

The cultural export paradox of *Black Myth: Wukong*: Different cultural experiences and ideological shaping through media

Xiaoyu Liu

Submitted to the Faculty of Film, Art and Creative Technologies in candidacy
for the BA (Honours) Degree in Design for Film – VFX

Submitted 11/02/2026

Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) Design for Film. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.



Xiaoyu Liu

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to give my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Sorcha O'Brien. I am grateful for her guidance and assistance during my thesis writing process. She helped me expand upon many of my ideas and gave me a broader perspective in every question that I asked, and it sparked my interest in cultural studies. Every conversation was incredibly beneficial, constantly clarifying my initially thoughts and offering help whenever I encountered difficulties throughout my time writing this thesis.

I also want to thank my mother for her support during my studies at IADT, she was unconditionally supporting and encouraging me to persevere in researching the topics that I love. She also taught me to view things equally, to analyze situations from various perspectives, and also fostered my understanding of intercultural and media studies. Similarly, I thank my boyfriend ChengDong Yang for his support and talks about Chinese culture. As a Chinese who born in China and lived there for nearly 20 years, he has given me many Chinese perspectives on culture and intercultural relationships, and It helped me understand the differences in language contexts between different countries. These talks allowing me to conduct more in-depth research and verification on many intercultural phenomena.

Abstract

In the contemporary global media environment, modes of cultural transmission are undergoing profound transformation. Culture is no longer understood primarily through textual narration or isolated symbols, but is increasingly **experienced** through immersive and interactive media forms. As a highly integrated medium that combines audiovisual representation, narrative, mechanics, and participation, video games are becoming a significant vehicle for cultural dissemination. The emergence of *Black Myth: Wukong*, a work deeply rooted in Chinese cultural traditions, has therefore generated broad and complex discussion. On the one hand, it is widely regarded as a successful global presentation of Chinese mythological tradition and Eastern aesthetics. On the other hand, it has also provoked notable divisions and conflicts among players and media critics from different cultural backgrounds.

Taking *Black Myth: Wukong* as its central case study, this thesis draws on cultural studies and media theory to examine how cultural meaning is constructed, displaced, and reconfigured when culture is transmitted through interactive media. It first analyzes how the game departs from established Western fantasy paradigms in its narrative structure, visual style, and player positioning, instead reinterpreting the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West* from within its own cultural context. Through this process, the game reclaims a degree of agency in cultural expression within a media landscape long dominated by Western narrative frameworks. The thesis then adopts a intercultural reception perspective to compare differences in experiential

pathways, aesthetic expectations, and emotional resonance among players from different cultural backgrounds. Its central argument is that evaluative conflicts do not arise from the intrinsic quality of the cultural content itself, but from divergences in modes of participation and perception shaped by media mechanisms.

By synthesizing player responses, media discourse, and theories of culture and game media, this study argues that cultural authenticity and global accessibility are not inherently opposed within interactive media, but can instead function in a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship. At the same time, media do not merely transmit culture; they actively shape the subjects who experience it. When culture is experienced rather than simply observed, the cognitive structures, emotional mechanisms, and value judgments of its recipients are also being reconfigured. In this sense, the debates surrounding *Black Myth: Wukong* extend beyond the success or controversy of a single game. They illuminate broader issues embedded in contemporary cultural dissemination, particularly the interplay between media structures, power relations, and processes of othering. In this rapidly evolving world, reflecting on one's own perspectives and feelings can be extremely helpful for the study of culture and media.

Table of Contents

Introduction _____ pg. no.1

Chapter 1 The Paradox of Cultural Export: Success, Conflict, and Othering
_____ pg. no.6

Chapter 2 Culture as an experiential system in game _____ pg. no.18

Chapter 3 Eastern and Western player responses _____ pg. no.42

Conclusion _____ pg. no.61

Bibliography _____ pg. no.65

List of Figures

- Fig. 1: Screenshot from a bilibili video for *Black Myth: Wukong* 's Story-only Cut (HANsoA-KevinO, 2024) p.9
- Fig. 2: *Everything Disney Got Wrong About Mulan* (Eul Basa, 2024.)p.13
- Fig. 3: Public views of China's foreign policy in a 24-country survey (Pew Research Center, 2023)p.14
- Fig. 4: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing striking bell in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024)p.20
- Fig. 5: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing burning incense in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024).....p.20
- Fig. 6: Game capture of player transform into a cicada once reach the Outside the Forest Keeper's Shrine (VideoGamer, 2024)p.21
- Fig. 7: Game capture of player becoming Yin Tiger on the right side and fighting with the boss (GameSpot, 2024).....p.22

Fig. 8: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing six senses system in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024).....	p.23
Fig. 9: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Yellow-brow's critique of Buddhist philosophy in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024).....	p.25
Fig. 10: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Dialogue in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024).....	p.25
Fig. 11: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing slaughtering clay figurines within a narrow corridor in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)	p.26
Fig. 12: Official wallpaper for corridor in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> (Game Science, 2024)	p.26
Fig. 13: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing golden headband in <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)	p.28
Fig. 14: Screenshot from a bilibili video showing Wukong's remains and player fighting (HANsoA-KevinO, 2024)	p.29
Fig. 15-24: Screenshots from a bilibili video for <i>Black Myth: Wukong</i> True Ending Animation - Incomplete (BaiWeiFenCheng, 2024)	p.31

Fig. 25: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing *Journal* in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)..... p.33

Fig. 26: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing *JinChi* in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024).....p.35

Fig. 27: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Guanyin Bodhisattva's dialogue in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024)p.35

Fig. 28: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Guanyin Bodhisattva's in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024)...p.36

Fig. 29: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Land keeper's shrine in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024) p.38

Fig. 30: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing fighting against the boss Keeper of the Flaming Mountain in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)p.40

Fig. 31: IGN's incorrect discussion of sexism controversies translation related to *Black Myth: Wukong* (IGN, 2024)p.46

Fig. 32: Screenshot from a YouTube video discussing *The REAL Problem With Black Myth: Wukong*. (The Act Man, 2024)..... p.47

Fig. 33: Screenshots from a bilibili video for CEO *Feng Ji* talking his concepts about *Black Myth: Wukong* in an interview (CCTV News, 2024)p.51

Fig. 34-36: Screenshot of Asmongold’s reaction while watching *Black Myth: Wukong’s* ending (Asmongold TV, 2024)p.52

Fig. 37: Screenshot from a CCTV English news video report about *Black Myth: Wukong* (CCTV, 2024)p.55

Fig. 38: Screenshots from a bilibili video about Ganker Gongke talking his views about *Black Myth: Wukong* (Gamker Gongke, 2024)..... p.56

Fig. 39: Screenshots from a bilibili video about Ganker Gongke talking Chinese memories activation (Gamker Gongke, 2024)p.57

Fig. 40: English translation for content in Fig38 (Gamker Gongke, 2024)..... p.57

Fig. 41: Screenshots from a bilibili video showing the Wanwu Poyuan Video Game Museum in Guangzhou (Gamker Gongke, 2024)..... p.59

Introduction

In August 2024, a game not only shocked the Chinese gaming community but also the foreign gaming community. That game was *Black Myth: Wukong*. It quickly became a global phenomenon after its release. According to VG Insights 2024, sales exceeded 10 million copies within three days of its release, reaching 20 million within a month (Game World Observer, 2024a). Steam platform revenue exceeded \$850 million, and the peak number of online players on the first day reached 2.15 million (Polygon, 2024). Multiple media outlets reported that the number was once described as the second-highest in Steam history, second only to PUBG (The game with the highest peak online player count on Steam). Its global sales had exceeded 25 million copies (Game World Observer, 2024b). These numbers indicate not only commercial success, but also a major breakthrough in the global recognition of Chinese digital cultural products. *Black Myth: Wukong* has become a key case for studying how Chinese mythology and cultural identity can be effectively presented to international audiences through interactive media.

In the context of contemporary global informatization, the modes of cultural transmission are undergoing significant transformation. Culture is no longer conveyed primarily through single, linear texts, but increasingly through immersive experiences and sensory interaction. As a representative medium, video games play an important role in this shift. However, cultural transmission through games inevitably gives rise to divergence and conflict. In the following research, I will take *Black Myth: Wukong* as a case study to

examine in detail the challenges that emerge in the process of cultural transmission, as well as how these challenges might be understood and addressed.

The thesis is structured into three chapters, developing the argument progressively around the relationship between culture, media, and experience.

Chapter One focuses on the paradox of cultural export. From a theoretical perspective, it examines how contemporary media have transformed modes of transmission, a shift that is reshaping both the forms and the speed through which cultural content circulates. In an era of rapid technological change, emerging media have altered narrative structures and provided audiences with multiple ways of accessing culture and information. However, I argue that the short-term, high-volume circulation of fragmented information has gradually weakened people's sense of cultural identification. When modes of cultural transmission fail to align with lived realities, cultural depth is easily distorted. Western frameworks are often used to interpret Eastern cultures, which effectively imposes thresholds on Eastern cultural expressions even before meaningful cultural exchange can take place.

Such conditions inevitably generate friction between Eastern and Western cultures. Accordingly, this chapter also argues that cultural reception requires an effort to move beyond one's own cultural limitations and to engage with other cultures from multiple perspectives. Every culture possesses its own

specificity, and examining another culture can simultaneously prompt a re-examination of one's own, producing positive effects on both sides.

Centering on Eastern cultural subjectivity and Western perspectives of otherness, this chapter analyzes the underlying reasons why intercultural communication so often gives rise to tension and conflict.

Chapter Two analyzes the mechanisms of games as a medium through a close reading of *Black Myth: Wukong*. Taking a specific video game as its object of study, this chapter examines how the game medium enables culture to be “perceived” from the dual perspectives of gameplay and cinematic expression. By analyzing the game's aesthetic structure and mechanical design, it explores how cultural content is adapted, reconfigured, and transformed into experiential form within a medium that differs from traditional cultural carriers. This analysis is supported by concrete examples, including in-game dialogue and gameplay systems.

The chapter emphasizes that the development team did not dilute cultural expression due to its implicit or metaphorical nature, nor did they attempt to cater overtly to market expectations. Instead, they largely maintained cultural authenticity. Culture is conveyed through environmental rendering, cinematic atmosphere, and interactive mechanics rather than through explicit exposition or simplified narration. In doing so, the game reveals the internal logic of experiential cultural representation while preserving the depth of the cultural framework it embodies.

From a structural perspective, this chapter functions not only as a case study, but also as a conceptual bridge between theoretical discussion and analysis of intercultural reception. It provides a media-oriented foundation for the subsequent examination of differences in player experience and conflicts in evaluation.

Chapter Three focuses on the subject shaped by media: positions of agency within conflicts of evaluation. This chapter further shifts toward issues of intercultural reception by comparing player experiences and viewing perspectives across different cultural backgrounds. Through this comparison, it offers a detailed analysis of the underlying causes behind disagreements and evaluative conflicts. Particular attention is given to the psychological mechanisms operating within players from different perspectives, as well as to the emergence of behaviors such as active exploration and efforts at understanding after encountering Eastern culture.

By examining emotional resonance as shaped by players' respective cultural contexts, the chapter ultimately raises the question of contemporaneity. At the same time, analysis of public commentary and media coverage of Eastern and Western player responses allows for a deeper demonstration of how changes in media narrative forms operate when viewed from a position of otherness. The chapter emphasizes that these differences do not stem from the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of cultural content, but rather from mismatches in experiential pathways and aesthetic expectations. In doing so, it reveals the structural, media-based origins of contemporary cultural conflict. Cultural conflict, as this analysis shows, does not occur between cultures per

se, but between subject positions constrained and shaped by media structures. This insight provides the final analytical anchor for the thesis's overall argument concerning the relationship between cultural experience, media mechanisms, and intercultural understanding.

Taken together, the three chapters demonstrate that when culture is transmitted through immersive experience under contemporary media conditions, the core challenges of cultural exchange are fundamentally transformed. The divisions and conflicts surrounding video games are not merely the result of misunderstandings at the level of cultural meaning, but rather the outcome of tensions and contradictions among different media experiences, aesthetic expectations, and subject positions operating within the same media structure. On this basis, the thesis seeks to offer a new perspective for contemporary cultural communication and intercultural research: It begins with media experience and reconsiders how culture is perceived and how subjects are shaped in the process.

Chapter One: The Paradox of Cultural Export: Success, Conflict, and Othering

In the context of contemporary global media, alongside the development of digital technologies and the internet, modes of cultural transmission are undergoing a structural transformation. Culture is no longer understood primarily through texts or symbols, but increasingly through interaction, immersion, and experience. However, whether the transmission of culture and cultural belief systems is aligned with the momentum of contemporary technological development, and whether the explosion of information may weaken people's capacity to perceive and engage with culture, remain critical questions that demand careful reflection.

