ONE

Introduction

The Spread of the Ghost Festival

In the seventh month of 840, the Japanese pilgrim Ennin (793–864) made his way southwest from Mount Wu-t'ai (in present-day Shansi) toward the T'ang capital of Ch'ang-an. His journal entry for the fifteenth of the month describes a busy scene in the metropolitan prefecture of T'ai-yüan:

> Fifteenth day. On the invitation of the head of Ssu-chung ssu, we went with the mendicants to their temple for the forenoon feast. After the feast we entered Tu-t'o ssu and performed the yü-lan-p'en service and then went to the prefectural [headquarters] to see the Dragon Spring. Next we went to Ch'ung-fu ssu and paid reverence. In all of the Buddha halls, pavilions, and cloisters were arrayed displays; their radiant colors dazzled people, and their offerings were splendorous. Everyone in the city had come out to perform the ritual tour. At twilight [the monks] released themselves [in repentance].[1]

The residents of T'ai-yüan converged on Ch'ung-fu ssu to take part in the ghost festival, which in T'ang times was most frequently called by its Buddhist name of "*yü-lan-p'en*." The festival combined the interests of monks, householders, and ancestors in an annual celebration of renewal. Most residents of the city, laypeople with no exclusive religious affiliation, provided for the salvation of their ancestors by making offerings to the monastic community (the Sangha). By donating gifts to the Buddhist establishment donors produced a stock of merit that was dedicated to their forebears, who received the benefits in the form of a better rebirth and a more comfortable existence in the heavens or hells of the other world.

In fact, it is probably the tortuous conditions of life in purgatory that

[1] *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki*, in Ono Katsutoshi, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki no kenkyū*, 4 vols (Tokyo: Suzuki gakujutsu zaidan, 1964–69), 3:173, usually following Ono's translation and annotation, 3:173–76, cf Edwin O Reischauer, trans., *Ennin's Diary The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York, Ronald Press Co., 1955), pp 268–69.

give the festival its odd-sounding name of yü-lan-p'en (Middle Chinese "wuă lan bwən").[2] In Chinese the term fails to make literal sense, and for over a millennium most native speakers have assumed that the term derives from a foreign word transliterated into Chinese sounds. In the popular understanding, "yü-lan" is a foreign word describing the pitiable fate of those hanging upside-down in the subterranean prisons of hell, while "p'en" is the Chinese word indicating a bowl or tray in which offerings are placed. Thus, "yü-lan-p'en" is usually taken to mean the "bowl" in which are placed offerings to monks given with the intention of rescuing one's ancestors from the fate of "hanging upside-down" in hell.[3]

Offerings to monks were especially efficacious on the full moon of the seventh month, since this was the day on which the Sangha ended its three-month summer retreat. During this period monks abstained from contact with lay society and pursued an intensified regimen of meditation completed with the monastic ritual Ennin refers to as "releasing themselves," confession and repentance of their transgressions in front of fellow monks. Having accumulated ascetic energy in retreat, monks released it in communion with householders. Moreover, the festival was held just at the time of the autumn harvest. Thus the ghost festival not only marked the symbolic passage of monks and ancestors to new forms of existence, it also ushered in the completion of a cycle of plant life.

Coming at the juncture of the full moon, the new season, the fall harvest, the peak of monastic asceticism, the rebirth of ancestors, and the assembly of the local community, the ghost festival was celebrated on a broad scale by all classes of people throughout medieval Chinese society. Ennin reports great crowds of people, brightly colored decorations, and lavish offerings for north China in the year 840. The melding of the festival with traditional practices may be judged in Yin Yao-fan's (ca. 814) allusion to the age-old folk practice of divination. In a poem written on the occasion of the ghost festival he writes:

[2] I give Pulleyblank's reconstruction of the Early Middle Chinese; Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Middle Chinese: A Study in Historical Phonology* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984). Karlgren's reconstruction in Ancient Chinese is "jiu lă b'uən," in Archaic Chinese, "*giwo glăn b'wən"; Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, published in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 29 (1957).

[3] The etymology of "yü-lan-p'en" is discussed at greater length below. The two earliest surviving commentaries on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* both follow the popular understanding; see *Yü-lan-p'en ching tsan-shu (Hui-ching Commentary)*, T. no. 2781, 85:540a, and *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu (Tsung-mi Commentary)*, T. no. 1792, 39:506c–7a.

> Sweep off the altar and heaven and earth stand stern,
> Toss the slips and ghosts and spirits jump startled.[4]

For south China, Tsung Lin's (ca. 498–561) account of yearly observances in the countryside describes the festive, even raucous atmosphere of the celebration:

> On the fifteenth day of the seventh month monks, nuns, religious, and lay alike furnish bowls for offerings at the various temples and monasteries. *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* says that [these offerings] bring merit covering seven generations, and the practice of sending them with banners and flowers, singing and drumming, and food probably derives from this. . . . later generations [of our time] have expanded the ornamentation, pushing their skillful artistry to the point of [offering] cut wood, carved bamboo, and pretty cuttings [of paper] patterned after flowers and leaves.[5]

Had the ghost festival been limited to a local cult phenomenon, it would hardly be known to later history. Its ritual and material connections with the monastic community secured its place in Buddhist historiography, while its vital function in the ancestral cult and the local community insured its survival into modern times. A further index of the spread of the festival in China is supplied by the involvement of the emperor and the state. For as many years as not during the T'ang dynasty, seventh-month offerings to both Buddhist and Taoist monks at officially sanctioned temples in the capital cities and in the provinces were supplied out of state coffers, with the benefits dedicated to everyone's ancestors. The most illustrious ancestors in the whole empire, however, were honored and aided in the rituals performed privately by the Son of Heaven. The ancestral tablets of previous emperors, kept in the Imperial Ancestral Temple, were brought out, and offerings were made to them in bowls decorated with golden kingfisher feathers. In most years, after completing the ritual obligations to his ancestors, the emperor then joined in the festivities at the larger temples of the city. Te-tsung's (r. 779–805) reference to Chang-ching ssu as the "meditation bureau" in a poem of 791 illustrates well the integral place of religion, ritual, and politics in the imperial celebration of the ghost festival:

[4] Translation from Yin Yao-fan's poem, "On Watching Taoist Masters Pace the Void on Chung-yüan," contained in *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, ed. P'eng Ting-ch'iu (1645–1719), 12 vols. (Taipei: Ching-wei shu-chü, 1965), p. 5566. On Yin see *T'ang ts'ai-tzu chuan*, Hsin Wen-fang (ca. 1304) (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), pp. 97–98.

[5] See below, Chapter Three, for references and a full translation.

People from all over crowd the imperial city,
Lining the roads, forming many walls.

For the Dharma-feast meeting in early fall,
We drive out to visit the meditation bureau.[6]

The pervasiveness of the ghost festival in medieval Chinese society went well beyond the multifaceted ritual of renewal celebrated throughout the empire by emperors and the common folk. Myths connected with the festival gripped the imagination of medieval China, finding expression in genres ranging from oral tales to canonical sūtras written in the literary language.

Most people learned the story of the festival through the prosimetric "transformation tales" (*pien-wen*) told by professional storytellers. Yü-lan-p'en is the subject of the most famous of such popular entertainments in the T'ang, entitled *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother from the Dark Regions*. The transformation text follows a disciple of the Buddha named Mu-[chien-]lien (Sanskrit: Maudgalyāyana) as he searches for his deceased parents. Mu-lien, the disciple of the Buddha most adept at supernatural powers, uses his skills to try to find his parents, first in the heavens and then in the hells. Having found his father leading a comfortable life in Brahmā's Heaven, Mu-lien passes through the gates of the Yellow Springs and proceeds into the underworld. Mu-lien is drawn deeper and deeper into the infernal regions in search of his mother, named Ch'ing-t'i. The bureaucrat-gods whom he encounters along the way treat him most courteously in recognition of his prowess in mystical flight, but none of them know where his mother has been reborn.

In style and substance *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* draws a gruesomely entertaining and edifying picture of the underworld. The audience knows from the start that Ch'ing-t'i has been reborn in the deepest of all hells, Avīci Hell, where she suffers retribution for her evil deeds in a previous life. The focus of the drama, however, is on Mu-lien's journey, in the course of which the purgatorial hells of popular Chinese religion are described in terrifying detail. Mu-lien meets the great King Yama, Ti-tsang (Skt.: Kṣitigarbha) Bodhisattva, the General of the Five Paths, messengers of the Magistrate of Mount T'ai, and their numerous underlings. He shudders at the sight of ox-headed gaolers forcing sinners across the great river running through the underworld, and the prospect of people being forced to embrace hot copper pillars that burn away their chests induces even

[6] See below, Chapter Three, for references and a translation of the entire poem.

greater trembling and trepidation. The tale is nearly at an end by the time Mu-lien locates Ch'ing-t'i in Avīci Hell, her body nailed down with forty-nine long metal spikes. At this point the Buddha intervenes, smashing down prison walls and releasing the denizens of hell to a higher rebirth.

It is also in the last few scenes of the tale that yü-lan-p'en enters explicitly into the story. Ch'ing-t'i has been reborn as a hungry ghost endowed with a ravenous appetite that she can never satisfy due to her needle-thin neck. In fact, Mu-lien tries to send her a food offering through the normal vehicle of the ancestral altar, but the food bursts into flame just as it reaches her mouth. To rescue her from this fate, the Buddha institutes the yü-lan-p'en festival: he instructs Mu-lien to provide a grand feast of "yü-lan bowls" on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, just as monks emerge from their summer retreat. The Buddha prescribes this same method of ancestral salvation for other filial sons to follow in future generations, and the story ends with Ch'ing-t'i's ascension to the heavens.

The myth related in other forms of medieval literature differs considerably from the popular tale. The tortures and torments, even the basic structure of hell, are absent in two sūtras accepted into the Chinese Buddhist canon, *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness* and *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. These sources make no mention of Mu-lien's shamanic flight or of Ch'ing-t'i's biography, focusing instead on the story of the founding of the festival by the historical Buddha. The Buddha's instructions for carrying out the ritual are given in great detail, with special emphasis on the role of monks as intermediaries between descendants and ancestors. The sūtras reflect the interests of a monastic and self-consciously Buddhist audience, legitimizing the offerings given in the seventh month by tracing them back to the authority of the Buddha.

The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra was also a popular subject in the temple lectures that monks gave to interested lay people during the T'ang. Surviving portions of *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* (ca. 850) expound at length upon the topic of filiality. The duties of sons toward their parents and the kindnesses bestowed by senior generations (especially mothers) upon juniors are also discussed in commentaries on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, at least six of which were written prior to the eleventh century. Some commentators adopted a refined literary style to provide a close exegesis of the text, while others (notably Tsung-mi [780–841]) drew on the full range of traditional Chinese literature to demonstrate how the ghost festival fulfilled the basic ideals of Chinese religion.

