

# The Dance with Shackles: A Study on Black Myth: Wukong's Dialogues Translation

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**Abstract:** China's AAA game *Black Myth: Wukong* is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, featuring dialogue texts that integrate quintessential cultural elements with classical literary aesthetics from *Journey to the West*. However, its process of "Going global" faces significant cultural circulation challenges. This study examines the translation strategies for culture-specific items, including Buddhist terminology, characters' names, and prosodic texts, within the game's narrative dialogues. It investigates how game localization translation strikes a balance between the "shackles" of fidelity and the "dance" of creative treason. Through comparative analysis of representative source-text and target-text examples, it is shown that effective game localization requires the scientifically grounded application of translation strategies, which balances the game's functional requirements with cultural-aesthetic needs while upholding the source material's core essence, and juggle semantic precision and aesthetic functionality in the translated version, thereby enhancing cross-cultural communication efficacy.

**Keywords:** Game Translation, Black Myth: Wukong, Fidelity, Creative Treason.

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## 1. Introduction

*Black Myth: Wukong*, an action role-playing game based on the Chinese literary classic *Journey to the West*[1], reshapes iconic characters through original narratives to construct a dark fantasy interpretation of Eastern mythology. It delivers an immersive Eastern aesthetic experience while showcasing cultural storytelling rooted in Chinese tradition. Within China's intellectual property globalization initiative, reconciling profound cultural connotations with global market are facing significant localization challenges. This is particularly evident when translating culture-specific items(CSIs) with inherent untranslatability, such as historical allusions and religious terminology-necessitates strategic balance between translation adequacy and acceptability.

As an interactive digital entertainment product, the primary function of *Black Myth: Wukong*'s text is to ensure ludic clarity for player instructions. In addition to fidelity rule, the localization must preserve the cultural essence of the source material while maintaining global accessibility and appeal. Concurrently, in order to retell the stories of China in English, the game's global release assumes significant importance in the transnational dissemination of Chinese cultural narratives. An in-depth examination of its translation methodologies provides valuable insights into IP dissemination pathways for traditional Chinese content. This study specifically interrogates how "shackles" of fidelity govern translational decisions, while "dance" of creative treason demonstrating the essence conveyance of traditional Chinese cultural elements, aiming to render insights on novel perspectives and actionable insights for game localization theory and practices.

## 2. Framework Structure.

Throughout history, both Eastern and Western translation traditions have regarded "fidelity" as a fundamental criterion for translational practice. Translators are positioned as mediators between original authors and target readers and expected to maintain fidelity to both the source text and reader expectations. Functionalist theorist Christiane Nord(1997)

emphasizes balancing reader expectations with ethical responsibility toward the original text within Skopos Theory.[7] While fidelity remains fundamental, translators often adapt the source text for target audiences, namely a tension encapsulated in the Italian adage "Traduttore, traditore"(Qian Zhongshu, 1984).[16] This "creative treason" requires transcending literal accuracy to bridge cultural gaps while preserving the text's essence. Lefevere(2004a) asserts that "translations are rewritings of an original text... Rewriting implies manipulation", putting the translator's agency at the core of translation process Venuti(1995) further argues in *The Translator's Invisibility* that translators should visibly intervene through foreignization or domestication strategies.[10] These perspectives reposition translators as central figures in cross-cultural mediation, negotiating between source-text constraints and target-culture expectations through strategic adaptations.

The global gaming industry's rapid growth has made localization important. The Translators Association of China(TAC) defines it as adapting products for the linguistic and cultural needs from target market(TAC, 2011).[9] Mangiron and O'Hagan(2006) view game localization as "transcreation"-a cultural reimagining of texts.[5] Theoretically, communication theory focuses on effective information transfer, while functionalist approaches balance purpose and fidelity. Eco-translatology analyzes translation ecosystems, covering methods from literal translation to transcreation. With fierce competition requiring faster localization, practitioners must balance cultural authenticity with commercial goals. This demands flexible translation strategies that preserve the original's essence while meeting player expectations and market needs.

