

Illustration One: A compass rose describing the five phases and directions, with South at the top. Based on a 2nd-3rd century BCE bronze plaque depicted in Lillian Tseng's *Picturing Heaven in Early China*.

Illustration Two: Zou Yan's vision of the layout of the universe.
“Between Heaven and Earth are nine continents and eight pillars.”
- *Huainanzi* 4.1

Consider all of the information on the following pages a key to the large cosmological map of China.

The **Fusang** tree grew somewhere to the east, and the **Ruo** tree to the west. The ten bird-suns occupied these trees.

“The Fu tree in Yang province is baked by the sun's heat...The Ruo tree is to the west of the Jian tree. On its branches are ten suns; its blossoms cast light upon the Earth.”

- *Huainanzi* 4.5

“I watered my dragon steeds at the Pool of Heaven,
And tied their reins up to the Fu-sang tree.
I broke a sprig of the Ruo tree to strike the sun with”
- *Li sao* 193-95

Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou are mythical islands. Penglai was supposedly carried on the back of a turtle. Immortals occupied these islands.

“I climb Penglai and sally about;
Although a giant turtle thrashes the water, the island does not topple;
I stay at Yingzhou and father mushrooms,
Hoping with them to prolong my life.”
- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

The **Great** or **Impenetrable Marsh** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as being in the northeast.

Square Soil Mountain or **Azure Gate** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as being in the extreme northeast.

Angzhou, according to David Knechtges's notes in his translation of Zhang Heng's “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery,” is a very hot area in the south. **Kunwu**, by the same source, is a mythic volcano in the extreme south.

“I cross Angzhou and wander happily.
I ascend Kunwu when the sun reaches noon,
And rest in a place seared by blazing fire.”
- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Mu he or **tree-grain** grew, according to David Knechtges, in the Kunlun mountains. This tree was very tall, and was considered auspicious.

“At night I conjure up a dream of the tree-grain,
Growing high on Kunlun's peaks.”
- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Kunlun is a region to the northwest of China that is usually imagined as a large, terraced mountain. It is the central pillar between Heaven and Earth. Climbing Mount Kunlun could make one immortal. References to Kunlun are prevalent but confusing, as they tend to be amorphous and contradictory. Please do not regard this as an informed view of the layout of Kunlun; I depicted it this way for convenience.

Amassing Ice is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as a region in the north.

“I shall northward go, wandering far and wide.
I walk the glistening whiteness of Accumulated Ice;
Clear springs, frozen solid, no longer flow.”
- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Winter Cold Gate or **Extreme North Mountain** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as a mountain to the extreme north.

“Gazing toward the Gate of Coldness at the world's end,
I slacken the reins and head for Buzhou.”

- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Buzhou or **Gate of Darkness** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as a mountain to the extreme northwest. However, it is referenced in other works much more frequently than the other mountains listed in that chapter, and seems to have been more important.

The **Queen Mother of the West** is obviously not a region, but a deity. According to some sources, she ruled over Kunlun, but in Zhang Heng's “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery,” she seems to dwell somewhere west of Kunlun.

“I am invited to the silver terrace of the Queen Mother;
She offers jade mushrooms to allay my hunger.
Wearing a headdress, smiling her pleasure,
She teases me for arriving late.”

- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

String of Colts Mountain or **White Gate** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as a mountain to the southwest.

“Marching through White Portal, I gallop eastward,
Where I trek the midst of the wilds.”

- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Jian mu or **Standing Tree** is, according to the *Huainanzi*, the center of the world, though this conflicts with perceptions of Kunlun. **Mount Duguang** or **Reversed Doors** is mentioned in the *Huainanzi* section 4.6 as being in the south.

“The Jian Tree on Mount Duguang, by which the gods ascend and descend, casts no shadow at midday. If one calls, there is no echo. It forms a canopy over the entire world.”

- *Huainanzi* section 4.5

“I halt at the Standing Tree in Guangdu.”

- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

Flowing Sands is mentioned frequently under various names. In section 4.6 of the *Huainanzi*, it is “Place of Sands.” Section 4.16 of the same work reads, “The Queen Mother of the West dwells at the edge of the Flowing Sands.”

“‘See, I have come to the Desert of Moving Sands!’

Warily I drove along the banks of the Red Water,
Then, beckoning the water-dragons to make a bridge for me,
I summoned the God of the West to take me over.”

- *Li sao* 349-52

Xuanyuan is, according to David Knechtges's notes in his translation of Zhang Heng's “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery,” the state of the Yellow Emperor.

“I traverse Xuanyuan in the Western Sea,
Stride across Wangshi and its mighty dragon fish.”

- Zhang Heng, “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery”

References

- Chang Heng [Zhang Heng], “*Fu* on Contemplating the Mystery.” In Xiao Tong, comp., trans. by David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or, Selections of Refined Literature*. 3 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982-: 3:105-39
- Hawkes, David, trans. *Ch’u tz’ü: The Songs of the South, an Ancient Chinese Anthology*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Liu An, King of Huainan; John Major, et al., eds. & trans. *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Tseng, Lillian Lan-ying. *Picturing Heaven in Early China*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2011: 166-205.