Some similarities between the feng-shui of Chinese joss houses in Australia and postmodern architecture

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Published by the University of Melbourne Library

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This article postulates that the principles of feng-shui or Chinese geomancy used in building Chinese joss houses or Taoist temples in 19th- and early 20th-century Australia are akin to those of the postmodern architectural school.

Is ancient feng-shui postmodern architecture?

Postmodern architecture is not merely concerned with form and function, but also with symbol. Ideally, postmodern architecture celebrates the culture and the history of the people who construct and use postmodern style buildings. According to Charles Jencks, the author of *The language of postmodern architecture* (1977), ‘postmodern space is historically specific, rooted in conventions, unlimited or … ambiguous in zoning and “irrational” or transformational in its relation of parts to whole. The boundaries are often left unclear, the space extended infinitely without apparent edge … [and] it is … evolutionary not revolutionary …’

_Feng-shui_ (Chinese for wind-water) is an ancient Chinese system of geomancy, which is used to favourably position everything—from towns to furniture—in order to bring good luck. However, it is used most commonly to find lucky sites for houses and graves, i.e. dwellings for the living and the dead.

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Fig. 1: The Chinese characters ‘feng-shui’. Calligraphy by Khoo Lip Chee.
To put it simply, the occupants of a house with good feng-shui will be happy, healthy, wealthy and wise, while the relatives of the person buried in a grave with good feng-shui will have good fortune as well. On the other hand, the unfortunate people connected with houses and graves with bad feng-shui will be sad, sick, poor and foolish—or possibly suffer even worse troubles.

Feng-shui is based on the idea that energy called qi (the breath of nature) arises from the earth and also from the passage of time. Sheng-qi (vital vapour) is the positive, lucky, life-giving energy that emanates from the south and meanders through the landscape, while sha-qi (noxious vapour) is the negative, unlucky, destructive force that emanates from the north and travels in straight lines through the landscape. Sometimes sheng-qi and sha-qi are also interpreted as good and evil spirits respectively. Of the two forces or spirits, sha-qi is much easier to identify. This is because not only does sha-qi travel in straight lines, but also because it is produced by straight lines in the form of canals, fences, paths, railway tracks, roads and so on. These things are called ‘secret arrows’ and must be avoided at all cost in order to have good feng-shui.

During the 19th century, secret arrows were the bane of the colonists in China. For example, the Great Northern Telegraphic Company was not permitted to erect a landline between the towns of Fuzhou and Xiamen for many years, due to the locals’ extreme aversion to long straight rows of poles and wires—or in other words, secret arrows. Interestingly, this was reported in the Australian press in 1882.

The practice of modern feng-shui can be divided into new age (which includes non-traditional Chinese ideas), traditional vernacular (which includes what some critics may describe as ‘superstition’) and classical. Classical feng-shui is an empirical system. It is not merely mumbo jumbo. After closely observing numerous places in China over a long period of time, geomancers or feng-shui experts compiled a long list of feng-shui rules of thumb that people could follow for themselves. The geomancers observed that the sites with the best feng-shui had a flat open plain with a gently flowing stream to the south (symbolised by a red finch), a mountain to the north (a black tortoise), a slightly lower mountain to the east (an azure dragon), and a still lower mountain to the west (a white tiger).

Likewise, the buildings with the best feng-shui had the main doors and windows in the south facade, no doors or windows in the north facade, and hardly any doors and windows in the east and west facades.

This is a very architectural approach to place. After carefully looking at many places from around the world, the architectural theorists Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein and others identified 204 architectural ‘patterns’ that were published in a 1,171-page book, *A pattern language: Towns, buildings, construction* (1977). In many respects, this book resembles a list
of feng-shui rules of thumb. Some of the patterns even read like feng-shui rules of thumb. For example, ‘Always place buildings to the north of the outdoor spaces that go with them, and keep the outdoor spaces to the south. Never leave a deep band of shade between the building and the sunny part of the outdoors.’

Feng-shui basically involves finding a place with plenty of sheng-qi, while at the same time dodging or blocking any sha-qi. However, this is often easier said than done because it is first come first taken, so as the population of an area increases the number of places with good feng-shui decreases. Fortunately, feng-shui can be ‘artificially’ improved in a variety of ways.

