

**THE RELEVANCE OF ‘THE MONKEY KING 3’ FILM TO THE
BUDDHIST CHARACTERS
(A Semiotics Study)**

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ABSTRAK

Sebuah film dapat menjadi sebuah media untuk mengekspresikan perasaan dan mewakili kehidupan atau cerita nyata. Salah satu film yang mengandung banyak pelajaran dan nilai kehidupan adalah ‘Monkey King 3’. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) mengetahui makna dari tanda dan (2) mendeskripsikan kaitan film ‘Monkey King 3’ terhadap karakter umat Buddha. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik analisis semiotika dari Ferdinand de Saussure. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) tanda ditemukan dalam bentuk verbal dan non-verbal. Masing-masing tanda menyampaikan makna dan nilai yang penting seperti konsep *dukkha*, *metta*, *nibbana*, kejujuran, pelayanan dan juga menggambarkan kemampuan manusia mengatasi akar kejahatan. (2) Kaitan dengan karakter umat Buddha ditunjukkan melalui lima kualitas yang harus dimiliki untuk menjadi umat Buddha dan manusia: *saddhā*, *sīla*, *cāga*, *suta*, dan *paññā*
Kata kunci : Semiotika, Film, Karakter Buddhis

ABSTRACT

A Film could be a medium to express the feeling and represent the real life and the story. One of valuable film contains many life lessons and values are ‘Monkey King 3’. This research aims to: (1) find out the meaning of signs and (2) describe the relevance of The Monkey King 3 film to Buddhist characters. This study employs the analysis technique refers to the semiotics theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The results of this research show that (1)The Signs can be found on verbal and nonverbal signs. Those signs deliver important meanings and values: the concept of *dukkha*, *metta*, nirvana, honesty, service and also depicts the ability of a man to conquer the root of evil, *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*. (2)The Relevance to the Buddhist Characters is presented through the five qualities to be a good Buddhist and human: *saddhā*, *sīla*, *cāga*, *suta*, and *paññā*.

Keywords: Semiotic, Film, Buddhist Characters



Introduction

Film has been growing to be an interesting industry for the people who want to express their creative thought and skill. Most of the film creators consider that film could be a media to share their ideas and opinions. Like drama, the film communicates visually and verbally, through action and gesture, and verbally through dialogue. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie's says in their book "The Art of Watching Film"(2018:2), Film is a unique art production and has a strong influence toward its viewer because it combines paint, technology, music, literature and drama, and becomes interesting to be watched.

Additionally, Dennis (1985: 2) says a film can be visual images (perhaps in color), words that are spoken and occasionally written (as in signs or a letter shown in a close-up), background music, actors in costumes, and setting, and other means by which the medium of cinema conveys emotions and ideas to an audience. Film could become a medium to express the feeling, some of the cineastes make a film that they have an interest in it. The film could be interpreted as a moving picture that conducts color, sound, and also a story. Furthermore, many films represent the real life, and the story in the film may be

representing the real story from any people in the world.

One of valuable film which contains many life lessons, values and of course representing the real life is 'Monkey King 3'. It was produced in 2018. This film tells about the struggle of a Monk and his disciples to reach the west to find Holy Scriptures. This third series shows the adventure of them in the woman land. There are many signs can be found in this movie through words, images, gestures, objects etc.

The signs are very close related to the Buddhist teaching due to this is Buddhist film nuance. It is not produced for amusement only but also contains Buddhist philosophy and teachings. The teachings of the Buddha is vast and comprehensive, it covers many things in life. It also contains the teaching of having good personality. The Buddhists should have the five qualities to be a good Buddhist and a good human. The qualities are faith (saddhā), morality (sīla), generosity (cāga), learning or hearing (suta), and wisdom (paññā) (Anguttaranikaya.III.80).

A good Buddhist who has own the five qualities can help his country and nation to develop. He will hold tight the goodness value. Human beings are not free from values, without moral values unable to live a better life.



Knowledge is also not value-free, where knowledge is the result of human thought in certain situations and conditions built by a set of values. He will avoid the evil deeds, such as corruption.

Those kinds of values can be revealed through semiotics study. Daniel Chandler (2007: 2) defines semiotics, as signs which take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. According to Umberto Eco (1986:7), semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. So, we can conclude that anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying', something-referring to or standing for something other than itself. It means, every existing thing in our life is looked as a sign that is something that we should give them meaning.

In order to get the meaning expressed in the film, analyzing and understanding the signs in the film are not easy as we predict, but we can use a semiotic approach. Sobur in Gumono (2017: 79) state that semiotics is a science or method to analyze signs. According to Eco (1986: 7), semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign.

