

PROF. NICHOLAS KOSS:
A LOOK AT THE *XIYOU JI* (JOURNEY TO THE WEST)
FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF BIBLICAL TEXTUAL
CRITICISM
(REVIEW ARTICLE)^{1 2}

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Radovan ŠKULTÉTY
Chaoyang University of Technology
168 Jifeng E Rd, Wufeng District, Taichung City, 413 Taiwan
ORCID: 0009-0007-1059-733X
skultety@gmail.com

This is a review article of a paper by Prof. Nicholas Koss entitled “A Look at the *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West) from the Perspectives of Biblical Textual Criticism”, delivered at the Second International Workshop on the Bible in Modern China, organized by Fu Jen University in Taipei, Taiwan, 5 – 8 January 2002.³ In his experimental approach, the author applied certain methodologies of Biblical textual criticism to the research on the famous classical Chinese novel

¹ This article is dedicated to the 90th birthday of Dr. Marián Gálik (*1933), a co-founder of the Oriental Institute at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, who has devoted his lifetime effort to sinological research, particularly on modern Chinese literature and the influence of the Bible on Chinese literature.

² The author is grateful to Prof. Rivi Handler-Spitz at Macalester College for her comments on an earlier version of this paper, presented at the special session New Approaches to *Journey to the West* of the MLA Convention in Chicago on 3 January 2019.

³ Proceedings from this conference have never been published and only some of the papers appeared in print elsewhere. Dr. Marián Gálik, one of the workshop participants, published a report in Chinese entitled *Huigu bei yiwang de di er jie* “Shengjing zai xiandai Zhongguo” guoji yantaohui 回顧被遺忘的第二屆“聖經在現代中國”國際研討會 [Reminiscences on the Forgotten Second International Workshop on the Bible and China]. In *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 聖經文學研究 [Journal for the Study of Biblical Literature], 2019, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 308–321.

Xiyou ji (Journey to the West). Based on his previous research on the dating of earlier *Xiyou ji* editions, Nicholas Koss sought to make a distinction between layers of text written in different periods by various hands in order to document the development of the story from oral recensions to printed editions. As interesting as this paper is, it has not appeared in print since, in spite of repeated pleas to the author, Prof. Koss never revised his manuscript for publication. During the research for his PhD. dissertation on the *Xiyou ji*, the present author was encouraged by Nicholas Koss to test his methodology. This review is therefore a summary of the unpublished manuscript along with a report on the findings, offering a critical perspective on this methodology of textual criticism.

Keywords: Biblical textual criticism, the *Xiyou ji*, *Journey to the West*, the Pentateuch, *Sitz im Leben*, Ming dynasty vernacular literature

Introduction

The classical Chinese vernacular novel *Xiyou ji* 西游記, usually translated into English as *The Journey to the West*, following Anthony Yu's definitive translation, is loosely based on the pilgrimage of the Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 or Tripitaka 三藏 during the Tang dynasty (629 – 645 CE). He travelled to India in order to study Mahayana Buddhism in the land of its origin since in China, as he believed, "the Buddhist doctrine was imperfect and the scriptures were incomplete" (法義未周, 經教少闕).⁴ The journey along the Silk Road, undertaken by many, completed by but a few, was recorded by Xuanzang's disciples after his return. The legends that grew up around it became the shared stock of oral storytellers, playwrights as well as the literati, and eventually inspired the 100-chapter Ming novel *Xiyou ji*.

The period of almost a millennium between Xuanzang's return to China and the publishing of the authoritative 100-chapter version of the novel in 1592 saw the growth of the legends surrounding the journey and the emergence of several fictitious characters in the story, with one of them, the self-proclaimed monkey king Sun Wukong, eventually becoming the protagonist of the story. This development of the oral tradition and its eventual amalgamation into the printed version of the *Xiyou ji* bears similarity to the development of the Biblical Old and New Testaments since there was a gap of centuries or even millennia between some of their historical events and the earliest extant accounts of them, and then between the earliest accounts and their extant written versions.

