

# The ideas of *p'ungsu* (風水, wind and water) in the Context of Korea<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

This article is about the ideas of *p'ungsu*<sup>3</sup>, Korea's traditional outlook on nature and geography, has been used to select the sites of houses and graves. The purpose of this article is to analyse the ideas of *p'ungsu* as the method of interpreting metaphorically the sites of church building according to Korean folk faith and theology.

In this article, I intend first to compare Korea's outlook on nature, considered from the viewpoint of Korean folk faith, with the conception of ideal land, that is, a sacred place, Paradise and Utopia, seen from the standpoint of the science of religion and theology of Christianity.

Of course, the ideas of *p'ungsu* do not have exactly the same meaning as 'nature' or 'ideal land' in Western culture<sup>4</sup> because *p'ungsu* is very much a folk tradition rather than a scientific or theological system.

Secondly, I intend to give theological support to the ideas of *p'ungsu*.

The standpoint of modern thinkers about the ideas of *p'ungsu* can be generally divided into two.

One is a negative standpoint according to which the ideas of *p'ungsu* are merely geomancy because of its 'unscientific' aspect. The other is a positive standpoint

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<sup>3</sup> Literally, *P'ungsu* is a combination of the words *P'ung* (風 wind), and *Su* (水 water).

<sup>4</sup> Though the meaning and implication of *p'ungsu* are quite suggestive, such as "wind is what cannot be seen, and water is what cannot be grasped."; James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, p. 833. or the controlling of wind and water on earth, "the terms '*p'ungsu*' do not convey any idea of the thing meant."; M.T. Yates, 'Ancestral Worship and Fung-Shuy', in *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, Vol. 1. No. 3. July, 1868, p. 38.; quoted from Lee Sang-hae, *Feng-Shui; Its Context and Meaning*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Dep. of Architecture in Cornell University, 1986, p. 15.

valuing *p'ungsu's* influence on human lives and its environmental and ecological aspects based on philosophy and science originating from ancient China.

## 2. The Ideal Land

### 2-1. Western Ideal Land

#### 2-1-1. The Garden of Eden

The Jewish idea of the Promised Land and the Christian idea of the return of Christ are rooted in a promise given by God to his people. The ideal society is the fulfilment of humans hopes on earth.<sup>5</sup>

The ideal space in Western thought will be paradise<sup>6</sup>, more recently discussed as Millenarianism. George Kateb defined utopia as “the vision or idea of a perfect society”.<sup>7</sup> There is the biblical interpretation showing that “utopia exists somewhere between the ‘Garden of Eden’ of Genesis and ‘the New Jerusalem’ of Revelation”.<sup>8</sup>

The Garden of Eden is utopia seen as a literal ‘garden, green and pleasant’. Genesis describes it as containing four rivers and ‘every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food’(2:9). On either side of the stream that flows from the Temple stand trees of wonderful fruitfulness.

The prophet Ezekiel describes it in detail.<sup>9</sup> In contrast Revelation describes Jerusalem

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<sup>5</sup> Julia Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, Tokyo, Sophia University, 1977, p. 200.

<sup>6</sup> Originally paradise was a Persian word, denoting an enclosure and thence a nobleman's park, which was borrowed by both the Hebrew and Greek languages. ; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet ; Studies in the role of the heavenly dimension in Paul's thought with special reference to his eschatology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> George Kateb, “Utopias and Utopianism,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, The Macmillan Co.& the Free Press, 1974, p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Philip W. Porter & Fred E. Luckermann, “The Geography of Utopia,” in Lowenthal D. & Bowden, M. J. (eds.), *Geography of the Mind*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1975, pp. 199-200.

<sup>9</sup> The prophet Ezekiel, in the concluding vision of his book, prophesying in exile in Babylonia after the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E., is taken on a tour of a future Temple in a restored Jerusalem. In one passage he describes a stream flowing from the Temple in terms that recall the Garden of Eden. ; translations from the Hebrew Bible are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

47:7. As I went back I saw upon the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. And he (the angelic guide) said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh.” 9. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish; so everything will live where the river goes....12. And on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fall, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.

Martha Himmelfarb, “The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira”, in Jamie Scott & Paul Simpson-Housley (eds.), *Sacred Places and Profane*

as adorned with every kind of precious stone: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst.<sup>10</sup>

The history of God, who led his people from wilderness into the Promised Land, Paradise is recorded in the Bible.

