Picturing the Monkey King: Illustrations of the 1641 Novel *Xiyou bu*

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Introducing the Novel

The title of *Xiyou bu* 西遊補 [Supplement to *Journey to the West*, 1641] identifies it as a sequel to the older and more famous *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the West, 1592]. Examining its illustrations reveals their commentarial function and insights that might account for the existence of only one copy of its oldest edition, in the National Library in Beijing.¹

A note on its first page indicates that *Xiyou bu* begins after the ‘Three Tricks with the Banana Palm Fan’ episode 三調芭蕉扇 in the parent novel. Most sequels in China’s vernacular fiction tradition carry on where the parent novel ends to extend the tale;² instead, *Xiyou bu* offers another adventure for the Monkey King Sun Wukong 孫悟空 as he scouts the trail for pilgrims from Tang China to obtain scriptures in the land of the Buddha.

The note directs us to the Huoyanshan 火焰山 or ‘Flaming Mountains’ section (Chapters 59–61) of the parent novel where the pilgrims are blocked by a rocky barrier too hot to cross. In the novel’s symbolic scheme it represents the passions. Monkey discovers that the wife of his former friend Niu Mowang 牛魔王 (Demon King Ox) possesses a magical fan that can extinguish the flames, but she will not give it up. Only when Monkey changes into an insect, flies down her throat, and begins thrashing around in her belly does the female monster give him her treasured weapon – in order to stop the intense pain the Monkey is causing. In *Xiyou bu* Monkey’s penetration into her body is reconfigured as sexual: there he meets his sons that she bore after their encounter.³ Clearly *Xiyou bu* extends the allegorical reading established in *Xiyou ji*.

Prefatory essays and two kinds of commentaries – marginal ejaculations on specific stylistic or narrative features and chapter-end discussions of each new stage of the Monkey’s adventures – directed Ming and Qing readers of *Xiyou bu* to its religious and philosophical significance. Although we cannot be certain whether these paratextual features were supplied

¹ I am inspired to reconsider the relationship between text and illustrations by Hsiao 2003 and Hsiao 2004.
³ Associating monkeys with sexuality dates at least from the Tang; a Dunhuang cave temple wall painting shows a monkey with a peach in his left hand while he holds his genitals with the other; Liu Dalin 2003, p. 7. This image apparently combines human concerns for food and sexuality, but the peach later gains feminine sexual connotation relevant to interpreting *Xiyou ji*.
by the author himself, on virtually every page we find guidance about how the novel should be interpreted.4

At the beginning, Monkey comes under the spell of a Qingyu jing 鯨魚精 or Mackerel Spirit; he and a host of other characters in the novel are all representations of desire. Their symbolism is signalled by their names, all either homophones or visual references to qing 情 and yu 欲, Buddhist synonyms for emotional attachment and the passions. While under the Mackerel Spirit’s spell, Monkey experiences the displacements of and terrors of dreams: he is alone, and he finds himself in a variety of unprecedented roles. In Chapter 1 he writes a long legal appeal for clemency after he slaughters a number of young men and women. In Chapters 6 and 7 he takes the form of the concubine of Xiang Yu 項羽, a contender for the empire at the fall of the Qin. In Chapters 8 and 9 he serves as Yan Luo 閻羅, Judge in the Underworld. In Chapters 12 and 13 he hears performances of tales about the secular life of Monk Tang and about himself as a layman. Ultimately he joins an army and marches into a chaotic battle where several forces fight each other simultaneously. Just when the Monkey can no longer bear his confusion, he is rescued by a Buddha who explains the nature of his delusion to him. With a new degree of enlightenment concerning the snares of emotional attachments on the human mind, the Monkey returns to his band, and the pilgrims proceed westward – as in the parent novel.

