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# Introduction to Feng Shui

JAMPA LUDRUP

Lesson 2:  
Essentials of the Form School, Part 1

Reading:  
*Feng Shui: Seeing Is Believing*  
“Introduction to Geomancy,” pages 1–20

# FENG SHUI: Seeing Is Believing

*Essential Geomancy for Beginners and Skeptics*

by Jampa Ludrup

Foreword by Lama Zopa Rinpoche



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## Introduction to Geomancy



**T**HIS BOOK IS ABOUT the art of improving your luck by first choosing an environment that is conducive to good luck and then manipulating that environment so that the good luck manifests. In East Asia, this is known as *feng shui*, but I prefer the term *geomancy*. Many Westerners are skeptical about this sort of thing, but the good news is that geomancy works whether you believe in it or not. It does not rely on superstition. I use formulas that I have found to work in my own home and in the hundreds of consultations that I have done over the years. I will attempt to explain the most crucial aspects in a way that I hope will be most approachable for Westerners.

I first came across geomancy when I was traveling with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, a Tibetan monk who is widely acknowledged as a great meditation master. You can imagine my surprise when I discovered that in those days he was spending most of his free time investigating *feng shui* books rather than Buddhist texts. I come from a scientific background and appreciate Buddhism for its logical approach. So I told Rinpoche, “I am sorry, but you have to allow me to be skeptical about *feng shui*.” He is well known for his very lengthy explanations, but on this occasion he simply said, “It is just cause and effect.”

When I subsequently went back to Australia, I decided to put some of the *feng shui* principles into practice, just as an experiment; I had no particular belief other than faith in Lama Zopa’s judgement. I was living very simply in one room, writing and meditating,

so it was very easy to put the “right things in the right places.” The results were spectacular. I had no money problems; in fact, I had very generous benefactors. My health was good and everything went well. Then, within a few months, I was offered the best job of my life—English studies tutor to the Spanish reincarnated lama, Lama Osel Rinpoche.

As a practicing Buddhist I am always looking for ways to put into practice what I believe to be the essence of Buddhism—“As much as you can, help others. And if you can’t help them, at least don’t harm them.” So with my own practical experience of the power of geomancy, I started to try to help others to achieve the same results. I was immediately encouraged by the effect it had on people’s lives. The power of the techniques was confirmed again and again. What started as a hobby began slowly taking over my life, from consultations in Europe, Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and Australia, to running feng shui courses, and now this book.

## **HISTORY OF GEOMANCY**

### ***Geomancy Around the World***

There are many forms of geomancy practiced around the world. In Europe a lot of such knowledge was lost during the Middle Ages, but the monuments to it remain. Structures such as Stonehenge in England have slowly revealed their secrets over recent years. The network of paths of subtle energy called “ley lines” that coincide with some of the most spiritual places on Earth has recently come to the forefront of discussion again.

Ley lines can be detected by gifted practitioners using a pendulum, wooden twigs, or metal rods. The rods are bent at a ninety-degree angle at one end and held loosely in each hand. Then you slowly walk over the land to be investigated. When you cross an energy line or a source of water, the rods seemingly cross by themselves. I had some experience of this in India when we were looking for a good place to drill for water. In Europe it is often assumed that a geomancy consultation will include the detection of these lines. There are various tech-

niques of *geobiology*, as it is known, that can locate them. Some involve machinery that is a lot more complicated than metal rods. In my experience, the most important thing about these lines is to not locate your bed or desk above one of them—indeed, anything where you spend a lot of time. Proximity to these lines is a condition for quite serious illnesses, even cancer. So always avoid them if at all possible. When I am checking the best location for a house on a new piece of land for a client, I always try to avoid having any part of the house on these ley lines. The curious thing is that there is no equivalent practice in Chinese feng shui. They seem to be unaware of ley lines and there is no advice on detecting or dealing with any similar energy. However, I think it is important to check your property to see if there are any.

