

## Mythical Image of “Queen Mother of the West” and Metaphysical Concept of Chinese Jade Worship in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*

Juan Wu<sup>1</sup>

(School of Foreign Language, Beijing Institute of Technology, China)

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the mythological image, the Queen Mother of the West in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, to explore the hiding history and mental reality behind the fantastic literary images, to unveil the origin of jade worship, which plays an significant role in the 8000-year-old history of Eastern Asian jade culture, to elucidate the genetic mechanism of the jade worship budded in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, so that we can have an overview of the tremendous influence it has on Chinese civilization, and illustrate its psychological role in molding the national jade worship and promoting the economic value of jade business.

**Key words:** *Mythical Image, Mythological Concept, Jade Worship, Classic of Mountains and Seas*

---

### I. WHITE JADE RING AND QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST

As for the foundation and succession myths of early Chinese dynasties, Allan holds that “Ancient Chinese literature contains few myths in the traditional sense of stories of the supernatural but much history” (Allan, 1981: ix) and “history, as it appears in the major texts from the classical period of early China (fifth-first centuries B.C.), has come to function like myth” (Allan, 1981: 10). While “the problem of myth for Western philosophers is a problem of interpreting the meaning of myths and the phenomenon of myth-making” as Allan remarks, “the problem of myth for the sinologist is one of finding any myths to interpret and of explaining why there are so few.” (Allen, 1991: 19) To decode why white jade enjoys a prominent position in the Chinese culture, the underlying conceptual structure and unique culture genes should be investigated. Before we get down to investigate the tradition of jade worship, it is worth to notice that Chinese mythologists redefine the “Little Tradition” as the cultural tradition marked by metal and language characters and the “Great Tradition” as the cultural tradition before the appearance of characters, metals and nations (Ye Shuxian, 2011: 8). On the basis of this redefinition of tradition, the Chinese mythologists intend to reconstruct the long-lost great tradition of cultural texts, and then combine the great tradition that has no written words and the small tradition that has written records.

In *Baopuzi: the Way of the Ruler*, Ge Hong talked about the ideal regime of the ancient times, which was frequently accompanied with various magical propitious portents. For example: “a spiritual bird from the red hall is presented to the court, and a jade ring from the west pole is tributed to the emperor.” (Ge Hong, 1991: 223) The spiritual bird refers to the white pheasant Yueshang presented to righteous King Wu of Zhou Dynasty when he sent his armed forces to crusade the tyrannical King Zhou of Shang; and the jade ring refers to the white jade ring the Queen Mother of the West presented to Emperor Shun. The legendary jade ring, is also called as the white ring, or sometimes the white jade. The pheasant is a type of wild chicken, whose males are in colorful feathers while females in taupe color. A white pheasant is rare to see, so the ancient people regarded it as spiritual bird, which is as precious as the valuable and rare white jade ring presented by the Queen Mother of the West. The term “Xi Ji (meaning: the west pole)” first appeared in *Chu Ci: Li Sao*: “the setting sun arrives at Xi Ji,” which was annotated by Wang Yi as “the setting stops at the utmost west pole of the earth.” Besides the four utmost poles (east, west, north and south), there are also four waste lands as recorded in *Erya: Shidi (Erya*, the oldest surviving Chinese dictionary written in the Han dynasty), i.e. “Huzhu (lonely bamboos), Beihu (north-facing door), Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West) and Rixia (under the sun)”. Gu Pu annotated as: “all these four lands are very faraway states.” Huzhu is in the north, Beihu in the south, Xiwangmu in the west

---

<sup>1</sup> **Brief biography:** Dr. Juan Wu mainly engages in the study of English Literature and Literary Theory, Cultural Studies, Comparative Mythology, is a lecturer at School of Foreign Language, Beijing Institute of Technology. She has authored Vladimir Nabokov: “A Rigid Moralist” and numerous articles on academic journals. Recently she focuses on the Retelling of Myth in the Postmodern Sign Economy and Archetypal Criticism of Chinese Jade Mythology.

and Rixia in the east. They are all desolate states which are next to the utmost pole.”(Xing Bing, 1980:2616)

The myth of the Queen Mother of the West's presenting the white jade ring especially highlights the connection between white jade worship and ancient mythological characters. The story, though being very simple, implies three cultural messages: Firstly, in the opinion of the people in the Central Plains, the origin place of white jades is the remote Western Regions, which are represented by the place where the Queen Mother of the West lives. Secondly, the white jade is precious and rare, because it has something to do with the only secret of immortality which is owned by the Queen Mother of the West, which is the supreme dream of ordinary men. Thirdly, the Ring, being round in shape, implies the meaning of recycling back and forth which directs to limitless vastness. The implication of the jade ring unique to Chinese culture is friendly communication, in which courtesy demands reciprocity.

