

FENG SHUI IN MODERN HOUSE DESIGN SEARCHING FOR THE RATIONALE AND POSSIBLE IMPACTS ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Feng Shui, the "wind-water", is a Chinese system of geomancy using the laws of both Heaven and Earth for harmony and balance of life with the positive qi. Feng Shui is widely used to orient temples, palaces, shops, houses, and other structures, with the reference to local features such as bodies of water, stars, or a compass. The Feng Shui also informs the physical arrangements for manipulation and channeling the qi (positive or negative energy). Although Feng Shui is related to traditional believe and propitious manner, but some of its principles are rational. The current research is conducted to investigate any positive impacts of the Feng Shui application in modern house design. A house in Jakarta designed with Feng Shui was analyzed. The strategies were later examined based on the sustainable architectural design principles, especially its impact on the house functionality.

Keywords: Feng Shui; functionality; rationale; sustainable architectural design.

INTRODUCTION

The Feng Shui, the "wind-water", is a Chinese system of geomancy using the laws of both Heaven and Earth for harmony and balance of life with the positive qi. Feng Shui is widely used to orient temples, palaces, shops, houses, and other structures, with the reference to local features such as bodies of water, stars, or a compass. The Feng Shui also informs the physical arrangements for manipulation and channeling the qi (positive or negative energy). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feng_shui).

Feng Shui is widely accepted in China, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Guiley, 1991, quoted in Montenegro, 2003). Feng Shui came to the United States and other Western countries in the 1970s, and later was used by Donald Trump and Merrill Lynch (Singh, 2000, quoted in Montenegro, 2003). In 2001, Hong Kong billionaire businessman, Eric Hotung, decided to sell Senator Ted Kennedy's house that he bought earlier because of "bad Feng Shui" (Trudeau, 2001, quoted in Montenegro, 2003). This exposed the Feng Shui further and made more and more people believe in the system, such as business people, merchants, home builders, real estate brokers, interior designers, corporate managers, and regular home buyers. They spent enormously for the consulting services (Singh, 2000; Hanks, 2002; Yui, 2002; Heyamoto, 2002; Athens, 2000; quoted in Montenegro, 2003).

In Indonesia, the Feng Shui is also believed by many business persons and house owners. However, most Chinese Indonesian applied Feng Shui with lack of theory and consideration (<http://properti.kompas.com/kolom/fengshui>, <http://www.indofengshui.com/paidarea/index.php/Kompas.html>, <http://rumahminimalissederhana.com/category/fengshui-rumah/>, <http://www.qualife-fengshui.com/index.php/2-uncategorised/6-praktek-feng-shui-benarkah-dapat-memperbaiki-nasib-seseorang>, http://www.propertykita.com/artikel/fengshui/feng_shui_yang_memberi_harmoni-1368.html).

Unfortunately, the Feng Shui application is often considered incompatible with Christianity. The Architecture Study Program of Petra Christian University, for instance, was discouraged to implement it. The research question being addressed here is whether there are any positive impacts of the Feng Shui application in relation to functionality. The Goals of the Project are:

- To find whether the Feng Shui application improve the functionality of the architectural design,
- To find functional design solution for a house case study that is designed with Feng Shui

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main essence of Feng Shui is the qi. It could be defined as energy or force that provides vitality, harmony, creativity, also moral courage. It also

controls every aspect of the universe and it was developed by Lao Tzu, Confucius, Mencius, between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C. (Guiley, 1991, quoted in Montenegro, 2003). The qi should be controlled not to flow quickly or slowly. It could be destructive if it totally blocked (Henwood and Choy, 1999, quoted in Montenegro, 2003). The qi could be divided into two elements such as the yin (shade) and yang (light). And they should be in balance or complementing each other (Guiley, 1991; Wong, 1997, quoted in Montenegro, 2003).