Many Chinese believe that good luck is a finite commodity. It cannot be created out of thin air, but has to be wrestled off somebody else. Consequently, feng-shui disputes between neighbours were very common in Chinese communities. In The religious systems of China (1897), J.J.M. DeGroot wrote:

> Quarrels and litigation arising from changes are a daily occurrence in Chinese towns. The repairing of a house, the building of a wall or dwelling, especially if it overtops its surroundings, the planting of a pole or the cutting down of a tree, in short any change in our ordinary position of objects, may disturb the good luck of the house and temples in the vicinity, and of the whole quarter, and cause the people to be visited by disasters, misery and death.

Long ago in China, the citizens of Yung-chun regularly plundered the neighbouring town of Tsuen-cheu-fu. The citizens of Tsuen-cheu-fu realised that they had to improve their feng-shui in order to solve their problem, so they consulted a geomancer. He observed that Yung-chun was shaped like a fishing-net, while Tsuen-cheu-fu was shaped like a carp. The geomancer told the citizens of Tsuen-cheu-fu to build a pair of tall pagodas in the centre of town, which would intercept the fishing-net before it could trap the carp. After the two pagodas were constructed, the plundering stopped. This illustrates the highly symbolic nature of feng-shui. In general, like produces like: if it looks like a fishing-net, then it will behave like a fishing-net, and so on. Therefore, the best way to remove a feng-shui threat is to trump it with a more powerful symbol. To some extent this is reminiscent of the children’s hand game, ‘rock-paper-scissors’.

In The language of postmodern architecture Charles Jencks compares postmodern space to Chinese garden space:

> Postmodern, like Chinese garden space, suspends the clear, final ordering of events for a labyrinthine, rambling ‘way’ that never
reaches an absolute goal. The Chinese garden crystallises a ‘liminal’ or in-between space that mediates between pairs of antimonies, the Land of the Immortals and the world of society being the most obvious mediation. It suspends normal categories of time and space, social and rational categories, which are built up in everyday architecture and behaviour, to become ‘irrational’ or quite literally impossible to figure out. In the same manner postmodernists complicate and fragment their planes with screens, non-recurrent motifs, ambiguities, and jokes to suspend our normal sense of duration and extent. The difference, and it is a profound one, is that the Chinese garden had an actual religious and philosophical metaphysics behind it, and a built up conventional system of metaphor, whereas our complicated architecture has no such accepted basis of signification.

Fig. 2: A classic example of postmodern architecture is Piazza d’ Italia (1976) in New Orleans, designed by Charles Moore and William Hersey. Photograph by Derham Groves.
As a postmodern architect, I am very interested in the symbolic side of feng-shui. In my view, postmodern architecture and feng-shui are both largely about manipulating symbols. In this respect, a postmodern architect and a geomancer play similar roles. Furthermore, one can learn from the other. Therefore, it came as no surprise to me when the Walt Disney Company, the leading patron of postmodern architecture today, took to feng-shui like Donald Duck to water at its first theme park in Asia, Hong Kong Disneyland. Four is an extremely unlucky number because in Cantonese it also sounds like the English word ‘die’, thus Hong Kong Disneyland’s two tourist hotels—the supposedly Victorian-style Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel (which looks more like a grotesque version of Mr Roarke’s house on the 1980s television series *Fantasy Island*) and the glitzy art deco-style Hollywood Hotel—both lack fourth floors for fear that like will produce like. On the other hand, eight is a very lucky number because it physically resembles the Chinese character for happiness; consequently the ballroom at the Hollywood Hotel is exactly 888 square metres in area because in this case the hope—not the fear—is that like will produce like. Consequently the ballroom is a very popular venue for wedding receptions. Even before Hong Kong Disneyland had opened, more than 300 couples had already registered for in-park nuptials.¹⁰

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**Fig. 3:** A ba-gua painted on a restaurant’s window in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne. Photograph by Derham Groves.
Charms are frequently hung above external doors and windows to deflect sha-qi. The most common type of charm is a *ba-gua* (see Fig. 3 above), an octagonal piece of wood that is inscribed with the eight trigrams (eight combinations of broken and unbroken lines arranged in groups of three, which are used in fortune telling). It is an all-purpose cure-all—the feng-shui equivalent of aspirin. A number of everyday objects—especially fans, mirrors and scissors, which are also Taoist symbols—are also commonly used as charms.

