

## UNIT 3 TOPIC 4 FENG SHUI AND I CHING

### Pre-Knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 3 Topic 4 and read up some information on Feng Shui to understand its basic elements and rules.

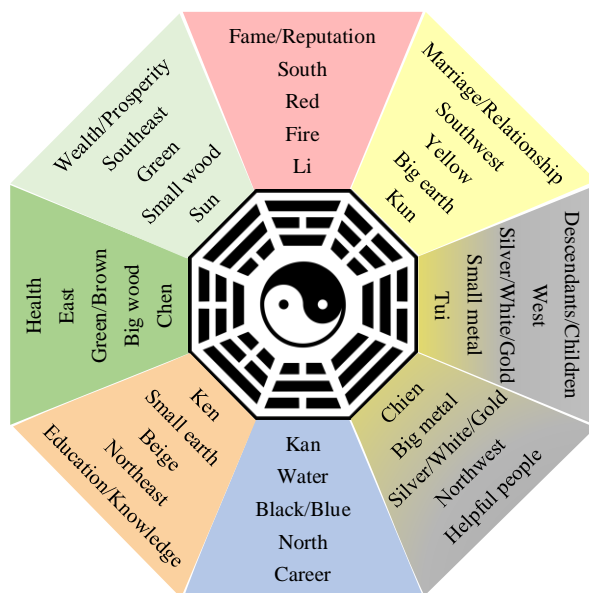
### Aim and Objectives

Topic 4 aims to provide students with some knowledge of the origins and concepts of Feng Shui and its role and functions in the lives of the Chinese.

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### Activity 1

Explain to your class what Feng Shui and its main principles are using the diagram and information below:



#### Key aspects of Feng Shui:

- For a long time, Feng Shui has been mistakenly regarded as a mysterious and even suspicious topic or way of life. Some people view it as a form of fortune-telling. Feng Shui is an ancient art and science developed over 3,000 years ago in China. It is a complex body of knowledge of balancing the energies in any given space, be it a home, office or garden, in order to achieve good fortune for people inhabiting it.
- It is a system of laws governing spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of *Qi* (气). The effects of *Qi*, both favourable and unfavourable, are taken into account when siting and designing buildings.
- *Feng* means wind and *shui* means water, both of which are associated with good health in Chinese culture. Hence, Feng Shui came to signify fortune or luck. It is based on the Daoist vision and understanding of nature, particularly the idea that the land is alive and filled with *Qi*.

Therefore, Feng Shui is not

- a get-rich-quick method that guarantees impossible results for mystically rearranging furniture
- a superstitious or magical belief system, or a New Age fad that disconnects people from reality or daily life
- a simple home makeover
- a quick fix to be tackled in one afternoon
- a luxury only the rich and famous can afford

### Activity 2

Explain to your class the concept of *Qi* and how it is related to Feng Shui and its applications in our daily lives using the information below. Have a class discussion to check for understanding.

As a central concept in Feng Shui, *Qi* is confusing to most people. Some people even call Feng Shui a superstition because of its constant reference to *Qi*, an invisible energy.

All physical objects are made up of vibrating particles of energy and even the space surrounding them is a sea of unseen *Qi*. The human body is part of this universal energy-matter continuum. *Qi* can be manipulated to bring about harmony in a person's environment in order to create well-being in his body and mind. This is aided by the placement of objects of various shapes and colours in different configurations.

The word “quantum” refers to the smallest amount of something that can exist. The smallest particles are subatomic and exist throughout the Universe as a collection of energy in the form of virtual particles. It is these particles that Feng Shui influences.

The things we consider to be real in our environment are nothing more than virtual particles of the quantum field emerging briefly and then disappearing back into the universal field of quantum energy. Through the hidden quantum particle field, the *Qi* of our body interacts with the *Qi* of other living things and objects.

Our body has a nervous system that gathers and sends information. It uses this system to “communicate” with the electromagnetic frequency radiation and other subtle energies in our environment, which are the hidden energies manipulated in Feng Shui. This explains why Feng Shui directly influences our body, mind and spirit.

When this interaction with the energies in our environment takes place, our endocrine system is also stimulated – the glands and the hormones they produce regulate our whole body. Our nervous and endocrine systems help our body function properly. This is enhanced by the positive *Qi* manipulated to pass through our body.

Our mental state also has a direct impact on our well-being. Stress may cause anxiety, fear and obsession. This causes emotional imbalance, which in turn upsets the mind, causing us to lose the equilibrium in the meridians present in our body. This loss of equilibrium affects our organs, creating a stagnation of the flow of *Qi* in the meridian systems. We fall sick over time.

Feng Shui adjusts the different invisible energies that we respond to, both consciously and unconsciously. These adjustments influence the sea of quantum particle energy or *Qi* around us, raising our frequency level to release blocked emotions. Over time, this nurtures our well-being and outlook on life.

