

An Investigation Into Promoting Geomancy As An Art In Singapore

I . INTRODUCTION

Geomancy is defined as the art of divining the future for good or ill fortune and anyone who has ever come into contact with Chinese society must have come across this term. Geomancy is commonly known as *feng-shui*. *Shui* embraces the tangible, physical environment. *Feng* on the other hand is more complex. It does not merely refer to wind and air but also to something abstract and intangible. It is the invisible force that the naked eye cannot see. Hence, the study of Geomancy is the study of environmental influences on human life.

Many people are now unaware of the usefulness of it and although it is an oriental culture, it affects everybody. In order to ensure that such traditions and the meaning and usefulness of Geomancy will not be distorted further, it is time to take adequate actions to promote it as a form of art locally and in the process, correct any misconceptions one may have regarding this so as to provide a direction for further study.

However, before we can promote Geomancy as a form of art, it is pertinent to dispel any untrue views people have regarding it. Another major obstacle is that since the Arts Industry in Singapore is still at its infancy despite efforts put in by the National Arts Council and the Ministry of Information and the Arts over the past few years. It will therefore be difficult to promote Geomancy as a form of Art here if the people are not enthusiastic and supportive of the development of Arts in the first place. Arts must be perceived as not an optional extra but an integral part of the growth of Singaporeans as a people.

II . METHODOLOGY

To achieve my aims, I had come up with a survey questionnaire to collect the relevant information that I need. In this survey, I had made deliberate attempts to select people from different age groups to participate. This was because the response that one has for Geomancy varies significantly with age. In all, 20 people from each of the six age groups took part in the survey.

Such information will include how much one knows about Geomancy. This will help me in analyzing later on how much effort and time will be necessary to educate the people on this subject.

In addition, I will also need to gather whether what response people have regarding Geomancy and how much they believe in it. Such information will be crucial in formulating policies to tackle the problem as well as decide for the need to clarify the misconceptions that people have regarding it.

Also, the survey also gathered opinions on the means they feel would be the most effective in promoting Arts locally and subsequently, Geomancy. Other questions posed include how they came to know about Geomancy and whether the attitude they show towards the topic as well as how far they think it can affect their lives in one way or another.

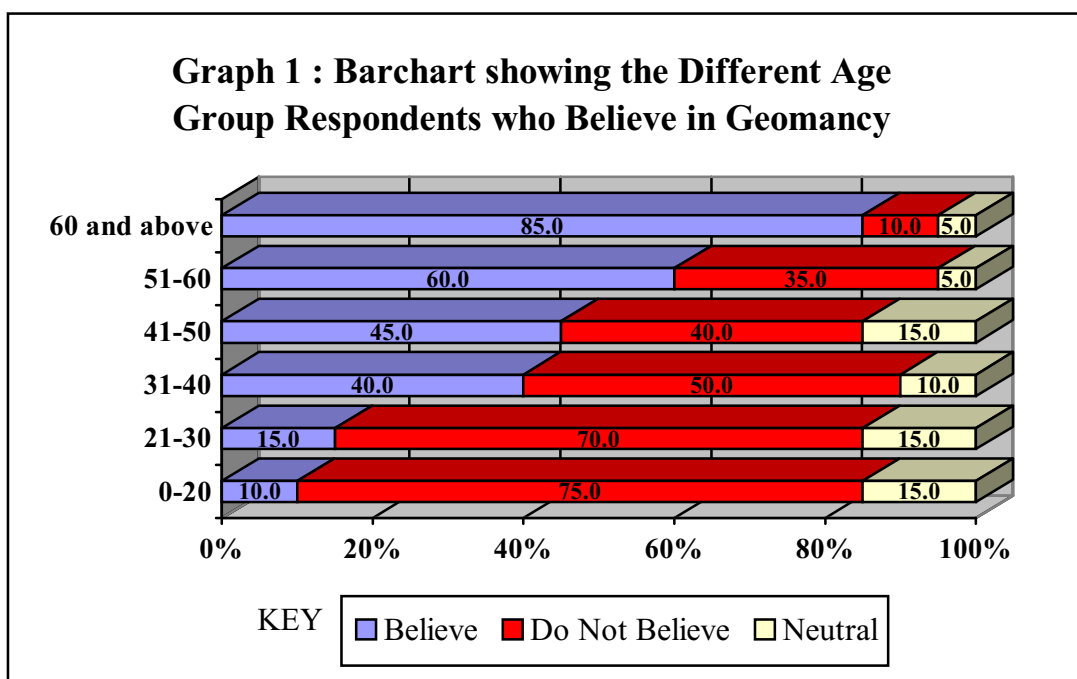
I will attempt to convince my audience by providing relevant evidence and illustrations which I had obtained from references such as "Chinese Geomancy-- A Layman's Guide to *Feng Shui*" by Evelyn Lip.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Nature and Extent of the Problem

In total, 120 people participated in my survey. 20 people from each age group were chosen. From the results, it was evident that the number of people that believed in Geomancy and who do not regard it as a superstitious subject increased significantly with age. For the 0-20 and 21-30 age groups, one could see that a large majority of our younger population are non-believers of Geomancy. (Please refer to Graph 1).

