

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The T'ang dynasty is definitely the pinnacle of the crest line. After then, and stretching over nearly a thousand years, comes a decline that, despite certain attempts at colossal results rather than grandeur, is to become more and more pronounced. The works of the Sung dynasty disfigured those of the T'ang. The Ming ran out of inventiveness. And, finally, the Ch'ing consummated the decadence.¹

The Buddhist persecution of 845, which laid waste to a vast majority of that community's holdings in China, has long been viewed as the turning point in Chinese Buddhist art. It is seen as the defining moment that began the downward spiral of Buddhism in China. Buddhist artistic production in the post-persecution period, considered by many scholars to be a mere shadow of its former glorious self, has merited little historical attention. The subsequent Song dynasty evokes images of gentleman-scholar painters; it is a time of re-grouping and re-assessing, a time of longing for past glories and former, more peaceful, times. Buddhist artistic production during this period did not cease, yet no longer was it seen to hold the rank of "high art," perhaps due to perceived formulaic devices and overproduction.² Some scholars have even gone so far as

¹Victor Segalen referring to Chinese works in stone in The Great Statuary of China trans. Eleanor LeVieux (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 26.

²The iconography associated with the vast pantheon of Buddhism, while by no means stagnant, was clearly established. This fact, combined with the popularity of printed words and images, made possible the mass distribution of

to label the Buddhism practiced in the 12th century “a folk-religion with little profoundness and much ritual.”³

If later Buddhist art is perceived as generally inferior, art produced in the peripheral areas of the kingdom is also viewed with scepticism. Provincial art is seen as being of secondary quality, quaint, not of the caliber of works found in more cosmopolitan centers. Sichuan is one peripheral region which had, until recently, fallen victim to such preconceptions. Angela Falco Howard, in her work cataloging Tang dynasty Buddhist artistic production in Sichuan, has done much to bring this problem to light.⁴

For this project, I have chosen to look at one site in Sichuan province - Baodingshan, in Dazu county. Baodingshan consists of a monastic complex and two grotto areas, Little Buddha Bend (Xiaofowan) and Great Buddha Bend (Dafowan) [fig. 1]. Located on a remote, rocky outcropping fifteen kilometers north of Dazu City, Baodingshan was an active pilgrimage site into at least the late Ming dynasty.⁵ Primary construction at the site dates from the later Song

Buddhist literature and imagery. For more on the historic changes taking place during the Song period, see Peter N. Gregory and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Religious and Historical Landscape,” in Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China, eds. Gregory and Ebrey (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 1-35.

³H. A. Van Oort, Iconography of Chinese Buddhism in Traditional China, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 1.

⁴Angela Falco Howard, “Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten,” Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, n.s., 60 (1988): 1-164. In her introduction to this article, Howard notes that cliff sculpture exists in 49 counties of Sichuan province, with over 63 known Tang dynasty sites, many of which have not been thoroughly researched.

⁵There is some question as to when Baodingshan was last in active use. Zhang Jiaqi, “The Splendour of the Grotto Arts of the Later Period in China,” Oriental Art n.s., 35 (Spring 1989): 19, states that the Yuan invasion of Sichuan

period, but the complex has until now received limited attention, partly due to its relatively recent arrival on the public scene.⁶

A brief treatment of an entire, largely undocumented, site could not reasonably be attempted in a project of this kind, and thus I have restricted this work to only one aspect of Baodingshan, namely, the hell scenes. I was first drawn to the hell relief because of its uniquely Chinese flavor. The hell scenes' combination of Buddhist and indigenous ideologies reflected Buddhism's flexible nature while highlighting local Chinese tastes. This characteristic was accentuated by the dynamic quality of the sculpted works, with energy drawn in

resulted in termination of the work done on the grottoes. Other sources, such as Dazu Grottoes (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), discuss later visits by Ming dynasty officials and royalty. Photos taken of the site during the excavations carried out in the 1940s would also seem to suggest that at least parts of the site were in use during the Qing dynasty [fig. 63]. Changjiu Liu, ed., in Dazu shi ke yan jiu (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1985) provides evidence for continued carving activity in the dating of reliefs numbered 23, 24, and 26 to the Qing dynasty, with relief 25 being added in 1915.

⁶Baodingshan was put on the register of important cultural sites in 1961, and only opened to the general public as of 1981. Mention of Dazu county, and of the site at Baodingshan, occurs in passing in various larger works, most notably Victor Mair's T'ang Transformation Texts, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, no. 28 (Cambridge and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1989), Susan Naquin and Junfang Yu's work Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) and Stephen Teiser's article "The Growth of Purgatory" in Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China, eds. Patricia B. Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993). Naquin and Yu place Dazu in the realm of such monumental sites as Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen, but do not elaborate on why they have chosen to do so. Teiser provides a brief two-paragraph overview of the ten kings tableau, along with mention of the site and its history. Only two articles devoted to Baodingshan specifically, one by Ann Paludan entitled "Enlightenment in stone: The buffalo carvings of Baodingshan," Apollo (February 1994): 11-14, and Zhang Jiaqi's "The Splendour of the Grotto Arts of the Later Period in China," have appeared in Western journals.

large part from the more secular portions of the hell tableau. After I began my study of hell within its historical context and within the site, I came to recognize that the religious and aesthetic values that necessitated the sculpting of the hell scenes at Baodingshan also helped form the final overall configuration of the Great Buddha Bend grotto site.

A brief outline of the method used within this work is as follows. Chapter two will be divided into two main parts. The first will comprise a synopsis of the development of the Chinese belief system that came to equate Sichuan with hell, and how those beliefs were in turn reflected back onto orthodox religious values. The second section will deal with historical developments specific to Dazu County, with the focus being an overview of Baodingshan's creation.

Chapter three will be focused on the hell tableau at Baodingshan, and the historical and literary constructs surrounding hell in the late medieval/early modern eras. This thesis will not attempt an exhaustive study of comparative hell iconography as such a study would not necessarily serve to further the main argument.⁷ Few depictions of hell dating to this period or earlier remain extant, and fewer still are of the size and medium of those seen at Baodingshan. Comparative material will thus be included primarily in conjunction with the discussion surrounding the formal aspects of the tableau.

Lastly, the hell scenes at Baodingshan will be returned to their place within the entire complex. Here I will discuss how the site characterizes a final break from earlier Buddhist sites based on Indic models, representing a truly

⁷For a thorough discussion of the development of hell imagery through the Tang dynasty in China, see Stephen F. Teiser's article "'Having Once Died and Returned to Life': Representations of Hell in Medieval China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 48.2 (December 1988): 433-463.

remarkable Chinese Buddhist artform based on another widely distributed artistic form, the illustrated handscroll. Since hell was a popular theme among non-literate as well as literate audiences, I will look at the use of transformation tableaux [bianxiang] and transformation texts [bianwen] within later Buddhist liturgical practice as a source for the uniquely Chinese layout of the grotto at Baodingshan.

As Sherman E. Lee notes in the introduction to The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850,

The subject [of later Chinese Buddhist painting] is fascinating not only in itself but also in terms of its artistic devices and development, notably the transformations and absorptions of Indian, Central Asian, and Tibetan Buddhist painting by the ever-ingenuous and dominating Chinese and the adaptation of earlier Chinese pictorial solutions to the assumptions and demands of later Chinese culture.⁸

The established construction dates of Baodingshan place it within a later transitional phase of China's history. The growth of a money-based economy along with increasing urbanization prompted changes throughout the empire, including the rise of a middle-class and a broadening incidence of literacy.⁹ If Buddhism was to survive these changes, it had to adapt to the changing needs of its practitioners. It is my contention that these transformations, absorptions, and adaptations can be seen in a variety of ways and on a variety of levels in the

⁸Sherman E. Lee, preface to The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850, ed. Marsha Weidner (University of Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 9.

⁹Valerie Hansen, Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 5. Hansen cites Sichuan, particularly the area around Chengdu, as one of the main metropolitan areas during the late Song period.

work done at Baodingshan, resulting in definitive changes within what was once considered a borrowed ideology and borrowed art. These ideas and their artistic forms denote redefined liturgical needs as they responded to the changes occurring in Chinese society as a whole.

CHAPTER II

BAODINGSHAN

In order to gain a better understanding of the work done at Baodingshan, a brief historical overview of the area as a whole is necessary. Rock carvings are scattered in over forty different groupings within Dazu county, mostly dating from the late Tang to the Southern Song periods, with a few additional works being sculpted in the Ming and the Qing dynasties.¹ How could the administrators and artisans of Dazu, so far removed from the more cosmopolitan regions of China, have been so successful at uniting inspiration and effort to create such an incredibly vast array of artistic works? A look at one of the other major Buddhist cave sites within Dazu county will help to denote some of the differences between Baodingshan and its nearby predecessors, differences which will be analyzed in greater depth in chapter IV.

I will begin with a discussion of the historical context surrounding hell within China, and how notions of the underworld came to be associated specifically with Sichuan province. This will serve to clarify issues surrounding not only the Chinese nature of the hell scenes depicted at Baodingshan, but also possible reasons for their inclusion within the grotto site.

Sichuan: Home to the Dark Regions

¹Zhang, 7.

Hell tableaux of Baodingshan's magnitude are rare in present-day China, and the prevalence of such large-scale works will forever be open to conjecture.² Despite numerous well-preserved cavesites within China, no analogous sculpted hell scenes of Baodingshan's size and importance within the grotto site would appear to exist. Other grottoes had painted hell scenes; work done at Dunhuang, for example, has found representations of the ten kings included in at least eleven different caves.³ However, this number is still not significant when given the fact that the Dunhuang site encompasses 492 extant caves.⁴ At other major sites where more specific documentation is lacking, it is difficult to determine exactly how prevalent depictions of hell were, but sculpted hell scenes do not appear to have been common.

Baodingshan's hell scenes were well-known. A common saying was "One goes up to Mount Emei, down to Baoding,"⁵ a reference to the Bodhisattva

²Although numerous painted works with hell motifs are mentioned in texts such as Acker's Some T'ang and pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting, when viewed within the context of artistic production as a whole, such works are comparatively few in number. Sculpted large-scale representations are also seldom mentioned. Teiser's account of a man named Duliang in 910 CE commissioning images of the Ten Kings to be carved in a grotto in Sichuan, and more contemporary works seen in Beijing and discussed by Anne Swann Goodrich, are among the rare few. The works created for Duliang may still have been in existence prior to the construction of Baodingshan. See Teiser's The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 39, and Goodrich's Chinese Hells: The Peking Temple of Eighteen Hells and Chinese Conceptions of Hell (St. Augustine: Monumenta Serica, 1981).

³ Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 40, n. 20.

⁴Pingting Shi and Xue Shu, "About the Mogao Grottoes," in Art Treasures of Dunhuang, ed. Ho Kai (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1981), 4.

⁵Zhang, 7. This saying could possibly refer to geographic position, although not using "up" in its modern usage equated with "north." Mt. Emei is approximately due west of Baodingshan, not north of it.

Samantabhadra as leading the worshipper into heaven on Emeishan (also in Sichuan) while Baodingshan was where one encountered the more unpleasant of reincarnation possibilities.

The contrast between these two mountains mirrors that of Sichuan proper, an area of fertile river valleys and plains surrounded by unpassable mountains and virtually unnavigable rivers. In the latter years of the Tang, Chengdu was considered to rank second only to Hangzhou as a cosmopolitan center; Chongqing, on the other hand, bore the onus of being far less-densely populated, situated in the “eastern wilderness,” at the joining of the Yangzi River and several lesser tributaries.⁶ In traditional Buddhist cosmology, those in hell are separated from those on earth by insurmountable mountains, with paradise to be found at the top.⁷ Coincidentally, Emeishan and the heaven it promises perches at 4000 feet atop a mountain south of Chengdu, while the hell scenes at Baodingshan are carved under a rocky overhang in a grotto closer to Chongqing. Yet both were considered sacred, and both were sites of active pilgrimage [fig. 2].⁸

⁶Winston W. Lo, Szechwan in Sung China: A Case Study in the Political Integration of the Chinese Empire (Taipei: University of Chinese Culture Press, 1982), 13 and 20.

⁷Anna K. Seidel in “Mountains and Hells: Religious Geography in Japanese Mandara Paintings,” Studies in Central and East Asian Religions (1992-3): 5-6, notes the prevalence within Japanese Buddhist cosmology of “the perception of mountains as the realm of death with the paradises at the summits.”