Its Provenance

Although most attribute Xiyou bu to Dong Yue 董說 (1620–86), he would have had to write it around the age of twenty or before, if the novel were completed by the preface date, 1641. Some scholars suggest that he wrote it a decade or more later as a critique of the Manchu conquest.5 But others maintain that the real author was his father, Dong Sizheng 董斯張 (1587–1628). Its disjointed plot and its many fairly awkward examples of deliberately contrasting genres of writing seem like an immature storyteller’s means to show off his range of compositional abilities. Previously I concluded that it is a prodigious work by a writer fresh from his teens; now I am convinced that Xiyou bu was a first attempt at writing vernacular fiction by his much better read, but ailing, father.

Dong Yue was born in Nanxun 南潯, a market town in Wucheng 烏程 (modern Wuxing 吳興) County of Huzhou District 湖州府 in the northern tip of Zhejiang, near Lake Tai. He lost his father at the age of eight. But his engagement with Buddhism and his knowledge of the classics and literature generally came after 1641; until that time he devoted most of his energies to taking the preliminary, ‘youth’ examinations in the civil service system.5

The Dong family had been distinguished for generations as one of the ‘great

4 Useful studies include Hsia & Hsia 1966; Brandauer 1978; Li 1982; Fu Shiyi 1981; Kao 1989; and Hegel 1981, Chapter 5. The Xiyou bu dawan 西遊補評問 [Answers to Questions about Xiyou bu], a prefatory section of the book, was signed with the same penname as the author of the novel, Jing-Xiaozhai 靜嘯齋.

5 See Gao Hongjun 1985; Fu Chengzhou 1989; and Rolston 1997, p. 276. Su Xing 1997 interprets it as a political allegory on the fall of the Ming. Dong Yue’s first biography is Liu Fu 1927.

6 Wang Hongjun 2003, p. 20, cites Dong Yue’s comment that he began writing poetry at age 21; Fu Chengzhou 1989, p. 121, also notes that until then Dong Yue was focused on the examinations; Gao Hongjun 1985, p. 81, concludes he did not write about Buddhism until his tonsure in 1656.
houses’ (dazu 大族) of their region. 7 Dong Bin 董份 (1509–93) passed the jinshi examination in 1541, to serve in the central Ming government before being cashiered for offending the emperor. His son Dong Daochun 道醇 (jinshi 1583) had six sons, two of whom also earned the highest degree.

Dong Sizhang was one of Dong Daochun’s younger sons. A sickly child, his family allowed him more freedom than his siblings; perhaps this was a consequence of the disorder caused by the deaths in rapid succession of his father and grandfather when he was about four. During his teens Sizhang spent long months inside, nursing a lung infection, having nearly died three times. During his convalescence he became interested in writing and soon was widely respected for his compositions in a variety of literary forms. He was also outstanding in his filial respect for his forebears – and in his knowledge of Buddhism, a solace in his pain and loneliness. As an adult Dong Sizhang made many friends and connections among the prominent literati of his time: the painter Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) and the writers Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), Mao Wei 茅維 (1575–1640?, his eccentric uncle), and Zhou Yongnian 周永年 (1582–1674). Sizhang’s circle also included the well-known vernacular fiction writer Feng Menglong 閆夢龍 (1574–1646); comments that he and Feng made about each other in their poetry collections reveal a close and durable relationship, despite their differences in age (Dong was thirteen years younger). Sizhang also had an even more cordial relationship with Feng’s older brother, the relatively prominent painter Feng Menggui 閆夢桂 (alias Rumuo 若木, style name Danfen 丹芬). Sizhang left several volumes of writings; their titles include the name Jingxiaozhai 靜嘯齋, the ‘Silent Whistle Studio’. Dong Qiao 樵 and Dong Lei 材, two of Dong Yue’s sons, wrote a biography of their grandfather confirming that Jingxiaozhai was Sizhang’s penname. 8 It appears in two prominent places on the earliest edition of Xiyou bu: the prefatory ‘Xiyou bu dawen’ 答問 [Answers to Questions about Xiyou bu] that explains the allegorical references in the text, and on the first page of the narrative proper. Undoubtedly he was the primary authority on the novel and had completed at least the bulk of the narrative before his death in 1628.

