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### Wu Ch'eng-en's *Monkey* as an Allegory for Buddhism

Stories and fairy tales have been a part of cultures since man created language. Since the dawning of civilization in China, stories have been used as a religious tool, enabling religious leaders to convey their beliefs to the common people. During the sixteenth century, one Chinese man, Wu Ch'eng-en, was credited with compiling many of these religious stories into one extensive testimony of Chinese religious culture. The extensive work, named *Monkey* by the Chinese-English translator Arthur Waley, also known as *Journey to the West* in other translations, is seen as an allegory for Chinese religion and/or philosophy. Scholars debate for which religion or philosophy that allegory stands, however. It is my argument that, although there are Confucian and Taoist aspects in Wu Ch'eng-en's *Monkey*, the main focus of religious allegory is directed toward Buddhism. This essay will look specifically at the parts of the story that pertain mainly to the journey taken by Tripitaka and his disciples, which composes a majority of the entire work. Evidence that *Monkey* is an allegory for Buddhism can be observed through each of the main characters--Tripitaka, Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy, and the dragon-horse--as well as through the journey itself, which comprises the numerous obstacles through which the pilgrims must pass. The journey as a whole represents the Buddhist path toward enlightenment, each obstacle being a result of karma. While Tripitaka represents the physical conduct of Buddhists along that path, Monkey represents the unseen, the human psyche. Pigsy and Sandy

signify some of the hindrances that Buddhists aim to overcome, and the dragon-horse is a symbol for Buddhism itself. The Taoist aspects come to play in the beginning and end of *Monkey*, and some evidence of Confucianism may be observed throughout the entire work. These aspects, however, are outweighed by evidence for Buddhist allegory.

Perhaps the most significant representation of Buddhism is the journey itself. The journey epitomizes the path toward Buddhist enlightenment. One of the most fundamental components of this Buddhist path is the idea of karma. Karma can best be described in metaphorical terms; karma is like a running total of tally marks under two categories, good and bad. If one does something bad with intent to harm another, that individual receives a tally under bad karma, whereas one receives a tally under good karma if he or she does something good with the intent to help another (Goodman). If, at the end of one's life, the good outweighs the bad, then he or she may be reincarnated into a higher level of life, and vice versa (Goodman). In one's next life, the good and bad tally marks are redeemed in the form of fortunate and unfortunate events that are bestowed upon that person. Charles Goodman defines karma's essence to Buddhist philosophy: "Law of Karma says that those of our actions that are intended to harm others will evolve into misery for us, whereas those of our actions that are intended to benefit others will evolve into happiness for us." In the story, each of the pilgrims possesses an accumulation of bad karma: Tripitaka fell asleep during a Buddhist lecture, Monkey wreaked havoc in heaven, Pigsy made a sexual advance on an immortal, Sandy dropped an important crystal dish, and the dragon-horse disobeyed his father. Therefore, all are destined to reach hardships in their lives. Dore J. Levy suggests that these hardships are represented by each obstacle that they come across along the journey (510). Take Tripitaka, specifically; according

to Levy, Tripitaka is destined to encounter exactly 81 trials throughout his life, and these 81 trials are played out through conflict in the story (511). These 81 hardships are bad karma that Tripitaka has collected. At the very end of the story, Tripitaka's exact 81 hardships are listed when he arrives at enlightenment (Fair 1381-1384). This list of hardships includes conflicts that Tripitaka overcame along the journey. With respect to all five pilgrims, each acts selflessly upon encountering every obstacle by helping those in trouble, whether it be by slaying monsters or by other means. For example, when the ghost of the dead king of Crow-Cock appears to Tripitaka, each of the pilgrims takes on his share of the project at hand. Tripitaka and Monkey inform the prince of Crow-Cock of the situation, Pigsy helps Monkey retrieve the dead king's body, Sandy watches over Tripitaka and the body, and the dragon-horse takes Tripitaka along on the quest to replace the dead king's kingdom into the rightful hands. This is an instance of karma in which each pilgrim acts in selflessness by helping the dead king. In handling situations such as this appropriately throughout the journey, the pilgrims consequently redeem themselves by collecting good karma. At the end of the journey, each main character reincarnates into a higher level as a result of his accumulation of good karma via his actions in response to each obstacle.