As noted in the Irish report *Arts and Cultural Participation among 17-Year-Olds*, the emergence of new media has led to a sharp decline in adolescents' participation in cultural activities (Smyth, 2020). They are increasingly inclined to consume large volumes of information that generate short-term cognitive stimulation but offer little substantive value (Janssen et al., 2024). Contents that processed through *McDonaldization* (Ritzer, 2019) is gradually coming to dominate the cultural landscape. This leads me to think whether media are truly fulfilling their role within their historical moment. The answer is yes, but only under certain conditions. Media must be capable of carrying complex ideas, respecting human attention and cognitive capacity, and allowing space for pause and reflection, rather than aiming solely to stimulate the brain and capture attention continuously. Once media strip individuals of

the rhythm of independent thought and the space for active understanding, they cease to function as carriers of culture and become merely tools of consumption.

As a highly integrated media form that combines narrative, visual, auditory, and interactive mechanisms, video games are becoming an increasingly significant vehicle for cultural dissemination in the contemporary world. It is within this context that *Black Myth: Wukong* has generated discussion extending far beyond the domain of games. On the one hand, it has been regarded as a successful presentation of Chinese mythology and Eastern aesthetics within the global media system, It won the Golden Joystick Award for Best Game of the Year (BBC News, 2024). On the other hand, it has provoked highly divergent, and at times even polarized, evaluations across different cultural contexts and among different media audiences (Gao, 2025). This suggests that the controversies surrounding the work are not merely about game quality or aesthetic preference, but instead point to a deeper question: when culture is transmitted through contemporary experience-based media, is what ultimately emerges an understanding of the culture itself, or are audiences, often imperceptibly, being shaped by the structures of the medium?

Black Myth: Wukong is adapted from *Journey to the West*, written by Luo Guanzhong, a novelist from the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties. The importance and influence of *Journey to the West* to the Chinese people is similar to that of *Divine Comedy* to the Italians. *Journey to the West* blends

Buddhism, Taoism, folk beliefs, and secular experience, telling the story of Tang Sanzang and his companions Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Wujing's journey to the West to obtain Buddhist scriptures. It's an adventure narrative of subduing demons and monsters, but at a deeper level, it's about self-cultivation, carrying profound symbolic allegories (Han, 2024). The character of Sun Wukong is particularly crucial, as he is true to himself, views desires correctly, resists injustice, and doesn't believe in fate, believing that destiny is in one's own hands. This spirit resonates deeply within Chinese culture and has become a heroic figure in the hearts of generations of Chinese people (Yu, 2012).

Black Myth: Wukong does not “tell” culture to players through explanatory narration. Instead, it enables players to experience culture through action, audiovisual feedback, and system rules. This experience-centered mode of cultural transmission means that culture is no longer merely an object to be observed, but one that requires participants to engage with it from within. One of the most evident examples of this approach lies in the construction of the protagonist. Players do not simply assume the role of Sun Wukong; instead, they become *Destinied One* who revere Wukong and bear the responsibility of awakening his will. The player may experience themselves as an inheritor, a follower, or even a new incarnation of Wukong. These possibilities are not explicitly defined, but are gradually discovered through immersive engagement, as the player grows and takes shape within a world structured by culture.



Fig. 1: Screenshot from a bilibili video for *Black Myth: Wukong* 's Story-only Cut (HANsoA-KevinO, 2024)

At the same time, it is precisely this immersive quality that allows culture to gain greater communicative force while also making it more susceptible to re-encoding, misinterpretation, or renewed othering when encountered across different media structures and cultural assumptions. The fact that cultural export can generate conflict even as it achieves success constitutes a cultural paradox that remains central to analysis within the contemporary media environment.

Subjectivity and Othering

In the contemporary world, conflict and opposition have become one of the most visible characteristics of intercultural exchange between East and West. From differing perspectives, Western discourse has often constructed Eastern culture through an “Othering” gaze, positioning the East as an object to be observed and described, in sharp contrast to a Western subject position. The Western understanding of China has long relied on the

following recurring tropes: crisis, chaos, collapse, and trauma, which simplify China into a perpetual state of becoming, rather than a complex modern society (Mitter, 2014). However, with the development of new technologies, Eastern societies have gradually moved from behind the curtain to the foreground. Taking video games as an example, *Black Myth: Wukong* symbolically lifts the veil that has long obscured Chinese culture, presenting an image that differs markedly from the East as imagined through Western othering perspectives. Here, China steps forward as a cultural subject rather than remaining a passive object of observation.

In the process of *Black Myth: Wukong's* intercultural circulation, a perceptual blind spot emerges among both Eastern and Western players, shaped by cognitive frameworks formed over long periods within their respective cultural contexts. Edward T. Hall's concept of high-context and low-context communication, proposed in *Beyond Culture* (1976), provides a useful lens for understanding this phenomenon. Differences between high- and low-context cultures constitute a fundamental source of such conflict and opposition. Eastern cultures tend to operate within high-context modes of communication. Historically, a key challenge for high-context cultures has been that much of their cultural meaning remains implicit. In both ancient China and Japan, for example, language as a communicative tool is rarely direct; it is often indirect and allusive, relying on complex rhetorical strategies, where identical phrases may carry multiple interpretations. By contrast, Western cultures, taking English- and French-speaking contexts as examples, tend to favor low-context communication, characterized by directness and

semantic clarity, where meanings are expected to be explicit and unambiguous.

These differences between high- and low-context communication have profoundly shaped the development of Eastern and Western cultures and, in the contemporary global context, render conflict and opposition an almost unavoidable aspect of intercultural exchange. Returning to *Black Myth: Wukong*, the game is grounded in Chinese mythology and philosophy as its internal logic, drawing upon value systems embedded within a Chinese cultural context. On Steam Community reviews, it shows that for players familiar with these cultural experiences, the game's design produces a sense of intuitive continuity. For those lacking such cultural grounding, however, the same experiential structures may be perceived as obscure, repetitive, or lacking clear motivation (Steam Community, 2025a). As a result, divergent cultural experiences emerge depending on whether the player occupies the position of cultural "subject" or that of the "Other."

Orientalism

Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), systematically reveals how Western systems of thought have constructed knowledge about the East. For Said, the East is not a passive object waiting to be discovered, but a product continuously produced through narratives that serve European political, cultural, and power interests. As he argues, Orientalism is a mode of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West. Through this fundamental binary, the East is positioned as the op-

positional counterpart to Western self-definition. In this process, cultural representation is transformed into a mechanism of power, exerting a profound influence on the logic of production within the global media system. Painter (2014), based at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, shows that Western news organisations such as the BBC and Reuters tend to privilege narratives of crisis, risk and uncertainty when reporting on non-Western societies, while offering limited representation of everyday social and cultural complexity.

Many cultural products aimed at global markets continue to treat the East as a consumable visual imaginary rather than as a cultural subject with complex internal logic. This tendency is particularly evident in film and entertainment works that draw on Chinese culture. Although Chinese elements appear frequently, they are often stripped of their underlying philosophical systems and de-historicized (Chow, 1995), functioning primarily as symbols that enhance a sense of exoticism.

A classical example is Disney's animated film *Mulan* (1998). In this adaptation, the legend of Hua Mulan is detached from its Northern Wei historical context and reconstructed within a dehistoricized cultural space designed to align with Western narrative conventions (Dong, 2011). This process deliberately avoids specifying a concrete dynastic China, instead producing an "imagined ancient China" intended to be universally legible to global audiences (Davé, 2005). However, for a character-driven film, such treatment risks hollowing out its core, as character formation is inseparable from the surrounding environment and cultural conditions. As a result, deeper

cultural meanings are lost, and traditions that originally possess complex intellectual structures are reduced to surface-level aesthetic ornamentation.



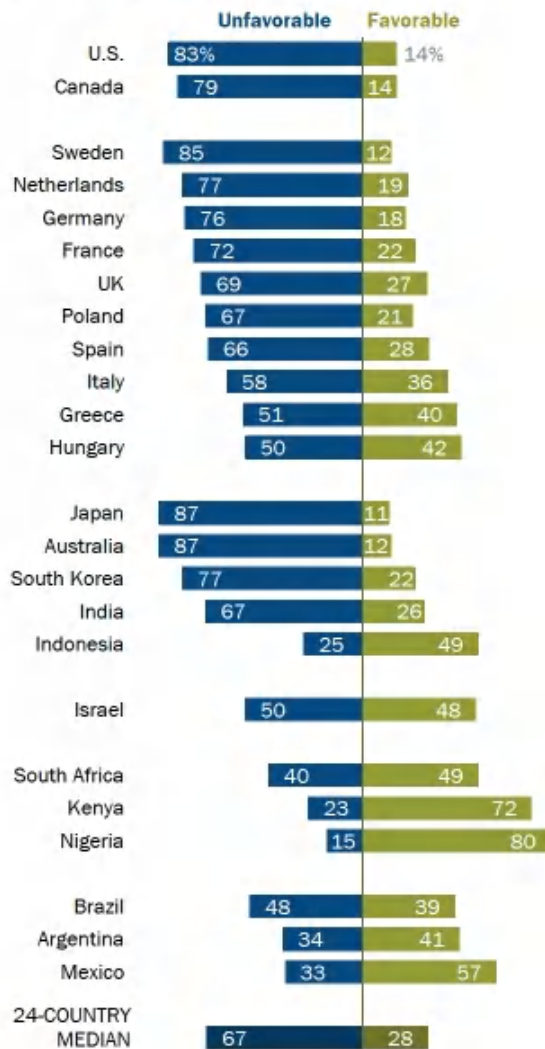
Fig. 2: *Everything Disney Got Wrong About Mulan* (Eul Basa, 2024.)

This phenomenon has a significant impact on how Western publics perceive other cultures. According to tourism statistics released by Eurostat (2019, 2021, 2023), in major European countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy, over 95 per cent of residents have never travelled to China.

At the same time, Pew Research Center's 2019–2023 survey covering 24 countries shows that around 70 per cent of respondents across Europe hold negative views of China, with the proportion exceeding 75 per cent in several Nordic countries (Pew Research Center, 2023).

China seen unfavorably in North America, Europe, and Asia but more favorably in Africa and Latin America

% who have a(n) ___ opinion of China



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.
 Source: Spring 2023 Global Attitudes Survey: Q3b.
 "China's Approach to Foreign Policy Gets Largely Negative Reviews in 24-Country Survey"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Fig. 3: Public views of China's foreign policy in a 24-country survey (Pew Research Center, 2023)

Taken together, these figures suggest that a large proportion of public opinion about China is formed in the absence of direct personal experience

and is instead mediated primarily through news coverage and public discourse. This highlights the strong influence of media narratives on public perception. When such narratives are selective or biased, the consequence is not only misunderstanding but also the distortion of other cultures, ultimately narrowing Western public's horizons in international cultural exchange.

It is precisely within this cultural context that the emergence of *Black Myth: Wukong* becomes particularly significant. The game neither follows the established paradigms of Western fantasy narratives nor deliberately caters to stereotypical overseas expectations of “Chinese style.” Instead, it reinterprets *Journey to the West* from within Chinese cultural traditions themselves. In doing so, this Chinese cultural product reasserts cultural agency within a media environment long dominated by Western narrative structures. Cultural authenticity and global accessibility are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can form a complementary relationship within contemporary interactive media. By constructing a world that is deeply rooted in Chinese mythological traditions while remaining open to participation by players from diverse cultural backgrounds, the game contributes, to a certain extent, to a rebalancing of cultural power relations. Just as human civilizations have historically been shaped through comparison and difference, self-identity often requires the presence of the “Other” as a point of reference. Culture operates in a similar way: opposition functions like a mirror through which culture becomes visible and subject to reflection. As

Edward T. Hall (1976) argues: *The true task is not to understand foreign cultures, but to understand our own.*

The developers of Game Science company demonstrate a profound awareness of their cultural background. By reconstructing mythological narratives from within Chinese culture, the game moves beyond the long-standing condition in which the East is represented on behalf of the West. At the same time, it enters a global circulation system shaped by media platforms, technological logics, and intercultural audiences, ensuring that its culture is no longer merely observed or described, but experienced through multiple forms. Meaning, in turn, is continuously redefined through these experiences. Players from different cultural backgrounds, guided by their own cultural experiences and aesthetic assumptions, generate markedly different, and at times conflicting, interpretations within the same media structure. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in the You Tube comments in initial trailer of *Black Myth: Wukong* and in the videos released after the game is released (Game Science, 2020). This divergence between experience and understanding is neither an accidental distortion nor simply a failure of comprehension. Rather, it is an inevitable outcome of culture entering a global context through diverse media forms.

