

Baogong as King Yama in the Literature and Religious Worship of Late-Imperial China

The legendary Judge Bao, popularly referred to as Baogong 包公, or as Clear-Sky Bao (Bao Qingtian 包青天), was celebrated as a paragon of justice and incorruptibility in a variety of literary and dramatic genres in the course of the last millennium, and still plays a significant role in contemporary popular culture across East Asia.¹ Although recent scholarship usually portrays Baogong-related stories and dramas as a cohesive, linear tradition, the Baogong lore is a multilayered cultural phenomenon, extremely varied in the scope of its genres and themes. Notwithstanding the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon, this paper will argue that an important undercurrent throughout the Baogong lore is his mythical role as a judge in the netherworld. Already in the early stages of Baogong's mythmaking process, he came to be associated with the courts of the netherworld, and in particular with the position of King Yama (*Yanluo wang* 閻羅王). This chthonic role not only underlies the history of the Baogong lore in literature and drama, but also has become the most prominent feature in Baogong's religious veneration in recent centuries. Nowadays, more than two dozens Baogong temples across mainland China and Taiwan still commemorate his role as judge in the courts of hell, many worshipping Baogong directly as King Yama.

I THANK Professor Shang Wei (Columbia University) and Professor Meir Shahar (Tel Aviv University) for their invaluable advice and guidance. I also thank Professor Bernard Faure (Columbia University), and the Eisenberg Foundation, which partially supported my field research in mainland China and Taiwan.

¹ The scholarly literature on the historical Bao Zheng and the legendary Judge Bao is voluminous. For a general introduction, see Abe Yasuki 阿部泰記, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai* 包公伝説の形成と展開 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2004); Wilt L. Idema, *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law: Eight Ballad Stories from the Period 1250–1450* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), pp. ix–xxxiv; Yao-Woon Ma, “The Pao-Kung Tradition in Chinese Popular Literature,” Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 1971); and Ding Zhaoqin 丁肇琴, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong* 俗文學中的包公 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 2000).

Literary and dramatic portrayals of Baogong's role as a judge in hell and his association with King Yama offer a window onto the workings of late-imperial Chinese conceptualizations of life, death, and the afterlife. These conceptualizations assign a cardinal role to government authorities in regulating and determining the destinies of mankind, not only on earth but in the netherworld as well. Life and death are thus conceptualized in administrative and legal terms, exemplifying an enormous faith in the bureaucratic system. This faith is not curbed by the shortcomings of the bureaucratic system, with its corruption and malfeasance, but rather it inspires expressions of a serious need for better bureaucratic functionaries, whether in the realm of the living or the dead. It is possible even to suggest that the trust in such a dynamic becomes an organizing principle for all of human existence. Namely, the only way to overcome the myriad flaws of the bureaucratic system and to ensure justice for mankind, in this life as well as the next, is to assign an incorruptible, unbiased, and sagacious judge. For many centuries, the legend of Baogong served in that capacity, a beacon of hope for a multitude hungry for justice. The bureaucratic and judiciary conceptualization of the cycle of life and death thus assigned Baogong a double role: as the ideal judge in the realm of the living, and as King Yama in the realm of the dead.

This paper examines the origins of Baogong's identification with King Yama in literature and the role that the identification had in shaping the Baogong legend and worship. I argue that Baogong's legendary role as a judge in hell is particularly indebted to a corpus of short courtroom stories from the late-Ming period that elaborate on his duties as King Yama, setting the course for the development of the Baogong lore of the following centuries. Baogong's mythmaking and deification process played a part in shaping the Chinese perception of the netherworld in late-imperial China, and particularly influenced the assimilation of King Yama, originally an Indic deity,² into the mainstream of

² Regarding the Indic roots of King Yama, see Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism: Their History and Iconography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), pp. 152–53; Bernard Faure, "Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology: King Yama and His Acolytes as Gods of Destiny," in John Kieschnick and Meir Shahar, eds., *India in the Chinese Imagination: Myth, Religion, and Thought* (Philadelphia: U. Pennsylvania P., 2014), pp. 46–60; Viggo Fausboll, *Indian Mythology: According to the Indian Epics* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1981), p. 138; Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism* (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1995), pp. 251–52; Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), pp. 1–15; L. D. Barnett, "Yama, Gandharva and Glaucus," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (University of London) 4.4 (1928), pp. 703–4; H. W. Bodewitz, "The Dark and Deep Underworld in the Veda," *JAS* 122.2 (2002), pp. 210–14; W. Norman Brown, "The Rigvedic Equivalent of Hell," *JAS* 61.2 (1941), pp. 78–79; J. Muir, "Yama and the Doctrine of Future

Chinese culture.³ The expansion of Baogong's role as King Yama in literature, drama, and religious worship in recent centuries indicates a growing pessimism among many Chinese regarding the judicial system in the world of the living, an attitude that in some sense may provide more opportunities for people to delegate their hoped-for justice to the courts of the netherworld. The Baogong phenomenon has been an enduring cultural icon and as such offers a glimpse into the workings of the Chinese popular imagination; it shows the profound connections and influences that have existed for centuries in and among China's literature, drama, and religious veneration.⁴

KING YAMA AND THE CHINESE NETHERWORLD

In order to understand the significance of Baogong's role as King Yama in literature and religious worship in late-imperial China, it is imperative to draw attention to the development of Yama and Chinese notions of the afterlife. Naturally, neither of those ever constituted unified cultural constructs, and their history should not be regarded as a linear "evolution." The following paragraphs do not presume to offer a comprehensive summary of such multifaceted cultural constructs, for it would surpass the scope of this paper. Instead, I would like to highlight facets of King Yama and Chinese conceptions of the netherworld that are specifically relevant to this discussion.

King Yama's long and multilayered history in China is anything but a simple "sinicization" process. In early Buddhism, Yama was por-

Life, According to the Rig-Yajur-, and Atharva-Vedas," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* NS 1.1-2 (1865), pp. 288-292; Alex Wayman, "Studies in Yama and Mara," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3.1 (1959), pp. 44-73.

³ This was similar to the role that the novel *Investiture of the Gods* played in reshaping the characters of the Indian deities Vaisravana (*pishamen tianwang* 毘沙門天王) and Nezha 哪吒. During Tang and Song, tales about Vaisravana that identified him with a Chinese general named Li Jing were already in circulation, but his "sinicization" was completed only in the *Investiture of the Gods*. See Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962), p. vii; Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2008), pp. 170, 199, and Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2005), pp. 112-13, 186, 191.

⁴ Recent scholarship discussed this interconnectivity in regards to other legendary figures. Meir Shahar, for instance, has shed light on the relationship between popular literature and the worship of the god Jigong 濟公; see *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998). Gary Seaman examined the ritualistic roots of the novel *Beiyou ji* 北游記 (*The Journey to the North*), as well as its role in propagating the cult of the god Zhenwu 真武; see *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel Pei-Yu Chi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

trayed as an ambivalent deity, an onlooker who does not interfere in the mechanisms of karmic law, and around the time of the formation of the Tibetan *Bar do*, Yama is depicted as supervising karmic judgment, though without interfering in it.⁵ Yama's introduction into the Chinese bureaucratic conceptualization of the netherworld opened a new stage in his development, but even then he was still portrayed as an ambivalent figure. In medieval China, Yama appears as a bodhisattva and protector of Buddhist worshippers.⁶ Furthermore, Buddhist and Daoist sources stress his benevolent character, claiming he was demoted from the first court of hell to the fifth due to his leniency.⁷ Nevertheless, as karma came to be envisioned as a judiciary system of netherworld courts, Yama was viewed as a punitive authority in the netherworld, similar to the Lord of Mount Tai (Taishan fujun 泰山夫君).⁸ The fifth-century indigenous Buddhist scripture *Guanding jing* 灌頂經 recounts that King Yama is responsible for keeping the registers of the living and examining their behavior (which is recorded and filed by other low-ranking officials in the netherworld), and finally for prescribing punishments according to the severity of their deeds.⁹

In the literature of the Sui and Tang period, King Yama gradually eclipsed the Lord of Mount Tai, who was until then the dominant figure in literary portrayals of hell. Around that time, Yama lost some of his earlier characteristics as a benign deity and assumed some of the Lord of Mount Tai's traits as a severe administrator.¹⁰ With the growing influence of Buddhism, hell was viewed as an underground prison (*diyu* 地獄), whose entry is marked by "The River of No Recourse" (*naihe* 奈何),

⁵ Bulcsu Siklos, "The Evolution of the Buddhist Yama," in Tadeusz Skorupski, ed., *The Buddhist Forum* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1996) 4, pp. 176–79.

⁶ Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., Kuroda Institute, 1994), pp. 4–8; Siklos, "Evolution of the Buddhist Yama," p. 181.

⁷ Chen Jianxian 陳建憲, *Yuhuang dadi xinyang* 玉皇大帝信仰 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1994), pp. 47–48; Siklos, "Evolution of the Buddhist Yama," p. 182.

⁸ Regarding the pilgrimage to Mount Tai and the cult of Taishan fujun, see Wilt L. Idema, "The Pilgrimage to Taishan in the Dramatic Literature of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *CLEAR* 19 (Dec., 1997), pp. 23–57.

⁹ Paul R. Katz, *Divine Justice: Religion and the Development of Chinese Legal Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 40–41; Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford U.P., 2002), pp. 118–19.

¹⁰ Fan Jun 範軍, "Tang dai xiaoshuo zhong de Yanluo wang: Yindu diyu shen de Zhongguo hua" 唐代小說中的閻羅王, 印度地獄神的中國化, *Huagiao daxue xuebao* 華僑大學學報 1 (2007), pp. 93–95. The Lord of Mount Tai was linked to Buddhist hells in popular Buddhism by the 3d c. AD, and eventually became one of the kings of hell. In Chinese Tantric Buddhism, the Lord of Mount Tai became one of King Yama's acolytes. See Faure, "Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology," pp. 52–55.

and its exit is marked by a large wheel of fortune that projects the dead into their next life.¹¹ The Tang-era conceptualization of King Yama as a punitive albeit benign lord of the dead is described in the *chuanqi* 傳奇 tale “Du Zichun zhuan” 杜子春傳, during the imaginary journey of the protagonist Du Zichun through purgatory.¹² The seventh-century text *Mingbao ji* 冥報記 depicts King Yama’s position in hell as parallel to that of the emperor in the human world, albeit subject to orders from religious practitioners in the world of the living. According to this text, when a Daoist priest submits a memorial seeking blessing, the heavenly officers send it to King Yama, who carries out the requests as officials would have done with an imperial command. Of particular importance is the tale of the monk Mulian (*Maudgalyāyana*) in the Dunhuang *bianwen* 變文 text “The Transformation Text on Mulian Saving His Mother from the Dark Regions.”¹³ In it, the court of King Yama is described as a transitional zone between death and rebirth, where Yama acts as a ruler of the underworld and keeper of the records of deeds.¹⁴ King Yama also appears in seven stories in the eighth-century work *Guangyi ji* 廣異記, where he occupies a cardinal position in the netherworld.¹⁵ In two of these stories (167 and 168), King Yama summons officials directly from the world of the living in order to recruit them to his netherworld court as assistants or clerks.¹⁶ This becomes a recurrent

¹¹ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, p. 2, and idem, “‘Having Once Died and Returned to Life’: Representations of Hell in Medieval China,” *HJAS* 48.2 (1988), pp. 172–73, 184–85. This river appears in several sources; perhaps the most famous among them are the Tang *bianwen* 變文 scripture “Mulian Saving His Mother from the Dark Region” and the “Scripture on the Ten Kings,” where the river is located in the second court of hell, presided over by the King of the First River. Interestingly, the motif of a river that the dead must cross in order to enter the netherworld appears also in the Vedic tradition as the river Vaitarani, as well as in Greek mythology as the five rivers of Hades (Styx, Akheron, Kokytos, Phlegethon, and Lethe). See Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the ‘Orphic’ Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004), p. 208.

