

# THE MYTH OF REINCARNATION IN NOVEL *HEAVEN OFFICIAL'S BLESSING* BY MO XIANG TONG XIU

---

Winata, Linda Huda<sup>1</sup>; Hidayah, Atinia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an

lindahwinataa@gmail.com; atiniahidayah@unsiq.ac.id

---

## Abstract

This research is conducted to analyze the Myth of Reincarnation in Novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu through the term Three Realm. The researcher used the qualitative method to examine the problem. The theory and approaches that the researcher used is the Cultural Studies, Myth of Reincarnation, Novel, and Fiction. The result of this study show that the myth of reincarnation can be seen through the term three realm. The term three realm included mortal realm, heavenly realm, and ghost realm.

**Keyword:** myth, reincarnation, realm

## Introduction

Reincarnation, also known as rebirth or transmigration, is the philosophical or religious belief that follows biological death, a living being's non-physical essence begins a new existence in a different physical form or body (McClelland, 2010:1 71). Many literary works, especially in China today, use themes with the background of reincarnation as the main plot of the story. This is because the majority of Chinese people adhere to Taoism. Taoism, often known as Daoism, is a Chinese traditional religion. The Tao is the ultimate principle underlying reality in Taoism, and it is the source of everything. Taoism teaches about the many disciplines for self-cultivation and obtaining perfection. This can be accomplished by employing Taoist techniques and becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the universe, referred to as "the way" or "Tao" (Pollard, 2010: 164).

In the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing*, author Mo Xiang Tong Xiu uses the background of reincarnation in the plot of the story. The novel follows the life of Xie Lian, a once human crown prince of the Kingdom of Xianle in the east who ascends to godhood at seventeen after dedicating himself to cultivation and martial training. After being banished twice by the Emperor of the Heavenly Realm, Xie Lian again ascends to the

heavens to work as a godly official. Now known as a peculiar, peripatetic scrap-collector with perennially bad luck, Xie Lian is ridiculed or ignored by most other heavenly officials. Nevertheless, he retains his good-hearted nature and only wishes to fulfil his duties as a god. In his completion of the assignment, bemused by an encounter he describes as "oddly charming to the extreme," Xie Lian learns from heaven that he had encountered Hua Cheng, or Crimson Rain Sought Flower, one of four fearsome ghost kings known as the Four Great Calamities.

Based on the description above, researcher is interested in doing research about the myth of reincarnation that presents in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu and this study focuses on the whole story in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu. Therefore, researcher focuses this study by taking the myth of reincarnation that is present in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu through Three Realms as the topic of this study.

Everyone has a personality as the characteristic of an individual. Personality is the way people thinking, feeling and behaving. Allport (1961) stated that personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his or her characteristics behavior and thought. In Social Learning Theory, Bandura (1977) have mentioned that a person's characters are developed through both nature (genetic, by birth) and nurture (environment). The environment influences the development of human personalities. It depends on how people interpreting and responding to their environment.

According to Adler in the theory of the practice and theory of individual psychology stated that how an individual develops is unique, creative, and dependent on the subjective interpretations the person gives to life (Henry Stein, 1998: 4). The primary goal of all human behavior is self-perfection. The main motives of human thought and behavior are individual's striving for superiority and power, partly to overcome the feeling of inferiority. Some factors may influence in achieving the superiority such as fictional finalism, social interest, style of life, and creative self. Those factors are interacted with each other for striving the final goal of an individual.

As a psychological aspect, personality development can be found in a literary works such as movies. Psychology researches human's life and behavior, while literature depicts human behavior through the characters in the literary work. Both of them are interrelated and

mutually beneficial, in the form of evaluation of a literary work with the resources of psychology and obtaining psychological truths from a literary work. According to Academic Ismet Emre (2006, p. III), mentioned that there is no other branch of science which is involved a lot in the study of the relationship between human body and soul beside psychology and literature, with its contradictions and dilemmas. So, to interpret the literary works, the researcher uses a psychological method in the study.

The researcher interested in analyzing *Encanto* film produced by Jared Bush and Byron Howard is because it contains the personality of Mirabel in the process of achieving self-love. The researcher chooses the main character "Mirabel" as the object of the analysis. In this study, the researcher used the theory of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology.

