

# Confucian ethical values regarding the parents–children relationships in Korean geomancy tales

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## I. Introduction

Geomancy, known as pungsu in Korean (feng–shui in Chinese), is defined as “a unique and comprehensive system of conceptualising the physical environment which regulates human ecology by influencing humanity to select auspicious environments and to build harmonious structures (e.g., graves, houses, and settlements) on them.” Geomancy has been an important part of the traditional Korean culture in siting graves, houses, temples and various settlements ranging from villages to major cities. Many Korean tales tell about the way a Korean practices geomancy in pursuit of obtaining an auspicious site. These tales which include the folk narrative genres of myths, legends and folktales will be called Korean geomancy tales in this paper. They reveal important aspects of traditional Korean world views, ethical values and social characteristics.

The idea that “an auspicious place can be found only by an ethical person” is deeply rooted in Korean geomancy. Ethical values adopted in geomancy can be classified into several categories, some of which are more emphasised than others. Generally people do not know who the author of a particular tale is, and by how much the tale has been changed in the process of telling and retelling to different audiences, so the tales can be considered to be communally authored and owned. Therefore, we can regard the ethical principles which appear in geomancy tales as the Korean people’s expression of the real ethical values. Because geomancers often cite folk narratives in the process of practicing geomancy, and these geomancy tales have been some of the most popular story theme in the Korean folk tradition, they are probably the most

important source for examining ethical values in geomancy as practiced in Korea.

According to the geomancy tales and sayings, it is often good (charitable or morally upright) people who somehow manage to acquire auspicious places. "Charity or compassion to humanity and animals" is not primarily a Confucian principle but a Buddhist ethic. However, it is probably the most emphasised ethical value of Korean folk society, and is the most popular ethical value that is expressed in Korean geomancy tales. The idea that "one's good or evil deeds can influence the fortune of one's descendants" is clearly conveyed in geomancy tales. Despite the fact that Confucian ethics ruled the country for such a long time, geomancy tales were significantly more influenced by Buddhist ethical values than by Confucian precepts. This fact may be an indication that Buddhist values survived among the commoners of Korean society even long after Neo-Confucianism replaced Buddhism as the dominant social value. Buddhism was introduced to Korea probably before the officially recognised date, the year 372 during the Three Kingdom's Period. Neo-Confucianism was introduced to Korea much more recently toward the end of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392). While Buddhism provided the dominant social and political ideology of Korea during the Koryo Period, Neo-Confucianism came to play such role only during the subsequent Choson Dynasty (1392-1910). Neo-Confucianism which is basically a scholarly tradition of China was embraced first by the upper class scholar-gentries (Yangban), and only later gradually penetrated downward to the commoners (Sangmin) during the Choson Dynasty.

While the matters of proper social ethics and political ideology were the Neo-Confucians' main concern, teaching people how to overcome suffering was the Buddhists' main concern, especially in consoling the human mind. Buddhism as a religion exerted greater influence on the Korean people's social psyche than did Confucianism and that is probably why Buddhist values are more commonly featured in Korean geomancy tales than Neo-Confucian ones. I have already examined the importance of the Buddhist concept of charity in geomancy in my earlier paper. In this paper, I will attempt to explain the relationships between Confucian ethical values and geomantic beliefs, especially the geomantic basis of parent-child relationships as reflected in geomancy tales. I will first discuss the importance of ethics in Korean geomancy before

discussing the Confucian ethical values relating to the parent–child relationships in geomancy tales.

