

Research on the Images of Immortals in Ancient Chinese Immortal Taoism Fu

Based on “Fu Collections of Past Dynasties”

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Abstract—Attaching importance to detailed account is the most remarkable stylistic feature of Immortal Taoism Fu, which is mainly realized by various immortal images. Therefore, in order to analyze the Immortal Taoism Fu, we shall distinguish the immortal related images. The author tries to analyze the related images of immortals in ancient Chinese Immortal Taoism Fu from two aspects: immortal image and image groups in Immortal Taoism Fu. This thesis mainly focuses on the two typical images, the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother, to analyze the evolution rules of immortal images, and the characteristics of image groups in Immortal Taoism Fu.

Keywords—Immortal Taoism Fu; images; the Yellow Emperor; the Queen Mother; Kunlun mythological system

I. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the stylistic features of Fu, Lu Ji put it in a nutshell: “Fu is a literary style to describe things and express emotions with clear thread of ideas and fluent language”¹. In the past dynasties, when describing things, literati liked to use Fu, because it was a particular good style to describe things. It’s no wonder that Zhi Yu said: “Fu is another wording of elaboration”². The words of Zhi Yu are somewhat exaggerated. But writers adept in writing Fu could use words and phrases in a sound way. And the images they described were really vivid. By describing things and list images, Fu writer show world appearance and human relationships in a minute and vivid detail. However, in fact, it is difficult to present the whole world of writer only by elaborating images. The fundamental reason why it is difficult to involve everything with imagery lies in the rules implied in images themselves. What are the implicit rules of imagery? This problem can be explained from the relationship between “image” and “meaning” in critical interpretation of ancient texts.

Concerning “image”, Zhouyi Zhengyi says that “image” is “similar to the shape of the thing”³. In this interpretation, “image” is regarded as a simple description of the external form of things. Compared with Zhouyi Zhengyi, Yi · Xici covers a broader scope: “image means that another thing is like this thing”⁴. The interpretation of Yi · Xici is aimed at the image of trigram. The image of trigram is a concrete symbol and a set of relatively abstract typed symbols. The image of trigram is not only a description of things, but also a high generalization of the common characteristics of a kind of things. When people use “the image” of trigram to predict the development of things, the predicted content will exceed Yao meaning corresponding to the image of trigram and the description of Yao itself. Therefore, in people’s concepts, “the image” of trigram contains more “meaning” than the text. But “the meaning” is derived from “image” and hides behind it, so we need to explore the connotation of “imagery” actively when we read.

Although “imagery” often has a broad space of meaning, the meaning space of “imagery” must not be constructed casually. Why can’t we construct meaning space at will? This is inseparable from the characteristics of meaning itself. Shuowen Jiezi says: “meaning” means “what the heart thinks. It’s about the heart. Know the mind through words”⁵. From Xu Shen’s words, we know that “meaning” of ancients is related to their inner feelings. And this inner feeling is expressed through “words”. In other words, it is showed through language and texts. Therefore, if we want to analyze “the meaning” of the ancients in Immortal Taoism Fu, we shall first explore its text. In addition, among the numerous texts of Immortal Taoism Fu, it is easy to see that there is a remarkable feature in Immortal Taoism Fu of past dynasties: the text is full of images related to immortals. So, we must first look at “words” of the text in order to explore “meanings” of the imagery in ancient Immortal Taoism Fu. Before looking

¹ Lu Ji, Zhang Shaokang. Collection and Interpretation of Literary Fu, People’s Literature Publishing House, 2002, P 99.

² Yu Yuan and Zhang Minggao, Selected Literary Theories of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, People’s Literature Publishing House, 1999, P 179.

³ Kong Yingda, Zhouyi Zhengyi, Peking University Press, 2000, P 349.

⁴ Zhou Zhenfu, Annotations to Zhouyi, Zhonghua Book Company, 1987, P 260.

⁵ Xu Shen, Shuowen Jiezi, Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, P 350.

at "words" in the text, we shall first explore "imagery" related to immortals.

