
SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

Number 286

June, 2019

The Reins of Language:
The Mantra of the *Heart Sutra* in
The Journey to the West

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SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

FOUNDED 1986

Editor-in-Chief

VICTOR H. MAIR

Associate Editors

PAULA ROBERTS

MARK SWOFFORD

ISSN

2157-9679 (print) 2157-9687 (online)

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The Reins of Language:
The Mantra of the *Heart Sutra* in
The Journey to the West

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1. INTRODUCTION

This interdisciplinary study across philology, literature, and religion examines the double-edged relationship of “reading text” and “making sense” in two discourses – Buddhism and late-imperial Chinese fiction, represented respectively by two texts: the *Heart Sutra* (*Prajñāpāramitā hṛdaya sūtra*, *Xin jing* 心經) and *The Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji*, 西遊記).¹ In these two contexts, I investigate the role and effect of language, especially text, in a practitioner’s, or alternatively a reader’s, comprehension of ideas. While text is a necessary assistance for people to learn ideas and gain knowledge of any kind, it also prevents them from going beyond what is provided by the text to reach its subtext. In other words, the effect of text on idea reception is double-edged: information receptors are under the control of a text and its providers – with the exception of only a few wise ones, who instead can control the text.

Such different effects on different people are analogous to reins. For some skillful riders, reins are expedients to control their horses; but ordinary riders and especially novices are overly dependent on them for the duration of their rides. I call this relationship as it pertains to idea and text “the reins of language,” a term that I explain below.

Sections 2 and 3 examine the role of “reins” in the two primary texts respectively, while section 4 incorporates the two contexts into one – to see how the *Heart Sutra* functions in *The Journey to the West*. In particular, I will examine the ways in which the text of the *Heart Sutra*, which the novel’s protagonist, Tripitaka, receives, influences his understanding of the *Heart Sutra* itself. This understanding affects his journey and at the end leads to his inability to discern the “true scriptures without words (*wuzi zhenjing* 無字真經)”² – the highest expression of Buddhist emptiness and enlightenment.

In Section 2, “The *Heart Sutra*: Duality of the Mantra’s Translational Development in China,” I deal with the first primary text, the *Heart Sutra*, a Mahāyāna Buddhist sutra. The *Heart Sutra* is called the “heart and essence of all Mahāyāna sutras” by Vajrapāṇi, one of the earliest bodhisattvas of

¹ *The Journey to the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012) is Anthony C. Yu’s translation of *Xi You Ji*; this is the translation I use for this essay.

² Yu, introduction, *Journey to the West*, 65.

Mahāyāna Buddhism.³ A teaching of the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, it delineates the essence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, i.e., *Prajñāpāramitā* – “going to the other (shore)” or “the perfection of wisdom,” as well as showing the way to attain it. One should abandon all sensory perceptions and consciousness itself to see things in their essence, and not be deluded by their appearances. The appearances stem from the five *skandhas*,⁴ which cause all sufferings and desires that bring one into *saṃsāra*. To achieve deep visions (*gambhīra darśana*), one needs to understand that there is “no permanent soul in the individual, only a living complex of physical and mental elements living on the fruits of the individual’s acts,”⁵ which is Buddhist non-dualism – form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Therefore, only when a practitioner understands the truth of emptiness does he attain complete perfection of understanding (*anuttarā samyak-sambodhi*). At that point, he attains enlightenment.

This section is a philological study. I investigate two aspects of the *Heart Sutra*’s Chinese translation, especially that of its mantra: “*gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhisvaha*.”⁶ First, I analyze the characteristics of both the mantra’s original Sanskrit text and its Chinese translations, to see how an ungrammatical and senseless sentence in both languages can represent the concept of Buddhist emptiness. Second, I will compare nine versions of the sutra’s Chinese translations in three dynasties: Tang 唐 (seventh century), Northern Song 宋 (tenth century) and Ming 明 (sixteenth century), to compare the ways in which the translational strategies have developed over the centuries. In the Tang dynasty, transliteration served solely as senseless symbols written in Chinese characters in order to represent sounds in Sanskrit; later, more meanings were inserted into the word choices so

³ Donald Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 113. However, Jan Nattier (1992) holds that the *Heart Sūtra* is an apocryphal text that was translated into Sanskrit from Chinese. Limited by space and context here, this paper will not discuss this issue. It awaits further discussion in later studies of mine.

⁴ The five *skandhas*: form, feelings, perception, disposition and consciousness. This is my own translation from Sanskrit, given that I’m not quite satisfied with the word choices for translating these concepts made by Lopez, Edward Conze, (*Buddhist Wisdom: The Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra* [New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2001], or Red Pine (*The Heart Sutra* [Washington, DC: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2004]).

⁵ Kenneth Chen, *Buddhism in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 9.

⁶ P. L. Vaidya, *Mahāyānasūtrasaṃgraha, Part 1* (Darbhanga, India: The Mithila Institute, 1961), 99.

that the mantra's Chinese translation started to produce meanings for Chinese practitioners, enabling them to reach a meditative state by reading only.

It is not just a process of transforming nonsense into meaningfulness, but also a process whereby Buddhism influenced the Chinese language system by adding new phonemes, morphemes and semantics to it, which leads to the eventual incorporation of Buddhist language into the Chinese culture. This process also shows that, along with the development of the printing and book culture, the power of a Buddhist mantra shifted from sound (orality) to text (literacy) for Chinese practitioners, as its word choices became more and more appropriate for silent reading, rather than chanting. However, while this evolution of textualizational skills provided *upāya* (expedient means, *fangbian* 方便) for its Chinese readers, the precision of the mantra's word choice also became a hindrance for a deeper understanding. Common practitioners would focus only on what they see written down – as the text makes more sense in the Chinese language – so that they lack the motivation to explore beyond the good translation into what the original Sanskrit meaning and vocabulary are. In this way, translation has become a rein, tying its common practitioners' thought tightly onto the provided text.

I choose the *Heart Sutra* to study for three reasons. First, the *Heart Sutra*'s unique expression of emptiness and perfect wisdom, reflected in its Chinese transliteration, can be compared to the "wordless sutras" offered to the pilgrims at the end of *The Journey to the West*. Second, the version of the *Heart Sutra*'s translation that the novel utilizes is based on the version of Northern Tripitaka during the Yongle reign (1403–1424) of the Ming (*Ming Yongle Bei Zang ben* 明永樂北藏本, or Ming Yongle Bei Zang version),⁷ which in turn is based on the version made by Tang Xuanzang – the historical prototype of Tripitaka – thus creating a particular connection between the Ming novel and the episode in Tang history. Third, an important stage in the development of Buddhism in China is the harmonization of the three parties, or Three Religions as One (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一) which began with the emergence of Neo-Confucianism in the Northern Song dynasty. In the late Ming dynasty, when *The Journey to the West* was written, Buddhist and Daoist canons had gained widespread

⁷ The Tripitaka was composed and printed from 1419 to 1440. For a detailed introduction on the Bei-Zang version, see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (fourth edition, Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 385.

adherence throughout the populace.⁸ Composed under this social discourse, *The Journey to the West* incorporates a full citation of the *Heart Sutra*, which runs through the whole novel and plays an important role in guiding the protagonists' practice, indicating their fate and influencing their pursuit and understanding of enlightenment.

Therefore, my philological study of the *Heart Sutra* in this section sheds light on my arguments in the next two sections, and it provides a basis for any further literary appreciation that I make. It enables me to examine the reasons the protagonists of the novel cannot reach enlightenment (as is widely acknowledged to be shown by their inability to understand wordless sutras at the end), and consider how the readers would respond to such an ending, as well as why the author designates such a "tied and trapped" pilgrim as a Buddha.

Section 3: "*The Journey to the West: Triple Readings of the End*" discusses the section's primary text, the sixteenth-century vernacular Chinese novel, attributed to Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 in the late Ming dynasty (1592). This novel is quasi-historical, based on the seventh-century true journey to India of Monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) in the Tang dynasty, whose translations of Sanskrit Mahāyāna sutras greatly influenced the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China. In the novel, as an ambassador dispatched by Emperor Tai-Zong 太宗 of the Tang, the protagonist Tripitaka, with his four disciples, undertakes a journey to the Western Paradise to bring back the Buddhist sutras to the Eastern Land. Because it is found that they cannot understand the highest form of sutras – wordless scriptures – they are given written texts. In the end, after their successful return to China, they are brought back to Heaven, and two of them (Tripitaka and his oldest disciple, Wukong 悟空 the Monkey) become Buddhas there. I base my investigation mainly on three incidents in the novel, which are based on Buddhist themes: the receiving of the *Heart Sutra* in chapter 19 (discussed in section 4), the dispute over the "wordless sutras" in chapter 98 and becoming Buddhas in chapter 100 (discussed in section 3).

Following the philological study in section 2, section 3 takes a literary approach, discussing three possible readings of the novel's ending, and suggesting each reading to a different group of readers – the lowest group, the middling group and the wisest group – whom I respectively name

⁸ Yu, introduction, *Journey to the West*, 84.

intuitive readers, analytical readers and transcendental readers, based on two aspects: (1) how does a reader link practice (the pursuit of enlightenment) to the eventual enlightenment? and, (2) as *The Journey to the West* is widely acknowledged to be a satire, what does a reader regard as being the target of the novel's satire? These two questions determine to which group a reader belongs, and the degree to which he is dependent on the text, i.e., bound by the "reins of language."

Intuitive readers link practice and enlightenment tightly with each other. They regard enlightenment as the necessary reward for the completion of the pilgrims' tasks, and the signal of success after practice, persistence and piety. According to them, as long as there is practice and spiritual progress, there must be enlightenment in the end. In addition, a large percentage of readers in this group does not understand Buddhism and its real ideas; their familiarity with Buddhist concepts, if any, come from folk culture, into which syncretic discourses are incorporated in the unity of the three religions. Analytical readers, in contrast, do not find a necessary link between the two. Because Tripitaka cannot understand the blank sutras – a representation of Buddhist emptiness or wisdom – these readers understand the pilgrims' arduous practice as being in vain. Therefore, they blame such a result on the limits of human understanding. In their eyes, every person is predestined to be wise or unwise (common), so fighting with one's intuition and the limits of one's nature makes no sense. As for the third group, the transcendental readers, they see any purposive action, or the pursuit of enlightenment alone, as an impediment to enlightenment. Enlightenment requires self-obliviousness, but the process of practicing and pursuing keeps one in a state of self-consciousness – in other words, a state of awareness of one's behavior, method and direction, which could never lead to a complete emptiness. In this way, transcendental readers realize that the author's constant usage of poems – which transcribes for its readers the sense of time passing, accentuates the sufferings of the pilgrims, and reinforces the impression of how immense and lengthy their journey is⁹ – actually keeps both the characters and the readers self-aware and naturally away from emptiness. Therefore, the more they do and the more arduous their tasks are depicted as being, the farther away they are from enlightenment.

Second, while all three groups are quick to detect the satirical character of the novel, the

⁹ Yu, introduction, *Journey to the West*, 38.

targets of its satire are different in each groups' eyes. The intuitive readers understand the target to be the monsters and demons who want to do nothing but wait around for to make a meal of Tripitaka's flesh, because they think that will allow them to achieve immortality. For them, *The Journey to the West* becomes an educational story about cultivating diligent and persistent personalities. The analytical readers assume four targets of satire: the stupidity of Tripitaka and his disciples, the weakness of human understanding, the senselessness of human effort, and the Buddhist religion itself – because Tathagata, the greatest of Buddhas, in the end promotes two unenlightened pilgrims into the Buddhahood. Moreover, they also laugh at the intuitive readers for not being able to understand all these. The transcendental readers instead see the target not as anything within the novel, but instead as the first two groups of readers: (1) the intuitive readers' shallowness and the analytical readers' complacency and (2) the first two groups' "reins of language" – they are bound by what the author has written to them, so that they are unable to tell fictional figures from historical people. Having the two become Buddhas is the author's act of homage to Xuanzang for making his arduous trip and to Wukong as a moral hero, which does not relate to Tripitaka's and Monkey's journey at all. The novel itself has already come to an end with the pilgrims' return to the Eastern Land; calling them back actually forms an epilogue to the book, showing exactly that Buddhism is not a target of satire, but an esoteric wisdom that the author reveres, appreciates and acknowledges.

The emergence of these three classes of readers accords with Andrew Plaks's term for describing *The Journey to the West*: it is a literati novel.¹⁰ According to Plaks, although it provides a seemingly easy and inspiring plot as well as an enjoyable reading experience, *The Journey to the West* is not designed for ordinary people. It is to be appreciated by the literati, for the multiple different readings they can make of the novel and their ability to discriminate between text and subtext; this distinguishes general readers from wise readers. This distinction fits the literati's self-conception in the late Ming: the elite cohort had a sense of its superiority over the common people, which often led it to self-praise, even narcissism. So we see that the analytical readers cannot avoid being laughed at by the transcendental readers, just as they themselves laugh at the still lower intuitive readers. Thus,

¹⁰ Andrew Plaks, "Hsi-yu chi: Transcendence of Emptiness" in *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 221–222.

this literati novel reflects three aspects of satire: first, the literati stratum's satire of the commoner stratum; second, the wise people's satire of the literati's complacency; third, the satire from the controllers of the reins of language, of those readers who are trapped and tied by those reins.

This triple reading of the ending of *The Journey to the West* leads us directly into the concerns of section 4: "Is the textual *Heart Sutra* in *The Journey to the West* an expedient or an impediment to enlightenment?" Subsequent to the analysis of both Buddhist and fictional discourses – the philological study of the *Heart Sutra* and the literary study of the novel – in the previous two sections, section 4 combines the two primary texts together by putting the Buddhist text into the novel, and examining two aspects. First, I look into the reasons for Tripitaka's non-enlightenment even after receiving the *Heart Sutra*. Tripitaka should be on the verge of enlightenment upon receiving the *Heart Sutra* in chapter 19 to guide him, for the *Heart Sutra*'s essence, as discussed early in this section, is the perfect wisdom and emptiness that Tripitaka needs at his journey's end. However, he is never able to make that last step. I argue that this is because Tripitaka is a representative of Everyman, whose mind is tied by the "reins of language." What Tripitaka has received and has been dependent upon throughout the whole journey is merely the *Heart Sutra*'s text, or its *upāya*, an expedient form with which common readers can learn to grasp Buddhist ideas, instead of its real spirit. Thus, no matter how he practices, memorizes and is admonished of its content by Monkey, his understanding of its ideas still stays on the textual level, instead of the deeper sub-textual level.

In this way, instead of being aided, he is impeded from reaching a higher state on his way to enlightenment. His unthorough understanding of the sutra also leads to two results: first, if he really understood the sutra, he would not have to take the journey, as "to see the Western Region takes only an instant (*jian xifang zhi zai chana* 見西方只在剎那),"¹¹ so that "one hundred and eight thousand miles (*shiwān baqian li* 十萬八千里)" are no different from right here right now; second, we see his ignorance and inability to discern the authentic sutras from the fake among all the thirty-five that he has received from Tathagata in chapter 98.