Nowadays, feng shui has taken hold of the European imagination. I have found a lot of interest in my courses and in consultations in Europe in general. Even 10 Downing Street, the residence of the British Prime Minister, was “feng shuied.” The words *feng shui* have now entered the Western vocabulary.

Other parts of the world have similar arts. In Africa it seems that *geomancy* means “divination using earth or stones to foretell the future.” In Indonesia, I heard of Muslim texts that deal with geomancy techniques. In India there is an advanced form of geomancy called *vaastu*, which is very similar in many ways to the feng shui that is practiced in China. There is some debate about where the practice originated. Some say that *vaastu* was the precursor of feng shui in China, that it flourished with Buddhism in India and then went through Tibet to China. This seems unlikely as there are ancient Chinese feng shui texts that predate Buddhism. Also, I have not heard of feng shui texts in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition—although it appears the Tibetan non-Buddhist “Black Hat” sect have them. In addition, feng shui is very clearly related to the I Ching, which originated in China about four thousand years ago and was probably practiced in some form even before this. So it seems more likely that *vaastu* is a derivative of feng shui. *Vaastu* is widely practiced in India, and is becoming more popular. In general, I have found the feng shui techniques that I will explain here to be more powerful than the *vaastu* or Tibetan Black Hat systems of geomancy.

These days in China the authorities have repressed the practice of feng shui, and so it is practiced primarily in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Feng shui is also practiced in Korea and Japan. In Korea it is called *p'ung suchirisol*. The founder of the Yi dynasty (1392–1910) in Korea moved the capital to Seoul because the site was said by a monk to fulfill all the requirements of *p'ung suchirisol*.

There are three main branches of feng shui, which I characterize as the Form School, the Compass School, and the Flying Star School. They are mainly complementary but sometimes contradictory. It is these schools that I will be discussing in this book.

### ***History of Feng Shui***

Feng shui is by far the most sophisticated form of geomancy in the world today. It has developed over a period of at least four thousand years in China. China has always had many problems due to floods and strong winds and the art of feng shui was originally developed to try to avert disaster from these elements—*feng* means wind and *shui* means water.

In the beginning of its development, it was practiced by people in every village. However, as the power of the technique became more widely known, it became the sole prerogative of the imperial palace and the ruling classes. Presumably this happened because it was so closely linked to the wisdom of the I Ching, which had an enormous impact on the philosophy of government. It was during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties that feng shui reached its peak of sophistication.

The emperors guarded the secrets of feng shui jealously. Emperor Chu, the founder of the Qing dynasty, is said to have gone as far as spreading fake books on the subject so as to confuse and weaken his enemies. This could be one reason why there are contradictory traditions of feng shui these days. The Forbidden City was designed and built upon feng shui guidelines that would promise success for the inhabitants for hundreds of years. In Japan, for similar reasons,

people were forbidden to build any residence with the same orientation as the palace of the emperor in Kyoto.

When the communists took over China, feng shui was banned, although it is said that Mao Zedong followed its principles himself. Practitioners of both feng shui and Taoism were persecuted and many fled from China to the free countries in Southeast Asia. It is in Southeast Asia that feng shui is now most widely practiced, especially in Taiwan, which is the main center for feng shui masters.

### ***Feng Shui Practitioners of Note***

Around the world there are many geomancy practitioners and writers—I guess I have become yet another one of them!—but there are three masters in general that I would like to mention.

In Singapore, the Buddhist Reverend Hong Choon was a very great master, particularly of the Form School of feng shui. He was widely reputed to be one of the main advisors to the government and so played an important part in the spectacular success of this small island state. He practiced with a purely altruistic motivation that was immensely admirable and never sought particular success for himself or his monastery.

Two figures that were very important for the spread of feng shui in the West are the Malaysian grand master Yap Cheng Hai and his famous interpreter, who is now a master of the art in her own right: Lillian Too. I first met them in the most holy of Buddhist places: Bodhgaya in northeast India, where Siddhartha became the enlightened Buddha and embarked on his mission to free all beings from suffering.

