

An Analysis of Korean Geomancy Tales

By

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Background For This Study

For a complete understanding of the role of a cultural process in a society, it is important to measure its role in folk society. In order to understand a folk society, analysis of its folklore is essential, for its folklore is a record of a people's cultural behavior.¹ Therefore, to comprehend the role of a cultural process such as geomancy in Korean folk society, Korean geomancy tales need to be analyzed.

Geomancy has had a more adverse than favorable impact on Korean culture. It has, in addition, been one of the important elements in regulating the cultural behavior of Koreans. In spite of its adverse impact, even scholars have not been able to completely oppose the concept because it has roots in a traditional philosophy, the Yin-Yang theory, and because it also has been favored by some aspects of Confucian ethics.² Because geomancy has been such an important factor in Korean culture, it is my conviction that without a thorough understanding of it, the study of Korean cultural history or cultural ecology is almost impossible.³ Therefore, it is my hope that this small study will be helpful in the understanding of geomancy *per se* and/or the characteristics of the Korean culture.

Before analyzing some geomancy tales, I will briefly discuss the nature of geomancy in order to better understand what these tales are

1. Compare this to William R. Bascom's statement that "The recording of folklore, in itself, is a very useful field technique for anthropologists—it provides a non-ethnocentric approach to the ways of life of people, emphasizing, as Boas pointed out, the things which are important in their own minds, it may offer clues to past events and archaic customs—." For further study, see William R. Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Study of Folklore*, Alan Dundes, ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), p. 284.

2. Especially filial piety can be listed as an example of this.

3. Dr. Clarence J. Glacken, Professor of geography at the University of California, Berkeley, said in class that without an understanding of geomancy, the understanding of Chinese cultural history or cultural geography may well be impossible.

about.

Definitions of Geomancy

Probably few ideas in the world are more closely related to the natural environment than geomancy. This concept is known as *Feng-shui* in Chinese and *Pung-su* Korean—both of which literally mean “wind and water”—and is based on the premise that certain sites or localities are more auspicious than others. *Feng-shui* teaches that man should not bring about disorder in the geomantic harmony of nature (however, it allows for corrections of geomantic disharmony of nature) by modifying either natural and/or cultural landscapes. Moreover, in the acquisition of one’s prosperity, the selection of an auspicious place for a house or burial site must be made by means of geomantic principles. Thus, geomancy is a quasi-religious and pseudo-scientific system which regulates human ecology by influencing man in the selection of various locations.⁴

Let us now turn to some basic geomantic principles which will aid us in the interpretation of geomancy tales.

Some Important Geomantic Principles

According to the Ts’ang-shu, which is known as Kuo P’u’s writing,⁵ when the spirit of Yin-Yang flows under the ground, it becomes a vital energy.⁶ An auspicious place is located where a vital energy stays, and people believed that if a man was buried in such a place, his descendants would receive good fortune from the grave. The reason for this is explained in *Ts’angshu*. Parents are the main bodies of their children (like

4. Compare this definition of geomancy with J.J.M. De Groot’s definition: “*Fung Shui* means a quasi scientific system, supposed to teach men where and how to build graves, temples and dwellings in order that the dead, the gods and living may be located therein exclusively, or as far as possible, under the auspicious influences of nature.” For further study see J.J.M. De Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Vol. 3, Part 1, p. 985.

5. Kuo P’u, a famous geomancer, lived in China during the Tsin dynasty, A.D. 276–324. He is famous to us not only as a geomancer but also a writer of literary works and commentaries. The great standard classical literature of geomancy, *Ts’angshu*, is known as his writing. It is assumed that he was one of the authorities in geomancy during the age of his time. Kuo P’u is, probably, the most important scholar-geomancer in the history of Chinese geomancy.