The final subject I will investigate in this essay is the relationship between a reader and his text – the controller and that which is being controlled. In the case of Tripitaka, he is controlled by the

¹¹ Huineng 慧能 and Shi Fahai 釋法海, *Liu zu tan jing* 六祖壇經箋註 (Taipei: Wei xin shu ju 維新書局, 1969), 78.

Heart Sutra's language, as previously explained; in Monkey's case, such a relationship represents an illusion. In chapter 14, under the Five-Element Mountain (*wuxing shan* 五行山), Monkey is trapped for five hundred years. However, as soon as Tripitaka lifts a piece of golden tag on which is written “*Om maṇi padme hūṃ* 唵嘛呢叭咪吽,” the Monkey jumps out. Was he really trapped by the mountain's weight? Or is he trapped by those six sounds? Or, is he actually trapped by neither, but just falling in with an illusion that he must be trapped by something – in other words, is he trapped by his own mind? At the beginning of the book, Wukong disturbed all of Heaven, possessed great power and even dreamed of being a heavenly emperor. There was only power in this mind. Hence, as Tathagata put him under the Five-Element Mountain, he did not struggle but submitted, assuming that his power was not as great as Tathagata's. The use of language – the six-syllable mantra, “*Om maṇi padme hūṃ*” – might just be a pretense in this last case. There are many readings to various parts of the novel that indicate “controlling” and “being controlled” in the language.

The scope of the current paper allows me to focus on only a small fraction of the whole book. The insight of a study of these fractions in *The Journey to the West*, related to the *Heart Sutra*, gives me a greater respect for the author's ability to balance esoteric knowledge, philosophical depth, satire and popular entertainment. I hope this study on the relationship between textual expression and subtext, or idea reception, will serve as an introduction to a larger study by other scholars, on further related topics beyond this discussion.

2. THE *HEART SUTRA*: DUALITY OF THE MANTRA'S TRANSLATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

In this section I analyze the *Heart Sutra*, especially its mantra, philologically, in order to examine the way in which its central idea of emptiness is presented both in its original Sanskrit text and in the various versions of Chinese translation that developed alongside the growing dominance of Buddhism in China over the centuries. I also investigate the way in which the evolution of the mantra's Chinese translational strategies from the Tang to the Ming dynasties (seventh to sixteenth centuries), leads to the incorporation of Sanskrit-loaned phonemes, morphemes and semantics into the Chinese language system. I argue that incorporation within the development of word choices in representing Sanskrit

sound symbols facilitates the esoteric religious texts to be accessed and accepted by common Chinese readers.

But the development of textualizational strategies is a double-edged sword. While text enables and aids its readers to comprehend ideas, it also prevents them from possible explorations beyond what is provided on the pages. The more delicate and precise linguistic expressions were, the narrower and more concrete interpretations would become, leading to the allowance of more control imposed on ordinary text-receivers by its providers. In Buddhism, only very few with “the root of wisdom” (*huigen* 慧根) are able to get rid of the reins of language, to reach beyond sutra texts into their “empty” subtexts. This discrepancy in “how to comprehend an idea” distinguishes common idea-receptors from those of higher wisdom both in Buddhism and literary readings – the latter of which I investigate in the next section within the context of a Ming vernacular novel: *The Journey to the West*.

2.1 PHILOLOGICAL STUDY: THE *HEART SUTRA*'S CHINESE VERSIONS

Phonological and morphological development of the *Heart Sutra*'s Chinese translation crucially occurred during three Chinese dynasties: Tang (618–917), Northern Song (960–1127) and Ming (1368–1644). The early and original Chinese translations of the *Heart Sutra* started in the early medieval period (the Later Qin 後秦 dynasty, early third century), with Kumārajīva as its first translator; after his, there were another seven versions preserved and included in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經.¹² Among these eight, the most widely circulated one is the translation by Xuanzang after his journey to India in the seventh century.

Xuanzang's version was regarded as the most authoritative in China for centuries. This authority was greatly enhanced by the re-translation of the *Heart Sutra* during the Yongle emperor's reign in the Ming dynasty, which was mostly based on Xuanzang's translation with slight revisions and alterations. The publication of *The Journey to the West*, a late Ming work of prose fiction, enhances the popularity of Xuanzang's trip and his translation, as the fiction made him the historical prototype of its protagonist, Tripitaka. Since the *Heart Sutra* is cited in full in *The Journey to the West*, studying

¹² Nos. 250–255 and no. 257, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1963), 8: 847–852.

the translation of the *Heart Sutra*, especially the connection between the Ming Yongle Bei Zang version and its early versions, is significant in understanding enlightenment in *The Journey to the West*.

All eight translations of the *Heart Sutra* in medieval China (one translation in the Later Qin, six in the Tang and one in the Northern Song) share a common feature: they all only transliterate Buddhist terms and the mantra, and utilize Chinese characters to serve (barely) as Sanskrit sound symbols, thus making those terms senseless and unintelligible to literate Chinese people. Surprisingly, while the translations vary according to different versions, crucial transliterations of Buddhist terms utilize the same word choice to represent their sounds across all eight versions: for example, “the enlightenment-being” is translated as “*pusa* 菩薩” (*bodhisattva*), “the perfection of wisdom” as “*boreboluomiduo* 般若波羅蜜多” (*prājñāpāramita*), “the final stage of the removal of all obstructions” as “*niepan* 涅槃” (*nirvāṇa*) and “unsurpassed, perfect, complete enlightenment/ understanding” as “*anouduoluo sanmiaosanputi* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提” (*anuttarāṃ samyak-sambodhim*).¹³ Such a transliteration fits the doctrine of “there is no cognition, no attainment, and no non-attainment,”¹⁴ according to the *Heart Sutra*. In reading the Chinese translation, a Chinese practitioner has neither any practice nor non-practice, for he does not even know what he is relying on in his practice and what he aims to attain. Thus, the way that all eight versions avoid meaningful translation of crucial Buddhist terms – a methodology that was prevalent in the treatment of Buddhist texts in medieval China – actually emphasizes the concept of “emptiness” in Buddhism, and reinforces the main idea of *Heart Sutra*. Chinese readers, compared to the sutra’s Sanskrit readers, can therefore, through its Chinese translations, be exposed to the “emptiness” of the *Heart Sutra* more directly and intuitively: whether one can reach enlightenment is not within the control of his consciousness or knowledge. This translation, using senseless word expressions, is a unique Chinese development in the history of Buddhism, which also prompts the unique “sudden enlightenment” in China.

¹³ Note that the English translations of these four terms are selected from the interpretations of various scholars, based on which interpretation is most precise. (1) *Bodhisattva* as “enlightenment-being”: Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom*, 82; (2) *Prājñāpāramita* as “the perfection of wisdom”: Lopez, *Heart Sūtra Explained*, 21; (3) *Nirvāṇa* as “the final stage of the removal of all obstructions”: Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom*, 108; (4) *Anuttarāṃ samyak-sambodhim* as “unsurpassed, perfect, complete enlightenment”: Lopez, *Heart Sūtra Explained*, 95.

¹⁴ Translation of “*na prāptih nāprāptih*” by Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom*, 97.

In this section, regarding the *Heart Sutra* in Chinese, I would like to focus on the translations of the sutra’s last sentence, or its mantra. A mantra is a spell to be repetitively and quickly chanted in order to enter meditation for the achievement of spiritual progress, or for the sake of subduing pain through meditation. It goes like this in Sanskrit: “*gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhisvaha.*”¹⁵

This Sanskrit mantra is made of five consecutive masculine singular vocatives, the first two of which are repetitive. Excepting the last word, which is a compound of *bodhi* – enlightenment derived from \sqrt{budh} (awaken) and *svaha*, an indeclinable interjection that ends almost all mantras – the four other words are past passive gerundive participles derived from the root \sqrt{gam} (go/come). Therefore the translation of the whole Sanskrit sentence should be “gone, gone, gone to the other shore, gone altogether/completely to the other shore, enlightenment o hail.” The finale of the sutra has an unusual syntactical structure, being composed entirely of interjections in vocative cases, derived from the verb \sqrt{gam} (go/come). Although ungrammatical in Sanskrit, this structure strengthens its power as an incantation. As early Indian Buddhist sutras privilege sound over sense, this has the effect of transforming what seems to be textual “senselessness” into oral/aural “sense.”

Moreover, there is no subject or object in this sentence, nor any other cases. Therefore, the mantra can be interpreted as: there is nowhere to come, nor is there anywhere to go; there is nobody coming or going, nor is anyone made to come and go. This “nobody goes anywhere” – the non-existence of one who practices, what is to be practiced, and how to practice – fits the Buddhist notion of emptiness, explained earlier in this section: emptiness is having no self, as self disappears the moment emptiness arises. The “coming” and “going” of a form change in every instant. And this “nowhere to depend on” is also an important idea in the *Heart Sutra*. Hence, if a Chinese Buddhist practitioner, via repetitive incantations of this mantra, becomes aware of this non-coming/going, then he may understand Buddhist non-dualism. In other words, he would be enlightened. In this mantra, the word *gate* – its sound choices in Chinese language, represented by the word choices of different Chinese characters, is to be particularly analyzed in order to see how Chinese translation preserves the *Heart Sutra*’s emptiness and the mantra’s meditative power both in meaning and in sound.

All eight versions only transliterate this mantra, because a mantra is among the five categories

¹⁵ See n. 5.

of Buddhist texts that shall not be translated. It is the “secret code” of Buddha’s teaching, which should not be easily known by non-Buddhist people.¹⁶ Table 1 shows the differences in the word/sound choices to represent “gate” across the eight translations, a complete transliteration, or a record of the sound of the original Sanskrit text, according to Xuanzang’s teaching in the Tang dynasty, included in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*.¹⁷

Table 1. Sound/Word Choices Representing “gate” in Eight Existing Chinese Translations

Time	Number (in <i>Dai-zo-kyo</i>)	Translator	Sound Choice (medieval sound)	Meaning (transliterated)
Later Qin	250	Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什	竭(gat/*KjAt)帝 ^{18, 19}	all holiness
Tang	251	Xuanzang 玄奘	揭(gat/*KjAt)帝	unveil holiness
	252	Dharmacandra 法月	揭(gat/*KjAt)諦	unveil truth
	253	Liyan 利言	葉(iap/(y)iep)諦 ²⁰	leaf truth

¹⁶ “密說般若，此五種不翻之一也。蓋咒是佛之密語，非下凡所知。” “Boreboluomiduo xinjing zhujie” 般若波羅蜜多心經註解, *Zhonghua dazang jing* 中華大藏經 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 2004), 97.322.

¹⁷ “Tang Fan fan dui zi yin bo re bo luo mi duo xin jing” 唐梵翻對字音般若波羅蜜多心經, No. 256, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai 大正一切經刊行會, 1963), 8: 851.

¹⁸ The phonological representations on the left side of the slashes in these parentheses reflect W. South Coblin’s Old Northwestern Chinese (1991) system, with Kumarajiva’s Sanskrit loans and translations as the earliest source and mistakes in the Late Tang (tenth century) Dunhuang manuscripts as the latest. To be noted, one may question the circularity of utilizing the ONWC evidence in deducing Chinese sounds here, but this paper doesn’t allow a reconstruction of a new system limited by its scope. One may treat this medieval sound representation as *upāya* here. I list out Coblin’s sounds because his system may be the most authentic in reflecting speech language at that time.

¹⁹ On the right side of the slashes in parenthesis: Scholars such as Bernhard Karlgren (g^hiɛt), Wang Li 王力 (gⁱɛt), Dong Tonghe 董同龢 (g^hiɛt), Li Fang-kuei 李方桂 (gⁱɛt), and William Baxter (gjet/khjet) all reconstruct 竭/揭 with a medial. *Guangyun* 廣韻 gives 羣母月韻 for this sound. Thus, the medieval sound for 竭/揭 should look like the form *KjAt in the traditional systems. I will use this sound, *KjAt, in analysis throughout this paper, for this sound, although different from Coblin’s reconstructional system the nucleus of which only contains a single vowel, represents the mainstream of medieval Chinese phonological studies and will bring out a contrast which I would like to foreground in this paper.

²⁰ *Guangyun* gives 葉 as 匣母帖韻. Thus some traditional scholars deduced a consonant /ɣ/ as onset (e.g. Dong). Baxter

Time	Number (in <i>Dai-zo-kyo</i>)	Translator	Sound Choice (medieval sound)	Meaning (transliterated)
	254	Zhihuilun 智慧輪	識(ŋa)帝 ²¹	good holiness
	255	Mgos Chos-grub 法成	峩(ŋa)帝	mountain holiness
	256	Sanskrit Sound Record 唐梵翻對字音般若波羅 蜜多心經	識(ŋa)諦	good truth
Northern Song	257	Dānapāla 施護	識(ŋɔ)帝 ²²	good holiness

As we can see, there are five characters to represent the sound “ga” – 竭 = 揭(gat/*KjAt), 葉(iap/(y)iep), 識 = 峩(ŋa > ŋɔ) – within these eight translations, and they can be categorized into two groups from the table.²³ Since the first four are open to the traditional reconstruction of *KjAt (see footnote 18), I call the first four (nos. 250–253) the “glide group,” because “ga” may be transcribed with Chinese sounds that has a medial glide (*j* or *i*) between the initial consonant and the middle vowels. I call the other four (nos. 254–57) the “nasal group,” for they all utilize the velar nasal “ŋa” as a way of transcribing “ga.” Intuitively, the “nasal group” sounds more similar to the original “ga” in both the place of articulation and the voice, for /g/ and /ŋ/ belong to the same natural class of velar sonorants.

In addition, since all the four translators in the “glide group” had the experience of staying in

(yjep=yep) and Coblin (iap) both give non-consonantal onset for this sound. Whatever the onset may be, I could give no explanation why 葉 is used here. It shares the feature of having a medial with 竭/揭.

²¹ The nasal stop /ŋ/ in transcribing its non-nasal voiceless counterpart /k/ here, may have been post-oralized as /ŋg/. C.f. Japanese Kan'on borrowings as voiced consonants (which were prenasalized) and modern Taishanese and Wu dialect postoralization. Therefore, all these “ŋa”s could also be written as “ŋga.”

²² The Northern Song a > ɔ sound change is deduced from Coblin's *A Handbook of Phags-pa Chinese* (2007).

²³ There are two characters in total to represent the sound “te” (帝 · 諦). Since 帝 and 諦 are near-homophonic in Medieval Chinese phonology at the time of the Tang dynasty (帝 teiH / 諦 tieiH, H denotes the qu 去 tone), I will only analyze the comparison of the translation of “ga” in this table, and in the following parts of this section.

