CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF TEXTS

The basic mechanism of the original conception of fengshui is perhaps best outlined in the Book of Burial:

Qi circulates through the earth according to the configurational force of the earth. It gathers where the configurational force stops. The qi follows the trunk of a hill and branches along its ridges. The Classic says that if the qi rides the wind it is scattered, if it is bounded by water it is held.¹

Thus, the consideration is that qi courses through the land in lines or veins as found in acupuncture. This similarity is also apparent in the relationship between vitality and qi. Again this is perhaps best described in the Book of Burial:

The Classic says that when qi circulates through landforms, entities are thereby given life. The configurational forces of the earth are the basic veins. The configurational forces of the mountains are the basic bones. They snake either west to east or north to south, curling back on themselves as if crouching and waiting, as if with something in their grasp. Qi desires to proceed but it is cut off. It desires to halt and becomes deep. Where it approaches and accumulates, stops and gathers, there will be a clashing of yang with a harmonising of yin, the earth will be rich and the water deep, the grasses lush and the forests luxuriant.²

Therefore, in this cosmology fertility is synonymous with the accumulation of qi and the correct association of the male and female principles.

The idea that the accumulation of qi is negatively affected by wind and positively affected by water is echoed in the words of Qing Wu's Burial Classic when it states:

Qi is scattered when riding the wind. Where its veins meet water, it stops and is retained coiling around enriching and ennobling the land.³

In fact, the commentary of Wu Qinze on this text states that this is the classic mentioned in the Book of Burial. However, even though there does seem to have been a certain Qing Wu in the Han dynasty, as has already

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¹ JDBS, p. 1.
² Ibid., p. 1.
³ CSJX, 0175, p. 4.
been pointed out in the Introduction there has been much evidence to suggest that this *Burial Classic* was written much later perhaps to validate and provide a basis for the *Book of Burial*. Nevertheless, the research of Gao Youqian argues that Qing Wu, rather than being a person, is actually a name for the ancestors of the later specialists in *fengshui*, that is the female shamans who used dance to tame the spirits, the *wu* in Qing Wu being a homophone with the same tone for *wu* meaning shaman. This is a very interesting argument in light of the Tang dynasty *yin-yang* specialist Lu Cai’s strong objections to the practices of *wu* shamans in his introduction to the *Book of Burial*. 4

Whether the *Burial Classic* was actually written in the Han dynasty and whether Qing Wu denotes a person or a concept notwithstanding, this text does reflect the concepts outlined in the earliest texts and, in fact, goes closest to outlining the ideal armchair configuration noted by Bennett and the effect that it has on focussing energy when the *Burial Classic* states:

> With 3 ridges the *qi* is made whole and the configurational force converge from all directions. If the front is screened and the back is embracing, all the auspices will arrive in their entirety. 7

There is also a similar theoretical basis to the *Burial Classic* and the *Book of Burial*. In these the accumulation of *qi* accords with the harmonisation of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Phases with emphasis on the form and configurational force not being in opposition. The mathematical relationship between form and configurational force is even outlined in the *Book of Burial* which states that the “configurational force is ten times that of form”. 8 The *Burial Classic* does, moreover, mention the terrestrial branch, *geng*, on one occasion but there is certainly no emphasis on the terrestrial branches nor the celestial stems.

The *Classic of Siting*, however, fully utilises these concepts of branches and stems to denote both time and space in addition to *yin* and *yang*, and Five Phases cosmology. There is even a formulation of the correct amount of *yin* and *yang* indicated in two different parts of the text:

> If there is a preponderance of either *yin* or *yang* then it is inauspicious. There is a preponderance of either *yin* or *yang* if a *yang* site beckons the

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4 Gao, Youqian, op. cit. pp. 25-27.
6 Bennett, S. J., op. cit. p. 11.
7 CSJX, 0175, p. 8.
8 JDBS, vol. 6, no. 51, *Huangdi zhai jing*, p. 4L.