Research on *Journey to the West* translations focuses on seven key areas: translation strategies, narrative structures, cultural interpretation, reader reception, Timothy Richard's missionary translations, skopos theory applications, and comparative translation studies(Liu & Zhu, 2019).[2] Among these, translation strategies dominate scholarly attention, which are domestication/foreignization, literal/liberal translation(Newmark, 1981)[6], semantic or communicative

translation, functional equivalence, and compensation techniques. Four major translations serve as primary research subjects: Waley's abridged *Monkey*(1942)[11], Richard's theological *A Mission to Heaven*(1913)[8], Lovell's contemporary version(2021)[4], and Yu's scholarly edition(1977-83)[13]. These research perspectives prove particularly relevant for examining *Black Myth: Wukong*, whose narrative inherits *Journey to the West's* cultural legacy through traditional dialogue and Eastern aesthetics. Players' cultural backgrounds shape their understanding of in-game symbolism. China's high-context culture relies on implicit meaning, whereas low-context cultures prefer explicit communication. This gap risks misinterpretation, requiring translators to mediate carefully; in other words, balancing fidelity and creative adaptation for cross-cultural clarity.

### 3. Analysis and Discussion

Related systematic textual analysis reveals that *Black Myth: Wukong's* culture-specific items comprises three domains: Buddhist terminology, character appellations, and prosodic structures.

#### 3.1. Buddhist Terminology

Chan Zen aesthetics, integrated into China's cultural paradigm through Wei and Jin Dynasties' philosophical developments, profoundly influenced Chinese literary traditions. The Buddha's ultimate pursuit, Dependent Origination and Emptiness(*pratītyasamutpāda-sūnyatā*) encapsulates:

缘 (*pratīyaya*): Causal conditions governing arising/cessation of phenomena

性(*svabhāva*): Ephemeral nature contingent on conditional factors

空 (*sūnyatā*): Ontological emptiness characterizing impermanent states

This triadic construct embodies profound Buddhist soteriology, emphasizing mind-phenomena engagement and advocating no-mind realization transcending subject-object duality through mind-cultivation. Faithful transmission of such concepts necessitates that translators to comprehend the text's soteriological stratum, exercise translatorial agency and Reconstruct source semantics within target-culture frameworks. Religious philosophy fundamentally permeated *Journey to the West's* creation, a legacy consciously maintained in *Black Myth: Wukong's* localization paradigm.

Subsequent analysis examines *Black Myth: Wukong's* dialogue translation through three characters, namely *pratīyaya*(缘), *svabhāva*(性), and *sūnyatā*(空).

Etymologically, 缘 (*yuan*) originates from "decorative hemming on ancient garments"(per *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*)[3], evident in its silk-radical(纟). Through semantic evolution, it acquired meanings of "causal connection"(因缘) and "reason"(缘由). Within Buddhist epistemology, 缘 corresponds to the Sanskrit "*pratīyaya*", denoting the cognitive process wherein subjective consciousness engages objective phenomena, extending to concepts like dependent origination(缘起) and karmic affinity(缘法). This semantic polyvalence necessitates meticulous target-language equivalence selection during translation to prevent hermeneutic distortion.

*Black Myth: Wukong* deploys seven translation strategies

for 缘.

Examples 1:

fate	缘到福自有。	What bliss my <b>fate</b> shows!
	都是机缘巧线编织的宿命。	It's about two souls woven together by <b>fate</b> .
	缘起缘落没斜阳	<b>Fates</b> rise and fall, as sunset flees.
bond	既在佛下会，都是有缘人。	Our acquaintance beneath the Buddha proves our <b>bond</b> .
	一念起万法生，一念灭万缘寂。	A thought springs, a world blooms; a thought ceases, all <b>bonds</b> break.
	因缘，可悲！	Our <b>bond</b> , how woeful!
destiny/destined	缘落缘起，不妨再赌一把.....	<b>Destiny</b> repeats itself, always. Why not cast the die once more?
	今日既有缘再见，我便教给你一招防身御寒的小神通。	Our reunion is destined, and so is my role to teach you this little trick.
luck	不知哪世修来的缘法，今生得遇好哥哥	But now my luck has returned. My savior appeared here right in front of me!

Examples 2:

karma	那弼马温跟老猪是前世的冤家。	That monkey and I must have been bonded by some <b>wicked karma</b> .
	你放心吧，结个善缘。	Go and meet him. A good <b>karma</b> awaits you there.
Budda/Buddahood	心诚则缘到，缘到则佛现	True hearts find their path, and the <b>Buddha</b> is on that path.
	信了得成正果，福缘善庆.....	He believed <b>Buddhahood</b> is a future of bliss...

