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Character types analysis of *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)* novel by MXTX

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a focused character analysis of *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)* by MXTX, a novel set in a fantastical world inspired by Chinese mythology. The narrative centers around Xie Lian, a former crown prince who ascends to become a martial god. The analysis aims to deepen understanding of the character types within the novel as it has only few prior academic studies conducted. By categorizing and examining these character types, the study reveals how each character functions within the story, enriching readers' comprehension of their roles. Character types are divided into two categories: major characters and minor characters. Major characters include the protagonist (Xie Lian), antagonist (Xuan Ji and Kemo), and tritagonist (Fu Yao and Nan Feng). Minor characters include foil (Pei Xiu), static (Ling Wen), dynamic (Pei Ming, Feng Xin, Mu Qing), flat (Tian Sheng, Xiao-Pengtou, Xiao-Ying), round (A-Zhao, Banyue), and stock (Wind Master, Jun Wu). This study has limitations as it focuses solely on character types in Book 1, though the novel spans eight books, leaving many characters and literary elements unexplored. Future studies should fill these gaps with comparative analyses, exploring cultural influences, applying diverse literary theories, and using multidisciplinary approaches.

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1. Introduction

Literature can be defined as a written work formed by human expression, capturing experiences, emotions, and imagination. Safrudi (2014) explained that literature involves the creation of written-artistic pieces expressed through various forms such as drama, short stories, novels, and more. The purpose of literature is to speak more using written words (Wulandari & Wediyantoro, 2023). Within literature, there are several keys to creating narratives called literary elements. These elements include point of view, theme, plot, setting, conflict, and literary character (Šauperyl, 2012). According to Putriwana and Yustisia (2021), literary character is all the qualities and features that differentiate

a person, groups of people, and places from others. The elements of the characters are essential to the story and liven up the plot. Besides, characters also stimulate an interaction between the text of a novel and its reader (Cohan, 1983). Kramer (2024) also mentioned that characters in stories could be in the form of humans and animals, aliens, mythical creatures, inanimate objects, or abstract concepts. Characters are significant as they are the ones who tell the story and whom the readers feel empathy for. Primarily, in fiction works, characters portrayed well are often used as the media for readers to experience events they never had.

Building on this foundation, characters are broadly categorized into two main groups: major characters, such as the protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist, and minor characters, including foil, static, dynamic, flat, round, and stock types (Literary Terms, 2017). Each category encompasses various character types that contribute to creating a dynamic and engaging storyline. According to Sari (2014), major characters play a central role in the narrative, appearing frequently and maintaining strong connections with other characters in the story. These characters are instrumental in driving the plot through their actions and decisions. A single novel may feature multiple major characters, each serving distinct purposes. The protagonist, often referred to as the hero or heroine, serves as the central figure of the story. In contrast, the antagonist acts as the opposing force, challenging the protagonist's goals and aspirations. Finally, the tritagonist, or the tertiary main character, provides crucial support to the protagonist, adding depth and complexity to the narrative (Malo, 2023).

On the other hand, minor characters are the ones who only have a small part and function to make the major characters stand out in the story. It includes foil, static, dynamic, flat, round, and stock. First, foil characters highlight the positive traits and attributes of the protagonist by contrasting with them. Second, static characters are ones who do not change throughout the narrative and are mostly used to relieve tension between the major characters. Conversely, dynamic characters change in understanding, dedication, and values due to tragedies or lessons learned throughout the story. Fourth, flat characters are two-dimensional figures lacking depth or complexity, typically defined by just one or two superficial traits. In contrast, round characters are characterized by depth and complexity and resonate with audiences as they resemble real individuals with relatable goals, successes, and failures. Last, stock characters are recognizable figures in literature, known for their predictable character and adherence to established archetypes and stereotypes.

Understanding the roles and functions of both major and minor characters provides a foundation for appreciating how literary works are structured. Beyond character analysis, literature itself can be categorized into various forms, each with distinct features and purposes. Krainc et. al. (2023) categorized literature into four main groups: fictional prose, nonfictional prose, poetry, and drama. Fictional prose, known as literary fiction, weaves intricate plotlines, develops rich characters, and employs sophisticated stylistic approaches. Literary fiction encompasses various forms, such as novels, novellas, and short stories. Short stories are compact narratives of 1,500 – 10,000 words that can be enjoyed in a single sitting. On the other hand, novellas are elaborate works that span 10,000 – 40,000 words. Meanwhile, literary fiction surpasses this length of words, which can be called a novel.

