



The Transnational Travels of Geomancy in  
Premodern East Asia, c. 1600–c. 1900

**PART 2**

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## I. *Fengshui* in Premodern East Asia

### A. Channels of Transnational Communication

There were a great many mechanisms by which people, texts, ideas, products, practices and skills traveled across land and sea borders in pre-modern East Asia.<sup>1</sup> One such mechanism was military conquest. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the recently unified Chinese state pushed into the areas we now know as (North) Korea and (North) Vietnam, and established military outposts. Although Japan was not invaded by the Chinese during this period (nor at any other period, for that matter), maritime merchants traveled from China to Japan and at least two Japanese envoys visited China in as early as the first century of the Common Era.

China's occupation of northern Korea lasted from 107 BCE to 313 CE., and, in the case of northern Vietnam, from 111 BCE to 938 CE. In each instance, resistance to Chinese occupation caused disruptions and dislocations, some as long as sixty years in the case of Vietnam, but Chinese cultural influences left their mark, especially with the settlement of large numbers of Chinese in both places. Perhaps the most important legacy of Chinese culture in Korea and Vietnam was the classical Chinese language (文言文)—so called because it was learned in large measure by rote memorization of the Chinese classics. Prior to the introduction of Chinese characters, neither Korea, Vietnam nor Japan had a written language.<sup>2</sup>

The use of classical Chinese as an administrative language in areas dominated by Chinese civil and military officials, as well as its broader application in Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist texts, contributed to the gradual spread of Chinese culture over the next several centuries, not only in Korea and Vietnam, but also Japan, by virtue of its

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<sup>1</sup> Chun-chieh Huang, "Some Observations on the Study of the History of Cultural Interactions in East Asia," *Journal of Cultural Interaction in East Asia*, 1 (2010): 11–35, esp. 18–23.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that over time all three of these culture areas developed their own written scripts, each of which reflected the sounds of their respective indigenous languages: *Kana* (仮名) in Japan; *Hangul* (한글) in Korea, and *Nôm* (喃) or *Chữ Nôm* (字喃) in Vietnam. For most of the period under consideration in this article, however, these scripts lacked the prestige of classical Chinese. See Smith, "The Transnational Travels of the *Yijing* or *Classic of Changes*" (forthcoming in Qian, Smith and Zhang, eds., *Reconsidering the Sinosphere*).

proximity to Korea. From the first to the sixth centuries, with the growth of commercial and other contacts among the states of this newly emerging “Sinosphere,” Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist ideas gained currency, and Chinese luxury products such as silk and lacquer found appreciative consumers.

But it was the great and glorious Tang dynasty (618–906) that provoked a surge of interest in all things Chinese on the part of the Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese. From the beginning of the Tang period to 894, for example, the Japanese sent more than a dozen “embassies” (*Kentō-shi* 遣唐使) to China, in addition to large groups of monks, students and government officials. Some of these expeditions numbered 600 or more people. As a result of these formal and informal contacts, the Japanese borrowed a wide range of Chinese political, military, legal, educational and economic institutions, as well as philosophical, religious, artistic, architectural, musical, literary and many other cultural ideas—including geomancy. The same was true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Korea and Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

Let us stop here to look briefly at the early history of Chinese-style geomancy in East Asia during the period from early seventh to the early tenth centuries. Although written evidence is incomplete, it seems likely that geomancy entered Korea during the period of Han domination, but it did not take firm hold until after unification by Silla in 667 CE. By the ninth century, the Zen master Tosōn 道誥 (827–898) had begun to employ geomantic methods in situating Buddhist monasteries and temples, and later, King Taejo 太祖 (r. 918–943), first ruler of Koryō 高麗 (918–1392), and his successors, extended these geomantic practices to secular buildings and even the location of cities.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, as we shall see, *fengshui* (Korean: *pungsu*) became as deeply embedded in

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<sup>3</sup> For a convenient overview in English, see Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.–A.D. 907* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); see also Joshua Fogel, “The Sinic World,” in Ainslee Thomas Embree and Carol Gluck, eds., *Asia in Western and World History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997). In Japanese, see Murai Shōsuke 村井章介, *Higashi Ajia no naka no Nihon bunka* (Japanese culture in East Asia) (Tokyo: Hōsō daigaku kyōiku shinkōkai, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 33–41.

Korea as it was in China, and Master Tosŏn came to be viewed by many as the “father” of Korean geomancy.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of Vietnam, the long period of Chinese occupation in the north brought a gradual appreciation of geomantic principles, especially during the Tang dynasty. In the early 860s, a renowned Chinese general named Gao Pian 高駢 (Vietnamese: Cao Biền; 821–887) was sent by the emperor to recover the district of Annam 安南 (in the vicinity of modern-day Hanoi), which had been invaded and occupied in 863 by the newly established kingdom of Dali 大理國. In 866, Gao recovered the lost territory, rebuilt defenses in the area, and made other adjustments to the local environment. According to Chinese and Vietnamese accounts, he did this by availing of the spiritual and geomantic powers of the region, and from this time onward geomancy became a major preoccupation of Vietnamese elites as well as commoners.<sup>6</sup> Less laudably from a Vietnamese perspective, Gao’s geomantic ideas reportedly assisted the fifteenth-century Ming dynasty general Huang Fu 黃富 (Vietnamese: Hoàng Phúc; fl. 1400), another famous Chinese general-geomancer, in regaining direct political control over northern Vietnam for twenty years, beginning in 1407.<sup>7</sup>

The early history of *fengshui* in Japan is somewhat difficult to track. We know, however, that even before the Tang dynasty, as early as 602 CE, a Korean monk named Kwallŭk 觀勤 (Japanese: Kanroku; fl. 600 CE) brought Chinese texts on astronomy,

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<sup>5</sup> See Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries: Changes and Continuities,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 30.2 (December 2017): 101–129, esp. 105 ff. See also Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, esp. 25–42, 153–54 and 320–23.

<sup>6</sup> See Niu Junkai 牛軍凱, “Shilun fengshui wenhua zai Yuenan de chuanbo yu fengshui shu de Yuenan hua” 試論風水文化在越南的傳播與風水術的越南化 (On the spread of *fengshui* culture to Vietnam and the Vietnamization of the geomantic arts), 2011. URL: <http://www.seasas.cn/article-332-1.html> and Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam: A Preliminary Study through Sources of Geomancy,” in Geoff Wade and Sun Lichen, eds. *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2010): 126–153, esp. 129–35.

<sup>7</sup> See Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body,” 131 ff.; Liam C. Kelley, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia: Premodern Geographic Knowledge and the Emergence of the Geo-Body in Late Imperial Vietnam,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 20 (September 2016): 8–39. URL: <http://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-20>; Keith W. Taylor, “A Southern Remembrance of Cao Bien,” in Philippe Papin and John Kleinen, eds., *Liber Amicorum: Mélanges offerts au Professeur Phan Huy Le* (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Thanh Nien, 1999): 241–258.

geomancy, and various forms of divination to Japan, and that students were selected to study each of these disciplines.<sup>8</sup> During the Tang dynasty Japanese enthusiasm for all things Chinese brought more knowledge of Chinese geomantic theories and practices. Around 700, for example, Emperor Monmu-tennō (文武天皇), following precedent established by Emperor Tenmu-tennō (天武天皇) in the 680s, established a Yinyang Bureau (Onmyōryō 陰陽寮) at court, modeled in part on the Tang dynasty's Office of Great Divination (Taibu shu 太卜署). The officials of the Onmyōryō were responsible for divining on the basis of astrology, numerology, observations of *ki* (Chinese: *qi* 氣), and an analysis of the “patterns of the earth” (地理; i.e. geomantic practices). They also designed Chinese-style calendars, and determined auspicious and inauspicious days for certain activities.<sup>9</sup> From the eighth century onward, exponents of the Way of Yinyang (Onmyōdō 陰陽道), known generically as “*yinyang* masters” (*onmyōji* 陰陽師), dominated the selection of auspicious times and sites (and related rituals) in Japan until 1868.<sup>10</sup>

In post-Tang times, China no longer occupied territory in Korea or Vietnam for any significant period, and Japan remained beyond military reach. But China continued to provide cultural inspiration for all three areas, and classical Chinese remained the written lingua franca for elites in each of these environments. Moreover, the Chinese civil service examination system (科擧), which developed during the Tang period and lasted until 1905, served as a model for all three areas on China's periphery—Korea and Vietnam in particular. Although the content of the Chinese examinations changed over time, the tests valued above all literary ability and command of the Confucian classical texts and their orthodox commentaries. The Japanese established a rudimentary examination system that

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<sup>8</sup> Masuo Shin'ichirō 増尾伸一郎 and Joseph P. Elacqua, “Chinese Religion and the Formation of Onmyōdō,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 40.1 (2013): 19–43.

<sup>9</sup> See Miura Kunio, “Onmyōdō Divination Techniques and Daoism,” in Jeffrey L. Richey, ed., *Daoism in Japan: Chinese Traditions and their Influence on Japanese Religious Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 83–102. A particularly influential text in the early development of Onmyōdō was Xiao Ji's *Wuxing dayi*. See Masuo and Elacqua, “Chinese Religion and the Formation of Onmyōdō,” 37.

<sup>10</sup> See Umeda Chihiro 梅田千尋 “Kinsei Onmyōdō soshiki no kenkyū” 近世陰陽道組織の研究 (Research on early modern Onmyōdō organization), *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40.1, Onmyōdō in Japanese History (2013): 189–193.

operated sporadically in the period from 794 to 1185), but the Koreans and Vietnamese established more enduring examination systems—the former lasting from 958 to 1894, and the latter lasting from 1075 to 1919.

The presence or absence of an examination system had far-reaching implications for the various cultures of East Asia. In China, it produced a meritocracy—the key to both social and bureaucratic mobility, and the sole focus for Chinese higher education. Chosŏn 朝鮮 (aka Joseon) Korea (1392–1910) was fundamentally a hereditary culture, in which the *yangban* (兩班) aristocratic elite took the exams primarily for prestige, not necessarily to improve their position in society, which was already secure. In late Lê 黎朝 (1428–1789) and early Nguyễn 阮朝 (1802–1945) dynasty Vietnam, the examinations followed the Chinese model, but the Vietnamese educational system was relatively undeveloped by Chinese and Korean standards. Also, as in the case of Korea, the Vietnamese exams included not only Confucian content but also Buddhist, Daoist and even geomantic themes.<sup>11</sup>

Tokugawa 徳川 Japan (1603–1868), like Korea in certain respects, was an aristocratic culture, in which the samurai (侍) class served as a warrior elite; and since their paramount duty was loyalty to their lord (the daimyo 大名), most of them learned what their lord wanted them to learn. Others, however, took leaves of absence or even resigned from domain service to pursue scholarly (and other) careers. Many non-samurai pursued scholarship as well, frequently interacting with samurai in scholarly and artistic circles.<sup>12</sup> In this society, there was no place for a sustained civil service examination system. Nonetheless, Tokugawa elites, like their Korean and Vietnamese counterparts, learned classical Chinese and studied the Confucian classics and orthodox neo-Confucian

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<sup>11</sup> For an excellent set of essays on intellectual life in the Sinosphere, see Benjamin A. Elman, John B. Duncan, and Herman Ooms, eds., *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See Anna Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons: Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century: a Prosopographical Approach* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006). For this reference, and for a great deal of guidance in other matters related to Japan and the Ryukyus, I am deeply indebted to Gregory Smits. Naturally, however, he is not responsible for any of my own errors of fact or interpretation.

commentaries.<sup>13</sup> Although by the fifteenth century the Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese had developed their own indigenous written scripts, the prestige of classical Chinese remained in all three societies until the waning years of the nineteenth century, if not longer.<sup>14</sup>

The situation in the Ryukyu 琉球 islands (1429–1879) is worth noting here. As with Japan, Korea and Vietnam, significant territorial, political and cultural changes took place in the Ryukyu archipelago during the years under consideration. At the same time, a significant trend in all of these areas was toward ever greater geographical consolidation and political centralization.<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, Japan and China exerted the greatest political, economic and cultural influence on this string of islands, which spanned the East China Sea from the southern tip of Japan (the Satsuma domain 薩摩藩, on the island of Kyūshū) to the island of Taiwan. As Gregory Smits shows clearly in a forthcoming book titled *Maritime Ryukyu, 1050-1650* (University of Hawai'i Press), the Ryukyu islands were a frontier region of Japan (and to a lesser extent, southern coastal Korea) until after Satsuma annexed the Ryukyus by force in 1609. Thereafter, the Ryukyus became a de facto part of Satsuma, which the Japanese domain used as a conduit to China. Prior to the seventeenth century, the influence of Chinese non-material

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<sup>13</sup> See Cai Yi 蔡毅, *Zhongguo chuantong wenhua zai Riben* 中國傳統文化在日本 (China's traditional culture in Japan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002. It should be noted that at an earlier period, from 1395 to 1443 in particular, Japan sent envoys to Korea roughly every year in search of important Buddhist classics, including the *Dazang jing* (大藏經), the *Da banruo jing* (大般若經), and the *Fahua jing* (法華經). See Huang, "Some Observations on the Study of the History of Cultural Interactions in East Asia," 18.

<sup>14</sup> See note 2 above. On the interplay between classical Chinese and local vernaculars, see the essays in Qian, Smith and Zhang, eds., *Reconsidering the Sinosphere: Cultural Transmissions and Transformations* and *Reconsidering the Sinosphere: Ideology, Aesthetics and Identity Formation*. James R. Reichert, "From Yomihon to Gōkan: Repetition and Difference in Late Edo Book Culture," *Journal of Asian Studies* 76.2 (May 2017): 311–332, esp. 312–13, emphasizes the wide variety of writing systems in Tokugawa Japan.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Lieberman, "The Qing Dynasty and Its Neighbors: Early Modern China in World History," *Social Science History* 32.2 (Summer 2008): 281–304, esp. 289–293. Generally, however, the idea of the early (pre-1500) Ryukyu islands as a coherent and orderly political community ruled by dynasties and kings from a central capital in Okinawa is a construct of the period from 1650 to 1750.

culture on Ryukyu was minimal, but the economic significance of trade with China was great, leading to frequent warfare between various Ryukyuan warlords.<sup>16</sup>

Over time, and with the encouragement of both the Tokugawa government in Edo (江戸; modern-day Tokyo) and the royal government on the main island of Okinawa (沖縄島), Ryukyu elites expanded their interests to include not only the study of Japanese language, history and culture, but also the study of Chinese language, history and culture. The reason is that for essentially political and economic reasons, it “was to the mutual advantage of Ryukyu, Satsuma, and the bakufu [the Edo government] for Ryukyu and its people to appear as much unlike Japan and [the] Japanese as possible,” which meant, in practice, appearing as “Chinese” as possible in the eyes of the Chinese.<sup>17</sup>

The center of Chinese learning in the Ryukyus was an area known as Kumemura (久米村) on Okinawa—the largest of the Ryukyu islands, and a scholarly shorthand term for the Ryukyus as a whole during the “early modern” period (1609–1879). According to legend, the people of Kumemura were descendants of Chinese immigrants (and some Koreans) who settled there in the late fourteenth century. These families became an aristocratic class of scholar-bureaucrats called *yukatchu* (良人), who dominated the royal administrative structure and also served as diplomats in the Ryukyu kingdom’s foreign relations. All *yukatchu* males learned classical Chinese, and many of them acquired Chinese technical knowledge such as medicine, astronomy, shipbuilding, navigation, sugar production, and geomancy. *Yukatchu* who served in the Ryukyuan capital of Shuri (首里) generally mastered Japanese culture, and many of them acquired Japanese technical knowledge in areas such as papermaking, medicine, agriculture, and basic mathematics.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Again, my debt to Gregory Smits’ scholarship and personal advice is great. See in particular his *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-Modern Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, 42–49, esp. 42. See also Mamoru Akamine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom: Cornerstone of East Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017; translated by Lina Terrell and edited by Robert Huey) and Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, esp. 79–99.

<sup>18</sup> In English, see Bixia Chen, “A Comparative Study on the *Feng Shui* Village Landscape and *Feng Shui* Trees in East Asia: The example of the Ryukyu and Sakishima Islands” (Ph.D. dissertation, Kagoshima University, 2008); in Japanese, see Miura Kunio 三浦國雄. *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji: Chūgoku bunka no hen'en to shite no Okinawa* 風水, 曆, 陰陽師: 中国文化の



As was the case with a certain number of Korean and Vietnamese scholars, Kumemura literati were permitted to study in China, and, if qualified, to take the Chinese civil service examinations.<sup>19</sup> According to some accounts, many, if not most, students and scholar-bureaucrats from Kumemura spent at least a few years of their lives studying in China, at the thriving port of Fuzhou in Fujian province. This meant that at any given time, a hundred or more Kumemura students and scholars resided in Fuzhou. At the Chinese capital, only eight attended the imperial university (國子監), where they were allowed to stay for three years, or up to eight in exceptional circumstances. Although the drop off of tributary trade with China in the 1520s led to a depopulation of Kumemura by c. 1600, later in the century considerable numbers of Ryukyuan relocated there, taking Chinese surnames and encouraging Chinese studies.<sup>20</sup>

From the Tang dynasty through the Ming (1368–1644) Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam participated at least periodically in what has become known as the Chinese tributary system, which reached its fullest development in the period from 1425–1550.<sup>21</sup> This “system,” which was actually a complex set of theories, institutions and rituals relating to foreign relations in the Sinosphere, evolved constantly over time in response not only to different historical conditions but also to different perceptions on the part of the respective participants. In the words of Takeshi Hamashita,

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辺縁としての沖縄 (*Fengshui*, calendars and *yinyang* masters: Okinawa on the margins of Chinese culture) (Okinawa: Yōju Shorin, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> I have no direct evidence on this score in the case of Ryukyuan scholars, but it was certainly true in the case of Korean and Vietnamese scholars. See Rui Wang, *The Chinese Imperial Examination System: An Annotated Bibliography* (Lanham, Maryland, Boulder, Colorado and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 18–19 and 154. For detail on the geomantic content of the examination systems of Koryŏ and Chosŏn Korea, see Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 110 and 115–18.

<sup>20</sup> See Wai-ming Ng, “The Historical Reception of [the] *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 24 (2017): 24–37; see also Barry Steben, “The Transmission of Neo-Confucianism to the Ryukyu (Liuqiu) Islands and Its Historical Significance: Ritual and Rectification of Names in a Bipolar Authority Field,” undated essay, 39–60. URL: <http://chinajapan.org/articles/11.1/11.1steben39-60.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> A vast and somewhat contentious literature has developed around the concept of a tributary system. For summaries, see Guang Ma, “Tributary Ceremony and National Security: A Reassessment of *Wokou* Diplomacy between China and Japan during the Early Ming Dynasty,” *Journal of Asian History*, 51.1 (2017): 27–54; also Richard J. Smith, “Mapping China and the Question of a China-Centered Tributary System 中国の文化地図作成と朝貢制度の問題,” *The Asia Pacific Journal*, 11.3 (January 2013): n.p. URL: <http://apjif.org/2013/11/3/Richard-J.-Smith/3888/article.html> and *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture*, 217–19.

The tributary system was an organic network of relations linking the center [China] and its peripheries, including the provinces and dependencies of the empire, rulers of native tribes and districts, tributary states and even trading partners. This tributary system, broadly understood, constituted the arena in which the states and other entities of southeast, northeast, central and northwest Asia operated and defined their multiple relations with China and other regions of Asia.<sup>22</sup>

It was, in short, a dynamic, fluid and mutually constructed framework for political, economic and cultural interactions.<sup>23</sup>

From a (theoretical) Chinese perspective, tributary relationships were sinocentric and hierarchical, predicated on the assumption of China's cultural superiority. [Figures 1a–e] According to Ming administrative statutes, tributary representatives from Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu islands, and Vietnam were to offer tribute on a regular basis, traveling on prescribed routes, and adhering to specific ritual requirements. In addition, there were many other occasions when foreign countries sent special missions to China.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for example, between 1392 and 1450 alone, the Korean (Chosŏn) court dispatched 391 envoys to China: an average of about seven per year.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, the Chinese court sent

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<sup>22</sup> Takeshi Hamashita, *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 13.

<sup>23</sup> Jaymin Kim's "Asymmetry and Elastic Sovereignty in the Qing Tributary World: Criminals and Refugees in Three Borderlands, 1630s–1840s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2018) provides an extremely useful framework for understanding how the Qing dynasty and three of its tributary states (Korea, Vietnam, Kokand) handled their foreign relations in the years from the 1630s to the 1840s, a process involving "shifting conceptions of boundaries, jurisdictions and sovereignty." See also Kathlene Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> The most comprehensive English-language account of the tributary system from a Chinese theoretical and institutional perspective remains John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, "On the Qing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 6.2 (June 1941): 135–246. For a more up-to-date summary, see David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), esp. chapters 3, 4 and 5.

<sup>25</sup> Donald Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming," in Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, Part 2: 1368–1644 (Cambridge, England: The Cambridge University Press, 1998): 272–300, esp. 279–80. Cf. Jaymin Kim's "Asymmetry and Elastic Sovereignty in the Qing Tributary World," esp. 85–144.

periodic missions to Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom, and Vietnam. All this interaction was intended to facilitate Sino-foreign diplomatic relations and to reinforce Chinese claims of political and cultural hegemony in the region. But mutually beneficial trade was a clear goal as well.<sup>26</sup>

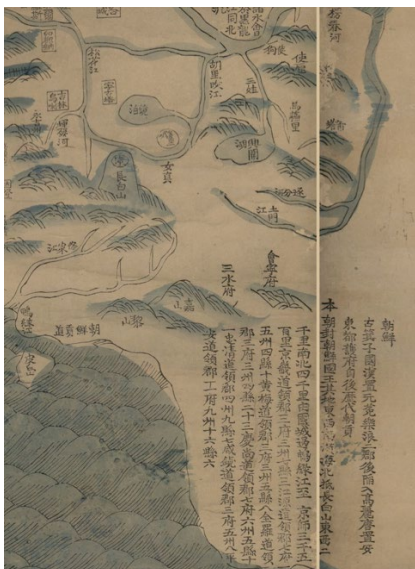


Figure 1a: Detail from the *Da Qing wannian yitong tianxia quantu* (Complete map of all under Heaven, eternally unified by the great Qing; 1811). Note the long inscription to the lower right describing Korea's trade and tributary relationship with China. Other parts of this "map of the world" provide similar descriptions for other "tributaries," including Japan, the Ryukyu Islands and Vietnam. For details, and additional illustrations, see Richard J. Smith, "Mapping China and the Question of a China-Centered Tributary System 中国の文化地図作成と朝貢制度の問題." URL: <https://apjjf.org/2013/11/3/Richard-J.-Smith/3888/article.html>. Source: Library of Congress Map Room

<sup>26</sup> For the larger picture of East Asian trade, see the many useful works by Angela Schottenhammer, including "Characteristics of Qing China's Maritime Trade Politics, Shunzhi through Early Qianlong Reigns," in Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *Trading Networks in Early Modern East Asia* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2010): 101–54; "Japan—the Tiny Dwarf? Sino-Japanese Relations from the Kangxi to the Early Qianlong Reigns," in Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The East Asian Mediterranean-Maritime Crossroads of Culture, Commerce, and Human Migration* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2008): 331–388; "The 'China Seas' in World History: A General Outline of the Role of Chinese and East Asian Maritime Space from Its Origins to c. 1800," *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 1 (2012): 63–86; "Empire and Periphery? The Qing Empire's Relations with Japan and the Ryukyus (1644–c. 1800), a Comparison," *The Medieval History Journal*, 16.1 (2013): 139–196. See also Pin-tsun Chang, "The Rise of Chinese Mercantile Power in Maritime Southeast Asia, c. 1400–1700," *Crossroads: Studies on the History of Exchange Relations in the East Asian World*, 6 (2012): 205–230.



Figure 1b: Representation of a Vietnamese “barbarian official” and his wife in the *Huang Qing zhi Gong tu* 皇清職貢圖 (Illustrations of the tribute-bearing peoples of the imperial Qing [dynasty]; 1761). The preface to this compilation emphasizes that “within and without the empire united under our dynasty, the barbarian tribes have submitted their allegiance and turned toward [Chinese] civilization [*xianghua* 向化].” Source: *Huang Qing zhi Gong tu* (1761)



Figure 1c: Representation of an English man and woman “barbarian” in the *Huang Qing zhi Gong tu*. Source: *Huang Qing zhi Gong tu* (1761). Like Vietnam and dozens of other foreign countries, England was considered to be a “tributary” of China, despite its failure, from a Chinese standpoint, to participate fully in the Chinese tributary system.



Figure 1d: At almost exactly the same time that the *Huang Qing zhigong tu* appeared in print (1761), two of the emperor's court painters produced a beautifully executed work titled "Illustration of the Myriad [Tributary] States Coming to Court" (*Wanguo laichao tu* 萬國來朝圖), which depicted representatives from dozens of countries in East Asia and the West, all gathered together with their "local products" in the Forbidden City under the watchful eye of Qing officials. Source: R.J. Smith, "Mapping China and the Question of a China-Centered Tributary System."



Figure 1e: Detail from Figure 1d above.

One explicitly economic device employed by the Ming government was its issuance of certificates called *kanhe* (勘合), which enabled members of tributary

missions to travel and trade within the boundaries of China. In the period from 1401 to 1547 at least twenty Japanese trade missions traveled to China, most of which involved the use of *kanhe*. Significantly, and contrary to some enduring stereotypes about tributary relationships in East Asia, exchanges were not simply a matter of acquiring exotic items. On many occasions China requested particular items, such as sulfur and precious metals from Japan and other practical commodities from Korea and Vietnam. On one occasion, China requested and received 10,000 horses as tribute from the Koreans at a difficult historical moment.<sup>27</sup>

What East Asians prized most about tribute trade, were return gifts from the Chinese emperor, including books. In a seminal article titled “Sino-Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming,” Donald C. Clark writes:

Chinese books were probably the item that had the widest influence in Korea. Korean embassies always brought back editions of the Chinese classics with commentaries, as well as treatises, histories, and other literature of all kinds— all of which could be reprinted and disseminated in Korea. Books were also the means by which new institutions were transmitted from China to Korea during the early Ming period. [ . . . ] Although the Koreans naturally adapted Chinese ideas and institutions to their own environment, the tribute trade was of unparalleled importance as a channel for cultural influence as well as commerce.<sup>28</sup>

We can be reasonably certain that at least some works on geomancy were among those either given to or sold to representatives from various countries in the Sinosphere.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Clark, “Sino-Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming,” 278. Cf. Akira Matsuura, “Imports and Exports of Books by Chinese Junks in the Edo Period,” in Keiko Nagase-Reimer, ed., *Copper in the Early Modern Sino-Japanese Trade* (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 175–195.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 281–82.

<sup>29</sup> See Matthias Hayek, “From Esoteric Tools to Handbooks ‘for Beginners’: Printed Divination Books from the Seventeenth Century to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century,” in Matthias Hayek and Annick Horiuchi, eds. *Listen, Copy, Read: Popular Learning in Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill 2014): 288–318.

During the Qing period, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam continued to offer tribute on a regular basis, but Japan did not.<sup>30</sup> The reason was that from the mid-1630s until the late 1850s, the Tokugawa policy of exclusion (retrospectively called *sakoku* 鎖國 from the mid-nineteenth century onward, and also known as maritime interdiction *kaikin* 海禁), prevented Japanese subjects from going abroad.<sup>31</sup> This was the most dramatic example of the gap that emerged between the Chinese theory of tributary relations and actual practice, but it was by no means the only one.<sup>32</sup> The Koreans, Ryukyu islanders and Vietnamese generally abided by the ritual requirements of the Qing dynasties, but they—like the Chinese themselves—made all sorts of pragmatic adjustments as changing political and military circumstances dictated.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the Ryukyu kingdom continued to send regular tribute to China throughout the Qing period, even as it also offered tribute to the Satsuma domain in Japan.<sup>34</sup>

In part because of the gap between theory and practice in China's tributary relationships, Peter Perdue has suggested that the most productive way to view tribute is as discourse—that is, as an “intercultural language,” which was employed by each participating regime for its own political, economic, diplomatic and cultural purposes.”<sup>35</sup> But whether viewed as part of a functioning system or as part of a discourse, tribute had

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<sup>30</sup> See Zhang Shiming, “A Historical and Jurisprudential Analysis of Suzerain-Vassal State Relationships in the Qing Dynasty,” *Frontiers in History in China* (2006) 1:124–157. Cf. Bongjin Kim, “Rethinking the Pre-Modern East Asian Region Order,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 2.2 (2002): 67–101.

<sup>31</sup> Chinese merchants could, however, visit Nagasaki, a trading port located in northern Kyushu. See Norihito Mizuno, “China in Tokugawa Foreign Relations: The Tokugawa Bakufu's Perception of and Attitudes toward Ming-Qing China,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 15 (April 2003): 108–144.

<sup>32</sup> For articles focusing on the primary institutions by which the Qing dynasty conducted its foreign affairs, see Dittmar Schorkowitz, ed. *Managing Frontiers in Qing China: The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, John E. Wills, “Functional, Not Fossilized: Qing Tribute Relations with Dai Viet (Vietnam) and Siam (Thailand), 1700–1820,” *T'oung Pao* 98 (2012) 439–478; Song Nianshen, “‘Tributary’ from a Multilateral and Multilayered Perspective,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5.2 (June 2012): 155–182; Jeong Mi Lee, “Cultural Expressions of Tokugawa Japan and Chosŏn Korea: An Analysis of the Korean Embassies in the Eighteenth Century.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> See Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, esp. 34–42 and Akamine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom*: 18–32 passim.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Perdue, “A Frontier View of Chineseness,” in Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita and Mark Selden, eds., *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 51–77, esp. 67.

meaning only in specific instances, and then only in the eye of the respective beholders. In any case, envoys from tributary states were cultural emissaries par excellence. In the first place, they brought items of value to the Chinese, and came away with items of value to themselves—including books and other documents. Second, they engaged in “conversations” with the Chinese, exchanging poems, ideas and cultural artifacts. Classical Chinese was extremely well suited for these conversations because, as indicated above, any text written in it could be easily read and appreciated by literate envoys, who could also communicate directly by means of “brush talks” (筆談). The use of the literary Sinitic in this way enabled envoys from various countries in East Asia to communicate easily and efficiently. Liam Kelley and William Pore provide a number of illuminating examples of “conversations” that took place in Beijing, involving intellectuals from three different cultural traditions—Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese.<sup>36</sup> Cross-cultural “conversations” of this sort also involved Japanese and Ryukyu scholars, of course.

As many scholars have noted, trade was a major feature of tributary relations in East Asia—especially during periods when China and/or other countries in the Sinosphere prohibited maritime trade—in fact, for much of the Ming period and for some of the Qing as well.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the Tokugawa era, there were no government-to-government relations between Japan and China, but the absence of diplomatic relations does not mean that there was no communication between the two countries in the Tokugawa times. Quite the contrary. For instance, Chinese merchants were permitted to trade at Nagasaki 長崎市, a thriving port located in northern Kyushu. In 1688, the number of Chinese crew members who came to Nagasaki reached a total of 9,128.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Liam C. Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005 and William F. Pore, “The Inquiring Literatus: Yi Sugwang’s ‘Brush-Talks’ with Phung Khac Khoan in Beijing in 1598,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch* 83 (2008): 1–26.

<sup>37</sup> These policies in Ming and Qing China were designated “maritime interdictions” (*haijin* 海禁).

<sup>38</sup> See Ōba Osamu’s 大庭修, *Edo jidai no Nit-Chū hiwa* 江戸時代の日中秘話 (A record of Sino-Japanese relations in the Edo period) (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten 東方書店, 1980). Joshua Fogel has translated this book in eleven parts in the journal *Sino-Japanese Studies*—part 1, 8.1 (October 1995): 40–52; part 2, 8.2 (May 1996): 50–61; part 3, 9.1 (October 1996): 56–74; part 4, 9.2 (April 1997): 3–12; part 5, 10.1 (October 1997): 33–55; part 6, 10.2 (April 1998): 43–59; part 7, 11.1 (October 1998): 21–38; part 8, 11.2 (May 1999): 50–68; part 9, 12.1 (November 1999): 47–64; part 10, 12.2 (April 2000): 51–64; part 11, 13.1 (October 2000): 34–53. A Chinese edition of



Chinese merchants were also able to conduct indirect trade with the domain of Satsuma in southern Kyushu, since Satsuma had conquered the kingdom of Ryukyu in 1609 and thereafter controlled most of its commerce. Tokugawa diplomatic and commercial relations with Korea, conducted mainly through the Japanese island of Tsushima 對馬島 (about equidistant from Kyushu and the Korean mainland), also gave the Japanese opportunities to make contact with China.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Vietnam participated in a triangular trade involving China and Japan.<sup>40</sup>

Through these and other mechanisms, the countries of East Asia were able to buy and exchange all sorts of commodities.<sup>41</sup> In 1688, for example, more than 190 ships arrived in Nagasaki, the vast majority from Chinese ports such as Fuzhou, Ningbo, Xiamen, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and so forth. The provincial distribution of these ships was: 86 from Fujian, 40 from Zhejiang, 30 from Guangdong, 23 from Jiangsu, and 14 from areas to the south of China—including Malacca, Siam, and Annam (Vietnam).<sup>42</sup> For our purposes, the key commodity was books.<sup>43</sup> Wang Yong 王勇, Ōba

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Oba's work was published in Beijing by the Zhonghuan shuju 中華書局 in 1997. For the figure of Chinese crew members, see Ōba, "Sino-Japanese Relations in the Edo Period," part 2, esp., 52.