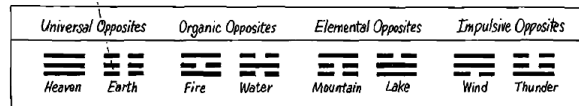
The Chinese cosmology actually tries to preserve the harmony of heaven, earth, and human beings. The translation is that the heaven qi, earth qi, and human qi, (social qi and personal qi) must be in the perfect harmony. The Feng Shui could be described as a study of relationship between the way of heaven, the earth and the human beings. Therefore, human can choose a life and place to live that harmonizes with the way of being human (ren tao). This relationship is described by eight different combinations of three parallel unbroken and broken lines called trigrams (or Bagua), which described in the I Ching book (Henwood and Choy, 1999; Wong, 1997, quoted in Montenegro, 2003).

Henwood and Choy (1999) recommended not to attract the negative energy (sha qi), which “strikes” quickly in straight lines. Therefore, the straight pathways and other straight line design forms are to be avoided. On the other hand, the positive energy (sheng qi) should be attracted, which moves along curved lines.

Spear, (1995) suggested to use Bagua for organizing the house. The Bagua is actually used as starting point from which all design decisions are made. The Bagua could be overlaid on the house. The architect or designers could use the basic design principles form Bagua. Basically, the Bagua described 4 pairs such, namely: Heaven and Earth (the Universal Opposites, also masculine and feminine), Fire and Water (the Organic Opposites), Mountain and Lake (the Natural Opposites), Wind and Thunder (the Impulsive Opposites). The Heaven is the creative force, the essential spirit of all, and is called the house of Helpful Friends.

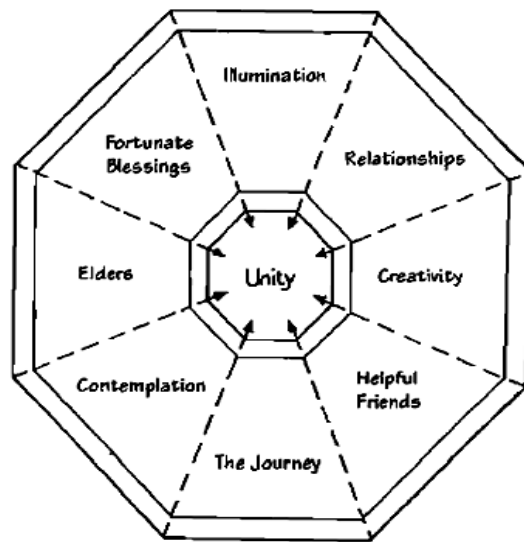
While The Earth is the receptive force, or receiving Heaven’s blessing such as sun rays, rain and other forces and it is called the house of Relationships. The Fire refers to internal light so it is called the house of Illumination. The Water flows through time like the human live therefore it is called the house of Journey. The Mountain cave is the symbol of introspection or called the house of Contemplation. On the other hand, the Lake relates to the joyful expression in

outer world and offspring therefore it is called the house of Creativity. Thunder is like the booming voice of our ancestors therefore it is called the house of Elders. Lastly, the Wind is constantly flowing of good fortune given by the gift of life and represents the house of Fortunate Blessings. When all these houses are in the balance, then the home owner would be in the state of harmony or the house of Unity (Spear, 1995).



Source: Spear, (1995).

Figure 1. The Four Pairs of Trigrams or Bagua



Source: Spear, (1995).

Figure 2. The Houses in the Trigrams or Bagua



Source: <http://www.impression-lifestyle.nl/files/2012/03/Feng-Shui-kleurencirkel.jpg>.

Figure 3. The Trigrams or Bagua

Spear, (1995) further explained that Bagua could be superimposed on the house plan or called the Three-Door Gate of Qi. The Front Door is the “gate” which allows energy to enter the home. The Bagua could be used directly for symmetrical and regular shape. It also could be stretched as long as each area remains proportionally. The Three Door Gate of Qi should be applied locating in the Front Door at the bottom of the page facing down.

