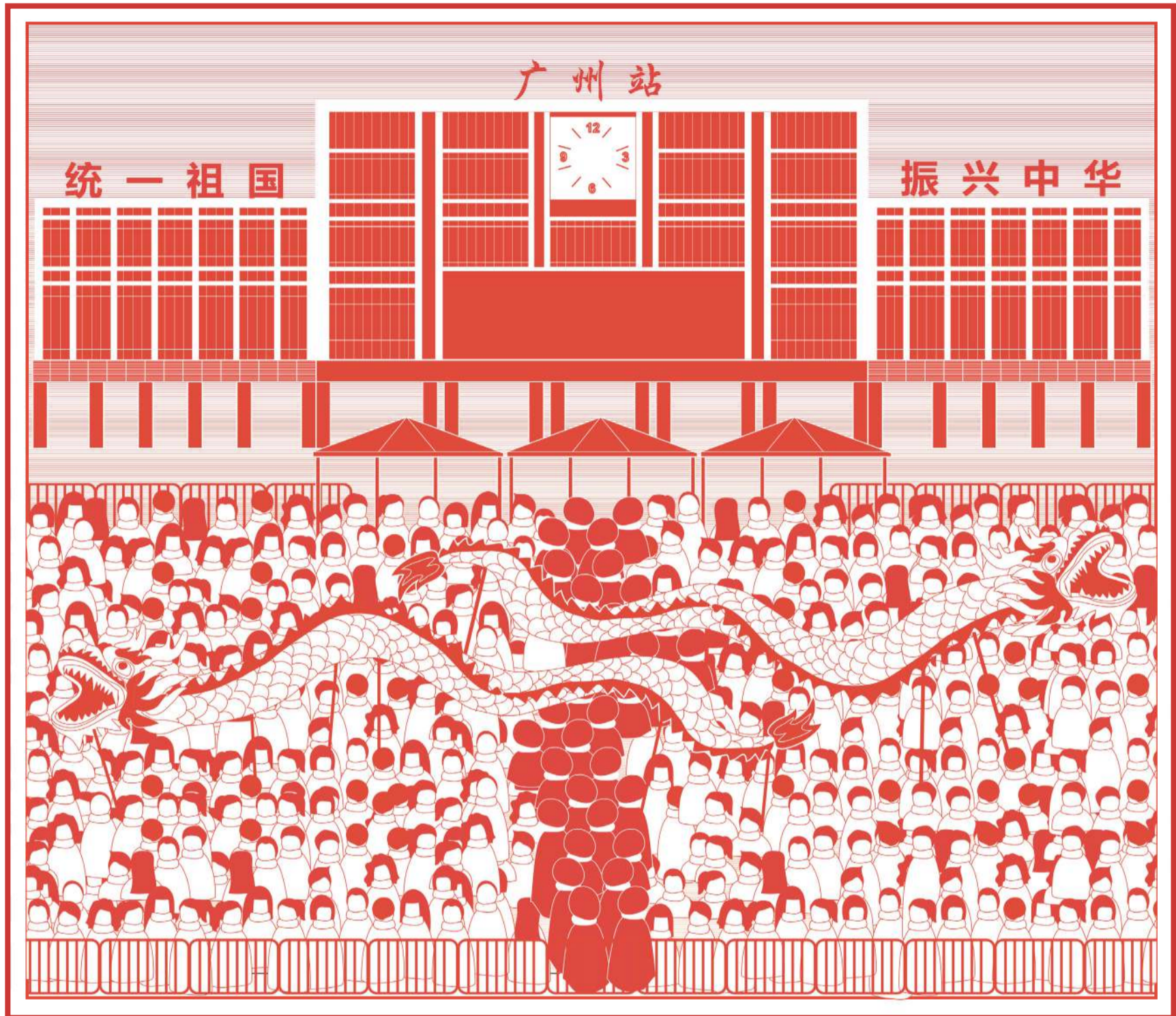


THESIS PREPARATORY REPORT



# THE PRODUCTION OF FORTUNE

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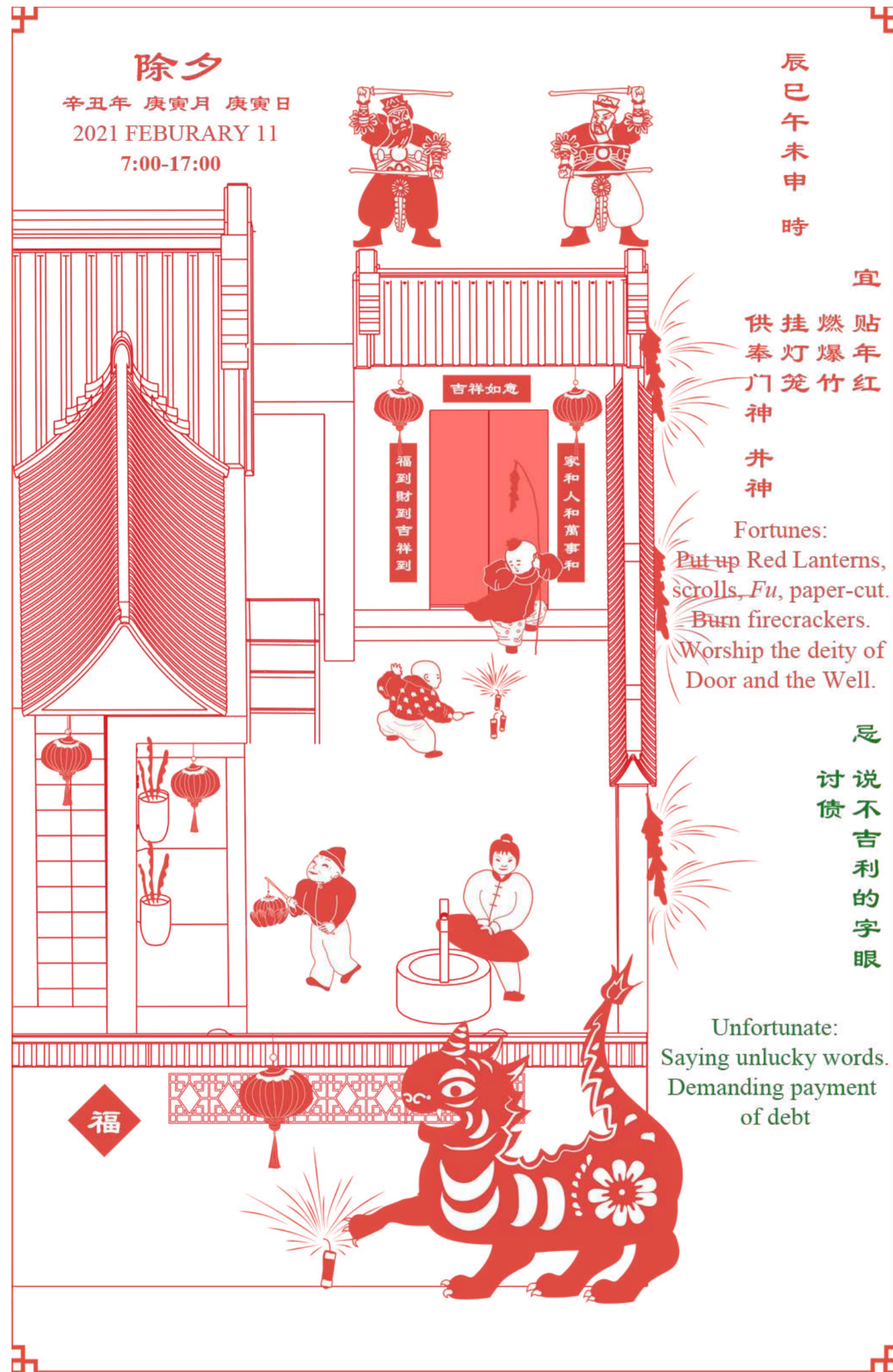
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## ABSTRACT

### The Production of Fortune

The annual Spring Festival Travel Rush marks the biggest human migration event during the Chinese New Year. To ensure a prosperous year ahead, a series of events and behaviours surrounding the production of Fortune unfolds and the conventional uses of spaces are reconfigured.

Through retracing my personal homecoming journey across five stages of movements - the packing, on the road, the arrival, the celebration, and the return, the thesis proposal examines the intersection of physical space with auspicious belief. With reference to the Chinese folktales, superstitious beliefs, the traditional farmer's almanac and the words of mouth of the elder, the proposal aims to create a contemporary almanac calendar that presents the incompatibility and uncomfortable aspects of fortune production.

These aspects will seek the position of vernacular tradition in the modern context, hence establishing a dialogue that negotiates between sacred and mundane, belief and practice, urban and rural.

Keywords

Fortune, Chinese New Year, Calendar, Journey, Transient

# INTRODUCTION



Herbal Tea Lunar New Year Advertisement



Lunar New Year Guangzhou Train Station

Understanding towards the Lunar New Year in China has always been limited between the blissful and the calamitous. From the poems in the school textbooks<sup>1</sup>, advertisements on televisions<sup>2</sup>, and the New Year Gala from China's CCTV<sup>3</sup>, the impression of the Lunar New Year is the delightful reunion and capturing of Fortune through a series of vernacular traditions and the auspicious colour red. While these New Year portrayals are essentially generalised, they illustrate the symbols of what the public recognized that constitutes the "New Year."

Reversely, in the news, New Year is often messy and afflictive.<sup>4</sup> Celebrations of Fortune are phenomenal but fatal<sup>5</sup>; journey home is full of discomfort and sufferings.<sup>6</sup> The transition between the facets of the blissful and the calamitous, however, is often left to the individual experiences. The journey is rarely elucidated.

*What happens before boarding the train back home? What happens after? What are the preparations needed to conduct the celebration? How does the New Year end?* This study of the New Year practices, the seemingly banal mundane and traditions has the power of, as mentioned by Foucault, as the insurrection of subjugated knowledge, to reveal deeper social tensions and more complex realities.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ruyi Education, 'The Texts and Ancient Poems about the Spring Festival in the Chinese Textbook of the New Curriculum Standard Elementary School (Collection)', accessed 1 November 2021 <https://www.ruyile.com/news/r21574/>.

<sup>2</sup> 'Honest Confessions, Neza Nuggets, and the King of Dance: Here Are the Best Chinese New Year Commercials', RADII | Stories from the Center of China's Youth Culture (blog), 11 February 2021, <https://radiichina.com/chinese-new-year-commercial/>.

<sup>3</sup> ChinaTravel, 'CCTV New Year's Gala: Chinese New Year's Gala', accessed 1 November 2021, <https://www.chinatravel.com/chinese-new-year/cctv-new-year-gala>.

<sup>4</sup> David Barboza, 'In Moments, New Year's Revelry Became Fatal Crush in Shanghai', The New York Times, 1 January 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/02/world/asia/witnesses-recall-panic-of-deadly-stampede-in-shanghai.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Chen Yiyi, 'No more Travel in Guangzhou after 2008', Zhihu Special Column, 1 August 2018, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/33688673>.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).



The Evolution of Fu Character

Lunar New Year practices can also be seen as an ancient tradition on the production of Fortune (福 Fu). Around 4000 years ago, Lunar New Year began as a sacrificial ceremony that makes offerings to the ghosts, deities and ancestors in wish for luck and Fortune.<sup>8</sup> The earliest Fu character found on the bone inscriptions illustrates two hands holding a jar of liquor honouring to the deity (示). Written in the late Han Dynasty, the meaning of Fortune is defined as health, prosperity, wealth, longevity and fertility.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> ChinaTravel, 'Chinese New Year History, Origin and Development', accessed 2 November 2021, <https://www.chinatravel.com/chinese-new-year/history>.

<sup>9</sup> Tan Heng, Xinlun Roll Eleven (One Man, 2014).

As time evolves, the meanings of Fortune become ambiguous. The Fortune production customs and rituals of the celebration vary between regions, villages, and even between families and generations of people. In my family's case, while my grandparents in the countryside still strictly follow the most traditional practices, rituals and ceremonies of Fortune production, my parents and relatives in the city have already abandoned most of the customs. The Fortune production process has been reduced to the simplest way of hanging up red couplets and having reunion dinner together. How Fortune is really produced became arguable. As for my generation, the belief in Fortune is more perplexing. While still following the New Year customs imposed by the parents, most believe the Fortune of New Year is no longer about the ancient traditions, families and deities but the opportunity for self-enjoyment in the present.<sup>10</sup> These highly ambiguous perceptions, practices and definitions of Fortune is, therefore, what I am interested in investigating in my thesis proposal.

The first questions I asked to start approaching the ambiguous Fortune in the Chinese context are: *What is the belief of Fortune? Who believes Fortune in this way? How are the beliefs carried out differently in practice? How do the practices adapt in the modern context?* In particular, the photography series "Chinese on the Train"<sup>11</sup> by photographer Wang Fuchun reveals to me the gap between the belief and the practice of Fortune. The belief of the paradisiacal sphere above is loaded with blessings and joy from the deities, free from pain and absence of misery. On the other hand, preparations that invite blessings to the secular world are often uncomfortable and strenuous. In the photography series, boarding the train to go back home (the first step to obtain Fortune in the New Year) is a strenuous quest with squeezing and pushing; the travellers carve out spaces on the racks, under the tables and between the carriages to ensure sleep and health during the journey; baby-sitting became a task never so exhausting. *When maintaining physical well-being is an arduous task to keep, where and how does Fortune then exist?*

<sup>10</sup> Dominic Ngai, 'Exploring Millennials' Changing Chinese New Year Travel Habits', Discovery, 19 December 2019, <https://discovery.cathaypacific.com/millennials-changing-chinese-new-year-travel-traditions/>.

<sup>11</sup> Fuchun Wang, Chinese on the Train (Shanghai Jinxu Article Publication, 2007).