In the past, feng shui secrets were guarded jealously by the masters and were often only passed on to close disciples when the master was near death. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Yap Cheng Hai for the selfless way in which he has shared his knowledge with so many. Lillian Too, in her turn, has popularized Master Yap's knowledge and that of other masters in a series of highly successful books. She has also added to the body of knowledge through



her own observation and the rediscovery of ancient formulas. Both Lillian and Master Yap run very successful courses. I fully acknowledge their encouragement and wisdom in the development of my interest in geomancy.

### **The I Ching**

The source of much of the wisdom of feng shui appears to lie in the I Ching, or “Book of Changes,” as it is known. *I* means “truth” and *ching* means “change.” The origins of the I Ching itself are rooted in the distant past. Originally it was developed as a means of divination, but later it also evolved into a philosophical work involving all aspects of good governance and life in general. This was mainly due to the efforts of the famous scholar Confucius. At first, the divination itself was done using animal bones or tortoise shells. Later, yarrow stalks were preferred.

In his excellent and comprehensive new translation of this remarkable book, Alfred Huang says, “The ancient sages watched astronomical phenomena in the sky and topographical features on the earth, and studied the relationships among all beings. They realized that in Heaven and Earth there exists a universal principle that everything is in a continuous process of change. Change is absolute and certain; only the principle of change never changes.” The main theme of the I Ching is that everything is in a process of continuous change, rising and falling in a progressive evolutionary advancement.

In this way, the I Ching represents the cosmic balance of the universe. The more we are in tune with the universal forces, the more harmonious our lives will be. This balance is symbolized by the famous circle of yin and yang.

The characteristic called *yang* is applied to the masculine, strong, firm, and active things; *yin* is applied to the feminine, yielding, weak, and passive things. In the symbol, *yang* is represented by white and *yin* by black. Yin should not be thought of as negative and undesirable, and *yang* positive; the yin/yang symbol shows very clearly that yin and yang must embrace each other. It also shows that in the *yang* it is necessary to have a little *yin* and in the *yin* a little



yang. This is the way to preserve a proper balance, according to the wisdom of the I Ching.

## **Confucius**

Almost two thousand years after the origins of the I Ching, the famous sage Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) brought it to a new level of sophistication. He added commentaries called the Ten Wings to the explanations of the trigrams. These commentaries are crucial; without them, divination is very difficult.

Alfred Huang says, “After Confucius and his students had written the commentaries, it became known as a book of ancient wisdom. It is a book that not only tells one who consults it about the present situation and future potential but also gives instruction about what to do and what not to do to obtain good fortune and to avoid misfortune. But one still retains free choice. The guidance is based on comprehensive observations of natural laws by ancient sages and their profound experiences of the laws of cause and effect.” The work of Confucius was carried on after his death and the I Ching became more and more refined. By the Song period (960–1279) it was the main philosophical text. It was also the primary source of wisdom on statecraft and was extremely important for the ruling elite of China.

There are many aspects of feng shui that rely on the wisdom of the I Ching; its development was very much bound up with the development of this classic text. As the I Ching developed and became more profound, so did the art of feng shui, until both were at the heart of good governance in imperial China.

## **BUDDHISM AND FENG SHUI**

Over the years I have taken an interest in the links between Tibetan Buddhism and feng shui, and so far I have found that they are very tenuous indeed. Feng shui has been practiced in various forms for at least the last four thousand years.

It therefore predates Buddhism by fifteen hundred years. The link between the cultures of India and China seems to have been through Tibet, and here it seems that the practice of Tibetan astrology holds some clues.

Tibetan culture was far more influenced by India than China, although nowadays it must seem somewhat unique. However, it is very clear that Buddhism is at the very heart of Tibetan culture, and Buddhism came from India. As far as I can ascertain, until quite recently feng shui was practiced in the capital city, Lhasa, but only among the elite families. There is no evidence that it was used in the monasteries at all, and these formed the basis of education in Tibet for centuries. There are some texts that give advice on the orientation and dimensions of temples, but this does not conform to any particular school of feng shui. It may be that the essentially nomadic nature of life in Tibet made the practice of feng shui unnecessary.

