Li Bo Unkempt

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Chapter 51. “Woman on the Silk-washing Rock”

Woman on the silk-washing rock

You jade-face Ye Stream girl,
azure eyelid makeup, blush red powder.
One pair of gold-clasp shoes,
two feet as white as mist.⁴¹²

浣紗石上女

玉面耶溪女
青蛾紅粉妝
一雙金齒屐
兩足白如霜

China’s tradition speaks of Four Great Beauties (sida meinü 四大美女).⁴¹³ The Precious Consort was the last of them. The first was Xi Shi 西施 (fifth century BCE), and she is from this Ye Stream, and she washed silk on this rock. Her lover gave her to the King of Yue, who gave her to the King of Wu, so that her beauty might entrance and thus destroy him.⁴¹⁴ And so it was.

Returning home from Wu, after its demise, Xi Shi drowned herself in the Yangtze River.⁴¹⁵