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Restore the Monkey King

: based on the early narratives of *Journey to the West*

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ABSTRACT

The Monkey King, one of the most celebrated figures in Chinese culture, has had his superhero tale passed down through at least several centuries. His story has been retold in numerous oral traditions, written texts, performances, and operas. Over the past century, the Monkey King has transcended borders to become an international star, gaining prominence in various literary works, film and television productions, animations, games, and other industries in multiple countries. He has starred in over 100 films and TV shows, becoming a prominent figure from Disney to Hollywood, widely believed to originate from the late 16th-century Chinese novel *Journey to the West*.

This project traces the Monkey King's history and reveals that this iconic character significantly predates the 16th-century novel. By extending traditional literary comparisons to encompass interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, cross-regional, and cross-temporal research of religious art, architectural decoration, and other related fields, including a comparative study of the Monkey King and Hanuman, this practice-led research offers new insights into the century-long debate concerning the origins of Monkey King. Through character design, it illustrates how myths and mythological figures evolve through dialogues among ancient civilizations. The project also attempts to validate methodologies applicable to recreating classic mythological characters in design practice.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature:

Date: May 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This project explores the theme of the Monkey King, a character that has intrigued me from childhood through adulthood. Despite frequent appearances in textbooks, my travels through South and Southeast Asia since 2007 revealed that the Monkey God theme is prevalent across many ancient Asian cultures. Investigations in western China also uncovered that the Monkey King character has a long history that predates the commonly taught era. These findings made me reflect on the completeness and accuracy of the "authoritative knowledge" about the Monkey King.

Driven by curiosity, I sought to uncover the origins of the Monkey King and explore the possibility of an earlier depiction than the famous one in the hundred-chapter novel *Journey to the West*. Through field research and comparative studies, I discovered the deep and extensive cultural connections between ancient civilizations that might have influenced the early image of the Monkey King. This project examines these connections and aims to restore classic characters by tracing the history and development of cultural symbols across disciplines.

Focusing on the origins of the Monkey King and potential early depictions, the project draws insights from field investigations and historical China-Indian cultural exchanges. It is grounded in the earliest surviving literary work about the Monkey King, the *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua*, published in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD). By analyzing religious and mythological literature, spiritual art, ancient paintings, architectural decorations, and historic sites, especially from the Tang and Song dynasties (7th to 13th centuries), the project aims to recreate the early Monkey King character that predates the hundred-chapter *Journey to the West*, which published in the late 16th century during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD).

The project integrates cultural and historical factors to challenge the stereotypes of the classic Monkey King figure. It contributes to developing a methodological framework for redesigning classic mythological characters, considering diverse cultural developments.

This exegesis situates design practice within a theoretical and methodological framework, the main body organised into five main sections:

1. Contextual review: This section retrospectively examines the academic background of this project and provides an overview of the scholarly debates surrounding the Monkey King character's origins and earlier Monkey King stories.
2. Research design: This section elucidates the methodological approaches employed in the design research, encompassing interdisciplinary, intercultural, and diachronic comparative research, field investigations and practice-based research.
3. Documentation and process: This section documents the practical evolution of the project and the process of reflection during the design and creative procedure.
4. Findings and results: This section presents the discoveries and results drawn during the research process of this project.
5. Conclusion: This section reflects on the project and summarises the research and practice in reconstructing classic characters through interdisciplinary tracing of historical and cultural development.

This research covers a wide range of contextual materials, including some key historical sites and artefacts that are only accessible to professional researchers. While I was fortunate to view some of these, I was not permitted to photograph them. Some primary data have been used with permission for study and research but are not allowed for publication. Additionally, some materials were inaccessible in their original form, requiring indirect methods for review, such as third-party records, and some might be digital or physical reproductions. Due to copyright restrictions, I have substituted some materials with online sources and removed the images before submission. I ensured no flash was used to prevent damage to the artefacts I photographed.

Owing to the length restrictions of the Master's exegesis, additional relevant background information and research findings are placed in Appendices 1-5. For this project's final design, application, and exhibition outcomes, please refer to Appendix 6.

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

A Century-Long Debate on the Origin of the Monkey King

The Monkey King has a long and storied history as a globally renowned character. The origins of the Monkey King have been subject to a century-long academic debate, which, to date, remains unresolved. This protracted and public academic discourse initially stemmed from the renowned scholar Hu Shi (胡适) in 1923 regarding the origins of the Monkey King. Hu Shi posited his scepticism based on insights from the Russian scholar Alexander von Stael-Holstein, who was well-versed in Indian history and culture, suspecting that the Monkey King was not a native Chinese character but rather originated from the famous character Hanuman, the Monkey General, in the Indian epic *Ramayana*.¹

Another prominent scholar, Lu Xun (鲁迅), who lived during the same period as Hu Shi, proposed that the author of *Journey to the West* had not read Buddhist sutras. He argued that there was no similar content about Hanuman in the Chinese translations of Indian sutras. Lu Xun believed that the Monkey King originated from the Chinese indigenous mythological figure, the water monster Wuzhiqui (无支祁)²

Subsequently, after comparative research by Chen Yanke (陈寅恪)³ and Zheng Zhenduo (郑振铎)⁴, they concluded that characters in the Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, published in the 16th century, as well as certain storylines, were derived from Buddhist stories in India, indirectly supporting Hu Shi's viewpoint. During the 1920s and 1930s, numerous renowned Chinese scholars engaged in academic discussions on the origins of the Monkey King. Whether it was the "foreign theory" or the "native theory", both had speculative inferences in their argumentation process and failed to provide direct evidence to support their respective views.⁵

¹ Hu Shi, 'Research on *Journey to the West*', *Reading Magazine* 6 (4 February 1923).

² Lu Xun, 'The Changing History of the Chinese Novel / Lecture 3: The Legendary Texts of the Tang', *National Northwestern University and Shaanxi Education Joint Office Summer School Lecture Series 2* (July 1924).

³ Chen Yanke was a scholar proficient in multiple languages, including Sanskrit.

⁴ Zheng Zhenduo, 'The Evolution of *Journey to the West*', *Literature* 1, no. 4 (1 October 1933).

⁵ Following the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent Chinese Civil War, from the late 1930s to the late 1940s, there was no significant progress in the academic exploration of the Monkey King's origins.

After founding the People's Republic of China in 1949, in the 1950s, Wu Xiaoling (吴晓玲) revisited Lu Xun's "native theory". The view of the Monkey King/Sun Wukong (孙悟空) as a symbol of rebellion was a product nurtured by traditional Chinese culture,⁶ becoming a widely accepted consensus. Wu Xiaoling's reintroduction of this old view did not provoke any rebuttals from other scholars at the time, mainly due to the political environment and public opinion prevailing in mainland China at that time.⁷

While Wu Xiaoling reintroduced the "native theory," Ji Xianlin (季羨林) studied the Indian elements in *Journey to the West*. His work "Indian Literature in China," written in 1958, was published and released in 1980, after the end of the Cultural Revolution and during the new era of ideological liberation and reform and opening up in Chinese academia. When Ji Xianlin translated the Indian epic *Ramayana* into Chinese,⁸ it was the only complete translation of a foreign language in the world besides the English version.⁹ He searched for clues in the translated Buddhist sutras, revisited Hu Shi's viewpoint and cited some archaeological findings.¹⁰ He claimed that except for the Tripitaka/Xuanzang (玄奘, 602-664 AD)¹¹, most of the main characters and many chapters' storylines of *Journey to the West* were inherited from the Buddhist adaptation

⁶ Wu Xiaoling, 'Journey to the West and Ramayana', *Literary Studies*, no. 1 (1958).

⁷ On the one hand, in the 1950s, a wave of criticism against Hu Shi and efforts to remove his influence swept through Chinese universities, making the academic community deeply cautious of Hu Shi's viewpoints. On the other hand, Mao Zedong, the paramount leader of mainland China at the time, consistently held a high regard for *Journey to the West* and frequently quoted stories from it in his writings and speeches. Mao was fond of *The Monkey King* in "Uproar in Heaven", admiring his rebellious nature and heroic image. Consequently, this classical fantasy novel continued to gain popularity during an era dominated by class struggle and frequent political movements. Furthermore, with the China-Indian border conflict in the late 1950s to early 1960s and the "Cultural Revolution" from 1966 to 1976, during this historical period marked by ideological fervour, it was hard to reaffirm the "foreign theory" 's plausibility openly.

⁸ Ji Xianlin translated the Indian epic *Ramayana* into Chinese", which People's Literature Publishing House published in eight volumes between 1980 and 1984.

⁹ Ji Xianlin, *Ramayana (Chinese Translation)* (People's Literature Publishing House, 1980), <https://www.maigoo.com/citiao/1001660.html>.

¹⁰ Ji Xianlin, 'Indian Literature in China', no. 1 (1980): 144–54, https://www.zhangqiaokeyan.com/academic-journal-cn_detail_thesis/02012104711223.html.

¹¹ Xuanzang (602-664 AD), a distinguished monk of the Tang Dynasty, was one of the four great translators of Chinese Buddhism and the founder of the Faxiang (Yogacara) school. He was renowned as a translator, Buddhist scholar, philosopher, traveller, and a remarkable ambassador of cultural exchange between China and other nations. Xuanzang embarked on his journey to the West for Buddhist sutras (629-645 AD). He brought back a vast collection of Buddhist scriptures, totalling five hundred and twenty volumes and six hundred and fifty-seven treatises from Mahayana and Hinayana traditions. Upon his return, he translated seventy-five sets of Buddhist scriptures, totalling one thousand three hundred and thirty-five volumes. He also translated the *Tao Te Ching* (道德经) and the *Awakening of Faith* (大乘起信论) in the Mahayana into Sanskrit, introducing them to India, and wrote the twelve-volume work *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (大唐西域记, compiled in 646 AD) based on his observations during his journey to India.

of *Ramayana*, which spread from India to China by land from the West to the East before the writing of this novel, in which Monkey King/Sun Wukong was derived from Hanuman, and partly mixed with local Chinese mythology.¹² So far, Ji Xianlin has shifted from echoing Hu Shi's "foreign theory" to advocating the "hybrid theory." He posited that, after the transmission of the *Ramayana* to China, it was adapted and combined with native Chinese elements to create the subsequent *Journey to the West*. Ji Xianlin's perspective¹³ revitalised the "foreign theory", which had been dormant for decades, bringing it back into scholarly discourse in the 1980s.¹⁴

Subsequently, Zhao Guohua (赵国华) refuted some of the "native theory" deficiencies after comparative literature studies.¹⁵ Zhao Guohua's argument is primarily based on comparing the Monkey King story with the translation of Buddhist sutras from India into China. Not only does he endorse the view that the Monkey King's image originates from Hanuman in one of India's two major epics, the *Ramayana*, but he also proposes further that the Monkey King's story is influenced by another of India's two major epics, the *Mahabharata*.¹⁶

Contemporary Japanese scholar Miyako Nakano (中野美代子), referencing some archaeological findings, supplemented the theories proposed by Ji Xianlin. Nakano posited that the role of the Indian monkey god Hanuman was transmitted to China along maritime routes along with the *Ramayana*, which formed the prototype of Monkey King/Sun Wukong in *Journey to the West*—the Monkey King/Hou Xingzhe (猴行者)/Monkey Pilgrim in *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* (大唐三藏取经诗话, author unknown, hereafter referred to as *Shihua*).¹⁷

Thus far, while there remains no direct evidence to support that the Monkey King is Hanuman, the "foreign theory" and its derivative, the "hybrid theory," have essentially refined the logic of argumentation and demonstrated indirect influences from Hanuman to Monkey King, with the

¹² Ji XianLin, 'Ramayana in China', *Chinese Comparative Literature* 1 (1986): 1–38.

¹³ Ji Xianlin was an internationally renowned orientalist proficient in ancient Indian languages such as Sanskrit and Pali.

¹⁴ Zhu Jiyong, 'The Great Sage Returns to the Screen. Is Sun Wukong an "Imported Product"?', www.thepaper.cn, 12 July 2015, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1351060.

¹⁵ Zhao Guohua, 'On the Origin of the Monkey Image of Sun Wukong (Part 1) - A Comparative Study between *Journey to the West* and Indian Literature', *South Asian Studies* 1 (1996).

¹⁶ Zhao Guohua, 'On the Origin of the Monkey Image of Sun Wukong (Part 2) - A Comparative Study between *Journey to the West* and Indian Literature', *South Asian Studies* 2 (1996).

¹⁷ Miyoko Nakano, *Secret of Journey to the West* (Zhonghua Book Company, 2002).

spread of Buddhism serving as the bridge between the two. Meanwhile, the contemporary "native theory" has not made any significant breakthroughs, lingering on the reiteration of previous scholars' viewpoints, such as Lu Xun's, or some less rigorous views, such as those derived from "Shipantuo (石磬陀)". The debate over the origin of the Monkey King remains unsettled to this day, and there have been no significant milestone developments in over a decade.

From the retrospective review of the century-long academic debate on the origin of the Monkey King, it can be seen that scholars who were proficient in both Chinese and Indian languages and also familiar with the traditional cultures of both countries tend to support the viewpoint that the Monkey King originated from Hanuman. Compared to the "native theory," the "foreign theory" involves horizontal spatial and vertical historical comparisons through cross-cultural studies of ancient religious and literary works on the theme of monkey deities. And the subsequent "hybrid theory" seems more rigorous and reasonable.

The century-long debate in the academic community has sparked my curiosity. In addition to the origin of the Monkey King character, I also want to understand what the earlier depiction of the Monkey King, preceding the portrayal in the hundred-chapter novel *Journey to the West*, looked like. The research on the origins of the Monkey King character has determined whether I can incorporate cross-cultural elements or purely Chinese native elements into the character design. Alternatively, I may seek clues from ancient cultural exchanges between China and India.

The famous *Journey to the West* version and the early literature narrative

As a prominent symbol of Chinese cultural heritage and a widely recognised figure internationally, the Monkey King owes a substantial portion of its renown to the publication and widespread circulation of the literary masterpiece *Journey to the West*, one of the 'four great classical novels' of Chinese literature, published during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD). According to Zhang Peiheng's (章培恒) research, the novel's author was initially uncertain, and after the 1920s, some

scholars speculated that Wu Cheng'en (吴承恩) of the Ming Dynasty was the author.¹⁸

This novel narrates the story of the Monkey King accompanying Xuanzang on a journey to India to obtain Buddhist sutras. According to Wang Lina's (王丽娜) statistics, from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 AD) in China, there were seven versions of *Journey to the West*, comprising nine editions. From the 18th century to the 20th century, *Journey to the West* has been translated into various languages,¹⁹ resulting in numerous translated versions. In modern Japanese alone, there are approximately over 30 different translated editions.²⁰

However, a series of easily overlooked facts indicate that *Journey to the West* was not merely the imaginative creation of a Ming Dynasty author, but emerged due to cultural sedimentation over a long historical period. Before the publication of the novel *Journey to the West*, numerous early versions existed.²¹ Currently, the earliest surviving version of literary works involving the Monkey King assisting Tang Sanzang on his Journey to Western Heaven (India) can be traced back to the Song Dynasty's publication of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*.²²

Cao Bingjian (曹炳建) cautiously suggests, based on the colophon "Zhong Wazi Zhangjia Yin"(中瓦子张家印) at the end of *Shihua*, that the book was printed in the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD).²³ It predates the hundred-chapter edition novel *Journey to the West* approximately 400 years ago.²⁴

In this remaining fragment of the "Shihua", the main storyline and significant characters of the later

¹⁸ Zhang Peiheng, 'Whether the 100-Chapter Version of *Journey to the West* Was Written by Wu Cheng'en', *Social Science Front* 4 (1983).

¹⁹ Including English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Esperanto, Swahili, Russian, Czech, Romanian, Polish, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and others.

²⁰ Wang Lina, 'Journey to the West Overseas', *Knowledge of Classical Literature* 4 (1999): 10.

²¹ Glen Dudbridge, 'The Hundred-Chapter Xi You Ji and Its Early Versions', in *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture* (Brill, 2005), 15–74, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047415893_005.

²² Lu Xun, 'The Changing History of the Chinese Novel / Lecture 3: The Legendary Texts of the Tang'.

²³ Cao Bingjian, 'Also Talking about the Era of the Writing of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*', *Journal of Henan University*, Social Science Edition, 35, no. 2 (1995): 69–72.

²⁴ Before being rediscovered, *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* had long been lost in China. During this period, not only were no book artefacts found, but there were also no book records. It was not until the 1910s that it was discovered in Japan, with only two incomplete versions surviving, and the author remains unknown. Luo Zhenyu separately printed the small-character edition in 1916 and the large-character edition in 1917. In 1925, the Commercial Press reprinted the small-character edition based on Luo's edition. In 1955, the Chinese Classical Literature Press used the small-character edition as the base text, with some collation from the large-character edition, and reprinted it.

novel *Journey to the West* were already present, making it a recognised early religious literary work of the story *Journey to the West* in academia.²⁵ Thus, Wu Chengen is not the original author of *Journey to the West*; even as the editor, many unexplained points remain. Zhang Peiheng extensively argued that Wu Cheng'en did not write the hundred-chapter edition of the novel *Journey to the West*.²⁶ Therefore, Xu Ying (徐颖) suggested that university textbooks might rewrite literary history about the author of *Journey to the West*.²⁷

In *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, the pilgrimage team comprises seven members, with the Monkey King and Xuanzang being the most prominent. The other five disciples of Xuanzang had no specific names. The Monkey King emerges as the story's central character, possessing comprehensive knowledge of everything encountered along the pilgrimage route. He serves as both the guide and protector of the pilgrimage team, often foretelling Xuanzang, providing introductions to the following destinations, and offering reminders about essential considerations. In *Shihua*, The Monkey King was depicted as knowledgeable in geography and history, skilled in literary arts such as poetry, and a devout Buddhist semi-divine believer proficient in magic and combat. Xuanzang frequently seeks advice from the Monkey King.

As Zhang Yiwei (张怡微) said, *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* transformed the historical narrative of the Xuanzang's pilgrimage (628-645 AD) into a mythological literary work, marking a milestone in the evolution of *Journey to the West*.²⁸ The protagonist changed from Xuanzang to the Monkey King/Hou Xingzhe (猴行者)/Monkey Pilgrim, also known as the precursor to the Monkey King/Sun Wukong (孙悟空) in *Journey to the West*.²⁹ It is a valuable resource for studying the origin of the Monkey King character.

²⁵ Chen Yinchi, 'A Revisit of the Time of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*: Focus on Rhyme Style', *Fudan Journal (Social Science Edition)* 56, no. 5 (2014): 69–80.

²⁶ Zhang Peiheng, 'Was the Hundred-chapter Edition of *Journey to the West* written by Wu Cheng'en?', *Social science front*, no. 4 (1983): 295–305.

²⁷ Xu Ying, 'Will the University Literary History Textbook Be Rewritten to Say That Wu Cheng'en Was Not the Author of *Journey to the West*?', *News Morning*, 7 December 2007, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/news/2007/12-07/1098379.shtml>.

²⁸ Zhang Yiwei, 'Research on "Rewriting" of *Journey to the West* in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties' (PhD dissertation, Taiwan, Department of Chinese Literature, National Chengchi University, 2015).

²⁹ Xiao Mao, 'Instructions for Proofreading *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*', accessed 9 April 2024, <http://www.guoxue123.com/xiaosuo/0000/dtszqjsh/002.htm>.

However, *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, from the rediscovery to republication, did not gain the same popularity as its successor, the hundred-chapter version of *Journey to the West*, and remained severely underestimated for a long time. There are many possible reasons for this phenomenon. First, before *Shihua* was rediscovered and published in the first half of the 20th century, the complete hundred-chapter version of *Journey to the West* had already been globally renowned. It was too famous to be overshadowed by a newly discovered fragment. Second, *Shihua* only consists of text without illustrations, and some scholars believe it is a brief text outline used by folk storytellers,³⁰ which does not offer a vivid reading experience like the illustrated hundred-chapter version of the novel *Journey to the West*, published in the late 16th century. Third, the Song Dynasty published *Shihua*, which retains many ancient Chinese rhetorical devices from the Tang Dynasty, making it more distant from modern readers than the Ming Dynasty's popular vernacular novels.

These factors may raise the entry barriers to studying the *Shihua* but will not diminish the significance of this ancient classic's research value in tracing the Monkey King's origin. After all, it contains the earliest surviving literary descriptions of the Monkey King character, and these materials are closer to the historical background of the *Journey to the West* story setting. It is worth mentioning that with the assistance of the annotated edition of the *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* by Li Shiren (李时人) and Cai Jinghao (蔡镜浩),³¹ readers can better understand this religious literary work published a thousand years ago.

Classic Monkey King Character Designs

The earliest surviving religious literature featuring the Monkey King, published during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), is the *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*. However, it only exists in brief textual fragments without any accompanying images. The Monkey King character design prototype based on literature narratives emerged in the hundred-chapter version of the *Journey to*

³⁰ Ling Guang, 'How the "Great Sage" Was Born', *Beijing Daily*, 6 January 2016, <https://culture.qianlong.com/2016/0106/247735.shtml>.

³¹ Li Shiren and Cai Jinghao, *The Annotated Edition of the 'Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua'* (Chinese Publishing House, 1997).

the West in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD).

Among various versions of *Journey to the West*, the *Xinke Chuxiang Guanban Dazi Xiyou Ji* (新刻出像官板大字西游记) imprint by the Shidetang Hall of Jinling (金陵世德堂) in 1592, is the earliest surviving complete edition of the hundred-chapter version of the *Journey to the West* (百回本西游记, which Wu Chengen speculated as the author). It is also the earliest illustrated version of *Journey to the West* (Figure 1),³² including portraits of the Monkey King character.



Figure 1. The Illustrations from *Xinke Chuxiang Guanban Dazi Xiyou Ji* Large-print *Journey to the West* (1592), imprinted by the Shidetang Hall of Jinling, Wanli reign, Ming dynasty. National Palace Museum, Taipei, China.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=893225034094615>

The *Original Intent of Journey to the West* (西游原旨), published in the Qing Dynasty in 1819 and written by Liu Yiming (刘一明), consists of over 1500 pages, with eight illustrations depicting six main characters, including Monkey King (Figure 2) and two Taoist figures. The illustrations drawn during the Ming and Qing dynasties based on the narrative descriptions of the renowned version of the *Journey to the West* novel established the basic appearance of the Monkey King for future generations, representing the earliest surviving literary-based character design of the Monkey King.

³² Dou Yaxiong, 'The Evolution of the Illustration Design Style of *Journey to the West* under the Influence of the Times', *Art Science and Technology*, no. 6 (June 2016): 263, <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/82628x/201606/89837575504849544854505055.html>.



Figure 2. Monkey King/Sun Xingzhe, *The Original Intent of Journey to the West*, written by Liu Yiming. Published by the Tongshan Branch in Changde, Hunan Province, in the 24th year of Jiaqing in the Qing Dynasty (1819), Volume 1, 47. Tianjin Library.

<https://www.shuge.org/meet/topic/13774/>

Monkey King is well-known in China and has gained international recognition due to the widespread of his legendary superhero tales' continuous dissemination, adaptation, and re-dissemination. Over the past few decades, his characters and stories have increased across numerous industries.

In the film and animation industry, according to incomplete statistics spanning from 1926 to 2016, China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States have collectively produced over eighty *Journey to the West* adaptations into films. Consequently, *Journey to the West* is arguably one of the most frequently adapted stories in the history of Chinese cinema.³³ In the history of Chinese cinema, two representative film and television works with Monkey King themes have accompanied several generations.

³³ Magasa, 'The *Journey to the West* Movies Made in America, Japan and Korea', Weixin Official Accounts Platform, Rris, 11 February 2016, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/sc6-xqWmRm267YKVyRoPsQ>.

One of them is *The Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven*.³⁴ This classic Chinese animation portrays the legendary adventures of the Monkey King/Sun Wukong as he wreaks havoc in the Dragon Palace and defies the Heavenly Court. It is regarded as a monument in the history of Chinese animation³⁵ and has won many awards worldwide.³⁶ Zhang Guangyu (张光宇) and Yan Dingxian (严定宪) were responsible for the character design of the Monkey King. Zhang Guangyu's character design of "Peach Face" Monkey King in 1945 for *The Comic Journey to the West* was inspired by face contouring and makeup techniques from traditional Chinese drama mask art (Figure 3).³⁷

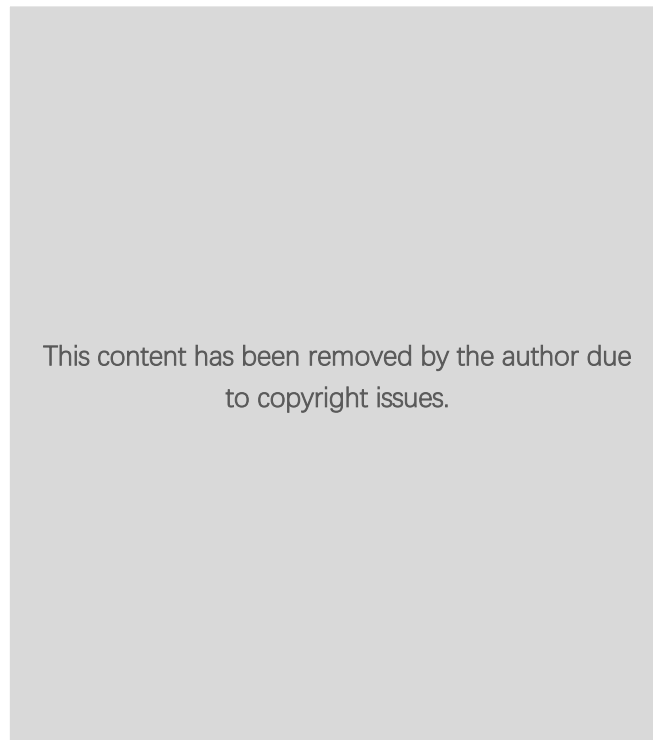


Figure 3. Zhang Guangyu. The character design of the Monkey King in *The Comic Journey to the West*, 1945, was inspired by face contouring and makeup techniques from traditional Chinese drama mask art (the upper).

