

## Article

# Location and Fortune: An Exploration of the Buddhism and Daoism Roles of Geomancy in the Song Dynasty

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**Abstract:** The Song dynasty (960–1279) was the peak of *fengshui* development in China. During this period, *fengshui* books proliferated, and geomantic techniques spread rapidly. Thus, the population was generally inclined to consider the influence of architecture on the fate of individuals or families from a *fengshui* perspective. In addition to writing books on *fengshui*, many Buddhist monks and Daoist masters also practiced the location selection and spatial planning of Buddhist and Daoist temples, houses, and tombs. This paper first collates the *fengshui* books written by Buddhist monks and Daoists during the Song dynasty and then analyzes their spatial planning concepts according to the geomancy theory. Secondly, taking into account specific cases of Buddhist and Daoist temples, garden buildings, and residential tombs, it elaborates on the reasons and purposes behind the Buddhist monks' and Daoists' use of the geomancy theory. Lastly, the changes in the function of site selection in the urban landscape reflect the interaction between Buddhism, Daoism, and *fengshui* during the Song dynasty. An awareness of the historical origins of religious tradition is helpful in our understanding of *fengshui* architectural heritage in general.

**Keywords:** *fengshui*; geomancy; Buddhism; Daoism; site selection



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## 1. Introduction

The Song dynasty (960–1279) was a time of great cultural prosperity in Chinese history, with significant developments in culture, technology, and social customs, while the overall cultural trend was secular and commonplace. With the rapid development of engraving and printing, the proliferation of books on a wide variety of topics played a large role in the spread of culture to the lower classes. The geomancy named *fengshui* (literally, wind and water), traced by its practitioners to hoary antiquity, was surprisingly widespread in traditional Chinese society.

The bibliographic chapter (藝文志) of the Song dynastic history (宋史) recorded hundreds of *fengshui* texts, far more than the total number in previous generations. Nearly three hundred geomancy texts were recorded, including a catalog of books and journals, with more than fifty surviving texts (Yu 2022). The authors of such writings were varied and included officials, Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, Daoists, and folk augurs, all of whom contributed to the spread of geomancy among the common people (Liao 2009, vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 1–58; Liu 2010; Pan 2018). A group of Buddhist monks and Daoists, in particular, were involved in the site selection of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples, houses, and tombs. This community was under the influence of *fengshui* in their use of geographical and spatial concepts. The absorption of geomancy by Buddhism and Daoism in the Song period and its influence on the architectural philosophy and spatial planning of that time is a worthy topic for exploration.

Although there have been a variety of discussions of *fengshui* in the Song dynasty according to regional divisions, the official method of geomancy was the “Five Sound

Surname Law” (五音姓利法), which had been popular since the Tang and Song dynasties. However, later on, this method gave rise to the main two schools, the “Forms and Circumstance” or “Forms and Configurations” school (形勢派) in Jiangxi province and the “Compass” or “Principles and Energy” school (理氣派, also translated as “Directions and Positions” school in some books) in Fujian province. The two schools were more popular in the southern region than in the north for the complexity of the terrain, so the five surnames method was mainly popular in the central area and east coast region (current He’nan and Jiangsu provinces). Although both originated from the doctrine of “Qi” (氣, the flow of the energetic pneuma), “Yiti Shouyin” (遺體受蔭, the proper burial sites for deceased parents and other ancestors, had an impact on the fate of future generations) in Guo Pu’s 郭璞 (276–324) *Zang Shu* (*Burial Book*) (葬書) means that if the remains of the deceased received “Qi,” it would benefit their descendants, and that the wealth and fortune of their descendants were related to the location of the grave. The former school is based on Yang Yunsong 楊筠松 of the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and was influenced by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the great master of Confucianism in the Song dynasty. It mainly focused on the topography of the area around the burial site, especially the terrain of the mountains and streams, to ensure the flow and preservation of the “Qi” in the general environment. The latter school, known as the Fujian School, applied cosmological ideas such as yin–yang and the five elements (五行) to the site selection of burials. The core concepts of *fengshui* have focused on the collation of key historical materials, such as dragons (mountain terrain), sands (flat land), waters (river course), and caves (low-lying hollow places) (Feuchtwang 1974; Bennett 1978; Roszbach 1983; Song 2003; Yu 2017; Pan 2018), but fewer have elaborated in depth on the religious connections therein.

From the 1990s onwards, researchers discussed the choices of ancient geomancy from the perspective of geographical landscapes and environmental factors (He 1990; Wang 1992; Liu 1995; Yu 1998; Madeddu and Zhang 2021). Since the 1950s, the academic community has paid attention to ancient *fengshui* techniques, using specific operating principles to solve archaeological problems, such as site selection and burial order of the Tang and Song dynasties based on the “Five Sound Surname Law” (Su 1957; Xu 1963). From the 1970s onwards, some researchers focused on the symbolic meaning of *fengshui* from the perspective of anthropology. Especially in Japan, a series of works delved into the cultural phenomenon, clans, folklore, anthropology, and natural environment of *fengshui* in East Asia (Watanabe 1990, 1994, 2001; Miura 1995, 2005; Segawa 1996). Moreover, Makio (1994) and Yoon (1989) summarized the issue of the origin and state orthodoxy of the ancient *fengshui* concept. In the 21st century, researchers have focused mainly on the study of specific ancient *fengshui* books (Miyazaki 2003; Shen 2010, vol. 8, pp. 313–36; Liu 2014; Pan 2017; Smith 2021) and others that concentrate on the time of writing and the circulation of editions of the officially compiled *fengshui* book *Dili Xinshu* (地理新書) during the Northern Song dynasty, and *Yingyuan Zonglu* (瑩原總錄, the General Record of the Tombs), which was written during the Song and Yuan dynasties (Liu 2014, vol. 1, pp. 259–72; Yu 2017; Wen 2017). Furthermore, studies have mainly focused on the overall *fengshui* literature or *fengshui* techniques of the Song dynasty (Song 2003; Yu 2017; Pan 2018).