Dong Yue had an exceptional interest in dreams; he recorded his own in Zhaoyang meng shi 昭陽夢史 [My Midnight Dreams, 1643]. They include his perceptions of walking on clouds, visiting the past, and seeing whole new worlds spread out before him – all of which have analogues in Xiyou bu. 9 Yet Dong Sizhang’s personal experiences might also lie behind segments of the narrative. A drunken older scholar’s fulminations over Song general Yue Fei’s sufferings at the hands of the villainous minister Qin Hui left an indelible impression on Sizhang, who was twelve years old and unwell at the time; hence

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7 Liu Fu 1927, pp. 78–81 & 124, describes his extensive literary connections with friends and acquaintances. Feng Baoshan 2002, p. 76, identifies Dong Bin with the 1541 jinshi class, but Goodrich 1976, p. 1329, incorrectly gives 1537 as the date for his highest degree.


9 Dong Yue’s collected works titled Fengciaoan zazhu 風草庵雜著 includes ten short dated texts; the earliest is Zhaoyang meng shi. Since this appeared after Xiyou bu, perhaps working on the novel inspired him to pay more attention to his own mental experiences.
Monkey as Judge in the Underworld brutally punishes Qin Hui in *Xiyou* *bu*. Sizhang was also interested in dreams, and he kept a running record of his own, a *mengli* 夢歷, for years.¹⁰ Dong Yue may have been inspired to record dreams after editing his father's novel, and clearly Sizhang's knowledge of Buddhism was superior to his son's by 1641.

I conclude that Dong Sizhang penned *Xiyou* *bu* in the last years of his life, when he suffered from chronic pain in his left leg and sought distraction in Buddhism—and in writing. His contacts with vernacular fiction authors Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu 涙蒙初 (1580–1644) may have served as instigation for his additions to the Monkey’s perils. Dong Yue’s notes to a poem written in 1640 say that he had written a bit of fiction that ‘supplemented The Journey to the West’ (*bu* *Xiyou*). Probably the son was contributing to what his departed father had already written, a fitting act for a filial son.

**As Illustrated Book**

Physically, the earliest edition of *Xiyou* *bu* is fairly large: the printed area within borders is 19.5 x 14 cm; the pages themselves are 26 x 16 cm. However, no publisher is listed: the *fengmian* 封面 or cover sheet is lost, and there is no indication within the book itself. The original preface was written on *xinsi zhongqiu* 辛巳中秋 (19 September 1641) at Huqiu 虎丘 (Tiger Hill), Suzhou. Most likely the book was printed in that city.

The size of the paper and of the graphs with which the book was printed indicate a relatively expensive production.¹¹ Its preface is written in large graphs, five columns of ten characters per page. After the preface come sixteen illustrations, several pages of introduction explaining the novel’s meaning, and a table of contents. The narrative is printed in eight columns of twenty characters per half-folio, a somewhat large but relatively common format.

However, the pictures in *Xiyou* *bu* are exceptional in both content and execution. They are replete with difficult-to-carve curving lines and complex floral and architectural details; one is presented within a perfectly circular frame. Facial features of figures are delicate and detailed. All illustrations are grouped at the beginning of the novel, as *guantu* 冠圖, or ‘pictures preceding the text’. Like most late Ming novels, there are as many images as there are chapters. The protagonists in *Xiyou* *bu* are the Monkey King and the Mackerel Spirit, but because the latter is only suggested in the narrative, he is not represented. Monkey appears in six *shanshui renwu tu* 山水人物圖 (figure-and-landscape pictures), although in three he appears in disguise.¹² These do represent the novel’s plot.