In the sixth century C.E. the king of Tibet sent four scholars to China to learn elemental astrology and astronomy. It seems that at this time the Tibetans also absorbed knowledge of these sciences from the Indians, the Arabs, and even the Greeks. The next king, Songtsen Gampo, was responsible for creating a Tibetan written language based on Sanskrit script. He also married a Chinese princess called Wencheng who brought many scholars of classical astrology, astronomy, and medicine with her from China. So at this time, knowledge of the I Ching and feng shui must have been available in Tibet.

Buddhism came to Tibet from India in the eighth century C.E. and quickly flourished. In particular Tantric Buddhism seized the imagination of the Tibetan people; the Tibetans say that in 1027 C.E. the system of meditation known as the Kalachakra Tantra was translated into Tibetan and the practice became widely established. The Kalachakra Tantra clearly describes the cycle of the elements. At death the elements of the body are described as absorbing into each other. Earth dissolves into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into space. This reflects the destructive cycle of the elements in feng shui. In the Chinese system, air is replaced by metal, and space by wood. The trigrams of the I Ching are also to be found in the iconography of the Kalachakra system.

This rather tenuous link is the closest I can find between geomancy and Buddhism. Maybe more will emerge later. We should not be too surprised at the lack of common ground however. The main focus of geomancy is the manipulation of those outer environmental energies that can cause good fortune to ripen. Buddhism is concerned with the inner mental energies that determine our destiny; it is the internal search for truth and peace that is the driving force in Buddhism, and the outer environment, or destiny, is simply a reflection of our progress in controlling and channelling our inner forces. Put simply, if we always create the right causes, we must always achieve the right effects.

Buddhist monks are sometimes criticized for their interest in feng shui. For one thing, it appears to be mostly derived from Taoist beliefs and not from the words of the Buddha. Additionally, people who practice it are generally looking for some material benefit, which would seem at odds with the more noble aims of a religious philosophy. I can offer no better explanation than Reverend Hong Choon, who told a student that, as a Buddhist, he had a duty to help others. He said it would be wrong for him to watch passively as others strayed from the correct path and not to guide them back.

In my own view, life is hard enough without making it more difficult unnecessarily. How can we hope to find enough peace and space in our minds for loftier and spiritually nourishing pursuits when we are beset by basic problems? Geomancy has some of the answers to these basic problems and so we do indeed have a duty to help others by using its techniques. It is clearly wrong, however, for so-called religious people to use it purely for material gain.

## **FENG SHUI AND SUPERSTITION**

Some people would say that all feng shui is superstition and therefore not worthy of study. Indeed, many writers on the subject include a lot of Chinese superstition in their advice. This involves keeping such objects as three-toed wooden frogs with coins in their mouths, tortoises with dragon's heads, good

luck gods, golden sailing ships, strings of Chinese coins, and so on. I am not saying that these things do not work. Maybe they do for some people. Indeed, I met an Englishman in Singapore who always carries a three-toed frog with him for wealth luck. He described a disaster he had at home when his young son accidentally broke the frog. It seems he was in something of a panic to find another one in England before he set off on an important business trip. Curiously though, he seemed rather indifferent to feng shui techniques.

Clearly, we can become rather obsessive about superstitious things in a way that becomes unhealthy. It is important to keep a sensible balance in one's life and not to worry unnecessarily. I do not recommend that my Western clients buy a lot of Chinese objects; they generally do not fit with the overall décor and style of the house and there is no point in trading a set of Western superstitions for Chinese ones.

However, it is clear to me that feng shui itself can be practiced in a non-superstitious way. That has been my approach, and the recommendations I make are generally the essential ones that I have found to work whether you believe them or not. If you want to follow Chinese superstition that is up to you, but in my experience it is not necessary for successful feng shui practice.