Novels have long been esteemed for their ability to delve deeply into human experiences and emotions, making them a cornerstone of literary culture. As a testament to their enduring appeal, many novels continue to captivate audiences and achieve significant acclaim. According to Burgess

(2023), a novel is described as a crafted prose narrative of substantial length and complexity, which creatively explores the human experience through a connected series of events involving characters within a defined setting. Novels are still prevalent among people these days. The popularity of a novel can be seen in charts like The New York Times Best Sellers, an authoritatively ranked list of books sold in the United States. One of the formidable novels that ranked in this chart at its debut is *Heaven Official's Blessing* (Yǎn Pūy, *Tiān Guān Cì Fú*). It ranked #8 as it debuted in stores worldwide on December 14, 2021. This historical fantasy novel was originally published in Chinese by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu (MXTX). MXTX has also written several works, and it has inspired multiple blockbuster adaptations. Upon discovering the formidable reputation of MXTX, the writer recognized *Heaven Official's Blessing* novel's immense potential.

Heaven Official's Blessing has the genre of *xianxia*, a fantasy genre with elements of Taoism, Buddhism, and Chinese mythology. Initially released in 2017 on JJXWC, the story consists of 244 chapters, with an additional four post-canon stories divided into eight chapters. The official English translation, published by Seven Seas Entertainment, divides the novel into eight books. According to Bookmakingblog (2024), *Heaven Official's Blessing* has an intricate plot, emotional depth, and complex characters. These can distress readers as they need extra comprehension and time to grasp the storyline. Moreover, Book 1 is crucial for understanding the story in its entirety because it contains the characters' introduction and the initial events of the conflicts.

Not many prior academic studies have been dedicated explicitly to analyzing the *Heaven Official's Blessing* novel. One of which was Winata and Hidayah (2022), who analyzed the myth of reincarnation through the term Three Realms and concluded that the term Three Realm included the mortal realm, heavenly realm, and ghost realm. However, several analytical reviews are available on the internet, written by fans or avid readers of the book. One of the common platforms for discourse is the Wiki Fandom page. It is a page dedicated to fans of diverse literary works, including *Heaven Official's Blessing* fandom. Through this communal exchange, readers delve deeper into the narrative, uncovering hidden meanings and exploring the nuances of the plot, characters, themes, and other elements.

Another example of non-academic analysis of the *Heaven Official's Blessing* novel is the in-depth analysis of the characters on the Wiki Fandom page. The page lists all the characters found in the book from A to Z. It also categorizes them based on similar traits so that the reader can quickly look up a particular character. Furthermore, the page also describes each character more deeply, including their appearance, history, abilities, and even their relationships with other characters. However, the article fails to address and divide the characters based on literary character types. Therefore, this final report serves as an academic complement to the existing analytical character reviews of the "*Heaven Official's Blessing*" novel online.

The study by Sari (2022) conducted a noteworthy academic analysis focusing on character types and Jo March's perspective on gender equality in *The Little Women* movie. It divides character types into major, minor, and character types based on the story's development. However, the study primarily focuses on explaining the meaning of each character type and overlooks the actual analysis of the movie's characters. Instead, the writer analyzes the characterization of the main character. Therefore, despite the title, the study only discusses the theory, not the character types analysis itself.

This study addresses the gaps identified by offering a detailed analysis of the character types in *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*. The analysis focuses on categorizing and examining the roles and functions of both major and minor characters, highlighting their contributions to the narrative and thematic development. Additionally, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding character dynamics in enhancing the reader's comprehension of the novel's intricate world-building and storytelling. The findings are expected to serve as a valuable reference for researchers interested in exploring character typology and literary analysis within Chinese-inspired fantasy literature.

2. Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design, utilizing descriptive analysis to examine the character types in MXTX's *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*. The method involved content analysis, which is well-suited for exploring and interpreting textual data to identify, categorize, and understand the diverse character types depicted in the novel. The primary data source was the English translation of *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*, published by Seven Seas Entertainment. The text was meticulously read and re-read to extract detailed information about the characters introduced in the first book. Special emphasis was placed on identifying key passages that highlight the characters' behaviours, relationships, and roles within the narrative structure.

The selection of characters for analysis was based on their significance and function within the story. Both major and minor characters were included, following the definitions provided by Literary Terms (2017). The criteria for categorizing a character as major or minor were determined by their frequency of appearance, their involvement in critical events, and their influence on the plot's development. Subsequently, the characters were further classified into specific types: major characters (protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist) and minor characters (foil, static, dynamic, flat, round, and stock). This classification enabled a nuanced and systematic exploration of the character dynamics within the novel.

The analysis began with reading the novel to identify characters and their roles. Relevant excerpts were extracted and coded based on predefined categories. This coding process focused on dialogue, descriptions, and interactions reflecting character traits. The categorized data were compared with existing frameworks to ensure accurate classification. Major characters were analyzed for their plot centrality and development, while minor characters were assessed for their supporting roles. Patterns and relationships among character types were identified to understand each character's contribution to the storyline.

