) and Mr. Gao (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006).

their combination, the *Axis Mundi* represented by the conceptual center and that represented by the geometric center are perfectly incorporated into each other.

It is important to notice that, today, another important center of the house, called 'Liji point' (立極點), is also of great concern to modern Feng-Shui practitioners and followers. This *Liji* point is a new conception of the house center developed in today's Feng-Shui practice, for it is never mentioned in any old Feng-Shui text. It literally means 'the point where the *Taiji* (太極) should be positioned', as 'Li' (立) means 'to position', and 'Ji' (極) is an abbreviation of '*Taiji*'. As mentioned earlier, the *Taiji* is a symbol of the cosmic center and the supreme ultimate of the cosmos, and the *Zhongliang Bagua* with its center as a *Taiji* symbol is usually attached onto the middle of the central beam of the main hall in a traditional house. Therefore, as its name suggests, the *Liji* point is considered to be the crucial place where the cosmic center and the *Axis Mundi* should be represented.

This *Liji* point is not represented by any particular room or element found in the house space, but rather like the 'geometric center' of a house plan; according to Feng-Shui manuals, this point can be identified at the intersection of the two diagonal lines of a house plan (Fig. 47). In today's Feng-Shui practice, how to correctly identify the *Liji* point is one of the top priorities in the arrangement and design of house space, because without this *Liji* point as a point of reference, the different directions related to the house cannot be defined (Fig. 48).⁶⁵ As we see, in a modern apartment house, the living room usually lacks a holy element as the focus, and the simple family altar is usually too small and poor to be compared with the traditional prominent main hall; both the living room and the family altar cannot represent the *Axis Mundi* very completely. In such a circumstance, people are eager to find a place as the genuine center of the house that is impressive and powerful enough to represent the *Axis Mundi*. Consequently, the *Liji* point as a geometric center, just like the 'middle of the site' as mentioned earlier, is qualified to assume the role. As regards a modern apartment house, whether or not it has a living room or a family altar, and no matter how its interior rooms are arranged, it always has a geometric center represented by the *Liji* point that occupies the intersection of the two diagonal lines as well as of the two orthogonal horizontal axes of the house plan. With this *Liji* point, the house space can be mentally constructed in the frame of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*. It is also noteworthy that, in today's Feng-Shui practice, this *Liji* point is often compared with the heart of the human body.⁶⁶ This fact again highlights the influence of the *Anthropomorphic*

⁶⁵ Hu 2007, pp. 90-93.

⁶⁶ Interviews with Mr. Xie (Taipei, Taiwan, 27/10/2006), Ms. Fan (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006) and Mr. Huang (Taipei, Taiwan, 06/01/2007)

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long-cycle tradition on the Feng-Shui architectural practice in modern built environment.

The Many Centers of the House in Today's Vāstu-Shāstra Practice

Just like in today's Feng-Shui practice, how to correctly define the center of the house is also of great concern in today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, and, there could also be more than one center identified simultaneously in a modern house plan. These many 'centers' are probably conceptualized on the basis of the experience of the courtyard and the sanctuary of traditional Indian houses.

First of all, let us consider the two kinds of centers, the '*Griha-nabhi*' and the '*Brahma-nabhi*', which are mentioned frequently in contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra manuals. The former signifies 'the geometric center of the house plan', while the latter denotes 'the geometric center of the site'.⁶⁷ The two centers highlight that, in modern days, the boundary of the house plan often does not coincide with that of the site, and hence the locations of their geometric centers are not identical with each other. Besides, as mentioned in Chapter 3, some modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners recommend that the house building should not be located in the center but on the southwestern part of the site, so that the 'positive cosmic energy' from the northeast can easily enter the site without being blocked.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the *Griha-nabhi* as the geometric center of the house plan and the *Brahma-nabhi* as the geometric center of the site are not located at the same place (Fig. 90). Some modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners ask people to pay more attention to the *Griha-nabhi* than to the *Brahma-nabhi*, because the former one is more crucial to the arrangement of the interior space.⁶⁹ As a geometric center of the house plan, the *Griha-nabhi* is quite comparable with the *Liji* point developed in today's Feng-Shui practice (Fig. 47).

Surely, as it can be imagined, many Indian people are not likely to be satisfied by the *Griha-nabhi* to be seen as the supreme center because, traditionally, the geometric center of a house should be represented by a tangible courtyard. Therefore, many modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners still recommend that people should buy or build houses with a central courtyard in which the *Griha-nabhi* can also be identified (Fig. 147, 273).⁷⁰ However, most modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners have realized that it is more and more

⁶⁷ Ananth 1998, p. 115; Babu 2003, pp. 16-17, 43-44.

⁶⁸ See: 3.2.4.

⁶⁹ Ananth 1998, p. 115; Babu 2003, pp. 16-17, 43-44.

⁷⁰ Ananth 1998, pp. 137-138; Arya 2000, pp. 60-61; Babu 2003, pp. 9, 104; Babu 2007, pp. 56-57, 71.

difficult for people to build or buy a house with a central courtyard, especially for those who have to live in urban apartment houses. Therefore, these Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners suggest that if the house cannot be built with a courtyard in its central area, this area should be used as the living room or the dining room or just left empty, and should never be occupied by the kitchen, the bedrooms, the storeroom, etc. (Fig. 274-276)⁷¹

Besides, many modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioner and theoreticians try to provide explanations for why the courtyard should be built in the center of the house. Among these explanations, the most systematic is probably the one given by Sashikala Ananth, which can be found in her *The Penguin Guide to Vāstu: The Classical Indian Science of Architecture and Design*:

*The courtyard has been adopted as a device for physical well-being as well as spiritual contentment... The central court can be seen to coincide with the reclining Vāstu-Purusha's central body composed of lung, heart and stomach. Physically this part of the building offers the heart nexus or feeling center, the lung or pranna (breath) center, the stomach or digestive center, and the nabhi (naval) or creative center.*⁷²

As shown in this passage, the house plan is supposed to be arranged on the basis of the Vāstu-Purusha Mandala, and the central courtyard can be compared to the crucial central part of the body of Vāstu-Purusha. Again, the architectural *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition is highlighted. Furthermore, also according to Sashikala Ananth, the house plan should be divided into three areas—the 'Brahma Pada' (i.e. the central area), the 'Deivika Padam' (i.e. the first concentric space around the central area), and the 'Manusha Padam' (i.e. the second concentric space):

Brahma Pada: This is the central area of the total form which includes the central point. In the process of design the Brahma Pada is considered to have very high concentration of energy (of the total form). Therefore traditionally it was either opened out as the courtyard or made into a central hall for collective gathering.

Deivika Padam: This is the first concentric space around the central Brahma Pada. In this space the energies are considered to be fairly high and so the allocation of passages and rooms for collective rather than individual use such as dining, family rooms are recommended here.

⁷¹ Babu 2003, pp. 37-41; Sabharathnam 2005. p. 51; Sthapati 2005, pp. 74, 115.

⁷² Ananth 1998, pp. 137-138.

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*Manusha Padam: The second concentric space, this space is considered to contain energy which is fairly comfortable for human activity and therefore, all activity rooms such as kitchen, bedroom, study areas, Puja and rooms for individual use may be placed in this part of the layout.*⁷³

Here we can clearly see a principle that is asserted by Sashikala Ananth: '*the closer to the center, the stronger energy it should have*'. According to this principle, the central area has the strongest energy, the first concentric area around the central area has a fairly high energy, and the outer area has a moderate energy (Fig. 91). Although such an explanation in terms of the cosmic energy cannot be found in any ancient Vāstu-Shāstra text, it implies that the center should be the place where the *Axis Mundi* is represented. Through this *Axis Mundi*, the cosmic energy from the heavenly realm may come down to the built space and, first of all, concentrates at the central area. In the process of spreading outwards, the cosmic energy is likely to become less strong and more moderate. To a certain degree, the principle concerning the intensity of the cosmic energy can also be seen as a representation of the aforesaid principle concerning the spatial hierarchy: '*the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked*'.

Moreover, according to the Vāstu-Shāstra *do's & taboos* as mentioned earlier, the sanctuary of a built space is usually regarded as a center, be it a geometric center or a conceptual center. For example, in the center of a city or village, there should be a temple; a temple should have a *Garbha-griha* as its center; concerning a house, the center should be occupied by an altar. Accordingly, somewhat modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners still recommend people to establish the family altar or the *Puja* room in the center of a house plan.⁷⁴ However, as we will see later, modern Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners more often suggesting placing the family altar or the *Puja* room in the northeastern part of a house because the north, the east and the northeast as their combination are usually thought to be auspicious and higher-ranking directions. The *do's & taboos* regarding the sanctuary to be situated in the northeast will be discussed in 4.4.1.

⁷³ Ananth 1998, p. 115.

⁷⁴ Babu 2007, pp. 102-104; Krishna 2001, p. 97.

4.2.6 The Protection of the Center

So far we have seen that, as representing the *Axis Mundi*, the center is considered to be the supreme position of a space, whether it is a geometric center or a conceptual center, and whether it is the middle of the site, the courtyard, or the sanctuary. As the supreme position, the center is also thought to be the holiest and the most exclusive zone in a built space. Therefore, in the Feng-Shui and the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural traditions, we can find a variety of *do's & taboos* meant for the protection of the center. It can be imagined that if the center is polluted or harmed by the people, things or force thought to be unclean or evil, the existence of the whole space is likely to be seriously threatened.

Feng-Shui Do's & Taboos concerning the Protection of the Center

In the Feng-Shui tradition, the *do's & taboos* of this kind are mostly concerned with the center of the house rather than the center of the temple. This is probably because the construction of traditional temples should usually be under the charge of powerful and experienced master craftsmen and priests, and traditional temples are almost always built with a regular spatial structure, and located in a very auspicious environment. Hence the center(s) of temples — the courtyard and the main hall — are less likely to be put in danger. However, although traditional houses are also supposed to have a regular spatial structure, they are often not built in such an ideal way. This is probably because of the limited budgets, the defects of natural or built environments, the disputes among different family members and less informed craftsmen, etc. So long as the house is not built with a reasonable ground plan, its center(s) is very likely to be in a dangerous situation. Therefore, in old Feng-Shui texts, we can find a lot of *do's & taboos* that inform people to safeguard the courtyard and the main hall as the two centers of the plan of a built house, keeping them away from any potential threat such as pollution and evil force. Besides, in the contemporary Feng-Shui practice, as the *Liji* point (i.e. the geometric center) is often said to represent the genuine center of the house, many newly developed Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* are meant for the protection of this point.

First of all, regarding the courtyard of the house, many *do's & taboos* found in the old texts strongly emphasize that it should be square/rectangular in shape and should never be split into two or more parts. As we have learned, the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross* can only be represented in the shape that has a definable center and two orthogonal horizontal axes. The following *do's & taboos* are mentioned in the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu* and the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

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*The courtyard shall be square and regular in shape, and shall not be too wide or too narrow. An auspicious Mingtang (i.e. courtyard) is the promise of wealth... If the courtyard is as narrow as a line, it is very inauspicious... A square and regular courtyard is very favorable.*⁷⁵

(Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu)

*A square and regular Mingtang ensures the honor and fame of the family.*⁷⁶ *(Zhaipu Dacheng)*

*If the courtyard is split into two parts, the householder and his children may die.*⁷⁷ *(Zhaipu Dacheng)*

In addition to the shape, the size of the courtyard is also of great concern. As mentioned, the courtyard in Chinese is often called 'tianjing' (天井) which literally means 'the well towards Heaven', it implies that the courtyard is a channel through which the cosmic *Qi* can circulate between Heaven and the house on Earth. It can be imagined that if the size of the courtyard is too small, the house could hardly absorb the cosmic *Qi* from Heaven. On the contrary, if the size is too large, the house could hardly retain the cosmic *Qi*. The following passages can be found in the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

*If the courtyard is too wide and too large, the Qi in the house may escape, and hence the family will suffer a big loss of money.*⁷⁸

*If the courtyard is too narrow and too small, the householder will become fatuous and have few sons.*⁷⁹

Moreover, it can also be found in old Feng-Shui texts that many *do's & taboos* ask people to carefully protect the courtyard from being polluted by unclean water and being hurt by stones, plants or some building elements; otherwise, the family members are likely to suffer misfortune. For example, the following passages can be found in the *Zhaipu Dacheng* and the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu*:

*If there are stones buried in the center of the courtyard, the women will have problems with her menses and eyes, and they will be infertile.*⁸⁰ *(Zhaipu Dacheng)*

If a big stone which looks like a coffin is placed in the courtyard, the

⁷⁵ Huang 1998, pp. 13-14. 「天井闊狹得中，而團聚方正，則明堂吉而財聚矣。……天井橫長，如一字者凶。……方正為佳。」

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 460. 「明堂四方，功名早盛。」

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 581. 「天井分成雙，患眼主少亡。」

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 580. 「天井太敞，洩氣耗財。」

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 581. 「天井太狹小，癡迷更子少。」

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 582. 「天井中心塊石砌埋，經閉眼痛孕亦空懷。」

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*householder may be often ill and will die early.⁸¹ (Zhaipu Dacheng)
If the courtyard is too deep, it is inauspicious. If there are dirty
puddles in the courtyard, it is very inauspicious... In the courtyard,
neither the tree nor flower can be planted. If there are balustrades or
poles built in the courtyard, the householder will be blind and suffer
from heart disease. If there are ugly stones piled up in the courtyard,
the family members cannot live together in harmony.⁸² (Bazhai Zaofu
Zhoushu)*

As mentioned earlier, many people nowadays still prefer to live in the apartment buildings with a shared big open space situated in the middle of the building complex, which plays a role as the traditional courtyard. Surely, in such a big open space, there are usually some pleasant gardens in which trees and flowers are planted. However, interestingly enough, a small number of modern Feng-Shui practitioners insist that, in this open space, there should be neither garden nor plant, as they still want to follow the above-mentioned old Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*.⁸³

Now we turn to the *do's & taboos* supporting the protection of the main hall-the sanctuary-of the house. As we have learned, the main hall should be located at the rearmost of the central front-back axis of the house plan, coinciding with the 'Principal Position' of the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram' and representing the head of the human body. The following *do's & taboos* found in the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu* and the *Zhaipu Dacheng* are concerned with how to correctly locate the main hall in a house plan:

*The ancestral hall (i.e. main hall) shall not be built close to the front
entrance door; otherwise the family members will be threatened
by plagues. The ancestral hall shall be located in the middle of the
rear part of the house (i.e. the Principal Position).⁸⁴ (Bazhai Zaofu
Zhoushu)*

*If the main hall is not located in the middle of the rear part of the
house, the family will not be in peace.⁸⁵ (Zhaipu Dacheng)*

Moreover, as we have seen in some Feng-Shui texts, in a courtyard house, the central main wing, in which the main hall is located, is often compared to

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 582. 「天井大石渾似棺材，家長早殞常多病災。」

⁸² Huang 1998, pp. 13-14. 「天井太深陷者凶，停水穢污者尤凶。……天井栽花者不宜，置欄柱者斷主目暗，或心氣痛。亂石參差者，家不和。」

⁸³ Ou-Yang 2004, *Illustrated Architectural Taboos and Solutions in Modern Dwellings*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Huang 1998, p. 21. 「凡祖宗近門必招瘟，宜座後正盤內。」

⁸⁵ Wei 1985, p. 571. 「大廳堂不居正中者，人口不安。」

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the trunk of a human body and the householder of a family, while the two side wings compared to the limbs and the servants; the central main wing is ranked higher than the two side wings. In order to let people respect the central main wing and the main hall in its middle, many Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* dictate that the construction of the central wing should be prior to the constructions of the side wings, and that the height, length and overall size of the central wing be greater than those of the side wings. For instance, the following passages can be found in the *Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu* and the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

If the side wings are built before the construction the central main hall, the family members will not live together in peace.⁸⁶ (Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu)

The left and right wings shall not be too high or too low. They shall be two or three feet lower than the central main wing.⁸⁷ (Bazhai Zaofu Zhoushu)

If the side wings are longer than the central main wing, the householder is likely to lose power and his family will be broken up...

If the corridors of the side wings are longer than the central main wing, the servants will never obey the orders of the householder.. If the side wings are built as high as the central main wing, the servants will be supercilious and despise the householder.⁸⁸ (Zhaipu Dacheng)

In the Feng-Shui architectural tradition, the kitchen and the toilet are usually seen as the two most negative and dangerous parts of the house because the kitchen with the stove inside is likely to cause a fire accident, and the toilet is thought to be highly polluted and polluting and always located outside the house compound in old times. The following two passages, in the *Zhaipu Dacheng*, warn people not to place the kitchen and the toilet directly behind the main hall:

If the kitchen is located directly behind the family shrine, the family members will be often troubled by lawsuits and never live in peace.⁸⁹ (As for the toilet), it shall never occupy the intermediate place between the site and the mountain behind the site, and shall never be situated directly behind the main hall.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Huang 1998, p. 34. 「兩邊先造，不造堂，兒孫爭鬧不可當。」

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 36-37. 「左右從屋，不宜太高太低，比正屋矮二三尺可。」

⁸⁸ Wei 1985, pp. 576-578. 「橫屋直長正屋短，主人忤逆家飄散。……前後左右拖長廊，中間屋子小，正奴強違主令。……廂脊與正一般高，下人奴僕逞雄豪。」

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 585. 「神龕後作灶，招訟心焦躁。」

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 593. 「(廁舍) 忌在宅基來脈及正堂後。」

In today's Feng-Shui practice, the above *do's & taboos* concerned with the relationship between the main hall (or family shrine) and the toilet remain highly influential. It is important to note that since most modern houses are built with 'inside toilets' rather than 'outside toilets', the *do's & taboos* of this kind found in today's Feng-Shui practice are much more complicated than those found in old Feng-Shui texts.⁹¹ For instance, in Taiwan, people would never place the family altar against the wall behind which is a toilet, and never let the family altar directly face a toilet. Besides, some people also think that the family shrine or family altar should be neither located under an upstairs toilet nor located above a downstairs toilet.⁹² Even though modern toilets with ventilation and sewerage systems are usually bright, clean and in hygienic conditions, they are considered to be space potential to emit evil force and unclean *Qi*. Therefore, the toilet should never be connected in any way to the family shrine or altar.