¹² Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1994), pp. 830–35.

¹³ This version of the tale was translated and explored in depth by Victor H. Mair; see his *Tang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1989), and *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983). See also Teiser, “‘Having Once Died and Returned to Life,’” pp. 87–91.

¹⁴ The Mulian story cycle also played an important role in propagating the Yulan-pen ritual. See Stephen F. Teiser, “Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion: The Yu-lan p’en Festival as Mortuary Ritual,” *History of Religions* 26.1 (1986), pp. 47–67. See also David Johnson, ed., *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies* (Berkeley: Chinese Popular Culture Project, distributed by IEAS Publications, University of California, 1995).

¹⁵ These are nos. 39, 167, 168, 171, 172, 174, and 200. See Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in Tang China: A Reading of Tai-fu’s Kuang-i chi* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995), pp. 49–53.

¹⁶ Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society*, pp. 206–7.

motif in late-imperial depictions of the relationship between the realms of the living and the dead, culminating in the identification of famous officials as netherworld judges.

The *Scripture of the Ten Kings* (*Fo shuo shi wang jing* 佛說十王經) is the earliest surviving text that mentions all ten kings of hell by name.¹⁷ Stephen Teiser considers the system of the ten kings to be a synthesis of two monolithic conceptualizations: the Indian concepts of samsara and karma on the one hand, and the Chinese kinship system and imperial bureaucracy on the other hand.¹⁸ The Indian notion of karma, which was conceived originally as a rule of nature, was understood in Tang China as a bureaucratic procedure, wherein the deceased must go through a long and complicated process of judgments overseen by powerful officials.¹⁹ One of the most unusual features of the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* is its recurring usage of legal terminology, which is of special interest here.²⁰ Despite their dreadful role as the judges of the dead and the gruesome tortures they inflict upon sinners in hell, the work portrays the kings as agents of compassion, serving a higher purpose. King Yama himself, we are told by the Buddha Śākyamuni, will become a Buddha named Puxian 普賢 (Samantabhadra in Sanskrit) in a future lifetime.²¹

While Buddhist influences on the Chinese hells took root in the *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, the Song-dynasty *Compiled Accounts of the Jade Ephemera* (*Yuli chao zhuan* 玉曆鈔傳) represents a standardized vision of the netherworld as a confluence of Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian ideas that dominated the popular perception of the netherworld since the Song dynasty.²² It maintains the basic bureaucratic structure depicted in the *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, but alters the names and the or-

¹⁷ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, p. 8. The earliest surviving copy of the text was written in 908 AD. However, the earliest reference to the ten kings, by the cleric Daoxuan, dates to 664. Daoxuan mentioned a treatise by the monk Fayun about the ten kings that was lost sometime after the thirteenth century; *ibid.*, pp. 48–49. See also discussion of this text in Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福, *Dao Fo shi wang diyu shuo* 道佛十王地獄說 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1996), pp. 239–88.

¹⁸ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, p. 3. Despite the popularity of the text from the Tang dynasty onward, and its incessant duplication, it was not incorporated into the Buddhist canon until 1912. However, by the end of the tenth century it “was recognized as a noncanonical and indispensable source on King Yama”; *ibid.*, pp. 9, 50.

¹⁹ Sawada Mizuho 澤田瑞穂, *Jigokuhen: Chūgoku no meikaisetsu* 地獄變: 中国の冥界説 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), p. 86–87; Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168. This terminology doubtlessly contributed to the popular conceptions of righteous human officials, such as Baogong, as office-holders in hell.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² Xiao, *Dao Fo shi wang diyu shuo*, pp. 418–19. The dating of this text is somewhat of a conundrum; legends attribute its origins to a Daoist priest of the 11th c. named Danchi, and the first printing of the text to the 12th c. See also Timothy Brook, Jerome Bourgon, and Gregory

der of some of the courts, replacing Buddhist deities with non-Buddhist figures, and adding an array of sub-hells (*xiao diyu* 小地獄). According to this text, the dead who arrive at the fifth court of hell ruled by Yama have already undergone tortures in the preceding courts. Here they witness the results of their earthly sins, suffer corporal tortures, and are then sent to the sixteen sub-hells, which are divided according to the nature of the sins committed.²³

Not only was the bureaucratic judicial system of the netherworld modeled after the earthly bureaucracy, but it was intimately tied to it. Certain netherworld administrators even occupied parallel roles in the world of the living and in the realm of the dead. In the Dunhuang manuscript “Han Qinhu hua” 韓擒虎話, for instance, the Sui-dynasty general Han Qinhu takes up the post of an official in the netherworld (*yinsi zhi zhu* 陰司之主).²⁴ Another famous example is Prefect Cui Ziyu 崔子玉, an official in both administrations of the living and the dead, who appears in the Dunhuang manuscript “Taizong in Hell” (*Tang Taizong ru ming ji* 唐太宗入冥記), which received a later adaptation in *Journey to the West*.²⁵ Prefect Cui became a popular deity in northern China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁶ He also appears in a Yuan-dynasty play, *The Wrong Creditor* (*Yuanjia zhaizhu* 冤家債主) by Zheng Tingyu 鄭廷玉, which also mentions an inscription in a temple to Prefect Cui. The play’s protagonist goes to the court of Prefect Cui in order to sue King Yama and his messenger, the Earth God (*tudi gong* 土地公), since he holds them responsible for the death of his family. Of particular interest to the following discussion is the fact that Prefect Cui, while seated in a netherworld court next to King Yama, mentions Baogong’s double duty in the world of the living and the dead.²⁷

Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2008), pp. 128–30, who use a late-Qing edition of the text.

²³ Anne S. Goodrich, *Chinese Hells: The Peking Temple of Eighteen Hells and the Chinese Perception of Hell* (St. Augustin: Monumenta Serica, 1981), pp. 84–85.

²⁴ Sawada, *Jigokuhen*, pp. 88–89; Victor H. Mair, *Tun-Huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983), p. 7, and George A. Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama: Three Judge Pao Plays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1978), p. 21.

²⁵ The Dunhuang manuscript of *Taizong in Hell* was translated into English by Arthur Waley, and reprinted in John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations* (Hong Kong: The Chinese U.P., and Columbia U.P., 2000), pp. 1081–82. The story appears in chapters 10–12 of the *Journey to the West*.

²⁶ Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, pp. 217–20. Regarding the connection between the careers of Prefect Cui and Baogong as netherworld officials, see Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 37–38.

²⁷ Qian Nanyang 錢南揚, *Song Yuan nanxi baiyilu* 宋元南戲百一錄 (Taipei: Guting shuwu, 1969), pp. 216–17.

Late-imperial views of the afterlife consisted of a *mélange* of elements from Daoist and Buddhist traditions, sharing a basic bureaucratic framework informed by Tang and Song judicial systems. Daoist funerary rituals paralleled the legal system of the Song, not only in terminology but also by including rites resembling legal procedures, such as interrogation (*xun* 訊), accusation (*he* 劾), investigation (*kao* 考), and the like. Furthermore, the Daoist Ritual Master was regarded as an official responsible for regulating the behavior of spirits and ghosts according to the legal and administrative laws of the Song dynasty.²⁸ Officials of the netherworld were in some cases subjected to “demon codes” (*guilü* 鬼律) or in others to “celestial codes” (*tianlü* 天律) that regulated their behavior through legalistic restrictions. The judges of the netherworld were threatened with various punishments (demotion, forced labor, and even death) if they failed to act according to these regulations.²⁹ Inasmuch as the regulations resembled the bureaucracy in the world of the living, they projected an idealistic perception of the law, wishing perhaps that the courts in the world of the living would follow in the footsteps of the better-regulated chthonic system.³⁰

EARLY PORTRAYALS OF BAOGONG IN THE NETHERWORLD

The connection between Baogong and King Yama dates back to the lifetime of the historical Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062), who was compared by his contemporaries to King Yama for his sternness and unbiased enforcement of the law.³¹ During Bao Zheng’s service as the prefect of Kaifeng, a popular saying stated that “Bribes and connections will never reach King Yama, Old Bao 關節不到，有閻羅包老.”³² In the centuries following Bao Zheng’s death, his association with the

²⁸ Edward Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China* (Honolulu: Hawaii U.P., 2001), p. 61.

²⁹ See Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, pp. 219–21, and Katz, *Divine Justice*, pp. 38–39. One of these codes, the “Heavenly Code as Proclaimed by Nüqing in Vermillion from the Mixed Cave On-High,” was divided into sections, according to specific categories (earth gods, stove god, ghosts of the dead, judges of the underworld, etc); each group was given its own set of regulations.

³⁰ Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, p. 221.

³¹ See Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1976), pp. 823–32; Ma, “Pao-Kung Tradition,” pp. 34–35; Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 13–58; Ding Zhuanjing 丁傳靖, *Songren yishi huibian* 宋人軼事彙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 414–16. Sawada, *Jigokuhen*, p. 89, mentions that according to the Song text *Ai ri lou ye chao* 愛日樓業鈔, Bao Zheng, among other historical figures, became King Yama.

³² Franke, *Sung Biographies*, p. 828. Ma translated this saying as: “Wherever justice is not guaranteed, there are the Yama and Old Pao.” Ma’s translation implies that Yama is not identified with Baogong, contrary to Franke’s translation; Ma, “Pao-Kung Tradition,” p. 44.

netherworld expanded further. By the thirteenth century, Baogong was perceived in northern China as a judge in the Court of Swift Retribution of hell (*subao si* 速報司), one of the seventy-two courts in the netherworld, ruled by the Lord of the Eastern Peak (*dongyue dadi* 東嶽大帝), also known as Lord of Mount Tai.³³ The judge of the Court of Swift Retribution was portrayed as an impartial judge, not only in hell but in the world of the living as well.³⁴ Valerie Hansen quotes an anecdote by Yuan Haowen (1190–1257) according to which Baogong – as the judge in charge of the Court of Swift Retribution – saved a kidnapped girl by assuming the voice of a medium.³⁵ Hansen also mentions an inscription from Mount Tai dated 1285, which lists seventy-five netherworld offices under three higher supervisors and six courts; Baogong appears among the officers of the netherworld.³⁶ Wilt Idema has suggested that “Judge Bao’s Office of Speedy Retribution was only a recent addition to the Taishan bureaucracy.”³⁷

In the early stages of Baogong’s mythmaking process, his role as a judge in hell was a recurring theme, albeit a minor one. Baogong assumes the position of judge in the Court of Swift Retribution in several northern and southern plays (*zaju* 雜劇 and *nanxi* 南戲) of the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties.³⁸ The play *Little Zhang Murders a Son to Save His Mother* (*Xiao Zhang tu fen er jiu mu* 小張屠焚兒救母), for instance, mentions Baogong’s position as this court’s judge.³⁹ In the play *Little Butcher Sun* (*Xiao Sun tu* 小孫屠), Baogong is said to reign as judge in the world of the living by day, and serve in the realm of the dead by night.⁴⁰ Early references to Baogong’s chthonic role are also found in

³³ See Edouard Chavannes, *Le T’ai Chan* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910), pp. 361–69; Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama*, pp. 20–21.