Black Myth: Wukong thus succeeds in reasserting the cultural subjectivity of Chinese mythology while simultaneously exposing an inescapable tension in contemporary cultural dissemination. Once culture becomes something that is experienced, its meaning can no longer be fully determined by creators or by the culture itself. Instead, it is continuously produced at the intersection of

media structures and audience reception. This paradox constitutes the central issue that the game reveals within the contemporary media landscape. What *Black Myth: Wukong* ultimately presents is a paradigmatic paradox of modern cultural export: Eastern culture gains unprecedented global visibility while simultaneously being redefined, differentiated, and othered through experience-based media. Conflicts of evaluation do not arise from deficiencies within the culture itself, but from the coexistence of multiple perspectives shaped by different cultural contexts. When culture is no longer merely viewed but practiced and experienced, its meaning ceases to belong exclusively to a single cultural subject and instead emerges through ongoing negotiation among audiences from diverse backgrounds. It is precisely within this process that the success and conflict of cultural dissemination occur simultaneously, laying the theoretical groundwork for further discussion on how media shape experiential subjects and cultural cognition.

Chapter Two: Culture as an experiential system in game

In *Black Myth: Wukong*, Chinese culture is not presented through conventional, text-driven storytelling, but through the dynamic interaction between **situations**, **subjectivity**, and **systems (rules)**, as well as through the player's embodied participation. Through gameplay, players are able to directly experience the culture the game seeks to convey. As McLuhan (1964) argues that "the medium is the message"; *Black Myth: Wukong* transmits culture precisely through lived gameplay experience rather than through a single, linear text. Players do not merely observe culture in the game—they engage with it by controlling the character, interacting with NPCs, reading environments, and transforming the character through gameplay mechanics, thereby achieving a deeply immersive, situational form of cultural experience.

Systemic and cultural

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) define the *magic circle* as a space of meaning that players enter once they accept the rules of the game. One representative example of this in *Black Myth: Wukong* is the "strike the bell three times" mechanic in the first chapter. In Buddhist culture, bell ringing carries meanings of prayer, awakening, the removal of obstacles, and resonance with all sentient beings. This action means three invocations and three responses, as the number three, within Chinese temple ritual systems, symbolizes happiness, prosperity, and longevity (Birrell, 1993).

Another highly representative and frequently recurring ritual mechanism in the game is the act of offering incense as a means of saving progress. In Chinese religious culture, burning incense is a ritual practice used to communicate with deities, express intention, seek blessings, and perform acts of worship. It is commonly performed with three incense sticks, symbolizing Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, or the Daoist cosmological order of the Three Pure Ones. However, in *Black Myth: Wukong*, players are only able to light a single incense stick with the left hand. This modification is not a simplification, but rather a deliberate articulation of cultural meaning. The land keeper occupies a far lower status than the enlightened Sun Wukong, and the single incense stick no longer functions as a threefold ritual of supplication. Instead, it becomes an act of notification or initiation of contact, aligning with the hierarchical position of the deity within the game's cosmology.

The game translates this culturally embedded hierarchy into system rules. Players must offer incense in order to save, revive, or craft medicine. Through this design, the medium redefines how players understand the order of the world. The act of saving becomes a way of comprehending relationships between the world, divine hierarchy, and the player's own positionality within that structure. As a result, these mechanics function as cultural practices within the game. Their purpose extends beyond puzzle-solving, guiding players instead toward an experiential understanding of the internal logic and symbolic order of Chinese culture.



Fig. 4: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing striking bell in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024)



Fig. 5: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing burning incense in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024)

Philosophical ideas are embodied in the game's transformation mechanics.

In combat, players gain control over different creatures and their abilities through a cycle of defeat, absorption, and transformation. For example, in the first chapter, when the player's combat strength is insufficient at the start of the game, they can transform into a cicada (see Fig.6) to avoid alerting minor enemies.



Fig. 6: Game capture of player transform into a cicada once reach the Outside the Forest Keeper's Shrine (VideoGamer, 2024)

The player can transform into bosses they have previously defeated to increase combat power, in order to engage the new boss with different ways (see Fig.7). It can be conceal themselves, evade long-range attacks, preserve health, depending on the features of the form they have absorbed.



Fig. 7: Game capture of player becoming Yin Tiger on the right side and fighting with the boss (GameSpot, 2024)

Each bodily capability aligns closely with Daoist ideas such as following nature, effortless transformation, and responding to circumstances through change. Together, they produce a form of flow that is emphasized in Eastern thought: the subject is not fixed, but shifts according to context. This experience of multiple subjectivities enriches gameplay at the strategic level, while at the philosophical level it constructs an experiential structure grounded in Daoist naturalism. Through play, players come to understand a worldview in which all things are mutable and responsive, not through explanation, but through embodied action.



Fig. 8: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing six senses system in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire, 2024)

In addition, Buddhist philosophy is reconfigured within the game and made perceptible to players through interactive systems. The concept of the *six senses and six sense objects* (Baidu Baike, 2025a; Baidu Baike, 2025b) is integrated into the main gameplay mechanics in the form of Sun Wukong's relics (see Fig. 8). Emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, contemplation, desire, and attachment function as mental obstacles that shape player action and progression. As players become immersed in the narrative, the emotions

generated through gameplay implicitly reflect a key Buddhist psychological concept, namely that when the six senses encounter the six sense objects, the six forms of consciousness arise.

The six senses refer to eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, understood as perceptual organs or functions. The six sense objects are form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects, which constitute the external conditions encountered by the six senses. The six forms of consciousness (Baidu Baike, 2025b) arise from the interaction between each sense and its corresponding object, including visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousness. Together, the six senses, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses form the eighteen realms of perception in Buddhist thought.

By collecting these relics through combat and quests, players are able to experience, through action, the idea of mental purification and are encouraged to reflect upon it. This dynamic is particularly evident in Chapter Three and in the final confrontation with the boss Yellow-brow. Throughout the encounter, Yellow-brow repeatedly speaks in ways designed to test the player's mental state. He continually manipulates and coerces the protagonist into killing the Macaque Chief, one of Sun Wukong's former companions, who is sealed within the Human Seed Pouch, a powerful weapon. Later, Yellow-brow transforms the protagonist into the Macaque Chief, reduces their physical scale, and forces them to continue slaughtering clay figurines within a narrow corridor. Yellow-brow encourages the release of murderous desire, claiming that only through such indulgence can justice

be achieved. This belief represents his core doctrine, namely that justice can be attained only by surrendering to desire.

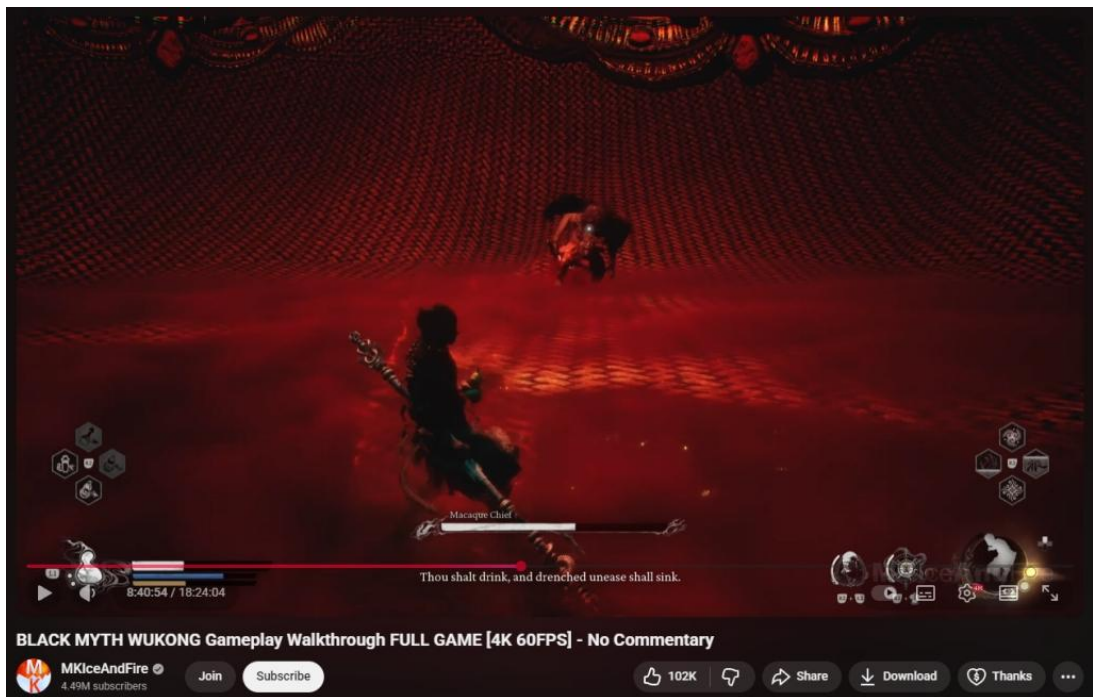


Fig. 9: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Yellow-brow's critique of Buddhist philosophy in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

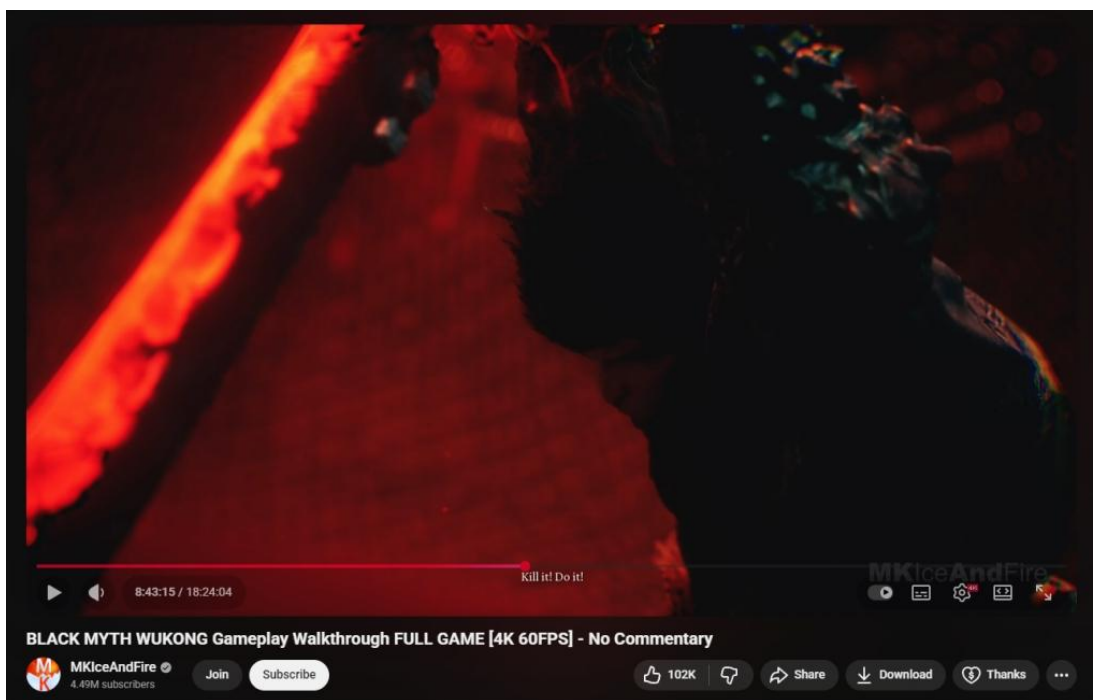


Fig. 10: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Dialogue in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)



Fig. 11: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing slaughtering clay figurines within a narrow corridor in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)



Fig. 12: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing slaughtering clay figurines within a narrow corridor in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

At the same time, the Five Skandhas (Baidu Baike, 2025c; Baidu Baike, 2025d) collected through side quests represent Buddhism's comprehensive classification of all existence, both material and mental, understood as five aggregates. These include form, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness. Together, they constitute what we perceive as the self and the world, yet they are fundamentally impermanent and without an inherent self. The Buddha taught that all five are in constant flux, and that there is no unchanging entity that can truly be called the "self." Attachment to the Five Skandhas as the self is identified as the root of suffering. While the six senses, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses provide a horizontal analysis of the perceptual process, the Five Skandhas offer a vertical analysis of human constitution. Through these game systems, Buddhist theories of experience are transformed from abstract philosophical concepts into operational and lived experiences, allowing players, across repeated play sessions, to encounter a Buddhist understanding of how humans perceive and engage with the world.

In the final section of *Black Myth: Wukong*, the mechanism of the golden headband further consolidates the internal coherence and structural logic of the game's cultural framework. In traditional narratives, the golden headband is commonly understood as a symbol that restrains Sun Wukong's mind, functioning as a metaphor for the tension between discipline, rules, and the

restless mind. In the original text, the headband primarily serves to establish the master–disciple relationship and to regulate Wukong’s behavior, while later cultural interpretations increasingly emphasize its association with self-discipline and the governance of inner desire.

