

## MD14 : A Study on the Cultural Symbols of Religious Folk Life – Taking the Character of "Baomazai" as an Example

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### Abstract

The word "Baomazai" has the characteristics of literal visualization to us. From interviews, we learned that most people would directly think associated it with "a person riding a fast horse to deliver a message". Due to diverse performances such as TV programs, Taiwanese Opera, Glove Puppet Shows, and other folk dramas, broadcasters in "local style," who wear bamboo hats and ring gongs along the streets to broadcast news, embody the vivid and concrete character impressions that we associate with Baomazai. Nowadays, the term "Baomazai" has also been extended to express the abstract meaning of "announcement". In addition, the "Baomazai", a pioneer in the Mazu Pilgrimage Procession activities of folk Mazu belief, not only explores the way and transmits information, but also has its own established style impression and semiotic metaphor to advise people to do good. However, in academic research, there are research gaps and few studies on the relevant literature of Baomazai. This study explores the following three research methods: 1. analyzing and summarizing literature (website, existing research paper); 2. structured interviews with 16 general public to understand the interpretation of the intuition of "Baomazai"; 3. semi-structured interview with 1 experts (Ya-Po Chi, the scholar of cultural studies in Beigang Yunlin). Through the interview, we learned that "Baomaza", the pioneer of Mazu Pilgrimage Procession of Beigang Chaotian Temple, is the concrete character of religious activities". The character has equipment with cultural semiotics which combines three essentials as following: 1.symbol; 2.semiotics; 3. phonetic metaphor (homophone pun). Mazu's four spirits of "satisfaction, kindness, gratitude, and cherishing blessings" and their visual symbols are conveyed. Based on the above summary and analysis, a meta-database of text and visual semantics of "Baomaza" is constructed to serve as a reference for designers or future application research in various fields.

**Keywords:** *Baomazai, Mazu pilgrimage procession, Beigang Chaotian Temple, Semiotics, Phonetic metaphor*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Communication between people is through gestures and language. Since sound cannot be effectively conveyed and recorded, knotted ropes were developed to record events, then graphic symbols, and now written symbols. The objective structure of language symbols enables verbal communication to form meaning, and the words and vocabulary in them will be used and applied differently due to the influence of the times, environment, religion, politics, customs, culture or extended subcultures. During the transmission process, the messenger (encoder) and the receiver (decoder) will also have different interpretations due to their different cognitions. The term "Baomazai" is a good example. There are often roles of scouts and messengers in costume TV series, Taiwanese Opera, and Glove Puppet Show. Therefore, some people have the impression that "Baomazai" are messengers and snitchers. And because Taiwan Minnan is the language with the largest usage rate and number of people after Mandarin. And also Taiwanese Opera and Glove Puppet Show are traditional Taiwanese dramas that are often performed in Minnan. Therefore, some people directly associate them with people with local styles and intuitively pronounce them in Minnan. The concrete image of the role of Baomazai also extends to abstract applications. Nowadays, it is often seen in advertisements such as "latest news" on websites or social media. Media is the material carrier that spreads information symbols, and the "publicity" of the media is the vanguard of performance. "Baomazai" [1], that is, "publicity" is the "prelude" before the performance of a play, so "performance promotion" = "widely inform" = "Baomazai".

Due to the multiple changes of the era and environment, language and visual codes mark different codes of theera. Therefore, everyone may have different intuitive reactions and interpretations of the same things depending on their different life backgrounds. Through the process of learning and cognition, human beings have constructed a meta-language database for interpreting things in the language system. We can select the elements

that we think are most appropriate to combine and express. Long-Ting Chen, the scholar of Taiwan Language and Literature, mentions: [2]