³⁴ Anne S. Goodrich, *The Peking Temple of the Eastern Peak* (Nagoya: Monumenta Serica, 1964), p. 126. Baogong is not the only historical figure to be associated with the Court of Swift Retribution; Yue Fei 岳飛 serves as judge in this court in certain Daoist temples, as witnessed by Anne Goodrich in the 1930s; see Goodrich, *Chinese Hells*, p. 27.

³⁵ Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, p. 217.

³⁶ Ibid. Regarding the inscription, Hansen mentions a local gazetteer of Mount Tai. The date of this inscription is not coincidental; the temples at the town of Tai’an, at the foot of Mount Tai, were extensively restored in 1285, after suffering damage following the collapse of the Jin dynasty in the mid-13th c. See Idema, *Pilgrimage to Taishan*, p. 54.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

³⁸ See Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenka*, pp. 26–33.

³⁹ Idema, *Pilgrimage to Taishan*, p. 45.

⁴⁰ See the translation of this play in Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, eds., *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2010), pp. 389–454. In Baogong’s self introduction in scene twenty-one, he presents himself as an honest judge who “administers justice in the world of men, and in the gloom and dark of the courts of hell.” Ibid., p. 451. See also Idema, *Pilgrimage to Taishan*, pp. 31–34, and 54; Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama*, p. 21–22.

several *cihua* 詞話 works whose time of composition falls between the Southern Song and early Ming.⁴¹ In a *cihua* titled *Emperor Renzong Recognizing His Mother* (*Renzong ren mu zhuan* 仁宗忍母傳),⁴² Guo Huai 郭槐 is duped to believe he is being tried in hell, a ruse to coerce him into admitting his crimes; the prison cell he occupies is decorated as a netherworld court, while Baogong masquerades as a judge in hell, and the emperor himself masquerades as King Yama.⁴³ In another *cihua*, *The Tale of the Early Career of Rescriptor Bao* (*Bao daizhi chushen zhuan* 包待制出身傳), a fortuneteller informs the young Baogong that he will not only win rank and fame, but that he will also be “Judging at day-time the world of light [the world of man], at night the world of shade [the underworld].”⁴⁴ However, these works merely mention Baogong’s chthonic position in passing; they neither elaborate on Baogong’s duties in the netherworld, nor describe the cases that Baogong decides in the courts of the netherworld.

It is important to note that Baogong is not the only figure to assume the position of King Yama in late-imperial Chinese fiction. The Ming-dynasty Judge Xu (Xugong 徐公) also takes Yama’s position in a work titled *Judgments of the Living King Yama* (*Huo Yanluo duan an* 活閻羅斷案).⁴⁵ In *Xiyou bu* 西遊補, Sun Wukong agrees to act as replacement for the previous King Yama, who died of illness.⁴⁶ These examples

⁴¹ A collection of *cihua* 詞話 dating from the Chenghua 成化 period (1465–1488) of the Ming dynasty and printed in Beijing was discovered in 1967 in the grave of a Ming official outside Shanghai. This collection of prosimetric stories contains eight *cihua* about Baogong. Although the collection was printed in the late-15th c., the composition of the stories probably occurred in the previous two centuries; Idema suggests 1250–1450 as timeframe. The collection is richly decorated with woodblock illustrations, twelve of which depict Baogong sitting in trial. Although these tales could have been recited and chanted before an audience, they were most likely printed for reading. Idema translated all eight in *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law*. See also Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 8–13, and Anne McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefable* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 55, 60–61.

⁴² See a translation of this *cihua* in Idema, *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law*, pp. 67–104.

⁴³ McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefable*, pp. 114–16. McLaren also elaborates on the *cihua* and their connection to exorcism and anti-corruption campaigns during festivals. It is interesting to note that in another *cihua*, titled “Newly Printed Fully Illustrated Chantefable of the Wealthy and Virtuous Kai Zongyi” (“Xin kan quan xiang shuo chang Kai Zongyi fu gui xiao yi zhuan” 新刊全相說唱開宗義富貴孝義傳), it is the Buddha who masquerades as King Yama, in order to test the loyalty and unity of the Kai family; *ibid.*, pp. 54–55, 124–53.

⁴⁴ Idema, *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law*, pp. 6, 105, and McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefable*, p. 171. The bracketed asides are my own comments for clarification.

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Bauer, “The Tradition of the ‘Criminal Cases of Master Bao’, Pao-kung-an (Lung-t’u kung-an),” *Oriens* 23 (1974), p. 437, n. 3, and Y. W. Ma, “Kung-an Fiction: a Historical and Critical Introduction,” *TP* 65.4–5 (79), p. 229, n. 60.

⁴⁶ Tung Yueh, *Tower of Myriad Mirrors: A Supplement to the Journey to the West*, trans. Shuen-fu Lin and Larry J. Schultz (Berkeley: Asia Humanities Press, 1988), pp. 97–121.

indicate that King Yama was sometimes regarded more as a title or a bureaucratic position, which can be occupied by different individuals, rather than a specific person, thus breaking away from the Indic roots of Yama as a personified deity. However, since late Ming, King Yama was associated with Baogong more than any other historical or mythical figure. The predominant association of King Yama with the legend of Judge Bao in recent centuries points to an increasingly personified view of Yama as Baogong.⁴⁷

BAOGONG AS YAMA IN LATE-MING SHORT STORIES

The first work of fiction to describe Baogong's role as judge of hell in detail is one titled *Longtu gongan* 龍圖公案,⁴⁸ an anthology of short courtroom stories that was published in Suzhou in the Wanli period.⁴⁹ Although the popularity of courtroom (*gongan* 公案) anthologies waned in the beginning of the seventeenth century, *Longtu gongan* remained in circulation during the next two centuries, and its tales continued to inspire storytellers and dramatists. Baogong's relationship with the realm of the dead in late Ming courtroom stories is not uniform. Some stories portray Baogong as assuming the role of King Yama, whereas in other stories from both *Longtu gongan* and *Baijia gongan* 百家公案, he descends to the netherworld to assist King Yama or to seek his assistance in solving cases.

Out of the hundred stories in *Longtu gongan*, Baogong assumes the role of Yama in a dozen that take place in the netherworld. Baogong

⁴⁷ It is also important to note that during Ming and Qing times, the title Yanwang 閻王 was sometimes used to refer both to King Yama and the other judges of hell. In Baogong-related works, particularly those discussed in the following section, Baogong is identified specifically with King Yama 閻羅王.

⁴⁸ The historical Bao Zheng was granted the title Auxiliary Academician of the Longtu Pavilion (*longtu ge zhi xueshi* 龍圖閣直學士) in 1052. See Ma, "Pao-Kung Tradition," p. 42, and Franke, *Sung Biographies*, pp. 827–28. Since then, Baogong was often referred to as Longtu in fiction and drama.

⁴⁹ The full title of this work is *Xiu xiang Longtu gongan* 綉像龍圖公案, or *Illustrated Cases of the Longtu Studio*. The author of this anthology, or more likely the editor, is not mentioned. However, the front cover bears the name Ting Wuzhai 聽五齋, whose comments 評 appear occasionally at the end of each pair of stories. Following the front cover is a four-page preface by Tao Langyuan 陶娘元 (z. Naibin 乃斌). Six other *gongan* anthologies are related to *Longtu gongan*, and nearly half the stories in the collection are taken from *Baijia gongan* 百家公案. Judging by the relationships between these anthologies and the preface by Ting Wuchai, Ma sets the terminus ante quem of *Longtu gongan* around 1594 or 1597. See Ma, "Pao-Kung Tradition," pp. 125, 160–91, and Y. W. Ma, "The Textual Tradition of Ming Kung-an Fiction: A Study of the Lung-t'u Kung-an," *HJAS* 35 (1975), pp. 190–220. *Longtu gongan* exists in several versions which include a hundred, sixty-six, or sixty-two stories, organized into ten, eight, or five *juan*. The version which was available to me in the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at the University of California, Berkeley, contains a hundred stories in five *juan*.

descends to the netherworld with the help of an “otherworldly bed” (*yinchuang* 陰床), which enables him to travel between the human realm, the heavens, and the netherworld.⁵⁰ All twelve stories share a similar rigid structure, which was probably intended to imitate juridical procedures. These stories are far from the best in the collection; they are didactic, fragmented, and dull. Yau-Woon Ma has suggested that they were written hastily by the compiler in order to reach the round number of one hundred.⁵¹ Whereas most stories in *Longtu gongan* are derived from other sources,⁵² its stories about Baogong’s role as judge in hell, which are analyzed next, do not appear in any other *gongan* collection, and stand out from the rest of the stories in this anthology, both in terms of style and theme.

Invariably, Baogong’s predominant duty as a judge in hell is to compensate the victims of earthly bureaucratic corruption and malfeasance. In the story “Hidden Honesty, Concealed Integrity” (*zhong jie yin ni* 忠節隱匿), an honest official is wronged after refusing to bribe his superior; after unsuccessfully appealing to the authorities in the world of the living, he turns to seek justice in the netherworld. In the case that follows, a chaste widow, whose husband died on the battlefield before they were wed, did not receive official recognition since she could not bribe local officials; her indigence forced her to commit suicide, after which she arrived at the netherworld. In both cases, Baogong rewards the injured party with a happy and prosperous life in their next incarnation, while sentencing the corrupt officials to suffer retribution for their crimes. This story not only integrates Baogong’s battle against corruption with King Yama’s duties in the realm of the dead, but also represents Neo-Confucian ideals, such as the chastity of widows, that are repeatedly propagated by the *gongan* collections.⁵³

Baogong’s adamant battle against bureaucratic corruption and malfeasance continues even within the administration of the netherworld. The story “Long Time Bachelor” (*jiu guan* 久鰥) recounts the case of a gifted scholar named Zhao Neng 趙能, who failed to pass the imperial examinations and never married. His complaint spurs Baogong to question the Lord of Marriage (*zhanghun si* 掌婚司) and the Lord of Records

⁵⁰ The “otherworldly bed” seems to be an original addition of late Ming Baogong-related stories. It also appears in several stories of the *Baijia Gongan*, and resurfaces again in chapter 27 of the late-19th-c. novel *Sanxia wuyi* 三俠五義.

⁵¹ Ma, “Textual Tradition of Ming Kung-an Fiction,” p. 212.

⁵² Ma, “Pao-Kung Tradition,” pp. 145–46, and idem, “Textual Tradition of Ming Kung-an Fiction,” pp. 217–18.

⁵³ Ma, “Pao-Kung Tradition,” pp. 226–28, and Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 285–86.

(*zhulu si* 注祿司), who cannot find Zhao Neng in their records. Further investigation reveals that the scholar's name was miswritten in the otherworldly records (Zhu 朱 instead of Zhao 趙), thus preventing him from fulfilling his destiny. Baogong writes a memo to the celestial administration, informing all relevant authorities that the scholar named Zhao should be replaced with Zhu; that he will pass the examinations, and shall marry a woman née Wang. In this story, the netherworld courts are portrayed as a complicated administrative system, which suffers from the same bureaucratic shortcomings that permeate the courts on earth. This portrayal is doubtless inspired by earlier depictions of the netherworld, such as those found in *Mingbao ji*.⁵⁴ Bureaucratic mistakes in the netherworld are often employed by authors as an opportunity to recount the experiences of a living person who witnessed the courts of hell and lived to tell about it. "Record of a Returning Soul," for instance, recounts how in the eighth century, the monk Daoming was summoned to the court of King Yama as a result of a case of mistaken identity and later released.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, unlike earlier works, the emphasis in the tales from *Longtu gongan* is placed on Baogong's efforts to eradicate these bureaucratic faults. In fact, "Long Time Bachelor" reaches its zenith when Baogong embarks on an investigation in the netherworld courts, which strikes panic among the demon-officials. Here, in his adamant battle against corruption, the Baogong legend stands in line with his historical persona.