In Xunzi: Dalue, Xunzi said: “Hire a person with Gui (an elongated pointed tablet of jade held in the hands by ancient rulers on ceremonial occasions), ask a scholar's help with Bi, send for a person with Yuan (a jade ring with a big hole and small brim), break with a person with Jue (penannular jade ring), refuse to break with a person with Huan (a kind of jade ring).”Five jade sacrificial vessels have different meanings and functions. Among them, the fourth one (Jue) and the fifth one (Huan) are opposite and supplementary. In Guangyun, the authors said: “when an official is exiled to the frontier, if what he gets from the Emperor is Huan, it means that he can come back to the court; if what he gets is Jue, it means he won't be back any more.” Na Zhiliang explained as: both jade Huan and jade Jue can be used as official tallies. Obviously, the exiled officials wanted very much the government's pardon, allowing them to go back home. Instead of any documents, either of two articles – Huan or Jue will be sent as an announcement by the government. Huan has the same pronunciation as another Huan (return), symbolizing the permit of returning home. Jue has the same pronunciation as another Jue (refuse, or reject), symbolizing that there is no pardon. (Na Zhiliang, 1990: 178) However, different from the general meaning of jade ring in Chinese culture, the white jade ring the Queen Mother of the West presented to the ruler of the Central Plains mainly conveyed the meaning of friendly communication.

## II. MYTH OF KUNLUN MOUNTAIN AND QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST

The four waste lands are four states near the four utmost poles, and Queen Mother of the West is name of a state in the west. Earlier than this, in the Western Han Dynasty, *Huainanzi: Forms of Earth* locates the State of Queen Mother of the West at: “Queen Mother of the West is along the Liu Sha (quicksand) river.” *Shang Shu: Tribute of Yu* mentioned that, Liu Sha is located at the He Li Mountains, in the middle part of the Hexi Corridor: “Yu led the Ruo River to He Li, where it flew into the Liu Sha River.” The upper part of Ruo River is the Shan Dan River in Gansu, while its lower part is named as the Heihe River which is the combination of Shan Dan River and Gan Zhou River, and renamed as Erginar river when it flows into the Inner Mongolia. *Classic of Mountains and Seas: Classic of the Great Wilderness: West* thought that Ruo River is at the foot of Kunlun Mountain, “at the foot of Kunlun Mountain lies the deep pool of Ruo River.”In *Records of the Grand Historian: Treatise on the Dayuan*, Sima Qian said: “according to the story told by the old Anxi people, there are Ruo River and Queen Mother of the West in Tiaozhi State.” If what the story told is true, i.e. the Ruo River is a river in Tiaozhi State, it should be in current Central or Western Asia. In *Book of the Later Han: Biographies of the Western Regions-Daqin*, Fan Ye said: “in Daqin, there are Ruo River and Liu Sha River, which are close to where Queen Mother of the West lives.”All these possible locations are at the far west regions, some even in the Central and Western Asia. In *Book of Han: Treatise on Geography, Part 2*, Ban Gu also put Ruo River and Kunlun Mountain together, which is much closer to the Central Plains, i.e. in Qinghai Province: “in Jincheng County ...close to where the Qiang people lives.”Original note: “in the west, there is Xudi Lake, Ruo River and Kunlun Temple.” Erya: Explaining Earth also talked about the beauty of different places: the beauty of the east is the medicine, the witch, and Xun Yu Qi (a kind of jade) of Lv Mountain; the beauty of the north west is the Qiu Lin Lang Gan (beautiful jade with the shape of balls) of the Kunlun Mountain. Guo Pu annotated “Xun Yu Qi” as “a kind of jade”, which actually is nowadays Xiuyan Jade of Liaoning; he annotated “Qiu Lin” as “beautiful jade” and “Lang Gan” as “with similar shape to balls”. However, his illustration, being amphibolous, can only be used for reference. In fact, “Qiu Lin” and “Lang Gan” can be interpreted as a special term of Kunlun Mountain's Hetian Jade.

The above literary narration reveals to us that, in the opinion of people at that time, the most beautiful jade comes from the remote regime of utmost west poles, whose exact location must be somewhere in the great plateau west to the Central Plains, being very remote and out of ordinary men's reach. This place is often closely related to the other two mythological images of Kunlun Mountain, which is taken as the mountain of myths and Queen Mother of the West, who was deems as the ancestor of immortals. Thus, the beautiful jade, secular article produced in Kunlun Mountain of Tian State, is deified considerably. Queen Mother of the West, not only owns the supreme white jade, but also possesses the elixir of life in the world. In this way, the mysterious bondage and intimate connection of the white jade and the elixir of life is implied brilliantly. The white Jade Ring made from

the west pole, represents a peaceful and prosperous world with fair and clear politics with the blessing from gods, and symbolizes human beings' dream for immortality.

