

Here we are folks, well into the year of the Yin Water Snake and as the seasons move ever on through autumn and now into winter, after one of the best summers in living memory; it gives us pause to think of where we intend to go with the remainder of the year. Travel is very likely to be much on the cards for many this year as the Snake is one of four so called Travelling Horses; the Tiger, the Monkey and the Pig being the other Chinese zodiac signs associated with travelling. Me too; having just recently returned from my second trip to New Caledonia for the year. Those with a will to escape the winter blues will no doubt be planning their destinations around about now. For those of you who attended my Annual Talk, you will recognise that these four animal signs are all directly related to one another. The Tiger, Snake and Monkey form a familial connection known as the Fire Penalty, one of just two such serious penalties, within the Chinese system of the Four Pillars of Destiny. (The serious Earth Penalty that forms between the Ox, Goat and Dog being the other.) These three signs are all linked with the element of fire; the Tiger is related to the element of wood and signifies the burgeoning of spring and the very sudden, strong growth of vegetation that accompanies it. It therefore carries hidden within it complex mixes of the ensuing elements of fire, metal and earth connected to the Snake and the month of May. (In Chinese theory of five elements, wood gives birth to fire, fire to earth and earth to metal.)

The fire of the Snake is very strong and holds inherent within it, the element of earth in which the metal of autumn's Monkey is to be found. These three signs therefore, are directly inter-related as in a chain of production, one giving birth to the other. The strong yang nature of the first two signs is reflective of the speedy growth of the seasons they represent. Just as spring brings a sudden rush of new life and growth after winter's long sleep, summer too reflects the height of yang's upward thrust. Autumn by contrast, heralds inexorably and without remission the end of the year's yang forces, to be followed by yin's increasing downward return into the cold depths of winter's dormancy. It is this burgeoning energy, their speedy movement and jointly held great yang energies that lead to their being associated with travel in particular. If the concept of yang is to be associated with any one thing, it is with movement and speed.

The Pig by contrast sits directly opposite the Snake and so is in a clash relationship to it. Clash by definition infers disturbance, movement and change. Thus the Pig too is considered to be a Travelling Horse, especially for those born under the influence of the Snake. It is also considered that if one does not institute changes one's self, then the clash or disturbance will come regardless. It is therefore usually suggested that when in clash, one is always better to make some such alteration, rather than sitting immobile, simply waiting for it to visit. Hence the advice for those in clash each year to travel, to make changes, such as moving house, jobs, schools, country or even to use the clash to undergo surgical procedures and thus be rid of operable medical problems. (The rationale here being that since one is then in the hands of properly trained medical professionals, it is the best opportunity to maximise the effects of the clash period. It is for this reason feng shui masters will often choose a clash day for medical procedures when asked to select suitable dates by clients.) The advice to wear a combining animal pendant is yet a further method of reducing the negative effects of the clash factor. Although it is a very complex system, it is nevertheless one based on a good deal of logic.

Quote:

"The gods sell all things at a fair price", said an old poet. He might have added that they sell the best goods at the cheapest rate. All that is really useful to us can be bought for little money; it is only the superfluous that is put up for sale at a high price. All that is really beautiful is not put up for sale at all but is offered us as a gift by the immortal gods. We are allowed to watch the sun rise and set, the clouds sailing along in the sky, the forests, and the fields, the glorious seas, all without spending a penny. The birds sing to us for nothing, the wild flowers we may pick as we are walking along by the roadside. There is no entrance fee to the starlit hall of the night. The poor man sleeps better than the rich man. Simple food tastes better than the food from the Ritz. Contentment and peace of mind thrive better in a small country cottage than in a stately palace in a town. A few friends, a few books, indeed a very few, and a dog is all you need to have about you; as long as you have yourself. But you should live in the country. The first town was planned by the devil. That is why God wanted to destroy the Tower of Babel.

Axel Munthe in 'The Story of San Michele.'

Limits to Determining Face using GoogleEarth.

