

## Chapter 4: The Door as a Ritualistic and Cosmological Device

Derived from the Xun Zi theory on rites, ritual *shi* that is attained through the proper Confucian ritual disposition can authoritatively mold a common person into an abiding citizen and bring about order within a chaotic society. An example of proper ritual disposition is a faithful adherence to the Confucian orientation and size hierarchies. Within the perspective of traditional Chinese architecture, ritual *shi* is obtained by arranging the orientation and the dimensions of doors according to Confucian ritual doctrines: the central southern door holds the highest significance, while the eastern door takes precedence over the western door, the larger and grander doors preside over smaller and simpler doors. The hierarchically oriented and built doors thus embody the ritual *shi*; in addition, cosmological *shi* is gained from positioning a door within an auspicious orientation and sizing a door opening according to the propitious dimension. Positioning and Sizing a door favorably is believed to maximize the cosmological *shi* ensuring the well-being of the residents.

The process of hierarchically orienting and sizing doors to embody ritual *shi*, as well as the detailed methods and theories about gaining cosmological *shi*, are analyzed in this chapter. The Yin Yu Tang (YYT) house doors present an ideal case study because the Huang family, the owners of the house, had been devoted both to the practice of Confucian doctrines and to Fengshui theories in the construction of the doors.

## Ritual *Shi* Embodied in Door Orientations and Sizes

Ritual *shi*, as generated from the Confucian hierarchical disposition of the orientations, is one of the essential manners for persuading a person to become aware of his or her status relative to others. In the Confucian classical ritual scriptures (*Book of Etiquette*, *Book of Record*, and *Family Rites*), the hierarchical order of orientation is explicitly described as the center direction presiding over the east, and the eastern direction presiding over the west. For example, at the royal court where government hearings are conducted, the emperor is seated in the center position, facing the center door at the south orientation, while his higher-ranking officials are placed on his left side, (i.e., on the east side of the central door or adjacent to the eastern door). The lower-ranking officials are positioned at his right side (i.e., on the west side of the center door or adjacent to the western door). Through such an arrangement, order is made explicit and the higher and lower status of officials is easily discerned from their positions in relation to the orientation of the door. Thus, the traditional Chinese doors, providing routine settings for these affairs, are naturally oriented and constructed to uphold the required hierarchies.

Prior to being stressed in the Confucian rites, the idea of assuming the center presiding over the east, which in turn presides over the west, has an ancient origin derived from the primitive cosmological understanding of orientation. In the ancient Chinese culture, the first spatial perception about orientation was mono-directional. From this single primordial orientation, the two, four, eight, and twenty-four directions emerged.

The *Book of Change* contains an enigmatic passage that says,

The heaven as one, earth as two, the heaven as three, earth as four...<sup>220</sup>

The number one in the phrase “heaven as one” is construed as chaos before order is established. It is supported by the fact that the original ideogram of the word *one* (*yi*, 壹), which is still used today in formal counting of money, is similar to the shape of a calabash (*hulu*, 葫芦), a symbol of totality. The ancient Chinese pronunciation of the ideogram *Hulu* is homophonic to the ideogram chaos (*hundun*, 浑沌). The original meaning of the number one is not considered quantitative, but rather, it indicates chaos, totality, or undivided space that has a singular orientation and qualitatively holds the central position.<sup>221</sup>

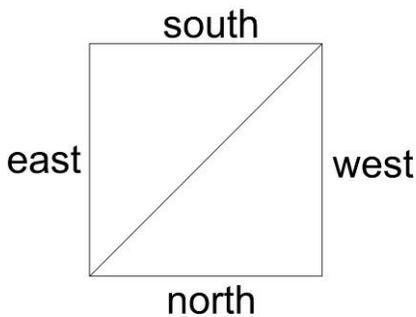
In recent studies, the meaning of two in the phrase “earth as two” is interpreted as demarcating the one (i.e., the total undivided space) into two directions (i.e., east and west) to configure the initial order on earth, rather than two as the demarcation of heaven and earth. This interpretation led to the empirical observation about orientation systems in the pre-Qing dynasty anthology of Chinese myths, *Shan hai jing* (山海经). In *Shan hai jing*, the sun sometimes is recorded as rising from the east, sometimes as rising from the south. Correspondingly, the sun sometimes is noted as setting in the west and sometimes in the north. Yet the eastern and western directions are never

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<sup>220</sup> He Xin, *Zhu she de qi yuan*, p. 275, quotes, “the heaven as one; earth as two, the heaven as three, earth as four; the heaven as five, earth as six; the heaven as seven and earth as eight; heaven as night, earth as ten. There are totally five heavenly numbers and five earthly numbers, <易系辞>>天一, 地二, 天三, 地四, 天五, 地六, 天七, 地八, 天九, 地十, 天数五, 地数五.”

<sup>221</sup> Ye Shuxian & Tian Daxian, *Zhongguo gu dai shen mi shu zi*, (Beijing, 1995), p. 6 & p. 9.

confused with the north and south. In ancient times, observation of the sun's movement indicated that the sun not only moved from the east to the west, but also moved slightly in accordance with the north and south axis. From intuitive observations of the sun's movement, the ancient Chinese deduced two primary directions for orientation: the east-south and the west-north, both generated from the undivided "one" spatial orientation system (Figure 4.1). These two major directions of orientation (i.e., east and west) are the primary points of reference and the primary order of space.<sup>222</sup>



**Figure 4.1. The primordial orientations, drawn by the author.**

The chaos was the source and the center of order that created the east and west. Because the sun rises in the east, bringing light and life, and the sun sets in the west, representing darkness and death, the east is understood as more favorable and auspicious, and takes

precedence over the west.<sup>223</sup> These ancient spatial understandings of orientation are incorporated into Confucian rites and became a means to arrange and display hierarchies.

The first rite described in the Confucian ritual scripture, *Book of Etiquette*,<sup>224</sup> is the capping rite that is performed when a youngster enters

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Wang Guixiang, *Dong xi fang de jian zhu kong jian*, (Tianjin, 2006), p. 23, the Chinese ideogram to the east portrays the sun in a sacred tree (日在木中). The Chinese ideogram for darkness is represented as the sun under the tree (日在木下). The ideogram for the character west, *xi*, means the sun resting in a bird's nest. In Chinese mythology, the sun is a red bird.

adulthood. The capping rite is a ceremony where the father awards the son with a square cornered cap to commemorate the son's rite of passage. This text states at the beginning,

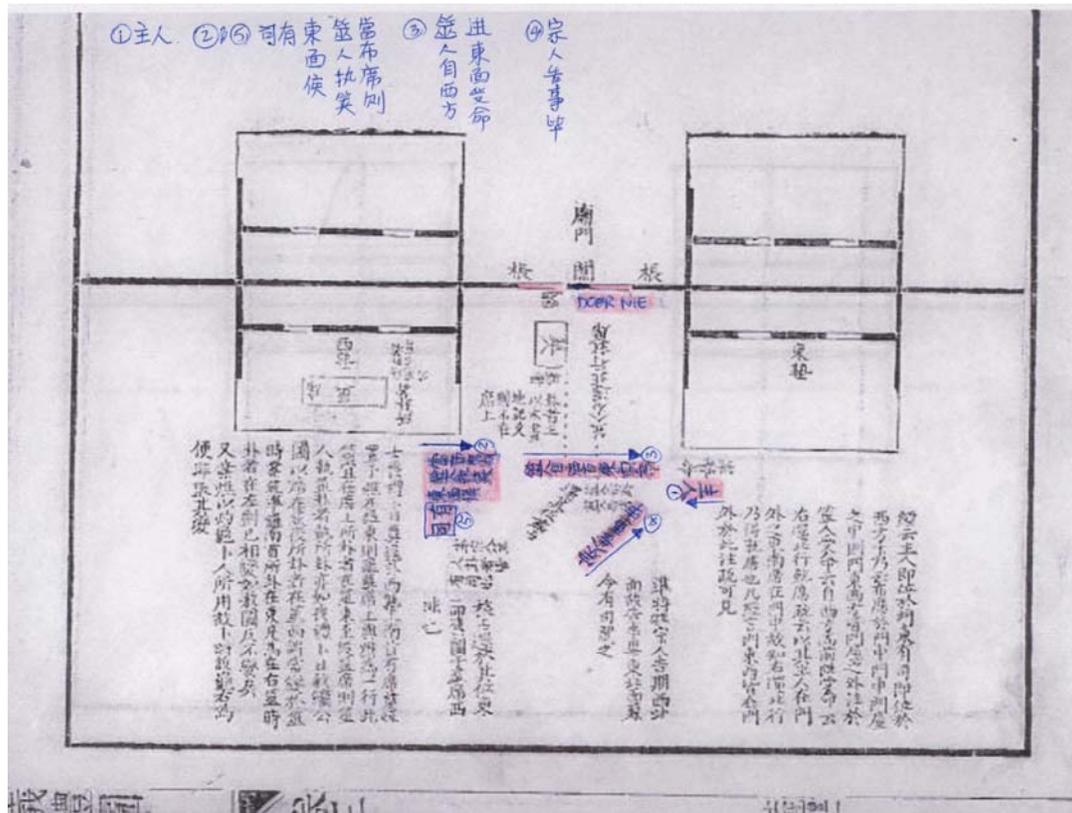


Figure 4.2. The Capping Rites in the *Book of Etiquette*, Zhang Huiyan, *Yi li tu : 6 juan*, 1871, added with annotations by the author.

The Master of Ceremonies, in his dark cap, dress clothes, black silk girdle, and white knee-pads, takes his place on the east side of the doorway facing west. The serving assistants, dressed like the Master of

<sup>224</sup> AAVV., *Zhongguo ru xue tong dian*, (Haikou, 1992), p. 226. The *Book of Etiquette*, which documents in detail the correct behavioral configurations in ritual ceremonies, is believed to have been compiled during the Spring and Autumn Period. It gained significant popularity during the Han dynasty. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, it had been largely re-compiled into one of the canonic liturgies of Confucian classics. The re-edited *Book of Etiquette* documents the detailed procedures of various ritual ceremonies, including the capping ceremony, the wedding ceremony, the greeting guest ceremony, the drinking ceremony, and the burying ceremony.

Ceremonies, take their places on the west side, facing east, and greeted from the north.<sup>225</sup>

A good visual reference that further illustrates the procedure of the

capping rites is the 1806 Qing dynasty publication, *Yi li tu* (仪礼图),

which visually details the prescribed ritual procedures.<sup>226</sup> Figure 4.2

from *Yi li tu* illustrates the event on the day of divination, which is



**Figure 4.3.**  
The ideogram  
for *nie* drawn  
by the author.

conducted at the doorway of a ritual hall known as *miao* (庙). The

door proper is located in the center oriented towards the south. This

southern central door is represented with double lines in the center of which is an

architectural piece labeled as the *nie* (臬). In Chinese oracle bone writings, the

word *nie* is derived from the image of a person's nose at the top, juxtaposed at

the bottom with the image of a tree (Figure 4.3). The nose means center, and the

tree is like the primitive form of a sundial for locating the central north-south axis.

The combined ideogram of *nie* in pre-Qin dynasty Chinese architecture

represents the central column that logically partitions the space into east and

west directions.<sup>227</sup>

The *nie* device at the threshold shown in Figure 4.2 is a small wooden

block that prevents the door panel from closing more than 90 degrees.<sup>228</sup> Yet the

most important function of the *nie* is to locate the center, thus providing a

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<sup>225</sup> John Steele, tr., *The I-Li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, (Taipei, 1966), p. 1. For the Chinese text, refer to AAVV., *Zhongguo ru xue tong dian*, (Haikou, 1992), p. 227.