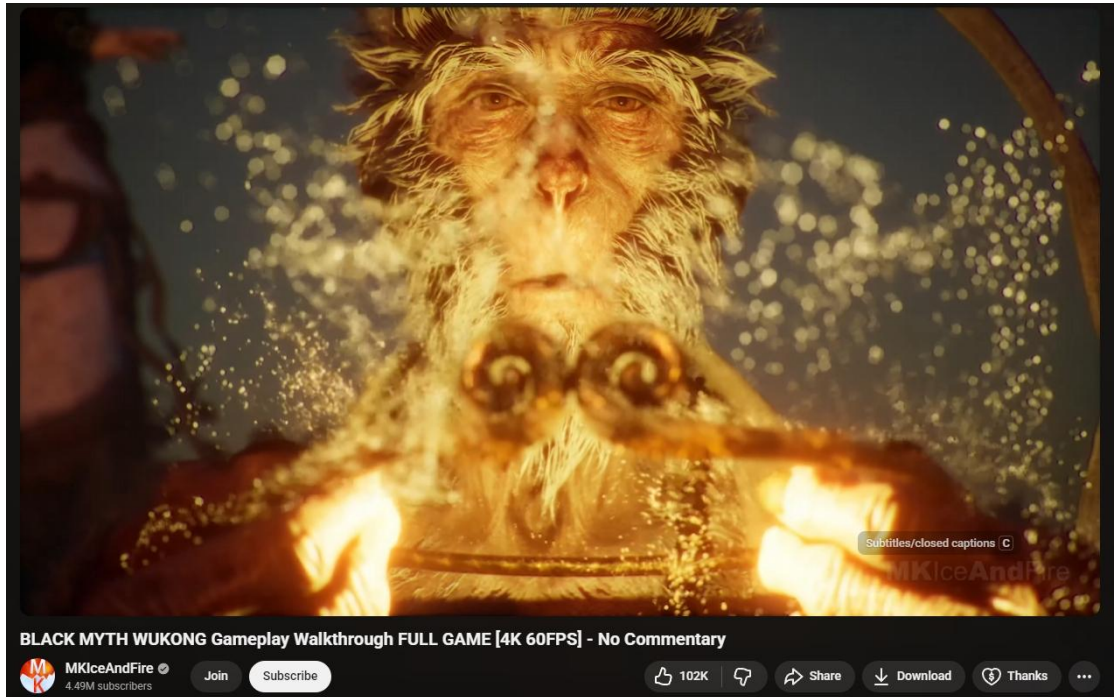


Fig. 13: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing golden headband in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

Black Myth: Wukong translates these layered cultural meanings into both system design and narrative structure. Wukong uses his own death to place his mind within Erlang’s third eye. This mind can be understood as Wukong’s will, comparable to a form of free will. However, if the Destined One fails to find Erlang and only killed Wukong’s remains, they are forced to accept the Buddhist will instead, as they have not escaped the structure imposed by gods and Buddhas. The player’s choices throughout the game determine whether the golden headband is accepted or rejected. This decision not only shapes character identity and narrative meaning, but also functions as a

cultural reflection on the relationship between selfhood, discipline, and freedom. Choosing to wear the headband means inheriting the will of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven and entering the cycle of reincarnation. Rejecting it, by contrast, unlocks the true ending and receives freedom.

When all Buddhas, gods, immortals, and demons believe that granting Sun Wukong the scriptures, compelling him to recite Buddhist teachings, and binding him with the golden headband represents submission to destiny, Wukong instead chooses to relinquish bodily immortality in favor of the immortality of thought and spirit. This constitutes a different form of transcendence: the body perishes, but the will endures. The Destined One who passes the final trial becomes the bearer of this legacy. In fact, during the final confrontation with Wukong's remains, the encounter functions less as a struggle of life and death than as a test of inheritance. Throughout the fight, Wukong's remains continually instruct the player in how to fight, framing the battle as an act of transmission rather than annihilation.



Fig. 14: Screenshot from a bilibili video showing Wukong's remains and player fighting (HANsoA-KevinO, 2024)

Cinematic and cultural

Beyond its well-judged system design, the immersive visual atmosphere of each chapter also works in service of the overall cultural experience. The game is not only engaging to play, but also visually compelling, functioning in many respects like a film. Each chapter concludes with an animated sequence that corresponds to the chapter's narrative, and the artistic design of these animations differs from one chapter to another. In this regard, Game Science provides a high degree of creative freedom, allowing each sequence to develop its own distinctive visual style.

After completing the final chapter and choosing to reject the golden headband through both narrative and combat, the player is presented with the ending animated short film. This sequence employs a flashback structure to recount the journey for the scriptures from *Journey to the West*, and its effect is striking as it is also revealing the truth about this journey. As is traditionally understood, the path to obtaining the scriptures consists of eighty-one trials. Likewise, the transformation from a domesticated Fighting Buddha into the true Great Sage who dares to challenge destiny, this defiant and unruly figure, also requires the endurance of eighty-one ordeals.

Even as the road ahead is filled with hardship, and even though his companions have already sacrificed their lives, he still chooses without hesitation to walk alone toward the Lingxiao Palace to fight for what he believes in. This narrative progression suggests that the present Destined

One has already completed and been tempered by these trials, and thus possesses the spiritual resolve required of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

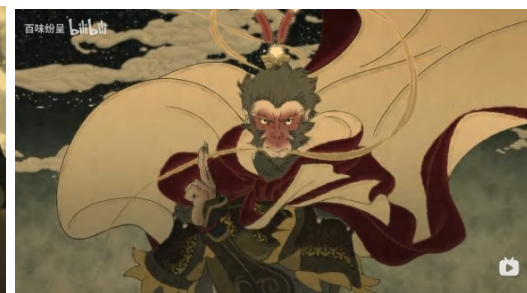




Fig. 15-24: Screenshot from a bilibili video for *Black Myth: Wukong True Ending Animation - Incomplete* (BaiWeiFenCheng, 2024)

After watching all of the animated sequences, I did not experience any sense of abruptness, even though they employ different media forms and visual styles. In my view, there are three main reasons for this.

First, the internal tone remains consistently unified, with an overall retro aesthetic. Each chapter revolves around a distinct philosophical question.

The game's approach to character construction differs fundamentally from adaptations in other media. Every character is rendered with depth, and even minor enemies possess their own backstories. These stories are recorded in a system called the *Journal (Yingshen Tu)*, which players can view all the time. Characters that once existed merely as names in a text or as minor figures in earlier narratives are given fully realized histories within the game world, each embodying specific symbolic meanings.

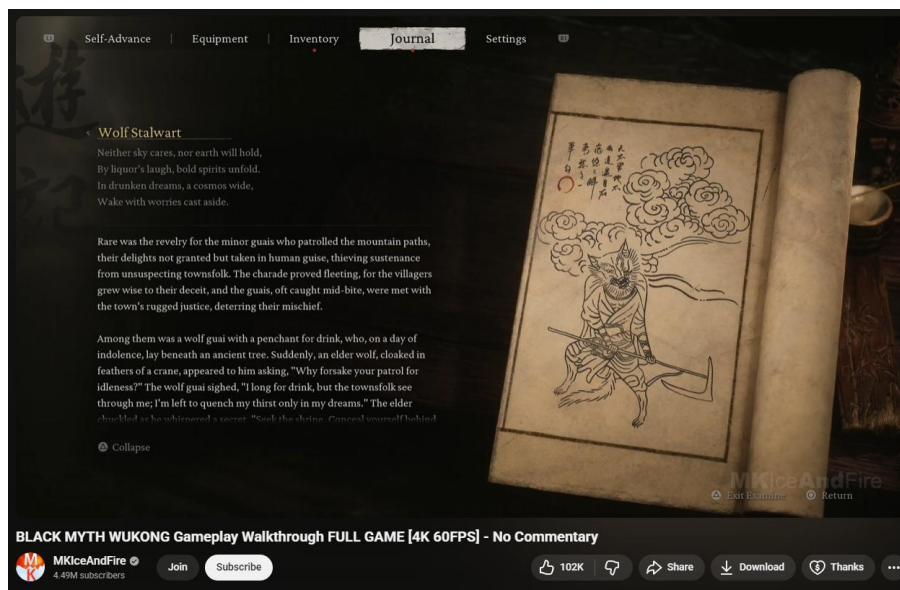


Fig. 25: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing *Journal* in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

For example, in the first chapter, both the Black Bear Spirit and Elder Jinchi represent greed, obsession, and disordered religious authority. In the narrative, Elder Jinchi dies, while the Black Bear Spirit survives, becomes a mountain guardian deity, and eventually enters Guanyin's retinue. This outcome draws on ancient Chinese bear worship and bear-related cultural symbolism. In early tribal societies, clan names were often derived from

totemic worship, and the first Chinese dynasty, the Xia, is believed to have revered the bear as its totem. The bear symbolized vitality, immense strength, masculine courage, and power, while its hibernation was understood as a metaphor for death and rebirth, reflecting the regenerative force of nature. As a result, bears receive unusually respectful treatment in *Journey to the West*, a tradition that the game continues.

Elder Jinchi is influenced by the Black Bear Spirit and longs to transform himself from a weak and impoverished man into the figure symbolized by the bear. However, once this aspiration hardens into obsession, its meaning is fundamentally distorted. Even after reaching a position of reverence within Guanyin Bodhisattva, he still requires a piece of Sun Wukong's multicolored cassock to validate his status. Early in the game, the Earth God explicitly warns of this danger, stating that if a person's heart has already burned away, what value is there in repairing a ruined temple? This use of fictional narrative to reflect on real-world concerns runs throughout the entire game. Each character's story functions as a philosophical reflection on dilemmas and questions that players themselves may encounter in lived experience.

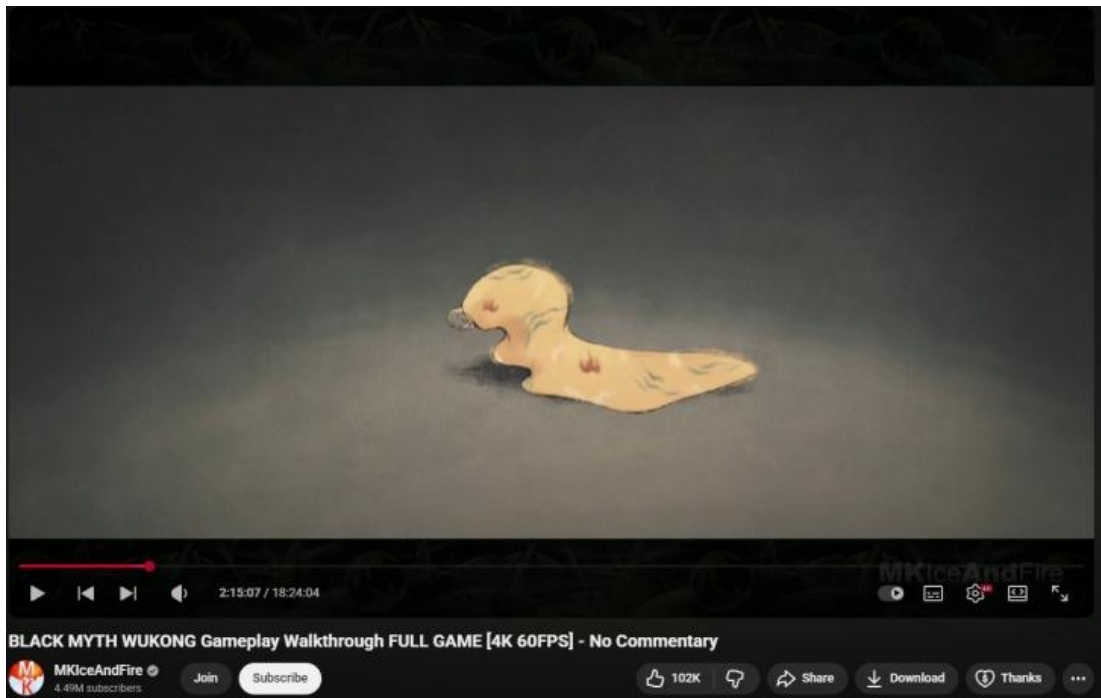


Fig. 26: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing *JinChi* in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024)