Popular conceptualizations of the netherworld abound with tales of an "eye for an eye" type of retribution that weighs the culprits' punishments according to the crimes they had committed. Such retribution is also portrayed in several *Longtu gongan* stories. In "The Rafters Corpse" (*shi shu chuan* 尸數椽), Baogong condemns to deafness a magistrate who did not listen to the complaints of the people in his next incarnation; and, for his failure to report to his superiors, he is to be reborn a mute as well. In "Falsely Reporting Good and Evil" (*shan'e wangbao* 善惡罔報), a servant who murdered a man by covering him in snow is doomed to be boiled in hot oil.⁵⁶ These solutions are in keeping with popular

⁵⁴ Donald Edward Gjertsen, "A Study and Translation of the Ming Pao Chi: A T'ang Dynasty Collection of Buddhist Tales," Ph.D. diss. (Stanford University, 1975), pp. 162–63; Sun Changwu 孫昌武, *Fojiao yu Zhongguo wenxue* 佛教與中國文學 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1988), pp. 263–64. See also Teiser, "'Having Once Died and Returned to Life,'" pp. 433–64.

⁵⁵ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, pp. 67–68.

⁵⁶ This punishment is probably related to the Buddhist and Daoist depictions of the fifth court of hell as "the boiling court." See Teiser, "'Having Once Died and Returned to Life,'" pp. 445–46, and Goodrich, *Chinese Hells*, pp. 44, 49–51, 62, 72–76, and 94–95.

representations of netherworld retribution, marked by the predominant mechanism of meting out punishment by weighing the torture according to the sin committed.

Despite such harsh punishments, Baogong's role as a netherworld judge, as it is portrayed in *Longtu gongan*, is directed more towards compensating the righteous than punishing the wicked. Considering the gruesome aspects of earthly judiciary processes, on the one hand, and the terrifying portrayals of the courts of the netherworld in later popular literature and art, on the other, it is surprising to discover in these stories a relatively benign judgment process in the afterlife. Ironically, torture is much more prevalent in Baogong stories and dramas that take place in earthly courts. This emphasis on compensation, and Baogong's surprisingly kind attitude in these stories, draw him closer to the earlier stages in the development of Yama, who was once portrayed as a benign ruler of the dead, the Lord of Ancestors.⁵⁷ It also reflects a prevalent vision of the netherworld in late-imperial fiction and drama as a realm brimming with opportunity; a chance to set history right (as in *Xiyou bu* 西游補) or correct contemporary social and personal wrongs (as in *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭).⁵⁸

Baogong's unbiased judgment in the realm of the dead does not offer any hope of affecting one's judgment in the afterlife through ritual, that is, by bribing netherworld personnel or appealing for heavenly forgiveness. Embedded in this depiction of the netherworld courts is the idea that leading a virtuous life is the only path to take in order both to avoid afterlife retribution and to achieve a good reincarnation. This didactic moral was somewhat in keeping with the then-popular "morality books" (*shan shu* 善書),⁵⁹ only without leaving much hope of manipulating judgment in the afterlife by accumulating counter-merit.

Longtu gongan stories of Baogong in the netherworld also address tensions between the concept of karmic retribution and the Chinese kinship system. In "Posterity Cut Off" (*juesi* 絕嗣), a man complains that he never had any offspring despite his virtuous character, whereas a certain sinful acquaintance had many sons. When examining the Virtue Register (*shan bu* 善簿) and the Transgression Register (*e bu* 惡簿), Baogong discovers that the current state of affairs is a direct result of the accumulated merit in both men's ancestral lineage. Thus, the righteous man suffers retribution for the transgressions committed by his

⁵⁷ See Siklos, "Evolution of the Buddhist Yama," p. 177.

⁵⁸ See Sawada, *Jigokuhen*, pp. 149–79.

⁵⁹ See Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), pp. 33–36, 58–60.

ancestors, while the sinful man enjoys the fruits of his ancestors' merit. Baogong's solution follows the logic of personal karmic retribution; the righteous man will be rewarded in his next incarnation, whereas the sinful shall suffer retribution for his transgressions in the next life.

The concept of inherited moral debt existed in China prior to the introduction of Buddhism. In Qin- and Han-period commentaries of the *Yijing*, disasters were attributed to moral transgressions committed by family members.⁶⁰ Late-Han Daoist scriptures refer to this notion as "inherited burden" (*chengfu* 承負).⁶¹ In his *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343 AD) states that one is punished for one's sins during one's lifetime, but if one dies before the "counters and markers" of one's sins are exhausted, then "the curse extends to the descendants."⁶² In an early commentary on the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* 三國志注, illness is portrayed as retribution for one's moral digression.⁶³ According to the third-century *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Laozi*, one's transgressions would also inflict disaster upon one's descendants.⁶⁴ A fourth-century Shangqing text titled *The Sword Scripture* (*Jianjing* 劍經) refers to it both as *chengfu* and as "dark virtue" (*yinde* 陰德).⁶⁵ The *Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints* (*Da zhong song zhang* 大冢訟章), a medieval Celestial Masters ritual, aims to absolve the living from the polluting transgressions of their ancestors.⁶⁶ The notion of accumulated good

⁶⁰ Chang Chaojan, "Killing Spirits from the Dead: The Object of Exorcism in Medieval Daoist Funerary Rites," in Florian C. Reiter, ed., *Exorcism in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), p. 22.

⁶¹ See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, with contribution by Peter Nickerson (Berkeley: U. California P., 1997), pp. 129, 360.

⁶² Peter Nickerson, "The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints," in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, p. 232; Chang "Killing Spirits from the Dead," pp. 22–23.

⁶³ See Maeda Shigeki, "Between Karmic Retribution and Entwining Infusion: Is the Karma of the Parent Visited upon the Child?," in Benjamin Penny, ed., *Daoism in History: Essays in Honor of Liu Ts'un-yan* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 108–9.

⁶⁴ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, p. 129. Schipper and Verellen date the *Xiang'er* commentary to the Later Han (25–220 AD); see Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 74–77.

⁶⁵ Stephen Bokenkamp, "Death and Ascent in Ling-pao Taoism," *Taoist Resources* 1.2 (1989), pp. 6–7. The same scripture also asserts that rebirth depends upon one's level of morality. About the *Sword Scripture*, see also Robert Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendence* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2002), pp. 71–72, and 277.

⁶⁶ Nickerson, "Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints," pp. 231–32. The work "The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints" is found in *Master Red-pine's Almanac of Petitions* (*Chisong zi zhang li* 赤松子章曆), which Schipper and Verellen date to the Six Dynasties (with some later additions); see Schipper and Verellen, *Taoist Canon*, pp. 134–35. The dating poses a conundrum; Anna Seidel dates it between the 3d–5th c. AD, whereas Nickerson places it around the sixth century. See Anna Seidel, "Post-Mortem Immortality, or the Taoist Resurrection of the Body," in S. Shaked, D. Shulman, G. G. Stroumsa, eds., *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution,*

merit is equally old; it is promoted by the *Yijing*, *Huainanzi*, and *Tai-ping jing*,⁶⁷ as well as by several Shangqing texts, such as the above-mentioned *Sword Scripture* and *Upper Scripture of Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits* (*Ling shu zi wen shang jing* 靈書紫文上經).⁶⁸ In later centuries, Buddhist notions of karmic retribution and reincarnation converged with popular conceptualizations of inherited moral debt, which was increasingly conceived in legal and bureaucratic terms.

Interestingly, in *Longtu gongan*, not all cases brought before Baogong in the netherworld relate to the dead. Conflicts in the world of the living also find their way to the courts of hell, in search of a better judicial process.⁶⁹ For instance, in “Evil Teacher Wrongs His Pupils” (*e shi wu tu* 惡師誤徒), a man hires a teacher, only to discover later that he is illiterate. The man accuses the teacher of fraud, while the teacher claims he has been mistreated. They descend to the netherworld and bring their grievance before Baogong, who finds both men guilty; the teacher is found guilty of fraud, and the employer – of negligence. The final verdict is that in their next incarnations, the teacher will be the employer’s water buffalo, and in the following round of reincarnations, the employer will be the teacher’s pig, thus achieving some level of equality between the two parties. In “Confused Fortunes” (*qiao zhao dian dao* 巧拙顛倒), a living woman descends to hell to complain to Baogong about her unsuccessful marital match to an ugly, untalented man. Baogong, half mockingly, promises the woman a reward in her next life if she serves her husband faithfully in this one.

These descents to the courts of the netherworld in order to solve issues in the world of the living are significant in two ways. First, they portray the courts of the netherworld as a judicial alternative to that on earth, criticizing its shortcomings and inefficiency. The fact that the courts of the netherworld appear less threatening than those in the world of the living is enough to suggest that the earthly system is profoundly flawed. Second, the stories indicate a shift in the role of King Yama. In its various transformations, Yama’s portrayal vacillated between demonic and benign. Although some of Yama’s demonic aspects also appear in

and *Permanence in the History of Religions, Dedicated to R.J. Zwi Werblowsky* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 232; Nickerson, “Great Petition for Sepulchral Complaints,” pp. 238, 250–54.

⁶⁷ Maeda, “Between Karmic Retribution and Entwining Infusion,” pp. 105–7.

⁶⁸ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, p. 360. This text was revealed to the Daoist Yang Xi (330–386?) and later included in the first of the tripartite divisions of the Daoist canon; *ibid.*, pp. 275–76.

⁶⁹ See Ma Shutian 馬書田, *Zhongguo mingjie zhushen* 中國冥界諸神 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1998), pp. 75–77.

late-imperial Chinese perceptions of the netherworld courts as terrifying prisons and chambers of torture, in the earlier stages of Yama's assimilation in China, he was portrayed as a rather compassionate judge and keeper of records.⁷⁰ In his convergence with the Baogong lore, it is actually Yama's earlier characteristics as a benign ruler of the realm of the dead that are more pronounced. In the *Longtu gongan* courtroom stories, Baogong, acting as King Yama, appears as an otherworldly authority responsible for the destinies of all living things, whose duties include both punishing and compensating. In this respect, he is not only the lord of the dead, but of the living as well. This portrayal, in fact, comes closer to the ancient Indic depiction of Yama than to late-imperial Chinese visualizations of the netherworld, where the judges of hell are depicted as terror-striking demonic authorities.

The frequent exchanges between the realm of the living and the dead are also reminiscent of Yama's ambivalent image as a deity responsible for the fortunes of mankind. The tantric visualization of Yama, for instance, was more focused on longevity than on retribution.⁷¹ It is sometimes argued that the late-imperial conception of the netherworld and its judges and functionaries has gradually shifted from a benign realm of the dead, to a terrifying array of torture chambers and cruel prosecutors. The portrayal of Baogong as King Yama in these late-Ming courtroom stories is a digression from this narrative, and seems to complicate our understanding of the netherworld judicial process.

Although Baogong's duties in hell vary somewhat from story to story, his chief responsibility is rewarding righteous men and women who were wronged during their lifetimes, and in most cases compensation to them is bestowed only in the next incarnation. Philosophical discussions concerning karmic retribution, morality, or eschatology are entirely absent from these stories; they project a somewhat simplistic and didactic conceptualization of judgment in the afterlife. Baogong stories that take place in the netherworld portray it as a realm closely tied to the world of the living. The courts of the netherworld mirror the bureaucracy on earth, including its shortcomings, and interact with it by borrowing its officials and imitating its procedures. This fluidity between the two realms and the bureaucratic nature of the netherworld echo ancient Chinese beliefs concerning the afterlife that predate the arrival of Buddhism in China. As a rectifier of wrongs and compensator of those who suffered injustice, Baogong as Yama fulfills a vital exor-

⁷⁰ One of Yama's manifestations is Mara, the enemy of the Buddha. See Siklos, "Evolution of the Buddhist Yama," p. 179.

