GUO PU’S ANTIQUE SCHOOL OF FENG SHUI

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ABSTRACT
Throughout the history of Feng Shui in China, and more recently abroad, there have been numerous different and often competing methods employed by Feng Shui Practitioners. Textual evidence suggests there was once however, a common root. This paper will investigate the specifics of this foundational system and illuminate its scope of practice.

A true Chinese Classic is a text important before or during the ‘Golden Age’ of Philosophical thought, the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.). This is sometimes extended to, but not beyond, the Jin Dynasty (265 C.E. – 420 C.E.). Whilst many manuscripts from later periods in Feng Shui and other traditions may carry the title Jing ‘Classic’, it is merely a literary device. This leaves scarce few texts to meet the definition. Nevertheless one such text does exist - Guo Pu’s Zang Shu ‘Burial Book’.

Guo Pu was a famous Scholar, Philosopher, Poet and Diviner known for his commentaries of Confucian Classics. From these texts and a now lost ‘Burial Classic’ he composed his own work, the oldest existent on Feng Shui, the ‘Burial Book’. Within it he outlines three different methods in a hierarchical arrangement, corresponding with three chapters – Inner (勢 Shi ‘Configurations’), Outer (形 Xing ‘Forms’) and Mixed (方 Fang ‘Directions’). These three devices, along with supplementary information from Guo Pu’s other writings and annotations, formed the corpus of his original classical system or ‘Antique School of Feng Shui’.

KEY WORDS
Feng Shui, Guo Pu, Zang Shu, Burial Book, Classic

INTRODUCTION
In antiquity, it is likely the Chinese practice of Feng Shui had a common root, a primal system, whose techniques predated the diversification that flourished during the Tang and Song dynasties. The best choice for a progenitor of this ‘Antique School’ is the ‘Grandfather’ of Feng Shui – 郭璞 Guō Pú of the Jin Dynasty. His work, the 葬書 Zàng Shū ‘Burial Book’, is the oldest complete text on the subject, still in existence today. It is a common misconception that the text discusses only Burial and this exclusively from the perspective of the ‘Form School’ of Feng Shui. However, within its pages Guo Pu outlines a comprehensive structure for the analysis of a site using three different methods – Configuration, Form and Direction. He describes them in a hierarchical arrangement at the opening of the third chapter thus:
Before these three methods are investigated further, a few key issues must be discussed:

**KEY ISSUES**

**On finding a common ancestor of Feng Shui**

The source must be in the recording writings. Oral traditions and secret lineages are too problematic to verify and fraught with difficulties. A 经 ‘Classic’, by the strict Chinese definition, was a text important before or during the ‘Golden Age’ of Philosophical thought, the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.) (Nylan 2001). This is sometimes extended to, but not beyond, the Jin Dynasty (265 C.E. – 420 C.E.). This leaves scarce few texts to meet the definition, nevertheless one such text does exist - Guo Pu’s Zang Shu. It is important to note that whilst many manuscripts from later periods in Feng Shui may carry the title ‘Classic’, this is merely a common literary device, the purpose of which was often to elevate the content in the hope of increasing readership - pre-modern marketing at its best.

**Studying the foundations of Feng Shui**

It is only through careful examination of canonical literature that we can hope to understand the transmission of knowledge in this tradition. From its historical synthesis to its modern applications it has undergone many changes, resulting in conflicting schools of thought and contradictory findings. A fragmentation of knowledge occurred somewhere around the Tang and Song dynasties, and these schools began to compete with one another (Skinner, 2012). The issue continues to this day, in many ways hindering research and hampering the establishment of credibility for this ancient science. If the original process were illuminated it could be used as a benchmark for later developments (particularly the attempts at consolidation of Feng Shui methods in the Ming and Qing Dynasties), and a way to critically analyse contemporary translations of this wisdom.

**Regarding the authorship and authenticity of the Zang Shu**

There are some questions as to whether the extant text today is the same as that of the Jin dynasty (Zhang, 2004). There have been a number of editions and reorganising of the material within throughout the centuries since its inception, but there have clearly been enough common passages to make its further investigation a repeatedly worthy endeavour. While it is, with the current source material available, impossible to say it is of its supposed vintage, there is nothing within the Burial Book to suggest it is not.