Given the power with which the myth of Mu-lien and the ritual established after his example affected the shape of medieval Chinese religion, it is hardly surprising to find myths and rituals of the ghost festival persisting in other times and other places. The livelier versions of the myth related in T'ang transformation texts became the subject of numerous plays, morality books, and precious scrolls, all of which supplied new genres for popular entertainment in early modern China. By the time that sources allow a close look at local history it is clear that the festival itself, long held in conjunction with services honoring the "Middle Primordial" (*chung-yüan*) of the Taoist pantheon, had taken on a great deal of local color. An early eighteenth-century compendium notes the diversity of names given to the seventh-moon festival: "The Yü-lan Assembly" (*yü-lan hui*), "The Ghost Festival" (*kuei-chieh*), "The Day [Honoring] the Middle Primordial" (*chung-yüan jih*), "Releasing [Hungry Ghosts with] Burning Mouths" (*fang yen-k'ou*), "The Universal Passage [of Hungry Ghosts Out of Hell]" (*p'u-tu*), "Gathering Orphaned Souls" (*ch'iang-ku*), "Sending Grains" (*sung mi-ku*), and "The Melon Festival" (*kua-chieh*). In some regions rituals were performed in Buddhist and Taoist temples, in other regions at graveside, in clan halls, and inside or outside the home. In addition to the gifts given to the Sangha, offerings included grain, melons, and other first fruits of the harvest, cakes, rice, wine, incense, sheep, and mock sheep made from flour. In some places paper money and paper horses were sent by fire to the ancestors, while in other places (especially south China) lanterns were set adrift in boats.[7] In modern times the festival may be found in some form or another in every area of Chinese influence, from the *sembahjang hantu* ritual in Java to the *p'u-tu* rite in Hawaii.[8]

Mu-lien's legacy is also evident in greater East Asia, whence the ghost festival traveled from China in medieval times. The legend of Mu-lien emerges at the very beginning of Korean prose literature in the fifteenth-century collection *Wŏrin sŏkpo*.[9] Records of seasonal observances in Korea from the late eighteenth century report two kinds of cel-

[7] See the collation of notices from local gazetteers in *(Ch'in-ting) Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng* (completed 1725), ed. Ch'en Meng-lei et al., 100 vols. (Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1964), 3:692–94.

[8] For Java, see Claudine Lombard-Salmon, "Survivance d'un rite bouddhique à Java: la cérémonie du *pu-du (avalambana)*," BEFEO 62 (1975):457–86. For Hawaii, see Duane Pang, "The P'u-tu Ritual," in *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*, ed. Michael Saso and David W. Chappell, Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 18 (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), pp. 95–122.

[9] See Minn Yong-gyu, "*Wŏrin sŏkpo* che isip-sam chan'gwŏn," *Tonghang hakchi* 6 (June 1963):1–18.

ebration held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month: one called *paek-chong il* ("The Day on Which One Hundred Kinds [of Food Are Offered to the Buddha]"), and one called *mang-hon il* ("Lost Souls' Day"), in which people offer fruit, wine, and other foods to the souls of their deceased relatives.[10]

Further to the east, yü-lan-p'en (as *urabon*, *obon*, or *bon*) had become a part of court Buddhism in Japan as early as 606, and on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of 659 historical records relate that, "By a decree to the ministers, the Empress had *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* expounded in all the temples of the capital to repay [the kindness bestowed by] seven generations of ancestors."[11] Temple records preserved in the Imperial Repository (Shōsōin) at Nara provide tantalizing glimpses of the actual administration of urabon. An inventory from Daianji dated 747 itemizes the money in different accounts: out of a total amount of 6,473,832 cash belonging to the temple, the holdings of the urabon account came to 17,510 cash.[12] Other documents establish that the seventh month was indeed a busy time for scribes in the temples of the Japanese capital in the eighth century, with the worst rush coming between the twelfth and sixteenth of the month, when fresh copies of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness* were in heavy demand.[13] In Japanese literature the story of Mu-lien's experiences in hell went through numerous transformations in a variety of genres, including the collection of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese tales compiled in 1407 by the monk Gentō, *Sangoku denki (Recorded Tales from Three Countries)*.[14] At the local level, the festival flourishes in contemporary Japan, where everything comes to a halt in the seventh month so that people can return home in time to perform the

[10] See the eighteenth-century chronicle *Tongguk sesigi* by Hong Sŏng-mo, translated in Kan Jie'on [Kang Chae-ŏn], *Chōsen saijiki*, Tōyō bunko, Vol. 193 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971), pp. 123–24.

[11] In the year 606, feasts were held on 4/8 (the traditional observance of the Buddha's birthday) and on 7/15; see *Nihon shoki*, Nihon koten bungaku taikei, Vols. 67–68 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967, 1965), 2:187. The notice for the year 659 is translated from *Nihon shoki*, 2:341, following William G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, 2 vols. (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1972), 2:263.

[12] "Daianji shizai chō," reproduced in Ishida Mosaku, *Shakyō yori mitaru nara-chō bukkyō no kenkyū*, Tōyō bunko ronsō, Vol. 11 (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1930), pp. 64–65.

[13] See documents dated 743 and 763, respectively, in *Dai nihon komonjo, hennen monjo*, ed. Tokyo teikoku daigaku shiryō hensanjo (Tokyo: Tokyo teikoku daigaku, 1901–40), 8:190–91 and 5:451–52.

[14] See *Sangoku denki*, Gentō (ca. 1407), 2 vols., ed. Ikegami Jun'ichi (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1976–82), 1:122–29. For a survey of Japanese legends of Mu-lien, see Iwamoto Yutaka, *Bukkyō setsuwa kenkyū*, Vol. 4, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kaimei shoten, 1979), pp. 50–170.

"Dance of Bon" (*bon odori*). One observer reports from a village not far from Tokyo:

> Then, the counterpart of the mid-winter New Year's holiday, one of the two yearly Settlement Days when one paid off debts and gave servants their wages, there was the mid-summer Bon holiday, the All Souls festival at the August full moon when for two or three nights running there would be dancing; the outside circle this way, the inner one that, round and round the frantic drummers, Kanejirō's buxom widow blooming in the atmosphere of sexual excitement and everyone conscious of the electric charges between Sanetoshi's eldest and Kentarō's girl every time the circles brought them together—and the young men jumping into the drummers' circle to take their show-off turn at singing, each vying to outdo the last in voice-power and intricate tremolos.[15]

The Significance of the Ghost Festival

Setting aside for the moment its legacy in East Asian religion, a strong case can be made for the importance of the ghost festival merely on the basis of its diffusion through the entire fabric of medieval Chinese society. Its pervasiveness during a period in which relatively little is known about Chinese life—the social life of the vast majority of people left largely unrecorded in the surviving corpus of historical sources compiled by scholar-bureaucrats—makes it an important area of study in the first place simply as a story yet untold. The French historian Jacques Gernet describes the tremendous gap in current knowledge of medieval Chinese religion:

> Devotional activities pose a basic and wide-ranging problem, that of the assimilation of Buddhism by the Chinese world's forms of religious life. Neither the philosophical and doctrinal borrowings nor even the half-fearful veneration of the semi-barbarian monarchs of North China for wonder-working monks suffice to explain the general impulse of intense fervour felt by the Chinese world from the end of the fifth century onwards. In short they do not explain how Buddhism became in China a great *religion*. There took place at the level of local cults and communities a subterranean activity about which very little is known. The results alone were to emerge into the light when Buddhism had become a Chinese religion with its priesthood, its faithful, and its places of worship.[16]

[15] Ronald P. Dore, *Shinohata. A Portrait of a Japanese Village* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 223–24.

The story of the "subterranean activity" of the ghost festival told here is limited mostly to the medieval period, typically thought to commence in the third century and to merge indistinctly into "early modern" China in the ninth or tenth. While social historians are still far from agreement over the nature of the social, economic, and political changes that occurred toward the end of the period,[17] there is a consensus that from the third to the eighth centuries Chinese society was composed largely of two classes: peasants bound to the land they worked and members of endogamous aristocracies from whose ranks government officials invariably came. Agriculture and landholding were organized around a manorial system; theoretically the government distributed land to each family of the empire, but in practice land came to be concentrated in estates belonging to powerful clans and to the Buddhist church. Beginning in the ninth and tenth centuries, this structure began to change. A money economy came into existence, and with it there developed a mercantile class based in the cities. In the countryside, different forms of land tenancy also evolved which, together with the emergence of an urban middle class, contributed to the dissolution of the medieval family system. Social mobility also increased with the democratization of examinations for government service, the development of printing, and a broadening of the system of public education.

The study of the ghost festival undertaken here focuses especially on the T'ang dynasty (618–907). Most of the documents I have been able to unearth on the early ghost festival date from this dynasty, and the

[16] Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. J. R. Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 215.

[17] Among a mountain of studies, see especially Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China: A Case Study of the Po-ling Ts'ui Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973); David Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977); Joseph P. McDermott, "Charting Blank Spaces and Disputed Regions: The Problem of Sung Land Tenure," JAS 44.1 (November 1984):13–41; Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955); Michio Tanigawa, *Medieval Chinese Society and the Local "Community,"* trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Denis C. Twitchett, "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class: New Evidence from Tunhuang," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis C. Twitchett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), and idem, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, Part 1, *Sui and T'ang China, 589–906*, ed. Denis C. Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), esp. pp. 8–31.

T'ang provides the most obvious examples of the celebration of the festival on the part of the emperor and the Buddhist church. The T'ang is probably the most critical period in the assimilation of Indic and Central Asian culture from the west, its major capital city of Ch'ang-an serving as a cosmopolitan hub to merchants and monks, travelers and traders from all directions. The pantheons, philosophies, legends, and rituals "imported" into China at the start of the medieval period became in the T'ang more fully accepted into the traditional patterns of Chinese religion, which were themselves transformed in the process. Many of the basic forms of later folk religion had surfaced by the late T'ang: a Buddho-Taoist pantheon staffed by bureaucratic divinities; a systematized picture of the afterlife in heavens and hells; the involvement of Buddhist and Taoist monks as ritual specialists at critical junctures in the life of the individual and the community; and a comprehensive worldview in terms of which fate and retribution could be figured and the divinatory arts could be practiced.

Confining the seventh-month festival to the recesses of Chinese social history, however, would be rather poor history. The myth of Mu-lien and the ritual established at his request occupy a telling place in the history of Chinese religion and in the comparative study of religion and society.

