

place filled with bizarre creatures.

The thought that stunned him the most was that the location of Kunlun Mountain in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* needed to match the Pamir Plateau's location! He checked again to ensure he had understood correctly. Could the ancient Chinese not have considered Kunlun Mountain in China? We should not limit our scope to China. In ancient times, Chinese civilisation might have spread across the world. Or, more accurately, it wasn't just Chinese civilisation; there was a unified world civilisation from which all humans descended. The concept of "Tianxia"(天下) can mean "the world". We all come from one place, but the Chinese recorded it in their historical resources.

John's heart was full of doubts, but he also understood that more evidence was needed to solve this mystery. He embarked on another journey to uncover the secrets hidden in the depths of history.

In the following days, John visited museums, historical sites, and ancient ruins across the country. His steps traversed the vast landscape, each filled with exploration and discovery.

After a long effort, John finally found a crucial piece of evidence: an ancient map. Marked on this map were the Kunlun Mountains and the Caucasus Mountains, between the Black and Caspian Seas!

There were no geographical and national categories in ancient times as we know them today. Instead, early civilisations viewed the entire planet as a single entity rather than focusing on specific regions.

After returning to Hong Kong, John searched for information at the library of Hong Kong Baptist University. He flipped through the first and second chapters of *The Water Classic*(*Shui Jing Zhu*, 《水经注》).

The Kunlun Mountain was described as a place outside of today's China in the first chapter. If he needs clarification, start with the second chapter, which discusses the Congling(Pamir Plateau) to Dunhuang. At least the distance could be confirmed.

In the second chapter of *Shui Jing Zhu*, it said: “《西河旧事》曰：葱岭在敦煌西八千里，其山高大，上生葱，故曰葱岭也 ... 治蒲犁谷，北去疏勒五百五十里，俗与子合同 ... 治皮山城，西北去莎车三百八十里。” [*The 'Old Stories of the West River*: “The Congling

is located eight thousand *li* west of Dunhuang. The mountain is tall and steep, and onions are growing on it, so it is called the Congling... It is also where people govern the Puli Valley, which is 550 *li* north of Shule. The local customs are the same as those of Zi He... It is also the place where people govern the Pishan City, and it is 380 *li* northwest of Yelken.”]

Based on positions confirmed today, in the Qin and Han periods, each *li* was approximately 418 metres. Therefore, the distance from today’s Tashikuergan County in the Pamir Plateau to Dunhuang was recorded in an ancient book as 8,000 *li*, or 3,344 kilometres. Today’s highway distance is 2,300 kilometres. This shows that old geographical distances were less convenient than today’s highway distances and that travel distances were longer.

Given this, John used two relatively close geographical locations as examples for calculation. The distances from Tashikuergan County to Shule and from Pishan County to Yelken were 550 *li*(230 kilometres) and 380 *li*(159 kilometres), respectively. This distance was the same as today’s highway distance.

John’s eyes sparkled with intrigue as he once again delved into the enchanting pages of *The Water Classic*. His gaze fixed on the opening lines, which described the elusive location of the fabled Kunlun Mountain.

The text unfolded before him like a majestic tapestry, each word rich with historical depth and cultural intrigue. He could almost taste the allure of the forbidden knowledge hidden within its pages.

“The Kunlun Mountain,” he mused, lost in the enchanting world of ancient legends. “Where is it? What secrets does it hold?”

The text described Kunlun as a place of mythical proportions, a mountain that loomed large in the collective consciousness of ancient people. It spoke of a place where the gods and immortals dwelt, a realm beyond the mortal world, high in the clouds, hidden from the rest of the world.

John felt his pulse quicken as he considered the vast distances that separated this fabled mountain from the known world. The journey, it

seemed, would be long and arduous, filled with peril and uncertainty.

