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Indian Influence on the Chinese Novel
The Journey to the West

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Beyond the Question of the Monkey Imposter: Indian Influence on the Chinese Novel, *The Journey to the West*

Ramnath Subbaraman

The Chinese Ming period (1368-1644) novel the *Hsi-yu Chi*, or *The Journey to the West*, relates the exploits of the monk Hsuan-tsang during a pilgrimage to India to obtain Buddhist scriptures. Throughout the hundred-chapter narrative, Hsuan-tsang's character is constantly overshadowed by the four animal disciples who accompany him on his journey, especially his superhuman monkey disciple Sun Wu-k'ung. These pilgrims are preordained to obtain the scriptures only after facing eighty-one ordeals, represented by a series of monsters that must be vanquished by the group. In these episodes of conflict, the monkey disciple inevitably plays the lead role in subjugating the demons through his strength, guile, and cunning.

In one such episode, Sun Wu-k'ung, having been temporarily rejected from the group of pilgrims seeking the scriptures, returns to his home at the Flower-Fruit Mountain to find that his position has been usurped by an imposter. No ordinary charlatan, this fake monkey so resembles Sun Wu-k'ung that, try as they may, observers "[can] not distinguish the true one from the false" (3: 118). Similar in facial features and strength, the two monkeys also simultaneously repeat each other's phrases, claiming that the other is the fake.

After Sun Wu-k'ung's traveling companions, the Jade Emperor, and even the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin all fail to differentiate between the two monkeys, the paradox is brought before the Buddha himself. When the Buddha solves the dispute by correctly identifying the false monkey, an indignant Sun Wu-k'ung immediately strikes the imposter dead despite the Buddha's pleas (3: 118-132). For the "Monkey of the Mind," there could only be one *true* monkey; to allow more would lead to the fundamental problem for which the incident is a metaphor: "If one has two minds, disasters he'll breed;/ He'll guess and conjecture both far and near" (3: 128).

An earlier version of this essay was presented at a University of Pennsylvania conference entitled "Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World." The author is grateful to Victor Mair of the University of Pennsylvania for arranging his appearance at this conference, as well as for providing important source material and critical commentary. Jean Zapanta also provided extensive editorial comments on the paper. Most of all, the author would like to thank Anthony Yu of the University of Chicago for vehemently encouraging him to pursue this idea, as well as for his suggestions and patience.

This episode can perhaps serve equally as well as a metaphor for the "regrettably acrimonious dispute" (Mair 660) that has surrounded the issue of the character Sun Wu-k'ung's historical origins. Not only does the debate circulate around two similar monkeys, but the scholarly community is also of two minds on this issue. Hu Shih's original suggestion that the character "is not a native product, but rather is an import from India" (cited in Mair 705) stimulated a controversy that has generally focused on whether Sun Wu-k'ung is of "indigenous" creation or simply a copy of the monkey Hanuman, a prominent character in the Indian epic the *Ramayana*. The issue has generally been construed in this highly polarized manner; Glen Dudbridge, for instance, interprets the claim of scholars supporting the possibility of Indian influence as being "quite simply, that Sun Wu-k'ung derives ultimately from Hanumat" (160). With one set of scholars claiming the "foreign" derivation of Sun Wu-k'ung and others denying any possible connection between *The Journey to the West* and Indian literature, the debate seems to boil down to one question: which monkey is the imposter?

Of course, the issue cannot and should not be reduced to such a simple question. This paper attempts to widen this debate by illuminating some of the remarkable plot similarities between *The Journey to the West* and the Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It does *not* examine the possibility of textual and oral transmission of Indian stories to China, an issue that has been extensively discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Dudbridge, Mair, and Walker). While most other analyses explore connections between particular images and characteristics, few examine the more *extended* plot parallels. Moreover, most other arguments focus solely on the similarities between the two monkeys Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung. The narrow scope of simply examining whether the first served as the "source" for the second misses a more general, and perhaps more significant, issue, namely the type of influence the Indian body of literature has had on a particular Chinese novel. Though this paper obviously focuses on the detailed similarities between texts, it does so keeping in mind this larger picture.

In light of this larger picture, this analysis includes comparisons not only between Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung but also between other characters, as well as particular aspects of plot and setting. Also, in addition to the Valmiki *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* (Poona critical edition) serves as a primary text for comparison to *The Journey to the West*. Both Indian texts are used not only to bring to prominence plot parallels between the *Mahabharata* and the Chinese novel that have previously been overlooked (possibly because the debate has focused so

heavily on the two monkey characters) but also to emphasize the idea that the possibility of an Indian influence on *The Journey to the West* cannot be understood by examining a single text alone. The concern here is not simply textual transmission but also cultural transmission; in this spirit, these particular versions of the Indian epics have not been chosen because of the assumption that they have some sort of primordial *Ur*-status. A.K. Ramanujan has written extensively on the multiplicity of Ramayanas, and he notes that "it is not always Valmiki's narrative that is carried from one language to another" (134). The Valmiki *Ramayana* and the Poona critical edition of the *Mahabharata* are rather used for their general comprehensiveness and, in this manner, serve to represent a wider spectrum of possible "tellings" of both epics (Ramanujan 134).

The first part of this paper revisits the debate surrounding Sun Wu-k'ung and Hanuman by offering new similarities and taking a closer look at previous connections. Next, an in-depth comparison between one episode of the *Mahabharata* and another from the *Journey to the West* illustrates the possibility of influence from multiple Indian texts on the Chinese novel. Finally, parallels between an episode of *The Journey to the West* and the *Ramayana* show that comparisons between the two texts should not simply be limited to the two monkey characters, but should be expanded to other characters, settings, extended plot lines, and even thematic organization. The use of these examples will hopefully illuminate the many ways Indian literature may have influenced the Chinese novel *The Journey to the West* without portraying the novel as a foreign "imposter."

Revisiting the Hanuman=Sun Wu-k'ung Debate: An Extended Plot Comparison

Given the many shared characteristics of Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung, the fascination of scholars with the possibility of a connection between the two is not at all surprising. Victor Mair notes, "Anyone who is fortunate enough to read both [texts] . . . will invariably be struck by the remarkable similarities between the monkey heroes in each of them" (660). Indeed, these "remarkable similarities" appear from the moment Sun Wu-k'ung enters the narrative in *The Journey to the West*. Take, for instance, the following passage recounting the monkey's birth:

Exposed to the wind, it was transformed into a stone monkey endowed with fully developed features and limbs. Having learned at once to climb and run, this

monkey also bowed to the four quarters, while two beams of golden light flashed from his eyes to reach even the Palace of the Polestar. The light disturbed the Great Benevolent Sage of Heaven, the Celestial Jade Emperor of the Most Venerable Deva, who, attended by his divine ministers, was sitting in the Cloud Palace of the Golden Arches, in the Treasure Hall of the Divine Mists. Upon seeing the glimmer of the golden beams, he ordered Thousand Mile-Eye and Fair Wind Ear to open the South Heavenly Gate and to look out. . . . With compassionate mercy, the Jade Emperor declared, 'These creatures from the world below are born of the essences of Heaven and Earth, and they need not surprise us' (1: 68).

In this excerpt from the *Ramayana*, Jambavan exalts Hanuman's greatness immediately before Hanuman rises to prominence as the main character in the narrative:

As a child in the great forest you once saw the sun rising, and thinking it was a fruit, you wished to seize it. So you leaped up and flew into the sky./ You leaped upward. . . . But as you flew swiftly through the sky, great monkey, wise Indra was filled with rage and hurled his thunderbolt at you./ Then as you fell on a mountain peak, your jaw was broken . . . that is why you are named Hanuman. . . . Now the bearer of fragrances, the wind god himself, seeing you stricken became enraged at all three worlds. And so the tempestuous wind god ceased to blow./ With the three worlds disturbed, all the gods became agitated, so the lords of the worlds propitiated angry Maruta./ Once Pavana was propitiated, Brahma gave you the boon that you could not be killed by any weapon in battle, dear child of true valor./ Gratified at seeing you undamaged by the blow of his thunderbolt, thousand-eyed Indra also gave you an excellent boon, which is that your death should occur only when you wish it, lord . . . you are both Kesarin's son, since his wife bore you, and the flesh and blood of Maruta, whom you equal in power. You are indeed the son of the wind, dear boy, and his equal in flight (IV.65.19-28).

These two passages demonstrate that immediately after birth or during early childhood, both monkeys "disturb" or threaten the most prominent figure in Heaven—"the Great Benevolent Sage of Heaven, the Celestial Jade Emperor of the Most Venerable Deva" and Indra, who is ruler of Heaven and king of the Devas in Hindu mythology. Moreover, both characters subsequently receive a blessing or boon from this figure out of admiration and respect for the disturbance.