The idea of Yin-Yang and Five Elements came into being in the Warring States Period. The five spatial places in the world are matched with the Five Elements and five colors, to realize the re-coding the mythological symbols of cosmology: the east is match with Wood and Cyan, the south with Fire and Red, the west with Metal and White, and the North with Water and Black. (Pang Pu, 1995: 114-139) Accordingly, the national rituals dominated by the philosophy of Five Elements were also recoded, year after year operating regularly under the logics of four seasons. For example, in the months of summer, “the Emperor should sleep in the Zong Zhang Zuo Ge (southerly west room), take Rong Lu (the chariot), ride the white Tuo, wear white clothes, adorn himself with white jades, eat sesame and dogs, and use weapons that is sharp and long.”(Ruan Yuan, 1980: 1373) Annotation said: “Zong Zhang Zuo Ge refers to the bedroom located at the southerly west. Rong Lu refers to the chariot similar to that of the Zhou Dynasty and decorated with white. Luo is the white horse that has black mane, and sesame, with patterns on it, belongs to metal. Dogs are also animals being to metal. Weapons that are sharp and long resembles the hidden harmful metal weapons. The west and the autumn are thus connected to the White and the Metal, forming a unit of symbolism and a inseparable coding system of classification. Accordingly, the authority also rearrange the jade rituals into “Liu Qi” (six vessels) to match with the six spatial directions, i.e. the sky, the earth, the west, the east, the north and the south. Like what said in *Rites of Zhou: Officials of Spring: Dazongbo* (the head of the Officials of Spring):

Make Six Vessels with jades, to worship the heaven, the earth, the west, the east, the north and the south; worship the heaven with blue Bi (a piece of jade with a hole in the center), worship the earth with yellow Zong (a long hollow piece of jade with rectangular sides), worship the east with green Gui (an elongated pointed tablet of jade held in the hands by ancient rulers on ceremonial occasions), worship the south with red Zhang (an jade article with the shape of half Gui), worship the west with white Hu (tiger-shape jade) and worship the north with black Huang (semi-annular jade pendant).( Jia Gongyan, 1980: 762)

Zheng Xuan annotated as: “when worshipping the gods, you should choose vessels with similar shapes: Bi is round as the sky; Cong is square, like the earth; Gui is long and sharp, like the new born things in spring; Zhang is half the shape of Gui, like the dying things in summer; Hu is as majestic as the autumn; Huang is half the shape of Bi, like the dormant winter, with nothing on the earth and they only appear at noon.”Jia Gongyan annotated as: “they say ‘Hu is as majestic as the autumn’ because Hu has the shape of a tiger, belonging to the West, so it is as majestic as the autumn.””In *Compendium of Materia Medica: Metals and Stones (Part Two): Jades*, Li Shizhen said: “according to old rites, black Gui, blue Bi, yellow Cong, red Zhang, white Hu and black Huang are used respectively to represent the sky, the earth, and four seasons.”What needs to be mentioned is, *Rites of Zhou* used to be thought as a book describing the rites of the Western Zhou Dynasty. However, modern scholars confirmed that the book was written during the transitional period of the Warring States and the Western Han Dynasty, so what the Six Vessels system reflects are not the rites of the Western Zhou Dynasty, but the Five Elements philosophy and the jade rites of the Han Dynasty.

As for the origin of Queen Mother of the West and the Kunlun myth, some modern scholars (represented by Sun Xuelin, Ding Shan, Du Erwei, Xue Gaoruan and Ling Chunsheng) influenced by foreign scholars like Hirth think that Xiwangmu is the goddess of the moon in the ancient civilization of the Tigris and Euphrates Valley in the Western Asia. When introduced to the Central Plains, it was translated into three Chinese characters, i.e. Xi (west) Wang (monarch) Mu (mother). People at that time were not clear about how Chinese jade culture passed on from the prehistoric period to the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Things are different now: numerous unearthed jade articles show us that, the jade rituals since Western Zhou Dynasty can't be without white jades and greenish white jades. But these jades are rare in the Central Plains, so the transportation of jades from the west to the east turned more and more fierce since the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, which supplied Hetian jades of Xinjiang (with white jade as the most precious) to the rulers of China. Based on this, we can see that the myth of Queen Mother of the West's presenting the white jade ting to the Emperor has its root in the reality, instead of being totally imaginative in cultures with no white jade worship.

### III. KING OF MU AND QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST

There are numerous mineral resources of different places recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which provide us with sufficient documentary evidence to interpret the evolution history of jade mythical ideology. In the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, there are more than 140 mountains that produced jades, 16 of which produced white jades are mentioned. And among these 16 white-jade-producing mountains, the 7<sup>th</sup> one, i.e. the Mi Shan Mountain was the one described in most details. Mi Shan was in the same volume as Kunlun: the volume of *Classic of the Mountains: West*.