⁸Susan Naquin and Junfang Yu, eds., map in Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China, np. The change in destination from India to China for pilgrimages is worthy of note. As Gregory and Ebrey, 20, point out, by the Song period, “China came to displace India as the center of the Buddhist world.” Several reasons may have accounted for this, not the least of which was probably the Islamic takeover of the route to India.

The presence of the hell scenes at Baodingshan (and their relative absence at other large sites) can best be understood within the larger context of Sichuan Province. Angela Howard notes that the cult of Dizang,⁹ often termed the “Bodhisattva of Hell,” may have developed in Sichuan prior to the Tang dynasty. Evidence for this is seen in a description of a sixth-century wall-painting of Dizang given in the Buddhist encyclopedia Fayuan zhulin.¹⁰ In another very important way Sichuan can be regarded as the birthplace of the “modern” Chinese conception of hell for it was in Sichuan, at Da Shengci Monastery in Chengdu Prefecture, that the apocryphal Scripture on the Ten Kings is conjectured to have been written.¹¹ For the purposes of this thesis, it is vital to note the non-Indic origin of the Scripture on the Ten Kings. Loosely based upon portions of earlier Pali texts,¹² this scripture manifests overtly Chinese qualities

⁹Known in Sanskrit as Ksitigarbha. Dizang will be discussed at length in chapter III within the context of his central location in Baodingshan’s hell tableau.

¹⁰Howard, “Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten,” 64, n. 61. A later copy of this painting was considered to possess miraculous qualities.

¹¹Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 69-70. See also Marinus Willem de Visser, The Bodhisattva Ti-tsang (Jizo) in China and Japan (Berlin: Oesterheld and Co., 1914), 25-6. Da Shengci Monastery had its start under the auspices of Emperor Xuanzong, while he was in residence in Chengdu in 756-757 CE, and hell scenes were already known to exist there by the time of the next court exodus to Chengdu. Regarding the term “apocrypha,” and the problems inherent in its use, see Robert E. Buswell’s work “Prolegomenon to the Study of Buddhist Apocryphal Scriptures” in Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1-30.

¹²Stephen Teiser, ““Having Once Died and Returned to Life”: Representations of Hell in Medieval China,” 435. Teiser notes the prevalence of hell descriptions in the Pali Nikayas, Jatakas, and Vinaya, but points to an overall lack of systemization regarding the hells, hell as a mental construct remaining as the central focus.

in its use of the ten kings, an idea considered to have been borrowed from the Daoist religion,¹³ as well as in its overtly Confucian emphasis on filial piety and corporal punishment. Such indigenous works were not unusual in Buddhist teachings, being seen as a means of attracting non-believers as well as an effective method for reaching a lay audience.¹⁴

The Scripture on the Ten Kings¹⁵ was most likely produced in China in the ninth century, although mention of the ten kings does occur as early on as the seventh century CE.¹⁶ The earliest extant work dates from 908 and was found at Dunhuang.¹⁷ Teiser and others have traced the authorship of this scripture to one monk by the name of Zangchuan, of whom little is known other than his

¹³Henri Maspero, "The Mythology of Modern China," in Asiatic Mythology, ed. J. Hackin (New York: Thomas J. Crowell, 1932), 364, and DeVissers, 26.

¹⁴Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues," in Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 49. Tokuno paraphrases the cataloguer Daoxuan's opinion of the purpose of indigenous scriptures as "to convert the common people to Buddhism, and . . . to adapt their presentation of doctrine to the people's limited ability to understand."

¹⁵The Scripture on the Ten Kings [Shiwang jing] is actually the shortened form of The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha to the Four Orders on the Prophecy Given to King Yama Concerning the Sevens of Life to be Cultivated in Preparation for Rebirth in the Pure Land [Foshuo yanlo wang shouji sizhong yu xiu shengqi wangsheng jingtu jing]. For a complete study of this scripture, see Stephen Teiser's work, The Scripture on the Ten Kings .

¹⁶Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 48, points to An Essay on the True Karma of the Ten Kings [Shiwang zhengye lun] written in Chang'an in the seventh century.

¹⁷Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 7.

residence at Da Shengci Monastery.¹⁸ Twenty-two copies of the Scripture on the Ten Kings bearing the same inscription regarding production in Sichuan by Zangchuan were recovered from the cache at Dunhuang.¹⁹ The scripture's central theme of filial piety probably did much to save it from total proscription; other apocryphal works which were perceived as a threat to the nation-state were routinely banned and burned.²⁰

By the thirteenth century, the Scripture on the Ten Kings was a popularly circulated non-canonical work.²¹ Other connections to Sichuan appear in the form of bound books of this scripture also found at Dunhuang. These works are prefaced with the notation of having been copied from originals brought to Dunhuang by a family of Sichuanese origin during the Tang dynasty. Sichuan's large woodblock printing industry has been credited with aiding in this type of dissemination of the scripture.²²

¹⁸Evidence for Zangchuan's authorship of the scripture lies mainly in colophons attached to scriptures produced at Dunhuang, in which both the monk and the temple are mentioned by name as sources for the scripture. See Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 65.

¹⁹Waikam Ho, Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art in cooperation with Indiana University Press, 1980), xxxiii.

²⁰Tokuno, 50 and 52.

²¹Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 25 and 79. Teiser notes that, although authorship may be traced to Sichuan, differing versions of the text probably were originating in other parts of China, but no longer remain extant.

²²Ho, xxxiii, notes that printing houses in Sichuan were entrusted with the first official edition of the Northern Song Buddhist canon, produced in Chengdu between 971 and 983 CE.

Sichuan also claims unique status in the Daoist religion. Although of uncertain date, the “Court of the Labyrinth of Springs” in Fengdu, Sichuan,²³ [fig. 3] would seem to hark back to earlier Daoist notions of the afterlife. Originally, Daoist cosmology placed the afterlife in a variety of places,²⁴ becoming standardized into one location - Mt. Tai in Shensi Province - in 110 BCE.²⁵ Exactly when hell was moved from under Mt. Tai to Fengdu is open to debate. First mention of Fengdu as home to the underworld was during the southern Song era [1127-1279] by Fan Chengda, an official travelling through Sichuan.²⁶ According to Werner, the first emperor of Fengdu was a rebel during the Qin dynasty who, upon his death, was made overlord of hell.²⁷ This story bears a striking resemblance to that of King Yama, nominal head of the Buddhist underworld.²⁸

²³John Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, 204. E.T.C. Werner notes that the Indian hell was too far removed from China, so Sichuan was chosen as its new location. E.T.C. Werner, A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology (Boston: Longwood Press, 1977), 449.

²⁴Daoist conceptions of the afterlife could be categorized as falling into three areas - the land of eternal bliss, the Yellow Springs, or residence in the tomb itself. Henri Maspero, Taoism and Chinese Religion, trans. Frank A. Kierman Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 27.

²⁵Yingshi Yu, ““O Soul, Come Back!” A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and the Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 47.2 (December 1987): 388. Mt. Tai, and more specifically, the Lord of Mt. Tai, will be discussed at greater length later on within the context of the hell imagery found at Baodingshan.

²⁶Licheng Guo, Shi Tian yanwang (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo guoli lishi bowuguan, 1984), 25.

²⁷Werner, 449. Unfortunately, Werner does not give a source for this statement.

²⁸Yama, as King of Vaisali, swore while dying in battle to be reborn as king in hell so as to avenge himself against his earthly opponents.

Both DeVisser and Maspero link the latter evolution of the ten kings to earlier Daoist notions of nine layers of darkness.²⁹

By the Tang dynasty, Fengdu had come to be clearly associated with the realm of hell in the minds of the populace. Wu Daozi, a Tang artist renowned for the life-like qualities of his hell scenes, was purported to have painted depictions of hell at a Fengdu temple.³⁰ Fengdu is also mentioned by name in the popular Ming dynasty classic, Journey to the West (Xi you ji), “My name is Cui Jue. I have now been given office in the underworld as the judge in charge of cases at Fengdu.”³¹ This tale is considered to have been based on earlier oral legends, evidence for which exists in the discovery of the Record of Emperor Taizong’s Journey to Hades among the transformation texts found at Dunhuang.³² Located on the route of the Yangzi River tourboat trade, Fengdu remains a popular destination for the average Chinese citizen, still equated in their minds with visions of the underworld.³³

²⁹Maspero, 364, and DeVisser, 26. DeVisser further substantiates his argument with remarks upon the appearance of the terms hun and po, two words used to describe two of the three possible states of the soul’s existence within the Daoist theology, within the sutra itself. Later chapters will contain more on Daoist cosmology and how it relates to the Ten Kings of hell.

³⁰Eberhard, Guilt and Sin in Traditional China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 46, n. 39, citing the Yijianzhi, 48, 1b.

³¹Wu Zhengen, Journey to the West, translated by W.J.F. Jenner, vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986), 194.

³²Tang Taizong rumingji as noted by Guo, 25. Transformation texts will be discussed at greater length in chapter four in regard to the site layout at Baodingshan.

³³Having had the opportunity to visit Fengdu in the summer of 1994, I can honestly say that the mountain itself is still a very active “pilgrimage” spot, although, unfortunately, heavy on the kitsch. (Most of the pilgrims seemed more intent on riding the ski-lift than in burning any incense or paper money!) A few

Other factors linked hell to Sichuan, and, consequently, reinforced its presence at Baodingshan. One of these was the timeless perception that Sichuan lay beyond the limits of comfortable Chinese control. As a peripheral area, the image of Sichuan perceived by the Han Chinese was of a wild place, a frontier country :

The capricious and intractable wilderness readily inspired notions of supernatural powers impervious to human control. As a result the Han inhabitants of the upper and middle Yangzi valley accumulated a rich store of beliefs and rituals focused on comprehending and controlling the frontier landscape and its eerie denizens.³⁴

Lawlessness would also appear to have been a problem associated with Sichuan. Mountainous and peripheral areas were considered to be particularly conducive to organized crime, making eastern Sichuan an ideal spot for marauding bandits.³⁵ Following the Northern Song conquest of the Sichuan region, uprisings occurred frequently, with no fewer than eleven within a fifty year span.³⁶

remnants of past eras remain, mainly a small ornamental bridge located near the top of the mountain, and old steles of which the still legible ones appeared to date back to the Ming dynasty. The Chinese are actively pursuing refurbishing the site, and were kind enough to allow me access to the on-site workshops where most of the "Tang dynasty" statuary was being produced.

³⁴Richard Von Glahn, The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times, Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 123 (Cambridge and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1987), 12.

³⁵Brian E. McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 109.

³⁶Von Glahn, 24.

Sichuan was a place of numerous non-Han tribes as well, a place where, to this day, the tribesmen are thought to worship demons.³⁷ The Han Chinese spared few words when describing the various ethnic groups of Sichuan, using words such as “raw” versus “cooked” to describe the tribes’ civility when dealing with the Han.³⁸ Playing with the homophonous nature of the Chinese language, a Ming author went so far as to transform the ethnic tribes of Sichuan into hungry-ghost-type specters, who haunted cemeteries and devoured passers-by.³⁹

The common perception of Sichuan would then appear to be that of a remote place overrun not only with rebellious, uncooperative individuals, but also with savages, people scarcely perceived of as human in the eyes of the Han Chinese. It is with this perspective in mind that I now turn to a discussion of the site itself.

War’s Vicissitudes

Dazu county is an area of Sichuan province located northwest of Chongqing on the road to Chengdu [fig. 4]. The main center of Dazu county is the city of Dazu, a bustling market town which is quickly losing its rural air under the onslaught of tourism and investment in the region. It is not necessary to travel far outside the city to reach remnants of Dazu’s past glories; the city is virtually ringed by Buddhist cave sites, with construction dates ranging from 892

³⁷Ibid., 26.

³⁸Ibid., 16.

³⁹Ibid.

to 1249 CE [fig. 5]. Two pagodas flank the city of Dazu, one to the north, the other to the south, aptly named Beishan ta (North Mountain Pagoda) and Nanshan ta (South Mountain Pagoda).

Along with the rock carvings at Beishan, the pagoda found there is the oldest relic in the area. It was at Beishan⁴⁰ that General Wei Junjing, influential military leader and civil administrator in Dazu county during the Tang dynasty, fortified himself against the Tang general Wang Jian⁴¹, who had taken refuge in Chengdu following Emperor Xizong's flight to Sichuan from the capital.⁴² Historical record states that Wei Junjing built twenty castles and one hundred look-out towers on the hills surrounding Dazu, and stockpiled rations for his over ten thousand troops stationed nearby.⁴³

In 892 CE, Wei Junjing also undertook the implementation of a large-scale image-carving campaign. Over 6,000 figures were eventually carved, all done in the hope that such work would prove meritorious for the general, and that the region as a whole would be placed under the Buddha's blessed protection.⁴⁴ Unfortunately for Wei Junjing, his devotional act succeeded only in forestalling

⁴⁰Dazu Grottoes, 1. North Mountain is actually composed of several areas often referred to by their more specific names. For simplicity's sake, I here refer to the whole complex as "Beishan."