As the words "fate", "bond", and "destiny" capture connotations of predestination, they are somewhat proximate to "*pratīyaya*"(缘). The Terminology Library of Key Concepts in China Thought and Cultural renders 缘分 as "dependent origination" which carries implicit deterministic overtones incongruent with Buddhist doctrine. However, within Buddhist doctrine, 缘 refers to the 缘法(karmic affinity), attained through intentional practice, fundamentally rooted in causal theory rather than providential fortune. Renderings employing explicitly Buddhist terminology like "karma" and "Buddha" allow players to directly perceive doctrinal connotations.

In the translated example, "But now my luck has returned. My savior appeared here right in front of me!"(不知哪世修来的缘法，今生得遇好哥哥), the phrase 修来的 means "cultivated through practice" explicitly denotes the causal relationship between spiritual cultivation and karmic affinity. The reduction of this relationship to "luck" proves problematic.

Furthermore, for expressions related to 缘, translators employ free translation according to the context to maintain textual coherence. During this process, unavoidable inadequacies occur in conveying original meanings. In the example "A monk's lust for gold should be quelled." The Buddhist concept 尘缘已断 is reduced to the elimination of

material desire, losing its essential Buddhist connotations.

Examples 3:

小西天的极乐之境，怕是与你无缘了。	Evidently, you just don't deserve the ecstasy of the New West!
下次谷里开满奇花异草的景致，你和她，都无缘再见了。	The valley will unveil its blooms anew, but neither of you shall see its beauty.
唉，缘起缘落。	Such is his end...
开路向前，自有机缘。	Awakening awaits you ahead.
出家人尘缘已断，金海尽干。	A monk's lust for gold should be quelled.

*Black Myth: Wukong* also frequently employs the term 空 (kong), rendered diversely in translation. Buddhist doctrine posits that humans perceive reality through the “six roots” or “six relics”(六根: “eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind”), necessitating spiritual cultivation to attain inner stillness—the state of 空. Consequently, 空 cannot be simplistically rendered as “empty”, denoting mere absence. Alternative translations include “blank”, “void”, or contextual adaptations like “lonely”, “vague”, “bare”, and “in vain” based on situational usage.

Example 1:

悟空	Wukong
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In *Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong originates from Cave of the Setting Moon and the Three Stars(斜月三星洞). The compound 斜月三星 encodes a grapho-semantic cipher, visually reconstructs the character 心. This orthographic allegory establishes the name “Wukong”(悟空) as a to the Buddhist concept of “comprehending the principle of emptiness”(悟彻空理). Sun Wukong's journey of slaying demons and monsters symbolizes self-cultivation and elimination of mental afflictions to achieve enlightenment, ultimately realizing the truth of existence to attain liberation.

The character 空(kong) in Wukong embodies dialectical complexity, reflecting his arduous journey to reclaim the six sense. Translations like “empty” or “void” fail to adequately convey this subtle connotation, as they suggest mere absence. Consequently, the direct transliteration “Wukong” circumvents restrictive interpretations, preserving players' imaginative engagement with the character's spiritual essence while effectively balancing semantic accuracy and cultural resonance.

Examples 2:

凝虚结实，化空为有，乃炼化精魄的仙品宝具	From <b>voidness</b> , it grabs completeness. This is the legendary tool you need for Spirit Cultivation.
诸法空相，不增不减。	“All things are by nature <b>void</b> ... There is no wax or wane.”
有人问他为何，他便说：“我见无缘实我，不空是空。都是假的，何必吝惜？”.....	When asked why, he would say, “I see no true self; <b>Non-void</b> is but <b>void</b> . It's all an illusion, so why hold on to it?”...
同虚空相，欺我哀我恹我。	Yet the <b>void illusion</b> deceived and beguiled, Mourned and lamented, your spirit defiled.
魔将·妄相	Captain <b>Void-Illusion</b>

In the game, 空(kong) or 虚(xu) are frequently rendered as “void”. In the Cambridge Dictionary, this term carries

definitions: “a large hole or empty space” or “a feeling of unhappiness because someone or something is missing”. This semantic profile reveals inherent negative connotations, risking misinterpretation as Western philosophical nihilism. This entrenches a binary opposition between being and non-being that deviates from Buddhist wisdom regarding 空.