In the first chapter, it said: “仑墟在西北，三成为昆仑丘。《昆仑说》曰：昆仑之山三级：下曰樊桐，一名板桐；二曰玄圃，一名闾风；上曰层城，一名天庭；是为太帝之居。去嵩高五万里，地之中也。高诱称河出昆山，伏流地中万三千里，禹导而通之；出积石山。案《山海经》：自昆仑至积石千七百四十里。自积石出陇西郡至洛，准《地志》可五千余里。又案《穆天子传》：天子自昆山入于宗周，乃里西土之数。《外国图》又云：从大晋国正西七万里，得昆仑之墟，诸仙居之。数说不同，道阻且长，经记绵褊，水陆路殊，径复不同，浅见末闻，非所详究，不能不聊述闻见，以志差违也。” [Located in the northwest, the Kunlun Mountain consists of three distinct levels: the lowest tier, Fan Tong or Ban Tong(a giant tree with fence around); the middle level, Xuan Pu(a primordial garden) or Lang Feng(a floating bird-like place with massive gate); and the highest, Cheng Cheng or Tian Ting(heaven city). These represent the abode of the Tai Emperor(supreme God), who is believed to reside there. “The location of Songgao is considered to be at the geographical centre, situated five million miles away. As per Gao You’s description, the river, likely referring to the Yellow River, originates from Kunlun Mountain and courses through the earth for an immense distance of 13,000 *li* before being successfully navigated and channelled by the legendary figure, Yu the Great, before draining out through Jishi Mountain. According to *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, the distance between Kunlun and Jishan stands at 1,740 *li*. From Jishan to Luoyang via the Dizhi route, it is approximately 5,000 *li*. *Records in the Muzongtishuan* recount how the emperor ascended from Kunlun to Zhou and subsequently measured the vast expanse of the western territories. The *Waiguotu* adds that it is 70,000 *li* from the Da Jin kingdom to the Kunlun Xu, where immortals dwell. Different accounts exist, reflecting the challenging terrain and the extensive journey, with historical records often fragmentary and routes varied.]

Let’s explore the narrative of Kunlun Mountain, a subject of profound interest within the interdisciplinary studies of mythology, geography, and cultural symbolism. Located in what is modern-day

Northwestern China, this mountain has piqued the academic curiosity of researchers, including our hypothetical investigator, John. Through rigorous analysis and correlation with geographic landmarks, John postulates a connection between Kunlun Mountain and the Caucasus Mountains, thereby situating the myth within a tangible geographical context.

Kunlun Mountain is not a singular monolith but comprises three distinct tiers, each with its own mythological and cultural significance. The first tier is known as 樊桐 (Fan Tong) or 板桐 (Ban Tong). The semantic exploration of “樊” (Ban, pronounced in ancient Chinese), akin to the English ‘ban’, suggests a notion of prohibition or sacred exclusivity, while “桐” (Tong) represents a large tree. This tier, therefore, symbolises a sacred, forbidden tree that serves as a connection to the divine, echoing the mythological motif of the World Tree found in various cultures, including the Nordic Yggdrasil, which bridges the human and the sacred.



Advancing to the second tier, 玄圃 (Xuan Pu), John’s analysis reveals a conceptual parallel to the primordial gardens found in global mythologies, such as the Garden of Eden. This tier, described as a floating, ethereal space with significant gateways, evokes the image of a celestial ark or even a spacecraft, situating ancient mythologies within the realms of the extraordinary and the otherworldly. The creation myths

involving deities such as Beksxia and Nuwa, who crafted humanity in this mystical garden, underscore the universality of creation narratives and their pivotal role in human cultural and spiritual understanding.

Are there any more descriptions of the XUAN PU? John puzzles.

Here it is:

《山海经·大荒西经》：“西北海之外，大荒之隅，有山名曰昆仑之丘。上有瑶台，琼室，玉楼，金阙。是为西王母所居，实为天下之宗。其下有弱水之渊环之，上有紫渊，有天梯焉，所谓太虚之梯，上登于天。天梯旁有悬圃，是西王母所居室，其中多桃树，实大如斗，食之令人不老。又有不死药，服之长生。”

[In “Great Wasteland West Route” in the *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*: “Outside the Northwest Sea, on the corner of the great wasteland, there is a mountain named Kunlun Peak. There are jade towers, jade rooms, and golden halls on top. This is where the Queen Mother of the West resides, and it is actually the centre of the world. There is a shallow-water abyss below it, surrounding it, and above it is a purple abyss. There is a Heavenly Stairway here, called the ladder to the void, which can lead to heaven. Next to the Heavenly Stairway is the suspended(primordial/floating) garden, which is the residence of the Queen Mother of the West. There are many peach trees here, with fruits as big as a basin, which, if eaten, can make one immortal. There is also the elixir of immortality that one can drink to live forever.”]

Now, what does this passage say to you?