6. Kuo P’u, *Ts’angshu* in *Ti-li Cheng-tsung*, edited and commented by Chiang Kuo (Hsin-chu: Chulin Shu-Chu, 1967), Vol. 3, p. 1.

the trunk of a tree with branches), and when they die and are thus influenced by a vital energy, their remaining bodies in the living world (in other words, their descendants) are also influenced by this energy.⁷ So when parents are laid to rest in an auspicious place, their descendants enjoy the benefits of such a place because they are branches of the dead parents. This explains how descendants could receive good fortune from the ancestors' graves.

The basic principles of geomancy are simple enough. As put forth in *Ts'ang-shu*, they are, first, the acquisition of water and then the storing of wind.⁸ This means that an auspicious place is mainly determined by the location of surrounding mountains which store the wind and by nearby watercourses.

Motifs (Themes) of Korean Geomancy Tales

Compared with Chinese geomancy tales studied by Professor Wolfram Eberhard, the Korean tales have more varied motifs.⁹ Although some tales have more than one motif, all of the stories can be classified into one of the following four categories:

1. An auspicious locale is given to a good person.

This is an extremely popular motif. Many tales say that when one has been a good person, he (or she) has been able to obtain an auspicious place for a house or a grave. The term "good person" here refers to an ethical man. Ethics have been greatly emphasized in the geomancy tales as well as in other Korean tales. The ethics emphasized include charity, filial piety, parental sacrifice for children and so on. The ethical principle most emphasized was charity to all poor living things, such as suffering animals and travelling monks. The plots of many tales involve offering help or charity to poor creatures who then, in gratitude, choose an auspicious place for their benefactor as a reward.

In *The Story of the Grave of Mr. Yu*, Mr. Yu helps a suffering tiger, and is offered an auspicious place in reward:¹⁰

Long ago, in a certain county in Hamkyong Province, there lived a

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. For the motifs of Chinese geomancy tales, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Typen Chinesischer Volksmärchen*, Folklore Fellows Communications No. 120 (Helsinki: 1937), pp. 226-29.

10. Translated and abridged from Choi Sangsu, *Hankuk Minkan Chonsoljip*, (Seoul: Tongmun-kwan, 1958), p. 464.

strong man, Mr. Yu. One day while passing through a mountain trail, he came across a tiger which was having trouble with its mouth. Mr. Yu realized that the tiger was asking for his help. Upon examining the tiger's mouth, he found a *Pinyo* (Korean woman's hair dressing stick) and removed it.

Years after, when Mr. Yu died, this tiger appeared before the funeral procession and led the funeral cart to an auspicious place. Mr. Yu's sons buried the corpse of their father at the spot which the tiger indicated. After that, Mr. Yu's descendants became high government officers.

Mr. Yu was buried in an auspicious place because he was charitable to a suffering animal. Stories concerning charity to travelling monks are also popular. The following short tale, *The Grave of Mr. Yun of Hepyong*, illustrates this.¹¹

Mr. Yun Ungyul was very poor during his boyhood. His mother, however, was well-known to the people as a charitable lady. One day a poor monk was fed well at her house. As a reward, the monk selected an auspicious place for her. At that time, however, the place was located in a mountain which belonged to a rich man of the area. Mr. Yun's family moved an ancestor's grave secretly to this place, but they did not make a dome above the ground so that nobody could tell the place was a grave. After that, the descendants became prosperous.

Confucian ethics, for instance the five cardinals, have not played a role as important as charity in the geomancy tales. It is an interesting phenomenon that although the Confucian principles were officially accepted as the standard moral principles by the government and had penetrated extremely well into Korean society, the Confucian ethics were not as important in the tales as were the Buddhist ethics. Even the most Confucian ethic concept, namely filial piety, has not played a role in the geomancy tales as important as the Buddhist ethic, charity.

