STORIES of Mid-Autumn Festival

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Fairy on the Moon

- Chang’e
- This is the fairy on moon.
• Chang’e in Moon Palace
• She is now living in Moon Palace
Long long ago, there were 10 suns in the sky. They burnt all the plants on the earth. People were dying. Hou Yi used his bow and arrows to shoot down nine of them. All the people on the earth were saved. These 10 suns were sons of God in Heaven (Di Jun).
嫦娥奔月 Chang’e Flying to the Moon Chang’e Ben Yue
Wu Gang and the Cherry Bay

- Wu Gang was a woodchopper. He always wanted to become an immortal, but he never tried his best to learn the necessary theurgy. The Jade Emperor got angry with him because of his attitude. In order to punish him, the Jade Emperor planted a huge cherry bay, which was 1665 meters (5460 ft) high, on the moon and ordered Wu Gang to chop it down, then Wu Gang could become an immortal.

- This time, Wu Gang was very serious, but he could never finish his work. The cherry bay healed every time that Wu Gang chopped it. Wu Gang wouldn’t give up. He tried time and time again.

- On unclouded nights people can see some obvious shadows on the moon. They are made by the huge cherry bay.
One day, three immortals who were living in heaven came to the earth. They asked a fox, a monkey and a rabbit to find some food for them respectively. The fox and the monkey both found something for the three immortals while the rabbit got nothing. The rabbit felt very sorry for the three immortals. Finally, he jumped into the fire and said to the three immortals, "Eat me, please!" The three immortals were deeply moved by the rabbit. They decided to give the rabbit the title of "Jade Rabbit" and let him accompany Chang'e in the Moon Palace.
Jade Rabbit Pounding the Herbs

• An early mention that there is a rabbit on the moon appears in the Chuci, a western Han anthology of Chinese poems from the Warring States period, which notes that along with a toad, there is a rabbit on the moon who constantly pounds herbs for the immortals. This notion is supported by later texts, including the Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era (太平广记) encyclopedia of the Song Dynasty.

• Han Dynasty poets call the rabbit on the moon the “Jade Rabbit” (玉兔) or the “Gold Rabbit” (金兔), and these phrases were often used in place of the word for the moon. A famous poet of the Tang Dynasty period, Li Bai, relates how: “The rabbit in the moon pounds the medicine in vain” in his poem “Gufeng (the Old Dust”).

• 生者为过客, 死者为归人。天地一逆旅, 同悲万古尘。月兔空捣药, 扶桑已成薪。白骨寂无言, 青松岂知春。前后更叹息, 浮荣安足珍。
The Old Dust

The living is a passing traveller;
The dead, a man come home.
One brief journey betwixt heaven and earth,
Then, alas! we are the same old dust of ten thousand ages.
The rabbit in the moon pounds the medicine in vain;
Fu-sang, the tree of immortality, has crumbled to kindling wood.
Man dies, his white bones are dumb without a word
When the green pines feel the coming of the spring.
Looking back, I sigh; looking before, I sigh again.
What is there to prize in the life's vaporous glory?
Other Names of the Moon

• 兔 Rabbit
• 蟾蜍 Tod
• 桂 Cherry Bay
• 嫦娥 Chang’e
Activities on the Mid-Autumn Festival