<https://culture.ifeng.com/c/82UeUblhmHV>

³⁴ A feature-length animated film produced by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio between 1961 and 1964. Co-directed by Wan Laiming and Tang Cheng, this colour animation, distributed by Les Films de ma Vie (VHS) from France.

³⁵ People's Artist Magazine, "Have Fun" on June 1st, Pay Tribute to the Classics! 2 Masterpieces of Chinese Comics, Come and See If They Hide Your Childhood Memories', baijiahao.baidu.com, 1 June 2023, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1767510398385664685>.

³⁶ 13th Special Interest Award at the Czech Republic Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 1962; Best Art Award and Children's Literature Award at the 2nd Chinese Film "Hundred Flowers" Festival 1963; Outstanding Film Award at the 1978 International London Film Festival; First Prize from the 2nd National Youth and Children's Literary and Artistic Creation Award Committee in 1980; Third Prize at the 5th Quito International Children's Film Festival in Ecuador in 1982; Jury Award at the 12th Figueira da Foz International Film Festival in Portugal in 1983; "Golden Yanghua Award" at the "New Era International Film Festival" in January 2022.

³⁷ Yitiao, 'The 120th anniversary of the birth of the father of Chinese animation, childhood is incomplete without "Havoc in Heaven"', culture.ifeng.com, 25 December 2020, <https://culture.ifeng.com/c/82UeUblhmHV>.

1959, they conducted field investigations and gathered creative materials from ancient architecture, clay sculptures, and murals in Beijing. This research helped them accurately depict the visual elements and aesthetics of the period.³⁸ In 1960, Yan Dingxian invited Zheng Faxiang, a traditional drama actor known as the "South Monkey King," to provide insights into monkey plays. Zheng Faxiang's expertise and experience in performing monkey roles offered valuable inspiration to the animators, aiding them in capturing the essence of the Monkey King's character and movements. Based on Zhang Guangyu's design, Yan Dingxian designed a new version of Monkey King's character for "Uproar in Heaven" in 1960 (Figure 4).³⁹ Yan's character design blends three characteristics of human, deity, and monkey from Chinese classical theatrical performances, allowing the Monkey King to exhibit a fusion of these elements in his movements and expressions.⁴⁰

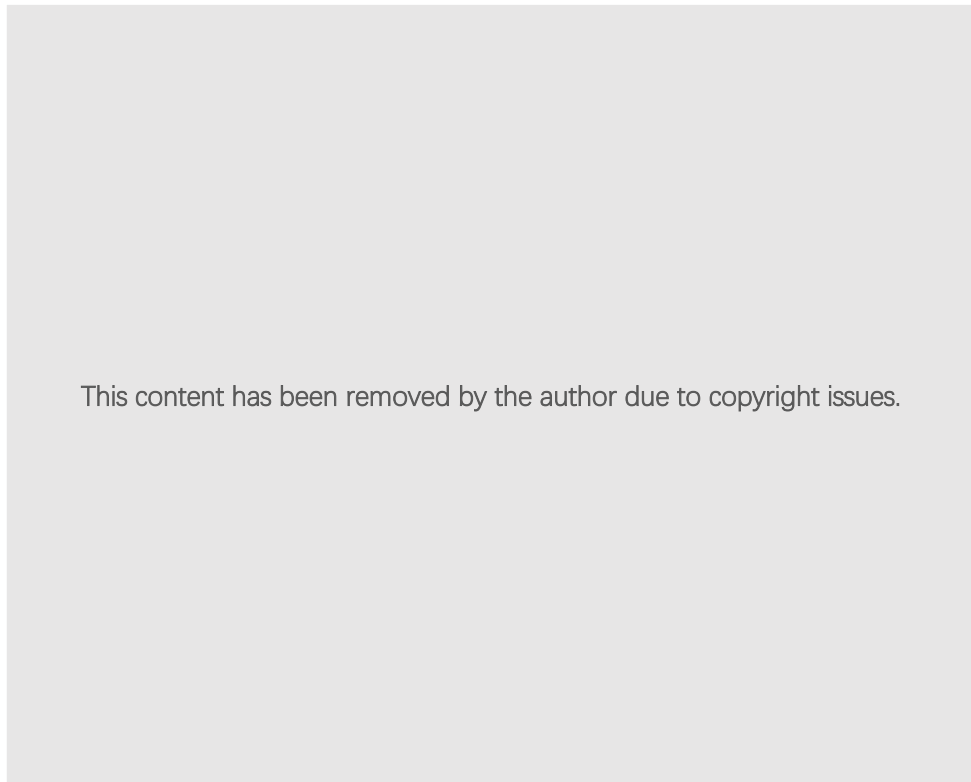


Figure 4. Yan Dingxian. The character Design of The Monkey King in *Uproar in Heaven*, 1960, was inspired by the drama of monkey play.

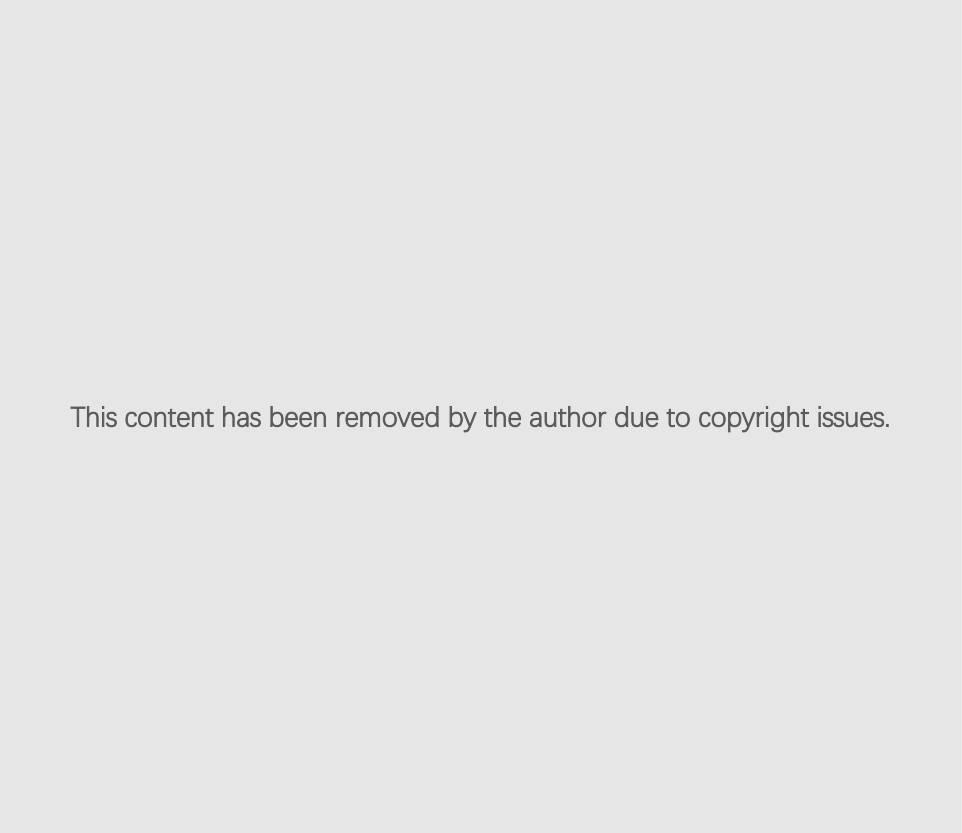
https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_21309170

³⁸ Sizhitangzhu, '54 Years Ago, This Chinese Animated Film Surpassed Hollywood in an Instant and Influenced Hayao Miyazaki; It Is Still a Classic Today!', 5 January 2018, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1588737628633993904>.

³⁹ Sun jiayin, "Havoc in Heaven" Chief Animation Designer Yan Dingxian Passed Away This Morning at the Age of 86', news.xinmin.cn, 26 December 2022, <https://news.xinmin.cn/2022/12/26/32287621.html>.

⁴⁰ Sun jiayin, "Havoc in Heaven" Chief Animation Designer Yan Dingxian Passed Away This Morning at 86. news.xinmin.cn, 26 December 2022. <https://news.xinmin.cn/2022/12/26/32287621.html>.

The other notable production is the 1986 version of the TV series *Journey to the West*,⁴¹ which was adapted from the literary masterpiece of the same name from the Ming Dynasty, with character design by Wang Yunqi (王蕴琦)⁴² and Wang Xizhong (王希钟).⁴³ The TV series gained widespread popularity in China, remaining enduringly popular (Figure 5, Figure 6). According to incomplete statistics, by 2014, the series had been rebroadcast over 3,000 times across various local television stations, setting a record for the most frequently rebroadcast television drama worldwide.⁴⁴



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Figure 5. Character design for the 1986 version of the TV series *Journey to the West* by Wang Yunqi and Wang Xizhong.

https://k.sina.com.cn/article_6854615503_1989121cf00100ok49.html/

⁴¹ A 25-episode costume drama directed by Yang Jie and produced by China Central Television (CCTV) and China Television Drama Production Center.

⁴² Fashion, 'The Heights of Masters and Apprentices in *Journey to the West* Are Revealed, Sun Wukong Is 1.3m and Sha Monk Is 4m! Bajie's Nose Is Surprising', *sina.com.cn*, 25 May 2020, https://k.sina.com.cn/article_7282749474_1b215f02202000q0wz.html.

⁴³ Ucpnz, 'Wang Xizhong, the chief character designer of the 86 version of *Journey to the West*, passed away', 22 December 2022, <https://ucpnz.co.nz/archives/5229349>.

⁴⁴ Wenzhou.com official Weibo, '*Journey to the West* Has Been Replayed More than 3,000 Times: It Has Been Declared a Guinness Record!', Weibo, 16 November 2014, <https://weibo.com/1725252714/BwpRgpMks>.

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Figure 6. Screenshot from the 1986 version of the TV series *Journey to the West*.⁴⁵

https://k.sina.com.cn/article_6854615503_1989121cf00100ok49.html/

In the gaming industry, the abundant "Dragon Ball" series of games, based on manga of the same name by the renowned Japanese manga artist Akira Toriyama, draws inspiration from the Monkey King for the protagonist Goku.⁴⁶ These games predominantly focus on combat and effectively recreate the characters from manga, with each character possessing their classic moves and exclusive storylines.⁴⁷ The other games, such as *Ganso Saiyuuki - Super Monkey Dai Bouken* (スーパーモンキー大冒険/元祖西游记)⁴⁸, *Oriental Legend* (西游释厄传)⁴⁹, *Westward Journey* (大话西游)⁵⁰, the China-Japanese co-production *Monkey King: Hero is Back* (西游记之大圣归来)⁵¹, all draw on characters or stories from the Monkey King. The hero-based mobile game *Honor of Kings*, developed by Tencent TiMi Studios, produced the Monkey King character, and in 2021, collaborated with the 1986 version of *Journey to the West* to produce classic Monkey

⁴⁵ Zhushouyujian, 'The 86 Version of *Journey to the West* Design Sketches Exposed Each Is a Work of Art', Sina, 23 December 2019, https://k.sina.com.cn/article_6854615503_1989121cf00100ok49.html/. IMDB scored 8.8, and Douban scored 9.5, ranking first in the live-action movies and TV shows about Monkey King.

⁴⁶ Yinfengshe, 'Akira Toriyama and Toei's Tribute to *Journey to the West*: *Journey to the West* Elements in Dragon Ball', 22 March 2024, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1794156713474203527>.

⁴⁷ The crazy hamster, 'The classic Dragon Ball games in China (not a complete inventory!)', Zhihu column, 18 December 2022, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/592640315>.

⁴⁸ VAP, 'Ganso Saiyuuki - Super Monkey Dai Bouken', gouhuo.qq.com, 21 November 1986, <https://gouhuo.qq.com/mainpage/game?gameid=778081>.

⁴⁹ International Games System, 'Oriental Legend', baike.baidu.com, 1997, <https://baike.baidu.hk/item/西游释厄传/83317>.

⁵⁰ NetEase (Hangzhou) Network Co., Ltd., 'Westward Journey', 17 September 2015, <https://dhxy.163.com/2024/mumu/>.

⁵¹ HEXADRIVE and D4 Enterprise, 'Monkey King: Hero is Back on Steam', Steam, 2019, https://store.steampowered.com/app/967240/_/.

King character skins (Figure 7).⁵² It is the only Monkey King skin based on the description of the *Journey to the West* in this game.

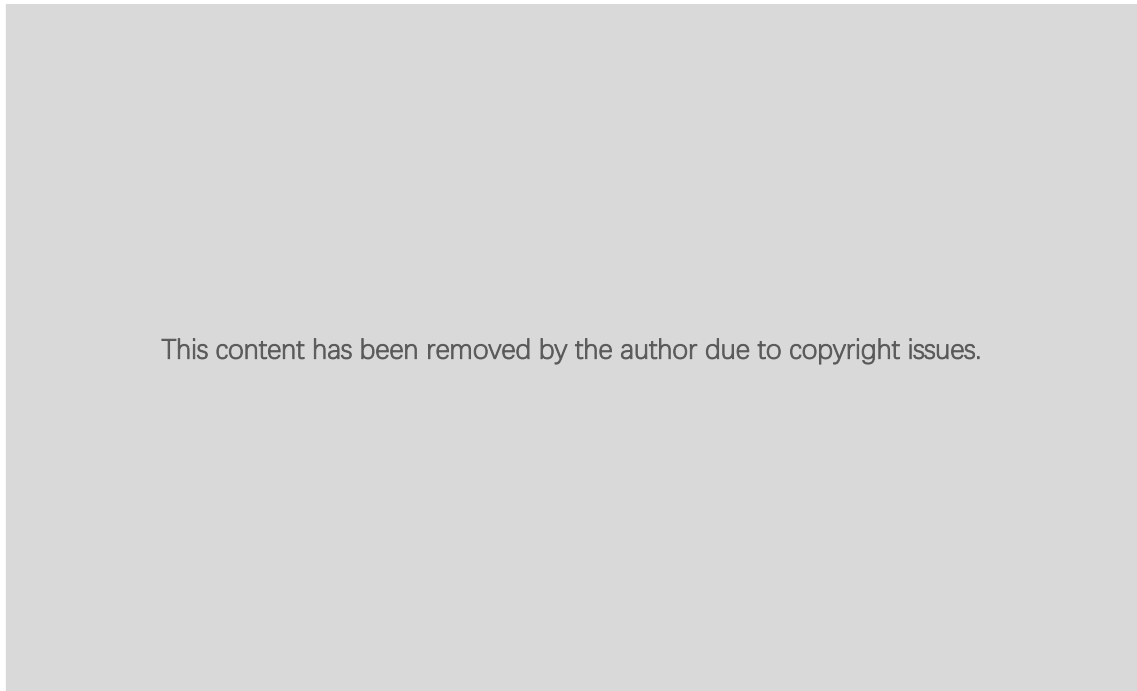


Figure 7. *Honour of Kings* by Tencent Interactive Entertainment, The Skin of Monkey King linked the 1986 version of the TV series *Journey to the West*, 2021.
<https://pvp.qq.com/web201605/herodetail/167.shtml>.

The highly anticipated action role-playing game "Black Myth: Wukong" was developed by Game Science Studios, and the character designed by Yang Qi (杨奇) is currently in production (Figure 8). It is the world's first Monkey King-themed AAA game⁵³ that stands out as its first gameplay demonstration video released using Unreal Engine 5.⁵⁴ This game stars the Monkey King as the protagonist and is set against the backdrop of *Journey to the West*. It aims to faithfully recreate the fantastical world of Eastern mythology in players' minds. Its scene designs draw inspiration from ancient Chinese architecture and stone carvings, while the character designs also reference Chinese classical literature and ancient sculpture artworks.⁵⁵

⁵² Tencent Interactive Entertainment, 'Glory of the King: Sun Wukong-Glory of Kings Official Website-Tencent Games', 2021, <https://pvp.qq.com/web201605/herodetail/167.shtml>.

⁵³ Game Science, 'The Concept Map of the Domestic Masterpiece "Black Myth: Wukong", the Monkey King's Costume and Hair Are Full of Details!', 20 August 2020, <https://www.dongqiudi.com/article/1499679.html>.

⁵⁴ Jianchunxingwei, 'Black Myth Wukong broke 1 million views in an hour. Why do players pay so much attention to Black Myth?', zhihu, 21 August 2021, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/401973961>.

⁵⁵ Yang Qi, "'Black Myth: Wukong' Chief Art Designer Yang Qi's Speech Content Lifted', 17173, 23 December 2021, <http://news.17173.com/content/12232021/105807302.shtml>.

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Figure 8. *Black Myth: Wukong* character designed by Yang Qi, Game Science, 2020.⁵⁶
https://www.gamersky.com/news/202108/1417082_6.shtml

In cultural exchange and brand marketing, the image of the Monkey King also garners attention. For instance, the "10th China-French Brand Summit Forum Series Activities—China-French Brand Week,"⁵⁷ which will be held at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France,⁵⁸ also adopts the Monkey King theme. The "Great Sage 'Causing Chaos' in Paris" (齐天大圣闹巴黎) project, jointly initiated by the China-French Brand Aesthetics Center and the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, adopts a traditional Chinese paper-cutting style to depict the classic Monkey King character (Figure 9).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Xintaihaodebangzi, "Black Myth: Wukong" New Character Design and Scene Original Painting Released', gamersky, 20 August 2021, https://www.gamersky.com/news/202108/1417082_6.shtml.

⁵⁷ The high-profile China-French brand summit initiated by BonjourBrand—the China-French Brand Summit Forum, an official event recognised by the foreign ministries of both countries. The event venues range from the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to the headquarters of UNESCO, Paris City Hall, the Pompidou Center, and the Eiffel Tower, organised by the China-French Brand Summit Forum Committee.

⁵⁸ 'The China-French Brand Aesthetic Center | China-French Summit Forum on Branding', accessed 7 April 2024, <https://www.bonjourbrand.com/中法品牌高峰论坛/>.

⁵⁹ Bonjour Brand, 'The Shanghai Animation Film Studio and Bonjour Brand Jointly Launched the Monkey King "Now" in Paris Event', accessed 7 April 2024, <https://www.bonjourbrand.com/齐天大圣闹巴黎/>.

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Figure 9. The Shanghai Animation Film Studio and Bonjour Brand jointly launched *the Monkey King "Now" in Paris* event.

<https://www.bonjourbrand.com/齐天大圣闹巴黎/>

The Monkey King character designs discussed above are predominantly influenced by the descriptions found in the 16th-century Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, featuring attire and accessories reflecting Ming Dynasty styles. This trend is closely tied to the global dissemination of the hundred-chapter novel *Journey to the West*.

However, the earliest surviving literary work featuring the Monkey King, *Shihua*, remains relatively obscure despite its significant scholarly value. Several factors may contribute to this lack of recognition. First, *Shihua* predates Ming Dynasty vernacular novels, employing too ancient language for contemporary readers to understand. Second, its rediscovery occurred relatively late and hasn't widespread circulation. Lastly, *Shihua* lacks accompanying illustrations, further complicating modern designers' efforts to base Monkey King character designs on its narrative. There is a dearth of such research on translating the textual descriptions from *Shihua* into visual representations of the Monkey King character, which is the gap this project aims to address.

Design Plan and Background Setting

Firstly, I need to establish a starting point for the design. Based on the contextual overview provided earlier, *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* is the earliest existing textual narrative of the Monkey King. As a religious and mythological literature, it merges the historical records of Xuanzang's journey to the West during the early Tang Dynasty (629-645 AD) with the Monkey King mythology, laying the foundation for the literature of *Journey to the West* in later generations. Despite its relative obscurity and lack of illustrations as an ancient literary work, I recognise its significant importance in shaping Monkey King culture. Therefore, I consider this book, published nearly a thousand years ago, as the basis for the character design project. I will supplement it with materials from disciplines closely related to its era to visualise ancient literary narratives and recreate the image of the early Monkey King in this character design project.

Secondly, I will select the historical background for the early Monkey King character design project. Regarding the publication time of *Shihua*, Li Shiren argued that the book was likely compiled around the late Tang Dynasty (875-907 AD) based on the abundant use of Dunhuang Bianwen (变文) features in the text.⁶⁰ However, he could not explain the presence of place names in the book, which only emerged during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) and later. So, I concur with Cao Bingjian's view that, based on the colophon, it should have been published during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD).⁶¹ Zhang Jinchai (张锦池) even provided a more specific timeframe, proposing that the book was likely not produced earlier than the early Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 AD), possibly even during the reign of Emperor Renzong (1010-1063 AD). Moreover, it is unlikely to have been published later than the early Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 AD), possibly even during the reign of Emperor Gaozong (1107-1187 AD).⁶²

Based on the historical fact that the *Ramayana*, including Hanuman (whether through simplification and excerpts or adapted into Buddhist stories), entered China and considering its

⁶⁰ Li Shiren and Cai Jinghao, 'A Textual Research on the Era When "Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua" Was Written', *Journal of Xuzhou Normal University* 3 (1982): 24–32.

⁶¹ Cao Bingjian, 'Also Talking about the Era of the Writing of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*', *Journal of Henan University*, Social Science Edition, 35, no. 2 (1995): 69–72.

⁶² Zhang Jinchai, 'An Examination of the Date When "The Poems of the Tripitaka of the Tang Dynasty" Was Written', *Academic Exchange* 4 (1900): 114-120+73.

wider dissemination in western regions such as South-Xinjiang and Dunhuang compared to the central plains of China before publishing of the *Da Tang Sanzang Qu Jing Shihua*.⁶³ Additionally, from the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD), religious murals depicting the Monkey King assisting Xuanzang in his journey to the West in the Dunhuang region were already emerging.⁶⁴ These murals exhibit relevance to the narrative of Monkey King's religious literature.⁶⁵ Moreover, these regions intersected with the Silk Road and the route of Xuanzang's Journey to India, serving as crucial channels for ancient commercial and cultural exchanges between China and foreign lands.

Therefore, I hypothesise that the *Shihua* composition period is approximately contemporary with or slightly earlier than when it was carved and printed. Considering its concise outline and narrative structure, the *Shihua* is likely a condensed adaptation of another earlier complete version, incorporating some elements from the Song Dynasty during the adapting process. This hypothesis helps reconcile the discrepancies pointed out by Li Shirén.

The presumably earlier version of Monkey King religious literature should have been produced after Xuanzang's factual travelogue *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (大唐西域记, compiled in 646 AD) and the semi-legendary "Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Great Cien Monastery of the Great Tang (大唐大慈恩寺三藏法师传, compiled in 668 AD), both written shortly after Xuanzang's return to China with no mention of the Monkey King, but earlier than the survival Monkey King literary *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* (published during the Southern Song Dynasty between 1127 and 1279 AD).

Hence, it can be speculated that merging the *Ramayana* story, including Hanuman, into the historical facts of Xuanzang's journey to the West to form the earliest religious, mythological literary works featuring the Monkey King occurred between the 7th and 13th centuries.

⁶³ Yang Fuxue, 'Uighur Buddhism's Borrowing of the Indian Heroic Epic *Ramayana*', in *Research on Buddhist Mythology: Texts, Images, Legends and History* (Shanghai Zhongxi Book Company Co., Ltd., 2013), 103–13.

⁶⁴ Yu Shuo, 'The Murals of Xuanzang's journey to the West in Guazhou East Thousand Buddha Cave and Yulin Cave', *Master Craftsman's Gate*, November 2016, 30–40.

⁶⁵ Chien Pei-chi, 'On the Textual Source for the Wall Painting in Dunhuang, "the Poems and Lines of the Great Tang Hsuanchuang Searching for the Sutras"', *Xuanzang University* 28 (September 2017): 167–90, <http://ird.hcu.edu.tw/front/bin/home.phtml>.

Consequently, the historical background for my character design project is set around this period.

Physical evidence of this hypothesised earlier version of Monkey King's literary work has not been discovered yet. Perhaps, similar to the past discovery of *Shihua*, the older prototype of the Journey to the West story might be unearthed by modern people through archaeology and literary research one day.