Some steps recommended after placing the Bagua over the home plan (Spear, 1995), namely:

1. Negative Spaces

- Reclaim the negative space in the house (the area that is missing in the Bagua house) with mirrors.
- Produce a symmetrical home plan with home expansion.

2. Poor Placement

- Not to place toilets that opens directly to a kitchen.
- Not to locate toilets in the Wind (Fortunate Blessings), or opposite to the front door, or are located in the centre of the house.
- Not to arrange the rooms and corridors that cause doors to bang into each other or obstruct or severely limit free passage.
- Not to design the doors opening into the hallway.
- Put the furniture (bed, desk or stove) to maintain a wide view to doorway or room.
- Put the furniture not directly opposite to the door.
- Put the furniture not at the 45-degree point.

3. Kitchen

- Consider the kitchen as the most important room in the house.
- Design a comfortable ceiling of the kitchen.
- Not to place stoves next to sinks or refrigerators.
- Not to place the stoves under windows or under skylights.
- If a stove is sited in a corner, allow an open view to the door.
- Place the stove facing the east or light (South in the Northern hemisphere and North in the Southern Hemisphere).
- Design the eating areas with calm, clear, uncluttered, peaceful.

4. Bedroom or Sleeping Areas

- As the room is for sleeping, design colors, artwork, and other objects to convey peace.
- Place TV, stereos, entertainment areas far away from the bed.
- Place the bedroom at the rear area of a house, away from the front door.
- Place the bed not blocking closet doors or passage to dressing areas or bathrooms.

- When a bed must be placed under slanted ceilings, install canopy covering the bed running parallel to the sleeping surface.
- Design side tables, headboards dressers, night stands, or valets with slightly rounded edges.

5. Living Areas

- Design the living areas to be comfortable, well – lit.
- Design the seating save for occupants and guests.
- Place couches and chairs protected from behind with wall, bookcase or side table.
- Provide side or end tables nearby the seating located in the middle of the room.

Henwood and Choy (1999) recommend mingua (destiny number) calculation for the house owners (normally the breadwinner/husband) to do first. It is started with calculation of the person’s element (wood, fire, earth, metal, or water), and based on the mingua, the luckiest direction is found.

Other recommendations are also described by Henwood and Choy (1999):

- The stove should be positioned towards the east and southeast of the kitchen because that is the direction for the wood element.
- Flushing the toilet with the lid open increases the chances that “your money will go too.”
- Cover your computer screen at night if it is in a bedroom so it will not “act as a mirror and disturb your spirit” when you are sleeping.
- Hang curtains at the bottom of stairs or put a mirror on the landing to draw qi up so that qi does not flow down and out the door.
- To help qi rise up the stairs, put plants under the stairs or hang art that is “light and bright.”
- Because the kitchen is the money room, cooking on all burners with a variety of food will help bring money in.
- The house’s front door should be simple and practical and face the sun so that it will attract “fame, fortune, and longevity.”
- Do not have the edge of your bed in line with the door; the bed’s head should be on the north/south axis to be “in line with the magnetic energy of the earth.”
- A pointed roof (associated with fire) against a curved roof shape (associated with metal) is destructive since fire melts metal.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted with literature review and an in-house evaluation which designed with the Feng Shui approach. The Feng Shui strategies were checked whether or not they contribute positively to functional live of the house

owners. Later, the positive recommendations would be differentiated from Feng Shui myths.

