The Influence of *Fengshui* on the Building of the City of Beijing in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study aiming to resolve the dispute over the role of geomantic fengshui in the building of the capital city Beijing. It argues that the complexity and diversity of the various elements that went into the formation of concepts concerning siting and building encouraged the use of fengshui ideas as part of retrospective interpretations of the capital city at the urban planning level. However, the inferior position accorded fengshui in orthodox cultural contexts prevented fengshui's being incorporated in the official, governmental ideology of creating imperial capitals.

This study begins with a description of the historic and cultural background against which Beijing was built. It demonstrates that the ideology employed in the building of imperial capitals on the one hand, and fengshui on the other hand were each associated with entirely different socio-cultural contexts. Fengshui was more a body of loosely related ideas than a coherent theoretical system. Although the same cosmological symbols were used in both codes, whereas the orthodox ideology was held by the elite to be most important for legitimising the capital as a cosmic centre, fengshui was viewed by the elite with ambivalence, indeed sometimes fierce criticism, partly because of the heterodox nature of fengshui in challenging the Confucian concept of Heavenly Will.

An inquiry into the specific circumstances of the capital city Beijing at the time when it was being built suggests that fengshui theory was not consciously taken into account in the choice of the city’s site. Pragmatic considerations appear to have been paramount. Owing to the unique significance of the city as a capital, fengshui practitioners are not likely to have been employed in the city’s siting, even though they were employed in the siting of imperial tombs. However, many factors caused fengshui ideas to be incorporated in the non-governmental interpretations of the siting of Beijing. First, the interpretations had their origin in an analysis by the seminal Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200) whose sympathies were not entirely antagonistic to fengshui. Second, the concepts regarding geography had been established and were shared by fengshui and other realms of theory. Third, most importantly, the very fact of the city’s having been built on that particular site stimulated the flourishing of post-hoc fengshui theoretical justifications of that site. Fourth, furthermore, essentially aesthetic concepts regarding features of the topography, which concepts may have been further developed through the widespread practice of fengshui, came to be part of the common notion of an ideal site. Concepts referring to xing (contours) and shi (dynamic form), which had been elaborated largely in fengshui, came to be shared by geography, landscape-gardening and painting. While these concepts were applied in the choice and interpretation of the site, they were not in general seen as ideas solely the preserve of fengshui.

Finally, an investigation is made here into alleged fengshui features in the plan of the city of Beijing, and it is demonstrated that the cosmological symbols expressed in fengshui were seen as part of the traditional authentic imperial-capital symbolism, and not of fengshui. The plan of Beijing may, however, have been perceived by the general populace in fengshui terms, since the symbols could easily be associated with fengshui practice. It is stressed that the coincidence that the city structure was also in accord with what was commonly viewed as the ideal fengshui plan, left additional room for fengshui interpretation.
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I hereby declare this thesis to be my own work.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a study of the building and underlying concepts of the city of Beijing in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), by focusing on the aspects of its spatial formation and interpretation which are disputably regarded as related to the application of fengshui. The city of Beijing which was built 500 years ago on the base of the capital city of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) was the most important imperial capital in late imperial China, since it was used as the capital throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties. Fengshui, a term which has been loosely translated as "Chinese geomancy," denotes a discourse about the adaptation (in both siting and building) of the residences of the living and the dead mainly for the purposes of obtaining good fortune. In imperial China, fengshui ideas are often applied in the siting and construction of graves, houses and other building activities; or involved in interpretations of them. Elaborated in countless fengshui manuals, the ramified fengshui ideas are particularly complicated, and, often, in conflict with each other. With a long history dating from no later than the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.),

1 In the context of imperial China's urban history, by "city" I mean, throughout this thesis, a walled urban nucleus that functioned as a regional or local centre of imperial administration. In the specific context of the city of Beijing, in the terms "Forbidden City," "Imperial City," "Inner City" and "Outer City," etc. the word "city" represents the walled functional enclosure. It has been used as a conventional translation of the Chinese character cheng (lit. "walled city" or a wall serving as or of the form of a city wall).

2 This thesis uses the system of spelling commonly referred to as Pinyin for romanising Chinese words throughout. Corresponding Chinese ideographs are printed after their Pinyin spelling when any particular Chinese word first appears in the text, and when the same word reappears later after a considerable length of text.

3 The city of Beijing was the imperial capital city of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The city was built as early as 1406 (the 4th year of the Yongle reign-period). (Wang Hongkai 1986:116-27), after the original city on the site had been designated the northern capital of the dynasty in 1403 (the first year of the Yongle reign-period). (RJK, 64) Beijing was formally established as the imperial capital city of the Ming dynasty in 1420 (the 18th year of the Yongle reign-period). (RJK, 66) The city remained much the same during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.). Since the city was built to a considerable extent on the site of the earlier city known as Dadu 大都, the capital city of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 A.D.), the latter has also to be taken into account in this study. For the convenience of readers, in some cases in the thesis I use the name "Beijing" to denote both the city of Dadu and the city of Beijing in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The other specific names of the city will be given when necessary.

4 As Andrew L. March (1968:253) has pointed out: "Geomancy' translates fengshui, kanyu, or even dili which ordinarily corresponds to 'geography.' It is not the 'geomancy' of the Oxford English Dictionary (Vol. 4, Oxford, 1933): 'The art of divination by means of signs derived from the earth, as by the figure assumed by a handful of earth thrown down upon some surface. . . . Hence, usually, divination by means of lines or figures formed by jotting down on paper a number of dots at random.' This latter is evidently the sense in which it is understood by Mary Danielli in her article 'The Geomancer in China, with some Reference to Geomancy as Observed in Madagascar, Folklore, Vol. 63, December 1952, 204-26."

5 The origin of fengshui will be discussed in section 2.1.
"fengshui" has become a colourful part of Chinese culture. Different parts of the vast country that is China, however, have been affected in various degrees by different schools practising "fengshui". Neighbouring countries and certain other regions have also been influenced by it, for example Japan and Korea.

The purpose of this study is not to produce a comprehensive investigation of either the construction of this city or the "fengshui" theories, but instead, by taking Beijing as a specific case, it aims to address a number of important aspects of "fengshui" ideas sometimes reflected in the building and concept of a capital city in late imperial China, through which an appropriate historical approach to studies of traditional Chinese capital cities can be suggested. I investigate whether the role of "fengshui" is mainly one of directive ideas, practical techniques or interpretation in the building of Chinese capital cities. Thus, by analysing the relevant materials contained in a number of historical documents on the history of the city of Beijing, I seek tentatively to answer the following questions: to what extent and in what way were "fengshui" ideas applied to its physical construction? What psychological effects could "fengshui" interpretation have had upon the city? How significant may this prove to be in studies of the Chinese imperial capital city?

The Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) city of Beijing is the only example employed in this study. The choice of this particular city has been determined by three major considerations. The first is a historical one. The building of the city of Beijing began in 1406 and was completed in 1420, and the city was designated one of the imperial capital cities of the Ming dynasty in 1406, and was promoted as the imperial capital of the Empire in 1420. The city retained almost all its characteristics during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). In addition we note that the city was built largely on the basis of the earlier city of Dadu, the capital city of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Prior to these three dynasties, the Liao dynasty (916-1125) and Jin dynasty (1115-1234) had also built their capital cities on the site, which approximately overlapped with the site of the city of Beijing. Having been chosen for an imperial

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6 "Fengshui" has been described by many scholars. Dawson (1978:153) holds that the "matter which deeply concerned the Chinese was the siting of graves, for it was believed that it was possible to site a tomb in relation to the conformation of the landscape and the vicinity of watercourses, in such a way that a mysterious fecundity was drawn from the earth and transmitted to the descendants of the deceased. The science of discovering suitable sites was known as feng-shui (wind and water), and people who could afford it would employ expert geomancers to seek the most propitious sites for their family graveyards."
capital in five dynastic periods, the site has been regarded as the ideal expression of late imperial concepts of how a capital city should be sited. Being the dominant imperial capital city for about 500 years throughout late imperial China, it is the most outstanding example for research into the building of imperial capital cities in the later stages of the Chinese empire. This period was also the climax of fengshui development, when it reached its most systematic complexity and the height of its popularity. It is without doubt then a period that must occupy an important position in any study of the links between fengshui and the capital city.

Our second consideration concerns the disputed role of fengshui ideas in the shaping and understanding of this specific city. It is widely believed that the city was built most closely in accordance with the model of the ideal imperial capital city, an ideal plan of an imperial capital as first prescribed in the “Kaogong Ji 工記,” the last section in the Confucian Classic Zhou Li 周禮. It also inherited many other of the traditions of preceding dynasties for the building of capitals, including the employment of cosmological symbols, which is also embodied in fengshui, the origin of which can be traced back to their sources in ancient texts, the didactic Confucian Classics. However, some scholars hold that the city form is the result of the mixture of two symbolic systems, the Confucian orthodox and the fengshui ideas, which are quite independent of, and sometimes in conflict with, each other. It is also often believed that fengshui was a significant factor in understanding of the city. Therefore the city of Beijing is a good example for a case study on the role of fengshui in an imperial capital city.

The third consideration is the availability of materials for this study. The city of Beijing was the last Chinese capital to be built, and remains one of the best preserved imperial Chinese capitals. It is indeed well preserved, particularly the Forbidden City, and provides better textual sources and physical evidence of its construction, and its topographical/ natural environment is largely unchanged, as far as the present inquiry is concerned, compared with other capital cities. The city wall was preserved until

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7 Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645) also ruled in Beijing for 42 days in 1644. (CY 1521. Yan 1987:114) There is also a view that Beijing has been used as a capital twelve times. (Yan 1987:107-18)

8 In the early years of the Ming dynasty, Jinling 金陵 was designated Nanjing 南京 (lit. “southern capital”), while Bianliang 溧陽 was designated Beijing (lit. “northern capital”) in 1368. Fengyang 鳳陽 was chosen as what was called Zhongdu 中都 (lit. “central capital”) in 1369, being abolished as such in 1375. Nanjing was officially established as Jingshi 京師 (lit. “the capital city”) by Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 in 1378. After Beijing was established as the capital city by Zhu Di in 1420, Nanjing was then, in 1421, changed into a subordinate capital. (Yan 1986:94-108)
Given its distinctive historical status, the city of Beijing is a significant living example for the study of the relationship between the capital city and fengshui.

**0.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT**

A basic question, however, remains to be answered: why should this topic be important? To answer this question, two fundamental points need first to be emphasised: (1) the necessity for studies of China's cities, and (2) the significance of studies of fengshui in the history of China's cities, in particular, the city of Beijing. For the first point, I believe various modern scholars' arguments to be quite encouraging. Rhoads Murphy (1984:187), for instance, has pointed out the importance of Chinese urban history:

Given China's immense size, in both area and population, and the great age of its civilisation, there have probably been more cities and more city dwellers in China than in all of the rest of human experience... Until some two or three centuries ago (only a brief interval in Chinese history), the level of economic, commercial, administrative, and technical development in China was higher than anywhere else in the world; this was accompanied and manifested by a larger number of cities, many of them bigger than any in the West until the recent advent of industrialisation. Sian, Kaifeng, Hangchow, Nanking, and Peking have each in their time been the largest city in the world, with populations of about a million a thousand or more years ago, larger still in more recent centuries.

On the basis of other arguments, by Murphy and Mote, it has properly been concluded by Xu Yinong (1996:4) that "the importance of studies of Chinese urban history lies not only in its distinctiveness from that of the West, but in the fact that the range and variety of Chinese experience in building, adjusting, governing and

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9 The main damage was the removal of the city wall during the Cultural Revolution.

10 While stressing that China's urban history is more than just different from that of the West, F. W. Mote wrote:

No matter how pervasively influential the Western experience seems to have become in recent centuries, historically speaking the Western models have not been typical of man's experience. Nor is it certain that the rest of the world, especially China, will travel the same path as that we have come along in urban development, even should it acquire the means to do so. Historically speaking, it is the Chinese experience with cities, and not our own, which has to be recognised as the largest, the longest and the earliest to reach certain advanced — but pre-industrial — levels of development. ... Generalisations about urbanism would be scientifically deficient if not cognisant of any relevant information whatsoever, even if minute and eccentric. Such generalisations become, practically speaking, all the more deficient when they are formulated without considering so vast a body of material as Chinese history offers us. (Cited from Xu 1996:4)
inhabiting cities, as well as in relating cities to the rest of society, is by far the largest block of human urban experience."

I consider the issue of analysing the role of fengshui in city building as important not only because fengshui is generally supposed to be extensively applied to building activities in traditional China, but also because of the special characteristics of the involvement of fengshui in the building of cities, which has largely differed from that of the building of houses, graves, and other individual structures. While the practice of fengshui was regarded by many Chinese as essential for building a house or tomb, and even local cities and imperial capitals, it was also severely criticised by most scholar-officials in charge of city construction. Therefore, not only does this study provide us with understanding of the application of fengshui ideas in the building of capital cities, it will also enable us to learn more about people’s understanding of the city in traditional China.

Moreover, the building of imperial capitals is but one specific type of the Chinese city; many aspects of the building of capital cities have been different from those regarding local cities. First of all, as the most important project in every dynasty, the idea of building the imperial capitals, especially in its cosmological aspects, is profoundly to be differentiated from that of building, maintaining and governing local cities. (Xu 1996:6) With such a strong ideology of imperial capital city building, the adaptation and use of fengshui ideas may have been substantially different in capital cities from what was the case with local cities. Secondly, the social context of the building of the capital city often involved discussion between the emperors and high ranked officials, who perpetuated the symbolic meanings of the imperial capital, and their attitudes towards fengshui differed from those of common people. Decision-making in the building of capital cities was most likely not the same as that involved in local cities. Thirdly, in this field of architecture, the application of fengshui had to have certain special characteristics due to the particular importance of the capital city. For instance, the significance of the whole state’s topographical environment was, in fengshui interpretations, greatly emphasised. (See Chapter Four.) A study of the specific application of fengshui in a specific type of residence, such as the capital city, should enable us to reveal new aspects of both fengshui and the Chinese city.

I further consider the topic significant because of the disputed view on the role of fengshui in the building and understanding of the city in the current studies. Topics involving fengshui and Beijing have been paid much attention in the realm of
Chinese studies, and the number of works on them has been increasing over the past few decades, all works on this subject having their own varied approaches and conclusions. While fengshui is not mentioned in most of the research on the city of Beijing, a common assumption held by many modern scholars is that the planning and understanding of this city were influenced by fengshui ideas. The link between fengshui and the city of Beijing is regarded as obvious: the city was interpreted in fengshui terms by some historical texts; the city plan and its relationship with topographical environments was apparently in accordance with certain fengshui principles; cosmological symbols, an inseparable part of the fengshui system, were widely used in the city plan; some of those who were involved in the planning of the city of Beijing and its predecessor, the city of Dadu, were even described as leading figures of fengshui according to unofficial traditions. It seems that fengshui must have played a significant part in the city’s planning and cannot be ignored in research on the history of Beijing. A few aspects of these assumptions turn out however to be questionable as this thesis indicates. The first is that the role of fengshui ideas claimed in fengshui manuals and fengshui interpretations for a city was often, if not always as far as the imperial capital is concerned, entirely different from that which they played in practice. Although it was claimed by fengshui advocates that its principles should ideally be applied to all kinds of man-made construction, from the capital city to individual buildings and tombs, in the historical texts regarding the building of Beijing, fengshui ideas are only found in non-official writings, in particular, in the post hoc interpretations of the city. However, in the official writings wherein the building process was recorded, fengshui ideas or terms are hardly found.

In previous research on fengshui in Beijing, a most prominent problem is that most research has not focused on the historical and social context of the city of Beijing. On the one hand, studies of fengshui in the West have often concentrated on its cultural distinctiveness, and on how Chinese cosmology is reflected in it. While attention is more often paid to individual buildings and graves than to cities, understanding of the fengshui in Beijing is often based on studies of either the fengshui theories themselves, seeing them as a unity, or fengshui phenomena in the southern provinces of China. On the other hand, attention has been paid more often to the analysis of the apparent coincidence of the physical features of the city and fengshui ideas than to the investigation of historical sources. Therefore, the notions of fengshui phenomena related to the city of Beijing have mainly been established on the basis of either a study of fengshui in general or on a study of the physical features of the city alone. Another noticeable deficiency in this scholastic imbalance is that, although it has
been believed that fengshui was to some extent taken into account in the building of capital cities, no real textual evidence has been provided to support this belief. Instead of utilising materials that indicate the way in which the city was seen in the imperial era, our contemporary writers have often conducted analyses of the fengshui of the city by applying fengshui principles themselves.

Can the fengshui aspects of a specific capital city be explained solely on the basis of either study on fengshui theories and operations, or the investigation of fengshui phenomena generalised mainly from that of graves and individual buildings in southern area of China? Should the role of fengshui in a city be studied by concentrating on the apparent connections between the physical features of the city and fengshui principles, rather than analysing fengshui in terms of the historical and social context in which the city itself has been built and understand? There are two basic reasons for a negative answer to these questions, one lies in the realisation that the circumstances of the application of fengshui ideas in the imperial capitals had their own unique characteristics since the urban context and the concept of building for the imperial capitals was profoundly different from that of local cities, and, of course, from that of individual houses and tombs. The other one is that whereas there were common characteristics in both the way of shaping and looking at the city, this particular city must have its unique factors in its history, which made the city differentiated to various degrees from other Chinese cities in form, in spatial disposition of urban components, in symbolic functions. Without examining the historical context in which the city was built and understood, the deduction of the effect of fengshui by analysing the appearance of the city layout can hardly be an appropriate approach.

0.2 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS AND CURRENT RESEARCH

These biases are reflected in a large number of published modern works on either fengshui or the city of Beijing, and the publications — extremely limited in range — on the topic of fengshui ideas in the city of Beijing. A review of previous and current research further supports the point that my present research approach is both necessary and potentially fruitful. In the following, I examine first Western research on fengshui, then Western research on Beijing, and finally Chinese research on fengshui and Beijing.

0.2.1 The Approaches to Fengshui
In the nineteenth century writings, fengshui was treated by Westerners with contempt, being variously referred to as “a farrago of nonsense” “falsely so-called science,” (Ball 1892:169) a “pernicious system,” (Doré 1917:414) “a ridiculous caricature of science,” and a “farrago of absurdities,” (De Groot 1897:938) March (1968:254) believes “such animus arose from the belief that geomancy was to blame for difficulties in promoting, in China, Christianity and trade and the ‘gospel of natural science’ which served both.” Freedman (1979b:315) also suggests that “to a large extent, these men of the last century were put on to geomancy by its emergence as a political force in the encounter between China and the West.” One of these men, De Groot (1897:950) claims that Beijing is in perfect accord with the principles of geomancy:

Peking is protected on the North-west by the Kinshan or Golden Hills, which represent the Tiger and ensure its prosperity, together with that of the whole Empire and the reigning dynasty. These hills contain the sources of a felicitous watercourse called the Yuh-ho or “Jade River,” which enters Beijing on the North-west and flows through the grounds at the back of the Imperial Palace, where it bears the name of the Golden Water... Its course therefore perfectly accords with the principles which are valid for grave brooks and grave tanks.

E. J. Eitel (1873), as a pioneer in this field, who dealt substantially with the subject of Chinese geomancy, describes Canton’s ideal fengshui disposition in his monograph Feng-shui: or, the Rudiments of Natural Science in China. Since then, a few

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11 In the nineteenth century, sinologues, missionaries, Western administrators, tradesmen and travellers found geomancy staring them in the face in China. The building of churches, the laying down of roads and railways, the digging of mines, and so on, were likely to be attended by Chinese protests that the fengshui of villages, towns, or districts was being ruined. Fairbank (1992:219) describes the conflict: “Similar attitudes handicapped early industrialization. Conservative feared that mines, railroads, and telegraph lines would upset the harmony between man and nature (fengshui) and create all sorts of problems — by disturbing the imperial ancestors, by assembling unruly crowds of miners, by throwing boatmen and carters out of work, by absorbing government revenues, by creating a dependence on foreign machines and technicians.” Fengshui was prohibited by the missionaries in a address to Chinese converts of the Romish faith as collected in The Chinese repository( from May 1832 to December 1851) (vol. XX, 90): “Those who cause to be engraved on the tomb-stones, that such a hill was selected; and that the person lies towards such a point of the compass, and was buried on such a propitious day; or foolishly believe the geomancy of the fung-shuui — Sin.” Davis’ words was also quoted: (op. cit. vol. VI, 190): “The strangest and most unaccountable of the Chinese superstitions, is what they denominate foong-shuvey, ‘wind and water,’ a species of geomancy, or a belief in the good or ill luck attached to particular local situations or aspects, which we had occasion to notice before, and which, among the more rational classes of the people, is admitted to be nonsensical.” Soothill (1923:166) described how the yin and yang idea applied in fengshui, a “science” or “natural philosophiy,” “possibly an outgrowth of primitive magic.” “But the doctrine, when removed from the philosopher’s study and brought into the daily life of the people as an applied science, has placed a burden upon their shoulders which is beyond the strength of any people to bear. It has closed the avenues of national wealth. Mines could not be opened lest the spirits be disturbed and bring woe on the land. Railways could not be built for a like reason.”
Westerners were able to drop at least their scorn, and find a good word to say of
geomancy and much research has been undertaken on *fengshui* by Western scholars.

Durkheim and Mauss’ essay on primitive classification, a classical text of
anthropology written in 1903 and translated into English in 1963, takes China as one
of its case studies to extract elements from “the astronomical astrological, geomantic
and horoskop divinatory system of the Chinese,” (1963:67) which they drew from
the works of De Groot and other early writings to support their general ideas of
primitive classification. By analysing the cosmological symbols of “the four cardinal
points,” “the eight powers” and “the five elements,” they described the Chinese
classification of regions, seasons, things, and animal species that comprised the
Chinese universe, and then concentrated solely on *fengshui* as their example to
demonstrate the application of this classification:

> It is the very principle of the famous doctrine of *fung-shui*, and through this
> it determines the orientation of buildings, the foundation of towns and
> houses, the siting of tombs and cemeteries; If certain tasks are undertaken
> here and others there, if certain affairs are conducted at such and such a
time, this is due to reasons based on this traditional systematisation. (*Op. cit.* 73)

This reference to *fengshui* and the foundation of towns may have been the beginning
of misunderstandings concerning the universal application of *fengshui*, and the
beginning of the later studies of Chinese cosmology in the exploration of *fengshui*.

Joseph Needham (1956:359), in the context of the development of Chinese science,
summarises well the nature and history of *fengshui* in his monumental work *Science
and Civilisation in China*, written in collaboration with Chinese scientists. He thinks
*fengshui* “has been well defined by Chatley12 as ‘the art of adapting the residences of
the living and the dead so as to co-operate and harmonise with the local currents of
the cosmic breath.’” From a scientific viewpoint, Needham takes *fengshui* as a form
of “divination depending on the earth” and as “the far-reaching pseudo-science of
geomancy.” (ibid.) In *fengshui* practice, as Needham describes it, “There was in
general a strong preference for tortuous and winding roads, walls and structures,
which seemed to fit into the landscape, rather than to dominate it; and a strong
objection to straight lines and geometrical layouts. Isolated boulders were also
considered unlucky.”13 This depiction of *fengshui* as a picturesque system of

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12 The reference is give by Needham as *Encyclopaedia Sinica* (ed. Couling) p. 175.
13 As Needham further describes it (*op. cit.* 359):
organisation is not a detailed one. Because he only regarded *fengshui* as a pseudo-science, and it was not worthwhile to describe it in detail. He (op. cit. 360-61) indicates that in many ways *fengshui* was an advantage to the Chinese people, since all through, “it embodied, I believe, a marked aesthetic component.” But, “in other ways it developed into a grossly superstitious system.” However, he does not discuss any major *fengshui* work in detail or give any example of a city reputed to be built using *fengshui* ideas.

C. K. Yang (1961) in his *Religion in Chinese Society* regards *fengshui* as part of the folk religion of China in saying that:

Out of the theory of Yin-yang and the Five Elements came a whole system of metaphysical interpretation of nature that affected the traditional Chinese view of the universe and even permeated the theory of medicine. Out of it also grew a whole range of supernatural interpretations of nature and its relation to human affairs because of the anthropomorphic notions of the Yin (negative) and Yang (positive) factors and the Five Elements. Astrology and the theory of interaction between Heaven and man are examples of this outgrowth. But one of the most widespread results was the popular belief in geomancy (*feng-shui*, or wind and water). Geomancy dealt with the supernatural relation of geographical locations to human events. The merits or demerits of a location were interpreted in accordance with the Yin and Yang factors and Five Elements, which were considered to be invisibly linked with the fortune and misfortune of men.14 (Op. cit. 263)

If houses of the living and tombs of the dead were not properly adjusted, evil effects of most serious character would injure the inhabitants of the houses and the descendants of those whose bodies lay in the tombs, while conversely good siting would favour their wealth, health and happiness. Every place has its special topographical features which modified the local influence (*xing-shi*) of the various *qi* of Nature. The forms of hills and the flowing directions of watercourses, being the outcome of the moulding influences of winds and waters, were the most important, but, in addition, the heights and forms of buildings, and the directions of roads and bridges, were potent factors. The force and nature of the invisible currents would be from hour to hour modified by the positions of the heavenly bodies, so that their aspects as seen from the locality in question had to be considered. While the choosing of sites was of prime importance, bad siting was not irremediable, as ditches and tunnels could be dug, or other measures taken, to alter the *fengshui* situation.

14 He argues that the Confucian doctrine contained a subsystem of religious ideas based on belief in Heaven, predeterminism, divination, and the theory of Yin-yang and the Five Elements. This belief in fate or predeterminism as a course of events preordained by Heaven as the supreme ruling power. “Divination and the theory of Yin-yang and the Five Elements were both devices for knowing Heaven’s wish and for peering into the secrets of the this preordained course so as to help men attain well-being and avoid calamity. Associated with the attempt to glean information about Heaven and fate were the theory of interaction between Heaven and man, the concepts of *feng shui* (wind and water), and other forms of magic and animism.” (op. cit. 248)
He believes that some Confucians did not believe in fengshui, but that there were a very large number who did. He claims that “under the administration of Confucian officialdom, few major public buildings were constructed without advice from geomancers.” *(Op. cit. 263-4)* He concludes that fengshui had a psychological role: “Geomancy, like other forms of divination, increased man’s confidence as he turned to face an uncertain world.” *(Op. cit. 265)* Since Yang’s work much scholarship on fengshui has been social-anthropologically oriented.

Maurice Freedman (1979),⁴ on the basis of his fieldwork in the New Territories of Hong Kong, has made a great contribution to the research on fengshui.⁵ He (1979b:316) argues: “It was often officially attacked for its tendency to delay burial, and yet feng-shui lawsuits were entertained in the courts, and officialdom often responded to rebellion by smashing the ancestral tombs of the rebels.”⁶ He further argues “the geomancer stands outside the ordinary religious system, being counterposed to the priest. He looks like an observer of nature and he appeals to an orthodox Confucian metaphysic. And yet the fruits of his analysis and reasoning are expressible in popular religion.” *(Op. cit. 325)* I think this grasps precisely the status of fengshui in the Chinese society.

Freedman *(ibid.)* argues that fengshui is ordinarily exempt from the description “superstitious” in the eyes of respectable Chinese. “For them there is something called religion, a debased and sometimes dirty thing, and there is fengshui which rests on a kind of science of observation, backed up by a canonic literature and that impressive instrument, the compass.” As for the outside observer, Freedman disagrees with Needham’s approach, and disregards fengshui as divination.⁷ What is

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⁴ Freedman’s two essays on fengshui were selected and introduced by G. William Skinner in *The Study of Chinese Society* in 1979. However, they originally appeared in 1964 and 1968 respectively. (“Acknowledgements” Skinner ed. 1979: vi-vii)

⁵ With regard to the chapter written by Durkheim and Mauss on China, he thinks “for all its poor scholarship and faults in reasoning, correctly sites geomancy within an enormous Chinese system of classificatory ideas and positional and temporal notions; and, by its determination to perceive a total system (even if in reality there is none such), balances the comical effect produced by the atomistic treatment of the subject found in *The Golden Bough.*” (1979b:314)

⁶ As a social anthropologist, Freedman (1979a:211) addresses the role of fengshui in Chinese society by analysing mainly the role of “geomancers” in the New Territories of Hong Kong: (1) Fengshui is, in one respect, an assertion of rights: to home territory and to individual access to rank and riches, which can be in conflict with those of others. (2) Fengshui is an amoral explanation of fortune lying alongside a moral explanation: Earth against Heaven, good luck against merit; (3) Fengshui is an intrinsic part of the cult of the ancestors, but is in fact individualistic and therefore opposed to collective ancestor worship.

⁷ Freedman (1979b:326) argues: “No doubt, just as in the history of alchemy and chemistry and of astrology and astronomy, there is some significant developmental connection between fengshui and
being divined? “Geomancy is essentially turned toward the future, a means for men to create their lives as they would have them, full of honour, riches, and progeny. . . . Yet at the same time, the ideas of *feng shui*, as distinct from its techniques, furnish men with an opportunity to explain strange failures and successes.” (ibid.)19 About the function of *fengshui* in buildings (including tombs), Freedman (1979b:331) argues: “Buildings are culture in a special sense; what men make for themselves in their constructions may be a challenge to the natural world, and *feng-shui* shows both the risks attending the challenge and the means of minimising them.” “We are dealing with a society in which the development of a sophisticated architecture has allowed men to classify their groupings and, so to say, objectify their relationship by means of constructions. *Feng-shui* is the ritual of a society not yet overborne by its architectural technology.” (Op. cit. 333) I doubt though if *fengshui* “is respectable by virtue of its connection with respectable (i.e. orthodox) literacy, and in this fashion it is ordinarily exempt from the description ‘superstitious’ in the eyes of respectable Chinese.”

Freedman most importantly argues that “*fengshui* cannot be treated entirely on its own, as though it were some independent feature of Chinese thought and life:”

Its basic ideas are those of a standard system of metaphysics; its elements are transposable into Chinese “religion”; it belongs as a form of divination with horoscopes, almanacs, face-reading, and so on. Indeed, a case can be mad out for *feng-shui* as the most systematic statement of Chinese ideas about the constitution and working of the cosmos. But what I find particularly interesting is the way in which it brings all its elements to bear on the problem of adjusting men, through their habitations, to the physical environment. (Op. cit. 331)

Freedman (1979b:332) then speaks of the Chinese capital as presiding over the country from “the peak of the political and (from one point of view) the geomantic hierarchy.” He later expands upon this notion: “In the *feng-shui* of buildings we see a kind of political hierarchy, the apex of which is formed by the state and the base by individual dwellings. Between these two extremes lie administrative units, cities, the Chinese understanding of the nature of the earth. But I think it is forcing the evidence to assert any stronger link between *fengshui* and science. Chinese geomancy is a technique of divination; it states no unambiguous propositions; it foresees no rational comparison or experiment. For us it must be part of Chinese religion—when we take that word in its broadest sense—even though, from the point of view of the Chinese themselves, it is differentiated from what they think of as their religion.”

19 Freedman (1979a:207) considers *fengshui* to be like “a sort of ‘science,’ its principles working automatically and without the agency of anthropomorphic supernatural entities.” But “although *fung shui* is riteless, it is part of a wider religious system of which rites are an intrinsic part. If *fung shui* is ‘magic’ it depends on ‘religion.’”
towns, villages, lineages, and segments of lineages.” (1971:138) In adopting this architectural spectrum many scholars are less cautious on the subject of fengshui and cities, and tend uncritically to see the influence of fengshui as extending to the site-selection and physical construction of most, if not all, pre-modern Chinese cities.

Stephan Feuchtwang, a former student of Freedman’s, wrote his Master’s thesis titled An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy in 1965, and it has turned out to be an extremely important work on fengshui published in 1974. All the materials on fengshui in his book come from the eighteen manuals collected in the Gujin Tushu Jicheng (Collection of Ancient and Modern Texts) edited in the 18th century. A detailed explanation and interpretation of all the different systems of Chinese cosmology used in fengshui is given in the first half of the book, the rest of the book being dedicated to examining the three main constituents of fengshui theory: (1) Operators — fengshui’s place among Chinese ideologies and religious beliefs (geomancers as priests, ritual elders and diviners; fengshui and ancestor worship; fengshui and Chinese divination). (2) Clients — the social function of fengshui (fengshui as a ritual focus of local groups; fengshui as a ritual focus for descent groups). (3) Geomancy and divination in other cultures (Japan, Vietnam and Africa).²⁰

Feuchtwang (op. cit. 243-47) also gives a partly psychological explanation for fengshui:

Two linked procedures for allaying anxiety are used in Chinese geomancy. The first is to fabricate a sense of control where there is no real control, and the second, linked to the first, is to regularise the making of decisions in an otherwise irregular and uncertain field of choice. First there is observation of the dependence on natural forces. Then there is observation of the

²⁰ In comparing fengshui with Chinese religious beliefs, Feuchtwang (1974:239) makes far-reaching objections, based on Lévi-strauss works, to the classification Durkheim and Mauss proposed for China: “each of the compass’s component sets of symbols was, before integration to feng-shui science, a separate system of classification. The evolutionary process was not elaboration from a simple core but unification of a proliferation of autonomous systems.” He argues that fengshui practice is a method of self-identification. By fengshui a person or group is identified not as one of a collateral series but as an ego-centred universe with status achieved or aspired to and which may impinge on other ego-centred universes. “The hierarchy constituted by fengshui and its cosmology is a natural one and not a supernatural or religious hierarchy.” (op. cit. 240) Feuchtwang holds that there are four hierarchies: a natural (fengshui), a supernatural (Buddhist beings), a social (imperial administration) and a moral one (ranked according to Confucian ethics). He further explains: “The structure of the natural universe must be distinguished from both the supernatural and the social, on the two counts that it is not articulated either by authority or by Confucian ethics. As a convenient over-simplification we may say that the natural structure is a conception of the way power is distributed from a central source, as opposed to the way authority is delegated from a source above.” (op. cit. 241)
regularities of natural forces. . . . Then ways of measuring the regularities are evolved. But if there is no further analysis into the causes of good and bad fortune, the ways of measuring, which are already means by which predictions can be made and which are therefore a form of control, themselves become symbols of control.21

Feuchtwang concludes that “it is useful to treat Chinese geomancy as divination and as the expression in symbols of a unique and hence personally critical decision. Retrospective fengshui divination, the expression of conflicts about the fengshui of the already chosen site, is merely an extension of the same concern with identification, preservation and betterment of self-interest that charged the original prospective decision.”22

In a passing statement in which Beijing is mentioned, Feuchtwang (op. cit. 3) follows Freedman’s line of thinking about fengshui ideas in the capital cities: “Chinese towns, ideally, are planned on a strict north-south axis, with gates at the four quarters subject to the whole symbolism of feng-shui cosmology. The layout of Peking and of its Forbidden City is exemplary.” He (1982:241) argues that “the actual construction

21 He also says: “Feng-shui divination is better than chance, and it is not worse than the alternative scientific form of site-divination enough to be critical,” and “Feng-shui being symbolic has the advantage over the scientific method.” (Ibid.)

22 Treating fengshui as divination which has three possible functions: objectification, publication and legitimation of decisions, Feuchtwang (op. cit. 247-249) holds that in fengshui, the objectification of a decision is done by transference of the decision to a machine — the compass, to a third person, the fengshui practitioner, and by reference to a cosmology. Publication is the expression of the decision to site, or to defend one’s personal interests in commonly recognised symbols. Symbolisation of conflict, competition or resistance to change is not, then, the expression of an adamant position. “A function of fengshui divination is, therefore, to formulate or crystallise the conditions that circumscribe the decision to site or to contest a site; ‘to make known the unknown’ in symbolic terms and show willingness for it to be governed or defined by publicly recognised terms. A decision, which has already been made in intent, is dramatised.” As for the legitimation, it is also a function of symbolic action. But one element of religious legitimation, the additional authorisation of a decision by supernatural sanction, is missing in fengshui divination. “It may be said the fengshui of the site itself is more open to challenge just because it is distinguished from the supernatural sanctioning of the house or grave at its centre.” Feuchtwang’s main conclusion is incisive. He (op. cit. 249-54) argues that fengshui comprises an analytic model but that the model itself can be treated as a discourse, a kind of language. Therefore fengshui metaphysics is a self-defining set of concepts. It is not open to contradiction except in its own terms, certainly not by being checked with reality. Fengshui is less model than language. It is an explanatory device, but not for discovery. Its cosmology is eminently more about relationships than fixed entities. Since this analogue model furnishes plausible hypotheses, not proofs, it is metaphysical, a meta-natural-environment. He conclude that fengshui is “something like but not the same as a model, what Black calls an archetype. This is an understood field of reference which provides the imagery for describing the original unknown field for investigation.” From a scientist’s point of view, it is an aberration. To the Chinese, as Feuchtwang says, it is a self-certifying myth: “Those aspects of the analogy sufficiently rich in implication last and have a following. It is these that become ‘mythologized’, that is to say they become clichés in the stock of proverbial knowledge which constitutes the metaphoric system by which life is described.”
of Capital Cities, which again is done according to similar principles to those which I have already described as of geomancy.” He takes the cosmology of the construction of the capital cities elaborated in *Zhou Li*, such as, “here where heaven and earth are in perfect accord, where the four seasons come together, where the winds and the rains gather, where the forces of *Yin* and *Yang* are harmonized, one builds a royal capital,” as geomantic ideas. It is worth speculating why no other monograph of similar extent on *fengshui* has been written since Feuchtwang. Perhaps the best way to reveal the different aspects of *fengshui* is to analyse a practical example like Beijing, as *fengshui* is a complicated subject, which has such an intricate relationship with other realm of traditional Chinese thinking, and is most ambiguous in practice.

Andrew March (1968), summarising the previous approaches to *fengshui* and generally introducing the origins, schools and applications of *fengshui*, disagrees with Needham’s view that *fengshui* is pseudo-science: “Needham has been criticized for, in effect, identifying Western science too wholly with a universal science and forcing traditional Chinese thought into our mold; thus geomancy and other such arts, important to many thoughtful Chinese, are to him only pseudo-sciences.” March’s (op. cit. 265) central argument is:

A contrasting point of view is that Chinese science should be taken more on its own terms, as being “of synchronistic nature,” i.e. founded at least in part on “synchronicity” instead of causality. The concept of synchronicity is an attempt to take account of the fact that (not only in China) highly improbable meaningful coincidences do often occur, and a hypothesis that the “meaning” is not merely psychic and subjective, but somehow also a property of the natural world. Unhappily, apart from the general insight it represents, synchronicity as Jung (its inventor) left it is too vague to be of much service for a nearer understanding of geomancy, and we still lack the means of reconciling this “meaningful” noncausal element with our usual habits of thought.

March has then discussed the Chinese controversies over geomancy, and noticed the gravest philosophical objection to geomancy was that it lacked filial piety toward Heaven with its belief that man can make his own destiny by manipulating the blind natural forces whose evolutions should be left to Heaven. He (op. cit. 267) analyses the ambiguous attitude of the Chinese towards *fengshui* as “the good man trusts Heaven like a father, looks to his own virtue and his family’s, and does not try to force the natural mechanism by which Heaven accomplishes its designs; but neither will he believe that the siting of his parents’ graves is of no moment.” March concludes his essay as: “in all these matters the main concern is still actual human
experience and its meanings rather than any abstract and exclusive constructs of religion or science." (Op. cit. 267) I return to these points in Chapter Two.

0.2.2 Approaches to Chinese Cities and Fengshui

It is appropriate at this point to review the works in another research field in the Western world, the field of Chinese cities. Although there is a large number of works on Chinese cities, the topic of fengshui and the city of Beijing has not been extensively studied. But it is often claimed that Chinese cities, and, in particular, the city of Beijing, were influenced by fengshui. Paul Wheatley (1971:419), on the basis of his studies on the capital cities in ancient China, asserts that:

Chinese city planners were well aware that the fortunes of a city could be assured only if its site were adapted to the local currents of the cosmic breath (ch'i). . . . The analysis of the morphological and spatial expressions of ch'i in the surface features of the earth constituted the pseudo-science of feng-shui, the art of adjusting the features of the cultural landscape so as to minimise adverse influences and derive maximum advantage from favourable conjunctions of forms. Expertise in this art, which was a prerogative of diviners known as k'ao-yü chia, was of crucial importance in siting the residences of the living and the tombs of the dead, so that no city was ever planned without the advice of a geomancer.

Then he (op. cit. 420) takes the practice of divinations in siting for capital city in ancient times as "geomancy:" "Because of the nature of the evidence on which we have to rely, there is no direct record of geomancy in the service of city planning in Shang times, but there are ample indications that the Chou chroniclers did not consider it anachronistic to attribute divinatory measures to Shang architects. Unfortunately this tells us little more that that the Chou themselves engaged in such practices." Conducting a detailed study on the ancient texts on divination in the service of site selection in ancient China, Wheatley believes that this "widespread practice" was shared in ancient China since the practice is recorded with ever-increasing frequency. He takes geomantic considerations as part of the cosmic symbolism of the Chinese city as he concluded: "The Chinese city was established only after an array of geomantic considerations had been satisfied; it was constructed as an axis mundi, an omphalos incorporating the powerful centripetality of that symbol; and it was laid out as a terrestrial image of the cosmos, a schema involving

23 Johnston (1995:68) holds: "Thus guided by the geomancer, proper siting of cities and buildings would ensure prosperity, happiness and well-being for the inhabitants; lack of such divination foreboded poor siting with prospects of adverse effects."
cardinal axiality and orientation and, as a corollary, strong architectural emphasis on the main gates.” (Op. cit. 481) This understanding that ancient divinatory measures and the cosmic thinking in symbolism of the Chinese city are geomantic or fengshui ideas is as we shall see misleading.

Arthur Wright (1977) in his remarkable work “The Cosmology of the Chinese City” analyses the ancient and elaborate symbolism for the location and design of cities persisting in the midst of secular change throughout the long record of Chinese city building. He holds that a core cosmology of the capital city, which had been put together partly out of ancient lore and practice and partly out of the systematising imaginations of the architects of Han imperial Confucianism, persisted throughout the history of imperial China. Having reviewed “the longest tradition of city cosmology the world has ever known,” Wright (op. cit. 73) speculated on some of the reasons for its persistence:

One reason is that the symbolism of Chinese cities became a part of the imperial ideology, with its emphasis on the centrality of China in the world and on the Son of Heaven as radiator maximus of civilisation. It was the literate elite, who insisted time and again on the importance of the ritual-symbolic acts of ‘their’ emperor, on his role as pivot of the cosmos who should operate in a microcosm of the Chinese universe — the capital. A second reason is that the cosmology from which city symbolism derived was part of the enduring world view of the Chinese people. A third reason is that the artisans kept alive a profoundly conservative architectural tradition, so that when the time came to build anew, they resorted to traditional forms and techniques.

Wright thinks that the various ingredients of fengshui can be traced back to the Zhou dynasty, and that some continued as separate traditions for many centuries. “There are also references from late Chou, Ch’in and Han times to practitioners known as wang-ch’i-che who surveyed the ambience or emanations (ch’i) of a site or situation to determine its favorable or unfavorable character. This subtradition persisted and, I suggest, was fused with feng-shui theories in the third or fourth century A.D.” (Op. cit. 54) Wright notes that the application of this “emanation” theory and the fengshui system to the siting of cities is only partially and uncertainly reflected in the sources. He argues:

Thus despite its ancient pedigree and approval of Chu Hsi, feng-shui and the “emanation” theory associated with it did not become an integral part of the dominant Confucian ideology or of its subideology of the city. It was introduced into later city planning not by the scholar-officials but by their often restive masters, the emperors of China. It tended to be practised as a profession by the subelite, and to be more prevalent in the South than in the
The ramifying influence of *feng-shui* ideas in the later dynasties no doubt introduced among the common people a consciousness of the good and bad features of a city's site and made them judge some cities to be more fortunate than others. (Op. cit. 55)

He further suggests that the experience of building in southern terrain encouraged the application of *feng-shui* to city sites and secular buildings. But for cities, he argues, *feng-shui* seems to figure more in the retrospective writings of later scholars than in the actual choice of a site.

The city of Beijing in the Ming dynasty is chronologically the last example showing the tradition of Chinese city symbolism. Wright (op. cit. 66-73) notes that this “city was in closer accord with the canonical cosmology than were either of the Sung capitals or, indeed, Sui and T’ang Ch’ang-an.” He also suggests that a few aspects of the features of the city have a basis in *feng-shui*, but fails to give any precise reference for his suggestion: “A legendary source says that Liu’s design was influenced by *feng-shui* considerations.” While the Yongle emperor was moving the seat of power from Nanjing to Beijing, “arguments for and against Beijing as a capital site had gone on from the beginning of the Ming and had centred on supply problems, construction costs, defence considerations, climate, historical precedent, and *feng-shui* principles.” A city wall was built without a central gate facing North. “Since such a gate would have exposed the central axis of palaces to negative *ch’i*, I suspect that its elimination from the plan was on *feng-shui* grounds.” He also suggests that: “the hill’s location north of the palace complex and its contours — five peaks, the central one being the highest — strongly suggest the influence of Taoism and of *feng-shui* theories, but I have found no textual evidence for this.” I examine this further in section 6.2.2.

George T. C. Peng and Jeffrey Meyer are the two scholars whose research concentrates specifically on the *feng-shui* of Beijing. Peng (1972:124) holds that the design of Chinese cities was generally based on the Yin-Yang Principle: “The application of the Yin-Yang Principle to the building of a city is known in Chinese as ‘Feng-Shui.’” He (op. cit. 124) then claims:

The main ideas of Confucian philosophy are formality and regularity, which is Yang, representing man-made elements. The main concept of Laotze’s philosophy is informality and irregularity, which is Yin, representing natural features. This duality of opposites has been clearly expressed in the relationship between the Chinese house and garden, and in their extension, the city and park.

Peng takes the walled city of Beijing as an example to show the balance between the regular form of city walls and gates, as a symmetrical architectural composition, and
the irregular layout of the artificial lakes and parks. This work of his is the earliest modern research which analyses Beijing from an entirely fengshui angle.24 While he gives no references, Peng (op. cit. 126) contributes the most extensive fengshui analysis that I have encountered as to the spatial formation of the city of Beijing, the following being an interesting example of his thoughtful approach:

Because the sun seldom reaches the north-western corner of the Inner City, a corner of the square was cut off. Diagonally opposite, the southeastern corner of the Outer City, which was handicapped by its low, damp land, was also cut off not only because of its correlation with Chinese hand-writing as stated earlier, but in order to be reached by more sunshine as prescribed by the principles of Feng-Shui. For the same reason, the Temple of Temples’ was built in the southeastern corner of the Outer City not only to sanctify otherwise inauspicious land, but to balance the mortal power of the Emperor or King in the Forbidden City (Yang) with the divine power of god in the Outer City (Yin).

Peng (op. cit. 125-6) even provides extensive fengshui analysis for particular single features of the Outer City wall, for instance:

The form of the City’s surroundings, which is determined by the location of its mountains, is concave. It relates to the Chinese expression “Yin-shape,” because the mountain chain, which begins in the Chinese character “凹” which means “concave” and belongs to the Yin-complex. Thus, the corresponding shape of the city is convex, as the shape of the city plan looks like the Chinese character “凸” which means “convex” and belongs to the Yang-complex.

I find these analyses based on the apparent features of the city layout, which are alleged to be in accord with “fengshui principles,” but which have come from nowhere except the author himself, very misleading in terms of sinological scholarship (see section 6.1). But this work affected later researches on the city of Beijing.

Jeffrey Meyer bases his analyses on the picture of the “fengshui of Beijing” drawn by Peng and other secondary materials.25 Meyer, in his article of 1978, addresses the

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24 Peng (op. cit. 129) concludes his argument by saying: “the City of Peking, as a well enclosed and harmoniously unified form, is an ideal city representing Chinese philosophy in city design. Its location corresponds to the demands of nature, and its composition corresponds to the theory of Organism and Dualism, incorporating exogenous and endogenous thinking, as a great contribution to urban planning.”

25 Meyer (1991:42) says: “Although I have encountered countless scattered statements about this or that feature of Beijing’s fengshui, I know of only Peng’s comprehensive interpretation of the city’s geomancy. Unfortunately, the author does not give any indication of Chinese sources for his analysis,
question of what it means to speak of the fengshui of a city, taking Beijing as the example, later republishing his analyses in his book of 1991. He conducts an analysis of the fengshui features of the city by applying his own fengshui interpretations. Yet he does so without supplying historical evidence. Meyer (1978:142) takes fengshui as a determinative force which had a power almost the equivalent of that of the other major authority, the prescriptions from Zhou Li, in the shaping of the form of the capital city: "It appears that the urban form of Peking is the result of the mixture of two symbolic systems which are rather independent and sometimes in conflict with each other." He claims that "in fact, anything of height or mass in the city must be considered in the light of feng-shui." (Op. cit. 146)

Meyer (1978:148) does further argue that "the fengshui of cities is (as distinct from that employed in the location of graves, homes, and smaller structures) vastly indeterminate and should not be considered a ‘system’ at all.” However, he holds that the “fengshui of a city’ is not an entirely inappropriate term, for two reasons. At the most general level there are certain feng-shui principles which may be applied to nearly all cities, and they are the same ones which govern graves, homes, and single sites." (Op. cit. 151) And the other one, “for the feng-shui of cities, the communal aspect is paramount, enabling the dwellers to understand their group’s fortunes or failures and giving them some positive scope for action to rectify misfortunes.” (Op. cit. 153) Meyer (1991:44) summarises his conclusions about the fengshui of Beijing as follows: (1) The possible points of reference are simply too many, and there is no way to determine priorities as to which of these points of reference are most important. (2) There are too many potential symbolic referents in fengshui itself to make a systematic analysis possible. (3) Although not a comprehensive system, fengshui nevertheless is a significant factor in Beijing. He argues that once we accept the fact that geomancy is not so much a tool of urban planning as it is a method of analysis, then we can affirm that it too is a way of understanding the city, its history and destiny. (op. cit.)

Fengshui is taken by Meyer (1991:44) as “religious language, a tool for naming the mystery, for dealing with cosmic forces that may bring threat, problem, danger, luck, good fortune, or prosperity. If the city suffered a reversal, such as famine, drought, rebellion, or military attack, the fengshui expert offered a possible way of explaining it and dealing with it. . . . To embody the evil in a symbol is a big step toward

but he is able to provide a geomantic explanation for many of the city’s most important monuments, especially its gates, towers, hills, pagodas, and watercourses."
remedying it. This was the function of the geomancer and his worldview must therefore be accepted as an alternate and valid way of interpreting the meaning of Beijing.” Thus Meyer provided a controversial conclusion on the role of fengshui in the city of Beijing — as both “determinative force” and “retrospective analysis.” No matter which is correct, I think a more comprehensive understanding of the fengshui of Beijing has to be based on more profound research into the historical context of the construction of the city.

Then Evelyn Lip (1995) analyses the fengshui of the Forbidden City of Beijing. By taking the traditional Chinese theories, such as yin-yang and Five Elements as fengshui theories, and by examining various aspects of the Forbidden City, such as, the master plan of the city, the design of major palaces, the numbers used in the buildings, the colours and architectural details, the author claims that the whole design of the Forbidden City presents various fengshui principles. However, again, there is no historical reference supporting the argument.

A notable recent work that should be mentioned is that of Xu Yinong (1996) who was the first to conduct a thorough study of fengshui ideas as regards a local city, as a chapter of his doctoral thesis on the formation and transformation of the urban form and space of the city of Suzhou. He argues “that the application of fengshui to the city was characteristic of retrospective interpretation at [the] urban level and was probably influential on the physical outcome of building activities at the level of local corporate groups; more complex and volatile situations are likely to have affected the construction projects that fell between these two levels.” (Op. cit. iii.) He also distinguishes the fengshui phenomena of the formation of a local city from that of the building of houses and graves. “Because of the collective ambivalent attitudes of the imperial scholar-officials towards fengshui, and because of the social context of the local government and urban society, city constructions as part of the local administration seldom fell under geomantic influences.” (Op. cit. 324) But he implies that in imperial capital cities, the fengshui influence might have been stronger. (Op. cit. 311)

0.2.3 Chinese Scholars

Finally, the contributions to the study of fengshui and the city of Beijing made by contemporary Chinese scholars must be considered. While research on fengshui in the West has been well established for over a century, due to political reasons proper research in mainland China only started in 1985. Since the fundamental political and
social changes brought about in China in 1949, *fengshui* practice has been officially forbidden in mainland China. For the Communist Party, *fengshui* has been a superstition which was against communist ideology and political belief. Therefore it was categorically to be abandoned and precluded, a ban that included a forbidding of the study of it.26 For this reason, many Chinese scholars of architectural history have a very limited knowledge of *fengshui*.27 This has resulted in an evident gap in their research, as *fengshui* as an issue has rarely been addressed in their works. For instance, in the widely used text-book28 of the history of traditional Chinese architecture, by Liu Dunzhen, the concept of *fengshui* is not even mentioned. In other cases, when *fengshui* is referred to, it is merely seen as a “superstition.” Thus in the studies on the site selection and planning of the city of Beijing, *fengshui* ideas have been paid no attention at all. However, *fengshui* has recently become more acceptable in China again, due largely to the rapid economic development in the country following the economic reforms of 1979. The newly-rich have again begun to place their hopes in *fengshui* for ensuring their good fortune. *Fengshui*, therefore, is entering the market with an unexpected speed, which has also aroused academic interest. An assemblage of the outcome of the various inquiries into *fengshui* by modern Chinese scholars has only emerged since 1985, when a synthesis was signalled by Wang Qiheng’s MA. thesis *The Exploration of the Fengshui of the Imperial Tombs of the Qing Dynasty*. Further research articles on *fengshui* have been published since then.29 In general, there has not been much substantial research on the subject in China so far, apart from the popular books on the topic by He Xiaoxin (1990), Cheng Jianjun (1992) and Liu Xiaoming (1994).30

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26 There have all along been highly commercial *fengshui* manuals, many written in modern terms, available from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

27 Actually, since the Han dynasty, *Kanyu* 坎輿 (another name of *fengshui*) has been seen as superstitious, and depreciated by some of the elite. It is possibly also the case that after 1911 when Western culture and civilisation became dominant in the ideology of the Chinese, *fengshui*, seen as part of the imperial cultural tradition, was subject to criticism, and from then on was discouraged in China.

28 Liu Dunzhen’s *The History of Ancient Chinese Architecture* is published by Chinese governmental authorities in 1981 and utilised in all higher educational institutions.

29 The development of this kind of unorthodox publishing has been accompanied by attacks in many articles in official newspapers criticising research on *fengshui* as advocating “superstition.” The subject is, therefore, controversial.

30 Of course, some people are profiting financially from publications on *fengshui*, but it is as difficult to confirm the validity of their works as it is to believe various other unofficially published brochures. Some cheaply produced copies of *fengshui* manuals (even including thread-bound and block printed ones) could be found on bookstands over the last few years.
Among the few publications presenting a general introduction to *fengshui*, the *Journal of Tianjin University*, (Supplement) 1989 provides a unique academic perspective. It was reprinted as *Research on Fengshui Theory*, edited by Wang Qiheng in 1992. Most of its articles were written by Wang himself and the graduate students he supervised. These articles cover many aspects of *fengshui*, introducing its origins, development, terms, schools, general principles and practical methods, and for the first time presented *fengshui* as something other than superstition. Their exploration of, and textual work on, the dust-laden *fengshui* materials is valuable and provides a basis for further research. However, their approach interprets and evaluates *fengshui* on the basis of modern science. In their analysis of *fengshui* ideas and practice, they constantly try to make a differentiation between what can be branded as superstitious and what can be seen as scientific. One of their conclusions is that “the Liqi School is full of superstitions” while “the Xingshi School is scientific as its theory is highly coherent with the relevant theories of modern sciences.” (Feng Jiankui and Wang Qiheng 1992:9) Some articles try to find the components of modern science in *fengshui*. (ibid.) Others compare *fengshui* with some modern scientific theories (cf. Wang Qiheng and Mei Danyu 1992:240) or use them to verify it. (cf. Xu Subin 1992:107) Wang Qiheng (1992:117-37) analyses the spatial design of the Forbidden city of Beijing by applying a set of theories which he extracted from the Xingshi School of *fengshui*, to show that an exterior architectural design theory, which is in accordance with modern architectural, aesthetic and visual scientific theories, has long been provided by *fengshui*.

He Xiaoxin’s *The Source of Fengshui* (1990), which was highly influenced by Wang Qiheng’s works, was, as far as we know, the first scholarly book on *fengshui* published in mainland China. It is based on field investigation in south-east China where *fengshui* is particularly popular, and the author has done some detailed work probing into the historical development of its theory of the residential house. Her book consists of three parts. The first part expands on the historical development of *fengshui* and the characteristics of the two main schools in the South-east. The second part analyses *fengshui*’s influence on the traditional architecture of the South-east, and discusses in detail the architectural designs of villages, cities and temples. The third part elaborates on the question of why *fengshui* has been so popular in most parts of China, and how its more useful aspects may be absorbed by modern architecture. A general assessment of *fengshui* from an angle of modern science is given: “*Fengshui* originally came into being from observation of daily living and agricultural production. Its theory developed from observation and practice. It may
seem superstitious, but in fact it has remarkably scientific components. It is an embodiment of ancient Chinese philosophy, science and aesthetics. It has permeated every aspect of traditional architecture in China, and has become a medium of Chinese philosophy, science and architecture. In a word, it gives Chinese architecture its own philosophical character and unique splendour.” (Op. cit. 158)

Cheng Jianjun (1992), in *Fengshui and Architecture*, holds that *fengshui* has the dual characteristics of being both scientific and superstitious, and that its components of scientific value have been cloaked with traditional Chinese ideas. He tries to verify the *fengshui* theory and historical practice of building by means of modern architectural science to prove *fengshui*’s scientific value for the purpose of “making the past serve the present.” Liu Xiaoming’s (1994:260-61) *Fengshui and Chinese Society* concludes that since being penetrated by the Confucian School, *fengshui* had been elevated from an ancient art of divination into a systematic body of theory. The theory of correspondence between man and Heaven of the Confucian School developed into the theory of the correspondence between man and Earth in *fengshui*. The theory of *yin-yang* and Five Elements developed into an operative technique, which enabled people to locate the conjunction of man’s behaviour and Heaven’s law. Liu (op. cit. 261) thinks that “there are many reasonable components in the theory of selecting natural environment in *fengshui*, which are the summation of people’s practical experience and conform with modern science, and, can even be verified. However, the theory of getting rich and attaining honour and prestige is totally superstitious and is never verifiable in practice.” The books published later after are basically repeating Wang Qiheng and He Xiaoxin’s view.

It appears that all these contemporary Chinese works, in order to avoid *fengshui*’s reputation as superstition,31 anxiously stress the scientific components of *fengshui* by analysing it with the use of concepts borrowed from modern science or aesthetics. Some scholars even simply label it as a sort of traditional Chinese science or modern natural science. According to Feng Jiankui and Wang Qiheng (1992:3): “In fact,

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31 In “Joseph Needham’s Remarks on *Fengshui*” (translated by Fan Wei) (1992:273), a straight translation of Needham’s account of *fengshui* (1956:359-63), the description of *fengshui* as “the far-reaching pseudo-science of geomancy” is — deliberately I assume — avoided. The whole translation thus presents an impression that Needham thought *fengshui* to be a pure science. Needham may like to attribute *fengshui* as a kind of science based on his research. But the Chinese scholars doing this is for different reasons. In the Chinese Communist ideology, the Marxism and Leninism are science. To be pseudo-science has no much differences from superstition, which is regarded as completely unacceptable. Thus, to claim that *fengshui* is regarded by Needham as science means *fengshui* is worth to be studied for having the scientific value.
fengshui theory is natural science synthesised with geography, meteorology, landscape, biology, urban design and architecture, etc." Although their research is interesting and covers a vast academic field, it nevertheless lacks credibility. Their discussion lacks plausible evidence and reference, and presents some hasty conclusions, particularly on the practical usage of fengshui. For instance, they overstate the function of fengshui in traditional society by repeatedly asserting that the imperial capitals and local cities were strongly influenced by, or based on, fengshui, such as the city of Beijing but they only draw on a few legendary sources. The shortcomings of their research are also reflected in other respects, such as the fact that no sources are commonly given for a quotation or allusion, the meaning of original texts is misinterpreted and they tend to reach inflated conclusions.32

This kind of overstatement of the importance of fengshui and general misinterpretation of evidence is also demonstrated by many Chinese students studying abroad. Wang Mingming’s (1994) “Quanzhou: The Chinese City as Cosmogram” exhibits some of the same failings. He (op. cit. 145) wants to show how the city in traditional China served as a cosmogram, and takes Quanzhou as an example “to draw out some general implications concerning the use of cosmology in the making of social order in imperial China.” His conclusion is: “the cosmological vision that is reproduced in the Chinese city represents a totalising force which not only incorporates political and economic reality into its own spheres of influence but also confers the cosmic order on social organisation and policy.” (Op. cit. 164)

Though one may agree with his conclusion and other scholars’ opinions which he quotes as hypotheses, unfortunately, his poor understanding of Chinese concepts and texts in classical Chinese inhibits the strength of his arguments. Many historical texts are misunderstood and many examples misused in his article. For example, a method for the determination of the four directions described in “Kaogong Ji,” which has been translated by many scholars in conformity with Zheng Xuan’s (127–200 A.D.) annotation of Zhou Li in Eastern Han dynasty and Jia Gongyan’s annotation of Zhou Li in the Tang dynasty (618–907), is entirely misinterpreted by Wang Mingming.33 There are lot of other mistakes in Wang’s essay. He misinterprets

32 Part of the reason for these poor research habits may lie in the long standstill of academic research in China following the Cultural Revolution of 1967-1976, and the ensuing atmosphere which has prioritised profit over scholarship, and the constraints imposed by a failing revolutionary ideology.
33 A method for the determination of the four directions is described in “Kaogong Ji,” Zhou Li has been translated by several scholars:

[They] level the ground (by the use of) water (-levels), and suspend (plumb-lines) (shui ti i hsien). Then they test the verticality of posts, gnomons or poles, by the plumb-line (chih yeh
I hypothesise that there are deep reasons for the disappointing situation of modern research on the fengshui influence on Chinese cities. For the Western scholars interested in fengshui, fengshui is clearly an important factor in both the activities and the Chinese' understanding of construction-related matters in traditional China. This understanding of the prevalence of the application of fengshui seems to have been confirmed by social anthropological studies on fengshui phenomena in Hong Kong and the southern provinces of China. Their great interest in Chinese culture and architecture has made them inclined to accept that the Chinese cities were somehow also influenced by fengshui, although no direct evidence has been found for this.

To the first of these phrases the +2nd-century commentary of Cheng Hsuan says that 'at the four corners (of an instrument) four straight (lines) hang over the water, and (the surveyors) observe with this the high and the low; when this has been decided the ground can be levelled. (Needham 1959:571)

They erected a post, took the plumb line to it (to ensure its verticality), and then observed its shadow. They described a circle, and recorded the shadow of the sun at its rising and setting. (Wheatley 1971:426)

The Chou li describes the method of determining the four directions on the site by taking at various times the shadow of the sun as cast by a pole whose verticality has been assured by the use of multiple plumb lines. This method is supplemented by night observations of the polestar. (Wright 1977:47)

The Jiangren builds the state, levelling the ground with the [sic] water by using a plumb-line. He lays out posts, taking the plumb-line (to ensure the posts' verticality), and using their shadows as the determinators of a mid-point. He examines the shadows of the rising and setting sun and makes a circle which includes the mid-points of the two shadows. (Steinhardt 1990:33)

The interpretation and the translation of the same passage by Wang Mingming (1994:145) place a highly contemporary, methodological and geographical complexion in the original passage:

When an architect intends to establish a city (state), he should examine the patterns of water flux and other topographic features and employ the natural sights (jing) as reference points for measurements. When he tries to shape the forms of the city, he should inspect the sunrise and sunset. This helps him to fix the directional orientations of the city. The architect's city plan should be based on the knowledge and charters which derive from study of the motions of the sun and the changing positions of the stars. The knowledge and charters serve to set the city in a position consistent with the temporal moods of the universe.

The serious error that Wang has made probably comes from his misinterpretation of a few keywords in the context of this passage. For example, he mistakes an ancient character ying 景 (shadow) for another modern character jing 看 (sight), and misunderstands "水平以測 level the ground by the use of water levels" with "examine the patterns of water flux and other topographic features."
Their curiosity and enthusiasm has been further misled by the Mainland Chinese scholars supposedly more steeped in Chinese culture and history.

A proclaimed purpose of the Mainland scholars' studies of fengshui is always “to inherit the useful in tradition.” Under this excuse, many scholars are exaggerating the importance of fengshui in the building activities in imperial China, and trying to prove that fengshui is a Chinese science or, at least, has “scientific elements.” What I found difficult to understand is that, if “scientific elements” are indeed found in fengshui, and therefore can be of “benefit” to the planning and building activities in our time, why can we not simply and directly apply elements of modern science to design, since the system of those “scientific elements” found in fengshui could well be established within the domain of modern science? Since fengshui has been heavily denounced as superstitious, the Mainland scholars’ practice is really an excuse for writing something on this ill-reputed, but at the same time interesting, discipline. As Marxism and Leninism are officially regarded as scientific thought in China, to claim that fengshui has “scientific elements,” and to exaggerate the importance of fengshui in city planning, may seem to make research into fengshui legitimate and significant, and in this way, a researcher does not risk drawing too much criticism, a factor which is so very important in China. Under such an ideology, and being isolated from the international academic world, the poor scholarship of garbling texts, omitting evidence and imposing arbitrary views is inevitable. The exaggeration of the role of fengshui in traditional China has been disseminated by Chinese students studying overseas in order to cater to Western scholars’ interest in fengshui.

This review of previous and current studies on fengshui and the city of Beijing shows the urgent need for further research. So many scholars and students hold the implicit, or sometimes explicit, assumption that the building of the city of Beijing was influenced by fengshui ideas, but this survey reveals several problems: (1) There are controversies concerning the role of fengshui in the building of the city. For example, Peng and He Xiaoxin hold that the city plan was made in accordance with fengshui principles; Wright cautiously suggests that the fengshui evidence is based only on legendary sources; Wang Qiheng believes that fengshui was used as a design technique in the spatial layout of the Forbidden City, while Meyer concludes fengshui was both a determinative force in shaping the city, and a means of post-hoc analysis. (2) The same features of the layout of the city, which are in accordance with the prescriptions in “Kaogong Ji” and with the Yin-Yang Principle and other Chinese cosmological theories, are often considered to be a reflection of fengshui ideas as well. It is difficult to determine what belongs specifically to fengshui. (3) There is
little investigation of the historical context in which the fengshui ideas were considered or to which they were applied. There is no doubt that “fengshui ideas were an integral part of the urban phenomenon in imperial China.” (Xu 1996:273) However, studies of how and to what extent fengshui ideas were applied to city construction and interpretation of the city seem, so far, not to have been carried out as extensively as studies of other aspects of both Beijing and fengshui. Therefore, an enquiry into the role of fengshui in the building of the imperial capital city is necessary.

The above-mentioned deficiencies and gaps in the research of fengshui in Beijing have led to the formulation of a clear notion of the research issues needing to be addressed in this thesis: To what extent, and in what way, were fengshui ideas applied to the construction and transformation of the city of Beijing? Was fengshui so competitive and influential as to be considered a force which conflicted with the principles of “Kaogong Ji” in the shaping of the city? How significant are fengshui interpretations in Chinese perception of the city? What factors made fengshui imbued ideas become part of the imperial scholars’ understanding of the city?

0.3 METHODS AND MATERIALS

In order to deepen our understanding of the ideology, process and techniques of the building of Chinese imperial capitals, this research focuses on the architectural practices and understandings associated with fengshui in the pre-modern era. The method of this research is historical, textual and analytic. I trace the history of Beijing and the history of fengshui ideas by examining primary textual material mainly from the Yuan Ming and Qing period (1271-1911). I compare and contrast sources with each other, including a consideration of the contemporary understanding of fengshui.

I acknowledge here that my inquiries in to the fengshui perception of the city are mainly based on literary evidence rather than archaeological and physical evidence. This approach may result in some problems, since the information provided by the surviving written documents can be misleading as their authors were likely to have been biased to various degrees against certain ideas and even historical facts which they found hard to accept. However, since it is almost impossible to determine on physical evidence alone whether and, if it ever did, to what extent, fengshui operated in any building project, due to the ambiguous characteristics of both fengshui theory and practice, (Xu 1996:305) the poor surviving written documents are probably the best sources that we can rely on.
The materials used in this thesis are mainly of three types: (1) original texts (most of them recently reprinted), (2) city maps and drawings produced in the pre-modern era, and (3) occasionally materials referring to modern surveys of the form, space and individual constructions of the city. Most of the original texts regarding the city of Beijing are from *Rixia Jiwen Kao* (A Textual Research of the History of Beijing), a compilation carried out by Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 in 1688, and revised by imperial decree in 1775. Since it includes almost all the official and non-official materials associated with the city of Beijing, which were produced in previous dynasties and survived until the Qing dynasty, it has been regarded as the most important collection of documents for studies of the history of Beijing. Other primary official documents that I use are from *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 (the Veritable Records of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty), compiled throughout the Ming dynasty, and *Ming Shi* 明史 (History of the Ming Dynasty), compiled in the Qing dynasty. Many casual notes or records (*biji* 笔记) by individual scholars are also consulted. The fengshui theories I quote are principally from the “Section of Kanyu,” *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* 古今圖書集成, *Imperial Encyclopaedia of Ancient and Modern Books* compiled on government order during the reign of Qianlong 乾龍 (*r.* 1736-1795). The works collected in this section have been regarded as the earliest and most authoritative sources, and have been widely quoted. The earliest of them, *Zang Shu* 葬書, *Burial Book* has been ascribed to Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324).

### 0.4 Structure

The thesis opens in Chapter One with the historical background against which the city of Beijing was built and developed. This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I introduce the geographical location of the city and briefly summarise the history of the development of the previous cities which had been located, although not exactly, on the same site. In the second section, I introduce the ideology associated with the imperial capital city, which emerged in the Han dynasty and which was based on ancient practice, and centred on the protocol given in the “Kaogong Ji” section of *Zhou Li*. A summary of the persistence of these conventions in the later dynasties is provided as well. Thirdly, I deal with the foundation and design of the city of Dadu of the Yuan dynasty, since the basic city form and structure of Ming dynasty Beijing was largely determined by the plan of Dadu. an introduction to the physical features of the city plan. Fourthly, I examine three aspects of the recorded building of the city of Beijing: these being, the foundation of the city; the form of the city; and the cosmological symbolism of the city.
Chapter Two is an outline of *fengshui* reviewing its history, main concepts and schools, and most importantly, its status in imperial society. The main argument concerning the basic nature of *fengshui* is that *fengshui* is the art and practice of site selection and spatial organisation in order to maximise the good fortune of the owner/occupier (and their descendants) of a building or grave. Since the elaborate symbols used in *fengshui* theory are characteristic archetypes shared with imperial capital symbolism, which are rooted in fundamental Chinese cosmology, the basis of *fengshui* belief and its cosmological foundation is discussed. Then I discuss the two major schools of *fengshui* and the boundlessly varied theories inspiring it, to indicate that mixed with popular ideas among the common people, and drawing elements from many other disciplines of traditional Chinese thinking, *fengshui* ideas in general are not easily regarded as a coherent theoretical system. Finally, an extensively analysis of the position of *fenghsui* in the imperial cultural hierarchy and Confucian scholars’ various attitudes towards different aspects of *fengshui* is undertaken.

The main argument of the thesis, however, is composed of three parts. The first, constituted by Chapter Three, is an analysis of the role of *fengshui* in the matter of the siting of the city of Beijing. The second part, Chapter Four and Chapter Five, focuses on the *fengshui* ideas reflected in the imperial scholars’ understanding of the siting of the city. In the final part, Chapter Six, I investigate the role of *fengshui* in the planning of the city.

In Chapter Three, I investigate the role of *fengshui* in the siting of the city by analysing the historical situation when the city was constructed, *fengshui* practice in imperial government projects, and the position of *fengshui* interpretations in official and non-official writings on the city. This begins with an analysis of the choice of site of capital cities in history, especially the choice of the site of Dadu of the Yuan dynasty, and a discussion of the specific factors that influenced the decision making in the choice of the site of Beijing. By examining both historical materials, including the emperors and imperial scholars’ official and non-official writing, and modern research on the history of the city, we are able to see which factors were considered the paramount by the emperors and officials when making such decisions, and whether *fengshui* was considered as an important one. Then, in the second section, the role of *fengshui* in government projects, particularly in the siting of imperial tombs, is examined in order to find out the different degrees to which *fengshui* ideas were accepted according to the different nature of the construction projects. In the third section, I deal with the divinatory terms used in texts regarding the siting of Beijing, which also denoted *fengshui* in certain contexts, in order to distinguish
"fengshui" from the traditional forms of divination used in the siting of the capital city, and most importantly, to specify whether the use of these terms indicates that fengshui was practised in the siting. In the final section, I recount the interpretations of the location of Beijing in terms of fengshui in order to find out whether these pronouncements on the fengshui superiority of the site were post hoc. An analysis of all these aspects is of great help in locating the role of fengshui idea in the siting of the city.

Not only for grasping the role of fengshui in the siting, the imperial scholars' analyses of the siting of the city, in which fengshui terms were used, are also crucial for us to comprehend the extent to which fengshui ideas influenced the imperial scholars' understanding of the city. Beyond doubt, many analyses of the site were influenced by fengshui ideas. It is, however, too superficial to conclude merely that fengshui was a contributing factor in people's understanding of the city. A vital question is: what was the reason which induced some of those scholars, who perpetuated the orthodox Confucian ideology of the imperial capital, and usually despised fengshui, to accept fengshui ideas in their perception of the site of Beijing. The specific characteristics of fengshui associated with this particular city, which differ from those of the siting of graves and houses, and probably of other cities, must have been a product of special historic conditions, and of the intricate relationship between fengshui and other disciplines of Chinese thinking. This question leads further to the issue of whether fengshui ideas, the geomantic perception of geography and the landscape, were part of the general mentality of the Ming elite, and were consequently applied in the siting and perceiving of the city at an almost unconscious level. If not, why was the site seen so often as so in accord with principles of fengshui? I examine the reasons why fengshui theory became part of the interpretation of the site of Beijing. These issues are dealt with in Chapter Four and Chapter Five focused respectively on two aspects — the wider geographical location and the local topographical features of the site — two main aspects concerned in the fengshui imbued analyses.

Chapter Four focuses on fengshui interpretations of the geographic aspects of the city's siting. Coincidently, all the theories regarding the geographical aspects of the site were associated with the concept of qi, but a diversity of theories on different aspects of qi were involved. I first analyse the idea that the site of Beijing in a long mountain range accesses authentic qi (pneuma). This leads into a discussion on the development of a macro-sopic concept regarding the geographic situation of the whole of imperial China, namely that of the Three Dragons, and its variant theory —
the Three Dragons in *fengshui*. The second section concentrates on the theory that the site of Beijing is of an ideal topographical pattern for concentrating *qi*. Thirdly, the theory on *qi*, which is closely associated with the perception of geography and the idea of change of fortune, and the theory on the phenomenon of capital cities moving eastward is examined. Thus by analysing the relevant theories contained in *fengshui* manuals, imperial scholars’ notebooks, and travellers’ diaries, this chapter discloses the complicity and ambiguity in all these *fengshui*-associated theories to reveal the factors that brought them into some scholars’ understanding of the site, and the factors that hindered them entering into official interpretation of the city of Beijing.

Chapter Five concentrates on the topographical aspects of interpretations of the city. *Fengshui* includes two main schools: the Liqi 理氣 School which concentrates on inferences based on the calculation of cosmological symbols; whereas the Xingshi 形勢 School focuses primarily on the natural environment as the central consideration in architectural situations, which offers an elaborate exposition for viewing the topographic surroundings of a selected site. In imperial scholars’ writings, the topographical environment of the site of the city of Beijing is always seen as excellent in regard to both its pragmatic and its symbolic aspects. Concepts and terms that were an integral part of *fengshui* are often found in analyses of the city’s topographical features, especially regarding the aesthetic beauty of the spatial configuration of the site, while some writers claimed plain and simply that the spatial layout pattern of the city’s topographical surroundings was in perfect accord with the principles of *fengshui*. By investigating the ideas applied to the perception and creation of a topographical environment, this chapter aims at tentatively answering the question whether these theories and terms had derived from or developed in, *fengshui*, and why these concepts became part of some scholars’ understanding of the sating of Beijing.

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first is an investigation of the spatial formation of the topography of the site, which was proclaimed as being of an ideal pattern according to *fengshui*. We will see that the topographic appearance of the site was seen as ideal from both *fengshui* and non-*fengshui* points of view. Secondly, I examine the involvement of the ideas regarding the Four Spiritual Animals (Green Dragon, White Tiger, Red Bird and Black Tortoise), which were also typical *fengshui* terms, in assessments of the topographical surroundings of the site. Thirdly, I review the use of two significant concepts, *xing* 形 (form) and *shi* 勢 (power), which were extensively developed in the Xingshi School of *fengshui*, for grasping and conveying the aesthetic beauty of the site. I demonstrate that these linked concepts were shared
by many Chinese arts concerning landscape, such as Chinese painting, landscaping and architecture, and not used exclusively by fengshui.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I discuss the application of fengshui ideas to the spatial layout of the city. Due to deviations from the principles stated in Zhou Li, together with the appropriation of cosmological symbols, in the planning of Beijing, fengshui has been regarded by many modern scholars as the reason for the layout of the city. Besides this argument that fengshui governed the siting of the city, there have been assumptions and suggestions that there are “fengshui features” in the layout of the city which have come mainly from modern scholars rather than from historiographical writings. Although lacking all textual evidence, some of these scholars have produced a large number of interpretations of the city plan by applying theories which they have regarded as fengshui. By examining the specific contemporary historical and cultural context in which the city was planned and conceived, in this chapter, I focus on the issue of whether there was any feature of the city layout which resulted from fengshui ideas. Further more, do the modern fengshui analyses of the city prove that the plan was perceived in the same way in imperial times as they perceive it today? I first investigate the city wall and the city gates, and explore the possible factors which led the plan of the city wall to deviate from that prescribed in “Kaogong Ji.” In the second section I deal with the city structure, including the street grid, the pattern of rivers, and the location of Long-life Hill by investigating both the historical and cultural backgrounds of these examples of architecture in practice. The third section is an examination of the layout of the Forbidden City in terms of the application of cosmological symbols. The difference between the ideas of fengshui and imperial capital symbolism, which both share the same sets of symbols rooted in fundamental Chinese cosmology, is clarified.