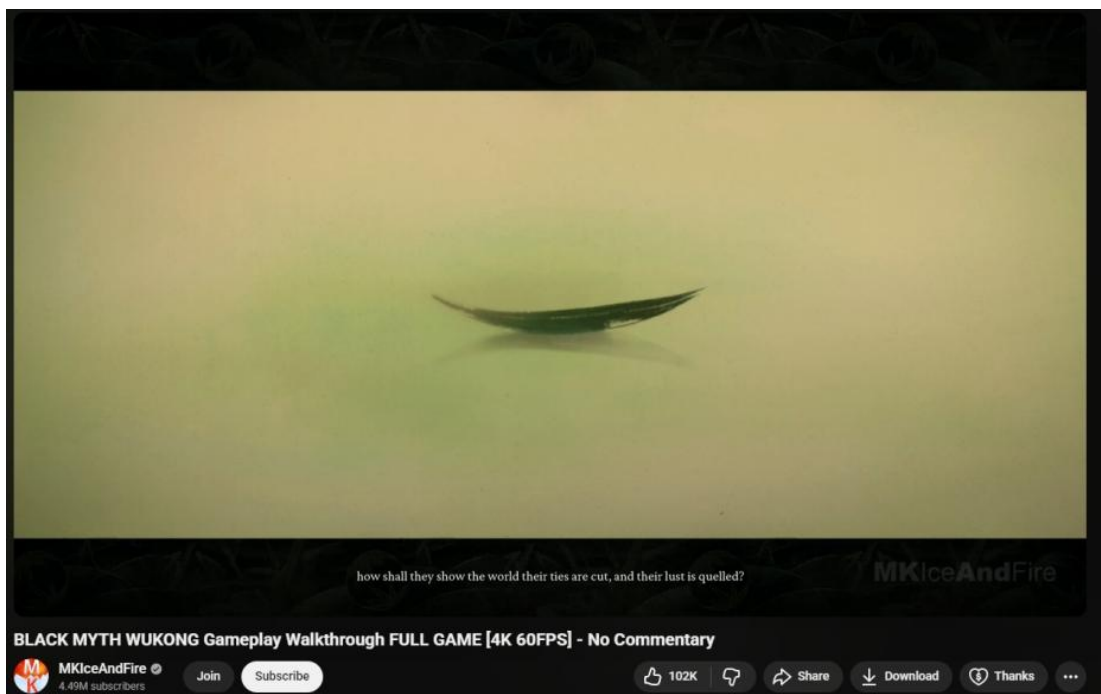


Fig. 27: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Guanyin Bodhisattva's dialogue in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024)

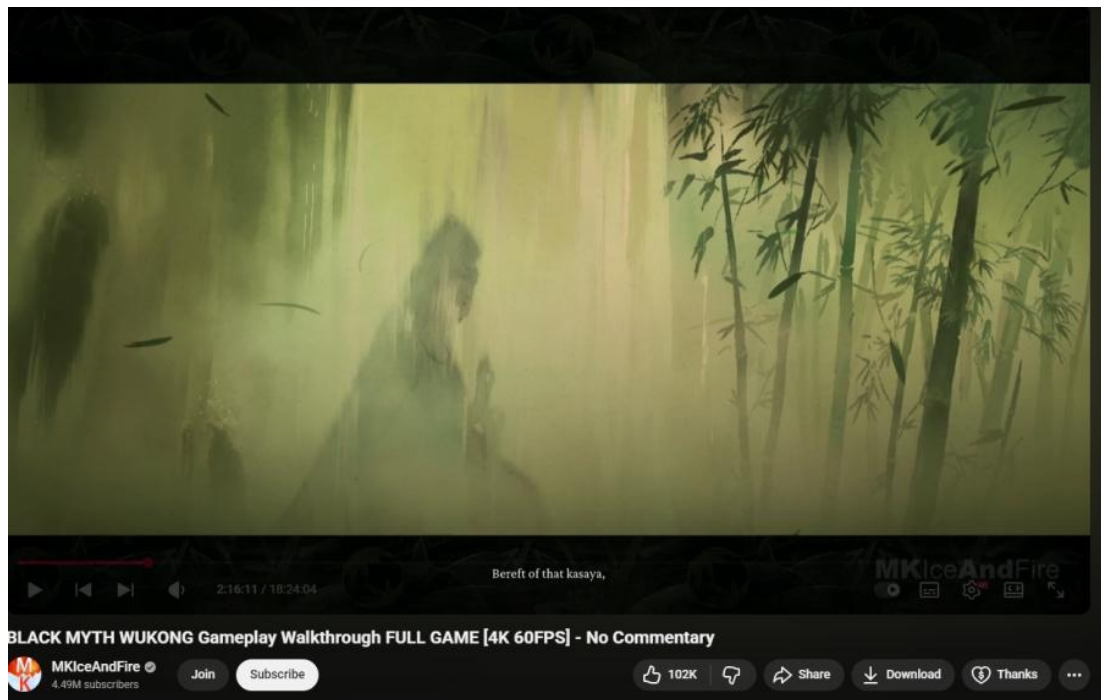


Fig. 28: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Guanyin Bodhisattva's in *Black Myth: Wukong* Chapter one animation film (MKIceAndFire,2024)

Second, I noticed a clear commonality across these animated sequences: a high degree of unity in rhythm and cinematic language. This unity is not achieved through constant narrative escalation or the continuous advancement of events. Chinese narrative rhythm does not typically rely on one event driving relentlessly toward the next. Instead, it unfolds gradually, placing greater emphasis on situation and atmosphere. The rhythmic variation is generated through the modulation of mood rather than plot progression (Liu, 1999).

Narrative structures within this tradition are often non-linear. Rather than moving straightforwardly from beginning to development to conclusion, they

frequently return to a central thematic core. From a temporal perspective, this reflects a conception of time that is cyclical rather than linear, resonating with Confucian and Daoist views of natural recurrence and temporal return. Chinese storytelling also places strong emphasis on moments of pause, stillness, and silence. Through shifts in tempo, tension and a sense of breathing space are created by means of deliberate emptiness and restraint. This sensibility appears across Chinese theatre, visual art, and literature, particularly in the value placed on emptiness and blankness (Zong, 2020).

In contrast to the Western narrative model, which often accelerates toward climax before resolution, Chinese narrative rhythm more closely resembles breathing, with alternating rises and falls (Zong, 2020) . It tends to favor juxtaposition, fragmentation, and leaps in time or perspective, rather than tightly constructed chains of causality. Overall, these animated sequences are less concerned with telling a story that moves steadily forward, and more focused on sustaining a continuous state of flow and atmosphere.

Third, the use of Easter eggs plays an important supporting role. In each chapter, the treatment of the land's keeper shrines, specifically the feedback animations that appear after offering incense, further integrates cultural meaning, spatial context, and chapter themes. In the first chapter, after incense is placed in the wooden land shrine, flowers begin to grow from the wood, symbolizing the return of vitality.

Within this chapter, Guanyin Monastery, originally presided over by Elder Jinchi, falls into ruin due to his greed for the cassock during his lifetime. The

monastery is destroyed, and his lingering obsession remains after death. Against this backdrop, the Black Bear Spirit occupies the mountain region, plunging the area into a state of disorder and oppressive control. Through the final confrontation, the player defeats the Black Bear Spirit and releases the region from his domination. As a result, Elder Jinchi's obsession is resolved, and Black Wind Mountain gradually returns to its original state of balance and vitality.

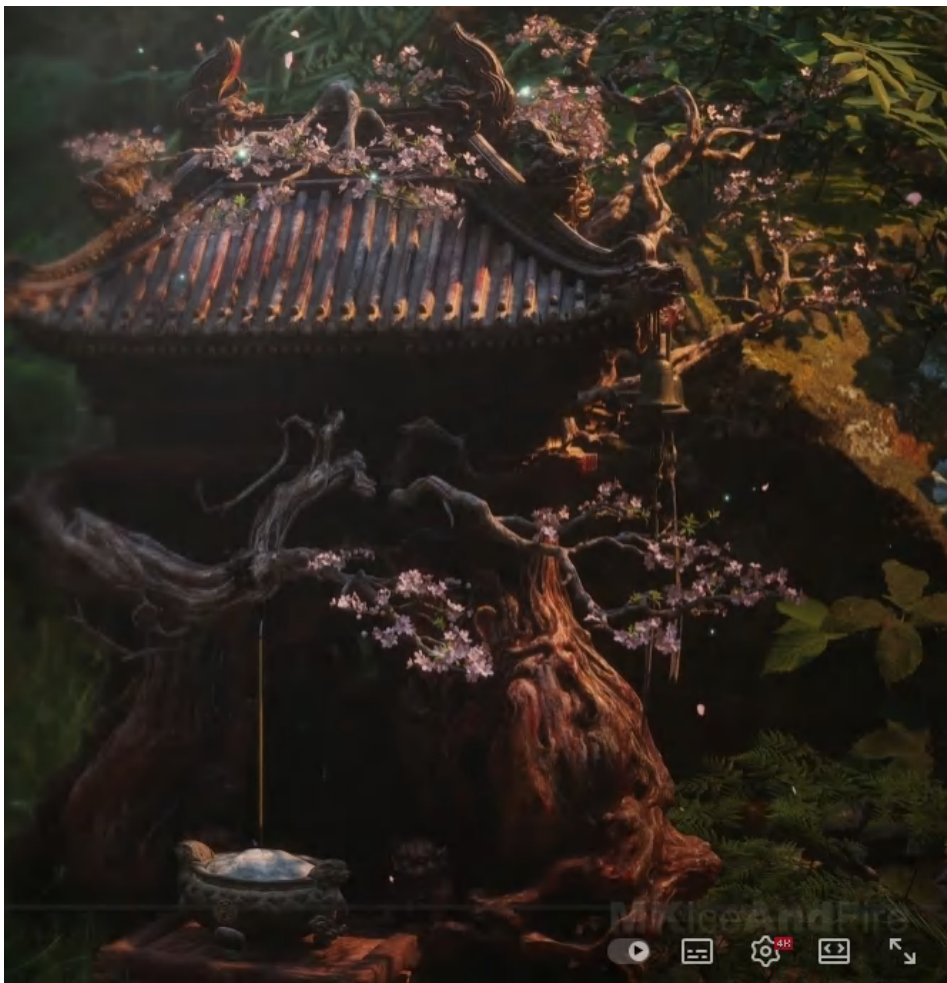


Fig. 29: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing Land keeper's shrine in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

In the second chapter, the feedback takes the form of the manifestation of

Buddhist light; in the third chapter, melting ice and snow; in the fourth chapter, the dispersal of spider webs; and in the fifth chapter, the ignition of the token. In the final chapter, the stone-built Land Keeper's shrine at Mount Huaguo produces no special animation effects at all, because this is the birthplace of Sun Wukong and calls for a return to primordial simplicity. These interactive responses function as micro-level annotations to each chapter's narrative theme and serve as subtle clues within the game's broader worldview.

Such details are typically only noticed after a chapter has been completed. Prior to that, they remain embedded in the player's subconscious, operating like Easter eggs. In the fifth chapter, the boss Keeper of the Flaming Mountain features combat animations rendered in an ink-wash style, evoking the visual language of Chinese calligraphy. During the fight, the color divisions beneath the feet of the protagonist and the boss also resemble the yin–yang structure of the Taiji diagram (see Fig.30), further reinforcing the game's integration of visual aesthetics and philosophical symbolism.

Cultural meaning in the game is revealed through the systematic structure of its mechanics rather than through visual symbolism alone. It becomes a key entry point for understanding character construction, chapter design, and the overall narrative framework. In this sense, these forms of visual–cultural feedback function simultaneously as systems and as narrative premises, providing a strong cultural foundation for the content that unfolds in later chapters.



Fig. 30: Screenshot from a YouTube video showing fighting against the boss Keeper of the Flaming Mountain in *Black Myth: Wukong* Gameplay (MKIceAndFire,2024)

Different media operate as extensions of human cultural expression. When a system shares the same underlying logic at a deeper cultural level, visual forms can remain diverse without losing a sense of unity (McLuhan, 1964). Here, technology consistently serves a single cultural system, namely Chinese mythological narrative and philosophical thought. The Game Science team did not dilute or discard cultural elements in order to make them more outward-facing or accessible. Instead, they positioned each element according to its own characteristics, allowing it to occupy the place most appropriate to it within the medium. As a result, the game functions as a cultural technological system driven by interaction, supported by visual

experience, allegory, and foreshadowing, enabling players to become genuinely embedded within the culture through the act of play.

Chapter Three: Eastern and Western player responses

Black Myth: Wukong has generated a strong reaction at the level of cultural communication. Across a wide range of media reports and commentaries, it is evident that for both Eastern and Western player communities, the game has taken on a symbolic significance that goes beyond that of an entertainment product, giving rise to a broader social phenomenon. The act of intercultural viewing has never been neutral; every perspective always carries existing power structures and modes of imagination (Said, 1978). The global discussions triggered by this game reflect long-standing ways in which the East has been viewed from different perspectives, and they unsettle the established narrative frameworks through which the Orient has been understood. Art continually providing new media presentations and creates new narrative frameworks, reflecting and reshaping how we understand identity. For Chinese players, what is being reshaped is “who we are”; for Western players, it is “who they are.”

