



## Cultural overflow vs. cultural export: *Black Myth: Wukong* and the evolution of Chinese gaming in global creative industries

Aiqing Wang, Thomas William Whyke & Zhennuo Song

To cite this article: Aiqing Wang, Thomas William Whyke & Zhennuo Song (19 Nov 2025): Cultural overflow vs. cultural export: *Black Myth: Wukong* and the evolution of Chinese gaming in global creative industries, Creative Industries Journal, DOI: [10.1080/17510694.2025.2583652](https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2025.2583652)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2025.2583652>



Published online: 19 Nov 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# Cultural overflow vs. cultural export: *Black Myth: Wukong* and the evolution of Chinese gaming in global creative industries

Aiqing Wang<sup>a</sup> , Thomas William Whyke<sup>b</sup>  and Zhennuo Song<sup>b,c</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Department of Languages, Cultures and Film, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK<sup>b</sup>School of International Communications, University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Ningbo, China; <sup>c</sup>Sino-German Faculty of Branding, Zhejiang Wanli University, Ningbo, China

## ABSTRACT

This study examines *Black Myth: Wukong*, China's first AAA (Triple-A) game, as a transformative medium that bridges traditional Chinese mythology and modern digital storytelling. Drawing from *Journey to the West*, a cornerstone of Chinese literary heritage, the game integrates advanced gaming technologies with immersive narratives, offering an organic reinterpretation of classical mythology for a global audience. Employing Walter Benjamin's theory of storytelling and Carly Kocurek's insights on interactive media, this research highlights how the game revitalises cultural narratives, fostering cross-cultural connections while maintaining authenticity. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates content analysis of narrative and visual elements, sentiment analysis of audience reception, and a dual deductive-inductive thematic analysis to uncover key trends and insights. This study also addresses controversies surrounding inclusivity and ethical storytelling, emphasising the challenges and opportunities in adapting traditional narratives to contemporary global contexts. By analysing the reception and cultural implications of *Wukong*, we underscore the potential of interactive media to serve as both a cultural bridge and an educational tool.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 January 2025  
Accepted 22 October 2025

## KEYWORDS

Chinese mythology; AAA (Triple-A) video game; Walter Benjamin; interactive storytelling; audience reception; *Black Myth: Wukong* (2024)

## Introduction

Mythology frequently functions as a narrative foundation, enhancing stories with depth, cultural importance, and emotional impact, while enabling audiences to connect with universal themes, such as heroism, ethics, and transformation (Campbell 2008). The growing prevalence of legendary adaptations in modern media spans animation, television programs, films, and video games. These media serve as dynamic platforms for reinterpreting myths, facilitating the discovery of cultural narratives through immersive and interactive encounters. Launched globally on 20th August 2024, an action role-playing game *Hei Shenhua: Wukong* 'Black Myth: Wukong' sold

10 million copies worldwide across all gaming platforms within three days, rivalling the figure of 'The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom' developed and published by Nintendo, which sold over 10 million copies worldwide within three days after its release in May 2023. Developed by a China-based enterprise Game Science as their debut console game, *Black Myth: Wukong* (henceforward 'the game') is regarded to be one of the country's most premium productions and the first Chinese-developed AAA (Triple-A) game (AFP 2024), a terminology of the video game industry denoting high-budget, high-profile and stand-alone commodities typically produced and/or distributed by well-known major publishers with large prospective returns (Bernevega and Gekker 2022). Since its global release, the game has been a trending topic in China's cyberspace: on the day of its release, the game became the hottest topic on the 'hot search' (*re sou*) list of a prominent Chinese micro-blogging platform Weibo that has 588 million monthly active users (Weibo 2024), and it frequently appeared on the list afterwards (Xinhua Daily 2024). On Douyin, the mainland Chinese version of TikTok, videos under the topic *#Black Myth Wukong* (*Hei Shenhua Wukong*) accumulated 15.24 billion views within three days of the game's release (Mo and Wu 2024).

In addition to commercial success and widespread attention, the game has earned critical acclaim. On Steam, its 676,931 reviews are 'overwhelming positive', and there are accolades, such as 'great to play', 'visual masterpiece', 'very responsive', 'excellent CGs with outstanding art', etc. (Steam 2024). On Douban, China's leading social networking platform celebrated for user-generated reviews of cultural products, such as films and television serials (Douban 2024a), the game has been given a score of 9.1 on a scale of 1 to 10 a month after its release, and among the 32,982 reviewers, 96.2% of them rate the game 'three-star' or above (Douban 2024b). On Zhihu, a Quora-like question-answering and knowledge-based platform encompassing a plethora of user-generated discussions (Zhihu 2024a), the game is reviewed by 106,000 registered users and recommended by 81% of them; by 20th September 2024, its dedicated page has garnered over 2.81 billion views as well as a veritable cornucopia of questions and their 2 million responses, ranging from generic questions, such as 'What is your evaluation of *Black Myth: Wukong*? Is it fun?', to specific ones concerning its strategies and plots, such as 'Why is the Wandering Wight in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter 1 so difficult to beat? Are there any tips?' and 'What is your opinion about the seeming romance between Wukong and the White Bone Demon in *Black Myth: Wukong*?' (Zhihu 2024b). In addition to its popularity on social media platforms, the game even attained visibility on China's mainstream media, such as China Daily that reports the phenomenal global appeal of the game (Ouyang, 2024).

It is notable that the game has been captivating not only Chinese players familiar with the original narrative but also players around the globe, who might not be familiar with its cultural background. The game topped weekly sales charts in 12 countries, and it has attracted the second-highest number of concurrent players on Steam. Elon Musk, the owner of X (formerly known as Twitter) and the CEO of Tesla, shared an AI-generated synthetic photograph of himself with the game's central character on X, accompanied by a tweet 'Impressive AAA game from China' (ET Now 2024). The game, therefore, has been promoted and adulated by China's mainstream media as a source of nationalist pride manifesting the appeal of Chinese culture

(The Economist 2024). According to Xinhua News Agency (*Xinhua She*), China's state-run press agency, the game has succeeded in 'telling China's stories well with world-class quality', 'sparking an international wave of traditional Chinese culture' and 'inspiring future games' exploration of global markets' (Shi 2024; Xie and Jiang 2024).

Nonetheless, despite its commercial success and critical acclaim substantial inquiries persist concerning audience participation and the understanding of these versions. *Black Myth: Wukong* exemplifies the versatility of Chinese mythology; its amalgamation with international narrative methods and game design prompts apprehensions regarding authenticity and cultural representation (Hong and Shen 2024). Does the game's dependence on universal narrative frameworks, such as the 'hero's journey' (Campbell 2008), diminish the cultural distinctiveness of the original myth? Does this international approach enable the tale to connect with a wider audience, so increasing its accessibility and allure? The international reception of *Black Myth: Wukong* illustrates the cultural diplomacy potential of Chinese media. The game's popularity in worldwide markets may indicate a growing awareness of Chinese cultural themes, fostering cross-cultural understanding. Conversely, it heightens the risk of oversimplifying or exoticizing Chinese culture to conform to global consumer expectations, potentially reinforcing stereotypes instead of challenging them.