⁴¹Wang Jian went on to found the kingdom of the Former Shu. Lo, 21-2.

⁴²Emperor Xizong [r. 874-888 CE] fled to Sichuan following the approach of the hordes of Huang Chao. Ibid.

⁴³Zhang, 7.

⁴⁴Dazu Grottoes, 1.

the inevitable; five years after its inception, Wei Junjing's stronghold-temple fell to General Wang Jian.⁴⁵

Wei Junjing's sacrifice was not in vain, however. The carvings at Beishan served as inspiration for the construction of Buddhist art works at various sites around Dazu county. Many of these were sponsored by the same contributors toward later works done at Beishan.⁴⁶ Aside from the military presence at Dazu, evidence for a landed gentry presence is seen at Beishan, in the form of inscriptions that detail various offerings made for devotional purposes.⁴⁷ The court that had followed Emperor Xizong to Sichuan had also brought money and talent with them.⁴⁸ Painters in attendance at the court were recorded as settling down in Chengdu, resulting in a profusion of styles being made available to local artists and artisans.⁴⁹ Although the majority of both most likely remained in Chengdu, it cannot be ruled out that some members of the aristocracy did not move further south into Dazu county. It is probable that such a movement into

⁴⁵Zhang, 10.

⁴⁶Ibid., 7.

⁴⁷Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸Patricia Berger, "Preserving the Nation: The Political Uses of Tantric Art in China," in The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850, ed. Marsha Weidner (University of Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 96-97. See also Angela Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten," n. 12, in which Howard quotes Wen Tong's chapter "Penzhou Zhangshi huaji" in the Ming dynasty work by Yang Shen, Chuan Shu yiwenzhi. On page eight of her introduction, Howard further notes the presence of a well-established indigenous artistic tradition in Sichuan at the time of the court's first arrival, as well as possible iconographic links to Sichuan's Buddhist neighbors, the Kingdoms of Nanzhao and Tibet. Zhang, 9, points to Sichuan as home to China's greatest density of ancient rock-carvings.

⁴⁹Ho, xxxi.

the area would have taken place following Wang Jian's victory. During the Song dynasty, the Chengdu Plain, which includes roughly the area from Chongqing to Chengdu, was seen as one of the wealthiest regions in all of China.⁵⁰

Artistic production during the Five Dynasties period continued steadily under the relative peace found in Sichuan. One-third of the artistic work done at the North Mountain grotto dates from the Five Dynasties,⁵¹ an impressive number of stone sculptures when compared to works of like-medium of this time found in other parts of China. However, it is during the Song dynasty that the highest proportion of artwork was created. Song artisans are credited with not only a core group of carvings at Beishan, but the entire complex of sculptures found at Baodingshan as well.

One Man's Devotion

Situated at an altitude of approximately 500 meters, the monastic complex on Baodingshan sits aloof from the hubbub of daily activity that ensues in Dazu city, fifteen kilometers to the south. The grotto site and the original temple complex were the product of seventy-one years of one man's religious devotion. Zhao Zhifeng, a monk trained in the teachings of the Esoteric Yogacara school of

⁵⁰Lo, 11. Dazu county would be at the eastern edge of the Chengdu Plain.

⁵¹Dazu Grottoes, 2. It is perhaps thanks to its peripheral location that Sichuan escaped much of the turbulence of this period.

Buddhism,⁵² supervised not only the carving of the grotto, but the construction of the monastic complex, both meant to create a center for esotericism at Baodingshan.

Information available on Zhao Zhifeng is scant. It is known that he was born in Dazu county in the twenty-ninth year of the Shaoxing reign of Emperor Gaozong [1160 CE].⁵³ At five years of age, he was sent to reside in a monastery, consequently becoming a Buddhist novice. One commentary states that Zhao was sent away as his mother was ill; this would not seem improbable for the times, given that such an act would guarantee Zhao's education as well as gain merit for the family.⁵⁴ Accounts as to where Zhao was sent are conflicting. One source places Zhao in Hangzhou while another says Zhao studied at the school of a famous Sichuan Yogacara master named Liu.⁵⁵ The latter seems more probable in light of the fact that Esoteric practices were still prevalent in Sichuan

⁵²Dazu Grottoes, 5. For a discussion of Esotericism's development in China, particularly the events surrounding the monks Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, see Zhou Yiliang's article "Tantrism in China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, vol. 8, no.1 (March 1944): 241-332.

⁵³ Dazu xianzhi: Sichuan sheng (Taipei: Chengwen chuban she, 1976), 498.

⁵⁴Liu, 261.

⁵⁵Ann Paludan in her article "Enlightenment in stone: The buffalo carvings of Baodingshan," 11-14, states that Zhao returned to Dazu after "studying esoteric Buddhism at Hangzhou". Paludan does not cite a source for this particular statement, and nothing has been found to support this claim. Zhang Jiaqi's version of Zhao studying in Sichuan makes sense in light of the fact that Liu was supposedly placed in high regard by Wang Jian, the general in control of Dazu county. Given the fact that Liu was born in 855 CE, Zhao could not have received direct instruction from Master Liu, but rather was most likely affiliated with his branch of the Chengdu Yogacara sect. Further evidence of Zhao's admiration for Liu may be found at Baodingshan itself, in the form of relief number twenty-one, depicting the asceticism of Master Liu.

in the Song dynasty, holdovers from earlier Tang practices no longer popular in the heart of the empire.⁵⁶

After sixteen years of study, Zhao went “west,” wandering and preaching for three years.⁵⁷ In 1179, he returned to Baodingshan to lead in the establishment of Longevity Temple [Shengshou si], becoming its first monk.⁵⁸ The area was named “Baodingshan” (Precious Crown Mountain), due to its expansive rise, and there Zhao Zhifeng took an oath to disperse the Buddhist Law to all, to keep the surrounding countryside free from evil calamities, such as flooding, and to bring harmony to the region.⁵⁹

For seventy years, Zhao dedicated himself to his vision of Baodingshan, gaining for the region untold merit and for himself the title of “Master of the Sixth Generation of the Esoteric Sect in China.”⁶⁰ Zhao was also responsible for

⁵⁶Berger, 96-7. Berger, on page 90, also notes that Esotericism had been a force within China since as early as the second century CE, with texts of tantric magical incantations or dharani known and translated into Chinese.

⁵⁷Dazu xianzhi, 498. It is not clear whether Zhou’s point of departure was from somewhere within Dazu county, or from Chengdu. West from Dazu would put him on a course for Mount Emei and Chengdu; west from Chengdu would place him en route to Tibet.

⁵⁸Ibid. Shengshou si was repaired in 1684, and has been completely renovated since 1949. Other buildings at the site include Longevity Tower, built in 1419 in honor of a visit by the imperial Prince of Shu (Shu being the former name for Sichuan), 11th son of the founder of the Ming dynasty. Dazu Grottoes, 5.

⁵⁹Dazu xianzhi, 498-9.

⁶⁰Dazu Grottoes, 5. Zhao Zhifeng’s position in the established hierarchy of the Esoteric school remains to be confirmed. I have as yet to find evidence of his being granted this title in any information outside of the site itself. Charles Orzech also makes a clear case for the disappearance of these lineages after the Huichang persecution of 845 CE. See “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China,” in The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition, Seminar for Buddhist Studies

work carried out at thirteen other sites, as well as for the construction of six monastic complexes, all within Dazu county.⁶¹ He is immortalized in stone at Baodingshan. The carvings that immediately follow the depiction of the King of the Revolving Wheel are said to represent the pious monk at three different stages in his life, the Buddhas carved above serving to indicate that Zhao had achieved enlightenment [fig. 6].⁶²

The construction of the Baodingshan complex appears to have been systematic. Zhao and his workers actually began the stone carving in an area which today is known as Little Buddha Bend [Xiaofowan], a rocky outcropping that lay directly above the main stone face used later for Great Buddha Bend [Dafowan] :

The area is not large; in fact, it is rather like a courtyard. According to historical records, there were at one time tens of thousands of small Buddhist figures on the back wall alone. Unfortunately, only about 2,000 remain today in the whole of the Bend.⁶³

The Little Buddha Bend was badly damaged by fire sometime over the next century, yet Zhao Zhifeng's work in Great Buddha Bend remained intact.⁶⁴

Monograph series, no.2, ed. Henrik H. Sorensen (Copenhagen: Aarhus, 1994), 56.

⁶¹Zhang, 14.

⁶²Dazu Grottoes, 7. Zhao Zhifeng is also purportedly the monk seen preaching in the lowest levels of the hell tableau. Chapters three and four contain further discussion of the significance of Zhao's placement there.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴There is, however, evidence that some shifting of the substratum at Baodingshan has occurred over the centuries, possibly due to earthquakes. It is particularly obvious in the relief of the hell scenes, in which part of the relief has

The sandstone substratum proved ideal for the undertaking, and by 1249 CE the rockface had been worked into over 1,500 individual carved figures, spanning an area 500 meters in length and between fifteen to thirty meters in height [fig. 7 and Appendix B]. According to Ann Paludan, a combination of naturalistic and geometric carving styles can be seen at Baodingshan, an unusual occurrence for an officially-sanctioned sculptural work, most of which tended toward the geometric style.⁶⁵

This blending is subtly used to further stratify the types of subject matter at Baodingshan.⁶⁶ In the hell tableau, this change can be seen as one's eye travels down the cliff-face, from more frontal geometric carvings at the top to almost free-standing forms at the viewer's level. A direct link can then be made between the prescribed traditions involved in depictions of religious icons such as the Buddhas of the Ten Directions [fig. 8], and the latitude afforded the artisan when working on secular subject matter, as is seen in the drunkard not recognizing his own son in the Admonition Against Alcohol portion of the work [fig. 9].

collapsed and a jagged slash can be seen cutting diagonally through the work [fig. 80].

⁶⁵Paludan, 12. I here use "naturalistic" versus "geometric" as defined by Paludan's article. Paludan views the changes in sculptural approach to have been consciously made by either Zhao Zhifeng or the artisans. Although this theory is plausible, she does not theorize as to what motivated such an action. Her argument is weakened by a statement to the effect that the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, and its naturalistic style, is "a prelude to the story at the western end of the south side [of the grotto]" while the Brilliant Kings [Vidyarajas], carved in the geometric style, "close the narration on the north side." This statement implies that the twelfth-century pilgrim entered the grotto at Baodingshan in the same fashion as tourists do today. This does not appear to have been the case, an issue I will discuss in chapter four.

⁶⁶Ibid., 14.

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 in 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.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMATION OF AN INDIGENOUS CHINESE SITE

The hell tableau at Baodingshan represents a truly Chinese work of art. It is based on a sutra of non-Indic origins, and the various real-life components are clearly meant to help the Chinese viewer more closely identify with the souls of the damned, hopefully inspiring them to take action to avoid a similar fate. In this final chapter, I would like to extend this idea of Chinese influence outward, to encompass the entire Great Buddha Bend grotto at Baodingshan.¹

What the pilgrim or tourist encounters at the grotto is a virtually uninterrupted frieze of carvings, altogether comprising thirty scenes punctuated by two caves.² Several authors have likened Great Buddha Bend to “an illustrated storybook,”³ but none have pursued this statement in an attempt to show exactly how this site is exceptional or what reasons may have prompted such a dramatic change. My purpose here will be to show how this type of site layout differs from previous Chinese grotto sites, and how Baodingshan’s Great

¹I have consciously chosen to shift to a usage of “grotto” over simply “Baodingshan” as the latter refers to the entire site, including the monastic structures atop the hill, which are not relevant to this discussion.

²There are thirty-one scenes total; however, number thirty-one is placed on the path coming up the hillside from the river below, and thus cannot be counted among the continuous grotto works.

³Mainly, Paludan, 11, and Zhang, 17. Like Zhang and Paludan, this aspect of the grotto struck me upon my first encounter with photos from the site.

Buddha Bend grotto represents possibly the first major work to respond to the laity's needs with a format popularized in another medium.

