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# How the Jin Loyalists Made a New Home in the South

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With the sacking of the capital city of Luoyang in 311 came the realization that for the first time in the long history of the Central States that the people of the Yellow River Valley had lost control of their homeland to ethnically and culturally divergent rebels. The Jin literati, successors of already nearly 1,000 years of recorded history, were forced to abandon their traditional homeland and the cradle of their civilization along the Yellow River Valley for the unfamiliar and somewhat exotic territory in southern China. By deserting their homes in the Yellow River Valley, they left behind territory that they viewed as sacred.

This sacred territory, as the origin of their civilization, was intimately tied to their history and their identities. The incursion from the Xiongnu into their homeland, which forced the literati to leave their homes, created a crisis of identity for the Jin loyalists that was rooted in location. Suddenly, their physical connection to their homeland and to the history of that land was broken. This move forced the refugees to look at the land, the history of their civilization and their connection to it through new eyes. From this new perspective, they were forced to redefine who they were as a community, and as individuals within that community. The exodus from the heartland reminded them repeatedly of everything they were losing, and made them cling all the more desperately to their memories and cultural traditions.

The new environment challenged the Chinese frame of reference. The vegetation was lush and wild compared to their tame and cultured north. Rivers and lakes covered the landscape, and many of the inhabitants, despite being ethnically Chinese, observed different cultural practices and sacrificed to different deities. Many of the elements that we understand as being distinctly “Chinese” today, such as paddy rice, silk, ceramics (or “china”), in fact, are produced primarily in this region.<sup>1</sup> The new environment and different cultural practices, gods and even languages all combined to help change the ways the Chinese coped with their world. Though the refugees and their successors clung to their traditions in their attempt to recreate the state, the new environment significantly influenced how they interacted with the world, as well as the way the culture developed in subsequent generations.<sup>2</sup>

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When the aspiring statesman, poet, and *Yi jing* expert, Guo Pu, made the dangerous trek from his home in Wenxi in Hedong Commandery,<sup>3</sup> he took with him several dozen families made up of his closest friends and relatives.<sup>4</sup> As Guo Pu led the families on their flight, he documented their experiences, passing through his homeland into the strange territory in the south in several poems and a travelogue.<sup>5</sup> What remains are all fragmentary, but taken together, the poems and travelogue depict the treacherous journey, as well as Guo Pu's psychological struggle as he made his way south. One *fu* fragment, "On Traveling without a Home" ("*Liuyu fu*," *Quan Jin wen* 120.5a-120.6a), documents the first part of his southern crossing and was written prior to the fall of Luoyang.

In this *fu*, Guo Pu identifies various geographical landmarks he passes on his way to the capital city, but only dwells on those that have the most significance to him in preserving the historical traditions of the Central States. More than just a catalog of these places and the landmarks he sees along the way, he recalls historical events that occurred in these specific locations, and evokes a sense of the sacred that is tied to these sites. He names the geographic location, and then follows with a reference to his current situation. In doing so, he uses his own body as the site of memory and draws a direct connection between himself, his family history, the geography, and the entire history and future of the Jin. For example, he says, "I contemplated the ancient name of this city<sup>6</sup> / Surely, it was of the state of Wei in former days" (13-14). By invoking the memory of the ancient state of Wei that existed at that site from the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty nearly 1500 years earlier, he reiterates the connection between the land, the culture, and the people of the present Jin Dynasty.

He discusses a space significant to his own family history: "I gazed at Shancheng on the southern banks/ It is all that remains of the battlefields of the Guo clan" (19-20). Guo draws a connection between his present space and time to the ancient history of the land, recalling how King Wu, the founder of the Zhou, enfeoffed each of his younger brothers with different parcels of land. The brothers, Guo Zhong and Guo Shu, settled in their respective territories, and the people that followed them to these lands took their family name from these two brothers. Thus it was from this site at Shancheng that Guo Pu's family originated. As he contemplates the origins of his family, he recalls the battles that took place there in the previous centuries. Feeling the transitory nature of time, he is aware that aside from his own memories, the town of Shancheng on the southern banks of the Yellow River is the only trace of his ancestors left in this land. Here, in perhaps the most personal note in the rhapsody, Guo sees that time, the Xiongnu invasions, and the abandonment of his home are all acts that would eradicate his own family history.

