

GEOMANCY

Living in Harmony with the Land

An Overview of Geomantic Principles

Mu Soeng Sunim

The question “where shall we live?” has been a dominant theme in the Chinese way of looking at the world since time immemorial. The art of geomancy (*Chinese: feng-shui; Korean: pung-su; literally, “wind-and-water”*) is used to determine the energies of a specific location. Its premise is that certain sites are more auspicious for habitation than others.

The Chinese postulated that the earth is a living entity, and as such carries currents of energy much like those that travel through the central nervous system in our own bodies. Positive currents — those carrying good “ch’i” or “life-force” — are known as dragon-lines. They are thought to follow the flow of underground water and the direction of magnetic fields beneath the earth’s surface. Some of the dragon-lines are punctuated here and there with “dragon-points” or “energy-centers,” much like the meridian points known to the acupuncturists. Energy centers are points at which a particularly potent source of ch’i gushes to the surface. Some of the dragon-lines have branches, like tap-roots, which tend to siphon off the flow of ch’i and diminish its force.

The impact of geomancy on Chinese and Korean culture has been profound. A belief in feng-shui has meant an ability and willingness to live in harmony with the land, as well as a belief that man should not bring about disorder in the geomantic harmony of nature by indiscriminately modifying natural landscapes. The culture of China and Korea can hardly be understood apart from the influence of feng-shui. In fact, an observer of Chinese history and geomancy has remarked, “Perhaps one can go a step further. Perhaps the ‘rootedness’ of Chinese civilization, the Chinese sense of belonging to the earth, their capacity to live without friction in colossal numbers — have all, in the long run, resulted from their adherence to the principle of ‘feng-shui’.”

In the Chinese world-view, “yin” and “yang” forces are at the root of all things. In their interaction with each other, they are the moving forces of our world and all its manifestations. Yin is seen as female, receptive, yielding, and nurturing, while yang is seen as male, active, dominating, and creative. The interaction of these two opposing forces produces the “five elements”: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. These elements are not static, but rather dynamic and interacting forces.

What makes one place more auspicious than others? According to geomancy, it is because of the availability of vital energy in a place. The energy of yin-yang interactive forces belches and becomes wind, ascends and becomes cloud, fights and becomes thunder, descends and becomes rain, and flows under the ground and becomes vital energy.

This vital energy flowing under the ground supports all living things.

Calming the Wind

Just as a plant has roots, a stem, branches, leaves, and flowers, a landscape, especially a mountain, has comparable parts. As all parts of a plant are linked in the production of a fruit, similarly all components of mountains and watercourses form a system which produces auspicious places. The two important functions of a mountain in geomancy are delivering vital energy to an auspicious place and “calming the wind” (storing the energy) in it. The transmission of vital energy is entirely dependent upon the shape of the mountain ranges at the geomantic location. Of all the surrounding mountains, four are the most important:

“Black Turtle” is the mountain located at the top of a site; it is also called the Main Mountain.

“Red Bird” is the mountain located in front of a geomantic location.

“Blue Dragon” is the mountain range on the left side of a site.

“White Tiger” is the mountain range on the right side of a geomantic location.

The task of both the Blue Dragon and the White Tiger is to calm the wind by encircling the auspicious place.

The presence of water in front of the site helps to hold the vital energy which is being delivered by the main mountain. A desirable watercourse flows in a curve, as if embracing the auspicious place, from an angle perpendicular to the mountain ranges. When watercourses and mountains run in the same direction, the area is inauspicious. Good watercourses are gently meandering with many curves, never following a straight line. If the curves are too sharp, or are tortuous, the watercourse is considered to be very bad. A watercourse is considered auspicious when it meanders as if looking back again and again at the site with a sense of love.

An auspicious place is said to yield the greatest benefits only through association with ethical people. An evil person may be able to get short-term benefits from such a place but eventually he will be misled by the energies of the place to abandon it.

The principles of geomancy require symmetry, balance, beauty, and harmony among geomantic components in any given place. Each individual component of a landscape, and the landscape as a whole, can influence human beings. □