⁷¹ Faure, "Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology," pp. 52–58.

cistic role as well; by offering justice to the dead, he prevents their return to the world of the living as malevolent ghosts. His role as a judge in hell, therefore, should also be understood in relation to the need to separate the worlds of the living and the dead, and avert dangerous, illegitimate crossovers between hell and earth.

Baogong's constant battle against corruption, as described, above, transcends the realm of man and continues to preoccupy him even in the realm of the dead. In a way, the mechanisms of karmic retribution render the judges of hell obsolete. Yama's relatively sympathetic characteristics as judge notwithstanding, the netherworld bureaucracy was largely perceived as suffering from the ailments of corruption and malfeasance, and therefore potentially unreliable and cruel. In other words, judgment in the afterlife somehow had become a far cry from the ancient view of karmic retribution. In this way, Baogong's role as King Yama symbolizes a desire to rectify the shortcomings of both the earthly and otherworldly bureaucracies. Furthermore, by judging the living in his netherworld court, Baogong is regarded as responsible for the destinies of mankind, which draws him closer to the responsibilities of the Indic Yama. In this respect, Baogong's role in the netherworld redefines the workings of karmic retribution, as well as the relationship between the human and netherworld bureaucratic systems.

Since their publication in the late Ming, the stories of Baogong in the netherworld have reverberated in works of fiction and drama, shaping Baogong's popular image, and in turn his religious veneration, especially his ties to the netherworld. Regional dramatic adaptations given in late Ming anthologies, as well as local versions of earlier *zaju* and *chuanqi* dramas, show Baogong in action as Yama.⁷² For instance, in the Beijing drama *Tanyin shan* 探陰山, Baogong descends to the netherworld to consult the Registers of Life and Death (*shengsi bu* 生死簿) before reaching a verdict in a certain case.⁷³ In contemporary ritual, worshippers in Yama temples and in Baogong temples prayed for good

⁷² Ding lists numerous examples, such as the Yue play *Baogong shen Kang Qi* 包公審康七, and the Nanchang play *Tao qian shu* 搖錢樹; see Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 370–88. Regional dramas about Baogong have yet to be documented and studied extensively.

⁷³ Zeng Bairong 曾白融 et al., *Jingju jumu cidian* 京劇劇目辭典 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989), pp. 205–6; see analysis in Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 392–93. One visual representation of the drama *Tanyin shan*, showing Baogong judging the dead, is a 1902 New Year print from Shanghai, currently held by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. See Judith T. Zeitlin and Yuhang Li, eds., *Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, U. Chicago P., 2014), p. 202. Other Beijing dramas portraying Baogong descending to hell include *Hei lu gao zhuang* 黑驢告狀 and *Lu yao zhi ma li* 路遙知馬力.

fortune in this life and the next.⁷⁴ Baogong's image, as a severe judge, on the one hand, and an incorruptible compensator for the lack of justice in the world of the living, on the other, represents an interesting moment of conflation of the Indian and the Chinese models of the afterlife, and played a pivotal role in his assimilation into Chinese culture.

BAOGONG'S MAGICAL MIRRORS

Although we have Baogong as a devoted judge, with an acute sense of justice, sentencing the souls of the dead is anything but a simple task. Netherworld officers and their registers fall short of providing adequate information about the lives and mentalities of the dead to achieve just and accurate verdicts. In the story "Longevity and Premature Death Distributed Unevenly" (*Shouyao bujun* 壽夭不均), a presumably righteous man who feels wronged for his short lifespan pleads his case before Baogong in the netherworld. Baogong discusses the matter with the Lord of Morality (*shan e si* 善惡司) and the Lord of Longevity (*zhu shou guan* 注壽官), but cannot reach a verdict. Something about this man's case seems to be wrong, but Baogong cannot pin it down. Fortunately, Baogong possesses an instrument surpassing all other means of weighing justice: a "sin-revealing mirror" (*niejing* 孽鏡) that reflects one's true nature and immoral deeds in life. Gazing into the mirror, Baogong watches the plaintiff's life unfolds before his eyes. Not only does the mirror capture this man's deeds and misdeeds chronologically, as in a movie, but it also allows Baogong to peer into the man's mind and examine his innermost thoughts. In this story, Baogong discovers that despite the upright appearance of the complainant, he is actually evil at heart. The mirror, in other words, provides a window onto one's soul.

This extraordinary mirror changes the rules of the game; no longer do otherworld authorities need make do with confused mounds of paperwork or toil like their counterparts on earth to extract confessions from plaintiffs and defendants through torture, as we saw. Information on the conduct of mankind had so far been accessible to otherworldly authorities only in textual form through various documents and registers, such as the above mentioned Virtue Register (*shan bu* 善簿), Transgression Register (*e bu* 惡簿), and Registers of Life and Death (*shengsi bu* 生死簿). The mirror, however, provides an almost unmediated visual representation of deeds. In reflecting one's past and present, the mir-

⁷⁴ Liu Zhemin 劉哲民, *Yanluo wang chongbai de yanjiu* 閻羅王崇拜的研究 (Taipei: Ganlan jijinhui chubun, 1986), pp. 42-43.

ror is an embodiment of the rule of *karma*. This visual effect brings to mind the Western scales of justice, but in this case the mirror reveals actual deeds, and is not an abstract tool that simply quantifies them. Supplying the judge with this visual depiction enables more accurate sentencing while transforming this episode into a remarkably theatrical and memorable scene.⁷⁵

The “sin-revealing mirror” is a recurrent motif in late-imperial Chinese literary and visual representations of hell, and in particular of the fifth court ruled by King Yama. It appears to be a Chinese invention, mentioned, since the seventh century, in a variety of Chinese literary and visual sources portraying the netherworld.⁷⁶ It appears under the same name (*niejing*) in the *Compiled Accounts of the Jade Ephemeral*, where the mirror is located in the first court of the netherworld, along with the registers of deeds.⁷⁷ Here, those with numerous transgressions are led to a “sin-revealing mirror platform” (*niejing tai* 孽鏡臺), from where they can watch their misdeeds in life. The mirror appears even earlier, in the Tang-era *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, where it is called the “mirror of deeds” (*yejing* 業鏡).⁷⁸ The mirror is stationed at the fifth court of King Yama, and the souls of the dead reach the court on the seventh day:

Yama rāja puts an end to the sounds of dispute, but in their hearts sinners are resentful and unwilling. With their hair yanked and their heads pulled up to look in the mirror of actions, they begin to know that affairs from previous lives are rendered distinct and clear.⁷⁹

While the visualization of the netherworld in Baogong stories seems to be indebted to both the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* and the *Compiled Accounts of the Jade Ephemeral*, Baogong’s sin-revealing mirror is closer to the model presented in the former, whose composers gave visual potential to the mirror by including illustrations of King Yama using it in the fifth court to judge the dead.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Abe Yasuki discusses some of Baogong’s extraordinary instruments of justice in literature and drama; Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 43–59.

⁷⁶ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, pp. 175 and 188. Bernard Faure discusses the mirror briefly in relation to esoteric Buddhism in Faure, “Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology,” p. 56.

⁷⁷ See Xiao, *Dao Fo shi wang diyu shuo*, p. 394, and Brook, Bourgon, and Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, pp. 128–29.

⁷⁸ Wolfram Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. California P., 1967), pp. 30–46; Goodrich, *Chinese Hells*, pp. 84–89; Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, pp. 2–8 and 171–88; Ma Shutian, *Huaxia zhushen* 華夏諸神 (Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 1990), pp. 532–33.

⁷⁹ Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, pp. 213–14.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 184, plates 8a–8b.

By Ming times, the mirror became a frequent symbol of truth, impartiality, and correct judgment in fiction and drama. One particularly noteworthy example is a famous episode of netherworld judgment in *Xiyou bu* in which Sun Wukong, assuming the role of King Yama, uses a “treachery-reflecting water-mirror” when judging the treacherous Qin Kuai.⁸¹ *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義) mentions a mirror that reveals evil thoughts, as in the above Baogong story.⁸² In Ming drama and fiction, the mirror is used in two ways: either as an instrument of judgment, or as a symbol of impartiality and selflessness in passing judgment. Courtroom stories of Baogong assuming the role of King Yama conflate these two uses, and the mirror motif came to be identified with the judge and the process of judgment – together.

In netherworld courtroom stories, the mirror seems to replace Yama’s acolytes (the companion deities Siming and Silu, Taishan fujun, and the God of Five Paths), whose main responsibility is to report the good and evil deeds of mankind.⁸³ Furthermore, the mirror’s accuracy also alleviates the burden of confession through torture, which plagued the Chinese judicial system in both realms. Thus, it offers the means for an efficient, just, and near-painless courtroom experience for the deceased. In these courtroom stories, Baogong gradually transforms into a one-man justice system, neither cruel nor benign. He comes to represent an ideal form of justice: quick, indifferent, and free from bureaucratic maladies.

Another recurring mirror motif in late-imperial Chinese literature, and particularly in Baogong-related stories, is the “demon-revealing mirror” (*zhao yao jing* 照妖鏡, or *zhao mo jing* 照魔鏡) – a magical mirror that distinguishes between humans and demonic beings.⁸⁴ For instance, in the famous novel *Xiyou ji*, Sun Wukong employs “demon-revealing mirrors” on multiple occasions.⁸⁵ In *Nanyou ji* 南游記, when Huaguang 華光 descends to Fengdu to rescue his mother and disguises himself as a celestial messenger, the guards of Fengdu use a “demon-revealing mirror” to reveal his true form.⁸⁶ An early example of this mirror is also found in the *cihua* tale “Dragon-Design Bao Sentences the White

⁸¹ Yueh, *Tower of Myriad Mirrors*, pp. 97–121.

⁸² David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1997), pp. 169–70, 224.

⁸³ Regarding Yama’s acolytes, see Faure, “Indic Influences on Chinese Mythology,” pp. 46–60.

⁸⁴ See Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 243–55.

⁸⁵ See chapters 6, 45, and 58.

⁸⁶ See Yu Xiangdou 余象斗, *Wuxian lingguan dadi huaguang tianwang zhuan* 五顯靈官大帝華光天王傳 (Shanghai: Guben xiaoshuo jicheng, guji chubanshe, 1990), pp. 201–2.

Weretiger” (*Bao longtu duan baihu jing zhuan* 包龍圖斷白虎精傳);⁸⁷ when Baogong summons a Celestial Master to expose the true identity of a weretiger, the Celestial Master suggests they use a mirror (“Karmascope” in Idema’s translation) to expose the weretiger.⁸⁸ In the drama *The Five Flower Cave* (*Wu hua dong* 五花洞), Baogong uses a “demon-reflecting mirror” to distinguish between a human couple and a couple of animal-spirits impersonating them.⁸⁹ The “demon-reflecting mirror” reappears in the nineteenth-century novel *Sanxia wuyi* 三俠五義, where it also saves Baogong’s life.⁹⁰ The relevant scene can now be seen in a temple mural at the Kaifeng-gong temple in Daliao, Taiwan: depicted is the young Baogong holding the mirror while escaping from a cave.