II. DISCUSSION ON THE EVOLUTION RULES OF IMMORTAL IMAGERY IN IMMORTAL TAOISM FU: TAKING THE YELLOW EMPEROR AND THE QUEEN MOTHER AS EXAMPLES

The relationship between "image" and "meaning" is analyzed. The author believes that "image" in text and text are the basis for the emergence of all fields of meaning. "Image" implies "meaning" and calls for the generation of meaning. Meanwhile, "image" restricts "meaning" and "meaning" must create the meaning of the text on the premise of respecting the evolution rule of "image". According to this principle, the following attempts to take the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother as examples to explore the immortal imagery in Immortal Taoism Fu.

With an overall view of Immortal Taoism Fu, writers were mainly to depict the scenery of ascending to heaven and express the feeling of seeking immortality and longevity. In order to fully depict scenery and express feelings, Fu writers often went to great lengths to list and display various immortal imageries. Among many immortal images, the most frequent immortal images appeared to be the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother, and they are two typical images in Immortal Taoism Fu. With the images, people will unconsciously form a specific mental direction when read the text. The reason for this psychological orientation is that it is not only related to the evolution of the two "images", but also to the hidden "meaning".

For thousands of years, China has the legend of the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother. The two images are not frozen and unchanged. Imageries in Immortal Taoism Fu are inherited through the medium of words. Up to now, there are rich meanings hidden behind the images of the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother. These "meanings" have both life experience and cultural memory. Life experience is individual, and cultural memory is collective. As a link of memory, the image in the text carries the life experience of the predecessors from generation to generation, traveling through time and space, constantly showing the predecessors' knowledge of all things. Once the recognition of the predecessors is recognized by the present people, the life experience will be deepened and become a consensus across the whole historical period, lasting forever and a common cultural memory. Cultural memory is not confined to one person, one region and one time. With text (including words, pictures, sounds, etc.) as a medium, it retains the traces of his predecessors' observation of the world.

In Immortal Taoism Fu, many images in imagery originated from ancient myths, and so did the "images" of the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother.

The images of the Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother in the existing literature were first seen in Shan Hai Jing:

(1) Dahuang Dongjing: There was an immortal on the island of the East China Sea. He was of human face but bird body. He wore two yellow snakes on ears and two yellow

snakes on feet. He was called Yu Xiao. The Emperor Huang gave birth to Yu Xiao and Yu Xiao gave birth to Yu Jing⁶.

(2) Xici Sanjing: The Queen Mother of the West looked like a human being. But she had a leopard-like tail and tiger-like teeth. And she was good at roaring. Her hair was disorderly. She was always wearing jade hair accessories. She reined the fierce spirit in the sky and the spirit of five punishments⁷.

In quotation (1), although the face of the Yellow Emperor is not directly stated, according to the human face and animal body of Yu Xiao, the son of the Yellow Emperor, it is inferred that the original "image" of the Yellow Emperor was probably half man and half beast. In quotation (2), the original "image" of the Queen Mother has a leopard-like tail and tiger-like teeth, which is the image of a beast. According to these two quotations, we can get a clear message: The Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother both have prominent alienation characteristics. Why do these alienation characteristics occur? If we discuss it with the theory of personality structure, people were still at the stage of unawakened self-consciousness and the inner self in the mythological period. People were still in a state of unconsciousness, and focused on satisfying the basic survival needs. So, they observed the world in an imagined thinking way, without mature aesthetic view. In such a state of thinking, they had no ability to distinguish the good from bad. When they made text narration, they selected information from memory and put perceptual intuition first and used the impressive information which appeared repeatedly. In the age of mythology, life was attacked by beasts, so people imitated beasts to bring down the spirit in sacrifices. In reality, various situations were often related to beasts. Therefore, when creating the original mythological images such as the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother, the ancestors would choose some features of birds, snakes, leopards, tigers and other animals to create alienated images. If measured by the aesthetics of the post-mythological era, these two images are not beautiful at first, even some ugly. But everything that exists has profound meaning. From the beginning of the images of The Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother, it is not only a simple image record, but also implies rich emotional experience, carrying common feelings, and hiding the common cultural memory of people in the mythological era. On the one hand, people were afraid of beasts. On the other hand, they feared beasts and were thirsty for their power.