The physical transformation bought by the jade is achieving immortality, to guarantee the eternity of the god's life, which satisfy and initiate the ruler's imagination and dream. The planting and reproduction of ideal jade is illustrated concretely by the King of Mu's visiting the Queen Mother of the West. On a lucky day of Jiazi

Year (the first year of Chinese sexagenary cycle, also known as Stems-and-Branches, which is a cycle of 60 terms used for recording days or years), the King of Mu visited the Queen Mother of the West as a guest. With a white Gui (an elongated pointed tablet of jade held in the hands by ancient rulers on ceremonial occasions) and a black Bi (a piece of jade with a hole in the center) in his hands, he was permitted to visit the Queen Mother of the West. Once he saw her, another a hundred Chun of flowered silk bands and 3 hundred Chun of □silk bands were presented as the greeting gifts, which were kindly accepted by the Queen Mother of the West. (Guo Pu, 1992: 223) Gu Pu annotated as: “Chun is the name of cloth.” King Mu of the Western Zhou, who came from the Central Plains, called on the Queen Mother of the West, brought a large amount of silk – a hundred Chun of flowered silk bands and another 3 hundred Chun of a silk products whose exact name is lost. In ancient times, Chun means a segment of cloth and silk. For example, Chan-kuo ts'e: Strategies of Qin recorded that: “one thousand Chun of fine silk, one hundred pairs of white Bi (a piece of jade with a hole in the center), and ten thousand Yi (a unit of weigh used in ancient China, and 1 Yi equals to 1 or 1.2 kg ) of gold.” Bao Biao annotated as: “Chun refers to four edges.” Here, “hundred”, “thousand” and “ten thousand” express the volubility and preciousness of these things and the ranking sequence shall be the white jade, the fine silk and the gold. From the number of each kind of gifts King Mu brought to Queen Mother of the West, we can crudely infer the value or status of each kind. There are hundreds of silk products, but only one white jade Bi and one black Jade Gui. The special combination and sharp contrast of white Gui and black Bi stimulates various mysterious imaginations, such as the round and the square, the black and the white, the sky and the earth, the Yin and the Yang, etc.

The sharp contrast of white Gui and black Bi associates with Mi Mountain recorded in *Classic of Mountains*: West which describes the legendary story that the white jade can produce jade cream, and then the jade cream can produce black jade. In the variation and transformation of white and black colors, the transformation of Yin and Yang and the change of the universe are implied. In current jade circle, a kind of Hetian jades is called “Qing Hua jades (green-flowered jades)”, which are in dark and light colors. Penetrating through the magic color in this myth narration, we can see the hidden message, the black or the white, the focus of these mythical prototype is the white jade exclusively produced in the west regions. A river at the foot of Kunlun Mountain which produces white jades is exactly named as “Bai Yu River (White Jade River)”, and the river which produces green jades is named as “Lv Yu River (Green Jade River)”.

According to the records in History of Five Dynasties: Yutian State: In the third year of Tianfu Reign of Jin Dynasty, the emperor sent Zhang Kuangye and Gao Juhui as assistants to the local officials, to confer the title of “Dabao King of Yutian” on Li Shengtian. Juhui recorded that, 1300 km south to Yutian is a mountain named as Jade State, which is the very mountain Zhang Qian of Han saw when he had traveled to the origin of the Yellow River at Yutian and was described by Zhang as being rich with jades. The source of the Yellow River is three rivers at Yutian: the eastern one is White Jade River, the western one is Green Jade River, the westernmost one is Black Jade River. All the three rivers produce jades, but of different colors. Every autumn, when the rivers dry up, the King will get jades out of the waters. Only after that can the common people go get jades out of the waters. After Kuangye and other assistant came back to Jin, Shengtian sent the governor Liu Zaisheng to bring a thousand Jin (one Jin equals half a kilogram) of jades, jade seals and Xiang Mo Zhu (Anti-Evil Stick) to present them to the emperor.

Since the Kunlun Mountain which indeed produces both the white and black jades, the physical prototype of white Gui and black Bi might be discovered. From the King's monopolization of the jades, we can understand why facilities like Yu Shi Zhang (Jade Stone Block) and Yu Men Guan (Jade Gate Pass) were built on the way to transfer such precious, rare materials from the remote West Regions to the Central Plains. They were just built to effectively ensure the smoothness of the jade road, so by that the form of taxation the emperor can gain not only maximize financial benefits, but also strategic materials.

#### **IV. THEORETICAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURAL DETERMINISM OF JADE MYTHOLOGY**

As Karl holds that cultural determinism as: “It is a faith, believing that every single incident results from one or several reason and it won't happen in a different way unless the reason or something of the reason changes. Determinism is not something about history, but about all human beings' behaviors” (Carr, 1981: 100), the initial beliefs of human being should be traced back to all cultures and civilizations in the prehistoric age. The Mythological Concepts might become the common and effective research approach for humanities and social sciences only after making clear how the core concepts of a culture come into being from the perspective of the pre-historical tradition.

In order to grasp the literary narrative of queen mother of the west, it's necessary to analyze the theoretical structure and inherent cultural logic underlying in the jade mythology. Jade, as a natural mineral, enjoy certain

characteristics that are superior to other minerals. Firstly, it's formed in extremely harsh conditions, which makes it rare and special. Secondly, it has special physical properties, such as, the hardness, color and luster, and the touch. Numerous phrases and idioms in Book of Odes, including “a gentleman is as gentle as jade”, “a gentleman always wear jade”, a gentleman shall cultivate his morals the way jade is sculpted — by “cutting, polishing, carving and rubbing”, and the concept of “jade virtues”: all these are related to jade's physical properties. However, Ye Shuxian explains them as the reflection of the great tradition of “jade-as-god”. And the reason why jade is respected in the little tradition of Chinese civilization lies in the jade myths of 5000 years ago. “Jade myths” are particular to Chinese mythology, and the mythological mode of thoughts provide a multi-dimensional panoramic view of the origin of Chinese civilization.

