ABSTRACT

*Xiyouji or widely known as ‘The Journey To The West’ is based on a real pilgrimage to India undertaken by a monk by the name of Sanzang 三藏 (also known as Xuanzang 玄奘 or Tripitaka), during the Tang Dynasty. In China, Sanzang was not the only monk to have undertaken such a long and hazardous journey. However, why Sanzang’s pilgrimage story was so extraordinary? How did this pilgrimage story originate? How was it enriched during its process of evolution? Did any significant changes arise during the process of evolution?

One of the main purpose of my dissertation is to seek answers to all the above-mentioned questions.

By comparing and analysing relevant resources in various forms of literary works and Chinese local gazettes, dating from the Tang Dynasty right back to the Ming Dynasty, the evolution of the 100 chapter version *Xiyouji* was clearly understood and some interesting elements were uncovered. For example:

1. The earliest 100 chapter version was most probably published in 1592 by Shide Tang 世德堂 of Nanjing.

2. In Yuan Dynasty, an episode called ‘Chen Guang Rui’ 陈光蕊, which told about the birth of Sanzang as well as the terrible mishaps befalling his parents. This story still remains in one of the brief versions of the *Xiyouji* named *Tang Sanzang Xiyou Shi E Chuan* 唐三藏西游释厄传 (also believed to be published during Ming Dynasty). This brief version has 4 chapters in it. However, in the Shide Tang *Xiyouji* ‘Chen Guang Rui’ story was not mentioned.

3. Resources also proved that before the Shide Tang *Xiyouji*, Sanzang’s pilgrimage story was not only commonly quoted all over China, it was also widely distributed in Japan and Korea. This was proved by the discovery of three texts titled *Da Tang Sanzang Qujing Shihua* 大唐三藏取经诗话, *Xindiao Da Tang Sanzang Fashi*
Qujingji 新雕大唐三藏法师取经记 (this two texts originally belonged to the monastery Kozanj situated to the north-west of Kyoto) and Xuanzang Sanzang Dutian Youlai Yuanqi 玄奘三藏渡天由来缘起 in Japan. Besides, Sanzang’s pilgrimage story can also be found in a Korean Text book titled Pak tongsa onhae 朴通事谚解.

The second part of my dissertation is to examine and analyse the characteristics of the five main pilgrims. Although Sanzang’s existence remained as in the original pilgrimage story, his entire personality has been altered to a weak-willed, indecisive character.

Of the 5 pilgrims, Sun Wukong was the main and most distinguished character. Sun Wukong himself was mischievous, impatient and fame conscious. Despite all this, he is valiant, intrepid and regarded by many as a hero.

Zhu Bajie was a real joker. At times, he is greedy, lechery, gluttony. However, he could be very helpful and clever too. Shaseng and the Dragon-horse were the two less vivid characters. They were decent, loyal and faithful in the entire pilgrimage journey.