Finally, the findings were synthesized into a detailed analysis, linking the characters' roles and traits to the novel's broader themes and narrative techniques. This approach ensured a systematic and thorough exploration of the character dynamics in *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*.

3. Results and discussion

This analysis categorizes characters into two primary groups, major characters and minor characters, to better understand their roles and functions within the narrative. These classifications help to

highlight the varying degrees of influence and significance that each character holds in driving the story forward.

3.1. Major characters

Major characters discussed in this final report include the protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist. The protagonist is the central figure around whom the story revolves. The antagonist opposes the protagonist, while the tritagonist serves as a supporting character to the protagonist.

3.1.1. The Protagonist characters *Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

Two protagonists appear in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*: Xie Lian and Hua Cheng. Xie Lian, a martial god, is depicted as the common protagonist with a good nature. Hua Cheng, a powerful ghost king, is an example of a protagonist with a bad nature. The first protagonist of this novel is a martial god named Xie Lian, who was once the crown prince of the Kingdom of Xianle. Having been demoted twice as a god, he is generally recognized as an unlucky figure who earns a living by collecting scraps. He is the perfect example of a protagonist because he follows good rules and values. He becomes the center of the story and makes his appearance stand out the most since the first chapter, as shown in the data below.

Among all the deities of heaven, there was one famous Laughingstock of the Three Realms (p. 11).

Xie Lian also has a particular objective or ambition that a protagonist does. It gives him direction and purpose, advancing the story and drawing the audience into his journey. In the story, Xie Lian has a clear, admirable goal that propels him forward and draws the viewer in. He does not succumb to the temptation of materialistic prosperity or imperial power, even if he is a crown prince. His genuine goal is to save the common people. He has a specific goal and purpose because of this selfless objective, which advances the plot and helps the audience connect with his character on a deep level. When Xie Lian puts the needs of others before his own, his journey turns into an inspiring story of bravery and compassion, thus maintaining connections with other characters in the story.

However, the crown prince was not interested in imperial power or wealth in the mortal world at all.

What he was interested in, in his own words, was:

"I want to save the common people!" (p. 11)

As the one who drives the plot, a protagonist's capability for development or transformation is one of their key characteristics. Xie Lian undergoes significant personal growth through the conflicts, making him considered a dynamic character in his role as the protagonist. From being portrayed as protected and affluent, Xie Lian's fall from grace exposes him to experiences he had never had before, forcing him into the harsh realities of the human world. The contrast between his heavenly childhood and the intensity of human misery highlights the depth of his personal development. Xie Lian experiences hunger, poverty, and filth via hardship, a crucial turning point in his character's journey. This

realization not only gives his role as the protagonist additional depth but also paves the way for his future growth as he uses his newly acquired empathy and understanding to overcome the obstacles in his path.

He'd grown up endlessly coddled and pampered. He had never tasted the suffering of the human world before, yet the punishment hurled him from the clouds down into the mud. And in this mud, for the first time, he understood the taste of hunger, poverty, and filth (p. 19).

From his portrayal as the unlucky Laughingstock of the Three Realms to his unwavering commitment to serving the common people, Xie Lian's journey is marked by profound personal growth and transformation, thus making him a dynamic character. Through his experiences of hardship and empathy, he maintains connections with other characters, driving the plot forward.

The third type of protagonist does not always have to be virtuous. Villain protagonists, such as Hua Cheng, also exist. Hua Cheng is a formidable ghost king feared across the three realms, including the heavens. The story regularly switches to Hua Cheng's point of view, making his appearance frequently and emphasizing how crucial he is as the major character of the protagonist. The passage below highlights Hua Cheng's infamous reputation and establishes him as a major character in the Ghost Realm. The protagonist in this portrayal is a complex, multifaceted individual, which makes his character dynamic. His behaviors and motives drive the narrative forward, challenging the idea that heroes are always virtuous or heroic.

In the heavens, "notorious" was the word to describe the Heavenly Emperor and the crown prince of Xianle. Although the meaning of "notoriety" was completely different between the two, the world still resonated equally. However, in the Ghost Realm, there was only one worthy of being called "notorious," and that was Hua Cheng (p.156).

Hua Cheng plays a crucial role in the narrative, challenging conventional notions of heroism. Despite his menacing appearance, he is portrayed as a good character by Xie Lian (p. 164). Hua Cheng and Xie Lian share aligned goals, and their partnership is vital in overcoming obstacles, showcasing their mutual support. This dynamic highlights the complexity of morality in the story, suggesting that appearances can be deceiving. As a villain protagonist, Hua Cheng's multifaceted personality and strategic disguises add depth to his character, illustrating his dynamic nature.