Guo Pu’s role as author has also been at times doubted. The text is not listed in his bibliography in the official history of the Jin dynasty, in fact the first time it is attributed to him is more than five hundred years later in the Song dynasty (DeGroot, 1897). There was certainly a text of a similar name recorded during this era and there is no evidence to suggest it was not of Guo Pu’s hand. Perhaps it was posthumously credited to such a noted literary figure to add weight? It is impossible to know and in the end irrelevant, the text exists and contains valuable information regardless of whose penmanship it resulted from.
On the content of the Zang Shu

The work itself has on occasion been disregarded as antiquated and irrelevant. The subject ‘burial’ often suggested as reason. Within the chapters the word 葬 Zàng ‘Burial’ is used interchangeably with 宅 Zhái ‘Dwelling’, suggesting that the information applies equally to both. It has long been a misconception in Feng Shui research that the practice of auspicious siting for the dead predates that for the living. This has been thoroughly and convincingly discredited in recent years (Yoon 2006), the implications of which for the Burial Book indicate that its content was likely adapted from similar rules for auspiciously locating homes.

On the mysterious Classic quoted

The Classic referred to in the text warrants some investigation. It is commonly thought to be the 葬經 Zàng Jīng ‘Burial Classic’ by 青烏 Qing Wū. In one famous edition of the Zang Shu, Guo Pu states as much in his preface. But the book that carries this name surviving today has been proven to include post-dated substance and thus a forgery (Paton 2013). There is doubt as to the reputed existence of the author Qing Wu (whose name is actually a clever play on the term Feng Shui ‘Wind Water’, where 青 Qing indicates the colour Cerulean [Green] associated with the diagram 禄 Xùn ‘Wind’ 4 and 烏 Wū the colour Black and the trigram 坎 Kǎn ‘Water’ 1). He may have been a work of fiction.

Another possibility for the ‘Classic’ has been a short primer of dubious heritage, the 青囊經 Qing Náng Jīng ‘Cerulean Satchel Classic’ (Ong, 2009). It first appears in the Qing dynasty collection – 地理辨證 Dì Lǐ Biàn Zhèng ‘Earth Principles Differentiated’ by 蔣大鴻 Jiāng Dàhóng but claims far more ancient origins. The short work contains less than half of the lines quoted as ‘The Classic Says’ making it impossible for it to be the base text (Chan, 2008).

It is possible that the Zang Shu is a commentary on a more ancient classic, it is equally possible that references to a ‘Classic’ were another common form of literary device, to imply a higher level of importance. Chinese having no plural form, this could be read ‘The Classics said…’.

On Guo Pu

The life and achievements of Guo Pu are many and varied. He was a Daoist philosopher and poet, as well as being a Confucian scholar of note. He was likely well-travelled and performed roles variously as a diviner, astrologer, dream interpreter, author and annotator of Classic texts. He was recorded to have made over 60 true predictions and legend has it he even predicted his own death at the hands of a tyrant overlord whom had abducted him into service for his renowned skill. In fact, many classic Chinese texts in existence today owe their survival to his annotated editions (Strassberg 2002). Some of these undoubtedly would have influenced his book and method of Feng Shui. As an Official having passed the Imperial examinations, he would have been well versed in the Confucian Classics, such as such as the divination text 易經 Yi Jīng [I Ching] ‘Change Classic’, the 詩經 Shī Jīng ‘Odes Classic’ and the three 禮經 Lǐ Jīng ‘Ritual Classics’. Other works upon which he was known to have written commentaries include the mytho-geographical guidebook 山海經 Shān Hǎi Jīng ‘Mountain Sea Classic’, the encyclopaedic dictionary 爾雅 Ėryà ‘Approaching Refinement’ and the poetry collection 楚辭 Chǔcí ‘Southern Verses’, all of which contain information pertinent to the subject.

