

The Journey to the West

REVISED EDITION Volume I

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Summary

Journey to the West is a Chinese fantasy novel published in the 16th century during the Ming dynasty and attributed to Wu Cheng'en. It is regarded as one of the greatest Classic Chinese Novels, and has been described as arguably the most popular literary work in East Asia.[2] Arthur Waley's abridged translation, *Monkey*, is known in English-speaking countries.

The novel is an extended account of the legendary pilgrimage of the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Xuanzang, who traveled to the "Western Regions" (Central Asia and India) to obtain Buddhist sacred texts (sūtras) and returned after many trials and much suffering. The monk is referred to as Tang Sanzang in the novel. The novel retains the broad outline of Xuanzang's own account, *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*, but adds elements from folk tales and the author's invention: Gautama Buddha gives this task to the monk and provides him with three protectors who agree to help him as an atonement for their sins. These disciples are Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Wujing, together with a dragon prince who acts as Tang Sanzang's steed, a white horse. The group of pilgrims journeys towards enlightenment by the power and virtue of cooperation.

Characters

Tang Sanzang
Sun Wukong
Sha Wujing
Zhu Bajie



Wu Cheng'en

Wu was born in Lianshui, Jiangsu province, and later moved to Huai'an. Wu's father, Wu Rui, had had a good primary education and "shown an aptitude for study", but ultimately spent his life as an artisan because of his family's financial difficulties. Nevertheless, Wu Rui continued to "devote himself to literary pursuits", and as a child, Wu acquired the same enthusiasm for literature—including classical literature, popular stories, and anecdotes.

He took the imperial examinations several times in attempt to become a mandarin, or imperial official, but never passed, and did not gain entry into the imperial university in Nanjing until middle age; after that he did become an official and had postings in both Beijing and Changxing County, but he did not enjoy his work, and eventually resigned, probably spending the rest of his life writing stories and poems in his hometown. During this time he became an accomplished writer, producing both poetry and prose, and became friends with several prominent contemporary writers. However, Wu remained poor throughout his life and did not have any children. Dissatisfied with the political climate of the time and with the corruption of the world, he spent much of his life as a hermit.



Adaptations

- The Monkey Sun (Opičák Sun), a 1984 production adapting several chapters from the novel by the Theatre Esence in Prague, Czechoslovakia.
- *Amazing Adventures of the Marvelous Monkey King*, a 2001 children's play by Elizabeth Wong.
- *The Cave of the Silken Web*, or *Pan Si Dong*, a 1927 silent adaptation of one chapter of the novel. It was followed by a 1930 sequel, *The Cave of the Silken Web II* (alternatively known as *Spiders II*).
- *Journey to the West*, a two-season television series produced by CCTV, starring Liu Xiao Ling Tong as Sun Wukong. The two seasons were released in 1986 and 1999 respectively. Noted for its faithfulness to the original novel, this series is still considered by many as a classic.
- *After Journey to the West*, is a 2000 Chinese television sequel series that is loosely based on the events that take place after *Journey to the West*. It is produced by Shaanxi Television. The main story centers around a quest to find seventeen magical relics before demons use them to take over heaven and earth.
- "The God of High School", a Korean manga/game, with protagonist Jin Mori as the Monkey King Sun Wukong.
- *Dragon Ball* was initially inspired by *Journey to the West*. For example, Sun Wukong (pronounced Son Gokū in Japanese) becomes "Son Goku", who wields an elongating staff weapon, can fly using a magic cloud and has the ability to change into a giant ape. The supporting character Oolong was also based on Zhu Bajie and it was said that Yamcha was based on Sha Wujing. The object of sutras are replaced by the seven "Dragon Balls" and the dragon "Shen Long" who appears from the Dragon Balls to grant a wish. The first arc is a loose adaptation of *Journey to the West*, while following arcs diverge and tell original stories.
- *Gokū no Daibōken*, a 1967 Japanese anime.
- *Iyashite Agerun Saiyūki*, a 2007 adult anime.
- *Monkey Magic* is an animated retelling of the legend.
- *Monkey Typhoon* is a manga and anime series based on the *Journey to the West* saga, following a futuristic steampunk-retelling of the legend.