Despite its groundbreaking accomplishments, the incorporation of Chinese mythology into AAA gaming reveals a significant gap in scholarly research. The perspectives of players from diverse cultural backgrounds on these adaptations remain largely underexplored. To address these issues, the primary research question for this study is: How does *Black Myth: Wukong* transform the narrative of *Journey to the West* through interactive digital media, and how do diverse audiences perceive and engage with this transformation?

To explore this question, the study employs Walter Benjamin's theory of storytelling and Carly Kocurek's insights into interactive media as foundational frameworks. These theories offer a perspective for examining how *Black Myth: Wukong* revitalises traditional narratives through digital technologies, fostering cultural engagement and enabling a transformative approach to mythological storytelling.

## The cultural narrative of *Black Myth*

*Black Myth: Wukong* illustrates the advancement of Chinese mythology within the AAA gaming sector, characterised by elevated production standards, complex narratives, and state-of-the-art technology. The cultural importance of *Black Myth: Wukong* resides in its capacity to both update and maintain traditional Chinese storytelling. The game recontextualizes the Monkey King as a protagonist in a graphically immersive, interactive medium, thereby appealing to a worldwide audience while preserving its cultural authenticity. This dual function as entertainment and cultural export highlights the capacity of AAA games to serve as instruments of soft power. The game illustrates the ability of Chinese mythology to transcend national boundaries and achieve worldwide appeal by integrating local cultural components with international gaming trends (Chen 2017; Du 2019).

Rooted in Chinese mythology, *Black Myth: Wukong's* narrative is based on a 100-chapter masterpiece *Xi You Ji* 'Journey to the West' that has been granted the

ultimate accolade as one of the Four Great Classical Novels (*Si Da Mingzhu*) of Chinese literature. Owing to its supernatural depictions of mortals and immortals based on the Sinicised Buddhism and the indigenous Taoism and folk religion (*minjian zongjiao*) (Bantly 1989; Cozad 1998), this novel is also regarded as the pinnacle of *zhiguai* (the strange) literature, an immemorial literary genre featuring divinities, spectres, the underworld, occult powers, paranormal events, mythical locations, mythological flora and fauna, practitioners of esoteric arts, etc. (see Campany 1991, 1996; Chiang 2005; Kao 1985; Shang 2018; Zeitlin 1993; Zhang 2014, among many others). Overwhelmingly ascribed to a scholar Wu Cheng'en (circa 1506–1582) (Hsia 2015, 108; Wall 2017), this novel recounts the gruelling and protracted pilgrimage of a pious Buddhist monk Xuanzang (aka Tang Sanzang, 602–664 CE) from Tang China (618–907 CE) to India in attainment of sacred scriptures, accompanied and protected by his three monster disciples, Sun Wukong ('Great Sage Equal to Heaven'), Zhu Bajie ('Curtain Lifting General') and Sha Wujing ('Marshal of the Heavenly Canopy'), as well as Bai Long Ma 'White Dragon Horse' transformed by a dragon prince.

*Journey to the West* operates as a complex allegorical narrative embedding multiple philosophical traditions, though the Chinese allegorical mode differs fundamentally from Western allegory by functioning within a 'spatial vision of totality' where opposites exist as complementary within a single frame of reference rather than hierarchically ordered between separate metaphysical realms (Plaks 2015, 109). Sun Wukong emerges as a Buddhist disciple whose surname has deep historical roots in the Tang dynasty Lingyin si (Lingyin Temple) monkeys, called the 'Sun group' (Sun tuan), representing the earliest recorded instance of the monkey surname Sun before Sun Wukong's literary appearance (Shahar 1992). His primary function is guiding Buddhist Master Xuanzang to Buddha's paradise atop a sacred mountain, employing supernatural powers while submitting to his mortal master's authority—a transformation representing the cultivation of unruly spirit through disciplined practice. The narrative's emphasis on magical mountains and caves draws from the Huili monkey legend, which circulated from Tang through Song times across Buddhist hagiography, geographical writings, and poetry, telling of a supernatural monkey in a cave on Feilai Peak who accompanied monk Huili on a journey between China and India, arriving at the same destination as the Xiyouji pilgrims: Buddha Sakyamuni's paradise (Shahar 1992).

Due to its artistic merit, literary renown, and cultural and religious elements, *Journey to the West* has inspired myriads of sequels and textual and audiovisual adaptations. Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties have witnessed a list of sequels, exemplified by *Xu Xi You Ji* 'Sequel to Journey to the West' arguably by Lan Mao circa the Ming dynasty (Liu 1984), *Hou Xi You Ji* 'After the Journey to the West' written circa late Ming or early Qing (Liu 1991), and *Xi You Bu* 'A Supplement to Journey to the West' arguably by Dong Yue (1620–1686) (Fu 2006). In modern and contemporary periods, the novel's textual and audiovisual adaptations are in various forms, ranging from web fiction to films *Xi You Xiang Mo Pian* 'Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons' (2013) and *Xi You Fu Yao Pian* 'Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back' (2017) and a 1998 animated serial *Xi You Ji* 'Journey to the West: Legends of the Monkey King' produced by China Central Television. Among the screen adaptations, the most prominent one is the 1986 television serial

*Xi You Ji* 'Journey to the West' produced by China Central Television, which reached the ratings of nearly 90% in the 1980s and has been repeated for over four thousand times in the past decades, breaking a Guinness World Record (Kong 2017). Additionally, there are works alluding to *Journey to the West*, such as an episode *Xiao Yaoguai De Xitian* 'Nobody' in an animated serial *Zhongguo Qitan* 'Yao-Chinese Folktales' (2023), which is set in the same universe as the novel yet adopts the perspective of an obscure low-ranking monster. It is worth noting that *Journey to the West* has also provided inspiration for non-Chinese works, such as the Japanese media franchise *Dragon Ball* that encompasses manga, anime, film, video games, collectible cards, etc.