Because the *Liji* point is often thought to be the genuine center of the house plan in today's Feng-Shui practice, many new *do's & taboos* are developed to protect this crucial point. Given that the *Liji* point is not represented by any particular room or architectural element but represented by the 'geometric center', it is possible for the *Liji* point to appear in the living room, the bedroom, the dining room, the toilet, the kitchen or the staircase. Undoubtedly, if this crucial point is coincidentally located in a toilet, a kitchen or a staircase, it would be very bad and very inauspicious. Hence in most Feng-Shui manuals or handbooks nowadays, we can find the *taboos* that warn people not to let the toilet, kitchen or stair occupy the *Liji* point of the house; otherwise, the inhabitants will be ill and suffer misfortune.⁹³ When designing apartment buildings, modern architects would always carefully identify the geometric center as being the *Liji* point for each house plan, and spend quite a lot of time checking whether this point is "touched" by the toilet, the kitchen or the staircase. If the *Liji* point is unfortunately touched by one of them, the architect cannot but spend more time adjusting or redesigning the entire house plan because no one is willing to live in a house whose "heart" is hurt and polluted.

Take the house plan of a 13-story apartment building in Taipei as an

⁹¹ Huang 2009, pp. 162-169.

⁹² Pang 2003, p. 116; interviews with Mr. Wu (Taipei, Taiwan, 11/01/2006), Mr. Gao (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006), and Mr. Wu and Ms. Guo (Taipei, Taiwan, 10/01/2007).

⁹³ Bai 2005, p. 38; Ou-Yang 2004, *Illustrated Architectural Taboos and Solutions in Modern Dwellings*, pp. 92, 117; Ou-Yang 2004, *Ensuring the Prosperity of Human Beings and Homes: A Practical Manual of House Feng-Shui*, 2004, p.60; Pang 2003, p. 151; Too 2004, p.160; Too 2006, p. 30.

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example (Fig. 263). In this plan, the *Liji* point as the geometric center is well defined, and the two toilets are arranged together in the upper part. It is noteworthy that the 'toilet A' strangely protrudes about 50 cm from the external wall of the building. Normally, as for such an apartment constructed of reinforced concrete, all its rooms are supposed to be confined within even external walls, as any small protrusion from even external walls may cause a considerable increase in the construction budget. As told by Mr. Gao, the architect of this apartment, originally, the 'toilet A' was indeed confined within the external wall, but if so, the *Liji* point would be touched by the 'toilet B'. In order to correct this bad situation, he had no choice but to shift the two toilets outwards together, thereby keeping the 'toilet B' away from the *Liji* point, and as a result, the 'toilet A' protrudes the external wall.⁹⁴ If this bad situation was not corrected, all the houses with the same plan from this building would be unmarketable.

Vāstu-Shāstra Do's & Taboos concerning the Protection of the Center

Likewise, the *do's & taboos* found in old texts, regarding the protection of the center, usually deal with the center of the house rather than the center of the temple. However, they are usually not particularly concerned with the 'middle of the site', the 'courtyard' or the 'sanctuary' of a house, but directly concerned with the central '*Brahma Square*'. It can be imagined that as long as the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala is used to form the basis of a house plan, its central area—the *Brahma Square*—could be possibly occupied by any of the above three kinds of centers. Once the central *Brahma Square* is well safeguarded, theoretically, the three kinds of centers should all be under protection.

Regarding the protection of the '*Brahma Square*', many *do's & taboos* found in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts instruct that unclean things such as the remnants of food and improper building elements such as the pieces of joinery, the pillars and the doors should be kept away from this central area. The following passages can be found in the *Mayamatam*, the *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra* and the *Brihat Samhitā*:

Pieces (of joinery) are not to be assembled above the place of Brahma for that would be a source of misfortune. A pillar set at the place of Brahma leads to the death of the house owner but no error is made if upper pieces, such as beams, go above the place.⁹⁵ (Mayamatam)
Neither in the center of the house nor at the center of the pedestal a

⁹⁴ Interview with Mr. Gao (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006).

⁹⁵ Dagens 1994, p. 247.

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door should be created [sic].⁹⁶ (Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra)
*A door created in the center of a house, is the destroyer of wealth and
treasury and may carry out a quarrel with the owner or may result in
the un-chastity of his wife.⁹⁷ (Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra)*
*A house-owner wishing for happiness should guard very carefully
Brahman situated at the center of the house. For, His affliction by
dirty things like remnants of food, would harm the owner in it.⁹⁸ (Brihat
Samhitā)*

Similar to the Feng-Shui *Do's & Taboos* as mentioned earlier, these Vāstu-Shāstra *Do's & Taboos* are that warn people not to let the 'courtyard'-represented by the 'Central Square' of the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram'-be hurt or dirtied by plants, stones, balustrades, poles and puddle.

In today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, we can still find a variety of *do's & taboos* regarding the protection of the center of the house, whether this center is represented by the *Brahma Square*, the courtyard or the *Griha-nabhi* (i.e. the geometric center of the house plan). These *do's & taboos*, to a large extent, are based on the above *do's & taboos* mentioned in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts. For example:

Do keep the central area totally unoccupied.⁹⁹
*Do not pollute the central area or the Griha-nabhi by leftover
foods.¹⁰⁰*
Do not build a water pool in the central area or the Griha-nabhi.¹⁰¹
Do not put any furniture in the central area.¹⁰²
Do not let any improper construction be built in the central area.¹⁰³
*Do not let a lower-ranking space such as a bedroom occupy the
central area.¹⁰⁴*
Do not build a stair in the central area or at the Griha-nabhi.¹⁰⁵
Do not dig a well in the center of the house.¹⁰⁶

It is noteworthy that, in the contemporary practice of Vāstu-Shāstra, just

⁹⁶ Sharma 2007, *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva 1*, p. 464.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 532.

⁹⁸ Bhat 1986, p. 475.

⁹⁹ Arya 2000, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Babu 2007, pp. 56-67.

¹⁰¹ Arya 2000, p. 34.

¹⁰² Krishna 2001, p. 48.

¹⁰³ Sabharathnam 2005, p. 51.

¹⁰⁴ Dwivedi 2004, p. 71.

¹⁰⁵ Bhambi 2007, p. 64.

¹⁰⁶ Chawla 2004, p. 90.

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like in that of Feng-Shui, the toilet is also of great concern because the toilet has become an 'inside part' for most modern Indian houses. Therefore, many Vāstu-Shāstra manuals and handbooks nowadays strongly recommend people not to build or buy a house, of which the center or the *Griha-nabhi* is occupied by the toilet.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Arya 2000, p. 34; Bhambi 2007, p. 59; Dwivedi 2004, p. 71; Krishna 2001, p. 99.

4.3 Do's & Taboos Supporting the Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principles of 'the Superiority of the Front over the Back' and 'the Superiority of the Left over the Right' in Feng-Shui Architectural Tradition

Now we turn to the Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy based on the two principles, '*the superiority of the front over the back*' and '*the superiority of the left over the right*', which are established in the body-based frame of reference (Fig. 42). As having been discussed, the first principle – '*the superiority of the front over the back*' – can be easily understood in terms of the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition of architectural representations, because just like the front side of a human body, the front side of a built space is always thought to be more crucial than the back side. By and large, the front side should play a more important role than the back side. For instance, the front side of a built space should always be oriented to an auspicious direction (e.g. south), whereas the back side can be oriented to an inauspicious direction (e.g. north). Therefore, the front side is thought to be superior to the back side. As for the second principle – '*the superiority of the left over the right*', it cannot only be understood according to the *Anthropomorphic* tradition. To explain this principle, we should discuss the two body-based directions of left and right in the spatial system based on the 'south-orientation' particularly prevalent in Chinese architectural tradition. Hence the left may signify the east, and the right may denote the west. Given that the east as the direction of the sunrise usually symbolizes the beginning, the ascendant, and the life, while the west as the direction of the sunset usually symbolizes the ending, the decline and the death, the east is supposed to be superior to the west. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' is a result of '*the superiority of the east over the west*'. If so, this principle can be seen as a support of the architectural representation of the sun-focused cosmic realities.

4.3.1 The Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principle of 'the Superiority of the Front over the Back'

Regarding the principle of '*the superiority of the front over the back*', many *do's & taboos* found in old Feng-Shui texts strongly emphasize that the most unclean and unholy zone, that is to say the toilet, should be placed on the back side instead of the front side of a built space. Besides, according to many

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architectural *do's & taboos* found in old Confucian texts, the front section of a built space should belong to the 'male members', while the back section should belong to the 'female members', as in the traditional Chinese patriarchal society, men are always thought to be superior to women.

Locating the Toilet on the Back Side but not on the Front Side

Traditionally, the toilet is treated as the most unclean part of a house, and the 'concept of dirtiness' is also often associated with the 'concept of evil'. For example, in Taiwanese, the equivocal popular term '*lapsap*' is usually used to denote dirtiness and, what is more, evil.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the toilet is not only an unclean zone but also an *Unholy Zone*, and in old times, people usually built the toilet outside the house compound. However, as it can be imagined, putting the toilet outside is not enough for the protection of the house, as the unclean and evil force or *Qi* emitted from it still can circulate and move inside the house, seriously threatening the living space of people. Given that the front side of the house is usually the side of the main entrance through which any positive and negative force or *Qi* may pass, many *do's & taboos* found in old Feng-Shui texts strongly recommend that the toilet should not be placed in front of the house but at the back (Fig. 49). Surely, as the most unclean zone, the toilet is also usually considered to be the lowest-ranking part of a house, and the principle of '*the superiority of the front over the back*' is highlighted by these *do's & taboos*.

The following *do's & taboos* concerned with the location of the toilet can be found in the *Yangzhai Shishu*, the *Zhaipu Dacheng* and the *Yangzhai Jicheng*:

*If the front door directly faces the latrine, the dwellers will suffer from permanent paralysis and leprosy.*¹⁰⁹ (*Yangzhai Shishu*)

*If the toilet is placed in front of the house, cattle will be dead.*¹¹⁰ (*Zhaipu Dacheng*)

*If the toilet is set directly in front of the entrance door, the dwellers will be frequently troubled by lawsuits and get sick.*¹¹¹ (*Yangzhai Jicheng*)

A similar passage can also be found in the *Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts*

¹⁰⁸ Li, Yih-Yuan, 2004, *Cultural Images (I): An Anthropological Study on the Cultural Development*, pp. 206-207.

¹⁰⁹ Wang 1996, p. 9. 「糞屋對門，癱瘓常存。」

¹¹⁰ Wei 1985, p. 437. 「廁屋前立牛馬剝皮。」

¹¹¹ Yao & Zhan, 1995, p. 482. 「門前若有坑廁屋，官災心痛發幾場。」

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compiled in the 3rd-century-BCE when the term 'Feng-Shui' was yet unknown to Chinese people:

*It is auspicious to place the latrine at the back of the house, whereas
it is inauspicious to place the latrine in front of the house.¹¹²*

Let us consider these *do's & taboos* concerned with the toilet according to the *Anthropomorphic* long-cycle tradition again. Just like the anus of a human body, the toilet is usually thought to be a very private part of the house in worldwide cultures. Therefore, people usually do not let the toilet be easily seen by strangers from the front side of house, and it is better to place it at the back of the house. Moreover, as having been discussed in Chapter 3, it is always the front side through which the house can see, and which is oriented to an auspicious direction. As long as the house is oriented to an auspicious direction, it is also connected to the cosmic structure. As we can imagine, the toilet situated in front of the house can be seen as occupying an intermediate position between the house and the cosmic structure, and consequently, the connection between the house and the cosmic structure could be destroyed by the unclean and unholy toilet. Surely, if the toilet is placed directly behind the middle back of the house, the connection between the house and the cosmic structure is under threat as well because the toilet can be seen as occupying an intermediate position between the sanctuary of the house and the mountain behind it; this mountain usually represents the *Axis Mundi* that stands in the center of the cosmic structure. Therefore, as we have seen earlier, some old Feng-Shui texts warn people not to let the toilet occupy the intermediate place between the site and the mountain behind the site.¹¹³

It can be easily found that the toilet of traditional Chinese courtyard houses is usually placed outside, on the back side, and not located directly behind the middle back of the house, such as the toilet of the *Sanheyuan* house of the Chen's family in Houli, Taiwan (Fig. 236). As we can also see in this house compound, its henhouses and pigsties are also kept outside and on the back side, as they are treated as the lowest-ranking space as well as the toilet. Besides courtyard houses, nowadays, many row houses also often have their toilets built in the rear part, although these toilets are usually parts of the inside rather than of the outside (Fig. 240, 241). The modern house of the Ke's family built in Dacheng, Taiwan is also a good example (Fig. 245, 246). In either the original or the final plan, we can see that the toilet is placed on the back side.

¹¹² Liu, Yue-Xian 1994, p. 219. 「屏居宇後，吉。屏居宇前，不吉。」

¹¹³ Wei 1985, p. 593. "As for the toilet, it shall never occupy the intermediate place between the site and the mountain behind the site, and shall never be situated directly behind the main hall." (廁舍忌在宅基來脈及正堂後。)

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Furthermore, interestingly enough, although this toilet is built inside, it looks like an excluded part of the regular and rectangular house plan. It seems that the Ke's family do not are not really willing to let the toilet become an inside part of the house.

The Front Side Belonging for Men and the Back Side for to Women

In ancient Confucius classics and some later texts written by Neo-Confucianists, some architectural *do's & taboos* are recorded, with regard to the spatial division of the house as based on the gender difference. As instructed by them, the front or outer section should belong to the male members, while the back or inner section should belong to the female members (Fig. 50).¹¹⁴ Accordingly, women are not allowed to set foot in the front/outer section of the house, unless they have to attend some important meetings or ceremonies held there; men are not supposed to stay in the back/inner section of the house, except when they are sleeping and having meals there. Interestingly, although these precepts are mostly found in Confucius or Neo-Confucius texts, they are generally considered to be developed in Feng-Shui tradition. In a broad sense, therefore, we can see them as Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*.

In the *Liji*, or *Book of Rites*, one of the most important Confucius classics compiled before the 1st century BCE, the following passage can be found:

*The essentials of 'Li' (i.e. rites, customs, etiquette, morals, and rules of proper behavior) are concerned with the proper relationship and differentiation between husband and wife. Of a palace or a house, the outer (i.e. front) and the inner (i.e. back) sections shall be clearly divided. The outer section shall belong to men, while the inner section shall belong to women... In principle, men shall not step in the inner section, and women shall not go to the outer section.*¹¹⁵

*Men shall not get involved in the matters of the inner section, while women shall not interfere with matters of the outer section.*¹¹⁶

Another Confucius classic, the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, compiled before the 1st century CE, also mentions:

Of a house, the proper space for women shall be the inner section, while the proper space for men shall be the outer section. The

¹¹⁴ Bray 2005, pp. 259-261.

¹¹⁵ *Liji*, accessed 09-08-2010, <http://ctext.org/liji>. 「禮，始於謹夫婦，為宮室，辨外內。男子居外，女子居內。……男不入，女不出。」

¹¹⁶ *Liji*, accessed 09-08-2010, <http://ctext.org/liji>. 「男不言內，女不言外。」

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*essential righteousness of Heaven and Earth is based on the proper
distinction between men and women.*¹¹⁷

In the traditional Chinese patriarchal society, men are always thought to have higher social status than women, and this surely has found expression in the way of life of traditional Chinese families. Therefore, the *do's & taboos* about the front/outer for men and the back/inner for women, can be seen as the manifestations of the principle of 'the superiority of the front over the back side'. Besides, they also highlight the shorter-cycle theme of the *Including & Excluding Structures* of architectural representations which is based on the *Sociomorphic* long-cycle tradition: women are excluded from the front section that belongs to men, whilst men are excluded from the back section that belongs to women.