### Activity 3

Have your students research the relationship between Daosim and Feng Shui and take down notes for a class discussion.

### Activity 4

Have your students present their notes from Activity 1, giving the class a summary of the principles of Daoist cosmology.

The *Dao* is:

- eternal: it is never born so it can never die.
- infinite: it has no desires for itself and is thus present for all beings.
- the reason or cause of everything.

The process:

*Wuwu* (before *Dao*: 无无, Not Nothing) → *Wuji* (with *Dao*: 无极, No Limit) →

*Hundun* (混沌, Chaos) → *Taiji* (太极, Great Pole, the first fixed point in space and time) → *Taiyi* (太易, Great Change).

Two stages of *Taiyi*:

- *Taichu* (太初, Great First), giving rise to *Xing* (形, Form)
- *Taishi* (太始, Great Beginning), giving rise to *Qi* (气, Breath)

*Xing* and *Qi* combined to create *Taisu* (太素, Great Primordial) which has *Zhi* (质, Substance). The first substances had *Yin* and *Yang*, while all things terrestrial and celestial fall into one of the Five Elements (五行) – Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth – which are usually in a stage of flux.

The Five Elements are arranged in:

- a productive sequence where
  - Wood burns, creating...
  - Fire leaves ashes, creating...
  - Earth contains ore, creating...
  - Metal melts, creating...
  - Water nourishes plant life, creating (back to Wood)...
- a destructive sequence where
  - Wood draws strength from, destroying...
  - Earth pollutes, destroying...
  - Water puts out, destroying...
  - Fire melts, destroying...
  - Metal chops down, destroying (back to Wood)...

They are also used to symbolise different things:

- Wood: Direction – East / Season – Spring / Colour – Green
- Fire: Direction – South / Season – Summer / Colour – Red
- Earth: Direction – Centre / Season – None / Colour – Yellow
- Metal: Direction – West / Season – Autumn / Colour – White
- Water: Direction – North / Season – Winter / Colour – Black

The Daoist story:

In the beginning there was *Wuji* from which *Taiji* emerged. *Taiji* contains *Yin* and *Yang*, which continually “danced” and transformed to fuel the flow of *Qi*.

From this dance of *Yin* and *Yang* emerged the Five Elements: Wood (lesser *Yang*), Fire (greater *Yang*), Metal (lesser *Yin*), Water (greater *Yin*) and Earth (central phase). Also produced here were the eight trigrams that were then used to form the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching*.

From the Five Elements came the “ten-thousand things” (万物), that is everything that exists in the world.

#### Activity 5

Watch the video clip *The hidden meanings of yin and yang – John Bellaimey* on YouTube (published by Ted-Ed and available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezmR9Attpyc>). Ask your students to use two real-life examples to illustrate the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* and this concept functions in our daily lives.

#### Activity 6

Divide your class into groups of three or four. Ask each group to interview some Chinese in their community to find out how they perceive Feng Shui. Each group will then have to report their findings to the class.

#### Activity 7

Divide your class into groups of four or five. Ask each group to visit a local Chinese company which has made use of Feng Shui in the design of their interior space. Each group will then have to prepare an oral presentation of the contemporary uses of traditional Feng Shui they have observed on their visit.

#### Activity 8

Ask your students to read up on the *I Ching*. They then have to write a 300-word summary on what the book is about.

#### Activity 9

Ask your class to find out whether there is something similar to Feng Shui in the West. Give them some clues such as the Druids, the Wiccan and Earth Religions. They have to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of their findings.

#### Activity 10

Have your students do Exercise 4 of the Workbook according to your teaching needs and progress.

### **Resources/Materials**

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Levitt, S (2000), *Taoist Feng Shui: The Ancient Roots of the Chinese Art of Placement*. Vermont: Destiny Books.
2. Minford, J. (2014), *I Ching: The Essential Translation of the Ancient Chinese Oracle and Book of Wisdom*. New York: Viking Publishing House.
3. Sharp, D. (1999), *Simple Feng Shui*. Berkley: Conari Press.
4. Skinner, S. (2005), *Feng Shui for Modern Living*. US: Trafalgar Publishing.
5. Tin, L.P. & Yeap, H. (1997), *Feng Shui: Secrets that Change Your Life*. Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc.