The second substantial point in regard to Buddhist allegory is a series of events that have to do with the Goddess of Mercy, Kuan-yin. Many identify Kuan-yin, also known as Guanyin, as the Bodhisattva of Compassion, as does the Buddhist expert Pannyavaro. According to Pannyavaro, Guanyin is a Bodhisattva who helps people reach enlightenment due to her compassion for others. In the story, the pilgrims meet with Kuan-yin several times; Kuan-yin intervenes whenever the pilgrims seem to reach an impasse in the journey. It can thus be

inferred that Kuan-yin represents compassion, which is a basic Buddhist virtue. Buddhist teachings direct Buddhists to primarily act out of compassion, for through compassion for others, one may attain all other goals of Buddhism (Goodman). One example of such a display by Kuan-yin takes place when Monkey and Tripitaka first meet the dragon-horse. When the dragon-horse swallows the pilgrims' white horse, Monkey first attempts to fight the dragon-horse, but then turns to the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin when his first course of action fails. Kuan-yin then proceeds to correct Monkey's thought process by informing him that the dragon-horse is meant to help the pilgrims along the journey (Wu 27). Kuan-yin brings the dragon-horse out of the river, changes the dragon-horse into the shape of the lost white horse, and then tells Monkey that he is to act less violently in the future (Wu 27). In this example, Monkey and Tripitaka are forced to turn to Kuan-yin in order to resolve the issue concerning the dragon-horse. Metaphorically, a person on the road to Buddhist enlightenment, when faced with impedance along the way, must turn to compassion in order to resolve said issue in the correct manner. With that simple fact, it can be inferred by any reader that Kuan-yin represents compassion.

Buddhism in traditional China preaches an idea called the Middle Path (Liebenthal 67). The Middle Path represents a state of mind that dictates that "life is suffering. But this suffering is not to be evaded. There is no beauty, no bliss, no rest apart from it" (Liebenthal 67). Furthermore, Liebenthal asserts that in order for one to be in tune with the Middle Path, one must associate himself or herself with the suffering of others, since suffering is a part of life, and is hence a part of every other person. Knowing this, it is inferred that the Middle Path is vital to the Buddhist religion. Therefore, in *Monkey*, the Middle Path would need to be an important

part of the journey. If the journey itself were to represent one lifetime, then a vital piece of the journey would be the actual trail along which the pilgrims travel, which would represent the Middle Path. The “suffering that is not to be evaded” is part of the actual road in both the conflicts encountered and the physical effort taken by the pilgrims to travel the long distance by foot. When Tripitaka and Monkey are traveling along their path, they encounter physical suffering: “They had been traveling for several days in the twelfth month of the year, with its freezing North winds and biting cold” (Fair 218). This biting cold is a part of the journey, and the pilgrims cannot avoid it. By going through the bitter cold, the pilgrims exhibit the suffering that makes up the journey, metaphorically life, and the Middle Path. Also, whenever the pilgrims encounter conflict, Tripitaka identifies himself with others who suffer in their predicament, just as the Middle Path demands. For instance, when Tripitaka and Monkey arrive on the Kao Farm, Mr. Kao explains his situation with Pigsy (Fair 266-267). Mr. Kao complains of Pigsy’s ugly face and monstrous appetite, to which Tripitaka responds, “he has to eat so much because he works so hard” (Fair 267). Tripitaka is implementing the Middle Path, identifying himself with Pigsy’s suffering as a farm hand. The journey itself is difficult to distinguish from the story as a whole, just as the Middle Path is difficult to distinguish from the entire Buddhist religion, for the two are intertwined and each comprises the other. The Middle Path creates a basis of belief upon which Buddhism is built. In a similar manner, in the story, the journey provides a basis upon which to build the Buddhist allegory.