In *Journey to the West*, among Tang Sanzang's three disciples, Sun Wukong, aka the Monkey King, is the most invincible one, whose magic powers include the weapon Gold Hooped Rod that can change size, mighty strength to shoulder mountains, transformation into various animals and objects, etc. Meanwhile, Sun Wukong is regarded to be valiant and rebellious, for creating complete havoc in the Dragon Palace, the Underworld, and Heaven, and for defeating one hundred thousand celestial warriors before becoming a Buddhist and a profusion of demons and monsters during the pilgrimage. At the end of the novel, Sun Wukong ascends to Buddhahood as the 'Victorious Fighting Buddha' (*Douzhan Sheng Fo*) after overcoming 81 calamities. This legendary character, therefore, has been serving as a revered cultural icon in China and inspiring a veritable cornucopia of adaptations, exemplified by animated films *Da Nao Tiangong* 'Uproar in Heaven' (1961) and *Xi You Ji Zhi Dasheng Guilai* 'Monkey King: Hero is Back' (2015), as well as live action films *Xi You Ji Zhi Sun Wukong San Da Baigu Jing* 'The Monkey King 2' (2016) and *Wukong Zhuan* 'Wu Kong' (2017). To capture the imagination of audiences, some of the adapted audiovisual works reshape the image of Sun Wukong substantially, such as the tragicomedy film *Da Hua Xi You Zhi Yueguang Baohe* 'A Chinese Odyssey Part One—Pandora's Box' (1995) and its sequel *Da Hua Xi You Zhi Dasheng Quqin* 'A Chinese Odyssey Part Two—Cinderella' released in the same year, which feature Sun Wukong's emotional entanglements with the White Bone Demon and the Lamp Wick Fairy. Since there is no romantic depiction concerning Sun Wukong in the original novel, such adaption is subject to castigation from people, such as Zhang Jinlai (aka Liuxiaolingtong), the actor playing Sun Wukong in the 1986 television serial *Journey to the West*. In terms of video games inspired by *Journey to the West*, *Black Myth: Wukong* is not the first one. Previously launched Japanese games can be dated back to the 1980s, while more recent games developed by Chinese companies include *Menghuan Xi You* 'Fantasy Westward Journey' (2001), *Dou Zhan Shen* 'Asura' (2013), *Da Hua Xi You* 'A Chinese Odyssey' (2015), etc. In addition to Chinese and Japanese games, there are *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West* (2010) by Ninja Theory in the UK and *Unruly Heroes* (2019) by Magic Design Studios in France. The adaptation into *Black Myth: Wukong* exemplifies 'digital mythology', characterised by the digital production and existence of modern myths in the media environment, where computer games visualise mythological motifs and become myths themselves, with gaming spaces formed by systems of mythogenesis that allow contemporary audiences to engage with traditional narratives through the transformation of social myths into digital form (Artamonov et al. 2021).

## Theoretical framework

Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay, *The Storyteller* (2006), articulates storytelling as a profound communicative act capable of imparting 'counsel'—wisdom derived from collective life experiences. Benjamin contrasts the enduring value of stories with the fleeting nature of modern information, lamenting the decline of traditional storytelling in the face of industrialisation and technological change. He emphasises that true storytelling not only shares narratives but invites reflection, fostering a deeper connection between the teller and the listener (Benjamin 2006). Building on Benjamin's insights, Kocurek (2018) argues that narrative immersion in interactive media, particularly video games, can evoke the qualities of Benjaminian storytelling. She highlights that effective storytelling in games avoids reductive conclusions, instead offering players opportunities for reflection, emotional engagement, and transformative experiences. In doing so, such games can mirror the impartation of 'counsel', allowing players to navigate complex narratives that resonate on a personal and communal level (Kocurek 2018).

This research applies Benjamin and Kocurek's frameworks to analyse the game *Wukong*, demonstrating how it revitalises the fading art of storytelling through interactive media. Firstly, Benjamin mourns the decline of storytelling traditions, yet *Wukong* counters this trend by serving as a digital platform for cultural preservation. Rooted in Chinese mythology, the game integrates legendary narratives, such as those of the Monkey King, into an immersive format that appeals to contemporary audiences. By drawing on rich mythological content, *Wukong* aligns with Benjamin's notion of the storyteller as a transmitter of cultural heritage, bridging the past and present (Benjamin 2006; Kocurek 2018).

Secondly, Benjamin describes storytelling as a vessel for collective wisdom, derived from shared experiences. In *Wukong*, players engage in diverse in-game battles and quests, accumulating personal insights that resonate within a broader gaming community. These shared experiences foster a collective identity, echoing the oral traditions Benjamin revered. This aligns with Kocurek's observation that games provide a space for experiential knowledge, allowing players to connect and reflect on their actions within the game world (Juul 2005; Kocurek 2018).

Thirdly, stories, according to Benjamin, possess an inherent educational value, offering insights and moral guidance without didacticism. Similarly, *Wukong* embeds players in narratives that convey traditional Chinese values and lessons. As players progress, they encounter themes of loyalty, perseverance, and the complexities of morality, reflecting Benjamin's ideal of storytelling as a vehicle for instruction and self-discovery. Moreover, the game's artisanal design, which integrates visual and interactive elements, underscores its role as a modern manifestation of Benjaminian storytelling (Benjamin 2006; Kocurek 2018; Ryan 2001).

By analysing *Wukong* through the lens of Benjamin's storytelling theory and Kocurek's application to interactive media, this research underscores how *Wukong* can serve as transformative storytelling mediums. They not only preserve cultural narratives but also engage players in the reflective and communal dimensions of storytelling. In doing so, modern video games like *Wukong* expand the potential of digital media to function as both an educational tool and a cultural bridge, aligning with Benjamin's vision of storytelling as an enduring and adaptive art form.



## Methodology

### Research approach

This study employs a dual deductive-inductive approach to examine how *Black Myth: Wukong* transforms traditional narrative and how audiences engage with this transformation. Drawing on Benjamin's theory of storytelling and Kocurek's framework of interactive media, we developed initial deductive themes while remaining open to emergent patterns in the data. According to Joffe (2011, 210), this dual deductive-inductive thematic approach helps achieve 'high-quality qualitative work' with the ability to transform knowledge of previous findings and establish new concepts. The approach is particularly suitable for exploring the game's cultural impact as it allows researchers to examine how Benjamin's concepts of storytelling manifest in digital gaming while remaining receptive to novel insights about cross-cultural reception and narrative transformation.

### Data collection

To ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant content and reception, we used multiple data collection strategies informed by our theoretical framework. We collected user reviews and discussions from major platforms, including Douban (32,982 reviews) and Zhihu (106,000 user reviews). Our data collection was guided by Benjamin's emphasis on storytelling as a communal experience and Kocurek's focus on interactive engagement. Keywords included 'Black Myth: Wukong', 'Journey to the West adaptation', and 'Chinese gaming', selected to capture both narrative transformation and cultural reception aspects.

Our inclusion criteria required that reviews and comments addressed themes central to Benjamin's storytelling theory (such as cultural transmission, collective wisdom, and moral instruction), and Kocurek's focus on interactive engagement while also remaining open to emergent themes. Content was selected based on its relevance to narrative elements, cultural adaptation, cross-cultural reception, and substantive commentary beyond basic gameplay feedback. To particularly grasp the cross-cultural acceptance of *Black Myth: Wukong* and ensure representative sampling across diverse audiences, we employed language-based filtering on the Steam platform. Steam's review system allows users to filter comments by language preference, enabling us to systematically collect both English-language reviews (representing international players) and Chinese-language reviews (predominantly from mainland Chinese players). The data collection period spanned from the game's global release in August 2024 through September 2024, capturing both immediate reactions and evolving discourse around the game's cultural impact.

### Data analysis

We utilised a dual deductive-inductive thematic analysis approach to examine the qualitative data. The deductive component was guided by key concepts from Benjamin's storytelling theory and Kocurek's interactive media framework, while the inductive



**Table 1.** Deductive-inductive coding analysis.

| Open codes                        | Axial codes                         | Selective codes                                       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Traditional storytelling elements | Benjaminian narrative preservation  | Cultural heritage translation for the modern audience |
| Digital adaptation techniques     | Interactive storytelling mechanisms |                                                       |
| Visual narrative innovations      | Modern storytelling adaptations     | Educational-entertainment integration                 |
| Moral instruction elements        | Value transmission methods          |                                                       |
| Gaming mechanic integration       | Pedagogical design elements         |                                                       |
| Cultural authenticity balance     | Cultural preservation strategies    | Interactive community engagement                      |
| Communal wisdom sharing           | Collective experience formation     |                                                       |
| Cross-cultural understanding      | Cultural bridging practices         |                                                       |
| Player reflection patterns        | Experiential learning processes     |                                                       |

component allowed for the emergence of new themes from the data. Following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory approach, we conducted three levels of coding:

The first level involved open coding, combining predetermined theoretical categories with emergent concepts. The second level employed axial coding to establish relationships between these categories and identify patterns that either confirmed or expanded upon our theoretical framework. The final level used selective coding to integrate and refine the core themes, synthesising theoretical insights with empirical findings.