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Geography in this piece plays a dual role. It is at once the revered land from which his civilization developed, but it is also something that antagonizes him. Both historically and geographically, he questions his civilization and struggles against the terrain of the land. In the few places where Guo Pu examines the landscape outside the context of any historical allusions, the land is hostile. The peaks they cross (7-11) are not beautiful, but dangerous. He didn't just cross these precipitous paths, he "transgressed" (*yue*) them, as though leaving their homeland was a "transgression" or a mistake. They were not told or informed of the hidden road to Burnt Hill; instead, they were advised or cautioned (*xiu*) against taking it. Guo Pu does not appreciate the majesty or beauty of the tall peaks. Instead of inspiring a sense of tranquility and calm, the natural features of the land frighten Guo Pu and give him cause to feel wary. It is only as he goes through the pass at Hangu and he enters Luoyang's sphere of influence that he starts to feel unthreatened by the landscape. At the pass, he remarks optimistically, "Strong! The power of its impregnability!" In contrast to the deserted towns, ruins of old battlefields, and uninhabitable mountains that he passed on his long journey from Wenxi, he begins to see signs of life as he nears the city. His tone changes from pessimistic to optimistic.

The act of writing helped Guo Pu to bind himself to the history of his civilization. At the same time, the poetry helped him to redefine his own identity, and maintain a relationship between himself and lands of his birth. In writing his *fu*, and filling it with historical and literary allusions from the rich textual tradition that preceded him, Guo Pu also created a moment of simultaneity through the medium of poetry. Through writing, he brought the past and the present together, and preserved it for the future. As he passed by ancient landmarks, Guo Pu recorded the histories associated with those places alongside his experiences leaving that land. As a survivor of the Xiongnu invasion and a refugee fleeing his homeland, he felt a need to actively maintain the bond between his body, his homeland, and the history of that land. He felt a sense of urgency to commemorate the history and the civilization by adding a record of his own memories passing through that land. Moreover, Guo Pu brings another dimension to this time continuum with the addition of space. Guo Pu situates himself and the geography of the Chinese heartland within the stream of Chinese history and traditions in an attempt to maintain order in the confusion of the flight south.

As Guo Pu and the other refugees settled in the south, they relocated along the Yangtze River. This new river naturally played a leading role in the poetry of the revival of the Eastern Jin. Again, the refugees used writing as a medium to connect themselves to their environment, and celebrate their new homes along the Yangtze

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as a way to claim the territory. They did not merely connect themselves personally to the land through their writings, but also used language to strengthen the connection between their homelands in the north and the history of the Central States to their new homes in the south.

While Guo Pu's famous *fu*, "The River" specifically focuses on the Yangtze River and its path, Yu Chan's "The Southern Capital" (*Quan Jin wen*, 38.2a) describes the entire southland.<sup>7</sup> Further, Yu Chan includes references to places in the north, thereby connecting the two spaces across time. Yu Chan, a native of Yanling in Yingchuan in present day Hebei province, begins his *fu* by asking, "Have you not heard of the wonder of the Southern Capital?" He then establishes the eastern and western borders of the empire, "To the left is the azure sea; to its right, the Min Mountains." The "azure sea" is the great Pacific Ocean along the eastern edge of the Jin, forming a natural border to the Jin territory. Far out in the west, along the border between modern Gansu and Sichuan provinces, sits the Min Mountain range, another natural border. In addition, the Min Mountains was the traditional source of both the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, as well as a variety of other waterways, which Yu Chan goes on to describe in detail. As such, the Min Mountains were a natural starting point for the *fu*, which celebrates the scope of the Eastern Jin territory. At the same time, as the source of both the great rivers, it forges a connection between the old territory and their new homes.

Yu Chan continues naming other rivers and mountains throughout the empire: "The Tortoise-Bird River crosses it at its font / The Yangtze and Han Rivers reach it from their sources / The Jie and Jin peaks project from the shores of the Xiang / Zhu and Tong crowd the murky rivers." The rivers and mountains he names span the entire area of the Central States, from far in the west with the Min Mountains and the Xuan River, into the southwest with the Tortoise-Bird River (the Luo River, in modern Sichuan), from Jie Peak in Hebei province in the north, to Jin Peak in Jiangsu and the Xiang River in Zhejiang in the south. In this way, he celebrates not only the southern capital, but also all that it represents. By spanning the entire traditional territory of the Central States, he shows both a sense of optimism that they would retake their homelands, as well as a steadfast adherence to their claim on the northern territory.