A comprehensive argument on the overall aspects of the fengshui influence on the siting and planning, and on the understanding of the city of Beijing in late imperial China, is provided, based on preceding discussions, in the Conclusion. It is also seen as necessary to further review the problems and prospects of studies on fengshui and the city. For the question of how significant this research is for the study of Chinese capital cities, I think two important and interrelated ideas come to inform this methodological issue. First, whereas the histories of Chinese cities were profoundly different from each other, common features must have existed in their cultural and urban context so that they were all culturally “Chinese.” Second, Chinese cities were not only given form by their particular historical circumstances, they were also shaped by, and understood in the light of, the “cosmology of Chinese city” — part of
a widely shared traditional Chinese world view. What I do in this research — tracing both the common ideological ground in which the Chinese cities firmly embedded, and the particular historical context in which one Chinese city developed its unique characteristics — the warp and weft of a particular city, may provide I hope an appropriate approach for further studies on other Chinese cities.
Perched at the northern end of the North China Plain, the city of Beijing was established in 1420, and served as the capital for both the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. (Figure 1-1) The site, the general outline and structural layout of this capital for all of late imperial China was inherited from its predecessor, the capital city Dadu 大都 of the Yuan empire (1271-1368). Many aspects of its form were different from that of the capitals before the Yuan, and of course the regional capital-cities. The choice of the site, which differed from Chinese capitals before the Jin and Yuan dynasties, was a result of the conflict between the Han and northern nomadic peoples. Not only did the configuration of the city express the ideology of capital city building, which had been formed throughout history and constantly advocated by the elite in imperial China, but its physical appearance was actually most close to the ideal model of an imperial capital city elaborated in one of the Confucian classics Zhou Li throughout history. While its putative origins in fengshui practice will be examined in subsequent chapters, serving as a basis for such future discussion, this chapter focuses on the history, the social-political context, the layout of the city, and in particular on the primary aspects of its cosmological symbolism, based on a long-formed imperial capital city building tradition.

The chapter is divided into four sections. First, I introduce the geographical location of the city and briefly summarise the history of the development of the cities which had been located on the site. The second section presents a general description of some of the conventions of city construction in Central China in the Shang 商 and early Zhou 周, and the principles of city planning prescribed in Zhou Li. A summary of the persistence of these conventions in the later dynasties is provided as well. This section serves as a background for the theory of city building activities according to which the city of Beijing was constructed and recorded. Thirdly, I deal with the foundation and design of the city of Dadu of the Yuan dynasty, since the basic city form and structure of Ming dynasty Beijing was largely determined by the plan of Dadu. Fourthly, I examine three aspects of the recorded building of the city of Beijing: these being, the founding of the city; the form of the city; and the cosmological symbolism of the city.

1.1. THE LOCATION AND HISTORY

The site of the city of Beijing was located between the North China plain, the Mongolian plateau and the Songliao 松遼 Plain. Its terrain is like a half enclosed bay.
The Yanshan 燕山 range in the north-west, the Taihang 太行 range in the south-west, and the Bohai 渤海 bay in the east, provide it with a natural defence. Against these natural screens of the east, north and west, this site opens only to the south, onto the North China Plain. The River Yongding 永定 flows through to the south-west of the city. The south-western end of the city is close to the foot of Taihang Mountain, which served as a gate leading to the central plain of China. In the Northeast and Northwest, there is a valley leading to the Plateau of Mongolia and the Songliao Plain. As the juncture of the central area of China and the northern desert, this geographical position had great economic and military significance in the imperial era. Before the ninth century, all the dynasties in Central China were ruled by the Han people, while the northern desert and Songliao Plain were mainly controlled by northern nomads. The cities located on this site naturally served as trading centres for the Han and other peoples. After the ninth century, this site was regarded by the Han as the line of last defence against attacks from northern nomads, who excelled in cavalry battle and could not be stopped if they broke through this area and entered the Central Plain. By holding this crucial pass it was easy for the nomadic peoples who occupied this area to dominate both the central area of China and the northern desert. (Su 1987:121) (Figure 1-2)

The history of the cities of the area, which later became the location of the city of Beijing, can, according to Su Tianjun (op. cit.), be divided into five phases. I briefly recount the history of the development of these cities in the sequence of the five phases. (1) Yan 燕 and Ji 齊, the two ancient city states in this area, used to be subordinate to the Shang dynasty (16 c.-11c. B.C.). After suppressing the Shang, King Wu 武 of Zhou granted the territories to his relatives, and later, the state of Yan conquered the state of Ji and moved its capital to the city of Ji. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the city of Ji served as a ruling centre for the Yan state to strive for supremacy in the Central Plain (comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River). This phase (11c. B.C.-221 B.C.) can be considered as the embryonic phase in the development of the cities located in this area. (Hou 1985:9-12) (2) Having unified the other six states into one, the Qin 秦 Empire (221-207 B.C.) divided its territory into thirty six prefectures, of which six were the territory of the former state Yan. From then on through the Han 漢 dynasty, Sui 隋 dynasty (581-618 A.D.), Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907 A.D.) and up until the time of the Five Dynasties (907-960 A.D.), the city of Ji was always a commercial centre for the Han people and some minorities. From the later period of the Tang dynasty, the city of Ji was named Youzhou 幽州, and became a more important frontier city as a result of the rise of
Figure 1-1 China and Inner Asia at the Beginning of the Ming


Figure 1-2 The location of Beijing and the routes to neighbouring areas in the Ming

several nomadic tribes in the Northeast. (TDCGJ 1982:60) In this period, the city of Ji gradually developed from a ducal city into a yet more important city on the frontier district in the north of China. During the period 221 B.C.-938 A.D., the essential historical function of the city of Ji was that of a military fort. (Hou ed. 1985:13-21)

(3) Having taken over the sixteen prefectures surrounding Youzhou, the sovereign state Liao (916-1125), founded by northern nomads, promoted Youzhou to its subordinate capital and named it Nanjing 南京 (Southern Capital), while the dominant capital city of the Liao remained still located in the North. This period (938-1125 A.D.) may be regarded as a transitional time in which a regional capital-city of military importance developed into a national capital city. (Hou Renzhi ed. 1985:22) (4) Nanjing was conquered by the Jin, a state of the northern, Jurchen 女真 people in 1122. The original capital of the Jin was in Huining 惠宾 (the present-day administrative capital of Chen County of Heilongjiang 黑龙江 Province). After murdering Emperor Xizong 熙宗, King Hailing 海陵 became Emperor Shizong in 1149. He intended to move to Yanjing 燕京, the former Southern Capital of the Liao dynasty, in order to avoid the former emperor's influence in the original capital Huining and to take firm control of both the northern part of the Central Plain of China and the northern desert. One of his officials said to him:

Yan [the site of Beijing] is grand in strategic location, relying on the mountains in the north as a natural barrier, controlling the vast area of China in the south, just like sitting in a great hall of a house and looking down the courtyard. The people raised up here are strong and brave. Although the doomed Liao was a small country, because it obtained Yan, it was then able to control both the north and the south, and finally dominated the territory of the Song. (Jin Shi 金史: “Shizong Benji 世宗本纪,” translated from RJK, vol. 5)

Emperor Shizong accepted the proposal that the official was advocating by this statement, and sent officials to make a plan and design for its implementation. On the base of the city of Yanjing, the new capital was expanded. Shizong formally moved the capital to Yanjing and named it Zhongdu 中都 (Central Capital) in 1153. (Hou Renzhi ed. 1985:23-24) After the Northern Song 北宋 was defeated in 1126, the Jurchens, as a new dynasty, the Jin (1115-1234 A.D.), confronted the Southern Song 南宋 dynasty for more than a hundred years. In this period, it was the first time that a city on this site served as the sole ruling centre of a imperial dynasty. (5) The Yuan, a dynasty of northern nomads dominated by the Mongols, re-unified the whole of

34 Ji was called Youzhou from 2 century A.D.
China and built its capital city close by the city of Zhongdu, naming this capital Dadu (lit. “Great Capital”) in 1272. (BDL 1985:99) The capital city of the Ming dynasty ruled by the Han people was built on the basis of this, and has been named Beijing ever since, remaining a capital city in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In this period (1272-1911), the city developed into one of great prosperity. (Hou 1985:25-56) (Figure 1-3)

From the Zhou dynasty, over a period of 2,000 years, the cities on the site where Beijing was located, were selected as the capital city twelve times — from Ji, Yan, Pre-Yan, Dayan, Zhongyan, the Liao, the Jin, the Yuan, the Ming, Dashun, and the Qing and into the initial period of the Republic of China. (Yan Chongnian 1987:116) During this period, the city of Nanjing on this site in the Liao dynasty was a capital city of an empire for the first time, but was not the prime capital of the Liao. In many dynasties there were several cities appointed as capital cities (ducheng; (Sid)) of the Empire. These capital cities were distinguished by names regarding their locations, such as, Shangdu (lit. “Upper Capital”), Zhongdu (lit. “Middle Capital”), Nanjing (lit. “Southern Capital”) or Beijing (lit. “Northern Capital”). While all these capitals shared the title du or jing (lit. “capital”), only one of the capital cities, where the Emperor lived and the central government was located, was regarded as the principal or prime capital of the empire. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the prime capital was sometimes called jingshi (lit. “The Great Capital”). Therefore, although the city of Nanjing on this site was appointed as one of the capital cities of the Liao, the real ruling centre was Shangjing in the North. In the Jin dynasty, the city Zhongdu on this site was the prime capital city of an empire ruling the northern half of modern China for the first time. Dadu of the Yuan dynasty was the capital of the largest empire in the world at the time. These three dynasties and the last imperial dynasty Qing were all ruled by northern peoples who came from beyond the northern screen of the mountains of Beijing, and they all defeated the previous dynasty by first breaking through this area. This site was of great military significance for both the Han and northern peoples. (Figure 1-4)

1.2 TRADITIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF CAPITAL CITY BUILDING

As Wright (1977:33) points out: “Throughout the long record of Chinese city building we find an ancient and elaborate symbolism for the location and designing of cities persisting in the midst of secular change.” The first written records of capital-city construction are of the building of the capital cities of the Shang dynasty

course, considerable building. The tradition was then elaborated in one of the Confucian classics *Zhou Li* which brought in the influence of the Han dynasty. The building of the city of Beijing was, of course, a product of a tradition of city planning and construction which, by the time of its building, had been in progress for nearly three thousand years, and can not be seen in isolation as peculiar to that dynasty. Wright (1977) has produced an excellent work on the cosmology of the Chinese cities, which covered most of the Chinese cities built in a span from the very beginning of the building activities in the ancient Shang and Zhou dynasties to the end of the imperial time. He detailed various aspects of the formation and development of the symbolism for the location and designing of the cities. With his fine eye Wright grabbed the spirit of the long formed tradition of the building of Chinese cities, and laid a sound foundation for further studies on the history of Chinese cities. For instance, Xu Yinong (1996) recounted Wright’s discovery as part of the basis of his study. Since the tradition of the symbolism of Chinese cities is essential background for my research, in this section I then summarise the tradition and history of the capital city in imperial China based mainly on Wright’s research.

### 1.2.1 Cosmological Elements In The Building Of Early Cities

According to Wright, the legendary beginnings of Zhou city building are evoked in the ode called “Mian” in the *Book of Songs*. It is said that Tanfu, grandfather of the father of the founder of the Zhou dynasty, King Wen 文, led his people to build a city at the foot of Mt. Qi on the north bank of the River Wei 渭 (the traditional date is 1352 B.C.). He consulted the oracle about the site by reading the cracks on burned tortoise shells\(^\text{35}\) on the site, and the divination response was that the Zhou people

\(^\text{35}\) The form of divination was *bu*. *Bu* 卜 and *shi* 爻 were two forms of the art of divination used in siting for the capital cities in the Zhou dynasty, together with another activity, that of *xiang* 相. *Bu* was a kind of divination of consultation of the carapace or scapula to obtain predictions either fortunate or unfortunate. This was the oldest Chinese scapulimancy, the heating of tortoise carapaces or ox and deer shoulder-blades with red-hot metal, and the interpretation of the resulting cracks. (Needham 1956:347) *Shi* was another art of divination to acquire an importance almost equal to that of scapulimancy, namely, the “drawing of lots” by means of the dried stalks of a plant known as the Siberian milfoil. (op. cit.) *Xiang* was a land survey for the choice of site, probably conducted through the *bu* form of divination. Elsewhere in *Zhou Li*, details on the taking of auguries by *bu* and *shi* are provided, and it specifies that a major shift in the site of the capital is an occasion for consulting the *bu*. Once the site has been decided, the first step of the construction is to survey the contours of the
should build their houses there. Other construction matters associated with this historical juncture, were certain ritual symbolic elements, such as the building in straight lines, the royal ancestral hall, and the great earth-mound. When later King Wen moved southeast across the River Wei to establish his capital, Feng, this event was celebrated in the ode “Wenwang yousheng 文王有聲” in the ancient classic *Book of Songs*. King Wu, the successor of King Wen, built his capital at Hao 駆, to the east of the River Feng 频 where he too divined by tortoise shell for the site-selection.

The evolution of the ritual-symbolic procedure appropriate to city planning is apparent in the following building of capitals. The establishment of a second Zhou capital at Luo 維, in what was formerly Shang territory, and the adoption of the elements of symbolism and ritual of the conquered country, were dealt with in two chapters of the *Book of History*. According to the chapters “Zhaogao 召誥” and “Luogao 維誥,” the Grand Guardian, Duke of Zhao 召, went to search for auspicious sites. He arrived at Luo, took a tortoise-shell oracle and, finding it favourable, planned the new city, determining the dimensions of the walls, the palace, the ancestral hall, and other buildings. The Duke of Zhou arrived the day after this city was completed to inspect it. In his report to King Cheng, the Duke of Zhou recounts how he followed the Grand Guardian to Luo and then consulted an elaborate series of oracles. The Duke of Zhou says, “May the king in accordance with the rites of the Yin36 make sacrifice in the new city. Range everything in order without confusion.” (Wright 1977:37) It is with the building of this new city in the eastern plain that Zhou and Shang ritual-symbolic practices were fully merged. The first of these elements that were of ritual-symbolic significance was the placing of the city in precise alignment with the four directions. The second was the building of city walls in the form of a square or a rectangle. Thirdly, South is the ritually favoured orientation of important excavated temples, halls, and tombs. Wright (ibid.) infers that the cities, too, “faced south” and that their principal gate was in the south wall.

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36 On the “rites of Yin 墟殷,” Wright (ibid.) summarises: “there are four elements appearing for the first time in this text. First, the city was pre-planned, and the plan was reduced to written form. Second, the proposed city was staked out on its site according to the plan. Third, when this had been completed, there were two sets of animal sacrifices. . . . Fourth, the labour force was charged in advance with specific parts of the work.”
A fourth element of Zhou and Shang ritual-symbolic practices is the use of divination.

In the Eastern Zhou period, from 771 B.C. onwards, the building of cities spread all over the North China Plain. Some of the cities were capitals of the various states. In the building of these hundreds of urban centres there are continuities with Shang and early Zhou patterns: location of cities on level land near waterways; consistent use of pounded earth walls; the use of pounded-earth platforms as foundations for important buildings; adherence to a rectangular or square form; orientation of the city to the four cardinal points with an emphasis on the north-south axis. The most important innovation in the building of these cities is the articulation of city plans into functional zones or areas. In these cities there was a central area, usually walled, that contained the palaces and important buildings used by the aristocracy. Surrounding this was a second walled area that included industrial and artisan quarters, residences of the people and markets. Outside the wall there was often a moat. Wright (op. cit. 41) believes that these elements were not systematised but were parts of a slowly growing body of traditional practice:

Underlying all was a kind of primitive organicism: a belief that the worlds of the gods and of men were interconnected, that it behooved men to respect the natural forces and natural features over which the gods presided in locating cities and their parts, and that the ancestors, particularly those of great lineages, continued to play an important role in the affairs of their descendants as surrogates of the God on High. Thus gods, men, and nature, the living and the dead — all were seen as interacting in a seamless web.

Toward the end of Zhou, the first great flowering of Chinese philosophy occurred and different schools and doctrines were produced. In addition to those of Confucius, the early Taoists and the Legalists, further schools appeared that influenced the cosmology and symbolism of cities. One was the school of the Dual Forces (yin-yang), another the school of the Five Elements (wu-xing):

37 The theory of yinyang was created very early. It was said in the Book of Changes: “The alternation of yin and yang is what is called Tao.” (Bodde 1981:239) In the earliest expression of the oscillation theory Laozi (prob. 4th-3d centuries B.C.) explained Tao: “The movement of the Tao (the universal course or Way) is that of reversal.” “Passing on means going far away, and going far away means reverting again,” or “If diminished, it will increase; if increased, it will diminish.” (op. cit.) Thus the eternal interplay of two cosmic forces, the yin and yang was viewed as the fundamental pattern of the universe. This was further developed by Zou Yan in the Warring States period. (CY 3282-3) On this Needham (1956:273) writes:

the two fundamental forces are not mentioned in any of the surviving fragments of Tsou Yen, though his school was called the Yin-Yang Chia, and in the Shih Chi and other documents, discussion of them is definitely attributed to him. There can be very little doubt
that the philosophical use of the terms began about the beginning of the 4th century, and that the passages in older texts which mention this use are interpolations made later than that time.

From the Han dynasty onwards, the doctrine of yinyang was developed by Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.) and others, became the foundation of the Chinese world-view, and exerted great influence on Far Eastern culture in general. Graham (1986:25–41) has conducted an extensive study on the origin and development theory of yinyang. It was recognised that everything has two aspects, namely yin and yang, which are mutually dependent and yet antagonistic. For instance, upper and lower, front and back, odd and even, and positive and negative are all expressions of yin and yang. This view came to be disseminated throughout the whole of Chinese culture, that many Chinese theories and arts were based on this basic aspect of Chinese cosmology, such as Chinese medicine, gongfu and fengshui. It is no exaggeration to say that the theory of yinyang was a crucial landmark in the evolution of ancient Chinese people’s conceptions of the world. But what we should particularly bear in mind is that the theory of yinyang cannot be identified as fengshui, even though fengshui also uses the theory of yinyang.

38 According to the theory of the Five Elements, the whole world is composed of 5 principal elements—Water (shui 水), Fire (huo 火), Wood (mu 木), Metal (jin 金) and Earth (tu 土). This theory was recorded in the “Hongfan 洪範” (Great Plan) section of Shangshu (Book of Documents) (reputedly edited by Confucius before 476 B.C.) (CY 132, 896; Needham 1956:242; Graham 1986:48) During the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.), Five Elements theories were developed by Zou Yan, (Graham 1986:47) and the theory of mutual promotion and restraint between the five elements came into being. It stated: wood is the fundamental element, dominating the creation of life, fire dominates expansion, and earth is the controller of evolution, metal the controller of the harvest, and water the controller of keeping. Wood promotes fire, which gives birth to earth. Earth promotes metal, which promotes water. Metal restrains Wood, Wood restrains Earth, Earth restrains Water, Water restrains fire, and fire restrains Metal. The Five Elements promote and restrain each other, forming a never-ending cycle. Its earliest form this theory is found in the Yue Ling (Monthly Commands), but it soon reappears, considerably elaborated, Huainian Zi (The Book of Huainian) (compiled shortly before 122 B.C.) (Bodde 1981:240) The Five Elements are used to classify a wide variety of correlated qualities, including the Five Directions, the Five Colours, and many other categorisations, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Elements</th>
<th>Mu (Wood)</th>
<th>Huo (Fire)</th>
<th>Tu (Earth)</th>
<th>Jin (Metal)</th>
<th>Shui (Water)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Directions</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Seasons</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Long Summer</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Colours</td>
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<td>Red</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Musical Notes</td>
<td>Jiao</td>
<td>Zhi</td>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>Yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Tastes</td>
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<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Spicy</td>
<td>Salty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Organs</td>
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<td>Heart</td>
<td>Spleen</td>
<td>Lungs</td>
<td>Kidneys</td>
</tr>
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<td>Happy</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Worrying</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hot</td>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>Dry</td>
<td>Cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of Changes</td>
<td>Generating</td>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>Changing</td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>Storing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1-1 Classifications corresponding to the Five Elements Source: Yu Zhuoyun (1992:24)

In the above table, the vertical columns represent associated characteristics, and in the horizontal columns the items are of the same category. This school originally distinct from the Yin-yang School, with which, however, it became amalgamated by the second century B.C. (Bodde ibid.) This theory influenced the Chinese peoples’ outlook on Nature and society, and became a major part of the foundations of the Chinese world-view. In Zhou Li, even the national institutions and officials were named after heaven, earth, spring, summer, and other elements of this classification system. For example, the zongbo was the “spring” official, who was in charge of education and cultural affairs; the stina was the “summer” official, who was the leader of the army; the sikou was the “autumn” official, who was responsible for criminal law; and the sikong was the “winter” official, who was in charge of engineering. The various sections in Zhou Li were entitled “Tianguan (heaven official),” “Diguan...
The two schools were closely related, and they developed the model of the universe and its forces that is at the heart of the organicism that appeared in early times and remained constant in Chinese thought. The school of Yin-Yang elaborated the idea of complementary energies that, if properly perceived and controlled, kept all phenomena in smooth oscillating motion. The school of the Five Elements analysed phenomena into five categories (xing) that appeared in a cyclical sequence — of which there were two variants. Members of these two schools — and people who drew from both — offered analyses of events and prognostications, estimates of character, and appraisals of the natural forces at work in a given segment of nature, whether a river valley, a mountain slope, a proposed building site, or a grave site." (Wright 1977:41-42)

Then, after the founding of a unified empire Qin 秦, this large and heterogeneous body of lore practices and ideas connected with city building was integrated into the synthesis known as Han Confucianism.

1.2.2 The Locus Classicus — "Kaogong Ji"

Zhou Li (Ritual of the Zhou), one of the Confucian classics, was a set of books about social etiquette in the Eastern Zhou (770-256 B.C.) and Warring States periods (475-221 B.C.). It was composed of six sections: "Heaven Offices 天官," "Earth Offices 地官," "Spring Offices 春官," "Summer Offices 夏官," "Autumn Offices 秋官" and "Winter Offices 冬官." "Winter Offices," the section about construction and handicrafts, was missing until the Han dynasty, when Liu De 劉德 presented "Kaogong Ji" (Artificers' Record) to Emperor Wu to make up the missing section. (cf. He Yeju 1987:21; Lin Yin 1988:1)39 Controversies on the authenticity and date of Zhou Li have continued for two millennia. Considering that its texts "represent the endeavors of the Confucian school to determine what the beliefs and rites should properly be,"40 and that they are normative and prescriptive, not historical, Wright (1977:46) holds that: "whereas some passages, or their underlying ideas, may be of early date, the basic structure — and particularly the numerical-symbolic references

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39 He Yeju (1985:171-78) holds that "Kaogong Ji" is a government document with a set of principles to guide, supervise, and evaluate government handicraft industry and the work of slaves. It is supposed to have been written in the state of Qi 齊 in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.). It is the oldest existing handicraft-industrial document, and not only preserved much technical information on handicraft industry, but also provided a series of regulations on business management, urban construction, and etiquette.

40 Wright (1977:684) believes that the "Kaogong Ji" was inserted into the Zhou Li at least not later than the time of Liu Xiu of the Han dynasty. (Liu Xiu died in 23 B.C.)
— date from about the time of Han Wu-ti.” (140-87 B.C.) The archaistic bias is also noted by Wright: “the belief that ancient models alone had authority — was so strong among the Han ideologues that the Chou li was attributed by them to the Duke of Chou, that peerless statesman of early Chou idolized by Confucius.”

1.2.2.1 Choice and preparation of the site

Each of the four main sections of Zhou Li — corresponding to the four seasons — opens with the following passage:

It is the sovereign alone who establishes the states of the empire, gives to the four quarters their proper positions [and determines the location of the site (bianfang zhengwei 辨方正位)], gives to the capital its form and to the fields their proper divisions. He creates the offices and apportions their functions in order to form a center to which the people may look. (Zhouli Zhushu. Translated by Wright 1977:46)

Wright (op. cit. 46) thinks this is an expression of the centralism of Han ideology. It makes the capital the epicentre of an orderly spatial grid extending to the boundaries of civilisation. The first step in the consideration of capital building is to determine the four quarters and the location of the site. It is easy to understand that once a point has been established, a well planned capital could be laid out and properly orientated by having the main gate and approach of the city and principal buildings facing South. However as it was associated with the establishment of the empire, its symbolic implication was not less important than its practical significance.

As prescribed in Zhou Li (“Diguan Situ 地官司徒,” no. 2; vol. 10 “Da Situ 大司徒”), the official known as the Da Situ, was, in the matter of capital building, to take the site plan and study it in advance. Symbolically, the city was claimed to be at the centre of the earth. The precise position of this cosmic pivot was to be calculated with the gnomon shadow template (tugui 土圭), the length of the gnomon being one chi 尺 five cun 寸:41

(The Da Situ,) with the tugui method, measures the length of the sun’s shadow on the earth (tushen 土深). (He) seeks (the place where) the sun’s shadow (riying 日影) stretches in the true north and equals the gnomon in length, so as to find the centre of the earth. . . . The centre of the earth is (that place where) the sun’s shadow at the summer solstice is one chi five cun. (This is the place) where earth and sky meet, where the four seasons merge, where wind and rain are gathered in, and where yin and yang are in

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41 Chi and cun are units of length. See Appendix 2.
The purpose of this step is not merely to determine a physical location. Wright (op. cit. 47) believes that this is an expression of the systematised organicism characteristic of Han Confucian ideology. “In this passage, the siting of a capital is seen in relation to the forces of nature and to the hypostasized powers that govern all phenomena. . . . It makes of a capital city a cosmic focal point — a centre from which the forces of nature may be adapted to or controlled in the interests of the whole realm.” Xu (1996:53-54) notes: “It was at this quintessentially cosmic pivot that the royal palace was raised, and at which resided the king, the Son of Heaven, who upheld and represented the harmony of macrocosm and microcosm.”

1.2.2.2 Cardinal orientation

The orientation of the capital city to the four cardinal points is regarded in Zhou Li as most important for the foundation of the empire. There were several ways to determine the four quarters used by the ancient Chinese, such as watching the polestar or using a compass. (Wheatley 1971:423-25) One method for the determination of the four directions is described by Wright (1977:47) as: “The Chou li describes the method of determining the four directions on the site by taking at various times the shadow of the sun as cast by a pole whose verticality has been assured by the use of multiple plumb lines. This method is supplemented by night observations of the polestar.” The true directions can be seen as of cosmic order, and the referential objects used for this, the heavenly bodies, are no doubt related to the force of nature. As a result, a capital city, which is founded in compliance with the cosmic order, naturally draws forth the power of that order into the city, the centre of the kingdom or empire on earth. The mandate from Heaven, the legitimacy of the emperor, the Son of Heaven, is emphasised by the step of determining the four quarters.

The terms bianfang (to determine the four quarters) and zhengwei (to determine the right location of the site) are always combined together in Zhou Li (and other traditional works). Another way of expressing the matter is that without the central point the four quarters could not be determined, and likewise without the four quarters the central point could not be determined. Moreover, it is quite possible that bianfang (determine the directions) was the means and zhengwei (determine the location) was the end, in terms of Chinese grammar. Thus, the purpose of the second activity was the more important of the two. The word zhengwei should better be
understood as “to determine the central point.” The concept of the central point has featured prominently in phenomenological writing. Christian Norberg-Schulz, for example, has pointed out that, from the very beginning, the centre has represented to man what is known, in contrast to the unknown and somewhat frightening world beyond. (Christian Norberg-Schulz 1971:19) But this determination of the centre was not only regarded as a necessary method for the construction of a capital city. It had a still more comprehensive meaning. In Chinese, zhengwei also implies “to determine the (emperor’s) location in a certain social order.” The purpose of this process was also crucial in establishing the emperor’s legitimacy, as indicated in Zheng Xuan’s comments on Zhou Li: “Determination of the four quarters is used to determine the social positions of the monarch and his subjects.” (Zhouli Zhushu 周禮注疏 12)

Social order is frequently depicted as an order in space. For example, an emperor should live in the palace, whereas common people should live outside the palace. In other words, one’s position in space reflected one’s position in society. Spatial relationships between people’s positions indicate the social relationships between them. Therefore, if a slave lived in a palace and an emperor lived on the street, the whole order of society would have been disrupted. Many traditional texts pointed out the appropriate spatial and social position of the emperor: “The Son of Heaven [must] have his throne in the centre [of the world]” (Guanzi 管子, “Duodi Pian 度地篇,” translated from He Yeju 1985:56); “The Son of Heaven must settle in the centre of the world: that is li [rites or order]” (Xunzi 荀子 “Dalüe Pian 大略篇,” op. cit.). Thus, when the emperor found or determined the central point of the earth and built his capital on it, he, in a symbolic way, established a position for himself as sovereign, and the order of the society.

The emperor’s social position is also reflected in another spatial order closely related to the determination of direction, that of “facing the south.” The pole-star was associated with a philosophical system linking microcosm (earth) with macrocosm (universe), and the position of the pole-star corresponded to the position of the emperor on the earth, around whom the vast system of the bureaucratic agrarian state naturally and spontaneously revolved. (cf. Needham 1959:230; Xu 1996:56), as was stressed metaphorically in a passage in Lun Yu (vol. 2: “Weizheng”):

He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the pole star, which keeps its place while all the stars turn round it. (Translated by Xu 1996:57)
To correspond to the pole star which, at the axis of the universe, watched over the world of men, the throne of the Son of Heaven on the earth had to face southwards to rule all the people who in turn “face the north to acknowledge their allegiance as his subjects” (beimian chengchen 北面稱臣) (Xu 1996:57). Thus the orientation of a capital city was a declaration of the monarch’s legitimacy. The emperor, the most favoured member of the whole society, in order to be an acceptable sovereign in the social order, had first to establish spatial order. Social order was seen as most important to Chinese society in Confucius’ works, which held that the sovereign and his officers should maintain themselves in correct and suitable social positions. So the first step in the construction of the capital city was also the first step of symbolically establishing the social order.

1.2.2.3 City layout

The ideal plan of the capital city is prescribed in “Kaogong Ji” (vol. 41: “jiangren”):

The jiangren [artificer] constructs the state capitals. He [they] makes a square nine li on each side; each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine north-south and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. (Translated by Steinhardt 1990:33) (Figure 1-5, 1-6)

The traditional platform of the Chinese city is a square or a rectangle. This urban plan is believed not only to have relied on the same principle of subdivision as the old well-field (jingtian) system of land settlement and cultivation (cf. Wright 1977:48; Xu 1996:57), but had a symbolic significance as well. The earth was regarded as a perfect square which was covered by the dome of heaven. To borrow Wright’s (1977:47) words: “thus it was fitting that the ruler of all under heaven should live in a structure that was a replica and a symbol of the earth. Xu (op. cit. 58) argues that the layout of the city was analogous to the principle of the administrative subdivision of the royal territory and further to the conceptual subdivision of the whole world: “Yu, a legendary hero-emperor, divided the land of China into nine regions or nine provinces ... It is therefore reasonable to think of the city which was subdivided into nine units with the royal palace in the centre, as a microcosm embedded in a concentric system, from the Chinese empire up the scale of the whole world, on the pivot of which resided the Son of Heaven.”

The use of numbers three, nine and twelve in the city plan is regarded by Wright (1977:48) as a product of the theory of emblematic numbers that had developed before the Han. As he analysed it, these three numbers were particularly significant:
Figure 1-5 Canonical plan of the royal Zhou capital (Wangcheng) in the *Sanli Tu Jizhu* part I, vol. 4.

Figure 1-6 Canonical plan of the royal Zhou capital in the *Yongle Dadian*, vol. 9561.
Three because it represents the three sectors of the intelligible universe (heaven, earth, and man); nine because it represents three times three and is also the number that represents the ancient Chinese world (the nine provinces as established by the Emperor Yu); twelve because it is the sum of three and nine and the number of months in a year. Thus it follows that the ruler, who is seen by the Han theorists as uniting in his person the three sectors of the universe and presiding over the nine provinces during the sequence of twelve months in each year, should have the numbers three, nine, and twelve in the symbolism of his capital.

Another point referring to the application of the number nine to the capital city is raised by Xu (op.cit. 59): “Odd numbers were regarded as of yang, and nine, the largest of odd numbers, was the supreme yang number denoting Heaven and thus associated with the Son of Heaven.” In these prescriptions, the greater width of the north-south streets emphasizes the orientation of the city toward the south. The ruling position of the Son of Heaven is stressed repeatedly.

1.2.2.4 Disposition of principal structures

There are several important buildings in the capital city that are particularly prescribed in the “Kaogong Ji” (vol. 41: “Jiangren”):

On the left (as one faces south, or, to the east) is the Ancestral Temple [zu 祖], and to the right (west) are the Altars of Soil and Grain [she 社]. In the front is the Hall of Audience [chao 朝] and behind the markets [shi 市].

(Translated by Steinhardt 1990:33)

Wright (1977:39-40) assumes that the cult of ancestral worship is as old as Chinese culture itself. The Ancestral Temple of the princely line, wherein the commemorative tablets of the royal lineage were enshrined, was a building of the highest importance in religious, political and diplomatic terms: “The high ancestor of the lineage was the focus of the cult. The lord’s ancestors, like his god of the soil, were believed to have the power (if properly propitiated) to help assure good crops, victory in war, the timely appearance of rain and sunshine, the chastisement of the state’s enemies, and the punishment of the unrighteous. All significant events had to be reported at the tsung-miao 祖廟 [ancestral temple] in appropriate formulas, and an elaborate annual calendar of sacrifices was followed.” (ibid.) Thus it became necessary for a city to have an ancestral temple in order to be regarded as a proper capital, as a passage in Zuo Zhuan 左傳 (Zuo’s Commentary) states: “All walled towns having an ancestral hall containing the tablets [memorial plaques] of former rulers were called capitals [du 都].” (Zuo Zhuan, vol. 10: “Duke Zhuang’s 28th Year,” cited from Wright 1977:39) Here, the Ancestral Temple and the Altar to the
Gods of the Land and Millet/Grain (sheji 社稷) share symbolic significance as the loci of the state's power. The Altar to the Gods of the Land and Grain was a feature of another ubiquitous cult. The altar was laid with soils of five colours symbolising the territories in the five directions (four quarters and centre).\textsuperscript{42}

According to this ideal plan, the palace was to occupy the very centre of the city. As many historical works have shown, "[the Son of Heaven] should establish the capital at the centre of the world and build the palaces at the centre of the capital city." \textit{(Lüshi Chunqiu 呂氏春秋, translated from He Yeju 1985:56)} The audience hall was in the south, in contrast to the market, which is given the place of least honour and minimum \textit{yang} influence by being located in the northern extremity of the city. Wright (1977:49) thinks that this prescription reflects to a degree the value system of the Han Confucians: "this is to represent the harmonious complementarity of the male and female principles (\textit{yang} and \textit{yin}). . . . [Zheng Xuan's (2nd century A.D.)] additional theorising tends to underscore the \textit{yin} character of the market location in the classical plan." Xu (1996:63) summarises the symbolic elements involved in building the capital city as follows:

One of the most notable and important features in the mode of the canonical disposition of these principal urban structures, and, indeed, in the whole set of city planning principles prescribed in \textit{Zhou Li}, ideal as they were, is the proper, symbolic positioning of every physical element of the city, by reference to cardinal orientation with an emphasis on the south. It formed an order which was seen as durable because it was not arbitrary but based upon an understanding of Nature — the eternal standard.

1.2.3 \textbf{The Persistence of Symbolism and the Variations between Theory and Practice}

Wright (1977:44-46) argues that these characteristic features of the cosmology of the city are products of the Han philosophical and cosmological synthesis. It was the Han ideologues in the service of the great Emperor Wu who began to put together a synthesis that offered a coherent view of the world and of the place of China and the imperial system in it. The main themes of this synthesis are: (1) archaism, which took Confucius's idealisation of the early Zhou and transformed it into an elaborate

\textsuperscript{42} All dynasties in ancient China took the God of the Land and Grain as a symbol of the life and death of the country, so that the time to worship God of the Land and Grain was the grandest occasion at that time. (Dong Jianhong:57.) It was said in \textit{Baihu Tongyi 白虎通義}, written by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 A.D.), that "Without land, there is no life; without harvest, there is no food." "An altar should be built to worship the God. Since Ji 稷 is senior to the five kinds of grain, it should be worshipped." (CY 1979:139)
scholastic system in which the ancient provenance of desirable ideas and institutions was invoked to justify them to the men of Han; (2) organicism, by which, the Han syncretists had to draw into their considerations texts and ideas that had been quite separate from the Confucian tradition to develop this theme. The Book of Changes, originally a manual for the interpretation of milfoil auguries, became a “Confucian classic” because its images could be used to explain the interrelations between many phenomena. Ideas from the school of Tao, from the school of yin-yang, and from the school of the Five Elements were drawn into the synthesis; (3) centralism, which covered both the centrality of the emperor in the world of men and the centrality of China, the Central Kingdom, in the universe; and finally (4) the theme of moralism. This latter involved belief in the moral right of the emperor to rule, in the moral rightness of the social hierarchy, and in the inalienable right of the classically educated to interpret the moral as well as the physical universe to emperor and commoners. A corollary to this idea was the belief that the Classics contained the basis of morality and offered both the norms for proper social behaviour among the masses and the standards by which the literate could perfect themselves. Because of the above conditions, by the end of the Western Han, as Wright (op. cit. 50) says: “a core cosmology of the capital city had been put together partly out of ancient lore and practice and partly out of the systematising imaginations of the architects of Han imperial Confucianism. Surrounding this core ideology, and in a loose relation to it, are bits of nomenclature and symbolism from the early Classics as well as other elements (such as the ming-t'ang),43 that are symbolically consistent with the core cosmology but not always associated with capital cities.” This imperial ideology of the city was not equally, but was persistently, applied to the planning of capital cities in subsequent dynasties.44

43 Mingtang 明堂 (hall of light, or cosmic house) has been the subject of endless theorising by Chinese scholars from the Han onward. (Wright op. cit. 49-50)

44 According to Wright (op. cit. 50-51), Wang Mang 王莽, who usurped the Western Han throne in A.D. 6, was the heir and in a sense a victim of the imperial ideology. Although he seems to have done little to the Han capital of Changan 長安 beyond making changes in nomenclature, the record of his reign is filled with frenetic ritual and symbolic activity. The ancient practices concerning the building of capitals, such as the divination and the detailed ceremonies sanctioned by Zhou Li were his principal concern. He built the archaic-style buildings, acted out the ancient rituals, and echoed in his speeches the words of exemplary emperors of the past. He may well be unique among Chinese emperors not only for the fervor of his commitment to imperial Confucianism, but also for his infatuation with the whole range of its symbolism. This is seen by Wright as the efforts of a usurper to justify himself and legitimise his rule. “Wang Mang appears in the record as the captive of the imperial ideology and its interpreters.” (ibid.)
As Wright summarised, all the normative ideas and techniques of city building were developed in the North China Plain, the putative seat of Chinese civilisation. The availability of flat sites made orientation to the cardinal points straightforward, and construction with pounded earth or mud brick was universal. During and after the Han dynasty, the geographical extent of Chinese culture was greatly increased as the Chinese moved into the Yangtze Valley and further to the south and east, into a mountainous and heavily watered region. City building was inevitably adapted to irregular and hilly sites as well as to large bodies of water and different climatic conditions. (op. cit. 51-52) From the fall of the Han dynasty, some of the larger centres in the South were taken as capitals by one or another regional satrap or imperial heir. The Jin, in flight after their loss of the whole of North China to the steppe peoples in 317, built their capital Nanjing on a site the topography of which is not untypical of that of other southern cities. The site displays an intimate relation between a great river, tributaries, canals, and lakes, on the one hand, and hills, mountains, scarps, and ravines, on the other. This is in striking contrast to the flat city sites of the North China Plain. Wright (1977:54) hypothesises that from the end of the Han dynasty, when the capital cities began to be built in the Yangtze Valley, where the topography of a site had an intimate relation between a great river, tributaries, canals, and lakes on the one hand, and hills, mountains, scarps, and ravines on the other, fengshui “became loosely appended to the imperial cosmology of the city. This system represents the only accretion to the cosmology of the city from the fall of Wang Mang to the end of the imperial order.” He also notices that “the application of the ‘emanation’ theory [ideas associated with fengshui, centred on the concept of diqi 地气 (ambience) often used as a collective term referring to the multifarious resources of a site] and the feng-shui system to the siting of cities is only partially and uncertainly reflected in the sources.” (op. cit. 54)45 He concludes that fengshui and the “emanation” theory did not become an integral part of the dominant Confucian ideology or of its subideology of the city:

It was introduced into later city planning not by the scholar-officials but by their often restive masters, the emperors of China. It tended to be practiced as a profession by the subelite, and to be more prevalent in the South than in the North. The ramifying influence of feng-shui ideas in the later dynasties no doubt introduced among the common people a consciousness of the good and bad features of a city’s site and made them judge some cities to be more fortunate than others. The experience of building in southern terrain encouraged the application of feng-shui to city sites and secular buildings.

45 The theory associated with concept of qi and “ambience” will be analysed in section 4.3.2.
But for cities, it seems to figure more in the retrospective writings of later scholars than in the actual choice of a site. (ibid.)

Once the empire was reunified by the Sui in 589, the influence of the northern Chinese norms and the Han ideology of the city again became dominant. The influence of the classical cosmology can be seen clearly in the plan of the city of Changan under the Sui and Tang. The city was built on an unprecedented scale on a bare site in A.D. 6, and accommodated at its height a population of a million. The outer walls formed a rectangle. The orientation of the city was according to the ancient canons; it “faced south,” and the central and widest north-south street served as the principal axis of the city. The city had, as Zhou Li prescribed, three gates in the south, east, and west walls. The Tang rulers had their ancestral hall to the east and the Altar of the Land and Grain to the west, but both were located in the southern part of the administrative city. Although the palace was not in the middle of the city but centred against the north wall, with only the imperial Forbidden Park behind it, the number of wards in the original city plan are in the Han tradition of emblematic numbers — one aspect of the classic symbolism. For Wright (1977:56) there is nothing of fengshui in the city plan: “In its siting we find no influence of feng-shui principles. . . . The names of gates, streets, and wards reflect nothing of feng-shui theories.” Although Changan was clearly influenced by the classical cosmology, it was by no means as perfect an example as the later Beijing. Wright concludes: “the imperial cosmology had discernible but limited authority over the planners of Ch’ang-an. Pragmatic considerations — convenience, functional zoning, ease of policing — outweighed the canonical prescriptions whenever a choice had to be made. The planners used selected elements of the classical cosmology to reiterate the claims of the Sui to be the heirs of the long-vanished Han and thus the new and rightful rulers of a reunited empire.” (op. cit. 60)

46 Wright (1977:56) analyses:

When we notice the number of wards in the original city plan, we find that both the total number (108) and the number in various sectors (12 to the west of the palace and 12 to the east; 36 grouped on either side of the central avenue) are in the Han tradition of emblematic numbers. All these units and multiples are numbers symbolic of the harmonious rapport between heaven and earth. They reflect in numbers the Chou li passage that speaks of the capital as a place “where the four seasons come together, where the winds and the rains gather, where the forces of yin and yang are harmonized.” The emperor, as cosmic pivot, saw to the harmonious operation of these natural forces, and he did so from the great main palace called T’ai-chi Tien, whose name symbolizes the astral center of the universal order.”
However, when the Song came to power in 960, they inherited the city of Kaifeng. When the outer wall of which had originally been built in 955. This was the first Chinese capital that was not pre-planned. The Temple of the Imperial Ancestors was to the east of the main palace axis, and the Altar of Land and Grain was to the west of it. But the gates in the outer wall were not of the right number, and many of them were water gates to accommodate barge and boat traffic. Markets were not situated behind the palaces, but instead commerce was carried on everywhere. The symmetrical grid of straight streets prescribed by Zhou Li was a practical impossibility. Emperor Huizong before losing the empire, its capital and his life to the invading Jurchen, introduced elements of the classical cosmology into the city. He ordered the embellishment of the Imperial Way that led to the palaces, and established many other important building in accordance with the ancient traditions. In 1117, under the influence of Taoist adepts, he began the building of an immense complex of hills in the north-east part of the city. Wright (1977:62) holds “that the disposition of the hills in relation to various artificial lakes and watercourses strongly suggests the influence of feng-shui theories.” During the Song dynasty, there were forces at work, which became stronger later, and that tended to perpetuate the old system of imperial symbols, which we can see most clearly reflected in the later city of Beijing. The Neo-Confucianism developed in Song times was an attempt to create a new Chinese ideology:

Like all such systems, it was made up of many strands of ideas and traditions. Along with rationalism and the organic-holistic view of man and the universe went what de Bary calls “fundamentalism” — a return to the classics as the basis of all norms — that shaded off into archaism and indeed into cultural chauvinism. This latter strain, I believe, was greatly strengthened in the Southern Sung, when China was the beleaguered and isolated defender of its ancient heritage; it was reasserted, after the trauma of the Mongol conquest, in the Chinese restorationism of the Ming dynasty. (op. cit. 63) (Figure 1-7)

1.3 THE CITY OF DADU — THE PREDECESSOR OF BEIJING

Arising as a force in the 13th century A.D., the Mongols, a nomadic people in the north, had become stronger and conquered great areas in Asia and Europe. (Figure 1-8) A Mongol-led country was established in 1206 with Genghis Khan (1162-1227) as its monarch. (cf. TDCGJ 1982:61; CY 272) After conquering the

47 These market activities should be understood in the general context of economic changes at this time. (See Elvin 1973)
Figure 1-7  Four capitals: a comparison of sizes and shapes


Figure 1-9 Plan of the city of Shangdu of the Yuan dynasty, designed by Liu Bingzhong.

Tangut kingdom in Central Asia, Ordos, and Alashan in 1209, the Mongols turned their attention to the Jin domain and its capital Zhongdu on the site of modern Beijing. Genghis Khan’s cavalry seized Zhongdu, and burned most of the buildings there by breaking through its north-west fort, Nankou 南口, in 1215. (cf. RJK vol. 4; TDCGJ 1982:61; Dong Jianhong 1988:51) Located in the present-day Mongolian People’s Republic, Khara-Khorum 哈喇和林, a city established some years before 1250, is considered to have been the first Mongolian imperial city. (Steinhardt 1990:148) In 1256, Genghis’s grandson Kublai 忽必烈 (1215-1294), who at the time was leading military expeditions in China, ordered Liu Bingzhong 劉秉忠 (1216-1274), his trusted Chinese advisor, to take charge of building the capital Shangdu 上都 (lit. “Upper Capital”) at a site called Kaiping Fu 開平府 in the present Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. (cf. Yuan Shi 元史, vol.4; Steinhardt 1990:148) Kublai himself took over the imperial throne in Shangdu in 1260. (cf. CY 272; Yuan Shi vol. 4) (Figure 1-9) Kublai Khan, the ruler of the entire Mongolian empire and advised by Liu Bingzhong, took Zhongdu as his capital and planned to build a new city there in 1264. The new city was named Dadu (lit. “Great Capital”) in 1273. Building of the palaces began in 1267, and the building of Danei 大内 (the Forbidden City) was started in 1272 and finished in 1275. (cf. Yuan Shi vol. 4; vol. 7; vol. 6; vol. 7; vol. 8) The city wall was finally completed in 1276. (BDL 1985:99) (Figure 1-10)

The city of Dadu was planned with great care. A thorough survey of the site was carried out before a general plan was devised. The construction of the city avoided the ruins of the city of Zhongdu, by placing the new imperial city on a site encompassed by a wide area of ponds, the site having been the suburban palace of the Jin, which had not been damaged during the Mongol invasion. (TDCGJ 1982:62; Su Tianjun 1987:131) The sewerage system for the whole city was installed before houses and streets were built. Everything was carried out according to plan from the start. (TDCGJ 1982:62) Dadu was the largest capital city that had been built since

48 TDCGJ (1982:61) mistakes the year as 1250.
49 Nigel Cameron and Brian Brake (1965) hold that Kublai was elected successor to the Mongol emperor in 1260 and defeated a younger brother who was making pretensions to the throne in 1264. He officially proclaimed a new Chinese dynasty, the Yuan, of which he was the emperor, in 1271. However, according to Yuan Shi, Kublai officially proclaimed the throne in 1260 (Yuan Shi vol.4); he changed his reign into Zhiyuan in 1264 (Yuan Shi vol. 5); he named his dynasty as Dayuan in 1272 (Yuan Shi vol. 7); the ceremony of the completion of the palaces was held in 1275 (Yuan Shi vol. 8). Apparently Cameron and Brake mistakes the 11th year of the reign of Zhiyuan (1272) as the 11th year of the reign of Zhongtong (1264).
Figure 1-10 Plan of the city of Dadu in the Yuan dynasty

Changan of the Tang dynasty. Although the city was expanded on a great scale from the Ming dynasty onwards, its foundation was laid in the Yuan dynasty.

Dadu was most noticeably a triple-walled city whose concentric boundaries each had a perfect, or nearly perfect, geometric form. These were the Outer City (outer enclosure), the administrative-city and the palace-city. The Outer City was a rectangle, 6,635 metres from east to west, 7,400 metres from south to north. The outer wall had eleven gates altogether, three gates at each face, with the exception of the northern one, which had only two. (op. cit. 62-65) From the gates emerged major north-south and east-west city avenues, each approximately 37 meters wide. There was an obvious vertical axis going through the whole city, beginning from Lizheng Gate in the south, going through Lingxing Gate of the Imperial City and Chongtian Gate of the palace-city, and eventually reaching Central Pavilion (Zhongxin Ge 中心閣) at the end. This vertical axis met the horizontal axis (the street from Chongren Gate to Heyi Gate) at Central Pavilion, the geometric centre of the whole city, close to which the Bell Tower and the Drum Tower were built. The Ancestral Temple was built to the east of the administrative-city, and the Altar of the God of Land and Grain to the west, while the commercial areas were to the north. This layout accorded with the rules of capital layout in the “Kaogong Ji” section of the Confucian classic Zhou Li.

The administrative-city was located in the centre of the southern part of the city. To a certain extent, the size of the Dadu palace-city was predetermined by geographical features. The man-made island Wansui Shan 萬歲山, which stood in Taiye Pond at the centre of the administrative-city, was the only architectural remnant of Zhongdu that the Mongols spared. The Imperial Garden formed by Longfu Palace, Xingsheng Palace and the pond occupied a large area in the west part of the administrative-city. Regular palaces and irregular gardens were harmoniously combined in the planning of the administrative-city, and made full use of the natural environment of plants and ponds (haizi 海子). (TDCGJ 1982:64-65.) The innermost portion of the administrative-city was the palace-city, lying to the east of the Imperial City at the central axis of the Outer City. That was where the main palaces were located, and was called Danei (Supreme Interior). (TDCGJ 1982:64) Within the three building complexes of the palace-city, Kublai and later Mongolian emperors of China gave audiences, held court ceremonies, and occasionally conducted more private affairs. (Steinhardt 1990:156)
The Yuan dynasty was ruled by Mongols, and their foreign customs survived in the particular usage they made of the walled Chinese city, especially of individual buildings. But on the urban planning level, from its inception the city of Dadu was purely Chinese. The desire of Kublai and his successors to maintain the Mongolian rule of China, and the use of architecture as a means of legitimising their power, have been widely noted. (cf. Hok-Lam Chan 1981; Steinhardt 1990; 1986:355) These practices were part of Kublai’s policy of Hanization — namely “Hanizising the constitutional system [of the empire] 儀文制度 適用漢法.” (BDL 1985:100) As the following record noted:

When the city of Dadu was constructed in the 6th year [of the Zhiyuan 至元 reign-period (1270)], the institutions had not been determined. [Xu Shilong 徐世隆, the Taichang 太常, (erudite of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices)] suggested to the emperor: “Since your majesty is ruling China (zhongguo 中國), you have to [carry on your duty] in a Chinese way. The most important of these [Chinese ways] is the sacrificial rites to the Ancestral Temple.” He then presented the construction plan [of the Ancestral Temple].... (Xijin Zhi Jiyi 析津志集佚: “Ming Huan 名宦”)

Through these policies Kublai intended to proclaim that the newly founded Mongolian empire was the legitimate inheritor of the former dynasties in the central area where the Han lived. In this manner, he was able to win the support of the Han people, and prepare his next step, the conquering of the Southern Song. The city of Dadu was built against such a historical background. (He Yeju 1987:167)

From the beginning, the planning and construction of Dadu followed the dictates of the “Kaogong Ji” specifications for an ideal capital city (wangcheng 王城). The requirements in the “Kaogong Ji” continued to be handed down along with Confucianism from the Eastern Han to the Yuan dynasty — for about 1300 years — and each dynasty constructed its capital by drawing elements from this blueprint. It was Kublai who first built, on an unoccupied site, a capital city that most resembled the ideas presented in “Kaogong Ji.” His audience hall and palaces were mainly located in the south half of the city, with the market located to the north of the palace-city on a canal route. The Ancestral Temple and Altar of Land and Grain were located respectively in the east and west of the city. In fact, it can be argued that, formally, Dadu was more a part of the classical tradition of Chinese urban planning than any city that had come before it. (Steinhardt 1990:158) The city plan also draws elements from Tang Changan and Northern Song Kaifeng: three square cities enclosing wall after wall; the palaces located nere the centre; and the main buildings laid symmetrically along the central axis. This planning reflected the traditional
theme of centralism — a demonstration of the supremacy of imperial power by means of architecture. (TDCGJ 1982:64.) One important purpose for the selection of a purely Chinese plan was to legitimise the non-Chinese regime in accordance with Chinese customs.

At the same time, some concepts from the Book of Changes, an ancient book about divination in the Zhou dynasty (CY 1415), were employed in the planning. (TDCGJ 1982:64) Kublai named his empire Da Yuan 大元 [Great Origin], as “it derives from the principle of qian yuan 乾元 [the original creative force] in the Book of Changes.” an ancient book included as one of the Confucian classics, to show that his was an orthodox successor dynasty. He named the second period of his reign Zhiyuan, which originated from the phrase “zhì zāi kun yuán 志在坤元” (kun and yuán are the supreme perfection) in Book of Changes. Among his palaces there were those named Daming, Xianning; and among the city gates there were those named Wenming 文明, Jiande 健德, Yuncong 雲從, Suncheng 順承, Anzhen 安貞 and Houzai 厚載. These names also originated from the same book, in an explanation of qian 乾 and kun 坤, two of the Eight Trigrams, a set of divinatory symbols in the Book of Changes, used in the book’s divination system. (BDL 1985:100) According to Steinhardt (1990:159), “To the list of ironies of Chinese history, then one must add the city plan at the time of Mongolian rule. It was Kublai Khan who resurrected classical sources for new imperial city designs and rekindled interest in them.”

1.4 THE CITY OF BEIJING IN THE MING DYNASTY

50 Needham (1954:256) holds that the book was derived from the Zhou dynasty with a Former Han edition. The compiler was unknown. Graham (1986:9) says that the first extant Confucian who unquestionably uses the Changes is Xu Zī in the 3rd century B.C., Graham (1986:67-70) has conducted an extensive study on the origin and development of the theory associated with the Eight Trigrams from the Book of Changes. According to him, it is said in “Great Appendix II,” Book of Changes: “Therefore in the Changes there is the Supreme Pole. This generates the Two Exemplars, the Two Exemplars generate the For Images, the Four Images generate the Eight Trigrams. The Eight Trigrams fix the auspicious and the baleful.” Then the two alternatives at the first step are the “exemplars” of all pairs (Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang . . . ), the four at the second step are the “images” of all fours (Four Seasons, Four Directions . . .), the eight at the third step are the trigrams, and so on up to the 64 hexagrams. The trigrams have a wide range of symbolism expounded in the appendix “Shuo Gua (Explanation of the Trigrams),” but represent primarily the four pairs Heaven/Earth, mountain/marsh, water/fire, thunder/wind. This symbolism, attested in the Zuozhuan as already current among diviners by the 4th century B.C. is independent of the correlations of the Five Element, which are not mentioned in the appendices.

51 On a date which corresponded to January 18, 1272, Kublai proclaimed the edict which determined that the Mongol regime in China would thenceforth bear the title Yuan. The edict reads as follows: “Ta Yuan (Great Yuan) shall be the title of the dynasty. As such, it derives from the principle of ch’i’en-yuan (‘the original creative force’) in the Book of Changes.” (Translated by Langlois 1981:4)
1.4.1 The Founding of the City of Beijing

Dadu was conquered by the warlord Zhu Yuanzhang’s general Xu Da 徐達 in 1368. (RJK, vol. 4) This marked the termination of the Yuan dynasty in China by the strongest faction of southern Chinese rebels. Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, established several capitals. While Bianliang, the capital of the Song dynasty, was designated the northern capital namely Beijing, Yingtian 應天 (Jinling), a site in his homeland and power base in South China, where two years earlier he had begun the construction of a new city, was designated the southern capital namely Nanjing, and Dadu was demoted to a local administrative seat and renamed Beiping 北平 (lit. “Northern Peace”). (Ming Shi, vol. 2) Evidence shows that Zhu Yuanzhang planned to establish his capital in Dadu, with the aim of controlling the remaining forces of the Yuan which fled to the northern desert. Opposed by ministers, he was forced to give up his idea, and Nanjing was finally set up as the imperial capital city from which to rule China.

Zhu Di 朱棣, Zhu Yuanzhang’s fourth son, who, as the Prince of Yan, launched a campaign from his base in Beiping against his nephew, the successor to the throne at Nanjing, managed to become Emperor Chengzu (also called Emperor Taizong) and started his reign, with the reign-period entitled Yongle, in 1403. (cf. Ming Shi vol. 6) Intending to return to Beiping, he almost immediately began the long and complex process of moving his seat of power from Nanjing, which his father had rebuilt on a lavish scale, to Beiping. Arguments went on for and against Beiping as a capital site, and they centred on supply problems, construction costs, defence considerations, climate, historical precedent, and fengshui principles. (Wright 1977:67) He was opposed by a large number of the officials. Xiao Yi 蕭儀, secretary of a bureau, was the most radical of these. But the emperor was so determined, that he executed Xiao, overrode all opposition and marshalled huge supplies and forces to reconstruct Dadu on a grand scale. (cf. Mote 1988:241)

After changing the name of the city of Beiping to Beijing (Northern Capital), the preparation for construction began in 1406. (Ming Shilu 明實錄, Taizong Yongle Shilu 太宗永樂實錄, vol. 44) The new city was completed by the end of 1420. (op. cit. vol. 118, 9) This construction covered not only the palaces of the Forbidden City and the Imperial City, the city gates, the watch towers of the city wall and the moat, but also a series of buildings such as the Ancestral Temple, Altar for the God of Land and Grain, the Temple of Heaven, the Altar of the Mountain, the Bell Tower and the Drum Tower. (BDL 1985:208) The Ming dynasty Beijing that emerged with
the formal inauguration of the northern capital was the first Chinese capital to dominate the sub-continent from the northern fringes of the North China Plain. The capital of China was officially moved the following year to the site where it would remain for the duration of imperial rule. (*Taizong Yongle Shilu*, vol. 119, 2)

Throughout the Ming dynasty, the Mongol troops roaming the northern desert were the greatest threat to the Ming. They attacked Beijing and its surrounding area many times. Zhu Di himself led troops to suppress the Mongols seven times, dying in the last expedition. The Zhengtong 正統 Emperor was even captured by the Mongols in a Han punitive expedition. In the next dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911), ruled by the Manchus from the North, Beijing remained the capital of all of China with no changes to the city structure.

1.4.2 The Form of the City

The Ming dynasty city of Beijing was established on the same site after the plan of Dadu — possibly because the city wall of Dadu had not been damaged much during the war against the Yuan — unlike some former dynasties which had deserted the preceding capitals and established new ones. (*TDCGJ* 1982:78) As the Prince of Yan garrisoning Beiping, one of Zhu Di’s paramount concerns was how to protect the city from attack by northern peoples. Long before the Ming decision to return to this site for the capital, the walls of the former Mongolian imperial city had been rebuilt or reinforced. The northern face had been moved five li 里 (2880 metres) southward, retaining two city gates, to protect the smaller population, gathered primarily in the old city’s south. A wide and bleak area in the northern part of the old city had been forsaken. In 1419, the southern city wall was moved two li further south. (*Taizong Yongle Shilu* vol. 115) Three gates survived, with unchanged names. (Figure 1-11)

Over a century later, the built-up area outside the southern gates of the city had expanded rapidly. The construction of another wall surrounding the city was started in 1553 in order to protect the increasing population there from the aggression of

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52 It was recorded (*Taizu Hongwu Shilu* 太祖洪武實錄 vol. 30) that “in the eighth month of the first year of the reign of Hongwu 洪武 [1368] ... General Xu Da ordered Hua Yunlong 胡雲龍 to renovate the old Yuan capital [Dadu] and built the new [northern] city wall...” supervised labours to build the northern and western city wall.” “At the beginning of the reign of Hongwu [1368-1398], the Dadu province was changed into Beiping prefecture and the northern face of [Dadu’s] city wall was moved in five li.” (Huanyu Tongzhi 環宇通志, translated from *RJK* vol. 38) But Steinhardt’s holds that the “work had begun on the outer wall in 1370” (1990:169) might according to the record: “In the fourth year of the reign of Hongwu [1371], [the emperor Zhu Yuanzhang] ordered general Xuda to train the military force and renovate the city walls and moat.” (*op. cit.* vol. 60)
Figure 1-11 The plan of the city of Beijing in different periods of the Ming. This layout we see today has been formed on the basis of plans made at different periods, each of the plans having different aims.
northern Mongolian cavalry. (*Shizong Jiajing Shilu* 世宗嘉靖實錄” vol. 395; vol. 396) The original plan was to build a complete enclosure to surround the whole city, so as to establish an outer city, but because of financial difficulties, only the southern wall was completed, in 1564. (*op. cit.* vol. 397; vol. 409) It formed a southern extension to the city and enclosed the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of the God of Agriculture. After the completion of the southern sector, from the mid-sixteenth century onward, the northern great-walled enclosure was known as the Inner City (*neicheng 內城*) and the southern walled enclosure became the Outer City (*waicheng 外城*). Such was the final layout of the imperial city of Beijing as it is known today. (Figure 1-12) Thus, this layout was formed on the basis of plans made at different periods, each of the plans having different aims.

The Outer City, with seven gates, was 7950 metres wide (from east to west), and 3100 metres long (from north to south). This was mainly an area of handicraft industries and commerce, and the one where the enormous Temple of Heaven and Temple of Agriculture were situated. The Inner City was 6650 metres wide and 5350 metres long. (Liu Dunzhen 1980:281) There were nine gates which all had *wengcheng 瓮城* with a gate tower and an embrasure watchtower. A chessboard-like pattern of street grid was adopted, with the Imperial City (*huangcheng 皇城*) symmetrically surrounded by the streets.

The Imperial City was an irregular square situated in the centre of the south of the inner city, being 2500 metres from east to west and 2750 metres north to south. (Liu Dunzhen 1980:281) There was a gate on each of the four sides of the city. The southern gate was Chengtian 承天 Gate. In front of that gate there was another gate, called Daming 大明 Gate. The Imperial City was composed of a variety of functional areas. There were the three lakes, one of them artificial, running from north to south in the western part of the imperial city; surrounding them were a variety of temples, pavilions and follies. To the north was an artificial hill known in the Ming times as Long-life Hill. Other areas were occupied by residences and stables of the guards, granaries and warehouses, houses for the palace staff, and so forth. At the central north-south axis of the whole city and slightly east of centre within the imperial City was another walled rectangle, the Forbidden City (*zijincheng 紫禁城*). (Figure 1-13)

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53 Temple of Agriculture was originally the Temple for Mount and River in the beginning of Ming dynasty.

54 *Wengcheng* is a special courtyard for defence outside the city gate. It is surrounded by city wall, which connected the city wall to a gate.
Figure 1-12  Plan of the city of Beijing from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century showing imperial and administrative buildings.

Figure 1-13  The Imperial City (Enclosure) and the principal offices of the imperial government.

The Forbidden City was 760 metres east to west and 960 metres north to south, and had huge gate towers and a city moat on its four sides. (cf. Liu Dunzhen 1980:281; TDCGJ 1982:78) There were four large watchtowers at the four corners of the wall. The imperial administrative and residential quarters were situated here. Inside it, the principal palaces were arranged on a north-south axis, with Fengtian 奉天 (Heavenly Worship) Hall, where the throne was located, as the southernmost of the three great halls. To the north of the administrative quarter was the imperial residential quarter centred on the three residential palaces. There was also an imperial garden in the northernmost part of the Forbidden City. (Figure 1-14)

The axis which ran through the centre of the throne in Fengtian Hall was also the central axis of the palace enclosure and the central axis of the whole city with some sub-axes. All the palaces and other important structures were laid symmetrically to this north-south axis. It is therefore appropriate to analyse the central axis in order to comprehend the layout of the city. This axis started at Yongding 定 阙, the central gate in the southern face of the outer city wall, and ended at the Bell Tower. Along this axis a wide and straight avenue was laid from Yongding Gate to Zhengyang 正陽 Gate, the gates of the Inner City. The Temple of Heaven was in the east and the Temple of Agriculture in the west, parallel to the avenue. Just north of Zhengyang Gate, between Daming 大明 Gate and Chengtian Gate there was a broad marble imperial road with a “T” shaped narrow space 60 metres wide and more than 500 metres long called qianbulang 千步廊 (Thousand-pace Corridor). The Ministries of Personnel, Military Matters, Rites, Justice, with the functions of selecting officials, and of reviewing examination papers, verdicts and death sentences, were installed on either side of the corridors, beyond which one came to the spectacular Wu 午 (Meridian) Gate, entrance to the Forbidden City. (Figure 1-15)

Continuing through Chengtian Gate, Duan 端 Gate, and Wu (Meridian) Gate, the imperial road entered the Forbidden City. Palaces of different sizes were set along

55 The name of this hall was changed into Huanji (Super Imperial) in 1562. (Shizong Jiejing Shilu vol. 513. 2) In the Qing dynasty, it was named Taihe 太和 (Great Harmony).

56 Some Scholars hold that the design of the central axis is influenced by the design of Song capitals. During the Song dynasty (960-1279), the palace area was located in the centre but a little north of the Dongjing 東京 (Bianliang), the capital, and the north-south central axis of the palace was the central axis for the city. The importance of the symbolism of the central axis was very much stressed, more so than in the Zhou dynasty (11th c.-771 B.C.), and this architectural style had a direct impact on the capital cities in the Jin, Yuan and Ming dynasties. Its scale and opulence far exceeded the capital city of Dongjing of the Song dynasty. (Zhu Chuanrong 1992:154)

57 In the Ming dynasty, ceremonies of accepting surrender or capture were held at the Wu Gate. Before such ceremonies, sacrificial offerings were dedicated to the Imperial ancestral Temple and the
Figure 1-14 Plan of the Forbidden City.


Figure 1-15 Plan of the Forbidden City from the Marble Bridges to the Xuanwu Gate.

the axis. Inside Fengtian Gate, the Three Great Halls, the focal point of imperial Beijing, were raised on a triple-tier marble platform. The first and largest, Fengtian Hall, was for grand ceremonies. In the Ming dynasty, emperors received respects from, and granted banquets to their officials there, on the occasions of their being enthroned, getting married, conferring title upon empresses, and commissioning generals for military actions, New Year’s Day, the ceremonies of the Winter Solstice, and the emperor’s Birthday. The second, Huagai 華蓋 Hall, a square-shaped hall, was much smaller in size and a resting place for emperors on their way into Fengtian Hall. The final one was Jinshen 謹身 Hall, where imperial examinations were held, and in which the emperor honoured successful scholars of the highest rank. The Three Great Halls were surrounded by the largest courtyard in the whole palace area, and it acted as a place for accepting homage from officials, for banquets and for guards of honour.

Directly behind the Three Great Halls were the Three Back Halls, smaller-scale replicas of the former. They were raised on a single marble platform and surrounded by a covered corridor with gates on all four sides. They were the “rear private chamber” counterparts to the more public Three Great Halls. The first one, Qianqing 乾清 Hall, was the emperor’s bedroom. The second, Jiaotai 交泰 Hall, was the

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58 In the Ming dynasty, the Fengtian Gate, was the place where emperors held normal imperial court and administered state affairs. The protocol of the morning court was like this: when the sound of the drum was heard, all officials queued up in order outside the left and right gates of the Wu Gate. At the stroke of the bell, the gates were opened and all officials went through the left and right gates, crossed the Gold Water Bridge and stood facing east or west in front of the throne of the Fengtian Gate. After the emperor arrived, and mounted his throne, all officials went to their own places and knelt down to pay respects, and stood up again. Officials concerned then reported in order and by turn to the emperor. Then senior officials put forward proposals and requests. When the court was over, the emperor went back to the palace and all the officials came out in order. This administering of state affairs was similar to that of the Zhi court of the Zhou dynasty (11th c.-771 B.C.).

59 It was changed into Huangji 皇極 Hall in 1562, and then was called Taihe Hall in the Qing dynasty.

60 It was changed into Zhongji 中極 Hall in 1562, and then was called the Zhonghe 中和 Hall in the Qing dynasty.

61 It was changed into Jianji 建極 Hall in 1562, and then was called the Baohe 寶和 Hall in the Qing dynasty.

62 It was also used for emperors meeting their officials personally. On the occasions of New Year’s Day, the Lantern Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Moon Festival, the Double Nines Festival,
empress’s throne room and ceremonial hall. The last one, Kunning 坤寧 Hall, was the empress’s bedroom. Flanking the back halls were the six eastern and six western palaces, both groups arranged in two clusters of three, where the imperial wives and widows lived. Beyond Shenwu 神武 Gate, the northern gate of the Forbidden City, the artificial mountain Wansui 萬歲 (Long-life) Hill, known also as Jinghan 景山 or Meishan 煤山 (Coal Hill), which was 50 metres high, was the peak of the central axis. (Liu Dunzhen 1980:281) Beyond it were Dian 地安 Gate (the Gate of Earthly Peace), the north gate of the Imperial City, and the Drum Tower and Bell Tower, the final key-points along the axis.

To the front left of the Forbidden City was built an Ancestral Temple for the emperors to offer sacrifices to their ancestors on the occasion of ascending the throne, taking power, marriage and triumphant return. (Dong Jianhong 1988:57) To the front right was the Altar of the God of Land and Grain, an altar of three layers built with white marble and covered with five earth colours. The yellow earth, from Henan 河南, was placed in the centre, the green, from Shandong 山東, in the east, the red, from Guangdong 廣東 and Guangxi 廣西, in the south, the white, from Shanxi 山西, in the west and the black, from Beijing, in the north. Outside the Inner City were other altars: the Altar of Heaven complex was located to the south of the Inner City; the Altar of Earth to its north; the Altar of the Sun to its east, and the Altar of the Moon to its west.

1.4.3 The Cosmological Symbolism of the City

Wright (1977:72) holds that this city was in closer accord with the canonical cosmology than was either of the Song capitals or Sui and Tang Changan. Its principal streets in a grid plan led to the main gates. The whole city, and especially the palace and imperial enclosures, faced south. The Forbidden City occupied approximately the centre of the city, with the imperial administrative quarter in its south, and its market area (downtown) to the north.63 The palaces themselves had the audience halls in front of them and the imperial residences behind them. The Temple of the Imperial Ancestors was to the east and the Altar of Land and Grain to the west.

the Winter Solstice, New Year’s Eve, Birthday, emperors received respects from and granted banquets for their officials there, like the function of the Yan 燕 court of the Zhou dynasty (11th c.-771 B.C.).

63 There is no evidence that the Yongle emperor tried to locate the markets behind the palace enclosure, as enjoined by the Zhou Li. But according to the city plan at his time, there was no space at all for markets in front of the palaces, and the parts of Beijing to the east and west of the imperial city were given over, as the Zhou Li prescribed, to the residences of the people. At least, the market at the Drum Tower was one of the main market. (TDCGJ 1982:78-79; Hou ed. 1985:32)
These were laid out according to the classical plan in the “Kaogong Ji” section of Zhou Li.

There was an emphasis on the north-south axis. The distance between Wu Gate, the gate of the Forbidden City, and Zhengyang Gate was lengthened to 1.5 kilometres, and Daming Gate, Chengtian Gate and Duan Gate were constructed in the intervening space so created. Such a design emphasised the grandeur of the Forbidden City on the one hand, and, the three courts” and “five gates” system of Zhou Li on the other. (cf. Liu Dunzhen 1981:286; He Yeju 1985:2) In details as well as in the broad outlines, every effort was made to see that the city conformed to the most ancient precedents.

64 According to Zhou Li (“Chao Shi” in the Autumn Chapter; “Da Si Kou 大司寇” in the Autumn Chapter; “Xiao Si Kou 小司寇” in the Autumn Chapter; “Zai Fu 宵夫” in the Heaven Chapter of Zhou Li), there should be three chao 朝 (courts) for emperors and kings, i.e. an exterior court and two internal courts, namely the zhichao 濟朝 and the yanchao 燕朝. It was said by Zheng Xuan of the Han dynasty when commenting Zhou Li that “Both the emperor and dukes of the Zhou dynasty had three Chao (court) one waichao 外朝 (outer court), two neichao 内朝 (inner court). The inner court inside Lu 路 Gate is yanchao.” (CY 1979:36) Chao is the imperial administrative building group. The outer court was mainly for the conduct of the affairs of common people and was in the most external part of the palace area. (“Da Zai 大宰” in the Autumn Chapter of Zhou Li) The zhichao was the formal administrative court for daily affair and was outside the Lu Gate. The yanchao was the place where rulers received, discussed with, and granted banquets to ministers, and should be inside the Lu Gate. (Zhou Li, “Xiaoguan”) Besides these, there were also sayings about the dachao 大朝 (grand court) [Honghuan Shu 吳漢書 (The History of Lai Han), Liyi Zhi (The Records of Li)] and the “normal court.” The grand court was where emperors received their dukes and officials on special occasions. The normal court was when emperors accepted respect from their officials at ordinary times. In the Forbidden City, the functional spaces along the central axis were divided by the gates and the courts in a positional sequence. The location of the waichao, the Fentian Hall and the Qianqing Palace was according to the principle of the “three courts” and that of the five gates from the Daming Gate to the Fentian Gate was according to the principle of “five gates.” Whereas the relation of the Three Great Halls and the Three Back Halls demonstrated the principle of “administrative quarter in the front and residential quarter in the rear.” (Liu Dunzhen 1981:286) The five gates were: Chengtian Gate, Duan Gate, Wu Gate, Fengtian Gate and Qianqing Gate. The Qianqing Gate of the Forbidden City was in fact a Lu Gate (lumen) in ancient times. (Lu Gate, the innermost gate of the imperial palace; Liu means great or imperial. CY 1979:2996) The three palaces outside were “imperial administrative quarters” (chao) and all halls and rooms inside were “imperial residential quarters” (qin). The Qianqing Palace inside was actually the luqing 路寢. (Luqin, zhengqin 正寢 or daqing 大寢, the formal or supreme imperial residential palace. CY 1979:2997) The “three imperial administrative building groups” (three chao) were: the “outer imperial administrative building group” (waichao) outside Wu Gate; the “formal imperial administrative building group” (zhichao) in the Supreme Harmony Hall inside the Fentian Gate and the “residential imperial building group” (yanchao) in the Qianqing Palace inside the Qianqing Gate. All these imperial administrative building groups and gates were laid out along the axis of the Forbidden City. The planners of the city of Beijing employed a method of building the imperial administrative building groups and gates one after another gradually leading up to the Qianqing Palace (Lu qin). This not only stressed the dominant role of the axis in the overall planning of the city but also gave prominence to the sovereignty of the emperors. The ancient system of courts and gates were used as a basic structure, the whole palaces were divided by gates and a pattern of “administrative quarter” in the front and residential quarter in the rear” was decided according to the situation of the dynasty. We can see that the pattern of the central axis in the Forbidden City basically follows the same structure as the ancient system of gates and courts.
Other traditions brought to bear in the building of previous capitals were inherited as well. The theories of Yin-Yang and Five Elements were applied in the disposal of some important individual structures. The numbers of three, five and nine were carefully employed in the design of the imperial palaces and other important buildings. The design of the city also corresponded to the stellar constellation Ziwei 紫微, the Polaris, which is an astrologically privileged star in the heavens, an apparent hub of the sky, surrounded by other stars. Beijing, traditionally viewed as corresponding to it, was conventionally regarded as the centre of the Earth. Not only was the site believed to correspond to the stellar constellation, but the Forbidden City indeed had the character zi 紫 included in its Chinese name. Thus the basic principles of the design of the city of Beijing were the same as those stipulated for a capital city in early antiquity.

Wright (1977:73) has speculated on the reasons for the persistence of this, the longest tradition of city cosmology ever known. Since his insight into both the role of the literate elite in matters concerning the building of capital cities and the influence of the Neo-Confucian synthesis and the Mongol domination on the development of this cosmology is closely relevant to this present research, I would like to summarise his conclusion here. (1) the symbolism of Chinese cities became a part — if only a minor one — of the imperial ideology, with its emphasis on the centrality of China in the world and on the Son of Heaven as radiator maximus of civilisation. It was, of course, the literate elite, in their long symbiotic relationship with the Chinese emperors, who insisted time and again on the importance of the ritual-symbolic acts of “their” emperor, and on his role as the pivot of the cosmos, who was to operate from a microcosm of the Chinese universe — the capital. (2) the cosmology from which city symbolism derived was part of the enduring world view of the Chinese people. (3) the artisans kept alive a profoundly conservative architectural tradition, so that when the time came to build anew, they returned to traditional forms and techniques. The other three forces Wright regards as accounting for the longevity of this symbolic system were extremely important in the formation of the Ming Beijing: (1) The cumulative weight of history, which became in time a formidably detailed and complex body of precedent. Historical precedent was extremely important for the Chinese. The ever-increasing weight of cumulative history was against innovation, whether in city building or in any other field. (2) The Neo-Confucian synthesis of the tenth to the twelfth centuries drove men back to ancient models, to meticulous re-examination of classical texts. At the same time it undoubtedly discouraged innovation in many realms, including the design and the
symbolism of cities. (3) The defensive posture of the Chinese order from the Northern Song onward, followed by the harsh century of Mongol domination, brought into being the fervent Chinese restorationism of the Ming. If this had not occurred, the period from 1368 to modern times might have seen a wider range of innovation in social policies, in thought, and indeed in the design of cities.