## 2-1-2. Utopia

Thomas More, who first used the word 'Utopia' called the island of a remote country 'Nusguama (Nirgendwo)' in his letters sent to his friends. His "happy island" is a non-Christian society. Yet it is, More's Christian inspiration that led him to project the image of a paradise on earth.<sup>11</sup> It is connected with the meaning of the word 'Utopia', 'non-place'. It can be said to be the desire for the 'Perfect Society'.<sup>12</sup> In general, the utopian literary genre has been adopted primarily to imagine societies of greater virtue and quality.<sup>13</sup>

In 18th century Britain there were many attempts to describe ideal societies featuring pastoral or moral visions, following upon the revolutionary debates of the 1790s.<sup>14</sup> The character of utopia of the West was summarised as having the properties of isolation<sup>15</sup>, nature and harmony.<sup>16</sup> But, the description of the land or scenery is insignificant. That is because the utopia of the West was not expressed as the *ideal land*, but was thought to be the *ideal society* and so, the substance of its description shows the supernatural

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*Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, London, Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 21 : 19,20.

<sup>11</sup> Julia Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, Tokyo, The Institute of Oriental Religions, Sophia University, 1977, p. 201.

<sup>12</sup> Porter, P. W. and F. E. Luckermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-223.

<sup>13</sup> "The imaginative form of the genre permits normal social restrictions to be dissolved more readily than in other, more realistic, types of fiction. Among other things, this allows the expression of more extreme or implausible principles of social reform felt none the less to be practicable or desirable at some time and in some place."; Gregory Claeys (ed.), *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, introduction. pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> "In 'The Island of Content' (1790), for example, the earth disgorges food without labour, no animals are eaten (they too consume only fruit and nuts), wine flows without drunkenness, and piety reigns supreme."; *Ibid.*, introduction, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> "The location of utopia is expressed as some place between India and Brazil in *Utopia* (1516) written by Thomas More, Taprobane (Sri Lanka) in *City of the Sun* (1602) written by Campanella, an island called Caphar Salama of the Ethiopian Sea in *Christianopolis* (1619) written by Andreae and South Seas in *New Atlantis* (1627) written by Francis Bacon. It shows the property of isolation."; quoted from Ch'oe Ch'ang-jo, *P'ungsu Ideas in Korea*, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>16</sup> "The valley glaciated and rockwalls in a mountainous district of South Alps in New Zealand are expressed in '*Erewhon or Over the Range*' written by Samuel Butler in 1873. The scene of a person riding a horse and running along the silent seashore on a rainy day, with the rising sun, white sand, the coconut palms, a lawn and huts is expressed in '*Islandia*' written by Austin Tappan Wright in 1942. These show the property of harmony with nature."; quoted from Ch'oe Ch'ang-jo, *Ibid.*, p. 334.

contents, such as the good commonwealth or the relationship between humans and between a human and God.

The shape of utopia in the West is expressed variously. In general, it can be divided into the utopia of Eden and arcadias. The utopia of Eden is the biblical paradise in the relation between God and humans. After humans were banished from the Garden of Eden, they felt nostalgia and desired a return to utopia of Eden. Arcadia is literary and imaginary, and related to common political theory while Christian utopia proposes the realisation of common people's dreams including amusements and sex. In a word, the idea of utopia in the West can be said to have been a subject of social concern mainly about the principle of equality.

### **2-1-3. Church**

In the Byzantine church building the interior represents the universe. "The four parts of the interior of the church symbolise the four cardinal directions. The interior of the church is the universe. The altar is paradise, which lay in the East. The imperial door to the altar was also called the Door of Paradise. During Easter week, the great door to the altar remains open during the entire service ; the meaning of this custom is clearly expressed in the Easter Canon : 'Christ rose from the grave and opened the doors of Paradise unto us'. The West, on the contrary, is the realm of darkness, of the dead, who await the resurrection of the flesh and the Last Judgment."<sup>17</sup> The centre of the church is the Earth. According to Kosmas Indikopleustes, the earth is a rectangle defined by four walls and covered by a dome. Thus the church is a representation of heavenly Jerusalem.