### **Literary Review**

According to Merriam Webster, culture is a racial, religious, or social group's conventional beliefs, social structures, and material attributes, as well as the distinctive features of everyday life such as diversions or a way of life held by individuals in a region or period. Furthermore, culture refers to a set of shared attitudes, beliefs, goals, and practices that define a company or organisation. Culture, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary is a particular group of people's way of life, notably their general habits and beliefs, during a certain moment.

Cultural studies, according to Chris Barker (2004: 6) is a "discursive formation," or a "cluster", on the other word is a formation of ideas, images, and practices that give ways of talking about kinds of knowledge and behaviour linked with a certain topic such as social activity or institutional site in society. Cultural studies is also defined as a regulated method of speaking about things which is what it brings into the view and is organised around fundamental concepts, ideas, and concerns (Hall, 1997:6). Furthermore, cultural studies has a point in time when it gave itself a name, despite the fact that this naming merely serves as a snippet of an ongoing intellectual activity.

Barker (2004: 31) also said that by highlighting the constructed nature of cultural texts and the myths and ideologies they contain, cultural studies aims to play a demystifying function. This was done with the intention of creating subject positions and actual subjects that are capable of resisting subjugation.

#### **1. Myth of Reincarnation**

Reincarnation is the process of a soul or other immaterial aspect of human nature repeatedly taking on a physical form or embodying itself through flesh. Metempsychosis is also a phrase that is widely used in the same way that is defined as the passage of the soul or an eternal essence from one living body to another after death (Atkinson, 1908: 3).

Atkinson (1908: 3) also said that there are several beliefs in reincarnation. This fundamental belief can be summed up as the idea that there is an immaterial part of every person known as the soul, spirit, inner self, or many other names, which survives the death or dissolution of the body and then reincarnates, or is born again, into a new body, such as that of an unborn child, then it moves on to live a new life in the body, more or less unaware of its previous lives, but with the essence or effects of those lives still present, whose ultimately contribute to the creation of its new character or personality.

Reincarnation as stated by Hall (1939: 10) is nothing more than the law of evolution linked to the individual's evolving consciousness. All physical development and growth are evidence of the enhancement of that unseen divine energy that is the source of all physical development and growth. Everything in the universe is maturing as a result of its experiences.

The term reincarnation is derived from the Sanskrit word "samsara" (Hall, 1939: 15). Literally, the term reincarnation refers to the process of returning to life after death in a new physical body. It can also refer to being re-embodied. According to the law of reincarnation, which Buddha revealed, all living creatures must go through multiple reincarnations until all defects have been eliminated through experience.

There is a little different concept about reincarnation in Daoism or Taoism. Regarding Eva Wong (1997), Daoism or Taoism is also recognized for its adherents' belief in eternal life. In Taoism, an alchemist is a person who uses meditation to reach out to a deceased person if they need to be contacted. Although many Taoists have tried to become immortal, death is viewed in Taoism as merely another stage of existence. According to Kirkland & Kierman in their book (1983) Most Taoists see immortality as one of their main and most frequent goals, as opposed to the normal afterlife. It's not simple to achieve this objective, someone must complete a number of requirements throughout their entire existence to be eligible to become immortal. Internal alchemy and external alchemy are the two distinct categories of requirements for immortality, it is also called cultivation (Khon, 2008). Mastering certain

breathing exercises, sexual practices, physical activities, yoga, trying to create an elixir of immortality by ingesting pure metals and complex chemicals, and learning medical skills are all examples of external alchemy. The vital energy, which is what feeds your soul, is seen to be linked with your energy. This energy can be raised by cleansing the body of impurities. In addition to these prerequisites, you must live a morally upright and kind life. Internal alchemy includes sophisticated visualization, strict dieting, specific sexual exercises and self-control.

According to Khon, there existed the term three realms in Daoism called three worlds (Khon, 2008: 123). The term three realms are very influential with the existence of reincarnation myth. In reincarnation there is the term "karma", karma according to Jerome A. Anderson (1896: 45) disclosed as "cause" and "effect". Every phenomenon in this universe where the law of cause and effect applies in it is called Karma. Karma affects a human's life after their death, whatever it becomes, all affected from karma when they lived because life will always in it cycle. Daoism beliefs also believe in karma, but there is a little difference because Daoism considers all human life to be the same (Khon, 2008:21).