## II. The importance of ethics in Korean geomancy

An important aspect of geomantic belief in Korea is that if one has been a good (ethical) person, he will be able to obtain an auspicious site when he searches for one; an evil person, however, may not be able to obtain an auspicious place no matter what he does and even if an evil person were to obtain such a site, not only would the auspiciousness not be manifested to him but it would be ruined. Although Koreans believed that geomantic principles are objective like scientific laws, their linkage with ethics is still very strong. This linkage obviously weakens the objectivity but gives geomancers an opportunity to defend their false prophecies. The textbooks of geomancy rarely mention ethical values in the selection of the auspicious site, and people's basic attitude toward geomancy is that the art is composed of value free and generalised principles. Generally, people believed that if they occupy an auspicious location, the place would manifest its benefits to them, regardless of their morality. That is why there has been so much illegal and immoral behaviour in the process of acquiring auspicious site. As a Sirhak scholar Chong Yakyong lamented that “the unfortunate act of excavating graves to move them to a more geomantically auspicious site was considered to be the practice of filial piety.” Examining the classical geomantic textbooks, it is quite clear that the ethical element is a later addition in the practice of geomancy and emphasised perhaps by professional geomancers in order to justify and defend their sometimes false prophecies.

As most geomancers say, there are numerous folk narratives concerning good people's attainment of auspicious places and their receiving benefits from them. This idea is firmly rooted both among geomancers and the people who use their services. During my field trips I met several geomancers who mentioned that one must be a good person in order to obtain an extraordinarily auspicious place. Also, among numerous geomantic folk narratives, the importance of being ethical in order to obtain an auspicious site is emphasised.

A local scholarly geomancer in Sangju told me that in order to obtain an auspicious site and to receive benefits from it, both the person to be buried and the descendants who bury the corpse should not have accumulated evil deeds during their life. The geomancer said, if either one of them has been evil, the descendant would not be able to see an

auspicious site even if he were standing on that spot. The geomancer told me the following story, titled Mr. Mr. Nam Sago and His Mother's Grave, which illustrates this point:

Mr. Mr. Nam Sago was a famous geomancer during the Choson Dynasty. When his mother died, he searched for a site in which to bury his mother. Eventually he found an auspicious site which was thought to be a geomantic landscape of "A Dragon Flying into Heaven", so he buried his mother there. After he finished the burial, he noticed some writing in the air. It said, "Why have you chosen an inauspicious site for the grave? This is a geomantic landscape of 'Overhanging Dead Snake on a Tree Branch', not 'A Dragon Flying into Heaven'." He re-examined the locale and realised that the site was indeed a geomantic landscape of 'Overhanging Dead Snake on a Tree Branch', which was very inauspicious.

Since the geomantic landscapes of 'Flying Dragon' and 'Overhanging Dead Snake' were similar, it is said that his error in selecting the site was caused by the sins his mother had committed during her lifetime.

When his mother was preparing for her wedding, her servant burned the cotton stuffing for her quilt by mistake. The mother beat the servant to death. Such a criminal deed made her unworthy to be buried in an auspicious place.

As the above legend indicates, even the most famous and prominent geomancer of Korea was not able to find an auspicious place for his mother's grave due to confusion caused by his mother's sinful life. However, not only did the mother suffer by being prevented from being buried in an auspicious place, but her descendants were also unable to receive benefits from her being buried in an auspicious grave site.

This story well supports the idea that a person who has an ancestor who committed an immoral deed can not obtain an auspicious site, even if he himself is moral. Geomancers argue that "if one has accumulated sinful deeds, it will more adversely influence one's

descendants than oneself.” It is clear then that ethical values are very strongly interwoven with the practice of geomancy in Korea. Now the rest of this paper will be devoted to investigating the Confucian relationships between parents and children as expressed in geomancy tales.

### **III. The Confucian ethics regarding the parent–child (ancestor–descendant) relationships as expressed in Korean geomancy tales.**

The Buddhistic concept of charity or compassion to humanity and other living creatures is seemingly the most emphasised ethical value in Korean geomancy tales. Next to charity, the Confucian ethical values, defined the ideal inter–personal relationships in Korean society, are most common in geomancy tales. The essence of Confucian social ethics is encapsulated in the so–called Five Cardinal Articles of Morality (Oryun) regarding the relationships between the ruler and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, seniors and juniors and between friends as follows:

Between the ruler and subject there should be righteousness (loyalty to the ruler).

Between father (parent) and son (child) there should be intimacy (filial piety to the parents).