Furthermore, the visual materials related to the Monkey King, including murals, stone carvings, handicrafts, and other artefacts from the Tang Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, along with photographic documentation during field research for comparison, have provided abundant historical and cultural resources for the design practice aimed at textual visualisation in this project. For instance, in several Dunhuang murals depicting Xuanzang's journey to the West in the Xinxia period (1038-1227 AD), the Monkey King consistently follows behind Xuanzang, appearing to be an attendant. I plan to select materials based on the established time frame and consider the cultural exchange between ancient China and India. If suitable materials cannot be found within this range, I will appropriately extend the search for time and space until the necessary materials are found.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodologies

The methodology for this project adopts a contextual review rooted in cultural and historical backgrounds to trace the formation and evolution of the Monkey King character. It involves analysing significant early mythological literature about the Monkey King and the narrative descriptions in related religious artworks. Considering the diversity within cultural development contexts, a multidimensional comparative study is conducted across cultures, eras, and disciplines. Visual elements from ancient religious artworks and crafts and photographic records from field investigation are examined. The restoration of the Monkey King, based on the earlier narratives from the *Journey to the West* story, requires a methodological design incorporating comparative research, field investigation, and practice-led research to ensure authenticity and fidelity to the original texts while allowing for creative reinterpretation and adaptation.

Contextual review

Carole Gray and Julian Malins propose that the contextual review is an expanded version of the literature review, acknowledging a broader range of background materials in the public domain. These materials extend beyond text or traditional published works and encompass various media such as images, videos, websites, films, art and design objects, performances, and event records.⁶⁶ Considering the interdisciplinary and intricate nature of early Monkey King character design research and the necessity for visualizing literary narratives in this project, a contextual review proves more appropriate for research in visual arts and design than a conventional literature review. Moreover, the academic discourse encompasses debates on the Monkey King's origin, classical works featuring the character, and early religious and literary narratives associated with the Monkey King. These review dimensions are instrumental in establishing this project's historical background for character design. Consequently, they form the foundation for literary narratives, character development, and the selection of visual elements, all critical components.

⁶⁶ Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Hants: Routledge, 2016).

The project involves an extensive background review, enabling me to try to represent the image of the Monkey King visually described in ancient literature in a manner consistent with the historical context of the time. For instance, in the opening of chapter two of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, Xuanzang first encounters the Monkey King, who is described simply as a "scholar in white cloth." However, the specific style of his clothes and accessories was not detailed. Reconstructing this simple textual description into a concrete visual representation requires sourcing reference materials from the historical development of attire over a millennium ago. Additionally, the specific etiquette and gestures of the Monkey King bowing to Xuanzang are not elaborated upon, necessitating the search for clues in records of societal customs and other indirect sources from that era. (Cross-reference Part A. A Scholar in White)

Field Investigation

Relative to literature reviews, field investigation can provide more firsthand data more intuitively. The field investigation for this project involved gathering primary sources and researching locations relevant to the earlier narrative, such as historical sites, temples, and cultural institutions related to early Monkey King culture: the Monkey King at the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou, China, and the Hanuman stone carvings on the Hindu temple gate pillars at the Quanzhou Overseas Communication History Museum (replicas, original is housed at the Xiamen University Museum of Anthropology), as well as the stone carvings of the Journey to the West at Feilai Peak in Lingyin Temple, Hangzhou, China. During the investigation, materials were rapidly captured through photography. Compared with previous photographic records and contextual reviews, these field investigation materials help deduce a more detailed basis for character creation.

For instance, the plot of the Monkey King defeating a fierce tiger in the *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, published during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), has been inherited by later versions, including the hundred-chapter novel Journey to the West, published during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD). However, the descriptions of the Monkey King in early religious literature are brief and do not mention the details of the Monkey King wearing a tiger-skin apron. I designed

the Monkey King character wearing tiger skin, with the determination of this concept through observations of the clothing in the stone carvings of the Monkey King (1228-1236 AD) during the Song Dynasty (Cross-reference Part C. The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron).

Comparative Research

David Collier argues that comparison is an essential analytical tool which can enhance descriptive capacity and centralise concept formation by highlighting suggestive similarities and contrasts between cases. It is helpful to test hypotheses and contributes to inducing discoveries and constructing theories.⁶⁷ The project involves multidimensional comparative research across cultures, eras, and disciplines to address the ambiguity in the narrative of the Monkey King in earlier ancient literary works. It aims to determine how to select from various material sources and decide which elements should be reflected in the character design of the Monkey King.

During the initial conceptualisation phase of character design for the early Monkey King, I drew upon the commonly used deductive template in social science to supplement aspects of early Monkey King religious literature lacking explicit descriptions. In "Inductive Iteration in Comparative Research," Sean Yom characterises the deductive template as a procedural framework in observational research aimed at deriving causal inferences. Scholars initially formulate falsifiable hypotheses based on existing theories or axioms. Following the delineation of all predictive implications of the hypotheses, they gather data and cases, such as datasets, surveys, timelines, and interviews. Finally, hypothesis testing compares predictions with observed outcomes. If they align, the causal hypothesis becomes plausible and can be reported for publication (Figure 10).⁶⁸

⁶⁷ David Collier, 'The Comparative Method', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 1993), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1540884>.

⁶⁸ Sean Yom, 'From Methodology to Practice: Inductive Iteration in Comparative Research', *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 5 (1 April 2015): 616–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414014554685>.

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Figure 10. Yom, Sean. (1 April 2015). The deductive template of research. From *Inductive Iteration in Comparative Research*.

<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/doi/10.1177/>

In the Ming Dynasty edition of the novel *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King's iconic weapon is the Ruyi Jingu Bang (如意金箍棒), a cudgel that can change its size at will. This weapon set can be traced back to decorative paintings on a porcelain pillow (Cross-reference Figure 36) from the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 AD). It has been consistently portrayed since then, seemingly cementing itself as a stereotype. Contemporary designers may find it challenging to justify altering this setting. Therefore, I applied the deductive research template to address whether the early depictions of the Monkey King, aside from magical attacks, featured physical weapons. If these weapons resemble Hanuman, the correlation could be part of the evidence chain on the Monkey King's origins in Hanuman. These inquiries were not addressed in literary works featuring the Monkey King during the Tang and Song dynasties. Therefore, I used the deductive research template to conclude and apply the findings to my character design practice. (Cross-reference Part B. Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo) The deductive template can be utilised iteratively to address the rational aspect of design creativity. Simultaneously, it enriched the research aspect of the entire design practice project, transforming it from mundane to engaging.

Practice-Led Research

This project constitutes a practice-based research endeavour. The chosen subject matter spans a

distant historical period and carries an inherent mystique, stimulating interdisciplinary inquiry. It encompasses diverse fields such as classical literature, folklore, religious art, architectural decoration, and attire history. These investigations and research are all oriented towards the character design with evidence for the Monkey King in the earlier narrative.

Carole Gray and Julian Malins acknowledge the shared basic structure of practice in fine art and design, which can be a starting point for developing research procedures. They argue that the processes involved in the development/production of art/design work share similarities with the methodologies used in scientific research despite differing contexts. The procedure of practice and reflection on practice, in practice-led research, the methodology should be tailored to the characteristics and structure of the practice.⁶⁹

Drawing from the refined art and design methodology Gray adapted from Cornock (Figure 11), I conducted practice-led research. Considering the backdrop of the era in which the *Journey to the West* story was conceived and established, the process of designing the character for the early Monkey King involved considering various components of the character, including personality traits, actions, facial features, attire, accessories, weapons, and more, through an iterative process that facilitated the reciprocal advancement of practice and theory, leading to the completion of the character design.

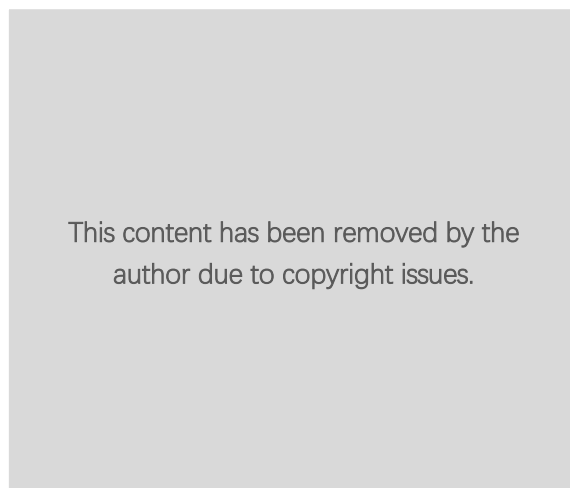


Figure 11. Carole Gray and Julian Malins. (31 December 1993). The methodology in art & design, adapted by Gray from Cornock from *Research Procedures/Methodology for Artists and Designers*.

⁶⁹ Carole Gray and Julian Malins, 'Research Procedures/Methodology for Artists and Designers.', 31 December 1993, <https://rgu-repository.worktribe.com/output/248099>.

For example, an error in the Monkey King's gestures is identified during the reflective process on the interim results of the character creation. The discovery of the practice mistake led to research on hand gestures in ancient Buddhist art, particularly those associated with tirtha-rishis (non-Buddhist sages). Subsequent modifications are made to the character design. This practice-based reflection-driven research can provide corroborative evidence for the possibility of the Monkey King's roots in religions outside Indian Buddhism, such as Brahmanism. (Cross-reference Page 60-62)

Methods

This project combines and cross-used various methods within the framework of the methodologies above. This chapter lists and briefly describes the methods used to avoid redundancy since methods can be demonstrated more straightforwardly through concrete practice. For further details, please refer to the corresponding sections in the next chapter via cross-references.

Photography

Photography is initially preferred for its rapid, accurate, and efficient ability to document materials during fieldwork. In the field investigation and material collection of the Monkey King stone carvings at the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, and the stone carvings of *Eminent Monks' Pilgrimages to India for Buddhist Sutras* at the Feilai Peak in Lingyin Temple, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, photography played a crucial role in this project. (Cross-reference Figure 47, Figure 49, Figure 50)

Sketch

Sketches are utilised during the initial stages of character design to record ideas and maintain a

cohesive style. It is conducive to learning from nature and ancient paintings in the process. For example, I utilised sketching while referencing photographs of monkeys from the natural world and detailed brushwork paintings from the Song Dynasty to depict the facial features of the Monkey King. (Cross-reference Figure 15. *Part of the illustrated practice manuscript* (from sketches of natural monkey expressions to learning lines from Song Dynasty paintings). Sketched by Lili Kong, 2023.)

Material Experiments

Due to the unalterable nature of silk painting, it is essential to establish a clear implementation plan before formally starting the artwork. Therefore, material experiments are imperative. The experiments before final drafting included testing ink-to-water ratios when outlining contours with a brush on silk and presenting mineral and plant pigments transitioning from wet to dry colours on silk. (Cross-reference Figure 22. Test the ink density for outlining on silk. Lili Kong, 2023.)

Computer Software

Computer-aided design software can significantly enhance efficiency in transitioning from conceptual ideation to graphic layout. For instance, Adobe Photoshop processes and converts scanned documents and composite selected materials into conceptual images. Moreover, Adobe Acrobat is utilised for graphic and typesetting layout. (Cross-reference Figure 12. Collage concept sketches, software synthesised by Lili Kong, 2023.)

DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESS

The preceding stage

The preceding stage is a preliminary experiment leading to the start of the project plan. It breaks free from the stereotypical template of the existing Monkey King character design, facilitating rapid documentation of inspiration and ideas. Simultaneously, it involves a literature review and data search to explore potential routes of ancient China-Indian cultural exchange and to become acquainted with religious literature and artistic works relevant to the Monkey King across different regions and epochs. Building upon the foundation of early data collection and inspiration documentation, I gradually refined and clarified the subsequent creative direction and formulated the design plan.



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Figure 12. Collage concept sketches, software synthesised by Lili Kong, 2023.

In establishing the appearance of the Monkey King with a monkey's head and human body, specific facial features are necessary to capture the expressions of monkeys. To achieve this effect, I sourced materials from nature documentaries and photography of monkeys,⁷⁰ observing and extracting various facial and bodily expressions. I used software to remove unwanted details and generate numerous concise black-and-white printmaking effects from the functional main parts (Figure 13). Additionally, I drew inspiration from ancient artworks from the Tang and Song dynasties to learn the expressive method of concise line drawing. For instance, in the meticulous traditional Chinese painting *Monkey* (绘猿图) by the Southern Song Dynasty artist Mao Song (毛松) in the 13th century, the depiction transcends naturalism by projecting human personalities

⁷⁰ *Monkey Kingdom* (DisneyNature, 2015), <https://www.disneyplus.com/en-nz/movies/disneynature-monkey-kingdom/12pZp4AQpjfA>.

onto the realistic portrayal of a monkey (Figure 14).⁷¹ I recorded these observations and accumulated materials through pencil sketching (Figure 15).

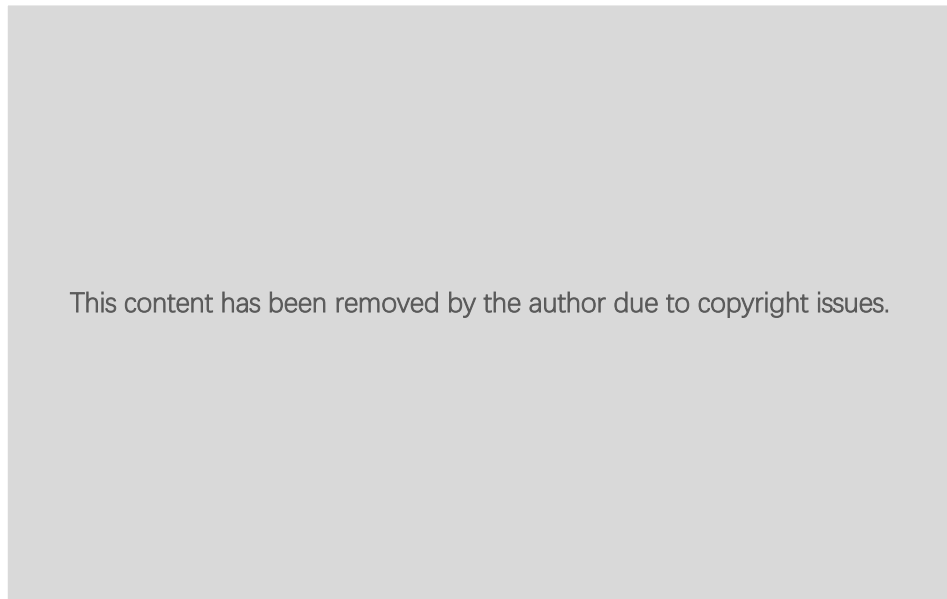


Figure 13. Study on monkey expressions and movements, Printmaking Effects, Lili Kong, 2023. References: *Disney Nature: Monkey Kingdom*, 2015.



Figure 14. *Monkey*, (Attributed to) Mao Song, Southern Song dynasty, 13th century, China. Provenance: Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=TA297

⁷¹ Mao Song, 'Monkey', Tokyo National Museum, 13th century, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=TA297.



Figure 15. *Part of the illustrated practice manuscript* (from sketches of natural monkey expressions to learning lines from Song Dynasty paintings). Sketched by Lili Kong, 2023.

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Preparation of materials and tools

Subsequently, based on the abovementioned study, I determined the materials and style for the portraits. Considering silk's nearly transparent physical properties, I employed the traditional method widely used during the defined historical periods. (Cross-reference Page 28-29) The advantage of painting on silk is the ability to colour both sides of the fabric, which involves using mineral and plant pigments and painting with a brush on silk. From selecting materials and tools to gradually mastering them through a series of experiments, the objective was to ensure that the subsequent illustration style would better align with the established era and cultural backdrop of the creative setting. Then, I procured tools and materials according to these requirements and prepared them for the subsequent illustrations.

These steps included but were not limited to selecting suitable brushes from hundreds of Chinese elaborate-style painting brushes based on size and quality (Figure 16). Group the selected brushes in brush bags according to their different purposes, such as outlining and rendering (Figure 17), and dissolve the glue on the brush tips with water before use. The silk should be secured on wooden frames with paste, spraying water to shrink and tighten it, allowing it to dry and serve as the painting medium (Figure 18). The process also includes selecting inksticks, pigment powders, and pigment blocks (Figure 19).



Figure 16. Selection and procurement of painting materials and tools. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 17. The selected brushes are grouped and placed in the pen curtain according to their different uses for drawing lines or rendering. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 18. Glued silk to a wooden frame as a medium for painting. Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 19. Selected ink sticks, pigment powders and pigment blocks (parts). Photographed by Lili Kong, 2023.

It is worth noting that this project employs natural materials for pigment production, such as mineral powders and plant extracts, to express respect for tradition and reduce environmental impact. This choice necessitates processing some pigments before starting the Monkey King portrait. For instance, the adhesive and mineral powders are thoroughly blended through manual kneading and then diluted with water to the appropriate concentration (Figure 20). Certain processed pigments require preliminary testing on the chosen painting medium to assess their colouring effect. For example, I opted for clamshell white instead to avoid the discolouration and flaking similar to lead white used in Tang and Song Dynasty murals due to oxidation. However, clamshell white presents a challenge as it appears nearly transparent on silk when diluted with water and only reveals its white colour once dry. Therefore, I conducted experiments on silk to determine the appropriate pigment concentration based on colour testing (Figure 21). I also tested the ink concentration for outlining contours (Figure 22).

Finally, I integrate the selected materials using sketches or software, ensuring a unified style, reflect on and correct errors during the design and drawing portrait process, then realise a visualisation based on the textual narrative of *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* and restore the early Monkey King's character.



Figure 20. Processing of powdery pigments. Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 21. Experiment with the colour presentation after the dyes on the silk have dried. Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 22. Test the ink density for outlining on silk. Lili Kong, 2023.

Part A. A Scholar in White

Regarding how the Monkey King's first meeting with the Master Tripitaka/Xuanzang was described in the narratives of early religious literature, I tried to compare the depiction in *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua*, which is recognised as the prototype of *Journey to the West*, about the Monkey King's first encounter to Xuanzang with Hanuman's to Rama in *Ramayana*.⁷² Both divine monkeys assume human form and bow to their master upon meeting. The comparative analysis reveals a clear relationship between these two classical literary masterpieces (Cross-reference Appendix 1). Therefore, I decided on the first character design theme: the appearance of the Monkey King, a scholar in white (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Monkey King character design *Part A. A Scholar in White*, reference demonstration diagram, edited by Lili Kong.

The composition parts list of *A Scholar in White*:

Figure 23-a. Facial appearance: Xuanzang's Indian assistant (Cross-reference Figure 24)

Figure 23-b. Circular collar gown: "Tang yuan ling"(唐圆领) (Cross-reference Figure 25, Figure 26, Figure 27)

Figure 23-c. Headscarf: fu tou (幞头) (Cross-reference Figure 25, Figure 26)

⁷² See Appendix 1

Figure 23-d. Belt: die xie dai (蹠屐帶) (Cross-reference Figure 25, Figure 26)

Figure 23-e. Boots: zao xue (皂靴) (Cross-reference Figure 25, Figure 26)

Figure 23-f. Formal greeting etiquette: Tang hand-crossing salute (唐代叉手礼) (Cross-reference Figure 26, Figure 27, Figure 28)

The process of demonstration and creation is as follows:

1. Xuanzang's Indian assistant

The widely circulated painting, depicting an itinerant monk carrying sutras on his back and holding a dust brush, does not represent Xuanzang but rather the Yoga master Dharmatrāta (Sanskrit), who is the patriarch of Xuanzang.⁷³ However, the *Portrait of the Priest Xuanzang* from the Saidai-ji Temple more closely resembles the actual appearance of Master Xuanzang (Figure 24).⁷⁴



Figure 24. *Portrait of the Priest Xuanzang*, Hanging scroll; ink and colours on silk, 142.4 × 55.5 cm, partial. Kamakura period 14th century, Provenance: Saidai-ji Temple, Nara Prefecture, Japan. <https://www.narahaku.go.jp/english/collection/950-0.html>

⁷³ Du Nanfa, '[Story of Buddhism] Investigation of the Identities in "Xuanzang Carrying Xingji"', *Singapore Lianhe Zaobao*, 3 March 2008, <https://hocje.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/佛教故事《玄奘負笈圖》人物身份考/>.

⁷⁴ Du Xuchu, 'Portrait of Master Xuanzang on the Silk Road', *China Art News*, 1 November 2019, https://www.cflac.org.cn/whsy/wenbo/201911/t20191101_461443.html.

In the lower-left corner of this portrait is a foreign assistant dressed in a white robe with red curly hair, a high nose, and arched eyebrows, rumoured to be the Indian assistant of Master Xuanzang.⁷⁵ The Monkey King is also referred to as the Monkey Assistant.⁷⁶ It has been demonstrated in the contextual review that the Monkey King comes from India, so I use the appearance of Xuanzang's Indian assistant as a reference to match the Monkey King's portrait when he first appears as the white-clothed scholar in the character design.

2. Popular clothing in the Tang Dynasty

During the Tang Dynasty, popular attire encompassed distinctive elements that reflected the era's fashion trends. These included the circular collar gown, Tang yuan ling, which is not a traditional Chinese dress. After the Wei, Jin (220-280 AD) Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589 AD), it absorbed the characteristics of Hunni clothing⁷⁷ and became trendy in the Tang Dynasty.⁷⁸ Additionally, the fu tou, as a headscarf,⁷⁹ is commonly worn by men and women as a fashion accessory.⁸⁰ Another notable component of Tang attire was the die xie dai, a belt or sash tied around the waist, which is very close to the modern belt and is convenient for hanging belongings.⁸¹ Furthermore, footwear was booted, including zao xue, black high-top boots made of leather or textile.⁸² The set of outfits was a prominent clothing feature during that period, favoured by individuals of various social classes, from ordinary people to the emperor, and could be worn on multiple occasions, from diplomatic etiquette to daily wear.⁸³

⁷⁵ Chan Tan Jing she, 'Kamakura Period Painting: *Portrait of Master Xuanzang*', WeChat public platform, 7 January 2023, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/zU6HK9ppYQHVALp5JnilaQ>.

⁷⁶ Gustav Ecke and Demiiville Paul, *The Twin Pagodas Of Zayton* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1935), <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.127766>.

⁷⁷ Siming Jushi, 'Men's Clothing in the Tang Dynasty Was Compact but Not Simple', 360doc, 24 July 2020, http://www.360doc.com/content/20/0724/15/5512889_926493410.shtml.

⁷⁸ Wan Fang, 'The "Gown" Collar Style of Hunni Burial Puppet in Tang Dynasty', *Editorial Board*, 2009, 72. In the Tang Dynasty, "Hunni" means the races in Central Asia, West Asia and the East Pamir plateau, which has the deep eye and high nose.

⁷⁹ Gufengwanshi, 'On the Daily Attire of People in the Tang Dynasty - Futou: In the Early Tang Dynasty, They Were Tied by Themselves, but in the Late Tang Dynasty, They Were Worn Directly', NetEase163, 9 October 2022, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HJ8G6JAA0543L1LU.html>.

⁸⁰ Li Wan, 'The Implicit Beauty and Open Beauty of Tang Dynasty's Aesthetic Taste from Tang Dynasty Noble Women's Clothing Features' (2016 International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Atlantis Press, 2015), 352–55, <https://doi.org/10.2991/iccsh-16.2016.90>.

⁸¹ Zhang Wanli, 'Tang Costume Belt', 3 January 2017, http://www.360doc.com/content/17/0105/13/9165926_620246740.shtml.

⁸² Si shu zhi hua, 'Ancient Chinese Footwear', 6 May 2017, http://www.360doc.com/content/17/0506/15/6207320_651573879.shtml.

⁸³ Fan Yingfeng, 'A Brief Summary of Costumes in the Sui and Tang Dynasties', in *Research on Qianling Culture*, 5 (Sanqin Publishing House, 2010), https://www.sxlib.org.cn/dfzy/sxdwljgb/tddl/yjwx_5659/yjzl_5660/qlwhyjw/201704/t20170426_698248.html.

The prevalent fashion style of the Tang Dynasty finds validation in realistic paintings from that era. The painting *Emperor Taizong Receiving the Tibetan Envoies* (步辇图卷) by the Tang Dynasty artist Yan Liben (阎立本) depicted a scene of foreign attendants meeting Emperor Taizong (Figure 25) and the *Night Revels of Han Xizai* (韩熙夜宴图卷) by the Five Dynasties artist Gu Hongzhong (顾闳中) portrays a gathering of gentry celebrities of the time (Figure 26).⁸⁴ The figures' attire in these paintings reflects distinctive characteristics of the Tang Dynasty fashion, including the elements mentioned earlier, such as the Tang circular collar gown, fu tou headscarf, di xie belt, and black boots zao xue. These paintings serve as primary visual references for the attire of characters in my design for the character design depicting the Monkey King transformed into a scholar in white when he first encountered Xuanzang.

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Figure 25. *Emperor Taizong Receiving the Tibetan Envoy* by Tang (618–907) artist Yan Liben. 38.5 × 129 cm, partial. The Palace Museum, Beijing, China.

<https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/234620>

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Figure 26. *The Night Revels of Han Xizai* by Southern Tang (937–975) artist Gu Hongzhong. 28.7 × 335.5 cm, partial. The Palace Museum, Beijing, China.

<https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/228200.html>

The *portrait of Hui Kuo*, one of the *Eight Patriarchs of the Shingon Sect of Buddhism*, shows his assistant standing on the left side of the painting wearing a white circular collar gown (Figure 27). The attire of this assistant resembles that of Xuanzang's assistant, which might be shared among Buddhist monks' assistants in East Asia during the Tang and Song dynasties. I drew inspiration

⁸⁴ Bu Hangbin, 'Top 10 Ancient Chinese Paintings', *English World* (blog), 7 November 2020, <https://cnintro.com/?p=18>.

from the contrasting tones of the white round-collar robe in this painting, with shadows complemented by brown undertones, making the white appear even brighter in the lighter areas.