Kucha – Xuanzang spent decades lecturing in Kucha 庫車 while the other three were born there – it is very likely that the “glide” sound is influenced by the dialect pronunciation of Kucha, which makes “ga” a “gia,” with the slipping of vocal chord from tense to lax. This might be an accent that Tang people, in the “central land” (*zhongyuan* 中原) area, did not have. A most significant contrast, which can be treated as the evidence for this hypothesis is: Xuanzang’s transcriber, hearing the sound, transcribed it as “ŋa (讖)” in the Tang transliteration record “*Tang-Fan fandui ziyin boreboluomiduo xinjing* 唐梵翻對字音般若波羅蜜多心經,”²⁴ but Xuanzang’s own translation chooses 揭 in the medial group instead. The Kucha dialect, I conjecture, might thus be a main cause in the difference between Zhongyuan and Kucha sounds in the Tang dynasty, as well as in the differences of word and sound choices between the two “groups.” This issue of historical linguistics is open to objection and further exploration.

2.2 TRANSFORMATION OF THE MANTRA’S POWER: FROM ORALITY TO LITERACY

Before continuing the discussion on philological development and comparison, the concept of “incantation” and the power of sounds needs to be introduced. In Indian Buddhism, or early Chinese Buddhism prior to the Song dynasty, sound was the most important element determining a mantra’s value, instead of its meanings. This situation changed after the Song dynasty, after the Chinese translation work of Buddhist text began to thrive, and after the printing and book culture enabled the popularization of reading. The significance of sound can be traced back to its roots in the Indian for the value of incantation. A sutra’s function is regarded as lying primarily in its mantras, because by quickly repeating a mantra’s same sounds over and over again a practitioner’s mind is continuously stimulated and influenced by sonic waves of the same frequency, inducing a quasi-meditative state in the practitioner. Sound determines the particular pitch, frequency, or timbre to be received by a practitioner’s auditory organs, upon the stimulations of which he abandons all corporeal senses, thoughts and even consciousness, until he eventually understands and reaches the state of emptiness, entering into a pure spiritual world. This deep meditative state is, according to the *Heart Sutra*, “the

²⁴ “*Tang-Fan fandui ziyin boreboluomiduo xinjing*” 唐梵翻對字音般若波羅蜜多心經, No. 256, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai 大正一切經刊行會, 1963), 8: 851.

achieving of emptiness": "In emptiness, (there is) no form, no feelings, no perceptions, no inclination, no consciousness; no vision, audition, smelling, gustation, or tactus; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch or thoughts; ... up to no element of mental cognition."²⁵

Therefore, since incantation, determined by sound only, is an access to the indispensable meditative state that every Buddhist practitioner needs in order to attain emptiness, a mantra has little to do with what it means. If meaning really matters to any extent, it is because the repetition and murmuring trigger both the practitioners' throats and their minds and strengthen the practitioners' memories of Buddhist doctrines expressed in the repeated lines. Some novice practitioners, during their initial stages of mind activation, may not be able to grasp the meaning of the mantras or certain terms written in unintelligible semantic expressions. But as they are effectively exercised, their ability to memorize and potential to learn and comprehend would be enhanced. They might have acquired enough knowledge and developed strong enough learning ability after such long-lasting incantation exercises to allow a sudden understanding of the terms that they did not comprehend before, i.e. the "sudden enlightenment."

At the early stage, when Chinese Buddhist practitioners still focused on the aural features, a written text only served as the "recording code" to preserve sounds.²⁶ Sutras have many forms: there are long sutras with 100,000 lines, which characteristically and frequently repeat verses. There are also short sutras (especially popular between 600 AD and 1200 AD) with several lines only. The shortest sutra in the world, *Perfect Wisdom in One Letter*, has only one syllable: "A," condensing all meanings of the perfection of wisdom in one exclamation.²⁷ Therefore, while the length of Buddhist sutras varies from one syllable to thousands of lines, all serve to record of what is supposed to be chanted aloud. As teaching expedients, written forms also enable the heritage of thought to be preserved and passed on. This impulse underlay the relationship of sounds and texts in the early stage of Chinese Buddhism.

However, that situation and relationship has changed. According to table 1, and the word choices analyzed earlier in section 2.1, if sound were still the primary means by which to preserve the

²⁵ This is my own translation of the *Heart Sutra*.

²⁶ Walter J. Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 11.

²⁷ Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1978), 14.

meditative power of spiritual progress in the Ming dynasty, as it was in Indian and early Chinese Buddhism, then the second group of nasal sounds (誡 and 峩) and its textualization, the most popular and phonologically closest way to transliterate “gate” in the Tang and the Song dynasties, should still be the word choices that were eventually preserved and more widely circulated in the later development of Buddhism in China. However, in contrast, it was the first group – specifically, Dharmacandra’s word choice of “揭諦” (unveiling the truth) that was accepted and preserved over centuries in the Ming dynasty. As mentioned above in the first paragraph of introduction, the *Heart Sutra*, which was widely circulated and well-known in Chinese folk culture, mainly contributes to the Ming Yongle revised version of the translation – a re-translation of the *Heart Sutra* mostly based on Xuanzang’s version, while combining some elements from other versions. It should be noted that the sound choice utilized by the Ming Yongle version, was neither the “velar group” nor Xuanzang’s original “揭帝,” but 揭諦, from Dharmacandra’s version – this makes the Ming Yongle version a mixture of more than one early translation.

Then arises a question: why does the phonologically closest transliteration from Sanskrit, while still keeping the meaning of “a good and beautiful (ṇa 誡) truth (諦),” get abandoned in the development? The retained one (揭*KjAt 諦), instead, may not actually follow the real sound of the original Sanskrit text, and it is even under the influence of some dialectic accent.²⁸ My approach is to examine the philological and phonological “evolution” of the Buddhist sutra translation into Chinese, by investigating how translational strategies developed from the Tang dynasty to the Song dynasty, after which a supposition could be made to predict its tendency in the Ming dynasty, combined with social and religious discourse in late-imperial China. My resources in this section are mainly *Jingyou Tianzhu ziyuan* 景祐天竺字源²⁹ and *Songben Guangyun* 宋本廣韻.³⁰ By examining these two dictionaries, the development of the Buddhist translation can be seen and will contribute to resolving

²⁸ It depends which reconstruction system we should follow. If we follow Coblin’s Old Northwestern Chinese (1991) or Common Shazhou Dialect (1992), this point may be open to objection. But if we follow scholars such as Baxter, Li, or Dong, then this point could be furthered. I pose both systems here before a linguistic investigation could be made in the near future, but such an investigation, as aforementioned, fall out of the scope of this paper.

²⁹ Shi Weijing 释惟净, *Jin you Tianzhu ziyuan* 景祐天竺字源 (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan), 1976–1982.

³⁰ *Songben Guangyun* 宋本廣韻 (Nanjing: Jiang su jiao yu chu ban she, 2008).

this question. I will investigate how new Chinese phonemes and morphemes are absorbed into the language system from Sanskrit borrowed sounds and the “sound symbols” of Buddhist sutra transliterations.

In the Tang dynasty, the system of representing Sanskrit sound by Chinese characters was newly established. When it comes to the Song dynasty, a period when Buddhism was greatly developed and began to assimilate with Daoism and Confucianism, the translational strategies of the Indian monk Dharmadeva 法天 began to thrive; he had come to China in the Northern Song dynasty, the sixth year of Emperor Kaibao 開寶 (973 AD). By that time, since many new symbolic representations in Chinese characters had been invented (as shown in table 2), Sanskrit sounds and new Chinese words/characters start to be incorporated into the Chinese sound and word system. *Jingyou tianzhu ziyuan* 景祐天竺字源 collected those new words and characters.

Table 2. Comparison: Major³¹ Tang and Song Transliteration Methodology

Method	Meaning	Example in Chinese	Represented Sound in Sanskrit	Tang	Song
二合/三合	Two or three sounds combined for a new sound ³²	戍爾焰二合	sūrya	x	x
引	long vowel	曩引	nā	x	x
口边	Turns a lateral liquid /l/ into the retroflex liquid /r/ (The “ra” sound does not exist in Chinese.)	波囉	pra	x	x

³¹ Note that this checklist does not involve all the methodologies used in the Song dynasty, but only the major ones that closely relate to the translation of the *Heart Sutra*.

³² Usually, the first sound is for the consonant, the second sound for the vowel.

Method	Meaning	Example in Chinese	Represented Sound in Sanskrit	Tang	Song
切身	Two Chinese characters combined for a new character ³³	寧也切身	nya, dya		x
声调	Representing anusvāra if added at the end	三去	saṃ		x
转音	Inserting an /r/ sound into the word	达转么	dharma		x
重呼	Turning nasals into voiced stops	冒重呼地;	bodhi		x
半音	Only the consonant of a syllable remains	特哩二合俱半音	dhṛk		x
鼻音	Nasal insertion	野撒拽二合反弩 鼻音重呼	yasendu		x

In this chart it is clear that the Song dynasty uses many more sound representative strategies than the Tang dynasty did, when Buddhist text translation was still nascent to China. In the *Heart Sutra*'s case, the Tang transliteration records show evidence of only the first three methods; but in Dānapāla's translation from the Song dynasty,³⁴ *qieshen* 切身 is added and *yin* 弓| is much more frequently and appropriately used than in the Tang record. These methodologies, developed through the ages, contributed greatly to the increase of Chinese sounds and characters, an improvement of Chinese phonology, morphology and even semantics, by gradually absorbing the Indian sounds into the Chinese language system. In the Song dynasty, the attempt to classify and systematize the phonology of *Qieyun* 切韻 appeared, using concepts borrowed from Indian phonological theory. In

³³ Usually, the first character is for the left part of the new character, and the second character is for the right part of the new one.

³⁴ Dānapāla 施護, "Fo shuo sheng fo mu bo re bo luo mi duo jing" 佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經, no. 257, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1963), 8: 852.

addition, *Dengyun* 等韻 successfully reconciled two different phonological systems of authentic Chinese words and borrowed Sanskrit words from Buddhist texts, and absorbed borrowed morphology and phonology into standard Chinese literary pronunciations.³⁵ This dramatic change and reconciliation process cause *Songben Guangyun* 宋本廣韻 and *Dengyun* 等韻, which appeared at the earliest in the Song dynasty, to have many more new words than *Tangyun* 唐韻 and *Qieyun* 切韻, although the former is based on the vocabularies of the latter two.

By the Ming dynasty, Chinese vocabularies had already been greatly enlarged. Those mere "sound symbols" from the Tang and Song were already so thoroughly merged into the Chinese language, that when reading characters with the component of "口" such as *luo* 囉, *li* 哩 or *lu* 嚕, Chinese readers and speakers no longer treated them as loan words or transliterations of a foreign language. In addition, the Ming society had assimilated the three religions – Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism – well into the folk culture. The literacy level of the Ming dynasty population increased as printing and book marketing thrived, and the supremacy of the elite culture was increasingly challenged by popular folk culture. Hence, as writing and reading became more and more important in knowledge promotion, "words" came to matter more than "sounds."

Therefore, to answer the question posed at the beginning of this sub-section, the Ming Yongle version is a combination of several early translations, because in the Ming dynasty, the original sounds of Sanskrit already did not matter to most readers. This is because more and more people were literate, and thus the readers of Buddhist sutras were no longer only scholars or monks. To these ordinary people who did not know Sanskrit, the printed version was the only translation they read, and the only version that could help them to achieve faster and more efficacious spiritual progress. Therefore, in the Ming dynasty, the way the text was written was much more important than what the text sounded like. In other words, as Chinese Buddhism developed, "words" increasingly mattered more than "sound" in producing meaning. Since Dharmacandra's 揭諦 best expresses the Buddhist meanings of "unveiling the truth," bestowing on its practitioners a more intuitive psychological prompt for Chinese practitioners to "unveil the truth" behind the senseless words, this was the word that Ming translators chose.

35 Jerry Norman, *Chinese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 29.

2.3 UNVEILING THE TRUTH AND THE LEGACY OF THE MANTRA

So why was this word 揭諦 the best one to choose? As introduced earlier, the concept of “nowhere to come, go or depend” is the “truth” of emptiness, to be unveiled by the practitioners by repetitively chanting the mantra, entering into the meditation to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The power of a mantra lies in its sound, and sound influences those listeners who understand their meanings more than those who do not. Therefore, retaining the Sanskrit sound of *gate* (go) did not make sense to ordinary Ming Chinese practitioners. It is the 揭諦 (unveil the truth), the self-prompt of “solving the puzzle and attaining the truth” that is efficacious in their auditory system and minds. Moreover, in Chinese, the written characters are monosyllabic, and every character is a morpheme. It is not enough for Chinese sutra readers just to learn the sounds; each sound must have one corresponding meaning – and this reflects the fact that the Ming Yongle version ingeniously incorporates the Sanskrit *gate* (gone) and Chinese 揭諦 (unveil the truth), and reflects the Chinese Buddhist development throughout the history, from merely transliterating in Tang dynasty to combining the Chinese culture into the transliteration.

Besides, in this version, if we translate every Chinese word into English, excepting the last interjection *svaha*, then the sentence in the Yongle version becomes: “unveil (揭) the truth (諦), unveil (揭) the truth (諦), wave (波) silk (羅) unveil (揭) the truth (諦), wave (波) silk (羅) monk (僧) unveil (揭) the truth (諦), Bo-tree (菩提) *svaha* (薩婆訶).” At first, it seems that the change is senseless, since the change of one word does not make the mantra any more comprehensible than before. However, the word choice of 揭諦 (unveil the truth) in the Yongle version prompts the reader intuitively to delve into the mantra and practice it to find out the “truth” to be unveiled, as if solving a riddle. A practitioner, if he can figure this puzzle out to “unveil the truth 揭諦,” he would then attain “*puti* 菩提” – the Bo-tree, as the Buddha Śakyamūni did, lying under it.

Not only does his translation retain the power of the repetition of sounds and the beauty of incantation in the original Sanskrit mantra, but it also indicates an evolution in Chinese Buddhist expression and language. Therefore, the appearance of this version, after Buddhism had developed for centuries in China, was a big leap in the integration of Buddhist Chinese into the Chinese language. The translation of the mantra in the Yongle version combines the secret and senseless “code” of

Buddhism, with the understanding of “nowhere-to-go” and the discovering the truth of emptiness – in one Chinese phrase. In addition, to this extent, the Ming Yongle version of the *Heart Sutra* expresses the essence of *Prajñāpāramitā* as emptiness, perhaps even more effectively than its original Sanskrit text does. The text of the translation teaches its Chinese practitioners to seek emptiness and perfect wisdom intuitively in the lack of purpose and sensation of “coming” and “going,” or “birth” and “death,” and leads its readers to the destination of “unveiling the truth.” This seemingly “senseless” transliteration of the mantra is not senseless; on the contrary, it makes perfect sense. It can even be treated as an evolution in both Chinese language and Chinese Buddhism.

After analyzing the Ming Yongle version’s word choices in re-translating the mantra, I would like to look back to see the attitude of the Ming readers toward the Tang original translations. I continue with a phonological and philological approach, by analyzing the sound of 揭 (chosen in the Yongle version) in the most authoritative Ming dictionary, *Hongwu zhengyun* 洪武正韻, in Table 3:

Table 3. Four sounds of 揭 in *Hongwu Zhengyun* 洪武正韻, Ming dynasty

洪武正韻	反切	韻目	聲調	小韻	釋義	切韻系統 ³⁶	四聲通解 / 明官話 ³⁷
vol. 3, 43	去計	三霽	去	契	涉水 crossing waters	k ^h jejH	k ^h jejH
vol. 4, 80	古屑	五屑	入	結	揭起 lift up	kjot/kjet	kjeʔ

³⁶ This column of *Hongwu Zhengyun* sounds is based on what could be deduced from the Qieyun System as a source.

