

CHAPTER III

RELIEF NUMBER 20: THE HELL TABLEAU

“There is a road to Paradise, but you choose not to go.
 There is no door to hell, and yet you force your way to woe.”
 -a Chinese proverb¹

How unique is the hell imagery of Baodingshan? Depictions of hell were common in medieval China, and continued to spread in appeal during the modern period, thanks in large part to Daoist incorporation of the imagery and a broadening base of popular belief. Uniqueness is subjective, yet several factors serve to set Baodingshan apart when one considers it within the context of the whole of Chinese hell imagery. These similarities and differences will be discussed here. The use of doctrine within the hell tableau will be analyzed along with any external sources which may have influenced the depiction of the hell scenes at Baodingshan. These non-doctrinal influences consist mainly of the Confucian bureaucracy evident in the presentation of the ten kings, and methods of Song dynasty corporal punishments seen in the various hells.

Historical Precedents

¹Proverb number 1878 in Clifford H. Plopper's Chinese Religion Seen Through the Proverb (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Co., 1969).

Hell imagery in China has an extensive history. It would appear that depictions of underworld beings, such as ghosts, began as early on as the third century BCE. In a now-famous conversation, the king of Qi asked a painter friend what were the easiest and the most difficult things to paint, to which his friend replied, “Ghosts are the easiest. Nobody has ever seen ghosts so therefore they are the easiest. One recognizes dogs and horses for one sees them every day and it is difficult to make them seem like real ones.”²

The underworld as a part of indigenous Chinese religion, would have necessitated depictions of ghosts. Buddhism’s arrival came complete with a very clearly defined hell doctrine, to which the Chinese quickly applied their own interpretations. “Demons and divinities” [gui shen] is one category of specialization within the records of famous painters dating to the Tang dynasty. Zhang Yanyuan’s Lidai minghua ji³ lists at least nine painters who specialized in depictions of hell or works within the “demons and divinities” category. The most well-known of this group is undoubtedly Wu Daozi,⁴ an artist whose paintings done at Jingyun Temple in Chang’an in 736 CE were so realistic they occasionally frightened fishmongers and butchers into changing their respective professions!

²H. A. Van Oort, Iconography of Chinese Buddhism in Traditional China, vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 4, citing Lin Yutang, The Chinese Theory of Art (New York: Putnam Sons, 1967), 23-4.

³William Reynolds Beal Acker, Some T’ang and pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954).

⁴Acker, vol. 2, 236. According to Waikam Ho, xxxiv, evidence of Wu Daozi’s lasting influence can be seen in later Song dynasty works produced by members of the Song Academy.

The references made in the Lidai minghua ji also point to the prevalence of hell imagery within temple precincts throughout China. In post-Tang China, however, such imagery was seen to spread into most segments of society mainly through the production of painted scrolls which, unlike wall frescoes and statuary, were more readily transportable.⁵ Most of the extant Buddhist scrolls dating from the tenth through the twelfth centuries were part of a large cache of manuscripts brought to light in the early years of this century at Dunhuang. Of the thousands of these sutra and devotional scrolls, the works pertaining to the underworld comprise only a small portion, yet their existence in a monastic environment despite the scripture's non-canonical status points to a significance reaching beyond mere numbers.

Descriptions of hell came to China at an early date.⁶ These earlier versions of the Buddhist hells were greatly modified over time by the Chinese. By the medieval period in China, the predominant motifs relating to the underworld involved the worship of Dizang Bodhisattva⁷ and portrayals of the Ten Kings. Although one of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, Dizang was little known in Indian

⁵Stephen F. Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 154. Besides painted scrolls, Teiser also notes that of the surviving works concerning the Scripture on the Ten Kings, a large proportion are in booklet form, a format which he suggests may have served as either a talisman or a personal lecture book.

⁶Howard, The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 7-10. Howard cites the hells within chapter nineteen of the Dirghagama, a text translated into Chinese circa 414 CE.

⁷Soper, Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1959), 210. Soper notes that the earliest Chinese source for Dizang is a Northern Liang work entitled The Great Expansive Sutra of the Ten Wheels [Da Fengguang shi lun jing]. Origination tales for Dizang were also the focus of The Sutra on the Origins of Dizang Bodhisattva [Dizang Pusa benyuan jing], which was translated from the original Pali around 700 CE in Khotan.

literature, having gained in popularity only later on in China.⁸ Dizang as described in the latter Sutra on the Ten Wheels presented a radical departure from standard iconographic formulae: he is described not in princely garb, but rather as a lowly monk, a change possibly made as an attempt to recapture the former prestige of the Hinayana way.⁹

The cult of Dizang enjoyed increasing popularity in China from the sixth century on, and entire temples came to be devoted to his worship [fig. 10]. Dizang as monk was but one of the popular representations of Dizang in China, the other being Dizang depicted as overseer of hell with the ten kings in attendance [figs. 11 and 12].¹⁰ One of the most prolific of the known painters of Dizang and the ten kings was Wang Qiaoshi, a Five Dynasties artist who had over one hundred different versions of this grouping in circulation at one time.¹¹ It is such a grouping that is the basis for the tableau at Baodingshan.

Sculpted versions of hell tableaux were uncommon, yet two predecessors to the Baodingshan work have also been found in Sichuan province. Located in neighboring Anyue county, these two shallow-carved reliefs belong to an area similar to Baodingshan in its profusion of tableaux, yet are of much smaller

⁸DeVisser, 2. On page 15, DeVisser states that the Sutra on the Mandalas of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, of which Dizang forms a part, was translated in the eighth century by Amoghavajra, leader of the Yogacara branch of Buddhism in China.