Although these studies have revisited *fengshui* from different perspectives, the following problems exist. Firstly, monographs on religious sites in the Song dynasty have been relatively scarce. Although some detailed evidence of the siting and layout of religious buildings exists, most of the Daoist temples were Ming and Qing buildings (He 1990, pp. 130–43). Most of the Song-dynasty-related content is found in books on the subject of architectural histories, such as Guo’s review of the historical development of religious and residential buildings, which describes the layout and siting of the buildings but does not point out the relationship between their locations and *fengshui* (Guo 2009, vol. 3, pp. 255–64). Sun (2010) took the temples in Hangzhou in the Song period as examples, specifying the location and architectural philosophy without considering the geographical factors. In recent years, Zhang used the Japanese collection of *Painting of Five Mountains and Ten Temples* (五山十刹圖) to elaborate on the geographical distribution pattern of

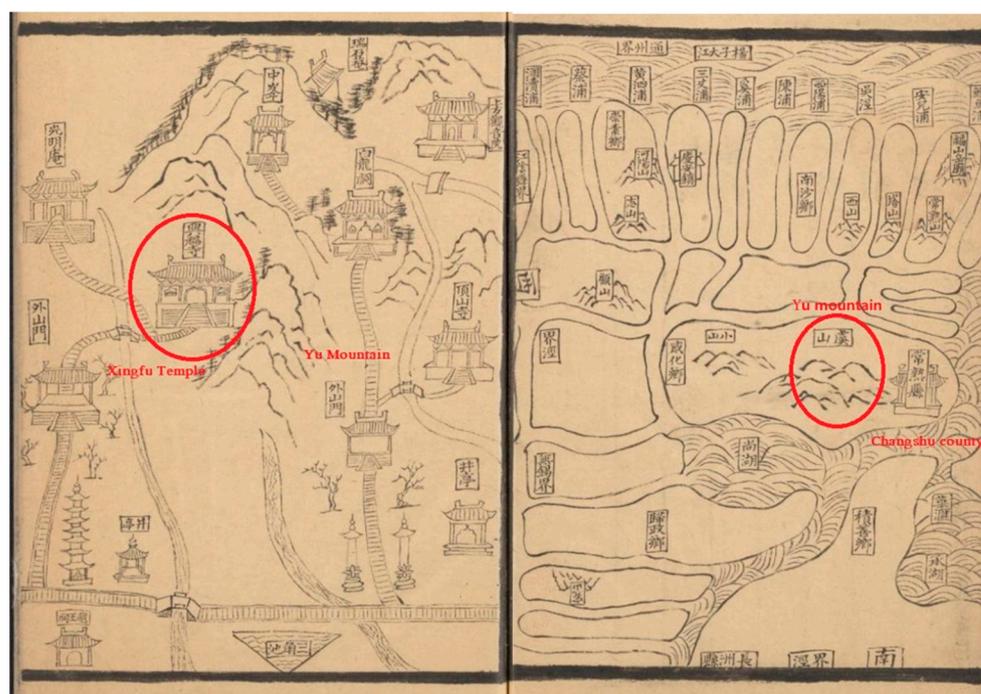
Buddhist temples in the southern region of the Southern Song, but also did not relate it to *fengshui* (Zhang 2000). Secondly, there are few descriptions of geomancy- and *fengshui*-related religious figures. Gao listed the famous people who practiced *fengshui* during the Song and Yuan dynasties, yet only two of them were Buddhist monks, namely Monk Da 達僧 and Monk Duo 鐸長老 (Gao 2004, pp. 259–61). Liu used historical materials from Song literary collections, notebooks, and novels to collate the sources of the Song dynasty *fengshui* masters (Liu 2010, pp. 21–22). Using Song literary collections as materials, Pan collated the geographical distribution of geomancers in the Song dynasty, collecting more than Gao Youqian, but only seven of them were Buddhist monks and Daoists, mostly in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. The descriptions of geomancers among the Buddhist monks and Daoists mostly focused on their business without describing their *fengshui* concepts in detail (Pan 2018, pp. 296–99). This is also the case with other related works on the Song dynasty *fengshui* (Chikusa 2000). Thirdly, the examination of *fengshui* doctrines in the previous literature was mostly limited to the Forms and Configurations school doctrines of the southeast and lacks an understanding of other *fengshui* doctrines of the time. Wang (1993) examined *fengshui* activities and writings during the Song and Yuan dynasties, only focused on the views of the Forms and Configurations School and the Principles and Energy School but did not delve into the *fengshui* doctrines that were popular in other regions. The above-mentioned work by He (1990) also provided an introduction to the figures and writings of the Forms and Configurations School of the Song dynasty, as well as a study of how to improve non-ideal bases (e.g., by diverting water, opening ditches, opening lakes, planting trees, etc.). However, the examples cited are mostly of lineage halls and villages in the Southeast China (He 1990, pp. 35–129). Fourthly, there is a lack of literature on *fengshui* and architectural space in other regions during the Song dynasty, for example, the relationship between the spatial layout of the urban and *fengshui* landscape in the Song dynasty (Mao and Zhang 2016, No. 31, pp. 90–101). This paper explores the influence of *fengshui* on Buddhism and the theory of site selection in Buddhism and Daoism with Song-dynasty geomancy literature and historical sources related to the practice.

## 2. The Influence of *Fengshui* on the Location of Buddhist and Daoist Temples

Since its introduction in China, Buddhism has been influenced by mysticism and has absorbed many *fengshui* doctrines in the process of localization. For example, in the Buddhist literature of the Tang dynasty (618–907), there are two books related to the art of geomancy, namely *The Method of Establishing a Mandala and Site Selection* (建立曼荼羅及揀擇地法) by Monk Huilin 釋慧琳 and *Brahma Site Selection* (梵天擇地法) by Monk Bukong 不空. In addition, there were Buddhist monks, such as Yixing 一行 and Hongshi 泓師, who were skilled in the art of geomancy and produced many geomancy stories, legends, and writings during that period (Yixing wrote *Wuyin Dili*, and the book *Taiping Guangji* recorded Hongshi's legends). In the Song dynasty, Monk Jingdao 釋靜道 wrote a *fengshui* book named *The Complete Book of the Eye of the Earth* (入地眼全書), *Inquiries and Answers of the Monk Da* (達僧問答), *Monk Sima's Diqian* (司馬頭陀地鉗), and Huang Miaoying 黃妙應's *Boshan Pian* (博山篇) (Yu 2017). These writings clearly show that Chinese Buddhism was integrated with the idea of *fengshui*.