A Chinese woman from Kuching in Malaysia mysteriously fell ill. She suspected that this was due to bad feng-shui, so she consulted a geomancer. He attributed her illness to the house directly across the street, which was one storey taller than hers. The geomancer advised the woman to hang a large pair of scissors and a round shaving mirror above her front window. He said that the sha-qi emanating from the taller house would be cut to pieces by the scissors and reflected straight back to where it came from by the mirror. After the charms were installed, the woman recovered. However, when the Chinese man living in the taller house eventually noticed the scissors and the mirror hanging above the woman’s front window, he countered by hanging a *ba-gua* and a fan above his front window in order to maintain his feng-shui advantage. The fact that the woman recovered suggests that he failed.11

Besides symbolic cures to sha-qi, tangible ones can also be applied. I asked a group of architecture students from RMIT University, where I used to teach, to design an imaginary house for a fictitious Chinese couple, which was located at a T-junction, i.e. a secret arrow. I stipulated that rather than depending on charms hung above the doors and windows, the house itself had to deflect the sha-qi. The students experimented with armour plating, cactus gardens, gargoyles, jagged edges, mirrored glass, obscured doorways, pools of water, screen walls, sharp sticks, tiny windows and twisted metal. A number of these things also addressed some of the more mundane problems associated with living in a house that faces oncoming traffic, such as invasive car headlights and persistent traffic noise. Good feng-shui and good design are certainly not incompatible. In fact, I believe that most people would have approved of the students’ designs regardless of whether they knew anything about feng-shui or not.

Of course, there is much more to feng-shui than I have described in this section. I have only referred in passing to the eight trigrams and not even mentioned yin and yang, the five elements, the ten stems, and the twelve branches, which are all important components of feng-shui.12 Nevertheless, in a nutshell, feng-shui is about locating sheng-qi and avoiding sha-qi.
The arrival of feng-shui in Australia

Traditionally, feng-shui has been practised in China (although it was banned during the Cultural Revolution [1966–1976] and is still frowned upon in some official circles), Taiwan and countries with large Chinese populations, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. However, in the last 20 years or so, feng-shui has become very popular—indeed, at times almost a craze—in Australia (and several other western countries too).

Many books about feng-shui have been written in English (as opposed to Chinese), including one by me, *Feng-shui and western building ceremonies* (1991). When I was undertaking the research for this book during the late 1980s, hardly anyone in Australia had even heard of feng-shui, let alone understood it. By contrast, today feng-shui is a part of everyday Australian life. The change has been remarkable.

If you feel off-colour, if your best friend suddenly turns against you, if your business goes bust, then perhaps bad feng-shui is the cause? An increasing number of ‘dinky-di’ Australians are blaming their troubles on feng-shui. In 1993 a feng-shui expert began writing a weekly column in *Australian Woman’s Day* to answer the magazine’s readers’ feng-shui questions, while for the past several years the College of Advanced Education in Melbourne has run short courses on feng-shui. Perhaps this trend reflects the need to introduce a mysterious element into a mundane world?

Nevertheless, I suspect that most people would be surprised to learn that the practice of feng-shui in Australia does not date back to the 1990s, but to the 1850s. Thousands of Chinese came to Australia following the discovery of gold in 1851, hoping to strike it rich. Since they needed good luck in order to find gold, they continued to practice feng-shui on the goldfields. As geomancers were rather scarce, most of the Chinese goldminers followed the stock feng-shui advice in books like the Chinese almanac. According to Jean Gittins, the author of *The diggers from China* (1981):

> Even though the seasons in the strange land [i.e. Australia] were reputed to be topsy-turvy, it was hoped that life would continue to be guided not only by seasonal variations recorded in the almanac, but by advice set down for matters of daily routine. It would, for example, be advantageous to know the exact day on which proposed ventures gave promise of successful conclusion or when it would be wiser to step quietly to avoid meeting up with evil spirits.

I believe that many feng-shui principles are universal. In *Feng-shui and western building ceremonies* I compared feng-shui to western groundbreaking ceremonies, foundation stone ceremonies and opening ceremonies and found
many parallels between the practices of east and west. For example, a foundation stone marked the centre of the world, which is akin to a place with perfect feng-shui.

The foundation stone of the Capitol building was laid at the centre of Canberra, the capital of Australia and arguably also the centre of the world in Australia (at least as far as the government is concerned). The inscription on the building’s flat ceremonial slab read: ‘His Royal Highness, Edward, Prince of Wales, laid this stone 21 June 1920.’ A dot in the centre of the letter ‘o’ in the word ‘of’ indicated the centre point of Canberra, which is circular in plan. The Capitol building never proceeded and many years later Australia’s new Parliament House was constructed on the same site. Thus the huge flagpole on top of Parliament House indicates the centre of the world in Australia. This is also a fitting marker because traditionally a pole symbolised the *axis mundi*.