Selection is a product based on equivalence. Equivalence does not only refer to the similarity between elements, but also includes the relationship between similarity and difference, synonyms and antonyms. Combination is based on proximity. Baomazai, a pioneer in the folk belief in Mazu, has a life equipment with semiotic and phonetic metaphor (homonym) meanings. The symbols use homophony (the pronunciation of the words is the same or similar) [3] association, integrating visual and phonetic metaphors. The metaphors are triggered by homophones or similar sounds. Moreover, the relationship between the ontology and the metaphor represents Mazu's four major spirit of "contentment, kindness, gratitude, and blessing". The semiotics of "Baomazai" is an important asset of traditional folk culture. In order to deeply understand the semiotics of "Baomazai" in Beigang Chaotian Temple and for future promotion and application. This study aims to explore the semiotics of the equipment on the current Baomazai of Beigang Chaotian Temple (after 1956). This study will compose this article based on the folklore data obtained through literature review, interviews, and comparative analysis. The research process is as follows:

1. Analysis and synthesis of literature data (websites, existing literature); 2. Structured interviews with the general public, involving 16 interviewees, who will first complete a simple questionnaire, followed by an interview to understand the general public's intuitive interpretation of "Baomazai"; 3. Semi-structured interview with one expert: Documenting the history and heritage of Baomazai of Beigang Chaotian Temple through an interview with Mr. Ya-po Chi, an 80-year-old Yunlin cultural and historical research scholar.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Linguistic Semiotics

#### 1) The symbolic structure of language

Taiwanese Linguistics and Literary Scholar Long-Ting Chen [2] mentioned that the Swiss linguist Saussure's theory of semiotics states that language is a symbolic system. The symbols in language (whether they are sounds or written forms) have meaning primarily due to two fundamental relationships: syntagmatic relationships and associative relationships. Syntagmatic relationships (rappports syntagmatiques) refer to the linear, sequential relationships in language, constituting a collection of words that are present and connected in a sequential manner (in praesentia). On the other hand, associative relationships (rappports associatifs) involve a radial, non-present (in absentia) collection of words, uniting words that share commonalities to form a set embodying various relationships [2][4].

#### 2) Phonetic Metaphor

The associations triggered by homonyms are caused by the homophone or similar sounds (also known as paronyms) of two words, and the metaphors triggered by idioms imitate idioms and folk phonetic metaphors. Phonetic metaphor emphasizes individual experiences and subjective experiences, fostering a dialogue between the creator and the reader through associations [5]. Scholar Zane & Shafer referred to the expansion of conceptual metaphor mentioned in Lakoff & Johnson's "Primary Metaphor and Subjective Experience". This expansion goes from one psychological dimension to another, representing a latent cognitive process. Namely, abstract concepts are conceptualized through concrete applications. Therefore, whether the conceptualization is successful depends on the successful mapping of the metaphor; that is, whether the message receiver and the encoder share a common understanding of the translated concept [6]. This applies to phonetics as well. Chinese people like to use patterns or objects to express auspicious meanings. For example, the equipment "錫壺" (tin pot, pronounced in xī hú) of "Baomazai" is a homophone and metaphor for "惜福" (cherish blessings, pronounced in xī fú).

### B. The Diverse Definitions of "Baomazai"

The term "Baomazai" has various applications. It evolved from being used to describe scouts in the early army, who were responsible for detecting the enemy's movements and reporting information. It later transformed into a role in religious processions, where individuals walk at the forefront of the pilgrimage procession team, exploring the road ahead and reporting back immediately [7]. In online dictionaries, it is defined as a snitch, informer, a person who talks too much, or someone who cannot keep a secret [8] [9]. During the agricultural society era in Taiwan (1945-1968) [10], televisions and radios were not widespread, making it impossible to disseminate news through traditional broadcast media. Instead, news was often proclaimed by individuals shouting in the streets. Consequently, these "gong ringers" became the local "Baomazai," serving as informal broadcasters [11].

From the following, we can observe the various applications of lifestyle customs and emotional beliefs, as well as notice the distinctive stylistic features:

1) *Message Transmitter, News Broadcaster*: Scholar Lian-Chen Tsai [12], in the Taiwanese speech draft for the promotion of Taiwanese, defined "Baomazai" as a news broadcaster (only one sentence from the text is shown below):

Baomazai! I am here to report the news to you, thank you all for listening.