The two major figures in the yü-lan-p'en myth are a monk and a mother, neither of whom would appear to be very highly valued in a culture where the most pervasive social and religious institution is based on the principles of procreation and male descent. Even in its canonical versions, the story concerns Mu-lien saving his mother and not his father; rather than producing male descendants, Mu-lien attends to the salvation of his female ascendant. The myth of Mu-lien is quite exceptional in its preoccupation with the state of the mother after death, suggesting a course of action alternative to but not necessarily inimical to the ancestral patriliny.[18]

If the ghost festival fostered the acceptance of traditionally marginal roles, it also affirmed the motivating ideal of mainstream Chinese life, filial devotion. Mu-lien spares naught in bringing aid to his mother. In Avici Hell he even offers to trade places and suffer the tortures that she alone deserves. The audience is shown that no matter how self-sacrificing, children can never fully repay the kindnesses bestowed on them by parents. Commentators from medieval times to the present have iden-

[18] See Stephen F. Teiser, "Mother, Son, and Hungry Ghost: Gender and Salvation in the Mythology of Mu-lien," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta, November, 1986

tified filial devotion as the essential teaching of the ghost festival. Filiality or "politeness to the dead" is also the moral of the story in Juliet Bredon's empathetic chronicle of Chinese customs in the 1920s. She writes:

> People who are far from their ancestral tombs—too far to make a personal visit—prepare paper bags filled with mock-money. On each bag, a strip of red paper with the name and date of death of the person for whom it is intended is written. These are laid on an improvised altar and, while the priests chant *Sutras*, members of the family in turn make deep *k'o t'ous* to the spirits of their forefathers—even the little children who can not understand the meaning of their filial obeisance. They find it so hard to be serious when, after the mass is over, the bags are taken into the courtyard and set alight. "Oh, the pretty bonfire!" a small boy exclaims. "Hush! Little Dragon," whispers his mother, drawing him aside into the shadows to tell him the reason for this beautiful and touching custom. "To-day," she says softly, "all the dead leave their tombs and come back to us. The sky is thronged with an invisible procession."
>
> "Why do they come back, mother?" he murmurs.
>
> "Because, my treasure, they love us and expect us to love and serve them. Therefore, irreverence is very wrong and cruel." Unwise too, since naughty spirits are also abroad these days, ready to harm little boys and girls who, for this reason, are forbidden to go out after nightfall during this festival.
>
> "Little Dragon," throughly sobered now, bobs his head in a jerky *k'o t'ou*. It is his attempt at an apology to spirits, bad and good. Thus, very tenderly, children in China are given their first lesson in politeness to the dead.[19]

The involvement of the dead also means that the ghost festival speaks to issues and problems in fields less exotic and less bound to texts than Buddhology or the history of Chinese religions. As a rite of passage, the early autumn festival marks a shift in agricultural work and it signifies the end of the monastic retreat. In addition, it helps to effect the passage of the dead from the status of a recently deceased, threatening ghost to that of a stable, pure, and venerated ancestor. Although it is observed on a yearly schedule not synchronized with the death of any single person, the ghost festival marks an important tran-

[19] Juliet Bredon and Igor Mitrophanow, *The Moon Year: A Record of Chinese Customs and Festivals* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1927), pp. 380–81

sition in the life of the family, which is composed of members both living and dead. Like mortuary rituals performed in many other cultures, the festival subsumes the potentially shattering consequences of the death of individuals under the perpetually regenerating forces of the community and the cosmos.

The ghost festival also illustrates the Chinese answer to a problem posed in all societies that institutionalize, for some of their members, an ascetic way of life. The relationship between monk and householder varied throughout the Buddhist-influenced cultures of Asia. Most Asian societies incorporated monasticism by recourse to a circuit of exchange in which lay people provided material support for the Sangha while monks bestowed religious benefits on lay people. The Chinese solution not only accepted monasticism, it placed the renouncer at the very center of secular life: in the ghost festival the participation of monks is deemed essential for the salvation of ancestors.

Another issue raised in the transmission of Buddhism eastward from India was the relation between the Indian cosmology assumed in Buddhist thought and practice and the gods and concepts of the afterlife assumed in indigenous cultures. Certainly *kamis*, *nagas*, *nats*, and immortals all learned to live with the Buddhist view of things, and vice versa, but infinite variations were always possible. The underworld through which Mu-lien travels in the popular versions of the ghost festival myth reflects an important stage in the evolving cosmology of Chinese religion. Some deities of foreign origin, like King Yama, had assumed a place under the administration of the age-old Magistrate of Mount T'ai, while others (like Ti-tsang Bodhisattva) dispensed aid to hell dwellers and argued on behalf of inmates for exceptions to the harsh laws of retribution. By T'ang times, deities of Chinese and Indian origin had joined forces in administering a single karmic law that extended from the woeful states in which most ancestors were reborn to the blissful, less populated abodes of heaven. As Joseph Edkins, describing the ghost festival in nineteenth-century Peking, writes:

> The belief in metempsychosis among the Hindoos connected itself with the Chinese sacrifices to the ancestors. The two things combined formed an engine of great power for affecting the public mind.[20]

The public mind was also captured by the figure of Mu-lien, who united in one person the attributes of an austere, far-seeing monk and those of a demon queller roving through the dark regions. These two

[20] Joseph Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism. A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive, and Critical* (London: Trübner and Co., 1880), p. 268.

sets of attributes tended to appeal to two different audiences: monks and state authorities on the one hand, who admired his ability to travel through different cosmic realms in staid postures and circumscribed settings; and on the other hand the vast majority of Chinese people, for whom Mu-lien played the role of spirit medium, sending his spirit to do battle in worlds above and below the earth. Like shamans in other parts of the world, the Mu-lien portrayed in ghost festival tales satisfied simultaneously elite and folk conceptions of sacred power.

The Forms of Religion in Chinese Society

To claim that the ghost festival in its mythic and ritual forms suffused all classes of medieval Chinese society is to make a further chain of assertions concerning the very nature of Chinese religion. Unlike the modalities of religion found in modern industrial countries and in some tribal societies, religion in China functioned in the first place *within* such institutions as the family, the community, and the state, and only secondarily as an institution distinct from all other social groupings. In China the most recognizable forms of religious activity—recognizable to *us*, i.e., those for whom either Church, Faith, or God describes the limits of the sacred—were derivative and far less numerous than feasts held in the community, or banquets given to honor the ancestors, or rites of passage conducted in clan halls. Moreover, religion in China—"religion" meaning the family of activities in which myth and ritual, symbol and cosmology figure prominently—more often than not affirmed the immanence of sacrality and allowed for the realization of a transcendent Way within the bounds of the profane. These facts require some elaboration, since they have important implications for the shape that the ghost festival took in traditional Chinese society and for the critical methods best suited to discern that shape.

In an introductory work composed largely on a train commuting between Paris and Tonnerre in 1922, Marcel Granet writes:

> If religion were defined by the more or less explicit adherence by individuals to a dogma, and their more or less great respect for a clergy, it would be equally as false to say that the Chinese practise two or three religions as that they practise one. Indeed, in China there exist as almost definite beliefs only those about Ancestors, and if anyone deserves the title of priest, it is a layman: the paterfamilias.[21]

[21] Marcel Granet, *The Religion of the Chinese People*, trans. Maurice Freedman (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 146.

To a general French audience in 1922, as to any audience in this century, one of the first prejudices to be put to rest in the study of Chinese religion is the predilection to sort religions and to define the general phenomenon in terms of a specific set of credos which preclude the believer from giving allegiance to any other authority. The point, echoed frequently by historians and anthropologists far removed from the oversight of Durkheim and Chavannes, is not that the Chinese lack "religion," but that religion in China is not a differentiated function of social life.[22]

The most systematic elaboration of this viewpoint may be found in C. K. Yang's work, *Religion in Chinese Society* (1961). Yang distinguishes two basic forms of religion, institutional and diffused. Institutional religion, says Yang, possesses:

> (1) an independent theology or cosmic interpretation of the universe and human events, (2) an independent form of worship consisting of symbols (gods, spirits, and their images) and rituals, and (3) an independent organization of personnel to facilitate the interpretation of theological views and to pursue cultic worship. With separate concept, ritual, and structure, religion assumes the nature of a separate social institution, and hence its designation as an institutional religion. On the other hand, diffused religion is conceived of as a religion having its theology, cultus, and personnel so intimately diffused into one or more secular social institutions that they become part of the concept, rituals, and structure of the latter, thus having no significant independent existence.

To this Yang adds the equally important point that diffused religion in traditional China was the primary form of religion:

> the religious element was diffused into all major social institutions and into the organized life of every community in China. *It was in its diffused form that people made their most intimate contact with religion.*[23]

[22] In *La Pensée chinoise* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1968), p. 476, Granet writes further: "It is often said that the Chinese have no religion, and sometimes taught that their mythology might as well be said to be non-existent. The truth is that in China *religion* is not, any more than *law*, a *differentiated function* of social activity. . . ." For similar statements, see Jacques Gernet, *Les Aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* (Saigon: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1956), p. xiii, and Sawada Mizuho, *Jigoku hen. chūgoku no meikai setsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), preface.

[23] C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 294–95, 296; emphasis added in the last quotation.

The relevance of Yang's analysis to the subject of this study is that it makes of the ghost festival not something "exotic," "cultic," "devotional," "folk," or in any way marginal to Chinese religion, but rather something quite central to the fabric of daily life of the vast majority of people in medieval China. While it did mark an important event in the yearly cycle of life for monks, yü-lan-p'en was even more firmly anchored in the dominant social institution in China, the family. Its rituals became part of the system of observances that united living and ancestral members of the family, reinforcing their reciprocal obligations and harmonizing the rhythms of family and monastic life with the agricultural schedule. The mythology of the ghost festival gave voice to the basic worldview of medieval Chinese religion, a cosmology not argued systematically in treatises, but rather, assumed in the practice of ritual.

While the ghost festival was rooted in the primary form of religious life, "diffused religion," it also reached into most areas of "institutional religion" as well. Indeed, if Yang's analysis of institutional and diffused religion in China is to be faulted, that is only because it tends to create too wide a gulf between the two poles. Given the way in which the seventh-moon festival brought the Sangha into the midst of family life, and the way in which state religion and the emperor's own ancestral cult actively sponsored offerings on that day, perhaps it is best to view the ghost festival as spanning the entire spectrum between diffused and institutional religion.

Translated into the perhaps more familiar terms of class analysis, the ideology and activities of the ghost festival were shared by both elite and folk, the scholar-producing gentry class and peasant farmers. While the versions of the Mu-lien myth and the styles of its celebration were different for these two groups, the commonalities are no less striking. The evidence supplied by this study of the ghost festival attests to the largely hospitable interplay between folk and elite levels of culture, a trait which has been attributed far more frequently to medieval and especially early modern China than to corresponding periods of European history.[24]

A serious consideration of the social contexts of the ghost festival in medieval China also dictates that special attention be paid to the nature of the primary texts used in this study. It is an irrefutable but insufficiently appreciated fact that the major sources on medieval China were

[24] See, for example, David Johnson, Andrew Nathan, and Evelyn Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

written by members of the elite: monks or scholar-bureaucrats. In either case the authors of almost all texts surviving from this time viewed the world from the perspective of institutional religion: from within the monastery or through the eyes of the government. To use these sources without radical criticism, or even to begin our study with these texts, is to limit our field of vision to that of the monk or the state official; it is to insure from the start that the place of the ghost festival in the most pervasive form of Chinese religion will remain obscured.

A tremendous amount of detail about the ghost festival—how long the celebrations lasted, how many temples the average family visited, what pictures were used to illustrate Mu-lien's adventures, what prayers were said in receiving offerings, the clothes people wore to festivities—is simply unrecoverable. Most of the minutiae in which modern historians take such interest will never be known. By virtue of their literacy, recordkeepers in traditional China had already lifted themselves into a social class that deemed the everyday life of "the people" to be unworthy of historical note. As Derk Bodde notes, in imperial China:

> it was inevitable that writing, although of course used for multiple purposes, should have functioned above all as an adjunct of government. Essays, poetry, history, philosophy, and later on drama and fiction: all of these as well as other types of written expression were for the most part produced by men who, if not bureaucrats themselves, were at least would-be bureaucrats, retired bureaucrats, or the friends, relatives, or hangers-on of bureaucrats. This fact severely limits our view of premodern China. For it means that we have to see it through the eyes of men who, with rare exceptions, tended to idealize, to treat with superior condescension, or simply to ignore many aspects—especially the more seamy aspects—of everyday life essential to the great population mass known as "the people."[25]

Literati took as little interest in folk observances as they did in folk literature, which "was seldom written down and less often preserved. Popular literature was, quite simply, beneath the dignity of the fully literate."[26]

How to sift and how to construe the literature on the ghost festival that does exist remains an important issue. Many sources relevant to

[25] Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.–A.D. 220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 2.