The Grotto at Baodingshan

The grotto follows the natural contours of the surrounding landscape, taking a semi-circular shape formed by the erosion of the rock by local springs. The scenes at Great Buddha Bend were probably meant to be viewed by a pilgrim approaching on foot by a path, no longer in use, which leads to the Juxue River below [figs. 60 and 61].⁴ Thus, one would enter the grotto area at what is today scene number five, the depiction of the three Huayan saints [fig. 62].⁵ The placement of these figures is quite appropriate as the philosophy of Huayan Buddhism hinges on the view that enlightenment was available to all those who chose to seek it.⁶ This arrangement would have reinforced the idea that the grotto was for worshippers from all walks of life. To the right of them is a large carved inscription, bearing the name "Baodingshan," over which is a carved grouping said to represent the monk largely responsible for the work done at

⁴Further evidence to support an earlier river entry to the grotto lies in the fact that it was necessary to build an access road to the site "after Liberation." Zhang, 10.

⁵Dazu Grottoes, 7. Vairocana is viewed as the leader of the Esoteric sect.

⁶For a thorough overview of the principles of Huayan Buddhism, see Francis H. Cook's work Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) and Jae-ryong Shim's essay "Faith and Practice in Hua-yen Buddhism: A Critique of Fa-tsang by Li T'ung-hsüan" in Buddhist and Taoist Practice in Medieval Chinese Society, ed. David W. Chappell, Asian Studies at Hawaii, no. 34 (University of Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1987): 109-124.

Great Buddha Bend, Zhao Zhifeng [fig. 6]. Being so prominently placed, Zhao would then be on hand to personally and eternally welcome pilgrims to the sight.

Having entered the grotto, the pilgrim would have then proceeded to the left, walking along while a continuous story unrolled at his right hand, until he had come full circle, having crossed the Buddha-Bless-You Bridge.⁷ At this point, he could then either choose to ascend to the monastic complex on the ridge of the grotto via another set of stairs, or complete the circuit by proceeding to what is now scene number three, the Revolving Wheel of the Six Paths [fig. 63], this reminder of the continuous nature of karma serving as a fitting end to the circle.

The most obvious difference between Great Buddha Bend and most earlier cave sites is the lack of caves, or even cave-like niches, in which the statues would normally be positioned [fig. 64]. The Buddhist rock-cut cave, evolving early on from pre-existing Indian traditions, emerged in China to include only remnants of the stupa and chaitya-hall traditions. One of the most apparent changes occurring in China was that of the stupa being replaced by a central pillar or icon. Another change can be seen in the dissolution of the chaitya-hall's horseshoe-shaped window into the outlines of the niches. These niches focused the worshipper's attention on the icon or iconic grouping while also serving to set the statue apart from its surroundings.

⁷Zhang, 2. It is not clear whether this bridge was always in place, or whether a pilgrim would simply have proceeded downward upon reaching the scene depicting Master Liu's asceticism. Given that such an abrupt ending would leave the circuit incomplete, it seems more likely that a bridge of some sort existed in Song times.

The caves which honeycombed the cliffs at sites such as Dunhuang and Yungang were a necessary part of the religious process [figs. 65 and 66]. They were places where the pilgrim or worshipper entered into a “Buddha-world.” There they continued to perform the rites of circumambulation or meditation on an icon.⁸ Although today many of the caves at these sites appear open and exposed to the visitor, most art historians concur that these caves were generally faced with wooden superstructures which did not stand the test of time.

There are only two caves in Great Buddha Bend grotto and one constructed facade.⁹ Of the two caves, the larger, known as the Cave of Complete Enlightenment, does not have as its focal point a central pillar or icon for circumambulation, as is the case at most other earlier sites, but appears more as a shrine, with three Buddha figures on the south wall flanked on both sides by groupings of bodhisattvas [figs. 67 and 68].

In a rare case of transposition, one of these bodhisattva statues has been brought down to the level of the viewer, and with back turned to the outside world, is depicted as praying to the Buddhas, much as worshippers would themselves do.¹⁰ It must be noted that this cave appears to be naturally-

⁸Although many of these caves also included narrative scenes, I would have to agree with Wu’s analysis that they were not actively used for educational purposes as they would have been extremely hard to see. See Wu Hung, “What is *Bianxiang*?” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 52, no. 1 (June 1992): 133-134.

⁹This is the facade covering the 1000-Armed Goddess of Mercy, scene eight. Although it is difficult to ascertain whether this fronting was part of the original plan, the statue was recessed similarly to the others at the site, if not more so. The other wooden construction at the grotto covers the relief of the Herdsmen Taming the Water Buffalo; its functionality lies in question as the statuary has suffered from intense weathering despite the covering.

¹⁰This change in representing the bodhisattva as one seeking enlightenment, positioned with back turned to the worshipper on ground-level,

occurring, with some work having been done to standardize its shape. The cave is naturally lit from an opening above the entrance; this opening was created by the artisans, and differs from much of what is seen at other sites regarding the need for interior lighting.¹¹

The second cave at Great Buddha Bend is a smaller cave, dedicated to the Buddha Vairocana [fig. 69]. This cave was chiselled out of the rockface, but has since been shored up by bricks,¹² and it follows the more standard format seen at earlier Chinese Buddhist sites. There is a pillar at the middle of the cave, upon which the Buddha sits. The interior space as well as the pillar are all intricately carved.

What is noteworthy here is the fact that the pillar is not truly central to the cave, being either attached to, or extremely close to, the back wall of the cave.¹³ This would negate the possibility of circumambulation, the main purpose behind construction of a central pillar.

Since the central “pagoda” (which developed from the Indian stupa) was a chief symbol of Sakyamuni, circumambulation expressed the devotion to the historical Buddha. In practicing this ritual the worshipers accumulated good deeds.¹⁴

is a thesis unto itself, which I plan to consider at a later time within a more complete discussion of the Baodingshan complex.

¹¹Wu, 133-4, discusses the darkness that pervades most caves. Most light was provided by lit candles or burning oil.

¹²Dazu Grottoes, 7.

¹³Visitors are not allowed access to this cave; therefore, I hesitate to say that the central pillar is not attached to the back wall, as my observations were entirely frontal ones.

¹⁴Wu, 125-7.

Even if the pillar in the Cave of Vairocana allows for some movement around it, the narrowness of the space would have allowed for a very limited number of participants in any ritual activity. Thus, the Cave of Vairocana can be seen as a mere echo of what was common at earlier Chinese sites, its functionality apparently lost.

Baodingshan's distance from most major Chinese cave sites may be perceived as one possible explanation for such discrepancies in the Great Buddha Bend's site plan. This theory is not viable, however, when earlier sites within Sichuan are considered. As noted earlier in chapter two, Dazu county had an extensive history of Buddhist sculptural work prior to the conception of Baodingshan.

As Angela Howard notes, "In contrast to the large cave sites in northern China, Sichuan cliff sculpture occupies niches and small chambers rather than large grottoes."¹⁵ Ample evidence for these niches and chambers, which follow earlier Chinese traditional styles of site construction, can be seen at other sites within Dazu as well as at Baodingshan itself [figs. 70 and 71]. The work done at Little Buddha Bend also shows a clear knowledge of pre-existing Chinese cave formats, with a hollowed-out area and multiple carvings of the Buddha's image. The artisans at Great Buddha Bend can thus be seen as consciously moving away from known Chinese forms.

As was the case at earlier sites, at Great Buddha Bend one does not enter into a sacred space in order to view the Buddha and his array of attendants. Nor

¹⁵Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten," 8. However, Howard does not reflect on Great Buddha Bend's changed format from the niche and grotto style.

is the pilgrim confronted with niches “excavated as closely as beehives.”¹⁶ Instead, he or she enjoys the company of the statues, many of which extend outward away from the rockface, as if to greet the viewer. There is a feeling of being watched over, an intimacy allowed by the proximity and size of the statuary. This feeling of closeness is further augmented by the incorporation of numerous images which the pilgrim could easily identify as common to daily life. Furthermore, the pathway which takes the pilgrim around the grotto is narrow, leaving little room for practical applications such as monks seated in meditation, or large groups of worshippers gathering for a ritual celebration.¹⁷

Issues of Text and Image

One of the most common features of medieval and later medieval vernacular narrative was the use of illustrated handscrolls as a popular form of entertainment.¹⁸ Among these handscrolls, modified versions of sutras, known as transformation texts or bianwen, were specifically designed to propagate the religion to the uneducated.¹⁹ Among such handscrolls, one of the most popular

¹⁶Zhang, 12.

¹⁷The pathway varies in width quite considerably, with some areas, notably those in front of the Parinirvana scene at the actual “bend” in the grotto and in front of the hell tableau and the Asceticism of Master Liu at the opening end of the grotto, reaching a depth where masses could be held and accommodate larger groups. The average width of the rest of the pathway is probably around ten to twelve feet.

¹⁸Victor Mair, Painting and Performance: Chinese Recitation and its Indian Genesis (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 1.

¹⁹Chen, 251-2. For two different approaches to the intricacies of the term bian, see Mair’s T’ang Transformation Texts, 37-49, and Wu’s article “What is

subjects for presentation were transformation texts showing Mulian going to the underworld to rescue his mother, with detailed illustrations of hell's physical appearance and bureaucratic structure.²⁰ Numerous illustrated copies of this text were found in the cache of manuscripts at Dunhuang, with copies now scattered among the British Museum, the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, and Peking.²¹

Transformation texts composed mainly of illustrations were known as transformation tableaux or bianxiang.²² Transformation tableaux existed in a variety of media, including paper, silk, and wall-paintings. Bianxiang could also refer to sculpted works.²³ Both bianwen and bianxiang were considered to be essential for spreading the Buddha's message; both appear to date to the late Tang and Five Dynasties period.²⁴ A Central Asian precursor for the use of transformation tableaux can be found in a wall painting from Kizil [fig. 72], which depicts King Ajatasatru being educated in Buddhism by his minister who

Bianxiang?" In this work, Wu also gives a detailed analysis of specifically the term bianxiang versus that of bianxiang used within the context of bianwen.

²⁰Chen, 25-6. Mair, in his work entitled T'ang Transformation Texts, 14, states unequivocally that, "Of all the Dunhuang popular literary texts, none more clearly qualifies as a bianwen than that relating Mahamaudgalyayana's rescue of his mother from the dark regions. This is a text for which there exist multiple related copies, most of which include titles specifying the work as a bianwen."

²¹Ibid, 26. Mair in Transformation Texts, 100-102, also refers to bianwen with text on the backside as well as manuscripts where text alternates with blank spaces, presumably left open for the inclusion of images.

²²Ibid., 252.

²³Victor Mair, "Records of Transformation Tableaux," Toung Pao 72.1-3 (1986): 3.

²⁴Mair, Painting and Performance, 1. In this work, Mair traces the bianwen tradition back to its roots in India and Southeast Asia.

uses a painted cloth. This work provides evidence for the early use of mobile painted works in religious instruction.

The transformation texts and tableaux may be seen to derive from a heritage of oral transmission, with the emphasis originally placed on the pictures and less on the accompanying text. Evidence for oral transformation performances taking place in Sichuan province occur as far back as the eighth century.²⁵ Both bianwen and bianxiang would appear to have lost popularity at some point during the Song dynasty, although “storytelling with pictures persisted under other names.”²⁶ An early 20th century description of an oral performance using pictures may help in visualizing how a medieval event would appear to the viewer:

The pictures were large colored paintings on cloth that could be rolled up for easy transportation. The performer would hang them on the outer wall of a building facing the street and point to relevant spots on them as he told his tale. The most common paintings depicted the various tortures of hell. These could be used in conjunction with virtually any of the pao-chuan to show what happens to those who go against the moral lessons they proffered. The paintings were not divided by lines into sections but did portray a continuous sequence of narrative events.²⁷

References to hell, and particularly the Buddha’s disciple Mulian and his descent into hell, are numerous in transformation tableaux and transformation texts. These are perhaps due to an earlier Indian work, the Divyavadana, where

²⁵Mair, Transformation Texts, 216. Here Mair refers to passages found in the Tan bin lu [Records of talks about guests] compiled by Li Fang in Taibing guangji, chapter 269, 2109.

²⁶Ibid., 3.

²⁷Mair, Painting and Performance, 9. Baozhuan [pao-chuan] refers to the recitation of precious scrolls.