Chinese on the Train





Chinese Farmer's Almanac Calendar

To study the relationship between the incompatible and uncomfortable aspects of Fortune practice and the auspicious belief of Fortune, I use the farmer's almanac calendar as a research method. The Chinese farmer's almanac is especially relevant in the New Year context as it includes Fortune telling predictions to ensure maximum production of New Year Fortune. Predictions such as Chinese zodiacs, western horoscopes, poker cards, I-Ching oracle, blood types, Feng Shui, marriage compatibility, and baby gender are all included to provide a complete guide to capture and produce Fortune for every choice in the life.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the traditional almanac calendar, the calendar I am trying to produce in my thesis proposal is reflective of the contemporary issues of Fortune production. *While following all the "to-dos" and "not to-dos," what kind of incompatibility of Fortune production is disclosed?* The topic of the thesis proposal, therefore, will be a study of the vernacular tradition in the modern and urban context.

<sup>12</sup> ChineseFortuneCalendar, 'Chinese Farmer's Almanac, Chinese Farmer Calendar, Tung Shing, Tung Shu', Chinese Fortune Calendar, accessed 2 November 2021, <https://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/Almanac.htm>.



Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space*

Culture creates signs to make objects symbolise and take on specific meanings.<sup>13</sup> Could the production of Fortune also be spatial? In *Productions of Space*<sup>14</sup>, Henri Lefebvre discerns three levels of social space: Spatial Practice, Representations of Space and Representational Space.<sup>15</sup> The culture of Fortune production, the everyday life in which we are living, the red couplets, oranges, firecrackers and red envelopes forms Representational Spaces.<sup>15</sup> As the planner of the thesis project, I am constructing maps, images, signs and codes that create the Representations of Fortune Production Spaces. Interventions presented in this proposal are acting as experiments of the Fortune Production Spatial practice. While trying to provide another lens to perceive the daily routines involving the production of Fortune, the interventions also try to investigate and question the social relations between the Fortune producer, the practice and the belief – *what can the Fortune production produce other than Fortune?*

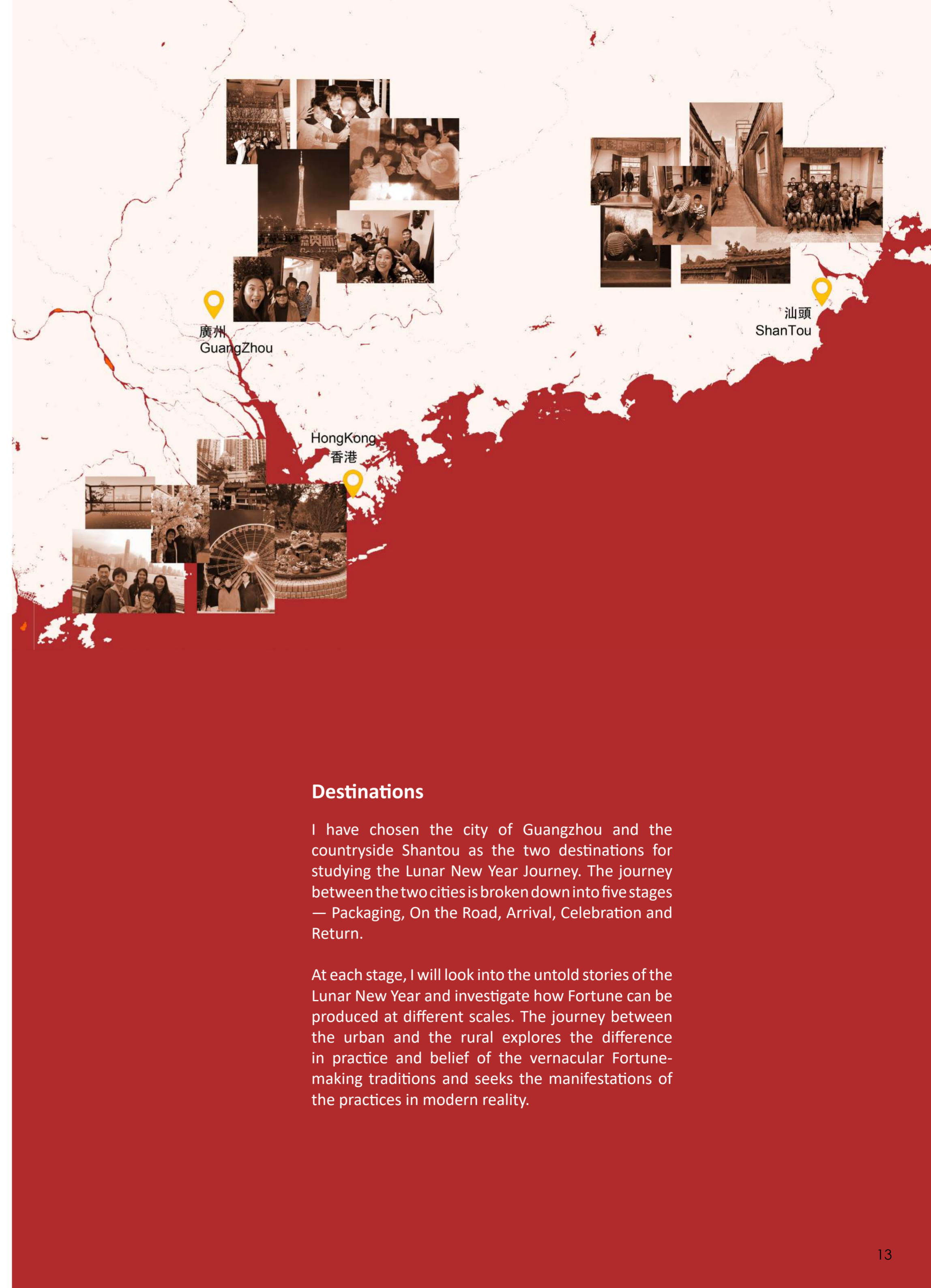
<sup>13</sup> Christian Fuchs, 'Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space and the Critical Theory of Communication', *Communication Theory* 29, no. 2 (1 May 2019): 129\_50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty025>.

<sup>14</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Wiley, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

The thesis report will be presented as fragments and collections of essayistic reflections, stories, poems, history and timetables interwoven around the themes of Fortune and tradition. Each chapter of the journey circles around the search for the meaning of Fortune, the significance of the production and the essence of traditions.

Each chapter begins with a fictional narrative that is based on true stories from my family's personal New Year experience. The narratives lay the ground for the discussion of Fortune in each phase of the journey. There are reflections of the story protagonist as the family's train schedule is delayed, which she questions the existence of vernacular traditions. There are opinions and dialogues from other New Year travellers, providing alternative views and attitudes towards Fortune production. By presenting the narratives of Fortune on an intimate scale, the report aims to capture the intangible aspects of Fortune in each phase of the journey.

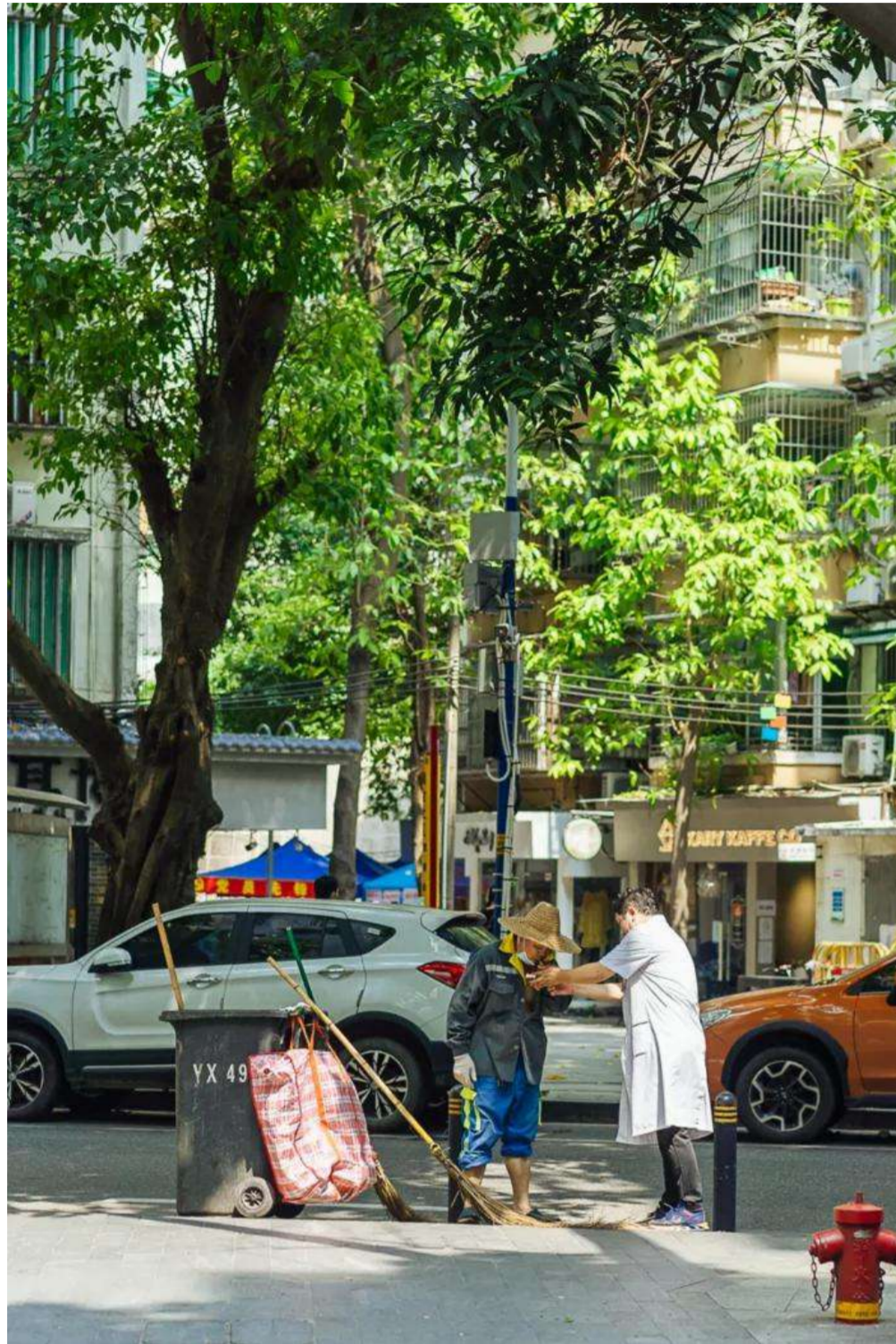


## Destinations

I have chosen the city of Guangzhou and the countryside Shantou as the two destinations for studying the Lunar New Year Journey. The journey between the two cities is broken down into five stages — Packaging, On the Road, Arrival, Celebration and Return.

At each stage, I will look into the untold stories of the Lunar New Year and investigate how Fortune can be produced at different scales. The journey between the urban and the rural explores the difference in practice and belief of the vernacular Fortune-making traditions and seeks the manifestations of the practices in modern reality.

## Guangzhou 廣州



Street in Guangzhou

The only time when the city quiets down is during the Lunar New Year. For once, cars are driving smoothly in the morning on a weekday without needing to stop every mile. The liveliness in the markets faded. The variety of fruit and meat stalls disappeared and are left with only the local sellers.



Empty Street in Guangzhou during New Year

Where my family live, work and study. This is the city I am most familiar with. The hustle and bustle of the streets and roads filled with energy. Stalls in the markets compete to attract the nearby residents with fresh food and meat with blood that is "still warm." Different accents of Cantonese are heard as you walk down the streets.

"Winters look just like Summer here," commented my secondary school Chinese teacher who came from the North, "the trees are so green, and we are still wearing shorts in December!"

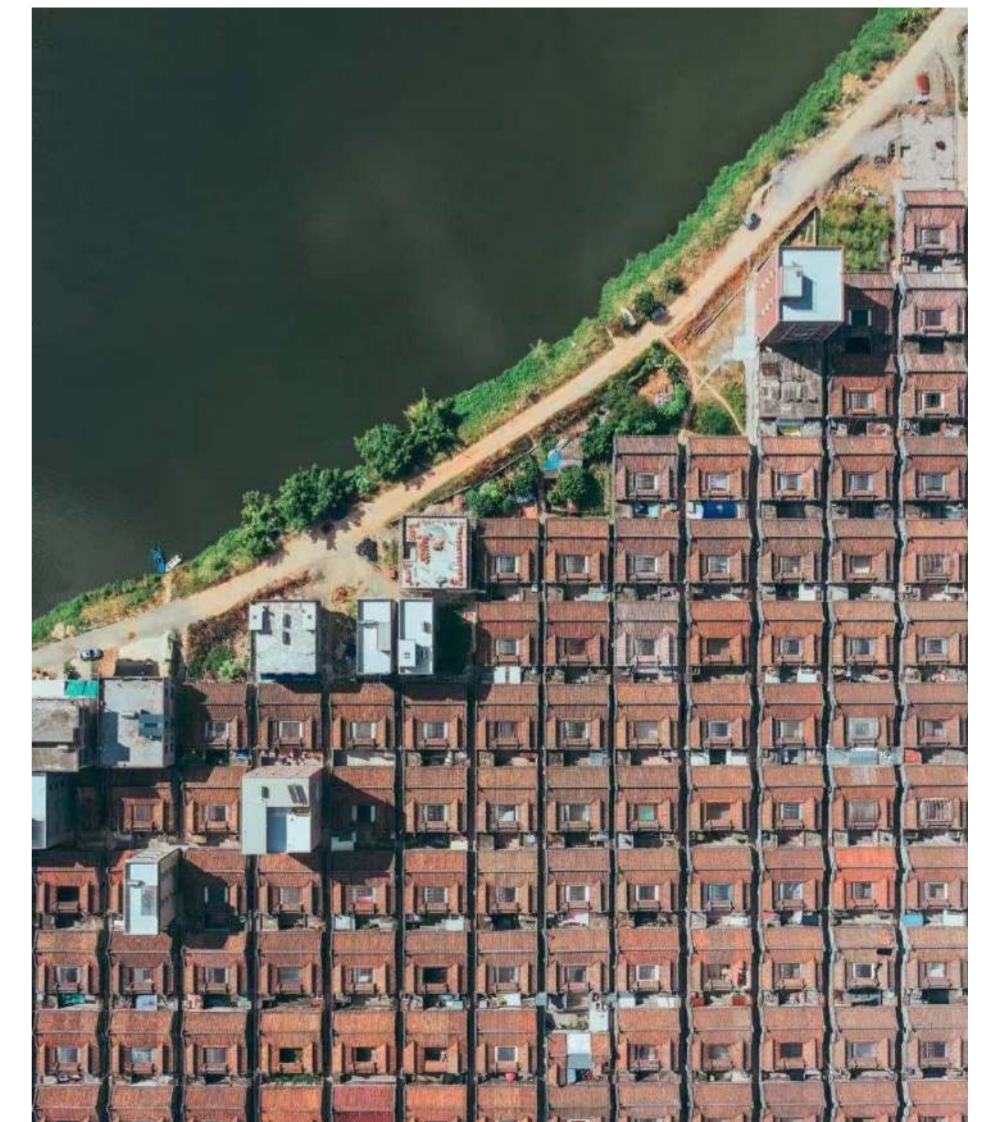
## Shantou 汕頭



City Centre in Shantou

Where my grandparents live and my father grew up. My grandparents have seven kids, and my dad is their fifth. They lived in a small fishing village in Shantou and earned their living through farming and selling vegetables. When my dad left the village to study at the university, my grandparents spent all their savings building the house they are living in now.