To summarise this chapter, the construction of the city of Beijing, and that of Dadu upon which it was founded, was managed and conducted by the scholar-officials, the elite of imperial China, who revered the Confucian classics. The emperors had a final say in the matter. The site, and especially its topographical advantages for military concerns, were carefully deliberated. As a capital city, on the one hand, the form and implications of the city of Beijing were different from those of the local cities, as the symbolism of the imperial capital city was more heavily emphasised. On the other hand, it was different from the other imperial capital cities of the previous dynasties, since its design inherited the symbolism of imperial capitals accumulated throughout history. Affected by the Neo-Confucian synthesis and the restorationism of the Ming, this was the city which was built most closely in accordance with the principles recorded in Zhou Li. Thus the design of the city was mainly an expression of the dominant Confucian ideology of the capital city.
Although it has been extensively studied by many scholars, some particular aspects of fengshui related to this present research need further discussion. This chapter is an outline of fengshui mainly reviewing the following aspects of fengshui: (1) the fundamental distinctions of fengshui ideas; (2) the incoherent nature of fengshui theories resulting from the boundless range of ideas under the rubric fengshui; (3) the relationship between the cosmological foundation of fengshui, and the cosmological symbols, the characteristic archetypes rooted in fundamental Chinese cosmology, which were shared by other Chinese thinking; (4) and most importantly, the status of fengshui ideas in imperial ideological hierarchy, and the fengshui practitioner’s social position.

Serving as a foundation for further discussion by introducing a number of aspects of fengshui, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I introduce problems concerning the origins of fengshui to show its ingredients drawn from ancient divinations. Secondly, I deal with the basic theories and typical terms of fengshui. The main argument concerning the basic nature of fengshui is that fengshui is the art and practice of site selection and spatial organisation in order to maximise the good fortune of the owner/occupier (and their descendants) of a building or grave. Thirdly, I discuss the major schools of fengshui and the boundlessly varied theories inspiring it, to indicate that it is not a unified phenomenon. Finally, I extensively analyse the position of fengshui in the imperial cultural hierarchy and Confucian scholars’ various attitudes towards different aspects of fengshui.

2.1 THE ORIGINS

The origins of fengshui are vague, as March (1968:260) has noted, and this leaves room for disagreement about its nature. According to de Groot (1897:938) the “elementary principles . . . were practically applied” already in Zhou times (c. 11th century – 256 B.C.).65 Needham (1956:359-63; 1962:240) argues that, although it

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65 Some research has held that fengshui was evident in primitive man’s practice of siting for cities. Zhang Rongming (1994:3) holds that the divination of the Zhou dynasty was the embryonic form of fengshui. Liu Xiaoming (1994:6) said: “Fengshui as a technique for the selection of geographic environment when building a house or city, was formed in primitive society, for example in the Yangshao Culture [7,000-6,000 B.C.].” The earliest activities of selecting a site were recorded in the Shang dynasty (16 c.-11 c. B.C.). But accounts of building divination from the oracle inscriptions are scattered and not detailed. In the early Zhou dynasty (11 c.-771 B.C.), xiangzhai was usually carried out before building a city. In ancient records, the terms bu or buzhai and xiang or xiangzhai, which
developed during the Warring States period when Zou Yan's 鄚衍 (c. 305-240 B.C.) correlative cosmology and philosophic magic were flourishing,66 in Wang Chong's time (A.D. 27-c. 97), the system had developed sufficiently for Wang to argue against it. Wright (1977:54) holds that "the origins of fengshui are to be found in the systematic organicism that was characteristic of the Han synthesis," although "various ingredients of the system can be traced back to the Zhou."67 He adds:

There is ample early evidence of the manipulation of the Five Elements system and of the symbols of the Book of Changes. There are also references from late Chou, Ch'in, and Han times to practitioners known as wang-ch'i-che who surveyed the ambience or emanations (ch'i) of a site or

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66 Various materials indicate that in the period of the Warring States the practice of grave selection had already come into being. According to Liji, "Zaji Shang", celebrated senior officials practised divination not only in selecting the site of graves, but also for the dates of funerals. According to Xiaojing (Filial Piety Classic), "Sangqin" (Bereft of Parents Section), besides the selection of a funeral date, it seems to have been the bounden duty of a filial son to select the site of the grave for his late father/mother by means of divination. These records give evidence of the rise of grave selection at that time. But these practices were not connected with the idea of events which were to happen later, in the period of the Warring States (475-221 B.C.). According to Shiji (Historical Records), "Chulicius Zhuan (Chulicius' Biography)," Ying Ji's grave was selected by himself before his death, and he predicted: "In one hundred years, there will be an imperial palace flanking my tomb". When the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.) came, Changle Palace was actually built to the east of his tomb, and Weiyang Palace was built to its west. People later called Ying Ji "Chulicius", as his tomb was located in Chuli Town to the south of the River Wei. In later times, fengshui-practitioners held him to be the founder of orthodox kanyu. (GTJ, "Kanyu Section," "Collected Biographies of Distinguished Personages") The idea of correspondence between Man and Earth in the Qin dynasty (221 B.C.-207 B.C.) is a variant of the idea of correspondence between Heaven and Man. According to the Shiji, "Meng Tian Liezhuan" (Historical Records, "Meng Tian's Biography"), General Meng Tian rendered outstanding service to the Emperor in unifying the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.). Yet later he was ordered by the second emperor of the Qin dynasty to kill himself. Just before his death, Meng Tian sighed: "Whatever have I done to offend Heaven, that it has ordered me to die without any fault?" After thinking it over for a long time, he came to the realisation: "I deserve death. I built the Great Wall from Lintao in the west to Liaodong in the east, for more than ten thousand li. How can it not harm the dimai (earth vein)? This is my fault." Meng connected his death with the dimai (earth vein), that to us would seem to have had nothing to do with his death, and held his death to be due to his having injured the earth vein. (cf. Needham 1971:53) This shows his belief in the correspondence between Earth and Man. It is also the first known recorded use of the concept of earth vein, a term which became prevalent in later works on fengshui.

67 When concerning the Han tombs which were grouped together as it were in a cemetery, Loewe (1990:211) says that "it may be assumed that the site was chosen after due consultation with specialists in geomancy."
situation to determine its favorable or unfavorable character. This subtradition persisted and, I suggest, was fused with feng-shui theories in the third or fourth century A.D. The earliest text that lays out feng-shui as a system is attributed to Kuo P’u (267-324), who applied his principles to the sitting of ancestral graves in order to ensure the good fortune of the descendants.

The assumption that the system had developed sufficiently in the Han dynasty is supported by evidence. Although scattered ideas can be found before the Han, a batch of works specially on house surveying and divination was written in the Han dynasty, The bibliography of Han Shu 漢書 mentions two books which must have been relevant to fengshui, namely, Kanyu Jingui (Golden Box of Geomancy) and Gongzhai Dixing 宮宅地形 (Terrestrial Morphology for [the siting of] Palaces and Mansions), but both have long since been lost. Although none of these works has survived, we can still gain a preliminary understanding of their theory by viewing what was quoted from them by Wang Chong 王充 (27-97 A.D.) in his Lunheng 論衡, “Jishu pian 論術篇:”

It was said in Tuzhaishu 圖宅術 (Housing Geomancy): “There were eight kinds of zhai (residential forms) classified in Liujia 六甲. By applying [Liujia], the natures of houses for officials and merchants are distinguished. The houses are classified according to the five musical notes, while people’s surnames can be subjected to five tones. The house is not suitable for a householder who has a name of the same tone as the house. If

68 In the chapter from Guanzi, which Needham notes may well contain material of the 4th century B.C., the qi of the earth was said to flow in vessels comparable with those in the body of man. In Shi Ji (vol. 127: “Rizhe Liezhuin,” no. 67), a class of diviners known as the kanyu jia (“diviners by the canopy of Heaven and chariot of Earth,” as translated by Needham), is mentioned along with six other classes of diviner. The real consolidation of the system Needham (ibid.) considers to have taken place in the Three Kingdoms period (220-280 A.D.), since Guan Lu (209-256 A.D.) probably wrote about it, if the Guanshi Dili Zhimeng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator) which we still possess is indeed from his hand, or his time.

69 In Chinese, the pronunciations of characters are subjected to different tones, and the correct intonation of a word is essential to clearness of speech. The sounds of the Chinese characters were classified into five tones in pronunciation in traditional times. The ancient Chinese five-tone scale also had five notes. Apparently, in the days of Wang Chong, it was usual to number houses in cycles of sixty; and the tones of the surnames of their occupants had to correspond to the tones of the house “numbers.” “These cyclical names were thought of as if they were spirits; and to please them it was even considered necessary for houses to face different ways according to the tone of the owner’s name.” (Willoughby-Meade 1928:287) Li Cai of the Tang dynasty says: “As for the contemporary diviners, they hold a theory of ‘five names and five tones.’ The five tones are gong, shang, jiao, zhi, yu, and everything in the world is classified into these five tones, and, on the basis of this, good or ill fortune can be told.” However, “According to the ancient classics, such theories did not exist. The books on yin and yang did not mention them either. It must be oral legend from some low-class sources with no literate reference.” (cf. Wang Qiheng 1992:12) Thus the five tones theory was not regarded as derived from ancient times.
the names of the house and the householder conflict with each other, the householder will face illness, crime, disaster and death." ... It is said in 
*Tuzhaishu*: “It is not good for the gate of a house of *shang* 商 tone to face South. It is not good for the gate of a house of *zhi* 徽 tone to face North. *Shang* is metal but South means fire; *zhi* is fire but, North means water. Water restrains fire, and fire restrains metal, so the five elements restrain each other. Therefore, the house gates of five surnames in five tones have their own auspicious directions for facing in. If the direction is correct, the owner will be rich, otherwise he will be poor and lost.” (*KYJC* vol. 2, 306)

The way in which the theories of the “five tones” and “five elements” are employed in *Tuzhaishu* is obviously similar to that of later *fengshui*. There were also arts for funerals — such arts being the major concern of later *fengshui* — recorded in *Lunheng*, “Jiri 諸日篇.”

It is said in *Zangli* 葬歟 (Funeral Calendar): “The funeral should avoid the harmful dates of *jiukong* 九空 and *dixian* 地陷. The date of the funeral should be set on the balance between *gangri* 剛日 (lit. “firm day”) and *rouri* 柔日 (lit. “gentle day”), and the balance between the month of odd number and the month of even number.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:5)

Moreover, regarding the construction of houses, it was held that the movement of celestial bodies and the location of the homestead corresponded to personal affairs. Wang Chong said in his “Jianshi Pian 講時篇” that there was a saying that if the construction were in the year and month when *Taisui* 太歲 (Jupiter) was in position *zi* 子, and the construction were made in the homologous position *zi* or *yin* 氳 on earth, it would bring disaster to the residents in position *you* and position *si* on Earth.70 This was in a sense a “taboo of *Taisui*”, as seen in a popular Chinese idiom “to construct on the day against *Taisui*” (*taisui tóushang dòngtu* 太歲頭上動土), which meant to break a highly dangerous taboo. Whenever *fengshui* may have originated, theories dealing with the siting and adaptation of residence so as to acquire good fortune were formed in the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.). Although there was no such term as *fengshui* then used to embrace them, the principal ideas of the later *fengshui* appeared at that time, such as the belief that one’s residence affects one’s future, the siting method applying the theory of the Five Elements, the burial-date selecting and the taboos about building.

70 In traditional China, in accordance with the twelve Earthly Branches, a system of numerals which was used in combination with the Heavenly Stems to designate years, months, days and hours, the Earth was divided into 12 directions. *Zi*, *yin*, *you* and *si* are the names of some of these directions.
In the dynasties that followed, Guo Pu (4th century A.D.) also wrote on fengshui, but Needham thinks it is very doubtful whether any of the present Zangshu (Burial Book) ascribed to him, are his. Wang Wei in the fifth century A.D. wrote his Huangdi Zhaijing (Yellow Emperor’s Mansion[-sitting] Classic). In the Tang dynasty (618-907) there was the Qingnang Aozhi (Mysterious Principles of the Blue Bag [i.e. of the Universe] as translated by Needham) ascribed to the famous geomancer Yang Yunsong,71 and the series of works culminates, though by no means ends, with the Kanyu Manxing (Agreeable Geomantic Aphorisms) by Liu Ji (1311-1375) at the end of the Yuan dynasty.

The development of fengshui reached its climax in the Ming and Qing dynasties, with a proliferation of new fengshui texts. Many large scale collection books officially edited by imperial order contained a large number of fengshui works. Such as, Yongle Dadian 永樂大典 (The Great Encyclopaedia in the Reign of Emperor Yongle), Siku Quanshu 四庫全書 (Complete Library of Four Branches of Books) and Gujin Tushu Jicheng 古今圖書集成 (Completed Collection of Graphs and Writings of Ancient and Modern Times). There were 32 fengshui books collected in the “Section of Art Forms”, Siku Quanshu and 23 fengshui books were included in the Gujin Tushu Jicheng. Meanwhile, many books titled “collections” were edited by non-governmentally organised scholars, such as, in the Ming dynasty, Wang Junrong’s Yangzhai Shishu 陽宅十書 (Ten books of the Siting of House) of 4 volumes, Xu Weizhi and Xu Wershi’s Dili Renzi Xuzhi 地理人子須知 (Basic Dili) of 39 volumes, including over a hundred single books, Chen Menghe’s Yangzhai Jicheng 陽宅集成 (Collection of Siting of Houses) of 9 volumes, Yangzhai Daquan (Collection of Siting of Houses) of 10 volumes, Xuanze Congshu 選擇叢書 (Collection of Siting), and in the Qing dynasty, Ye Jiusheng’s Dili Daicheng 地理大成 (Collection of Dili) of 36 volumes, Ye Tai’s Shanfa Quanshu 山法全書 (Collection of the Method of Selecting Mountains) of 19 volumes, Wei Qingjiang’s

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71 Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyaoyu 四庫全書總目提要 says: “Yunsong 險松 is not recorded in history. Only his name appears in Chen Zhengsun’s Zhuyu Jie 總目解 in Songshi 宋史 “Yiwenzhi” 壬文志 he is called ‘Yang Jipin’ 楊濟貧 (Yang Helper-of-the-poor), without any details. It was only claimed by the Shujia 術家 (arts specialists) that Yunsong’s name was Yi 益, and that he was born in Dozhou 贛州. He was in charge of dili in Lingtai 靈台, and was awarded the title of Ziguanglu Dafu 紫光祿大夫. While [the rebel] Huang Chao 黃巢 was attacking the palace in the Guangming 廣明 reign-period (880-881), Yunsong stole the books of secret arts from the Forbidden City and escaped. He later lived in Qianzhou 越州. It is a fantastic tales and totally unbelievable.” (translated from He Xiaoxin 1995:112) It is doubtful if this quotation really comes from Yang, since it first appeared in the Ming dynasty and is not contained in the collection of available works attributed to Yang Yunsong. Needham (1962:282) takes Yang’s dates as (fl. 874 A.D. to 888 A.D.).
Apart from these collections, there were countless single works that enjoyed popularity at the same time. For example, according to He Xiaoxin (1995:142-45), there were 160 single books, which had not been included in the previous collections, collected in the Qianshi Suocang Kanyushu Tiyou (Catalogue of the Kanyu Works collected by Scholar Qian), published in 1942. Qian Wenxuan classified them into 7 groups: “luantou (mountains),” “liqi (School of Liqi),” “shuilong (water dragon),” “zhaijing (house-siteing),” “luopan (compass),” “xuanze (selection)” and “qianji (local record).” While collecting and editing these works, many scholars did a lot of textual research, annotation and correction to the previous fengshui works. For example, in the Siku Zongmu Tiyou (An Annotated Full List of the Complete Library of Four Branches of Books), the editor researched many of the fengshui books included in the Siku Quanshu. Apart from this, many other books named as “annotations,” “examinations” and “corrections” to the previous fengshui works were written in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In practice, among the populace, fengshui was often practised in the building of houses and graves, especially, in the southern area in the Ming dynasty. The degrees to which fengshui was involved depended on the natures of the different construction activities. In the matter of the burial the geomancer was “indispensable.” (Gray 1878, vol. 1:315) There was a government department namely Qintianjian (Directorate of Astronomy) in charge of affairs associated with various kinds of divination. It is notable that the large-scale imperial tombs of the Ming were built by consulting with the officials of Qintianjian as providing fengshui advice and practise was sometimes part of their duty. According to the explicit records in official documents, there is no doubt that fengshui played an important role in this imperial project. However, in the matter of the sitting and building of the capital city of Beijing, the role of fengshui is unknown due to the lack

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72 Most of the volumes in these collected fengshui books are quite thin.

73 It was said in The Chinese repository (from May 1832 to December 1851) (vol. XVIII, 372): “In the southern parts of China, the sides of hills, and places elevated above the water, are selected for burial spots: but in the northern provinces, this point is not so carefully attended to, nor in fact is so much are there taken to bury the dead.” It was also recorded by Vale (1906:5): “The southern provinces of China are said to be much more superstitious than the northern, and the western provinces, especially Si-chuen, more superstitious than either.”
of clear records of the building process and direct evidence. This has left room for various assumptions, interpretations and arguments.

After tracing back the general development of this discourse, I now discuss the origins of different terms denoting it. The word fengshui, first used in Zangshu 葬書 (Burial Book), appeared in the Song (960-1279). Even though the book was written under the name of Guo Pu, a well known expert on the arts of divination in the Jin dynasty (265-420 A.D.), it is believed to have been written shortly before the middle of the Tang dynasty (i.e. 8th century A.D.).

The burial principle is to find a site with shengqi 生氣 (life breath). . . . Qi can be dissipated in wind and bounded by the water. The ancients could gather qi together and make it flow or stop as desired: this is called fengshui. (KYJC vol. 1, 340)

This theory was termed fengshui (lit. “wind and water”) not because wind and water are the greatest natural forces changing topography, but because of the fundamental belief of qi (pneuma, vital breath) in fengshui. Thus the term fengshui derives from no earlier than the Tang dynasty. The preceding is the original meaning of the term fengshui, which was quite closely associated with the burial fengshui most criticised by the elite in imperial China. The term fengshui was more often used in non-elite circles. For instance, it was a common word in the Ming and Qing novels, but rarely used for official purposes, the other terms kanyu and dili then being employed.

In history, other terms to some degree equivalent to, or closely associated with, fengshui are kanyu 坐輿 (lit. “heaven and earth”), dili 地理 (lit. “earth pattern”), xingfa 形法 (lit. “form craft”), qingwushu 青烏術 (lit. “Qingwu’s craft”), qingnangshu 青囊術 (lit. “green bag craft”), xiangdishu 相地術 (lit. “siting

74 Ji Yun 祺筠 of the Qing dynasty wrote down a large passage of discussion to prove this in SQZT. Yu Jiaxi 余嘉锡 (1958:729-30) holds that it was written in the 8th-9th centuries A.D.. He Xiaoxin (1990:34) holds that this book was written before the 8th century A.D., in the Tang dynasty.

75 The full implications of qi cannot be adequately ascribed to any single English word — or even series of words. Needham (1956:139; 1962:pp.xxv, 131) employs such phrases as “subtle matter,” “vital breath,” “emanation,” “matter-energy” and “energy present in organized form,” and expresses a preference, if synonyms must be found, for Greek “pneuma.” Wheatley (1971:458n25) has discussed these terms, in particular, the “cosmic breath.”

76 Qingwu was known as a hermit of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), who wrote an early fengshui classic, Zangjing (Burial Classic). Thus, fengshui later came to be called “Qing Wu’s craft.”

77 Qingnang means “green bag”. According to Jinshu, “Guo Pu Zhuan,” Guo Pu once studied under a Master Guo. Master Guo picked out 9 volumes of books from a black bag and gave them to Guo Pu. From then on Guo Pu knew the Five Elements and the craft of divination. Guo Pu also wrote a book named Zangshu (Burial Book). Later generations held that fengshui craft also came from the black-
craft”.78 xiangmushu 相墓術 (lit. “grave siting craft”),79 tuzhai 圜宅 (lit. “house selection”), buzhai 卜宅 (lit. “house divination”), xiangzhai 相宅 (lit. “house geomancy”), yinyang 陰陽, etc. Their meanings were slightly different. The changes in the frequency of their appearance show precisely the shift of emphasis of the theories in different historical periods. Among them kanyu, dili and xingfa are the earliest and most important.

(1) kanyu

According to Shi Zhen (1992:12), the term kanyu appeared earliest in Huainan Honglie 淮南穀烈 vol. 3, Tianwen Xun 天文訓 in the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.). In context, kanyu means the Law of Heaven and Earth. Xu Shen 許慎 (30-124 A.D.) explains the meaning of the term kanyu as: “Kan means the dao of Heaven; yu means the dao of Earth.” Zhang Yan of Three Kingdoms says: “Kanyu is the general name of Heaven and Earth.” The kanyu practitioner of the Han dynasty is recorded by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-86 B.C.):

Emperor Xiaowu 孝武 called the diviners together to ask whether it was good or not to get married on a certain day. The wuxing-jia 五行家 [diviner by the Five Elements] said yes, the kanyu-jia 坎舆家 [kanyu practitioner] said no, the jian chu-jia 建除家 said it was bad luck, the congchen-jia 聚辰家 said it would be very dangerous, the li-jia 歷家 [diviner by the calendar] said it was inauspicious, the tianren-jia 天人家 said it was auspicious, the taiyi-jia 太一家 said it was most auspicious. Knowing they could not reach an agreement, the emperor said: “To avoid days of ill luck, the wuxing [Five Elements] principles should be primarily obeyed. So we take the suggestion of the wuxing-jia.” [Shiji vol. 67, “Rizhe Liezhuan (Rizhe Biographies)”]

Thus the kanyu-jia (kanyu practitioner) was one kind of diviner of that time, divining the auspiciousness or ill luck of a particular date, by consulting the “dao of Heaven and Earth.” There were many books including the term kanyu in their titles listed in

bag books. For this reason, they used qingnang (black bag) as an alternative name for the theory of fengshui.

78 The terms xiangdilshu (lit. “siting craft”) first appeared in the Shiji. “Zhou Benji:” “Hou Ji xiangdi [surveyed a piece of land] to see what crop it was suitable for. People took his conclusion as law.” Later the term was extended to house and grave siting. (Liu Xiaoming 1994:5)

79 The term xiangmishu (grave geomancy) first appeared in Jin Shu, “Yang You Zhuan:” “There was a man good at xiangmu [grave geomancy], who said You’s ancestors’ graves had monarchical omens.” Here the term xiangmishu (tomb survey) has the same meaning as fengshui. (Liu Xiaoming 1994:5)
the records of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Unfortunately the actual literature regarding the theory of kanyu has not survived.

The kanyu discipline was also associated with the xingye 星野 or xingtu 星土 (lit. “stars and field”), an astrological system, which was of great antiquity. (cf. Huainan Zi, vol.3, “Tianwen Xun”) The principal idea of xingye is “the correspondence between the spatial sections of the heavens (fenxinf) and the spatial divisions of the earthly field (fenye 分野), and between the movement of the heavenly bodies in one celestial section and the vicissitudes in the corresponding terrestrial division; and that, on the basis of such correspondence, auspicious or inauspicious signs in the world of man can be interpreted.” (Xu 1996:276 n) It was said in Zhou Li, “Chunguan Zongbo 春官宗伯,” vol. 26: “Bozhangshi 保章氏 is the official who is in charge of observing the constellations, recording the changes of stars, sun and moon, to predict the changes on the earth and explain the good or ill omens. According to the theory of xingtu, the world is divided into nine divisions. Each division represented by a group of constellations, its changes could foretell good or ill luck.”

In explaining this, Zheng Xuan (127-200 A.D.) mentioned a book entitled Kanyu:

**Xingtu** means the constellation dominating the *feng* 封, *feng* is a division of territory on Earth. The world as a whole can be divided into nine regions, the territories of the states in each part being represented by the separate constellations in the sky. The book on this has not been handed down. The present-day book Kanyu presented by states is not the original classic. We only know that according to the ancient book, the twelve groups of territory and constellation were divided according to its theory: the constellation Xingji 星紀 represents the territory Wu 吳 and Yue 越; . . . Ximu 星木 represents the territory of Yan 燕. This *fenye* theory tells fortune mainly on the basis of the movement of new stars or comets. (Zhou Li Zhushu vol. 26).

So we can see that the Kanyu was an ancient book which was lost even before the Han dynasty, and contained the theory of xingtu. According to Shi Zhen (ibid.), the earliest explanation of kanyu related to the idea of fengshui is presented by Meng Kang of the Three Kingdoms who said: “Kanyu is the name of the Divinity who made Tuzhai Shu (House Geomancy).” According to Jiu Tang Shu 唐書 (Old Record of the Tang dynasty), “Lü Cai Zhuan 呂才傳 (Biography of Lü Cai),” Kanyu Jing 坤興經 and Tuzhai Shu included the same “five names and five musical notes” theory, which was popular in the Han and Tang dynasties, and was inherited by the later fengshui works and became part of the framework of the Liqi School of fengshui. It was later included in many fengshui books, such as the Five Tones Fengshui Dili Theories, Five Tones Dili Classics and Five Tones Three Ways.
Residence Classics of the Song dynasty. The term kanyu became another name for fengshui in the later dynasties.

Due to its different origins, the term kanyu has a different emphasis from the term fengshui. Since the earlier kanyu is associated with the astrological theory of xingye, the term kanyu literally implies the correspondence between Heaven and Earth, which is the central idea of the symbolism of the imperial capital city that the Confucian elite held in esteem. By comparison, the term fengshui was associated more with grave-siting, since it derived from Zangshu (Burial Book). This aspect of fengshui theory was severely criticised by the elite. The term kanyu was used more in academic discourse than was fengshui. In the collection of books known as Gujin Tushu Jicheng, the section for these theories is titled the “Kanyu section,” and there is no book entitled fengshui in this section. The designation for practitioners, kanyujia, was more academic and respectable than fengshui-xiansheng 风水先生. The title jia 家 was generally used in terms for the scholars of philosophies and bodies of thought. For example, the Confucian scholar was called rujia 儒家, the Taoist was called daojia 道家, and the philosopher of yin yang theory in the Han dynasty was called yinyangjia 陰陽家. However, after the Han the fortune-teller was rarely called suanming-jia 算命家. Fengshui-practitioners were usually called fengshui-xiansheng in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Xiansheng 先生 was a term referring to a mentor, an elder, also to the practitioners of various skills such as the fortune-teller and physiognomer (suanming 算命 xiansheng and xiangmian 相面 xiansheng). In association with these kinds of occupations the title xiansheng was not as respectable as the title jia. Since the term fengshui was rarely associated with the term jia 家, and kanyu never with xiansheng, it would seem that kanyu sounded more academic and acceptable to the elite than fengshui, even though they represented the same body of theory in most cases. By viewing the elite’s different attitudes towards these two terms, we can see that the elite seemed more interested in the idea of correspondence between Heaven and Earth as in kanyu rather than the idea of siting the grave according to qi (pneuma) as in fengshui.

(2) dili

According to CY (589), the term dili (lit. “earth pattern” or “texture of the earth” the identical term used in modern times for “geography”) appears earliest in the Book of Changes, “Xici Shang 系辭上: ” “Look up to observe the heavenly constellations, look down to watch the dili.” The ancient annotation to this term in the book says: “There are mountains, rivers, plains and basins on the Earth. They all have their own
order. That is called dili.” After the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), fengshui works entitled dili became very popular. For example, all historical events concerning fengshui were collected together in the book Cefu Yuangui, under the heading “Ming Dili 明地理 (The Understanding of dili).” (Liu Xiaoming 1994:5) Thus the term dili has been shared by the two disciplines, geography and fengshui. It is difficult to distinguish the two implications of the term dili without a specific context. For instance, while the term dili implying earth pattern was used as a title of the “Section of Geography” in Yuan Shi (History of the Yuan Dynasty) and Ming Shi (History of the Ming Dynasty), many fengshui works collected in Gujin Tushu Jicheng have the term dili in their titles. Even the two disciplines themselves, fengshui and Chinese geography, have not been entirely distinct from each other, as many concepts were shared by both fields. However, the scholars of geography often refused to be associated with kanyujia. For instance, although being regarded as geographical scholars and travellers, Wang Shixing 王十性 (1547-1598) and Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1586-1641) often distinguished themselves from the kanyujia (kanyu experts). 

The term dili was more acceptable to the elite than the term fengshui, even though they often implied the same kind of theories. The term dili was often connected with jia to form a more respectable title for an expert of fengshui, as was the term kanyu, but the term fengshui, which was hardly used in historical works, rarely was. These phenomena not only show the different connotations of these terms, but also show us the elite’s different attitudes towards these two disciplines — fengshui and Chinese geography.

(3) xingfa

According to Han Shu: “Yiwen Zhi,” there was the School of Xingfa (xingfajia) in the Han dynasty. Works of the school included the seven-volume Guochao, and the 12-volume Gongzhai Dixing (Terrestrial Morphology for [the siting of] Palaces and Mansions). Its leading theme was described by Ban Gu: “The Xingfa School is for determining the form of the city and buildings by observing the topography of the jiuzhou 九州 (lit. “nine regions,” i.e. the world) and to tell the fortune, value or class of human and animal according to their form. It is as if each single bell of bells of different sizes in a set of chimes corresponds to a certain musical note. It is not caused by ghosts or gods, but is of natural law.” Since Ban Gu took the 13-volume Shanhai Jing (Mountains-and-Seas Classic), which has been handed down to the present and is regarded as an ancient classic of geography, as belonging to the same school as xingfa since they both refer to Nature, it seems that xingfa was a form of
skill for determining fortune according to the shape and appearance (xing) of the objects concerned. However, the relevant works of the school have all been lost. This is why the later Xingshi School of fengshui, which emphasises consulting topography, has sometimes been known as xingfa or xing-jia.

From the above, it can be seen that the systematic theories of kanyu and tuzhai (house selection) elaborated in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), had the same general aim, that of adjusting residences for improving their fortune, as the fengshui theory of later periods. Although each schools originally had their own esoteric methods, they had the same purpose and part of their theories and terms was also in use in later fengshui works and could be regarded as of the same body of ideas to which fengshui belongs. The emphasis of these terms is not always the same, and the ways in which they were used and appreciated were also different. The term kanyu was used more officially in imperial times. The term fengshui originated later than kanyu and seemed more popular among the common people. Considering that fengshui is now well-known to modern scholars, the term fengshui will be used as a general name for the theory, with other terms being used when specific contexts require it in this thesis. None the less, the difference in the use of the varying terms requires attention.

However, the activities of conducting land surveys or of divination for the building of houses or graves before the Han dynasty cannot be described as fengshui, even though many ingredients of them were inherited by the fengshui of later dynasties. Strictly speaking, it is improper to name all practices of divination or surveys for building "fengshui," and it is questionable to say that fengshui, as a body of theory, was formed before the Han dynasty. Although fengshui was used for site selection, not all site selection, in particular, the primitive man’s divination of site selection, such as bu, zhai or xiang, was fengshui. (See Section 1.2.1.) Although the ancient divination in site selection could be seen as of a kind of geomantic idea, being an elaborate body of theory fengshui had its own particular concepts and esoteric theories. In the following discussions we will see that whereas the bodies of theory

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80 When answering the question: is there a long history of fengshui, Feuchtwang (1982:250) says: "Yes. But it’s not called fengshui. There is a long history of research or surveying qi before the 10th century, long before. There are also the schools of Yin and Yang, Five Elements, ... You can consider all of that by referring forward anachronistically to the compass dial as being fengshui. But I don't think that it exists, as it were, in a harmonized form, before the Han (1st century).” Loewe (1990:90) is aware this point by saying that "the early belief that certain sites on earth, such as mountains, were possessed of holiness was accompanied by a faith that others were blessed by virtues
represented by terms such as *fengshui*, *kanyu* and *dili* were integrated and constituted a large conceptual entity which can be referred to by the generic title *fengshui*, some of their ideas derived from different bodies of theory which continued to develop parallel to *fengshui*.

### 2.2 PRINCIPLES AND CLASSICS

According to its different fields of application, *fengshui* has been divided into grave *fengshui*, that is *yinzhai* (lit. “residence of the dead”) or *xiangmu* (lit. “grave geomancy”), and house *fengshui*, that is *yangzhai* (lit. “residence of the living”) or *xiangzhai* (lit. “house geomancy”) since the Tang dynasty (618-907). That this is the case is indicated by two classics of *fengshui*, *Zangshu* (*Burial Book*) and *Zhaijing* (*House-Siting Classic*), the earliest two books to have survived, on grave *fengshui* and house *fengshui* respectively. Although an immense number of books appeared in the subsequent dynasties, they only made additions or amendments to the existing framework constructed by these two classics. Many fundamental principles of *fengshui* are well presented in these two *fengshui* classics.

#### 2.2.1 Zangshu (*Burial Book*)

*Zangshu* (*Burial Book*) is the earliest work on the principles of siting graves to have survived. It substantially quote *Zangjing* (*The Burial Classic*) a work ascribed to Qingwuzi of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.).81 The main theories in this work are outlined as follows:

1. The belief that the interred can affect their descendants’ fortune is elaborated at the beginning of the book:

   The principle for burial is to find a site and settle the dead on *shengqi* [energy or vigour]. As for the *qi* (pneuma, vital energy) of *yin-yang*, when it moves, it forms the wind; when it rises, it changes into cloud; when it

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81 Among the surviving early works on *fengshui*, there is one with the title *Zangjing* (*Burial Classic*). According to the textual research of Yu Jiaxi (1958:729-30), this book was not the *Zangjing* (*Burial Classic*) quoted in *Zangshu* (*Burial Book*), it was written by a later writer, by collecting the fragments of *Zangjing* quoted in *Zangshu* (*Burial Book*) and adding his own commentaries. This book, a collection of quotations, cannot be regarded as formulating a theoretical system. The surviving *Zangjing* (*Burial Classic*) has no position in the historical development of the theory of *fengshui* comparable to that of *Zangshu* (*Burial Book*) or *Zhaijing* (*House-Siting Classic*).
descends, it makes rain; when it travels in the earth, it becomes shengqi. All things on Earth are bred or composed by the shengqi released from the earth. Man gets his body and qi from his parents. When he is alive, qi forms his body, but after death, the qi still exists even when his body returns to the earth. So the true way of burying dead is to re-pour qi into the remains of the dead so that they may influence the living. It was said in the Jing: “qi causes responses [between things] just as a ghost affects the living.” That is why when Copper Mountain collapses in the west, the bell Ling Chung responded, by resonance, in the east. . . . (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 340)

The concept of qi is a traditional Chinese belief of great antiquity, which all objects in the universe are seen as being composed of. In this book, qi is believed to be travelling through the earth as shengqi (life-vigour), and the interred can receive help from this shengqi, which can then in turn influence the descendants of the deceased. This is the central idea of grave fengshui, and the one upon which the whole system is built. The main aim is to use the remains of the dead to improve the fortune of the living: “by doing this, one can snatch spiritual efficacy and alter Heaven’s ordainment (是以君子奪神工, 改天命).” (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 341)

(2) Zangshu (Burial Book) holds that qi has two characteristics: one is of floating and dispersing in wind, the other is being bound by water.

It was said in [Zang] Jing (Burial Classic) that: [qi] can be dispersed in wind and bound by water. The ancient people could gather qi and control its running and stopping. That is why it is called fengshui. (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 340)

For this reason, when selecting a burial place, it is necessary to inspect whether the place can block the wind and whether it is surrounded by water. The method for preserving wind and obtaining water is to select a suitable site by certain complicated methods. There are about fifty principles on site selection given in the book.

3) It was believed that mountains and hills are formed by the movement of qi in the earth. “While floating in the earth, qi follows the terrain, and stops at the end of a stretch of shi [mountain ridge]. Both the main ridge of mountain and the small mound and hillock are the marks of the routes of the movement of qi.” (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 340) In order to distinguish the main ridge and the secondary branch of the mountain, the concepts of xing and shi were employed. “The part [of a mountain ridge] of a dimension over a thousand chi is called shi, while the part measured in hundred chi is called xing.” (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 340)
(4) There should be symbolic hillocks and waters around the site. “[The hillock or water] at the left hand side [the east, assuming the site is oriented facing the south] of the site is called Green Dragon, while the right [the west] one is called White Tiger. The [hillock or water] in front of the grave is called Red Bird, and the one behind the site is called Tortoise.” (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 342) Different forms of these four manifestations will lead the descendants of the buried to a different future.

(5) A series of taboos were outlined based on the fundamental requirements of qi. For example, a tongshan (a bare hillock where no grass or trees grow) is not suitable for a burial. Such a hillock is a sign of the absence of qi. Therefore, it is not suitable to bury the dead in such a place. Secondly, a duanshan (place where the ridge of a hill is abruptly broken) is not suitable for a burial site. Such a hill is not suitable for a grave, for qi relies on the earth veins to travel through. Thirdly, a stony hill is not suitable for a burial because qi travels through the earth, and stony hills allow no channels for energy. (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 342)

(6) The sites are listed in grades according to the different mountain features. The grade of the site will determine future fortune in relation to rank in the imperial hierarchy. For example, in the grave of a duke or a marquis, the momentum or shape of the hill should be like ten thousand horses galloping forward, thundering down from Heaven. In the grave of a nobleman, the thrust of the hill should be like huge waves surging forward one after another; in the grave of an important figure, the momentum of the hill should be like a dragon fighting, clouds piling and water twisting. (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 342)

2.2.1 Zhaijing (House-Siting Classic)

Huangdi Zhaijing (Yellow Emperor’s Mansion-[siting] Classic) is the earliest surviving work on the siting of houses.82 In its preface, it claims to be a synthesis of 25 books all designated in their titles as some kind of Zhaijing (House-Siting Classic). The theoretical system contained in it is much more complicated than that of Zangshu (Burial Book). Its main features are as follows:

82 Needham (1956:360) holds that it was written by Wang Wei in the 5th century. Yu Jiaxi (1958) considers that “this book is righteous and theoretical, refined and fluent . . . the closest to the ancient among the mentioned works.” (translated from Liu Xiaoming 1994:10) Liu Xiaoming holds that this book was a little later than Zangshu (Burial Book). Cai Dafeng (1994:113) is of the opinion that it was written soon after the end of the Tang dynasty (907 A.D.).
The theories of the book are established on the belief that the house can exert influence on the householder’s fortune as is claimed at the beginning of it:

Zhai [residence] is the joining point of yin and yang, and the foundation of human relations. This truth can only be understood by erudite and wise men. Among the five kind [of arts], zhai [house geomancy] is the most important secret art. Wherever man lives, a residence is needed, though sizes [of houses] and the balance of yin and yang are different. Even a room for temporary lodging may lead to good or ill fortune. Big [houses] and small [houses] all have their own affects. Violating [the principle of the house geomancy] will definitely result in disaster. Only adaptation [according to geomancy] can prevent the ill luck, just like medicine can cure illness. Therefore, the residence determines the man’s fate. If a man’s residence in a house is good, the family will develop well for generations, and if otherwise, the family will decline. Graves are governed by the same principle. From the capital city, the local administrative centre, the village, to even a cottage in the mountain, wherever man lives is under the same rule.83 (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 1)

The houses are divided into two kinds: yin or yang according to which direction they face. The directions for this division are as follows: Step 1: Divide the surroundings into eight positions according to the Post-natal Eight Trigrams, (see section 1.3) to determine the yin or yang property of the location. Of the eight positions of the Eight Trigrams, while qian, zhen, kan and gen belong to yang, kun, xuan, li and dui belong to yin; Step 2: The above positions will be subdivided into 24 directions with eight stems, four dimensions and twelve branches. The positions and directions at the Northeast belong to yang and those at the Southwest belong to yin.

Step 3: The yin or yang property of the site of the house must be determined. A house built in position yang is a yang house; a house built in position yin is a yin house. Attention should be paid to the integration of the frontal direction of the house. It should not be for both strengthening yang and strengthening yin. That is, a yin house should not face yin and a yang house must not face yang. (Figure 2-1, 2-2)

The book does not confine itself to the matter of houses alone. It declares that more attention should be paid to the harmony of houses and graves. It holds that the house is much more important than the grave: “If a grave is of evil omen and a house is of good omen, the descendants will be rich officials; if a grave is of good omen and a house is of evil omen, the descendants will have insufficient food and clothing.

83 It fails to give any detailed method for building a capital city, although it is claimed at the beginning of this book that the capital city is the most important type of residence for the living.
Figure 2-1   The Yangzhai Tu (diagram of house) and the Yinzhai Tu (diagram of Grave) in Huangdi Zhaijing (Yellow Emperor’s Mansion-siting) Classic. Source: Gujin Tushu Jicheng (Imperial Encyclopaedia of Ancient and Modern Books) vol.1.

If both the grave and the residence are good then the descendants will be wealthy; if the grave and house are both of evil omen, the descendants will move to other places and the family die out in future.” (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 3)

(4) The book lays down an order of house construction. The construction should proceed in sequence according to the properties of the different parts of the house. If it is suitable to start from the position si (Southeast corner) in a yin residence, that is where the head of the dragon is. From then on, the house should be built in a clockwise direction to position xuan. The head of the dragon in a yang residence is in position hai (Northeast corner). For this reason, construction in a yang house should start from position hai and continue clockwise to position qian. (Figure 2-2)

(5) The seasons should be taken into consideration when building a house, otherwise it will offend the gods, and bring ruin upon oneself. For example, in different seasons, the Four Emperor Gods should be avoided. The Four Emperors are the Green Emperor, Red Emperor, White Emperor and Black Emperor. They are respectively in charge of spring, summer, autumn and winter. In Five Elements theory, the four seasons are also distributed between the four directions north, south, east and west. Therefore, an easterly house should not be built in spring to avoid offending the Spring God, the Green Emperor who controls the east. Furthermore, it is not suitable to build a southerly house in summer, nor a westerly house in autumn, nor a northerly house in its corresponding season of winter. Moreover, regarding the specific dates on which residential houses should be built, attention must be paid to “life” and avoiding “death.” Zhaijing (House-Siting Classic) holds that there being 12 months a year, there are dates for “life” and “death” each month. A “life date” should be selected for house construction. This is called being “close to life.” House construction should not be done on a “death date.”

(6) The internal locations and fortune constellations of the house are stressed. The typical traditional Chinese residences were built in the form of an internal closed type of quadrangle surrounding a courtyard. On the basis of this distinction of the character of the house, the book holds that the locations inside the residential house are linked with the fortunes of each member of the family. The place somebody is linked with represents his fortune. For example, position si represents the head of the dragon in yin residences, that being the father’s fortune constellation, for he is the head of the family. Therefore, no well is allowed to be dug there, otherwise it will cause harm to the father’s life. Position bing represents the mother’s fortune. This place must not be used for a doorway, otherwise the mother will be harmed. Position
**kun** represents the fortune of the daughter. Stables must not be built here, otherwise the daughter will suffer from disaster. Position **geng** represents the fortune of the oldest grandson, where similarly no door should be built, otherwise the oldest grandson will suffer from misfortune. But it is different in **yang** residences. Position **si** is the location of happiness, suitable for an internal room; position **bing** is suitable for a door, warehouse or cow shed; position **kun**, as the location of the dragon’s intestines, is suitable for a byre or horse stable.

What I have introduced in this section is only the most basic principles and concepts provide in two **fengshui** manuals.\(^84\) This is by no means to generalise the principles in different **fengshui** works. Viewing these basic **fengshui** principles, we can see that the essence of **fengshui** ideas is about **fortune**. Its application is about the adaptation of the **residence/inhabitation** for the living or dead. They connect one’s **residence** with one’s fortune and even one’s descendants’ future. Just these two salient common characteristics have created the countless manuscripts and innumerable theories which are categorised under the title of **fengshui**. Therefore **fengshui** can be identified as the use of a body of theory with a batch of **distinctive** methods and theories for selecting the topographical or architectural surroundings of a building site or adapting an existing residential form (for either the living or the dead), for the purpose of improving one’s (or his descendants’) fortune. By “distinctive” I mean that **fengshui** practitioners identify the relationship between man and his surroundings by means of applying their own esoteric theories, with the belief that the selection of influences on the house or grave could affect the fortune of the owner and his descendants. Its explanatory system relates to the Chinese cosmology, theories of death and the soul, ancestor worship, notions of **qi** and the correspondence between Nature and Man, or, more precisely, Earth and Man.

In terms of social function, **fengshui** ideas were not always used in divination or prediction, but also as a religious language to analyse or interpret building activity related phenomena in social life; or its terms or theories were used to assess topographical surroundings or landscape in terms or aesthetic beauty. But fundamentally, **fengshui** was a art or practical technique regarding selecting or sometimes creating residential or burial surroundings. Thus no matter how mysterious **fengshui** may seem, the fundamental distinctions of its theories are:

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\(^84\) A comprehensive outline of the theories and concepts of **fengshui** has been produced by Feuchtwang (1974).
firstly, the purpose of fengshui is to help improve the fortune of both the householder and his descendants (even the descendants of the buried); secondly, the field to which fengshui is applied is the adaptation (in both siting and building) of the residences of the living and the dead. No fengshui idea or language ever leaves the theme associated with fortune.

2.3 THE MAIN SCHOOLS AND CONCEPTS

2.3.1 The Two Main Schools

After the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), the two main schools of fengshui, the Liqi School and the Xingshi School were formed. The distinctive principles of the two schools were summarised by a late Yuan and early Ming writer Wang Yi (1322-1373) in his Qingyan Conglu:

In later times those who advocated the art of dili divided into two schools. One is called the Zongmiao 宗廟 (lit. "Ancestral Temple") method, which began in Minzhong 閩中 (the central area of present-day Fujian). Its origins go far back, but with Wang Ji of the Song it gained great currency. Its theory focuses on the Planets and the Trigrams (xinggua 八卦), and on the yang positions (shan 山) and directions (xiang 向), and the yin positions and directions, so that they are not at odds. By means of exclusive reliance on the Five Planets (wuxing 五星) and the Eight Trigrams (bagua 八卦), the order of production and conquest is determined. Its doctrine is circulating in Zhejiang, but those who presently employ it are very few. (The other) one is called the Jiangxi 江西 method, starting with Yang Yunsong and Zeng Wenchan, and especially refined by Lai Dayou and Xie Ziyi. Its theory focuses on landforms and terrains (xingshi 形勢), and on tracing back where they arise from and pursuing where they stop so as to determine position and direction. Special attention is paid to the co-ordinations of the long 龍 (lit. "dragon"), xue 穴 (lit. "cave" or "hollow"), sha 砂 (lit. "sand") and shui 水 (lit. "water"), whereas other limitations and restraints are not considered at all. Its doctrine is current nowadays, and both south and north of the River (Yangzi), everyone follows it. (Translated by Xu Yinong 1996:277)

The former school laid stress on analysis with reference to the cosmological symbols, such as those of the Eight Diagrams, the Five Elements, the Heavenly Stems and the

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85 Xu Yinong (1996:277 notes 429) explains:

The Five Planets correspond to the Five Elements and all their correlates. This correspondence is depicted in the Shi Ji (vol. 27: "Tianguan Shu," no. 5) as associated with that between Heaven and Earth: "In the sky there are the Five Planets, on Earth there are the Five Elements. Thus in the sky there are arrays of stars and planets, and on Earth there are the separate territories."
Earthly Branches, which were included on the compass, which is regarded by Feuchtwang (1974:96) as “the most complete and comprehensive single body of feng-shui symbols.” It was thus known as the Liqi 理气 (lit. “principles and cosmic breath”) School or the Fangwei 方位 (lit. “orientations and locations”) School. It was also called the Fujian School since it was popular in that area. It inherited many ideas and methods from the previous tuzhai or kanyu schools of the Han dynasty. The theory in Zhaijing can be seen as representative of this school. Since the elaborate symbols used in fengshui theory are the characteristic archetypes of Chinese cosmology, the application of these symbols, without esoteric fengshui methods for the purpose of maximising good fortune, in the planning of cities is not necessarily, always to be seen as an application of fengshui. (Figure 2-3)

The latter, on the other hand, emphasised the forms of the landscape. Since its theories were centred on the concepts of xing 形 (lit. “forms”) and shi 勢 (lit. “dynamic terrains”), it was thus named the Xingshi 形勢 School or Luantou 烏頭 (lit. “mountains”) School. It was also called the Jiangxi School since it was popular in that area. Its ideas of examining the landforms were associated with the xingfa school of the Han dynasty. These two schools are called “Cosmology” and “Earthly Forms” by Feuchtwang and recognised as those of “Directions” and “Shapes” by March (1968:263):

The emphasis on direct experience - the immediate response to the whole feeling of a place - belongs especially to the Shapes school, which seems to have been the more aesthetic, prestigious, and orthodox. The Directions school may be more magical and superstitious but at the same time, relying less on subjective experience and more on the indications of the compass, it is more proto-scientific in the Western sense: the principles may be occult, but the application could be more nearly uniform and objective. Directions, I suspect, could recommend more places than met the exacting requirements of Shapes, and hence may have been more practical for ordinary poor people.

The relationship between the two schools is complicated. On the one hand, they are distinct from, and sometimes in fierce opposition to, each other.86 Ding Ruipu 丁芮樸 of the Qing dynasty points out in his Fengshui Qugan 風水祛感:

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86 The opposition between the two schools has also been noted by Xu (1996:279, n 433), who points out that obstinate rejection of the latter school [Liqi] is also found in the “Dishu Zhengxie Bian 地書正邪辨” section of Bianlun Sanshipian written by Meng Hao, incorporated in his Xuexin Fu Zhengjie produced around 1680, where he branded all discourses of the Liqi school as “heresies.” Meng implies in another section, “Luantou Tianxing Liqi Bian 剃頭天星理氣辨,” of his work, only if
The art of **fengshui** is mainly included in the two schools of Xingshi and Liqi. Those who stress xingshi are nowadays known as the Luantou [school], while those who emphasise fangwei 方位 (lit. “orientation and position”) are known as the Liqi [school]. Since the Tang and Song dynasties, they have both only been passed on to their own successors, without any mixing between them. (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:8)

On the other hand, the two schools infiltrated, and absorbed some ingredients from, each other. For example, in **Guanshi Dili Zhimeng** (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator), a classic of the Xingshi School, the cosmological symbols were used to determine sites. In **Yangzhai Shishu**, a classic of the Liqi School, there was a section about the house shape and topographic image. The mixing of different methods and theories of **fengshui** was prevalent in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

**Fengshui** theories are not invariable, since different ideas for it originated in different historical contexts. Countless new methods, which may have mixed with, or derived from, other field of arts and beliefs, were invented. The whole theoretical apparatus of **fengshui** became extremely vast and varied, as the following examples show. Miu Xiyong 繆希雍, a doctor of the Ming dynasty, applied many concepts of Chinese medicine, such as those of qi 氣, mai 脈 (vein), puomian 破面 (face injury), lousai 漏腮 (cheek fistula), to **fengshui** in his book **Zangjing Yi 葬經翼** (Wings of the Burial Classic). He classified the earth vein into huan 缓 (slow), ji 急 (fast), 硬 (hard), 敷 (soft), xu 虚 (weak), just as in the diagnostic technique used in traditional Chinese medicine. *(KYJC vol. 2, 96-127)* Another example is that some **fengshui** works took the mountain range as a lineage-like system based on patriarchal clan conceptions. Like a tree, the mountain range was classified into main trunks, secondary trunks and branches. The mountain from where all the trunks derived was called zushan 祖山 (ancestor mountain), followed by the shaozushan 少祖山 (younger ancestor mountain) along the longmai (mountain range), and so on. Finally, via the fumushan 父母山 (parents mountain), the longmai reached the (youngest) mountain, where the site was supposed to be. The most ancestral mountain was believed to be the Kunlun 山 Mountain and all the mountains in China were held to extend from it. Such a theory gave the mountains an order, the same order as that of patriarchal society in late imperial China, and made the mountain system co-ordinate with the society. *(Kanyu Manxing (Agreeable Geomantic Aphorisms) 堪舆漫興)*

regarded and treated, not as a set of ideas separate from that of the Xingshi school, but as an inferior part of Xingshi theory.
It should be recognised here that among these two main schools, many sub-schools or derivative theories can be found in the fengshui manuals, especially those of the later times, as the following example illustrates. While the mountain was personified as dragon by the main body of fengshui works, a few came up with the new theory of taking water as the “dragon.” (Zhang Rongming 1994:30) This new approach may be called “water dragon” theory, or the Water Dragon School. Here is a fragment of a complaint made by the Water Dragon School:

Mountain and water have been the two shenqi 神器 (lit. “sacred subjects”) since the origination of Heaven and Earth. One is yang, the other being yin; one is hard, the other being soft; one is still, the other floating. Each one has its own duty, just as Heaven forever covers Earth. The previous dilijia 辰理家 (geomancers) did not know this essential idea of the universe, and only took the mountain as the dragon, and neglecting the water. Even those who talk about the methods of examining water hold only that the mountain is the dominant subject and that the water serves as an assistant, just like the soldier obeys the general’s order or the wife serves husband. This [phenomenon] has made the mountain hold the leading role over the water in (fengshui) practice, so that practitioners miss the truth of the “water dragon” by following the “mountain dragon” nonsense, even when siting in a plain area of rivers and lakes [where there is no mountain at all]. There is nobody who knows [the importance of the waters], and it is just as if the whole world is deaf. . . . At the very beginning of the universe, there was only qi. Water came the very next. The dregs deposited in the water became earth. The earth formed the mountain after the water ebbed. So the mountain looks solid and the water has the feature of floating. The Jing (Burial Classic) says: Qi is the mother of water, water is the son of qi. (Michuan Shuilong Jing 密傳水龍經, translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:30)

The Water Dragon School held that the water is even more important than the mountain. As it is said in Qingnang Haijiao Jing:

When the site is located on a mountain, the fortune depends on the water. So the method of selecting a site should be based on consideration of the water. The mountain is like a wife, and the water is like a husband. The wife’s fortune depends on the husband’s career. For instance, there is no mountain in the central plain [of China], but the heroes come forth generation after generation in large numbers. Why? The water is the most important factor. Thus it has been said that one should take the mountain as the decisive factor if only the mountain is available, and take the water as the decisive factor if there is no mountain nearby. (KYJC vol. 1, 83)

According to this, the order of the formation of the universe is as follows: qi forms water, water forms earth and earth becomes mountain. The “Water Dragon School”
tried to play down the “Mountain Dragon School” from such a cosmological angle. As Needham (1962:300) has noticed: “The Ming and Chhing literature on geomancy is, however, extremely confused, and seemingly became more and more so as time went on.”

There were also numerous ideas and beliefs which could be categorised under the title of *fengshui* but which were apparently not in accord with either of the two schools. On this phenomenon, Feuchtwang (1974:171) writes:

The great bulk of evidence of these random symbols is in records, not in manuals. From this we may deduce that their inclusion in feng-shui interpretations is on a quite different plan from those symbols which form the discourse of the manuals. With the former we are at the most inexpert and popular level of interpretation. Anything the physical environment suggests to you may become significant in the light of appropriate circumstances. The suggestion itself is indeed probably first evoked by those circumstances. . . . On the other hand, the specifically feng-shui symbols . . . occur in any circumstances. Unlike the extraneous symbols, they exist before the specific case. Each case must be interpreted according to at least their crudest principles . . . whereas the case itself suggests the extraneous symbols.

Let us take *Yangzhai Shishu* 陽宅十書 as an example to see how intricate the instructions are:

For a house, the water running by its left side is called green dragon; the long road passing by its right side is called white tiger; the water pool in front of it is called red finch and the hill at its back is called *xuanwu* (tortoise and snake). Such a layout pattern is perfect.

For a house, if its east part is higher than its west part, the owners will be rich and heroic; if its front part is higher than its rear part, the owners will be without offspring; if its rear part is higher than its front, the owner will acquire many more domestic animals.

For a house, it is bad to face a valley; it is bad to adjoin temples; it is bad to be near government offices; it is bad to be on barren ground; it is bad to be set on a former battlefield; . . . (*KYJC* vol. 2, 191)

There are over a hundred such instructions in this one book alone, and the same is the case in other books. The instructions of the different *fengshui* manuals are not coherent. One readily perceives that the rules and ideas proposed by different works often run counter to each other. The inconsistency is partly caused by the fact that *fengshui* was multi-faceted and derived from many beliefs and practices such as *wangqi* (lit. “qi-surveying,” or “emanation” theory by Wright 1977:54), *xingfa*,

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kanyu and xiangzhai in the Han dynasty. These beliefs and practices came to be integrated under the heading of fengshui, simply because they all referred to the idea of improving of fortune and the adaptation of residence. This was also because of the way fengshui knowledge and skills were handed on has been noticed by Hayes (1985:95):

To the corpus of published handbooks on all the ramifications of feng-shui must be added the perhaps even larger stock — much of it probably now destroyed — of handwritten material. It is certain that over a lifetime’s practice, most specialists would have prepared their own notes, some copied from rare or standard works and their own teachers’ writings, and others based on their own studies and experience. Some of this material would have been passed on to their disciples in turn. Such papers — individual notebooks or even a complete stock of handwritten and printed works — come onto the market occasionally, but, as with all specialist materials, the numbers that appear in this way provide a guide not to their real extent, but only to their nature and content. The reason we cannot estimate the numbers of such manuscript books in existence is that those addressing these different skills were mostly not for general circulation. They were private property, and the information they contained was probably closely guarded.

Since the fengshui theories were commonly elaborated and developed in such a highly individualised way, the contradiction in fengshui manuals are very common. With countless prohibitions and prescriptions elaborated by fengshui practitioners through the ages, the theories and ideas in the manuals even contradicted each other.

Leaving aside the extra complications provided by the varied theories found in the manuals, the main body of fengshui, ideas related to the improving of fortune and the adaptation of residence, and, with or without a fengshui label, can also be found in non-fengshui works and popular legends.87 It is quite common, that a theory, or merely a saying, regarding site selection, recorded in non-fengshui works, may claim to be in accordance with fengshui, but does not in fact correspond to any theories in the fengshui manuals. Many such kinds of ideas, which were associated with fengshui or merely included under the rubric of fengshui, produced by fengshui specialists and people who knew little about fengshui, made fengshui theory boundless. Mixed with popular ideas among the common people, and drawing

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87 It is necessary to emphasise that although today some people still claim to practise fengshui or modern fengshui, particularly in Chinese society, these modern versions are far removed from those recorded in traditional times.
elements from many other disciplines of traditional Chinese thinking, the *fengshui* ideas in general are difficult to be regarded as a coherent theoretical system.

Considering the contradictory nature of *fengshui* theories and the boundless range of the theories associated with it, the term *fengshui* is more like a rubric or heading not denoting any specific theory or method when used without context. It is thus better defined as referring to a loose set of ideas rather than to a unified system of coherent theory. The only aspect shared by the different *fengshui* theories and ideas is the common purpose of improving one’s fortune and field of their application, the residences of the living and the dead. *Fengshui* can be regarded as a body of theory for adapting the residences of the living and the dead so as to improve fortune, but this is only a necessary, not a sufficient, definition. The differences and contradictions between different *fengshui* ideas are so enormous and complicated that few single concepts, such as that of “popular culture,” could possibly encompass so many different ideas and approaches. *Fengshui* is open to a prodigious range of interpretations and has a multiplicity of authorities. It is easy to come to different, contradictory, conclusions when studying its various aspects when taking *fengshui* as a unified and invariable body of theory.

A final note has to be made here. Although hundreds of *fengshui* manuals have been handed down, it is hard to find theory particularly focused on the siting and shaping of the capital city in these manuals, except for a couple of paragraphs, referring only to the mountains and the capital cities of the Ming produced by Liu Ji in the early years of the Ming dynasty. Although it was claimed in *fengshui* works that the capital city was the most important kind of residence, there was no specific *fengshui* work on this topic. It seems that the capital city was never a main subject in *fengshui*.

### 2.3.2 Four Concepts

Since some *fengshui* terms, which are associated with siting among natural surroundings, are used in the interpretations of the location of Beijing, I therefore briefly introduce four *fengshui* concepts, which refer to four practical steps, that is those of *long* 龍, *sha* 砂, *shui* 水 and *xue* 穴. (For more details see Feuchtwang’s extensive studies in 1974.) This is by no means seeking to standardise or generalise the operational procedures of *fengshui*, since different manuals, even different individual practitioners, advocated different procedures in each case.

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88 Liu’s theory will be dealt with in section 3.4.
(1) Long (lit. “dragon,” denoting main mountain ridge)

Long (lit. “dragon”) refers to the ridge of a mountain.89 Shi is the course of a ridge or the power of the dragon. A fengshui practitioner may take “xunlong wangshi 寻龙望势 (seeking the dragon and examining the power)” as his first procedure, since the longmai 龙脉 (mountain ridge) is regarded as the basis of the whole topography investigating procedure of fengshui. All other features and influential elements are largely determined by the “mountain ridge.” For example, where there is a mountain there must be waters, and hillocks only exist in places where there is a mountain ridge, and in the end a proper site for a grave or a house can be appointed with reference to all these features. There are four main points of “seeking the dragon”: one is to investigate where the grand mountain ridge comes from, and where it runs to; the second is to watch where the trunk produces branches and where the main trunk ends. It was believed that qi is only concentrated in a place where the “dragon” stops. If the ridge still extends further and develops instead of ending at that place, it is known as a “passing by dragon,” according to Zangjing, this sort of dragon place is not suitable for a burial. The third is to see whether the ridge has shengqi (vitality). Only at places in which there are clouds and mist, luxuriant vegetation, flowing water and moist soil is there shengqi. The fourth is to observe the shape of the mountain, that is, to see whether the shape of it meets the requirements of fengshui theory or not.90 Some books hold that the mountain shape can be divided into wuxing 五星 (five kinds) and jiuxing 九星 (nine kinds).91

(2) Sha (lit. “sand,” denoting “secondary hillocks”)

Sha refers to the small hillocks around the site. These small hillocks are also called “husha 護砂 (protecting hillocks),” as they play the role of protecting qi. A dragon mountain must have some hillocks beside it to protect it. There are many requirements for ideal hillocks: regarding the overall disposition of the landscape, the hillocks are better laid out range upon range to form a luocheng 隘城 (a city-wall-like enclosure) without many gaps; inside of this luocheng, the central space is

89 Qingnang Haijiao Jing (Green Bag Cape Classics): “On Toutuo Nazi,” in KYJC vol. 1, 68.
90 Guanshi Dili Zhimeng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator); GTJ vol. 655.
91 A method of seeking the dragon was described by Miu Xiyong in Zangjing Yi (Wings of the Burial Classic): “Nanjie Pian Knotty Problems):”

It is necessary to climb up to the highest place, inspect from outside of the area, then observe the opposite side, and observe the left and right sides, then return to the desirable place and make inspection carefully. And then no loss will occur. (KYJC vol. 2, 117)
ideally broad and plentiful. The four symbolic hillocks, namely the Green Dragon, White Tiger, Red Bird and Black Tortoise, should accord with certain general requirements. For instance, the Red Bird (hillock), which is in front of the site, also called chaoshan 朝山 (facing hillock), should be suitable in height and distance. If it is too far away, the qi of the dragon will be dispersed, and plundered. If it is too near, the central space will be too narrow and small. If it is too high, the main ridge will be oppressed. If it is too small, the qi will not be protected. Moreover, the shape of the hill is also taken into consideration, and a desirable chaoshan (facing hillock) should be a smaller hillock with a flat top like a desk, the kind called anshan 案山 (desk hillock). The other protecting hillocks must also meet similar requirements.

(3) Shui (lit. “waters”)

Chashui 查水 (investigating waters) includes examining the water source, and determining whether the water flows through the central area of the site, and the status of the flowing water, and, most importantly, the location of the shuikou 水口 (lit. “water mouth,” referring to the place where the water flows to). The two previous steps of examining the mountain are possibly omitted by the Liqi School, for the location of the “water mouth” is regarded as the decisive factor, and the means used to determine it is the compass. Since there is no agreement in fengshui manuals on determining the location of the “water mouth,” different manuals hold to different principles.

(4) Xue (lit. “cave or hollow,” denoting a precise location)

According to Qingnang Haijiao Jing (Green Bag Cape Classics), to point out a precise point and orientation of a selected site is the last step of the whole procedure of siting. Before doing that, one has to distinguish the yin or yang nature of the dragon (mountain). One of the two ways of determining the yin and yang of the dragon is by the compass. The second method is to determine “pure” and “miscellaneous” dragon ridges. (cf. Liu Xiaoming, 1994:17) There are three main parts to the site selection. One is to determine the location by moving the compass about a proposed site to see which point matches the requirements of the “water mouth” and dragon ridge most accurately. The spot which the compass finally

92 In Huang Miaoying’s Boshan Plan, the theory about water-courses goes: “A large area of water with plenty of inflow is the rich pattern of water: A water-course that drifts twisting and round the site is the noble pattern of water; A water that comes directly and floats straight away is the most degrading pattern of water.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:27)
locates is the *xue*. The second is to determine the orientation of the grave or house. Each *fengshui* practitioner will proceed according to his own will. Those believing in the Xingshi School, which emphasises *xing* (topography), take the direction facing the *chaoshan*; those of the Liji School choose the direction pointed out by a compass. The third step is to mark the location by putting lime on the place selected for the grave, as a mark, and sometimes certain rites are involved. (cf. Liu Xiaoming, 1994:18-9)

It may seem difficult to find a site that meets all these requirements in actual practice, yet in reality, *fengshui* is flexible in application. For example, according to *Qingnang Haijiao Jing* (*Green Bag Cape Classic*), if there are no hillocks on flat ground, the first two procedures are abandoned, and one should start from the third step — examining water. *Fengshui* holds that it is good to have both waters and hills, but if there is no hill, water can also do the job by carrying on the functions of the mountain in *fengshui*. (*GTJ* vol. 654) In the north of China, where there is sometimes no water, "a place one *cun* ½ higher will be taken as hill, a place one *cun* lower will be taken as water."

### 2.4 FENGSHUI AS SEEN BY THE ELITE

As part of the background to the analysis of the building of the city of Beijing, the position of *fengshui* in the imperial cultural hierarchy needs to be analysed. The attitude of people who participated in the siting and planning of the city — as the force that converted ideology into a substantial capital city — towards *fengshui* should be a key aspect to our understanding of the role of *fengshui* in capital city building. Clearly not all social groups had the right to participate in capital city building at the planning stage. Only emperors and high ranking scholar-officials could have a say in this matter. The emperor himself was usually involved in the capital city building in that he made some decision or aired some views, or in various other ways. 93 The persons entrusted to be in charge of the general planning and the whole construction, were usually scholar officials such as the ministers. No other kind of professional planner or designer as in the building of a modern city, is

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93 For instance, in building the capital Pingcheng, the imperial edict says (477 A.D.): “To conduct such a great construction, real experts are needed. Prime Minister Li Chong is erudite and of bold vision, and is to be appointed as the general designer (*dajiang*); Minister Mu Liang is to assist him. Once the old palaces have been demolished and before the start of building of the new palaces, I, the sovereign, will give guidance by personally attending.” (translated from *Lidai Zhaijing Ji* vol.14: “Yunzhong”).

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mentioned in the record of the construction of the imperial capital. Thus the emperor and the scholar officials, whose attitude towards fengshui was quite different from that of the populace, had the most significant roles in the building of Beijing. The emperor, having supreme authority, the essential quality that distinguished him from other members of society, affected the culture from a level wholly above all others. Unlike those beneath him, the emperor “owned” the empire. He could acquire and dispose of land, life and property at will. However, since only a couple of emperors are involved in this study, I will not treat them as a separate group here. Here my analysis therefore focuses on the scholar officials.

The scholar-officials, who had the managerial role over the whole of imperial society, were the main body of the elite of imperial China. Not only had they the right to plan and manage the city, they also composed most of the influential literary and historical works, and their attitude toward fengshui was most crucial to the influence of fengshui on both the building and the understanding of the city. Since the bureaucratic system of imperial China was based on the imperial examination system, and has been termed by Johnson (1985:48) a “grammatocracy — rule by the learned,” the rank and education level of an official were assumed, ideally, to correspond to each other precisely. This implies that educational level was the crucial element for the classification of society. The members of society could generally be divided into two groups on the criterion of education: (1) classically educated scholars on the one hand, and (2) the populace, including the non-classically educated (semi-educated or less educated) literate and the illiterate, on the other. What I mean by classically educated includes the intellectuals who received a systematic literary and moral education centered on the Confucian classics. Most of them were trained in guanxue 官学 (official schools) or sishu 私学 (private schools). An explicit (but not the only) standard for the classically educated was to pass the imperial literary examinations. These classically educated men, in particular the scholar-officials, are the ones to whom the term elite refers in this thesis. Since such classification is only a means for, not the purpose of, my research, I will not unnecessarily complicate matters by giving further social analysis group by group.94

94 David Johnson (1985) has presented a social classification of late imperial China according to education, social privilege, dialect, gender and other criteria. Johnson’s classification is important, but does not help the discussion of this thesis as it is limited in two respects. Firstly, we know almost nothing about some groups owing to the lack of historical materials and records. Secondly, the main topic in his discussion merely underlines the elite’s attitudes. Since my subject is the relationship between Beijing and fengshui, rather than a thorough analysis of the attitudes of all social groups toward fengshui, and even though it is an interesting and significant topic, a general social
In this section I will provide a general analysis of the elite’s general attitude towards fengshui in general, and also briefly introduce the attitude of the populace.

The writings of the elite were decisive in the perpetration of ideology, advocacy of doctrine and recording of events and ideas. Consequently, the attitudes of the elite towards fengshui determined the status of fengshui in the culture. Although imperial society tolerated the existence of different schools of thought and beliefs, from, for instance, Buddhism to fengshui, we should not assume that all the systems of thought were accorded the same orthodox esteem. There was a hierarchy to the various kinds of thinking. Some doctrines such as Confucian thought became the foundation of the imperial ideology, while other beliefs and idea-systems were deemed non-orthodox, or were excluded from the main stream of culture or of elite culture. Confucianism played the leading role in traditional Chinese culture. By contrast, fengshui theories or ideas never became a legitimate orthodox belief system or ideology. This point can be demonstrated simply by the fact that no fengshui work was included in the highly influential Thirteen Classics of Confucianism. 

Siku Quanshu 四庫全書 (Complete Imperial Encyclopaedia of the Four Grand Categories) compiled in the Qing dynasty has four sections: “Jing 經 (classics),” “Shi 史 (history),” “Zi 子 (schools of thought or theory)” and “Ji 集 (art).” Only the Thirteen Classics were included amongst the jing (classics). Fengshui works were recorded only in the zi section. In some leishu 類書 (reference books with material taken from various sources and arranged according to subjects), fengshui, if mentioned, was always in the category of shushu 數術 (arts) together with other arts, such as fortune-telling, physiognomy, and so on. There is no doubt that only those works revered as classics can properly represent the thought-systems or ideologies which were held in esteem by the elite. Having throughout history never reached a position comparable with the classics, “fengshui and the ‘emanation’ theory associated with it did not become an integral part of the dominant Confucian ideology or of its sub-ideology of the city.”
(Wright 1977:55) That is our basic understanding of the position of fengshui theory in the culture system of imperial China.

Although fengshui was never accorded the same status as Confucianism and other cosmological thought-systems by the elite group, attitudes of individual members of the elite towards fengshui varied. The elite demonstrated a range of attitudes to fengshui, including being fiercely critical, ignorant, supportive and ambivalent. As their attitudes differed so greatly, any assertion that the elite believed or did not believe in fengshui would not be helpful. I will attempt instead to present the main aspects of the attitude of the majority of the elite towards fengshui.

Many outstanding scholars fiercely criticised fengshui throughout history. According to Needham (1956:360), and Shi Zhen (1992:11-24), the earliest on record was Wang Chong of the Han dynasty. In his essay *Bozang* (criticising burial), when comparing lavish and simple burials Wang says: “after a man’s death, even a miraculous sorcerer like Wu Xian cannot bring him back to life. Hence, after death and when the qi is gone, there’s no help to be had for it. Knowing this, why should we need a generous burial? A most simple burial is enough.” In his essay *Sihui* (four taboos) Wang refutes four kinds of taboo which were popular in the Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.). One of the taboos was to avoid expanding a house westward. (KYJC vol. 2, 302) In his essays *Jianshi* (criticising the taboo of time) and *Nansui* (questioning the Taisui; 雲紀的) the taboo of Taisui is attacked. In his *Jiri* (criticising the taboo of date) he denounced the method of selecting the orientation of a house according to the owner’s name. (He Xiaoxin 1995:205-08)

Ji Kang 姜康 (223-262 A.D.), a thinker and musician of the Jin dynasty, wrote two essays criticising fengshui theory: *Nan Zhai Wu Jixiong Shesheng Lun* 雲宅無吉凶論 (Questioning the Theory that his House Affects Man’s Luck) and *Dashi Nan Zhai Wu Jixiong Shesheng Lun* 答釋雲宅無吉凶論 (Answering Questions on the Theory of his House Affecting Man’s Luck). In the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) Lü Cai 吕才 (600?-665), a scholar who opposed belief in Heaven, fate

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95 A miraculous sorcerer in legend.
96 A famous doctor in the Warrior States period.
and other ideas of the supernatural, criticised *fengshui* theory on the basis of the Confucian concept of *li* (rites), which is found in the Classics, maintaining that the people of ancient times and the pre-Qin dynasties (16th c.-221 B.C.) did not believe *fengshui*. (Needham 1956:387) In the Song dynasty, Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) was the most well known scholar to criticise *fengshui*. In one of his memorials to the throne, he tried to persuade the emperor, who was looking for another place to bury his predecessor, not to be affected by *fengshui* ideas, which he believed to come from the uneducated (*yufu* 愚夫). Sima presented some disadvantages of the measures used in deciding a burial place: “Such a great event should follow the ancestors’ ritual tradition. As for *Zangshu* (Burial Book), it is merely the ideas of street gossip. The officials who are in charge of astronomical and *yin yang* affairs, are all *shijing yufu* 市井愚夫 [lit. ‘stupid people who are only fit to wander in the marketplace’].” Another disadvantage of *fengshui* methods was that they would tire the people and drain the treasury. He also tried to demonstrate that *fengshui* ideas were nonsensical by presenting the burial events of his own family, which were not according to *fengshui*, in *Lunzang* 讀葬 (On Burial). Zhao Fang and Xie Yingfang 謝應芳. (1340-1360),97 Zhu Zhenheng 朱震亨 (1281-1358) of the Yuan, Hu Han 胡翰, Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), Lang Ying 郎瑛 and Xiang Qiao 項喬 of the Ming were also criticised *fengshui*. (He Xiaoxin 1995:204-15)

Tang Shunzhi’s 唐順之 (1507-1560) criticism of *fengshui* shows both how popular and problematic *fengshui* had become in the Ming dynasty:

> Among the schools of divination, the most flourishing one is called *kanyu*. It insolently talks about Heaven and wantonly divides up Earth. It also willfully disorganises and distorts the theory of the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams. There are many bizarre sayings in it, but people greatly revere it. . . . Since this school became popular, it has caused many ridiculous phenomena, such as some descendants suspending the burials of their elder generation while waiting for a auspicious site and propitious date. With this waiting than can last for years, it is usually unavoidable that the corpse will be ruined in some accident. Other people have dug up their ancestors’ corpses buried decades ago and moved their graves several times without good reason, such as a landslide or flood. What is more, in the area of Yuzhang 豫章 people steal good land for burials, it often leading to endless fighting and killing. (translated from KYJC vol. 2, 362)

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97 Xie made a whole collection of anti-superstitious material in his *Bianhuo Lun* (Disputations on Doubtful Matters), in which geomancy was fiercely attacked. (Needham 1956:389)
From such texts, although we can not be certain of the full extent of fengshui belief, it seems that it was more popular than other types of divination. It may have become an indispensable component of burial practice in some region.

All these criticisms show a tradition of scepticism on the part of the elite towards what they regarded as superstition. It also shows how the development of fengshui has always been accompanied by criticism. Whether or not these critical stances represent the views of the majority of the elite, we can see that fengshui and Confucianism were in conflict at an ideological level, as the grounds for these criticisms were the doctrines of the Confucian Classics. The main targets of the criticisms were that it is possible to improve your fortune through fengshui practice. Confucianism advocates that one follows the will of Heaven. By contrast, the central idea of fengshui is to reset the fate determined by Heaven. According to March (1968:265): “The gravest philosophical objection to geomancy was, similarly, that it lacked filial piety toward Heaven with its belief that man can make his own destiny by manipulating the blind natural forces whose evolutions should be left to Heaven. ‘Death and life have a doom, wealth and honour are from Heaven,’ says Confucius; but according to the Burial Book one can ‘snatch spiritual efficacy’ and ‘alter Heaven’s doom [destiny] [duoshengong gaitianming 奪神工，改天命].’” Fengshui was despised by many of the elite because it sought to overturn the divine order.98

98 Richard J. Smith (1990:302) writes on the criticism on fengshui in the Qing dynasty:

Although they enjoyed comparatively high status in Ch’ing society, they received persistent criticism from certain members of the orthodox Chinese elite. These criticisms were not, however, directed primarily against the general theory of feng-shui, for all levels of society accepted its basic cosmological assumptions. Rather, the Confucian literati objected to the practice of geomancy, which generated social tensions, often led to delayed burials (a serious breach of mourning ritual), and involved the manipulation of the Chinese masses by agents who were not generally part of the orthodox elite. This latter concern seems to have motivated much elite criticism of popular religious practice in traditional China, for ritual specialization could all to easily be turned to heterodox purposes.

On the “cosmological assumptions,” Smith (ibid.), when emphasising that the theory and practice of divination was practised by the elite and the villagers in different forms, writes:

In many respects, traditional Chinese cosmology was extraordinarily complex, with intersecting Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist notions of destiny and Heavenly retribution. But virtually all sectors of Chinese society accepted certain basic assumptions about the workings of the universe. Perhaps the most important of these was that man could know, and to some extent influence, fate [ming]. This accounts for the universal Chinese interest in divination during traditional times. And despite the vast range of divination practices in China, the majority of Chinese divining systems were based on the same cosmological principles as were embodied in feng-shui calculations.

He has clearly distinguished the cosmological principles and fengshui. What I need to emphasise is that the idea of “to influence fate” is stressed in fengshui more than “to know” the nature or the working of the universe. However, no matter how many cosmological principles are shared,
This indicates by no means that the imperial scholars regarded the destiny set by Heaven was unchangeable. They did believe the transferring of the Mandate of Heaven, which could be resulted by the ruler’s moral unworthiness, but not the geomantic magic. Bodde (1981:99) has discussed the elaboration of the theory of “tianming:”

Certainly there seems no doubt that T’ien [Heaven] was a Chou and not a Shang divinity, and that the Chou were the creators of the important political theory known as that this theory was used as political propaganda by the Chou to justify their overthrow of the Shang Dynasty. Their claim was that they had supplanted the Shang because of the latter’s moral unworthiness, and that Heaven had therefore transferred its Ming or Mandate to themselves, thus giving them the divine right to rule. This theory, however, proved to be double-edged, for it involved the idea that the Mandate does not necessarily remain “eternal.” That is to say, should its holders at any time prove to be incompetent, it could quite conceivably be transferred by Heaven to yet another ruling house. As later elaborated by the scholar-bureaucrats of imperial China, this idea was to become an important instrument for criticizing the ruler and thus strengthening their own influence. It has been repeatedly invoked to justify the many changes of dynasty in Chinese history, and is still perpetuated in the present Chinese term for revolution, ko ming, which literally means “transferring the Mandate.”