⁴ HUILI (ed.). *Da Tang Da Ci'en Si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 [The Biography of Master Tripitaka of the Monastery of Great Charity of the Great Tang], Vol. 1, s. p.

Methodology

In his paper, Nicholas Koss attempts to show how some of the methodologies and analytic techniques of Biblical textual criticism can lead to a better understanding of the text of the *Xiyou ji*, but possibly of other works of ancient Chinese literature such as other classical novels and early Daoist scriptures and Buddhist sutras. These critical approaches include grammatical-historical criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and source criticism. Nicholas Koss's assumption is that the *Xiyou ji*, like the Bible, consists of various layers of text created by different authors and traditions over a significant period of time. However, these layers (passages) still preserve a part of their original structure and language. With the right tools, they can be identified to demonstrate the development of the text, especially given that for centuries the oral tradition of the *Xiyou ji* was passed down in storytelling with very little written record.

By 1981, at the start of his project, Nicholas Koss had done extensive research on the late-Ming editions of the *Xiyou ji* for his PhD. dissertation. He labelled these editions as the Zhu for Zhu Dingchen's (朱鼎臣) edition,⁵ the Yang for Yang Zhihe's (楊致和) edition,⁶ and the 1592 for the Shidetang (世德堂) edition, a 100-chapter novel published in 1592, traditionally ascribed to Wu Cheng'en.⁷ Twenty years later, equipped with a solid command of Biblical textual scholarship, Koss tested his method on *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* to reconstruct the image of the original Hui-neng.⁸

In his paper, Koss attempts to apply theories on the formation of the Pentateuch to the Zhu and the 1592 version of the *Xiyou ji*. Then he endeavours to see if the idea of *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life") as used in the study of the New Testament can be of help to understand the formation of the *Xiyou ji*. His ultimate goal is to reach an understanding of the *Xiyou ji* at a level comparable with our comprehension of the formation of the books in the Bible.

⁵ Its full title is *Xinqie quanxiang Tang Sanzang Xiyou shi ni (e) zhuan* 新鐫全像大唐三藏西游釋尼厄傳 [A Newly Printed, Completely Illustrated Chronicle of Deliverances of Sanzang of the Tang Dynasty During his Journey to the West].

⁶ The full title is *Xinqie Sanzang chu shen quan zhuan* 新鐫三藏出身全傳 [Newly-Printed, Complete Biography of Sanzang's Career]. This version, however, is not examined in the present article.

⁷ The title of this edition is actually *Xinke chuxiang guanban dazi Xiyou ji* 新刻出像官板大字西遊記 [Newly Engraved, Illustrated Official Edition of the *Xiyou ji* in Large Characters] but it is commonly referred to as the Shidetang edition.

⁸ See KOSS, N. The Historical Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, in *Dialog with the Unknown Author of The Cloud of Unknowing*. In *Purity of Heart and Contemplation*, pp. 108–123.

As for the formation of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, Koss follows the documentary hypothesis. These books should be conceived more flexibly as ‘traditions’ to incorporate any number of earlier oral and written traditions, which is also valid for the *Xiyou ji*. Careful textual analysis should allow for assigning specific episodes or their parts to various narrative traditions – the Buddhist temple service of the Tang Dynasty when monks would preach about Xuanzang; the secular storytellers of the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279) who would present a cycle of stories about Xuanzang; Yuan Dynasty (1279 – 1368) drama about Xuanzang and his disciples; and Song and Ming printed “fiction” about the journey to the West. Also, especially pertinent to the study of the *Xiyou ji* is the suggestion that these formative documents may preserve oral traditions to some extent. Koss uses this approach on two versions of the same episode that appear near the start of the novel (ch. 2 of the 1592 edition) – a dialogue between Sun Wukong, who is searching for the key to immortality, and the Patriarch Subodhi, who is willing to teach him. Having identified the form or structure of this dialogue, Koss speculates that the Zhu version was closer to the oral tradition while the 1592 edition showed substantial redaction on the part of the author of the 100-chapter novel.