Home in Shantou to me is a long-ago childhood memory. We went back once a year during the Lunar New Year, stayed for a few days and came back to Guangzhou. I never understood the Teochew dialect, so I was never able to communicate with my grandmother smoothly.



Houses of Descending Tigers in Shantou





## 包裝 Packaging

【存  
放  
】

Gift

Best wishes of fortune from your relatives and friends.

Storage

Spaces to store the influx of fortune during the New Year.

*"Uncle gave us another bag of Kumquat<sup>16</sup>." Said my mom as she put the sixth bag of Mandarin on the floor. The departing day back to Shantou is tomorrow, but the house now is filled with fresh food from all our relatives and friends.*

*"Uncle said his house is also overloaded with Kumquat, so he gave us a bag. I told him we had a lot too, but he still gave it to me! How do we keep all these kumquats until we are back again?" said my mom as she took off her shoes at the entrance of the door.*

*"Well, they can't be left on the floor." Said my dad.*

*"But where can we put it? The tables, ALL tables are full with stuff!" my mom yelled.*

<sup>16</sup> Kumquat(金桔), also known as Mandarin. Derives from the Cantonese, with the meanings of Gold(金) and Fortune (吉). A common gift in the Cantonese regions during the Lunar New Year.



Assorted New Year Gifts and Groceries on the floor

## Folding the Rebirth Lotus Tower

During Chinese New Year, families and festival participants turned overfilled waste bins into hills of rubbish. Among these heaps were many disposable plastic bags, bottles, and containers.<sup>17</sup> The sudden influx of Fortune in the form of food also results in unfinished plates being wasted and thrown into the rubbish bin.<sup>18</sup>

Is there a way to attenuate the waste of resources in the festive season in an auspicious way?

*I recalled the folding of the Rebirth Lotus Tower in Shantou. During New Year, every family needs to fold a Lotus Tower and bring it to the village temple to wish for safety, wealth and Fortune in the coming year. Fortune is packaged and folded into the flower petals and burned to be sent to the sky.*

Could the packaging of New Year food, the universal, identical and general, embodied with specific meanings and Fortune like the Lotus Tower? Could the Lotus Tower really function as a tower that creates spaces to store, and structures to support the New Year Fortune?

**Could vernacular traditions be the strategy to the issues of vernacular traditions in the modern age?**

<sup>17</sup> "Solving the Plastic Packaging Problem: It's Time for Industries and Governments to Play Their Part", Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, 21 April 2018, <https://hongkongfp.com/2018/04/21/solving-plastic-packaging-problem-time-industries-governments-play-part/>.  
<sup>18</sup> Nadim Diab, "From Tabletop to Trash: Food Waste during Spring Festival", 9 February 2018, [https://news.cgtn.com/news/3355444e32677a6333566d54/share\\_p.html](https://news.cgtn.com/news/3355444e32677a6333566d54/share_p.html).



Process of folding the Lotus Tower

【廣州火車站】  
Guangzhou Train Station

**值大** 宜天乙土位正北方  
相配屬相 龍鼠蛇馬羊狗兔  
忌絕命金位正西方

**刑大** 宜天乙土位正北方  
相配屬相 牛虎龍羊馬雞  
忌絕命金位正西方

**害大** 宜天乙土位正南方  
相配屬相 鼠虎牛兔狗馬  
忌絕命金位正北方

**牛 COW**  
Location in Advantage: North  
Location in Disadvantage: West  
Matching Zodiac Signs: Mouse, Snake, Chicken  
Restricting Zodiac Signs: Dragon, Horse, Sheep, Dog, Rabbit

**狗 DOG**  
Location in Advantage: North  
Location in Disadvantage: West  
Matching Zodiac Signs: Tiger, Rabbit, Horse  
Restricting Zodiac Signs: Cow, Dragon, Sheep, Chicken

**馬 HORSE**  
Location in Advantage: South  
Location in Disadvantage: North East  
Matching Zodiac Signs: Tiger, Sheep, Dog  
Restricting Zodiac Signs: Mouse, Cow, Rabbit

农历腊月三十  
辛丑年 庚寅月 庚寅日  
2021 FEBRUARY 11

在 On  
路 the  
上 Road

【健康】  
【娛樂】

Entertainment

The required happiness to produce fortune on the road.

Well-being

Never hungry, always clean. Warm and fulfilling.

“Dear passengers, train K0618 to Shantou has been delayed. Sorry for the inconvenience.”

Now my parents are quite worried. The train has already been delayed for an hour and now it is delayed again. We might not be able to reach Shantou on time for the New Year’s Eve reunion dinner.

“Mother is going to be furious,” My dad laughed, “she said the time we bought the ticket is the most auspicious time of the day.”<sup>19</sup> Now she couldn’t tell if the time we are departing is fortunate enough to start the New Year.”

“It’s okay. It’s just something superstitious.” My mom said, “As long as we are back safely for the reunion dinner, everything is fine.”

“Her superstitious belief,” my dad smiled and shook his head, “she also said we should sit separately

from our daughter because her zodiac sign is not compatible with ours this year.” “Our daughter is not lucky for us in the New Year.” My mom laughed and responded.

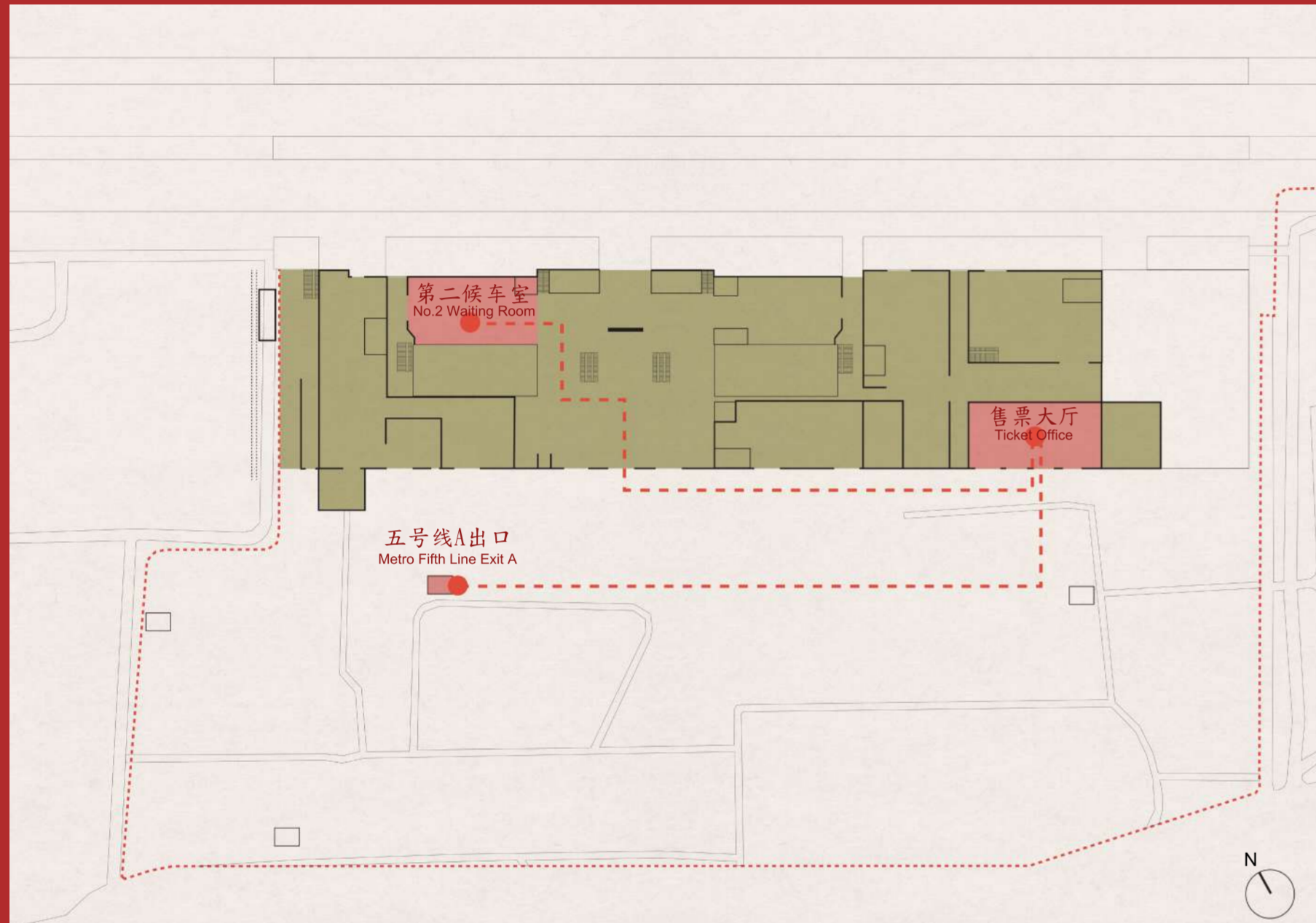
For me, I don’t really care about departing at an auspicious time, getting on time for the reunion dinner or whether I am lucky enough to my parents in the New Year. I just want to leave the train station for good and for all. I’m hungry and tired. Clenching onto my bags too tight and for too long trying to prevent thieves in the crowd in winter must have drained all my energy.



Crowds of people at Guangzhou Train Station During New Year

<sup>19</sup> The Chinese Farmer’s Almanac shows the Fortunate and Unfortunate times of a day.

## Guangzhou Train Station: Route to the Trains



Guangzhou Train Station Plan



Soldiers acting as Human Barriers to control the crowd

*We have been squeezing in the crowd for hours to get into the waiting room. At Guangzhou Train Station, the exit from the metro to the ticket office then to the waiting room is not far, but it took us hours. Guangzhou is a city with a large percentage of the migrant population<sup>20</sup>, and it seems like the 80,000 migrants are all here at the train station at the same time.*

<sup>20</sup> Pengying, 'Guangzhou Police Release Figures of Foreign Population - Xinhua | English.News.Cn', Xinhua Net, 29 January 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018\\_01/29/c\\_136933673.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018_01/29/c_136933673.htm).

## Article: A Ticket Back Home<sup>21</sup>



2008 February  
By Anonymous

I never understand the reason to go back home on New Year's Eve, but because my parents care, it becomes important for me. Now I am standing here in the rain in winter, with no shelter and no food to eat. A few vendors came. They step on the buckets where they put their goods, trying to raise their volume to sell instant noodles, usually 5 yuan to 50 yuan per pack. And people rushed to buy it. I am too far from the vendor to get a pack, but I am sure I will not be fast enough to snatch one even if I am next to him.

Another 10 hours have passed, and I am still here, at the same spot. The announcement on the plaza is repeating the serial numbers of the trains that are delayed because of the snowstorm. The information does not help ease our tiredness and anger, and the crowd is getting more and more impatient. Suddenly, I heard a roar from the other side of the plaza. People are pushing the iron bars and are raging for the long hours of waiting. The sound and movement of the roar come nearer and nearer, and eventually, people around me are also shouting, pushing and crying. The soldiers came, standing side by side, forming human barriers and trying to control the crowd. Then, the reporters also came, which caused another round of chaos as people rushed to complain in front of the cameras. The girl standing beside me fainted and collapsed on the ground. I tried to help, but the crowd pushed me further and further away from the girl.

I am only trying to get a ticket back home.

