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.

sistant to analysis for so many centuries. A more synthetic and synchronic picture of the festival is presented in later chapters.

To make the documents more accessible to general readers, wherever possible I offer translations and descriptions of the historical context of the documents and of their authors. The texts and episodes discussed below are arranged in chronological order. The bedrock of historical sequence is somewhat misleading, though, because many of the documents are copies of texts or records of oral traditions that began much earlier. The manuscript of *The Transformation Text on Mulien Saving His Mother*, for instance, may be dated only to around the year 800, while the storytelling traditions preserved in it probably extend back at least a few centuries before that.

Since my narrative in this chapter sticks so closely to the texts, some generalizations about the dispersion of the ghost festival in medieval Chinese society are offered here by way of summary. (Unless otherwise noted, further details and bibliographical references may be found in later sections of this chapter.)

The locus in which the ghost festival touched the lives of most people in medieval China was the local Buddhist temple. In his sixth-century account of folk customs in south China, Tsung Lin portrays great crowds of people from all walks of life converging on Buddhist temples to make offerings for the benefit of their ancestors on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The Japanese pilgrim-monk Ennin describes a similar scene in the local temples of T'ai-yüan (present-day Shansi) in 840.[2] In the T'ang metropolitan areas poems written by courtiers and emperors make frequent reference to the crowded streets of Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, as city dwellers joined the bustle of processions that visited the temples of the two capital cities. Commoners brought their own offerings, government officials carried offerings supplied by the state, and the emperor himself came out frequently to view the festivities. Musicians and popular entertainers were also part of the stir of medieval celebrations, which united a mood of festivity and diversion with themes more abstractly serious and religious.

The offerings supplied by common people, intended ultimately for their ancestors via the agency of the Sangha, included a wide range of brightly colored natural materials: paper flowers, carvings from wood and bamboo, and seasonal delicacies. The state often used the occasion to send gifts to the officially sponsored temples throughout the empire. Such gifts were supplied by the Central Office of the Imperial Workshop, while the merit resulting from the donation accrued to every-

[2] See Ennin's diary entry for 7/15/840, translated in Chapter One.

one's ancestors. In some years the offerings were sent to Taoist temples rather than Buddhist ones, but in either case people's ancestors reaped the soteriological benefits. Donations of large sums of money by rich lay donors were used to dress up the halls of the temples and to provide a vegetarian banquet for all visitors. Most of these donations were given directly to the Sangha or transferred to the Sangha account at the close of festivities, since it was the act of bestowing gifts on the Sangha (not the Buddha or the Dharma) that produced merit to aid the donor's ancestors.

The ritual of offering was a small but very important part of a broader celebration. The actual act of offering was accompanied by hymns praising the Buddha, the Dharma, and especially the Sangha. Judging from an early Sung liturgical text, in temples lay people called upon Mu-lien and other members of the Sangha to help release their ancestors from the torments of purgatory. Prayers accompanying the offering often singled out the deceased individuals to whom merit was to be transferred. A eulogy dating from the late T'ang, for instance, refers to two "princes" who gave their lives on the western borders, presumably in the service of the state:

> on the fine festival of chung-yüan, an auspicious morning at the beginning of autumn, a sanctuary for the practice of yü-lan is established. In setting out a feast for their salvation, it is my earnest desire, as Great Guardian, Chief of Prefectural Headquarters, to make merit on behalf of the two princes.[3]

The fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month marked a time of regeneration for people from all walks of life. The seventh-moon festival occurred right around the late-summer or early-autumn harvest. Vitality and rebirth also characterized the experience of monks at this time of year. Members of the Sangha ended their three-month period of increased asceticism and isolation by confessing their transgressions to each other and then resuming contact with the lay world. The joining of worlds kept separate, which Mu-lien achieves by traveling to hell, was also echoed in T'ang poetry. Poems written on the seventh moon allude frequently to ethereal visitors from the mysterious mountains west of China and to sages and adepts ascending to heaven.

The version of the ghost festival myth with which most people in medieval China were familiar was the story of Mu-lien's fabulous tour

[3] *Tun-huang chüan-tzu* (Taipei: Shih-men t'u-shu, 1976), Vol. 6, No. 135, p. 1. This eulogy is not mentioned in other studies of the ghost festival. The identities of the two princes and the donor are unclear, nor am I certain of the donor's official post.

of hell contained in *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother*. The average person knew little of the Mu-lien presented in the sūtras of the Buddhist canon. People learned about Mu-lien, not through the lectures or commentaries of Buddhist monks, but from popular storytellers who used picture scrolls to illustrate the scenes they described in their prosimetric tales. One such tale, *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother*, was quite popular in T'ang times. The drama enacted in this transformation text concerns Mu-lien's search for his mother. Mu-lien appears decidedly unmonkish: he battles the demons and deities of the various hells, sweating profusely, weeping grievously, and pummelling himself into unconsciousness when he is defeated. The protagonist of the text is clearly Mu-lien, not the Buddha. Furthermore, the ghost festival itself fades into the background, superseded by the ogres and ox-headed soldiers who guard the many chambers of hell.

The myth contained in the sūtras directed toward a monastic and literate audience is somewhat different from the popular tale. *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*, two sūtras probably dating from the fourth or fifth century, were accepted as part of the Chinese Buddhist canon beginning in the sixth century. In these two brief texts the story of the ghost festival is a story about the founding of yü-lan-p'en by the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, who teaches his fellow monks their ritual duties toward lay people in the seventh-month festival. The sūtras evince no interest at all in the previous lives of Mu-lien or of his mother, nor do they address the subject of the underworld. The canonical sūtras supply a legitimating myth for the festival by returning to the authority of the historical Buddha as creator of the festival. It is not accidental that the story is cast in the genre of a "sūtra" which claims to represent the word of the Buddha. In the eyes of the Chinese Buddhist establishment, the authenticity of yü-lan-p'en depended on its connection with the historical Buddha.

Further indications of the importance of the ghost festival to the monastic community may be gained from a consideration of the commentaries written on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. Between the sixth and tenth centuries six commentaries are attributed to Chinese monks: Chi-tsang (549–623), Buddhātrata (ca. 618–626), Hui-ching (578–ca. 645), Hui-chao (d. 714), Tsung-mi (780–841), and Chih-lang (871–947).[4] Only

[4] On Chi-tsang, see *Hsü kao-seng chuan*, Tao-hsüan (596–667), T. no. 2060, 50:513c–15a; MBDJ, p. 530b; and *Bussho kaisetsu dai jiten*, ed. Ono Gemmyō (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1933–36), 1:216c. On Buddhātrata (or Chüeh-chiu), see *Sung kao-seng chuan*, Tsan-ning (919–1001), T. no. 2061, 50:717c; and *Bussho kaisetsu dai jiten*, 1:216c. On Hui-chao, see *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. 50:728c; MBDJ, p. 280a–b; and *Bussho kaisetsu dai jiten*,

those by Hui-ching and Tsung-mi survive. Hui-ching's commentary may easily be judged a refined literary creation in its own right. In subject matter it sticks closely to the text, and the sources it cites derive from the most erudite levels of the Buddhist tradition. By contrast, Tsung-mi's commentary is an openly apologetic work, placing the ghost festival at the very center of Chinese society. It is addressed to a much broader audience than is Hui-ching's commentary, explaining and justifying the celebration of yü-lan-p'en in terms acceptable to lay and monk alike. Tsung-mi draws on some of the more popular elements of the yü-lan-p'en myth not contained in the canonical sūtras (e.g., the previous lives of Mu-lien and his mother). For Tsung-mi, the festival is the ultimate expression of filial devotion, a concept that he explains by reference to both Buddhist examples and to the classical texts of indigenous Chinese religion.