From time to time all feng shui consultants will come across a building for which it is just very hard to determine the facing. Indeed establishing the facing of buildings is sometimes a hotly debated topic and I have on the odd occasion, seen even quite senior Chinese masters get very heated with one another as to who is right or wrong in determining the correct facing of a particular building. This can, therefore, be a confusing issue for clients. I recently went to look at a house for a friend considering purchasing it. I had given them a checklist of things they might use to help distinguish the facing side of the building and indeed from everything they described to me in our initial discussions, including assessing the floor plan, it appeared they had correctly identified the facing. However, to try and double check before going all the way out to see the property, I decided to do a preliminary examination using GoogleEarth. This on-line package is frequently a major plus for feng shui consultants who know how to use its multi-faceted options correctly, but it does have some serious limits.

Although it can be used very effectively to assess land form where there is reasonable contrast in the terrain, it is all but useless for this when the terrain is shallow and has little contrast. In this particular case, it was of little help for another reason altogether. The property in question was almost totally overshadowed by trees on two sides, thus making it difficult to actually see the roof line properly. Once onsite however, it became apparent the roof line was the overriding factor in determining the correct facing of the building and not the side on which the main used entrance lay. This was simply not possible to see from GoogleEarth. One might even have thought it may have been possible to work this out from photos of the house taken onsite, but even then other factors were to play a significant role in my advising my friend against the property. It was however, yet another good example of the difficulty that can be involved in finding the facing of a building. I'm happy to report my friends have since found a lovely house to buy and in an even better locale, and are currently in the process of making some small renovations to the new house as this goes to print. I wish them and their extended family every happiness in their new home!

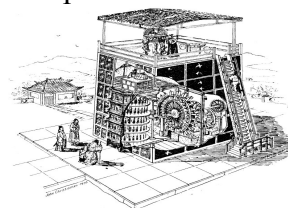
The Art of Science:

A Natural History of Ideas by Richard Hamblyn

The following excerpt is taken from this excellent book in which the eleventh century writings of the Chinese court official Shen Kua (c. 1031-95) are quoted; as the back cover says: 'Science is a

discovery, a journey towards knowledge'. Cool stuff!

“Before Han times (Han Dynasty 206BCE – 220CE), it was believed that the Pole Star was in the centre of the sky, so it was called Chi hsing (Summit Star). Tsu Keng-Chih found out with the help of the sighting tube that the point in the sky which really does not move was a little more than 1° away from the summit-star. In the Hsi-Ning Reign period (1068-1077), I accepted the order of the emperor to take charge of the Bureau of the Calendar. I then tried to find the true pole by means of the tube. On the very first night I noticed that the star which could be seen through the tube moved after a while outside the field of view. I realised therefore, that the tube was too small, so I increased the size of the tube by stages. After three months' trials I adjusted it so that the star would go round and round within the field of view without disappearing. In this way I found that the pole-star was distant from the true pole somewhat more than 3°. We used to make diagrams of the field, plotting the positions of the star from the time when it entered the field of view, observing after nightfall, at midnight, and early in the morning before dawn. Two hundred such diagrams showed that the pole-star was really a circumpolar star. And this I stated in my report to the emperor.”



Imperial Chinese Observatory

Here is what Chamber's Biographical Dictionary has to say about Shen Kua: Chinese administrator, engineer and scientist born in Hangzhou. He made significant contributions to such diverse fields as astronomy, cartography, medicine, hydraulics and fortification. As director of the astronomical bureau from 1072 he improved methods of computation and the design of several observational devices; in 1075 he constructed a series of several relief maps of China's northern frontier area, and designed fortifications as defences against nomadic invaders. He surveyed and improved the Grand Canal over a distance of some 150 miles using stone-filled gabions, wooden piles and long bundles of reeds to strengthen the banks and close gaps. In 1082 he was forced to resign by intrigue from his government posts, and occupied his last years in the writing of *Brush Talks from Dream Brook*, a remarkable compilation of about 600 observations which has become one of the most important sources of information on early science and technology. Cool stuff indeed!

Produced and Distributed by:

Feng Shui Consultants New Zealand
09- 6257-888

fsc@fengshui88.co.nz

www.fengshui88.co.nz

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