[26] Victor H. Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts," *Chinoperl Papers* No. 10 (1981):92.

the festival are contained in the Chinese Buddhist canon: sūtras, commentaries, and histories. My interpretation of this important set of texts is pursued in light of the recognition that, whatever else they may be—repositories of wisdom, literary exemplars, defining marks of a high tradition—canons are social institutions. The Chinese Buddhist canon was not merely a "useful organizing concept for pedagogy" or a set of texts grouped together for reasons purely soteriological, literary, or philosophical. A canon is also, as Henry L. Gates remarks, "a mechanism for political control."[27]

The canon in China was defined at the request of the state by highly placed members of the Buddhist establishment. The making of the Buddhist canon was a process of disavowal as much as it was an enterprise of creation: authority was established by selecting which existing texts were to be allowed "into the canon" (*ju-tsang*).[28] Prior to the large-scale use of woodblock printing in later times, only a fraction of texts judged noncanonical survived very long.

This is not to suggest that the apocryphal versions of the Mu-lien myth threatened political subversion or advocated making prostrations to animals, as did some writings, later banned from the canon, of the Teaching of the Three Stages (*san-chieh chiao*) in the sixth and seventh centuries. But the yü-lan-p'en sūtras that were accepted into the Chinese canon did differ from noncanonical sources in their conformity to a monastic view of orthopraxis, and they showed little interest in the purgatorial chambers of the underworld. Mu-lien's unruly side is kept under control, subordinated to the Buddha's superior powers, and only in the commentaries on the canonical sūtras is there any interest, furtively displayed, in Mu-lien's mother's previous life.

To escape the constraints of a singularistic perspective, I construct my picture of the ghost festival beginning not with canonical texts but with texts deriving from the milieu of diffused religion. I attempt to retrieve these popular texts out of the jungle of "cult" and "local religion," and to reestablish their position on home ground. My goal in this respect is to place the ghost festival against the background of a to-

[27] Henry L. Gates, Jr., "Criticism in the Jungle," in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry L. Gates, Jr. (New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 2.

[28] On the definition of the Chinese Buddhist canon and a study of several important noncanonical works, see Makita Tairyō, *Gikyō kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1976), esp. pp. 1–124. On the formation of the Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhist canons, see Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde classique: manuel des études indiennes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Payot, 1947 and Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1953), Sections 1947–74, 2107–62, and 2033–44.

tal social landscape, to view it not just from the position of the literati, but from as many different social situations as possible.

The cache of manuscripts uncovered at Tun-huang in northwest China in the first decade of this century makes this goal a realistic one. Among the roughly 42,000 pieces of writing are to be found several written records of the picture tale told to the masses by storytellers, *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother*; a sūtra on yü-lan-p'en explicitly excluded from the canon of Chinese Buddhism; and a transcription of an exegetical lecture on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. These and other sources provide important clues as to what common people in medieval times found significant and entertaining about the ghost festival.

Another way to avoid the limitations of traditional historiography is to comb through those sources more tangential to the official task of history writing. For medieval China, this avenue leads through poetry, occasional prose pieces, diaries, encyclopedias, and liturgical texts. The results of this sifting do not prove inconsequential: the first certain reference to the celebration of the festival in the countryside of south China in 561; diary entries portraying discontent with the government suppression of offerings at Buddhist temples in 844; and several pieces—including one striking rhapsody by Yang Chiung (650–ca. 694) and one notably unimpressive poem by Emperor Te-tsung (r. 779–805)—written on the occasion of the ghost festival.

The Place of Buddhism in Chinese Society

Although the ghost festival is found only in East Asia in medieval times, many of its ritual and mythological components derive from lands to the west of China: not only India, but the many kingdoms and trading centers of Central Asia so crucial in the dissemination of Indic and Aryan culture to the east. Indian Buddhist literature preserves a rich store of tales about Maudgalyāyana (Chinese: Mu-lien) who, together with his best friend, Śāriputra, joined the ranks of the Buddha's followers and quickly demonstrated their prowess in superhuman powers and in wisdom, respectively. In collections of legends detailing the previous lives of the Buddha's disciples (*avadānas*), Mu-lien often plays the role of seer, divulging to hungry ghosts and hell dwellers the atrocities committed in previous lives for which they now suffer the consequences. Yü-lan-p'en literature preserves and embellishes these aspects of Mu-lien's character. Likewise, the Chinese celebration of the ghost festival was based partly on the monastic rain retreat, which in India and Central Asia was held often, but not always, between the

fourth and seventh months. Other nonspecifically Buddhist aspects of Indian culture found in the ghost festival include a world-disk cosmograph with vertically arranged planes of existence, a system of rebirth governed by karma, and a reciprocal relationship between householders and renouncers. The list could go on.

By the time that it appears in the historical record (the sixth and seventh centuries), the ghost festival was thoroughly integrated into the traditional patterns of Chinese social life. It did, however, preserve a trace of the exotic: its odd-sounding Buddhist name. To the Chinese eye, "yü-lan-p'en" in its written form *looks* foreign. Passages from *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* make it clear that "yü-lan-p'en" is a kind of "p'en" ("bowl") in which offerings are placed, but in the sūtra the meaning of "yü-lan" remains obscure (literally, "cup iris"). Unlike other foreign-sounding words in Chinese literature, the mystery cannot be solved by reference to the original Sanskrit or Central Asian versions of the text, since none now exist, if indeed they ever did.

This single etymological mystery has dominated all previous scholarship on the ghost festival. The vast majority of books, articles, and research notes published on yü-lan-p'en is devoted largely, if not wholly, to ascertaining the problematic origins of the Chinese word "yü-lan-p'en." It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that most scholars have been obsessed with the search for the primal word event in Sanskritic and Indo-European languages that lies behind the Chinese disguise of "yü-lan-p'en." The findings as well as the assumptions of this search, pursued by American, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, and Japanese scholars, bear further discussion here.[29]

[29] An incomplete listing of studies dealing with the etymology of "yü-lan-p'en," which I summarize in the next three paragraphs, would include: Ashikaga Enshō, "Notes on Urabon (Yü Lan P'en, Ullambana)," JAOS 71.1 (January–March 1951):71–75; Bredon, *The Moon Year*, p. 384; Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 61–64; J.J.L. Duyvendak, "The Buddhistic Festival of All-Souls in China and Japan," *Acta Orientalia* 5:1 (1926):39–40, 44; Ernest J. Eitel, *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism*, second ed. (1904; reprint ed., Peking: Wen-tien-ko, 1939), p. 154b; *Fan-i ming-i chi*, Fa-yün (1088–1158), T. no. 2131, 54:1112c; Wilhelm Grube, "Zur pekinger Volkskunde," *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde* 7:4 (1901):78–79; Honda Gi'ei, "*Urabon kyō* to *jōdo urabon kyō*," in *Butten no naisō to gaisō* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1967), *I-ch'ieh-ching yin-i*, Hsüan-ying (737–820), T. no. 2128, 54:535b; Ikeda Chōtatsu, "*Urabon kyō* ni tsuite," *Shūkyō kenkyū* N.S. 3.1 (January 1926):59–64; Iwamoto Yutaka, *Bukkyō setsuwa kenkyū*, Vol. 2, *Bukkyō setsuwa no genryū to tenkai* (Tokyo: Kaimei shoten, 1978), pp. 373–93 and Vol. 4, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kaimei shoten, 1979), passim; Victor H. Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 224, n. to line 11; MBDJ, pp. 243c–44b; Murase Yukihiro, *Ocien nisshō*, in Nihon zuihitsu zenshū, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kokumin tosho kabushiki kaisha, 1927), p. 555; Bunyu Nanjio, *A*

Three basic kinds of explanation for the etymology of "yü-lan-p'en" have been offered. The first kind postulates Indo-European origins for "yü-lan-p'en." According to these theories, the original word represented phonetically by the Chinese was: the Sanskrit "*avalambana*" (Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit: "*ullambana*"), meaning "hanging down, depending on"; the Pāli "*ullampana*," meaning "salvation, rescue, full of mercy"; or the Iranian "*urvan*" (carried to China in Sogdian form: "*rw'n*" or "*'rw'n*"), meaning "soul."

A second explanation follows the standard Chinese understanding of "p'en" as the Chinese word for "bowl" and of "yü-lan" as a transliteration of a foreign term for "upside down." On this basis, "yü-lan-p'en" may refer to the bowl into which offerings are placed to save ancestors from the fate of hanging upside down in purgatory or to the manner in which offerings are sometimes made, by inverting the bowl of offerings intended for wandering spirits. Other interpreters accept "bowl" as the meaning of "p'en," but suggest that the Chinese term is the shortened form of a Chinese transliteration (*p'en-tse-na*) of the Sanskrit word "*bhājana*," meaning "vessel."

A third theory explains the meaning of "yü-lan-p'en" by reference to spoken Chinese. Some scholars have suggested that the *sound* "yü-lan-p'en" represents a word different from the commonly accepted orthography, namely "yü-lan-p'en[b]," meaning "tray-shaped bamboo basket." Others suggest that the shortened sound "yü-lan" represents either "yü-lan[b]," meaning "fish basket," or "yü-lan[c]," referring to a cup of nectar and a basket of doughnuts. The shortened sound "lan-p'en" has also been interpreted as "magnolia bowl." My own survey of popular usage in liturgy, lecture texts, and regional names for the festival merely affirms that the more melodious shortened forms of "yü-lan" and "lan-p'en" are indeed quite common.[30] It is as if the spoken language reclaimed a philological disaster by domesticating the foreign word.

Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka (1883; reprint ed., San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1975), p. 78; Paul Pelliot, Review of Schlegel, "Les Termes bouddhiques Yu-lan-p'en et Yu-lan-p'o," BEFEO 1 (1901):277–78, Jean Przyluski, "Les Rites d'Avalambana," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 1 (1931–32):221–25; Sawada Mizuho, *Jigoku hen: chūgoku no meikai setsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), pp. 131–33; Marinus Willem de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1935), 1:59–68; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu* (*Tsung-mi Commentary*), Tsung-mi (780–841), T. no. 1792, 39:506c–7a; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsiao-heng ch'ao*, Yü-jung (Sung), Z. 1, 94:4, p. 375ra–b, and *Yü-lan-p'en ching tsan-shu* (*Hui-ching Commentary*), Hui-ching (578–ca. 645), T. no. 2781, 85:540a.

[30] The popular handbook of common knowledge, *Tsa-ch'ao*, refers to "Yü-lan Buddha bowls" (*yü-lan fo-p'en*), *Tsa-ch'ao*, P. no. 2721, reproduced in Naba Toshisada, "Tō shōbon zashō kō," (1942), reprinted in *Tōdai shakai bunka shi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1974), p. 227. *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* makes reference to "*The Sūtra on the Purity of Yü-lan*" (*Yü-lan ch'ing-ching ching*), see *Tun-huang chüan-tzu*, 6 vols. (Taipei: Shih-men t'u-shu, 1976), 2:1. "Yü-lan Assembly" (*yü-lan hui*) is a frequent name for the ghost festival in later regional usage, see *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng*, 3:692–94. See my bibliography of primary sources for liturgical texts and commentaries on "Lan-p'en."

In view of the lack of any hard facts on its Indic origins, the results of etymology ("discourse about the true sense") must remain hypothetical. My own analysis is of a different order, intended not to replace but to supplement the standard Buddhological treatments. I have chosen to explore the most immediate context of the ghost festival, the medieval Chinese society in which it was practiced. In fact, Chinese sources promise to yield a far greater wealth of information on all aspects of the ghost festival than do the farther reaches of Indo-European philology.