This brings me to the ultimate point of Buddhist representation: Buddhist enlightenment. At the very end of the story, Monkey and Tripitaka are enlightened; Monkey receives the name Victorious Fighting Buddha, and Tripitaka receives the name Candana-punya Buddha (Fair

1401). There is a literal shedding of the body and becoming a spirit that represents the mind detaching itself from the body. This is the concept of grasping the idea of “no self,” which will be explained in further detail later. Pigsy, Sandy, and the dragon-horse are reincarnated into higher statuses: Altar Cleanser, Golden Arhat, and Heavenly Dragon of the Eight Classes of Being, respectively (Fair 1401-1402). They haven’t yet reached enlightenment, but as reward for their good deeds they are reincarnated into a higher level of being. The ending is essential to the whole allegory; the ending of the story specifies what the whole journey represents. Because the ending quite clearly represents Buddhist enlightenment, then it can be assumed that the journey as a whole is an allegory for the Buddhist means toward that enlightenment.

Arguably, the hero of the story is Tripitaka. Tripitaka’s account is clearly of Buddhist nature: he was a disciple of Buddha, but sinned by falling asleep during one of his lectures and as a result was punished by being reincarnated into a lower life form, and through many cycles of reincarnation, he was born as Tripitaka, Buddhist Monk (Levy 511). Besides the fact that Tripitaka is on a Buddhist pilgrimage, he represents a journey into Buddhism toward enlightenment. Specifically, Tripitaka represents the physical facets of the Buddhist journey. Francisca Cho Bantly sums up this idea when she states that Tripitaka “embodies this concern as a well-meaning practitioner whose obsession with the outward forms of piety hinders him from true perception” (514). In other words, Tripitaka is too concerned with physical rules of conduct to represent anything more intricate, like compassion. Buddhists on the path to enlightenment are expected to beg for necessities and refrain from displaying any violent behavior (Goodman). Tripitaka does just this, as he explains to Mr. Kao, when he refuses a gift, that he must beg his way through the journey (Wu 36). Tripitaka shows that he refrains from

behaving violently when he scolds Monkey at the beginning of the journey for killing the six armed robbers: “A priest...should be ready to die rather than commit acts of violence” (Wu 21). Tripitaka is so concerned with his physical conduct that he fails to realize that he must handle the situation. Rather, Tripitaka remains idle, letting Monkey take action, and then scolds Monkey for executing the unethical solution. In another instance, Tripitaka demonstrates that he represents strictly physical Buddhist manner when he weeps over the body of the dead king of Crow-cock. When Pigsy asks Tripitaka why he is crying, Tripitaka answers: “for us who are followers of Buddha compassion is the root” (Wu 61). Here, it appears that Tripitaka is concerned only with his outward appearance and behavior; he is concerned only with showing others that he has embraced compassion. In absorbing his thoughts in appearance, it seems that he falls short of fully grasping the concept of compassion. Therefore, Tripitaka could be a symbol for little else but physical Buddhist conduct of a believer on the way to Buddhist enlightenment.

Some would argue that Monkey is the story’s true hero. In the story, Monkey brings wholeness to the allegory by representing the *mental* processes of a believer on the path toward Buddhist enlightenment. To begin the journey toward Buddhist enlightenment, the physical self must subdue the mind in order to control it and advance along the path. Ping Shao maintains that this subduing of the mind is symbolized in the story by the headband that Monkey wears; Tripitaka “tames” the mind by controlling it with the prayers, thus enabling the journey to progress (725). Once Tripitaka positions Monkey under his control, the journey is begun. The first obstacle along the journey is the confrontation with the formerly mentioned six armed robbers. The robbers are Eye that Sees and Delights, Ear that Hears and is Angry, Nose that