Another analytical tool Koss applies is based on the 1973 study by Patrick Hanan⁹. Hanan proposed a method for dating stories of the late Ming dynasty, using the occurrence of style markers as an indication of the period when a given text was authored. He proposed three sets of style markers – or set expressions – that reflect stories written before 1450 (the early stories), those written from 1400 to 1575 (the middle stories), and those written after 1550 and before 1627 (the late stories).

The notion of *Sitz im Leben* refers to the context in which particular oral forms arose and developed.¹⁰ In textual criticism, the *Sitz im Leben* has to be taken into consideration in order to allow a proper contextual interpretation. Koss suggests various levels of the *Sitz im Leben* for the *Xiyou ji*, such as the relation to the historical Xuanzang (ch. 9, 12 and 100), to Buddhist temples and monasteries of the Tang dynasty, to the political dimension in editing the 1592 edition (e.g. the Confucian dimension), and to the character Sun Wukong. An example Koss cites comes from ch. 14 of the novel and consists of six scenes starting with Sun Wukong killing the six robbers and Xuanzang reprimanding him, as a result of which the monkey character leaves the company, up until Sun Wukong’s return

⁹ Patrick Dewes Hanan (1927 – 2014) was the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Chinese Literature at Harvard University. A sinologist, he specialized in pre-20th century vernacular fiction.

¹⁰ LONGMAN, T. III, STRAUSS, M. L. *Sitz im leben*. In *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*, s. p.

when Xuanzang tricks him into putting on a shirt and a cap which gives the master ultimate control over his disciple. Identifying several elements such as early style markers (Hanan), dialogues between just two characters (oral tradition) and very little narration, Koss suggests the origin of this passage as a Thou-shalt-not-kill-type of Buddhist sermon. This passage has a clear connection to other similar passages in the early chapters of the novel, and so it may be assumed that these passages belong to an early oral tradition of stories about Xuanzang.

Koss' approach to the analysis of the novel is quite unique. Unlike traditional Chinese approaches focusing on aspects of religious allegory (e.g. Anthony C. Yu, Qiancheng Li) or approaches based on Western literary theory such as A. Plaks's putting the *Xiyou ji* tradition in the framework of the Chinese novel, all of which attempt an overall interpretation, Koss takes a different look at the textual history (the approach represented by G. Dudbridge or Isobe Akira) and outlines a methodology derived from Biblical studies that seeks to identify various literary traditions as represented in the 100-chapter novel and show their function and intertextual relations.¹¹

Research Methodology Test: The Development of the Character Sun Wukong

The present review focuses specifically on the monkey character Sun Wukong, who is de facto the protagonist of the novel. From the structural point of view, the story of the 100-chapter novel can be divided into three sections:

- section I (ch. 1–7): the birth of Sun Wukong, his rise to prominence in the monkey tribe, his acquisition of immortality and magic powers under the instruction of Patriarch Subodhi, the disturbance he created in Heaven, and his final subjugation by Buddha under the Mountain of Five Elements;
- ch.8: the linking chapter, in which Buddha declares his intention to impart the Buddhist canon to the Chinese people and selects Bodhisattva Guanyin to prepare the journey for a pilgrim to fetch the scriptures;

¹¹ A word of warning: the comparison of a sacred Jewish and Christian text with a comic novel may at first sound a little frivolous to believers and scholars of the Bible. As a Benedictine monk and an avid student of the Bible, Prof. Koss dismissed this possible accusation by sticking to a more liberal, open-minded approach to literary criticism, in which texts are evaluated by their literary rather than religious or dogmatic value. See KOSS, N. A Look at the *Xiyou Ji*, p. 2.

- section II (ch. 9–12)¹²: the background and early career of Xuanzang, the journey of the Emperor Taizong to the underworld, and the commission of Xuanzang as the scripture pilgrim;
- section III (ch. 13–100): the main body of the novel describing the journey itself during which Xuanzang and his retinue face eighty-one ordeals set up by the goddess Guanyin, consisting of fighting a slew of monsters and demons, and many other challenges; after the successful completion of the journey, the pilgrims return with the scriptures to China and are canonized.