With the abundance of materials, beasts are no longer a great threat to human survival and development. In people's common cultural memory, the information of the horrible images of the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother in the mythological period is less and less. Moreover, there are generations of ideological trends. When new ideological trends and concepts invade, the old cultural memory becomes more and more inappropriate. Because of the inappropriateness, people began to use some opportunities to change the "images" of mythological characters formed in the

⁶ Yuan Ke, Annotations to Shan Hai Jing, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1980, P 350.

⁷ Yuan Ke, Annotations to Shan Hai Jing, quoted from Preface, P 50.

mythological period, and these opportunities may be one or several ideological trends, or may be several documents. As far as the "image" of the Yellow Emperor is concerned, the opportunity for its change lies in one document: Sima Qian's Historical Records. The opportunity for the change of Queen Mother's "image" is also due to two documents: Biography of Mu Tianzi and Biography of Emperor Wudi of Han Dynasty.

First of all, analyzes the change of the "image" of the Yellow Emperor. In the Spring and Autumn Period, all schools of thoughts contended for attention, and they integrated with each other after wars in the Warring States Period. Li Zehou believed that during the Qin and Han Dynasties, the schools were further integrated. Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and Yin & Yang became the four major ideological trends for the construction of new ideologies in the Qin and Han Dynasties. Among them, Confucianism was increasingly taking the initiative to absorb and influence other schools⁸. Following the founder of Confucianism Confucius, Confucian scholars of all dynasties have attached great importance to etiquette and moral conduct. In the Han Dynasty, Confucianism became the official ruling ideology in Emperor Wu's Court, and influenced all aspects of social life. Literature was no exception. It was at this time that the image of the Yellow Emperor in Immortal Taoism Fu was changed from the distinct alienated image of beasts to the image of ordinary people. Instead, it began to emphasize the various achievements of the Yellow Emperor. Historical Records · Primary Chronicle of Five Emperors records:

The Yellow Emperor was born with intelligence, and spoke soon after birth. He was smart in childhood, honest and diligent when he grew up. When he grew up, he read and heard extensively and saw things thoroughly. In the Xuanyuan era, Shennong's descendants had declined, and all the princes fought against each other and maimed the people, while Shennong's family had no power to fight against them. Hence, Xuanyuan practiced military training and sent armed forces to suppress the princes who didn't pay tribute. Only then did all the princes surrender. Chiyou was the most ferocious among all the princes. No one conquered him. Emperor Yan wanted to attack and oppress the princes who came back to Xuanyuan. Hence, Xuanyuan practiced virtue, rectified the army, studied the changes of solar terms of four seasons, planted grains, pacified the people, measured the land of the four sides, trained the beasts such as bears, Pi, Xiu, Chu and tigers, and fought several battles with Emperor Yan in the countryside of Banquan before he conquered Emperor Yan and won as he wished. Chiyou launched a rebellion and did not obey the orders of the Yellow Emperor. So, the Yellow Emperor commanded the army of the princes and fought against Chiyou in the countryside of Zhuolu. He finally captured and killed him. If anyone did not surrender to him, he would go to fight him. After conquering the place, he would leave and level off hills to pave roads all the way. He never lived in a place peacefully. The Yellow Emperor moved around without a fixed residence. Wherever he led his troops, he set up barracks

⁸ Li Zehou, *Historical Comments on Ancient Chinese Thoughts*, Sanlian Bookstore, 2017, P 122-123.

to defend himself. The Yellow Emperor's official posts were named after Yun, and his army was known as the Yun Division. He set up the left and right supervisors, and let them supervise states of the princes. At this time, the country was peaceful and stable. Therefore, since ancient times the Yellow Emperor worshiped ghosts and gods the most. The Yellow Emperor got the precious Ding from heaven, so he observed the movement of the sun, used the yarrow used in divination to calculate the calendar, and predicted the solar term. He appointed Fenghou, Limu, Changxian and Dahong to govern the people. The Yellow Emperor conformed to the law of the four seasons of heaven and earth, speculated on the changes of yin and yang, explained the truth of life and death, discussed the reasons for survival and death, planted grains, grass and trees according to the season, domesticated birds, animals, silkworms, observed the sun, moon and stars to determine the calendar, collected soil, stone, gold and jade for civilian use. His body and mind suffered hard work, and used water, fire and wood and various wealth in a moderate manner. As the son of heaven, he had the auspicious sign of soil and soil is yellow, so he was called the Yellow Emperor⁹.