<sup>39</sup> See Robert Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640–1868* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2010). Cf. Mizuno, "China in Tokugawa Foreign Relations," 108–144; see also Bongjin Kim, "Rethinking the Pre-Modern East Asian Region Order," esp. 87–88. According to Kim, "throughout the Tokugawa period the *bakufu* was obliged to transact its business either through the visiting Korean emissaries in Edo or through Tsushima, whose daimyo (hereditary lord) was designated as the shogun's agent in the management of Korean affairs."

<sup>40</sup> Tana Li, "The Imported Book Trade and Confucian Learning in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Vietnam," in Michael Arthur Aung-Thwin and Kenneth R. Hall, eds., *New Perspectives on the History and Historiography of Southeast Asia Continuing Explorations* (London: Routledge, 2011): 167–82.

<sup>41</sup> For some recent scholarly work bearing on this topic, see Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684-1757* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), Ronald C. Po, "Mapping Maritime Power and Control: A Study of the Late Eighteenth Century *Qisheng yanhai tu* (A coastal map of the seven provinces)," *Late Imperial China* 37.2 (2016): 93–136, and esp. Ronald C. Po, *The Blue Frontier: Maritime Vision and Power in the Qing Empire* (Cambridge, England and London: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> Ōba, "Sino-Japanese Relations in the Edo Period," part 2, 57.

<sup>43</sup> For an illuminating case study of book culture in Japan, see Konta Yōzō 今田洋三, *Edo no hon'yasan: kinsei bunkashi no sokumen* 江戸の本屋さん: 近世文化史の側面 (Bookstores of Edo: Aspects of [Japan's] modern cultural history) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009); also Laura Moretti, "The Japanese Early Modern Publishing Market Unveiled: A Survey of Edo-Period Booksellers' Catalogues," *East Asian Publishing and Society* 2 (2012): 199–308.

Osamu 大庭修 and others have written insightfully about an East Asian “Book Route” 書籍之路 (more properly Routes), analogous to the idea of a “Silk Route” (again, more properly Routes) that facilitated the circulation and recirculation of texts and ideas.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, it has proven difficult for me to identify the ways that specific works on geomancy moved from one part of the Sinosphere to another. The inventories of books that I have seen emphasize, for the most part, prestigious works. For example, in a representative shipment of 86 titles brought in 44 crates to Nagasaki in 1711, most of the books were collections of or about literature, of or about the Chinese classics (four were works on the *Yijing*), or studies of philosophy and history. Other inventoried books were on calendrical science, medicine, encyclopedias, genealogies, gazetteers, etc.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Wang Yong 王勇, ed. *Zhong Ri “shuji zhi lu” yanjiu* 中日書籍之路研究 (Research on the Sino-Japanese “Book Route”), Beijing: Beijing Tushuguan chubanshe, 2003; see also Osamu Ōba 大庭修, *Edo jidai ni okeru Tōsen mochiwatarisho no kenkyū* 江戸時代における唐船持渡書の研究 (A study of the importation of books by Chinese ships in the Tokugawa period (Suita: Kansai daigaku tōzai gakujutsu kenkyūjo, 1967). A version of this book appeared in English as *Books and Boats: Sino-Japanese Relations in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Portland, Maine: Merwin Asia, 2012), translated by Joshua A. Fogel. Another valuable English-language study of the book trade is Akira Matsuura, “Imports and Exports of Books by Chinese Junks in the Edo Period.” It is well to remember, however, that ship inventories are not the only measure of the popularity of certain books. For example, Matsuura, “Imports and Exports of Books by Chinese Junks in the Edo Period,” 175–76 suggests that, based on book manifests, the *Yijing* (易經) was less popular than certain other Chinese classics, and yet we know from other evidence that Tokugawa scholars gave unprecedented attention to the *Changes*. See Wai-ming Ng, *The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 22–34, and “The Hollyhock and the Hexagrams: The *I Ching* in Tokugawa Thought and Culture” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1996), esp. 30–36.

<sup>45</sup> Ōba, “Sino-Japanese Relations in the Edo Period,” part 5, esp. 41–43. For a few useful works on the spread and circulation of literary Sinitic texts in East Asia, see the previous two notes and Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄, *Nihon Shushigaku to Chōsen* 日本朱子学と朝鮮 (Japanese Zhu Xi scholarship and Korea) Tokyo: Daigaku Shuppankai, 1965; Cai Yi 蔡毅. *Zhongguo chuantong wenhua zai Riben* 中國傳統文化在日本 (China’s traditional culture in Japan) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002); Dai Ruikun 戴瑞坤, “Zhuzi xue dui Zhong, Ri, Han di yingxiang” 朱子學對中,日,韓的影響 (The influence of Zhu Xi’s learning on China, Japan and Korea), *Fengjia renwen shehuo xuebao* 逢甲人文社會學報 1 (November 2000): 95–115; Wu Weiming [Benjamin Wai-ming Ng] 吳偉明, *Dong Ya yixue shilun: Yijing Ri, Han, Yue, Liu chuanbo yu yingxiang* 東亞易學史論:周易日韓越琉的傳播與影響 (The spread and influence of the *Changes* scholarship in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and the Liuqiu [Ryukyu] Kingdom) (Taipei: Taida chuban zhongxin, 2017); Yang Hongsheng 楊宏聲, *Bentu yu yuwai: Yixue di xiandaihua yu shijiehua* 本土與域外: 易學的現代化與世界化 (The native land and beyond: The modernization and globalization of *Changes* studies) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan, 1995). In English, see, for example, Yoshio Abe, “Development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan, Korea, and China,”

Among the Chinese encyclopedias that found their way to Edo Japan were a version of the massive *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 and a large number of popular encyclopedias of daily use, including the *Wanbao quanshu* 萬寶全書—both of which, as discussed earlier, contain substantial sections on geomancy.<sup>46</sup> Some editions of the *Wanbao quanshu* were preserved in their original formats, but others were transformed into *wakokuhon* 和刻本 (Chinese texts marked with Japanese grammatical notes, annotated in Japanese, and published by Japanese bookstores). Still others were integrated selectively into distinctively Japanese genres such as *Chōhōki* 重寶記 (Treasures of knowledge) and the very broad category known as *Nichiyō jiten* 日用事典 (Encyclopedias of daily use).<sup>47</sup>

In short, by one means or another—territorial occupation, early missions of self-conscious borrowing (especially during the Tang dynasty), state sponsorship of geomantically oriented theories and practices, tributary channels, direct trade, indirect trade and personal relationships—books on geomancy written by Chinese authors found their way to Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu islands and Vietnam, where they inspired

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*Acta Asiatica* 19 (1970): 16–39; Rutgers University, ed. *East Asian Confucianism: Interactions and Innovations*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Confucius Institute, 2010; Huang, Chun-chieh. *East Asian Confucianisms: Texts in Contents*. Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2015; Chang, Wonsuk and Leah Kalmanson, eds., *Confucianism in Context: Classic Philosophy and Contemporary Issues, East Asia and Beyond*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010; Tana Li, “The Imported Book Trade and Confucian Learning in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Vietnam.”

<sup>46</sup> See Ōba, part 5 of “Sino-Japanese Relations in the Edo Period,” esp. 41–43 and Ōba, part 7 of “Sino-Japanese Relations in the Edo Period,” esp. 32–34. On the content of the TSJC and encyclopedias of daily use like the *Wanbao quanshu*, see R. Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture*, 309–10 and 419–23.

<sup>47</sup> On the role of popular encyclopedias in Japan, see Michael Kinski, “Treasure Boxes, Fabrics, and Mirrors: On the Contents and the Classification of Popular Encyclopedias from Early Modern Japan,” in Hayek and Horiuchi, eds., *Listen, Copy, Read*, 70–88, Toshio Yokoyama, “Even a Sardine’s Head Becomes Holy: The Role of Household Encyclopedias in Sustaining Civilisation in Pre-industrial Japan,” *Sansai: An Environmental Journal for the Global Community* 1 (2006): 41–57. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2433/108259>, and Joan Judge, “Myriad Treasures and One-Hundred Sciences: Vernacular Chinese and Encyclopedic Japanese Knowledge at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” forthcoming in Qian, Smith and Zhang, eds., *Reconsidering the Sinosphere: Cultural Transmissions and Transformations*. I am also grateful to Kuei-ju Lin for sharing with me her as-yet-unpublished paper, “The transmission of *Wanbao Quanshu* 萬寶全書 in Edo Japan.”

indigenous responses ranging from mechanical imitation to creative transformation and innovation.

## B. Chinese-Style Geomancy and Its Variations

Given the long and rich tradition of geomancy in China, it is hardly surprising that its theories and practices took firm hold in the rest of East Asia. Nor is it surprising that the countries that embraced them most ardently and tenaciously had the longest sustained contact with China and were closest to China in culture—namely Korea and Vietnam. Chinese traditions of geomancy were less popular in Japan, for reasons that will be discussed below, but, somewhat surprisingly, despite the Ryukyu kingdom’s physical proximity and political subordination to the Satsuma domain since 1609, the approach to geomancy in the island kingdom seems to have been closer to China’s, Korea’s and Vietnam’s than to Japan’s.<sup>48</sup>

### *Some Common Denominators in East Asian Geomancy*

Throughout the Sinosphere, a Chinese-style cosmology prevailed among all classes of society—one that was not only expressed in shared divinatory (and medical) theories and practices, but also reinforced by various state-sponsored and popular rituals.<sup>49</sup> Everyone in East Asia believed that there were correlations and mutual resonances (感應) that operated within the interconnected realms of Heaven, Earth and Man, and that certain cosmological factors affected the health and destiny of human beings. There was thus a shared “grammar” in much of East Asian cosmological discourse, a common ground of cultural beliefs and understandings. To be sure, there

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<sup>48</sup> For a somewhat different and more detailed approach than mine here, see Watanabe Yoshio 渡邊欣雄, *Fūsui shisō to Higashi Ajia* 風水思想と東アジア (Geomancy and East Asia) (Kyōto: Jinbutsu shoin, 1990). Cf. Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 101–129.

<sup>49</sup> These theories and practices were guided by ritual specialists and communicated by means of scholarly tracts, specialized handbooks, and popular publications such as encyclopedias almanacs (通書, 曆書, etc.). On the ubiquity of almanacs in the Ming-Qing period, see R. Smith, “The Legacy of Daybooks,” 336–72.

were intense scholarly debates about the nature of “fate” and the relative importance or priority of philosophical concepts such as principle (*li*) and material force (*qi*), as well as differing opinions about certain cosmologically oriented theories connected to classic works such as the *Yijing*.<sup>50</sup> But the scriptural authority of the *Changes* itself was unchallenged in all of these societies, and it remained the theoretical foundation for nearly every major form of divination, including geomancy. There was also a widely shared acceptance throughout the Sinosphere of the major cosmological variables connected with *fengshui*, including *yin* and *yang*, *shen* and *gui*, the four directional animals, the five agents, the eight trigrams, the nine stars and palaces, the ten heavenly stems, the twelve earthly branches, the twenty-four directions, the twenty-eight lodges, the sixty-four hexagrams, and dozens of evil and benevolent star-spirits.<sup>51</sup>

For many centuries, Chinese-style divination—in such familiar and often overlapping forms as aeromancy (predictions based on weather), astrology, cleromancy (the drawing of lots, including various *Yijing*-related mantic techniques), chronomancy (the determination of auspicious and inauspicious times and directions), geomancy, glyphomancy (the dissection and analysis of written characters), horoscopy, numerology, onieromancy (predictions based on dreams) and physiognomy—was a central feature of elite and popular culture in premodern Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and strong vestiges of these mantic beliefs and practices are still evident to this day.<sup>52</sup> Not surprisingly, many of these divinatory techniques bore directly on the temporal and spatial concerns of *fengshui*—including not only astrology, chronomancy, and a wide variety of trigram- and hexagram-based methods, but also eight-character horoscopy and numerological techniques such as *taiyi* 太乙, *liuren* 六壬 and *qimen dunjia* 奇門遁甲.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> I have discussed these issues at length in *The I Ching: A Biography*, esp. chapter 4. See also Wai-ming Ng, *Dong Ya yixue shilun*, 1–9 and Sun Yiping, *Dong Ya Daojiao yanjiu*, 2–11 and 65–69.

<sup>51</sup> For a convenient summary, see Field, *Ancient Chinese Divination*, passim and Aylward, *The Imperial Guide to Fengshui*, esp. 28–53.

<sup>52</sup> For details on these and other Chinese-style mantic methods, see R. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers* and “Divination in Late Imperial China.” See also note 51 above the excellent articles in Michael Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia* (Leiden and London: Brill, 2018).

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed English-language discussion of these techniques in China, see Peng Yoke Ho, *Chinese Mathematical Astrology: Reaching Out to the Stars* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). For discussions of these and related techniques in other parts of East Asia, see the essays in

We can also find abundant evidence for the interplay of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist (and, in the case of Japan, Shintoist) beliefs and practices in the major divinatory traditions of the Sinosphere.<sup>54</sup>

From the standpoint of geomancy in particular, siting specialists in post-1600 Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam not only drew upon the same set of cosmological variables, but they also (with the partial exception of Japan, to be discussed below) employed many of the same technical terms for landforms, such as “mountain dragons” (山龍), water dragons (水龍), water routes (水路), confluences of water (水口), staff patterns (杖法), veins (脈), hollows (窩), flanking features (砂), lairs (穴), noxious winds (風煞), “secret arrows” (暗箭), stabilizing devices (鎮物), “*fengshui* forests” (風水林), etc.<sup>55</sup> In addition, they all consulted cosmologically oriented diagrams, including the Former Heaven and Later Heaven configurations of the eight trigrams as well as the Yellow River Chart and the Luo River Writing. In the case of Korea, Japan, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam, Chinese-style visual models were often employed to depict auspicious and inauspicious locations—not only generic ones but also ones particular to a given society.<sup>56</sup> At times, however, different cultures used different terms for the same

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Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*; Wai-ming Ng, *Dong Ya yixue shilun*; Miura Kunio, “Onmyōdō Divination Techniques and Daoism,” esp. 90 ff.; Matthais Hayek, “Correlating Time within One’s Hand: The Use of Temporal Parameters in Early Modern Japanese ‘Chronomancy’ Techniques,” in Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*, 530–58; Matthias Hayek, “Les manuels de divination japonais au début de l’époque d’Edo (xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle): décloisonnement, compilation et vulgarization,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 35 (2013): 83–112, and Alexei Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 35 (2013): 113–40. Both of the last two articles are available at <http://journals.openedition.org/extremeorient/270>.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Sun Yiping, *Dong Ya Daojiao yanjiu*, esp. 44–51, 244–67, 308–13, 417–73, 485–517, 506–23, 651–80, 751–72, and 864 ff.; see also Dan Shichuang 詹石窗, *Daojiao fengshui xue* 道教風水學 (The study of Daoist geomancy) (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994), and Masuo Shin’ichirō 增尾伸一郎 and Joseph P. Elacqua, “Chinese Religion and the Formation of Onmyōdō,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 40.1 (2013): 19–43.

<sup>55</sup> For examples of these and other commonly used geomantic terms, see Carole Morgan “A Short Glossary of Geomantic Terms;” Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy* (1974 or 2002); Aylward, *The Imperial Guide to Fengshui*; Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, chapters 5–9; Yoon, ed., *passim*. Not all of the landforms mentioned here were important for Japanese siting specialists, as will be discussed below.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Nishioka Yoshifumi 西岡芳文, “Aspects of *Shikiban*-Based Mikkyō Rituals,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 21 (2012): 137–162.

techniques, masking similarities. For example, the selection of auspicious days and times commonly known in China as *zeri* 擇日 or *xuanri* 選日 came to be collectively referred to as *rekisen* 曆占 (calendrical divination) in seventeenth century Japan, if not before.

Professional specialists in siting operated at levels of East Asian society and government, from royal courts and state bureaucracies to rural villages and lineage groups, and their activities were explicitly recognized in Chinese-style legal codes and regulations. In China, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam, such practitioners were commonly referred to as “geomancy masters” (風水先生, 風水師, 地理師 or 地理先生)—although they were also sometimes designated *yin-yang* specialists (陰陽先生 or 陰陽師). In Japan, a particular class of specialists in astrology, numerology, weather prediction, siting, calendrics, and the selection of auspicious and inauspicious times emerged in the early Heian period. These individuals were almost always known as *yinyang* masters (*onmyōji* 陰陽師), rather than *fengshui* masters, and they were initially connected directly to the Royal Bureau of *Yin* and *Yang* (Onmyōryō).

Although from an institutional standpoint *onmyōji* were unique to Japan, many of their divinatory activities drew substantially from Chinese mantic traditions.<sup>57</sup> As one of many examples, a widely distributed divination manual, allegedly written by the most famous of all *onmyōji*—Abe no Seimei 安倍晴明 (921–1005), a renowned Japanese specialist in various magical and mantic practices, including geomancy—provides an excellent example of his major cosmological concerns. The basic contents of this manual, titled *Senji Ryakketsu* 占事略決 (Summary judgments of divinations), would be familiar to anyone in China, Korea, the Ryukyus and Vietnam who understood the popular divination Chinese system known as *liuren* 六壬. This method of calculation, as Abe’s

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<sup>57</sup> See the following works by Matthias Hayek: “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes: An Inquiry into Japanese Early Modern Divination,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 38.2: 329–68; Matthias Hayek, The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes: Divination in Early Modern Japan, in Richey, ed., *Daoism in Japan*, 209–47; “Correcting the Old, Adapting the New: Baba Nobutake and the (Relative) Rejuvenation of Divination in the Seventeenth Century,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40.1 (2013): 169–188; “Les manuels de divination japonais au début de l’époque d’Edo (xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle): décloisonnement, compilation et vulgarization,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 35 (2013): 83–112; “Correlating Time within One’s Hand: The Use of Temporal Parameters in Early Modern Japanese ‘Chronomancy’ Techniques,” in Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*.

handbook indicates, places special emphasis on cosmic variables such as *yin* and *yang*, the five agents, the ten stems and twelve branches, the twenty-eight lodges, hexagrams, and so forth. As anyone conversant with *Liuren* techniques would have been well aware, these methods were particularly well suited for determining auspicious and inauspicious times and directions, for finding lost or stolen objects (including domestic animals), and for divining about weather, illness, birth, and human relationships. Naturally these methods also had geomantic applications.<sup>58</sup> [Figures 2a–c]

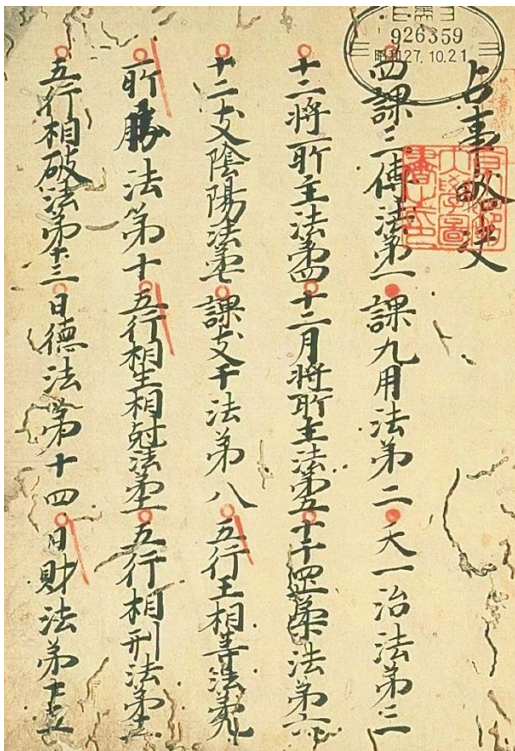


Figure 2a: A partial table of contents for Abe no Seimei's *Senji Ryakketsu* (Summary judgments of divinations). Most of these categories reflect *Liuren*-style calculations involving interactions between the five agents, the twelve heavenly stems, the “twelve divine generals” (十二天將), etc. Source: Kyoto Digital Library exhibit of the *Senji Ryakketsu*: <https://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/s100/image/1/s10010003.html>

<sup>58</sup> See Kosaka Shinji 小坂真二, *Abe no Seimei sen senji ryakketsu to onmyōdō* 安倍晴明撰占事略決と陰陽道 (Summary judgments of divinations by Abe no Seimei and the Way of Yin and Yang) (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2004). See also Nishioka Yoshifumi 西岡芳文. “Rikujin shikisen to konrō no miura” 六壬式占と軒廊御卜 (*Liuren shi* divination and the imperial ceremony known as *konrō no miura*), in Imatani Akira 今谷明, ed., *Ōken to jingi* 王権と神祇 (Royal power and the gods) (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2002): 79–103. For an excellent English-language discussion of *Liuren* divinatory techniques, see Peng Yoke Ho, *Chinese Mathematical Astrology*, 113–138.



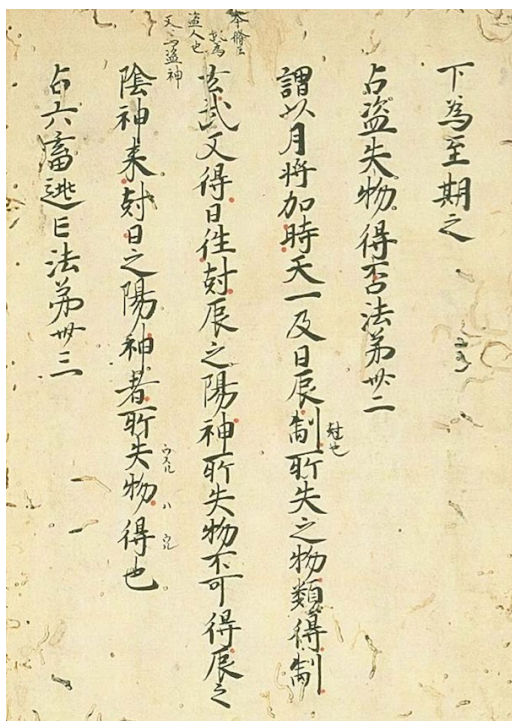


Figure 2b: Section on divining about the location of stolen and lost items. Source: Kyoto Digital Library exhibit of the *Senji Ryakketsu*

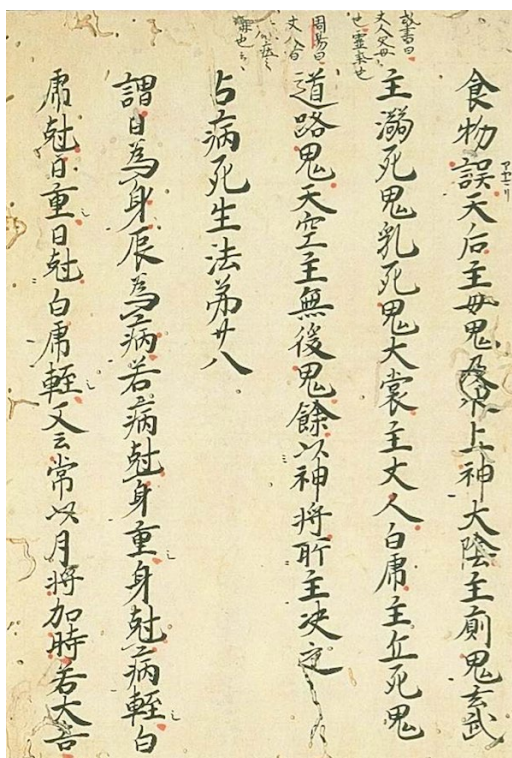


Figure 2c: Section on divining about illness and matters of life and death. Source: Kyoto Digital Library exhibit of the *Senji Ryakketsu*

Geomancy played a particularly significant role in Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910), where *fengshui* (Korean: *p'ungsu*) was, in the words of a leading authority, “one of the most important elements regulating the cultural behavior of Koreans.”<sup>59</sup> It was also extremely influential in the Ryukyu kingdom (1429–1879) and in late Lê (1428–1789) and early Nguyễn (1802–1945) dynasty Vietnam, although documentation is less ample for these two societies than for Korea or Japan.<sup>60</sup> In the case of Tokugawa Japan (1603–1868), identifying auspicious locations was also vitally important, but, as we shall see—in sharp contrast to China, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam—finding auspicious sites for the living (陽宅) in Japan proved to be much more prevalent than determining auspicious sites for the deceased (陰宅).<sup>61</sup> Hence, the well-developed Japanese form of Chinese-style siting known in Japan as *kasō* 家相 or “residential divination” (also known as “domestic geomancy,” “household divination,” etc.; see below).

That said, it should be evident, as we have seen in the case of China, that no East Asian government or social group could afford to overlook geomantic considerations in the location of buildings, settlements, and cities—including royal capitals: Beijing and Nanjing in China, Seoul and Kaesong in Korea, Nara and Kyoto in Japan, and Hue and Hanoi in Vietnam.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, all cultures in the Sinosphere were highly attuned to the need for protective deities to be stationed at critical locations, where, for instance, there were “directional taboos” (方忌) related to the presence of threatening star-spirits—notably the infamous calendrical spirit known as the “Great General” (大將軍).<sup>63</sup> These deities had to be propitiated by rituals, and honored by the building of shrines, temples and other monuments. Thus we find, for example, that throughout Tokugawa Japan, important sites and communication routes that might be threatened by “road blocking

<sup>59</sup> Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> See Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam” and Momoki Shiro, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam,” esp. 133–38.

<sup>61</sup> The generic terms 陽宅 (Chinese: *yangzhai*) and 陰宅 (Chinese: *yinzhai*) were commonly used throughout premodern East Asia.

<sup>62</sup> Hong-key Yoon, “Human Modification of Korean Landforms for Geomantic Purposes,” *Geographical Review* (April 2011) 101.2: 243–60, esp. 244. Cf. Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 217–29. See also Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature and the Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), esp. 144–52.

<sup>63</sup> See Bernard Faure, “The God Daishōgun: From Calendar to Cult,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 21 (2012): 201–221.

deities” were protected by devices such as “*shōgun* mounds” (將軍塚) and “crossroad deities” (*dōsojin* 道祖神), also known as “gods of the borders” (*sai no kami* 塞の神). People even invoked the name of the Great General (Daishōgun, in Japanese) to assure good fortune when they erected a building or dug a well.<sup>64</sup> [Figure 3a–b]



Figure 3a: Temple of the Great General (Daishōgun) Spirit, Kyoto. Source: Wikimedia Commons

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 208 and 214. See also Gregory Smits, “Conduits of Power: What the Origins of Japan’s Earthquake Catfish Reveal about Religious Geography,” *Japan Review* 24 (2012): 41–65.



Figure 3b: Statue of the Great General at his temple in Kyoto. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Siting specialists in Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam used many of the same books, manuals and other written resources (including almanacs, encyclopedias and calendrical works) in carrying out their responsibilities. Some such works were attributed to ancient Chinese culture heroes, such as the *Huangdi zhaijing* 黃帝宅經 (Yellow Emperor's siting classic).<sup>65</sup> Others were written by historically verifiable Chinese authors, including several of the individuals discussed earlier in this article, such as Guan Lu, Guo Pu, Xiao Ji, Yang Yunsong, Xu Shanji/Xu Shanshu, and Jiang Bingjie.<sup>66</sup> Most of these geomantic handbooks relied heavily on illustrations and charts, mnemonic devices (especially songs and chants), and sometimes poetry or rhyme prose

<sup>65</sup> For information on other widely influential Chinese *fengshui* classics, see the documents and discussions in Michael J. Paton, *Five Classics of Fengshui*.

<sup>66</sup> The *Huangdi zhaijing* was assuredly not written by the mythical "Yellow Emperor," but there is no agreement on the actual author. For a convenient summary of the authorship of early Chinese texts on geomancy, see Paton, *Five Classics of Fengshui*, esp. 11–17.

(賦). Not surprisingly, throughout the Sinosphere siting specialists accepted the basic premise, discussed earlier and to be discussed below, that China (especially its Kunlun range 崑崙山) was the fundamental source of geomantic power in East Asia.<sup>67</sup>

In short, siting specialists in Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam accepted all the basic assumptions of Chinese cosmology and divination, and performed all of the major political, social and cultural functions that have been described in previous sections of this article. As in China, they gave advice on propitious times and places for construction; they emphasized the need for moral behavior on behalf of their clients; and they attempted, whenever necessary, to improve the geomantic fortunes of a given area by means of charms, spells, religious structures (such as pagodas) and other devices, such as stones that “dare to resist [evil influences]” (石敢當).<sup>68</sup> They also invited criticism for misleading people, creating social tensions, and provoking lawsuits. In addition, geomantic specialists periodically found themselves in conflict with other religious and mantic specialists—including Buddhist, Daoist and Shinto clergy members, spirit mediums and so forth. Not surprisingly, *fengshui* masters were often lampooned in popular plays and literature.<sup>69</sup>

### *Variations*

In considering the differences between the geomantic traditions of China, Japan, Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom and Vietnam in the period from c. 1600–1900, we should keep in mind several points. First, and most obviously, the geography of each culture area

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<sup>67</sup> See Kelly, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia,” 10; cf. Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 172 and Smits, “Conduits of Power,” 54–56.

<sup>68</sup> For the use of such stones in Vietnam, see Ruan Huangyan [Nguyen Hoang Yen] 阮黃燕, “Jianlun Yuenan shigandang inyang” 簡論越南石敢當信仰 (A brief discussion of Vietnamese beliefs about “dare to resist” stones) *Taishan xueyuan xuebao* 泰山學院學報 37.5 (September 2015): 21–25.

<sup>69</sup> As far as I can tell, elite criticisms of geomancy were more prevalent in China and Korea than in other parts of the Sinosphere. One reason might be that *fengshui*-related lawsuits, quarrels and disturbances were particularly common in these two countries. Nonetheless, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that diviners were often the butt of jokes throughout all of East Asia. See for example, Matthias Hayek, “Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan: Redefining Onmyōdō from the Inside,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 21 (2012): 255–274.

differed, from its respective mountains and rivers to its weather and vegetation. Each also had its own network of sacred historical and geographical sites, all with indigenous local and countrywide myths to celebrate them. Second, the cultures under consideration evolved in different ways, producing significantly different political, social, economic and legal institutions over time and across space, not to mention distinctive local traditions and practices regarding such fundamental human issues as death, burial and ancestor veneration. And, as with scholarly fashions, divinatory fashions changed.<sup>70</sup> Third, although the literary Sinitic was the common written medium for elites in Japan, Korea and Vietnam, by 1600 all three societies had developed their own vernacular scripts and literary traditions, which replaced or complemented the literary Sinitic under various circumstances and in certain periods.<sup>71</sup>

Although most works on geomancy in these societies were originally written in Chinese, a number were eventually translated into local vernaculars or otherwise transformed into “new” Chinese-language works.<sup>72</sup> This process of “domestication” often involved the incorporation of national or local stories, culture heroes and traditions, changes in terminology, and even the invention of new divinatory systems under older rubrics.<sup>73</sup> Finally, as indicated in the preliminary remarks to this article, the specific

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<sup>70</sup> For an excellent example of changes in mantic “fashions,” see Matthias Hayek, “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes: Divination in Early Modern Japan,” in Richey, ed., *Daoism in Japan*, 209–47. Similarly, Jiyeon Jang’s “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries” focuses on various diachronic factors that contributed to changes in divinatory theories and practices in Korea.

<sup>71</sup> See the discussions in Qian, Smith and Zhang, eds., *Reconsidering the Sinosphere: Cultural Transmissions and Transformations*, and *Reconsidering the Sinosphere: Ideology, Aesthetics and Identity Formation*.