2) *Gong Ringing Herald*: News Reporter Shao-Wen Lin, in the "Illustrating Folk Customs: The Gong-Ringing Baomazai", introduces the national treasure-level local comic artist Hsing-Ching Liu, who created a comic illustration titled "Auntie Playing Matchmaker" in 2006, within which a limerick is inscribed:

A clown with makeup carrying a billboard, going through the village banging a gong and shouting. The auntie matchmaker marries herself, be careful or your teeth might fall out from laughing.

The text also mentions:

The person who rings the gong, at each section of the road or every time they reach a crossroad or an alley entrance, would sound the gong to convey messages. In that era, the gong-ringer was a significant presence on the streets, functioning as a broadcast station, and also as a "reporter" of the latest news.

- 3) *The Abstract Expression of "Performance Publicity":* "Publicity" plays the role of a vanguard, akin to the "Baomazai", in the theatrical performance, attracting and even summoning the audience to come and watch the play. The "performance publicity" is for "widely broadcasting" [1], conveying the concept that publicity is the "precursor" or "forerunner" of the event = "Baomazai".

- 4) *Application of Website Title*

The unit's website uses "Baomazai" as a headline, serving as a "news bulletin" or "providing information feedback", as follows:

1. "Road- smooth Baomazai": A public facility repair and maintenance system, for reporting and logging the maintenance needs of street lights or sidewalks [13].
2. "District and Village Baomazai": A website for publishing community news [14].
3. Tainan Cultural Center "Theatre ART Baomazai " Series Lectures: Series lecture event announcements [15]."

- 5) *The Baomazai evolving from the culture of folk belief processions*

According to statistics from the Civil Affairs Department of the Yunlin County Government in 2021, there are about 808 temples in Yunlin County. Of these, 88 primarily worship the Mother Goddess of Taiwan, Mazu. The three temples in Beigang that are dedicated to Mazu are Chaotian Temple, Shengping Temple and Fuxing Temple. Mazu is one of the most commonly believed deities in Taiwan. Baomazai leads the procession during Mazu's ceremonial pilgrimage or the incense offering procession. Their task is to detect the situation ahead and report back immediately. They often carry various props, each with its own symbolic meaning [17].

The "Baomazai" is a prominent feature of the Beigang Mazu pilgrimage processions, acting as the vanguard who voluntarily clears the way at the forefront of the procession. The current attire and equipment of the Beigang Baomazai differ significantly from earlier times. They were meticulously designed in 1956 by Mr. Chuan Tsai (蔡川), who served as a committee member of the Beigang Chaotian Temple from the first to the tenth term (1921-1949). This marked a major transformation in the Baomazai equipment, enhancing its local characteristics and imbuing it with a deeper sense of cultural mission. Mr. Chuan Tsai's father was a Qing Dynasty scholar (秀才 xiù cái: one who passed the county level imperial exam), and Chuan Tsai was also well-versed in literature. Mr. Chuan Tsai designed a set of Baomazai props and costumes, which he gifted to Mr. Yi-Chuan Chen (陳義泉) to wear, explaining their significance. Since then, the Beigang Baomazai have had official equipment and costumes.

Puppet Show Baomazai: During the 2014 Yunlin Agriculture Expo (December 25, 2013 to March 6, 2014), puppet master Mr. Shih-Chih Huang of Yunlin Beigang performed a talk show on January 2, 2014, using puppet dolls styled as "Baomazai" from the Mazu pilgrimage processions (as shown in Figure 1). The show conveyed Mazu's message encouraging people to do good deeds and promoted



traditional puppetry.