Between husband and wife there should be difference (different roles– women should be domestic and accept the supremacy of her husband).

Between the senior and junior, there should be order (respect toward elders).

Between friends, there should be faithfulness (trustworthiness).

Out of these five principles, the more commonly represented themes in geomancy tales are the ones relating to the parent–child relationships and the married women’s attitudes toward her husband’s family. The other ethical values play minor roles. The fact that these values were second to the Buddhistic concept of charity demonstrate that Korean geomancy has

quite a close relationship with Confucianism, but not as close as that with Buddhism.

Three out of the Five Cardinal Articles of Morality in Confucianism lay the ground rules in a Confucian family. They are the relationships between father and son, husband and wife and the elder child and the younger child. Out of the three, the intimacy between father and son (parents and children) was the most important one in a Korean family and forms the basis of all Confucian ethical values. The parent-child relationship has emphasised the children's unconditional filial piety (hyo in Korean) toward their parents, although the parents' unlimited love for children was assumed. Therefore, we will first examine the Korean parent-child relationship as reflected in the traditional geomancy tales. In doing so I will argue that this pattern of the geomancy tales emphasising children's inheritance from parental sacrifice for their descendants are in fact in line with and supported by the geomantic principle of transmitting auspiciousness (vital energy) from auspicious sites through the buried parents in it to the living descendants.

**i) Parents sacrifice for their descendants: children's inheritance.** Confucian ethics concerning parent-child relationships require every son's total and unconditional sacrifice to his parents: but no parental sacrifice for children is required. In the geomancy tales, however, there are stories about poor parents sacrificing themselves to acquire grave sites that will guarantee a prosperous future for their descendants. The Grave of the Crop Keeper Old Lady is one of the best example of this type of legend.

During the reign of King Sonjo lived Mr and Mrs Ho in the Pyongan Province. They 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 included three sons who could not yet marry, plotted to obtain this auspicious place

One day, as she did every day, Mrs Ho went to the bird-lookout in the fields. 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 went to the bird-lookout in the fields. 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-tower. After three or four days, she died.

This was all according to a plan which Mrs 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 at the regional court unless the master gave them the chosen 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, albeit with great reluctance. After Mrs Ho was buried in the chosen 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, albeit with great reluctance. After Mrs Ho's burial at the auspicious site, her descendants became rich.

The above example is an extreme case of the extent to which a typical Korean parent, in particular the mother, will sacrifice for their children, although this would not happen these days. In the story, the mother was prepared to give her own life for the sake of her children's prosperity. There is not a single comment on the happiness of Mrs Ho's prosperity. There is not a single comment on the happiness of Mrs Ho after her death, but her descendants became rich. From this, it can be assumed that Mrs Ho did not kill herself for her own happiness but for her family's prosperity. Moreover, we can also assume that even Mrs Ho's prosperity. Moreover, we can also assume that even Mrs Ho's sons did not allow their mother's suicide for their own personal (selfish) happiness but rather for the future of the family; the wish reflected in the tale was for the prosperous future of their descendants not themselves. This tale reveals the Korean Mother's Psyche towards the family quite well. Even nowadays, a mother's sacrifice for her children's success is virtually unlimited. Although they do not necessarily give their lives away, they take up enormous sacrifices for their children, a prime example being when they sit university entrance examinations. It can be said that mothers are almost like the exam candidates themselves, because for the whole year, their life centres around their children;

preparing food, arranging tutors, etc. So Korean families' fanatical enthusiasm for their children's education is engineered and fuelled by the parents' interest in their children's success. Thus, the spirit of Mrs Ho's altruism for her children's life still continues in a greater sense. One could say that Koreans prepare for tomorrow rather than for today.

Many other tales are relevant to the idea of selecting a grave site in preparation for their descendants' future. Another story, An Auspicious Place of Yondok-san in Pukchong describes fairly well the idea of a parents' sacrifice for their descendants, as follows:

There were two geomancers who were also friends named Mr Tong and Mr Chin. One day they found two auspicious grave sites, one better than the other. Each wanted to take the better spot, but they decided the one who died earlier would be buried at the better site. Mr Tong was so anxious to obtain the better site that he killed himself and left a will asking his friend to choose the right orientation for his burial.