## **CAN GEOMANCY REALLY MAKE US HAPPY?**

This is a difficult question to answer. So much depends on the individual and their way of thinking. I have done consultations for many materially rich people with some magnificent houses. Paradoxically, these have also been some of the most unhappy people, with the most worrying problems. We all seem to regard material progress as the yardstick of success in our society. We have an insatiable desire for bigger houses in better neighborhoods, luxury cars, labor-saving devices, and better entertainment. We are constantly looking for better paying, more interesting occupations. Sometimes this is driven by the desire to provide the very best for our children. Sometimes it is simply the desire for higher status. We subconsciously believe that these acquisitions will help us to

be happy. Ironically, it seems that possessions end up owning us. Maintaining a luxurious lifestyle can become a burden in itself.

People turn to geomancy hoping that there is an easier way to create good fortune. Indeed, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the wish to find happiness. It is innate in every living being. But to think that it solely comes from material possessions is wrong. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with having material possessions either, but if they come at the expense of a good heart then they can bring you no benefit in the long run.

The very worst that can happen with geomancy is that it becomes your new unhealthy obsession. We Westerners are always hoping for quick and easy solutions to problems. We turn to religion, astrology, numerology, palmistry, yoga, exercise, new-age therapies, meditation, and geomancy, hoping to make sense of our crazy world. Some people flit from one to another looking for a quick fix. However, all of them require some perseverance in order to find benefit.

Meditation and geomancy have one thing in common. When you start meditation and look at your mind all you can see is clutter, disarray, and things hopelessly out of place. Similarly, when you first look at the geomancy of your house, all you can see are faults—the door is facing the wrong way; the bed has to be put in the corner; the right-hand building is higher than the left; there is no water in front. It can drive you crazy!

No house is perfect and it is very rare for a house to be a complete disaster either. The trick is to make the best of what you have; to make it work for you as best you can. Every house can be improved—and believe me, if you are living in a house that has really bad geomancy for you, you know it already. Just try to apply the geomancy techniques and then forget about it for a couple of months. Then check if there has been any benefit. Constantly worrying about whether you have done it right and whether it will work or not will not help you.

My first Buddhist teacher, Venerable Geshe Dawo, used to tell me, “Worry doesn’t help. If there is something you can do, you do it and there is no need to worry. If there is nothing you can do, why worry?” Geomancy can help you to take control of the external environmental forces that shape your life, but

if you want to be really, truly happy you must take control of your mind and your heart.

Anyway, enough of the theory of geomancy and how it came into being—you want to know what advice it can give you and how to put it into practice. I will try to explain, in the most logical order I can, what you most need to know in order to have more success in your life.

## **FUNDAMENTALS OF GEOMANCY**

### ***Looking for Luck***

People use geomancy to try to improve their luck, but luck is a relative thing. If you have enjoyed a rich lifestyle since you were young, you may feel unlucky if you suddenly have to go without something you consider essential, like a car. However, someone living in the slums in India may consider you to be very lucky indeed, even without a car. On the other hand you may find that many people in India are luckier spiritually than you are. It depends on your priorities and circumstances, and these change as we age and go through life. But whatever kind of luck you are hoping for, where does it come from and how does it manifest? And why is it that geomancy seems to work for some but not for others?

There is an old saying in business circles that there is “No such thing as a free lunch.” The same thing applies to geomancy. Luck is not just spirited out of nowhere. In order to have a beneficial result, there must first be a positive action—in order to receive good fortune, you must first do good. That positive action creates a seed, which will ripen into a positive result when the right conditions come together. Then it is up to you to seize the opportunity that appears. Geomancy provides the cooperative conditions through which the good luck becomes manifest. This is what Lama Zopa meant when he said, “It is just cause and effect.”