Figure 1. Traveling with the Agriculture Expo / Watching Huang Shizhi's Puppetry Talk Show in Beigang [20]

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the semiotics of the "Baomazai", the vanguard figure in the Beigang Chaotian Temple Mazu pilgrimage processions. The research methods employed are literature analysis and interviews. 1. Literature Data Analysis and Induction (websites, existing literature): by utilizing Airiti Library Database and the Google search engine to conduct searches with "Baomazai" as the keyword; 2. Interviews: There are two target

groups for interviews, one being the general public and the other being researchers specializing in the Mazu pilgrimage procession's Baomazai. (1) Structured interviews involving 16 general interviewees, initially completing simple questionnaires, followed by analysis and then interviews to understand the general public's intuitive interpretation of "Baomazai"; (2) A semi-structured interview with one expert: through an interview with Mr. Ya-Po Chi, an 80-year-old scholar specializing in Beigang cultural and historical research, to document the history and heritage of the Baomazai of the Beigang Chaotian Temple. Through comprehensive and inductive analysis, the results can be used as a reference for applications in various fields in the future. Figure 2 illustrates the research framework of this study.

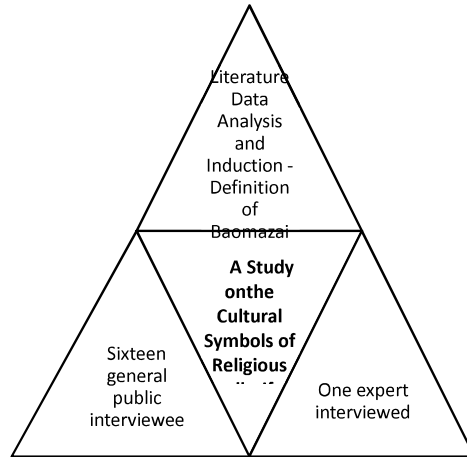


Figure2. Research Architecture Diagram

#### A. Literature Analysis and Summary

The literature has been discussed in the previous chapter, and the analyzed and summarized data will be placed in the Table 1 for comparison with the "Responses to the open questions from the sixteen general public respondents in the questionnaire".

#### B. Structured Interviews with Sixteen General Public Interviewees.

In order to understand the general public's intuitive impression of the term "Baomazai", 16 respondents were interviewed. They were randomly selected, with approximately 4-5 people each from the northern, central, and southern regions. First, they completed structured questionnaires, which were then analyzed, followed by telephone interviews. The questionnaire included 6 closed-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions.

##### 1) Questionnaire Statistics

###### 1. Six Closed-Ended questions

- (1) Age: 1 person (6.2%) between 20 and 30 years old, 4 people (25%) between 31 and 40 years old, 3 people (18.8%) between 41 and 50 years old, 7 people (43.8%) between 51 and 60 years old, 1 person over the age of 61 (6.2%).
- (2) Gender: 10 males (62.5%), 6 females (37.5%)
- (3) Place of residence: 6 people in the north (37.5%), 4 people in the center (25%), 5 people in the south (31.3%), and 1 person in the east (6.2%)
- (4) Frequently spoken languages: 7 people (43.8%) speak Mandarin, 7 people (43.8%) speak Mandarin and half Taiwanese, and 2 people (12.4%) speak Taiwanese.
- (5) When you see the word "Baomazai", do you instinctively think of pronouncing it in Mandarin? Or the Taiwanese pronunciation? : 13 people (81.4%) spoke Taiwanese; 2 people (12.4%) both spoke; 1 person (6.2%) didn't pay attention.
- (6) Which pronunciation do you think can best interpret the image of the character "Baomazai"? 15 people (93.8%) spoke Taiwanese; 1 person (6.2%) had no difference.

###### 2. Three Open-Ended Questions

- (5) The open-ended is: What do you think the literal meaning of "Baomazai" is?