Sometimes feng-shui principles emerge in unexpected places. In Australia, letterboxes are usually located on the street boundary, either next to the driveway or the garden gate. While most people feel sufficiently secure behind their wire doors and front fences, some people appear to have turned their letterboxes into feng-shui style charms, perhaps for additional protection. Are letterboxes designed to resemble cannons, dogs and Ned Kelly meant to deter burglars? And are those made from old fire alarms, fire extinguishers and fire hydrants meant to prevent fires? Maybe not consciously, and some of these letterboxes may be merely humourous in intention, but in some cases the symbolism of these letterboxes is unmistakable.

![Fig. 4: A fisheye lens view of 520 Collins Street showing the Rialto Towers (top) across the street. Photograph by Derham Groves.](image-url)
As a result of my writing *Feng-shui and western building ceremonies*, several local property developers, who wanted to attract Chinese buyers as well as Australian buyers, employed me to suggest ways of improving the feng-shui of the apartment buildings they were constructing in Melbourne. Usually this involved correcting simple feng-shui ‘mistakes’, such as rearranging doors that were in a straight line with each other, which is an arrangement that produces sha-qi.

The most challenging feng-shui job I did involved 520 Collins Street in downtown Melbourne. A Malaysian property developer wanted to buy this multistorey office building and convert it into apartments. The trouble was that the building had terrible feng-shui because it was directly opposite and overshadowed by the Rialto Towers, the tallest office building in the southern hemisphere (66 levels and 253 metres high). Consequently the Rialto Towers seriously restricted the flow of sheng-qi to 520 Collins Street.

How do you reduce the height of the Rialto Towers? I suggested fixing a large, round, shiny, stainless steel, convex disc (similar to the back of a giant soup spoon) to the front facade of 520 Collins Street, near the roof. Then the top of the Rialto Towers would be reflected in the disc and so appear to be shorter than 520 Collins Street. The developer was impressed. In addition, he suggested aiming two decorative brass cannons at the building—less subtle, but still effective. However, in the end the developer did not buy 520 Collins Street because its feng-shui was simply too bad.

**Fig. 5:** The Chan mausoleum (centre) at the Song He Yuan. Photograph by Derham Groves.
The most unusual feng-shui job I did concerned a dispute at the Song He Yuan, the new Chinese section of the Springvale Botanical Cemetery in Melbourne. The Chan family constructed a large mausoleum at the rear of the Song He Yuan, which the Tang and the Shao families believed had ruined the good feng-shui of their graves, which were adjacent to the mausoleum. The two aggrieved families took legal action against the trustees of the cemetery for permitting the mausoleum to be built. The case was reported widely in the Melbourne media at the time. In my opinion, the Chan mausoleum actually improved the feng-shui of the Tang and the Shao graves because it was a black tortoise. While a black tortoise is ideally a mountain, it can also be a hill, a building or a wall, depending on the scale of the site concerned. The dispute between the families and the cemetery was eventually settled out of court.

**Joss houses in Australia: orientation, form, space, order, and symbol**

Of perhaps hundreds of Chinese joss houses that were constructed in Australia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, only a few are still standing today. However, all of these were sited and designed according to feng-shui principles. In the final section of this essay I will discuss the feng-shui of the existing joss houses at Atherton (1903) and Breakfast Creek (1885) in Queensland, Alexandria (1910) and Glebe (1897) in New South Wales, and North Bendigo (1860s) and South Melbourne (1866) in Victoria.

![Fig. 6: The northwest facade or front of the Glebe joss house. Photograph by Derham Groves.](image)
The first architectural element I will consider is ‘orientation’. As mentioned earlier, the ideal site from a feng-shui point of view has an open flat plain with a gently flowing stream to the south, a mountain to the north, a slightly lower mountain to the east, and a still lower mountain to the west. However, unlike most other countries where feng-shui is practised, Australia is in the southern hemisphere. This causes a dilemma. Should the feng-shui rules of thumb be ‘reversed’ when dealing with the other side of the world? Some contemporary geomancers believe that they should, while others believe that they should not. The Chinese goldminers who came to Australia over a century and a half ago seem to have been in two minds about this as well. For example, the joss house at Glebe faces northwest, while the joss house at nearby Alexandria faces southeast. Surely they cannot both have good feng-shui. Or can they?