In this way geomancy makes up only one third of your luck. The first third is creating the causal seed through a positive action, the second third is making

the seed ripen through geomancy, and the last third is recognising and seizing the opportunity that is created. In the same way, negative actions create seeds for negative results, and bad environmental energy will allow those seeds to ripen, and then you will experience bad luck. This is where geomancy is so critical for the type of luck we experience in life, and why some houses and businesses are luckier than others for us.

The dominant philosophy in the West is scientific materialism. We demand logical and empirical explanations for everything and cannot accept the existence of subtle physical and mental forces. We think of ourselves as individuals, responsible for our own lives; more and more we are disconnected from our fellow beings and our environment. We cannot see any connection between how we live our lives and the fortune we experience. More than that, we cannot see the basic inter-connectedness of all things. We actually depend upon one another and our environment for survival, yet somehow we believe we depend ultimately only on ourselves. We say “I make my own luck,” and to some extent that is true, but that luck is made in dependence on others and ripens in dependence on our environment—good reasons to cherish both!

### **Creating Luck**

To create good luck you must first have a good intention. The more pure the intention, the better the result. So for instance if you give money to a beggar in the hope that it will improve his life, that is a better motivation than giving it to him to get rid of your loose change. Both actions are positive, but the former is made much more so by the intention. The more unselfish the motivation, the better.

Each type of luck—whether wealth, health, relationship luck, or help from mentors—has its cause. For instance, generosity is the cause of wealth. My mother used to ruefully say, “Much gets more.” In our family we never had much opportunity to be generous with money. But one can also be generous of spirit, giving what little you can to those who give you the opportunity. You can be generous just with your time, your love, and your support. The more giving



you are, the more seeds of wealth are created. The more noble the intention, the more seeds are created. As they ripen, you can create a flow of wealth that can benefit many and, by the way, create more seeds of wealth. In that way “much” does indeed “get more.”

From a Buddhist point of view, we have all had many previous lifetimes, during which we may have taken the opportunity to create positive seeds. Such seeds are carried forward with us from life to life. This is why the most miserly person still has the possibility of his or her wealth luck ripening, and why people who act in a negative way in general may still appear to have good luck—they still have positive luck from their previous lives. The problem for them is that they are exhausting their stores of seeds and they will run out one day.

Of course, this is a Buddhist perspective and you can accept it or leave it as you see fit. The point is that geomancy works regardless of your philosophical beliefs, so you can reap the benefits whether you are religious, atheist, or agnostic.

### **Making Luck Manifest**

There are two ways to make good luck manifest. You can pray to a higher power, or you can manipulate your environment in a positive way. Sometimes the former will lead you automatically to the latter. For those who do not believe in higher powers, then geomancy is essential.

People are often afraid that when they invite the geomancer they risk being told to break walls and move swimming pools. In fact it is rarely so drastic. Usually improvements can be made by placing a small water feature such as a fish tank, hanging a couple of wind chimes, moving some pots and flowers, and putting a lamp here and there. Often it is simply a matter of relocating things that you already own. In this way, it is very affordable and certainly need not be very expensive.

How do we assess whether geomancy has affected our luck or not? We have some idea of our general circumstances and whether they are steadily improving or not. Sometimes we feel there is some unexplained obstacle that prevents

us from achieving something that we expect. When you use geomancy, the block is removed or there is some other unexpected beneficial result. Sometimes the result is quite subtle or can come in a disguised way, so you do not always spot the potential benefit immediately. You may even miss it entirely due to some predisposition or habit that makes you keep looking elsewhere for opportunity. Often however, the change is unmistakable. Some water features can bring unexpected wealth within as little as nine days. Normally you would expect a result within a few months.

### **Seizing Luck**

When the opportunity presents itself, you must seize good luck and make it work for you. All kinds of opportunities may come, but if you are lazy or inattentive they will just pass you by. Quite often opportunities come but we fail to recognize them because we are so set in our ways that we think that they lie outside of our expertise or ability. We can only take full advantage if we are prepared to look “outside of the box.” We must be prepared to go beyond our normal mindset.