Sima Qian wrote the chronicle of the Yellow Emperor into his work in the primary chronicle, and clearly established the identity of the ancestor of the Yellow Emperor, which was included in the history pedigree. According to the criterion of historical truth, Sima Qian said "the words of all schools on the Yellow Emperor are not elegant, and even scholars cannot distinguish true and false". As a part of real history, the ridiculous image of "beast" is obviously contrary to the truth of historical biography. Therefore, the alienation characteristics of the Yellow Emperor were omitted by Sima Qian. The stories of the Yellow Emperor he recorded are all his achievements and virtues. His conduct followed the time of heaven and benefited the people. His virtue was like soil, and according to the theory of five elements, soil matched yellow, so called him the Yellow Emperor. Since then, the image of the Yellow Emperor was completely established as "the ancestor of human". When people talk about the Yellow Emperor, they still recognized his morality, though Taoism had alienated the Yellow Emperor before.

Looking at the "image" of the Queen Mother. By the time Biography of Emperor Wudi of Han Dynasty was basically finalized, the image of the Queen Mother had gone through the process of transforming from a completely animal image to a noble goddess. In this process, Biography of Mu Tianzi was the key to the transformation. Biography of Mu Tianzi recorded the events of Mu Tianzi's journey to the West in order to show his great virtues. The third volume of this book records an event that the Queen Mother had banquet with Mu Tianzi. As the master of Yao Chi, the Queen Mother hosted a banquet for Mu Tianzi. The relationship between the host and the guest was equally honorable. The image of Mu Tianzi was graceful and magnanimous. The first volume of Biography of Mu Tianzi depicts the image of Mu Tianzi as follows: "Mu Tianzi stood in front of the river god in his formal clothes. He

⁹ Sima Qian, *Historical Records*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1959, P 1-6.

wore a crown, two leather kneepads, a scepter plate stuck in his waistband and two jade pendants on both sides of his waist. He took a jade in his hands"¹⁰. As far as the creation of literary images is concerned, if the Queen Mother treated Mu Tianzi with the "image" of beast, Mu Tianzi would be scared to death. It was quite inconsistent with the elegant image of Mu Tianzi. From the ideological point of view, this work's purpose was to show the virtues of Mu Tianzi. The original alienation image of the Queen Mother was obviously inharmonious to the image of Mu Tianzi. Therefore, in this work the writer changed the original image of the Queen Mother into an elegant goddess and omitted her beast image in previous works, and honored her as the master of Yao Chi.

As we mentioned earlier, "image" in the imaginary often contains "meaning", and the interpretation of "meaning" is based on "image". According to the evolution process of the two "images", the Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother mentioned above, we can elucidate some deep "meanings" hidden behind the two "images". Looking back on the evolution process of the Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother, the evolution rules of "image" of the Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother are identical: de-alienation and beautification with high morality. Both the image of the Yellow Emperor and the image of Queen Mother were de-alienated and turn to strengthening morality in the derivation. Taking Historical Records and Biography of Mu Tianzi as an opportunity, the image of The Yellow Emperor and the image of Queen Mother were implanted with the connotation of virtue. Therefore, when we see the images of the Yellow Emperor and Queen Mother in Immortal Taoism Fu, we can not only associate them with their immortal status, more importantly, we can feel the implication of virtue in them. In Baopuzi, Ge Hong said: "those who seek immortality should be loyal, filial and obedient. If don't cultivate morality and conduct, they can't live forever if they just pursue magic arts"¹¹.

III. ANALYSIS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF IMAGE GROUPS IN IMMORTAL TAOISM FU: FOCUSING ON KUNLUN MYTHOLOGICAL SYSTEM

When we study Immortal Taoism Fu, we find that many gods and geographical images come from Shan Hai Jing. In Han Huangxiang's Jiugong Fu, the images of astronomy were frequently used, which come from Shan Hai Jing.