Smells and Covets, Tongue that Tastes and Desires, Mind that Conceives and Lusts, Body that Supports and Suffers (Wu 20). It is obvious to the reader at this point that the robbers are symbolic. Dore J. Levy suggests that these robbers represent the senses that must be overcome in order for one to be able to progress on the road toward Buddhist enlightenment (512). It is basic Buddhist philosophy that one must lose a sense of self and become a part of the universe, as the universe and all its inhabitants are one (Goodman). Kim Boykin encapsulates this idea: “According to the Buddha, true satisfaction cannot be found in satisfying the desires of a “self” viewed as separate from everything else; true satisfaction can be found in each moment if life is viewed from the perspective of ‘no-self.’” Overcoming the senses enables a Buddhist pilgrim to recognize an inner self congruent with the universe. This overcoming of the senses, symbolized by Monkey subduing the six robbers, enables a Buddhist pilgrim to realize the universe as one (Ping 726). Lawall and Mack also pick up on this, as they explain that “Monkey understands the world with a comic detachment that is in some ways akin to Buddhist detachment” (9). This detachment is precisely the loss of the sense of self that Ping explains. That idea brings me to another significant argument in support for Buddhist allegory in *Monkey*. The actual key to understanding what Monkey symbolizes is Monkey’s Buddhist name assigned at Monkey’s first meeting with Tripitaka, Monkey Aware-of-Vacuity (Ping 725). Monkey embodies the concept of emptiness, which is a primary virtue of Buddhism (Ping 725). As already confirmed by Kim Boykin, “at the heart of Buddhist wisdom is the realization of ‘no-self’” (Boykin). This “no self” is exactly the emptiness that Monkey, being an allegory of the human mind, encompasses. There are reasons, however, that the journey is a progress toward Buddhist enlightenment. Although Monkey is aware of the emptiness that one must embrace in order to reach



enlightenment, he has personal hindrances that he must overcome. The primary problem that Monkey must surmount is his proneness to violence (Levy 512). For example, when Pigsy, Monkey, and Tripitaka first approach their soon-to-be disciple, Sandy, Pigsy at first fights a physical battle against Sandy. Monkey, prone to violence, sees “the grand fight that [is] in progress, [and] itch[es] to go and join in it” (Wu 38). Throughout the excursion, Monkey must learn to live in a peaceful manner before he reaches Buddhist enlightenment.

The next main character up for discussion is Pigsy. Pigsy’s outward form of a pig-like human denotes what he symbolizes: greediness. Dore J. Levy affirms this selfishness: “[Pigsy] is lazy and disingenuous, yearning for enormous meals and comfy domesticity” (512). Pigsy craves excess amounts of commodities, which points out directly his egocentricity. Charles Goodman explains one aspect of Buddhist philosophy, which unveils further the problematic complexity to Pigsy’s character: “the human world is primarily characterized by the instrumental pursuit of objects of desire [one must] refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and drunkenness.” Ideally, a Buddhist strives to detach himself or herself from the human world of pursuit, and Pigsy epitomizes this problem of attachment that is to be defeated. Pigsy displays possession of three of these five objects of desire: lying, stealing, and, most obviously, sexual misconduct. Pigsy first shows that he represents sexual misconduct when he makes inappropriate sexual advances toward a goddess in heaven (Fair 275). Pigsy also shows that he is willing to lie when he deceives Tripitaka amidst the Crow-Cock event. In order to avenge Monkey, Pigsy convinces Tripitaka to recite the spell that tightens the golden headband and brings excruciating pain to Monkey in order to force Monkey give life back to the dead king. Of course, Pigsy knows that Monkey does not possess this power. Upon the same occasion in a

different scene, Pigsy also displays his proneness to thievery when he says to Monkey:

“Brother...are you asking me to commit robbery? If so, that’s a business I have experience of and can really be of some help” (Wu 56). Pigsy appears to be a selfish individual that steals, lies, and is preoccupied with obtaining sexual satisfaction. In order for Pigsy to reach Buddhist enlightenment as part of the allegory, he must overcome his inclination toward selfishness and non-virtues of Buddhism. Apart from Pigsy’s attachment to material assets, Pigsy perhaps represents a further facet of Buddhism: vegetarianism. Charles Goodman maintains that the ideal Buddha is a vegetarian. Pigsy must abstain from meat in order to arrive at the Buddhist virtue of vacuity, and thus reach enlightenment (Ping 725). The fact that Pigsy is a vegetarian validates his root in the allegorical journey toward Buddhist enlightenment. Even so, Pigsy has impedances within himself he that must overcome, representative of problems that a person must prevail over in order to reach enlightenment.