This collection could be viewed as Guo Pu’s source material and as a corpus their contents can help elucidate some of the more cryptic passages of the Zang Shu, ‘fleshing out’ the system.
The Text

The edition used throughout this paper is that of the 四庫全書 Sì Kù Quán Shū ‘Four Libraries Complete Works’ Volume 808 of 1500, as edited by 吳澄 Wú Chéng (1249-1331 C.E.). The division of the lines follows that of Zhang Juwen’s translation (2004) with the only amendment being that the numbering is continuous throughout and does not restart with each chapter. Commentaries consulted include those of 吳元音 Wú Yuányīn (1676 - ? C.E.) and 鄭謐 Zhèng Mì of the early Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 C.E.).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE ZANG SHU AND THE THREE METHODS WITHIN

1. INNER CHAPTER

The inner chapter of the Zang Shu discusses mostly the first method - Shi ‘Configuration’. Before this however, there are a few important fundamental theoretical subjects expounded. There appears to be, at times, an assumption that the reader has prior knowledge of certain topics, evident in the lack of substance presented in some key areas of the Zang Shu. This information can of course be gleaned from any of dozens of classics Guo Pu studied himself. It appears though, that some concepts he felt were too important not to elucidate further upon. The first is 感應 Gǎn Yìng ‘Mutual Resonance’. Verses 3 – 6 of the Zang Shu read thus –

人受體於父母， ‘Humans receive their body from their father and mother,
本骸得氣， when the original bones obtain qi,
遺體受蔭。 descendants receive the conferred privileges.
經曰， The Classic says,
氣感而應， qi affects thus responding,
鬼福及人。 spirit’s fortune reaches the people.
是以， Therefore,
銅山西崩， copper mountain in the West collapses,
靈鐘東應。 effected bell in the East responds.
木華於春， Trees flourish in Spring,
栗芽於室。 chestnuts sprout in rooms.’

This is the idea that things of a similar nature affect and respond to each other through a kind of ‘sympathetic vibration’. This forms the basis of systematic correspondence in Chinese philosophy and explains the mechanism behind these correlations. An earlier description of this appears in the 易經 Yì Jīng ‘Change Classic’, Commentary of the Words, Qian, 14 -

子曰， ‘The Master said,
同聲相應， similar sounds mutually resonate,
同氣相求 。 similar qi mutually seek.’
This example uses a scientifically reproducible phenomena to justify Gan Ying. The mutual resonance of sounds is discussed at length in other Han works and indicates that when a note on a stringed instrument is played, the string of the same note on any other similarly tuned instruments in the vicinity will also vibrate at the same frequency thus producing the same sound. The following line indicates that this also applies to objects with a similar qi or energy signature.

The two examples given in the Zang Shu, one ‘Heavenly’ in origin – a seasonal affect, and one of ‘Earthly’ basis – a seismographic vibration, help to illustrate how Guo Pu and his contemporaries believed Feng Shui burial worked. The previous lines would suggest that the hereditary link we share with our ancestors can be exploited to our benefit. Auspiciously placed within a flow of qi, their remains can generate good fortune to living descendants like a kind of battery charging locally and then transferring power at a distance. Burial was considered optimal for this as underground there was less worry of the qi being dispersed.

This leads to the second concept investigated in the text, which can be referred to as a kind of ‘Qi cycle’. The 17th verse of the 1st chapter reads thus -

陰陽之氣，  ‘The qi of yin yang,
噫而為風，  exhales and becomes wind,
升而為云，  rises and becomes cloud,
降而為雨，  drops and becomes rain,
行乎地中，  travels through the ground,
而為生氣。  and becomes generative qi.’

This quote has been used at times as justification the Chinese were aware of the precipitation cycle at this early stage of development (Needham, 1959). Whilst it bears some similarity there are differences, chiefly the description of Qi as the outcome. This Sheng Qi ‘Generating Qi’ was of particular importance to Guo Pu’s method and three aspects mentioned above highlight this – Wind, Water and Earth. An earlier verse, the 13th of the same first chapter elucidates further upon the first two –

經曰，  ‘The Classic Says:
氣乘風散，  when qi rides the wind it is dispersed,
界水則止。  when it meets a boundary of water it is retained.

古人聚之使不散，  The Ancients were able to gather it to prevent dispersion,
行之使有止，  to guide it and retain it,
故謂風水。  hence it was called Wind Water [Feng Shui].

風水之法，  The law of Wind Water [Feng Shui] is,
得水為上，  getting water is the superior act,
藏風次之。  hiding from wind is secondary.’

