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Peach Blossom Shangri-la

By Tao Yuanming [1]

During the Taiyuan era [2] of the Jin Dynasty [3] there was a man of Wuling [4] who made his living as a fisherman. Once while following a stream he forgot how far he had gone. He suddenly came to a grove of blossoming peach trees. It lined both banks for several hundred paces and included not a single other kind of tree. Petals of the dazzling and fragrant blossoms were falling everywhere in profusion. Thinking this place highly unusual, the fisherman advanced once again in wanting to see how far it went.

The peach trees stopped at the stream's source, where the fisherman came to a mountain with a small opening through which it seemed he could see light. Leaving his boat, he entered the opening. At first it was so narrow that he could barely pass, but after advancing a short distance it suddenly opened up to reveal a broad, flat area with imposing houses, good fields, beautiful ponds, mulberry trees, bamboo, and the like. The fisherman saw paths extending among the fields in all directions, and could hear the sounds of chickens and dogs. Men and women working in the fields all wore clothing that looked like that of foreign lands. The elderly and children all seemed to be happy and enjoying themselves.

The people were amazed to see the fisherman, and they asked him from where he had come. He told them in detail, then the people invited him to their home, set out wine, butchered a chicken [5], and prepared a meal. Other villagers heard

[6] 221-206 B.C.

[7] 206 B.C. to A.D. 220.

[8] A.D. 220-265.

[9] The villagers would just as soon keep their existence secret.

[10] A retired scholar of the Jin Dynasty.

[11] A place in present-day Henan Province.

This translation is based on the SiKuQuanShu text with editorial emendations and punctuation by the translators. It was done by Rick Davis (Japan) with help from David Steelman (Taiwan).