<sup>21</sup> Base on reports, blogs and documentaries on the 2008 Guangzhou Train Station Lunar New Year travel rush stampede incident



### Homesick

Yu Guangzhong (1972)

*“When I was young, Homesick is a tiny stamp.*

*I am here, my mother is there.*

*When I grew up, Homesick is a little ticket.*

*I am here, my bride is there.*

*Thereafter, Homesick become a short grave.*

*I am outside, my mother is inside.*

*And now, Homesick is the shallow strait.*

*I am here, the mainland is there.”*

## 廣州站

統一祖國
振興中華

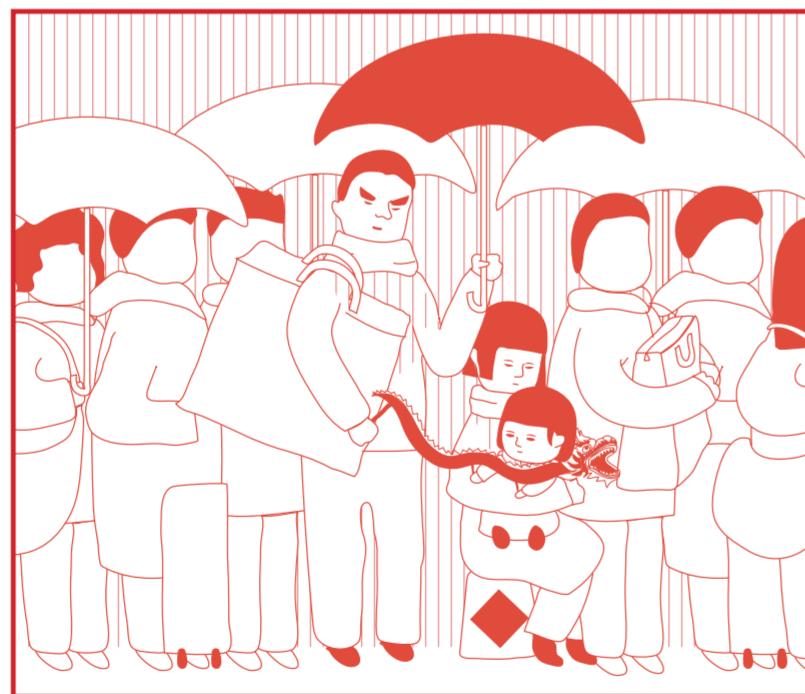
## 農曆除夕

<h3 style="color: red;">宜</h3> <p>送神 <small>Sending away the deities</small></p> <p>圍爐(年夜飯) <small>Having dinner together</small></p> <p>守歲 <small>Staying up late</small></p> <p>貼年紅 <small>Putting up red couplets, paste, window paper-cuts</small></p>	<h3 style="color: red;">忌</h3> <p>忌吵架、罵人、動粗口、禁忌字 <small>NO Arguing, scolding, rude words, unfortunate words and conversations</small></p> <p>禁關燈 <small>DO NOT Off the light</small></p> <p>忌向屋外灑水、倒垃圾、掃地 <small>DO NOT spill water, throw away rubbish, sweep</small></p>	<h3 style="color: red;">時辰吉凶</h3> <p><small>Fortunate Hours</small></p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">舞龍 Dancing Dragon</p>	<p style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">子丑寅卯辰巳午未申酉戌亥</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">23 01 03 05 07 09 11 13 15 17 19 21</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">01 03 05 07 09 11 13 15 17 19 21 23</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">凶 吉 凶 中 吉 吉 吉 吉 凶 中 凶 中</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">Unf. For. Unf. Neu. For. For. For. For. Unf. Neu. Unf. Neu.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">One day, the dragon emperor went to the human world disguised as an old man to seek help for his back pain. After a brief diagnose, the doctor asked the dragon emperor: "You are not a human right?" The dragon emperor told him the truth. The doctor asked him to reveal his original identity, and picked out a centipede hiding in his scale. The emperor is healed. To thank the doctor, the dragon emperor said "If human dance with paper dolls in my shape, everything will go well." The advice is spread to the others. Hence every Spring Festival, people will do the Dragon Dance to wish for fortune and a smooth going year.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">今日吉數</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; color: red;">Lucky No. of the Day</p>			2 14 38 43

## In the Queue



“Gong hey fat choi!” “Sun nin fai lok!”  
Words of Fortune condenses with the cold air  
and forms the fog of Fortune floating above  
the crowd.



Fortune transforms into umbrellas and in the  
belongings. The bucket is a chair, a bag and  
the belongings the happiness to endure the  
queueing.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Zhangke Jia, *A Bucket* (Feb 5 2019, Apple, 2019), Online



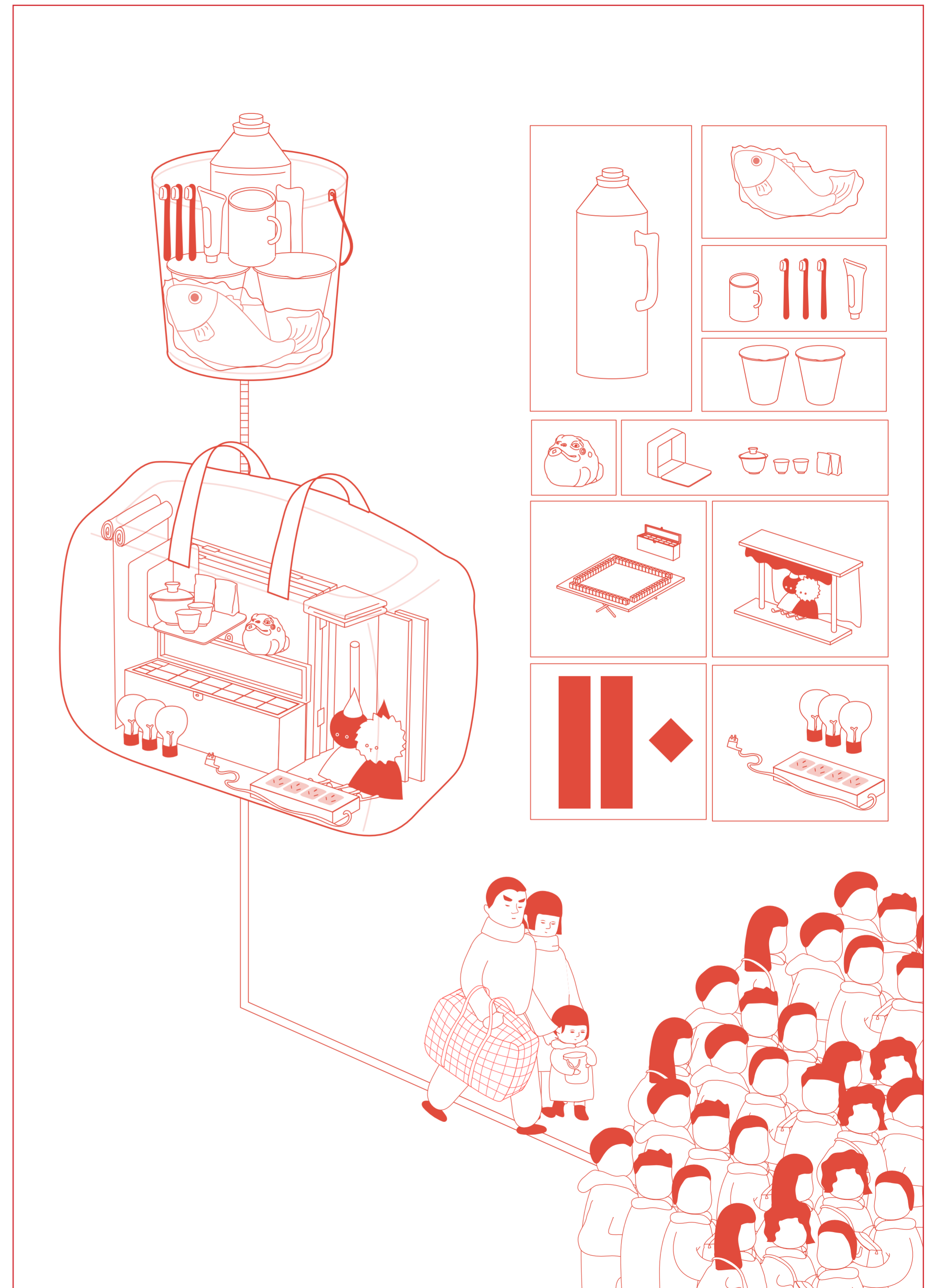
*New habits adapted during the New Year Journey*

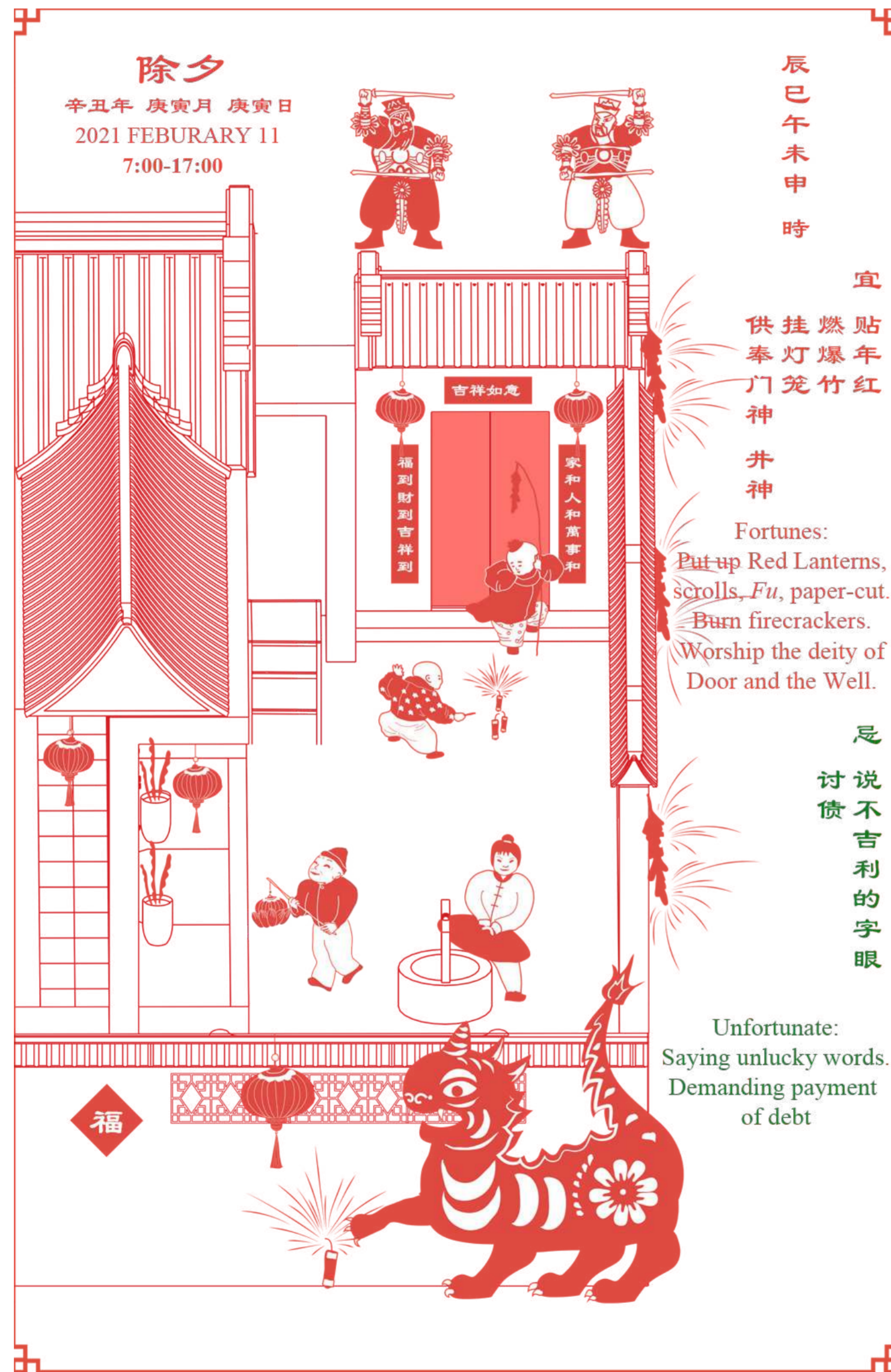
# THE CNY TRAVEL TOOLKIT

The travel toolkit is constructed using the checker bag and the bucket often seen in train stations during the Lunar New Year Travel Rush. As an attempt to shape the intangible Fortune on the road, the Travel Toolkit interprets Fortune as portable health and auspicious equipment to endure the long journey back home. The health equipment reflects new habits adapted through the practices that emerged during the journey, while the auspicious equipment references the cultural leisure activities specific in Guangzhou and Shantou.

But if the toolkit user doesn't believe in the production of Fortune, what is the significance of the Travel Toolkit?

**Who is producing for whom?**





## 抵達 The Arrival

【女性】  
【祖先】

Ancestors

Worshipping the ancestors for Fortune on the first day of New Year.

Women

Sacred places for women and sacred placed for men.

*The house in Shantou is very old and traditional.<sup>23</sup>*

*"Come with me!" said my cousin, dragging me out of the house, "we need to go out; the ceremony is beginning soon." I looked at the main hall. The inner doors are opened, revealing the worship table and the ancestor's name boards. Men start gathering in the main hall, and women collect the food ingredients in the kitchen, put them on the bamboo baskets and walk out of the house.*

*"This is now a house for the men." My aunt winked as she walked past me, "come, we need to make the cakes for them outside."*

<sup>23</sup> Xiashanhu (The Descending Tiger), a traditional type of housing found in Shantou



House in Shantou, Main Hall



**LUNAR NEW YEAR DAY 1**

子時 (23:00-01:00)  
Sleep

– Auspicious for: Worshipping the Deity of Wealth, Guanyin

丑時 (01:00-03:00)  
Sleep

– Not Auspicious for: Young Couples

寅時 (03:00-05:00)  
Sleep

– Auspicious for: Specialists in Medicine, Artist

卯時 (05:00-07:00)

Wake up, Breakfast, Worshipping Deities

– Auspicious for: Politicians and Work

辰時 (07:00-09:00)

Preparations for Ancestor Worshipping

– Not Auspicious for: Sleeping

巳時 (09:00-11:00)

Men: Ancestor Worshipping

Women: Cake Making

– Not Auspicious for: Using water

午時 (11:00-13:00)

Lunch, Rest

– Auspicious for: Dining

未時 (13:00-15:00)

Visiting the others

– Auspicious for: Worshipping ghosts and spirits

申時 (15:00-17:00)

Visiting the others

– Auspicious for: Arranging files and documents

酉時 (17:00-19:00)

Dinner

– Not auspicious for: Gossiping

戌時 (19:00-21:00)