For example chapter 6 - 覈冥 Lǎn míng ‘Examining Obscurity of the text ’淮南子 Huái Nán Zǐ ‘Masters South of the River’
Clearly wind should be avoided for its ability to scatter the *Qi*. Water should be sought after for its ability to contain *Qi*. In this famous verse Guo Pu not only gives name to the art he is describing but also describes the science behind it. It is the essence of *Feng Shui* in theory and practice. Another important verse on the connection between *Qi* and water follows our *Qi* cycle quote above. The 18th verse reads thus –

夫土者，氣之体，
有土斯有氣。

氣者，水之母，
有氣斯有水。

‘Soil, it is the body of qi, where soil exists there is qi. Qi, it is the mother of water, where qi exists there is water.’

This again reinforces the intimate connection between water and qi and explains the emphasis placed on obtaining a site with water. It also for the first time illustrates the connection between qi and soil. The cycle makes it clear qi travels through the ground, this quote informs us that qi is in fact dependent upon the soil for its movement. Wind scatters, water contains and earth allows for its movement. An essential central triad that will become the reason for many of the requirements mentioned thereafter throughout the text.

The bulk of the remainder of the Inner Chapter, is concerned with the concept of 勢 *Shì*. Fundamental to Classical *Feng Shui* but often misunderstood, it has many uses in traditional Chinese literature – a military strategy, a hand position for a music instrument, a martial arts posture or even a sexual position. In all cases it is the force within an arrangement that is indicated. The phenomena can be subjectively observed, like the potential energy housed in a drawn bowstring. It is much the same idea in *Feng Shui* – a configuration of mountains (and water) will contain within it a measure of ‘geodetic’ force (Paton 1995). The keenly trained were able to analyse arrangements of mountain ranges and water courses and assess the latent power embedded within. This is a macro-view of the land as indicated in verse 9 -

地勢原脈，
山勢原骨，
委蛇東西，
或為南北。

‘The land configuration is the original veins, the mountain configuration is the original bones, snaking East from West, or South from North.’

This defines the geography of China, from the heights of the Tibetan Plateau and the north west to the low river deltas and the seas of the south east. The term 龍脈 Lóng mài ‘Dragon Veins’ used to describe mountain ranges in *Feng Shui* is likely derived from this quote. Guo Pu’s annotations of the 山海經 Shān Hǎi Jīng ‘Mountain Sea Classic’ would suggest he was well travelled and had spent a great deal of time observing mountain ranges, likely contributing to the development of these theories (Strassberg, 2002). This is echoed in the macro-view of the site when in verse 23 he writes –

千尺為勢，
百尺為形。

‘Thousands of feet becomes Configuration, hundreds of feet becomes Form.’

Whilst it is unclear from the text if this indicates height, breadth or even distance (commentaries vary in opinion) it is clear that Configurations are ten times greater in size than that of the local *Xing* ‘Forms’ discussed in Chapter 2.
This chapter finishes with specific information on types of mountains considered auspicious or otherwise unsuitable. In doing so, establishing the primary criteria that generations of *Feng Shui* texts since have expanded from. Those considered unfit are listed in verses 46 - 52 -

山之不可葬者五。

气以生和，

而童山不可葬也。

气因形来，

而断山不可葬也。

气因土行，

而石山不可葬也。

气以势止，

而过山不可葬也。

气以龙会，

而独山不可葬也。


‘Five Mountains not fit for burial.

Qi harmonises with life,

thus barren mountains are not fit for burial.

Qi arrives following forms,

thus broken mountains are not fit for burial.

Qi moves by means of soil,

thus rocky mountains are not fit for burial.

Qi is in accord with Configuration ending,

thus passing mountains are not fit for burial.

Qi is in accord with dragons assembling,

thus solitary mountains are not fit for burial.

The Classic Says:

barren; broken; rocky; passing & solitary,

generate new misfortune thus eliminating existing good fortune.’

2. OUTER CHAPTER

The second chapter adds the next layer of analysis to Guo Pu’s method – 形 *Xíng* ‘Form’. As mentioned previously he considered this aspect of *Feng Shui* less difficult than *Shi* ‘Configuration’. Hierarchically he also arranged *Xíng* ‘Form’ as of secondary importance, verses 150-151 found in the third chapter confirm this –

夫势与形顺者吉，

势与形逆者凶。

勢吉形凶，

百福希一。

勢凶形吉，

禍不旋日。

‘Configuration with Form flowing is auspicious,

Configuration with Form against is inauspicious.