The synthesis of literature and the compilation of interviews with the general public are pre-sented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF LITERATURE AND INTERVIEWEES' ANSWERS

Literature definition	Responses to the open questions from the sixteengeneral public respondents in the questionnaire
<p>Detective, responsible for detecting the enemy's situation and reporting information)</p> <p>Literature: The "Baomazai", originally known as "Tanmazai", evolved from the "scouts" in ancient armies, and has now transformed into a role in religious pilgrimages [7].</p>	<p>a. Vanguard (4 people) a1: The "Baomazai", originally known as "Tanmazai", evolved from the "scouts" of ancient armies. a2: Vanguard. a3: Reporting the information on the situation ahead. a4: Meaning to scout the road and convey messages.</p>
<p>Message Transmitter (Messenger)Literature: "In 'Pictorial Folklore', the gong rings Baomazai" - the article introduces the comic illustrations in the 2006 "Auntie Acting as a Matchmaker" by Hsing-Chin Liu, a national treasure-level local comic artist [11]. Originally referring to people conveying messages, it later often denoted informers or those who leak information [8].</p>	<p>b. Message Transmission (5 people). b1: Special news reporter, dispatched reporter, 1 person. b2: A person who disseminates firsthand information, 1 person. b3: A person who shares news, information, gossip, and communicates intelligence, 1 person. b4: Message transmitter, 1 person. b5: Message notifier, 1 person.</p>
<p>Informant, Person Making a Petty Report, Snitch.Literature: Originally referring to people conveying messages, it later often denoted informers or those who leak information [8].</p>	<p>c. Gossip or Informal News Informers (6 people). c1: Gossip mongers, 2 people. c2: A person conveying the meaning of informal news, 1 person. c3: Informants, 3 people.</p>
<p>The Vanguard in Mazu Pilgrimage Processions: a person conveying messages, walking at the very front of the deity welcoming or pilgrimage procession, whose task is to scout the conditions of the road ahead and report back in real-time. Literature: Baomazai (waxwork figures, where the appearance of Baomazai can be seen), is at the very front of the deity welcoming or pilgrimage procession, with the duty of scouting the conditions of the road ahead and reporting back promptly [17]. In the artwork "Welcoming Mazu - by Zhi-Xin Lin - watermark woodblock print", it described that Baomazai (scout horse), walking at the forefront of the procession, is the vanguard of the deity's pilgrimage team [21].</p>	<p>d. Temple Fair Procession Vanguard Informers (5 people). d1: Temple fair procession. d2: Appearance: Conical hat, eyepiece, holding a gong, one pant leg long and the other short, goatee beard. Qing dynasty attire, with a queue (braided ponytail). d3: Appearance: Wearing straw sandals.</p>
<p>Publicity (an abstract representation of "pre-performance publicity"); a person who is quick to speak, unable to keep words to themselves, and voices out thoughts immediately. Literature: Originally referred to a person who conveys messages, later more commonly used to describe someone who informs secrets or tattles [7]. A person who is quick to speak, unable to contain their words, and immediately voices out their thoughts [8]. The media's "publicity" serves as the "Baomazai" who paves the way for performances [1].</p>	<p>e1. Special news bulletin, special correspondent, 1 person. e2. Likes to talk, gossipmonger-like, 2 people</p>

<p>Application in Website Titles (Conveying News Flashes or Reporting Messages) Literature: Organizations utilize "Baomazai" as a heading for their websites, signifying "newsannouncements", as illustrated below: "Road Smooth Baomazai": A public facility maintenance and repair system for logging the maintenance requirements of street lights or sidewalks [13]. "Neighborhood Baomazai": A website for disseminating community news [14]. "Tainan Cultural Center Theater ART Baomazai Series Lectures": Announcements for a series of lecture events [15].</p>	
<p>Application in Website Titles (Conveying News Flashes or Reporting Messages)</p>	<p>f1. Bold and fearless, unafraid of death. f2. Vivacious and curious. f3. Features fluid lines and vibrant colors, conveying a sense of speed. f4. A man with greyish-white hair styled in a "mushroom head", wearing glasses and slightly hunched over in his 50s or 60s, affectionately referred to by everyone as "Ah Bei". f5. Unbeatable Taiwanese style. f6. Wearing tattered clothes and carrying a shoulder pole. f7. A comical character. f8. Horse.</p>

(8) What do you think the character "Baomazai" should look like?

