

A Research Review of "Journey to the West" in the Past Forty Years

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Abstract

It has been four hundred years since the hundred-fold novel "Journey to the West" was published in the Ming Dynasty. This paper tries to describe the research topics and propositions of "Journey to the West" in the past forty years from the thematic aspect. As an important part of the cultural study of "Journey to the West" in modern China, the hundred-fold novel "Journey to the West" has accumulated a series of important achievements in the study of the literary works of "Journey to the West" and formed a relatively complete academic system. And it is in a state of inclusive development. From the perspective of academic research, many foci condensed because their theoretical logic and object characteristics are concentrated. Thus, this paper mainly focuses on several propositions, including research on the author and version of the hundred-fold novel "Journey to the West", research on the theme and culture of "Journey to the West", research on the characters in "Journey to the West", research on images and murals in "Journey to the West", research on the legend of "Journey to the West", research on the overseas dissemination of "Journey to the West", etc. Therefore, it can be seen that the current academic research on "Journey to the West" is in a period of prosperity.

Keywords

"Journey to the West"; The Culture of "Journey to the West"; The Cultural Dissemination of "Journey to the West".

1. Introduction

The origin or initial plot of the cultural study of "Journey to the West" is the true story of Tang Xuanzang's journey to the Western Regions to learn scriptures. According to historical records, the earliest text "The Record of the Western Regions of the Tang Dynasty" was a documentary work recorded by Xuanzang's disciples after his return from the study of Buddhist scriptures, following the edict of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty, and personally dictating it. This book described in detail the mountains and rivers, history, and customs of various countries in the Western Regions that Xuanzang experienced. Later, Xuanzang's disciple Huili and others added a lot of literary color to "The Biography of Sanzang Master in Daci'en Temple of the Tang Dynasty". One is to strengthen the image description of Xuanzang's life; the other is to add some religious myths and historical legends. In this way, the story of Xuanzang's study of scriptures gradually broke through the truth, leaving the monastery and entering the society. This prompted the transformation of the true story of Xuanzang's study of scriptures into myths and legends, which were continuously spread to the public.

In the process of completing the hundred-fold novel "Journey to the West" of the Ming Dynasty, "The Poetry of the Tang Dynasty Sanzang" was a key work. This poem has seventeen stanzas. Although the narration of the story is relatively brief, the plot is complete and self-contained, and it is very likely to be a script of folk oral communication that began with the "popular talk" in the Tang Dynasty. In the Yuan Dynasty, "Simple Words of Journey to the West" appeared. Its original has been lost, but we can read fragments of stories such as "Killing the Jinghe River

Dragon in the Dream", "Fighting the Sage in the Chechi Kingdom", and other story clips from the "Yongle Dadian" and the ancient Chinese textbook in Korean "Park Tong Shi Proverbs". It can be seen that this is close to the storyline of the novel "Journey to the West" in the Ming Dynasty.

The novel form of "Journey to the West" was first seen in Wu Chengen's hundred-fold "Journey to the West" in the Ming Dynasty, without the author's signature. This novel is based on the historical event of "Tang Seng's acquisition of scriptures", and it deeply depicts the social reality at that time through the author's artistic processing. The whole book mainly describes that after Sun Wukong was born and made big havoc in the Heavenly Palace, he met Tang Seng, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Seng, and traveled west to learn scriptures, conquered demons, and subdued demons all the way, went through hardships, arrived in the west to see Tathagata Buddha, and finally become immortals. In "History of Chinese Fiction", Xun Lu said that "Journey to the West" is a novel of Chinese gods and monsters. "Journey to the West" is a classic of Chinese mythical novels, reaching the pinnacle of ancient romantic novels. Together with Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, and A Dream of Red Mansions, it is also known as the Four Great Classical Novels of China.

