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Analysis of the Buddhist Conversion of Great Sage

A corpus-based investigation of textual evidence from the English translation of *The Journey to the West*

Abstract: As one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, *The Journey to the West* narrates a legendary Buddhist pilgrimage. Until now, the religious conversion in the novel remains much less explored by academia. We propose an innovative approach to addressing this shortfall by conducting a corpus-based investigation into the characterization of the protagonist “Great Sage.” We use the corpus tools BFSU PowerConc 1.0 and LancsBox v.2.0.1 to calculate and visualize the collocation networks of Great Sage: for one thing, to contextualize the complex interactions between him and the external environment; for another, to define and compare different phases of the character’s evolution. The collocational networks are derived by means of a quantitative approach, i.e. a mutual information (MI) score with collocation cutoff values. This lays an objective foundation for a subsequent qualitative interpretation of how the protagonist’s identity is forged in his conversion. Further, some associated literary and theological scholarships are woven into our text-based analysis.

Keywords: characterization; corpus stylistics; *The Journey to the West*; translation stylistics

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1 Multi-identities of Monkey in Journey

The novel under investigation, The Journey to the West1 (henceforth Journey), begins with the birth of a stone monkey in the first chapter and ends with his reward “Victorious Fighting Buddha” when reaching the destination of the pilgrimage, the Thunder Monastery. If we read this literature by juxtaposing the beginning and ending, one possible implication of the story is that even a stone can reach Buddhahood and that all is the result of assiduous cultivation. In the novel, this conversion is gradually realized through an arduous pilgrimage from China, the Land of the East, to India in quest of the Buddhist scriptures.

[Journey] represents the inclusion of moral and ethical values in the evolutionary process permeating the universe and the vindication of man’s potential of moral metamorphosis and transcendence to a higher plane of existence and ultimate immortality through absolute devotion to the scourging of evil and the exaltation of good. (Xia 2001)

In other words, Monkey undertakes the physical journey synchronously with his spiritual purification, which is also manifested in the evolution of his name (identity) in the fictional plot from Monkey King (identity: an animal), to the Great Sage (identity: an insurgent against the Celestial Palace), and Pilgrim (identity: a Buddhist). As Leone (2004) notes, the way people change and represent their spiritual evolution is often determined by recurrent lexical and grammatical patterns in the discourse. However, the evolution of Monkey is not in the least a linear progression. Based on a close reading of the novel, we find that Monkey in Chapter 14 converts himself to Buddhism as a disciple of the Monk Xuanzang (Tripitaka, Chinese: 玄奘, 三藏法师). From then, his primary identity label is Pilgrim, while frequently switching back to Great Sage in concrete situation contexts. We formulate two hypotheses related to his religious conversion: (1) the identity discourse of the converted Great Sage will show a discrepancy indicating his changes after conversion to Buddhism; (2) the collocate analysis of Great Sage will enable us to reveal the dynamic molding of this characterization.

In order to test the above two assumptions, we aligned the identity discourses with the story plot: (1) “Great Sage a” from Chapters 1 to 13, i.e. from his birth as a stone monkey, through his acquisition of magic powers, and to his

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1 The Journey to the West is a Chinese novel published in the 16th century during the Ming dynasty and attributed to Wu Cheng’en. It is one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese Literature with strong roots in Chinese folk religion, Chinese mythology, Taoist and Buddhist philosophy. This epic narrative is still reflective of some Chinese religious attitudes today.
raising havoc in the Heaven Palace; (2) “Great Sage b” from Chapters 14 to 100 from his conversion on. In this study, the trajectory of Monkey’s conversion to Buddhism is subject to a scrutiny of the English translation of Journey. Religious conversion, as a peculiar kind of intercultural behavior, through a lens of literary translation, mirrors how this changeover is recognized and accepted in a larger intercultural context. In a translational context, the reflection and refraction of original religious implications can be observed. Accordingly, a brief overview of the translation history of Journey presents us with an intercultural and intertextual background for a better understanding of the manipulated identity of Monkey.

2 The retranslation of Journey and the manipulated identity of Monkey

The English translation history of Journey hitherto is already more than 12 decades old. In this process, the team of translators consisted of missionaries, sinologists, literary scholars and theologians. Their religious stance and other cultural attitudes permeates throughout their translation practice, which leads to their hybridization, secularization, and representation of Monkey’s religious identity. This first English translation of Journey is widely acknowledged to be an adapted translation in 1895, The Golden-Horned Dragon King; or, The Emperor’s Visit to the Spirit World, by Samuel I. Woodbridge (1856–1926), an American Presbyterian missionary to China (see Wang 1980; Zheng and Wu: 2012). This rendition is only one episode selected and adapted from the original 100-chapter novel.