Imagine this: At the very heart of our tale stands a ladder stretching all the way to heaven, a majestic tree ladder, roots deep in the earth, crown piercing the skies. Suspended between the lower realms and the celestial domains, a mesmerizing garden floats. It's no ordinary place; it's the kind where the very fabric of time seems to weave itself into something magical.

And within this garden? PEACHES! Yes, those holy fruits of legend. In the tales of the West, they speak of apples, but here, in this enchanted realm, it's peaches that hold the secret to wisdom and eternal life.

Ascending from this lush, verdant middle ground, we reach the third level, “层城”(Cheng Cheng) or “天庭”(Tian Ting) – what we might call the abode of the supreme gods, heaven in its purest essence. But this is no place you could walk into; it’s a realm beyond the physical, a mystical space that defies the reach of mere mortals.

Given the majestic narrative that cloaks Kunlun Mountain, its stature becomes all the more awe-inspiring. The tallest mountains on Earth soar about 8,000 meters into the heavens. So, one can’t help but wonder, just how high does Kunlun Mountain reach, in both the literal and the mythical sense?

John puzzled, and went back to check the *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, he found: “《山海经·海外北经》也有记载：昆仑之虚，方八百里，高万仞，上有木禾，长五寻，大一围，面有九井，以玉为槛。面有九门，门有开明兽守之。百神之所在。在八隅之岩，赤水之际，非仁羿莫能上冈之岩。”

[In *Volume of the Outer North Sea*, it is recorded: The vastness of the Kunlun Mountain is eight hundred square *li*(around 200 square kilometers) in size, towering a height of ten thousand *ren*(17,000 metres). Atop it, there grows a divine tree, the Muhe(giant grain tree), measuring five *xun*(8.5 metres) long and one circumference in *wei*(1.7 metres). It possesses nine wells, adorned with jade railings. The mountain features nine gates, each guarded by the celestial creature, the Kaiming Beast(a tiger or lion with 9 human heads). This place, home to myriad deities, is situated amidst the rocks at the four corners and along the banks of the Red Water. Only the virtuous archer, Yi, could ascend those cliffs.]

Picture Kunlun Mountain, not just as a mountain, but as a gigantic tower of nature and magic that stretches far beyond the clouds. At its base, it stands proud at 7,000 meters above sea level. That’s already about as high as some of the tallest peaks in our world, where the air is thin, and the vistas are breathtaking.

Now, imagine atop this already awe-inspiring natural skyscraper, there lies a hidden marvel, the Primordial Garden, often compared to the Garden of Eden from Western traditions. This isn’t just any garden.

According to the tales, it sometimes floats, adding a layer of mystical charm. This garden, floating or not, is said to be situated right on top of the mountain, effectively increasing the mountain's height with its own.

But we're not stopping there. Above this mesmerizing garden, the story takes us even higher, to where the supreme deities are said to dwell, an additional 10,000 metres up in the sky. This places the abode of the gods beyond the realms of our immediate world, into what's known as the Kármán line. For those not familiar, the Kármán line is essentially the border between Earth's atmosphere and outer space, recognized globally at about 100 kilometres above the Earth.

So, when we add it all up—the mountain's base, the floating garden, and the realm of the gods—we reach an astonishing total height of 17,000 meters for Kunlun Mountain. This concept isn't just a measurement; it's a journey that bridges our earthbound existence with the lofty realms of myth and the outer reaches of space. It's a vivid illustration of how ancient stories envisioned the cosmos and our place within it, long before the age of satellites and space stations.

Understanding the geographical context of Kunlun Mountain within ancient texts brings us into a realm where myth and the physical landscape of our world intertwine in fascinating ways. These texts offer a glimpse into the imagination and understanding of geography in ancient times, presenting distances that, while not literal in our current knowledge, convey the vastness and the mystical significance of these places.

“Song Gao” is mentioned as the pinnacle of Kunlun Mountain, located a staggering five thousand *li* from the historic city of Luoyang. To put this into perspective, a ‘li’ is an ancient Chinese unit of distance, which has varied over time but is generally considered to be roughly half a kilometre in modern terms. Therefore, according to the text, Song Gao would be over twenty thousand kilometres away from Luoyang, considering the treacherous terrain that includes both perilous lands and the sheer verticality of the mountain itself. This distance far exceeds China's actual geographic extent and ventures into the realm of the symbolic, emphasizing the mountain's remoteness and its place in the

spiritual geography of ancient Chinese belief systems.