³⁷ This column is based on two sources: first, the sixteenth-century Chinese sounds transcribed by Hangul (the Korean alphabet) in Choi Se-Jin 崔世珍’s *Sasong t’onghae* 四聲通解 (manuscript stored in Naikaku bunko 內閣文庫, Japan, 1822). Second, two of W. South Coblin’s treatises on Ming standard pronunciation (*guanhua* 官話): “Notes on the Sound System of the Late Ming Guanhua,” *Monumenta Serica*, 45 (1997), 261–307, and “A Diachronic Study of Ming Guānhuà Phonology,” *Monumenta Serica* 48 (2000), 267–335.

洪武正韻	反切	韻目	聲調	小韻	釋義	切韻系統 ³⁶	四聲通解 / 明官話 ³⁷
vol. 4, 81	琦熱	五屑	入	揭	高舉而又擔 hold high, bear	k ^h jot	k ^h jeʔ
vol 4, 88	巨列	五屑	入	傑	負而又豎之(揭竿為 旗) lift up and erect (a flag)	gjet/gjet ³⁸	kjeʔ/gjeʔ

This chart makes it explicit that, among the four forms of 揭, the first one is different from the other three in every aspect – tone, rime, sub-rime, meanings and phonetics. While the rest of three with closed syllables (ending with consonants) all have the meaning of “lifting and holding,” the first one is an open syllable meaning “crossing waters.” This indicates that the first distinct sound comes directly from the translation of Buddhist sutras, adding another felicitous meaning to “unveiling the truth”: crossing the water to the other shore – a translation of *prajñāpāramita*, which also means “going to the other side.” Two items of significance are indicated by this philological phenomenon of inheriting Buddhist meanings and the Tang sounds of 揭 in *Hongwu zhengyun* 洪武正韻. First, although Buddhism, Daoism and the folk culture already were so well mingled in the Ming dynasty that they were no longer close to their original doctrines, the Tang translations of sutras were revered in the Ming dynasty, by preserving a special place for its sounds and meanings. Second, in the Ming dynasty, Buddhism further developed and inaugurated many more ways to fit the Chinese “sense” with the Sanskrit “sounds” and Buddhist “ideas.”

Leaving a meaning of 揭 as “crossing waters” in the Ming lexicon reveals this evolution and connection between the Tang and the Ming, and reveals the attitude of the Ming Buddhist scholars and practitioners toward their original legacy from centuries earlier. It is essential to get a perfect version for a sacred text, thus even mixing many early versions together in one is acceptable, as long as the idea and power conveyance could be efficacious for Chinese readers, and the Ming version does that. Notably, this suggestion that the first 揭 (k^hjeʔH, crossing waters) is not solely based on the

³⁸ *gjet* may be added here due to merger.

lexicon's differences from others in its group. Such an analogy also exists in modern Mandarin Chinese: the lexicon item 頓 *dun* – sudden stop, immediate – has a special pronunciation of *du*, preserved in the dictionary, referring only to the name of the fourth known emperor and founder of the Xiongnu 匈奴 Empire, contemporary with the Han dynasty – *Mo Du* 冒頓 (ruled 209–174 BCE). Therefore, the transition and alteration of 揭's meaning and linguistic elements might be analogous to the provided example, a legacy from Tang Buddhist text translation.

This attitude and reverence towards Tang legacies in the Ming dynasty and folk cultures also influences *The Journey to the West* and its citation of the *Heart Sutra*. In chapter 19, Tripitaka receives the *Heart Sutra* from the Crow's Nest Chan Master (*wuchao chanshi* 烏巢禪師), the translation of which is the revision of the Ming Yongle version. Just like the Ming version, which is a revision based mainly on Xuanzang's translation while also incorporating the word choices of many other Tang versions, the text cited in full in *The Journey to the West* is also a combination of more than one translation. As explained earlier in this section, *The Journey to the West* is a literary work, thus it has to be clearest and most comprehensible in its written form. Serving for the novel's plot, the *Heart Sutra* citation functions no longer as a sacred Buddhist sutra, but as a text at the beginning of their journey that leads the readers to think, to guess and to figure out what will happen next. Without a direction, there cannot be a "journey"; the *Heart Sutra* in chapter 19 is a "direction" for both the five protagonists on their way to the Paradise, but also for the readers on their way of understanding the novel and the issue of Tripitaka's enlightenment.

2.4 "THE REINS OF LANGUAGE"

The incorporation of religious texts into Chinese literature and the establishment of connections between the Tang and the Ming dynasties – represented by the full citation of the *Heart Sutra* in the Ming prose novel *The Journey to the West* – emerges along with the development of Buddhist textual translations and is prompted by two factors. First, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism were united and mingled into the Chinese folk culture in the Ming dynasty, especially alongside the Learning of the Mind (*xinxue* 心學), a Ming school of and development of, known as the portmanteau Western term, Neo-Confucianism, a form of Confucianism that dominated intellectual life from the twelfth to

seventeenth centuries.³⁹ This allowed religious imageries and conceptions to be combined into literary works for public access, the appearance of which stemmed from the growing accessibility of printed literary works. Second, as the manuscript culture gave way to silent, private reading, the nascent flourish of printing in the Ming dynasty accelerated its development, allowing for greater legibility for rapid, silent reading.⁴⁰ ⁴¹ With idea conveyance and reception inaugurating a textualized, silenced and privatized experience, aural reception was gradually replaced in the sixteenth century, in stark contrast to a thousand years ago, before Buddhism had so thrived. In other words, within a Buddhist context, the Ming dynasty practitioners were much more dependent on how and what was written in the texts, rather than how it sounded, as compared to practitioners in the Tang dynasty. We can say that the development of the Sanskrit-sound-recording-and-textualization strategies in China over centuries eventually caused the power conveyance of the Buddhist mantra to shift from orality to literacy, when *The Journey to the West* was composed in the late Ming.

Such a shift from aural to textual, from a heavy dependency on how the text sounded to how the text is written, applied only to the general population, whose access to ideas was written or translated texts in Chinese. The masses were the ones for whom translational strategies and designated word choices serve. The Ming Yongle version of the *Heart Sutra*, analyzed earlier in this section, is a key example. First, the delicate word choices in both Chinese translations and transliterations, in order to represent Sanskrit sounds while retaining the essence of original meanings, aims at helping common practitioners – who had no knowledge of Sanskrit and relied on second-hand texts provided by Chinese translators – to enter the state of meditation and achieve the best possible understanding within a limited translational context. Second, the paradox in the *Heart Sutra* of expressing emptiness, or the non-existence of form cognition or understanding, within non-empty concrete texts and descriptive concepts, is also for the convenience of these common practitioners, who needed language as a path towards knowledge.

That Buddhist emptiness needs to be expressed by concrete forms reflects the concept of

39 For more on *xinxue* and the Neo-Confucianism, see Wilkinson (2015), 372–373.

40 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 122.

41 Ling Hong Lam, “The Matriarch’s Private Ear,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 65, no. 2 (2005): 379–380.

Buddhist *upāya* (*fangbian* 方便) – the expedient means, or pedagogy. As the *Lotus Sutra* (*miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) analogizes *upāya* to the Parable of a Burning House (*huozhai* 火宅),⁴² in which a father uses the expedient means of white lies (three types of beautiful carriages) to attract his children outside a burning building and rescue them, I would also like to give an analogy to the concept of reins. Reins enable a person to take a ride on horseback, but they also tie the rider’s hands so that he cannot let go but must grasp them instead for the duration of the ride. Notably, a novice rider – in the literary case, an ordinary reader – might have the experience that, as he operates his reins to control the horse, expecting a quicker and more convenient trip from A to B, he is at the same time controlled by his horse as well, struggling with its strength and unable to fully take advantage of its convenience, not to mention exploring the scenery on his way. Thus I call this double-edged relationship “the reins of language.” While guiding the readers on the path to Buddhist ideals, the text also controls what the readers can get by providing a specific means to present ideas, binding common readers or practitioners of the *Heart Sutra* and its mantra from any possible intellectual explorations beyond the provided interpretation by its translators. The readers, assisted by the metaphor, are meanwhile reined by *upāya*: a special path (*dao* 道) of Buddhist compassion for readers from the general population to access the essential Buddhist wisdom and enlightenment, despite the fact that there should actually be “*namārga* (no path, *wudao* 無道)” in the first place.

While novices must rely on texts, experienced riders do not have that problem. They are sufficiently skillful that reins are not necessary, but serve only to better the ride. These riders regard equipped and bare hands as of equal value for riding horseback – in other words, finding form and emptiness identical. Analogously, in a Buddhist discourse, those who have the “root of wisdom (*huigen* 慧根)” do not care whether there are words or no words, or in which way words are written down. Their comprehension does not depend on texts, but on a higher, more intuitive, meditation-based, and even syncretistic ground beyond any form presented. This kind of higher understanding is represented by the concept of “sudden-enlightenment (*dunwu* 頓悟),” proposed by the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng 慧能 (638–713) of the Tang dynasty, who, though illiterate, “upon hearing (the

⁴² 妙法蓮華經, 譬喻品第三. The *Lotus Sutra* (No. 262), *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, translated by the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007), 9: 56–62.

Diamond Sutra), his mind was clear and awakened.”⁴³ His reception of Buddhist *prajñapāramita* did not rely on text or teaching, just as the achievement of emptiness does not rely on memorizing the description of emptiness.

Walter J. Ong observes that written texts function as “coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound.”⁴⁴ A writing system is not merely a memory aid that assists its readers in linking an intellectual concept with a specific code, which may be eliminated once the connection-establishing process is completed; it is also a vehicle by which one can preserve knowledge. In addition, Sanskrit-readers would also overlook how the *Heart Sutra* and its mantra were translated into Chinese, instead directly comprehending what “truth” is to be “unveiled” based on original Sanskrit sounds and vocabularies. This growing gap between the two groups of idea-receptors leads to my analysis of the triple readings of the ending of *The Journey to the West*.

3. THE JOURNEY TO THE WEST: TRIPLE READINGS OF THE ENDING

In the last section, subsequent to the philological analysis of the translation of the *Heart Sutra*, I discussed the double-edged nature of text, and named the paradox “the reins of language.” Readers from the general population – the majority of human beings – are aided by text as a path to comprehend ideas, at the cost of being controlled by how the information-providers present the ideas. Yet these reins do not limit wise people, for they have either the capacity or sufficient knowledge to reach beyond given texts into the subtext. In reading the *Heart Sutra*, such a discrepancy distinguishes common practitioners from those with the root of wisdom, and monolingual Chinese readers from bilingual scholars familiar with Sanskrit. In reading the literati novel, *The Journey to the West*, this gap between text and subtext reveals itself in the distinction between the majority of ordinary readers and

43 “惠能一聞經語，心即開悟。” Huineng 慧能 and Shi Fahai 釋法海: *Liu zu tan jing* 六祖壇經箋註, 2, translated by Philip B. Yampolsky in *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), 127.

44 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 75.

a few esoteric, educated scholars of the elite class. Their different attitudes towards the novel's narrative language, poems and story ultimately lead to triple readings of its ending.

At the end of *The Journey to the West*, after the completion of the journey and all but one task, the pilgrims reach the West and are ready to receive the sutras. However, the pilgrims are not able to understand the blank sutras that Ānanda and Kaśyāpa gave them, and they regard their blankness as valueless and useless. They insist on replacing the wordless scriptures with ordinary written texts, which they eventually bring back to the Eastern Land, despite being regarded as "foolish and unenlightened" by Tathagata for their inability to appreciate the wordless sutras.⁴⁵ However, two chapters later, as the novel ends, as the wind returns the five to the Western Paradise, Tripitaka and Wukong the Monkey are still raised to become Buddhas, giving a contradictory conclusion to the novel.

Whether Tripitaka, the protagonist and leader of the pilgrims' group, has reached enlightenment has been studied for decades, and most scholars have reached the conclusion that none of the five is enlightened despite surviving all designated difficulties. Although some spiritual progress was undeniably made during the journey, according to scholars such as Andrew Plaks (1987), Qiancheng Li (2004), and Francisca Cho Bantly (1989), the spiritual progress of these characters was not sufficient for Buddhahood. I will not focus too much in this discussion on this heavily studied issue. Instead, what I will analyze are the three possible readings of the question of Tripitaka's promotion into Buddhahood, by categorizing the novel's readers again into three groups: the lowest group of readers from the general population; the middling group of readers; and the highest group, the wise readers.

Readers from the general population see Tripitaka's becoming a Buddha as an inspiring and happy ending, indicating his success and the reward given for his persistence, effort and piety. In this reading, the novel becomes a parable teaching commoners to cultivate a persistent, courageous and kind personality. The middling readers are able to realize that, despite attempting to achieve one-heartedness (*yixin* 一心) and making progress, Tripitaka has not really achieved enlightenment at the end. They consider the novel to be a joke about the limits of the human capacity for understanding: all

⁴⁵ Yu, chap. 98, *Journey to the West*, 4: 354.

efforts to break destiny are in vain, and human nature is predestined toward weakness. This group regards the novel as a satire of religion, laughing at Tripitaka's failure, and at the author in making an unenlightened person and a monkey into Buddhas.

While the first two groups both belong to the "common" category under the reins of language, the third group can reach beyond texts into deeper hidden meanings. Wise readers are able to discover from the way that the novel depicts the pilgrims' progress step by step, that the author never intended to depict them as enlightened at the end of their journey. Instead, the real humor of this novel lies in mocking the second group of readers, who laugh at Tripitaka's stupidity and are immersed in their own complacency, believing that they have discovered the author's logical lacuna in making his unenlightened protagonists Buddhas – the joke is turned back on themselves. Read this way, *The Journey to the West*, is a literati novel characterized by irony: irony understood by the literati stratum with regard to the commoner stratum, and irony emanating from the wisdom of Buddhism regarding sentient beings. These readers extend the joke on human understanding from within the novel to outside the novel, and include the mockers themselves within the joke.

Moreover, extending the irony toward human understanding, the wisest readers do not only see the power of fate, but also mock commoners. Bounded by the novel's text and trapped by the reins of language, these readings are unable to distinguish fictional characters from historical figures. The ending is neither a reward to the protagonists, nor a logical lacuna; it is an homage shown by the author to two things: first, the novel's historical prototype Monk Xuanzang, and his actual great journey to India in the Tang dynasty; second, heroism – the laudable qualities of dedication to people, struggles in the face of danger, and the courage to serve others – which the author tried to propagate amidst China's moral bankruptcy in the late Ming. Making Xuanzang and the moral hero represented by Wukong become Buddhas has nothing to do with whether the fictional Tripitaka and Monkey themselves achieve enlightenment. Corresponding to the three categories of readers, here are the three readings: the intuitive reading, the analytical reading, and the transcendental reading.