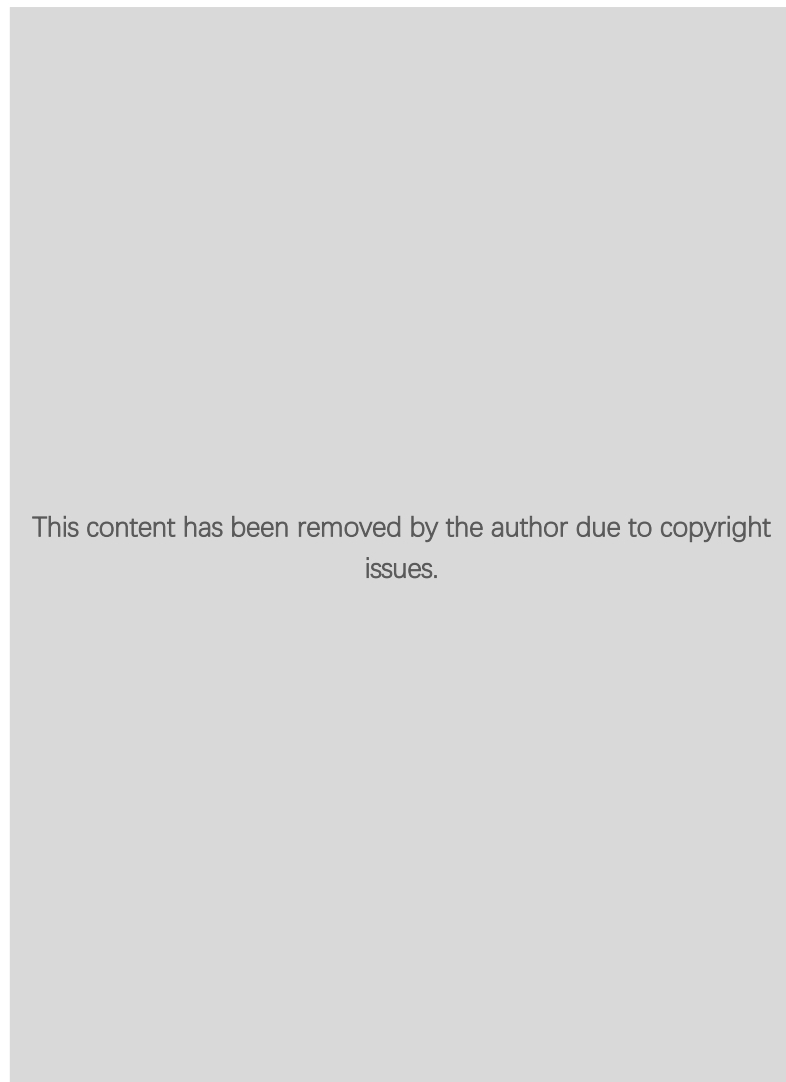


Figure 27. *Eight Patriarchs of the Shingon Sect of Buddhism*, Hui Kuo, Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 118.6 × 83.8 cm, Kamakura period (13th-14th century) Nara National Museum, Nara, Japan. <https://www.narahaku.go.jp/english/collection/797-7.html>

3. Tang hand-crossing salute for the formal greeting etiquette

When Hanuman first meets Rama in the *Ramayana*, and the Monkey King first meets Xuanzang in the *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, both characters pay respects to their masters, and the plot is nearly identical. However, the two works were written almost a thousand years apart, with settings thousands of kilometres apart, and different customs and manners prevail leading to distinct ways of paying respect.

In ancient China, there were various forms of paying respects, with different actions suitable for different eras and occasions. A comparison of literature and archaeological evidence shows that during the Tang and Song dynasties when meeting someone of higher status, the hand-crossing salute was a formal greeting etiquette customary for showing respect. The method of performing the hand-crossing salute in the Tang dynasty is different from other dynasties, involving crossing both hands in front of the chest, with the left hand holding the right hand and the thumb of the right hand raised (Figure 28).⁸⁵

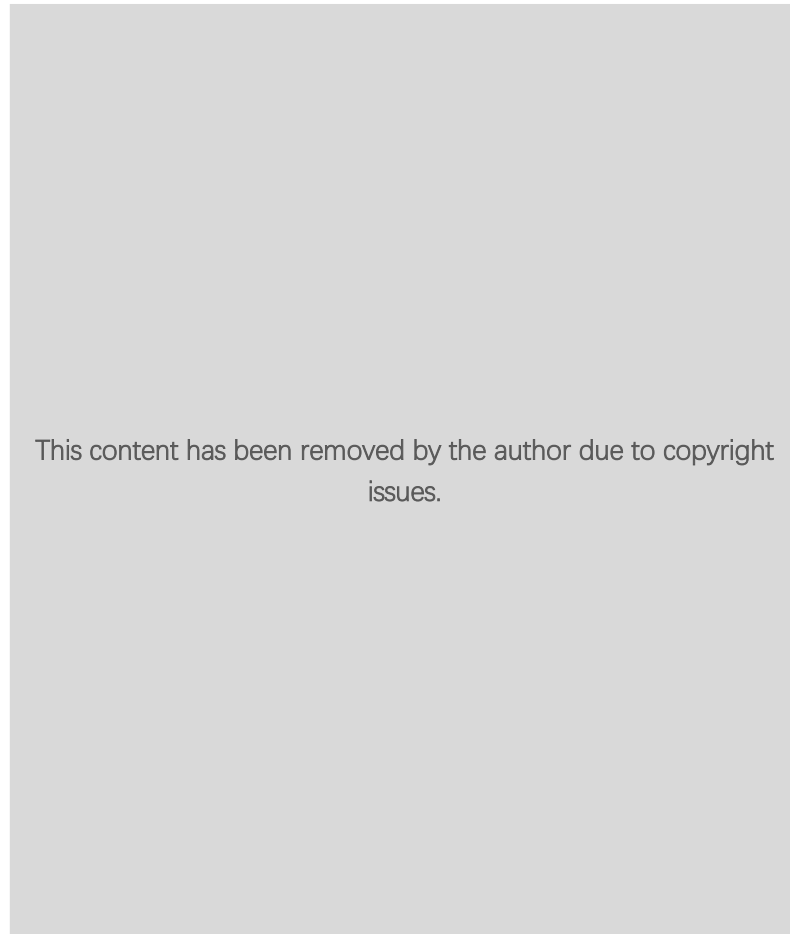


Figure 28. Murals unearthed from the Tang Dynasty Zhao Yi Cemetery in Anyang. Henan, China. https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1261840

4. A scholar in white from India in the Tang Dynasty

Thus far, the character design depicting the Monkey King disguised as a scholar in a white robe meeting Tang Xuanzang, as described in chapter two of the *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* (the book being a fragment, with the first chapter missing, possibly detailing the inception of

⁸⁵ Xu Chanfei, 'Bowling and Shaking Hands Are Unconventional, Murals Teach You the Cross-Hand Ceremony of the Tang Dynasty', Art Review_The Paper, 15 August 2014, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1261840.

Xuanzang's decision to embark on the journey to the West)⁸⁶, has mainly been finalised. I have assembled and evaluated visual materials substantiated by research and arranged them according to the established scenario. This process involved progressing from hand-drawn sketches to digitally composited preliminary drafts (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Drawn sketches on paper, computer-generated materials, and hand-drawn lines for finalisation. Lili Kong, 2023.

Subsequently, using ink to draw the refined lines will outline the characters' images on silk. Following this, multiple layers of colour will be applied to both sides of the silk using diluted mineral and plant-based pigments (Figure 30). Finally, this portrait visually recreates the literary narrative of the Monkey King story's beginning from the *Shihua* nearly a thousand years ago (Figure 31).



Figure 30. The drawing process of the original manuscript of *Part A. A Scholar in white*, ink outline, meticulous rendering on silk. Lili Kong, 2023.

⁸⁶ Li Shiren and Cai Jinghao, *The Annotated Edition of the 'Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua'*.



Figure 31. Monkey King character design *Part A. A Scholar in White*, ink and colours on silk, Lili Kong, 2023.

Part B. Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo

In *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, the Monkey King/Monkey Pilgrim is called the Hou Xing zhe (猴行者).^{87; 88} The second portrait emphasises the Monkey King's appearance after he joined the pilgrimage team, depicting his original form as a semi-divine figure with a monkey head and human body. This portrait refers not only to this specific chapter but also to the Monkey King's common iconic poses when he gazes into the distance to anticipate the next destination, mainly when the narrative describes the view (Figure 32), *Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo* (Figure 33).

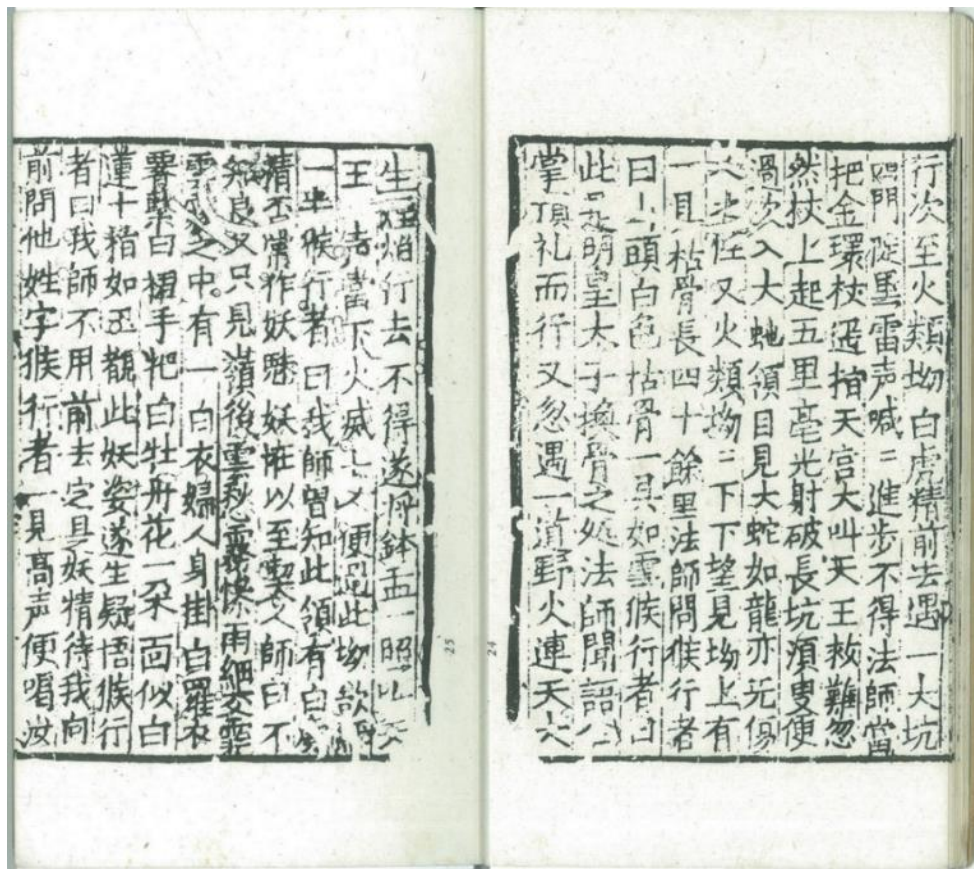


Figure 32. *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Literary Classics Publishing Society, reprinted in 1955, 24.

⁸⁷ 'Xingzhe (行者)', Buddhist Dictionary, accessed 9 April 2024, <http://foxue.fitfrom.com/detail/25265>.

An attendant to the abbot;

An itinerant monk;

One who renounces the world and takes refuge in a monastery but keeps the hair;

A[^]carin, a practitioner of Buddhism;

In the sutras, those practising Buddhists are often called Xing zhe.

⁸⁸ Liu Mingshan, 'An Examination of the Belongings Carried by Walking Monks in the Tang and Song Dynasties', *China Literature and History Publishing House*, Zen Tea, January 2020.

During the Tang and Song dynasties, Buddhist monks were fervently engaged in itinerant activities, viewing this practice mode as a significant gateway to enlightenment through meditation.

Itinerancy constituted a widespread practice among monks, undertaken to seek renowned masters, enhance personal cultivation, or propagate teachings to others.

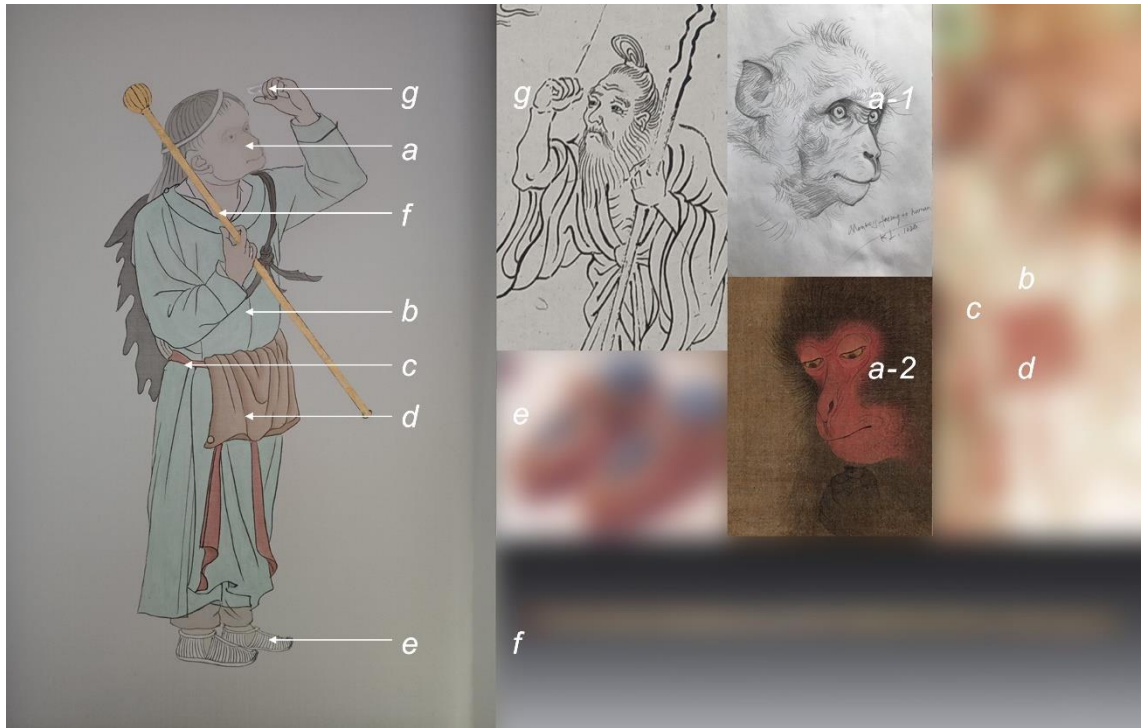


Figure 33. Monkey King character design *Part B. Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo* reference demonstration diagram, edited by Lili Kong.

The composition parts list of *Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo*:

Figure 33-a. Facial appearance: monkeyface (Cross-reference Figure 14, Figure 15)

Figure 33-b. Circular collar gown: Tang yuan ling (Cross-reference Figure 34)

Figure 33-c. Sash (Cross-reference Figure 34)

Figure 33-d. Bag (Cross-reference Figure 34)

Figure 33-e. Hemp shoes (Cross-reference Figure 35)

Figure 33-f. Hand gesture (Cross-reference Figure 41, Figure 42,)

Figure 33-g. Blunt weapon: gu duo (骨朵) (Cross-reference Figure 68)

The process of demonstration and creation is as follows:

1. Monkey King on Pilgrimage

In creating this portrait, I drew inspiration from various depictions of the Monkey King in Dunhuang murals, particularly referencing the portrayal found on the west side of the southern wall of Cave No. 2 of the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves in Guazhou (Figure 34). Additionally, I incorporated my sketches of real monkeys based on photographs as a reference to capture the facial features of the Monkey King. This composition presents the Monkey King's original

appearance as he traverses the journey westward, akin to Hanuman reverting to his true form upon confirmed Rama.



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Figure 34. *The Journey to the West*, on the south wall of Cave No. 2 in East Thousand Buddha Cave, Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD), Guazhou, Gansu, China.

<https://news.sina.cn/2018-09-06/detail-ifxeuwvr4227978.d.html>

The Monkey King's attire includes a gown, a sash, a bag, and hemp shoes resembling contemporary upstream shoes. While these details are hardly seen in modern depictions of the Monkey King, they are more aligned with the outdoor travel requirements than those derived from the 16th-century Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, which traverses rugged terrain on the journey to the West.

Due to the dim lighting conditions, forbidden photography within the Dunhuang Grottoes, and limited access to specific caves, I encountered challenges in obtaining visual references during on-site research. Moreover, many extant murals are fragmented and blurry. Consequently, I had to rely on archaeological artefacts to explore the specific appearance of outdoor equipment from over a millennium ago.

For instance, I compared the photos of Tang Dynasty hemp shoes excavated from the Astana Cemetery in Turpan, Xinjiang (Figure 35), with those of the Monkey King's shoes in the Western Xia Dynasty Dunhuang murals. I found a close match given the proximity of these two archaeological sites along the ancient Silk Road, which was also the route of Xuanzang's pilgrimage, particularly in the regions of present-day Xinjiang and Gansu mentioned earlier. This type of woven shoe was a common footwear choice for both men and women and was suitable for local use. I also noticed the similar woven shoes worn by Xuanzang's "Indian assistant" mentioned previously.

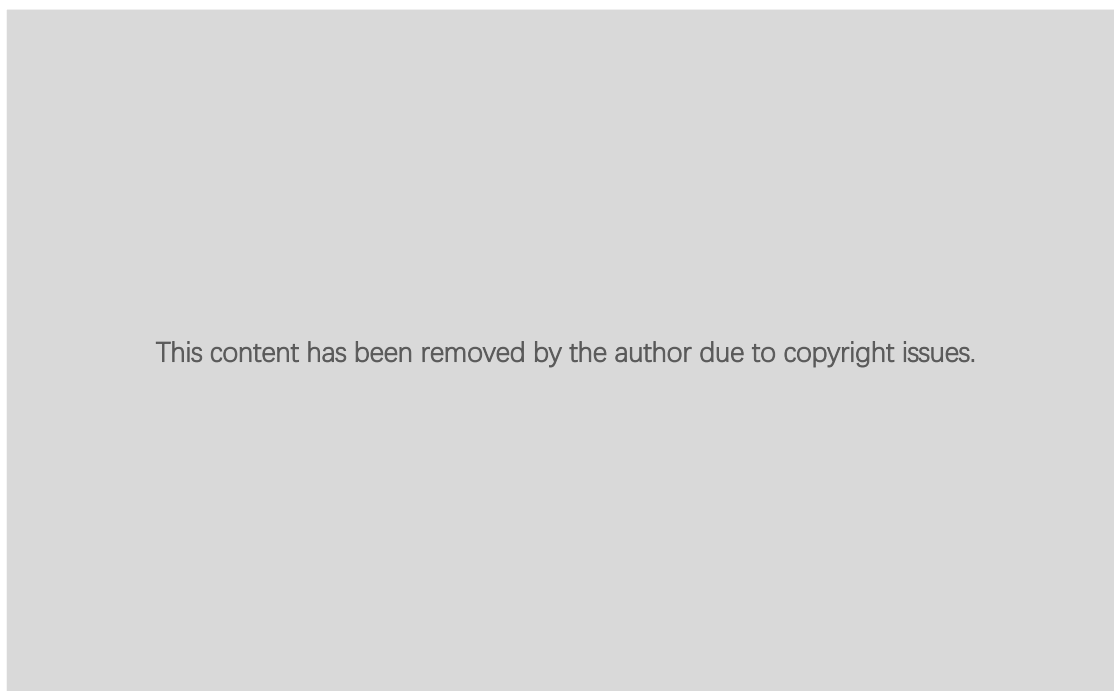


Figure 35. Hemp shoes unearthed from Tomb 37 of Astana in Turpan in 1964, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum, Xinjiang, China.

http://k.sina.com.cn/article_3960624673_pec12562102700kmes.html

2. Gu duo as a blunt weapon

In the second portrait of the Monkey King, his physical attack weapon is the focal point of my creation, involving the evolution of the Monkey King's weapons. In the well-known novel *Journey to the West*, published in the 16th century, the iconic weapon of the Monkey King is the Ruyi Jingu Bang, a compliant golden-banded cudgel that can change its length and size according to the owner's will. In the decorative paintings on porcelain pillows from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the Monkey King holding the cudgel can already be seen among the Xuanzhang and the disciples in the later *Journey to the West* story (Figure 36).

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Figure 36. The Monkey King holds a cudgel, Cizhou Kiln Brown Glazed Pillow, and the drama story of Journey to the West, Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Guangdong Provincial Museum, Guangzhou, China. <https://www.gdmuseum.com/cn/col49/148083>

However, in the *Shihua* published in the Song Dynasty, among the three treasures that the Brahma (originated from Brahmanism) gave to Xuanzang, there was a Jin Huan Xi Zhang (金环锡杖), a staff with golden rings, which served as a magical tool to summon Brahma for assistance. Both the Monkey King and Xuanzang shared this staff. It can also transform into a fire dragon or yaksha to fight and subdue enemies. More precisely, the staff belongs to Xuanzang as his magical tool; "Shi Hua" does not describe any weapon designed explicitly for the Monkey King.

Xi Zhang is a staff with rings that produce sound when shaken, used initially for begging food, insect repellent, and defence against cattle and dogs.⁸⁹ It was a common accessory for itinerant monks and later became sanctified as a Buddhist artefact. Various Buddhist art pieces and unearthed relics from the Tang Dynasty depict the Xi Zhang as a prevalent Han Buddhist ceremonial object. Early Tang Dynasty Dunhuang murals often portray Medicine Buddha Bhaisajyaguru and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva wielding the Xi Zhang. Subsequently, eminent monks of the Han Buddhist tradition were also depicted with the Xi Zhang. The illustrations depict Xuanzang holding the Xi Zhang, which can be found in various versions of Journey to the West since the Ming and Qing Dynasties,⁹⁰ which remains an iconic attribute of Xuanzang in modern

⁸⁹ 'Xi Zhang', in *Buddhist Dictionary*, accessed 13 April 2024, <http://foxue.fitfrom.com/detail/28546>.

⁹⁰ 'Speaking of the Four Great Classical Novels, *Journey to the West*: What Is Tang Monk's Nine-Ring Staff?', 360doc, 10 June 2019, http://www.360doc.com/content/19/0610/15/16534268_841551918.shtml.

character designs. It can be suggested that Xi Zhang's purpose and significance align with the magical tool concept outlined in "Shi Hua" and with ceremonies. No evidence indicates that the Xi Zhang used for magical purposes, was transformed into the Monkey King's physically striking cudgel, later the Ruyi Jingu Bang.

However, I noticed that in Cave 3 of the Yulin Grottoes, on the north side of the east wall, there is a mural of the *Eleven-faced Avalokitesvara Sutra*, dating from the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD), with a portrayal of the Monkey King (Figure 37, behind a statue). Yu Shuo (于硕) quotes Duan Wenjie's (段文杰) description of the Monkey King in this mural: "He holds a Jin Huan Xi Zhang in his right hand, close to his right shoulder, and lifts a stack of sutras with one end (Figure 38)."⁹¹

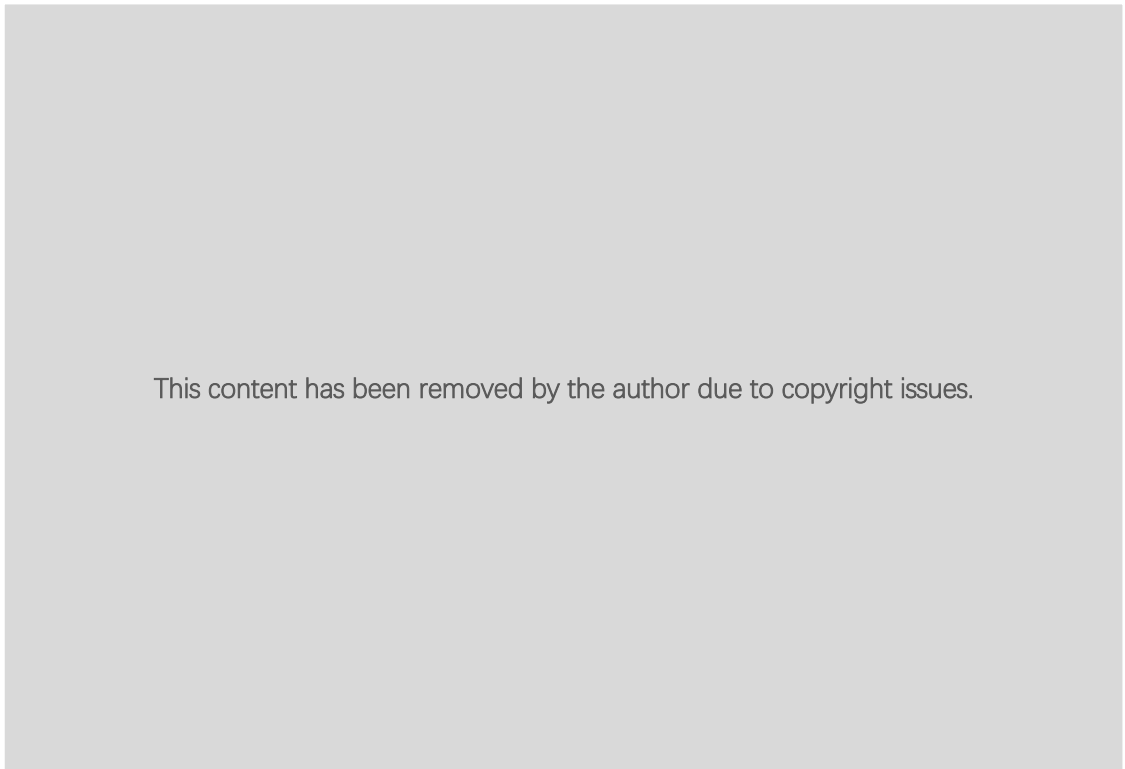


Figure 37. Yulin Grottoes Cave 3 North side of the east wall *Eleven-faced Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara*, partial., Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD)
https://www.sohu.com/a/351956873_466973

⁹¹ Yu Shuo, 'The Evolution of *The Journey to the West* Murals in Yulin Caves of Gua Zhou', in *The Heritage of the Silk Road* (The First International Conference on Xuanzang and Silk Road Culture, Xian, 2018).