Compared to the antecedents of the 100-chapter novel (e.g. the *shihua* 诗话 and the *zaju* 杂剧),¹³ the most significant structural changes take place in sections I and II and the first part of section III, while the bulk of section III seems to be much more homogenous and, as such, arguably a work of a single editor/author.

A textual analysis of chapter 2 of the novel will be offered here as an example. The reason for this selection is that it was the chapter most often referred to in the reviewed paper, and also because it is one of the opening seven chapters that focus on the early career of the character Sun Wukong. In order to have an overview of the development of the text over time, the texts of both the Zhu and 1592 editions will be compared. Based on the research by Koss¹⁴, the assumption is that the 1592 edition succeeded the Zhu edition and brought about its substantial revision, enlargement and artistic embellishment.

Description of the Testing Method

Putting his methodology to the test was suggested to the author of this review by Prof. Koss.¹⁵ Given its complex nature, two methods were chosen for the testing. First, the text of the 1592 edition was scanned for the style markers as proposed by Patrick Hanan. Thus, an attempt was made to identify various layers of text that antedated the late Ming dynasty. Then, a close reading of the text itself and

¹² Chapter 9 is rather incongruous and seems to be a later insertion by Zhu Dingchen. See YU, A. C. Narrative Structure and the Problem of Chapter Nine in the “Hsi-Yu Chi”. In *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1975, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 295–311.

¹³ These are the Song dynasty *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取经诗话 [A Story, Interspersed with Poetry, about How Tripitaka from the Great Tang Acquired the Scriptures], the earliest written version of the *Xiyou ji* story, and the Yuan dynasty *zaju* 杂剧, the lyrical dramatic genre in China of 13th to 14th century, by playwrights such as Yang Jingxian 楊景賢 and Wu Changling 吳昌齡. See DUDBRIDGE, G. *The Hsi-yu chi: A Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel*, pp. 25–89.

¹⁴ See KOSS, N. *The Xiyou ji in its Formative Stages*, 1981.

¹⁵ KOSS, N. Personal communication, September 2007.

its comparison against the Zhu version were carried out to reveal different semantic units that were incorporated into the “final” text of the Shidetang edition. Finally, the use of various names for the main character Sun Wukong was examined in context.¹⁶

Note about the text formatting:

The quotations are based on the 1592 text. The text of Li Zhuowu (李卓吾)’s¹⁷ critical edition entitled *Xiyou ji jiaozhu* 西游记校注 [The Revised and Annotated ‘Journey to the West’] will be compared to the Zhu version. After each quotation there is a number indicating the location of the passage in both books (page/column of the text).

悟空 – occurrences of the different names of Sun Wukong

却待 – occurrence of the style markers (criteria)

bold type – marks the text found only in the 1592 version (+)

(text in parentheses) – marks the difference in the Zhu version (+/-)

[text in square brackets] – the text found only in the Zhu version (-)

Chapter 2

悟徹菩提真妙理 斷魔歸本和元神

The true wondrous doctrine of Bodhi thoroughly comprehended;

The destruction of Māra and the return to origin unify the soul.

Plot Summary

Having been accepted as a disciple of the Patriarch Subodhi, Sun Wukong applies himself to his studies with the utmost dedication. The Patriarch notices his talent

¹⁶ The text of the novel abounds in different names for various characters but by far the richest one in this respect is Sun Wukong. As Koss suggests, the use of a particular name for Sun Wukong in certain passages might be an indication of which “document” those passages are from. See KOSS, N. “A Look at the *Xiyou Ji*”, p. 8.

¹⁷ According to Prof. Robert Hegel, this commented edition was most likely the work of Ye Zhou 叶昼 (葉晝). In citations, the source text will therefore be referred to by the name of the novel’s author, i.e., Wu Cheng’en. Cf. HEGEL, R. Performing Li Zhi. Li Zhuowu and the Fiction Commentaries of a Fictional Commentator. In HANDLER-SPITZ, R., LEE, P. C., SAUSSY, H. (eds.). *The Objectionable Li Zhi. Fiction, Criticism, And Dissent in Late Ming China*, pp. 187–208.

and offers him a training in the advanced arts, which Sun Wukong, however, rejects one by one. Sun Wukong then receives a secret instruction leading to immortality and magic arts; however, he becomes too self-conceited, which eventually leads to his expulsion from the monastery. The monkey then returns to the Flower-Fruit Mountain and resumes his royal throne. He consolidates his rule by defeating a monster who has been harassing his kin.