But the other ten illustrations are considerably more ambiguous and seem only tenuously linked to the text. All are objects more like the *hua niao* 花鳥 (bird-and-flower) category of album prints—or the illustrations on fancy letter

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¹¹ For observations on book format, relative price, and intended audiences, see Hegel 1998; McLaren 2001; McLaren 2004; and Zhao 1994. This *Xiyou* *bu* edition was a small job: it needed only 153 blocks (six for the preface, eight for the illustrations, three for ‘Answers’, three for the table of contents, and 133 for the text), or half that many of two-sided boards.

paper. All were drawn with great skill and carved with exceptional talent. Yet their apparent disjunction with the text is puzzling: might they be self-referential to the artist, in the manner of scholar-amateur paintings?\footnote{I am indebted to Anne Farrer and Kathlyn Liscomb for pointing out these resemblances. Wright 2003, p. 114, notes that such designs could function as commentary on the letter’s contents or as a self-image for the correspondent him/herself.}

**Illustrations as Commentary**

One possible reading for these diverse and attractive illustrations is as pure decoration; they may reflect a new fashion, seen in certain Hangzhou imprints, to include decorative material shared with letter paper.\footnote{See Clunas 1997, esp. pp. 18–24. Appreciating these illustrations is similar to the ‘contemplation’ of pictures practised by the ‘armchair traveller’ (woryou 步遊); Teng 2003, esp. pp. 467–8.} They constitute an album of printed pictures that might be contemplated separately from the...
novel, and several are framed in round circles, as decorative images often are among play illustrations printed around the same time.\textsuperscript{16} Many are printed on the second half of the block, to appear as fanmian 反面 (verso) pages. But upon closer scrutiny, these objects suggest ways of reading textual references and provide commentary on the novel's philosophical dimensions as well.

The broom in Illustration 1b (Fig. 1), is a qingzhu zhou 青竹帚 for sweeping away the ‘dust’ of qing 情 desire and zhu 住 attachment, in Buddhist terms.\textsuperscript{17} The flaming rock (2b, Fig. 2) may well represent blazing desires. Or it may suggest, in

\textsuperscript{16} Ma Meng-ching 1993, pp. 68–73, on play illustrations alternating dramatic scenes with decorative images; Shang Wei 2003, pp. 205–6, cites the Ma thesis. Shang Wei 2003, pp. 207–8, 216–19, comments on the different ‘voices’ offered by commentary and other paratextual elements. Murray 2005, p. 418, notes some literati’s disdain that ‘viewing pictures might be pleasurable in itself’.

\textsuperscript{17} See the injunction from Section 10 of the Jingang jing 金剛經 or Diamond Sutra, to ‘produce an unsupported thought’ ying wu su zhu er sheng qi xin 應無所住而生其心.
miniature, the ‘Flaming Mountain’ in the parent novel where the Monkey had his close encounter with a woman.

Illustration 3b (Fig. 3), the plum branch inscribed as huajing 花鏡 or ‘flower mirror’ seems to suggest feminine attractions. The associations between women and the mei 梅 or plum date to the ancient Shijing 詩經 [Classic of Poetry]. Thereafter it represents purity and simplicity in women, and later, by extension, the purity of mind of the recluse. But the plum also suggests transience and mutability, in addition to its resilience. According to their captions, two of these pictures represent women, Xiang Yu’s concubine Yu Ji 虞姬 or Yu Meiren 美人, Yu the Beauty, as a flower (4a, Fig. 13) and Lüzhu 綠珠 or Lady Green Pearl as an orb on a plate (4b, Fig. 4), which is perhaps a pearl. Women were regularly represented as flowers in poetic language, so the ‘flowery’ aspects of Yu’s character – beauty and transience – take precedence over the loyalty unto death for which she

\[\text{Bickford 1985, pp. 17–26.}\]
was historically famous. This constitutes an ironic reading of the scene portrayed so movingly in Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 Shiji 史記 [Historical Records] – and again suggests the Monkey’s unacknowledged desire. The object on the plate may well be the yeming zhu 夜明珠 (or yeguang zhu 夜光珠), the pearl that illuminates the darkness – of Monkey’s befuddlement by his attachments.