The translation “Non-void is but void” for 不空是空 exemplifies effective handling. As phonetic repetition of “void...void” preserves the original's dialectical rhythm, the translation contains not only the dialectical logic but the conciseness to satisfy the ludonarrative aesthetic requirements.

Examples 3:

十方诸佛皆无心，你已与十方诸佛无异	“The minds of the Buddhas are <b>empty</b> .” Yours is now likewise.
这苍狼精不屑长生虚言，只情修炼气力。	The grey wolf cared nothing for the ways of deities and Buddha, nor for the <b>empty</b> promises of eternal life. Instead, his heart was set on mastering strength and skill.
眼亮尚迷茫，目空常自失。	<b>Empty</b> gaze, in self's maze.

The term “empty” frequently corresponds to kong-related concepts in translations, such as 无(absence), 虚(vacuity), and 迷茫(confusion), appropriately conveying notions of “non-existence” or “complete voidness”.

Per the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary(7th ed.), 性 denotes:(1) Essential characteristics of matter or qualities derived from compositional elements;(2)Suffix function: When affixed to nouns, verbs, or adjectives, it forms abstract nouns or attributives indicating specific qualities.[3]

The first definition explains the ontological attributes, and the second one refers to the taxonomic attributes. Corresponding translation strategies include:

Examples 1:

再到取经的猪悟能，本性一点没变。	And Bajie in the journey. Yet his <b>nature</b> remains unchanged.
本性难移的下贱东西。	Such is the <b>nature</b> of you.

The Chinese lexeme 性 intrinsically encapsulates notions of “innate disposition”(天性) and “essential nature”(本性). The translation's adoption of “nature” achieves cross-linguistic conceptual equivalence by mapping to the core semantic constituents of 性 in philosophical discourse.

Examples 2:

依他的脾性，准是又在哪个丹炉前摇扇子。	Given his <b>nature</b> , he's surely tending the furnace flames somewhere.
你呀，模样与他是有几分相似，不过脾性可千万不能学他！	Well, you do kind of resemble him, looks-wise. But you'd better not take after his <b>temper</b> !
师父惜你赋性，饶你一命，让你在浮屠塔底清修。	Master valued your <b>talents</b> . He kept you alive beneath the pagoda for your own good.
为师观你悟性尚可，这才容你，不然.....	You are allowed here only because I saw some <b>promise</b> within you. Otherwise...
四灾耐性	Four Banes <b>Resistance</b>

When conveying specific attributes denoted by, translators systematically employ semantically precise nominal equivalents to preserve contextual functionality. The rendering of 脾性 as “temper” captures its core signification of characterological propensity, foregrounding affective

volatility within interpersonal dynamics. For 赋性, denoting innate aptitudes, the translation “talents” operationalizes a capacity-centered paradigm, enabling players to immediately comprehend narrative logic wherein mentors exhibit leniency based on demonstrable competence rather than abstract endowments. Most notably, 悟性, epistemologically rooted in hermeneutic capacity with the compound of comprehension and innate quality, undergoes deliberate transcreation as “promise” in the localized line “I saw some promise within you”(为师观你悟性尚可). It rejects the mechanically literal “comprehension ability”, viscerally communicates the protagonist’s recognized aptitude for growth, and aligns with RPG character progression mechanics familiar to global players.

Examples 3:

噪性化真性, 人心变道心, 开炉。	“Quell thy inner turmoil, and thou shalt attain the Dao.” Ablaze!
法性贯通	Spiritual Awakening
佛向性中作, 莫向身外求。	To walk the path of Buddha, go within, not without.

Certain lexical instantiations of 性 defy precise equivalence in target languages, necessitating compensatory translation strategies. The esoteric formulation 噪性化真性, denoting the transformative sublimation of restless primal impulses into purified consciousness, is rendered as “Quell thy inner turmoil”. This solution achieves tripartite efficacy: semantically, “inner turmoil” effectively conveys the psychological agitation inherent in 噪性 while avoiding reductive literalism; stylistically, archaic diction(thy/thou) and biblical parallelism evoke liturgical solemnity commensurate with incantatory contexts. Parallel challenges emerge in translating 法性 (dharma), the ontological ground of all phenomena. The reduction to “spiritual” enables gamers to comprehend specialized Buddhist terminology; ludologically, “Spiritual Awakening” as skill nomenclature aligns with established RPG progression tropes while satisfying player expectations regarding metaphysical enhancement. The doctrinal maxim “佛向性中作, 莫向身外求” undergoes cognitive spatialization as “To walk the path of Buddha, go within, not without”. The “within” metaphorically reconstructs 心性 as navigable psychic interiority, while the antonymic pairing “within/without” establishes spatial opposition mirroring the original’s philosophical dualism.