In the third stanza of this *fu*, Yu Chan emphasizes the natural world's consent of the reestablished government by pairing celestial bodies with their terrestrial counterparts, using the *fenye* system which maps the constellations in the sky to a map of China using the divisions of the original nine domains (*Jiu zhou*州) of the Central States demarcated by the sage king, Yu. "Heaven embraces the Dragon and the Axeltree<sup>8</sup> / Earth surrounds Heng-Huo / This is where the mysterious

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sages wandered / And where they took refuge.” The parallel in the first couplet between Heaven embracing the Dragon and Axeltree constellations, and Earth surrounding the sacred mountains of Huo and Heng, two of the five sacred peaks (*Wu Yue*) of China, shows both Heaven and Earth coming together in harmony to condone the new emperor and his dynasty across the entire old and new territory.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the two constellations both correspond to specific geographic locations within the territory of the Central States. The Dragon constellation, *Canglong*, governs the eastern sky, and corresponds to the areas encompassing the ancient states of Zheng and Song in the modern Henan region, as well as Yan in the north. The star, Axeltree corresponds to the region of Chu in the south along the Yangtze. The sacred peak Huo lies in Anhui to the south, while Heng lies in modern Hebei to the east. These territories were where the ancient “mysterious” sage kings, Shun and Yu, traveled and rested during their inspection tours of the land. By showing that the sage kings had also traveled into the south, claiming these lands as part of the original nine domains, Yu Chan reiterates that although they had been forced to flee to a territory that was new and alien to them, these lands had always been a part of the culture and history of the Central States.

The literati tied the history and culture of their civilization to the landscape, spreading their authority over the land and its many splendors. Throughout the descriptions of the terrain, they named significant historical sites and recalled ancient stories from their shared cultural history, such as the great sage king Yu, who traveled throughout the land, and made his final resting place in a mountain cave in the south. In this way, they drew a connection between their past and their new homes, and ensured that their civilization survived the devastating war and loss of their homelands in the north.

The starkly different climate and landscape of the watery and mountainous southland had frightened the literati and made them uneasy when they first settled in the area. However, their attitudes towards the natural world began to change. Nature and landscape, which in previous centuries was a hostile space, evolved into a place that the literati enjoyed and appreciated. In the earlier poetry of Guo Pu and other statesmen of the Western Jin such as Liu Kun, nature was antagonistic.<sup>10</sup> However, the tone of the poetry and attitudes of the writers changed with the need to celebrate and commemorate the reestablished state in the south, and to lay claim to their new homeland.

In their attempt to establish the authority of the Jin over their reduced territory, as well as to maintain their connection to their lost territory in the north, the Jin literati used language and history to control their environment. Using literary and historical allusions in their poetry, the Jin loyalists show their reverence for history

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and tradition, and tie the old with the new. Within each poem is a confluence of space and time. The poetry that was written during the transition and restoration period imitated old styles of poetry, used historical allusions, and was in many ways traditional literature. However, the poems themselves carved out something new. The transition and exodus poems show movement—they travel from one physical space to another—while the narrator of the poem travels simultaneously on an emotional journey in an effort to make sense of his experiences. It is as though by redefining the poetic styles and resituating the historical allusions, they somehow restructured the physical world around them and put a sense of order in it.

The early fourth century was a turning point for the medieval Chinese. It forced them to shift the center of their civilization geographically away from the traditional heartland along the Yellow River in the north, to the Yangtze River in the south. However, abandoning their homelands to a foreign power, and retreating to a region that had very different climate, terrain, and vegetation had a profound effect on their psychological state. Losing the land of their births to the Xiongnu emphasized their cultural differences between themselves and the non-Chinese, and ignited a need to find something else, other than the land, to define them as a community. They turned to their history, traditions, and the tradition of writing to give them back their identities, and to help them to shape their futures.

As studies on the cultural, institutional, and literary history of this period have shown, the move south in the early fourth century changed the worldviews of the people of the Central States. The perception of the natural world transformed from the hostile and alien place beyond civilization, as it was when they first relocated, into space where they could find peace, tranquility, and celebration, and where they could call home. This way of viewing the natural world contributed to the emergence of landscape poetry as a dominant literary genre in subsequent dynasties. At the same time, the volatility of the period also created an awareness of the ephemeral nature of life, and a consequent sense of urgency to preserve their history, and write about their lives and their thoughts for posterity.