The passages contain other similarities that are not as obvious. First, both passages bring to light the connection of each monkey to the wind, a resemblance also noted by Hera Walker (6-8). Hanuman is literally "the son of the wind [god]," and the *Ramayana* celebrates this aspect of Hanuman throughout the narrative. In his introduction to the fifth book of the epic, Robert Goldman notes:

Hanuman's association with the wind god is, of course, constitutive of his personality, physical powers, and character. His birth to Anjana as a "mind-born" son of the god of the wind is narrated by Jambavan at the end of the previous kanda, and the present book is filled with innumerable repetitions of his patronymic epithets such as marutatmaja, vayusunu, etc., while he is frequently said to move with the speed and force of the wind and to travel by his father's path. . . . it is noted that his father assists him in his leap to Lanka (41).

Just as Hanuman is conceived by the wind, the stone egg from which Sun Wu-k'ung derives only "transform[s]" into a monkey upon "expos[ure] to the wind." Hera Walker's commentary further illuminates this issue: "The wind is the paternal element to the maternal element of the earth. Like animals, the earth produces an egg, which is fertilized by the semen of the blowing wind. In giving the stone life, the wind makes Wukong *immortal* because he always has wind, or breath, within him" (7, emphasis mine). Thus, Sun Wu-k'ung comes closest to death in chapter 41 of the novel because his "breath [is] caught in his chest" and fails to move like the wind through the "three regions" (2:257-258). Throughout the narrative, Sun Wu-k'ung constantly changes the hairs of his body into various figures by blowing "divine breath" upon them. The following passage perhaps best sums up Wu-k'ung's relationship to the wind:

Now Sun symbolizes wind; where there is no wind, there is no fire. However, wind could churn up smoke, which at that moment reddened his eyes, giving them a permanently inflamed condition. Hence they were sometimes called Fiery Eyes and Diamond Pupils (1:167).

Another similarity brought out by these passages is the immortality of both monkeys. While Hanuman gains his immortality, as shown above, from the boons of both Brahma and Indra, Sun Wu-k'ung derives his from an "immortal stone" (1:67) and immortalizes his body through Taoist practices in the second chapter of the novel. Also, Walker's comment that "the wind makes Wukong immortal because he always has wind, or breath, within him" (7) corresponds to the divine power that Hanuman gains from his father, who constantly guides and protects him. It is interesting that "in the Thai rendition of the Rama saga, King Rama I wrote that Hanuman 'can never die, because whenever the wind blows on him, he is always brought back to life'" (Walker 7).

Finally, the "two beams of golden light" that "flashed from [Sun Wu-k'ung's] eyes" to disturb the Jade Emperor (1:68), as well as the description of Wu-k'ung's "fiery eyes and

diamond pupils" (1:167) match the many descriptions of Hanuman's eyes. Compare those lines to the following from the *Ramayana*: "And as he followed the path of the wind, his eyes, shining like lightning, blazed brightly like twin fires on a mountain./ The great, round, yellow eyes of that foremost of yellow-eyed monkeys blazed like the sun and moon" (V.1.54-55).

Commentary on Other General Shared Characteristics

This section aims to bring to light previously unnoticed mutual characteristics of the two monkeys as well as put flesh on the bones of many previous observations using direct quotations from both works¹. The ability of both monkeys to transform into various shapes has been heavily commented upon; thus, there are only a few previously unnoticed points on the subject to add in this discussion. First, it is important to recognize the similarity in the extraordinary range of possible transformations each monkey can achieve. While Sun Wu-k'ung easily "master[s] all seventy-two transformations" taught to him by the Taoist Patriarch (1:90), Hanuman boasts to Sita that he can "take on any form at will" (V.33.69). Also, though many scholars have noted Hanuman's ability to rapidly change in size, none have commented on his transformation into human shape by "giving up his own form for that of a mendicant" when he first encounters Rama (IV.3.3). This is an important observation to add to the debate, since Sun Wu-k'ung often changes into human form at the request of Hsuan-tsang when encountering unknown people so as not to scare them. Also, just as Hanuman takes on the form of a mendicant to meet Rama and Lakshmana, Wu-k'ung often takes on the figure of a Taoist priest when the pilgrims meet Taoist strangers in the narrative.

One piece of striking imagery that multiple commentators have noticed is that both monkeys' tails are described as looking like flags. Juxtaposing the original descriptions from both works makes this similarity clearer. When Hanuman makes his trip to Lanka, "his tail, flung out behind him, resembled the upraised banner of Sakra [Indra]" (V.1.57). In the sixth chapter of *The Journey to the West*, Sun Wu-k'ung attempts to conceal himself by changing his body into a temple and his tail into a flagpole. The author plays up this image in a comical manner, as it is the fatal flaw through which the pursuer recognizes the monkey:

¹ For an extensive summary of previously recognized connections between the two monkey characters, see Victor Mair's article "Suen Wu-kung=Hanumat?"

Only his tail he found to be troublesome, so he stuck it up in the back and changed it into a flagpole. . . . Seeing the flagpole behind [the temple], [the pursuer] laughed and said, "It's the ape! Now he's trying to deceive me again! I have seen plenty of temples before but never one with a flagpole behind it" (1:161).

Juxtaposing these two quotations shows that, though both texts have similar images, the authors employ these images in completely different ways. In the *Ramayana*, the image of the flag serves to exalt Hanuman's greatness, especially through the comparison to the banner of Indra. In *The Journey to the West*, however, Sun Wu-k'ung's transformation of his tail into a flagpole creates a more comical effect by playing with the idea of the tail as the monkey's Achilles' heel.

Another much commented-on similarity that would benefit from a direct look at the texts is the ability of both monkeys to attack their opponents from within. There are two prominent examples of this method of attack in the *Ramayana*. In the first instance, a goddess named Surasa takes on the form of a raksasa (monster) and threatens Hanuman by saying, "I am going to eat you, so get into my mouth" (V.1.136). Hanuman attempts to escape by expanding his body beyond the size of her mouth:

Addressed in this fashion by Surasa, the bull among monkeys became angry and replied, "Then make your mouth big enough to hold me."/ Having spoken these words, Hanuman grew to a height of ten leagues./ When Surasa saw that he had expanded himself to a distance of ten leagues so that he resembled a huge cloud, she opened her mouth to a distance of twenty leagues./ Hanuman, however, in rage, extended himself. . . . But when Maruti, the wise son of the wind god, who resembled a great cloud, saw the gaping mouth of Surasa with its long tongue, looking like hell itself, he contracted his body so that in an instant he was no bigger than a thumb./ He entered her mouth and flew out (V.1.143-152).

In this manner, Hanuman escapes the rakshasa by quickly moving in and out of her mouth.

The next example from the *Ramayana* bears much more resemblance to the methods used by Sun Wu-k'ung. In this instance, Hanuman encounters another rakshasa woman named Simhika:

Recognizing her as Simhika from the nature of his situation, the clever monkey grew to enormous size. . . . When she saw the body of the great monkey expanding, she stretched her jaws as wide apart as heaven and hell./ The great and clever monkey noted her huge and hideous jaws, the full extent of her body, and her vital spots./ But once inside her open mouth, the powerful monkey instantly contracted his adamant body. . . . [he] vanish[ed] in her mouth. . . . With his

sharp claws the monkey slashed her vital organs and flew up swiftly. . . . all . . .
saw Simhika fallen, quickly slain by the monkey (V.1.172-178).

In his introduction to the fifth book, Robert Goldman notes the constant recurrence of this motif throughout the epic and the pervasiveness of this type of imagery in Indian literature. He states:

Connected with . . . Hanuman's dispassionate visual consumption of women as sexual objects is a recurrent motif in which he encounters powerful female figures who he penetrates and destroys. This motif is first introduced in . . . the reduplicative encounters with the mock demoness Surasa and the real one Simhika. . . . both center around the projection of the female as the nightmarish, gargantuan, and all-devouring form that recurs frequently in traditional Indian literature. . . . This motif of Hanuman's encounters with, and penetration of, female figures is latent in the entire episode (52).

Sun Wu-k'ung attacks enemies by entering their stomachs many times throughout the novel, including chapters 59, 75, and 82. In the first instance in chapter 59, Wu-k'ung attacks a female monster whose name, interestingly, is Raksasi, a term meaning "female demon" that probably derives from the word raksasa. The use of this term connects back to the fact that both Surasa and Simhika (the two demons destroyed by Hanuman from within) are both female raksasas. The passage reads as follows:

Pilgrim by then already reached her stomach; changing back into his true form, he shouted: "Sister-in-law, lend me your fan!" Turning white, Raksasi cried, "Little ones, . . . how is it that Pilgrim Sun is making noises in our house?" "He's making noises in your body," said one of the maids (3:146).

The excerpt above again shows that each author employs the same imagery in a completely different manner in each text. The passage from the *Ramayana* is simultaneously more heroic and gruesome, while that from the Chinese novel is more comical. Yet the continuation of the previous passage shows greater similarity between the two examples:

Suddenly he shoved his foot down hard and unbearable pain shot through Raksasi's lower abdomen, sending her tumbling to the floor and moaning. "Please don't refuse me, Sister-in-law," said Pilgrim, "I'm presenting you with an added snack for your hunger." He jerked his head upward, and unbearable pain coursed through Raksasi's heart. She began to roll all over the ground, the pain turning her face yellow and her lips white. All she could do was to cry out: "Brother-in-law Sun, please spare my life!" (3:147).