Examples 4:

黑风怪好弄把戏, 嘴上修真养性, 肚里贪婪欺心, 我所求之事不敢托付。	Black Wind Guai is a sly one. He <b>preaches virtue</b> with a heart full of greed. I wouldn’t entrust him with my plea.
只修性, 不修命, 此是修行第一病。	"Failure to cultivate one’s body is the blight of cultivating one’s mind."

The construct 修性 denotes the disciplined cultivation of one’s innate nature to achieve spiritual refinement, conventionally rendered as “cultivate one’s mind”. This translation necessitates rigorous contextualization within Buddhist soteriological frameworks, particularly regarding the dialectic between authentic praxis and performative piety. In characterizing Black Wind Guai’s hypocritical declaration 修真养性, translators strategically substituted “preaches virtue” for the latter component. This lexical shift achieves three critical objectives: first, it establishes immediate moral

semiosis comprehensible to Western audiences without presupposing Buddhist knowledge; second, it forges visceral irony through antithetical coupling with “with a heart full of greed”. The translation of 只修性, 不修命 similarly reflects sophisticated doctrinal discernment—resisting the facile “cultivate one’s mind” equivalence to preserve the Daoist internal alchemy principle of dual cultivation. Here, “nature” versus “vitality” consciously maintains the critical juxtaposition between metaphysical transcendence and somatic discipline, thereby accurately transmitting the original critique of spiritual imbalance. These cases collectively demonstrate how strategic lexical re-anchoring, diverging from literal equivalents when necessary, ensures both philosophical fidelity and player-centric intelligibility within game localization paradigms.

### 3.2. Character Appellations

The character nomenclature system in *Black Myth: Wukong* centers on the “Portraits”(影神图) compendium, a diegetic catalogue accessible through the inventory interface. As described in-game: “Some chronicler has recorded the spirits and beings encountered by ‘the Destined One’(天命人), sketching their forms, transcribing names and histories into this travelogue.” This taxonomy classifies entities into four hierarchical tiers: Lesser Yaoguais(小妖), Yaoguai Chiefs(头目), Yaoguai Kings(妖王), and Characters(人物). The game’s narrative exigencies predominantly feature demonic entities and antagonists, while also incorporating deities and mortal characters. These diverse personae in *Black Myth: Wukong* lend chromatic depth to the narrative and significantly drive its dynamic plot progression. Character appellations synthetically integrate Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian elements, embodying multifaceted cultural connotations. Consequently, the translation of these names comprehensively demonstrates strategic localization methodologies.

The localization of core character appellations demonstrates sophisticated negotiation between cultural authenticity and ludic functionality. As the protagonist, Wukong(悟空) receives context-dependent nominal designations reflecting dynamic relational hierarchies: honorific titles like “Handsome Monkey King”(美猴王) and “Great Sage”(齐天大圣) convey mythic prestige; derogatory epithets such as “scamp”(泼猴) and “filthy monkey”(弼马温) project socio-relational contempt; while self-referential “Old Sun”(老孙) embodies performative bravado through vernacular intimacy.

Example 1:

孙悟空	Wukong/Sun Wukong
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The appellation 孙悟空 possesses cultural uniqueness and singularity within Chinese tradition, exhibiting inherent cultural untranslatability. Consequently, the localization team eschewed conventional renderings like “Monkey King”, adopting instead direct transliteration as “Wukong” or “Sun Wukong”. Transliteration constitutes a methodology employing phonetically proximate approximations between languages. When confronting absolute lexical lacunae and there is no equivalent exists across cultural-linguistic systems—transliteration emerges as the primary solution(Zhang Fumin, 2021:48).[15] As articulated by the game’s creative leads: “For nouns unique to Chinese culture, particularly those denoting singular entities, we consistently

prioritize phonetic retention.” Preserving the original Chinese pronunciation achieves dual objectives: it safeguards the phonesthetic qualities of Mandarin syllables while circumventing potential phonetic dissonance that might compromise player immersion.