The significance of a landscape (6a, Fig. 5) referred to only in a chapter title, Luhua pan 蘆花畔 or the ‘reedy bank’, is unclear. However, it may suggest the retirement to the lakes and rivers of the detached scholar, a freedom of mind that the Monkey King so badly needs at this point in the tale. This is followed by Illustration 6b (Fig. 6), the Bell that expels the mountain, Qushan duo 驅山鐮, the ‘Flaming Mountain’ of Monkey’s raging sexual desire. Duo, is, after all, a tocsin or alarm bell. But its position, following the ‘reedy bank’ may suggest such distinctions are invalid: whether repellent or inviting, all attachments cause greater mental...
confusion, as the Monkey discovers. The basket with skeins of thread and a hook for needlework (7b, Fig. 7) is captioned Jing xian 经线. It seems unlikely that any literate illustrator would mistake jìng for Hong, as in hong xian 紅線, the ‘Red Cords’ that ensnare the Monkey in the Tower of Mirrors (Chapter 10); consequently they must suggest the attachment to sutras, Fojing 佛經, which causes the Xiyou ji pilgrims to beg the Buddha to give them texts with writing – after he first awards them blank scriptures.

The two remaining objects can also be read as commentary on the text. One curiosity is apparently a knife (5b, Fig. 8), labelled Sančhi 三尺, literally ‘three foot’. This is a traditional name for a broadsword – for which there is no reference at all in the text, although the illustration of Xiang Yu shows him about to slay his concubine Yu with such a weapon. However, it suggests what Monkey desperately needs: a sword with which, figuratively, to cut off

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19 I am extremely grateful to Li Qiancheng 李前程 for help in reading these captions.
all human attachments. As one response in
the ‘Answers to Questions about Xiyou bu’
[Xiyou bu dawen 西遊補答問] indicates, ‘If
you want to cut off the head of the demon
Desire (qing mo 情魔), you must cut right
through it’ (yi dao liang duan 一刀兩斷),
most likely the illustration refers to the
explanation more than to the story.20

The last in the series (Fig. 9) is
labelled a jianshu 簡書, a bamboo-strip
book, which it clearly is not. Interestingly,
the bamboo appears in Chapter 1 when
Monkey searches for a surface on which to
write his acknowledgement of guilt – for
the slaughter of innocents that begins his
misadventures in this novel. Moreover,
although its pages are lined out for print
or inscription, the book in this illustration
is blank. Since the proportions of its pages
are those of sutras, surely this image,
too, refers to the ‘blank scriptures’ wuzi
de kongben 無字的空本 that the Buddha
gives the pilgrims in the original novel
– before they are sufficiently enlightened
to comprehend them. Reading this image
as commentary to the episode in Chapter
98 of the parent novel, and the message it
conveys is that the ‘real’ texts are blank, that
the true transmission of Buddhist wisdom
occurs wordlessly from mind to mind, and
that Monkey’s adventure is an illusion.

Even the narrative images function
similarly. Illustration 1a (Fig. 10) represents
the novel’s opening scene: while the other
pilgrims rest from their journey, Monkey
goes off to find food. Under the rough
and decorative rock lie two packets with
a walking stick shoved through them as a
carrying pole; curving lines suggest their
bulging contents. The Pig Zhu Bajie 豬
八戒 and Monk Sand (Sha Seng 沙僧)
 sprawl in delightfully careless poses, Bajie
with his head back snoring and Sand
reclining, one hand on a knee and his
head resting on the other. Monk Tang
(Tang Seng 唐僧), or Triпитaka, sits in
meditation. Iconographically, however, the
looping lines from his head suggest that
it is the monk who is dreaming Monkey’s
adventures as he heads off. Not only does
this contradict what the text says, the
illustration seemingly conflates meditative
states with dreaming. Moreover, Monkey
has raised his staff here, as if to strike the
children and young women he slaughters in
Chapter 1 – and all of this is represented as
coming from the mind of the monk.