Confucian values and fengshui belief are ideologically distinguished as Wiens (1990:252) does in a case study:

The concept of “Heaven-ordained fate” (t’ien-ming) and the belief in geomancy, which was closely associated with ancestral burial sites, strengthened the tenant/servants’ ties to their landlords. Confucian values and popular beliefs, sustained by lineage authorities and benevolence, seem to have reconciled the tenant/servants to their lot.

I argue that the Confucian elite’s criticism was not only targeting the fengshui practice, but mostly on the fengshui philosophy of “changing the Heavenly determined destiny” which was not a “cosmological assumption” shared by most of the elite.

99 Virtual was the central theme of the Confucian conception of the Heaven’s destiny. Tillman (1987: 31-2) discusses that during the Song renaissance of Confucianism, the concept of principle (li) largely eclipsed the conventional one of Heaven (tian). The brothers Cheng Hao (1032-85) and Cheng Yi (1033-1107) innovated when they asserted that tian, destiny (ming) and the Confucian Way (dao) were actually no more than various names for the system of cosmic principles. After Confucius (551-479 B.C.) had largely transformed the anthropomorphic tian (lit. “Heaven”) as seen in pre-Confucian passages in the Shu Jing (Book of Documents) and Shi Jing (Book of Songs) into a tian of moral reality, Zhu Xi (1130-1200) transformed the traditional Confucian thinking based on tian into a more rational and metaphysical philosophy. On the basis of Mencius’ idea that man’s nature is essentially one of ren (humanity) and is endowed by the Mandate of Heaven, Zhu Xi asserted that man receives this “mind” of Heaven and Earth as his mind, and that the individual may attain the full exercise of this ren by cultivating virtue in himself. (op. cit. 49) Zhu’s “celebration of the life-giving force in t’ien could also be seen as another supplemental ground for hope in the efficacy of one’s moral cultivation.
At the other extreme, many classically educated men were familiar with and involved in *fengshui* practice in their private life. This is evident in a story told in Wu Jingzi’s *Rulin Waishi* (Unofficial History of the Scholar Class vol. 44). A member of the elite Shi Er intended to move his ancestral grave so as to gain good fortune. He not only kept a geomancer in his household, but also made friends with a large number of other geomancers. Against his expectations, they all put forward their own ideas, without any compromise, and were unable to reach a decision. Finally, Shi Er was struck blind while moving the coffin to a new site. Even so, he still believed in geomancy, and took the accident to be his own fault. On the other hand, the author Wu Jingzi expresses his disapproval of *fengshui*, using another character, an elite Du Shaoqing in the story to say: “The government should establish a law about such matters. In every case of somebody wanting to move a grave, let him submit a written document to the court. On the document, the geomancer should write down how much water there is in the grave, and how many ants there are on the coffin. After the grave has been dug, if he is right, let him go; if not, a headman tending the site should then cut off the bastard’s head at once. As for the man who wanted to move the grave, put him to death by dismembering, according to the relevant items of law on murdering parents.” This story provided two examples of how the elite regarded *fengshui*: one blindly believing, in spite of evidence to the contrary; the other censuring the practice. In another novel, *Qilu Deng* (The Lamp on Forked Road), written by Li Guanhai 李觀海 (1707-1790), the leading character Tan Shaowen 譚少文 wasted most of the family wealth by becoming addicted to gambling instead of pursuing learning. In order to restore the family business and property, he planned to move his ancestral grave and consult a geomancer to that end. The author wrote a poem sneering at Tan’s behaviour:

> Listening to a wizard’s nonsense without a thought,  
> [He] turns to old skeletons in the ancestral grave.  
> Even if [he] may be rich and honoured in the future,  
> What about his gambling debt of the moment?

Just before Tan carried out his plan, an elder scholar gave him a lesson: “There are no books as detailed on good or ill luck as *Book of Changes*. In this book it is said for it implied that nature in the self and nature in the cosmos were ultimately one and the same.” (ibid.)

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100 This story from the *Rulin Waishi* and the next story from *Qilu Deng* are two of the examples of the disapproval of *fengshui* in the novels in the Ming are given by He Xiaoxin (1995:140-142, 219-220).
that all good luck is related to modest and prudent behaviour, and ill luck is related to arrogant behaviour and the inclination to wicked ideas. This book has been bequeathed to us by the Four Sages. Is there any saying about diaoxiang 調向 (lit. ‘adjusting the orientation,’ a fengshui term) to get good luck or otherwise suffering ill luck, in this classic?..." Then in a long speech he critiques fengshui by quoting the relevant passages in Confucian Classics such as Shujing 書經 (Book of Documents), Shijing (Book of Songs), Zhouli (Ritual of Zhou), Liji 禮記 (The Book of Rites). (cf. He Xiaoxin 1995:141-142;220 -222)

Such jousting with fengshui should be seen in the context of criticisms of it in the elite’s written works. They reflect an aspect of a fengshui believer’s private life. Certain of the elite, such as Liu Ji, were even involved in the elaboration of fengshui theory. However, scholars who were willing to talk about fengshui on official occasions and in formal works appear to be very rare. The acceptance of fengshui ideas by the elite was limited and conditional. It varied depending on events, topics, and contexts in which it was discussed. Fengshui was likely to be mentioned favourably in connection with grave siting, as in the case of an ancestral grave or the emperor’s tomb. Among them is Zhu Xi, the main founder of the Neo-Confucianism, who discussed certain fengshui theories in a positive manner. What I have to emphasise is that Zhu Xi is exceptional among who constituted the elite throughout history. He submitted an edict, Shanling Yizhuang 山陵議狀 (Document Of Counsel Concerning The Imperial Tombs) about the fengshui of imperial tombs, when he heard that the emperor had called upon top officials to discuss the matter of tomb siting for his (the emperor’s) father:

[We] should find a ji 吉 (good or propitious) site for the tomb to show respect [to the emperor’s father], and chuiyu 布育 (bring luck) to ensuing generations forever. But the shan zhi bu 山之卜 (siting by fengshui) has lasted months without a result and given rise to confused argument. I believe that the reason for this is that only the taishi 臺史 (official who was in charge of the divinatory affairs) is entrusted with the matter, and there is no wide-ranging consultation with other geomancers, [the theories adopted] being confined solely to those of the Tones and Orientation Schools instead of their being a broad investigation of the major mountains ... so that the excellence of the xing shi is hardly going to be discovered. (Zhuzi Daquan 朱子大全, Wenji 文集, vol. 15)

Wright (1977:55) has stated that Zhu Xi “was a particular enthusiast of feng-shui,” but that he was seemingly enthusiastic only about the theory and practice of the Xingshi school, while he vigorously denounced those of the Liqi school. The
belief that the dead may be able to affect their descendants’ fortunes, was also attacked by him. On this topic, Zhu Xi emphasises the significance of the practise of fengshui regarding grave siting more from the Confucian point of view of filial piety:

To bury their ancestors’ or parents’ bodies, the descendants must cherish respect and filial piety to find a secure and long lasting means of burial. If the body is well protected, the spirit [of the dead person] will be in peace, and then the descendants will be prosperous. That is a law of Nature. And that is why the ancient people used bu and shi in siting. (Zhuzi Daquan, Shanling Yizhuang)

As we have seen, fengshui was multi-faceted and derived from many beliefs and practices. Only some of these were acceptable to some of the elite. This situation doubtless led to the ambivalence of the elite towards fengshui as a system. Scholars often showed themselves in ambivalence when fengshui was mentioned. On the one hand, they looked down on fengshui as a part of the culture of the lower classes in conflict with Confucian ideas. On the other hand, they needed to resort to fengshui terms in special cases, for fengshui provided theories regarding topography, and a widely accepted service in funerals. Such an ambiguous attitude towards fengshui is typically revealed in the “Kanyu Section” of Gujin Tushu Jicheng, a collection of historical books edited and assembled by imperial order. All the fengshui works and criticisms in this section are grouped together without general comment, but at least the inclusion of fengshui in this collection reserved a place in the history of imperial culture for fengshui as a school of thought. When fengshui ideas or practitioners of fengshui were mentioned, in most cases the attitude adopted was contemptuous. Even in Zhu Xi’s Shanling Yizhuang, which raises fengshui matters throughout, he says: “Since most officials do not learn such a most base and disreputable craft (cideng weijian zhi moshu 此等猥賤之末術), they cannot pass judgement in this matter.” It is understandable that, as the advocates and defenders of an imperial ideology centred on Confucian thought, the elite should have held attitudes of indifference, scepticism or criticism towards fengshui, as a non-orthodox body of thought. Zhu’s statement also shows that most of the elite were unfamiliar with fengshui theory. 101 We can further surmise that there was likely to be an atmosphere

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101 Jeffrey Meyer (1978:152) argues that: “The language of feng-shui was known to Chinese at all levels of the social hierarchy, from imperial officials and scholars down to the common people who had to have their homes and graves properly placed. None of these knew the language [of fengshui] completely, but they knew enough to understand in part, and to trust those they believed to understand fully, the feng-shui hsien-sheng.” Such a statement is misleading. Not all the elite members would
of deprecation of fengshui in elite circles, for whom any accomplishments in fengshui would not be regarded as particularly honourable.\textsuperscript{102}

This assumption is supported by the evidence that scholar-officials are hardly to be found in the sub-section “Mingliu Liezhuan 名流列傳 (Biographies of Fengshui Masters)” in the “Kanyu Section” of Gujin Tushu Jicheng. Why were famous scholar officials, like Liu Bingzhong and Liu Ji, who are, according to some sources, believed to have been fengshui masters and to have produced works on fengshui, not included in this list of the names of fengshui masters? Maybe the editor believed that the books in question were not written by these scholar officials, but only in their names, a practice sometimes used to gain a better reputation than the books intrinsically deserved. However, another explanation possible is that these scholar-officials probably did write some books about fengshui, but that the writing of such books would not have been appreciated as political or academic achievements, since fengshui was not part of the elite culture and legitimate doctrine and was therefore excluded from official records. To be associated with fengshui may potentially have brought shame on most respectable scholar officials in certain contexts, as there is actually no successful and respected scholar recorded in orthodox works for his fengshui achievements. We may also infer that there was pressure upon them to live up to their positions. A scholar official, in the light of his own circumstances, would probably scorn, or at least pretend to scorn, fengshui to a greater extent than non-governmental scholars. That might be why fengshui was mentioned mostly in biji 筆記 (lit. “notebooks,” a kind of unofficial or casual writings in which scholars express their opinions), rather than in official texts.

\textsuperscript{102} The ambiguous attitude towards fengshui is also noticed by Furth (1990:194) in his study on Jia Xun 家訓 (Household Instructions):

Occasional strictures against hsieh, or heterodox practices, focused on “superstition,” but there were no consistent targets of criticism. A few cast a disapproving eye at the use of Buddhist and Taoist priests in wedding and funeral ceremonies, but the silence of most instructions suggests tolerance of this widespread phenomenon. On the suitability of fengshui geomancy, a subject on which the Confucian establishment was divided, household instructions did not speak with a common voice either.

This ambiguous attitude shows that fengshui was more tolerated by the scholars in their private life and domestic affairs.
Apart from the conflict with Confucian thought, the deprecation of *fengshui* was possibly also caused by the low class status of the *fengshui* practitioner,¹⁰³ and the fact that *fengshui* was more acceptable to the general populace than to the literati. The geomancer with *fengshui* as his occupation was not regarded as a member of the classically educated elite.¹⁰⁴ Freedman, though, holds that the geomancer was "in one sense a part of the elite." (1979b:316) In his discussion of the geomancer's social status, he argues that the geomancer "mediates, then, between the two main strata of Chinese society, the learned (and therefore the bureaucratic) and the common." (1979b:323) He points out that the geomancer "is a kind of literatus; at least he is literate. Therefore he is raised above the common people..." (1979b:329) My own view is that the geomancer cannot be grouped into the society's upper scholarly or bureaucratic elite, who ran the empire in managerial capacities. A common literate or semi-literate who can read *fengshui* manuals should not be counted as a member of the "Confucian elite," as far as it was defined by the imperial examinations.¹⁰⁵

*Fengshui* theory may have been partly contributed to by members of the bureaucratic elite, but the main body of the geomancer fraternity probably consisted of lower class literate or semi-literate persons, since obvious differences of writing style can be found between *fengshui* manuals and the works which were treated as orthodox

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¹⁰³ It was noticed by Eberhard (1962:41) that "soothsayer, geomancer ('the science of maps') and local doctors (i.e., those who have not passed special government examinations by which they qualified as officials) are low-status professions which often were selected by men who wanted to climb socially."

¹⁰⁴ Geomancer is regarded by Eberhard (1962:230) as "half-educated:"

the man from a farmer's family, who had had some chance to learn something, though not enough to be able to compete in the official examination. He could become, for instance, a shaman, ... Or he could become a geomancer, i.e. a person who had some knowledge about where to bury a dead person so that the descendants of the dead would have good luck; or where and how to build a house so that the inhabitants would have good luck. ... As a geomancer he would be self-employed, but many of his customers would be gentry members. In all these cases, he had the opportunity to establish quite close and personal ties with gentry members, closer than any other non-gentry person, and such ties could (and apparently often did) pay off either in terms of cash and wealth, or in terms of opportunities and protection ... This is one of the best and almost the only avenue for farmers' sons to move up into the gentry within two or three generations. But the starting level of these "half-educated" was already above that of the others.

¹⁰⁵ Following Freedman, Meyer (1978:139) considers that the *fengshui* practitioners "were a marginal group, neither a part of the official class nor of the common people, although they were employed by both and the latter treated them with great respect because of their recondite knowledge." He also says: "Geomancers were not members of the Confucian literati class and therefore did not receive the 'approval' of the molders of Chinese tradition, although privately many officials (and emperors) were in fact engaged in *fengshui* and other occult practices. Geomancers belonged neither to the upper class nor to the ordinary people, yet their services were used by both." (1991:44-45)
academic classics. The writing style used in most fengshui works, even the fengshui classics, was often that of popular ballads and of instructive writings catering for the less educated and uneducated in a non-academic style. I assume that the possible causes of this are as follows. Firstly, the manuals may have been written by non-classically educated literate persons, since the classically educated used to pursue a more classical and formal writing style which was the emblem of their educated level and social class. Or, in consideration of their poorly educated potential audience, the authors, who may sometimes have been classically educated, may have deliberately adopted popular or low-class writing styles for their fengshui works. This was to demonstrate that they were writing for a less educated and uneducated audience. Thirdly, the popular and oral style of the fengshui works may show that the source materials for them came from the uneducated. No matter which of these assumptions is correct, fengshui ideas were certainly more acceptable to the uneducated or less educated, who had more exposure to fengshui ideas than the classically educated elite.

I mention in the following passage certain characteristics of popular culture reflected in fengshui practice which possibly also affected fengshui’s position in the hierarchy of culture. The fengshui specialist, who acted as a diviner and consultant in the process, held the decisive role in fengshui practice. Since there were so many diverse and incoherent fengshui manuals, and since the clients normally knew little about fengshui, the geomancer’s personal understanding, if he had one, of the manuals and his judgement was decisive. Thus fengshui practice was a kind of stochastic process depending on the specialist’s individual characteristics. Being mixed with metaphorical and imaginative legends of miracles and the colloquialisms of everyday speech, fengshui often appeared vulgar, improbable or mysterious. In practice fengshui often incorporated belief in ghosts and spirits: spiritual agencies. (Freedman 1979b:324) All these may have contributed to the elite regarding fengshui as witchcraft just as Tang Shunzi 唐順之 (1507-1560) says in his Dili Lun 地理論 (On Dili):

When consulting with the witch (wu 巫), diviner (bu 卜), astrologer (xingxiang 星), fortune-teller (xiang 相) or kanyu specialist about fortune, if what is said is good, even if it is not true, the clients immediately get excited. So these witches are in the business of announcing people’s good luck, bad luck, misfortune and happiness. It sounds ridiculous that one’s fortune can depend on what a witch says, and that people believe it. Why do they? Because man is usually hoping to find ways to avoid his inevitable fate, and thinking about things beyond what he can know. These specialists
convince people by arming themselves with ghosts and spirits. They provide various [explanations], and some of their words will surely come to pass. They carefully elaborate [ambiguous explanations], and some of them are certainly to match the circumstances even by chance. Therefore, those who, cherishing the hope of knowing their fate and things beyond them, consult with witches relying on ghost and spirit, are perhaps greatly deluded. (KYJC vol. 2, 362)

Thus, having the above-mentioned popular characteristics, which ran against the doctrine pursued by the elite, fengshui tended to be seen by the elite as a form of skill, or at least a body of non-orthodox theory, which did not generally appeal to their taste. Although some of them would practise fengshui privately and many others criticised it fiercely, as far as the historiographical texts indicate, the majority of the elite were not willing to talk about fengshui, especially in official situations due to the general atmosphere of exclusion of fengshui. The lack of the elite’s approval of fengshui may not prove that the elite did not believe in fengshui, but the frequency of mention of fengshui possibly indicates a degree of its acceptance among the majority of the elite. If fengshui can be seen as a language, it is not a language that most of the elite were fond of. This resulted in the fact that fengshui ideas were usually paid no attention in imperial affairs, and indulging in fengshui would receive punishment. There was a section of provision in support of the performance of officially ordained rites of mourning at all levels of the society in the Da Ming Lü (Great Ming Code) that pertained to religion. This section of the code on mourning and burial, made it a crime, punishable by eighty strokes of the heavy bamboo, to leave a corpse unburied for year on the excuse that the fengshui

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106 Freedman (1979b:316) derides those who suppose that only common people believed in fengshui. He argues strongly that members of the Confucian elite were also involved in many fengshui practices and shared in many of these “superstitions,” as otherwise, why were the graves of rebels destroyed? Many such events, that both rebels and emperors destroyed each others ancestral graves, can be found in history. Doré (1917: vol. IV 409) has recounted some of them from the Sui dynasty to the Ming. Without checking the original evidence, I can only venture a few tentative opinions on this. It is possible fengshui was one of the reasons for such acts. But there were also many others. The ancestral grave was regarded as important not only in the sense of its fengshui, but most importantly in terms of ancestral worship. Destroying an ancestral grave could be the result of many non-fengshui motivations, such as hatred, punishment, to warn the public, and so on. Even if it was due in part to fengshui reasoning, it still cannot prove that the elite as a group believed in fengshui. Firstly, it is possible that a member of the elite, one who believed in fengshui, suggested doing this deed of destruction, and that the others with him who did not believe in fengshui would probably not have tried to stop him, since they themselves had other motives for doing the same thing. Secondly, it is also possible that being aware of the common people’s interest in fengshui, the officials felt it was a useful measure for giving the rebels and the public a lesson. Finally, another possibility is that in a desperate situation, any available means would have been employed. Threatened by the rebels, and in a desperate mood, even the elite who did not believe in fengshui were likely to turn to means which could be seen as a satisfying revenge in many ways, and not only for fengshui considerations.
determination of the burial site had not yet been completed. (Mote 1998:887) Against such a background, it seems unlikely that fengshui would have been taken by members of the elite as a dominant principle in one of the most important constitutional matters of a dynasty, the planning of the capital city.

At the opposite extreme, fengshui has flourished among the populace.107 Although “geomancy, the pseudoscience of manipulating primal forces in topographical features,” may often have been “pursued by educated and unlettered Chinese alike,” (Rawski 1985:402) the intellectual elite’s and populace’s understandings of fengshui were different. The elite took fengshui as a non-orthodox ideology, a kind of low-class culture derived from the uneducated, and a kind of superstition. The common people may simply have taken fengshui as a kind of truth, a revealing of Nature, it was therefore proper to follow its instructions. The populace had no chance of participating in the planning stage of the capital city. But they were part of the audience for the symbolism of the building of the capital city. To a large degree, the capital city was built to impress them and ensure their loyalty. Common traditional symbols which fengshui also used, were employed in the building, and to this extent, imperial buildings often appear to express fengshui symbolism. To what extent the beliefs of the common people in fengshui were consciously taken into account in city

107 The popularity of fengshui in late imperial China was described by P. P. Thoms in his translation of the Indo-Chinese Gleaner as collected in The Chinese repository (from May 1832 to December 1851) (vol. XX, 90): “The doctrine of the fung-shwui, which inculcates the above superstitious customs, is allowed, by the considerate Chinese, to be one of the most useless that has entered the mind of man; yet this absurd doctrine has taken such a hold of the minds of the simple, that the geomancers are necessary to fix the site of a house, and the position of a grave.” Hayes (1985:109) thinks that “from such abstruse specialist concerns such as geomancy, fortune telling, . . . to the more prosaic requirements of social and community life, specialists were at the core of Chinese society.” Since fengshui was not part of the orthodox ideas intimated mostly by classically educated intellectuals of imperial China, the common peoples’ activities relating to fengshui are rarely recorded in texts. The analyses in this section are therefore based on inference from scant historical data, with some examples drawn from novels written in imperial times. Since this discussion is ultimately based on texts written by imperial scholars, not on archaeological studies or field work, and since almost all the relevant historical texts were written by the elite, it is difficult to avoid the problems caused by the distortion of textual materials when analysing the historical attitudes of the non-elite, although I have tried to consider each author’s personal or class influence on their writing. The examples employed in this section may not stand for the attitudes of all the populace, but they still demonstrate representative characteristics of them. However, Doré (1917: vol. IV 412) provided a interesting popular quatrain in his time in China: “Professors of geomancy are wont to tell nonsense; they point to the South, North, West and East, but if they can really find places in the mountains which produce princely dignities, why then do not they immediately bury their own elders there?” A similar popular rhyme was also translated by Willoughby-Mead (1928:286). Even among the common people, fengshui was often criticised.
planning we may never know, since there would have been no record of this in the historical documents owing to the official disapproval of fengshui.
CHAPTER 3  THE CHOICE OF SITE

Fengshui is believed by some scholars to be one of the major systems involved in the choice of the site of Beijing, while most modern research on the history of Beijing makes little or no mention of fengshui. The evidence of the former is mainly that (1) it was claimed in fengshui manuals that fengshui principles should be applied to the capital city as it was applied to houses and graves; (2) that fengshui terms and theories have been used by both fengshui specialists and imperial scholars in certain interpretations of the location of Beijing; (3) that the geographical and topographical situation of the site is in accord with certain fengshui theories; and (4) that Liu Bingzhong, the designer of Dadu, and Liu Ji, the putative designer of Beijing, two scholar officials, are, according to evidence from traditional non-official sources, considered to have been geomancers. At the same time, some scholars believe that fengshui was only applied retrospectively to the city's location, but they fail to present any comprehensive study in support of this claim. The lack of records of the siting and planning process of Beijing further sustains the disagreement on the role of fengshui in the siting of Beijing. The issue of whether fengshui played a decisive role in the choice of site of Beijing will be investigated in this chapter by analysing the historical circumstances of the siting of the city, in particular whether fengshui was of fundamental interest to the decision-makers in the choice of site of the city.

This chapter is composed of four sections. In the first section, after analysing the choice of site of capital cities in history, especially the choice of the site of Dadu of the Yuan dynasty, I discuss the specific factors that influenced the decision making in the choice of the site of Beijing. I propose that fengshui is not likely to have been considered since it was not one of the many important factors which were seen as crucial by the elite in official or non-official texts. In the second section, the role of fengshui in government projects, particularly in the siting of imperial tombs, is analysed. As fengshui was accepted to different degrees according to the different nature of the construction projects, I argue that in the siting of the capital city,

108 Although fengshui theories on siting and construction of house and grave have been very richly documented, either fengshui theory on imperial capital or the literary evidence of influence of fengshui on the imperial capital were less than those on the other architectural activities in imperial China. There was no evidence showing how the siting and construction was actually carried out, or, if it ever did, to what extent, under the influence of fengshui. Only scattered and very small in number accounts about the merit of the site which match the fengshui principles usually appear in casual notes (biji) or local gazetteers. Most of the available discourses were on the superiority of the site assessed in criteria and terms of fengshui. Since most of their accounts were probably written decades or centuries after the city was constructed, their reliability is very questionable.
fengshui was not tolerated to the same extent as in the siting of tombs. In the third section, I deal with the divinatory terms used in texts regarding the siting of Beijing, which also denoted fengshui in certain contexts. By distinguishing fengshui from the traditional forms of divination used in the siting of the capital city, I suggest that fengshui was not overtly practised, but that the use of terms and concepts shared with fengshui was part of the imperial capital symbolism — imitating the practices of the Zhou dynasty — part of Confucian ideology which usually rejected fengshui ideas. In the final section, I analyse the interpretations of the location of Beijing in terms of fengshui and argue that these analyses were all post hoc and only accepted by a small portion of the elite.

3.1 THE IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE CHOICE OF THE SITE OF BEIJING

According to the available historical records, fengshui, as an art of divination, was not ostensibly practised in the siting of the city, although in some folklore, Liu Ji (Liu Bowen), a scholar official who was regarded as an expert on fengshui, was believed to have been the designer of Beijing. (Jin Shoushen 1982:11) Such legends have even affected the pronouncements of certain careless modern scholars. For instance, George Peng said: “The City of Peking was planned around 1403 A.D. by the Emperor Cheng Tsu and his advisor Liu Po-wen, a geomancer, in the Reign of Yung Lo (1403-1425).” In fact, Liu Ji died in 1375, thirty years prior to the reign of Yongle. (Ming Shi vol. 128) In the information available there are no records of any individuals in charge of the planning of Beijing. Only Xu Da, a general who superintended labour in the construction process, is mentioned. But the decision-makers’ main considerations were presented in the official documents, and a large number of interpretations of the site in unofficial notebooks (biji 筆記). Through analysis of the way that these considerations were recorded, we can differentiate what was primary from what was secondary to the decision-maker and recorder.

3.1.1 The Important Factors Taken into Account in the Choice of the Site of Capitals in History

Historically, the advantages and disadvantages involved in choosing the site of a capital city were usually weighed up by considering the overall, general political, military and economic situation of the tianxia 天下 (lit. “under heaven”, i.e. the world, or China). Even when a dynasty was only occupying a corner of central China, as in the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the scope of its
considerations would not be limited to its own domain. The following examples contain substantial information about how various factors were considered in choosing a site for a capital city. A typical case involving the establishment of the first capital city of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) was recorded in the Shi Ji in the first century B.C.:

[Knowing the emperor was going to choose Luoyang, the former capital of the Zhou, as his capital in order to achieve a prosperity that the Zhou had], Liu Jing 刘敬, a soldier, advised: “The way your majesty obtained the throne was different from that of the Zhou. The Zhou clan... developed themselves and accumulated a reputation for de 德 [virtuous influence] for over ten generations.... When King Wu was going to lead a campaign against King Zhou 羲, all the 800 dukes supported him. After King Cheng ascended the throne, all those who followed Duke Zhou came over [to the Emperor] and pledged allegiance to him. The cities of Chengzhou and Luoyi were built as centres of the world. For paying tribute to the capital, the distances from each duke’s territory [to the capital] were equal. One who would be the king pursues de. As for those deviating from de, they will be exterminated. Those who were ruling from this place were demonstrating that the Zhou was applying de, and not instead relying on topographical advantages to maintain any despotic rule. In the flourishing age of the Zhou, all the states paid respect to the king and there was no need to have any warriors. After the decline of the Zhou, the world split and nobody paid tribute any more, but Zhou could do nothing about it. It was not because Zhou had too little de, but that its xingshi 形势 (military situation or topographical advantage) was weakened.... However, since rising up at Fengpei 豊沛, Your Majesty has conducted countless battles... and killed millions. I do not think it is a good idea to pursue the prosperity of the Zhou while all the damage has yet not been healed. Moreover, Qinchuan 秦川, possessing mountains and rivers as its boundaries is a safe place, with forts on all sides. Once any emergency occurs, it is easy to mobilise millions of soldiers there. Having the richest resources, it has from the Qin dynasty been called “tianfuzhiguo 天府之国 (the land of abundance).” Having it as the capital, if any upheaval takes place in Shandong 山東, you could still hold the whole territory of Qinchuan. As in the case of fighting with a man, you cannot win completely unless you hold his throat and ride on his back. Having a capital city in the Qin location means that you are holding the throat and riding on the back of the world. The emperor asked his officials’ opinion. Since the officials all originated from Shandong, they all objected. The emperor hesitated until Zhang Liang 張良 approved Liu’s idea. Then the emperor and his court immediately set off to Guanzhong 關中. (translated from Shiji: “Liu Jing Zhua”)

In these discussions, the paramount principle is, as noted above, always to weigh the advantage or disadvantage of a site by considering the overall military, economic and topographic situation of the world in which the Chinese lived at the time in question. Sometimes the military or economic aspects are discussed separately, but more often
the term *xingshi* is used to represent all these aspects in a general way. In such contexts, the use of the term *xingshi* referring only to the situation as defined by politics, economy and topography, has nothing to do with *fengshui*.

In the discussions on the siting for capital cities in history, the topographic advantage of a site was particularly emphasised. This pragmatic consideration was often in conflict with a symbolic theme — that of imitating the Zhou by choosing Luoyang, the former capital of the Zhou and believed to be the centre of the world, as the capital. A traditional theory was that “the key to maintaining a capital or ruling the country is to rely on *de* 德 [virtuous cosmic influence] but not topographic advantage [*xian* 隊] [zai de buzai xian 在德不在隊].” A capital located at the centre of the world was an ideal model derived from the Zhou dynasty and was regarded as part of the symbolism legitimising the authority of an empire. After the Zhou dynasty, arguments on the topic of *de* and *xian* occurred again and again throughout history. Liu Jing and Zhang Liang’s arguments show a practical attitude, aiming for utilitarian benefit rather than symbolic expression. While each dynasty declared that its capital was the centre of the world, no matter where the capital was located, it seems that topographical advantage was the uppermost consideration. A similar discussion in the Tang dynasty (618-907) was recorded in Du You’s *Tongdian*:

**Question:** Guanzhong is in the west and transport will cost much if the capital city is there. Luoyang is located in the central [territory], and was often chosen as capital in the Zhou and Han. Any place that the emperor’s chariot can reach can be a capital. Why should we move [to another place] with many difficulties? ...

**Answer:** Time changes, and the *xingshi* [overall situation] has changed as well. Zhou set the capital in Luoyang in its flourishing age, ... Since the Wei and Jin dynasties, there has been more and more unrest in that area. In this dynasty, the ancestor’s temple is located in Xianqin 咸秦 [Guanzhong], where there are millions of warriors and where all the financial resources of the world are gathered. If we choose another place as the capital, it would weaken the empire and expose our weakness to the world. How could the dynasty rule any more? Luoyang, the infertile place declined obviously, and cannot accommodate the thousands of officials [who live in the capital] with their carriages. The request for firewood and food [of the capital] cannot be satisfied. Furthermore, in the event of any vicious attempt against it by enemies, it would not have the topographical advantages for defence that Guanzhong has. ...

**Question:** What about Puban 菏州, the Emperors Yu and Shun’s capital, and Jiangling 江陵? ...
Answer: Puban is a poor place because of its barren land and being limited within the area of Luoyi. Jiangling is not an important military location, the emperor of the Liang 梁 only survived for a few years [after choosing it as capital]. Thus, to control the world, the overall situation must be carefully considered. Qinhuai 秦淮 [Guanzhong] is the most affluent and powerful place in the world (hainen 海内). Besides that, it is where the capital of the Tang was located. If it is chosen as the capital, [we] will have the greatest [military] power (deterrent force) known far and wide. (Tongdian, translated from Lidai Zhaijing Ji: vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

Looking into these texts, we learn that many relevant factors were taken into account. Not only was where the emperor had built up his power considered, but the financial and human resources available, the geographical characteristics and local customs were also taken into account. For example, it was recorded in Liu Xu’s, Jiu Tangshu, Zhu Pu Zhuan 朱樸傳 (edited in 936-946):

In Emperor Zhaozong’s 昭宗 time, Zhu Pu suggested moving the capital: “Jiangnan 江南 cannot be the place for the capital city for the soil is thin and the water is shallow, and the people frivolous, cunning and niggling; Hebei 河北 cannot be built as a capital city either, since the soil is [too] thick there, the water [too] deep, and the people fierce, tough and malicious. Only in Xiang 襄 and Deng 邓 located in the central plain of China are people simple and honest. Since it is close to the former capital of the Qin, . . . it is a perfect place for a capital city.” (translated from Lidai Zhaijing Ji vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

In the history of capital-city building, as shown by these examples, primacy was given in site-selection, planning and construction to pragmatic, practical supply, administrative and defence needs and to the likewise practical systems of imperial symbolism.

3.1.2 The Choice of the Sites of Zhongdu of the Jin and Dadu of the Yuan

Beijing was built on the site of two preceding capitals, Zhongdu of the Jin dynasty, and Dadu of the Yuan dynasty. There was no record to show that fengshui was directly considered in the siting of these two cities. The siting of Zhongdu in the Jin dynasty (1151), was described in Jin Shi (History of the Jin Dynasty), “Shizong Benji” 世宗本紀:

When Emperor Shizong was going to visit Jinlianquans 金蓮川, Liang Xiang 梁襄 presented a memorial to the throne: “In my humble opinion, living in forbidden palaces surrounded by high walls and deep moats is a yoke on the Emperor. A temporary palace without luxury halls, walls and moats will enable the Emperor to rid himself of fetters. Yan is in a strategic location which relies on mountains in the North as a natural barrier and
controls China in the South, just as [one] sitting in the hall of a house looks out at a courtyard. The local people are strong and brave. The doomed Liao was a small country, but since it was occupying the Yan, it was able to control both the north and south till the end of the Song. Therefore Yan is the first choice for the imperial capital. In addition, [in Yan] the palaces and buildings have been splendidly built, the grain and goods are fully stored, and the officials families have already been there for some while. Now it is entirely different from what it was as a secondary capital. Since the Juyong 居庸, Gubei 古北, Songting 松亭, Yulin 榆林 and other passes of the Great Wall, which control the border of thousands of li along the rolling hills, are close to the city, there are benefits for its defence. . . . These advantages are offered by the Heaven to enable the great Jin to establish its ever lasting dynasty. How can we move to the prairie, just to enjoy the cool weather, and neglect the ancestors’ great cause? . . . I implore Your Majesty to return to Zhongdu. It will be the greatest good fortune for the empire and people.” Emperor Shizong then accepted this suggestion. (translated from RJK, vol. 5)

The Jin rulers were persuaded to choose this site by the fact that “the land of Yanjing is vast and fertile, and it is a highly civilised country.” (Dajinguo Zhi 大金國志, translated from RJK, vol. 5)

Since the choice of the site of Dadu directly affected the siting of the Ming dynasty Beijing, the role of fengshui in the siting of Dadu is worthy of analysis. It was recorded in the Yuan Shi:

Kublai said to Batulu 巴圖魯: “Since the war is close to its end, I will advise the sovereign to return to Huihu 回鶻 [in the North] so that soldiers and people may fully recover. What do you think?” Batulu answered: “The [topography of] Youyan 幽燕109 is like a tiger crouching, a dragon curling, and has great advantages (龍蟠虎踞 形勢雄偉). [From this site] it is easy to control Jianghuai 江淮 (the mid-south-eastern area of China) in the South, and access the desert in the North. Besides that, the emperor should reside at the centre of the world to receive tributes from all sides. If your highness seriously intends to rule the world, I am afraid there is no other site suitable for your residence except this one.” Kublai sighed with deep feeling: “I would have erred, if you had not reminded me.” . . . After succeeding to the throne in Kaiping 開平 and establishing his capital at Yan, Kublai once said: “Now I can rule the world from this place, but all the credit for this should go to Batulu.” (translated from Yuan Shi vol. 119)

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109 Since the site, where the city of Zhongdu of the Jin was located, was called Youzhou 幽州 after the Han dynasty, (Wang Caimei 1987:36) and was called Yanjing 燕京 for a short period after the Jin dynasty, this place was sometimes called Youyan 幽燕 or Yan 燕.
The main reason for choosing this site was that it was in an advantageous geographical location — it was easy to control the central area of China by advancing south, and to access the Plateau of Mongolia — the home base of the Mongol-created Yuan — through the pass to its north. The political and military factors were apparently paramount to Kublai. (cf. Su 1987:121; Dong 1988:51)

What leads some modern scholars to suspect that fengshui was considered in the choice of the site of Dadu is that Liu Bingzhong, the major designer of Dadu, was reputedly a fengshui expert, a belief that was mainly derived from Yuan Shi, “Liu Bingzhong Zhu.” Liu was a monk when his talent was discovered by Kublai and he became an intimate adviser of the emperor. He played an important role in creating the constitutional framework of the empire. Before planning the city of Dadu, Liu was entrusted with the building of the former capital city of Shangdu, which was believed to have affected the planning of Dadu. (TDCGJ 1985:61) Liu is described in the Yuan Shi as an outstanding and erudite scholar: “There was no book he did not want to read. He mastered The Book of Changes and Huangji Jingshi,110 he was also good at tianwen (astronomy and astrology), dili, calendrical calculations and various arts of divination (三式六壬遁甲之屬).” (Yuan Shi vol. 157) Here the term dili may be understand as either geography, topography or fengshui, each of them not explicitly indicated. In a later passage the emperor, after Liu’s death, praises his prediction skills, but fengshui is not mentioned: “Bingzhong served me for over thirty years. . . . His prediction of the future was so precise that what happened later was just like a contract being fulfilled. Nobody knows his speciality in yinyang shushu 陰陽術數 (arts forms) except me.” (op. cit.) Liu’s background in such kinds of art has led certain people to hypothesise that the building the city of Dadu was influenced by fengshui.

There is no doubt that Liu was an expert in divination, and it is possible that he knew fengshui well. However, his divinatory skills played only a small part in Liu’s service to the emperor. He was primarily one of the most important political advisers of Kublai. The constitutional system of the empire, including the system of uniforms, ritual program of the imperial court, officials’ salary standards and official ranks were all formulated by him. A thousand-word memorial to the throne by him, on different aspects of the management of the empire shows that Liu was very keen on

110 Written by Shao Yong (1011-1077) He had mastered Yi (Book of Changes) and believed that the Taiji was the noumenon of the universe. (cf. CY 3100)
following ancient traditions and Confucius’s theories so as to establish the orderly running of the state. (Yuan Shi vol. 157) Social order was particularly seen as imperative by Confucians. It was emphasised in Confucius’ works that the sovereign and his officers should correctly and properly adhere to the requirements of their governmental rank and functions. To determine a spatial order was seen as part of the establishment of social order. Against this background of philosophy, the step of determining the four quarters was repeated by Liu Bingzhong before the construction of Dadu:

In the 4th year of Zhiyuan (1267), the emperor Shizu was going to build the new capital. He ordered Liu Bingzhong to determine the directions and the location (辨方位). The site was determined to the north of present-day Fengchifang 鳳池坊. The location of the city belongs to the Constellation of Ziwei by the [correspondence principle] of fenji 分紀 [i.e. fenye]. (translated from Xijin Zhi Jiyi 行津志集佚: “Chaotang Gongyu”)

Actually, in comparison with the capital cities in previous dynasties, the plan of the city of Dadu was the closest to the ideal capital prescribed in Kaogong Ji. The dominant ideas reflected in Liu’s plan were no doubt the Han ideology of the capital city, which was admired by the elite. All this evidence shows that Liu Bingzhong was a remarkable Confucian scholar and official who was determined to apply Confucian ideology to both the political system and the architectural-spatial system. Fengshui, the ideas of which were often opposed to Confucian ideology, were therefore unlikely to have guided in his design.

The available evidence regarding Liu’s opinion on the choice of the site of Dadu is as follows. After unifying China, Kublai asked Liu Bingzhong: “One of the cities Shangdu and Dadu has to be chosen as the capital. Which one do you think the better?” Liu answered: “Shangdu has not been a capital for very long and its minfeng 民風 (folk mores) are chun 淑 (pure and honest). Dadu has already been a capital for a long time and the folk there are yin 润 (luxury-loving and sophisticated).” So Yan was chosen as the capital. (Tianfu Guangji, vol. 5) So the virtues of the ordinary inhabitants (or the level of the local civilisation) were taken into account, but there is no evidence that fengshui was considered by Liu.

There was also a fengshui manual, entitled Yuchi Jing 玉尺經, reputedly written by Liu. However, it has been proven by Yu Jiaxi 余嘉锡 that it was forged in the Ming

111 For details of the idea of determining the social order see section 1.2.2.2.
The major part of the book’s contents are the same as in Huang Miaoying’s Boshan Pian 博山篇, making it doubtful that the book was really written by Liu. (cf. He Xiaoxin 1995:131; 136) Another relevant point is that in Xijin Zhi 析津志, written at the end of the Yuan dynasty, there are many interpretations of the plan of Dadu in fengshui terms. For instance:

Tianshi Hall 天師宮 was located at the gen position (艮位) in the gui gate (乾門) [according to the compass]. The plan of the city, and the locations of palaces and government departments were all decided by the emperor and Liu Bingzhong according to dili 理地, with particular consideration being given to the wangqi 王氣 (true-kingly breath-energy). The empire was then successfully established and could last forever. In the long period after that, it is strange that many parts of the city have been changed from how it was [originally planned], because, according to dili, mountains have xingshi, and waters have sources, and the mountain is the basis [for fengshui] while the waters are its blood. Since ancient times, before building a capital, the dili xingshi [geomantic situation] and the earth vein of wangqi have first had to be considered in order that any great dynasty founded. (translated from Xijin Zi Jiyi: “Chaotang Gongyu”)

The author is no doubt a fengshui believer, since many sentences are quoted directly from fengshui manuals. Although this is a valuable book regarding the city of Dadu, the fengshui interpretations are apparently post hoc. He was trying to use Liu’s design to confirm his fengshui interpretations. For instance, he cites the example that there were two taxation departments in the Jin dynasty and also two similar departments in the Yuan to draw the conclusion, “so [we] can see that the diqi for the emperor processes like this (乃知地氣之王而不歇者如此).” Such fengshui analyses do not prove the connection between the city and its planner. Therefore, the choice of site of the city of Dadu was not a product of fengshui ideas, although some fengshui believers tried to interpret it as such.

3.1.3 Modern Hypothesis of the Reasons for the Choice of the Site of Beijing as the Ming Capital

The decision of making Beijing the imperial capital may seem rather surprising since it was in fact a peripheral city, where the influences of the steppe have always made themselves felt. Many modern scholars have already investigated the reasons that Beijing was taken as the capital in the Ming dynasty. Although “the emperor’s motives for establishing a new capital at Peking are only vaguely alluded to in imperial pronouncements and in the remarks and memoranda of court officials,” Mote (1988:237) argues that “they were certainly linked to the political and military situation at the time of his enthronement.” Among these discussions, Yan
Chongnian's analysis is the most representative. Yan (1986:92-115) holds that there were three reasons for Emperor Zhudi's taking Beijing as the capital of the Ming dynasty. The first lies in the geographical advantage of the location of Beijing. Beijing was located in the Northern end of the North China Plain and acted as the hub of communication between the Northern China Plain at its South, the Mongol Plateau at its Northwest and the Songliao Plain at its Northeast. Yan considered that the geographical location of Beijing, as described in Tianfu Guangji 天府廣記, “holding which it is easy to dominate the Central Plains inside [the Great Wall] and to control the deserts outside,” was one of the reasons why Zhudi took Beijing as his capital. (Figure 3-1)

Secondly, Yan holds that the strategic position of Beijing and the situation of the ethnic conflicts at the beginning of the Ming dynasty rendered the Beijing area important to the Ming rulers. Since Emperor Taizu missed the opportunity to wipe out the enemy thoroughly, and the former Yuan survived in considerable strength. “Over a million warriors skilful in battle were still available.” (Yan cited from Ming Shi Jishi Benmo 明史記事本末, vol. 10) Therefore, “the war at the border lasted throughout the Ming dynasty.” (Yan cited from Ming Shi: “Dadan Zhuan” vol. 32) In the early years of the Ming dynasty, Beijing was “facing the alien enemy on its three fronts [North, East and West].” (Yan cited from Ming Shenzong Shilu, vol. 567) Most of the Ming’s troops were disposed along the part of Great Wall near to Beijing. There were five large scale punitive expeditions to Mongolia during the reign of Hongwu and there were five expeditions during the reign of Yongle. Beijing was the starting point of all these expeditions. Zhu Di himself led seven of the expeditions, dying on the last one. Therefore, while Yingtian was the political centre, Beijing actually became the military centre of the Ming and the most important fort for securing the empire. (Figure 3-2)

112 The translations of this quotation and all other quotations from Yan’s argument are done by myself.

113 Yan presented the following examples cited from Ming Taizu Shilu. In 1368, “the emperor [of the Yuan] escaped to the North and ordered Koguotiemuer 擴郭帖木兒 to recapture Beijing.” The survivors of the Yuan regime intended to recover Beijing, which made the northern border restless. Yan attributes these troubles partly to Emperor Taizu’s policy as described in Ming Shi: “Xu Da Zhuan” 徐達傳. Before setting out to attack Dadu, Zhu’s General Xu Da asked: “If the emperor of the Yuan escapes to the North when Dadu is being captured, should I pursue and attack him?” The Emperor answered: “Yuan is out of fortune and will soon wither away. It is unnecessary to chase them. After driving them outside the Great Wall, it will be enough that [you] guard the border by taking precautions against their harassment.”

The third reason comes from the fact that Beijing was the place where Zhu Di set himself up in power, and the means by which he took the throne. Zhu Di’s political and military power was strengthened because of the special strategic position of Beijing. This afforded him the possibility of usurping the throne. After Emperor Taizu’s death, Beijing was superior to Yingtian both militarily and politically. Zhu Di took the advantage and lead his army south to attack Emperor Jianwen, his nephew, who was ruling at Yingtian. After four years of war, Zhu Di captured Yingtian and became the Taizong Emperor in 1402. From the founding of the capital Nanjing to the establishment of the capital Beijing, through half a century of ethnic conflict and civil war, Beijing gradually developed into a political centre where Zhu Di built up his political power. After Zhu Di had ascended the throne, the aides and generals whom he rewarded were mainly those who had followed him when he was the Prince of Yan, so their main interests were in the north. Although they were awarded high positions, they still wanted the capital moved north to Beijing. In addition to this, Zhu Di had massacred too many of the last emperor’s supporters in

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114 Yan recounted the history Zhu Di built up his power. Zhu Di, the fourth son of Emperor Taizu, was entitled the Prince of Yan, with his headquarters in Beijing, in 1370. After that point his official Hua Yunlong 華雲龍 “began to build palaces in Yan and to consolidate the city wall of Beijing.” (Yan cited from Ming Shi: “Hua Yunlong Zhuan” vol. 130) In 1390, Emperor Taizu declared in his imperial edict: “The Prince of Yan is the one who eliminated the remnants of the enemy in the desert.” (Yan cited from Ming Taizu Shilu, vol. 201) Two years later, after the crown prince Zhu Biao’s 朱標 death, Emperor Taizu intended to appoint Zhu Di his successor. He instructed his officials:

“My fourth son [Zhu Di] is wise and able, merciful and tolerant, as brave and good at military matters as myself. I am going to appoint him as the successor to the throne. What do you think?” A Hanlin Academician 翰林學士 Liu Sanwu 劉三吾 said: “What Your Majesty said is absolutely right. However, what positions would you give to the Prince of Qin 秦 and Prince of Jin 晉 [Emperor Taizu’s second son and third son]?” The emperor could not find a word to answer, then burst into tears and gave up his attempt. (Yan cited from Ming Taizu Shilu, vol. 217)

In 1393, Taizu Emperor ordered all the military officers in Beijing to be put at Zhu Di’s disposal. All military actions “must be reported to the Prince of Yan when reporting to the Imperial Court. This rule must be obeyed permanently.” (Yan cited from Ming Taizu Shilu, vol. 226) In 1398, Emperor Taizu, in his terminal illness, instructed a senior officer Yang Wen 楊文 and others: “My son the Prince of Yan is in Beijing, the gate of China. Now you as the zongbing 僉兵 [Regional Commander] go to meet him in Beijing. . . . [and] give him the picked troops. All the military forces should be at the Prince’s disposal.” (Yan cited from Ming Taizu Shilu, vol. 257) The purpose of this edict headed “Prince of Yan to Command All Princes Guarding the Frontier” (Yan cited from Mingshi Jishi Benmao, vol. 10) was to defend against possible invasion from Mongol troops. However, this promoted Zhu Di’s political position. Just ten days before his death, Emperor Taizu sent an imperial edict to Zhu Di:

Among my all sons, only you are outstandingly wise, able and competent at the job. Since the Prince of Qin and the Prince of Jin are already dead, you are actually the eldest one. To resist foreign aggression and suppress civil strife, nobody is qualified but you. I have already ordered . . . to all be put under your control. You are to command all the princes, be alert for the enemy, guard the frontier, and protect the multitude, to recompense Heaven’s kindness and my putting my trust in you. (Yan cited from Ming Taizu Shilu, vol. 257)
Nanjing. It was recorded that Zhu Di was even bothered by the ghosts of those he had killed.

Yan concludes that the above geographical, historical, military, ethnic, political and social factors, as he analyses them, resulted in Zhu Di taking Beijing as the capital. Given the great amount of supporting evidence, many scholars, including myself, find Yan’s argument convincing. When one examines the situation at the time when the site was chosen to be the location the capital, there is no doubt that political, military and geographical factors played the decisive role in the choice of the site of Beijing just as Gernet (1996:408-9) suggests:

It may be that the emperor Yung-le felt some attachment to the places where he had been prince and where he had found support at the time of his expedition towards the south. It may be, too, that he felt nothing but distrust and antipathy for the people of the lower Yangtze. But there may have been another reason for the decision — the strategic importance of the Peking area, for the control both of eastern Mongolia and of the north-eastern territories. It was in fact in Yung-le’s reign that the frontiers of the empire were pushed up to the distant valley of the Amur. The transfer of the capital would in that case reflect the desire to expand towards the steppe zone and Manchuria, and finally the ambition to reassume in Asia the dominant position held by the Yuan empire between the end of the thirteenth century and the middle of the fourteenth.

By suggesting that Zhu Di’s decision may be seen as following his father’s will; and that this decision also reflected the emperor’s perception that the north was the seat of his own personal power, Mote (1988:237) also argues: “Finally, for political and military reasons, Peking surpassed all other sites: it served at once as a bastion against invasions from the north and as a center for all the activities that supported the emperor’s expansive policies in the north. Also, at this point in history, it appeared to be the only major city on the northern frontier that could be supplied adequately to support a large garrison and a large civilian population.”

3.1.4 Information Provided by Imperial Documents

An examination of the official documents on the discussion of the choice of the site of Beijing in the Ming dynasty will enable us to know which aspects were primary to the decision-makers at that time. The proposal to take Beiping as a capital was first put forward by the Minister of Rites Li Zhigang 李志剛 in the first month of the first year of the reign of Yongle (1403) immediately after Zhu Di’s becoming emperor (Ming Shi: “Li Zhigang Zhuan” vol. 151):
Li Zhigang among other officials said: “From ancient times, the emperors, whether those who rose from the populace and gained power or those who were aliens who inherited the legitimacy, all promoted the places where they had risen to power. In my humble opinion, Beijing is where Your Majesty has gained fortune and risen up. It should be instituted as a capital as Emperor Taizu did to Zhongdu [Emperor Taizu' home town].” Zhu Di then agreed: “You are right. Establish Beijing as the Beijing (North Capital) then.” (translated from Ming Taizong Shilu, vol. 16)

After more than ten years of construction of the city of Beijing, in 1416 the Ministry of Construction asked for instruction on the construction of the palaces. Due to the importance of this matter, Zhu Di called all the officials to again discuss the issue:

Then the dukes and the military officials presented a memorial to the emperor: “In our humble opinion, Beijing is a secure place because of its having superior mountains and rivers. The water is sweet and the land is fertile. The folk are pure and honest. The local produce is abundant. It really is a land of plenty and the best place for an imperial capital.” . . . The ministers and other civic officials presented a memorial to the throne: “We have considered that Beijing is the place where Your Majesty has risen up [long xing zhi di 龍興之地 — lit. ‘the place where dragon has risen up’]. It is against the Juyong Pass of Great Wall in the North, relies on Taihang Mountains in the West, connects with the Shanhai Pass of Great Wall in the East and faces the Central Plains in the South. It possesses thousands of miles of fertile lands. The superior mountains and rivers (shanchuan xingsheng 山川形勝) are sufficient for supporting [the emperor] in controlling the aliens and ruling the world. It is indeed a capital city of an emperor who will rule forever. . . .” (translated from Ming Taizong Shilu, vol. 103)

When the construction of Beijing was completed in the eighteenth year of the reign of Yongle (1420), Zhu Di published an imperial edict celebrating the event. He explained the aim of making Beijing the capital and praised the location of Beijing in a most formal and symbolic way:

When initiating the founding of a dynasty, pursuing victory and gaining the throne is of the first importance. For preserving the inherited accomplishment, the matters concerned with the administration of the country are the most important duty. In the past, my father Emperor Taizu, being so entrusted by Heaven, established his capital beside the River Yangtze and laid a foundation for the state. Now in my turn to inherit the legitimate succession, the aim is to make it last forever. In my view, Beijing is truly a metropolis (duluit 都會). The topography is magnificent (xiongwei 雄偉). The mountains and rivers are secure and impregnable. From all the states in the world, the roads leading to here are of equal length. [This means the city is located in the centre of the world.] This place is exactly the one most favoured by Heaven (惟天意之所屬), and is surely in accordance with bu and shì [two kinds of divination] (貞卜筮之悠同). Therefore, by
imitating ancient traditions (乃仿古制), and following the law of Earth (従舆情), the two capitals have been instituted, the imperial altars and temples have been established and the palaces have been built. . . . Therefore order the Ministry of Rites to take Beijing as the Imperial Capital (jingshi 京師), not as the sub-capital any more. (translated from Taizong Yongle Shilu, vol. 118)

In these official analyses, leaving aside the familiar clichés such as the imperial capital being the centre of the world and its topographical advantages, two aspects were repeatedly emphasised — the strategic position of Beijing and its having been the place where Zhu Di had built up his power. This emphasis indicates that the threat from the North and the importance of holding military power in Beijing were taken seriously by the emperor and his top officials. The strategic aspect of Beijing interested Emperor Taizu even before the setting up of Nanjing as the capital. After having conquered the capital of the Yuan, Emperor Taizu asked his officials: “To establish the capital at Beijing will [enable us to] control foreign enemies. What do you think of [Beijing] in comparison with Nanjing?” (Changan Kehua, vol. 1) Although for a number of reasons, he did not take Beijing as a capital, he had in mind the same strategic considerations.

These two aspects were actually interrelated. Zhu Di was taking the threat of the Mongols seriously. The fact that he led seven expeditions to Mongolia himself and died on the last of them, is a good demonstration of his apprehension about their threat. To resist the Mongols, massive forces had to be stationed in Beijing. Consequently, the man who held power in Beijing would be another threat to the throne, just as Zhu Di himself had been. In order to secure the dynasty from both foreign aggression and civil war, the emperor had to reside at the crucial point — Beijing. And Zhu Di did indeed take the movement of the capital to Beijing as a strategy. When facing objections from a number of officials, he said: “When I was first considering the move to Beijing, I discussed matters with ministers secretly for a long period before making my final decision. It was not an indiscreet [careless?] action.” (translated from Ming Shi: “Xia Yuanji Zhuan,” vol. 149) In his own words, it was an act of a “yingxiong’s 英雄 [capable person who has ability, insight, sagacity, or achievement in political and military affairs, (CY 2638)] sagacity:”

When Emperor Chengzu [Zhu Di] was establishing Yan [Beijing] as the capital, many officials opposed the idea. Xiao Yi 蕭儀, a secretary of a bureau (主事), was the most radical of them. . . . The emperor said: “Concerning the move to Beijing, I discussed with ministers secretly for months before making this decision. How could you, a scholar with
Zhu Di’s decision was widely regarded as the strategy termed “tianzi shubian 天子戍邊 [lit. ‘emperor guards the frontiers’].” (cf. Zheng Zhihai 1992:89; Yan 1986:113) We see therefore that the strategic considerations — guarding the frontier and holding military power, were most important to Zhu Di and his officials. This is in accordance with what has been concluded by the historians who have analysed the historical situation when Beijing was built. The view expressed by Zhu Di and his officials became the official explanation of the site of Beijing just like that written in Wanli Shuntianfu Zhi (vol. 1) in the Wanli period of the Ming:

Yan’s [Beijing] location embraces the sea as its moat, and has its back the Taihang Mountains as its natural barrier, holds the Juyong Pass [of the Great Wall] to dominate the interior and control the outside [countries/peoples], holds the key [strategic position] of the world by possessing the area along Yellow River and River Ji, accepts tributes from the states through the East-west Tributary Road, and is protected by the forts on the Northwest frontier. It is bound to be secure and prosperous forever.

By surveying the official views expressed on the choice of the site of Beijing, we find that the geographical aspects, the topographical aspects, the military situation, the water, land and labour resources, the material supplies and transport for the project, and even folk custom were all taken into account, but fengshui was not. There was no argument put forward on fengshui grounds, and no fengshui terms were used, nor were there any records of fengshui’s being practised, as it was in the siting of graves.\textsuperscript{115} The location of Beijing was highly praised from the fengshui angle by Zhu Xi, the famous Song dynasty founder of Neo-Confucianism, and Liu Ji, an important aide of Emperor Taizu, before the building of Beijing was proposed. But their eulogies were not used at all in the official discussions either by those who approved of, or dissented from, the decision. Three months after the ceremony of completion, the Three Great Halls of the Forbidden City were burnt down.\textsuperscript{116} When the emperor then asked for blunt comments, many officials criticised the enormous costs of the

\textsuperscript{115} The application of fengshui in the siting of the Imperial Tombs of the Ming will be discussed in section 3.2.2.

\textsuperscript{116} When the Three Great Halls of the Forbidden City were burnt down three months after the ceremony of completion, the emperor asked his officials for comments: “I, the sovereign, have been humbly pursuing Heaven’s directions and trying to fulfil a grand vision. By imitating the ancient institutions, I have established the two capitals. Unfortunately, the Three Great Halls caught fire on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of the fourth month of the 19th year of the Yongle reign-period. Shocked by this, I am at a loss.” (translated from Taizong Yongle Shilu vol. 120)
project, the corruption of the officials and the labourers’ unbearable suffering in the process of construction. None of them turned to fengshui to support their lament. (cf. Ming Shi: “Li Shimian Zhuan” vol. 163)

One might argue that fengshui may have been considered in the choice of the site of Beijing, but that such considerations were simply not recorded, due to certain pressures on the elite. However, no matter how briefly a matter was recorded, we do have various records of the many aspects referred to in the emperor’s and his officials’ discussions on the building of Beijing. By analysing these recorded considerations, we can differentiate what was primary from what was secondary to the decision makers. Those aspects recounted in the official documents were surely primary to the decision makers, whereas those not mentioned at all cannot have been primary. The lack of any evidence of fengshui itself shows unmistakeably that the officials’ focuses were not on fengshui. No matter whether or not fengshui was in any way considered, one thing is certain: it was definitely not taken to be as acceptable, dignified or reasonable a factor in the choice of site as the other official explanations were.

3.1.5 Information Provided by Non-official Documents

Not only was fengshui not mentioned in the official documents, but it was not considered in most of the non-official notebooks either, though they analysed the location of Beijing. Many scholars argued for the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy of building the capital at the current location. Gu Zuyu 顾祖禹 (1631-1692) argued in his Dushi Fangyu Jiyao 讀史方舆紀要:

On the completion of the expedition [to Yingtian], the Emperor Taizong [Zhu Di] was anxiously concerned about the threat from the North and established his temporary headquarters at Yan. The endless preparations for the war and the non-stop expeditions were due to the situation’s leaving him no other choice. . . . That was the reason for his choosing Yan as the capital.” (translated from Yan 1986:113)

We can see that in casual writings the aspects primarily considered were the same as those discussed in the official documents. The military importance and the topographical advantages of a site were seen as the most important matters, just as Zhu Jianzi 朱建子 (Ming dynasty) says in Gujin Zhiping Lue 古今治平略:

The ancient people always built the capital on a site which [had topographical advantages] to be relied on. A reliable place is most important for the state. There were Hangu 函谷 in the Qin, Jiange 劍閣 in the Shu 蜀, Chengquan 成泉 in the Wei 魏, Jingxing 井陘 in the Zhao, and Feihu 飛狐 in
the Yan 燕, and the Wu 吳 had the River Yangtze. All these places were ones which the states relied on. (translated from Liu Xiaoming, 1994:174)

The following quotations are typical analyses of the location of Beijing cited from notebooks written in the Ming dynasty. Which show the importance of economic and military considerations in the siting of Beijing in the eye of non-official scholars.

The capital [Beijing] has mountains at its back and faces the plains. The location enjoys an abundance of fish, salt, grain, horses, fruit and vegetables, and is supported by grain from the South-east. By concentrating wealth and products and relying on the natural barrier, it controls the frontiers without much effort. Bianliang, Luoyang, Guanzhong and the cities in the Yangtze Valley are incomparable with [Beijing]. (Wu Xue Bian 吾學編, translated from RJK, vol. 5)

The Han, Tang and Song dynasties all had two capitals. In the Han and Tang dynasties, Changan was the West Capital while Luoyang was the East Capital. In the Song dynasty, Bianliang was the East Capital and Luoyang was the West Capital. The two capitals were not far apart in these dynasties. Emperor Gao [Gaohuangdi, i.e. Emperor Taizu, Zhu Yuanzhang] established his capital in Jinling 金陵 [Nanjing] and Emperor Wen [Wenhuangdi, i.e. Emperor Chengdi, Zhu Di] moved the capital to Jintai 金台 [Beijing]. This made two metropolises, one in the South, south of the River Yangtze, and the other in the North, north of the Yellow River. Most of the wealth in the world is produced in the Southeast and is gathered in Jinling. The military forces are strong in the Northwest, and Jintai acts as the [imperial military] headquarters. Establishing the two capitals combines the wealth of the Southeast and the military forces of the Northwest. [The empire] is unmatched anywhere in the world. (Tushu Bian 圖書編, translated from RJK, vol. 5)

The reason for Zhu Di’s decision to move the capital to Beijing was also speculated on by scholars like Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1593-1675) did in Chunming Mengyu Lu 春明夢余錄 (Records of Dreams in the Spring). He (op. cit. vol. 1) argued that the aspects Zhu Di considered were no more than the following four: (1) The site of Beijing had been a capital for over nine hundred years, longer than the capitals of the Zhou dynasty; (2) The capital of a dynasty was usually changed, especially under threat of war. After the war for seizing power, Zhu Di had to move [to avoid potential wars]; (3) Throughout history the capital was always established where the emperor established himself. Zhu Di said: “I have risen from Yan, then established the capital at Yan;” (4) The most serious danger for a dynasty was foreign enemies. To let the descendants of the emperor garrison the border was good to gather forces to save the capital. Identical views on the factors influencing the choice of site of Beijing expressed in both official and non-official documents show that the majority of the elite, including both the officials and non-officials, had no interest in fengshui
in this specific matter. Although fengshui-influenced analyses of the site of Beijing can be found in some scholars’ casual writings, such discussions are very rare in available notebooks.

As discussed above, throughout the history of capital siting, the military, economic and topographic considerations have always played the most important role in the siting of a capital city. In the siting of Zhongdu and Dadu, it is not likely that fengshui ideas had any effect. In the choice of site for Beijing in the Ming, the contemporary political, military and economic situations were such that the emperor and his top officials had no choice but to select Beijing as the capital. Most of the elite, including the emperor himself, were much less interested in fengshui than in the practical aspects. At the very least, fengshui interpretations were not as acceptable as the other analyses of the site used in official discussions. Both the official documents and casual writings show the impossibility of fengshui’s having been considered as one of the decisive factors in the choice of the site of Beijing as the Ming capital.

3.2 FENGSHUI IN THE GOVERNMENTAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

3.2.1 The Qintianjian

Among the government departments of the Ming, the Qintianjian 錫天監 (Directorate of Astronomy) was the only one officially associated with fengshui. Such a department was found in other imperial dynasties, but with different names. In the Yuan, it was named the Sitianjian 司天監 [Directorate in Charge of the Heavens]. (cf. CY 1656; Taizong Hongwu Shilu 太宗洪武實錄 vol. 31) It mainly provided services regarding astronomical observations, fixing the manual calendar, weather forecasting, earthquake prediction, and irregular natural phenomena interpreting, but matters involving fengshui were not amongst its major duties. The most common duty of this directorate was to keep the emperor informed of ominous or auspicious celestial phenomena that might require some action on his part. (Mote 1998:86, 841-2) In this department of about 300 staff members,117 apart from the head of the division, the Jianzheng 監正 (director) and Jianfu 監付 (vice director), an honoured title for specialists was that of Louke Boshi 漏刻博士 (lit. “specialist in chronography”). The common staff members were the Tianwensheng 天文生 (astronomy specialist) and the Yinyangren 陰陽人 (lit. “yin-yang specialist”). The

117 One historic record reveals that in 1488 there were 261 staff members in the department, when another 108 were fired on failing to pass a qualifying exam. (cf. Xiaozong Hongzhi Shilu, vol. 17)
specialities of the Yinyangren were various, such as those of predicting the weather, selecting propitious dates, divinations, and fengshui. (CY 3283) They held the lowest positions among the government staff members. The yin-yang specialist’s ranking was lower than the astronomy specialist’s.118

The Qintianjian was sometimes ordered to select a site for an imperial construction project. But the majority of such opportunities were in the construction of imperial tombs. A fengshui specialist was supposed to be sent to do the job, but quite often there were no fengshui specialists available in the Qintianjian. It seems that fengshui specialists were not kept as permanent employees. Most of the staff members, including the director himself, were not familiar with fengshui. One example illustrating this involved the Wanli Emperor, who ordered Zhang Bangyuan 張邦垣, the vice director of the Qintianjian, to engage yin-yang specialists to look for more prospective sites. Another official, Liang Ziqi 梁子琦, said: “Zhang does not know dili, let me lead [fengshui] specialists to select more prospective sites.” (Shenzong Wanli Shilu, vol. 134) Therefore, an official known as having fengshui knowledge was often required to participate in the siting of a tomb, or a fengshui specialist had to be employed temporarily. When Han Huang, a Daxueshi 大學士 (grand academician, an official of great power in the central government), was ordered to select sites, he forced Chen 陳明晰 Mingxi, a Zongshusheren 中書舍人 (drafter in the Secretariat) to go with him, since Chen was known as being learned in the Xingshi theory of fengshui. (cf Xizong Tianqi Shilu, vol. 1)

3.2.2 The building of the Imperial Tombs

Apart from the Great Wall and the capital city, the building of imperial tombs was held to be the most important kind of construction project throughout the Ming dynasty. Since Emperor Taizu and Emperor Taizong had selected the sites for their own tombs during their lifetime, it later became a tradition to build the emperor’s

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118 In 1489, Wu Hao 吳昊, Jianzheng (the head) of the Qintianjian, reported that the Tianwensheng and Yinyangsheng asked to be exempted from corveés (徭役). The answer from the Ministry of Rites was: “A Tianwensheng and another member of his family are exempt from the corvée. As for the Yinyangren, only he himself can be exempted.” (translated from Xiaozong Hongzhi Shilu, vol. 31)
tomb during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{119} With the growth of the emperors' enthusiasm for building their own tombs, \textit{fengshui} was consequently paid more attention. Mentions of \textit{fengshui} even occur more frequently in the second half of \textit{Ming Shilu} 明實錄 (Ming Veritable Records).

When officials and departments were ordered to select prospective sites for imperial tombs, the Qintianjian was usually asked to join in the process. Dukes, ministers and many other high ranking officials were in charge of each stage of the whole project, such as siting, reporting to the emperor, worshipping the ancestors, construction of the tomb and the burial. The officials from the Qintianjian and professional \textit{fengshui} specialists were only involved in the siting stage so as to help the major officials select one or a number of prospective sites, and to present maps and illustrations to the emperor. Among all the officials who participated in the siting, they were amongst the least important. In the name-list of the officials rewarded after the completion of the construction, such a person generally came at the very end. The final decision on the choice of site was usually made by the emperor himself.\textsuperscript{120} Apart from selecting prospective sites, choosing auspicious dates for the relevant ceremonials was definitely the duty of the Qintianjian. But such a task was not necessarily part of the duty of the \textit{fengshui} specialist. Traditionally, it was the duty of another kind of specialist, the \textit{rizhe} 日者 or \textit{riguan} 日官 (astrologer), although in practice a \textit{fengshui} practitioner would often provide such service as well.

Sometimes, an official who claimed, or was claimed, to be familiar with \textit{fengshui} would be sent to participate in the selection of sites. For instance, after many officials, including the vice director of the Qintianjian, found a good site, the Ministry of Rites suggested that the Hongzhi Emperor (i.e. Emperor Xiaozong) ought to send other officials to appraise the site, owing to the importance of this matter. An executive assistant (\textit{Jishi} 給事), Xu Tianxi 許天錫, said: “[The emperor] should choose an expert on \textit{dili} from the officials to recheck the prospective site. If there are any difficulties [in looking for a \textit{fengshui} specialist or in choosing the site], then [the

\textsuperscript{119} When the previous emperor’s tomb was still being built, Emperor Shizong planned to build his own tomb at the same time, for convenience. Xia Yan 夏言, the Minister of Rites, said: “Historically, emperors have not been willing to talk about [their own] tombs [in their lifetime]. Only Taizu and Taizong built their tomb in advance. This [practice] has been followed till now. It has been considered that only outstanding sages can make [such] astonishing decisions.” (translated from \textit{Shizong Jiajing Shilu} 世宗嘉靖實錄, vol. 185)

\textsuperscript{120} When other members of the imperial family were siting their own tombs, the final decision might be made by themselves.
emperor] should order Jiangxi [province] and [its neighbouring] districts to recruit shushi 術士 ([fengshui] specialists) and [let the specialists] conduct a wide survey of the mountains. Only a site which is perfect in having strong shi, gathering qi, deep water and soil, and that has the correctly oriented xue and complete power, just like that which is described by the Song Confucian Zhu Xi, can be used for settling the [previous emperor's] spirit and gaining blessing from Heaven for everlasting fortune.” The Ministry of Rites and the Emperor accepted his suggestion and sent more eunuchs and officials to re-examine the prospective site. Later, Wang Hua 王華, an official of the Ministry of Rites, reported: “We have been checking the . . . site again and looking for the expert on dili. But [the call for fengshui specialists] will not generally be known in the short period of time. What Xu Tianxi said shows he was well acquainted [with fengshui]. He should recommend a person [to do the fengshui tasks].” The emperor then ordered Xu to go there together with Wang. (Wuzong Zhengde Shilu 武宗正德實錄, vol. 1)

Among the imperial officials, only a couple of individuals practised fengshui, and as a secondary interest, or a spare-time hobby. Since most of the imperial officials were not familiar with fengshui theory, when the ministers submitted the illustrations of the prospective sites, the following declaration was quite common: “We are ignorant and not familiar with dili. What we have chosen are those for which the xingshi [landscape] looks good and convenient for construction.” (translated from Shenzong Wanli Shilu, vol. 136) Although fengshui was invariably employed in grave siting, there was no shortage of evidence illustrating the officials’ and emperors’ cautious attitude towards, and dislike of, fengshui.

The emperors normally made the final decision on the prospective sites presented by officials, but this was not always the case. The Emperor Shizong determined burial sites himself and then had the officials and the fengshui specialists approve his choice. When siting an empress dowager’s tomb in 1522, the Jiajing Emperor was determined to choose a site next to the Maoling 茂陵, Emperor Xianzong’s tomb. But the ministers were all in favour of another site. They argued that it would disturb the buried emperor if the construction took place at a site so close to the existing tomb. They even referred to the story of Zhu Xi’s objecting for the same reason to his emperor’s tomb-siting. When he did not receive the expected support, the emperor had the officials discuss the matter again and again, and ordered the Qintianjian to re-examine the site that he was indicating. Being aware of the emperor’s determination, the officials did not dare persist in their stand, and the tomb was built according to the emperor’s wishes. (Shizong Jiajing Shilu, vol. 21) In such a case as this, the
function required of the Qintianjian was to cater for the emperor’s decision rather than to select a site according to fengshui principles. In 1536, the emperor himself again selected two sites for his own tomb. Then he had the officials from the Qintianjian and other departments inspect the maps of the two sites, which he had secretly ordered officials Zhang Fujing 張孚敬 and He Yongqing 稱用卿 to draw a year previously. The officials then approved one of the sites.

Regarding this matter, there was a contrast between the emperor’s and the ministers’ attitudes towards fengshui. Once it was known that the emperor was going to look for a site himself, the ministers suggested: “Please order the ministers to lead the head of the Qintianjian, and the fengshui specialists to examine the xing, and investigate the earth vein in order to obtain an auspicious omen for a site that will be [secure] forever. After the plans are drawn, Your Majesty can make the decision as to whether you are satisfied.” (op. cit.) The emperor’s answer seems quite critical of fengshui: “The purpose of building a tomb is to show the respect for parents’ bodies. You have to approve [this] and not be disturbed by heretical [i.e. fengshui] ideas (xiēshuō 邪說), and do not talk about [fengshui] taboos (bi 避).” After the site was selected by the emperor, as suggested by Xia Yan 夏言, the Minister of Rites, a number of fengshui practitioners (the descendants of fengshui masters Zeng 曾, Yang 楊 and Liao 廉) were called up from Jiangxi 江西 to confirm the site. It seems that the minister had more trust in the fengshui specialists. But the following words reveal what was in the ministers’ minds: “Your majesty has selected the site yourself and put forward the principle of thrift in its construction. Such concern and insight should be followed. But we are afraid that [what you did] was beneath your dignity and provides us, your servants, with no means of showing our respect.” The ministers were not concerned with the neglect of fengshui, but rather that performing a task which was supposed to be carried out by mere fengshui specialists would harm the emperor’s prestige.

A more dramatic conflict over the matter of fengshui occurred during the reign of Emperor Shenzong. It had already become a tradition that the Qintianjian first sent fengshui specialists to choose a prospective site. (Shenzong Wanli Shilu, vol. 132) But this time an unusually large number of officials applied for selection, claiming that they possessed knowledge of fengshui. Then the emperor ordered all the officials of all levels who knew about fengshui, and who were living in Beijing, to join in the siting. (op. cit. vol. 133) However, personal preference for different sites, mixed with jealousy and conspiracy, caused serious conflict. (op. cit. vol. 142, 143) When three officials were continuing to attack an opponent after a decision made by the emperor,
the emperor withheld their salaries for half a year, and said in a fury: “The duty of an official is to assist [the imperial affairs]. How can [you] criticise [others] for [their poor] kanyu skills (豈責以堪與伎耶)” (op. cit. vol. 164) When the emperor finally overrode the objections and confirmed his choice of the site, all officials changed their stance to one of praise for this site. But the emperor could not hold back his anger. He asked a few officials privately: “This matter is entirely up to my own will. Why do they one after another [propose fengshui suggestions] like this?” He then punished all those who had opposed his choice for a fengshui reason, those who had failed to provide a satisfactory site, and those who had rejected the site at first but later shifted their ground to extol it in fengshui terms, by sending them into exile or deducting from their salaries. He expressed a strong aversion to such fengshui arguments:

Now many officials have been arguing on fengshui over the matter of siting the tomb. But the most important [consideration] is de (virtuous influence), not the rugged topography (zai de, bu zai xian 在德不在險). In history, when [the] Qin [emperor] Shihuang 秦始皇 built [his tomb] on Mount Li, it is unlikely that he did not appeal to fengshui. But before long [the tomb] was destroyed. Did it gain any help [from fengshui]? My ancestor selected Mount Tianshou for tombs. All his descendants were to be buried there forever. How can there be so many good sites [apart from this site] in the world? I am determined [to select this site]. (op. cit. vol. 166)

Fengshui was seen as a degrading skill that a respectable scholar-official should not indulge in.

Such dislike of fengshui was also to be found among the officials. Liu Shiyan 劉世延, Liu Ji’s descendant, who inherited the title of nobility, Chengyibo 誠意伯 (Earl of Sincere Intent), also tried to submit fengshui advice to Emperor Shenzong on the siting of tombs. He held that the site chosen by the emperor was not that of a real dragon range (longhuo feizhen 龍火 非真). But no official passed on his message. His enthusiastic advice was regarded as nonsense (wangyan zaixiang 妄言災祥). Growing weary of his constant pestering, a large number of officials from different departments asked for him to be impeached for his arrogance. Frustrated by this, Liu became more unrestrained and was eventually sentenced to death, in 1606. (cf. Shenzong Wanli Shilu, vol. 289; Ming Shi, vol. 128) Although fengshui was tolerated in the matter of grave siting, over indulging in it was seen as improper for a scholar-official.

Many officials’ attitudes towards fengshui were reflected in Zhang Juzheng’s 張居正 behaviour. In his own essay “Zangdi Lun” 葬地論 (“On Grave Siting”), Zhang
criticised the theory that a grave's fengshui would affect the descendants' fortune, through numerous examples, such as that Guo Pu, a patriarch in fengshui, had not managed to avoid being killed, that none of the descendants of the fengshui masters flourished, and that the ancient sages did not apply fengshui at all. He argued that: “Building cities and houses is for [the benefit of] those who are alive. So [we] must consider the xingshi (topography), investigate the waters, select orientations, and make [the site] harmonious in order that the living people benefit.” (translated from He Xiaoxin 1995:216-17) When he was entrusted with selecting prospective sites for the tomb of the late emperor in 1572, he submitted a memorial:

Burying a parent is a most important event; but siting is a meticulous task. An important matter requires one to go into minute details; such a meticulous task requires wide consultation. I suggest that, following the precedent of the seventh year of the Jiajing reign-period, you send the ministers of Rites and Construction, and representatives from each department, together with officials who know dili from Qintianjian and the yin-yang specialists, and select someone who knows dili well from the imperial officials, to check the site. (translated from Shenzong Wanli Shilu, vol. 2)

Although he criticised fengshui as a corrupted body of thinking, Zhang still favoured the involvement of fengshui in imperial tomb siting, for the sake of filial piety.

There is no doubt that fengshui was considered necessary for the siting of imperial tombs, and that fengshui specialists were involved in the siting process. Consequently, the physical outcome of the siting could be found to be, in principle, in accordance with certain fengshui theories. However, the guiding role of fengshui in the field of siting technique was in contrast with its lower position in the political hierarchy and the ideological world. The non-official fengshui specialists who were temporarily employed were mostly in charge of certain specific and detailed jobs, such as giving advice to the officials who were in charge of the siting, determining a precise point on the approved site, drawing maps, and other trivial jobs. The main argument, however, occurred between the officials and the emperor, neither of whom were fengshui specialists. Although a few officials might have comprehensive fengshui knowledge, the person in charge of the siting was normally a prince or high-ranking official who did not have a background in fengshui. The final decision had to be made by the emperor.