In the 11th-century-CE *Jujia Zayi* (居家雜儀), or *Family Norms*, written by Sima Guang (司馬光), an influential Neo-Confucianist, historian and high official of the Song Dynasty, we can find a passage with the same concern:

*A girl shall never enter the front section through the middle door
until growing up to eight years old... Women shall neither set foot nor
pry into the front section through the middle door for no reason... If
women have to enter the front section through the middle door, they
shall cover their faces... The male servants shall never go into the
back section through the middle door, unless he has to go there to
repair something or deal with emergencies*¹¹⁸

As indicated by this passage, the house is supposed to have a 'middle door' which demarcates and connects the front section for the men and the back section for the women. However, in a typical single-courtyard house arranged on the basis of the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram', the back section usually cannot be clearly defined, given that the space on the back side is located outside the house plan. Obviously, there is no need for such a single-courtyard house to be built with a middle door used as the demarcation between the front and the back sections. However, as it can be imagined, rich and upper-class families often do not live in humble single-courtyard houses but in magnificent multi-courtyard houses which are likely to be built with a middle door. For example, in the two old double-courtyard houses respectively belonging to the Dong's family (Le'an, Jaingxi, China) and the Liu's family

¹¹⁷ *I Ching*, accessed 09-08-2010, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes>. 「家人，女正位乎內，男正位乎外，男女正，天地之大義也。」

¹¹⁸ Du 1995, p. 233. 「八歲，女子不出中門。……婦人無故不窺中門，……有故出中門必擁蔽其面。……男僕非有修繕及有大故不入中門。」

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(Qinshui, Shangxi, China), whose family members have been high-rank officials in the court of the Qing Dynasty, we can clearly see the middle doors set on the back wall of the main hall, according to which the demarcation line between the front and the back sections can be well defined (Fig. 242, 243).

Besides, we can find many other larger mansions belonging to nobles, high officials and rich families, which are built with more than two or three courtyards. Except for single-courtyard house, the houses with double, triple, quadruple and quintuple courtyards all have a clear distinction between the front section and the back section according to where their central main halls are located (Fig. 51). As mentioned before, in a traditional Chinese house, both the courtyard and the main hall are representations of the *Axis Mundi*. In a multi-courtyard house with many halls and many courtyards, we can clearly observe many representations of *Axis Mundi* which together highlight the front-back axis of the house. Surely, among the many halls, there is only one that can be regarded as the main hall serving as the family shrine; this main hall and the courtyard in front of it are the two most important representations of the *Axis Mundi*. It is reasonable to assume that the Confucian doctrine concerning 'the front section for men and the back section for women' does not apply to the single-courtyard houses for commoners but to the multi-courtyard houses for rich and upper-class families. Indeed, as told by some Taiwanese old people who live or have lived in traditional *Sanheyuan* single-courtyard houses, they never heard of such a doctrine, let alone follow it.¹¹⁹

Obviously, this Confucian doctrine has been well represented in the Forbidden City in Beijing, the royal residence of the Ming and the Qing Dynasties (Fig. 151). As we can see, in its plan, there is a demarcation line between the 'outer court' (i.e. the front section) and the 'inner court' (i.e. the back section); as the very center, it is the group of three major halls, namely 'Taihe Hall' (太和殿, No. 1), 'Zhonghe Hall' (中和殿, No. 2) and 'Baohu Hall' (保和殿, No. 3). Just like the main hall of a multi-courtyard house, the group of three major halls also marks the intermediate position between the front and the back section of the Forbidden City. Among the three halls, the Taihe Hall is of the greatest importance, as it is the most magnificent hall in which the throne of the emperor is placed. To the back of the three halls, it is the 'Qianging Gate' (乾清門, No. 11), through which one can enter the inner court from the outer court, and undoubtedly, it is quite comparable with the 'middle door' of a multi-courtyard house. The outer court exclusively belongs to men, as it is the space where the emperor and princes managed state affairs and met up

¹¹⁹ Interviews with Mrs. Huang (Taipei, Taiwan, 31/08/2006), Mr. Cai (Xikou, Chiayi, Taiwan, 30/12/2006), Mrs. Xu (Puli, Nantou, Taiwan, 03/12/2006).

with nobles and courtiers; surely, they are all male. On the contrary, the female inhabitants of the Forbidden City, such as the queen, concubines, princesses and maids, should all stay and live in the inner court and not go to the outer court through the 'Qianging Gate', unless they have to attend certain important ceremonies held there.¹²⁰ Interestingly enough, the eunuchs as the servants of royal members, are usually thought to be neither male nor female, and are thus allowed to live in the inner court.

Given that the Confucian doctrine regarding '*the front section for men and the back section for women*' is highly influential and dominant, even the all-powerful Empress Dowager Cixi dared not violate it. In the second half of the 19th century, Cixi gradually took power and then became the de facto ruler of the Qing Dynasty from 1861 to her death in 1908. Unlike all the former emperors who usually placed their thrones in the 'Taihe Hall', Empress Dowager Cixi chose the 'Yangxin Hall' (養心殿, No. 9) located in the inner court as the place to manage state affairs and met up with nobles and officials.

Moreover, there is a famous legend concerned with the 'Yangxin Hall', known as '*Chuilian Tingzheng*' (垂簾聽政) which literally means 'listening to reports on government affairs behind the screen'. According to the traditional Chinese political ethics based on the patriarchal system, it should be the male emperor but not the female Cixi who can manage government affairs and grant audience to officials, nobles and courtiers, and during the reign of Cixi, there were still two nominal emperors, Tongzhi (同治) and Guangxu (光緒). Although the two emperors were deprived of power, they were the genuine male emperors. In order to respect the political ethics and the Confucian doctrine regarding '*the front section for men and the back section for women*', when meeting up with officials, nobles and courtiers in the 'Yangxin Hall', Empress Dowager Cixi always sat behind a screen and let the emperor, Tongzhi or Guangxu, sit in front of it.¹²¹ This seems as if the emperor is meeting and talking with courtiers, but in fact, it is Cixi. It is very clear that this screen functions as a demarcation line between the front section, a zone belonging to the male but weak emperor, and the back section, a zone belonging to the female but all-powerful Cixi.

Today, in some houses, we can still observe the principle of '*the front section for the hierarchically higher members and the back section for the hierarchically lower members*', although the high-class and the lower-class members are not necessarily represented by men and women respectively. The aforesaid row house of the Chen's family in Tianchong, Taiwan is a good

¹²⁰ Holdsworth 1995, pp. 79-82; Lip 1995, pp. 49-53; Yi, Yu & Hung 1999, pp. 179-180.

¹²¹ Holdsworth 1995, pp. 124-125.

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example (Fig. 236). As mentioned earlier, in this house, the elder brothers live in rooms closer to the main hall, while the younger ones live in rooms further from the main hall; this highlights the principle of '*the closer to the center; the higher it is ranked*', since the main hall as the family shrine is a 'conceptual center' of the house. From another perspective, because the main hall in this row house is the first room from the front side, it can also be said that the elder brothers live in rooms closer to the front, while the younger ones live in rooms closer to the back. Surely, in a typical modern apartment of which the front and the back sides cannot be easily defined, the principle of '*the front section for the hierarchically higher members and the back section for the hierarchically lower members*' is hardly represented (Fig. 255, 256).

4.3.2 The Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principle of 'the Superiority of the Left over the Right'

In the Chinese Feng-Shui architectural tradition, as regards the spatial hierarchy established in the body-based frame of reference, the second principle to be discussed is '*the superiority of the left over the right*'. According to old Feng-Shui texts and the contemporary Feng-Shui practice, we can find that this principle finds expression in a variety of architectural *do's & taboos* which apply to a variety of built spaces such as altars, temples, houses, palaces, cities, etc. These *do's & taboos* highlight that, in a built space, this principle can be manifested by the hierarchical relationship between the earlier ancestors and the later ancestors, between the higher-ranking deities and the lower-ranking deities, between the elder brothers and the younger brothers, between men and women, and between the auspicious/holy/clean and the inauspicious/unholy/unclean. For a better understanding of these *do's & taboos*, first of all, we should discuss how and why the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' can be seen as a representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality.

The Principle of 'the Superiority of the Left over the Right' as a Representation of the Sun-focused Cosmic Reality

As mentioned earlier, to understand the cosmic meaning of this principle, we should establish the correspondence between the four body-based directions (i.e. front, back, left and right) and the four sun-based directions (i.e. south, north, east and west) according to the idea of the 'south orientation' that is extensively followed in the Chinese Feng-Shui architectural tradition (Fig. 52). Given that the east is the direction of the sunrise, and the west is the direction

of the sunset, it makes sense that the east is considered superior to the west. Therefore, the principle of 'the superiority of the left/east over the right/west' can be seen as an important representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality. In many old Chinese texts, we can find that the correspondence between the four body-based directions and the four sun-based directions in accordance with the south orientation has been developed and applied in ancient Chinese astrology, astronomy, cosmology, philosophy, etc.

First, it can be evidenced by the application of the symbolic system of *Sixiang* (四象), or Four Divine Animals, namely Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermillion Bird and Black Tortoise. As shown in many ancient texts of astrology and astronomy, the four symbols are used to represent the four sun-based directions; Azure Dragon denotes the east, White Tiger the west, Vermillion Bird the south, and Black Tortoise the north.¹²² In later times, the Four Divine Animals began to be regarded as the four guardian deities in the four cardinal points.¹²³ The following passage can be found in the *Hanshu Tianwenzhi*, or *Treatise on Astronomy in the Book of Han*, composed by Ban Gu in the 2nd century CE:

*The divine palace in the eastern sky is called 'Azure Dragon'... the divine palace in the southern sky is called 'Vermillion Bird'... the divine palace in the western sky is called 'White Tiger'... the divine palace in the northern sky is called 'Black Tortoise'.*¹²⁴

In another ancient text regarding astrology and astronomy, the 2nd-century-BCE *Huainanzi Tianwenxun* (淮南子天文訓), or *Patterns of Heaven in the Great Brilliance of Huainan*, written under the patronage of Liu An, Prince of Huainan, it is also said that:

It is Wood that resides in the east... dominating the spring. The eastern sky is represented by Sui Star (i.e. Jupiter) and under the control of 'Azure Dragon'... It is Fire that resides in the south... dominating the summer. The southern sky is represented by Yinghuo Star (i.e. Mars) and under the control of 'Vermillion Bird'... It is Earth that resides in the center... dominating all the four seasons. The central sky is represented by Zhen Star (i.e. Saturn) and under control of 'Yellow Dragon'... It is Metal that resides in the west... dominating the autumn. The western sky is represented by Taibai Star (i.e. Venus)

¹²² Kuang 1992, pp. 350-351.

¹²³ Li, Xiu-E 2004, pp. 60-61.

¹²⁴ Ban, accessed on 07/09/2010, <http://ctext.org/han-shu/tian-wen-zhi/zh>. 「東宮蒼龍……南宮朱鳥……西宮白虎……北方元武……。」

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*and under the control of 'White Tiger'... It is Water that resides in the north... dominating the winter. The northern sky is represented by Chen Star (i.e. Mercury) and under the control of 'Black Tortoise'.*¹²⁵

According to the above two passages quoted from two ancient texts, it can be clearly seen that the four divine animals of *Sixiang* are used to represent the four sun-based directions. However, according to some old Feng-Shui texts, it can also be seen that they are used to represent the four body-based directions. For example, the following passages can be found in *Dili Xinshu* and the *Dili Renzi Xuzhi*:

*The river to the left of the site is named 'Azure Dragon', the road to the right of the site is named 'White Tiger', the pond in front of the site is named 'Vermillion Bird', and the hills behind the site is named 'Black Tortoise'.*¹²⁶ (*Dili Xinshu*)

*In the practice of geomancy, the mountains in front of the site is called 'Vermillion Bird', the mountains behind the site is called 'Black Tortoise', the mountains to the left of the site is called 'Azure Dragon', and the mountains to the right of the site is called 'White Tiger'.*¹²⁷ (*Dili Renzi Xuzhi*)

Therefore, it can be understood that the four symbols of *Sixiang* can be used to signify the four main directions in both the sun-based and the body-based frames of reference: Azure Dragon represents both the left and the east, White Tiger the right and the west, Vermillion Bird the front and south, and Black Tortoise the back and the north (Fig. 53).

According to some other ancient Chinese texts, the application of the Five Elements of *Wuxing*, as well as the application of the four divine animals of *Sixiang*, highlights the correspondence between the four body-based directions and the four sun-based directions. The following two passages can be found in the 2nd-century-BCE *Chunshu Fanlu* written by Dong Zhongshu, an influential philosopher of the Yin-Yang School:

Wood resides on the left; Metal resides on the right; Fire resides on

¹²⁵ Liu, An, accessed on 07/09/2010, <http://ctext.org/huainanzi/tian-wen-xun/zh>. 「東方，木也……執規而治春；其神為歲星，其獸蒼龍……南方，火也……執衡而治夏；其神為熒惑，其獸朱鳥……中央，土也……執繩而制四方；其神為鎮星，其獸黃龍……西方，金也……執矩而治秋；其神為太白，其獸白虎……北方，水也……執權而治冬；其神為辰星，其獸玄武。」

¹²⁶ Wang 2003, p. 77. 「欲得左有流水，謂之青龍，右有長道，謂之白虎，前有淤池，謂之朱雀，後有丘陵岡原謂之玄武。」

¹²⁷ Xu 2007, p. 19-1. 「地理以前山為朱雀，後山為玄武，左山為青龍，右山為白虎。」

*the front; Water resides on the back; Earth resides in the middle.*¹²⁸
*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.*¹²⁹

Comparing the two passages, we can clearly see that, regarding the Five Elements of *Wuxing*, Wood represents both the left and the east, Metal represents both the right and the west, Fire represents both the front and the south, and Water represents both the back and the north. In accordance with the idea of the south orientation, the four body-based directions can perfectly coincide with the four sun-based directions.

Furthermore, the correspondence between the body-based frame of reference and the sun-based frame of reference are also highlighted by two important elements, the 'bell' and the 'drum', which can be found in most traditional Chinese temples, be they Buddhist temples or Taoist temples. This bell is also called 'morning bell' (晨鐘), and the drum called 'evening drum' (暮鼓). Traditionally, the bell should be rung in the early morning, and the drum should be beaten in the late evening, marking the beginning and the ending of a day respectively. Therefore, in a temple, it is proper for the bell to be placed in the east, the direction of the sunrise, while it is proper for the drum to be placed in the west, the direction of the sunset. As we have seen, in the Chinese architectural tradition, the temple is often built to face the south. In such a temple, the bell is placed in the east as well as on the left side, while the drum is placed in the west as well as on the right side (Fig. 161, 162, 165, 192). Hence, the body-based left and right can again be connected with the sun-based east and west (Fig. 54).

However, as we have seen in Chapter 3, not all temples can be ideally built to face the south, especially when the orientation of a temple is supposed to be determined by reference to the objects in the external environment. Hence, a temple is also possibly oriented to the east, the west or even the inauspicious north. Nevertheless, in such a temple not oriented to the south, we can usually still find the morning bell and the evening drum. It is important to note that, in this case, the two elements are not placed according to the sun-based directions but according to the body-based directions. That is to say, people tend to place the bell and the drum respectively on the left and the right sides, whether or

¹²⁸ Lai 2003, p. 286. 「木居左，金居右，火居前，水居後，土居中央。」

¹²⁹ Ibid., 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。」

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not the left and the right sides coincide with the east and west sides. In the east oriented Jinci Temple (Taiyuan, Shanxi, China), the bell tower and the drum are located on the left and the right sides respectively, although the left and the right sides denote the north and the south sides respectively (Fig. 163). For a more convincing example, in the Nanshan Temple (Zhangzhou, Fujian, China) which is built to face the unfavorable north, the morning bell, which is supposed to represent the direction of the sunrise, is placed on the left as well as the west side, while the evening drum, which is supposed to represent the direction of the sunset, is placed on the right as well as the east side (Fig. 185).

In the cases of bells and drums placed in temples, we can see a significant transformation from the focus on the 'sun-based frame of reference' to the focus on the 'body-based frame of reference'. Originally, the bell in the east and the drum in the west are meant to signify the beginning and the ending of a day, thereby representing the sun-focused cosmic reality undoubtedly, and based on the south orientation, the east and the west sides are identical with the left and the right sides. However, once the temple is not built to face the south, people do not insist on placing the bell and drum in the sun-based directions of east and west, but instead, in the body-based directions of left and right. On account of the transformation from the sun-based system to the body-based system, people nowadays usually do not understand the original cosmic meaning of the bell and drum of the temple. Therefore, it is very reasonable to assume that the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' is a result of the idea of '*the superiority of the east over the west*', yet its original cosmic meaning is seldom realized by people nowadays.

In many ancient Chinese texts of Feng-Shui and those before the development of Feng-Shui, we can find the idea of '*the superiority of the east over the west*'. For example, the *Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts*, dating back to the 3rd century BCE, a time when the term 'Feng-Shui' was yet unknown to people, contains a passage supporting this idea:

If the house is built to face the east and a well, the sun, when it rises, can always warm the house and the well. Therefore, the people living in this house will never face a shortage of meat (i.e. food).¹³⁰

As mentioned in Chapter 3, according to the *Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts*, the house built in the spring/summer/autumn/winter should not be oriented to the east/south/west/north respectively, and this implies that a house is allowed

¹³⁰ Liu, Yue-Xian 1994, p. 219. 「廡居東方，鄉（向）井，日出炙其榦（井垣），其後必肉食。」

to be built to face one of the four cardinal points.¹³¹ However, as shown in the above passage, among the four cardinal points, the east should be considered the most auspicious, as it is the direction of the sunrise. Granted the great power by the sun, the house can ensure the future prosperity of its occupants.