⁹Soper, 211.

¹⁰Only two representative types are presented here, Dizang as monk and Dizang with the Ten Kings of Hell. For a more thorough overview of at least those works found in the Pelliot collection in Paris, see Nicole Vandier-Nicholas' study Bannières et Peintures de Touen-houang Conservées au Musée Guimet, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1974), plates 105-120.

¹¹Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 39.

magnitude.¹² Both reliefs date from the mid-tenth century, with one clearly linked iconographically to Baodingshan. It features a central bodhisattva figure flanked by kings, under which appear several depictions of the horrors of hell [figs. 13 and 14]. Beishan, the other major Buddhist site within Dazu county, also has a sculpted reference to the underworld. Niche number 253 portrays Dizang Bodhisattva accompanied by the disciple Daoming on a tour of the dark regions. However, no direct references to the tortures of hell are apparent [fig.15].¹³

Whether sculpted hell tableaux were once prevalent throughout the Chinese empire and only survive in Sichuan due to some unique coincidence, or whether such works were in fact specific to the region for various other reasons remains to be determined. Given the dates of the other scattered hell tableaux, it is fairly certain that Zhao Zhifeng would have been familiar with hell tableaux sculpted in stone before he undertook his work at Baodingshan.

Analysis of the Hell Tableau Found at Baodingshan

The relief depicting hell at Baodingshan can be found on the far end of the north side of Great Buddha Bend. Of the thirty-one sculpted reliefs, it is numbered twenty and measures fourteen meters high by nineteen meters wide

¹²Wenhe Hu, "Lun diyu bianxiang tu," *Sichuan wenwu* 2 (1988): 20-26. The reliefs, numbered 80 and 84, measure 2.45 meters by 3.2 meters and 2.0 meters by 2.8 meters, respectively. I would like to thank Angela Falco Howard for bringing this article to my attention and for being kind enough to forward it to me.

¹³*Ibid.*, 23.

[fig. 16].¹⁴ The relief can be divided into four different strata with relative ease. The uppermost, approximately 13.8 meters above the pathway, depicts a line of ten Buddhas, referred to as the Buddhas of the Ten Directions.¹⁵ Each is seated frontally in the lotus position within a shell-like niche. The effects of time have eroded away much of their facial features, yet each Buddha appears to be distinctly garbed as well as differentiated by his particular mudra or attribute.¹⁶ The painted rays of the niches mimic the effect produced by the central figure of the second level, that of Dizang Bodhisattva, the only figure to cross over two strata.

Although the second level is devoted mainly to the ten kings and their assistants, the image of Dizang dominates, his ribboned garment carrying over above his head to form the outline of his radiant aureole. This ribboning continues across his folded legs, serving to link him to the arenas of suffering

¹⁴Yang Jialuo, The Discovery (1945) of 6216 Statues Carved on Rocks During the T'ang and Sung Dynasties at Ta Tsu (Taipei: Encyclopedia Sinica Institute, 1968). This numbering system was inaugurated by Yang Jialuo, the archaeologist credited with the rediscovery in the 1940s of most of the sites in Dazu county. No explanation is given as to why he chose to number the reliefs in the order that he did. Logically speaking, it must be assumed that he entered from a now-unused stairway from the monastic complex at the top of the hill, proceeding to then number the reliefs as he proceeded to his right, making a carved lion figure number one and a grouping on the downward staircase number thirty-one. As of 1994, entry by this route was no longer possible, the pilgrim or tourist instead beginning the circumambulation at number thirty, The Taming of the Wild Buffalo relief.

¹⁵Changjiu Liu, ed., Dazu shike yanjiu (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1985), 485.

¹⁶Stephen Teiser gives a correlation between ten Buddhas and the Ten Kings in The Scripture on the Ten Kings, appendix nine. I have as yet to ascertain whether his grouping corresponds to the Buddha figures and the ten kings as depicted at Baodingshan.

below. The gold still glistens on his bejewelled crown and necklace, recalling Dizang's status as Bodhisattva.¹⁷ His position, seated on a lotus throne and central among the ten kings, yet linked to the heavens, reminds the devotee of Dizang's vow to save the damned. He is the true ruler of hell, capable of releasing loved ones from their torments, given that their descendants fulfill their ritual needs.¹⁸

Flanking Dizang Bodhisattva are two figures which remain largely unidentified in the main body of literature regarding this site [fig. 17].¹⁹ Several possibilities arise if one studies the iconography of the two more closely. The bare-headed figure on the right is carrying the standard monk's staff²⁰ while the figure on the left cradles either a begging bowl or a pearl of wisdom. Seen outside of the entire tableau's context, they therefore seem simply to be acolytes. Another possibility exists, however, when the tableau as a whole is viewed as a representation of the ten kings and the underworld.

Using scrolls depicting the ten kings as comparative material, the iconography of the begging bowl and the monk's staff points toward very

¹⁷In the search for liturgical precedents to explain iconographical elements, it must be said that Dizang's depiction at Baodingshan does not correlate to the rules laid out in the non-apocryphal Tantric work, Rules on the Bodhisattva Dizang [Dizang Pusa yigui], which date to the early 8th century. DeVisser, 45.