How to construe the Buddhist elements in the ghost festival remains—or should remain—an open question. Which versions of Maudgalyāyana's biography are relevant to the Chinese figure of Mu-lien? Did the ghost festival have particular affinities with one Buddhist "sect" more than any others? How was the law of karma combined with a bureaucratic administration of the cosmos? Which elements prevail in the ghost festival, Indic or Chinese ones?

Answers to these questions have varied widely, but most of them share the unspoken assumption that Indic origins logically entail non-Chineseness, that what is Indian is and always has been different from what is Chinese. If concern with the salvation of one's mother is found in Buddhist mythology, then it could not have been truly Chinese. Or if the goal of long life and happiness in heaven expressed in yü-lan-p'en liturgy was originally a Chinese concern, then it conflicted with the normative claims of Buddhism.

Even the most careful scholars and the most persuasive studies appear to assume an *essential* difference between Indian religion and Chinese religion.[31] My own analysis adopts instead a more fluid defi-

[31] The most important Western-language study of the place of filiality in Chinese Buddhism begins with the statement, "Buddhism started in India as a religion advocating abandonment of family, but it ended in China praising the virtue of filial piety." The same study concludes with the statement, "The accommodation by the Buddhists to Chinese ethics is probably one of the chief reasons why the foreign religion was so readily accepted by the Chinese despite many features that were opposed to Chinese culture." See Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, "Filial Piety in Chinese Buddhism," HJAS 28 (1968):81, 97. Scholars ranging from anthropologists to epigraphers have begun to question the traditional stereotype of Indian Buddhism as asocial. See, for example, Louis Dumont, "World Renunciation in Indian Religions," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 4 (1960), re-

nition of Buddhism and a less historically rigid understanding of Chinese religion. To assume that Indian Buddhism was a self-existing whole that could change into another entity (Chinese Buddhism) only by a radical alteration of its basic core is to preclude from the beginning any comprehensive understanding of the ghost festival, in which elements originally deriving from India and from China were synthesized in a complex and coherent whole.

The un-Nāgārjunian view of "Iranian," "Indian," or "Chinese" essences results in a schizophrenic reading of the ghost festival and, more generally, of postclassical Chinese religion; it makes impossible a reading of "Chinese Buddhism" as a coherent, sense-making system of religion. For some authors the festival remains an unconvincing mixture of the Buddhist notion of universal salvation with Chinese practicality and this-worldliness.[32] For others, the presumed origin of the festival in the monastic retreat of the Dharmagupta sect in India of the fourth and fifth centuries marks its essential foreignness.[33] Iwamoto Yutaka states most strongly the non-Chinese origins of the ghost festival, reaching back beyond Buddhism to ancient Iranian religions. For him, not only is the name of the festival itself derived from the Iranian term for soul (imported by Sogdians into China), but the very notion of salvation expounded in T'ang transformation tales is an essentially Iranian idea. Iwamoto argues that the soteriological themes found in the canonical sūtras derive from the monotheistic and dualistic religions of western Asia (Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Manichaeism), which were carried by Greeks, Shakas, Parthians, and Kushans from Iran to northwest India beginning in the second century A.D. Moreover, Iwamoto suggests that the mytheme of a son saving his mother from hell in ghost festival mythology derives from the Greek myth of Dionysus descending to hell to rescue his mother, Semele, a myth transmitted to China through the Dionysian cults popular in northern Asia.[34]

A consideration of diffused religion in medieval times, however, appears to contradict the presumption that Buddhism remained foreign to China. Whatever their origin, all of the components of the ghost festival had become a seamless part of Chinese religion by the early T'ang, if not earlier. To demonstrate this assertion, as I attempt to do in this study, is to allow for interplay between "Indian" and "Chinese" aspects in the religion of medieval China; it is to understand medieval Chinese Buddhism not as an uneasy layering of essentially different strata, but as a complex and comprehensive whole.

printed in *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, revised ed., trans. Mark Sainsbury et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 267–86; and Gregory Schopen, "Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism. A Question of Sinicization Viewed from the Other Side," TP 70:1–3 (1984):110–26.

[32] See, for example, Tsuda Sōkichi, *Shina bukkyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1957), pp. 235–62.

[33] See Ogawa Kan'ichi, *Bukkyō bunka shi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshōdō, 1973), pp. 159–71.

[34] Iwamoto, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku*, pp. 184–99.

TWO

The Prehistory of the Ghost Festival

AT ITS PEAK in T'ang times the ghost festival was celebrated on a grand scale by people from all walks of life. The spread of the festival in medieval times (to be described in detail in Chapter Three) may be attributed to a number of factors. Later chapters discuss the place of the Mu-lien myth in Chinese Buddhist mythology and the Buddhist and Chinese understandings of the figure of the shaman, a role which Mu-lien appears to have mastered. Other chapters explore the cosmology of the ghost festival and show how ghost festival rituals were incorporated into the basic patterns of Chinese life, providing a more efficient means of communicating with the ancestors.

This chapter provides another kind of historical explanation for the popularity of the ghost festival in medieval times. It examines the precedents for holding celebrations on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and discusses the character of these earlier festivals. Not surprisingly, in China this day had long been an occasion of renewal, with emperors presenting their ancestors with the first fruits of harvest and common people marking the conjunction of death and rebirth. The themes evident in these early celebrations, characteristic of Chinese festivals in general, were to emerge as an important part of the ghost festival in later times.

Other precedents for the ghost festival originated outside of China. The schedule followed by Chinese monks, deriving largely from Indian sources, also included special celebrations on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. For the Sangha, this was a day of culmination and release. Their summer retreat having come to an end, monks confessed their transgressions of the Vinaya and donned new robes. For world renouncers, the day brought a relaxation of ascetic practice and the beginning of a new year. These monastic customs also constituted an important factor in the spread and development of the ghost festival.

Buddhism was not the only institutional religion in China. The Taoist church, at about the same time as the Buddhist church, began sponsoring celebrations on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. This was a day of judgment, during which gods of the celestial hierarchy descended to earth to tally up people's good and bad actions and

to mete out judgment accordingly. Celebrants made confessions and presented offerings to Taoist masters at Taoist temples. This chapter explores the history and symbolism of these rituals, since they were an important ingredient in the medieval celebration of the ghost festival.

ANTECEDENTS IN INDIGENOUS CHINESE RELIGION

The ghost festival was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, a day that carried numerous significations in traditional China. It must be remembered that the Chinese calendar was (until the founding of the Republic) partly based on lunar phases and partly synchronized with the solar year. Derk Bodde writes:

> The traditional Chinese calendar . . . consists of twelve months referred to by number, each beginning with the new moon and reaching its midpoint with the full moon. These twelve lunations total 354 days, which means that individual lunations have a length of either twenty-nine or thirty days. Like the lunations themselves, the days included in them do not bear names but are consecutively numbered.
>
> In China, as elsewhere, the major problem in calendar-making has been to reconcile as far as possible the in fact incommensurate movements of the sun and moon. . . . The Chinese solution has been to insert an intercalary month, usually at three-year but sometimes at two-year intervals, in such a way that seven intercalations occur every nineteen years. . . . The Chinese intercalary month does not come at the end of the lunar year. Rather it may be inserted between any two months (except the first, eleventh, and twelfth) in such a way as to insure that the Winter Solstice always falls in the eleventh month, the Spring Equinox in the second, the Summer Solstice in the fifth, and the Autumn Equinox in the eighth. The net result is a calendar whose lunar New Year (first day of the first lunar month) fluctuates from year to year anywhere between January 21 and February 20.[1]

Thus, while the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month (7/15) always marked a full moon, it varied considerably within the solar and agricultural year. The fifteenth day of the seventh month always fell between the Summer Solstice and the Autumn Equinox, and it was always associated with ripening, darkening, and decay, but its

[1] Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 26–27. See also Joseph Needham, with the assistance of Wang Ling et al., *Science and Civilization in China*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–). 3:390–408.

coordination with the progress of the sun was inexact. The precise correspondence of 7/15 with agricultural rhythms was further attenuated by regional variation: in north China, early autumn marks the beginning of harvest, while in south China, a second planting of rice is often made at this time.

The agricultural processes and governmental operations appropriate to each month are described at length in the *Yüeh ling* ("Monthly Ordinances"), which forms a section of the early Han ritual book, the *Li-chi (Book of Rites)*. The "Monthly Ordinances" presents an idealized picture of the actions undertaken by the Chou ruler, whose ritual observances were thought to link the Way of heaven and the Way of man.[2] The "Monthly Ordinances" were quite influential in the formation of Han ritual, and they provide a detailed and dependable picture of the rhythms of the seventh month prior to the development of Buddhist and Taoist services.

The seventh month marks the beginning of cooling winds and frozen morning dew. As the "Monthly Ordinances" notes, "Cool winds come; the white dew descends; the cicada of the cold chirps. [Young] hawks at this time sacrifice birds, as the first step they take to killing [and eating] them."[3]

Not only animal life, but plant life too begins the turn toward ripening and decay. The "Monthly Ordinances" describes the imperial celebration of the inauguration of autumn:

> In this month there takes place the inauguration of autumn. Three days before the ceremony, the Grand Recorder informs the Son of Heaven, saying, "On such-and-such a day is the inauguration of autumn. The character of the season is fully seen in metal." On this the Son of Heaven devotes himself to self-adjustment; and on the day he leads in person the three ducal ministers, the nine high ministers, the princes of states [at court], and his great officers, to meet the autumn in the western suburb, and on their return he rewards the General-in-Chief, and the military officers in the court.[4]

[2] The "Monthly Ordinances" are also imbued with the schema of the "five phases" (*wu-hsing*), a system of thought that became popular only in the late Chou and early Han dynasties, which thus belies an earlier provenance for the book. For introductions to the theory of the five phases, see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols., second ed., trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952–53), 2:11–16, 19–32; and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, 2:216–345.

[3] *Li-chi cheng-i* (Taipei: Kuang-wen shu-chü, 1971), p. 143b; translation from James Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, 2 vols., ed. Ch'u and Winberg Chai (reprint ed., New York: University Books, 1967), 1:283–84.

[4] *Li-chi cheng-i*, p. 143b; translation from Legge, *Li Chi*, 1:284. In five phases theory, autumn corresponds to the element metal and to the West. Other sources describe the *ch'u-liu* sacrifice, held after the inauguration of autumn, in which the emperor kills game and then offers the meat to his ancestors; see Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, pp. 327–39.