Psychological Mechanisms of Players from Different Cultures

Although players in China and other countries both experience a strong resonance with *Black Myth: Wukong*, the pathways through which this resonance emerges are fundamentally different. For Chinese players, the game first activates collective memory and cultural emotion: In Sun Wukong, they recognize a mythological figure that has been deeply ingrained through cultural education since childhood. They also find, in elements such as the

master–disciple relationship and the *Journey to the West* narrative, points of identification that connect to their own experiences of growing up, value conflicts, and the pressures of their time. For example, *Journey to the West* appears in Chinese primary school textbooks, and Sun Wukong’s image is firmly embedded in the childhood memories of Chinese children (Zhang, 2004). They are not encountering a new character, but revisiting a cultural figure who has grown up alongside them. As a result, Chinese players often enter the text as inheritors of cultural tradition, as young people shaped and constrained by their historical moment, or as contemporary individuals searching for a spiritual outlet, and then return to their own lived experiences to find resonance.

By contrast, many Western players approach the game with more individualized identities: as myth enthusiasts, external observers of Eastern culture, or fans of the action-game genre. Their initial interest often stems from genre-based expectations such as heroic narratives, a dark fantasy atmosphere, or demanding combat systems (Steam Community, 2025a). After the release of the first gameplay trailer for *Black Myth: Wukong* in 2020 (Black Myth, 2020), discussions in YouTube comment sections were largely focused on questions like whether this was a “Chinese Souls-like” or whether the combat looked particularly hardcore. This was followed by growing curiosity about Chinese mythological symbols, which gradually led players to become aware of the deeper cultural structures underpinning the game. In other words, Chinese players tend to move from culture to the individual, while overseas players follow a path from the individual to culture.

The psychologist Carl Jung proposed the concept of the *Archetype*. *Archetypes* are rooted in the collective unconscious (Jung, 1969) and represent shared psychological structures through which humans understand fundamental themes such as motherhood, the hero, the shadow, rebirth, and the journey. Different cultures narrate these structures through different symbolic systems, and myth functions as the cultural expression of these archetypes. As a result, while each culture possesses its own distinctive mythological system, they share the same underlying psychological patterns. As Joseph Campbell observes: “*Wherever the hero appears, he is the same: each culture has clothed the archetypal story in its own symbolic garments*” (Campbell, 1949). It is precisely for this reason that *Black Myth: Wukong* is able to evoke both commonality and difference among players from different cultural backgrounds: the hero archetype provides a shared psychological foundation, while culture determines how these emotions are interpreted, expressed, and intensified, ultimately shaping how individuals understand their own identities.

Western Players’ Perspective: Otherness, Tension, Reconstruction

Western players approach *Black Myth: Wukong* from a distinctly different perspective. For a long time, the West has tended to view the East through an external and often subjective lens, whereas this game places Western players inside an Eastern cultural viewpoint, asking them to observe from within rather than from a distance. For some, encountering an unfamiliar

culture in this way produces a sense of psychological resistance; for others, it becomes an expansion of their experience of cultural otherness.

For most Western players, the primary motivation is audiovisual spectacle and the appeal of a stylistically novel action game. Visual design, motion capture, boss presentations, and environmental construction are typically the first elements to attract their attention. Many Western players are already fans of Souls-like games. Taking classic titles such as *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* and *Elden Ring* as examples, community reviews on Steam (Steam Community, 2025b; Steam Community, 2025c) frequently praise character animation and environmental design in these games. This is a genre they know well, and because *Black Myth: Wukong* adopts a similar structural framework, their evaluations tend to focus on gameplay itself: hit detection, combat rhythm, boss design, and the depth of gameplay loops.

Their interest in the game's cultural background is therefore built on its perceived quality as a game. As a result, a small number of players have criticized the later stages of the game for repetitive combat design or a decline in pacing. (Steam Community, 2025a) These critiques reflect an evaluation based on action-game standards. At the same time, reviews on platforms such as ScreenRant reveal a striking internal tension, describing the game as having "great diversity in items and mechanics," while simultaneously criticizing it for "lacking in inclusivity and diversity." (ScreenRant, 2024) This critique is further supported by pointing to the absence of female monsters in the first and second chapters as evidence of

an imbalanced gender design. However, this framing overlooks the fact that many female monsters and characters appear in later chapters of the game.

In the media response generated by the game, we can also observe extensive debate in Western media around issues such as gender representation and political correctness. The most controversial case involves the professional game review platform IGN. Articles published by IGN misled players by circulating an inaccurately translated post (IGN, 2024) attributed to the CEO of Game Science, using it to introduce claims of sexism and arguments that the game is unfriendly to female players. This significantly challenged IGN's long-established reputation for professionalism and credibility.

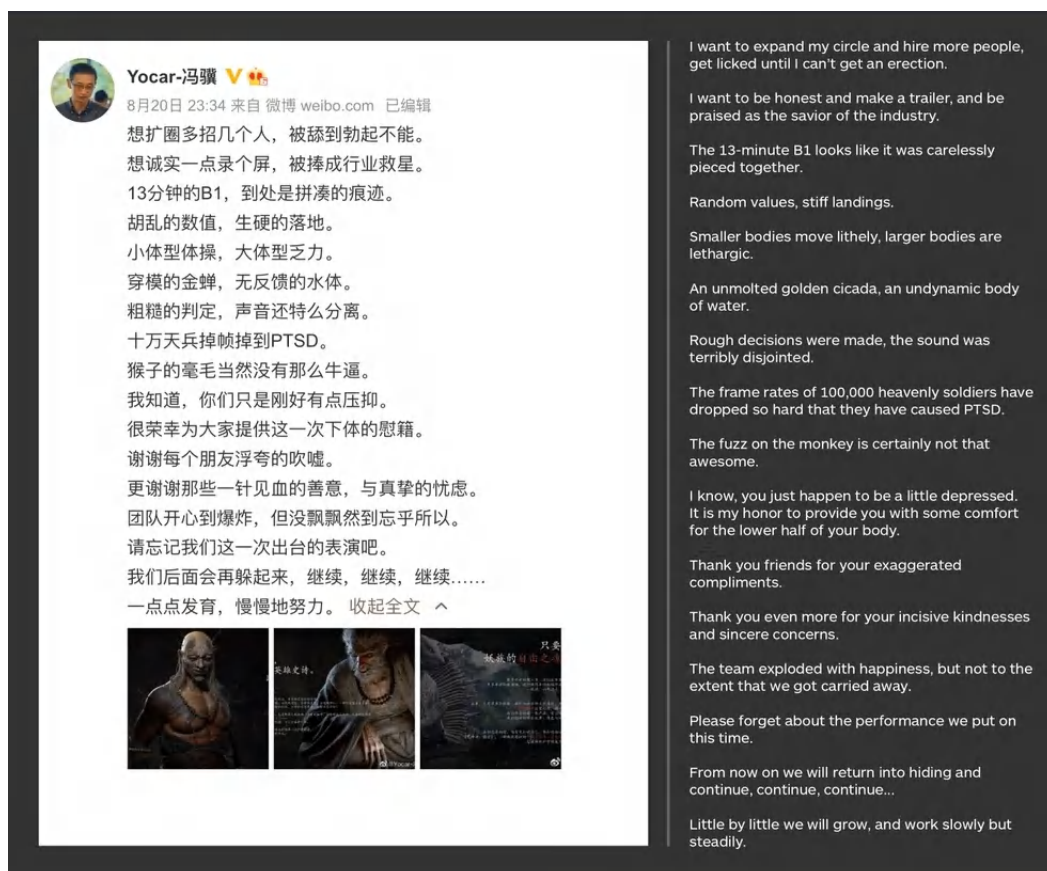


Fig. 31: IGN's incorrect discussion of sexism controversies translation related to Black Myth: Wukong (IGN, 2024)

The YouTube gaming commentator The Act Man later released a video addressing this controversy, and many comments beneath the video expressed opposition to IGN's actions, arguing that the platform was more focused on promoting political and gender correctness than on the game itself. (The Act Man, 2024) This form of position-driven polarization suggests that the reception of the work is already shaped by political ideology, rather than operating as a neutral mode of cultural consumption.

This phenomenon echoes Said's (1978) critique of *Orientalism*: Western discourse often interprets Eastern cultural products within specific cultural frameworks, unconsciously placing them into structures of othering.

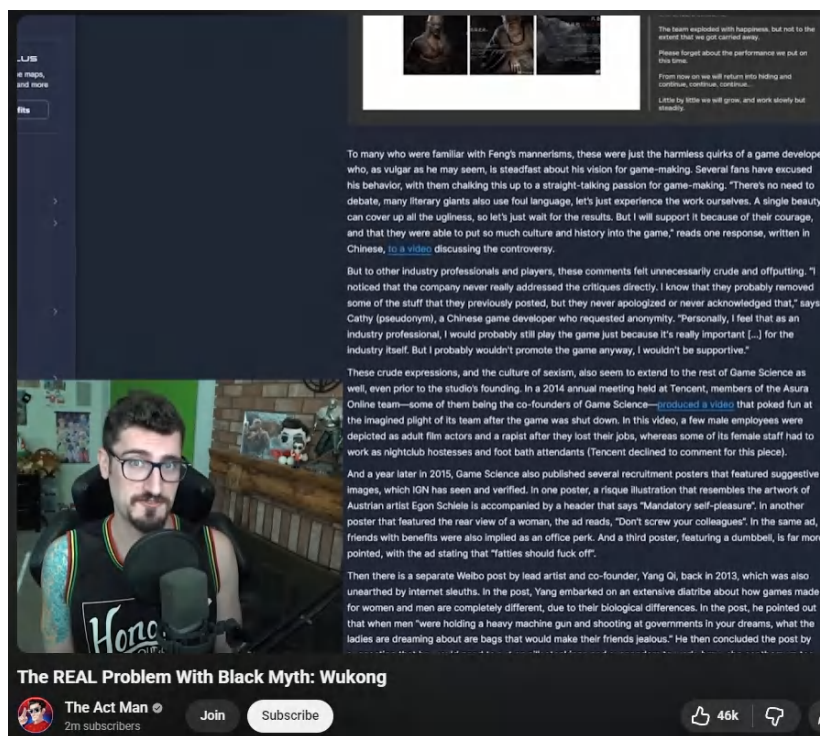


Fig. 32: Screenshot from a YouTube video discussing *[The REAL Problem With Black Myth: Wukong]*. (The Act Man, 2024)

Active Exploration and Understanding

For Western players who are primarily focused on games as games, their initial attention is directed toward game design itself. However, the distinctive Buddhist and Daoist systems, along with unfamiliar demon and monster traditions, offer a completely different aesthetic experience. In terms of *Black Myth*'s localization and translation strategy, the development team chose to retain a large amount of Chinese cultural context rather than fully rewriting the game within a Western framework, and this decision constitutes a key part of the game's appeal. This approach to cultural transmission—preserving a sense of originality—allows the game to convey both exoticism and authenticity.

Some players have a limited prior familiarity with *Journey to the West*. For several decades, *Monkey / Saiyūki 1978* (Wikipedia, 2025) functioned as a popular gateway through which Western audiences encountered *Journey to the West*, although it was not produced by Chinese creators but by others. Nevertheless, the majority of Western players lack a clear understanding of the original story, Buddhist and Daoist belief systems, and the traditions of classical Chinese myth and the supernatural. Moreover, they have rarely encountered such a complete and coherent presentation of Buddhist–Daoist cosmology and *zhiguai* (chinese tales of the strange and anomalous) aesthetics (Wikipedia, 2025) aesthetics in a mainstream AAA game. In this context, cultural difference itself becomes a distinctive source of attraction (Iwabuchi, 2002).

Even without fully understanding the cultural background, many players remain deeply drawn to the game, a sentiment widely reflected in comment sections across major platforms. One Chinese player once posted a question on Steam: *Why do you pay attention to Black Myth: Wukong?* The responses included the following types of answers:

“As I studied Chinese I am very interested in Chinese culture, Thus, I also read some simplified version of the journey to the west. On the other hand I like gaming and combining this results of course to be a must buy for me for wukong. The golden peak is that this game is so much fun and I am not having any technical issues unlike the most games have on release nowadays. I hope there is coming more from China in the future.”

“Combat, character, design, graphics, atmosphere, mythology, monkey with stick.”

“... While I don't have much interest in the story of Wukong what is appealing is exploring a mythology that I am not familiar with. European and Japanese fantasy / mythology is great but it's super overdone at this point and so anything like this is fresh.”

“Because it's devs are a bastion of sanity pushing back against the woke mind virus for anything paying attention to the culture war. Admittedly none of it really matters in the grand scheme of things, but we play games to escape reality and it was very annoying for activists to be pushing politics into our escapism, so seeing Game Science reject that framework is an example we hope more game devs will follow. Plus it is nice to explore myths from other cultures.”

