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Geomancy:

The art of adapting the residences of the living and the dead, so as to co-operate and harmonize with local currents of the cosmic breath... Chatleys

This study hypothesizes that the Chinese in Barkerville employed *feng-shui*, (sometimes called Geomancy), an ancient Chinese art and science, to determine the location of the Chinese graveyards at both Stanley and Richfield. The methodology of this study is to provide a brief history and model outlining the parameters of *feng-shui*, which translates literally as "wind and water" and its use to place humanity in harmony with nature. Then formulate conclusions by studying the cultural landscape of Chinatown in Barkerville. It will examine: artifacts retrieved at the site relating to use of *feng-shui*; Chinese architecture at Barkerville and its position in the environment; and finally, the burial sites topographical relationships within the natural environment.

The Chinese who came to Barkerville in the 1860s, like the occidentals, came dreaming of gold, hoping, not only to gain individual wealth, but trying also to increase their family's wealth and good fortune. They brought with them an ancient set of beliefs, with origins predating the Han dynasty (202 BC- AD

221), that they imposed upon the natural landscape of the Cariboo in an attempt to achieve this goal. This religion, the fifth largest recognized belief system in the world, sometimes called Chinese folk religion, was a mixture of the teachings of Confucius, Tao and Buddha. It reflected the ideals of the Chinese people: polytheism, Yin and Yang theory, divination, filial and ancestor worship. Central to this belief is the concept of *feng-shui*, the ancient Chinese art of placement. The belief is that the "universe is composed of invisible, shapeless,and untouchable currents of energy called Ch'i" (dragon's breath).This ch'i forms the source of all life, linking the universe together as one. The earth itself is seen as a living entity (the dragon). When the dragon breaths it creates yang,or positive energy. Resting creates yin, a negative or passive force which works together, (not opposed as in western thought) to form all life. Proof of this energy is manifested in chains of mountains. Careful community planning in relation to ch'i, is seen as beneficial to the inhabitants of dwellings and future generations; conversely bad placement would injure the inhabitants or later generations. Since the Chinese miners came to Barkerville to increase their families good fortune, they would not have jeopardized this by failing to carefully consider where to bury friends and kin unfortunate enough to die before returning home.

Parameters of the Model

The feng-shui model exhibits two main fundamentals: Li Ch'i (arranging ch'i), which uses a compass to access proper site location; although more commonly used was a concept called Luan Tou (mountain peak). This philosophy makes use of the topography, hydrology, and vegetation of the landscape. An observable model such as this is more understandable than the astrological concept of Li Ch'i's use of a compass to postion humanity in the cosmos advantageously. The positioning of dwellings within the natural configuration of the earth's surface to take advantage of shelter and natural resources concerns anyone who has ever built a house. To avoid any confusion, this paper will refer to both as Feng-Shui.

There are four major requirements for an ideal feng-shui site: First, the topography should be smooth in form and outline. Rough mountains, chasms, steep declavities and difficult terrain that exert evil forces should be avoided. Straight lines of water ways, mountain ranges, roads, railways and other natural and human features should not point to the tomb site as these will disturb the quiet repose of inhabitants. The reasoning is that ancient spirits travel in straight lines, but would become lost on a winding path. Secondly, water courses should be open to view from site. Water is the symbol of wealth and influence and sites set where streams converge gather ch'i therby increasing the good fortune. The third parameter relates to feng-shui. Nature is a living organism that breathes. When it moves, its breath produces the yang or male energy, when it rests it produces the Yin or female energy. Yin and Yang interact and produce all forms of existence on earth. Mountain chains are indications of the life giving energies of Ch'i. The "Green Dragon" is symbolized by the higher mountain, where all yang energy originates; while the lower range is beheld as the "White Tiger" and represents the feminine or yin energy. Forth, a well-drained slope of a dominant mountain is necessary where these two forces interact vigorously and are keep in constant harmony. Such a site, with an abundance of streams and a commanding view of the water and valley is an ideal location for a tomb. Topographically such a site has the dragon mountain running out to the left and the tiger mountain out to the right forming an armchair or horseshoe configuration opening to the South and containing a stream. Variation in topography can make this model quite complex. If possible, sites should be situated as to obtain three-fifths yang and two-fifths yin. In order to achieve the desired balance, the geomancer's main tool, the compass, makes use of the hexagrams of I Ching, as well as lunar cycles, cardinal points, and days of year. Some compasses are so complex that they contain forty levels of information around the heaven pool (center of the compass containing the needle).