<sup>72</sup> Hayek, “From Esoteric Tools to Handbooks ‘for Beginners,’” 311 ff. provides excellent examples of how old “Chinese” works were made new in Japan by individuals such as Baba Nobutake 馬場信武 (d. c. 1715). See also Matthias Hayek, “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes: Divination in Early Modern Japan,” in Richey, ed., *Daoism in Japan*, 228 ff. The same processes occurred in Korea and Vietnam to greater or lesser degrees.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Matthias Hayek, L’Invention d’une divination ‘traditionnelle’ aux accents modernes: l’art de juger de l’aspect des demeures de Matsu.ura Kinkaku (début xixe s.),” *Japon Pluriel*, 8 (2010), Arles: Philippe Picquier: 319–27 and Matthias Hayek, “From Esoteric Tools to Handbooks ‘for Beginners,’ 288–318, esp. 308–09. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, documentary resources are more abundant in some cultures than in others, and some are more easily dated. See, in particular, the discussion of extant documentation on divination in pre-modern Vietnam in Alexei Volkov’s “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 35 (2013). Accessible at <http://journals.openedition.org/extremeorient/270>.

historical experiences of each culture group differed dramatically, producing, among other things, complex self-images that might involve admiration for Chinese culture as well as countervailing assertions of cultural distinctiveness and superiority.<sup>74</sup>

### Tokugawa Japan

I begin with Japan because—despite extensive borrowing from China during the period from c. 700–1600, and notwithstanding a sustained interest in Chinese philosophy on the part of educated people for most of Tokugawa era—Japanese society was, on the whole, further removed from Chinese culture than Korea, the Ryukyu kingdom or Vietnam from c. 1600 to 1900. For our purposes, one of the most significant cultural differences was with respect to death rituals and burial customs. During the Edo period, all Japanese people, including Shinto priests, were required to belong to a Buddhist temple of their choosing as part of a temple-membership system (*danka seido* 檀家制度). Each temple kept track of the local population, performed funerals and other death-related rituals, and supervised local cemeteries, sustained primarily by funerary contributions from its members.<sup>75</sup>

As one result, most people had little, if any, say about where the body of given relative might be buried, especially in the case of commoners. Naturally, this meant that there was comparatively little need for Chinese-style geomantic manuals focusing on graves (陰宅). Although under some circumstances cosmological calculations and/or aesthetic considerations might come into play in determining the location or orientation

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<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Kelly, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia,” 20 ff.; Charles Burnett, “East (and South) Asian Traditions in Astrology and Divination as Viewed from the West,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 35 (2013): 285–293; Elman, “Sinophiles and Sinophobes” and “Cultural transfers between Tokugawa Japan and Ch’ing China to 1800,” in Willard J. Peterson, ed. *The Cambridge History of China*, vol 9 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 197–233; and Benjamin Wai-ming Ng, *Dong Ya yixue shilun* and “The China Factor in Tokugawa Culture;” David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth Through the Eighteenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Kenney, “Shinto Funerals in the Edo Period,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 27.3/4 (Fall, 2000): 239–271, 240. See Watanabe Yoshio, *Fūsui shisō to Higashi Ajia*, 50–53 on the comparative weakness of Japanese patriarchal networks as compared to those China and Korea.

of a temple and its cemetery, other factors might be more important in the selection of an “auspicious” gravesite. For example, as temple cemeteries began to spread in urban areas of Japan from the sixteenth century onward, “more and more people wanted their tombs to be as close to the main hall as possible to ensure the ‘guarantee of continual prayer for their spirits after death.’”<sup>76</sup>

Japanese burial customs during the Tokugawa period naturally varied greatly by social class, region and religious outlook.<sup>77</sup> In some areas, people simply disposed of corpses in wilderness areas, without graves or gravestones. In others, a single grave was dug, with a marker reflecting the family’s wealth and/or social status. There was also a practice known as *ryōbosei* 兩墓制 (lit. “dual-grave system”), which involved the establishment of one grave where the body was interred, and another where the family actually paid its respects.<sup>78</sup> For instance, a deceased person might be buried in the cemetery managed by his or her local temple (*bodaiji* 菩提寺) but worshipped in a sacred place such as Mt. Kōya 高野山.<sup>79</sup> [Figure 4]

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<sup>76</sup> Michael M. Rowe, *Bonds of the Dead: Temples, Burial, and the Transformation of Contemporary Buddhism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 162.

<sup>77</sup> See Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Kenney and Edmund T. Gilday, “Mortuary Rites in Japan: Editors’ Introduction,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 27.3/4, (Fall, 2000): 163–178; and Akio Tanigawa, “Excavating Edo’s Cemeteries: Graves as Indicators of Status and Class,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 19.2/3 (June–September 1992): 271–297.

<sup>78</sup> See Shintani Takanori 新谷尚紀, *Ryōbosei to takaikan* 兩墓制と他界観 (The dual grave system and notions of the afterworld), in *Nihon Rekishi Minzoku Sōsho* 日本歴史民俗叢書 (Collection of Japanese history and folklore) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> I am grateful to Matthias Hayek not only for providing this example and for his excellent scholarship on Japanese divination, but also for his valuable answers to my periodic questions. He is, however, in no way responsible for any mistakes I may have made.





Figure 4: Graves at the Buddhist cemetery known as Okunoin 奥の院, located on Mt. Koya. Okunoin is the largest cemetery in Japan, with more than 200,000 tombstones. Source: Wikimedia Commons

In urban areas, as indicated above, the general practice was to bury the deceased in a collective temple gravesite. [Figure 5a–d] Tanigawa Akio’s 谷川章雄 research on cemeteries in Edo reveals several important trends over time: (1) the practice of erecting gravestones (as opposed to burial mounds) spread significantly in the early Tokugawa period; (2) the shapes and sizes of gravestones changed as the number of independent nuclear household units increased after about 1800; and (3) the number of posthumous Buddhist names (*kaimyō* 戒名) inscribed on the same gravestone increased in the late Tokugawa period, giving rise to ancestral graves that accommodated several generations of a single family.



Figure 5a: Tokugawa family graves at Zojo-ji (増上寺), Tokyo. Source: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 5b: Grave of daimyo Asano Naganori 浅野長矩 (1667–1701), whose death provoked the famous event known as the “revenge of the forty-seven rōnin” (四十七士). Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5c: Grave of the Forty-Seven Ronin. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Generally speaking, prior to the changes of the nineteenth century, most of the temple burials in Edo (as many as 80% in some parts of the city) involved cheap, hastily-made coffins (*hayaoke* 早桶); the rest involved various percentages of stone clusters (*ishigumi* 石組), wooden coffins (*mokkan* 木棺), burial jars (*kamekan* 甕棺), cinerary urns (*zōkotsuki* 蔵骨器), and burial pits (*dokō* 土坑) in which bones from cremations were buried.<sup>80</sup> Thus, for most Japanese of the Tokugawa period there were few occasions to apply the kind of grave-oriented geomantic knowledge available in China, Korea, Vietnam and even the Ryukyu kingdom. There were, however, various means by which to protect gravesites and their occupants, including charms and statues of the bodhisattva known as Jizō 地藏 (lit. “storehouse of the earth”), guardian of roads and travelers, and in particular the protector of children—including those who had died prematurely. [Figure 6]

<sup>80</sup> Tanigawa, “Excavating Edo's Cemeteries, 282.



Figure 6: An image of Jizō. Jizō (Chinese: Dizang) is known throughout East Asia as the bodhisattva who helps save sentient beings from the torments of “hell.” Source: Wikimedia Commons

Because most of Japan’s burial customs, family system and legal traditions differed so significantly from China’s, we do not see in Tokugawa times the systematic use of *fengshui* as a tool used by lineages to protect their economic vested interests in the way that lineage leaders did in Ming-Qing China. In sharp contrast to Japan, the post-1500 period witnessed the emergence in China of lineages that were “the hegemonic force in ancestor worship,” and of *fengshui* as “the dominant local discourse of ritual space—even as Neo-Confucianism was enshrined at the highest levels of state orthodoxy.”<sup>81</sup> For this reason, among others, we do not find in Japan the plethora of *fengshui*-related lawsuits that occupied so much time and attention in Korea and China (the jury is still out on the question of geomantic legal disputes in Vietnam and the Ryukyu kingdom).<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ian Miller, “Roots and Branches,” esp. 289. See also *ibid.*, 308 ff. and 339 ff. A similar development occurred in Korea but not Japan, where there was no strong patriarchal network. See Watanabe Yoshio, *Fūsui shisō to Higashi Ajia*, 50–53 and Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 122 ff.

<sup>82</sup> On geomantically related lawsuits in Korea, see Yoon, ed., esp. 344–46.

This is not to say that Japan lacked disputes connected to divination. But the institutional status of siting specialists and related practitioners in Japan differed fundamentally from the rest of East Asia, especially after the royal Yinyang Bureau declined in influence over time. During the Edo period, the powerful Tsuchimikado family 土御門一家 redefined the roles and responsibilities of *onmyōji* 陰陽師, organizing them and licensing through localized status groupings known as *honjo* 本所. At various levels, and in various ways, *onmyōji* who were licensed by the Tsuchimikado family were permitted to engage in divination, participate in Shinto events and intone Shinto prayers, perform rituals designed to assure abundant harvests, purify spaces, exorcize evil spirits and placate gods, activate charms, create calendrical predictions for the year, and play roles in local festivals.<sup>83</sup>

But Tsuchimikado control over *onmyōji* was not officially recognized until 1683 and not extended countrywide until 1791. Even then, not all *onmyōji* were under the Tsuchimikado family's direct control. In addition to "official" *onmyōji* (*kanjin onmyōji* 官人陰陽師), there were also a number of *onmyōdō* practitioners among commoners in "branch villages" (*edamura hyakushō* 枝村百姓). Moreover, other religious specialists undertook divination, including individuals known as *shinshoku* (神職) and *shugenja* (修驗者).<sup>84</sup> The former maintained Shinto shrines and conducted religious ceremonies (although some, perhaps many, performed mantic services), while the latter undertook divination (*bokusen* 卜占), obtained oracles through mediums (*fujutsu* 巫術), offered prayers (*kitō* 祈禱), and performed exorcisms (*chōbuku* 調伏). Another common term in Tokugawa times for a diviner was *urani-shi* 占師. These individuals employed a wide range of mantic practices, from selecting lots, to reading turtle shells, to making

<sup>83</sup> See Hayashi Makoto 林淳 and Dylan Luers, "The Development of Early Modern Onmyōdō," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 40.1 (2013): 151–167, esp. 155–60 and Matthias Hayek, "Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan," 255–274. It should be noted that no single *onmyōji* was authorized to undertake all of these divinatory activities.

<sup>84</sup> See Makoto Hayashi, "Tokugawa-period Disputes between Shugen Organizations and Onmyōji over Rights to Practice Divination." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21 (1994): 167–89. See also Hayek, "Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan," 261–64 and 267–68.

predictions based on trigram correlations.<sup>85</sup> Yet another term for specialists in *Yijing*-related divination was *ekisha* 易者 (lit., “those who employ [methods based on] the *Changes*”).<sup>86</sup> All such individuals were at least theoretically subject to regulation by the Tsuchimikado family, although many undoubtedly operated under the radar.

Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準 has analyzed the varied mantic activities of the *shugenja*, which fell into the following major categories (in addition to the practice of obtaining oracles through spirit mediums): the analysis of auspicious and inauspicious days, *yinyang* divination, the determination of lucky and unlucky directions, and divining a person’s fate by means of either astrological signs or guardian deities based on that person’s birthdate. They combined *yinyang*, five agents, and stem-branch correlations with calculations involving the power of various deities or vengeful spirits and astrological influences.<sup>87</sup>

Naturally, the activities of independent *shugenja* diviners challenged the authority of the Tsuchimikado family, leading to frequent lawsuits. Hayashi Makoto 林淳 has examined several of these legal disputes, at least one of which deserves our brief attention here. In the Fall of 1770, *onmyōji* from the Kantō area lodged a complaint with the Shogunate’s Office of Temples and Shrines (Jisha bugyō 寺社奉行), claiming that *shugenja* diviners were taking business away from the *onmyōji*, who had no other source of livelihood. According to this complaint, during the Tenna years (1681–1684) there had been about fifteen or sixteen hundred *onmyōji* in the eight Kantō regions of Edo, but in a 1766 survey there were only about twenty *onmyōji* left in the city. In 1771, the Office of Temples and Shrines reprimanded the Shugen organization for performing divination for

<sup>85</sup> For details, see Matthias Hayek, “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes,” 329–368; also William Fairchild, “Shamanism in Japan,” *Folklore Studies* 21 (1962): 1–122, esp. 59. Ishikawa Ichirō 石川一郎, *Edo bungaku zokushin jiten* 江戸文學俗信辭典 (A dictionary of folk beliefs in Edo literature) (Tōkyō: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1989) provides a rich source of information on Japanese divinatory terminology in the Tokugawa period.

<sup>86</sup> According to Ng, *The I Ching*, 45–47, there were more than one thousand *ekisha* in Edo and one in every village throughout the country.

<sup>87</sup> Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, “Religious Rituals in Shugendō: A Summary,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16.2-3 (1989): 101–116. Cf. Audrius Beinorius, “On the Religious and Cultural Aspects of Divination in Japanese Society,” *Orientalistika, Latvijas Universitāte* (2016): 84–109. URL: [https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/lu\\_portal/apgads/izdevumi/LU\\_Raksti/813/09-raksts.pdf](https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/apgads/izdevumi/LU_Raksti/813/09-raksts.pdf).

payment (*baiboku* 賣卜), but its members were not forbidden from divining in private if it did not involve any compensation.<sup>88</sup> The Kantō *onmyōji* protested that divination was divination, whether it was done for compensation or not, but to no avail. On the whole, however, the Shogunate upheld the authority and prerogatives of the Tsuchimikado family.<sup>89</sup>

As indicated above, since Japan did not have a robust tradition of Chinese-style grave-oriented *fengshui*, much of the attention of Tokugawa mantic specialists was devoted to residential divination or *kasō* (家相).<sup>90</sup> Fundamentally, as Matthias Hayek has indicated in his many valuable writings on Japanese divination, this approach to siting applied the major cosmological principles of *fengshui* to domestic structures, temples and buildings, both official and non-official. It was, in essence, a highly developed form of directional and calendrical auspice, initially inspired by Chinese beliefs and practices but adapted to Japan's own political, social and cultural circumstances—in particular, the values and domestic needs of the samurai, peasant, artisan and merchant classes. It naturally reflected distinctively Japanese spiritual beliefs (including, of course, ancestral sacrifices and devotions to a wide range of Shinto and Buddhist deities), as well as other

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<sup>88</sup> For an excellent example of neo-Confucian criticisms of such activities, on the grounds that they “deceived ignorant peasants,” see Jason Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 180.

<sup>89</sup> Makoto Hayashi, “Tokugawa-period Disputes between Shugen Organizations and Onmyōji over Rights to Practice Divination,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21 (1994): 167–89.

<sup>90</sup> The literature on this topic in Japanese is vast. See, for example, Matsuura Hisanobu 松浦久信 *Kasō zukai* 家相圖解 (An illustrated explanation of residential divination) (Ōsaka: Hashimoto Tokubei, 1798); Matsuura Kinkaku 松浦琴鶴. *Kasō hidenshū* 家相秘傳集 (A collection of secret transmissions on residential divination) (Ōsaka: Kantōkaku zōhan, c. 1840 Miyuchi Takahisa 宮内貴久. *Fūsui to kasō no rekishi* 風水と家相の歴史 (The history of *fengshui* and residential divination) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2009); Miyuchi Takahisa 宮内貴久. *Kasō no minzokugaku* 家相の民俗学 (The folklore of residential divination) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006); Seike Kiyoshi 清家清, *Kasō no Kagaku* 家相の科学 (The science of residential divination) (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1969); Seike Kiyoshi 清家清, *Jiazhai fengshui zikan shu* 家宅風水自勘術 (An investigation of residential *fengshui*) (Hong Kong: Dayuan chubanshe, 1971), translated by Miu Qiwen. 廖啓文; Shishido Katsu 宍戸勝, *Kasō benran* 家相便覽 (A guide to residential divination) (Tokyo: Bunkaidō, n.d.).

ritual requirements and taboos—especially attitudes toward illness and misfortune, and notions of ritual purity and hygiene.<sup>91</sup>

These concerns are all clearly reflected in a widely circulated book titled *Kasō shinpen* 家相新編 (A new work on residential divination), written by Ojima Sekibun 尾島碩聞 (fl. c. 1900), a self-proclaimed disciple of the renowned late Tokugawa mantic specialist Matsuura Kinkaku 松浦琴鶴 (fl. c. 1840).<sup>92</sup> [Figure 7a] Kinkaku is probably the most famous member of the so-called Matsuura School of divination, which focused primarily on the Chinese work known as the *Bazhai mingjing* 八宅明鏡 (Eight halls bright mirror). The Eight Halls Bright Mirror approach, as mentioned earlier in this article, emphasizes trigram configurations associated with the eight directions. Each direction identifies a site in terms of occupied space, and the trigrams characterize the *ki* 氣 (Chinese: *qi*) of that location.<sup>93</sup> Like one of Kinkaku’s earlier mantic works, *Hattaku meikyō zukai* 八宅明鏡圖解 (An illustrated explanation of the Eight Halls Bright Mirror), the *Kasō shinpen* applies the basic principles of Eight Halls geomantic analysis to Japan’s unique historical, religious, calendrical and aesthetic traditions (especially domestic architecture). It also contains sixty well-drawn illustrations of Japanese buildings, mostly domestic residences, showing in each case the application of Eight Halls principles to Japanese circumstances (see below).<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> See in particular, Matthias Hayek, “Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan: Redefining Onmyōdō from the Inside,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 21 (2012): 255–274 and “L’Invention d’une divination ‘traditionnelle’ aux accents modernes,” 319–27. See Murata Aga 村田 あが. “Kasō shinpen ni miru Meiji-ki no kasō-setsu” 家相新編 にみる明治期の家相説 (A New Work on Residential Divination: An investigation of the theory of residential divination in the Meiji period), *Atomigakuen joshidaigaku tankidaigakubu kiyō* 跡見学園女子大学短期大学部紀要 38 (2001): 35–44, accessible at <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/110000486730>, esp. 35.

<sup>92</sup> Ojima Sekibun 尾島碩聞, *Kasō shinpen* 家相新編 (A new work on residential divination) (Tokyo: Koishikawadō, 1901), accessible at <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/760078>. Ojima authored several works on residential divination, including *Takusō hakki* 宅相發揮 (Manifestations of residential divination; 1893). On Matsuura Kinkaku, see Hayek, “L’Invention d’une divination ‘traditionnelle’ aux accents modernes,” 319–27.

<sup>93</sup> For further details, see Stephen Field, “The Numerology of Nine Star Fengshui.” <http://www.fengshuigate.com/numerology.html>. As Field points out, in this system, the hall trigram complements the natal trigram of the client, symbolizing “a metaphysical interaction between the individual’s natal *qi* and the *qi* of the environment that surrounds that individual.”

<sup>94</sup> The 1901 edition of the *Kasō shinpen* that I have consulted is especially interesting, because it retains the flavor and style of a traditional Japanese *kasō* manual and at the same attempts to



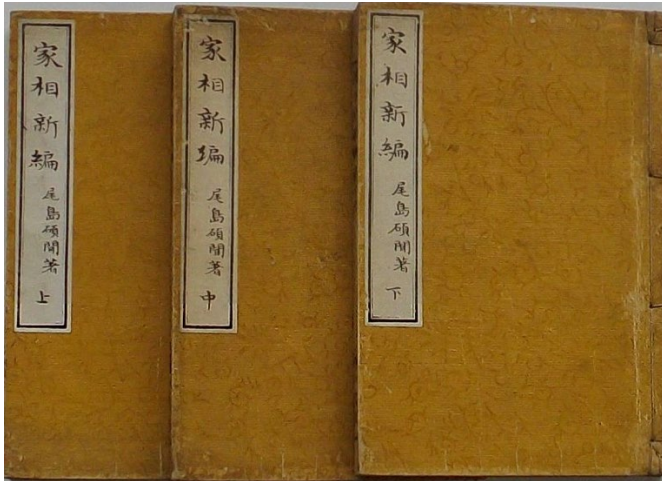


Figure 7a: A three volume set of the *Kasō shinpen* 家相新編 (A new work on residential divination).

The extensive bibliography of the *Kasō shinpen*, which consists of more than 40 Chinese books (most dating from Han dynasty to the late Qing period), and about 100 Japanese books (most dating from the 1780s to the early 1870s), testifies to the breadth of Ojima’s reading, as well as to his attraction to Eight Halls mantic methods. [Figure 7b] Significantly, in the case of both the Chinese and the Japanese works he cites, although the emphasis in the titles clearly indicates a preoccupation with residences for the living (陽宅, 家相, etc.), a number of works—both Chinese and Japanese—focus on broader geomantic themes and concerns, grave divination (墓相, 相地, 地理, 堪輿, 風水, 陰宅, 地宅, etc.) in particular. Moreover, although Japanese siting specialists, including Kinkaku himself, often distinguished between residence-based *kasō* (家相) and land-based *chiri* (地理), *kasō* calculations might well take into account the area outside a given house or building, and *chiri* techniques might refer to houses as well as landforms, including those of the entire world.<sup>95</sup>

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integrate new Western scientific knowledge into the mix. This sort of “modernizing” approach characterizes much of the work by East Asian geomancers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

<sup>95</sup> See Watanabe Yoshio 渡邊欣雄, *Nihon fūsui shi–kagaku to uranai no rekishi* 日本風水史—科学と占いの歴史 ([Two kinds of] *fengshui* history in Japan: scientific and divinatory) (2015): 124–138. URL: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/ej/article/download/127683/124712>. See also <http://iccs.aichi-u.ac.jp/archives/report/036/5092021f694a8.pdf>. Watanabe cites the famous Tokugawa scholar Nishikawa Joken 西川如見 (1648–1724) on this point.

書名		卷	著者	年代			
黃帝宅經	二				相地骨經		漢青烏
營造宅經	一				管氏指蒙		漢管輅
○陰陽五要奇書世二				乾隆五十五年	葬經		晉郭璞
郭氏元經	十	晉郭璞			天機金篆類辰論		唐一行禪師
璇璣經	一	晉趙載			地理小卷		唐李淳風
陽明按索	五	明陳復心		洪武元年	天隱子養生書		唐司馬承禎
佐元直指	十	明劉基		洪武五年	疑龍經		南唐楊筠松
三白寶海	三	元慕謙禪師		至正十年	陰契陽符		宋吳景鸞
附錄八宅明鏡	二	清若苑道人			披肝露胆		宋賴文俊
郭氏元經以下五部書明崇禎五年(我紀元三三九年)					保生要錄		宋蒲處質
二江孟隆刊行シテ選擇載書集要ト多ク其後清乾隆					發微論		宋蔡神禹
辛丑年(我紀元二四五年)ニ至リ顧吾廬之ヲ重刊シ					四神口訣		元董德彰

Figure 7b: The first of four pages of the *Kasō shinpen*'s extensive bibliography. Source: Online version of the *Kasō shinpen* (1901)

A prominent and recurring theme of Ojima's book is that since Heaven, Earth and Man are all interrelated, human beings must abide by both Heavenly principles (天理) and Earthly principles (地理; i.e. configurations), acting morally and responsibly in all realms of human affairs (人事). Naturally, this involved not only understanding these principles and patterns but also acting in accordance with them.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Ojima Sekibun, *Kasō shinpen*, 2: 47–52 (online pagination).

As might be expected, the *Kasō shinpen* devotes considerable attention to “classical” Chinese writings on siting—including not only the *Huangdi zhajing* 黃帝宅經 (Yellow Emperor’s siting classic) and the *Zangjing* (Burial classic), but also such highly influential geomantic books from late imperial China as the *Yinyang wuyao qishu* 陰陽五要奇書 (Remarkable book on *yin* and *yang* and the five essentials), the *Kanyu baojing* 堪輿寶鏡 (Precious mirror of geomancy), the *Fengshui quhuo* 風水祛惑 (Dispelling confusion about geomancy), the *Sancai fami* 三才發秘 (Secrets of the Three Powers), and the Qing dynasty’s official cosmological reference work, the *Xieji bianfang shu* 協紀辨方書 (Treatise on harmonizing the times and distinguishing the directions). Nonetheless, as indicated above, Japanese writings outnumber Chinese works by more than 2:1, and many of them—like the *Kasō shinpen* itself—show a clear sensitivity to Japan’s unique historical, geographical, religious, calendrical and aesthetic traditions.<sup>97</sup> At times, Ojima criticizes the mistakes he finds in the texts he references, but not often.

After discussing his major sources of moral and intellectual inspiration, Ojima describes the basic evolution of residential divination in Japan. He then embarks on a systematic overview of the cosmological variables involved in *kasō*, followed by a detailed analysis of the Eight Halls/Nine Palaces system. The next section of the *Kasō shinpen* addresses the pitfalls of following misleading advice and offers counsel on how to avoid misfortune. From there the book goes on to provide detailed guidance—punctuated by references to, and extracts from, various authors (mainly Japanese)—on how to approach issues of climate, weather, space, directional orientation, protection from evil spirits, and timing. It also offers specific advice concerning the location and sometimes the dimensions of specific areas, from entrances and hallways, study spaces, washing and bathing areas, sleeping quarters and household shrines (both Shinto and Buddhist), to storage facilities of all sorts, stables, greenhouses and even accoutrements, such as *tatami* mats.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, books in Ojima’s bibliography with titles such as *The Secret Record of the Beginnings of Residential Divination in the Reigning [Tokugawa] Period* (本朝家相發明秘錄).

<sup>98</sup> Ojima Sekibun, *Kasō shinpen*, 2: 2–40 (online pagination).

The final third of Ojima’s book consists almost entirely of line drawings of domestic residences—primarily peasant and merchant homes, but also “miscellaneous” buildings, including businesses, religious sites, and the houses of elites. In all cases, Ojima’s numerologically oriented interpretive approach consists of dividing the building into eight sections, depicted visually by conical segments radiating outward from an octagon located at a strategic spot—usually, but not invariably, the main room. The rectangular border of each illustration represents the twenty-four directions (二十四山) that are found in both the early astrolabes of the Han period and later *fengshui* compasses (see part 1) Each of the eight segments is marked by a combination of two stems and a branch, two branches and a stem, or two branches and a trigram (either 乾, 坤, 巽, or 艮), always in the same order, and with the 子 branch indicating north.<sup>99</sup> For larger structures, the *Kasō shinpen* provides information on ideal proportions (比例), land orientations (地 向), surface areas (面積), and land areas (地積).

Seventeen of the illustrations in the book show rural residences (農家), eighteen are merchant dwellings (商家), and the rest are “miscellaneous” structures (雜家). These include a pawnbroking (質業) establishment, a teahouse (待合業), a restaurant (料理店), a hostel (旅店), a domestic manufacturing operation (工業家), a brewery (釀造家), a physician’s house (醫家), a Shinto shrine (神社), and a Buddhist temple (寺院). Some illustrations of agricultural homes are based on Chinese models, while some illustrations of merchant homes are based on either Edo or Kyoto models. But, as the author points out, these are simply “standard” patterns; details may differ according to the customs of individual regions.<sup>100</sup> [Figures 8a–d]

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<sup>99</sup> To the best of my knowledge, Japanese geomancers did not make significant use of magnetic *fengshui* compasses in their on-site investigations, but their paper compasses performed the same basic siting function. I am grateful to Stephen Field for urging me to clarify this point in commenting on an earlier draft.

<sup>100</sup> Ojima Sekibun, *Kasō shinpen*, 3: 3 (online pagination).

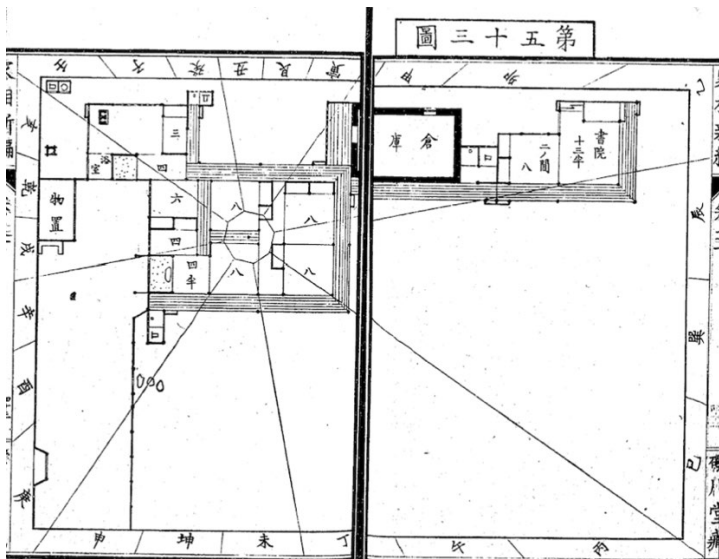


Figure 8a: An elite home. The “academy” (書院) is located in the upper right part of the diagram. Source: Online version of the *Kasō shinpen* (1901)

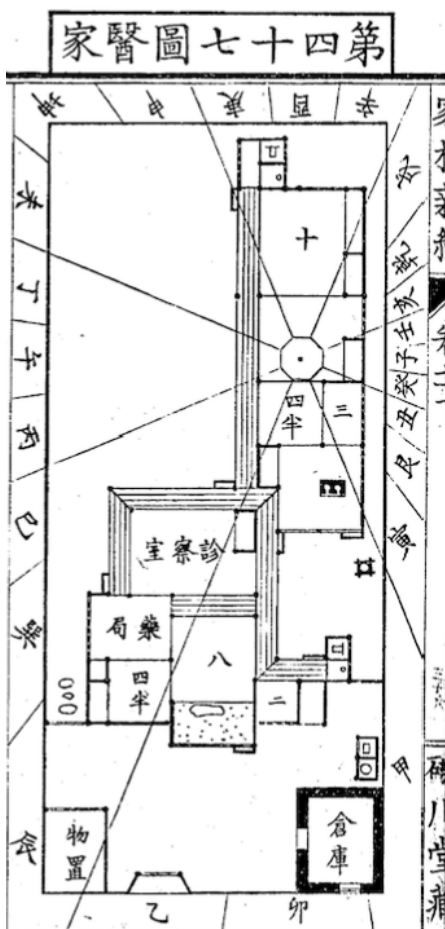


Figure 8b: A doctor's residence. The examination room (診察) and the dispensary (藥局) are on the left side of the diagram. Online version of the *Kasō shinpen* (1901)

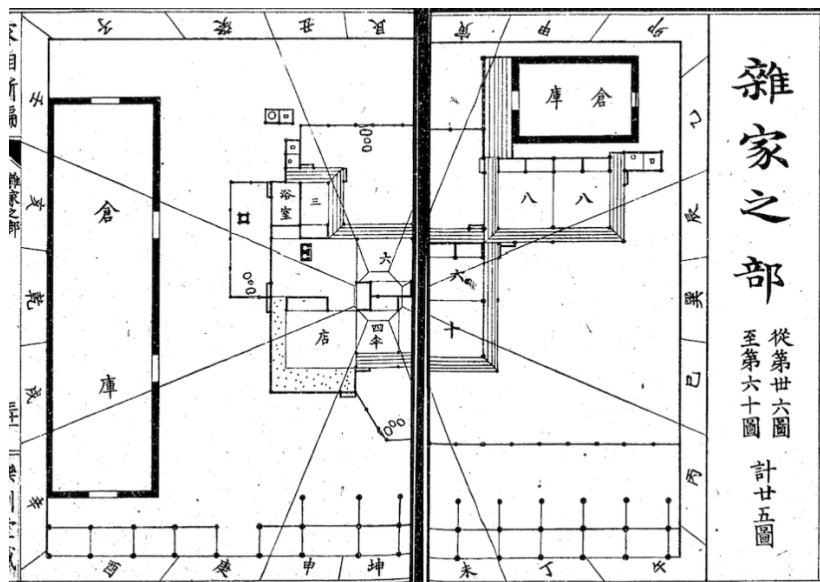


Figure 8c: A timber merchant's residence. The main storage spaces (倉庫) in this housing complex are to the upper left and the lower right of the business area (店). Source: Online version of the *Kasō shinpen* (1901)

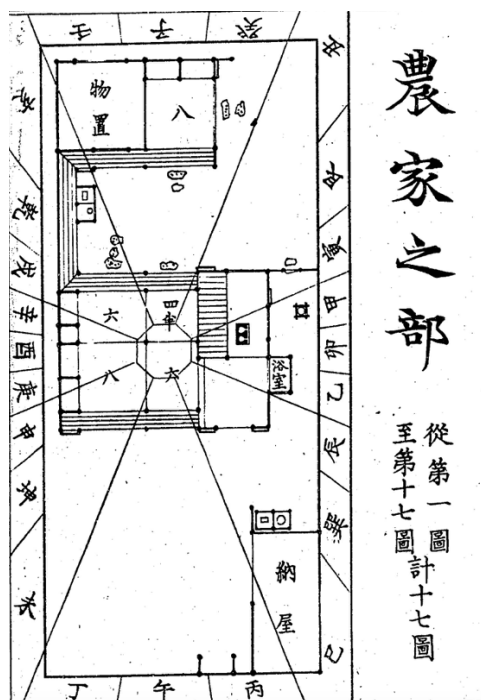


Figure 8d: A peasant home. The rectangular areas to the upper left and lower right of the diagram are primarily workspaces. Source: Online version of the *Kasō shinpen* (1901)

Since the location of graves was not a major feature of Japanese geomancy, nor was the location and orientation of most towns and villages, we have relatively few examples in Japan (aside from capital cities) of the way that geomantic principles were

applied to large-scale space. Accordingly, there are relatively few accounts of grave-related litigation or disputes. But in the case of at least one “planned” settlement—the town of Shingū 新宮町, on the western side of Kyūshū—we can see the application of *kasō*-style residential divination to an entire rural community. This approach, focusing on the four cardinal directions (*hōgaku* 方角), involved the major interpretive variables noted above, including a special emphasis on the role of four key trigrams: *gon* 艮 (NE) *son* 巽 (SE) *kon* 坤 (SW) and *ken* 乾 (NW).<sup>101</sup> Chinese-style form-school theories also influenced the choice of the location, which was established by the Tokugawa authorities in 1685 to assist local fishermen. What is particularly significant about this planned community is the way that Japanese deities and religious objects (especially protective stones known as *ishigantō* 石敢當 (i.e. stones that “dare to resist” evil influences) were enlisted to help protect the town.<sup>102</sup>

One final point about geomancy in Japan (although much more could certainly be said): As indicated earlier, all the countries in the Sinosphere accepted the idea that they were linked to a vast geomantic network focused on China and radiating outward, but the specific ways they conceived of this connection varied. In the case of Japan, we find not only efforts to equate Japanese sacred sites with their real or imagined counterparts in China—for example Mt. Fuji (富士山) in Japan served in the minds of many as the symbolic counterpart to Mt. Penglai (蓬萊山) in China—but also to establish networks of geomantic power involving local sites. Sometimes, for protective purposes, they were concentrated in a certain city. Thus, the capital at Edo eventually hosted replicas of as many as thirty famous Japanese temples and mountains from all parts of the country. Under this system, a small-scale Mt. Fuji became Fujizuka 富士塚 (“Fuji mound”). At the same time, the mountains, rivers and shrines on which these surrogates were based

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<sup>101</sup> For details, see Arne Kalland, “Geomancy and Town Planning in a Japanese Community,” *Ethnology*, 35.1 (Winter, 1996): 17–32. Cf. Haruko Wakabayashi, “Disaster in the Making: Taira no Kiyomori’s Move of the Capital to Fukuhara,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 70.1 (2015): 1–38.