士冠礼。筮于庙门。主人玄冠，朝服，缙带，素鞶，即位于门东，西面。有司如主人服，即位于西方，东面，北上。筮与席、所卦者，具饌于西塾。

<sup>226</sup> Zhang Huiyan, (1761-1802), *Yi li tu*, (1871), juan 2, shi guan li 1-10.

<sup>227</sup> Zhang Lianggao, *Jiang Xue Qi Shuo*, (Beijing, 2002), p. 82.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

reference to divide the homogenous space into its east and west orientations. In the *Book of Etiquette*, *nie* is mentioned three times, each with the purpose of directing placement (e.g., placing the sitting matt to the west of the *nie*).<sup>229</sup>

Once the center, east, and west directions have been pinpointed, the positions of the participating parties are determined. The Master of Ceremonies assumes the superior eastern orientation (i.e., at the east side of the door *nie*, facing west), while the serving assistant takes the inferior western side of the door *nie*. The two Chinese ideograms for *zhuren* (主人), meaning master are placed horizontally and written in the sequence from east to west, indicating the orientation of the Master facing west. The texts opposite to the ideograms of *zhuren* in Figure 4.2 are marked in the sequence from west to east and states, “The serving diviner from the west side approached the east to display the divinatory [to the Master of Ceremonies], the diviner told the content and the meaning of it [to the Master of Ceremonies].”<sup>230</sup> The sequence of annotations precisely maps the pre-defined movement of the diviner, who approaches from the west and moves respectfully toward the Master in the east. Thus, the Master is recognized unambiguously as the most important individual in the entire event.

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<sup>229</sup> Zheng Liangshu, *Yi li gong shi kao*, (Taipei, 1980), pp. 31-32. <<仪礼。士冠礼>> 布席于门中，臬(门部)西，域(门部)外，西面。

<<仪礼。士丧礼>> 布席于臬(门部)西，域(门部)外。

<<仪礼。特牲馈食礼>> 布席于门中，臬(门部)西，域(门部)外。

<sup>230</sup> John Steele (translator), *The I-Li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, p. 2. <<仪礼。士冠礼>>

The sixth image in the capping rites portrays the configuration associated with inviting guests into the house to join the banquet celebrating the youngster stepping into adulthood (see Figure 4.4). Two dotted lines mark the separate movements of the guest and the host as they ascend to the main hall. The line for the host enters from the east side of the main entry door and zigzags (*qu*, 曲) across the eastern steps and into the east side of the main hall. The line for the

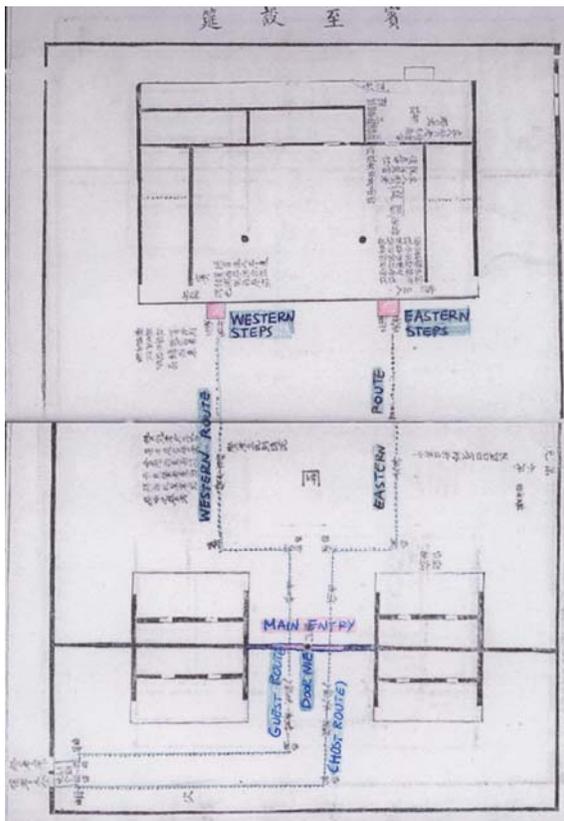


Figure 4.4. The Capping Rites in the *Book of Etiquette*, Zhang Huiyan, *Yi li tu* : 6 juan, 1871, added with annotations by the author.

the guest and host pause and bow to one another.

guest mirrors the east line by entering from the west side of the main entry door and zigzagging across the western steps and into the west side of the main hall. Although the east line for the host again takes precedence over the west for the guest, neither of them takes the central route or enters through the center of the door, which is strictly reserved for the king, the superiors, and the ancestors. The annotations embedded in the two dotted lines mark the locations where

A similar scenario of greeting a guest is documented in another classical Confucian ritual scripture, the *Record of Rites*,<sup>231</sup> which dictates the proper ritual behavior of the individuals. First the host must greet the guest outside of the door and ask the guest to enter into his humble estate first; meanwhile, the guest must politely apologize for any inconvenience he might have caused the host due to his visit, and appreciate the honor the host has granted him for allowing him to enter first. However he must not enter into the estate ahead of the host: the host enters, followed by the guest. Once both parties are inside, the host turns right onto the eastern route and ascends the eastern steps into the main hall, while the guest turns left onto the western route and ascends the western steps of the main hall. As part of the protocol, the host and guest respectfully ask each other to ascend into the hall first. Then the host is obliged to ascend first, and the guest follows. The host, ascending from the east, uses his right foot first; the guest, ascending from the west, uses his left foot first. On each step, the host and the guest must put together both their feet, and then ascend to the next step.<sup>232</sup> Not only are their demeanors highly refined, the sequence of their movements are rigidly orchestrated to conform to the explicit hierarchical order between the host and the guest and the orientations of the east and west. Another passage in the section *Yu zao* in the *Record of Rites* further emphasizes the east orientation over the west orientation. It states that, for reporting of all public affairs not

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<sup>231</sup> Yang Tianyu, *Li ji yi zhu*, vol. 1, (Shanghai, 1997), p. 15. The *Record of Rites* was a book completed in the Han dynasty purporting to further explain the concept of rites, to provide annotations on the *Book of Etiquette*, and also to record the many ritual performances related to the Han dynasty.

<sup>232</sup> This is the author's paraphrase. The Chinese texts are extracted from: *Ibid.*, p. 12.

凡与客入者，每门让于客。客至于寝门，则主人请入为席，然后出迎客。客固辞，主人肃客而入。主人入门而右，客入门而左。主人就东阶，客就西阶。客若降等，则就主人之阶。主人固辞，然后客复就西阶。主人与客让登，主人先登，客从之。拾级聚足，连步以上。上于东阶，则先右足，上于西阶，则先左足。

closely related to the family, one must enter through the west side of the door, and for reporting of affairs closely related to the family, one must enter through the east side of the door.<sup>233</sup>

In addition to the hierarchy between the east and west, the awe-inspiring center position is emphasized in the section *Qu li* in the *Record of Rites*. A passage states,

As a gentleman, he would not live in *ao*, the bedroom reserved for the parents or elders, neither does he occupy the center of a room reserved for the head of the household, neither does he enter into the household on the central route, and neither does he stand at the center of the door reserved for the superiors only.<sup>234</sup>

All these tediously documented rules about the hierarchy in orientation reflect its paramount importance. Through these seemingly superficial protocols for hierarchy in orientation, the correlated ranks in the relationship among the king and his officials, ancestors and their descendants, hosts and their guests, and among masters and their servants were translated into everyday habits and behaviors.

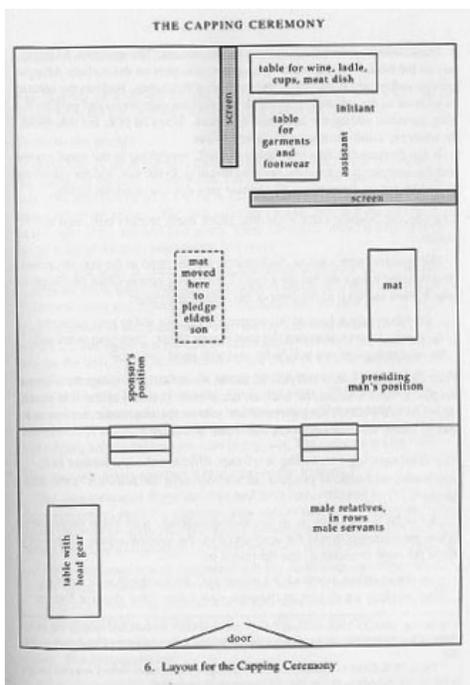
Although both the *Book of Etiquette* and the *Record of Rites* profoundly influenced the everyday habits and behaviors of people in the upper echelons through the 12<sup>th</sup> century, ordinary families were neither able to access these

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<sup>233</sup> This is the author's paraphrase. The Chinese texts are extracted from: Ibid., p. 522.  
公事自臬西，私事自臬东。

<sup>234</sup> This is the author's paraphrase. The Chinese texts are extracted from: Ibid., p. 8.  
为人子者，居不主奥，坐不中席，行不中道，立不中门。

ritual texts, nor allowed to practice the rites. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi revised these Confucian classics into his book *Family Rites*, which was geared to suit the needs of both the elite class and the common people. The *Family Rites* is based on a similar premise as in the Confucian classics utilizing a ritualistic setup to form a powerful ritual *shi* that automatically influences the body and mind of the individual, such that a community composed of these cultivated individuals would result in an orderly society. Although the fundamental rules in the *Book of Etiquette* and the *Record of Rites* are adopted in Zhu Xi's scriptures, many adaptations of these rules have been reinterpreted to ensure that ritual *shi* is maintained within simplified and practical ritual



**Figure 4.5. The Capping Rites in Zhu Xi's *Family Rites*, Chu Hsi (1130-1200), *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals, a twelfth-century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites*, tr., Patricia Buckley Ebrey, 1991.**

configurations, allowing for a broader base subject to the ritual *shi*.

When comparing the capping rite in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian *Family Rites* with that in the *Book of Etiquette*, the architectural configurations are seen to be similar, although far less elaborate. The designated room at the northeast corner of the hall in the *Book of Etiquette* is replaced with a room enclosed with two temporary screens (Figure 4.5).

However, within the simplified setup, the orientation hierarchy of center over east over west is still strategically maintained. In the

*Family Rites*, the eastern and western stairs on the main hall where the capping ceremony is held are repeatedly stressed as very salient features because they establish the fundamental hierarchical order. Zhu Xi advises that families who do not have two sets of steps in front of the main hall can draw two sets of steps with chalk lines to fulfill the requirements for the ritual.<sup>235</sup> Families unable to build a house with the main offering hall positioned at the center facing south due to various circumstances can take note of Zhu Xi's suggestion: "Here and throughout this book, in organizing the room, no matter which direction the offering hall actually faces, treat the front as south, the rear as north, the left as east and the right as west."<sup>236</sup>

Disregarding the absolute compass orientation, Zhu Xi takes the offering hall where ancestors are worshipped as the conceptual center facing the southern orientation. Based on his conjured orientation, the conceptual east and west are determined, overriding the true compass east-west orientations. Thus, Zhu Xi rearranges the absolute and unchangeable orientation hierarchy using a set of rational but imagined conceptual orientations to firmly sustain the ritual *shi*.

### **Ritual *Shi* Embodied in the Dimensions of the Doors**

The more dominant authoritative power inherent in the large size building elements is evident in ancient Chinese culture prior to the formation of the Confucian rites. The *Zuo zhuan* of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC specifies the different

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<sup>235</sup> Chu Hsi (1130-1200), *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals, a twelfth-century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites*, (Princeton, 1991), p. 40.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

scales of construction suited for the different ranks of people. It states that the size of the city built for the emperor encompasses nine *li* by nine *li*, with a total height of nine *zhang*; the city of a feudal lord encompasses five *li* by five *li*, with a height of seven *zhang*, while the size of the city built for royal relatives covers three *li* by three *li*, with a height of five *zhang*.<sup>237</sup> In the Confucian rites, the size hierarchies are also used to embody ritual *shi*, effectively imposing social order at every social level.