2. An auspicious place can be either destroyed or recovered.

Another important motif is that an auspicious place can be either destroyed or recovered by human agency. This idea is very important in the study of Korean cultural behavior. Because they firmly believed in this, people have often opposed artificial modification of harmonized geomantic landscapes by modern technology, and many people are very careful in remodeling old-fashioned houses into modern styles. *The Story of the Ancestor's grave of the Yi Family of Kosong* may be one of the best examples of this type of tale:¹²

11. Translated and abridged from *Chugan Choson* (Seoul), October 24, 1971, p. 28.

12. Translated and abridged from *Ibid.*, August 29, 1971, p. 28.

The ancestor's grave of the Yi family of Kosong is located in an auspicious place of the land figure of cattle which are lying down. Six generations after the grave was made, the benefits of the grave began being effective to the descendants. For this reason, high government officers were produced among the descendants. Because these high government officers visited their native town so often, the common people were forced to work for the preparation of their visit. Naturally, this caused them to complain.

When a geomancer-monk heard their complaints, he advised them to break a geomantically-important rock in Ansan. The figure of the rock was food for the cattle. Thus, when they broke the rock, the cattle lost food and eventually starved to death. No more of the grave's good fortune was now available to the descendants. Therefore, the Yi family could no longer produce high government officers.

Later on, when the Yi family realized what had happened, they put the broken pieces of rock together again and thus regained their prosperity.

As the above story points out, often the disorderings of natural harmony mean very significant things to the Korean people. It is true that Koreans have been careful about disturbing natural harmony without a geomancer's advice because their action might destroy the auspiciousness of the place or might even bring misfortune.

3. The grave manifests its benefits to the descendants.

Traditional Koreans probably believed in geomancy as strongly as westerners believe in their sciences. The pre-modern Koreans firmly believed that if they buried their ancestors in auspicious places, they would get good fortune from the grave. This benefit, however, was often available not directly to the son of the buried man but, after lying dormant for several generations, to distant descendants. According to a geomantic saying, the characteristics of each local *pungsu* (*feng-shui* in Chinese) is solely responsible for the kind of good fortune received. Some locales are of mild benefit; others produce spectacular results. Some will cause their good fortune to manifest itself immediately after the funeral, while others will not do so for several generations.

There are a number of tale motifs mainly concerned with getting benefits from the auspicious grave sites. The following story of *An Ancestor's grave of the Yi Family* of Hansan is a typical example of such a tale.¹³

The grave site had been the location of the local administration office of Hansan county of Kyongsang Province. Mr. Yi was working as a low local officer in this office. One day he saw that the floor where the governor's seat was located was decaying. He judged that this was the result of the power of the earth at that place. Concluding that it was an auspicious place,

13. Translated and abridged from *Ibid.*, October 31, 1971, p. 28.

he secretly buried his father's body under the floor. The family guarded their secret, and in the third generation after the burial, the grave brought forth good fortune. Many great men were produced among its descendants.

4. The regional landfigures (landforms) are living things or inanimate objects.

Koreans often considered the mountains and rivers as living things, and so they tried to provide the necessities for these geomantically personified landfigures. They believed that if the personified landfigures were lacking something for the necessary harmony of their local geomantic landscape, the merits of that place would not be available to them. For instance, if a local landfigure has only the landfigure of a mouse, the people might make an artificial geomancy cat in front of the mouse in order to keep the mouse from running away.¹⁴ Unless the geomancy mouse was so threatened, they believed, it would run away, and the benefits of the place would not be available to them any longer. Therefore, people were often enthusiastic about so stabilizing their landscapes. Another example of such balancing would be to provide many male soldiers for the grave site located in the landfigure of a general who had no landfigure of soldiers.¹⁵ This geomantic belief in balance is well reflected as an important motif in many of the tales, including *Phoenix Terrace and Well in Chestnut Forest*:¹⁶

At the end of the Silla dynasty, on observing the landfigure of Kyongju, the capital of the Silla dynasty, the king of the Koryo dynasty noticed that the landfigure was 'a type of sailing boat.' He also noticed that if he let this figure be as it was, the Silla dynasty would become prosperous again. Therefore, he sent a geomancer to cheat the king.

The geomancer told the king that the landfigure of the kyongju was a type of 'flying phoenix,' and he advised the king to prevent the phoenix from flying away by making a good well for its drinking water along with many small hills, like phoenix eggs so that the phoenix might enjoy the good drinking water and love the eggs and thus not fly away.