![Fig. 7: The northwest facade or rear of the Alexandria joss house. Photograph by Derham Groves.](image)

When selecting a site for a joss house in Australia, it appears that the Chinese preferred one with a southerly aspect. Four of the six joss houses being discussed face south (or at least to some degree): Atherton faces south, Alexandria faces southeast, North Bendigo faces south-southeast, and South Melbourne faces southeast. The two exceptions are Breakfast Creek, which faces east, and Glebe, which faces northwest.
But when the Chinese goldminers had to choose between a joss house facing either south or water, they always chose water. All six joss houses face water: Atherton faces Piebald Creek, Breakfast Creek faces the Brisbane River, Alexandria faces Sheas Creek, Glebe faces Rozelle Bay, North Bendigo faces Bendigo Creek, and South Melbourne faces Albert Park Lake (formerly South Park Lagoon). The location of water indicates that the joss house builders sought to retain qi in accordance with the feng-shui saying that ‘[Qi] rides the wind and is dispersed, [reaches] the boundary of water and is retained.’ However, over time the views of the water have been either partially or totally obstructed by more recent buildings, adversely affecting the feng-shui of the joss houses. Likewise, all six joss houses originally faced a flat open yard—not as grand as a plain, but space was at a premium even in 19th-century Australia. In feng-shui, such open space is called a ‘bright hall’. However, over time trees have been planted in front of some of the joss houses, especially at South Melbourne. Over-large or dying trees are thought to harbour sha-qi or evil spirits.

What all of this seems to suggest is that topography was more important than orientation to the Chinese goldminers in Australia. Significantly, under these conditions it is possible for the Glebe joss house and the Alexandria joss house to both have good feng-shui, even though they are facing in opposite directions. As I mentioned earlier, postmodern architecture and feng-shui have a lot in common. It is all right to bend the rules. Therefore, it is perhaps more accurate and less confusing when talking about the joss houses in Australia to refer to the front, the rear and the sides of the buildings instead of to actual directions.

The second architectural element I will look at is ‘form’. All of the joss houses have the main doors and windows in the front facade, no doors or windows in the rear facade and hardly any doors and windows in the side facades. For example, the Glebe joss house has the main doors and windows in the front facade and no openings in the rear and side facades, while the Alexandria joss house has the main doors (but no windows) in the front facade, no openings in the rear and the right-hand side facades and a door in the left-hand side facade. As mentioned earlier, buildings that follow this pattern have good feng-shui. The six joss houses all have a short cross-wall or ‘spirit screen’ near the main doors to stop any stray sha-qi from reaching the statue of Guan Di on the altar, who as both the god of war and a god of literature symbolises a classic yin-yang duality. At Breakfast Creek, the spirit screen is located a few metres in front of the main doors outside the joss house, while at the other five joss houses they are located a short distance behind the main doors inside the joss houses.
The joss houses at Alexandria and Breakfast Creek each comprise one building: a temple dedicated to Guan Di. The Atherton joss house comprises two buildings side by side (facing the joss house and going from left to right in all cases): a temple keeper’s residence and a temple to Guan Di. The joss houses at Glebe and North Bendigo each comprise three buildings side by side: the Glebe Joss house has an ancestral hall for ancestor worship, a temple to Guan Di and a temple keeper’s residence; and the North Bendigo joss house has a temple keeper’s residence, a temple to Guan Di and an ancestral hall. The South Melbourne joss house originally comprised three buildings: a temple keeper’s residence, a temple to Guan Di and an ancestral hall. However, in 1901 a second ancestral hall was constructed next to the first one.

Even though the three buildings that comprise the North Bendigo joss house are very simple gabled forms, a complex interplay exists between them, which may be glimpsed through the gaps between the buildings. This is also the case with the joss houses at Atherton, Glebe and South Melbourne. They are a lot more than the sum of their parts.
Fig. 9: The roofs of the North Bendigo joss house. Photograph by Derham Groves.