¹⁸Chapter seven of the Sutra on the Origins of Dizang Bodhisattva is devoted to the explanation of blessings received by the living who have masses said for the dead, make images of Dizang or who but for one moment take refuge in Dizang. DeVisser, 7-10.

¹⁹Liu, 485. This work identifies the two simply as monk and nun attendants to Dizang Bodhisattva.

²⁰Also sometimes referred to by its Sanskrit name, kalakkara.

distinct personages. The clean-shaven acolyte holding the monk's staff could be either another manifestation of Dizang Bodhisattva represented in monk's garb or the well-known disciple of the Buddha, Mulian.²¹ Both individuals are dependent upon the monk's staff to gain access to hell. Dizang Bodhisattva in monk's attire was a consistent theme among Chinese artists from the ninth century onwards, and it is in this form that Dizang is popularized in Japan.²²

Dizang is most-often portrayed carrying a miraculous jewel as well as his six-ringed staff, "with the one, he opens Hades, and with the other, he lights up the dark abode of suffering souls."²³ It is perhaps this jewel which is the object being held by the monk to Dizang's right. Dizang is also sometimes depicted as a monk holding his alms bowl [fig. 18]. In which case, given the above information, all three figures could simply be viewed as varied manifestations of Dizang Bodhisattva.

²¹Soothill, 199. Mulian's Sanskrit name is Maudgalyayana, "one of the ten chief disciple of Sakyamuni, specially noted for miraculous powers." Chen give the source of the Mulian story as the Syamajataka. See Kenneth Chen, The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 24.

²²I base this conclusion on the number of depictions extant from Dunhuang and later that show Dizang as a monk. For more information of Dizang's development in Japan as the bodhisattva Jizo, see the last section of DeVisser's work The Bodhisattva Ti-tsang (Jizo) in China and Japan.

²³Werner, 497. Other images of Dizang not discussed here remain closer to the iconography proposed in one of the earliest works devoted to him, Dizang Pusa yigui. This is an orthodox Tantric work dating to the early eighth century which gives two slightly varied methods for depicting Dizang as a monk seated on a lotus. This style of representation differs from Baodingshan's portrait of Dizang in that at Baodingshan he is shown in full Bodhisattva regalia on a lotus, not as a monk. For more specifics on the former, see DeVisser, 44-45.

In The Ghost Festival in Medieval China, the Buddha's disciple Mulian is described as being dressed as a shaven-headed monk carrying the six-ringed staff which he has borrowed from the Buddha in order to force open the gates of hell.²⁴ Transformation texts also have Mulian using his bowl to transport himself from the darkest regions of hell to confer with the Buddha in the heavens.²⁵ In notes describing a no longer extant illustrated scripture, Mulian is said to appear at the Hell of the Iron Bed, where he converts the jailer and succeeds in freeing his mother.²⁶ Given the iconographical similarities and Mulian's popularity among a broad spectrum of the laity, the figures to the right and left of Dizang Bodhisattva could also be seen as duplicate representations of Mulian.

A third possibility exists, involving yet another individual and yet another textual source. This is the prospect that the figure holding the begging bowl is Daoming,²⁷ an individual taken to the underworld in a case of mistaken identity. Before being returned to this world, Daoming encounters Dizang Bodhisattva

²⁴Teiser, The Ghost Festival in Medieval China (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 161.

²⁵Ibid., 162.

²⁶Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 179.

²⁷Ibid., 66. According to Stephen Teiser, Daoming makes his first appearance in Dunhuang manuscripts in a story of unknown date entitled The Record of the Returned Soul. Annemarie von Gabain also discusses Daoming's importance in relationship to Chinese and Uighur manuscripts dating from the 11th through the 13th century, and which are thought to be based upon an earlier 8th century work in "The Purgatory of the Buddhist Uighurs: Book Illustrations from Turfan," in Mahayanist Art after A.D. 900, ed. William Watson, *Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia*, no. 2. (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, and the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1972), 26.

who guides him back to his earthly life while instructing him to have proper devotional images of the bodhisattva made.²⁸ In later years, Daoming himself developed as a savior of other tormented souls, his name being re-written to translate as “Guide to the Dark Regions,” and is noted as such in twelfth-century literature.²⁹ Daoming appears in this form in an illustrated copy of The Scripture on the Ten Kings [fig. 19] as well as in the sculpted work at Beishan.

Yet another figure portraying a monk appears in the hell tableau. Placed underneath a small-scale pagoda, this work has been tentatively identified as an additional rendering of Zhao Zhifeng [fig. 20].³⁰ Zhao’s presence in the depths of hell, rather than a depiction of one of the more illustrious figures discussed above, points toward a changing usage of these religious works of art as well as a shift in perceptions of the sanctity of religious imagery.

The Ten Kings

By the late Song dynasty, dissemination of the Scripture on the Ten Kings was widespread.³¹ Copying the text or carving related images is a large part of the emphasis of the scripture; the cultivation of merit can thus be viewed as at least one factor leading to the work done at Baodingshan.

²⁸Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 68.

²⁹Ibid., 69.

³⁰Dazu xianzhi, np. This representation of Zhao Zhifeng, and its function within the tableau, will be addressed at greater length in chapter four.

³¹I base this statement on the prevalence of earlier medieval Chinese ten kings worship as discussed by Stephen Teiser in his body of work devoted to the Ghost Festival and the Scripture on the Ten Kings .