Another main character that aids Tripitaka along his journey is Sandy. Sandy is a dragon-like creature that is banned from Heaven to the Flowing Sands River, a punishment bestowed for breaking an important crystal dish in a banquet in Heaven. Sandy represents the Buddhist non-virtue of killing and eating meat, as well as redemption of sin. On one incident, Sandy says to Pigsy, “When I am hungry I go ashore and eat whatever living thing comes my way. Many are the woodmen and fishermen who have fallen to me as my prey” (Wu 39). Sandy executes Buddhist non-virtues by committing acts of murder and eating the meat of people and animals. At the very end of the story, Buddha tells Sandy: “You sinned by killing and eating people” (Fair 1402). This statement indeed validates the ideas of murder and eating meat being Buddhist non-virtues. Charles Goodman also supports this notion by stating, in

regard to Buddhist morality, that “ideally we should refrain from killing animals, adopt a vegetarian diet, renounce all forms of violence and live in harmony with nature.” Sandy undoubtedly contradicts Goodman’s statement by killing and eating people and animals. In this way, Sandy, like Pigsy, symbolizes Buddhist non-virtues that must be mentally subdued by a person in order for him or her to advance on the path toward Buddhist enlightenment. In addition, Sandy represents another component of the Buddhist allegory: redemption of sin. Sandy redeems good karma and compensates for his bad karma by aiding Tripitaka along his journey. For instance, upon first becoming Tripitaka’s disciple, Sandy removes his necklace, which comprises nine skulls, places them in a square with the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin’s magical gourd in the middle, and changes the figure into a boat in order to help Tripitaka and his disciples trek across the roaring Flowing Sands River (Fair 329). It is in this fashion that Sandy signifies liberation from the weight of bad karma due to sin. Because karma and redemption of sin are interrelated, Sandy exemplifies a significant portion of the allegory of Buddhism.

The last main character I wish to discuss is the dragon-horse. The dragon-horse symbolizes both the essential Buddhist virtue of selflessness as well as Buddhism itself. According to Ping Shao, dragons are a monumental symbol for the Buddhist religion (730). Dragons are often depicted in Buddhist texts and stories, frequently helping someone along the path toward enlightenment (Ping 730). The dragon-horse is, of course, a dragon, and therefore a significant Buddhist figure. The dragon-horse also aids Tripitaka along his journey, fulfilling the role of the dragon according to the Buddhist religion. The dragon-horse does this by literally carrying Tripitaka along the journey. When the dragon-horse first meets Tripitaka and Monkey, the dragon-horse is in the form of a dragon and swallows the pilgrims’ horse whole

(Wu 24). When the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin is forced to intervene, the Goddess of Mercy transforms the dragon into the form of the lost horse, as previously explained. Upon this event, the dragon-horse proceeds in carrying Tripitaka on his back along the entire distance of the journey (Wu 27). One may interpret the dragon-horse as moving along his own path toward enlightenment within the act of helping Tripitaka. The law of Buddhism includes a virtue that states that “those who reach the goal of freedom thenceforward act in a loving and compassionate manner towards others, helping these others in turn to be more happy and free” (Goodman). The dragon-horse does in fact embrace Buddhist morality by helping others, specifically Tripitaka, along the path toward enlightenment. In this way, the dragon-horse practices selflessness, acting in a “loving and compassionate manner” toward Tripitaka. Thus, the dragon-horse embodies yet another facet of the allegory.