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Figure 38. Yulin Grottoes Cave 3 North side of the east wall *Eleven-faced Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara* - Line drawing of the Monkey King by Duan Wenjie, partial.

<http://www.peoplechina.com.cn/maindoc/html/kaogu/yulinku/200103/200103-left.htm>

However, Yang Fuxue (杨富学) believes it cannot be explained as a Jin Huan Xi Zhang because the Jin Huan Xi Zhang is bestowed upon the Xunanzhang by Mahavira. Moreover, it is carried on Monkey King's shoulder, which is inconsistent with using a Xi Zhang.⁹² I partially agree with Yang Fuxue's view that the Xi Zhang, as a magic ceremonial object, should not be carried on the shoulder to lift sutra boxes. In conjunction with Duan Wenjie's line drawing check of this mural, I found that the rod-like object on the Monkey King's shoulder is more akin to a blunt weapon used for physical strikes, a gu duo.⁹³

The earliest surviving depictions of the Monkey King's weapon may not have emerged abruptly. By comparing ancient Chinese and Indian religious artworks, I discovered that around the 11th century AD, the Monkey King and Hanuman were depicted using the same type of blunt weapons. It might be another piece of evidence which supports the theory that the Monkey King originated from Hanuman.⁹⁴ In the latter stages of the evolution of the Monkey King's weapon, it is conceivable that specific ancient murals may have degraded, resulting in the loss of the heads of

⁹² Yang Fuxue, 'Examining the Evolution of the Sun Wukong Image to Understand the Era of the Dunhuang Grottoes *Tang Monk Journey to the West*' (Forum on the Peak of the Hexi Corridor and Silk Road Civilization in the Middle Ages, Zhangye, Gansu, China: Hexi College, 2023).

⁹³ See Appendix 2

⁹⁴ See Appendix 3

the gu duo depicted in the images, leaving behind what appears to be just a stick. However, the hypothesis that the golden-banded cudgel evolved from Xi Zhang cannot be entirely dismissed until further archaeological evidence is procured.

3. The pilgrim bearing the gu duo gazes into the distance

I synthesised various materials mentioned above, including an ancient Western Xia mural, a Northern Song Dynasty painting, my sketches, and a Liao Dynasty gu duo to develop a conceptual character of the *Monkey King Holding a Gu Duo*. Then, I refined it by printing it out and utilising a simple backlight copyboard to trace the necessary features manually, resulting in a coherent image suitable for use as an outline draft (Figure 39). Drawing inspiration from the long-handled gu duo depicted in the photographs (Cross-reference Figure 67. *Gilded Dragon and Phoenix Patterned Gu Duo*, Liao Dynasty (907-1125), Shaanxi History Museum., Figure 68. *Silver Gilt Carved Gu Duo*, Liao Dynasty (907-1125). Figure 69 *Silver Gu Duo*, Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), Heilongjiang Museum.), I opted for a garlic-shaped gu duo as the weapon in the second portrait of the Monkey King. Moreover, I enhanced its appearance by applying a gilt effect using gold foil in the subsequent painting process (Figure 40).

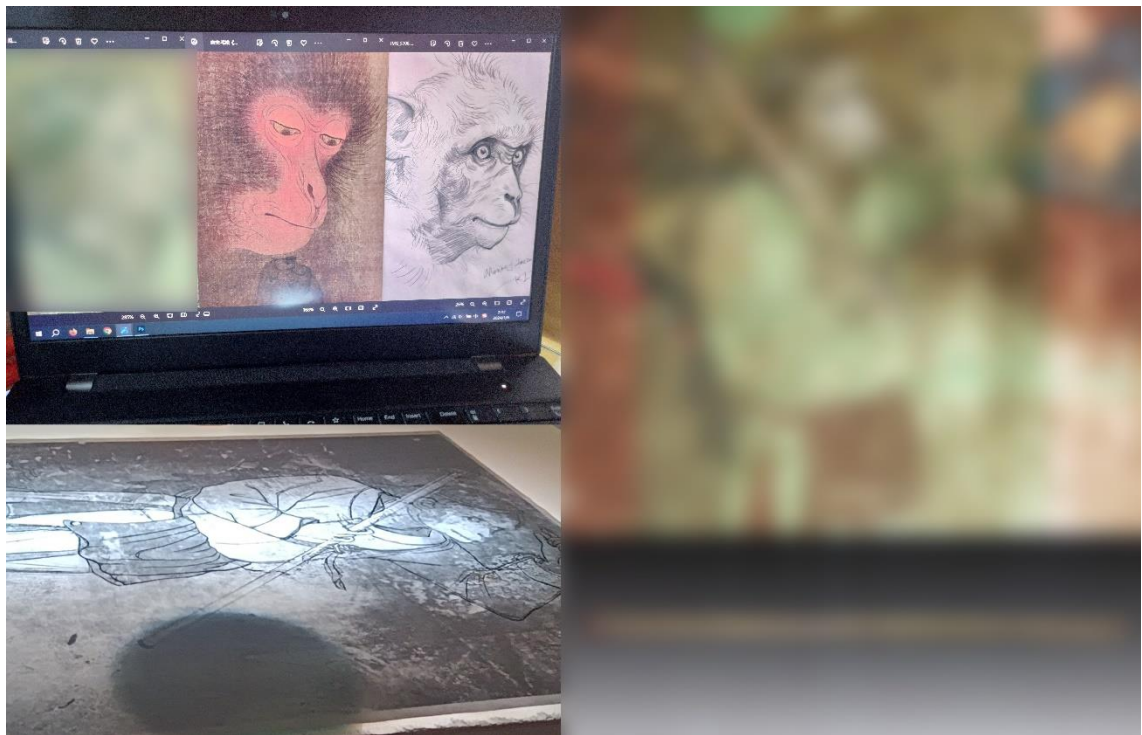


Figure 39. Composite concept drawing as the outline draft for *Part B. Xing zhe Holding a Gu Duo*. Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 40. The drawing process of the original manuscript of *Part B. Xing zhe Holding a Gu Duo*. Lili Kong, 2023.

4. The correction of the gesture

Drawing upon the hand-raising gesture of the Monkey King depicted in the Dunhuang murals from the Xinxia period, I initially rendered the Monkey King facing right, with his left hand raised in a clenched fist, index finger and thumb extended. While the murals have suffered from erosion and the images are blurry, similar hand-raising actions are observed in other Dunhuang murals of the same period, albeit with unclear details of the finger movements. I became aware that this gesture may serve as the origin of the iconic hand gesture of the Monkey King depicted in later works, such as the illustrations of the Monkey King found in *The Original Intent of Journey to the West* (西游原旨), published during the Qing Dynasty (1819 AD, Cross-reference Figure 2). This hand gesture has persisted to the present day. It has become a standard pose used by designers, depicting the Monkey King raising his hand and placing it in front of his forehead to shield the sun while looking into the distance.

Upon completing the second portrait of the Monkey King, I came across a Chinese Line drawing (白描) of the Avalokitesvara with Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes style, a *Reconstruction of the Song Dynasty Line Drawing of the Great Bodhisattva from Longxing Temple in Hebei Province* (重修绘河北隆兴寺宋画大菩萨白描图) (Figure 41) by Zhao Chenyu (赵晨雨). Upon consulting the artist, I have learned that this painting is based on a Jin Dynasty stone carving dating back to around 1198 AD. The original stele has become indistinct over time. An older man in the lower right corner of the stele features a figure with a hand-raising gesture on his forehead. The artist reconstructed it using his knowledge of religious art and painting experience. The old

man figure was to represent a Brahmin sage (Figure 42). I found the hand-raising gesture is similar to the Monkey King's gesture in the ancient mural.



Figure 41. Reconstruction of the Song Dynasty Line Drawing of the Great Bodhisattva from Longxing Temple in Hebei Province by Zhao Chenyu, Chinese line drawing, printmaking on rice paper, 100 × 58 cm, 2022.

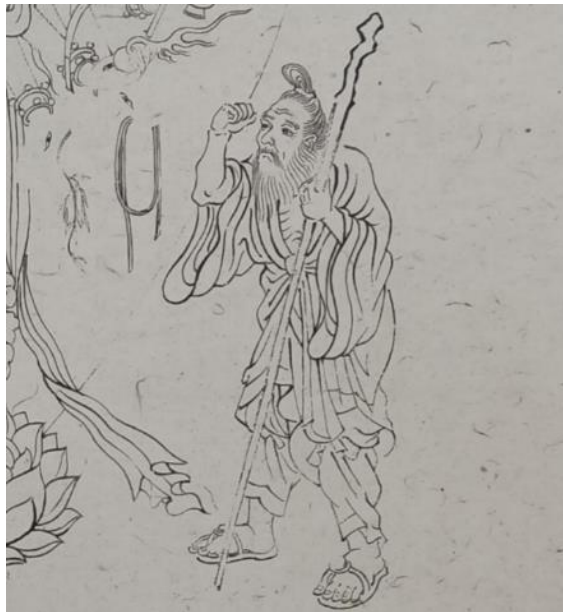


Figure 42. *Reconstruction of the Song Dynasty Line Drawing of the Great Bodhisattva from Longxing Temple in Hebei Province by Zhao Chenyu, Chinese line drawing, printmaking on rice paper, 100 × 58 cm, detail, 2022.*

Then, I found that the stone carving depicts an older figure of a giant bronze-cast statue of the great Avalokitesvara in the Longxing Temple,⁹⁵ which was cast around 971 AD in the Northern Song Dynasty⁹⁶, a little earlier than the Monkey King's earliest mural in the Western Xia Dynasty.

After comparative research, I found that in Dunhuang murals, the gesture of the Monkey King is similar to tirthika-rishis' (non-Buddhist sages) in early Buddhist art, especially from Brahmanism.⁹⁷ This gesture suggests that before embracing Buddhism, the Monkey King might have been a significant deity from another faith, likely from Brahmanism. If this hypothesis holds, the Monkey King will likely be derived from Hanuman. (Cross-reference Page 100-101) In later depictions, this gesture evolved into the iconic posture of the Monkey King (Cross-reference Figure 2, Figure 7, Figure 8), with his hand raised to his forehead to shield his eyes from the sun while gazing into the distance, which persists.

Returning to the illustration of the Monkey King character design, before sufficient research, I

⁹⁵ Du Ping and Wang Qiaolian, 'The Stone Carving of the Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara in the Longxing Temple Copied and Carved in the Jin Dynasty', *Cultural Relics Chronicle*, Introduction and research on cultural relics, no. 6 (2003): 68–70.

⁹⁶ The statue was 21.3 meters tall and had a total height of 45.5 centimetres, including the rosette.

⁹⁷ See Appendix 4

misinterpreted the gesture of the Monkey King. Since correcting mistakes in silk paintings is impossible, I have to use graphic design software to amend this error later (Figure 43).



Figure 43. Monkey King character design *Part B. Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo*, ink and colours on silk, Lili Kong, 2023.

Part C. The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron

The specific origin of the Monkey King wearing tiger skin remains uncertain, but it could be linked to two locations along Xuanzang's historic journey to the West: Gandhara⁹⁸ and Dunhuang. Gandharan art,⁹⁹ influenced by Greek styles, travelled along the Silk Road into China, notably impacting Chinese grotto art like the Dunhuang Grottos. The Greek hero Hercules, often depicted in lion skins, evolved into Vajrapāṇi, symbolised by tiger skin, a Buddhist guardian figure.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the Silk Road facilitated the introduction of the *Ramayana* to China, with the Dunhuang region as a vital hub, where early Monkey King murals were discovered. The Tubo regime briefly occupied Dunhuang during the Tang Dynasty after Xuanzang's journey to the West. The Tubo warrior reward system included wearing tiger skins as symbols of bravery,¹⁰¹ possibly influencing the Monkey King's attire. Hence, I have chosen the theme for the third Monkey King portrait: the warrior adorned in a tiger-skin apron (Figure 44).

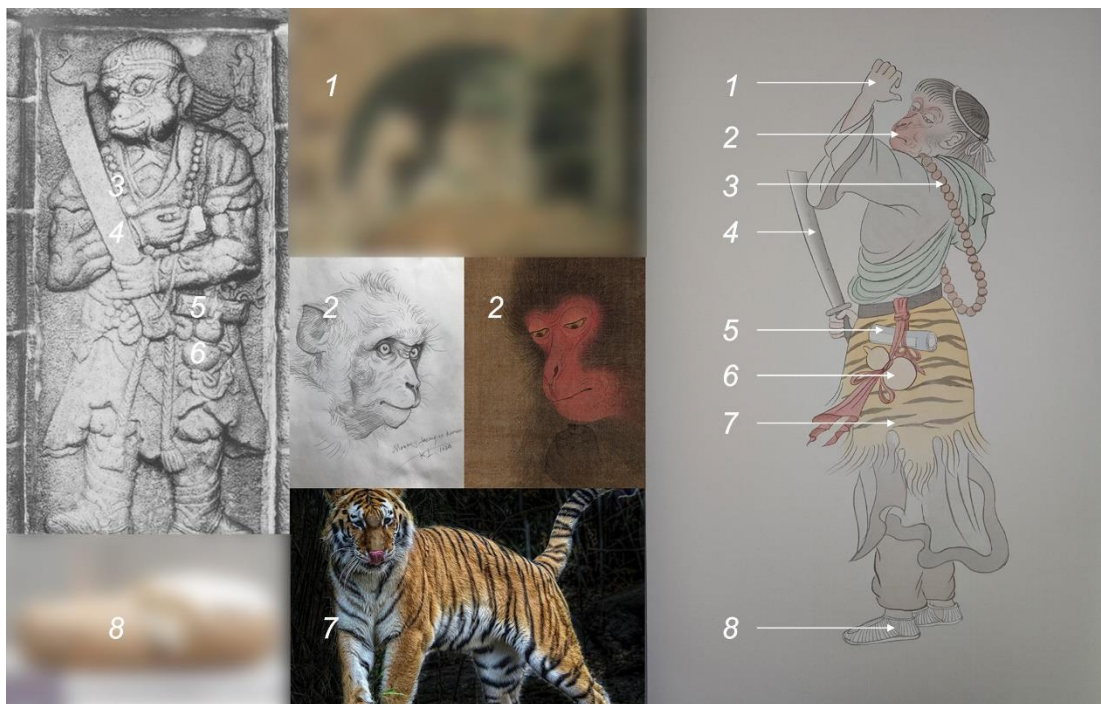


Figure 44. Monkey King character design Part C. *The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron* reference demonstration diagram, edited by Lili Kong.

⁹⁸ Ma Xueren, 'Gandhara Art and the Production of Buddhist Statues', *Northwest Ethnic Studies*, no. 4 (2021): 9.

⁹⁹ The Greco-Buddhist art of the northwest region of the Indian subcontinent (present-day northern Pakistan and northeastern border regions of Afghanistan in Central Asia) emerged around the 1st century AD and declined after the 5th century AD.

¹⁰⁰ Zhang Jianyu, 'Hercules and Buddhist Protectors: Greek Armaments in Gandhara Art', *Art Studies* 2 (2022): 46–52, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.13318/j.cnki.msyj.2022.02.019>.

¹⁰¹ Tong Tao, 'Archaeological Observation of Tubo Tombs in Dachangling', *Archeology* 6 (2018): 11.

The composition parts list of *Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron*:

Figure 44-a. Tiger-skin apron (Cross-reference Figure 48, Figure 52)

Figure 43-b. The knife used by monks: Jie dao (Cross-reference Figure 48)

Figure 43-c. A string of Buddhist beads (Cross-reference Figure 48)

Figure 43-d. The Mantra of the Peacock King (Cross-reference Figure 48)

Figure 43-e. The water container: a gourd (Cross-reference Figure 48)

Figure 43-f. Hand gesture (Cross-reference Figure 41, Figure 42)

Figure 43-g. Monkeyface (Cross-reference Figure 14, Figure 15)

Figure 43-h. Hemp shoes (Cross-reference Figure 35)

The process of demonstration and creation is as follows:

1. The story of tiger-skin aprons

In the 16th-century publication of the "Journey to the West", in one hundred-chapters, there is a description of the Monkey King killing the tiger demon and then wearing its skin around his waist (Figure 45). The tiger-skin apron has become one of the classic costumes of the Monkey King in later generations, still influencing various creative fields related to the Monkey King theme.

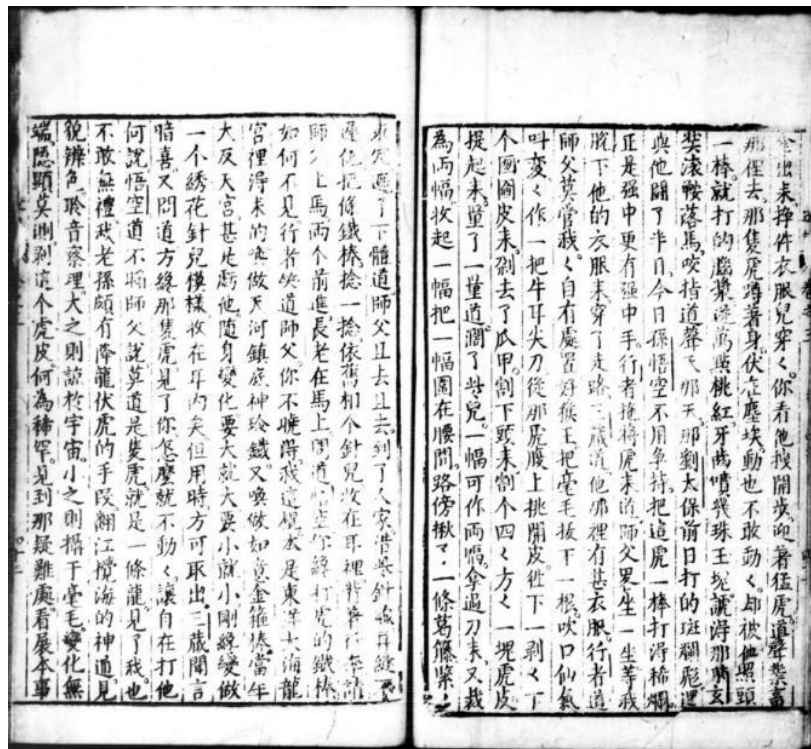


Figure 45. Newly engraved large characters of *Journey to the West*, Ming Dynasty, (Attributed to) Wu Cheng'en, published by Shide Hall in Jinling (1592), Chapter 14.

The *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua* narrated the story of the Monkey King defeating the White Tiger demon (Figure 46). Still, it does not mention the details of making or wearing a tiger-skin apron. Given that the existing *Shihua* is a brief and incomplete version, contemporaneous or earlier editions may contain relevant content regarding the tiger-skin apron. However, in the extant murals of Dunhuang and Guazhou from the same period, after excluding some damaged and unidentifiable murals, there are no depictions of the Monkey King wearing a tiger-skin apron. Therefore, I turned to examine religious sculptures from the era close to the publication of the *Shihua*.

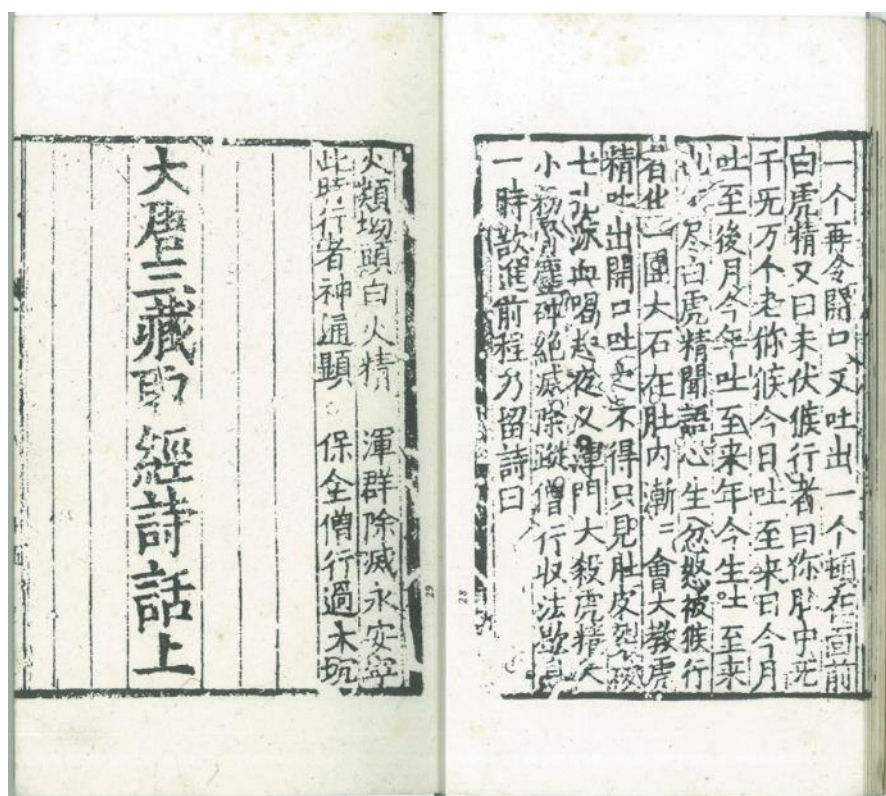


Figure 46. *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua*, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Literary Classics Publishing Society, reprinted in 1955, Chapter 6, 28-29.

I conducted a field investigation at Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, during this Monkey King character design project.¹⁰² This temple is the only Buddhist temple in China with remnants of Hinduism, with the Monkey King statue on the fourth floor of the West Pagoda (built between 1228-1236, Figure 47) having a garment with an irregular lower edge. Its texture is supple, thick, and looks like fur (Figure 48).

¹⁰² It is also the only temple in southern China that enshrines the Five Buddha Mandala of Tantric Buddhism, preserving many characteristics of Tantric Buddhism. Inside the temple are two magnificent stone pagodas built during the Southern Song Dynasty.



Figure 47. Stone carving of Monkey King on the fourth floor of the West Pagoda of Kaiyuan Temple (1228-1237), Quanzhou, Fujian, China. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 48. Gustav Ecke and Demiiville Paul, *The Twin Pagodas Of Zayton*, Cambridge. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,(1935), Plate 26.

I also investigated the group sculpture of eminent monks journeying for sutras at Feilai Peak in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, carved during the Song Dynasty (11th-13th centuries, Figure 49). Among the characters, the second figure between Xuanzang and Zhu Bajie has a missing head

and upper body, making it challenging to identify. However, I noticed that the edge of the garment of this statue differs from the other figures in the same group sculpture (Figure 50), showing a texture similar to that of the apron worn by the Monkey King on the West Pagoda in Kaiyuan Temple. Additionally, the shoes worn by this character resemble the hemp shoes worn by the Monkey King in Dunhuang murals and on the West Pagoda in Kaiyuan Temple, which are different from the footwear worn by other characters in this group of stone sculptures. Therefore, I tentatively inferred that this group sculpture's second character may relate to the Monkey King.



Figure 49. Stone Statues on Feilai Peak, Carvings of Eminent Monks' Pilgrimages to India for Buddhist Sutras. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 50. Stone Statues on Feilai Peak, Carvings of Eminent Monks' Pilgrimages to India for Buddhist Sutras. Detailed comparison, from right to left: Xuanzang, the No. 2 figure, Zhu Bajie, and a retinue. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.

While I have yet to encounter visual references of Hanuman wearing tiger skin, I found parallels

between his composite deity Bhairava and the Monkey King regarding the attire of tiger skin. Furthermore, in Indian folklore, Bhavana, who crafts tiger-skin attire, possesses magical abilities similar to the Monkey King's ability to create duplicate assistants or tools.¹⁰³

2. Xing Zhe's belongings

At the West Pagoda of Kaiyuan Temple, the Monkey King wears a long string of Buddhist beads and holds a Jie Dao,¹⁰⁴ which can also be seen in the sculpture at Feilai Peak. Hanging from his waist belt is a scroll of the Mantra of the Peacock King and a gourd, which served as a water container in ancient times. These were personal items used by Xin Zhe at that time.¹⁰⁵ The scroll adds a more mystical aspect to the Monkey King, aligning with the esoteric style prevalent in the *Shihua*. I documented these props for use in the third portrayal of the Monkey King character design.