The narrative complexities here are
numerous. First, the novel purports to be
Monkey’s dream, not Triпитaka’s dream;
the Mind symbolized by Monkey here is
confounded, and nearly vanquished, by the
Mackerel Spirit who symbolizes Monkey’s
unreleased desires. By alerting the reader to
illusion, the illustration confirms what the
chapter title reveals: that the ‘New Tang’
was an illusion (huan 幻). Furthermore, the
novel’s first line states unequivocally, ‘In
this chapter the Mackerel Spirit confuses
and deludes the Mind Monkey, but in the
end he perceives all the emotions of the
world as floating clouds and the delusions
dream’. But, because it does not cite
the source of the dream accurately, the
illustration introduces philosophical
ambiguity. Is it Triпитaka who dreams this
adventure? Or is it the reader who might
identify with the only human protagonist
among these pilgrims?

Especially since they do not appear
in the same sequence as the chapters they
ostensibly represent, these illustrations seem
to function as a non-verbal commentary

20 Xiyou bu Chongzhen, p. 3. Andres 1989 gives a
philosophical reading of the novel; Rolston 1997,
pp. 277-8, mentions its lack of a ‘traditional com-
mentarial mode’ of narrative.
on the narrative as a whole rather than as representations of particular events. In this, they assume an audience who will appreciate their symbolic relevance, and who would be instructed by their more subtle hints at the novel's metaphorical implications. Like the text itself, these pictures would seem to preclude all readers who are only looking for the distraction of entertainment fiction.

Although not unique, it is rare to have illustrations function as commentary. Certainly illustrators were experimenting with forms and content during the last decades of the Ming, but most contemporary novel and play illustrations consist of generic elements and represent key episodes in the narrative. Were these illustrations drawn by an unusually insightful early reader of the novel in manuscript, before it was printed? Or, alternatively, could there have been a close, collaborative relationship between the editor and the illustrator—well after the death of the author? I suspect that a circle of friends were involved in producing this edition.

Its Production
Barring some felicitous discovery of a note by the author or more printers' records than have generally been preserved, one can never know just who was involved in a book's publication. Given the quality of its illustrations, *Xiyou bu* would have been relatively expensive for its length—if it had ever been sold. It was most likely printed in Suzhou (where the preface was signed). One could find fine printing craftsmen there, if not in such smaller centres as Wucheng, much less the market town where the Dongs lived. And Suzhou was near for the Dongs. Since none of the novel's illustrations is signed, the artist probably was not a famous craftsman of the day; he may have worked in Suzhou and elsewhere.

Stylistic features appear in Illustration 2a (Fig. 11), for Chapter 3 of the novel, in which Monkey King meets a character from the parent novel *Xiyou ji*. They discuss the activity going on at the top of the illustration: human figures are walking in midair, trying to chip holes in the firmament above them. Monkey has a long, 'beaked' face—although he is not so ugly as in the Jinling Shidetang 金陵世德堂 edition of 1592, and in contrast to the round-faced Monkey in the 'Li Zhi Commentary' edition printed in Suzhou in the 1620s. Clearly the illustrator was influenced by neither of these predecessors; probably he had not seen them. Also, the background figures seem to have no necks. In the group on the left, the heads are placed at uncomfortable, or even impossible, angles in regard to the shoulders. The faces we see in profile have long chins. They also seem to be standing on the toes of one or both feet. The clouds are represented in two ways, first the wisps of vapour in the upper half of the frame, and generally fluffy clouds in the lower half, including the one on which Monkey is standing.

Clouds are represented conventionally here as in other Ming book illustrations and paintings, with rounded lines that suggest their edges. Wisps of vapour alert the viewer to illusion, or to dream, on the part of the figure represented here. Consequently readers of the illustration can guess, but

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21 Burkus-Chasson 2005, pp. 404-5, explains the 'divergent reading' offered by poetry and images on the verso halves of the leaves of the mid 1660's album *Li Yuan jing hui Lingyan ge* 劉源敬繪凌煙閣.
23 Bussotti 2001 is an excellent study of book illustrations of this period.
the readers of the text do not yet know, that Monkey is dreaming throughout the novel until a Buddha awakens him. The ‘dancing feet’ of the sky walkers suggest the Hangzhou style of illustrations, but the elongated chins of faces in profile are more typical of contemporary Jinling or Nanjing images. The illustrator was not to be identified with any one regional style, it would appear.