<sup>102</sup> Although *ishigantō* is the common pronunciation of 石敢當 in Okinawa, the typical pronunciation in Kaoshima is *sekkantō*.

remained part of a perceived countrywide network of interconnected nodes and conduits of power, uniting Japan in distinctively Japanese ways.<sup>103</sup>

### The Ryukyu Kingdom

Ironically, as discussed above, following the conquest of the Ryukyu kingdom by the Satsuma domain in 1609, elites in the Ryukyu islands became more identifiably “Chinese” in their cultural orientation. This was not simply because many members of the aristocratic class of scholar-bureaucrats in Kumemura known as *yukatchu* spent a substantial amount of time in China, or even because the administrative structure and ritual activities of the state became, by design, more and more “Chinese.”<sup>104</sup> It was also because the Ryukyu kingdom, in an effort to avoid complete absorption into the Japanese *bakuhan* political organization, created, in the words of Mamoru Akamine, “a pseudo-Chinese national identity that embodied the kingdom’s supreme effort to retain its autonomy.”<sup>105</sup> Japan, meanwhile, found it convenient to treat the Ryukyu kingdom as a more or less “foreign country,” in part to benefit from the kingdom’s close tributary relationship with China. Not only did Chinese goods become available to the Tokugawa regime during the period of “seclusion,” but Japan also gained valuable knowledge of and from the Chinese mainland.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> See Gregory Smits, “Conduits of Power,” esp. 56 ff. See also Takayuki Ogata, “Geographic Information of the Listed Mountains in the Encyclopedia ‘Kojiruien,’” *Geographical Studies* (地理学論集) 83 (2008): 22–28.

<sup>104</sup> An excellent general discussion of Ryukyu elites can be found in Gregory Smits, “Making Destiny in the Kingdom of Ryukyu,” in Chun-chieh Huang and John Allen Tucker, eds., *The Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer 2014): 109–40, esp. 111–13.

<sup>105</sup> Akmine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom*, 83. See also Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 27–42 and Douglas G. Haring, “Selected Aspects of Chinese and Japanese Cultural Influences in the Northern Ryukyu Islands,” *Sociologus* n.s. 13.1 (1963): 56–67.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Lai Zhengwei 赖正维, “Luelun Ming Qing shiqi Fujian shengchan jishu zai Liuqiu de chuanbo” 略論明清時期福建生產技術在琉球的傳播 (A short discussion of the transmission of Fujian production techniques to Liuqiu [Ryukyu] in the Ming and Qing dynasties), *Haijiao shi yanjiu* 海交史研究 (2002): 75–83. URL: <http://dyyjy.zjgsu.edu.cn/uploadfiles/2012-1-5/20121513513265628.pdf>.



One important realm of such expertise was geomancy, as the research of Miura Kunio 三浦國雄 and others has shown.<sup>107</sup> Unlike the Japanese, who seldom used the term *fengshui* (Japanese: *fūsui*; Okinawan: *funshii*) until the mid-nineteenth century, Ryukyu elites employed it regularly from the seventeenth century onward. The early history of the Ryukyu kingdom suggests an awareness of the importance of finding auspicious sites—particularly areas known as “sacred groves” (*utaki* 御嶽)—for the founding of villages and other residential spaces.<sup>108</sup> [Figure 9] There is considerable evidence to show that the early sacred groves served as graveyards, and that they were the focus for some form of ancestor worship,<sup>109</sup> but we do not know whether Chinese-style geomantic principles informed the choices. By the fourteenth century, however, rudimentary *fengshui* ideas came to the Ryukyu islands by way of China, Japan and Korea, and by the mid-1660s, the royal government made a conscious effort to promote geomantic knowledge by sending waves of students to China to study its principles and practices. Perhaps the first of such students to become a *fengshui* master was a highly regarded scholar named Shū Kokushun 周国俊 (fl. c. 1670), who was also thoroughly versed in the Chinese classics.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji*, esp. 15–55. See also Kubo Noritada 窪徳忠, *Okinawa no shūzoku to shinkō: Chūgoku to no hikaku kenkyū* 沖縄の習俗と信仰: 中国との比較研究 (Okinawan customs and beliefs: Comparisons with China) (Tokyo: Tōkyōdaigaku shuppankai, 1971).

<sup>108</sup> Mitsugu Sakihara, *A Brief History of Early Okinawa Based on the Omoro Soshi* (Tokyo: Honpo Shoseki Press, 1987), 42 ff. Sakihara, 44 notes that “only after a proper and auspicious site had been selected as the otake [sic] did the people build their village.” We do not know, however, what specific system of site-selection may have been used. On *utaki*, see also Susan Sered, *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa* (New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17, 57–58, 110–11, 182. Cf. Noriko Kawahashi 川橋範子, “Kaminchu: Divine Women of Okinawa” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1992) and her “Seven Hindrances of Women? A Popular Discourse on Okinawan Women and Religion,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27 (2000): 85–98.

<sup>109</sup> See Evgeny S. Baksheev, “Becoming Kami? Discourse on Postmortem Ritual Deification in the Ryukyus,” *Japan Review* 20 (2008): 275–339, esp. 310. An early belief was that the buried bones of prominent people attracted rain, an idea that seems to have been inspired at least in part by Silla Korea’s “bone rank system (*golpum jaedo* (骨品制度)). I am grateful to Gregory Smits for this suggestion.

<sup>110</sup> See Shizuaki Shibuya, “A Study on the Spatial Composition of the Villages in the Ryukyu Islands from the Perspective of the Conditions of Topographic Locations: By Classification on the types of Planned Villages Established during the Early Modern Period,” *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, 81 (2016): 11–21.



Figure 9: Īmui Utaki (いいむいうたき; also 食栄森御嶽), by some accounts, the tomb site of Shunten (舜天), the first king of Ryukyu. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The most famous exponent of *fengshui* in the Ryukyu kingdom was the reformer Sai On 蔡温 (1682–1761), who studied geomancy in China for two years under Liu Riji 劉日霽 (fl. 1710). According to a 1708 entry in the official history of the Ryukyu kingdom (the *Kyūyō* (球陽, written between 1743 and 1745), during the time that Sai served as a “resident official” in Fujian, he was ordered by the throne to study geomancy, and as a result he acquired “the secret books of that art and a large geomantic compass.”<sup>111</sup> Sai later trained other scholars in *fengshui* theories and practices, and after returning from Fujian he undertook a geomantic assessment of Shuri Castle 首里城 and other important sites, including the National Temple 崇元寺, and the Royal Mausoleum 玉陵. A lengthy passage in the *Kyūyō* describing these efforts begins with the following words: “There is nothing more important than geomancy for constructing a capital and establishing a country.”<sup>112</sup> It is difficult to imagine an official history in China, Japan,

<sup>111</sup> I do not know which books and which version of the compass Sai On acquired. One version, known in Chinese as the *Sanyuan* 三元 compass, was based on the 384 individual lines of the *Yijing* (i.e. six times 64), and seems to have become the most popular compass in the Ryukyu Islands over time. The other, older, version, known in Chinese as the *Sanhe* 三合 compass, was divided into the days of the year. See note 120 below). Again, I am grateful to Stephen Field for encouraging me to clarify this discussion.

<sup>112</sup> Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 75–76. See also Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji*, 17 ff. It should be noted that although geomantic arguments loomed large in debates such as the one

Korea or Vietnam making such a claim. We can deduce, then, that although Chinese-style *fengshui* may have been practiced with equal enthusiasm in both the Ryukyu kingdom and China, Ryukyuan elites seem to have embraced it with greater overt enthusiasm.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the value placed on geomancy as a means of “establishing the state,” most Ryukyuan scholars—unlike those in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam—had no particular interest in the *Yijing* as a philosophical text, not even Sai On. According to Benjamin Wai-ming Ng,

The *Yijing* was not a very popular text among Ryukyuan scholars who neither reprinted [individual] Chinese commentaries nor wrote their own commentaries on the text. Although Ryukyuan scholars made little contribution to *Yijing* studies, the *Yijing* remained influential in Ryukyuan society and culture. In particular, the *yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行 (two primal forces and five phases) theory and divination associated with the *Yijing* were incorporated into Ryukyuan traditions, and applied to all walks of life, including geomancy, folk religion, medicine, and architecture.<sup>113</sup>

Gregory Smits makes the same basic point about Ryukyuan scholars in terms of professional self-interest: they “were well-versed in Confucian writings, but they focused their intellectual attention on subjects of immediate practical use to their career such as Chinese poetry, geomancy or the calendar.”<sup>114</sup>

One eighteenth-century Chinese observer, Li Dingyuan 李鼎元 (1750–1805), vice-envoy for a Qing investiture mission to the Ryukyu kingdom, went so far as to say: “This country [Ryukyu] has published few books and has not purchased many books from China. No wonder, its civilization is not as flourishing as Korea.”<sup>115</sup> Undoubtedly

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over moving the Ryukyu capital from Shuri to Nago in the mid 1700s, at issue were also struggles for political power. See Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 129–32 and chapter 5, *passim*.

<sup>113</sup> Wai-ming Ng, “The Historical Reception of *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” *Sino-Japanese Studies*, 24 (2017): 24–37. URL: <http://chinajapan.org/articles/24/2>.

<sup>114</sup> Smits, “Making Destiny in the Kingdom of Ryukyu,” 110. Knowledge of classical Chinese poetry was an important instrument in the toolkit of diplomatic representatives to Japan, Korea and, of course, China.

<sup>115</sup> Wai-ming Ng, “The Historical Reception of *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” 25.

Li was referring primarily to classical books and commentaries, for it appears that a considerable number of works on geomancy found their way to the Ryukyus.<sup>116</sup> We also know that scholars such as Sai On wrote earnestly about *fengshui*, not least in an official capacity. In 1750, for example, Sai On created a document, inscribed on stele, titled *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* 三府龍脈碑 (Monument to the dragon vein in the three provinces), in which he argued that because the three provinces of the Ryukyu kingdom were located in an auspicious area (a “dragon vein”), a contemplated move of the capital from Shuri to Nago should not take place.<sup>117</sup> And in fact, it did not. Instead, during the late 1760s, the Ryukyu government followed Sai On’s advice and employed geomantic principles in the building of the Main Hall (Seidan 正殿) and surrounding building of Shuri Castle 首里城. This structure had certain Japanese architectural features, such as a hipped double roof and a cusped gable on the portico, but its overall layout was strongly reminiscent of Beijing’s Forbidden City, with similar attention to the geomantic principles on which it was built.<sup>118</sup> [Figure 10]

<sup>116</sup> See Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji*, esp. 32 ff. and 189 ff. and Chatanchō kyōiku iinkai 北谷町教育委員会, ed., *Kinra Sōhō monjo: Eki takujitsu fūsui* 金良宗邦文書: 易, 擇日, 風水 (The Kinra Sōhō Document: *Yijing* oracles, auspicious date selection, and *fengshui*) (Chatanchō: Hatanchō kyōiku iinkai, 1993). In her preface to this latter work, Tsuzuki Akiko 都築晶子 maintains that hand-copied Chinese books had a wider circulation than published Chinese books in the Ryukyu kingdom. See also Wai-ming Ng, “The Historical Reception of *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” 27.

<sup>117</sup> For details regarding Sai On’s geomantic, cosmological, and historically grounded arguments, see Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, esp. 128–32.

<sup>118</sup> Castles of this sort had a long history in Ryukyuan culture. Shuri Castle may date from as early as c. 1300, and its adoption of certain Chinese elements may have begun as early as the 1500s. For a thorough analysis of the site’s favorable *fengshui*, see Akmine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom*, 85–88. Akmine describes the Shuri Castle as “a perfect model of the principles of [Chinese] *fengshui* cosmology. Ibid., 88. For further comparisons and contrasts, see Kubo Noritada, *Okinawa no shūzoku to shinkō*.



Figure 10: The main hall of Shuri Castle, Okinawa (restored after 1945). Source: Wikimedia Commons

Meanwhile, well-trained *fengshui* masters increasingly became involved in the location and construction of family homes and graves, using conventional Chinese cosmological categories and calculations, employing visual siting techniques as well as compasses, linking birthdates with issues of direction and timing, and advocating the usual charms, walls and other protective devices.<sup>119</sup> Naturally enough, because many geomantic specialists either learned their skills in Fuzhou, or learned from others who had done so, a number of Ryukyu graves were built in the style of Fujian “turtle-shell tombs” (*kamekō-baka* 龜殼墓).<sup>120</sup> [Figure 11]

<sup>119</sup> Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji* provides detail on these points. See also Chatanchō kyōiku iinkai, ed., *Kinra Sōhō monjo*, passim, and Hidekazu Sensui, “On Cognitive Aspects of Rhetorical Time Reckoning: Metaphor and Image-Schema in Calendrical Divination in Okinawa,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 62.2 (2003): 291–321.

<sup>120</sup> Akmine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom*, 90–91. For a more complete discussion, see Chen Jinguo 陳進國, “Fenmu xingzhi yu fengshui xinyang: Fujian yu Liuqiu (Chongsheng) de shili” 墳墓形制與風水信仰 (The forms of graves and *fengshui* belief: Using Fujian and Ryukyu [Okinawa] as examples), *Xin shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 4:1 (September 1994): 2–54. Although Ryukyu and Tsushima geomancers had access to both 360- and 384-line *fengshui* compasses (see note 111 above), most seem to have preferred the 384-line variety.



Figure 11: A Ryukyu grave built in the style of Fujian “turtle-shell tombs” (*kamekō-baka* 龜殼墓). Source: Wikimedia Commons

To be sure, much of what I have described above could be considered a discussion of similarities rather than differences in the geomantic traditions of East Asia. But two aspects of *fengshui* practice in the Ryukyus may be different enough in degree to be considered differences in kind. One is the relatively prominent role played by women in activities that might loosely be described as geomantic.<sup>121</sup> These women were of two distinctly different types. By far the most prominent, both in terms of numbers and social importance, were priestesses (*kaminchu* 神人, *noro* 祝女, etc.), who operated within a complex “official” hierarchy that extended from the capital down to individual villages and small towns (*mura* 村/邑). Clans (*munchū* 門中) also employed priestesses, who performed the same basic services on behalf of the kinship group. The other type of female religious functionary was a shaman, generally known as a *fujō* or *yuta* 巫女). Taken together, these two groups of women dominated much of religious life in the Ryukyu kingdom, at all levels of society.<sup>122</sup> [Figure 12]

<sup>121</sup> By this I mean simply a degree of involvement in matters related to the establishment of homes, graves and other structures—not necessarily practices based on Chinese *fengshui* principles.

<sup>122</sup> Priestesses and female shamans were, of course, prominent features of the cultural landscape in all of the other countries of the Sinosphere during pre-modern times, and their influence can



Figure 12: Yuta ユタ in Okinawa (c. 1955). Source: Wikimedia Commons

The principal role of priestesses, high and low, was to propitiate the ubiquitous spirits known as *kami* (神) that inhabited the Ryukyu islands (and Japan). They conducted rituals on behalf of collective entities. The primary role of female shamans was to determine the causes of misfortune afflicting individuals, and to devise strategies for relieving distress.<sup>123</sup> But priestesses also performed certain divinatory roles that were

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still be seen in these areas to this day. We also know that on occasion female shamans became directly involved in Korean *fengshui*. See Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 180. I am not aware, however, that they were as involved in *fengshui*-related activities in other parts of East Asia as they were in the Ryukyu islands.

<sup>123</sup> The above summary has been drawn predominantly from Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji* and William Lebra, *Okinawan Religion: Belief, Religion and Social Structure* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1966), esp. 62–64, 72–78, and 162–74. For detail on priestesses, see Sered, *Women of the Sacred Groves* and Isabelle Prochaska, “Mittlerinnen zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits Eine Erörterung der spirituellen Heilung in Okinawa” (Ph.D. dissertation, Wien University, 2011) and her “Mediators between this world and the hereafter: Spiritual concepts and frames of interpretation concerning misfortune as seen from the Okinawan shaman” (University of the Ryukyus Repository 2007). URL: <http://ir.lib.u->

“personal,” and related to conventional geomantic practices—for example, saying prayers to expel evil influences, welcoming positive spirits at a certain place and time, and periodically praying at the “door” of a repaired or rebuilt tomb.<sup>124</sup> Shamans, for their part, not only identified the source of personal and family misfortune (including health problems), but also analyzed dreams, found lost items, assessed marriage compatibility, handled ancestral affairs (tombs, rituals and property), selected housing sites, and contacted deceased persons on behalf of others.

On the other side of the gender divide in the Ryukyu islands were a number of relatively high-status male geomantic specialists (風水師) and a much larger group of less specialized diviners, also male, known collectively as *ekisha* 易者 (as in Japan, defined as “those who employ [methods based on] the *Changes*”). The mantic responsibilities of these two groups overlapped considerably. Both were conversant with various Chinese and Japanese works on geomancy (some of the latter were written in the *Kana* syllabary), and both employed traditional almanacs and *fengshui* compasses (some comprised of paper, 羅盤圖 or 紙羅盤) in making their calculations. Many also employed *Yijing*-related mantic techniques such as “*Changes* judgments” (*ekidan* 易斷 or *dan’eki* 斷易) and “Eight trigrams divination” (*hakke uranai* 八卦占).<sup>125</sup>

*Ekisha* were, however, much more likely than geomantic specialists to tell personal fortunes and to select propitious times for various actions (e.g. business, traveling, moving, etc.) and events (engagements, marriages, funerals, etc.). Also included in the amorphous *ekisha* category were large numbers of predominantly male fortune-tellers, identified as *sanzesō* (三世相; Okinawan: *sanjinsoo*; lit. “[those]

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[ryukyu.ac.jp/bitstream/20.500.12000/12250/3/16520024-3.pdf](http://ryukyu.ac.jp/bitstream/20.500.12000/12250/3/16520024-3.pdf). For detail on Okinawan shamans, see Matthew Allen, *Identity and Resistance in Okinawa* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002) and “Therapies of Resistance? Yuta, Help-seeking, and Identity in Okinawa,” *Critical Asian Studies* 34.2): 221–242. See also Crystal McCormick, “Saadaka: An Aspect of Shamanism, Spiritual Power, and Pollution in Okinawa” (MA thesis, Auburn University 2011). URL: <https://etd.auburn.edu/bitstream/handle/10415/2474/Thesis%20ReRevised%2012-7-10.pdf?sequence=2>.

<sup>124</sup> See Hidekazu Sensui, “On Cognitive Aspects of Rhetorical Time Reckoning,” 304–05; see also Sered, *Women of the Sacred Groves*, esp. 142–46.

<sup>125</sup> For details, see Hayek, “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes” and “Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan.” Cf. Ng, *The I Ching*, 45–47 and Ng, “The Historical Reception of *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” *passim*.



observing the three ages [past, present and future]), who employed an especially wide array of divinatory techniques, including not only geomancy, chronomancy and cleromancy, but also astrology, glyptomancy, and physiognomy. To round out the picture, there were many low-status male diviners in villages known as *toki* (時), who specialized in selecting lucky days.<sup>126</sup>

Naturally, given the overlap in their mantic skills and claims, there was some competition within the ranks of both male and female diviners.<sup>127</sup> But to what extent did men and women compete? In this preliminary investigation, I cannot answer my own question with any degree of depth or certainty. In some circumstances, there seems to have been a substantial degree of cooperation between them; for instance, a shaman might offer protective prayers for a newly built house that a geomancer had previously located and perhaps also determined for the owner or proprietor an auspicious date for the commencement of construction.<sup>128</sup> But more often, male diviners seem to have been resentful, disdainful, or distrustful of priestesses and female shamans.<sup>129</sup>

As if the situation was not complicated enough, at times, for essentially political reasons (the perceived usurpation of government-controlled divinatory functions), the newly “Confucianized” Ryukyu state attempted to suppress the activities of *yuta* and *toki*. The most notable occasion was in 1728, when Confucian scholars such as Sai On and his colleagues, convinced the throne to ban certain mantic activities on the following grounds:

*Toki* and *yuta* have existed in our society since ancient times. They have even been established within the royal government. But recently the number of *toki* and *yuta* has increased markedly, becoming a hindrance to society. Because they are employed in farming villages, the result has been the highly improper situation of

<sup>126</sup> Miura Kunio, *Fūsui, koyomi, onmyōji*, esp. 189 ff. See also Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 85–88.

<sup>127</sup> See Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, esp. 113–18.

<sup>128</sup> See Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 74 ff. Also, Hidekazu Sensui, “On Cognitive Aspects of Rhetorical Time Reckoning,” 304–05.

<sup>129</sup> Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 87.

cows, pigs, chicken and the like being lost and expenses accumulating. This impoverishes the peasants.<sup>130</sup>

This move by Sai On and his colleagues against “vulgar” diviners, who were allegedly capable of “evil delusion,” might seem somewhat ironic, given Sai’s ardent embrace of geomancy as a mantic art. But, of course, as with elites in other parts of the Sinosphere, Ryukyuan scholars found it expedient to distinguish between “orthodox” diviners, including some *fengshui* specialists, and lowly, crass and opportunistic professionals like *toki* and *yuta*. A further irony in terms of the gender divide is that during periods when the *yuta* were suppressed by the state, at least some of them managed to become Eight Trigrams diviners, thus encroaching on the traditionally male roles of *ekisha*.<sup>131</sup>

Sadly for Sai On’s broad reformist program, *toki* and *yuta* remained an integral part of Ryukyuan society at the local level; they could neither be eradicated nor neutralized.<sup>132</sup> But another of Sai On’s programs was more successful, and it relates directly to the second major distinctive feature of geomancy in the Ryukyu kingdom—the special attention given to trees. It is true, of course, that favorable geomantic sites in East Asia almost invariably had trees of some sort to protect them.<sup>133</sup> But to my knowledge, no other country in the premodern Sinosphere gave as much systematic and sustained

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 114. See also Gregory Smits, “Making Destiny in the Kingdom of Ryukyu,” esp. 122 ff.

<sup>131</sup> Wai-ming Ng, “The Historical Reception of *Yijing* in Early Modern Ryukyu,” 35. On the background of this and other efforts to suppress shamanism and certain other forms of fortunetelling, see Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 113–18. The irony here is that Sai On continued to support the activities of “orthodox” geomancers.

<sup>132</sup> See Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, esp. 113–18, esp. 116–17.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, Ellen Van Goethem, “Of Trees and Beasts: Site Selection in Premodern East Asia,” *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University* 1 (March 2016): 1–7; Chris Coggins, et al., “Village *Fengshui* Forests of Southern China: Culture, History, and Conservation Status,” *ASIANetwork Exchange* 19.2 (Spring 2012): 52–67 and Chris Coggins, “When the Land is Excellent: Village *Fengshui* Forests and the Nature of Lineage, Polity, and Vitality in Southern China,” in James Miller, Dan Smyer Yu, and Peter Van der Veer, eds., *Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China* (London: Routledge, 2014), 97–126; Sang Hae Lee, “Siting and General Organization of Traditional Korean Settlements,” in Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar Alsayyad, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (New York and London: University Press of Americas, 1989): 295–316. See also Ian Miller, “Roots and Branches,” and Qifeng Yi, “The Dragon’s Veins.”

attention to the concept of “protection trees” (保護林) or “protection *fengshui* trees” (保護風水林) as Ryukyu geomancers.<sup>134</sup>

As indicated above, from earliest times, villages in the Ryukyu islands had been established at auspicious sites known as “sacred groves” (*utaki*), and over time, the value of trees as a means of protecting villages from particularly harsh weather became increasingly apparent. Forests were also a vital part of the Ryukyuan economy. In the words of Sai On: “Were we not to rely on the power of wood products we would become incapable of tilling fields, building houses, weaving clothes, making pottery, forging iron and crossing the sea.”<sup>135</sup> The severe winds that whipped across the island created many challenges, not the least of which was that trees became bent and gnarled, and thus of little use for lumber. But by using a “fish-scale pattern method of forest construction” (*gyorinkei zōrinpō* 魚鱗形造林法), villages could be protected from harsh winds, and trees had a better chance of growing up straight. At the same time, the planting of groves as windbreaks improved agricultural productivity.<sup>136</sup>

An important part of Sai On’s ambitious reform program was to increase agricultural production by establishing new villages and moving old ones—a process informed in part by his understanding of geomantic principles and facilitated by the employment of professional *fengshui* specialists. A number of scholars have examined the role of *fengshui* trees in the creation of Ryukyu villages, and their conclusions are worth summarizing. According to Chen Bixia 陳碧霞, a leading specialist, one major difference between the use of *fengshui* trees in the Ryukyu islands and elsewhere in the Sinosphere was the unique “fish-scale pattern” employed in planting them. Another special feature of a great many “*fengshui* villages” in the Ryukyus was the widespread

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<sup>134</sup> Bixia Chen, “A Comparative Study on the Feng Shui Village Landscape and Feng Shui Trees in East Asia,” 42. For another, much broader, comparative study of “groves” (especially as sacred places), see Jan Woudstra and Colin Roth, eds., *A History of Groves* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 104. See also John Purves, Bixia Chen and Nakama Yuei, “The Secrets of Forestry: An English Translation of the *Sanrin Shinpi* (山林真秘) of Sai On,” *The Ryukyuanist*, 86 (Winter 2009–10): 1–8.

<sup>136</sup> See Purves, Chen and Yuei, “The Secrets of Forestry,” Chen, “A Comparative Study on the Feng Shui Village Landscape and Feng Shui Trees in East Asia,” and Bixia Chen and Nakama Yuei, “On the Establishment of Feng Shui Villages from the Perspective of Old Fukugi Trees in Okinawa, Japan,” *Arboriculture and Urban Forestry* 37.1 (2011): 19–26.

use of *fukugi* trees (福木; lit. “blessing trees”) to “protect” (保護) individual homes or small clusters of them (usually four or less houses). [Figure 13] Throughout the islands different areas naturally supported different trees, as they did in the greater Sinosphere, but *fukugi* trees predominated in most areas. Yet another distinctive feature of *fengshui* villages was the planting of lines of *fukugi* trees along curving roads that declined from north-south or east-west axes. This sort of layout was designed to achieve the geomantic goal of “storing the wind and accumulating water” (藏風得水). Whenever possible, an effort was made to maintain preexisting “sacred groves,” and at times, clumps of protection trees served as symbolic equivalents of the Four Directional Animals.<sup>137</sup> In short, from the eighteenth century onward, the Ryukyu people seem to have been remarkably adept at mapping Chinese-style geomancy onto preexisting notions of secular and sacred space.

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<sup>137</sup> In addition to the sources cited in the previous note, see Bixia Chen, Nakama Yuei and Urayama Takakazu, “Planted Forest and Diverse Cultures in Ecological Village Planning: A Case Study in Tarama Island, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan,” *Small-scale Forestry* 13 (2014): 333–347; and Evgeny S. Baksheev, “Becoming Kami? Discourse on Postmortem Ritual Deification in the Ryukyus,” *Japan Review* 20 (2008): 275–339. For comparisons with other “*fengshui* forests” in East Asia, see Chris Coggins, et al., “Village *Fengshui* Forests of Southern China”; Chris Coggins, “When the Land is Excellent”; Sang Hae Lee, “Siting and General Organization of Traditional Korean Settlements”; Ian Miller, “Roots and Branches,” and Qifeng Yi, “The Dragon’s Veins.”

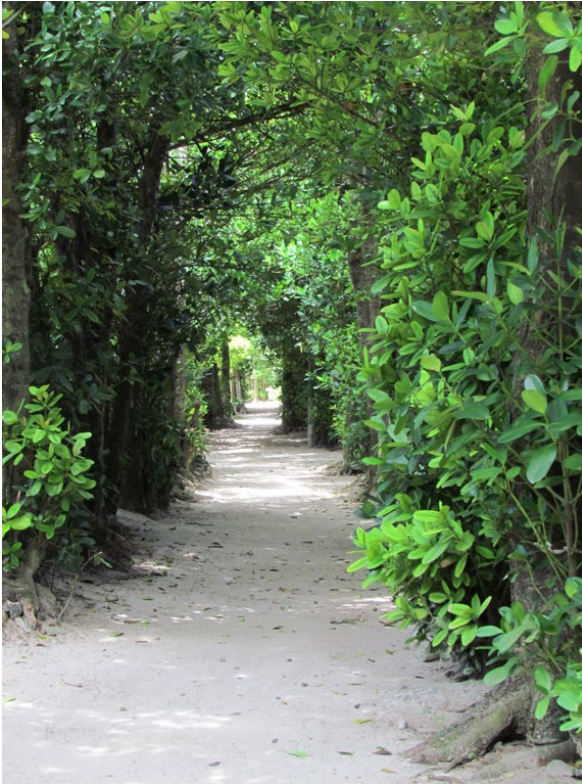


Figure 13: *Fukugi* trees of Bise Village in modern Okinawa. Source: Wikimedia Commons

### Chosŏn Korea

A discussion of *fengshui* in Chosŏn Korea is both easy and difficult, and for the same reason: the huge amount of available material.<sup>138</sup> Fortunately, Hong-Key Yoon has provided a convenient point of entry into this vast terrain with the publication of two excellent books. *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea: An Exploration of East Asian*

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<sup>138</sup> Details may be found in Kyŏngin Munhwasa 景仁文化社, ed. *P'ungsu chiri ch'ongsŏ* 風水地理叢書 (Collectanea on [Korean] *fengshui*) (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa 景仁文化社, 1969 [Colophon title: *Han'guk p'ungsu chiri ch'ongsŏ* 韓國風水地理叢書]) and Murayama Chijun 村山智順, *Chosen no fūsui* 朝鮮の風水 (Korea's *fengshui*) Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 2003). For convenient English-language materials, see Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*; Hong-key Yoon, ed., *P'ungsu: A Study of Geomancy in Korea* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018); Jiyeon Jang, "Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries," 101–129, Chang-jo Choi, "*P'ungsu*: The Korean Traditional Geographic Thoughts," *Korea Journal* 26:5 (May 1986): 35–45; and Hong-key Yoon, "The Role of *Pungsu* (Geomancy) in Korean Culture." Undated University of Auckland, New Zealand Keynote speech. URL: <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/8655>.

*Geomancy* (2008)—a study based on more than forty years of research in Chinese, Korean, Japanese and English primary and secondary sources—and a more recent collaborative volume titled *P’ungsu: A Study of Geomancy in Korea* (2018). As Yoon’s books and articles point out, geomancy was ubiquitous in the Chosŏn period, deeply woven into the fabric of Korean society at all levels and in all parts of the realm. For a long period in Korea, well into the Chosŏn era, geomancy was a recognized category in the civil service examination system, and, as in other parts of East Asia, it was a major preoccupation of the Bureau of Astronomy (Korean: *Gwansang-gam* 觀象監) in the Ministry of Rites (Korean: Yejo 禮曹).<sup>139</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Yoon describes the Koreans in premodern times as being “no less serious than the Chinese” in their devotion to *fengshui*.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, social and economic changes in Korea after the disastrous Japanese invasions known as the Imjin War (1592–1598)—notably the emergence of powerful patrilinear family organizations intent on honoring their ancestors and literally defending their geomantic turf—resulted in a surge of interest in Chinese-style grave-oriented *fengshui*.<sup>141</sup> Competition for desirable burial land led, in turn, to the same sorts of social tensions and legal disputes in Korea that had arisen somewhat earlier in late imperial China.<sup>142</sup> It was in this context that intellectuals such as Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836) leveled blistering criticisms against the theories and practices of Korean *fengshui* specialists.<sup>143</sup> But to no avail. As in the case of China, the basic cosmological assumptions were too

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<sup>139</sup> For additional details, see Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, esp. 71–80 and 329–43. See also Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 115 ff. On the geomantic activities of the Bureau of Astronomy, consult Park Kwon Soo, “Choosing Auspicious Dates and Sites for Royal Ceremonies in Eighteenth Century Korea” in Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*, 289–98.

<sup>140</sup> Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 4 and esp. 126–34

<sup>141</sup> See Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 122 ff.

<sup>142</sup> Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 174, note 8 indicates that about half of the litigation documents in the Kyujanggak Archive at Seoul University “are cases related to disputes over auspicious graves.”