Mr Tong was so upset at losing such a good grave site that he tricked Mr Chin's son by asking the son whether he wanted his father to be buried in "the direction of himself playing the flute" or "the direction of having a musician play the flute." The son answered that he preferred that his father's body be positioned in "the direction of playing the flute by him."

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

In this tale, Mr Chin committed suicide and thus tricked his friend in order to obtain the auspicious place. The

geomancer, Chin obviously did not kill himself to be buried there for a blessed life after death. The reason is that neither the principles of geomancy nor the tale itself discuss the afterlife of those buried in an auspicious place. Therefore, it is quite probable that the geomancer tricked his colleague by committing suicide to obtain the place because he knew that it would guarantee a prosperous family future for his descendants. Thus, geomancer Chin's suicide can be considered as a kind of parental sacrifice for his descendants.

The above two stories show us the sacrifice of parents for their family to the extent of giving away their own life for the family's prosperous future. Koreans considered their descendants to be more important than themselves and thus were willing to sacrifice themselves for their children. The emphasis in these stories on parental altruism for children (rather than the other way around) could be considered a non-Confucian, traditional Korean moral value, which existed during the time of the stories. However, this is an expected and assumed condition for the children's filial piety toward the parents. In this sense, it does not contradict Confucian family structure. Filial piety, which is the basic ethical value for the family system of both Korea and China, requires children's unlimited obedience and sacrifice for their parents.

The practice of 'parents' sacrifice for the family's future supports one of the 3 principles suggested by Wolfram Eberhard on the Chinese social structure. He argued that the 3 principles have shaped the "Chinese" feature in Chinese society: (1) every person is educable, (2) people are not equal, and (3) society can not function unless the individual relinquishes some of his freedoms. What Eberhard said about the three principles of Chinese social structure may well be applied to Korea, for both countries share Confucianism as the key guiding light of their society. Limiting individual freedom for the sake of the community they belong to means that sacrificing individual's rights and gains are needed for the wellbeing of the group that the person belongs to. In this sense, the story of parent's sacrifice for the wellbeing of the descendants is in fact an extended elaboration of Eberhard's 3<sup>rd</sup> principle.

## **ii) Two explanations for Korean's fanatic quest for auspicious grave site**

The following two points are important in explaining Koreans' use of geomancy as a way of gaining family prosperity and their fanatic behaviour in the quest for an auspicious grave site as reflected in a number of geomancy tales.

**a) parents' sacrifice for the descendants in geomancy tales is supported by the principles of geomancy.** The geomantic principles stated in classical geomancy textbooks are mainly concerned with how to extract benefits through the bones of ancestors placed at auspicious grave locations. The geomantic principles which are explained in the single most important geomancy textbook, Zangshu or Zangjing (Book of Burial) are rather materialistic. The book does not mention anything about life after death, but only tells one how the bones of the dead can affect the descendants. Therefore, the enthusiasm of Koreans for grave geomancy was for the sake of the living descendants in this world rather than for the sake of their deceased ancestors, although they pretended that the primary motivation was filial piety to the deceased parents.

Now let us investigate geomantic principles that are responsible for the Korean people's belief that auspicious blessings can be transmitted to descendants through the buried ancestors. When a geomancer in modern Korea is asked about the transmission of auspiciousness from grave site to living descendants, the person may not be able to give an adequate answer to this question. Some geomancers in rural areas merely told me during my fieldwork "somehow it works that way". A few educated geomancers, however, explained this concept by using geomantic statements usually based on Zangshu, which has several discussions relevant to the questions, such as the following:

The buried corpse can be influenced by the vital energy [under the ground] ... Every living body is a concentration of vital energy. The energy condenses and forms bones. When a person dies, only the bones [which are condensed vital energy] remain [under the ground]. Therefore, it is a principle that a buried corpse can latently influence its descendants by returning the vital energy from the bones.