The king trusted the geomancer and asked his people to make small hills like phoenix eggs and to dig a deep well in Yilliam (literally this means 'Chestnut forest') which could produce bountiful water.

Actually, the landfigure was 'a type of sailing boat,' so the artificial well acted as a big hole in the bottom of the boat, and the artificial eggs acted as a heavy load on the boat. Therefore, the boat could not sail and so it sank. Not long after this, the Silla dynasty collapsed.

14. See *Ibid.*, September 19, 1971, p. 28.

15. See *Ibid.*, October 17, 1971, p. 28.

16. Translated and abridged from Choi Sangsu, *op. cit.*, p 225

The Geomancy Tales in Relation to Korean Religions

Because some religious influences on the geomancy tales are significant, it is necessary to analyse the relations between the geomancy tales and the various Korean religions. Since the influences of religion have been so vividly portrayed in these tales, it is possible for this analysis to show the impact of religion on Korean folklife. Furthermore, through this analysis, Korean geomancy can be differentiated from that of its neighboring countries.

One difference between Chinese and Korean geomancy tales lies in the role of Buddhist monks in selecting auspicious places. In the Chinese tales, in many cases, the auspicious places are selected by geomancers. In the Korean tales, however, the situation is rather different; in many cases, the Buddhist monks appear as geomancer-monks who choose most of the auspicious places. This is evidence that Korean Buddhism has cooperated more closely with geomancy than has Chinese Buddhism. In fact, Korean Buddhism has often accepted geomantic principles for the selection of temple sites, and Korean geomancy has accepted Buddhist influences such as the establishment of a pagoda or temple compensate for the inauspiciousness of a place. Therefore, the locations of many Buddhist temples have geomantic legends. The following story of the *Locale of Songrim Buddhist Temple* is a good example.¹⁷

During the Yi dynasty, when a geomancer-Buddhist monk was passing through a part of Chilgok county, Kyongsang province, he found an auspicious place and decided to build a Buddhist temple there. At the same time a professional geomancer also discovered this auspicious place and advised a Yangban (a Korean scholar-gentry) to move his father's grave there, for the place would produce ministers for the nation for ten generations.

The Yangban was very pleased with this advice and so asked his people to move the grave to that place. As they were making preparations to move the tomb, the Buddhist monk was starting to build his temple.

When the Yangban realized what the Buddhist monk was doing, he was very disappointed and so consulted the geomancer. The geomancer advised him to beat the offending monk until the monk had cried out three times. At this, the polluting spirit would leave the place.

The Yangban went to carry out the geomancer's instructions. When he arrived at the place, however, the old Buddhist monk had already finished his temple, and several dozen monks were in worship service with him. So the Yangban had to give up the temple site.

As in the above tale, Korean Buddhism was closely associated with geomancy. Through my field-work in Korea, the author realized that

17. Translated and abridged from *Ibid.*, p. 274.

most Korean Buddhist temples are located in a place where it is said to be geomantically good. We can conclude from this that Buddhism is closely linked with geomancy in Korea.

Another aspect of the relationship of Buddhism to Korean geomancy is that most Korean tales are closely tied to Buddhist ethics (such as charity). This has already been noted in a previous section of this paper. Despite the fact that Confucian ethics ruled the country for so long, it is interesting to note that the folktales were actually influenced more by Buddhist ethics than by Confucian precepts. This may be interpreted as an indication that although the upper class (Yangban) was neo-Confucianist during the Yi dynasty, the common people (and many upper-class women) remained essentially Buddhists. Even today, I have known women who are quite faithful Buddhists while their husbands are thoroughgoing Confucianists. However, there have not been any serious religious conflicts between these husbands and wives, or between the common people and the elite. This is probably the case because, unlike the Judeo-Christian religions, Buddhism and Confucianism are not exclusive.