Just as Hanuman notes Simhika's "vital spots" and "slash[es] her vital organs," Sun Wu-k'ung causes Raksasi pain by attacking her abdomen and heart. Even Wu-k'ung's use of the word "snack" is a pun for "a touch of the heart" (3:438). Moreover, just as Goldman notes that Hanuman's actions could symbolize the "penetration" of an "all-devouring female form," Wu-k'ung's behavior seems to have similar connotations, especially with his request for Raksasi not to "refuse [him]" and his reference to her "hunger." Thus, the deployments of this motif in both texts have distinct similarities, though the author of *The Journey to the West* gives it a much more comical twist, especially when the motif is used again in chapters 75 and 82.

An important set of similarities that has commonly been overlooked in the Hanuman=Sun Wu-k'ung debate revolves around the fact that both monkeys are central figures in a monkey kingdom. In fact, the settings in which the two kingdoms are situated share remarkable parallels. The following excerpt from the *Ramayana* describes the visit of Rama's brother, Laksmana, to Kiskindha, the monkey kingdom from which Hanuman hails. Kiskindha is a single cave in an area replete with "waterfalls and caves" (IV.1.48).

Then when he was summoned, Laksmana . . . entered the terrible cave Kiskindha/. . . Majestic Laksmana saw that delightful, heavenly, great cave made of jewels, filled with jewels, crowded with mansions and palaces, resplendent with all sorts of wares. The cave with its blossoming groves was resplendent with blossoming trees, whose fruits satisfied every desire. It was splendid with beautiful monkeys wearing heavenly garlands and clothing, for these were the sons of gods and gandharvas and could change form at will. The principal streets were fragrant with the scents of sweet-smelling sandal, aloes and padma, and of maireya and madhu wines; and there were many-storied palaces as solid as Mount Meru or the Vindhya mountains. And Raghava saw there unsullied mountain streams (IV.32.4-8).

In the first chapter of *The Journey to the West*, Sun Wu-k'ung follows a mountain stream to its source with a group of monkeys. There they find a waterfall hanging like a "curtain." Sun Wu-k'ung quickly crosses the waterfall to discover a cave "that seemed to be some kind of residence" (1:70). He describes this place to the other monkeys:

There isn't any water at all. There's a sheet iron bridge, and beyond it is a piece of heaven-sent property. . . . This water splashes through a hole in the rock and fills the space under the bridge. Beside the bridge there is a stone mansion with trees and flowers. Inside are stone ovens and stoves, stone pots and pans, stone beds and benches. A stone tablet in the middle has the inscription, 'The Blessed Land of the Flower-Fruit Mountain, The Cave Heaven of the Water-Curtain

Cave.' This is truly the place for us to settle in. It is, moreover, very spacious inside and can hold thousands of the young and old. Let's all go live in there, and spare ourselves from being subject to the whims of Heaven (1:71).

Wu-k'ung establishes this cave as the site of a monkey kingdom over which he himself rules.

The passages above illuminate several highly detailed connections. The first is that both monkey kingdoms are in caves located in mountainous areas near streams and waterfalls. Also, while Kiskindha has "blossoming groves . . . resplendent with blossoming trees, whose fruits satisfied every desire," Sun Wu-k'ung's kingdom has many "trees and flowers" and is part of the "Flower-Fruit Mountain," the lushness of which the narrator conveys throughout the first chapter of the novel. Both caves are filled with buildings: Kiskindha has "mansions . . . [and] many-storied palaces as solid as Mount Meru" while Wu-k'ung's kingdom has a "stone mansion" complete with living facilities such as ovens, beds, and benches. These structures allow living space for an entire kingdom of monkeys in both cases; indeed, Sun Wu-k'ung's kingdom can hold "thousands of the young and old." Finally, just as the monkey Sugriva rules over Kiskindha, Sun Wu-k'ung governs the kingdom in the Water-Curtain Cave.

Some of the links between the two kingdoms are also of a more general nature. First, both share a general plot motif in which a true monkey king returns to his kingdom after having been abroad to find that his place has been stolen by an imposter. In the case from the *Ramayana*, the monkey king Vali leaves his kingdom to kill a demon accompanied by his brother Sugriva. Sugriva accidentally comes to believe that the demon killed his brother and returns home to rule the monkey kingdom. After Vali finally kills the demon and discovers Sugriva on the throne, he angrily banishes Sugriva from the monkey community (IV.9-10). Similarly, in chapters 28 and 57 of *The Journey to the West*, Sun Wu-k'ung returns to the Water-Curtain Cave to find the kingdom under the control of others. In the first case, the monkeys of the kingdom have been largely decimated by a group of hunters (2:34). In the second instance, Sun Wu-k'ung finds his throne usurped by a monkey "double" that looks and acts exactly as he does (3:103-133). In both cases, Sun Wu-k'ung subdues the enemies and frees his kingdom from the false rulers.

Both Sun Wu-k'ung and Sugriva mobilize mighty forces of monkeys that eventually fight in the battles of an extensive war. The most prominent examples of this mobilization in the *Ramayana* take place in the fourth and sixth books of the epic. In the fourth book, countless

monkeys gather at Kiskindha to search for Sita (IV.37-38); Sugriva boasts that these monkeys have come by the "ten thousand trillions" (IV.38.30-32). Later, in the climactic battle against Ravana that takes place throughout the sixth book of the epic, these same monkeys constitute Rama's army. In the fifth and sixth chapters of *The Journey to the West*, a "troop of monkeys" aids Sun Wu-k'ung against his battle with the troops sent from Heaven, led by Devaraja Li (1:147-160). In addition, as he often does throughout the novel, Sun Wu-k'ung creates additional monkeys from a handful of his own hairs by putting them in his mouth, chewing them, and spitting them out. These hairs then transform into "thousands of Great Sages [imitations of Sun Wu-k'ung], each employing a golden-hooped rod" (1:148). Another force sent from Heaven under the command of Erh-lang finally defeats this army, "dispers[ing] the four mighty commanders of monkey imps and captur[ing] two or three thousand intelligent monkeys" (1:159).

The comparisons presented above focus solely on the similarities between *The Journey to the West* and a single Indian text; furthermore, the arguments circulate solely around two characters, Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung. As such, they do not compellingly situate *The Journey to the West* within the larger multifaceted question of the influence Indian texts and motifs in general may have had on the Chinese novel. The next section attempts to engage this question by presenting the possibility of Indian influence from another angle using a different text, the *Mahabharata*.

Terrorized Villagers, Heroic Travelers: The Mahabharata and The Journey to the West

Comparing extensively the section which relates the slaying of the demon Baka in the first book of the *Mahabharata* to the episode in which the pilgrims confront a demon at the Heaven-Reaching River in chapters 47 and 48 of *The Journey to the West* reveals startling similarities². Thus, this comparison serves as a site through which to explore the wider possibility of Indian influence on the Chinese novel. The parallels are evident even on a highly superficial level. In each text, a small traveling group takes refuge in a villager's home.

² Dieter Schlingloff's paper "The Oldest Extant Parvan-list of the Mahabharata" reveals that a Buddhist manuscript from Chinese Turkistan (Qizil) lists many subparvans of the *Mahabharata* (including the subparvan containing the

Unfortunately, some of the people who live in the house must soon be sacrificed to satisfy a monster that rules over the townspeople. Members from the traveling group then kindly consent to act as surrogates for the villagers in the sacrifice and ultimately help to defeat the monster.

A closer examination of the two texts reveals even more intricate connections between the episodes. First, there are general parallels on the level of setting and the social situation of the characters in each text. In the *Mahabharata*, an assassination attempt by their cousin forces the Pandavas, a group of princely brothers, to wander in disguise accompanied by their mother, Kunti. To protect themselves, they take refuge in the house of a brahmin in a small village named Ekacakra (I.144-145). Similarly, in *The Journey to the West*, Hsuan-tsang and the rest of the pilgrims seeking scriptures from the Western Heaven (Sun Wu-k'ung, Chu Pa-chieh, Sha Monk, and the Dragon Prince) take residence in the home of two old Buddhist men in a village of about "four or five hundred houses altogether" after having been discouraged in their travels by the width of the Heaven-Reaching River (2:356-357).

The traveling groups in both texts share a very similar status within their respective societies. Though actually of the warrior caste, the Pandavas disguise themselves as part of the priestly class by wearing the markers of wandering brahmins: "the men braided their hair and all wore bark skirts and deerskins, and so did Kunti, assuming the guise of ascetics" (I.144.1). Following with this disguise, they dwell in the house of brahmin and obtain their food in the manner of people who have renounced worldly life: "All of them went abegging, . . . [and] [e]very night they handed their alms over to Kunti" (I.145.1). In fact, even their brahmin host takes them to be part of his own caste (I.149.1). The pilgrims in *The Journey to the West* similarly have the role of wandering monks, or, as Sun Wu-k'ung often emphasizes, "those who have left the family." They choose to request hospitality from those particular villagers because they hear religious services coming from the house that are distinctly Buddhist, not Taoist (2:356). When the pilgrims encounter one of these villagers, he is "chanting the name of the Buddha" and is in the process of "feasting" many Buddhist monks (2:357-358).