According to the classical geomancy textbook, it is clear that the mediator between the vital energy under the ground and the living descendants is the bones of buried ancestors. The geomancy textbook, Zangshu explains it in a metaphysical way:

Human beings received their bodies from their parents. When the main body [dead ancestor] acquires vital energy, the remaining body [living descendants] receives auspiciousness from the energy. The scripture said that the energy induces spirit, and then the auspiciousness is delivered to humans [living descendants]. This is as if a copper mountain is broken down in the west, the spiritual bell rings in the east, or when trees bloom in spring, the chestnuts bud in the room.

The above explanation fails to expose the channelling mechanism whereby auspiciousness is delivered to the descendants. The mechanism is very ambiguous; there are only mysterious statements regarding the absorption of vital energy by the living. Zangshu explains only that the induction is similar to the relationship between a copper mine and a spiritual bell (of copper which is from the mind), or to the relationship between blooming trees in spring and chestnuts budding in a room. In the geomancy textbook, the relationship between the copper mine and copper bell was compared with relationships between the deceased ancestor and the living descendants. The copper mine is to the remains of the deceased parent in the grave, what the copper bell must be to a child (a living descendant). This mysterious and metaphysical point of parent-child relationships through vital energy in Zangshu is, as clarified in a commentary of the book by Cheng Mi, "a vital energy is passed from the main body (parents) to prosperous branches (descendants)." As discussions on the mechanism of the flow of auspicious energy do not appear in the geomantic textbooks, I asked a learned geomancer in Seoul, Korea, about it. He answered that he does not know the mechanism itself, and that his knowledge is from observation of the relationship between descendants and graves. Geomancers accept the idea of the delivering of auspiciousness to descendants on faith rather than on describable principles.

Considering the transitional characteristics of vital energy, they are such that they are more readily transmitted to the living via one's main body (ancestors' bones without flesh) under the ground than via a living man's flesh-encased bones. One reason for this is that when the energy ascends, it becomes wind, but when it flows under the ground, it becomes vital energy. Therefore, obtaining vital energy from under the ground is much more secure than obtaining it above ground. Apparently, it is also believed by geomancers that bones (condensed vital energy) covered by flesh are not as efficient as bones under the ground without flesh. For these reasons the selection of grave sites has probably been more important to Koreans than the selection of house sites. This concludes the presentation

of the fundamentals of geomantic ideas regarding why Koreans have been so eager to obtain an auspicious grave site for the living descendants of the deceased ancestor to be buried there.

The geomantic principle in Zangshu of considering parents as the main body of their children is analogous to a tree trunk with many branches. I will now discuss how this principle has been illustrated and transmitted to Korean folk society as a geomancy tale. When the dead bodies of the parents or ancestors are suffused with vital energy, the remaining living branches also may receive benefits from the energy. By extending this geomantic logic, one can say that if the dead ancestors' body suffers in its grave, the living descendants will suffer as well. This aspect of geomantic belief regarding deceased ancestors and living descendants is very effectively described in a folkloric form in the following legend:

A geomancer, on his way down from a remote mountain after completing his study of geomancy for 10 years, found an extremely auspicious grave site worthy of producing a prime minister. On the site an exposed skull was lying there and so he poked a stick through an eye of the skull to see what would happen.

At that very moment, the prime minister of the nation suddenly came to suffer severe pain in his eye. No medicine was effective for his pain and he went searching for a doctor who could cure his pain. That same geomancer went to the prime minister and promised to cure his sickness within three days, and told him that he needed to see his ancestor's graves. When the geomancer examined the graves of the prime minister's family, he realised that all had been well maintained but they were not located in geomantically good places. Therefore, the geomancer went to the mountain where the auspicious site with the exposed skull was lying. He pulled out the stick from the skull, and the pain in the prime minister's eye suddenly went away.