The whole theory behind the Ten Kings centers on the idea that each soul passes in front of each of the kings at predetermined points over a three-year duration.³² The idea of interim stages is a Buddhist concept that was given a Chinese twist by the addition of judges in the guise of the ten kings. Originally, there were rites connected to passing from one existence to the next. Perhaps drawing on Daoist precedents, the Chinese added a bureaucratic format.³³ Bureaucratic blunders and inordinate amounts of paperwork existed in the afterlife much as they did in this life; souls moved slowly through the courts, much as they would have in the actual Song legal system.³⁴ Stephen Teiser notes the importance of this link in the story of Mulian's search for his mother in the netherworld, the inefficiency of the real world bureaucracy mirrored in hell's

³²These ten dates correspond to the "seven-sevens" [7,14,21,28,35,42, and 49], designating the days after one is deceased, plus 100th day, one year and three year anniversaries. On these days, offerings need to be made to each of the ten kings. This numbering system appears to be standard within both the longer and shorter versions of the Scripture on the Ten Kings. See Yongwu Huang, ed., Dunhuang baozang, 140 vols. (Taipei: Xinwen feng chubanshe, 1981-1986), vol. 23 - 574a-b, vol. 36 - 475a, vol. 45 - 143b, and vol. 109 - 434b.

³³Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory," 117. Teiser points to the early Daoist notion of heaven periodically taking stock of man's actions and recording them for posterity, to be used regularly in judging one's lifespan.

³⁴Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 1 and 5. McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China, 184, notes that miscarriages of justice were common enough in the Song era, an example being that of innocent farmers accused of banditry, bound and flogged. Laufer describes later theatrical depictions of an innocent being tortured by being ground under a pestle, only to be saved by the appearance of a lotus blossoming forth from his chest. See Berthold Laufer, Oriental Theatricals (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1923), 13.

endless paperwork and processing, necessary before the souls can achieve rebirth.³⁵

In order to assure favorable judgement and make for an easier passage, living family members were [and are] encouraged to have ceremonies performed, have sutras copied, make contributions to the Buddhist community, and have religious icons produced. If all went well, they could rest assured that their loved ones would arrive safely in heaven, but it was not without economic hardship that the desired results were achieved. Less well-off families either banded together to form “funeral-aid” type groups, helping one another to offset the costs of having the sutras read and copied, or, as was the case for the very poor, they simply prayed for their loved ones and received the benefits available to them at the large Buddhist festivals for the dead.³⁶

Although technically even the emperor himself could not buy his way out of hell, the monetary requirements involved in the ten feasts were enough to set apart the “haves” from the “have-nots”. Similar arrangements were to be seen in the bureaucratic real world. For lesser offenses, labor could replace corporal punishment, much in the same way that offerings to the Buddhist community or

³⁵Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 173. Teiser goes on to further state that “Some medieval accounts address the issue [of the Mulian transformation text] explicitly, explaining the hierarchy of the other world by comparing it to the hierarchy of this world.” This reinforces the assumption that the authors of the apocryphal scripture from which the Mulian text was drawn consciously based the work on known medieval bureaucratic methods.

³⁶These societies of Buddhist lay groups were known as she. Their main purpose was to provide an opportunity for lay practitioners to meet regularly to perform a variety of functions, many of which centered around rites for the dead.

prayers could be seen to lessen the pains inflicted in hell.³⁷ Yet, given comparable crimes, the poor were more likely to suffer severe punishment or execution than the wealthy.³⁸ This is attributable to both a reluctance to mete out punishment to the elite, hoping they would reform and act as examples for the commoners,³⁹ as well as to the Song practice of allowing individuals to commute certain penalties into fines.⁴⁰

For those unfortunate souls who do not have remaining family, specific dates such as the fifteenth day of the seventh month [Dizang's birthday],⁴¹ are set aside to aid in their emancipation from hell. Such days were comparable to the general amnesties granted by the emperor, which came in response to the high numbers of individuals incarcerated and the empire's inability to maintain the rising numbers.⁴² It must be remembered that, like prison, Buddhist hell is not a

³⁷Brian E. McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge, England and New York : Cambridge University Press, 1992), 336. McKnight notes on page 361 that bribery was also a common practice among Song jailers.

³⁸Ibid., 470. McKnight also discusses variance in severity of punishment for women versus men and laity versus clergy.

³⁹Ibid., 13.

⁴⁰Ibid., 496.

⁴¹This date marks the celebration of the Buddhist festival known as the Yulan pen or "Ghost Festival." The seventh month is traditionally considered to be a time when the gates of hell are opened, and the ghosts are allowed to roam free. For this reason, it is colloquially called "Ghost Month." The power of the ghosts at this time is recognized and many normal activities cease. The ghosts are placated with food and drink offerings. For a complete historical discussion of the Ghost Festival through China's middle ages, see Teiser's work, The Ghost Festival in Medieval China. For further thoughts on avenging ghosts, see "Avenging Ghosts and Moral Judgement in Ancient Chinese Historiography: Three Examples from the Shih-chi" in Legend, Lore, and Religion in China (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1979) 97-108, written by Alvin P. Cohen.

⁴²McKnight, 485.

permanent condition [except for those who have committed atrocious crimes or killed themselves], but rather purgatorial in the end.

Whenever the ten kings are seen in conjunction with Dizang Bodhisattva, they are presented standing.⁴³ Each king and magistrate is fronted by a table over which is hung a piece of blue cloth, on which are inscribed his titles and a corresponding hymn.⁴⁴ Overall, the ten kings are not represented so much as sacred entities, but as men of justice, and although the kings' placement within the work concurs with that seen in The Scripture on the Ten Kings, the hymns inscribed under the kings at Baodingshan do not.⁴⁵ Also notably absent from the carved inscriptions is any reference to celebrating the days of fast associated with each king at set weekly and yearly intervals.