Mulian, in his capacity as magician, conjures up images with which he instructs the populace.²⁸ One of the earliest Chinese writings on this subject can be found in the Notes on the Origins of Events and Things, written in the eleventh century, which cites that during the late summer Ghost Festival “painted representations of Maudgalyayana saving his mother are displayed.”²⁹ Already dating from the Tang dynasty are references to theatrical productions which were based on the Mulian theme.³⁰ Interestingly enough, the Buddhist source from which the Mulian transformation works are thought to have been derived, the Scripture on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness, is also of questionable authenticity.³¹

Mulian also figured prominently in the Yulan pen Scripture, a work devoted largely to ancestral worship and which played a pivotal role in oral performances employed during the medieval Ghost Festival.³² This scripture was extremely popular among elite and villager alike, and was the basis for temple lectures in which the monks expounded the merits of filial piety to lay devotees.³³ Like the Scripture on the Ten Kings, and most writings dealing with

²⁸Ibid., 64.

²⁹Mair, Transformation Texts, 12. Mair posits that these representations were derived from transformation tableaux.

³⁰Ibid., 13. Mulian’s popularity as a subject for live entertainment did not diminish with time. See Berthold Laufer’s work, Oriental Theatricals.

³¹Teiser, Ghost Festival, 48.

³²Yulan pen jing. Teiser, The Ghost Festival, 6. Teiser, 107, claims a Tantric precedence for the Ghost Festival, offering the Scripture of Dharanis for Saving Hungry Ghosts with Burning Mouths [jiuba yankou egui tuoleni jing] as a possible precursor.

³³Ibid., 7.

more sinicized subjects, the Yulan pen Scripture was also excluded from the orthodox Chinese Buddhist canon.³⁴

Apart from the Mulian works, the ten kings were also a part of the oral performance tradition, appearing either individually or together. Their function was more varied, actively being used at services involving the ten memorial post-mortem feastdays as well as during any of the widely encouraged premortem services.³⁵ As statues, the carvings of the kings at Great Buddha Bend Grotto were fit to receive offerings, and probably were not used as meditation devices. Documentation to support the notion of monks engaged in memorial services involving the ten kings has been found in the Dunhuang texts.³⁶

All of the above evidence would seem to support a theory that, by the late medieval period, depictions of hell in all of its various facets would not only be desirable, but actually necessary. With ceremonies specific to the well-being of the deceased widening their appeal, the Buddhist clergy either had to accommodate those needs, or allow themselves to be usurped by interlopers in the form of popular entertainers or Daoist priests.

Wu Hung argues that bianxiang paintings should not be considered as related to bianwen for two reasons: first, because works titled bianxiang are narrative in neither content nor format, and, secondly, because those bianxiang works found at Buddhist cave sites were not produced for edification, being too

³⁴Ibid., 20.

³⁵Ibid., 10 -41.

³⁶Ibid., 78.

incoherent to serve this purpose³⁷ Although his arguments are well-supported by his choice of evidence from Dunhuang, the grotto at Baodingshan would seem to uphold just such an impossible connection. The hell scenes are commonly referred to as *bianxiang*,³⁸ and if one considers the hell tableau alone, it is apparent that it is a pictorially-based work, one where the narrative is at least implied, if not strictly adhered to.

The hell tableau at Great Buddha Bend is divided into a series of bands, top to bottom, much like stacked sections of a scroll. The kings appear in chronological order, right to left, similar to how one would envision them appearing in an illustrated handscroll, with or without text. The main hells follow suit, and, if there is a breakdown seen in the ordering of the lowest strata, this is not necessarily to deny that there is no order, but simply that there was no room. Similar results can be seen in illustrated handscrolls where artisans were forced to make use of every available inch of space. Wu Hung further differentiates between narrative and iconic modes of representation, predicating this division on the interaction of the viewer. Wu stipulates that narrative formats engage the worshipper as a viewer, not as a participant, which is the

³⁷Wu, 116 and 130. I agree with Wu's earlier statement on page 115 in that it does not necessarily follow that all paintings falling under the rubric "*bianxiang*" are therefore illustrations of *bianwen*. Wu also states on page 122 that "from the High Tang on, *bianxiang* were generally understood as a kind of two-dimensional, complex pictorial representation. Because they are two-dimensional, they are not sculptures." Part of his evidence lies in a general overview of catalogs, in which the word *bianxiang* occurs most frequently as a description of temple murals and picture scrolls. I perceive the grotto's works in many ways functioning as greatly enhanced temple murals. This idea, when combined with the fact that only a few of the works done at Great Buddha Bend can be classified as free-standing sculpture, I feel allows for the usage of the term *bianxiang* with regard to the site.

³⁸Liu, 485.

main function of iconic works.³⁹ Although he notes that some bianxiang exist in which the central icon is surrounded by narrative-style scenes, Wu also points out that these are largely out of sequence, and, hence, cannot be viewed as narrative in the strict, linear sense of the word. The hell tableau at Great Buddha Bend would appear to represent a blending of these two types: Dizang Bodhisattva as central icon, to whom devotees can engage in direct worship, while below him the actions of the souls of the damned and their jailers remain to be witnessed from the outside. While not entirely ordered, a definite attempt has been made to sequence the events depicted.

I would not argue that the hell tableau was constructed solely for preaching; its surrounding space and lotus-shaped altar were obviously designed to accommodate a variety of types of worship by an equally diverse number of participants. The presence of the highly-detailed hymns and descriptions, however, does point to a more interactive style of worship. Wu Hung postulates that the bianxiang of the caves at Dunhuang were primarily the result of meritorious acts, their efficacy being muted by the placement of the bianxiang far from the viewer and the darkness of the cave itself.⁴⁰

Neither problem exists at Baodingshan, and, therefore, one can surmise that meritorious act was not the sole purpose for the tableau's construction. The two widely-practised funerary rites centered on the Yulan pen jing and the Rites for Distributing Food to Burning Mouths from the Essentials of Yoga.⁴¹ The latter

³⁹Wu, 130.

⁴⁰Ibid., 133-4.

⁴¹Yujia jiyao yankou shishi yi. For a thorough overview of the evolution of the shishi rites, see Orzech's article "Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China." Julia K. Murray in "The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration in

was a more strictly Esoteric ritual, and as Baodingshan was promoted as an Esoteric center, it probably served as the focal point of any large-scale plenary masses. Both of these rituals dealt with the feeding of the hungry ghosts, a notion visually reinforced by the placement of the Hungry Ghost Hell directly behind the tableau's free-standing altar [fig. 73]. Depicted in such a fashion, the starving soul appears to be receiving the offerings, and serves as a close and constant reminder of the fate that awaits those who do not give willingly to the needy. Further evidence for rituals related to the Ghost Festival can be seen in the inscription placed immediately next to the statue of Zhao Zhifeng; it provides a gruesome description of the hungry ghost state, and refers directly to ways to protect oneself from their awful fate.⁴²

If the rituals related to celebrations of death and the afterlife can be extrapolated from other ritual activities, then those involving Dizang and the ten kings probably included bowing, chanting, the use of prayers and hymns, along with the usual offerings of flowers, the burning of incense and the offering of money to be used by the Buddhist community.⁴³ The fact that the Scripture on the Ten Kings was not an orthodox work would have mattered very little, as the

China after 850," in The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850, ed. Marsha Weidner, (University of Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 94, asserts that few Esoteric rituals survived after the persecution of the Tang dynasty, but of those that did "rituals that answered Chinese concerns for the well-being of the dead and for the prolongation of life eventually became a part of regular practice."

⁴²This inscription is partially gone due to water damage, but what does remain has been translated in Appendix A, and is noted as letter "G" in the drawing of the hell tableaux.

⁴³Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 10.

Buddhist appropriation of popular imagery was considered to be an “expedient device” [upaya] for educating lay audiences.⁴⁴

Unlike the earlier caves of Dunhuang which served as the focus for Wu Hung’s analysis, those caves constructed in the Five Dynasties and Song periods, contemporaneous with the works at Baodingshan, also have longer inscriptions [fig. 74 and 75]. Several factors could account for this: a rising literacy rate among the Chinese populace, or a final sinicization of Buddhism with greater emphasis being placed on the written word.⁴⁵ These longer inscriptions could feasibly have been read by either a literate pilgrim or a monk engaged in edifying lay devotees. The same holds true for the hell tableau at Baodingshan [fig. 76]. Being fully exposed to the outside world, there is no darkness to impede legibility. There are no inscriptions placed too high to be read, given that the site was probably painted even more brightly than today’s restoration work allows for. Moreover, the closer to eye-level the carving, the more complete the inscribed texts become, implying that it was expected that a pilgrim or monk would at least attempt to read them.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Daniel Overmyer, “Buddhism in the Trenches: Attitudes toward Popular Religion in Chinese Scriptures Found at Tun-huang,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 50.1 (June 1990): 197.

⁴⁵Julia K. Murray, 135-138, discusses these two possibilities at greater length. Valerie Hansen notes that “the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed an enormous increase in the number of people taking the [civil service] exams in any given year.”. She also indicates that, while overall literacy was still low, it was definitely on the increase among city dwellers, merchants and gentry, thanks in large part to the expanding wood-block print industry. See Valerie Hansen’s work Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276, 7.

⁴⁶Teiser, “Growth of Purgatory,” 127, argues that the placement of Baodingshan’s scenes at eye-level implies an illiterate or semi-literate congregation. He obviously predicates this statement on the imagery, not taking into account the amount of text actually involved within each scene at the site.

Aside from the heavy use of very visible inscriptions in the hell tableau, other aspects of the work point to Buddhist propagation as a prominent focus. The figure of Zhao Zhifeng [fig. 20], placed slightly higher than the level of the viewer with hand held up as he gestures toward the inscribed sutras and sculpted carvings around him, furthers the notion that the scene was meant to represent an oral performance.⁴⁷ One can view the figure of Zhao as a surrogate guide for those literate individuals who chose to contemplate the texts and carvings which surround him on their own. Or, Zhao can be seen as a type of mnemonic aid for those who were not literate, evoking memories of popular oral performances of the Mulian genre that they had seen elsewhere.

The combination of text and image in a relatively balanced format supports the theory that the hell scenes fall clearly into neither the bianwen nor the bianxiang category, but in fact represent a blending of the two traditions. “Wherever texts exist at all, even if they are accessible only to a small minority, the two sorts of tradition [oral and written] are bound to infiltrate one another.”⁴⁸ The same could be said of the perceived separation of the written and illustrated traditions. Wu Hung himself asserts,

A general principle in studying religious art is that individual pictures and statues must be observed in their architectural and religious contexts: they are not portable objects that can be carried around and

Given the combination of the two, I would argue that Zhao Zhifeng was attempting to reach both lettered and unlettered devotees.

⁴⁷This figure is not mentioned in the discussion on the hell scenes found in *Dazu shike yan jiu*. However, *Dazu xianzhi: Sichuan sheng*, np, specifically identifies this figure as “Standing sculpture of Zhao Zhifeng.”

⁴⁸Mair, *Transformation Texts*, 111, quoting Confucius in *The Analects*, translated by Arthur Waley (New York: Vintage Books, 1938), 51.

appreciated independently but are components of a larger pictorial program designed for a particular ritual structure for religious worship.⁴⁹

My purpose in placing the hell scenes back into the overall plan of Great Buddha Bend has been to reintegrate the individual tableau into its original setting. Such a reintegration was necessary to fully understand the work and its function within the whole. The question of bianxiang versus bianwen, therefore, provided a forum for debate which served to help clarify often ignored issues of synthesis and appropriation among works done at sites like Great Buddha Bend.

⁴⁹Wu, 123-4.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Buddhist concepts of hell changed in various ways upon arrival in China. One was the appearance of the ten kings and the incorporation of Confucian-style bureaucracy into the administration of the underworld. Another change was that of location, hell being moved from the remote realm of India to the more familiar reaches of Sichuan. Yet another change can be seen in the widespread number of depictions of hell found in China.¹

Notions of hell had existed in China prior to the arrival of Buddhism, but never with the scale or intensity found within the medieval and modern periods. I see this change as a religious response to sociological demands. Several factors support this theory. One very important piece of evidence is the spread of the Scripture on the Ten Kings, and its incorporation into religious life, despite the fact that it was widely known to be a non-canonical work.² Clearly, the educational value inherent in depictions of hell was not lost upon the clergy,

¹Although descriptions of the hells are clear within early Indian Buddhist doctrine, they were not a popular subject for depiction. Bimala Charan Law in Heaven and Hell in Buddhist Perspective (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishing, 1973), appendix ix, points out the absence of hell in early Buddhist textual and artistic works, noting that any mention of hell is absent from the Asokan inscriptions, as well as being isolated to a single representation on the railing at Bharhut.

²Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 9, points out that there is no evidence for the scripture in the early Buddhist catalogues, and, although copied, first by hand and later mass-produced in print, from the 10th century onward, the Scripture on the Ten Kings was not allowed into the Buddhist canon until 1912.

nor among the bureaucratic elite: “Penalties are messages, messages to those who suffer, to those who observe, to those who execute, and to those who know of them only by rumor.”³

The bureaucrats may have been seeking a method to alleviate criminal activity, but the clergy was looking for a way to convince the laity of the severity of repercussions in the next life for karmic disobedience in the here-and-now. Buddhism’s flexible nature allowed for a broad interpretation of what constituted hell; orthodox doctrine held that man ultimately had the power to create for himself his own personal hell. Relying on tortures real as well as imagined, unique representations of hell were produced in response to an individual’s, or perhaps a community’s, fears and concerns for their deceased loved ones as well as for their own future well-being.

Thematically, the composition of Great Buddha Bend varies widely: jataka tales and scenes from the historic Buddha’s life are intermingled with reliefs depicting local dignitaries along with works which would now be construed as relating to a variety of religious affiliations.⁴ Such a wide range

³McKnight, *Law and Order in Sung China*, 4 and 351. McKnight notes on several occasions that the Confucian ideal of educational transformation through power of example was the basis for the legal system. Eberhard, 26, correlates the rise in morality books to an increase in crime related to the urbanization trends taking place in the late Song dynasty.

⁴Aside from the tableau devoted to Master Liu, Zhao Zhifeng is depicted several times in a relief placed at the entrance to Great Buddha Bend grotto. Indigenous gods appear in the forms of the gods of wind, thunder, lightning and rain. The birth of the Buddha shows the infant being bathed by a water-spouting dragon. Regarding the Great Buddha Bend’s somewhat unorthodox appearance, Paludan, 11, is quick to point out the influences of Confucianism and Daoism, which by the Southern Song would appear to have been firmly blended with Buddhism in the minds of both laity and clergy. Unfortunately, many of the more apparent of such works, such as the carving of the Taoist Sages and the depiction of the Jade Emperor, were actually carved after Zhao’s death, and, therefore, cannot be considered part of the original site design.

may be reflective of Zhao's efforts to widen his monastic community's appeal by melding together diverse orthodox and heterodox traditions. Upaya, or expedient means, was a doctrine preached by the Buddha specifically to aid in the dissemination of Buddhism. Buddhism's original use of Daoist terms to translate abstract ideas from Sanskrit or Pali into Chinese was seen as upaya. It was done in order to make these ideas more accessible to a suspicious public. Zhao Zhifeng's work at Great Buddha Bend can also then be viewed as upaya. By using imagery and texts which were accepted throughout all levels of society, his religious efforts could then achieve the greatest success.

Factors such as patronage would conceivably have played a major part in what was carved. Beishan was constructed largely as a meritorious undertaking; yet Zhao Zhifeng developed Baodingshan for the edification of both laymen and clergy. The earlier works at Beishan were funded by General Wei Junjing, with later works known to have been commissioned by gentry, monks and nuns as well as local officials. Clear evidence for funding of Baodingshan is not available. One knows for certain, however, that this was not an imperially-sponsored undertaking, as was the case at other sites. Zhao Zhifeng undertook this project himself, his main source of income presumably those local patrons who had sponsored work at Beishan, as well as visiting wealthy pilgrims. Both Zhao's religious vocation and the demands made upon him by his patrons may explain the wide variation of imagery chosen for depiction at the Great Buddha Bend grotto.

The works at Great Buddha Bend follow a continuum from largely iconic works to varying degrees of narrative storytelling. Some scenes within the grotto

area could be argued as being solely bianwen in that they are largely textual in content. These include the various steles interspersed throughout the site. Others, such as the Guardians of the Law [fig. 77], the Taming of the Water Buffalo [fig. 78] and the Parinirvana scene [fig. 79], may be argued to be bianxiang in the stricter sense of the word, pictorial works without accompanying text. Such scenes would have required outside interpretation, and probably functioned in a variety of ways, either as icons for worship or as backdrops for ritual services.⁵ The hell tableau is only one of many that combines a considerable quantity of both text and image.

The overall layout of the site at Great Buddha Bend may differ from earlier Chinese site precedents, but one could view it as a sculptural representation based on a normally two-dimensional format, i.e. the handscroll. This is not to say that the artisan actively referred to an illustrated handscroll in order to produce the carvings at Great Buddha Bend, but rather, that their popular appeal made for a source commonly known to both craftsmen and clergy. As discussed earlier, the handscroll was a format popularized by the clergy as a transportable means by which they could reach a larger lay audience, while the development of the handscroll industry is considered by some scholars to have been based in Sichuan province.⁶ Therefore, it is not impossible to

⁵Murray, 129, states that the “grand iconic tableaux for Mahayana sutras reflect the importance of contemplation and visualization rituals in Tang Buddhist practice” without specifying which rituals were involved, or who was involved in their practice. For many of the more iconic statues at Great Buddha Bend, contemplation and visualization would have been difficult given the relative lack of space for this type of meditative exercise.

⁶Ho, xxxi. According to Ho, Dasheng ci Monastery, home to the monk who wrote the apocryphal Scripture on the Ten Kings, was known nationwide as a center of Buddhist art and Buddhist propagation, handscrolls forming a large part of both.

theorize that the design of Great Buddha Bend grotto developed from handscroll prototypes, be they bianwen or bianxiang.

Zhao Zhifeng was responding to a need for edifying works to portray specific scenes from Buddhist sources. In order to do so effectively, Zhao chose a format that complemented the rocky grotto area, a format that was suitable for his purpose of spreading the Buddhist doctrine. This format also happened to be one which was widely popularized, appealing to all classes of society. The populace preferred entertainment to education, and beginning as early on as the Tang dynasty, the clergy sought to accommodate this fact. Documentation shows that on festival days, when spectators and worshippers were gathered on the monastery grounds, the monks themselves would stage dramatic performances for their edification as well as enjoyment.⁷ It has also been determined that, beginning in the Tang, bianwen and bianxiang came to be utilized by entertainers outside of the Buddhist community.⁸ Zhao Zhifeng's construction of a permanent, large-scale bianwen/bianxiang site may have been an attempt by the clergy to regain control of the oral performance tradition.

Time and distance had made the grotto system seen at earlier sites unnecessary. Education, not circumambulation, was the key to reaching the laity in the 12th century.⁹ India was faraway, and Song Dynasty China had a long-standing religious tradition based on various apocryphal scriptures. Their

⁷Chen, 272.

⁸Mair, Painting and Performance, 32.

⁹Chen, 251-2, notes that extremely abstruse texts had to be modified in order to propagate the religion to the uneducated.

popular appeal made them vital portions of a site like Great Buddha Bend. The apocryphal Scripture on the Ten Kings, upon which the hell tableau is based, is not the only such work in the grotto. Another apocryphal Chinese scripture, the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents,¹⁰ serves as the source for scene number fifteen. Both works are based heavily upon the Chinese concept of filial piety, and both can be found among the illustrated bianwen scrolls found at Dunhuang.¹¹

Other non-Indic elements lace the entire site. A carved tiger figure guards the entrance to the monastic complex; a carved lion stands watch over the Cave of Complete Enlightenment. The gods of cloud, wind and thunder, along with the numerous representations of secular life scattered among the Buddhist stories, helped to place the worshipper firmly in China.¹²

How was it possible for such disparate themes and so many controversial scenes to be depicted in lieu of more customary, canonical works? Valerie

¹⁰Bao fumu enzhong jing. Although I have not as yet had the opportunity to fully study this area of the site, it does appear to closely mirror the main aspects of the scripture, i.e. the hardships of pregnancy and childrearing. Whether or not the texts inscribed there exhort the worshipper to make yulan ben offerings on behalf of his or her parents as suggested in the scripture remains to be studied.

¹¹Mair, Transformation Texts, xvii. It is interesting to note how accommodating the Buddhist faith can be, its initial failure to incorporate notions of filial piety being one of the main reasons given for the Buddhist persecutions of 446 CE and 574-577 CE.

¹²See Wu, 152. Murray, 141, refers to these three as “indigenous Chinese folk deities.” Discussion of the many secular scenes incorporated into the Buddhist imagery at Great Buddha Bend deserves further attention. Virtually all of the available sources make reference to at least one of the many mundane events depicted, yet no one, to my knowledge, has done an exhaustive study of how this secular imagery responds to or reflects the Buddhist imagery which surrounds it.

Hansen notes that officially sanctioned works of the late medieval period were strictly regulated, forced to mold to rigorous standards implemented by the orthodox Buddhist church.¹³ Creating a site dependent more on private donations than official monies, Zhao Zhifeng was allowed greater latitude in what he chose to include in the construction at Great Buddha Bend. The donors, assembled from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, also had differing reasons and demands for works to be included at the grotto. The monks and nuns sought meditative aids, or works that they may have felt were necessary for the edification of the populace. Landed gentry and visiting pilgrims were looking for themes common to their daily life, themes centered on family and the life hereafter. Great Buddha Bend can then be seen as a work constructed under the direction of one man, but devoted to a myriad of concerns from a diverse congregation.

¹³Hansen, 24-5. Although Hansen is here focusing on textual works, I see no reason why this sort of control would not have been extended into the artistic realm as well.

APPENDIX A

HYMNS INSCRIBED ON RELIEF NUMBER 20

Captions under the Ten Kings

The captions appearing under the Ten Kings at Baodingshan are among the thirty-four hymns included in The Scripture on the Ten Kings, as translated by Stephen Teiser.¹ Differing from Teiser's translation, however, the ten hymns at Baodingshan do not correspond to the same ten kings, even though each of the kings is specifically mentioned in the scripture and accorded a hymn. Where the hymns were originally positioned within The Scripture on the Ten Kings will be referred to in the footnotes. This author has taken care to note when sections of Teiser's translations have been used on a line-by-line basis.

Officer of Immediate Retribution²

If one desires peace and happiness and to reside amongst men and gods,
 one must immediately stop taking money belonging to the
 Three Jewels.³

¹Stephen Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism (Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

²Xianbao Siguan, an intermediary between the world of the living and that of the dead. In Teiser's translation, this hymn is connected to Dushi Dawang. There is no mention of this particular personage in Teiser's translation. There is, however, an "Officer of Records" or Si Lu.

³The Buddha, the Sangha, and the Law.

Once you fall into the dark regions and every hell of the
underworld,
there, amongst the clamor, you will receive punishment for untold
years.

Magnanimous King of Qin⁴

The various kings [of hell] dispatch messengers to inspect the
deceased,⁵
to see what merit these men and women have cultivated.⁶

Depending on one's name, one can be released from the hells of
the three paths,⁷
and escape passing through the dark regions, and there
encountering suffering and grief.

King of the First River⁸

Wrongdoings are like a mountain peak as numerous as the sands of
the Ganges,⁹
but blessings number not so much as a little fine dust.

⁴Qinguang Dawang. In Teiser's translation, 211, this hymn is related to King Yama's address to the Buddha in which he discusses the duties of the Ten Kings.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Teiser here translates the passage to read "sons and daughters" as opposed to men and women.

⁷Teiser, 211.

⁸Chujiang Dawang. In the Teiser translation, this hymn is part of a continuing interchange between King Yama and the Buddha. At Baodingshan, the mirror of karmic deeds is positioned between Dushih Dawang and Pingzheng Dawang .

⁹Soothill, 302.

Yet the good spirits protect you,
so you can be reborn into a powerful, rich and devout family.¹⁰

Sovereign King of Song¹¹

Actions of sin and suffering within the three paths¹² are
completed with ease;
they are all conditioned by killing living beings in order to
sacrifice to the gods.

You should aspire to wield the diamond sword of true wisdom,
using it to cut off all of Mara's clan,
and to awaken the sentient beings.

King of the Five Offices¹³

Breaking the fast and damaging the precepts, slaughtering
chickens and pigs,
these are reflected clearly in the mirror of actions.¹⁴

If one commissions this scripture together with the painting of
images,
King Yama will issue an imperial order to dispel all blame.

King Yama¹⁵

¹⁰Teiser, 208.

¹¹Song Di Dawang. As with the hymn attached to Chujiang Dawang, this hymn is part of an ongoing exchange between King Yama and the Buddha.

¹²Soothill, 62. The three roads, the three unhappy ways - the six gati.

¹³Wu Guan Dawang. According to Teiser, King of the Five Offices, although others say "King of the Five Officials." In Teiser's translation, this hymn is part of a monologue given by the Buddha regarding the roles of the Ten Kings and how individuals come to be sent to them. It is preceded by a discussion specific to King Yama.

¹⁴Teiser, 203.