In each text, the members of the traveling group discover the problems of their hosts after hearing the host family in lamentation. In the *Mahabharata*, Kunti "hear[s] the sounds of grief coming from the brahmin and his wife. . . . [and finds the brahmin], with wife son, and daughter,

Baka episode); this discovery strongly suggests that the *Mahabharata* may have been known in other parts of China as well. The author thanks Michael Witzel of Harvard University for pointing him to this paper.

his face distorted by grief" (I.149.15-20). The brahmin laments that "accursed is the life in this world, with the substance of a flame, meaningless, rooted in pain, enslaved to others, and only finding misfortune" (I.145.20-25). He then continues to reveal his fear for the survival of the family. The mother and the daughter then discuss the situation and offer themselves for the sake of the family. After hearing this emotional discussion among the family members, Kunti proceeds to inquire and intervene in the situation. Similarly, in *The Journey to the West*, the pilgrims accost the old men to stay at their home specifically because of their involvement in a Buddhist religious ceremony. Hsuan-tsang then inquires into the nature of the ceremony, and Pa-chieh replies:

"Why do you ask, Master?" said Pa-chieh, laughing. "Can't you guess? It has to be a service for harvest, or for peace, or for the completion of a building. Nothing more!" "No, no," said the old man. . . . "It's a preparatory mass for the dead." Laughing so hard that he could hardly remain seated, Pa-chieh said, ". . . You think monks are ignorant of masses and religious services? You may hold a preparatory mass for the transference of merit, or for the presentation of a votive offering. Since when was there ever a preparatory mass for the dead? There is no one in your house who has died. How could you have a mass for the dead?" (2:362-363).

By further investigating the cause of this puzzling ceremony, the pilgrims learn of the family's situation.

After Kunti approaches the brahmin in the *Mahabharata*, he describes to her the reason for the family's grief:

What you say, ascetic, is becoming to the good. But no one can dispel this grief. Close to this city lives a powerful Raksasa named Baka who lords it over the countryside as well as the town. This evil-spirited man-eater feeds on human flesh and, being a powerful king of the Asuras and possessing the power of Raksasas, always extends his protection to country, city, and land. Because of him we are in no danger from the circle of enemies, or from any creatures. The price he has set is a cartload of rice, two buffalos, and the one human who takes them there. All the people provide him with his food, each in his turn; and when after many years a man's turn comes around, he finds it hard to escape. If people anywhere try to escape their turn, the Raksasa kills them with wife and children and eats them (I.148.1-10).

One of the old villagers in *The Journey to the West* reveals to the pilgrims that his current situation is intimately involved with the "Great King of Miraculous Power" who "bless[es]

people far and near./ . . . [by] send[ing] us sweet rains from month to month,/ And auspicious clouds from year to year" (2:363). Sun Wu-k'ung naturally asks why this circumstance causes the family so much grief. The old man explains further:

"Though favors abound, there's also spite./ He will take lives even when he is kind./ He loves to eat the virgin boys and girls,/ This god has no enlightened, upright mind!" "So he likes to devour virgin boys and girls?" said Pilgrim. "Yes," said the old men. Pilgrim said, "I suppose it's your family's turn now?" "Indeed it is," said one of the old men. "Our village here consists of over one hundred families. . . . Every year this Great King requires the sacrifice of a virgin boy and a virgin girl in addition to the offering of various kinds of livestock like hogs and sheep. When he has devoured all of these to his satisfaction, he would bless us with wind and rain in due season. If there is no such sacrifice for him, he will inflict upon us all kinds of calamity" (2:364).

The situations of the families in both texts (as described in the two passages above) share many striking parallels. The most obvious is that a demon, Baka in the case of Ekacakra, and Great King of Miraculous Power in the case of the village next to the Heaven-Reaching River, rules and protects the town. As the brahmin states, Baka "extends his protection to country, city, and land . . . [eliminating] danger from the circle of enemies, or from any creature." The Great King blesses the village with "sweet rain" and "auspicious clouds." These benefits are a mixed blessing in both cases, however, for the satisfaction and forestallment of retribution by the monster depends on the constant sacrifice of villagers. The responsibility of providing a human for the monster's nourishment rotates among the various families in the village in both texts. The brahmin notes the impossibility of escaping the monster: "If people anywhere try to escape their turn, the Raksasa kills them with wife and children and eats them." Similarly, the old men in *The Journey to the West* relate the futility of attempting to trick the demon in order to save a family member: "He knows everything there is to know of our families here; he can remember even the birth dates and hours of young and old. He will not consider it a treat unless he can devour children who are truly ours" (2:365). Finally, both demons require similar offerings, mixing both humans and livestock; while Baka demands "a cartload of rice, two buffalos, and one human," the Great King asks for the "sacrifice of a virgin boy and virgin girl in addition to the offering of various kinds of livestock like hogs and sheep."

While in one case, two old men must collectively sacrifice their virgin girl and virgin boy, in the other, any single member of the family must be given up to satisfy the monster.

Though—unlike the situation in *The Journey to the West*—the family in the *Mahabharata* does not have to sacrifice both its children, the plight of the children dramatizes the family's predicament in a manner similar to the episode in the Chinese novel. First, the primary dilemma for the families in both texts revolves around a young daughter and a young son. As the father in the *Mahabharata* laments, he does not even mind sacrificing himself except for the fact that this could lead to the downfall of his wife and children:

How could I sacrifice my daughter, a child still, before the age and without the outward signs of womanhood? The great-spirited creator has left her with me in trust for her husband; and from her I and my ancestors hope for the worlds that the sons of one's daughters open to one. . . . There are men that hold that a father loves his son more than his daughter—I do not, I love them both as much, though on the son rests the worlds and continuity and bliss eternal. . . . Yet if I leave [my family] behind it is clear that they won't be able to live (I.145.35-40).

The mother and the daughter repeat this logic, each arguing that she herself must be sacrificed for the preservation of the rest of the family, especially the young boy, who will continue the family line. Similarly, one of the old men in *The Journey to the West* says: "The joint age of my brother and me is over one hundred and twenty, but we have only these two children to perpetuate our families. How could we ever anticipate that the turn to provide victims would fall on us! We dare not, of course, refuse, but it is difficult to give up our precious children" (2:364-365).

One critical similarity is that the primary concern for both families is the preservation of lineage. Not only does the old man in the Chinese novel emphasize that "we have only these two children to perpetuate our families," but he also describes how both the old men only obtained children after great pains:

"How many esteemed sons do you have in your family?" said Pilgrim. "Alas! Alas!" said the older of the two men, beating his breast. "Why mention 'esteemed sons'? The term would only embarrass us to death! . . . [we are] both badly off for children. Since I had no children even when I was fifty, friends and relatives urged me to take a concubine. I had no choice but to do so and a girl was born later" (2:364).

This concern with lineage is highly reminiscent of the *Mahabharata* in which, as shown above, the brahmin says that a daughter "opens worlds" to one and one's ancestors and that "on the son rests the worlds and continuity and bliss eternal." Later in the episode, the daughter again argues

that she herself must be the one sacrificed "for the sake of your progeny, good father" (I.147.15). She believes that "[w]hen father has gone to heaven and my little brother perished, the offerings to the ancestors will come to an end, and that will much displease them. . . . But when [the father] is healthy and safe, mother and my little brother and our line and the offering to the Fathers will go on as always" (I.147.5-15). Thus, in both the *Mahabharata* and *The Journey to the West*, the distress of the family hinges on the two children and concern for the perpetuation of the family line. Because of this concern for lineage, both families attempt to buy another person to act as a substitute in the sacrifice. Both attempts fail, however: while the brahmin does not have the economic means to afford a surrogate (I.148.15), one of the old men says that the "Great King" cannot be outsmarted with another virgin child, as he "will not consider it a treat unless he can devour children who are truly ours" (2:365).

After hearing the brahmin's story, Kunti takes pity on them and offers one of her sons, the Pandava Bhima, to be a substitute in the sacrifice. Though the brahmin initially adamantly refuses, he eventually agrees once Kunti convinces him that her son can defeat the Raksasa (I.149.1-15). Similarly, Sun Wu-k'ung offers to take the place of the young boy in the sacrifice to the Great King, and he uses his abilities to transform into a figure that looks so much like the young boy that even the father cannot tell them apart (2:366). Interestingly, Bhima shares the same relationship to the wind that Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung have (described in the second section of this paper). Kunti conceived Bhima with the wind god so that she would bear a "son of triumphant strength" (I.114.1). Other characters constantly recognize the importance of this characteristic of Bhima throughout the epic; once, when the brothers are attempting to escape their cousin Duryodhana and can no longer walk, they call on Bhima to carry them because "[he] alone [is] the strongest of us, [he] alone [is] like the Wind" (I.137.20). Bhima then proceeds to carry his brothers so quickly that "the speed of his thighs raised up a wind that stormed as it storms at the onset of the months of Asadha and Jyaistha" (I.138.1). The text also shows an awareness of the connection of Bhima to Hanuman through their shared father, the wind, and plays up this relationship later in the epic.