Buddhist lay people also took a special interest in the ghost festival. This social group was more involved in specifically Buddhist activities than were common people. In addition to making offerings on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, they also attended lectures given by Buddhist monks on various sūtras. Hence, their level of involvement in identifiably Buddhist activities was greater than that of other householders. In lectures given to such audiences on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, filiality and charity were the major topics of discussion.

Information concerning the emperor's celebration of the ghost festival is also available in medieval sources. Many emperors appear to have participated in the festival in a style similar to that of the common people: imperial visits to temples in the capitals to view the festivities are reported for the reigns of Empress Wu (r. 690–705), Emperor Tai-tsung (r. 762–769), and Emperor Te-tsung (r. 779–805). Furthermore, most emperors probably made visits not recorded in surviving sources.

The historical record also permits a fairly detailed reconstruction of how the festival was observed in the imperial ancestral cult. The spirit tablets representing preceding generations of emperors in the T'ang line were taken from their niches in the Imperial Ancestral Temple and moved into the Palace Chapel. Here the emperor made offerings, probably similar to the lavish donations given by kings and queens portrayed in apocryphal yü-lan-p'en literature, for the benefit of the imperial patriliny. Some emperors—the case of Tai-tsung in the year 768 being a noticeable example—also used the occasion to make pro-

1:216c. On Chih-lang, see *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. 50:884c–85a; and *Bussho kaisetsu dai jiten*, 1:215d. The commentaries by Hui-ching and Tsung-mi are discussed at length in this chapter.

visions for their mothers' salvation by sponsoring ceremonies at temples outside of the official ancestral cult.

Surviving sources do not permit the writing of a year-by-year chronicle of imperial participation or support provided for the ghost festival by the government, which depended largely on the official attitude, always fluctuating, toward the Buddhist church. In some years the emperor attended services as an observer, he made offerings for his own ancestors, and he saw to it that the state supplied offerings on everyone's behalf. In other years the public celebration of the ghost festival was prohibited, and items donated illicitly were turned over to the Taoist church.

Details to support this picture of medieval Chinese religion may be found in the episodes and writings described below.

The Canonical Sources: *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness* (ca. 400–500)

The canonical sūtras describing the founding of the ghost festival emerge out of a murky past. Beginning in the sixth century two texts are associated with the ghost festival: *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*. The origins of these two texts can be established with even less exactitude than the actual celebration of the festival, the first certain record of which dates from the year 561. Some scholars postulate Indian or Central Asian authorship around the year 400 and multiple translations into Chinese, while others suggest that the texts were put together in China in the early sixth century.[5]

[5] Ogawa Kan'ichi suggests that *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* grew out of the Dharmagupta sect in northwest India ca. 400, *Bukkyō bunka shi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshōdō, 1973), pp. 159–71. Makita Tairyō opts for a later date and Chinese origins, *Gikyō kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1976), pp. 49–50, 84. A selective list of important scholarship on the two canonical sources would also include: Ch'en, *Mu-lien chiu-mu ku-shih chih yen-chin*, pp. 7–23; Fujino Ryūnen, "*Urabon kyō* dokugo," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* No. 353 (1956):340–45; Ikeda Chōtatsu, "*Urabon kyō* ni tsuite," *Shūkyō kenkyū* N.S. 3:1 (January 1926):59–64; Ishigami Zennō, "Mokuren setsuwa no keifu," *Taishō daigaku kenkyū kiyō* No. 54 (November 1968):1–24; Iwamoto Yutaka, *Bukkyō setsuwa kenkyū*, Vol. 4, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kaimei shoten, 1979), pp. 10–20; Okabe Kazuo, "Urabon kyōrui yakkyōshiteki kenkyū," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 37:3 (March 1964):60–76; Sawada Mizuho, *Jigoku hen: chūgoku no meikai setsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), pp. 130–33; and de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 1:68–75. Chavannes' early (1902) French translation of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* remains a good guide to some of the problems involved in translating this short text; it is contained in Edouard Chavannes, *Dix Inscriptions chinoises de l'Asie Centrale d'après les estampages de M. Ch.-E. Bonin* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902), pp. 53–57. Karl Ludwig Reichelt provides an extensive

The two extant canonical texts most likely represent different recensions current in the mid-sixth century. Given the lack of independent evidence prior to the sixth century, theories regarding when and where these textual traditions began must remain inconclusive. I have chosen ca. 400–500 as a reasonable average of the scholarly opinions.

I translate the two texts below in parallel columns:

The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra

Thus have I heard. Once, the Buddha resided in the kingdom of Śrāvastī, among the Jetavana trees in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍika. The Great Mu-chien-lien began to obtain the six penetrations. Desiring to save his parents to repay the kindness they had shown in nursing and feeding him, he used his divine eye to observe the worlds. He saw his departed mother reborn among the hungry ghosts: she never saw food or drink, and her skin hung off her bones. Mu-lien took pity, filled his bowl with rice, and sent it to his mother as an offering. When his mother received the bowl of rice, she used her left hand to guard the bowl and her right hand to gather up the rice, but before the food entered her mouth it changed into flaming coals, so in the end she could not eat. Mu-lien cried out in grief and wept tears. He rushed back to tell the Buddha

The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness

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summary of the contents of the sūtra, *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism*, trans. Katharina Van Wagenen Bugge (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927), pp. 114–18. The closest study of the text, still quite helpful to the modern translator, is Tsung-mi's (780–841) commentary, *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu*, T. no. 1792.

and laid out everything as it had happened.

The Buddha said, "The roots of your mother's sins are deep and tenacious. It is not within your power as a single individual to do anything about it. Even though the fame of your filial devotion moves heaven and earth, still spirits of heaven and spirits of earth, harmful demons and masters of the outer paths, monks and the four spirit kings of heaven cannot do anything about it. You must rely on the mighty spiritual power of the assembled monks of the ten directions in order to obtain her deliverance. I shall now preach for you the method of salvation, so that all beings in trouble may leave sadness and suffering, and the impediments caused by sin be wiped away."