<sup>143</sup> See Sang-Hak Oh, “The Recognition of Geomancy by Intellectuals during the Joseon Period,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 13.1 (March 2010): 121–147, esp. 125–26. Cf. Eggert, Marion. “P’ungsu: Korean Geomancy in Traditional Intellectual Perspective.” *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung* 26 (2002): 243–257; Hong-Key Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 4, 42, 126, 133–34 and Yoon, ed. *P’ungsu*, 344–46.

deeply rooted and the perceived requirements of filial piety were too powerful for meaningful change to take place.<sup>144</sup>

According to Yoon, the fundamental principles of Chinese geomancy did not change over time in Korea.<sup>145</sup> They were, however, “interpreted and applied to the Korean situation differently.” This led, Yoon argues, to “the development of Korea’s own style of geomancy, which reflected particular cultural, political and physical aspects of Korea.”<sup>146</sup> But what, exactly was this “style”? A careful reading of Yoon’s writings does not provide a clear answer to this question.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, most of what he and other authorities have written about Korean *fengshui* focuses on the many similarities between Korean and Chinese geomancy.

There are reasons for this, of course. In the first place, the Imjin War destroyed countless Korean books, including works on geomancy, and China was obviously the closest and best source of new books, written in the literary Sinitic to replace them. Second, the Koreans needed geomantic handbooks appropriate to their changing times and circumstances, as indicated above. Third, the Koreans naturally sought documents that accorded with their long-standing cultural preferences. Thus it was that a long and detailed seventeenth century Chinese work on *fengshui* by Xu Shanji and Xu Shanshu, which I have mentioned previously—the *Renzi xuzhi* [Korean: *Inja suji*] 人子須知 (What people must know [about geomancy])—became extremely popular in eighteenth century Korea, despite its considerable length and complexity. A shorter version of this work also circulated in Vietnam, as we shall see.

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<sup>144</sup> See Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, esp. 48–56 and 342–46.

<sup>145</sup> Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 117 offers a compelling contrary opinion, describing the fifteenth century as a pivotal period in which “Koryŏ geomancy was replaced by Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian geomancy” in Korea.

<sup>146</sup> Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 15. Cf. Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” esp. 113 ff.

<sup>147</sup> Some of Yoon’s most influential articles in English include: “An Analysis of Korean Geomancy Tales,” *Asian Folklore Studies*, 34.1 (1975): 21–34; “The Image of Nature in Geomancy,” *GeoJournal* 4.4 (1980): 341–348; “The Traditional Standard Korean Maps and Geomancy,” *New Zealand Map Society Journal* 6 (1992): 3–9; “Human Modification of Korean Landforms for Geomantic Purposes,” *The Geographical Review* 101.2 (2011): 243–260; “Geomancy and Social Upheavals in Korea,” *European Journal of Geopolitics* 2 (2014): 5–23; and “The Role of Pungsu (Geomancy) in Korean Culture.” Undated University of Auckland, New Zealand Keynote speech. URL: <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/8655>.

The C.V. Starr East Asian Library at the University of California, Berkeley, has an online version of the *Inja suji* in fifteen abundantly and nicely illustrated volumes.<sup>148</sup> Like most Chinese-style geomantic manuals, the *Inja suji* provides a wealth of information on how to identify proper burial sites at a time when Koreans felt a desperate need for just such information. And, of course, it devotes an enormous amount of attention to the *Yijing*—an object of particular interest to Korean intellectuals in the late Chosŏn era.<sup>149</sup> But beyond its ample inventory of cosmic variables, technical terms, interpretive devices, and depictions of graveyard configurations, the book offers a great number of short essays that provide useful and/or comforting advice to its readers. The tone is often personal, but also didactic. [Figures 14a–d]

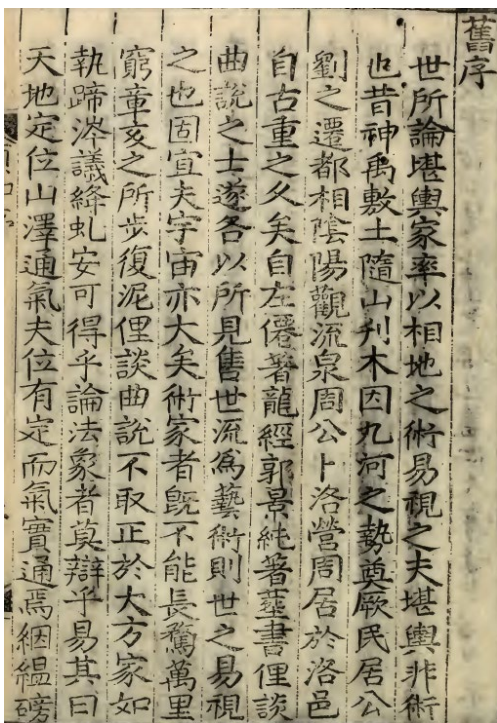


Figure 14a: The first page of the “old preface” to the *Inja suji* 人子須知. The emphasis here is on the classical/historical foundations of geomancy (堪輿), with particular reference to culture heroes such as the Duke of Zhou and venerated texts such as the *Yijing*. Source: <https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22880-01+Xu%2C+Shanji%2C+14th+cent%22>.

<sup>148</sup> I have consulted several editions of the *Inja suji*, including the one referred to above, which probably dates from the seventeenth century. URL: <https://archive.org/details/injasujikwon147u018800>.

<sup>149</sup> See R. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography*, 141–50.



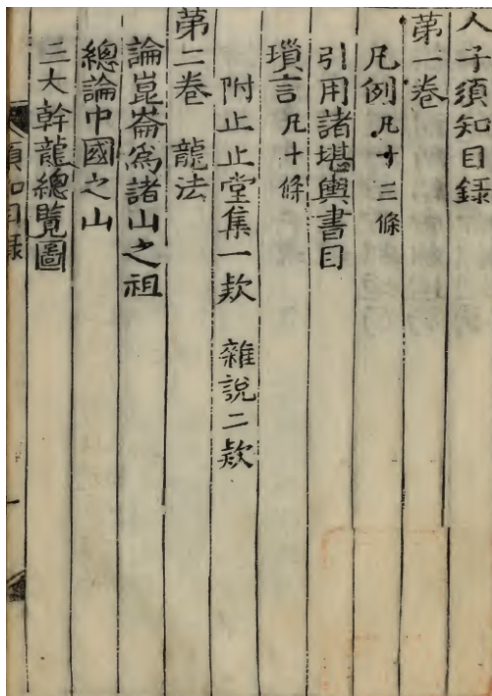


Figure 14b: The first page of the 33-page table of contents of the *Inja suji* 人子須知. The table of contents as a whole provides a fairly detailed breakdown of a total of 47 volumes (卷). The first volume includes preliminary materials (a thirteen point guide to the reader, bibliography, and “trivial remarks” (瑣言) by the author. The second volume provides a broad overview of topography and the third volume focuses on historical capitals (see also Figures 16a–d and 17a–b)

論九州山鎮川澤	論山河兩戒	論三大幹龍脉絡	第三卷	論帝都	歷代帝都圖并考	論帝都必合星垣	論北龍所結帝都垣局	論中龍所結帝都垣局	論南龍所結帝都垣局
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Figure 14c: The second page of the 33-page table of contents of the *Inja suji* 人子須知.

第四卷	總論枝幹	論枝龍	附隨龍穴格諸圖	建安楊太師祖地	杭州江尚書祖地	蘭谿趙探花祖地	休寧程尚書祖地	杭州高相公祖地	第五卷	總論支壠
				蘭谿磨狀元祖地	承天曾尚書祖地					

Figure 14d: The third page of the 33-page table of contents of the *Inja suji* 人子須知. The fourth chapter includes discussions of large-scale geographical “branches and stems” (枝幹), as well as an appendix with illustrations and discussions of eight elite gravesites.

The overarching theme of the *Inja suji* is revealed in one of its several alternate titles: *Renzi xuzhi zixiao dili xinixue tongzong* 人子須知資孝地理心學統宗 (A comprehensive summary of what people must know about geomancy in the service of filial piety). Chosŏn elites no doubt responded positively to this moral emphasis, which resonated with their own deep-seated self-image of righteous thought and behavior. By virtue of steady indoctrination and long ritual practice, the Koreans were as devoted to the concept of filiality (孝) as any culture group in East Asia, including the Chinese.<sup>150</sup>

The “introduction” (凡例) to the *Inja suji* sets the moral and practical tone of the work. Based on the constantly cited authority of the ancients, it admonishes readers to become thoroughly acquainted with the principles of *fengshui*, to avoid delaying burials, to eschew moving or disturbing existing graves, to resist competing with siblings over who might benefit most from a gravesite, to observe past examples of well-chosen gravesites, to select a “good teacher” (i.e. a skilled geomancer), to nourish their “inner morality” (陰德), and so forth. “When a son is looking for a [proper] place to bury a parent,” we are told, “he first has to cultivate his virtue” (蓋人子求地葬親，當先修其德).<sup>151</sup>

The most striking characteristic of the book as a whole is its attention to specific, as well as generic, geomantic sites—ranging from the whole of East Asia, to famous capital cities, and to notable graves in individual Chinese locations. Why would Korean intellectuals be interested in such things? A few answers suggest themselves (I have not yet found any specific reaction to the *Inja suji* on the part of Chosŏn scholars). One is that the Koreans were literally part of the cartographic picture, at least in terms of several of the *Inja suji*’s maps, including a tripartite map of East Asia—a version of the famous Chinese document titled *Zhongguo san da ganlong zonglan zhi tu* 中國三大幹龍總覽之圖 (A general map of the three great “stem dragons” of China), which I have discussed in part 1 of this article. Another possible reason for interest in this and other maps in the

<sup>150</sup> This is a subjective judgment, but I think it is defensible. For one valuable perspective on the matter, see Martina Deuchler, “The Practice of Confucianism: Ritual and Order in Chosŏn Dynasty Korea,” in Elman, Duncan, and Ooms, eds., *Rethinking Confucianism*: 292–334. Cf. Yoon ed., *P’ungsu*, 48, 52–56, 344–46.

<sup>151</sup> *Inja suji* (UCB edition), 1: 94–110 (electronic pagination).

*Inja suji* is that they link Korea directly to the ultimate source of geomantic power in the entire world—the majestic (but mythical) Kunlun Mountains (崑崙山). [Figures 15a–c]

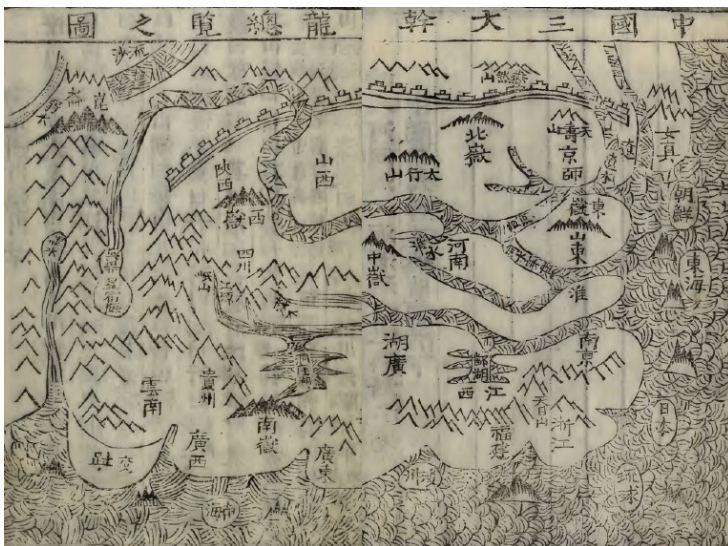


Figure 15a: Tripartite map of East Asia. Source: *Inja suji*. Cf. Figure 18c below.

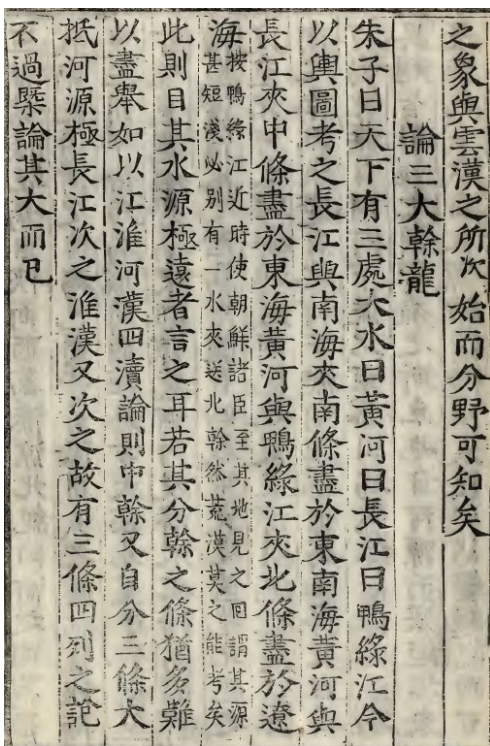


Figure 15b A discussion of the “three great stem dragons” of East Asia. Source: *Inja suji*

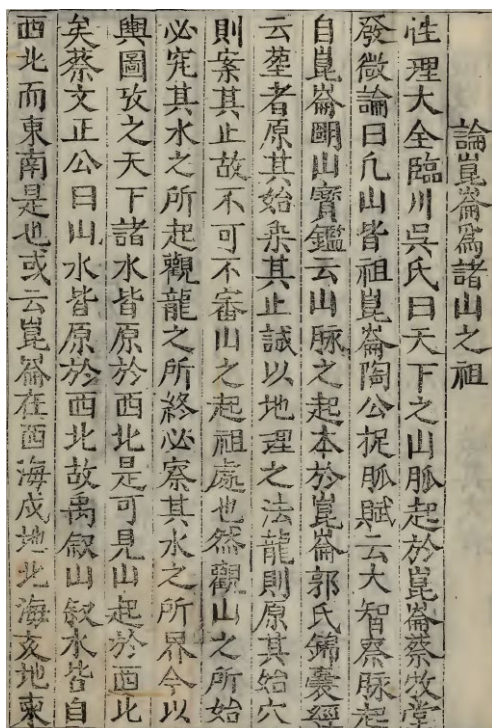


Figure 15c: A partial discussion of the Kunlun Mountains as the “ancestor of all mountains” (論崑崙為諸山之祖). Source: *Inja suji*

As we have seen in section 1 of this article, the Tang dynasty geomancer Yang Yunsong described the Kunlun range as constituting “the bones of Heaven and Earth,” the “spine” of the world. According to an ancient legend that became deeply entrenched in all parts of the Sinosphere over time, the Kunlun Mountains generated four mountain systems, known as “stem dragons” (幹龍), which spread out into the “four directions of the world.”<sup>152</sup> One of the branches that found its way eastward traveled across the Liaodong Plain to form the Paektu 白頭 (aka Baekdu) mountain range, the great Korean

<sup>152</sup> Later, in the Ming dynasty, another famous exponent of geomancy, Liu Bowen 劉伯溫 (1311–75), offered a somewhat different evaluation of the relationship between the Kunlun Mountains and the rest of the world. In his view, as in Yang’s, the “earth veins” of all under Heaven originated from the “chief dragon,” Mount Kunlun. But the main “dragon stems” (幹龍) in China were more numerous and more clearly delineated in Liu’s scheme than in Yang’s. In the far north was the “branch dragon” of the Yin Mountains (陰山), running along the border between Mongolia and present-day Hubei; in the middle was the branch dragon of the Qinling 秦嶺 Mountains, forming a natural boundary between north and south China; and in the south, another branch ran eastbound from Mount Emei (峨眉山) in modern-day Sichuan across the Yangzi River and into the Nanling Mountains 南嶺, which separate the Yangzi River Valley from the Pearl River Basin. These branches, in turn, were connected to a great many “secondary” dragon veins. See Qiufang Yi, “The Dragon’s Veins,” 96–97.

pilgrimage site on the border between Manchuria and Korea.<sup>153</sup> Korea was thus “energized” by this geomantic connection, and by its links to other mountain systems in the country.

A fascinating variation on this theme, involving the same mountain range, can be found in the Manchu appropriation of China’s most sacred peak, Mount Tai, after the Qing conquest in 1644. In 1684, the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661–1722) made a pilgrimage to the ancient ceremonial site in Shandong province, after which he wrote an essay titled “Mount Tai’s Mountain Veins Originate in the Changbai Mountains” (泰山山脈自長白山來). Here we see a Manchu emperor claiming, on the authority of certain unnamed “*fengshui* masters,” that the geomantic power of China’s most “ritually potent” mountain had its source in the Manchu homeland (Mount Paektu is known in Manchu as Golmin Šanggiyan Alin and as Changbai shan in Chinese). Significantly, and presumably by design, the Kangxi emperor’s interpretation of the link between the Changbai Mountains and Mount Tai did not accord with the views “of the [Chinese] ancients.”<sup>154</sup>

The *Inja suji* evaluates the three major stem dragons of China, and analyzes the cities that arose in their embrace. By mapping the way some cities flourished while others did not, the *Inja suji* provides its readers with a blueprint for the establishment of successful capitals. [Figures 16a–d] Such information would be of interest to anyone connected to the Kunlun geomantic power grid, especially the Koreans, since the eighteenth century was a time when geomantic prophesies regarding the establishment of a new Chosŏn capital began to circulate widely. These geomantic prophesies were known generically in Korea as *chiri toch’am* (地理圖讖) or *p’ungsu toch’am* (風水圖讖).<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> See Ik-cheol Shin, “Travel to Baekdusan and Its Significance during the Joseon Period.” *The Review of Korean Studies* 13:4 (December 2010): 13–31 and Nae-hyun Kwon, “Changes in the Perception of Baekdusan during the Late Period of Joseon,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 13:4 (December 2010): 73–103.

<sup>154</sup> See Dott, *Identity Reflections*, 151 ff, esp. 159–63.

<sup>155</sup> See the discussion in Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 120–25. Cf. Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 74 and 172 and Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, esp. 104–05.



Figure 16a: A map showing the capitals of various Chinese kingdoms and dynasties from the time of the legendary ruler Fuxi up to the establishment of the Ming dynasty. Note the Kunlun Mountains to the far west as well as the major river systems. Source: *Inja suji*

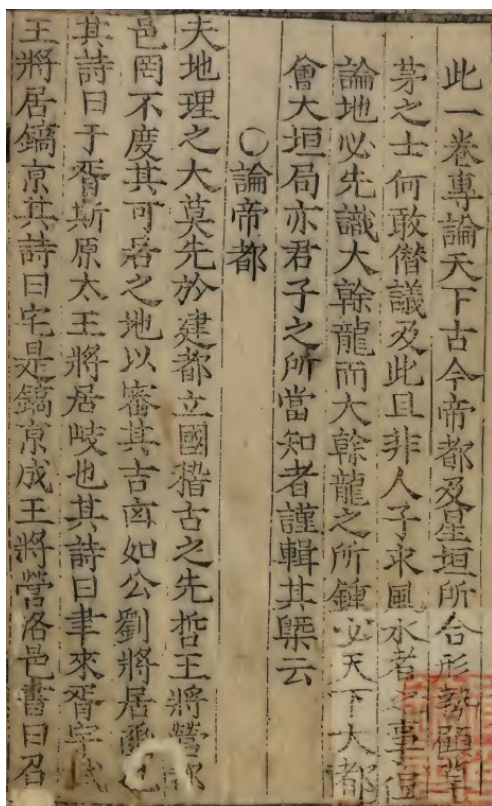


Figure 16b: The beginning of a long essay titled “A Discussion of Imperial Capitals” (論帝都). Source: *Inja suji*



Figure 16c: A map of the Luoyi 洛邑 area, identified with Luoyang 洛陽 (see the lower right corner of the map), capital of several dynasties, including the Eastern Han, the Western Jin, and the later Tang. The emphasis here is on waterways but two prominent mountain ranges are also identified. Source: *Inja suji*





Figure 16d. A map of Nanjing (aka Jiankang 健康 and Jinling 金陵), capital of the Southern Dynasties in the Six Dynasties period and the early Ming dynasty. Note the protective mountains and the Yangzi River, which is depicted as if it were nearly encircling the city. Source: *Inja suji*

Significantly, the four most successful Chinese capital cities discussed in the *Inja suji*—Beijing, Chang’an, Luoyang and Nanjing—were not, in fact, equally blessed from a geomantic standpoint. The result was that adjustments had to be made in both the illustrations and the texts accompanying them, a standard cartographic practice in various parts of the Sinosphere, as we have seen.<sup>156</sup> In the case of Beijing, the *Inja suji* reveals that certain cartographic modifications were made in order to “improve” the city’s *fengshui*. After these adjustments, Beijing appears to be situated comfortably between the Yalu and Yellow Rivers, with Korea apparently protecting its eastern flank. [Figure 17a–b] Korean cartographers, as we shall see, modified depictions of space for similar reasons, eager to produce maps that reflected auspicious “shapes and circumstances” (*hyöngsedo* 形勢圖).<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 219–24 discusses the evaluation of these cities and the modifications that had to be made.

<sup>157</sup> Ledyard, Gari. “Cartography in Korea,” in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds. *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, bk. 2 (Chicago University Press, 1996): 235–345, esp. 276–79.



Figure 17a: A map of Beijing (aka Yan 燕 or Yanjing 燕京), capital of the Yuan, the later Ming and the Qing dynasties. Note that Beijing is protected on the north by both the Great Wall and the Tianshou Mountains 天壽山 depicted immediately below it. Source: *Inja suji*



Figure 17b: A map of the Pingyang 平陽 (aka Linfen 臨汾) area, capital of the legendary ruler Yao 堯, in what is now Shanxi province, to the southwest of Beijing. Note the

Kunlun Mountains and the Yellow River in the upper northwest, with the Great Wall appearing as a part of the landscape well before its actual creation in the Qin period.

Source: *Inja suji*

Often, as Hong-Key Yoon has indicated, the Koreans borrowed maps and images of gravesites from standard Chinese geomantic works like the *Inja suji*, and then either amplified them, or, more often than not, simplified them.<sup>158</sup> On other occasions, they created their own distinctive cartographic images, eager to document the power of their own auspicious sites.<sup>159</sup> [Figures 18a–g]



Figure 18a: A map of Korea, showing Mount Paektu/Baekdu and the Changbai Mountains as separate ranges to the far northwest of the capital city, Seoul, which is depicted as a rather unsightly orange circle. Immediately above Seoul on this map are the Samgak Mountains 三角山, now known as the Bukhan Mountains 北漢山. Source: *Da Ming yitong shanhe tu* [Korean: *Tae Myong ilt'ong sanha to*] 大明一總山河圖 (The great Ming Dynasty's atlas of mountains and rivers c. 1722; Library of Congress Map Division)

<sup>158</sup> See Hong-key Yoon, "The Traditional Standard Korean Maps and Geomancy." *New Zealand Map Society Journal* 6 (1992): 3–9.

<sup>159</sup> David J. Nemeth, "A Cross-Cultural Cosmographic Interpretation of Some Korean Geomancy Maps," *Cartographica* 30.1 (Spring 1993): 85–97, "Feng-shui as Terrestrial Astrology in Traditional China and Korea," in James Swan, ed., *Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1991): 215–234 and "Korean P'ungsu Maps and Nature's Self-organizing Principles," paper for the First Kyujanggak International Symposium on Korean Studies, "The Flow of Ideas and Institutions: Korea in the World and the World in Korea," Seoul National University, October 16–17, 2008: 290–316. Cf. Yoon, ed., *P'ungsu*, 106–11.



Figure 18b: A Korean map of Korea in a collection titled *Ch'ŏnha chido* 天下地圖 (Maps of all under Heaven; 19th century). This map strongly suggests the geomantically oriented topographical features of China's Hainan Island reflected in Figure 17, part 1 of this essay—especially its undulating rectangular shape and its prominent mountains and rivers. These features are also evident in two other Korean maps of Korea, both titled *Chosŏn chongdo* 朝鮮總圖, and included in collections generically titled *Yŏjido* 輿地圖. One map dates from c. 1760 (URL: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7900m.gct00115/?sp=10>), and the other from some time in the nineteenth century (URL: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7900m.gct00157/?sp=2>). Source: Library of Congress Map Division



Figure 18c: A Korean map of East Asia in the collection titled *Ch'ŏnha chido*. Cf. Figure 15a above. Source: Library of Congress Map Division

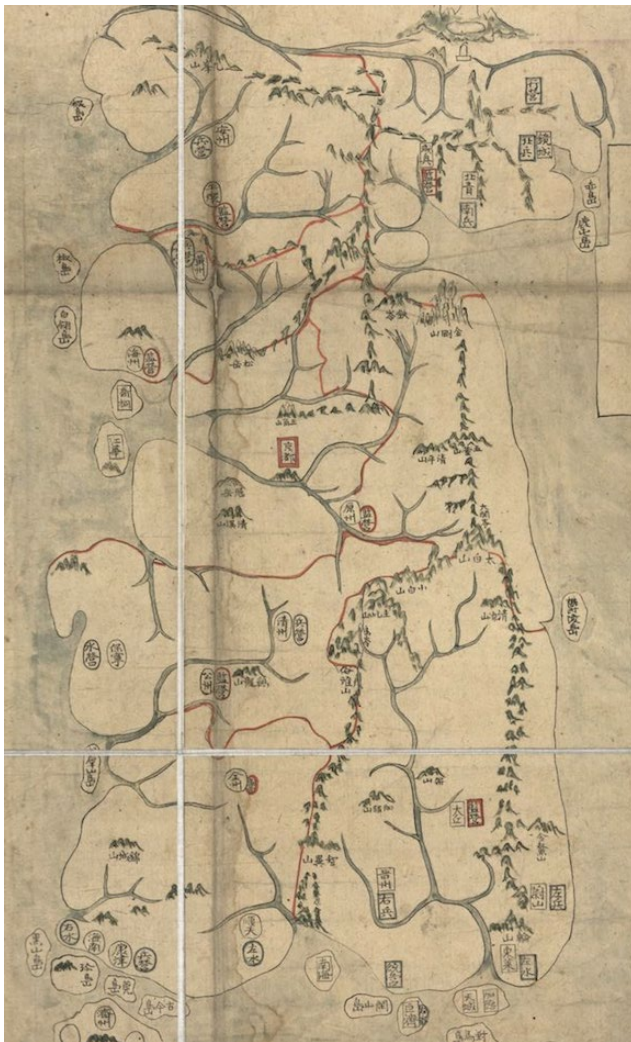


Figure 18d: A Korean map of Korea titled *Chosŏn Chongdo* 朝鮮總圖 (Complete map of Korea c. 1722) in a series of folios generically titled *Yŏjido* 輿地圖. Note the prominent mountain systems (“dragon veins”) running north to south—in particular the “great stem” (大幹) of connected ranges that runs from Mount Paektu (白頭山) in the north to Mount Chiri (智異山) in the south. According to the *T’aengniji* (Treatise on selecting settlements; see below) the “great stem” served as the “backbone of the Korean peninsula,” uniting all of Korea’s eight provinces. Source: Library of Congress Map Division



Figure 18e: A Korean map of Korea in the collection titled *Chosŏn chido* 朝鮮地圖 (Maps of Korea; 1730). Note the prominent river systems. Source: Library of Congress Map Division



Figure 18f: Detail of the Seoul area from the collection titled *Chosŏn chido*. Note the protective mountains surrounding Seoul (京都). Source: Library of Congress Map Division



Figure 18g: A nineteenth century map of Seoul titled *Kyōngjo obu* 京兆五部 (The five sections of the capital). Note how extraordinarily well-protected the city is, from the standpoint of both fortifications and geomantic features. Source: Library of Congress Map Division

During the Chosŏn period, most Korean books on geomancy other than those imported from China were oriented strongly toward what I have described earlier in this article as the interpretation of physical shapes (物形) and topographical forms (形局).<sup>160</sup> Although this geomantic approach had its origins in China, it often reflected distinctly Korean perceptions and preoccupations.<sup>161</sup> For instance, because Korean villagers commonly treated the local landscape as if it were an actual object, they might refrain from digging a well in an area that resembled a boat, for fear of drilling a hole in the bottom of a boat. By the same token, if an area seemed to lack certain auspicious physical features, especially protective hills or mountains, the local population might attempt to compensate for the “deficiency” by the arrangement of rocks or mounds of earth—a process known in Korean as *pibo* 裨補.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>160</sup> See Sanghak Oh, “The Physical Shape Theory of *Fengshui* in China and Korea,” 559–76, Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 137 ff. and Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, 253–74.

<sup>161</sup> Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, 255–58 identifies more than forty “well-known” geomantic landscapes in Korea, many with colorful and sometimes disgusting names such as “a dead snake hanging on a tree” (枯蛇掛樹形) and “a golden crow pecking a corpse” (金烏啄(啄?)屍形). Some of these names are based on Korean folklore.

<sup>162</sup> See Hong-Key Yoon “Human Modification of Korean Landforms for Geomantic Purposes,” 243–260 and Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, 102–04, 227, 230–31, and esp. 275–89.

One late Chosŏn work providing guidance was a book titled *Son- 'gam myogyŏl* 巽坎妙訣 (Marvelous *fengshui* formulas). Based on actual Korean land surveys, it examines 218 propitious sites, each accompanied by a geomantic map. In at least 140 cases, a physical shape—based on a plant, an animal, a person, a deity, an object or a substance—guides the interpretation. After taking both the physical features of the landscape and certain cosmological factors into account, a section of the book titled “record of formulas” (訣錄) yields its prognostications.<sup>163</sup> Other more recent interpretations of geomantic sites have focused on certain kinds of human sexual symbolism.<sup>164</sup>

Another distinctly Korean geomantic work from the late Chosŏn period is Yi Chung-hwan's 李重煥 (1690–1756) famous *T'aengniji* 擇里誌 (Treatise on selecting settlements; 1751). Astonishingly, there are ninety versions of this book with thirty-two different titles.<sup>165</sup> As in the case of the *Son- 'gam myogyŏl*, the *T'aengniji* is concerned more with residences for the living (陽宅) than for the dead (陰宅). At the same time, however, the author's clear goal is to go beyond the standard geomantic categories of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, calamity and good fortune (吉凶禍福). To be sure, Yi claims that the first consideration in selecting a desirable place to live should always be its geomantic circumstances. But in the section of his book dealing the eight provinces (八道) of Korea, and in other places of the book as well, he identifies non-geomantic factors that also need to be taken into account. For Yi, a place with the best of geomantic features but poor economic conditions will not be suitable for long-term habitation, and a place with good economic conditions but poor geomantic qualities will not be satisfactory

<sup>163</sup> See Sanghak Oh, “The Physical Shape Theory of *Fengshui* in China and Korea,” 571–74 and Hong-Key Yoon “Human Modification of Korean Landforms for Geomantic Purposes,” 243–260. See also Kyŏngin Munhwasa 景仁文化社, ed., *P'ungsu chiri ch'ongsŏ: T'akokpu, Chiri sinpŏp*, Myŏngsannon, *Songam myogyŏl* 風水地理叢書: 帛玉斧; 地理新法; 明山論; 巽坎妙訣 (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 1969).

<sup>164</sup> See, for example, Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 80 and 150–52; see also Murayama Chijun, *Chosen no fūsui*, 214–16.

<sup>165</sup> See Inshil Choe Yoon, *Yi Chung-hwan's T'aengniji*” and “An Examination of Geomancy (*P'ungsu*) as Employed in *T'aengniji*.” *International Review of Korean Studies* 6:1 (2009): 49–76. Cf. Hong-key Yoon, “T'aengni-ji: A Classical Cultural Geography of the Korean Settlement,” *Korea Journal* 16:8 (August 1976): 4–12 and 353–71.



either. Furthermore, Yi asserts, one needs a comfortable social environment and natural beauty.<sup>166</sup> [Figures 19a–b]

擇里誌目錄	
四民總論	一
八道總論	二
平安道	三
咸鏡道	六
黃海道	九
江原道	三
慶尙道	五
全羅道	元
忠清道	二
京畿道	三
卜居總論	四
地理	四
生理	四
人心	四
山水	五
總論	
山水總論(五)	五
海山(七)	七
山水之勝(六)	六
四郡山水(七)	七
江居(七)	七
溪居(七)	七
山形(五)	五

Figure 19a: Table of contents of a modern version of the *T'aengniji* 擇里誌.

<sup>166</sup> Inshil Choe Yoon, trans., *Yi Chung-hwan's T'aengniji: The Korean Classic for Choosing Settlements*. Sydney: Wild Peony Press, 1998), 61.