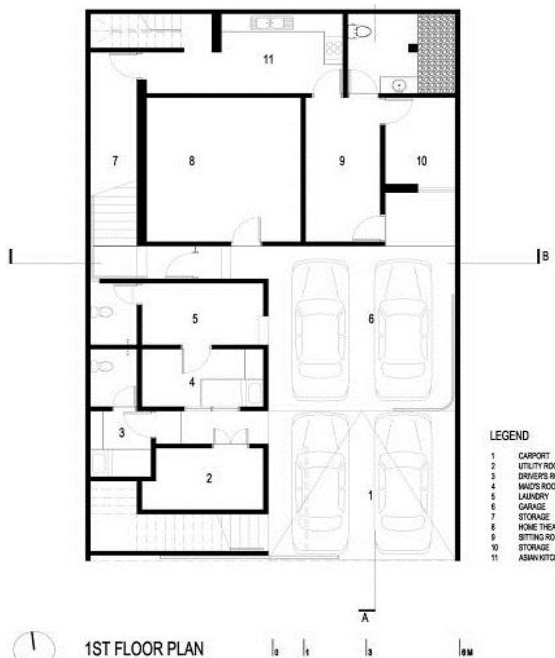
RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Although Feng Shui is related to traditional beliefs and propitious manner, but some of its principles are quite rational. Therefore, the research is conducted to find the rationale of Feng Shui application in modern house design. A house in Jakarta designed with Feng Shui was analysed to find the rationale and the strategies. The strategies were later examined based on the sustainable architectural design principles, especially its impact on the home functionality.

The Leo House in Kelapa Gading, Jakarta, was designed by Edy Hartono, the principal architect of EDHA Architects. (<http://www.edhaarchitects.com/profil.php>).

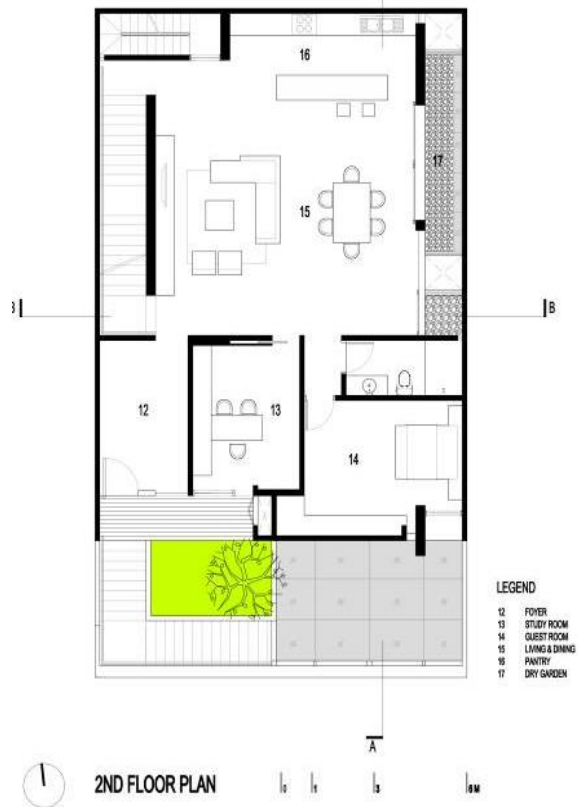
The house site is 240 sqm, while the total building area comprises 552 sqm. This house was assisted by Feng Shui master in the home zoning because the owner believe that Feng Shui will increase the living quality. Later, the architect proposed a modern architecture into this building with functionality and aesthetic.

The concept of the house is simple but with a strong character. The building façades basically consists of geometric plane emphasized with vertical and horizontal lines. Lighting and air circulation is being optimized to the maximum in the interior design. At the stair area, a skylight is provided to create a “dramatic” effect. The skylight also produced adequate lighting to the dining area.



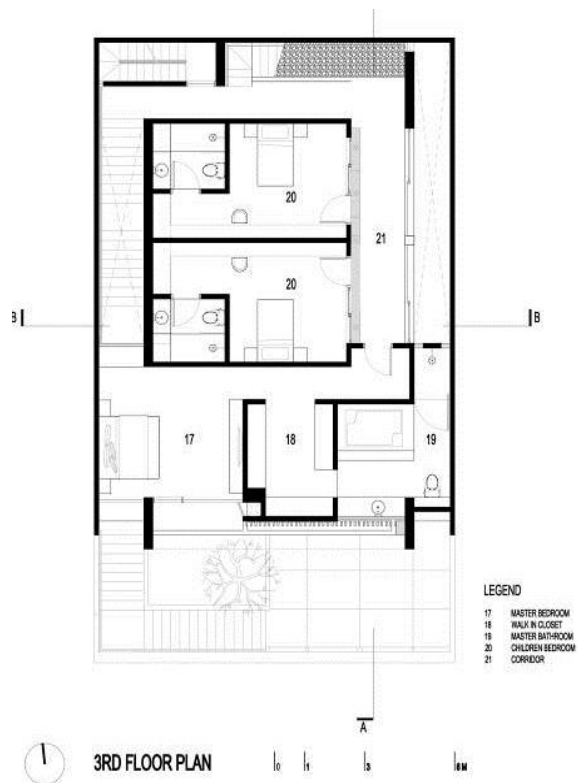
Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 4. The First floor plan