As the size of the monastic community expanded, the traditional *fengshui* theory of site selection was reflected in the construction of Buddhist temples, which is well documented. It was mainly the monks who referred to the *fengshui* theory when building their temples and rebuilding the original site. For example, as a gazetteer recorded during the Song dynasty, the Xingfu Temple 興福寺 in Changshu 常熟 county (the former name was Qinchuan 琴川, built in 1130, was located northeast of the county, as demonstrated in Figure 1. It was originally a low and humid marshy place (沮洳地), but later a monk, Wenyong 文用, who specialized in *fengshui*, suggested that the place was high on the guest hill but low on the main site, and the terrain surrounding should be changed by erecting a pagoda in chapter 10 of *Chongxiu Qinchuanzhi*. The Xingfu Temple in Yu Mountain (Figure 1) shows that such practices were undertaken. Examples such as this were common in the Song dynasty, and

there was more evidence for them in the poetry and collected works of the literati. The famous Northern Song scholar Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044–1130) recorded the selection of the site for the Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺 during the Chongning period (1102–1106). He believed that the temple should be located in a place where mountains and rivers converge and that the site for the temple was chosen through *fengshui* divination at the foot of the mountain known as “Cloud Gate” 雲門, on the southern outskirts of the city. Huang Shang visited Wanshou Temple and felt the lush atmosphere. When looking south at the double cliffs, the mountains split between the two sides of the overhanging hundred meters, much like a fairy stretching out two hands forward to hug (Huang 2006, vol. 103, pp. 2–38). Based on Huang’s description of the environment, it is clear that the choice of the temple was associated with a place with a beautiful landscape.



**Figure 1.** Sun Yingshi (Sun 1195–1201): *Chongxiu Qinchuanzhi*, chapter 15. Harvard University Collection.

During the Southern Song Dynasty, Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210) wrote a record of the construction of the Spiritual Secret Cloister 靈秘院. He stated that when one looked straight out the door, the road was straight and the plain was flat. A distant mountain was in front, with a lonely cliff and beautiful scenery filled with smoke and clouds. He wrote, “The geomancers believed that the Buddha dharma would not decline in a hundred generations and that the monks would be famous. This is the first time that the temple had been passed down, but it is so prosperous that how can it be imagined in the future?” (Lu 2015, vol. 21, p. 314). It is evident that although the Spiritual Secret Cloister is a sacred Buddhist site, in terms of the technique of site selection, its focus was on the external beauty of the scenery, and the people of the time were able to sense this.

On the other hand, Daoism, a native Chinese religion, has long incorporated numerology in its development, not least through the absorption and application of *fengshui* techniques. Geomancy is a theory derived from traditional numerology of astronomical and geographical observation so as to benefit the selection and planning of human living space. As such, some of the concepts and terminology of numerology were also used in geomancy techniques, and a number of *fengshui* masterworks were collected in the Daoist series. Historically *fengshui* texts were generally classified under the framework of the numerology category.

The early Daoist classic *Taiping Jing* (太平經) contained two chapters reflecting the geomancy of the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD): chapter 45 *The Book of the Unearth* (起土出書訣), and chapter 50 *The Book of the Burial House* (葬宅訣). In *Zhengtong Daozang* (正統道藏) and *Wanli Xudaozang* (萬曆續道藏), the collection of classics included two *fengshui* texts, namely the *Huangdi Zhaijing* (黃帝宅經) and the *Rumen Chongli Zhezhong Kanyu Wanxiao Lu* (儒門崇理折衷堪輿完孝錄). This shows that there is a close connection historically between Daoism and *fengshui*, although there are relatively few records of Daoist masters who were skilled in geomancy techniques or involved in writing geomancy books during the Song dynasty. However, the Daoist belief in ‘Taiyi’ (太乙) was deeply rooted in the Northern Song dynasty and was revered by the emperor, which led to the construction of Daoist palaces and the development of related ceremonies. During the Northern Song dynasty, three Taiyi palaces were built on the outskirts of the capital, in the east, west, and center, to worship the god Taiyi. For example, in 983, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities (Wufu Taiyi 五福太一) entered the southeastern Xun (巽) palace (see Figures 2 and 3), Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) ordered the construction of the East Taiyi Palace. In 1028, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities entered the southwestern Kun (坤) position (see Figures 2 and 3), Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022–1063) ordered the construction of the West Taiyi Palace. In 1071, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities were located in the Central Palace, Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) ordered the construction of the Central Taiyi Palace in the capital.

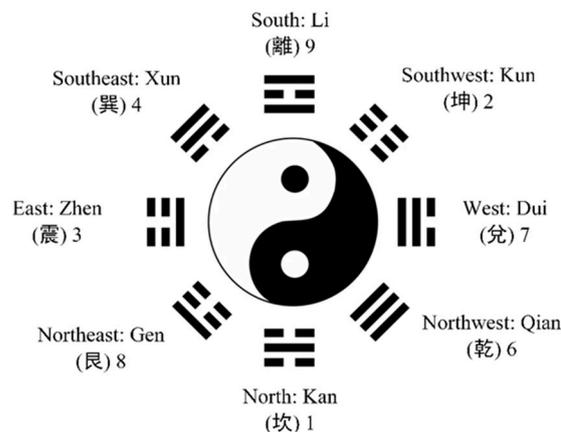


Figure 2. Eight directions of the eight trigrams (後天八卦).

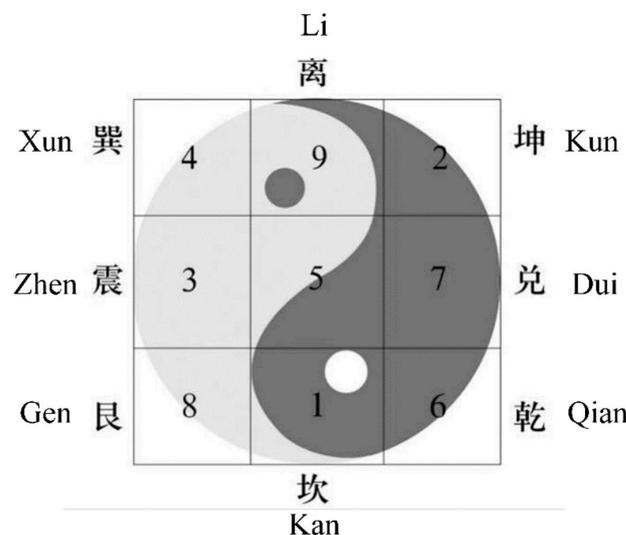


Figure 3. The classical nine palaces of the Luo Shu (洛書九宮) refer to the eight trigrams.