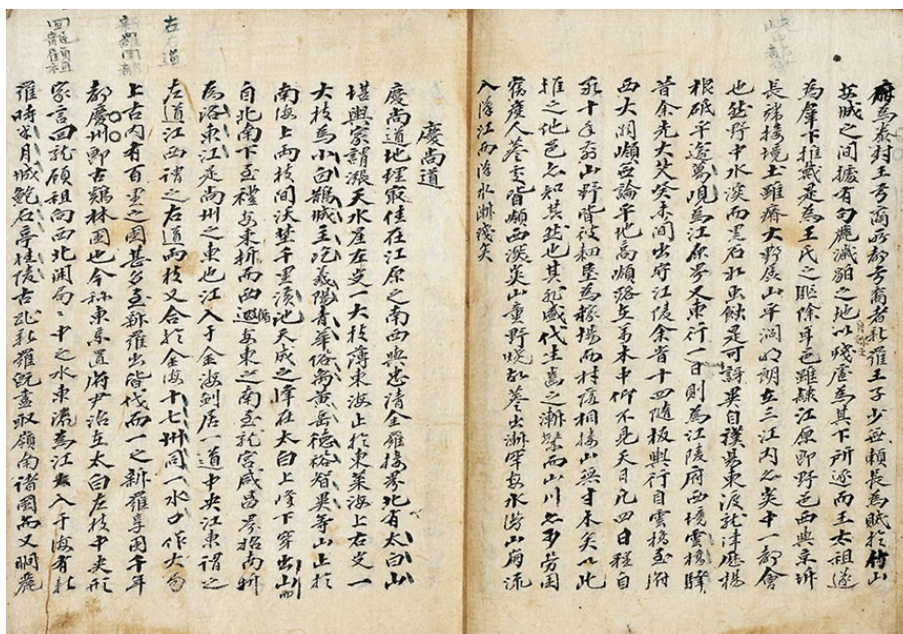


Figure 19b: Two pages from a handwritten copy of the *T'aengniji* 擇里誌 (undated). The page on the right ends the discussion of Kangwŏn province 江原道 and the page on the left begins the discussion of Kyongsang Province (慶尚道)

The geomantic section of the *T'aengniji* covers the usual territory, although in some editions a detailed discussion of *fengshui* is omitted because, as the author puts the matter, “there are books on the subject written by geomancers.”<sup>167</sup> There are, in this section, a few references to cosmological calculations involving the eight trigrams, the five agents, and the twenty-four directions, but most of the initial section of the book emphasizes the evaluation of water sources and flows, the shape, size and placement of hills and mountains, and so forth. Next, we are told about the need to find an area to live where economic conditions are favorable. Here, the author provides us with considerable detail on the poor and rich areas of Korea, along with information about local rivers, resources and transportation routes. The third section focuses primarily on national and local politics, with a surprisingly detailed account of Korea’s factionalism, and a blunt condemnation of the fractious *yangban* class. In the interest of social harmony, the author states bluntly, it would be best “to find a place where scholar-gentry do not reside.”<sup>168</sup> The final section on scenery is a lyrical paean to the grandeur of the Korean landscape, with a predictable emphasis on its glorious mountains.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 84.

In part, this may be what Hong-Key Yoon had in mind in referring to “Korea’s own style of geomancy:” a particularistic emphasis on the Korean land and its people rather than a more universalistic preoccupation with abstract cosmic patterns and principles.<sup>169</sup> The two were, of course, deeply imbricated in theory, but at the same time they could be psychologically separated. Similarly, although the many colorful stories about *fengshui* practitioners and their clients that circulated during the Chosŏn period reflect themes that can be found in the popular literature of other East Asian cultures at about the same time—cooperation and competition, morality and immorality, honor and dishonor, truth and deceit, altruism and selfishness, profit and pain, etc.—the tales in each culture appear in somewhat different dress. For example, although Confucian secular values were dominant in both the Qing and Chosŏn dynasties, Korean stories about geomancy tended to feature Buddhist themes and characters significantly more often than their Chinese counterparts. In Chinese geomantic tales, professional *fengshui* specialists generally do the divining; in Korean stories, Buddhists often appear as diviner-monks.<sup>170</sup>

#### Late Lê and early Nguyễn dynasty Vietnam

As with Korea and the Ryukyu islands, Vietnam in the period from c. 1600–1900 fully embraced Chinese-style geomancy. Books such as Huang Lanxiang’s 黃蘭翔 *Yuenan chuantong juluo, zongjiao jianzhu yu gongdian* 越南傳統聚落宗教建築與宮殿 (The traditional villages, religious architecture and palaces in Vietnam; 2008) attest to this commitment, as do scholarly articles such as Niu Junkai’s 牛軍凱, “Shilun fengshui wenhua zai Yuenan de chuanbo yu fengshui shu de Yuenan hua” 試論風水文化在越南的傳播與風水術的越南化 (On the spread of *fengshui* culture to Vietnam and the

<sup>169</sup> A taste of this emphasis may be found in David A. Mason’s interesting but not entirely satisfying book, *Spirit of the Mountains: Korea’s SAN-SHIN [sic] and Traditions of Mountain Worship* (Seoul: Hollym International, 1999). See also Mason’s website at <http://www.san-shin.org/>.

<sup>170</sup> See Hong-key Yoon, “An Analysis of Korean Geomancy Tales,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 34.1 (1975): 21–34; see also Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 179–213 and Yoon, ed., *P’ungsu*, 313–28.

Vietnamization of the geomantic arts; 2011).<sup>171</sup> Early ethnographic works by Westerners such as Gustave Dumoutier and Henri Oger describe at considerable length, and often with illustrations, the prevalence of Chinese-style popular beliefs in Vietnam, including geomancy and other forms of divination.<sup>172</sup> [Figures 20a–c] Moreover, recent ethnographic research in Vietnam reveals that contemporary *fengshui* masters known as *thầy pháp*—working from private homes (both their own and those of their clients), and providing advice on the location of buildings and tombs for a fee—operate essentially as they did in the pre-socialist period of Vietnamese history.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Huang Lanxiang 黃蘭翔, *Yuenan chuantong juluo, zongjiao jianzhu yu gongdian* 越南傳統聚落宗教建築與宮殿 (The traditional villages, religious architecture and palaces in Vietnam) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan, 2008) and Niu Junkai 牛軍凱, “Shilun fengshui wenhua zai Yuenan de chuanbo yu fengshui shu de Yuenan hua” 試論風水文化在越南的傳播與風水術的越南化 (On the spread of fengshui culture to Vietnam and the Vietnamization of the geomantic arts) (August 9, 2011). URL: <http://www.seasas.cn/article-332-1.html>; accessed 7-7-17. See also Momoki Shiro 桃木至朗. “Betonamu-no Chugoku-ka” (The “sinicization” of Vietnam) in Ikehata Setsuho 池端雪浦, ed., *Kawaru Tonan Ajiashi-zo* 変わる東南アジア史像 (Changing images of Southeast Asian history) (Yamakawa Shuppan-sha, 1994): 157–91.

<sup>172</sup> See Gustave Dumoutier, *Le rituel funéraire des Annamites: Étude d'ethnographie religieuse* (Hanoi: F.H. Schneider, 1904) and *Études d'ethnographie religieuse Annamite: Sorcellerie et divination* (Hanoi: Imprimerie nationale, 1899), esp. 314 ff.; Henri Oger, *Technique du peuple annamite* (Hanoi: Avenir du Tonkin, 1908–10).

<sup>173</sup> See, for example, the excellent discussion in Didier Bertrand, “The Thầy: Masters in Hué, Vietnam,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 55.2 (1996): 271–286; cf. Gustave Dumoutier, *Essai sur les Tonkinois* (Hanoi-Haiphong: Imprimerie d'Extrême-orient, 1908). Bertrand's research suggests an overlap in the responsibilities of *thầy pháp* and other Vietnamese mantic practitioners such as *thầy bói*, *thầy phù thủy* and *thầy pháp*. Cf. Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy* (1974), 228–30, Pierre Huard and Maurice Durand, *Connaissance du Viet-Nam* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale and Hanoi: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1954), 65–71, and Gerald Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 38–41.



Figures 20a: Depiction of a Vietnamese geomancer. Source: Henri Oger, *Technique du peuple annamite* (Hanoi: Avenir du Tonkin, 1908–10)



Figure 20b: Devotions at a Vietnamese tomb. Source: Henri Oger, *Technique du peuple annamite*



Figure 20c: Vietnamese protective charms. Source: Henri Oger, *Technique du peuple annamite*

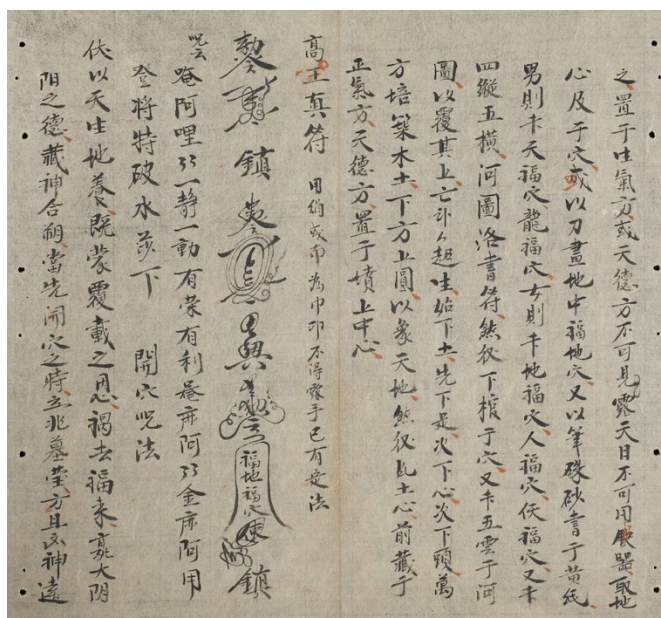


Figure 20d: Geomantic charms attributed to Gao Pian, from the *Địa lý gia truyền* 地理家傳 (Family traditions of geomancy; undated). Source: National Library of Vietnam

It is true that geomantic beliefs and construction practices in Vietnam have also been influenced by cultural traditions other than those of the Han Chinese,<sup>174</sup> and Vietnam's so-called "minority" people, who together constitute about 15% of the country's total population (about twice the number of "minorities" in China, proportionally speaking), have had their own rich mantic traditions.<sup>175</sup> But on the whole, Vietnamese divinatory traditions have followed those of China and other East Asian cultures. For example, a fairly complete annotated bibliography of Vietnamese books compiled by Liu Chunyin 劉春銀, Wang Xiaodun 王小盾 and Trần Nghĩa 陳義, titled *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao* 越南漢喃文獻目 提要 (Annotated catalogue of Han-Nôm literary materials; 2002), reveals a substantial number of entries in each of the "standard" Chinese mantic categories known as "arts of calculation" (數術): "geomancy" (堪輿; 77 works), "astrology" (星命; 49), "Yijing-based divination" (易卦; 12; in addition to 32 works on the *Changes* in the "classics" section [經部]), "physiognomy and miscellaneous prognostications" (相法雜占; 29), and "tallies and omens" (籤識; 21). Of all the above-mentioned works, purely Han Chinese texts outnumber Han-Nôm texts 7:1 (136 to 19), and the books in the "arts of calculation" category outnumber the "classics" 188 to 122.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> See Volkov, "Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam," esp. 127–28. For indications of Persian, Indic and other influences on this system (known as *Ziwei doushu* in Chinese), see Peng Yoke Ho, *Chinese Mathematical Astrology*, 74–82.

<sup>175</sup> Alexei Volkov and Dieu Linh Mai Bui, "Divination Practices among Vietnamese Minorities," paper for the workshop on "Divinatory Traditions in East Asia: Historical, Comparative and Transnational Perspectives," Rice University, February 17-18, 2012. From the evidence presented in this paper, it seems safe to say that Han Chinese beliefs and practices influenced the mantic practices of "minority" people in Vietnam far more than the other way around.

<sup>176</sup> See Liu Chunyin 劉春銀, Wang Xiaodun 王小盾, Trần Nghĩa 陳義, eds., *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao* 越南漢喃文獻目 提要 (Annotated catalogue of Han-Nôm literary materials) (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2002), xii–xlix. This work draws substantially from Trần Nghĩa and François Gros, eds., *Catalogue des livres en Hán-Nôm* (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản khoa học xã hội, edition [des] sciences sociales. 1993), which contains bibliographical entries for 5,038 books preserved in the library of the Institute of Han-Nôm Studies in Hanoi and other archives. Cf. Liu Yujun 劉玉珺, *Yuenan Han Nan guji de wenxian xue yanjiu* 越南漢喃古籍的文獻學研究 (Philological research on ancient Vietnamese works in Han and Nôm scripts) (Beijing:



Many of the “arts of calculation” identified above were closely related, as they were throughout the Sinosphere. But the categorization systems of works such as the *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao* do not reveal the substantial degree of overlap. For instance, none of the three most influential traditions of East Asian astrology—*Taiyi* 太乙, *Liuren* 六壬 and *Qimen dunjia* 奇門遁甲—all of which, as mentioned previously, were closely connected to *fengshui*—are represented in the “geomancy” section of the catalogue.<sup>177</sup> The same is true of derivative astrological systems, such as *Tử vi đẩu số*, which evolved out of *Taiyi* and became a part of the repertoire of many East Asian *fengshui* practitioners. Likewise, we find many overlaps in the content of books categorized as “astrology” and “*Yijing*-based divination.” As in China, Korea and the Ryukyus, grave divination (墓相, 相地, etc.) in Vietnam was more prevalent than residential divination (家相), and the Jiangxi School of “forms and configurations” (形勢) was more popular than the Fujian School of “directions and positions” (方位). Nonetheless, as indicated earlier, few geomancers in premodern East Asia used one approach to the total exclusion of the other.

In contrast to the abundant documentary records on geomancy in Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, there are comparatively few materials on *fengshui* (Vietnamese: (*phong thủy*)) that date from the late Lê and early Nguyễn periods in Vietnam. In all, less than one hundred volumes are presently extant and accessible in various archives and libraries around the world.<sup>178</sup> The primary reasons for this relative dearth of materials are: (1) the destruction of a great many Vietnamese books as a result of the Ming dynasty’s systematic “book-burning” campaign in the early fifteenth century; (2) the loss of enormous numbers of books during centuries of warfare (particularly, the Tây Sơn conflicts of 1773–1801), (3) the self-interested policies of the French colonial authorities in Vietnam, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, which led to the eradication of the Han-Nôm system of writing, (4) a series of politically inspired “anti-superstition”

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Zhonghua shuju, 2007), esp. 145–47. Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” 114–17, identifies gaps in some of these bibliographical records.

<sup>177</sup> On these three traditions, see Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” 126–131” and Peng Yoke Ho, *Chinese Mathematical Astrology*, 6 and 36–138 passim.

<sup>178</sup> The *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao* is relatively comprehensive, but not exhaustive. See Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” 116–17.

campaigns in 1948–49, 1956, 1968 and 1976, which resulted in the destruction of many books on divination, and (5) the decision by certain administrators of the National Library of Vietnam (NLV) during the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s to throw away large numbers of mantic works because they took up too much shelf space.<sup>179</sup> The Ming book-burning campaign was particularly devastating because the stated goal of this campaign was to destroy all written and printed materials that promoted Vietnamese rites and customs.<sup>180</sup>

Of the geomantic works still extant, many exist only in manuscript form (抄本), and the majority of these, although undated, seem to have been produced no earlier than the nineteenth century. One reason for the comparatively large proportion of such manuscripts is that printing in Nguyễn dynasty Vietnam was not as well developed as it was in Qing dynasty China, Tokugawa Japan or Chosŏn Korea. In the words of Shawn McHale,

Compared to elsewhere in Southeast Asia, print culture in Vietnam was vibrant in the nineteenth century. Compared to East Asia, it was not: it did not possess the institutions, networks, and media of a Japan or [a] China . . . . There was no Vietnamese equivalent to the developments in the Lower Yangzi region that transformed Qing intellectual life, nor was there a vibrant popularization of print culture such as in Tokugawa Japan, with merchant patrons subsidizing Confucian academies and printed matter flooding the country.<sup>181</sup>

And again:

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<sup>179</sup> According to Professor Alexei Volkov, the collection of the National Library of Vietnam (NLV) was not considered particularly important or useful by the administrators of the NLV in 1960s and 1970s, and during the early 1980s quite a few books were actually destroyed by them “because they took too much space on shelves.” Email communication dated April 2, 2018. I am indebted to Professor Volkov for many other professional and personal kindnesses and courtesies.

<sup>180</sup> See Alexander Ong Eng Ann, “Contextualizing the Book-Burning Episode during the Ming Invasion and Occupation of Vietnam: in Wade and Sun, eds., *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, 154–65, esp. 157.

<sup>181</sup> Shawn McHale, “Mapping a Vietnamese Confucian Past and Its Transition to Modernity,” in Elman, Duncan and Herman Ooms, *Rethinking Confucianism*, 397–430, esp. 407–08. For a fmore thorough analysis of print culture in Vietnam, see Liu Yujun, *Yuenan Han Nan guji de wenxian xue yanjiu*, esp. 96–156.

Few Vietnamese had access to books. Writing in the early nineteenth century for the Nguyễn court, Phan Huy Chú [潘輝注; 1782–1840] lamented: “Alas! Books from past generations have been scattered about, and have been lost and are difficult to search out, while those remaining are filled with errors.” Even later in the century, few Vietnamese outside the court had access to large collections of books . . . . Vietnam had few publishers, and many rulers were suspicious of reading material. Buddhist monasteries still served as a major source of publications.<sup>182</sup>

Yet another reason for the relatively large number of manuscripts in Vietnamese archival collections is that the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* employed a group of Vietnamese scholars to hand-copy books contained in the old imperial library of Hue, capital of the Nguyễn dynasty, before a number of these works—including some high-quality block prints—were lost or stolen when the dynasty fell in 1945. A significant percentage of these manuscripts eventually found their way to the National Library of Vietnam, the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies in Hanoi (Viện nghiên cứu Hán Nôm 院研究漢喃) and other repositories.<sup>183</sup>

Most of the dozens of premodern Vietnamese manuscripts on *fengshui* that I have examined, including some family genealogies (家譜), are available online at the Vietnamese National Library website.<sup>184</sup> But questions concerning authorship are often difficult to answer—as the annotations in the *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao* indicate clearly. In the first place, many Vietnamese books on *fengshui* simply have no designated author, editor or compiler. Second, geomantic works often have multiple titles, perhaps in part because there are often “books” within books, creating a great deal

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid. Tana Li argues that because labor costs in Vietnamese book production were so high, a robust maritime book trade developed between Vietnam and the rest of East Asia (especially China and Japan) as early as the sixteenth century. Apparently, however, it was not as robust as the book trade within the maritime nexus of China, Japan, Korea and the Ryukyu islands. See Li, “The Imported Book Trade and Confucian Learning in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Vietnam,” 167–82.

<sup>183</sup> Email communication from Alexei Volkov dated April 2, 2018.

<sup>184</sup> VNL, <http://hannom.nlv.gov.vn/>.

of bibliographical confusion. Furthermore, even among works that list an author, editor or compiler, there are many false attributions.<sup>185</sup> The primary reason for such attributions seems to have been an effort to associate these works with famous geomantic authorities, such as Guo Pu, Gao Pian, Huang Fu and Liu Bowen 劉伯溫 (aka Liu Ji 劉基; 1311–1375) in the case of China, and Chu Văn An 朱文安 (1292–1370), Tả Ao 左洑 (also written 左幻 or ; fl. 1460), Hòa Chính 和正 (aka Lê Hoàng 黎璜; fl. 1550), Nguyễn Bình Khiêm 阮秉謙 (1491–1585) and Ngô Thì Sĩ 吳時仕 (1726–1780) in the case of Vietnam.<sup>186</sup> There are, for example, at least four works associated with the name Huang Fu (Vietnamese: Hoàng Phúc), five associated with the name of Gao Pian (Vietnamese: Cao Biền), six associated with the name of Guo Pu (Vietnamese: Quách Phác), and no less than fifteen associated with Tả Ao—aka Hoàng Chiêm 黃瞻 or Nguyễn Đức Huyền 阮德玄.<sup>187</sup> [Figure 21]

<sup>185</sup> See Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam,” 131–37.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 131 ff. points out that many of these attributions are spurious. For some works allegedly written, edited or otherwise connected to Vietnamese authors, see, for example, *Thanh trì Quang liệt chu thị di thư* 清池光烈朱氏遺書 (The papers of Mr. Chu of Thanh trì district, Quang liệt village; attributed to Chu Văn An), *Địa học tinh hoa* 地學精華 (The essence of geomancy; attributed to Hoa Chinh), *Địa lý Tả Ao gia truyền* 地理左洑家傳 (Tả Ao's family tradition of geomancy), and *Địa lý Tả Ao di thư chân truyền chính pháp* 地理左洑遺書真傳正法 (Correct methods of geomancy handed down in direct descent from Tả Ao). VNL, <http://hannom.nlv.gov.vn/>.

<sup>187</sup> Most of these fifteen works include the name of either Tả Ao or Hoàng Chiêm in the title. See, for example, Liu, Wang and Trần, *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao*, entries 2393, 2396, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2408, 2409, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2449 and 2455. Several other works indicate that Tả, who is occasionally described as a “sagely teacher” (聖師), has contributed to their content. See *ibid.*, entry 2402. For biographical information on Tả Ao, see Niu Junkai, “Shilun fengshui wenhua zai Yuenan de chuanbo,” 84.

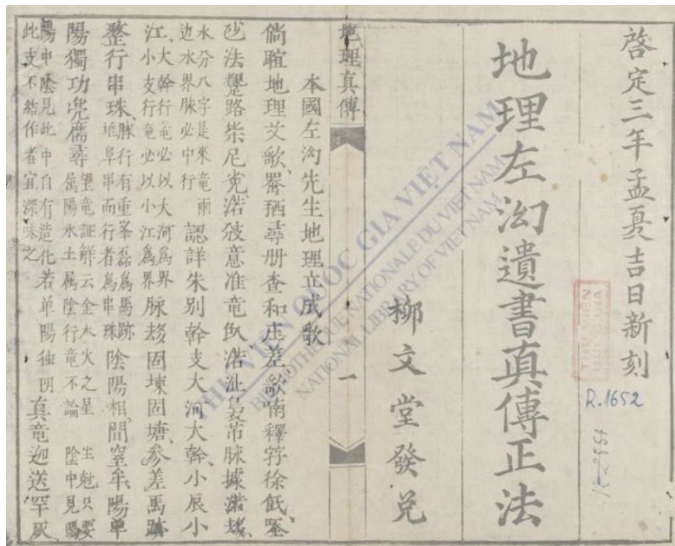


Figure 21: The first page of *Địa lý Tả Ao di thư chân truyền chính pháp* 地理左洑遺書真傳正法 (Correct methods of geomancy handed down from Tả Ao; 1918). The text displayed here, written in Han Nôm (漢喃) celebrates the geomantic achievements of Tả Ao in song (本國左洑先生地理立成歌). Source: National Library of Vietnam

Given the relatively small number of extant books, the lack of reliable dates for many of them, their composite nature (see below), and the tendency to misattribute authorship of such works, it is difficult to generalize about Vietnamese geomancy. On the one hand, all extant works on *fengshui* in Vietnam express a symbolic, aesthetic and analytical vocabulary that could be readily understood and appreciated by adherents of *fengshui* anywhere in East Asia into the early 1900s (and indeed, in most respects, to this day).<sup>188</sup> Many of them also employed geomantic maps and other illustrations in the fashion of *fengshui* manuals elsewhere in the Sinosphere.<sup>189</sup> [Figures 22a–e] And a

<sup>188</sup> Liu, Wang and Trần, *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao*, 459–73, identify the contents of most of their catalogued works with common geomantic concepts such as “seeking dragon veins and lairs” (尋龍脈和地穴), “methods for determining the orientation of structures for the living and the dead” (陽宅陰宅方向的方法), “day selection” (日擇), “[evaluating] earthly shapes” (地形), “using *yin* and *yang*, the five agents and the principles of the *Changes* in order to determine [proper] orientations” (以陰陽五行及易理為根據的立向), “methods of using the geomantic compass” (羅盤使用之法), “using the eight trigrams to look at the orientation of a house” (為依據八卦來看屋向), “using the River Chart and the Luo Writing as a theoretical foundation [for geomancy] (以河圖洛書為理論依據), “using stems and branches, the five agents and the eight trigrams as a theoretical foundation [for geomancy]” (以干支五行八卦為理論依據), etc.

<sup>189</sup> For examples of illustrations and/or detailed descriptions of geomantic sites, ranging from paradigmatic auspicious locations, to individual places in various parts of Vietnam, to the specific

number of them, like geomantic works in most other East Asian traditions, included, as part of their complex format, poems, chants, songs, charms and/or prayers.<sup>190</sup>



Figure 22a: Complete map of Vietnam 越南全境輿圖 (c. 1885), emphasizing geomantically relevant mountain and river systems. Source: Library of Congress Map Division

burial sites of rulers, famous generals and other notables, see *ibid.*, entries 2397, 2403, 2407, 2409, 2411, 2424, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2434, 2438, 2444, 2450, 2463, etc.

<sup>190</sup> For examples of works containing songs, chants, charms, prayers, etc., see *ibid.*, entries 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2409, 2414, 2415, 2420, 2426, 2429, 2431, 2441, 2447, 2452, 2455, 2456, 2467, etc.



Figure 22b: Details of Figure 21, depicting the Vietnamese capital and surrounding areas. Source: Library of Congress Map Division



Figure 22c: A gravesite (right) and an explanation of its basic geomantic features (left), from a Vietnamese work titled *Địa cục địa đồ* 地局地圖 (Maps of [geomantic] locations; undated copy of a 1721 version). This text analyzes twenty-eight “types” (格) of sites, using a basic East Asian geomantic vocabulary, and evaluating these sites in terms of variables conducing to fortune or misfortune. This particular page discusses ways to achieve wealth and status (富貴). Source: National Library of Vietnam



Figure 22d: Star-related lairs (星體結穴) from the *Địa lý gia bảo* 地理家寶 (Geomantic family treasures). Source: National Library of Vietnam

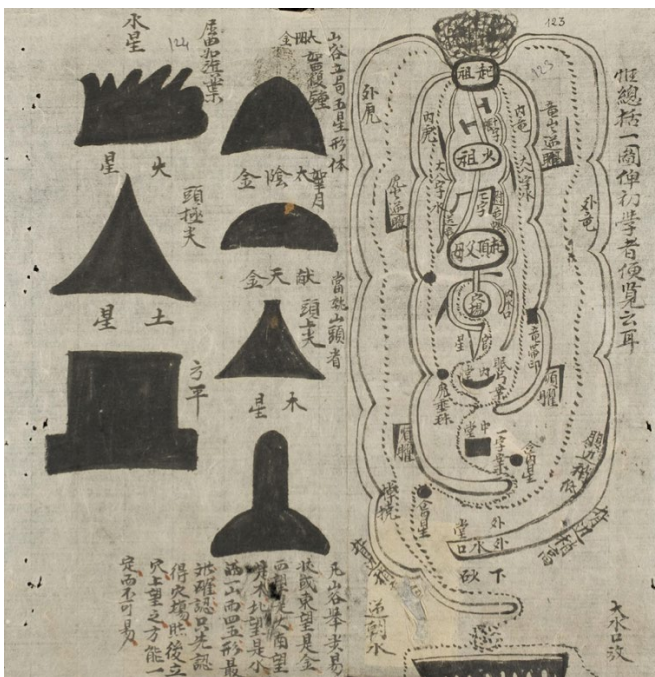


Figure 22e: Right, an auspicious gravesite, with detailed labeling of its component features (cf. section 1 of this paper, Figure 18b); left, variations on the standard five agent



(五行) topographical configurations of traditional East Asian geomancy. Source: From the *Địa lý gia bảo*, National Library of Vietnam

On the other hand, there are no complete Chinese *fengshui* “classics” among the documents I have seen in Vietnamese collections. At times, one or another Vietnamese work on geomancy will excerpt material from a classic Chinese text—say, the *Book of Burials* (葬書), the *Shaking Dragon Classic* (撼龍經), the *Profound Words of the Blue-Green Bag* (青囊奧語), or the *Classic of Houses for the Living* (陽宅經), but I have yet to encounter a complete Vietnamese version of any such work, much less an annotated one. To be sure, there is a Vietnamese edition of the famous Ming dynasty *fengshui* book titled *Renzi xuzhi* (Korean: *Inja suji*), which bears the name *Nhân tử tu tri lược biên* 人子須知略編 (A brief edition of *What people must know [about geomancy]*), attributed to the original Chinese authors, Xu Shanji and Xu Shanshu, and consisting of 256 pages—an extremely long book by Vietnamese standards.<sup>191</sup> But I have not been able to find a copy, and therefore cannot determine how close this work might be to the Chinese and Korean editions of an earlier period.

This situation presents obvious difficulties for anyone seeking to understand the process by which geomantic texts were transmitted to, and transformed in, Vietnam. What can be said about the relationship between “original” documents and subsequent copies or derivations? Alexei Volkov, offers an interesting perspective on the problem. In his pioneering research on astrology in premodern Vietnam, he encountered several different books that had titles similar to that of a famous Chinese astrological compendium known as the *Yu xia ji* 玉匣記 (Records from a jade chest). These works, all displaying the term “jade chest,” were: the *Ngọc Hạp* 玉匣, the *Ngọc Hạp Toàn Yếu* 玉匣纂要, the *Ngọc Hạp toàn yếu thông dụng* 玉匣攢要通用, the *Thông Thư Quảng Ngọc Hạp Kì* 通書廣玉匣記 and the *Tăng Bổ Tuyển Trạch Thông Thư Quảng Ngọc Hạp Kì* 增補選擇通書廣玉匣記. In comparing one of these versions (the *Ngọc Hạp toàn yếu thông*

<sup>191</sup> See *ibid.*, 471, entry 2461 (cf. 469, entry 2451). According to Li, Wang and Trần, the *Nhân tử tu tri lược biên* was punctuated (句讀) by a figure named Mr. Nguyễn (Nguyễn Thị 阮氏), also known as Mr. Lĩnh Nam Tiên Sinh (嶺南先生) or Mr. Nguyễn of Lĩnh Nam (嶺南阮氏), whom I have not been able to further identify. In their catalogue, the editors have miswritten Xu Shanji’s name as Xu Shanqiang 徐善強.

*dụng*) with the “original” Chinese text from the *Daozang* 道藏 (Repository of the Daoist canon), Volkov discovered that of the three main parts of the original book, the first was entirely absent, the second and third appeared at the very beginning, and the rest of the book consisted of a long Chinese text on divining good and bad fortune with hexagrams, which is not to be found in the *Daozang* version.<sup>192</sup> Presumably a close examination of the other “jade chest” materials would reveal similar permutations.

The apparent dearth of “classical” geomantic works in Vietnam may help explain a distinctive feature of Vietnamese works on *fengshui*—their extraordinary eclecticism and their often wildly discursive format. Indeed, a number of Vietnamese manuscripts I have examined look more like works in progress than finished products, and many give evidence of having been written expressly to be shared by family members and friends.<sup>193</sup> Although a given work might begin with a discussion about how to locate a favorable gravesite, and about what specific things to look for in a given location, it might then be followed by remarks on astrology, calendrical calculations, meteorological divination, *Yijing* divination, or even medicine. One section might be written in classical Chinese and another in the Han-Nôm script.<sup>194</sup>

A particularly striking feature of Vietnamese works on geomancy is their fascination with two Chinese generals who figured prominently in China’s occupation of north Vietnam during the late Tang and early Ming periods, respectively. As discussed briefly above, one of these individuals was Gao Pian 高駢 (Vietnamese: Cao Biền; 821–887) and the other was Huang Fu 黃富 (Vietnamese: Hoàng Phúc; fl. 1400). Both men were famous for their geomantic skills, and stories of their exploits circulated widely in Vietnamese folklore. Some Vietnamese accounts refer to Gao Pian as a “king” (高王), and others describe Huang Fu as a wise, flexible and talented leader. Gao even earned a

<sup>192</sup> Volkov, “Astrology and Hemerology in Traditional Vietnam,” 29.

<sup>193</sup> See, for example, *Địa lý gia truyền* 地理家傳 (Family traditions of geomancy) and *Địa lý gia bảo* 地理家寶 (Precious family materials on geomancy), VNL, <http://hannom.nlv.gov.vn/>. Cf. Liu, Wang and Trần, *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao*, 468, entry 2443.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, the work titled *Ngũ chương địa lý* 五章地理 (Five chapters on geomancy), VNL, <http://hannom.nlv.gov.vn/>. For other examples of books employing combinations of Han and Nôm writing. See Liu, Wang and Trần, *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao*, 459–73, entries 2400, 2404, 2406, 2409, 2412, 2414, 2420, 2425, 2436, 2439, 2440, 2447, 2452 and 2462. Entries 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457 and 2458 are predominantly Nôm texts.

prominent, albeit ambiguous, place in the fourteenth century Trần dynasty compilation titled *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* 粵甸幽靈集 or 越甸幽靈集 (Collection of stories on the dark spiritual world of the Viet realm), compiled by Lý Tế Xuyên 李濟川 (fl. 1400).<sup>195</sup> [See **Figure 21** above]

What Gao and Huang managed to do in their respective times was nothing less than to tame the “dragon veins” that emanated from the mighty Kunlun Mountains and extended to Vietnam. For a thousand years after Gao’s ninth century adventures in the north, Vietnamese *fengshui* experts continued to view China as the principle source of geomantic power in the region.<sup>196</sup> An early nineteenth-century geomantic text created by an ethnically Chinese specialist in geomancy titled *An Nam phong thủy* 安南風水 (The *fengshui* of Annam [Vietnam]; 1818) reflects this perception.<sup>197</sup> Among its illustrations is a rather crudely drawn tripartite map of the sort discussed earlier in this paper, which reveals one main stream of geomantic power flowing from the Himalayas into what is today central China, and subsidiary branches “energizing” such glorious dynasties as the Zhou, Han, Tang, and Ming. This map also depicts a powerful stream of energy that found its way to the north and gave rise to the Qing dynasty, as well as a smaller stream of geomantic power that flowed southward into Vietnam, what the Chinese author refers to as “our country” (*ngã quốc* 我國).<sup>198</sup>

This did not mean, however, that Vietnam lacked sufficient geomantic energy to sustain the country’s moral fiber. In a primer designed for children, and published in 1853, the Vietnamese scholar Phạm Phục Trai 范復齋 made specific reference to the myth of the Kunlun mountains in an effort to celebrate Vietnam’s remarkable cultural

<sup>195</sup> See Keith Taylor, “A Southern Remembrance of Cao Bien.” The ambiguity lies in the fact that, on the one hand, Vietnamese sources of this sort credit Gao with helping to reveal and exploit the geomantic powers of Vietnam for the benefit of the people; on the other hand, they ascribe to him efforts to prevent the emergence of power centers that might challenge Tang rule. See *ibid.*; also Liam Kelly, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia,” esp. 22–26, and Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam,” esp. 131–33.