One of the most controversial cases is A Mission to Heaven: A Great Chinese Epic and Allegory, translated in 1913 by a Welsh Baptist missionary, Timothy Richard (1845–1919). For the sake of proselytizing, he interpreted the source text as a Christian allegory, i.e. a group of converted sinners on their pilgrimage to “the transformation of the very unpromising material into saints fit for Heaven” (Richard 1913: xxvii). In the eyes of Richard, the leader of the expedition, Monk Xuanzang, is an allegory of Jesus Christ, helper in all difficulties, agent in the conversion of each one of this party, turning the proud, masterful monkey to repentance and a righteous use of his intellectual gifts (Richard 1916: 343–344). Whereas Richard had acknowledged the overarching theme of religious conversion in Journey, he deliberately integrated some Buddhist concepts and thoughts within a broader Christian framework in his translation. It indeed contributes to an interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism. A
Mission to Heaven: A Great Chinese Epic and Allegory contains a wealth of resources to study religious hybridity (e.g. Lai 2016) instead of researching Buddhist conversion, or attaining the objective of the present study.

In contrast with Richard’s ambitious pursuit of “a more inclusive kingdom of God” (Lai 2016: 60), Arthur Waley (1889–1966) adopted a secularized approach. Albeit highly learned, Waley avoided academic notes and religious terms so as to cater for a general audience when translating a wide range of Eastern classics. In spite of being an “under-translation,” Waley’s abridged version Monkey (1943) renders this Chinese canon for the first time widely known to the Western readers. His adapting strategies are clearly elaborated in the preface of Monkey:

The original book is indeed of immense length and is usually read in abridged forms. The method adopted in these abridgments is to [...] drastically reduce them in length, particularly by cutting out dialogue [...] Monkey is unique in its combination of beauty with absurdity, of profundity with nonsense. Folklore, allegory, religion, history, anti-bureaucratic satire, and pure poetry – such are the singularly diverse elements out of which the book is compounded. [...] As regards the allegory, it is clear that Tripitaka (Xuanzang) stands for the ordinary man, blundering anxiously through the difficulties of life, while Monkey stands for the restless instability of genius. (Waley 1961: 7–8)

Opposite to Richard’s interpretation of Monk Xuanzang’s Christianity, Waley restored his identity of being a mortal. He filtered out most of the religious significance, preserving the hilarious aspects. He chose Chapters 1–15, 18–19, 22, 37–39, 44–49, and 98–100, less than one-third of the source text. More importantly, this manipulation magnifies the proportion of the havoc monkey wrecked on Heaven, while diluting his Buddhist conversion. Needless to say, translation is social and linguistic behavior within a specific cultural context. The above-mentioned hybridized, secularized manipulations are multifaceted “refractions” of the source text, complementing the world literature treasury in various forms without harming the intrinsic value of the source text (see Lefevere 1981: 72).

In order to redress Waley’s distorted picture, Anthony Yu (1938–2015), a professor of literature and theology, translated this one hundred-chapter piece of Chinese fiction into English in four volumes from 1977 to 1983. After retirement, Yu revised the rhetoric and the vocabulary where needed and released a revised edition in 2012. As he notes in his preface, the primary motive of his translation was

to rectify the acclaimed but distorted picture provided by Arthur Waley’s justly popular abridgment and to redress an imbalance of criticism championed by Dr. Hu Shi, the Chinese scholar-diplomat who supplied the British translator with an influential preface.
Therein, Hu asserted that ‘freed from all kinds of allegorical interpretations by Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucianist commentators, Monkey is simply a book of good humor, profound nonsense, good-natured satire, and delightful entertainment’. (Yu 2012: p. i)

To date, Yu’s scholarly translation has been highly commended by multiple voices from literary studies (e.g. Chang and Owen 2010; Mair 2001), religious studies (e.g. Ma and Lau: 1978), translation studies (e.g. Levy 1984; Li 2009). On the one hand, his translation lays the foundation for further rewritings. Evans (2011), for instance, directed a stage play adapted from Yu’s translation. On the other hand, some authoritative critics derive allegorical interpretations about Monkey’s identity based on Yu’s translation:

In allegorical terms, Monkey represents the mind, and his main responsibility is to remind his master about the importance of cultivating the mind. In Chapter 85, when Tripitaka loses faith once again, Monkey quotes to him from the Heart Sutra: “Seek not afar for Buddha on Spirit Mount / Mount Spirit lives only in your mind” (Anthony C. Yu’s translation). The entire novel can, therefore, be read as an allegory for the progress of the mind, with the eighty-one calamities the means by which one finds enlightenment. (Chang and Owen 2010: 56)

On many occasions, Yu reiterates his argument that “religion is not only crucial to the novel’s conception and formation, but also that its nearly unique embodiment in this work need not clash with ‘good humor, profound nonsense, good-natured satire, and delightful entertainment” (Yu 2005: xiv). In short, the religious implications of Journey when being transmitted to the West via retranslation roughly follows a trajectory of “hybridization–neutralization–restoration” with a simultaneous manipulation of Monkey’s identities. If we want to compare the changes of Great Sage before and after his Buddhist conversion, Yu’s rendering has always been as it should be, an ideal English translation of Journey for answering this question.