2. The Research Field of "Journey to the West"

From the early 1920s to the present, the research on "Journey to the West" has gone through a course of 100 years. From the perspective of academic research, it mainly focuses on the following propositions:

2.1. Research on the Author and Version of "Journey to the West"

At present, among those papers with reservations, doubts, or even negative attitudes towards the author of the novel "Journey to the West" by Chengen Wu, the strength of refutation is far greater than that of argumentation. Because no very strong documentary evidence has been found to explain the author of the novel, the final solution of this issue depends on the discovery of new historical data. In the version study, the main problems focus on the two aspects of the successful relationship between the traditional version and the simplified version. Among them, Fan Li's master's thesis "Mr. Zhuowu Li Criticizes Journey to the West" shows that Li's commentary is the first relatively mature commentary of "Journey to the West". The strengths of its edition, text, illustrations, and commentary make Li's commentary an excellent version of "Journey to the West". Once it was published, it became popular and was widely distributed in the late Ming and Qing dynasties. Shunzhong Lou's research on "Journey to the West Records", after careful collation and comparison in the text, came to the conclusion that the original version of "Journey to the West Records" was "The True Interpretation of the Westward Journey". Miao Wang's "Supplementary Record of Journey to the West" is a transformation of "Journey to the West". The article starts from four aspects: theme, content, expression technique, and the image of the main character, Sun Wukong, to elaborate the transformation of "Journey to the West" by "Supplementary Record of Journey to the West". This confirms the artistic value of "Supplementary Record of Journey to the West" in many fairy tales and sequels. Hongwang Zhang's "Research on Yang Jingxian and drama Journey to the West", the text of Jingxian Yang and his drama "Journey to the West" is the research object of this paper. The author collects and organizes several existing versions and conducts in-depth interpretation and research on the innovative structure and system of Jingxian Yang's drama "Journey to the West". Lin Guo's review of Shushen Zhang's "New Journey to the West Images", the article compares and analyzes "New Journey to the West Pictures" and Zhi Li's "Mr. Zhuowu Li Criticizes Journey to the West" to find out the similarities and differences in thinking between the two and discover the differences between the two. From the cultural changes of the times and the reform of commentary methods, it demonstrates its significance in text interpretation

and obtains a holistic and systematic grasp of the commentary on "New Journey to the West Images". Yangyang Li's paper "Research on Dingchen Zhu's Compilation of Novels", through textual research on the time and inscription of Dingchen Zhu's compilation of books, as well as the contemporary Jiangxi literati who signed "Yangcheng", came to a conclusion: Dingchen Zhu was a lower-class scholar born in the late Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty and active in the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty. His native place was Linchuan, Jiangxi. There are currently three novels compiled by Dingchen Zhu: "A Commentary on the History of the Three Kingdoms", "The Biography of the Journey to the West of the Tang Seng of the Quanxiang", and "The Biography of the Journey to the South of the Quanxiang Guanyin". In her master's thesis of "Journey to the West" story evolution and dissemination research, Wen Li analyzed the dissemination characteristics, methods, and ways of the story-carrying genre of Journey to the West in different periods, and analyzed the communication methods and characteristics in the four different communication genres of Journey to the West in popular stories, talks, Yuan drama, and novels. In addition, she also discussed the adaptation of the novel "Journey to the West" by cartoons, TV series, and movies in the era of mass communication with the rise of new media such as computers, and analyzed the practical significance of film and television dramas for the spread of novels.