Configuration auspicious Form inauspicious,

one in one hundred blessings is rare.

Configuration inauspicious Form auspicious,

misfortune will not be the last moment of the day.’

As can be seen, if the Configuration is good, even if the Form is bad, there is still a chance of success, whereas if the Form is good but the Configuration bad, there no chance. Therefore, Form is of secondary importance.

Two areas of forms are discussed – Mountains and Water. Bennet (1978) classifies forms into three categories – Functional (those that block wind or retain water), Resonant (those that represent one of the five elements or other cosmological correlations) and Sign (symbolic,
those that look like an animal, object, mythical creature or such). He postulated that it was the former that was first observed and most scientific in analysis, whereas the latter were later elaborations and more subjective. Guo Pu concerns himself chiefly with the Functional and Resonant, resorting rarely to Sign and then likely only as metaphor. The main Functional/Resonant Forms discussed are the famous 四靈獸 Si líng Shòu ‘Four Celestial Beasts’ also known as the 四象 Si Xiàng ‘Four Images’. Previously only used in description of the four macro-constellations (Zhang, 2004), each comprising of seven smaller asterisms in the northern sky, they were now being applied to the Forms directly in front, behind and either side of the site, at the four cardinal directions. Verses 101 - 111 are dedicated to explaining the position, requirements and dangers if not met, of each –

夫葬以 左為青龍, 右為白虎, 前為朱雀, 後為玄武。
the left becomes the Cerulean Dragon, the right becomes the White Tiger, the front becomes the Vermillion Bird, the rear becomes the Dark Warrior.

玄武垂頭, 朱雀翔舞, 青龍蜿蜒, 白虎馴俯。
The Dark Warrior hangs down its head, the Vermillion Bird hovers and dances, the Cerulean Dragon winds sinuously, the White Tiger tamely bows.

When Form and Configuration are contrary to this, the law is there must be destruction and death. A Tiger crouching means biting the corpse. A Dragon squatting means jealously of the master. A Dark Warrior not hanging down rejects the corpse. A Vermillion Bird not dancing soars away. Now taking branches as Dragon and Tiger, coming to an end marked of ridges and mounds, must be like the elbow of an arm and are called the surrounding embrace.’

This ‘armchair arrangement’ was to become central to Feng Shui practice, historically and in contemporary times. Interestingly, despite Guo Pu’s text establishing the first criteria for these forms, the majority of its content seems to have been forgotten in later texts and applications. Similarly the chief conditions for water courses in Feng Shui, carried through to modern day, are also conferred in this section of the text. The second chapter, verses 113 – 122 read thus –
以水為朱雀者，
衰旺系乎形應。
朱雀源於生氣。
忌乎湍激，
謂之悲泣。
派於未盛，
朝於大旺。
澤其相衰，
流於囚謝，
以返不絕。
法每一折，
瀦而後匯。
洋洋悠悠，
顧我欲留。
其來無源，
其去無流。
經曰，
山來水回，
貴壽而財。
山囚水流，
虞王滅侯。

‘Using water as the Vermilion Bird,
decline and prosperity are in relation to Form’s response.
The Vermilion Bird originates in the generative qi.
Avoid the rapid surging,
their meaning is sadness weeping.
Tributaries are not yet abundant,
going towards great prosperity.
Marshes appear to decline,
when flow is imprisoned it withers
because of return not ceasing.
The law is every single bend
pooling and thus afterward collecting.’
Copious and leisurely,
turning back on itself desire grows.
It comes without source,
it leaves without degeneration.
‘The Classic Says
mountain arrives and water encircles,
nobility longevity and thus wealth.
Mountains imprison and water banished,
incarceration of the monarch and destruction of noblemen.’

These rules predate the use of ‘mountain dragon’ and ‘water dragon’ diagrams popular in more recent dynasties. Whilst they appear simple, their apparent generalisation deliberately allows for a broad range of interpretation, making them axiomatic for later practice.

