

UTOPIAS IN RELIGION, MYTHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

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Lead-in

- In many cultures, societies and religions, there is some myth or memory of a distant past when humankind lived in a primitive and simple state but at the same time one of perfect happiness and fulfillment.
- Instinctive harmony between humanity and nature.
- One anthropological theory: hunter-gatherers were the original affluent society.

Scheria (Scherie, Phaeacia)

- A region in Greek mythology
- First mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* as the home of the Phaeacians and the last destination of Odysseus in his 10-year journey before returning home to Ithaca.
- One of the earliest descriptions of a utopia



Pieter Lastman: *Odysseus and Nausicaa* (oil on panel, 1619; Alte Pinakothek, Munich)

Scheria (Scherie, Phaeacia)

- A place with stout walls, a stone temple and good harbours, a model for those founded from the middle of the 8th C onward. A land of plenty, home to expert mariners, and skilled craftswomen who live in peace under their king's rule and fear no strangers.



Arcadia

- A Greek province which dates to antiquity;
- Mountainous topography and sparse population of pastoralists



Arcadia

- Develop into a poetic byword for an idyllic vision of unspoiled wilderness referring to a vision of pastoralism and harmony with nature.
- The 'Garden' is often inhabited by shepherds. The concept also figures in Renaissance mythology.



Thomas Cole's The Arcadian
or Pastoral State, 1834

The Land of Cockaigne (also Cockaygne, Cokaygne)

- An imaginary land of idleness and luxury, famous in medieval stories and the subject of several poems
- One poem, an early translation of a 13th-century French work. "The houses were made of barley sugar and cakes, the streets were paved with pastry and the shops supplied goods for nothing."



Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Luilekkerland ("The Land of Cockaigne"), oil on panel (1567; Alte Pinakothek, Munich)

The Land of Cockaigne

- All these myths also express some hope that the idyllic state of affairs they describe is not irretrievably and irrevocably lost to mankind, that it can be regained in some way or other.



The Peach Blossom Spring

- The Peach Blossom Spring , a prose piece written by the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming, describes a utopian place.
- 林尽水源，便得一山，山有小口，仿佛若有光。便舍船，从口入。初极狭，才通人。复行数十步，豁然开朗。土地平旷，屋舍俨然，有良田、美池、桑竹之属。阡陌交通，鸡犬相闻。其中往来种作，男女衣着，悉如外人。黄发垂髫，并怡然自乐。
- 见渔人，乃大惊，问所从来。具答之。便要还家，设酒杀鸡作食。村中闻有此人，咸来问讯。白云先世避秦时乱，率妻子邑人来此绝境，不复出焉，遂与外人间隔。问今是何世，乃不知有汉，无论魏晋。此人一一为具言所闻，皆叹惋。余人各复延至其家，皆出酒食。停数日，辞去。此中人语云：“不足为外人道也。”



Depiction of the tale on a painting from the Long Corridor, Summer Palace, Beijing

Datong



- Datong is a traditional Chinese Utopia.
- 大道之行也,天下为公。选贤与能,讲信修睦,故人不独亲其亲,不独某其某,使老有所终,壮有所用,幼有所长,矜寡孤独废疾者,皆有所养。男有分,女有归。货,恶其弃于地也,不必藏于己;力,恶其不出于身也,不必为己。是故,谋闭而不兴,盗窃乱贼而不作,故外户而不闭,是谓大同。
- Later, Datong and its ideal of 'The World Belongs to Everyone' 'Tianxia weigong' 'influenced modern Chinese reformers and revolutionaries, such as Kang Youwei.

Ketumati

- A legendary place in some Buddhist traditions viewed as the earthly paradise of the prophesied figure called Maitreya, who is the future Buddha.
- A kingdom better than any cities of the gods.



Ketumati

- It will be seven yojanas wide and twelve yojanas long.
- Brilliant gardens full of trees will make the city radiant, and they, together with lakes and ponds, will be enough to keep its citizens happy.
- It will be encompassed by seven strong walls. One of them will be constructed from seven types of gems that will be so bright, people won't be able to tell if it is day or night....



Ketumati

- If you are interested in it, you can visit www.ketumati.org



City of the Caesars(City of Patagonia, Wandering City, Trapalanda or Trapananda)

- A mythical city of South America. It was supposedly located somewhere in Patagonia, in a valley of the Andes between Chile and Argentina.
- The city is described as prosperous and rich, plenty of gold, silver and diamonds. At least one description says it was located in between two mountains, somewhere in the Andes mountains, one of gold and another of diamonds.

To be continued...

- Eden(Abrahamic), Elysium(Greek), Garden of the gods(Ancient Mesopotamian religion), Shangri-La(In Tibet), Satya Yuga(Hinduism), Opona(Russian), Mag Mell(Celtic), Mahoroba(Japanese), Merry England(English), New Jerusalem(Hebrew), Zion(Hebrew)
- Almost in every culture, there is a religious or mythological place that is similar to utopia, reflecting people's yearning for a better life.

- "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias." —Oscar Wilde
- Does utopia exist? Are you utopians?

- "We are all utopians, so soon as we wish for something different." — [Henri Lefebvre](#)