Traditionally, royal attendants are present in pairs or not present at all [figs. 21 and 22]; however, at Baodingshan, perhaps due to space restrictions, each king would appear to have only one attendant. The attendants are for the most part male, with the exception of two female figures who flank the central triad along with King Yama⁴⁶ and the King of Transformations⁴⁷ [fig. 23]. The

⁴³DeVisser, 29.

⁴⁴For translations of the hell scenes' extant hymns and inscriptions, see Appendix A.

⁴⁵Where differences occur between the carvings at Baodingshan and the placement of the hymns within the scripture has been noted in the footnotes to the hymns, Appendix A.

⁴⁶In Chinese known as Yanluo Tianzi. Originally king of the first hell and head of the underworld, King Yama was demoted due to his compassionate nature, and like all the beings in hell, must undergo tortures until his eventual rebirth.

presence of these women coincides with the female donor figures appearing within the Ten Kings' handscrolls [figs. 24 and 25].

Introduced by the Officer of Immediate Retribution [fig. 26]⁴⁸, the ten kings follow the standard order of placement as given in the scripture, beginning with the Magnanimous King of Qin [fig. 27]⁴⁹ at the far right and concluding with the King who Turns the Wheel as the last major figure on the left end of the relief. The final figure is yet another second-level functionary, the Officer of Rapid Recompense [fig. 28].⁵⁰

Aside from the officers, who are clearly identified by their caps,⁵¹ only three of the ten figures vary in iconography: King Yama, the King of Transformations, and the King who Turns the Wheel [figs. 29, 30 and 31].⁵² The

⁴⁷His Chinese name is Biancheng Dawang. Pelliot suggests that biancheng comes from shiba biancheng, the 18 transformations. See Paul Pelliot, "Bibliographie," T'oung Pao 28 (1931): 389.

⁴⁸At Baodingshan, written as Xianbao siguan. This personage exists under the name Si Lu, "Officer of Records" in The Scripture on the Ten Kings.

⁴⁹This king goes under the name Qinguang Dawang in China. There are two different interpretations of his name; I have chosen to go with the Magnanimous King of Qin, the other being King Guang of Qin.

⁵⁰At Baodingshan, written as Subao siguan. In The Scripture on the Ten Kings, this position is filled by Si Ming, "Officer of Life Spans." He helps to record the rulings of the ten judges and keeps track of future rebirths for each individual.

⁵¹Unlike the illustrated scriptures and most printed works, the kings depicted at Baodingshan do not have the word "king" [wang] inscribed on their caps. Although the figures themselves appear not to have been altered, the pieces of blue draped cloth and the inscriptions have clearly been restored. For translations of the hymns accompanying each king, please see Appendix A.

⁵²Yanluo Tianzi, Biancheng Dawang, and Zhuanlu n Shengwang, respectively.

King who Turns the Wheel is dressed in martial attire, and his name would appear to link him to previous military officials found in earlier Tantric texts.⁵³ Attending this last king is a standard-bearer, characteristic of the King who Turns the Wheel's soldier-of-fortune attendants.

Like the first king, whose job it is to start the dead on their journeys through the various hells, the King who Turns the Wheel does not control a particular environ of hell. His job is to appoint the souls to their respective paths of transmigration, based on the judgements of the previous courts. These possible transmigrations are known as the Six Paths of Being.⁵⁴ In later years, this final king's position was augmented by the addition of Lady Meng (Mengpo niangniang),⁵⁵ who administered the broth of oblivion to all souls before their rebirth. Aside from the jailers tormenting the damned, the King who Turns the Wheel is the only figure depicted with a militaristic aspect.

The fifth and sixth kings differ in that both are depicted in imperial garb.⁵⁶ King Yama crosses both continental and ideological boundaries. He is

⁵³Teiser mentions the eighth century appearance of Wudao jiangjun wang, or the General King of the Five Paths, in his discussion of The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 178. Arthur Waley also mentions this personage as being part of a text devoted to the worship of Yanluo Wang, known as the Manual of the Procedure for Making Offerings to King Yama.

⁵⁴William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms with Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index (Taipei: Zhongwen Publishing Co., 1976), 139. It must also be noted that Dizang Bodhisattva is closely associated with the Six Paths of Being, in which he is transformed into six separate entities to aid all beings in their struggle for salvation.

⁵⁵Maspero, 370, and Werner, 311-2.

⁵⁶Their imperial regalia dates back to the late Qin - early Han dynasties. For an overview of the various specifics of this style of dress, see 5,000 Years of Chinese Costumes (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, Ltd., 1984), 34. This type of

the original father of the afterlife in the Vedic tradition.⁵⁷ In China, King Yama came to be ruler of the underworld in both Buddhist and Daoist cosmologies.⁵⁸ No longer a revered god in his country of origin, Yama was quickly adopted by the Chinese, and just as quickly sinicized.⁵⁹ The name “King Yama” came to be synonymous with any of the ten kings, the term often being used plurally, as in the “ten Yamas.”⁶⁰

Yama is always represented in imperial attire, having a dark face to symbolize his non-Chinese origins. He is further differentiated from the other kings by his title, “Son of Heaven” [Tianzi], as opposed to “Great King” [Dawang]. At Baodingshan, King Yama is placed immediately to Dizang Bodhisattva’s left. Although this is one possible placement in scriptural illustrations, he is not always honored in such a fashion [fig. 22].