Early Period Style Markers (Criteria) (Before 1450)

The early period style markers (criteria) occur five times in this chapter, with four of them grouped in a passage retelling in detail how to Sun Wukong was imparted the secret teaching of the Patriarch Subodhi. By readily solving the puzzle given him in front of the congregation of monks and receiving the instruction later, Sun Wukong shows his extraordinary intelligence and insight.

Style marker 卻待 *que dai* “was just about to... when...”:

In spite of its occurrence, this style marker obviously is not used in the sense that Hanan puts forward. In any case, the whole section with the style marker, except for a two-sentence embellishment, is identical in both versions.

Style marker 前後 *qian hou* “or thereabouts”:

“當日悟空與眾等，喜喜歡歡，在三星仙洞之前，盼望天色，急不能到晚（等不得到晚）。及黃昏時，卻與眾就寢，假合眼，定息存神。山中又沒打更傳箭，不知時分，只自家將鼻孔中出入之氣調定。約到子時前後，輕輕的起來，穿了衣服，偷開前門，躲離大眾，走出外，抬頭觀看。正是那：

月明清露冷，八極迴無塵。
深樹幽禽宿，源頭水溜汾。
飛螢光散影，過雁字排雲。
正直三更候，應該訪道真。”¹⁸

¹⁸ WU, Cheng'en. *Xiyou ji jiaozhu*, Vol. 1, pp. 31–32; ZHU, Dingchen. *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi'e zhuan*, p. 35.

English translation:

“Wukong spent the rest of the day **happily with the other pupils in front of the Divine Cave of the Three Stars**, eagerly waiting for the night. When evening arrived, he immediately retired with all the others, pretending to be asleep by closing his eyes, breathing evenly, and remaining completely still. **Since there was no watchman in the mountain to beat the watch or call the hour, he could not tell what time it was.** He could only rely on his own calculations by counting the breaths he inhaled and exhaled.

Approximately at the hour of Zi he arose very quietly and put on his clothes. Stealthily opening the front door, **he slipped away from the crowd and walked outside. Lifting his head, he saw**

The bright moon and the cool, clear dew;

In each corner was not a speck of dust.

Secluded fowls rested deep in the woods;

A brook flowed gently from its source.

The glow of darting fireflies dispersed the gloom.

Wild geese passed in calligraphic columns through the clouds.

Precisely it was the third-watch hour –

Time to seek the Truth, the Perfect Way.”¹⁹

In this passage we can see significant emendations by the 1592 editor who expanded the original text three times by adding some grace and explaining comments to it, and also by composing an additional eight-line rhymed poem in the *lüshi* style as an important structural device to sum up the plot and foreshadow its development.

Style marker 不多時 *bu duo shi* “before long”:

你看他從舊路徑至後門外，只見那門兒半開半掩。悟空喜道：“老師父果然注意與我傳道，故此開著門也。”即曳步近前，側身進得門裡，直走到祖師寢榻之下。見祖師蜷局身軀，朝里睡著了。悟空不敢驚動，即跪在榻前。那祖師不多時覺來，舒開兩足，口中自吟道：

¹⁹ YU, Anthony. *The Journey to the West*, Vol. 1, pp. 86–87.

“難！難！難！道最玄，
莫把金丹作等閑。
不遇至人傳妙訣，
空言口困舌頭乾！”²⁰

English translation:

“You see him following the familiar path back to the rear entrance, where he discovered that the door was, indeed, ajar. Wukong **said happily, “The reverend master truly intended to give me instruction. That’s why the door was left open.”**

He reached the door in a few large strides and entered sideways. Walking up to the Patriarch’s bed, he found him asleep with his body curled up, facing the wall. Wukong dared not disturb him; instead, he knelt before his bed. After a little while, the Patriarch awoke. Stretching his legs, he recited to himself:

Hard! Hard! Hard!
The Way is most obscure!
Deem not the gold elixir a common thing.
He who imparts dark mysteries not to a perfect man
Is bound to make words empty, the mouth tired and the tongue dry!”²¹

Here again the 1592 editor slightly enlarged the text by incorporating his explanatory comments into it. The reader is allowed a glimpse of the psychology of the protagonist, a dimension largely absent in the Zhu version.