Two linocuts by the Melbourne artist Kenneth Jack (1924–2006) express the complex character of the joss houses at North Bendigo and South Melbourne very well. In the late 1980s I stumbled across an old edition of *Hemisphere* magazine, which had on the cover a reproduction of the artist’s 1961 pillar-box red linocut of the South Melbourne joss house. Jack also had done a linocut of the North Bendigo joss house, which incorporated several different etching techniques as well. (I eventually acquired both prints and also a preliminary drawing that he did of the North Bendigo joss house.) The artist’s slightly abstract representations of the two joss houses captured the otherworldliness of the places and the people who inhabited them, while the printmaking process reflected the multi-layered nature of the buildings’ architecture. However, what is truly remarkable is that Jack chose to depict the joss houses in the first place, because during the early 1960s hardly anyone who was not Chinese was interested in them.
The third architectural element I will discuss is ‘space’. There is a one-metre-wide gap between the joss house buildings at Atherton, Glebe, North Bendigo and South Melbourne. This meant that the side doors could be staggered, so that a door on one side of a gap faced a blank section of wall on the other side of the gap. The effect was like that of a spirit screen. Consequently, any stray sha-qi inside the joss houses was halted at the gaps.

The gaps between the buildings were useful in other ways too. Oil lamps and sticks of incense or ‘joss sticks’ were burned inside the joss houses all the time, so there was a very high risk of the buildings catching fire. The Albury joss house burned down in 1915, the Alexandria joss house caught fire in 1996, the Ballarat joss house burned down in 1859, the Beechworth joss house burned down in 1902, the North Bendigo joss house caught fire in
1933, the Glebe joss house caught fire in 2008, and the Golden Point joss house burned down in 1902, just to mention a few instances. If a joss house did catch fire, then the gaps would act like mini-firebreaks and delay the fire from spreading—or at least that was the hope.

The fourth architectural element is ‘order’. It was much easier to establish an obvious hierarchy of spaces when there were several small buildings that each had a separate function instead of one large building that had many functions. At the North Bendigo joss house, for example, the temple dedicated to Guan Di is the most important of the three buildings. This is clearly expressed architecturally through scale, ornamentation and materials. The temple is larger and more ornate than the other two buildings. Also the two religious buildings—the temple and the ancestral hall—are both made of brick, whereas the secular building—the temple keeper’s residence—is made of timber.

Fig. 11: The plan of the North Bendigo joss house (Drawing from Bendigo and the Chinese joss house, [Melbourne]: The National Trust of Australia (Victoria), [1972?], p. 13.) Reproduced courtesy National Trust of Australia (Victoria).
Finally, the fifth architectural element—and arguably the most post-modern—is ‘symbol’. Before the public toilets were thoughtlessly built at the rear of the temple keeper’s residence in the 1970s, the plan of the North Bendigo joss house spelled out the Chinese character shan (mountain), which signifies a place of worship in Chinese culture. Shan comprises one short stroke (the temple keeper’s residence), one long stroke (the temple to Guan Di) and another short stroke (the ancestral hall) side by side, which are connected at the base by one long horizontal stroke (the front wall of the joss house).

**Conclusion**

When I was a child in the early 1960s, my parents would often compare my toy-strewn bedroom to a Chinese joss house. As far as I know, they had never seen a joss house, let alone ever been inside one, but in their minds (and no doubt in the minds of many other people too) it represented total chaos. Architecturally speaking, nothing could be further from the truth. I believe that many of the special qualities of the joss houses in Australia are due to the influence of feng-shui. In the process of avoiding secret arrows and deflecting sha-qi, unusual design solutions often replace banal ones. As a result, the joss houses have a measure of character, an air of mystery and a hint of paradox that perhaps they otherwise would not have had. A deeper understanding of these humble yet sophisticated buildings may not only provide insights into feng-shui, but also into architecture in general.

I also believe that feng-shui is important not only as a system of geomancy, but also as a model way of engaging with the built environment. Feng-shui helps to foster a bond between people and places; it provides an opportunity for people to participate in the building process; it reflects people’s aspirations and values via the built environment; it has a magical side and a rational side; and it is a powerful design tool. Thus I would say that feng-shui is a form of postmodern architectural expression.

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This article has been independently peer-reviewed.
NOTES


16 Groves, *Feng-shui and western building ceremonies*, p. 57.


Guo Pu, ‘Zangshu or book of burial’.

*Hemisphere: An Asian-Australian Magazine*, vol. 6, no. 4, April 1962, front cover.


Register of Historic Places and Objects, the PHA NSW Heritage Register, SHI no. 4671015, Yiu Ming Temple, 16–22 Retreat Street, Alexandria.


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