3 Collocation and collocation network

A person’s character is the aggregate of features and traits that form their individual nature. In the literary discourse, a figure’s character is represented by recurring textual evidence. In the meantime, we can track the evolving character of the protagonist, i.e. characterization, in the light of changing linguistic patterns. This kind of bottom-up stylistic approach allows us to “resolve the macro issues literary texts raise but without jumping to presupposed conclusions” (Hall 2015: 137). Therefore, this study investigates the
characterization of Great Sage in light of the collocates co-occurring with the character before and after his conversion. Actually, the linguistic exploration for word association has a time-honored tradition in the Firth School, adhering to the doctrine that “you shall know a word by the company it keeps” (Firth 1957: 6). Surprisingly, collocation research in literary discourse, as Hori (2004: 9) observes, has not yet produced particularly fruitful results. Furthermore, collocation research in literary translation studies is normally confined to “creative collocation” (e.g. Kenny 2014: 189–211), i.e. investigating the idiosyncrasy of writers on the basis of a bilingual alignment, unable to cast light on the macro concerns about literature. Taking the identity discourse of Monkey in Yu’s English translation as a case study, this research fills the gap by exploring the collocation network of Monkey so that we can obtain the empirical evidence of his Buddhist conversion in Journey.

Whereas previous collocation studies pertain to the discussion between node and collocate, collocates of words, in essence, don’t exist in isolation but in a complex semantic network, which ultimately discloses the meaning and semantic structure of a text or corpus. Lancsbox, a collocation network drawer, can thus be utilized to uncover the meaning connections in discourse that may otherwise pass unnoticed (see Baker 2016; Brezina et al. 2015). To date, this analytical tool has been applied in the analysis of Twitter (Baker and McEnery 2015), online forum discourse (Brezina 2016), terminological studies (Taljard 2016), and corpus-driven data visualization (Rayson et al. 2017) without arousing attention from literary studies. Compared with non-literary discourse, literary discourse differs substantially in the dynamism of the situation context, i.e. the situation context exhibits consequential variations alongside the development of the storyline. With regard to Journey, Monkey’s multi-identities, being an animal, an insurgent, a Buddhist, an Immortal, are one representative example of this dynamism. Thus, we believe that collocation networks will offer more empirical findings beyond intuition-based analysis when dealing with the literature.

Another further investigation into collocation in this present study is through the lens of systemic functional grammar (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). In light of this theory, the semantic stratification of discourse (e.g. religious conversion as a semantic stratification of Journey) is realized by the lexicogrammar of the clause. Lexicogrammar means a functional view that grammar is inseparable from lexis. In what follows, we will demonstrate how to visualize and analyze the religious conversion of Great Sage by combining quantitative findings (i.e. collocation) with a qualitative interpretation (functional linguistics).
4 Collocates of the Great Sage: Before and after conversion

In general, whenever a character is described in terms of the past and the present, we expect a contrastive change in the character’s personality (Hori 2004: 178). With the help of LancsBox, we obtained 15 collocates of “Great Sage a” (the Great Sage from Chapters 1–13 before conversion) and 37 collocates of “Great Sage b” (the converted Great Sage from Chapters 14–100) (Table 1). Table 1 also displays the threshold we set for data refinement, as well as the summarized semantic domains so as to compare the collocate tendencies between Great Sage a and b. It lays a foundation to explore: (1) how Great Sage interacts with the external world by examining the relationship between Great Sage and collocates; (2) how Great Sage evolves his character by comparing collocate a and collocate b.

Table 1. Collocates of Great Sage (MI≥6.5, Cmin=8, 15L, 15R)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Sage a</th>
<th>Collocate a (MI≥6.5)</th>
<th>Great Sage b</th>
<th>Collocate b(MI≥6.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>figure</td>
<td>maidens, equal, deities, monster, gods</td>
<td>figure</td>
<td>equal, sun, deity, local, deities, hook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magic</td>
<td>power, changed, rod</td>
<td>magic</td>
<td>mounting, mounted, somersault, sign, midair, fingers, golden-hooped, leaping, retrieved, subdue, hairs, lowered, instantly, shake, direction, reciting, fan, recited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utterance</td>
<td>words</td>
<td>utterance</td>
<td>dear, accompanying, greeted, disturbance, telling, relax, caused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>havoc</td>
<td>rank, peaches, garden, heaven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>called, sent</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>meanwhile, united, stared, bowing, wielded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, Table 1 shows that figure, magic, and utterance are the shared semantic domains appearing both in collocate a and b. Collocate b encompasses a larger variety due to the larger corpus size of Great Sage b. Secondly, the magic
discourse of collocate b is the most abundant semantic domain, delineating how Great Sage subdues monsters and demons encountered during the pilgrimage. Thirdly, the havoc discourse of collocate a is represented by the concrete mischief of Great Sage (e.g. fighting against Heaven for a high official rank, wrecking the banquet of peaches hosted by the Queen), while it is encapsulated in an abstract noun “disturbance” in the utterance discourse of collocate b. Example [1] is a dialogue excerpt between Great Sage and the local spirit from Chapter 60.