The psychoanalysis of jade is interpreted on the mystical witchcraft and magic in the comparative religious studies. Chinese jade, together with the western “hierophany” — gold and Lapis Lazuli, enjoys a holy and sublime status in the early civilization. The earliest “jade as god” appears in the great tradition of mythological world. Ye analyzes six jade myths — Yellow Emperor plants jade, etc. — that starts from “the legendary Chinese ancestor Yellow Emperor and ends with the three wise rulers of Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties.” (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 23). The analysis, stretching 2000 years, is the transition period from great tradition to little tradition. Ye “interpreted the little tradition of characters by the knowledge of great tradition” (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 13), and verified the great tradition by the little tradition.

All of the six myths listed by Ye Shuxian show jade's sanctity and function of connecting man and god. To be specific: Yellow Emperor's planting jade, recorded in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, shows that jade can increase the power of gods or ghosts and protect the gentlemen from the evil (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 14); the story that a jade article made Yu the Great the ruler of the country, as recorded in Shang Shu and Records of the Grand Historian, shows jade's honorable status in secular world (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 16-17); Qi of Xia going up to heaven with the ring of jade in his right hand and semi-circular jade wearing around his waist shows that semi-circular jades and jade wearing are all holy media that connect man and god (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 19); according to The Yizhoushu, Zhou, the last emperor of Shang dynasty, burned himself together with jade, which implies that jade can be smelted (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 20); Jiang Ziya got semi-circular jade and the Duke of Zhou talked to the ancestors with jade sacrificial vessel, which shows that jade conveys mythical information (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 21) ; King Mu of Zhou visited the Yellow Emperor's Palace and got jade bough and jade leaf, which hints that the Yellow Emperor's Palace may be the palace where the worship of god with jades is performed (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 22). In the previous interpretation of mythological stories, Ye re-interpreted both the great and little tradition under the guide of the “jade-as-god” concept and presented the multi-dimensions of jade myths.

With the aid of comparative studies of religion, Ye Shuxian confirms the mythological association between “jade” and “god”, points out that the great tradition of regarding jade as god has potentially dominated the little tradition of “jade is virtue”, and, more importantly, he suggests the method of searching for the driving force of regarding “jade as god”, that is the “supernatural power” in myths (Ye Shuxian, 2012: 25). The eternity concept in jade-as-god theory is the Chinese version of the pursuit for eternal life in mythical mode of thoughts. The association of water as the source and the color similarity with the sky provides mythical logics for jade's holiness. Holy narratives, Nüwa (a Chinese goddess) repairing the heaven with “five-colored stones” jade being the essence from “the combination of heaven and earth”, intensifies jade's holiness by integration of both the water as the source and the color similarity. As the driving force of Chinese civilization, jade-as-god concept integrates the material and spiritual elements of Civilization origin. The pursuit of jade mineral and the privilege of “worshipping god with jade” bred the bud of early Chinese civilization. Jade, which integrates the material resources and spiritual ideology, becomes a holy gold apple that attracts various power groups, invoking the birth of Chinese civilization.

## **V. WORSHIP OF WHITE JADE AND ORIGIN OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION**

In Chu Ci: Nine Songs: The Lady of the Xiang, Qu Yuan said: “take white jades to press the seats, and spread the Folium Pyrrosiae to make the room full of fragrance.” We can know that, since the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, the white jades have stood out of jades of various color and became the subject praised by poets. The charm of white jade resulted from a conceptual revolution of jade beliefs which was the first time in history, i.e. the worship of jades of any color to the worship of jade of pure white. The background of mythological concept of jade worship religion was, Hetian jades of Kunlun Mountain in Xinjiang was transported into the Central Plains on a large scale, which started the new tradition of transporting jades from the west to the east which lasted for 3 to 4 thousand years. Since perfect white jades can only be found in Hetian jades of Xinjiang, the white jade worship didn't appear in thousands of years' prehistoric jade culture. It was obvious, at that time there was yet no cultural revolution of “transporting jades from the west to the east”, so no white jade materials was available in producing jade sacrificial vessels or in the system of jade rituals. Once the rulers of the central plains found and started to use the white jade, the subject of worship in their ideology witnessed significant

changes. Viewed from this, in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, one of the 16 listed mountains that produced white jades was named as “White Jade Mountain”. This is no coincidence. We can speculate this book is the secret treasure map of those devout believers after Chinese jade religion came into being.