This three-stage coding process enabled systematic analysis while maintaining theoretical rigour and empirical grounding (Charmaz and Thornberg 2021). The following table displays our coding analysis, reflecting both theoretical and emergent themes (Table 1):

Through this methodological approach, we were able to analyse how *Black Myth: Wukong* transforms traditional narrative elements while examining how it exemplifies or challenges Benjamin's concepts of storytelling and Kocurek's insights into interactive media. This dual approach allowed us to both test existing theoretical frameworks and discover new patterns in how digital gaming can serve as a medium for cultural storytelling and cross-cultural engagement.

Next, to qualify audience attitudes, we also integrated qualitative sentiment analysis techniques to collect emotional and subjective social media comments and discussions. This approach classified sentiment into positive and negative categories, offering an in-depth overarching view of emotional responses to the game (Gaspar et al. 2016; Öztürk and Ayvaz 2018). This analysis complemented the deductive-inductive approach providing a balanced perspective on audience sentiment and engagement. Moreover, secondary data analysis was used to contextualise audience responses within the broader landscape of Chinese mythological adaptations in media. This included examining critical reviews, scholarly articles, and media coverage of Chinese mythological films, animations, and games. The analysis provided insights into how *Black Myth: Wukong* fits within existing trends and how it reinterprets traditional Chinese narratives for contemporary audiences.

## Findings and discussion

### *Embracing tradition through modern storytelling*

Benjamin's lamentation of the decline of traditional storytelling is directly challenged by *Black Myth: Wukong*. The game immerses players in Chinese mythology, serving

as a modern storyteller that reintroduces cultural history to both nostalgic and new audiences. This parallels Benjamin's concept of narrative as a conduit between historical knowledge and contemporary realities (Benjamin 2006). In this sense, the game does not merely reproduce cultural myths but re-mediate them through digital interactivity, allowing players to co-author meanings as they navigate mythological worlds. Each act of gameplay becomes a micro-narrative, where myth is re-experienced and reinterpreted through personal agency.

What makes *Black Myth: Wukong* outshine its peers? According to its introduction on Steam, the game invites players 'to venture into the challenges and marvels ahead, to uncover the obscured truth beneath the veil of a glorious legend from the past' as 'the Destined One' (*Tian Ming Ren*), and to 'traverse an array of breathtaking and distinctive landscapes from the classic tale, composing an epic of adventure that is seen anew' (Steam 2024). To be more specific, the game is widely acclaimed for its breathtaking three-dimensional animation special effects, exquisite character models, punctilious action details, smooth performance, and engaging plotlines, and the hero Wukong is also adulated for a range of merits, including bravery, loyalty, integrity, and acuity (Zhang 2024). When gamers play as 'the Destined One', they not only go on an adventure exploring intricately crafted forests, deserts, and mountains, but also immerse themselves in themes of fate, repentance, sacrifice, redemption, etc. (Rodriguez 2024). These achievements are brought about by over six years' development and an investment of 300 million yuan. The game designers create vast environments abounding with vertiginous, spectacular buildings, the archetypes of which are historic sites around the country, particularly ancient temples and sculptures. In addition to its visually stunning interpretations of real-world architecture and scenery, a multitude of deities, buddhas, monsters, demons, and fairies in the game are also marked with traditional Chinese aesthetics, and the game's music predominantly adopts traditional Chinese instruments and style.

The auditory dimension of *Black Myth: Wukong* has received widespread acclaim from both domestic and international audiences. As Lu (2025) observes in his study on the game's cross-cultural communication effects, the soundtrack combines traditional musical elements with modern electronic tones, replacing Western orchestral conventions with a uniquely Chinese soundscape that heightens emotional immersion and cultural resonance. One of the most widely cited player comments captures this sentiment: 'I've never heard such a moving chant in my life. The chanting, temple bells, and pentatonic melodies not only enhance the game's spiritual ambience but also evoke deep cultural nostalgia.' Compared with foreign-language dubbing, many players express a preference for the original Chinese voice acting, describing it 'as more authentic and lifelike'. Lu (2025) argues that this preference reflects a semiotic shift: in this context, sound functions less as a linguistic 'signifier' and more as an embodied 'signified', where accent, tone, and cadence carry cultural meaning beyond translation. This highlights how auditory authenticity becomes central to the game's immersive appeal. Through its soundscape, *Black Myth: Wukong* transforms music from a background element into a narrative and emotional bridge, harmonising ancient Chinese spirituality with contemporary digital aesthetics.

To Chinese fan players, the game's success brings traditional mythology they grew up with into the modern spotlight. The narratives and characters in the original novel have been etched on Chinese gamers' memory due to the prodigious number of works adapted from the novel, especially the television *Journey to the West* (1986) that has been repeated for over four thousand times in the past decades in both China and other Asian countries, and Sun Wukong was or still is a boyhood hero of some gamers. As commented by a critic,

'as soon as you pick up the game controller, you become Wukong who cleans up the universe with his Gold Hooped Rod, beating all gods and demons and sweeping into the Heavenly Palace' (Li 2024).

Although the influence of the masterpiece *Journey to the West* as a cultural item has never faded away in China, the recent craze for the game undeniably regenerates such cultural impact. For instance, on Bilibili, an entertainment platform celebrated for sharing and streaming of user-generated videos, there are recently uploaded videos in which posters cosplay as Wukong, analyse plots and characters in the game and the novel, sing or play the game's *Rebirth in Pureland Mantra* and themes of *Journey to the West* (1986) with different musical instruments, etc. (Bilibili 2024a). These fan practices illustrate how audiences actively participate in re-authoring the myth, extending storytelling beyond the screen into performance, music, and online discussion. Given the fact that at least 36 of the game's scenes are created based on real historic sites, its popularity also boosts the tourism in those places, especially Shanxi province that hosts 27 of the 36 historic sites appearing in the game (Xie and Jiang 2024). Upon the game's release, the Department of Culture and Tourism in several provinces published promotional videos and articles, which turned out to be effective—the visitor volume of an obscure tourist attraction in Shanxi increased by 300% compared to the same time last year (Mo and Wu 2024).

### *Controversies of authenticity and representation*

Analogous to other popular cultural items, the game's high visibility, commercial success, and broad reception are accompanied by controversy. Upon the game's launch, three Weibo users, including a painter, a craftsman, and a photographer, posted their previous works and implicitly or explicitly accused the game designer(s) of plagiarism. On 23rd August 2024, the hashtag #Black Myth Wukong suspected plagiarism# became the hottest trend on Weibo, attracting more than 100 million views (Guancha 2024). Moreover, although the game is adulated by the Guardian as 'the summer's most exciting' action game with 'stunning visuals, cinematic beauty and refreshing sense of speed', it is simultaneously referred to as the 'most controversial' one for failing to distance itself from disparaging remarks (Regan 2024).