In the *Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts*, another passage implies that an unclean and low-ranking space should not be built in the east of the house:

*If the animal pen is built to the southwest of the house, it is auspicious. If the animal pen is built to the north of the house, the family will be rich. If the animal pen is built to the east of the house, the family will decline. If the animal pen is built to the southeast of the house, it is acceptable. If the animal pen is built to the northwest of the house, the sons of the household will be successful.*¹³²

As it can be understood, in a house compound, the animal pen for cattle and poultry is often thought to be extremely unclean and ranked lower than the space for human beings, and hence it is usually excluded from the inside and located outside. This passage says that this animal pen can be built to the southwest, the north, the southeast or the northwest of a house, but is not allowed to be built to its east. Since the east is the direction through which the sun's great power may enter the house, it should not be polluted and negatively affected by the unclean and low-ranking animal pen. On the contrary, as is also mentioned in the *Shuihudi Rishu Bamboo Texts*, given that the well as a source of water is always supposed to be clean and unpolluted, it can, or even should be located to the east of the house.

The *Dili Xinshu*, an 11-century Feng-Shui text, also emphasizes that the east and south should be associated with the positive *Yang*, while the west and north with the negative *Yin*. Therefore, it is auspicious for a house to be built to the east or the south of mountains, whereas it is inauspicious be built to the west or north of mountains. As we have learned, the *Qi* of *Yang* is a representation of the sun, and hence the house located to the east or the south of mountains can benefit from the sunshine more than that located to the west or the north of

¹³¹ See 3.2.3. Liu, Yue-Xian 1994, p. 133. "In the three months of spring, one shall not built the house (or room) oriented to the east. In the three months of summer, one shall not built the house (or room) oriented to the summer. In the three months of autumn, one shall not built the house (or room) oriented to the west. In the three months of winter, one shall not built 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." (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。)

¹³² Liu, Yue-Xian 1994, p. 218. (圈(畜欄)居宇西南, 貴吉。圈居宇正北, 富。圈居宇正東, 敗。圈居宇東南, 有寵。圈居宇西北, 宜子興。)

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mountains. The following passages can be found in this text:

*If the house is built to the east of mountains, the family will be rich and own a lot of slaves. If the house is built to the south of mountains, it is auspicious... If the house is built to the west of mountains, it is inauspicious. If the house is built to the north of mountains, it is also inauspicious.*¹³³

*The house built to the east or south of mountains is called 'house of Yang', and the house built to the west or north of mountains is called 'house of Yin'... The house full of sunshine is called 'house of Yang', while the house with a lack of sunshine is called 'house of Yin'.*¹³⁴

So far it is clear that, as a result of the idea of 'the superiority of the east over the west', the principle of 'the superiority of the left over the right' can be seen as an important representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality. Surely, this cosmic reality can only be "completely" represented in a south-oriented built space, for its left and right sides are identical with its east and west sides. In a built space not oriented to the south, such kind of sun-focused cosmic reality can only be "incompletely" represented, for its left and right sides are not identical with its east and west sides. Given that the majority of people nowadays do not live in houses oriented to the south, the original cosmic meaning of the principle of 'the superiority of the left/east over the right/west' becomes very unfamiliar to them. Later we will see that, this principle forms the basis of many Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*, and due to the unfamiliarity of its original meaning in today's Feng-Shui practice, it is often explained in ways that have nothing to do with the sun-focused cosmic reality.

The Zhao-Mu System

First of all, let us discuss the Feng-Shui *do's & taboos* concerned with the 'Zhao-Mu System' (昭穆之制) which highlights the hierarchical relationship between the 'earlier ancestors' as the superior ones called 'Zhao' (昭) and the 'later ancestors' as the inferior ones called 'Mu' (穆). Accordingly, the shrine dedicated to the earlier ancestors should be placed on the left side, while that dedicated to the later ancestors should be placed on the right side. The following passage can be found in the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

¹³³ Wang 2003, p. 78. 「凡宅在山之東，富貴多奴婢。山之南，小吉。……山之西，凶。山之北，凶。」

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 82. 「凡宅居在山東及南為陽宅，山西及北為陰宅。……見日多處為陽宅，見日少處為陰宅。」

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As regards the three shrines for the ancestors of emperors (built together on the same site), the 'Tai Shrine' dedicated to the most-revered first forefather and foremother shall be placed in the center, the 'Zhao Shrine' dedicated to the second forefather and foremother shall be placed on the left side, and the 'Mu Shrine' dedicated to the third forefather and foremother should be placed on the right side... All people shall properly place the (shrines or altars of) ancestors on the left or the right sides according to the Zhao-Mu system.¹³⁵

As regards the three rooms for the ancestors of ordinary people (built together in the same building), the 'Primary Room' dedicated to the most-revered first forefather and foremother shall be placed in the center, the 'Zhao Room' dedicated to the second forefather and foremother shall be placed on the left side, and the 'Mu Room' dedicated to the third forefather and foremother shall be placed on the right side.¹³⁶

These above paragraphs show that the center as the supreme position should belong to the most-revered first ancestors, the left side as the second position should belong to the second ancestors, and the right side as the third position should belong to the third ancestors, and the hierarchical 'center-left-right order' is highlighted (Fig. 55, 56). As also mentioned in Chapter 3, the *Tai Shrine*, the *Zhao Shrine* and the *Mu Shrine* built together are all supposed to face the south, and hence the left and the right sides are identical with the east and the west sides.¹³⁷ Therefore, the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' manifested by the *Zhao-Mu System* can be seen as a complete representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality.

Moreover, in the Chinese Feng-Shui architectural tradition, this *Zhao-Mu System* does not only apply to the arrangement of ancestors but also to the arrangement of the deities worshipped on a family altar or in a temple. This can be well exemplified by a typical Taiwanese family altar. Traditionally, such an altar should consist of three parts: the '*Shenmingcai*' (神明綵) as a painting of deities hanging on the wall, the '*Ann*' (案) as a higher table on which the ancestral tablet and the idols of deities are placed, and the '*Gongzhuo*' (供

¹³⁵ Wei 1985, pp. 387-388. 「大夫中一廟，太祖也，左一廟供二昭，右一廟供二穆。……列其主於始祖之左右，使民知昭穆之義。」

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 398. 「中一間為正祠，特謂之中堂。近中左一間為左昭房，近中右一間為右穆房。」

¹³⁷ See 3.2.4. Wei 1985, p. 395. "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." (問祠向東可乎? 曰不可! 朱子云: 「古太廟、昭穆廟, 皆向南。」)

桌) as a lower table on which the oblations are laid (Fig. 189). As we can see in the main hall of the *Sanheyuan* house of the Cai's family (Xikou, Taiwan), there is an altar of this kind (Fig. 190). On this altar, *Guanyin*¹³⁸ (No. 1) and *Mazu* (No. 2) are respectively arranged on the top-center and the middle-center of the *Shenmingcai*, as they are the two most popular and favored goddesses in Taiwan, usually regarded as the 1st-ranking and the 2nd-ranking deities on a family altar.¹³⁹ Under the *Shenmingcai*, it is the *Ann*, on which three gods (represented by three idols) and ancestors (represented by a tablet) are placed, and as they are considered inferior to *Guanyin* and *Mazu*. Among the three gods, *Jigong*¹⁴⁰ (No. 3) as the first-ranking one is placed in the center, *Wang'ye*¹⁴¹ (No. 4) as the second-ranking one is placed on the left side of *Jigong*, and *Tudigong*¹⁴² (No. 5) as the third ranking one is placed on the right side. At the rightmost of the *Ann*, namely the lowest-ranking position, the ancestral tablet should be placed (No. 6), because the ancestors as 'deceased human beings' or 'ghosts' are considered to be inferior to all deities in the divine hierarchy.¹⁴³ It is worth noting that on the *Gongzhuo* under the *Ann*, there is another idol, the famous Chinese monkey king—*Sun Wukong*¹⁴⁴ (No. 7). According to the Cai's family, even though worshipped as a deity, *Sun Wukong* is nothing but an animal, and hence he should be ranked even lower than ancestors as deceased human beings; therefore, he is placed on the *Gongzhuo* as the lowest position of the entire altar.¹⁴⁵

The Thian Hock Keng Temple in Singapore is, as mentioned before, also an excellent example of the *Zhao-Mu* System. In this temple, as we have seen, there is an information board which clearly shows how these deities are arranged according to their hierarchical relationships represented by a sequence of numbers (Fig. 157). After entering this temple, people should also worship these deities in accordance with the sequence of numbers, beginning with the

¹³⁸ *Guanyin* (觀音) in the Chinese Buddhism is identical with the Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara* in the ancient Indian Buddhism. However, with the spread of Buddhism into China and the other places of East Asia, the male bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara* was transformed into the female *Guanyin*.

¹³⁹ Xie 2003, pp. 137-138.

¹⁴⁰ *Jigong* (濟公), in the Chinese Buddhism, is a 'living Buddha'.

¹⁴¹ *Wang'ye* (王爺), a popular deity in the Taiwanese folk belief, is thought to be a divine emissary on behalf the celestial realm.

¹⁴² *Tudigong* (土地公), the guardian deity of the land/site, is usually seen as the lowest-ranking one within the divine hierarchy of various Taoist deities.

¹⁴³ Li, Yih-Yuan 2004, *Cultural Images (II): An Cultural Observation of Religions and Ethnic Groups*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁴ The monkey king *Sun Wukong* (孫悟空) is a role in the famous Chinese classical novel *Xiyouji* (西遊記), or *Journey to the West*.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Mr. Cai (Xikou, Chiayi, Taiwan, 30/12/2006)

highest-ranking deity and ending with the lowest-ranking one.

First of all, people should go to the main hall as the center of the temple compound, worshipping the goddess *Mazu* (No. 1) as the first-ranking and main deity located in the center of the main hall, then worshipping *Guan Yu* (No. 2) as the 2nd-ranking deity placed to the left of *Mazu*, and lastly *Baoshengdadi* (No. 3) as the 3rd-ranking deity placed to the right of *Mazu*. After leaving the main hall, people should go to the back hall also situated on the central front-back axis of the temple plan, worshipping *Guan Yin* (No. 4) as the 4th-ranking deity (in the center), then the Sun God (No. 5) as the 5th-ranking one (on the left), and lastly the *Moon Goddess* (No. 6) as the 6th-ranking one (on the right). Next, people should go to worship Confucius (No. 7) as the 7th-ranking 'deity' situated in the left wing, and then go to worship *Kaizhang Shengwang* (No. 8) as the 8th-ranking one situated in the right wing. After this, people should return to the left wing, worshipping Bodhisattva *Galan* (No. 9) as the 9th-ranking deity. Finally, they have to go to the right wing again, worshipping the City God (No. 10) as the 10th-ranking deity (in the center), the White-face General (No. 11) as the 11th-ranking one (on the left) and the Black-face General (No. 12) as the 12th-ranking one (on the right). Obviously, this sequence as a recurrent 'center-left-right order' highlights the two principles regarding the spatial hierarchy: 'the superiority of the left over the right' and 'the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked'.

In addition, the arrangement of the Buddhist 'Huayen Trinity' (華嚴三聖) in Chinese Buddhist temples can also be seen as a manifestation of the *Zhao-Mu* System as well as the 'center-left-right order'. The *Huayen* Trinity includes 'Gautama Buddha' – the founder of Buddhism, 'Manjusri' – a bodhisattva known for his great wisdom, and 'Samantabhadra' – another bodhisattva known for his great practice of Dharma.¹⁴⁶ In Chinese Buddhist art, *Manjusri* is often depicted as riding on a lion, while *Samantabhadra* as riding on an elephant.¹⁴⁷ Among the three figures, *Gautama Buddha* is always thought to be superior to the two bodhisattvas without doubt. In primitive Indian Buddhism, there was no hierarchical relationship between the two bodhisattvas, but however, in Chinese Mahayana Buddhist tradition, *Manjusri* is usually considered to be superior to *Samantabhadra*. This hierarchical relationship can be found in the *Huayen Jing*,¹⁴⁸ a famous text of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist

¹⁴⁶ Lopez 2001, p. 260.

¹⁴⁷ Yen 2007, p. 139.

¹⁴⁸ The *Huayen Jing* (華嚴經) compiled between the 8th and the 9th centuries CE is one of the most important Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, in which the *Huayen* Trinity is firstly mentioned, and the term 'Huayen Trinity' is derived from the title of the scripture.

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tradition:

The 'three holy ones' are: the primal teacher, the Tathagata Vairocana (i.e. Gautama Buddha), and the two great bodhisattvas, Manjusri and Samantabhadra... Manjusri comes first and Samantabhadra afterwards.¹⁴⁹

Therefore, the hierarchical sequence of the three holy figures can be described as follows: *Gautama Buddha* as the first, *Manjusri* as the second, and *Samantabhadra* as the third. As we can see in many Chinese Buddhist temples, according to this hierarchical sequence, *Gautama Buddha* occupies the center, *Manjusri* riding on a lion is located on the left side, and *Samantabhadra* riding on an elephant is placed on the right side (Fig. 191).

The Left Side Connected with the Elder Son and the Right Side Connected with the Younger Son

In old Feng-Shui texts, we can find many *do's & taboos* supporting the idea that the left side of a house should be associated with the elder son, whilst the right side should be connected to the younger son. As mentioned before, in the pecking order of the traditional Chinese patriarchal society, an elder son or brother is always considered to be superior to a younger son or brother, and evidently, these *do's & taboos* also refer to the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*'. It is necessary to note that these *do's & taboos* are concerned with the '*Sha*' (煞).

In the Feng-Shui tradition, *Sha* is thought to be a kind of evil, malignant and killing force which can be caused by external objects that have aggressive and inauspicious shapes. Besides, *Sha* is also seen as a kind of negative *Qi*, and hence it is often called '*Sha Qi*'. The external objects that may cause *Sha Qi* could be the natural objects such as rivers, ponds, hills, trees, mounds and stones, or the built objects such as temples, tombs, roads, bridges, toilets, upright poles, and the eaves and corners of buildings.¹⁵⁰ Accordingly, the *do's & taboos* of this kind usually warn people not to let the entrance door or windows of a house directly face these natural or built objects, and they can be easily found in most Feng-Shui texts after the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE).¹⁵¹ For instance, the 15th-century *Huitu Lubanjing* mentions a variety of

¹⁴⁹ Gimello 1996, pp. 347-354. 「三聖者，本師毘盧遮那如來，普賢文殊三大菩薩是也。……故文殊居初，普賢居後。」

¹⁵⁰ Huang 2008, pp. 303-317.

¹⁵¹ Huang, 1998, pp. 22-27; Ruo-Guan 2002, pp. 80-102; Wang 1996, p. 122; Wei 1985, pp. 436-498, 593-594; Yao & Zhan 1995, pp. 283-291, 482.

external objects thought to possibly emit *Sha Qi*, which should never be found or located in front of the entrance of a house (Fig. 133).¹⁵² In today's Feng-Shui practice, the protection of the house against the dangerous *Sha Qi* is still of great concern, and these *do's & taboos* can also be found in most modern Feng-Shui manuals and handbooks (Fig. 134, 135).¹⁵³

As a powerful and dangerous force, *Sha Qi* is not only likely to enter the house through doors or windows but also likely to directly hurt the house from the outside. Interestingly enough, according to many old Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*, if the left part of the house is 'shot' by *Sha*, the elder son will suffer misfortune; if the right part of the house is 'shot' by *Sha*, the younger son will suffer misfortune (Fig. 57). The following passages can be found in the *Yangzhai Shishu* and the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

If there are ominous terrains in front of the house, the Sha from the 'left' terrain will cause the death of the 'elder son', and the Sha from the 'right' one will cause the death of the 'younger son'.¹⁵⁴ (Yangzhai Shishu)

If an ominous pond is located to the 'left' of the house, the 'eldest son' will die... if the 'left' wing of the house points to a river, the 'elder son' will be killed by the 'younger son'... if the 'left' wing is shot by a straight coming river, the 'eldest son' will be lazy and good for nothing.¹⁵⁵ (Zhaipu Dacheng)

If there is an ominous deep pond situated on the 'right' side of the house, the family of the 'second son' will suffer misfortune.¹⁵⁶

If the 'left' wing of the house is shot by Sha, the 'elder son' will be hurt; if the 'right' wing is shot by Sha, the younger son will be hurt.¹⁵⁷ (Zhaipu Dacheng)

As shown by these passages, the fate of the elder son (along with his sub-family) is influenced by the left side of the house, while the fate of the younger son (along with his sub-family) is influenced by the right side of the house. Moreover, as it can be seen in many traditional Chinese houses, the rooms on

¹⁵² Huitu Lubanjing 2000, pp. 14-16.

¹⁵³ Bai 2005, pp. 75-76, 89-90, 107-112; Birdsall 1995, pp. 50-51; Mai 2004, pp. 116-120; Qu 2003, pp. 45-47; Ou-Yang 2004, *Illustrated Architectural Taboos and Solutions in Modern Dwellings*, pp. 17-31; Pang 2003, pp. 27-28; Su 2006, pp. 68, 186-187; Tan 1999, pp. 36-36; Too 2004, pp. 71-85.