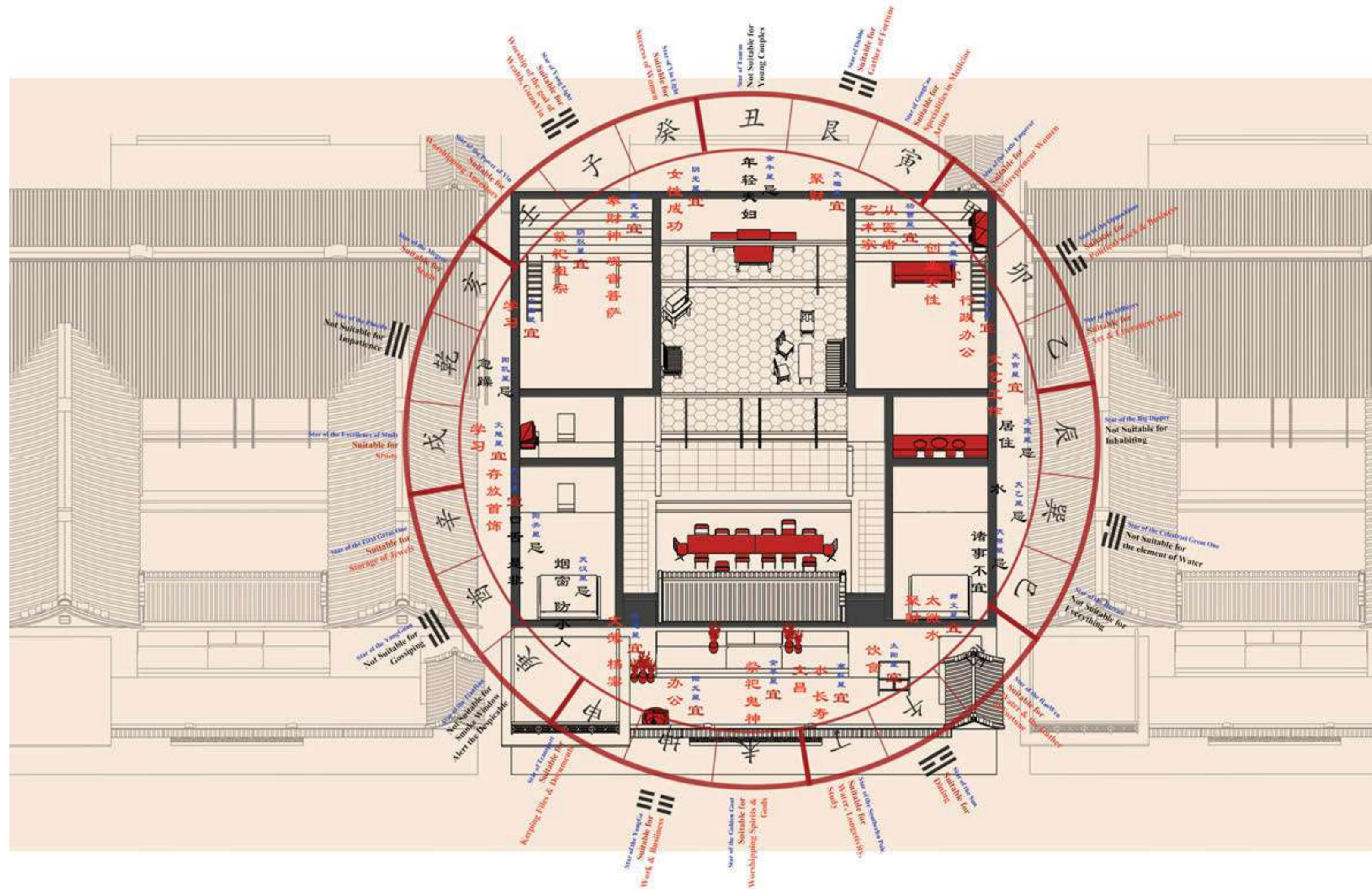
Tea Time and Sleep

– Auspicious for: Studying

亥時 (21:00-23:00)

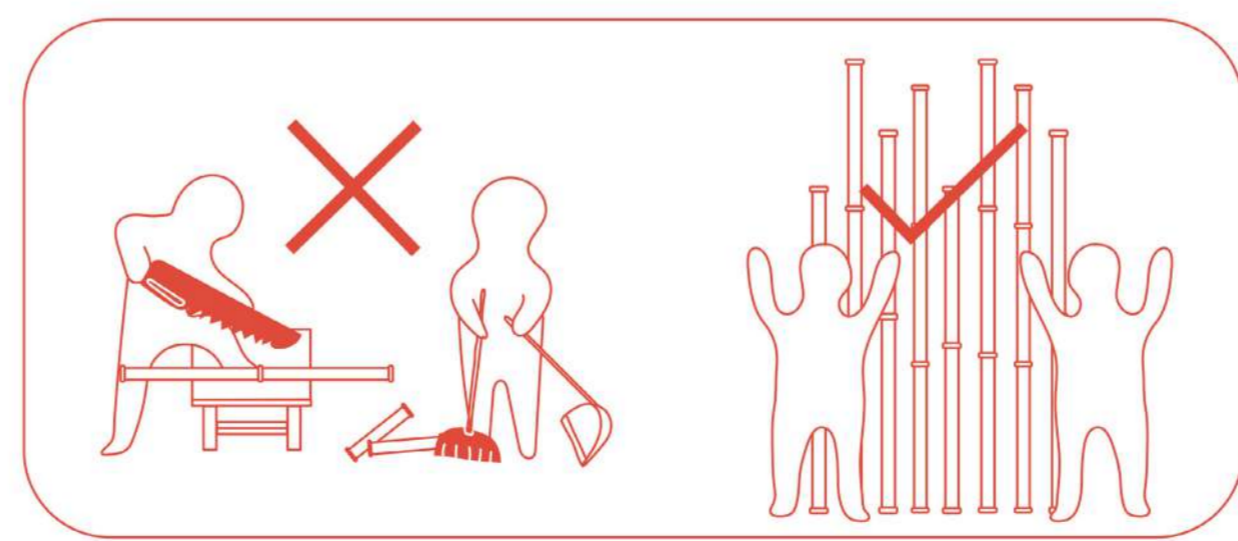
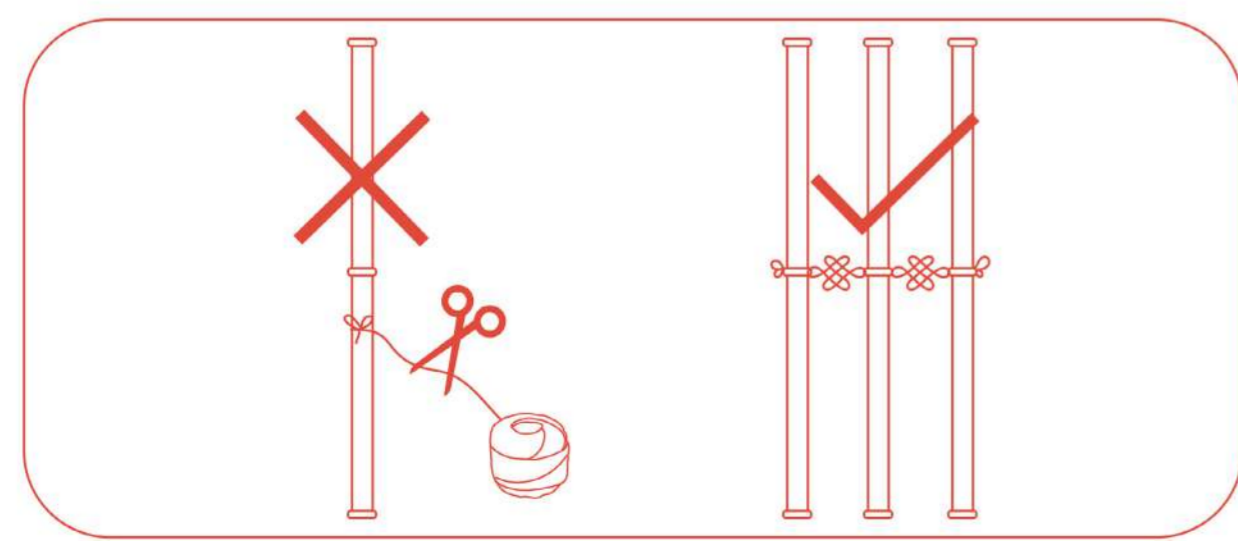
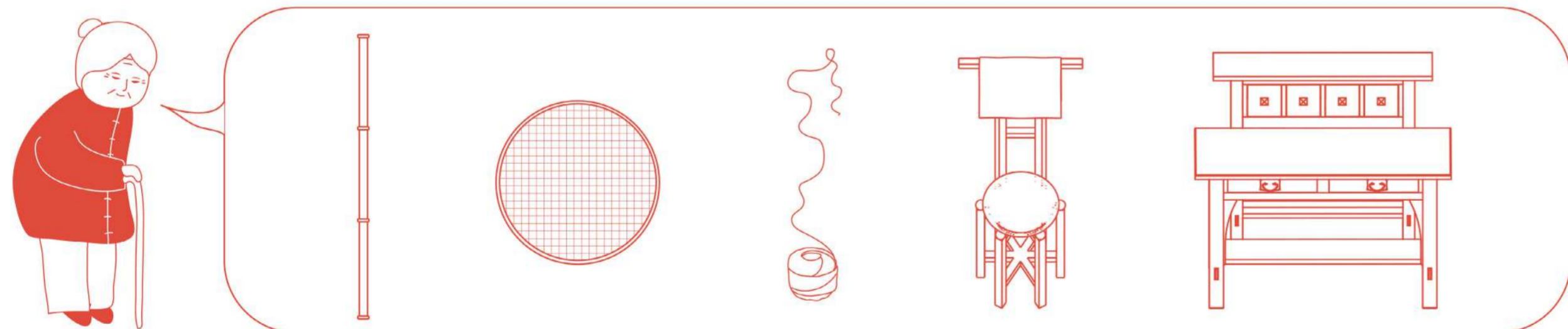
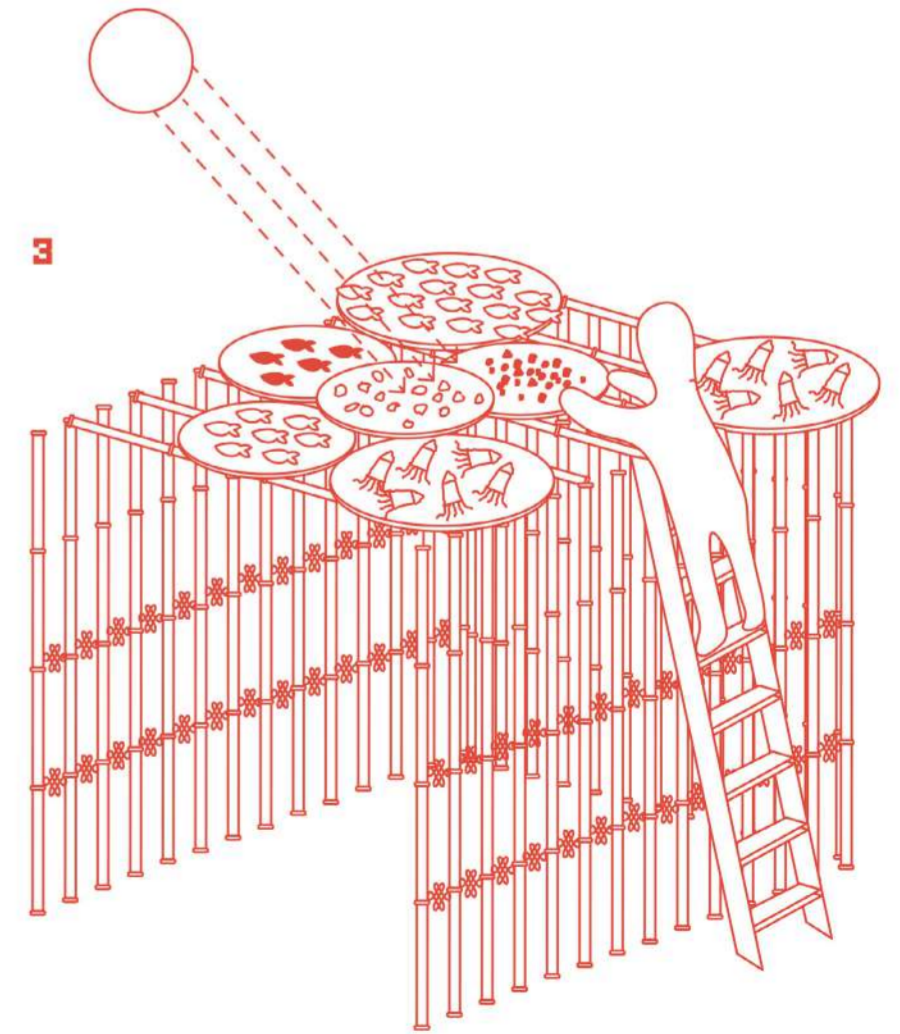
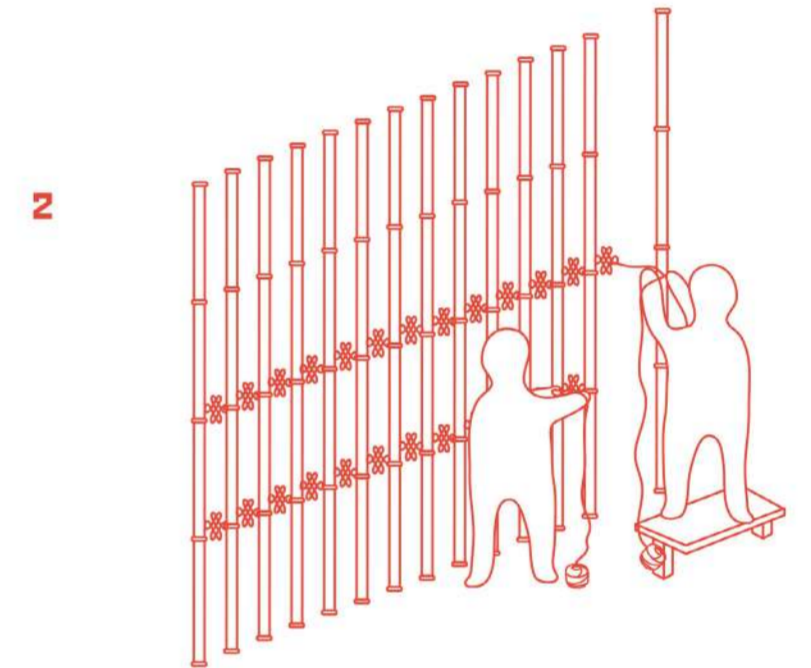
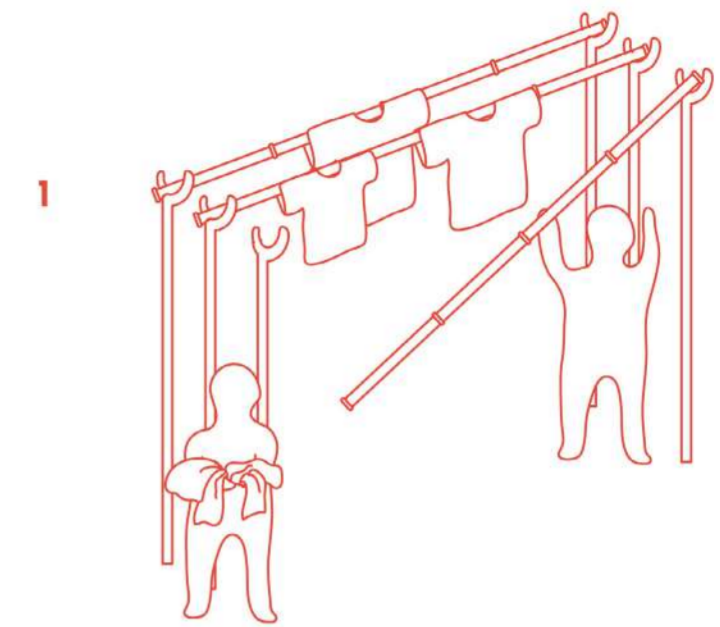
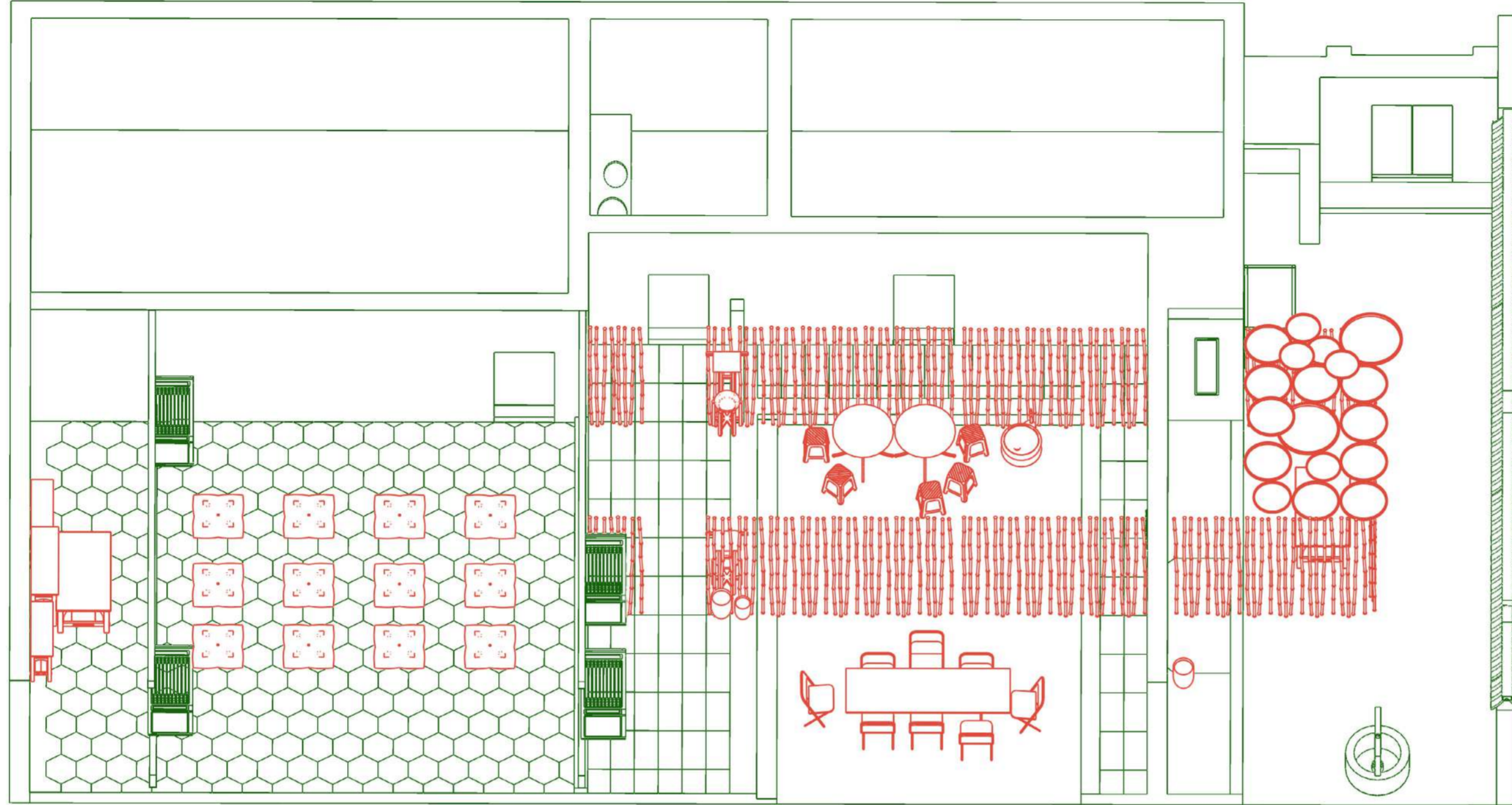
Sleep