Daoism (Khon, 2008:19), life is always good. Even though there are bad things like getting unlucky or meeting bad people. Even when someone experienced a setback, death, or misfortune, all of those things did not mean evil. On the contrary, all of these things are part of life that is going on because many things in this world can be relative in value and interconnected with each other. Yin and Yang always walk sideways and that's not a bad thing. One example is when a person experienced a setback. A person's decline or failure is not a bad thing but rather a part of the growth of human maturity. It would be bad if the failure makes a person do bad to nature and other humans. In short, a person's growth does not always go smoothly, but there are times when they will experience bad things.

As stated by Khon (2008:124-125), someone's bad karma came gradually. For human beings who live without courtesy and go against the laws of nature, they will get a lot of bad luck and calamity. This would make someone feel depressed both mentally and physically, so it would trigger anger from time to time and cause his body to suffer from many diseases. Too sick to live yet not sick enough to die, they lived in the world but felt like they lived in hell. Even after death, they would still feel the suffering in eternity. When they are successfully reborn, they will become animals, or despised people, disabled people, fools, or other bad

luck. In this situation, someone would be greedier for both food and wealth so that it will be even more difficult for them to create good karma for their future self. Moral behaviour and formal perception are the first thing to avoid living on a foul path. Fundamental prohibitions such as killing, stealing, and lying are things that help the growth in someone's life.

## **2. Novel**

Novel is the recreation and the reproduction of life through narration by using word as the medium and human experiences as the materials. Meanwhile, it can also be created by using an imagination to imagine a life in novel form as an illustration of human future life

Therefore, novel is the mirror of human life, as stated by Wellek and Warren (1956: 94) as follows: Literature (novel) represents life, and life is, in a large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also objects of literature imitation. The quotation above also refers the meaning that novel is a literary work which tells about human life such as social gap, war, racism of the different race. Failure in life struggle or other things which concern the real-life people in the world. Therefore, with reading novel is an activity of gaining social knowledge that the author represents.

## **3. Fiction**

The term fiction in this sense means as an imagination and fantasy stories. According to Altenbernd and Lewis (1966: 14), fiction can be defined as "imaginative narrative prose, but the story commonly makes sense and contains the truth which dramatises human interactions". Fictional prose can be interpreted as a narrative that is imaginative, but usually sensible and contains a truth that dramatises the relationships between people. The author argues that based on the experiences and observations of life.

From the definition above, it can be concluded that the fiction is a work that makes the story become fictional, the story does not really happen in real life, but the elements of creation are those of the author of a real-life environment around the author. A fictional work must consist of some elements, which are divided into two major categories. They are the intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements are elements that contain a theme, plot, character, setting, point of views, language, or figure of speech and these elements build up to the story inside directly.

## Methods

This research used descriptive qualitative approach to collect and analyse the data (Creswell, 2009: 207). The object of research in this study is novel *“Heaven Official's Blessing”* volume 1. The novel was written by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu and published in 2021 with 428 pages. The novel itself is the major source of data. Researcher followed a few steps when conducting the analysis. To begin, the source data was collected from the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, and the novel was read to gain a better knowledge of the contents. Second, the significant information about reincarnation is contained in the novel. Third, further information regarding all of the above can be obtained from other sources such as novels, the internet, and so on. After obtaining all of the data, the following step is to analyse all of the selected data in order to prove what is written in the study's objective, and then the researcher can make the study's conclusion.

## Findings and Discussions

### 1. *The Term Three Realms in “Heaven Official's Blessing” as Representative to Myth of Reincarnation.*

The term three realms appear in the first sentence in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing*.

*Among all Deities of heaven, there was one famous laughing stock of the three realms.*  
(Xiu, 2021:1)

From the text above, the term three realm came out from the perspective of heaven's Deities. This happened because the one who became the laughingstock is the main character named Xie Lian who is also part of the deity in heaven. He is someone so popular before and after he ascended to heaven. So many people admired him. They admire his aptitude and attitude. Until one day he violated the heaven rules and descended to the mortal world.