The Buddha told Mu-lien, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when the assembled monks of the ten directions release themselves, for the sake of seven generations of ancestors, your current parents, and those in distress, you should gather food of the one hundred flavors and five kinds of fruit, basins for washing and rinsing, incense, oil lamps and candles, and mattresses and bedding; take the sweetest, prettiest things in the world and place them in a

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bowl and offer it to the assembled monks, those of great virtue of the ten directions. On this day, the entire assembly of saints—those in the mountains practicing meditation and concentration; those who have attained the fruit of the four paths;[6] those who practice pacing under trees; those who use the six penetrations to be free; those who convert others, hear preaching, and awaken to causality; and the great men, those *bodhisattvas* of the ten stages who provisionally manifest the form of a *bhikṣu*—all of those who are part of the great assembly shall with one mind receive the *patra* [bowl] of rice. [A monk who] possesses fully the purity of the precepts and the Way of the assembly of saints —his virtue is vast indeed. When you make offerings to these kinds of monks as they release themselves, then your current parents, seven generations of ancestors, and six kinds of relatives will obtain release from suffering in the three evil paths of rebirth; at that moment they will be liberated and clothed and fed naturally. If one's parents are living, they will have one hundred years of joy and happiness. If they are deceased, then seven generations of

and offer them to the assembled monks.

On this day, the entire assembly of saints—those in the mountains practicing meditation and concentration; those who have attained the fruit of the four paths; those who practice pacing under trees; those who use the six penetrations to fly; those who convert others, hear preaching, and awaken to causality; and the great men, those *bodhisattvas* who provisionally manifest the form of a *bhikṣu*—all of those who are part of the great assembly shall gather with one mind to receive the *patra* [bowl] of rice. [A monk who] possesses fully the purity of the precepts and the Way of the assembly of saints —his virtue is vast indeed. When you make offerings to an assembly of this kind, then seven generations of ancestors and five kinds of relatives will obtain release from the three evil paths of rebirth; at that moment they will be liberated and clothed and fed naturally."

[6] The four paths are stream-winner, once-comer, nonreturner, and *arhat*.

ancestors will be reborn in the heavens; born freely through transformation, they will enter into the light of heavenly flowers and receive unlimited joy."

Then the Buddha decreed that the assembled monks of the ten directions should first chant prayers on behalf of the family of the donor for seven generations of ancestors, that they should practice meditation and concentrate their thoughts, and that they should then receive the food. In receiving the bowls, they should first place them in front of the Buddha's *stūpa*; when the assembled monks have finished chanting prayers, they may then individually partake of the food.

At this time the *bhikṣu* Mu-lien and the assembly of great *bodhisattvas* rejoiced. Mu-lien's sorrowful tears ended and the sound of his crying died out. Then, on that very day, Mu-lien's mother gained release from a *kalpa* of suffering as a hungry ghost.

Then Mu-lien told the Buddha, "The parents who gave birth to me, your disciple, are able to receive the power of the merit of the Three Jewels because of the mighty spiritual power of the assembly of monks. But all of the future disciples of the Buddha who practice filial devotion, may they or may they not also present yü-lan bowls as required to save

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their parents as well as seven generations of ancestors?"

The Buddha said, "Excellent! This question pleases me very much. It is just what I would like to preach, so listen well! My good sons, if there are *bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs*, kings of states, princes, sons of kings, great ministers, counselors, dignitaries of the three ranks, any government officials, or the majority of common people who practice filial compassion, then on behalf of their current parents and the past seven generations of ancestors, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the day on which Buddhas rejoice, the day on which monks release themselves, they must all place food and drink of the one hundred flavors inside the yü-lan bowl and donate it to monks of the ten directions who are releasing themselves. When the prayers are finished, one's present parents will attain long life, passing one hundred years without sickness and without any of the torments of suffering, while seven generations of ancestors will leave the sufferings of hungry ghosthood, attaining rebirth among gods and humans and blessings without limit."

The Buddha told all of the good sons and good daughters, "Those disciples of the Buddha who practice filial devotion must in every moment of

consciousness maintain the thought of their parents, including seven generations of ancestors. Each year on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, out of filial devotion and compassionate consideration for the parents who gave birth to them and for seven generations of ancestors, they should always make a yü-lan bowl and donate it to the Buddha and Sangha to repay the kindness bestowed by parents in nurturing and caring for them. All disciples of the Buddha must carry out this law."

Upon hearing what the Buddha preached, the *bhikṣu* Mu-lien and the four classes of disciples[7] rejoiced and put it into practice.

The *bhikṣu* Mu-lien and the entire assembly rejoiced and put it into practice.[8]

The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness is about half the length of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. The longer sūtra fills in some brief lacunae and elaborates several passages in the shorter version. It also adds some episodes not included in *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*: the Buddha's request that monks chant prayers; the salvation of Mu-lien's mother; and the long, largely repetitive answer to Mu-lien's question concerning the practice of yü-lan-p'en by future disciples of the Buddha.

The first reference to *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* occurs in the monk Seng-yu's (445–518) *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi (Collected Records from the Three Baskets)*, which notes the existence of "*The Yü-lan Sūtra* in one *chüan*."[9] *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness* had a broad circulation in the sixth century, since they are quoted in a Buddhist encyclopedia dating from 516 and in compilations on seasonal observances dating from 561 and 581.[10] There were two lines of

[7] The four classes of disciples are monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

[8] Translations from T. no. 685, 16:779a–c, and T. no. 686, 16:780a.

[9] *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi*, Seng-yu (445–518), T. no. 2145, 55:28c.

[10] *Ching-lü i-hsiang* (516), Pao-ch'ang, T. no. 2121, quotes an abbreviated version of *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*, calling it "*The Yü-lan Sūtra*." The essentials

thought concerning the authorship of the sūtras. Earlier sources state that the author-translator of the texts is unknown while later sources, beginning in 597 with Fei Ch'ang-fang's *Li-tai san-pao chi (Record of the Three Jewels through the Ages)*, place *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* among the 210 works translated by Dharmarakṣa (ca. 265–313).[11]

The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness* represent the sparest versions of the ghost festival myth. Mu-lien and his mother occupy a relatively insignificant place, merely filling the necessary roles of filial son and departed ancestor without greater elaboration. The narrative focuses instead on the Buddha's founding of the festival, his instructions on how to carry out the ritual, and the ceremonial responsibilities of monks. In fact more attention is paid to the ritual actions of the Sangha in this source than in later yü-lan-p'en literature, which amplifies the offerings required of lay people. The gruesome details of Mu-lien's mother's suffering, the severity of the laws of karma, the importance of filiality—subjects that become important in

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of the story are all there: Mu-lien's mother in hell, his unsuccessful offering, and the institution of yü-lan-p'en by the Buddha, T. 53:73c–74a. Tsung Lin's (ca. 498–561) record of seasonal observances, *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi* (edited by Tu Kung-chan [ca. 581–624]), contains an abridgement of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, including portions not present in *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*; see Moriya Mitsuo, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Teikoku shoin, 1963), pp. 359–61. The *Yü-chu pao-tien* (ca. 581), Tu T'ai-ch'ing, quotes from an abbreviated version of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng, No. 75 (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1965), ch. 7, p. 14r–v. Tao-shih's *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (668), T. no. 2122, also quotes from *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, which it calls the *Hsiao-p'en pao-en ching (Sūtra on Repaying Kindness with Smaller Bowls)*, T. 53:751a.