In the graveyard, the heads of the deceased should point northward, and the graveyard entrance should be from the South; although, if this is impractical, measures such as planting trees or building mounds of earth can divert or trap the ch'i as needed, in a beneficial way if all parameters cannot be met

History of Feng Shui

To properly understand Chinese culture in Barkerville, an exploration of the origins of

Feng-shui is necessary. While this paper is not the proper venue to fully explore such a diverse subject, a brief overview tracing ideas central to this belief should help to understand it..

The origin of feng-shui is unclear. Research suggests that feng-shui pre-dates the Han dynasty. It is probable the idea's roots originate with Taoist naturalists seeking harmony and balance with nature attempting to improve agricultural conditions. What is certain, is that feng-shui long pre-dates the age of Neo-Confucians (circa 12th- 18th centuries) who popularized it and employed it as a means of urban planning and social control. As stated earlier, the compass was the main tool used for divination of sites by the geomancer. Joseph Needham has traced the origin of the compass, developed in China, as far back as the forth century BC, but he contends its primary purpose was for Geomancy, not navigation.

The elite of the Han dynasty developed a cult of "centrality" with the sacred number five, involving the study of astronomy, numerology, and geography. Like other civilizations they needed to place themselves at the center of the universe, in order to regulate their realms. The Middle kingdom of China was seen as the center of the inhabited world consisting of nine provinces, and that China was one of the nine territories that constituted one of nine continents. These nine continents formed one central mountain, called Kunlun, known as the universe.

This belief known as "centerquest" manifests itself in the study of numerology. Taking the form of the magic square of three and viewed as proof that nature intended man to be at the center of the universe.

2	9	4
7	5	3
6	1	8

This combination of numbers provided certain proofs such as: the sum of any combination of numbers, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally totals fifteen.That number is divisible by the center five; the product of which is three, the base number of the square. One can see there are many such combinations possible from this configuration. The ancient Chinese saw them as proof of man's place in the perfect balance of the universe. Coincidentally, the eight numbers surrounding the five also correspond with the eight hexagrams of I Ching surrounding the heaven pool or center of the universe. These ideas remained sacred until the Sung dynasty (AD 960-1279) when Confusion philosophy underwent a profound change in medieval China. Centerquest then became a more secular and popularized theory with common people, who viewed it as an available avenue to increase their own wealth and fortune. Feng-shui was so popular it became entrenched into the mythology of the Chinese. The name *Kowloon* (Nine Dragons) alludes to a tale of the last Sung dynasty emperor. While fleeing the invading Mongols, a seer advised the emperor to seek a land in the South with nine dragons. Upon arriving at the designated site, he found the landscape contained only eight mountains, becoming despondent, he threw himself into the sea, forgetting that as Emperor, he constituted the ninth dragon.

Is there any evidence that the Chinese in Barkerville actually used feng-shui in the construction of their community? Would the Chinese, considering themselves temporary residents in the Cariboo, discard established beliefs for a short time? One factor that compounds the problem of determining whether feng-shui contributed in the construction of a building is that many of the same conditions feng-shui seeks to address such as orientation to wind, sun, and view are the concerns of every builder. A person unaware of feng-shui, may mistake various features of architecture, believing the builders to be merely pragmatic in their approach to construction. Neville Ritchie in studying the Chinese miners in New Zealand's gold rush of the same time period concludes that it is "unlikely that the Chinese would have neglected their deeply entrenched notions of feng-shui." Ritchie extrapolates this theory upon the American-Chinese immigrant as well.