– Auspicious for: Studying



The Auspicious Schedule at Home during Lunar New Year

# Sacred Space for Women Construction Manual



## Sacred Space for Women Construction Manual

New Year Celebrations at home in Shantou segregate the sex and the housework. The worshipping ritual is exclusively for the male, as they carry the family's surname and bloodline.<sup>24</sup> Based on China's patriarchal religion, the gender of the worshipped ancestors is also focused on the males.<sup>25</sup> Females, who are not considered part of the bloodline, are forbidden to go into the ancestral temples or the main hall in the house during ancestral worship. Children who are considered to be 'sexless' can enter all places without restrictions.

At the same time, women are in charge of preparing and making the New Year cakes (Kuih粿). The New Year cakes are one of the foods used for ancestor worship and also the lunch for the first day of New Year. Hence, even though movements are restricted, making the New Year cakes still needs to be carried on. This poses an inconvenience to the females in the family, especially in contemporary urban China, where gender equality and women empowerment is advocated.<sup>26</sup>

One exception would be the ancestress temples in Shantou. These are one of the first ancestress temples found in China.<sup>27</sup> The temples are smaller in scale and are organized in the opposite orientation as compared to the ancestral temples.<sup>28</sup> To ensure the female members of the family would also have equal rights and spaces during the ancestral worshipping, the construction manual is an exploration of how sacred spaces for women can be created at home using the immediately available everyday objects.

But why should we still follow the ancestral worshipping that assumes privileges for a particular sex?

**Can traditions be changed to fit the modern spirit and context?**

<sup>24</sup> Xiaoying Jing and Bin Zhang, 'Chinese Family Kinship and Ancestor Worship', 2020, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> huaxia, 'China Makes Remarkable Progress in Gender Equality, Women Empowerment: Official - Xinhua | English.News.Cn', Xinhua Net, 16 April 2021, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021\\_04/16/c\\_139885098.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021_04/16/c_139885098.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Ruoqiu Xie and Wei Huang, 'Exploration of the Features of Chaoshan Ancestress Shrines', Department of Teacher Education, Jieyang Vocational and Technical College 41, no. 04 (2020): 58\_64.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



*Ancestral Worshipping at Home*



*The Making of Kuih*

# 慶典 The Celebration

【考  
試  
】  
【營  
老  
爺  
】

## Deity Cruising

The land is purified and the people are blessed with fortune

## Examination

Preparations for the test never stops!

*The deadly silence in the house is disturbed by the screaming alarm at six in the morning. With her eyes still closed, my cousin found the ringing phone, turned the alarm off and got up from her bed.*

*“Where are you going?” I asked, still half-awakened, “Is it even morning yet?” “School.” She answered, “Online classes, holiday extra lessons.” “Even during Lunar New Year??” I asked in surprise. “Gakao.”<sup>29</sup> The preparations never cease till it ends.” “The connection here is terrible. My phone barely receives any signals in the house.” I said. “Going on the road.” She replied calmly. The road is the only place with signals. “But the deity cruising celebration<sup>30</sup> is starting soon.” I gasped.*

*“Yeah, will need to work through it. Will do anything to get into my dream university.”*



Preparing for Gaokao

<sup>29</sup> China's annual college entrance exam. A high-stakes exam on which students' entire future depends.  
<sup>30</sup> Lei cha xia, "The Deity Cruising Celebration", Souhu News, 29 June 2020. [https://www.sohu.com/a/www.sohu.com/a/404663675\\_471663](https://www.sohu.com/a/www.sohu.com/a/404663675_471663).

汕頭  
的  
街

Street  
in  
Shantou



Deity Cruising in Shantou

## Schedule of Urban & Rural Fortune Production

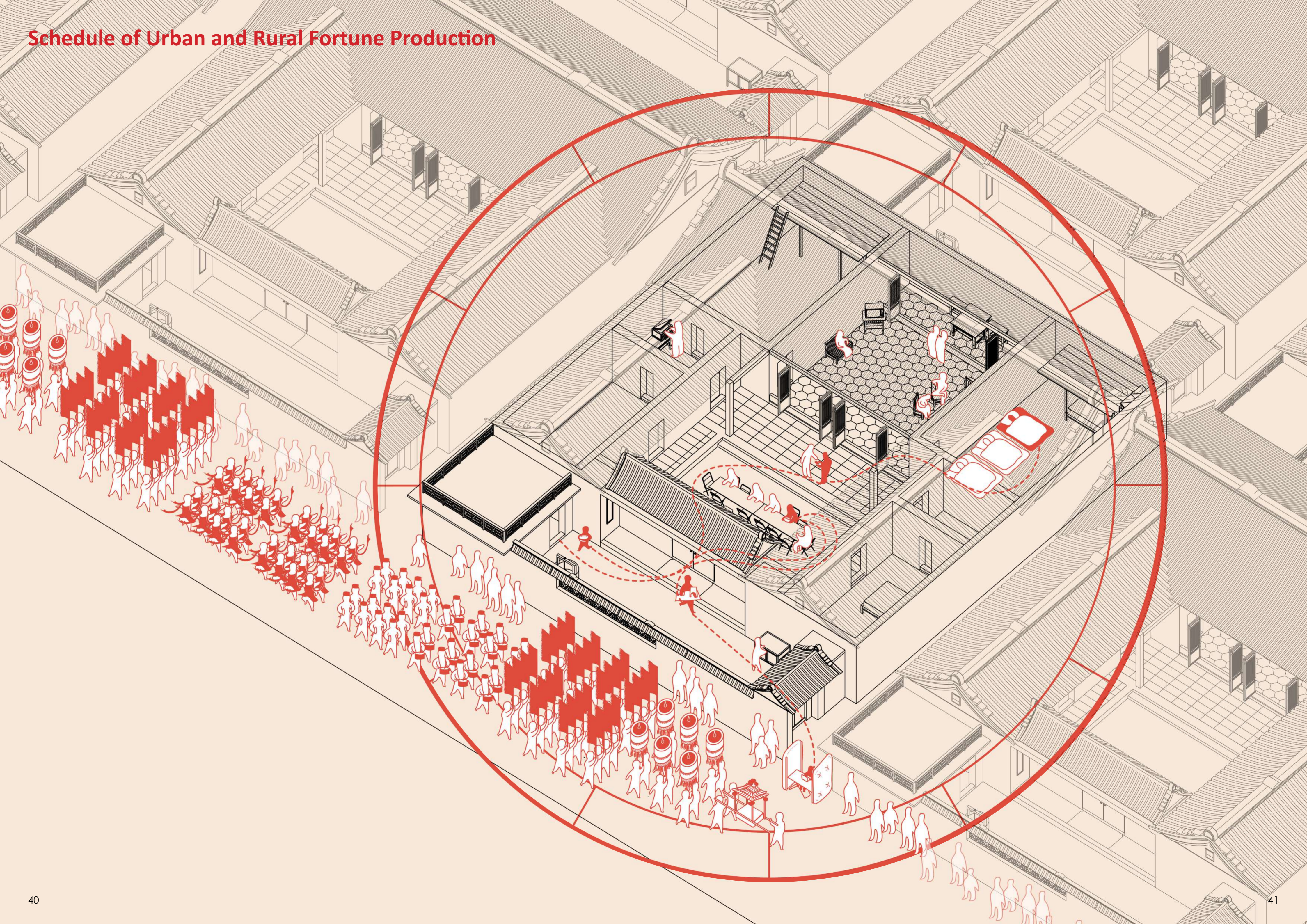
There is a disparity between the production of Fortune in the urban and rural.

To the urban students participating in the Gaokao (University Entrance Examination), Fortune is an immediate goal – to get into the course and university they wanted. The production of Fortune is no more than assiduous studies and revisions.

To the villagers in Shantou, Fortune is an abstract notion of luck, health, and wealth. By participating in celebration events such as Deity Cruising, Fortune is automatically produced. When the environment, context and timings for Fortune production varies, a gap is created between the belief of Fortune production and the actual practice.