After Sun Wu-k'ung agrees to take the place of the young boy in the sacrifice, he volunteers Chu Pa-chieh to serve as a surrogate for the girl. Pa-chieh vigorously refuses to play this role, claiming that he cannot transform into the correct shape and size to take her place. Hsuan-tsang, realizing that this is an absurd excuse on Pa-chieh's part, attempts to convince Pa-

chieh that taking the girl's place is the right thing to do: "The proverb says, 'The saving of one life is better than the construction of a seven-tiered pagoda.' In the first place, we should repay their great kindness to us; in the second, we should make merit whenever possible by the performance of good works" (2:367). This argument for helping the family in need made by Hsuan-tsang is remarkably similar to one that Kunti makes to the Pandava Yudhisthira to convince him to let Bhima take the place of one of the brahmin's family members. When Kunti first suspects that the brahmin family is in grief, she says to Bhima: "We have been living very happily in this brahmin's house, son, and we have been well-treated. . . . I have often thought whether I could not do something nice for this brahmin, son, as people do who lodge somewhere happily" (I.145.10-15). Later, when Yudhisthira protests Bhima's involvement in the brahmin family's problems, Kunti chides him:

I didn't make my decision because my mind has gone feeble! Son, we have been living happily in this brahmin's house, and I want to consider this our compensation, dear. One is a man to the extent of his gratitude. . . . [W]hat I had in mind was *Law*, and *that* decided me! Two purposes are going to be accomplished this way, Yudhisthira, compensation for our lodging and a great deal of *Law* observed. The baron who renders assistance to a brahmin in any matter, will, so I have heard, obtain the blessed worlds (I.150.10-25).

In the passage above, Kunti outlines the same two reasons that Hsuan-tsang does for assisting the family in need. Both see gratitude for the hospitality accorded by the family as the first reason for helping. For the second reason, Hsuan-tsang cites the making of merit through good works, while Kunti argues for adherence to the "Law" which helps one "obtain blessed worlds." Though these two references are culturally specific, they are also very similar. The pilgrims refer to the "making of merit" constantly throughout the Chinese novel; this term refers to the various good deeds the pilgrims perform during the journey through feats such as subduing demons. Indeed, the actions through which the pilgrims make merit could be read as a metaphor for the spiritual journey that they undertake in traveling to the Western Heaven. The term "Law" as used in van Buitenen's translation of the *Mahabharata* refers to the Hindu concept of *dharma*, which can be roughly interpreted as one's religious and caste duty. Performing one's *dharma* is thus fundamentally tied to spiritual obligation and fulfillment or, as Kunti puts it, the "obtain[ing] [of] the blessed worlds." Like the Buddhist idea of making merit in *The Journey to the West*, the notion of *dharma* lies at the very heart of the Indian epic; indeed, many read the

massive work as a complex inquiry into the nature of *dharma*. Thus, the first reason for helping the family in need given by Hsuan-tsang and Kunti involves repayment for hospitality, while the second ties to the larger issues of spiritual fulfillment that are vital to both works.

When the characters in both texts finally encounter the demon, both Bhima and Sun Wu-k'ung utterly surprise the monster in a rather comical way. Bhima enrages the demon Baka by slowly and nonchalantly eating the rice meant for the demon. Furthermore, Bhima laughs and does not even look at the raksasa as it continuously strikes him on the back. Only when Bhima finishes eating and rinses his mouth clean with water does he begin to engage the monster in battle (I.151.1-15). Similarly, Sun Wu-k'ung surprises the Great King of Miraculous Power by immediately answering the demon's questions without a hint of fright, and wholeheartedly offering himself to be eaten. The suspicious demon tries to eat Pa-chieh (disguised as a girl) first, at which point the pilgrims begin to fight with the monster (2:371). The final similarity between these two episodes is that both demons are indeed eventually killed or subdued by the protagonists. This extended plot comparison shows how the current debate can be expanded beyond single characters and single texts to incorporate a wider body of knowledge that diversifies the manner in which the issue is approached.

Abducted Princesses, Shattered Kings, and Monkey Emissaries: Another Plot Comparison

This next section returns to the *Ramayana* to help explore an episode in *The Journey to the West* that serves as a virtual microcosm of some of the most prominent and famous events in the Indian epic. Again, the similarities between chapters 68-71 (the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom episode) of the Chinese novel and the *Ramayana* are evident even on a superficial level. In both texts, a demon abducts the consort of a king (or prince) and takes this princess back to his palace. Plunged into grief, this king then meets a monkey who volunteers to search for and find the lost princess. This monkey traces the princess back to the demon's dwelling and disguises himself to enter the palace. Upon locating the princess, the monkey serves as an emissary from the king, proving his authenticity by showing the princess a specific token given by the king. After conversing with the princess, the monkey sets fire to the demon's palace and quickly escapes³.

³ Schlingloff's paper "The Oldest Extant Parvan-list of the Mahabharata" notes that the same Buddhist manuscript that lists the parvans of the *Mahabharata* also contains a summary of the *Ramayana*, including Sita's abduction and

The background of these events in *The Journey to the West* must be elaborated upon before examining the details of the connections. In chapter 68 of the Chinese novel, the pilgrims enter the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom, where they discover a proclamation stating that the ruler of the kingdom is gravely ill and is desperately seeking someone who would be able to cure this illness. Sun Wu-k'ung immediately examines the king and declares that the ruler has "the manifestation type of an illness called the 'Paired Birds Separated from Company'" (3:306). Mixing various ingredients, the monkey administers a medicine to the king that quickly purges the root of the disease, curing him (3:314). At this point, the king explains that the root cause of his illness was the abduction of his consort by a demon king a few years prior to the arrival of the pilgrims (3:317-319). The kidnapping of the princess Golden Sage Palace in *The Journey to the West* (described in more detail below) parallels the abduction of Sita by the demon Ravana (III.40-47), which is the critical event around which the entire Indian epic revolves.

The king's anxiety upon the abduction of his princess, which the author dramatizes through the excruciating illness, has multiple links to Rama's predicament after the abduction of Sita by the demon king Ravana. The king of the Scarlet-Purple kingdom describes the abduction of the princess and the subsequent anxiety as follows:

"Our illness of several years," replied the king, "was caused by great anxiety. . . . [The demon Jupiter's Rival] learned of the great beauty of our Golden Sage Palace [the king's consort]. He demanded that we turn her out, and if we did not after his asking us three times, he would first eat us alive and then proceed to devour the various officials and the people. . . . [W]e had no alternative . . . [the queen] was immediately abducted by the fiend with a single sound. That incident, of course, gave us a great fright, and the glutinous rice cakes we ate thus remained undigested in our body. Moreover, we were ridden with anxious thoughts night and day, which led to three long years of bitter illness. . . . There's not a day or a night that we do not yearn for her presence" (3:317-318).

Indeed, the author's description of the purging of the illness symbolizes the extent of the pain and anxiety the king suffered; the products excreted by the king were such that "the filth and phlegm were indescribable, in the midst of which there was also a lump of glutinous rice" (3:314).

Hanuman's offer of aid to Rama. This text predates yet another record of the *Ramayana* in Chinese Buddhist writing discovered by K. Wanatabe.

Valmiki's *Ramayana* is replete with descriptions of Rama's yearning and anxiety after the abduction of Sita. Perhaps the most evocative of these takes place throughout sargas 56-62 of the *Aranyakanda* (the third book), which consist nearly entirely of Rama's lamentation for the lost Sita. For example, the following line associates Rama's anxiety with physical ailments: "I am sick at heart and wretched at what has happened, Laksmana; my left eye is throbbing fitfully. Sita no doubt is gone—she has been carried off, or has set out on her own, or is dead" (III.55.20). Rama searches for her until he has the "look of a madman" and then even proceeds to question the trees surrounding the area as to whether they have seen Sita (III.58.9-13). He then becomes immensely angry: "Anguished and tormented by the abduction of Sita, Rama was prepared to annihilate the worlds, like the fire that comes on doomsday" (III.61.1). Later, in the *Kiskindhakanda* (the fourth book), Rama again plunges into grief after witnessing the sensuousness of the surroundings of Lake Pampa (IV.1).

In both texts, the monkey responds to the king's sorrow by offering to find the princess and return her to the ruler. It is important to note that the motif of the monkey rescuing a princess on behalf of a king occurs not once, but twice in *The Journey to the West*. In chapter 31 of the novel, Pa-chieh describes another case of a princess abducted by a demon king:

Master met a saving star inside, who happened to be the third princess of the Precious Image Kingdom, abducted some time ago by that fiend. She wrote the letter to her family and wanted Master to send it for her; that was the reason why she persuaded the monster to let Master go. When we arrived at the kingdom, we presented the letter, whereupon the king asked Master to subdue the monster (2:83).

Sun Wu-k'ung meets with and eventually rescues this princess. Thus, Wu-k'ung consents to rescue a princess in chapter 31, in addition to his offer to the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom (3:318-319). Hanuman also offers to search for Sita, and Rama has so much confidence in the monkey that "his senses and heart filled with joy like someone whose object was already achieved" (IV.43.10). Moreover, later in the *Kiskindhakanda*, the poet emphasizes the fact that Hanuman is the only monkey powerful enough to make the leap to the island of Lanka to find Sita (IV.65-66).