The Confucian governments of different dynasties intently regulated the scale of the architectural elements, including the house doors. The Tang dynasty decree on house construction, *Ying shan ling* (营缮令), in the *Yi fu zhi* section of the *Tang hui yao* (唐会要·舆服志), stipulates,

The houses for the officials with a status lower than the royal lords cannot be built with the layered bracket systems and coffered roofs. The officials above Rank Three yet not royal lords cannot build their main halls larger than five *jian* wide nine *jia* deep; the main entry gate structure cannot be built more than five *jian* wide and five *jia* deep. The officials of Rank Four and Five cannot build their main halls larger than five *jian* wide and seven *jia* deep; their main entry gate structure cannot be built more than three *jian* wide and two *jia* deep. The officials, if above Rank Five, are allowed to build the Black Head Door (*Wu tou men*). For the officials under Rank Six and Seven, their main hall cannot be built more than three *jian* wide and

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<sup>237</sup> Zhong Jingwen, *Zhongguo li yi quan shu*, (Hefei shi, 1995), pp. 21-22. One *li* equals to 150 *zhang*, one *zhang* equals to 10 *chi*, 1 *chi* equals 10 *cun*. One *chi* in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC is about 23.1cm.

five *jia* deep, and the main entry gate structure cannot exceed one *jian* wide and two *jia* deep. For the commoners, their houses cannot exceed three *jian* wide and four *jia* deep. Their main entry gate structure cannot be over one *jian* wide and two *jia* deep.<sup>238</sup>

These legalized building size regulations keep apart the social groups and orders. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, similar detailed rules were established. The Qing dynasty decree, *Qing lu ling* (清律令), declares that the officials of Ranks One and Two can build their main halls with a size of seven *jian* wide and nine *jia* deep, and with main doors three *jian* wide and five *jia* deep. The main entry gate structure cannot be over one *jian* wide and two *jia* deep in houses of the common people.

These rules were further imposed on Qing dynasty house door construction, which can be observed in the doors of the many Qing house preserved today. The different ranked doors are shown in Figure 4.6. The left-most image is the main entrance entry of a royal family's house; it is the grandest in scale among all the house doors in the figures. The second image is the *guang liang da men* (literally, the "broad and bright grand door"), a main entrance for the important government officials. The last two images are the *ruyi* and the *manzi* (蛮子) doors used by commoners.<sup>239</sup> The arranged settings not only endorse the

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 24. *Jian* is a unit in traditional Chinese architecture, measured as the distance between two columns in the east-west axis; *jia* is a unit measured as the distance between two purlins in the north-south axis.

<sup>239</sup> Lou Qingxi, *Zhongguo jian zhu de men wen hua*, (Wuhan shi, 2001), p. 33.

grander door with superior power, but also engender a greater ritual *shi* that brands the hierarchy in the minds of the people who experience them.



Figure 4.6. Various doors built according to the Confucian hierarchy, Lou Qingxi, *Zhongguo jian zhu de men wen hua*, 2001.

### Orientation and Size of the Yin Yu Tang House Doors

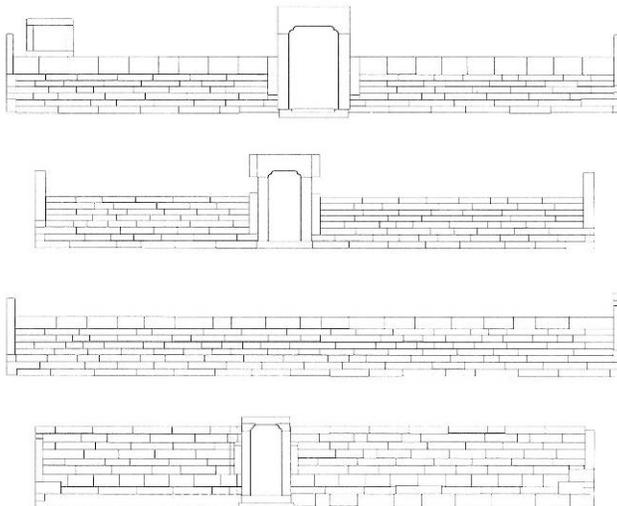
The hierarchical rules for the orientation and size of doors were encoded into the construction of the YIT house. The actual compass orientation of the YIT house has the central building entrance at the north and the main offering hall located at the south facing north, responding to the practical requirements of the site. However, the actual house orientation is the opposite of the orientation



Figure 4.7. Left: Yin Yu Tang front entrance, Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, 2003. Right: Yin Yu Tang side entrance door, photograph by the author, courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum.

preferred by the classical Confucian scriptures on rites, which place the central building entrance at the south, with the main offering hall located at the north facing south. When the YIT house was constructed in the early 1800s, the owner of the YIT house followed Zhu Xi's proposal to take the compass north as the conceptual south to resolve this conflict. The conceptual south determines the conceptual east and west, which overrules the true compass orientations. The three YIT house entry doors are sized according to the ritual orientation hierarchy referencing the conceptual orientations. The center exterior house door positioned at the conceptual south was built as the main and the grandest entrance. The exterior door at the conceptual east was built more prominently than the door at the conceptual west (Figure 4.7 shows the conceptual south central door and the conceptual east door of the YIT house).

The main entrance door at the conceptual south is set into the masonry



wall, with a wall base about five and a half feet in height, which is a foot higher than the other stone wall bases at the conceptual east or west. It is also built with nearly evenly sized stones in a running bond, capped with a course of large

**Figure 4.8. Construction details of the Yin Yu Tang entrance doors and enclosing walls, Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, 2003.**

capstones. The stone doorframe is composed of three large masonry stones; the two vertical pieces support the horizontal lintel. These three pieces of stones are larger than the corresponding ones at the other conceptual orientations. The conceptual eastern door is set within a masonry wall with a four-and-a-half foot tall stonewall base. The stone course is laid out in a running bond, with relatively uniformly sized blocks. The stone doorframe resembles the central door, except on a smaller scale. On the conceptual west side, the running bond stone courses are laid out with randomly sized stone blocks (Figure 4.8 and Plate 4.1). As Nancy Berliner observes,

The (conceptual) west wall seemed to be made of reused stone from a previous construction. And instead of the wall being one stone thick, it has at places the thickness of three thin stones, each laid vertically in a sandwich fashion.<sup>240</sup>

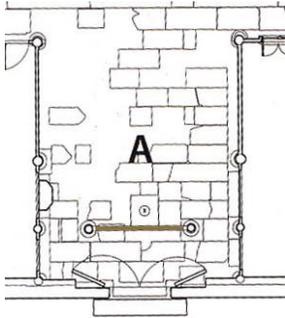
The conceptual west stone doorframe is made of smaller slab of stones than those used on the doorframe on the conceptual east. The wooden door panel and the wooden door lintels all follow the same construction logic. The central entry door at the conceptual south is built with neatly sized pieces of *shanmu*, a type of local fir. In contrast, the door at the conceptual west is economically constructed with scratches of *shanmu* (Plate 4.2). The first owner of the YYT house discriminately built the grandest architectural elements at the superior conceptual south orientation with much higher construction accuracy. The less important conceptual east and the inferior west utilized cost-effective

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<sup>240</sup> Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, p. 140.

construction, appropriate to the requirements of the orientation and size hierarchy defined in the Confucian rites.

After one enters the main entrance door, one encounters the ceremonial



**Figure 4.9. Partial plan of the Yin Yu Tang showing the ceremonial door, Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, 2003.**

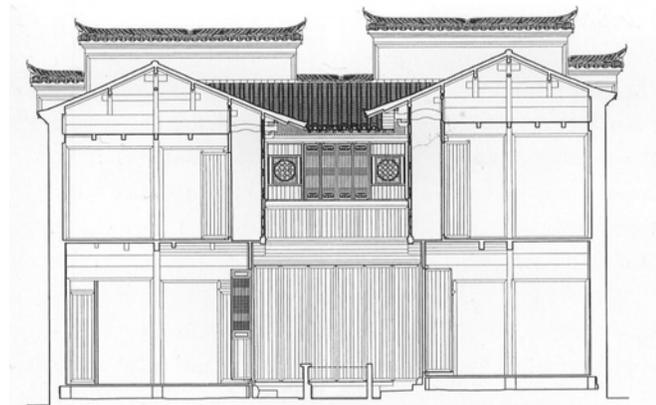
door, about three feet six inches away from the main entrance door (Figure 4.9). The ceremonial door located at the central north-south axis separates the incoming people into two orientations: the east and the west (see Figure 4.28). The ordered proceedings, as configured by the disposition of the ceremonial door, effectively encode the ritualistic manner of behaving into everyday habits.

The hierarchical sequence was also built into the various rooms within the YYT house. The rooms on the lower floor on the same side of the offering hall possess

higher status than the rooms facing them because they are oriented the same way as the offering hall facing the conceptual south. Their floor levels are raised one step above the courtyard and are higher than the floor levels of the rooms on the

opposite side. The rooms directly above them are also taller than those on the opposite side; therefore, as a whole, the YYT house has a higher roofline on this

The hierarchical sequence was also built into the



**Figure 4.10. Yin Yu Tang house sectional drawing, Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, 2003.**

side than its opposite side, indicating its more prominent status (Figure 4.10).

Among the downstairs rooms facing conceptual south, the rooms located to the

conceptual east of the offering hall (i.e., as shown in Figure 4.11,

numbered room 7 and 8) rank higher than do the rooms at the

conceptual west (i.e., numbered room 3 and 4). Rooms 7 and 8

were traditionally designated for the elders and the most senior

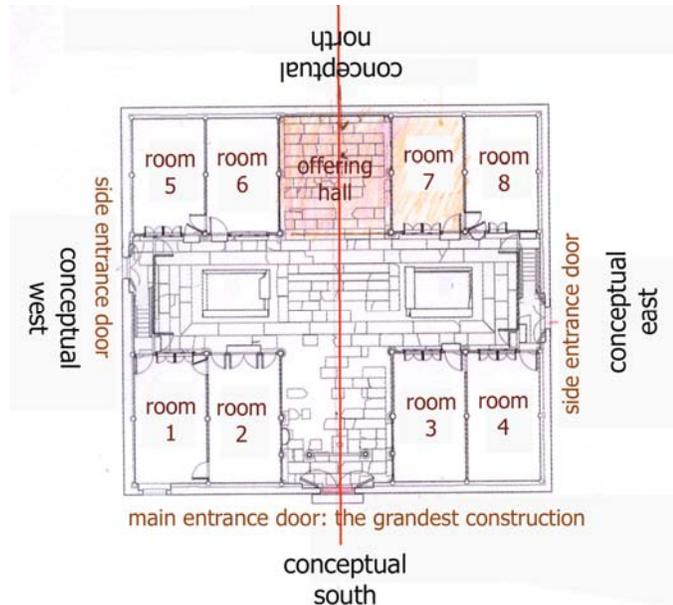
members of the family and their

spouses, due both to the

member's high status within the

family and to the conveniences these rooms provided them. Berliner observes,

“Room 7, located in the upper hall and on the conceptual east side of the building would have been the room of greatest status. This bedroom measures 8 feet 9 wide by 14 ft and 2 inches long.”<sup>241</sup>



**Figure 4.11.** Yin Yu Tang house door orientations, Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, 2003, with annotations by the author.