[1] “You can’t possibly recognize me now,” said the local spirit. “There was no such mountain in this place originally. Five hundred years ago, when the Great Sage caused great disturbance in the Celestial Palace, you were caught by Illustrious Sagacity and taken in custody to Laozi. He placed you inside the brazier of eight trigrams, and after the process of refinement, the reactionary vessel was opened. You jumped out, kicking over the elixir oven in the process, and a few bricks still on fire dropped down to this spot. They were transformed into the Mountain of Flames.

“Disturbance” as a frequent collocate of Great Sage b in the utterance semantic domain implies that the havoc wrecked by Great Sage would be a recurring topic 500 years later on his pilgrimage in the speech and thought of fictional agents. This could probably drop a few hints about the evolution of Great Sage. Likewise, based on a close reading of concordances containing all 37 collocates of Great Sage b, we find all the collocates and semantic domains, especially magic discourse, highlight a central event on the pilgrimage, i.e. the subduing of grotesque demons and monsters. Campany (1985) thinks that the subjugation of demons in Journey is constructed by recurring discourse structures, which adds extra weight to our view that the pervasiveness of demons and monsters contributes to the characterization of converted Great Sage. Therefore, based on the above account of Table 1, our research proceeds to explore the following questions in the following sections:

1. What is the primary identity of Great Sage a?
2. How does Great Sage b perceive his havoc in Heaven 500 years before?
3. How does the prevalent subjugation discourse contribute to the characterization of Great Sage b?
4. What textual devices suggest the evolution of the converted Great Sage?

### 4.1 Monstrous identity of Great Sage a

This section briefly demonstrates the collocation network of Great Sage a (before his conversion, Chapters 1–13) generated by Lancsbox. These
associations contribute in various degrees to meanings created in the discourse and can serve to answer the question of “the aboutness of discourse” (Brezina 2016: 142). The statistical measure of identification of collocates used in this study is the MI score, which is enlightening in providing a rough measure of the strength of attraction between relevant items by comparing the probability that the word association be a joint event with the probability that their co-occurrence is just by chance (see McEnery and Wilson 2001: 86). Figure 1 shows the node Great Sage with the first-order collocates as defined through MI calculation and application of various threshold values specified in the sub-corpus of JW from Chapters 1–14. The length of the arrows in the graph shows the collocational strength (MI value): the shorter the arrow, the stronger the collocational strength.

![Figure 1: 199 occurrences of Great Sage from Chapters 1–14 in JW [MI (5.5), Cmin 8, 15L, 15R]]

This figure presents visual evidence that the Great Sage, as opposed to the literal meaning of Sage, is actually a monster whose havoc in the Daoist Heaven, e.g. wrecking the Peach Banquet, battling with Immortals (battles), is likely to trigger disasters. To scrutinize this possibility, we incorporate concordances into the subsequent qualitative analysis with the help of BFSU PowerConc (Figure 2). As seen in Figure 2, we refine the concordances associating with monster(s) through the filter function and obtain 14 occurrences.
Among 14 instances in Figure 4, there are four exceptional Sages not referring to Monkey (*Great Sage Equal to Heaven*). These exceptions occur in the first four concordances in Chapter 4, as shown in Figure 2, namely, *Great Sage Parallel with Heaven*, *Great Sage Covering the Ocean*, *Great Sage United with Heaven*, *Great Sage, Mover of Mountains*. As sworn brothers of Great Sage, they are bull, dragon, garuda, and lynx in nature, but confer themselves the title of Sage without an official appointment from the Celestial Court (see concordances 1 to 4, Chapter 4). Of particular note, translator Yu adopts an agentless passive voice, implying that these Sages are attempting to conceal their illegitimacy.

[2] He then said to the six brothers, “If little brother is now called the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, why don’t all of you assume the title of Great Sage also?” “Our worthy brother’s words are right!” shouted the Bull Monster King from their midst, “I’m going to be called the Great Sage, Parallel with Heaven.”

At the beginning of Chapter 5, the monster identity is explicitly announced by the voice of the narrator (concordance 5).