3.1.2. The antagonist character in Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)

Antagonists create obstacles that the protagonist must overcome, as they are the opposition. Two antagonists appear in the novel Heaven Officials' Blessing Book 1, they are Xuan Ji and Kemo. Xuan Ji's character is the protagonist's obstacle in the first half of the narrative. Meanwhile, Kemo causes conflict for the protagonist in the second half of the book.

The first antagonist is Xuan Ji, who appears to be the protagonist's first counterbalance in Book 1. She is a former general of a fallen kingdom and becomes a wrath ghost. Initially, she was identified as a ghost groom since she likes kidnapping brides and devouring their marriage procession.

Xie Lian must come from heaven to intervene since mortals cannot defeat the threat. It highlights how serious the situation is and how urgent heavenly intervention is to occur. This setup moves the storyline along and lays the groundwork for later events by establishing Xuan Ji as a major challenge and providing the groundwork for Xie Lian's heroic quest to face and defeat her.

This ghost groom had really stirred up the hornet's nest this time... It was a huge uproar that shook the city until finally this alerted a few heaven officials above... (p. 47-48)

Antagonists generally have their backstory that initiates personal ambition, revenge, or even a misguided sense of righteousness. Xuan Ji's past reveals a complex web of feelings as she leaves her kingdom and makes every sacrifice to fulfill her obsession to Pei Ming, the general of a rival kingdom. Her pathetic and regretful plea to him shows how deeply smitten she is and how much it has affected her. The turning of Xuan Ji into a resentful ghost represents her unwillingness to relinquish her unfulfilled love and her will to exact revenge for what she believes to be betrayal (p. 127). This interpretation emphasizes how a powerful blend of betrayal, vengeance, and love drives her antagonist with a dynamic character.

The second antagonist in the story is Kemo. He was once a general in the Kingdom of Banyue and has transformed into a wrath ghost. Even after his death, he resented the State Preceptor of Banyue and the Kingdom of Yong'an, which had destroyed his kingdom. He possesses an intense desire for vengeance, as he accuses the woman of betraying her country and causing the deaths of his people and brothers. This highlights Kemo's role as a significant antagonist whose presence and actions drive conflict in the plot as he seeks revenge on those he believes wronged him and his kingdom.

And so San Lang translated, "He's cursing. He says that woman betrayed his country, opened the city gates, and let the Yong'an army in to slaughter. She's got the blood of her people on her hands, and of his brothers who she pushed into this pit. He will hang her dead a thousand times. Ten thousand times" (p. 302).

Antagonists often have clear objectives, motivations, and backgrounds that deepen their character. Kemo, consumed by resentment, lures a caravan to his dead kingdom, where he throws everyone into the Sinner's Pit to be devoured by his soldiers (p. 309). His justification for his actions reveals a warped sense of morality, making him a dynamic antagonist. Kemo's role drives the narrative by introducing conflict, emphasizing the importance of portraying antagonists with depth and complexity.

3.1.3. The Tritagonist character in *Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

The tritagonist plays an important role in the plot's development and interacts with other characters, although they may not be the central focus. Two tritagonists appear in the novel "Heaven Officials' Blessing" Book 1: Fu Yao and Nan Feng. These characters play significant roles in supporting the protagonist and enriching the narrative. Their interactions and unique traits add depth to the story, making their presence integral to the overall plot development.

The first tritagonist is Fu Yao, one of the characters who accompany the protagonists throughout the journey. Fu Yao is introduced as a character who volunteers to assist Xie Lian, indicating a willingness to participate actively in the unfolding events. Fu Yao's presence as a tritagonist suggests a significant role in the plot's development. Their interaction with Xie Lian and other characters hints at their importance in the narrative, potentially contributing to the story's progression in meaningful ways.

Without any choice, Xie Lian first flashed a smile at the two junior martial officials, then said, "Nan Feng and Fu Yao, was it? Let me thank you both for volunteering to come help." (p. 43)

Tritagonists typically share a strong personal link and have important interactions with the protagonists. Despite his sassy behavior, Fu Yao deeply empathizes with Xie Lian, the protagonist. His willingness to wait for over six hours and then personally investigate when Xie Lian did not arrive suggests a sense of loyalty and concern for Xie Lian's well-being. Additionally, his nonchalant response belies a deeper level of understanding and attachment to Xie Lian, as indicated by his initiative to check on him personally rather than relying solely on others.

Having just entered the pit, Fu Yao wasn't yet used to the stench of blood and fanned his hand to make the air flow. He replied indifferently, "We waited for over six hours and there was still no sign of you, so we figured something had happened. I drew a circle for them to wait in and came to check things out myself" (p. 315).

His active participation in the unfolding events and willingness to take the initiative highlights his loyalty, camaraderie, and cooperation. Since he stays the same throughout the plot, he is considered a tritagonist with a static character.