Because room 7 has a floor level one step above the courtyard, a piece of artistically carved stone doorstep is placed in front of the door, which is not found in the lower ranking rooms. Meanwhile, the raised wooden floor provides extra

<sup>241</sup> Nancy Berliner, *Yin Yu Tang, the Architecture and Daily Life of a Chinese House*, p. 157.

room underneath for ventilation, to keep out ground moisture, and to prevent deterioration.<sup>242</sup>

As analyzed above, the orientation and size hierarchies codified in the Confucian classical ritual scriptures are built into the YYT house in subtle yet perceivable ways. Simultaneously, the house's rigid and ritualistic orderly configurations naturally espouse a ritual *shi* that cultivates the habits and demeanors of the residents. For example, a woman in the family clan habitually enters the ungainly western doors of the house, while avoiding the more graceful eastern doors. The younger generation within a household occupies the lesser rooms at the western side, while yielding the finer eastern rooms to the older generation. Explicitly encoding the orientation and size hierarchy into the house configurations not only engraves the hierarchical rules into the mindset of the residents, it also imbues each detailed door orientation and size with a didactic meaning and a ritual *shi*.

### **Cosmological *Shi* Embodied in the Orientation and Size of the House Doors**

House doors encoded with the rigid orientation and size hierarchies defined in the Confucian rites embody a ritual *shi* that reinforces the fixed social order. However, the center, south and east are not the only orientation considered preferable for house door dispositions. Some house doors in the Huizhou region are positioned with a southeast or northwest orientation, according to the guidance of various Fengshui theories. In those instances, the

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

orientation is not hierarchical and can be understood as either auspicious or inauspicious. Moreover, the sizes of the doors not only follow the ritual hierarchy, but their dimensions were required to be proportional to the size of the house and to fall within auspicious dimensions. The favorable orientations and sizes of doors can maximize beneficial cosmological *shi*, thus blessing the residents within.

### **Cosmological *Shi* Embodied in the Door Orientations**

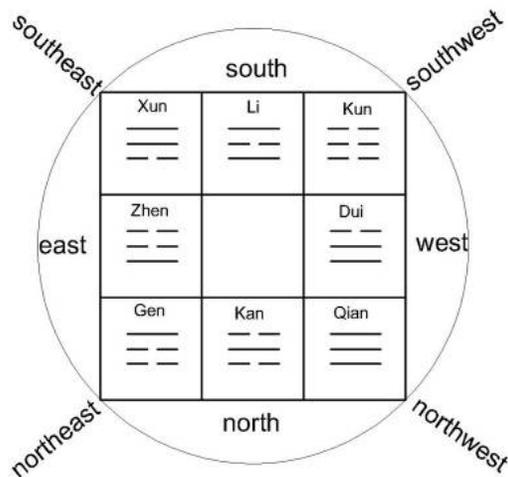
According to the later Fengshui texts about human dwellings, such as the popular *Yang zai shi shu* (i.e., literally, *Ten Books on the Dwellings* 阳宅十书) of the Ming dynasty and the *Yang zai zuo yao* (*On the Fundamentals in Dwellings* 阳宅撮要) of the Qing dynasty, the orientation of the door is particularly emphasized. Wu Zi in his *Yang zai zuo yao* states:

The house itself does not denote auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. The door will make the house auspicious or inauspicious. In general, if the sitting location of the house door faces the three auspicious orientations of *shengqi*, *tianyi* and *yannian* according to the destiny of the householder, then the auspicious *qi* from the three auspicious orientations will enter the house (engender favorable cosmological *shi*) to naturally bless the occupants who go out and come in through the auspicious access on foot.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Wang Yude, *Gu dai feng shui shu zhu ping*, (Beijing, 1992), pp. 134.

The three auspicious orientations for positioning house doors are as follows: *shengqi* (i.e., literally, endorsing life energy, 生气), which possesses cosmological *shi* blessing new lives and liveliness to the family; *tianyi* (i.e., literally, heavenly doctor, 天医), which possesses cosmological *shi* blessing the health of the occupants; and *yannian* (i.e., literally lengthening life, 延年), which possesses cosmological *shi* endorsing the longevity of the family. These directions do not have universal correlations with the compass orientations



**Figure 4.12. The Eight Trigrams and the eight orientations, drawn by the author.**

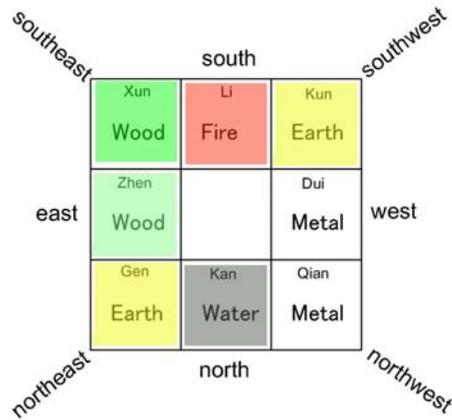
because their mappings to the compass orientations are determined based on the destiny of the house owner; therefore, the cosmological *shi* embodied in the door is specific to the family lineage.

The popular method for calculating the three auspicious orientations is called *Dayounian fa* (大游年法), a rather complicated

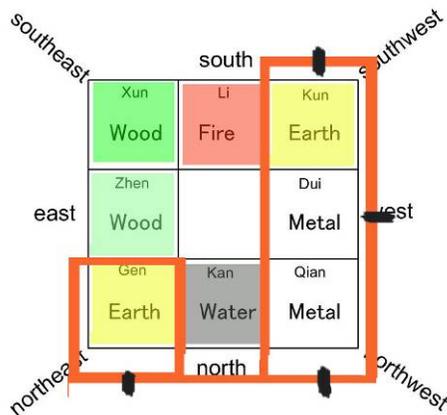
process recorded in the *Yang zai shi shu* as well as in *Yang zai zuo yao*.<sup>244</sup> First, a house is categorized as either an Eastern Four House or a Western Four House. The destiny of the house owner is classified as belonging either to the Eastern Four Destinies or to the Western Four Destinies. A house owner belonging to the Eastern Four Destinies must live and build his house belonging

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

to the Eastern Four Houses, and vice versa for an owner belonging to the Western Four Destinies. Whether a house is categorized as an Eastern Four



**Figure 4.13. The Eight Trigrams, the eight orientations and the Five Phases, drawn by the author.**



**Figure 4.14. Western Four Houses, drawn by the author.**

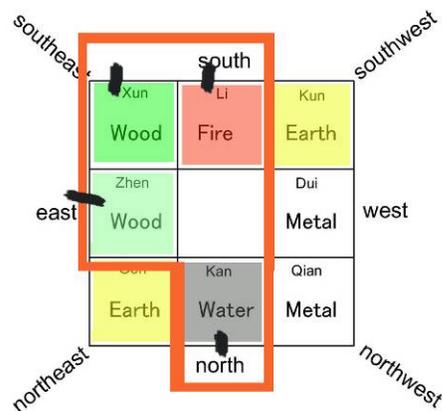
House or a Western Four House is determined according to the orientation of the main entrance door. The main entrance door can be located in one of the Eight-Trigram orientations arranged in the Later Heaven Sequence (Figure 4.12). Each of the Eight-Trigram orientations is mapped with one of the Five Phases. The

conventionally accepted mapping is shown in Figure 4.13. The northwest trigram orientation *qian* (乾) is assigned to the Metal Phase of the Five Phases; the west trigram orientation *dui* (兑) is also assigned to the Metal Phase; the southwest *kun* (坤) is assigned to the Earth Phase; and the northeast *gen* (艮) is likewise assigned to the Earth Phase.

The *qi* produced from these four trigram orientations is infused with the cosmological forces of the Earth Phase and Metal Phase, which are construed as mutually nourishing each other (i.e., as earth nourishes the formation of metal mines) and are in productive relationship

according to the Five Phase theory. Therefore, the four trigram orientations primarily focused on compass west are grouped as the Western Four Orientations. When locating a house's main entrance door in any of the four Western Four Orientations (i.e., *qian*, *dui*, *kun*, and *gen*), the house is considered a Western Four House type (see Figure 4.14).<sup>245</sup>

Similarly, the trigram orientations of the east *zhen* are assigned to the Wood Phase, the southeast *xun* is assigned to the Wood Phase, the northern *kan* is assigned to the Water Phase, and the south *li* is assigned to the Fire



**Figure 4.15. Eastern Four Houses, drawn by the author.**

Phase. The *qi* generated from these four trigram orientations—which are infused with the cosmological forces of Wood, Fire, and Water—are construed as mutually nourishing each other in the same way that water nourishes the growth of a tree (wood) and wood nourishes the creation of fire, and therefore remain in productive relationship

according to the Five Phases theory. Thus, the four trigram orientations primarily focused on the compass east side are grouped as the Eastern Four Orientations. If the main entrance door is located in any of these four Eastern Four Orientations (i.e., *zhen*, *xun*, *li*, and *kan*), the house is considered an Eastern-Four-House type (see Figure 4.15). The Phase assignments and cosmological forces in Eastern Four Houses are in harmony with each other, as are those in

<sup>245</sup> Kang Liang, *Feng shui yu jian zhu*, (Tianjin, 1999), p. 94, or Yu Xixian & Yu Yong, *Zhongguo gu dai feng shui de li lun yu shi jian*, pp. 542-543.

Western Four Houses. Yet, if intermingled, the Phase assignments and related cosmological forces in Eastern Four Houses become controlling and harmful to those of Western Four Houses.



Figure 4.16. Fengshui palm, Kang Liang, *Feng shui yu jian zhu*, 1999.

subject to the influence of one phase and one type of vital energy *qi*. The birth year of a person is calculated to obtain a single digit number normally through a Fengshui palm calculation, a rule-of-thumb method for the Fengshui master to determine the trigram that belongs to the house owner who is born in a particular year. Figure 4.16 shows an image of the Fengshui palm on which the correlations between the magic square of three, the Eight-Trigram orientations and the twelve *dizhi* (地支) used to record time (i.e., the hours, months and years) are inscribed.<sup>246</sup> This single digit number, or the destiny number of this person, is mapped into the divinatory chart of the Chinese magic square of three. If the calculated number is 9,

3, 4, or 1 in the magic square of three, the fate of the person belongs to the

Classifying a person as Western Four Destinies or as Eastern Four Destinies is based on the year the person was born because each year is believed to be subject to the influence of one phase and one type of vital energy *qi*. The birth year of a person is calculated

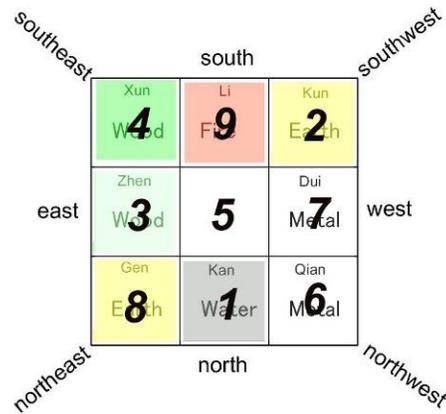
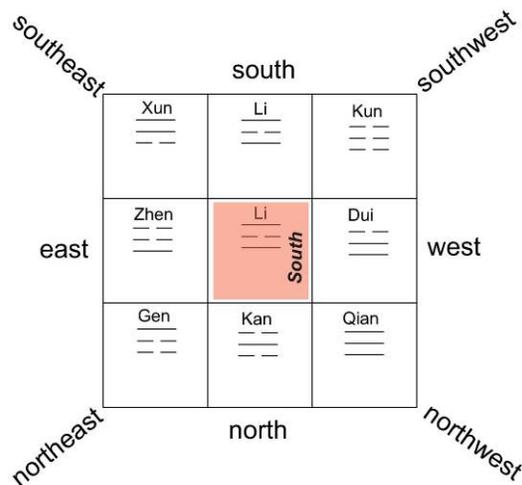


Figure 4.17. The Eight Trigrams and the Magic Square of Three, drawn by the author.

<sup>246</sup> The way to calculate a person's birth year into one of the eight trigrams is explained in Li Ling *Zhongguo fang shu gai guan xing ming juan* (Beijing, 1993), pp. 367-369.

Eastern Four Destinies; if the number is 8, 7, 6, or 2, the fate belongs to the Western Four Destinies.<sup>247</sup> An Eastern-Four-Destinies person can only have a house belonging to the Eastern Four Houses, with its main entry door at the position of one of the four Eastern Four Orientations.