One other area that bears mention from the outer chapter, is that of soil. The condition of the soil is mentioned repeatedly throughout text suggesting Guo Pu considered it of some import. Verses 96 – 100 read thus –
夫土欲細而堅，
潤而不澤，
裁肪切玉，
備具五色。
夫乾如粒粟，
濕如刲肉，
水泉砂礫，
皆為凶宅。

Now soil that is desirable is fine and firm,
moist but not damp,
like cut fat or sliced jade,
fully possessing the five colours.
Dry like grains of millet,
water spring grit gravel,
all serve as inauspicious dwellings.’

It would appear this aspect of Form is now lost, little is mentioned of soil composition or analysis in Feng Shui practice as it exists today or indeed in the centuries preceding ours.

3. MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER

This complex and final chapter introduces the third aspect to complete the Guo Pu school – 方 Fāng ‘Direction’. This ‘Heavenly’ component relies upon astronomical indicators to determine auspicious orientations and positions. Scholars often divide Feng Shui into two main schools ‘Form’ and ‘Compass’. The ‘Form’ school incorporates both of the former methods (Configuration and Form) described above, whilst the ‘Compass’ has its equivalence here in Chapter 3 (Direction). It is often misstated that the Zang Shu is only a ‘Form’ text and ‘Compass’ methods are not included (Eitel, 1873), but the following would prove otherwise.

Verses 152 – 156 discuss the measurements Guo Pu used –

經曰，
地有四勢，
氣從八方。
寅申巳亥，
四勢也。
震離坎兌，
乾坤艮巽，
八方也。

是故，
四勢之山，
生八方之龍。
四勢行龍，
八方施生。
一得其宅，
‘If one obtains such a dwelling,
吉慶榮貴 it is auspicious celebrating flourishing and nobility.’

‘The classic says,
earth has four Configurations,
qi comes from eight directions.
Yin Shen Si Hai,
are the four Configurations.
Zhen Li Kan Dui,
Qian Kun Gen Xun,
are eight directions.

Hence therefore,
four Configuration mountains,
generate eight directional dragons.
Four Configurations move dragons,
eight directions grant life.
‘If one obtains such a dwelling,
A number of different things can be taken away from this short passage. Firstly the ‘Four Configurations’ mentioned are those of the ‘Four Images’ mountains discussed in the previous section. Next, the八卦 Bā Gùa ‘Eight Diagrams’ are being used to mark directions, along with the four of the twelve 地支 Dì Zhī ‘Earthly Branches’. This is common practice throughout Feng Shui and indeed other classical cartographical traditions. The dynamic between these different measuring groups can be gleaned from the lines that follow. The order the Eight Diagrams are listed suggests the 后天 Hòu Tiān ‘Later Heaven’ arrangement. The four Earthly Branches mentioned indicates knowledge of the 三合 Sān Hé ‘Three Combinations’, a method of grouping the Branches, key to later ‘Compass’ methods used in Feng Shui. The magnetic compass however, not being invented until much later in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.), was not being utilised for surveying here. Verse 157 clarifies the tool in use during Guo Pu’s era—

土圭測其方位。 ‘Earth gnomon surveys its direction and position,

玉尺度其遠邇。 Jade ruler measures if it is distant or near.’

The Earth Gnomon was a device used for measuring the sun’s shadow to determine north (or south in the Chinese mapping tradition). Interestingly this would suggest true north (south) was being used at this stage in the development of Feng Shui and not magnetic as has been the protocol since the Song. Exact details of the construction of the ‘Jade Ruler’ are difficult to find, however it can be assumed it was a device used to calculate distance.

Another technique of the ‘Compass’ school is to measure time. An intriguing line, 167, from the last part of this chapter on the 三吉六凶 Sān Jí Liù Xiōng ‘Three Auspicious and Six Inauspicious [Factors]’ reads thus—

歲時之乖為， ‘Year and time contrary,

二凶。 is the second inauspicious.’