Similar to Fu Yao, Nan Feng also serves as the tritagonist, offering support to the protagonists and staying with them from the beginning of the narrative. His presence as Xie Lian's friend from the beginning signifies a consistent support system for the protagonist and represents the archetype of a faithful and trustworthy comrade throughout the story. This consistency makes him a static character.

Without any choice, Xie Lian first flashed a smile at the two junior martial officials, then said, "Nan Feng and Fu Yao, was it? Let me thank you both for volunteering to come help" (p. 43).

Nan Feng is a tritagonist with a static character, offering steadfast support to the protagonists throughout the narrative. His unique abilities distinguish him as a key player with a distinct perspective, enriching the story with depth and complexity. His readiness to aid the protagonists further emphasizes themes of loyalty, camaraderie, and cooperation.

3.2. Minor characters

Minor characters discussed in this study include foil, static, dynamic, flat, round, and stock characters. Foil characters contrast the protagonists, highlighting their traits and decisions. Static

characters remain unchanged throughout the story, maintaining their initial characteristics and perspectives. In contrast, dynamic characters undergo significant development and transformation. Flat characters are two-dimensional, while round characters are complex and multi-faceted. Stock characters are stereotypical figures commonly found in literature, easily recognizable by their typical traits. Major characters can also be defined within these categories, demonstrating that these classifications are not limited to minor roles but apply to all characters in the narrative.

3.2.1. The foil character in *Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

One foil character that appears in the novel is Pei Xiu. Foil characters often possess traits that contrast with those of the protagonist to highlight their virtue. Pei Xiu, a martial god from the Middle Court, was initially described as a polite descendant and the right-hand man of Pei Ming. He is frequently called in to clean up Pei Ming's messes. Regardless of the situation, he consistently maintains his composure with a distant yet calm demeanor. Pei Xiu is depicted as a capable and efficient problem solver, maintaining his composure even in challenging situations.

...While this young military general was also handsome, his complexion was pale, and his countenance was as calm as cool jade. There was no sense of a murderous aura, only an unrippled tranquility. He was a military general, but he could also be said to be a tactician (p. 135-136).

Pei Xiu's hidden motives and the slaughter of a city reveal the ethical ambiguity of godly power. Hua Cheng's dialogue (p. 362-363) highlights the dehumanizing views of heavenly officials, contrasting Pei Xiu's calm demeanour with his darker actions. As a foil character, Pei Xiu's flaws emphasize Xie Lian's virtues, adding complexity to the narrative without directly causing conflict.

3.2.2. The static character in *Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

Ling Wen, a static character in the novel, represents the archetype of an independent, career-driven woman. As the top civil god overseeing heaven's bureaucracy, she symbolizes authority, efficiency, and dedication to her role. Her unwavering focus on her career and responsibilities highlights her static nature as a figure of success and power rather than personal growth or change.

Ling Wen was a heavenly official who managed the affairs of celestial personnel and controlled the smooth sailing and rapid career promotion of humans. The entire palace was stacked full of official documents and scrolls from the ground to the ceiling, quite an astounding sight, enough to make one quake with fear. On the way over, every heavenly official who emerged from the Palace of Ling Wen was holding stacks of documents that were taller than the average person. Their complexions were ghastly pale, looking either like they were breaking down or numb (p. 34-35).

Ling Wen is a static character who is consistently portrayed as an independent, career-focused figure within Heaven's bureaucracy. Despite significantly assisting the protagonist, Xie Lian, she shows no notable growth or change, limiting her to a supporting role. Her consistent personality and perspective throughout the story emphasize her static nature.

3.2.3. *The dynamic character in Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

Dynamic characters exhibit a variety of personality traits. Three dynamic characters appear in the novel “Heaven Officials’ Blessing” Book 1: Pei Ming, Feng Xin, and Mu Qing. Pei Ming, with his complex background and evolving relationships, adds depth to the plot. Feng Xin’s journey reflects his inner struggles and gradual development, compelling his character arc. Similarly, Mu Qing’s character evolves as he faces various challenges and reveals different facets of his personality.

The first dynamic character is Pei Ming. He was initially described as the martial god of the North. He embodies confidence, charm, and exceptional combat skills, reflecting a persona of abundance and renown. However, the subsequent portrayal of General Ming Guang presents a stark contrast, depicting him as mighty, unapproachable, and flush with success, suggesting a shift in his demeanour and public perception. Despite his secure status in the North, there seems to be tension between his past reputation and his current demeanour, hinting at the underlying variety in his character.

However, this General Ming Guang was a mighty and unapproachable great heavenly official, flush with success. Additionally, his status in the north was very secure (p. 95).