Similarly, the journey to Kunlun Xu, described as the dwelling of the immortals and situated to the west of the Da Jin country, spans seven thousand *li*. This translates to a journey of over twenty-nine thousand kilometres, encompassing vast deserts, soaring mountain ranges, and territories unknown to the travellers of the time. Again, these descriptions far exceed Earth's geographical realities but serve a crucial purpose in mythological narratives. They highlight the arduous, almost impossible journey to reach these sacred places, underscoring their significance as sites of divine power and enlightenment, far removed from the mundane world.

These mythic distances are not just measurements but serve as metaphors for the spiritual journey one must undertake to reach these hallowed sites. They represent the quest for wisdom, the pursuit of immortality, and the transcendence of the human condition, themes that are universal across many cultures' mythologies. Through these tales, ancient texts communicate the idea that the path to enlightenment and the divine is fraught with challenges and requires a journey beyond the physical limits of our world.

John's mind whirled with these accounts, each more unbelievable than the last. Could such a place indeed exist? Or was it merely a figment of ancient imaginations?

He knew the answer lay within these pages, hidden amidst the cryptic language and arcane symbols. It was a quest requiring physical strength, an unwavering resolve, and a thirst for knowledge that could never be quenched.

With each word he read, John felt himself drawn deeper into this ancient mystery, his heart pounding with anticipation. Who knew what secrets awaited him on the road to Kunlun? All he knew was that he had to find out...

Let's take another fascinating trip from the mysterious mountains of China to the icy realms of Norse mythology, discovering how both ancient stories share a cool idea: the universe is split into three layers.

We can start with the Yggdrasil.

Yggdrasil is a central element in Norse mythology; it's an immense, sacred tree that connects the different worlds or realms within the Norse cosmological framework. Imagined as an ash tree, Yggdrasil is said to be so large that its branches extend up into the heavens and its roots spread out into various realms, both above and below.

1. Structure: The tree has three primary roots, each extending to a different realm and source of wisdom. Beneath one root lies the well of Urd, a source of fate and destiny where the gods meet daily. Another root reaches into Jotunheim, the land of the giants, near the well of Mimir, whose waters grant wisdom and insight. The third stretches down to Niflheim, close to the spring Hvergelmir, from which all waters flow.

2. Realms Connected by Yggdrasil: The tree connects nine worlds within Norse cosmology. These include Asgard (the realm of the gods), Midgard (the world of humanity), Jotunheim (the land of giants), Niflheim (a cold, icy realm), Muspelheim (a realm of fire), Vanaheim (the home of the Vanir gods), Alfheim (the land of the light elves), Svartalfheim (the land of the dark elves or dwarves), and Hel (the underworld where the dead dwell).

3. Inhabitants and Lore: Yggdrasil itself is said to be home to various creatures that inhabit its branches and roots, including an eagle perched atop the tree, a squirrel named Ratatoskr that runs up and down carrying messages between the eagle and the dragon Nidhogg, who gnaws at one of its roots. Other beings, like stags, chew on its branches, and bees gather honeydew from it.

4. Symbolism: In Norse culture, Yggdrasil symbolizes the structure of the universe, the interconnectedness of all things, and the cycle of life and death. It's considered the axis mundi or world's axis, connecting the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. The health and well-being of Yggdrasil were thought to reflect the state of the cosmos.

Yggdrasil is much more than just a tree; it's a symbol of life, growth, and the interconnectedness of all living things and worlds in the Norse worldview.

The comparison between Yggdrasil from Norse mythology and the

Kunlun Mountain from Chinese mythology reveals fascinating parallels in how different cultures perceive the structure of the universe and the interconnectedness of life and the cosmos.

Yggdrasil serves as the cosmic tree, with branches that stretch into the heavens and roots that extend into various realms, embodying the connection between the gods, humanity, and the underworld. It symbolizes life, growth, and interconnectedness, emphasizing the unity of all beings within the universe. The health of Yggdrasil reflects the state of the cosmos, illustrating the Norse belief in the interdependence of all worlds and entities.

In Chinese mythology, Kunlun Mountain is depicted as the sacred mountain at the centre of the world, serving as a pillar connecting Heaven, Earth, and the underworld. It is the dwelling of immortals and gods, a place where the divine and the mundane intersect. Kunlun Mountain is often associated with paradisaical gardens and mythical creatures, symbolizing spiritual enlightenment, immortality, and the axis mundi—the connection between different planes of existence.