<sup>196</sup> See Liam Kelly, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia,” 8–39, esp. 22–26.

<sup>197</sup> This document is available online at the Vietnam National University). URL: [http://repository.vnu.edu.vn/handle/VNU\\_123/53350](http://repository.vnu.edu.vn/handle/VNU_123/53350).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26. Cf. the discussion in Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam,” 133–35. See also Liu, Wang and Trần, *Yuenan Han-Nan wenxian mulu tiyao*, 471, entry 2463.

refinement by reference to its geography. “The southern domain,” he wrote, “is one of civility [*văn hiến* 文獻]; its geomantic arteries are very special. The Yellow Kun [i.e. the Kunlun range] is the ancestral [node]; and from it, the three main branches extended outward.” In a commentary to these simple poetic lines, Phạm explained that the writings of Vietnam [交趾] and the rituals of Korea [高麗] evinced a complementarity, born of their common geomantic heritage; in this view of things, geography was, in a certain sense, destiny.<sup>199</sup>

A number of texts attributed to Gao Pian or Huang Fu—but probably not written by them—evaluate the specific geomantic features of Vietnam. One such source, titled *An Nam cửu long kinh* 安南九龍經 (Classic of the nine dragons of Vietnam) and attributed to Gao, appears in at least four nineteenth century Vietnamese books on *fengshui*, including two readily accessible manuscripts: the *Vấn đáp sơn thủy* 問答山水 (Questions and answers concerning mountains and rivers) and the *Địa lý tiện lãm* 地理便覽 (A convenient guide to geomancy). In each instance, when the text of the *An Nam cửu long kinh* appears, we find poetic discussions of the three main branches (支) of the dragon vein (龍脈) that flows into Vietnam from China, as well as other, more focused, entries based on administrative subdivisions from provinces to individual villages—most of them in the Red River Delta region.<sup>200</sup> Many poems identify specific areas by name, and some even include four-character phrases summarizing the geomantic features of individual villages in these locations.

Works like the *Cao Biên di cáo* 高駢遺藁 (Posthumous drafts of Gao Pian) and the *Địa lý Hoàng Phúc cáo* 地理黃富藁 (A draft of Huang Fu’s work on geomancy) do the same, each listing nearly a hundred different districts (縣), and identifying the geomantic qualities of individual locations, including “lair” (穴) at the micro level, accompanied by poetic or parallel phrases.<sup>201</sup> According to the preface of the *Cao Biên di cáo*, in 1407, when Huang Fu arrived in northern Vietnam to serve as the governor of the

<sup>199</sup> Phạm Phục Trai 范復齋, *Khải đồng thuyết ước* 啟童說約 (A recitation of the essentials for enlightening children; 1853). Cf. Kelley, “From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia,” 26.

<sup>200</sup> Shiro Momoki, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam,” 135–38.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. Momoki translates 穴 as “holes.”

area, he brought with him Gao Pian's geomantic manuscripts, and whenever he passed through a certain province, district or village he added his own notes. And after Huang was "repatriated" to China in the midst of Lê Lợi's (1384–1433) successful campaign against the Ming dynasty, Lê Lợi and his supporters confiscated the writings of Gao and Huang. Shiro Momoki surmises that works of this sort may have been based on fifteenth century land surveys that were revised in the late seventeenth century.<sup>202</sup>

Momoki goes on to argue that premodern Vietnamese texts on geomancy encouraged the people of Vietnam to imagine themselves as part of a "geo-body"—a concept invented by Tongchai Winichakul in a famous book titled *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (1994). In this path-breaking work, Winichakul maintains that one condition of modern nationalism is a recognition on the part of the people of a given country, through their exposure to maps, that cartographic images of their land produce powerful feelings of "national" pride.<sup>203</sup> In the case of Vietnam, Momoki believes that geomantic maps were probably more successful than premodern maps in enabling the Vietnamese people to imagine their own geo-body.<sup>204</sup> Liam Kelley doubts, however, that exposure to Vietnamese geomantic maps produced this sort of "nationalistic" awareness.<sup>205</sup> After all, Vietnam's geomantic power was linked to a source (China) that was located outside of the country's borders. How, we might ask, can nationalism exist in the absence of clear "national" boundaries?

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<sup>202</sup> See the discussion in *ibid.*, 133 ff., esp. 136–38. Momoki speculates that Ngô Thì Sĩ may have played a role in the editing process.

<sup>203</sup> Tongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>204</sup> Shiro Momoki, "Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam," 126–153. For another perspective on the role of maps in premodern Vietnam, see J. L. Whitmore, "Cartography in Vietnam," in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds. *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, bk. 2 (Chicago University Press, 1996): 478–508.

<sup>205</sup> See Kelly, "From a Reliant Land to a Kingdom in Asia," 7–39. This article, esp. 23–28, does an excellent job of evaluating the place of Gao Pian in the history (and mythology) of Vietnamese geomancy. Cf. Keith Taylor, "A Southern Remembrance of Cao Bien."

## II. *Fengshui* in the Modern Era

What do we mean when we speak of the “modern” world? This is, of course, not an easy question to answer. For our purposes, let’s define the modern world as one increasingly dominated by the actions of competing nation-states; the expansion of empires through outright colonization as well as strategies of “semi-colonialism;” the widespread embrace by intellectuals of empiricism and the “scientific method;” the use of non-animate sources of power for production (i.e. mechanization); the growing influence of new electronic technologies, including mass media, for education, entertainment and economic growth; and the attraction of concepts such as nationalism, democracy, egalitarianism, and individualism. By some definitions modernity also involves growing secularism, although there are many “modern” societies in which religion in one or another form is still strong.<sup>206</sup>

### *Historical Background*

The story of *fengshui* in East Asia during the period from c. 1900 to the present is one of the persistence of tradition on the one hand, and sometimes radical transformations on the other. At present, geomancy continues to be practiced in Greater China (including the People’s Republic, Hong Kong and Taiwan), Japan, South Korea, Okinawa (formerly the Ryukyu kingdom, now a prefecture of Japan), and Vietnam, where, during the past century or so, remarkable changes have taken place. These changes have been provoked not only by domestic developments, but also by foreign aggression. Indeed, imperialism in its various forms has been a common denominator in East Asian history from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth.

China, first to feel the sting of Western aggression, suffered under the yoke of the infamous “unequal treaties” from 1842 to 1943, and although the Qing dynasty lost Hong Kong to the British in 1842, subsequent regimes managed to modernize their respective

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<sup>206</sup> For a useful comparative discussion of “modernity” from an East Asian perspective, see Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities: China, Vietnam, Korea and the Hazards of World History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2006).

political and economic institutions with considerable, if uneven, success. Japan, subject to a similar set of onerous treaty stipulations beginning in the 1850s, modernized rapidly along Western lines during the Meiji period (1868–1912), and, following a Western model, became an imperialist power itself, colonizing Okinawa in 1879, Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910. Vietnam fell increasingly under French domination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a *colonie d'exploitation*, although the French, out of economic self-interest, did build transport and communications networks as well as cities and towns for trade and tourism. From 1940–45, Vietnam was occupied and exploited by Japan. After 1945, Taiwan returned to Mainland Chinese rule, and Korea became an independent nation. France continued to rule Vietnam as a colony until its defeat at the hands of insurgents, who proclaimed Vietnam's independence in 1954. Meanwhile, China and North Korea had become communist regimes, to be followed by Vietnam in 1976. In all of these cases, imperialism generated and sustained a vibrant nationalism.

The rise of nationalism was a crucial factor in provoking efforts by elites in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam to modernize their countries, although colonial domination naturally constrained these efforts in Korea and Vietnam until independence. What the desire to “modernize” meant eventually in all of these countries was the embrace, to varying degrees, of new ideas, new technologies, new political, social and economic institutions, new structures of knowledge, and new ways of knowing—all in the interest of national strength and national self-determination. This search for modernity also entailed attacks on certain aspects of “tradition.” In Japan, this dual process of embracing the new and rejecting the old began during the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when all things “Western” seemed attractive, and most traditional beliefs came under fire. Something similar occurred in China during the Republican period (1912–49), beginning with the so-called New Culture Movement (c. 1915–25). As in Meiji Japan, the New Culture Movement was an iconoclastic assault on Chinese tradition by intellectuals seeking new, foreign-inspired solutions to China's pressing problems.

In both the Meiji Restoration and the New Culture Movement, the main target of intellectuals was so-called “feudal” superstitions—especially “unmodern” practices such as divination, shamanism and exorcism. The state, too, got into the act. The Meiji law

code of 1880 stipulated criminal punishment for such activities, as did the Nationalist government's laws against "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信 Japanese: *meishin*), enacted in the period from 1928–31. The colonial governments of Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam also sought to curtail such activities by legal and other means, but their efforts were neither sustained nor effective.

Scholars such as Gerald Figal, Rebecca Nedostup, and others have indicated that the "anti-feudal" policies of the Meiji and Nationalist regimes masked some of the ways in which Japanese and Chinese officials attempted to transform domestic religious traditions into instruments of modernization.<sup>207</sup> Nonetheless, exponents of divination, geomancers in particular, faced a good deal of public and private pressure—at times quite intense. This was particularly true with the establishment of communist regimes in North Korea (1948), China (1949), and Vietnam (1976). Eventually, however, even the communist regimes softened their policies—with the exception of North Korea. As a result, various forms of divination, including geomancy, proliferated throughout East Asia.

### *Geomancy in Contemporary East Asia*

In discussing the development of *fengshui* in the Sinosphere during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I will not address in an explicit way academic studies by scholars in East Asia. Suffice it to say that since the 1980s there has been a flood of excellent scholarship written in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and, to a lesser degree, Vietnamese—much of which I have cited in previous sections of this article.<sup>208</sup> There have also been a number (but certainly not a flood) of first-rate scholarly works written by Western authors in English, French, German, Italian and several other European languages, which I have also cited in the footnotes of earlier parts of this paper. But my

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<sup>207</sup> Gerald Figal, *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) and Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>208</sup> Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 118–22 discusses some of the reasons for an interest in *fengshui* on the part of academics in the PRC from the 1980s onward.



primary interest in this section is in contemporary geomantic beliefs and practices, rather than in scholarship per se.

In Greater China, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, such beliefs and practices are ubiquitous.<sup>209</sup> Bookstores throughout the Sinosphere are filled with traditional works on *fengshui* (including reprints and vernacular equivalents of “classic texts”), and one can also easily find geomantic practitioners. [Figures 23a–d] This is particularly true in modern South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where there has never been a systematic or successful effort to discourage the practice of *fengshui*. On the contrary, in these environments, government officials have often availed of, and/or openly endorsed, geomantic practices. At the same time, as in the past, *fengshui* lawsuits have repeatedly arisen in these environments.

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<sup>209</sup> See, for example, Stéphanie Homola, “The Living Traditions of Divination” for the IKGf conference on “Mantic Arts in China,” July 19–22, 2016, Erlangen, Germany and “Pursue Good Fortune and Avoid Calamity: The Practice and Status of Divination in Contemporary Taiwan,” *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 41. 2 (November 2013): 124–147; Michael J. Paton, “*Fengshui*: A Continuation of ‘Art of Swindlers’?,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, (2007): 427–45; Charles Emmons, “Hong Kong’s *Feng Shui*: Popular Magic in a Modern Urban Setting,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 26:1 (Summer 1992): 39–50; Andrew Eungi Kim, “Nonofficial Religion in South Korea: Prevalence of Fortunetelling and Other Forms of Divination,” *Review of Religious Research*, 46.3 (March 2005): 284–302; Jiyeon Jang, “Korean Geomancy from the Tenth through the Twentieth Centuries,” 101–129; Thien Do, *Vietnamese Supernaturalism: Views from the Southern Region* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), esp. 10, 31, 44, 166–167, 187.

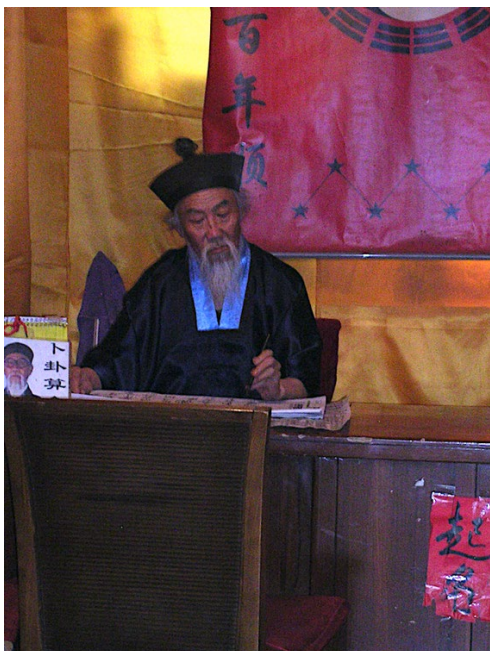


Figure 23a: A fortune-teller in contemporary Beijing. Source: Author's photo

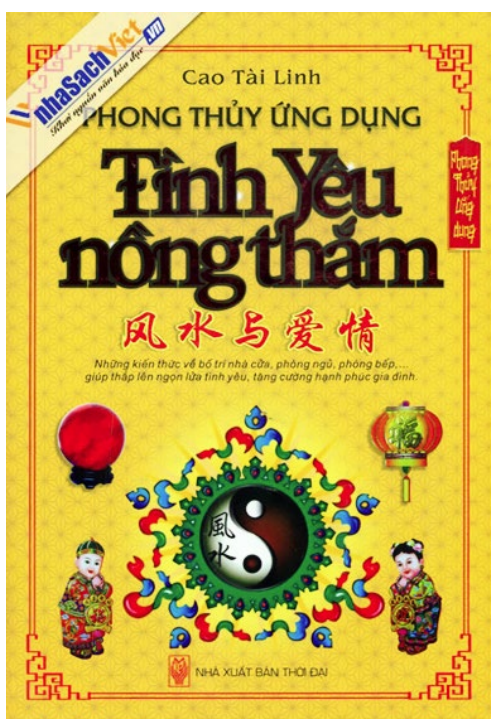


Figure 23b: A contemporary Vietnamese book on *fengshui* and love. Source: Author's photo

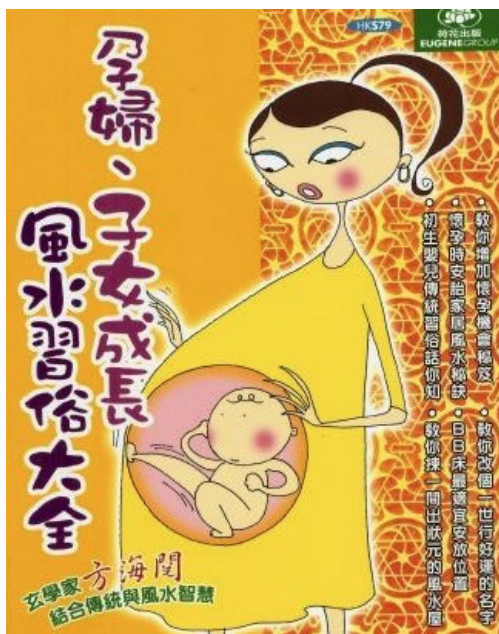


Figure 23c: A contemporary Chinese book on *fengshui*, pregnancy and child-rearing. Source: Author's photo

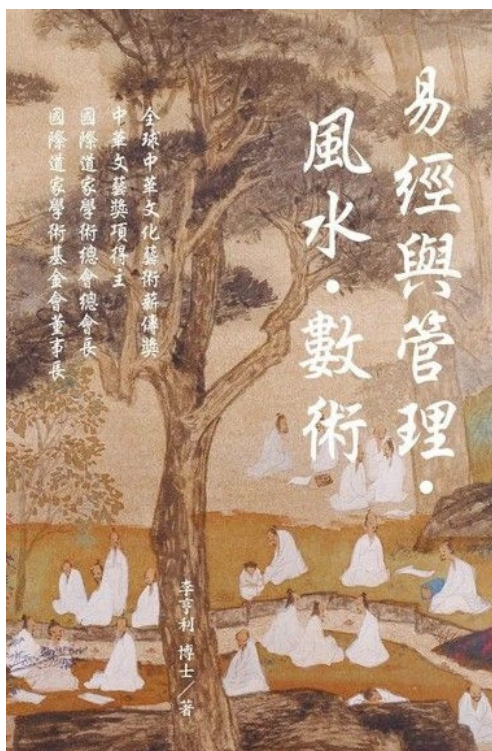


Figure 23d: A contemporary Chinese book on *fengshui* and management. Source: Author's photo

In Hong Kong, for example, the government itself pays for claims when its building activities have disturbed the *fengshui* of local sites—not only graves and houses

but also entire housing settlements. According to a 2010 article titled “Hong Kong Government Spends Millions on Feng Shui,” written by the *Telegraph*’s Shanghai correspondent, Malcolm Moore, “anyone whose property is affected by a public construction project is entitled to claim compensation from the government for the damage to their *qi*.” “Typically,” Moore writes, “claimants ask the government to pay for a ‘tun fu’ [*dunfu* 躉符] cleansing ritual, which involves a *feng shui* master performing rites around the site.”<sup>210</sup> In contemporary South Korea, many lawsuits arise from geomantic disputes and *fengshui* considerations and geomantic issues even appear in political battles. Hoon-Key Yoon writes, for example, that during any major election campaign, “people often hear about candidates’ ancestral graves [being located] in auspicious sites.”<sup>211</sup> Similar stories emanate from Taiwan, where an estimated 30,000 *fengshui* practitioners operate—a ratio of one for every 750 inhabitants.<sup>212</sup>

Even in the People’s Republic of China and Vietnam, where geomancy and other forms of divination were long stigmatized as “feudal superstitions,” and explicitly outlawed,<sup>213</sup> we find bursts of “fortune-telling fever” (*suanming re* 算命熱), including *fengshui*-related activities in both the cities and the countryside.<sup>214</sup> In urban areas,

<sup>210</sup> See “Hong Kong Government Spends Millions on Feng Shui,” *The Telegraph*, December 16, 2010. URL <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/hongkong/8206601/Hong-Kong-government-spends-millions-on-feng-shui.html>. For additional information on geomancy in contemporary Hong Kong, see Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 136–43.

<sup>211</sup> Yoon, *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*, 5, 45–46. Yoon also notes that in North Korea, for all its criticism of geomancy, the government has described the location of Kim Il-sung’s mausoleum as an auspicious site of “first class quality,” superior to all other such sites in the world.

<sup>212</sup> See Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 130–36.

<sup>213</sup> See Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, “The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country’s Socialist Period” (March 31, 1982) URL: <https://www.religlaw.org/content/religlaw/documents/doc19relig1982.htm> and Edyta Roszko, “Spirited Dialogues: Contestations over the Religious Landscape in Central Vietnam’s Littoral Society” (Ph.D. dissertation, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, 2011), pp. 167–68. URL: <https://d-nb.info/1025352424/34>. For illuminating details in the case of China, see Stéphanie Homola, “From *Jianghu* to *Liumang*: Working Conditions and Cultural Identity of Wandering Fortune-Tellers in Contemporary China,” in Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*, 366–391, esp. 368–71.

<sup>214</sup> See Yiren 伊人, *Dangdai Zhongguo de suanming re* 當代中國的算命熱 (Fortune-telling fever in contemporary China) (Beijing: Beijing Shifan daxue chubanshe, 1993) and Michael Lackner, “The Renaissance of Divinatory Techniques in the People’s Republic—A New Type of Chinese Cultural Identity?,” *International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF), Occasional Papers* (2011), 1–44. URL: <http://www.ikgf.uni-erlangen.de/publications/occasional->

Chinese builders, often in concert with investors from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, routinely employ geomancers as consultants. According to a report emanating from the Chinese official news agency, Xinhua 新華通訊社, “at least 70 percent of [Nanjing’s] real estate projects are appraised by *fengshui* masters before the construction starts.”<sup>215</sup>

Several different kinds of geomancers operate in Chinese cities. Some come from village areas (see below) for more lucrative economic opportunities, but they face stiff competition from imbedded *fengshui* specialists, and have to adjust their rural practices to take into account the radically different urban landscape, with its high-rise buildings, offices and such. Another type of urban geomancer is a Buddhist or Daoist clergy member who operates (often clandestinely) out of monasteries and temples. A third variety is an academic who, having acquired a knowledge of *fengshui* through scholarly research, might then take paying clients on the side. Several university professors on the Mainland, including Shao Weihua (邵偉華) and Liu Dajun (劉大均), are renowned for their divinatory prowess. And finally, there are *fengshui* masters who come to the Mainland from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, reversing the flow of mantic specialists who left China immediately before or after the communists took power in 1949.<sup>216</sup>

As for rural China, there has also been a “*fengshui* resurgence.” Writing in 1996, Ole Bruun pointed out that in virtually all villages in China Proper, “the *fengshui* of a site is now routinely considered when a new house or grave is constructed.” [Figure 24] Ascribing this resurgence in part to economic changes in the People’s Republic, he emphasizes that “recent attempts to curtail it have appeared politically motivated and ambivalent, especially since those [officials] who publicly have fought it have tended to use it privately.” Moreover, he documents the ways in which neighbors compete for favorable *fengshui*, which often leads to disruptive quarrels and disputes. Local

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[papers.shtml](#). See also Bruun, *Fengshui in China*, 81 ff. and Bertrand, “The Thày: Masters in Hué, Vietnam,” esp. 273.

<sup>215</sup> Cited in Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 123.

<sup>216</sup> See *ibid.*, 124–29. Also Stephen Skinner, *Feng Shui History: The Story of Classical Feng Shui in China and the West from 221 BC to 2012 AD* (Singapore: Golden Hoard [sic] Press, 2012), 135 ff. and Homola, “From *Jianghu* to *Liumang*,” esp. 377.

government authorities for their part, silently tolerate the practice of geomancy “as long as it does not disturb the public order.”<sup>217</sup> I do not have similar documentation for Vietnam, but a number of visits to rural and urban areas in both the north and the south in recent years have left me with the same impression. [Figure 25a–b]



Figure 24: A *fengshui* “shadow wall” (*yingbi qiang* 影壁墙) in a contemporary Chinese village. Source: Author’s photo



Figure 25a: South-oriented graves in contemporary Vietnam. Source: Author’s photo

<sup>217</sup> See Ole Bruun, “The *Fengshui* Resurgence in China: Conflicting Cosmologies Between State and Peasantry,” *The China Journal* 36 (July 1996): 47–65, esp. 47–48.



Figure 25b: Incense at a Vietnamese grave. Source: Author's photo

As in the past, contemporary geomancers in China and elsewhere in the Sinosphere represent a variety of “schools” and approaches, but they almost invariably operate within familiar interpretive frameworks, including variables such as *yin* and *yang*, the *wuxing*, the eight trigrams, stems and branches, and so forth. The books they employ tend to be traditional ones, whether *fengshui* manuals or almanacs. They ply their trade for profit, either in their homes, stalls or makeshift quarters on the street, and their status depends not only on their professional success but also the extent to which they seem to be acquainted with traditional learning/scholarship, especially the still-venerated *Yijing*. Although often criticized by intellectuals and government bureaucrats for their “superstitious” and mercenary ways, geomancers are in many instances also employed by them—either officially (especially in the case of Hong Kong) or unofficially. With some frequency, they defend their profession on the grounds that they not only help people, but that they are also preserving a valuable Chinese cultural tradition (even as they employ “modern” devices such as computers and cell phones).<sup>218</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Homola, “From *Jianghu* to *Liumang*,” 371–83. See also Bruun, “The *Fengshui* Resurgence in China,” Lackner, “The Renaissance of Divinatory Techniques in the People's Republic,” and Bertrand, “The *Thầy*: Masters in Huế, Vietnam.”

Stéphanie Homola provides us with fascinating and revealing case study of a professional itinerant diviner in contemporary Mainland China named Mr. Yao—a native of Qingdao, and a former colonel in the People’s Liberation Army—whose advertised mantic talents include geomancy. She met with Mr. Yao regularly between 2008 and 2011, after first encountering him in the fall of 2008, while he was working at one of his favorite spots near the Guangji Temple 廣濟寺 in Beijing. She notes that in advertising his trade he had a large printed poster spread out on the ground featuring a table of Chinese surnames framed with the maxims, “No need to tell anything, I can guess your name” and “Give me your hand and I will know your destiny.” In addition, he had a smaller poster immediately in front of him, which, under the prominent heading “*Classic of Changes*” (周易經典), he described his services—including, but not limited to, answers relating to questions about marriage, career, wealth, education and exams, promotion, going abroad, children, dream interpretation, solving problems, resolving crises, and *fengshui*.<sup>219</sup> Like other fortune-tellers, his network of clients included “senior officials” who, quite naturally, tended to keep their consultations “secret” (*mimi* 秘密).<sup>220</sup>

Throughout East Asia, government policy and/or the high cost of real estate—especially in urban areas—has encouraged the cremation of deceased individuals. This practice has been nearly universal in Japan for quite some time (99.97% in 2014), and it is on the rise in the rest of the Sinosphere, from highs in Taiwan (92.83%) and Hong Kong (90.23%) to a low in Mainland China (c. 47%).<sup>221</sup> News stories from the Sinosphere attest to the efforts by East Asian governments to encourage cremation, sporting headlines such as “Too Many Corpses to Bury: China’s New Campaign for Cremation,” “In Vietnam, Cost of Dying Soars as Private Cemeteries Boom,” “Burial

<sup>219</sup> Homola, “From *Jianghu* to *Liumang*,” 368 includes photographs of Mr. Yao and his advertisements.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 366–391. See also Homola, “The Living Traditions of Divination.”

<sup>221</sup> The 2014 percentage was 79.23% for South Korea, but I have not been able to find reliable statistics for North Korea or Vietnam. See “Table of International Statistics [on Cremation] 2014.” URL:

[http://www.iffs.eu/cms/fileadmin/members\\_only/documents/news\\_articles/Cremation\\_statistics\\_2014.pdf](http://www.iffs.eu/cms/fileadmin/members_only/documents/news_articles/Cremation_statistics_2014.pdf); cf. “International Cremation Statistics [on Cremation] 2016.” URL: <http://www.cremation.org.uk/international-statistics-2016#>.



Traditions Changing Fast [in South Korea],” and “Ho Chi Minh City to Give Cash Support for Cremation of Dead Bodies.”<sup>222</sup>

This does not mean, however, that geomantic considerations have gone by the wayside. Quite the contrary. Prime locations for individual gravesites are extraordinarily expensive throughout the Sinosphere, as are favored geomantic spots in both public and especially private cemeteries. In Beijing, for example, where graves cost more per square meter than apartments, residents spent an average of 70,000 *yuan* (US \$10,000) on burial expenses per death in 2014. At the Thiên Đức Vĩnh Hằng Viên cemetery in Vietnam, 100 kilometers (62 miles) from Hanoi, plots on a “new hill” go from US \$350–\$520 per square meter, and higher-altitude plots, which “appeal to adherents of *feng shui*,” cost as much as US \$4,600 per square meter. [Figure 26] Naturally, all such burial grounds take into account geomantic considerations, and, for good measure they often include protective icons, such as Buddhist statues.<sup>223</sup> In Japan overall, grave sites in urban areas can cost between US\$ 20,000 and US \$40,000, and the average price of a funeral is around US \$23,000—about \$6,400 of which is paid to the local Buddhist temple in “funeral fees.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> “Burial Traditions Changing Fast,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, November 12, 2013. URL: <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2980282>; Matt DeButts, “Too Many Corpses to Bury: China’s New Campaign for Cremation.” URL: <http://supchina.com/2017/03/30/too-many-corpses-bury-china/>. “In Vietnam, Cost of Dying Soars as Private Cemeteries Boom,” <https://e.vnexpress.net/projects/in-vietnam-cost-of-dying-soars-as-private-cemeteries-boom-3618745/index.html>, “Ho Chi Minh City to Give Cash Support for Cremation of Dead Bodies,” *Tuoi Tre News* (March 13, 2015). URL: <https://tuoitrenews.vn/society/26709/ho-chi-minh-city-to-give-cash-support-for-cremation-of-dead-bodies>.

<sup>223</sup> See “In Vietnam, Cost of Dying Soars as Private Cemeteries Boom.”

<sup>224</sup> “Funerals in Japan,” *Facts and Details* (Japan): URL: <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat18/sub114/item604.html>.



Figure 26: A photo advertising the favorable *fengshui* for family graves at the Thiên Đức Vĩnh Hằng Viên cemetery. Source: <http://nghiatrangxanh.com/mo-gia-dinh-phong-thuy-dep-tai-thien-duc-vinh-hang-vien/> (June 23, 2017)

Despite the persistence of “traditional” attitudes toward *fengshui* in contemporary East Asia, “modernity” has made its mark. This is particularly evident in new electronic technologies, which transmit information about geomancy with unprecedented speed and reach. During the last two or three decades, there has been a virtual explosion of East Asian websites devoted to *fengshui* and related concerns. Even in Vietnam, arguably the least modernized country in the Sinosphere, whether judged by GDP per capita or by individual internet usage as a percentage of the population,<sup>225</sup> geomantic information is available in cyber-abundance, much of it commercial.

On February 26, 2018, for example, I undertook a Google search using the contemporary Vietnamese term for *fengshui*—*phong thủy*—which yielded c. 684,000 results. Naturally, a significant percentage of these results represented conversations on chat sites, reportage, academic sources of information, and so forth. And, of course, the intended audience of these electronic transmissions was not, and is not, necessarily limited to Vietnam. In cyberspace, national borders blur, especially when messages are bilingual or multilingual. But it is clear that an enormous number of Vietnamese-language *fengshui*-oriented websites—like their counterparts in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea—are designed for profit and intended primarily for

<sup>225</sup> On internet usage, see <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>. The World Bank statistics for internet use as a percentage of the population in 2016 are: Japan 92%, South Korea 93%, China (PRC) 53%, Vietnam 47%. In terms of GDP per capital in that same year, the world rankings were (and are): China, #2, Japan, #3, South Korea, #11, Vietnam, #48.

national markets. A great many such sites sell books on *fengshui* and related paraphernalia.<sup>226</sup> Others offer specific services, from burial arrangements and modifications of homes and businesses, to advice on choosing names that harmonize with horoscopes and geomantic locations (命名). Many websites specialize in real estate transactions involving auspicious land and/or buildings.<sup>227</sup>

A good number of commercial sites in the Sinosphere focus on traditional knowledge. A good example in Vietnam is Master Chu Hiễn (Thầy Chu Hiễn; born in China in 1959). Master Chu speaks on his website as if he were conversing directly with a client. Typical of many geomancers, past and present, he emphasizes his credentials (fifteen years of successful practice in Vietnam as well as three years of study in China), and promotes himself as a leading exponent of *fengshui* in Vietnam, denigrating his rivals, and warning potential customers not to trust most of the geomantically oriented internet sites in China and Vietnam. He also discusses his charitable activities, suggesting the purity of his motives.<sup>228</sup> Another example of a traditionally oriented *fengshui* master is Wang Junzhi (王君植), from Hubei province in China, whose website contains a long biography emphasizing his ancestral training, adherence to ancient *fengshui* theories (以古法風水理論為依據) and the great masters of the past such as Guo Pu and Yang Yunsong. At the same time, his promotional photograph shows him not only with a traditional *fengshui* compass but also with a modern laptop computer.<sup>229</sup> [Figure 27]

<sup>226</sup> See, for example, <http://nhasachviet.vn/tim-kiem.html>, which advertises nearly 100 books on *fengshui*.

<sup>227</sup> See, for example, the Japanese real estate site at <http://fusui-fudosan.jp/>.

<sup>228</sup> See <http://tenphongthuy.vn/huong-dan-dat-ten-theo-phong-thuy-A40186732.html>.

<sup>229</sup> See <http://www.zgwpfs.com/index.html>. An especially interesting feature of this site is that it displays a number of photographs of auspicious landforms, some of which are marked to show specific geomantic features.



Figure 27: Advertisement for Wang Junzhi's geomantic services. Source: <http://www.zgwpfs.com/guanyuwomen/2014/0318/169.html>

Most such websites, whether directed toward readers in Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese, focus on traditional—indeed, nearly universal—concerns: health, wealth, professional success and good fortune.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, virtually all of them invoke the usual set of cosmological variables. The same is true of most contemporary books on *fengshui* in these languages, although on occasion the traditional cosmology has been simplified. But many of these works now speak to preoccupations that were seldom addressed directly in traditional-style geomantic manuals, such as love, sex and personal appearance.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, modern works on *fengshui* often seek validation in terms of

<sup>230</sup> For an illuminating study of the motivations of people who access fortune-telling sites on Taiwan, see Guo Zhen 郭貞, “Yingxiang wanglu suanmingxingwei yinsu yu dongji zhi tantao: Zhaoxun wanglu suanming xingwei zhi dongli moshi” 影響網路算命行為之探討：找尋網路算命行為之動機與模式 (An investigation into factors affecting online fortune-telling behavior and motivation: A psychodynamic model for investigating online Fortune-telling behavior), *Xinwenxue yanjiu* 新聞學研究 85 (October 2005): 141–82. This survey research, involving 6,088 internet users of different ages and backgrounds over a six-month period, indicated that most of the respondents were attracted to the fortune-telling sites for their free trials, and that only 26% of them actually paid for the online fortune-telling services during the six months. Among these individuals, romance was the most popular topic among both males and females, followed by careers.