As explained above the semiotics study and film is an interesting works, where the deep values and

meanings hidden in an art work can be revealed and presented to people. Thus it can be learnt and practiced in daily life as a part of good human characters to be a better life. This research aims to: (1) find out the meaning of signs in 'The Monkey King 3' film and (2) describe the relevance of 'The Monkey King 3' film to Buddhist characters.

Semiotics

The word "Semiotics" is derived from the Greek "Semion" which means sign. Chandler (2007) states that semiotics could be anything which has relation with signs. It is not only in the form of objects or things, but words, images, sound, and gestures are also considered as "signs". Muzakki (2007) tells that semiotics is a branch of sciences that considers culture, society and social phenomena as signs. It studies about correlation of signs and the community who use those signs.

Chandler (2007) proposes the importance of studying semiotics, it is about the information and meanings of something do not come directly from the things, but we create those meanings based on the certain convention and codes although usually we do not deliberately aware of those codes. We learn from semiotics that we live in the world which is full of signs and we have no way of anything except through sign



and codes where they are organized. Through semiotics study, we realize a lot of signs and codes that usually are transparent and need deep understanding to know the real message of those signs or codes. Besides, we also learn that even the most realistic signs are not what they look like. They can have explicit meanings so that we should interpret those signs to know what they are actually meant.

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that semiotics has close relation with signs which is useful to understand explicit meaning of signs. Therefore, semiotics is used by the writer as the guideline of this study to analyze the all results based on research problems.

Saussure proposes a model of sign called dyadic or two-part model of signs. He classifies the sign into two elements which represent a material element, signifier, and an abstract or conceptual element, signified. In other words it can be described that the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers.

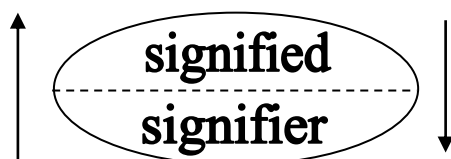


Figure 1. Saussurean Model of the sign (Source: Chandler, 2007, 14)

Saussurean diagram is called ‘Signification’ which shows the relationship between the signified and the signifier. The relationship in this diagram is represented by the two arrows in the left and right. The two elements of sign, signified and signifier, are divided by the horizontal line which is called ‘the bar’. Signifier is something that is in the form of material or physical, so that it can be seen, touched, smelt or tasted. Signified is in form of concept, so it is abstract. The concept comes to people’s mind when they see, hear, smell, or taste certain thing. Saussure states that the bound between signified and signifier is purely physiological, and the sign is the whole result of the association or interpretation of the signified and the signifier. However, there is no logical reason why a certain word can represent or describe the two elements.

The semiotics model of Saussure is adapted to this study. Then, this study focuses more on symbol. Symbol is interesting because it is absolutely arbitrary and convention. It means that there will be differences in understanding the meaning of the same symbol in the different society. It is not the same with index which has



connection directly to the signified. It is also pretty different from icon which imitates the signified. That is why the symbol should be learnt before to know the meaning and the relationship between signifier and signified.

Film

Film is life pictures commonly called movies or cinema. Cinema itself comes from words *kinematic* or motion. Film (cinema) is a cinematographic derived from *cinema* + *tho* = *phytos* (light) + *graphie* (writing, image), so the meaning is to paint motion with light. In order to paint motion with light, we use a special tool commonly called a camera. While according to Joseph V Maschelli in Anggriani (2016: 178), structurally film is formed from many shots, scenes, and sequences.

In English, the word film is also known as movies (from the word move) meaning motion pictures. Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie's said in their book "The Art of Watching Film" (2018: 2), the film is a unique art production and has a strong influence toward its viewer because it combines paint, technology, music, literature and drama, and becomes interesting to be watched.

Danesi (2010: 134) in his book entitled *Semiotika Media* stated that in the level of signifier, film is a text

makes a series of photographic images and generates the illusion of motion and action in real life. Whereas in the level of signified, film is a reflection of metaphorical life. It clearly explain that the topic raised in a film can be used as a discussion topic for semiotics because in film there is a 'signification' system. Besides film brings enjoyments and entertainments, the signs in film can also bring the meaningful value or lesson, inspiration, and also insight to people life.