¹⁵⁴ Wang 1996, p. 24. 「面前凶沙若有此，左火沙來兄必死，右火沖身弟必亡。」

¹⁵⁵ Wei 1985, p. 441. 「塘居屋左長子摧挫。……左尖投河弟殺長哥。……水射左脅長無奕業。」

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1985, p. 442. 「右協深塘必損次房。」

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 1985, p. 489. 「射左損長郎，射右小兒當。」

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the left side are usually reserved for the elder son and his sub-family, whilst the rooms on the right side reserved for the younger son and his sub-family. This is well exemplified by many traditional *Sanheyuan* courtyard houses in Taiwan, such as the house of the Chen's family in Houli, which is shared by four brothers and their sub-families (Fig. 236). In this house, the room located in the middle of the central main wing is the 'main hall' used as the family shrine. Also in the central main wing, the left part belongs to the eldest brother and his sub-family, while the right part belongs to the second brother and his sub-family. As for the left wing and the right wing of the house, they are respectively assigned to the third and the four brothers with their sub-families.¹⁵⁸ The complex spatial hierarchy of this house is thus brought to light: The highest-ranking space is the main hall occupying the 'middle' of the central main wing, the 2nd-ranking one is the 'left part' of the central main wing, the 3rd-ranking one is the 'right part' of the central main wing, the 4th-ranking one is the 'left wing' of the house, and the lowest-ranking one is the 'right wing' of the house.

Besides, a small numbers of people living in modern houses still follow the idea of assigning the left room(s) to the elder son and assigning the right room(s) to the younger son. For example, in the house of the Ke's family, the 'master bedroom' reserved for the firstborn son is located on the left, whilst the 'second bedroom' reserved for the second son is located on the right (Fig. 245, 246).¹⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that such a spatial hierarchy in houses is quite similar to that in temples (Fig. 157). In a house, different members should also be arranged in accordance their hierarchical relationships and the recurrent 'center-left-right order' as based on the three principles: '*the center as the supreme position*', '*the closer to the center, the higher it is ranked*', and '*the superiority of the left over the right*'.

The Left Side Connected with Men, whilst the Right Side Connected with Women

According to the *do's & taboos* concerned with the harmful *Sha Qi*, the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' not only finds expression in the hierarchical relationship between the elder son and the younger son, but also in the hierarchical relationship between men and women. As is told by these *do's & taboos*, the male members of the family may suffer misfortune if

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Mr. Chen (Houli, Taichung, Taiwan, 31/12/2006).

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Jun-Cheng Ke (Tainan, Taiwan, 20/02/2010).

the left side of the house is 'shot' by the *Sha Qi*, whilst the female members of the family may suffer misfortune if the right is 'shot' (Fig. 58). The following related passages can be found in the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

*If the left side of the house is shot (by the Sha), the male members (of the family) will suffer misfortune; if the right part, the female members will suffer the misfortune.*¹⁶⁰

*If the right wing of the house is built like a sword or spear, the mother of the family will get in the trouble with lawsuits.*¹⁶¹

*If there are two ominous ponds located respectively on the left side and on the right side (of the house), both the householder and his wife will die.*¹⁶²

Moreover, the idea of 'the left side associated with men and the right side associated with women' can also be found in some Confucian classics. For instance, the Liji, or the Book of Rites, mentions:

*If the family has a newborn son, the parents shall place a bow on the left side of the entrance door; if the family has a newborn daughter, the parents shall place a handkerchief on the right side of the entrance door.*¹⁶³

*When giving a formal bow (to a person), a man shall use his left hand, but a woman shall use her right hand.*¹⁶⁴

As emphasized in both the Feng-Shui and the Confucian traditions, the idea of 'the left associated with men and the right associated with women' has become a popular saying 'Nan-Zuo Nu-You' (男左女右) which literally means 'men on the left and women on the right'. This saying is an important guideline on many details of people's daily life. For instance, in the classroom or auditorium of a school, boys are often asked to sit on the left side, and girls on the right side. At a wedding, the bridegroom should stand on the left, while the bride should stand on the right. Likewise, at a funeral, men should stand on the left side of the deceased, while women are supposed to stand on the right side.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Wei 1985, p. 486. 「左傷關男，右傷關女」

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 442. 「右出刀鎗官事剋娘。」

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 444. 「左右雙塘，主母齊亡。」

¹⁶³ Liji, accessed 09/08/2010, <http://ctext.org/liji>. 「子生，男子設弧於門左，女子設帨於門右。」

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 「凡男拜尚左手，凡女拜尚右手。」 As indicated by Yan-Wen Qiu in his *A Study on Ancient Chinese Rites*, 'to use the left hand' means 'to let the left hand hold the right hand', and 'to use the right hand' means 'to let the right hand hold the left hand'. See Qiu 1992, pp. 307-308.

¹⁶⁵ Taipei Mortuary Services Office, accessed on 04/09/2010, <http://www.mso.taipei.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=15152&CtNode=2869&mp=107011>.

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Surely, this idea is also, to a great degree, represented in the arrangements of temples and palaces. As we know, many famous Chinese temples are provided with accommodations for pilgrims, and in these temples, the accommodations for men are usually located on the left side of the temple complex, while those for women on the right side. Besides, in many Chinese Buddhist monasteries in which monks and nuns are living together, the area for monks is usually situated on the left side, while that for nuns is located on the right side. This can be exemplified by the well-known Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Monastery in Kaohsiung, Taiwan (Fig. 178). This monastery was ideally built in accordance with most Feng-Shui architectural precepts, oriented to the south, facing lower ground with the back turned towards hills. In the complex of this monastery, there are two building of importance, the 'Dazhi Hall' (大智殿) and the 'Dabei Hall' (大悲殿), used as places for Buddhist monks and nuns to study and practice meditation. Not surprisingly, the 'Dazhi Hall' on the left is reserved for monks, whilst the 'Dabei Hall' on the right is reserved for nuns.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, in the Forbidden City in Beijing, the idea of '*the left section for men and the right section for women*', as well as that of '*the front section for men and the back section for women*', is clearly represented (Fig. 151). As we can see, the 'Nansan Palaces' (No. 4) and the 'Wenhua Hall' (No. 5), two places for princes to live and study, are located in the left section of the palace complex. As for the female royal members including the Empress Dowager Cixi, the queen and hundreds of concubines, they should usually live and have their daily activities in the buildings of the right section, such as the 'Xiliu Palaces' (No. 7), the 'Shou'an Palace' (No. 8), the 'Yangxin Hall' (No. 9), the 'Cining Palace' (No. 10), etc.¹⁶⁷ It is clear that the palace buildings for the female royal members are located in the right as well as the back sections, so that both the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*' and that of '*the superiority of the front over the back*' are manifest in the Forbidden City.

Setting the Entrance on the Dragon (Left) Side, whilst Placing the Toilet on the Tiger (Right) Side

Now we turn to the *do's & taboos* related to two important elements of a house, the entrance and the toilet, which also highlight the principle of '*the superiority of the left over the right*'. In the Feng-Shui tradition, the entrance is supposed to be always auspicious because, as we have seen in Chapter 3, it is always asked to point to an auspicious direction, and through it the auspicious

¹⁶⁶ Fo Guang Shan Monastery, accessed on 2010/09/04, http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs/fgs_view.aspx.

¹⁶⁷ Yi, Yu & Hung 1999, p. 180.

and divine cosmic *Qi* is expected to enter the house. Therefore, the entrance is usually seen as a much-revered element of the house, and according to some Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*, it should be set on the left (or left front) side, i.e. the higher-ranking side, of a house. On the contrary, the toilet is usually thought to be an inauspicious and unpleasant element, for it is polluted, unclean and unholy. Hence as told by some Feng-Shui *do's & taboos*, the toilet should be placed on the right side, i.e. the lowered-ranking side, of a house. Obviously, these *do's & taboos* concerning the entrance and the toilet highlight the hierarchical relationship between the left as an auspicious/holy/clean side and the right as an inauspicious/unholy/unclean side. Moreover, these *do's & taboos* are usually described in terms of the system of *Sixiang*, or Four Divine Animals, as mentioned earlier: The entrance should be set on the side of 'Azure Dragon' (i.e. the left side), while the toilet should be placed on the side of 'White Tiger' (i.e. the right side) (Fig. 59).

Let us firstly consider the idea of '*setting the entrance on the Dragon/left side*'. Interestingly, even though followed in today's Feng-Shui practice, it is hardly found and is not explicitly mentioned in old Feng-Shui texts known to us. Besides, even though this idea is referred to by a few texts, the authors of these texts usually seem to have taken a stand against it. For example, the following passage can be found in the *Zhaipu Dacheng*:

It appears that most people tend to build the entrance door on the left side (of the house), as they think that the left side is always auspicious. It should be noted that these people usually overlook the negative effects of the 'four inauspicious directions' (i.e. the four directions represented by the four auspicious symbols-Jueming, Wugui, Huohai and Liusha-of the seven symbols of Qizheng, as mentioned in Chapter 3).¹⁶⁸ Hence they fail to notice that, if the left-side door is coincidentally located in one of the four inauspicious directions, the occupants of the house will decline. However, the right-side door, though often considered inauspicious, can bring good fortune to the occupants of the house, as long as it is located in one of the 'three auspicious directions' (i.e. the four directions represented by the three inauspicious symbols-Shengqi, Tianyi, Yannian-of the seven symbols of Qizheng)¹⁶⁹... How can we say that the entrance door on the Tiger side (i.e. right side) is always inauspicious? ... One shall not stubbornly insist upon setting the door on the Dragon side (i.e. left side), but shall understand that, according to the inter-

¹⁶⁸ See: 3.2.6.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

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*generating and inter-overcoming cycles (of the Five Elements), whether the door should be seen as inauspicious does not depends on whether it is set on the Dragon side, but largely depends on whether it is set in one of the three auspicious directions.*¹⁷⁰

The reason why the author strongly disapproved the idea of 'setting the entrance on the Dragon (left) side' is probably because he was an adherent of the *Liqi* School of Feng-Shui and was convinced that the orientation or location of the entrance door should be determined according to the seven symbols of *Qizheng* and the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram' as mentioned before.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, according to this passage quoted from the *Zhaiyu Dacheng*, we can clearly see that this idea has been widely followed by people in the past. As it can be imagined, the idea of 'setting the door on the auspicious Dragon side' and the idea of 'setting the door in one of the three auspicious directions according to the *Qizheng* system' could often conflict with each other; the Dragon side often does not coincide with any of the three auspicious directions according to the *Qizheng* system. However, as it can also be imagined, the former idea is much less complicated and can be followed more easily than the latter. That is probably why the idea of 'setting the entrance door on the Dragon side' has never been abandoned in the Feng-Shui tradition.

It is worth noting that, if the house is built with the most favorable 'south orientation', the above two ideas would not conflict with each other. As we have seen in Chapter 3, according to the *Qizheng* system and the 'Nine-Square & Eight-Trigram Diagram', the 'Kan House' (i.e. the house oriented to the south) should have a 'Xun Door' (i.e. the door oriented to or set in the southeast). Clearly, such a 'Xun Door' of the 'Kan House' is located on the Dragon (left) side, too. The *Kan* House provided with a *Xun* Door can be exemplified by many traditional Siheyuan courtyard houses in Beijing and *Sanheyuan* houses in Taiwan (Fig. 232, 233, 252).¹⁷² Building the south oriented house with an entrance door on the left/east side is meaningful, as it highlights the representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality. Since the east can be seen as the 'cosmic entrance' through which the sun—the great source of auspicious, positive and powerful life energy—goes into the world, the left/east-side door of a south oriented house can thus be seen as a representation of this 'cosmic entrance', through which the heavenly blessing is given to the house.

¹⁷⁰ Wei 1985, pp. 64-65. 「曰今人每喜開左首門，不知在休四方位，易致衰敗。若右首開門在生旺方位，更主發福洪大。……豈俗云白虎門路遂無吉祥者乎？……豈非俗尚青龍行路，不知向犯八煞，不辨生剋理氣，而徒拘於青龍白虎之形也哉。」

¹⁷¹ See: 3.2.6.

¹⁷² Liu, Dun-Zhen 1983, pp.32, 91.

Undoubtedly, this also reinforces the idea that the house is a representation of the world/cosmic structure. Moreover, in this sense, the Feng-Shui idea of 'setting the entrance on the Dragon side' is quite comparable with the Vāstu-Shāstra idea of 'building an east-west oriented temple', both highlighting the built space as a representation of the world/cosmic structure to be filled up with the cosmic energy produced by the sun.

Having discussed the prescription of 'setting the entrance on the Dragon (left) side', now we turn to the prescription of 'placing the toilet on the Tiger (right) side'. Unlike the former prescription that is mentioned in a few old Feng-Shui texts, the latter one is totally absent in any old Feng-Shui text. Nevertheless, in the present day, it is still followed by not a few people, especially in Taiwan. Besides, as we have learned, traditionally, people in Beijing usually tend to build the *Siheyuan* houses with a south orientation, and these south-oriented *Siheyuan* houses usually have toilets in the southwest, that is to say, on the Tiger (right) side (Fig. 233).¹⁷³ Although it is hard to explain why this prescription has not been documented in old Feng-Shui texts, at least we should understand that it is not a new prescription developed over the past decades but a relatively old one. As we can easily find, this prescription is more often followed by the people living in old traditional houses than by those living in modern houses.

In Taiwan, the prescription of the 'Dragon/left-side entrance' and the prescription of the 'Tiger/right-side toilet' are often paired. That is to say, the people who tend to set the entrance on the left side usually also tend to place the toilet on the right side. Notably, a variety of explanations for the pair of prescriptions can be found in today's Feng-Shui practice. For example, as some people think, because the entrance door is a crucial passage through which the good fortune and the beneficial *Qi* should come into the house, it should be set on the propitious left side protected by the benevolent Dragon, and because the toilet is the most unclean and unholy space of the house, it should be located on the less propitious side occupied by the fierce Tiger.¹⁷⁴ Surely, this kind of explanation, to a certain degree, still has something to do with the principle of 'the superiority of the left over the right'. However, we can also find some explanations which have nothing to do with this principle regarding the spatial hierarchy. The most interesting explanation is probably the saying: "Dragon is afraid of the stink, and Tiger is afraid of the noise (龍驚臭, 虎驚吵)."¹⁷⁵ As

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Interviews with Ms. Fan (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006) and Mr. Xu (Puli, Nantou, Taiwan, 03/12/2006).

¹⁷⁵ Interviews with Mr. Gao (Taipei, Taiwan, 09/11/2006) and Mr. Huang (Taipei, Taiwan, 06/01/2007).

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suggested by this saying, one should not place the stinky toilet on the left side in order to avoid offending Dragon, and should not set the toilet on the right side in order to avoid enraging Tiger. Obviously, most of the people nowadays usually do not understand the original cosmic meaning of 'the superiority of the left over the right' represented by the two prescriptions.

No matter how the two prescriptions are explained, they are being well represented in traditional and modern houses. For instance, many traditional courtyard houses in China and Taiwan are deliberately built with Dragon/left-side entrance doors (Fig. 232, 233, 242, 252). Besides, the toilet of the traditional *Sanheyuan* house of the Chen's family is built in accordance with all the *do's & taboos* concerned with the toilet: it is located at the back but not in front of the house, it is not placed directly behind the main hall as the conceptual center of the house, and it is built on the Tiger/right side but not the Dragon/left side of the house (Fig. 236). In addition to courtyards houses, sometimes we can find that the row houses built together on a street, amazingly, all have their entrance doors set on the Dragon/left side (Fig. 164). Since a row house usually has a narrow and long plan, and its ground floor is often used as a shop space, people usually have to build for it a wide and big entrance door opening to the street. Hence, this door cannot be a left-side door. Nonetheless, in such kind of row house, there is usually a long left-side corridor which connects all rooms from the front to the back (Fig. 240, 241). Because of this left-side corridor, every room of the row house would have a left-side door, and surely, the toilet can be properly placed on the right side. Moreover, if the front façade of the row house is wide enough, it usually has two entrance doors: the big one used as the entrance of the ground-floor shop is totally open, and the small one used as the entrance of the upstairs private rooms is located on the left side (Fig. 265).

The modern house of the Ke's family (Dacheng, Taiwan) is also a good example (Fig. 244-246). Even though the entrance door of the house building is set in the middle, the entrance door of the entire house compound is on the left side. Besides, the toilet is placed on the right side. Just like the house of the Ke's family, many other modern detached houses or semi-detached ones built in the countryside or small towns, also highlight the idea of '*setting the entrance on the left side*' (Fig. 266, 267). It should be noted that the two prescriptions concerned with the left-side entrance and the right-side toilet, though scarcely mentioned in old Feng-Shui texts, have come to the attention of some modern Feng-Shui practitioners and thus are described in their books.¹⁷⁶ However, as

¹⁷⁶ Ou-Yang 2004, *Illustrated Architectural Taboos and Solutions in Modern Dwellings*, p. 13; Too 2006, p. 110.

we can imagine, for people who live in modern apartment houses it is usually difficult to strictly follow the two prescriptions, given that the left and the right side, as well as the front and the back sides, cannot be easily defined. Consequently, the two prescriptions are gradually losing their influence in the modern urban built environment.

The prescription regarding the left-side entrance is not only followed in houses but also in temples, but however, it is followed in a different way. It is noticeable that a typical Chinese temple, not only having a left-side door, is usually built with a magnificent tripartite front gate which consists of a central door, a left door and a right one. Traditionally, people are asked to enter the temple compound through the Dragon/left-side door, and to leave the temple compound through the Tiger/right-side door. For instance, the Thian Hock Keng Temple in Singapore is built with a tripartite gate consisting of a central door, a left door and a right door, and people usually enter this temple through the left door and leave the temple through the right door (Fig. 158-160). Surely, people in Taiwan, Hong Kong and many other regions of the Chinese cultural sphere, who often go to temples, usually follow the same rule.