In worship of the Five Mountains, Heaven and Earth and the Four Seasons, they commanded Zhu Rong and Ju Mang... Up to Kunlun and Jieshi, they had ever climbed over Dizhu, Taihang Mountain, Xiong'er Mountain and Wutong Mountain, and lived in Bozhong Mountain and Waifang Mountain... Stars led the way as if they carried weapons. Xuanyuan rode a horse in front. The god of thunder rode a lion and guards followed. The spirit of gods drove luxuriant carts one after another... Gods like Chiyou wore colorful clothes and carried halberds and shields... The waves of the Four Seas relaxed and widened the boundary. They broke

Taishan Mountain and Songshan Mountain to absorb rivers. They climbed over the stone cliffs and saw the Gate of Heaven open and the Imperial Palace. They enjoyed the longevity of and felt the endless happiness in the Imperial Palace.¹²

In the above quotation, 15 images come from Shan Hai Jing. The geographical images include Kunlun, Jieshi, Bozhong, Taihang, Xiong'er, Four Seas, Taishan, Jiujiang and the Gate of Heaven and the Imperial Palace. The image of character includes Zhu Rong, Ju Mang, Xuanyuan and Chiyou.

For example, Tao Hongjing's Water Immortal Fu has depicted the life of a water immortal:

... In the past, Tongguan was not blocked and the gate was opened. Water in Jiangshui River and Hanshui River could be diverted out to the Jishui River and reached Huaishui River. Zhangshui and Baoshan Cave Mansion were immortal dwellings. They were traveling place of E Ying and Qin Feng (all of them were spiritual water)... the tall corridors attracted the Phoenix. The geese led the way for curtained carts... Clapped the stone in the cave, and blew Aoguan of Xuanyou. Made wine in the alchemy cave, and presented delicacies of Linzhou. An Qisheng offered long-lived jujubes, and the Queen Mother gave peaches to Xishan... Speaking of the castles and high-rise pavilions in the sky, they were places for the Yellow Emperor to drink with the gods. Stones from Tushan formed a screen and meteorite formed a curtain, which was the place of Xia Yu to gather his ministers. The intersection of Minshan Mountain and Minzhong Mountain was opposite to Jingxiu in the sky. The Milky Way hanged high in the sky and carried stars across the sky... The river run through Mount Mangdang, and running outside the mouth of the pot...¹³

Above, the twelve places of Shimen, Hanshui, Jishui, Huaishui, Zhangshui, Goushan, Xuanyou, Danxue, Cengcheng, Tushan, Panshan and Mangdang are geographical images. E Ying, Queen Mother, the Yellow Emperor and Xia Yu are god beast images. The total 16 images come from Shan Hai Jing.

So many and frequent use of the images of Shan Hai Jing in Immortal Taoist Fu was due to the fact that scholars in past dynasties knew more about Shan Hai Jing. Shan Hai Jing, as a Taoist classic, is highly respected by Taoism and is included in Taoist collections of all dynasties. For Taoist Fu writers and readers, Shan Hai Jing is a must-read classic. It can be affirmed that the god beasts, mountains and rivers, city pools appearing in Shan Hai Jing are commonly recognized cultural memories in the hearts of readers of Taoist Fu. Therefore, in order to make the works more acceptable to Taoist Fu readers, it is natural that the images of Shan Hai Jing in Immortal Taoism Fu appear frequently.

Although Shan Hai Jing is the common cultural memory of Taoist Fu writers and readers, we should also note that Fu writers did not select images from numerous images in Shan

¹⁰ Wang Tianhai, Annotations to Mu Tianzi · Yan Danzi, Guizhou People's Publishing House, 1997, P 14.

¹¹ Ge Hong, Baopuzi, Zhonghua Book Company, 2016, P 53.

¹² Chen Yuanlong, Fu Collections of Past Dynasties, Phoenix Publishing House, 2004, P 435.

¹³ Chen Yuanlong, Fu Collections of Past Dynasties, Preface, P 435.