Pei Ming exemplifies a dynamic character with internal conflicts and a complex backstory. His reputation as a womanizer complicates his relationship with Xuan Ji, whose deep emotional attachment and unrequited love drive her to sacrifice herself to stay by his side. Despite her desperation, Pei Ming remains emotionally detached, never intending to commit to her, which leads to her tragic death out of resentment. This highlights the emotional distance between them and adds depth to Pei Ming’s characterization, emphasizing the nuanced storytelling and intricate relationships within the narrative (p. 140).

The second dynamic characters undergo significant personal development or change in their perspectives, beliefs, or personalities. This character development typically impacts their conduct and decisions. Feng Xin was initially introduced as Xie Lian’s devoted bodyguard, transitioning to the Martial God of the Southeast, known as Nan Yang-zhenjun. Despite their close bond, circumstances lead to their separation, marking a turning point in Feng Xin’s character journey. This separation likely prompts him to reevaluate his priorities and forge his own path.

Nan Yang-zhenjun was the Martial God of the Southeast. He possessed eight thousand temples and was incredibly loved by the people. His real name was Feng Xin, and eight hundred years ago, he was the number one heavenly general of the Xianle Palace of the Crown Prince.

Feng Xin was loyal to fault, and he had been Xie Lian’s imperial bodyguard since the crown prince was fourteen years old. He grew up with Xie Lian; they entered the heavens together, were banished together, and drifted together. Unfortunately, they couldn’t endure all eight hundred years together. In the end, it was an unhappy separation as each went their own way, never to meet again. (p. 33)

Dynamic characters are multifaceted, exhibiting a range of traits and emotions. Feng Xin evolves from a loyal bodyguard to a martial god while maintaining deep respect for Xie Lian despite their

strained relationship. His possession of the sacred sword gifted by Xie Lian (p. 230-232) reflects this reverence, showcasing the complexity of their bond and the lasting influence of their shared history.

The second dynamic character, Mu Qing, served as the main character's personal assistant, Xie Lian. Initially depicted as his close companion, Mu Qing undergoes significant evolution following a series of tragedies. Later, Mu Qing becomes General Xuan Zhen, the Martial God of the Southwest. This transformation underscores the dynamic nature of Mu Qing's character, reflecting the multifaceted nature of character development within the story.

General Xuan Zhen was the Martial God of the Southwest who possessed seven thousand temples; his name in the human world was considerably distinguished, and this General Xuan Zhen's real name was Mu Qing. Eight hundred years ago, he was a deputy general at the Xian Le Palace of the Crown Prince (p. 30).

Readers frequently find dynamic characters relatable as they evolve in response to the novel's events. The audience may get emotionally invested and empathetic in their experiences. Despite his exceptional talent, Mu Qing was fortunate enough to get hired as Xie Lian's personal assistant, as he was just a regular guy. For that, he ought to feel grateful. Nonetheless, it is considered degrading to be regarded as someone's subordinate, given his current status. He thus becomes enraged whenever someone reminds him of that, and the reader can relate with similar emotions.

... If the Palace of Nan Yang couldn't stand to hear the words Tremendous Masculinity, then the Palace of Xuan Zhen couldn't stand to hear people bring up the term "sweep." This was because, when Mu Qing still an errand boy at the Royal Holy Temple, all he did all day was serve tea, deliver water, sweep, and change the sheets for Xie Lian at the Palace of the Crown Prince. One day, Xie Lian saw him silently reciting training incantations while sweeping. He was thus moved by his spirit for learning and hard work under such harsh and difficult circumstances, and persuaded the state preceptor to take him in as a disciple. (p. 61)

In conclusion, as a dynamic character, Mu Qing undergoes significant changes that reflect a shift in their worldview, beliefs, and attitudes. It showcases the complexity and depth of character development within the narrative. Mu Qing's journey reflects relatable themes of ambition, identity, and the quest for self-realization, making him a compelling and dynamic character in the story.

3.2.1. The flat characters in *Heaven Officials' Blessing (Book 1)*

Flat characters are uncomplicated and straightforward. Their lack of depth and complexity limits them to supporting roles that only set the scene and move the plot along. Three flat characters appear in the novel are Tian Sheng, Xiao-Pengtou, and Xiao-Ying. These characters are depicted with limited depth and development, serving specific narrative functions without significant growth or complexity. Tian Sheng, Xiao-Pengtou, and Xiao-Ying are similarly portrayed with two-dimensional personalities and predictable roles within the story.

The first flat character is Tian Sheng, the youngest member of the merchant caravan traveling through the desert near Banyue. He gets along with people easily and thinks he knows them after a

brief conversation. Being an enthusiastic young man, he is naturally curious and frequently questions new information that he learns.