Style marker 但見 *dan jian* “(all) he saw was...”:

此時說破根源，悟空心靈福至，切切記了口訣，對祖師拜謝深恩，即出後門觀看。但見東方天色微舒白，西路金光大顯明。依舊路，轉到前門，輕輕的推開進去，坐在原寢之處，故將床鋪搖響道：

²⁰ WU, Cheng'en. *Xiyou ji jiaozhu*, Vol. 1, p. 32; ZHU, Dingchen. *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi'e zhuan*, pp. 35–36.

²¹ YU, Anthony. *The Journey to the West*, Vol. 1, p. 87.

“天光了！天光了！起耶！”那大眾還正睡哩，不知悟空已得了好事。當日起來打混，暗暗維持，子前午後，自己調息。²²

English translation:

“At that moment, the very origin was revealed to Wukong, whose mind became spiritualized as happiness came to him. He carefully committed to memory all the oral formulas. After kowtowing to thank the Patriarch, he left by the rear entrance.

As he went out, he saw that the eastern sky was just beginning to pale with light, though golden beams were radiant from the Westward Way. Following the same path, he returned to the front door, pushed it open quietly, and went inside. He sat up in his sleeping place **and purposely rustled the bed and the covers, crying: “It’s light! It’s light! Get up!”**

All the other people were still sleeping and did not know that Wukong had received a good thing. He played the fool that day after getting up, but he persisted in what he had learned secretly by doing breathing exercises before the hour of Zi and after the hour of Wu.”²³

As before, the text is enriched here by descriptive details. The addition by the 1592 editor actually furnishes one more instance of the early marker which would speak in favour of an earlier dating of this part of the text.

Style marker 頃刻 *qing ke* “in a moment”:

悟空謝了，即抽身，捻著訣，丟個連扯，縱起筋(筋)斗雲，徑回東海(騰)。那裡消一個時辰，早看見花果山水簾(廉)洞。美猴王自知快樂，暗暗的自稱道(悟空雲)：

“去時凡骨凡胎重， 得道身輕體亦輕。

舉世無人肯立志， 立志修玄玄自明。

當時(當年)過海波難進， 今日來回(今世回來)甚易行。

別語叮嚀還在耳(自耳)， 何期頃刻見東溟。”²⁴

²² WU, Cheng'en. *Xiyou ji jiaozhu*, Vol. 1, p. 33; ZHU, Dingchen. *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi'e zhuan*, pp. 38–39.

²³ YU, Anthony. *The Journey to the West*, Vol. 1, p. 88.

²⁴ WU, Cheng'en. *Xiyou ji jiaozhu*, Vol. 1, pp. 37–38; ZHU, Dingchen. *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi'e zhuan*, p. 46–47.

English translation:

“Having thanked the Patriarch, Wukong turned away, made the magic sign, pulled himself up, and performed the cloud-somersault. He headed straight towards the East Pūrvavideha, and in less than an hour he could already see the Flower-Fruit Mountain and the Water-Curtain Cave. Rejoicing secretly, the Handsome Monkey King said to himself:

Heavy with bones of mortal stock I left this place.
But success in Tao has lighten'd both body and frame.
'Tis this world's pity that none is firmly resolved
To learn the mystery, plain to all who seek.
Hard was the advance in that hour of ocean crossing.
How easy the journey of my homecoming today!
Parting words of counsel still echo in my ears.
Mine's not the hope to see so soon the eastern depths!”²⁵

This style marker was found in an eight-line rhymed poem in the *lūshi* style. It is interesting to see that the poem was already inserted in the Zhu edition. The 1592 author, however, slightly refined the wording. Another point worth mentioning is the reversal of identity: right after having been banished from Subodhi's monastery and losing his status as a monk, Sun Wukong is referred to once again as the Handsome Monkey King, a name he had chosen for himself as the leader of the monkey tribe.