[3] Now we must tell you that the Great Sage, after all, was a monkey monster; in truth, he had no knowledge of his title or rank, nor did he care for the size of his salary. (Chapter 5)

Echoing Firth’s famous saying, “you know a word by the company it keeps,” we collect corroborating evidence proving the monster identity of Great Sage a (Figure 2): other monsters as allies (concordances 1–4), the voice of the narrator (concordance 5), monstrous subordinates (monsters of 72 caves, concordance
7–12), the swearing of Immortal Masters (audacious monster, concordance 13), scaffold (the monster-subduing pillar, concordance 14). Thus, we cannot quite concur with Yue, who for the purpose of comparative poetics implausibly beautifies Monkey’s havoc in Heaven: “the more he [Monkey] lived this life, the more he harbored the desire to break out of Huaguo Mountain [birthplace of Monkey] and see the outside world. Thus, Monkey can be compared to Greek heroes, who wanted to seek out the Golden Fleece” (Yue 2016: 132). Unlike some macro-level and intuition-based literary theories, corpus stylistics is essentially connected to close reading while concordance tools can support the analysis of text-specific meanings by retrieving all the occurrences of a form to trace a meaning or the development of meaning through the text (Mahlberg 2014). Herein, a plot development regarding Monkey’s conversion from a monster to a Buddhist is revealed by second-order collocates around Bodhisattva (Figure 3).

Figure 3 displays that Bodhisattva Guanyin traveled across the magic and mortal worlds for the sake of launching the pilgrimage and selecting the pilgrims. Assisted by a context-based concordance reading, we give attention to Chapter 8, where Bodhisattva receives the decree of Tathāgata to find a scripture pilgrim in the East Land of Tang. If the scripture seeker is firm in mind to embark on the pilgrimage, he may accept the embroidered cassock and the nine-ring priestly staff granted by Tathāgata. Although the Great Sage and Pilgrim refer to the same protagonist, these two concepts do not have a direct connection in this above graph. Therein, an intriguing question arises: Who is the proselytizer of Monkey, converting him from a monster to a Buddhist? Or more narrowly: Is the proselytizer Bodhisattva or his master Monk Xuanzang?

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2 One sarcastic instance is concordance 6 in Figure 4. When the Great Sage is wakened from his nap, he insults the Immortal Maidens as monsters. The Maidens reply, “we are not monsters, but the Seven-Gown Immortal Maidens sent by the Lady Queen Mother to pluck the fruits needed for the Grand Festival of Immortal Peaches.”

3 When the literary critics denigrate stylisticians’ supposedly trivial concerns with language and linguistic form, paradoxically, they advocate so-called “close-reading,” a close examination of the rhetoric and form of the literary text under investigation. Unfortunately, it is impossible to find any explicit and fully systematic exposition of how to do this “close reading” (Hall 2015). As a cogent compensation, corpus stylistics reads the literary through a combined lens of telescope and microscope, i.e. for one thing, we obtain the prominent meanings by a quantitative measurement; for another, we read the concordances in a close way.

4 In Christianity and Islam, the ideology of mission has without doubt been perceived with a greater sense of urgency than in Buddhism. The reasons for this difference may have to do with the more “provisional” nature of Buddhist teaching conveyed in the story of the raft. In that
Assumedly, Xuanzang, who gives him the religious name Pilgrim, is supposed to be his missionary (Chapter 14).

Yet in the same chapter when Monkey grumbles to the Dragon King (examples [4] and [5]), we could corroborate the following two findings in the light of functional linguistics (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2014):

1. The proselytizer is Bodhisattva. Conversion arises from a Mental Process of Monkey (be indebted in example [4]) and is realized by a Material Process (follow in example [4]). Through the lens of functional linguistics, Monk in example [4] is the Goal of follow. In other words, Monk doesn’t extend an active influence over Monkey. Follow is more likely to be caused by the subjectivity of Monkey.

2. The Dragon King looks at Monkey based on the stereotype (vocative Great Sage in example [5]) while the narrator has acknowledged his identity of Buddhist (Pilgrim in example [5]).

story, religion is likened to a raft with which one crosses a stream, but when the stream is crossed, one does not continue to carry the raft. It is left behind (Bryant and Lamb 1999: 8).
[4] “I was indebted to the Bodhisattva of South Sea,” said Pilgrim, “who persuaded me to do good and seek the truth. I was to follow the Tang Monk from the Land of the East to go worship Buddha in the West.” (Chapter 14)

[5] The Dragon King said, “Great Sage, you must make the decision yourself. It’s unwise to allow momentary comfort to jeopardize your future.” “Not another word!” said Wukong. “Old Monkey will go back to accompany him, that’s all!” Delighted, the Dragon King said, “If that’s your wish, I dare not detain you. Instead, I ask the Great Sage to show his mercy at once and not permit his master to wait any longer.” When Pilgrim heard this exhortation to leave, he bounded right out of the oceanic region; mounting the clouds, he left the Dragon King. (Chapter 14)

The following characterization analysis of Great Sage b (Chapters 15–100) incidentally reveals how Monkey follows the tenet of “do good and seek the truth” as Bodhisattva enlightens.

4.2 Havoc perception of Great Sage b

Once Monkey converts to Buddhism in Chapter 14, his characterization never breaks away from the disturbance discourse. Figure 4 displays six concordances about the Great Sage b associated with disturbance.