2.2. Research on the Theme and Culture of "Journey to the West"

Thematic research belongs to the category of textual interpretation. Based on the text, it presents the interpretation of various opinions, and many opinions can be roughly classified into political themes and philosophical themes. Junhua Li's "Journey to the West" theme research uses the methods of text research and historical examination. Based on Shi Hu and Xun Lu's point of view of the game theory, he further supplements the analysis and demonstration and puts forward the view that "Journey to the West" is an entertaining novel. Jianwei Huang put forward a new interpretation through the careful reading of the text of "Journey to the West" in his book "Degrading Taoism, Laughing at Buddha, and Chongru Confucianism--A Study on the Theme of Journey to the West". This novel, which looks like a game, is basically a haiku-style playlist. It inherits the tradition of ancient Chinese haiku dwarfs satirizing the king with funny and witty language. It uses a strange method to persuade the politicians at that time, not to favor the believers, but to choose the virtuous and capable and to reuse the talents, in order to "keep the country forever" and "the emperor's plan is forever". The theme of "Journey to the West" is to degrade Taoism, ridicule Buddhism, and worship Confucianism. It exposes Taoist warlocks who are confused and chaotic and exposes the false compassion of Buddhist monks who take the lead and selfishness and then expose the monarch's ignorance and virtuousness, leading to the evil consequences of treacherous and evil in power, and let the world take a warning. Zhe Yang's "Journey to the West" Taoist thought research mainly pointed out the cultivation idea in "Journey to the West", that is, the cultivation of inner alchemy and the yin-yang and five-element ideas reflected by the team of learning scriptures and the gods and demons. Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Monk Sha, and others all practiced the inner alchemy method, and many poems and terms in the book reflect the inner alchemy thought. The pilgrimage team is a combination of yin and yang and the five elements. More than once in the book, Taoist terms such as Jin Gong, Mu Mu, and Huang Po are used to refer to Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Seng, but the attributes of Tang Seng and Bailongma are not clearly explained, which shows that the Taoist thoughts in the book are not rigorous. Immortals and demons also correspond to the yin and yang attributes of the five elements, and each has different functions. Nan Zhang's paper "The "Reality" and "Falsehood" of Journey to the West from the Perspective of Buddhist Philosophy, starting from the specific connotations of the opposites of "truth" and "falsehood" in Buddhist philosophy, and the overall observation and specific analysis of "Journey to the West" are made to explore the deep meaning of the work. It can be seen that "Journey to the West" has a very close connection with Buddhist philosophy,

and the artistic conception is rigorous and profound. Guoqing Zhao's "Journey to the West" and Immortal Culture believes that part of "Journey to the West" is about the popular inner alchemy technique since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, while the other part is a hidden criticism of the emperor and social reality at that time. These two aspects should not be exposed directly, so the author has taken protective measures, that is, the method of deformation and exaggeration. On the one hand, it turns the cultural life of the fairy into a story, and on the other hand, it turns the social life into a monster. Deformation and exaggeration is the artistic principle of "Journey to the West", which not only serves the purpose of protecting the author's safety but also has the aesthetic effect of "defamiliarization".

2.3. Research on the Characters in "Journey to the West"

In Feng Zhu's "Analysis of the Literati Spirit of the Image of Sun Wukong", he carefully read the text of "Journey to the West" and analyzed the personality, bearing, and spirit of the "human" contained in the image of Sun Wukong. The article explains that the literati spirit presented by Sun Wukong is not necessarily the intention and original intention of the author of "Journey to the West". It is more likely that his temperament, emotion, and the depths of his thoughts, the so-called "subconsciousness", are unconsciously revealed, and the connotation of his literati spirit is an ideal model and does not have universal significance. Wanxing Cai's master's dissertation started from "Journey to the West", and analyzed the definition of "God". At the same time, he looked at the genealogy of the gods of various religions (mainly Taoism and Buddhism) before "Journey to the West" was written. Through the classification and induction of the gods in "Journey to the West", the images of the gods have four characteristics: The system of gods is huge and complex, but not confusing at all; All the gods in "Journey to the West" have the characteristics of the unity of the three religions; The author rearranged the relationship between the gods in work; The secular character of the images of the gods. The author further discusses the cultural implication and artistic function of the gods in Journey to the West. With the help of the image of the gods, the author of the novel achieves a pleasing artistic aesthetic effect. In Xingxiang Wang's master's thesis "Equals Immortals and Mortals, Ancient and Present - Cultural Interpretation of Zhu Bajie's Image in Journey to the West", the cultural origin, cultural connotation, and various forms of expression of the image of Zhu Bajie, which integrates animals, gods, and mortals, are objectively, comprehensively, and meticulously discussed. Wei Han's master's thesis "Research on the Image of Kings in Journey to the West" studies the image of the "king". He hopes to study the images of four types of kings, namely, god kings, human kings, spirit kings, and religious leaders, through the study of the images of many kings in "Journey to the West". Through the research, it can be seen that the author's image of these four types of kings is less praise than criticism. By examining the various kings in "Journey to the West" from the above aspects, we can see that the author is actually using the images of various kings to show people the reality of Ming society with a dazed king, corrupt rule, dark and unfair society, and local tyranny. At the same time, he also used the image of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, to reflect his ideological quality and his good desire to rebuild a peaceful world.

