

Keynote

The Role of Pungsu (Geomancy) in Korean Culture

한국문화 속에서 풍수지리의 역할

Hong-key Yoon

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Abstract

Pungsu (fengshui in Chinese) is often known as geomancy in the West, and has been understood by some scholars as a superstition, the rudiments of natural science of China or a quasi-religious and pseudo-scientific system. However, it is an ancient Chinese system of divining locations that can not easily be classified or labelled using a Western category. It is not a clear cut superstition, religion or science, but an art comprised of all three. The influence of geomantic ideas on Korean culture is so profound that it is almost impossible to understand the people-land relationships in Korea without appreciating the nature of geomancy and its role in Korean culture. Ever since this idea was introduced to Korea, it has been an important part of the Korean way of thinking in dealing with the environment. Its impact is clearly visible in Korean settlement landscapes, grave landscapes, the practice of religious beliefs and even in Korean literature and paintings.

Introduction

The Korean term for geomancy is pungsu or pungsuchiri and is derived from the Chinese term, fengshui (風水) which means wind and water.¹ Geomancy in East Asia had been an enigma to many Western scholars², and has been labelled as “a grossly superstitious system”,³ “the rudiments of natural science of China”⁴ or “a quasi-scientific system of China”.⁵ However, it is a system that can not easily be classified or labelled using any Western category. Geomancy is not a clear cut superstition, religion or science, but an ancient Chinese system of site selection comprised of all three. Geomancy is defined as “a unique and highly systemised ancient Chinese art of selecting auspicious sites and arranging harmonious structures such as graves, houses and cities on them by evaluating the surrounding landscape and cosmological directions.”⁶

Although Pungsu or geomancy is of Chinese origin, ever since this idea was introduced to Korea, it has been an important part of the Korean way of thinking in dealing with the environment. Geomancy has been critically important in understanding the characteristics of traditional Korean culture in an historical context, especially those of Korean’s use of the environment. The aim of this address is to overview and point out the depth and width of geomancy’s role in traditional Korean culture by incorporating and reviewing my previous research. In this paper I will first briefly comment on the nature of geomancy and its origin and diffusion to Korea before discussing the desirable attitude of geomancy researchers and the development of geomantic culture in Korea. The rest of this paper overviews the relationship between Korean religions and geomancy, the impact of geomancy on Korean landscapes and finally the image of nature in geomancy in Korea.

The Nature and the Origin of Geomancy

When a geomancer chooses auspicious sites for a house, grave and other structures, three important factors are considered. They are the surrounding landforms, watercourses and cardinal directions. First and perhaps the most important condition is a landform of horseshoe shaped surrounding hills. The second is that there should be a watercourse in front of the site, although the site itself should not be wet. Thirdly, such a site should face a desirable direction which normally is southward including Southeast and Southwest. A desirable direction is examined by geomancers using a geomantic compass.

¹ I will use the terms geomancy and pungsu interchangeably in this paper.

² For instance, a Western scholar declared as late as in 1970s that “If there is a subject which should have captivated Western sinologists, it is Chinese geomancy”. Jacques Lemoine, “foreword”, in Stephan D.R. Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological analysis of Chinese geomancy*, (Vientiane: Editions Vithagna, 1974), p. I.

³ J. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), vol. 4.1, p.239.

⁴ Ernest J. Eitel, *Feng-Shui or The Rudiments of Natural Science in China* (Hongkong: Lane, Crawford & Co., 1873), title page.

⁵ J.J.M de Groot labelled fengshui as “a quasi-scientific system” in his book, *The Religious System of China* (Leiden: Librairie et Imprimerie, 1897), Vol. III, 935.

⁶ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), p.4.

When geomancers carried out field surveys on an auspicious site, draft survey results were often recorded in their sketches of the landscape and these drawings were gradually developed as geomancy maps. The main purpose of drawing geomancy maps was to record landforms around an auspicious site. This is why drawings of relief are more accurate near auspicious places and the accuracy diminishes quickly with distance.⁷ Geomancy maps have developed an ingenious and rather sophisticated means of topography with clearly recognisable map symbols. I have suggested that the landform expressions in the geomantic maps might have had significant impact on traditional Korean cartography, including the famous Map of Korea, Taedongyojido (Map of the Great Eastern Nation).⁸