The merchant boy Tian Sheng was young, and youths were prone to curiosity. After the little chat earlier, it was as if they had become familiar, so he called out, "Gege, what does it say on the stele?" (p. 246-247)

Tian Sheng represents a flat character. His brief and one-dimensional reaction to the situation, screaming in terror and pleading for help, does not show significant depth or development beyond his immediate fear (p. 29). His role is limited to being a fearful figure in the scene, reacting passively to the situation at hand. Unlike more complex characters who undergo growth or change, Tian Sheng's character is defined by a single, overt characteristic (fear) and does not exhibit a broader emotional or narrative arc. This makes him a flat character, serving more as a plot device rather than a fully developed individual. Tian Sheng is a quintessential flat character. His straightforward, uncomplicated nature and lack of depth confine him to a supporting role that moves the plot forward. Tian Sheng's interactions, such as his journey to the Banyue Palace and subsequent rescue by Xie Lian, primarily highlight the heroism of the main character.

The second flat character is Xiao-Pengtou, who serves as a flat character defined by his aggressive and greedy nature. Motivated by the desire to capture the ghost groom for a reward, he remains stubborn and seldom listens to others. His ignorance provides comic relief, such as when he eagerly interacts with a disguised Xie Lian, mistaking him for a kidnapped girl (p. 99). Xiao-Pengtou's consistent aggression and single-minded pursuit of financial gain highlight his static role in the story, culminating in his unchanged demeanor leading to his demise.

The third flat character Xiao-Ying portrayed as an unattractive girl. Xiao-Ying has unattractive features and a small, petite body. She has slanted eyes and a crooked nose. Her look is average overall, with a flat face. Xiao-Ying is a shy and reserved girl, yet she also possesses courage. Even though she was ignored because people denigrated her, she persisted in trying to advise and warn those around her.

Right then, a young girl's voice came from the street. "Don't... don't listen to him, don't go. Mount Yujun is a very dangerous place..."

The one who spoke while hiding at a street corner was the girl who was praying for blessings at the Temple of Nan Yang last night, Xiao-Ying. When Xie Lian saw her face, he could feel his own aching and subconsciously rubbed his cheek.

That youth appeared grim when he saw her, and he shoved her. "What's a little woman doing, interrupting when the big men are talking?" (p. 69)

In conclusion, Xiao-Ying is considered a flat character due to her portrayal as an unattractive yet courageous girl based on a single trait or role. Her role as a supporting character advances the plot, particularly in assisting Xie Lian in tracking down the ghost groom.

3.2.2. *The round character in Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)*

Two round characters found in the novel *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)* are A-Zhao and Banyue. These characters are portrayed with depth and complexity, exhibiting multifaceted personalities and evolving throughout the story. As round characters, both A-Zhao and Banyue contribute significantly to the richness of the novel's characterization, enhancing its thematic exploration and overall impact.

According to the story, the first round character is A-Zhao. He is a local guide in the Banyue region who guides merchant caravans over the dangerous landscape for a living. He has incredibly important information that helps steer those people. Because of his credibility, the merchants all trust him.

"Yeah!" that youth Tian Sheng said. "It all depends on the guide! We owe everything to A-Zhao-ge! If not for him, we wouldn't have been able to avoid all those quicksand pits. When the sandstorm started, he knew exactly where to bring us to hide, otherwise we would be buried alive in sand by now!" (p. 245)

Round characters are complex, with motives shaped by desires, fears, and beliefs that provide a full picture of their actions. A-Zhao, revealed as a clone of Pei Xiu, uses his guide persona to lure merchants into Banyue territory, sacrificing them to avenge his country's enemies (p. 334). His detailed and multifaceted nature exemplifies a round character, adding depth and complexity to the story.

The second round character is Banyue, a wrath-ranked ghost who was the state preceptor of the Kingdom of Banyue in the past. She may be gloomy, but she genuinely wants to spare people from suffering, even if it means going through it herself.

"That one is the general of Banyue, and the other side is the state preceptor of Banyue. Right now they're..."

Kemo suddenly leapt up before Xie Lian could finish. He had been lying on the ground gathering his strength and was finally able to jump up with a shout, aiming his fists at the preceptor of Banyue. A large, beefy warrior attacking a little girl—normally, Xie Lian would never allow that sort of thing to happen before him. But Kemo had every reason to hate the state preceptor, and she could defend herself perfectly well. However, she didn't and allowed herself to be thrown around like a broken ragdoll (p. 316).

Banyue is a round character whose backstory shapes her motivations and actions. Gifted in controlling scorpion snakes and black magic, she earned both admiration and fear from her people. Appointed as the state preceptor of the Banyue kingdom with General Kemo as her guarantor, Banyue later opened the fortress gates during a battle between Banyue and Yong'an, leading to her kingdom's downfall. Accused of treason, she was captured by the Banyue troops and hanged over the Sinner's Pit. Her complex history and decisions reflect the depth and multidimensional nature of round characters.