Next to Buddhism, Confucianism is the second strongest influence on Korean geomancy tales. Confucian ethics, such as filial piety and a married woman's attitude towards her real father's family, are seen to have quite an influence in the folk tales. The story of *The Grave of the Yu Family of Andong* is a good example of this.¹⁸

A girl of the Kim family of Andong married into the Yu family, also in Andong. On the very same day, the woman's father and father-in-law died. Her father's family was rich, while her husband's family was poor. Therefore, only her father's family could hire geomancers to search for an auspicious grave site.

A geomancer reported to her brother that he had prepared an auspicious place. He said that if water did not spring up from the grave by the next day at noon, the place would produce ministers of the nation for three generations.

The woman heard the story and secretly went to the grave site and poured water into it throughout the night.

Next day at noon, when the Kim family came to see the grave site, there was water in it. So they abandoned the place and chose another. At this, the woman asked her mother to give her the site, saying, 'I am poor (her husband's family), so if you give me the abandoned grave site, where water sprang up, I will be happy to bury my father-in-law in it.'

The mother allowed her daughter to do this. Thus, after the grave was made, the Yu family became very prosperous, producing many great ministers of the nation.

18. Translated and abridged from *Ibid.*, p. 256.

In this story the daughter's attitude towards her parents' family typifies Confucian family ethics for married daughters.

Confucian virtue lists the three followings of a woman. Before marriage, a girl should follow her father; after marriage, her husband; in her old age, her son. Therefore, after a girl marries, she belongs not to her father's clan but to her husband's. All benefits and detriments that a married woman accumulated can only be claimed by her husband's family. Thus, even benefits from her grave can not go to her own family. This Confucian practice has also been applied in Korean geomancy tales.

The influence of Taoism on the Korean geomancy tales seems to be almost non-existent. Neither Taoist monks, nor the stories of men becoming supernatural are seen in the geomancy tales. In fact, there were no periods in Korean history when Taoism was officially protected by the government (as were Buddhism and Confucianism) nor did it develop a significant following among the people. Of course, I have not been able to find any geomancy tales which were associated with the newly introduced Christianity.

In conclusion, then, the Korean geomancy tales were mainly influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism with Buddhism having significantly more influence.

The Wishes of Koreans Which are Revealed in the Geomancy Tales

Through the wishes in their geomancy tales, the Koreans inform us of some of their important concerns. For instance, the tales vividly describe particular attitudes towards one's family.

When people chose a grave site, they were little concerned with whether the place was good for the dead or not, but mainly with how good the site would be for the descendants of the family. Usually, people did not expect to benefit from the grave in the generation in which the dead was buried, but rather several generations later. For instance, there is the story of the Grave of the Crop Keeper Old Lady.¹⁹

During the regime of King Sonjo, Pyongan Province, there was a Mr. and Mrs. Ho who were so poor that they had to work as servants in the house of a rich man, Mr. Yi. They knew that there was an auspicious place in the mountain which their master owned. Mr. Ho's family, which

19. Translated and abridged from *Chugan Choson* (Seoul), September 12, 1971, p. 28.

included three sons who could not yet marry, plotted to obtain this auspicious location.

One day, as was usual, Mrs. Ho went to the field to keep the birds away from the crops. When the master appeared, she pretended to be asleep. On seeing this, the master became angry and shouted, 'Why do you sleep without keeping the birds away?' Mrs. Ho, feigning great surprise, fell from the bird's tower. After three or four days of sickness, she died.

This is all according to the plan which Mr. Ho's family had devised. Mrs. Ho's sons went to the master, accusing him of the murder. The sons threatened that they would sue in the regional courts unless the master gave them the auspicious place for their mother's burial. The master thought that giving up the site was better than being sued as a murderer, so he gave up the spot although with great reluctance. After Mrs. Ho's burial in the auspicious place, her descendants became rich.