This art seems to have originated from the Loess Plateau in ancient China. Some prominent scholars, including J.J.M. de Groot, thought that geomancy developed from the ancient Chinese custom of ancestor worship and selecting auspicious grave-sites.⁹ However, it is my contention that geomancy first developed from the art of selecting a comfortable dwelling (house) site for living persons, not graves for deceased ancestors.¹⁰ The following analysis of geomantic principles suggests that they are closely related to the location of a comfortable house, especially cave dwellings:

- 1) The current geomantic term for an auspicious site is *hyol* (xue: 穴) which literally means “cave”. *Hyol* in geomancy means any auspicious site, not solely a cave. However, originally the Chinese character ‘xue (穴)’ meant earthen cave-dwelling (土室也), according to *Shuowen Jiezi*(說文解字).¹¹
- 2) A desirable soil condition in an auspicious site is pure fine yellowish soil which again reflects the soil conditions of the Loess Plateau and the ideal cave dwelling in the region.
- 3) The shape of ‘the earth mountain’ supports the view that Chinese geomancy originated from the Loess Plateau. In geomancy, mountain shapes are classified into five types: earth, fire, water, wood (tree) and metal. Apart from the earth type, all types are explained by analogy: a tongue of flame like pointed peak is a fire mountain; waves like gentle rolling hills are water mountains; a tall tree like projected mountain is a wood mountain; a metal bell-like dome-shaped hill is a metal mountain. However, the earth mountain cannot be explained by analogy the way these four types are explained. A typical earth mountain has steep slopes with a broad flat top. Why is this so? This type of mountain is the most common in the Loess Plateau, while they are extremely rare in other parts of China or East Asia. I conjecture that the ideal model of the earth type mountain was developed in association with the Loess Plateau’s common shape of hills.
- 4) A key geomantic principle requires having a watercourse nearby an auspicious site, although the site itself should be dry. This requirement is critically important for a living person’s residence, especially for a cave dwelling, but it is hard to justify for a grave, unless this principle is a carry-over from that of an ideal house site.
- 5) Hills that act as wind barriers on the northern sides, especially the North-western sides, reflect the desirable conditions of loess cave dwellings in the Loess Plateau where cold wind comes from during the winter.

Based on this analysis I postulated that geomancy was initially developed by the early Chinese cave dwellers in the Loess Plateau as the art of choosing a comfortable house (cave dwelling) site, not gravesites.

The art of geomancy must have been introduced to Korea with the early waves of Chinese cultural contact. The paintings of the four guardian deities during the 5th and 6th century and the crescent shaped hills surrounding the Koguryo capital site, Hwandosong on the Manchurian side of the upper Yalu River can be seen as an indication of the introduction of geomancy into Korea.¹² When the Japanese capital site of Nara was examined in 708AD, the surrounding hills of Nara Basin were assessed in light of four guardian deities and the site was proclaimed a suitable capital site.¹³ This Japanese historical event indicates that the terminologies of four guardian deities were clearly used in Japan indicating geomantic landforms surrounding an auspicious site. This Japanese usage suggests that the symbols of four guardian deities in Koguryo tombs may well have geomantic significance. However, the story of removing the Buddhist temple structures in order to make way for a royal tomb of Silla, King Wonsong in 798 AD

⁷ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, p.164.

⁸ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, p. 171.

⁹ J.J.M. Degroot, *The Religious System of China*, p. Vol, III, 937, pp. 982-983.

¹⁰ For a more comprehensive discussion, see Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of fengshui in Korea*, pp. 15-32.

¹¹ Xu, Shen. *Shuowen Jiezi* [Etymology of Chinese Characters]. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1963), p.152.

¹² Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp.37-39.

¹³ *Zokunihonki* (Tokyo: Kishida Kinko and others, 1883), vol.4, p.3: Furuhashi Nobutaka, *Heiankyo no toshiseikatsu to kogai* (*Urban life and Suburbs of Heiankyo*), (Tokyo: Yoshigawahiroumikan, 1998), p.19.

must be a decisively important date for the introduction of geomancy in Korea.¹⁴ If Koreans thought that it was important to replace a Buddhist structure with a royal tomb for geomantic reasons by 798AD, the art of geomancy must have been introduced into Korea quite some time before this date. After geomancy was introduced into Korea, Master Toson is probably the single most important person in the development of the Korean history of geomancy. He seems to have examined Korean landscapes by applying geomantic principles, and generated various geomantic prophesies for the different parts of Korea. Geomancy originated from China, not Korea. Ever since its introduction, the art played an important role in the development of Korean culture.