It is not clear as to why the fifth king, the King of Transformations, is attired in imperial garb, except perhaps in response to aesthetic demands of symmetry in the Baodingshan work. The more appropriate sovereign to enjoy such treatment would be the King of Mt. Tai, as he was already ranked highly

dress can also be seen in depictions of the emperors, such as Yan Liben’s Thirteen Emperors, and in nobility presented in wall paintings found at Dunhuang.

⁵⁷The Mahavastu. trans. by J. Jones. Sacred Books of the Buddhists Series, vol. 16 (London and Boston: R. & K. Paul for the Pali Text Society, 1949-1956), 11.

⁵⁸In the Daoist faith, Yanluo Tianzi is said to rule the nether regions from his palace at Fengdu. See Taoist Ritual, 225, as well as references to the imperial encounter with Yanluo Tianzi, as mentioned in The Journey to the West, 198.

⁵⁹Michel Soymié, “Les dix jours de jeûne de Ksitigarbha,” in Contributions aux Études sur Touen-houang, vol. 1, ed. Michel Soymié. Centre de Recherches d’Histoire et de Philologie de la IVe Section de l’École pratique des Hautes Études, Hautes Études Orientales (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1979), 148.

⁶⁰Dazu Grottoes, 8.

within the Daoist pantheon. In literary sources, the damned are beaten and placed in cangues under the King of Transformation's jurisdiction, similar to what occurs in the actual depictions of the strata below him.⁶¹

The six remaining kings vary little iconographically. Their discussion here will center on textual versus representational differences, and will proceed systematically from right to left, as one would progress through their respective courts.

As King of the First River of Hell [fig. 32],⁶² this king plays a vital role iconographically. In handscroll and hanging depictions of this hell, the "River of Nai" or River of No Recourse is a prominent theme [fig. 33]. It is this river that separates the damned from their fate, and, therefore, unusual that there is no representation of the river among the hells at Baodingshan. Given the clever channeling of runoff water seen in other parts of the grotto [fig. 34], such a depiction would have seemed not only possible but desirable. Other images popular to hell iconography are also absent at Baodingshan, most notably the black horseman who serves as messenger to the kings, and who is accorded a verse in the scripture itself [fig. 35].

The fourth hell is ruled over by the Sovereign King of Song [fig. 36].⁶³ It is in this hell that those who have been found guilty by the Magnanimous King of

⁶¹Regarding the jurisdiction of the various hells, I have tried to present variations in placement of the hells as they occur, based mainly on the works done by DeVisser and Teiser.

⁶²In Chinese, he is known under the name Chujiang Dawang.

⁶³Known by the name of Songdi Dawang. Little is known regarding the origins of this title.

Qin are sent to be scalded and roasted by hot water and flame.⁶⁴ This corresponds well with the Boiling Cauldron Hell [fig. 37] carved directly below. The idea of karmic retribution is further reinforced by the text of the hymn, which refers to “killing living beings in order to sacrifice to the gods.”⁶⁵ The cooking of sacrificial offerings was a traditional practice in China which continues into the present day.

The head of the fifth court, the King of the Five Offices [fig. 38],⁶⁶ is considered to be the overseer of the hell in which the guilty have their hearts torn out and their bellies cut open. At Baodingshan, this king appears to watch over the damned in the Freezing Hell [fig. 39], the Balance of Karmic Deeds separating the two. The suggestion of karmic retribution as described above is, however, reflected in the inscribed hymn, which refers quite pointedly to those who kill animals. The hymn also places the Mirror of Karmic Deeds in this court, which makes the presence of the Balance of Karmic Deeds questionable here. Illustrated scriptures often place the mirror in King Yama’s court [fig. 25], while later printed works show the mirror in the first court [fig. 40].

Moving to the left side of the hell tableau and continuing with a description of the remaining three kings, one first encounters the King of Mt. Tai

⁶⁴DeVisser, 31.

⁶⁵See Appendix A.

⁶⁶Chinese name, Wuguan Dawang. Soper traces the origins of this sovereign to the Bhaisajyaguru Sutra, in which there is mention of King Yama entrusting the “Five Officials” with keeping records of those who have committed the five deadly sins. He also notes that as early as the late Zhou Dynasty, the five highest officials at court were referred to as such as well as being linked to the five senses. Soper, 176.

[fig. 41],⁶⁷ a Daoist entity who was quickly absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon. Theories vary as to what effect Daoism did or did not have on the formulation of the Ten Kings, with some scholars stating unequivocally that the Daoists were responsible for the final number of kings standing at ten, having added one judge to their already extant cosmology of nine, while others maintain that the Daoists only later appropriated the set of kings, using their notoriety to popularize their own set of deities.⁶⁸ The King of Mt. Tai was later re-absorbed into Daoist cosmology in his new capacity of “Bodhisattva Emperor of the Eastern Peak.”⁶⁹

The eighth hell, office of the Impartial King [fig. 42],⁷⁰ is where the souls are weighed, their good and bad deeds influencing the suffering they must further undergo. Unfortunately, the placement of the karmic balance has been switched with the karmic mirror at Baodingshan. It is not clear whether this was

⁶⁷His Chinese title at Baodingshan is Taishan Dawang. A personage going by a similar name exists in Pali texts, yet it seems more probable, given the Daoist precedence for the King of Mt. Tai, that he is an incorporated deity rather than an imported one.