Common Themes:

1.Axis Mundi: Both Yggdrasil and Kunlun Mountain function as the axis mundi, central pillars connecting and supporting the heavens, the earthly realm, and the underworld. They represent the centre of the cosmos in their respective mythologies.

2.Interconnectedness: Each serves as a metaphor for the interconnected nature of all things within the universe. Yggdrasil connects the nine worlds of Norse cosmology, while Kunlun Mountain bridges the gap between the human and divine realms, highlighting their unity and interdependence.

3.Symbolism of Life and Spirituality: Yggdrasil and Kunlun Mountain both symbolize life, growth, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. They embody the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, as well as the quest for knowledge and immortality.

4.Dwelling of Deities: Both are homes to gods and otherworldly beings. Creatures like the eagle, the squirrel Ratatoskr, and the dragon Nidhogg inhabit Yggdrasil. At the same time, Kunlun Mountain is

known as the abode of Daoist immortals and deities, a place of divine significance and mystical occurrences.

Despite originating from vastly different cultures, the myths of Yggdrasil and Kunlun Mountain share profound similarities, reflecting universal human themes of unity, the spiritual journey, and the cosmic order. These similarities suggest a common understanding across cultures that the world is interconnected and sacred, with certain places or entities serving as linchpins that hold the universe together.

Revisiting John's exploration, we delve into the intriguing phonetic similarity between 樊桐 (Ban Tong, pronounced in ancient Chinese) and the English word "Ban". This comparison is not just a matter of sound but carries a rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic significance. The English word "Ban" itself has a compelling etymology that enhances our understanding of this connection.\

The word "Ban" originates from Old English "bannan", meaning "to summon, command, proclaim" or "to prohibit". It traces further back to the Proto-Germanic "bannan" and is related to the Old High German "bannan"("to command or forbid under threat"), which in turn comes from the Germanic root "bannan". This etymology underscores the word's dual nature, both to proclaim officially and to impose a prohibition or restriction.

When we consider "Ban" in the context of 樊桐, the phonetic resemblance John pointed out becomes thematically significant. The ancient Chinese term, with "樊" suggesting a boundary or enclosure and "桐" a type of tree, could metaphorically represent a sacred or forbidden area, much as the English "Ban" encapsulates the notion of prohibition or a boundary set by authority.

This linguistic parallel between the English "Ban" and 樊桐 offers a fascinating glimpse into how different cultures articulate the concept of sacred boundaries or prohibitions. It highlights a shared human inclination to delineate the holy, the forbidden, and the permissible, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers. Through the lens of etymology, we uncover not just the roots of words but also the universal ideas and values they convey, further enriching John's discovery and

our understanding of the symbolic dimensions of Kunlun Mountain in ancient Chinese mythology.

In the deep of night, the library announced, ‘The closing time for today is 9 PM. Please make preparations to leave the library.’ John lost in thought, emerged from the building, and suddenly realised his stomach was growling. He searched the nearby Kowloon Tong District for Hong Kong Street food. As he looked for a place to eat, he reflected on how his brain worked so hard that he often had a big appetite and a hot temper. He remembered the familiar herbal tea shop and walked over.

“After all these years, you’re still selling ‘Bangdawan’ [崩大碗] here. It’s not easy. Nowadays, many places don’t have this anymore. Could you please give me a large bottle?” Nowadays, many people are unfamiliar with ‘Bangdawan’, a plant type called ‘jīng xuě cǎo’. It has a cold nature, a bitter, pungent taste, and is known for its heat-clearing and damp-dispelling properties. It is commonly used in traditional medicine to treat various conditions such as heat and dampness in the liver, swelling and pain in the joints, heatstroke, contagious hepatitis, and epidemic cerebrospinal meningitis.

John then went to a Cantonese dim sum restaurant for a late-night snack. He ordered a pot of jasmine tea and various dishes, including shrimp dumplings, radish cake, fish porridge, and egg rolls. The restaurant was filled with the sights and sounds of people enjoying their evening meals. This was a culture that was deeply ingrained in the hearts of the people of Hong Kong. As John tucked into his meal, he felt a sense of contentment wash over him. This was his city, his home, and these flavours reminded him of where he came from.

