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The Journey To The West, Vol. 3



Synopsis

Journey to the West is a classic Chinese mythological novel. It was written during the Ming Dynasty based on traditional folktales. Consisting of 100 chapters, this fantasy relates the adventures of a Tang Dynasty (618-907) priest Sanzang and his three disciples, Monkey, Pig and Friar Sand, as they travel west in search of Buddhist Sutra. The first seven chapters recount the birth of the Monkey King and his rebellion against Heaven. Then in chapters eight to twelve, we learn how Sanzang was born and why he is searching for the scriptures, as well as his preparations for the journey. The rest of the story describes how they vanquish demons and monsters, tramp over the Fiery Mountain, cross the Milky Way, and after overcoming many dangers, finally arrive at their destination - the Thunder Monastery in the Western Heaven - and find the Sutra. Attached are a number of illustrations drawn during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Hardcover: 530 pages

Publisher: University of Chicago Press (December 1980)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226971473

ISBN-13: 978-0226971476

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (78 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,812,377 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #236 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Asian > Chinese #413 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Asian > Chinese #4670 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geography

Customer Reviews

There are, at present, two complete versions of the long Chinese comic novel "Journey to the West". One of them, the more recent, is published by Anthony Yu at Chicago University Press. The other, an older version made by W. J. F. Brenner for the Foreign Language Press, is made over five decades ago, but is as yet still not completely superseded. Looking through the translations, it's obvious that both are worthy undertakings by two enthusiastic contemporary Sinologists. Anthony Yu, though not a native English speaker, is professor of East Asian studies at the Chicago

University, an expert in his field, and an ethnic Chinese. Brenner is a long-time Sino translator who has rendered his fair share of Chinese classics into English. So how did these two translations fare compared with each other? Brenner is a no-nonsensical and very sensible translator of the Wu Cheng'en's book. While he doesn't take great liberties with the text, when required, he demonstrates lots of felicities in reframing Chinese ideas and philosophies into English. Take the beginning for instance, a difficult passage which involves understanding of Chinese arithmetics and metaphysics. Here is Brenner's version: "In the arithmetic of the universe, 129,600 years make one cycle. Each cycle can be divided into twelve phases: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII, the twelve branches. Each phase lasts 10,800 years." Now within a single day, the positive begins at the time I; at II the cock crows; at III it is not quite light; at IV the sun rises; V is after breakfast; and at VI one does business. VII is when the sun reaches noon; at VIII it is slipping towards the west; IX is late afternoon; the sun sets at X; XI is dusk; and at XII people settle down for the night.

This is the most complete and faithful translation of Journey to the West I have yet found. It is the third version of the story I've read, and unlike those other versions ("Adventures of Monkey King"/ISBN 0962076511 and "Monkey : A Journey to the West [ABRIDGED]"/ISBN 1570625816), it contains the complete and unabridged story, preserving very faithfully both the style and content of the original story. This extreme faithfulness is both a strength and a weakness. It's a strength in that you get a real feeling for the scope of the original work, and you get to hear all the interesting little back-stories and side-stories that make Journey to the West one of the great works of Chinese literature. It's a weakness because these stories often seem completely irrelevant, and may be quite confusing to someone who is not familiar with Chinese culture and religion. For example, every time something happens in Heaven, Hell or in the palace of the Tang Emperor, the book includes a complete list of everyone who attended. In Heaven, at least, many of the names are descriptive (names of stars, constellations, etc.) and are therefore translated. In the Tang Emperor's palace, though, you'll get a list of 10 or 20 names in Chinese, and only some of the names ever get stories attached to them in the book (and I challenge any non-Chinese speaker to remember the names when they do show up again). There's also a lot of poetry, and though the translations are good, translated poetry can never equal the original. In one sequence, a fisherman and a woodsman argue in verse for 10 or more pages of very small type, frequently singing songs set to tunes few non-Chinese would recognize by name.

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