⁶⁸Maspero, 364, and Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 29.

⁶⁹DeVisser, 30. DeVisser, 35, discusses other later works which link the two philosophies, one of the most noteworthy being the Calendar of Jade or Yuli, which was recognized as being written sometime in the later Song Dynasty. For illustrations taken from a contemporary calendar, and other more modern depictions of hell, see Wolfram Eberhard, Guilt and Sin in Traditional China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 51-55.

⁷⁰At Baodingshan, he is referred to as Pingzheng Dawang. He is also known under the title Pingdeng Wang. Teiser points out that Tang dynasty Tantric texts portray the Impartial King as another manifestation of Dizang Bodhisattva. Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 177.

an oversight in planning the work or a misinterpretation of the scripture. Either or both are possible.

The last of the six to be discussed here is the King of the Capital [fig. 43].⁷¹ Like the King of Mt. Tai, he would appear to have direct connections to indigenous gods and beliefs. As his name implies, the King of the Capital may simply be a further extension of the City God. It is the City God, along with the God of Moats, who is responsible for bringing dead souls to justice in popular Chinese mythology.⁷² The formulation of such a deity may have been in direct response to these popularly held beliefs. Pelliot posits that his true title is “King of the Market of the Capital” the market area being the natural place for a prison, as it was there that public executions took place.⁷³ This correlation may be seen as bridging the gap between the earthly and afterlife existences.

The Eighteen Hells Seen at Baodingshan⁷⁴

Diyu or “earth-prison” is the Chinese term for hell. Prison is an interesting metaphor for hell, and one used first by the Chinese.⁷⁵ As seen earlier

⁷¹Known under the title of Dushi Dawang in China.

⁷²Maspero, 373.

⁷³Pelliot, 389.

⁷⁴For an overall picture of the placement of the eighteen hells within the Baodingshan work, please see figure 16. Translations of the extant inscriptions can be found in Appendix A, under Mid-Level Inscriptions and Lower-Level Inscriptions.

⁷⁵This statement is based on the definition in Chinese of naraka or hell as “earth-prison is generally interpreted as hell or the hells” as provided by Soothill, 207.

within the discussion of the ten kings iconography, links to the real world were fundamental to hell imagery. The penal ideology of the day reflected a combination of rewards and punishments as effective means of changing behavior.⁷⁶ Such was the case with Buddhism as well; an individual was not damned for all eternity, but upon repaying his karmic mistakes, could hope to be freed into a new existence, capable of starting anew. Like the Song penal codes, however, one did not pass from a state of guilt to one of innocence without paying a price. Methods of torture employed by earthly jailers were thought to be far harsher in practice than they were on paper.⁷⁷

Similarly, depictions of hell far exceeded literary descriptions of hell in both their variety and their detail. Gabain notes that, "Anxiety for the dead might have stimulated the fancy to more than the text contained."⁷⁸ The hells at Baodingshan number eighteen in all, and they do not appear to follow any one specific text.⁷⁹ More interestingly, although the hell tableau is regarded as a representation based on the Scripture on the Ten Kings, no hells are actually

⁷⁶McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China, 8.

⁷⁷Ibid., 330.

⁷⁸Annemarie von Gabain, 26.

⁷⁹Some of the hells are similar to those described in Journey to the West, 202-206. Some similarities can also be seen in the hells described in the Mahavastu, 13-21. For a general listing of the descriptions of hell to be found in the Pali canon, see Bimala Charan Law's Heaven and Hell in Buddhist Perspective (Varanasi : Bhartiya Publishing, 1973), 94-111. For a discussion of hell specific to the Yogacara school of Buddhism, see Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga's work The Buddhist Concept of Hell (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), 60-72.

described in that work, the majority of the text being devoted to the ten kings and their worship.⁸⁰

Such anomalies were not unusual, with the majority of hell works maintaining common themes while varying considerably in detail.⁸¹ How the hells were iconographically depicted was then largely subject to individual discretion. Both earlier and later works can be found which are consistent in their usage of the ten kings and their courts, while greatly varying in the tortures shown. One explanation for such discrepancies may be the changing realities of punishment and torture seen at differing places at varying times within China.

During the Song dynasty, two factors remained constant throughout China. The first was that the military was increasingly being used within the penal system.⁸² Not only was the military involved in executions and punishment, but by the late eleventh century, soldiers known as “unpaid volunteers” made their living by forcing inmates to pay them for either leniency or freedom.⁸³ A similar situation occurs in the Journey to the West, where even Emperor Taizong must pay off hell’s lictors in order to go free. Some Song prisoners were deliberately killed by their jailers in exchange for bribes given them by those who wished the incarcerated dead.⁸⁴

⁸⁰Consistent with the notion of worship, references to hell found in extant portions of the Scripture on the Ten Kings focus on how not to enter hell, or what one has done to arrive there. See Dunhuang baozang, vol. 109, 432b-434a.

⁸¹Teiser, 62, and Gabain, 26.

⁸²McKnight, 71-72.

⁸³Ibid., 375.

⁸⁴Ibid., 374.

The jailers at Baodingshan are quite clearly meant to represent military figures; they wear cuirasses, boots, and occasionally helmets [fig. 44 and 45]. This would fit into the Song precedent of having soldiers functioning as jailers. Yet another element in this equation is the fact that many of the soldiers were themselves convicts, forced into conscription as part of their sentence.⁸⁵ The Baodingshan figures are grotesque, which may or may not fit into then perceived notions of jailers, but as convicts, they themselves were likely to be scarred or mutilated in some way.⁸⁶ This idea of convicts serving as jailers also mirrors the Buddhist philosophy that those who punish in hell are themselves being punished, the jailers being themselves among the jailed.