The imperial attitude towards Daoism can be seen in the memorial words written by Su Song 蘇頌 (1020–1101), an astronomer of the Northern Song dynasty, about Zhezong's 哲宗 (r. 997–1022) rituals to Shenzong. He wrote: “in 1090, the rituals were organized by officials of the Western Taiyi Palace, and three or seven Daoist masters were invited to open the Daoist temple at Taiyi Palace on the anniversary of the death of emperor Shenzong” (Su 1988, vol. 27, p. 373). Since the presiding officer of the Taiyi Palace ceremony was a Daoist master, the construction of the palace would necessarily follow the Daoist concept of geography. However, due to a lack of historical information, the exact method of the construction of Taiyi Palace is unknown. In the Southern Song dynasty, Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126) decreed that the Daoist master Liu Hunkang 劉混康 of Maoshan (Mao Mountain) was responsible for the construction of the Daoist temple in 1103 (Li 2013, p. 736). This fact is also revealed in the Maoshan Zhi (茅山志), where an edict from Emperor Huizong to the Daoist master Liu, mentioned that “the construction of this temple has descended to command, the start working date should be decided very soon” (Liu 1989, vol. 7, p. 278). Three years later, the palace was given the name “Yuanfu Wanning Temple” 元符萬寧宮. Its construction was mainly the responsibility of the Daoist master Liu, who would also largely adopt *fengshui* techniques.

Daoist masters not only participated in the architecture of the imperially sponsored temples but also wrote books documenting the secret techniques of each school. It is recorded that the classic geomancy book *Yusui Zhenjing* (玉髓真經 *The Classic of the Jade Marrow*) was compiled by Zhang Dongxuan, a Daoist master of the Song dynasty, who became the state preceptor (Zhang 1996, vol. 1053). In addition, the geomancy classics, such as *Jiazhu Meihuayuan Zuan* (夾竹梅花院纂), *Daofa Shuangtan* (道法雙譚), *Wugong Jiaozishu* (吳公教子書), and *Xiantian Houtian Liqi Xinyin Buzhu* (先天後天理氣心印補注), were all written by a geomancer called Wu Jingluan 吳景鸞. He assisted celebrities, such as Zhang Tao 張燾 (1092–1166) and Zhu Xi, in the burying of their ancestors. It can be inferred that Wu Jingluan lived in the Renzong period. He was an expert in *fengshui* and had been selected as the state preceptor. Wu Jingluan's father, Wu Kecheng 吳克誠, studied with Chen Tuan 陳搏 (871–989), who learned from Zeng Wenchuan 曾文迪, who was guided by Yang Yunsong 楊筠松 (834–900) (Wu n.d.). Therefore, Wu Jingluan's knowledge system was inherited from Chen Tuan, who was the representative figure of Daoism in the Inner Alchemy (*neidan* 內丹). There was also a historical record that Guo Xian 郭顯, known as Qixiazi 棲霞子, was a Daoist. He wrote an inscription as a cliff carving on Nanxi (South Stream) Mountain 南溪山 in 1149, which reads: “The circumstance is beauty that there are gods and immortals among them. Guo Xian, who was knowledgeable and professional, divined the rock and dug a well to cultivate the fields. He was an alchemist and wandered through the forest and springs” (Guo 2006, no. 4574, vol. 206, p. 211). The site chosen by Guo was based on *fengshui* divination, and its landscape was off the beaten track. Although there were fewer records of individual Daoist masters involved in the practice of *fengshui*, there were not many examples of the construction of Daoist temples based on *fengshui* divination. One example, however, is when Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) sent his official Wang Guicong 王龜從 to build the Taiping Temple at the foot of Zhongnan Mount 終南山. Wang had just divined the location in Zhongnan town when a Daoist came down to tell him that this was the place at which to build God's palace (Li 1955, vol. 7, p. 116). At the end of the Southern Song dynasty (1253), when the Qingyuan Chongying Abbey 清源崇應觀 was built, the advice of the Sichuan Daoist masters was followed, and the land was divined according to the topography of the rivers around Wu Mount 吳山 (Qian 1986, vol. 75, p. 767).

In summary, *fengshui* books in the Song dynasty were partly written by Buddhist monks and Daoists, and religious buildings were erected based on their sittings, according to a suitable external environment. It was a popular trend at the time for both Buddhist monks and Daoists to refer to *fengshui* criteria when selecting a site for construction, which led to an aesthetic conception of the location of religious buildings. Also, the development of cartography in China led to the integration of landscape painting and geomancy. As the

Song dynasty painting treatise says, “Those who paint monasteries, temples, and Daoist temples should be located in places that embrace secluded valleys, deep rocks, and cliffs” (Han 1986, vol. 813, p. 322). This shows that the influence of *fengshui* in the construction of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples reflected aesthetic tendencies. Indeed, the importance the Song people attributed to the natural environment around the building was the focus of the Forms and Configurations school.

### 3. Choosing Sites for Residences and Burials

Numerology, which was closely related to geomancy in traditional Chinese society, was popular because it helped people understand their destinies. The spread of printing in the Song dynasty contributed to the rapid spread of numerology. According to the famous bibliographer Chao Gongwu, “the most prevalent among the common people were the Zangshu (葬書 funeral books), Xiangshu (相術 the philological techniques), Wuxing (五星 the five stars), Luming (祿命 the fortunes), Liuren (六壬 divination), Dunjia (遁甲 predictology), and Xinqin (星禽 astrology)” (Chao 1990, vol. 14, p. 610). The large collection of books on numerology and geomancy written during this period also reflects increased social demand. Thus, more and more Buddhist monks and Daoists joined in spreading the *fengshui* techniques.

Geomancy can affect the descendants due to changes in their surrounding environment. The example of Chen Gongfu 陳公輔 (1081–1150) can help explain this phenomenon. A temple named Puji 普濟寺 was located in front of his house. A monk told Chen Gongfu’s father that within just one year when the temple would become a pond, the family’s heir would win first prize in the imperial civil examinations. As it turned out, the temple became a pond after it was relocated due to the low-lying terrain, and Chen Gongfu was ranked first in 1113, fulfilling the monk’s words: “Once this temple becomes a pond, the Gongyuan (貢元: ranked first in the prefectural examination) will sit at the top” (Hong 1981, Jiazhi, vol. 5, Chen Guozuo). This change reflects the auspicious correspondence between the house and the flow of water, according to the Song dynasty’s officially edited geomancy book *Dili Xinshu* (地理新書 *Geography New Book*), which states: “The ideal residence should have flowing water on the left (Azure Dragon), a long road on the right (White Tiger), a pond in front (Vermilion Bird), and a hill behind (Black Tortoise). This surrounding locates the most prestigious place the best place” (Wang 1996, No. 1054, vol. 2, p. 20). The pond in front of Chen’s house exactly matched the “most prestigious place” (最貴地) of the four symbols (四象, four emblems, representing the four Auspicious Beasts). Although the layout of this house was not made deliberately, it reflects the influence of the changing surrounding environment. This idea appears in the Dunhuang scrolls of the Tang period (such as P.2615a + P.2632v *Zhu Zatui Wuxing Yinyang Dengzhai Tujing* 諸雜推五姓陰陽等宅圖經, S. 5645f *Monk Sima Dimai Jue* 司馬頭陀地脈訣), which show the absorption and application of geomancy by Buddhist monks and Daoists. A similar example involves Yang Cunzhong (1102–1166), who built a mansion near Hongfu Bridge in Lin’an 臨安 city (Today’s Hangzhou 杭州, the capital city of the southern Song dynasty). When a monk advised that the mansion needed to be supplemented by water, Yang requested permission from Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162) to draw water from the West Lake into the mansion (Zhou 1983, vol. 4, pp. 68–9).