It may be a safe thing to say that Mrs. Ho did not kill herself for her own happiness but for her descendants' prosperity. Moreover, it may be evident that even Mrs. Ho's sons did not allow their mother's suicide for their own personal happiness but rather for that of their descendants. Therefore, we can state that the wish reflected in the tale was the prosperous future of their descendants. Many other tales are relevant to the idea of selecting grave sites for the prosperity of the descendants. Thus, we can probably say that the Koreans lived for the preparation of tomorrow rather than for today.²⁰ These wishes for family prosperity center around either wealth or the appointment of high governmental officials. This may reflect the average Korean's poverty-stricken life as well as the bureaucratically-oriented Korean society. In comparison with the Chinese tales, however, the Korean wish for a descendant who became king or emperor was quite weak. Only a few tales about the first king of the Yi or Koryo dynasties are found.

According to the tales, the Korean wish for a life after death is not strong. The only tale on this theme, *The Story of the Geomancer's Grave*, informs us of the life after death of two people who were buried in an

20. One may want to consider the parental sacrifice for descendants as part of "The Achievement Motive" which was discussed in *The Achieving Society* by David C. McClelland. However, there are basic differences between the two. The achievement motive is the psychological motive to achieve mainly personal satisfaction, while the sacrifice of parents is an ethical motive to secure the prosperity of one's descendants. The achievements motive can not be ethic because it does not necessarily require interactions between one and others. The parental sacrifice, on the other hand, should be considered as ethic since it is based on the relationship between oneself and others. For further study of McClelland, see David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1961), pp. 32-62.

auspicious place. The abridged tale is as follows:²¹

When a noted geomancer died, he asked his three sons to bury him in the midst of a big reservoir in the east of the village. The two elder brothers were opposed to burying their father under the water, and so they buried him instead in the soil. The youngest brother, however, trusted his father's will and secretly took the body from its grave, put it in a stone coffin and buried it in the reservoir as his father had wanted.

When the mother died, the same series of events occurred again. Several years after the mother's funeral, the parents appeared to their youngest son in a dream as the dragon-king and queen. The mother asked for a bigger coffin so that she would be more comfortable, and the filial son did as she had asked.

After that, the youngest son started having good luck and finally became a minister of the nation.

This was the only story out of 34 collected geomancy tales dealing with this subject. We can interpret this as an indication that Koreans place emphasis on the present world rather than the mythical life after death. Similarly, there are few Korean wishes concerning the prosperity of the nation as a whole. Only two tales of patriotism were found. And only a couple of the stories deal with the prosperity of a religion. Thus, according to the tales, Korean wishes about the family are the most important matters of concern.

An Analysis of Non-Confucian Moral Values from Korean Geomancy Tales

In analyzing Korean geomancy tales, one receives the strong impression that, although Koreans were strongly influenced by Confucian ethics, the common people had moral values somewhat different from the Confucian ones. As Professor Wolfram Eberhard said, the Chinese and Korean tales are "essentially educational." We can, therefore, regard all moral principles which appear in the tales as real moral values of Korean folk society of the time.

According to the tales, the Confucian values of morality were quite important to the common folk. They do, however, attract our attention less because we already expect them to be there. Moreover, it is my conviction that the Confucian ethics were less emphasized than were non-Confucian ethics in the tales. Therefore, I would like to discuss some important aspects of non-Confucian moral principles as found only in

21. Translated and abridged from Choi Sangsu, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

the tales. A brief discussion of each aspect follows.

1. Parents sacrifice for their descendants.

Confucian ethics concerning the parent/son relationship ask for every son's indefinite and unquestionable sacrifice to his parents, but this does not require any parents sacrifice for the children. In the geomancy tales, however, there are stories about poor parents sacrificing themselves to provide grave sites that will guarantee a prosperous future for their descendants. *The Grave of the Crop Keeper Old Lady*, discussed above, is the best example of this type of tale.²² Evidently, the old lady in the tale committed suicide not for herself but for her descendants' prosperity. Another story, *The Grave of Mr. Yun of Hepyong*, also illustrates such a sacrifice. Here, Mrs. Yun, a poor lady who had obtained a good grave site, buried one of her husband's ancestors there rather than be buried there herself.²³ It is assumed that she does this for the prosperity of her descendants.