The second constant of the Song code was that no leniency was shown to the convicted:

The emphasis was on deterrence and was coupled with an underlying assumption that the greatest effect would be achieved when the severity of the penalty corresponded as closely as possible to the seriousness of the crime. . . .The men of Sung China believed in punishment as a form of retribution. Wronged men demanded vengeance.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Ibid., 396.

⁸⁶Of course, Ox-head and Horseface cannot be explained as such, but clear evidence as to their origins is lacking. Teiser, *Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 212, states that they are “commonly depicted as guards in the underworld in Indian and Chinese sources,” but does not note precisely which texts describe them. They would appear to have been a part of Chinese lore prior to the rise in popularity of hell, and are connected to both Daoist and Buddhist pantheons. The depictions of Ox-head and Horseface at Baodingshan are interesting in that, given the fact that the artisans could easily mimic real-life animals in stone, as seen in the Taming of the Water Buffalo relief, Ox-head and Horseface remain caricatures of animals. Their cartoon-like appearance may further substantiate the argument that the artisans were drawing off popular imagery such as illustrated scrolls and opera.

⁸⁷Ibid., 324-5.

Emperor Gaozong himself is quoted as observing that the intent of the law should reflect an eye-for-an-eye philosophy, those who kill should be killed, those who injure should themselves be injured.⁸⁸ Buddhism's tortures would seem to have a similar underlying theme, one example being that of the Tongue-Extraction Hell [fig. 46], where individuals who speak ill of others have their tongues pulled out.

Other tortures, while not directly related to Song penal practices, could still be seen as evocative of their methods. Swordtree Hell [fig. 47], Sword Mountain Hell [fig. 48], and the Hell of Being Sawed into Pieces [fig. 49] all can be linked to Song practices of mutilation and death by slicing. Mutilation existed as a punishment in China as far back as the Qin, when common practices included the amputation of feet and hands, comparable to the Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees [fig. 50], or the cutting off of the nose.⁸⁹ Death by slicing, while an irregular punishment, was nonetheless condoned with regard to violent criminals, in order to serve as a warning to all evildoers.⁹⁰ Similar practices included beheading and being cut in two at the waist [fig. 51].

Another common form of corporal punishment can be seen represented within the Hell of Poisonous Snakes [fig. 52], the Hell of Darkness [fig. 53] and

⁸⁸Ibid., 326.

⁸⁹Ibid., 331. McKnight also gives evidence for punishment by cutting off limbs dating as far back as the Shang dynasty, with oracle bone script depicting one man with one leg shorter than the other, and a saw placed next to the shorter leg.

⁹⁰Brian E. McKnight, "Sung justice : death by slicing," American Oriental Society 93 (1973), 359.

the Feces and Filth Hell [fig. 54]. This is the use of clubs to inflict harm upon the damned. Such a practice was entirely too common in Song China, with various-sized rods being used to mete out the appropriate punishment.⁹¹ As seen in the Halberd Hell [fig. 55], spears were also used by Song authorities.⁹²

Perhaps the most visible form of punishment in Song China was the use of the cangue [fig. 56]. Cangues were used to transport criminals, to torture innocent individuals in order to gain information, and to publicly humiliate the incarcerated.⁹³ Although size, weight, and construction were explicit in the penal code, officials often were accused of using injurious cangues, such as the “four-layer cangue” in which wrought iron and uncured rawhide were attached to raw wood, the resulting effect one of shrinking and squeezing as the rawhide dried.⁹⁴

Combined with the use of the cangue as a prominent torture method seen at Baodingshan was the stripping of the individual [fig. 57]. As Chinese custom at the time called for entire coverage of the body with the exception of hands and face, only individuals who were being humiliated would be subjected to forced public nakedness.⁹⁵ At Baodingshan, nakedness is the primary form of depiction for the damned, adding an extra dimension to the horrors expressed there for the Song dynasty pilgrim.

⁹¹McKnight, *Law and Order in Sung China*, 82. Size was combined with number of blows under what was called the traditional Five Punishments [*wuxing*].

⁹²*Ibid.*, 183.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 344-347.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 345-6.

⁹⁵Gabain, 30-1.

Not only are eighteen hells depicted at Baodingshan, but an additional four admonitions are included. These include the Admonition against Alcohol together with the Evils of Selling Alcohol [fig. 58], the Admonition against Raising Animals [fig. 59] and the Admonition against Speaking Falsehoods.⁹⁶ These have all been prominently positioned within the entire tableau, at eye-level with the viewer. With the individuals carved clad in contemporary Song attire and realistically painted, the vignettes accorded to alcohol consumption must have been highly effective deterrents to over-indulgence. The inscription related to speaking falsehoods along with the relief depicting a woman feeding chickens can be viewed as delineating the broad scope of the Buddhist precepts, emphasizing how seemingly innocent activities do not go unpunished.

⁹⁶Although the engraved texts corresponding to these four are all formatted in conventional Buddhist liturgical style, I have not as yet been able to ascertain if they belong to specific scriptures, are scriptures in and of themselves, or whether they are apocryphal works specific to the region, perhaps based on extant scriptures. What was legible of the four texts has been translated and can be found in Appendix A.