6. Wu, Wei (2006), *I Ching Life: Becoming Your Authentic Self*. Los Angeles: Power Press.
7. The Feng Shui Society. <http://www.fengshuisociety.org.uk/>
8. Richard, W., translation of the *I Ching*. Available at:  
[www2.unipr.it/~deyoung/I\\_Ching\\_Wilhelm\\_Translation.html](http://www2.unipr.it/~deyoung/I_Ching_Wilhelm_Translation.html)

### Assessment

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions, including those taken while watching video clips.
2. Prepare some questions and assess your students when they answer them verbally.
3. Students are required to investigate the Feng Shui of a house or any other building and write a 300-word report of their findings.
4. Each student is required to write a 500-word essay comparing Feng Shui and something similar to the West and his reflection on the comparison.
5. Students are required to prepare a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the philosophies and developments in the creation of Feng Shui and the writing of the *I Ching*.
6. Each student is required to write an essay on the current applications of Feng Shui and *I Ching* in China.

### Workbook Answer Key

1. How would you explain the concept of Feng Shui to a friend who has heard about it for the first time? Write down some key points.

Read to pages 150-157 of the Textbook.

Feng Shui is actually an ancient art and science developed over 3,000 years ago in China. It is a complex body of knowledge of balancing the energies in any given space, be it a home, office or garden, in order to achieve good fortune for people inhabiting it.

Feng Shui is part of the complex Daoist body of knowledge that includes the fields of traditional Chinese medicine (acupuncture and the use of herbs among other techniques), energy work, such as Qigong and Taiji, and Chinese astrology and other disciplines related to the *I Ching*, *Dao De Jing* and other ancient Taoist works.

Feng Shui discusses the relationship between human beings and their environment. Based on the law of nature, Feng Shui helps us create a harmonious and balanced living environment.

2. What are the main principles of Feng Shui? Using examples, illustrate the importance of Feng Shui to the lives of the Chinese.
3. In which areas or aspects has Feng Shui been used? Why is it practised in these areas or aspects?

For Q2 and Q3:

Ancient Feng Shui masters knew what quantum physics tells us today, that everything around us is composed of endless energy fields connecting everything we see, feel and touch (as well as millions of things we do not see with our physical eyes).

There is really no separation between everything and us.

Four aspects of Chinese philosophy especially contribute to the development of Feng Shui: mutual responding between heaven and human beings, the *Yin* and *Yang*, the Five Elements and *Qi*.

The practice of Feng Shui emphasises and reflects these four Chinese cultural values: prosperity/status/longevity, harmony, moral concern and aesthetics.

It is obvious that Feng shui penetrates every aspect of the Chinese society.

4. Internet Search

Do you think the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* is logical? Why? How do you think it is applied in interior design?

*Yin* and *Yang* are the two opposite but complementary forces that form the universe. Etymologically, *Yin* refers to the shady northern side of a hill, while *Yang* is the sunny southern side. *Yin* represents amiable, yielding, receptive and submissive attributes, and *Yang* represents active, unyielding and dominant attributes.

In Feng Shui, the interior design and setting of an office can often affect its ambience and employee mood. It is important to create a comfortable and conducive working environment.

It is important to consider the location of the manager's room and the arrangement of the in it in these aspects:

- His room should be in a quiet place, away from the eyes of outsiders, offering him support and protection.
- The height of his work desk should correspond to the wealth and prosperity positions.
- He should not be seated with his back to a window or door, as the *Qi* here is very strong and can take away his concentration and power as he does not have the support to guard against this strong *Qi*.

5. Draw a diagram to illustrate the interactions among the Five Elements.

Refer to pages 153 and 154 of the Textbook.

6. Internet Search

Find out how the Chinese determine which of the Five Elements each person belongs to. Which element are you?

In Chinese astrology, each of the 12 zodiac signs is associated with one of the Five Elements:

- Monkey, Rooster: Metal
- Tiger, Rabbit: Wood
- Rat, Pig: Water
- Snake, Horse: Fire
- Ox, Dragon, Goat, Dog: Earth

Each animal sign is further divided into the Five Elements, so the animal is called different names in different years. For example, the Rat is called a Metal Rat in 1960 and 2020, Wood Rat in 1924 and 1984, and Water Rat in 1912 and 1972.

Students may use this website to find out which element they are:  
<https://www.yourchineseastrology.com/five-elements.htm>

7. We have learnt that in the use of Feng Shui for interiors, one key aspect is the facilitation of the flow of *Qi*. Talk to someone who believes in Feng Shui and has made use of it in his house. Ask for his permission to visit his house. Observe what objects have been used in his house to enhance *Qi*. Write them down and state why they have been used.

Suggested video: *Feng Shui your home in 8 minutes*  
Published by fengshuiexperience on 25 July, 2009  
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVYYgyttRBA>

#### 8. Internet Search

There are many buildings and complexes around the world that have had Feng Shui incorporated into their designs. Examples are the Taipei 101 in Taiwan and the Suntec City in Singapore. Read up on one or two such buildings or complexes. Write down some of the ways Feng Shui have been used in it/them and the reasons.