Epilogue: The Symphony of Mythology and Geography

In this symphony of mythology and geography, John’s exploration ultimately points to a shocking historical truth: “Kunlun” has never been static; it is a “spiritual river” that flows continuously in tandem with the shifting political center and territorial perception of Chinese civilization.

Kunlun was originally a celestial palace, a roost for the Khyung. Later, it descended to the mortal realm, gradually transforming into a

sacred mountain symbolizing power.



If we unfurl the long scroll of Chinese history, we find that Kunlun’s coordinates are not locked by latitude and longitude, but defined by the actual scope of control of the regime. Where the empire’s power reaches, there lies the “Center of the World”, and there lies Kunlun. This magnificent history of “Kunlun’s Westward Migration” can be performed in three acts:

Act I: The Rise of Northern Shaanxi — The Birth of Kunlun(c. 2300 BC)

The story begins not in distant snow-capped mountains, but in the hinterland of the Loess Plateau. In the Hetao region of Northern Shaanxi, a prehistoric super-city — the Shimao Ancient City — rose from the ground.

At this time, “Kunlun”(phonetically) approximated a description of the circular firmament. When the ancestors of the late Yangshao period looked up at Shimao’s Imperial City Terrace, round like the dome of heaven, they gave physical form to the word “Kunlun” for the first time. This was the place of origin of the Xia tribe, where the legend “Yu was born of Mount Kunlun, Qi was born of stone” took root.

The Kunlun of this era was a union of kingship and theocracy; its core meanings were “Heaven” and “Roundness”, serving as the initial “Holy City” of the Huaxia ethnic group.

Act II: The Thousand-Mile Pursuit — From Guanzhong to the Western Regions(Zhou, Qin, Han, Tang)

As the political centers of the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties shifted westward, Kunlun began a “Westward Movement” that lasted two thousand years.

The Political Tours of the Zhou Dynasty: King Mu of Zhou’s chariot wheels rolled westward, reaching the Pamir Plateau. His meeting with the Queen Mother of the West was not merely a mythological encounter, but a political declaration by the Zhou royal house to establish its status as “Co-Lord of All Under Heaven”. The concept of Kunlun was uprooted from the ruins of Northern Shaanxi and moved west to the Gansu-Qinghai region.

The National Definition of the Han Dynasty: Emperor Wu’s ambition pushed Kunlun’s coordinates significantly westward. To open up the Western Regions and find the source of the Yellow River, based on Zhang Qian’s report, he officially designated the Southern Mountains of Yutian(now the Karakoram Mountains) as “Mount Kunlun”. This was not just a geographical discovery, but a political manifesto—the majesty of the Great Han had reached the legendary divine realm.

The Territorial Expansion of the Tang Dynasty: By the High Tang, the concept of Kunlun became grand and inclusive. The Bayan Har Mountains, the Amne Machin, and even the Tianshan Mountains were included in the scope of “Kunlun”. At this time, Kunlun was no longer a solitary peak, but a synonym for the Tang Empire’s western frontier.

Act III: The Fixed Frame of Grand Unification — From Specific Peaks to Western Mountain Ranges(Yuan, Ming, Qing)

As history entered the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, Kunlun completed its metamorphosis from a “Divine Mountain” to a “Great Geographical Artery”, becoming a footnote to the structure of “Grand Unification”.

The Exploration of the Yuan Dynasty: Kublai Khan’s envoy, Dushi,

ventured deep into the Tibetan lands three times to seek the river source. The motive behind this was to argue that “national mountains and waters are connected”, spatially confirming the western boundary of the Chinese map.

The Final Confirmation of the Qing Dynasty: Emperor Qianlong cast his gaze further west to the Pamir Plateau, bestowing the name “Kundulun”(Manchu for “Heaven”) upon the jade-producing lands, and officially designating the vast western mountain ranges from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to the Qinling Mountains as “Great Kunlun”.

Thus, the concept of Kunlun was bound entirely to the regime’s territory. As the Qing scholar Hong Liangji stated: “Mount Kunlun is Tianshan.”

Finale: The Projection of Political Power

When we close the pages of history and look back at this pursuit spanning time and space, the conclusion is self-evident:

Kunlun is the sacred gauge used by successive dynasties to confirm the “Mandate of Heaven” and “Territory”.

When the regime was based in Northern Shaanxi, Kunlun was the Shimao Ancient City; When the regime dominated Chang’an, Kunlun was the Southern Mountains of the Onion Range(Pamirs); When the regime ruled all under heaven, Kunlun was the entire western mountain system.