### **2-2. Oriental Ideal Land**

The Buddhist ideal land is divided into two kinds. One is the 'Pure Land' which stems from the dogmas of Buddhism. In Buddhism, the Pure Land is said to have been created by Amita Buddha and is sometimes termed the Western Paradise.<sup>18</sup> The other is an actual temple site. But, in Buddhism, it is believed that the Pure Land can agree with a

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<sup>17</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*, Zurich, 1950, p. 119. quoted from Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>18</sup> David Bentley-Taylor, "Buddhism", in J.N.D. Anderson (ed.), *The World's Religions*, London, The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950, p. 132.

temple site symbolically in the real world.<sup>19</sup> The utopias of Taoist philosophers are remarkably similar to that of Thomas More. For example Chuang-tzu (莊子) describes Nan Yueh (南越): its inhabitants live a simple happy life protected from all the cares and moral problems of civilisation.<sup>20</sup> But, it is also the ideal society of a kind like the utopia of the West and is not the perfect land suitable to *p'ungsu*.

## 2-2-1. *Myongdang* (명당, 明堂) in *P'ungsu* (풍수, 風水)

The *p'ungsu* spot can function perfectly only when it is defined by physical objects within the territory of the *p'ungsu* situation. The defined territory is the Chinese version of 'imago mundi'.<sup>21</sup> The Azure Dragon (靑龍) to the east, the White Tiger (白虎) to the west, the Black Warrior (玄武) to the north, and the Red Bird (朱雀) to the south represent the Chinese idea of replicating the heavenly structure on earth.

*Myongdang*<sup>22</sup> in front of the *p'ungsu* spot and the place enclosed by the surrounding *sa* has a specific relation to the *p'ungsu* spot. In comparison with utopia of the West, though the expression of *myongdang* in *p'ungsu* of oriental ideal land are hard to understand and vague, it is the distinctive feature that their sceneries are described very concretely.

While utopia of the West was a fantasy of a kind, *myongdang* of the Orient was a concrete site. So, its existence was confidently believed. This is the difference between utopia and *myongdang*. But it is a common feature that harmony and balance were thought to be important. And especially in case of the property of isolation, *myongdang* had to be enclosed by mountains and water, and so this shows another common feature.

The surrounding environment is mild and soft and makes our minds comfortable. A range of mountains flows long and soft. The arrangement of mountains and water is not monotonous but ever-changing. There are also eternal dwellings of virtuous people in harmonious nature. These ideal lands selected according to *p'ungsu* are *myongdang*.<sup>23</sup>

The ideas of *myongdang* in *p'ungsu* are applied to the selection of a good house site. Any nation probably has some ideas of *myongdang* about the spaces thought to be ideal places. As an example, an outlook on *myongdang* in Korea is complicated

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<sup>19</sup> 최창조 (Ch'oe Ch'ang-jo), *좋은땅이란 어디를 말할인가 (Where is Good Land ?)*, Seoul, Sohae munjip, 1996, p. 423.

<sup>20</sup> Julia Ching, *op. cit.*, pp.201-202.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Sang-hae, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

<sup>22</sup> *Myongdang*: a house site or a grave site having the auspicious energy.

<sup>23</sup> Ch'oe Ch'ang-jo, *P'ungsu Ideas in Korea, op. cit.*, p.337.

because many things from an geographical outlook expressed in myths, legends, tales and pictures in the paradise in shamanism, the Buddhist Elysium of Amitabha, the shangrila of Taoism, the ideas of *p'ungsu* and Confucian outlook on *myongdang* of scholars in *Sirhak*, are united and appear a composite whole. But all things are unified into the ideas of *p'ungsu*.

Selecting *myongdang* based on *p'ungsu* in the Orient is not searching for the ideal society made artificially like Western utopia, but is like a pilgrimage to 'a definite place'<sup>24</sup> suitable for the conditions of *p'ungsu* in the world already given. In short, the ideas of *myongdang* in the Orient designates fundamentally the condition of mutual harmony among the heavens. After all, as the Bible leads people into the Promised Land, Paradise, in Christianity.