The Taipei 101 towers over the city of Taipei like a gigantic bamboo stalk. It was once the tallest building in the world. In line with Feng Shui beliefs, the building has an octagonal shape with no sharp protruding angles. Ancient coin designs depicting the heaven (round and infinite) encircling the earth (square with the four cardinal points of the north, south, east and west) are also evident in the design of the Taipei 101. It is believed that this will ensure Taiwan continues to be blessed with wealth and prosperity.

The Suntec City in Singapore houses the world's largest fountain. Its base is located underground, while its top circular ring is visible at ground level. It is called the Fountain of Wealth as its design was reportedly based on a strict Feng Shui formula to help bring in money. The water flows inwards to signify the continuous flow of business and thus money into Suntec City. It is claimed that visitors to Suntec City can walk around the base of the fountain three times while touching the water to gain good luck.

There are five buildings surrounding the fountain, namely Towers One, Two, Three, Four and Five. These five buildings represent the five fingers of the human hand with the fountain as the palm which signifies control of wealth. Rumour has it that when the fountain was being constructed, the Singapore Government intervened as they wanted it to benefit the country so its original design was changed to what was eventually built. It is believed that the economic growth Singapore experienced thereafter was a result of this.

9. Apart from China, what are the other countries that practised Feng Shui? Give an example.

Suggested video: *Practical Feng Shui Tips from Japanese, Korean and Chinese Gardens* – Victor H. Garza (China) 9 FSS 15  
Published by The Feng Shui Society on 7 July, 2015  
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFb7Hxva5rg>

Pungsu-Jiri, literally “wind-water-earth-principles-theory” is the Korean version of Chinese Daoist Feng Shui. This ancient art of divinatory geomancy involves the arrangement of buildings or other sites auspiciously, based on topography. It was and is still widely used in the placement and architecture of Korean Buddhist temples and even entire cities.

The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans have designed gardens for over 1,000 years. Whether they are found in a palace, temple or along the streets of an ancient sector of a town or city, these gardens invite residents or visitors to connect with and enjoy the beauty of nature by taking in their paths, bridges, pavilions or pagodas arranged according to Feng Shui principles. appreciating its flowers, plants, trees and water.

#### 10. Internet Search + Group Discussion

What is the *I Ching*? What does it cover? How has it influenced Chinese thought? In a group of three or four, discuss the answers to these questions and write them down.

Refer to pages 157 and 158 of the Textbook.

Students may consider these points:

The *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, is the most widely read of the five Chinese classics. It is believed to have been written by the legendary Chinese Emperor Fu Xi. It might have originated from a prehistoric divination technique dating back to 5000 BC. Commentaries were added by King Wen and the Duke of Zhou in the 11th century BC.

An *I Ching* interpretation is performed by making six binary decisions (a hexagram). This is called “casting the *I Ching*”. These are written down as a stack of six solid or broken lines. This was traditionally done by tossing yarrow stalks or coins.

There are four possible values for each of the lines: the two on/off values and a line which changes from on to off or vice versa. Thus, one cast of the *I Ching* can generate two different hexagrams, adding depth to the interpretation.

For thousands of years, the *I Ching* has served as a philosophical taxonomy of the universe, a guide to an ethical life, a manual for rulers and an oracle of the future of an individual and the state. It has also been an organising principle or authoritative proof for the arts and sciences, as well as cartography and medicine. It has generated endless Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist and even Christian commentaries and several schools of thought.









In China and East Asia, the *I Ching* has been the most consulted book because of the belief that it can explain everything. In the West, it has been known for over 300 years and has been the most recognised Chinese book since the 1950s. With its seeming infinite trove of applications and interpretations, there has never been a book quite like it anywhere.

#### 11. Internet Search

Find out the other 56 hexagrams in the King Wen sequence. Draw eight of them in the box below and write down their names and sequence numbers.

In the mythological version of the origin of the hexagrams, Fu Xi studied the patterns of nature: the movement of clouds, the arrangement of stars and the markings on birds, animals and rocks, among other things. He discovered that everything could be reduced to eight trigrams each composed of three stacked solid or broken lines that reflected *Yin* and *Yang*, which form the duality that drives the universe. Some of the trigrams represent natural elements, such as the heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, a mountain and a lake.



9. 小畜 (xiǎo chù) 	10. 履 (lǚ) 	11. 泰 (tài) 	12. 否 (pǐ) 
13. 同人 (tóng rén) 	14. 大有 (dà yǒu) 	15. 谦 (qiān) 	16. 豫 (yù) 

## 12. Internet Search + Pair Work

We have learnt about the Druids. Read up on the Wicca religion and compare it with Feng Shui. Write down the key similarities and differences.

Refer to pages 158 and 159 of the Textbook.

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 10 September, 2020.