Concordance 1 from Chapter 26 tells the story that Monkey uproots the cinnabar tree of the Great Immortal, which reveals that Monkey still maintains some mischievous behavior at an early stage of having become a Buddhist. In the later long process of cultivation, new havoc directly caused by Monkey almost vanishes, but the disturbance discourse doesn’t cease. One poetic function of raking up his disturbance in the Celestial Palace, as shown in concordances 2 and 4, embodies the philosophy of “the Buddhist karma and redemption” (Yu 1983). In other words, these mentioned ordeals the Monkey suffers in the
pilgrimage may be ascribed to his previous misdeeds. The redemption theme and self-cultivation are closely intertwined, both of which are in accordance with the Buddhist doctrine “do good and seek the truth.” This finding is further strengthened in our later argument.

Concordance 6 from the mouth of a demon implies that the monstrous image of Great Sage deters the demons lurking on the road to the West. Example [6] is a conversation between the Monk and the monsters from Chapter 91.

[6] [...] replied the Tang Monk, “[...] I have three disciples. The first one’s surname is Sun, and his names are Wukong and Pilgrim. He is actually the converted Great Sage, Equal to Heaven.” Greatly startled by the last name they heard, the monsters said, “Is this Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, the person who caused a great disturbance in the Celestial Palace five hundred years ago?”

The juxtaposition of different vocatives of Great Sage in the Monk’s speech foregrounds the epithet “converted,” which embodies the Monk’s intention to convert the monsters into Buddhists. However, these monsters are merely intimidated by the hearsay account of the disturbance caused by Great Sage without a consciousness of renouncing evil and turning to virtue. The repeatedly mentioned disturbance on the pilgrimage may remind readers wittingly or unwittingly to place the Great Sage on a par with monsters. The juxtaposition of all the names of Monkey, especially Wukong (Chinese 悟空,悟 awakening, 空 emptiness) suggests that the conversion from monster to Buddhist lies in the awakening mind. Our speculation was confirmed by concordances 3 and 5, in which the endless magic power of a demon is compared with Monkey’s havoc. Moreover, an appeal to subdue the fiend is made to none other than Bodhisattva or Buddha to after the pilgrims fail to do so in several rounds of battle. Coincidently, the demons in Chapters 33 and 77, i.e. Red Boy and the Great Roc, are integrated into the cosmic order becoming the personal attendants of Bodhisattva and Buddha. In this sense, Monkey accumulates his “fruits” and “merits” or “good stock” (Campany 1985) by converting the other monsters into Buddhists. The novel’s rhetoric of denying duality between deity and monster is most superbly expressed in an exchange between Monkey and Bodhisattva Guanyin. In Chapter 17, Monkey asks, “Is the monster the Bodhisattva, or is the Bodhisattva the monster?” The Bodhisattva laughed and said, “Wukong, the Bodhisattva and the monster---they all exist in a single thought, for originally they are nothing” (“悟空，菩萨妖精，总是一念。若论本来，皆属无有”). In brief, the disturbance discourse reveals the changes in Great Sage from a havoc-wrecker to a Buddhist pursuing good and seeking truth in terms of three specific aspects: showing confession to his past
wrongdoings, highlighting the awakening role in conversion, and converting other monsters to Buddhists.

### 4.3 Demon subjugation of Great Sage

The above disturbance discourse analysis has touched upon the subjugation of demons. Taking cue from his close reading, Campany (1985) summarizes the subjugation of demons in the following seven steps: 1) description of the site where the demon lives; 2) initial encounter; 3) initial battle(s); 4) stalemate or initial defeat for pilgrims; 5) location of the demon’s master; 6) subjugation; and 7) integration of demon into cosmic order. In this study, we want to extend his argument with the characterization of the converted Great Sage. Alternatively, we start from a distant reading at first, i.e. to obtain the visualized global features of the text (Figure 5), formulate hypotheses, and verify them by a concordance-based close reading.

![Figure 5: Subjugation discourse of Great Sage in Chapters 15–100 of JW](image)

Figure 5 presents the collocation network composed by subduing demons and monsters, which to a large extent corresponds with the opinions of Campany (1985). But the network informs us two latent conceptions recurring in the subjugation discourse, that is, first, a hierarchical ladder, and second, subjugation as a representation of ordeals. Our tentative hypothesis is that monsters and demons who want to eat or sexually seduce the Monk constitute
great ordeals for the sake of jeopardizing the self-cultivation of the pilgrims. As a consequence of subjugation by Great Sage, some monsters are exalted to the Buddhist hierarchy (e.g. Red Boy, Black Bear Monster, Great Roc), some resume their original cosmic positions (e.g. the Great King Golden Horn, the Great King Silver Horn), some renounce evil and continue their self-cultivation (e.g. Rākṣasa), and some are wiped out (e.g. Lady White Bone). In this sense, the frequently recurring subjugation by Great Sage fulfills the Buddhist doctrine “scourging of evil and the exaltation of good.”