The Confucius Temple in Taipei is also a good example. As we can see in its original plan in 1930, the toilet is built on the right side (Fig. 193).¹⁷⁷ After World War II, many auxiliary buildings in the temple compound were rebuilt and relocated, and the toilet was still placed on the same side (Fig. 194). Regarding the tripartite gate of the Confucius Temple, in principle, its central door, as well as the central door of other types of temples, should be permanently kept closed because it is only opened for the much-revered divine beings such as the deities and the emperor. Ordinary human beings are absolutely not allowed to pass through the central door. Today, even the president of a country is not allowed to pass through this central door, because in the modern democratic society, he/she should not be seen as an emperor. However, on 5th Oct 2008, Mr. Ma Ying-Jeou, the President of Taiwan, was invited to attend the annual Confucius sacrifice ceremony held in the Taipei Confucius Temple. Astonishingly, the temple opened its central door for President Ma, and President Ma actually entered and left the temple through this door. Thereafter, as we can imagine, the public strongly criticized the temple committee and President Ma, because people thought that the temple committee wants to flatter President Ma, and President Ma wants to be respected as an emperor.¹⁷⁸

Obviously, the tripartite gate of the temple highlights the principles of *'the*

¹⁷⁷ Gaijiro 1999, p. 157.

¹⁷⁸ China Review News, accessed on 08/04/2011, <http://www.chinareviewnews.com/doc/1007/6/3/1/100763105.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=100763105>.

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center as the supreme position and *'the superiority of the left over the right'*. As we have learned, for the principle of *'the superiority of the left over the right'* is a result of the idea of *'the superiority of the east over the west'*, it is a representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality. Therefore, the people who visit and worship in a temple also take part in this representation. The entry into a temple through the left door represents the sun's entry into the world from the east, and the exit through the right door represents the sun's exit through the west. Furthermore, while these people worship deities in the temple in accordance with the recurrent 'center-left-right order', the sun-focused cosmic reality is represented over and over again. It can even be said that the movement and activity of these people in the temple are great representations of the circular motion of the sun in the cosmos.

4.4 Do's & Taboos Supporting the Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principles of 'the Superiority of the North and the East over the South and the West' and the 'Clockwise Order' in Vāstu-Shāstra Architectural Tradition

Now we turn to the two principles — '*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*' and the '*clockwise order*' — followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition that form the basis of a variety of *do's & taboos* regarding the spatial hierarchy (Fig. 89). Different from the above-mentioned two principles in the Feng-Shui traditions, the two principles in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition are always described in terms of the sun-based directions (i.e. east, south, west and north) but not in terms of the body-based directions (i.e. front, back, left and right). Nevertheless, the two principles in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition also, to a large extent, represent the sun-focused cosmic reality as well as the two principles in the Feng-Shui tradition.

4.4.1 The Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principle of 'the Superiority of the North and the East over the South and the West'

The principle of '*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*' is based on the idea that the north and the east are more auspicious than the south and the west. The north is the direction in which Mount Meru or Mount Kailash — the cosmic center and the abode of deities — is situated; hence, it is considered more auspicious than the south dominated by *Yama* — the lord of the dead. Regarding the east, it is the direction of the sunrise, conveying many positive meanings such as beginning, prospering and growing, and thus is considered more auspicious than the west that conveys many negative meanings such as ending, declining and dying. As it can be imagined, in a built space, the parts closer to the more auspicious north and east are likely to be considered superior to those closer to the less auspicious south and west. According to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts and today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, this principle applies to a variety of built spaces such as houses, palaces, temples, villages and cities.

Building the Sanctuary in the Northeast

As we have learned, in a built space, the sanctuary is usually considered to be the supreme center superior to any other interior part of this built space. As

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we have also seen, this sanctuary is usually a conceptual center, so that it is not necessarily located in the geometric center of a built space. As indicated by old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, in a house or a palace, the sanctuary, which can be a family altar, a worship room or a shrine, should be built in the northeast but not in the geometric center (Fig. 92).

The following passages quoted from the *Brihat Samhitā* and the *Mānasāra* clearly show that the family altar or worship room should be placed in the northeastern part of the house plan:

In a four-halled house the worship-room should be situated in the northeast... [sic]¹⁷⁹ (Brihat Samhitā)

(In a residential building), in the Aditi or the Isa quarter should be the house for the worship of the gods of the three other castes.¹⁸⁰ (Mānasāra)

As shown by the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the *Aditi* and *Isa* quarters are both located in the northeast (Fig. 137, 140), and accordingly, as based on the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, the house should be built with a worship room in its northeastern part. Moreover, some passages found in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts also indicate that there should be a shrine or temple built on the northeast side of the king's palace. The following passages can be found in the *Mānasāra* and the *Mayamatam*:

Temples for one's own (personal) worship as well as for the public should be built in the north-east (of the palace).¹⁸¹ (Mānasāra)

(In a palace), the baths and the shrine are in the north-east corner of this assembly...¹⁸² (Mayamatam)

(In a palace), the temple of the king's chosen deity takes up nine squares on the outside to the north-east.¹⁸³ (Mayamatam)

It should be remembered that, as mentioned in some old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the sanctuary of a built space should be located in the geometric center represented by the 'Brahma Square' of the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, both the northeastern part and the geometric center of a space seem to be suitable places to build the sanctuary. As we can see in today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, some practitioners suggest that the *Puja* room (i.e. the family

¹⁷⁹ Bhat 1986, p. 495.

¹⁸⁰ Acharya 1994, p. 400.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁸² Dagens 1994, p. 655.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 659.

¹⁸⁴ See: 3.2.3.

shrine) can be built either in the northeast or in the geometric center, or the *Griha-nabhi*, of the house.¹⁸⁵ However, most practitioners insist on locating the *Puja* room only in the northeast of the house, as they hold that the geometric center can only be occupied by a courtyard, used as a living room, or just left empty (Fig. 147, 274-276).¹⁸⁶ As told by some practitioners, even in a shop, there should also be a *Puja* space in the northeast (Fig. 278).¹⁸⁷ As a place for the *Puja* room, the northeastern area of the house is undoubtedly a *Holy Zone*, and hence most Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners nowadays warn people not to build the unclean and polluted toilet and kitchen in this area, and not to let them be above, below or adjacent to the *Puja* room.¹⁸⁸

In some other countries influenced by Hindu culture, we can also find the practice of building the family shrine in the northeast of the house. According to John Gray, an American anthropologist who has conducted a field research at Kholagaun in southern reaches of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, the majority of the houses of Chhetris¹⁸⁹ in this area have their *Puja* rooms built in the northeast. Among the twenty-five houses that he has researched, fourteen houses are built with the *Puja* room in the northeast, while only eleven houses have their *Puja* rooms located in the directions of southeast, south, southwest, west and northwest (Fig. 93).¹⁹⁰ Moreover, according to Paul Oliver, the Balinese Hindus in Indonesia also usually tend to build the family shrine in the northeast corner of their traditional courtyard houses (Fig. 277).¹⁹¹

In today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, we can often find an interesting explanation why the *Puja* room should be placed in the northeast: Because the northeast of the house space represents the 'head' — the most vital part — of Vāstu-Purusha's body, the *Puja* room should be placed in this direction (Fig. 148).¹⁹² In an *Anthropomorphic* sense, this can be well compared to the main hall as the family shrine in the traditional Chinese courtyard house, which is also considered to represent the head of the house space regarded as a human body (Fig. 45).

¹⁸⁵ Babu 2007, pp. 102-104, 107; Krishna 2001, p. 97.

¹⁸⁶ Alse 2005, p. 122; Arya 2000, p. 67; Babu 2003, p. 16; Bhambi 2007, p. 47; Chawla 2004, p. 57; Dwivedi 2003, p. 63; Dwivedi 2004, p. 140; Rao, R. G. 2005, p. 155; Setty 2005, p. 176; Sthapati 2005, p. 335; Vasani 2005, p. 177; Vaze 2005, p. 149.

¹⁸⁷ Saluja 2007, p. 101.

¹⁸⁸ Arya 2000, p. 67; Babu 2007, p. 107; Bhambi 2007, pp. 47, 59; Chawla 2004, pp. 64, 78; Dwivedi 2004, p. 71; Krishna 2001, p. 99.

¹⁸⁹ The Nepali 'Chhetri' is a colloquial derivative of the Sanskrit 'Kshatriya', namely the second-highest caste.

¹⁹⁰ Gray 2006, pp. 63-64.

¹⁹¹ Oliver 2003, pp. 184-185.

¹⁹² Savarkar 2005, pp. 38-39.

Hanging the Photos of the Deceased Family Members in the South, the West or the Southwest of the House

In an Indian house, may it belong to a Hindu or Jain family, we can usually find a 'space for the dead', which is represented by the room where the photos of the deceased family members are located. These photos are usually hanging on the wall and decorated with garlands of flowers (Fig. 280, 281). Such a space for the dead in an Indian house is very different from the space for the dead in a Chinese house. As we have seen, traditionally, Chinese people tend to place the ancestral tablet along with the idols or images of deities on the same altar and in the same room, worshipping ancestors and deities together and respecting all of them as transcendent beings, although ancestors should just be seen as ghosts and considered lower than deities. In an Indian house, the photo of the deceased and the idols or symbols of deities are not necessarily placed together. In some cases, such a photo is placed along with or near the altar of deities (Fig. 280); in other cases, it is alone hanging on the wall (Fig. 281).

As indicated by Axel Michaels in his *Hinduism: Past and Present*, in the Hindu traditions, the dead persons are often seen as sacrifices to the fire, or the Lord *Agni*, that can carry them to heaven and the world of the forefathers with smoke; before they find their place as forefathers, they are potentially dangerous and hence should be carefully dealt with.¹⁹³ However, to be treated as ancestors, the deceased family members are sometimes seen on a level with the gods — ancestors and gods once lived together, it says in one place — partly in a separate class. In any case, the ancestors have a semi-divine status. Therefore, the place of forefathers is a kind of Heaven but not the earthly world of human beings, though not the Heaven of gods.¹⁹⁴ In an Indian family, the ancestors are worshipped every day; however, they are considered more dangerous than gods, because they are closer or still reside in the house, they are dissatisfied, and they always demand respect.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, many Indian people are not willing to admit that placing the photos of the deceased in the house is meant for the 'worship' of ancestors, but only for the 'commemoration' of them. Notwithstanding, these people by and large believe the continued existence of the deceased family members who have the ability to influence the destiny of the living family members.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Michaels 2004, pp. 144-146.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Interviews with Ms. Patnaik (Ahemedabad, Gujarat, India, 15/02/2008), Ms. Ramakrishna (Ahemedabad, Gujarat, India, 17/02/2008) and Mr. Singh (Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, 26/02/2008).

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

As we can see, even though the deceased family members should be 'worshipped' or 'commemorated' in the house at least during the time when they have yet to find their place as forefathers, they are usually not treated equal to gods. Therefore, many today's Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners warn people not to place their photos along with the deities in the *Puja* room; otherwise the deities might get displeased. According to the frame of the *Including & Excluding Structures* shorter-cycle theme, the *Puja* room should be regarded as a space exclusive to the deities and not be shared by the dead. Moreover, these practitioners also recommend that the photos of the deceased family members should be located in the south, west or southwest of the house, in contrast to the *Puja* room located in the northeast (Fig. 92, 94). The followed passages are quoted from some books written by contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners:

*It is said that photos of dead persons should not be hung along with God's photo... Normally, the recommended place for the family deity is the Easanya or the north-east sector of one's house. Your family deities, saints, sages can all be accommodated here... However, the right place (side) for the departed souls would be on the south. You can have their photos on the south walls.*¹⁹⁷

*Photos of gods, goddesses, saints, sages, landscapes, waterfalls, rivers, seas etc. can all adorn the eastern and northern walls. Photos of departed near and dear ones can be hung on the southern walls. Avoid their photos in the prayer rooms.*¹⁹⁸

Photos of dead should always be hung in the corner of south-west or in the western corner... Do not keep a dead ancestor's photo or picture in the worship room... No doubt, our ancestors deserve our respect and faith, but they can neither be equated with nor substituted for our deities... There is no person who can be equated with God. When a living person is not equal to God, then how can a dead person acquire such a status? After death, human body is simply a pack of earth, as all five elements merge in the atmosphere. So, if we worship a dead person's soul, we are actually worshipping the souls of ghosts. Our ancestors should be given respect and shown gratitude for, without them, our existence was not possible. So, we should feel indebted to them and express our gratitude. Sometime, they attain divine qualities and powers and protect our house. Hence they are venerable. Despite all this, remember that they can neither be replaced nor worshipped like the deities. Paying respects to our

¹⁹⁷ Babu 2003, pp. 108-109.

¹⁹⁸ Babu 2008, p. 105.

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*ancestors is not worship. If we worship them, our deities will get displeased. So, photos or pictures of the ancestors can be hung in the west, south or south-west directions and respects paid to them and also worshipped, because such photos are not kept in the worship place.*¹⁹⁹

Notably, the hierarchical relationship between the deities and the ancestors represented in the Indian house is quite comparable to that represented on the Chinese family altar. The former is based on the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west as followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition, while the latter is based on the superiority of the left over the right as followed in the Feng-Shui tradition (Fig. 190).

Digging the Well and Placing the Water Tank in the Northeast

As told by old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the northeast is also the direction in which people should dig the well or place the water tank (Fig. 95). In the Hindu traditions, water as an essential element of life is much revered and said to play a crucial role in the cosmogony. As shown in the celebrated hymn of the *Rig Veda* 10. 121, the god is imagined as the Golden Embryo, hovering over the 'Waters'; by entering them, the Golden Embryo fecundates the Waters, which give birth to *Agni*, the god of Fire, and other gods.²⁰⁰ Besides, later, many variants of this original myth were developed, mentioning that the Golden Embryo is the seed of the creator god flying above the primitive Waters, or that this Golden Embryo is engendered by the Waters.²⁰¹ According to the myth and its variants, without water, the world and the gods could have not been created, nor could have the human beings and other kinds of life.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the system of *Panchamahabhuta* (i.e. the Five Elements) was developed in the *Samkhya* School of Hinduism, and according to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the Five Elements—Water, Fire, Earth, Wind and Ether—are respectively assigned to the five positions—northeast, southeast,

¹⁹⁹ Dwivedi 2003, pp. 141-142.

²⁰⁰ Embree 1988, pp. 19-20. "A golden embryo evolved in the beginning. Born the lord of what has come to be, he alone existed. He established the Earth and Heaven here... When the deep waters came, carrying everything as an embryo and giving birth to the fire, then the life of gods, the sole evolved... Who surveyed the waters in their greatness, the waters that carried the skill [to sacrifice] and gave birth to worship, who, the god beyond the gods, alone existed."

²⁰¹ Eliade 1981, pp. 223-224.

southwest, northeast and center.²⁰² It can be clearly seen that Water, the essential element and source of life, is associated with the northeast, the most revered direction. Accordingly, it is reasonable to dig the well or place the water tank of a built space in the northeast.

As regards the well or tank to be dug in the northeast of a temple, the following passage can be found in the *Mānasāra*:

A well or a tank should be dug in the north-east (Isa plot).²⁰³

According to the *Mayamatam*, in a palace compound, the well, tank or reservoir should be dug in the plot of *Apavatsya*, *Apavatsa* or *Isa* in terms of the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, each of the three plots being located in the northeast corner (Fig. 140):

There is a reservoir, a well and a tank on the squares of Apa (Apavatsya) and Apavatsa and there, too, drinking water and the flower garden are to be installed.²⁰⁴

(In a palace), there is a tank and a well on Isa square.²⁰⁵

As also told in the *Mayamatam*, the well and the bath of a dwelling should be respectively arranged in the *Isa* plot and the *Aditi* plot according to the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, both in the northeast corner (Fig. 140):

The dining hall is situated where Yama is, the room where money is stored is where Soma is, Agni has the granary, and condiments for the cooking are stored on the square of Isa, and the well is there too, though the baths are on the square of Aditi; as far as other (parts of the dwelling) are concerned, they should each be put in a suitable position.²⁰⁶

In the *Brihat Samhitā*, it is said that the water in different directions of a house may have different effects on the occupants; only when the water is in the north or the northeast, the effect is likely to be positive (Fig. 96):

If there is water to the (1) east, (2) south-east, (3) south, (4) south-west, (5) west, (6) north-west, (7) north and (8) north-east of a house,

²⁰² As told in the *Mayamatam*: "It is known of the Pitha Diagram, which consists of nine squares, that the four Vedas are at the four cardinal points and that Water, Fire, Ether and Wind are at the intermediate points, of which the first is the north-east; in the center is Earth." See: Dagens 1994, p. 41.

²⁰³ Acharya 1994, p. 299.

²⁰⁴ Dagens 1994, p. 637.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 651.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 571.