The geomancer then told all that he did to the prime minister and advised him that the grave that was originally thought to be his father's was not his real father's grave; the exposed skull in the auspicious site was his real father's. With great surprise the prime minister asked his mother for an explanation. Then his mother told him her secret and shameful

story that the prime minister was born out of wedlock between her and a male slave in the family. After that incident the slave ran away from the family and she did not know what happened to him.

After that the prime minister made a decent grave for the skull and maintained it well.

The above story clearly illustrates the geomantic principle that the living descendants are the branch bodies of the deceased ancestors and the descendants are directly affected by the conditions of the deceased father. In the story, poking the deceased father's skull with a stick caused the pain in the eye of the living descendant, and pulling the stick out of the skull relieved the pain. This tale represents a folklorised Korean explanation of the geomantic relationships between the deceased parents' remains and the living children.

According to the logic of the above statement in the Zangshu and the Korean geomancy tale quoted above, the following paradox is possible: people never die; they always live in the world through their descendants even after their death. According to this logic, expecting prosperous descendants is also a hope for these ancestors. This expectation may be one reason that Koreans have such wishes. In this sense, even a filial son who moved his parents' grave(s) with the sincere hope of their peaceful rest at an auspicious site, could also hope for blessings from the grave for the descendants including him. This hope, of course, would not be against the principles of filial piety, but would support the importance of the patrilineal continuity in the Confucian family structure.

**b) Korean's identity comes from family lineage.** Korean's fanatic interest in obtaining an auspicious site for the wellbeing of the living descendants may be due to their strong family identity which blurred the boundary between oneself and one's family. Often traditional minded Koreans thought that their duty to the family was greater than duty to anything else including oneself. This idea supports the above discussed Eberhard's third principle that governs Chinese society: An individual should sacrifice some of his freedom (right) for the community one belongs to.

A person's most important aspect of his identity always comes from his or her family in traditional Korea, and does not always make clear distinctions between the "I", "my ancestors", and "my descendants". The destiny of "I" could hardly have been separated from that of the family line and so the "I" could be sacrificed for the ancestors or the descendants. No matter what a person achieved in his life, his destiny

(especially social status) could hardly be separated from that of his family. One's glory, failure, prestige, or responsibility to society was not just one's own but was extended to one's entire family. Therefore, when one achieved something, the entire family shared the glory, while if one committed a crime, the responsibility and punishment were that of the entire family. It is correct to say that whenever one did something while away from their family, they were representatives of the family. Traditional Koreans probably have understood themselves not as independent individual human beings but as members of a family. This idea is well illustrated in geomancy tales, as we have seen in the above example.

To a Korean, the existence of "I" may not terminate with the death of a person, but continues living through the descendants. It was believed that one's ancestors could know nothing more pitiable than to see the discontinuance of the family line. Although a person may have enjoyed a prosperous and glorious life before death, if the person did not have a son, he would not be considered a blessed man, because he would then not have descendants who would take care of his grave and perform worship ceremonies for him through the following generations. The wish to have prosperous descendants can be seen as the desire for a guarantee that they, as ancestors, will be served and honoured even after their death, since having prosperous descendants would guarantee such security and glory. Receiving good worship ceremonies after death and having a well maintained grave were two of the greatest concerns. Therefore, the prosperity of one's children is no less important than one's own prosperity. If one had an honourable descendant, the ancestors could be glorified by him even after their death. For the best example of this, we cite Yi ǒt concerns. Therefore, the prosperity of one's children is no less important than one's own prosperity. If one had an honourable descendant, the ancestors could be glorified by him even after their death. For the best example of this, we cite Yi Songgwho became the first king of the Choson dynasty. He glorified his ancestors by conferring posthumous kingships on them up to the fourth generation. This family relationship may explain why a person, who might choose his own grave site before death, would select it in terms of its effect on the prosperity of his descendants.