Middle Period Style Markers (Criteria) (1400 – 1575)

No occurrences of middle style markers were found in this chapter.

Late Period Style Markers (Criteria) (1550 – 1627)

Out of the eighteen markers put forward by Hanan, only one can be found in this chapter, which is in sharp contrast to the occurrence of early style markers frequency. It suggests that the 1592 text was finished not later than by 1550 but also that parts of the text were composed even much earlier, in the period before 1450.

²⁵ YU, Anthony. *The Journey to the West*, Vol. 1, pp. 93–94.

Style marker 自古道 *zi gu dao* “from olden times it has been said” (introducing a proverb):

忽一日，祖師與眾門人在三星洞前戲玩晚景。祖師道：“悟空，事成了未曾？”悟空道：“多蒙師父海恩，弟子功果完備，已能霞舉飛升也。”祖師道：“你試飛舉我看。”悟空弄本事，將身一聳，打了個連扯跟頭，跳離地有五六丈，踏雲霞去勾有頓飯功夫(之時)，返復不上(尚)三里遠近，落在面前，又(叩)手道：“師父，這就是飛舉騰云了。”祖師笑道：“這個算不得騰雲，只算得爬雲而已。自古道：‘神仙朝遊北海暮蒼梧。’似你這半日，去不上三里，即爬雲也還算不得哩！”²⁶

English translation:

“One day when the Patriarch and the various pupils were admiring the evening view in the front of the Three Stars Cave, the master asked, “Wukong, has that matter been perfected?” Wukong said, “**Thanks to the profound kindness of the master**, your pupil has indeed attained perfection; I now can ascend like mist into the air and fly.” The Patriarch said, “Let me see you try to fly.” Wishing to display his ability, Wukong leaped fifty or sixty feet into the air, pulling himself up with a somersault. He trod on the clouds for about the time of a meal and travelled a distance of no more than three miles before dropping down again to stand before the Patriarch. “Master,” he said, his hands folded down in front of him, “this is flying by cloud-soaring.” Laughing, the Patriarch said, “This can’t be called cloud-soaring! It’s more like cloud-crawling! The old saying goes, ‘The immortal tours the North Sea in the morning and reaches Cangwu by night.’ If it takes you half a day to go less than three miles, it can’t even be considered cloud-crawling.”²⁷

The 1592 editor here embellished Sun Wukong’s speech with a humble expression used when talking to one’s superiors.

²⁶ WU, Cheng’en. *Xiyou ji jiaozhu*, Vol. 1, p. 35; ZHU, Dingchen. *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi’e zhuan*, pp. 41–42.

²⁷ YU, Anthony. *The Journey to the West*, Vol. 1, pp. 90–91.

Findings of the Research Methodology Test

In the examined chapter, a certain refinement in the characterization of the hero of the novel can be observed but no substantial literary development. Compared to the Zhu edition, Sun Wukong appears in the 1592 even shrewder in the process of his study with the Patriarch but, which is more important, some depth is added to the description of his mental processes.

As for the various names of the protagonist, only three are used in the quoted text. Wukong 悟空, “Awakened to Emptiness”, is a Buddhist name (dharma name) used by the Patriarch Subodhi in communication with his disciple, while *dizi* 弟子, “your disciple”, is a self-deprecating form used in communication with a superior. Both appear in the monastic context. The only other name is *meihou wang* 美猴王, Handsome Monkey King, the name Sun Wukong used before he was humanized and received a last name and a dharma name. All in all, it appears that this text sample is too narrow to yield any meaningful results in this respect.