There are also allegations against the sexist culture of Game Science, as indicated by its recruitment posters featuring suggestive images, innuendo-laden text published by its CEO on Weibo, an employee's Zhihu post taking about masturbation to a female character in the game, etc. (Chen 2024). The company's co-founder is also accused of expressing misogynistic attitudes and regarding female players with disdain

(Valentine and Chan 2023). Additionally, the game's co-publisher, Hero Games, has caused debates for instructing streamers and content creators to avoid discussing certain topics, including feminism, politics, Covid-19, and China's gaming industry policies, in their live streaming and reviews of the game, which triggers some concerns over censorship and freedom of speech (Butler 2024; Kapur 2024). According to ScreenRant, one of the game's listed cons is 'Lacking in inclusivity and diversity'. To be more specific, although the original novel indeed depicts some important female characters, the game is excoriated for including no female or feminine non-player characters (at least in the first two chapters), which is disconcerting for a modern audience (ScreenRant 2024). Under a YouTube video 'Black Myth: Wukong—Before You Buy' published by Gameranx, a comment with over 20,000 likes says 'Just so you all know screen rant gave this game a 6/10 for 'lacking inclusivity and diversity', and it has received more than 600 responses, such as 'LOL But we have monkeys, tigers, rhinos, boars etc. What more do they want?' (3129 likes), 'Yikes' (2871 likes), 'I would expect something like that from IGN but aye, it's so stupid wanting diversity and inclusivity from a game based on an old Chinese novel' (1163 likes), etc. (Gameranx 2024). On Zhihu and Douban, Chinese fan gamers also oppose ScreenRant's criticism, drawing on both depictions in the original novel and adaptations of the game. One of the Zhihu user points out that

'First, Sun Wukong was born from a stone, genderless. Second, in the game, Pingping (Red Boy) at the Flaming Mountains is transgender. Third, in the game, there are men, women, animals and the stone family—there are dozens of species, not to mention genders. A pig and a spider fall in love with each other and have a kid, which is far more creative than the diversity in a Western sense. Fourth, in the novel, both Tang Sanzang and Zhu Bajie were pregnant as men' and another Zhihu user adds that Wukong used to dress up as a bride to tease Zhu Baijie.

Benjamin's conceptualisation of storytelling as a medium for imparting wisdom and engaging audiences gains complexity when applied to *Wukong*. While the game revitalises traditional narratives, allegations of sexism and criticisms about inclusivity highlight the challenges of adapting cultural heritage to modern contexts. These issues invite reflection on the evolving expectations for storytelling in digital media and the societal implications of narrative decisions. Meanwhile, these debates reflect Kocurek's (2018) assertion that interactive media can provoke reflection and dialogue. By sparking discussions on gender and representation, the game exemplifies how modern storytelling mediums extend beyond passive consumption to active engagement.

Furthermore, as an entertainment product, the game is inevitably faced with censure from parents and regulatory scrutiny. In China's cyberspace, the game is chastised for abounding with representations of violence and exploiting children's weak self-control as 'electronic opium' (Sohu 2024). This framing ties into Benjamin's notion of the erosion of traditional storytelling in modern societies, where newer forms of media, such as games, are often seen as less morally instructive and more harmful (Benjamin 2006). Meanwhile, restrictions, such as only allowing gamers under the age of 18 to play for 1 hour on Fridays, weekends, and holidays, intend to prevent obsessive gaming behaviours and limit in-game purchases. There are also bans on game content that 'endangers national unity' or 'endangers national security or harms

national reputation and interests' (McCallum and McMahon 2023), which might account for Hero Games' instructions for streamers and content creators. This strict regulatory framework reflects a broader moral and ideological agenda, where gaming is not only a matter of youth protection but also of cultural governance. However, such control mechanisms often generate tension with China's ambition to position itself as a major cultural exporter. The government's simultaneous encouragement of globally influential cultural products contrasts with its domestic constraints on creativity and content. This paradox exposes the duality of state-led cultural modernisation: while promoting national image through mythological storytelling, it also reinscribes moral and ideological boundaries around media consumption.

Benjamin viewed storytelling as a means of imparting moral lessons and wisdom through experiential narratives. Critics of *Wukong* argue that its violent content exploits children's self-control and undermines its educational potential. However, the detailed, immersive world of the game and its thematic engagement with Chinese mythology could also be seen as providing opportunities for players to reflect on themes of morality, perseverance, and redemption. The sarcastic Zhihu comments also highlight a counter-narrative: the idea that gaming can coexist with educational and cultural enrichment. By engaging players in a rich mythological world, *Wukong* may fulfil Benjamin's ideal of storytelling as a medium for collective and moral reflection, even as it navigates criticism for its perceived flaws.

### *The global impact of Black Myth: Wukong*

As acclaimed by China News, one of China's state-run mainstream media, the game offers intriguing cultural storytelling and brings China onto the global stage, in that the game encompasses a splendid array of traditional cultural elements, ranging from architecture, sculpture and calligraphy to mythology, religion and folk music, which not only engages Chinese gamers' interest, but also equips international gamers with a combined immersive cultural and entertainment experience (Zhang 2024). The game's exploration of traditional Chinese culture is also praised for setting itself apart in an industry 'typically dominated by Western narratives' (Kapur 2024). Since the game's launch, gaming streamers and content creators have broadcasted on Twitch and uploaded videos to their YouTube channels, attracting legions of viewers. On Twitch, for example, the dedicated page for the game has accumulated 75,400 followers, and a video titled 'DEFEATING THEM ALL' has obtained 297,000 views in three days (Twitch 2024).

On Bilibili, there are user-generated videos recording the reactions and comments of non-Chinese Twitch/YouTube streamers, such as Birdyrage, Deebeegeek, and MissMikkaa, and the posters sometimes provide Chinese subtitles to facilitate their audiences' understanding. This type of videos showing non-Chinese players' acclamation of the game are popular on Bilibili. For instance, 'A foreign streamer gets emotional and has the feeling of emptiness after beating Black Myth: Wukong! He praises Game Science for making an incredible game!' has attracted 301,000 views within two days (Bilibili 2024b), and 'After beating Black Myth: Wukong, a YouTube streamer with millions of fans says it's not the case that any game can be compared with it' has attracted 127,000 views within two days (Bilibili 2024c).

The Steam reviews reveal distinct patterns in how international players engage with the game. Western players predominantly frame their experience through familiar gaming references rather than mythological context. As one reviewer notes: 'Beat the first boss which is the one in the trailer, the white wolf... It's basically a Chinese God of War (2018) and the Jedi Fallen series' (8200 positive votes). Another states: 'this game is gorgeous and there is plenty of Chinese folklore that the devs have put obvious amounts of effort and love into making' while admitting 'this is my first experience with anything related to the Journey to the West story' (93 positive votes). This gameplay-first approach contrasts sharply with Chinese players' cultural immersion. International reviews frequently mention: 'I chose not to play in default English, as it sounds so much better in original voice (Chinese) and it makes for a more unique experience' (900 positive votes), suggesting appreciation for authenticity without deep cultural understanding.