Examples 2:

俺老孙啥功名不要，只求回到这花果山终老，过过逍遥日子。	All I ever wanted was a life in <b>my</b> mountain, free from you, and your so-called merits.
今日让你看看，俺老孙的手段！	Behold what the <b>Great Sage</b> can do!

The prefixed honorific 老 preceding surnames constitutes a culturally embedded appellative convention in Chinese discourse. Sun Wukong’s self-referential 老孙 functions as a self-aggrandizing address. During localization, this construct is predominantly rendered as “I” or “me” when denoting subjective agency. However, when the character wants to introduce the identity, the translator utilizes “Great Sage” as a substitution that foregrounds emotional disposition while optimizing contextual congruence. Crucially, the systematic avoidance of “old” as an equivalent for 老 mitigates potential cultural misinterpretations, precluding player confusion regarding gerontological connotations.

Examples 3:

竟是你这猴头……	Oh, <b>lad</b> , it can’t be you!
猴头，我这好妹妹恼哩！你闯下祸来也！	We’ve got an angry spider here! That’s your bad, <b>monkey</b> !
你这猴头，跑什么，还有大事没交代！	<b>Hey!</b> Where are you going? There’s still important business!

For third-person references to 猴头, translators employ appellations such as “lad” or “monkey”, while contextually shifting to “you” when situational pragmatics dictate.

Examples 4:

泼猴，哪里走！	Come back here, you <b>scamp</b> !
泼猴，吃吾一刃！	<b>Foul monkey</b> , taste my axe!
弼马温，你不是死了么！	<b>Filthy monkey!</b> Aren’t you dead already?
你这猢猻好似弼马温，专欺老年人！	Picking on the aged, you are just like Sun Wukong!

When characters employ derogatory appellations such as 弼马温 and 泼猴 to address Sun Wukong, translators utilize epithets including “you scamp”, “foul monkey”, “filthy monkey”, “stinky monkey”, “nasty monkey”, or directly nominalize as “Sun Wukong”. The lexical selection of scamp, foul, filthy, stinky, and nasty, all bearing pejorative connotations, vividly conveys the sarcastic and disparaging undertones inherent in these address forms. Within the original *Journey to the West*, 弼马温 is conventionally translated as “Protector of the Horses”. However, in the game context, this appellation primarily communicates affective disposition rather than denoting official rank or narrating character backstory. Consequently, the original literary rendering was omitted, demonstrating the impact of skopos-oriented priorities on game localization praxis.

In the original *Journey to the West*, beyond the senior disciple Wukong, the Tang Priest accepts Zhu Bajie and Sha Heshang as disciples, bestowing the religious names “Wuneng”(悟能) and “Wujing”(悟净). The character Wuneng, or Zhu Bajie is uniformly rendered as “Bajie” whether referenced as 猪八戒 or 悟能. Even when self-referencing as 天蓬元帅(Marshal Tian Peng), the translation predominantly employs “Admiral Bajie”. During self-address

as 老猪, the localized version uses “pig”, which is much similar like the translation of 老孙 of Wukong. The appellation “Bajie” demonstrates greater recognizability among international players than “Wuneng”, while “pig” vividly resonates with the character’s porcine embodiment. Given limited familiarity with the source narrative among global audiences, comprehensively translating each honorific according to semantic nuances would induce player confusion. Strategic onomastic simplification thus enhances cross-cultural comprehensibility and memorability.

This approach aligns with the onomastic translation methodology observed in *Journey to the West* renditions. Wujing(悟净), or Friar Sand, alternatively termed Sha Seng—was exiled to the mortal realm as a demon at Flowing Sand River(流沙河) after shattering a crystal goblet in the Heavenly Palace. The character is commonly rendered “Friar Sand”, while Arthur Waley’s 1942 translation employs “Sandy”, reflecting the figure’s narrative origins.[11] Etymologically, “Sandy” derives from the Greek “Alexandros”, signifying “defender”, “guardian”, or “helper of mankind”. The semantic resonances partially congruent with the character’s steadfast reliability within the plot. Phonetically and in terms of lexical familiarity, this appellation proves more readily memorable and comprehensible than traditional equivalents. However, given that “Sandy” is prevalent utilized as a feminine name, potential reader misinterpretations warrant deeper critical examination.