It is not only the “Earthly Capital of the Emperor” in mythology but also a mirror image of realpolitik. Rulers of all ages, to prove the legitimacy of having “received the Mandate from Heaven”, constantly designated real high mountains as the mythical Kunlun. “Fixed by the capital, shifting with the borders” — this is the highest projection of Chinese civilization’s ideology of “Grand Unification” onto geographical mythology. Kunlun is not far away; it lies wherever the fingertip of power points.

第六章 上古昆仑：身在何处？

挂上地图，合上古籍，John 心中的疑云却愈发浓重。古人笔下的昆仑，难道所指竟是帕米尔高原？他收敛心神，决定深入探究。

次日，John 早早来到图书馆，潜心研读关于昆仑的各类历史记载。他的脑海如一幅宏大的历史画卷徐徐展开，勤勉地搜寻着那些隐匿的线索。



书页翻动间，John 的目光定格在一部泛黄的古籍上——《山海经》。他记得，书中亦有关于昆仑的记述。

他轻轻翻开书页，生怕惊扰了沉睡的历史记忆，书中对昆仑的描述与他此前所知大同小异——那是一处充满奇珍异兽的神秘圣地。

然而，最令他震惊的念头却是：《山海经》中昆仑的地理位

置，竟与帕米尔高原的位置高度吻合！他反复核对，以确保自己理解无误。难道古人并未将昆仑视为中国境内的山脉？我们不应将视野局限于今日之中国。在上古时代，华夏文明或许曾广布天下。或者更准确地说，那不仅仅是华夏文明，而是一个全人类共祖的统一世界文明。“天下”这一概念，本就可能指代整个世界。我们皆源自同一处，只是中国人将其记录在了史册之中。

John 心中虽充满疑虑，却也明白解开此谜需要更多实证。于是，他再次踏上旅程，去揭开深埋于历史尘埃中的秘密。

接下来的日子里，John 走访了全国各地的博物馆、历史遗迹与古代废墟。他的足迹遍布广袤的大地，每一步都伴随着探索与发现。

经过漫长的努力，John 终于找到了关键证据：一幅古地图。图上标注的昆仑位置，正是黑海与里海之间的高加索山脉！

在远古时代，并不存在如今日这般的地理与国家疆域之分。早期人类文明视整个星球为一个整体，而非局限于特定区域。

回到香港后，John 在香港浸会大学图书馆查阅资料。他翻阅了《水经注》的第一章与第二章。

第一章将昆仑描述为今日中国疆域之外的所在。若需考证，当从第二章看起，其中论述了从葱岭（帕米尔高原）至敦煌的地理。至少，其中的距离记载是可以验证的。

《水经注》第二章载：“《西河旧事》曰：葱岭在敦煌西八千里，其山高大，上生葱，故曰葱岭也……治蒲犁谷，北去疏勒五百五十里，俗与子合同……治皮山城，西北去莎车三百八十里。”

依据今日可确认的地理位置推算，秦汉时期的一里约为 418 米。因此，古籍中记载的帕米尔高原塔什库尔干县至敦煌的距离为八千里，即 3344 公里。而如今的高速公路里程约为 2300 公里。这表明古代地理距离的测算包含了更多的行程迂回，不如今日的高速公路便捷。

据此，John 选取了两个相对较近的地理位置作为计算示例：塔什库尔干县至疏勒（喀什）为 550 里，皮山县至叶尔羌（莎车）为 380 里，折算分别为 230 公里和 159 公里。这一数据与今日的高速公路距离几乎一致。

当 John 再次沉浸于《水经注》那引人入胜的书页时，眼中闪烁着好奇的光芒。他的目光聚焦于开篇那几行字，描述着传说中昆仑那飘忽不定的方位。

文字在他面前如一幅宏伟的织锦般展开，每一个字都饱含着历史的厚重与文化的迷踪。他几乎能尝到隐藏在字里行间的禁忌知识所散发的诱惑。

“昆仑，”他沉思着，迷失在古代传说的奇幻世界中，“你究竟在何方？又隐藏着怎样的秘密？”