According to modern mining, white-jade-producing mountains in China are very rare, impossible to amount to 16 in number. However, more than 2000 years ago, *Classic of Mountains and Seas* stated this with great certainty and specific specialties. When the author introduced each of the 140 mountains, he first recorded whether it produces jades, then talked about whether it has white jades. It could not be a simple coincidence, since such mode of sequence appeared repetitively more than 16 times. From this, we could see that the jade and the white jade are differentiated holy articles. In *Tale of King Mu, Son of Heaven* which came into being in the Warring States period, jades of different colors were also emphasized. For example, according to narration in Volume 2: King Mu visited the Yellow Emperor's Palace at Kunlun Mountain, and worshiped Kunlun with sacrifices; later, he went further north and stayed at a place named as Zhu Ze (jade pond), by whose bank King Mu fished and said: “Zhu Ze’s water spreads an area of 30 Li” (Guo Pu, 1992:217). The following narration immediately after this one is: “Then □ white jade/s was/were presented.”

Here, the subject who presented the white jade was not mentioned. With only the predicate and the object, we are not clear that who presented this white jade and how many jades were presented. According to the annotations by Guo Pu and Hong Yixuan of the Qing Dynasty, *Shi Wu Ji Yuan* thought that “people living in Zhu Ze region presented white jade(s) material to King Mu”. (Guo Pu, 1992: 217) The subject is added, thus we know that it was the local people of Zhu Ze who presented white jade material to King Mu. After that, more things with larger scale were presented to him, “So, 300 horses and 3000 cattle and sheep were presented to King Mu.” (Guo Pu, 1992:212). The inscriptions on bronze objects that recorded how the Emperor of the Western Zhou awarded his officials, unfold the fact that the jade and the horse were the two most important treasures of that time and in the charge of the supreme ruler, which played an essential role in the construction of the power network and stratified hierarchy of the Western Zhou Dynasty. Among all jades transported from the west to the east, the white jades, because of its rareness, are more precious than others.

In *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, 16 of the more than 140 jade-producing mountains produce white jades, with the other more than 120 mountains only produce jades of other colors, and white jades only account for 11% of the total jades. The 16 white-jade-producing mountains are: Yuanyi Mountain, Jiwei Mountain, Kuishan Mountain, Dashi Mountain, Lutai Mountain, Xiaoci Mountain, Mishan Mountain, Leyou Mountain, Youshou Mountain, Jinggu Mountain, Zhongqu Mountain, Niaoshutongxue Mountain, Baisha Mountain, Yizhu Mountain, Geshan Mountain and Xiongshan Mountain. Besides, there is another mountain whose name is “White Jade Mountain”. As for the geographic positions of these mountains recorded in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*: 3 of them are included in *Classic of the Mountains: South*, 9 in *Classic of the Mountains: West*, 1 in *Classic of the Mountains: North*, 0 in *Classic of the Mountains: East* and 3 in *Classic of the Mountains: Central*. So, geographically, 56% of white-jade-producing mountains gather in the region recorded by *Classic of the Mountains: West*, more than the 44% which totals those in the *Classic of the Mountains: South*, *Classic of the Mountains: North*, *Classic of the Mountains: East* and *Classic of the Mountains: Central*. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* was regarded as the treasure house of ancient ideas, from which we can see that, for generations of ancient Chinese, the geographical and mining knowledge made them firmly believe that the mountains in China’s west plateau are the main place producing white jades. With the popularity of *Thousand Character Classic* which tell that “jade comes from Kunlun”, people gradually think that the Kunlun Mountain is the only place that produces white jades and other places are forgotten.

Till the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Hetian jades of Xinjiang became deteriorated. So people started to look for and mine substitutes for Hetian jades. Then, the other two white-jade-producing places are discovered: Baikal in Russia and Golmud in Qinghai, China. In the jade industry, white jades from Baikal are called “Russian materials”, and those from Golmud “Qinghai materials” (or Kunlun jades). Compared with Hetian white jades of Xinjiang, the Russian materials are whiter in color, yet with little worse in oily texture; while, the Qinghai material are grayish white in color, have hidden water lines, better translucency and much worse in oily texture.

In 2014, in a cultural delegation of the Jade Road to Gansu Province, a 23-kilometer-long mountain located in Guazhou, Gansu Province is discovered, which produces shining white jades at the northern part of Datou Mountain. The sampling report tells that the Mohs' hardness of jades here is 6, with all major indexes equal or close to the Hetian jades of Xinjiang. The only difference is that there is visible difference in their white colors. The Hetian white jades are usually slightly greenish; however, the white jades of the Datou Mountain are slightly yellowish. This illustrates that in the western plateau of China, there are multiple places that produce white jades. It remains a mystery how much unknown jade materials are mined from here. The 16 white-jade-producing mountains recorded in *the Classic of Mountains and Seas* can't be fabricated in the study, but based on sordid investigation.