A Researcher's Attitudes of Geomancy

In one of my earlier writings I commented that a researcher of geomancy is comparable to that of a football commentator.¹⁵ A suitable commentator should not be the person who plays the actual game. The person should be an observer of the game, positioned in a way to give an adequate commentary. A football player in the game may not be a suitable commentator, because the player does not have the opportunity to see the game as a whole as an observer. In the same way, an actual practitioner of geomancy, namely a professional geomancer, may not be a suitable geomancy researcher because the person would not have the opportunity to observe the practice of geomancy as an independent person. Therefore a desirable researcher might be an observer of the practice of geomancy, but not professional geomancer practising the art for fee-paid clients. So in this sense, a researcher of geomancy is different from a professional geomancer who practises geomancy to find an auspicious site.

Pungsu and Korean Religions

Geomancy and Buddhism have a close relationship.¹⁶ Firstly, some prominent geomancers in Korean history were Buddhist monks and numerous Korean folk tales feature a Buddhist monk as the expert of geomancy. In Korean folklore, these monks often find auspicious sites as rewards for humble peasants who have treated them well. Many monks of the Choson dynasty were in fact geomancer-monks who were experts in geomancy as well as Buddhism. Of course, in the official history of Korea some famous monks such as Master Toson and Master Muhak played important roles in evaluating the Korean landscape by participating in the selection process of capital sites or settlement planning.

Secondly, the close relationship between geomancy and Buddhism is reflected in the locations of Buddhist temples. The Buddhist temples built during traditional Korean society are normally located in geomantically auspicious sites surrounded by background hills with a watercourse in front. The historical legacy can be traced back to the First King of Koryo. He officially decreed that Buddhist temples were located so by considering geomantic conditions of Korean landscapes by Master Toson and therefore future kings should not interfere with this arrangement.¹⁷

Thirdly, folktales about the practice of geomancy strongly reflect the Buddhist ethical principle of charity. In Korean geomantic folklore, an auspicious site is often given to a charitable person who has helped the needy or suffering.¹⁸ Since charity to humans, animals, and all living creatures is a key Buddhist principle and classical geomancy texts have not mentioned the need of exercising charity to gain an auspicious site, we consider this as an influence of a Buddhist moral on the art of geomancy. According to folktales, uncharitable or evil persons are unable to find an auspicious site, even if they are standing on the very site. Folktales suggest that uncharitable people will suffer misfortune even if they occupy an auspicious site by harming it somehow. This idea somewhat blurs the logic of geomantic principles being 'scientific' principles but strongly reflects the influence of the Buddhist ethical cord.

Geomancy has also maintained close relationship with Confucianism which is echoed in Korean attitudes towards family and society.¹⁹ A traditional Confucian family structure may be characterised by patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal relationships. In the traditional Confucian society of Korea a married woman becomes an integral part of her husband's family and is entitled to the according privileges and responsibilities, while her relationships with her own family by birth are somewhat severed and alienated. This Confucian ethos is well reflected in a number of Koreans legends. One example is about a girl from

14Ki-baik Lee (Yi Kibaik), "Han'guk Pungsu Chirisol ui kiwon (the origin of geomancy in Korea), *Han'guksa Siminkangchoa*, vol 14 (1994), p.7.

15 Hong-key Yoon, "Hankuk pungsuchiri yonguui hoigowa chonmang (Prospect and Retrospect of Research into Geomancy in Korea)", *Hankuk Sasangshak (History of Korean Thought)*, vol. 17 (2001), pp.43-44.

¹⁶ For a more comprehensive discussion on the relationships between Korean Buddhism and geomancy, see Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp. 179-199.

¹⁷ This information is from the second article of the Ten Injunctions (Hunyosipjo), decreed by the First King of the Koryo dynasty during the summer of 943. Hong-key Yoon, , *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, p.185.

¹⁸ Hong-key Yoon, , *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp. 190-196.

¹⁹ For a more comprehensive discussion on the relationships between Korean Confucianism and geomancy, see Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp. 201-214.

the Kim family of Andong district who steals an auspicious grave site prepared for her own father in order to use it for her father in law.²⁰ This legend suggest that for a married woman her father in law is more important than her own father by considering her husbands family to be her true family line, no longer belonging to her family of birth.