### **iii) Criticisms on and the evidence of practicing grave geomancy for the benefits of the living descendants.**

During the Choson dynasty, because of people's belief in the geomantic principle of delivering vital energy (blessings) from an auspicious site to the descendants through the burial of the deceased ancestors in it, the practice of grave-geomancy was so popular among the people and caused much negative impact on the Korean culture, as a Shirhak scholar during the later Choson Dynasty (1392–1910), Pak ǒ, as a Shirhak scholar during the later Choson Dynasty (1392–1910), Pak Chega, sai

The idea of geomancy has had a more adverse influence [on Korean society] than Buddhism or Taoism.

Even the scholar-gentry class followed this idea and made it a custom. It is said that moving an ancestor's grave to a better location is an act of filial piety. Since the scholar-gentry class considered the making of its ancestor's graves as important, the common people imitated their behaviour . It is said that moving an ancestor's grave to a better location is an act of filial piety. Since the scholar-gentry class considered the making of its ancestor's graves as important, the common people imitated their behaviour ... Generally, it is a d intention to depend upon one's fortune through one's deceased parents. Moreover, occupying other's mountains illegally and destroying other's funeral biers are not right things to do. To have more splendid worship ceremonies at graves than at home during special occasions is against proper principles. It is not possible to list all the stories about people who perform deeds against proper principles by wasting all of their wealth [in finding auspicious places] but do not take care of their ancestral bones, and yet expect blessings (good fortune).

Moving one's ancestral grave to a geomantically better place is mainly motivated by a hope for blessings to one's descendants, rather than by feelings for one's ancestors. Maurice Freedman, a British anthropologist once commented on the Chinese practice of grave geomancy that:

"Indeed, we may say that, in the traditional Chinese setting, there is more involved than a mere desire to procure good fortune; there is a moral obligation to seek a future of happiness for those for whom one is responsible. If I select my grave site in anticipation of my death, it is for the benefit of my sons and remoter agnatic issue. If my sons choose my grave, they are intent not only on their own prosperity but also on that of their descendants, each his own."

Indeed, Freedman understood the purpose of practicing grave geomancy in China quite accurately and pointed out a critically important aspect of the theory of geomancy regarding the manifestation of auspiciousness from it. Freedman's comment on Chinese geomancy is also applicable to the practice of geomancy in

Korea. The main purpose of practicing grave geomancy was to extract blessings from the grave site, rather than the wellbeing of the deceased ancestors' afterlife.

The following historical document concerning the movement of King Sejo's tomb in Chungbo Munhon Pigo clearly supports and illustrates the above point:

In the first year of King Yejong (A.D.) 1469), Yongnung [the name of King Sejong's tomb] was moved to Yoju. Originally the tomb was nearby Honrung [the name of King Taejong's tomb]. During King Sejo's reign, there was discussion that Yongnung should be moved, since it was not located at an auspicious place. Therefore, King Sejo summoned So Kjong [famous scholar-officer] and asked him about the matter. Mr So said that, "the art of geomancy [literally, 'mountains, waters, and directions'] is used for receiving blessings and for avoiding misfortune to the descendants. I, your officer, do not know about the art, but the moving of the ancestor's graves by the people [to a better place] is an attempt to seek and acquire fortune [for the descendants]. As a king, what more fortune do you expect [by moving the tomb of the king]." Then, the king said, "I no longer wish to move the tomb."

By moving graves, people expected to receive blessings such as enhanced social status, greater wealth, or having more sons in the family. Most geomancy tales reflect these wishes and very rarely convey any information regarding the descendants' concerns for the well being of their deceased ancestors' life after death. Certainly, geomancy text books declared the manifestation of benefits delivered from auspicious grave sites are only concerned with the wellbeing of the living descendants and their future descendants to come, but not the well being of the deceased ancestors' life after death.

Geomancy tales are important sources of learning about people's wishes for the various kinds of blessing from ancestor's graves. The wishes expressed in Korean geomancy tales are in fact some of the Korean people's most important concerns, because folk narratives are anonymously and communally authored and owned. The anonymous authors of tales freely expressed their wishes without fear of being identified.

In the legends, the concern of people for their descendants extends several generations. Usually descendants living at the time that a grave was made may not benefit the blessings, but rather expected the benefits to come several generations later. For instance, there is the story of Ancestor's Grave of the Yi Family of Hansan:

The grave site used to be the location of the local administration office of Hansan County, Kyongsang-do Province.