In *Dayounian fa*, the owner's destiny is further used to conceptually figure out the three auspicious orientations for positioning house doors: *shengqi*, *tianyi*, and *yannian*. As shown in Figure 4.17, each of the eight perimeter squares of the magic square of three is associated with one of the Eight-Trigram orientations. The owner's destiny number attained from the Fengshui palm calculation as explained earlier thus has an associated trigram through the correlation of the



**Figure 4.18.** The method of deducing the auspicious orientations, drawn by the author.

magic square of three and the Eight-Trigram orientations.<sup>248</sup> The house owner's destiny trigram is then positioned at the center of the magic square of three, with the Eight-Trigram orientations surrounding it. For example, if the head of the household has a time-fate number 9, the associated trigram would be *li* in the south orientation. Then the *li* trigram is situated in the center of

the 3 x 3 square at the position of 5 (Figure 4.18).

<sup>247</sup> Kang Liang, *Feng shui yu jian zhu*, pp. 93-97.

<sup>248</sup> Wang Yongkuan, *He tu luo shu tan mi*, (Zhengzhou, 2006), pp. 246-251. Also see Kang Liang, *Feng shui yu jian zhu*, p. 97.

The three lines of the central trigram, either broken or unbroken, are sequentially contrasted with the three lines of the surrounding eight trigrams, creating eight possible outcomes: (1) If only the first line within the three lines is changed, it means the compared trigram gives *shengqi* to the central hexagram (in the case of the *li* trigram at the center, the east orientation *zhen* trigram is the auspicious *shengqi* orientation). (2) If the first two lines are changed, such as the *li* trigram and the west *dui* trigram, the *dui* orientation is inauspicious and brings the evil forces of the *wugui* (literally, Five Demons) to the house owner. (3) If the middle line is changed alone, such the northwest *qian* trigram to the central *li* trigram, the *qian* orientation brings the harmful forces of *jueming* (literally, Breaking off Life). (4) If only the bottom line of the trigram changes, such as the *li* trigram with the northeast *gen* trigram, the *gen* orientation brings the inauspicious force of the *huohai* (literally, Calamitous Injury). (5) If the bottom two lines of the trigram change, such as the *li* trigram with the southeast *xun* trigram, the *xun* orientation brings the auspicious force of the *tianyi*., (6) If the top line and the bottom line are changed, such as *li* with the trigram *kun* at the southwest orientation, the *kun* orientation is believed to bring the evil forces of *liusha* (literally, Six Noxiousness). (7) If all three lines are changed, such as the northern *kan* trigram to the *li* trigram, then the *kan* of the north casts the auspicious force of *yannian*. Therefore, three auspicious positions *shengqi*, *tianyi*, and *yannian* can be found according to the destiny of the owner, as shown in Figure 4.19. These three orientations are appropriate for locating doors to benefit the entire household.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Kang Liang, *Feng shui yu jian zhu*, p. 96.

Besides auspiciously orienting a door, the main gate needs to be positioned properly in relation to other architectural elements. According to the *Yang zai zuo yao*, if the main gate is on the same north-south axis as the main entry door and forms a direct route, auspicious *qi* will escape from the house, therefore inflicting misfortune on the residents.

Furthermore, the *Yang zhai san yao*

(*Three Primary Elements of the Yang Dwellings*)—another Qing dynasty treatise widely distributed, especially in Southern China—stresses the harmonious arrangement of the three fundamental elements of the house: the gate, the principal room, and the cooking stove. The three elements are introduced at the beginning of the first chapter of *Yang zhai san yao* as follows:

What are the so-called three primary elements of a house? They are the gate, the principal room, and cooking stove. The gate is the access to approach [the house]. The principal room is the place of [householder's] residing, and the cooking stove is the place for food preparation.<sup>250</sup>

After introducing the three elements, the sequence of examination is elaborated: “[for the examination] of a house, one must examine its gate first,

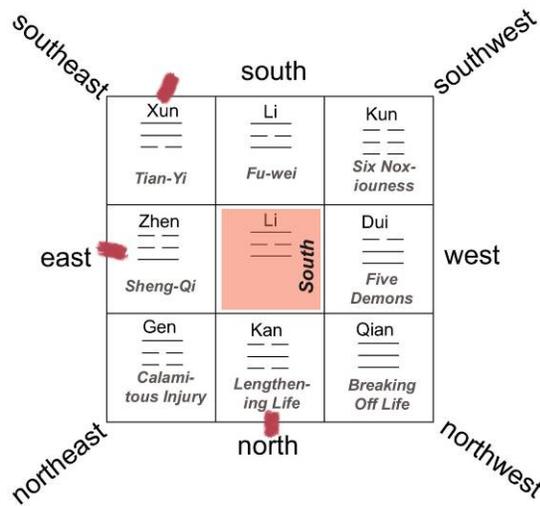


Figure 4.19. The method of deducing the auspicious orientations, drawn by the author.

<sup>250</sup> Sang Hae Lee, *Feng-Shui: Its Context and Meaning*, (Ithaca, 1986), p. 303.

then the door [orientation] of the principal room and finally the [orientation of the fuel hole of] the cooking stove.”<sup>251</sup> If the relationship between the principal room and the gate is favorable, then the relationship of the cooking stove to the other two elements is examined:

The gate and the principal room should have a productive relationship to each other [according to their assigned Five Phases] from which the house will be judged as being auspicious. If they are in the destructive relationship, [the house] will be inauspicious. This method is no doubt the very necessary principle for the examination of house. As to the [fuel hole direction of the] cooking stove, since it is the place of nourishment, its relation to the others is very important. First, with the gate, it (the fuel hole) must have a productive relationship, then with the principal room.<sup>252</sup>

According to the theory of the Five Phases, each opening or door orientation of the three primary elements of a house is given one of the Eight-Trigram orientations and is equated with one of the Five Phases, as mapped in Figure 4.13. The orientations of the three elements are examined in the order of the gate, principal room, and cooking stove, and should have their assigned Phases arranged in a productive relationship with each other so auspicious cosmological *shi* permeates the house, ensuring prosperity, longevity, and luck for the family.

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

## Examining YYT House Door Orientations

As stated earlier in this chapter, the conceptual orientations of the YYT house are chosen over the compass orientations, following the Zhu Xi's neo-Confucian orientation hierarchy. Did the Fengshui master use the compass orientations or the conceptual ones in deciding the auspicious orientations for the doors of the YYT house? Studying the two scenarios below reveals that the Fengshui master followed the conceptual north-south orientation to position the doors to gain the *shi* of beneficial cosmological forces.

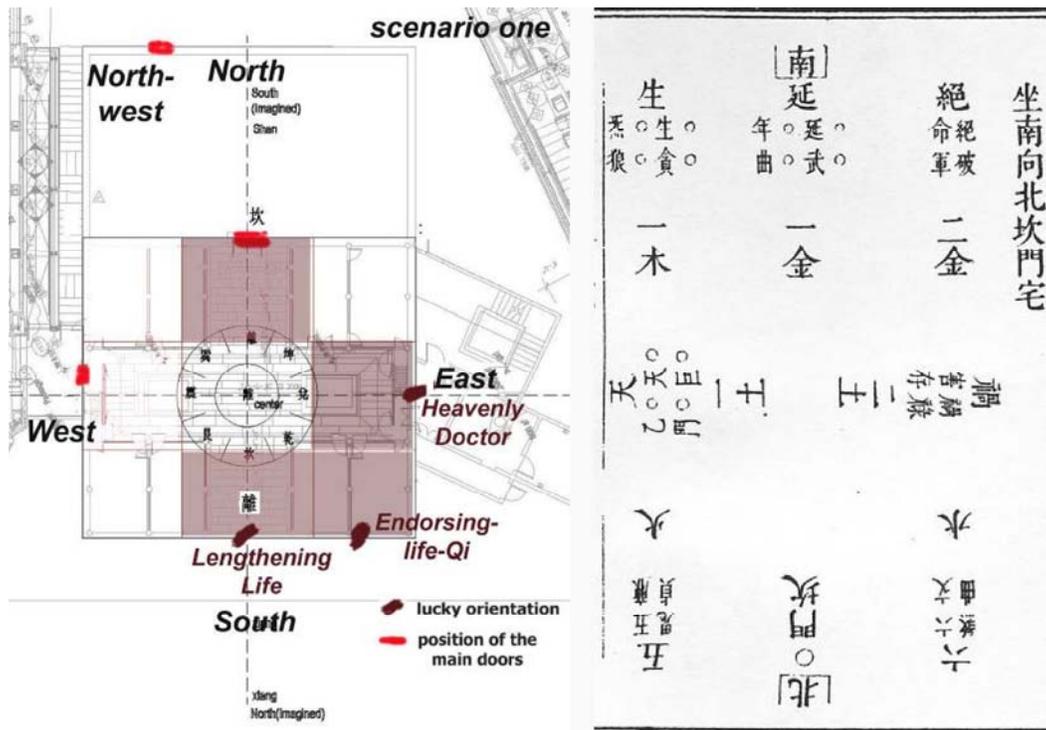


Figure 4.20. Left: The analysis of the Yin Yu Tang door orientations, based on plan drawing by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC., with annotations by the author. Right: Gu jin tu shu ji cheng - yi shu dian, kan yu bu, *Qin ding gu jin tu shu ji cheng*, vol. 675, 1726.

The first scenario takes the true compass north-south directions as the Fengshui master's reference for orienting the YYT house doors. According to the current orientations of the house doors, the YYT house would have been

classified as Sitting South Facing North, with the main entry door at the north trigram *kan* orientation. Having the main house entry door at the *kan* determines the YYT house as an Eastern Four House type ( left-most image on Figure 4.20). As a rule of thumb, an Eastern Four House classification should not have any doors positioned on the Western Four Orientations; otherwise bad luck will be brought into the family. However, the current second entrance of the YYT house door is located at the compass west, and the front yard door of the YYT is located at the compass northwest. Both belong to the Western Four Orientations, violating the rules defined in the Eastern and Western Four House theories. Furthermore, *Yang zai shi shu* gives the orientation chart deduced from the *Dayounian fa* for a house arranged as Sitting South Facing North, with the main entry door at the north trigram *kan* (see the right-most image on Figure 4.20). The chart identifies the orientations suitable for locating house doors as the south *li*, possessing the cosmological *shi* of *yannian* (sanctioning longevity); the southeast Xun, possessing the cosmological *shi* of *shengqi* (endorsing vital energies and liveliness into the family); and the east *zhen*, possessing the cosmological *shi* of *tianyi* (sanctioning good health). All the other orientations are not appropriate for locating doors. Comparing this with the actual YYT house door locations, none of the YYT house entry doors has an auspicious orientation. This takes issue with the supposition that the Fengshui master used compass orientation as the main reference to position the YYT house doors.

The second scenario takes the conceptual orientation as the Fengshui master's reference. The YYT house would be conceptually classified as Sitting

North Facing South, with the main entrance door located at the conceptual south *li* orientation. Having the orientation of the main entrance door at the conceptual south *li* shows that the YIT house is also an Eastern Four House type. The conceptual orientations of the YIT house entry doors are as follows: the front main entry door is in the conceptual south *li*, the side entrance door is in the conceptual east *zhen*, and the front yard door is in the conceptual southeast *xun*—all mapped into favored auspicious orientations (see left-most image on Figure 4.21).