The same source also portrays the "tasting" (*ch'ang*) of the first fruits of harvest by the emperor and his ancestors in a ritual that joins the themes of agricultural fertility with the concerns of the ancestral cult: "In this month the farmers present their grain. The Son of Heaven tastes it, while still new, first offering some in the apartment at the back of the ancestral temple."[5]

Other celebrations held during the seventh month used methods of purification and the joining of the sexes to bring about world renewal. The "Lustration" (*hsi*[b]) festival, for instance, was held on the fourteenth day of the seventh month. On this day in the Han dynasty large numbers of people—apparently drawn from all classes of society—converged on riverbanks under gaily colored canopies to indulge in food, drink, and poetry.[6]

Eight days before the full moon was the date of the meeting of the two ill-fated constellation lovers, the Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden, which, at least by the end of the second century A.D., was marked by popular celebrations.[7] Having been banished to opposite sides of the Milky Way, the Cowherd (Ch'ien-niu) and Weaving Maiden (Chih-nü) were allowed to meet only one night per year. Medieval sources note a variety of practices on this day. People gathered outside to watch for bright lights and colors in the night sky, they set out feasts of wine and seasonal foods, and they sought divine assistance in the form of riches and the birth of sons.[8]

[5] *Li-chi cheng-i*, p. 143c; translation mostly following Legge, trans., *Li Chi*, 1:285. The *Chou-li* mentions the *ch'ang* as one of the four seasonal offerings to the royal ancestors; see *Chou-li cheng-i* (Taipei: Kuang-wen shu-chü, 1972), p. 122c, and Edouard Biot, trans., *Le Tcheou-li ou Rites des Tcheou*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1851), 1:422. For other Han references to the *ch'ang* ritual, see CWTTT, 4238:7.

[6] The "Lustration" festival of the seventh month was linked to the festival of "Purgation" (*fu-ch'u*) held in the third month of the year. On these two festivals, see Lao Kan, "Shang-ssu k'ao," *Chung-yang yen-chiu-yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so chi-k'an* 29:1 (1970):243–62; Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, pp. 273–88; Marcel Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, trans. E. D. Edwards (London: Routledge, 1932), pp. 147–66; and Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, trans. Alide Eberhard (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 33–43.

[7] See Kominami Ichirō, *Chūgoku no shinwa to monogatari: ko shōsetsu shi no tenkai* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1984), pp. 13–94, esp. pp. 14–25.

[8] See *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi*, Tsung Lin (ca. 498–561), in Moriya Mitsuo, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Teikoku shoin, 1963), pp. 356–59; *Chin-ku-yüan chi*, Li Yung (d. 746), in Moriya, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū*, p. 443; and Kominami, *Chūgoku no shinwa to monogatari*, pp. 14–25.

All of these festivals held during the seventh month exhibit a blending of polarities that we will see surface later, in a variety of forms, in the ghost festival. Communication between generations is evident in the offerings presented by the preeminent descendant, the emperor, to his exalted ancestors, just as the ghost festival joins the senior and junior members of the family through the exchange of gifts. The seventh month brings the Weaving Maiden her only chance to cross the celestial stream that separates her from the Cowherd, just as the ghost festival brings into being the bridge that allows the ghostly inhabitants of the *yin* world to return to their loved ones in the *yang* world.

The ghost festival developed on the basis of these indigenous practices, and the widespread nature of ghost festival celebrations in medieval times is to be explained, in part, by these observances. The great span of time separating them should not lead us a priori to assume discontinuities between earlier and later celebrations. In fact what is most striking are the continuities, the shared themes and polarities in the Han festivals and the later festivals of Buddhist and Taoist coloring. They all share the character of the feasts described by Mikhail Bakhtin:

> The feast (every feast) is an important primary form of human culture. It cannot be explained merely by the practical conditions of the community's work, and it would be even more superficial to attribute it to the physiological demand for periodic rest. The feast had always an essential, meaningful philosophical content. No rest period or breathing spell can be rendered festive per se. . . . They must be sanctioned not by the world of practical conditions but by the highest aims of human existence, that is, by the world of ideals. Without this sanction there can be no festivity.
>
> The feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness. Moreover, through all the stages of historic development feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man. Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world. These moments, expressed in concrete form, created the peculiar character of the feasts.[9]

The similarities between pre-Buddhist and post-Buddhist feasts extend well beyond the trait of concern for the dead, which de Groot singles out as the principal and enduring indigenous contribution to the

[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 8–9

ghost festival. After an examination of Han dynasty observances in the seventh month, de Groot writes:

> It follows from the above that if in fact Buddhist masses for the dead were celebrated throughout China in the seventh month, and if then all the inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom vied to celebrate the festival of offerings in honor of their deceased ancestors, then these ceremonies, however Buddhistic they may have become in ritual, already existed in China for many centuries before Buddhism penetrated there. The priests of the doctrine of Shakyamuni, when they began to invade China in the first two centuries of our era, erected an exotic edifice upon this base, which was provided them by the religion of a people who always showed extreme concern for the destiny of the dead.[10]

There are other continuities aside from an extreme concern for the destiny of the dead—which is surely no less "Buddhistic" or "Indian" than it is "Chinese." Foremost among them may well be the conjunction of the themes of decay and regeneration. The seasons themselves provide a model for this conjunction, as autumn inaugurates a turn toward darkness and the beginning of cold, at the same time that it marks the ripening of plant life and the expansiveness of the harvest. The seventh month combines impending decay and death with a celebration dedicated to the ancestors, progenitors and providers of life. Male and female mingle, in the heavens and on the ground, as do householders and those who have renounced the life of family and reproduction. The celebrations held in the middle of the seventh month are marked by such unions both before and after the development of the ghost festival.

The Monastic Schedule

The monastic rituals associated with the ghost festival in China are based partly on Indian models. In India the Buddhist Sangha ended its summer rain retreat with a ceremony of confession and the donning of new robes by monks. In India, as in China, the end of the summer retreat was an important juncture in the monastic schedule, with special celebrations marking this seasonal event. But there is little evidence linking the event in India with the salvation of the ancestors, and in China the role of lay people in this celebration was considerably greater than in India. Moreover, Indian and Central Asian Sanghas observed

[10] Jan J.M. de Groot, *Les Fêtes annuellement célebrées à Emoui*, 2 vols., trans. C. G. Chavannes, Annales du Musée Guimet, No. 12 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1886), pp. 405–6.

the retreat at varying times, while the Chinese Sangha appears to have followed an unchanging schedule.

The observance of a rainy season retreat (Skt.: *varṣā*, Ch.: *an-chü*) was a common practice among many groups of wandering ascetics in India in the fourth century B.C.[11] Vinaya sources show that the early Buddhist Sangha adopted the tradition of non-Buddhist sects in observing a three-month retreat during which monks undertook more strenuous religious practice and reduced their contacts with lay society.[12] These Vinaya accounts describe how the Buddha instituted the retreat, allowing monks to choose during which three months out of the four-month rainy season they wished to observe the retreat. The Buddha instructed his disciples to remain in one place, to follow a more intensive course of meditation and study, and to restrict as much as possible their intercourse with lay society. Isolation and asceticism were not, however, to be pursued to excess; most of the Vinaya accounts are filled with exceptions and extenuating circumstances. Monks were allowed to leave their place of retreat if they restricted their travels to less than seven days; if they were called by lay people to receive gifts and preach the Dharma; if they ministered to a monk, nun, or lay follower who was sick; if the settlement of a monastic schism demanded their presence elsewhere; or if a novice desired ordination. The Buddha also allowed his followers to break their isolation if they were attacked by beasts or robbers, if they were afflicted by fire or flood, or if they ran out of food.

Having spent ninety days in near-silent practice, cheek-by-jowl with other practitioners, monks in India (and China) concluded the session by airing any grievances and grudges they may have harbored during the period. The settling of accounts on the last day of retreat was formalized in the ceremony of "invitation" (Skt.: *pravāraṇa*, Ch.: *tzu-tzu*, or "releasing oneself" or "following one's bent"). In this ritual, mentioned in the earliest strata of the Buddhist canon, each monk "invites"

[11] See Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), pp. 52–55; and Etienne Lamotte, *L'Histoire du bouddhisme indien des origines à l'ère Śaka*, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain (1958; reprint ed., Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1976), p. 66.

[12] For Vinaya accounts, all of them very similar, see Isaline B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Pitaka)*, 6 vols., Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vols. 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 25 (London: Luzac and Co., 1949–66), 4:183–207; *Shih-sung lü (Sarvāstivādavinaya)*, trans. Kumārajīva (350–409), T. no. 1435, 23:173b–78a; *Ssu-fen lü (Dharmaguptavinaya)*, trans. Buddhayaśas (ca. 408–412), T. no. 1428, 22:830b–35c; *Mi-sha-sai-pu ho-hsi wu-fen lü (Mahīśāsakavinaya)*, trans. Buddhajīva (ca. 423–24), T. no. 1421, 22:129a–30c; and *Ken-pen-shuo i-ch'ieh-yu-pu p'i-nai-yeh an-chü shih (Mūlasarvāstivādavinayavarṣāvastu)*, trans. I-ching (635–713), T. no. 1445, 23:1041a–44c.

other monks to report anything in his word or deed that they may have found contrary to the rules of discipline.[13] Having offered himself up for criticism, each monk then publicly repents any offenses.

Having purged themselves of wrongdoing and the suspicion of wrongdoing, monks inaugurate the new season by donning fresh robes. The distribution of robes (Skt.: *kaṭhina*, Ch.: *chia-ch'ih-na*) is described at length in most Vinaya texts.[14] These accounts provide extensive details on how a monk is chosen to distribute cloth to his fellow monks, who is eligible to receive new cloth, and how to make a suitable robe from the cloth. Interestingly, these accounts barely even mention the lay people who donate the new cloth. The early Indian rite thus stands in contrast to the *kaṭhina* rite celebrated in contemporary Southeast Asia[15] and to ghost festival celebrations in China, both of which highlight the coming together of lay and monastic communities at the end of the summer retreat.

Chinese monks in many ways followed the model provided by their Western contemporaries in Central Asia and India as recorded in the rules and examples of the Vinayapiṭaka. Both the Indian and Chinese monastic orders observed a summer retreat and held rituals of renewal

[13] Versions of the *Pravāraṇa sūtra* are preserved in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*; see Caroline A.F. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward, trans., *The Book of Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikaya) or Grouped Sayings*, 5 vols., Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 7, 10, 13, 14, 16 (London: Oxford University Press, 1917–30), 1:242–44; *Shou hsin-sui ching (Pravāraṇasūtra)*, Dharmarakṣa (ca. 265–313), T. no. 61, *Hsin-sui ching (Pravāraṇasūtra)*, Chu T'an-wu-lan (ca. 381–395), T. no. 62, *Chung a-han ching (Madhyamāgama)*, Gautama Saṃghadeva (ca. 383–398), T. no. 26, 1:610a–c; *Tsa a-han ching (Saṃyuktāgama)*, Guṇabhadra (394–468), T. no. 99, 2:330a–c; *Pieh-i tsa a-han ching (Saṃyuktāgama)*, Anonymous (ca. 350–431), T. no. 100, 2:457a–c; and *Tseng-i a-han ching (Ekottarāgama)*, Gautama Saṃghadeva (ca. 383–398), T. no. 125, 2:676b–77b. The *Hsin-sui ching* is the longest and most developed of these texts, in which the Buddha and Śāriputra lead the Sangha in the ceremony of *pravāraṇa*. The ceremony is also described in Vinaya sources; see Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline*, 4:208–35; T. no. 1435, 23:165a–73a; T. no. 1428, 22:835c–43b; T. no. 1421, 22:130c–33c; and *Ken-pen-shuo i-ch'ieh-yu-pu p'i-nai-yeh sui-i shih (Mūlasarvāstivādavinayapravāraṇavastu)*, trans. I-ching (653–713), T. no. 1446. See also *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan*, I-ching (635–713), T. no. 2125, 54:217b–18a.

[14] Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries*, p. 55; Lamotte, *Histoire*, p. 66. For a study of this festival in Vinaya sources, see Chang Kun, *A Comparative Study of the Kaṭhinavastu*, Indo-European Monographs, No. 1 (Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957).