**When Fortune production schedule in the city and the countryside clashes and both need to be attended, how can Fortune be produced?**

# Schedule of Urban and Rural Fortune Production



## 返 The 程 Return

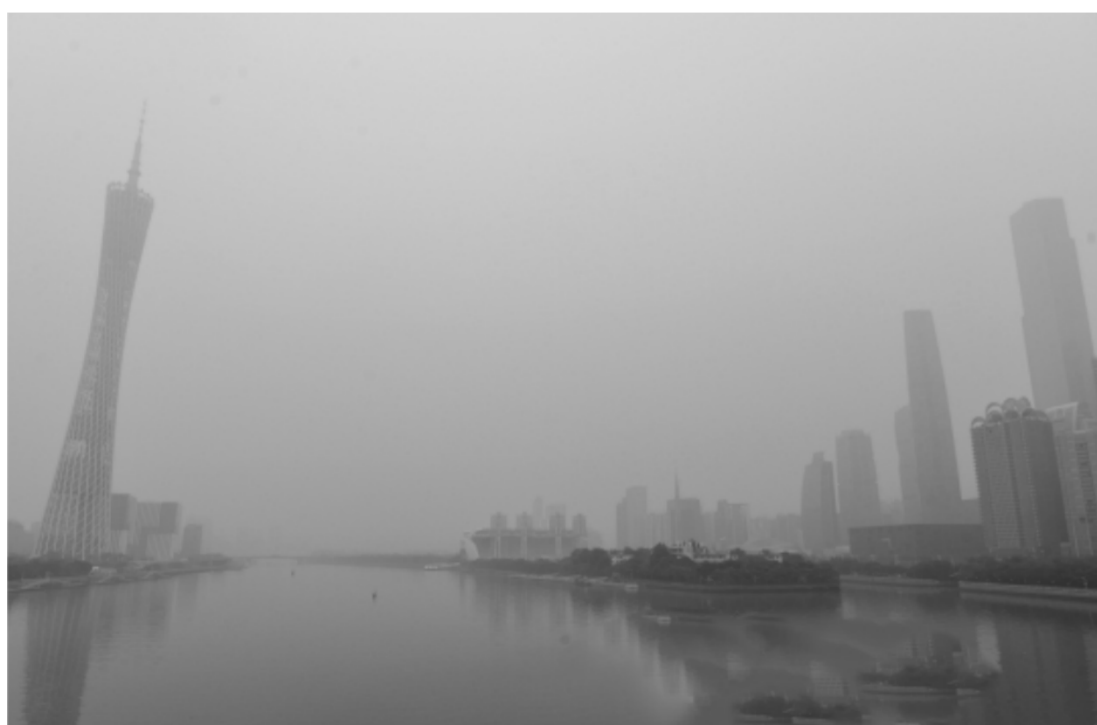
【水質】  
【空氣】

**Air**

Sneezings and coughs.  
Be aware not to fall sick.

**Water**

Water being 'wet' and  
'hot' to the body.



*Don't drink the water, it is hot and wet.<sup>31</sup>*

*Don't breathe the air, it smells like cigarette.*

*Don't fall sick, it is New Year.<sup>32</sup>*

*And off we go, back with Fortune and souvenir.*

<sup>31</sup> Term in Chinese Medicine.

<sup>32</sup> Lunar New Year Custom: it is not auspicious to fell sick or consume medicine during the New Year period.

身 環  
體 境

The Human  
Body & The  
Environment

## The Souvenir of Fortune

Like other first tier economy cities<sup>33</sup> in China, Guangzhou is also notorious for its air pollution due to the transport vehicle and factory emissions.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the rural city Shantou has much better air and water quality as compared to Guangzhou.<sup>35</sup> In order to not lost the Fortune produced during the New Year and keep healthy during the return journey, the body needs to adjust to the changing temperature, humidity, air and water between the cities.

In the previous phases in the journey, Fortune production always concerns with the producer, the immediate close friends and families and the people. Could Fortune also be produced for the environment?

**What could the production of Fortune produce besides Fortune?**

<sup>33</sup> Marco Hernández, 'China City Tiers', South China Morning Post, accessed 6 November 2021, <http://multimedia.scmp.com/2016/cities/img/cover.jpg>.

<sup>34</sup> Mimi Lau, 'Guangzhou Announces Emergency Measures to Tackle Heavy Pollution | South China Morning Post', South China Morning Post, 12 November 2013, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1354765/guangzhou-announces-emergency-measures-tackle-heavy-pollution>.

<sup>35</sup> Guangdong Provincial Environmental Monitoring Center, 'The Air and Water Environment Quality and Ranking of Cities in Guangdong Province (2020)-Guangdong Provincial Department of Ecology and Environment Public Website', Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province, 26 January 2021, [http://gdee.gd.gov.cn/sz5628/content/post\\_3232650.html](http://gdee.gd.gov.cn/sz5628/content/post_3232650.html).

## EPILOGUE

The series of drawings of the almanac then leads me to another set of questions: *why is the almanac fortune instructions written in this particular way? How does the calendar know what numbers are in luck, which days are suitable for marriage and the gender of the baby a woman is giving birth to?* For the millennial generation, instructions on the almanac calendar are merely words that are read and forgotten. New Year celebrations and traditions are already altered and moulded to fit their personal likes and preferences.<sup>36</sup> While some of the new generations still respects and believes that the traditions exist for a reason, voices that question the relativity of the customs and the associated stress and burden has also been raised. Hence, *what is the Fortune production we are following if people producing Fortune do not believe in the Fortune itself? Who is producing Fortune for whom? Where does the Fortune production lie in the future?*

Although I am unable to provide an answer to these questions, the explorations do allude to the bigger implications the Chinese Fortune production can apply beyond the scale of the individual, home, and the family. By constructing a collection of stories, poems, schedules, and drawings, I have tried to map out Fortune's intangible, ambiguous aspects in different scales and across generations. Instead of seeking a solution, the interventions proposed in the thesis report help me expand the scope of inquiry on vernacular traditions in the modern context to be investigated next semester.

<sup>36</sup> Rena Lim, 'Chinese New Year, the Millennial Way', The Star, accessed 3 November 2021, <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2019/01/28/chinese-new-year-the-millennial-way-as-more-older-folk-go-easy-on-tradition-young-ones-adopt-modern>.

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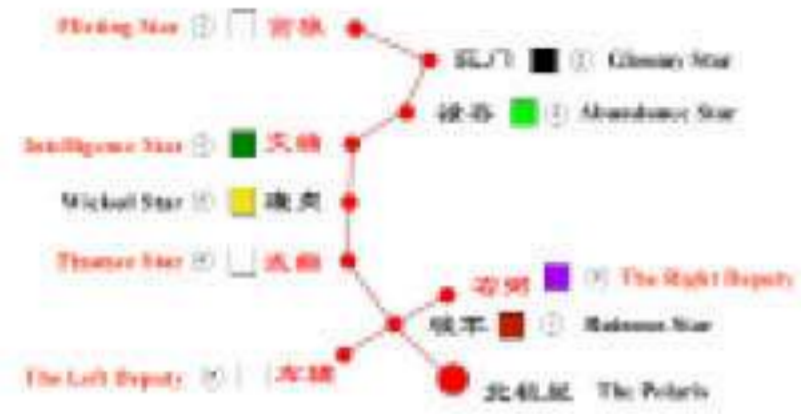
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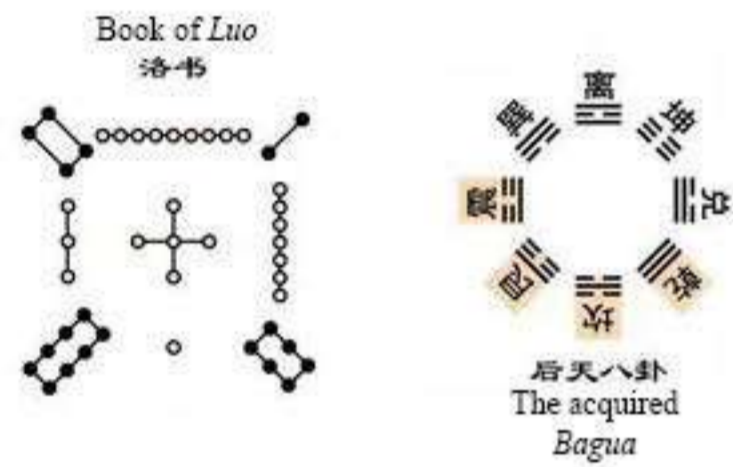
# APPENDIX



**The Big Dipper**  
北斗七星



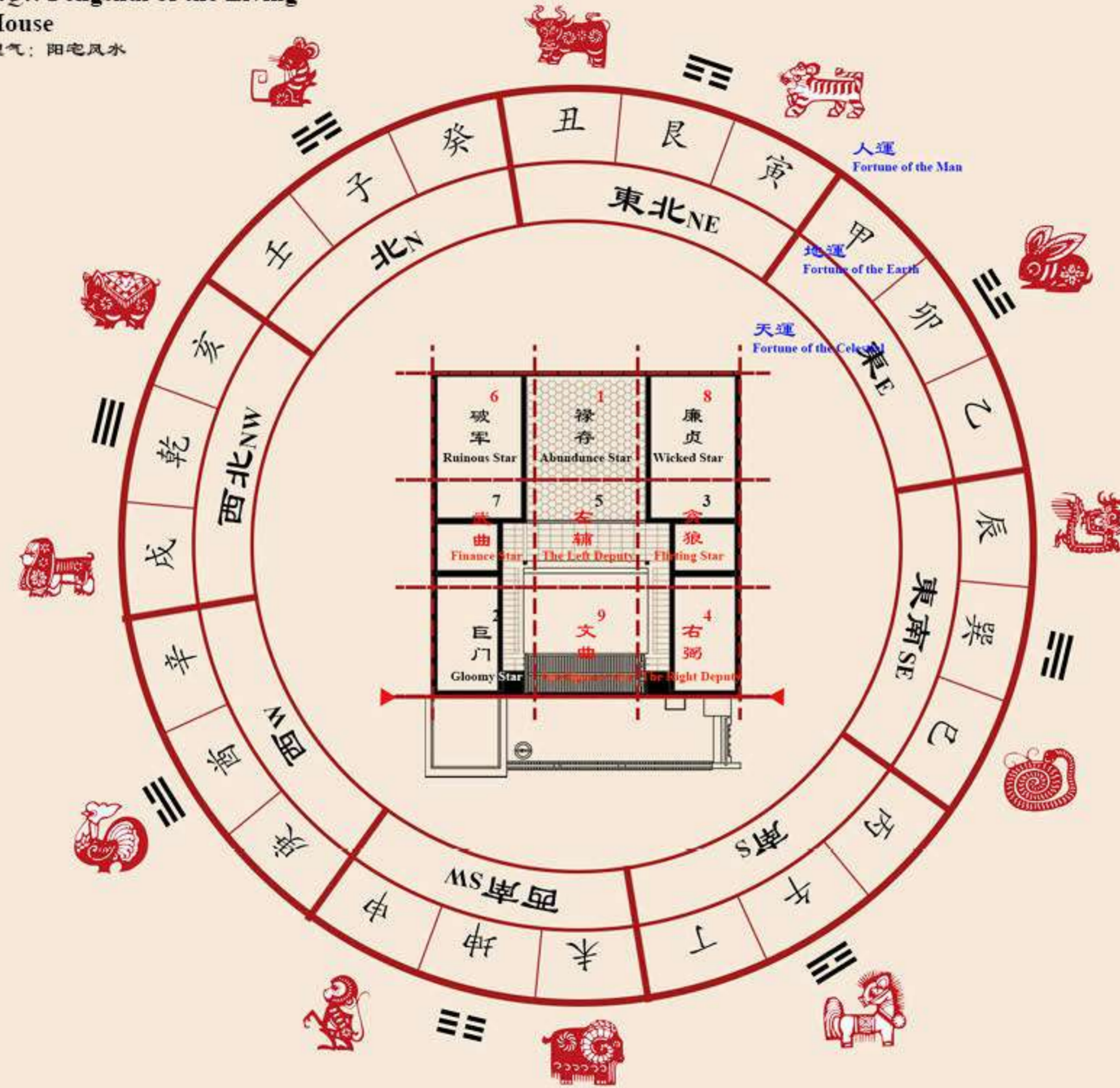
**The Big Dipper**  
北斗七星



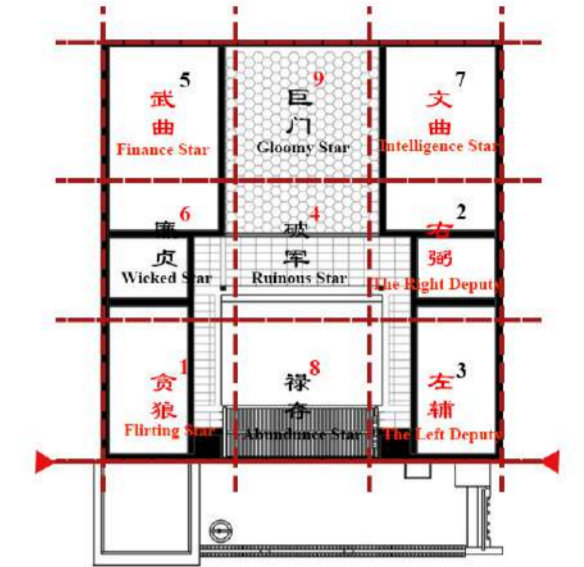
**The Three Cycles & Nine Fortunes**  
三元九運

	1st Fortune	1864-1883
Upper Cycle (60 years)	2nd Fortune	1884-1903
	3rd Fortune	1904-1923
Medium Cycle (60 years)	4th Fortune	1924-1943
	5th Fortune	1944-1963
	6th Fortune	1964-1983
Lower Cycle (60 years)	7th Fortune	1984-2003
	8th Fortune	2004-2023
	9th Fortune	2024-2043

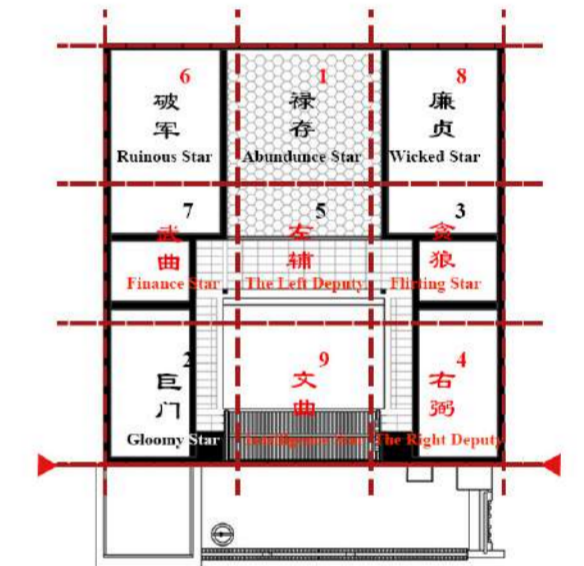
**LiQi: Fengshui of the Living House**  
理气: 阳宅风水