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*the effects would be (1) loss of children, (2) danger from fire, (3) fear of enemies, (4) quarrel among women, (5) frailty of women, (6) poverty, (7) increase of wealth, and (8) prosperity of children in order.*²⁰⁷

It seems that the prescription of placing the water in the northeast does not only apply to the buildings but also to the cities. For instance, in the northeastern part of the Dabhoi City in Gujarat, there is a big pond, or reservoir. Although we do not know whether it is a natural or man-made pond, some local people do believe that it is a manifestation of this prescription (Fig. 286, 291).²⁰⁸

In today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, this old prescription remains influential, as many practitioners strongly advise that, in or around a house or shop, all the facilities related to water should be located in the northeast, such as the well, the water tank, the water supply system, the fountain, the swimming pool, etc. (Fig. 97, 278, 279).²⁰⁹ However, although also having something to do with water, the unclean sump and toilet are warned by Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners not to be placed in the northeast; otherwise the clean water in the much revered northeast might be polluted.²¹⁰

Locating the Toilet in the South, the West, the Southwest or the Northwest

As we have seen, in today's practice of Vāstu-Shāstra and Feng-Shui, there are a lot of *do's & taboos* concerned with how to properly locate the toilet, since the toilet – the most unholy and unclean zone – has become an indispensable interior part of most modern houses. Hence it is very reasonable to set the toilet in the southern, the western or the southwestern part of a house, so that the well, the water supply and the *Puja* room, located in the northeast, can be far away from the dangerous and polluted toilet. However, many contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners also say that the toilet can be located in the northwest, the direction controlled by *Vāyu* (i.e. the god of wind) or represented by the element of 'Wind' (Fig. 64);²¹¹ as long as the toilet is set in the northwest, its pollution

²⁰⁷ Bhat 1986, p. 496.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Mr. Mistry (Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, 17/02/2008).

²⁰⁹ Ananth 1998, pp. 112, 125; Arya 2000, p. 38; Babu 2003, p. 19; Babu 2007, pp. 64-65; Babu 2008, p. 100; Chawla 2004, p. 53; Dwivedi 2003, p. 59; Krishna 2001, p. 82; Kumar 2005, p. 172; Mastro 2006, p. 112; Rao, C. H. Gopinath 2005, p. 104; Reddy 2005, p. 72; Saluja 2007, p. 67; Sthapati 2005, p. 331.

²¹⁰ Arya 2000, p. 67; Babu 2007, p. 107; Babu 2008, p. 100; Bhambi 2007, pp. 47, 59; Chawla 2004, pp. 64, 78; Dwivedi 2004, p. 71; Krishna 2001, p. 99.

²¹¹ Dee 2002, p.43; Manohar 2005, p. 140.

can be easily brought away by the wind. For instance, the following passage can be found in the book written by Bangalore Niranjana Babu, a modern Vāstu-Shāstra consultant:

*Northwest or Vayuvya is assigned to the primary element Vayu or air. As the toilet is the seat of pollution, placing it in the North-west will mean that pollution is flushed out.*²¹²

Therefore, in today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, the toilet is usually prescribed to be placed in the northwest, the west, the southwest or the south of a house (Fig. 98).²¹³ It can be clearly seen that, in many a house plan approved by modern Vāstu-Shāstra consultants, the toilet is located in one of these directions (Fig. 147, 274-276, 279). In some sense, the opposition and hierarchical relationship between the 'well' (as clean water) and the 'toilet' (as unclean water) can be compared with that between the 'Puja room' (as a space for deities) and the 'place for the photos of the deceased' (as a space for ancestors), both based on the principle of 'the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west'.

Locating the Treasure Room in the North

In addition to the sanctuary (or Puja room), the place for the photos of the deceased, the well and the toilet, the 'treasure room' is also a space which highlights the principle of 'the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west'. According to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, in a house or palace, the treasure room that is usually highly valued, should be located in the north (Fig. 99). The following passages can be found in the *Mayamatam* and the *Mānasāra*:

*(In a house), the room where money is stored is where Soma is.*²¹⁴
(Mayamatam)

*(In a house), in the Soma and Mriga quarters should be the treasury for keeping gold and jewels.*²¹⁵ (*Mānasāra*)

*(In a palace complex), the house for keeping jewels and gold, etc., should be situated in the Soma (north) or the Mukhyaka quarter.*²¹⁶

²¹² Babu 2003, p. 68.

²¹³ Arya 2000, p. 73; Babu 2003, pp. 27, 30, 31, 34 and 68; Babu 2007, pp. 107-109; Babu 2008, p. 100; Dwivedi 2004, pp. 69-72; Murthy 2005, p. 202; Rao, R. G. 2005, p. 155; Setty 2005, p. 176.

²¹⁴ Dagens 1994, p. 571.

²¹⁵ Acharya 1994, p. 400.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

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(*Mānasāra*)

We can clearly see that the above-mentioned plots of both *Soma*, *Mriga* and *Mukhyaka* are located in the north of the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala (Fig. 140). In many contemporary Vāstu-Shāstra manuals or handbooks, the north is also said to be the direction that controls the wealth of the occupants of a house, and hence the room for storing money and valuable belongings should be placed in the north (Fig. 147).²¹⁷

4.4.2 The Spatial Hierarchy as Based on the Principle of the 'Clockwise Order'

Now we turn to the '*clockwise order*', the second principle of the spatial hierarchy followed in the Indian Vāstu-Shāstra architectural tradition, also concerned with the hierarchical relationships between the four sun-based directions of North, East, South and West (Fig. 89). We should be well acquainted with this principle, since it is a crucial determinant of many *do's & taboos* regarding the orientation of built spaces as discussed in Chapter 3.²¹⁸ Hence, we should also remember that it is an important representation of sun-focused cosmic realities, as it implies the 'sunwise order'. In this sense, this principle followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra tradition can be compared with the principle of '*the superiority of the left/east over the right/west*' followed in the Feng-Shui tradition, both implying that the spatial hierarchy should be established in accordance with the sun-based cosmic order.

As we can find in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, many *do's & taboos* suggest that, according to this clockwise order, the part in a 'preceding direction' of a built space should be superior to that in a 'following direction'. For instance, as regards the two directions of east and south, the east should be seen as the 'preceding direction', while the south as the 'following direction', and hence the part in the east should be ranked higher than that in the south. Moreover, it is important to note that, when applying to the built space, the principle of the '*clockwise order*' is usually supported by the previous principle of '*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*'. That is to say, in the clockwise order, the north, the east or the northeast is usually regarded as the beginning or first-ranking direction, and hence the spatial hierarchy is described as the sequence of 'N-E-S-W', 'E-S-W-N' or 'NE-SE-SW-NW' (Fig. 100-102). Surely, the sequence of 'N-NE-E-SE-S-SW-W-NW', 'E-SE-S-SW-

²¹⁷ Ananth 1998, p. 71; Babu 2007, p. 71; Pulippani 2005, p. 159; Setty 2005, p. 175.

²¹⁸ See: 3.2.3.

W-NW- N-NE' or 'NE-E-SE-S-SW-W-NW-N' is also possible (Fig. 103-105).

As well as the other principles regarding the spatial hierarchy followed in the Vāstu-Shāstra or the Feng-Shui traditions, the clockwise order is applied to a variety of built spaces, such as cities, villages, temples, altars and houses. Later we will see that the arrangement of the people of the four castes in a city/village, the arrangement of the deities on a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, and the arrangement of the foundation deposits of a building site should all be based on the clockwise order.

Arranging the Four Castes in a City/Village according to the 'Clockwise Order'

As we can find in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, many *do's & taboos* prescribe that the living quarters of the four castes inside a city or village should be arranged according to the clockwise order. The Brahmins as the highest caste are assigned to the northern quarter, the Kshatriyas as the second caste to the eastern quarter, the Vaishyas as the third caste to the southern quarter, and the Sudras as the lowest caste to the western quarter (Fig. 106). The spatial hierarchy is described as the N-E-S-W order (Fig. 100). Surely, this also highlights the principle of '*the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west*'; the two higher castes are asked to reside in the north and the east, while the two lower castes are ordered to live in the south and the west. The following passages can be found in the *Brihat Samhitā* and the *Agni Purāna*:

*The houses of Brahmins and other classes should be located in the northern, eastern, southern and western parts respectively of villages and towns.*²¹⁹ (*Brihat Samhitā*)

*The houses of Brahmins, 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.*²²⁰ (*Agni Purāna*)

Concerned with the arrangement of the four castes in the clockwise order, these *do's & taboos* highlight that the social hierarchy should correspond to the spatial hierarchy that represents the sun-based cosmic order, and that the cosmic reality provides a good basis for the spatial representation of the social reality. Besides, as based on this spatial hierarchy, the mental constructs of the

²¹⁹ Bhat 1986, p. 476.

²²⁰ Shastri 1967, p. 430.

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schemes of the *Including & Excluding Structures* and the *Holy & Unholy Zones* are closely associated with the scheme of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross*. On the one hand, among the four castes, the Brahmin is the highest and purest caste, the quarter belong to Brahmins should be seen as a relatively *Holy Zone* and forbidden to the other three less pure and more polluted castes. Likewise, the quarter for Kshatriyas should be forbidden to Vaishyas and Sudras, and the quarter for Vaishyas forbidden to Sudras. On the other hand, in order not to be polluted, the people of a higher and purer caste are usually unwilling to enter the quarter where the people of a lower and less pure caste reside. Hence, Brahmins would never risk going to the eastern, the southern and the western quarters, Kshatriyas would never go to the southern and the western quarters, and Vaishyas would never go to the western quarter.

The following two passages quoted from the *Mayamatam* and the *Arthashastra* suggest the same kind of spatial hierarchy for the four castes, and are both concerned with the residential area for the king:

*The saukhya, dwelling of Brahmins, is to be built on the squares of Mahidhara, Indu, Bhallata, Mriga and Aditi (i.e. in the north)... A dwelling like this invariably brings success to Brahmins... For kings, a mahanasa (is to be built) on the squares of Mahendra, Arka, Aryaka, Satya and Bhriśa... A dwelling like this, situated in the east, is fitting for the king, to whom it will bring an increase of treasure... There is a dhanyalaya (for Vaishyas) on the squares of Grihakhshata, Arkin, Gandharava, Bhringaraja and Visvasvat... This dwelling, situated in the south, brings wealth, rewards and good fortune to Vaishya... A dhanalaya is prescribed on the squares of Pushpadanta, Asura, Sosha, Varuna and Mitra... this dwelling, situated in the west, brings good fortune to Sudra.*²²¹ (*Mayamatam*)

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... On the eastern side, merchants trading in scents, garlands, grains, and liquids, together with expert artisans and the people of Kshatriya caste shall have their habitations... To the south, the superintendents of the city, of commerce, of manufactories, and of the army as well as those who trade in cooked rice, liquor, and flesh, besides prostitutes, musicians, and the people of Vaishya caste shall live... To the west, artisans manufacturing worsted threads, cotton threads, bamboo-mats, skins, armors, weapons, and gloves, as well as the people of Sudra caste, shall have their dwellings... To the

²²¹ Dagens 1994, pp. 583-585.

*north, the royal tutelary deity of the city, ironsmiths, artisans working on precious stones, as well as Brahmins shall reside.*²²² (*Arthashāstra*)

As we can clearly see, there is a significant difference between the two passages, regarding the residential area for the king. According to the former passage quoted from the *Mayamatam*, the king as a Kshatriya should have his residential area in the east. However, as indicated by the latter passage quoted from the *Arthashāstra*, the king should not live in the eastern quarter belonging to Kshatriyas but in the northern quarter where Brahmins reside. This discrepancy is probably a result of the ambiguous and debatable role of the king in the social-political hierarchy of the Hindu traditions as we have seen in Chapter 2.²²³ Some people suggest that the king is by nature a Kshatriya, while others hold that the king, as a divine being, should be superior to the Kshatriya and not inferior to the Brahmin.²²⁴ That is why the *Mayamatam* says that the king should live together with Kshatriyas in the east, but the *Arthashāstra* instructs that the king is allowed to live together with Brahmins in the north. Besides, since the *Arthashāstra* was written by Kautilya as an advisor and prime minister of the first Maurya Empire (350-283 BCE), it is more like a treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy for kings but not only a work for religious purposes.²²⁵ It is reasonable to assume that, in this treatise, the king is given a status higher than the Kshatriya, or at least not lower than the Brahmin.

Arranging the Deities on a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala according to the 'Clockwise Order'

As told in many old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the arrangement of the deities on a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, as well as the arrangement of the four castes in a city/village, should also be based on the principle of the 'clockwise order'. The following passages can be found in the *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*, the *Mānasāra* and the *Mayamatam*, all concerning how to arrange the deities on the mandala in a proper way:

*Now we shall talk of those abiding as installable on the outskirts.
From north-eastern quarter their abode should be recognized in a
clockwise manner [sic].*²²⁶ (*Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*)

²²² Sharmasastry 1961, pp. 53-54.

²²³ See: 2.3.2.

²²⁴ Flood 2004, pp. 67-74.

²²⁵ Bhattacharyya 1963, p. 70.

²²⁶ Sharma 2007, *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva 1*, p. 110.

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The Sakala (plan) of a single plot should be bounded by four cords; of these the eastern cord is assigned to Aditya, the southern one to Yama, the western one to Varuna, and the northern one to Chandra... The Pechaka (plan) of four plots should be bounded by eight cords: in this Isa is assigned to the northeast, Agni is the deity of the southeast, Pavana is assigned to the southwest, and Gagana is to the northwest... In the Mahapitha plan (of sixteen plots) the four central plots are assigned to Brahma; beyond these along the boundary lines beginning from northeast are assigned in order Apavatsa, Aryaka, Savitra, Visvasvat, Indra, Mitraka, Rudra and Bhudhara... In the Upapithaka plan (of twenty-five plots) the aforesaid twenty-five deities are assigned to one plot (each) in the same order beginning with northeast.²²⁷ (Mānasāra)

In the sixty-four and eighty-one square diagrams, one being even and the other odd, the gods, of whom the first is Brahma, are installed on the periphery and in the center. Now the gods are presented consecutively starting with (he who rules the) north-east corner: Isa, Parjanya, Jayanta, Mahendraka, Aditya, Satyaka, Bhṛsa, Antariksa, Agni, Pusan, Vitatha, Raksasa, Yama, Gandharva, Bhrngaraja, Mrsa, the Pitr deities, Dauvarika, Sugriva, Puspadanta, Jaladhipa, Asuram, Sosa, Roga, Vayu, Naga, Mukhya, Bhallataka, Soma, Mrga, Aditi and Uditī, these are the thirty-two exterior divinities.²²⁸ (Mayamatam)

Shown in the three above passages, the arrangement of the deities on a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala should begin with the deity who resides in the east or the northeast, described as the sequence of 'E-S-W-N', 'NE-SE-SW-NW' or 'NE-E-SE-S-SW-W-NW-N' (Fig. 101, 102, 105) Surely, this also implies that the north and the east are superior to the south and the west.

Besides, according to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, at the initial stage of a construction work and at the first entry into a newly built house, one should make offerings to the deities invoked on the site or house plan based on the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala, and the offerings to these deities should be made in the same manner. For example, the following passages can be found in the Mānasāra and the Mayamatam:

(At the beginning of a construction work), the ordinary offerings should be made to Brahma and other deities. Towards the east and north on the occasion of building a house should be offered as

²²⁷ Acharya 1994, pp. 35-37.

²²⁸ Dagens 1994, pp. 43-45.

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*sacrifice to the fire, the samid plant, clarified butter, sesame seed and boiled rice each twenty-five times, to Brahma (in the center), Arya (in the east), Vivasvat (in the south), Mitra (in the west) and Bhudhara (in the north) deities, with proper incantation and mentioning their names amidst the uttering of Vedic hymns and (other) auspicious sounds.*²²⁹ (*Mānasāra*)

*(At the first entry into a newly built house), (the offering) for Indra (is placed) in the east (for he holds that position) with those belonging to him, for Agni at the southeast, for Yama at the south, for Nirrti at the southwest (for he holds that position) with the host of those belonging to him; for Varuna the offering is to be placed in the west, for Anila in the northwest (because he holds that position) with those belonging to him; for Soma it is on the Soma square because the north is where (he rules) with those faithful to him; lastly, for Siva, the offering is placed in the northeast (for he rules there) with the host of those belonging to him.*²³⁰ (*Mayamatam*)

According to both passages, the offerings made to the deities surrounding the center (occupied by *Brahma*) should begin with the one assigned to the east and proceed in a clockwise direction. In the former passage, the spatial hierarchy is described as the E-S-W-N order (Fig. 101), while in the latter passage, it is described as the E-SE-S-SW-W-NW-N-NE order (Fig. 104).

Moreover, the arrangement of the deities in the clockwise order can also be found in the *Pancayatana-Puja* practiced by the Hindus of Smartism (or Smarta Sampradaya). There is a variety of traditions in Hinduism, among which of particular importance are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism. Regarding the Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism, their followers usually focus worship upon a particular deity, respecting him/her as the supreme and ultimate Godhead: *Vishnu* in Vaishnavism, *Shiva* in Shaivism, and *Devi* (i.e. the Goddess) in Shaktism. However, those of Smartism do not focus on a particular deity but accept all the major Hindu deities as different representations of the Divine One, thereby worshipping the main five deities—*Vishnu*, *Shiva*, *Surya* (i.e. Sun God), *Ganesha* (i.e. Shiva's elephant-headed son) and *Devi*.²³¹ The *Pancayatana-Puja* is a popular domestic worship of the five deities together, who can be worshipped either in the forms of small brass idols or in some aniconic shapes, for instance, the *bana-linga* representing *Shiva*, the *salagrama* stone representing *Vishnu*, the *suryakanta* gem or crystal representing *Surya*,

²²⁹ Acharya 1994, p. 112.