[15] On the *kahteing* ritual in Burma, see Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, second ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 226–28. On similar Khmer rituals, see Eveline Porée-Maspero, *Etudes sur les rites agraires des cambodgiens*, 3 vols., Le Monde d'outre-mer passé et present, Series 1, Vol. 14 (Paris, Mouton, 1962–69), 3:598–607. For the Thai ritual of *kathin*, see Howard K. Kaufman, *Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand* (Locust Valley: J. J. Augustin, 1960), pp. 185–89.

at the end of it. World renouncers prepared for the passing of the new year—the Buddhist New Year (*fa-la*), beginning the first day after the summer retreat—by increasing their austerities and multiplying their ascetic energies. As the new year dawned, they released themselves: they broke loose from the stringent rules of summer, they unleashed the purified forces accumulated during retreat, they opened themselves up to criticism from fellow monks, they made a clean break from their past sins, they put on fresh garb. The end of retreat was a time of renewal.

But the Chinese Sangha far surpassed Indian and Central Asian monastic establishments in accentuating the themes of renewal latent in the ending of the summer retreat. The involvement of lay people and the emphasis on agricultural fertility are important hallmarks of Chinese practice to be discussed in later chapters. Here it may merely be noted that the timing of *pravāraṇa*, which varied considerably in the lands west of China, was made uniform throughout the Middle Kingdom. In the Vinaya sources, the Buddha is reported to have given individual monks the choice of three out of four months in which to make their retreat, and medieval Chinese writers note that their contemporaries in the West held the three-month retreat at various times, some beginning in the fourth, fifth, or sixth month, some in the twelfth.[16] The retreat in China, which had its own quite sizable climatic variations, seems to have been held consistently beginning in the middle of the fourth month and ending in the middle of the seventh month, as noted in pre-T'ang sources.[17]

The timing of the retreat in China is hardly insignificant. In the first place, the monastic schedule was calibrated on the basis of the indigenous luni-solar calendar so that the release of world renouncers always

[16] See *Kao-seng fa-hsien chuan*, Fa-hsien (ca. 399–416), T. no. 2085, 51:859b–c, James Legge, trans., *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (1886; reprint ed., San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1975), pp. 44–47; *Ta-t'ang hsi-yu chi*, Hsüan-tsang (602–644), T. no. 2087, 51:872a, 875c–76a, Samuel Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: The Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 2 vols. (reprint ed., San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1976), 1.38, 71–73; *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan*, I-ching (635–713), T. no. 2125, 54:217a–b; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsin-chi (Yüan-chao Commentary)*, Z. 1, 35:2, p. 121rb; and *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsiao-heng ch'ao (Yü-jung Commentary)*, Z. 1, 94:4, pp. 406vb–7ra.

[17] See *Fan-wang ching*, attributed to Kumārajīva but probably written ca. 431–481, T. no. 1484, 24:1008a. See also Ishida Mizumaro, trans., *Bommō kyō*, Butten kōza, Vol. 14 (Tokyo: Daizō shuppansha, 1971), pp. 221–24; Jan J.M. de Groot, *Le Code du Mahāyāna en Chine: son influence sur la vie monacale et sur le monde laïque*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling Letterkunde N.S., 1:2 (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1893), pp. 69–71, 169; and *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi*, Tsung Lin (ca. 498–561), in Moriya, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū*, pp. 349–50.

fell on the full moon of the seventh month, a day which, in China, had always seen the celebration of rebirth and renewal. Buddhist monks in China welcomed the new year at a time when the whole world around them passed through a special time of regeneration. Second, the monastic schedule in China mirrored precisely the festival year of lay people: the monastic New Year fell exactly six months after the popular celebration of the secular New Year, held on the fifteenth day of the first month. By configuring its annual round of festivals as a perfect opposite to the secular calendar, the Chinese Sangha marked its difference from the secular world as well as its inability to extricate itself from the formal patterns of mainstream society.

Taoist Parallels

The Buddhist church was not the only organized religion to sponsor a festival of ancestral offerings on the first full moon of autumn. Taoists also held a festival on this day, called "*chung-yüan*," the day on which the "Middle Primordial" descended to earth to judge people's actions. Although some scholars assert that the Taoist festival originated prior to the Buddhist festival (which would make it an authentic episode in the "prehistory" of the ghost festival), it is more likely the case that the development of the Taoist festival was most strongly influenced by Buddhism. At any rate, by the T'ang dynasty there existed a scriptural basis for the festival, and in at least a few instances, celebrations involving sacrifices for the imperial ancestors and prohibitions of butchering were sponsored by the state.[18] Buddhist and Taoist elements were freely mixed during the occasion, as were the terms "chung-yüan" and "yü-lan-p'en," used as generic appellations for the fifteenth day of the seventh month. More importantly, for most people, making offerings at a Taoist temple in no way precluded making offerings at a Buddhist temple; both were deemed efficacious in bringing aid to the ancestors.

Very few sources record the actual observance of chung-yüan.[19] Ou-

[18] For state sponsorship of *san-yüan* (including chung-yüan) in 734 and 739, which prohibited the slaughter of animals and called for offerings at Taoist temples, see Ryū Shiman [Liu Chih-wan], *Chūgoku dōkyō no matsuri to shinkō*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1983), pp. 439–40; and T. H. Barrett, "Taoism under the T'ang," draft chapter for *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, Part 2, ed. Denis C. Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), MS pp. 43–44.

[19] The paucity of references to the actual observance of chung-yüan probably reflects the scarcity of historical sources on Taoism as much as it does the actual incidence of chung-yüan celebrations in medieval times. For studies of chung-yüan, see Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō to bukkyō*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon gakujutsu shinkōkai, 1959), pp. 369–411, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Toshima shobō, 1970), pp. 229–85; Akizuki Kan'ei, "Dōkyō no san-

yang Hsün's (557–641) encyclopedia, *I-wen lei-chü (The Classified Collection of Arts and Letters)*, reproduces an account of celebrations held at Buddhist temples written a century earlier and then quotes a Taoist source on chung-yüan:

> A Taoist scripture says, "The fifteenth day of the seventh month is the day of the Middle Primordial [chung-yüan]. The Officer of Earth checks his figures, searching through the human world to distinguish good from evil. All of the gods and assembled sages arrive together at the palace to decide upon the length [of people's lives]. Ghosts from the human world summon the records, and hungry ghosts and prisoners all converge at once. On this day grand dark-metropolis offerings should be made to the Jade Capital Mountain: select myriad flowers and fruits, precious gems and rare items, banners and jeweled vessels, delicacies and food, and offer them to all of the assembled sages. All day and all night Taoist masters should preach and chant this scripture, and great sages of the ten directions together should sing from its numinous pages. All of the prisoners and hungry ghosts can eat their fill, completely escape from suffering, and come back among humans.[20]

The Officer of Earth (the Middle Primordial) is an important member of the bureaucracy that administers heaven and hell. As one of the Three Primordials (san-yüan; the other two are the Upper Primordial and the Lower Primordial), he is responsible for adjudicating the records of everyone's actions and adjusting their life spans accordingly.

gen shisō ni tsuite," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 34.3 (January 1961):1. idem, "Sangen shisō no keisei ni tsuite," *Tōhō gaku* No. 22 (1961):27–40. For broader studies of medieval Taoist festivals including chung-yüan, see Ryū, *Chūgoku dōkyō no matsuri to shinkō*, 1:387–486; and Rolf A. Stein, "Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to the Twelfth Centuries," in *Facets of Taoism*, eds. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 53–82.

[20] Translation from *I-wen lei-chü*, Ou-yang Hsün (557–641), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1965), p. 80. In the paragraph before the one translated here, Ou-yang cites the account in *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi*, by Tsung Lin (ca. 498–561), which describes celebrations in Buddhist temples and gives a summary of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. This passage is translated in Chapter Three, below. The account in *I-wen lei-chü* is repeated, with minor variations and some additions, in later encyclopedias; see *Ch'u-hsüeh chi*, Hsü Chien (659–729) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965), p. 79; *Po-shih liu-t'ieh shih-lei-chi*, Po Chü-i (772–846), 2 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1969), pp. 71–72 (heavily abbreviated); and *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* (completed 983), Li Fang, 12 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1959), p. 272a.

He is assisted in the job by a host of underlings who serve as record-keepers, messengers, and jailers of the many spirits in hell.

The Three Primordials have a long and varied history in Taoism. The "Three Primordials" designate the primordial forces of heaven, earth, and man; the three supreme gods of the body; as well as the regions where these gods dwell in the body.[21] In the case of festivals dedicated to the san-yüan, the "Three Primordials" are the personified forces of the cosmos who govern its various spheres. A tripartite system of cosmic government—with thirty-six bureaus administered by the Upper Primordial, Officer of Heaven; forty-two bureaus administered by the Middle Primordial, Officer of Earth; and forty-two bureaus administered by the Lower Primordial, Officer of Water—is described at length in a fifth-century text. This scripture, *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao san-yüan p'in-chieh kung-te ch'ing-chung ching (The Scripture of the Exalted One of the Sacred Jewel of Penetrating Mystery on the Prohibitions and Judgment of Merit of the Three Primordials)*, also contains a long list of the sins prohibited by the Three Primordials, ranging from criticizing the scripture and not observing fasts to lying, adultery, and murder.[22] The concept of trinitarian rule (and of offerings to the Three Officers [san-kuan], which preceded the development of the Three Primordials) probably goes back to the beginnings of organized Taoism in the second century A.D., when festivals were held on the fifth day of the seventh month.[23]

The description of chung-yüan in *The Classified Collection of Arts and Letters* draws attention to the judgment of human actions by the bureaucrat-gods of the celestial and infernal administration. Other sources from the seventh century highlight the repentance rituals that were part of the festivals of the Three Primordials: "During the feasts of the Three Primordials people confess their transgression of codes

[21] See Poul Andersen, *The Method of Holding the Three Ones: A Taoist Manual of Meditation of the Fourth Century A.D.*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Studies on Asian Topics, No. 1 (London and Malmö: Curzon Press, 1979); the fourth-century text *Chun-ch'üeh ti-chün san-yüan chen-i ching*, TT no. 253; and Isabelle Robinet, *Les Commentaires du Tao tö king jusqu'au VIIe siècle*, Mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Vol. 5 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977), pp. 149–203.

[22] *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao san-yüan p'in-chieh kung-te ch'ing-chung ching*, TT no. 456. Tu Kuang-t'ing's (850–933) collection of liturgies, *T'ai-shang huang-lu chai i*, contains a liturgy for san-yüan celebrations. TT no. 507, chs. 32–34.

[23] See Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 34, 82; and *Wu-shang pi-yao* (completed 583), TT no. 1130, chs. 44, 52, 56.

and prohibitions."[24] Thus, the chung-yüan festival involved not only offerings to gods and ancestors, but also rites of confession, which had long been an essential part of Taoist services.