3.1 THE INTUITIVE READING

I call the common readers' interpretation the "intuitive reading," as they get their amusement from the most superficial grasp of the novel: happy tones, bracing plots and funny characters. Since readers

from the general population draw ideas solely from the text or what is on the pages provided by the writer, they infer the ending to be happy and inspiring from the surface text and plot. *The Journey to the West* is popular among these readers for its comedy and the absurdity of the plot: a craven, short-tempered and lacrymose monk as the protagonist, surrounded by animals, monsters, deities, plant-spirits, children and ghosts in the shape of beautiful ladies, is tasked with completing an impossible journey to somewhere up in the sky. In particular, the first eight chapters, in which the Monkey King is introduced, resemble a farce more than a literati novel. It is easy to laugh along with its humorous dialogues, simple and repetitive plot, challenging but successful completion of tasks again and again, and to naturally expect a happy comic ending. In addition, through Wu Cheng'en's depiction of the pilgrims' distinctive traits and personal charms, common readers are also quick to discover their respective virtues: Tripitaka's piety, Monkey's righteousness, Pigsy's hilarity, Sha Monk's steadfastness and the horse's willingness to bear. That is why *The Journey to the West* is usually used for children's education in China, given its readability and seemingly easy comprehensibility. It presents a simple story of how its protagonist overcomes ordeals and reaches success.

It is also easy to detect the spiritual changes and progress of the pilgrims throughout their journey, giving common readers another reason to believe Tripitaka's and Wukong's Buddhahood to be reasonable. For common readers, it does not matter whether they are really enlightened, since they are ignorant of the concept of enlightenment. Reading the book as a comic fiction, they focus solely on whether the protagonists get their deserved reward. Scholars such as Plaks and Li have also noted their spiritual progress, and their relatively more enlightened state towards the end of their journey. The characters' learning through actual experiences and ordeals is real. The pilgrims become more dependent on each other, more united as a group, and more thankful for the help of other group members after traversing mountains and rivers.⁴⁶ Their change in personality and attitude toward Buddhist doctrines is undeniable. Below is an analysis of their spiritual progress.

To begin with, note that nobody joined the group purely for the sake of Buddhism; each took

⁴⁶ Li, Qiancheng, "The Journey," chap. 3, in his *Fictions of Enlightenment: Journey to the West, Tower of Myriad Mirrors, and Dream of Red Chamber* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 67–71.

the trip for his own benefit, and for “a direct participation in the process of salvation,”⁴⁷ because all five of them were guilty and in need of redemption. Even Tripitaka does not start the journey out of pursuing Buddhist enlightenment or completing a grand mission for the people of China, as he told his disciples in Chapter 48: “profit and fame are regarded as most important in the affairs of the world; for profit, men would give up their own lives. But the fact that this disciple strives so hard to fulfill the imperial decree may also be taken as his quest for fame. Am I so different really from those people?”⁴⁸ Therefore, the group is in the state of disconformity and deceit at first: “the Great Sage Sun harbored feelings of hostility, while Eight Rules and Sha Monk too, were swayed by enmity. In fact, masters and disciples...only appeared to be cordial.”⁴⁹ Even when it comes to whether to save Tripitaka in a crisis, what the little dragon thinks is “if I don’t try to rescue the Tang Monk now, this merit will be undone.”⁵⁰ These examples show that the pilgrims’ spiritual virtues at the beginning of their journey are low.

Also, each pilgrim has significant shortcomings. Tripitaka, being too self-conscious and peevish in the face of every calamity that befalls him, falls repeatedly into similar mistakes in the face of every difficulty, and is deluded by almost every demon encountered from the beginning to the end. Monkey, always overly suspicious and bellicose towards anything that he sees, has killed many. Pigsy, suspicious and self-indulgent of food and sex, never stops clamoring to withdraw from the group. Sha-Monk and the little dragon never stop thinking about gaining merit. The five pilgrims do not trust each other, blaming one another in face of danger while attempting to sow discord and play each companion off against another. For instance, all three times Tripitaka chases the Monkey away, it is always Pigsy who had made the mischief.⁵¹ “As brothers, you haven’t shown the least bit of sympathy

47 Li, “The Journey,” chap. 3, *Fictions of Enlightenment*, 70.

48 Yu; chap. 48, *Journey to the West*, 2: 340.

49 Yu, chap. 56, *Journey to the West* 3: 85.

50 Yu, chap. 30, *Journey to the West* 2: 64.

51 Three times when Pigsy encourages Tripitaka to chase Monkey away: chapters 14, 30 and 56.

or kindness. You are constantly envious of one another."⁵² Tripitaka's rebuke of Monkey clearly shows that the group is not united.

However, as the story goes on, we see moral development in the pilgrims. First, Pigsy becomes more active in the face of enemies and is more willing to fight for the group: while earlier he would always want to withdraw and attempt to separate members of the group, in chapter 62 he bravely petitions to accompany Monkey to go cleanse the contaminated pagoda in the Sacrifice Kingdom, to restore its sacredness and save the monks in that region.⁵³ As Monkey and Sha Monk cry in desperation, instead of making mischief as usual, Pigsy stops whining and instead comforts his comrade and encourages him to cheer up, which serves to derail the demons' "Plan of Plum Blossoms with Parted Petals" aimed at splitting the group apart and so that they can haul away the unprotected Tripitaka.⁵⁴ Second, Monkey becomes more compassionate towards the worldly commoners. He kills less, grows to be less bellicose, and donates more to charity. For example, as the group encounters a lady losing her husband in Spider Spirit's hands in chapter 73, Monkey sheds sympathetic tears, which is rare for him;⁵⁵ in chapter 87, they pray for rain for the people of Phoenix-Immortal, practicing Buddhist compassion rather than resisting, as they had done whenever Tripitaka talked about it at the beginning of their venture.⁵⁶

The biggest change, however, takes place in Tripitaka. At first, he is a grumbling short-tempered monk, fussing about the ordeals along the way and blaming his disciples for not taking good care of him. However, when challenged in the Cart Slow Kingdom in chapter 46, he steps forward bravely to accept the Tiger-Strength Great Immortal's first challenge of sitting and meditating⁵⁷ – the

⁵² Yu, chap. 32, *Journey to the West* 2: 95.

⁵³ Yu, chap. 62, *Journey to the West* 3: 178.

⁵⁴ Yu: chap. 86, *Journey to the West*, 4: 158.

⁵⁵ "The person shedding tears meets the tearful one, he whose heart's broken sees the broken heart." (Yu, chap. 73, *Journey to the West*, 3: 342. This shows Monkey's compassion toward that lady. He used to have no emotions, and the gaining of sympathy shows his inner progress.

⁵⁶ Yu, chap. 87, *Journey to the West*, 4: 184–186.

⁵⁷ Yu, chap. 46, *Journey to the West* 2: 301

first time the whole group actively volunteers to help one another and win the competition. Tripitaka also learns to pray for the safety of his disciple, The Great Sage Monkey, every time the latter fights for him, beginning in chapter 75,⁵⁸ creating many emotional scenes as the group clearly becomes more united with and attached to one another. From condemning one another, they move to trying their best to overcome their “many-heartedness” and personal weaknesses, as Monkey gains empathy, Pigsy gains calmness, Sha Monk gains concision and Tripitaka gains wisdom and the ability to distinguish good from evil. Most importantly, they gain trust. More and more emotional conversations appear towards the end of their journey. This evidence shows the progress of the pilgrims toward forming a loyal group during the journey, and exhibits their spiritual ascendance through overcoming ordeals and danger together.

The “intuitive reading” thus focuses on seeing the group’s change and progress, and Tripitaka’s personal virtue as well as the completion of the task. At the same time, common readers also see the Buddhist teaching of gradual enlightenment: pious and frequent practice culminates in enlightenment, in the same way that repetitive incantation of the mantra would contribute to understanding the idea of emptiness in the *Heart Sutra*. What the readers from the general population infer is based on the protagonists’ performance in the novel – more precisely, on how the author depicts their actions in a fictional context. Their judgments derive directly from the author’s judgment. This reading of the readers from the general population reflects “the reins of language”: while the author’s humorous and legible language allows for easy understanding of its gist and an enjoyable reading experience, such a simplistic and repetitive plot prevents its ordinary readers from seeing beyond the text.

3.2 THE ANALYTICAL READING

I call the middling group’s reading the “analytical reading,” since their laughs come from a textual analysis of the journey depicted by the author. This reading regards the novel’s satire as directed against Tripitaka’s stupidity and self-consciousness, as well as the notion that what Tripitaka has purposively done is in vain. The more he pursues enlightenment, the farther away he is from it.

⁵⁸ Yu, chap. 75, *Journey to the West* 3: 371

According to C. T. Hsia, in chapter 19, upon Tripitaka’s receiving of the *Heart Sutra* from the Crow’s Nest Master as a guide and protector, he already seems to be on the verge of enlightenment, equipped with the way of “going to the other shore” and “unveiling the truth,” as discussed in the last section.⁵⁹ However, he is never able to take the last step toward enlightenment with the *Heart Sutra* as a companion for eighty chapters, despite his gaining of spiritual progress, improvement of personality and leadership, and completion of tasks. In addition, is his progress throughout the journey anywhere acknowledged in the story as real? Instead of going straight into the analysis of the novel itself, my approach is again to look at the philological statistics of the name of the *Heart Sutra* – how and how often it is mentioned throughout the novel. With the data in table 4 I analyze the “middling group”’s understanding of the pilgrims’ progress – because for these readers, such spiritual ascendance is not only seen in the plots and narratives, but also in textual analysis related to Buddhism.

Table 4. The *Heart Sutra*’s Chinese names in *The Journey to the West*

Real Name	Sanskrit: <i>Prājñāpāramita Hṛdaya Sūtra</i>	
	English: <i>The Heart Sutra</i>	
	Chinese: <i>bo re bo luo mi duo xin jing</i> 般若波羅蜜多心經	
Four Names in the Novel	Chapters and Frequencies ⁶⁰	Total: 10
xin jing 心經	32 (1), 93 (1)	2
duo xin jing 多心經	19 (1), 20 (1), 43 (2), 85 (1)	5
bo re xin jing 般若心經	93 (1)	1
mo he bo re bo luo mi duo xin jing 摩訶般若波羅蜜多心經	19 (1), 80 (1)	2

According to table 4, the most popular form of the *Heart Sutra*’s Chinese name is “*duo xin jing*

⁵⁹ This is implied instead of explicitly claimed in C. T. Hsia, “Journey to the West,” chap. 4 of his *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1996), 115–164.

⁶⁰ Note that the differences between the Chinese names being called cannot be reflected by their English translations in Yu’s *The Journey to the West*. All are translated identically as the “*Heart Sutra*.”

多心經,” which means “many (*duo* 多) hearts (*xin* 心) sutra (*jing* 經),” as well as “the oversensitivity (*duoxin* 多心) sutra (*jing* 經).” This translation of the name appears five times out of ten. Among the alternate titles and abbreviations for the *Heart Sutra* in Chinese, the author’s choice of *duoxinjing* 多心經 is not merely a coincidence, or an error out of ignorance of its original name.⁶¹ The author keeps stressing that the *Heart Sutra* – the guidance and companion given to the protagonists – should be the sutra of “*duoxin* 多心,” in order to indicate that the principle contradiction and main obstruction throughout the pilgrims’ journey to enlightenment is each member’s *duoxin* 多心 – their oversensitivity, suspiciousness towards one another and lack of single-mindedness in pursuing Buddhist enlightenment. The choice of the *Heart Sutra*’s Chinese name also implies that the main struggle for the group is to overcome their “many-heartedness,” get rid of their self-interest and suspicion, and become more united as a whole (*yixin* 一心). Plaks has argued that the ending shows ultimate submission to the all-encompassing power of Buddhism.⁶² To the extent of becoming one-hearted and gaining reverence towards what they pursue, I agree with Plaks. However, I disagree with Plaks’s reading of submission to Buddhist hierarchy as the meaning of the novel’s ending. Hence, for the “analytic reading,” a better reading and deeper comprehension of the pilgrims’ progress is the transformation of the group’s mind from many to one – unity, compassion and piety towards Buddhism.

If spiritual progress is the result of “one-heartedness (*yixin* 一心),” the pilgrims’ approach is to eliminate sensory perceptions, as reflected in Monkey’s killing of the “six robbers”: Eye that Sees and Delights (*yan kan xi* 眼看喜), Ear that Hears and Rages (*er ting nu* 耳聽怒), Nose that Smells and Loves (*bi xiu ai* 鼻嗅愛), Tongue that Tastes and Desires (*she chang si* 舌嘗思), Mind that Perceives and Covets (*yi jian yu* 意見欲), and Body that Bears and Suffers (*shen ben you* 身本憂).^{63 64} Since

61 “(經名) 即心經。般若波羅蜜多心經之簡稱。唐玄奘譯。一卷。按心經稱為多心經者世俗之謬稱也。” Ding Fubao 丁福保, *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典。

62 Plaks, “*Hsi-yu chi*: Transcendence of Emptiness,” in *Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, 209.

63 Wu Cheng’en 吳承恩, chap. 14, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (Shenyang: Chunfeng Wenyi Chubanshe, 1994), 1: 176; Yu, chap. 14, *Journey to the West*, 1: 314.

64 I actually do not agree with Yu’s translation of these six phrases. Instead of “S-V and V,” I consider them to be “S-V-O”:

Monkey represents Tripitaka's mind, killing the six robbers represents the elimination of the six senses – vision, audition, olfaction, gustation, tactus and consciousness (*caḥṣus-śrotra-ghrāna-jihvā-kāya-manāmsi, yan er bi she shen yi* 眼耳鼻舌身意) from one's heart, a critical step in achieving emptiness and enlightenment according to the *Heart Sutra*. Tripitaka also avoids any physical desires such as meat and sex, as most of the chapters since chapter 51 refer to the demons' attempt to seduce Tripitaka, exemplified by chapter names such as "The Fair girl seeks mate/the *yang*" (chapters 80 and 82) and Tripitaka's resistance to marriage in the Woman State in chapter 54. Plaks has expatiated upon the hemispheric structure of the novel in "*Hsi-yu Chi: The Transcendence of Emptiness*," arguing that the hundred-chapter text is divided into two halves, the focus of which shifts from the confrontation of the demons' bloodlust to Tripitaka's resistance to their sexual seduction.⁶⁵

During the pilgrims' gradual inner ascendance, the watershed occurs in chapters 57–58, as they confront and prevail over the "Six-Eared Macaque (*liu'er mihou* 六耳猕猴)." After Monkey is chased away for the third time, the pilgrims encounter a "fake Wukong," a macaque with "a sensitive ear... and comprehension of all things" and possessing the knowledge of whatever one says at the instance,⁶⁶ thus identical to the Great Sage in looks, language and behavior such that no one except Tathagata, the wisest Buddha, can tell the difference. The Six-Eared Macaque represents the conflict between two minds; it comes out of another struggle within the group: suspiciously chasing the Mind-Monkey away reflects Tripitaka's many-heartedness, leaving the group instead of loyally persisting reflects the Monkey's many-heartedness, and the jealousy and mischief of Pigsy and Sha Monk reflects the many-heartedness of those two. Therefore, the emergence of the Six-Eared Macaque, which represents a pernicious second Mind, sounds an alarm for the pilgrims of the jeopardy of (*duoxin* 多心). "You are all of one mind, but take a look at two Minds in competition and strife arriving here," said Tathagata to his divine disciples.⁶⁷ Prevailing and killing the macaque denotes the elimination of

eyes see delight, ears hear rage, nose smells love, tongue tastes desires, mind perceives lust, and body is (I interpret *ben* 本 as "in the original state of" instead of "bear") suffering.