In dealing with fengshui, the emperors' and officials' unconcealed disdain of fengshui meant that they were in an awkward position. Although fengshui itself was despised in general, the application of fengshui to graves was regarded by many as
part of filial piety. It was practised in a manner so as to emphasise filial piety while avoiding mention of the supernatural power of the dead to influence their descendants. Holding an ambiguous attitude in this regard, the scholar officials favoured applying fengshui to grave siting, and emphasising its significance with regard to filiality, yet also attacked fengshui absurdities. Therefore, in the field of siting and construction of graves, fengshui was able to enjoy special privileges. The imperial tomb, as the most important tomb in the empire, was no exception. Although fengshui was considered at an early stage, and fragments of fengshui language were possibly used in argument, the choice of site was actually made at a non-fengshui level. Fengshui was employed, but not much appreciated.

3.2.3 Other Governmental Projects

Fengshui was rarely required in government projects except for the siting of imperial tombs. On several occasions, suggestions were made on the basis of fengshui, but not much attention was paid to them. In 1455, the Qintianjian asked for the observatory to be moved to a new site: “The Guanxingtai 觀星台 (observatory) is located by the east city wall. It is too noisy [for us to do our work]. Besides, most [of our] buildings are dilapidated. We request to be allowed to move [the observatory] to Taijichang 塔基廠 in East Changan Street. Then the observatory with the Twin-pagoda in West Changan Street will stand symmetrically [flanking the Forbidden City]. This will present an image of a Green Dragon and a White Tiger, and match the Xingshi theory of fengshui.” This suggestion was at first accepted, but soon the emperor changed his mind, since he did not want the trouble it would cause. (yiqlaorao 以其勞擾). (cf. Yingzong Zhengtong Shilu 英宗正統實錄, vol. 257, Jingtai Fulu, vol. 75) the emperor did not think it was worth spending money and effort on changing part of the city for the sake of fengshui imagery.

Another example shows the common contempt for fengshui ideas in matters of construction. A Tianwensheng, Chen Bowu 陳伯武, said privately: “Because of the heavy traffic under the arch of the Guanxingtai (observatory), the fengshui [of this place] has been disturbed. Now the emperor is going to visit the [nearby] Guozijian 國子監. If he could visit us on the way, maybe he would let us move to the Forbidden City, as in the case of Nanjing, for convenience.” A Xiaowei 校尉 (commandant) told this [to the emperor], and [the emperor] ordered that Chen be put in chains under the Guanxingtai as a warning to those who dared to propose such “nonsense.” (Yingzong Zhengtong Shilu vol. 113)
In 1434, the Xuande Emperor (i.e. Emperor Xuanzong) let the Qintianjian look for a site on which to build a new drill-ground. The Qintianjian recommended a site outside Pingze 门则 Gate: “Since it is located to the west of the city, and the West is in the category of Metal according to the Five Elements theory, the site there is of a solemn atmosphere (susha zhi qi 虚煞之气) which is good for a drill-ground.” On being sent to examine the site again, officials from other departments reported: “[The drill-ground] can be built out from Pingze Gate, but thirty-six families have to be removed.” The emperor then abandoned this proposal. (Xuanzong Xuande Shilu, vol. 108) Although an idea based on Five Elements theory cannot necessarily be categorised as fengshui, it shows that such fengshui or fengshui-like ideas would be abandoned, once a loss of interest occurred. We can see that in the non-grave projects fengshui was not taken seriously as a means of legitimating costly and necessary urban interventions, by the emperor and officials.

The only evidence that fengshui was involved in the construction of the city is that the Qintianjian was requested to join in the planning of the wall of the Outer City in the Jiajing reign-period.121 Two facts need to be noticed here: firstly, the involvement of fengshui is clearly recorded; secondly, this recording happened in the second half of the Ming dynasty, when we may assume that fengshui was more influential in constructions than before, owing to the continual construction of imperial tombs.

By analysing the role of fengshui in these government projects, we find that several points support the hypothesis that fengshui was not considered in the choice of site of the city. Firstly, the building of tombs was a special kind of construction project. No matter how much fengshui was despised, there was no objection to the participation of the fengshui specialist in the siting of imperial tombs, and the involvement of fengshui was recorded explicitly and in detail. But to consider fengshui in the siting of other construction projects was often regarded as ridiculous, and was not tolerated as much as in the siting of imperial tombs.

Secondly, there appeared to be no special siting process for choosing Beijing as the capital. The existing city of Beiping, where Zhu Di had been living before becoming the emperor, was designated as Beijing (the Northern Capital) immediately after he took the throne in 1403. The new capital, with its well maintained city wall, considerable number of palaces, and all the facilities inherited from the city of Dadu

121 This will be discussed in detail in section 6.1.
of the Yuan, was not a new city built on a new site. There was no process of siting, as in the case of the siting of tombs, when the city was appointed as a capital. After 18 years renovation and construction, Zhu Di officially promoted Beijing as the principal capital (jingshi 京師) instead of the previous one, Nanjing (the Southern Capital) in 1421. Actually, from the moment of seizing the power, or even before then, Zhu Di had been planning to promote Beijing as his principal capital. According to Yan (1986:104-07): (1) By imperial orders, immigration to Beijing to increase its population was started in 1402. (2) The projects of dredging the rivers and canals to improve transportation for the construction of Beijing were started in 1403. (3) The preparation of building materials for the construction of Beijing was started in 1406. (4) The palaces in Beijing started to be built in 1407. Therefore, the decision had been determined mostly by Zhu Di himself in a long process of premeditation. Although Zhu Di had his decision discussed by the officials, this was more like an impious or cynical gesture made in order to gain their support. Only the top ministers were involved in the secret decision-making. Under such circumstances, the officials from the Qintianjian and the fengshui specialists were unlikely to have been consulted.

Thirdly, if the Qintianjian or any other fengshui specialists had been involved, it would have appeared in the records of the siting of the imperial tombs and in those of the planning of the wall of the Outer City. One might argue that the lack of evidence of the use of fengshui in the siting and building of the city is due to the fact that records of the building process were sketchy in the Ming dynasty. However, by contrast, it was explicitly recorded that fengshui was practised in the siting of imperial tombs, as when Zhu Di ordered the building of the imperial tombs:

Since the body of Empress Xiaoren had not yet been buried, the emperor [Zhu Di] ordered the Minister of Rites to send a person, Liao Junqing, who knew dili, to select site, and he found a good place on Huangtushan (Mount Yellow Earth) to the east of Changping. The emperor examined the site and named the mountain Tianshoushan (Mount Heavenly Longevity). On the same day, the Marquis of Wuan (Wuanhou 武安侯), Zheng Heng, was sent to take charge of the

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122 Wang Hongkai (1986) holds that the construction of the city of Beijing was started in 1406.

123 One example from Qing Shenzu Shilu was noted by Yan (1986:107): even the Kangxi Emperor (i.e. Emperor Shenzu) of the Qing was disappointed by the lack of detailed records regarding the building of Beijing: “I have read all the Ming Shilu (Ming Veritable Records). No events were recorded in detail. Even in the section on the building of Beijing by the Yongle Emperor, there is no single word on the details [of the construction].”
sacrificial rites for the construction. The Earl of Wuyi (Wuyibo 武義伯), Wang Tong 王通, was sent to take charge of the construction. Junqing and others received awards. (translated from Taizong Yongle Shilu, vol. 63)

Fengshui was not evaded when the construction was recorded in the official documents. The lack of evidence of fengshui in the building process of Beijing is therefore not due to a lack of documentation, it is my assumption, but to the actual neglect of fengshui. This suggests that the acceptance of fengshui was different in different fields of activity. There was almost no room for it in the siting of a capital city.

Finally, fengshui is reputed to have become more influential in the second half of the Ming period as a consequence of the enthusiasm for imperial tomb construction. Moreover, there was no evidence in the case of Beijing to support Wright’s (1977:55) argument that fengshui “was introduced into later city planning not by the scholar-officials but by their often restive masters, the emperors of China.” Even in the cases of their own tombs, the emperors did not show more enthusiasm than their officials for fengshui. Since there is no record of the practice of fengshui in the construction of other buildings, and since fengshui was not acceptable as a theory for the siting of a capital city, I suggest that fengshui, either for a specific divination art or as siting theory, is unlikely to have been taken into account in the choice of site for the city of Beijing.

3.3 THE USE OF DIVINATORY TERMS IN THE CHOICE OF THE SITE OF BEIJING

The terms bu 卜 and shi 篇 were used in the official documents on the building of Beijing. For instance, in the imperial edict for celebrating the completion of the construction of Beijing, Emperor Taizong (Zhu Di) said: “This place is precisely the one favoured by Heaven (惟天意之所屬), and surely in accordance with bu and shi (實卜筮之幽同). Therefore, the two capitals have been instituted by imitating ancient traditions (乃仿古制), and considering the situation on the earth (徇輿情) . . . .” (Taizong Yongle Shilu, vol. 118) Bu and shi were two forms of the art of divination used in siting for the capital cities in the Zhou dynasty, together with another activity, that of xiang 相, which was also mentioned in some documents on the building of the capital city in the Yuan dynasty: “The emperor ordered Liu Bingzhong to select [xiang] a site to the east of Huanzhou and north of the River Luan.

124 These arts of divinations have been introduced in section 1.2.1.
Although the terms *bu* and *xiang* were also widely used in *fengshui*, the use of these terms does not imply *fengshui* was employed, as we will now show. Although the criteria of *xiang* at that time are unknown, it is certain that *bu* and *xiang* in the Zhou dynasty were not the same skills as in the later art of *fengshui*. We stress again that the systematic theory of *fengshui* did not come into being before the Han dynasty.

In the ensuing dynasties, the practice of *bu* and *shi* was sometimes adopted in the siting of capital cities, but there is no evidence that they were considered to be necessary or crucial procedures. For instance, there was an argument on the moving of the capital in the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534):

Emperor Gaozu [Emperor Xiaowen, reigned 471-499] intended to move the capital to the south, while pretending that he was going to go on a punitive expedition to the South. . . . He ordered Wang Chen to carry out a *bu* for the expedition, and obtained an omen for *ge* (revolution, big change or revolt). The emperor said: “It is the same omen as that for the transferring the Mandate of Heaven from [King of Zhou] to Duke Wu. This Heaven’s omen is in accord with Man’s [i.e. my] will.” All the officials remained silent except Wang Cheng, who said: “*Ge* means ‘transferring [the Mandate of Heaven],’ and to follow this instruction from Heaven the dynasty should be overthrown. It would be an auspicious omen for Duke Wu to move against King Zhou, but not a good omen for you, the king owning the world.” . . . The King became angry, and reprimanded him in a stern voice: “The country is my country! How dare you disappoint my people?” . . . [After the court session, the King told Wang privately about his real purpose:] “I lost my temper in order to stop the officials’ objections, which could ruin my plan of moving the capital. . . . Our country has developed from the northern region and moved to this capital, Pingcheng. Although we possess such a large territory at the moment, this place is good only for military activities, and not suitable for civil development. It will be very difficult to change the prevailing habits and customs of northern people. Xiaowan and Heluo used to be capitals in history, and with them as our base [we] can unify the world.” Wang said: “Yiluo is the centre of the world. If Your Majesty can reside there to control the world, people will rejoice over it.” (*Weishu* 魏書, translated from *Lidai Zhaijing Ji* vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

Although in this case the *bu* was not carried out for the stated purpose of building a capital city, but instead on the pretence of a feigned expedition, we can still learn from it what elite people’s attitudes were towards divination. Since the aim of moving the capital was essentially to foster civil and economic development — not to follow Heaven’s instructions, the divination served only as an excuse to enable the emperor to realise his secret plan. Not only was the whole move one of false
pretences, but the carrying out of the *bu*, as so very often but by no means always in divinations, was a pretence, and in this case, moreover, something regarded as out of date and unnecessary in those times. Furthermore, the officials on the other side tried to protect their own interests in the same way:

Wang Pi 王丕 said to the emperor: “Before a move, a *bu* and a *shi* should first be conducted to show the omen.” The emperor said: “Already when I was in Yezhong 雩中, Yan Wangxi and Li Chong suggested conducting a *bu*. In the Zhou dynasty, Duke Zhou and Duke Zhao did the divination for the siting of Yi and Luo and received the most auspicious omens. Since such talents are not available nowadays, it is no use doing so. Furthermore, the purpose of *bu* is to resolve uncertainty. But there is no doubt in this case. Why should we use *bu*? When the Xuanyuan 軒轅 Emperor [i.e. the demi-god world-ruler Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor]¹²⁵ was performing a *bu*, the diviner advised him to consult persons of virtue and learning. The emperor asked Tianlao 天老 and obtained his approval. Following this, there was prosperity. Therefore, only when facing difficulties which are beyond man’s abilities to solve is divination necessary.” (*Weishu 魏書*, translated from *Lidai Zhaijing Ji* vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

According to the emperor’s understanding of divination, making a divination was not as important as interpreting the omen. What he needed was an explanation corresponding to his own intention, a guaranteed result to serve his purpose, the man-made decision being more important than Heaven’s omen. The officials’ motive for taking the divination was no more sincere than that of the emperor: it was to halt the emperor’s plan in order to protect themselves from suffering an upheaval. We can also see another change of attitude towards the divinatory arts — divination was only resorted to when individuals could not make a decision. The siting of a capital city was regarded as a matter that they could deal with themselves. Given such an enlightened attitude towards them, these arts of divination no longer served as centrally as they had done in the siting of capital cities in the Zhou dynasty. The quote, “such talents are not available nowadays” also shows that the practice of divination was not as popular in the Northern Wei period as in the Zhou dynasty.

When the last emperor of the Northern Wei dynasty was forced to abandon his capital city, he made use of *bu* in his imperial edict to add authority to his decision:

> “Be able to settle and be able to move (*an’an nengqian* 安安能遷)” is an ancient idiom. It is an ancestral tradition that residence should not be fixed

¹²⁵ I.e. the Yellow Emperor, a legendary ruler said to have ruled in the prehistoric period (5000-2100 B.C.), regarded as the father of Chinese civilisation.
forever. That was why the Yin moved its capital eight times, and the Zhou built three capital cities. The fate is fixed, but the change is forever. Everything is changing, and the decision should be made according to circumstances. After Emperor Gaozu, observing astrology and consulting with people, moved his capital from Wuzhou 武州 to Songxian 宋縣, the old state of Wei 魏 knew a new prosperity. Since the Zhengguang 正光 reign-period [520-525], the state has fallen into the disaster of wars and other difficulties. Now we are going to move the capital to Zhangfu 滄塗, taking into consideration the traditions of moving capitals, the current circumstances and the omens from bu. (Weishu 魏書, translated from Lidai Zhaijing Ji vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

The auspicious tortoise oracle was used as an excuse for political action, especially at times of trouble. However, it seems that it was used in name only. In the Sui dynasty (581-618) which followed, the first emperor of the dynasty also mentioned this step of bu-divination in one of his imperial edicts:

The current capital city was originally regarded as a temporary one. Moreover, the divination (bu and xiang) has not been taken, so it is not suitable as a capital city. Considering the change . . . , Longshoushan 龍首山 has its beautiful mountains and rivers, fertile land and abundant produce. According to bu and xiang, it is suitable to be a capital city. (Suishu 薩書: “Gaozu Benji 高祖本紀,” translated from Lidai Zhaijing Ji vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

According to historical records, the emperor climbed a mountain to investigate the site, and made the decision himself. It seems that he did not rely on methods of divination to assess the situation. Instead, divination was used to support the already accomplished selection of a site. It is doubtful that the steps of bu and xiang were taken in this case. (Lidai Zhaijing Ji vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”) As it was most honestly interpreted by Emperor Zhaozong (reigned 889-904) of the Tang: “the selection [of the site of the capital city] was made by dukes and officials (公卿議), and it was followed and assisted by bu and shi (guishi xiecong 龜筮協從).” Thus the art of bu was not a determining step as it may once have been, but only served as a manipulated means of supporting the decision already made. (Jiu Tang Shu 舊唐書: “Zhaozong Benji 唐宗本紀,” translated from Lidai Zhaijing Ji vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

As time went on, although the terms bu and shi were recorded with ever-increasing frequency in the imperial scholars writings regarding the establishment of imperial capitals in succeeding centuries, the symbolic importance of these terms was appreciated more than the determining function of divination. If performance of these arts in ancient times had been in order to show deference to Heaven and the legitimacy of a decision, in later dynasties, the emphasis on using these terms
changed, to that of demonstrating an imitation of the Zhou dynasty. Repeatedly emphasised by the elite, imitating the practice of the Zhou became part of the ideology of building the imperial capital, as it was regarded as a means of legitimising the capital city and the dynasty. When capital cities were built by copying the plan prescribed in *Kaogong Ji*, the arts of *bu*, *shi* and *xiang* in the siting activities of the Zhou were often praised. Without any indication of the arts having been practised, these terms *buluo* 卜雒, *buzhou* 卜周, *buzhai* 卜宅 and *bushi xiangtu* 卜食相土 eventually became, in certain contexts, specific terms representing the establishment of the imperial capital.

At the same time, the terms *budi* 卜地, *xiangdi* 相地, *buzhai* 卜宅 and *xiangzhai* 相宅 were frequently used in *fengshui* works to denote the practice of *fengshui*. Many *fengshui* manuals had the terms *bu* and *xiang* in their titles, such as *Buzhao Zhenji* 卜兆真機 (Secrets Of Bu) and *Xiangzhai Xinbian* 相宅新編 (New Edition Of Xiangzhai). (He Xiaoxin 1995:143-45) To be sure, these terms derived from the siting practice of the Zhou dynasty, but they had particular meanings in *fengshui* practice. *Fengshui* theory might be used for interpretation, but first and foremost *fengshui* was a practical profession. The basic definition of *fengshui* practice is as a kind of divination, as has been pointed out by many scholars. This art of seeking a site which it was believed could bring good fortune to the owner/occupier of the house or grave has its own body of theory and skills. Although a *fengshui* practitioner would try to trace back the origin of the arts of *fengshui* to the siting practices of the Zhou dynasty, the divination activities of *bu* and *xiang* were not synonyms of *fengshui*, as they had different bases. (Figure 3-3)

Apart from their original meanings of divination and their later specific implication of *fengshui*, the terms *bu* and *xiang* were also used more loosely, to signify seeking a good location. Derived possibly from both Zhou dynasty divination and the influence of *fengshui*, these terms were, in many cases, used in reference to something other than *fengshui*. Whether or not these terms meant the practice of *fengshui* depended on their specific context. In ordinary writings, when they were not accompanied by references to *fengshui*, they usually meant just looking for a good site. For instance, a few examples of this meaning of the term are given in *CY*, (430-31): The Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) wrote: “I build a house in a selected place (*buzhai* 卜宅) for the rest of my life. Get away from state affairs and enjoy the pleasure of farming.” Ren Fang (460-508) wrote: “I then built the house (*buyu* 卜宇) in Jinling, where the landscape was amazing.” Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460-494) of the Nan Qi 南齊 wrote: “Looking for a good place in the northern hills, I finally built the house (*buju* 卜居) in
Figure 3-3  A late Qing depiction of selecting the site of the capital city Luo in the Zhou dynasty. As noticed by Needham, the illustration is taken from the Shujing Tushuo (1905), which explains the egregious anachronism in the use of the magnetic compass a millennium and a half before it was invented. Source: Needham, Joseph (1956). Science and Civilisation in China. vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 362.
the west suburbs.” In Liang Shu 梁書, “Liu Yu Zhuan,” we find: “So they together made their dwelling (buzhu 卜築) to the east of Songxi Temple 宋熙寺. They were determined to live there forever.”

Documents about the capital city, in most cases, only referred to the siting or building of the city. In all the examples referring to the building of capital city that I have cited above, whether bu and xiang were used as a divination or as a symbol of legitimation, the use of these terms in such circumstances shows nothing necessarily related to fengshui ideas. In the following example, the term bu represents both the ancient divination for siting and fengshui. But the Jin emperor was critical of these skills:

In the third month of the third year of the Tiande 天德 reign-period (i.e. 1151), The ruler, the Prince of Hailing 海陵, ordered his minister Zhang Hao 張浩 and others to rebuild the city of Yan and establish the imperial palaces there. In the following month he ordered that the capital be moved to Yanjing. The officials in charge of the construction presented the plan of the city and palaces, and “theories about the yin-yang and Five Names in construction (營建陰陽五姓所宜).” The emperor said: “The fortune of a state depends on virtuous influence (de) not the place. How could a place, no matter how well it was selected according to bu, make a dynasty secure, if a Jie 桀 or a Zhou 纣 were to live there? And why should bu be used for selecting a place if a Yao 堯 or a Shun 舜 were to live there?” (Jin Shi 金史, Hailing Benji 海陵本紀, translated from RJK, vol. 4)

It is beyond doubt that “yin yang and Five Names” are typical aspects of fengshui theory. But the following term here, bu, is of vague implication. In the context of general conversation, it must have implied fengshui. As referring to the siting of the capital city, it would naturally have been understood as the specific divinatory art of the Zhou dynasty. Whatever the term bu signified here, this commentary demonstrates the contempt of these arts. Virtuous influence, gained by being attuned to cosmic moral patterns, was something a man could realistically attain by his own human efforts, and was, according to the above, appreciated more than the superstitious crafts.

Let us return to examining the documents about the building of Beijing. Considering the contexts in which the terms bu and xiang were used, it is obvious that these terms

126 The last ruler of the Xia dynasty (c. 21st-c. 16th century B.C.), traditionally considered a tyrant.
127 The last ruler of the Shang dynasty (c. 16th-c. 11th century B.C.), reputedly a tyrant.
128 Yao and Shun, legendary sage monarchs of ancient China.
did not imply fengshui, since they were employed in clear statements referring to the siting of the capital in the Zhou dynasty in most official documents. An official, Li Shimian 李時勉, in his Ode of Beijing on the establishment of Beijing has the words, “imitating the buluo 卜雒 of the Zhou dynasty.” (translated from RJK, vol. 4) In Liang Benzhi’s 梁本之 congratulatory memorial to the emperor he wrote, “the capital was built by imitating the buluo of the Zhou dynasty.” (translated from RJK, vol. 6) This is obviously a statement indicating that the building of Beijing was in imitation of the capital cities of the Zhou dynasty, and implies that Beijing had the same legitimacy as that of the capital of the Zhou. Furthermore, since bu and shi are only mentioned in the odes of Beijing, at a time when all the decisions had been made and when the construction had even been finished, the terms were more likely used in a symbolic sense, as there is no evidence that the arts were actually applied.

The contrast between the role of the symbolism of the imperial capital and the role of fengshui in capital city building should be paid close attention. Bu and shi, as part of the symbolism imitating the Zhou dynasty, became part of the ideology of the imperial capital city, an ideology from which fengshui was excluded. They were more and more taken as slogans, or as merely symbolic language, rather than as denoting practical steps in the building procedure, and were not necessarily part of fengshui language. If it is unlikely that the arts of bu and shi were practised in the building of Beijing, it is quite impossible that fengshui was practised.

Moreover, the contradiction between the philosophy of fengshui and imperial symbolism also prevented the involvement of fengshui. In the building of a capital city, apart from the military, political and geographical aspects, which I have called utilitarian or practical aspects, the imperial symbolism was considered important as well, such as for instance the concepts of “the centre of the world,” “being in accordance with astrology” and “imitating the capital of the Zhou dynasty.” The central idea of this symbolism was to show that the dynasty had a legitimacy issued by Heaven, by building the capital city in accordance with Heaven, in various ways. The main aspect of fengshui criticised by the intellectual elite was the idea of improving one’s fortune as set by Heaven. This is in extreme contradiction with the symbolism of the capital city. Being criticised for its challenging of Heaven, fengshui would not have been admired by the orthodox elite, who emphasised capital-city symbolism. Thus, not only did the use of the divinatory terms in the official document not mean that fengshui was applied, but the esteem in which the symbolic meanings of these terms were held further shows further indicates how unlikely it is that fengshui was taken in to consideration.
3.4 INTERPRETATIONS IN FENGSHUI TERMS

As Loewe (1990:195) has noticed: “If practical reasons affected the choice of situation [of imperial capital cities], so also, it was claimed, did the pronouncements of the geomancer.” After Beijing was established as the capital, the site of Beijing was seen by many imperial scholars in the past 500 years as superior in terms of fengshui. Such acclamation can be traced back even to Zhu Xi’s time (1130-1200), two hundred years prior to the siting of Beijing in the Ming dynasty. The role of these fengshui concepts in the siting of Beijing is a key aspect of understanding the relationship of fengshui with the capital city. In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, I must make it clear that analyses referring to fengshui were only a meagre portion of the writings in the numerous works that refer to the site of Beijing. Although the location of Beijing was highly praised from various angles, it was hardly ever admired by the elite in terms of fengshui. There appears to be no fengshui analysis of the site of Beijing in any of the official documents available. Only in some casual writings and fengshui manuals are scattered fengshui theories about the location of Beijing gathered. Even in fengshui manuals, the capital city and Beijing were hardly mentioned until the appearance of Liu Ji’s Kanyu Manxing (Agreeable Geomantic Aphorisms) in the Ming dynasty. Moreover, the fengshui analyses of the site of Beijing were all produced after the city’s establishment as a capital, except for those of Zhu Xi and Liu Ji.

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) is, as far as we know, the first scholar who was not a fengshui specialist to have expressed a view on the site — where there was no contemporary capital at that time — from a fengshui angle. Zhu is famed as the chief representative and advocate of the thought-system known as Neo-Confucianism (or New Rationalistic Confucianism). His school of philosophy held the dominant position in the 700 years from the end of the Song dynasty until the end of the Qing dynasty, and became the official philosophy of the dynasties of those centuries. Most volumes of Zhuzi Yulei (Collection of Zhu Xi’s Utterances) are a concise declaration of his philosophy, and in this work is recorded one statement that he made about the topographical characteristics of the area of Beijing in terms apparently of fengshui:

Jidu 冀都, located at the very centre of the Earth, exhibits a wonderful fengshui pattern. The mountain chain derives from Yunzhong 雲中, the highest part of the mountains. The waters of the west side of the ridge go westward to the West Longmen River 龍門西河, while the waters of the east side of the ridge go eastward to meet the sea. The Yellow River flows in front [of the site], and Mount Huashan 华山 rises at its right as [the White] Tiger. To the front, is Mount Songshan 嵩山, the qianan 前案 (front
Furthermore, Mount Taishan is located on its left as [the Green] Dragon. The mountains of Huainan are a second screen of an. The mountains to the South of the River Yangtze and The Five Mountains are regarded as the third and fourth rows of an. (translated from Zhuzi Yulei, vol. 2)

Among outstanding scholars of the same high social position and academic fame, there seems never to have been any instance of a comparable statement. Since this passage was included in Zhuzi Yulei, a work compiled by his disciples after his death, it is possible that the words do not actually come from him. But from other sources we know that Zhu was seemingly enthusiastic about such matters, particularly about the theory and practice of the Xingshi school of fengshui. Whether this passage actually stems from Zhu Xi himself is not of crucial importance, if we consider subsequent events. As the site was chosen for capitals from the Yuan dynasty onwards, the ideas in the above passage were reproduced in several later works praising the topographical advantages of Beijing. I regard Zhu Xi’s view as of special significance, as it came to be an important piece of evidence often cited in studies of Beijing and fengshui.

Together with Zhu Xi, we should consider Liu Ji. An explicit fengshui theory on the siting of capital cities was first elaborated by Liu Ji (1311-1375), one of Emperor Taizu’s officials, in the early years of the Ming dynasty. In his Kanyu Manxing (Agreeable Geomantic Aphorisms), he associates the longevity of a dynasty with the auspicious locations of capitals in the three great mountain ranges – literally the Three Dragons, in verse:

**Ancestral Mountain (祖山):**
Kunlun mountain is the highest in the world,
Its Three Dragons [trunks] stretch to the North, South and middle.
They run throughout China in various forms,
The beauty and ugliness of the mountains affect fortunes.

**Sources of Water (水源):**
The Southern Sea, the River Yangtze and the River Yalu, With the Yellow River, make up the Four Powerful Waters.
They have marked the Three Dragons [trunks],
All mysteries are hidden in this pattern.

**North Dragon (北龙):**

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129 A typical fengshui term, meaning the front mountain or hill regarded as the front table of the selected site. It could be translated as “table hillocks.”
The North Dragon is the best for a site, summit upon summit stretching into the far distance. The River Yalu and the Yellow River are running in front of and behind it. Therefore Jintai 金台^130 is a real emperor’s residence forever.

Middle Dragon (中龍):
The honour of the Middle Dragon is incomparable, all mountains and waters surround its centrality. Our emperor’s ancestral tombs are located on this beautiful mountain, you must know this guarantees the everlasting fortune of the dynasty.

South Dragon (南龍):
The South Dragon is amazing as well. For the first time it has been chosen for a capital by Emperor Gaozu. Jinling [Nanjing] is the only capital city enjoying the superiority. It is used by Emperor Gaozu as a ladder to reach Heaven. (translated from KYJC vol. 2) (Figure 3-4)

There is no doubt that after the city was built many scholars’ understanding of the city was influenced by Zhu’s and Liu’s theories. However, there is no evidence to show that the choice of the site for Beijing was influenced by their theories. Although Zhu Xi’s view on the site where Beijing was later built was produced some two hundred years prior to the determination of the site in the Ming dynasty, and although he was respected as a great Confucian, his paean of the site was not used in the Ming official documents. Liu Ji died before Beijing was built. His assertion that “the North Dragon is the best for a site” could have served well as a theory to support the move of the capital to Beijing, since it was also in accord with the emperor’s will. But it was never used as part of the official interpretation of the choice of the site of Beijing. Zhu Xi’s view and Liu Ji’s theories formed a framework of later fengshui analysis of the location of Beijing. Several scholars were obviously influenced by them, and made comments on the site of Beijing in similar fashion. The main points of their fengshui-imbued praises are as follows. Firstly, the site was on the North Dragon, one of the Three Dragons which were believed to form the topography of China. Secondly, Beijing was surrounded by many “table hillocks”, one after another. It was a place which held in the wind and collected qi. Its topography was laid out in a perfect fengshui pattern. Moreover, there were mountains representing the White Tiger and Green Dragon, one of the characteristics of an ideal site according to

^130 Jintai was where the city of Beijing was later located.
Figure 3-4  “Zhongguo San Dagan Tu (Three Dragons)” (lit. “map of the three great stems in the Middle Kingdom”) contained in the Sancai Tuhui, vol. 16: “Dili.”

Figure 3-5  “Map of Mount. Yan” contained in the Sancai Tuhui, vol. 16: “Dili.” The topographical surroundings of the site of Beijing were largely distorted to form an ideal landscape.
fengshui principles. Thirdly, Beijing was surrounded by water at its front and back. This layout also matches a typical fengshui plan. (Figure 3-5)

Since these fengshui analyses of the location of Beijing were produced after the city was built, they were post hoc interpretations of the completed building activities. In these theories, the examples employed are no more than those of the existing capital cities, in particular the city of Beijing. The conclusion reached is based on historic facts rather than a prediction according to fengshui theory. Even Liu Ji’s theories were retrospective. According to the Three Dragons theory, every single hill in China can be seen as part of the extension of these Dragons. So any site could always be connected with one or another branch or sub-branch of the Dragons. Ten dynasties through the ages built their capitals in the area around Changan, which was regarded as the start of the Mid Dragon. Beijing was the place where the capitals of the Liao, Jin and Yuan were located. It was regarded as the end of the North Dragon. Jinling (Nanjing), a site selected by ten dynasties including the Ming for their capitals, was a distant part of the South Dragon. The same situation is described in Miu Xiyiong’s Ming dynasty fengshui manual, in which the capital cities are used to demonstrate the three-trunk theory of fengshui:

Guanzhong 闢中 is the summit of the world. It is the dragon head of the mountains in the central area [of China]. Jizhou 冀州 is [located in] the mid trunk of the Taihang Mountains. Luoyang 洛陽 is the centre of the world. It is the essence of the central area [of China]. Yandu 燕都 is the end of North Dragon. With the Yalu River running past its rear and the Yellow River running in front of it, and being embraced by countless mountains and rivers, it is a real capital in the North. Since ancient times, each of these places without exception has been selected as the capital city. (translated from KYJC vol. 2)

In Miu’s analysis, the existing facts are used to prove the fengshui advantage of these places. The good fortune already apparent in these places is presented as a conclusion produced by fengshui, a case of an effect being used as a cause. In addition, as Beijing had become the capital city by Miu’s time, the previous capital, Yingtian (Nanjing), was no longer praised. According to a retrospective source written in the end of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming, was planning to choose Beijing as his capital:

After overcoming the capital of the Yuan [Dadu] and establishing the prefectural government there [in Beijing 北平], the emperor [Zhu Yuanzhang] asked his ministers: “[I think] to establish Beijing as the imperial capital could assist control of [Mongol] enemies in the desert. Which would be better, it or Nanjing?” A Hanlin Compiler [漢林修撰] Bao
Pin 鮑頻 said: "Since the [Mongols'] emperor rose from the desert and founded their capital at Yan [Dadu] a hundred years ago, the diqi 地氣 [cosmic breath or vital energy in earth, or geomantic ambience (of Dadu)] has been totally consumed (地氣已盡). Nanjing is a place which will bring flourishing to the emperor [xingwang zhidi 興王之地]. There is no need to move the capital." (translated from Changan Kehua 長安客話, vol. 1)

After Beijing became the capital, a view of Jinling found in another manual, Dili Renzi Xuzhi 地理人子須知, produced in the Ming, was that: “according to dili, it is in correspondence with the stellar constellation Ziwei, but the qi of the site leaks too much (奈何垣氣多泄).” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:12) The preference for fengshui theory was changing as a consequence of the change of capital city.

Thus it was not that fengshui theory influenced the choice of the site for Beijing, but precisely the reverse: the fait accompli of the choice of the site inspired the retrospective development of fengshui theory on the capital city. The fact that the site had already been chosen as the capital, subsequently gave the fengshui advocates their best chance for elaborating a set of fengshui theories about the chosen site to enhance the reputation and popularity of fengshui. Fengshui influenced the later understanding of the city, rather than explaining the actual process and attitudes involved in the original siting of the capital. Zhu Xi and Liu Ji’s initial development of fengshui theory on the siting of Beijing and other capital cities only influenced subsequent fengshui theory, not subsequent sitings. These later fengshui analyses formed part of the non-orthodox post-hoc interpretation of the city, but definitely not the mainstream of analysis of the location of Beijing.

To resume the conclusions of this chapter, I would hold that, in view of the materials that I have analysed, one can hardly argue that in the choice of the site of Beijing fengshui theory played as decisive a role as it did in the siting of graves. I suggest that fengshui had more influence on the interpretation of the site already selected than on the choice of site. Several aspects of my evidence support the hypothesis that fengshui was not considered or practised in the choice of the site of the capital. Firstly, specific historic conditions made it inevitable that the site would be chosen as the capital. Under the pressure of circumstances, Emperor Chengzu [Zhu Di] had no choice but to select Beijing as his capital. Many practical factors and immediate dangers had to be considered ahead of any possible claims of fengshui. Secondly, there was no siting process when the city of Beiping was designated Beijing (the Northern Capital), when the city was promoted as the principal capital. The choice of the site had been predetermined, mostly by Zhu Di himself in a long process of prior decision-making, so there was no need to look for a new site in the course of which
fengshui might have been consulted. Thirdly, the building of a capital city was different from the building of tombs, fengshui being seen in the latter case as a necessary body of theory for the siting. Primacy was given in site-selection to pragmatic practical supply, administration and defence needs and the also imperial symbolism over the methods and requirements of fengshui. The idea of imitating the Zhou dynasty dominated the imperial capital's symbolism, which was contrary to the philosophy of fengshui. Finally, the appearance of fengshui theory in relation to the capital-city siting was an effect of the building of Beijing rather than a cause of the siting of the city. With no fengshui discussion or practice recorded for the siting, in contrast to the cases of the siting procedures of the imperial tombs and the planning of the wall of the Outer City, fengshui analyses of the site came into existence as part of the retrospective interpretations of the city.

However, a relevant question has not been answered — what was the reason which induced those later scholars, who perpetuated the orthodox Confucian ideology of the imperial capital, and usually despised fengshui, to accept these fengshui ideas in their perception of the site of Beijing? To assert that they must have been fengshui believers would be to over simplify the complexity of this matter. This question leads to the issue of whether fengshui ideas, the geomantic perception of geography and the landscape, were part of the general mentality of the Ming elite, and were consequently applied in the siting and perceiving of the city at an almost unconscious level. If not, why was the site so often seen as so in accord with principles of fengshui? These questions will be answered in the next two chapters in regard to the geographical aspects and the topographical aspects in fengshui imbued interpretations of the site.
CHAPTER 4 GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF FENGSHUI IN BEIJING

The imperial scholars’ analyses associated with fengshui and concerning the site of Beijing were mainly focused on two aspects, the wider geographical ones and the local topographical ones, which will be dealt with respectively in this chapter and the next. The theories on the geographical location of the city, such as those about the mountain ranges, the theory of qi (pneuma) and the changes of fortune of the imperial capitals through history, will be analysed in this chapter. Coincidentally, all the theories regarding the geographical aspects of the site were associated with the concept of qi, but a diversity of theories on different aspects of qi were involved. In this chapter, I shall first analyse the idea that the site of Beijing in a long mountain range accesses authentic qi. This will lead into a discussion on the development of a macroscopic concept regarding the geographic situation of the whole of imperial China, namely that of the Three Dragons, and its variant theory — the Three Dragons in fengshui. The second section concentrates on the theory that the site of Beijing is of an ideal geographical pattern for concentrating qi. Thirdly, the theory on qi, which is closely associated with the perception of geography and the idea of change of fortune, and the theory on the phenomenon of capital cities moving eastward will both be examined. Finally, I shall analyse the complicity and ambiguity in all these fengshui-associated theories to reveal the factors that brought them into some scholars understanding of the site of the city of Beijing.

4.1 THE NORTH DRAGON

In Zhu Xi’s analysis and the analyses that agreed with Zhu’s view, the geographic location of Beijing was seen as a superior one. One of the reasons was that the site was located in a long mountain range that was in certain contexts named Beilong 北龍 (lit. “North Dragon”), the north trunk of the three great mountain ranges named the Three Dragons in China. The idea of having a site located in a long mountain range, and the concept of the Three Dragons, were both largely developed in fengshui and also closely associated with the development of Chinese geography. In order to fully understand this theory, we have first to trace back the development of this particular view of China’s geography. (See Figure 3-4)

4.1.1 The Three Dragons Theory

In imperial China, the mountains and hills of the entire region where the Chinese lived were perceived as three mountain-range systems, namely the Sandalong 三大龍
The Three Dragons theory of geography was developed from the Two Frontiers theory. Its initiator Yixing 行 (683-727), a Buddhist monk of the Tang dynasty, is believed to have been a fengshui master, as his name is listed in the Kanyu Section of GTJ among other fengshui masters through the ages. According to Weng Wenhao’s 翁文灏 study, the most explicit theory regarding the mountain ranges was raised for the first time by Yixing, who classified the mountain ranges into two great systems namely the Liangjie 兩戒 (Two Frontiers). According to Wang Shixing’s Guang Zhi Yi 廣志绎 (Records and Investigation of General Geography), Yixing’s theory was as follows:

The pattern of the mountains and rivers of the world can be summarised in the Two Frontiers. The range which originates at Sanwei Jishi 三危 積石, proceeds via the north of the Zhongnan 終南 Mountains, grows eastward to the Taihua 太華 Mountains, then crosses the Yellow River to include the Leishou 雷首, Dizhu 底柱, Wangwu 王屋 and Taihang 太行 Mountains to the east of Mount Changshan 常山, and continues eastward along the Great Wall, ending in Korea, is the North Frontier (beiji 北紀) for holding back the savages in the North. The range which originates at Bozhong 博中 in the Minshan 峦山 Mountains, proceeds via the south of the Zhongnan Mountains, grows eastwards to the Taihua, Shangshan 商山, Xionger 熊耳, Waifang 外方 and Tongbai 椤柏 Mountains, then goes southwards and crosses the River Yangtse at Shangluo 上洛, to include the Wudang 武當 and Jingshan 荊山 Mountains, and continues on to Hengyang 衡陽 before turning eastwards again and along Lingjiao 嶺徼 until it reaches Dongou 東甌 at Minzhong 甌中. This is the South Frontier (Nanjì 南紀) to segregate the barbarians in the South. . . . The source of the Yellow River lies together

131 Monk Yixing’s original name was Zhang Sui. He was an expert on the calendar, and the founder of the Mizong Sect of Buddhism. He was also seen as an outstanding scholar of mathematics, the calendar, astronomy and geography. In fengshui books, he was also claimed as a fengshui master. (cf. CY 3; Needham 1959:4, 37-8, 48, 119-20, 282-83, 544-45)

132 Weng Wenhao’s two essays “A Study on Chinese Mountain Ranges” and “Some Incorrect Principles in Chinese Geography”, in which Yixing’s concepts on the mountain ranges in China were discussed, were published in Zhui Zhi Ji 稅指集 in 1930. As Wang Chengzu (1982:172) has pointed out, very few copies of Weng’s book were printed, and it is hard to find, which is why Wang kindly appended a piece of Weng’s essay to his own book.

133 It was said in Xin Tang Shu, Tianwen Zhi, vol. 1: “Yixing thought the geography of the country could be classified into Two Frontiers.” (CY 1188)
with the origin of the North Frontier. . . . That is the North River. The source of the River Yangtse lies together with the origin of the South Frontier. . . . That is the South River. (translated from Wang Shixing Dilishu Sanzhong 王十性地理書三種 239)

Weng held that: “Yixing’s Two Frontiers theory was an extension of the theory of *fenye* 分野 [the theory regarding the correspondence between Heaven and Earth],\(^{134}\) since he believed the mountains responded to the movement of stellar constellations and the changes in human affairs. In the view of modern science, it is complete nonsense. But his idea regarding the use of frontiers to segregate barbarians offers a deep understanding of the relationship between natural geography and human life. It is of the same essence as modern geography.” (translated from Wang Chengzu 1982:173) Although Yixing was a *fengshui* master, his study on geography laid a foundation for the further development of geography in imperial times. The connection between *fengshui* and geography was noticed by Needham: “it would be interesting to make a study of the steps by which the expression *ti li* 地理 (lit. ‘earth pattern’) came to have its present meaning of geography. This was certainly being used in the +1\(^\text{st}\) and +2\(^\text{nd}\) centuries as we use it now. Earlier there was no doubt a close connection with geomancy, but the significance of the term *li*, about which so much has already been said, and which fundamentally implied pattern and organisation as well as rational principle, will not escape us.” (Needham 1959:500)

*Dili*, as exploring the earth’s patterns, was a title shared by geomancers with geographers, but with different aims.

A further contribution to the Three Dragons theory on the geography of China is believed to have been made by another *fengshui* master, Yang Yunsong of the Tang dynasty. He provided a general concept for the geographical situation, at the very beginning of his *fengshui* manual *Han Long Jing* 擎龍經:

> Mount Xumi 須彌 (Kunlun) is a huge object between Heaven and Earth. It is just like a man's back and nape, and has four legs. Its four [mountain] ranges, which divide the world into four, run North, South, West and East. The north and west ranges run for tens of thousands of *li*, and the east range enters into Sanhan 三韓 and beyond. The south dragon which enters China is especially wonderful for being the ancestor of mountains. The Yellow River with its nine bends is [its] intestine. The twisting River [Yangtse] is [its] bladder. The branches [of the mountain] and [earth] veins stem and stretch away in criss-cross pattern. The *qi* and blood [vessels] connect with each other, and accumulate where there is water. The biggest [mountain

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\(^{134}\) The theory of *fenye* has been introduced in section 2.1. (1) “Kanyu.”
ranges] can be used as a site for a capital city. The secondary [ranges] are suitable for the prefectural administrative capitals and the [residences of] dukes and princes. The much smaller [ranges] form the site for the remote towns, where nobles and wealthy people may also be found.

Although the idea of Mount Kunlun as ancestor of mountain ranges in China was not initiated by Yang, his theory of the three mountain ranges is the earliest among the materials available. This was also accompanied by the Three Waters concept as Yang stated in his Yi Long Jing 疑龍經:

To seek the dragon and the earth vein, the shi (power/ dynamism) must be stressed. The dishi (terrain) is decided by the earth. According to the theory of “two frontiers,” the Yellow River and the River Yangtse form two systems [of waters]. Among them, the Ji, Huai, Han, and River Xiangs also have [their own] sources. Stemming from the trunk are branches which themselves have their own sub-branches. The long ones reach the sea and the short ones enter [the sites to form] configurations. (translated from Liu Xiaoming 1994:102)

This macroscopic concept of geographical pattern, which served as a foundation to elaborate his fengshui theory on how to influence one’s fortune, was followed by not only the later geomancers but also the scholars who were interested in geography.

Zhu Xi also discussed the three large water systems, as quoted in Zhaipu Zhiyao 宅譜指要 (Guide of House-Siting): “There should be a mountain between two waters, and any two mountains must have water between them.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 9) We find it said in Zhuzi Daquan 朱子大全 (The Complete Works of Zhu Xi):

There are three large systems of waters in China: the Yellow River, the River Yangtse and the River Yalu. According to yutu 奄圖 (maps), the River Yangtse and South Sea flanked the South Dragon, and enter the Southeast Sea. The Yellow River and the River Yangtse flanked the Middle Dragon, and enter the East Sea. The Yellow River and the River Yalu

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135 According to Needham’s (1959:565-68) research, it was believed, as shown in Buddhist works during the Tang dynasty, that Mt Kunlun at the north of Tibet was the centre of the Earth, corresponding to Heaven. To the west of it lay unknown regions, while to the east China occupied only one of eighty regions which were scattered all around the mountain. Needham held that this religious cosmography came into China with Buddhism, perhaps joining with earlier indigenous concepts of Mt Kunlun as central.

136 Yutu or yuditu 與地圖 means maps. It was said in Suoyin 索隸: “Since Heaven is for covering, while the Earth is for carrying, Heaven is called pai 蓋 [cover] and the Earth is called yu 與 [carrier]. So the map is called Yaditu. I assume that this name was derived from ancient times, not from the Han dynasty.” (CY, 3032)
flanked the North Dragon, and enter the Liao Sea. (translated from Liu Xiaoming 1994:102)

As shown by evidence from the subsequent development of the discipline of geography in China, it seems that Zhu Xi was seen as the founder, or the most important advocate, of the Three Dragon theory on the geographic pattern of China, and the terms Sandalong 三大龍 (Three Great Dragons) and Sandaganlong 三大干龍 (Three Great Mountain Dragons) were probably initiated by him. “The Three Dragons of China termed by the Song dynasty Confucian scholars” was a common expression used when the term “Three Dragons” was mentioned in later geographical works, as in Xu Xiake Youji (b, 55). The term song ru 宋儒 does generally mean “the Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty,” and was a traditional way of referring to the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi and the representative figures of his school, including Cheng Hao 程頤, Cheng Yi 程頲, Zhang Zai 張載, Shao Yong 邵雍, and Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤. The fengshui specialist’s contribution to the Three Dragons and Three Waters theories is sometimes noted, as in Wang Shixing statement: “Since early times it has been said by the kanyu specialist that all mountain ranges and rivers originate from Mount Kunlun and enter China as three dragons.” (Wang Shixing Dilishu Sanzhong 210) However, in most cases Zhu Xi was cited as the primary and authentic source of this theory, while Yan Yunsong’s theory on the Three Dragons, which was reputedly given about two hundred years prior to Zhu Xi’s time, was not mentioned at all by the imperial scholars.

In the early years of the Ming, a geomantic theory on the choice of site for imperial capital cities was elaborated by Liu Ji, on the basis of this Three Dragons concept regarding the macroscopic geography of China. Liu’s theory (see section 3.4) was no doubt a fengshui theory, as it was created by a fengshui master in a fengshui manual. There were therefore two theories that both referred to the concept of Three Dragons. One was a purely geographical concept regarding the macroscopic geographic situation of China, a concept which was established through the efforts of both fengshui specialists and non-fengshui scholars. The other one was an explicit fengshui theory distinguished from the previous one by its concentration on the fortune of the capital cities. Liu’s theory on the fortune of the capital cities surely influenced some scholars’ understanding of the site of Beijing, as a similar idea subsequently appeared in some of the discussions on the change of fortune of the capital cities. But Liu’s theory was never quoted or mentioned in non-fengshui works, where Zhu Xi was regarded as the initiator of the Three Dragons theory of geography. (Figure 4-2)
Figure 4-2  "Yu Di Tu" (a general map of China) carved in stone in 1265-1274 (Song). The rubbing of it is now preserved in the Kuritogeian Convent in Kyoto, Japan. It confirms the conception of the geography of China in Zhu Xi's time. In this way any location within the territory of China could be connected with one of the Three Dragons. Source: Cao Wanru (et. al.) (1990). (Eds.) An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China: From the Warring States Period to the Yuan Dynasty (476 B.C.-A.D. 1368). Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe. p. 83.
In most cases, the term Three Dragons was merely used to describe the geographic pattern, without implications concerning fortune as in fengshui. Most of the subsequent scholars who were interested in the Three Dragons concept were attracted to the framework of the macroscopic geography of China rather than to the fengshui significance of the term. Wang Shixing was one of those scholars who was devoted to the study of geography, and who tried to modify the Three Dragons concept of geography in accord with his own fieldwork. In Guang Youzhi 廣游志 (Records of Wide Travelling) he gave an account of the course of the Three Dragons, and pointed out Zhu Xi’s mistakes:

Mount Kunlun is located at the centre of the Earth. Its four divisions stretch into the wilderness. The only division that enters China is the south-east one. This division is again divided into three branches outside the Great Wall. The left branch goes via Yinshan 陰山 and Helan 贺蘭 Mountains, gives rise to the Taihang Mountains in Shanxi, and then stretches further for thousands of li to form the Yiwulü 酉巫閟 Mountains, before ending at the Liao (Bo) Sea . This is the North Dragon.

The middle branch goes along Xifan to the Minshan Mountains, before then sandwiching the River Min 岷. The mountain range to the south of the River Min stops at Xuzhou 叙州. The range to the north of the River Min runs further northward to Guanzhong and connects the mountains at Dasanguan between the River Wei 渭 and River Han 漢. The range runs further than the Zhongnan, Taihua, Qin and Songgao Mountains in the middle. The range going right [south] forms Mount Jing 荊 on the bank of the River Huai, while the range going left [north] turns into a plain of thousands of li before finally rising as Mount Tai 泰 and submerging itself in the sea. That is the Middle Dragon.

Another mountain range starts to the west of Tufan 吐蕃 and proceeds to Yunnan 雲南 following the River Li 麗. It continues further to Zhanxi and Guanling 閩嶺 in Guizhu 貴竹, then turns to Yuanling 沅陵 in the east. One of the branches of this range from Wugang 武岡 follows westwards along the River Xiang to Wuling. Another branch from Mount Haiyang 海陽 in Guilin 桂林 goes via the Jiuyi 九嶷 and Heng 衡 Mountains and follows the River Xiang 湘 eastward, ending at Kuanglu 考壠. . . . All these sub-branches form the South Dragon.

The Song dynasty Confucians thought that both the Middle Dragon and the South Dragon started from the Min Mountains and were divided by the River Yangtze. This is because the Song dynasty took the River Dadu 大渡 as its frontier, and excluded the Dian-yun 滇雲 region [i.e. roughly present-day Yunnan province] from its territory. Since no scholar-officials had travelled there, this theory was based entirely on imagination. Actually, the River Jinsha 金沙 starts from the River Liniu 犀牛 in Tufan and flows into Dian [i.e. Dian-yun] as the River Chuan 川. It is separated from the Min Mountains before crossing the Great Wall. Therefore the South Dragon does
Another traveller, Xu Xiake (1586-1641), described by Needham (1959:524) as “a man whose interests were neither official nor religious, but scientific and artistic,” also made a contribution to the Three Dragons concept. As Needham has pointed out: “His biographers agree in saying that he thoroughly disbelieved in the theories of the geomancers, and wished to go and see for himself the dispositions of the great mountain regions radiating from the Tibetan massif.” (ibid.) After challenging many traditional views and clarifying the sources and courses of the Chinese rivers, Xu also examined the previous Three Dragons concept, in his book Jiangyuan Kao (Inspection of the Sources of the Rivers), on the basis of his own fieldwork. He points out many mistakes in Zhu Xi’s description. Xu summarises the macroscopic geography of China as follows:

Here I examine the general courses of the Three Dragons. The North Dragon runs along the north bank of the Yellow River. The South Dragon goes along south of the River Yangtse. The Middle Dragon running between them is the shortest one. Only the southern half of the North Dragon range is inside China. There are [my] other separate works on this. The South Dragon, which starts from Mount Kunlun as well, covers most of the territory of China. It runs south along the River Jinsha, and that is why I think the River Yangtse is longer than the Yellow River. . . . The South Dragon comes from the Five Mountains and its main range (zhengmai then turns northward. . . . The Dragons turns West and forms the site for Jinling. The rest of the ranges (yuanmai) go east to Yuyi. So Yuyi is not only the end of the River Yangtse but is the end of the South Dragon as well. The South Dragon and the River Yangtse both started from Mount Kunlun and end at Yuyi together, and make an important military fortress of Jinling. That is why the Liudu (i.e. the previous capital city – Jinling/Nanjing) is considered as a place that could never be conquered. However, the Yellow River, which originally ran northwards to Jieshi but now turns south into the valley of the River Huai and River Si, forms no important fortress. The conclusion that the River Yangtse is longer than the Yellow River is drawn from a consideration not only of their sources but also of the Dragons’ courses. Therefore, without investigating the source of the River Yangtse, how could we know that the River Yangtse is much longer than the Yellow River? (Xu Xiake Youji b, 55-56)

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137 Only part of this book is included in the Xu Xiake Youji edited by Din Wenjiang. The other edited Xu Xiake Youji does not contain this piece of text. (cf. Wang Chenzuz 1982:170)

138 It seems that Xu wrote another, separate work on the Three Dragons. It is not, however, available today.
Although Xu seems to have been influenced by fengshui to a certain extent, as seen from his use of the Three Dragons framework and of the term long (dragon) to represent a mountain range, his arguments on both mountain ranges and water courses seem always to be based on practical geography. The Three Dragons theory became a common view of the geography of China shared by both the fengshui experts and the scholars. Terms such as long (dragon), which were associated with fengshui, were used widely by non-fengshui scholars in the field of geography without any specific implication of fengshui. For the scholars interested in geography, their focus was on the purely geographic aspect as they sought to establish an appropriate representation of the general geographic pattern of China. To them, this theory was a successful framework for illustrating the reality that they encountered in their ongoing research. In Wang Shixing’s and Xu Xiake’s books, their effort was concentrated on revising the concept concerning the courses of the Three Dragons from a geographical point of view.

The focus of fengshui theory was not on the practical geographical pattern itself, but rather on an elaboration of the relationship between mountain ranges and fortune. In fengshui, mountains and hills along a range were classified into a series, starting from the “primary ancestor mountain,” “secondary ancestor mountain” and “parent mountain,” until the mountain on which a site was to be located was selected. The pedigree of mountain ranges was important to a site, as it was believed that a good site had to be close to a main “dragon” with a long mountain range. The Three Dragons theory served only as a basic set of ideas for investigating the origins of mountain ranges, and to distinguish the trunk from the branch of the range, in order to determine whether the fortune of the site was “precious” or poor — good or bad, ample or meagre. In reflection of the difference between their purposes, a demarcation could be drawn between the field of geomancy and the field of geography, although they both shared the same name, dili (lit. “earth pattern”) and many other concepts and terms.

The geographer and fengshui specialist were, however, both engaged in exploring the geographic circumstances of China. As a result of contributions from both the fengshui experts and other scholars from the Tang dynasty to the Ming dynasty, a general concept of China’s geography was established. (Figure 4-3) In spite of different opinions on details of the courses of the Three Dragons, the main trunks of
mountain ranges were considered to be well established.\textsuperscript{139} Throughout the development of this concept, Zhu Xi’s suggestions and the geologists’ efforts were crucial in making the concept convincing and acceptable. Therefore, to speak of the Three Dragons, a general term not exclusively used by fengshui, was not necessarily to do so with reference to fengshui. Whether or not a statement on the site of Beijing referring to the North Dragon implied fengshui, should be judged according to the context and the purpose of any specific argument, not only as a reference to the concept of Three Dragons. Wright (1977:55) held that “later scholars [in Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) time] returned to the ‘emanation’ theory and elaborated the feng-shui system as it applied not only to capital cities but by extension to the whole geography of China.” I think it is inappropriate to attribute this theory solely to fengshui.

4.1.2 The Site of Beijing and the North Dragon

In Zhu Xi’s passage on the site where Beijing was later located, he admires the great length of the mountain range, although he does not use the term North Dragon. In the ensuing argument, he explicitly praises the fengshui pattern of the site. So his admiration of the great length of the mountain range was possibly based on a fengshui idea, that of locating a city on a great mountain so as to obtain the original qi. This idea was expounded, using the term Three Dragons, by fengshui specialists who agreed with Zhu’s argument. A large part of the analyses of Beijing and Nanjing

\textsuperscript{139} According to Liu Xiaoming’s research (1994:102-3), Liao Yu of the Song dynasty thought as follows: The North Dragon rises from the Kunlun Mountains, and branches into several streams at Baideng. The west branch is Hukou Taiyue. The second branch runs south out of Xicheng, then runs west to Leishou. The third branch is Taihang, the fourth Hengshan. The fifth branch is Yanshan, ending at Mount Jieshi in Pingluan. Liao Yu held that the range of the middle trunk rises from the Kunlun Mountains, runs east to Longyou, passes Fengxiang and Changan, and then branches into three. One of the main trunks comes out of Xionger and is called Mount Songshan, then runs via Bianliang out of Yanzhou, forming Mount Taishan. One branch ends in Denglai, and one ends at Cangli. According to Liao, the dragons to the south of the River Changjiang (Yangtse) rise to form the Kunlun Mountains. Mount Minshan twists westwards, then turns south, entering Yunnan again, turns east forming Mount Yelang (in present-day north-west Guizhou), then runs into Lingling, Hunan, from Guiling Ridge of Guangxi, forming the Jiuyi Mountains, comes into Guilian, passes over Dugeng Ridge, goes out of Nanxiong, entering Shaowu from Dingzhou and arrive at Guangxin, where they are called the Wuyi Mountains, carry on to Huizhou, where it is called the Tianmu Mountains. From there on, it branches into three, one being Qiantang, one being Jiankang (Nanjing), which ends at Jiangyin, and one running up from Lingshan, and ending at Lushan by Lake Poyang. Liu Ji had a different idea about it: “The South Dragon ends at the Tianmu Mountains.” Yao Tongshou 姚桐壽 of the Yuan dynasty quoted Liu Ji’s words in Lejiao Siyu 樂郊私語: “All the earth veins in China derive from Mt Kunlun. It is known to all [where are the ends of the North Dragon and Middle Dragon. But it is unknown where is located the end of South Dragon which rises from Mount Emei and of which the range runs eastwards along the river. I have recently learned on a trip from Tongzhou by sea that the islands of Haiyan are the end of the course of the South Dragon.” (translated from Liu Xiaoming 1994:103)
was presented in *Dili Renzi Xuzhi* 地理人子須知 (The Basic Dili), a fengshui manual written in the Ming dynasty. In which, the theories of Zhu Xi, Yang Yunsong and Qu Jun were conflated in the following statement:

Mount Yan in the North Dragon is the site of the capital city of the present time [Ming]. Because the range of the Yanran 燕然 Mountains ends here, it acquired the name Yan. It was called Jintai [Golden Terrace] as well, since King Zhao 昭 of the Yan built a Huangjintai 黄金臺 [Golden Terrace] there to summon wise and able people to serve him. It was in the territory of ancient Jizhou. Emperor Shun 舜 took the north-east part of Jizhou as Youzhou, so it [the capital] was called Youdu as well. According to Qiu Wenzhuang’s 邱文莊 [Qu Jun] *Daxue Yanyi Bu* 大學衍義補, “the world was divided into nine prefectures in the Yuxia 虞夏 period. Jizhou was at the north end, with the widest territory to its north...” Yang [Yunsong] said: “Mount Yan is the highest place, and in correspondence with the stellar constellation Tianshi.” It is located on the main trunk of the North Dragon *(beigan zi zhengjie 北干之正結)*. The Dragon originates from the Middle Division of Mount Kunlun... running tens thousands of *li* to Mount Yanran, the branch in China that is called Mount Yan. It then goes eastward, rising to the Mount Tianshou, before finally submerging itself in the sea. It encloses a plain of thousands of *li*. According to the principles of *dili*, the course of the Dragon is long, the configuration [of the site] is perfect, the site is the very point at which the Dragon ends, and the great mountains and great rivers are concentrated here, ... all of these perfectly matching the requirements of *fengshui*. (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:10)

Zhu Xi was probably the first scholar to raise the idea that being located on the main range of the Dragon, and having a long Dragon-course, were advantages of the site of Beijing. This idea was repeatedly copied in *fengshui* works after the city of Beijing was built in the Ming dynasty. Then an explicit *fengshui* theory about the siting for the capital city arose, in which it was said that the imperial capital should be on a dragon trunk, and not on a branch. Only in this way could *zhengqi* 正氣 (main or original *qi*) be available. The fact that the city of Beijing was built on the North Dragon enabled the *fengshui* theories on capital-city siting regarding the Dragons to come into being. What Miu Xiyong said in his *Zangjing Yi* 彫經翼 *(A Supplement to Burial Classics)*, *Xia Lun Pian* 峽論篇 (Canyon Section) was typical of such theories:

A *guo* [xia] 過峽 (lit. “transitory canyons”) should be on a main mountain ridge in order to obtain the original *qi*. When [*qi*] is flowing low, [the mountain] turns into [flat] ground. When [*qi*] rises up, it forms a mountain. If the waters run at both sides of the ridge, the ridge is twisting and circling [forming an appropriate site]. It is suitable for establishing cities there. So it is easy to understand [what kind of city can be built at] the end of a main mountain ridge and [what kind of city can be built at] the end of a branch of a mountain range. Therefore, [a site with] a plain stretching out for a thousand miles is the best place for the imperial residence. [A site with]
mountainous topography is suitable for a mountain tomb. [A mountain], with the rage deriving from afar, luxuriant and green, is suitable to be the dominant hill of a region. [A hill] deriving from a trivial branch, or that is isolated, is only suitable for an ordinary residence or grave. (translated from KYJC vol. 2, 101)

Obtaining the main qi was the essence of fengshui theories for building the capital city on the Dragons. These theories were associated with ideas concerning mountains and qi, fundamental concepts of fengshui. The most distinguishable essence of fengshui was the idea of finding a site with good qi, in order to improve one’s destiny. The way to trace qi was to investigate the mountains and rivers, since the mountains were seen as the visible form of the movement of qi in the earth. Locating good qi was the goal, and examining the earth pattern was the means. However, it was also common among scholars to explain the formation and variation of geographic landform by using the concept qi. In Wang Shixing’s and Xu Xiake’s works, the variation of landform was often described as a result of the movement of qi. Whereas investigating and explaining the earth pattern was taken as the main task by scholars who were interested in geography and cartography, the concept that qi formed mountains was also adopted by fengshui, though for a different purpose.

In order to obtain the original qi, it was also stressed in fengshui that an ideal capital city should be associated with great mountains and rivers. For instance, it was said in Xie Tianji 澤天機 (Revealing Nature’s Mystery), “Fucha Benyuan Ge” 俯查本源歌 (Song Investigating the Original Source): “the capital should be founded at the meeting-point of great mountains and rivers, the town should be founded at the meeting-point of moderate-sized mountains and rivers, and the house and grave should be built at the meeting-point of tiny mountains and rivers.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:17) According to Zhaipu Zhiyao (Guide of House-Siting): “The mountain is yang and the water is yin. . . . They coexist together to form the taiji (Supreme Being). Therefore the xingshi for a capital city should be half yin and half yang.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:10) Yang Yunsong said in Han Long Jing: “The biggest [mountain ranges] can be used as a site for a capital city.” For fengshui purposes, the large mountain and large river were endowed with great significance. For the fengshui specialist, therefore, that Beijing was located on the North Dragon meant that it would have good fortune. But to other scholars, who were probably not interested in matters of fortune, that the Dragons had original qi was an undeniable truth just as were the facts that the North Dragon had a long course, commencing from Mount Kunlun, and ending at Beijing. So, praising the site for being closely attached to the Dragon, was firmly on the basis of the prevalent
ideas of geography. Since the knowledge of geography and qi was shared by all, the Dragon theory on the site of Beijing would surely evoke resonances among the scholars.

However, for Confucian scholars, connecting the capital city with one of the Dragons was a way of praising the imperial capital, or, to some scholars, of emphasising its legitimacy. The belief that the capital city should be built beside a great mountain or great river appears to have a long history. It was said in Guanzi 管子 (“Cheng Ma” 乘馬 section), a book written no later than the Han dynasty,\(^{140}\) that “The capital city must be built either at the foot of a great mountain or on the bank of a great river (Fanli guodu feiyu dashan zhixia biyu guangchuan zhishang 凡立國都 非于大山之下必于廣川之上)” (translated from Liu Xiaoming 1994:173) Thus, this principle was not derived from fengshui. This idea would give a strong symbolic meaning to a capital city, since it confirmed the elite’s desire of legitimising the place of the capital in the cosmic order. The fengshui theories on capital cities and on Dragons were something separate from this idea of stressing the authenticity of an imperial capital.

The approval of the geographical location of Beijing on the North Dragon was thus not only based on fengshui. However, we need to consider the many non-fengshui factors which made the theories acceptable to some non-fengshui scholars. When Zhu Xi drew attention to the long mountain range stretching to the site, he may have implied the authentic qi in fengshui terms. But another implication of great mountains, which were imbued with the signification of authority, may also have interested him. As for those who quoted Zhu’s words, they may have been influenced by fengshui ideas. But the idea of emphasising the symbolic authority of the imperial capital surely fascinated them as well. To the scholars, praising the capital city by connecting it with the Three Dragons was a way of emphasising the legitimacy of the capital and, of course, of the Empire.

### 4.2 THE CONCENTRATION OF QI

In Zhu Xi’s analysis of the site where Beijing was later located, the most explicit fengshui idea was that the geographical location of the site was good for concentrating qi. (Zhuzi Yulei vol. 2, see section 3.4 quotation) (Figure 4-4)

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\(^{140}\) Guanzi, attributed to Guan Zhong (-645 B.C.), is believed to have been written in the Warring States Period, Qin or Han dynasty. (CY 2361)
Figure 4.4  An illustration of Zhu Xi's view of the site of Beijing.
In Zhu Yizun’s (1629–1709) version, quoted in Rixia Jiwen Kao 以下幾見考, this passage was followed by two sentences: “There is no other site of a capital city in history that can match the site of Ji. It is what is meant by saying [in fengshui] that ‘[qi] can be dispersed in wind and bound by water (無風以散之 有水以界之)’.\[141\] (translated from Rixia Jiwen Kao 69) The last sentence was possibly not Zhu Xi’s own, since it is not included in his Zhuzi Yulei 朱子語類 or most other books. It was also possible that the scholars who quoted Zhu’s passage did not want Zhu’s argument to look like a fengshui argument. But considering the context, this sentence was clearly the central message of the whole passage. The site was seen as located in an ideal pattern of geographic surroundings which could protect the site from possible dispersion of qi. Although the concept of qi was used in many other contexts that had nothing to do with fengshui, the theory about the nature of qi corresponding to water and wind was a unique contribution by fengshui. In addition, the terms an, Green Dragon and White Tiger were also used in the passage. This was an unmistakable application of fengshui theory. With regard to this passage itself, it therefore endorsed the fengshui principle of confining qi, since it was about an ideal spatial layout for a selected site. According to fengshui, a selected site should contain waters to restrict the qi. The hillocks, which surrounding the site to form an enclosure, would be regarded as a perfect pattern for preventing the loss of qi.

The concept of qi is one of the ideas associated with fengshui in Zhuzi Yulei. The theme of this book is how to perceive and explain the world through the dominant Neo-Confucian philosophy. These fengshui conceptions became part of his explanation of the world. Most scholars have paid little regard to his idea about the site of Beijing, even though this passage was directly quoted in most books concerned with the geographical aspects of the site of Beijing in the Ming and Qing dynasties, for instance, Daxue Yanyi Bu 大學衍義補, Dili Renzi Xuzhi 地理人子須知, Chuming Mengyu Lu 春明夢余錄, Tianfu Guang Ji 天府廣記, Chenyuan Shilue 宸垣識略 and Rixia Jiwen Kao. In most cases Zhu’s passage was quoted as an endorsement of the choice of the site without further elaboration in light of fengshui. On the other hand, a few scholars tried to avoid any reference to qi and fengshui. The first sentence “Jidu exhibits a wonderful fengshui pattern” and the last sentence “It is what is meant by saying [in fengshui] that ‘[qi] can be dispersed in

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\[141\] This sentence was translated by Wright (1977:55) as: “As a place for building a capital in ancient or modern times, no place surpasses Chi-chou. It is what may be called a place where there is no wind to disperse it and there is water to contain it.”
wind and bound by water,” the two parts with obvious fengshui connotation, were omitted by some scholars in their quotations. In RJK and Chenyuan Shilue, the first sentence was omitted. In Tianfu Guangji and Chuenming Mengyulu, the last sentence was omitted. Only in Qiu Jun’s book and the fengshui book Dili Renzi Xuzhi did they both survive. Therefore, scholars who were willing to quote this passage as it was praising the site of Beijing, were however embarrassed by the obvious fengshui style of this passage.

I assume that there were two reasons other than a belief in fengshui for this passage having been quoted by various scholars. One was that the city of Beijing was the capital city in the Ming and Qing dynasties. To stress the superior geographical features of the site of the capital city, even in terms of fengshui, is likely to have met with the approval of the elite, who were otherwise not normally interested in fengshui. The title “Xingsheng” 形勝 (lit. “advantageous geography/topography”) of the section in which this passage is quoted reveals the main theme of such books — to bring together statements of Beijing’s geographical advantages, for the purpose of legitimising the imperial capital. Zhu Xi’s words catered to the elite’s wishes to deepen the coherence of notions of the appropriateness of the site, which notions sought to confirm the legitimacy of the city and to heighten the éclat of the city, for political motives. It is not difficult to imagine that this passage would not have been quoted by later writers, if Zhu Xi had said that the site was disappointing according to fengshui criteria.

The second, but more important, factor causing this passage to be quoted by so many scholars is that it was produced by Zhu Xi, the influential founder and greatest philosopher and synthesist of orthodox Neo-Confucianism. By contrast, although the site of Beijing was also applauded in Liu Ji’s Three Dragons theory concerning capital cities, his theory was not quoted, or even mentioned, in known subsequent works on Beijing. In spite of Zhu Xi’s having been the initiator, it seems that his undisguised engagement with fengshui in the above passage bothered the elite. Most of them only reluctantly accepted this fengshui statement for the sake of Zhu Xi, showing their reluctance by quoting this passage without comment. In this, they were unlike the fengshui specialists, who expanded on Zhu’s view in their manuals, as did Liu Ji, Miu Xiyong and the authors of the Dili Renzi Xuzhi. Gu Yanwu’s 魯炎武 (1613-1682) ambivalent attitude towards fengshui was clearly shown in his Lidai Zhaijing Ji 歷代宅京記 (History of Selecting the Capital City in Past Dynasties). On the one hand, he points out that Wang Mang 王莽 (45-23 B.C.) and Qin Hui 秦桧 (1090-1155), two notoriously treacherous court officials, performed certain deeds
under the guidance of fengshui. Picking out these individuals for special mention shows that in Gu’s mind, and perhaps for most of the elite, fengshui was absurd and unacceptable. On the other hand, he also quotes Zhu Xi for praising the perspectival advantages of Beijing, the imperial capital at the author’s time. In order to emphasise the perspectival advantages of the capital city, he gives little regard to the status of fengshui amongst the elite. The ambivalence towards Zhu’s view was expressed by Gu Yanwu’s nephew Xu Yuanwen 徐元文 in his preface to Lidai Zhaijing Ji:

Alas, it has been said from antiquity that the key to maintaining a capital city is virtue, not topographical advantage. However, the view that Jidu has a topographical advantage in terms of fengshui has been raised by Master Zhu [Xi]. Thus, the author perhaps compiled this book in order to let future sages judge for themselves (gusi housheng buhuo yeyu 固俟后聖不惑 也歟).

Apart from Zhu Xi’s passage, there was another passage regarding the geographical aspects of the site of Beijing in which fengshui terms were used, and which is frequently quoted in books on the geographical aspects of the site of Beijing. It was produced by Qiu Jun of the Ming in his Daxue Yanyi Bu:

[The site of Beijing] has “complete” xingshi [superior topography in terms of fengshui] (xingshi quan 形勢全). The qi there is confined and concentrated (fengqi mi 風氣密). It really does, as the kanyu specialists said, “preserve wind and concentrate qi.” (translated from Chunming Mengyu Lu vol. 2)

In Qiu’s passage, a fengshui account of the site of Beijing was conflated with a large number of other theories on the symbolic significance of the imperial capital:

Moreover, [the site] is located in the very north [of China], which is in correspondence with the stellar constellation Ziwei. The an (table hillock) in front of it is Mount Tai, the ancestor of the world’s mountains (wandai zhizong 萬代之宗). In Heaven, the North is the pivot. So the North must be the pivot of the earth as well. It is said in Yi (Book of Changes): “Gen is the oracle for the North-east. It implies the start and the end of all things on earth.” Gen is [the symbol] for the mountain. Waters are the blood of the earth and all end at the sea. All the mountains [of China] are formed in the north. All the waters [of China] merge in the sea in the east. To build the capital in this place, the starting and ending point of the cosmos, is something that has never been seen to occur in the whole of history. . . . Confucius said: “Rule by virtue like the polar star which is located in the north and surrounded by all the stars.” It is said in Yi: “Li [is an oracle] implies being faced by all the beings. It is a oracle of the South.” . . . Today’s capital city is located in the North, just like the polar star. . . . No one in the world is not facing it. Wherever man reaches is illuminated by [the capital]. There is no other site for capital cities in history that has been
able to match this one, which is supported by Heaven, Earth and Man. (ibid.)

The fengshui statement is only a small portion of the elaborations of this symbolic description of the capital city. So in most cases it was quoted together with the rest of this passage. But when Qiu's discourse was quoted in Rixia Jiwen Kao and Chenyan Shilue, the part referring to fengshui ideas was completely cut out, which made it look as if Qiu's argument made no reference to fengshui. This omission reflects the fact that discussion referring to fengshui was not generally tolerated by the scholars. It is probable that Qiu's statement on the site of Beijing referring to the concentrating of qi was quoted by some scholars simply because it was a part of the whole discussion on the symbolic significance of the site.

There were, therefore, special reasons for fengshui's being involved in the interpretation of the site of Beijing, as these scholars were not particularly interested in the theory of concentrating qi. It is unlikely that Zhu Xi and Qiu Jun's discourses were quoted to support fengshui, except among the fengshui specialists. It would not have been quoted by later scholars if not for Zhu Xi's reference and the symbolic significance of the imperial capital, since that those from Liu Ji and Miu Xiyong were never mentioned.

4.3 THE SITE AND FORTUNE

After the city of Beijing was built, many scholars, especially those interested in studying geography, believed that it was the right choice to have Beijing built on the site, as this step led to a period of prosperity, in the light of the theories of diqi (lit. "earth power") wangqi (true-kingly breath-energy), and diyun (lit. "earthly/locative fortune"). Wang Shixing, for example, reasoned at length concerning the prosperity of Beijing in Guang Youzhi 廣游志 (Records of Wide Travelling):

In the past, Yong 郅, Ji 冀, He 河 and Luo 洛 [in the north] were regarded as China, while Chu 楚, Wu 吳 and Yue 越 [in the south] were regarded as barbarian lands. At present, however, literature, civilisation and material products are now flourishing in the south-east, making the Yellow River area pale by comparison. It has been said that "This is the result of the interaction between the change of tain yun 天運 (lit. "Heaven-sent fortune") and the movement of the dimai (Earth vein)." I think that is right. It is important to know how Heaven and Earth interact with each other. It was said by the kanyu experts that all the mountain ranges and rivers started from Mount Kunlun, and that the Three Dragons stretched into China. But they failed to tell the hows and whys of the rise and decline of the Three
Looking at past and present, the Middle Dragon is the earliest one to have released wangqi 王氣 and had the longest period of prosperity. The North Dragon is the second one. The South Dragon has never released [its wangqi]. Since the Song moved its capital to the south, the Dragon which released [its wangqi] earlier began to have a rest, and the newly released one will definitely be more active. Why? From very ancient times, Fuxi 吸義 took Chen as his capital, Shao Hao 少昊 took Qufu 曲阜, ... Duke Zhou and Confucius being born there, Qin, Han and Tang took Guanzhong, and Song took Bianliang. That is why I say that the Middle Dragon is the earliest and longest one [for releasing wangqi]. The Yellow Emperor rose in Zhilu 漕鹿, ... and in the end the Liao, Jin and Yuan controlled China. That is why I say that the North Dragon is second. Wu and Yue was still a place of barbarians in the time of Taibo 太伯, ... and no dynasty ruled there for longer than a hundred years. When the Song dynasty moved south, it became its capital for over a hundred years. Now Emperor Taizu of the Ming has established it as a capital again. That is why I say that the South Dragon is just in its beginning. ... Then what about the wangqi of our dynasty? My answer is that it is much superior than that of the previous dynasties. The previous dynasties used to have a single Dragon’s wangqi. For our dynasty, the Feng 凤 and Si 泗 imperial tombs are in the Middle Dragon, the former capital [Nanjing] was in the South Dragon, and the North Dragon is where the palaces and imperial tombs are currently located. Having the Three Dragons at the same time, how can the dynasty not last forever? (translated from Wang Shixing Dilishu Sanzhong 212)

This was a typical view of the phenomenon of the ruling centre’s moving gradually eastward throughout history held by some scholars in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Gu Yanwu of the Qing dynasty reproduced Wang Shixing’s exposition of the Three Dragons as a large portion of his book Tianxia Junguo Libing Shu 天下郡國利病書 (Merits and Shortcomings of all the Countries in the World). (Wang Chengzu 1982:173) In this analysis, qi was again a frequently used term. But a diversified theory of the concept of qi was involved. It was said that the wangqi (true- kingly breath-energy) was contained in the North Dragon, and that it was now time for this wangqi to be active. At first glance, this analysis seems typical of the fengshui genre, as the concepts of yun (fortune) and wangqi, which were repeatedly emphasised in fengshui, were employed in it. But it would be simplistic to attribute this theory only to the obvious influence of fengshui, since fengshui was only one of the disciplines based on the concept of qi as regards the prospering of places.