The literature of the transition period between the Western and Eastern Jin shows the medieval Chinese at the moment of crisis in which they needed to identify and redefine their community with reference to a new location. The two poems chosen here are just a small sample from this period, highlighting this crisis of identity and transience of the Jin literati, showing some of the ways that exile and war affected the individuals caught in the transition, and how they learned to cope with the crisis engendered by losing their real and symbolic homeland. The new dynasty was built upon the displaced aristocracy's memories of their shared cultural heritage. The striking differences in the land itself and the ordeals of war

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and exile affected the Jin refugees. Their worldviews changed, as did their attitudes about nature, and as a result, their writing. With these transformations, a new world emerged in the south.

Prior to the mass southern exodus, the displaced literati still felt the southeastern coastal region was on the frontier, and thus, wild and uncivilized. In order to bring these lands out of the periphery, they incorporated images of the southern landscape into their literature. Through the use of history and language, they laid claim to the new land and resituated the civilization in space and time. Not only did the literature capture the beauty and riches of southern landscape, but by integrating the southern scenery into a new written record with the northern landscape, the poets also created a space in which the entire territory belonged to the new Eastern Jin Dynasty. In addition, by celebrating the southern landscape in their literature, the literati also began to win the hearts of the people of these lands and thereby take control of the lands and people of the south, both politically as well as emotionally.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, on the origins of rice, see Fujiwara, *Search for the Origin of Rice Cultivation: The Ancient Rice Cultivation in Paddy Fields at the Cao Xie Shan Site in China*. Although products such as rice and silk did not originate in the Jiangnan region (areas south and east of the Yangtze River Delta), these “Chinese” products are now produced primarily in Jiangnan.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the psychological and cultural impacts of the southern migration on the people of the Jin and later dynasties, see Holcombe, *In the Shadow of the Han*.

<sup>3</sup> At Wenxi in modern Shanxi province.

<sup>4</sup> The *Jin History* (*Jin shu*) states that he led several dozen families of close friends and relatives (*shu shi jia*); the *Yi donglin* states the same in the beginning of the first *juan*, but then says “more than ten families” (*shi yu jia*) in a later section. See Ma Guohan, *Yuhan shanfang ji yishu*. It is possible that this drop in numbers comes because by this point in the journey many people had already perished from the dangers of the journey or separated from the larger group. Another possible explanation is that this is a copyist error or a mistake in the reconstruction of the text.

<sup>5</sup> These other fragmentary works include the travelogue, *Yidonglin*, which documents how Guo Pu used the *Yijing* to determine which roads to travel on their flight from their homes. In addition to the poem discussed in this article, “On Traveling Without a Home,” Guo Pu also describes different parts of his journey south in “On Climbing the Hundred-Foot Tower” (*Quan Jin wen* 120.6a) and the three poems included in “Grieving Poems in Reply to Jia Jiuzhou” [Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, Nanbei Chao shi*, 862-863, or Xu Jingzong (592-672), *Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林, *Congshu jicheng chubian*, 157.11].

<sup>6</sup> The ancient city of Hebei lay just northeast of the eastward turn of the Yellow River, near the modern city of Ruicheng in Shanxi Province.

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<sup>7</sup> This piece is preserved in *Wen xuan* (12.557-579). *Quan Jinwen* also has this text (120.1b-4a). An excellent translation has been done by David R. Knechtges in *Wen xuan*, Vol 2 (320-351). All translations are by Knechtges.

<sup>8</sup> The *zhen* constellation corresponds to the ancient state of Chu. For more on the ancient Chinese system of constellations, see Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (75-78).

<sup>9</sup> The traditional Five Marchmounts (*Wu Yue*) include Mt. Tai in present-day Shandong province, Mt. Hua in Shaanxi, Mt. Heng in Hunan, a different Mt. Heng in Shanxi, and Mt. Song in Henan. However, it was recorded that when Han Emperor Wu went on his southern inspection tour, he climbed Mt. Huo in Anhui province in the *Jiangnan* region, which is also known as Mt. Tianzhu ("Heaven's Pillar") and named it the Southern Marchmount (*Nan Yue*). See *Shiji* (12.480).

<sup>10</sup> For an example of a poem by Liu Kun (270-318), see "Fufeng ge" ("Song of Fufeng") in *Wen xuan*, j. (28.1339-1340).

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