Additionally, the stone carvings of the Monkey King in Kaiyuan Temple depicted him adorned with earrings, armlets, bracelets, and other ornaments characteristic of esoteric Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism represents a fusion of Brahmanic elements with Buddhist traditions, and such adornments are commonly found in the iconography of Brahmanic and Hindu deities. A comparison with statues from similar Hanuman periods also reveals similar adornments, for instance, the Standing Hanuman in Chola Dynasty (11th century, Figure 51) and Hanumana from Kangra Fort (10th-11th Century, Cross-reference Figure 72).

3. Monkey King's Tiger-skin Apron

In the second portrait of the Monkey King character design, I observed the figure obscured by sculptures in the Dunhuang murals to set a physical attack weapon for the Monkey King. I searched through various references, but the Monkey King depicted in the murals behind the sculptures cannot be fully observed due to the angle. I could only refer to Duan Wenjie's line sketches, which provided limited details (Cross-reference Figure 38). Therefore, I combined the props of the Monkey King from the Kaiyuan Temple stone sculptures with the raised hand posture

¹⁰³ See Appendix 5

¹⁰⁴ Jie Dao, the precept knife, was one of the items carried by monks for their travels, serving as a daily tool for cutting clothes and shaving.

¹⁰⁵ Liu Mingshan, 'An Examination of the Belongings Carried by Walking Monks in the Tang and Song Dynasties'.

of the Monkey King in the murals and added elements from Southern Song dynasty paintings and my sketches to create a concept drawing (Figure 51). I also revised it to ensure consistency with the style of the other completed Monkey King character designs. Then, refine and improve the design, use ink to trace it onto silk, render it with colour, and finalise the artwork (Figure 53).



Figure 51. The process of designing and drawing of *Part C. The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron* from conceptualization to the final version. Lili Kong, 2024.

In the process of creating the final draft, the challenge encountered was how to depict the iconic tiger-skin apron of the Monkey King. Within the historical period set for this project, I only found relevant stone carvings but did not come across any coloured materials depicting Monkey King's tiger-skin apron. Despite examining many depictions of tigers in contemporary Dunhuang murals and the tiger painting from the matching period, unfortunately, their style did not align with the overall aesthetic of my character design. Consequently, I had to resort to sourcing references from nature, consulting photographs of real tigers, and painting the Monkey King's tiger-skin apron patterns on silk (Figure 52).



Figure 52. Painting the Monkey King's tiger-skin apron patterns by consulting photographs of real tigers. Lili Kong, 2024.

Tiger, wild, endangered (Free commercial image): <http://cc0.cn/image/1572248621668411.html>



Figure 53. Monkey King character design *Part C. The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron*, ink and colours on silk, Lili Kong, 2024.

Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha

The last chapter of *Shihua* describes the Monkey King succeeding in protecting Xuanzang's journey to the West and bringing the Buddhist sutras back to the Tang Dynasty's capital. Following the Buddha's request, the pilgrimage team of seven members returns to Western Heaven on time to achieve enlightenment. As per Buddhist doctrine, this signifies passing through trials and tribulations and attaining liberation from the cycle of reincarnation's suffering (Figure 54). The Monkey King was then honoured by Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty and titled "The Great Sage with Bronze Muscles and Iron Bones" (Figure 55). However, in *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, as a concise and outline-style religious literature, there is no particular description of the Monkey King's attainment of enlightenment, neither specifying his rank nor his title.

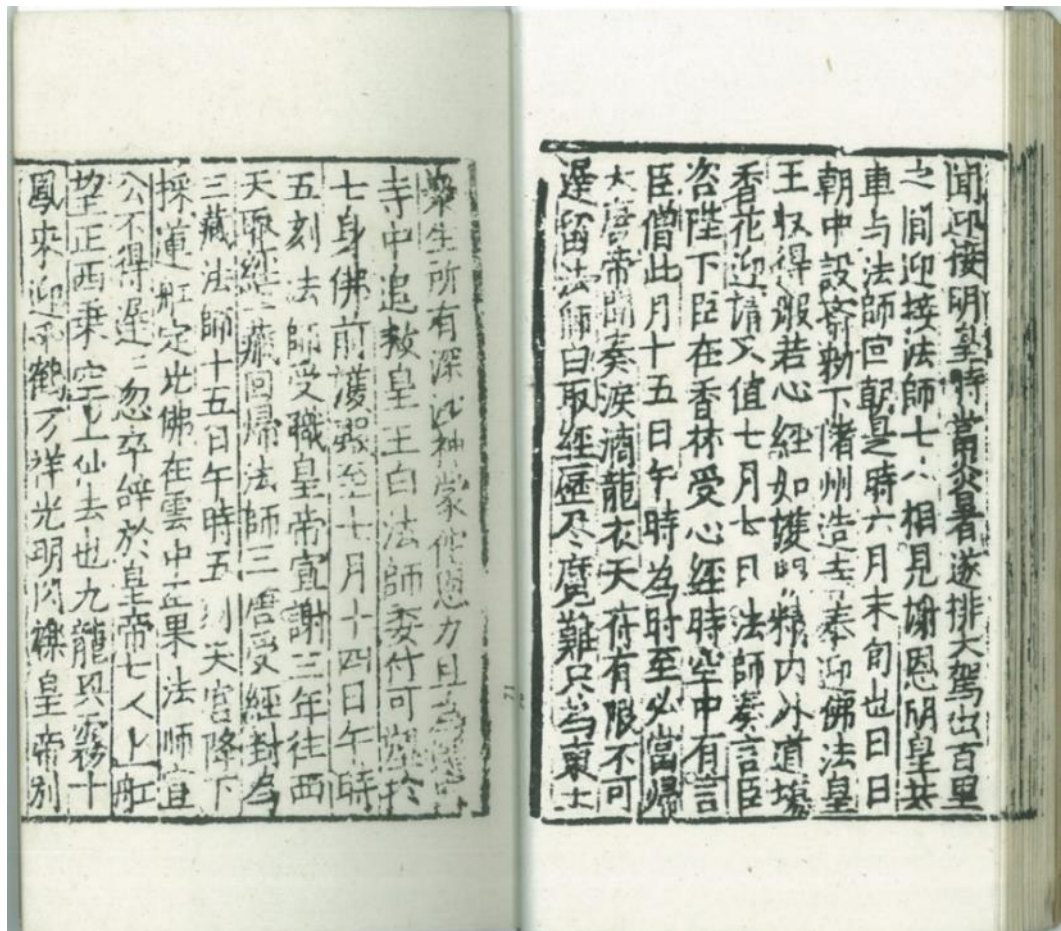


Figure 54. *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Literary Classics Publishing Society, reprinted in 1955, Chapter 17, 70-71.

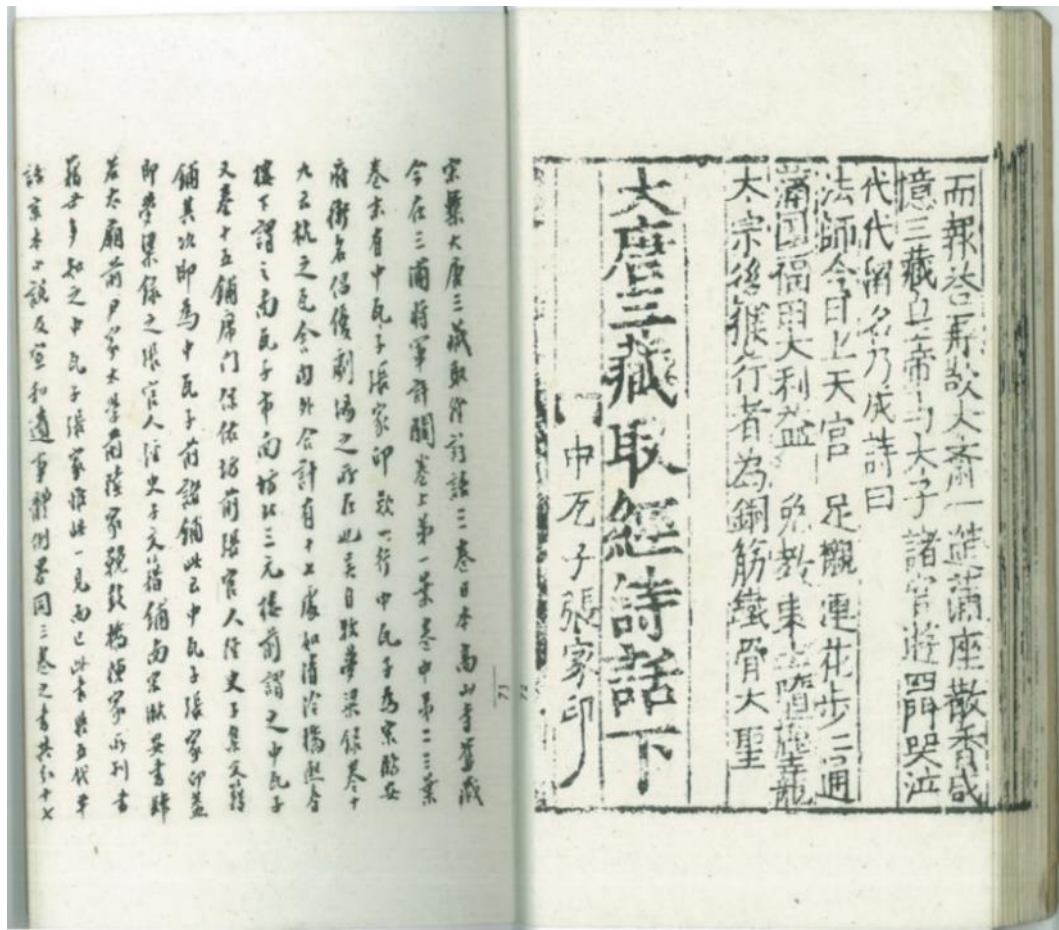


Figure 55. *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Literary Classics Publishing Society, reprinted in 1955, Chapter 17, 72.

Literary works sometimes leave room for readers to imagine further, while the character design of The Monkey King requires a specific and clear image. Therefore, in depicting the Monkey King achieving enlightenment in the fourth portrait, I had to expand my reference sources, supplementing the details not fully explained in *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* with those provided in the hundred-chapter edition of *Journey to the West*. However, in searching and selecting visual materials, I aimed to adhere as closely as possible to the historical period in the former design plan. Therefore, in this series of Monkey King character designs, I have devised the fourth illustration to depict the Monkey King achieving enlightenment after completing the journey to obtain the scriptures, appearing as the Victorious Fighting Buddha with armour (Figure 56).

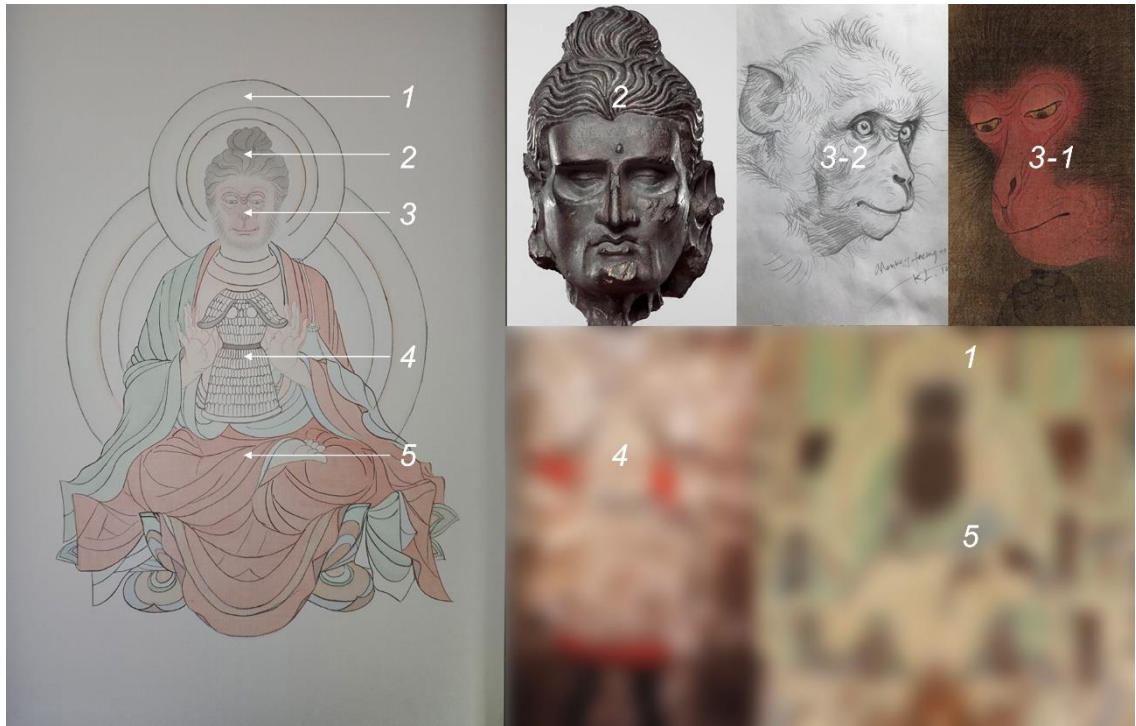


Figure 56. Monkey King character design *Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha* reference demonstration diagram, edited by Lili Kong.

The composition parts list of *The Yuddhajaya Buddha*:

Figure 56-a. The backlighting: Halo (Cross-reference Figure 59)

Figure 56-b. The vestment: Kasaya (Cross-reference Figure 59)

Figure 56-c. Tang Dynasty Guangming armour (Cross-reference Figure 60)

Figure 56-d. Hairstyle: Topknot (Cross-reference Figure 61)

Figure 56-e. Monkeyface (Cross-reference Figure 14, Figure 15)

The process of demonstration and creation is as follows:

1. From the Great Sage to a Buddha

In the 16th-century Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King's journey with Xuanzang through 81 ordeals to retrieve the sutras culminates in his enlightenment. He was then bestowed the title of Dou Zhan Sheng Fo (斗战胜佛) by the Buddha (Figure 57). Although similar descriptions may have existed in other versions of the *Journey to the West* that were lost to history or even documented in subsequent versions before the publication of the Ming Dynasty novel, based on the available evidence, there is no description of the Monkey King being conferred this title before the publication of the hundred-chapters edition of *Journey to the West*. Therefore, it

remains uncertain when the title Great Sage was transformed into that of Dou Zhan Sheng Fo in the Monkey King mythology.

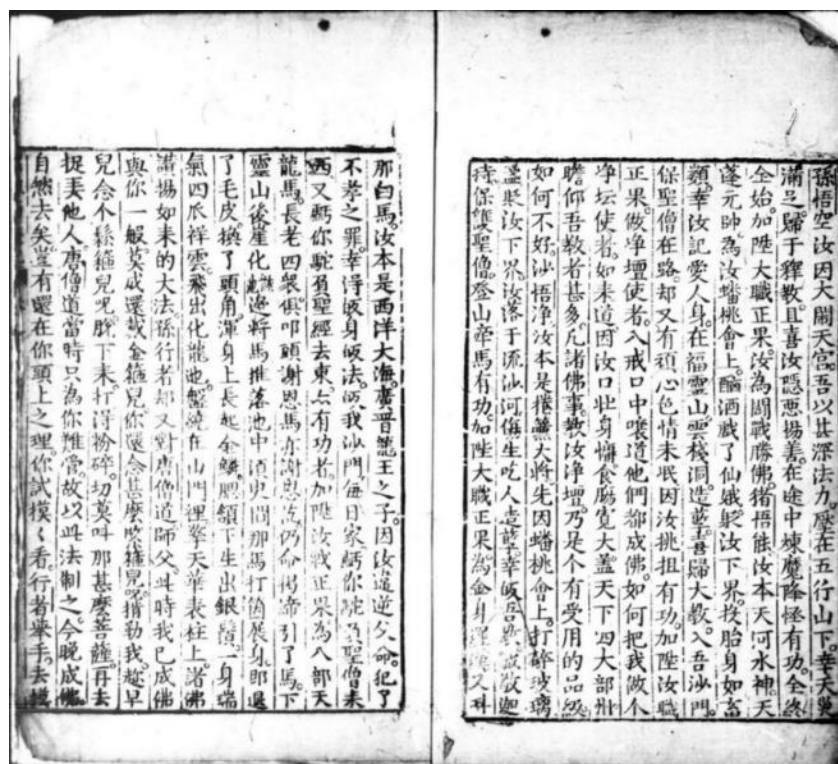


Figure 57. Newly engraved large characters of *Journey to the West*, Ming Dynasty, (Attributed to) Wu Cheng'en, published by Shide Hall in Jinling (1592), Chapter 100.

Dou Zhan Sheng Fo in Chinese means Victorious Fighting Buddha or the Buddha Victorious in Strife, but it is not an invention of the novel *Journey to the West*. It can be traced back to the Sanskrit term Yuddhajaya, one of the Buddhas in the Indian Buddhist Sutra, the *Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession*. The most renowned Chinese translation of this sutra was done by the Tang Dynasty master Amoghavajra (705-774 AD), who hailed from present-day Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁶ Amoghavajra lived nearly a century after Xuanzang (602-664 AD), and both were renowned sutra translation masters in Tang Dynasty China.¹⁰⁷ The fusion and adaptation of elements are common creative methods in mythological stories and folktales. Therefore, theoretically, it is reasonable to assume that the inclusion of the title Victorious Fighting Buddha in the Monkey King legend occurred from the era of Amoghavajra, during the transition of Xuanzang's journey to the West from historical literature to mythical legend, at any stage between the 8th and 16th centuries till

¹⁰⁶ 'Sutra of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas', baike.baidu.com, 10 September 2023, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/佛说三十五佛名礼忏文>.

¹⁰⁷ Li Weitian, 'Introduction to the Four Major Translators of Chinese Buddhism', *Dharma Light Monthly* 143 (2001).

the publication of the Journey to the West.

2. Yuddhajaya and his armour

In the *Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession* (Figure 58), each Buddha is assigned a specific name and role, serving particular functions when worshippers pray to them. For instance, the Victorious Fighting Buddha can absolve the karmic consequences of pride from past lives. Within the compositional paradigm of the Tsongkapa System in the *Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession* iconography, each Buddha maintains a consistent appearance, distinguished mainly by hand gestures and held attributes.¹⁰⁸

As one of the thirty-five Buddhas, the Victorious Fighting Buddha Yuddhajaya is positioned below and to the left of the main Buddha Shakyamuni, seated on a lotus throne while holding armour.¹⁰⁹ Drawing inspiration from this source, then I returned to the designated period of the Monkey King character design project to search for relevant materials.

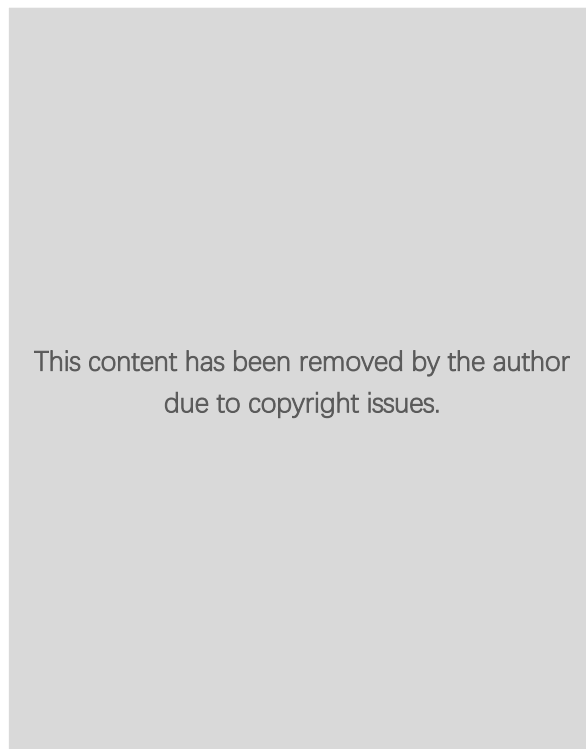
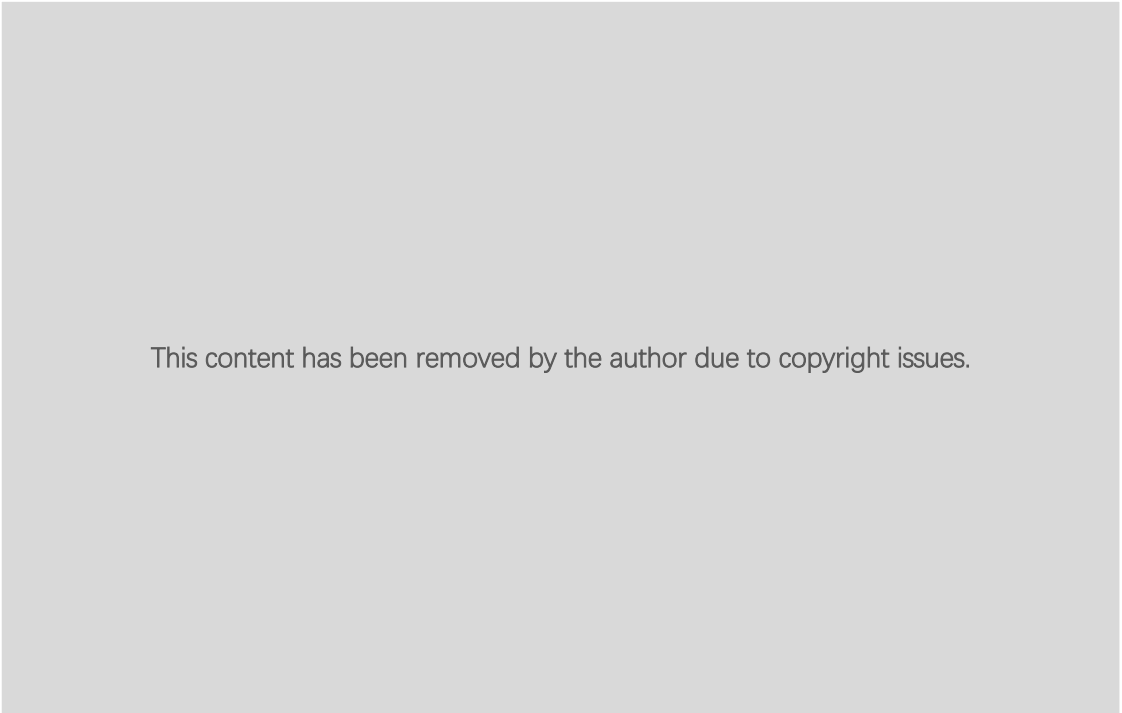


Figure 58. *Confession Buddhas* (Tsongkapa System). Collection: Bonhams New York (March, 2019). <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/61945/images/primary>

¹⁰⁸ Jeff Watt, 'Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas Iconography', HimalayanArt.org, December 2019, <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=5872>.

¹⁰⁹ Jeff Watt, 'Shakyamuni Buddha - with the 35 Buddhas of Confession (Himalayan Art) - Primary Image', March 2019, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/61945/images/primary>.

I focused on Tang Dynasty Buddhist murals from the Dunhuang Grottoes to find references for seated Buddhas. Ultimately, I selected Cave 172 of the Mogao Caves, dating back to the flourishing Tang Dynasty (650-755 AD), where the south wall depicts scenes from the Infinite Life Sutra (Figure 59). From this ancient mural, I studied the posture and attire of seated Buddhas and the lotus pedestal partially covered by the kasaya and the halo, the backlighting of Buddhist statues represents the light of wisdom, symbolising enlightenment and signifying the Buddha's wisdom and awakened state.¹¹⁰ In comparison, Tang Dynasty Buddhist paintings exhibit more freedom in line work and greater artistic expressiveness.



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Figure 59. *The Infinite Life Sutra*, Mogao Cave 172, the South wall, flourishing Tang Dynasty (650-755), Dunhuang, Gansu.

<https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0172>

In the extant *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua*, the first chapter is missing, and the second chapter describes the Monkey King's encounter with Xuanzang to embark on the journey to the West to obtain the Sutras. Still, there is no mention of the Monkey King's armour. In later versions of the Journey to the West, stories about the Monkey King before embarking on the journey include

¹¹⁰ Chengdu Wenshu Temple, 'Why Is There a "Halo" behind the Buddha Statue?', NetEase, 21 April 2022, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/H5GA5SLB0521CNGT.html>.

describing his armour, which he was called the "Great Sage Equal to Heaven." However, once the journey begins, the Monkey King adopts the appearance of a pilgrim. He no longer wears the armour.

In this regard, I interpret the inclusion of armour and the Monkey King's eventual transformation into Yuddhajaya, Victorious Fighting Buddha, as forming a cohesive narrative arc. The armour symbolises the Monkey King's rebellious and competitive nature before converting to Buddhism. Yuddhajaya, within the context of Buddhism, represents the ability to eradicate the sins of arrogance accumulated in past lives, implying that the Monkey King has overcome his previous flaws. It is a typical Buddhist narrative pattern in which the Buddha Shakyamuni converts tirtha-rishis or demons to Buddhism in Buddhist sutras and the novel *Journey to the West*.