On Douyin, there are similar videos, such as 'A leading YouTube streamer Asmongold beats the game and gives it a full mark!' (Douyin [2024a](#)), and 'See foreign players' reactions to Black Myth: Wukong!! This cultural export is amazing!!' (Douyin [2024b](#)). One of the most frequently seen comments on these videos, apart from plaudits of the game, is 'cultural export', as appears in some videos' titles too.

On Zhihu, there are discussions concerning the game's global impact, such as a question 'How to evaluate the cultural export of Black Myth: Wukong?'. According to an answer with 3196 likes,

'Very interestingly, the game development team's original intention was by no means to create a cultural export or even to enter the global market. They only focused on producing a good game and exploring traditional Chinese culture. It turned out to become a phenomenal, unbelievable cultural export'

A similar answer with 1895 likes says,

'There is only "cultural overflow", but no "cultural export". You must first make something good before spreading it. Those who like it will explore the background culture on their own initiative. If you put it in a niche and wait people to pray, you'll never be able to export it'

There are also comments on Steam which demonstrate that overseas players also recognise that cultural immersion requires knowledge of the original Wukong story. On Steam for instance, an international player observes 'The game seems to expect players to be familiar with the original story, which made it hard for me to connect with the narrative' (925 positive votes). This stands in stark contrast to Chinese players who 'compare this game's status to the award-winning Three-Body Problem' and feel that 'as soon as you pick up the game handle, you become Wukong who cleans up the universe'.

International players also often praise the game's departure from 'an industry typically dominated by Western narratives' without fully grasping the cultural significance. Whilst for some reviewers 'Black Myth: Wukong is not the game that you think it is... Bosses that have fantastic visual design have no framing within the story' (350 positive votes) highlights how the lack of cultural context can at times transform the experience into a disconnected 'boss rush' rather than the mythological journey Chinese players perceive.

On the other hand, Chinese players on Zhihu note that,

‘China’s previous efforts to create cultural exports were too purposeful. From visual works to Confucius Institutes, there’s always a sense of flattery showing “this is designed specifically for foreigners to understand”. The end product fails to please either side: Chinese people despise it while foreigners don’t understand it. The most typical example is the film *Hero* directed by Zhang Yimou. Chinese audiences see what he wanted to show, but they find it too superficial, while foreign audiences have no idea what he meant. Black Myth: Wukong successfully avoids this pitfall: it uses the traditional values of Chinese civilisation and tells a pure Chinese story. Chinese people enjoy it, while foreigners are attracted to it, because there’re too many things they’ve never seen or understood’

The game’s approach to localisation reflects the ‘cultural overflow’ philosophy discussed by Chinese players. Rather than extensive explanatory localisation, the game maintains its cultural specificity, expecting international audiences to meet it on its own terms. This creates what Rodriguez describes as an intentional challenge where ‘the narrative is confusing at first’ but ‘nonetheless encourages you to embrace that sense of strangeness and wonder as you venture into distant lands’ (Rodriguez 2024). The most telling evidence of successful cultural bridge-building comes from players on Steam who embrace this challenge: ‘Remember when a game was just a game? Apparently, these devs do’ (2996 positive votes), suggesting that universal gaming values can transcend cultural barriers even when specific mythological references remain opaque.

The game’s ability to captivate audiences globally, as evidenced by its immense popularity on platforms like Steam, exemplifies the evolving role of storytelling in the digital age. Walter Benjamin emphasised that storytelling serves as a bridge between communities, offering a shared space for understanding and reflection. In the case of *Wukong*, its narrative and aesthetic richness extend this concept to a global audience, demonstrating how interactive storytelling can foster cross-cultural connections by combining universal themes with deeply rooted cultural specifics. The widespread sharing of non-Chinese streamers’ emotional reactions on localised Chinese platforms like Bilibili and Douyin further amplifies this cultural exchange. Videos of foreign players engaging with the game not only provide entertainment but also act as a lens through which Chinese audiences can observe and interpret how their cultural heritage is perceived internationally. This two-way interaction underscores the dynamic nature of digital storytelling, where the audience is not just a passive recipient but an active participant in a dialogue that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers.

Such exchanges also reveal the universality of human emotions and values embedded in *Wukong*’s narrative. By invoking themes of perseverance, loyalty, and redemption—alongside its visually stunning depictions of Chinese mythology—the game resonates with players from diverse backgrounds. These shared experiences foster a global community where cultural appreciation and dialogue thrive, demonstrating the potential of interactive media to break down cultural silos. Moreover, the addition of localised subtitles and commentary by Chinese users on platforms like Bilibili highlights the collaborative effort in making this cultural storytelling accessible to international audiences. This act of translation and contextualisation enriches the game’s reach, allowing it to serve as a cultural ambassador while maintaining its



narrative authenticity. This synthesis of technology, storytelling, and audience engagement elevates *Wukong* beyond a mere entertainment product, transforming it into a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy and understanding in a globalised world.

This systematic comparison reveals that while the game may not achieve traditional 'cross-cultural understanding' through explicit education about Chinese mythology, it creates what might be termed 'parallel appreciation'—where international and domestic audiences value different aspects of the same work, creating a multifaceted global reception that validates both gaming excellence and cultural authenticity. The game's success lies not in making everyone understand *Journey to the West*, but in demonstrating that Chinese cultural products can achieve global acclaim without sacrificing their cultural core.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, rooted in the culturally significant heritage of *Journey to the West*, *Black Myth: Wukong* exemplifies a groundbreaking reinterpretation of traditional Chinese mythology through the medium of Triple A video game, redefining how ancient narratives can be presented in contemporary formats. By integrating advanced gaming technologies with a culturally immersive storytelling approach, it transcends conventional achievements in gaming to offer an organic, profound connection to Chinese mythology heritage for audiences. As Benjamin's theory suggests, storytelling serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, and *Wukong* embodies this by preserving the depth and richness of traditional Chinese culture while engaging players through immersive, interactive narratives. Furthermore, its reception reinforces Kocurek's assertion that interactive media can provoke reflection and dialogue, fostering cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.

The game also serves as a case study for how digital platforms can amplify storytelling's role in cultural diplomacy. The enthusiastic global reception, particularly through platforms like Twitch, YouTube, Bilibili, Douyin, and Steam illustrates how non-linear, participatory storytelling can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. By allowing players and viewers to experience universal themes of heroism, transformation, and moral complexity within a deeply Chinese context, *Wukong* positions itself as a cultural ambassador that bridges Eastern and Western audiences. However, the game's success also invites critical inquiry into the broader cultural implications of such adaptations. Questions about gender representation, inclusivity, and the ethical dimensions of narrative decisions highlight the challenges of balancing authenticity with modern expectations. These debates underscore the evolving role of digital storytelling as both a creative and social medium.