*He was once the noble and gracious crown prince, a heavenly official who was part of the divine ranks. But in truth, no one else had ever screwed up so badly. And*

*so, this was the story of the man who was known as the laughingstock of the three realms.*  
(Xiu, 2021:21)

According to the text above, the term three realms also appear at the end of chapter one. This chapter tells how a crown prince of Xian Le Kingdom named Xie Lian who used to be praised by everyone descended from heaven and after he made one mistake on the basis of his kindness by intervening the matter in the mortal world. Prince Xie Lian did not become a prince by accident, he acted like a true noble. He is also renowned for his generosity toward others. He gladly lends a hand to others even for common people. He is a very unlucky twice-fallen god who takes out a meagre living collecting scraps.

## **2. Mortal Realm**

The Mortal Realm in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* is described as the life of ordinary humans. Humans were living, working, farming, begging, eating, and normal things that are often found in everyday life. Some scenes show how the main character named Xie Lian works as a performer and collects scrap for living.

*Xie Lian thought that the few days since he ascended felt longer than an entire year of collecting scraps in the Mortal Realm. Climbing, jumping, flying, screaming, tumbling, disguising, and performing...*  
(Xiu, 2021:148)

This scene shows that the main character Xie Lian works as a performer and collects scraps. This is the work he has done for a long time since he was banished from the Heavenly Realm for the second time. Not only performing and collecting scraps, Xie Lian also acted in human behaviour like screaming or tumbling which he had never done during his life as a crown prince and ascended god. He used to have whatever he wants, and whatever he likes because all is already provided by maids. When he became a human being, he had to do everything by himself, so of course with curses in his body he had to work without his power and had to jumping, disguising, and screaming for his performance. He felt like lived in Mortal Realm



collecting scraps much better than ascension because he felt that after so many years he lived in Mortal Realm, heaven had many matters he found it hard and complicated.

*With the curse collar on, he was no different than a mortal. He could eat anything, and through experience, nothing he ate could kill him either. Even if it was a bun that had been set aside for over a month, or a cake that had gone moldy, he could eat it all without harm.*  
(Xiu, 2021:168)

Xie Lian used to be a god but then banished to the mortal world and he lost his power, that's why he lived the way mortal lives. As a mortal, he had a habit like needs to eat every other time. He has a strong stomach from the previous spiritual power, but due to the curse on his collar, he still had to eat even if it was expired food. As a banished god, he still had the nature of cultivator on himself that is spiritual power. This makes it easier for him to look for food, because any food will not kill him because of his strong stomach.

*Mu Qing responded coolly, "Your Highness walked the Mortal Realm for hundreds of years, and yet you are still so ill-informed. I'm really curious to know what you've been doing all this time.*  
*"Eating, sleeping, busking, collecting junk, duh?"*  
(Xiu, 2021:154)

Other than eating, as a mortal Xie Lian also had a habit like to sleep. He as a mortal also needs to rest his body by sleeping. This scene shows that the hundreds of years Xie Lian did in Mortal Realm was to survive. He did not even have time and did not feel the need to find information about things that were popular in the Heavenly Realm. As he reported the first case he handled, Xie Lian also reported it to the Heavenly Realm and described the sequence of unusual discoveries he had found, including the formation of a blood rain by the Green Ghost Qi Rong and the existence of Hua Cheng, a person with control over silver butterflies. Mu Qing, one of Xie Lian helpers said he is one of "The Four Calamities" who was the strongest in Ghost Realm. Xie Lian has spent the previous eight hundred years travelling

alone because his poor luck tends to affect others around him negatively. Nevertheless, he seems to have come to terms with his loneliness or at the very least with the “*duh*” he finds humour in it.

*The silk band Ruoye was quietly encircling his hand, ready to strike at a moment's notice. If whoever had come showed a trace of killing aura, it would instantly, wildly strike back with ten times the power.*  
(Xiu, 2021:88)

The text above mentions about Ruoye. Ruoye is Xie Lian's sentient strip of white silk, also often described as a flying band aid. Ruoye is likely kind of legendary sword that can emerged with their master. The existence of Ruoye shows that even Xie Lian was banished, he still have the spiritual power as a god and can control a weapon. It is an earnest and energetic and a bit nervous sometimes. It has its own instinct, it shows when Ruoye feels a killing aura from someone, it can be aggressive and attack them without hesitation. Ruoye, as it shows in the novel, can stretch out to almost limitless dimensions.