A Survey of Barkerville's Architecture

A comparison of the feng-shui model and the location of the graveyards at Stanley and Richfield, combined with a survey of surviving artifacts, and the remaining architecture in Barkerville, should reveal if Chinese miners did practice feng-shui in their daily lives.

Most popular contemporary works suggest the Chinese miner's segregation to the south-end of town as a result of racism. This paper contends that the miners consciously choose to live there and actually preferred the location over the lower flatter sections of Barkerville. This is not to suggest that racism did not exist, it did, but is offered to suggest another possibility explaining the location of "Chinatown" within the community. If the Chinese miners held to the ideals of feng-shui as suggested by Ritchie, then one can surmise that the south-end of the community would be a desirable place to live. The construction of traditional Chinese cities follows a strict pattern, displaying a hierarchical power structure along a north-south axis. The markets anchor the north end of the axis and the southern urban area is reserved for royalty. In the Chinese mind, the postion where the royalty resides receives the most beneficial ch'i; therefore that area of any urban area would be first choice when considering their habitation site. Add to this idea, the fact that the south-end of Barkerville constitutes the high ground (elevation) of the community, creating a favorable position according to feng-shui theory, and you can see how the concepts of feng-shui work in the favor of the Chinese in Barkerville. This elevated position generated several complaints concerning sanitation from the occupants of the lower, northern section of town.

Just as location within the landscape holds significance for the Chinese in Barkerville, the position within a building can influence fortune. Environments as large as the universe or as small as a room fit the feng-shui model. The consideration of a building's location and structural design, in an urban setting is called ba-gua. This is a concept where doors, windows, sleeping quarters, and offices all take on importance in the architcture. Any entrance is symbolic of the North, the source of killing ch'i and is best avoided. The position of power in a building is in the left hand rear in relation to the entrance. If a person's bed or office is to close to the door there will be too much disrupting ch'i thereby reducing good fortune. Observations of the architecture in Barkerville confirm such features do exist in the Chinese structures. Structures such as the Kwong Sang Wing Store (circa 1890) and the representations of the Wa Lee and Yan War stores demonstrate the concepts of feng-shui within a building, each contains an office or storage room at back of the building. The Kwong Lee Wing Kee Co. Manager's residence (circa 1901) is an excellent example of a house designed with good feng-shui. The manager's bedroom occupies the postion of power. A small wooden tablet on the wall of the kitchen faces the front entrance. An inscription written on the tablet translates roughly as the "The Dragon's Breath." It was common to place a stone or wooden tablet called a Tai San Shui Kan to deflect bad ch'i. Since this tablet aligns with the main entrance it is possibly meant to adjust or deflect bad ch'i.

In order to maximize the effects of feng-shui on a building it is necessary to consider the alignment of structures with the magnetic lines of force. Nearly all buildings in Barkerville face the street in an east-west configuration, but there are two Chinese buildings that display a different orientation. One is the Lowhee toolshed, and the other is Trapper Dan's Cabin named after Chan Fong who died in the 1950s. Measurements indicate the walls of Trapper Dan's cabin align precisely along the magnetic lines of force in a north-south axis. The building's south facing entrance opens into single room dwelling. The building is rectangular in shape, measuring five meters long and four meters wide, a size and shape common for the bunkhouse style housing of Chinese miners. Ritchie suggests in his study that these dimensions were favoured by the miner's for good feng-shui. The history of this building creates an interesting note in the study of feng-shui, before Chan Fong purchased this building its main use was that of a Chinese hospice house, a hospital where old men came to die. It may be the design of the building was intended to provide maximum beneficial ch'i either to prolong the lives of the residents or to ease their suffering and secure good feng-shui in death.