Further Ardianto (2007: 143) explained that through a film, information can be consumed deeply because the form of film is audio-visual media. This media is popular and has ability to reach every social segment. Nowadays many studies related to film have been conducted due to its potential to influence audiences. As the media of communication, film is divided into some types and genres. Based on Danesi (2010:134) film can be categorized into three main categories, namely:

1. Feature film: it is works of fiction, whose structure is always in the form of narration. It is made in three stages: preproduction stage, production stage and post-production stage (editing).



2. Documentary film, it is a nonfiction film that describes a real life situation where each individual describing his feelings and experiences in the situation as it was, without preparation, directly to the camera or interviewer.
3. Animated film, it is a film with the use of motion illusion techniques and a series of images in two or three dimension.

Monkey King 3 (2018)

The Monkey King 3 is an action adventure film from China. It is directed by Cheang Pou-soi. The script is written by Wen Ning. It is produced by Ko Film Productions Limited and Ko Film Pictures, released on February 16, 2018. It based on a classic novel ' Journey to the west' by Wu Cheng en.

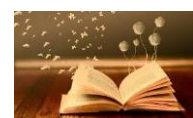
The Monkey King 3 film tells a story of the thrilling adventure of a monk, Tang Sanzan, went to west who was escorted Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing in trying to find the Holy Scripture. Inadvertently, they entered the land of women from West Liang. The country was very mysterious and frightening, where there were only women, there was not even a man who lives there. Until finally, they met the Queen who immediately fell in love

with the Monk. Even though she thought she would be hit by a powerful curse that would not be cured.

The advisor of the womenland then reminded the queen that men are very poisonous poisons. After that, she ordered his troops to destroy the Monk and his disciples. However, with the help of the queen, they all managed to escape from the execution place. In a hideout, the monk, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing accidentally consumed water from motherly rivers. This made their stomach grew bigger, like a pregnant person. With his powerful magic power, Wukong tried to save all three.

The attitude of the monk gradually began to return to normal after being dominated by the feeling of falling in love with the Queen. The infiltration carried out by them finally made the river god angry. The anger was out of control which peace became disturbed because of the wrath of the River God. His anger is out of control again, resulting in the Women Kingdom at risk of total destruction.

At the end the monkey king, Sun Wu Kong, with the help of the Buddha can overcame the destruction from the anger of the river god. Then the four of them left the woman kingdom and continued the journey to the west.



Buddhist Characters

Thomas Lickona emphasizes three components of a good character, namely, moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action. There are so needed by children to understand, feel, and do the goodness value. Moral knowledge includes moral awareness, knowledge of moral values, perspectives determination, moral thinking, decision making, and personal knowledge. Moral feelings include conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving goodness, self-control, and humble. While moral actions include competencies, desires, and habits (Chasanah, 2013: 84)

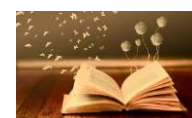
Personal character is shaped by values, and fosters the spirit of ideal inspirational values, The Buddhists should have the five qualities as the Lord Buddha often conveys about the character of his disciples, whether they are monks or householders. Five qualities are faith (*saddhā*), morality (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), learning or hearing (*suta*), and wisdom (*paññā*) (A.III.80). Human beings are not free from values, without moral values unable to live a better life. Knowledge is also not value-free, where knowledge is the result of human thought in certain situations and conditions built by a set of values. According to talks with Prince Abhaya, the Buddha conveyed only

things that were true, rational, beneficial or well-intentioned, and in the right time. It did not matter whether it was pleasant or unpleasant (M.I, 395).

The good Buddhists should manage their behavior based on the consideration of benefits or good as the Buddha's teachings. Even in their speech, the Buddha said "Better than a thousand useless words is one useful word, hearing which one attains peace" (Dh. 100). The Buddha compared what he had taught with a handful of *sinsapa* leaves, while the Buddha's knowledge was as many as leaves in the forest. What is a handful or a little can be grasped is important knowledge because it is needed to navigate the sacred life. However, to master the handful of teachings, people must learn a lot. "People who only learn a little will grow old like bulls. The flesh increases, but the wisdom does not develop" (Dh. 152).

Methods

This study is a qualitative research because the primary instrument of this research is the researcher himself. Ary et al (2014: 424) states that "in qualitative studies, the human investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data". Thus, the researcher collected and analyzed the data by himself. In line



with it, Milles and Huberman (2013) describe that the qualitative data are usually in the form of words rather than number and in the past decade, it is used not only in social fields such as History, Anthropology, and Political Science, but also in Linguistics, Sociology, Educational research, etc. Qualitative research more widely used for studying documents in form of texts, pictures, symbols, and so on to understand the culture of a particular social context (Moelong, 2010 :5).