Besides the white jades, in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, another 11 mountains are recorded as producing blue and green jades, and another 8 mountain as producing water jades, i.e. crystals; and in the chapter of

*Classic of Mountains: Central*, 5 mountains are recorded as producing “White Min (beautiful stones)”. In Xunzi: Lawful Behaviors, the author said: “so, although Min is colorful, it’s no match for the white and shining jade.” Here, the grades of Min and white jade are differentiated. In Book of Han: Sima Xiangru (Part 1), the author said: “the stones there include Chi Yu (red jades), Mei Gui (a kind of beautiful rosy jades), Lin (a kind of beautiful jades) and Kun Wu (name of a kind of stones which are inferior to jades)”. In Yan Shigu's annotations, he cited Zhang Ji as: “Lin is a kind of jade. And Min is stone that is inferior to jades.” Though the ancient people prefer white jades to Min, they also paid attention to white Min as substitution of white jades under the condition that white jade materials were rare. If not so, Min won’t be listed by *Classic of the Mountains and Seas* as one of the special resources. This also proves the white jade worship in the mind of the authors of *Classic of Mountains and Seas*.

## VI. MYTHOLOGICAL IDEOLOGY AND CULTURAL FUNCTION OF JADE MYTHOLOGY

The Queen Mother of the West is honored as the ancestor of gods and goddesses. In terms of the geological locations, she lived in the holy Kunlun Mountain, which represents the source of Chinese mother river and the source of beautiful jades, thus to some extent, the secrets of Kunlun myth is exactly that of Chinese civilization. In the *Classic of Mountains and Sea*, Jade Mountain is where the Queen Mother of the West lives. 480 Li (one Li equals half a kilometer) west to the Jade Mountain is a hill named as Xuanyuan. 480 Li (one Li equals half a kilometer) west to the Jade Mountain is a hill named as Xuanyuan.

Nowadays, according to archeological findings, the earliest jade could be traced back in Xinglongwa Culture which dated back to 8000 years ago and 3000 years earlier than the era of the Yellow Emperor. Based on the white jade worship of the dynasties of the Central Plains, the origin of the myth of the Queen Mother of the West could be deduced to the Shang and Zhou dynasties which are 3000 years ago. The revolution of the jade religion brought by the white jades make the later sublime rulers focus not only on the white jades, but also the places producing white jades. King Mu, the 5<sup>th</sup> emperor of the Western Zhou Dynasty, spared every efforts to visit the Queen Mother of the West at Kunlun can be taken as the symbolic incident to demonstrate to the popularity of white jade worship. The connection of jade worship and ideal of immortality could be generated from the permanent shining objects, such as the stars, sun, moon, etc. In one of the poems of Li Bai, a famous poet in the Tang Dynasty, the moon is described metaphorically as “white jade plate”, which vividly demonstrates the immortality of white jade in the Chinese mythological thoughts. From Queen Mother of the West’s presenting white jade ring, we could see the pursuit of spiritual values in jade worship and the idea of associating white jade with sublimity and immortality. The Chinese phrase “Bai Bi Wu Xia (flawless white jade, used to describe impeccable moral integrity of a man), could be taken as the secular extension of the holy ideal of white jade and sparked by the constant interaction myths of man and jade in the special cultural context of Chinese civilization. On the premise of this, the function of white jade at the Hongmen dinner (a dinner at Hongmen Where treachery – murder of the invited guest -- was planned) as described in *Records of the Grand Historian* and the First Emperor of Qin chose a white jade – the jade of the He family to make the Imperial Jade Seal that passed from one dynasty to the next could be fully understood.

Chinese culture values the white jade as articles of supreme sublimity and preciousness. In A Dream of Red Mansions, the correspondence between the imperial seal and the supreme ruler was replaced by the relationship between Jia Baoyu, the hero, and his Tongling Jade. Description of the Jade's functions was more clear than in the Qin and Han dynasties, i.e. three mysterious functions were inscribed on the back of Tongling Jade: "first, drive away the evil spirits; second, heal chronic diseases; third, know the weal and woe." (Cao Xueqin, 1987: 154) Cao was truly the inheritor of the essence of Chinese jade culture. In the “third, know the weal and woe”, i.e. the religious function of foreseeing the future, Jia Baoyu's Tongling Jade had surpassed the Emperor of Qin's imperial jade seal, which fully showed the continuity of jade religion's mythological beliefs from the Neolithic Age to the last dynasty of the feudal society. People in the age of the Emperor of Qin firmly believed that the jade seal can adequately represent the heaven’s will to justify the emperor’s ruling, which was the national belief, so the nation’s highest orders should be issued and published in the particular way of “Xi Shu” (meaning: documents sealed by imperial jade ); people in the age of Cao Xueqin still believed that jade articles can “tong ling” (meaning: psychic), i.e. relate to gods, which was a typical mythological function, while it was folk belief that Tongling Jade can protect its wearer’s safety. Both the national belief represented by the king and the folk belief represented by the common are the heritage of the profound tradition of jade culture embodied in the Chinese characters.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