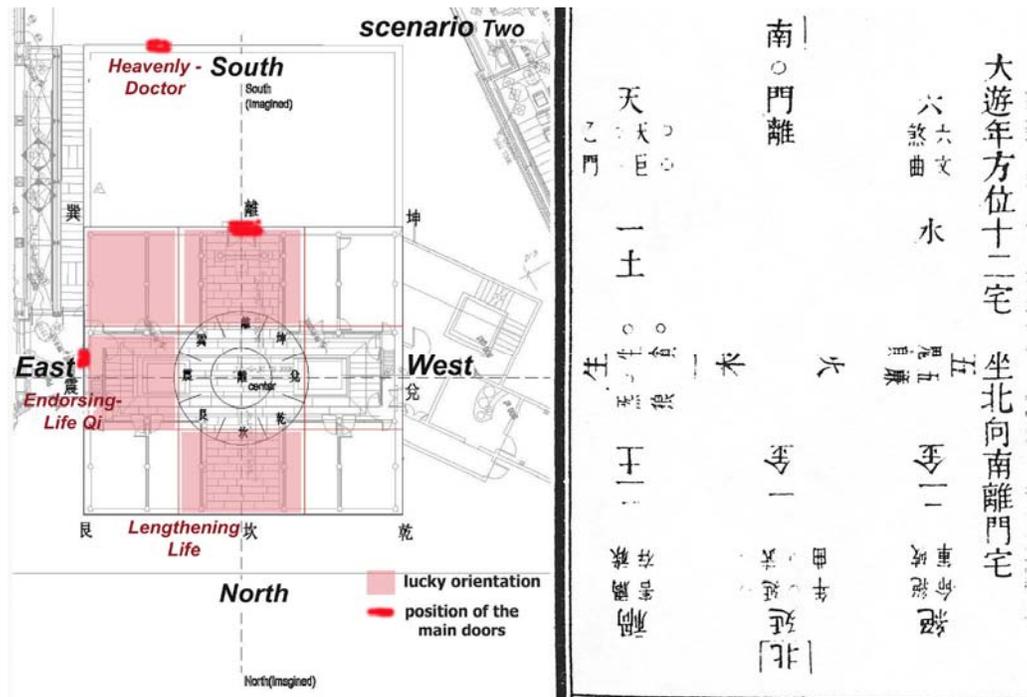


Figure 4.21. Left: The analysis of the Yin Yu Tang door orientations, based on plan drawing by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC., with annotations by the author. Right: Gu jin tu shu ji cheng - yi shu dian, kan yu bu, *Qin ding gu jin tu shu ji cheng*, vol. 675, 1726.

Similarly, in the *Yang zai shi shu*, the *dayounian fa* orientation chart for type of house arrangement, lists Sitting North Facing East, with the main entry door at the south *li* (see right-most image in Figure 4.21). The east *zhen*, which is

the conceptual orientation of the side entrance door, is labeled as *shengqi*, possessing favorable cosmological *shi*. The southeast *xun*, which is the conceptual orientation of the front yard entrance, is labeled as possessing the favorable cosmological *shi* of *tianyi* to ensure the good health of the family members. Although the north *kan* would have been a favorable location for an entry door, no actual door was ever built there because a door at the YYT house's conceptual north *kan* would have formed a direct route with the main entry door at the conceptual south *li*, causing the house's auspicious vital energy *qi* to escape. The main entrance door at the conceptual south *li*, with the Fire Phase, is harmonious with the Phase of the conceptually south-facing principal room (i.e., the offering hall) to ensure that auspicious cosmological powers penetrate layer by layer into the house through the doors. Therefore, the Fengshui master cleverly used the conceptual orientations to auspiciously orient the YYT house doors to reorder the cosmological powers and ensure favorable cosmological *shi* in the house.

### **Cosmological *Shi* Embodied in the Dimensions of Chinese House Doors**

The numerical dimensions of traditional Chinese house doors were not only categorized into different levels of scale to reinforce the social hierarchy, but were supposed to be proportionate to the size of the house. The 9<sup>th</sup> century treatise *Huangdi zhai jing* (*Yellow Emperor's House Canon*, 黄帝宅经) states,

House has five types of unfavorable emptiness that can wane the family.

First emptiness is when a big house has few people living inside. Second

is when a small house has small narrow interiors but a big entry door. Third is when a house leaves the outside enclosing walls unfinished. Fourth is when the water well and stoves of a house are not correctly oriented. The last one is when a house is located on a vast piece of land with a big empty courtyard. The house also has five types of favorable solidness that can enrich the family. First solidness is gained when a house is relatively small yet with many people living within. Second is gained when a house has large and broad interior space, yet small entry door. Third is gained when a house has completely finished the outside enclosing walls. Fourth is gained when a small house is filled with many living stocks. The last one is gained when a house has a water feather

channeling to the South-east directions.<sup>253</sup>

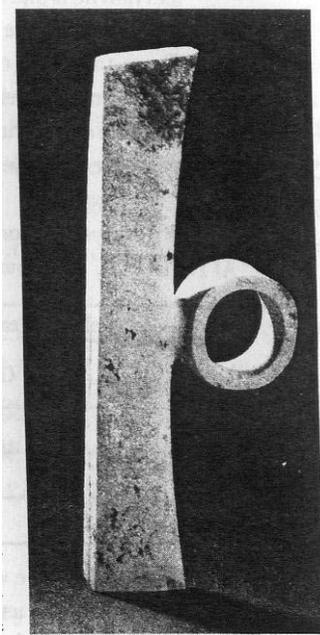


Figure 4.22. Image of an ancient *ju*, Yu Jian, *Kan yu kao yuan*, 2005.

Among the five types of unfavorable emptiness and favorable solidness in relation to a house, one type of unpromising emptiness has an entrance door disproportionately big for a small house. Conversely, one type of promising solidness has a small entrance door for a big house. This theory is derived from the premise that the cosmological vital energy *qi* flows in and out of a house through the entrance door. A disproportionately

<sup>253</sup> Wang Yude, *Gu dai feng shui shu zhu ping*, pp. 30.

又云：宅有五虚，令人贫耗；五实，令人富贵。宅大人少，一虚；宅门大内小，二虚；墙院不完，三虚；井灶不处，四虚；宅地多屋少、庭院广，五虚。宅小人多，一实；宅大门小，二实；墙院完全，三实；宅小六畜多，四实；宅水沟东南流，五实。又云：宅乃渐昌，勿弃宫堂。不衰莫移，故为受殃。舍居就广，未必有欢。计口半造，必得寿考（宅不宜广）。

large door has the danger of leaking vital energy *qi*, leading to an inauspicious result. On the other hand, a door that is small in proportion to the size of the house is capable of storing the vital energy *qi* inside the house, leading to the well-being of the residents within. Besides the request of making a door proportional to the size of the house, the 15<sup>th</sup> century carpenter's manual, *Lu ban*



**Figure 4.23.** Silk funeral banner showing Nu Wa and Fu Xi, Lou Qingxi, *The Architectural Art of Ancient China*, 2002.

*jing jiang jia jing*, and the Ming dynasty treatise on dwellings, *Yang zai shi shu*, require door opening dimensions to be finely tuned by the simultaneous use of two different foot-rulers: the *qu chi* (carpenter's square) and the Lu Ban *zhen chi* (true foot-ruler of Lu Ban).<sup>254</sup> Both foot-rulers are measuring devices possessing cosmological powers. The carpenter's square was originally called *ju* (矩), the former ideogram of which is *ju* (𠄎). The jade *ju* (𠄎) excavated from the ancient Liangzhu cultural site shown in Figure 4.22 is a cosmological instrument. The circular aperture is used to peer through to observe the movement of the stars, therefore revealing the seasonal changes on Earth.<sup>255</sup> The ideogram *ju* (𠄎) itself is derived from the image of the ideogram *gong* (工) which means craftsman

<sup>254</sup> Klass Ruitenbeek, *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China - a Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenter's Manual Lu Ban Jing*, p. 77.

<sup>255</sup> Yu Jian, *Kan yu kao yuan*, (Beijing, 2005), p. 59.

nowadays.<sup>256</sup> *Gong* is not a common craftsman, but someone who possesses the magical power of knowing the rhythms of the heavens with the aid of the divine tool, *ju*. Multiple representations of the Chinese progenitors—the female goddess Nu Wa holding a compass *gui* and the male god Fu Xi holding a *ju*—can be seen in early Han dynasty tomb brick carvings and mural paintings. The 7<sup>th</sup> century Chinese silk funeral banner later became an elaborate version of this ancient motif (Figure 4.23). In this image, the goddess Nu Wa and the god Fu Xi entwine in cosmic harmony with the divine instruments (the *gui* and *ju*) in their hands.<sup>257</sup>

The *ju* has multiple functions. The *Zhou bi suan jing* (周髀算经), a mathematical treatise compiled around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, explains the rules for using the *ju*:

Position the *ju* leveled to measure the straightness;

Position the *ju* upwards to determine the height;

Position the *ju* downwards to determine the depth;

Crouch the *ju* to know distance;

Loop the *ju* to get circles;

Connect the *ju* to get squares.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 15 & p. 59.

<sup>257</sup> Lou Qingxi, *The Architectural Art of Ancient China*, (Beijing, 2002), p. 29.

<sup>258</sup> Yu Jian, *Kan yu kao yuan*, p. 12. <<周髀算经>>

平矩以正绳，偃矩以望高，复矩以测深，卧矩以知远，环矩以为圆，合矩以为方。”

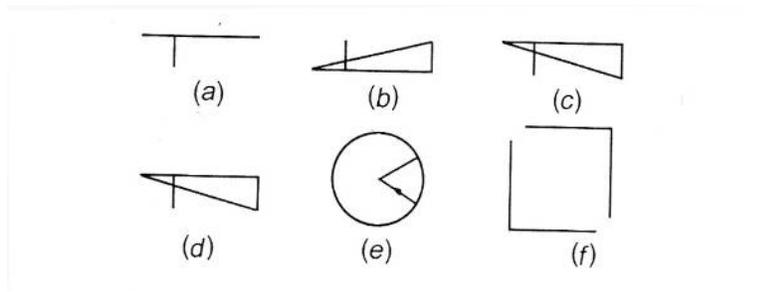


Figure 4.24. Method of using the *ju*, Yu Jian, *Kan yu kao yuan*, 2005.

This is shown pictorially in Figure 4.24. Thus, the *ju* is used to measure straightness, depth, distance, and height, and to draw circles and squares. In

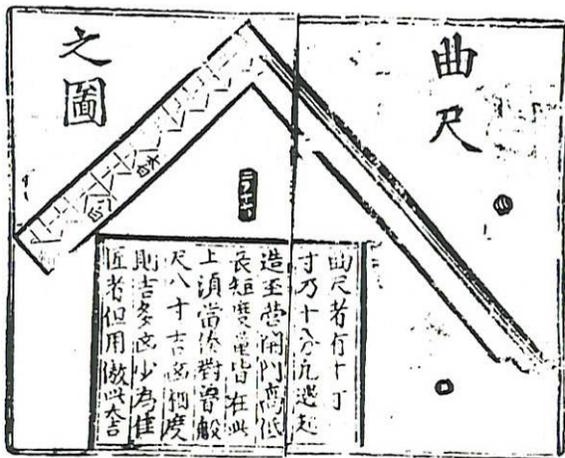


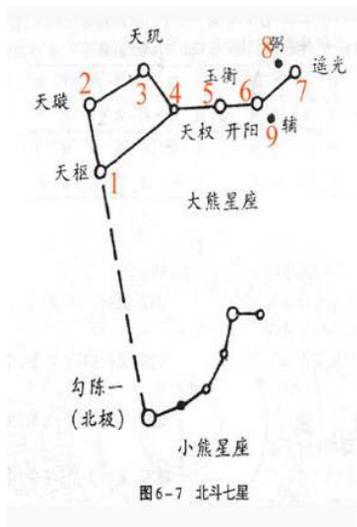
Figure 4.25. The carpenter's square, Klass Ruitenbeek, *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China - a Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenter's Manual Lu Ban Jing*, 1993.

ancient times, the powerful capacity of the *ju* allowed the movement of celestial stars and time to be measured and calculated. Holding an instrument that affected the lives of people thus infused one with cosmological powers. Hence, holding the *ju* symbolizes possession of the cosmological *shi*. Later the *ju* in the

hands of carpenters became a magical instrument that must be operated skillfully because it is capable of bestowing both lucky and disastrous cosmological *shi* on a family. A *ju* is commonly given the English term as a carpenter's square. An image of the carpenter square is shown in Figure 4.25. The shorter leg is divided into ten units of *cun*. Each *cun* is inscribed with a color and a number, as mapped and color-coded in Table 4.1.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
white	black	blue	green	Yellow	White	red	White	purple	white

**Table 4.1. The carpenter’s square color codes. Table produced by the author.**



**Figure 4.26. The Nine Stars, Cheng Jianjun, *Zhongguo feng shui luo pan*, 1999.**

The numbers from 1 to 10 are correlated with the nine cosmological stars (10 and 1 are considered the same in this instance). The nine cosmological stars are the seven stars in the Big Dipper plus two auxiliary stars nearby (Figure 4.26).<sup>259</sup> Each of the nine stars controls a certain trigram orientation at a particular moment in time as the constellation rotates across the sky, perennially affecting the fate of a house. The nine stars are also mapped into the Chinese magic square of three (Table 4.2). The

auspicious stars occupy the locations of numbers 8, 1, 6, and 9. The stars at 8, 6, and 1 in the magic square are by convention assigned a white color. The star at 9 is assigned purple. All the other stars occupying the 4, 2, 3, 5, and 7 locations are assigned different colors and are considered unfavorable.<sup>260</sup>

<sup>259</sup> Joseph Edkins, “Feng Shui - the wind and water superstition of the Chinese,” *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, vol. 4, (1872), p. 276.