文中将昆仑描绘为神话般的存在，一座在古人集体意识中巍峨耸立的高山。那是众神与仙人居住的领域，一个超越凡尘、高入云霄、隐于世人视线之外的境界。

想到这座传说中的山脉与已知世界之间的遥远距离，John 感到脉搏加速。那段旅程，注定漫长而艰辛，充满艰险与未知。

第一章载：“仑墟在西北，三成为昆仑丘。《昆仑说》曰：昆仑之山三级：下曰樊桐，一名板桐；二曰玄圃，一名閼风；上曰层城，一名天庭；是为太帝之居。去嵩高五万里，地之中也。高诱称河出昆山，伏流地中万三千里，禹导而通之；出积石山。案《山海经》：自昆仑至积石千七百四十里。自积石出陇西郡至洛，准《地志》可五千余里。又案《穆天子传》：天子自昆山入于宗周，乃里西土之数。《外国图》又云：从大晋国正西七万里，得昆仑之墟，诸仙居之。数说不同，道阻且长，经记绵褱，水陆路殊，径复不同，浅见末闻，非所详究，不能不聊述闻见，以志差违也。”

让我们从神话学、地理学与文化符号学的跨学科视角，来探索昆仑的叙事。这座位于今日中国西北部的山脉，激起了包括我们假设的研究者 John 在内的学术界的强烈好奇。通过严谨的分析与地

理地标的关联，John 推断出昆仑与高加索山脉之间的联系，从而将这一神话置于具体的地理语境之中。

昆仑并非单一的巨石，而是由三个各具神话与文化意义的层级构成。第一层名为樊桐或板桐。从语义上考察，“樊”（古音近于英文的‘ban’）暗示着禁忌或神圣的排他性，而“桐”则代表巨树。因此，这一层级象征着连接神性的神圣禁树，呼应了包括北欧世界树尤克特拉希尔（Yggdrasil）在内的多种文化中连接人神两界的“世界树”母题。

进而至上的第二层玄圃，John 的分析揭示了其与全球神话（如伊甸园）中 primordial gardens（原始花园）的概念对应。这一层被描述为漂浮的、空灵的、拥有宏伟门户的空间，令人联想到天上方舟甚至宇宙飞船的意象，将古代神话置于超凡脱俗的领域。涉及伏羲（Beksxia）与女娲在这一神秘花园中造人的创世神话，强调了创世叙事的普适性及其在人类文化与精神认知中的核心作用。



“关于悬圃（XUAN PU），还有更多的描述吗？” John 陷入沉思。

找到了，在这里：

《山海经·大荒西经》载：“西北海之外，大荒之隅，有山名曰昆仑之丘。上有瑶台、琼室、玉楼、金阙。是为西王母所居，实为天下之宗。其下有弱水之渊环之，上有紫渊，有天梯焉，所谓太虚之梯，上登于天。天梯旁有悬圃，是西王母所居室，其中多桃树，实大如斗，食之令人不老。又有不死药，服之长生。”

现在，这段文字向你诉说了什么？

试想一下：在我们故事的核心，矗立着一架直通天际的梯子——那是一架宏伟的树梯，根系深扎大地，树冠刺破苍穹。在下界与天域之间，悬浮着一座令人目眩神迷的花园。这绝非寻常之地；在这里，时间的织物似乎将自己编织成了某种魔法。

而在这座花园里有什么？桃子！是的，就是传说中的圣果。在西方的传说中，他们谈论苹果，但在这里，在这片被施了魔法的领域，正是桃子掌握着智慧与永生的秘密。

从这片郁郁葱葱、生机盎然的中层地带向上攀登，我们抵达了第三层——“层城”或“天庭”——我们或许可以称之为至上神祇的居所，是纯粹本质的天堂。但这绝非一个可以随意步入的地方；这是一个超越物质的领域，一个凡俗肉体无法触及的神秘空间。

鉴于笼罩在昆仑山身上的宏伟叙事，其地位愈发令人肃然起敬。地球上最高的山峰耸立入云约 8000 米。因此，人们不禁要问：昆仑山究竟有多高？无论是在字面意义上，还是在神话意义上？

John 带着疑惑，回头查阅《山海经》，他发现：“《山海经·海外北经》亦有记载：昆仑之虚，方八百里，高万仞，上有木禾，长五寻，大一围，面有九井，以玉为槛。面有九门，门有开明兽守之。百神之所在。在八隅之岩，赤水之际，非仁羿莫能上冈之岩。”

请将昆仑山想象一下，不仅是一座山，更是一座超越云层的自然与魔法的巨型塔楼。它的基座傲然矗立在海拔 7000 米之上。这