[11] Fa-ching's catalogue of the Buddhist canon, *Chung-ching mu-lu* (ca. 594), T. no. 2146, links three sūtras as different translations of the same Sanskrit text: *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra, The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*, and the *Kuan-la ching*, translator unknown, T. 55:133b. The *Kuan-la ching* may have been the brief text now known under the title *Pan-ni-huan hou kuan-la ching (The Sūtra on Bathing [Statues on the Buddhist] New Year after the [Buddha's] Parinirvāna)*, T. no. 391, attributed to Dharmarakṣa, which mentions offerings to monks on the fifteenth day of the seventh month for the sake of the ancestors. Tsung-mi attributes authorship of the text to Fa-chü (ca. 290–306); see *Tsung-mi Commentary*, T. 39:506c. Fa-ching's assessment was one of the two standard views on the origins of the canonical texts. Other catalogues follow him in linking these three sūtras and admitting that the translator is unknown: Yen-tsung's *Chung-ching mu-lu* (completed 602), T. no. 2147, 55:160a; Ching-t'ai's *Chung-ching mu-lu* (completed 665), T. no. 2148, 55:194c; and Ming-ch'üan's *Ta-chou k'an-ting chung-ching mu-lu* (completed 695), T. no. 2153, 55:431c.

The other standard view, first formulated by Fei Ch'ang-fang in his *Li-tai san-pao chi* (completed 597), T. no. 2034, attributes authorship of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* to Dharmarakṣa, T. 49:64a. Catalogues that follow Fei's assessment include: Ching-yü's *Ku-chin i-ching t'u-chi* (completed 648), T. no. 2151, 55:354a; *Ta-t'ang nei-tien lu* (completed 664), Tao-hsüan, T. no. 2149, 55:235a; and *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu* (completed 730), Chih-sheng, T. no. 2154, 55:494c, 685a.

later versions of the myth—are mentioned only briefly in the two sūtras. In later sources Mu-lien's role is significantly developed to the point that he, rather than the Buddha or Sangha, is the principal actor, and Mu-lien's mother is provided with a biography interesting in its own right. The canonical sources, probably like the actual performance of the ritual they describe, thus provide a kernel for the later elaboration of the Mu-lien myth and the expansion of ghost festival practice.

Tsung Lin's *Record of Seasonal Observances in Ching-ch'u* (ca. 561)

Buddhist histories do record imperial sponsorship of the ghost festival for the years 483 and 538 A.D., but due to the lack of corroborating evidence, these accounts cannot be confirmed with any certainty.[12]

The earliest undisputable reference to the celebration of the ghost festival occurs in Tsung Lin's (ca. 498–561) account of seasonal observances in south China, *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi (Record of Seasonal Observances in Ching-ch'u)*. He writes:

> 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.
>
> The sūtra also says, "Mu-lien saw his departed mother reborn

[12] In his *Pien-cheng lun*, T. no. 2110, Fa-lin (572–640) reports that under the reign of Emperor Kao (r. 479–483) of the Ch'i dynasty, "on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, bowls were sent to all temples as offerings to three hundred famous monks," T. 52:503a.

The first mention of the sponsorship of the ghost festival at T'ung-t'ai ssu in 538 under Emperor Wu (r. 502–550) of the Liang dynasty comes in Chih-p'an's thirteenth-century history of Buddhism, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:450c, 351a. Emperor Wu was an important patron of Buddhist institutions, and he sponsored many large feasts at T'ung-t'ai ssu after its completion in 527, see *Li-tai san-pao chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:99c. Chih-p'an's account remains suspect due to its late date and the lack of other evidence. If his account does amount to the interpolation of a pious historian, it may have been based on the record of Emperor Wu having granted an empire-wide amnesty on the sixth day of the seventh month in the year 538. *The History of the Liang Dynasty*, written in the seventh century, reports that in the fourth year of Ta-t'ung (538), on the sixth day of the seventh month, "an edict proclaimed a great act of grace throughout the empire on account of the [Buddhist] disciple, Li Yin-chih of Tung-yeh [present-day Fukien] having discovered an authentic *śarīra* [relic] of the Thus-Come One," *Liang shu*, Yao Ssu-lien (557–637), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1973), p. 82.

among the hungry ghosts. He filled his bowl with rice and sent it to his mother as an offering, but before the food entered her mouth it changed into flaming coals, so in the end she could not eat. Mu-lien let out a great cry and rushed back to tell the Buddha. The Buddha said, 'Your mother's sins are grave; there is nothing that you as a single individual can do about it. You must rely on the mighty spiritual power of the assembled monks of the ten directions: for the sake of seven generations of ancestors and those in distress, you should gather [food] of the one hundred flavors and five kinds of fruit, place it in a bowl, and offer it to those of great virtue of the ten directions.' The Buddha decreed that the assembly of monks should chant prayers on behalf of seven generations of ancestors of the donor, that they should practice meditation and concentrate their thoughts, and that they should then receive the food. At this time Mu-lien's mother gained release from all of her sufferings as a hungry ghost. Mu-lien told the Buddha, 'Future disciples of the Buddha who practice filial devotion must also carry out the yü-lan-p'en offering.' The Buddha said, 'Wonderful.' "

Based on 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.[13]

Tsung Lin's notice establishes quite clearly that celebrations flourished among the populace of south China in the mid-sixth century. Temples (and perhaps markets) were decorated, probably with banners

[13] Translation from the annotated text of Moriya, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū*, pp. 359–61, following Moriya's translation in *Keiso saijiki*, Tōyō bunko, Vol. 324 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1978), pp. 196–97. Tsung Lin titled his work *Ching-ch'u chi*. Tu Kung-chan (ca. 581–624), a nephew of the author of the *Yü-chu pao-tien*, Tu T'ai-ch'ing, edited Tsung Lin's text and named it *Ching-ch'u sui-shih chi*. The work is extremely important in Chinese social history, as it represents the first real effort to describe the seasonal practices of common people in contrast to previous compendia of monthly ordinances, which described the idealized ritual and agricultural practices that were initiated by the ruler. See Moriya, *Chūgoku ko saijiki no kenkyū*, pp. 48–130, 263–65, for an excellent study of Tsung Lin's work.