<sup>260</sup> Li Feng, *Xin juan jing ban gong shi diao zhao zheng shi - Lu ban jing jiang jia jing*, (Haikou, 2003), pp. 48-51, Yu Xixian & Yu Yong, *Zhongguo gu dai feng shui de li lun yu shi jian*, pp. 536-537.

4文曲 Cultural Activities	9右弼 Right Assistants	2巨门 Huge Gate
3禄存 Wealth Preserved	5廉贞 Purity and Righteousness	7破军 Breaker of Armies
8左辅 Left Assistants	1贪狼 Covetous Wolf	6武曲 Military Activities

**Table 4.2. The Nine Stars and the Magic Square of Three. Table produced by the author.**

Comparing the colors and numbers in Table 4.1 (extracted from the *ju*) with those in Table 4.2 (representing the mapping of the nine stars on the Chinese magic square of three) reveals that the numbers and colors inscribed in the *ju* correspond to the number in the magic square of three and the colors of the nine stars mapped onto it. In other words, the *ju* is a linear and sequential rearrangement of the Chinese magic square of three, overlaid with the nine cosmological stars.

When sizing a door with the *ju*, a dimension will fall within a range labeled with a number and a color. The number and color indicate that the size empowers the door with a particular quality of cosmological *shi*. For example, if a door is built with a dimension that falls into an 8 *cun* or 1 *cun* or 6 *cun* size, then the door naturally possesses the auspicious cosmological influence from the three auspicious stars within the nine stars. The *ju* therefore is a cosmological instrument to measure invisible cosmological power and energy.

Besides obtaining correct measurement using the *ju*, a door's dimensioning should fall into the auspicious measurement of another foot ruler, the Lu Ban *zhen chi*, which has a total length of 14.4 units of *cun*. It is also called

the “foot ruler of the glorious door” because its correct use on the various doors is believed to have the effect of exalting the family clan. The foot rulers of the glorious door still preserved in the Forbidden City are subdivided into only eight parts, each measuring 1.8 *cun* on the *ju*. Again, each part is designated by a series of symbols; namely, wealth (财), illness (病), separation (离), justice (义), office (官), plunder (劫), harm (害), and luck (吉本) (see Table 4.3).<sup>261</sup>

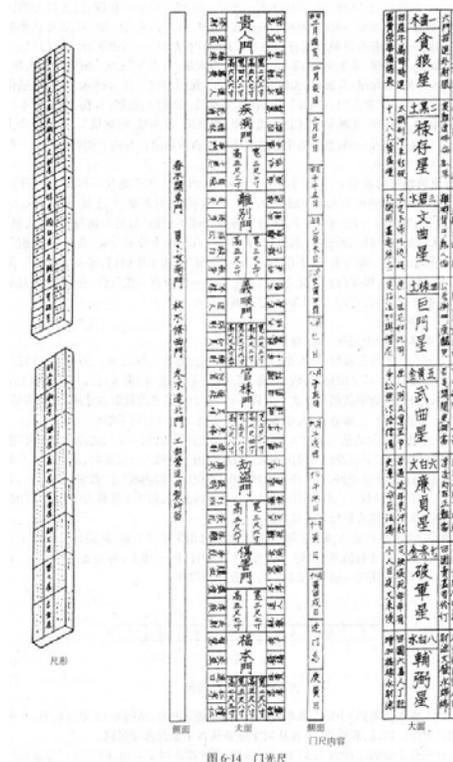


Figure 4.27. Tian Yongfu, *Zhongguo yuan lin jian zhu shi gong ji shu*, 2002.

Wealth	Illness	Separation	Justice	Office	Plunder	Harmful	Luck
财	病	离	义	官	劫	害	吉本

Table 4.3. The Lu Ban *zhen chi* codes. Table produced by the author.

<sup>261</sup> Ma Bingjian, *Zhongguo jianzhu mu zuo ying zao ji shu*, pp. 281-282. See also Li Feng, *Xin juan jing ban gong shi diao zhuo zheng shi - Lu ban jing jiang jia jing*, pp. 45-47.

The first and the last (i.e., wealth and luck) are favorable. The fourth and the fifth (i.e., justice and office) are lucky to some extent. The others are harmful. However, both the lucky and unlucky designations are relative to each unique situation. Having the dimension of the corridor door fall in the measurement of justice would be unlucky. If ambitious and deceitful ordinary people make their main door dimensions to fall into office, the result will be harmful.

In the Ming dynasty treatise *Yang zai shi shu*, a passage explains that when air will flow in and out of a door or other opening (e.g., a window), the Lu Ban *zhen chi* should be used to measure and obtain the auspicious dimensions. The Lu Ban *zhen chi* bestows three types of good fortune into the house.

At the main entrance gate, the correct measurement of the main door can help the family to obtain high government positions, heavenly blessings and good fortune. The correct measurement of the door inside the house, such as the doors to the reception hall, or the doors of the bedrooms, can help the family to obtain protection of peace, wealth and stableness, etc. The correct measurement applied to the door on the study areas can help the family members become wise and intelligent.<sup>262</sup>

After the dimensions of the house doors have been made to suit the context of the situation, the owner can determine the appropriate sizes of the doors to be built.

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<sup>262</sup> *Gu jin tu shu ji cheng - Yi shu dian, kan yu bu*, vol. 675, (Beijing, 1726), p. 46.

## Examining the Yin Yu Tang House Door Dimensions

The various dimensions of the YYT house doors shed light on the desired embodiment of the cosmological powers. The main house door on the conceptual north, the exterior house door on the conceptual east, and the interior house door at rooms 7 and 8 are measured and calculated in Table 4.4.

Type of Door	Dimensions of the Opening		Range in <i>Ju</i>	Range in the True Foot Ruler of Lu Ban <i>zhen chi</i>
Main entrance door (conceptual south)	4'-1-19/32"	125.97cm	3 chi 9 cun and 4 fen (lucky–white)	2 chi 5 cun 8 fen (lucky–义 justice)
Side entrance door (conceptual east)	2'-8-17/32"	82.63 cm	2 chi 5 cun and 8 fen (lucky–white)	1 chi 6 cun and 3 fen (unlucky–害 harmful or unlucky–病 illness if using the ruler in a reverse way)
Bedroom 7 door	1'-10-13/16"	57.94 cm	1 chi 8 cun (lucky–white)	1 chi 2 cun (unlucky–病 illness)
Bedroom 8 door	1'-9-15/16"	55.72 cm	1 chi 7 cun 4 fen (lucky–white)	1 chi 1 cun 7 fen (unlucky–病 illness)

**Table 4.4. Analysis of the Yin Yu Tang house door dimensions. Table produced by the author.**

The door dimensions in Table 4.4 are obtained from the construction documents used in reassembling the YYT house by John G. Waite Associates. The calculation is based on 1 Qing dynasty *chi* equaling 32 cm today, and 1 *chi* in the Lu Ban *zhen chi* equaling 1.44 *chi* in the *ju*. The foot in the *ju* is divided into

ten equal parts, while the foot in the Lu Ban *zhen chi* is divided into eight equal parts.<sup>263</sup> According to the translation of dimensions using the method introduced in the annotations on *Lu ban jing*, the result of the widths of the selected YYT house doors matches all the auspicious dimensions in the *ju*.<sup>264</sup> When measured with the Lu Ban *zhen chi*, the main entrance door falls in the range of justice, which is the auspicious dimension for the main entry door of a commoner's house.<sup>265</sup> The widths of the other three doors all fall in the range of the unlucky illness (Table 4.4). It is unknown if the unlucky dimensions of the door are a trick the carpenters played on the owner of the YYT house. However, in *Lu ban jing*, the acceptable width of a room door within a house is specified as two *chi* and three *cun*, which also falls into the range of illness on the Lu Ban *zhen chi*. It is also possible that because these three doors were less important, their dimensions were compromised for practical reasons.<sup>266</sup> However, the above analysis indicates the orientation of the various doors in the traditional Chinese house was not devised to accommodate the traffic patterns, and that the size of the doors was not intended to satisfy the requirements of egress or bodily comfort while entering and exiting. Rather, the orientation and size of the various house doors generated dispositions that subtly embodied ritual and cosmological *shi*.

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<sup>263</sup> Li Feng, *Xin juan jing ban gong shi diao zhao zheng shi - Lu ban jing jiang jia jing*, p. 103. See also, Tian Yongfu, *Zhongguo yuan lin jian zhu shi gong ji shu*, (Beijing, 2002), pp. 271-273. In the measuring system of the Ming and Qing dynasties, one *chi* unit equals about 32 cm and equals to 10 *cun* units.

<sup>264</sup> Klass Ruitenbeek, *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China - a Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenter's Manual Lu Ban Jing*, p. 91. and also see Li Feng, *Xin juan jing ban gong shi diao zhao zheng shi - Lu ban jing jiang jia jing*, p. 103.

<sup>265</sup> Li Feng, *Xin juan jing ban gong shi diao zhao zheng shi - Lu ban jing jiang jia jing*, p. 79.

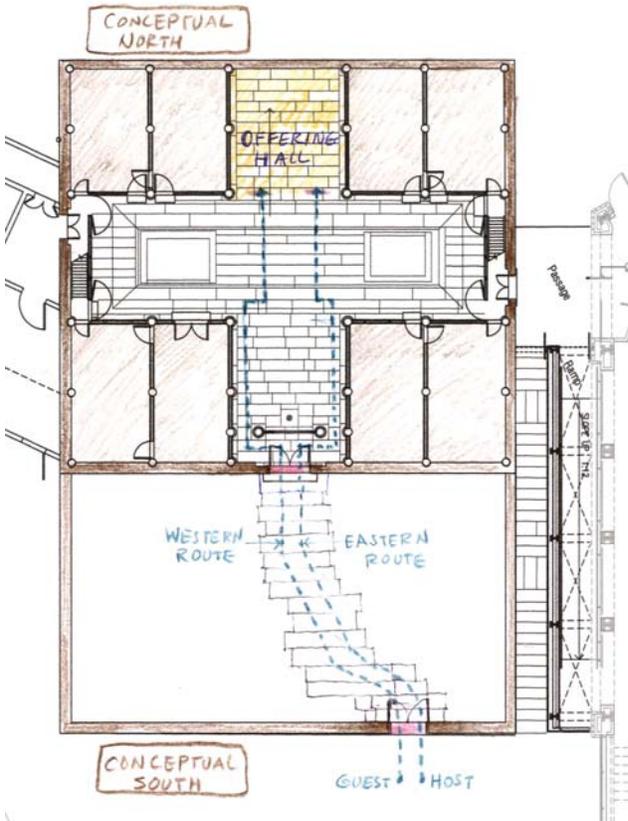
<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lu ban jing* gives the width of a room door as 74cm, which is much larger than the widest room door in the YYT house, which measures 58cm. Probably the YYT house room doors were intended to be built economically, yet still within the acceptable width ranges specified in *Lu ban jing*.