There are primary and secondary data source in this study. The primary source of data is taken from the film of Monkey King 3 (2018). While the secondary source of data is data from books, journals, articles, online sources and so on which related to the application of semiotics theory and also to support and complete the primary data of this study.

There are several processes in collecting the data for this study: observation, interview, and documentation. This study employ the analysis technique refers to the semiotics theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, considering that language is a semiotic system that conveys thoughts in the form of sounds and referred to this system as a combination of the representament and object of which the

form and concept of a meaning is defined as the signifier and the signified, respectively (Saussure, 2011).

Results

The signs in the Monkey King 3 Film are grouped into two main group verbal signs and nonverbal signs. The verbal signs are derived from conversations or utterances of the casts in the film while the nonverbal signs divided into some categories: 1) figure, 2) animal, 3) nature and tradition, 4) gesture.

Meanings of Signs in Monkey King 3 Film

1. Verbal Signs

a. 'he e'

This expression is uttered by Xuanzang, the monk. It occurs when the Queen and her friends were just (accidentally) attacked by the Monk and his disciples but she did not saw the attackers, then ask the monk:

Queen : we were just attacked

Monk: he e (nodding)

Queen: so you did it?

Monk: **he e** (almost nodding)

Disciples: hemm hemm (as if coughing)

Wu Kong: We didn't do it

'he e' expression together with the gesture of nodding can be interpreted as approval to the statement or the question from the queen. However, Wu Kong and other disciples deny it. They try to save their teacher and the situation



where they are in unfavorable condition and also need some helps from the Queen. Xuanzang as a Monk is bounded by many rules and used to act honestly so he does not try to avoid what he has done. Therefore, the expression 'he e' can be considered as a sign. It symbolizes honesty, integrity, morality, and the obedience to rules.

Buddhism has morality rules called *pancasila* for lay people and *patimokha sila* or *Pratimoksha sila* for monks. *Pratimoksha sila* consist of more than two hundreds rules. The rules cover rules on eating, speaking, taking a bath and soon, to make the monks stay upholding their morality. It also emphasizes on maintaining honesty in many ways whether in thoughts, words and deeds.

b. 'because I miss you, it must be cured'

The expression 'because I miss you, it must be cured' is produced by the Queen to Xuanzang. Based on the book of *Womenland's Ancestor*, a man is the number one poison among all poisons. By only seeing him the disease can come to the woman. This meaningful word carries an expression of heart that the Queen actually falls in love to Xuanzang. This love is not 'the real love' or in *Womanland ancestor* words called 'love poison'. It is why, Xuanzang said 'no', when the Queen

asked 'do you miss me?'. Xuanzang never experiences this kind of love that time. He only knows that his love is universal love for all beings to help them find happiness and end the sufferings live in this world. It also becomes the main reason for Xuanzang to take a journey to India, finding the Holy Scripture.

The 'unreal' love should be cured as soon as possible. It suffers the people who experience it. The queen knows that it is wrong but she still keeps the feeling which makes her increasingly poisoned by love. In *Dhammapada* verse 210 stated that do not associate with those who are dear, and never with those who are not dear to you; not seeing the dear ones is painful, and seeing those who are not dear to you is also painful. Then in *Dhammapada* verse 213 stated that from love arises sadness, from love arises fear, for people who have been free from love there is no sadness and fear anymore. It is clear that the love explained in *Dhammapada* is the 'unreal' love which leads to suffering.

In Buddhism the concept of universal love is called *Metta*. This kind of love should be for all sentient beings as stated in *Sutta Nipata* verse 146 – 147 'Whatever there may be with breath of life, whether they be frail or



very strong, without exception, be they long or short, or middle-sized, or be big or small, or dense, or visible or invisible, or whether they dwell far or they dwell near, those that are here, those seeking to exist, may beings be happy.

c. 'when I was young, the abbot in the temple told me to copy the scriptures when I was upset as I improved my handwriting, my mind would be pacified'.

Xuanzang upset because he believes that he is pregnant after consuming water from motherly rivers, he wants to give a birth his child but Wukong give him medicine water so his pregnancy is aborted. Then he take a dry twig soon write the *sutras* on the ground and said 'when I was young, the abbot in the temple told me to copy the scriptures when I was upset as I improved my handwriting, my mind would be pacified'. It symbolizes the self-control.