According to the monk’s theory, Yang Cunzhong’s 楊存中 (1102–1166) house resembled a tortoise. He was lucky if he had water and misfortune if he lived in a water-deficient area. This statement is related to the ‘Shape Method’ (喝形法), a kind of Forms and Configurations school technique. That is, the various landforms were used to judge fortune through metaphorical images that likened the physical features and relationships of the landscapes to animals (especially the mythical dragon), parts of the human body, celestial bodies, etc. As the tortoise is an aquatic animal, it must have water to survive, so the monk suggested that Yang should surround the house with lake water to make up for the shortage. Because Yang took the monk’s advice, his house remained fire-free for over a hundred years. On closer examination, Yang’s mansion was of a large scale, and as most

ancient buildings were made of wood, they were prone to fire, so perhaps drawing water into the house was also a reason to avoid fires.

The tradition of Buddhist monks and Daoists selecting burial sites in the Tang and Song dynasties, in addition to simply choosing a place to live, has been abundantly documented, such as in the literature listed in Section 2, all of which focused on the selection of burial sites. As for the participation of anonymous and even occasional monks in the choice of burial sites, there are numerous examples. For example, in the Northern Song dynasty, Su Xiangxian 蘇象先 mentioned that when his grandfather Su Song was planning the burial of his great-grandfather, he happened to meet the monk Zizhen 自真, an expert in *fengshui* who used his knowledge to obtain auspicious divination at the ideal site of Jingxian Mountain 京峴山, and the practitioners all said that the site was good (Su 1988, vol. 3, p. 1134). Apart from such auspicious sites, there were also negative effects if one did not accept the monk's advice of where to bury one's ancestors. For example, Fan Zeshan 范擇善 (1097–1148), after he obtained a good rank in the imperial civil examination, was given a teaching post in Jiangnan West Circuit 江南西路 (current Jiangxi province). His father died suddenly and was temporarily placed in a nearby temple. The head abbot, who was very attuned to *fengshui*, observed that there was a cave in the middle of the hill behind the temple that was suitable for burial, not only to save him trouble but also because it was an excellent location for *fengshui*. Fan followed this advice at first, but when he became a successful official, he planned to transfer his father's grave to his ancestral tomb instead. Thus, in his insistence on moving the grave, he ultimately did not heed the monk's advice. As a result, Fan Zeshan was immediately sanctioned by Prime Minister Qin Hui 秦檜 (1091–1155) in the official circles and was denounced for "disturbing the state and country in the name of moving the burial." Eventually, he died of depression (Wang 2019, vol. 11, p. 220).

The main reason for the above case is that at the time, geomancy was used as a tool for commons to "avoid bad luck" and to implement it into various construction activities. People were more inclined to discuss the impact of architectural changes on the fate of individuals or families from the perspective of *fengshui*, and directly attributed the vagaries of life to the five elements (五行) of *fengshui* in the yin–yang theory (陰陽). Once the geomancy was fulfilled, it deepened the people's faith in it. Some anecdotal accounts in that time revealed this fact. In the year 1140, the scholar Zhang Yaosou 張堯叟, who was passing through Mount Lu 廬山 the year before the execution of the famous general Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103–1142), witnessed the funeral of Yue's mother, at which there was a huge crowd of onlookers and a grand ceremony. One of the bystander monks told Zhang Yaosou that although Yue Fei's mother was buried in a good place, it was in the same direction as the ancestral tomb of General Wang Shao 王韶 (1030–1081), and was subject to similar fortune and misfortune, as the mountains surrounding the tomb were the same, with the azure dragon on the left and the white tiger on the right. Thus, the descendants must suffer from misfortune before they can prosper. As foretold, Wang Shao's son (Wang Fudao, 王輔道) died in an accident, but Wang Shao's grandchildren Wang Yanbi (王炎弼) and Wang Yanrong (王彥融), were both favored by the imperial court. In a similar vein, Yue Fei's sons were persecuted to death, a fate that was reversed 30 years later, when their descendants soared to great heights.

The involvement of Daoists in the choice of residence and burial was less often mentioned in historical sources, but some examples exist, such as the 'Tomb of Vice Minister Rong 榮侍郎墳' (Hong 1981, vol. Zhijing, 4). During the Southern Song period, a Daoist master passing by the grave of the official Rong said that the location was originally excellent but that in recent years the prosperity had moved to another location, and thus his family's downfall would occur in the next two or three years. If he immediately selected another better location and moved the grave, he could still save half of his family, but if he ignored the situation, the family would suffer from trouble for a long time. Unfortunately, the Rong family did not heed the Daoist master's advice, and its descendants died one after another. In addition to these examples of misfortune, there are more 'auspicious' ones.

For example, it is recorded that the Vice Minister Gong 龔侍郎 once consulted a Daoist master because his ancestors had not been well buried. After the Daoist master divined the place, he recited a poem on the foot of Wujun Mountain 烏軍山 to the effect that the tomb should be taken care of by Master Tu and Master Fan, so that the offspring could rise in the officialdom. Later, when Gong returned home, he found that his ancestors had been buried at the bottom of Wujun Mountain and that they had been moved by the two Daoist masters, Tu and Fan, proving that “there is a time to be born and a place to die” (Wu 2019, vol. 18, p. 239).