### 3. Environment and *P'ungsu*

On the practical side of the interaction between human and environment, Rossbach explained as follows ;

“ the ancient Chinese found that a house sited halfway up a hill on the north side of the river facing south received optimal sun, was protected from harsh winds, avoided floods, and still had access to water for crops. In such surroundings, it was easiest to survive : rice, vegetables, and fruit-bearing trees grew under an unhindered sun, cattle grazed on lush grass, and a house stayed relatively warm in the winter. The environment proved comfortable and harmonious, and helped inhabitants to survive and to grow successful and even wealthy. When that significant, auspicious, and ideal space was unattainable, the search for antidotes led to the study of *p'ungsu*.”<sup>25</sup>...“*p'ungsu* supports the

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<sup>24</sup>As the symbols of paradise in Korean literature, fishermen or peach blossoms mainly appear ; 김석하 (Kim Sok-ha), *한국문학의 낙원사상연구 (The Study of Ideal Society in Korean Literature)*, Seoul, Ilsinsa, 1973, pp. 175-77. “In Korean paintings, the frequency rate of a mountain of constituent elements of the landscape is 91%, the rate of a river is 73% and the rate of a pine tree is 53%. The frequency rate of a dwelling house of artificial constituent elements is 37%, the rate of a pavilion is 25%, the rate of a ship is 21%, the rate of temple is 11% and the rate of a bridge is 11%. It shows the way of thinking harmonised with nature.”; 김경영 (Kim Kyong-yong), “한국인의 경관의식에 관한연구” (The Study of Korean Consciousness on Landscape), in *환경연구 (Hwankyong Yonku)*, Seoul, , vol. 2, 1981, p. 214.

<sup>25</sup> Sarah Rossbach, *Feng Shui: Ancient Chinese wisdom on arranging a harmonious living environment*, London, Rider. 1996. p.9.

modern idea of ecology and conservation. Its message is : Harmonise with, do not disrupt, nature. Tampering with nature might disrupt its equilibrium.”<sup>26</sup>

### 3-1. Landscape

Landscape is a central term in geographical studies because it refers to one of the discipline's most enduring interests ; the relation between the natural environment and human society, or between Nature and Culture. There was no *p'ungsu* in the West, but towns and villages, especially in England, grow or are planned to embody the pastoral or bucolic image of the countryside. Porteous divides landscape into five types: “mountains, wilderness, the middle landscape (rural), gardens and townscape. Between mountain and wilderness on the one hand, and garden and city on the other, lies the middle landscape of agrarian enterprise. This approximates to the pastoral or bucolic ideal”.<sup>27</sup>

The development of the village reflects the needs and habits of humans.<sup>28</sup> In conclusion, it is truly an issue of environmental quality and the good life.<sup>29</sup>

Considered from another standpoint, the landscape of the West was used as ‘a visual ideology’. As Daniel and Cosgrove remark, “ a landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings”.<sup>30</sup> In some ways landscape showed the way of thinking restricted to the relations of classes. Westerners especially fabricated landscape pleasant to their tastes with their landscape paintings<sup>31</sup> and gave an impression deeply in the spectators' minds that it was the landscape of an

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> “English landscape tastes ; The poet Cowper's notion that ‘God made the country and man made the town’. Village life is sanctified and there are attempts to countrify the city via parks, turf, and trees. The bucolic includes both the pastoral, which involves open, rolling grassy downs complete with sheep, and the rustic, which is essentially arable land with trees. The tree must be rounded, bushy-topped, broad-leafed, and deciduous.”: J. Douglas Porteous, *Environmental Aesthetics, ideas, politics and planning*, London, Routledge, 1996, p.101.

<sup>28</sup> Amos Rapoport, *Human Aspects of Urban Form : Towards a Man - Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1977, p.26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.19-23. : The Japanese and Korean cities are characterised by a lack of public open spaces so that shopping centres and amusement areas are used instead. This is very different to Western cities. But the Korean farmhouses have *madang* individually for communication with neighbours.

<sup>30</sup> S. Daniels and D. Cosgrove, Introduction : the iconography of landscape, in *The Iconography of Landscape : Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp.1-10, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> “One example, came from Belgium painter Antonie Watteau (1684-1721). He began to paint his own visions of a life divorced from all hardship and triviality, a dream-life of gay picnics in fairy parks where it never rains, of musical parties where all ladies are beautiful and all lovers graceful, a society in which all are dressed in sparkling silk without looking showy, and where the life of the shepherds and shepherdesses seems to be a succession of minuets.”; E. H. Gombrich, *The History of Art*, London, Phaidon, 1972, pp. 357-58.

ideal society.