8-1: Not necessarily bad looking, wearing a tank top, playing a gong, with a handlebar mustache, wearing a hat. 8-2: Ordinary, not particularly prominent. 8-3: Broadcasting/Calling out. 8-4: An old person riding a horse. 8-5: Someone riding a fast horse to deliver messages. 8-6: A horse. 8-7: Wearing a bamboo hat, distinct eyes, holding a gong, wearing pants that are longer on one side and shorter on the other, sporting a handlebar mustache. 8-8: Righteous and brave, fearless. 8-9: Lively, curious, likes to talk. 8-10: Has fluid lines, bright colors, gives a sense of speed. 8-11: Wearing straw sandals.

(9) Where have you seen the character of "Baomazai"?

9-1: In historical dramas. 9-2: In Glove puppet shows and historical costumes. 9-3: In TV dramas. 9-4: In puppet shows. 9-5: During the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage. 9-6: In serial dramas. 9-7: During temple parades. 9-8: Haven't paid attention to it. 9-9: In plays and in daily life. 9-10: The one at the very front during the Mazu pilgrimage. 9-11: In EDM. 9-12: In elementary school Taiwanese language textbooks. 9-13: In military educational films. 9-14: During Mazu's patrol. 9-15: At temple fairs. 9-16: In Taiwanese opera (Gezaixi).

2) *Post-Questionnaire Interview Analysis*

During the questionnaire, 5 people proactively mentioned matters related to religious processions, 4 people did not mention the Baomazai (messenger/forerunner) in the Mazu procession while filling out the questionnaire, but they are aware of the religious messenger role (one of them knew that there was someone delivering messages at the front of the procession, but didn't know it was the Baomazai). 3 people wouldn't specifically associate the term "Baomazai" with the imagery of the Mazu procession, but they have seen introductions about it (2 people saw it on television). In total, 12 people directly or indirectly knew about the religious Baomazai role.

C. *In-depth Interview with One Expert*

To deeply understand the semiotic significance of the role and equipment of the "Baomazai" in the folk belief of the Mazu pilgrimage, this study conducted an interview with the Yunlin Beigang cultural and historical worker,

Teacher Ya-Po Chi, recommended by the Chaotian Temple. After two interviews and content verifications, the details are organized as follows:

1) *Introduction to Teacher Ya-Po Chi*: He was born in 1943, 80 years old, currently residing in Beigang Town, Yunlin, he is a cultural and historical scholar in Beigang. He wrote the first article on "Baomazai" in 1987. Since 2005, he has been involved in Yunlin cultural and historical research for 18 years. He graduated from Taichung Teacher School (Junior College) and National Chiayi Teachers College. He is a retired guidance director at the Ming-De Elementary School in Sihou Township.

2) *Definition of "Baomazai" (Only a portion regarding the attire and equipment is extracted due to the extensive content)*: The role of "Baomazai" is defined as: 1. Vanguard Officer: Leading and clearing the path for the pilgrimage procession. 2. Megaphone: Assisting in the search for separated pilgrims by

ringing the gong. 3.Reception Escort: When the Mazu from Dajia, Baishatun, and Shanbian arrive at Beigang, the "Baomazai" goesto Xinjie to receive and escort them.

3) *Functions of Baomazai*: 1.Educational function: life philosophy. 2.Paving the way, advising, guiding, conveying messages, and scouting: needs to notify to avoid if encountering residents along the way who have violated taboos. 3.Serving friendly temples. 4.Assisting in finding and driving away evil spirits and eliminating negative forces. 5.Praying for blessings and attracting auspiciousness.