Kemo, who was fighting hard against their enemies, went mad with rage when he heard that the state preceptor had opened the gates. But no matter how tough he was, one could not win alone against so many.

Kemo gritted his teeth. "I only learned right then that she had long been colluding with the enemy general and agreed to let their troops in at that moment. But even if I was destined to die in battle, before I died, I was going to kill that traitor no matter what!! So I sent a troop of soldiers to charge up the city tower, and we dragged her down and hung her dead over the Sinner's Pit. Hung on that pole!" (p. 308)

To sum up, Banyue is a round character. She possesses diverse features and motivations that render her realistic and empathetic. Her sincere desire to save others from suffering embodies complexity. Her actions during the Banyue against Yong'an war demonstrate her moral dilemma and inner conflict.

3.2.3. The stock character in Heaven Officials' Blessing Book 1

Stock characters are based on a well-known stereotype or archetype that readers are familiar with right away. These roles are rooted in cultural, social, or literary conventions. Two stock characters appear in the novel are Wind Master and Jun Wu. These characters embody recognizable figures, fulfilling conventional roles that readers can easily recognize. Wind Master portrays a generous, wealthy lady, while Jun Wu portrays a mighty leader.

The first stock character is the "generous wealthy lady" Wind Master portrayed. She is exceptionally friendly and popular, making friends with many Heavenly Officials and mortals. Additionally, she enjoys giving her colleagues a portion of her wealth.

Ling Wen replied, "The Wind Master has just returned and is giving away merits. Why don't you go and see if you can grab any?"

Sure enough, Xie Lian could hear the many officials cheerfully shouting (p. 210-211).

Stock characters often serve a specific narrative or thematic purpose related to their archetype. As a wealthy lady, she utilizes her considerable fortune to perform good deeds and assist those in need, particularly the protagonist. Through her actions, the Wind Master not only advances the plot but also reinforces themes of kindness, support, and the moral responsibility of the privileged to assist others.

...He asked, "Why did the Wind Master come to the Banyue Pass?"

"To help out," Nan Feng said. "When we saw them strolling in the streets earlier, they were actually looking for those Banyue soldiers."

Xie Lian recalled now the first time he asked about the Banyue Pass in the communication array. In the midst of that silent awkwardness, it was the Wind Master's sudden release of ten thousand

merits that distracted everyone. The Wind Master probably taken notice of his query then (p. 344).

In conclusion, the Wind Master is considered a stock character, fitting the well-known stereotype of the “generous wealthy lady.” Through her actions, the Wind Master advances the plot. She reinforces themes of kindness, support, and the moral responsibility of the privileged to assist others, fulfilling a specific narrative and thematic purpose.

The second stock character is Jun Wu, who the audience is familiar with and can easily identify with in this novel. These characters serve particular functions throughout the narrative and are based on well-known stereotypes. Jun Wu represents a mighty leader. He is the highest rank god in heaven and is often called The Emperor of Heaven. He is composed and serene as a wise man, yet his power remains aloft.

At the Heavenly Ceremonial Procession, the God-Pleasing Warrior wore a golden mask. Dressed in glamorous attire and with a sacred sword in hand, he played the role of the subduer of evil, the number one martial god for the past thousand years: the Heavenly Emperor, Jun Wu (p. 12).

With stock characters, audiences come with preconceived expectations based on the archetype. They anticipate certain behaviors and traits, which can be a useful storytelling tool. Even though there are many scheming and gossiping people in the Heavens, Jun Wu refuses to be involved in such small-minded arguments and is prepared to hear the pleas of all creatures for justice. His positive qualities also benefit the protagonist and assist him throughout the story (p.36). Furthermore, Jun Wu exemplifies a stock character, embodying the well-known archetype of a mighty and wise leader. This familiarity allows the audience to easily identify his role and anticipate his behavior, which is a useful storytelling tool.

4. Conclusion

This study categorizes characters in *Heaven Official's Blessing (book 1)* into major and minor groups. Major characters include the protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist, with Xie Lian and Hua Cheng serving as central figures whose complex personalities drive the plot. Antagonists like Xuan Ji and Kemo create conflict, while tritagonists such as Fu Yao and Nan Feng emphasize themes of friendship and loyalty. Minor characters, including foils, static, dynamic, flat, round, and stock types, support the narrative by contrasting or complementing the major characters. The study is limited to Book 1, leaving many characters and elements unexplored.

To further explore the characters and themes, readers should look beyond the main plot and consider character evolution and their role in driving the narrative. Future research could involve comparative studies with other MXTX works or similar *xianxia* novels, examine cultural and historical contexts, and apply diverse literary theories for a deeper understanding. Expanding the analysis to the entire eight-book series would provide a more comprehensive exploration of character development and literary elements.

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