A landscape painting anywhere in the world is originally the thing to evoke the cognition about the vast and great nature and the human environment that endlessly changes. The Chinese and Korean especially have thought nature as a calm world, a refuge from the framework of society, since ancient times.<sup>32</sup> From the beginning, Taoism has developed the thought of seclusive life to nature to understand the universal power and spirit.

In painting, an oriental painting, the principle is '*ki un saeng dong* (기운생동 氣韻生動).' *ki un saeng dong* means that the spirit of the object painted has to be expressed in a picture according to the law of nature. While forests and trees were often personified in the West, forests and trees themselves expressed the universal spirit in the Orient.<sup>33</sup>

### 3-2. Religion and landscape

Religion has had an influence on landscape for a long time and continues to do so to the present time. Landscape is thought to be the product of culture. Interpretation of landscape needs some comprehension of how the values and beliefs of men were translated into the forms of architecture and how the structure of space, such as in the spatial organisation of residences, shows the values and beliefs of men.

A landscape presents many interesting questions about forms, structure, organisation and function. In the veneration of saints the close link between worship and place is very clear.<sup>34</sup> It is an interesting question how religious worship was reflected in landscape in various environments and cultures. Features of landscape which play some function in worship, such as churches and temples, show the most clear signs of the reflection of religion on the area.

Moreover, symbols of religious worship have developed into the cultural features of many areas and gave them special and peculiar identities. Some elements of religious landscape may be local and of a small scale. Domestic altars, shrines on the roadside and chapels on the roadside are typical examples.

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<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Rowland, Jr., *Art in East & West*, (최민) Ch'oe Min (trans), *An Essay on Eastern and Western Art* (동서미술론), Seoul, Yolhwadang, 1982, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>34</sup> "The true cult of the Christian holy man did not come into full flower until the third century with the liturgical veneration that began to be paid to the martyrs of the new faith. And it was site-oriented : the first public veneration of the Christian martyrs took place, in either cruciform tombs or circular mausolea on the Roman style, in traditional burial places outside the city walls."; F. E. Peters, *op. cit.*, p.11.



## 4. The Support of Christian Theology through *P'ungsu*

### 4-1. Ecological Theology and *P'ungsu*

Every religion has had different attitudes towards the natural environment. Yet for all the religions, religious life has always been the most important element in nature.<sup>35</sup>

That human is master of nature is a deeply rooted view in civilisation. Those now trying to challenge this view have an uphill task.<sup>36</sup> The earth spread wide, mountains, fields and rivers can be said to be the root and trunk of a tree. So, if mountains and streams are indiscriminately destroyed in the name of development, *myongdang* and its *ki* will be destroyed too.

The thinking that human beings ought to conquer nature has its origin in religion, scientific technique and economic planning. In Christian thought with Augustine of Hippo as the central figure, the spiritual aspect of human beings (Theomorph) was emphasised as the analogical interpretation of domination over the earth (Dominium Terrae: Genesis 1: 28).<sup>37</sup> In particular, it was said that ruling over the earth was a blessing given to human beings assuming the spiritual Shape of God.(Imago Dei: “God said, let them rule over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground”; Genesis 1: 26-28)

This tradition of Biblical interpretation was strengthened by developed scientific technique in the age of Renaissance. Francis Bacon said “Knowledge is Power.” This saying became the principle of pragmatic science. Though the pursuit of profits is the fundamental idea of industrial capitalism, the thinking that human beings ought to conquer nature can not be justified.

In the past, the ideas of *p'ungsu* were sometimes put to political use.<sup>38</sup> For example,

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<sup>35</sup> Cardinal Kim Su-hwan, “Beyond Sectarianism: Protection of the Environment”, in *Inculturation, Korea*, Seoul, The Columban Inculturation Centre, Vol.1 No.1, Oct. 1991, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Melvin Rader and Betram Jessup, *Art and Human Values*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976, p. 368.