Hence, there is a need to address the problem and clarify the misconceptions that people have regarding it.



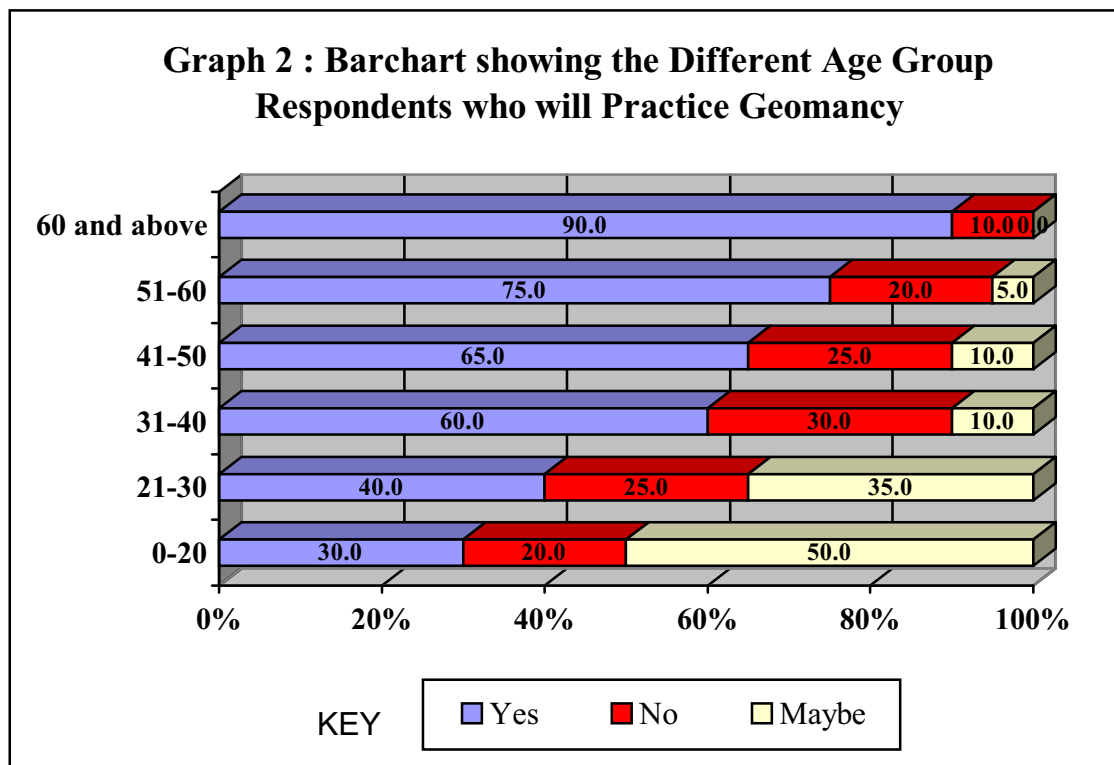
B. Problem Elimination

Before we can promote Geomancy effectively as an Art in Singapore, we must address a few problems at hand.

(i) Geomancy : Misconception Elimination

In order to determine how people in Singapore feel and think about this, a survey was conducted. A sample of people from each age group was chosen to take part in the survey and the results summarized and tabulated.

- The younger population aged between 0-30 years were mostly non-believers and the reasons given included the fact that they were ignorant about it, some thought that it was only for the old while others felt that it was useless to acquire any knowledge pertaining to this.
- As one goes progressively higher the Age groups, the percentage of believers increased steadily. From the graph, one could predict that in a few decades time, the number of believers would be significantly reduced.
- In addition to this, a similar survey was conducted on the same group of people and they were asked as to whether they would practice Geomancy.