Dhammapada verse 24 stated that 'If a person is energetic, mindful, pure in his thought, word and deed, and if he does everything with care and consideration, have self-control, earns his living according to *Dhamma* and is not unheedful, then, the fame and fortune of that mindful person steadily increase'. The ability of taking self-control support the happy live. There are five ways to maintain the self-

control as described by lord Buddha in the *Visuddhimagga* : 1) Self-control through morality (*sila-saṃvara*): controlling the word and deed according to morality rules or society disciplines. 2) Self-control through consciousness (*sati-saṃvara*): maintaining mind awareness at all times, so that it is not easily carried away by evil desires, greed lust, and hatred when seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking. 3) Self-control through insight (*ñāna-saṃvara*): contemplating the life as it is. Contemplating the basic needs and and the real purpose of using it, so as not to be dragged down by greedy desires. 4) Self-control through patience (*khanti-saṃvara*): maintaining patience when faced with hunger, illness, upset, disorders (such as insects), insults, and other unpleasant experiences. 5) Self-control through effort or enthusiasm (*virīya-saṃvara*) : Attempting to eliminate the evil thought.

d. 'In the next life'

The expression 'in the next life' appears twice in the film of *Monkey King 3*. First when Xuanzang and the Queen are on the boat in the middle of *Suffering Sea*. They were starving and dying. Xuanzang was afraid cannot show the human life outside the *Womanland*. Second, in the last section of the film, at the gate, Xuanzang and



his disciples leave the Womenland. The Queen takes Xuanzang to the gate. When Wukong said ‘see you.. oh no, we won’t meet again’ to the Queen. Xuanzang said ‘in the next life’.

‘in the next life’ expression shows that both of them still have a wish to meet each other in better condition. It also conveys that they believe in the Buddhism’s concept of reincarnation and *punarbhava*, the concept of life after the death. It is not impossible for them to make their wish come true because in Buddhism there are so many kind of life outside this world. If their *kamma* mutually support they can life together in the next life. The Buddhist believe all being will be born and born repeatedly as long as they cannot reach *nibbana/nirvana* yet. Thus The expression ‘in the next life’ represent the concept.

- e. **‘there is also a sea of suffering out there, but on that sea, everyone is an island, everyone is on the drift.’**

Xuanzang and the Queen are on the boat in the middle of Suffering Sea. They were starving and dying. The Queen asked ‘what is it like outside the Womanland?. Then Xuanzang answered ‘there is also a sea of suffering out there, but on that sea, everyone is an island, everyone is on the drift.’ The phrase ‘a sea of suffering’ intended by Xuanzang

is not the real sea which contain water. It represents the concept of *dukkha* (suffering). The suffering in *dukkha* concept is suffering that come out from someone's dissatisfaction of something and inability to accept any change. However, *Dhamma* do not only explains about the existence of *dukkha*, it also explains the causes of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the path to end *dukkha* which are commonly called the Four Noble Truths (*cattari ariya sacca*). Thus the human being can be free from suffering in the end.

The ‘island’ in the Xuanzang utterance also symbolizes a state that is free from all defilements which are the cause of suffering. This state called *nirvana*, it is not a place but the highest happiness, an extraordinary state of eternal happiness. While the inner defilements usually called greed (*Lobha*), hatred (*Dosa*), and Ignorance (*Moha*). Someone who can overcome those defilements will free from any suffering appears form birth, old age, illness, death, pain, lamentation and despair. Everyone can attain *Nirvana* similar with the expression of xuanzang ‘everyone is an island (but) everyone is (still) on the drift’. The ‘drift’ means the cycle of *samsara*, the beginningless cycle of repeated birth, mundane existence and dying again.



- f. **‘Xuanzang, in this world you can only let go of the things you have never owned. Will you choose to love one person or all sentient beings?’**

Xuanzang is in the middle of confusions and anxieties, so he asks for suggestion from Kwan Im goddess. The goddess of mercy gives him an advice, she said ‘Xuanzang, in this world you can only let go of the **things you have never owned**. Will you choose to love one person or all sentient beings?. The phrase ‘things you have never owned’ implies the status of Xuanzang as a monk and his mission to find the scriptures in the west. It can be interpreted as ‘unreal love’, the love only for one person. The monk should not own this kind of feeling. He lives in celibacy and bound to the strict rules. Then the goddess asked ‘Will you choose to love one person or all sentient beings?’, this question give a chance for Xuanzang to rethink and contemplate about the main reasons of taking journey so far.

2. Non-Verbal Sign

The nonverbal sign has four categories, they are : 1) figure, 2) animal, 3) nature and tradition, 4) gesture.