Hai Jing at will in the creation of Immortal Taoism Fu. They abided by certain principles unconsciously. Generally speaking, the images of Immortal Taoism Fu from Shan Hai Jing are mainly based on Kunlun Mythological System. Why did writers use the images of Kunlun Mythological System in the Immortal Taoism Fu?

The author thinks that this is related to the status of Kunlun in the ancient immortal system. Nowadays, there is no definite conclusion about the specific geographical location of Kunlun in academic circles, but the noble status of Kunlun Mythological System in the whole ancient mythology is indisputable. This is evidenced by the relevant literature of Hainei Xijing and the Xici Sanjing.

Hainei Xijing recorded:

There was Kunlun Mountain in the sea. The northwest was the capital of the Emperor of Heaven in the earth. Kunlun was about 800 li round and 8,000 zhang high. There was a rice tree on the mountain, four zhang high, big enough to be embraced by five people. There were nine wells on each side of Kunlun Mountain, beside which there were jade railings. There were nine doors on each side, and each door was guarded by god beasts. That's where the gods were. These gods lived in the cave of Bafang Mountain or on the side of Chishui River. Without high ability like Hou Yi who shot the sun, no one can climb up to the mountain¹⁴.

In addition, Xici Sanjing recorded:

The place, four hundred li to the southwest, was called Kunlun Mountain. It was the capital of the Emperor of Heaven in the earth. Lu Wu was in charge of it¹⁵.

At the same time, the above two documents mentioned that Kunlun is "the capital of the Emperor of Heaven in the earth". Viewing Shan Hai Jing, only the one place Kunlun is called as "the capital of the Emperor of Heaven in the earth". In addition, Kunlun is not only the dwelling place of the Emperor of Heaven in the earth, but also the "place where all gods live". In this record related to "all gods", only Kunlun is the permanent residential place of these gods. It is obvious that Kunlun is in the lofty position of Shan Hai Jing.

Because Shan Hai Jing has been collected as Taoist collections in past dynasties, the related images of Kunlun mythology in it have been inherited for a long time and absorbed by Taoism. The Kunlun Mythological System has further evolved into the center of Taoist immortal system.

The Volume 110 of Taiping Classics recorded:

In ancient times, people who had acquired Taoism also had certain rules. Those who had not been born recorded in the longevity book. And the names had been recorded on the book should be transmitted to Zhongji when they soared.

Zhongji is also called as Kunlun. The people who manage the book copy the names on the book. No omissions are allowed¹⁶.

As shown above, the Kunlun Mythological System has become more and more important since it was introduced into the Taoist immortal system. It is not only at the core of belief, but also at the center of the world. It is at the axis line of the earth and echoes with the North Pole in the sky.

In addition, Huainanzi Topographic Instructions recorded:

Climbed up from the Peak of Kunlun Mountain and reached Liangfeng Mountain. One who climbed up Liangfeng Mountain could be immortal. Continued to climb up and saw Xuanyou Mountain. One who climbed up Xuanyou Mountain could see gods and summon wind and call for rain. Continued to climb up and reached the Heaven Court. One who reached the Heaven Court could become a god and live together with the Emperor of Heaven¹⁷.

The nearer the distance of the god is to Kunlun, the higher his status is in the immortal system and the stronger his magic arts are. From bottom to top, Kunlun is divided into three levels: Liangfeng Mountain, Xuanyou Mountain and the Palace of Emperor Tai. The gods living in Liangfeng Mountain could live forever. The gods living in Xuanyou Mountain could use magic arts. The gods living together with the Emperor of Tai could summon wind and call for rain. It is not easy for ordinary people to live a long life. As for the residence of Emperor Tai, immortals are not yet available, and ordinary people cannot reach it. In reality, Taoist Fu writers, as human beings, naturally cannot live in Kunlun or reach Zhongji. Thus, Taoist Fu writers, with the frustration of not realizing the ideal of seeking immortals, turned to the magnificent imagination and realized it in writing Immortal Taoism Fu. In Immortal Taoism Fu, writers liked to use dream to fly over the immortal mountains and reached the Palace of the Heaven. For example, in Ge Changgeng's *Zi Yuan Fu*, he dreamed to fly over the Palace of the Emperor of the Heaven. He recorded: "I visited the residence of the Emperor of the Heaven and reached the boundless and vague fairyland"¹⁸. The Palace of Heaven was vague and empty, and Taoist Fu writers were also unconvinced about reaching to the Fairland Kunlun. Therefore, they only wanted to and tried to realize their long-cherished wish by magic arts, which is particularly evident in Tang Wang Yanling's *Sleepwalking Fairy Court*:

I rode a white deer and a unicorn, flew over the cart of Cui Yu and skipped over the Sun. Passed through the Southern Gate and surpassed the boundary of the North. I showed my ambition by flying over Kunlun and expressed my desire of longevity by getting across the heaven and the sea. I rebuked

¹⁶ Wang Ming, Annotation to *Taiping Classics*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1985, P 532.

¹⁷ Xu Kuangyi, Annotations to *Huainanzi*, Guizhou People's Publishing House, 1990, P 233.

¹⁸ Chen Yuanlong, *Fu Collections of Past Dynasties*, Phoenix Publishing House, 2004, P 438.

¹⁴ Yuan Ke, Annotations to *Shan Hai Jing*, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1980, P 294.

¹⁵ Yuan Ke, Annotations to *Shan Hai Jing*, quoted from the same book, P 47.

Fengbo and blamed Leishen, and finally opened the gate of heaven and visited the Palace of Heaven¹⁹.

In his dream, Wang Yanling flew over Kunlun by relying on the Kunlun Immortal Fengbo and Leifu. This kind of flight not only shows the satisfaction of Taoist Fu writers from imaginary of immortality, but also reveals their infinite yearning for Kunlun fairyland.

Compared with Ge Changgeng and Wang Yanling, some Fu writers had a stronger desire to seek immortality. In order to highlight their yearning for the fairyland, they often used multiple images in Kunlun Mythological System instead of a single image when choosing meanings. This is the case with the previous quotation of Water Immortal Fu. In Tao Hongjing's Fu, there are more than ten images of Kunlun Mythological System. Compared with the use of a single image, the meaning space contained in the image group of Kunlun Mythological System in Immortal Taoism Fu is larger, the life experience is deeper and the emotion is more explicit. From the perspective of intuitive reading experience, through the image group, readers can more truly feel the attraction of Kunlun, the center of immortal belief, to Immortal Taoism Fu writers. As far as the meaning space of the text is concerned, image groups have more space for readers to analyze and understand, and the larger possibility to create new meaning in interpretation of text. Still takes the record of Water Immortal Fu as an example. If we simply look at the text, it depicts the extremely elegant daily life of the water immortal. By combining with the composition of Kunlun Mythological System, there are more possibilities of interpretation in the text, and there is a huge space of meaning hidden behind the image group. In the image group of Water Immortal Fu, there are images of Xuanyou, Cengcheng, E Huang, Queen Mother and the Yellow Emperor, which are closely related to Kunlun. Kunlun was also the center of Taoist immortal system and the yearning place of the people who worshiped Taoism in the past dynasties. The continuous emergence of images in Kunlun Mythological System is bound to arouse readers' interest. Once interest is stimulated, a dialogue is established between the reader and the text. Through dialogue, various immortal life experiences in Immortal Taoism Fu use imagery as a medium to drive readers' imagination and connect with the internal cultural memory, awaken association with the themes of seeking immortal and longevity, and ultimately influence the readers and lead the readers to identify with the writers.

IV. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, the selection of images in ancient Chinese Immortal Taoism Fu is not go-as-you-please. Images in Immortal Taoism Fu were elaborately selected by the writers according to life experience and aesthetic consciousness. These images were constructed into image groups, which imply the aesthetic value orientation of the ancients when they sought immortality and Taoism, reveal the ancients' desire to live forever, and are also the profound cultural memory passed down from generation to generation

by those who seek immortality. Through analysis of Immortal Taoism Fu of past dynasties, as readers, we can experience the infinite "meaning" of the writers in worship of the immortal Taoism by the unique aesthetic space of image construction.

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¹⁹ Chen Yuanlong, Fu Collections of Past Dynasties, Preface, P 437.