*The name “grand believer” usually referred to one of three types of people. The first type were the rich, those who paid for incense and religious services and built temples. The second type were missionaries, people who promoted the religion and gave sermons. The third type were believers who possessed absolute faith in both heart and body.*  
(Xiu, 2021:35)

In this novel, believers are divided into 3 types. The first type is the so-called Grand Believer, they are wealthy people who can afford religious services, buy incense, and can afford to build temples. The second type is missionaries, they spread beliefs about their worshipped god. The third type is the type that has believed in both heart and body over the existence and power of a god. Of all the three types, the first type is the most, because achieving worldly wealth is a common thing that many people can do. While the rarest type of believer is the third type, when a person has reached this point, then

it is certain that they have a high spirituality and are not far from ascension.

### 3. *Heavenly Realm*

Heavenly Realm in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing* is a court of wise and enlightened beings led by the Heavenly Emperor named Jun Wu. Some manage and guard a particular area of the celestial and Mortal Realm, such as love, marriage, a plot of land, with some others having administrative tasks. Other carefree immortals choose to live as hermits in the mountains or simply explore the earth and assist mortals as they go.

*Xie Lian turned his head to gaze toward where she pointed, and what he saw was an extremely beautiful sight. There was a grand palace temple made of white jade, abundant towers, pavilions, and gazebos, with heavenly clouds lingering about as streams flowed and birds danced.*

(Xiu, 2021:24)

As the text said, a city of god built on clouds is called the Heavenly Realm. Luxurious palaces and workplaces of the gods are scattered over the landscape amid flowing streams and auspicious clouds. The temple is also depicted in jade and has a tall tower which shows how magnificent the temple is. Not only made of jade, but many temples in the Heavenly Realm are also made of gold. There are also gazebos, pavilions, and tall towers that show how grandiose the Heavenly Realm is. This place is designated for heavenly officials to assist their numerous and difficult tasks in the Heavenly Realm.

*If you wanted to learn about a god, simply walk into his temple and take a look at the way he was dressed and the weapons he wielded, and you'd more or less understand him.*

(Xiu, 2021:156)

In addition, there is also a description of the appearance of people in the Heavenly Realm. The appearance of Heavenly God can be seen from the statement from Xie Lian above. He describes the appearance of gods which will look quite striking in the eyes of

Mortals because from the illustrations in the novel itself gods' appearance is described with one of them carrying a sword and elegant attire or weapon. Not only their appearance is striking in mortal's eyes, gods also have decent faces, on the other word they Heavenly God have handsome and beautiful faces.

*This Middle Court was naturally the opposite of the Upper Court. The heavenly officials of the Heavenly Realm could be crassly divided into two groups: those who had ascended and those who hadn't. The Upper Court consisted of heavenly officials who ascended on their own abilities. There were only about a hundred of them in the entire Heavenly Realm; extremely eminent. As for the ones in the Middle Court, they were brought up as "appointed generals." Strictly speaking, they should be addressed as "Peer Heavenly Officials," but when everyone addressed each other, they'd often take out "Peer" in the name.*

(Xiu, 2021:42)

From the text above, it is known that The Heavenly Court consists of two sub-courts: the Upper Court and the Middle Court. The Upper Court consists entirely of ascended gods, mortals who have ascended due to their own capabilities and talents are referred to as part of the Upper Heaven. Some of the characters in this novel who is part of the Upper Court official is Mu Qing who ascends to heaven purely through his cultivation. The other is Xie Lian with his both cultivation and good deeds. The Middle Court consists of remarkable and skilled officials who have not yet ascended to godhood. Upper Court Officials have the privilege to appoint mortals who are close to them or who are skilled enough to serve them. The Middle Court used to be called Lower Court, but they changed it due to Lower Court sounding too cheap when Gods of that rank would announce it to mortals. The characters in this novel who were part of the Middle Court are Nan Feng and Fu Yao. Nan Feng served The Palace of Nan Yang and Fu Yao served The Palace of Xuan Zeng.

