



The Fountainhead of Chinese Erotica: The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction (Ruyijun zhuan) With a Translation and Critical Edition

Charles R. Stone

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The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction (Ruyijun zhuan), a short work of fiction from the early sixteenth century, tells the story of the Tang dynasty's notorious Wu Zetian, the only woman to rule as emperor of China. It is famous not for the history it relates, but for its graphic sexual descriptions - the first ever in a Chinese novel - purportedly given from a woman's point of view. Despite its renown and unmistakable influence on later writing, the origins and significance of the Ruyijun zhuan have never been explored, in any language, and until now it has never been translated. Its date of composition is unknown, its author unidentified. One of its earliest appraisals, written by a contemporary scholar known for his conservatism, maintains that the Ruyijun zhuan is a moral work notwithstanding its sexual content. Combining a careful textual study with a complete translation and a detailed and far-ranging study of the text and its various contexts. The Fountainhead of Chinese Erotica places this important cultural document into historical context and offers possibilities on its meaning.

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