These stories show us the sacrifice of parents for their family lineage. Epistemologically speaking, Koreans probably understood themselves as nothing but members of a family lineage. That may be why many people were willing to sacrifice themselves for their future families. The emphasis in these stories is on parental sacrifice for their children rather than on children sacrificing for their parents, as one would expect from Confucian ethics. We may consider this as a non-Confucian Korean traditional moral value which existed during the time of the stories.

2. Charity

Another very popular moral principle in these tales which is also not Confucian is charity for poor living things. This may be considered as a Buddhist influence on Korean folk society. In numerous geomancy tales poor journeying Buddhist monks chose auspicious places for those people who had been charitable towards them. As I already have discussed, some stories also show us that charitable men who were poor found auspicious places by unusual and mystical means. Because of this, we may conclude that charity, while not a Confucian ethic, was emphasized in Korean folk society.

3. Cheating or Playing tricks

According to many tales, playing tricks or cheating was not considered as evil as it is in Christianity or even in Confucianism. Even the story of *The Grave of the Yu Family of Andong*, which carries a

22. For the story of the tale, see p. 29 above.

23. For the story of the tale, see p. 24 above.

strong Confucian influence, tells us of a girl cheating her family and playing tricks by pouring water into the grave to obtain the auspicious place.²⁴ This girl is not described as a bad woman. In the story of *An Auspicious place of Yondok-san in Pukchong*, more serious tricks were played.²⁵

There were two geomancers who were also friends named Mr. Tong and Mr. Chin. One day they found two auspicious grave sites, one of which was better than the other. Each geomancer wanted to take the better spot. The settlement was that the one who died earlier would be buried in the better place.

Mr. Chin was so anxious to obtain the better place that he killed himself and left a will asking his friend to choose the right direction for his burial.

Mr. Tong was so mad at losing such a good grave site that he tricked Mr. Chin's son by asking the son if he wanted a "direction of playing the flute" or a "direction of having (musicians) play the flute." The son answered that he preferred that his father's body be positioned in the "direction of playing the flute."

Therefore, the auspiciousness of the grave came to be expressed as the production of many musicians who play musical instruments rather than as great government officials who could enjoy the performance of such music.

Each geomancer played a trick. By killing himself, Mr. Chin obtained the auspicious place. But by asking a tricky question to the son of his friend, Mr. Tong degraded the auspiciousness of the grave site. However, there is no evidence of punishment for these tricks.

If folklore accurately reflects a people's cultural behavior, then playing tricks and cheating were accepted in the society to some degree. As Professor Wolfram Eberhard observed, both Chinese and Korean folk often played tricks without feeling guilty. As Professor Eberhard suggested, the absence of this guilt indicates that Koreans perceive *feng-shui* as a kind of automatic or "scientific" value-less concept (or principle) comparable to a natural law in modern science. Although there is an geomancy that auspicious places are given to only good persons, it appears to be true in the tales that if one acts in a certain way concerning the *feng-shui*, then certain consequences follow, regardless of the morality of the act. This conclusion is supported by all the geomantic tales presented in this paper. When we consider that Confucian ethics taught that people such as merchants were not of desirable social status because they cheat people, we realize that cheating and trick-playing are cer-

24. For the story of the tale, see p. 28 above.

25. Translated and abridged from *Chugan Choson* (Seoul), September 5, 1971, p. 28.

tainly not part of the Confucian ethics.

Conclusion

The geomancy tales reveal many aspects of Korean cultural behavior including wishes, beliefs and ethics. According to the tales, it was evident that the most important Korean wish was for the prosperity of the family but not of the individual. Although Confucianism was strong, their belief was more strongly affiliated with Buddhism than with any other major Korean religion. It is especially noticeable that some geomancy tales preserved a non-Confucian parent/son relationship where it is the parent who makes the sacrifice. It is my conviction that geomancy has been an influential cultural process in the regulation of the cultural behavior of the Korean people.