## Summary

In this chapter, the ritual and cosmological *shi* attained through the orientation and construction of doors, in accordance with both the Confucian ritual doctrines and the Fengshui theories, are analyzed through the YYT house doors, giving each door distinct ritual characteristics and cosmological traits. However, the key question is whether the ritual and cosmological *shi* still exhibit these embodiments now that the house has been relocated to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. Ostensibly, the efficacy of the ritual and cosmological *shi* should be diminished as a result of the house's relocation from a feudalistic society filled with cosmological beliefs to a Western democratic society with modern scientific prowess.

As a museum object, a Western visitor enters the exhibited YYT house through the house's original side entrance at the compass west orientation; he goes directly into the inner courtyard, and then sequentially into each room along the route. One easily loses one's sense of orientation in such a manner of visiting, unlike when a visitor to the house's original location in Huizhou entered through the main gate together with the host, both consciously turning to either the east or west side of the ceremonial door, in accordance with Confucian ritual hierarchy (Figure 4.28), where the host takes the eastern route, and the visitor takes the western one. Furthermore, as a museum object, the original cosmological *shi* of the YYT house, gained from having its doors auspiciously oriented and sized to benefit the fate and fortune of the Huang family, is now superfluous since the house is no longer inhabited.

Inelegantly, the various house doors have become merely a means of moving from one place to another, and have lost their power as ritual or cosmological devices, thus diminishing the experience of the embodied *shi*.



**Figure 4.28.** The original primary route to enter the Yin Yu Tang house, based on plan drawing by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC., with annotations by the author.

However, considering the amorphous and weak nature of *shi*, one interpretation is that the new way of entering into the house was engineered to bring about a different intrinsic ritual *shi*. For example, to get into the YYT house, a museum visitor enters through the YYT house's original side door, located at the west and adjacent to an exhibition room called the YYT Gallery, where the Huizhou local culture and local building traditions are permanently on exhibit. Through this configuration, the YYT house

visitor experiences three environments (Figure 4.29). First, the visitor initiates his or her tour in a contemporary Western cultural environment; that is, the central atrium of the Peabody Essex Museum, which is a modern glass and steel structure, designed by the Canadian architect Moshe Safdie. Second, the visitor experiences the YYT gallery, a transitional space in which he or she is

acquainted with the local Huizhou culture and the history of the YYT house through various exhibition methods (e.g., video broadcasts and cultural artifacts in display cases). After passing this transitional space, the visitor reaches the inside of the house through the YYT house's western entrance, the highlight of this procession. After stepping over the house's western door, the visitor is totally immersed in an Eastern cultural environment reminiscent of that experienced by a Chinese family in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The side entrance door of the YYT house thus implicitly attains a new *shi* as a result of transitioning from a Western contemporary environment into an Eastern environment.

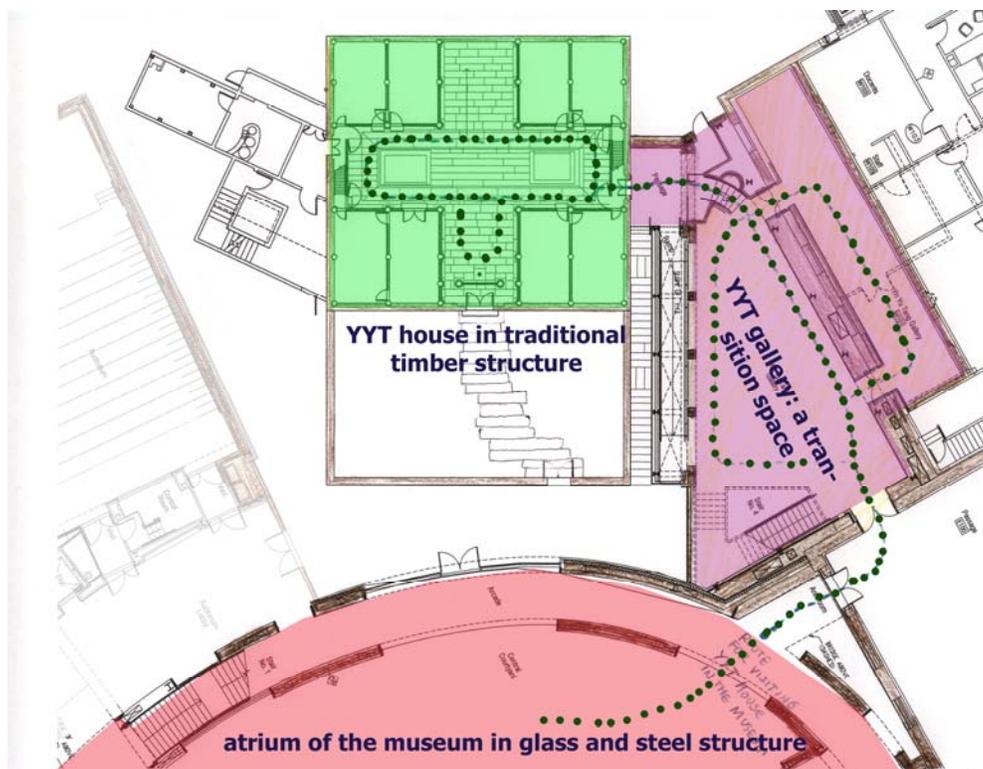
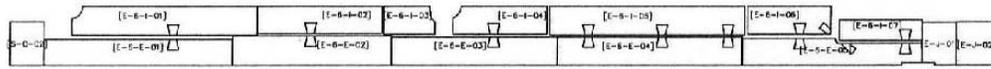
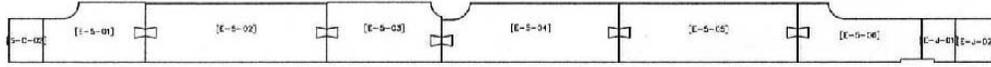


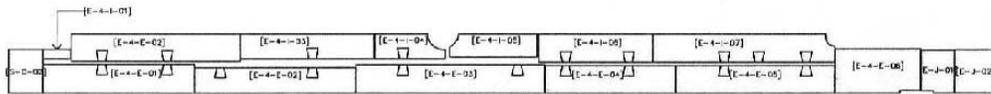
Figure 4.29. The current primary circulation route for the Yin Yu Tang house, based on plan drawing by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC., with annotations by the author.



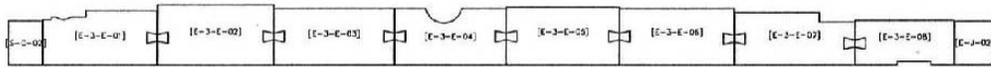
6 PLAN - STONE COURSE SIX  
A.5.1.6 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



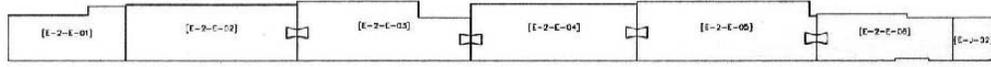
5 PLAN - STONE COURSE FIVE  
A.5.1.6 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



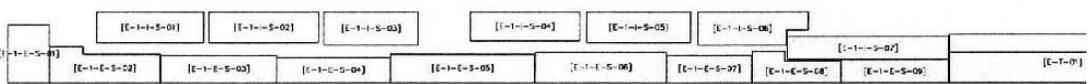
4 PLAN - STONE COURSE FOUR  
A.5.1.5 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



3 PLAN - STONE COURSE THREE  
A.5.1.5 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

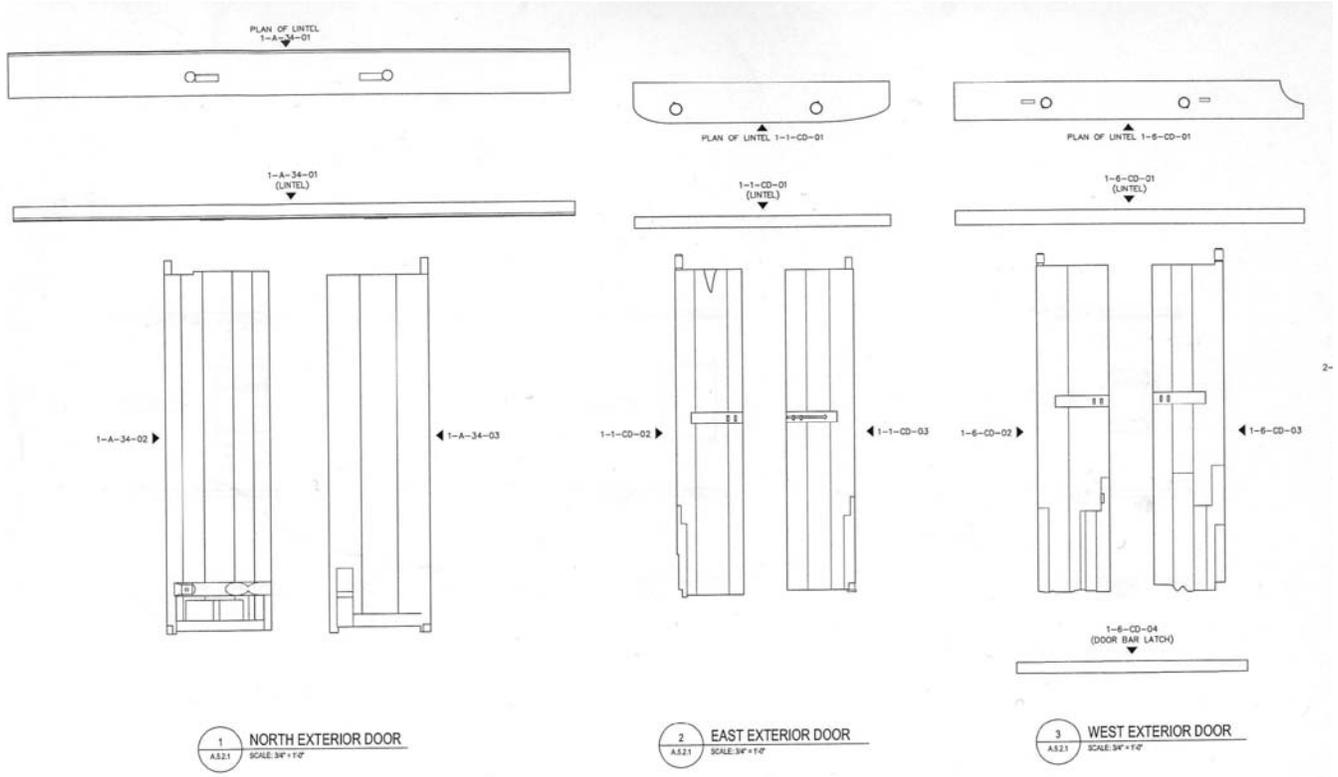


2 PLAN - STONE COURSE TWO  
A.5.1.6 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



1 PLAN - STONE COURSE ONE  
A.5.1.6 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

Plate 4.1. Stone coursing east plans of the Yin Yu Tang house by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC.



**Plate 4.2. Exterior Door Assembly of the Yin Yu Tang house by John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC.**