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 5. The Second floor plan



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 6. The Third floor plan



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 7. The Front Facade



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 8. The Interior

The motto of the architect is that there is no such a thing as a perfect design. His design is based on the theory, form, trend and the aim to achieve the best

quality design. It should be considered the contextual and well utilized. All aspects such as forms, styles, and materials, proportions, details, arts, and technologies also should be solved.

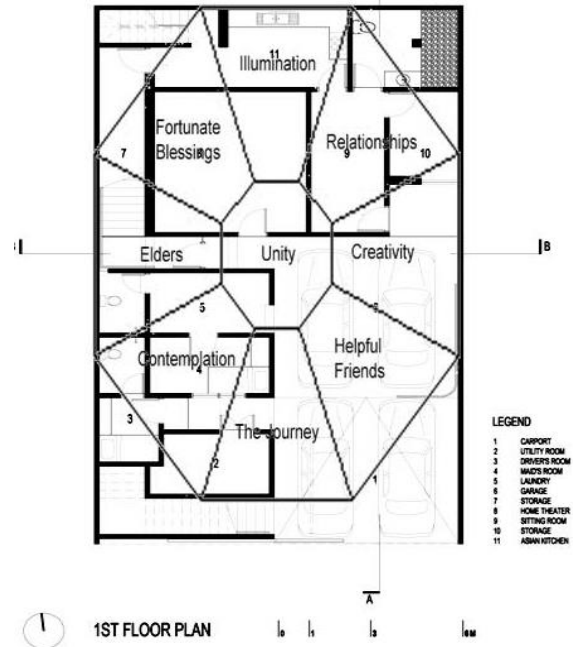


Figure 9. The First floor plan analysis according to the Bagua

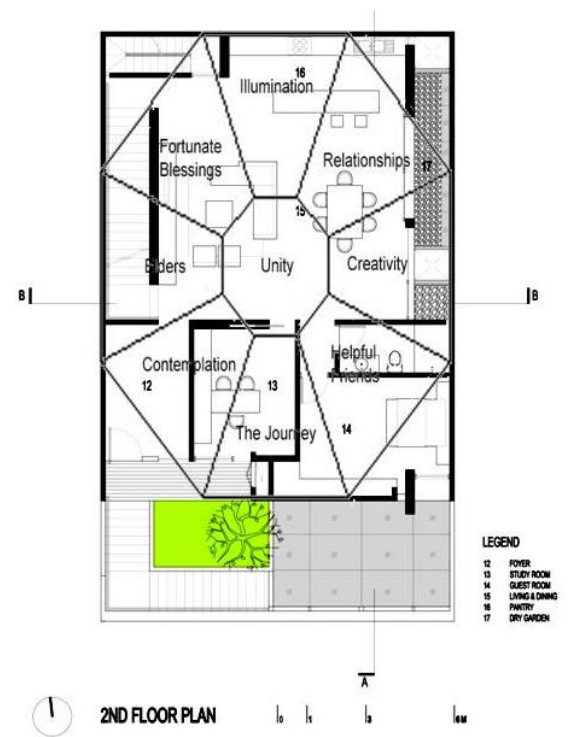
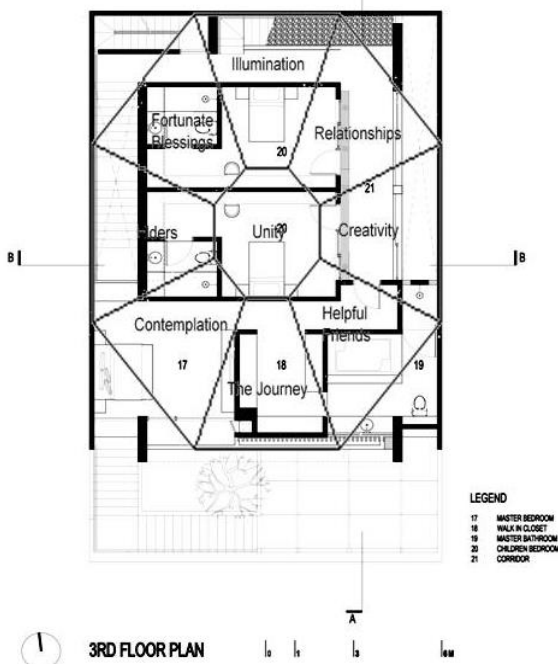