In traditional times, qi (translated as “pneuma,” “cosmic breath” or “vital breath”) was regarded by the Chinese as a fundamental cosmic concept for explaining everything in existence and the universe itself. Wang Shixing explained the variety of locative climates by using the qi conception in his Guang Youzhi 廣遊志 (Records of Wide Travelling). (Wang Shixing Dilishu Sanzhong, 214-15) Ge Hong 葛洪 (281-
comprehend comprehensive such force which reflected environment formation term qi were quite divergent. Basically, correspondence Solidarity as a 341), I diqi prosperity Qi 4.3.1 Qi ideas of it] qi will must the movement manuals. The following extraordinary and many other things. This is clearly similar to fengshui ideas, since the belief that diqi could affect social affairs was the very foundation of fengshui. Many extraordinary stories about the effects of diqi on social affairs are found in fengshui manuals. The following is a typical example of predicting social change by regarding the movement of diqi as a signal of such. Gan Yi 甘怡 said in Dili Xinzhuan 地理新傳 “Prosperity and decline of dirai are caused by the change of diyun, and must be an obvious sign. Zhang Jiuyi 張九儀 said: ‘If heavenly qi moves, the earthly qi will respond . . . For example, Shao heard the cuckoo calling and knew [from it] that someone from the south would become the prime minister.’” Hearing the

4.3.1 Qi And Social Conditions

Qi was often used as a term representing a general power which causes or marks the prosperity and decline of various aspects of a place. It was believed that diqi (the qi of the earth) could affect climate, the fertility of the land, culture, social prosperity and many other things. This is clearly similar to fengshui ideas, since the belief that diqi could affect social affairs was the very foundation of fengshui. Many extraordinary stories about the effects of diqi on social affairs are found in fengshui manuals. The following is a typical example of predicting social change by regarding the movement of diqi as a signal of such. Gan Yi 甘怡 said in Dili Xinzhuan 地理新傳 “Prosperity and decline of dirai are caused by the change of diyun, and must be an obvious sign. Zhang Jiuyi 張九儀 said: ‘If heavenly qi moves, the earthly qi will respond . . . For example, Shao heard the cuckoo calling and knew [from it] that someone from the south would become the prime minister.’” Hearing the

142 The passage has been translated by Needham (1956:300-1): “Thus the body of a man is the image of a State. The thorax and abdomen correspond to the palaces and offices. The four limbs correspond to the frontiers and boundaries. The divisions of the bones and sinews correspond to the functional distinctions of the hundred officials. The pores of the flesh correspond to the four thoroughfares. The spirit corresponds to the prince. The blood corresponds to the ministers, and the chhi to the people. Thus we see that he who can govern his body can control a kingdom. Loving his people, he will bring peace to the country; nourishing his chhi, he will preserve his body. If the people are alienated the country is lost; if the chhi is exhausted the body dies.”

143 Shao Yong was one well known idealist of the Northern Song dynasty. According to Liu Xiaoming’s research (1994:194), this story is found in Shaoshi Wenjian Lu (Shao’s Record). It was said that Zhao Kuangyin, founder of the Song dynasty, set up a stone tablet in his palace, inscribed with the words: “My descendants are not allowed to use southern people as their prime ministers and are forbidden to let their cabinet ministers to control the military.” He held that to appoint someone from the south as prime minister would cause great confusion in the country. Shao made this statement in
cuckoo calling was commonly regarded as a result of change in climate, but Shao held that it was connected with the movement of *diqi*. To interpret the movement of *diqi* as a premonition of political change seems to have been a typical *fengshui* analysis. Liu Ji associated the topography of the site of the city of Dadu with the style of writing in the Yuan dynasty, in his *Chengyibo Wenji* (*Collected Works of the Earl Chengyi*) by using the term *fengqi* 風氣 (characteristics):

> When the Yuan [dynasty] was ruling China, although its capital was located near the mount Yin [sic], the topographical advantage [of the site] was the most superior in the world. [The Yuan then] had a most prosperous period for almost a hundred years. Even the style of writing was full of inspirations at that time. It is not impossible that it was affected by the *fengqi* of the [masculine] landscape of mountains and rivers. (translated from *RJK* vol. 5)

However, using *qi* to explain the fertility of land, and the prosperity of culture and society, was not necessarily a theory exclusively limited to *fengshui*. The concept of *qi* was so fundamental to general Chinese cosmology, that it was the ultimate explanation of various aspects of the existence of the world. It was unexceptional that the concept *qi* was treated as an essential causal force in investigations regarding cultural and anthropological geography, as in other academic fields. It was widely believed that different local geographical features could produce different types of people, a generally reasonable assumption. Sometimes the concept of *qi* was indeed tantamount to the modern idea of "Natural environment". For instance, it was commonly believed — and not as a special idea from *fengshui* — that it was because many waters were concentrated in the mid south-east of China, the *qi* there made the region one of wealth and one that produced many scholars and officials, and that it was because the mountains of the north were of powerful aspect that the *qi* there made the northern people intrepid, strong and vigorous. Sayings encapsulating beliefs such as these were quite common in books about the capital city, and there is no justification for regarding them as deriving from anything but general observation, natural supposition or rational deduction.

the Pingzhi reign-period. While Shao walked on a bridge in Luoyang with his friend, he suddenly heard a cuckoo calling, and was immediately depressed. He said: "There have been no cuckoos in Luoyang in the past. It must presage something." When asked for the meaning of this, Shao answered: "The emperor will appoint a southerner prime minister in three or five years time. There will be confusion in the world." His entourage asked again: "Is there any relation between the cuckoo's call and this matter?" Shao said: "If the *diqi* comes from north to south, the country will be in order; if from south to north, there will be confusion. Now the southern earth *qi* is coming, and the cuckoo feels it first." When it came to the Xining reign-period, Emperor Shenzong actually employed Wang Anshi, (from Linchuan in the south) as his prime minister to carry out political reform, which was later seen as having produced chaos.
Thus the correspondences between humanity and geography were not only a fengshui belief. It may be impossible to know whether this idea originated in fengshui or influenced fengshui. It was, at least, a shared idea. The major contribution of fengshui was a large number of theories about controlling qi by manipulating the form of the human residence. Such developments in fengshui give the impression that diqi was an exclusively specialised field of fengshui. I would rather say that, although the influence of fengshui cannot be neglected, the use of diqi to analyse the capital city was not necessarily done solely on the basis of fengshui theory, just as one cannot regard Chinese medicine, Qigong 气功 (a system of deep breathing exercises) and Gongfu 功夫 (Chinese martial arts) as having been influenced by fengshui, though qi was important in their theories as well.

4.3.2 The Releasing of Qi

The idea regarding the releasing of qi was also involved in Wang Shixing’s analysis. It was believed that the qi of a place could be released and consumed. The releasing of qi led to prosperity, and once the qi was entirely consumed, the place would begin to decline. In many discussions of the capital cities, this theory was used to explain the change in fortune of a place. An event recorded in Songshi Jishi Benmo 宋史紀事本末 is mentioned by Wright (1977:55), in which he translates the term qixiang 氣象 as “ambience.”

But in 1138 a minister tried a last-minute argument to prevent Sung Kao-tsung from moving the capital from Nanking to Hangchow. His argument was, in part, “Chien-k’ang has from the Six Dynasties been a capital for emperors and kings. Its ambience (ch’i-hsiang) is awesome. Using this place as a capital, it will be possible to control the Central Plain [lost to the Jurchen in 1127].”

According to Song Shi (History of the Song Dynasty), “Chen Liang Zhuan” 陳亮傳 (Biography of Chen Liang), in 1178, this matter was discussed again by Chen Liang, who advised Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 to move the capital to Jiankang 建康:

[Hangzhou 杭州] is a small area, and is unable to contain the throne. Besides that, it has been resided in for more than fifty years, and all of the qi of the mountains and rivers has been completely vented.

He cited the fact that many important historical figures had been associated with the area in the past. Emperor Guangwu 光武 of the Han dynasty came from Nanyang, and the famous scholars, generals and statesmen Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, Zhou Yu 周瑜, Lu Su 魯肅 and Lu Meng 呂蒙 were all active here. But during the Sui and Tang dynasties, Jingxiang 荊襄 decayed into a remote secondary area, and had almost
reverted to a wilderness. The reason he gave for this was that the *qi* of the land had been completely dispersed. Chen held that “an area was bound to release its *qi* over five hundred years.” He suggested moving the capital to Jingxiang [which for a long time had not been releasing its *qi*] and “reclaiming its land and civilising its people to release the *qi* and take advantage of it. After the *qi* of Jingxiang has been growing and connecting up with the *qi* of Guanzhong and Luoyang, we will be able to fight back [into the north]. It is the eternal law of changes of the world (*xingshi*)” (translated from *Lidai Zhaijing Ji* vol. 2: “Zongxu Xia”)

In Wang’s and Chen’s opinions, the level of *qi* in a particular place varied from time to time, and would be released when there was a high concentration. This concentration would sooner or later decline. It was possible, however, that *qi* could be released again after it had accumulated there for a long period. The releasing of *qi* resulted in the prosperity of the place. The vicissitudes of *qi* were the essential cause of the succession of dynasties and capital cities. The releasing of *qi* was a natural law beyond man’s control. Thus a capital city should be built in a place releasing its *qi* or wangqi.

Such a theory was related to the *qi* theory in fenghsui, but not identical to it. In fenghsui, the main requirements for selecting a site is that the place should be able to protect *qi* from dispersion so as to bring good fortune for the owners’ or occupiers’ descendants, by using “table hillocks” and bending waters. For example, in *Dili Renzi Xuzhi*, the site of Nanjing was criticised: “according to kanyu, the *qi* of the site leaks too much.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:12) The theory on the “releasing” of *qi* was another approach to the relationship between Earth and Man, though it was also based on the same predicates, that the *qi* in earth could affect social affairs. According to this idea, the releasing and accumulation of *qi* of a place is a natural process, that every couple of hundred years there is a period of releasing the *qi*, which sounded like a natural phenomenon regularly occurring like the El Nino. This idea was possibly influenced by fenghsui, but also referred to the *qi* theory and the art of wangqi 望氣 (lit. “surveying for *qi*”) in ancient times. As Wright (1977:54) pointed out “there are also references from late Chou, Ch’in, and Han times to practitioners known as wang-ch’i-che who surveyed the ambience or emanations (*ch’i*) of a site or situation to determine its favorable or unfavorable character.” Since wangqi was, from a definition by Sima Qian, solely concerned with observing the forms of clouds, — something not characteristic of later fengshui — and since this theory had a complicated pedigree, separate from any derivation from
fengshui works, it was not as closely related to fengshui as the theory on the “dispersion” of qi.

Partly because of the lack of detailed criteria for determining whether the qi of a place was being released, this theory was used quite flexibly by scholars to interpret the selected site in accordance with their own speculations. It was said in Changan Kehua, Bao Pin claimed that the qi of the site of Beijing was entirely consumed when Jinling was chosen as the capital city at the beginning of the Ming dynasty. (See section 3.4.) But exactly the same site was regarded by Wang Shixing and others as being at the right time for releasing its qi after Beijing was chosen as the capital. Their views both relied on the facts of where the capital city was built. The main criterion for assessing the situation of the qi of a site appears to have been whether the site was selected as the capital city. Thus, their analyses were basically retrospective.

4.3.3 Wangqi 王氣 (true-kingly breath-energy)

Another idea associated with fengshui in Wang Shixing’s text was wangqi 王氣 (true-kingly breath-energy). It was believed that if a place had a particular kind of qi, this could enable the owner/occupier himself, or his descendants, to attain or retain the throne. Such a theory was often used in discussing the choice of site for capital cities or palaces. According to legendary sources, advised by wangqizhe 王氣者 (specialists in the art of observing qi) that Jinling had wangqi 王氣 (true-kingly breath-energy), Emperor Qinshihuang 秦始皇 ordered the cutting off of a mountain ridge so as to erase Jinling’s wangqi. Wright (1977:54) also mentions this story:

A story current in the third century A.D. was that Ch’in Shih Huang-ti, on a visit to the east, had been told by a wang-ch’i-che that the site of the future Nanking “in the configurations of its land has the ambience (ch’i) of a kingly capital.”

Another legend was that when Chu conquered Yue (330 B.C.), the King of Chu buried gold at the place where he wanted to build a capital city, so as to repress the wangqi of the area. So this place was called Jinling 金陵 (lit. “gold tomb-mound”). (Liu Xiaoming 1994:181) It seems that there were such specialists doing the job of assessing the qi of a selected site in the Han dynasty, or even in the dynasties prior to the Han. Telling whether a place was good for the throne by indicating if it had wangqi was a major part of their principal tasks. There was no such art in later dynasties, and the detailed principles and theories of it are unknown.
There is no doubt that fengshui was influenced by the art of wangqi 王气 of early times, since the concept of wangqi 王气 was also talked about by fengshui specialists, just as we find in Liu Ji’s Three Dragons theory on capital city siting. The position of the concept of wangqi 王气 was quite marginal in fengshui theory, since there was in fengshui manuals no specific theory on defining, recognising and controlling wangqi 王气. It seems that wangqi 王气 was a special category of qi which was not usually dealt with in fengshui manuals. The notion of wangqi 王气 came to be closely associated with fengshui ideas, although in certain contexts it referred to the art of wangqi 王气 in early times. Because of this association, unlike the theory of diqi, the idea of wangqi 王气 was not regarded highly by scholars. This might have been because the idea of wangqi 王气 was directly related to improving one’s personal future fortune — an idea similar to that of fengshui 王气.

In the cases mentioned above, wangqi 王气 was part of the prediction or explanation provided by an practitioner of either fengshui 王气, kanyu or wangqi 王气. It could also be asserted by an ordinary, non-fengshui scholar, without any good stated grounds and reasoning, that a place had wangqi 王气. In Wang Shixing’s discussion, the notion of wangqi 王气 was combined with the theory of the releasing of qi 王气, as it was believed that, once the wangqi 王气 of a place was released, it would sooner or later be consumed. While his focus was on the general development of human geography, wangqi 王气 was seen as a special kind of cosmic power and a reflection of the prosperity of the places concerned. Wangqi 王气 was part of his understanding of qi 王气 and geography. Although Wang’s interest was not in predicting fortune by looking for wangqi 王气, there is no doubt that his approach to the geographical location of Beijing was influenced by fengshui 王气.

4.3.4 The Transfer of Diyun 地运 (locative fortune)

The central topic in Wang Shixing’s analysis was the reasons for the prosperity and decline of the places where the capital cities were located. This referred to the idea of the transfer of yun 运 (fortune) or diyun 地运 (the fortune of a place/locative fortune), which was also discussed in fengshui works. In history, along with the vicissitudes of successive dynasties, the capital cities also kept moving, for a diversity of reasons. The sites selected for imperial capital cities were all claimed to be the best places, with various advantages. If, however, a dynasty collapsed, a new imperial capital would be established that was possibly not on the site of the previous capital city. Sometimes the location of the imperial capital could be changed within the same dynasty, a new site being selected for the capital city. Why could not the emperors
hold their thrones forever, and why were there changes of dynasty one after another, if the sites of their capital city were so perfect? *Fengshui* specialists tried to answer this question by employing the theory on the transfer of *diyun*.

*Fengshui* holds that the fortune of a place will change. If the fortune is retained in a place, the place will be prosperous. If the fortune moves to another place the place will decline. It was also held that changes of topography caused the transfer of fortune. Liu Ji gave an example of this in his work *Lingcheng Jingyi* 靈城精義:

The Yellow River is a big blood vein between Heaven and Earth. In the time of Huang Yu (the Yellow Emperor and Yudi Shun), its course originally flowed from Longmen 龍門, and turned towards Lüliang 呂梁, Taibang and Jieshi before entering the sea. In this way, Ji 凱 was at its centre, as it was said that as [the site was surround by] the Yellow River as a ribbon, and was paid respect by the Five Mountains, it was the number one *fengshui* pattern of the world. In that glorious time, the three sage rulers, Yao, Shun and Yu, were born there. Because the Yellow River ran in the north and the River Yangtze in the south, Mount Tai was sandwiched between them. Mount Tai was the end of the [Middle] Dragon. It was owing to this that Confucius and other sages were born here and [the region enjoyed] a period of great prosperity. After the Han dynasty, the Yellow River changed its course to the South, crossed the land of Zoulu 鄒魯, and reached [the Rivers] Huai and Si. Mount Tai then became located to the north of the Yellow River. The “earth vein” was cut off, and the fortune of [Ji] declined. When our [the Ming] imperial tombs were located in Zhongdu, the Emperor established himself in Chuyang 澇陽, just between the River Huai and the River Si. That resulted from the transfer of fortune, after the course of the Yellow River changed. Some said that the prosperity in the South started from when the Song dynasty moved its capital to the South. They did not know that the Yellow River changed course to the south, the *tianyun* 天運 (lit. “heavenly fortune”) moving with it. Man could not help that. Such is the correspondence between *tianqi* 天氣 (heavenly *qi*) and *diyun*. When *tianyun* changes, the *diyun* will follow. For example, in the Qin dynasty, the *taishi* 太史 [court astrologer] divined that Jinling 金陵 had *tianzigi* 天子氣 (lit. “*qi* for the Son of Heaven”). So [the Emperor] then diverted the River Qinhuai 秦淮 to discharge it. However, the changing of the river course caused a change of *diyun*. In the ensuing dynasties, the Six Dynasties took the place as their capital on a small scale, and finally our Empire established the capital there on a large scale. (translated from *SKQS*)

The site most often praised by Liu Ji was Jinling, the capital city in his time. After the city of Beijing was built, *fengshui* master Miu Xiyong also discussed the changes of the location of capital cities using the theory of *qi* in his arguments, but came to the conclusion that the most favoured site was Beijing, the capital city during his time:
Guanzhong is the summit of the world. It is the dragon-head of all the mountain ranges in the central area of China; Jizhou is located in the main ridge of the Taihang Mountains, the trunk of the Middle Dragon. Luoyang, at the centre of the world, is the essence of the central area of China. Yandu 燕都 is the end of the North Dragon. The River Yalu marks the frontier to its rear, while the Yellow River crosses in front of it. [The site] is faced by thousands of mountains which appear in rows around it. Since ancient times, all of these sites without exception have been selected as the capital city. The unpredictable movement of qi, however, caused their changes and replacement. (translated from KYJC vol. 2, 104)

In Miu’s analysis, the geographical advantages of these sites are emphasised, but its qi is considered the most important factor for explaining the decline in fortune of a city that had at one time been a capital city. Even though the geographic features of a site had remained unchanged, its spell of good qi must have run out.

The influence of fengshui on Wang Shixing’s view should not be ignored, since a large portion of the body of theory on the capital cities and diyun was produced by fengshui specialists such as Liu Ji and Miu Xiyong, and since, moreover, the conclusions on the site of Beijing presented by both fengshui and non-fengshui scholars, after the city was built, were identical. However, such reasoning was not exclusively used in fengshui. It was even used by scholars to criticise fengshui, just as in the case of Xiang Qiao 項喬 of the Ming dynasty, who said in his Fengshui Bian (A Criticism of Fengshui):

All the mountains and rivers have qi, which moves all the time. You cannot trace qi, no matter how obstinate you are. When qi is concentrated, it breeds people, even on a deserted island in the sea where there have been no people before. Why do we need to have the Green Dragon, White Tiger, Red Bird and Tortoise matching with each other in a place? When qi is declining, the place will be deserted, no matter how great its mountains and rivers are and how prosperous its capitals or towns used to be. It is common sense that man’s social status, wealth and life are all related to the change of diyun 氣運 (lit. “qi fortune”). (translated from KYJC vol. 2, 345)

Thus the theories of diqi and diyun were not regarded as only fengshui ideas. They were part of the basic concept of the changes of human geography, and exerted profound influence on scholars’ thoughts on the rise and fall of capital cities. They were even applied by scholars in their analysis of the law of the development of history. (Figure 4-5) Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814), a remarkable scholar in literature and historiography in the Qing dynasty (CY, 2988), used the theory of diqi to analyse the phenomenon of the ruling centre being moved from the Northwest to the Northeast through the course of history. He argued that before the Tang dynasty, the
Figure 4-5  The capital cities in the history.
qi of the earth lay in the north-west, and that that was why the political centres of successive dynasties were founded there. After the Tang dynasty, the qi of the earth turned to the north-east, which is why the Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties arose there. The movement of diqi from west to east was caused by the An-Shi Rebellion in the Tang dynasty. In short, Zhao Yi concluded in Ershier Shi Zhaji (Reading Notes of Twenty Four Dynasties History) that “the qi of the earth made a tremendous turn from north-west to north-east in the reign-periods Kaiyuan 五—六 and Tianbao 天寶 of the Tang dynasty.” (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:17) The movement of diqi and wangqi was certainly the theme of his own analysis, but he was nevertheless trying to distinguish himself from the fengshui expert:

While Changan declined into a prefecture, the Liao had already risen in the north. The movement of diqi from the west to the north-east was the sign. As the transfer of diqi had not been completed, the Liao could not unify China and only had You-Ji 凑劇. Luoyang and Bianlang served only transitionally as capital cities during the movement of the diqi toward the north-east. They were what are termed the guoxia 過峽 (lit. “transitory canyons”) by the kanyu specialist. (op. cit. 16)

Here Zhao takes the capitals Luoyang and Bianlang as guoxia, and believes this to be in accordance with the definitions of such in fengshui. But this is an obvious misuse of the fengshui term. In Miu Xiyong’s Zangjing Yi, the definition of guoxia was: “Xia is the extension of the great range of the ancestral mountain. It is the part where the range is getting lower and thinner between two mountains. So xia has to be the subsided part, with mountains continuing the range either end of it. Guo [xia] should be on the main trunk of a ridge to get the original qi.” (translated from KYJC vol. 2, 101) Self-identified as a non-fengshui specialist, Zhao borrowed and misused fengshui terms to conduct his analysis. This shows that the theory of diqi was not elaborated and regarded only as a fengshui idea. Zhao concluded his discussion of this movement of diqi by referring to the establishment of Beijing:

In the last couple of centuries, the qi in the Northeast has grown stronger. So the Jin dynasty controlled half of China, and the Yuan and Ming dynasties seized the whole of China. For our dynasty [Qing], the territory was even expanded tens of thousands of li beyond the Great Wall. This is a sound piece of evidence of the accumulation of wangqi in the north-east. (translated from Zhang Rongming 1994:16)

In Zhao’s essay, the entire history of the imperial capital cities was used to demonstrate his theory of the movement of diqi. It was a proclamation of the relationship between the theory of diqi and the capital city. The idea of moving
capitals according to fluctuations in *diqi* was elaborated on the basis of the fact of the movement of the capital cities, rather than guiding the process of moving the capitals.

Therefore, not only *fengshui* specialists thought that the rise and fall of dynasties and the moving of capitals were influenced by *qi*. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the concepts *diqi*, *wangqi*, *diyun* were employed in probing the laws of the change of dynasties and movement of capitals in history by scholars who were not necessarily *fengshui* specialists. It seems that the theory of *diqi* was almost the only available one for dealing with the issues in the field of human geography. At the end of the Qing dynasty, in his “*Zhongguo Dili Dashu Lun*” (On the Geography of China), Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873-1929),\(^{144}\) in agreement with the previous scholars’ argument, made a brilliant exposition of this topic by focusing on geographical and social changes, without using the theory of *qi* at all.\(^{145}\)

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\(^{144}\) Liang Qichao, one of the major advocates of political reform in China in the late 19th century.

\(^{145}\) Liang Qichao argued: “The capital cities were located in the North, while there was no other capital in the South, for over two thousand years. Only the Emperors Taiizu and Huidi of the Ming established a capital in the South, and for only thirty-five years. The political centre was normally in the area of the Yellow River. There must be a reason why power moved from the West to the East. The nation of the yellow people originated from the Kunlun Mountains and emigrated eastward. In the times of the Yellow Emperor and Zhuan-xu, they reached the lower reaches of the Yellow River. Suffered from flood, they had to move to the plateau in Shanxi and Shaanxi. The Emperors Xia and Yu unified the country for the first time, and Kings Wen and Wu and Duke Zhou unified it a second time. The Qin empire unified the country for the third time. They all made their base on the upper reaches of the Yellow River. This area became the most prosperous place . . . and reached its climax in the Tang dynasty. Yan in the north-east had since ancient times not been an important place. Before the Sui dynasty, it was a remote place, and was paid no attention by the big powers. . . . Now though, Yan has been paid respect for over seven hundred years. Why? The digging of the Great Canal was the turning point. The two great rivers in the north and south of China had their own reaches, and formed different folk. After Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty opened up the Canal, this new means of transport connected the lower reaches of the two rivers. The convenience of transport was the most important factor in the political change of the country. With the opening of the Canal, the foundation for the unification of the country was laid. In the ensuing millennium, the country was split up for only one century. As a result, the lower reaches of both the two rivers became more and more prosperous. Beijing and Nanjing, as the two pivots, attracted the elite. When An Lushan 安祿山 and Shi Siming 史思明 devastated China in the middle of the Tang, they were enabled to do so by the power of You-Yan 燕幽. By building the capital there, the Jin captured the Two Emperors [of the Song dynasty]. The Mongols seized it, and then sent the Jin and Song to their dooms, and unified the world. Since the founder of the Ming was from the south, he established his capital at Jinling. But Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan, based himself in the north, and then seized power. He retained the capital city of the Jin and Yuan, which is still in use till now. This was not caused by *diyun*, but by *disi* 地勢 (geographical situation). Since then, although the Great Canal has dried up, the power of Yanjing is not declined. One reason is that [the power] was accumulated for a long time. The situation was similar to that of the Gao-Luo 辽洛 (the capital of the Zhou dynasty) thousands years earlier. Another reason is that ocean shipping is taking over from river transport. So Yan 燕, Qi 齊, Wu 吳, Zhe 浙, Min 范 and Yue 粵 are closely connected to each other. Yan is in the leading position. Thus there is bound to be a reason for the rise and fall of a place. Yanjing is only one example. For the future, inland the Great Wall has no use any more. On the seashore, the forts of Jin 津, Gu 浚, Weihai 威海 and Lushun 旅順 are all lost to foreigners. Since the railway and steam shipping have come into use, the transport
From Wang Shixing, Xiang Qiao to Zhao Yi, although their ideas were more or less influenced by fengshui, their analysis of the capital cities should not be seen as exemplifying a fengshui approach. The influence of fengshui exerted in the long development of the theory of qi should not be neglected, but the theory on diqi and diyun was not regarded only as a part of fengshui as it was also used against fengshui. Scholars engaged in studying either fengshui, geography or history was all using the same ideas of qi to probe the relationship between the geographical aspects and the rise and fall of cities and dynasties. Beijing was used as an example in their examinations of the changes of the capital cities. The influence of fengshui was obvious in their post-hoc interpretations of the prosperity and decline of Beijing, in which the concept qi was involved, but it would be unwise to attribute these theories only to fengshui.

4.4 THE COMPLEXITY AND AMBIGUITY OF FENGSHUI INVOLVEMENT

In viewing analyses made by non-fengshui scholars regarding the geographical aspects of the site of Beijing, we see that many terms and concepts involved referred to fengshui. There is no doubt that the scholars’ notion of the location of Beijing was in certain ways influenced by fengshui ideas. There were, however, complicated historical reasons why fengshui terms and concepts became part of the explanation of the site of Beijing. The factors causing fengshui ideas to be involved were two complex to justify any simplified conclusion that these scholars believed in fengshui. I summarise here four major aspects of the complexity of the issue.

Firstly, the basis of these analyses was not a theory exclusively used in fengshui, but a well accepted theoretical framework of geography. Many theories and concepts regarding geography were established through the effort of both fengshui specialists and non-fengshui scholars. Although fengshui specialists and scholars who studied geography were regarded as coming from two fields, and mainly carried on their work in parallel to each other, the developments of fengshui and geography were actually closely associated with each other. The fundamental ideas, such as qi, diqi, diyun, the formation of the mountain, the concepts of Three Dragons and Three Waters, were shared in the three fields of fengshui, dili (geography, topography or

situation is becoming entirely different. Will there be anybody who concerns the ruling of the country in the future? Who knows whether the future Yanjing will be as today’s Changan or Luoyang.” [translated from Yinbingshi Wenji 欲冰室文集 (Collected Works of Yinbingshi)]
geomorphology) and yudi (topology or cartography). The mountain range and water system concepts may first have been raised by fengshui specialists. But the contributions that rendered this theory valid for real, practical geography were made by many non-fengshui scholars, including Zhu Xi. Thus it is impossible strictly to distinguish the development of fengshui from the development of dili and yudi. As a great contribution made by fengshui to the study of geography, many concepts developed in fengshui became part of the recognised body of knowledge of the geography of China. It was unavoidable that people used for geography the well built theoretical framework which had been co-elaborated by fengshui and non-fengshui scholars. It was easy and inevitable that concepts associated with fengshui should be used when carrying out an analysis on a geographical topic. Therefore, I agree with Ward’s (1996:186) argument: “Xu Xiake’s application of fengshui terms in his discussion of the landscape through which he travelled reflects his desire for the recording of accurate and precise information within a widely-known theoretical framework.” To many scholars, the application of the concepts commonly associated with fengshui provided an appropriate geographical interpretation of the site of Beijing. However, as the framework regarding geography was only partly built on contributions from fengshui, arguments making use of this framework were not necessarily using fengshui theory or approving of fengshui.

Secondly, it was the historic facts regarding the siting and moving of the capital cities, which were employed in the post-hoc interpretations, and justified the authority for analyses in the theory of diyun. Most of the analyses on the propitiousness of the site of Beijing were based on the fact that the capital city was already built on the site. The accordance of the fengshui-related theory with the objective geographical existence of the city made these arguments more convincing. The establishment of Beijing encouraged the fengshui-related diyun theory.

Thirdly, some fengshui interpretation of the site of Beijing was coincidentally combined with the implication of the authenticity of the imperial capital. Although not many of the elite were interested in fengshui itself, a strong implication of the authenticity of the site was provided by Zhu Xi’s and Qiu Jun’s words. For some scholars, ideas associated with fengshui were only used as an auxiliary language to

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146 Another Neo-Confucian philosopher Cai Yuanding 蔡元定, the exact contemporary of Zhu Xi, made a great contribution to geology in his Zaohua Lun 造化論 (Discourse on the Creation). But he did write a book on geomancy, the Fawei Lun 發微論 (Effects of Minute Causes). (Needham 1956:598-9 n f)
emphasise the symbolism and the legitimacy of the location of Beijing. While the causal magic of *fengshui* was fiercely attacked by the elite, the idea of siting the capital near great mountains and great rivers was in accordance with the elite’s desire to legitimate the capital city as has been said by Rawski (1985:407): “Both elite and state efforts to propagate and sustain cultural norms succeeded in part by accommodating and incorporating diverse traditions. Cultural influence was most definitely a two-way process.” This claim must be treated with caution, but may be part of the reason why Zhu’s and Qiu’s words were quoted in non-*fengshui* scholars’ retrospective analyses of the geographical aspects of Beijing’s site.

Finally, a very important reason for theories associated with *fengshui* to enter the analyses of Beijing was Zhu Xi’s utilisation of *fengshui* ideas. Zhu Xi was the initiator of most of the *fengshui*-influenced theories on the site of Beijing. In both Wang Shixing’s and Xu Xiake’s books, the *song ru* (Song dynasty Confucians), were taken as important elaboraters of the Three Dragons theory. His analyses in terms of *fengshui* of the site where Beijing was later located were quoted in almost every analysis referring to the site of Beijing. To the *fengshui* specialists, Zhu’s statement was the best authentication of their theories. Some non-*fengshui* scholars, however, tried to save Zhu’s reputation from involvement in *fengshui* arguments. Xiang Qiao was one of those who tried to separate Zhu’s thought from *fengshui* belief, by presenting a thousand-word essay to the emperor, in which he said:

Zhu Xi, the great Confucian, moved his parents’ coffins hundreds of *li*, and moved them again and again. One may ask how this cannot be deemed worthy of emulation! In my opinion, Cheng [Yi] and Zhu [Xi] were the great Confucians, but in this matter and the statement concerned, it is indeed doubtful if that was so. . . Moving his parents’ grave again and again was done just out of Zhu’s pure filially pious concern to avoid laying his parents to rest in a bad place. I am afraid that regarding this as his seeking good influence for his descendants is against the sages’ original lofty intention. (translated from *KYJC* vol. 2, 344)

Zhu’s influential position is a factor which should not be ignored in any examination of the spread of the theories associated with *fengshui*. His application of *fengshui* theory legitimised those *fengshui* ideas. To the non-*fengshui* scholars, quoting Zhu Xi’s *fengshui*-influenced argument was done simply because it was produced by Zhu Xi, not because they were willing to accept *fengshui*.

Thus the influences of *fengshui* on post hoc interpretations of Beijing were integrated with the effects of traditional beliefs in *qi*, the efforts of scholars working on geography, the undeniable fact that the capital city was built on the site, the elite’s
wish to legitimise the capital city, and the tremendous influence from Zhu Xi. Believing in fengshui was not the only reason for the scholar to be interested in the theories associated with fengshui ideas. In fact, seeing these theories as composed from fengshui and non-fengshui elements, it was the fengshui elements which caused the theories to be neglected by the scholars, while the non-fengshui elements caused them to be accepted to a certain extent. While the analyses in fengshui manuals were often seen as ridiculous, some of the theories associated with fengshui were accepted and developed not only as fengshui concepts. Although some influence of fengshui was unavoidable once the theoretical framework of geography was adopted, these analyses were often regarded as pure geographical theory, and, most importantly, as stemming from Zhu Xi.

The complicated composition of the body of theory regarding the geographical aspects of the site of Beijing determined scholars’ ambiguous attitudes in discussions over this issue. While using the geographical terms shared with fengshui, they also criticised fengshui. For instance, although Wang Shixing’s argument on the topic of dimai, wangqi and Dragons was closely influenced by fengshui, he could not help showing his contempt for fengshui. An expression such as “the residents of Yancheng were hoodwinked by kanyu (huoyu kanyu yan 感 于堪舆言)” in his Guang Zhi Yi 廣志綱 (Records and Investigation of General Geography) was obviously derogatory. (translated from Wang Shixing Dilishu Sanzhong 269) At another point, he thought a fengshui idea was acceptable: “It should not be looked down upon merely because it was said by a kanyu practitioner (buke yi kanyu yan shaozhi 不可以堪舆言少之).” (op. cit. 214) This sounds as if fengshui was normally being disparaged at that time. A frequently used expression “in the kanyu practitioner’s view” (op. cit. 292, 378) shows that he was trying to distinguish himself from fengshui practitioners. Xiang Qiao of the Ming dynasty fiercely criticised fengshui in his essay Fengshui Bian (A Criticism of Fengshui). He mainly refuted the idea that the way of burying the dead could affect the descendants’ fortune. But to him the theory about the movement of diqi was an absolute truth, which was misinterpreted by fengshui. (cf. KYJC vol. 2, 343-47) So the use of certain geographical concepts and fengshui terms does not imply the full acceptance of fengshui as a directive theory for building activity, especially in the case of a capital city. It would be too hasty to conclude that, simply because they used fengshui terms, these scholars, believed in fengshui as a causal magic. To them, fengshui terms may have been used as merely appropriate descriptions to employ in geographical topics.
Nevertheless, the inseparable influence of *fengshui* hindered the acceptance by most of the elite of these analyses. They were excluded from the main body of interpretations of the location of Beijing. While some scholars were interested in these analyses, most of the elite took a very cautious approach, only quoting Zhu Xi’s and Qu Jun’s words, without comment, in most of the works on the geographical aspects of Beijing. To say the least, topics associated with *fengshui* were not ones that the elite in general were willing to talk about in their written works. Thus non-*fengshui* factors caused some ideas shared with *fengshui* to become a component of the analytic theories on the site of Beijing, but the ill-repute of *fengshui* limited the influence of those ideas. All the same, these non-*fengshui* factors did in fact bring it about that the non-*fengshui* scholar’s understanding of the site of Beijing was influenced to a certain degree by *fengshui*. That is why I consider that the influence of *fengshui* on how the site of Beijing was viewed was subtle, complex and indirect.
The topographical environment of the site of the city of Beijing is always seen as excellent in regard to both its pragmatic and its symbolic aspects in the writings of imperial scholars. Concepts and terms that were an integral part of fengshui are often found in analyses of the city’s topographical features, especially regarding the aesthetic beauty of the spatial configuration of the site, while some writers claimed plain and simply that the spatial layout pattern of the city’s topographical surroundings was in perfect accord with the principles of fengshui. This chapter is an investigation of such fengshui-imbued analyses of the local topographical aspects of the site of the city, carried out mainly by tracing the development of some aspects of the various concepts regarding natural siting and the Chinese attitude towards natural landscape.

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first section is an investigation of the spatial formation of the local topography of the site, which was proclaimed as being of an ideal pattern according to fengshui. We will see that the topographic appearance of the site was seen as ideal from both fengshui and non-fengshui points of view. Secondly, I examine the involvement of the ideas regarding the Four Spiritual Animals (Green Dragon, White Tiger, Red Bird and Black Tortoise), which were also typical fengshui terms, in assessments of the topographical surroundings of the site. Thirdly, I review the use of two significant concepts, xing 形 (form) and shi 勢 (power), which were extensively developed in the Xingshi School of fengshui, for grasping and conveying the aesthetic beauty of the site. I demonstrate that these linked concepts were shared by many Chinese arts concerning landscape, such as Chinese painting, landscaping and architecture, and not used exclusively by fengshui. Fourthly and finally, I conclude this chapter by summarising some of the main points that I have presented in the preceding sections and argue that fengshui interpretations, as a deviated footage, were in loose association with the main body of scholars’ attitudes towards this commonly approved site.

5.1 THE SHARED PATTERN OF IDEAL SITES

In both the official and non-official writings about the city of Beijing, it was held that the site enjoyed a superior topographic environment, namely xingsheng 形勝 (lit. “superior topography”). The term xingsheng was used to describe geographical or topographical advantages in warfare, transport or the landscape of a place. (cf. CY,
There was, normally, a section titled *xingsheng* in local annals/gazetteers, in which the topographical advantages of the place concerned were recorded, in the light of their military, scenic and symbolic significance. In the *xingsheng* sections regarding Beijing, apart from the strategic and geographical aspects which I have introduced in preceding chapters, the topographical aspects of the natural environment of the site were also praised. For instance, in *Rixia Jiüwen Kao* (A Revised Description of the History and Antiquities of Beijing) re-edited in 1774, Zhu Xi’s view of the *fengshui* pattern of the site of Beijing as being a perfect one was not taken as a dominant idea, as it is quoted together with a large amount of other scholars’ analyses that have no *fengshui* grounds. This demonstrates how the same topographical features of the site were admired from both *fengshui* and non-*fengshui* points of view. (Figure 5-1)

When he praises the topography of the site of Beijing as being of an ideal *fengshui* pattern, the major topographical features admired by Zhu Xi (*Zhuzi Yulei*, vol. 2) may be summarised as the following four aspects: Firstly, the site had both mountains and waters, or had mountains at its back (to the north) and faced water, being circled by the Yellow River, in the front (to the south). Secondly, embraced by the mountains to its north, the site faced south. This point is closely related to the previous one, since the mountains were actually to the north of the site. Thirdly, the topographical surroundings were distributed symmetrically around the site. In Zhu’s words, the site was flanked by Mount Taishan on its left, as the Green Dragon, and Mount Huashan on its right, as the White Tiger. Zhu actually touches upon this point only as a literary image, rather than in accordance with topographical fact, since Mount Taishan was actually located, and was regarded by other scholars such as Qu Jun as being at the front (south) of the site. Fourthly, the site had screens formed by hillocks to its far southern side. A site having these topographical features was seen by Zhu Xi and others interested in *fengshui* as a perfect spatial pattern according to *fengshui* criteria.

Exactly the same topographical features of the site were also, however, held in great esteem by the elite, without any reference to *fengshui*. In many historical documents such topographic features were seen as superior, but in terms of their military, aesthetic or symbolic significance, without any *fengshui* terms being used in the expression of this viewpoint. The same spatial layout pattern was cited as the ideal choice, applauding the topographical features praised by Zhu Xi. (See Figure 4-4)

Firstly, the pattern of “*yishan daihai* 傾山帶海 (having the mountain and the sea)” or “*fushan baohai* 負山抱海 (bearing the mountain on its back and embracing the sea)”
was extolled by other scholars in a manner that had nothing to do with fengshui, as shown in the following quotation. In Ming Yudi Zhizhang Tu 明輿地指掌圖 (Handy Maps of the Ming), this pattern was interpreted in a symbolic way to emphasise the military importance of the site:

The xingsheng (topography) of the capital Beijing is finest in the world. Having its back to mountains and embracing the sea, it is impregnable. (京師形勝甲天下, 傾山帶海, 有金湯之固) (translated from RJK, vol. 5)

This pattern was explained in a pragmatic way in Lushui Ketan 談水客諫 (A Guest’s Words in Lushui)

The capital of [Beijing] has its back to the mountains, and embraces the sea. “Having mountains” means having abundant deep springs and a sufficient water supply. “Having the sea” means that the soil is fertile due to the silt of the sea. (京东负山控 海, 负山则泉深而土泽, 控 海则潮淤而壤沃.) (translated from GTJ, vol. 5)

The pattern of “having its back to the mountain and facing the sea” displayed by the topography of the site of Beijing was even praised in the Yuan dynasty. For instance, quite late in the dynasty, in Liao Shi 遼史 (The History of the Liao Dynasty): “Dili Zhi 地理志 (Records of Geography)” edited in 1344.

Youzhou 邯州 is located between Bo 海 (the Bohai Sea) and Jie 碣 (Jieshi). The site has its back to mountains and is beside the sea (qidi fushan dathai (his地負山帶海). Its folk are bold and virile (fengqi gangjin 風氣剛勁). It has been a place for using military forces since ancient times. (translated from RJK vol. 5)

Secondly, being embraced by the mountains to its north, and facing south, was seen as an ideal pattern for a capital, since facing south symbolised the authority for ruling the world in the orthodox symbolism of imperial capitals. As Loewe (1990:197) states out: “The emperor would sit enthroned in his principal audience chamber facing due south, and balancing the glory of Heaven’s chief luminary as it rose to its full power at noon; the expression Nan mian (‘Facing the south’) was used regularly to denote the person of the reigning monarch.” It was said in Dushu Yide 讀書一得 (Gainful Reading):

Youzhou has the sea to its left, Mount Taihang to its right, and the Juyong 京來 Pass behind it, and faces the area of He-Ji 河濟 to its the south. It is a paradise (tianfu zhiguo 天府之國). Mount Taihang comes from Pingyang 平陽 in the west, forms the Juyong Pass to the north, and enters the sea to the east. It runs for thousands of li just like dragon’s flying and phoenix’s dancing. The impregnable passes benefit the defence of the city. The site only opens to the south, so as to receive the respects of all the world. How
could this not be a heaven-created xingsheng 形勝!147 (translated from RJK vol. 5)

Thirdly, the symmetrical appearance of the surroundings was also praised in a large amount of writings about Beijing. But the terms of the Four Spiritual Animals were rarely if ever used. For instance, in Sun Chengze's 孫承澤 (1593-1675) Chunming Mengyu Lu 春明夢余錄 (Records of Dreams in the Spring),

Youyan 幽燕 has been a place of great power since ancient times. It is enclosed by the sea to its left, joins up with Mount Taihang to its right, faces the area of He-Ji to its south and backs onto Juyong Pass to its North. . . . Therefore it is worthy of the name of the capital of an eternal emperor. (幽燕自昔稱雄。左環滄海, 右擁太行, 南襟河濟, 北枕居庸。誠帝王萬世之都。) (op. cit. vol. 2)

Fourthly, being protected by screens formed by hillocks to the south of the site was seen as part of an ideal and beautiful pattern without any fengshui qi-protecting significance. In Shuntianfu Jiuzhi (Old Annals of Prefecture of Shuntian) the fengshui term an (table) was used without any fengshui meaning:

Yan is situated in the north of the world [China]. Possessing the north-west [of China] and controlling the south-east [of China], it is the most strategically advantageous position of the world, and, just like water pouring off a steep roof, it sweeps down irresistibly from a commanding height. Mount Taishan stands to its south, Mount Huashan embraces it on the right. Three rows of an (table hillocks) appear to its fore. The Nine Rivers concentrate to its rear. It is a capital city well protected from all four sides. (夫燕天下之上遊也。臣服西北, 控 御東南, 若建瓴然。泰嶽峙其南, 華山環其右, 前則三重案閱, 廟則九河歸宿。誠四塞之國。) (translated from RJK vol. 5)

In most cases, all these advantages were recounted in conjunction with each other. The site, which was praised by Zhu Xi in terms of fengshui, was not necessarily seen by most of the elite as of a fengshui pattern. It was praised as being of an ideally composed pattern by applying various theories. As people mildly approving of fengshui, Zhu Xi and Wang Shixing naturally adopted fengshui imagery to illustrate the features of the landscape. In contrast, the general run of scholars show no evidence of fengshui in their mental perceptions of the same landscape. Thus there were certain common principles in the elite’s mind for justifying their views of the ideal spatial, topographical or aesthetic composition of a site for capital city. That the

147 According to the context, the book should be written after the city of Beijing being built. As it was collected in Rixia Jiujwen edited in 1686, this book supposed to be written in the Ming or early Qing.
site of Beijing had an ideal topographical pattern was a view shared by both *fengshui* and common judgement.

The conceiving of this pattern as ideal did not derive from *fengshui*, just as the following interesting example shows. Wang Shixing (1547-1598) once tried to interpret the site of the capital city Luo of the Zhou dynasty, about 2000 years prior to his time, from a *fengshui* point of view in *Guang Zhi Yi* 廣志綸 (*Records and Investigation of General Geography)*:

At the time when Duke Zhou established the capital Luo, there was no *kanyu* theory (practitioner) at all. The sage’s practice already, however, naturally followed the principles of the *kanyu* of later dynasties. [For the capital Luo], Longmen is its gate, the River Yi flows to the front of it, Qi Mountain rises to its rear, River Chan and River Jian flow at its two sides, and the great River Luo comes from the west and twists to its fore before flowing away at the *gen* position. Mount Songshan is the Green Dragon to its right and Mount Taishan is the White Tiger to its left. The Yellow River is the Tortoise at the rear of it. The mountains on its four sides appear row on row like a city wall without any gap. Of all the cities in the world that I have seen, none has such a superior layout pattern of mountains and rivers. Only the [topography] to its north and south is not good enough as far as the acquisition of good fortune is concerned.148 (translated from Wang Shixing *Dili Shu Sanzhong* 王十性地理書三種 281)

In Wang Shixing’s eyes, the topography of the site of Luo met the requirements of *fengshui*. Admitting that there was no *kanyu* in Zhou’s time, Wang’s point was that the ancients followed the principles of *fengshui* naturally, without even needing to study them. But, this only goes to prove the non-*fengshui* origin of these requirements. In other words, the topographical pattern of the site of Luo, which was admired by Wang Shixing in the light of *fengshui*, was regarded as an ideal pattern and was actually applied in capital siting even in the Zhou dynasty. Two points, therefore, may be drawn from this example. Firstly, since this ideal pattern was practised and held in esteem long before the appearance of *fengshui*, it did not originate with, or derive from, *fengshui*, and it therefore cannot be limited by any designation as *fengshui*. Secondly, since the Zhou capitals were regarded as the classical models throughout the history of imperial capital building, this pattern was

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148 The original text is as follows:

周公卜洛時，未有堪 與家也，然聖人作事，已自先具后世堪 與之說。龍門作關，伊水前朝，祁山後緩，黃河所出，中流自方，華夏為龍左聲，泰山為虎，右伏。黃河為玄武後牆，四山環郭，重重無空隙。行天下郡邑，未見山水整齊于此者，獨南北略淺福耳。
praised as generally orthodox, not just as an exclusive appurtenance of fengshui practice.

This universally recognised landscape pattern thus may not be classified as a specifically fengshui pattern, due to the following three points: Firstly, this pattern did not originate with or derive from fengshui. There is no denying the fact that the practice of fengshui made this pattern more widely known. The perpetuation of this long praised and long pursued ideal topographical pattern was due, in one way or another, to the popular practice of fengshui. The influence of fengshui on the perception of the pattern of the landscape of the site was limited only to making this universal pattern more popular, especially to the fengshui believer. Secondly, this landscape pattern was a widely accepted ideal pattern in the history of capital-city building. It was shared by fengshui and common aesthetic theory on landscape, two areas which sometimes belonged to two groups of contrasting social status. But in most cases, the pattern presented by the site of Beijing and possibly by those of some other cities was not perceived by the scholars either through a fengshui framework or in fengshui terms, although advocates of fengshui naturally tried to attribute the scholars’ perception to fengshui. What was borne in mind by the scholars when they examined the site was mainly its pragmatic significance and orthodox symbolism of capital-city building.

Consequently, an admiration of this universal landscape pattern does not necessarily mean the acceptance of fengshui, either as a belief, or as a mental attitude for perceiving landscape. As part of the perception of landscape, “very widely shared by the elite”, and indeed one which “pervaded at an unconscious level their thinking about landscape,” (Clunas 1996:183, 189) this pattern was not a fengshui pattern except in the eyes of fengshui practitioners or believers. Thus, it would be misleading to conclude that the most of the elite’s admiration of the site of Beijing was simply a “geomantic perception.”149 Their unanimous approval of the site was an outcome of the elite’s essential aesthetic sensibility towards landscape, which was not affected by the coincidence with, or absence of, fengshui interpretations. Fengshui interpretation was only loosely attached to the main body of the scholars’ analyses of the site.

5.2 THE USE OF THE CONCEPTS OF THE FOUR SPIRITUAL ANIMALS

149 Johnston (1985:71) claims that: “within the system of axial planning all dwellings were required to face south in conformity with feng-shui.”
The Four Spiritual Animals (or Four Manifestations, 四靈, 四獸, 四象, 四神),\textsuperscript{150} namely the qìnglong 青龍 (Green Dragon), bái hu 赤虎 (White Tiger), zhú què 朱雀 (Red Bird or Vermilion Bird) and xuān wù 玄武 (Black Tortoise), were four important terms used in fengshui. (See Chapter Two.) The terms qìnglong (Green Dragon) and bái hu (White Tiger) were used in Zhu Xi’s passage regarding the site of Beijing’s being an ideal fengshui pattern:

Mount Huashan 華山 rises at its right as the [White] Tiger. To its front, is Mount Songshan 嵩山, the qìanán 前案 (front table).\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, Mount Taishan 泰山 is located on its left as the [Green] Dragon. (Zhuzi Yulei, vol. 2) (See Figure 4-4)

While these same topographical features were praised by scholars in the Ming dynasty, the terms for the Four Spiritual Animals were not used in most analyses of the topography of the site of Beijing. The use of these terms in some analyses suggests the influence of fengshui, but further investigation shows that the use of these terms, which had not originated in fengshui, did not imply the application of fengshui, the influence of fengshui lying mainly in its popularisation of these terms.

That the concept of the Four Spiritual Animals did not originate in fengshui is seen from one of the Confucian classics, Yīlì 儀禮 (Ceremonies and Rituals), “Quli” 曲禮 (shàng 上), in which it is said:

When [a procession or troop] marches, the Red Bird [flag] should be to the fore, the Black Tortoise [flag] to the rear, the Green Dragon [flag] to the left and the White Tiger [flag] to the right. The fluttering [flags] lend impetus and strength. (行, 前朱鳥而後玄武, 左青龍而右白虎, 招搖在上, 急繚其怒.)

According to Liu An’s (ca. 178 B.C.-ca.122 B.C.) Huainanzi 淮南子 (The Book of Huainan), the 28 stellar constellations were divided into four groups, represented by four animal symbols: dragon, bird, tiger and turtle. So the concept of the Four Spiritual Animals was derived from theories about 28 constellations, and is recorded in Confucian classics. According to Jiao Gongyan’s 賈公彥 (7th century) annotation to the Yīlì, the Four Animals were the four names of four stellar constellations in the North, South, East and West:

\textsuperscript{150} The other three heavenly (spiritual) animals are the Lín 麒 (unicorn, imaginary deer-like animal with horn and scales on its body), Fēng 凤 (phoenix) and Lóng 龍 (dragon). (cf. Xu 1996:295)

\textsuperscript{151} A typical fengshui term, meaning the front mountain or hill regarded as the front table of the selected site. It could be translated as “table hillocks.”
The front is the South, the rear is the North, the left is the East, and the right is the West. Red Bird, Black Tortoise, Green Dragon and White Tiger are the names of four stellar constellations in the Four Quarters. (translated from CY 3353)

Representing the four cardinal quarters, the Four Manifestations were often used as symbols in the building of capital cities to show the emperor’s sovereignty over the world by emphasising that the imperial capital was the central pivot of the four quarters. (See Section 6.3.5.) In fengshui, the Four Spiritual Animals were also made use of with regard to topography and architecture, but in a unique way — as ingredients for the elaboration of instructions for selecting sites for graves and houses. According to Zhang Rongming, (1994:26), Xiong Bolong (Qing dynasty) argues, in Wuhe Ji 無何集, “Kanyu Bian” 廿變 繼 (Criticism of Kanyu), that the ideas concerning the Four Spiritual Animals were inherited from the military theory found in Wuzi 吳子 (The Works of Master Wucius), a book attributed to Wu Qi 吳起 (? B.C.-378 B.C.) of the Warring States Period:152

Liu Huanggang 劉黃岡 said: The notion of dragons in kanyu derives from Wuzi’s 吳子 military theory. Wuzi said: “To deploy a army, do not display it on the tianzao 天壇 and the head of a dragon. Tianzao is the entrance of a great valley. The head of the dragon is the top of a mountain. A suitable place should have hills on all four sides of it, the left one being the Green Dragon, the right one being White Tiger, the front one being Red Bird and the one at the back being the Black Tortoise.” The kanyu practitioners of the ensuing dynasties inherited this idea and changed it into a theory about long and xue. The people who do not believe in kanyu hold the theory about long and xue to be a total nonsense. Who, though is aware that Wuzi was the founder of the theory about topographical advantages!

Not only were the Four Spiritual Animals used to represent the things (hills or water) on the four sides of a selected site, but there were in fengshui manuals countless detailed requirements concerning what appearance the four things should have in order that good fortune be acquired. For instance, it was said in Guo Pu’s Burial Classic:

For the site of a grave, the area to its left is the Green Dragon, that to its right the White Tiger, that to the front of it the Red Bird, and that to its back the Black Tortoise. The Black Tortoise should bow its head, the Red Bird should dance and fly, the Green Dragon should twist for a great distance, and the White Tiger should be moderate, these being the ideal formations. Otherwise, it will lead to decline and death. Therefore, the Tiger rising is

152 Forty eight volumes of the book were collected in Hanshu, Yiwenzhi. It was believed that the book was not written in Wu Qi’s period. (cf. CY, 488)
said to be “biting the corpse,” a rising Dragon is said to be “envying the host,” a rising Tortoise is said to be “resisting the burial” and a Bird that does not dance will fly away soon. (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 342)\textsuperscript{153}

This was only one version of the requirements concerning the Four Manifestations of a selected site presented in one of the early fengshui treatises. In the fengshui manuals of ensuing ages, when the Four Manifestations were used to signify objects, such as, roads, ditches, rocks or trees, on the four sides of a site, countless interpretations for the various features of these objects, by which one’s prospective fortune was determined, were produced. (Figure 5-2) The interpretations and instructions in different manuals were often contradictory. What distinguished fengshui theory from other theories in which the Four Manifestations were also used, was that a connection between the features of the objects around a site, and the future dependent on them was established in fengshui. Each distinctive feature of the objects included under the term Four Manifestations indicated a specific consequence for the future of the owner of a site. Thus, just using the Four Manifestations terms did not of itself necessarily mean that fengshui theory was being applied, unless further argument concerning prospective fortune, referring to the characteristics of the objects denoted by these terms, was provided.

However, as fengshui developed, the Four Manifestations terms, which were discussed in almost every manual, became one of the fengshui terms known to all, even to those who had least knowledge about fengshui. It would not have been absurd for an imperial scholar to mentally connect a view on the topography of a site in which the Four Manifestations terms were used with fengshui. The imperial scholars were, beyond doubt, familiar with these terms, although they may not have known the associated fengshui theories. It was the prevalent practice of fengshui in the siting of graves and individual buildings that made the practice of using the Four Manifestations to denote components of the topographical or architectural surroundings of a selected site more popular. Such was the influence of fengshui on the prevalence of the use of the Four Manifestations terms in siting, but the exportation of fengshui beliefs may not have been to an equivalent extent.

\textsuperscript{153} The original text is as follows:

故葬以左为青龍，右为白虎，前为朱雀，后为元武。元武垂頭，朱雀翔舞，青龍蜿蜒，白虎驯服，形势反此，法當破敗。故虎蹲踞之衔尸，龍騰騰之搏主。元武不垂者拒尸，朱雀不舞者逝去。
In most cases when the Four Manifestations terms were used to comment on the site of Beijing, no explicit *fengshui* argument was involved. Not all the texts were praising the site as an ideal pattern of *fengshui*. To some scholars, the use of the terms was only a way of illustrating the landscape formation, just like using the terms North, South, East and West. It had nothing to do with any *fengshui* purpose. In the following text in *Pengchuang Rilu* 蓬窗日錄 (*Diary of a Cottage Window*), the Four Spiritual Animals are used merely to indicate the four quarters, without any implication concerning fortune in the light of *fengshui*:

For Beijing, the Green Dragon water is the River Bai 白, which flows out to the south of Miyun 密雲 County and towards the city of Tongzhou 通州; the White Tiger water is the River Yu 玉, which starts from Mount Yuquan 玉泉山, flows through the Forbidden City and joins the River Tonghui 通惠 and River Bai outside the capital city; the Red Bird water is the River Lugou 鷺溝, which derives from the River Songqian 蘇乾 in Datong 大同 and enters Wanping County before reaching the Lugou Bridge; the Black Tortoise waters are the Shiyu 漏餘, Gaoliang 高梁, Huanghuazheng Chuan 黃花 鎮川 and Yu 榆 rivers, which all run to the north of the capital city before joining the River Bai. (translated from *RJK* vol. 5)

This passage was surely influenced by the popular way of describing the spatial position largely used in *fengshui*, but the passage itself is just a plain description of the spatial location of the surroundings of the site, and is quite different from *fengshui* argument, such as that seen in the following passage regarding the planning of the city of Beijing, found in *Zixin Ji* 《Works of Catalpa Stream》:

As for the topographical advantages of the capital [Beijing], according to *kanyu*, the River Yu should be extended directly [southward] to meet the Nanhaizi (ponds to the south of the city), and then turned eastward right in front [at the south] of the Temple of Heaven and Earth [sic] towards the River Lu to form a natural [pattern]. The River Zha outside Chongwen Gate should be blocked, then the left arm [of the city] will remain unbroken. This is a plan for the emperor to make a capital city lasting forever.154 (translated from *RJK* vol. 5)

This was no doubt a *fengshui* argument.155 But in many cases when *fengshui*-associated terms were occasionally employed to praise the site, *fengshui* principles were not applied. For those who did not conduct a *fengshui* argument, using the Four

154 The original text is as follows: (it will be analysed in section 6.2.1)

京師形勝，以壇 興家論之。玉河之水當直出會 南海子，從天地壇前轉東入潞河。方為自然，崇文門外殲河宜塞之，庶幾左臂不壞，此乃帝王建都萬世之計也。

155 This passage will be analysed in section 6.2.1.
Manifestations terms may possibly have provided greater symbolic significance, as they were also part of the symbolism of the building of the imperial capitals. Twenty-nine pieces of prose and poetry specifically on the topic of praising the capital city Beijing, or the capitals Beijing and Nanjing, were collected in *Rixia Jiuwen Kao (A Revised Description of the History and Antiquities of Beijing)* in 1774. The Four Manifestations terms were only used in Sheng Shitai’s 吳時泰 “Beijing Fu 北京賦 (Rhapsody on Beijing).” In this rhapsody of about 5000 characters, a wide range of the symbolic aspects of the city was touched upon as in the other similar rhapsodies, and a *fengshui*-tinged analysis was given in passing:

[The site] has Mount Huanshan to its west as the [White] Tiger, and takes Mount Taishan to its east as the [Green] Dragon. . . . Comparing this with those [other capitals] in history, which one can match it in terms of *kanyu*? (translated from RJK, vol. 7)

These ideas borrowed from Zhu Xi were used by Sheng in a more symbolic or aesthetic way, as the idea of concentrating *qi* was not mentioned, to emphasise the legitimacy of the capital city. The influence of *fengshui* on the application of the Four Manifestations terms in these texts is obvious. The practice of using the terms to denote spatial surroundings of a site was no doubt enhanced by the development of *fengshui* on topography through the dynasties. *Fengshui* helped to build up a framework for perceiving topography and spatial layout, and this framework was well known to the elite.

However, while some of the elite may have been influenced by the geomantic perception of landscape and “unconsciously” used the terminology shared with *fengshui*, which most of the elite were familiar with, the majority of the elite consciously rejected the use of these terms, because of the strong *fengshui* shadow over the popular use of them. Most historical documents avoided using these *fengshui*-imbued terms while expressing the greatest esteem for Beijing’s superior topography. The site was assessed by the use of terms such as, front, back, left and right, or north, south, east and west, a conventional practice in local gazetteers for illustrating the topography of a city or a place. Such opinions on the site of Beijing were always the dominant theme of the sections on *xingsheng* in books on Beijing.

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156 Fu 賦, descriptive prose interspersed with verse.

157 The original text is as follows:

西以華山為虎, 東以泰山為龍, 南岳南鎮, 益遠益隆, 五嶽作案於嶽表, 江河襟帶而朝宗。

展明堂於奧海, 抚朝拜于群峰, 以此而駕往昔, 賢堪 興之比崇。
What concerned the majority of the elite was the military and aesthetic significance of the topographical surroundings of the site, not their value from a fengshui point of view. The landscape which was praised by Zhu Xi in terms of fengshui was not necessarily a pattern which was appreciated only from a fengshui angle.

Although the landscape itself and the symbols used to describe it were shared by fengshui and general traditional practice, the Four Spiritual Animals terms did not interest most of the elite, possibly because of the popular use of these terms in fengshui. Not only was fengshui belief generally rejected by that elite, but they even had a strong tendency to reject the terminology of it that was simply shared with fengshui. Thus, the common knowledge of fengshui did not mean a common belief in fengshui. Shared criteria for judging the value of landscapes, and a shared terminology, did not mean shared philosophy. Although the elite were possibly familiar with the fengshui vocabulary, and some of them may have been highly conversant with it, the majority would not choose fengshui language to explain a site the aesthetic features of which they valued as much as did fengshui.

5.3 THE CONCEPTS OF XING AND SHI

Another aspect of scholars’ assessments of the site of Beijing, an aspect which could have been associated with fengshui, was the use of the concepts of xing and shi, which were used extensively in fengshui. The term xingshi, denoting “strategic or military situation” or “topography/landscape,” according to its different contexts, was employed in many analyses of the site. The way of using this term to denote topography, especially a “scenic or propitious landscape” was the same as that of fengshui.

The various connotations of the term xingshi were actually closely inter-related. When denoting “strategic or military situation”, as in the following examples, topographical advantage was certainly one of the elements that determined the strategic or military situation. Guo Zizhang 郭子章 discussed the strategic situations of the capital cities through the ages in his Du Lun 都論 (On Capital Cities): “In history, when talking about the most advantageous capitals, as far as xingshi has been concerned, (古今論形勢之都) Qin and Luo have always been the ones selected. But since the Han dynasty, Luo has not been seen as being as good as Qin.” (translated from Chunming Mengyu Lu vol.1) From the context of Guo’s whole discussion, we can see that he was using the term xingshi to denote the strategic and geographic circumstances. When Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1593-1675) was comparing the sites of
the capitals in Chunming Mengyu Lu 春明夢余錄 (Records of Dreams in the Spring), he said: “Jinling is protected by the River Yangtse to its north, and possesses the [commercial] metropolises of Wu to its south. Despite the luxurious [aspects of the capital], as far as the honest ordinary citizens are concerned, its xingshi (strategic situation) is not as good as those of the [capitals] in the Northwest, which hold the throat and ride on the back of the world.”158 After detailing the disposal of the troops at the forts and passes around Beijing, Sun Chengze said: “The defence is indeed well organised. This is [the garrison plan] which is relied on for controlling the xingshi (military situation) (其制可謂密矣。此所以控御其形勢者也).” In such kinds of use of the term xingshi, the meaning of “topography” or “landscape” may have been included as part of the considerations, but was not of major significance.

In many cases, the term xingshi denoted superior topography in the strategic or military sense, but also implied a scenic significance. For instance, in Yuan Shi (The History of the Yuan Dynasty), it was said: “The [topography of] Youyan is like a tiger crouching, a dragon curling, and has impregnable [magnificent] xingshi. [From this site] it is easy to control Jianghuai 江淮 (the mid-south-eastern area of China) in the South, and access the desert in the North.”159 (op. cit. vol. 119) Li Shimian 李時勉 in praising the topography of the site used the term xingshi, in his Beijing Fu 北京賦 (Rhapsody of Beijing): “[The site] holds Mount Taihang to its left, and grasps Jieshi to its right, Has its back to the strategic passes, and faces the plain of fertile land, Has the mountain ridge deriving from the eternal peak, and perches magnificently with Mount Yilü. Having the top xingshi of China, it is the terrain of superiority.”160 (translated from RJK vol. 6) In these examples the term xingshi was used to denote topography but also emphasised its aesthetic characteristics, sometimes with a strong preference for visual images concerning the landscape, such as those of the dragon and tiger. This sense of the term was in almost no way different from that of the habitual use of it in fengshui, as seen in Qiu Jun’s praise of the site of Beijing in Daxue Yanyi Bu (A Supplement to the Great Learning):
[The site of Beijing] has “complete” xingshi [superior topography in terms of fengshui]. The qi there is confined and concentrated. It really does, as the kanyu specialists said, “preserve wind and concentrate qi.” (translated from Chunming Mengyu Lu vol. 2)

In this case, since the pair of concepts xing and shi referred to the central idea of the Xingshi School of fengshui, using the term xingshi to denote the topography, or making any reference to the concepts of xing and shi, such use of the terms of xing and shi in the interpretations of the site did strongly suggest the influence of fengshui. The next sections will throw some further light on this.

5.3.1 The Origin of the Concepts of Xing and Shi

According to Wang Qiheng (1992:117-37), the terms xing and shi were mentioned in pre-Qin dynasty literature. There are works specifically specially discussing xing and shi, some even referring to them in their titles, such as “Xingshi” and “Xingshi Jie 形勢解” (Analysis of Xingshi) in Guanzi 管子, “Xing Pian 形篇” (An Essay on the Xing) and “Shi Pian 勢篇” (An Essay on the Shi) in Sunzi 孫子. In these works, xing refers to form, shape, manifestation, feature or expression, while shi means terrain, pose, tendency, situation and power. Xing has more connotations of individuality, detail, part, and close-up objects; shi has an overtone of integrity, macroscopic visual effect, enormity and distance. Wang has found that in “Kaogong Ji,” it was emphasised that artisans should address the relationship between the ensemble and the details so as to attain perfection in their practice, saying that one should “examine detailed shape and observe overall appearance (shenqu mianshi 審曲面勢) in considering [the use of] the five materials and designing tools.” I also note that Zheng Xuan of the Han dynasty annotated this as “examine the xingshi (shape or appearance) of materials.” (Zhouli Zhushu, 592)

Wang takes the Xingfa School of the Han dynasty as the predecessor of the later Xingshi School of fengshui. As described in Ban Gu’s Han Shu, “Yiwen Zhi”, the principles of the Xingfa School aimed at “deciding the form of cities and buildings by observing the geographical or topographical environment of the world” (daju jouzhou zhishi, yi li chengkuo shishe xing 大舉九州之勢 以立城郭室舍形). Wang holds that this idea was most probably inherited from the theory of “xingti zhifa” (method for dealing with xing and with ti, “objects”) which was mentioned in the “Diguan” section of Zhouli. According to Ban Gu’s records, the works of the Xingfa School included a 7-volume Guo Chao, a 12-volume Gongzhai Dixing and a 13-volume Shanhai Jing (Mountains-and-Seas Classic). Although their theory of xing
and shi is no longer available, owing to the loss of these books, Wang Qiheng is of the view that the theories of the Xingfa School of the Han dynasty were inherited by, and developed in, the Xingshi School of fengshui in later dynasties.

I do not readily subscribe to Wang’s deduction, since we know too little about the Xingfa School of the Han dynasty. I agree, however, with what Wang claims is shown by the materials he collected, that the concepts xing and shi were well established much earlier than the appearance of fengshui. The aesthetic values of the concepts of xing and shi were not originally related to fengshui belief at all. In one example given by Wang, He Yan of the period of the Three Kingdoms, describes architecture, in his Jingfu Hall Song, availing himself of the terms xing and shi for his depiction: “the roofs are overlapping, and the shi is integrated but the xing is separated.”161 Although this is a description of a dougong (an architectural part structured by square pieces of wood at the top of a pillar supporting a main beam),162 the artistic and architectural idea of making parts separate from each other but at the same time keeping them integrated organically as part of the whole structure is clearly indicated. Thus, before fengshui theory was properly formed, the notions of xing and shi had already developed into a set of concepts belonging to the general realms of aesthetic experience and visual effects, such as the relationships between the general and the detailed, the large and the small, the far and the near, the integrated and the separate, the primary and the secondary, and the dynamic and the static.

From the Tang dynasty onwards, xing and shi were largely used for interpreting features of mountains, in the Xingshi School of fengshui. Only on this point do I agree with Wang Qiheng’s opinion, that, following the development of the Xingshi School of fengshui, the concepts of xing and shi were further evolved into a systematic theory regarding the aesthetic beauty of landscape.

5.3.2 The Xingshi Theory in Fengshui

In the Xingshi School of fengshui, a site had to be determined mainly by investigating the quality of its topography, which largely relied on a visual

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161 The original text is as follows:

檐柱重叠, 勢合形離.

162 A special set of parts in the construction of traditional Chinese building. It could be translated as racket set, carved brackets supporting the eaves from the columns.
examination of it, focused often on the aesthetic value of the features of the landscape. The theories for evaluating the landscape were mostly centred on the basic concepts xīng and shì, translated by Feuchtwang (1974:112) as in the following: “on the ground, in all places are to be found forms (xīng) in patterns (ge), and power, or the significance of circumstances (shì) seeks manifestation in the forms (xīng).” The fundamental definition of these two concepts was given by one of the fēngshuí classics, Guó Pù’s Zāng Jīng (Burial Classic):

Shì is the mountain of over a thousand chi in dimension, while xīng refers to the mountain of over a hundred chi in dimension.¹⁶³ [This may also be understood as: “Shì is a mountain to be viewed from a thousand chi away, while xīng refers to the view a hundred chi away.” When xīng and shì become harmonious and co-ordinated, it leads to good fortune; otherwise, it leads to disaster. . . . The oncoming dragon which measures a thousand chi is a shì, and that which measures a hundred chi is a xīng. With the oncoming force of shì and the static and refined xīng, and their interdependent relationship within the site, it is a perfect one.¹⁶⁴ (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 342)

Following Guó Pù’s argument, this idea was further developed in Guānshí Dílì Zhìmēng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator):¹⁶⁵

Thus shì is the distant view, xīng is the close view. Generally speaking, shì is sketchy and macroscopic, while xīng is detailed and microscopic. Shì is larger-scale than xīng, and xīng is smaller-scale than shì. It is not, however, easy to distinguish the xīng in a large-scale topography, owing to the very extensiveness of the area to be analysed, just as it is not easy to recognise the shì in a tiny environment, owing to the very abundance of detail For a huge topography, the xīng indeed lies in the shì. For a tiny area, the shì is to be found amidst the xīng. If one concentrates solely on observing the “huge one that comes from afar” - the large mountain, one will easily neglect the xīng. If one examines only “the near and small” mountain, one may lose sight of the shì. If we refine what is small and near from the total of what is large and far-reaching, and seek the large and far that extends beyond the near and small, the xīng and shì will both be discovered. Shì should be observed from far away; xīng must be examined from nearby. Shì is easily

¹⁶³ In the Ming dynasty, 1 chi = 0.320m. See Appendix 2.
¹⁶⁴ The original text is as follows:
夫千尺為勢, 百尺為形. 勢與形順者吉, 勢與形逆者凶. ... ... 來龍千尺為勢, 百尺爲形, 前後倚吉葬也.
¹⁶⁵ Guānshí Dílì Zhìmēng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator) was written under Guàn Zhòng’s name. Since Guó Pù and Yang Yùnsòng’s work was quoted in it, it was believed not being written earlier than the Tang dynasty.
detected, but xing cannot be recognised by those who are not extraordinarily intelligent.\textsuperscript{166} (translated from KYJC vol. 1, 302)

The oncoming mountain [ridge] is the shi, and it becomes xing when it forms a xue (site). (來山為勢，結穴為形) (translated from op. cit. 299)

Thus we learn that the concepts of xing and shi were used to evaluate the mountain, representing its different visual effects, although there was also a variant use of the terms of xing and shi, as seen in Guanshi Dili Zhimeng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator): “[The hills] to the left, right, front and rear [of the site] are called the Four Shi, and the mountain, water and an (table hillock) are called the Three Xing.” (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 299) Of course, the aim of the fengshui manuals in hunting out the perfect xing and shi was to acquire good qi and good fortune. When xing and shi were harmonious and co-ordinated, it would lead to good fortune; otherwise, the omens would be ill ones, as is summarised in the following statements:

If perfection is attained in both xing and shi, the qi will be exuberant. (勢全形就者，氣之旺也) (translated from op. cit. 290)

With mutual promotion from its xing and shi, the cheng (the configuration for containing qi) of a site becomes perfect. (形勢相登，則為昌熾之佳城) (translated from op. cit. 299)

However, extensive theories were elaborated by fengshui concerning the skills needed for addressing the visual effects of a mountain. Attention to the “marked aesthetic component” of fengshui, which was particularly evident in the Xingshi School, has been drawn by Needham, but without further exploration.\textsuperscript{167} Only recently has Wang Qiheng (1992:117-37) made a breakthrough in the xingshi theory of fengshui, an important aspect of the aesthetic component of fengshui. Wang has found that there were many theories on the concepts of xing and shi argued for in various fengshui treatises, which standardised the different meanings and spatial dimensional limitations of xing and shi, and illustrated their dialectical relationship,

\textsuperscript{166} The original text is as follows:

而此以遠為勢，近為形，大約勢居乎粗，形在乎細，勢為形之大者，形為勢之小者，然大地無形，融結氣極，小地無勢，精神聚會，大地非無形，形即在勢之間，小地非無勢，勢即在形之中，若徒於遠者，大者而來則失形，若徒於近者，小者而諷則失勢，勢在遠者，遠者之中而求其小者，近者，於小者，近者之外而求其遠者，大者，則勢與形骨得之矣，然勢可遠觀，形須近察，勢在中人或得見之，形非上智未易測識也。

\textsuperscript{167} Joseph Needham (1956:361): “In many ways feng-shui was an advantage to the Chinese people, as when, for example, it advised planting trees and bamboos as windbreaks, and emphasised the value of flowing water adjacent to a house site. I other ways it developed into a grossly superstitious system. But all through, it embodied, I believe, a marked aesthetic component, which accounts for the great beauty of the siting of so many farms, houses and villages throughout China.”
seeing them both as opposite and complementary, and thus as convertible into each other, and which went into the relevant skills for dealing with them. As discovered by Wang, the interrelationship between xing and shi was explained in detail in Guanshi Dili Zhibeng (Guan’s Geomantic Indicator), as in the following statements:

Shi is the oncoming mountain-range, and where it ends the xing is formed. Shi is like the root and trunk of a tree, and xing is like its flowers. The trunk will be strong while the flowers are flourishing, and the root stretches widely so that the crown of the tree will be more splendid. . . . The perfection of the xing is thanks to the development of the shi; while shortcomings in the xing will make the shi feeble. Shi should extend as much as possible and xing should be as condensed as possible.168 (translated from op. cit. 215)

Shi coming from a long distance is not clear but is solid, while xing from a short distance is not large but is rich in content. (進以觀勢，雖略而真，進以認形，雖約而博。) (translated from op. cit. 216)

Xing is the element which can be accumulated into shi; and shi is the result of [the integration of] xing (蓋形者，勢之積，勢者，形之崇). (op. cit. 146)

Shi is viewed a thousand chi away but not from several li169 (miles) away. Xing is viewed a hundred chi away but is not involved in the appreciation of tiny dimensions such as insects (千尺為勢，非數里外之勢，百尺為形，非昆蟲草木之形). (translated from op. cit. 151)

Viewing xing from nearby, one sees that it contains countless elements but is not [rich] enough; seeking shi from far away, one sees no much items but it is [tasteful]. . . . The dynamic shi is fundamental; the static xing is secondary. . . . The shi is the basis for the xing, and the xing is the texture of the shi.170 (translated from op. cit. 153)

The xue (site) is formed by the xing, and the xing is supported by the shi. The effect of the xing depends on the shi. Without the xing, the shi will be too abrupt; without the shi, the xing will be of wretched appearance.171 (translated from op. cit. 223)

On the basis of these examples, the fundamental meaning of this pair of concepts has been summarised by Wang as follows: xing (form) refers to close-up, smaller, more

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168 The original text is as follows:

來山為勢，結的成形。勢如根本，形如蓋英，英華則實固，根遠則干榮。 ... 勢止形就。形結勢薄，勢欲其伸，形欲其締。

169 In the Ming dynasty, 1 li was about 576 metres. See Appendix 2.

170 The original text is as follows:

近相住形，雖百端而未已，遠求來勢，得九條而可殲。

171 The original text is as follows:

穴以形造，形以勢得，無形而勢，勢之突兀，無勢而形，形之龍兇。
individual, partial and detailed spatial composition and its visual effect; shi (power) refers to distant-view, large, grouped, integrated spatial composition and its visual sense. The basic standard for the dimensions (the frontage, depth and height) of a mountain, or the distance from which it should be observed is: for xing, normally less than a hundred chi, but should not include things of tiny dimensions such as insects; for shi, generally speaking, the measurement is one thousand chi, and should not include things of boundless dimensions. Wang, therefore, argues that the development of xingshi theory in fengshui not only made a great contribution to the field of observing and analysing the spatial environment from the angle of aesthetic appreciation, but that, furthermore, it provided a set of practical guidelines with criteria of fixed quantities for building activity. Basing myself on his explorations, I believe the following three points should be summarised here.

First of all, the providing of criteria of fixed quantities (100 chi and 1000 chi) had considerable subsequent practical significance. The concepts of xing and shi came to be used in reference to controlling both the dimensions of individual buildings and viewing distance. They came to be advocated as the basic criteria of dimension for exterior space composition.