Tsung Lin's account is quoted extensively in early encyclopedias. The *Yü-chu pao-tien*, Tu T'ai-ch'ing, quotes from it without identifying it as the source, ch. 7, pp. 12v–13v. See also *I-wen lei-chü*, Ou-yang Hsün, pp. 79–80; *Ch'u-hsüeh chi*, Hsü Chien (659–729) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), p. 79; *Po-shih liu-t'ieh shih-lei-chi*, Po Chü-i (772–846), 2 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1969), ch. 1, p. 72, which is a heavily abbreviated paraphrase; and *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* (completed 983), Li Fang, 12 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1959), p. 272a.

and flowers, and music and singing filled the air. Families collected delicacies to present to monks in the yü-lan bowls, offering lifelike flowers elaborately crafted from natural materials. As Tsung Lin does not mention government sponsorship, we may assume that such practices thrived outside the system of official temples and without the provision of offerings by the government.

The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra was well known by this time, the story of Mu-lien and his mother providing justification for the ornate gifts offered during the festivities. Tsung Lin also mentions the notion of making merit for the ancestors, which was instrumental in synthesizing the rituals and symbols of Buddhism with ancestral religion.

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra (CA. 600–650)

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra, a sūtra-style work not included in the Chinese canon, represents a version of the Mu-lien myth that falls between the poles of folk and elite. It contains the same basic story as do the earlier canonical sūtras, but it also contains elements that the Buddhist establishment deemed unacceptable for inclusion in the canon: the story of Mu-lien's and his mother's actions in previous lives and the donation of lavish, even irresponsible, offerings by rulers of state. In its form and language it also tends toward the vernacular narratives and folk entertainments that were popular in later centuries. The first undisputable reference to the Pure Land sūtra comes in the year 664, and records dating from 730 show that it was quite popular among the common people despite its noncanonical status.

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra[14] opens with the Buddha preaching to a large audience in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍika in the Jetavana trees in the Kingdom of Śrāvastī. From his lotus-gilded lion's throne, the World-Honored One emits rays of light from his mouth and then prefaces his teaching with a few short stanzas concerning "pure land conduct" (*ching-t'u chih hsing*), which state that the purity of the Pure Land as an objective state of being depends upon the purity of the "mind" or "thought" (*hsin*).[15]

The Pure Land sūtra then presents the basic story of the founding of

[14] *Ching-t'u yü-lan-p'en ching*, P. no. 2185, reproduced in the studies by Jaworski and Iwamoto (noted immediately below). Jan Jaworski, a student of Jean Przyluski, has written the best study and translation of the text, "L'Avalambana Sūtra de la terre pure," *Monumenta Serica* 1 (1935–36):82–107. Iwamoto Yutaka has also translated the text in *Jigoku meguri no bungaku*, pp. 25–32.

[15] Jaworski and Iwamoto offer different interpretations of these lines; Jaworski, "L'Avalambana Sūtra de la terre pure," p. 94; Iwamoto, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku*, p. 25.

the ghost festival, paralleling the accounts in *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*. Mu-lien enters a state of meditation to search for his deceased mother, but to no avail. He returns to the Buddha for information on his mother's whereabouts. When the Buddha replies that Ch'ing-t'i has been reborn as a hungry ghost in hell, Mu-lien is overcome with grief; he sobs and rolls on the ground, unable even to pick himself up. Taking pity on his dedicated disciple, the Buddha teaches a method of making merit designed to free the ancestors from the torments of purgatory. Mu-lien performs the service as directed, presenting a bowl laden with food and other items to the Buddha and the Sangha as they emerge from their summer retreat. This act immediately bears fruit, and Mu-lien's mother is liberated from the realm of hungry ghosts and reborn among humans. Unlike the canonical and more literary sources, the Pure Land text describes Mu-lien's joy and amazement at being reunited with his mother:

> It was like searching for a golden grain of sand among all the sands of the Ganges and suddenly finding it. It was like a filial son hearing that his deceased mother had suddenly come back to life. It was like a man who is blind from birth suddenly having his eyes opened. It was like a person who has already died coming back to life. Such was Mu-lien's joy.[16]

Mu-lien is so happy, in fact, that his body gushes flames and rainwater, after which he settles down to hear the Buddha recapitulate his teaching on yü-lan-p'en to the audience.

The next section of the sūtra shows royalty and lay people performing the ritual of offering. Having witnessed the reunion of Mu-lien and his mother, which was secured by giving gifts to the Buddha and the Sangha, King Bimbisāra of Magadha orders his minister of the treasury to prepare an offering. In the Pure Land text the offerings are far more lavish than those described in the canonical texts: "five hundred bowls made of gold filled with a thousand kinds of flowers, five hundred silver bowls filled with a thousand kinds of red-gold incense, five hundred jade bowls filled with a thousand kinds of yellow lotus, five hundred agate bowls filled with a thousand kinds of red lotus flowers, five hundred coral bowls filled with a thousand kinds of greenwood incense, and five hundred amber bowls filled with a thousand kinds of

[16] *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, lines ("line" and "lines" hereafter abbreviated "l." and "ll.," respectively) 28–31.

white lotus flowers."[17] King Bimbisāra and his treasure-bearing retinue pay their respects to the Buddha, present their offerings to him and to the Sangha, and then return home. The sūtra notes that seven generations of the king's ancestors were accordingly freed from seventy-two *kalpas* of suffering. Following King Bimbisāra's lead, Sudatta leads a large group of laymen and laywomen in making less extravagant offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha, followed by another round of royal offerings by King Prasenajit and Queen Mallikā.

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra includes a long section on the past lives of Mu-lien and his mother in which the Buddha explains how their previous acts have led to their current situation. In a previous life Mu-lien was a pious boy named Lo-pu (Turnip), and his mother's name was Ch'ing-t'i. One day the boy set out on a journey, instructing his mother to make feasts for wandering almsmen during his absence. Ch'ing-t'i only pretended to provide the offerings, deceiving her own son about her stinginess. As a result of her greed she was reborn as a hungry ghost in hell, suffering the torments that the yü-lan-p'en offering is intended to relieve. The sūtra closes with the audience rejoicing, paying respects to the Buddha, and practicing the teaching.

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra represents a significant elaboration of the version of the myth of Mu-lien contained in canonical sources. The story of the Buddha establishing the ghost festival after Mu-lien's unsuccessful attempt to succor his mother remains basically the same. The significant additions to the story concern the participation of rulers and the particulars of Mu-lien's previous life. The Pure Land sūtra describes the provision of gifts from the state treasury and the participation of state officials in yü-lan-p'en services; the description in the sūtra accords well with what is known of state-sponsored celebrations in the second half of the seventh century. The sūtra also shows that the benefits from state-sponsored offerings were believed to accrue to the emperor's ancestors for seven generations. While the details of state celebrations in China can be established in only a few well-documented cases, the theme of imperial patronage of the ghost festival as narrated in the Pure Land sūtra is clearly related to the use of Buddhist ritual apparatus in the Chinese imperial ancestral cult during the T'ang dynasty.