This likely demonstrates the use of ‘Auspicious Timing’ another area that was to become popular in later Feng Shui texts. Without any further information it is impossible to know for sure which method Guo Pu preferred. We can however say the likely method was the use of the栻盤 Shì Pán ‘Divination Plate’. Examples of these devices, likely forerunners of the modern羅盤 Luó Pán ‘Feng Shui Compass’, have been found dating back to (and before) the period of Guo Pu. They were a popular form of divination at the time, concerning the selection of dates and the practice was called 堪輿 Kān Yú ‘Canopy and Chassis’ referring to the construction of a circular heaven plate over a square base plate. This name was synonymous with an earlier progenitor of Feng Shí and its practitioners. Doubtless, being a scholar of note

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2 Cerulean Dragon, White Tiger, Vermillion Bird and Dark Warrior
3 震 Zhèn ‘Thunder’ 3, 離 Lí ‘Fire’ 9, 坎 Kǎn ‘Water’ 1, 兑 Duì ‘Lake’ 7, 乾 Qián ‘Heaven’ 6, 坤 Kūn ‘Earth’ 2, 艮 Gèn ‘Mountain’ 8 and 巽 Xùn ‘Wind’ 4
5 Zhen, Xin, Li, Kun, Duì, Qian, Kan and Gen
Guo Pu would have been at the very least aware of their existence and likely familiar with their workings. This can be confirmed by their appearance in a Confucian classic he was known to have studied the 周礼 Zhōu Lǐ ‘3rd Dynasty Rites’ (Needham, 1962). The process of using the device is too complex to outline here but its construction included use of the Earthly Branches, the 天干 Tiān Gān ‘Heavenly Stems’ 7, the Twenty-Eight 宿 Xiù ‘Asterisms’ 8 and possibly even the Eight Diagrams.

APPLICATION

This last part completes the overview of the text and ‘rounds out’ Guo Pu’s antique method. Whilst he recorded no instances of the completed process we can look to a likely inspiration of his work, as summary of the full analysis - the poem 公劉 Gōng Liú ‘Duke Liu’. Taken from another Confucian Classic Guo Pu keenly deliberated upon, the 詩經 Shī Jīng ‘Odes Classic’. The six verses tell the story of Duke Liu and his efforts to locate a prosperous new land for his people, displaced from their homes by warring clans around the year 1796 B.C.E.. The relevant excerpts from verses 2, 3 and 5 read thus -

篤公劉，‘Sincere Duke Liu,
於胥斯原。 went to survey the countryside.
陟則在巘、 Ascended to follow up to the peak,
复降在原。 turning down onto the plain.
篤公劉， Sincere Duke Liu,
瞻彼溥原、 looking toward a wide plain,
乃陟南岡、 then ascending the southern ridge,
乃觀於京。 to meet upon a centre.
京師之野， A centre for many with open space,
於時處處。 in which opportunity for dwellings.’
篤公劉， Sincere Duke Liu,
既溥既長、 already breadth already length,
既景乃岡、 took their bearings from the ridges,
相其陰陽、 appraised its yin and yang,
觀其流泉。observed its streams and springs.
度其隰原。 Measured its marshes and plains.
度其夕陽。 Measured its setting sun.’

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7 甲 Jià, 乙 Yì, 丙 Bǐng, 丁 Dīng, 戊 Wù, 己 Jǐ, 庚 Gēng, 辛 Xīn, 壬 Rén and 廿 Guǐ
The first part discusses the steps that would be taken to assess the Configuration. To get the best view of a large area and better understand the flow of the Dragon Veins, a practitioner of old would have had to climb a high peak and look down over the land. From this vantage point the Qi flow could be surveyed and a beneficial arrangement chosen.

The second verse quoted concerns the Form. Within the Configuration a practitioner would then have found a flat area suitable for constructing a dwelling or grave. The site was then observed from the front, south, to determine the appropriateness of the Four Image mountains.

The third concerns further aspects of the Form – water courses, and also describes the process of determining Direction. Measurements would have been made and orientations calculated based upon the sun’s shadow. This would have determined the final facing Direction within the Form and Configuration.

CONCLUSION

It may not ever be possible to know for sure the exact process conducted by Guo Pu in conducting an analysis of a site, or even if he did complete such personally. We can say from the investigations outlined above, that the knowledge the Zang Shu has passed down is a fully functioning complete system. Certainly, this was the first method recorded that resembles Feng Shui as we know it today.

As the earliest classical system known it most definitely a useful tool for greater understanding of the development in Feng Shui. It is hoped this 尊經派 Zūn Jīng Pāi ‘Antique School’ could in the future be employed for comparison and critical analysis of more modern counterparts in the hopes of furthering research and establishing credibility for this ancient science.

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