

Feng Shui in Finland

The Finnish Feng Shui Association was founded in 1994. At that time Finnish people knew very little about the existence of Chinese Feng Shui. It was only familiar to some researchers and enthusiasts of Chinese culture. The situation was the same in other Western countries, as there were only a few easily accessible written sources about the subject.

Vesa Heikkinen wrote a social anthropology seminar paper "Fengshui perinteisessä ja modernissa kiinalaisessa arkkitehtuurissa" (Feng Shui in Traditional and Modern Chinese Architecture) in 1992. His thesis "Lohikäärmettä ja tiikeriä etsimässä. Fengshui kiinalaisessa arkkitehtuurissa" (Looking for a Dragon and a Tiger. Feng Shui in Chinese Architecture) was completed in the following year. However, these works have been available only for a rather small group of researchers.

Tauno Olavi Huotari and **Pertti Seppälä** mention Feng Shui on several occasions in their book "Kiinan kulttuuri" (Chinese Culture) published in 1990. In addition, Huotari wrote an article "Fengshui: Kohtalo maan muodoissa" (Feng Shui: Destiny in the Land Forms) in *Kiina sanoin ja kuvin* (China in Words and Pictures) journal in 1993. In the following year, a small *Valonkantajat* journal published **Kristiina Mäntynen's** a short article entitled "Fengshui: Kiinalainen oppi paikan hengestä" (Feng Shui: The Chinese Teaching of the Spirit of the Place). The first books with practical advice begun to be translated in Finnish only since 1997.

In 1998, **Stephen Skinner** started to publish a magazine called "Feng Shui for Modern Living" in Britain. It soon became very popular and got an extensive international distribution and was to be found even on the shelves of quite ordinary Finnish supermarkets. The English journal combined teaching and trendy Oriental interior design.

Feng Shui in Other Western Countries

In the beginning Feng Shui was treated in Western books mainly just as a cultural phenomenon. Early writings about the subject were done by missionaries and anthropologists. From these first ones, probably the best known is a small book called "Feng-shui: The Science of Sacred Landscape in Old China" by British **Ernest J. Eitel**. The first edition is from 1873. Scientific studies of Feng Shui were done in the West since 1940s. Of these, it is worth mentioning at least **Joseph Needham's** "Science and Civilisation in China" in 1956 and **Stephan D. R. Feuchtwang's** "An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy" in 1974.

The book by American **Sarah Rossbach** "Feng Shui, The Chinese Art of Placement" in 1983 was one of the first "every woman's and man's" book of the subject. That book and her "Interior Design with Feng Shui" in 1987 have been kind of model books for the many similar ones that give practical advice. Rossbach is a student of Prof. **Lin Yun**, who moved from China to California. Due to the success of Rossbach's books, Lin managed to market the so called Black Hat School of Feng Shui to the Western audience. It is a simplified version of the more complex and difficult classical Chinese Feng Shui. The model, which consists of nine squares/ life situations soon became very popular around the world. This bagua chart, as it is called, is how most of the Western people still mainly perceive Feng Shui.

Of the Central European countries, especially Germany had benign soil for the Oriental teachings of harmony and Feng Shui studies became quickly popular there. Accordingly the biggest International Feng Shui congresses in Europe have been organized not only in

London but in Germany. The 1st International Feng Shui Congress in Europe (1998) was held in Starnberg, near Munich, and The 1st Annual World Classical Feng Shui Conference (2002) in Cologne. In the first mentioned congress there were still many representatives of the Black Hat School. The latter one, on the other hand, focused solely on the themes of classical Chinese Feng Shui.

Feng Shui Education in Finland

Teaching of Feng Shui in Finland began first with just small scale lectures and courses, but the interest increased fast at the end of 90's. The situation can be generally portrayed by the fact that Kristiina Mäntynen gave her first public lecture outside the Association in 1997. It was held at an evening party during an astrological summer camp. After that there has been a continuous demand for popular Feng Shui courses, not only in the capital region but all around Finland.

Anja Banks studied Feng Shui in London, Scotland and China. In 1999 she founded a Feng Shui consultant school in Finland called European School of Feng Shui (ESOF). At first it was a branch of an international school of the same name. The teaching began in six European countries at the same time. In 2000 ESOF Finland was also incorporated under Master **Chan When Wah**'s Imperial School of Feng Shui and Chinese Astrology. The teaching consisted of weekend courses and lasted for two years. A total of around 70 consultants graduated from the school until 2004.

The second school providing professional education for consultants in Finland was founded by **Marika (Burton) Borg**. She has a versatile experience in adult education. Her school was called International School of Energy Design & Feng Shui. Around 40 "Feng Shui Energy Designers" graduated from her school in 2002. That school lasted for around two years. "Energiasustaja[®]" (Energy Decorator) is a registered trademark of Marika Borg's company.

In addition to that, there are several Feng Shui consultants and teachers in Finland, who have acquired their education from several sources and around the world. That is quite possible, as there are no official requirements of who can use the Feng Shui consultant title.

Over the years both the members of the Association, as well as outsiders have given many kinds of education connected to Feng Shui. For example, several adult education and folk colleges have adopted sets of Feng Shui courses into their curriculum. Also various companies and groups of friends have been keen audiences for teachers giving basic courses and lectures.

Feng Shui Education Around the World

The internet has made an important impact in providing Feng Shui information. In the beginning of 1990s, there were only a couple of dozen Feng Shui links. Today the number is countless. All kinds of email and teaching lists have also become a popular way of learning and to compare information from different sources.

The old classical Chinese texts are usually written in classical Chinese, which is strange even to contemporary Chinese people. In addition to that, the texts are often poetic and ambiguous. The Western Feng Shui practitioners, therefore usually have to rely on Chinese teachers, or as they are traditionally called, masters.

Masters who have moved to West or otherwise teach here, are usually fluent in English. That gives them an advantage on the education market compared to their Chinese colleagues. However, to be able to provide teaching and to market it effectively, does not necessarily tell much about the teacher's level of knowledge. Nowadays there is a wide range of courses offered in the West. Traditionally in China, students studied only with one master. Today students have an opportunity to participate in the education of various teachers, find information themselves and to compare, but also equally often get confused about conflicting opinions and instructions.

The Use of Feng Shui in Finland

As the interest in Feng Shui has grown, many have begun to require personal Feng Shui advice in order to modify their environment. However, the Western books and short courses usually only just lead to the gates of knowledge.

Feng Shui consultations have been available in Finland gradually from the late 1990s. However there are not yet any statistics of the amounts of clients of consultants in Finland. Anyway, it is most likely that several thousand clients have already been using the services of consultants. Even from economic point of view, it means quite a lot of professional activity. In fact a whole new profession has suddenly and almost unnoticed appeared in the field of action of architects, interior architects and interior designers. It is therefore very important that Feng Shui consultants are not only professional in what they are doing, that is to say, to be able to promote the welfare of the client, but also qualified to represent Feng Shui publicly and work in cooperation with other designers when needed.

The Future of Feng Shui Here and Elsewhere

The road of teachings and practices of Chinese metaphysics to the West has been long. It has demanded the work of many persistent people in Finland and elsewhere in the West. However, the Feng Shui concepts and principles clearly seem to gradually take root in the Western environmental thinking and planning practices. Therefore the Feng Shui professionals can especially thank the practitioners of Chinese medicine and martial arts of the previous decades. They are the ones that have in large extent leveled the way of Feng Shui, for example, into an ordinary living room in Pelkosenniemi, Lapland!

© **Kristiina Mäntynen**, Architect, Feng Shui Consultant
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