Although *Monkey* can be read as an allegory for the Buddhist religion, there are undeniable components of other Chinese cultural aspects. The main contradiction to the allegory of Buddhism is an allegory for Taoism. It is true that in the beginning of the story, Monkey embarks on a Taoist quest for immortality and becomes a disciple of a Taoist patriarch (Levy 511). This Taoist quest, however, only constitutes the first seven chapters of the novel, out of a total of 100 chapters. Furthermore, Ping Shao gives more compelling arguments in favor of Taoism as the allegory; Ping argues that (a) when the pilgrims reach their destination in India, they are first greeted by a Taoist, (b) the entrance to the Buddha-land in heaven is a Taoist entrance, and (c) Monkey’s name is first Taoist. I assume that Monkey’s Taoist name must be “Great Sage Equal of Heaven,” which is the name granted to Monkey within the first seven chapters of the novel. That name is replaced by “Monkey-Aware-of-Vacuity,” however, for a

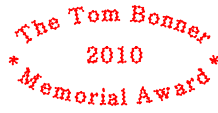
majority of the work, the middle 90 chapters. His name granted at the end, Victorious Fighting Buddha, obviously is likewise a Buddhist name. If Taoism were to be an accepted piece of the overall allegory in addition to Buddhism, there are some explanations as to *why* the two religions coexist. One explanation is derived from Walter Liebenthal's claim that in China during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, Buddhism was seen as a pathway to Taoist goals. This could elucidate why the story's metaphor for the journey toward Buddhist enlightenment is sandwiched by Taoist elements. Another explanation for the apparent intertwining of Buddhism and Taoism also comes from Liebenthal, who maintains that when Buddhism was first introduced into the Taoist Chinese culture, the gods of Buddhism were not discerned from the gods of Taoism. Perhaps many Chinese people saw the two religions as being one in the same. This would explain why *Monkey*, being a collection of traditional Chinese folklore, exhibits characteristics of both religions. So, it is accepted that there are some Taoist aspects to the story. Nevertheless, these Taoist aspects are overpowered by the Buddhist ones. Nine-tenths of the version of the story edited by Collinson Fair constitutes the allegory for Buddhism. So overall, Taoist allegory, though existent in the story, becomes insignificant when deducing what the novel as a whole represents.

Others argue that Monkey does not, in fact, symbolize Buddhism, but rather, is a depiction of Confucianism. Confucianism is more a philosophy or a way of life than a religion. Francesca Cho Bantly reasons that Confucianism is displayed at the beginning of the story, when Monkey leaves Tripitaka after being scolded for killing the six armed robbers (517). By abandoning Tripitaka, Monkey abandons the basic Confucian philosophy of filial piety. Monkey then goes to visit the Dragon of the Eastern Ocean, who shows Monkey that the right

way to live is to abide by filial piety, not fight against it (Wu 22). It is then that Monkey returns to Tripitaka out of faithfulness in accordance with Confucian philosophy (Bantly 517). *Monkey* could be interpreted as a lesson of filial piety in another way: each pilgrim devotes himself to the journey and to Tripitaka (Levy 512). Besides the basic Confucian virtue of filial piety displayed overall, Confucian values may also be observed in specific instances throughout the story. For example, when Tripitaka meets the Prince of Crow-Cock, he asks the prince, “Your Majesty, to how many things does man, born into the world, owe gratitude?” (Wu 49). The prince then answers: “To four things...He is grateful...to Heaven and Earth for covering and supporting him, to the sun and moon for shining upon him, to the king for lending him water and earth, and to this father and mother for rearing him” (Wu 49). The honoring of these things-- heaven, earth, king, and parents-- was recognized as significant aspect of Confucian teachings in traditional Chinese society (Li and Yan 562). When weighed against the amount of evidence for Buddhist allegory, however, Confucianism is again proved insignificant. The theme of filial piety and the specific instances of Confucian demonstration, though present in the story, compose only a minor portion of the entire novel. The majority of the novel is attributed to being an allegory for Buddhism.