4) *Attire and Accessories of "Baomazai" during the Mazu Pilgrimage Procession*: 1.Qing Dynasty Period ~Before 1956: Performed by Ke Ke (柯科) and Lao-Hu Tsai (蔡老虎), the attire and equipment were: double-breasted shirt, black pants, straw sandals, gong, and megaphone. 2.After the year 1956 (Designed by Chuan Tsai):Chuan Tsai (once served as a committee member of Chaotian Temple) invited Mr. Yi-Chuan Chen to take on therole of "Baomazi", and designed the attire and accessories for him. That was the beginning of customized stylingfor Beigang Baomazai. Because Tsai Chuan's father was a scholar during the Guangxu period, Tsai Chuan was influenced by his family's education and had a deep literary cultivation. Therefore, when designing the attire and accessories for "Baomazai", he incorporated "homophonic words" to imbue them with "cultural meanings and spirits", symbolizing the four core values of Mazu: "Contentment, Altruism, Gratitude, and Cherishing Blessings".The design elements and their meanings are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2. THE SYMBOLIC SEMANTIC MEANING OF BAOMAZAI  
DESIGNED BY CHUAN TSAI

Equipment (signifier)	Oral Summary by Teacher Ya-Po Chi (signified)
Wearing a sheepskin jacket inside out	1.Enduring hardship, achieving prominence. 3. Too happy to serve theMazu, hastily wearing the jacket inside out.
Red-tasselled official hat	1.Recognizing one's place and fulfilling duties responsibly. 2.Stand upright with integrity.
Glasses frame (without lenses)	1.Those wearing glasses are commonly called "four-eyed," should be able to discern right from wrong better. 2. The absence of lenses signifies not being arrogant (the word for lens sounds like the word for "humane" inChinese).
Swallowtail beard and braided hair	1.Speak without falsehood. 2. Be true to one's word, consistent throughout.
Buttoning the mandarin jacket up and down	1.Disheveled clothing represents the unpredictability of life. 2. So happy to serve the Holy Mother that buttons were fastened incorrectly.
Long dry tobacco rod, tobacco pouch, tin pot	1.The pronunciation of the smoking rod in Taiwanese implies influencing (hun-tshue). 2.Dry tobacco rod: can be used for protection, expressing grat- itude (a play on words with the pronunciation of the rod and tobacco pouch in Chinese).3. Pouch: handed down from generation to generation. 4. Tin pot: appreciate blessings, promote societal harmony.
Carrying a long-handled paper umbrella over the shoulder.	1.Umbrella: implies integrity and promoting goodness; 2. Long handle:signifies perseverance and longevity.
Hanging leeks and pork trotters on the handle of the um-brella.	1. Pig's foot and leek: being content (a pun on pig's foot in Chinese) and happy leads to longevity. 2.Umbrella and leek: maintain integrity and promote goodness for a long time. 3. Pig's foot represents using the hind leg, indicating full strength in the latter stage.
gong with red dot	1. Laborious heart (center of the gong): hard work with success in sight; 2.Red center: a heart full of sincerity.
One pant leg higher than the other	Speak cautiously, do not gossip about others' shortcomings.
Three scars on the leg	Heaven knows, the earth knows, I know. 2. One must not act recklessly.
Barefoot.	1.Symbolizes being grounded, maintaining a good image. 2. During rest, stretch your feet to see where you stand (showing all five toes), hoping tocontinue serving in the Mazu procession.
Red thread.	To ward off evil spirits for the believers with a red thread.