These two secondary protagonists exhibit lower narrative frequency and reduced gameplay significance compared to their literary counterparts. Consequently, their localization diverges from the phonetic transliteration approach applied to “Wukong”, rendering instead as “Bajie” rather than “Wuneng” or “Wujing”. This study contends that such onomastic decisions prioritize player-experiential optimization, preventing confusion among audiences unfamiliar with the cultural backdrop. By adopting cognitively accessible appellations intrinsically linked to character traits—specifically, the porcine epithet for Zhu Bajie and the toponymic reference for Sha Heshang—translators demonstrate proactive methodological selection to circumvent narrative comprehension impediments.

Within the game’s bestiary, diverse localization strategies govern supernatural entity nomenclature. 妖 denotes spiritually animated flora or fauna believed in traditional cosmology to develop sentience and anthropomorphic forms through prolonged cultivation. 魔, etymologically derived from the Buddhist “Mara”(摩罗), underwent orthographic sinicization during Emperor Wu of Liang Dynasty. 鬼 constitutes a spectral existence within Chinese folk traditions and Daoist eschatology. 怪, synonymous with 精 or 妖, manifests when metamorphosis into human form fails, retaining partial anthropic features alongside predominant primordial characteristics.[14]

Examples 1:

妖怪	Yaoguais
老人身精	Old Ginseng Guai
地莲精	Golden Lotus Guai
黑熊精	Black Bear Guai
黑风怪	Black Wind Guai
石精怪	Rock Guai
鼠精鼠怪	Rat Guai

The suffix 怪 within all character appellations undergoes phonetic transliteration as “Guai”, while 精, denoting 妖精, semantically equivalent to 妖怪, is similarly rendered as “Guai”. This methodology consciously avoids Western lexemes like “monster”, defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as “any imaginary frightening creature, especially one that is large and strange”. Such terminology emphasizes grotesque physiognomy and colossal stature, diverging significantly from the Chinese conceptualization of “cultivated entities assuming human guise to inflict harm”. Given this ontological disparity, exhaustive searches for target-culture equivalents prove less efficacious than direct phonological transference. Retaining the original pronunciation “Guai” simultaneously preserves source-cultural specificity and foregrounds China’s unique mythological traditions.

Examples 2:

妖怪	Yaoguais
老人身精	Old Ginseng Guai
地莲精	Golden Lotus Guai
黑熊精	Black Bear Guai
黑风怪	Black Wind Guai
石精怪	Rock Guai
鼠精鼠怪	Rat Guai

The names of the six frog-shaped monster leaders are directly transliterated using the foreignization strategy, preserving the catchy phonetic characteristics of the Chinese original and vividly embodying the lively and agile traits of frogs in water. However, onomatopoeic words like “Baw,” “Lang,” and “Guhh” find no corresponding equivalents in English, making it difficult for English-speaking players to understand the monster imagery from these character names. This naturally evokes associations with the roles of “Benboerba” and “Baborben” in the original *Journey to the West*. The inverted word order in the Chinese original not only creates phonetic beauty but also implies the similar duties, fates, and close connections between the two characters. In Jenner’s translation, like *Black Myth: Wukong*, they are transliterated as “Benborba” and “Baborben,” while Anthony C. Yu’s translation ingeniously uses free translation as “busy bubble” and “bubble busy”[13]—not only reproducing the phonetic rhythm to some extent but also explaining the true identity of the two characters as fish monsters. In fact, the game’s 石磷磷, 石苍苍 and 石双双 also demonstrate the ingenuity of free translation. Translated as “Pitstone” “Palestone” and “Poisestone” these names not only reflect the prototype attributes of stone spirits but also share similar word structures, allowing players to instantly recognize the connection between the two stony monsters.

### 3.3. Prosodic Structures

*Black Myth: Wukong* features numerous instances of unique phonetic and metrical beauty in Chinese. When translating sentences with distinct Chinese phonetic characteristics, translators are required to convey the original meaning while maximizing the reproduction of source-language phonetic features, recreating the aesthetic atmosphere created by rhyming, reduplicated words, alliteration, and assonance.