Figure 10. The Second floor plan analysis according to the Bagua



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/112155/leo-house-edha-architects/>.

Figure 11. The Third floor plan analysis according to the Bagua

The Leo House is zoned based on the Bagua application. The Kitchens are located all in the Illuminations zone, while the Main Bedroom is located in the most private areas in the third floor in the Contemplation zone. The Guest Bedrooms are located in the Helpful Friends zone and Living Room is located in the second floor in the Unity – Fortunate Blessings – Relationship – Creativity zone. The zoning actually is proposed positive recommendation to the house design.

Furthermore, some Feng Shui recommendations are analyzed for positive rationale recommendation in the design.

Table 1. Comparison of Theory – Leo House and Positive Impacts

Recommendation from Leo House Theory	Leo House	Positive or Negative Impact
1. Negative Spaces.		
Reclaim the negative space in the house (the area that are missing in the Bagua house) with mirrors.	Not	Neutral.
Produce a symmetrical home plan with house expansion.	Yes	Positive because of land utilization and earthquake resistance.
2. Poor Placement.		
Not to place private area	Yes	Positive because it

Recommendation from Leo House Theory	Leo House	Positive or Negative Impact
such as toilet that opens directly toward a kitchen.		reduces pest such as rats and cockroaches entering kitchen easily.
Not to locate toilets in the Wind (Fortunate Blessings), or opposite the front door, or located in the centre of the house.	No, the children toilet is located in the Fortunate Blessings	Neutral for toilets in Fortunate Blessings. Positive for toilets in the centre of the house, because it reduces dampness and indoor air pollution.
Not to arrange the rooms and corridors that causes doors to bang into each other or obstruct or severely limit free passage.	Yes, in general, it only happens in the service area	Positive because reducing collusion for users.
Not to design the doors opening into the hallway.	Yes, in general, it only happens in the service area	Positive because reducing collusion for users, especially in the blind school. But it might be negative for fire escape.
Put the furniture (bed, desk or stove) to maintain a wide view to doorway or room.	Yes, in general, it only happens in the service area	Positive because it is better to control the room and optimise the spatial usage.
Put the furniture not directly opposite to the door.	Yes, in general, it only happens in the service area	Positive because it does not limit the access and movement.
Put the furniture not at the 45-degree point.	Yes, in general, it only happens in the service area	Positive because reduces dangerous collusion with sharp objects.
3. Kitchen.		
Consider the kitchen as the most important room in the house.	Yes	Positive because the indoor air pollution is being considered.
Design a comfortable ceiling of the kitchen.	Yes	Positive because the indoor air pollution is being considered.
Not to place stoves next to sinks or refrigerators.	Yes	Positive because it reduces the problem of electrical problems because of short circuit.
Not to put the stoves under windows or under	Yes	Positive because it reduces the cooking