- The results obtained were not close to the ones in the previous graph. In fact, the number of people who would or perhaps practice it was significantly higher than the percentage of believers. (Please refer to Graph 2).
- There were two reasons for this. Firstly, no one was unable to prove beyond doubt that Geomancy was a superstition and they adopted a "better be safe than sorry" attitude especially when it would perhaps improve their lives.
- Secondly, it was inevitable not to practice Geomancy in our daily lives as certain practices actually originated from commonsensical and practical reasons.

(ii) Geomancy Education and Elucidation

To eliminate the misconceptions people had about Geomancy, we must provide them with the correct information to let them have a greater understanding.

- 70% of the people surveyed still entertained the belief that the number "4" which sounded like death in Cantonese dialect was inauspicious and 73% agreed that the colour blue was also disliked by many because it was used for Chinese funeral lanterns. These are all examples of mere superstitions and have no bearing on Geomancy.

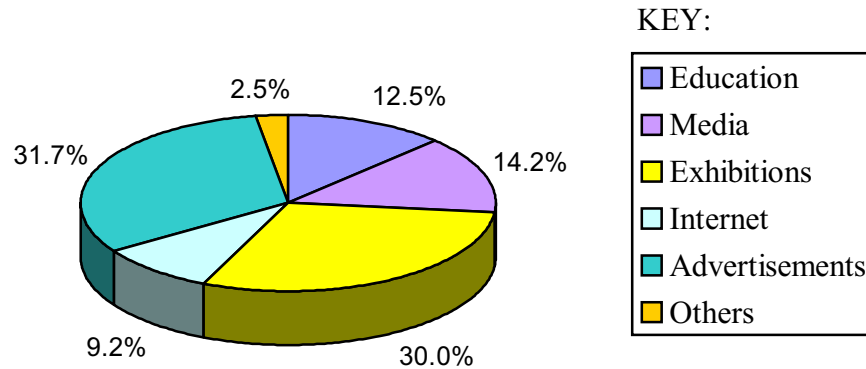
C. Geomancy Promotional Methods

To effectively promote Geomancy and to allow it to be accepted as an Art locally, the Government would have to improve on the Arts Industry here first. After which, other methods such as advertisements, Education of the public, exhibitions and Internet etc. could then be employed. (Please refer to Graph 3).

(i) Advertisements and Exhibitions

- Survey respondents who supported the use of advertisements and exhibitions to promote Geomancy, felt that advertisements reached out to many people from all walks of life, thus would be more effective in bringing the message across to all. In addition, Art exhibitions could promote Geomancy should also be encouraged allow people to gain knowledge and insights on the workings of Geomancy.

Graph 3 : Piechart showing Respondents Suggestions on Methods to Promote Geomancy



- Since a vast majority of the people surveyed reflected that by using advertisements and exhibitions, it would enable people to gradually appreciate the Art of Geomancy at their own pace.

(ii) Government Intervention

- However, the entire above could be carried out better if the Government could provide the impetus for it. Government expenditure on Arts and heritage hovered around 0.3% of the total spending every year and there are competing claims on the Government's purse for example on housing and education. The money that is spent now on Arts infrastructure would be better used in training and educating audiences.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the results of the survey, it brings to three important conclusions:

- Many people are misled or ignorant about Geomancy and hence they feel that it is nothing more than a superstition. The younger population is generally unaware or just unappreciative of the existence of the Art of Geomancy.

- Although many people do not believe in Geomancy, they will choose to practice it nevertheless if given an opportunity. This is because they are actually willing to give it a try and adopts a "better be safe than sorry" attitude. Also, some actually practice it without the knowledge that they are actually doing so. The reason is that Geomancy encompasses certain commonsensical techniques.
- Many feel that by exhibitions and advertisements can help greatly not only in promoting Geomancy alone but also the atmosphere of Arts as a whole. However, many expressed the opinion that it would not be an easy task

V.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above analysis, I recommend the following:

- Improving the quality of Arts education in school by introducing new topics such as Geomancy and to implement an Art-in-Education programme to allow students to appreciate the Arts.
- Mounting more Education and exposure programmes by Arts companies and reaching out to the community about Geomancy. This could be aided further by corporations who are willing to sponsor high profile events that involves Geomancy such as exhibitions or seminars and at the same time supporting more low-key, behind-the-scene schemes like the Arts Education Programme.
- Getting the Government to work together with the National Arts Council and National Heritage Board to promote Geomancy as a form of Art because Arts and entertainment, apart from contributing to personal enrichment, quality of life and nation-building, are an industry capable of significant impact on the economy. They can do so by allocating more funds from the budget to develop arts infrastructure as well as to educate and training audiences and artists.

Based on the above recommendations, it reflects on the overall larger goals in promoting Geomancy as an Art in Singapore.