In Illustration 3a (Fig. 12), the architectural details are finely drawn and finely carved with far more detail than is needed to identify the site as an upper-class garden. The Taihu rock, the balustrade, the lotuses in the pond, and the complex wall (several layers of foundation at its foot, curving tile roof along its top edge) reflect the taste and opulence stipulated by the text at this point. But the artist also rendered texture on the rock surfaces, details of carving on the balustrade posts, several types of foliage, and decorative designs on the bench where the lady sits. The beard of the warrior charging into the scene, Xiang Yu, is realized in fine,
curving individual lines. His robes are richly decorated as well. In Illustration 4a (Fig. 13), in addition to complex rocks and leaves the caption labels the curious flower as ‘Beauty Yu’, Xiang Yu’s concubine. The vapours swirling above her reveal that this is a representation of her spiritual essence – or perhaps her incorporeality in Monkey’s dream. The artist behind these illustrations was clearly thinking philosophically and expressing his interpretations in painterly terms; he must have been deeply engaged in this production, with a clear sense of the significance of the scene. He also wanted these images to be visually attractive.

However, this fine workmanship in printing block preparation is combined with shoddy printing. Despite the delicacy of its illustrations, impressing the carved blocks onto the paper was most likely done by the run-of-the-mill artisans who carved the text – and whose work impaired the images. There are spots torn or worn out of several, suggesting that it was printed on especially thin, hence cheap, paper. Poor quality paper – or an overly liquid form of the ink – might also be confirmed by the fact that ink has soaked between lines to make dark blobs where thin lines were intended, as in Fig. 3, for example. The perfectly round mirror has a remarkably beautiful representation of a twisted plum branch, but its effect is diminished by the blackened area in what should have remained blank. Similar printing faults also occur elsewhere, such as the pearl in a shallow bowl, the knife, the bell, the basket with the red thread, and even the book here (Figs 4, 6–9).

Conclusions and Speculations
Not only is there but one copy of 西遊記’s first edition, it was seldom printed later. By contrast, more popular novels

Fig. 13. ‘Yu the Beauty’, Illustration 4a from 西遊記, Chongzhen edition, National Library, Beijing.

25 These figures are photographs made directly from the Chongzhen edition of 西遊記, now in the National Library, Beijing, for which I thank Dr. Luo Manling. Every reprint made from this edition has reproduced a poor microfilm copy and not the original. Note that 西遊記 1983 ‘corrects’ blurry elements by redrawing them. For example, in place of the mysterious flower in illustration 4a (Fig. 13), it has a woman gazing off into space (p. 7).

and story collections of the time stayed in print, and many copies still exist. I suspect there were only a few copies of *Xiyou bu* to begin with. It may have been too quirky and intellectually too demanding for a broad readership, and that fact may have precluded commercial publication. But barring new evidence to the contrary, it appears that Dong Yue had it privately printed — probably with the financial backing of relatives and friends (and the artistic involvement of his father’s good friend, painter Feng Menggui?), given the reduced circumstances of the Dong family by 1641. A private printing may have only yielded a few copies for Dong family members and donors — sophisticates who would appreciate its complexity. The Dong men were known for their filiality; it would make sense that Dong Yue would polish his father’s rough novel and print it to honour his memory. Thus he identified his father as sole author on the first page and included his father’s explanatory preface, while modestly omitting his own name, despite his role as editor and partial author. And he probably involved his father’s friends in the book’s production. But the filial son may have run out of funds before the project was completed. This would explain the complex artistry of the illustrations created in the early stages of the printing process — and the subsequent cost-cutting that placed carefully finely carved printing boards into the hands of low paid, hence slap-dash, printers.

2 Murray 2005, pp. 449–50–n60, refers to the son of the Nanjing literatus Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1541–1620) who had an album of his father’s paintings and calligraphy printed in Nanjing for private circulation, a seeming parallel to what I conclude about the printing of this first edition of *Xiyou bu*.
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