The offerings made by kings in the Pure Land sūtra are far more elaborate than those described in the canonical texts, and in the late seventh century we find the monk and encyclopedia writer Tao-shih (ca. 600–683) using this fact as scriptural license for lavish ghost festival of-

[17] *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, ll. 46–50. Cf. Jaworski, "L'Avalambana Sūtra de la terre pure," p. 96.

ferings. He quotes from *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* to show that offerings of jewels and precious objects bring help for the ancestors, calling the sūtra *"The Pure Land Sūtra of the Larger Bowl" (Ta-p'en ching-t'u ching)* in contrast to the canonical text, *"The Sūtra on Repaying Kindness with the Smaller Bowl" (Hsiao-p'en pao-en ching).*[18]

The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra also marks the first appearance in surviving Chinese literary sources of the story of Mu-lien and his mother in their previous lives. Stories of the previous lives of disciples and other important figures (a genre known as "*avadāna*") generally betray a didactic purpose: they are compiled and told in order to illustrate the ineluctable workings of karmic retribution, and they often reflect the interests of an audience composed of lay people. The avadāna tale contained in the Pure Land text occupies an intermediate position among the different versions of the Mu-lien myth. The canonical sources make no mention of Mu-lien's previous life, the Pure Land sūtra includes it at the end of the text, while *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* includes it as an integral part of the narrative.

The literary form of *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* also represents an intermediary stage in the development of ghost festival mythology. It includes elements that probably derived from a milieu close to oral tradition: similes describing the reunion of mother and son, the colloquial expression "A-p'o" for "mother"; and a long section on the previous lives of mother and son. In other respects the Pure Land sūtra betrays a literary style and pretensions to canonical status: it opens ("Thus have I heard. . . .") and closes ("Then the immeasureable grand assembly rejoiced and practiced it.") in typical sūtra style, and the avadāna section remains an appendage to the main body of the story.

The sūtra may be dated to the period 600–650. It was never accepted as part of the official canon of Chinese Buddhism, but was quite in vogue during the T'ang. By chance a complete manuscript of the text was discovered at Tun-huang, and in 1936 Jan Jaworski published an important study and translation.[19]

The Pure Land text is first mentioned—with suspicion, as an apocryphal version of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*—in the year 664 in Tao-hsüan's

[18] *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, Tao-shih, T. no. 2122, 53:751a quotes loosely from ll. 40–46 of *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*; a second quotation, T. 53:751a-b, quotes from ll. 46–70.

[19] Jaworski, "L'Avalambana Sūtra de la terre pure," pp. 82–107. See also Iwamoto, *Jigoku meguri no bungaku*, pp. 25–32; Okabe Kazuo, "Urabon kyōrui no yakkyō shiteki kenkyū," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 37:3 (March 1964):70–72; Ogawa Kan'ichi, *Bukkyō bunka shi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshōdō, 1973), pp. 171–79; and Honda Gi'ei, "*Urabon kyō* to *Jōdo urabon kyō*," in *Butten no naisō to gaisō* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1967), pp. 557–77.

catalogue of the Buddhist canon.[20] By the early eighth century the sūtra had become so popular that most people considered it to be a true, canonical text. Chih-sheng, in his catalogue compiled in 730, also indicates that it may have been transmitted orally. In the section on "doubtful" (*i*) texts (apocryphal [*wei*^{b}] as opposed to true or canonical [*chen*]) he writes:

> *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* in one *chüan* on five sheets. None of the records, old or new, register this sūtra. Having been transmitted popularly, it is now considered to be a true classic. On close investigation, its phrasing appears to touch people's feelings, but having examined the matter in detail, I have placed it in the record of doubtful texts.[21]

These comments from T'ang sources show clearly that the Pure Land sūtra was distributed broadly in Chinese society and that it appealed to the masses at large despite the aspersions cast on it by those who defined the Buddhist canon.[22] One of the leading clerics of the ninth century, Tsung-mi, quotes the Pure Land text in his commentary on the canonical yü-lan-p'en sūtra. He draws on the Pure Land sūtra's description of Mu-lien's mother's previous life, but *he does not name his source*, noting merely that, "A sūtra says. . . ."[23] Tsung-mi's tacit acceptance of the avadāna tale as part of the myth of Mu-lien suggests that by the early ninth century, learned members of the Buddhist establishment could no longer ignore the apocryphal versions of the myth. Tsung-mi not only signals its popularity and its noncanonical status, but also hints that other commentaries had been written on the Pure Land text. Unfortunately, these texts had been lost by the twelfth century.[24]

[20] Under his entry on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, Tao-hsüan writes, "*The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, on one sheet. There is another text of five sheets, entitled *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. We do not know from which [Sanskrit text] it has been translated," *Ta-t'ang nei-tien lu*, T. no. 2149, 55:298b. The opinion is repeated in *Ta-chou k'an-ting chung-ching mu-lu*, T. no. 2153, 55:431c.

[21] *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*, T. no. 2154, 55:671c–72a.

[22] *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* also circulated in eighth-century Japan. See the documents collected in *Dainihon komonjo, hennen monjo*, ed. Tokyo teikoku daigaku shiryō hensanjo (Tokyo: Tokyo teikoku daigaku, 1901–40), 5:451–52, 7:10, and 12:332.

[23] *Tsung-mi Commentary*, T. 39:509c.

[24] After a discussion of some of the details in the avadāna, Tsung-mi writes, "Other commentaries say otherwise, but none of them penetrate [the meaning]," T. 39:510a. Following Tsung-mi's comment, Yüan-chao writes, "There must have been other interpretations in older commentaries. These texts are now lost, so we cannot know what they say," *Yüan-chao Commentary*, Z. 1, 35:2, p. 120rb.

HUI-CHING'S *Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* (CA. 636–639)

The earliest surviving commentary on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* was written by the eminent monk of Ch'ang-an, Hui-ching (578–ca. 645). In both style and content the *Yü-lan-p'en ching tsan-shu (Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)* reflects the refined tastes and learned interests of its author. Hui-ching was well versed in the major trends of Buddhist thought of his day. He assisted in the translation of Sanskrit texts and he held important positions in the administration of the Sangha. His writings cover a broad range of topics.

Hui-ching's commentary follows closely the Mu-lien myth as it is presented in the earliest canonical sources. Mu-lien appears in the commentary as the ideal monk, one who combines the discipline required of the religious specialist with the devotion needed to sustain the ancestral cult. Mu-lien's previous life and his battles with demons are passed over in silence, as are his mother's biography and her tortures in hell. Hui-ching's monastic orientation is apparent in the commentary's sources, which derive from the "high" tradition of Chinese Buddhism rather than from the oral tradition or Chinese apocrypha.