2.4. Research on Narrative Function of "Journey to the West"

Ying Xue's "narrative techniques and narrative methods--on Andi Pu's research on the four Chinese strange books" pointed out that the significance of Andi Pu's narratological research on the "four strange books" and his systematic analysis of the narrative thoughts in them can be summarized as follows: "Chinese Narratology". The article summarizes the enlightenment of Andi Pu's "Chinese Narratology" to Chinese academic circles: He thinks about Chinese Ming and Qing novels from the standpoint of an exotic cultural background, and discovers the modern value of the long-forgotten Ming and Qing commentaries; To realize the modern transformation of ancient Chinese literary theory, the key is to find the point of convergence

between Chinese and Western literary theory. Yuting Gong's "Journey to the West" functional narrative research specifically analyzes the different manifestations of "Journey to the West" functional narrative from four aspects: functional scene narrative, functional object image narrative, functional auditory narrative, and functional illustration narrative. She tasted the different narrative charm of "Journey to the West", and triggered people's more understanding and thinking about "functional narrative", and then explored the stylistic characteristics of ancient novels and the original appearance of narrative tradition. Hui Ma's thesis "Journey to the West" story of marriage snatching -- a comparative study of the novel "Journey to the West" and the novel "Journey to the West" carried out structural morphological analysis and comparative study based on the story of snatching marriage in the drama "Journey to the West" and the play "Journey to the West". The article mainly uses Propp's folk story morphological analysis method to explore the origin of thinking consciousness, social system origin, and ritual origin of the story of "Journey to the West".

2.5. Research on Comparative Literature of "Journey to the West"

Tiancai Dai's "A Comparative Study of Faust and Journey to the West from Multi-dimensional Perspectives" compares and analyzes the style and connotation of the two novels from the dimensions of time and space, expressing the different understandings and thinking of the East and the West towards life, and showing the different cultural spirits of the East and the West. Yanfei Gong's "On the Blockiness of Chinese and the Linkage of English: Taking "Journey to the West" and "Gulliver's Travels" as Examples", selects "Journey to the West" and the English work "Gulliver's Travels" similar to its era as corpus. It compares the typical example sentences and translations of the original work, focusing on the block structure of Chinese and the hook structure of English, and concludes that the spatial characteristics of Chinese can be traced back to Chinese characters that express meaning by shape. The temporal nature of English can be found in the words that express the meaning of sounds. In Jie Xing's "A Comparative Study of "Journey to the West" Drama and "Journey to the West" Wu Ben's "Journey to the West" by Yang Jingxian of Yuan Dynasty and "Journey to the West" by Wu Chengen of Ming Dynasty, the purpose of learning scriptures, reflection on life and society, the attitude towards religion, and the characters of the novels are compared, and the reasons for these differences are drawn, which are not only related to the author's social background and creative guiding ideology, but also to the source of the subject matter of the work, richness, and apology, genre, capacity, volume, and the audience is related, and the drama has a certain influence on the novel. But the novel goes beyond the drama. Ying Yang's comparative study of "Journey to the West" and "The Greatest Traveler", the paper takes two animations, "Journey to the West" (China) and "The Greatest Traveler" (Japan), which are also adapted from Chinese classics. Supported by art theories such as literature, drama, and film, she compares the differences between Chinese animation and Japanese animation in animation character modeling, character, character relationship, narrative techniques, etc., explores the shortcomings of Chinese animation, and absorbs the development of Japanese animation. The experience provides some reference for the development of Chinese animation. Dong Zhang's "Water Margin", "Journey to the West", "Jin Ping Mei" and "A Dream of Red Mansions" comparatively study the modal particles, reveal their development and changes, and finally describe the semantic and pragmatic functions of the modal particles in modern Chinese. According to the results of comparative analysis, the semantic function and pragmatic function of modern Chinese modal particles are summarized, and the evolution track of modern Chinese modal particles in four famous works is summarized. Longhai Zhang's "Journey to the West" and "Faust" in the comparative study of the emancipation of the mind, several sets of literary motifs shared by "Journey to the West" and "Faust", including "rescue", "pursuit", "Good and Evil", "Spirit and Flesh", "Childhood and Carnival", etc., for comparative analysis. The article points out that "multiple symbioses" is the basic form of world literature ecology. Literature of different countries and nationalities has its