Along with Taoist rituals held on chung-yüan there also developed a set of legends that justified and explained the celebration. As seen in such sixth-century texts as *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao san-yüan yü-ching hsüan-tu ta-hsien ching (The Scripture of the Exalted One of the Sacred Jewel of Penetrating Mystery on Great Offerings to the Three Primordials of Jade Capital Mountain in the Dark Metropolis)*, the Taoist legends drew extensively on the Buddhist mythology of the ghost festival. The Taoist scripture includes a parallel cast of characters as well as phrases employing the same locutions as *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. In *The Scripture on Great Offerings*, the Original Celestial Venerable (Yüan-shih t'ien-tsun), like the Buddha, emits rays of light illuminating the dark regions of the underworld. Evoking Mu-lien's request, the disciple of the Celestial Venerable, the Exalted Master of the Way (T'ai-shang tao-chün), asks what sins the many hell dwellers have committed to deserve their painful recompense. The Celestial Venerable proceeds to catalogue their previous offenses, and his disciple interviews the gods of the various realms. The Celestial Venerable concludes by pointing the way to salvation. The only way to liberate the denizens of hell from their torments is to present gifts to Taoist monks. Just as the Buddha tells Mu-lien, "It is not within your power as a single individual to do anything about it," so too does the Celestial Venerable inform his disciple that sinners in hell can only be released by collective offerings: "It is not within the power of a single individual to liberate them."[25]

Chung-yüan marked a breach in the normal structure of the cosmos when gods and goblins, ancestors and ghosts, immortals and hell dwellers all had a chance to visit the earthly realm of humans for a day. It was a time when offerings to the ancestors—the mainstay of Chinese family religion—were particularly efficacious. *The Scripture on Great Offerings* stipulates that food, fruit, cloth, banners, jewels, and other items be offered to various sages and Taoist priests on chung-yüan. As a result of these offerings one's ancestors, who suffer as inmates of hell and as hungry ghosts, "will obtain liberation and be fully fed; they will escape from all suffering and return to the human world."[26] A short

[24] *Chai-chieh lu* (late seventh century), TT no. 464, p. 3v.

[25] Translation from *Yü-lan-p'en ching (The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, T no. 685, 16:779b; and from *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao san-yüan yü-ching hsüan-tu ta-hsien ching*, TT no. 370, p. 12. Yoshioka discusses a Tun-huang MS. of this source, S no. 3061, in *Dōkyō to Bukkyō*, 2:231–49.

[26] *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao san-yüan yü-ching hsüan-tu ta-hsien ching*, p. 12r.

poem written by Ling-hu Ch'u (765–837) gives voice to the privilege occasioned by chung-yüan:

"Presented to Honored Master Chang on Chung-yüan"

By luck the human world holds chung-yüan;
Without offerings to the dark metropolis, we would be forever separate.

Silent, quiet—incense burns in the immortals' temple;
The learned master bows to Jade Capital Mountain from afar.[27]

The rupture and linkage afforded by chung-yüan worked both ways: gods and ancestors visited the human realm, and humans (at any rate the more ethereal among them) could visit the starry realms. One T'ang poet, Lu Kung (ca. 770–845), expresses his wish for the wings that would allow him to return to the jade palace along with the offerings sent there via the altar of a Taoist temple. In "Observing Buddhist Services on Chung-yüan," he writes:

Seasons change at the start of autumn;
The Three Primordials flow on course.

Clouds pad the sky-blue paces;
A memorial sent to the Jade Emperor's Palace.

Altar dotted with locust blooms,
Incense whirls, cypress-seed wind.

Feathered garb rising through the mist,
Jade hub cutting through space.

I long for a cloud-fed guest,
I pity the poor bugs raised on joint-weed.

Were I to receive the green satchel,
I could visit the vaporous expanse.[28]

Lu Kung envies the divine messenger who ascends to the higher heavens in the trappings of immortality wearing a dress of feathers and driving a jade-wheeled chariot. As a simple mortal, he feels left behind, an unwilling companion to the joint-weed bugs, creatures who see nei-

[27] Translation from *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, 12 vols. (Peking, Chung-hua shu-chü, 1960), p. 3751. Ling-hu Ch'u was from Hua province (present-day Kiangsu) and held a number of different posts both in the capital and in the provinces, see *Chiu t'ang shu*, Liu Hsü (887–946) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975), pp. 4459–65.

[28] Translation from *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, p. 5268. According to the brief biography in *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, Lu was a contemporary of Po Chü-i (772–846).

ther change nor the hope of transcendence.[29] Without proper authorization from the heavenly emperor (the green satchel for carrying edicts on official business), Lu Kung must content himself with a merely earthly existence.

Conclusions

Lu Kung and other literati drew on a largely Taoist vocabulary in their poems written on the occasion of chung-yüan, but in many respects the celebrations held on the full moon of the seventh month were nondenominational. Prior to the development of Buddhism and Taoism as organized religions in China, members of the ruling house had carried out ancestral sacrifices on this day. Moreover, the agricultural and cosmological rhythms of this time of year were self-consciously articulated and were well integrated into Chinese family religion.

While the growth of Buddhism and Taoism as institutionalized religions changed the setting (Buddhist/Taoist temples) and the medium (Buddhist/Taoist priests) of these ancestral offerings, the underlying social, religious, and cosmological structures of family religion remained strong. For the majority of Chinese people in the medieval period, the festival of yü-lan-p'en/chung-yüan marked the end of growth and the beginning of harvest, events in which the ancestors were implicated as both suppliers and recipients. Giving thanks and making offerings to the ancestors were the major activities of this important day. *Where* these activities were carried out—in the home or in a Taoist or Buddhist temple—was not an issue, for they could be carried out in any or all of these settings, without contradiction or diminution of their effects.

For the religious specialist the picture was somewhat different. Having developed rituals that complemented the preexisting base of family religion, both the Buddhist and Taoist churches sought to distinguish themselves from each other and to claim privileged (if not exclusive) access to the ancestors. This drive toward self-definition, to define the history and function of shared rituals in specifically Buddhist or Taoist terms, accelerated during the T'ang dynasty. T'ang rulers took advantage of the legitimizing symbolism of both Buddhism and Taoism and, at the same time, pitted these two churches against each other in order to check the power of their monastic orders and the size of their temples and estates. Hence it is not surprising to find Buddhist historians in the early seventh century disputing the authenticity and origin of the

[29] See PWYF, p. 4249a.

Middle Primordial and the offerings made in his name at Taoist temples.[30]

The apologetic efforts of Buddhist and Taoist historians need not blind us to the contours of the broader picture: for most people the distinction between "Buddhist" and "Taoist" aspects of the festival was irrelevant. Even in the case of later forms of Taoist meditation based on chung-yüan, Taoist adepts insisted upon the unity underlying chung-yüan and yü-lan-p'en. A twelfth-century meditation text, for example, provides instructions to the Taoist practitioner on the visualization of the gods and spirits dwelling in his body. By calling on the appropriate gods residing in his body, the initiate uses this form of meditation to refine his spirit and liberate it from its own internal prisons.[31] The esoteric ritual employs the paradigm of "refining" (*lien*) to describe the salvation of the meditator's spirit or soul, while the exoteric rituals performed in temples tend to picture the spirits being saved as ghosts or ancestors. But as Cheng Ssu-hsiao (1239–1316) points out, although they utilize different techniques, the two rituals have a common goal:

> From Taoism one studies the immortals' art of salvation by refining. From Buddhism one studies Ānanda's art of giving food [to lost souls]. Since they both involve a caring heart, we need not ask whether they derive from Buddhism or from Taoism. Their common measure is salvation from the dark regions.[32]

Contrary to the claims of traditional historiography, it must be recognized that Buddhist and Taoist versions of the seventh-moon festival grew out of a common structure, as the peaks of two pyramids sharing the same base. At one level, for a small number of people, offerings could be intended only for Buddhist or for Taoist priests and not both. At another level, where common people availed themselves of whichever temples and altars were closest-to-hand, offerings were carried out in a form in which Buddhist and Taoist elements were not distin-

[30] See Fa-lin's (572–640) criticisms in *Pien-cheng lun*, T no. 2110, 52:548b; and the account by Hsüan-i (ca. 690–705), who had earlier served in the ranks of the Taoist hierarchy, in *Chien-cheng lun*, T no. 2122, 52:567a–b.

[31] See *Ling-pao ta-lien nei-chih hsing-ch'ih chi-yao* (thirteenth century), TT no. 407; and Judith M. Boltz, "Opening the Gates of Purgatory: A Twelfth-Century Taoist Meditation Technique for the Salvation of Lost Souls," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein*, Vol. 2, *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. 21 (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1983), pp. 487–511.

[32] *T'ai-chi chi-lien nei-fa i-lueh*, Cheng Ssu-hsiao (1239–1316), TT no. 548, ch. 3, p. 40v.

guished.[33] It is precisely this synthesis of different traditions—indigenous ancestral and agricultural patterns, the monastic rituals of Indian Buddhism, the descent of Taoist gods—that accounts for the spread of the ghost festival (or "yü-lan-p'en," "chung-yüan," or whatever prejudice historians use to label it) throughout medieval Chinese society.

[33] Even Yoshioka, who insists on the "this-worldly" and Taoist origins of the ghost festival, writes: "Of course, among the folk, offerings were made in a form in which the teachings of both Buddhism and Taoism were thoroughly mixed," *Dōkyō to bukkyō*, 2:247. Erik Zürcher suggests the metaphor of two pyramids sharing the same base in "Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism A Survey of Scriptural Evidence," TP 66:1–3 (1980):146.

THREE

An Episodic History of the Ghost Festival in Medieval China

PEOPLE from all levels of Chinese society took part in the ghost festival in medieval times, while the myth of Mu-lien's tour through hell was known in every corner of the empire. It is the burden of this chapter to provide a detailed historical account in support of this assertion.

Very few materials on the practice of the ghost festival are available in Western languages, and previous studies in Chinese and Japanese have either been quite broad in their chronological coverage, or have focused on canonical materials at the expense of "popular" ones, or vice versa.[1] I have, therefore, found it necessary to provide an episodic history of the festival from the fifth through the tenth centuries, concentrating on the most thickly documented celebrations and on all versions of the Mu-lien myth current in medieval times. An episodic arrangement has its drawbacks as well as its advantages, but it is hoped that the latter outweigh the former. The lack of a continuous narrative voice in this chapter is intentional: by focusing on discrete events and specific texts, this approach illustrates the many different meanings that the ghost festival assumed for people throughout T'ang society. The documentary style of arrangement also demonstrates the extent to which the ghost festival was embedded in the familial, political, poetic, and recreational life of medieval China, and why it has remained re-

[1] Standard treatments of the ghost festival in medieval times include Ch'en Fang-ying, *Mu-lien chiu-mu ku-shih chih yen-chin chi ch'i yu-kuan wen-hsüeh chih yen-chiu*, History and Literature Series, No. 65 (Taipei, Taiwan National University, 1983), Kenneth K.S Ch'en, *Buddhism in China A Historical Survey* (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 282–83; Iwamoto Yutaka, *Bukkyō setsuwa kenkyū*, Vol 4, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kaimei shoten, 1979), Michihata Ryōshū, "Chūgoku bukkyō no minshūka," in *Chūgoku bukkyō*, Kōza bukkyō, Vol. 4 (Tokyo Daizō shuppan kabushiki kaisha, 1957), pp. 115–16; idem, *Chūgoku bukkyō shi*, second ed. (Kyoto, Hōzōkan, 1958), pp. 96–98; Ogawa Kan'ichi, *Bukkyō bunka shi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshōdō, 1973), pp. 183–86; Otani Kōshō, *Tōdai no bukkyō girei*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Yūkōsha, 1937), 1:23–30; Sawada Mizuho, *Jigoku hen, chūgoku no meikai setsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), pp. 128–35; and Marinus Willem de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 2 vols. (Leiden. E. J Brill, 1935), 1:75, 84.