*Here is a story that must be told. When Hua Cheng first appeared, he did something notorious. He openly*

*challenged thirty-five heavenly officials. The challenge was to spar with the martial gods and to debate with the civil gods.*  
(Xiu, 2021:157)

The scene above is when Xie Lian ascends to heaven to report a case about The Ghost Groom. He met one of the heaven assistants named Ling Wen, a God in charge of reports, paperwork, and logistics in the heavens. He told Ling Wen the incident about his meeting with Hua Cheng, the controller of the silver butterflies. Hua Cheng became a nightmare for heavenly officials because of his history for challenging all the gods in heaven and crushing their dignity because of their losses. From the scene, it can be known that there are thirty-six officials who served the Heavenly Realm. The text above only mentioned thirty-five officials, but as it turns out, one of those officials is Xie Lian. No one can replace him yet, as explained below.

*The heavenly officials who lost both their temples and believers soon grew weaker and weaker, until they were erased from existence. It was not until a new wave of ascensions that those empty positions were filled again.*  
(Xiu, 2021:160)

The heavenly official who banished still exists in this world and would grow weaker from time to time. They would lose their temple and believer so they lost all merit. Merit is the source of existence for god, if they lose all merit and are unsuccessfully survived in the Mortal Realm, their existence would vanish and die. When they died, then the position he used to occupy as a heavenly official would be vacant and automatically filled by other cultivators. Xie Lian as a banished god also lost his merit, but he is still alive and can even ascend to heaven for the third time. This means that Xie Lian still has a believer, which is not yet known who this believer is. Though he also tried to survive his way of working as a performer and scrap collector. That's why Xie Lian is still part of the heavenly officials, and no one can ascend and replace him to be the heavenly official yet.

*Achieving fruitful cultivation was always far too difficult. It required talent, training, and luck. It was often a long road of a hundred years for a god to be born.*

(Xiu, 2021:16)

Before someone ascends to heaven and becomes god, they have to practice cultivation and become immortal. People who practise cultivation are called cultivators, they are practitioners of spirituality and martial arts who seek to gain understanding of the will of the universe while attaining personal strength and extending their life span. They must go through a trial known as a Heavenly Tribulation. This novel said that cultivation is a long process marked by "stages", even gods themselves must endure and overcome tribulations if they want to level up. Practising cultivation is described as a very heavy task, cultivators must have talent and strong willpower so that their cultivation level is higher.

*Many more years passed. Suddenly one day there was another huge rumble in the sky. The heavens fell and the earth cracked, the ground trembled and the mountains shook. The lanterns of everlasting light shuddered, the firelights danced in fury, and all the heavenly officials inside their golden palaces jolted awake, every one of them running out to ask each other.*

(Xiu, 2021:21)

This description was seen when Xie Lian ascended to Heavenly Realm for the third time. In the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing*, God and other immortal beings are reborn as mortals and in order to attain the heavenly tribulation, they must go through high cultivation practice, do good deeds, and attain profound divine understanding. Their mortal body will be released and then an immortal body will be formed. When someone successfully overcomes the heavenly tribulation, they would ascend to heaven. Heaven will shake like there is an earthquake. This crumble shows how powerful someone's divine rank is. The stronger the heaven shook, the stronger someone's divine rank will be.

*The crown prince could absolutely not accept this reality, and he had an even harder time accepting the punishment he received for his transgressions: banishment. His spiritual powers were sealed, and he was knocked back down to the Mortal Realm.*  
(Xiu, 2021:19)

If mortals can ascend to Heavenly Realm, so god too can descend to Mortal Realm. This kind of event is called “banishment”. A Heavenly official who makes mistakes would experience banishment. They will be exiled from heaven to the Mortal Realm, they would also lose their spiritual power. The text above told about how Xie Lian felt after he experienced his first banishment. He cannot accept the fact that his intervention in mortal matters would cause him banishment. Xie Lian felt that his interevent was based on saving his people which in his opinion is not a wrong action. Later, Xie Lian realised that although he held tightly to his principle to save common people, he forgot to listen to the advice of Heavenly Emperor Jun Wu that Heavenly officials who descend without permission would only bring disaster.