Compassionate toward the hated,¹⁶ he transforms all, such is
his awe-inspiring majesty;¹⁷
the wheel of the six paths [of incarnation] turns round unceasingly.

Teaching and edifying, he detests suffering, contemplating
contentment and joy;
hence, he manifests himself in the form of Yama-raja, Son of
Heaven.¹⁸

King of Transformations¹⁹

If a person believes in the Law and does not doubt it,
and copies the scripture, obeys it, receiving and retaining it,

upon giving up one's life, he will release himself from the
three evil paths,
and in this body he will always avoid entering Avici Hell.²⁰

King of Mount Tai²¹

¹⁵Yanluo Tianzi. In the Teiser work, this hymn appears near the beginning, under a passage describing King Yama.

¹⁶Prabhara. Soothill, 299.

¹⁷Teiser, 201.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Biancheng Dawang. He is the king of the sixth hell and is seated to the right of the central Bodhisattva figure. Here DeVisser states that the guilty are tortured by beating and being placed in the cangue. This hymn appears early on. It also is related to how a sentient being arrives in Yama's domain, and how one can successfully avoid such a fate.

²⁰*Ibid.*

A single life is fragile like a lantern in the wind;
 two rats creep up, gnawing at a vine in the well.
 If one does not cultivate a precious raft to ferry one over the
 bitter sea of life,
 then what can you depend on to attain deliverance?²²

Impartial King²³

At that time the Buddha extended a ray of light that filled the
 Great Thousand,²⁴
 dragons and ghosts assembled with man and gods.

Indra, Brahma, the various gods, and the multitude of heaven
 and hell's living creatures
 all came to prostrate themselves in front of the World-honored One.

King of the Capital²⁵

Each birth on the Six Paths contains suffering without limit;
 the Ten Evils and the Three Paths are not easy to bear.

If all efforts are put forth to establish the feasts completing
 meritorious deeds,

²¹Taishan Dawang. The second to last hymn, it appears after the final invocation of the Scripture on the Ten Kings.

²²Teiser, 218.

²³Pingzheng Dawang, also sometimes called Pingdeng Dawang. This hymn appears as the second hymn in Teiser's translation. It is related to King Yama, but moreso to the gathering together of the myriad beings to hear the Buddha preach the Scripture on the Ten Kings.

²⁴Teiser, 199.

²⁵Dushi Dawang. According to Teiser, this hymn makes up part of the final remarks of King Yama on the celebration of the ten feasts for the ten kings.

then sins as numerous as the sands of the Ganges will disappear of themselves.

King who Turns the Wheel of Dharma²⁶

For the last three,²⁷ where they pass is an important crossing.
Good and evil depend only on felicitous actions as a cause.

If you don't perform good, there will be still more grief, and within a thousand days,
they will be reborn into a womb only to die in birth,
or to die at a young age.²⁸

Officer of Rapid Recompense²⁹

Not constructing a boat or bridge is man's folly;
meeting with danger, troubled men begin to understand.

If enlightened, one hundred years will pass like a snap of the fingers;
thus, one must not delay in observing days of fast and listening to the Law.³⁰

²⁶Zhuanlun Sheng Wang. His Sanskrit name is Cakravartinraja. This is the only hymn to actually hold a corresponding position within Teiser's translation of the scripture.

²⁷The last three here refers to the last three periods in the cycle of the 10 feasts required of family of the deceased in order to insure their safe passage - i.e. seven times seven or forty-nine days, the 100 day feast and the 1000 day or three-year feast. According to Teiser, precedence for the 'seven-seven' practice can be found in the fifth-century Consecration Scripture [Guanding jing]. Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory," 118.

²⁸Teiser, 215.

²⁹Subao Siguan. He helps to record the rulings of the Ten Kings and keeps track of the future rebirths of each individual. There is no personage of this name in Teiser's translation, but instead Si Ming, the "Officer of Lifespans." The last hymn read in the Scripture on the Ten Kings. According to Teiser, it is not connected to any one personage.

Mid-Level Inscriptions

As there are so many inscriptions scattered among the hell scenes at Baodingshan, a chart of the various hells has been prepared [fig. 16]. For expediency, the inscriptions have been lettered where space did not allow placement of their respective names. Reference letters found in the chart will be noted in the footnote text accompanying the translation. Words in brackets have been added where the text was no longer extant, yet followed preset literary constructs; “[xxx]” indicates words that are no longer extant in the inscriptions and for which educated guesses were not really possible.

Sword Mountain Hell

If once a month one chants the name of the Brilliant Buddha³¹ 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Sword Mountain Hell.

The hymn says:
Hearing tell of Sword Mountain yet unable to climb it,
the outlines of its rocky hills, lofty and precipitous,
causing sickness at heart.

By observing both a day of fast and industriously cultivating blessings,
one avoids suffering from the drag of evil karma on the path ahead.³²

³⁰Teiser, 219.

³¹I here give a translation of the name given, Dingguangfo, as I have found no appropriate Sanskrit equivalent.

³²The format of this, and many of the hymns to follow, mirrors those described by Soymié in Les dix jours de jeûne de Kstigarbha, 137.

Boiling Cauldron Hell

If daily one chants the name of the Buddha of Medicine³³ 1000 times,
one will not fall into Boiling Cauldron Hell.

The hymn says:

Exhort the ruler to industriously honor the Buddha of Medicine,
and escape from enduring the suffering of the boiling cauldron.

Fallen into the waves, wondering when one will get out,
early cultivation of the Pure Land helps to renounce perishing.

Freezing Hell³⁴

If daily one chants the names of the One Thousand Buddhas of the
Present Kalpa³⁵ 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Freezing Hell.

The hymn says:

Amidst the suffering, it is most freezing cold,
with eyes covered, naked and exposed to the gods.

Merely chant to the various Buddhas seeking merit,
and bad karma will be removed, thus one will be reborn.

³³Bhaisajya-guru-vaidurya-prabhasa. Soothill, 472.

³⁴Eberhard, 25, notes that fear of freezing, to the point that it is devoted its own hell, was more common to Tibetan and Mongolian systems of hell than to those of the Chinese.

³⁵Soothill, 444.

Swordtree Hell³⁶

[If daily one chants the name of ____] 1,000 times,
one will not fall into Swordtree Hell.

The hymn says :
[xxx] within speak violently, [xxx] altogether by the swordtrees
destroyed.

Receiving the penalty for one's own sins,
not acquiring [xxx] the opportunity [xxx] [xxx].

Tongue-Extraction Hell

If daily one chants the name of Tathagatha Buddha³⁷ 1,000
times,
one will not fall into the Tongue-Extraction Hell.

The hymn says :
The hell of tongue-extraction is caused by sending the ox³⁸
out with the iron plow,
all types of grasping does not still it for even one moment.

If one desires to beseech King Yama to look into the matter
personally,
keep chanting the name of Ti-tsang 1,000 times.

³⁶Large portions of this hymn are missing due to what appears to be a shifting of the earth, possibly an earthquake. Whatever happened caused the destruction of most of the Swordtrees Hell, which is now blocked up, probably to provide additional support for the level above it.

³⁷It must be noted that "Tathagatha Buddha" is a redundancy often found in Chinese texts. Original Indic sources would have either "Tathagatha" or "Buddha," both being seen as representing the same individual. The Chinese, perhaps in their ignorance of the true meanings of the terms, tended to attach "Buddha" [fo] to a variety of names, regardless of whether it was warranted or not.

³⁸Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 136, translates a colophon in which the commissioner asks to have the scripture copied for his plowing ox's merit.

Hell of Poisonous Snakes

If daily one chants the name of the Buddha of Mighty Power³⁹ 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Hell of Poisonous Snakes .

The hymn says :
Bodhisattvas of vast compassion and mercy,
save sufferers through constant instruction on how to
emerge from the river of desire.⁴⁰

The nine grades of being⁴¹ each have a share in the dew of the lotus,
what can cause one to be sent through the poisonous snakes?

Hell of Cutting and Grinding

If daily one chants the name of the Bodhisattva who Regards the
World's Cries⁴² 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Hell of Cutting and Grinding.⁴³

The hymn says :
Chopping up the body, cutting and grinding, no time for
repose;
all here performed evil deeds, not cultivating and maintaining good.

³⁹Mahasthama. Soothill, 85.

⁴⁰Ibid., 401.

⁴¹Ibid., 16. The nine grades of incarnation, i.e. everyone.

⁴²Avalokitesvara. Soothill, 489.

⁴³In Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu, 487, it is noted that, on the pestle being used to grind the poor souls, the phrase "Thus the Buddha of the Great Repository spoke" is inscribed. From photos, it would appear that a two-line inscription runs the length of the pestle, along with words being engraved on the pestle's crossbar. Time has not allowed for further work on this area. It must be noted that the transcriptions provided by the compilers of the Dazu shike yan jiu, while helpful, are not entirely accurate nor are they complete. Care should be taken when using this text as a source as numerous discrepancies and omissions occur.

Avalokitesvara grieves for the suffering of all sentient beings,
revealing her⁴⁴ mercy and compassion, she aids all to escape
from hell.

Hell of Being Sawn into Pieces

If daily one chants the name of Vairocana Buddha⁴⁵ 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Hell of Being Sawn into Pieces.

The hymn says :

The Tathagata's power is great, all perfect his knowledge,⁴⁶
which follows like a bright moon
coming out among the myriad stars.

Chanting alone can do away with numerous sins;
only a sovereign presumes to saw into pieces without cause.

Hell of the Iron Bed

If daily one chants the names of the Bodhisattvas of Healing and
Medicine⁴⁷ 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed .

The hymn says :

The Bodhisattvas true names are those of "Healing Kings;"
and they can dissolve the flames of the iron bed.

Having mercy on those who created evil karma as heavy as a
mountain,
by merely chanting their true names all living creatures can
avoid such calamities.

⁴⁴I have chosen to refer to Avalokitesvara in the feminine here, as this deity appears mainly in female form at the sites within Dazu county.

⁴⁵Soothill, 449.

⁴⁶Soothill, 262. The Sanskrit term is vidya.

⁴⁷Bhaisajyasamudgata and Bhaisajya-raja. Soothill, 472.

Hell of Darkness

If daily one chants the name of Sakyamuni⁴⁸ Buddha 1,000 times,
one will not fall into the Hell of Darkness.

The hymn says :
Keeping the feastsdays, serving the Buddha, and reading the scriptures,
one accumulates virtue and controls the darkness of existence.

Repeatedly reciting the name of Amitabha⁴⁹ 1,000 times,
naturally the darkness will manifest brightness.

Lower-Level Inscriptions

Admonition Against Alcohol⁵⁰

The Buddha of the Great Repository⁵¹ preached the “Brilliant Fresh”
sutra.

At that time Buddha announced to Kasyapa,⁵²

⁴⁸Soothill, 482.

⁴⁹Soothill, 457.

⁵⁰Images here include that of the father not recognizing his son, the husband not recognizing his wife, the older brother failing to recognize his younger brother, and the older sister not knowing her younger sister. Unlike the accompanying works, this section of the tableau, along with the Alcohol Sellers, the Admonition against Raising Animals, and the Admonition against Speaking Falsehoods, is not given the title of “hell”.

⁵¹Professor Kyoko Tokuno, written suggestion, March 1995, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. The term here is dazang which can be either translated as “Tripitaka,” which is used primarily in reference to Hinayana Pali canon, or as “Great Repository.” I have chosen to use “Great Repository” as it has a less specific meaning.

⁵²The text breaks here as a large portion of the actual inscription has been broken away.

Those who drink alcohol do not know their own families.

Among those who drink, fathers do not recognize their sons,
and sons do not recognize their fathers.

Elder brothers do not recognize younger brothers,
and younger brothers do not recognize elder brothers.

Husbands do not recognize their wives,
and wives do not recognize their husbands.

Elder sisters do not recognize younger sisters,
and younger sisters do not recognize elder sisters.

Good men and children then respect all
sentient beings, and do not eat meat or drink alcohol.

In this way, they achieve a Buddha heart.

The Alcohol Sellers

The sutras of the Great Repository say:

At that time, the World-honored One informed all Buddhist monks,
“If you receive the Five Precepts⁵³ and the 250 Rules of Conduct,⁵⁴
then the rules of proper deportment are complete if you comply
with not drinking alcohol, and do not violate the
250 Commandments⁵⁵ with regard to right conduct.

If you transgress, you will accordingly enter hell.”

Kasyapa addressed the Buddha saying,

“No alcohol throughout life? Tathagatha, for what reason do the
precepts equate alcohol with suffering?”