Example 1: 走走走, 游游游 On the go, bent the toe

The translation of this character’s dialogue not only conveys the original meaning of 走(walk) and 游(swim) as “forward movement,” but also forms a rhyme with “go” and

“toe”. Both phrases follow the “amphibrach” meter(stressed-unstressed-stressed), making the translation catchy and fully embodying colloquial characteristics.

Example 2: 霏霏 Snow Veil

The game skill “Feifei” enhances the character’s cold resistance. Derived from The Book of Songs verse “When I left here, Willows shed tear. I come back now, Snow bends the bough.” It depicts a scene of swirling snowflakes. The translator employs a domestication strategy here: “Snow Veil” draws on the definition of “veil” as “a thin covering that hides or obscures”, evoking the hazy atmosphere of snowfall and effectively conveying the misty beauty of classical Chinese poetry. However, it fails to reproduce the phonetic rhythm created by the reduplicated character 霏, a limitation in preserving the original prosodic beauty of the reduplicated word.

In addition to proper nouns composed of reduplicated words, *Black Myth: Wukong* also features numerous segments with the characteristics of Chinese poetry. Translators can subjectively construct corresponding metrical patterns and accurately select words and sentence structures to restore the source language’s connotations and phonetic features as much as possible. Given the inherent untranslatability of poetry, translation activities cannot fully reproduce the charm of the source text, so excessive pursuit of creative translation, removing the “fettters” of the source language to act freely, should be avoided. As Mr. Huang Xinqu advocated that poems should be translated in a semi-free and semi-metrical style. Faithfulness remains the primary principle in translating Chinese poetry into English: use approximate rhymes if necessary, but never force rhyme at the expense of meaning.(Huang Xinqu, 1992)[12]

Example 3: 威凛凛, 气堂堂, 花身电目逞凶狂。

Majestic and grand, with a fierce display, striped coat, eyes like lightning’s ray.

Phonology and meter are the most fundamental aesthetic features of Chinese and English poetry. Rather than mimic the original’s three-clause form, the translation uses four parallel phrases of 3to 6 syllables to reproduce internal rhythm and adds an abcb end-rhyme. Stress-alternating words like “majestic” and “striped” echo Chinese tones in an iambic pattern. Rendering 威凛凛, 气堂堂 as “Majestic and grand” preserves its solemn force and antithetical four-character balance, corresponding to the level and oblique tones of the source text and approximating the source’s sonorous impact.

Example 4: 扑面漫漫黑, 脩脩神鬼惊。

A buzzing black mass, his visage thus swathed. The dead and deities startled by the chirr of rage.

In translating reduplicated words in the source text, apart from constructing corresponding metrical patterns in the target language, precise lexis can also be employed to manifest the connotations of reduplication. In Example 3, 漫漫(manman) is translated as “buzzing”, and 脩脩(xiaoxiao) as “chirr of rage”—replacing the original reduplicated characters with onomatopoeia to transform visual sensory experience into auditory imagery. Through sound descriptions, these translations convey the horrific atmosphere. The choices of words in the target text form alliteration: the voiced consonant /b/ in “black” and “buzzing” creates a sense of environmental oppression, while the /d/ in “dead” and “deities” evokes a gloomy ambiance, compensating for the rhythmic quality of the original reduplications and authentically reproducing the phonetic

beauty and rhythmic patterns of the source text.

## 4. Conclusion

The translation of *Black Myth: Wukong* requires balancing cultural authenticity with accessibility. While transliteration and literal translation preserve Oriental cultural charm, free translation aids international comprehension. Current challenges, including cultural misinterpretations and inadequate background conveyance of gamers, cause the loss of some unique cultural elements in translation. Optimal translation should strategically blend transliteration and free translation, maintaining phonetic appeal while ensuring accurate cultural transmission. This approach enhances quality, keeping fidelity to the source while improving player experience.

Translators are now facing various constraints in the game localization: linguistic-cultural gaps, market factors, and reader expectations. Unlike regular translators, storyteller-translators can more effectively adapt content for target audiences. Top translators play crucial roles in promoting Chinese culture globally. Encouraging them to apply strategic adaptations while respecting core cultural values may effectively introduce Chinese classics overseas - potentially guiding readers from popularized translations to academic versions and even original texts.

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