own unique value, and the exchange between them is possible and necessary; At the same time, "harmony but difference" is an inevitable criterion in the communication of literature between different countries and ethnic groups. Acknowledging the state of pluralism and symbiosis and respecting the principle of cultural differences is the logical starting point for the harmonious coexistence of world literature and national literature. This paper compares and analyzes the relationship between the two literary works and creative thinking, aiming to see the big from the small, write the general from the special, and deduce the commonality from the personality so as to draw the important value of creative thinking to literary works.

2.6. Research on the Translation of "Journey to the West"

A comparative study of the discourse markers in the two English translations of Qiongli Li's *Journey to the West*, the main content of the paper is the similarities and differences of the discourse markers in the two translations and clarifies the differences between a western scholar and an overseas sinologist's translation, thereby enriching translation studies. Finally, it is proposed that translators should pay attention to discourse markers in order to make the translation more accurate and true, and students should make good use of discourse markers to obtain coherent articles. Yumei Sun used the method of in-depth translation of the poetry in the full translation of Jenner and Guofan Yu in "A Comparative Study of the Translation of Poetry in Two English Versions of *Journey to the West* from the Perspective of In-depth Translation". Through the difference between these two translation strategies and the reasons for the difference, it can be concluded that Guofan Yu's purpose is to introduce Chinese culture to the Western world, while Jenner hopes that Western readers can enjoy reading. Qing Wan, in his research on the English translation of "Journey to the West" culturally loaded appellations, has a large number of appellations in "Journey to the West", trying to discuss the two by Jenner and Guofan Yu's English translation of "Journey to the West" appellations. The translated version retains the advantages and disadvantages of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in these three types of appellations, and hopes to accurately analyze the inadequacies of the two English translations of *Journey to the West* in conveying Chinese culture through these research methods. Maomao Jing's "Journey to the West" in two English translations of the study of hybridization - taking the English translation of Willie and Jenner as an example" selected two English translations of *Monkey*, translated by British sinologist Arthur Waley in the 1940s, and *Journey to the West*, translated by Jenner in the 1970s. According to the classification of cultural factors involved in translation by the famous translator Nida, a comparative analysis is made on the hybridization reflected in the cultural level in *Journey to the West*. In these studies, the ancient translation and the modern translation are used as the basic materials for comparative research, in order to explore the commonalities and different characteristics of the two translations. Therefore, it tries to demonstrate the different translation views and translation methods formed by the different treatment of language expression, content fidelity, cultural barriers and artistic image shaping in different eras, and further conducts a more comprehensive comparative study of the two versions, and summarizes the translation views and translation methods in different periods.