Figure 5 shows that the collocates of monster exhibit a greater variety than those of demons by the descriptions of weapons and treasures (rake, lance), battles (rounds, battle, defeat, fought, catch, capture, threw, carry, appearance), emotions (fun, enraged), characters (Gao, Zhu, son-in-law). “Monster” constitutes the primary goal of Great Sage to subdue, while the collective concept “demons” is associated with an allegorical notion of “ordeal.” Moreover, the collocational direction between report and demons suggests a hierarchical relationship.\(^5\) In order to unveil a holistic picture, we sum up nine agents involved when Great Sage subdues the demons on the pilgrimage and mark their transformation based on a close reading of the concordances (Figure 6). The left part in Figure 6 is a demonic world marked by a dashed line, consisting of animals and plants, ghost, lesser demon (or little fiend), monster and demon, in other words, the goal of subjugation. The right part is mainly about the world of pilgrims. These two sections have an interaction because of the ubiquitous demons causing hindrance to the pilgrimage. The recurring subjugation of monsters is a representation of the converted Great Sage protecting his Buddhist faith.

\(^5\) The "little ones" or "lesser demons" (小妖) constitute the household servants and armies of more important and powerful demons (妖魔, 魔头). These animal-spirits, in order to further their own self-cultivation and climb the ladder of perfection, hitch their fortunes to that of an upwardly mobile spiritual and political leader: spiritual, because this leading figure often aids them in the cultivation of self, sometimes by providing them with foods that enhance longevity; political, because the structure of authority in these little communities always mirrors the familiar Chinese monarchical model (Campany 1985).
Figure 6 informs us that self-cultivation is the primary option to get exalted in the hierarchical system. For the pilgrims, they fulfill their self-cultivation by standing the test of 81 ordeals on the pilgrimage. As Yu (2009) has already recognized, we need to read the narration of *Journey* as a pilgrimage of karmic redemption. Because of the store of karmic demerits built up by the past transgressions of each pilgrim, all must undertake the journey to atone for their sins and wipe their karmic slates clean (Bantly 1989). For monsters, they wish to enhance their cultivation by eating or having a sexual alliance with the Monk (see example [7]), and even their destinies after the subjugation to be exalted (example [8]) or spared (example [9]) are explicated or hinted at as a consequence of self-cultivation.

[7] I have often heard people say that he is someone who has practiced self-cultivation for ten incarnations. If anyone eats a piece of his flesh, this person will enjoy the same age as an immortal. (Chapter 42)

[8] Because that Great Black King attained the way of humanity through self-cultivation, he frequently came to the monastery to discuss religious texts with my master. (Chapter 17)

[9] My wife, who has practiced self-cultivation since her youth, is also an immortal who has attained the Way. (Chapter 60)

In short, the cyclical ordeals and subjugation by Great Sage are governed by the ubiquitous karmic law, in which each fictional character, immortals, humans, demons, has his destiny as a consequence of his self-cultivation.
4.4 Civility contrast before and after conversion

As a textual hint of Monkey’s evolving character, the collocate *bowing* in Figure 7 is gauged to be body language symbolizing civility discourse. In what follows, we will analyze the 11 instances of *Great Sage* collocating with *bowing* (15L, 15R) with the help of BFSU PowerConc, and spot its progression in light of functional linguistics (Table 2). Horizontally read, Table 2 could be interpreted as the way Monkey relates with other interactants. Vertically, we can discern the evaluation of Monkey by comparing the civility discourse concerning him. These two perspectives hint at the civility characterization of Monkey.

**Table 2:** Bowing behavior related to Monkey in *Journey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Bowing</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Local spirit to Monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td>question</td>
<td>What sort of instructions do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Dragon prince to Monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td>offer</td>
<td>Your little dragon dares not linger any longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Child Sudhana to Monkey</td>
<td>Approached him bowing</td>
<td>offer</td>
<td>I must thank you for your past kindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Devarāja to Monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td>question</td>
<td>Where is the Great Sage Sun going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Devarāja to Monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td>question</td>
<td>Where are you going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Monkey to Fox</td>
<td>Bowing low to salute her + said slowly</td>
<td>question</td>
<td>Lady Bodhisattva, where are you going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Monkey to Fox</td>
<td>Bowing again and smiling</td>
<td>question</td>
<td>May I ask the Lady Bodhisattva whether this is the Hoard-Thunder Mountain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Monkey to Bull Demon King</td>
<td>Bowing again + statement</td>
<td>command</td>
<td>Don’t wrongly blame me… Bodhisattva Guanyin persuaded your</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6 As emphasized in systemic functional linguistics, one of the primary purposes of communication is to interact with other people: to establish and maintain social bonds with other interactants. In the process of communication, we use language to exchange information or goods and services by performing the speech role of giving or demanding. Hence, four major speech functions are outlined: statement (giving information); question (demanding information); offer (giving goods and services), and command (demanding goods and services) (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). One possible exploration of the characterization of Great Sage requires us to examine the dynamic relations between him and his interactions.
Bowing behavior doesn’t happen to Great Sage before his conversion (Chapters 1 to 14), but dramatically increases in Chapter 60, where he bows to his sworn brother the Bull Demon King, the White-Faced Fox (the concubine of Bull) with affable manners bowing low to salute her, said slowly, bowing again and smiling, etc. From this perspective, the Great Sage is portrayed in a more humanized way. The mentioned humble body language of Monkey in lines 6, 7, and 8 are “the narrational suspensions,” that is, the voice of the narrator inserted between the direct speech of the characters, reflecting their emotional or cognitive process (Stockwell and Mahlberg 2015: 134). In other words, the narrator is guiding readers to offset the previous cumulative effect that Great Sage is a monster and reconstruct his image as a civilized human being. This narrative intention is in line with the politeness of direct speech, e.g. the vocative (Lady Bodhisattva), and a low modal value (May I). But one intriguing question in need of clarification is why Monkey was deliberately and intensively humanized in Chapter 60. This twist of characterization is believed to be in accordance with his equally humanized counterpart “Bull Demon King,” who is the only demon in the novel establishing a humanlike social network with his wife, mistress, son, and sworn brothers. Our above findings are essentially complementary to those by Chen (2015). Having carefully probed the intertextual relationship between Journey and Buddhist scriptures, Chen (2015) discovered that Buddhists subduing Bull Demon King could be made analogous with mortals suppressing their carnal desires. With respect to the present study, the humanized Great Sage in Chapter 60 can be attributed to the fact that he is dealing with another humanized Bull. As shown in Figure 6, conversion and