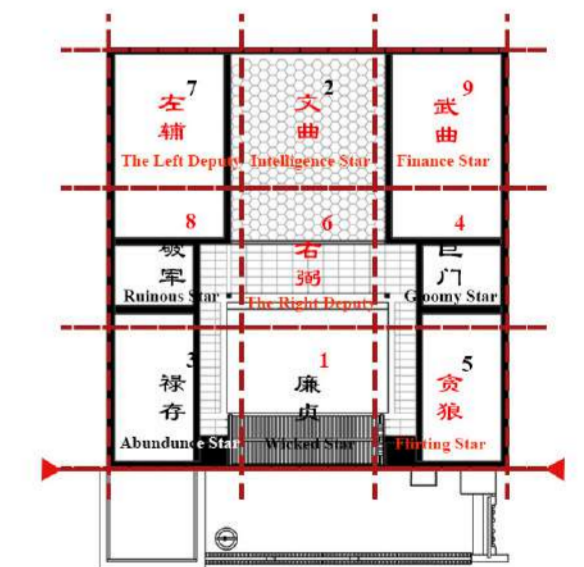
The 7th Fortune  
七運 1984-2003



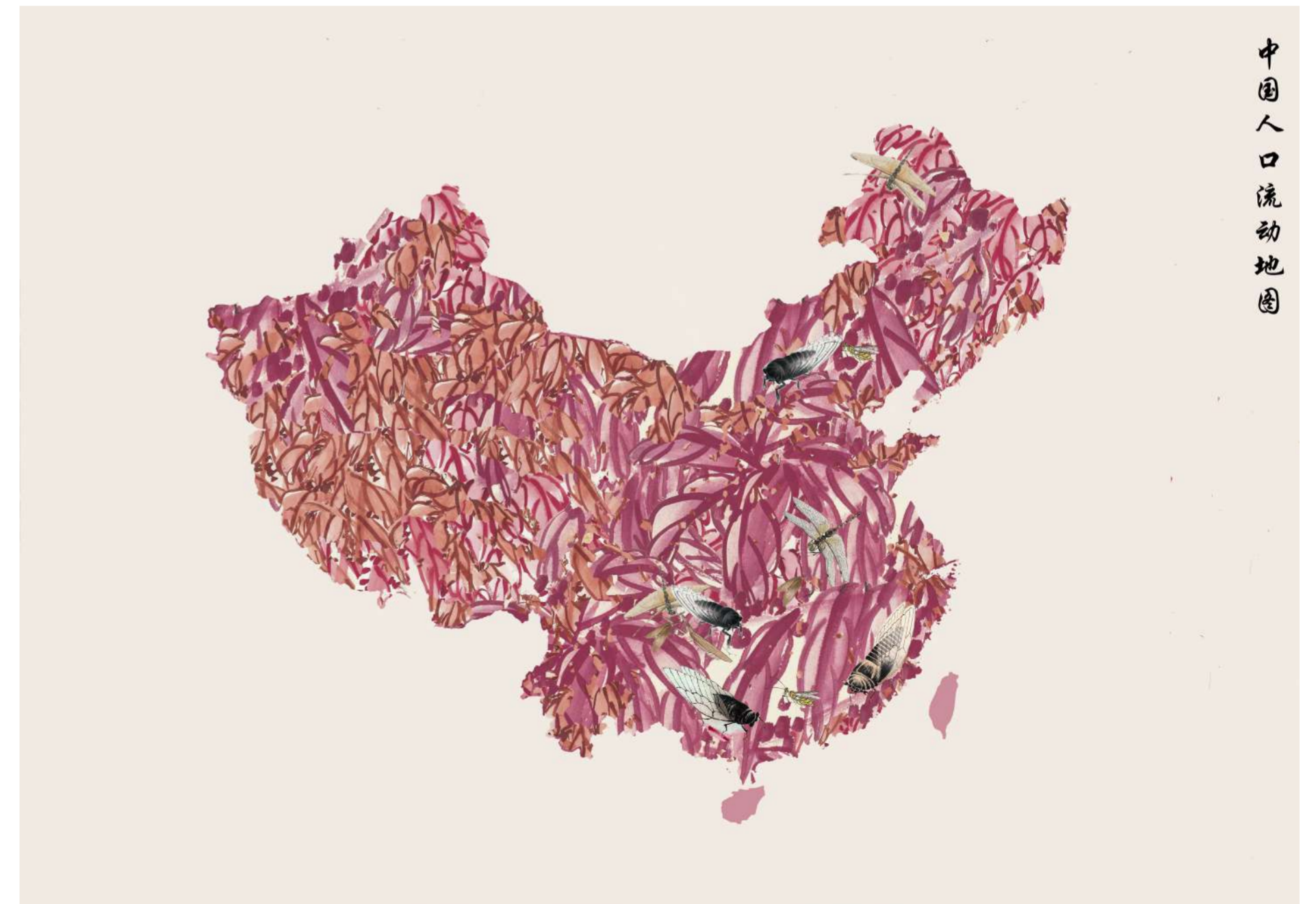
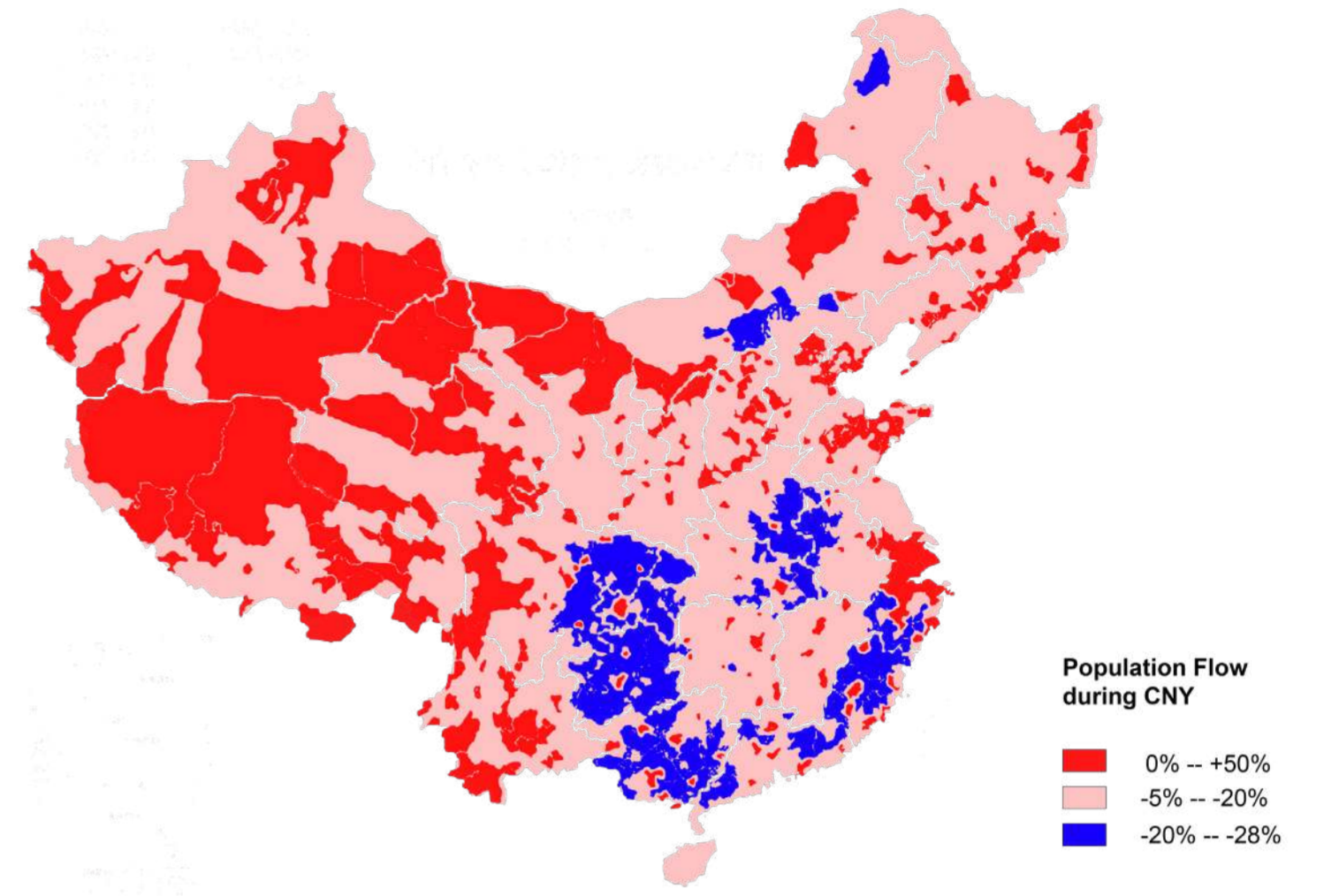
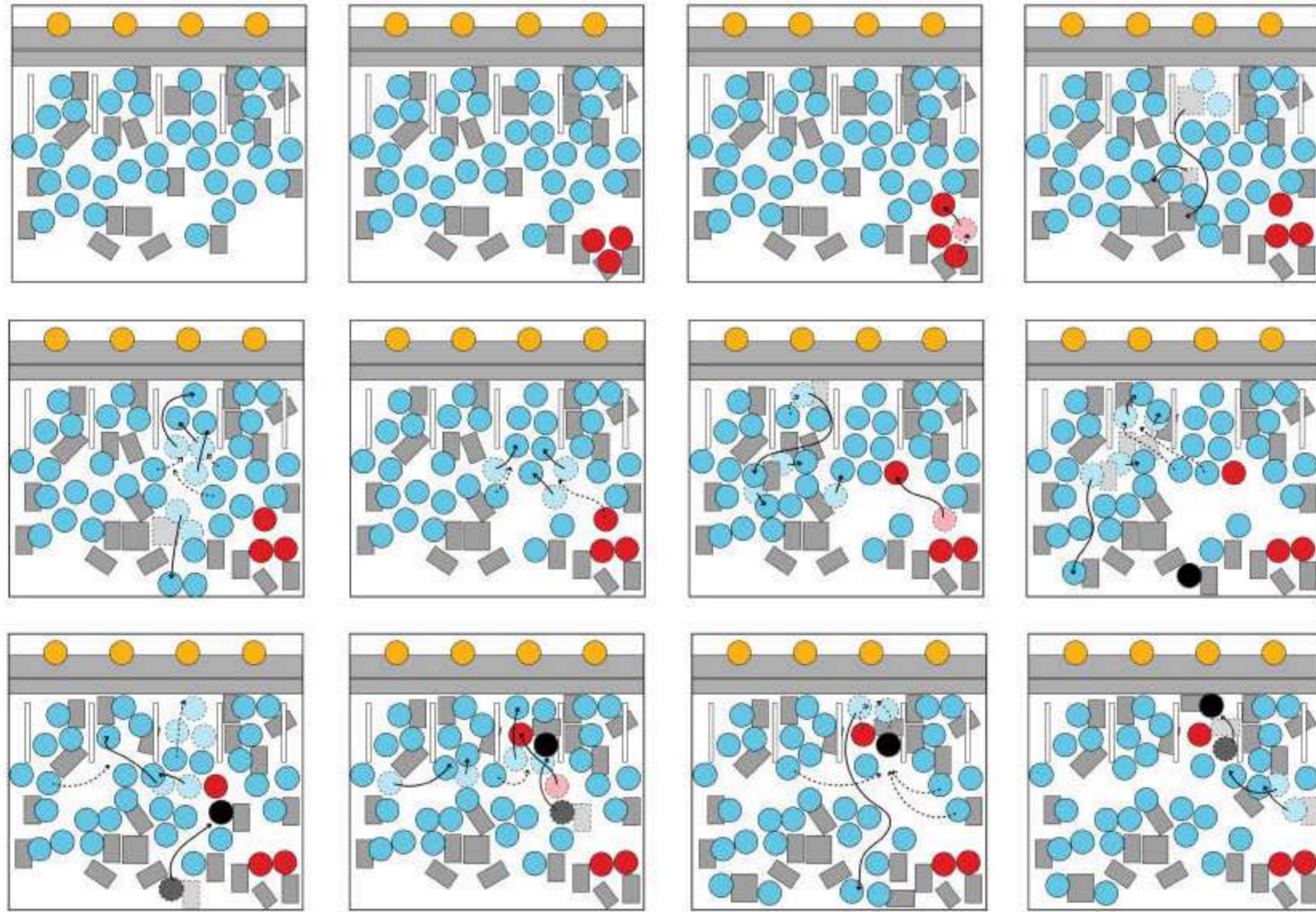
The 8th Fortune  
八運 2004-2023

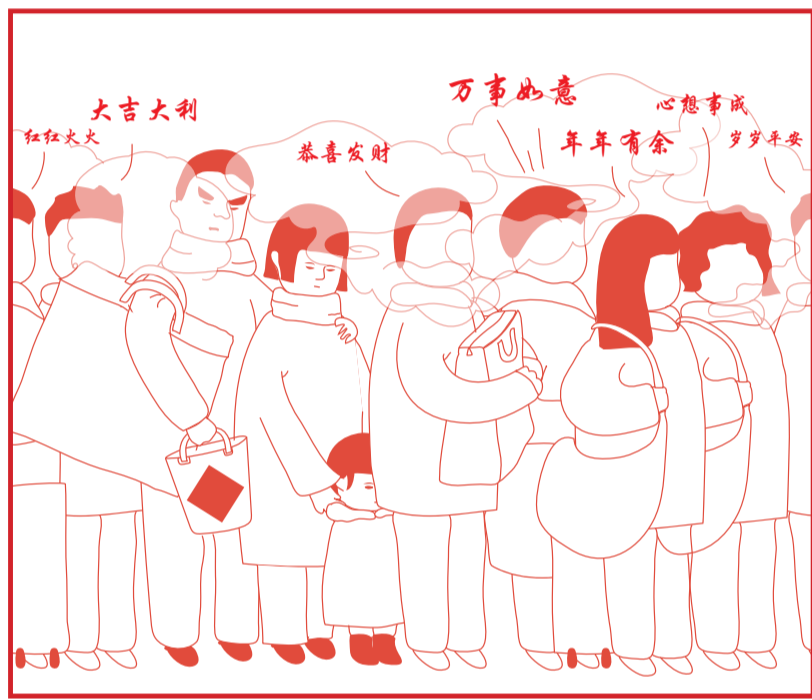


The 9th Fortune  
九運 2024-2043



### How to produce Fortune in Gaps: Queueing





**THE PRODUCTION OF FORTUNE**