Although the origin of these extraordinary mirrors is unclear, one possibility is exorcistic and funerary rituals. In regional dramas, for instance, the mirror is used not only to reveal the demons’ true form, but to combat them as well.⁹¹ An early reference to a similar magical mirror is found in *The Secret Rites of the Spells of the Divine Emissary the Immovable One*, translated by Vajrabodhi (662–732), where the mirror is used in a Tantric Buddhist ritual involving spirit possession.⁹² In late-imperial China, bronze mirrors for quelling demons were buried along with the deceased as funerary sacrifices.⁹³ In the late-Ming novel *Beiyong ji* 北游記, a “demon-reflecting mirror” is used by a demon named Fu Ying 副應 to combat the Dark Warrior (Xuanwu 玄武, also known as Zhenwu 真武) and his horde of generals, who are in fact converted demons.⁹⁴ Since in late-Ming courtroom stories Baogong assumes the position of King Yama in hell and the role of exorcist in the world of the living, the symbolic significance of sin-revealing and demon-quelling mirrors most likely informed his image as an impartial judge, cum exorcist.

Baogong’s extraordinary mirrors also left a mark on popular oral traditions. Folktales about Baogong’s mirrors particularly abound in

⁸⁷ A translation of this tale is in Idema, *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law*, pp. 105–32.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 128, note 7.

⁸⁹ See L.C. Arlington and Harold Acton, *Famous Chinese Plays* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), pp. 403–5.

⁹⁰ In chapter 2 of *Sanxia wuyi*, Baogong’s second aunt repeatedly attempts to assassinate him. After failing to poison him, she tricks him into falling into a deserted well. Fortunately, Baogong is saved by a mysterious mirror he finds there that shows him the way out of the well. See Deng Shaoji and Wang Jun, *the Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2005), pp. 14–15.

⁹¹ Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 259, 369–70, and 404.

⁹² Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 206–7.

⁹³ McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefable*, p. 25.

⁹⁴ See Yu Xiangdou, *Beifang Zhenwu xuan tian shangdi chushen zhizhuan* 北方真武玄天上帝出身志傳 (Shanghai: Guben xiaoshuo jicheng, guji chubanshe, 1990), pp. 202–3. For an

Anhui and Henan, where such stories are linked to the history of local temples and scenic spots. Some go as far as to draw a connection between Baogong's mirrors and the crescent moon on his forehead, claiming that the crescent moon is a mirror inlaid into his forehead.⁹⁵ The mirrors became essential images of Baogong as the ultimate judge and a key feature in his iconography as well.

THE ZHA-GUILLOTINE

The *zha* 鋸, a guillotine-like instrument of execution comprised of two vertical axes, is a prime example of Baogong's persistent chthonic association in popular imagination. In the nineteenth-century novel *Sanxia wuyi*, Baogong receives three *zha*-guillotines, each intended for the execution of criminals of a different social rank: a dog-shaped *zha* for commoners, a tiger-shaped *zha* for officials, and a dragon-shaped *zha* for the highest echelons of society, that is, high officials and members of the imperial family.⁹⁶ The design of these curious instruments is the result of a word play between Baogong and his clever advisor Gong-sun Ce. However, the *zha* are used only in a few incidents in *Sanxia wuyi*, and it appears that they serve more as a deterrent than as routine instruments of execution. By granting him the three *zha*, the emperor bestows absolute judicial authority, allowing Baogong to transcend bureaucratic obstacles, corruption, and the influence of powerful individuals, and to lay down the law as he sees fit. The role of the three *zha* in the novel is very similar to that of two particular symbols Baogong receives from the emperor in Yuan plays: a sword and a golden badge that allow him to decide cases without consulting his superiors.⁹⁷ Although *Sanxia wuyi* depicts Baogong as a mere mortal, stripped of any

English translation, see Gary Seaman, *The Journey to the North: An Ethnological Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel Pei-yu chi* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1987), pp. 184–85.

⁹⁵ Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 243–52.

⁹⁶ This storyline takes place in chapter 9. See also Susan Blader, "A Critical Study of the San-xia wu-yi and its Relationship to the Long-t'u Kung-an Song-book," Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 1977); idem, *Tales of Magistrate Bao and His Valiant Lieutenants* (Hong Kong: The Chinese U.P., 1998); idem, "Oral Narrative and its Transformation into Print: The Case of Bai Yutang," in Vibeke Børdahl, ed., *The Eternal Storyteller: Oral Literature in Modern China* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 1999), pp. 167–69; and Song, *Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*. It is interesting to note that this focus on rank and social segregation is a deviation from the general image of Baogong, and also contradicts the principles of the historical Bao Zheng as presented in his biographies.

⁹⁷ Ma, "Pao-Kung Tradition," pp. 80–81; Vincent Durand-Dastès, "Le Hachoir du Juge Bao: Le supplice idéal dans le roman et le théâtre Chinois en langue vulgaire des Ming et des Qing," in Antonio Dominguez Leiva and Muriel Détrie, eds., *Le Supplice Oriental dans la Littérature et les Arts* (Lyon: Éditions du Murmure, 2005), pp. 203–4.

supernatural abilities or otherworldly duties, the appearance of the *zha* is a remnant of Baogong's past role as a judge in hell, reminding us of an earlier stage of his mythmaking process.

The origins of the *zha* in Chinese literature seem to be rooted in King Yama's fifth court of hell, as described already. Certain temples dedicated to Yama, bearing no connection to Baogong, also house *zha* sculptures (see figure 1).⁹⁸ Wolfram Eberhard describes the *zha* as the typical instrument of torture in the fifth court, and lists several Taiwanese temples where he saw this instrument.⁹⁹ Vincent Durand-Dastès addresses the religious significance of Baogong's instruments of torture and execution by highlighting the connection between the *zha* and ritualistic instruments of exorcistic law-enforcement (*fa bao* 法寶).¹⁰⁰ In addition, he notes that the execution mode of cutting a man in half, or *yao zhan* 腰斬, is borrowed from ritualistic contexts, where it is associated with vanquishing otherworldly menaces. Interestingly, Durand-Dastès infers that cutting the criminal off at the waist might symbolize the weighing of justice, as suggested by the expression *heng zha* 衡鋸, meaning "balancing guillotine."¹⁰¹

By the end of the nineteenth century, literary and visual representations of Baogong and the *zha* were frequent. Several *chuanqi* and regional dramas dating to late Ming, such as the Wanli-period plays *Zhenzhuji* 珍珠記 and *Taofuji* 桃符記, mention the *zha* as one of Baogong's staple characteristics, along with his sternness and notorious humorlessness.¹⁰² The scripture "Lü zu shi jiang yu zun xin Yuli chaozhuan Yanluo jing" 呂祖師降諭遵信玉曆鈔傳閻羅王經 Durand-Dastès depicts as Baogong presiding over the fifth court of hell, punishing culprits with the *zha*.¹⁰³ A Zhejiang *baojuan* dated 1844, *Maihua zhuan baojuan* 賣花傳寶卷, portrays Baogong executing Cao Guojiu 曹國舅 with a *zha*.¹⁰⁴ In illustrations depicting the seventh and eighth hells from the Vidor collection of the National Museum of History in Taipei, Baogong is

⁹⁸ For instance, I came across a tiger-shaped *zha* in a Taiwanese temple dedicated to King Yama (Yanluo dian 閻羅殿) in Gaoxiong 高雄. Curiously, although this temple does not include any references to Baogong, it appears under the section of Baogong temples in the guidebook "Taiwan miao shenzhuan" 台灣廟神傳.

⁹⁹ Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁰ Durand-Dastès, "Le Hachoir du Juge Bao," pp. 187–225.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 208–11; and Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, pp. 219–20.

¹⁰² See Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 323–32, 354–60, and 366–67.

¹⁰³ See (no author stated): *Lü zu shi jiangyu zunxin Yuli chaozhuan Yanluo jing* 呂祖師降諭遵信玉曆鈔傳閻羅王經 (Beijing: Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin, 2011), p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Cao Guojiu is one of the Eight Immortals, a mythical group of immortals celebrated since the Tang dynasty in poetry, drama, fiction, art, and material culture. Regarding the story cycle of Cao Guojiu, see Wu Guangzheng 吳光正, *Baxian gushi xitong kaolun* 八仙故事係

seen interrogating a kneeling woman and watching a man being cut in half by a *zha*.¹⁰⁵ Baogong's facial appearance in these illustrations is identical to that used when made-up for the stage: it consisted of a black face and a crescent moon on his forehead.¹⁰⁶ This iconography persists in an illustration of King Yama, seated in the fifth court surrounded by his bailiffs. In front of him, at the center of the picture, is a tiger-shaped instrument, identical to the *zha*, on which is written "tiger knife hell 虎刀地獄," suggesting the existence of a sub-hell where this instrument is used. Two demons operate this blade as they chop a man at the waist.¹⁰⁷

The *zha* had an enormous impact on the popular imagination concerning Baogong. Nowadays, numerous Baogong temples in mainland China and Taiwan house sculptures of the three *zha* (see figures 2 and 3). The fact that local dramas across China portray Baogong executing criminals with the *zha* and that so many *zha* replicas are in Baogong temples indicate that the *zha* have become one of Baogong's permanent pan-Chinese cultural icons.

BAOGONG AS YAMA IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Baogong veneration has gone hand in hand with Baogong lore; nowadays, whether at government-sponsored sites commemorating the historical Bao Zheng or at rural, privately-operated temples for the legendary Baogong, history and fiction are closely intertwined.

統考論 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006). There are several variations to the story of Baogong executing Cao Guojiu. An earlier version of this story appears in the *cihua* "The Tale of the Case of Dragon-Design Bao Sentencing the Emperor's Brothers-in-law Cao," translated in Idema, *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law*, pp. 197–276. Another version of this story appears in "The Flower Seller," a text in women's script translated in Wilt L. Idema, *Heroines of Jiaogong: Chinese Narrative Ballads in Women's Script* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2009), pp. 98–118. Interestingly, in this version, the ghost of the murdered wife arrives at the court of King Yama, who directs her to present her case before Baogong, who holds a dual position in the worlds of the living and the dead.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Vidor and the National Museum of History (Guoli lishi bowuguan 國立歷史博物館), *Ten Kings of Hades: The Vidor Collection* 十殿閻王, 魏伯儒捐贈 (Taipei: National Museum of History, 1984), pp. 55, 60, 67, 69, and 76.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 55. The origins of this otherworldly iconography are rooted in Baogong's representation in drama. See Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 256–66; L.C. Arlington, *The Chinese Drama: from the Earliest Times until Today* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), pp. 107, 111, 136, 142, 168, and *Ten Kings of Hell: The Vidor Collection*, p. 55. Information plaques at the Kaifeng-fu museum 開封府 in Kaifeng, Henan, also address the origins of Baogong's iconography in drama.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 35–37. Additional illustrations of the *zha* are found on pages 60, 67, 69, and 76. A very similar representation of the *zha* also appears in an illustration of the sixth court of hell in (n.a.) *Diyu youji* 地獄游記 (Taizhong: Shengxian tang zazhishe, 1986), p. 8.

Scattered across mainland China and Taiwan, most Baogong temples do not maintain connections with other Baogong temples,¹⁰⁸ or even know of their existence. Nevertheless, one prominent feature shared by all Baogong temples is their preoccupation with various aspects of the Baogong myth, shaped by a millennium of popular culture.¹⁰⁹ Central to Baogong's mythical persona, as demonstrated in the previous sections, is his association with judgment in the afterlife, and particularly with the position of King Yama of the fifth court of hell. This aspect has had a large impact on the way he is worshiped.