(Steam Community, 2024)

From their perspective, Chinese aesthetic style becomes a source of attraction rather than a cultural barrier. Players enter the game with certain expectations precisely because of its Chinese identity, and then discover that the world of demons, deities, and Buddhist–Daoist systems can convey philosophical narratives rather than functioning merely as cultural symbols. Religion, as they come to recognize, carries the same dual nature found in

Western traditions: it encompasses both redemption and oppression, belief and power. Historically, religion has provided meaning, morality, and a sense of community, while also inspiring art, charity, and spiritual pursuit; yet it has equally been entangled in struggles for power, transforming faith into an instrument of political order (Eliade, 1959).

For this reason, Western players are often able to grasp the complexity of the divine and mythological systems presented in *Black Myth: Wukong*.

Otherness here becomes another way of interpreting the world. Because the game does not deliberately rewrite Chinese Buddhist and Daoist frameworks into Western modes of understanding, some players begin to actively look up Buddhist terminology and classical references on their own. On Reddit, in communities such as r/Games, r/PS5 and r/Black Myth Wukong, typical comments have appeared about after watching the gameplay, they started reading about Journey to the West (Smol_Cyclist, 2024).

This is widely regarded as a successful case of unintentional cultural transmission. The developers themselves have repeatedly stated that cultural export was not their goal. In multiple interviews and public statements regarding *Black Myth: Wukong*, CEO Feng Ji has consistently emphasized that their aim was simply *to make a good game*, rather than to *take on a mission of cultural export* (CCTV News, 2024). They were creating a game they personally believed in. Their focus was on achieving high quality, while whether players choose to engage with and understand the underlying cultural system ultimately remains the players' own decision.

【面对面】专访冯骥：重走西游

全站排行榜最高第2名 > 224.3万 2.3万 2024-10-13 14:51:13 未经授权，禁止转载



Fig. 33: Screenshots from a bilibili video for CEO Feng Ji talking his concepts about *Black Myth: Wukong* in an interview (CCTV News, 2024)

Deep Resonance: Emotion, Action, and the Unconscious

Players come to re-engage with a culture not because they fully understand its symbolic system, but because they recognize universal human experiences in its characters, emotions, and conflicts. The streamer Asmongold demonstrated this process during one of his live broadcasts (Zackrawrr, 2024), where he openly expressed confusion about certain lines spoken by the characters, followed by moments of sudden realization and a strong emotional response to the game's ending animation. He came to understand that the monsters he had defeated throughout the game were, in

fact, former companions of Sun Wukong, and that the final cinematic retells *Journey to the West* through a reverse narrative structure. In the livestream's comment section, many viewers responded to his questions, explaining the context and sharing in the sense of shock and emotional impact alongside him.

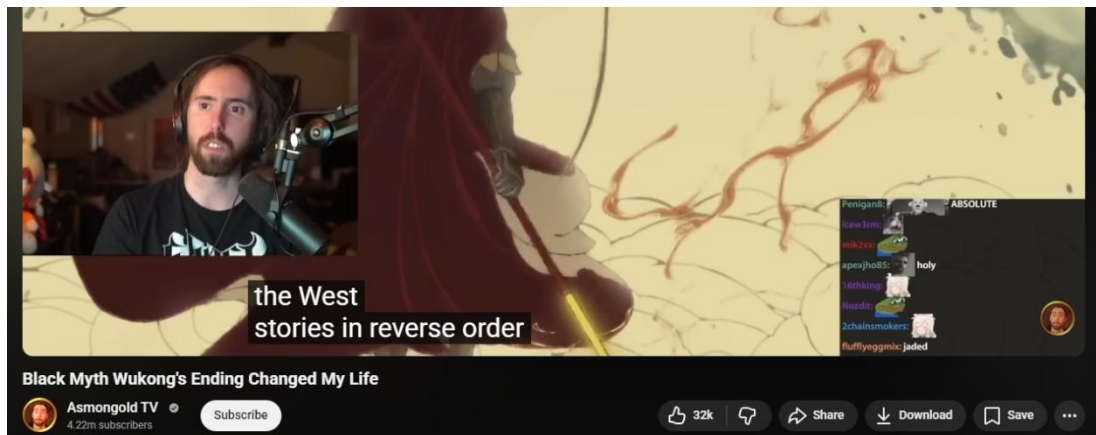


Fig. 34-36: Screenshot of Asmongold's reaction while watching *Black Myth: Wukong's* ending (Asmongold TV, 2024)

What they encounter is not Eastern culture in a pure or abstract sense, but a projection of their own emotions. As Murray (1997) argues, interactive narrative grants players agency, allowing them to participate in self-construction through cycles of action and feedback. Gabor Maté (2010) further helps explain why players form deep connections with particular characters or emotional moments: games can reach emotions that have not yet been put into words, as well as unmet inner needs. As a result, cultural difference does not become a barrier to understanding. Players are willing to actively learn about Chinese culture not because they already understand it, but because they have been moved at the level of emotion and action.

Chinese players' perspective: Emotions and reshaping of cultural subjectivity

Chinese players are far more familiar with the mythological system of *Journey to the West*, and therefore enter *Black Myth: Wukong* with a long-established cultural background. Their experience of the game is marked by a stronger sense of collective emotion, it is what Anderson (1991) describes as the way a community forms imagined connections through shared emotions and historical narratives. As a result, their expectations go beyond gameplay alone; they also seek an affirmation of cultural confidence and an intensified sense of shared perception as cultural subjects.

For a long time, Chinese players have been accustomed to encountering high-level narrative design and technical polish primarily in foreign AAA games, while the domestic game industry has often been burdened by stereotypes. In 2021, *Xinhua Net* published an article titled *Spiritual Opium Has Grown into a Hundred-Billion-Yuan Industry*, which associated games with issues such as mobile micro-transactions, online addiction, damage to physical and mental health, and broader social risks. For many traditional parents, gaming was likewise seen as an unproductive or irresponsible activity (Xinhua, 2021).

Against this backdrop, *Black Myth: Wukong* has been widely regarded as the first high-quality Chinese-developed game to truly reach AAA standards. It has been directly positioned by official media as an industry benchmark, cited by a spokesperson from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an example of the appeal of Chinese culture (Xinhua, 2024), and even adopted by cultural and tourism departments for promotional purposes (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2025). This clearly indicates that its status has risen from that of an entertainment product to a recognized achievement of the cultural industry. In this sense, the game demonstrates the mutually reinforcing relationship between games and culture.

Chinese hit game Black Myth: Wukong drives cultural tourism

Source:CCTV.com 26-08-24 04:13 Updated BJT

Font size: [A+](#) [A-](#)



As the first domestic triple-A video game in China, Black Myth: Wukong has taken the gaming world by storm, sparking a boom in related cultural industries, including cultural tourism with fans flocking to the historical and cultural sites featured in the game.

| Editor: Liusiyu

Fig. 37: Screenshot from a CCTV English news video report (CCTV, 2024)

Retelling the Classic

Another key aspect lies in the re-narration of the classic. During gameplay, Chinese players activate multiple layers of memory: childhood mythological memories, recollections from literature textbooks, collective memories drawn from folktales, and the emotional weight of national narratives. The game reimagines the demons, deities, and characters from *Journey to the West* with greater complexity and realism, allowing players to experience, perhaps for the first time, how traditional culture can be reinterpreted through contemporary forms.

By concretizing characters' suffering, desires, and dilemmas, the game transforms figures once treated as minor or peripheral into individuals with emotions, motivations, and personal histories. These character arcs and world-building elements, conveyed through expressive forms familiar to contemporary players, generate strong emotional resonance among Chinese audiences. In this sense, we can observe how cultural texts are continually reinterpreted across different historical moments (Hall, 1997). Players themselves become participants in this process of cultural re-presentation, rather than merely passive recipients of their own cultural heritage.



Fig. 38: Screenshots from a bilibili video about Ganker Gongke talking his views about *Black Myth: Wukong* (Ganker Gongke, 2024)



Fig. 39: Screenshots from a bilibili video about Ganker Gongke talking Chinese memories activation about *Black Myth: Wukong* (Ganker Gongke, 2024)

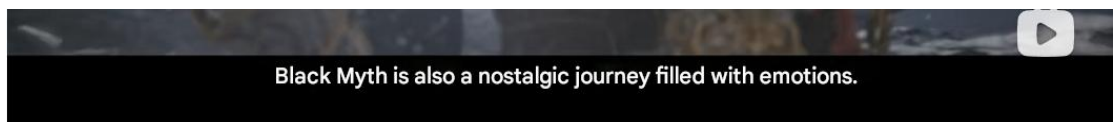


Fig. 40: English translation for content in Fig38 (Ganker Gongke, 2024)

The game renders the demons, deities, and characters of *Journey to the West* with greater depth and realism, allowing players to experience, perhaps for the first time, how traditional culture can be reinterpreted through modern forms. By giving concrete shape to characters' suffering, desires, and dilemmas, figures once treated as minor or peripheral are transformed into individuals with emotions, motivations, and personal histories. These character stories and designs, communicated through expressive modes familiar to contemporary players, generate strong emotional resonance

among Chinese audiences. In this process, we can observe how cultural texts are continually reinterpreted across different historical moments (Hall, 1997), with players themselves actively participating in cultural re-presentation rather than merely receiving their own cultural heritage.

Reconstructing Contemporary Meaning

Themes of causality, cultivation, failure, betrayal, and a strong sense of fate in the game resonate easily with Chinese young people. Their personal values collide with traditional ones, and through gameplay they both experience cultural inheritance and participate in the contemporary reconstruction of Chinese mythology. This process can be understood through Nietzsche's notion of the spiritual metamorphosis from "*camel-lion-child*" (Nietzsche, 1954): searching for a new cultural position amid following, resisting, and recreating.

When Chinese players encounter representations of their own culture, what takes place is a process of self-reflection. As Hall (1997) points out, cultural representation is not only about the production of meaning, but also about how subjects come to re-understand their own positions. For many Chinese players, *Black Myth: Wukong* offers a moment of pause and reconsideration: while engaging with the story, they also reflect on the emotions, cultural experiences, and social positions that shape their personal choices.

The popularity of *Black Myth: Wukong* has also had tangible social effects. For example, the Wanwu Poyuan Video Game Museum in Guangzhou has

seen an increasing number of parents bringing their children to try the game and learn more about games as a cultural medium (Ganker Gongke, 2024).



Fig. 41: Screenshots from a bilibili video showing the Wanwu Poyuan Video Game Museum in Guangzhou (Ganker Gongke, 2024)

Beyond emotional identification, although domestic players regard *Black Myth: Wukong* as a national symbol, their evaluations remain strict. They compare it directly with top-tier games such as *Sekiro* and *God of War*, setting high standards in terms of combat experience, narrative pacing, and technical optimization. The game is expected to function simultaneously as a culturally representative work and as a genuine AAA production subject to rigorous scrutiny. In short, Chinese players' experience of the game reflects a layered set of expectations, in which cultural confidence, generational sentiment, the reworking of a classic, and the demand for truly high-quality gameplay are deeply intertwined.

Cultural Transmission: Media, Perception, and Self-Understanding

When a cultural work engages with the deep symbolic structures of human experience, cultural differences become multiple points of interpretation rather than obstacles to communication. In the digital age, as Marshall McLuhan argued, the medium itself shapes how we perceive the world, and to understand media is also to understand the self (McLuhan, 1964). In video games, players' actions, choices, and feedback loops carry projections of the individual unconscious, because media function as extensions of human capacities and perception (McLuhan, 1964). It is precisely through the collision of different cultural systems that these dynamics become visible. When individuals remain within a single cultural environment, they exist within what Edward T. Hall describes as tacit knowledge, where culture operates unconsciously (Hall, 1976). It underlies behaviors we take for granted and remains largely unrecognized. Only in intercultural encounters—when familiar modes of perception are challenged—do people become more aware of the hidden assumptions embedded in their own culture, and through difference, come to a deeper understanding of themselves.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of differing perspectives in contemporary media, modes of cultural experience, and the tensions produced by intercultural communication, this thesis ultimately argues that under contemporary media conditions dominated by immersive experience, cultural export has become a new form of experience. Culture no longer exists primarily as something to be interpreted. Instead, it functions as a concrete force that directly shapes perception, judgment, and emotional response, and is encountered and lived through by audiences themselves.

This conclusion indicates that the divergences in understanding and the conflicts of evaluation surrounding contemporary cultural products can no longer be explained solely through cultural content or modes of representation. The cases discussed in this thesis demonstrate that even when cultural material is complete and richly developed, once it enters a specific medium or is encountered from an external perspective, it can still produce markedly different experiences among audiences from different cultural backgrounds. The resulting tensions do not stem from a failure of the culture itself, but from the partiality and subjectivity inherent in intercultural communication. From the perspective of high- and low-context cultures, high-context cultures contain a greater density of implicit elements and therefore cannot be adequately understood through surface-level features alone.