Based on my understanding of the Monkey King's story conclusion, the armour symbolises past attachments, and the Monkey King, having endured hardships and succeeded in obtaining the scriptures, represents his renunciation of pride and attainment of enlightenment. Thus, he holds the armour instead of wearing it. Similarly, Hanuman's mythical legend shows aggression and pride in the early stages.¹¹¹ After aiding Rama in defeating the demon king Ravana and rescuing Sita, he becomes a deity symbolising courage, strength, loyalty, protection, and the ability to overcome obstacles.¹¹²

After comparing typical types of armour from the Tang Dynasty,¹¹³ I opted for the infantry armour worn by warriors depicted in the mural *The Guard of Honour* from the tomb of Princess Changle of the Tang Dynasty (643 AD, Figure 60)¹¹⁴ as the prototype for the armour held by the Victorious Fighting Buddha in the fourth portrait of the Monkey King. This type of armour, used for actual combat, bears the distinctive features of the famous Tang Dynasty Guangming armour.

¹¹¹ Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (Oxford University Press, 2007):31.

¹¹² Leonard T. Wolcott, 'Hanuman: The Power-Dispensing Monkey in North Indian Folk Religion', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 4 (1978): 653–61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2054368>.

¹¹³ Huang Mingyuan and Li Qian, 'Analysis of Armor Types in the Tang Dynasty', *Corporate Culture* 12 (2014).

¹¹⁴ Li Langtao, 'Analysis of the "Soldiers of the Guard of Honour" from the Tomb of Princess Changle', *Protection of Human Cultural Heritage* 1 (2015): 6, <https://doi.org/DOI:CNKI:SUN:RWYB.0.2015-00-010>.

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Figure 60. *The Guard of Honour*. The mural of the Tomb of Princess Changle, Zhao Mausoleum, Shanxi province. Tang Dynasty, 644 CE.

<https://wx1.sinaimg.cn/mw2000/67747f3dly1g4a4z900gfj20nm0fjq6x.jpg>

The *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* does not describe the Monkey King's tonsure. In early religious literature narratives, the Monkey King, portrayed as a pilgrim assisting Xuanzang on his journey to the Western Heavens, is depicted as dhuta/Xingzhe with a headband restraining his shoulder-length hair, a portrayal consistent across Dunhuang murals to the stone carvings of the Western Pagoda at Kaiyuan Temple. The Buddhist images originated from Gandhara art, influenced by Greek realistic styles, forming the early paradigm of Buddha images with hair coiled into a topknot fixed on the head. Given the Monkey King in religious literature and artistic works and his portrayal as a dhuta retaining his hair, I referenced the coiffure of Gandharan Buddha statues to depict the Monkey King's hairstyle after attaining Buddhahood. The Gandharan stone statue of the ascetic image of Shakyamuni Buddha (3rd-5th century) depicts Shakyamuni after six years of ascetic meditation (Figure 61), with clearly defined topknot-styled-texture, suitable as a reference material.

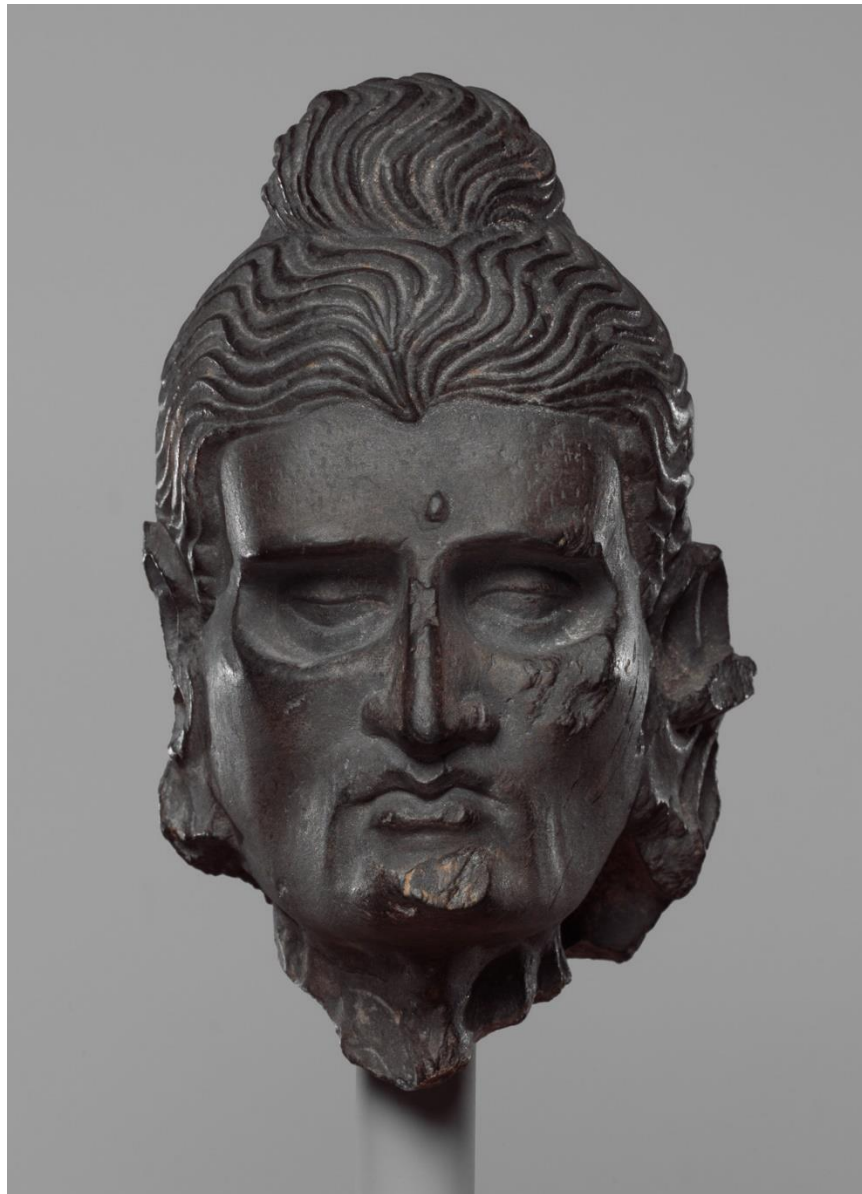


Figure 61. *Head of the Fasting Siddhartha*, Pakistan (ancient region of Gandhara), 3rd-5th century, schist, height 13.3 cm, wide 8.6 cm, depth 8.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38206>

3. The Monkey King as Yuddhajaya

I synthesised partial materials to generate rough conceptual sketches. Then, I referred to the monkey face of Southern Song's meticulous national painting and the Gandharan hairstyle, using a backlight copyboard to hand-draw details on the sketches. To achieve the envisioned effect of the Monkey King holding armour with both hands, the hand gestures of the Yuddhajaya Buddha and the folds of the kasaya needed to be reconstructed (Figure 62). After multiple corrections through copying, the details were inked onto silk. The colour scheme of this portrait required some chemical knowledge to restore the colours that have faded or oxidised on ancient murals,

such as the blackened skin tone due to oxidation and the now peeled-off red pigment (Figure 63). The final design of the early Monkey King's character was presented through multiple rounds of colouring on both the front and back sides of the silk (Figure 64).



Figure 62. Synthesis materials for *Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha* concept sketch and colour restoration by Lili Kong, 2024.

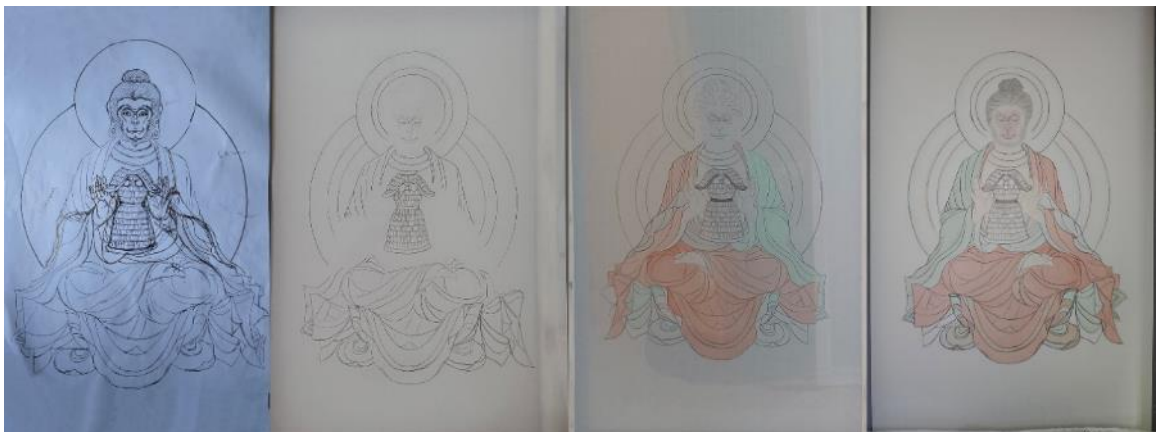


Figure 63. The process of the character design of the Monkey King *Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha* ranges from sketch to final draft, by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 64. *Monkey King character design Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha*, ink and colours on silk, Lili Kong, 2024.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This project draws upon the earliest literary narrative of the Monkey King's role in aiding Xuanzang's journey to the West, described in *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, the precursor to the 16th-century novel *Journey to the West*. It incorporates evidence from religious art and historical sites spanning the 7th to 13th centuries of China's Tang and Song dynasties. Utilizing character design, it endeavours to recreate the early portrayal of the Monkey King. The project's findings address a gap that the Monkey King lacked in visual representation in literary works before the 16th-century publication of the illustrated version of *Journey to the West*.

Guided by practice-led and comparative research methodologies, I conducted a literary comparison between *Ramayana* and *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua*, unveiling their congruent narrative structures and notably similar plot elements. Subsequently, I broadened the analysis to encompass iconographic parallels in religious art. It became apparent that the early portrayal of the Monkey King exhibited more resemblances to Hanuman than to later depictions dating from the 16th century. Notably, around the 11th century, both characters were depicted holding the same type of weapons, while in the 13th century, they adorned similar ornaments. Moreover, considering the literary analyses of various scholars highlighted in the contextual review section, these findings collectively indicate a historical linkage between two iconic simian deities.

While *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* and *Journey to the West* share similar structures and storylines, a comparison with *Ramayana* reveals unique parallels. Yet, some resemblances between *Shihua* and *Ramayana* are absent in the later *Journey to the West*. Conversely, there are similarities between *Journey to the West* and *Ramayana* that are not found in *Shihua*. This phenomenon implies diverse pathways connecting Hanuman to the Monkey King. *Shihua* may not be the exclusive precursor to *Journey to the West*, suggesting the possibility of other earlier and more comprehensive literary depictions of the Monkey King. Alternatively, the novel's formation may have been influenced by Indian religious texts, such as the *Ramayana*, on multiple occasions.

Due to the Tang Dynasty's literary and language features, Li Shiren proposed that *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* was compiled during that period. However, he couldn't explain references to place names that only appeared during the Song Dynasty in the book. Since the Western Xia Dynasty, murals depicting the Monkey King assisting Xuanzang's journey to the West have been frequently found in caves in Dunhuang and Guazhou. These recurrent religious artworks likely had textual sources. At that time, the *Ramayana* story had already been transmitted to China through Buddhism from India, mostly in various adapted forms. Hence, it is inferred that the *Shihua* may have originated from more earlier religious literature works featuring the Monkey King assisting Xuanzang's journey, possibly during the mid to late Tang period along the Silk Road owing to cultural exchanges between ancient China and India.

My findings in this project also include that in the Western Xia Dynasty, there are several instances in the Dunhuang murals where the Monkey King raises one hand, which might be the origin of the iconic hand gesture of the Monkey King, possibly to illustrate that he was initially a tirthika-rishi, such as a Brahmin, before converting to Buddhism. If this speculation holds, the Monkey King is almost certainly a manifestation of Hanuman.

Thus far, this project has addressed the research questions that have intrigued me for over a decade regarding the origins of the Monkey King and the appearance of the early Monkey King, providing certain fundamental answers. These findings can offer references to contemporary designers when designing the character of the Monkey King to reconsider the various possibilities for reshaping this world-renowned classic character from different perspectives. It also provides a methodology to restore historically significant traditional characters by tracing history through the interaction of practice and research.

CONCLUSION

This project reconstructed the early Monkey King character within the historical setting of the *Journey to the West* story by synthesising early literary works and religious artworks. It aimed to explore reconstructing classic characters historically, offering a methodological framework for redesigning them from theory to practice.

The process of creating the Monkey King character design underscores the notion that myths and mythological figures are products of imaginative descriptions deeply rooted in cultural history, constituting a cultural phenomenon. By emphasising the classic character design derived from mythological narratives through the lens of cultural development, it becomes evident that exploring the historical-cultural context behind classic characters, rather than solely focusing on contemporary design aesthetics, can offer richer and deeper insights and novel perspectives. In character design, any historical phase of the character's evolution can serve as a point of departure for recreation. The methodologies enable the liberation from stereotypical impressions and constraints on design creativity inherent in classic character design.

Moreover, as the scope of comparison expanded to include other Asian countries, the narratives of the Monkey God were widely disseminated across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, where they underwent reinterpretation within local cultural contexts. The Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, featuring the Monkey King as its central figure, is a monumental work based on the rich cultural heritage of China and India. It has sparked a continuous process of reinterpretation and creative adaptation of the Monkey King theme and has transcended Asia to achieve global recognition in modern times.

Researchers can see the intricate connections between different religions and cultures through comparative studies when arguing about the Monkey King's origin. The development of Monkey King culture demonstrates that the interconnectedness during the growth process of ancient civilisations might be much more profound than contemporary audiences typically assume. Throughout the long history of humankind, cultural integration, instead of isolation and

fragmentation, fostered continuous growth and innovation. As people emphasise individuality for differentiation, it is equally important to direct the attention towards comprehending shared attributes. Ultimately, viewed from the standpoint of global civilisation, humanity has consistently been a unified entity.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

In *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* (Figure 65, original in Classical Chinese, paragraph translated into English by Lili Kong):

Passing through a country,
one day at noon,
a scholar of white coming from the East,
saluted the Master (Xuanzang),
" Greeting, greeting"¹¹⁵

In "The Ramayan"(original in Sanskrit, the first English translation by Ralph T.H. Griffith):

The Wind-God's son with cautious art.
Had laid his Vanar form apart,
And wore, to cheat the strangers' eyes,
A wandering mendicant's disguise,
Before the heroes' feet, he bent
And did obeisance reverent...

(with the note: The semi-divine Hanuman possesses, like the Gods and demons, the power of wearing all shapes at will. He is one of the Kamarupis, Like Milton's good and bad angels as they please.

They limb themselves, and colour, shape, or size
Assume as likes them best, condense or rare.)¹¹⁶

In the *Ramayana*, Hanuman bent before the heroes' feet he bent, and did obeisance reverently, while in the *Shihua*, it is described as saluting the Master (Xuanzang) and saying "Greeting, greeting." However, the specific gesture of the Monkey King to pay respects is not explicitly

¹¹⁵ Unknown, *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* (Literature Ancient Books Publishing House, 1955).

¹¹⁶ Ralph Thomas Hotchkin Griffith, *The Rámáyan of Válmíki: Translated Into English Verse*, vol. 1 (London: Trübner and Company, 1870).p22.

described.

Notably, in the 1870 English translation of *Ramayana*, dating back to the 6th century BC to the 3rd century AD,¹¹⁷ special mention is made of Hanuman's semi-divine nature and ability to change his appearance and size. This trait becomes significant in later story developments. This annotation aligns with the portrayal of the Monkey King/Monkey Pilgrim in *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua* from the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) and subsequently in the 16th-century hundred-chapter version of *Journey to the West*, where Monkey King/Sun Wukong shares nearly identical traits.

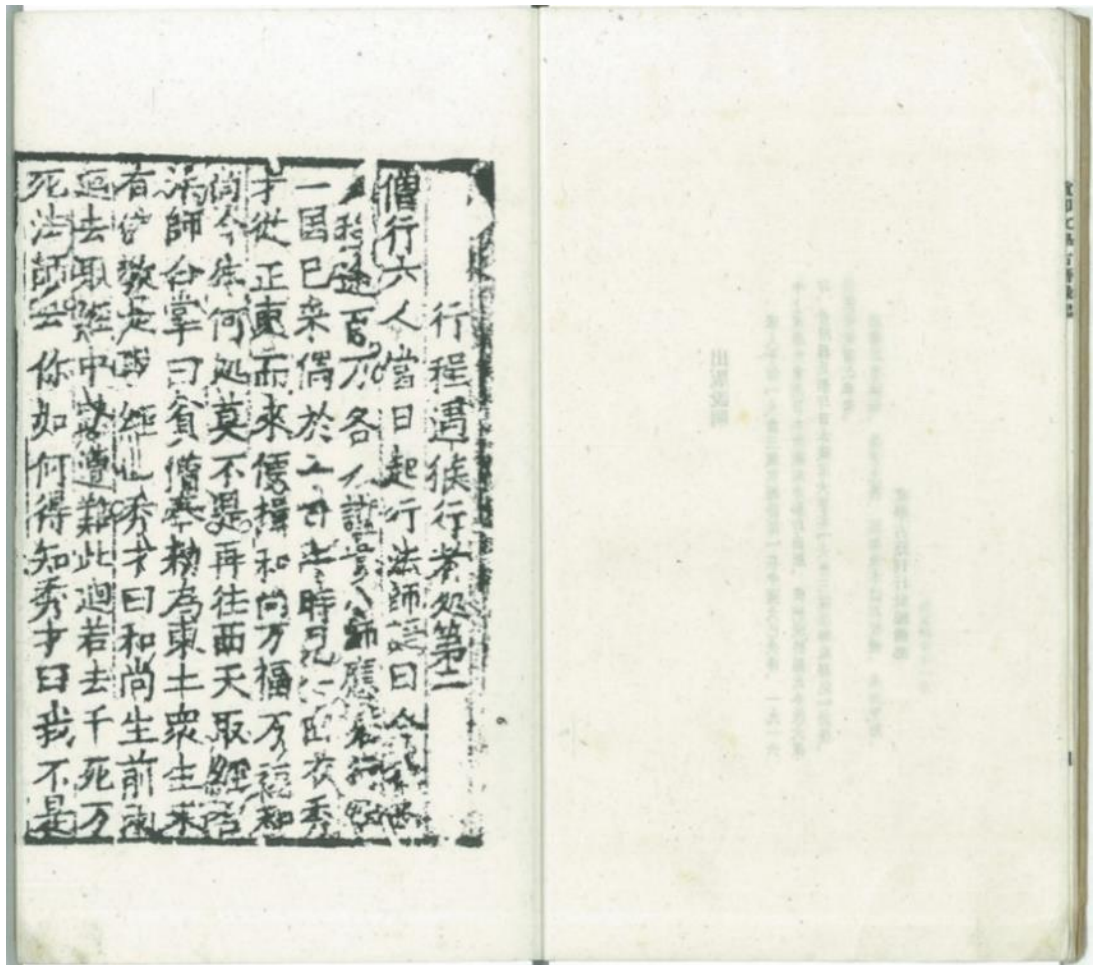


Figure 65. *Da Tang Sanzang Qijing Shihua*, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Literary Classics Publishing Society, reprinted in 1955, 9.

¹¹⁷ J. L. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (BRILL, 1998).

Appendix 2

The weapon in Chinese is called the gu duo and is a kind of mace or war hammer that has existed since the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. With a long history of use and wide distribution, it was not invented or exclusively used by the Khitan people.¹¹⁸ Bronze-headed clubs emerged during ancient China's Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period (770—221 BC). In the Liao Dynasty (907-1125 AD, contemporaneous with the Northern Song and Western Xia Dynasties), besides being used as hunting tools and weapons, they also evolved into ceremonial implements, resembling thorny burdocks and multi-lobed garlic heads, it was also commonly called a gu duo (flower bud shape).

After its transformation into a ceremonial implement, the bulbous head of the gu duo gradually decreased in size, and the protruding teeth resembling burrs also became smoother, evolving into melon-shaped, garlic-shaped forms or a smooth spherical shape. From the murals of Liao Dynasty tombs, it can be observed that Khitan warriors wielded garlic-shaped gu duos, while civil officials held sandbag-shaped (circular) gu duos.¹¹⁹

During the Song and Yuan Dynasty, with the rise of northern ethnic groups such as the Khitans and Mongols, the use of gu duo experienced a resurgence (Figure 66). During this period, gu duo were also known as "jin gua"(金瓜, golden melon)—often exaggeratedly depicted in novels as long-handled large hammers. In addition, similar blunt weapons have been discovered through archaeological findings in Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan and other countries.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Shi Xiaoqun and Hang Zhihong, 'A Study on the Liao Dynasty Gilded Dragon-Patterned Silver Gu duo', *Wenbo* 2 (2011): 74-77.

¹¹⁹ Huang Yaoshi, 'The Unique Gu duo of Ancient Chinese Nomadic Tribes Turned out to Be a Weapon Used against the Han People?', Institute of Cold Weaponry Research, 14 August 2017, <https://baike.baidu.com/tashuo/browse/content?id=a800080107755cd97170f318>.

¹²⁰ Nian Nian You Da Yu, 'Gu duo', 360doc, 29 December 2016, http://www.360doc.com/content/16/1229/22/39234070_618757012.shtml.



Figure 66. *Refusing the Seat* (却坐图), 146.8 x 77.3 cm, partial, Anonymous painter, Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), National Palace Museum, Taipei, China.

<https://www.shuge.org/meet/topic/13771/>

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Figure 67. *Gilded Dragon and Phoenix Patterned Gu Duo*, Liao Dynasty (907-1125), Shaanxi History Museum.

https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/pyyETCCcXWei_DtiAbdPKw

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Figure 68. *Silver Gilt Carved Gu Duo*, Liao Dynasty (907-1125).

<https://auction.artron.net/paimai-art5039830173/>

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Figure 69 *Silver Gu Duo*, Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), Heilongjiang Museum.

http://www.360doc.com/content/17/1117/21/37583807_704754297.shtml

Appendix 3

Below is a comparison between Chinese gu duos (Figure 70) and similar weapons from India (Figure 71), both belonging to the category of mace or war hammer, albeit referred to differently in the languages of the respective countries:



Figure 70. *The Chinese Mace Gu Duo Collection*, Owned by Xu Kaihong
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/pyyETCCcXWei_DtiAbdPKw



Figure 71 *Mace*, City Palace of the Maharana of Udaipur, India. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2010.

Finally, by comparing the aforementioned materials with the relief sculptures of Hanuman wielding war hammers (10th to 11th centuries, Figure 72), it can be inferred that Hanuman and the Monkey King may have used the same kind of blunt weapons for physical attacks around the 10th century. This weapon, which was widespread across multiple countries, was depicted in China as a *gu duo*. However, over time, Hanuman's war hammer emphasised a more giant head (Figure 73, while the Monkey King's *gu duo* extended the handle, with the head gradually shrinking and eventually simplifying into the raw gold cudgel depicted in Yuan Dynasty Journey to the West stories. It was later literary processed into the famous Ruyi Jingu Bang in the Ming Dynasty, which continues to endure (Figure 74).



Figure 72. *Hanumana*, 10-11th Century, Kangra Fort, Himachal Pradesh, India. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2010.



Figure 73. *Modern Hanuman statue*, Cinmaya Mission, Sidhabari, Himachal Pradesh. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2010.