<sup>37</sup> See, Michael T. Seigel, *Mission and Ecology: An Exercise in Dialogue and Contextualisation*, Chap. 6 and 7, Ph.D. Dissertation, Dep. of Theology, The University of Birmingham, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> “Geomancy was transmitted to Korea during the Three Kingdoms period (57B.C.-A.D.935) and was used in selecting auspicious grave-sites of kings and nobles. The person responsible for popularising geomancy in Korea was Toson (도선 道詵, 827-898 ). He is looked upon as the pioneer of Korean geomancy. His technique analysed the surface features of a region and was used more in identifying locales for building palaces and government offices than in choosing sites for graves. The first king of the Koryo kingdom (918-1392), Wang Kon (왕건 王建) believed in Toson’s geomantic theory, and he was influenced by Toson’s divination of the auspicious topographical features of the capital city *Kaekyong* (개경 開京) as the region blocking wind and of *Sokyong* (서경 西京) as the region

the capital city was moved according to the ideas of *p'ungsu* for the wealth of the country, and house sites were selected according to the ideas of *p'ungsu* for private success in life. So, ordinary persons still have a political or self-satisfying image about *p'ungsu*. It was an outlook on nature based on Chinese philosophy.

The fact that human beings ought to live harmoniously with nature has a religious base. The key example may be St. Frances of Assisi. Yet more religions in harmony with nature are found in the East than in the West. Santmire says as follow:

“It has been alleged that Western theological tradition is ecologically bankrupt....As a result of this popular reading of Western Christian thought, many who have been concerned with environmental issues have turned to other traditions, such as Eastern religions or native American religions, in order to find theological or metaphysical resources for the new kind of inclusive thinking that the emerging ecological consciousness seems to require – to view humanity as part of nature, not as a species above or against nature, to understand God as immanent in the vast expanses and diversities of cosmic history, as well as immanent in the unfolding dramas of human history.”<sup>39</sup>

Sallie McFague theologises about the organic model in the evocative metaphor, “the world as God’s body.”<sup>40</sup> That is, it shows that God is not unrelated to the world and natural lives and preferably he exists, groaning with the destroyed world ( Rome 8:18 ). The concept, “the world as God’s body,” implies that human beings ought to come in contact with the whole world as ‘Thou’. She insists on the paradigm shift of Western theology which is patriarchal and says as follows ;

“Theology is an ‘earthly’ affair in the best sense of that word : it helps people to live rightly, appropriately, on the earth, in our home. It is, as the Jewish and Christian traditions have always insisted, concerned with ‘right relations,’ relations with God, neighbour and self, but now the context has broadened to include what has dropped out of the picture in the past few hundred years – the

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acquiring water.”; Choi Byong -hyon (최병현), “Toson’s Geomantic Theories and the Foundation of Koryo Dynasty”, in *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature; The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1985, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1987, p. 11. and see, *The Metaphorical Theology: Model of God in Religious Language*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1982 and “imaging a Theology of Nature : The World as God’s Body”, in *Liberating Life*, Orbis 1990.

oppressed neighbours, the other creatures and the earth that supports us all. This shift could be seen as a return to the roots of a tradition that has insisted on the creator, redeemer God as the source and salvation of all that is.”<sup>41</sup>

Recently, the ideas of *p'ungsu* have become the centre of attention again from the point of view of natural ecology. The ideas explain the mutual relation between nature and humans which is how '*ki*', the substance of this idea, has had an effect on human life. The ideas of *p'ungsu* excludes the framework of Western thinking, masculinity and human-centredness, and instead reflects the feminist viewpoint which is cosmos-centric, ecological and perceives the earth as a mother. This ideas of *p'ungsu* can be said to be the theological system which perceives the cosmos and nature as God (a mother).

When the position of *chongjung* was selected by *chwahyang*, the process of selecting *chongjung*'s position had the symbolic meaning of the process of finding the womb of a mother for *songjusin*. Of course, perfect *myongdang* is not in *p'ungsu*. Every *myongdang* has some fault. However, the organic attitude of *p'ungsu* towards the environment and the scientific and environmental significance of *p'ungsu* can be found in for example the protection of mountains for the sake of keeping mountains alive, as an act compensating for the inadequacies of *myongdang*.