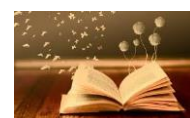
A. Figure

- 1) Xuanzang



Picture 1. Xuanzang

Xuanzang is a Chinese Buddhist monk who pilgrims to India in order to find the Holy Scripture. He faces many obstacles along the way to his destination, but he fights the condition and overcomes all the obstacles. Xuanzang actually represents a general human being who experiences sickness, disappointment, sadness, and soon. Sometimes he also doubts in making some decisions and is tempted to the worldliness live. However, he can manage and control himself and also never give up learning from wise people. This attitude makes him always can overcome problems and be out of any troubles. He implements *silā* firmly and holds tightly the Middle Way and also strives hard for the happiness of all beings.



2) Zhu Bajie



Picture 2. Zhu Bajie

Zhu Bajie is a disciple of Xuanzang who has posture like a Pig. He has various worldly desires and greed. He eats a lot, typically a pig, and he also crazy of woman. He often cannot hold his desire to love and admire beautiful women. He actually symbolize one of the defilements which also a root of evil conduct, it is called *Lobha* (greed). The characteristic of *lobha* is willing to have properties of others, never satisfied to what already owned, seeking pleasure continuously, and anything is taken to fulfill desire from all senses: eyes, ears, mouth, nose, skin.

3) Sun Wukong



Picture 3. Sun Wukong

Sun Wukong is a disciple of Xuanzang who accompany him to the

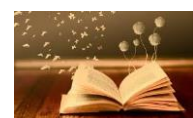
West. He is very strong and ferocious who always ready to rescue his teacher in every bad situation. He is very wild and easy to get angry, his anger is hard to control, except his teacher. He likes to fight with the demon who impede their journey. His characteristics also represent the human's defilement called *Dosa* (hatred). *Dosa* or hatred is the roots of evils, keeping the feeling of dislike, suspicious, afraid, anxious, worry, grudge and so on in mind. It can be likened to a burning fire point, and if it is not immediately extinguished it will become a greater fire, so that it can damage everything, in this case it damages mind, physical and mental health.

4) Sa Wujing



Picture 4. Sa Wujing

Sa Wujing is the youngest disciples of Xuanzang, he was a god but he lost his wisdom. Therefore, he is not smart and late thinker. He is always dependent to other disciples, weak almost in everything, and a slow learner. This characters depict the other root of



evil is *Moha* (Ignorance). The *Moha* is ignorance. The notion of ignorance or stupidity here is not about the inability to write, read or in technology, but the ignorance here means the inner stupidity. It is unable to distinguish good deeds to be implemented and evil deeds that should be abandoned. The actions tend to be evil things because of the ignorance. The people who has *moha* considers crimes are natural. *Moha* also includes laziness in conducting virtues, selfishness, imperious, arrogance, and hypocrisy.

5) Queen of Womanland

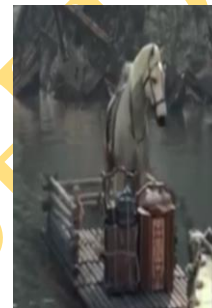
The Queen of Womanland Kindom is a beautiful lady who rules the Kingdom. She is an orphanage after the death of her mother. She never meets any man before until at one time she met Xuanzang and his disciples accidentally. After the meeting, the Queen is interested in Xuanzang and fall in love with him. In the context of this film and the journey to the west, the Queen symbolizes an obstacle which has to be overcome to continue to the main purpose, Scripture. Besides, The queen also means as a shackle toward Xuanzang. The love of the Queen almost shackles him to forget his main purpose. The queen offers the worldliness lust that hard to be refused.



Picture 5. Queen of Womanland

B. Animal

1) White Horse



Picture 6. White Horse

A white horse always accompanied Xuanzang in the journey to the west. Eberhard (2006: 178) said that in the great Ming novel ‘Journey to the West’ (Xi-you ji) we find the expression yi-ma = ‘horse of the will’, as a metaphor for willfulness and inconstancy. The ‘willfulness’ conveys the strong will of Xuanzang to find scripture although he knows that it is very difficult. How far and difficult it is, he determined to conquer it. The white horse which often appears in Buddhist texts stands for purity and loyalty Eberhard (2006: 178). Besides, the white horse also represents the teaching.



2) White Deer

In this film the white deer is the mount of the queen. The deer in Chinese culture has special meaning. Because of the exact phonetic equivalence of 'lu' means deer to 'lu' means good income, the deer symbolizes riches. More frequently, the deer is a symbol for longevity (Eberhard 2006: 93). Therefore it can be interpreted that the deer in this film as the mount shows the status of Queen herself as a ruler of a kingdom.