Another aspect of Confucian ethics is that of treating children as an extension of their parents, because in the Korean Confucian family system an individual may be treated as a building block of the family lineage, rather than as an independent person. Children's responsibilities towards their parents are of paramount importance. At the same time, parents' sacrifices for their children are commonplace in Confucian ethics, for having good children means good social security for themselves as well as ensuring future family lineages. This aspect of parental sacrifice for their children as well as the children's' filial piety towards their parents is well reflected in geomancy tales.²¹

To many Confucian scholars, some knowledge in Korean medicine and Korean geomancy were unavoidable necessities as both were based on the Chinese Yin and Yang and Five Element Theory. However, many rational minded Confucian scholars were against the superstitious practice of geomancy and seriously critiqued the adverse social effect resulting from the practise of geomancy especially as related to grave-sites. The scholars belonging to the Sirhak or Practical Learning School seriously criticised the superstitious aspect of geomancy and Chong Yakyong argued that about half of the crime and assaults resulting in death were due to conflict over auspicious sites in geomancy.²² Some well known Confucian scholars during the second half of the Choson dynasty have been associated with geomancy by providing serous criticisms over its practice.²³

The relationships between Korean geomancy and Shamanism are also noteworthy. The Shamans often recommended shifting or modifying houses and graves in order to avoid misfortune or cure sickness in the family.²⁴ Sometimes Shamans were invited to cure the shortcomings of local geomantic landscapes with kut, or other forms of Shamanistic exorcism. In this way, geomancy maintained close relationships with all three major traditional religions in Korea: Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism.

Of course the newly developed religions such as Chondokyo (Tonghak) or Chungsankyo also incorporated some aspect of geomantic evaluations of Korean landscape or prophecies. For instance a sacred canon of Tonghak, Yongdamyusa (龍潭遺詞: Inherited Words from Dragon Lake), expresses a geomantic explanation of the birth and genealogical background of the founder, Choe Chae-u by declaring that they were auspiciously influenced by a key mountain of his hometown.²⁵ The leaders of the Tonghak movement, including the famous General Chon Pongjun of the Tonghak peasant army, subscribed to geomancy and were knowledgeable on the art. The successor of the Tonghak founder, Choe Sihyong also took refuge in one of the 10 most auspicious places in Korea, when the movement was under persecution. General Chon Pongjun is said to have moved frequently to geomantically auspicious places.²⁶

Geomancy was also closely related to social upheaval in Korea, the most significant being the well known Myochong's upheaval during the Koryo dynasty to shift the capital from Kaegyong to Pyonyang by convincing the king with a geomantic plot. However his attempt failed. Geomantic beliefs and geomantic prophecies also provided important cause for the failed attempt of Hong Kyongnae's rebellion (1811-1812) in Pyongan Province against the central government of the Choson dynasty.

Pungsu and Korean landscape

Perhaps the best evidence of the importance of geomancy in Korean culture is reflected in the Korean landscapes of settlements and graves.²⁷ Unlike the Western world which has cemeteries, traditionally Koreans had no concept of cemeteries, and made graves wherever they thought was auspicious. Korean mountains and hills are dotted with graves, especially if it is south facing and is enclosed by hills on the northern side. Commoners as well as the royal family of the Choson dynasty have applied geomancy in the selection of the grave sites for their deceased family members. Fighting over auspicious grave sites was a common scene. Koreans' obsession over geomantically auspicious grave-

²⁰ Choi Sangsu, *Hankuk Mingan Chonsoljip* [Collection of Korean Legends] (Seoul: Tongmunkwan, 1958), pp. 256–257; Hong-key Yoon, *Geomantic Relationships Between Culture and Nature in Korea* (Taipei: The orient culture Service, 1976), p. 28; Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp.202-203.

²¹ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp.203-206.

²² Chong Yakyong, *Kukyok Mokmin-simso* [Criticisms and Advice on Governing the People, A Modern Korean Translation] (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Chujinhoe, 1969), vol. 2, 628; Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, p.5.

²³ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp.209-212.

²⁴ ²⁴ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, p. 180.

²⁵ Kim Dukyu, *Hankuk Pungsu ui ho wa sil* [Truth and False of Korean Geomancy] (Seoul: Tonghaksa, 1995), pp.204-205.

²⁶ Kim Dukyu, *Hankuk Pungsu ui ho wa sil*, pp. 204-209.

