

The pak kua and white horse jade.

There are two meanings to the bird of paradise

Prof Li advises to strike a balance between beauty and practicality.

On the Tao path of harmony

EU HOOI KHAW learns about the practical applications of Tao, as in feng shui and ways to charge up your *qi* or energy, from a master.

FENG Shui has become a subject that is now being studied avidly by heads of business and political organisations in China.

They have been greatly influenced by businessmen from Hong Kong and Taiwan who go there to buy land, set up offices and factories, bringing along their own feng shui consultants.

Tao master Professor Li Heng-Lih, who's from Taiwan, has been approached by universities in Beijing and Nanjing to give talks and conduct courses for an ever increasing audience.

Li, who also has a strong following in Kuala Lumpur, and was recently here on a visit, said: "The people behind the Cultural Revolution in China thought that art, Tao studies and feng shui were counter-productive and did their best to wipe them out. Now there's a shortage of teachers in these fields. A lot of Chinese claim they know feng shui but in fact they know nothing!"

Not only businessmen but also politicians and common folk want to learn and practise feng shui in China but it's not possible because of the lack of teachers.

Li hopes to be able to fill this void through the International Federation of Taoist Studies which he founded in Taipei and of which he is the president.

Tao studies are about the management of time and space, using six skills:

San — it helps man get closer to nature e.g., exercise, diet, fasting, dancing and meditation.

Yi — traditional alternative and natural medicine e.g., Chinese herbal medicine, acupressure, acupuncture, reflexology, etc.

Min — fate theories like *Zi Wei* Numerology, Four Cylinders (Eight Characters), etc.

Pu — using *I-Ching* (Book of Change) to gather unknown information.

Siang — Appearance for the living (feng shui

for man) and Appearance for the dead (feng shui for the dead).

Shien — the magical and mystical part of the Tao studies: calligraphy, the use of invisible *qi* (energy) etc.

The Federation has a list of learned Tao teachers on its website, and Li's name tops the list.

He counts among his students at the school — there are 200 — five deans of Taiwan universities.

His high profile has come to the notice of the mainland Chinese, and they have invited him to be life honorary president of the prestigious China International Economics and Cultural Research Institute in China. It's a government-linked organisation. He considers it an honour.

Having been involved in Tao studies for more than 30 years, Li wants his students to carry on his teachings. He would like to turn Tao into an academic discipline that students could take up at the university level. In this way, the knowledge would be passed on in a regulated manner.

The flamboyant Tao master collects jade, and when we met he was wearing a piece carved into the *pak kua* or hexagram of the Early Heaven, with a dragon on the other side. He designed it himself, using Tao wisdom.

"Jade is good for health as it's in harmony with the body. The *pak kua* upgrades the positive energy. It brings in the eight elements of the universe to arouse this energy. Other stones, gold or silver cannot compare to jade in terms of the energy it can give you.

"The Chinese believe jade brings them luck and things will be smooth-sailing when they wear it. The emperors used to wear it, so did the nobility, the scholars, the wealthy and those in authority," he said.

"There is a saying 'the nobleman is never separated from his jade'. There is jade in his hat, belt, necklace and ring. In the game of archery, they wear a jade on their thumb.

"Before the Ching Dynasty, white jade from Xinjiang was often worn. Green jade became the fashion after this dynasty."

A Tao master told me, after finding out about my animal year, that "horse" is my prosperity. "It's full of energy, and is loyal and sincere towards friends. Wear it for energy. It will gallop all over

the place and is good for your job. There will be less conflicts too."

He also collects herbs to make what he calls feng shui aroma. It's an incense to burn to improve the *qi* of your surroundings. "It will help your house, office or any building to achieve good *qi*, to give you the energy to perform better."

"These herbs are very rare and expensive. The aroma has plant, animal and mineral content. The most expensive herb in this formula is the *qi nan xiang*, which is only found in Vietnam. Indonesia used to have it but not any more. The trunk of the plant is found under the ground and is at least 50 years old."

Li talked about Tao's practicality, whether in the colours you use or the food you eat, for example.

"Different kinds of food can help in your fate. If you are not in harmony with your boyfriend, you can go to a restaurant and order the food for it. If you are not on good terms with your superior at work, you can do the same. You can be on that diet for a week, a fortnight or a month and you will see the difference."

It could be tomatoes — red, green, white and yellow — and in different shapes too. Or spices like pepper, coriander, mustard, chillies, etc.

Flowers can change the magnetic field as well.

"In a flower arrangement, you have to choose the flowers carefully, as every one of them has a meaning. For instance, the bird of paradise is not for a bad relationship. The bird shoots up to heaven and flies to other places. It also gives a warm feeling when the relationship is good."

"Go with the season. When flowers are in season, they have great energy. Don't think imported flowers are better."

Strike a balance between beauty and practicality, advised the good professor of Tao.

There's an International Institute of Tao Studies in Kuala Lumpur which regularly conducts courses on *I-Ching*, appearance analysis and fate theory.

There will be a talk on "Charging up the Vigour of the Ox Year 2009" at the institute on Dec 28, at 2.30pm. Call 03-7983-0388.

■ hooikhaw@gmail.com