For example, a friend of mine in Kuala Lumpur had his heart set on working in interior design and was completely absorbed in redesigning his family home in order to launch his career. His house should have been very lucky, but I detected a blockage in the orientation of the front door. Removing the metal security grille was enough; within two days he had a wonderful and unexpected offer that set him off on a completely different and successful career.

There are many other factors that affect our ability to take full advantage of our good luck: our physical health, self-confidence, emotional stability, and general level of education. If we improve these factors it seems that our “luck” improves. In fact, we are simply better able to seize the opportunities when they come.

### **Dealing with “Bad” Luck**

In geomancy we are usually obsessed with the creation of “good” luck. But sometimes “bad” luck is not necessarily a negative thing. Often, it is adversity

that helps us grow. I became interested in Buddhism and subsequently in geomancy after an illness that lasted three months. I had been overdoing it in the corporate world and now had to pay for it. During my illness, I had to rest completely, and after exhausting my interest in the local video library I picked up a book by the Dalai Lama in the New Age bookshop next door. This opportunity completely transformed my life in a most beneficial way. I went from computers to compassion. I can truly say that the illness was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

They say, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” It is important not to become too obsessed with geomancy, otherwise you may blame every little negative thing that happens to you on your environment and you may miss the “silver lining” that is there in all of life’s problems. In any case, geomancy is never perfect. It is impossible to create the perfect house—otherwise there would still be Chinese emperors. Every building has some negative aspects and it impossible to fix all of them with geomancy. We can only try to minimize them.

There are many ways to solve life’s problems. Obviously, the solutions that cause the most benefit and the least harm are the best and there are many philosophies and religions that can help you to understand how to achieve them. But your environment also plays a crucial role in both the arising of and the solution to problems. That is what prompted Lama Zopa Rinpoche to say to me, “The best way to help people is with religious philosophy—the next best is geomancy.”

### ***Environmental Influences***

Environmental influences are a major factor in creating the conditions for your luck to manifest itself. Some are much more obvious than others.

### **Gross Environmental Influences**

It is very clear how our gross physical environment has a major effect on our lives. Noise, weather and climate, industrial pollution, and general geography

and geology all influence our general well-being. The presence of a major land feature such as a great mountain or volcano can even induce a more spiritual view of life. We see this in such places as Nepal and Bali. In Bali, the active volcano Mount Agung has a brooding presence that pervades the island. The people practice a very active form of Hinduism and make extensive offerings every day to pacify the local spirits and placate Agung. It seems to work, and most visitors are impressed with the spirituality, peace, and creativity of the people who live there. In Nepal and Tibet the high mountains have had a major effect on the culture of the inhabitants. It seems that such harsh conditions are very conducive to spiritual practice. I have always been amazed at the sunny dispositions and generosity of those who live in such places.

It seems that industrial and other pollution always has a damaging effect on people. The spirits of those who live under such conditions are usually low. Pollution has a depressing effect on a society and people can feel quite hopeless. The more polluted an environment becomes, the less incentive people feel they have to keep it clean. It is a vicious cycle that results in worse conditions.

These days we suffer from other pollution also. We are surrounded by an increasingly pervasive network of electromagnetic radiation. All electronic devices give off this kind of radiation, from electric kettles to mobile phones. The behavior of some animals can be severely affected by it. For instance, some species of bees will attack any electrical object, seeing it as a threat to the community. Fire ants in the southern United States are so strongly attracted to electrical radiation that they will take up residence in traffic lights, computers, and other equipment, causing chaos. Some writers of books on geomancy make mention of electromagnetic radiation as a negative influence. However, I would find it much harder to live without these radiation-causing gadgets and, as far as I know, there is no proven scientific link between low-level radiation and disease, as everyone fears there is. However, it does seem to make sense to reduce your exposure as much as possible and so I agree with those that suggest we should reduce the amount of electrical gadgetry in the bedroom. After all, that is where we spend most of our time. This just seems to be common sense to me, and not geomancy.

