

NEW STRAITS TIMES

LITERARY & BOOKS



AUTHOR AND 'APPEARANCE' ... Goh and her book

How to read someone like an open book

THE supposedly inscrutable Chinaman is not such a closed book, after all – not if you know the ancient Chinese art of appearance analysis or physiognomy. Going by the art, every hair, wrinkle, scar, ridge, cleft or mole tells on you. Inborn physical features aside, changes wrought by growth, age or even the scalpel can affect a person's character, spirit, health, luck, destiny and the "pathway cycle".

This complicated process of carving up the different parts of the body and deciphering what they mean is explained, in tandem with sketches, in *Appearance Analysis* by Goh Sim Ngan and Eu Hooi Khaw.

Published by Tao Cheah Sdn Bhd, this self-help handbook on physiognomy (one of the five skills of Tao studies), begins by grouping the body under "departments", "waterways", "mountains" and "courts". From there, you can tell if someone is intelligent, obstinate, quarrelsome or broad-minded; whether she is blessed by her ancestors, prone to accidents, or likely to have a poor and short life.

Check out the tips on choosing a suitable spouse. A thick, sword-like brow denotes daring and courage; small nostrils belong to a stingy person; triangular eyes indicate cunning, and beware the sharp tongue, if you crave peace and quiet!

The same features on men and women say different things. Body language, the active part of human appearance, can tell much, too. So note the colour of your date's lipstick, how she applies eyeshadow, the way she walks.

At heart, scrutinising the appearance of a new business acquaintance, a potential spouse, or someone you wish to get to know better, gives you an edge. It enables you to better size up the person and, from there, strive for better understanding.

Looks DO count; but, then again, take heart, if your features reflect negative traits. Goh and Eu emphasise the Chinese belief that a person's thought is reflected in his character, behaviour and activities. Conversely, one can work on these aspects – tapping nature and the environment, naturally – to attain a "fortunate appearance".