One other building, The Chui Kung T'ang deserves some scrutiny in this discussion of feng-shui, and connects Barkerville with the numerology discussd earlier. Lily Chow states in her book, Sojourners in the North, "the Chee Kung Tong assumed the role of preserving and promoting the Chinese beliefs in Barkerville." Since the Chee Kung Tong building is the only Chinese structure now displaying original signs and given the assumed role, the translation of the signs given in Wright's book Barkerville take on new meaning when placed in context of feng-shui. The two blue banners on the outside of the building

read "Outside, nine mountains lie beautifully verdant" and "Inside the temple, three Gods are solemnly seated." This translation places the importance of myth and ancient beliefs of Barkerville's Chinese into historic context. A connection between the "nine mountains" and the "three Gods" could suggest devotion to either a cult of centrality or the myth of Kowloon or both. Regardless of what is signifed, a connection between the signs and the landscape of the Barkerville area is visable. The translation links the belief and importance of the physical and mythological landscape to the three Gods: Lao, Confucius, and Buddha, thereby providing strong evidence that the Chinese in Barkerville practiced feng-shui.

The Graveyards At Stanley and Richfield

The main argument of this hypothesis is a similarity in the topography of the Chinese graveyards at Stanley and Richfield. Stanley, is a small ghost town about twenty kilometers west of Barkerville started in 1861 when gold was found. Very little of Stanley now remains that would suggest the large Chinese community that lived there. The only remaining evidence is the depressions in the ground marking the now exhumed graves of the Chinese. In 1959 the Chinese Benevolent Society located and exhumed the graves of Chinese individuals to return them to their homes for burial along side their ancestors. Could the empty graves reveal anything about Chinese culture in Barkerville? Will the graveyard conform to the given paradigm? The exhumation left clearly defined depressions in the ground orienting the sites of the graves. Compass readings reveal that the graves at both sites align along a north-south axis. The graveyards exhibit similar patterns of interment except that two of the exhumed graves in the Stanley site align along an east-west axis. As no records exist one can only assume that the people who buried them were either not Chinese. Both of these graves sit inside the fenced off section containing Caucasian graves and align east-west like the graves of White residents.

The topography of both sites bears a striking resemblance to the armchair model as well. The Stanley site sits on south-facing slope of Dragon Mountain with a slightly lower mountain running out to the left and a even lower range to the right. The site has a view of Lightning Creek that runs through the valley.

The graveyard at Richfield fits the model presented in the same way as the Stanley except it faces north overlooking Stout's Gulch above Barkerville. The graveyard sits on Richfield Mountain, the highest of the three mountains surrounding Barkerville. Barkerville mountain assumes on the role of the Green Dragon running out to the left, while Conklin Mountain the lowest of the three mountains becomes the White Tiger mountain forming the classic armchair configuration needed for a good feng-shui site. William's Creek runs by to the East and a smaller creek converges with William's Creek just below the site.

Taken separately, the architectural and the topographical evidence provided could just be mistaken as coincidental, what is needed is some concrete evidence to tie these disparate clues together with the use of feng-shui. That piece of evidence is found in the room of Small Treasures in the Chinese museum. Pushed in behind and partly hidden in a display cabinet is small geomancer's compass. Actually there are two small compasses. A pair of geomancer's compasses, complete with the I Ching hexagrams surrounding the heaven pool. One, a small wooden folding device contains the cardinal points and the I Ching hexagrams is simple device and could have been used solely for finding direction. The other is larger and more complex. It contains all the information displayed on the smaller compass but includes several levels of graduations, designating finer graduations of the compass points. This is not a compass to be carried in a pocket like the small wooden one, this is a geomancer's compass. One used for quasi-magical purposes.

Conclusion

The idea of place is very important to humanity. While different cultures express similar ideas

differently, we all seek some understanding of our place within the universe. When the Chinese came to Gold Mountain (North America), feng-shui created a place, both physically and psychologically in an ever-expanding set of relationships in the world and universe. The Chinese miners, isolated from civilized life in a frigid and hostile landscape, segregated from the main community by language and cultural differences, were secure in their place in the universe. When they gazed at the snow-covered mountains surrounding them, they saw green dragons and white tigers.

The ancient Chinese mind contemplates the cosmos in a way comparable to that of the modern physicist, who cannot deny that his model of the world is a decidedly psychophysical structure. Carl Jung

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