65 Plaks, "*Hsi-yu chi: Transcendence of Emptiness*" in *Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, 206–208.

66 Yu, chap. 58 *Journey to the West*, 3: 115–116.

67 Yu, chap. 58, *Journey to the West*, 3: 113.

“two hearts” or “many hearts” in favor of “one heart.” It is from then on that the pilgrims significantly start their spiritual progress, described earlier. The group begins to be united, whole-heartedly heading to the West for Buddhist wisdom instead of for selfish purposes. That is what the study of Minds called “recovering the mind/submission of the mind (*shouxin* 收心) and “returning the mind to its proper course (*zhengxin* 正心).”⁶⁸

It seems that, upon the purification and submission of his mind (represented by the Mind Monkey) and the abstinence from his physical desires (represented by the Pig), Tripitaka should have approached enlightenment in terms of being able to comprehend without the aid of senses. However, the moment that Tripitaka sees the blank sutras, the judgment of their value is still based on vision, or surface illusion. Blank sutras expose the uselessness of all Tripitaka’s efforts in sensory abstinence as a human, as he ultimately cannot prevail over his instinct intuition to understand the world only with sensory perceptions. Finishing the tasks, surviving physical and sexual enticement, memorizing the *Heart Sutra* and following its instructions, and making real spiritual progress along the way, he has done everything possible to pursue enlightenment, yet none of these exertions is sufficient in the face of the fact that he is just a human being, whose intuition and senses are paramount. As it is widely acknowledged that not understanding the blank sutra represents non-enlightenment, the blame for such failure does not fall on laziness, impiety or any subjective factors. It is predestined, and purely beyond the limits of the human capacity for understanding.

To conclude, this “middling,” analytical reading’s understanding of irony, which is also based on textual literary analysis, is two-fold. The first mocks Tripitaka’s failure in the face of human intuition, as we just discussed. The second aims at mocking the first group – common readers, for their inability to discern, under the author’s positive tone in depicting the pilgrims’ progress and personal charm, that they are not actually enlightened. This analytical group does not only see the pilgrims’ spiritual progress, but understands that their progress is actually a process of eliminating the “many-hearts (*duoxin* 多心)” into one, as well as the insufficiency of such action to culminate in ultimate enlightenment. Instead of accepting the novel’s ending as reasonable, inspiring or educating,

68 The translation of the two conceptions is by Plaks, “*Hsi-yu chi: Transcendence of Emptiness*,” in *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: shou-xin* 收心: p. 259. *zheng-xin* 正心: p. 263.

analytical readers cast doubt on Tripitaka and Monkey's promotion into Buddhahood, and wonder why an unenlightened practitioner, along with an animal, can become Buddhas without understanding the essence of emptiness expressed by wordless sutras. In contrast with the first group, who regard the novel as an affirmation of human power and will, the second group considers *The Journey to the West* to be a satire of religion, as well as a pessimistic account that negates human capacity in nature, understanding and action.

3.3 THE TRANSCENDENTAL READING

Finally, I will discuss the wisest reading of the novel's ending: I call this the "transcendental reading," which only a few people are able to obtain. To begin with, since wise readers are not controlled or misled by texts, they are able to go beyond language and discover that the author never intended to make the group enlightened at the end of their journey, knowing this by the way he writes the story. The reason for this lies in the function of poems and exclamations. Whenever the pilgrims makes any progress, or seem to understand and follow the Heart Sutra's teaching correctly, the story-narrator immediately exclaims and praises their improvements either by exclaiming "Good Pilgrim!" or "Dear Eight Rules!" or by composing a poem to recapitulate the whole story, so that the reader instantly knows and appreciates the pilgrims' good deeds. However, the expedience of poetic expression is an impediment to enlightenment, because all three parties – protagonists, narrator and readers – are always conscious of it. The author keeps conveying such consciousness, making it impossible to abandon it and achieve the self-obliviousness required by Buddhist enlightenment.

Spiritual ascendance, represented by compassionate practices, discernment of good and evil, and one-heartedness, is beneficial and necessary for enlightenment. More importantly, the pilgrims have achieved the important step of shifting self-redemption to the redemption of all creatures. Their journey begins in deep mountains and forests; the closer they are to their destination, the closer they get to the real world, passing kingdoms and households to donate charitably to the people. It is undeniable that the protagonists are heading in the correct direction. But as long as unconscious actions are pointed out, all efforts are in vain. Take the conversation between Tripitaka and Monkey in chapter 93 as an example. Tripitaka worries once again about how far they have gone, and Monkey reminds Tripitaka of the *Heart Sutra's* teaching – abandoning consciousness, "success will come

naturally when merit's achieved (*gong dao ziran cheng* 功到自然成).⁶⁹ Tripitaka asks Monkey whether he knows its interpretation. Monkey does not utter one word. As Pigsy and Sha Monk start to mock Monkey for explaining nothing about the sutra, Tripitaka said: "Wukong's interpretation is made in a speechless language. That is true interpretation."⁷⁰ Truly, the highest way to interpret emptiness is by emptiness – speechlessness, the function of which resembles that of the blank sutras. Yet along with the author's immediate explanation, praising Monkey's "speechless language" as the best interpretation, the emptiness of speechlessness is erased. It is hence not surprising that the pilgrims repetitively fall into the same delusion right after conquering a similar one, or that Tripitaka and Monkey, already able to understand the speechless interpretation to the *Heart Sutra* in chapter 94, fail to understand its wordless form in chapter 98. It is because their accumulated self-obliviousness is constantly erased by language, so that they have to start all over again.

Consequently, the question for analytical readers of why the pilgrims are never able to accomplish the last step for enlightenment has a new answer. It lies not only in the limits of human understanding, but also in the author's deliberate and instant distraction by language, as long as they progress on their way. Ostensibly, poetry and exclamations make it easier for common readers to see the progress and naturally expect their ultimate success; yet wise readers would discern the author's real intention in keeping his protagonists within a state of self-consciousness far from emptiness, far from enlightenment. An old Chinese idiom describes the function of language in this context: "It carries the boat and capsizes the boat (*shui neng zai zhou yi neng fu zhou* 水能載舟亦能覆舟)." Whoever is confused by the author's discordance between ostensible and real attitudes would be laughed at and included as a part of the joke.

According to Andrew Plaks, *The Journey to the West*, as a "literati novel," is characterized by irony: the discrepancy between text and meaning, through which it undercuts and avoids any real Buddhist interpretations to allow for better hidden understandings achieved only by a few.⁷¹ This discrepancy between what it says, how it is said, and what it means, also distinguishes those

69 English translation quoted from Yu, chap. 36, *Journey to the West*, 2: 149.

70 Yu, chap 93, *Journey to the West*, 4: 265.

71 See n. 10.

controlled by the reins of language from the controllers, the former falling into two groups: intuitive readers and analytical readers. For wise readers, aside from their laughter at understanding Wu Cheng'en's real intension, they laugh at the analytical readers as well. As the second group of readers are mocking Tripitaka's stupidity and immersing themselves in complacency, believing that they have discovered the author's logical lacuna of making his unenlightened protagonists into Buddhas, the joke bounces back onto themselves.

In addition, wise readers also laugh at the analytical readers' doubt of Buddhahood, for those who see the ending as a logical gap or satire of religion are unable to tell Tripitaka from Xuanzang, or Monkey from a real animal. In contrast, the author designs such a satisfying "success" to end the pilgrims' journey; Buddhism is not what he is ironic about. First, by promoting Xuanzang's fictional descendant, Tripitaka, into Buddhahood, Wu shows respect to Monk Xuanzang, expressing his gratitude for Xuanzang's great trip to Hindu eight hundred years ago, which introduced Buddhism into China and provided the premise for *The Journey to the West*. Second, by promoting the Great Sage Sun Wukong into Buddhahood, Wu lauds and propagates Wukong's wisdom, loyalty, courage, righteousness and heroism in order to invoke conscienceness in the late Ming, during a time when morality declined with the emergence of commercialism. This fiction provides an enjoyable reading experience and a happy ending as a brisk way to achieve moral education.

We can say that chapter 100, the finale of the novel, is to some extent unrelated to the prior storytelling. The journey has already ended with Tripitaka's return to China carrying the written sutras. The subsequent summoning back to Paradise with the wind is semi-detached from the fiction itself: chapter 100, especially its second half, serves as an epilogue, or envoi, to the novel. Wu Cheng'en uses such an epilogue as an homage to Buddhism, clarifying that Buddhism the religion is not the target of his satire. What Wu ridicules are those practitioners who practice Buddhist sutras dogmatically or for their personal glorification. Moreover, this "epilogue" also indicates that the whole trip is an illusion. For an enlightened person whose mind is cultivated, sitting there and having Buddha in his mind is an adequate enough practice. Seeking enlightenment afar and arduously will not make more sense, just as how in transcendental readers' eyes, the first two groups of readers make no sense in sticking to the novel textually to investigate Tripitaka's process of enlightenment, or casting doubt on the novel's ending.

Interpreting *The Journey to the West's* mockery – a mockery of the commoners both by the literati and by the wisdom of Buddhism – the transcendental reading further extends the joke on human understanding's limits from inside to outside the novel. Wu Cheng'en's design of triple readings allows him, along with those wisest readers capable of getting the “transcendental reading,” to cast irony on the elite class's perspective on commoners, who, just like Tripitaka, rely solely on text to comprehend the wordless sutras. Each group of the three, while laughing at different layers of the novel's humor, also mocks the class below for its superficial and partial understanding, unaware that there are higher classes laughing at them at the same time. This might be what an early Chinese philosopher, Hanfei zi 韓非子 (ca. third-century BCE), meant by “wisdom is like eyes, seeing objects a thousand *lis* away but not its own eyelashes.”⁷² Everybody laughs at others, but everybody also cannot avoid being laughed at too: this is the beauty of *The Journey to the West*. Whether children, sub-literate people, ordinary students, or esoteric scholars, everyone has an opportunity to enjoy laughter at different aspects of this great comedy, and gain different lessons from it. And above all these groups, there sits the author, Wu Cheng'en on a cloud, enjoying his readers' reactions, and laughing at all of them.

4. TEXTUAL HEART SUTRA IN THE JOURNEY TO THE WEST: EXPEDIENCY OR IMPEDIMENT?

4.1 TRIPITAKA'S TEXTUAL COMPANION

After analyzing two primary texts – the *Heart Sutra* and *The Journey to the West* and how the reins of language are applied respectively in two discourses – this section will discuss the connection and comparison between the two, to further examine the double-edged effects of text on human understanding. My approach is to analyze Tripitaka's understanding of the *Heart Sutra*, as well as his uses and misuses of Buddhist doctrines.

Before the comparison on how text affects understanding, the identity of its subject shall first be analyzed: Tripitaka is a common person. C. T. Hsia (1996) defines Tripitaka on three levels: first, he

⁷² “智如目也，能見百里之外而不能自見其睫。” My own English translation. This sentence is from 韓非子·喻老.

is a saintly monk of popular legend and a folk hero, the fictional descendant of Xuanzang, with extraordinary abilities to survive after being abandoned and to control himself so as never to lose a drop of his semen for decades. Second, he is a disciple of the Buddha, the Golden Cicada and a pious Buddhist, whose flesh can confer everlasting life upon demons. And most importantly, Hsia argues that Tripitaka has a third aspect: an ordinary mortal human being, an Everyman with limits, fallibility and a short temper. In short, although he overcomes an arduous journey and is made a Buddha at the end, Tripitaka is a commoner. Therefore, as mentioned in the previous two sections, he has his limits on understanding; and being a commoner, he is destined to be one of those bound by the reins of language – especially written words. Tripitaka does not realize that purposive acts are as much an impediment as sex and desires, for as long as he is trying to attain enlightenment he cannot make progress; only when he lives in the moment and follows his path naturally (*shun qi ziran* 順其自然), could enlightenment suddenly come.

His ordinariness leads to the inability to understand the *Heart Sutra* he received in chapter 19, at the beginning of his journey – which predicates his failure to enlighten and comprehend the value of wordless sutras in chapter 98. In fact, if he really were to grasp the essence of emptiness in the *Heart Sutra*, he would not even start the journey. According to chapter 85:

Seek not afar for Buddha on Spirit Mount;
 Mount Spirit lives only inside your mind.
 There's in each man a Spirit mount stūpa;
 Beneath this stūpa you must be refined.

佛在靈山莫遠求
 靈山只在汝心頭
 人人有個靈山塔
 好向靈山塔下修⁷³

⁷³ Wu, chap. 85, *Xiyou ji*, 2: 1087; Yu, chap. 85, *Journey to the West*, 4: 145.

Upon hearing the *gatha* (*jie* 偈), Tripitaka answers: “you think I don’t know these? ... the lesson of all scriptures concerns only the cultivation of the mind.”⁷⁴ Tripitaka’s response demonstrates the paradox in his comprehending emptiness and Buddhist cultivation. While he seems to understand that mind-cultivation is solely sufficient for enlightenment, his actions – fears, worries, and self-consciousness – during the trip show that he does not. In discussing the necessity for the trip, Qiancheng Li argues that Tripitaka’s insistence on making the trip, even after receiving the *Heart Sutra*, implies Tripitaka’s search for direct participation in the process of salvation and dependence on existential experience, which is not in conflict with his internal cultivation of mind.⁷⁵ Li thus defends the necessity of Tripitaka’s trip due to his actual gaining of experience.

However, I would like to suggest something else. Tripitaka’s spiritual progress, made on the way of his journey, does not justify the necessity of the journey’s beginning. The *Heart Sutra*’s text, given by Crow’s Nest Chan Master (*wuchao chanshi* 烏巢禪師), is an *upāya* for Tripitaka to correct him from going astray with a purposive, self-conscious and fame-chasing mind. What Crow’s Nest Chan Master does not consider, is the double-edged effect of *upāya* – its expression of inconceivable and incomprehensible emptiness in concrete text. As mentioned in section 2, as the *upāya* of the *Heart Sutra* accompanies Tripitaka along the way, frequently chanted and memorized, what can be seen by Tripitaka, a common human being, is merely its text. The text he memorizes can only enhance his understanding of the sutra to a certain level – the best possible level in a textualized discourse; beyond that, text becomes his ideological impediment instead of expedient. The role of the sutra text in a practitioner’s spiritual progress is analogous to an ordinary foreign language teacher. It is necessary that teachers instruct a novice foreign language learner at his beginning and intermediate level, introducing him the vocabularies and pronunciation of a language. In this period, the teacher is the student’s learning assistant. However, after a student reaches a certain level beyond the teacher’s profession, continuing to learn with him would impede the student from a higher understanding of the foreign language. In contrast, instead of learning more from the teacher, the student might even be affected by his teacher’s accent so that he could not make further progress. It is similar with

74 Yu, chap. 85, *Journey to the West*, 4: 145.

75 Li, “The Journey,” chap. 3, *Fictions of Enlightenment*, 73.

Buddhist texts. Crow’s Nest Chan Master neglects the fact that what he has given is merely the sutra’s textual form, the practice of which actually limits the development of “the root of wisdom” for Tripitaka.