The historical Baogong has been venerated continuously since the Northern Song dynasty in his hometown of Hefei and in the ancestral temple of the Bao clan in Baogong zhen 包公鎮 (in Da Bao Cun 大包村), Anhui province.¹¹⁰ The earliest concrete evidence I have encountered of Baogong worship outside the Hefei area is a stele dated to the fourth year of the Ming-dynasty Chenghua 成化 reign (1468) located at the Baogong ci in Zhaoqing 肇慶 (formerly Duanzhou 端州), Guangdong province.¹¹¹ Moreover, certain courtroom stories about Baogong from the same time describe his being venerated by grateful commoners.¹¹² In Taiwan, the oldest Baogong temple dates back to the eighteenth century, and among the thirty-six Baogong temples recorded in Qing-dynasty and Republican-era local gazetteers examined by Abe Yasuki, four are still operating (located in Anhui, Henan, and Guangdong provinces).¹¹³ New Baogong temples were established in mainland China and Taiwan in the latter half of the twentieth century, and

¹⁰⁸ In this section I briefly address a selection of Baogong temples in which he is associated with King Yama. For a complete list and analysis of Baogong temples in mainland China and Taiwan, see Noga Ganany, "Judge in the Realm of the Living by Day, Judge in the Netherworld by Night: Baogong in Ming Fiction and Religious Worship," M.A. thesis (Tel Aviv University, 2011), pp. 142–79.

¹⁰⁹ On Baogong temples, see Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 457–538.

¹¹⁰ The ancestral temple of the Bao clan is currently maintained by the thirty-fifth generation of Bao Zheng's descendants, Mr. Bao Yaoliang 包堯良, whom I interviewed in 2010.

¹¹¹ The earliest record I found of this temple is in the local gazetteer *Guangdong tongzhi chugao* 廣東通志初稿, ed. Dai Jingcai 戴璟采, Jiajing period (1521–1567). See also Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 460–63.

¹¹² See for instance story 58 in the *Baijia gongan*, titled "Condemning to Death Five Rats Who Disrupted the Capital" (*juelu wu shu nao dongjing* 決戮五鼠鬧東京).

¹¹³ According to Abe Yasuki's research on listings of Baogong temples in local gazetteers, thirty-six Baogong temples existed in mainland China prior to the founding of the PRC. The earliest gazetteer listing of a Baogong temple which Abe Yasuki quotes dates back to 1462. See Abe Yasuki, *Jikatashi ni kisaisareta Hōkō soshi* 地方志に記載された包公祠 (Yamaguchi University, 2000), pp. 17–31. Abe Yasuki also examined a specific temple in Changsha, concluding that the origins of Baogong worship in this part of mainland China stems from the popularity of Baogong-related dramas and stories. See Abe Yasuki, "Hōkō tetsumen meiseikyō ni suite: Chōsa ni okeru Hōkō shinkō shiryō" 包公鉄面明聖経について、長沙における包公信仰資料, *Chūgoku bungaku ronshū* 中國文學論集 (Kyushu University) 26 (December 1997), pp.

more are now under construction. Following the enormous success of television dramas about Baogong in the 1980s and 1990s, a surge of visitors and donations swept Taiwanese Baogong temples. It would be difficult to tally precisely the number of Baogong temples in current operation, but a very modest estimate would be around twenty temples in mainland China and thirty temples in Taiwan.

Baogong Park 包公園 in the city of Hefei, Anhui province, is the largest compound dedicated to Baogong in China. It contains not only a *ci* temple, but also the tombs of Bao Zheng and his closest family members.¹¹⁴ The temple itself was established in the mid-nineteenth century by the statesman Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (also a native of the Hefei region), and renovated in 1981. In recent years the temple has become a local landmark and a site of political pilgrimage by party officials who go there to praise Bao Zheng's celebrated incorruptibility.¹¹⁵ Despite its attempts at historicity, the layout of the temple is heavily indebted to the fictional character of Baogong to such a degree that one finds it hard to draw a line between history and myth. For instance, Bao Zheng's statue in the main hall is accompanied by his four knights-errant (who made their debut in Ming vernacular fiction) and sculptures of the three animal-headed *zha* (featured in illustrations of hell and in *Sanxia wuyi*). Moreover, in other wings of the compound, life-sized statues reenact scenes from famous Baogong stories. The temple not only attracts tourists, but also worshippers on pilgrimage (*jinxiang* 進香) there, as well as spirit-mediums who come to commune with Baogong's spirit.¹¹⁶

The Baogong miao 包公廟, situated amidst fields on the outskirts of Shangqiu 商丘, Henan province, is an interesting example of a privately-operated temple for the legendary judge. It was built in 1982 by a farmer named Wang Zuncai 王尊才, who still resides near the temple. The temple is usually closed and does not receive visitors regularly, except during Spring Festival celebrations, when the basement is used as storage and a backstage for processions. Stone inscriptions in the

72–89. It is important to note that Baogong is also revered in temples in which he is not the main deity. See Katz, *Divine Justice*, p. 95.

¹¹⁴ The tombs were originally located outside Hefei. They suffered damage during the Great Leap Forward, when the area was transformed into a steel factory. The tombs were only moved to the park compound in the late 1990s. See also Chen Guidi 陳桂棟 and Chuntao 春桃, *Baogong yigu ji* 包公遺骨記 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005).

¹¹⁵ The image of Bao Zheng/Baogong in contemporary public discourse about widespread corruption in the ranks of the Chinese government deserves further research.

¹¹⁶ This is according to Mrs. Zhao Huiying 趙會英 of the temple's staff, whom I interviewed in 2010.

courtyard make several attempts at historicity; they claim, for instance, that the temple was first established in the Song dynasty following a visit of the historical Bao Zheng to the area, and was later rebuilt in the twentieth century as a show of gratitude by the locals for Baogong's miraculous assistance during the Japanese occupation and the famine of 1960. The inspiration for the design of the temple's rooms came from an illustrated version of *Sanxia wuyi*, which Mr. Wang laid out to show me. Two of the temple's halls contain morbid reenactments of scenes from Baogong stories with life-sized statues made of wood and papier-mâché. One of them shows Baogong, with a black face sporting a white crescent, seated behind a desk and attended by three courtroom constables on either side, while at the far end of the room lies a man who has been beheaded by a dog-headed *zha* (see figures 3 and 4). This temple illustrates many of the shared features of mainland Baogong temples – the connections with the historical Bao Zheng and the narratives and iconography.

Baogong temples in mainland China suffered greatly throughout the previous century; only a fraction of the temples remain, and their scale of operation is significantly reduced. Although Baogong was worshipped as a judge in hell in mainland China in the past, nowadays his chthonic position plays only a minor role in his veneration.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, most mainland temples still commemorate Baogong's chthonic position in one way or another. The Baogong ci 包公祠 of Hefei and Zhaoqing (see figure 5), for instance, address Baogong's role as a judge in hell in couplets hanging in the main hall. The Baogong ci and the Kaifeng fu 開封府 in Kaifeng mention this role on information plaques that hang in side rooms. The Baoxiang fu 包相府 in Guangdong sports a mural depicting Baogong listening to the pleas of the dead, while the adjacent Baomo yuan 寶墨園 contains murals and carvings portraying Baogong conducting trials in hell. Baogong's legendary instruments of execution, the *zha*, appear in most Baogong temples in mainland China and Taiwan, even in temples that do not portray Baogong as King Yama.

¹¹⁷ Anne S. Goodrich records how Baogong was worshipped as King Yama in 1932 in the temple Shiba diyu miao 十八地獄廟 in Beijing. See Goodrich, *Chinese Hells*, p. 74. Currently, Baogong's figure as a paragon of justice and incorruptibility is used, somewhat paradoxically, by both state officials (to maintain an image of honest public service) and the people (to criticize state officials). In my conversations with worshippers and temple staff members, I was given the impression that veneration of Baogong might invite undesired attention from government authorities, since it is often associated with criticism of state bureaucracy and its widespread corruption.

Baogong's chthonic duties feature more prominently in temples dedicated to Baogong across Taiwan, where he is often worshipped as King Yama alongside Dizang and other officers of hell. A couplet at the entrance to the Mingsheng gong 明聖宮 temple in Taipei (see figures 6 and 7), established in 1941, reads:

In rewarding and punishing the multitude he does not tire day
or night,
Dealing with the yin [realm] and the yang [realm],
In his authority over the people,
Justly and publicly he distinguishes virtue from malice."¹¹⁸

Haiqing gong 海青宮 Temple near Santiao lun 三條侖, on the western coast of Taiwan, is the largest and oldest Baogong temple on the island.¹¹⁹ It was established in 1738, following the vision of a local villager in which King Yama commanded him to establish a temple in his name. The vision featured a boat reaching the shore carrying the Bao family's books, Baogong's statue, and two wooden signs that read "The Hall of the Kings of Hell" and "Prince Yama."¹²⁰ Today, the temple enjoys immense popularity and attracts worshippers from near and far who communicate with the spirit of Baogong in the netherworld.¹²¹ Many visitors are accompanied by spirit-mediums and flock there especially on weekends. Around the courtyard, the temple's clerks work diligently, filing and stamping indictments and confessions that will be presented to the judges of hell.

In Chinese and Taiwanese temples, Baogong's position in the netherworld is viewed, with some variations, either as concomitant with his official position on earth, or as a position assigned to him after his death. Baogong is most frequently portrayed in temples as an incorruptible judge who fulfills a double role in serving both the realms of the living and the dead, styled after his portrayal in fiction and drama. Some temples hold that the historical Bao Zheng assumed the position of King Yama after his death.¹²² For instance, the hagiography of King Yama in Haiqing gong Temple's records is, in fact, a summary of

¹¹⁸ 賞罰群黎不免晝夜辦陰陽，司权萬姓正真公明分善惡。

¹¹⁹ See also description of this temple in Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 489–94.

¹²⁰ According to interviews with temple employees I conducted in 2009 and to a temple written work titled "Zhui ben su yuan zhao ji ding ding" 追本溯源肇基鼎定, printed in 2007.

¹²¹ According to the temple's staff, these mediums arrive individually, usually together with the worshippers who hired them, and are not associated with, or paid by, the temple's management.

¹²² This belief is rooted in a cycle of folktales discussed in Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 188–98.

Bao Zheng's biography from Song-dynasty historiography.¹²³ Qingtian tang Baogong miao 青天堂包公廟 Temple, in Puli 埔里, central Taiwan, published a prayer scroll for King Yama that opens with a biography of the historical Bao Zheng.¹²⁴ It recounts how Baogong was assigned the position of King Yama by the Jade Emperor for his loyalty and filial devotion.¹²⁵

A unique account of Baogong's links to the netherworld is given by Kaifeng gong Baogong miao 开封宫包公廟 Temple in Daliao village 大寮村, southern Taiwan (see figure 8). According to the hagiography of Baogong there, he was an incarnation of the Big Dipper. After Baogong died, he passed through the ten courts of hell and became Lord Ma (Maguogong 馬國公).¹²⁶ As Lord Ma, he served as the ruler of the netherworld and, as a reward for his service, was later granted another hundred years of life on earth. Hence, in 1415 he reincarnated as the official Liu Yuyun 劉玉暈, a prison inspector who requested to be transferred to oversee Baogong's temple, so that he could "dwell among the devotees and bestow fortune upon worshippers." This hagiography also identifies the spirit of Baogong and Lord Ma with the Stellar God of Literature (*wendian xing jun* 文典星君). Finally, the record describes the divine inspiration for the establishment of this temple following a revelation of Baogong through a spirit-medium in 1967, when a session of spirit-writing produced a poem conveying the god's wish that a temple for Lord Ma be built there.¹²⁷

The identification of Baogong with King Yama in Taiwanese religious worship is also celebrated in popular morality books, such as *Journey to Purgatory* (*Diyu youji* 地獄游記), attributed to the god Jigong 濟公 and composed throughout a series of spirit-writing sessions. This book has been distributed to the public, free of charge, in temples throughout Taiwan since 1978. Currently, the book is also distributed in several Baogong temples. We read that during a visit to the fifth court of hell, the protagonists Jigong and Mr. Yang 楊生 are invited to have tea with

¹²³ In the temple's literature, it appears under the title "Yanluo tianzi shengping shilue" 閻羅天子生平事略.