²⁷ For a further discussion on this topic, see Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, Chapters 6 & 7.

sites was so serious that even foreign missionaries noted bloody conflicts over grave sites. A Catholic missionary, C. H. Dallet recorded three of such conflicts.²⁸

As one travels through the country, they will find many Korean villages are situated at a foothill with an open field in front and sloping hills behind. Those are typically auspicious sites in geomancy; an agglomerated village in the middle of an open field also normally fulfilled with geomantic criteria justifying the fortune of the settlement. Thus few Korean settlements sites are free from geomantic influences.

Of course all important cities in Korea were located and planned by applying geomantic principles; this is evident in the location of local government offices in the provincial and county level cities and palace sites of the capital city. Geomantic qualities of a local city landscape may be clearly visible, when it is observed by a person who has basic knowledge of geomantic evaluation of local landforms. The geomantic influences on local city sites are also evident in the description of such city landscape in *Sinjung Tongguk Yojisungnam* (New and Enlarged Edition of Augmented Survey of the Geographical Gazetteer of Korea) of the Choson dynasty. The gazetteer presented every county in Korea with its county administrative centres by indicating its key geomantic landmark, 'Main Mountain'.²⁹

The influence of geomancy on capital cities is significant as shown in my study on two Korean capital cities, Seoul and Kaesong where royal palaces are located in geomantically auspicious sites.³⁰ The story of the choice of Seoul as the capital in 1394 by applying geomantic ideas is one of the best documented cases among all East Asian capital cities including Beijing, Nanjing, Kyoto and Nara.

The use of geomancy in the iconographical warfare between Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism

One can document and interpret the fierce iconographical battles between Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism over Kyongbok Palace, the landscape icon of Korean sovereignty.³¹ This iconographical warfare was started by the Japanese colonial government who manipulated geomantic ideas in their attempt to place the 'permanent' icon of their colonial rule over Korea. The main palace, Kyongbok Palace of the Choson Dynasty was constructed in 1395 on the most geomantically auspicious spot in Seoul. When Japanese colonised Korea, they mutilated the palace by destroying many of its buildings and constructing their Colonial Government Building on the front part of the palace ground. Such an act was a Japanese attempt to psychologically demoralise Koreans by demeaning and replacing the symbol of Korean sovereignty with that of Japanese colonial government. The majestic Japanese colonial icon was constructed in order to encourage Koreans to accept their fate as a Japanese colony and to impress upon Koreans that the new beneficiary of the geomantic fortune of the auspicious palace site was the Japanese colonial government and that of the Korean Kingdom is finished. For the same reasons, after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the Korean government demolished the Japanese colonial government building to restore the icon of Korean sovereignty, Kyongbok Palace, to its former glory. This iconographical warfare between Japan and Korea was not for geomantic reasons. Both Korea and Japan manipulated geomancy in this iconographical warfare in imposing their landscape icon of government authority. Geomancy certainly provided the cause of and the stage for iconographical warfare between Korean nationalism and Japanese colonialism. This war over the icon was only very recently resolved by 1996, by completely removing Japanese colonial buildings from Kyongbok palace grounds.

Geomantic Images of Nature

The geomantic images of nature are best reflected in geomancy tales of Korea that vividly reflect people's wishes, motivations of and expectations from the practice of geomancy. Geomantic principles discussed in classical manuals of geomancy also implied certain geomantic images of landscape. I have elsewhere discussed the three key images of nature in geomancy: (a) the magical image, (b) the personified image, and (c) the vulnerable image of nature.³² However, in this paper I would like to add one more (d) unclear boundary between humanity and nature that led to no division between culture and nature.³³

In order to point out that these four images of nature in Korean geomancy, I will first summarise two well known legends. According to the Story of a famous Confucian scholar, Song Siyol, his grave was on an

²⁸ Ch. Dallet, *Historie de l'église de Corée*, (Paris: Librairie Victor Palme E'diteur, 1984) pp. 141-143; Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, pp. 126-127.

²⁹ Hong-key Yoon, *Geomantic Relationships Between Culture and Nature in Korea*, p.107.

³⁰ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of fengshui in Korea*, pp. 217-273.

³¹ The brief discussion here is based on a more comprehensive documentation and explanation of this contested landscape in: Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of fengshui in Korea*, pp. 277-307.

³² Hong-key Yoon, "The Image of Nature in Geomancy", *GeoJournal*, vol. 4, no.4 (1980), pp.341-348.