Picture 7. White Deer

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status of Queen herself as a ruler of a kingdom.

C. Nature and tradition

1) Cutting Hair Tradition



Picture 8. Cutting Hair Tradition

The people of Womanland perform the cutting hair ritual to save the life of their Queen. The shaman recites the *mantras* to beg the assistance of ancestor.

'dear Ancestor, our people in the womanland will cut off our hair to weave it into an everlight lamp. We beg our Ancestor could save Her Majesty. The everlight lamp must burn till the end. Only then will Her Majesty have the chance to wake up'

The tradition or ritual can be interpreted as a sacrifice of all people in Womanland to their beloved queen. Hair is a crown for women, but they do not hesitate to sacrifice this valuable thing. It shows that the people of womanland love more their kingdom rather than their own property. This tradition conveys a sincerity sacrifice.



2) Sea of Suffering

Sea of suffering is described as a vast ocean with a gloomy situation and without any edges. There is no way back from this sea. Once setting off, it will be drifting for a lifetime. No one has ever made it out alive. The water tastes bitter, it makes anyone thirstier by consuming it.



Picture 9. Sea of Suffering Condition

This sea actually symbolizes the life fact about the suffering on every human being. The all beings will experience sufferings continuously before overcoming the roots of evil, *lobha, dosa, moha* (greed, hatred, ignorance). It represents the concept of *dukkha* (suffering). The suffering in *dukkha* concept is suffering that come out from someone's dissatisfaction of something and inability to accept any change. However, *Dhamma* do not only explains about the existence of *dukkha*, it also explains the causes of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the path to end *dukkha* which are commonly called the Four Noble Truths (*cattari ariya sacca*). Thus the human being can be free from suffering in the end.

D. Gesture

1) Kneeling



Picture 10. Xuanzang Kneels to Kwan Im

The gesture of kneeling in this film is performed by Xuanzang. He kneels to the Kwan Im or the goddess of mercy. Kneeling in Buddhism called *Namaskara*, it is a kind of homage based on full resignation. The meaning of this gesture is 'to whom I respect, I offer my soul and body; I open both of my hands to beg for your blessings, guidance and teachings. I tap my palms as the sign I receive your teachings and blessings. I turn my palms and go back, sticking to the floor to declare I am ready to hold it as guidelines for my daily life. In short *namaskara* or kneeling symbolizes the homage to the respected one to absorb the teaching, guidance, and blessing. In this film, Mercy goddess guides Xuanzang to contemplate about love.



2) Meditating



Picture 11. Meditating posture

Xuanzang uses the gesture of meditating when he was drowned in the water. He saw many death bodies in the water then he united both of his palms in the *Anjali* posture and closed his eyes. In full concentration, he communicated with Buddha ‘Buddha, they are drowning in the sea of sufferings. Please advise how I should give them salvation.’ Through the deep contemplation he found the wisdom about love that made him fully doubtless on his choice to return his journey to the west. He said ‘Love is the reason we were born in this world with endless reincarnation but the love we fully understand at last can be everlasting. I learned from this love that love for a person or the world is sheer the same’. In short, the meditating gesture symbolizes an inner communication, the communication with oneself and to the most absolute to find wisdom.

3) Robe wearing.

The cassock or robe is the cloth worn by monk. On a scene in this film the monk Xuanzang cannot wear his cassock. It cannot get attached and fall down whenever it tried to be worn. This is related to the Mercy goddess speech in the scene before. She said ‘remember, the day you put on your cassock again is when you resume the journey to the west’.



Picture 12. Robe wearing

Then, in the next few scenes Xuanzang wears the cassock with the help of the Queen. It is attached properly after he understands what the love is. He is back as before to be a monk who has dignity and wisdom. He continues the journey to the west. Thus, the cassock wearing here implies the state of Xuanzang’s soul, heart, and mind. When it cannot be attached means that Xuanzang is still in unstable condition but after contemplating he surely steady to be back to the main purpose as a Monk. Cassock symbolizes a sacred cloth that only can be worn by the person who practicing *Dharma* in depth.



The Relevance to the Buddhist Characters

The Buddhists should have the five qualities to be a good Buddhist and a good human they are faith (saddhā), morality (sīla), generosity (cāga), learning or hearing (suta), and wisdom (paññā). It is relevance to the film, those five qualities are also found.

