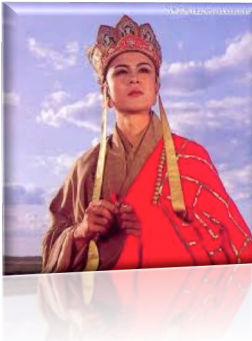


# The journey to the West

西游记 xī yóu jì



*Journey to the West* tells the story of one of Buddha 唐僧 or 唐三藏 (táng sēng or táng sān zàng) 's disciples. He is actually a reincarnation of Golden Cicada (simplified Chinese: 金蝉子; Jīn Chánzǐ), a disciple of the Buddha. He was sent to the human world and spend ten lifetimes practicing religious self-cultivation.



In his tenth lifetime, which is during the Tang Dynasty, he wishes to travel west and bring holy Mahayana Buddhist scriptures back to China. But 唐僧 táng sēng is ill-equipped for such perilous travel on his own. Weak and timid, he is no match for the evil creatures seeking to kill and eat him (his flesh, after all, is said to impart immortality). And so the goddess Guanyin(观音) arranges for an eclectic group to become his disciples and protect him: the valiant but impetuous Monkey King (also known as Sūn wù kōng 孙悟空), the lustful Piggy 猪八戒 zhū bā jiè, the taciturn Sand Monk 沙僧 shā sēng, and the White Dragon Horse 白龙马 bái lóng mǎ. All had been banished to the human world for sins in the heavens. Out of mercy, Guanyin gives them one more chance to return to their celestial home: They can convert to Buddhism and protect the monk Tang on his pilgrimage.

On the journey they encounter one trial after another—a total of 81, to be precise. Through force or deception, a motley of demons and evil spirits come after the monk. Some try to tempt the band with wealth or beauty. Yet, in the end, the pious pilgrims triumph, they return to China with sacred scriptures, and return to their rightful places in the heavens.



The Monkey King Sūn wù kōng 孙悟空 was born out of a rock, and learned supernatural powers from a Taoist master. With the combination of his mischievous nature and great powers, he created chaos both in heaven and the underworld. The heavenly Jade Emperor tried to calm him down by granting him the title of “Great Sage of Heaven,” but Monkey could not control himself and caused uproar in the heavenly palace.

Finally, the Buddha, still far more powerful, subdued the rascally Monkey and trapped him under a mountain. There he remained trapped for 500 years, until one day Tang Monk passed by the mountain.

This was the moment the Monkey King Sūn wù kōng 孙悟空 had been waiting for. He vowed to devote himself to the monk's service on the journey and was finally freed.

Sūn wù kōng 孙悟空 proved a critical asset to the monk. He could see right through the demons and their witchcraft, and was not tempted by beauty or riches. His wit helped the monk escape many a perilous situation. And although he proved unruly at times, for his great accomplishments he was later awarded the title of "Buddha Victorious in Strife."

猪八戒 zhū bā jiè is a complex and developed character in the novel. Zhu Bajie originally held the title of Tiānpéng Yuánshuài (天蓬元帅; lit. "Marshal Canopy"), commander-in-chief of 80,000 Heavenly Navy Soldiers. He was later banished, however, for misbehavior. 猪八戒 zhū bā jiè looks like a terrible monster, part human and part pig, who often gets himself and his companions into trouble through his laziness, gluttony, and propensity for lusting after pretty women.



猪八戒 zhū bā jiè was known for being lazy and gluttonous, and worst of all, licentious. Even after ten years of spiritual self-cultivation on his pilgrimage, 猪八戒 zhū bā jiè was still unwilling to let go of these desires, and so, upon completing the mission, he was only given the lowly title of "heavenly altar messenger."



Like 猪八戒 zhū bā jiè, 沙僧 shā sēng (or 沙悟净 shā wù jìng) was originally a general in Heaven, more specifically a Curtain-Lifting General. In a fit of rage, he destroyed a valuable vase. Other sources mention that he did this unintentionally, and in the Journey to the West series, it was an accident. Nevertheless, he was punished by the Jade Emperor, who had him struck 800 times with a rod and exiled to earth, where he was to be reincarnated as a terrible man-eating sand demon. There, 沙僧 shā sēng lived in the Liúshā-hé (Lú Sa Hà in Han-Vietnamese, "flowing-sand river", or "quicksand-river", modern name Kaidu River). As a punishment, every day, seven flying swords sent from heaven would stab him in the chest before flying off. As a result, 沙僧 shā sēng had to live in the river to avoid the punishment.

The White Dragon Horse (白龙马 bái lóng mǎ) is Tang Sanzang's steed and the third son of the Dragon King of the West Sea.



Extended reading:

1. How The Monkey King Came To Be - Journey To The West

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN3\\_6efimoQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN3_6efimoQ)

2. Introducing Journey to the West: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSFtiYHpnZ0>