Hui-ching was born into the Fang family in Ch'ang-shan (present-day Hopei) in the year 578.[25] At the age of fourteen he joined the monkhood, pursuing studies in Abhidharma and Mādhyamika philosophy. Between 589 and 601 he gave lectures in the capital, Ch'ang-an; these marked the beginning of a long career as a debater and public figure. In 628 he joined several prominent men of letters in assisting the Magadhan monk, Prabhāmitra (565–633), with a translation of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, so impressing his co-workers that they referred to him as the "Bodhisattva of the East" (*tung-fang p'u-sa*).[26] Hui-ching authored over a dozen works, ranging from thirty-*chüan* commentaries on Yogācāra treatises to brief explanations of such lay-oriented texts as *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*.[27]

[25] Hui-ching was sixty-eight years old in 645, according to his biography in *Hsü kao-seng chuan*, T. no. 2060, 50:446b. Biographical details in these two paragraphs are drawn from this source, T. 50:441c–46b; and from *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:363b–65a; *Ta-t'ang nei-tien lu*, T. no. 2149, 55:281c; *Lung-hsing fo-chiao pien-nien t'ung-lun*, Tsu-hsiu (ca. 1164), Z. 2B, 3:3, pp. 259vb, and 267rb–va; and the documents collected in *Chung-kuo fo-chiao ssu-hsiang tzu-liao hsüan-pien*, ed. Shih Chün (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), Part 2, Vol. 4, pp. 405–6.

[26] The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, attributed to Asaṅga, is *Ta-sheng chuang-yen ching lun*, T. no. 1604.

[27] MBDJ, p. 280b–c lists thirteen works. To this list should be added the *Shih-i lun* in one *chüan*; it is noted in *Ta-t'ang nei-tien lu*, T. no. 2149, 55:281c. For a brief study and

Hui-ching was a powerful member of the Buddhist establishment in the Sui and early T'ang, counting among his friends such high-ranking officials as the Duke of Liang, Fang Hsüan-ling (578–648). Hui-ching was the abbot of Chi-kuo ssu, held an honorary position at P'u-kuang ssu, and was certainly well acquainted with the administration of large celebrations like the ghost festival. He often represented the Buddhist side in debates between proponents of the Three Teachings held during the T'ang. Among the opponents whom he met (and vanquished, according to the Buddhist historians) in such debates were K'ung Ying-ta (574–648) and the Taoist master Ts'ai Tzu-huang. In 645 he was called to take part in the translation of more scriptures (probably those brought back from the West in the same year by Hsüan-tsang [602–664]), but Hui-ching had to decline because of poor health.

Hui-ching's *Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* was probably written between 636 and 639.[28] Because the commentary follows the sūtra so closely, I shall merely note some of its highlights here.

After explaining the meaning of the title ("yü-lan" refers to hungry ghosts hanging upside-down in hell, "p'en" means the basin in which offerings are placed) and discussing the organization of the sūtra,[29]

translation of Hui-ching's commentary on the *Wen-shih hsi-yü chung-seng ching*, trans. An Shih-kao (ca. 148–170), T. no. 701, see Ui Hakuju, "*Onshitsu gyōsho*," in *Seiiki butten no kenkyū: Tonkō isho kanyaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), pp. 311–32. Hui-ching's commentary, *Wen-shih ching shu*, is S. no. 2497, printed as T. no. 2780. Hui-ching's works are very well represented in the Imperial Repository (Shōsōin) in Nara, according to catalogues and other documents mostly from the Tempyō era (729–749); see Ishida Mosaku, *Shakyō yori mitaru nara-chō bukkyō no kenkyū*, Tōyō bunko ronshu, No. 11 (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1930), index nos. 1996, 2020, 2021, 2050, 2064, 2065, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2200, 2201, 2220, and 2500.

[28] My estimation of the date of authorship is based on Tao-hsüan's biography of Hui-ching. Tao-hsüan does not establish a specific date of composition, but his remark that Hui-ching's commentary on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* was popular comes in the middle of the biography, between events dated 636 and 639, T. 50:443a. Hui-ching's commentary is P. no. 2269, reproduced as T. no. 2781. The manuscript appears to be written with a quick hand, and corrections have been made with a thicker brush. The manuscript is almost completely intact, the major gaps falling at the beginning. Although the title at the end is merely "*P'en ching tsan-shu*," the first several lines of the manuscript make clear that its full title was "*(Fo-shuo) yü-lan-p'en ching tsan-shu*." The commentary is written in a compact, elegant prose style containing many four-character sentences. It sticks closely to the text, using synonyms to gloss individual words and quoting short extracts from Buddhist sources to expand the glosses. Unlike Tsung-mi's commentary, it contains few lengthy digressions on such topics as filiality and merit. *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* from which it quotes is very similar to the text now known under that title, although some of its wording follows the text of *The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness*.

[29] Hui-ching divides the sūtra into three portions: "a portion on the origins of the teaching," "a portion on what the Sage [the Buddha] taught," and "a portion on carrying

Hui-ching begins a line-by-line commentary. Hui-ching gives special emphasis to Mu-lien's dual status as masterful meditator and filial son. He stresses the meditative context of Mu-lien's cosmic flight and shys away from the combat and gore that predominate in other renditions of Mu-lien's travels to the underworld. The hells receive virtually no elaboration in Hui-ching's account, which confines itself to restating Mu-lien's mother's lack of food and her frail physical condition. Nor is there any explanation of how her greedy actions led to her current state of woe. Compared to other versions of the story, Hui-ching's commentary betrays a more refined or monastic bent: Mu-lien is tamer and less adventuresome, while his mother lacks a history and even a name.

For Hui-ching, the story of Mu-lien is a story about filiality, which, as taught by the Buddha, consists of aiding the ancestors in whatever path of existence they inhabit. Hui-ching quotes from a sūtra, "Even if you collected a pile of precious gems reaching to the twenty-eighth heaven and gave them all away to people [as charity], the merit earned from this would not be one-tenth of the merit of making offerings to one's parents."[30] The unity of filiality with the highest ideals of Buddhism is an assumption common to all versions of the Mu-lien myth, be they canonical, commentarial, or theatrical. Where Hui-ching differs from other interpreters of the myth is in the sources he draws on to articulate this synthesis. Where later commentators (notably Tsung-mi) cite examples from the pre-Buddhist Chinese tradition—classics like the *Shih-ching (The Book of Songs)* and paragons of filiality like Tung Yung—Hui-ching draws almost exclusively on the Buddhist canon to explain the concept of filial devotion. The *Āgamas*, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* provide Hui-ching's points of reference. The framework he uses to synthesize monastic and lay ideals is defined by the erudite terms of Chinese Buddhist philosophy and by the officially approved stories of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

Hui-ching's *Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* was apparently popular during his lifetime, and a copy of it had made its way to Japan by the middle of the eighth century, but it was not influential in later years.[31]

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out the teaching." He also notes that the division of the sūtra according to the "old" exegetical style (later used in the *Tsung-mi Commentary* and in *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*) amounts to the same thing, T. 85:540a.