*Cursed shackle. Like its name implied, it was a shackle formed by a particular curse. Heavenly officials who were banished from heaven would have the mark of sin, forged by the wrath of heaven, branded onto their bodies. This brand formed a fetter that sealed spiritual powers away, never to be freed. Just like a brand on the face, or chains shackling hands and feet, this was a form of punishment, and a warning. It was both terrifying and humiliating.*  
(Xiu, 2021:57)

As the text above said, gods who got banished to mortals have a curse on their body namely “Curse Shackle”. This curse made a god lose their spiritual power from their cultivation before and descended back to mortal. That is why Xie Lian had mortal behaviour in him like work, eat, and sleep. Curse Shackle is a mark of sin for a god who made a big mistake. Curse Shackle is black and shaped like a tattoo. This kind of tattoo is located in a part of the body that is easily

visible to others such as the face, hands, and feet. Curse Shackle is placed on an open body part and is easily seen by others, intended as a punishment and warning so that they are ashamed and always remember their mistakes. That is why it said this Curse Shackle are humiliating and terrifying.

#### 4. **Ghost Realm**

Practically all dead people reside in the Ghost Realm, which is significantly less structured and formalised than the Heavenly Realm. Under certain conditions, ghosts might escape the Ghost Realm or get trapped there, which poses serious issues for both gods and mortal.

*The gods created heaven to reside in, drawing a clear boundary between themselves and mortals. They watched from above and ruled from beyond reach. The Ghost Realm, on the other hand, was not separated from the Mortal Realm. Monsters, demons, ghosts, and mortals all shared one earth. Some ghosts hid in the darkness, and some pretended to be humans as they walked among the people and roamed the Mortal Realm in disguise.*

(Xiu, 2021:154-155)

According to the text above, Ghost Realm, commonly known as the Underworld, is placed in the same location as Mortal Realm. Ghosts are famous for their terrible appearance, so many of them hide and live in the dark. Ghost and Mortal live alongside. It is because ghosts are a restless spirit of deceased people, they have to live in disguise. To disguise, they created an empty shell using a realistic component to make fake skin and used living humans as references. These skins often used real human skin as to why ghosts were well-known as nefarious beings.

*Throughout history, heavenly officials who were banished either never regained their glory or fell into the Ghost Realm.*

(Xiu, 2021:20)

The text above said that so many heavenly officials banished from heaven they died or became the Ghost and remain in the Ghost realm. It happened when they lost all believers and merits and



became vengeful. In this novel everyone can become a Ghost. If the deceased are not received properly or miss the support of his descendants, they might well develop into a negative power and join the forces of demons, ghosts, spectres, and hobgoblins. As stated in the novel, not only Mortals can join Ghost Realm, even God can become Ghost and enter Ghost Realm.

*The Four Calamities are: Ship-Sinking Black Water, Night-Touring Green Lantern, White-Clothed Calamity, and Crimson Rain Sought Flower. They are the four Ghost Kings of the Ghost Realm, who cause endless headaches for all in the Heavenly Realm.*

(Xiu, 2021:154)

Unlike heavenly officials, the ghost realm only has 4 officials, not exactly officials, rather like four ghosts who were the strongest among the ghosts in the Ghost Realm. That is Hua Cheng as Crimson Rain Sought Flower, White No-Face as White-Clothed Calamity, Qi Rong as Night-Touring Green Lantern, and the mysterious Black Water Demon Xuan as Ship-Sinking Black Water. They are the four ghosts who the heavenly officials fear the most. That is because their power is on another level of being and additionally, their heart is full of revenge and cannot be guessed.

*In regard to the monsters, demons, and ghosts that caused great turmoil within the Mortal Realm, the Palace of Ling Wen had categorized them based on their abilities. The ranks were as follows: fierce, malice, wrath, and supreme.*

(Xiu, 2021:73)

There were also ranks in Ghost Realm like fierce, malice, wrath, and supreme. This kind of rank is based on their ability. The rank “fierce” they could murder one, a “malice” they could murder a sect, a “wrath” could slaughter an entire city, and a “supreme” could ruin a nation. Take the Ghost Groom as an example, she is a ghost with “wrath” as her rank, her name is Xuan Ji. It can be known from her past life that she once became a general of a kingdom, but because she fell in love with general Pei Ming, which is her enemy. General Xuan Ji betrayed her kingdom and chased after General Pei Ming.