5) *Beigang Baomazai Lineage Chart*

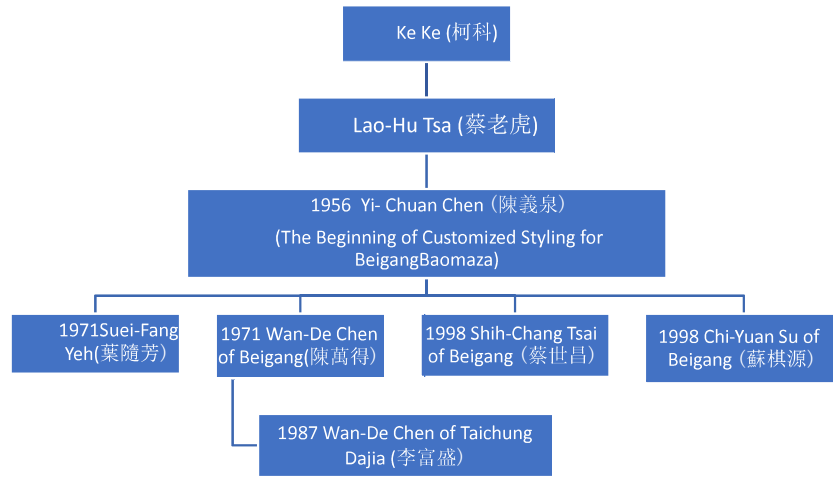


Figure 3. Beigang Baomazai Lineage Chart

6) Scholar Ya-Po Chi Guides Through the Baomazai Related Resources

Current Condition of Beigang Baomazai Hall (Figure 4), attire of Mr. Sui-Fang Yeh when he served as Baomazai, collected by Mr. Cheng-Feng Yeh (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Yunlin Beigang Town's Baomazai Hall. (Photographed by Wen-Hwa Cheng, 2023/8/21)



Figure 5. Mr. Sui-Fang Yeh dress for "Baomazai", collection (Photographed by Wen-Hwa Cheng)

D. Application of Puns Reflecting the Four Core Values "Contentment, Charity, Gratitude, and Cherishing Blessings"

1. Contentment: Pig's feet (Zhū jiǎo); 2. Charity: Umbrella (Yǔ sǎn); 3. Gratitude: Dry Tobacco Pipe (Hàn yān gǎn); 4. Cherishing Blessings: Tin Pot (Xī hú).










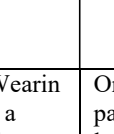
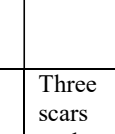
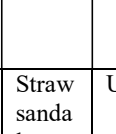

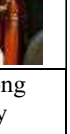

E. "Baomazai" Textual and Visual Semantics Metadata Database

From the literature and interview content, a textual and visual semantics metadata database has been analyzed and compiled, serving as a reference for designers or various fields for future application research (Table 3).

TABLE 3. CONSTRUCTION OF THE "BAOMAZAI" TEXTUAL AND VISUAL SEMANTICS METADATA DATABASE

Textual Semantics	Visual Semiotics
<p>Meanings:</p> <p>1. General meanings: Vanguard, scout, publicity, broadcasting, breaking news, first-hand information disseminator, informant, gossip conveyor, patrol (in Taiwanese).</p> <p>2. Religious: Vanguard in the Mazu pilgrimage, temple festival procession.</p>	<p>1. General impression: Wearing a conical hat, messenger riding a fast horse, wearing a tasseled hat, talkative, gossipy.</p> <p>2. The design of the styling and accessories of the vanguard role in the Mazu pilgrimage by Chuan Tsai</p>



Pronunciation: Minnan (mostly), Mandarin	Glasses frame(with outlenses)	Wearing a red-tasselled official hat	Swallowtail beard andbraided hair	Buttoning up and down		
						
	Pork trotters	Leeks	Tin pot	Red thread	Gong	
						
	Wearing a sheep-skin jacket inside out	One pant leg higher than the other	Three scars onthe leg	Straw sandals	Umbrella	Long dry tobacco rod, tobacco pouch
						

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Yunlin is a major agricultural county in Taiwan, with religious culture centered around the Beigang Chaotian Temple. The Mazu pilgrimage procession is a precious cultural asset reflecting folk beliefs. The semiotic metaphor of Baomazai is closely tied to everyday life and culture. Through literature analysis and interviews, the two important findings are as follows:

A. *Research on the religious and folk symbols that extend the life and culture of "Baomazai"*

Through an interview with Mr. Ya-Po Chi, an 80-year-old cultural-historical scholar from Beigang, the history and legacy of Baomazai at the Beigang Chaotian Temple are preserved and inherited.

B. *"Baomazai" text and visual semantic metadata construction and application*

1) *Metadata construction:* Based on the above summary and analysis, the text and visual semantic metadata of "Baomazai" are constructed (Table 3), which can be used as a reference for designers or future application research in various fields.

2) *Application in teaching:* Taking "Baomazai" as an example, let students explore more cultural semiotics to understand and care about the cultural semiotics of the ancestors around us, or apply them to modern design.

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