Also in the realm of common sense is the effect of the absence or presence of clutter. A cluttered environment is the result of a cluttered or careless mind rather than the cause of it. When you clear it up you are ordering your environment in a positive and comprehensible way and this must have a beneficial effect on the mind—and also on your ability to grasp opportunities when they come.

Wind and water are the major influences on those that live close to nature—indeed, as I mentioned, *feng* means “wind” and *shui* means “water.” A strong wind can either provide a lot of energy or can be tiring and unsettling. When I was a schoolteacher we used to dread windy days because the children would be full of a kind of wild energy that was hard for us to handle. The sea has enormous power and just watching it can change our mood. Water gives life and we all appreciate the presence of it, but it can also be destructive. It seems that every year there are more and more floods in different places around the world—a clear sign that we are not taking proper care of our environment.

These gross environmental influences are very obvious. It is very clear where the good and bad locations are from this point of view. So I do not need to explain to you which parts of the world, which countries, and which regions are likely to be “lucky”—usually this is very clear to you because it is where the fortunate people live! However, I can give some reasons why certain places may be luckier than others.

### **Subtle Environmental Influences**

It is not so clear how our environment can affect us in subtle ways, and indeed this has been the subject of careful observation in Asia for thousands of years. These subtle influences exist both inside the building and outside in the immediate vicinity. Some are related to the general topography or landforms around the building; these influences are the subject of study of the Form School of geomancy. Others are related to the best orientation of an individual person within the building; this is the area of expertise of the Compass School. More difficult to understand are the influences of the elements (earth, fire, water,

metal, and wood) in various parts of the property. Even more subtly hidden are the periodic influences that depend on the orientation and age of the building itself. This is the field of study of the Flying Star School.

The external influences of the Form School include the presence of hills, large buildings, trees, towers, and transmitters. The location and flow of water is very important, as are the roads that lead to and from the property. The Form School also gives advice for the inside of the building—the positioning of doors, beds, shelving, pillars, and so on.

In the Compass School the emphasis is on the orientation of the building in relation to personal good and bad directions that are based on your year of birth. Similarly, the orientation of your bed, workplace, and doors are crucial. In many years of consultation I have found the advice of this school to be the most easy to apply and particularly effective. It also deals with the proper location of the various elements, such as wood and metal, within the building and the surrounding land. It is the Form School and Compass School recommendations that I will mainly be dealing with in this book.

The Flying Star School is the hardest to understand and explain. It requires some skill with a magnetic compass, a good understanding of the Compass School, and strong familiarity with the cycles of elements, which I will explain later. A good understanding of the I Ching is also very useful. Flying Star is the most powerful form of geomancy but its full breadth and depth are beyond the scope of this introductory text, though I will outline those areas of Flying Star that are essential to know at first.

The Chinese call the subtle environmental influences *sheng chi* or “heaven’s breath.” Negative influences are called *shar chi* or “killing breath.” In both cases, when the *chi* energy is encouraged to slow down and meander, it becomes beneficial, and when it travels quickly and in straight lines, it can become detrimental to good fortune.

It is difficult to offer a hypothesis for the origin and nature of these environmental forces. Clearly they have something to do with magnetism—both the

earth's magnetic field and the influence of various objects upon it. By manipulating these you can definitely change your luck. The forces also clearly have something to do with the gravity exerted by large landforms and by celestial objects. But as of yet, there is no instrument that can entirely measure these subtle influences.

Like astrology, the practice of geomancy varies greatly in the quality of the practitioners. A poor practitioner will give both arts a bad name. Neither practice is yet scientific in the strict sense of the word, although both are based on centuries of careful observation of cause and effect. The recommendations that I will give in this book have been given by many masters over the centuries, and by myself in many consultations, and thus my recommendations have the weight of both history and personal experience. I urge you to try them for yourself and then you will see the results.