Each monkey is then given a token that the princess will immediately recognize upon inspection. In the Indian epic, "Rama, scorcher of foes, was delighted and gave [Hanuman] a ring engraved with his name as a token of recognition for the princess./ 'Janaka's daughter will

see by this sign that you have come from me and she will not be afraid, best of monkeys” (IV.43.11-12). Similarly, Sun Wu-k’ung doubts that the princess would immediately believe his story:

Even if I were to succeed, I fear that our lady would refuse to accompany me, a stranger, to return to the kingdom. She will trust me only if she sees me entrusted with some object most dear to her when she was in the palace. . . . “In the dressing alcove,” said the king, “at the Palace of the Bright Sun, there is a pair of gold bracelets, originally worn by our Golden Sage Palace. Because the day was the festival when she had to tie five colored threads to her arms,⁴ she took off the bracelets. As these were some of her favorite things, they are still kept in a jewel box. Because of the way we were separated, however, we could not bear the sight of these bracelets, for they remind us so much of her lovely face. The moment we see them, we would be sicker than ever.” . . . When the king saw the bracelets, he cried several times “Dearest, dearest Lady” before handing them over to Pilgrim (3:331).

These bracelets given to Sun Wu-k’ung link to the plot of the *Ramayana* in two distinct ways. The most obvious is the fact that both the ring and the bracelets are given as tokens of recognition. In addition, there is also a connection to the ornaments left behind by Sita that are later discovered by the monkeys under Sugriva’s leadership. Just as the King of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom “could not bear the sight of these bracelets,” after Rama sees the ornaments left behind by Sita, “tears covered his face like mist covers the moon,” and he “pressed those fine ornaments to his heart and sighed deeply like an angry snake in its burrow” (IV.6.14-16). Moreover, just as the King repeatedly cries “dearest, dearest Lady,” Rama cries “Ah, beloved!” immediately before he drops the ground (IV.6.15). Thus, in both texts, these ornaments serve as objects that augment the longing felt by Rama and by the King of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom.

After obtaining a token, each monkey eventually tracks down the fiend at his palace home. Subsequent descriptions in both texts reveal parallels in the locations of the palaces and the renditions of the palaces themselves. In the *Ramayana*, Hanuman discovers Ravana’s city of Lanka “on the peak of Mount Trikuta” where it appears “like a city in the sky” (V.2.1). Similarly, Sun Wu-k’ung locates the demon king’s cave on the Unicorn Mountain (3:331). The descriptions of the palaces in both cases are highly reminiscent of the prior accounts of Sun Wu-k’ung’s cave at the Flower-Fruit Mountain and Sugriva’s cave at Kiskindha, the similarities of

⁴ Interestingly, five colored threads tied around the arm is also a common Indian motif.

which have been previously noted; however, the short description of the demon king's cave is much more sparing than the vivid images Valmiki paints of Lanka throughout the entire fifth book of the *Ramayana* (see V.2-3 for an example).

When searching for the demon's palace, Wu-k'ung encounters a demon servant on his way to serve a declaration of war to the King of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom. The possibility of war that constantly looms in the background of this entire episode, just as the same possibility lies in the background of much of the Indian epic and actually takes place in the last few books.

In each work, the monkey transforms himself to enter the palace. While Sun Wu-k'ung takes on the appearance of the demon Going and Coming (3:332), Hanuman transforms his massive body into the shape and size of a normal monkey to remain unnoticed (V.1.185-187). After sneaking into the palace in this manner, each monkey has a brief encounter with the demon king of whom both texts provide extensive descriptions (V.8.5-25, III.47, and 3:332). Both works portray the demons as simultaneously terrible and splendid, with stormy, cloud-like auras and sharp fangs.

After the encounter with the fiend, each monkey searches until he finds the princess. The similarities between the settings in which the monkeys find the princesses and the appearance of the princesses themselves are perhaps the most remarkable of the many parallels shared by these episodes. Both princesses are hidden in areas not immediately noticeable in the city of Lanka or in the palace cave. While Sun Wu-k'ung crosses into the "rear palace" which is "quite unlike what is in front," Hanuman finds Sita in a grove of *asoka* trees set apart from the rest of the city.

Most striking, however, is the fact that both demons set a host of maidens to guard these women. When Hanuman finally notices Sita, her subdued beauty contrasts with the fierce ugliness of the group of rakshasa women surrounding her: "No longer seeing the people dear to her but only the hosts of raksasa women, [Sita] was like a doe cut off from her herd and surrounded by a pack of hounds" (V.13.23). In fact, Valmiki spends nearly an entire sarga recounting the hideous malformations of the rakshasa women (V.15). Similarly, the demon king in *The Journey to the West* surrounds the princess with a cohort of maidens who are not quite human: "[Sun Wu-k'ung] found two choirs of fiendish vixen and deer, all made up to appear as beautiful maidens standing on the left and right. In the middle was seated the lady" (3:334).

Though Valmiki's famous description of the initial moment that Hanuman views Sita spans three sargas (V.13-15), the following is an excerpt of one of the most evocative portions of this description:

She was gaunt with fasting. She was dejected and she sighed repeatedly. She looked like the shining sliver of the waxing moon./ . . . She was clad in a single, fine yellow garment, now much worn. Covered with dirt and lacking ornaments, she resembled a pond without lotuses./ . . . She was dejected, her face covered with tears. She was emaciated through fasting. She was depressed, given over to sorrow. Brooding constantly, she was consumed with her grief./ . . . She had a single braid like a black serpent falling down her back. Deserving only happiness and unaccustomed to calamity, she was consumed with sorrow./ . . . Sita's face was like the full moon; her eyebrows were beautiful; her breasts were lovely and full. With her radiance that lady banished the darkness from all directions./ . . . Sighing constantly, that timorous woman resembled a daughter-in-law of a serpent lord. By virtue of the vast net of sorrow spread over her, her radiance was dimmed like that of a flame of fire obscured by a shroud of smoke. She was like a blurred memory or a fortune lost./ She was like faith lost or hope dashed, like success undermined by catastrophe or intellect dulled./ She was like a reputation lost through false rumors. She was distraught at being prevented from rejoining Rama and anguished by her abduction by the raksasa (V.13.18-33).

Compare the passage above to the following initial description of the princess in *The Journey to the West*:

Soft, youthful features,/ Seductive good looks,/ Too lazy to do her hair,/ She left it piled up loosely;/ Fearful of make-up,/ She wore neither pins nor bracelets./ Her face had no powder,/ She being scornful of rouge./ Her hair had no oil,/ For she kept unkempt her tresses./ Her cherry lips pouted/ As she clenched her silvery teeth;/ Her moth brows knitted/ As tears drenched her starlike eyes./ All her heart/ Yearned for the Scarlet-Purple ruler;/ All her thoughts/ Dwelled on fleeing at once this snare and net./ Truly it has always been thus:/ The fate of fair ladies was always harsh./ Weary and silent, she faced the east wind (3:334).

These passages reveal the many resemblances between the two heroines. First, both passages relate the beauty of the women's faces and bodies. Valmiki compares Sita to the moon while the author of the Chinese novel praises the "seductive good looks" of the princess. Both women are also unkempt: Sita's hair is in a "single braid like a black serpent;" her body "lacks ornaments;" and she wears only a single garment "covered with dirt." Similarly, the princess's hair has "no oil" and is "unkempt;" she wears no "pins or bracelets;" and she applies no make-up or powder to her face. The disheveled nature of the women helps to convey the despondency

each feels from the longing for her mate; for instance, both women have tears in their eyes. Also, just as Sita is "distracted at being prevented from rejoining Rama," the princess "yearn[s] for the Scarlet-Purple ruler" with "all her heart." The combinations of these descriptions add up to make the above passages lamentations for the plight of the women. The *Ramayana* conveys this feeling by depicting her as "faith lost or hope dashed" and as the "flame of fire obscured by a shroud of smoke." Similarly, the author of the Chinese novel finally laments, "The fate of fair ladies was always harsh."

Another similarity between the two women not directly brought to light by the above passages is the fact that both women remain chaste despite living in a demon's home for an extended period of time. In fact, both texts go out of the way to constantly prove the purity of the women. Ravana places Sita alone with the group of raksasa women only after she originally refuses his advances upon reaching Lanka (III.54). She later declares, "I cherish my devotion to my husband above all else, monkey. . . . I would never willingly touch another's body even with my foot" (V.35.62). At the end of the epic, Rama tests Sita's purity through a trial by fire. The princess in *The Journey to the West* receives a "divine robe" as a gift from an immortal, which renders the fiend unable to even touch her.

After the descriptions of the princesses in the texts, each monkey reveals himself and the mission for which he has been sent to the princess. Also, in both the Indian epic and the Chinese novel the princess refuses to believe the monkey emissary until he shows her the token given to him by the king (V.34.2-4 and 3:335, respectively). The presentation of the token completely convinces the princess as to the emissary's credibility in both cases. Each monkey offers to carry the princess back to her home, though Sita refuses this offer (V.35.26-44 and 3:336). Also, when conversing with the princess, each monkey reveals his original form (V.35.36-37 and 3:335).

