ABSTRACT

This dissertation is inspired by the importance of monkeys in Chinese prose and poetry whose calls at the gorges have become a traditional symbol of the melancholy of travelers far from home. Very few scholarly works have been done on this subject; hence this study attempts to trace the development of the portrayal of monkey in Chinese literature from pre-Qin periods to the Tang dynasty.

Materials for this dissertation were obtained both from historical and literary documents. The study adopted a chronological approach in order to capture the development accurately.

The results show that although certain materials picture the more mysterious and horrid side of the monkey, it has been portrayed as human-like in most Chinese literature. It is also found that monkey had been idolized and worshipped since pre-Qin periods, and this had continued into the Tang dynasty. Most importantly, the study confirms that calls of the gibbon had indeed played an important role in Chinese poetry as a device for evoking sorrows of travelers.

In conclusion, the image of monkey in Chinese literature has become more elaborated and refined with the progress of history. In fact, its importance can also be observed from the influence it has had on Japanese literature.