The Buddha replied to Kasyapa,

“You like to examine what you hear!

In the kingdom of Sravasti, there was Angulimala;⁵⁶

⁵³ The first five of ten total commandments. Soothill, 118.

⁵⁴ Soothill, 239. Referring to the rules of the vinaya.

⁵⁵ The Sanskrit term is pratimoksa. Soothill, 266.

his action of drinking alcohol caused stupidity and confusion,
causing this son to violate his own mother and
to kill his own father.

The mother accordingly took a lover,
carrying a knife to do harm to others.

This is the reason why today the precepts say alcohol causes suffering.

A person such as the girl who buys and sells alcohol,⁵⁷
will die and fall into hell,
there enduring her final dharma form,

a body three feet high,
two ears blocked shut,
a face without two eyes,
likewise without nostrils,
underneath the lips, a gaping mouth,
hands without ten fingers,
legs without two feet,

entirely because of buying and selling alcohol.

In addition to people who drink,
those who press alcohol on a monk,
will fall into the Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees.”

Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees⁵⁸

Not believing in the Buddha’s words, the ruler repents without
benefit.

The three actions are not keeping the feastsdays combined with
violating the precepts,

⁵⁶Chizen Akanuma, Indo Bukkyo koyu meishi jiten (1931, n.p.), 39-41.
Much like the Christian saint Paul, Angulimala was a murderer who eventually
converted to Buddhism.

⁵⁷This girl is specified by name in the inscriptions, but does not appear to
be linked to any one Buddhist personage.

⁵⁸The inscriptions for this hell are actually split between a small stele
placed behind the demon wielding the sword and the cangue worn by the
prisoner to his right. They are notated as letters “A” and “B” on the diagram.

the four actions are the five deadly sins⁵⁹ toward father and mother.

Avici Hell - Mountain Enclosed by Iron

A scripture in the Great Repository states:

The Buddha told Kasyapa,

“If a mendicant here puts on my dharma robe,⁶⁰
first, he must abstain from drinking alcohol;
second, abstain from eating meat;
third, abstain from envying the good at heart;
and fourth, abstain from engaging in ignoble or impure deeds.⁶¹
Those who eat meat fall into Avici Hell”⁶²

Hungry Ghost Hell

A scripture in the Great Repository states:

Kasyapa Bodhisattva then addressed the Buddha saying:

“Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into which hell?”

The Buddha informed Kasyapa,

“Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into Hungry Ghost
hell”⁶³

⁵⁹The Sanskrit term is pancanantarya. Soothill, 128.

⁶⁰Soothill, 270.

⁶¹Soothill, 107.

⁶²The inscription continues with a physical description of Avici Hell. This apparently was not transcribed in Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu, by those doing the work at Baodingshan.

⁶³This inscription also continues but was not entirely transcribed in Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu, and is not legible in photographs.

Knife Boat Hell⁶⁴

Receiving the penalty for one's own sins, no heaven is given them.
Admonition Against Raising Animals

A scripture in the Great Repository states:

The Buddha told Kasyapa,
"All sentient beings who raise chickens, enter into hell"⁶⁵

Inscriptions Flanking the Pagoda⁶⁶

Heaven's halls are vast and broad, yet hell is also vast;
not believing in the Buddha's word, then how the heart suffers!

To resist the Way is to seek suffering amidst joy;
all living creatures born amidst happiness seek suffering.

The Buddha of the Great Repository expounded the "Brilliant Fresh"
Scripture.⁶⁷

"If one is sent to the hell of the hot iron wheel to proceed up
and down the mountainside,
throughout this suffering, he will never lose the great Bodhi."⁶⁸

Admonition against Speaking Falsehoods⁶⁹

⁶⁴The inscription for this scene can be found on a small stele placed above the souls in the boat. It is letter "C" in the diagram.

⁶⁵This inscription continues but was not transcribed in Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu, in its entirety. It is not clear from photographs due to discoloration of the stone.

⁶⁶These inscriptions are letters "D" and "E" in the diagram.

⁶⁷This inscription is letter "F" in the diagram.

⁶⁸"Great Bodhi" is equated with Mahayana enlightenment. Soothill, 94.

[In the Great] Repository, the Buddha spoke of protecting one's "mouth," saying,

"In the dark regions, there was one hungry ghost on whose repulsive body appeared fire. Maggots came out of his mouth, pus, and blood throughout his [xxx], and his foul breath reached penetratingly everywhere. From his limbs and joints, arose fire. [xxx] [xxx] crying.

Yama⁷⁰ asked the ghost,

"Do you know what sinful act [you have committed] in the past to endure such suffering today?"

The ghost replied, "I was fond of [xxx] [xxx]. [xxx] born [xxx]."

To grow old not to die, having constructed immeasurable evil. . . .⁷¹

His tongue which from kalpa to kalpa was evil, now endures unspeakable suffering.

Be good on account of my form, [I] admonish all sentient beings. Honor goodness with careful speech.⁷² Those who mistake their speech endure the hungry ghost body.

[xxx] [xxx] return to enter into hell.

To lie [xxx] to speak falsehoods is evil. Goodness is rewarded with good; evil is rewarded with evil. [xxx] [xxx]"

Iron Wheel Hell

⁶⁹The title of this inscription is for the most part eroded. I have chosen to refer to it as an admonition rather than a hell as it seems more appropriate given the subject matter. Although prominently placed at the right-hand of the Zhao Zhifeng statue, this inscription is not transcribed in Liu's Dazu shike yan jiu. This inscription is letter "G" in the diagram.

⁷⁰The only readable character here is luo, which I take to refer to Yanluo, or King Yama.

⁷¹These two lines suffer from serious water damage and are no longer legible. The word zang or repository occurs at the end of this line, but does not aid in the translation, and therefore, has not been included here.

⁷²The character used here is ko.

The Buddha of the Great Repository said,
 “[xxx] eat [xxx] eat or [xxx] eat medicine for father and
 mother [xxx]. . . .⁷³

Stop friends, wife, children, and family,
 while not yet separate from the world, from falling into
 Iron Wheel Hell.

There the armpit on the right side [xxx],
 [xxx] copper is poured [xxx], suffer for eating during
 the days of fast [xxx], likewise it is thus.

People who do not believe in hell, death, and rebirth,
 wait for the ruler to order their return.”

The Buddha of the Great Repository informed Kasyapa,

“People who seize upon others fall into Iron Wheel Hell;
 those who boil meat fall into Boiling Cauldron Hell.
 In the middle there is water, below there is fire, they wait for the
 fire to burn out,
 rushing to and fro yet still burning.

People who boil meat enter into [Boiling Cauldron] Hell, there
 enduring their own great suffering;
 people who broil meat fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed.

People who cut and chop meat fall into the Hell of Cutting and
 Grinding.

People who kill living creatures fall into Halberd Hell;
 consequently to expound the dharma is to explain it
 to all living creatures.”

Boiling Cauldron Hell

The Buddha of the Great Repository spoke,

“[xxx] [xxx] [xxx] [xxx] create bad karma,
 the Buddha is all compassionate.

⁷³Large portions of this inscription are no longer legible due to weathering. I present what has been transcribed in Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu.

The body which falls into the Three Paths meets with pain and suffering;
those who believe in one thought bring together ones' own knowledge."

Halberd Hell⁷⁴

Hell of Feces and Filth

A scripture in the Great Repository states:
Kasyapa asked the Buddha,

"Those who eat meat fall into which hell?"

The Buddha informed Kasyapa,
"Those who eat meat fall into the Hell of Feces and Filth
There among feces and filth 10,000 'feet' deep"⁷⁵

Mother and Father Feeding Child⁷⁶

The Buddha told Kasyapa,
"[xxx] if a person has come to the end of 80 years,
poor and poverty-stricken, forlorn, and the ruler has born one son,
with the utmost pity and compassion,

one hand gripping gold, one hand gripping food,
both around the entire [xxx],
knowing to pass it on to his ignorant infant son,
who does not recognize his own gold, but grasps his own meal.

⁷⁴No inscription is given with this hell.

⁷⁵The rest of this inscription was not transcribed in Liu, Dazu shike yan jiu, and was not legible from photos due to growth of moss and lichens on the substrate.

⁷⁶This last portion titled does not seem to have any real connection to the hell scenes, other than to have the text carved next to that of the Hell of Feces and Filth. This could have been done for purposes of expediency, or for lack of a better flat surface. My impression is that it is a vignette unto itself, not necessarily combined with either of the two flanking sculptural works.

For all sentient beings, even rulers, it is so;
I wish that all living creatures be just as kind as that father.

All sentient beings must but know to give up the body,
making obeisance and reverently practicing
the Way of the Buddha.”

APPENDIX B
LIST OF SCULPTURAL GROUPINGS FOUND AT
GREAT BUDDHA BEND GROTTA

This list follows the numbering system put in place by the archaeologist Yang Jialuo in the late 1940s. The sculpted tableaux are thus numbered one through thirty-one. Although I do not feel that it represents the most logical system, I nonetheless have chosen to adhere to it, so as not to confuse the reader who may wish to look at primary source materials.

- 1) Carving of a fierce tiger
- 2) Guardians of the Law
- 3) Revolving Wheel of the Six Paths
- 4) Pavilion of Great Treasure¹
- 5) Three Saints of the Avatamsaka School
- 6) Precious Holy Relic Pavilion
- 7) Engraved stele dedicated to Vairocana
- 8) 1,000-armed Avalokitesvara
- 9) Holy Relic Pagoda
- 10) Final Gathering of Men and Devas
- 11) Parinirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha
- 12) Birth of the Buddha
- 13) Peacock King²
- 14) Cave of Vairocana

¹The name “Baodingshan” is inscribed here, along with three sculptural representations of Zhao Zhifeng, the site’s founder.

²According to Soothill, 148, this is a former reincarnation of Sakyamuni.

- 15) Depictions from the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents
- 16) Gods of Cloud, Wind, and Thunder
- 17) Depictions of the Scripture on Mahopaya Buddha's Requitall of Kindness
- 18) Depictions from the Amitayus-dhyana Scripture
- 19) Six Rats
- 20) Dizang Bodhisattva with the Ten Kings of Hell and depictions of hell.
- 21) Asceticism of Master Liu
- 22) Ten Radiant Kings
- 23) Shrine to the Three Pure Ones³
- 24) Shrine of the Taoist Sages
- 25) Shrine to the Jade Emperor and the Earth Goddess⁴
- 26) Series of engraved steles⁵
- 27) Statue of Vairocana Buddha
- 28) Carving of a lion
- 29) Cave of Complete Enlightenment
- 30) Taming the Water Buffalo
- 31) Statue of the Old Woman "Su Die"

³Liu, 494, dates this relief as Qing dynasty, along with reliefs numbered 24 and 26.

⁴Liu, 495, gives a 1915 date for the carving of this relief.

⁵Numerous steles are arranged here, with the largest one bearing the name "Baodingshan" once again.

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Baodingshan - 寶頂山 | gui shen - 鬼神 |
| Bao fumu enzhong jing - 報父母恩經 | Juxue River - 曲水河 |
| Beishan Ta - 北山塔 | Mulian - 目蓮 |
| Biancheng Dawang - 變成大王 | Nanshan Ta - 南山塔 |
| bianwen - 變文 | Pingdeng Wang - 平等王 |
| bianxiang - 變相 | Pingzheng Dawang - 平正大王 |
| Chujiang Dawang - 浙江大王 | Qinguang Dawang - 秦廣大王 |
| Dafowan - 大佛灣 | Shiwang jing - 十王經 |
| Da Shengci si - 大聖慈寺 | Shengshou si - 聖壽寺 |
| dazang - 大藏 | Si Lu - 司錄 |
| Dazu - 大足 | Si Ming - 司命 |
| diyu - 地獄 | Songdi Dawang - 宋帝大王 |
| Dizang - 地藏 | Su Die - 粟姑 |
| Daoming - 道明 | Subao Siguan - 速報司官 |
| Dingguangfo - 定光佛 | Taishan Dawang - 太山大王 |
| Dushi Dawang - 都市大王 | Wei Junjing - 衛君靖 |
| Emeishan - 峨眉山 | Wuguan Dawang - 五官大王 |
| Fengdu - 奉都 | wuxing - 五形 |

Xianbao siguan - 現報司官

Xiaofowan - 小佛鬘

Yanluo Tianzi - 閻羅天子

Yulan pen jing - 盂蘭盆經

Zangchuan - 藏川

Zhao Zhifeng - 道智鳳

Zhuanlun Shengwang - 轉輪聖王

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