In summary, it was a common phenomenon in the Song dynasty for religious figures, whether Buddhist monks or Daoists, princes, nobles or commoners, to intervene in the selection of burial sites through *fengshui* techniques. Many records written by literary scholars about the fortunes of descendants were affected by *fengshui*, and the mystical spirituality of these events also determined people’s attitudes toward *fengshui*. The specific method to determine the luck of *fengshui* was by observing the natural environment around the house and tomb. Their accounts of the fulfillment of geomancy in Song society would also lead to a growing belief in the theory. Behind this also was the Confucian concept of filial piety and the worship of ancestors. The *Book of Rites* (禮記·祭義) states: “When flesh meat and bones vanished underneath and became wild earth, its Qi was raised up as bright light” (Zheng 2008, p. 1834). Basically, this means that when a person passes away, their body returns to the ground, while their spirit returns to heaven. The “Qi” is the flow of the energetic pneuma that connects the living world and the spiritual realm above the heaven; that is, “Humans are born with living Qi, and their death made the living Qi Reincarnate” (Wang 1990, p. 873). Folk beliefs center on the existence of ancestral spirits and their ability to influence future generations in different ways, which is why the commoners sought to gain refuge and blessings through geomancy.

#### 4. Urban Spatial Planning and Praying

In ancient China, there existed a similar belief system regarding the site selection for both the dead and the living, so *fengshui* had a practical function in urban planning. For the good purposes of the fate of the nation or literacy luck, Buddhist monks and Daoists were involved, and the logical elements in the choice of orientation were an important part of the doctrine of *fengshui*. When the location of graves required more specific and theoretical knowledge, the Buddhist monks and Daoists trained in *fengshui* were frequently called upon to site and orient residences, villages, and even capital cities. In the Song dynasty, royal gardens and private pavilions flourished, far surpassing the previous dynasties. The gardens open at that time mostly provided public leisure and entertainment space for the subjects (Lü 1992, vol. 7, p. 93; Meng 1982, p. 102). In the late Northern Song dynasty, the capital gardens were invariably constructed with mountains, water, flowers, trees, grass, and rocks in a beautiful and tranquil environment. However, there were also gardens built according to *fengshui* concepts, and sometimes people would plan their orientation on this basis to pray for blessings and protection from harm.

The construction of the imperial garden at Wanshou Mountain 萬壽山, later renamed Gen Marchmount 艮嶽 (Gen Yue, Northeast Marchmount), began in 1117, and it was closely related to the terrain of the entire Kaifeng City 開封 (the capital city of the Northern Song empire), construction of which was based on *fengshui* theory. When Emperor Huizong ascended to the throne, he took the advice of the Daoist master Liu Hunkang 劉混康 to raise the terrain in the northeastern corner of the imperial city in order to multiply his heirs. The reason was that in “the northeast corner of the capital city, the ground is in harmony with the public opinion, but the situation is slightly lower; if the height of the low-lying terrain is elevated, the imperial descendants will multiply” (Zhang 1985, p. 1). In terms of *fengshui*, Kaifeng City had a gentle terrain, and the northeast corner is a natural pitting, where yin energy (陰氣, Yin Qi) collects. So, the emperor issued an order to fill the top with earth and increase the height from the original one, and later, the number of male children did increase. After that, the royal court was free of trouble. It can be seen that the purpose of

the construction of the artificial Gen Marchmount was to elevate the terrain in the north-east of the capital city, “the Gen direction, the position of the eight trigrams; the Yue, the general name of the mountains” (Wang 2019, vol. 2, Houlu, p. 428). This was conducive to the prosperity of the Song family’s heirs. It was named Gen Marchmount because it is in the northeast of the capital, and the name reflects its orientation. However, why is the situation in the northeast one of slightly lower ground, and why is it possible to change the fortune of the heirs by using a mound of earth to form a small mountain?

According to the theory of numerology, especially the eight trigrams (後天八卦), the northeast of the city (Gen direction. See Figures 2 and 3), is also known as the “Ghost Gate” (鬼門). According to the “Five Sound Surname Law”, the royal surname of Zhao 趙 belongs to wood, so the Gen position is the place of vitality, which could be advantageous in terms of having more descendants. All of this shows that the Gen position is vital to the rise and fall of the heirs’ destiny. According to the description of the Gen position in the classic literature: “The Gen is Ghost Gate, the Dragon’s Belly, the Blessed Sac, should be thick, heavy and auspicious, and when thinness means poverty” (Huangdi Zhajing n.d.). As well as the *Monk Sima Dimai Jue* (司馬頭陀地脈訣 *A Pithy Formula of Site-Selection*, by Monk Sima): “If the tone of the grave occupant’s surname was in accordance with the five sound tones covering the tones of Gong (宮 Do), Shang (商 Re), Jue (角 Mi), Zhi (徵 So), and Yu (羽 La), the terrain should be high and Ghost Gate should not be flat or low” (Guan 2013, p. 481). It can be seen that the Gen position is auspicious for being high and thick, but the original actual topography in the northeast of Kaifeng City does not coincide with this statement. Therefore, for the benefit of the imperial family, the imperial court deliberately adjusted and transformed the northeast of Kaifeng, and thus Gen Marchmount obtained its *fengshui* role. Furthermore, the archaeological records show that most of the Northern Song imperial family tombs were made by the “Five Sound Surname Law” (Feng 1994; Jin 2015; Liu 2018).

In fact, before Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty, issues relating to the topography and *fengshui* of the northeastern corner of the capital had already become a subject of concern for the court. In 1081, a minister, Hu Zongyan 胡宗炎, pointed out the importance of the capital position, arguing that Yimen Mountain 夷門山 (see Figure 4), to the northeast of the capital, was the location of the lesser yang (Shaoyang 少陽) and it should be forbidden to fill in or dig in the area. This policy was confirmed and enforced by the astronomical bureau (Li 1995, vol. 312, p. 7560). In 1082, Emperor Shenzong issued an edict to protect the area around Fanjia Hill 樊家岡 on Yimen Mountain from the spirit of the deceased buried there and to prohibit burials from then on (Li 1995, vol. 329, p. 7917). In 1086, the Kaifeng Prefecture officials submitted a petition claiming that Yimen Mountain was not to be exploited and expressly forbade the burial of ordinary people: “Those who have a grave are allowed to move to the outside, and those who do not have a grave are to follow the first decree” (Li 1995, vol. 392, p. 9540). It is clear that the Song court followed the *fengshui* theory that the northeastern direction of Yimen Mount was where the Zhao surname (the royal surname) was located and that it was important to adopt a policy of protection for the northeast terrain so that it would not be destroyed.