Future research should explore how global audiences interpret and assimilate culturally specific narratives and how digital storytelling can influence cultural diplomacy. Examining audience interactions across cultural contexts can shed light on the shifting functions of mythology in the digital age and its impact on international cultural exchange. Ultimately, *Black Myth: Wukong* demonstrates the importance of an organic storytelling approach that prioritises authenticity, depth, and cultural integrity, setting a benchmark for future transmedia adaptations of classical literature.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## ORCID

Aiqing Wang  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7546-4959>

Thomas William Whyke  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9771-3626>

Zhennuo Song  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1053-7816>

## References

- AFP. 2024. *Sales of Chinese Video Game 'Black Myth: Wukong' Hit 10 Million in 3 Days*. Hong Kong Free Press, August 24. <https://hongkongfp.com/2024/08/24/sales-of-chinese-video-game-black-myth-wukong-hit-10-million-in-3-days/>.
- Artamonov, D. S., Medvedeva, E. N., Tikhonova, S. V., & Slivnaia, Z. A. (2021). Digital Mythology: A New Direction In The Study Of Social Myths. In D. Y. Krapchunov, S. A. Malenko, V. O. Shipulin, E. F. Zhukova, A. G. Nekita, & O. A. Fikhtner (Eds.), *Perishable And Eternal: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization*, Vol. 120. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences (pp. 1-7). European Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2021.12.03.1>
- Bantly, F. C. 1989. "Buddhist Allegory in the *Journey to the West*." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48 (3): 512–524. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2058637>.
- Benjamin, W. 2006. "The Storyteller." In *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900–2000*, edited by D. J. Hale, 361–378. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bernevega, A., and A. Gekker. 2022. "The Industry of Landlords: Exploring the Assetization of the Triple-A Game." *Games and Culture* 17 (1): 47–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211014151>.
- Bilibili. 2024a. "Wukong [Wukong]." *Bilibili*. [https://search.bilibili.com/all?keyword=%E6%82%9F%E7%A9%BA&from\\_source=webtop\\_search&spm\\_id\\_from=333.1007&search\\_source=3](https://search.bilibili.com/all?keyword=%E6%82%9F%E7%A9%BA&from_source=webtop_search&spm_id_from=333.1007&search_source=3).
- Bilibili. 2024b. "Waiwang ozhu tongguan heihou, shifen bushe huainian qi youxi juqing! Zhi kua youke chuangzaole yige hao youxi! [A Foreign Streamer Gets Emotional and Has the Feeling of Emptiness after Beating Black Myth: Wukong! He Praises Game Science for Making an Incredible Game!]." *Bilibili*. <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1h6s8esEKh/>.
- Bilibili. 2024c. "Youguan zhuming baiwan dabo dingji moshou zhubo tongguanle Wukong zhihou shuo biede youxi, bushi amao agou dou neng duibi Heishenhua [After Beating Black Myth: Wukong, a YouTube Streamer with Millions of Fans Says It's Not the Case That Any Game Can be Compared with It]." *Bilibili*. <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1h6s8esEKh/>.
- Butler, G. 2024. "Baokuan youxi Hei Shenhua: Wukong de chenggong yu zhengyi [The Success and Intention of the Popular Game Black Myth: Wukong]." *BBC*, August 25. <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-69296885>.
- Company, R. F. 1991. "Ghost Matter: The Culture of Ghosts in the Six Dynasties Zhiguai." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 13: 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/495051>.
- Company, R. F. 1996. *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Campbell, J. 2008. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Charmaz, K., and R. Thornberg. 2021. "The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory" *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18 (3): 305–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357>.
- Chen, E. 2024. "A Blockbuster Chinese Video Game Sparks Debate on Sexism in the Nation's Gaming Industry." *Independent*, September 9. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/chinese-a-p-washington-china-weibo-b2609257.html>
- Chen, S. 2017. "Soft Power and Video Games: Cultural Representation in AAA Gaming." *Asian Cultural Studies* 10 (2): 45–58.
- Chiang, S.-C. L. 2005. *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

- Cozad, L. 1998. "Reeling in the Demon: An Exploration into the Category of the Demonized Other as Portrayed in *The Journey to the West*." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66 (1): 117–145. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/66.1.117>.
- Douban. 2024a. "Guanyu Douban [About Douban]." *Douban Movie*. <https://www.douban.com/about>.
- Douban. 2024b. "Hei Shenhua: Wukong [Black Myth: Wukong]." *Douban*. <https://www.douban.com/game/35184766/>.
- Douyin. 2024a. "油管大神主播Asmongold通关后评价满分! Youguan dashen zhubo Asmongold tongguanhou pingjia manfen! [A Leading YouTube Streamer Asmongold Beats the Game and Gives It a Full Mark!]." *Douyin*. <https://www.douyin.com/video/7415260264473365814>.
- Douyin. 2024b. "Kan laowai wan Heishenhua wukong de fanying!! Zhe bo wenhua shuchu tai baobiao le!! [See foreign players' reactions to Black Myth: Wukong!!]." *Douyin*. <https://www.douyin.com/video/7408114964478725427>.
- Du, H. 2019. "The Globalization of Chinese Mythology: Reimagining Traditional Narratives in Digital Media." *Journal of Contemporary Media Studies* 6 (1): 78–92.
- Fu, C. 2006. "Dong Sizhang Xiyoubu yuanben wushi hui kao [The Original 15 Chapters of Dong Sizhang's A Supplement to Journey to the West]." *Wen Xian* 1: 127–130.
- Gameranx. 2024. "Black Myth: Wukong—Before You Buy." *YouTube*, August 16. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLnywm2XgJg>
- Gaspar, R., C. Pedro, P. Panagiotopoulos, and B. Seibt. 2016. "Beyond Positive or Negative: Qualitative Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Reactions to Unexpected Stressful Events." *Computers in Human Behavior* 56: 179–191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.040>.
- Guancha. 2024. "Resou diyi, Hei Shenhua: Wukong bei zhiyi chaoxi? Duoge bozhu huiying [Number on the Hot Search, Black Myth: Wukong is Suspected of Plagiarism? Several Weibo Users Respond]." *Guancha*. [https://www.guancha.cn/politics/2024\\_08\\_23\\_745811.shtml](https://www.guancha.cn/politics/2024_08_23_745811.shtml).
- Hong, X. Y., and S. H. Shen. 2024. "<Hei Shenhua: Wukong> nengfou chengwei xin yidai Zhongguo ren de wenhua jiyi? [Can *Black Myth: Wukong* Become the Cultural Memory of a New Generation in China?]." *Cultural Arts Research* 2024 (5): 34–41. <https://d.wanfangdata.com.cn/periodical/whysyj202405007>.
- Hsia, C.-T. 2015. *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.
- Joffe, H. 2011. "Thematic Analysis." In *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners*, edited by D. Harper and A. R. Thompson, 209–223. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Juul, J. 2005. *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kao, K. S. Y. 1985. *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic: Selections from the Third to the Tenth Century*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kapur, R. 2024. "How *Black Myth: Wukong* Evolved Cultural Storytelling in Gaming." *Campaign*, September 10. <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/how-black-myth-wukong-evolved-cultural-storytelling-in-gaming/498200>.
- Kocurek, C. A. 2018. "Walter Benjamin on the Video Screen: Storytelling and Game Narratives." *Arts* 7 (4): 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7040069>.
- Kong, L. 2017. "86 ban Xi You Ji: 30 nian le, ta reng shi yige qiji [The 1986 *Journey to the West*: 30 Years, and It's Still a Miracle]." *The Paper*, April 17. [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_1579107](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1579107).
- Li, R. 2024. "Women weishenme aishangle Hei Shenhua: Wukong [Why Do We Love *Black Myth: Wukong*]." *Chengdu Economic Daily*, August 20. <https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2024-08-20/doc-inckhmtn5509018.shtml>.
- Liu, Y. 1984. "Xu Xiyouji zuozhe tuikao [Speculation about the Author of *Sequel to Journey to the West*]." *Social Science in Yunnan* 2 (1): 106–107.
- Liu, X. 1991. "A Journey of the Mind: The Basic Allegory in Hou Xiyou Ji." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 13: 35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/495052>.