Aside from not being able to discern wordless sutras, Tripitaka’s unenlightenment and limits, partly caused by practicing *upāya* only, are also reflected at the end in his inability to distinguish real sutras from fake sutras. In the list of thirty-five sutras he receives in chapter 98, there are some non-existent sutras – so it is impossible to have any actual texts of them. This is a crucial point in my following discussion. In table 5, I categorize these (including both blank and normal ones) into four groups based on credibility: (1) sutras that truly exist, or “authentic sutras”; (2) sutras with names slightly altered from known ones; (3) fictional sutras that are relevant to some prototypes; and (4) purely fictional sutras. Below are the statistical data and the origins of these, to justify my categorization of each sutra into its appropriate group:

Table 5. The Authenticity of 35 Sutras in Chapter 98 of *The Journey to the West*

1) Fourteen Authentic Buddhist Sutras:⁷⁶

1. 涅槃經 *The Nirvāṇa Sūtra*
2. 虛空藏經⁷⁷ *The Akāśagarbha-bodhisattva-dharmi Sūtra*
3. 首楞嚴經⁷⁸ *The Sūraṅgama-samādhi Sūtra*
4. 華嚴經⁷⁹ *The Avataṃsaka Sūtra*

76 The sutra names in this category are not necessarily identical to the real names of the sutras in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Some names are abbreviations or aliases (as footnoted below). The most important factor distinguishing this category from the next is that the sutra names in this category are authentic names in whichever forms, recorded in *Ding Fubao Foxue da cidian* 丁福保佛學大辭典; but those in the next category, of “semi-authentic,” cannot be found in the record of Buddhist dictionaries and are partially made up.

77 Abbreviation of “Xukong yun pusa jing 虛空孕菩薩經,” no. 103, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 13: 47.

78 Abbreviation of “Da foding rulai miyin xiuzheng liaoyi zhu pusa wanxing shoulengyan jing 大佛頂如來密因修正了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經,” no. 945, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 19:

5. 大般若經⁸⁰ *The Mahāprajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*
6. 未曾有經 *The Abūta-dharma Sūtra*
7. 維摩經⁸¹ *The Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*
8. 金剛經⁸² *The Vajracchedika-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra (The Diamond Sutra)*
9. 佛本行經 *The Buddha-carita-kāvya Sūtra*
10. 大集經⁸³ *The Mahāsaṃghaṭṭa Sūtra*
11. 法華經⁸⁴ *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra (The Lotus Sutra)*
12. 瑜伽經 *The Māya-dālamahātantra mahāyāna-gambhīra nāyaguhyā-parasī Sūtra*
13. 大智度經 *The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*
14. 大孔雀經⁸⁵ *The Mahāmayūri-vidyārājñī Sūtra*

79 Abbreviation of “Dafanguangfo huayan jing 大方廣佛華嚴經,” no. 278, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 9: 30.

80 Abbreviation of “Da boreboluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經,” *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 7: 24.

81 Alias of “Foshuo Weimojie jing 佛說維摩詰經,” no. 474, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 14: 53.

82 Abbreviation of “Jingang bore boluomi jing 金剛般若波羅蜜經,” no. 235 *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 8: 25.

83 Abbreviation of “Dafang deng daji jing 大方等大集經,” nos. 415–416, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 13: 47.

84 Abbreviation and alias of “Zheng fahua jing 正法華經” and “Miaofa lianhuajing 妙法蓮華經,” nos. 262~263, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 9: 28.

85 Note the unusual case of “Kongque jing yinyi 孔雀經音译,” no. 2244, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 6: 235. There is no translation of “Kongque jing 孔雀經”; only a transliteration record has been found. However, according to the existence of its transliteration record, it is a real sutra.

2) Eleven Semi-Authentic Sutras⁸⁶

1. 菩薩經⁸⁷ *The Bodhisattva-piṭaka Sūtra*
2. 決定經⁸⁸ *The Arthaviniścaya-dharmaparyāya Sūtra*
3. 寶藏經⁸⁹ *The Prajñapāramitā-saṃkaya gāthā Sūtra*
4. 大光明經 (or 金光明品經)⁹⁰ *The Anakṣara-grathaka-rocana-garbha Sūtra*
5. 正法論經⁹¹ *The Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra*
6. 菩薩戒經⁹² *The Bodhisattva-caryā-nirdeśa Sūtra*
7. 魔竭經⁹³ *The Magadha Sūtra*

86 This category consists of sutras whose names are slightly altered, or are erroneous names of authentic Buddhist sutras. For example, there is no sutra named as *The Bodhisattva-piṭaka Sūtra* (pusa jing 菩薩經), but there are many sutras' names containing the word "Bodhisattva 菩薩." Sutras with such names belong to category No.2, and are regarded "partly real," or semi-authentic in this thesis.

87 Derived from "Pusa benyuan jing 菩薩本緣經 (No. 153 vol. 3, *Catalog* 16)," "Pusa benxing jing 菩薩本行經 (No. 155 vol. 3, *Catalog* 17)," "Foshuo longshi pusa benqi jing 佛說龍施菩薩本起經 (No. 558 vol. 14, *Catalog* 62)," and "Guanxiang fomu boluomiduo pusa jing 觀想佛母波羅蜜多菩薩經 (No. 259 vol. 8, *Catalog* 28)," *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經.

88 Derived from "Fachengyi jue ding jing 法乘義決定經 (No. 763 vol. 17, *Catalog* 83)," "Jue ding bini jing 決定毗尼經 (No. 325 vol. 12, *Catalog* 38)" and "Jue dingyi jing 決定義經," (No. 762 vol. 17, *Catalog* 83), *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經.

89 Derived from "Qin baozang jing 親寶藏經," No. 203 vol. 4. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 22.

90 Derived from "Foru sanwei yi yimao fang daguangming jing 佛入三昧以一毛放大光明經," vol. 16 *Kai yuan shi jiao lu* 開元釋教錄.

91 Derived from "Yiyin xian zhengfa jing 一音顯正法經 (vol. 5)," "Yiyin yan zhengfa jing 一音演正法經 (vol. 16)," *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄. And also "Dacheng pusa zhengfa jing 大乘菩薩正法經 (No. 316 vol. 11, *Catalog* 37)" and "Da jihui zhengfa jing 大集會正法經 (No. 424 vol. 13, *Catalog* 48)," *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經.

92 It should be "Pusa jie ben 菩薩戒本," No. 1500-01 vol.24 *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 158. It is not a sutra, but the name is real. Thus I have put it in this category.

93 Derived from "Fo shuo sanmojie jing 佛說三摩竭經," No. 129, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 2: 14.

8. 佛國雜經⁹⁴ *The Buddha-kṣetra Sūtra*
9. 起信論經⁹⁵ *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Śāstra*
10. 維識論經⁹⁶ *The Vidyā-mātra-siddhi Śāstra*
11. 具舍論經⁹⁷ *The Abhidharma-kośa Sūtra*

3) Seven “Semi-Inauthentic” Sutras⁹⁸

1. 恩義經大集⁹⁹ *The Gracious Will Sūtra*
2. 禮真如經¹⁰⁰ *The Homage to Bhūtatathātā Sūtra*
3. 三論別經¹⁰¹ *The Other Mādhyamika Sūtra*

94 Derived from “Shi wangsheng emituo fogue jing 十往生阿彌陀佛國經,” vol. 16, *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄. And also “A chu fogue jing 阿閼佛國經,” No. 313, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 11: 36.

95 Derived from “Dacheng qixin lun 大乘起信論,” No. 1667, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. *Dai-zo-kyo Catalogue* 大藏經總目錄, 32: 176.

96 Derived from “Wei shi lun 唯識論,” vol. 5, *Datang xiyu Ji* 大唐西域記. Therefore, 維識論經 would be the incorrect name of 唯識論.

97 Derived from “Ju she lun jie 俱舍論偈,” vol. 7, *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄. Therefore, 具舍論經 should be the incorrect name of 俱舍論偈.

98 This category consists of sutras that do not exist, but whose names are closely related to or derived from Buddhist concepts. For example, there is no sutra named *The Gracious Will Sutra* (Enyi jing 恩義經), nor are there any sutra names containing the words “gracious will.” However, since “four graces” is a Buddhist concept, the author might have made up its name according to this concept. This kind of sutras and names belongs to category no. 3, and are regarded as “semi-inauthentic” in this analysis.

99 There are four “graces” in Buddhism: parents’ grace, teacher’s grace, emperor’s grace and almsgiver’s grace. The name of *The Gracious Will Sutra* might correspond to the four graces.

100 Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zongjiao da cidian* 宗教大辭典, 1047, *zhenru* 真如: “梵文 Tathatā 或 Bhūtatathātā 的意译... 意为事物的真實狀況・真實性質.” *Sogo Bukkyo Daijiten* 総合佛教大辭典, 801, *shin-nyo* 真如: (梵) タタタ。“真実で永遠に不変なものの意味で真如と名づけられる。... 縁起の理法が永遠不変の真理であるのを真如といったようである。” Thus might have come about the name of *The Homage to Bhūtatathātā Sūtra*.

101 The three Śāstra of Buddhism: Mādhyamaka-śāstra, Dvādaśanikāya-śāstra and Śatika-śāstra. Thus might come the

4. 寶常經¹⁰² *The Precious Permanence Sūtra*
5. 僧祇經¹⁰³ *The Sāṅghika-vinaya Sūtra*
6. 寶威經¹⁰⁴ *The Precious Authority Sūtra*
7. 正律文經¹⁰⁵ *The Correct Commandment Sūtra*

4) Three Fictional Sutras¹⁰⁶

1. 五龍經 *The Pāñca-nāga (Five Dragons) Sūtra*
2. 西天論經 *The Western Heaven Śāstra*
3. 本閣經 *The Original Loft Sūtra*

According to this table, just fewer than half of the “wordless” sutras are real. The others are all inauthentic. In other words, only fourteen out of thirty-five, to some extent twenty-five including the eleven partly real ones, can be understood, and whether there were words or not would not make a difference. For the ten “sutras” left, since they do not exist in Buddhist records and are fictional, discussing whether the unreal sutras have words or not makes no sense.

name based on this: *The Other Mādhyamika Sūtra*.

102 Ding Fubao 丁福保, *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典, 2: 2875: “Ratna-pāni is also named ‘The Precious Permanence.’ 寶手菩薩又名寶常” Thus might have come about the name of *The Precious Permanence Sūtra*.

103 Ding Fubao 丁福保, *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典, 2: 2482: *sengzhi* 僧祇: “摩訶僧祇部之略，譯言大眾部。一在小乘二十部中。佛入滅之年，結集經典時，於窟外為之者。此窟內之結集名上座部，窟外之結集名大眾部。此二部為小乘之根本部。一佛滅後百年頃，於優婆多下，自律藏上分五部，其中之一，有大眾部。” There is a vocabulary item under *Sāṅghika-vinaya* in *Foxue da cidian*. Thus might have come about the name of *The Sāṅghika-vinaya Sūtra*.

104 There is the concept of “Precious Authority Bodhisattva.”

105 Ding Fubao 丁福保, *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典, 1: 362: *sanzang* 三藏: “經律論也。此三者，各包藏文義，故名三藏。經說定學，律戒說學。” According to this, *The Correct Commandment Sūtra* might refer to sutras on rules of prohibition.

106 Note that since the bibliographical resources of this discussion are limited, evidence that the “non-existent sutras” actually exist might yet be found in other sources.

It is noteworthy that in Anthony Yu's English translation of *The Journey to the West*, the difference between the real and unreal sutras is made explicit for English-speaking readers, who are able to recognize, from their translated names, which are real ones, or which are based on real ones, because they have their original Sanskrit names, while names of the unreal fictional sutras appear only in translation. However, except for esoteric Buddhist scholars, ordinary Chinese readers lack such access to distinguishing real sutras from unreal ones, thus creating confusion.

From the above analysis I infer that the blank sutras are not only a test of whether Tripitaka understands emptiness, but also whether he is able to differentiate truth from falsity, making sense from senselessness – all in all, the different essences (of authentic and inauthentic sutras) under the same form (of emptiness). Upon seeing Tripitaka's failure on both tests (which is indiscernable for intuitive readers), analytical readers regard the replacement with blank sutras of textual ones as inferiority. However, my interpretation, and the possible transcendental readers' interpretation of the episode is: Tathagata secretly punishes the pilgrims, not by giving them the written texts – because written texts have the benefit of *upāya*, possessing propagandic power for people in the Eastern Land – but by the punishment that: about half of the sutras are inauthentic, and Tathagata does not tell them anything about it. It is quite humorous to imagine how those non-existent sutras are textualized. What would happen if Tripitaka did not return to Heaven, but stayed in China instructing sutras to Chinese practitioners, until those fake sutra texts were discovered by the Taizong Emperor of Tang – also, a further doubt would be: would anyone ever discover the falsity in China?

Now arises a question. Scholars argue that since Tripitaka is a fallible and ordinary Everyman, what he sees and what common Chinese readers see are the same; Tripitaka is one of us, and represents all of us – this is how Hsia and Li interpret Tripitaka's inability to discern. However, Tripitaka is also different from common Chinese people to the extent that he is a learned Buddhist practitioner. He is the one who is selected by the Imperial Court to make a pilgrimage for the people in the Eastern Land. Common Chinese readers, having little knowledge of Buddhism, are excusable in being confused between real and illusory sutras. But how can Tripitaka, the Golden Cicada, after long suffering and practice of various sutras (including the *Heart Sutra*), also be still unable to distinguish the truth from falsity? If Tripitaka's incomprehensibility of the empty sutras exhibits irony about human understanding owing to the necessity of text in idea conveyance, then distinguishing which

sutras are true seems not that impossible. Despite the factor that he is a common human no matter how learned he is, the most important reason for his inability to discern truth from falsity is his incorrect practice on the *Heart Sutra* – the practice solely of its *upāya*, i.e., written text. Highly dependent, Tripitaka cannot jump out of the *Heart Sutra*'s textual records, just as Monkey cannot jump out of Tathagatha's palm.¹⁰⁷ Monkey regards Tathagata's fingers as the edge of Heaven, but is ignorant of the fact that the existence of a visible edge means that it is not the actual edge. Similarly, the existence of a textual expression of emptiness means that it is not completely empty.

