

# **Peach Blossom Shangri-la**

Tao YuanMing



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Translated and proofed by Rick Davis and David Steelman

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 about the fisherman, and they all came to ask him questions. Then the villagers told him, "To avoid the chaos of war during the Qin Dynasty [6], our ancestors brought their families and villagers to this isolated place and never left it, so we've had no contact with the outside world." They asked the fisherman what the present reign was. They were not even aware of the Han Dynasty [7], let alone the Wei [8] and Jin. The fisherman told them everything he knew in great detail, and the villagers were amazed and heaved sighs. Then other villagers also invited the fisherman to their homes, where they gave him food and drink. After several days there, the fisherman bid farewell, at which time some villagers told him, "It's not worth telling people on the outside about us." [9]

The fisherman exited through the opening, found his boat, and retraced his route while leaving markers to find this place again. Upon his arrival at the prefecture town he went to the prefect and told him what had happened. The prefect immediately sent a person to follow the fisherman and look for the trail markers, but they got lost and never found the way.

Liu Ziji [10] of Nanyang [11] was a person of noble character. When he heard this story he was happy and planned to visit the Shangri-la, but he died of illness before he could accomplish it. After that no one else ever looked for the place.

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### Translator's Notes

[1] Chinese nature poet, c. 365-427. This prose story is one of the poet's most well-known works.

[2] 376-396.

[3] 265-420 (actually two sequential dynasties, the "Western" and the "Eastern").

[4] A place in present-day Hunan Province.

[5] "...set out wine, butchered a chicken": A stock phrase meaning to entertain a guest lavishly.

[6] 221-206 B.C.

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

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[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).