<sup>231</sup> These concern could sometimes be found in traditional-style almanacs, which, as I have indicated, often contained geomantic information.

Western scientific ideas, such as electromagnetism, chemistry, acoustics, stratigraphy, mathematics, psychology and ecology.<sup>232</sup>

*Geomancy Outside the Sinosphere (1): Overseas Chinese as a Case Study*

The globalization of *fengshui* beyond East Asia began when large numbers of Chinese emigrated to Southeast Asia—especially modern-day Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand—during the Ming and Qing dynasties. But it was only in the nineteenth century that massive emigration began, provoked by internal rebellions and perceived economic opportunities in the Americas, the Caribbean, South Africa and Australia, especially after the abolition of slavery in several parts of Europe in the early 1800s. This was the beginning of the so-called Coolie Trade, a widespread and often-brutal form of indentured servitude. The University of Minnesota’s Immigration History Research Center notes that from 1847 to 1874, between 250,000 and 500,000 Chinese “coolies” (苦力) were “imported” to various British, French, Dutch and Spanish colonies in the Americas, Africa and Southeast Asia—about 125,000 of whom were sent to Cuba to work on plantations. According to an 1861 colonial census, China-born people in Australia numbered 38,258 (3.4 per cent of the population at the time). Meanwhile,

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<sup>232</sup> This tendency began in China during the 1930s. See Michael J. Paton, “*Fengshui: A Continuation of ‘Art of Swindlers’?*,” 427–45, 433 and Cf. Stéphanie Homola, “The Fortunes of a Scholar: When the *Yijing* Challenged Modern Astronomy,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 73.3 (August 2014): 733–752. For more recent perspectives, see Zhang Huimin 張惠民, *Fengshui yu kexue: Weibo, shengwu xibao, tianwen deng quanxin guandian* 風水與科學: 微波, 生物細胞, 天文等全新觀點 (Fengshui and science: Microwaves, cell biology, astronomy and other new views) (Taipei: Xueding chuban youxian gongsi 學鼎出版有限公司, 1993); Chen Yikui 陳怡魁, *Shengcun fengshui xue, you ming Zhongguo fengshui deyanliu yu kexue guan* 生存風水學: 又名, 中國風水的源流與科學觀 (Living *fengshui*, or The origin, development and the scientific view of Chinese *fengshui*) (Taipei: Yixue yanjiu fazhan jijinhui 易學研究發展基金會, 2000); Yu Jia 羽佳, *Kexue kan fengshui* 科學看風水 (A scientific look at *fengshui*) (Shanghai: Kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe 科學技術文獻出版社, 1989); You Qian’gui 游乾桂, *Fengshui kuanxin shu* 風水寬心書 (*Fengshui* for relief [of anxiety]) (Taipei: Yuanliu chuban gongsi 遠流出版公司, 1999), esp. 65 ff. Many contemporary websites address these issues. For one online pro-science argument, see “Fengshui shi kexue bu shi mixin” 風水是科學不是迷信 (Fengshui is science, not superstition). URL: <https://www.lnka.tw/html/topic/18670.html>. Cf. Nan Wang, “Time and Change: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Western Almanacs” (M.A. thesis, Rice University, 1993), 123–26. Available through UMI (University Microfilms International).

between 1850 and 1880 (two years before the first Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882), about 100,000 Chinese immigrants found their way to the United States—not, for the most part, as “coolies” in the technical sense (the US outlawed the “coolie trade” in 1862), but as laborers in mines, railroads and agricultural enterprises, or as small-scale entrepreneurs.<sup>233</sup> In at least some of the overseas Chinese communities (“Chinatowns”) that developed as a result, there is evidence that geomantic principles and practices were applied to buildings as well as graves—albeit with considerable variation, especially in smaller concentrations of people. These variations were, in part, a function of the limited choices available to Chinese laborers and merchants in terms of both land and building materials.<sup>234</sup>

Much later, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, wars, revolutions, the partition of India and other cataclysmic events in Asia, brought a flood of Asian immigrants to Europe and the United States—not only Chinese, Japanese and Indians, but also people from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. With the passage of the US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which ended long-standing policies of discrimination against Asians (and others), and following America’s recognition of the People’s Republic as the sole legitimate government of China in 1979, immigrants from

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<sup>233</sup> See “Chinese Australians,” Community Profiles for Health Care Providers, State of Queensland (Queensland Health) 2011. URL: [https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/156017/chinese2011.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/156017/chinese2011.pdf); University of Minnesota, Immigration History Research Center, “Coolie Trade in the 19th Century.” URL: <https://cla.umn.edu/ihr/news-events/other/coolie-trade-19th-century>; See Paul Yin, “The Narratives of Chinese-American Litigation During the Chinese Exclusion Era,” *Asian American Law Journal*, 145 (2012): 145–69. URL: <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/aalj/vol19/iss1/6>.

<sup>234</sup> See Priscilla Wegars, *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese* (Milton Park, Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 2016), esp. 38–39, 48, 59, 363–66, 395 and 397. See also the essays in Josephine D. Lee, Imogene L. Lim and Yuko Matsukawa, eds. *Re/collecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002) and Sue Fawn Chung and Priscilla Wegars, eds. *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman Altamira, 2005). For some individual case studies, see Fred W. Mueller, “Feng-Shui: Archaeological Evidence for Geomancy in Overseas Chinese Settlements,” in Wong Ho Leun, ed., *An American Chinatown* (San Diego, Great Basin Foundation, 1987): 1–24, Andrew Ryall Briggs, “Feng Shui and Chinese Rituals of Death across the Oregon Landscape,” *Geography Masters Research Papers*, 18 (2002): iii–35: URL [http://pd.xscholar.library.pdx.edu/geog\\_masterpapers/18](http://pd.xscholar.library.pdx.edu/geog_masterpapers/18); Wendy Rouse, “‘What We Didn’t Understand . . .’: Chinese-American Death Ritual in 19<sup>th</sup> Century [sic] California,” available at <https://www.scahome.org/publications/proceedings/Proceedings.13Rouse.pdf>.

the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong came to the United States in increasing numbers. On the whole, these immigrants were far better educated than earlier Chinese immigrants.<sup>235</sup>

It has long been assumed that knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge, dispels “religious” beliefs—particularly those associated with “the occult” (divination, magic, etc.).<sup>236</sup> But recent research indicates that the relationship between scientific knowledge and other forms of knowledge, including divination, is extremely complex, and variable across cultures. A study of particular relevance for our purposes appeared in the journal *Public Understanding of Science* a few years ago. In it, the Chinese investigators found that in contemporary Taiwan, well known for its highly educated population, about a third of the people surveyed (1,863 adults, using a statistical method known as “probability proportional to size”), believed that “fortune-telling [including horoscopy 四柱, astrology 紫微斗數, physiognomy 看相 and geomancy 風水] is accurate or predictive of the future.” More surprisingly, at least on first blush, was that the higher the levels of scientific knowledge, the greater the likelihood that the respondent would avail of fortune-telling services. The explanation was two-fold: First, “Fortune-telling beliefs and practices have an ancient origin and are deeply engrained in Taiwanese people’s consciousness,” and second, “people with more education . . . [tend to have] more social opportunities and thus a higher degree of uncertainty [in their lives].”<sup>237</sup> Another study, undertaken by scholars at Macau University, has determined that *fengshui* has had, and continues to have, a “significant impact” on housing prices in Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>235</sup> See “Chinese Immigrants in the United States” Migration Information Source (September 29, 2017). <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states/>

<sup>236</sup> See Bruce Sacerdote and Edward Glaeser, “Education and Religion,” National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 8080 (2001), 1–52, esp. 6. URL:

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w8080>, and Richard Walker, Steven Hoekstra and Rodnet Vogl, “Science Education is No Guarantee of Skepticism,” *Skeptic* 9.3 (2002): 24–27. URL: <https://www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/12-03-07/#feature>.

<sup>237</sup> Paichi Pat Shein, Yuh-Yuh Li and Tai-Chu Huang, “Relationship between Scientific Knowledge and Fortune-telling,” *Public Understanding of Science* 23.7 (March 2014): 1–17, esp. 3, 12 and 14, note 8. Cf. Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 130–36.

<sup>238</sup> Chu-Chia Lin, Chien-Liang Chen and Ya-Chien Twu, “An Estimation of the Impact of Feng-Shui on Housing Prices in Taiwan: A Quantile Regression Application” (University of Macau, undated): 1–22. This study, which focuses almost exclusively on Taiwan, confirms other research suggesting that the wealthy who buy expensive housing units care more about *fengshui* than those who buy less expensive units.

In my own academic experience, many well-educated and modern-minded Chinese intellectuals denigrate traditional “superstitions,” and yet, when gently pressed, admit to an interest, and perhaps even an active belief, in divination. One such person (a Ph.D. in linguistics) wrote the following note to me in response to a long discussion we had several years ago: “*Fengshui* is part of the makeup of nature, and therefore practiced by intellectuals. Like nature, it may be misused . . . but that does not diminish the truth of its existence. [ . . . ] Practices [such as *fengshui*] have universal spatial and temporal appeal and are closer [than crude superstitions] to man’s universal apprehensions about the future.”<sup>239</sup> This sort of cognitive polyphasia (that is, the use of “different forms of knowledge . . . to fulfill different needs, overcome different obstacles, and achieve different goals”) is not unique to Taiwan, the Mainland, Hong Kong or overseas Chinese communities.<sup>240</sup> But certain long-standing cultural beliefs and practices do seem to be particularly tenacious in these environments.<sup>241</sup> How else do we explain the results of a recent poll undertaken by a Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate and the Asian Real Estate Association of America, indicating that *fengshui* played a role in 86% of home selections by Chinese-American buyers, and that 79% of them were willing to pay more for homes that apply geomantic principles?<sup>242</sup>

I do not have comparable data for other East Asian culture groups, but I would be willing to bet that a significant percentage of overseas Koreans and Vietnamese hold similar views and act in similar ways. For a variety of reasons, I suspect that the percentage is much smaller for overseas Japanese, but I am not certain. Clearly this topic deserves further investigation.

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<sup>239</sup> Cited in R. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*, 278.

<sup>240</sup> Shein, Li and Huang, “Relationship between Scientific Knowledge and Fortune-telling,” 2 and 12. See also the discussion of “causal” and “mystical” thinking in *ibid.*, 283–85.

<sup>241</sup> Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, *passim*, esp. 118–58 abundantly documents this point.

<sup>242</sup> See Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, “Feng Shui a Driver of Home Selection and Investment for Chinese-Americans,” *Clean Slate*, August 11, 2015. URL: <http://bhgrealestateblog.com/feng-shui-a-driver-of-home-selection-and-investment-for-chinese-americans/>.



*Geomancy Outside the Sinosphere (2): The West and Beyond*

As indicated above, I do not intend to address Western academic scholarship on *fengshui*, although there is much to be said about it.<sup>243</sup> I would, however, like to provide a brief overview of efforts by various individuals to introduce and/or promote geomantic theories and practices to Western audiences. Prior to the nineteenth century, few people in Europe or the Americas knew anything at all about *fengshui*. Jesuit missionaries to China, beginning with Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), identified practices such as astrology, the selection of auspicious dates and times, and geomancy as prominent “pagan customs,” but ones that were more or less harmless. Later missionaries vigorously denounced these “superstitions,” but their denunciations were directed at Chinese audiences, and written for the most part in classical Chinese.<sup>244</sup>

The person who first brought Chinese-style geomancy to a significant Western audience was Ernest J. Eitel, whose 1873 tract titled *Feng-shui, or the Rudiments of Natural Science in China*, provided a generally accurate portrayal of its theories and practices. But like most of his missionary predecessors (and successors), he was hostile to geomancy, describing it on the last page of his book as a belief system based on “human speculation and superstition,” rather than on a “careful study of nature”—and therefore “doomed to decay and dissolution.”<sup>245</sup> For nearly a century thereafter, Western language accounts of Chinese *fengshui* were similarly unsympathetic, although not always overtly hostile.<sup>246</sup> But beginning in the 1960s, a few European academics began to show an

<sup>243</sup> For overviews of the general contours of this scholarship, see Paton, *Five Classics of Fengshui*, 17–43 and Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, passim, esp. 144–49.

<sup>244</sup> On Ricci and other missionaries, see Pingyi Chu, “Against Prognostication: Ferdinand Verbiest’s Criticisms of Chinese Mantic Arts,” in Lackner, ed., *Coping with the Future*, 433–450. In Chinese, see Ferdinand Verbiest, “Wangtуйixiong bian” 妄推吉凶辯 (On the Absurdity of Prognostication,” in Nicolas Standaert, Ad Dudink, and Nathalie Monnet, eds., *Faguo guojia tushuguan Ming-Qing Tianzhujiao wenxian* 法國國家圖書館明清天主教文獻 [Chinese Christian texts from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, vol. 16, 287–336. Taipei: Ricci Institute, 2009.

<sup>245</sup> Ernest J. Eitel, *Feng-shui, or the Rudiments of Natural Science in China* (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford and Company, 1873). URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951000340002s;view=1up;seq=171>.

<sup>246</sup> The most detailed premodern works on *fengshui* in Western languages were Doré, *Researches into Chinese Superstitions* vol. 4 and de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, vol. 3. See also Bruun, *Fengshui in China*, 38–65 and 263–72.

interest in geomancy as a social phenomenon, and it soon attracted scholarly attention in the United States as well. Along the way it came to be popularized, as part of a more general Western attraction to Asian exotica.<sup>247</sup> And with popularization, new geomantic techniques developed, such as Lin Yun's 林雲 (1932–2010) eclectic “Black [Hat] Tantric Buddhist *Fengshui*” (密宗黑教風水), which has proven to be far more appealing to Westerners (especially Americans) than to most ethnic Chinese.<sup>248</sup>

One of the earliest Western exponents of a “popular” approach to geomancy was Stephen Skinner, whose *Living Earth Manual of Fengshui* (1976) became “the first book entirely devoted to feng shui published in English in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>249</sup> As a genre, works of this sort might be described as “semi-scholarly,” in the sense that they are based on solid academic sources, but designed for popular audiences, and often motivated by a desire not simply to inform but also to persuade. Over the past forty years or so, Skinner has written or “translated” at least sixteen books on *fengshui*, in addition to producing more than twenty works concerning what he describes as “the Western Esoteric Tradition.”<sup>250</sup> Skinner writes from the perspective of a practitioner of the geomantic arts, whose goal, according to the inside cover of one of his latest books, *Feng Shui History: The Story of Classical Feng Shui in China and the West from 221 BC to 2012 AD* (2012), is “to propagate accurate knowledge about feng shui, so that feng shui is seen as a practical rather than a mystical [form of] knowledge.”

From what I have read of Skinner's work (the above-mentioned study and translations of four well-known *fengshui* tracts by the Qing dynasty geomancer Zhang Pinglin 張丙琳 (fl. 1740), it appears that his knowledge is derived mainly from

<sup>247</sup> See James E. Mills, “Western Responses to Feng Shui,” *Middle States Geographer* 32 (1999): 71–77; Dan Waters, “Foreigners and Fung Shui,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 34 (1994): 57–117; David Nemeth, “‘Berkeley School’ Genius: Musings on ‘Feng-shui,’” *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 70 (2008): 28–44. Cf. Stephen Skinner, *Feng Shui History*, 157–83.

<sup>248</sup> See Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 149 ff., esp. 153–55 (on Black Hat *fengshui*). Cf. Stephen Skinner, *Feng Shui History*, 135–67, esp. 176–78 (also on Black Hat *fengshui*). See also Lin Yun's website at <http://www.yunlintemple.org/introduction/hhgly>. For Asian-language descriptions, see <http://www.kagayakuinochi.com/service.html> and [http://fo.ifeng.com/news/detail\\_2010\\_08/13/1947984\\_0.shtml](http://fo.ifeng.com/news/detail_2010_08/13/1947984_0.shtml).

<sup>249</sup> Skinner, *Feng Shui History*, 159.

<sup>250</sup> <http://www.sskinner.com/>.

secondary studies in English rather than primary research in Chinese-language materials. The translations that he mentions have been done by an experienced language instructor named Er Choon Haw (余俊豪), and Skinner's role seems to have been to edit the translations and provide commentaries. Although it is clear that Skinner is eager to disseminate accurate information about the premodern traditions of *fengshui*, it is also evident that he is not shy about promoting his own entrepreneurial interests.<sup>251</sup>

Another prolific author on *fengshui* is Evelyn Lip, a Malaysia-based entrepreneur who, like Skinner, has written a number of *fengshui*-related books for popular audiences. But whereas several of Skinner's books deal with grave geomancy (陰宅) as well as residential geomancy (陽宅), Ms. Lip, and the overwhelming majority of other modern writers on *fengshui* in the West, focuses primarily on the latter. Her books include *Feng Shui: Environments of Power* (1995), *What is Feng Shui?* (1997), *Feng Shui for Business* (1989), *Feng Shui for Harmony in the Home* (2010) and *All You Need to Know about Feng Shui* (2010).<sup>252</sup>

From this point, the slope away from academic studies toward purely popular works becomes ever more slippery. Perhaps the most prolific of all non-academic English-language writers on geomancy is Lillian Too, who has, according to her website (<http://www.lillian-too.com/>), “authored over 80 best selling books” on the subject of *fengshui*, works that “have been translated into 30 languages.” Based in Malaysia, her reach is truly global—similar to that of another famous Malaysia-based Chinese *fengshui* specialist, Joey Yap (<http://www.joeyyap.com/>).<sup>253</sup> In such cases, the wealth of the specialist becomes an index of his or her geomantic ability. Thus, we read on Too's website that her “lucrative career in the banking and corporate world at the age of 45 . . . is living proof that feng shui works.” Seen in the light of personal good fortunes as an index of geomantic ability, one wonders what to make of the tragic story of Zheng

<sup>251</sup> See <http://www.sskinner.com/>. Another early popularizer of *fengshui* in the West was Sarah Rossbach, a promoter of Lin Yun in the United States, and the author of *Feng Shui: The Chinese Art of Placement* (1983).

<sup>252</sup> A noteworthy exception to the general emphasis on residential geomancy in the West is Hin Cheon Hung's (孔憲章) *The Yin House Handbook* (2012). See his website at <http://masteryacademy.com/course/mhhc/>. Hung is a disciple of Joey Yap (see below).

<sup>253</sup> See Skinner, *Feng Shui History*, 135–146 for discussions of *fengshui* specialists in Malaysia and Singapore.

Guoqiang (鄭國強), widely regarded as “one of the most famous feng shui experts in Hong Kong,” who was buried alive in a landslide at a Chinese cemetery, just seconds after showing a family the “perfect burial plot” for their relative’s grave.<sup>254</sup> *Fengshui*, it seems, can be a cruel mistress.

Looking at the titles of about two dozen of Lillian Too’s books on geomancy, certain themes appear prominently and repeatedly—in particular, the importance of an attractive and auspicious living space, professional success, good health, happiness in family affairs, and enduring friendships. We should recall that such themes were implicit and often explicit in premodern works on *fengshui* as well. But books by authors such as Too, like a great many of their counterparts in the modern Sinosphere, also emphasize romantic love and personal relationships—hence titles such as *Lillian Too’s Irresistible Feng Shui Magic: Magic and Rituals for Love, Success and Happiness*; *Essential Feng Shui: A Step-By-Step Guide to Enhancing Your Relationships, Health, and Prosperity*; *Lillian Too’s Easy-To-Use Feng Shui For Love: 168 Ways To Happiness—Enhance Your Relationships Energize Your Friendships, Maximize Your Love Potential*.

A host of other Western-language writers, recognizing a lucrative book market when they saw it, entered the *fengshui* game, many of them using the term as a trope, more or less, for something like “trendy Asian stuff” (hence the marketing of *fengshui* products such as crystals, perfumes, music etc.). Although certain features of traditional *fengshui* are often preserved in such works—the notion of *qi* (usually spelled *chi* or *ch’i*), five agents correlations, the eight trigrams, directional and temporal variables, and so forth—there is virtually no mention of the need for moral behavior in the popular Western books I have seen. Even less are there specific discussions of traditional East Asian values such as “humaneness” (仁) and filial piety (孝), which still appear in quite a few modern books on geomancy in the Sinosphere.

Rather, we encounter in Western works a proliferation of titles reflecting stereotypical qualities of Western (particularly American) culture: a preoccupation with

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<sup>254</sup> *Daily Mail*, February 14, 2018. URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2595028/Feng-Shui-master-buried-alive-landslide-Hong-Kong-cemetery-seconds-showing-family-perfect-burial-plot-relatives-grave.html>. Cf. the graphic Chinese-language account at <https://kknews.cc/news/zrpa3g.html>.

love, sex, fashion, personal appearance, pets, clearing out clutter, and doing things quickly. Here are just a few: *Move Your Stuff, Change Your Life: How to Use Feng Shui to Get Love, Money, Respect, and Happiness*; *Feng Shui in a Weekend*; *Classical Feng Shui for Health, Beauty and Longevity*; *Classical Feng Shui for Romance, Sex and Relationships*; *Design Your Living Space for Love, Harmony and Prosperity*; *Fashion Feng Shui*; *Feng Shui Tarot*; *Feng Shui, Craps, and Superstitions: The Martial Arts Approach to Winning at Craps*; *Feng Shui for the Loss of a Pet*; *Feng Shui for You and Your Cat*; *Billy Yamaguchi Feng Shui Beauty: Bringing the Ancient Principles of Balance and Harmony to Your Hair, Makeup and Personal Style*; *Feng Shui in a Day (Just Try This)*; *Teen Feng Shui: Design Your Space, Design your Life*; *10-Minute Feng Shui*; *The Vastu Vidya Handbook: The Indian Feng Shui*; *Beauty Feng Shui*; *Feng Shui for your Baby Nursery*; *Feng Shui Fun: Using Margarita Research to Create Yummy Spaces*; *Decorating with Funky Shui: How to Lighten Up, Loosen Up, and Have Fun Decorating Your Home*.<sup>255</sup>

As we have already seen in the case of the contemporary Sinosphere, the dissemination of information about geomancy is certainly not limited to books, and is now truly global in its reach—even if the primary targets for many websites appear to be local or national. In almost any large-scale urban culture worldwide, one can find any number of *fengshui* practitioners, *fengshui* associations and *fengshui* commercial establishments. There are hundreds if not thousands of geomantically oriented websites, emanating from every part of the world and devoted to all aspects of *fengshui*—commercial, academic and everything in-between.

There are, for example, *fengshui* “immersion” tours to China (<https://fengshuidesigns.com/travel/>), *fengshui* travel advisories (<https://news.mynavi.jp>), and *fengshui*-oriented hotels and gambling casinos ([http://www.clair.or.jp/j/forum/forum/pdf\\_340/12\\_kaigai.pdf](http://www.clair.or.jp/j/forum/forum/pdf_340/12_kaigai.pdf)). The American Feng Shui Institute, founded by Master Larry Sang in 1991 (<https://www.amfengshui.com/>) offers online classes as well as on-site classes (in 2014 the Institute sponsored a class in Guam). Interested in *fengshui* in Romania? Check out

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<sup>255</sup> I have included subtitles only when they clarify the content. Hundreds of other titles like these can easily be found at Amazon.com.

<https://www.facebook.com/romania.fengshui/>? Want a *fengshui* consultation in Nigeria? Try <http://www.astromeenaakshi.com/nigeria/fengshui-consultant.htm>. Of the many available geomantic options in Argentina, one possibility would be <http://www.fengshui-argentina.com/>. According to <https://www.sulekha.com/feng-shui-product-dealers/delhi> there are more than 150 *fengshui* shops in Delhi (the picture may be complicated in this case, however, since the traditional Hindu system of siting known as Vastu Shastra [*vāstu śāstra*]*—*involving variables of space, form and direction that are analogous to *fengshui*, and utilizing compass-like devices known as a *chakra* or *chakara**—*is often described as *fengshui*.<sup>256</sup>

### III. Concluding Remarks

It would be interesting, but beyond the scope of this essay, to explore similarities and differences between the globalization of *fengshui* and the globalization of practices such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). I can, however, offer a brief comparison between the globalization of geomancy and that of the *Yijing*.<sup>257</sup> To be sure, one is fundamentally a practice and the other is a text, but the processes by which they were transmitted and transformed over time and space are remarkably similar, down to efforts in the modern era to claim that they are “scientific” in the modern Western sense.<sup>258</sup> Also similar are the ways that both the *Yijing* and geomantic theories and practices emphasize the need for harmony and balance in one’s life, as well as an attunement to nature and the environment and/or the cosmos. Perhaps most important from an individual standpoint, both have been designed in part to help us cope with our fears, uncertainties and anxieties.<sup>259</sup> In the language of the *Yijing*, the role of the document has long been to

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<sup>256</sup> All the websites mentioned above were accessed on February 23, 2018 through a Google search.

<sup>257</sup> For details on the *Yijing* side of this comparative equation, see R. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography, Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, and “The Transnational Travels of the *Yijing* or *Classic of Changes*: Perspectives from the Sinosphere.”

<sup>258</sup> See, for example, See R. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, 204 and 208–11. Cf. “Fengshui shi kexue bu shi mixin 風水是科學不是迷信 (Fengsui is science, not superstition).” <https://www.lnka.tw/html/topic/18670.html>.

<sup>259</sup> See the illuminating discussion in Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 170–195.

“resolve doubts” (*jueyi* 决疑 or 决疑), to alleviate anxiety (*youhuan* 忧患), and to teach us the need for “caution and fear [in order] to avoid blame” (*jingju wujiu* 敬懼無咎).<sup>260</sup>

Clearly, one reason for the transnational spread of *fengshui* and the *Changes* has been the reputation and assumed authority of Chinese culture at certain historical moments. In premodern times, the study and application of both geomancy and the *Yijing* began in the Sinosphere, where the language of transmission (classical Chinese or the literary Sinitic) facilitated appropriation. It is true that the scholarly authority of the *Yijing* was, and remains, far greater than that of geomancy. But the former was seen as the theoretical foundation of the latter, and in any case, they shared a great many concrete symbols as well as cosmological assumptions. Moreover, the practical applications of the *Changes* and *fengshui* were fundamentally the same. In both cases, many different “schools” of interpretation developed, and eventually, complex and sophisticated ideas became simplified to reach popular audiences, both East and West.

Another reason why the *Yijing* and geomancy traveled so well in the premodern Sinosphere was that as instruments of divination, they performed similar political and social functions. Both were employed in some form by all sectors of society, from rulers, bureaucrats and scholars to clergy, merchants, and peasants. They both influenced decisions about nearly every major aspect of life in the Sinosphere, and both were concerned in one way or another with issues of moral behavior, which reflected the deep penetration of Confucian values throughout East Asia. As with geomancy, many individuals in premodern China, Japan, Korea and the Ryukyu islands believed, in fact, that the *Changes* would be of no divinatory value if employed by immoral people.<sup>261</sup> Criticisms of geomancers and professional *Yijing* specialists by intellectuals and officials generally had much more to do with their mercenary motives and questionable character than with the techniques they employed. Virtually everyone in the premodern Sinosphere believed in divination. The problem was not whether to believe in it, but whom to believe.<sup>262</sup> In the words of a well-known Qing dynasty proverb: “Do not say that King

<sup>260</sup> See the discussion in Richard J. Smith, “Why the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) Matters in an Age of Globalization.”

<sup>261</sup> See, for example, R. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, 134.

<sup>262</sup> Cited in R. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*, 260. See also *ibid.* 70–91 and R. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, 192–94, 211, and 232.

Wen's hexagrams are ineffective; fear only that the diviner's reading is untrue" (莫道文王卦不靈只怕先生斷不真).

As with interpretations of the *Yijing*, approaches to *fengshui* have always reflected the concerns of particular people, places and periods—not only in Asia but also in other parts of the world. Similarly, as I have tried to show in this article, variables of time, space and social class have invariably influenced the processes of transmission and domestication. So did the languages used to convey these ideas and practices. Once texts were translated from one language to another, they became transformed. Relatively minor changes occurred in the premodern Sinosphere, when works in the literary Sinitic were rendered into local vernaculars. But far more radical changes took place when texts and traditions moved from East Asia to other parts of the world—South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, Russia, and the Americas (to my knowledge, neither the *Yijing* nor geomancy has ever had much purchase in the Middle East).

To be sure, the cultural significance of the *Yijing* was much greater than geomancy in the premodern Sinosphere, where it influenced in sometimes fundamental ways the development and expression of language, philosophy, religion, art, literature, science and medicine.<sup>263</sup> And even in the modern West, geomancy did not and could not inspire the kinds of literary and artistic creativity that the *Changes* did. Aside from the Bible, it is difficult to imagine a single work or cultural practice that influenced the ideas and creations of such prominent and diverse Westerners as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Carl Jung, Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg, John Lennon, Philip K. Dick, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, John Cage, and “Merce” Cunningham.<sup>264</sup> It is true, however, that geomancy has played a significant role in modern architecture, both East and West.<sup>265</sup>

As with Western works on geomancy, the *Yijing* has spawned a great many New Age and special interest versions of itself in the modern era, bearing titles such as *The I Ching and Transpersonal Psychology*, *Self-Development with the I Ching*, *The I Ching Of*

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<sup>263</sup> See R. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World*, esp. 218–40 and *The I Ching: A Biography*, esp. 211–23.

<sup>264</sup> See *The I Ching: A Biography*, esp. 170–210. Aleister Crowley was one of very few major figures in the premodern and modern West who was interested in both the *Yijing* and geomancy. See Marlene Packwood, *The Feng Shui Journey of Mr. Aleister Crowley* (Lulu.com: 2012).

<sup>265</sup> See Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 97–99, 120–21, 127–29, 134, 136, 139, 146, 155, 170.



*Goddess, I Ching Divination for Today's Woman, The I Ching Tarot, Death and the I Ching, The I Ching on Love, Karma and Destiny, The I Ching of Management: An Age-Old Study for New Age Managers*, and my personal favorite, *The Golf Ching: Golf Guidance and Wisdom from the I Ching*. Many of these works are not actually translations, and some of them are quite amusing. Cassandra Eason, author of *I Ching Divination for Today's Woman*, for instance, writing from a somewhat jaundiced perspective, asserts: "While our mighty hunters are keeping a weather eye for potential concubines on the 17.22 from Waterloo to Woking, the *Woman's I Ching* uses the back door to enlightenment."<sup>266</sup>

But even at times and in places where the traditional moral and/or cosmological dimensions of geomancy and the *Yijing* have diminished in importance, especially in the modern era, both have continued to exert a certain psychological influence, shaping perceptions, satisfying emotional needs, and provoking various kinds of philosophical and/or practical reflection. This is nowhere more evident than in the realm of "deep ecology"—an approach to the environment that is biocentric or ecocentric, and not simply anthropocentric.<sup>267</sup> It is beyond the scope of this already overly long article to discuss this connection, but suffice it to say that a number of serious and thoughtful scholars—including Joseph Adler, Ole Bruun, and Stephen Field—have given a great amount of attention to the connection between geomancy, the *Yijing*, and environmental issues.<sup>268</sup> Other scholars—notably Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, John Berthrong and Duncan Williams—have approached these issues from the standpoint of specific East Asian philosophies such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Shintoism.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Cited in R. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography*, 193–94.

<sup>267</sup> This view asserts that all living things have an equal right to live and flourish. See David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction," in Landis and Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>268</sup> See Joseph A. Adler, "'The Great Virtue of Heaven and Earth': Deep Ecology in the *Yijing*," and Ole Bruun, "Is Chinese Popular Religion at All Compatible with Ecology? A Discussion of Feng Shui," in Peter van der Veer, Dan Smyer Yu, James Miller, eds., *Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China* (London: Routledge, 2014): 48–70 and 164–189, respectively. Cf. Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui*, 173–90 and my review of Florian C. Reiter, ed., *Feng Shui (Kan Yu) and Architecture* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011) in the *Journal of Chinese Religions* 42.1 (May 2013): 78–80. See also Yoon, ed., *P'ungsu*, 81–95 and 115–38.

<sup>269</sup> See, for example, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, "Ecology and the Classics" in van der Veer, Yu, and Miller, eds., *Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China*, 19–28. Also, Mary

One need not be a “true believer” in either the *Yijing* or the geomantic traditions inspired by it, to recognize that there is much we can learn from both epistemological approaches—not only in terms of our understanding of individual cultural traditions (my focus in this essay), but also in terms of what we may come to understand about our relationship with nature, past and present.

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Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, eds., *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions and Harvard University Press, 1998), Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Williams, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, 1997); and Norman Girardot, James Miller, and Xiaogang Liu, eds. *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, 2001), which includes an illuminating chapter by Stephen Field titled “In Search of Dragons: The Folk Ecology of *Fengshui*” (185–200).