After his conversation with Sita, Hanuman realizes that he must return to Rama. Before leaving Lanka, however, Hanuman decides to present the range of his strength to the raksasas to foreshadow Rama's war with Ravana. A scuffle breaks out, and Ravana finally subdues Hanuman using his raksasa army (V.39-51). To punish Hanuman, Ravana ties oily rags to the monkey's tail and sets it afire. Hanuman escapes, however, and sets fire to much of the city of Lanka using his tail (V.52). After Wu-k'ung converses with the princess, he proceeds to steal three golden bells, the formidable magical weapons of the demon king. Unwittingly, Sun Wu-

k'ung pulls the cotton out of the bottom of the bells, immediately starting a fire in the demon's palace (3:338). Thus, like Hanuman, Sun Wu-k'ung wreaks havoc and confusion in the demon's home by starting a fire. Both monkeys then escape this situation and later return to either subdue (in the case of Sun Wu-k'ung) or destroy (in the case of Hanuman) the demon.

The comparisons highlighted above do not imply that events in the *Ramayana* lay the basis for every single one of the details noted or that the author of *The Journey to the West* has "stolen" Valmiki's rendition of Hanuman's search for Sita in writing chapters 68-71. Yet, even if one does not agree that there is a connection between the two works on every point presented above, the sheer number of interconnected narrative details *in more or less the same order* bespeaks of some form of influence from the Indian epic on the Chinese novel. For, the above relationship is not solely on the level of isolated character traits, like most of the numerous similarities between Sun Wu-k'ung and Hanuman that have been previously noted. Others agree with this assessment; for example, when discussing Cheng Ming-li's brief observation of this connection, Victor Mair argues:

This entire lengthy episode resembles [Hanuman's] visit to Sita in Lanka so closely that the similarity can not possibly be ascribed to chance, shared folkloric impulses, "vagrancy," or any other explanation other than plain influence, whether direct or indirect. What we see here is nothing less than a whole series of intimately connected narrative details from [the *Ramayana*] that form the basis for four sequential chapters of [*The Journey to the West*] (Mair 725).

Thus, in the context of the entire debate, the numerous interconnected plot elements between Hanuman's search for Sita and chapters 68-71 of the Chinese novel are together one of the strongest arguments for the influence of Indian literature on *The Journey to the West*. Now, to move even one step deeper, the next section of this paper argues that the relationship between the two episodes occurs on a level perhaps even more intimate than that of simple plot connections—the level of shared motifs and shared themes.

Love, Separation, and Longing: Shared Motifs, Shared Themes

In chapters 68-71, after Sun Wu-k'ung sets fire to the demon's palace and escapes, he then returns to the palace and outsmarts the demon to regain the magic golden bells, with which he originally set fire to the palace. When the monkey tries to set fire to the demon's palace a

second time, the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin arrives and immediately puts out the fire. She subdues the fiend and then proceeds to explain why the demon abducted the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom's consort in the first place. The bodhisattva says:

You have no idea that when the deceased king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom was still on the throne, the present king, then the crown-prince, was exceedingly fond of hunting when he was a youth. Leading men and horses, mounting hawks and hounds, he once came before the Phoenix-Down Slope, where two young birds, one male and another female, were perching. These happened to be the offspring of the Bodhisattva Great King Peacock. When the young prince stretched his bow, he wounded the male peacock, and the female one, too, returned to the West with an arrow stuck in her body. After the Buddha Mother had pardoned him, she decreed that he should be punished by being separated from his mate for three years and that his body should be inflicted with the illness of yearning. At the time, I was riding this wolf [the demon king] when I heard the sentence pronounced. Little did I realize that this cursed beast would remember it and come here to abduct the queen and dispel calamity for the king. It has been three years now, and his preordained chastisement has been fulfilled. You are to be thanked for arriving to heal the king, and I've come especially to bring the fiend to submission (3:353).

Thus, in abducting the princess, the demon helps to fulfill the decree of the Buddha Mother. Also, for the king, the abduction of his consort is karmic retribution for an act he performed while hunting as a young man.

The motif of the hunter who becomes separated from someone he loves as a result of karmic retribution runs rampant throughout Indian literature. Usually, the act of hunting represents uncontrollable desires, which results in the separation of a pair of animals in love. As retribution for this act, the hunter eventually suffers the same fate of being separated from a mate. The following example of this motif from the *Mahabharata* is strikingly similar to the scenario presented above from *The Journey to the West*. In this instance, the hunter in question is King Pandu, father of the Pandavas:

King Pandu once saw in the great forest, which is haunted by deer and beasts of prey, a buck, the leader of its herd, mate with its doe. Thereupon, Pandu shot both the doe and buck with five swift, sharp, beautiful, fletched arrows with golden nocks. The buck was a powerful ascetic, O king, the son of a seer, who had been consorting with his wife in the form of a deer. Still coupled with his doe, he fell instantly to the ground and, his powers waning, cried out in a human voice (I.109.5-10).

The buck then proceeds to curse the king for his mistake:

What did it profit you, best of men, to kill me, an innocent? Me, a hermit who lives on roots and fruit, wearing the guise of a deer, who always dwells in the forest, seeking serenity? . . . I am Kimdama a hermit of unequalled austerities. . . . You will escape the guilt of brahmin-murder, since you did not know you killed me in the body of a deer when I was overcome by love. But for that, fool, you shall find the same fate. When you are lying with a woman you love, blinded by your passion, you too in that very same state will depart for the world of the dead. And the beloved woman with whom you shall lie at the time of your death will fall under the power of the king of the dead . . . she shall follow you out of devotion. . . . Just as you brought me to grief when I was moved in bliss, so shall grief come to you when you have found bliss! (I.109.20-30).

Both the excerpt from *The Journey to the West* and the one above from the Indian epic mingle ideas of desire, yearning, and separation using similar features. First, both involve a king who, fond of hunting, wounds an animal (either peacock or deer) at a moment when it is with its mate. The king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom hits both peacocks, while Pandu only wounds the buck when it is at the height of passion copulating with its mate. The most critical connection is that both the deer and the peacocks are much *more than they seem to be*: while the peacocks are offspring of a bodhisattva, the buck is a brahmin (highest caste) ascetic of "unequalled austerity." Thus, the fundamental sin committed by both kings derives not only from the fact that both kill anthropomorphized animals but also from the divine or holy nature attributed to the victims. The ignorance exhibited by each king mitigates the punishment. The Buddha Mother "pardon[s]" the ruler of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom, and the buck excuses Pandu from the "guilt of brahmin-murder." Nevertheless, both rulers are still subject to the laws of karmic retribution: the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom becomes separated from his mate and suffers the "illness of yearning," while Pandu ultimately succumbs to desire for his wife and immediately dies (I.116.10-15). At this point, the difference in tone becomes obvious despite the many shared similarities, since the *Mahabharata* conflates desire with death while the king in the Chinese novel ultimately reunites with his love.

The numerous connections with the *Mahabharata* again strongly suggest influence from Indian literature on *The Journey to the West*. Next follows a few examples from the *Ramayana* that also bear remarkable resemblance to the motif of the hunter and karmic retribution. Though these examples from the *Ramayana* may seem repetitive, they illuminate two critical points.

First, they bring to prominence the frequency with which the hunter motif occurs in Indian literature; thus, assembling these examples makes a much stronger case for *some* form of Indian influence on the Chinese novel, whether such influence occurred directly from the two epics or not. Second, these assembled examples highlight an even more striking connection between chapters 68-71 of *The Journey to the West* and the *Ramayana*. Specifically, the hunter motif serves as a symbolic microcosm of critical events in both texts; this motif allows the author to tie the episode or epic together based on a theme of love, longing, and separation.

For instance, the first occurrence of the hunter motif takes place at the very beginning of the Indian epic:

Nearby, that holy man saw an inseparable pair of sweet-voiced kraunca birds wandering about. But even as he watched, a Nisada hunter, filled with malice and intent on mischief, struck down the male of the pair. Seeing him struck down and writhing on the ground, his body covered with blood, his mate uttered a piteous cry. And the pious seer, seeing the bird struck down in this fashion by the Nisada, was filled with pity. Then, in the intensity of this feeling of compassion, the brahman thought "This is wrong." Hearing the kraunca hen wailing, he uttered these words: "Since Nisada you killed one of this pair of krauncas, distracted at the height of passion, you shall not live very long" (I.2.10-14).

Just like the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom, the Nisada hunter attacks a male and female pair of birds with arrows. The sage then curses the hunter as retribution for this heinous act.