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Rākṣasa to Monkey</td>
<td>command +statement</td>
<td>son to return to the right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Sentinel to Monkey</td>
<td>Bowing hurriedly</td>
<td>question</td>
<td>Great Sage, you are the joyous immortal among men. How could you be bored? [...] How could you blame us instead?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Monkey to the queen</td>
<td>Bowing to her as he offer retrieved his magic hairs</td>
<td>Worthy Queen, we promise you that we shall capture the old monster and return four princes to you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
self-cultivation are the way to move from human mortals to a real Buddhist or Immortals. The textual evidence of Great Sage proceeding to cultivate himself from humanity to deity is presented in Chapter 90, line 11 in Table 2.

Overall, the civility of Great Sage upgrades from polite speech (demanding information, lines 6–8 in Table 2) to a kind offer (giving service, line 11 in Table 2), where Great Sage rescues four young princes captured by a lion monster. This improvement manifests that Monkey is committed to the Buddhism doctrine “do good and seek the truth.” His mercy extending to human mortals indicates that the character of Great Sage therein has been approaching divinity. The virtues accumulated in the pilgrimage prove how Monkey transforms from a mixture of animal and monster to a human, to a deity, and finally to Buddhahood.

The charm of Monkey lies in the fact that he is a mixture of human, monkey, monster, and deity. Table 2 demonstrates that the Great Sage, after having converted to Buddhism, occasionally reverts to his old ways. For instance, lines 1, 2, 4, 5, and 10 indicate that local spirit, dragon, and sentinel, who closely safeguard the Monk and his disciples in the whole process of the pilgrimage, are reacting to the commands of Monkey. But their obedience is somewhat driven by a sense of owing, especially in line 10, where the sentinel is rebuked by Great Sage when the Monk is imprisoned by a demon.

5 Conclusions

Western readers reading the faithful translation of The Journey to the West by Anthony Yu for the first time may find Monkey's multiple identities confounding. Our present study indicates that there is a substantial difference in the identity discourse of the Great Sage before and after his Buddhist conversion. Before his religious conversion, the Great Sage is in nature a monster making indiscriminate use of his magic power to gratify his insatiable desires for a high official rank, immortality, etc. Indebted to Bodhisattva Guanyin, the converted Great Sage follows the Monk to be a Buddhist, adhering to the doctrine of “do good and seek the truth.” Based on a collocation network analysis, we assume that karmic redemption and self-cultivation are two intertwined themes emerging from the identity discourse of the converted Great Sage. That was quite likely the major reason for Timothy Richard misreading the source text as a Christian allegory. The tenet of karmic redemption permeates throughout the subjugation storylines and re-mentioned disturbance in Heaven in the speech of different fictional characters. For one thing, the Great Sage
confesses his wrongdoings and commits himself to protecting his Buddhist belief by eliminating the pagan demons and monsters encountered on the pilgrimage road. For another, the converted Great Sage inspires readers to reexamine the blurry boundary between monsters and immortals by emphasizing the theme of self-cultivation. In order to delineate the spiritual evolution of Monkey, we analyzed the collocations of bowing and the Great Sage in the light of functional grammar. We find a transition from the monstrous Sage to the humanized Sage and the Sage of deity. Apparently, Monkey, in the final chapter, is rewarded with the title “Victorious Fighting Buddha.” But Buddhahood is attained not only because he reaches the terminal of holy land but also because of the arduous process of suppressing the internal and external evil side and bringing honor to the virtuous side.

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