Secondly, in the xingshi theory there were many guiding principles for improving the visual effect: “When the xing at the left is [rich] enough, the shi at the right has to be complete. When the shi at the left is ready, make the xing at the right perfect (左形全而右勢就, 左勢就而右形全).” (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 214) “If that on the left seems too lofty, enrich that on the right; when that on the right looks more predominant, then substantiate that on the left (左崇而右實, 右勝而左殷).” (translated from Wang 1992:120) It was stressed that one should manipulate the visual effect, rather than passively observe it. In another example, it was said: “Establish distant shi as a background for the xing; and accumulate tasteful xing to develop the shi (駐遠勢以環形, 聚巧形以展勢).” (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 140) This means that in viewing an individual object, a delightful effect can be achieved by perceiving it in the whole topographic background. The astute skills employed in doing so reflect a comprehension of the way that humans perceive exterior space composition (of both landscape and architecture). Not only does this sound like an artistic or design theory, but its desire to manipulate the visual effect is creative. This shows why this theory had a leading significance for the Chinese visual arts associated with landscape.

Thirdly, xingshi considered the aspect of man’s movement in his observing of landscape. Its finest idea was that concerned with grasping the differences of effect
between distant views, near views and those between the two poles in time and space. The relativity and convertibility of xing and shi in time and space was stressed in xingshi theory. For example, "Alas! The differences between xing and shi are caused by the change of viewing distances when [the viewer] moves. This presents spectacles significantly to man's eyes and mind (至哉! 形勢之異相也, 遠近行止之不同, 心目之大覲也)." (translated from KYJC, vol. 1, 145) “Movement and stillness, yin and yang (動靜陰陽) . . . all things are changed in relationship to each other when [one] is moving, and in such changes lie their real excellence (移步換形, 相生爲用).” (translated from Wang 1992:120) Xing and shi have contrary and dependent relationships with each other, and can also be converted into each other. As for when objects are observed from different distances, xing and shi both have static characteristics when viewing distances are fixed. When, however, they are viewed in movement, in time and space (from near to far, or from far to near), their characteristics are shown in the motion to be full of changes and of convertibility between the two. As the viewing distance changes, so the visual effect changes — whereupon an object taken as a shi may be instead be regarded as a xing. As people’s experience in the mobile viewing process was reflected upon, it became a significant theory of aesthetic experience.

Although I dissent both from Wang’s attempt, by using modern scientific theories to examine fengshui, to prove that fengshui is science, and his approach of taking the fragments of the xingshi theory to interpret the achievements of traditional Chinese building, I appreciate his exploration of the aesthetic significance of the theories concerning xing and shi in fengshui. Thus I believe that the concepts of xing and shi did not originate in fengshui, but that many theories built upon these concepts regarding the observation and analysis of the aesthetic beauty of landscape or of architectural objects were indeed elaborated through the development of fengshui. Leaving aside the purpose of acquiring good fortune, the application of the theories of xing and shi had high aesthetic significance in the matter of pursuing perfection and harmony of visual effect.

5.3.3 The Concepts of Xing and Shi as Far as the Scholars Were Concerned

As these two concepts referred to aesthetic experience and visual effect manipulation, the application of them was not limited only to fengshui. They were used as part of the general vocabulary and framework for grasping the dynamism of the living landscape in geographical exploration, landscape painting and creation, and probably in building practices.
In observing and analysing landscape and topography, the concepts of *xing* and *shi* were an important part of the vocabulary of the Ming travellers. According to Ward’s (1996:181-82) extensive study on *Xu Xiake Youji* (The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake), Xu considered the mountain and landscape as alive and possessing its own dynamism. “Xu sought to capture the totality of a scene, and depict the notion of Nature as a living entity, in a similar manner to the aims of poets and painters. One of the terms used by Xu Xiake to describe this vitality was ‘momentum’ or ‘dynamic force’ (*shi*). . . . Xu Xiake wrote of a mountain’s *shi* to describe a dynamic state in contrast to its ‘fixed form’ (*xing*).” While Xu used *shi* predominantly to describe the position of mountains as part of the overall layout of the land, he also used it for other elements of the landscape, including rivers, rain, waterfalls, and man-made objects. Ward has also noticed that there is a clear distinction between *dishi* and *xingshi* as well,\(^\text{172}\) the latter signifying the formation of the earth, translated by Needham (1956:359) as “local influence”, while the former signifies the formation of larger-scale land masses. Ward (1996:182) holds that: “Xu used *dishi* to refer to the setting in the overall topography of the mountain, while *xingshi* referred to the form of the particular land mass under discussion.” I believe that the application of the concepts of *xing* and *shi* in Xu’s writing as Ward says “reflects his desire for the recording of accurate and precise information within a widely-known theoretical framework.” (op. cit. 186)

In Chinese landscape painting, although the painters were not generally willing to be associated with *fengshui*,\(^\text{173}\) painting and *fengshui* shared the same way of capturing

\(^{172}\) A passage from Xu Xiake was translated by Word (1996:182) as shown below:

Guanyn Cliff was bright and open and looked down, its form (*xingshi*) was certainly different from Nine Dragons which was dark, secluded and open in the middle. In terms of overall topography (*dishi*), although Nine Dragons was slightly below the summit of the mountain, it was much higher than Guanyin Cliff.

\(^{173}\) In the following example given by Shi Zhen (1992:198), it was shown clearly that the painters thought it beneath one to associate with *fengshui*. Gao Bing said in his *Zhitou Hualun* 指頭畫論 (Finger Painting Theory):

The tradition of painting throughout the schools in the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties is that regarding the lower half of the picture as primary and the upper half as secondary; the near object is primary and the distant object is secondary; drawing the tree, stone and building as near object in the lower half and paint the mountain and river as distant scene in the upper half. The most famous painters could not be exempted from this either. So there were even painting theories of “starting as *yin* then finish as *yang*; or starting as *yang* then finish as *yin*.” It was referred to scornfully as “applying *fengshui* in painting.”
and conveying the aesthetic beauty of landscapes. According to Shi Zhen’s (1992:202) research on Guo Xi’s Linquan Gaozhi (Aesthetic Taste of Woods and Water) in the Northern Song dynasty, its theory on landscape painting was largely based on the theory of the Xingshi School of fengshui: “Capture its shi when viewing the mountain from a distance; examine its zhi (texture) when looking at it closely.” “The mountain is a huge object, with its growing xing, shrinking xing, and opening xing.” “The mountain is a huge object. Its xingshi can only be discovered by viewing it from a distance.” Shi Zhen speculates that the reason for his theory’s deriving directly from fengshui was that Guo Xi had been a fengshui practitioner in his early years. But for the Ming painters who had no fengshui background, their perception of the living landscape also drew on the concepts of xing and shi. Ward (1996:181-82) has noticed that there was much discussion amongst late Ming painters and literati of shi. Zhao Zuo (1570?-1633) argued that for a painter the use of a technique of dynamic force made a painting lively:

The main thing is to try for a sense of dynamic force (shi). If you capture this dynamic force in your mountains, then even when they coil and twist from top to bottom they will be strung together (into a continuous movement).

Giving the following quotations, Ward (ibid.) argues that “the vocabulary of the late Ming painters, based firmly on such a view of shi, show that mountains were considered to be part of a living landscape.”

Cahill (68-9) describes this as a system of linking long series of forms through a continuity of shi, Dong Qichang writing, “One should begin by outlining the mountain in such a way that its form and momentum are already grasped.” For Dong, mountains were to be seen as an entity, not as a series of different features. This accorded with Xu’s way of looking at the scenery: the most important feature of the layout of the landscape was its shi, defined in the Wenxin Diaolong as, “the inclination of Nature.” John Hay (1994:1-55) has described shi as “the configuration of any phenomenon as it is manifested out of a state of potentiality, from entropic energy into specified matter. Its boundaries are therefore in time as well as in space; They are never geometrically precise or fixed.”

In some special cases, painters even directly applied the xingshi theory of fengshui, as shown in the following examples found by Shi Zhen (1992:198-203). Da Chongguang’s (early Qing dynasty) in his Hua Quan (On the Art of Painting) held that landscape painting should apply the theory of the Xingshi School of fengshui. In addition to his use of fengshui terms, such as zhushan, keshan, zufeng, sha and shuikou, some of his theories were the same as those found in fengshui: “According to Five Elements, distinguish ti (shape of mountain), and find the shi and
xing from the basis of dili.” “Going freely after a careful controlling, as the mountain is gradually expanding outwards, the shi turns. Rising and then going down, the mountain almost moves as its shi grows.” In Wang Yuanqi’s 王原祁 Yuchuang Manbi 雨窗漫笔 (Essay of Rainy Window), “The movement of the longmai, with its expanding and concentrating, rising and falling, is the qishi (dynamic force) in the picture, which is crucial to the success of the painting.”

In architecture, Wang Qiheng (1992:117-37) tried to use the xingshi theories to justify the design of a Chinese building complex, and speculated that the designer may have applied this theory in controlling the dimensions of individual buildings and the viewing distance within each courtyard, in order to get the best visual effect. For individual buildings with a dimension of 32 metres or less, the abundance of its details and texture must have been important in any perception of its architectural expression. (According to the measurements used in the Ming dynasty, 100 chi equalled about 32 metres, and 1000 chi about 320 metres.) However, for a building in a dimension of 320 metres (it must have been a building complex), its outline and dynamic force would certainly have been more important than its detailed features. Viewing a building from 32 metres or less, the details and texture would have been seen effectively, while viewing it from 320 metres away only a general overall impression would have been possible. He argues that this may have constituted an exterior space design model grid and a principle like the Golden Mean. He claims that this principle was applied in architectural design, because, according to his investigations, the design seems to match the principle. Although I doubt whether Wang’s attempt to prove that the xingshi theories were applied in architectural design is valid, I believe that, as an element of landscape, architecture too was perceived by the literati in the light of concepts of xing and shi.

Thus, for the Ming scholars, the landscape was alive and possessed its own dynamism. The concepts of xing and shi were an indispensable part of their vocabulary for observing and describing this living landscape, and were applied in all fields concerning landscape, including those of fengshui, travelling, painting, and landscaping. The development and pervasive spread of this vocabulary for grasping and expressing the dynamism of landscape were largely, but not exclusively, due to the development of the Xingshi School of fengshui. Some scholars may have been aware of the connection between the vocabulary and fengshui, but to use the vocabulary, which had also been well developed in fengshui, to capture the aesthetic beauty of a landscape did not of itself necessarily imply the application of fengshui theory. For the majority of the scholars, their use of concepts of xing and shi only
reflects the fact that their understanding of the living landscape was shared with fengshui, and does not imply that fengshui was part of their mental furniture. Nor should it be regarded as any reliable testament to their belief in the arts of fengshui.

5.3.4 Perceptions of the Landscape of Beijing

Let us return to those interpretations of the topography of the site of Beijing in which the term xingshi was used. Since using the term xingshi to denote the living landscape, or using the concepts xing and shi to express the aesthetic characteristics of the topography, was a general practice among the Ming elite, but did not necessarily imply the application of fengshui ideas, I suggest that their assessments of this site were subject to two kinds of argument. For those like Qiu Jun, who saw the topography of the site as perfect according to fengshui principles, saying that its “xing and shi are completed,” (translated from Tianfu Guangji, 7) used the terms xing and shi to serve his fengshui argument. Although such scholars saw the landscape within the same framework as others for capturing its aesthetic beauty, a framework which was shared by all the scholars, their fundamental judgement drew on fengshui grounds. There is no doubt that their assessment of the site was influenced by fengshui. In most cases, however, when the term xingshi or the concepts of xing and shi were used, the site was assessed without explicit reference to fengshui ideas. An instance of this usage is seen in Yuan Shi (History of the Yuan Dynasty): “Youyan is a topographically advantageous place, resembling a coiling dragon and crouching tiger. Its xingshi is superior.” (translated from RJK vol. 5) Such kinds of argument were not made in the light of fengshui.

Thus the site was perceived with the same aesthetic sensibility, and expressed in the same set of vocabulary, but with different attitudes, and reaching different conclusions from those of fengshui. For most of the elite, the site was not seen as having the advantage of protecting qi, nor as in accordance with the notions of the Xingshi School of fengshui. It cannot be far off the mark to assume that many of them were aware that this site could be also evaluated in the light of fengshui, but not many of them thought, or were willing to think, about the site from a fengshui viewpoint. Although some concepts or terms used in fengshui were employed as shared vocabulary in their illustration of the site, fengshui, as an “ideology,” a set of geomantic ideas for the purpose of procuring fortune, was hardly accepted by the elite in their understanding of the site.

5.4 SUMMARY
In this chapter, I have investigated three particular aspects of the scholars' assessments of the topography of the site, in which assessments some ideas and terms have been identical to those of fengshui argumentation. Firstly, I have demonstrated that the topographical configuration of the site was universally approved of as an ideal pattern for siting not only from a fengshui point of view. Secondly, I have analysed the use of the Four Spiritual Animals, and indicated that using these terms to denote spatial locations of the surroundings of a site was not necessarily an application of fengshui ideas or terms. Thirdly, I have introduced the prevalent application of the concepts of xing and shi in various arts concerned with landscape, and showed that the literati's view of the living landscape was similar to that of fengshui. The investigation reveals that three aspects in the elite's perception of landscape and siting, which pervaded the mentality of the Ming elite, were shared by fengshui as well: the basic understanding of the living landscape; the common criteria for assessing an ideal site with topographical surroundings which basically concerned aesthetic value; and the vocabulary for capturing and conveying the aesthetic beauty of landscape. These aspects, none of which originated or developed only in fengshui or were regarded as part of fengshui alone, formed the basis of the mental attitude of the Ming elite in its attempts to analyse landscape and siting. Fenshui ideas were of course established on the same basis.

Clunas (1996:189) has claimed that "geomancy was a widely disseminated element in the mentality of the Ming elite, which pervaded almost at an unconscious level their thinking about landscape." "I would argue that it was, and that a geomantic perception of landscape was very widely shared by the elite, to such an extent that it rarely shows up in biographical notices, being something largely taken for granted as part of an educated person's mental furniture." (op. cit. 183) Yet the framework for perceiving landscape, the principles for assessing an ideal site, and the terminology for grasping aesthetic beauty, were, to the elite, part of a common understanding, common knowledge, and common vocabulary, in other words, an essential general aesthetic sensibility towards landscape, drawing upon which foundation the theories of fengshui were also built. Although shared by fengshui, these elements in the basic common understanding of landscape are in themselves not fengshui. They form the basis for the attitudes of both fengshui and the elite in

174 It would be very unsafe as general practice to assume that something can taken for granted as having existed simply because there is little or no mention of it in records. The absence of mention is on balance more likely to indicate the absence of the phenomenon.
common towards the analysis and perception of landscape. Shared understandings do not mean that the collective mental attitude of the Ming elite was identical with the attitude of fengshui, nor that fengshui became “elements” in the general elite’s mentality. Common knowledge of fengshui does not mean common belief in fengshui. Shared terminology does not mean shared philosophy. Using concepts or vocabularies extensively used in fengshui was a common practice, and does not necessarily imply “geomantic attitudes” or “geomantic awareness.” (op. cit. 188) Fengshui, especially the Xingshi School, has no doubt been one of the forces in the establishment of an essential framework for analysing and perceiving landscape and siting, but it is impossible to distinguish or separate any part of this framework as only fengshui.175

One may wonder if there is a possibility that fengshui, as a way of perceiving landscape, was applied in the siting, maybe unconsciously, since the site was seen by some as in accord with fengshui criteria. My answer would be in the negative. The Ming elite did surely, at a conscious or unconscious level, perceive the site in the same sense as they perceived the landscape, a view which they shared with fengshui, even at the time when the city was being sited. Since some aesthetic principles and some layout patterns, which were largely developed in fengshui, were so widely accepted as universal criteria, this site was seen as superior in the common eye and in that of fengshui. But one cannot because of that conclude that they were fengshui attitudes, even though some of the elite may have also been aware that the site might be ideal in the light of fengshui as well.

My conclusion on the influence of fengshui in the scholars’ perception of the topographical aspect of the site of Beijing is that only a minority of the elite

175 Here I need to say more about the Chinese thinking on Man’s relationship with Nature, which thinking was also drawn into fengshui. It is pointed out by Willoughby-Mead (1928:274): “The ancient Taoist and pre-Taoist teaching bade man to ‘live in harmony with Nature,’ and the belief in the Unity of Life, and the unfathomable mystery surrounding the functioning of Yang and Yin, naturally made people anxious to find out, with the limited means of enquiry at their disposal, how best to obey this precept.” Although fengshui is regarded as one of the means employed for pursuing “harmony with Nature,” the idea of “being in harmony with Nature” is not itself by any means an exclusive fengshui idea. Fengshui, applying its specific theories in order to acquire good fortune, habitually uses methods to artificially change natural surroundings for the purpose of achieving an ideal fengshui spatial layout pattern, as Needham (1956:359) describes: “While the choosing of sites was of prime importance, bad siting was not irremediable, as ditches and tunnels could be dug, or other measures taken, to alter the fengshui situation.” One should not mistake the age-old general attitudes of Chinese people towards the aesthetic and other aspects of Nature, and the vocabulary that they used, as constituting or indicating the more delimited belief that was confined under the term fengshui. (The issue referring to pursuing a harmony with Nature or Natural forces will be further discussed in Section 6.3.4.)
interpreted the site in the light of fengshui. The congruent understanding, criteria and terminology involved in perceptions of the landscape of the site from both fengshui and non-fengshui points of view shows that there was a common ground shared by both fengshui and general Chinese aesthetics. In other words, the characteristics presented by the landscape of the site, which matched the shared common criteria, left room for fengshui interpretations. For this reason, the site of the city was often justified by imperial scholars with reference to fengshui. (cf. Wood 1995:84) The aesthetic significance of the topographic surroundings of the site was probably considered by the designers at the time of building the city in the same way as it was considered in retrospective interpretations. The congruent approval of the site from both fengshui and non-fengshui points of view does not mean, however, that fengshui was part of the elite's perceptual attitude towards the site. The way in which aesthetic value was assessed was not exclusive to fengshui, but was part of the scholars' essential understanding of landscape, which understanding underlay fengshui theory as well. This common view did not depend on approval from fengshui. The fengshui interpretations were, therefore, an imposed and appropriated elucidation loosely attached to the main body of analyses of the site of Beijing.
CHAPTER 6: THE CITY PLAN

Due to the deviations from the principles stated in Zhou Li, together with the appropriation of cosmological symbols, in the planning of Beijing, fengshui has been regarded by many scholars as the reason for the layout of the city. Besides the argument that fengshui governed the siting of the city, there have been assumptions and suggestions that there are “fengshui features” in the layout of the city which have come mainly from modern scholars rather than from historiographical writings.176 Although lacking all textual evidence, some of these scholars have produced a large number of interpretations of the city plan by applying theories which they have regarded as fengshui. Their speculations have concentrated primarily on various aspects of the city’s form, such as: the city wall, which does not precisely match the plan prescribed in “Kaogong Ji,” as no central gate was built in its northern face; and the main structure of the city plan, particularly Long-life Hill; the disposition of the palaces in accord with the principles of archaic cosmological ideas regarded by some as stemming from the influence of fengshui.

Owing to the unreliability of their sources and their arbitrary and disputed interpretations of the symbolic elements of the city’s features, these speculations and assertions can only be tentative. It is no wonder that those scholars who wish to demonstrate the ubiquitous influence of fengshui, which was prevalent in other architectural activities, on the city of Beijing, have found it extremely difficult to obtain reliable textual evidence about fengshui’s influence on the plan. Such evidence is indeed exceedingly rare and even less than evidence concerning shortcomings in the siting of the city. Lack of evidence is not the only reason why their arguments are untenable. I believe that a proper examination of the role of fengshui ideas in the planning of the city must be based on the specific contemporary historical and cultural context in which the city was built and conceived, and not simply on a superficial comparison of the city plan with a popular view of fengshui that may be familiar to us but which may well not have been known at all to the designers of the city.

By analysing the pragmatic and ideological factors involved in shaping the city, such as the specific contemporary historical, topographical and financial circumstances, and in particular certain architectural traditions reflected in the city planning, I try to justify the conclusions presented below. Regarding the issue of the extent to which fengshui ideas influenced the city at the urban planning level, I argue that although fengshui ideas were possibly taken as an allowable, but not indispensable, part of the explanation of the city plan, the plan was determined by more important practical and ideological considerations, and that fengshui did not affect the physical layout of the city. Furthermore, the fact that the city was seen from a fengshui viewpoint by fengshui specialists does not mean the city was commonly seen as being of a fengshui plan by either imperial scholars or ordinary people. To say the least, modern fengshui analyses of the city fail to prove that the plan was perceived in the same way in imperial times as they perceive it today.

In this Chapter, I first investigate the city wall and the city gates, and explore the possible factors which led the plan of the city wall to deviate from that prescribed in “Kaogong Ji.” In the second section I deal with the city structure, including the street grid, the pattern of rivers, and the location of Long-life Hill by investigating both the historical and cultural backgrounds of these examples of architecture in practice. The third section is an examination of the layout of the Forbidden City in terms of the application of cosmological symbols. The difference between the ideas of fengshui and imperial capital symbolism, which both share the same sets of symbols rooted in fundamental Chinese cosmology, is clarified. In the final section I summarise what I have discussed in preceding sections, and present my conclusions on the role of fengshui in the planning of the city and in the popular understanding of the city plan.

6.1 THE CITY WALL

In this section I trace back the causes that produced the irregularity of a few sections of the city wall, which has been regarded as the outcome of influence from fengshui. A few irregular lines in the city wall are plainly noticeable on the plan of the otherwise rigorously oriented and planned city which was most closely in accord with the orthodox plan prescribed in Zhou Li. Some modern scholars hold that the layout of the city wall was based on fengshui principles, simply because the irregular fragments of city wall can be explained by an analysis using a couple of ideas from the theory of yinyang or the Eight Trigrams. (cf. Peng 1972:125; Meyer 1991:41-45; He Xiaoxin 1994:174-75) However, according to all the materials available, there is no evidence showing that any part of the physical appearance of the plan of the city plan.
wall was influenced by *fengshui*, although a *kanyu* practitioner was possibly consulted at the time when the wall of the Outer City was planned. It is clear that these *fengshui* interpretations of the layout of the city wall have been imposed upon the city plan by modern scholars for their own particular reasons.

Peng (1972:125-26) has produced a work which is the earliest modern research analysing Beijing from an entirely *fengshui* angle. First of all, he claims that the city walls of the Inner City and the Outer City were planned at the same time:

The Inner City was built in 1421 A.D. The Outer City, to the south, was planned at the same time as the Inner City, but it was not built until 1545 A.D. and was walled twenty years later.

Basing himself on this mistake, and supplying no references, Peng contributes the most extensive *fengshui* analysis that I have encountered of the plan of the city wall, in order to demonstrate the relationship between the city and *yinyang*, and then *fengshui*:

The origin of the shape of the city plan of Peking has a symbolic relationship which probably stems from the following three facts:

(1) The form of the City’s surroundings, which is determined by the location of its mountains, is concave. It relates to the Chinese expression “Yin-shape,” because the mountain chain, which begins in the Chinese character “山” which means “concave” and belongs to the Yin-complex. Thus, the corresponding shape of the city is convex, as the shape of the city plan looks like the Chinese character “8” which means “convex” and belongs to the Yang-complex.

(2) The Chinese character “日” for the City is written in nine strokes, which shows the method of Chinese writing. In the shape of the plan for Peking at the south end of the south-eastern city wall, the stroke “8” of the character is bent towards the west, and at the southern wall, stroke “9” is curved inward. The shape of the north-western corner of the Inner City has nothing to do with the character, but it is coherent with the principle of *fengshui*.

(3) The square-shaped Inner City is inserted into the rectangular-shaped Outer City, like a wood joint, a bolt and a nut, showing that a structural stability exists between the two cities. Again the square form of the Inner City corresponds with the male pole of “Yang”; and the rectangular form of the Outer City, which inserts itself into the square, corresponds with the female pole of “Yin.”

These interesting but evidence-less analyses have been adopted and further developed by Meyer (1978:1991). In China, He Xiaoxin (1995:174) quotes He Junshou’s argument that two unusual shaped sections of the city wall reflect the fact that the layout of the city wall was in accord with *fengshui*, since the outline of the
city wall can be explained through the theories of yinyang and the Eight Trigrams, but again provides no historical support for his argument. He Junshou argues that, firstly, according to the theory of the Eight Trigrams, the south represents Heaven, and Heaven is round, and Earth is square. The Outer City being located in the South is subject to qian, representing Heaven and yang, while the Inner City, being in the North, is subject to kun, Earth, and yin, and that this is why the south wall of the outer city took the shape of an arc. Secondly, the plan also shows that the south-east corner of the Outer City wall protruded. Eight Trigrams theory can also give a convincing explanation for this: the south-east direction is the location of a duì ㄉㄞ, a place for water, and can therefore be compensated for by projection or protrusion. As a corollary, the concave north-west wall can be explained as follows: the north-west direction is the location of a gen 艮, a place for mountains, and therefore the wall caves inwards to create a balance.

The same unusual shape of the city wall has been attributed to fengshui also by Peng (1972:126), using another, carefully thought-out approach:

Because the sun seldom reaches the north-western corner of the Inner City, a corner of the square was cut off. Diagonally opposite, the southeastern corner of the Outer City, which was handicapped by its low, damp land, was also cut off not only because of its correlation with Chinese hand-writing as stated earlier, but in order to be reached by more sunshine as prescribed by the principles of Feng-Shui. For the same reason, the "Temple of Temples" was built in the southeastern corner of the Outer City not only to sanctify otherwise inauspicious land, but to balance the mortal power of the Emperor or King in the Forbidden City (Yang) with the divine power of god in the Outer City (Yin).

There is almost nothing right in the above analyses, and not only because I have nowhere found any such understanding of the matter to have been recorded in history. First of all, the Inner City and the Outer City were not planned at same time. The plan of the city of Beijing in the early years of the Ming was fixed in 1419 in accordance with the plan of Dadu, with the northern face being moved five li 里 (2880 metres) southward, and the southern city wall two li further south. (Taizong Yongle Shilu vol. 115) By a century or so later, the built-up area outside the southern gates of the city had expanded rapidly. The construction of another wall surrounding the city was started in 1553 (the 33rd year of the Jiajing reign-period), in order to protect the increasing population there from the aggression of northern Mongolian cavalry. (cf. Shizong Jiajing Shilu vol. 395; vol. 396) The original plan was to build a complete enclosure to surround the whole city, so as to establish an outer city, but, because of financial difficulties, only the southern wall was completed, in 1564. (op.
After the completion of the southern sector, from the mid-sixteenth century onward, the northern great-walled enclosure was known as the Inner City (neicheng 内城) and the southern walled enclosure became the Outer City (waicheng 外城). Thus the final layout of the city of Beijing as it is known today was not planned at one same time, and nor was the city wall of the whole city planned as a whole in the desire to create a plan that was in accord with fengshui principles, as claimed by Peng and others.

For the wall of the Inner City, the north-west corner was curved in shape. Not only is there no historical source that suggests this was due to a fengshui consideration, but the topographical situation at the time the wall was built could well provide a more down-to-earth rational explanation. According to the historical maps of Beijing provided by Hou Renzhi (1988), there was a large lake there throughout history until the time of the Republic of China, in the year 1947. Since the area of lakes has grown smaller as history has progressed, the lake located at the north-west corner of the city when the city wall was built cannot have been any smaller than it has been observed to be in the times of the Qing and the Republic of China. The difficulties of building the west side of the city wall were also recorded when the Outer City wall was in the planning. According to Shizong Jiajing Shilu, (vol. 397) the officials reported to the emperor that “only the west side [of the city wall] is located on lower ground with water and sinking sand, and is difficult to construct.” Thus the difficulty of construction may have been one of the reasons for the curved shape of the north-west corner.⁷⁷ (Figure 6-1)

I suspect that the prime consideration for choosing this location to build the northern city wall of Beijing on when the deserted area in the north of the city of Dadu was forsaken, was to use an existing river, which went from west to east across the city of Dadu in a straight line, as the city moat outside the wall. To locate the northern city wall to the north of this river meant that another moat had to be built. Further southward within the line of the river were the lakes, and there was probably no room for the city wall. So the location of the city wall was determined by the river. But if the northern city wall had gone straight westwards along the river, the north-west corner of the wall would have had to be built in the lake, or cross the lake to

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⁷⁷ I have read a report in a newspaper saying that, according to satellite photographs, there is a foundation of the city wall in the shape of a rightangle at the north-west corner of the city, where the lake was. This shows that the original plan of the city wall was a complete rectangle, and that there was an attempt to build the wall as it was planned, but that it was not completed like that, possibly due to the difficulties of construction in the water.
Figure 6-1  Detailed Map of the Capital drawn in late Qing (1901) and published in 1905. It shows that there was a large lake outside the north-western corner of the city wall. Source: Liu Zhenwei (et. al.). (Eds.) A Selection of China’s Ancient Maps. Beijing: China Esperanto Press., p. 33.
form a useless piece of land isolated right in the corner. The difficulty and costs of keeping the wall in a straight line would have been much more than that of the curved shape, and the result would possibly have been seen as worthless. Actually, when the wall was built curved, the lake was included as part of the moat. Thus the pragmatic consideration of taking advantage of the lake and the river to reduce cost and enhance the defences of the city was possibly the reason for the curved north-west corner of the city. (Figure 6-2)

Similar factors were also prioritised in the planning of the city wall of the Outer City. After the Mongols’ raid on Beijing in 1550, there was an attempt to construct an enclosure to protect the increasing population outside the south gates of the city (the later Inner City) in 1552. One year later, another plan to build an outer city wall to entirely surround the existing city was made. A similar proposal had been made in 1541, but nothing came of it. After the extensive pillaging of 1550 the need for such a wall was obvious, and the proposal won immediate approval. Actually, the mongols raided every year from 1550 to 1566. (Mote 1988:477) The officials were aware of the enormous cost of the proposed city wall, that the cost would be much higher than that of the Inner City which had taken eighteen years to complete. From the very beginning, they aimed to use the remains of the city walls of previous dynasties, which were scattered to the four sides of Beijing, as the foundation of the new city wall. It was not possible for a plan determined by the existing ruins to be in a perfectly formed geometrical shape. Nothing in the plan of the city wall was considered as important as the pragmatic benefit of reducing the cost by building the wall in an imperfect shape.

In the 32nd year of the Jiajing reign-period, Zhu Bochen reported to the throne: “The population living outside the city wall is growing. We should not let them live in conditions in which they are without any protection. I have investigated the suburb and found that there are ruins of city walls of the previous cities to the four sides of our city, just as was envisaged in the plan. The total length of them is about a hundred and twenty li. If these ruins are used as the basis for building up a new city wall, by adding bricks to make them higher and filling in the gaps, we could get twice the result with half the effort.” The Emperor consented to the construction. (Ming Dianhui 明典匯, translated from RJK vol. 38)

According to Shizong Jiajing Shilu, (vol. 396) there was a detailed description of the plan of the proposed city wall which recounted the names of the places where there were ruins. By checking with the historical maps provided by Hou Renzhi (1988), I have drawn a plan of the proposed city wall by connecting up the locations of these ruins. The bold line represents the ruins that existed at the time the capital city was
The location of the city wall of the later Beijing of the Ming. It shows that there was a large lake and some rivers outside the north city wall of Beijing. This was probably the reason for the wall being built in a curved shape. Source: Zhao Zhengzhi Kaogu Xuebao no. 1 (1966), p. 141.
planned. Having so many ruins available, the officials were not likely to attempt to build a city wall in a perfect shape instead of taking advantage of the ruins. The whole plan has turned out the strangest of shapes, and I have never seen its like. It looks like the back of a traditional armchair, which was indeed how it was described in Shizong Jiajing Shilu, (op. cit.): “The northern part is in a shape of a chair-back. (北一面勢如椅屏)” This shape was determined by the locations of the ruins, not by any ideology. If this plan had been realised, the city of Beijing would have been in a shape quite unfamiliar to the Chinese. The fact that such a plan deviating so much from the norms laid down in “Kaogong Ji” was accepted by the officials and emperor, shows that the principles of thrift and of prioritising concrete concerns were paramount, and even given precedence over imperial capital symbolism, in the planning. (Figure 6-3)

However, even such a frugal plan as this was not to be carried out, owing to the lack of money. Almost the whole reign of Jiajing was in a serious fiscal crisis, which resulted partly from the cost for palace construction, ceremonial alters, and temples since the beginning of the reign. (Mote 1988:485-88) Faced with constant deficits and shortages, many construction projects were stopped except the palaces. The original plan of the city wall was given up, and the construction was reduced to a minimum scale, under a provisional contingency plan. The city wall of the Outer City had to be left as it is seen today.

[In the fourth month,] the emperor, being concerned at the cost of the construction, questioned Yan Song and others about it. Yan and the others then went to the site, . . . and accepted a suggestion that it would be better to start with the southern part of the city wall. The rest could be finished when the funds became sufficient. . . . Then Yan and then other officials reported back to the emperor: “The original plan of the city wall of the Outer City was for a complete circle to completely surround the city. So the southern city wall should have been twenty li. Since so far only this part of the city wall is being built, it should be finished as one of 12-13 li, in order to save money. Now we plan to build more of the wall from the two ends of what has so far been finished of the southern city wall of the Outer City, to connect up with the south-east and south-west corners of the Inner City. This can be completed on schedule.” The Emperor agreed with them. (translated from Ming Shizong Shilu vol. 397)

The wall of Outer City was built on the basis of the ruins of other previous walled cities located in this area, so the plan of the wall had to curve at some point in order to keep following the line of the ruins. Actually, none of the three major faces of the Outer City wall were in a straight line. The historical circumstances, especially the financial difficulties, seem not to have allowed the city wall to be built in any shape
Figure 6-3 Plan of the proposed wall of the Outer City

According to the description of the plan of the proposed outer city wall in Shizong Jiajing Shilu (vol. 396), the length of the wall from A to B would be 9 li, from B to C = 18 li, from C to D = 19 li, from D to E = 15 li, from F to A = 9 li. Many names of sites where the city wall would be built were also given. Some of these names can still be found on maps today. This plan is drawn according to these data and based on a map of Beijing and its suburb in the period of the Republic of China, provided by Hou Renzhi (ed.) 1988. Beijing Lishi Ditu Ji (The Maps of the City of Beijing in History). pp. 65-71. The shape of the city plan indeed looks like a chair back.
that accorded with any idea other than that of the realistic consideration of saving money.

According to one source,\textsuperscript{178} \textit{kanyu} was mentioned in the records on the planning of the Outer City. This is actually the only evidence of the involvement of \textit{kanyu} available in historical records on the planning of the city, and it has not been used by modern scholars in their arguments. According to \textit{Shizong Jiajing Shilu}, (vol. 395), after the decision to construct another city wall completely surrounding the existing city was made, “The War, Revenue, and Construction [Ministers] came [to the emperor] again, and such as [Zhu] Bochen and [Zhao] Wenhua suggested Pingjiangbo (Earl of Pingjiang) Chen Gui, and Vice-minister Xu Lun, Lu Bing, a commander of the Imperial Guard, and the official supervising the Qintianjian be appointed together with us to supervise the surveying of the site and selecting a date for starting the construction. The Emperor agreed to this.”\textsuperscript{179} So then the plan was fixed:

Nie Bao, the Minister of War, and other officials reported [to the Emperor]:

“Obeying your order, we, together with Lu Bing, Commander of Imperial Guards, Chen Gui, Earl of Pingjiang, the Vice-minister Xu Lun, Yang Wei the Director of the Qintianjian, and others, have conducted a survey of the site of the capital city, [and found that] it is suitable to build an outer city wall to the four sides of the [existing] city. Then [we] surveyed the \textit{xingshi} (terrain). By consulting \textit{kanyu} theories, we have decided [the form of the proposed city-wall] which should be heightened and lowered [in certain section], square to the fore and round to the rear, and seventy or so li.”\textsuperscript{180}

Thus \textit{kanyu} ideas were indeed considered, or used to explain the proposed plan of the city, possibly through the involvement of the Qintianjian. As for the issue of the extent to which the physical realisation of the plan was influenced by \textit{kanyu} ideas, however, I doubt if suggestions with a \textit{fengshui} background would have caused any actual change to the plan, which was primarily determined by the physical

\textsuperscript{178} The following quotation is only found in one of the thirteen versions of \textit{Ming Shilu}. (cf. \textit{Ming Shilu Beijing Shiliao}, vol. 1, “Preface,” 9; vol. 3, 443).

\textsuperscript{179} The original text is as the follows:

兵部會戶，工部覆入，其如伯臣。文告言。清命總都京營政平江伯陳圭協理，侍郎許論，錦衣衛掌衛事陸炳皆同欽天官同臣等相度地勢，按日興工，詔從之。

\textsuperscript{180} The original text is as the follows:

兵部等衙門尚書顧豹等言，臣等欽遵於本月初六日，曾同掌錦衣衛督都陸炳，總都京營政平江伯陳圭，協理侍郎許論，督同欽天監正楊純等相度京城外四面宜築外城基址處所，遂勘度形勢，參之堪輿之說，就增高增卑，前方後圍，應築城約計七十余里。
surroundings and the financial situation. This judgement is supported by the following points. Firstly, when the plan to construct an outer city was considered under the theme of saving money, particularly when the construction had to be completed hastily, to form the Outer City we see today, because of the awkward financial situation, how could any course of the city wall have been built for the purpose of achieving an “artificial” shape for an ideological aim? If the budget was unable even to afford a plan in accord with the orthodox principles of “Kaogong Ji,” fengshui, being a body of non-orthodox ideas, had even less chance of being incorporated into the actual construction. Occupying the lowest position in the planning group, the officials from the Qintianjian would not have been able to entertain any fengshui suggestion about the city’s planning that involved greater expense than the plan based on the ruins accepted by other officials and the emperor.

Secondly, both the “chair back” plan and the actually carried-out plan of the Outer City were, as is suggested in the historical records, possibly supported and interpreted by some officials in light of kanyu. For the unusual features of some parts of the city wall to have been explained, if so they were, in the light of kanyu, is a different thing from their having been shaped according to kanyu instructions. The term “can 参” (consult/refer) used in the text’s phrase “by consulting kanyu theories” shows that the plan was only referred to, or combined with, kanyu theory, but not devised “according to,” or “guided by” it. The plan basically cannot realistically be regarded as a fengshui-oriented one, if fengshui was used merely as one of the theories for interpreting the plan rather than as a guiding theory used to create it. It is inappropriate to therefore regard the unusual features of the fragments of the city wall as having resulted from fengshui causes.

Thirdly, even if the “chair-back” plan was indeed illustrated and supported by kanyu theories, this plan was not realised. The Outer City that we see today was constructed on a provisional plan because of the shortage of money. It was not the plan recorded as having been devised in reference to kanyu.

Thus, according to the evidence available, only one point may be regarded as certain: the unusual outline of the city wall was determined by the practical considerations, mainly those of the local terrain and the budget. I consider that fengshui exerted almost no influence on the physical realisation of the plan of the city wall. Although we know that kanyu was used to support the plan, the modern scholars’ fengshui analyses of the city wall remain no more than unjustified assumptions, especially since it is unknown anyway what kind of kanyu theories were used. All the modern
scholars’ analyses of the fengshui of the city have been carried out by themselves on the basis of their own knowledge of fengshui. I am unable to trace any links between these modern fengshui interpretations and the imperial scholars’ understanding of the city wall. We just have no means of telling whether the features of the city wall as then interpreted, and the theories as then used, were the same as those claimed by the modern scholars. (Figure 6-4)

The number of the city gates has also been regarded by some modern scholars as having resulted from fengshui calculations. Wright (1977:67) for example argues:

The walls of the Mongol capital had had the canonical three gates in each of the walls save the north — where an eastern and a western gate, but no central gate, had been built. Since such a gate would have exposed the central axis of palaces to negative ch'i, I suspect that its elimination from the plan was on feng-shui grounds. The Ming moved the north wall of the city but reduced the total number of gates to nine, the number prescribed in the Chou li. [sic]181

I cannot find any sound evidence to suggest whether the number of the city gates was a result of fengshui considerations. It is said by TDCGJ (1982:30) that in the capital city Changan of the Tang dynasty it was not permitted to have gates on the northern wall of the most northern row of residential units (lifang 里坊) in order to avoid bad qi’s offending the palace, which was located at the north end of the city. This stipulation was related to fengshui belief, but different from the case of Beijing, since it had nothing to do with the “exposure” of qi and the city wall. (Figure 6-5) According to a legend provided by Willoughby-Mead (1928:287-8), blocking the northern city gate is actually a mean to diminish the good fengshui of a city in fengshui theory.

Early in the Ming Period, a professor of Feng Shui predicted that the City of Chü Yung, near Nanking, would produce an Emperor, and that all its inhabitants would become mandarins. The Emperor, hearing of this, was alarmed, and had steps taken to diminish the city’s unduly favourable Feng Shui. He had the north gate of the city bricked up, and issued a decree forbidding the inhabitants to take up literary pursuits. The people were left the choice of three callings — barbers, corn-cutters and bamboo-root carvers. Since those days, it has been noticed that throughout Central China, most members of these three trades are descended from Chü Yung men.182

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181 The number of gates of imperial capital prescribed in the Zhou Li was twelve, three in each side.

182 This story was possibly true since there were a large number of similar behaviours of the Emperor (Zhu Yuanzhang), known as a most suspicious, perverse and relentless emperor, recorded in Guochao
Figure 6-4  Plan of Beijing contained in *Shuntianfu Zhi* published in 1593. It is the earliest map of Beijing in available records. It shows that the form of the city was perceived as completely rectangular, without the curved line of the city wall being noticed. Source: Chen Zhengxiang (1979). *History of the Chinese Geography*. Hong Kong: Sangwu Yinshu Guan. Diagram 8.

Figure 6-5  Plan of the city of Changan of the Tang dynasty. The most northern row of residential blocks (black ones in the map) were said to be not allowed to open their gates towards the palaces. Source: Wheatley, Paul. (1971). *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*. UK.: Edinburgh University Press. p. 412.
According to this, the central gate of the northern wall of Beijing should not be blocked. Therefore, I assume that emphasising the orientation of the city so that it faced south may have been part of the reason for having the plan deviate from the orthodox prescription of Zhou Li. The plan of Dadu was a combination of the idea emphasising the axis from the palaces leading to the South, as was seen in the Song dynasty capital city Kaifeng, and the model created by Zhou Li.¹⁸³ The elimination of the central north gate was one of the means for ensuring that, and for emphasising that, the city faced south. My assumption here is in accord with the general theme of the plan of the city of Dadu — to legitimise the imperial capital by appealing to orthodox symbolism. (Figure 6-6)

He Junshou (op. cit.) also claims that one of the fengshui aspects of the city is that the number of its city gates can be accounted for in terms of the theory of yinyang. He argues that there were seven gates in the outer city wall because seven is an odd number which stands for yang. The reason, he says, for the nine gates in the inner city wall is that nine is the number of supreme yang. Two, he adds, is an even number which signifies yin, which is why there are only two gates for the north city wall. Again, he gives no historical support for his argument. But the number of the gates of the Inner City was not designed by the planning. Once the northern wall had been moved to this location, so as to improve the defence situation, as was explicitly recorded, the number of the city gates in the remaining city wall was nine. Moreover, even though yinyang theory was applied to odd and even numbers in the planning, such an idea was not necessarily an aspect of fengshui. (See section 6.3.1.)

So far, I have found no evidence to support any of the above modern assumptions about the plan of the city wall. There is no evidence showing that the plan of the city wall and the number of the city gates were seen by the scholars or general populace

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¹⁸³ The principle of making the main city gate facing the South is part of the symbolism of the Chinese cities as said by Wheately (1971:435): “Like so many other aspects of urban design, this feature is perhaps best illustrated from Pei-ching, where the Gate of Heavenly Peace at the entrance to the Imperial City outtops all buildings within the walls, and the Meridian Gate all those within the Forbidden City.” He (op. cit. 460 n41) further argues: “Chinese culture was permeated with the symbolism of an ominous threatening north as opposed to a benign, auspicious south: cf., for example, the I-Ching: Shuo-Kia, chûan 2: ‘That the holy sages turned their faces to the south while they gave ear to the meaning of the universe means that, in ruling, they turned towards what is light.’” And following this idea, the city of Changan in the Tang dynasty, although provided with the canonically sanctioned three gates on each of its eastern, southern and western sides, had only one on the northern side. Thus it is not a principle derived from fengshui, although the south oriented site is often, not always, preferred in fengshui. (cf. Feuchtwang 1974:3)
Figure 6-6  Map of Beijing as built in the 1420's. Having no central gate in the northern wall was probably a means of emphasising that the city was facing south. Source: Wright, Arthur F. 1977. "The Cosmology of the Chinese City", in G. W. Skinner, (ed.) The City in Late Imperial China. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 68.
of the time from the viewpoint of fengshui. I am not denying the possibility that the city plan was seen in fengshui practitioners’ eyes as having fengshui significance. But I strongly suggest that there was no direct fengshui influence on the physical realisation of the plan of the city wall, although fengshui ideas may have been used as one of the theories, but not likely a genuine or dominant one, to justify the plan at the planning stage. Owing to the special importance of the building of an imperial capital, in which orthodox symbolism predominated and fengshui had less chance of being considered than in any other projects, I do not think people were accustomed to considering or daring to comment on city planning in the light of fengshui. It is also doubtful if people thought of the fengshui of an imperial capital as commonly as they perceived the plan of a village or of a graveyard from a fengshui viewpoint, apart perhaps from the fengshui practitioners themselves.

6.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE CITY

The modern assumptions and dubious demonstrations of the “fengshui of Beijing” do not leave alone the general city structure, either. In a passing statement, Feuchtwang (1974:3) mentions: “Chinese towns, ideally, are planned on a strict north-south axis, with gates at the four quarters subject to the whole symbolism of feng-shui cosmology. The layout of Peking and of its Forbidden City is exemplary.” A few features regarding the principle structure of the city are held by others to be fengshui effects conflicting with the orthodox plan. The first half of this section is an examination of the alleged fengshui features of the street grid, the city’s canal system and the north-south axis of the city plan, the second half focusing on Long-life Hill.

6.2.1 Some Features of the City Structure

Peng (1972:124) off-handedly asserts that: “the application of the Yin-Yang Principle to the building of a city is known in Chinese as ‘Feng-Shui,’ a popular expression connected with the worship of nature, and a term for describing natural features.” He argues that the design of Chinese cities was generally based on the yinyang principle, by taking the walled city of Beijing as an example of the balance between yang and yin, showing the regular form of city walls and streets as a symmetrical architectural composition, and the irregular layout of the artificial lakes and parks:

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184 I feel it is necessary to make the minor note here, that fengshui was indeed used as a term for describing natural features, but mostly in a context referring to fengshui belief or theory. It was not a common practice to do so in denoting Natural features.
The main ideas of Confucian philosophy are formality and regularity, which is Yang, representing man-made elements. The main concept of Laozé’s philosophy is informality and irregularity, which is Yin, representing natural features. This duality of opposites has been clearly expressed in the relationship between the Chinese house and garden, and in their extension, the city and park.185

Peng (op. cit. 129) concludes his argument by saying: “the City of Peking, as a well enclosed and harmoniously unified form, is an ideal city representing Chinese philosophy in city design. Its location corresponds to the demands of nature, and its composition corresponds to the theory of Organism and Dualism, incorporating exogenous and endogenous thinking, as a great contribution to urban planning.”

Peng’s argument represents some modern scholars’ approach to Chinese cities, which has been perpetuated by many other modern scholars, and which is that of trying to demonstrate the fengshui influence on the city by looking for the application of cosmological symbols that were also incorporated on the fengshui compass. I believe such an approach to be superficial and misleading. First of all, the application of the yinyang principle to building does not equate with the application of fengshui, although, yinyang is one set of the cosmological symbols employed in fengshui accounts.186 Secondly, there is no evidence showing that in Chinese eyes the formality and regularity in a city plan has ever been seen as representing yang, or irregularity representing yin. Actually, water, such as lakes and rivers, usually represented yang in fengshui. In Peng’s argument, it seems that the designer of the city of Beijing was fully conscious that the symmetric urban form on the one hand and the irregular park and garden on the other represented yang and yin respectively,

185 Peng (1972:124-5) takes symmetric form and the structure of the city as representing yang and the irregular shaped park and garden as representing yin:

The theory of building a city or a house was based on Confucian ideas — formality, symmetry, clarity, straight lines, regular forms, a strict order of human creation. The approach of designing a park or a garden was guided by Taoist conceptions — informality, asymmetry, mystery, curved lines, irregular or romantic forms, a deep and persistent feeling for wide nature. . . . Since cities and houses are made by men, and man has a symmetric form and structure, Chinese cities and houses are generally built in regular form and symmetric arrangement. All streets of a city and rooms of a building, in principle, are guided by a north-south axis. In order to balance the Yin-Yang order, the Chinese adopted the Taoist concept in park and garden design, based on the image of the character of nature. The principles of park and garden design are applicable to landscaping on a large scale and have made possible and remarkable synthesis of an artificial landscape which has the qualities of wild nature and is not formal or urbane. For instance, the walled city of Peking is composed of a regular form of city walls and gates, as well as a symmetrical architectural composition along the north-south axis. In order to balance this formal scheme, an irregular layout of the artificial lakes and parks was then created.

186 The relationship with yinyang theory will be fully dealt with in section 6.3.1.
and deliberately put them together “in order to balance the Yin-Yang order.” The Chinese certainly pursued the balance of yin and yang. But I have not yet found any support for any Chinese notion of the yin-yang nature of the city form itself.

Finally, while a city built in accord with the norm of “Kaogong Ji” was built in regular form, the naturally formed lakes were of course of irregular shape, and that was the traditional way of shaping a landscape in a natural style. Since all traditional Chinese gardens are of irregular form, and the ideal capital city has been of symmetrical form, the form of a capital city with its gardens, parks or lakes has always turned out to be a mixture of symmetrical and irregular forms, just like the form of the city of Beijing. Such a balance — I would call it a combination — was an inevitable result of a planned, not “naturally” formed, city. The street grid of the Inner City was rigorously designed in accordance with the norms of “Kaogong Ji”, but the street system of the Outer City, which was primarily formed without planning, was of a completely irregular form. This combination of regular and irregular forms was not intentionally designed for the pursuit of any balance of yin and yang, and nor was it a fengshui achievement. Thus while I agree that balancing the yin-yang order must have been part of the planner’s idea in laying out the city of Beijing, I can hardly agree with Peng’s analysis that the combination of the symmetrical and irregular forms of the city was a purposive product of the balancing of yin-yang order.

Peng’s argument also involves another misunderstanding of the relationship between fengshui and Chinese landscape — that the irregularity in Chinese gardening, landscaping, and city planning was influenced by fengshui. Needham (1956:360-61) indicates his appreciation of the aesthetic component of fengshui. (See Section 5.3.) I believe that the theories in fengshui regarding landscape reflect traditional Chinese thinking on the aesthetic beauty of the landscape. Many fundamental concepts for perceiving landscape in Chinese landscaping, gardening, landscape painting, and even fengshui, which may all have been influenced by Taoism, were shared in common. The requirements for the spatial surroundings of a site in fengshui were also in accord with the literati’s taste as far as the aesthetic value of landscape was concerned. For example, the irregularity found in the formation of Chinese gardens, which was also emphasised in certain fengshui manuals, applied mainly, however, to the lines of paths. Such a minor coincidence does not mean that the irregular form of Chinese landscape was influenced by fengshui priorities. Neither the preference for irregular form in landscape, nor the sense of the aesthetic value of landscape was an
exclusive component of fengshui theory or was seen by the Chinese as derived from fengshui theory.

In certain cases, especially in fengshui dominated projects such as those for individual houses and graves in the southern part of China, the physical shaping of a spatial layout of buildings was certainly done under the guidance of fengshui instructions. Fengshui was possibly part of the force, maybe only a small part, that shaped the Chinese landscape admired by Needham. Fengshui was not, however, the only body of theory connected with the worship of natural power, and not the only theory for observing and assessing the aesthetic beauty of natural landscape. It is arbitrary to take the general way and skills with which the Chinese perceive and create landscape as having been necessarily influenced by fengshui, or to attribute the achievements of Chinese landscape to fengshui alone.

The north-south axis of the city plan has also been seen as one aspect of the influence of fengshui, as seen in He Junshou’s argument quoted by He Xiaoxin (1995:174). The straight line from Yongding Gate in the south to the Bell Tower and Drum Tower is the axial line of both the city and the Forbidden City, the length of which line is fifteen li. Here the ancient calendrical and divination theory of the Nine Palaces (jiugong 九宮) came into operation. The total number of horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines within the jiugong matrix is fifteen. The three numbers of intersection on the central vertical line, are nine in the south, five in the centre, and one palace in the north. The emperor’s palaces were located in the very centre of the matrix, which symbolised the supreme power of the emperor in ruling over the whole country (the four directions and four quarters). He Junshou suggests that the length of the axis, which matches the theory of the jiugong, was influenced by fengshui. (Figure 6-7)

I find this dubious for the following reasons. Firstly, the north-south axis of the city was not 15 li in Ming times. According to Xu Pingfang’s (1986) survey, the distance from Yongding Gate to the Bell Tower is 7680 metres, which equals only 13.33 li in the Ming dynasty system of measurements. (1 li = 1800 chi and 1 chi = 0.320 m in the Ming dynasty. See Appendix 2.) Since in modern China 1 kilometre is commonly taken as 2 li, I suppose that is why He Junshou takes 7680 metres as 15 li. But his reckoning does not agree with the measurement of length in the Ming. In Ming times, the length of the axis only measured 13.33 li. Secondly, as I have discussed in the preceding section, the south wall of the Outer City was built on the ruins of previous city walls. The location of the south wall was determined by the location of
Figure 6-7  The Jiugong matrix and its other form luoshu.

existing ruins, not by accordance to any plan for achieving symbolic expression. So the location of Yongding Gate would anyway not have formed a 15 li long axis through any deliberate intention. Finally, even if Yongding Gate had been designed to form a 15 li axis in order to fulfil a plan associated with the jiugong, neither the theory of the jiugong, nor the symbolism of the 15 li axis, were fengshui. The jiugong theory was one of the most ancient Chinese ideas concerning the analysis of the cosmos. The imperial capital and palaces were indeed associated with the theory of the jiugong, as the numbers nine and five were repeatedly used in the design of capital cities and palaces. Even the emperor himself was sometimes called jiuwuzhizun 九五之尊 (lit. “the supremo of nine and five”). But the jiugong theory was used in the imperial capital symbolism to legitimise the capital by associating it with the conventional cosmic symbols, and not for a fengshui purpose of acquiring good fortune in the here and now. (Figure 6-8)

A specific fengshui suggestion regarding the city’s canals is found in a Ming biji (notebook) Zixin Ji

Considering the topography of the capital according to kanyu, the River Yu should go straight southward to the lake to the south of the city (nanhaizi), and turn eastward before meeting the River Lu. The River Zha should be blocked up outside Chongwen Gate in order to let the river on the lefthand side flow freely. Then the dynasty could last forever. (translated from RJK vol. 5)

Such kinds of typically fengshui notions were of course not adopted in the planning. That is not to say that fengshui ideas were never appealed to in discussions on individual projects in the city. In a case presented in Tianfu Guangji (vol. 4, 45), an official, Wu Shen, persuades the emperor to stop a project of excavating a city canal, for the reason that: “I am afraid [the project] is expensive but no use at all. Besides, it would hurt the earth vein (dimai).” Thus, for some specific projects, fengshui could be brought in, as a secondary consideration, to support an argument for a more practical and important purpose.

The only available fengshui argument regarding the plan of the city of Beijing as a whole is a memorial submitted to the emperor by Zhu Jian 朱霂 in 1449:

Zhu Jian, a zhongcheng 中丞 (Vice Censor-in-chief), submitted a memorial to the throne on the issue of fortune: I have heard that it is said by the yin-yang specialist ilk that the earth has “four shi,” and that qi follows eight directions. The capital city is the foundation of the world, and the imperial enclosure is the central of the capital. Once construction needs to be done, it must not be carried out carelessly. Applying the theory of “the four shi” to
the configurations outside [the city], the Dragon is weak and the Tiger is strong. The mountain looks not good when viewed from its four sides. Fortunately there are waters, but their courses jeopardise [the palaces]. All the practitioners [of divinatory arts] say: “It does not matter, since the star of the emperor has already come [this site].” Let us now apply the theory of “the four shi” to the configurations inside [the city]. In the past, the government of Beijing was the central residence, so the Drum Tower and Bell Tower were located in front. Now Fengtian Hall is the central palace, and so the Drum Tower and Bell Tower should not be at the back. The left [object] is the Green Dragon, the right one the White Tiger, the front one the Red Bird, and the one to the rear the Black Tortoise. The left is yang, the right is yin. The Green Dragon should be active and the White Tiger, the Red Bird, and the Black Tortoise should be still. Since the reign-periods Yongle and Xuande, the government departments have flourished at the head of the Green Dragon [at the left]. [At the same time], the Qingshou Temple 慶壽寺 [at the right] has declined, and the pagodas have fallen into ruin, then there have been no disasters. In the last few years, the Qingshou Temple at the head of the White Tiger has been renovated, incense has been burnt there [i.e. the temple becomes prosperous], and bells and drums chiming there. The two pagodas have also been rebuilt. The most terrible thing is that the Tiger has grown horns, and the Dragon has lost its eyes. . . . This has led to the rebellion in the region to the south of the River Yangtse], and the endless war with foreigners to the north of the Great Wall. All this has resulted from the prosperity at the head of the White Tiger. Although this is associated with the fate fixed by heaven, it has possibly also been caused by man’s activities. The art of yinyang certainly must not be entirely trusted, but nor should the books of dili be cast away either. . . . If permitted [by your majesty], I would suggest discussing with the officials, I [believe that] we must firstly destroy the Qingshou Temple, remove its monks, block its gates, abolish its bells and drums, and ruin its pagodas. Once the border is pacified, we should rebuild the temple near the Construction Ministry to the east. . . . Move the Drum Tower and Bell Tower to the Taijichang to the east. . . . Change the north of Xuanwu Gate into a store to pacify the Black Tortoise. . . . Then the world will have peace. (Tianfu Guangji, vol. 21) (Figure 6-9)

This is a precise illustration of the true role of fengshui in the matter of city planning. Firstly, features of the city plan were sometimes perceived in the light of fengshui, as is shown by the fact that this passage of argument was not produced by a fengshui practitioner. While giving his argument a title indicating the topic of analysing fortune (jixiong 吉凶), however, the writer had to carefully draw a clear line of demarcation between himself and the fengshui practitioners by saying that “I have heard that”, and by referring to the yinyang specialists with the disdainful term zheliu 者流 (lit. “the like of” or “ilk”).” The sentences “the art of yinyang certainly must not be entirely trusted, but nor should the books of dili be cast away either” shows that an ambivalent attitude towards fengshui was held even by fengshui advocates
Figure 6-9  The locations of Qingshou Temple, Drum Tower, Bell Tower and other buildings mentioned in the Zhu Jian's argument.
when bringing up a *fengshui* argument. Secondly, the *fengshui* argument was brought up to explain disasters during a troubled time, or when something went wrong. It was more of a post-hoc interpretation of the existing facts than a directive prediction. Thirdly, the symbols used in the *fengshui* argument were imposed on arbitrarily chosen buildings or objects. In this way, countless conflicting *fengshui* analyses could be elaborated. Fourthly, such *fengshui* advice was brought forth after the city plan had been completed, and was never adopted in actual city planning. Finally and most importantly, this *fengshui* criticism of the city plan shows precisely that the plan of Beijing was not one in accord with *fengshui*.

### 6.2.2 Long-life Hill

Wansuishan (Long-life Hill), also known as Jingshan (Scenery Hill) or Meishan (Coal Hill), a man-made earth-mound to the north of the Forbidden City, was covered with pavilions and temples, and used as an imperial garden for the emperors in the Ming dynasty. It was an important design element for emphasising the north-south axis. It was piled up from the earth left by the excavation of the South Sea (／ Lake) 南海, a completely man-made pond to the southwest of the Forbidden City. It was built at the same time as the Forbidden City in the Yongle reign-period, and the two were completed in the same year, 1420. According to studies by the Archaeological Group of the Archaeological Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Science in Beijing on the city of Dadu in the early 1970s, the north part of this imperial garden “was one part of the boulevard on the central axis of the Dadu,”187 while the earthen hill of the south part was located in the ruins of the inner palace of the Yuan dynasty. This design, not prescribed in the “Kaogong Ji,” has been believed by many modern scholars to have been for a *fengshui* purpose.

Wright (1977:71) strongly suggests that the location of this artificial hill was decided by the influence of Taoism and of *fengshui* theories, although there is no textual evidence in support of his opinion. Since Long-life Hill was situated on the site where the residential palace of Yuan dynasty used to be, it is believed by many modern Chinese scholars that its location there was as the result of a *fengshui* directive, “which aimed to suppress the preceding dynasty by means of *yasheng*, which is why Long-life Hill was also called Suppressing Mountain (Zhenshan 鎮山).” (BDL 1985:214; cf. Hou Renzhi 1992:12; Zhen Lianzhang 1992:62)

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term *yasheng* (壓勝) or 腹勝 was often used in *fengshui* to denote the skills for overcoming an evil influence by means of an adaptation of the location or form of buildings. Peng (1972:129) thinks that the hill was built for the *fengshui* purpose of protecting the Forbidden City to the latter’s north. By explaining the term *zhēn* 鎮 as meaning “suppression,” many modern scholars believe that Long Life Hill was built to suppress the preceding dynasty, in order to make sure that the preceding dynasty could not return. However, I think that this is another purely modern *fengshui* interpretation.

The key issues in ascertaining the purpose of the building of Long-life Hill are whether the siting of the hill was for *yasheng*, and whether the term *zhēnshān* implied suppressing the preceding dynasty. The first of these issues is associated with another disputed legend concerning the demolishing of the Yuan palace at the beginning of the Ming in order to also demolish the so-called “wangqi” (fortune of the emperor) of the preceding dynasty. It has been widely believed that the former Yuan dynasty palaces were torn down at the beginning of the Ming, and that the destruction was actually a prerequisite for the subsequent rebuilding of the Forbidden City. (BDL 1985:208) According to Wang Jianying’s (1986:141) research, however, this is an erroneous understanding, caused by misinterpretations of the historic text. *Gu Gōng Yī Lù 故宮遺錄* is a book by Xiao Xu 蕭洵 recording the Yuan palaces surviving in Dadu at the beginning of the Ming. In a preface to the book, written by Wu Jie 吳節, a Ming scholar who kept the book, in 1394, it says “Xiao Xu . . . was ordered to go to Beiping with other officials to demolish the former Yuan capital. So he had the chance to visit all the palaces, . . . and recorded them in detail.”¹⁸⁸ In *Míng Taizu Shílū*, however, it is recorded: “General Xu Da ordered Commander Hua Yunlong to renovate the former Yuan capital, and build a new city wall.”¹⁸⁹ In *Hongwu Běipíng Tújíngzhī Shū 洪武北平圖經志書 (Illustrated Records of the Renovation of Beiping in the Reign of Hongwu)* written in the early Ming, it says: “The old city wall made of earth was 60 *lǐ* in circumference. After conquering it, [the Ming officials] thought the city stretched too far, so cut away the north-eastern half. The new city wall is covered by bricks for the first time, and is a perimeter of 40 *lǐ*.”¹⁹⁰ Wang argues that Wu Jie termed the “abandoning of the original north city...

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¹⁸⁸ The original text is as follows:

萧洵 . . . 奉命隨大臣至北平毁元舊都，因得備閲經歷，. . . . 莫不詳具該載。

¹⁸⁹ The original text is as follows:

大將軍徐達命指揮韋龍經理故元都，築新城垣。

¹⁹⁰ The original text is as follows:
wall” as “demolishing the former Yuan capital.” In another preface, written by Zhao Qimei 趙琦美 two hundred years later, Xiao Xun is said to have gone to “demolish the Yuan palace 殞元氏宫殿.” When this was quoted in Chunming Mengyu Lu towards the end of the Ming, it was written as “tear down the palaces 將宮殿拆毁.” It was then quoted in the same form in RJK. When reproduced in Siku Tiyao, it had turned into “[Xiao Xu] was ordered to tear down the Yuan palaces, and so he recorded their design and measurements 奉命毁元故宮，因記其制度.” Wang holds that this version is a mistake, being the result of repeated misinterpretations.

I have also found evidence in Taizong Hongwu Shilu, (vol. 47) that Emperor Taizu, Zhu Yuanzhang, looked at the map of the former Yuan palaces in Beijing, and ordered the rebuilding of the palace for the Prince of Yan in accordance with the original Yuan imperial enclosure. Thus the claim that the Yuan palaces were demolished is doubtful. Even if it were true that the palaces were torn down, in the view of fengshui it might have been for the purpose of demolishing wangqi, but a most important symbolic significance of any such demolition might have been to demonstrate the exclusive legitimacy of the Ming emperor in Jinling, which was also partly symbolised by his palaces there. According to Wang’s research, (op. cit.) however, the Yuan palaces were not torn down at all. They were instead used by the Prince of Yan, Zhu Di, as his palaces, until the construction of Beijing, which was after he became emperor. In terms of the idea of using the hill to “suppress” the wangqi, piling up a hill on top of the former palace of Zhu Di would have been a case of “suppressing” the fortune of the emperor, Zhu Di, himself, which would have been unthinkable. Thus, I cannot imagine that the location of the hill was determined by that fengshui reason.

Another issue is whether the term zhenshan implied suppression at all. Long-life Hill was indeed regarded as the zhenshan of the Forbidden City by the imperial scholars, as was said in Xiyuan Ji 西元集, (translated from RJK vol. 35) and in Chenyuan Shilue vol. 3. But although the character zhen 鎮 does have meaning of suppression, zhenshan basically meant the garrison hill or primary hill of a area when the topographical features of this area was recounted. Xu Yinong (1996) has carried out detailed research into the use of the character for zhen:
The character, denoting “to weigh (or hold) down,” has many derivative meanings. In our context, it is sufficient to mention just those of its connotations that seem relevant to its application to the description of mountains, namely “to stabilise” and “to pacify.” One of the fengshui notions is that “among the mountains and valleys of a particular region, there must be one that is the highest and largest as its zhen, which is accordingly termed ‘the ancestor mountain;’” that is, the character zhen means the primary mountain when it is employed in the fengshui accounts of local topographical conditions. As the principal point of reference, it is believed to be able to “stabilise” and “pacify” the land of a given region. (op. cit. 281). . . . Zhen not only has a ancient root for its specific connotation “primary mountain,” but, more importantly, finds its place in some of the Confucian Classics. The Han scholar Kong Anguo commenting on a sentence in the Shang Shu, states: “The most famous and particularly large mountain of every region was taken as its zhen.” This statement is entirely consistent with the passage in the Zhou Li about the designation of the most important mountain in each of the nine regions as a zhen.191 Thus it seems certain that the term was borrowed into the fengshui theories without any significant alteration of its meaning when it was applied to the descriptions of a region’s mountains. (op. cit. 292)

Thus there were conflicting opinions between imperial scholars on the one hand and fengshui advocates on the other concerning the use of zhen. In the case of Beijing, Long-life Hill was indeed called a zhen by the imperial scholars and the emperors, since it was the primary mountain in the city, but without including the character’s meaning of “pacifying” or “suppressing”, as is seen from its contexts in the historical texts. For example, Emperor Gaozong (Hongli 弘歷) (1736-1795) of the Qing dynasty wrote: “The screen to the back of the palaces is Jingshan. The garrison hill of the West Garden is Baita Hill.”192 (translated from RJK vol. 26) Baita Hill, located to the north-west of the Forbidden City, was the largest of the mountains, was called Long-life Hill and was the zhen in the city of Dadu of the Yuan dynasty. In the view of the fengshui advocates, however, the zhen could also be interpreted as having the function of “pacifying”, as is shown in a legend about the zhen of the city of Dadu:

This story was told by the elders. When the Yuan dynasty was about to be established in the northern desert, there was a magnificent mountain outside the Great Wall. According the wangqizhe [practitioners of the art of seeking qi] of the Jin dynasty, this mountain had wangqi [qi for an emperor, true kingly qi], and this was certainly not good for the Jin dynasty. So the Jin

191 Xu (op. cit.) also says in a footnote: “Zheng Xuan (127-200) explains in his commentary that ‘zhen’ are the famous mountains that help to maintain the unique property of the land.
192 The original text is as follows:

宮殿屏簾則曰景山，西苑作鎮則曰白塔.
tried to get rid of it by way of yasheng [arts to subdue the evil force]. After submitting tribute, the envoy of the Jin asked [the sovereign of the Yuan] for something in return: “We would like to have that mountain to pacify our land (zhenya wotu 鎮壓我土).” The officials of the Yuan laughed into their sleeves, and finally disdainfully agreed to it. Then the Jin carried out the great civil engineering feat of digging up the mountain and transporting its soil to the north of the city of Youzhou, and piled up another hill there. After trees and flowers were planted and palaces built on it, it became a place for emperors’ recreational trips. Before long, the Jin dynasty was destroyed by the Yuan. When the emperor built the palaces, this hill happened to be in the Forbidden City, so it was called Long-life Hill. (Chuogeng Lu 輯耕錄, translated from RJK vol. 32)

This legend was repeatedly refuted by scholars throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties. (cf. RJK, vol. 26; vol. 32; vol. 36) It is a good example of the typical characteristics of fengshui interpretation of a city — post hoc, providing no evidence, at a legendary level, and was rejected by the elite. Although zhen is associated with the idea of “pacifying,” it is not associated with the idea of “suppressing the previous dynasty.” I believe that the Long-life Hill of the Ming dynasty was in traditional times also interpreted at a popular level by fengshui advocates as having “pacifying” significance, although there is no textual evidence for that. I do not think, however, that the hill was planned for a fengshui reason, as there were other factors associated with the tradition of Chinese city planning, which could explain this feature of design more convincingly.

The design of Long-life Hill actually reflected a long tradition regarding imperial capital city planning. Some hold that Long-life Hill was modelled on the design of the Long-life Hill located to the north of the imperial palaces of the Zhongdu (Middle Capital) of the Ming, which was the second capital of the Ming dynasty during the reign of Emperor Taizu. (Zheng Lianzhang 1992:63). Some hold that it copied the archaic model of the capital city of the Zhou dynasty, which backed onto Mang Mountain in the north and faced the River Lao in the south. None of these hills through history were artificial ones, and they were all definitely not associated with the “suppression” idea. So to have a hill at the north of the capital city or the palaces was seen as part of the traditional plan for an imperial capital. As I have argued in section 5.1, for Chinese building, a site with its back to mountains and facing water was the ideal pattern, one which was held in esteem in fengshui as well. (Figure 6-10)

The practical aspect of the building of the Ming Forbidden City on a site south of the previous Yuan palaces is analysed by Hou Renzhi (1992:13). He holds that the
Figure 6-10 The plan of Kaifeng in the Song dynasty and the plan of Zhongdu of the Ming. The Long-life Hill of Beijing has been regarded as being influenced by the designs of these cites. Sources: The former: Liu, Laurence G. 1989. Chinese Architecture. London: Academy Group Ltd. p. 50; the latter: Teaching & Research Division of Urban Planning of Tongji University (TDCGJ). 1985. The History of Chinese Urban Construction. Beijing: Chinese Architecture Industry Publication House. p. 76.
Forbidden city had to be moved southward along the north-south axis in order to leave room for the moat of the Forbidden City. The original Yuan palaces were located too close to the lakes to their west. It would have been impossible to excavate a moat surrounding the Forbidden City and also keep the Forbidden City on the central axis of the city, if the Forbidden City had been built on the site of the Yuan palaces. Thus the locations of the Forbidden City and Long-life Hill were also determined by practical concerns. (Figure 6-11)

I suggest that the building of Long-life Hill was part of the plan of making the Forbidden City in the ideal pattern for an ideal site — “having a mountain to its back and facing water,” which was part of the traditional plan for a capital city, not necessarily a fengshui idea. In the city of Dadu, there was a Long-life Hill on Qiong Island in Lake Taiye, but it was not on the central axis of the imperial inner city. In order to form a screen-like back hill for the Forbidden City, some one million cubic metres of soil, from the city moat around the Forbidden City and the ruins of Yuan dynasty palaces, were transported to the imperial garden (which was also called the North Orchard) in the north of the Forbidden City, and piled up to form a hill 52 metres high. In addition to this, two “Gold-Water” Rivers were excavated in the south. Then a man-made “natural” environment of the pattern “having mountain at its back and facing water” was formed for the Forbidden City. (Zheng Lianzhang 1992:63) So to have a hill on the central axis was possibly for the purpose of emphasising the axial design and to achieve more impressively visual and aesthetic effect\(^\text{193}\) which was often pursued in fengshui as well. So the location of the hill was determined by the idea of moving the Forbidden City southward in order to leave enough room for the moat.

To compose an ideal spatial formation as the previous capital cities had done must have been the major purpose of this construction. That is not to say that this design was not given other, alternative interpretations in the views of fengshui. In fact, since hills and waters were common topics of fengshui discussions, I am sure that this hill was no exception, even though fengshui discussions may not have been accepted by the scholar-officials, nor in their writings. However, the statement about “suppressing the former dynasty” appears to be a later legend, which combined the fengshui notion of zhen in its sense of “pacifying” and information coming from excavation of the

\(^{193}\) Weatley (1971:425) states: “This axial design is superbly executed in Pei-ching, where the official visitor was formerly confronted in his progress along the processional way by a seemingly interminable succession of gates and towers and walls.”
Figure 6-11 The location of the Long-life Hill and lakes. There would have been no room for digging the moat if the Forbidden City had been built on the site of the Yuan palaces. Drawn based on: Hou Renzhi. (ed.). (1985). The Historical Atlas of Beijing. Beijing: Beijing Publication House. p. 36.
location of the Yuan palace, since the common people of imperial times could hardly have known whether or not the hill was located on one of the Yuan palaces.

6.3 THE PALACES

Many theories related to traditional Chinese cosmological thinking, such as those of the Eight Trigrams (bagua), the Five Elements, Four Manifestations (sixiang), and yinyang, were applied to the design of the Forbidden City, as many scholars have remarked. (Jiang Shunyuan 1991; Yu Zhuoyun 1992). Other scholars, however, have held that such applications were a fengshui practice. Meyer (1991:45) claims: “One final point needs to be made about Beijing’s geomancy. The principles that governed it are the symbols of cosmic thinking we have already seen in analyzing the form of Beijing: the trigrams of the Yijing, yin yang, and the five-phase worldview.” Meyer (1978:142) takes fengshui ideology as a determinative force, which had a power almost equivalent to that of the orthodox prescriptions from Zhou Li in the shaping of the capital city: “It appears that the urban form of Peking is the result of the mixture of two symbolic systems which are rather independent and sometimes in conflict with each other.” Feuchtwang (1982:241) holds that the actual construction of capital cities is done according to principles of geomancy. Lip (1995) claims that the whole design of the Forbidden City presents various fengshui principles, analysing these as such as yin-yang and the Five Elements.

I believe that the reason for the above clear divergence of opinion between the two groups of scholars lies in a misinterpretation of the application of Chinese cosmological thinking and symbols to the capital city. What was included in fengshui was merely a set of cosmological ideas elaborated by drawing on various sources in ancient texts, rather than an importation of the whole Chinese cosmological system in general, as Feuchtwang (1974:174) has gone into extensively:

Many other instances of the occurrence of feng-shui symbols in other contexts could be collected. It is wrong in fact to describe them as symbols coming from the feng-shui scheme specifically. Their incidence in a multitude of contexts shows the prevalence of concepts like the Five Elements and colours, Yin and Yang, and the Pakua [i.e. Eight Trigrams], and the symbolisation of heaven and earth, the seasons and the four quarters, as independent facets of a widely accepted cosmology. The fengshui scheme should therefore be understood as a point in the development of Chinese metaphysical thought around which such concepts and symbols have clustered and been arranged.
Therefore, most cosmological terms and symbols were borrowed into the fengshui elaboration, and not in its exclusive use. Generally speaking, the same sets of cosmological symbols were shared by two ideologies, imperial capital symbolism, and fengshui, which were applied to architecture, but often in conflict with each other, and were treated by the elite in different manners. As Xu (1996:315) has pointed out:

It would therefore be misleading to categorise under the title of fengshui either various modes of archaic cosmological symbolism or the canonical rituals and the imperial ideology of city building. Other cosmological or metaphysical concepts of cities found in local customs of later imperial times should also be carefully distinguished from fengshui, even though they might occasionally have been expressed in certain fengshui terms or absorbed a few of its various notions.

However, Feuchtwang (1982:241) takes the application of traditional Chinese cosmology in the construction of the capital cities, which was emphasised in Zhou Li, as geomantic ideas. In the present case, that of Beijing, however, Meyer holds the use of these symbols in the shaping and understanding of the form of the city is "geomancy," while the others believe it is part of the orthodox imperial ideology aimed at making the city a cosmic centre by appealing to archaic cosmological symbolism. As regards the issue of whether the application of these symbols implies the use of fengshui in either the design or the understanding of the city, I believe that an appropriate approach should be through an analysis of the cultural and architectural context of each specific aspect of the application of these symbols. In this section, I analyse the design of the Forbidden City in order to settle the dispute over the purpose of the application of the theories referring to Chinese cosmology in the planning of the imperial capital city. (Figure 6-12)

6.3.1 Yinyang

The theory of yinyang was created very early and became the foundation of the Chinese world-view. But what we should particularly bear in mind is that the theory of yinyang cannot be identified as fengshui, even though fengshui also uses the theory of yinyang. (See Section 1.2.1.) Extensive research on the application of yinyang theory in the Forbidden City has been conducted by many scholars. (cf. Jian Shunyuan 1991:251-60; Yu Zhuoyun 1992:16-42). I briefly recount their findings as

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194 I am not sure about the meaning of “Beijing’s geomancy” here, since Meyer has given two conclusion about the fengshui of Beijing, a determinative force in shaping the city and a language in analysing the city.
Figure 6-12  The important buildings in the Forbidden City.
follows. The general design of the Forbidden City could be divided into two parts, the outer imperial court at the front and the inner residential quarter to the rear. The outer court represented yang and the inner one yin. The front imperial court represented the yang of the Forbidden City. Its halls, taller than those in the residential quarter, were a reflection of the sacred and supreme imperial power and conveyed a sense of magnificence and masculinity. The architectural design of the outer court was lucid and magnificent, and displayed a beauty of masculine characteristics. The architectural style of the residential palaces was co-ordinated with their functions. The palaces were smaller there, and compactly laid out, evoking a sense of comfort, peace and femininity, and hence the residential quarter represented the yin of the Forbidden City.

