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Origins of the Poetic “Kunlun”

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Mt. Kunlun 崑崙山 has appeared in ancient Chinese mythological works, including *Shanhaijing* 山海經, particularly in its chapters “Hainei-xi-jing” 海內西經 and “Dahuang-xi-jing” 大荒西經, wherein its form and produce are described in detail. Moreover, “Xi-ci-san-jing” 西次三經, another chapter of *Shanhaijing*, and *Mu-tianzi-zhuan* 穆天子傳, influenced by the Huangdi 黃帝 sect of Daojia 道家, presented a mystic image of the mountain, highlighting its other-worldly aspects that symbolized immortality. The intention of these ancient scriptures was to pass down the knowledge of Mt. Kunlun to future generations.

In the verse form, specifically in works such as *Chuci* 楚辭 “Lisao” 離騷 and “Jiuzhang” 九章, Kunlun appeared as a place-name that deepened the sorrow for an unrealizable ideal, owing to its mystical atmosphere. Although these works merely cite Kunlun’s name and do not discuss its form, we can sense the mystical atmosphere that the mountain represents.

In the period of Han-Wudi 漢武帝, Kunlun became a place-name that was under the Emperor’s authority; it also greatly influenced the subsequent literature. In the final years of the West Han period, Yang Xiong 揚雄 erased the image of sorrow associated with Kunlun in his works of *Cifu* 辭賦 and invented a

new usage: he overlapped the emperor's palace or hunting field with the paradise in the mythical world. However, the description of Kunlun as a utopia in which the ideal was never realized, seen in, for example, the later *Chuci* songs, "Daren-fu" 大人賦 by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如, and "Sixuan-fu" 思玄賦 by Zhang Heng 張衡, was not passed down to subsequent Cifu, and eventually disappeared.

Nevertheless, in the Jian'an 建安 era, Cao Zhi 曹植 revived the sorrowful image of Kunlun in his poems; he depicted Kunlun as a destination for escaping from the corrupt world and wandering far off, thus, introducing the poetic "Kunlun."

A Small Place of Seclusion: A Study of Yu Xin's *Xiaoyuan-fu*

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Yu Xin 庾信, who served both the Southern and Northern dynasties, created a *Xiao-yuan fu* 小園賦, which depicted a dwelling of seclusion, in the early days of his transition to the North. Yu Xin created this work under the situation to be forced to the government service at an undesired place. It can be said that it is a traditional conception of retirement to find freedom and tranquility in a small space like a little garden 小園, and *Xiao-yuan fu* is the first literary work created according to the theme of this concept.

Compared to the works of poets who preceded him, such as Pan Yue 潘岳, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運, Shen Yue 沈約 and others, the space illustrated in *Xiao-yuan fu* is distinctly closed and isolated from the outside. The works of the previous poets, who depicted a dwelling of seclusion such as *Xian-ju fu* 閑居賦, *Shan-ju fu* 山居賦 and *Jiao-ju fu* 郊居賦 use many words to explain the process of retirement and provide a meaning for the place of seclusion. In contrast, such content is not seen in Yu Xin's work. Yu Xin's specific situation, separated by kinship and territorial bonding, acutely affects the creation of such a place of seclusion.

In addition to Yu Xin, Bai Juyi 白居易, the poet of the middle-Tang age, also built a closed "small space". By comparing the two, we can observe a significant difference related to their time of origin in terms of what philosophy sup-

ports the place of seclusion.

Transformation of the View to “the Dream” and “Another World” of Tang
Dynasty Tale “Zhen zhong ji”: With Reference to the Classification in
Tai ping guang ji

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“Zhen zhong ji” 枕中記 (Record of the World Inside a Pillow) is the famous story in the Tang dynasty, the summary of which is as follows: A young man Lu Sheng 盧生 spent his another life in a pillow given by a Daoist monk Lü Weng 呂翁 in an inn of Handan 邯鄲, but after Lu Sheng woke up to find that the long time he spent in the pillow was only fraction of time.

“Zhen zhong ji” is nowadays known as the dream story, which “Lu Sheng dreamed his another life in his sleep”, and is generally interpreted as the fable influenced by the Daoist or Buddhist idea like that “Life is but an empty dream”. In other words the world inside the pillow where Lu Sheng spent his another life is considered as “his fragile dream”.

In contrast with such today’s view of this story, *Tai ping guang ji* 太平廣記 compiled in the Northern Song 北宋 dynasty categorized “Zhen zhong ji” not into the Meng-bu 夢部 (the section of dreams) but into Yiren-bu 異人部 (the section of extraordinary person). The dreams depicted in “the Meng-bu” of *Tai ping guang ji* work as the medium which brings men into contact with the dead or the gods, and sometimes leads them to the after-life or the past era through sleep, therefore the dreams of this section is anything but mere “an illusion”.

Although depicted the element of sleep or dream, “Zhen zhong ji” was not categorized into “Meng-bu” of *Tai ping guang ji*. It means that the editors of *Tai ping guang ji* did not consider it as a story in which Lu Sheng went to the world inside the pillow mediated by “the dream”.

On the other hand, “Yiren-bu” consists essentially of the stories of an extraordinary person on the street. In other words the editors of *Tai ping guang ji* regarded “Zhen zhong ji” as a story of the extraordinary person Lü Weng who educates an ordinary person.

When one see this story in terms of Lü Weng as the protagonist of the story

such as *Tai ping guang ji*, one can interpret that his pillow is not so much a mere tool for sleep but a magical device which include another world inside it, because Lü Weng can be an extraordinary person by reason that he has a magical pillow and invites Lu Sheng to the world inside his pillow for educating him.

Most readers in after ages, however, regarded an ordinary person Lu Sheng as the protagonist of “Zhen zhong ji”. Nowadays they draw little attention to specialty of the extraordinary person Lü Weng’s pillow, and turned out to view another world inside his pillow as the empty illusion Lu Sheng dreamed. It means that people’s view of “Zhen zhong ji” has changed between the Northern Song when *Tai ping guang ji* was compiled and the present day.

TRANSLATION AND NOTES:

Jin-lou-zi (by Xiao Yi) Part 10

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REVIEWS:

Wenhua Zhidu He Hanyu Shi by HIRATA Shôji. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016

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