³³ Hong-key Yoon, "A Preliminary Attempt to give a Birdseye View on the Nature of Traditional Eastern (Asian) and Western (European) Environmental Ideas, in E. Ehlers & C.F. Gethmann (ed.), *Environment Across Cultures* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2003), p.138.

auspicious site having a geomantic image of an army general.³⁴ However, the site has no small landforms symbolising soldiers who can be commanded by the army general. Therefore, the geomantic landscape of the grave lacked the necessary components. In order to make up for these geomantic shortcomings, the descendants of Song Siyol negotiated for market place nearby to move in front of the gravesite. This was done in order that the landform shaped like an army general could command the thousands of “soldiers” who gathered in the market place.

In another story, the Yi Clan of Kosong, informed us that the geomantic image of their ancestor's gravesite was a reclining cow, and was auspicious so that many good fortunes to the family came about.³⁵ With the descendants becoming high government officials due to their good fortune, the local villagers were obliged to build and maintain infrastructure including roads, when the descendants returned to the village. When a monk heard of the villagers' complaints of their toil and hard work, he advised the locals to break a boulder on the front hill of the village, and so the people did. After breaking the boulder, the good fortune known to the Yi family stopped and no other descendants became high government officers. The broken boulder had been geomantically functioning as a trough for the reclining cow (background hill of the gravesite). The geomantic reasoning is that when the cow lost its trough, it would have starved and the good fortune could not be manifested from the site. When the Yi Clan realised what had happened, they put the broken boulder back together, and the landscape once again gave the clan fortune.

From these two stories, we realise that geomantic landscapes in Korea have been personified as an army general and a reclining cow. The personified geomantic landscapes were considered to be magical beings that could bless people in mysterious ways. In the story we also know that the people can destroy the harmony of geomantic landscapes but at the same time it can be restored. As in the above legends, there is no clear boundary between humanity and nature in geomantic landscapes, for the people gathered in the market place can function as soldiers for the army general (the mountain) to meet geomantic criteria. In this paper, I do not examine the geomantic reasoning behind the above four images of nature, for it is discussed elsewhere, although they are still to be explored further.³⁶

Conclusion

Koreans' intense interest in geomancy caused many social problems, with crimes committed from fighting over geomantic auspicious sites. It also drained many private and government resources through installing geomantically auspicious structures in excess and maintaining them. Sometimes, in order to keep a royal tomb at an auspicious site, the vast areas surrounding the royal tomb were prohibited from farming and even houses nearby were removed, causing inconvenience to unsuspecting peasant habitants.³⁷ However these geomantic ideas also had some favourable impacts on the traditional environmental management in Korea by conserving the forest surrounding cities, or taking action to reduce water pollution in streams that go through the Capital City.³⁸

The pungsu or geomancy is certainly from a Chinese origin and is not indigenous to Korea; however, ever since this idea was introduced into Korea, it has become an extremely important part in the Korean way of thinking in dealing with the environment. It's impact is clearly visible in Korean landscapes, as well as Korean religion and other aspects of Korean culture. I wish to reiterate what I have said my book in 1976 that it is almost impossible to appreciate Korean culture adequately without appreciating the role of geomancy in it.³⁹

Contact Address

Hong-key Yoon
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland NZ
PH: 64 (9) 373-7599 Extn 8466
EMAIL: hk.yoon@Auckland.ac.nz

³⁴ This story in Korean is found in Chang Yongduk, “Myongdang Chapki”, HankukLibo Newspaper (Seoul), 23 February 1974, p. 6. For an abridged and translated version, Hong-key Yoon, “The Image of Nature in geomancy”, p.346.

³⁵ This story in Korean is found in Chugan Choson The Weekly Magazine (Seoul), 29 August 1971. For an abridged and translated version, Hong-key Yoon, “The Image of Nature in geomancy”, p.347.

³⁶ Hong-key Yoon, “The Image of Nature in geomancy”, pp.341-348; Hong-key Yoon, “A Preliminary Attempt to give a Birdseye View on the Nature of Traditional Eastern (Asian) and Western (European) Environmental Ideas”, p.138

³⁷ Hong-key Yoon, *The Culture of fengshui in Korea*, pp. 124-126.

³⁸ Hong-key Yoon, *Geomantic Relationships Between Culture and Nature in Korea*, pp. 143-147

³⁹ Hong-key Yoon, *Geomantic Relationships Between Culture and Nature in Korea*, p. 3.