On the basis of the primary classification of yin and yang, all matter can be further classified into the yang of yang, the yin of yang, the yang of yin and the yin of yin. According to Jiang (op. cit. 259), as regards the buildings in the Forbidden City, Fengtian Hall exemplified yang in yang, while Qianqing Hall and the front halls of all the palaces exemplified yang in yin. Fengtian Hall was the yang of yang, everything being maximised there, in all its height, frontage, depth, furnishings and decor. The throne in the grand palace was, in effect, the axis of the City and the Forbidden City, and was a symbol of supreme imperial power. Yang in yang and yang in yin had something in common and yet something different from each other. The appearance of the roofs and front halls of the imperial street and the imperial thrones of Qianqing Hall, were the same as those of Fengtian Hall. But there were also differences. For instance, the decoration of the foundations and of the railings were not the same. As for Qianqing Hall (where the emperor lived), a yang of yin example, it modelled itself on Fengtian Hall (where the emperor worked). It was taller than all the other palaces in the residential quarter, and that is why the crown was kept there. Huagai Hall, a yin of yang example, was only a locker-room for the emperor and therefore could not compare with Fengtian Hall in size. Kunning Hall, a yin of yin example, was the residential quarters of the empress and was much smaller than Qianqing Hall. In all these cases, the principle was followed of the differentiation of principal from subordinate, the distinction between qian (Heaven) and kun (Earth), and the conveying of the status of the emperor and empress. As a reflection of the, ideally, harmonious relationship between the imperial pair, the hall between Qianqing Hall and Kunning Hall was named Jiaotai (Mating Harmony) Hall, which signified the unity of qian with kun that leads to a peaceful society.
Yu Zhuoyun (op. cit.) has also noticed that in Chinese numerology odd numbers represent yang, while even numbers represent yin. Thus according to him the number three was constantly used for the three main halls in the outer court. On the main axis, there were three halls, namely Fengtian, Jinshen and Huagai. On the line horizontally across the main axis, the three halls were Wuying, Fengtian and Wenhua. The foundations of the Three Front Halls on the central axis were of three layers. The odd number of five was also used very much in the outer court. In the Forbidden City, there were five gates in front of Fengtian Hall. One of them, the Wu Gate, was also called Five-Phoenix Pavilion. In the Palace, there were nine front bays and five lateral bays. The Book of Changes says, “Nine-Five means dragon flies in the sky,” so the throne of an emperor was called jiuwu (nine-five). Nine is the biggest yang figure among the odd numbers in the decimal system, and five is in the middle. There are several examples of the two figures’ being combined together in imperial halls in one palace. Fengtian Hall, the hall of Wu Gate, Qianqing Hall, Kunning Hall, Ling’en Hall of the Ming Tombs, and the main hall of the Imperial Ancestral Temple were all “Nine-Five” halls.\textsuperscript{195} The numbers of stairs, platforms and brick walls in the outer court were mostly odd numbers.

The inner court was at the back of the Forbidden City and represented yin, so even numbers were used in its design. The main buildings on the central axis were the two halls Qianqing and Kunning. According to Yu Zhaoyun’s research, (op. cit.) Jiaotai Hall was built improperly between the above two palace-halls, it and they were later called the Three Back Halls.\textsuperscript{196} The numbers of stairs and storeys in the inner court were similarly mostly even numbers.\textsuperscript{197} Although we have not yet set eyes on any historical records of such arrangements, we have been able to discover that odd and even numbers representing yin and yang were carefully used in the building of the palaces.

\textsuperscript{195} During the Kangxi reing-period of the Qing dynasty, Fengtian Hall was reconstructed with eleven front bays and five lateral bays.

\textsuperscript{196} Shan (1992:20) holds that such a design did not conform to ancient protocol or previous architectural custom. There was an ancient rule saying, "according to protocol, there should be six palaces (for six wives) for emperors and three for dukes or princes" (Heng’s Fourteenth Year, Guliang Zuan).

\textsuperscript{197} According to Shan’s (1992:42) investigations, the number of the layers of different sections of the brick walls of Zhong Cui Hall was six and four. The brick of the rear-court wall of Kun Ning Hall was of twelve layers. Even the numbers of the bricks of the stairs of the imperial road in the back imperial yard were mostly even numbers as well.
Although there are so many references to instances of the application of *yinyang* theory in the building of the Forbidden City, it was officially used to express the harmony of the universe, and closely related to the traditional conventional representations of Heaven and Earth. It is evident that these instances were taken as part of the classic symbolism of the imperial capital city. They had nothing necessarily to do with the *fengshui* system. I can hardly agree with Peng’s argument that the combination of the symmetrical and irregular forms of the city was a purposive act aiming to produce a balance of *yinyang* order. (cf. above, section 6.2.1)

6.3.2 The Five Elements

This Five Elements theory developed in ancient times was part of the foundation of Chinese cosmology. (See Section 1.2.1.) The architectural design of the Forbidden City naturally also reflected the ancient theory of the Five Elements. According to Jiang Shunyuan’s research (1991), the Forbidden City’s layout was divided into two parts — the imperial court to the front, and residential palaces at the back. The former faced the south, which was intended to imply forcefulness, power. Thus the front was chosen as the place for government affairs, while the north, being the place for “water”, which represented keeping, was selected for the residential quarters. Most palace buildings concerned with culture or administration were sited to the east, since the east was represented by wood, associated with spring, generation and creation, while institutions dealing with criminal law and military matters faced west, because west indicated metal/gold and autumn, the bleak season of dying and execution. The prototypical examples are Wenhua 文華 (Flourishing Culture) Hall and Wuying 武英 (Powerful Military) Hall. The former was to the east, and the latter to the west, and together they guarded the three palaces in the centre. Whenever officials were summoned to an interview with the emperor in Fengtian Hall, they stood in rows along the two sides of it, keeping to the convention that the civil officials should be on the east side and the military officers on the west side. The six national ministries outside the Forbidden City were also arranged in this way.

It was prescribed in *Zhou Li* that the Ancestral Temple of the ruler should be on the left hand and the state Altar to the Gods of the Land and Grain on the right hand. Jiang (*op. cit.*) argues that this can be clearly interpreted by the theory of the Five Elements: the left side was that of the east and wood, which dominated reproduction and evolution. Human reproduction and continuity of course refers back to ancestors, and the eastern location of the ancestral temple indicated the respect of descendants for their ancestors’ memory. The state Altar to the Gods of the Land and Grain was
located to the west, because it represented the harvest and metal. Thus, in the Ming dynasty the crown princes studied at a place inside Donghua Gate, as the name of that gate means "talent of the east" (the character for dong meaning "east", and the east representing youth; hua meaning "talent"), the location being in the east part of the Forbidden City and having a green glazed-tile roof. The state Altar to the Gods of the Land and Grain, which was constructed at the same time as the Forbidden City, shows most clearly the Five Colours co-ordinated with the Five Elements. On top of the Altar, there was five-colour earth which represented the land in the four quarters, green in the east, red in the south, white in the west, black in the north, and there was also yellow in the centre.

Besides this, on top of the walls around the altar, various coloured glazed tiles were set in the same pattern. As for the distribution of colours, the dominant colours of yellow tiles and red walls in the Forbidden City could be adjusted or varied within the theories of Five Elements and Five Colours (wuse), in keeping with the different contexts. For example, in the early years of the Ming dynasty, Wenhua Hall used to be the place where the crown prince resided. At that time, the tiles were green. Later, when this palace was changed into an informal place for the emperor, the colour of the tiles was changed to yellow. (Jiang op.cit.) Another exception was Tianyi Gate (the name implying the producing of water, from the Chinese idiom "tianyi shengshui", meaning "When Heaven [i.e. the world/ the empire] is united, water will be produced.") in the Imperial Garden at the north end of the axial line. (Yandu Congkao 燕都叢考, chap. 3, 61) The Gate’s walls were grey (i.e. black), and the “blackness” of them was concordant with north (indicating water), implying that conflagration would be avoided throughout the Forbidden City. The black glazed tiles were also used in the buildings next to Shenwu Gate (the rear gate of the Forbidden City). A design of making the names or symbolic meanings of city gates corresponding with the theory of Five Elements itself is not a fengshui or superstitious idea. But based on such a designation, various superstitious ideas could be produced. A practice in a city was observed by Vale (1906:23):

One of the most silly of the Chinese superstitions which the newcomer observes, is the closing of the city gates by order of the officials, in times of drought or floods. If there is too much heat, the “South” gate, which presides over the “fire element,” is closed; if too much rain, the “North” gate, which presides over the “water element,” is closed.

198 The roof of Wen Hua Palace was green before it was changed to yellow in the 15th year of the Jiajing reign-period in the Ming dynasty.
The theory of Five Elements was also applied to the design of the city of Dadu in the Yuan dynasty. Franke (1994:38-40) gives a detailed study on this, and states that “on an even more abstract and symbolical level legitimate succession in China found its expression in the speculations assigning to each legitimate dynasty one of the Five Elements.” I have also found that the fifty residential blocks (*fang*) in Dadu were named after the symbols of the theories of the Trigrams, Five Elements, and *fenye*. Their symbolic meanings were to be elucidated by tracing their origins back to texts of the Confucian classics, such as *Book of Changes*, *Shangshu*, and *Mencius*. Thus the theory of the Five Elements, having such an ancient origin and orthodox pedigree, was not regarded as confined to *fengshui*. To apply this theory to the disposition of the buildings, the use of colours, and other aspects of planning was a practice which was not necessarily seen as *fengshui*, even though it may have been geomantic, and this theory was also used in *fengshui*, as one set of symbols in its calculations for judging the fortune of a house or grave, in various ways that were specifically *fengshui* ones. So whether a given practice was a result of *fengshui* should be decided by examining whether *fengshui* theory was actually applied. In this specific case of the Forbidden City of Beijing, there is nothing to suggest that it was *fengshui* theory being applied when the theory of Five Elements was applied. The implication of the application of the theory of the Five Elements was apparently that of seeking to achieve a harmony with the universe, and to emphasise the central position of the emperor. This was part of the traditional symbolism of imperial capital-city building, for demonstrating “legitimacy of succession.”

### 6.3.3 The Eight Trigrams

Ideas related to the Eight Trigrams were applied to the Forbidden City as well. The names of the buildings of the residential quarter were, in general in ancient times, mainly taken from the *qian* and *kun* trigrams in *Book of Changes*, (see section 1.3) and this usage conforms well with the custom of the Yuan dynasty. *Qian* and *kun* are two divinatory symbols in the *Book of Changes*, representing Heaven and *kun* Earth. In the inner court, Qianqing Hall and the Kunning Hall were placed in the middle, with side halls named after stars. The east gate of the yard of Qianqing Hall was called Rijing (Solar Splendid) and the west one Yuehua (Lunar Beauty). These two names are the same as those of the two gates beside Daming Hall in the Yuan dynasty. The gates’ location also served to complete the design of sun in the east, moon in the west, Heaven in front and Earth at the back and core of the inner court. The palaces to the sides were called the East Six Palaces and West Six Palaces. In *Book of Changes*, there are six divinatory symbols or hexagrams representing *yin*,...
while another six represent yang. These twelve palaces symbolised the twelve stars which guard Heaven and Earth. The use of the trigrams was combined with the employment of other symbols for the Heavenly bodies.

Such a practice was not invented by the Ming. It appears, according to Xijing Zhi, that the principle of the Eight Trigrams was considered in the Yuan dynasty by Liu Bingzhong in his planning of the palaces. The theories connected with the Eight Trigrams were employed in the state constitutional set-up, even the name of the state (guohao), Yuan meaning “Origin,” being selected from a classical text, Book of Changes, after much philosophical speculation.\textsuperscript{199} Franke (op.cit. 29) points out:

The dynastic name suggested by Liu Ping-chung could therefore become, at least to educated Mongols, a political symbol which clad a tradition religious concept with a Chinese classical grab. The recurrent idea of “origin” and “beginning” in the nomenclature of the Mongol Yuan state and its first two reign-names points perhaps to the unprecedented way in which unity was achieved, namely, as part of a universal empire reaching over most of Asia and not starting from a Chinese territorium.

He (op. cit. 37) also notes that “in Shang-tu [the other capital of the Yuan] eight Buddhist and Taoist monasteries were built in octagonal arrangement following the eight trigrams of the I-ching, thus indicating a cosmological plan so that the city design became a symbolical representation of the universe.” This is seen by Franke as creating a sort of architectural “legitimate succession.” (Ibid.) Thus the practice of applying the theory of the Eight Trigrams and of naming the buildings in accord with the text of Book of Changes, in the building of both the Yuan and the Ming capital, were aimed at pursuing an architectural expression of harmony with the universe, a traditional way of legitimising the imperial capital and indeed the empire.

In actual fact, not only the Trigrams but many other symbols referring to the heavenly bodies were integrated into the design of the Forbidden City in order to make it a miniature of the universe. To the back of the East and West Six Palaces, there were the East and West Five Halls.\textsuperscript{200} The constructing of the five halls to the north of Qianying 千婴 (Thousands of Babies) Gate and Baizi 百子 (Hundreds of Children) Gate at the two sides respectively is a perfect example of nourishing yang

\textsuperscript{199} Franke (1994:28-9) points out: “It has been remarked that the connotation inherent in the term yuan ‘origin’ and its contexts in the Book of Changes facilitated the association of the Chinese term with the originally Mongol concept of Heaven (tengri) as their highest deity.”

\textsuperscript{200} The fourth and fifth of the West Five Palaces were turned into the imperial garden in the early part of the Qianlong reign-period.
from *yin*. The Five Halls at each side made up ten for the two sides, which conformed with the Ten Heavenly Stems. The figure of twelve palaces also conformed with the Twelve Earthly Branches. All these cosmological symbols were incorporated onto the fengshui compass, but they cannot be identified as exclusively fengshui principles.

### 6.3.4 The Constellations

The Forbidden City was called *zi-jin-cheng* 崙禁城 (lit. “Purple Forbidden City”). This name was derived from the “Purple Bright Constellation with Polaris in the centre,” and in English is usually shortened to Forbidden City. (Steinhardt 1990:172) The character for *zi* 紫 (purple) was associated with the most honoured celestial body, the constellation known as the *Ziweiyuan* 紫微垣 (lit. “purple light enclosure”). This was associated with the ancient theory of astrology, that of the *xingye* 星野 (lit. “star/planet field”), the principle idea of which was that there was a correspondence between the spatial sections of the heavens — the *fenxing* 分星 (lit. “divisions of the stars”) and the spatial divisions of the earthly fields, the *fenye* 分域 (lit. “divisions of the territory on earth”). (See Section 2.1.) It was believed that there was a correspondence between the changes of a constellation and the events in the territory regarded as belonging to that same constellation, and that, on the basis of such correspondences, auspicious or inauspicious signs in the world of man could be interpreted. According to Jiang Shunyuan’s (1991:255) study, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-86? B.C.) associated the imperial social structure with the positions of the constellations. Jiang has also presented evidence to show that throughout history the three stellar constellations, Ziweiyuan, Taiweiyuan 太微垣 (lit. “supreme light enclosure”) and Tianshiyuan 天市垣 (lit. “heavenly residential enclosure”) located in the middle of the sky were associated with the imperial capitals, and that the Ziweiyuan located at the middle of the three constellations was associated with the imperial palace.

However, some modern scholars regard such theories associating buildings and building activities with the constellations, and the belief that the imperial capital

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201 According to Liu Xiaoming (1994:174), Ziwei is the mid group of stars of three stellar constellations located to the northeast of the Big Dipper, corresponding to today’s Ursa Minor, Ursa Major, Draco, Canes Venatici, Bootes, Hercules, Cepheus Cassiopera. Taiwei is the upper star among the three constellations, and is located to the south of the Big Dipper, to the northeast of the Ziwei star constellation, corresponding to the Western Virgo, Leo and part of Coma Bevenices. Tianshi is the lower star group of the three constellations, to the southeast of the Ziwei constellation, corresponding to Hercules, Serpent, Ophiuroid.
should be sited in a territory corresponding to the three constellations, as *fengshui*. (Liu Xiaoming 1994:174) Although the early theories of *kanyu*, which were lost long ago, were indeed associated with the ancient astrological theories of *fenxing* and *fenye*, and the constellations were also sometimes talked about in *fengshui*, the symbolic idea of matching the imperial palaces with the constellation was never seen as *fengshui* in old times. Because *fengshui* inherited this idea, it was possibly also claimed in *fengshui* that an imperial capital had to be built in a territory corresponding to the constellation Ziwei, but the idea itself was not derived from *fengshui*, but was taken by the imperial scholars to be a part of the orthodox symbolism for legitimising the imperial capital.

Since the terms referring to the three constellations were often used metaphorically to denote the palaces and the Forbidden City of Beijing in the scholar-officials’ and the emperors’ writings, parallels were drawn between the imperial palaces and the constellations. Jiang (op. cit.) has found that the design of the Forbidden City also showed a tendency to correspond to the three constellations. The implication of such literary and architectural measures was to convey the clear message that the imperial capital, the palaces and the emperor himself were the pivot of the world just as the constellation Ziwei was the centre of the sky. This was part of the long general tradition of using cosmic symbols to legitimise the imperial capital and the emperor.

### 6.3.5 The Four Spiritual Animals

The concept of the Four Spiritual Animals was derived from theories about 28 constellations, and is recorded in Confucian classics. (See Section 5.2.) Representing the four cardinal quarters, the Four Manifestations were often used as symbols in the building of capital cities to show the emperor’s sovereignty over the world by emphasising that the imperial capital was the central pivot of the four quarters. In the Han dynasty, the Four Manifestations were cast on the tile-ends used in palace buildings. In the imperial capital city of Changan in the Tang dynasty, the southern gate of the city was called Zhuque (Red Bird) Gate, and the northern gate was called Xuanwu (Black Tortoise) Gate. They represented the four quarters, and imply that the imperial capital city, the palaces and the emperor himself were the pivot of the four quarters. This was part of the symbolism of the imperial capital city, which had nothing to do with *fengshui*.

The theory of the Four Spiritual Animals was also applied in the design of the Forbidden City of Beijing. Wu Gate, the south gate, was also called Wufenglou.
五凤楼 (Five Phoenixes Tower), the phoenix being of course a kind of bird. The name of the north gate of the Forbidden City used to be Xuanwu (Black Tortoise) Gate. A Sishen (four gods) Temple was built in the Imperial Garden for paying respects to the gods of the Four Quarters. The Four Animals were also depicted on the tiles of the palaces. In the Qing dynasty, a Sishengci (Temple of the Four Spiritual Animals), in which the Four Spiritual Animals were worshiped as deities, was built in the Imperial Garden at the rear of the Forbidden City. The above was the official view of the Four Spiritual Animals. The use of the Four Spiritual Animals symbolism in Beijing indicated that the Forbidden City was the centre of the world, and that the Emperor was the ruler of all the Four Quarters. But in fengshui these symbols were used in different ways from this, and to serve entirely different purposes. As shown by the example of Zhu Jian’s fengshui argument, which I have analysed in section 6.2.1, the Spiritual Animals were used to interpret fortune in state affairs when something went wrong. Thus we can see that the application of the symbols of the Four Spiritual Animals in the Forbidden City was not due to fengshui ideas.

In the examples above we have analysed the application of the theories of yinyang, the Five Elements, the Eight Trigrams, constellations and the Four Spiritual Animals in the spatial layout of Beijing. Beijing and the Forbidden City do appear to be laid out according to certain principles, which in turn refer to cosmological concepts, ones that were also employed in, but not confined to fengshui. The way in which these concepts were used in the plan of Beijing disproves any notion that this use was an application of fengshui. Although the application of such cosmological symbols has been seen by both some imperial-era and modern scholars in the light of fengshui, evidence of the application of fengshui can hardly be found in the master-plan of the city. The goal in the design of Beijing was to emphasise cosmological correspondences between earth, humankind and the heavens, rather than to improve fortune in the here and now.

It is certainly possible to study the Chinese cosmology or philosophy expressed within fengshui theory as De Groot and Feuchtwang did. What is more important for our present study, however, is that the fundamental ideas of Chinese philosophy or cosmology did not exist exclusively in fengshui theory. Such an approach as De Groot’s and others’ is likely to give the misleading impression that applying the cosmological symbols in building and planning necessarily reflects the application of fengshui ideas. In fact, Chinese cosmology, which appeared much earlier than fengshui, did not overwhelmingly affect architectural practice through fengshui, or
receive influences from *fengshui*. This cosmology penetrated into every corner of Chinese culture, and formed the foundation of many Chinese arts and sciences, such as *qigong*, martial arts, medicine, astrology, and, of course, *fengshui*. Even though imperial scholars may have regarded *fengshui* as a kind of superstitious belief, *fengshui* theories did share many of the fundamental concepts, beliefs and even symbols of Chinese cosmological thinking. But applying these concepts is not equivalent to applying *fengshui*. My analyses of the case of Beijing further supports Xu's (1996:315) argument:

If there was an all-encompassing cosmology, it was then part of the enduring world view of the Chinese people, under the sway of which various modes of applicational systems - including *fengshui* coexisted. Thus, some imperial scholars might have described some cities by using terms that were closer, or even identical, to those employed in *fengshui* theories, but it does not necessarily mean that these scholars' perception of the cities was influenced by *fengshui* ideas; and the matter should probably be turned the other way round: a description of this kind actually reflected the persistent world view with which *fengshui* ideas, and hence most of its terms, were largely in accordance. After all, most cosmological terms were borrowed into the *fengshui* elaboration, and not in its exclusive use.

While these cosmological concepts were appealed to as an important aspect of the symbolism of the imperial capital ideology, *fengshui*, by contrast, even though some of its concepts and symbols were taken from the same philosophy, had as its central idea one which offended against the very basis of the ideology of Confucianism, the latter being to build up and maintain the social order, and so was excluded from the principles of city planning. This philosophical conflict was perfectly reflected in an imperial scholar Luo Yuchen's 龍虞臣 *Bianhuo Lun* 辨惑論 (On Confusion):

None of the various schools of thought dares claim to achieve the magic of gods and change the fortune determined by Heaven, except for the *Burial Classic*. Such a vicious idea is dangerous, since it could confuse the common people so that they act against Heaven. (translated from *KYJC*, vol. 2, 343)

While classic cosmological concepts were used to show the legitimacy of the imperial capital, by achieving harmony with the universe and accord with laws of Heaven,202 in *fengshui*, where a harmony was also pursued by calculating with the

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202 Murphey (1984:191) analyses the importance of harmony in Chinese society: “The state’s predominant source of revenue, the land-and-grain tax, was in effect sustained by urban-based elite investment, and management of irrigation and water-control projects, roads and waterways, the dissemination of improved techniques, and the protection of rural areas from disorder. The intensive hand agriculture of traditional China, especially wet-rice agriculture with its heavy cumulative
cosmological symbols in a technical manner, the purpose was mainly to challenge destiny fixed by Heaven, by altering fortune. Granet (1975:151) argues:

The idea of an active solidarity between man and the world has remained powerful: everyone feels the need for an organization of existence congruent with the order of things, and in consequence oriented, if I may so put it, in time and space: whence the importance of the calendar and geomancy (feng-shui). . . . That obligatory participation still involves a constant care for spatial orientation: thence comes the fortune of those specialists called geomancers. They are not consulted merely to know whether such and such a site is suitable for a tomb or a house being built. They also know the procedures by which it is possible to transform an orientation that is actually irregular into an orientation that will be correct in religious law; for that, it is enough to put up screens and build mounds, or to modify the appearance of the earth (for the form of the unevenness of the ground has a symbolic value) or by means of appropriate emblems to ascribe qualities to the directions of immediately adjacent space.

This shows clearly how, far from always seeking harmony with Nature (= Heaven),203 fengshui was sometimes, in a major way, in direct conflict with it, and mainly concerned to change its overall dispositions and regular workings by contrary human intervention. In my opinion, although both imperial capital city symbolism

investment in dikes, terraces, and irrigation projects, required consistent order, and organization, to remain as highly productive as it was. The same was true of the social system, with its orderly stress on 'right relations' throughout its hierarchy, and on the companion Confucian precept of model behavior. Disorder - chaos, absence of officially sanctioned and enforced rules (all incorporated in the Chinese word luan) - was seen as the greatest evil to be prevented, an effort in which urban and rural areas worked together for a recognizable common good." Because of such social needs, after about the 12th century, the change was not primarily focused in cities, "which instead were seen as presiding over the 'Great Harmony,' a persistent Chinese ideal in which disruptive change was to be minimized, all groups worked together for the common good, and cities served the countryside as part of a single symbiotic order." This was a main reason for harmony's being so much emphasized in the symbolism of imperial capital cities.

203 This is by no means to say that Nature and Heaven were always seen as integrated by the Chinese philosophers. However, "Heaven" was often used to represent the "Laws of Nature." Bodde (1957:709-27; 1979:139-155) engaged in an extensive discussion with Needham (1956:518-83) on the issue of the Chinese concepts "natural law" and "laws of Nature." Needham distinguishes sharply between these two. The former, he points out, is wholly juridical and hence applicable only to the human world; this being so even though some of its past proponents may have viewed it as having had a divine origin, and subsequently as having early gained embodiment in the immemorially accepted customs of their particular society. "Laws of Nature" solely pertain to the nonhuman sphere, for they consist of those fixed physical regularities which men have discovered to be constantly operative in the world of natural phenomena. In the nine passages coming from seven different sources, and covering a total time span of perhaps seven centuries (probably fourth century B.C. to ca. A.D. 320), provided by Bodde (ibid.), the "laws of Nature" were often expressed in terms of several supreme agencies referring to Heaven or God, such as, da ming (Great Mandate) and tian (Heaven) in Mo Zi, tian ze (rules of Heaven) in Guan Zi, huangtian shangdi (Lord on High) in Lüshì Chunqiu (Mr. Lü's Springs and Autumns), "Yue Ling" (Monthly Ordinances), tian fa (Laws of Heaven) in a memorial submitted to Wang Mang.
and *fengshui* seem to seek harmony in “spatial sub-systems,” 204 (actually, often in a symbol system only referring to spatial systems), the purposes of the two sets of ideas are opposite. Whereas the former takes harmony with Nature or Heaven as the eventual aim, to symbolise Heaven’s mandate, the latter only seeks, and *only* at technical level, a harmony of “Natural forces” which are often only self-defined205 in *fengshui*, so as to challenge the work of Heaven or Nature. *Fengshui* manipulates self-defined “Natural forces” to achieve only a “*fengshui* harmony” of piecemeal kind — not a cohesive overall harmony with Nature — in order to alter the ordainments of Nature-Heaven. The contradiction is quite like that between Taoism as a philosophy and Taoism as a popular religion.206 *Fengshui* was *one*, and not a thoroughly cohesive or integral one, but certainly not *the* Chinese theory for achieving “solidarity between man and the world” or for giving “symbolic value” in building activities.

However, the application of cosmological symbols for the imperial symbolism in the layout of the capital city could easily be interpreted in the light of *fengshui*. A story set in Beijing after the establishment of the Republic is told by Granet (1975:152): “One evening the troops pillaged and burnt some districts. Now, since the fall of the Manchus the central gate to the South, hitherto reserved to the Emperor, had been open to the public. South is the Direction of Fire. The rumour ran in the city that fire had got into Peking through the incautiously opened gate. It was closed up and in fact the fires went out. I could not say how many people accepted the diplomatic fiction suggested to them. Since then, traffic needs have caused the South gate to be opened wide and widened: Peking is not on fire; it is true that they have been careful

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204 It was noted by Li Yih-Yüan (1995:388-9): “However, in order to attain equilibrium and harmony in the system of natural order, simply settling the temporal aspect is not enough; an equal level of harmony must be achieved in the sub system of spatial relations as well. In traditional Chinese popular culture, the concept of spatial harmony takes the forces of yin and yang as its root, but also adds the Five Elements and the Eight Trigrams. Welded together, these forces find expression in the Chinese system of geomancy or *feng-shui*. Ancient geomantic theories not only drew upon the Eight Trigrams, celestial stems and terrestrial branches, but also utilized related features of the Five Colors, Five Numbers, etc. These form a coherent system which clearly reveals the Chinese people’s search of equilibrium and harmony in the spatial sub-system.”

205 Although most of the cosmological symbols used in *fengshui* are archaic and commonly known to all, the denotations and implications of them in *fengshui* calculation are esoteric and very individualised. They are often arbitrarily imposed on the physical surroundings of a selected site. The application of these symbols in *fengshui* which is not as commonly recognised as that of the imperial symbolism, often cannot be agreed upon by more than one geomancer. For more details about the self-defining nature of *fengshui* metaphysics, see Feuchtwang (1974: “Conclusion”)

206 The former emphasises being harmonious with Nature, while the latter has developed into seeking magic to improve fortune — against Nature.
to keep a gate tower as a screen — or as a decoration.” The same set of symbols was used for a completely different purpose here.

Moreover, as I have learned from the historical records, *fengshui* interpretations were never taken seriously in the matter of the urban planning of the capital city. When a tower was built in the Forbidden City, according to one source, it was objected to on the grounds of *fengshui*:

Qianyou Tower 乾佑閣, which was also called Northern Tower in the Forbidden City, was eight *zhang* high. All the mess on the streets outside the Forbidden City could be seen from the top of the tower. The *Qintianjian* (Directorate of Astronomy) suggested demolishing the tower since it was not good for *fengshui*. It was removed in the Tianqi reign-period. (*Lüshi Duoyi* 鬥史掇逸, translated from *RIK* vol. 36)

The real reason for the tower’s being disapproved of was that too much outside the Forbidden City could be seen from it. The same case was recorded in many other books without mentioning *fengshui*, just as the following text shows:

When Lin Daonan 林道楠 was in charge of the construction of Qiande 乾德 Hall [i.e. Qianyou Tower] in the Forbidden City, he reported to the throne: “The Three Front Halls and Two Residential Halls do not exceed twelve *zhang*. But the foundation of this Hall of eight *zhang* plus the building itself, of several *zhang*, will make it taller than the main halls. How can such a tower be built in the Forbidden City?” (*Ming Shenzong Shilu*, translated from *RIK* vol. 36)

Thus, while in the view of *fengshui* believers *fengshui* was one of the reasons for activities concerning building, *fengshui* was actually a symbolic language rather than a body of guiding theory for palace building. It could be used, but not necessarily, when things went wrong, just as is shown in the following example:

In the Hongzhi reign-period, the eunuch Li Guang 李廣 found favour with the imperial family by performing heretical arts (*zuodao* 左道), and came into power. At the time when Yuxiu Pavilion 懿秀亭 was completed, the younger empress was ill. After drinking magic water (*fushui* 符水) given her by Li, she died. Soon after this, Qingning Hall caught fire. As somebody suggested these disasters were caused by Yuxiu Pavilion’s having been built at the wrong time, the parents of the emperor were angry [with Li Guang]. Li, afraid, committed suicide. (*Yueshan Congtan* 月山叢談, translated from *RIK* vol. 35)

The *fengshui* interpretation given to the disaster in this case was obviously post hoc. It provides further strong indications that, while individual buildings in the capital city could easily be interpreted in the light of *fengshui*, it is doubtful if there was any effect from *fengshui* ideas on the physical structure of the whole city.
These examples also show the great difference in attitude between the orthodox ideology and fengshui ideas regarding the building of the city, even though they both employed cosmological symbols. As regards fengshui, it was primarily seen by the scholar elite as a heretical art manipulating the cosmological symbols technically for specific good fortune here and now, although it was sometimes accepted by that elite for individual buildings. Once something went wrong, however, fengshui ideas, if applied in either design or interpretation would be subjected to criticism, sometimes even by using fengshui ideas. In contrast, when used in accordance with the orthodox symbolism of the imperial capital, the cosmological symbols were employed purely to show accord with Heaven. To employ the cosmological symbols was in itself a way of gaining legitimacy, not of seeking direct connection with immediate good fortune. And no matter how badly things went wrong, such symbolism was never blamed.

6.4 SUMMARY

So far I have not found any fengshui interpretation of the master plan or the integrated image of the city of Beijing made by imperial scholars, even according to any legendary source. All the various fengshui elucidations of the city plan have been made by modern scholars, sometimes with firm assertions but with no historical reference, as in the claims of Meyer (1978:142) that: “in fact, anything of height or mass in the city must be considered in the light of feng-shui.” Meyer, as do many others, obviously takes his own analysis as the fengshui analysis of the city, and holds that fengshui should be applied in both the planning and understanding of Beijing, and that the form of the city then be seen as a result of the conflict between fengshui and the Confucian prescriptions for capital cities.

By analysing the historical and cultural context of each alleged fengshui feature in the plan of the city, we can see that fengshui did not play a vital or active role in the planning of the city of Beijing, even though it did in the building of imperial tombs. It must not be automatically assumed, as so many scholars have assumed, that it was also applied, or applied at all extensively, to the siting and building of cities, and indeed my evidence all points to the fact that it was not so used for the siting and planning of Beijing. This was mainly because of the special nature of the imperial capital, where the dominant ideas informing the shaping of the city were pragmatic considerations, combined with imperial capital symbolism. Although fengshui ideas may have been considered and loosely attached to the diagrammatic plan of the city during the planning, they never became an integral part of the official and non-
official interpretations of the plan in imperial scholars’ writings. As one of the popular “superstitions,” fengshui was largely suppressed in the symbolism of imperial cities, this symbolism being a solid part of the imperial ideology. The inapplicability of fengshui ideas to the physical construction of the city was also decided by the social structure of the government, which did not constitute a context that would foster fengshui practices in the matter of city planning, since central government was packed with top scholar officials who held a largely negative attitude toward fengshui. The physical realisation of the plan may have been seen as in accord with certain traditional patterns which also existed in fengshui, but many factors which were considered more important could have resulted in the same design even if fengshui had never existed.

It is possible that the plan of the city was perceived by some from a fengshui viewpoint, but I doubt that this was as common as in the cases of individual buildings and graves. To be sure, some fengshui arguments were sometimes put forward for certain fragments of the design of the city and individual buildings, especially when something went wrong, but these arguments hardly referred to the city plan as a whole. This must have been because fengshui was never an integrated part of the ideology of city planning. I partly agree with Meyer’s (1991:44) opinion on the function of fengshui in the city:

Fengshui is religious language, a tool for naming the mystery, for dealing with cosmic forces that may bring threat, problem, danger, luck, good fortune, or prosperity. If the city suffered a reversal, such as famine, drought, rebellion, or military attack, the fengshui expert offered a possible way of explaining it and dealing with it. . . . It is the hidden that is dangerous and harmful. To name the inauspicious condition is halfway to removing it. To embody the evil in a symbol is a big step toward remedying it. This was the function of the geomancer and his worldview must therefore be accepted as an alternate and valid way of interpreting the meaning of Beijing.

Although this was no doubt of part of the function of the fengshui explanation, such explanations were actually often proffered by scholar officials, not by geomancers, who had almost no chance to speak out on matters of imperial city planning. It is doubtful if fengshui interpretations were ever applied to the plan of the city and even more so if they were ever “accepted.”

The imperial ideology associated with building the capital city, which dominated the plan of the city of Beijing, was so strong that each element of the city plan was used to achieve the effect of making the city a cosmic centre. Apart from the Confucian
idea of pursuing the plan prescribed in Zhou Li, cosmological symbols were used in addition, as part of the architectural means of symbolising the city’s correspondence with Heaven, explicitly in order to emphasise the “legitimacy of succession” of the dynasty. In this specific cultural context, fengshui, seen as a set of heterodox ideas, had no chance of being accepted as a force challenging Confucian ideas for shaping the city. Fengshui interpretations may have been put forward, but would not have been accepted in the planning. As demonstrated by my analyses of the alleged fengshui features of the city plan, it is not the case as claimed by Meyer (1978:141) that the prescriptions in Zhou Li “were not carried out because they conflicted with the requirements of feng-shui.” Each feature of the city which was not in accord with the prescriptions in Zhou Li had its own historical and architectural reasons, but those were not fengshui reasons. It is an utterly groundless assertion to say that “the urban form of Peking is the result of the mixture of two symbolic systems which are rather independent and sometimes in conflict with each other.” (op. cit. 142) It is misleading to consider fengshui ideas and Zhou Li as two competitive forces in the city planning since such a view exaggerates the influence of fengshui. That the plan could be interpreted as an ideal fengshui disposition does not mean that it was in fact guided by fengshui, since the plan could also have been, and actually was, officially articulated as part of the symbolism of imperial cosmology. Thus the layout of Beijing and of its Forbidden City is not an exemplary instance of the “symbolism of fengshui cosmology.” (Feuchtwang 1974:3)

Another conclusion made by Meyer on the “fengshui of Beijing” is that “the fengshui of cities is (as distinct from that employed in the location of graves, homes, and smaller structures) vastly indeterminate and should not be considered a ‘system’ at all.” (1978:148) The reasons why he thinks “the notion of the feng-shui of cities can be misleading,” (op. cit. 150) are summarised by him as follows:

(1) While one may speak of the fengshui of a grave, a house, a temple, or some other single site, when the term is applied to an entire city, it is used metaphorically. The possible points of reference are simply too many, and there is no way to determine priorities as to which of these points of reference are most important.

(2) There are too many potential symbolic referents in fengshui itself to make a systematic analysis possible. To give a partial list, there are the trigrams and hexagrams in both luoshu (posterior heavens) and hetu (prior heavens) arrangements, the ten stems and twelve branches, the sexagenary characters, the five phases, yin and yang, the twenty-four directions, the planets, the constellations, the twenty-eight habitations (su), the four seasons, eight directions, the symbolic animals, colours, the twenty-four
half month periods, and so forth. All these symbolic factors can be seen on the faces of the larger geomantic “compasses” (luopan). (1991:44)

From his context, I think that what he means by the “fengshui of cities” is the fengshui interpretations of the city. Although the issue of whether a fengshui interpretation of a city could be regarded as a system is not essential to either the shaping or the notion of the city, I believe that, since fengshui ideas can hardly be seen as one system, collective interpretations of a single site or design could likewise never have formed a single system. This issue is actually determined not by the particular characteristics of the capital city, but by the fundamental form of the framework of the fengshui theories, as I have analysed in Chapter Two. Moreover, Meyer’s argument on the nature of “fengshui of cities” is not based on the most convincing evidence. Firstly, no matter how many building projects there were in the city, if we take the principal palaces, or the Forbidden City, as being those of the supreme priority, it would not be difficult to determine the priorities of the rest of the buildings. Although the number of the buildings in the city was much more than the cases of any small group of buildings, there was no single building more important than the Emperor’s palaces. Even in a case of an individual house, if the whole range of the fengshui references in the circumstances, such as the names of its family members and its neighbours were considered, it would not be less complicated than for determining the priority of the references in a city.

Secondly, the symbols used for city were exactly the same as those used for a single site, since they were the same set of symbols incorporated on the compass. If “there are too many variables within the compass of feng-shui thought and again no way to determine which of these many variables must be given priority in providing an explanation,” it must be the same for any case, not only the city of Beijing. A single fengshui argument by an individual person could be in a form that could be viewed as a system, but the fengshui ideas collectively, which were produced by all the individuals of the different schools, since they applied diversified theories, and miscellaneous ideas and symbols, could never form a self-consistent system as a whole. This has nothing to do with the specific nature of the cities. Thus the inapplicability of fengshui to the capital city was determined not by technical difficulties, but by the historical and cultural context.

Yet, Meyer further holds that the “‘fengshui of a city’ is not an entirely inappropriate term, for two reasons. At the most general level there are certain feng-shui principles which may be applied to nearly all cities, and they are the same ones which govern graves, homes, and single sites.” (1978:151) And again: “for the feng-shui of cities,
the communal aspect is paramount, enabling the dwellers to understand their group’s fortunes or failures and giving them some positive scope for action to rectify misfortunes.” (op. cit. 153) He further states:

Although not a comprehensive system, fengshui nevertheless is a significant factor in Beijing. Once we accept the fact that geomancy is not so much a tool of urban planning as it is a method of analysis, then we can affirm that it too is a way of understanding the city, its history and destiny. For the geomantic expert (the fengshuixiansheng or kanyujia), Beijing was seen with different eyes than those of the ordinary person. It was the relationships of these features, together with the overall siting of Beijing in its macro-environment (hills, watercourses, etc.), that created the fate and destiny of the city. (1991:44)

Yes, in this present case, the role of fengshui remained only a post hoc interpretation, instead of a directive blueprint. How “significant” the factor of fengshui was in the people’s understanding of the city of Beijing in former times and traditional contexts, however, is an issue that needs to be treated with great care. Although “the language of feng-shui was known to Chinese at all levels of the social hierarchy,” (Meyer 1978:152) a perception of the city plan as a whole from the viewpoint of fengshui is not likely to have been a common one among the scholars, and quite possibly not among the ordinary people either. If fengshui ideas were only adopted by the “geomantic expert,” and these ideas were normally not applied to the city plan, I wonder how they can then be seen as having been a “significant factor in Beijing.” That is not to say that no building activities in the city, or interpretations of them, ever fell under fengshui influence. But it is my argument that fengshui, as a factor in both the construction and the perception of the city at urban planning level, was not nearly as significant as it was for individual buildings within the city.207

207 According to Oliver (1997:878), the screen wall (yingbi) of the entrance of the courtyard house (siheyuan), a traditional form of architecture in the north and the major form of houses in Beijing, is designated based on fengshui idea.
CONCLUSION

The main concern of this study has lain in the question of to what extent and in what way fengshui ideas were applied to the siting, planning and construction of the city of Beijing in late imperial China, and how significant this question may prove in studies of imperial cities in general. The role of fengshui in the imperial capital at urban planning level is actually informed by two issues, namely, (1) the actual influence of fengshui on the physical realisations of the siting and planning of the city, and (2) retrospective interpretations of the natural siting, form, and space of the city in fengshui terms. In order to deal with these questions properly, I have conducted a study mainly on the historical background of the construction of the city, the cultural context of the ideologies associated with it, and in particular the architectural, geographical, topographical and aesthetic concepts reflected in the planning and the understanding of the city. It has not sought to provide a detailed, all-encompassing fengshui account of every specific aspect of the building of the city, but instead has addressed a number of important characteristics of fengshui ideas in the planning and understanding of the city, upon which an appropriate historical approach to the application of fengshui in the physical creation of the imperial capital city can be based.

Due to inevitable limitations of time, space and available materials, this "Conclusion" is actually more like a pause for reflection in the course of a vaster process of research, rather than constituting any adamantly definitive assertion concerning the role of fengshui, since further explorations of archaeological and textual evidence will surely enable more precise understandings. It is a juncture both for a summary of the points made in the main text, and, more importantly, for a discussion of the problems that still exist regarding the studies of fengshui and Chinese cities. I first recount my major arguments in this research, not strictly following the sequential order of the chapters of this thesis, in order to stress the points and provide a more succinct and concise view of its conclusions.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CITY

My inquiry into the establishment of the city of Beijing in the Ming dynasty shows that many specific historical circumstances determined the location of the city. The city of Beijing was built on the base of Dadu, the site of which had been chosen for capital cities many times in history. After the Mongols' conquest of Dadu, the city was dwelled in by Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan, long before, after seizing power, he
promoted it into one of the imperial capital cities of the Ming. When the city finally became the supreme imperial capital of the Ming, after eighteen years construction of a new city wall, palaces and other imperial facilities, this was only an official confirmation of the political legitimacy of the city. Since the city was gradually developed into the imperial capital, there was no procedure which would have permitted the designer of the city of Beijing to look for an entire new site as freely as the geomancers did in their grave-sittings.

When the emperor determined to make the city his imperial capital, chief among the existing cities, arguments both for and against his choice ensued. The officials’ concerns were centred on pragmatic factors, such as the defence considerations, the supply problems, and historical precedents. The realistic problems, particularly the immediate threat of invasion by the Northern nomads, and the potential danger of the power of the garrison post in the city, which contained the forces for protecting the frontier, to protect the border, were clearly paramount to Zhu Di, the emperor who had established himself in this city, and who had done so through war. Although the significance of this choice was also attached, as it was throughout the history of imperial capital building, to the official symbolic interpretation of the establishment of the city, in actual fact specific contemporary situations rendered the decision inevitable.

The ideas which governed the ideological thinking concerning the city, and had been practiced in Chinese architectural tradition, were part of a long formed symbolism of Chinese imperial capital cities — “part of the imperial ideology, with its emphasis on the centrality of China in the world and on the Son of Heaven as radiator maximus of civilization.” (Wright 1977:73) Both architectural and literary means were used to achieve this expression, mainly by imitating the ideal capital city prescribed in Zhou Li, and appealing to Chinese cosmology and its symbols, these being part of the enduring world view of the Chinese people. The main reason for the persistence of this symbolism was “the literate elite, in their long symbiotic relationship with the Chinese emperors, who insisted time and again on the importance of the ritual-symbolic acts of ‘their’ emperor, on his role as pivot of the cosmos who should operate in a microcosm of the Chinese universe — the capital.” (Ibid.)

This imperial-capital symbolism was emphasised in the city of Beijing and its predecessor Dadu more than in any other capitals in history, owing to specific historical situations. When he made the Dadu the capital of all China, the Mongol emperor Khubilai Khan decided to rule as a Chinese-style Son of Heaven as well as
Khan of Khans, and adopted much of the ceremonial and symbolism of the Chinese monarchs. Supervised by Liu Bingzhong, a Chinese of wide learning but mixed cultural background, the city turned out to be a design strongly influenced by the canonical prescriptions of Zhou Li. By also introducing archaic cosmological symbols into the city plan, as well as into the institutional design of the governmental system, the dominant idea of emphasising the "legitimacy of succession" of the Yuan was powerfully and comprehensively articulated.

After two and a half centuries of harsh domination by the non-Chinese dynasties of the Liao, Jin, and Yuan, with the building of the city of Beijing the Chinese at last realised their dream of returning to the North China Plain. The defensive posture of the newly re-established Chinese order now brought into being the fervent Chinese restorationism of the Ming. The city was further embellished by the Ming rulers as a reassertion of many elements of the classical cosmology. As Wright (op. cit. 72) states: "This city was in closer accord with the canonical cosmology that were either of the Sung capitals or, indeed, Sui and T'ang Ch'ang-an... In details as well as in the broad outlines, every effort was made to see that the city conformed to the most ancient precedents... The whole is magnified, but the basic principles are the same as they were in remote antiquity." Thus, both alien domination and the restoration of the Chinese order hugely enhanced the Chinese symbolism of imperial capitals — what was called by Wright the "Chinese city cosmology."

In contrast, "despite its ancient pedigree and the approval of Chu Hsi, feng-shui, and the 'emanation' theory associated with it, did not become an integral part of the dominant Confucian ideology or of its subideology of the city." (op. cit. 55) The reasons for this were many, but I think that I have shown the loose formation of the system of fengshui ideas and its philosophical foundation were the major ones. The origins of fengshui as a formulated system of ideas are vague, but it seems that Xu's (1996:336) assumption is reasonable: "though its various ingredients can be traced back to the Zhou, it only started to develop in any systematic way in Zou Yan's time in the first half of the third century B.C., and emerged as encompassing a set of elaborated cosmological thoughts not earlier than Han times." The further I have investigated fengshui theories and ideas, the more I have discovered that fengshui has so many contradictory theories, boundless notions and symbols borrowed or shared with other Chinese metaphysics and popular beliefs, and competing versions of analyses deliberately elaborated by fengshui experts, and often by non-fengshui experts, under the name of fengshui or other alternative names. As a loosely connected collection of miscellaneous ideas, it is hard to regard the fengshui ideas as
a coherent system. I believe that the only common characteristics shared by these ideas, the ones which caused them to be categorised under the name of “fengshui ideas,” are their philosophy for improving one’s personal fortune, and their area of applicability — the residences for both the living and the dead.

Not only has its jumbled composition made fengshui come to be seen as one of the popular superstitions of China, but the philosophical foundation of fengshui, that one could alter one’s destiny by manipulating the construction of one’s or one’s ancestors’ residence, was normally seen by the Confucian as a heterodox idea challenging the authority of Heaven. This philosophical conflict with the orthodox ideology concerning Heaven caused the collective attitude of the elite towards fengshui to be ambivalent. While its radical opponents attacked fengshui fiercely on the one hand, and, on the other, fengshui advocates elaborated fengshui manuals, most of the elite had no particular interest in it, except in the matter of siting the grave of their parents, when they would actually emphasise the significance of doing this for reasons of filial piety. Although many scholar officials were familiar with fengshui knowledge, and some of them found it possible to employ a geomancer for siting a grave or house, or were even engaged with fengshui in their private lives, they could scarcely put forward suggestions on fengshui grounds on official occasions.

In the government departments where the scholar officials were concentrated, the construction of the imperial projects as part of the imperial administration seldom fell under fengshui influence, except in the case of the imperial tombs. In the expansion of the city in the Ming dynasty, the Qintianjian (Directorate of Astronomy), the department that usually suggested auspicious dates for important events, and in which fengshui practitioners could sometimes be employed, was involved, though in the lowest bureaucratic position. My close analysis of the construction of the imperial tombs, however, has shown that fengshui practitioners were not necessarily called in even in the matter of imperial tombs. When fengshui ideas were advised by one or two officials interested in this art, both the emperor and the other officials could sometimes not conceal their disdain for it. Although Wright (op. cit. 55) assumed that fengshui was introduced into city planning “not by the scholar-officials but by their often restive masters, the emperors of China,” according to my investigation the emperor showed no more enthusiasm for fengshui than the scholar officials. Thus the imperial government body and the social structure of the imperial administration did not form a context that would have encouraged and promoted the application of fengshui ideas to city planning.
Thus the city of Beijing was constructed in a historical context that can be depicted as follows. The time was a period during which the orthodox ideology of imperial capital building was greatly stressed, by both the Yuan and Ming dynasties. The site of the city was located in the North, where *fengshui* was not as prevalent as in the South of China (Wright *op. cit.* 55). The emperors and scholar officials considered pragmatic factors the most important, and had no particular interest in *fengshui* in the matter of the city planning. And the basic city form had already been determined by the Yuan, under the guiding ideology of legitimising the imperial capital by emphasising its orthodox symbolism. The specific historical context of the construction of the city was not favourable to any fostering or encouraging of the application of *fengshui* in its building.

**THE FENGSHUI INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CITY**

In order to fully understand the role of *fengshui* in the city’s construction, the main body of this research has been a detailed analysis of each interpretation of the natural setting, form and space of the city in *fengshui* terms, and of the alleged *fengshui* features of the layout of the city. Although only a handful of *fengshui* interpretations of the site and plan of the city has been found in the notebooks of the advocates of *fengshui*, and the *fengshui* manuals, this has provided substantial textual evidence and formed the most important area of my inquiry into the role of *fengshui* in the city’s design and building. These interpretations and analyses concentrated mainly on the natural siting of the city, while city planning was hardly mentioned. Among them, only Zhu Xi’s and Liu Ji’s analyses of the site were produced before the city was constructed. In a large number of *fengshui* works available today, there is no “authentic” *fengshui* theory specifically targeting the siting and planning of cities, except for a theory referring to the idea of the Three Dragons, an idea not exclusively elaborated or exclusively used in *fengshui*. Since each *fengshui* analysis on the city arbitrarily imposes the author’s own idea, normally based in common *fengshui* knowledge, on the site or the plan of the city, these analyses are often in conflict with each other.

Owing to the specific historical context of the city, the inapplicability of these contradictory *fengshui* ideas in the city’s construction was inevitable. Although the site was claimed by Zhu Xi and Liu Ji as having the “best” *fengshui* for a capital city, the first capital of the Ming dynasty was not built here. Nor was the construction of Beijing halted by the statement that the “qi of the site has been completely consumed” in the early years of the Ming. Leaving aside such *fengshui* statements
and predictions, contemporary fengshui advice regarding the city plan and city canals was not adopted either. As for later, retrospective fengshui interpretations imitating Zhu’s and Liu’s ideas, they were obviously stimulated by the fact that the city had already been built. This being so, no matter whether suggested or objected to by fengshui, the construction of the city was not in reality affected by fengshui ideas. What really strikes us most forcefully, is that the fengshui ideas produced by Zhu and Liu, which were supposed to be supportive of the actual siting of the city, were never used in the official interpretations of the city. Thus, no matter how early and supportive fengshui interpretations were, they remained non-official or retrospective interpretations of the city, and they were quoted only by a small number of scholars and only in their casual writings.

I have also discussed the alleged fengshui features of the city plan, in order to understand to what extent fengshui ideas influenced the city plan at urban planning level, by focusing on three aspects. Firstly, I have examined the city wall and the city gates, and explored the possible factors that led the plan of the city wall to deviate from what was prescribed in “Kaogong Ji.” Secondly, I have dealt with the city structure, including the street grid, the pattern of rivers, and the location of Long-life Hill, by checking both the historical and the cultural background of Chinese architectural practice. In my analysis of the layout of the Forbidden City, and the application of cosmological symbols in it, the difference between the ideas of fengshui and imperial capital symbolism, which both shared the same sets of symbols rooted in fundamental Chinese cosmology, has also been clarified. By analysing the pragmatic and ideological factors shaping the city, such as the specific contemporary historical, topographical and financial circumstances, in particular certain architectural traditions reflected in the city planning, I have found that, although fengshui ideas were possibly regarded as a taken for granted, but not indispensable, part of interpretations of the city plan which was determined by more important practical and ideological ideas, there is no evidence to show that the city form was determined by fengshui ideas. Almost all the alleged fengshui features of the city plan have been fabricated by modern scholars, without historical evidence. The fact that the city was seen from a fengshui viewpoint by the fengshui specialists, does not mean that the city was commonly seen as having a fengshui plan by the imperial scholars or general populace, at least not in the same way as so seen by the modern scholars.

Thus, after investigating the historical and cultural context of the construction of the city, the fengshui interpretations, and the plan of the city, the analysis has led to my
conclusion regarding the first issue, that of fengshui influences on the physical realisation of the siting and planning of the city, namely that fengshui ideas were never a guideline in the actual construction at urban planning level, nor any force in shaping the city, and that this was due to the specific historical circumstances of the city, the cultural background of the ideology of building an imperial capital and, in particular, the collective negative attitudes of the elite towards fengshui, and the social context of the imperial government, which was largely monopolised by classically educated scholars.

This is not to say that fengshui ideas were never raised during the construction, nor that no fengshui expert ever participated in any construction of the principal structures of the city. It is likely that fengshui ideas were used to endorse decisions regarding the siting and planning of the city, but, as shown by my investigation into the geographical, topographical, aesthetic and architectural aspects of the site and the plan of the city, the actual realisation of the city plan was a result that would have been the same if fengshui interpretations and even fengshui itself had never existed. Even though fengshui ideas could be brought up to object to the siting or planning of the city, the eventual failure of any fengshui attempt to be the decisive influence was virtually inevitable in the specific circumstances of the city in the Ming. Leaving aside the urban planning level, however, I tend to assume that fengshui practice may have been more active in the construction of individual buildings, in particular of the non-governmental projects, in the city.

As for the second issue, regarding the significance of the interpretations of the city in fengshui terms, I believe that in most cases the fengshui of the city existed in retrospective interpretation and perception rather than as guiding principles in actual urban construction. Although Zhu’s and Liu’s views on the site were produced before the construction of the city, they were only made use of by later scholars in their retrospective writings. Wright (1977:55) has noted that, for cities, generally fengshui “seems to figure more in the retrospective writings of later scholars than in the actual choice of site.” I believe this observation can be extended to the imperial capital cities in late imperial China. In order to more comprehensively understand the fengshui phenomena concerning this city, I think it is necessary to know the reasons why those scholars who did so interpreted the city in fengshui terms, and whether their fengshui-imbued interpretations demonstrate that they perceived the city from the viewpoint of fengshui. For that minority of scholars who interpreted the city by imitating Zhu’s or Liu’s ideas, there is no doubt that their notion of the location of Beijing was in certain ways influenced by fengshui ideas. There were, however,
complicated historical reasons why fengshui terms and concepts became part of the explanation of the site of Beijing. And the factors causing fengshui ideas to be involved were more complex than any simplistic assumption that these scholars believed in fengshui. To comprehend this complicated issue, it has been necessary to conduct a further investigation into both the historical factors that revitalised the fengshui interpretations, and the intricate connection of fengshui with other disciplines of Chinese thinking.

I propose that there were three historical factors that induced certain later scholars to be interested in fengshui analysis of the siting of Beijing. First of all, Zhu Xi’s unique and highly influential position in Chinese intellectual and ethical history ensured that his ideas on the subject were well known and paid attention to. An imperial scholar was sure to have been well inclined to agree with Zhu’s view, even though such a scholar might be reluctant to accept fengshui in general. Since Zhu Xi’s utilisation of fengshui ideas was always emphasised by fengshui advocates — as a means of preempting possible criticisms — I am surely justified in assuming that if Zhu Xi had not said what he did on the topic, there would not have been so many scholars interested in such fengshui theories. Secondly, some fengshui interpretation of the site of Beijing was combined with the implication of the authenticity of the imperial capital. Although not many of the elite were interested in fengshui itself, the ideas associated with fengshui were sometimes used as an auxiliary language to emphasise the symbolism and the legitimacy of the location of Beijing. Adding a fengshui-imbued idea to their comprehensive assemblage of items concerning the symbolic significance of the city was also congruent with the scholars’ fervent effort to legitimise the imperial capital. Thirdly, the fact that the site praised by Zhu and Liu from a fengshui viewpoint had already been chosen as the capital, subsequently gave the fengshui advocates their best chance for elaborating a set of fengshui theories about the chosen site. The historic facts regarding the siting and moving of capital cities supplied the apparent authority for the post-hoc analyses couched in the theories of diyun. If Beijing had not been built on that site, however, Zhu’s view would have not been copied by later people, and the good fortune of the site would have not been emphasised, and would thus not have been used to demonstrate the symbolic significance of imperial capitals. That is again to say, fengshui did not affect the construction of Beijing, but, on the contrary, the building of the city was what gave rise to the fengshui interpretations of the city.

The effect of the building of the city on the fengshui understanding of the city was also reflected with regard to other aspects of the siting of the city. The geographical
and topographical aspects of the siting of the city were regarded by some scholars as perfectly matching fengshui principles. In order to find out whether the siting of Beijing was congruent with fengshui ideas, and if such congruence implied that fengshui ideas were unconsciously applied in the siting, I have conducted an investigation into both the geographical and the topographical aspects of the city. This has led to another line of my reasoning, of how the complexity and ambiguity found in fengshui interpretations of the city reveal the intricate connection of fengshui ideas with other disciplines of Chinese thought.

I have analysed the fengshui interpretations of the geographical location of the city, such as those regarding the mountain ranges, the theory of qi and the changes of fortune of the imperial capitals through history, all these interpretations being associated with the concept of qi, but involving a diversity of theories on different aspects of qi. I have first analysed the idea that the site of Beijing accessed authentic qi, since it was located in a long mountain range, and this led into a discussion on the development of a macro-scope geographic concept of the whole of imperial China, namely that of the Three Dragons, and its variant and derivative theory — the theory of the Three Dragons in fengshui. Then I have analysed the theory that the site of Beijing was of an ideal topographical pattern for concentrating qi. The theory concerning qi, which was closely associated with the perception of geography and the idea of changing of fortune, and the theory concerning the phenomenon of capital cities moving eastward, have also been examined. My analysis shows that the basis of these fengshui interpretations was not a body of theory exclusively used in fengshui, but a well and widely accepted theoretical framework of geography established through the efforts of both fengshui specialists and non-fengshui scholars. The developments of fengshui and geography were actually closely associated with each other, as the fundamental ideas, such as those of qi, diqi, diyun, the formation of the mountains, and the concept of the Three Dragons, were shared by the fields of fengshui, dili (geography, topography or geomorphology) and yudi (topology or cartography). Concepts associated with fengshui were, as was only natural, bound to be used when carrying out an analysis of a geographical topic, but this was not necessarily seen as using fengshui theory or approving of fengshui. Thus the influences of fengshui on post hoc interpretations of Beijing were integrated with the effects of traditional beliefs in qi, the efforts of scholars working on geography, and the tremendous influence from Zhu Xi, since these interpretations were often regarded as geographical theory, and, most importantly, as stemming from Zhu Xi.
Believing in *fengshui* was not the only reason possible for a scholar to be interested in theories associated with *fengshui* ideas.

The natural siting of the city in its topographical location presented a number of characteristics which were in accord with the aesthetic ideas of traditional siting, but were also congruent with the Xingshi theories of *fengshui*. These features of the siting of the city which enabled interpretations of the city from the viewpoint of *fengshui*, were subjected to three aspects of Chinese thinking regarding the perception of landscape and the concept of an ideal siting: (1) the spatial formation of the topography of the site, which was seen as ideal from both *fengshui* and non- *fengshui* points of view; (2) the involvement of the ideas regarding the Four Spiritual Animals, a typical *fengshui* notion; and (3) the two significant concepts *xing* and *shi* for grasping and conveying aesthetic beauty, which were extensively developed in the Xingshi School of *fengshui*. My analysis has demonstrated that a general approach and relevant terminology for assessing the aesthetic value of a topographical environment, which was improved and widely disseminated partly due to the development of *fengshui*, became an integrated part of the Ming elite’s mental perception of, and attitude towards, landscape. The site of Beijing was universally perceived as superior by the elite in the light of both *fengshui* and common aesthetic sensibility, since there was a common ground for capturing the living landscape, a ground shared by *fengshui* and other arts concerned with landscape, such as Chinese painting, landscaping and architecture. The characteristics presented by the landscape of the site, which matched shared common criteria, left room for *fengshui* interpretations. In retrospective interpretations, the aesthetic significance of the topographic surroundings of the site was probably considered by the designers in the same way as at the time of the siting of the city, but it had not originally been a *fengshui* consideration since the common view had not depended on approval from *fengshui*. The way in which aesthetic value was assessed had not then — at the time of the siting — been, nor later was, exclusive to *fengshui*, but was part of the scholars’ essential understanding of landscape, which understanding underlay *fengshui* theory as well. Thus *fengshui* interpretations, as a variant body, stood in loose association with the main body of the scholars’ attitudes towards this commonly approved site.

The complicated composition of the body of theory regarding the geographical and topographical aspects of the site of Beijing determined the scholars’ seemingly ambiguous attitudes in the discussions over this issue. The use of certain geographical and topographical concepts which were inextricably involved with
terms or ideas shared with fengshui does not imply the full acceptance of fengshui as directive theory for building activity, since the fengshui terms may have been used not as such, but merely as generally speaking appropriate descriptions to employ in geographical and topographical topics. Nevertheless, the inseparable apparent association of such concepts with fengshui hindered the acceptance by most of the elite of analyses associated with them, and they were excluded from the main body of the interpretations of the location of Beijing. While some scholars were interested in such analyses, most of the elite took a very cautious approach by only quoting Zhu Xi’s and Qiu Jun’s words, the most accepted references referring to fengshui, whereas they treated analyses from an explicit fengshui angle as sheer nonsense.

Thus non-fengshui factors caused some ideas shared with fengshui to become a component of the analytic theories on the site of Beijing, but the ill-repute of fengshui limited the influence of those ideas. All the same, these non-fengshui factors did in fact bring it about that the non-fengshui scholar’s understanding of the site of Beijing seemed retrospectively to have been influenced to a certain degree by fengshui.

Therefore, although some people’s — only a minority’s among the classically educated scholars — understanding of the city seemed to have been in later times influenced by fengshui ideas to a certain extent, we should not neglect the complicated reasons that encouraged some of the elite to produce and collect post hoc interpretations, which were mainly associated with Zhu Xi’s influential initiation of fengshui ideas regarding the site, the historical fact of the construction of Beijing, and the intricate connection of fengshui with other disciplines of Chinese thinking. The superior political status of the city and, in particular, the geographical, topographical, and aesthetic characteristics of the city, being congruent with common geographical and aesthetic sensibility, caused such fengshui type analyses to become part of some later scholars’ stated understanding of the city.

A subsequent issue needs to be further discussed: if there were some ideas shared with fengshui in the designers’ understanding of the geographical and topographical aspects of the site, could fengshui be seen as having unconsciously been applied to the design of the city? I think that to claim it was is a far-fetched idea that exaggerates the influence of fengshui. Many kinds of general knowledge referring to geography, and conceptions regarding landscape, were indeed cultivated and disseminated, partly through the development of fengshui. However, first of all, the shared ideas in the understanding of the site were common knowledge, not esoteric ideas used exclusively in fengshui. Even if some of the city’s designers may have
perceived the site from the viewpoint of fengshui, although we may actually never know the truth as to that, the collective understanding of the site was not a fengshui one, since most of the elite were not interested in fengshui at all in this context. Moreover, the siting of the city did not depend at all on fengshui approval of the site. In the light of this, I have shown that fengshui ideas, which influenced only some scholars' understanding of the site, were not applied, consciously, or probably unconsciously or subconsciously, in the choice of the site.

Thus, owing to the specific historic context of the construction of the city, and the complexity and ambiguity inherent in the fengshui-imbued interpretations, it is fair to say that fengshui ideas did not influence the physical construction of the city, but that, quite the opposite, the building of the city encouraged the fengshui interpretations of the city.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Although many intricate issues concerning the various aspects of the fengshui ideas on the city have been indicated throughout this thesis, I have left some of them unsolved, or at a hypothetical level, for reasons of paucity of reliable textual materials and of direct evidence. It would not be unexpected if more archaeological and textual evidence were to further improve research on the present topics, and the present research makes no claim to have reached a definitive conclusion, or full stop, on the influence of fengshui on Beijing. I have, however, sought to present a new approach which may inspire or benefit the next phase of studies on this topic and beyond. In the following paragraphs, I point to a few remaining, and important, problems arising from my examination of the fengshui aspects of the city of Beijing, problems that also have wider implications for modern studies on this topic.

Firstly, I have stressed that to examine the historical and cultural context in which the city was built and understood should be an appropriate approach for studying the city's form and, more especially, for studying the cosmological symbolism involved in the construction and understanding of a capital city in imperial China. The applicability and ideological standing of fengshui in a capital city cannot be generalised from research on other cases of different historical and social context. The fengshui phenomena in building activities regarding graves, houses, and villages in Hong Kong and other southern provinces of modern China, have been extensively studied. On the basis of these achievements of social anthropology, the role of fengshui in the creation of imperial capital cities has often been assumed to have
been as important and prevalent as in other building activities. From such assumptions, a few features of the city form of Beijing have been deciphered by some modern researchers as products of fengshui. Meyer (1978:141) holds that the reason why the designs of "Kaogong Ji" were not followed exactly is "because they conflicted with the requirements of fengshui." “It appears that the urban form of Peking is the result of the mixture of two symbolic systems which are rather independent and sometimes in conflict with each other.” (op. cit. 142) Without extensive investigation into the specific historical and cultural context of the city, which was in a completely different category to that of other construction projects, such assertions are misleading. Although the roles of fengshui in different projects were determined by the different social contexts, the importance of the role of fengshui did not increase as the importance of the subject increased, as has been claimed by Meyer (1978:138): “At the summit of importance the imperial capitals were of paramount significance, and the success of their geomantic dispositions would redound not only to the good fortune of local inhabitants but also to the entire realm.” Although this view has been insistently emphasised in fengshui works, there is no evidence to show that fengshui was appreciated or applied in the construction of capital city any more than, or even as much as much as, in the building of a house or tomb.

The social context of a regional locality’s administrative city was assuredly different from that of an imperial capital city, but the influence of fengshui was not stronger in the imperial capitals, as Xu (1996:311) has implicitly hypothesised: “the walled cities on which the local governments were based did not form the kind of social context which would have promoted, as did those of houses or villages, and, to a lesser degree, market towns and perhaps imperial capitals, the application of fengshui to their building projects.” Many aspects of the social context of the capital city were quite unique. (1) The Qintianjian (Directorate of Astronomy), the duties of which included providing fengshui explanations and advice, was involved in the construction of the capital city. But it was not a department with the power to decide the city’s planning. Only when something went wrong and caused anxiety, mostly in individual buildings, could fengshui advice could be put forward. (2) The importance of the capital city enabled officials to speak of the fengshui of the city not as scrupulously as they might have done in the case of a local city, where broaching a matter associated with fengshui could be seen as an offence, since the geomantic fate of a prefecture or county was believed to derive from the siting of its regional capital city. (Skinner 1977c:262; Xu 1996:312) Fengshui, however, did not become a force
in creating the form of the city. (3) The emperors who might have been expected to be interested in the fengshui of their capital, which was regarded as inextricably linked with the future of their empire, showed no more enthusiasm for fengshui than the scholar officials. Thus, although fengshui ideas widely influenced the site-choosing, site-adjustment and construction of tombs, houses, and, villages, we should not take it for granted that the apparently omnipresent practice of fengshui was equally active in the siting and planning of imperial capitals. The historical and social context of the imperial capital city is indeed the key issue for grasping the role of fengshui in the building and understanding of the city.

My second point regarding the research on fengshui and Chinese cities, is about the misinterpretation of the application of ideas, symbols, and terminology shared by fengshui and other disciplines of Chinese thinking. Fengshui, with its countless and sometimes inconsistent theories, drew elements from, or shared ideas, notions and symbols with, other disciplines of Chinese thinking. The application of fengshui in an city, however, should not be understood only on the basis of the obvious application of the ideas and symbols, which were shared with fengshui coincidentally, to the city. For instance, by some who regard fengshui as a “Chinese philosophy of methodical adaptation of human work to the structure of nature and the universe,” (cf. Peng 1972:124) the application of Chinese cosmological symbols is seen as a proof of fengshui. The application of these symbols to the building of a capital city was an expression of an understanding of the structure of Nature and the universe, and reflected the will to be harmonious with Nature and universe, but it was not a fengshui principle, which focused on avoiding bad influences by specific esoteric means. The local influences which were elaborated in fengshui were not the structures of Nature and the universe recognised by orthodox cosmology. So fengshui is about the adaptation, by its specific methods, of human efforts to the fengshui notion of the structure of Nature and universe. Thus, no matter how many ideas or symbols have been drawn into fengshui, the idea of pursuing harmony with Nature or the universe, and of the cosmological symbols, are not fengshui as I have defined it.

Many other notions regarding the geography and topography, such as, the Three Dragons, the Dragon and Tiger, and the concepts of xing and shi denoting the living landscape, were also shared by both general knowledge and fengshui. Although the establishment of the traditional Chinese framework of geographic and landscape perception has been much assisted by the development of fengshui, the latter’s contributions have, when all is said and done, been part of general knowledge and of the vocabulary widely used in common Chinese bodies of ideas for perceiving
landscape. An application of this universally recognised framework is not necessarily to be seen as having been an influence from *fengshui*. Common knowledge of *fengshui* does not mean common belief in *fengshui*. Shared terminology does not mean shared philosophy. It would be unjustified as well as arbitrary to label these terms as having derived from *fengshui*, or to conclude that an argument using these terms was one from a *fengshui* viewpoint. An appropriate approach for comprehending the position of *fengshui* ideas with regard to the ancient understanding of Chinese cities has to be built on the framework of the Chinese thinking which formed the historic and cultural context wherein these ideas and terms shared with *fengshui* were applied. In order not to exaggerate the influence of *fengshui*, we should be most cautious and objective in our handling of references concerning *fengshui* terminology in historical records, and, above all, avoid the preconception that all these shared ideas were *fengshui*.

My third point regarding modern research on the city and *fengshui* refers to the way the city is analysed. I find the term “*fengshui of the city*” or “*fengshui of Beijing*” to be quite misleading, since there is no existing spatial layout design of the city nor any publicly recognised theory that would fit these terms. In the absence of any historical sources, to impose a *fengshui* analysis on the city because of one individual’s understanding of the city in this way, would mean that there could actually be countless different “*fengshui of Beijing*,” produced from different sources and mixtures of *fengshui* principles, which could not possibly illustrate how the city was understood in imperial times. Such a modern approach is the same as that which the *fengshui* advocates used in traditional times — that of employing their own *fengshui* knowledge to provide a post hoc interpretation of the already existing city. There is no doubt that *fengshui* has been an important urban phenomenon, but we can only understand this phenomenon accurately and comprehensively if we study it in its specific historic, social, cultural and architectural contexts. I hope that my research may serve as a starting point for a review of the misleading tendency to exaggerate the influence of *fengshui* in Chinese cities.

The last prospective line of further study that I should point out here is associated with the main purpose of this present study. As has been indicated in the introduction to my thesis, I believe that the city of Beijing in old times should be regarded as having shared many common elements with other capital cities in imperial China. It is on this premise that this study has aimed, by taking Beijing as a specific case, to address a number of important aspects of *fengshui* as regards the building and concept of a capital city in late imperial China, upon which research an appropriate
historical approach to the further study of traditional Chinese capital cities may be based. These aspects include, for instance: the steadfast enduring of the ideology of taking pragmatic considerations as paramount in the siting and construction of imperial capitals, which overrode fengshui and other ideological or symbolical ideas in the matter of the building of Beijing as a capital; the persistence of the concept of the cosmological ideas perpetuated by the Confucian Classics and the imperial scholars, which largely restricted the application of fengshui ideas in both the construction and the understanding of the cities; the ambiguity in the collective attitude towards fengshui of the scholar-officials, who were a major element in the composition of the social context in which a city was built and understood; and the complexity involved in the formation of the fengshui theories, along with the intricate connection between fengshui ideas and terms and other disciplines of Chinese thinking — a complexity that enabled the seemingly paradoxical understanding of the city through traditional orthodox ideas of what an imperial capital city should be and retrospective interpretations of the city in the light of fengshui. These and other issues call for yet further detailed research.

Since its research has been concentrated on the city of Beijing alone, this study leaves me still unable to determine conclusively which particular aspects of that city’s possibly fengshui-related phenomena may have been shared with other cities, and which aspects may have been unique to its own history.\(^{208}\) A more precise assessment of how typical the possible fengshui phenomena of the city of Beijing may have been in the history of imperial capital building in general, cannot be made until a sufficient number of other representative capital cities have been studied extensively and in a co-ordinated way. If a single capital city is to be reliably regarded as one of the multiple facets of some crystallised entity of ideas formed by all national capital cities in pre-modern China, we have first to obtain an understanding of fengshui.

\(^{208}\) This is not to say that no city was ever consciously constructed, nor its site ever consciously chosen, on fengshui ideas, which were more active in the far south-east region than in others. Mote (1977:141) have found that in the building of the city of Nanjing in the beginning of the Ming, "geomancers were consulted, and then a lake was filled in to make a flat terrace on which to locate the palace city; its location to the east of the old city put the highest mountain in the region, the Purple Mountain (chung shan), auspiciously to the rear of the whole complex." Wright (1977:n71): "Evidence on the southern origins of feng-s-shui and its far greater prevalence in the South than in the North is abundant." Lamley (1977:n125): "References to divination and geomancy appear in accounts of wall construction at all three northern Taiwan cities. Geomantic (feng-shui) considerations proved particularly important when I-lan was laid out.) Xu (1996:313) states that "literary evidence is relatively more likely to be found in the local documents of the areas of present-day Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Fujian and Taiwan provinces." But he doubts the reliability of some of these documents: "Yet could these accounts produced about one and a half millennia after the alleged events be trustworthy in historiographical terms?" (ibid.)
phenomena in that particular capital city, through the study of both the specific characteristics observable in the history of it, and of common elements in it shared with other cities that were culturally Chinese. Such studies will take us nearer to a definitive insight into the minds of those who planned built national capital cities in old China. This present thesis, concerning as it does one of the most prestigious and well-documented capital cities of China, takes a vital, and vitally cautious, first step towards that goal.
### APPENDIX 1  
**A BRIEF CHINESE CHRONOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Xia dynasty</strong></td>
<td>21st c. B.C.</td>
<td>16th c. B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shang dynasty</strong></td>
<td>16th c. B.C.</td>
<td>11th c. B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zhou dynasty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Zhou dynasty</td>
<td>11th c. B.C.-771 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Zhou dynasty</td>
<td>770 B.C.-256 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring and Autumn Period</td>
<td>770 B.C.-476 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warring States</td>
<td>475 B.C.-221 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qin dynasty</strong></td>
<td>221 B.C.-207 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Han dynasty</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Han</td>
<td>206 B.C.-24 A.D.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Three Kingdoms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>220-265</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu Han</td>
<td>221-263</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>222-280</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Dynasties</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>420-479</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Qi</td>
<td>479-502</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liang</td>
<td>502-557</td>
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<td>Chen</td>
<td>557-589</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Dynasties</strong></td>
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<td>Later Liang</td>
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<td>Later Tang</td>
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<td>Later Zhou</td>
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<td>Southern Song dynasty</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liao dynasty</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jin dynasty</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Yuan dynasty</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ming dynasty</strong></td>
<td>1368-1644</td>
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### APPENDIX 2 CONVERSION OF LENGTH MEASUREMENTS

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<th>Dynasty or Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warring States</td>
<td>0.227-0.231m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Han</td>
<td>0.230-0.234m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xin (Wang Mang)</td>
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<td>Eastern Han</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Kingdoms (Wei)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin</td>
<td>0.245m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song (Southern Dynasties)</td>
<td>0.245-0.247m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liang (Southern Dynasties)</td>
<td>0.236-0.251m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.255-0.295m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Wei (Northern Dynasties)</td>
<td>0.300m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Zhou (Northern Dynasties)</td>
<td>0.267m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sui</td>
<td>0.273m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tang</td>
<td>0.280-0.313m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>0.309-0.329m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>0.320m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>0.310m (-0.320m)*</td>
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</table>

1 $li$ 里 = 1800 $chi$. (If $1 li$ = 300 $bu$ 步, 1 $bu$ = 6 $chi$; if $1 li$ = 360 $bu$, 1 $bu$ = 5 $chi$) 1 $zhang$ 尺 = 10 $chi$ = 100 cun 寸 = 1000 fen 分.


Technical Glossary

baihu 白虎  sheji 社稷
bi  避  shi 势
bianfang zhengwei 辨方正位  shi 坑
bu 卜  shui 水
buzhai 卜宅  shushu 数术

de 德  sixiang 四象
dili 地理
diqi 地气
dishi 地势
diyun 地运

fenye 分野  taisui 太岁
genxing 分星
taiwei 太微
denqi 地气	san da gan long 三大干龙
denji 分纪
	
fu 赋  wangqi 王气

ge 革  wangqi 望气
guoxia 過峡

hetu 河图  xian 隘
ji 忌  xiang 相
kanyu 坎舆  xiangzhai 相宅
liqi 理気  xieshuo 邪説
long 龍  xing 形
longmai 龍脉  xingfa 形法
luantou 穴頭  xingshi 形勢
luopan 罗盘  xingye 星野
luoshu 落書  xuanwu 玄武

mingtang 明堂  xue 穴
moshu 术术  yasheng 厌勝
qi 气  yan 燕
qintianjian 欽天監
qinglong 青龙
qigong 氣功
qingyun 氣運
qingwu 青乌

sha 砂  yinyang 陰陽
ziwei 紫微
zhengqi 正氣
zhenshan 鎮山
zhuque 朱雀
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I TRADITIONAL CHINESE TEXTS
Abbreviations used in this section of the bibliography:

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Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyaow 四庫全書總目提要 (Analytical Catalogue of the Books in the Siku Quanshu Imperial Encyclopaedia)


II MODERN CHINESE TEXTS

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<tr>
<td>BJD</td>
<td>Beijing Daxue Lishixi</td>
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<td>TDCGJ</td>
<td>Tongji Daxue Chengshi Guihua Jiaoyanshi</td>
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III ENGLISH TEXTS


