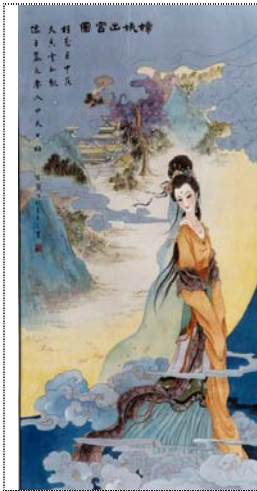


中秋快乐

zhōng qiū kuài lè

Mid Autumn Festival, 中秋节 zhōng qiū jié, falls on the 15th of the 8th lunar month and is the second most important festival on the Chinese calendar. It was first mentioned in The Rites of Zhou 《周礼 zhōu lǐ》 some 3,000 years ago but became popular during the Tang dynasty (618 - 907). Celebrated by Chinese all over the world, it is a time for family reunion, signified by the bright full moon. There are many legends, customs and foods associated with this festival. For most people, it is the only night in the year where one truly spends some time looking at the moon, enjoying some special moments sipping tea with one's family. For loves ones far apart, looking at the same moon from distant places has always been an expression of love and longing. Such sentiments have been beautifully penned over the centuries.

Below are some legends related to the Mid Autumn Festival. source: <http://www.chinapage.org>



The Lady of the Moon

嫦娥奔月 cháng é bēn yuè

The date of this story is around 2170 B.C. The earth once had ten suns circling over it, each took its turn to illuminate to the earth. But one day all ten suns appeared together, scorching the earth with their heat. The earth was saved by a strong and tyrannical archer *hòu yì*. He succeeded in shooting down nine of the suns. One day, Hou Yi stole the elixir of life from a goddess. However his beautiful wife *cháng é* drank the elixir of life in order to save the people from her husband's tyrannical rule. After drinking it, she found herself floating and flew to the moon.



hòu yì shè rì 后羿射日

The Man of the Moon wú gāng [Han dynasty 206 – AD 220]



吳剛伐桂 wú gāng fá guì

Wú Kāng was a shiftless fellow who changed apprenticeships all the time. One day he decided that he wanted to be an immortal. Wu Kang then went to live in the mountains where he importuned an immortal to teach him. First the immortal taught him about the herbs used to cure sickness, but after three days his characteristic restlessness returned and he asked the immortal to teach him something else. So the immortal to teach him chess, but after a short while Wu Kang's enthusiasm again waned. Then Wu Kang was given the books of immortality to study. Of course, Wu Kang became bored within a few days, and asked if they could travel to some new and exciting place. Angered with Wu Kang's impatience, the master banished Wu Kang to the Moon Palace telling him that he must cut down a huge cassia tree before he could return to earth. Though Wú Kāng chopped day and night, the magical tree restored itself with each blow, and thus he is up there chopping still.

The Jade Rabbit 玉兔 yù tù



玉兔捣药 yù tù dǎo yào

In this legend, three fairy sages transformed themselves into pitiful old men and begged for something to eat from a fox, a monkey and a rabbit. The fox and the monkey both had food to give to the old men, but the rabbit, empty-handed, offered his own flesh instead, jumping into a blazing fire to cook himself. The sages were so touched by the rabbit's sacrifice that they let him live in the Moon Palace (广寒宫 guǎng hán gōng) where he became the "Jade Rabbit." [Usually portrayed as a rabbit pounding medicine]

The Cake - Moon Cake 月饼 yuè bǐng



During the Yuan dynasty (A.D.1280-1368) China was ruled by the Mongolian people. Leaders from the preceding Sung dynasty (A.D.960-1280) were unhappy at submitting to foreign rule, and set how to coordinate the rebellion without it being discovered. The leaders of the rebellion, knowing that the Moon Festival was drawing near, ordered the making of special cakes. Baked into each moon cake was a message with the outline of the attack. On the night of the Moon Festival, the rebels successfully attacked and overthrew the government. What followed was the establishment of the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644). Today, moon cakes are eaten to commemorate this legend.

Wàng yuè huái yuǎn

望月怀远

zhāng jiǔ líng
张 九 龄

[678 - 740 年]

Hǎi shàng shēng míng yuè, tiān yá gòng cǐ shí
海 上 生 明 月, 天 涯 共 此 时
Qíng rén yuàn yáo yè, jìng xī qǐ xiāng sī!
情 人 怨 遥 夜, 竟 夕 起 相 思!
Miè zhú lián guāng mǎn, pī yī jué lù zī
灭 烛 怜 光 满, 披 衣 觉 露 滋
Bù kān yíng shǒu zèng, huán qǐn mèng jiā qī
不 堪 盈 手 赠, 还 寝 梦 佳 期

Looking at the Moon, longing for one far away

Out of the sea, the bright moon rises.
Night like this, lovers resent.
Put out the candle, moonlight remains bright.
I can't present it to you with my very hands.

Far apart, this moment is shared.
All night long, lovesick strikes.
Put on my coat, dew can still be felt.
I return to bed, to dream of our rendezvous.

jìng yè sī

静夜思

lǐ bái

李 白 [701—762 年]

chuáng qián míng yuè guāng yí shì dì shàng shuāng
床 前 明 月 光 疑 是 地 上 霜
jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè dī tóu sī gù xiāng
举 头 望 明 月 低 头 思 故 乡

Reflection on a Quiet Night

Bright moonlight in front of the bed.
Lift my head, I gaze at the bright moon.

Appears like frost on the ground.
Lower my head, I long for my hometown.