

JOURNEY TO THE WEST

WU CHENG'EN

Translated by
W.J.F. Jenner



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING

First Edition 1982
Second Edition 1990
Third Printing 2002

TRANSLATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Li Rongxi for giving generously of his broad, profound and many-sided scholarship in removing errors from this version and resolving problems. I am also greatly indebted to the staff of the Foreign Languages Press, and especially to

Huang Jingying for the infinite patience and care with which she has checked and improved typescript and proofs. Responsibility for the many remaining mistakes is mine.

W.J.F.J.

Home Page:
<http://www.flp.com.cn>
E-mail Addresses:
Info@flp.com.cn
Sales@flp.com.cn

ISBN 7-119-00653-3

English Translation © by W.J.F. Jenner

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

Printed by Beijing Foreign Languages Printing House

19 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a complete three-volume translation of the Chinese edition of *Journey to the West* in 100 chapters published in 1955 by the Beijing People's Literature Publishing House.

A well-known mythological novel based on folk tales, *Journey to the West* was probably put into its present form in the 1570s by Wu Cheng'en (1500-82).

Many different editions of the novel have appeared over the past 400 years. The Chinese edition of 1955 was based on the earliest known edition, the Shidetang woodblock edition printed in Nanjing in the 20th year of Wanli reign (1592) in the Ming Dynasty, and was further checked against six different editions from the Qing Dynasty.

The illustrations were selected from a lithographic edition (New Edition of Pictures for "*Journey to the West*") published in the 14th year (1888) of the Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty.

A "Translator's Afterword" will be found at the end of Volume 3.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Divine Root conceives and the spring
breaks forth;
As the mind's nature is cultivated,
the Great Way arises.

*Before Chaos was divided, Heaven and Earth were one;
All was a shapeless blur, and no men had appeared.
Once Pan Gu destroyed the Enormous Vagueness
The separation of clear and impure began.*

*Living things have always tended towards humanity;
From their creation all beings improve.
If you want to know about Creation and Time,
Read Difficulties Resolved on the Journey to the West.*

In the arithmetic of the universe, 129,600 years make one cycle. Each cycle can be divided into twelve phases: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII, the twelve branches.* Each phase lasts 10,800 years.

Now within a single day, the positive begins at the time I; at II the cock crows; at III it is not quite light; at IV the sun rises; V is after breakfast; and at VI one does business. VII is when the sun reaches noon; at VIII it is slipping towards the west; IX is late afternoon; the sun sets at X; XI is dusk; and at XII people settle down for the night.

If you compare this with the big numbers, then at the end of Phase XI Heaven and Earth became blurred and everything was in an inauspicious state. 5,400 years later came the beginning of Phase XII, when all was darkness and both human

* Represented also by twelve animals: mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog, and pig.

beings and inanimate things vanished from the world, for this reason it was called Chaos. Another 5,400 years later Phase XII was drawing to a close and a new cycle was about to begin. As Phase I of the new era approached, gradually there was light. As Shao Yong said,

*"When the winter solstice is at the mid-point of Phase I
The heart of Heaven does not move.
Where the Positive first appears
Nothing has yet come to life."*

At this time, Heaven first had a foundation. 5,400 years later, in the middle of Phase I, the light and pure rose upwards, and sun, moon, stars, and constellations were created. These were called the Four Images. Hence the saying that heaven began in I.

Another 5,400 years later, when Phase I was nearing its end and Phase II was imminent, things gradually solidified. As the *Book of Changes* says, "Great is the Positive; far-reaching is the Negative! All things are endowed and born in accordance with Heaven." This was when the earth began to congeal. After 5,400 more years came the height of Phase II, when the heavy and impure solidified, and water, fire, mountains, stone, and Earth came into being. These five were called the Five Movers. Therefore it is said that the Earth was created in Phase II.

After a further 5,400 years, at the end of Phase II and the beginning of the Phase III, living beings were created. In the words of the *Book of the Calendar*: "The essence of the sky came down and the essence of earth went up. Heaven and Earth intermingled, and all creatures were born." Then Heaven was bright and Earth was fresh, and the Positive intermingled with the Negative. 5,400 years later, when Phase III was at its height, men, birds and beasts were created. Thus the Three Primaries — Heaven, Earth and Man — now had their set places. Therefore it is said that man was created in Phase III.

Moved by Pan Gu's creation, the Three Emperors put the world in order and the Five Rulers laid down the moral code.

The world was then divided into four great continents: The Eastern Continent of Superior Body, the Western Continent of Cattle-gift, the Southern Continent of Jambu and the Northern Continent of Kuru. This book deals only with the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. Beyond the seas there is a country called Aolai. This country is next to an ocean, and in the middle of the ocean is a famous island called the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. This mountain is the ancestral chain of the Ten Continents, the origin of the Three Islands; it was formed when the clear and impure were separated and the Enormous Vagueness was divided. It is a really splendid mountain and there are some verses to prove it:

*It stills the ocean with its might,
It awes the jade sea into calm.
It stills the ocean with its might:
Tides wash its silver slopes and fish swim into its caves.
It awes the jade sea into calm:
Amid the snowy breakers the sea-serpent rises from the deep.*

It rises high in the corner of the world where Fire and Wood meet;

Its summit towers above the Eastern Sea.