How does this event serve to link together the entire *Ramayana*? Commentary by Ramanujan helps clarify this issue and presents other instances of the hunter motif in the Indian epic:

The incident of the death of a bird and the separation of loved ones becomes a leitmotif for this telling of the Rama story. One notes a certain rhythmic recurrence of an animal killed at many of the critical moments: when Dasaratha shoots an arrow to kill what he thinks is an elephant but instead kills a young ascetic filling his pitcher with water (making noises like an elephant drinking at a water hole), he earns a curse that later leads to the exile of Rama and the separation of father and son. When Rama pursues a magical golden deer (really a demon in disguise) and kills it, with its last breath it calls out to Laksmana in Rama's voice, which in turn leads to his leaving Sita unprotected; this allows Ravana to abduct Sita. . . . the death of the bird, in the opening section, and the cry of the surviving mate set the tone for the many separations throughout the work, of brother and brother, mothers and fathers and sons, wives and husbands. Thus the opening sections of each major work set into motion the harmonics of the whole poem, presaging themes and a pattern of images (151-152).

These examples cited by Ramanujan reemphasize the frequent occurrence of the hunter motif in Indian literature. Also, one can now see the common patterns that emerge in the manner in which the composers of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and *The Journey to the West* deploy this motif.

Just as the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom and King Pandu are ultimately disunited from their wives for separating two animals in love, Dasaratha becomes separated from his son Rama for killing a young ascetic who is the sole person taking care of his elderly parents. Interestingly, the father of the dead ascetic lays the curse upon Dasaratha, saying, "Since it was unintentionally that you struck down my pure son, I will only lay a curse on you, though it is a grievous and very dreadful one: Just as I now sorrow over my son's calamity, so you, too, your majesty, shall end your days grieving for a son" (II.57.45-46). This curse made by the father echoes almost exactly the ones made by the buck and the Buddha Mother upon Pandu and the ruler of the Scarlet-Purple king, respectively. In each case, the hunter is first pardoned the full extent of his punishment as he performed the deed "unintentionally;" however, the specific human relationship the hunter denies others is subsequently denied to him, following the laws of karmic retribution. Similarly, Rama and Sita are punished for their desire to capture the golden deer by being separated from one another. In addition to the pattern of retribution, all of the hunters in these examples make the fundamental mistake of perceiving the object of the hunt as simply an animal. To the previously noted cases of a peacock actually being a bodhisattva and a deer actually being a brahmin, it is now possible to add the mistakes made by Dasaratha in perceiving a brahmin ascetic as an elephant and by Rama in pursuing a magical deer that turns out to be a demon.

Thus, the act of the Nisada hunter killing two birds at the beginning of the *Ramayana* most importantly symbolizes the fundamental story of the separation of Sita from Rama but also aids in linking together the entire epic through the numerous deployments of the hunter motif throughout the rest of the epic. Moreover, specific images of birds seem strategically placed throughout the epic, echoing this initial event. For instance, when surrounded by the sensuous surroundings of Lake Pampa, Rama plunges to further grief over Sita after witnessing the mating ritual of the peahen and the peacock (IV.1.17-19). Later in the epic, the poet compares Sita to a "female *cakravaka* bird separated from her mate" (V.14.30).

Similarly, in *The Journey to the West*, the same hunter motif both explains and symbolizes the separation of the king from his consort in the episode in chapters 68-71. The author makes this symbolism explicit when Sun Wu-k'ung initially diagnoses the king's anxiety as the disease "paired birds separated from company" (3:306). This link of the beginning and end of the episode performs the same function as the strategic reappearances of bird images in the *Ramayana*. In other words, the use of the hunter motif and the bird images represent an attempt on the part of the authors of both works to capture the same theme of love, longing, and separation in a similar manner.

From this point of view, many of the connections between the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom episode and the Rama story elucidated in the previous section of this paper also similarly illuminate the same theme. For example, as previously shown, both authors represent the longing of Rama and the king through the metaphor of sickness. The image of the pure woman (Sita and the princess) surrounded by a cohort of demon maidens ("raksasa women" in one case and "fiendish vixen all made up to appear as beautiful maidens" in the other) helps to exaggerate the idea of the woman's isolated separation. Also, both works portray the women as unadorned and unkempt to highlight their reciprocation of their husbands' feelings of longing. Finally, both authors utilize ornaments as tokens that mediate the longing of the characters. For example, both Rama and the king of the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom weep at the sight of the ornaments left behind by their beloved ones and, later, after both women also weep upon the presentation of Rama's ring and the king's bracelets by Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung respectively.

Of possible connections between the *Ramayana* and *The Journey to the West*, Glen Dudbridge argues that "we can attach no more than a general folkloric significance to the fund of shared motifs" and dismisses such similarities as a "perhaps beguiling subject for conjecture" (164). The numerous highly specific connections between the Indian epic and the Chinese novel on the "shared motif" explored in this section of the paper—that of the hunter who receives retribution for his actions—already suggest that the uncanny similarity is of more than "general folkloric significance." Yet when one places this isolated motif in its correct context as one of the multitude of other connections between the Scarlet-Purple Kingdom episode in chapters 68-71 and the *Ramayana* and recognizes that it plays the same function of symbolizing the fundamental theme in both cases, it becomes even harder to maintain that such connections are merely "beguiling conjecture." Though scholars may still lack a nuanced understanding of the

derivation of links such as these (along with related problems of textual transmission), the plethora of evidence on this specific connection strongly favors a conclusion of influence from the Indian epic.

Which Monkey is the Imposter? (And Other Questions)

What do these heavily detailed comparisons between works of Indian literature and the Chinese novel *The Journey to the West* add to the acrimonious debate that has surrounded the relationship between the monkeys Hanuman and Sun Wu-k'ung? In other words, does the analysis above help answer the question posed at the beginning of the paper: which monkey is the imposter? The investigation performed in this paper suggests that one does not need the Buddha to answer this question.

For those who claim that Hanuman is the imposter, the remarkable similarities elaborated upon that occur in regard to both specific characteristics and extended series of plot events strengthen the argument for Indian influence in the creation of Sun Wu-k'ung and *The Journey to the West* in general. For those who claim that Sun Wu-k'ung is only a simian mimic of an originally foreign creation, the analysis above, through its juxtaposition of original quotations from each work, emphasizes that every similarity only conceals a difference, whether it be one of approach, style, or tone. Thus, to claim Indian influence on the Chinese novel is not to threaten the "originality" of the work in any way. What Ramanujan has noted about different "tellings" of the Rama story is even more appropriate in this case: "The story may be the same in two tellings, but the discourse may be vastly different. Even the structure and sequence of events may be the same, but the style, details, tone, and texture—and therefore the import—may be vastly different" (134).

By expanding the characters, texts, and the literary elements used in the task of comparison, this paper further suggests that the "imposter" question perhaps is not the correct question to be asking at all. For the analysis above reveals connections between other characters (Sita, for instance), other texts (the *Mahabharata*), and literary elements other than character traits and plot events (such as themes). Focusing solely on the two monkeys ignores both the breadth and depth of the relationship between Indian texts and *The Journey to the West*.

Then what is the correct question to ask? C.T. Hsia's approach helps orient this issue towards the correct questions. Hsia juxtaposes a passage from the *Arabian Nights* with one from *The Journey to the West*, both of which are remarkably similar in their descriptions of the ability of the characters to transform into various animals. He then says:

Though we find even in pre-T'ang literature legendary or fictitious characters who are able to transform themselves into bestial shapes, the possessors of such powers could not assume any shape at will and certainly could not put on a performance of magical virtuosity as Monkey and Erh-lang have done in the quoted scene. Their resemblance in this respect to the combatants from the *Arabian Nights* does not mean that the makers of the Monkey legend were specifically indebted to the book, but it certainly indicates their general awareness of the popular literature of the Middle and Near East. The [*Ramayana*], too, boasts characters who can transform themselves. And so does the *Mahabharata*. The oral transmission of this vast literature during the T'ang and after forms a fascinating subject still awaiting full-scale exploration by qualified scholars (cited in Mair 715-716).

Hsia articulates a fundamental problem: how does one account for motifs in *The Journey to the West* that are unique and completely different from those occurring in previous Chinese literature? Though Hsia's comparison to the *Arabian Nights* does not imply "specific indebtedness" to that work, it does suggest that other bodies of literature may help account for these new motifs. By opening up the "fascinating subject" of cultural transmission in this manner, Hsia moves the debate to a question that is wider in scope: how do works of literature from other cultures help to broaden one's understanding of *The Journey to the West* and, thus, Chinese literature?

After trying in vain to capture Sun Wu-k'ung, one of the demons in the novel exclaims: "I suppose it's exceedingly difficult to catch the wretched ape, and even if one does catch him, trying to hold him is like trying to grasp sand or handle mercury, to catch a shadow or seize the wind! All right! All right! Let him go" (1:493). Attempting to grasp the complex origins of Sun Wu-k'ung and the novel in general is perhaps no less frustrating. Nevertheless, as this paper suggests, Indian literature (as represented by the two epics) has had a critical influence on the Chinese novel, and one cannot examine the origins of the text without engaging the remarkable connections in characters, plots, motifs, and themes. Engaging the issue of cultural transmission will not only widen the scope of the debate over origins but will also help illuminate the full diversity and depth of the novel *The Journey to the West*.

*Editor's note: For ease of typesetting, the author has omitted all Sanskrit diacriticals. Their absence does not inhibit understanding of the argument presented in the paper or the identification of the characters named. For the full orthography of all Sanskrit names and terms, the interested reader may consult the works listed in the bibliography which follows below.

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