Using *Black Myth: Wukong* as an example, its presentation of Eastern

aesthetics does not seek to lower the barrier to understanding through explicit textual narration. Instead, it constructs cultural experience through environmental design, cinematic atmosphere, and gameplay mechanics. This strategy represents a deliberate media choice. However, when this form of experience is approached from a Western perspective and evaluated according to Western interpretive standards, misunderstandings are almost inevitable.

Therefore, I ultimately argue that the central issue in contemporary cultural conflict does not lie in whether culture is correctly understood, but in whether the act of understanding itself still serves as the core mechanism of cultural transmission. As illustrated by *Black Myth: Wukong*, within immersive media environments, experience often precedes understanding, while interpretation tends to begin only after the experience has already unfolded. This reversal of sequence means that culture can no longer be transmitted or received from an objective standpoint. Instead, it is continuously reconstructed and reshaped through the process of mediated experience, which makes the emergence of interpretations that do not fully align with the culture itself more likely, and in turn generates divergence and conflict.

At the same time, evidence also suggests that researchers often assume they occupy a neutral and transparent position of understanding. In reality, both the researcher and the media forms, research methods, and analytical frameworks they employ are already embedded within specific cultural experiences and perceptual habits. What I wish to argue, therefore, is that

the study of other cultures should not aim to eliminate difference, but should instead take difference itself as the object of analysis. Only when researchers recognize that they are participants shaped by media and cultural experience, rather than detached observers, can intercultural research avoid once again reducing the Other to something merely to be understood and evaluated.

At a broader level, examining this case ultimately does not point to whether a particular culture has been successfully “exported,” but rather to a set of underlying assumptions that are often left unexamined. Culture is not something that can be transmitted intact. Once it begins to circulate through media, it is reshaped by the medium’s rules, forms, and modes of experience. Likewise, audiences do not stand outside the medium as detached interpreters. Through playing, watching, and participating, they are gradually guided, constrained, and even reshaped in how they perceive the world. For this reason, when players from different cultural backgrounds encounter the same media work, they do not experience a single, unified cultural content. Instead, they encounter different experiential outcomes produced by the same set of media mechanisms.

In this sense, I am not seeking to defend any particular cultural position, nor am I attempting to judge whether specific evaluations are right or wrong. What matters more is to clarify how these conflicts and divergences are produced. An analysis of the structure of media experience reveals that many disputes that appear to be about cultural understanding in fact stem from misalignments between different modes of experience.

This perspective not only helps explain the controversies surrounding *Black Myth: Wukong*, but also offers a way of approaching a wider range of intercultural media phenomena. Rather than repeatedly asking what a work is trying to express, it may be more productive to ask what the medium enables people to experience, and how those experiences are rendered difficult to align with one another.

Bibliography

Book

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Campbell, J. (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chow, R. (1995) *Primitive passions: Visuality, sexuality, ethnography, and contemporary Chinese cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dong, L. (2011) *Mulan's legend and legacy in China and the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt.

Han, T. (2024) *Miaojie Xiyouji [A Detailed Interpretation of Journey to the West]*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Phoenix Literature and Art Publishing House.

Hall, E. T. (1976) *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding', in *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

- Iwabuchi, K. (2002) *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1969) *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: Vol. 9 pt. 1. Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (2nd ed., R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1919)
- Liu, Z. (1999) *Farewell to Revolution: Aesthetic Reflections on Chinese Literature*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mitter, R. (2014) *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murray, J. (1997) *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. New York: The Free Press.
- Maté, G. (2010) *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. Toronto: Knopf.
- Nietzsche, F. (1954) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press.
- Painter, J. (2014) *Climate change in the media: Reporting risk and uncertainty*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Ritzer, G. (2019) *The McDonaldization of society: Into the digital age*. 9th edn.
Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Said, E. W. (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Salen, K. and Zimmerman, E. (2004) *Rules of Play: Game Design
Fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Yu, A.C. (2012) *The Monkey King: Journey to the West*. Revised Edition.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zong, B. (2020) *Zong Baihua talks about aesthetics*. Chengdu: Chengdu
Fine Arts Publishing House.

Zhang, Y. (2004) *Chinese national cinema*. London: Routledge.

Journal Article

Birrell, A. (1993) *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Davé, S. (2005) *Apu's brown voice: Cultural inflections of race and voice*, *Television & New Media*, 6(4), pp. 313–339. (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Gao, Y. (2025) *Global Reception of "Black Myth: Wukong" as a Vehicle for Chinese Cultural Identity and International Media Flows*. SAGE Journals. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20594364251385203> (Accessed: 5 February 2026).

Janssen, S., Kristensen, N.N., Verboord, M., Marquart, F. and Lamberti, G. (2024) *Europeans' digital cultural participation: Diversification, democratization, barriers, and affordances*, *International Journal of Communication*, 18, pp. 4031–4096. Available at: <http://ijoc.org> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Smyth, E. (2020) *Arts and cultural participation among 17-year-olds*. ESRI Research Series 103. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/249084> (Accessed 10 Jan. 2026).

Website

BBC News. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong: Chinese video game draws global attention*, live news page. BBC News. Available at:
<https://www.bbc.com/news/live/cjr4pq0epr4t> (Accessed: 5 February 2026).

Baidu Baike. (2025a) *six senses*. Baidu Baike. Available at:
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%85%AD%E6%A0%B9/96112> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Baidu Baike. (2025b) *six sense objects*. Baidu Baike. Available at:
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%85%AD%E5%B0%98/412675> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Baidu Baike. (2025c) *the Five Skandhas*. Baidu Baike. Available at:
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%BA%94%E8%95%B4/727943#1>
(Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Baidu Baike. (2025d) *the Five Skandhas and six sense objects*. Baidu Baike.
Available at:
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%BA%94%E8%95%B4%E5%85%AD%E5%B0%98/11030082?fr=aladdin> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Eul Basa. (2024) *Everything Disney got wrong about Mulan*. TheShot.
Available at: <https://www.theshot.com/movies/everything-disney-got-wrong->

about-mulan (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Eurostat. (2019) *Outbound tourism trips from selected European countries to China*. Eurostat. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Eurostat. (2021) *Outbound tourism trips from selected European countries to China*. Eurostat. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Eurostat. (2023) *Outbound tourism trips from selected European countries to China*. Eurostat. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Game Science. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong*. Game Science. Available at: <https://gamesci.cn/wukong/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Game World Observer. (2024a) *Black Myth: Wukong revenue reaches \$850 million on Steam*. Game World Observer. Available at: <https://gameworldobserver.com/2024/09/03/black-myth-wukong-revenue-850-million-steam> (Accessed: October 2025).

Game World Observer. (2024b) *Black Myth: Wukong reaches 1.4 million CCU, becoming the 2th biggest game on Steam*. Game World Observer.

Available at: <https://gameworldobserver.com/2024/08/20/black-myth-wukong-1-4-million-ccu-4th-biggest-steam-game> (Accessed: October 2025).

Game World Observer. (2025) *Black Myth: Wukong surpasses 25 million copies sold, boosted by merchandise sales in China*. Game World Observer. Available at: <https://gameworldobserver.com/2025/01/31/black-myth-wukong-25m-copies-sold-merchandise-china> (Accessed: October 2025).

GameRant. (2025) *Black Myth: Wukong total sales as of January 2025*. GameRant. Available at: <https://gamerant.com/black-myth-wukong-total-sales-january-2025> (Accessed: October 2025).

Game Science. (2020) *Black Myth: Wukong – Official YouTube channel*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@BlackMythGame> (Accessed: 5 February 2026).

GameSpot. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong transformations guide*. Available at: <https://www.gamespot.com/gallery/black-myth-wukong-transformations-guide/2900-5704/> (Accessed: 5 February 2026).

Hwag79. (2025) *Please explain the relationship between the six sense organs, six sense objects, six consciousnesses, and the five aggregates in Buddhist philosophy*. Baidu Wenku. Available at: <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/40b8b52eae51f01dc281e53a580216fc710a5384.html> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

IGN. (2024) *How Black Myth: Wukong developers' history of sexism is complicating its Journey to the West*. IGN. Available at: <https://www.ign.com/articles/how-black-myth-wukong-developers-history-of-sexism-is-complicating-its-journey-to-the-west> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China. (2025) *Shanxi launches "Travel Shanxi with Wukong" cultural tourism campaign*. Available at: https://www.mct.gov.cn/whzx/qgwhxxlb/sx/202501/t20250113_957810.htm (Accessed: 11 February 2026).

One Esports. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong sets new player count records*. One Esports. Available at: <https://www.oneesports.gg/gaming/black-myth-wukong-player-count-record/> (Accessed: October 2025).

Pew Research Center. (2023) *China's approach to foreign policy gets largely negative reviews in 24-country survey*. Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/27/chinas-approach-to-foreign-policy-gets-largely-negative-reviews-in-24-country-survey/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Polygon. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong breaks Steam records*. Polygon. Available at: <https://www.polygon.com/> (Accessed: October 2025).

SteamDB. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong player statistics*. SteamDB. Available at: <https://steamdb.info/app/2358720/charts/> (Accessed: October 2025).

Steam Community. (2024) *Chinese ask foreign players: Why do you pay attention to Black Myth Wukong?* Steam. Available at: <https://steamcommunity.com/app/2358720/discussions/0/4426562258567815033/> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Steam Community. (2025a) *User reviews for Black Myth: Wukong*. Steam. Available at: <https://steamcommunity.com/app/2358720/reviews/> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Steam Community. (2025b) *User reviews for Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*. Steam. Available at: <https://steamcommunity.com/app/814380/reviews/> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Steam Community. (2025c) *User reviews for Elden Ring*. Steam. Available at: https://steamcommunity.com/app/1245620/reviews/?browsefilter=toprated&sr=1_5_100010_ (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

ScreenRant. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong Review: The Soulslike Action Hype Train Is A Little Off-Rails*. ScreenRant. Available at: <https://screenrant.com/black-myth-wukong-review/> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Smol_Cyclist. (2024) *And so my Journey to the West begins*.

r/BlackMythWukong. Available at:

https://www.reddit.com/r/BlackMythWukong/comments/1f3wagf/and_so_my_journey_to_the_west_begins/ (Accessed: 11 February 2026).

VideoGamer. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong – How to turn into a cicada*.

Available at: <https://www.videogamer.com/guides/black-myth-wukong-how-to-turn-into-cicada/> (Accessed: 5 February 2026).

Wikipedia. (2025) *Monkey (TV series)*. Wikipedia. Available at:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monkey_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monkey_(TV_series)) (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Xinhua. (2021) *Spiritual Opium Has Grown into a Hundred-Billion-Yuan*

Industry. People's Daily Online. Available at:

<http://gd.people.com.cn/GB/n2/2021/0803/c123932-34850354.html>
(Accessed: 10 January 2026).

Xinhua. (2024) *Foreign Ministry spokesperson comments on Black Myth:*

Wukong. Available at:

<https://www.news.cn/20241218/566d3e6e472c41e3b1550526869aa923/c.html>
(Accessed: 11 February 2026).

Online Video

Asmongold TV. (2024) *Black Myth Wukong's Ending Changed My Life*

[Online video]. YouTube. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjOKCHVaV1E> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Black Myth. (2020) *Black Myth: Wukong - 13 Minutes Official Gameplay Trailer* [Online video]. YouTube. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRLhCx886o> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).

BaiWeiFenCheng. (2024) *Black Myth: Wukong True Ending Animation - Incomplete* [Online video]. Bilibili. Available at:

<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1ERWMerEiw/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

CCTV News. (2024) *[Face to Face: Exclusive Interview with Feng Ji:*

Retracing the Journey to the West] [Online video]. Bilibili. Available at:

<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1ex2rYFETb/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Gamker Gongke. (2024) *What is the greatest significance of "Black Myth: Wukong" for Chinese games?* [Online video]. Bilibili. Available at:

<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1fnHReYEok/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

HANsoA-KevinO. (2024) *[True Ending Complete] Pure Story Cinematic Aspect Ratio, Panoramic Ray Tracing, Highest Quality "Black Myth: Wukong" Movie Cut* [Online video]. Bilibili. Available at:
<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1X5WoeAEpN/> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

MKIceAndFire. (2024) *BLACK MYTH WUKONG Gameplay Walkthrough FULL GAME [4K 60FPS] - No Commentary* [Online video]. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4DFKOlRXCQ> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

The Act Man. (2024) *The REAL Problem With Black Myth: Wukong* [Online video]. YouTube. Available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjOKCHVaV1E> (Accessed: 8 January 2026).

Zackrawrr. (2024) *Twitch channel*. [Online video]. Twitch. Available at:
<https://www.twitch.tv/zackrawrr> (Accessed: 10 January 2026).