1. Faith (saddhā)

The good Buddhists should have a strong faith to Tri Ratna and other concepts in Dharma. In this movie there are some concepts of Buddha's teachings appear, such as the concept of reincarnation depicted on the expression of 'in the next life' appears twice in the film of Monkey King 3. First when Xuanzang and the Queen are on the boat in the middle of Suffering Sea. They were starving and dying. Xuanzang was afraid cannot show the human life outside the Womanland. Second, in the last section of the film, at the gate, Xuanzang and his disciples leave the Womenland. The Queen takes Xuanzang to the gate. When Wukong said 'see you.. oh no, we won't meet again' to the Queen. Xuanzang said 'in the next life'.

Then, the concept of Four Noble Truths (cattari ariya sacca) described in 'Sea of suffering', This Sea actually symbolizes the life fact about the suffering on every human being. The all

beings will experience sufferings continuously before overcoming the roots of evil, *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* (greed, hatred, ignorance). It represents the concept of *dukkha* (suffering). The suffering in *dukkha* concept is suffering that come out from someone's dissatisfaction of something and inability to accept any change. However, *Dhamma* do not only explains about the existence of *dukkha*, it also explains the causes of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the path to end *dukkha* which are commonly called the Four Noble Truths (cattari ariya sacca). Thus the human being can be free from suffering in the end.

2. Morality (Sīla),

One of the qualities of a good Buddhist is conducting many good deeds and keeping the morality on their daily life. The practices of implementing morality or *sila* are found in Monkey King 3 Film. First is the practice of honesty conducted by Xuanzang. At least he shows his honest quality twice in this film, when he was accused of attacking the Queen and then in the execution day. In those two occasions, Xuanzang cannot conduct any lie although he was in the unfavorable position.

Further, this film also shows the important of implementing *sila*. The



cassock of Xuanzang represents this idea. It cannot be worn by him when he was in unstable condition because of falling in love to the Queen. It cannot get attached and fall down whenever it tried to be worn. In such condition, it can be interpreted that the *silā* implementation of Xuanzang were loose at that time. Then, Xuanzang strengthening more his *silā* and back to be a complete Monk, he can wear his cassock, it is attached properly.

3. Generosity (Cāga),

The generosity is a quality has to be owned by a good Buddhist. *Cāga* or generosity means helpful and selfless. This quality is also showed in the Monkey King Film 3, there are some scenes about it. The ritual of cutting hair is the practice of *cāga*. In this ritual, all people in Womanland sacrifice their hair to be burnt. It is used for helping their Queen to conscious. Then, Advisor of the Kingdom is also one of example the person implements *cāga*. She is selfless, sacrificing her love to serve the Kingdom.

4. Learning (Suta),

A good Buddhist should have the quality of *suta* means learn and listen to find the truth. This quality describes in the film through some activities. First, the activity of Xuanzang when upset. Xuanzang upset because he

believes that he is pregnant after consuming water from motherly rivers, he wants to give a birth his child but Wukong give him medicine water so his pregnancy is aborted. Then he take a dry twig soon write the sutras on the ground and said 'when I was young, the abbot in the temple told me to copy the scriptures when I was upset as I improved my handwriting, my mind would be pacified'. Xuanzang is performing *suta* in improving his handwriting and controlling his feeling. Besides, Xuanzang is also kneeling to Kwan Im when he is in the middle of confusions and anxieties to hearing some guidance and advices.

5. Wisdom (Paññā)

The quality of *paññā* or wisdom means fully and precisely understands., discover the good and valuable things. The film has taught the implementation of wisdom such as Xuanzang meditating and contemplating when he was drowned in the water. He saw many death bodies in the water then he united both of his palms in the Anjali posture and closed his eyes. In full concentration, he communicated with Buddha 'Buddha, they are drowning in the sea of sufferings. Please advise how I should give them salvation.' Through the deep contemplation he found the wisdom about love that made him fully



doubtless on his choice to return his journey to the west. He said 'Love is the reason we were born in this world with endless reincarnation but the love we fully understand at last can be everlasting. I learned from this love that love for a person or the world is sheer the same'. Through the deep contemplating Xuanzang has found the wisdom to choose the love.

Conclusion

The meaning of Signs in Monkey King 3 Film can be found on verbal signs and nonverbal sign. Those signs deliver important meanings and values such as the concept of *dukkha*, *Metta*, *nirvana*, honesty, service and also depicts the ability of a man to conquer the root of evil, *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha* as presented by Xuanzang and his diciples.

The Relevance to the Buddhist Characters is presented in this film through the five qualities to be a good Buddhist and human: faith (*saddhā*), morality (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), learning or hearing (*suta*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Those qualities are depicted on the sign of 'in the next life', sea of suffering, Xuanzang, Robe wearing, kneeling, meditating and so on.

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