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## THE GEOMANCER,

IT will be a sad day when nature loses all her mystery and when we can project the cathode ray of science into every nook and corner of this over-classified world; when we shall put, as it were, a revolver to the head of the sybil and compel her to rearrange the scattered leaves; when we shall reduce to grammar the leaf language of the Dordonian oak.

No one seems satisfied today unless he has his eye at a telescope or a microscope and the only ally that poetry has left is the bicycle. Shakespeare had the nineteenth century *fin de siècle* in mind when he spoke of the man who would "peep and botanize upon his mother's grave." The very children know there is no pot of gold under the end of the rainbow and now Nansen has been trying to bring nature to bay among the icebergs of the north.

The world loses as much as it gains when it wantonly penetrates the arcana of nature for the mere sake of classifying. Some people never can look at a flower without wondering how many petals it has and what family it belongs to; they forfeit the bloom and grace of life and like David, when he numbered Israel, they lose by it eventually.

Now here is one great difference between the westerner and the Asiatic. The Korean is as full of myth and legend, of fairy lore and goblin fancy as any minstrel of the middle ages. Nature, to him, is full of the mysterious and for that reason speaks to him with far greater authority than she does to us.

Korean Geomancy might be a page torn from some old wizard's book or copied from some Druid scroll. Let us examine it together and see some of its quaint conceits.

Geomancy is a regular occupation in Korea but there is no guild of them as there is of exorcists. Any man can become a geomancer but no Seoul man ever takes up that occupation. Its ranks are always filled from the countrymen. It is ordinarily the Rip Van Winkle style of man, who prefers walking over the hills with his dog and pipe, that evolves into a geomancer. The first step in the noviciate is the study of the book called Ch'un Keui Tā Yo or "The great important celestial instrument." Having mastered the theory of it he then begins to take practical lessons under a competent teacher. They wan-

der over the hills together and, selecting different points, discuss the merits and demerits of those particular places and decide whether they would make suitable burial sites, for geomancy in this country concerns itself almost exclusively with burial places for the dead. A man's prospects in life may be blighted in the bud by burying his father in an unpropitious spot. More agues and sprains and murrains and blights are caused by this than by any or all other causes combined. When he has been all over the country and has studied all the available places and has made out a mental list of charges, ranging from several hundred dollars for a first class site down to a few cents, for a common one, he graduates, buys him a Yun Do, "wheel picture," in other words a compass, and is ready to hang out his shingle. He has now taken the degree of **디관**\* or "earth specialist," or as we might say he has become a B. E. a "Bachelor of Earth;" or sometimes **디사** which would be D. E. or Doctor of Earth

Let us imagine him then in his office, when in comes a young man who states that his father has died and he must find a suitable burial place. The Geomancer accompanies the youth to his home where a table of substantial food is placed before him, to be washed down with plenty of wine. We might call this meal the retaining fee. He then puts out feelers in various directions to find out about how much the young man is prepared to pay for a burial site, and having made up his mind on that cardinal point he leads the youth over the hills and shows him various places and discourses on the merits of each.

The first question to be asked about any place is—Has it a good Nā Ryong † or the "Advancing Dragon?" This is the line of hills leading down to the burial site. Where a long line of hills falls away to the level of the valley, below the end of the slope is usually a good burial place. The sleeping dragon of hills holds it in his mouth or is supposed to stand guard over it. But there are several necessary qualifications in this dragon chain of hills to make it a proper custodian of the mortal remains of one's nearest relative. If the line of hills is very short, say only one or two miles long, or if in any place the continuity of the chain is broken by an extensive intersecting valley, if the line of hills is mostly shorn of timber or if the chain is very rugged and abounds in precipitous rocks—in any one of these cases the place is of very inferior value. The perfect burial site is rare and hard to find. It is called a Wlé Ryong Ko Jo ‡ or "a

\* 地官      † 來龍      ‡ 回龍顧祖

mountain line that curves around and sees its great-grand-father." This gives us another idea of a mountain chain. It is a succession of peaks or eminences each of which is looked upon as being the parent of the one next lower and so a range of hills forms an illustration of a genealogy, a family line of descent, so that when the line curves around so that from the lowest one the highest is visible it means that the latest descendant is looking upon his ancestor. It is thus that the Korean personifies everything in nature not in a pantheistic but in a romantic way.

This tendency to name mountains after animals which they resemble is almost universal and it is a curious fact that there is a universal tendency to name any extraordinary freak of nature after some evil spirit or agency. So all over the world we have such places as the Devil's slide, the Devil's chair, the Devil's kitchen, and a thousand others. These are remnants of early paganism.