Moreover, the ideas of *p'ungsu* can offer an attitude and method for Christian theology of nature and be studied in the feminist theological aspect. In the ideas of *p'ungsu*, which perceives the earth as a living organism, there can be found a basis for alternative ideas, not only in town planning but also in coping with the environmental crisis of the earth. The idea of *sojugilhyung-non* (소주길흉론 所主吉凶論) is applied in *p'ungsu* so as to prevent the ideas of *p'ungsu* from being a superstition and to emphasise morality.

The theory says that unless a person possesses virtue, he can never get good land. It is expressed in the Bible “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). This means that unless people are religiously renewed following the requirements of nature (the creation), they cannot get out of the condition of ecological alienation.

#### 4-2. Theological Approach to *P'ungsu* Ideas

*P'ungsu* is an attitude toward the earth and an outlook on geography which originates in

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<sup>41</sup> Sallie McFague, “An Earthly Theological Agenda” in Mary Heather Mackinnon and Moni McIntyre (eds.), *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, Kansas, Sheed & Ward, 1995, p.332.

Korea's experience of life and of the idea of *ch'onbu chimo* (天父地母 Heavenly Father and Earth Mother) and the theory of *umyang*. In the ideas of *p'ungsu*, the earth was regarded as a earth mother (지모, 地母) conceiving and giving birth to all things. So, the good earth was thought to be the place where the spirit of the earth (음기, *umgi*陰氣) was in harmony with the spirit of the heavens (양기, *yanggi*陽氣) and there was prosperous vitality. The place where the heavens combine with the earth to let all things grow may naturally be thought to be, in its own way, the centre of the universe. And each place selected by the method of *p'ungsu* was thought to be the centre of the universe.

The ideas of *umyang* and *ohaeng* means proper universal order and harmony, and a house has the sense of a special area having universal order and harmony. In the ideas of *p'ungsu*, a mountain symbolised *sotto* and was considered to be the sacred place as the place of theophany. The theophany in Korean *p'ungsu* is not onesided and vertical, but is based on the intercourse and reconciliation of heaven and earth.

The theology of the relations of Christianity to Confucianism, Buddhism and Shamanism is continuously studied in the paradigms of pluralism and syncretism. But, as the system of *p'ungsu* which is a branch of Korean folk faith is very complicated and hard to understand, the meeting of *p'ungsu* and Christian theology has never been attempted, except in the field of environmentalism. When the structure of *p'ungsu* is examined theologically, it is as follows.

Firstly, it is believed that if someone selects a good site, he and his descendants will be prosperous in future. Though this belief is different from the belief in the Kingdom of God in Christianity, such a religious element invoking a blessing in *p'ungsu* can be said to have performed a part of forming the characteristic of the blessing-invoking faith which shows itself in Korean Christianity of the present.

Secondly, the theory of *Sojugilhyung* (소주길흉) does not reduce *p'ungsu* to a superstition. The theory of *Sojugilhyung* is the moral principle that it is not until one cultivates virtue that one can get a good site. So, the theory of *Sojugilhyung* can be compared to the gospel in a broad sense.

Thirdly, the vital energy (*ki*) signifying wind and *pneuma* in *p'ungsu* can be compared to the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

Fourthly, the biblical meanings of wilderness and paradise have been substantially

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<sup>42</sup> See, footnote, No. 92.

interpreted in Christian history.<sup>43</sup> In the ideas of *p'ungsu*, nature corresponds to wilderness and *myongdang* and *sa* correspond to Utopia. And *hyol* can be compared to Jerusalem, the centre of the universe where God manifests himself. It indicates the symbolical sanctuary where a human keeps in touch with, makes peace with and is in harmony with the heavens. After all, the concept of *p'ungsu* means reconciliation, meaning of the heavens and human, that is, nature and human. Thus, the ideas of *p'ungsu* as the concept of reconciliation, harmony and *Sangsaeng* can be said to be an unexplored field of inculturation theology offering rich theological metaphors.

## 5. Conclusion

*P'ungsu* ideas as the controlling principle of planning dwellings rests on the idea that heavenly principles and rules are considered to be revealed through the medium of *ki*. First of all, in this article the ideas of *p'ungsu* were conceptually explained so that they might help us to understand how the folk faith interprets the sites of church buildings.