To conclude, *Monkey*, accredited to Wu Ch’eng-en, is mainly an allegory for the Buddhist path toward enlightenment. Although there are visible aspects of Taoism and Confucianism braided into the story, Buddhism is most compellingly the idea being represented. Confucianism and Taoism make up a minute portion of the story compared to the middle 90 chapters that are mainly a Buddhist allegory. Buddhism is represented in the story by its characters and by the components of the journey itself. The hero, Tripitaka, represents the

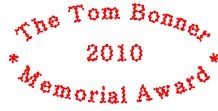
physical behavior expected of a Buddhist monk on the way to enlightenment. This is seen through his many displays of Buddhist conduct that seem to elude deep understanding of Buddhist philosophy. The most memorable character for many, Monkey, represents the mental process of the journey toward Buddhist enlightenment; he is an allegory for the human mind. Monkey is controlled by Tripitaka, which represents the body controlling the mind in pursuit of enlightenment. Monkey also overcomes the human senses, which are represented by the six robbers. Another main character, Pigsy, represents the Buddhist non-virtues of sexual misconduct, thievery, and lying. He fails to reach enlightenment in the end because he has not overcome these non-virtues. Sandy is another disciple of Buddhism. He represents the sin of killing, and he represents redemption through good works and collection of good karma. The last major character is the dragon-horse, who represents an important piece of Buddhist philosophy. The dragon is both an icon of Buddhism and an asset to the religion, because dragons are said to aid people along their paths toward enlightenment. Besides the main characters, a crucial attribute to the Buddhist allegory is the journey itself, which represents the mental process of a path toward enlightenment. At the beginning of the journey, each of the pilgrims is presented with bad karma from his previous lifetime. As the journey progresses, each main character redeems himself through good works, thus collecting good karma and earning prestige. Each pilgrim must learn to travel the Middle Path, meaning that they must prevail over each obstacle of the expedition. As the obstacles, in addition to representing karma, represent suffering, prevalence over these obstacles represents the acceptance of that suffering as part of the journey. Upon completing the long and physically exhausting journey, Monkey and Tripitaka reach enlightenment, and the other three main characters are reincarnated



into higher statuses. All of these facts provide a sound argument that dictates that *Monkey* is mainly an allegory for the Buddhist path toward enlightenment.

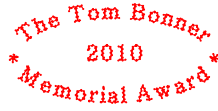
Although *Monkey* is most compellingly an allegory for Buddhism, it is also a collection of historic Chinese folklore. Therefore, it reflects many facets of Chinese culture throughout a matter of time. Chinese culture is represented from the sixteenth century back to perhaps the dawning of civilization in those eastern lands. Being a window to Chinese culture throughout time, *Monkey* displays so many different ideas. The argument remains open as to what the story of Monkey, Tripitaka, and the other disciples represents, but perhaps one may rest at seeing the Buddhist aspects that are presented throughout a majority of the novel. Perhaps there were once literary pieces that were strictly Confucian parables or Taoist allegories. Perhaps there also were once literary pieces that were strictly allegories for Buddhism. It is likely that over the years, as the stories were told and retold, written and rewritten, that the distinction between these stories became less clear. Perhaps those muddled stories were then compiled into the 100-chapter novel that gains merit today, leading to the confusion of its meaning. Beside the point, *Monkey* is above all an unarguable depiction of Chinese culture. This novel gained prominence in China and later the rest of the world. It became a movie that resulted in numerous spin-offs, which ultimately lead to a transfer of culture. If *Monkey* is an allegory for the path toward Buddhist enlightenment, perhaps members of all foreign societies that bore witness to the novel, its movie, and the movie's numerous spin-offs have some sort of subconscious understanding of the Buddhist religion.





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*I certify that the writing in the attached essay, entitled Wu Ch'eng-en's Monkey as an Allegory for Buddhism, is entirely my own. If it contains any text copied from another source (including websites), I have put those words in quotation marks and have provided a list of sources at the end of my paper. I have also given the source for any ideas or interpretations taken from other sources even if I have stated them in my own words. I have read the material on the "Student Responsibilities" page on this site and understand the penalties for plagiarism.*