Next to the Nǎ Ryong in importance comes the Choa Hyang,\* "The view" or "The prospect." To be perfect it must be toward the south but it may be toward the east or west. It must never face north for the north is without sunlight and its color is black. This is not only true of grave sites but Koreans always prefer to build their houses facing to the south. It would be interesting to trace in different peoples this tendency. Is it a remnant of an ancient sun worship or is it because the course of empire has usually been from the equator northward and southward and wherever people have settled they have, unconsciously, built their houses so as to cast a back glance toward the sunny south?

The Blue Dragon and White tiger† must also be attended to; these represent the east and west sides of the burial site. Blue is the color of the east and white of the west and this is a metaphorical way of describing the flanking hills. The grave usually lies in a slight hollow or indentation in the end of the hill and two arms, as it were, of the hill come partly around it on the east and west. These must not be greatly dissimilar in length or general shape. If one extends out far beyond the other it will influence for ill the descendants of the man buried there.

One of the most unpropitious things of all is the Kyu Bong‡ or "spying peak." In order to discover whether such a peak exists, the geomancer seats himself upon the exact spot proposed for the sight of the grave and scans the horizon in every direction, taking careful note of every hilltop that is visible. Then he rises to his feet and repeats the scrutiny with ex-

\* 坐向      † 青龍白虎      ‡ 窺峯

treme care and if he now sees a hilltop which was not visible when he was seated, he has found a "spying peak" and the site is absolutely worthless, for if a man is buried on such a spot his descendents are sure to become robbers. This is a poetic touch, for the idea of one hilltop overtopping another just enough to become visible suggests only to an imaginative mind the idea of a genius or spirit of evil crouching behind the nearer hill and keeping his baneful eye fixed on the last resting-place of the dead.

When the outward environments of the proposed site have been carefully examined and found as satisfactory as the price to be paid will guarantee attention is directed to the spot itself upon which the grave is to be dug. The geomancer gets out his wheel picture and lays it on the ground and decides upon the exact direction in which the grave shall point. This depends largely upon what is in sight in front. If there are other graves in sight it must not point toward any one of them. In fact if the site is a good one there will be no other graves in sight at all, and if there are others the value of the site will depend largely upon their proximity. The next part of the operation is to lay the Keum Jŭng \* or "The Golden Well." This refers to the shape of the instrument which is that of the Chinese character 井 which is the ideogram or picture word for a well. "The Golden Well" is shaped like this with two lateral and two transverse sticks that can be adjusted by sliding so as to accommodate any size of grave. This is laid on the ground and a mark is made all around inside the parallelogram, and ground is broken for the grave. There is no set measure for the depth of the grave but it differs in different places. It depends upon the nature of the soil and on the general position of the grave. The geomancer calls into requisition the Hyŭl Sim † or "Depth of Hole" principle and decides to bury the body one two, three or as deep as six Korean yards.

It is also necessary to decide where the chief mourner must stand to perform the rites. This is called the "Pul Pok Pang" ‡; There is always one particular side on which the chief mourner must by no means stand if he would escape dire misfortune in the future.

The geomancer's part in the interment may now be considered done—that is, after he has pocketed his fee. But the chances are that he or some other geomancer may be called at some future time to examine the grave and see if all is right. Altho every precaution has been taken and every contingency

\* 金井

† 穴深

‡ 不伏方

provided for, it not unfrequently happens that the dead man's descendents get into trouble. If so and if there is no other visible cause it is set down to the fact that something or other is the matter with one or other of the graves of his fathers. The geomancer is called and, if there seems to be plenty of money to back up the business, he will find perhaps that there is serious trouble with several of them, but otherwise he decides that some slight alterations only are necessary.

There are special formulæ for finding what is the matter with the grave. These are all given in the Ch'un Keui Tã Yo but would scarcely interest the readers of the REPOSITORY. He may discover by the use of these rites that the body has *run away*. And Koreans solemnly aver that time and again such graves have been dug open and found quite empty. The geomancer then goes to work to find where it has gone to, and it may be remarked that this chasing of a long buried corpse about the country is the most gruesome part of the geomancer's business and might well deter nervous or excitable people from entering this profession, but fortunately the Koreans have no nerves.

It is said that a skillful geomancer will tree his game within twenty-four hours without fail, or rather will run it to ground; and when the afflicted relative digs in the spot where the geomancer bids him he invariably finds the object of his search.

The skill by which this investigation is carried out is called the Pok Ku Pun § or "Old grave magic rite."

\* 卜舊墳

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