In the late reign of Emperor Zhezong, the official Dong Weizheng 董惟正 proposed the construction of a high building and temple on Yimen Mount to make up for the lack of a mountain, which caused much controversy in the court. In 1100, the official Cai Dao 蔡蹈 advised the emperor on this matter, arguing that Yimen Mountain was a place where the dynastic house had flourished, that he did not know what Dong Weizheng’s theory was, and that digging from the side to make up for the mountain’s shortcomings would disturb the tranquil environment and destroy the effect of *fengshui*.

Dong thought the construction of the temple with suspicious intentions, so he submitted the memorial to the throne for a second time. He cited the opinion of the official in charge of the site, who strongly opposed the construction of the temple on Yimen Mountain in the northeast of the capital. He argued that Dong Weizheng’s claim was not justified and

would affect the prosperity of the emperor. There was no benefit in building the temple and no harm in not doing so (Cai 2006, vol. 2235, No. 102, pp. 263–4).

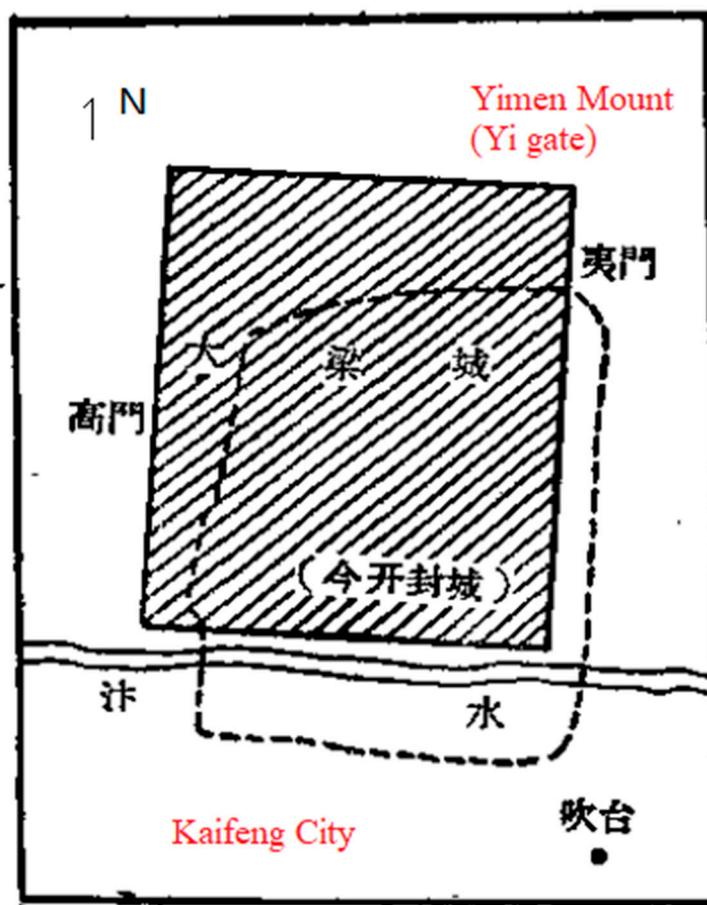


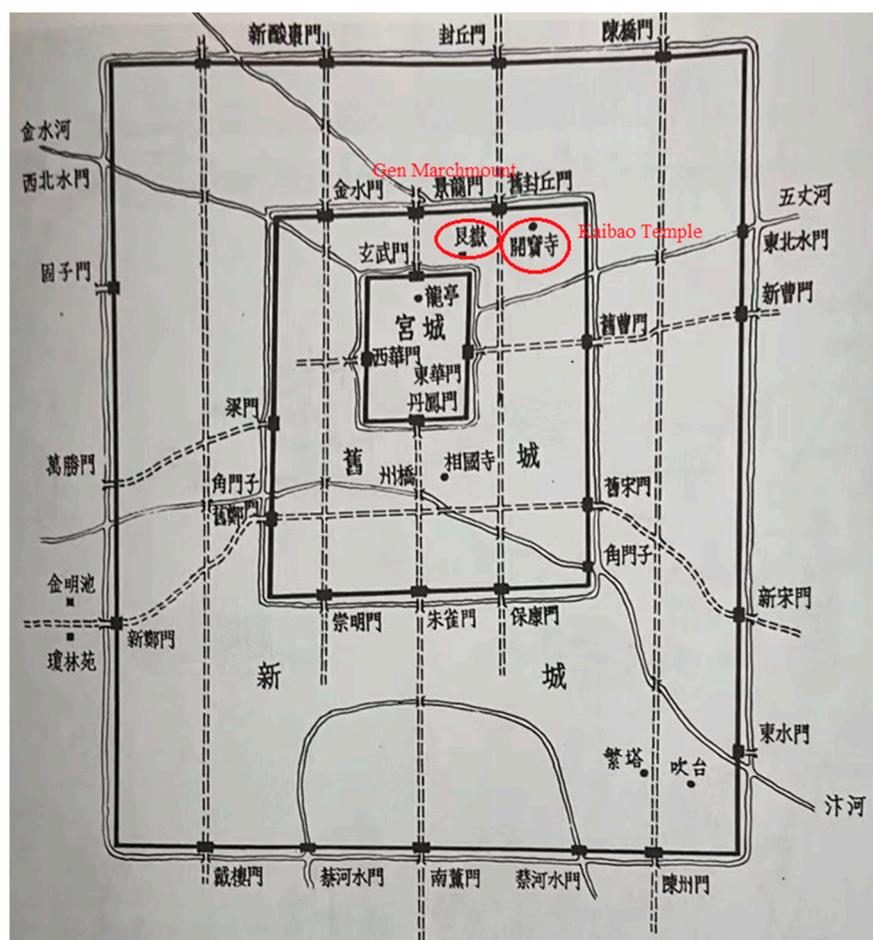
Figure 4. Overview of Kaifeng City of the Northern Song period. Source: Li (1958). *Kaifeng Lishi Dili*. p. 9.

This happened towards the end of Emperor Zhezong's reign, not long before the time when Huizong elevated the terrain in the northeast. It is clear that during the reign of Emperor Zhezong, not only was there a great increase in the number of experts skilled in the art of *fengshui*, but the concept of *fengshui* had emerged to fill the gap in the terrain, which was a serious divergence from the earlier notion that no excavation was allowed in the place where the emperor's Qi was located. Whatever Dong Weizheng's aims, what is certain is that he no longer confined himself to his predecessor's statement that no excavations should be made to the mountain and that he intended to deal with the problem of luck and misfortune through *fengshui*. The later construction of Gen Marchmount was a direct manifestation and application of this idea of repairing deficiency.