¹²⁴ See also description of this temple in Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 498–501.

¹²⁵ This notion also appears in several academic works but without references to its source. See, for instance, Li Yongping 李永平, *Baogong wenxue ji qi chuanbo* 包公文學及其傳播 (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2007), pp. 383–85; Chen, *Yuhuang dadi xin yang*, pp. 47–49, 111; Ma, *Zhongguo minjie zhushen*, pp. 72–89.

¹²⁶ Regarding the Daliao Kaifeng gong Baogong temple and its connection to Lord Ma, see Abe, *Hōkō densetsu no keisei to tenkai*, pp. 501–4.

¹²⁷ On spirit writing see David K. Jordan, *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1986), and Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*.

King Yama, during which they discuss, among other things, his identity as Bao Zheng in the world of the living.¹²⁸ In short, despite the thematic and geographic disparity between Baogong temples in mainland China and Taiwan, they share a vision of Baogong that is indebted to his chthonic position as King Yama.¹²⁹

EPILOGUE

Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1797) recounts a strange event during a performance of the drama *Bao Judges the Black Pot Case* (*Bao xiaosu duan wu pen* 包孝肅斷烏盆) by a theatre group in Guangdong during the Qing-dynasty Qianlong reign.¹³⁰ As the actor playing Baogong went up on stage, he saw the figure of a wounded and disheveled man kneeling before him, presenting a complaint. Frightened out of his wits, the actor fled the stage, leaving the audience in an uproar. Rumors of this uncanny event and the chaos it had unleashed made their way to the magistrate, who summoned the actor for an investigation. Since the ghost did not appear during the actor's interview in court, the magistrate ordered the actor to return to the stage and bring the ghost to court with him. Although the actor managed to bring the ghost to court, the magistrate could not see it, and became furious. The ghost then led the actor and officers of the *yamen* to the countryside, where they uncovered the body of a man that had been thrown haphazardly into the burial mound of a local gentry-woman. The ensuing investigation revealed that after the woman's funeral, the undertakers robbed and murdered a passer-by, and buried him in the same mound. According to Yuan Mei, tradition has it that when undertakers bury a corpse, they say that if one wishes to appeal for justice, there is no other way but to appeal to Longtu (Baogong) in the afterlife. The ghost heard this saying and therefore presented its complaint before the actor playing Baogong.

This anecdote not only demonstrates the pervasive image of Baogong as a judge in the netherworld, but also reveals the profound impact of Baogong lore on popular imagination. Yuan Mei, though stressing the historicity of his account, describes a chain of events that

¹²⁸ See *Diyu youji*, pp. 95–96. This conversation, accompanied by illustrations (portraying Baogong as King Yama, with black face and crescent), also appears in a comic-book edition of the *Journey to Purgatory*, called (n. a.), *Manhua diyu youji* 漫畫地獄游記 (Taizhong: Shengxiantang zazhishe, 2009), pp. 94–95. See also Shahar, *Crazy Ji*, pp. 190–94.

¹²⁹ Much of the history and development of Baogong worship in mainland China and Taiwan remains a mystery, which I intend to explore in further depth in the future.

¹³⁰ Yuan Mei 袁枚, *Zi bu yu* 子不語 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, Hunan sheng xinhua shudian faxing, 1985), pp. 260–61.

follows all the narrative rules of a Baogong courtroom story or drama. The question of fictionality and historicity in the genre of *biji* prose that typifies Yuan Mei's anecdote, though interesting in itself, is not the key issue here. The most remarkable aspect is that the events he describes in "real life" reenact a Baogong-style plotline that mirrors the events taking place in the drama performed that day in Guangdong – *Bao Judges the Black Pot Case*. Yuan is not merely a casual recorder of unofficial history or an ethnographer of the strange; he becomes a part of the very cultural phenomenon he records.

Yuan Mei's anecdote and other, similar, accounts shed light on the role of drama and regional drama in particular, in propagating the image of Baogong as a judge in the netherworld. As discussed above, Song- and Yuan-dynasty plays that portray Baogong as assuming responsibilities in hell and communicating with ghosts have planted the seed for his role as King Yama, later elaborated in the short courtroom stories of Ming times. These stories nurtured the popular view of Baogong as Yama, and inspired other works of different genres. One might suggest that drama was crucial in the development of iconic images of Baogong and in the worship of Baogong as King Yama.¹³¹

Adaptations of late-Ming courtroom stories into works of prose and drama had a particularly profound influence on local folklore in areas that housed Baogong temples and on *baojuan* texts that identified Yama as Baogong.¹³² According to a Qing-dynasty folktale from the Changsha area, an actor playing Baogong was approached during a temple festival by a female ghost who claimed that she had suffered an injustice and pleaded for Baogong's help.¹³³ A native of the area, she had been murdered by her adulterous husband and his lover. As a ghost, she now led the actor, along with several other actors and monks, to the place where the two murderers had buried her body. In this case, too, a performance of a Baogong drama transforms into a Baogong-style murder case, with the actor assuming a medium-like function of communicating with the dead and resolving injustices. Another tale, from Tianjin during Qing times, involves a performer clad in a Baogong costume who was approached by a headless ghost in a haunted house. The ghost recounted that he was on his way to buy tea, when people residing in this particular house robbed and murdered him, then buried his body in the yard. In the conclusion of the tale, it is suggested that

¹³¹ Ding, *Su wenxue zhong de Baogong*, pp. 391–92.

¹³² Li, *Baogong wenxue ji qi chuan bo*, pp. 373–78.

¹³³ Wen Chansheng 文產生, ed., *Zhongguo guihua* 中國鬼話 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenshu chubanshe, 1991), pp. 124–26.

the make-up of the actor playing Baogong was too convincing, and that if actors do not wish to attract wronged ghosts they should paint the crescent on their forehead a little crooked.¹³⁴ We see in these stories that performers who play Baogong assume his role not only as a great judge in the afterlife, but also his ability to communicate with ghosts. Baogong performances are conceived as bridging the realm of the living and the netherworld, thus conflating entertainment and ritual. Put differently, the stage becomes a liminal space between the two realms, wherein the performer playing Baogong acts as a medium.

Although the Baogong legend should not be regarded as a stable, cohesive cultural construct that developed linearly, Baogong's role as a judge in the netherworld and in particular his identification with King Yama constitute an undercurrent throughout Baogong-related works during the last millennium. This undercurrent has become especially pronounced in contemporary religious veneration of Baogong. Vernacular fiction and drama in recent centuries inspired Baogong's trademark emblems – his iconography, his “sin-revealing mirror,” and the *zha*; and these marked the mature stage in his mythmaking and deification process. Baogong's iconography, a black face sporting a crescent moon on the forehead, is a visual representation of his unbiased verdicts and his role in the realm of the dead. Baogong's extraordinary mirror cements his image within a larger context of the development of the popular perception of judgment in the afterlife, in which King Yama has increasingly attained a predominant role. The *zha*, whose origins are rooted in visual representations of the courts of hell, have captivated the imagination of readers, viewers, and worshippers, and today the *zha* are present in most Baogong and numerous King Yama temples. Considering that Baogong's emblems are increasingly integrated into the worship of King Yama, and that in the course of the twentieth century, temples previously dedicated to King Yama have transformed into Baogong temples,¹³⁵ it is possible that the conflation of the two figures will intensify in the future. Finally, Baogong's role as King Yama in literature and religious worship attests to the firm grip of the bureaucratic metaphor on the popular perception of the cycle of life and death. The perpetual hunger for justice and the desire to improve one's lot were interwoven into late-imperial conceptualizations of death and the afterlife, imagined in bureaucratic and judicial terms.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 719–22.

¹³⁵ Liu, *Yanluo wang chong bai de yanjiu*, pp. 40–42.

Death did not always symbolize the threat of a punitive judgment day, but also represented the final chance to rectify wrongs. The legend of Judge Bao offered a last resort for those seeking justice, whether in this life or the next.



Figure 1. Statue of a Tiger-headed zha

This is at Yanluo dian 閻羅殿, Gaoxiong 高雄, Taiwan. The temple seems to be unrelated to the Baogong lore, but houses replicas of zha. (Photograph by author)



Figure 2. Statues of the Three zha

At Bao xiaosu gong ci 包孝肅公祠; Hefei, Anhui province. (Photograph by author)



*Figure 3. Statue of a Man Executed by a Tiger-headed zha
At Baogong miao 包公廟, Shangqiu 商丘, Henan province. (Photograph by author)*



Figure 4. Baogong Statue

In one of the halls of Baogong miao 包公廟, Shangqiu 商丘, Henan province. Baogong's face is painted black, and a white crescent moon is painted on his forehead. On both sides of Baogong's desk stand statues of clerks and courtroom bailiffs. All statues at this temple are made from wood and papier-mâché, inspired by an illustrated edition of the adventure novel Sanxia wuyi. (Photograph by author)



*Figure 5. Baogong Statue
Main hall of Bao xiaosugong ci 包孝肅公祠; in
Hefei, Anhui province.
(Photograph by author)*

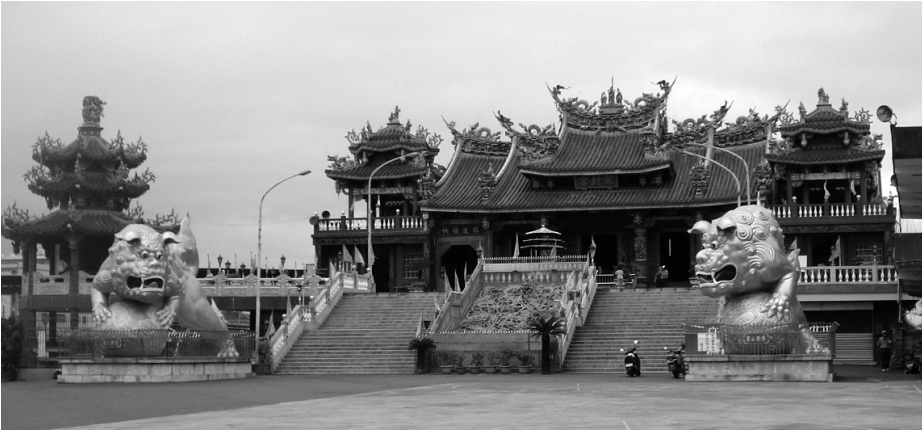


*Figure 6. Baogong Altar
At Mingsheng gong 明聖宮, Taipei, Taiwan. Adjacent halls are dedicated to Dizang and
Guanyin. (Photograph by author)*



Figure 7. Wooden Plaque Hanging above Baogong's Altar

*At Mingsheng gong; the text reads 第五殿, 閻羅天子 ("The fifth hall, Prince Yama").
(Photograph by author)*



*Figure 8. Main Entrance of Kaifeng gong Baogong miao 开封宫包公廟
In Daliao 大寮, Taiwan. (Photograph by author)*