Red cliffs and strange rocks;

Beetling crags and jagged peaks.

On the red cliffs phoenixes sing in pairs;

Lone unicorns lie before the beetling crags.

The cry of pheasants is heard upon the peaks;

In caves the dragons come and go.

There are flowers of jade and strange plants that wither

Miraculous birds and black cranes in the trees.

There are flowers of jade and strange plants that wither not;

Green pine and bluish cypress ever in leaf,

Magic peaches always in fruit.

Clouds gather round the tall bamboo.

The wisteria grows thick around the mountain brook

*And the banks around are newly-coloured with flowers.
It is the Heaven-supporting pillar where all the rivers
meet,*

The Earth's root, unchanged through a myriad aeons.

There was once a magic stone on the top of this mountain which was thirty-six feet five inches high and twenty-four feet round. It was thirty-six feet five inches high to correspond with the 365 degrees of the heavens, and twenty-four feet round to match the twenty-four divisions of the solar calendar. On top of it were nine apertures and eight holes, for the Nine Palaces and the Eight Trigrams. There were no trees around it to give shade, but magic fungus and orchids clung to its sides. Ever since Creation began it had been receiving the truth of Heaven, the beauty of Earth, the essence of the Sun and the splendour of the Moon; and as it had been influenced by them for so long it had miraculous powers. It developed a magic womb, which burst open one day to produce a stone egg about the size of a ball.

When the wind blew on this egg it turned into a stone monkey, complete with the five senses and four limbs. When the stone monkey had learnt to crawl and walk, he bowed to each of the four quarters. As his eyes moved, two beams of golden light shot towards the Pole Star Palace and startled the Supreme Heavenly Sage, the Greatly Compassionate Jade Emperor of the Azure Vault of Heaven, who was sitting surrounded by his immortal ministers on his throne in the Hall of Miraculous Mist in the Golden-gated Cloud Palace. When he saw the dazzling golden light he ordered Thousand-mile Eye and Wind-accompanying Ear to open the Southern Gate of Heaven and take a look. The two officers went out through the gate in obedience to the imperial command, and while one observed what was going on the other listened carefully. Soon afterwards they reported back:

"In obedience to the Imperial Mandate your subjects observed and listened to the source of the golden light. We found that at the edge of the country of Aolai, which is east

of the ocean belonging to the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, there is an island called the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. A magic stone on the top of this mountain produced a magic egg, and when the wind blew on this egg it turned into a stone monkey which bowed to each of the four quarters. When he moved his eyes, golden light shot towards the Pole Star Palace; but now that he is eating and drinking, the golden light is gradually dying."

In his benevolence and mercy the Jade Emperor said, "Creatures down below are born of the essence of heaven and earth: there is nothing remarkable about him."

On his mountain the monkey was soon able to run and jump, feed from plants and trees, drink from brooks and springs, pick mountain flowers and look for fruit. He made friends with the wolves, went around with the tigers and leopards, was on good terms with the deer, and had the other monkeys and apes for relations. At night he slept under the rockfaces, and he roamed around the peaks and caves by day. As the saying so rightly goes, "There is no calendar in the mountains, and when winter's over you don't know the time of year." On hot mornings he and all the other monkeys would play under the shade of some pines to avoid the heat. Just look at them all:

*Climbing trees, picking flowers, looking for fruit;
Throwing pellets, playing knucklebones;
Running round sandy hollows, building stone pagodas;
Chasing dragonflies and catching locusts;
Worshipping the sky and visiting Bodhisattvas;
Tearing off creepers and weaving straw hats;
Catching fleas then popping them with their teeth and
fingers;
Grooming their coats and sharpening their nails;
Beating, scratching, pushing, squashing, tearing and
tugging;
Playing all over the place under the pine trees;
Washing themselves beside the green stream.*

After playing, the monkeys would go and bathe in the stream, a mountain torrent that tumbled along like rolling melons. There is an old saying, "Birds have bird language and animals have animal talk." All the monkeys said to each other, "I wonder where that water comes from. We've got nothing else to do today, so wouldn't it be fun to go upstream and find its source?" With a shout they all ran off, leading their children and calling to their brothers. They climbed up the mountain beside the stream until they reached its source, where a waterfall cascaded from a spring.

They saw

*One white rainbow arching,
A thousand strands of flying snow,
Unbroken by the sea winds,
Still there under the moon.*

*Cold air divides the greeny crags,
Splashes moisten the mountainside;
A noble waterfall cascades,
Hanging like a curtain.*

The monkeys clapped their hands and exclaimed with delight, "What lovely water. It must go all the way to the bottom of the mountain and join the waves of the sea."