Conclusion

The methodology outlined by Nicholas Koss produced only limited practical results in the test aimed at tracing the development of the character Sun Wukong. Some embellishment of the descriptions can be observed across the Zhu and the 1592 editions, but not much else. In fact, the author himself acknowledged failure in his previous attempts at identifying and distinguishing various “documents” (oral versions or drafts) behind the Zhu text based on the various names used for the character Sun Wukong.²⁸ This somewhat limits the usefulness of the proposed methodology but does not cancel out its merits. For example, identifying the structural intensification of the dialogue between the Patriarch Subodhi and Sun Wukong in Ch. 2 of the *Xiyou ji* as a commentary on the Monkey King in the Zhu version and as the redactor’s in-text commentary on the oral tradition in the 1592 version is a very valuable finding. Moreover, applying the notion of *Sitz im Leben* to outline the context to which certain passages of the *Xiyou ji* probably referred has the potential to revolutionize how we read this classic novel. Finally, certain conclusions about the formation of the text of *Xiyou ji* could be applied to hypothesize the process of editing certain parts of the Bible. Part of Koss’s methodology, however, is based on premises such as the documentary hypothesis, which has been largely abandoned over the past few decades.

²⁸ See KOSS, N. A Look at the *Xiyou Ji*, p. 9.

As regards Patrick Hanan's method of dating vernacular stories based on style markers to the study of the *Xiyou ji*, Hanan himself labelled his method "rough", adding that it works up to a certain point but it had never been tried on the *Xiyou ji*. He specifically warned that [an occurrence of] an "early" criterion or two in a text does not necessarily mean those parts of the text are early. He suggested a more appropriate method for examining novels such as the *Xiyou ji*, that is to see if serious inconsistencies among the neutral markers in the text appear and, if so, to try to fix them to a time scale.²⁹

Finally, it should be noted that there is a significant point of difference between the process of formation of the two texts, namely the Bible and the *Xiyou ji*, and the application of the said methodology. In the case of the Bible, textual criticism seeks to determine the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the books of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because for many centuries manuscripts were copied by hand, and errors inevitably crept into those manuscripts.³⁰ In the case of the *Xiyou ji*, there is no original text to speak of and the authoritative text on which all later editions and translations are based is the 1592 edition.

In order to make progress in the research on the development of the text of the *Xiyou ji*, recent Chinese scholarship on pre-modern vernacular vocabulary, such as Prof. Shiyi Xu's (徐时仪) 2000 *Gu baihua cihui yanjiu lungao* 古白话词汇研究论稿 [A Draft on Research on the Vocabulary of the Ancient Vernacular] and its 2021 extended edition, should be taken into consideration. Shiyi Xu looks at linguistic criteria such as the laws of semantic change, semantic systems, morphological motivation, and phrase lexicalization to outline the process of development of the written Chinese language, which complements and advances Prof. Hanan's project.

At the intertextual and linguistic level, another important consideration in relation to the text of the *Xiyou ji* is the role of dialects, such as the dialect of the Huai'an (淮安) region in today's Jiangsu province where the late-Ming editions of the novel most likely came from. A study of local chronicles, textbooks of Mandarin, treatises on local folk adage, local scholars' notes and reviews and other documents could also help to draw clearer distinctions between different layers of text.

Naturally, each of these methods and approaches has its drawbacks but applying them consistently and simultaneously in the examination of a given text could produce a more reliable breakdown of various layers and their dating, along

²⁹ HANAN, P. *Re: Letter from a Student of Sinology*. Received by Radovan Škultéty, 13 June 2008.

³⁰ LONGMAN, T. III, STRAUSS, M. L. Textual Criticism. In *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*, s. p.

with more far-reaching findings about the development of the story, and hopefully even filling in the significant lacunae in the archive of written versions of the story.

In conclusion, using Biblical textual criticism as a methodology for the study of the formation of the *Xiyou ji* is a promising idea that could eventually lead to a reorganization and reinterpretation of the 100-chapter novel in a manner similar to A. C. Graham's treatment of the *Zhuangzi* in his *Inner Chapters*.³¹ The amount of effort such undertaking would require, as the reviewed paper suggests, is monumental and would probably become a lifetime scholarly project, especially given the rather fragmentary nature of the current methodological framework. Therefore, it is a pity that Prof. Koss seems to have abandoned this project and hasn't published any new material on it for the past twenty years.

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³¹ *Chuang-tzŭ: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzŭ*. Ed. and trans. by GRAHAM, A. C., 1981.

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