²³⁰ Dagens 1994, p. 615.

²³¹ Flood 2004, pp. 17, 113.

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the metallic stone representing *Devi* and the red stone from the river Narmada representing *Ganesha*.²³²

In the practice of the *Pancayatana-Puja*, there could be five modes of arranging the five deities on the altar, depending on which of the five deities is placed in the center. They are the *Shiva-Pancayatana* (*Shiva* in the center), the *Vishnu-Pancayatana* (*Vishnu* in the center), the *Surya-Pancayatana* (*Surya* in the center), the *Devi-Pancayatana* (*Devi* in the center) and the *Ganesha-Pancayatana* (*Ganesha* in the center) (Fig. 107-111).²³³ In each mode, the first deity to be placed on the altar is always the one to be placed in the center, and the other four deities assigned to the four corners should be placed successively in a clockwise manner from the northeast to the northwest, that is to say, in the NE-SE-SW-NW order (Fig. 102). It is important to note that although all the five deities are said to equally stand for the Divine One, a hierarchical relationship can be found between them, which coincides with this clockwise NE-SE-SW-NW order.

First, owing to the profound influence of theology of the *Trimurti* (i.e. Hindu Trinity) as well as Vaishnavism and Shaivism, among the five deities, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* are often considered superior to the other three deities.²³⁴ Therefore, even if *Vishnu* and *Shiva* are not placed in the center (in the modes of *Surya-Pancayatana*, *Devi-Pancayatana* and *Ganesha-Pancayatana*), they are usually assigned to a higher-ranking direction (e.g. northeast or southeast) but seldom to a lower-ranking direction (e.g. southwest or northwest). Second, *Ganesha*, as a son of *Shiva*, is never placed prior to his father according to the clockwise order, except in the mode of *Ganesha-Pancayatana*. Third, in Hinduism, *Devi*, or Goddess, is always a contradictory and ambivalent figure. On the one hand, as the 'goddess of breast' such as *Lakshmi*, *Parvati* and *Sita*, she represents the 'benevolent mother' who embodies maternal qualities of generosity and graciousness, subservient to her husband. On the other hand, as the 'goddess of tooth' such as *Durga*, *Mahamaya* and *Kali*, she represents the 'malevolent force' who demands offerings of blood, meat and alcohol to placate her wrath, and is often considered to be low-ranking.²³⁵ Whether the 'goddess of breast' or the 'goddess of tooth', *Devi* is usually thought to be inferior to male gods. Therefore, except for the mode of *Devi-Pancayatana*, *Devi* is always placed in the lowest-ranking direction, namely the northwest. As it can be clearly seen in the arrangement of the five deities in the *Pancayatana-Puja*, to a large extent, the representation of the social hierarchy is based on the sun-based

²³² Bühnemann 1988, pp. 49-50.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Flood 2004, p. 113.

²³⁵ Flood 2004, p. 174; Babb 1975, pp. 216-226.

clockwise order.

Besides the *Pancayatana-Puja*, the arrangement of deities in the clockwise order can also be exemplified by the domestic Maharastrian Rite which is practiced in the Hindu Smarta tradition, too. In its practice thirty-two deities should be together arranged in a mandala-like plan (Fig. 292). They can be categorized into four groups: fifteen deities on the circle (No. 1-15), eight deities in the four cardinal directions (No. 16-23), four deities inside the circle (No. 24-27), and five deities in the four diagonal directions (No. 28-32). The series of numbers also stands for the sequence of placing the thirty-two deities, and as we can see, in each group, the deities are successively placed according to the clockwise order.²³⁶ It is also noteworthy that the clockwise movement represents the usual order in most Smarta rituals, whereas the counter-clockwise movement usually applies to the rites for the dead.²³⁷

As mentioned earlier, according to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, the worship of the deities residing in the Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala should be according to the clockwise order. In a temple space, this order is notably manifested by 'Pradakshina' which, in Sanskrit, means 'to the right'.²³⁸ As we know, in an Indian temple, the main deity represented as an idol or symbol always resides in the *Garbha-griha* (i.e. the innermost sanctuary) regarded as the most important 'conceptual center'. When visiting a temple, devotees have to circumambulate this conceptual center, keeping it at the 'right hand side'; hence, the circumambulation is in a clockwise direction.²³⁹ In a bigger temple, there is usually not only a main deity placed at the core of the temple space, but also many other subordinate deities located in other places around this core. Before going to the *Garbha-griha* to worship the main deity, devotees should visit and worship these subordinate deities located in the path of *Pradakshina* which is called *Pradakshinapatha*.²⁴⁰ Hence, the journey of the people to the center is a spiral movement around the innermost sanctum, during which people progressively get closer to the holiest center.²⁴¹

Obviously, the clockwise circumambulation is a representation of the sun's motion, as it signifies the sunwise direction.²⁴² A man who practices *Pradakshina* is taking part in the representation of the sun-based cosmic order. As mentioned earlier, in a Chinese temple, people usually follow the 'center-

²³⁶ Bühnemann 2007, pp. 58-60.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ *Dakshina* means 'right'. See: Stierlin 1998, pp. 232-233.

²³⁹ Foekema 2005, p. 20.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

²⁴¹ Rodrigues 2006, pp. 231, 235.

²⁴² Wu 1968, pp. 15-16, 25.

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left-right order' to worship deities, and this order represents the sun's daily motion from the east to the west. Although the 'clockwise order' followed in the Indian temple and the 'center-left-right order' followed in the Chinese temple are very different, they both highlight that the sun-based cosmic order is represented in the temple space, and that the regular motion of the sun in the cosmos is represented by the regular movement of the human being in the cosmic temple space. Consequently, the human being himself is a representation of the sun.

The practice of *Pradakshina* is ubiquitous in India, which can be found in many Hindu as well as Jain and Buddhist temples, and the object of *Pradakshina* can be a Hindu deity, a Jain Tirthankar,²⁴³ a statue of Buddha, a stupa, or other divine symbols. This can be exemplified by the clockwise circumambulation practiced by a man in the Hathee Singh Jain Temple in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India (Fig. 222-224). This man, after entering the temple compound from the main gate in the west, walks along the peripheral corridors in a clockwise direction, worshipping the idols placed in the niches in the directions of north, east and south, and then goes into the central sanctuary to worship *Dharmnath*, the 15th Jain Tirthankar, to whom the temple is dedicated. For another instance, in the Shri Lakshmi Narain Temple in Delhi, a man is practicing *Pradakshina* around a pillar (Fig. 225-227). On this pillar, many deities standing for different celestial bodies (the sun, the moon, the Venus, etc.) are placed, and, clearly, this pillar is a representation of the 'cosmic pillar' – the *Axis Mundi*.

Notably, the practice of *Pradakshina* can also be found in many other countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia influenced by the Indian culture. For instance, many devotees often go to the Kelaniya Buddhist Temple (Gampaha, Sri Lanka) to practice the clockwise circumambulation around the stupa and the statue of Buddha (Fig. 228-231). As indicated by Anagarika Govinda in his *Psycho-cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa*, in Buddhism, there is an interesting theological explanation for the clockwise circumambulation around the stupa. As the sun illuminates the physical world, Buddha illuminates the spiritual world. The four *Toranas* (i.e. gates) established on the four cardinal sides of a stupa represent different stages of Buddha's life. The eastern one represents his 'birth', the southern his 'enlightenment', the western his 'setting in motion the Wheel of Law', and the northern his 'final liberation'. The *Pradakshina* around the stupa thus symbolizes the process of seeking the final

²⁴³ In Jainism, Tirthankars are human beings who achieved enlightenment through asceticism, and who then became role-model teachers for those seeking spiritual guidance. Just like Buddha and Bodhisattvas who are worshipped in Buddhist temples, Tirthankars are worshipped in Jain temples.

liberation, and it should usually begin with the eastern *Torona*.²⁴⁴ It is noticeable that such a theological explanation is also based on the sun-focused cosmic reality, representing the sunrise in the east and the sun's clockwise motion around the cosmic center.

Placing Foundation Deposits and Construction Materials according to the 'Clockwise Order'

In the Indian architectural tradition, at the initial stage of constructing a temple or a house, some special consecration rituals should be performed on the building site, and during these rituals, the 'foundation deposits' should be placed in a square pit dug on the site. As indicated by Anna Ślaczka in her *Temple Consecration Rituals in Ancient India Text and Archaeology*, this pit is not necessarily situated in the center of the site, and its location is usually not marked.²⁴⁵ Specific objects as foundation deposits are prescribed for temples of particular deities or for houses of particular castes, and they include various 'riches of the earth', such as plants, minerals, gems, and soil taken from different places.²⁴⁶

According to old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, these foundation deposits in the pit should be placed according to the principle of the 'clockwise order'. The following passages are found in the *Mayamatam* and the *Mānasāra*:

I present the rules relating to the placing of the foundation deposit in the temples of gods and in the houses of the twice-born classes. A foundation deposit with all the components is a source of success; an incomplete deposit of the absence of anyone component leads to failure... The depth of the pit meant for the deposit is to be equal to the height of the base of the building concerned. The pit is square and lined with bricks and stones... Next should be arranged on that: a root of padma (i.e. lotus) in the middle, one of utpala in the east, one of kumuda in the south, one of saugandhi in the west and one of nilaloha in the north... The eight grains are placed above that: Sali, vrihi, kodrava, kanku, mudga, masa, kulattha and tila; the arrangement is made according to the Pradakshina taking Sali in the northeast as the starting point.²⁴⁷ (Mayamatam)

Herein is described the foundation of the temples of gods and (the

²⁴⁴ Govinda 1976, p. 8.

²⁴⁵ Ślaczka 2006, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Dagens 1994, pp. 121-125.

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dwelling) of the twice-born and others, and of all other buildings and villages, etc. The foundation is auspicious in all respects when it is completely filled with various things but the foundation is unprosperous and inauspicious when (it is filled) with a lesser number of things... the depth of the excavation (lit. foundation-cave) should be as high as the basement of the building; the four sides (lit. corners or walls) made of brick or stone should be equal; from its bottom should be removed water (if there comes out any), and all (kinds of) earth should be deposited therein... Upon this (earth deposit) should be (further) deposited the root of the (white) lotus at the central part (of the excavation), to the east the root of the blue lotus, to the south the root of water-lily, to the west saugandhi (grass), and to the north the kakali (gunja) plant.²⁴⁸ (Mānasāra)

The two passages are similar, both prescribing that, at the beginning of constructing a building, some special flowers or grains as foundation deposits should be placed in the four or eight main directions in a square pit dug on the site, and that the placement should be in a clockwise manner, following the 'E-S-W-N order' or the 'NE-E-SE-S-SW-W-NW-N order' (Fig. 101, 105). Besides, in the first passage, we can see that if some deposit should also be laid in the middle of the pit, it should be placed first, prior to the placement of the other deposits in the four or eight main directions. Therefore, the placement of foundation deposits, apart from highlighting the two principles of the 'clockwise order' and 'the superiority of the north and the east over the south and the west', also points up the principle of 'the center as the supreme position'.

The square pit meant for foundation deposits undoubtedly can be seen as a Vāstu-Shāstra Mandala and represents the cosmos, in which the scheme of the *Axis Mundi & Cosmic Cross* is fully manifested. Therefore, placing the foundation deposits in a clockwise manner in it marks the crucial moment when the sun-based cosmic order and cosmic power are established in and poured into this represented cosmos. Surely, this square pit can also be seen as a representation of the to-be-built temple or house, and hence it is a guarantee that this to-be-built temple or house will be a space representing the cosmos and will stand under the protection of the great cosmic power.

Moreover, as shown in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, in addition to the foundation deposits, a variety of 'construction materials', such as stones, pillars, doors, bricks and wood, should also be placed or organized according to the clockwise order, whether they are used for ritual or for practical purposes. The following passages can be found in the *Brihat Samhitā* and the *Kāshyapashilpa*:

²⁴⁸ Acharya 1994, p. 109.

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In the northeastern corner of the site a worship should be offered with the necessary materials and then, first of all, a stone laid there, and others stones in the remaining quarters (i.e. the quarters in the E, SE, S, SW, W, NW and N) in a clockwise manner. In the same manner should pillars and doors be raised carefully, being decorated with umbrellas, garlands, cloths, incense and ointments.²⁴⁹ (Brihat Samhitā)

Having bathed the stones or bricks with products of the cow and with different kinds of fragrant water, one should proceed with the preliminary rites during the first part of the night... Having tied the pratisara-thread consisting of golden or cotton threads while reciting the 'hrd' mantra, one should have the first bricks placed on the ceremonial ground in the four directions, outside the pericarp. Having traced with rice-flour the letter 'la' in the eastern part, the letter 'va' in the abode of Yama, the letter 'ra' in the region of Varuna, the letter 'ya' in the abode of Soma...²⁵⁰ (Kāshyapashilpa)

As we can see, the placement of the construction materials, as well as the placement of the foundation deposits, is also usually according to the 'E-S-W-N order' or the 'NE-E-SE-S-SW-W-NW-N order' (Fig. 101, 105).

Besides, in old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, we can find some other prescriptions also concerned with the placement of construction materials according to the clockwise order, but however, in these prescriptions, the clockwise order is manifested in a different way having less to do with the spatial hierarchy. The following two passages are found in the *Mānasāra*:

The first brick should be laid (more particularly) at the end of the plinth, or the boundary, or at the fore or neck part of the base (of the column), or at the end of the fillet of the base... In case of residential buildings the first brick should be laid in accordance with one's own desirable rules... The eastern brick should extend towards the south, the southern brick towards the west, the western brick towards the north, and the northern brick towards the east.²⁵¹

The wood placed in the east should project towards the south. The wood lying in the south should project towards the west. The wood placed in the west should project towards the north. The wood placed in the north should project towards the east.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Bhat 1986, p. 491.

²⁵⁰ Ślaczka 2006, pp. 56-60.

²⁵¹ Acharya 1994, pp. 120-121.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 190.

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The two passages show how the bricks and the pieces of wood as construction materials should extend or project according to their locations. The brick or piece of wood located in the east should extend or project to the south, the one in the south should extend or project to the west, the one in the west should extend or project to the north, and the one in the north should extend or project to the east. Although these bricks or pieces of wood are not placed successively in a clockwise sequence, their directions of extension or projection also highlight the clockwise order (Fig. 112, 113).

Letting the Door Open and Letting the Staircase Ascend in a 'Clockwise Direction'

In old Vāstu-Shāstra texts and today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice, there are two other interesting prescriptions relating to the door and the staircase, which also accentuate the clockwise order, even though totally having nothing to do with the spatial hierarchy: '*The door should be set to open in the clockwise direction*', and '*the staircase should be built to ascend in the clockwise direction*' (Fig. 114). The following passages are found in the *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra* and the *Arthashāstra*:

*(In a house), a door should be created in a clockwise order and not in an otherwise norm [sic]. Over and above the storeys the opening may be clockwise. By any other way the door and staircases may not be created. On whichever wall a door is created earlier or the first one, on that very one may be created a door (in the upper storey) and likewise at another wall the door should be created clockwise [sic].*²⁵³
(*Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra*)

*(In a fort)... side walls built of bricks; on the left side, a staircase circumambulating from left to right; on the right, a secret staircase hidden in the wall.*²⁵⁴ (*Arthashāstra*)

The two paragraphs seem to emphasize, though vaguely, that both the opening of the door and the ascending of the staircase should be in the clockwise direction. In many of today's Vāstu-Shāstra manuals and handbooks, such prescriptions concerning the door and the staircase are much more clearly presented. For example, in *The Ancient Science of Indian Architecture: Vāstu FAQs Answered* written by Bangalore Niranjana Babu, it is said:

Is a particular direction for opening the door recommended?

²⁵³ Sharma 2007, *Samarāngana-Sūtradhāra of Bhojadeva I*, p. 463.

²⁵⁴ Sharmasastry 1961, p. 52.

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*Pradakshina or circumambulation in the clockwise direction is the traditional way of going round the deity in a temple. The clockwise movement is always considered positive and auspicious. As you stand inside the house or in the room, the door may open to your left in the clockwise direction.*²⁵⁵

*It is also told in the Handbook of Vāstu written by the same author: The step should begin either from the north or east. The turning of the staircase has to be clockwise only. The last step should be towards south or west.*²⁵⁶

Obviously, the clockwise order, as suggested in most old Vāstu-Shāstra texts, is still of great concern in today's Vāstu-Shāstra practice. However, as we can imagine, in a modern house, it is very impractical to establish the spatial hierarchy according to the clockwise order. No matter how eagerly people and Vāstu-Shāstra practitioners want to apply the age-old principle of the 'clockwise order' to the modern house, the only thing they can do is to let the door open and the staircase ascend in a clockwise direction. As we have learned, the clockwise order is a representation of the sun-focused cosmic reality; the practice of the two prescriptions concerning the door and the staircase can merely be seen as an incomplete representation of this cosmic reality, since the people who practice the two prescriptions seldom realize that the clockwise direction is based on the sunwise direction. They are just like the modern Chinese people who follow the principle of 'the superiority of the left over the right' but are not aware of the fact that it is based on the idea of 'the superiority of the east over the west'.

²⁵⁵ Babu 2003, pp. 74-75.

²⁵⁶ Babu 2007, pp. 118-119.