4.2 READERS AND TEXT: CONTROLLING VS. BEING CONTROLLED

Now let's bring the topic back to the *Heart Sutra*, referring again to section 2. The Ming Yongle version cited in chapter 19 of *The Journey to the West* is a great Chinese translation with precise word choices for *gate* 揭諦. It keeps the Sanskrit pronunciation of the mantra, while retaining both the aural power in incantation and visual power in textual reading, and prompting its practitioners to unveil the Buddhist truth, making the threshold of basic understanding and meditation-inducing lower than its Tang dynasty translations to commoners. As discussed in section 2 and earlier in this section, such precision is like an ideological "house-arrest." I will not restate the image of the "reins of language" in Buddhism now, but will shift the application of this linguistic/textual paradox to the discourse of the novel, investigating Tripitaka's application of Buddhist doctrines to his journey.

Tripitaka is a dogmatic person. Putting his unthorough understanding of the *Heart Sutra* aside, he misuses almost every Buddhist doctrine he learns, inflexibly and subjectively. As the doctrine teaches "no killing," he chases away the most loyal and sharp-eyed Monkey three times for killing demons such as the cadaver Demon who wants his flesh, and even for killing the six sensory thieves. As the doctrine teaches compassion, Tripitaka abuses the concept by holding sympathy for evil monsters, but is nearly ruthless to his own disciples, making the concept of Buddhist compassion amusing and even somewhat odious from his mouth. Tripitaka takes advantage of Buddhist doctrines and misuses them to excuse himself from personal weaknesses: feebleness, lachrymosity and incapacity to tell black from white. Bounded by dogmas, Tripitaka shows some control of them as well.

¹⁰⁷ Yu, chap. 7, *Journey to the West*, 1: 195

A better example to show the control over language is in chapter 14, when “Monkey turns to the Right.” This time, both Tathagata and Tripitaka are equipped with the reins. Trapped under the Five Phases Mountain for five hundred years for his rebellion and disobedience, Monkey encounters Tripitaka, and asks the latter to save him and accept him as a disciple for self-redemption. As Tripitaka lifts up the tag on which is written “*Om maṇi padme hūṃ*” on the top of the mountain, stuck there by Tathagata, the ape is rescued. This plot indicates that the weight of a mountain does not bind a soul; the four golden words do. Tripitaka controls the power of language over Monkey – both by lifting the tag up and by the Incantation of the Golden Hoop (*jingu zhou* 緊箍咒). Thus he has the authority to control Monkey, whose capacity is much higher than his. In sum, the power of Buddhist language is great in *The Journey to the West*. Whoever controls language is the most powerful, as exemplified by the many plots analyzed above.

Also, in the Monkey’s case mentioned just now, a further question on “what actually traps the Monkey” arises. He might be trapped by neither the mountain’s weight nor those six sounds, but his own mind. Whoever possesses the power to control the mind controls the others. At the beginning of the book, there was only “power (*quanli* 權力)” in Wukong’s mind, and his sense of superiority, even hierarchy, inflated as he gained more power. He made the “four seas and a thousand mountains all bow to submit (*sihai qianshan jie gongfu* 四海千山皆拱服),”¹⁰⁸ and he claims that “many are the turns of kingship, by next year the turn will be mine (*huangdi lunliu zuo, mingnian dao wojia* 皇帝輪流做, 明年到我家).”¹⁰⁹ Hence, as Tathagata put him under the Five-Element Mountain, he did not struggle but submitted, assuming that his power was not as great as Tathagata’s. In this case, the four-worded text on the tag has another function – being a pretense to cover the real conflict between powers, and the submission of the novel’s most heroic figure. It might be for the sake of the intuitive readers, who regard the book as happy, inspiring and educative, as the author’s will is to establish morality instead of diminishing it. Even if he wants to unveil the truth of such conflict and darkness, he leaves the “truth” to the subtext for wise people, instead of putting it on the surface – as a literary novel would do.

¹⁰⁸ Yu, chap. 3, *Journey to the West*, 1: 131.

¹⁰⁹ Yu, chap. 7, *Journey to the West*, 1: 194.

Then what about human understanding outside the novel? I will end the main body of this thesis with a joke, made by a Ming historiographer Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) about the over-dependency of Buddhism in *The Journey to the West*. In table 5, I have listed the authenticity of thirty-five sutras received by the pilgrims, over half of which are fake and brought back to China without being noticed. Hu, just like Tripitaka, could not tell real sutras from fictional ones as well, thus embodies all thirty-five sutras in chapter 98 in his textual criticism: *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢. Table 6 is the comparison between Hu's list and the list in chapter 98 of the novel:

Table 6. Comparison of the List of Sutras: Chapter 98 of *The Journey to the West* 西遊記 & "Shuangshu huanchao 雙樹幻鈔"

Blank and Verbal Sutras, chap. 98 <i>The Journey to the West</i> 西遊記	"Shuangshu Huanchao 雙樹幻鈔," vol. 47 <i>Shaoshi Shanfang Bicong</i> 少室山房筆叢 ¹¹⁰
1 《涅槃經》 748 (blank) volumes, ¹¹¹ 400 (verbal) brought back to Tang ¹¹²	《涅槃經》 4, 800 volumes, 40 in Tang
2 《菩薩經》 1,021 volumes, 360	《菩薩經》 2,100 volumes, 36 in Tang
3 《虛空藏經》 400 volumes, 20	《虛空藏經》 400 volumes, 2 in Tang
4 《首楞嚴經》 110 volumes, 30	《首楞嚴經》 110 volumes, 10 in Tang
5 《恩義經大集》 50 volumes, 40	《恩義經大集》 50 volumes, 4 in Tang
6 《決定經》 140 volumes, 40	《決定經》 140 volumes, 4 in Tang
7 《寶藏經》 45 volumes, 20	《寶藏經》 140 volumes, 2 in Tang
8 《華嚴經》 500 volumes, 81	《華嚴經》 23,000 volumes, 81 in Tang

¹¹⁰ This column of data is from Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, part 2, "Shuang shu huan chao 雙樹幻鈔中," 卷四十七癸部 *Shaoshi shanfang bi cong* 少室山房筆叢, 47: 641–642.

¹¹¹ The first number stands for the quantity of the volume of blank sutras that Tripitaka first received in chap. 98. Wu, chap. 98, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記, 2: 1252–1253. Yu, chap. 98, *Journey to the West*, 4: 350–351.

¹¹² The second number stands for the quantity of the volumes of verbal sutras that Tripitaka actually brought back from Tathagata's abode to the Tang Empire. Note that the volumes of the actually-received sutras are different from those of the blank sutras at the first place. Wu, chap. 98, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記, 2: 1257. Yu, chap. 98, *Journey to the West*, 4: 355–356.

Blank and Verbal Sutras, chap. 98	"Shuangshu Huanchao 雙樹幻鈔," vol. 47
<i>The Journey to the West</i> 西遊記	<i>Shaoshi Shanfang Bicong</i> 少室山房筆叢 ^{uo}
9 《礼真如經》 90 volumes, 30	《李真經》 90 volumes, 3 in Tang
10 《大般若經》 916 volumes, 600	《大般若經》 1,600 volumes, 6 in Tang
11 《大光明經》 300 volumes, 50	《金光明品經》 1,000 volumes, 10 in Tang
12 《未曾有經》 1,110 volumes, 550	《未曾有經》 1,500 volumes, 50 in Tang
13 《維摩經》 170 volumes, 30	《維摩經》 170 volumes, 3 in Tang
14 《三論別經》 270 volumes, 42	《三論別經》 270 volumes, 12 in Tang
15 《金剛經》 100 volumes, 1	《金剛經》 100 volumes, 1 in Tang
16 《正法輪經》 120 volumes, 20	《正法輪經》 120 volumes, 2 in Tang
17 《佛本行經》 800 volumes, 116	《佛本行經》 1,800 volumes, 60 in Tang
18 《五龍經》 32 volumes, 20	《五龍經》 32 volumes, 2 in Tang
19 《菩薩戒經》 116 volumes, 60	《菩薩戒經》 116 volumes, 16 in Tang
20 《大集經》 130 volumes, 30	《大集經》 1,200 volumes, 3 in Tang
21 《魔竭經》 350 volumes, 140	《魔竭經》 250 volumes, 40 in Tang
22 《法華經》 100 volumes, 10	《法華經》 100 volumes, 7 in Tang
23 《瑜伽經》 100 volumes, 30	《瑜伽經》 100 volumes, 3 in Tang
24 《寶常經》 220 volumes, 170	《寶常經》 1,000 volumes, 70 in Tang
25 《西天論經》 130 volumes, 30	《西天論經》 3,300 volumes, 3 in Tang
26 《僧祇經》 157 volumes, 110	《僧祇經》 570 volumes, 10 in Tang
27 《佛國雜經》 1,950 volumes, 1,638	《西天佛國雜經》 9,500 volumes, 30 in Tang
28 《起信論經》 1,000 volumes, 50	《起信論經》 2,000 volumes, 50 in Tang
29 《大智度經》 1,080 volumes, 90	《大智度經》 180 volumes, 10 in Tang
30 《寶威經》 1280 volumes, 140	《寶藏經》 4,520 volumes, 140 in Tang
31 《本閣經》 850 volumes, 56	《本閣經》 850 volumes, 20 in Tang
32 《正律文經》 200 volumes, 10	《正律文經》 2,000 volumes, 10 in Tang
33 《大孔雀經》 220 volumes, 14	《因名論經》 2,200 volumes, 50 in Tang
34 《維識論經》 100 volumes, 10	《唯識論經》 100 volumes, 10 in Tang
35 《具舍論經》 200 volumes, 10	《具舍論經》 2,000 volumes, 10 in Tang

However, unlike Tripitaka, Hu seems to realize that some sutra names are fictional, as he reminds the readers not to scrutinize too deeply whether they are authentic sutras or not.¹¹³ He might still take on those names out of an inability to discern them or for other reasons, but this is not my concern here. Despite whether or not Hu has a justification for his embodiment of fictional sutras, his misquotation of fictional and semi-fictional sutras is laughed at by an even more esoteric predecessor: Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), a Buddhist scholar in the late Qing dynasty. In his *Dengbudeng guanza lu* 等不等觀雜錄, a Buddhist research collection, he exclaimed:

One day as I skimmed through *The Journey to the West*, I found that it does not scrutinize the authenticity of Buddhist sutras before putting them down. Some posterity, prior to appraisal, misquotes fictional sutra names in their books and widely spreads them, such that even Buddhists could not discern their authenticity. What a sigh! Now that I know the origin, I would like to inform my posterities (to beware of its falsehood).

一日檢西遊記，見有唐僧取經目次，即此摺所由來矣。... 所以任意摭拾，全未考核也。乃後人不察，以此為實，居然鈔出刊行，廣宣流布，雖禪林修士，亦莫辨其真偽。良可浩歎！余既知其源流，以告夫來者。¹¹⁴

Clearly, Yang, as a Buddhist scholar, has the capacity to distinguish real sutras from unreal ones. He understands Wu Cheng'en's joke, finding it to apply to those text-dependent and text-controlled readers exactly like Hu. As Hu falls into the same trap as Tripitaka does, Yang is the one able to circumvent that trap, and laugh along with Wu Cheng'en at both the protagonists and

¹¹³ “大藏經四千五十餘卷，而諸家書目所載，僅百數十種，蓋唱偈疏讖等，於文義相遠，不得盡收也，然以西天經總較之，直百之一耳。因錄此廣異聞，不必論其有無。” Yinglin Hu 胡應麟: “Shuang Shu Huan Chao 雙樹幻鈔,” *Shaoshi Shan fang Bi cong* 少室山房筆叢, 47: 641.

¹¹⁴ Since no authoritative English translation of the book was found, this is my own English translation. Yang Renshan 楊仁山(楊文會), “*Dazang jing mulu bian* 大藏經目錄辨,” *Deng bu deng guan za lu* 等不等觀雜錄, 4: 1–2.

common readers because he understand Wu (*zhiyin* 知音). However, is he a better reader in appreciating the fiction than Hu? If the joke on Hu comes from Hu's inability to distinguish authentic sutras from fictional ones, the joke on Yang comes from the confusion between Buddhist sutras and Buddhist sutras as a plot in fictions. After all, few people can overcome the barrier of language at the cost of abandoning its assistance in idea comprehension. The "wise reader" might end up being the author himself, alone.

5. EPILOGUE

This analysis is offered as the beginning of a conversation about the nature of the transformation of language, and the impact of such transformation on Chinese culture, without which Buddhism could not have been able to develop as successfully as it did in China. Before the necessary Chinese translational strategies evolved, access to Sanskrit sutras or their esoteric early Chinese translations, characterized by heavy transliteration, was only for the elite class and Buddhist scholars. Readers from the general population really needed texts in order to comprehend the ideas. Accurate translation provides expedients for them to access Buddhist doctrines, and offers the general population an opportunity to be rescued from the pain of endless *saṃsara* – the compassion and *upāya* of which is the essence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To an extent, the development of Buddhist sutra translation has accelerated the assimilation of the three religions since the Song dynasty.

In addition, the more life experience and knowledge one has, the less dependent one is on the language, and the less vulnerable one is to the limitation of language, such as semantic/syntactical inaccuracy, textual deficiency, or changing of meanings. In the discourse of *The Journey to the West*, the three levels of readers react differently to its language. The least informed, intuitive readers need all the supports that language can provide. The analytical readers are able to question the meaning and significance of the language, in order to gain greater personal control over the content. They analyze the novel's text deeply, attempting to find an answer as they follow Tripitaka's process of enlightenment and solve the seemingly paradoxical ending in chapter 100. Both of these groups are controlled by the "reins of language," characterized by their dependency on the novel's text. The transcendental group is quite distinct. Its members can drop the reins of language completely,

because they recognize that language represents the illusion of control over meaning, rather than meaning itself. They delve directly into the subtext, seeking for the author's real intention, instead of belaboring the textual level and analyzing what is ostensible.

One last note: when Tripitaka goes back to the Tang empire, carrying the textual sutras, he hands them to the Chinese people from himself. As an ambassador, his mission is finished, thus he drops his reins. This is an important factor in understanding why he is finally qualified to be called back to sit in Heaven and be one of the Buddhas there. Despite his non-enlightenment throughout the journey, once Tripitaka drops his reins – whether purposively from enlightenment or unconsciously because his mission is completed – he is instantly enlightened. In addition to Wu's intention of showing homage to Tripitaka's prototype, Xuanzang, I hope this explanation can help justify Tripitaka's promotion to Buddhahood, within the discourse of the novel itself.

The Journey to the West extends its "reins of language" from its inner fictional world to the outer real world (the readers' world), the process of which is facilitated by handing on the textual sutras that the pilgrims have brought back to the Chinese people. Finishing the novel and passing it on to its readers, Wu Cheng'en transmits the reins at the same time, making his novel a link between the illusion of the journey and the deep vision (*gambhīra darśana*) of the *Heart Sutra* on which the journey is based, and providing us a multi-dimensional world to consider, to explore, in order to make the connections to see how magical and magnificent Buddhist wisdom is.

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