2.7. Research on the Murals of "Journey to the West"

Jia Yaxiong's research on "Journey to the West" murals in Minle Boys Temple, took the "Journey to the West" murals in Minle Boys Temple as the object of investigation and studied the cultural background of the "Journey to the West" murals in the Hexi Corridor. Through analysis and research, it is concluded that the murals of "Journey to the West" in Minle Tongzi Temple are the result of the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures, the fusion of Han culture and minority culture, and the result of a popular culture driven by economic factors. In the paper "Research on the Murals of "Journey to the West" in Gansu", Gucun Huang sorted and classified the murals of "Journey to the West" in thirteen places in Gansu by time. They are the murals of

the Western Xia period, the murals of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the murals of the late Qing Dynasty. He put forward his own opinions on the exact time of the creation of the murals of "Journey to the West" in Huagai Temple in Gangu County, Dafo Temple in Zhangye, and Tongzi Temple in Minle County. That is, the frescoes of "Journey to the West" in Huagai Temple Grottoes were created no later than the Ming and Qing Dynasties in the twenty-seventh year of Qianlong's reign. The mural of "Journey to the West" in the Great Buddha Temple should be the product after the novel "Journey to the West" was written. The murals of "Journey to the West" in Tongzi Temple should have been created 20 years ago in Jiaqing, "inheriting" the "upper" of the murals in the Great Buddha Temple, and "initiating" the "lower" of the murals in the Dongda Temple. Finally, he suggested that local tourism should be developed with the theme of "Journey to the West" by making full use of the murals of "Journey to the West" to promote local development.

3. Overseas Dissemination of "Journey to the West"

The country where the translation and publication of Journey to the West was first studied was Japan. The overseas dissemination of "Journey to the West" mainly focuses on translation research, Ming and Qing versions research, and Buddhist Zen thought to research in the novel. In the West, the earliest translator was Samuel Woodbridge, an American missionary to China, who first translated the story of Journey to the West into English in 1895. Combining the cross-language and cross-civilizational variation of Variation, he explores the translation and research status of Journey to the West in the United States from the 1890s to the 1980s, and analyzes Woodbridge's translation of the first section and Guofan Yu's full translation. The embodiment and application of creative rebellion in China and the interpretation method of Pu Andi's interpretation of the West, the variation of the text of "Journey to the West", and discusses the current status of the spread of "Journey to the West" in the United States from the 1980s to the present. Diyi Wu's "Research and Analysis of Nakano Miyoko's Journey to the West" attempts to analyze the "Journey to the West" from the perspectives of prototype and prototype criticism, common sayings and literature, folklore, Taoist folk beliefs, the symmetry of the story and the secret of numbers, and the five elements of thought. There is systematic care for the stories and texts. There are some comments on some of the views of sinologists centered on Nakano Miyoko. The author uses mythology, anthropology, and sociology to examine Miyoko Nakano's views. She used common sayings and literature combined with minority songs, etc., to restore the text to the original stage, and examined the relationship between "Journey to the West" and folklore. She then goes deep into the mysticism of Journey to the West and examines its blending with Taoist folk beliefs and Confucianism and Taoism. She put it under the ideology of ancient China. The general ideological tendency is Taoism, but it also uses the aspects of Confucianism and Taoism to distinguish it.

4. Conclusion

The academic research of "Journey to the West" mainly focuses on the study of the author and version of the novel "Journey to the West", the research on the theme and culture of "Journey to the West", the study of the characters in "Journey to the West", the image and the relationship between "Journey to the West", research on murals, research on the legend of "Journey to the West", and research on overseas dissemination of "Journey to the West". With the rapid development of China's economy and cultural self-confidence, the research on "Journey to the West" has attracted more and more attention from all walks of life. Therefore, the current academic research on "Journey to the West" is in a period of prosperity.

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