So far, there is no consensus on how *Classic of Mountains and Seas* was come into being. Some say it was made in the Xia Dynasty, some in the Shang Dynasty, in the Western Zhou Dynasty, Eastern Zhou dynasty, the Han Dynasty or others. According to the latest unearthed antiques, we can roughly confirm that the white jade

worship could be traced back to the Shang and Zhou Dynasty, and the large-scale application of white jade is a phenomenon after the middle period of Western Zhou Dynasty. Among the holy jades that symbolize the holy power as reflected in literary documents like *Shang Shu: Testamentary Charge*, we can see list of local jade materials including Yi Jade and Yue Jade, which are also great in number. So far, the white jade worship was still at the early stage, with its unique creeds and concepts not formed yet. If not, there wouldn't be so many local jades of multi colors that were also regarded as precious treasure of the royal family of Zhou Dynasty. The saying of “Kun Mountain Jade” began to become the national common sense since the Warring States Period. So the old names—“Qiu Lin”, “Lin Lang” and others are then replaced. That was why their meanings were not even known by the learned scholar Guo Pu of the Jin Dynasty. Currently, *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is the only ancient book that recorded the white jade resource and its production areas in many details and in a comprehensive manner. For this matter, its valuable significance can only be known by white jade worshippers. In the early ideology of Chinese civilization, white jade is important with its double functions of being both material resource and spiritual worshipping object. With the narration of supernatural and mythological elements, the reliable of relevant information in *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is proved sordidly by the inheritance vein of jade culture discovered by the findings of archeology. To some degree, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* can be seen as the first book of the early white jade worshippers in Chinese civilization. The date of book might belong to the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, since it should have the material premise of frequent jade transportation from the west to east, it can't appear in the Xia Dynasty and Shang Dynasty when the jade transportation from the west to east had just begun.

In *Myths and Ideology*, Flood, a distinguished English contemporary political theorist, holds that, “Mythological creation is no rare matter or mistake. It's nothing less than a way to make the political events easy to comprehend by way of ideological beliefs. After a long time, some narration seemed quite important for a social group; while, some others soon disappeared. But the creation and re-creation of mythological narrations is permanent in the political life.” (Schilbrack, 2002:188) The myths of the Queen Mother of the West living in Kunlun Jade Mountain, as recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, is recreation of mythological imaginations nourished by the historical reality in the early state of the Central Plains. The prototype and motif of such imaginations came from the worship of jade, especially the white nephrite, by the state rulers in the Central Plains. All such mythological motifs, no matter the white jade cream that produced black jades, the Yellow Emperor's planting the jade flowers, the Kunlun Jade Mountains (the Mountain of Jades) where the Queen Mother of the West lives or the Jade Lake, typically illustrate Chinese indigenous worship for the white jades and rebut the once popular proposal set forth by scholars like Su Xuelin and Ling Chunsheng that Queen Mother of the West originated from the moon god of ancient western Asian civilization and translated to China through cultural transmission. Max Weber once pointed out that, “The supreme gold of social sciences is not to pursue the construction of new ideas or new concepts, but to make efforts in understanding the cultural meaning of concrete historical links”. (Weber, 1999: 60) The genetic study of jade worship, which is particular to Chinese civilization, deepens the understanding of the connotative significance of jade mythological narrative, the philosophical ideals of jade ideology and historical information of the origin of Chinese Civilization.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Allan, Sarah. *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* [M]. San Francisco, CA: Chinese Materials Center, 1981.
- [2] Allan, Sarah. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* [M]. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- [3] Cao, Xueqin. *A Dream of Red Mansions*[M]. Vol. 8 of the annotated version. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1987.
- [4] Carr, Edward Hallett. *What Is History* [M]. Trans. Wu, Zhucun. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1981.
- [5] Ge, Hong. *Yang Zhaoming's Index to the Outer Chapters of Baopuzi* [M]. Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991.
- [6] Guo, Pu. *Classic of Mountains and Seas Collated and Annotated by Guo Pu* [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 1992.
- [7] Na, Zhiliang. *Pictorial Illustrations to Ancient Chinese Jades* [M]. Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1990.
- [8] Pang, Pu. *One Divided into Three: Research On and Interpretation of Traditional Chinese Ideas*[M]. Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 1995.
- [9] Ruan, Yuan. *Annotations to the 13 Classics* [M]. Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.
- [10] Schilbrack, Kevin. *Thinking Through Rituals*[M]. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- [11] Sun, Xingyan. *Annotations to and Comments on Old and New Articles of Shang Shu* [M]. Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986. P.309.
- [12] Weber, Max. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Trans. Han, Shuifa et al. Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 1999.
- [13] Ye, Shuxian. *Cultural Semiotics –the New Horizon of the Great and Small Tradition* [M]. Shaanxi: Shaanxi Normal University Press, 2011.
- [14] Ye, Shuxian. *The Golden Bough and the Jade Leaf— Comparative Mythology from Chinese Perspective* [M]. (Serial books of Contemporary Chinese Comparative Literature Studies) Shanghai: Fudan University, 2012.
- [15] Yuan, Ke. *Collation and Annotation to Classic of Mountains and Seas* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Publishing House, 1980.
- [16] Zhang, Hongzhao. *The Elegance of Stones* [M]. Tianjin: Baihua Culture and Art Publishing House, 2010.