Kim Won, an architect, who took charge of the extension work of Seoul Anglican Cathedral in 1966, says that the scientific rationality of *p'ungsu* ideas is generally substantiated in the domain of modern architecture from the viewpoint that most important conditions for the location of a building are that the location should not be exposed to the winds and get a lot of sun, abundant water and scenic beauty.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, there is no ideal land that meets all the conditions of *myongdang* in *p'ungsu*. The essence of *p'ungsu* is the wisdom to find out proper land without damaging it. Ultimately, the proper land does not mean the absolutely good land, but the land suitable for its use.<sup>45</sup>

In a word, the ideas of *p'ungsu* are the metaphors through which is expressed the methodology to realise the harmony of the earth and human. A house was thought to be 'the centre' of the universe and a microcosm, having universal order and harmony. So, the house sites selected by the method of *p'ungsu* were thought to be the centre of the universe and people made efforts to realise the ideal values of their lives by getting the

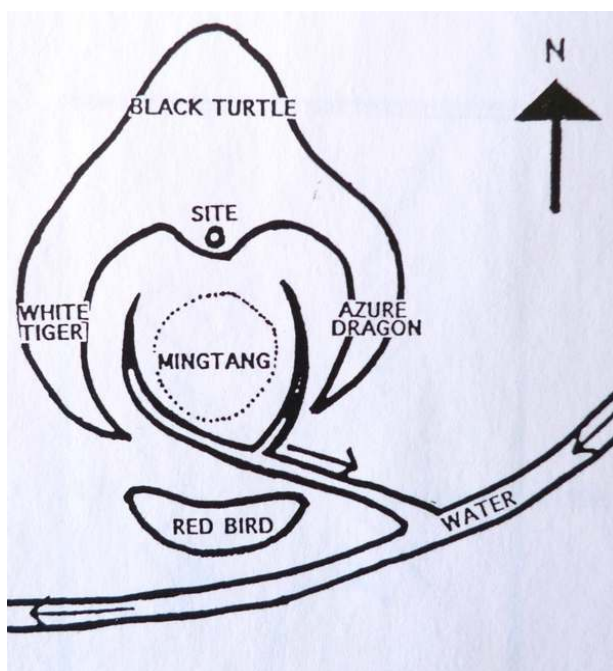
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<sup>43</sup> George Huntston Williams, 'The Wilderness and Paradise in the History of the Church', in *Church History*, Vol. 28, No.1, March, 1959, New York, The American Society of Church History, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> 김원 (Kim Won), "건축가의 입장에서 본 풍수" (*P'ungsu seen from the Standpoint of an Architect*) in *한국민속문화의 탐구* (*The Researches in Korean Folk Culture*), Seoul, Korean National Folklore Museum, 1996, pp. 209-12.

<sup>45</sup> An interview with Ch'oe Ch'ang-jo in *동아일보* (*The Dong-A Daily News*), 3th June, 1997, p. 29.

shape of a house suitable for the ideas of *umyang* and *ohaeng* there. Properly houses were their Utopia and built by imitating a model of the universe possessing order and harmony. *P'ungsu* is the important subject of research in Korean theology that can support 'Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation' (JPIC) and environmental theology. In addition, it is quite within the realms of possibility that a better relationship between the ideas of *p'ungsu* and the traditional theology of the West are brought about in the structural aspect. I intend to look into how the ideas of *p'ungsu* which occupy an important part in the concepts of traditional architecture were or were not applied to the selection of sites of church buildings in the early years of foreign missions and criticise the attitude of Western missionaries toward *p'ungsu*.



(Evelyn Lip, *What is Feng Shui?* 1997, p.

18, figure 15)

## Abstract

This article is about the ideas of *p'ungsu*. The essence of *p'ungsu* is the wisdom to find out proper land without damaging it. In a word, the ideas of *p'ungsu* are the metaphors through which is expressed the methodology to realise the harmony of the earth and human. *P'ungsu* is the important subject of research in Korean theology that can support 'Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation' (JPIC) and environmental (ecological) theology. It is quite within the realms of possibility that a better relationship between the ideas of *p'ungsu* and the traditional theology of the West and the Western ideal land are brought about in the structural aspect.

## Key words

*p'ungsu*, ideal land, garden of Eden, utopia, church, landscape, oriental ideal land, religion and landscape, *Myongdang*, *umyang*, *ohaeng*, *chongjung*, *chwahyang*, ecological theology, *Sojugilhyung*, *ki*,