However, they could not be together because she did not fit General Pei Ming ideal type who likes soft women, and not women with strong characters like General Xuan Ji. She then kill herself out of resentment and became the Ghost Groom who murdered many bride who pass through Mount Yujun.

*He continued, "There's a custom in the Ghost Realm where if a ghost has a special someone, they entrust their ashes to that person." That was akin to handing over one's life to another person. Such passion, what a charming tale that would be. Xie Lian commented, interested, "I didn't know the Ghost Realm had such a romantic practice."*

*"They do," the youth said. "But not many dare to practice it."*

*(Xiu, 2021:176)*

Different from their attitude and appearance they show to the world, they actually have a romantic side too. When Xie Lian was on his way home back to Puqi Shrine, he met San Lang. Because of the limited knowledge possessed by Xie Lian, they then talked a lot about Hua Cheng the Crimson Rain Sought Flower. San Lang with all his knowledge answered all Xie Lian's questions. He also told Xie Lian that the weakness Hua Cheng had was his ashes. There is also a romantic practice in it. If a ghost has a person he feels is special, they will give their ashes to that person. They would never be afraid of being betrayed nor they care about how that person treats their ashes afterwards.

## **Conclusion**

In the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing*, there are terms of three realms to describe the world of life. The Mortal Realm for the lives of ordinary humans, Heavenly Realm for those humans who successfully ascended to heaven, and Ghost Realm for those humans who turned into ghosts after their deaths. How humans ascend to heaven or descend into ghosts will depend on how they live.

## References

- Altenbernd, Lynn and Leslie L Lewis. (1966). *A Handbook For The Study of Poetry*. London: Collier-Macmillian Limited.
- Anderson. A. Jerome. (1896). *KARMA – A STUDY OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT IN RELATION TO: Rebirth Or Reincarnation, Post-Mortem States Of Consciousness, Cycles, Vicarious Atonement, Fate, Predestination, Free Will, Forgiveness, Animals, Suicides, Etc.* San Fransisco: THE LOTUS PUBLISHING COMPANY.
- Atkinson William Walker. (1908). *Reincarnation and the Law of Karma: A Study of the Old-New World-Doctrine of Rebirth, and Spiritual Cause and Effect (electronic ed)*. YOGeBooks by Roger L. Cole, Hollister. [www.yogebooks.com](http://www.yogebooks.com). Retrieved at May 27th 2022.
- Barker, Chris. (2004). *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. Britain: SAGE Publications.
- Brink, H. I. L. (1993). *Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research*. DOI:[10.4102/curationis.v16i2.1396](https://doi.org/10.4102/curationis.v16i2.1396)
- Creswell, John W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach, 4th ed*. United State of America: SAGE Publications.
- Hall, Manly P. (1939). *Reincarnation: the cycle of necessity, 1sd ed*. California: The Philosophers Press.
- Kennedy, C. and J. Jarvis. (1991). *Ideas and Issues in Primary ELT*. Hong Kong: Nelson.
- Khon, Livia. (2008). *Introducing to Daoism*. London. Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Kirkland, J. R., & Kierman, F. A. (1983). [Review of Taoism and Chinese Religion., by H. Maspero]. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 42(2), 395–397. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2055131> retrieved at May 27th 2022
- McClelland, Norman C. (1944). *Encyclopedia of reincarnation and karma*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

- McClelland, Norman C. (2010). [\*Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma\*](#). North Carolina: Mc Farland & Company, Inch.
- Nazir. (1998). *Metode Penelitian*. Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia.
- Pollard Elizabeth, Clifford R, and Robert T. (2014). [\*Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the World - From the Beginnings of Humankind to the Present\*](#). London. W.W. Norton.
- Wellek, Rene & Austin Warren. (1956). *Theory of Literature, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Wong, Eva. (1997). *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.
- Xiu, Mo Xiang Tong. (2021). *Heaven Official's Blessing, Vol 1*. Canada: Seven Seas Entertainment.