

Little Nex Classics

PEACH BLOSSOM SHANGRI-LA
桃花源記

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Translated from the Chinese by Rick Davis & David Steelman

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English Text

During the Taiyuan era¹ of the Jin Dynasty² there was a man of Wuling³ 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.

¹ 376-396.

² 265-420 (actually two sequential dynasties, the “Western” and the “Eastern”).

³ A place in present-day Hunan Province.



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 chicken⁴, 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 Dynasty⁵, 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 Dynasty⁶, let alone the Wei⁷ 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.”⁸

⁴ “...set out wine, butchered a chicken”: a stock phrase meaning to entertain a guest lavishly.

⁵ 221-206 B.C.

⁶ 206 BC to AD 220.

⁷ A.D. 220-265.

⁸ The villagers would just as soon keep their existence secret.



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 Ziji⁹ of Nanyang¹⁰ 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.

⁹ A retired scholar of the Jin Dynasty.

¹⁰ A place in present-day Henan Province.



Chinese Text

桃花源記

陶淵明

晉太元中武陵人捕魚為業。緣溪行，忘路之遠近。忽逢桃花林，夾岸數百步中無雜樹，芳華鮮美落英繽紛。漁人甚異之。復前行欲窮其林。林盡水源便得一山。山有小口仿佛若有光。便捨船從口入。初極狹纔通人。復行數十步豁然開朗。土地平曠屋舍儼然。有良田美池桑竹之屬。阡陌交通雞犬相聞。其中往來種作。男女衣著悉如外人。黃髮垂髫並怡然自樂。見漁人乃大驚問所從來。具答之。便要還家為設酒殺雞作食。村中聞有此人咸來問訊。自云先世避秦時亂率妻子邑人。來此絕境不復出焉。遂與外人間隔。問今是何世乃不知有漢無論魏晉。此人一一為具言所聞皆歎惋。餘人各復延至其家皆出酒食。停數日辭去。此中人語云不足為外人道也。既出得其船便扶向路處處誌之。及郡下詣太守說如此。太守即遣人隨其往。尋向所誌遂迷不復得路。南陽劉子驥高尚士也。聞之欣然規往未果尋病終。後遂無問津者。