Recommendation from Theory	Leo House	Positive or Negative Impact
skylights.		spilled to the window and reduces haze impact to skylight. But it is actually less possible because of current development of cooking hood.
If a stove is located in a corner, allow an open view of the door.	Yes	Positive because it provides escape to the door when fire happens.
Place the stove that faces the east or light (South in the Northern hemisphere and North in the Southern Hemisphere).	Yes, the stove is located on the North	Neutral
Design the eating areas with calm, clear, uncluttered, and peaceful.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional and comfortable eating areas.
4. Bedroom or Sleeping Areas.		
As the room is for sleeping, design colours, artwork, and other objects to convey peace.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional, comfortable and peaceful sleeping areas.
Place TV, stereos, entertainment areas far away from the bed.	No	Neutral
Place the bedroom at the rear area of the house, away from the front door.	No, the master bedroom is located in the front but in the third floor.	Positive because it provides privacy.
Place the bed not blocking the closet doors or passage to dressing areas or bathrooms.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional, comfortable and peaceful sleeping areas.
When a bed must be placed under slanted ceilings, install canopy covering the bed running parallel to the sleeping surface.	Not found	Positive because it reduces stress during the sleeping.
Design side tables, headboards dressers, night stands, or valets with slightly rounded edges.	Yes	Positive because it reduces dangerous collusion with sharp objects.
5. Living Areas.		
Design the living areas comfortable, well – lit.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional

Recommendation from Theory	Leo House	Positive or Negative Impact
		and comfortable living - dining areas
Design the seat save for occupants and guests.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional and comfortable living - dining areas
Place couches and chairs protected from behind with wall, bookcase or side table.	No	Negative because it reduces the spatial linkage
Provide side or end tables nearby the seat located in the middle of the room.	Yes	Positive because it provides functional and comfortable living - dining areas
6. Other recommendations.		
The stove should be located toward the east and southeast of the kitchen because the direction is for the wood element.	No	Negative because it might bring the air pollution during the east monsoon wind blowing.
Flushing the toilet with the lid open increases the chances that “your money will go too.”	No	Neutral
Cover your computer screen at night if it is in a bedroom so it won’t “act as a mirror and disturb your spirit” when you are sleeping.	No	Neutral
Hang curtains at the bottom of stairs or put a mirror on the landing to draw qi up so that qi does not flow down and go out the door.	No	Neutral
To help qi rise up the stairs, put plants under the stairs or hang art that is “light and bright.”	No	Neutral
Because the kitchen is the money room, cooking on all burners with a variety of food will help bring the money in.	No	Neutral
A house’s front door should be simple and practical and face the sun so that it will attract “fame, fortune, and longevity.”	Yes	Positive because it supports easiness way to find the house.
Do not have the foot of your bed in line with the door; the bed’s head should be facing the	No	Neutral

Recommendation from Leo House Theory	Positive or Negative Impact	
north/south axis to be "in line with the magnetic energy of the earth."		
A pointed roof (associated with fire) located against a curved roof shape (associated with metal) is destructive since fire melts metal.	Yes	Neutral

Most of the Feng Shui recommendations brought positive impacts, but the others brought neutral impacts. On the other hand, the Christianity believes that the main intention of living is to be lucky. Therefore, the Christians live by trusting God provision (Rome 8:28) and the permanent peace in Jesus (John 14:27). So, the Feng Shui strategies should be analyzed by Christian architects and house owners, whether they bring positive functional, comfort and safe improvement or just following the superstitious reason.

CONCLUSION

The Feng Shui is a Chinese system of geomancy using the laws of both Heaven and Earth for harmony and balance of life with the positive qi. The research found that many Feng Shui recommendations bring positive impact and some others neutral ones. Therefore, some Feng Shui strategies could be followed so long because they bring positive functional, comfort and safe improvements instead of following the superstitious reason. Besides that, the rationale of the Feng Shui will be developed for further research, such as how about the assessment of Feng Shui while we use science as parameter to evaluate

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