

Time and space metaphors in li bai's "shu-dao nan" essay sample

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Essay Sample

Generally acknowledged that LI Bai created "Shu-dao Nan" approximately in 742-744 BC, Changan, the capital city of Tang Dynasty, for his friend WANG Yan who prepared to go to Sichuan. LI Bai warned his friend to return to Changan as early as possible, if not, might be calumniated by evildoers. "Shu" is an antonomasia of Sichuan. In "Shu-dao Nan", LI Bai exaggeratedly described the strategically located and difficult of access of Sichuan. And he combined mythologies and his amazing imagination to express the emotion of revered and loved in country land. The entire distribution of "Shu-dao Nan" was followed the timeline, from ancient times to the present (Tang Dynasty), and the space, from Qin to Shu. In this paper, will focus on analyzing the time and space metaphors in "Shu-dao Nan".

At the beginning, LI Bai dated back to the remote history, cited the founding mythologies of "Can Cong" and "Yu Fu" that they were the legendary kings of ancient Shu and found Shu Dynasties. There was an exaggerative description of time in the following line, "四万八千岁", "forty-eight thousand years" described that the time of our ancestors to access to Shu was too much to count. Shu was isolated for many uncountable years because of its difficulty of access. "Forty-eight thousand years" was an indirect foil of Shu's hard approaching. When the way from Xianyang, the capital city of Qin, to Shu was experienced many years and countless hard-working trailblazers, it was exploited.

Following the order of the description of the way to Shu in “ Shu-dao Nan”, the scene where should reach firstly from Qin to Shu was the Taibai Mountain. “ 太白山峻極，飛鳥難越也”， even if for the flying birds, were hard to pass the mountain that described the difficulty of people to get through the mountain. Then the next destination was Qingni Neck where was the main entrance to approach Shu in Tang Dynasty. “ 清泥嶺峻極，飛鳥難越也”， there were more difficult to Shu. Until describing to Qingni Neck, LI Bai already had extreme description of the hardship and danger of Shu-dao. And next, would get to Jianmen Pass, “ 劍門關峻極，飛鳥難越也”. After that, the poet cited his description to the political situation. From ancient times to Tang Dynasty, from Taibai Mountain to Jianmen Pass, there were not just organizational ideas of the poetry that they were involved the metaphors of the current politics of Tang Dynasty.

Poets like to commend on ancient and current affairs. In “ Shu-dao Nan”, time was foiled the difficulty of accessing to Shu. Using the ancient mythologies and the exaggerative imagination led to the level of the hardship of getting to Shu. From Qin to Shu, ordered to pass three spaces there were progressively deepening, not only to Shu, but also to the purpose of the poet. Originally, “ Shu-dao Nan” was LI Bai created to warn his friend WANG Yan to be careful about calumniation, using the difficulty of passing Shu-dao to analogy the calumniation of evildoers. In fact, he expressed that his circumstance located in difficulty and he was anxious and terrified. LI thought on his way to politics was like the way from Qin to Shu. The flying birds and the flexible apes were hard to pass Shu-dao, much less people.

Although LI had superior literary talent, he lacked of ability on officialdom. He had romantic and unruly personality so that be hurt by the cruel fact invariably. In that corrupted world, LI wasn't willing to be an outsider, he had mission to service his country with his talent. He wanted to change but he couldn't.

Although the way to Shu was difficult, it was a real road that human could step on. Why LI described that to pass Shu-dao was harder than to go to heaven? The metaphor of Shu-dao was the complicated officialdom. On officialdom, everybody prepares for his own expectation. From ancient ages to present, officialdom is as cruel as battlefield. Human hearts are unpredictable, others' hearts like the heaven where couldn't touch. LI warned WANG Yan to take care about be calculated while warned himself.

The exaggerated rhetoric is the most outstanding characteristic of " Shu-dao Nan". LI cited the mythologies from ancient ages, " 五丁六甲死於開山; 日逐月移山蓋日", five warriors died for quarrying the mountain, and the sun was covered by the mountain. These two mythologies exaggeratedly foiled the difficulty of passing Shu-dao. And the other exaggerated expression was LI's imagination. He imagined the difficulties and dangers of others living beings to pass Shu-dao that vividly described the level of difficulty. Through the metaphors and rhetoric, at the end of the poetry, LI wrote, " 官場如戰場; 人心似天高; 世事如棋局", which reflected the awful officialdom.

In LI's expectation, he hoped he could avoid the calculations, while he was afraid that his ambition of serving country was failed. LI Bai's style of poetry is heroic, included " Shu-dao Nan". Although " Shu-dao Nan" is heroic and powerful, the emotion of the poetry is negative. Why LI thought back to the ancient age? He worried that the evildoers from outside and in would threaten the state security, and tried to find the clues or answers from ancestors that could solve those crisis. The difficulties existed from the past and followed the rule of the nature. The natural sceneries are attractive because have precipitous, but this feature was assimilated to officialdom that changed to be horrible. The road to Sichuan was difficult; the road to serve country was ever harder. The road on officialdom was like cliff; the evildoers were like jackals and wolves. As the natural rule, the officialdom is cruel, human hearts are unpredictable.

However, LI still praised the scenes of our country was glorious. No matter how boring the manners and morals of the time, still had pretty scenes that could be eulogized by poets and literary men. They could lose of high official positions and riches, but couldn't live without integrity and sensitive emotion. The road to Shu is risk, just as human life. Whoever you are, the life is also hard. LI Bai travelled around and created a lot literature works that expressed his feelings. We also should find the best ways of us to express ourselves and enjoy a few of happy time in this difficult world.

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