Then one monkey made a suggestion: "If anyone is clever enough to go through the fall, find the source, and come out in one piece, let's make him our king." When this challenge had been shouted three times, the stone monkey leapt out from the crowd and answered at the top of his voice, "I'll go, I'll go." Splendid monkey! Indeed,

*Today he will make his name;
Tomorrow his destiny shall triumph.
He is fated to live here;
As a King he will enter the Immortals' palace.*

Watch him as he shuts his eyes, crouches, and springs, leaping straight into the waterfall. When he opened his eyes and raised his head to look round, he saw neither water nor

waves. A bridge stood in front of him, as large as life. He stopped, calmed himself, took a closer look, and saw that the bridge was made of iron. The water that rushed under it poured out through a fissure in the rocks, screening the gateway to the bridge. He started walking towards the bridge, and as he looked he made out what seemed to be a house. It was a really good place. He saw:

*Emerald moss piled up in heaps of blue,
White clouds like drifting jade,
While the light flickered among wisps of coloured mist.*

*A quiet house with peaceful windows,
Flowers growing on the smooth bench;
Dragon pearls hanging in niches,
Exotic blooms all around.
Traces of fire beside the stove,
Scraps of food in the vessels by the table.
Adorable stone chairs and beds,
Even better stone plates and bowls.*

*One or two tall bamboos,
Three or four springs of plum blossom,
A few pines that always attract rain,
All just like a real home.*

He took a good, long look and then scampered to the middle of the bridge, from where he noticed a stone tablet. On the tablet had been carved in big square letters:

HAPPY LAND OF THE MOUNTAIN OF FLOWERS
AND FRUIT
CAVE HEAVEN OF THE WATER CURTAIN.

The stone monkey was beside himself with glee. He rushed away, shut his eyes, crouched, and leapt back through the waterfall. "We're in luck, we're in luck," he said with a chuckle. All the other monkeys crowded round him asking, "What's it like in there? How deep is the water?" "There's no water, none at all," replied the stone monkey. "There's an iron bridge,

and on the other side of the bridge there's a house that must have been made by Heaven and Earth." "How ever could you see a house there?" the other monkeys asked. The stone monkey chuckled again. "The water here comes under the bridge and through the rocks, and it hides the gateway to the bridge from view. There are flowers and trees by the bridge, and a stone house too. Inside the house are stone rooms, a stone stove, stone bowls, stone plates, stone beds, and even stone benches. In the middle of it all is a tablet which says 'Happy Land of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, Cave Heaven of the Water Curtain'. It's just the place for us to settle down in — there's room there for thousands. Let's all move in, then we won't have to put up with any more nonsense from heaven. In there

*We can hide there from the wind,
And shelter from the rain,
With nothing to fear from frost and snow,
And never a rumble of thunder.*

*The coloured mists glow bright
And the place smells lucky.
The pine and bamboo will always be beautiful,
And rare flowers blossom every day."*

The other monkeys were all so delighted to hear this that they said, "You go first and take us with you." The stone monkey shut his eyes, crouched, and leapt in again, shouting, "Follow me in, follow me in." The braver monkeys all jumped through. The more timid ones peered forward, shrank back, rubbed their ears, scratched their cheeks, shouted, and yelled at the top of their voices, before going in, all clinging to each other. After rushing across the bridge they all grabbed plates and snatched bowls, bagged stoves and fought over beds, and moved everything around. Monkeys are born naughty and they could not keep quiet for a single moment until they had worn themselves out moving things around.

The stone monkey sat himself in the main seat and said, "Gentlemen, 'A man who breaks his word is worthless.' Just

now you said that if anyone was clever enough to come in here and get out again in one piece, you'd make him king. Well, then. I've come in and gone out, and gone out and come in. I've found you gentlemen a cave heaven where you can sleep in peace and all settle down to live in bliss. Why haven't you made me king?" On hearing this all the monkeys bowed and prostrated themselves, not daring to disobey. They lined up in groups in order of age and paid their homage as at court, all acclaiming him as the "Great King of a Thousand Years". The stone monkey then took the throne, made the word "stone" taboo, and called himself Handsome Monkey King. There is a poem to prove it that goes:

*All things are born from the Three Positives;
The magic stone was quick with the essence of sun and
moon.*

*An egg was turned into a monkey to complete the Great
Way;*

*He was lent a name so that the elixir would be complete.
Looking inside he perceives nothing because it has no
form,*

*Outside he uses his intelligence to create visible things.
Men have always been like this;*

*Those who are called kings and sages do just as they
wish.*

Taking control of his host of monkeys, apes, gibbons and others, the Handsome Monkey King divided them into rulers and subjects, assistants and officers. In the morning they roamed the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit and in the evening they settled down for the night in the Water Curtain Cave. They made a compact that they would not join the ranks of the birds or go with the running beasts. They had their own king, and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

*In spring they picked flowers for food and drink,
In summer they lived off fruit.*

*In autumn they gathered taros and chestnuts;
They got through the winter on Solomon's-seal.*