Mr Yi was working as a low level clerk at the local office. One day he noticed that the floor where the governor's seat was located was in a process of decay. He judged that the decay occurred because of the power of the earth (vital energy) of the site. He concluded that it was an auspicious place, and secretly buried his father's body under the floor.

This was the top secret of his family, and three generations later, the merit of the grave came to be available to the descendants and many great men were produced among the descendants.

In the above geomancy tale, the blessings from the grave become effective three generations after the grave was made. This means that the descendants had to wait about 100 years to experience benefit from the grave. These wishes for family prosperity centre around either bringing material wealth to the family, prolific agnatic issue or appointments of descendants as high governmental officials, as shown in the earlier story of The Grave of the Old Crop Keeper Lady and the above story of An Ancestor's Grave of the Yi Family of Hansan. These may reflect the average short life expectancy and high mortality rates due to poor health conditions, the traditional

society's poverty stricken life as well as the envying of government offices who wielded power during the Choson dynasty.

#### iv) Filial piety toward parents

Filial piety may have been the most important ethical principle among traditional Koreans. In practice it is an act of a child's obligation toward parents for love and other material items received from the parents. However the act of filial piety (hyodo) is an unconditional obligation to have respect for parents, no matter how poorly the children have been endowed by their parents. In traditional Korean society the concept of parents can be extended to include grandparents, great-grandparents and other direct line ancestors. In spite of its importance, geomancy tales with this ethical theme have not been popular in Korea. Most geomancy tales are about how to and who can acquire an auspicious site as well as about what kinds of blessings an auspicious site has manifested to whom. I have been able to find only several geomancy tales which emphasise filial piety. One of them, Tiger Mountain, is as follows:

About five hundred years ago, a Mr An liv in Hosan-ri, Hwanghae Province. He was so filial to his parents that after his father's death, he went to his grave with a bowl of rice and bowed to the grave every day.

One day a tiger was in front of his father's grave. The tiger had been helped once by Mr An who had taken a stake out of its mouth. Mr An was surprised at seeing the tiger again. He pushed the tiger to make it go back to its cave, but it would not move. When the tiger started walking and looking back, Mr An realised that this was aign asking him to follow. At a certain place, the tiger stopped and dug in the soil with its paw. Mr gn asking him to follow. At a certain place, the tiger stopped and dug in the soil with its paw. Mr An understood that the tiger was offering a good place for Mr An to bury his father. Thus, he moved him father's grave to that plac

After that, Mr An family came to be prosperous, and eventually became the richest family of

the region. This is why the people call the mountain "Bomme" or "Hosan", both of which literally mean "Tiger Mountain".

Many unfilial sons who did not care for their parents while they were alive suddenly became filial after the death of their parents when it comes to searching for an auspicious grave site. This action clearly was for one's selfish gains, and not an expression of filial piety toward the deceased parents. Even in such cases, it is assumed that the wellbeing of the deceased ancestor is taken into consideration as the offspring will take better care of their graves and offer worship, when they become prosperous.

Based on the above discussion one could say that the Korean's practice of grave geomancy is mainly for the benefits of the living descendants and their future generations to come, rather than the deceased ancestors. This fact is well reflected in Korean geomancy tales of which there are only a few tales on filial piety and grave geomancy, while most tales are about living descendants eager to acquire an auspicious site and on how such a site manifested blessings to the living descendants.

## CONCLUSION

Korean geomancy is closely related to Buddhism and Confucianism. Buddhism is more strongly tied to geomancy than Confucianism; however, the relationships between geomancy and Confucianism have been well developed and are clearly evidenced in the locations of Confucian shrines and schools, Confucian scholars' interest in geomancy and the expression of Confucian values in geomancy tales. In the geomancy tales, the Confucian ethical values regarding the relationships between parents and descendants is the most commonly expressed one among the Five Cardinal Articles of Morality in Confucianism.

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