

## Healthy longevity

The Taiwan National Palace Museum has on display a 191 mm high statue of a smiling figure in good health with a jewel in its left hand and a walking stick in the right one. The statue embodies the god of longevity offering long life, health, and peace. Indeed the figure looks vital and healthy with only a walking stick as technical aid. The eldest man in Chinese folk tales, Pengzu, reached an age of 800 years

This gem of craftsmanship has been cut out of one piece of pure rock crystal (quartz), except for the jewel and the 'wooden' walking stick that are made of ivory. Pure quartz or silicon dioxide ( $\text{SiO}_2$ ) is clear as water and hard as jade. In ancient China it was also known as 'water jade', 'water essence', or 'Bodhisattva's pure stone'.

The statue originates from the imperial Yung-shou (Lasting life) Palace in Beijing,



a residence of empresses and consorts of China's last dynasty, the Ch'ing. It has been reproduced by courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, R.O.C. ([www.npm.gov.tw/exh96/Dazzling/descriptions03\\_en.html](http://www.npm.gov.tw/exh96/Dazzling/descriptions03_en.html)).