The construction of Gen Marchmount served to supplement the terrain. In addition, a look at the construction of buildings in the Song dynasty shows that *fengshui* towers served the same function as the two examples are listed below.

On the one hand, the construction of Gen Yue served to bring good fortune by supplementing the terrain from the ruler's perspective. On the other hand, the traditional Chinese cosmology system was reflected in the construction of the capital city. The yin and yang, the eight trigrams, and the five elements were applied directly to urban planning, reflecting the structural layout that was inspired by the classical nine palaces of the Luo Shu (洛書九宮). Similarly, in the construction of another type of architecture, the pagoda, we can also see the cosmology presented in the city and village.

A temple was built on the Yimen Mountain in 559. During the Song dynasty, in 970, Emperor Taizu changed its name to Kaibao Temple 開寶寺, also known as Guangjiao Temple 光教寺. It was located in the northeast of Kaifeng City (see Figure 5) and commonly called Shangfang Temple 上方寺, sitting above Yimen Mountain in the northeast of the city (Zhou 1988, p. 218; Li 1999, vol. 10).



**Figure 5.** The map of the capital Kaifeng City. Source: Liu Dunzhen (Liu 2017). *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*, 2017, p. 179.

In 980, to enshrine the relics of Buddha, Emperor Taizong ordered that the pagoda in the northwest of the Kaibao Temple be built with a stupa of eleven levels, under which a heavenly palace was made to bury the sarira (Jiang 1981, vol. 43, Yu Hao Zaota 喻浩造塔). The pagoda was completed in 989 and became the highest point of the capital at that time, with an excellent and vast view (Liu 1935, vol. 8, p. 88). It sloped to the northwest, was the tallest of all the pagodas in the capital and was built by a master craftsman. When the pagoda was first built, it appeared to be tilted to the northwest and in the wrong place. It turned out that the capital was flat, without any mountains, and could resist the force of the northwest wind (Ouyang 1991, vol. 1, p. 1). Although it is not possible to know exactly why the pagoda was built to the northwest of Kaibao Temple, it is possible to deduce that the purpose of the pagoda was probably related to the concept of ‘the northwest tilting towards the sky and the southeast dropping down to the ground’ and that the pagoda was used to compensate for the imperfection of terrain, to create the ideal environment for living in the ‘Modeling of Heaven and Earth’ (法天則地). In addition, the Yuqing Zhaoying Temple 玉清昭應宮, located to the northwest of the palace, corresponds to the Qian (乾) direction of the eight trigrams (see Figures 2 and 3) and was used to pray for good fortune (Li 1995, vol. 6, p. 71).

As for the pagoda named “Literary Brush Peak” (*Wenbi feng*, Wenbi Peak 文筆峰) by the famous politician Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052) in Poyang County 鄱陽縣 (in currently Jiangxi province), it mainly serves the function of blessing. According to Poyang Legend, Fan Zhongyan saw a high pagoda in Miaoguo Cloister 妙果禪院 in the southeast of the city, representing the cultural atmosphere of the place, after he arrived in the beautiful landscape of the county. Several lakes were connected around the county, which nourished Confucian students and scholars. Fan named the pagoda “Wenbifeng” and the lake “Yanchi” (硯池 inkstone lake) and predicted that in twenty years this place would be home to the top students. Sure enough, during the Zhiping period (1064–1067), Peng Ruli 彭汝礪 of this county achieved the top rank in the imperial civil examination (Fan 2004, vol. 2, p. 855).

The Wenbifeng pagoda of the Zen temple is located in the southeast, which is related to a concept in *fengshui* theory. The high mountain was always considered to be Jupiter (“star of wood”), which is the master of cultural activities. According to the commentary in the geomancy classic *Yusui Zhenjing*, the star of wood was considered the most valuable one of the five stars, and the geomancers used wood as the honored star (尊星), the star of the year (歲星), the star of the emperor (帝星), and the star of the literati (文星) (Zhang 1996, vol. 1053). Wenbi Peak Mountain stands tall in the Xun (巽) position, exactly in line with the southeast position, representing the literati (see Figures 2 and 3, the southeast position). So, the prediction of a scholar winning the first prize in an examination was fulfilled. The rationale behind this reflects the concept of “forming an image in the sky and taking shape on earth” (在天成象, 在地成形). The southeastern part of the temple belongs to the Xun position in the eight trigrams, and also to the four southeastern palaces of the Nine Palaces of the Luo Shu, which correspond to the nine stars in the sky, also known as the Tianfu (天輔 Heavenly Assistants) Star. According to the classic *Wuxing Dayi* (五行大義), “Tianfu star is charged with literati, the Xun position is the command, and there are for the essays (天輔子文者, 巽為號令, 有文章也)” (Xiao 2001, vol. 5, p. 123). The fact that the temple is located in the southeast of the city must also have been influenced by geomancy, which explains why the southeastern part of the temple is the star of literati, the star that governs the writing of articles.

Overall, the choice of the site during the Song dynasty had significance in terms of saving the building from harm and praying for good fortune. From the early days of the doctrine of prohibition for excavation was considered to remedy misfortune, the religious activities of Buddhist monks and Daoist masters put the theory of *fengshui* into practice. In addition, buildings were placed in various settings in praying for good fortune and protection from harm. This mix of religious and *fengshui* concepts in the landscape reinforced in the absorption, adoption, and use of folk beliefs by government authority.

## 5. Conclusions

The Song dynasty was the heyday of *fengshui* in China in terms of incorporating its techniques and beliefs, and it had a profound impact on the development of geomancy concepts and culture for generations to come. Carrying religious symbolism for architectural structures and urban planning, *fengshui* combined natural elements, such as mountains, rivers, and lowlands, with human landscapes, such as cities, Buddhist temples, and Daoist temples, demonstrating the involvement of religious figures in the political construction of medieval China’s empire as an intellectual power. This tradition influenced the later Ming and Qing dynasties, when *fengshui* writings were formalized and made public by official publishers, with more than 220 *fengshui* works. *Fengshui* was mixed with ecology, geography, geology, and architecture. Through the Buddhist monks and Daoists, the tradition of structured layouts of spatial orientation was integrated from the bottom up into the logic of Chinese imperial governance. Through this channel, skilled geomancers brought the cosmology of the high culture down to earth. An awareness of the historical origins of this tradition is helpful in our understanding of architectural heritage in general.

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