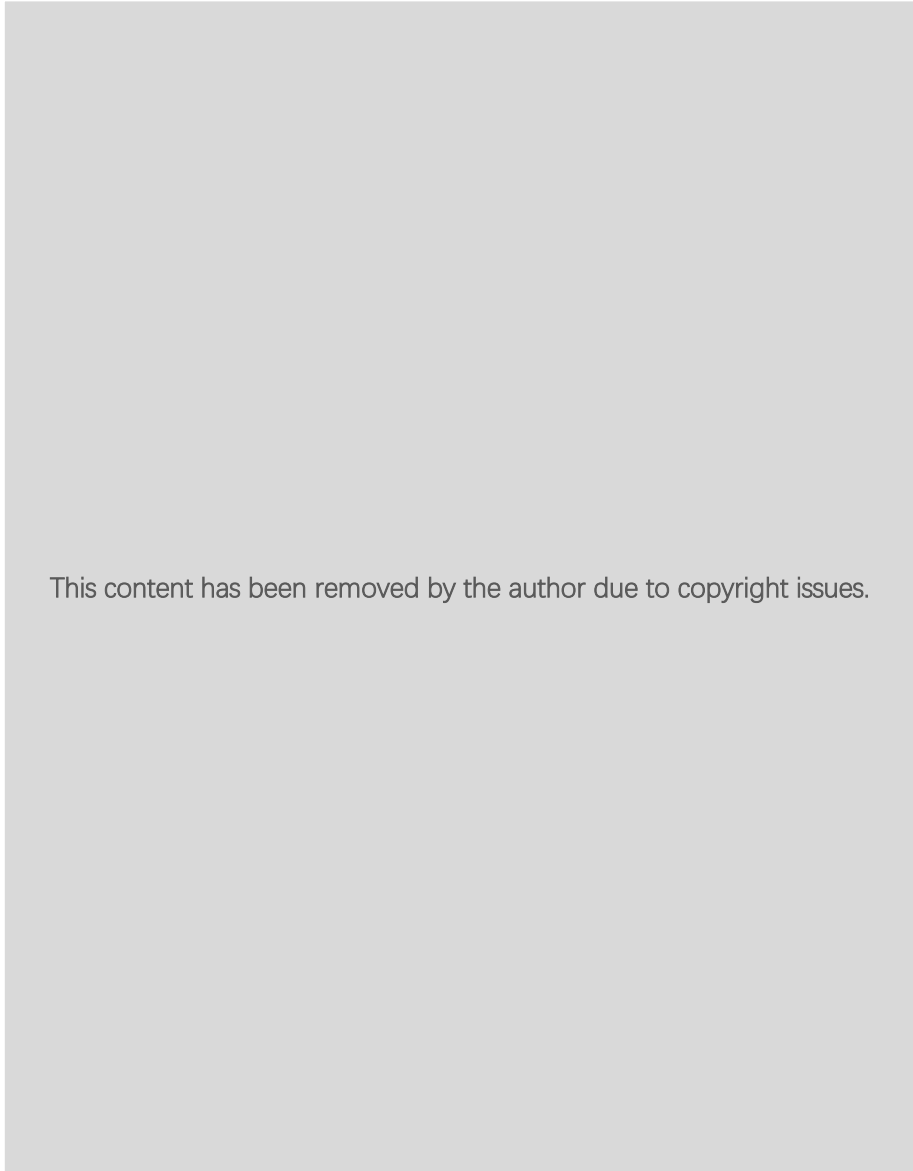


Figure 74. Screenshot from the 86 version of the TV series *Journey to the West*, 1982.
<https://www.163.com/dy/article/H0G7RT8D0521QGF8.html>

Appendix 4

The term tirthika refers to religious teachings outside the scope of Indian Buddhism.¹²¹ Aside from Buddha or Avalokitesvara figures, these representations of tirthika-rishis (non-Buddhist sages) often appear in Buddhist sculptures and paintings.¹²² I compared the carvings from Cave 9 at the Yungang Grottoes dating back to the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 AD) on the north wall of the front chamber's bright window on the east side, depicting the Nayaputta, a sage from the Jain tradition, or Brahmin sage Vasistha, shown with a gesture of hand raised to the forehead (Figure 75).¹²³ In contrast, the Brahmin sage Mrgasirsa is depicted. Additionally, in the murals from the Mituo Hall of the Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou during the Jin dynasty (1115-1234 AD, Figure 76)¹²⁴ and the Dunhuang Mogao Cave 3 from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 AD, Figure 77), the figure of an older man aside Avalokitesvara is likely the Brahmin sage Vasistha.¹²⁵

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Figure 75. In the front chamber of Cave 9 at the Yungang Grottoes, on the north wall of the bright window on the east side, bird-holding Nayaputta or Mrgasirsa.

https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5NTE4NDEzMg==&mid=2658584697&idx=1&sn=bf2ad67d89cf9b961880b4efd5e3be54

¹²¹ Buddhist Dictionary, 'Vasistha', <http://foxue.fitfrom.com>, accessed 15 April 2024, <http://foxue.fitfrom.com/detail/12045>.

¹²² w_ou, 'Six Divisions of Heretics', baike.baidu.com, 27 January 2021, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/六师外道/4945873>.

¹²³ Tan Gu Lun Jing, 'Who Are These Skinny Old People in the Ninth Cave of Yungang Grottoes?', baijiahao.baidu.com, 10 January 2018, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1589178130771448865>.

¹²⁴ Zhan Tan Jun, 'Amitabha Hall of Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou, Murals from the Jin Dynasty', [weibo](http://weibo.com), 12 September 2020, <https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404548215344332806>.

¹²⁵ Wutai Mountain Buddhism, 'Appreciation of Qingliang | Avalokitesvara with Thousand Arms and Thousand Eyes on the North Wall of Cave 3 of Yuan Dynasty Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang', [163.com](http://www.163.com), 11 January 2024, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/105K4LCG05219C7P.html>.

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Figure 76. Amitabha Hall of Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou, frescoes from the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234 AD), Brahmin sage Vasistha in the lower left corner.

<https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404548215344332806>

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Figure 77. *Avalokitesvara with Thousand Arms and Thousand Eyes* on the north wall of Cave 3 of Yuan Dynasty in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, Brahmin sage Vasistha on the right side.

<https://www.163.com/dy/article/IO5K4LCG05219C7P.html>

Whereas, in Cave 3 of the Yulin Grottoes, on the east wall's north side, there is a mural of the Eleven-faced Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara behind the sculptures. There is also the depiction of the Monkey King, symbolising the success of the *Journey to the West*, positioned to the right of the Avalokitesvara, while to the left is Xuanzang (Figure 78). In several Dunhuang murals depicting the *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King uses a hand gesture similar to the tirthikasages in the earlier Buddhist religious art format (Cross-reference Figure 37, Figure 38). His gesture involves raising the fist with the thumb extended towards the forehead. Consequently, I have concluded that there was an error in the depiction of the gesture in my second portrait of the Monkey King. Therefore, I had to cover the incorrectly drawn index finger of the Monkey King's left hand with a thick white overlay, intending to further address the traces of the cover-up in subsequent electronic versions.

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Figure 78. Yulin Grottoes Cave 3 North side of the east wall *Eleven-faced Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara*, Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD).

https://www.sohu.com/a/351956873_466973

Buddhist sutras contain numerous stories of tirthika deities or sages converting to Buddhism, often involving adapting narratives from other religious traditions to promote Buddhist teachings. Although the concise and fragmented *Shihua* does not describe this specific episode, later versions, such as the extant editions of *Journey to the West* from the Yuan and Ming dynasties, depict the

Monkey King being subdued by the Buddha and subsequently embracing Buddhism to assist Xuanzang in his journey to the West. Similar narratives are familiar in Buddhist adaptations of stories from other religions, particularly those from mainstream Indian religions that coexisted with Buddhism. Through the comparisons mentioned above, it is conceivable that the iconic hand gesture of the Monkey King may symbolise his original status as a non-Buddhist sage who converted to Buddhism. The Monkey King might have been a significant deity from another faith, Brahmanism. If this hypothesis holds, the Monkey King will likely be derived from Hanuman.

A Hanuman sculpture from Northern India also displays a raised hand gesture (Figure 79). While it remains uncertain whether these gestures are merely coincidental or indicative of deeper underlying connections between the narratives associated with the Monkey King and Hanuman, these findings inspired my design of the Monkey King character.

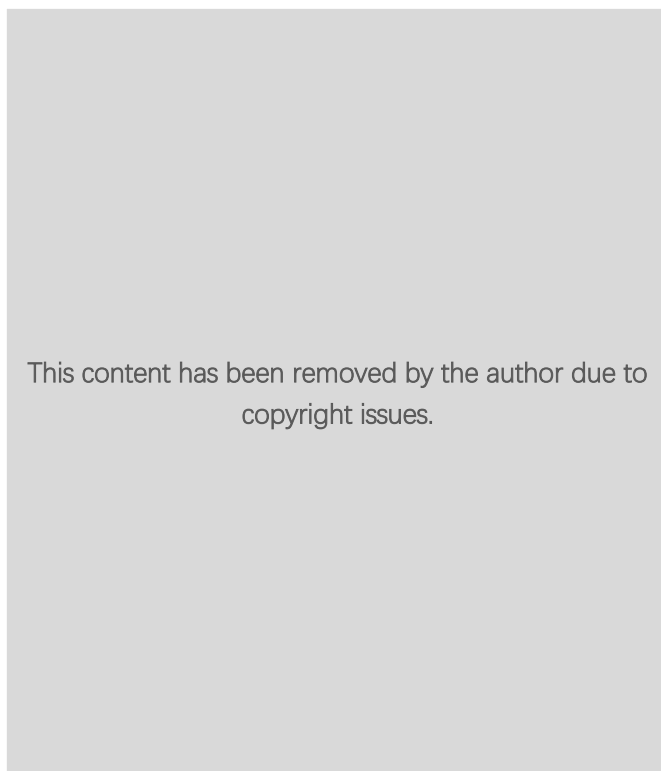


Figure 79. *Statue of lord Hanuman*, 18th-century, North India, National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, India.

<http://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/news/2010/06-24/2360578.shtml>

Gods of the West - Ancient Indian Treasures Exhibition, Henan Museum, Zhengzhou, Henan, China, March 17, 2007.

<https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2007-03-07/094411357568s.shtml>

Appendix 5

While visiting the Patan Museum in Kathmandu, I captured images of two rare composite statues depicting Hanu-Bhairava (Figure 80, Figure 81), a composite image of the deity Bhairava and the monkey-god Hanuman. While I have not encountered visual references of Hanuman wearing tiger skin, I found parallels between Bhairava and the Monkey King regarding dressing in tiger-skin garments.¹²⁶ Furthermore, there are folk narratives about Bhavana summoning three warriors from his sweat to help him gain victory,¹²⁷ which resonates with the similar magic described in the 16th-century *Journey to the West*, where the Monkey King transforms his three hairs into tools to facilitate his escape. Hanuman's multi-headed and multi-armed form is common in Brahmanic and Hindu mythology. Although "Shih-hua" does not describe the Monkey King's multi-headed or multi-armed combat imagery, later *Journey to the West* narratives depict similar scenarios (Figure 82).

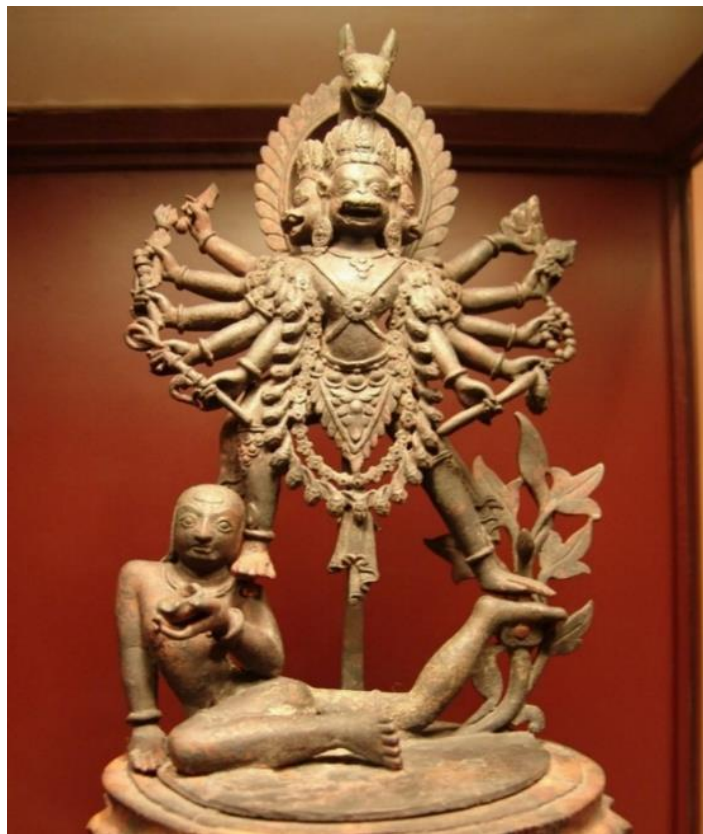


Figure 80. *Hanu-Bhairava*, 1754. Bronze. Gilt traces. Patan Museum, Kathmandu, Nepal. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2007.

¹²⁶ Simer Preet Sokhi, 'The Iconography of Lord Bhairava in Literary Sources', *Journal of Visual and Performing Arts* 4, no. 1 (30 May 2023): 502–504, <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.333>.

¹²⁷ Anais Da Fonseca, 'Replication and Innovation in the Folk Narratives of Telangana: Scroll Paintings of the Padmasali Purana, 1625–2000', *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 4, no. 1 (2019): 112–33, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/56/article/723906>.



Figure 81. *Hanu-Bhairava*, 17th-18th Century Stone. Patan Museum, Kathmandu, Nepal. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2007.

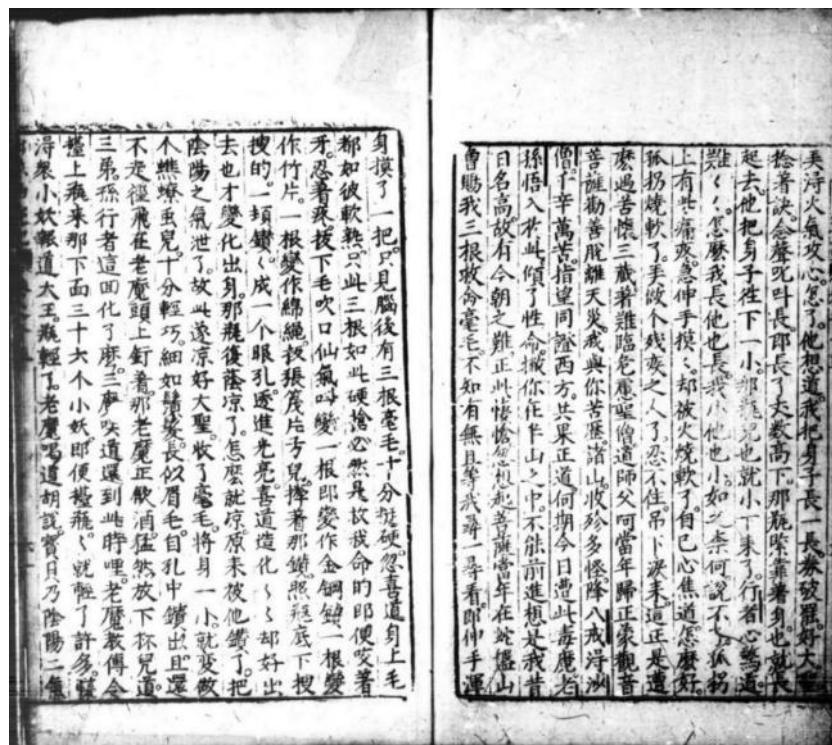


Figure 82. Newly engraved large characters of *Journey to the West*, Ming Dynasty, (Attributed to) Wu Cheng'en, published by Shide Hall in Jinling (1592), Chapter 75.

As a renowned Brahmanism and later Hinduism deity, Hanuman's adornments (Figure 83) have persisted to the present (Cross-reference Figure 73). During the era of the publication of the *Shihua*, the Monkey King's ornaments (Cross-reference Figure 48) were similar to Hanuman's but gradually disappeared in subsequent religious artworks. My design concepts for the early Monkey King character primarily drew inspiration from the murals found in Dunhuang and Guazhou, along the route travelled by Xuanzang to the West, thousands of kilometres away from the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou. Currently, no other sources are indicating the presence of ornaments on the Monkey King. Hence, these ornaments have not been incorporated into the design concept. Nevertheless, ornaments serve as another point of similarity between the Monkey King and Hanuman in history, which warrants further attention.



Figure 83. *Hanuman Conversing*, Chola Dynasty, 11th century, Tamil Nadu, India. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA. Photographed by Lili Kong, 2015. Or <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38945>

Appendix 6

The final design outcomes of this project were exhibited at the Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery (ST PAUL St Gallery) from June 19 to 22, 2024. The exhibition was organized into four sections, each corresponding to the design processes and historical materials in Part A – Part D of the DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESS chapter (Cross-reference Page 45-73). Each section included one of the original concept artworks of early Monkey King character designs, created with natural pigments on silk.

I translated the excerpts of ancient Chinese text into English, used design software to integrate ancient Chinese text with character design, and created bilingual Chinese-English layouts. These were printed, framed, and produced as various derivative items, including scrolls, leaflets, and bookmarks, printed and mounted on media such as imitation silk cloth, rice paper, and Jinqian paper (金潜纸). These derivatives were displayed alongside the original character design illustrations to demonstrate the relationship between the early Monkey King character designs and the literary descriptions from the *Da Tang San Zang Qujing Shihua*.

Part A. (Cross-reference Part A. A Scholar in White)

This section depicts the scene of the Monkey King performing the formal greeting etiquette, Tang hand-crossing salute, when he first met Xuanzang. Related literary descriptions:

A scholar in white coming from the East, saluted the Master (Xuanzang), "Greeting, greeting! Where are you heading? Are you journeying to the Western Heaven again to obtain the sutras?" ... "I am the Monkey King, with the bronze head and the iron-faced, from the Purple Cloud Cave on Flower Fruit Mountain. I come to assist you in obtaining the sutras. The journey is long, spanning thousands of miles, and you will pass through thirty-six countries, facing many perils." (Translated based on excerpts from the original ancient Chinese version: (Cross-reference Figure 55.)



Figure 84. *A Scholar in White*, ink and colours on silk, 60 × 40 cm, mounted in wooden frame 92 × 67 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 85. A Scholar in White, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qujing Shihua* (ancient Chinese version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 86. A Scholar in White, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qujing Shihua* (ancient Chinese and English version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.

Part B. (Cross-reference Part B. Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo)

This section depicts the Monkey King's classic pose of looking into the distance during his journey, holding a Gu Duo in another hand. Related literary descriptions:

They entered the Great Serpent Ridge, where they saw a giant serpent resembling a dragon, though it showed no inclination to harm people. They then crossed the Fire Valley. Looking up from the bottom of the valley, they saw a set of white bones, over ten miles long, lying on the ridge above. The Master asked the Monkey King, "What is this set of white bones, as white as snow, on the mountain?" The Monkey King replied, "This is where Prince Ming was transformed

and reborn." Hearing this, the Master folded his hands respectfully and bowed before continuing their journey. (Translated based on excerpts from the original ancient Chinese version; Cross-reference Figure 32)



Figure 87. *Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo*, ink and colours on silk, 60 × 40 cm, mounted in wooden frame 92 × 67 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2023.



Figure 88. *Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qijing Shihua* (ancient Chinese version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 89. *Xing Zhe Holding a Gu Duo*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qijing Shihua* (ancient Chinese and English version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.

Part C. (Cross-reference Part C. The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron)

This section depicts the Monkey King wearing a tiger-skin apron after defeating the tiger demon.

Related literary descriptions:

The White Tiger Demon said again, "I have not submitted!" The Monkey King said, "If your belly holds thousands or even tens of thousands of old monkeys, you could spit them out today, tomorrow, next month, next year, this lifetime, or even the next, and they would not end." Upon hearing this, the White Tiger Demon grew furious. The Monkey King transformed a large stone, gradually expanding inside the Tiger Demon's belly. The Tiger Demon tried to spit it out but could not, and its belly split open, bleeding from its seven orifices. (Translated based on excerpts from

the original ancient Chinese version: Cross-reference Figure 46)



Figure 90. *The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron*, ink and colours on silk, 60 × 40 cm, mounted in wooden frame 92 × 67 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 91. *The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qijing Shihua* (ancient Chinese version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 92. *The Warrior in a Tiger-skin Apron*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qijing Shihua* (ancient Chinese and English version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.

Part D. (Cross-reference Part D. The Yuddhajaya Buddha)

This section depicts the Monkey King ascending to immortality after completing the journey to obtain the scriptures. Related literary descriptions:

At noon on the fifteenth day, a lotus boat descended from the heavens, and the Master attained perfect enlightenment under the guidance of Dīpaṃkara Buddha in the clouds and announced that he was instructed not to delay. Hastily bidding farewell to the Emperor, the seven ascended the boat and headed westward, ascending to immortality. Afterwards, Emperor Taizong conferred upon the Monkey King the title "Great Sage with Bronze Muscles and Iron Bones". (Translated

based on excerpts from the original ancient Chinese version: Cross-reference Figure 54, Figure 55)



Figure 93. *The Yuddhajaya Buddha*, ink and colours on silk, 60 × 40 cm, mounted in wooden frame 92 × 67 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.

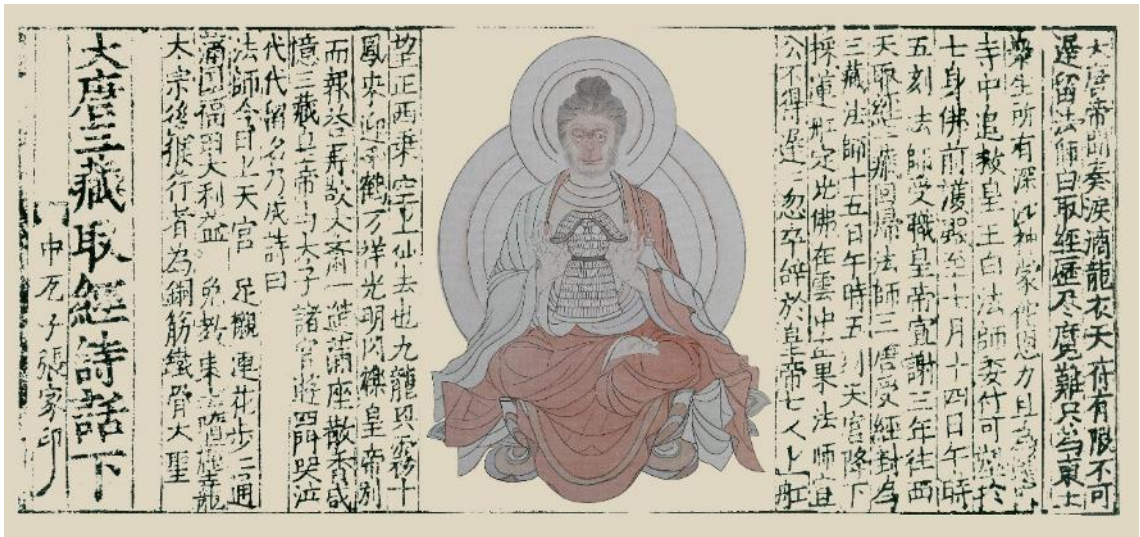


Figure 94. *The Yuddhajaya Buddha*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qujing Shihua* (ancient Chinese version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 95. *The Yuddhajaya Buddha*, the illustration with the descriptions from *Da Tang San Zang Qujing Shihua* (ancient Chinese and English version), designed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 96. *The overall effect of the exhibition*, designed by Lili Kong, photographed by Paul Chapman, 2024.



Figure 97. *The overall effect of the exhibition*, designed by Lili Kong, photographed by Paul Chapman, 2024.



Figure 98. *The overall effect of the exhibition*, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 99. *The overall effect of the exhibition*, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.

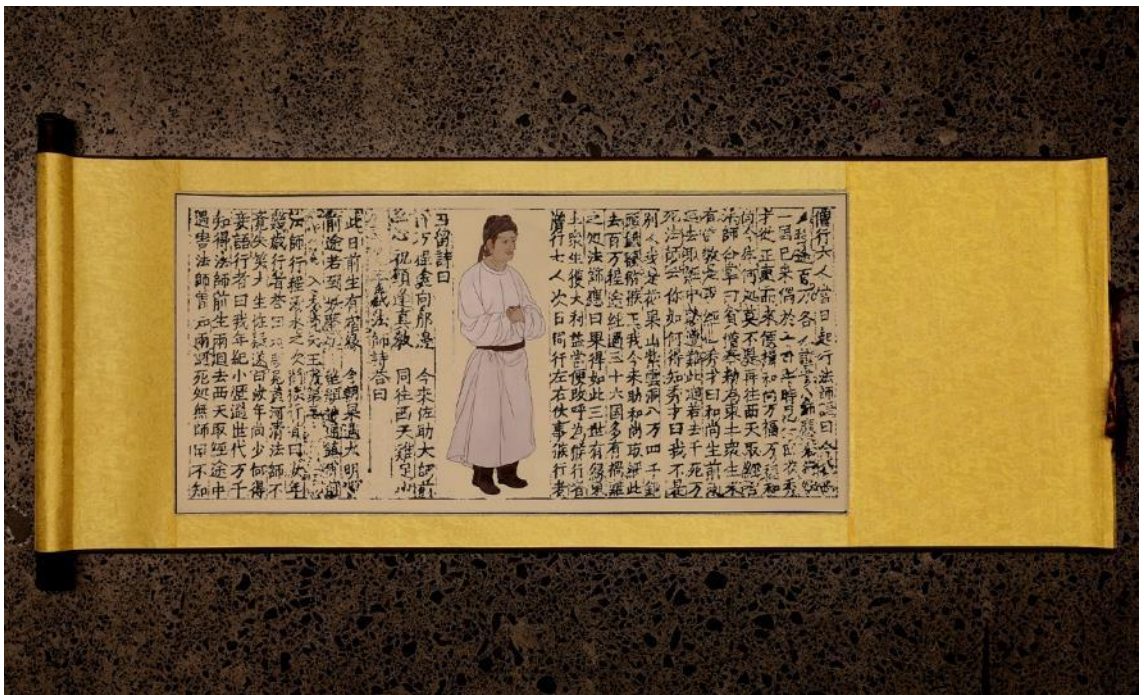


Figure 100. *A Scholar in White*, printed on rice paper, 32 × 68 cm, mounted on imitation silk scroll, 32 × 120 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 101. *Bookmarks, bilingual in ancient Chinese and English*, printed on Jinqian paper, 5.25 × 14.85 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 102. *Bookmarks, bilingual in ancient Chinese and English*, printed on Jinqian paper, 5.25 × 14.85 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.



Figure 103. *Leaflets, bilingual in ancient Chinese and English*, printed on rice paper, 14.85 × 42 cm, designed and photographed by Lili Kong, 2024.

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