**上海外国语大学 2020 –2021学年第一学期**

**期末考试试卷**

课程名称 中国文化概要

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**Please write an essay about 500-800 words in English, explaining a cultural phenomenon in China. A comparative perspective is encouraged.**

Fengshan Sacrifices by ancient Chinese emperors—mountain-top worship of Heaven and Earth at Mount Tai

Born and raised in the city of Tai'an, I always appreciate the Mount Tai that embraces us in its arms. Mount Tai is one of the five sacred mountains in China. Although it is not the highest or most picturesque, it is considered the most important of the five holy mountains thanks to a cultural phenomenon that has lasted more than a thousand years: the Fengshan Sacrifices by the emperors at the top of Mount Tai.

The cultural phenomenon of worshipping heaven and earth at Mount Tai has a long history. In ancient times, the primitive tribes around Mount Tai held nature worship ceremonies in the mountain. The first person who came to Mount Tai to hold the ceremony of Fengshan was Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor in China, who ended the division of China in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period for more than 500 years and established the first unified dynasty. After completing this unprecedented achievement, Qin Shi Huang came to Mount Tai in 219 BC and reported his achievements to heaven, so as to enhance the legitimacy of the Qin Dynasty's rule. After Qin Shi Huang, a total of five emperors in the history of China held the Fengshan Sacrifices at the top of Mount Tai. Only emperors who had accomplished great achievements were eligible, otherwise, they would be shamed by future generations. In 1008 AD, Emperor Zhenzong of the Song dynasty held the last Fengshan ceremony.

Fengshan ceremony, as a cultural phenomenon passed down for thousands of years, has a far-reaching influence on later generations. On the on hand, six times high-standard Fengshan ceremonies have given Mount Tai a special political status among all the famous mountains in China. Many palaces and temples were built in Mount Tai throughout the dynasties and worldly titles were given to gods of Mount Tai which contributed to the formation of the local beliefs of "Mount Tai Grandma" in Tai'an. What’s more, countless literati and poets came to Mount Tai, leaving behind outstanding literary works and calligraphy stone carvings. All these constitute a precious cultural heritage of humanity. On the other hand, as a native of Tai'an, I’m very proud of living at the foot of Mount Tai because it has played an important role in Chinese history. Whenever someone asks me where my hometown is, I will tell them that my home is at the southern foot of Mount Tai because I know that Mount Tai, as a special cultural symbol, is deeply imprinted in the hearts of every Chinese thanks to Fengshan ceremonies.

In ancient China, in ritual sacrifices such as Fengshan, the emperors mainly worshipped heaven and earth, without religious connotation. However, sacrifices abroad, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca or Gustra through the Routes of Santiago de Compostela, are carried out within the framework of a religion. This shows the difference in belief between China and Europe or the Muslim world: the majority of Chinese have not believed in religion since ancient times and they have maintained a pragmatic view. This makes Chinese people form the quality of self-reliance and realize that a better life depends on their hard work.