- Lu, W. A. 2025. "The Cross-Cultural Communication Effects of "Black Myth: Wukong"." *Journalism and Communications* 13 (3): 284–291. <https://doi.org/10.12677/jc.2025.133043>.
- McCallum, S., and L. McMahon. 2023. "China to Increase Curbs on Video Gaming Industry." *BBC*, December 22. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-67801091>.
- Mo, F., and N. Wu. 2024. "Mai kaifei de dou zhuanqian le! Jizhe diaocha: Wukong dai huo duoshao changye? [Even Those Who Buy Coffee Make Money! News Investigation: How Many Industries Become Popular Because of Wukong?]." *Beijing Daily*, August 23. <https://finance.sina.cn/2024-08-23/detail-incqwwqs1533538.d.html>
- Now, E. T. 2024. "Impressive AAA Game from China...—Elon Musk's *Black Myth: Wukong* Tweet Goes Viral." *MSN*, September 7. <https://www.msn.com/en-in/travel/tripideas/impressive-aaa-game-from-china-elon-musk-s-black-myth-wukong-tweet-goes-viral/ar-AA1q9X42>.
- Ouyang, S. 2024. *Black Myth: Wukong* has global gamers abuzz: China's action role play pursuit puts nation, culture on map. *China Daily*. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202410/02/WS66fccd50a310f1265a1c5f4f.html>
- Öztürk, N., and S. Ayvaz. 2018. "Sentiment Analysis on Twitter: A Text Mining Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis." *Telematics and Informatics* 35 (1): 136–147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.10.006>.
- Plaks, A. H. 2015. *Archetype and Allegory in the "Dream of the Red Chamber"*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Regan, T. 2024. "*Black Myth: Wukong*—The Summer's Most Exciting, and Most Controversial, Video Game." *The Guardian*, July 25. <https://www.theguardian.com/games/article/2024/jul/25/black-myth-wukong-the-summers-most-exciting-and-most-controversial-video-game>.
- Rodriguez, J. 2024. "*Black Myth: Wukong* Is an Epic Saga That's Both Confounding and Spectacular to Behold." *Polygon*, August 16. <https://www.polygon.com/review/440941/black-myth-wukong-review>.
- Ryan, M. 2001. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- ScreenRant. 2024. "Black Myth: Wukong Review—The Souls-like Action Hype Arrives—and Falters." *ScreenRant*. <https://screenrant.com/black-myth-wukong-review/>.
- Shahar, M. 1992. "The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples and the Origins of Sun Wukong." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52 (1): 193–224. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2719331>.
- Shang, B. 2018. "Unnatural Narratology and *Zhiguai* Tales of the Six Dynasties in China." *Neohelicon* 45 (1): 179–190. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-018-0421-5>.
- Shi, P. 2024. "Wukong' dakai youxi 'chuhai' silu [*Wukong* Inspires Future Games to Explore the Global Markets]." *Xinhua News*, August 23. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/20240823/b0e7d8a1ef524ae9a02ac713865e086b/c.html>.
- Sohu. 2024. "Hei Shenhua: Wukong bei jiazhang jubao shi dianzi yapian: xuexing baoli, hai haizi bu xuexi [*Black Myth: Wukong* is Reported by Parents as Violent 'Electronic Opium' preventing children from study]." *Sohu*, August 31. [https://www.sohu.com/a/805337047\\_120101311](https://www.sohu.com/a/805337047_120101311).
- Steam. 2024. "*Black Myth: Wukong*." *Steam*. [https://store.steampowered.com/app/2358720/Black\\_Myth\\_Wukong/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2358720/Black_Myth_Wukong/).
- Strauss, A., and J. Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- The Economist. 2024. "*Black Myth: Wukong*" is China's First Blockbuster Video Game." *The Economist*, August 29. <https://www.economist.com/culture/2024/08/29/black-myth-wukong-is-chinas-first-blockbuster-video-game>.
- Twitch. 2024. "*Black Myth: Wukong*." *Twitch*. <https://www.twitch.tv/directory/category/black-myth-wukong/videos/all>.
- Valentine, R., and K. H. Chan. 2023. "How *Black Myth: Wukong* Developer's History of Sexism is Complicating Its Journey to the West." *IGN*, November 20. <https://www.ign.com/articles/how-black-myth-wukong-developers-history-of-sexism-is-complicating-its-journey-to-the-west>.
- Wall, B. 2017. "Deconstruction of Ideological Discourses: Ch'oe Inhun's *Söyugi* (*The Journey to the West*) as a Parody of *Xiyouji*." *Acta Koreana* 20 (1): 281–306.

- Weibo. 2024. "Weibo Corp First Quarter 2024 Results." *Weibo IR Home*, May 23. <http://ir.weibo.com/>.
- Xie, Y., and H. Jiang. 2024. "Hei Shenhua: Wukong beihou—Yong shijie pinzhi jiang zhongguo gushi [*Black Myth: Wukong*—Telling China's Stories Well with World-Class Quality]." *Xinhua News*, August 20. <http://www.news.cn/politics/20240820/583b0f3d1574490bb89f22662afd16c2/c.html>.
- Xinhua Daily. 2024. "Resou diyi! Hei Shenhua: Wukong shangxian, yugaopian you Jiangsu qiye zhizuo [Number One on the Hot Research List! *Black Myth: Wukong* Was Released, and the Trailer Was Made by a Jiangsu Company]." *Xinhua Daily*, August 20. <https://www.xhby.net/content/s66c42862e4b00cab55aa7e06.html>.
- Zeitlin, J. T. 1993. *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zhang, L. 2024. "Lianming Hei Shenhua: Wukong bei qianggou, Quexin fengkuang lianming xiade xi yu you [Coffee Aligned with *Black Myth: Wukong* Sold out Quickly; the Success and Failure of Luckin Coffee's Partnerships]." *The Paper*, August 21. [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_28484723](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_28484723).
- Zhang, Z. 2014. *Buddhism and Tales of the Supernatural in Early Medieval China: A Study of Liu Yiqing's (403–444) Youming Lu*. Leiden: Brill.
- Zhihu. 2024a. "Zhihu [Zhihu]." *Zhihu*. <https://www.zhihu.com/>.
- Zhihu. 2024b. "Hei Shenhua: Wukong [*Black Myth: Wukong*]." *Zhihu*. <https://www.zhihu.com/topic/21340521/hot>.