[30] T. 85:541b. The passage quoted by Hui-ching expands upon the wording in the *Mo-lo wang ching (Sūtra on the King of Mallā)*, trans. Chü-ch'ü Ching-sheng (ca. 455–464), T. no. 517, 14:791b.

[31] On the popularity of the commentary during Hui-ching's lifetime, see *Hsü kao-seng*

CHAPTER 3

TAO-SHIH'S MEMORANDUM ON OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHA (CA. 668)

In his massive encylopedia completed in 668, *Fa-yüan chu-lin (The Pearl Grove of the Dharma Garden)*, the scholar-monk Tao-shih tucked away a small document discussing the management and disposition of offerings at Buddhist temples. Although the piece is untitled and unattributed, it was most likely authored by Tao-shih himself sometime before 668. It provides a unique picture of how the ghost festival and other celebrations were administered by Sangha authorities in the official temples of Ch'ang-an.

Tao-shih's memorandum sheds significant light on the general character of state-sponsored celebrations in the late seventh century. In the first place it confirms that the celebration of the ghost festival at major temples in the capital was sponsored by the government for the well-being of the empire. Gifts were provided out of state coffers and were delivered to temple grounds by government officials. Services performed at these large temples included music, a communal banquet for all those who attended, and offerings and prayers in front of Buddha statues. Presents given to the Sangha at these temples were considered to be "national offerings" (*kuo-chia kung-yang*); apparently everyone's ancestors benefited from the exchange.

Tao-shih's account also reveals much about the philosophy and economy of T'ang festivals. In China the "Three Jewels" did not simply represent a formulaic refuge of faith. In China the "Three Jewels" also referred to the material objects that had value in the Buddhist religion: statues, halls, and reliquaries in temples constituted the Jewel of the Buddha; texts and divinatory instruments were Jewels of the Dharma; and temple lands, lodgings, and resident farmers constituted "permanent property of the Sangha" (*ch'ang-chu seng-wu*). Most temple property belonged to only one of the Three Jewels and could not be intermixed with property belonging to another of the Jewels. Only a small fraction of temple property, called "general temple funds and possessions" (*t'ung-yung chih wu*), could be used for any purpose without restriction.[32]

The need to maintain clear distinctions between the accounts of the Three Jewels had important implications for the mechanics and admin-

chuan, T. 50:443a. At least two copies of the commentary existed in the Imperial Repository in Nara during the Tempyō shōhō era (749–757); see the documents in *Dai nihon komonjo, hennen monjo*, 10:329 and 12:542.

[32] 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. 63.

istration of the ghost festival. Offerings to the Sangha were the essence of the ghost festival. Offerings to the Buddha and to the Dharma were of course permissible during the festival, but gifts to monks were the only ones that brought merit to one's ancestors. Gifts to the Sangha were provided by private donors and by the state. Gifts to the Sangha could *not* be provided out of Sangha funds, since that could not properly be counted as an exchange between two different groups.

Making an offering to the Buddha was part of all Buddhist services, including the ghost festival, and Tao-shih discusses several ways of financing this offering. The offering may be supplied out of general temple funds; it may be supplied by a donor, in which case part of the offering is given to the Sangha after the service; or it may be supplied out of Sangha property, in which case the entire offering is returned to the Sangha account at the conclusion of the ritual.

During important festivals monks at large temples played host to hundreds and thousands of guests, including common people, government officials, entertainers, and emperors. Tao-shih's memorandum shows how seriously temple administrators viewed their ceremonial responsibilities to their guests. Monks did not simply make possible the transfer of benefits from living descendants to ancestors; they also fulfilled the responsibilities of a host at a large banquet. The Sangha catered the vegetarian feasts served to guests and often assumed the cost of the meal as well.

Tao-shih's document, placed in the part of *The Pearl Grove of the Dharma Garden* on "Offerings to the Buddha" (*hsien-fo*) in the section on "Sacrifices" (*chi-ssu*), is in the form of seven questions and answers.[33]

The first question asks about the source of the offerings made to the Buddha when crowds come for the festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Tao-shih answers that when there is a large donor sponsoring the festival, offerings to the Buddha should be drawn from the common property of the temple. When there is no sponsor, Buddha offerings are to be provided out of the permanent property of the Sangha.

The second question asks:

[33] *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, T. no. 2122, 53:750a–52a. The rest of the part on "Offerings to the Buddha" (T. 53:752a–53b) contains citations from various sūtras extolling the virtues of giving gifts to the Buddha. While many Japanese studies of the ghost festival note the citations of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* in this section, none mentions the other portions of the document which concern the disposition of offerings.

> In the great national temples like Hsi-ming and Tz'u-en ssu in Ch'ang-an, there are endowed fields and gardens in addition to land distributed on the basis of population, and everything that is given [during the ghost festival] is considered to be a national offering. Now every year when people send bowls of offerings and all sorts of items, with musicians and the like carrying the bowls and with more than one government official bringing bowls, what sort of items should be given to the guests? Furthermore, before the official bowls arrive, when offerings are made in front of the Buddha and various other offerings are made, what items should be used to make the offerings?

Tao-shih answers:

> If there is common property, use that first. If there is no such property, then there is no alternative but to take items from the permanent property of the Sangha to treat the guests and to offer as food.

The third exchange concerns the justification for taking property belonging exclusively to the Sangha and sharing it with lay people in the form of a festival meal. Tao-shih answers:

> According to the *Mahāsāṇghikavinaya*, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, and others, kings, great ministers, and workmen all hate stealing. In regard to the Sangha's profits and losses, if [34] you open things up to the laity and treat them with Sangha property, this does not count as an offense. If you do not share your expenditures with the laity, opening things up but not treating them, then they will deduce that there has been a loss in [the wealth of] the Buddha's Sangha. So it is no offense to open up [Sangha property] and let them see.
>
> Now, since this is so, when the state sends bowls for offerings with officials and musicians, and the Emperor orders that Buddha bowls be sent, how can you not let them see [Sangha property]? If you do not let them see, it will lead to ridicule and reproach, calling forth sneers from outside the fold. [They will think], "Those who have left the householder's life seek only the possessions of others; they haven't even given up their own avarice." The common man sees what is near without understanding what is far. This is what is meant in saying, "Share your income and share

[34] Emending *fo* to *jo*.

your expenditures." The Buddha understood profit and loss, which is why he opened up the strictures in accord with circumstances.

The fourth question concerns the disposition of offerings made to the Buddha in the course of the ghost festival:

> *Question*: When permanent property of the Sangha is used to make the offerings of Buddha food in front of the Buddha, then after the service the offerings revert to the Sangha's permanent [property]—in this matter there is no doubt. What we do not know is what happens to the offerings when an outside donor offers bowls and other sundry items.
>
> *Answer*: This should be decided on the basis of the donor's circumstances and capability. If the donor makes the offering according to the sūtra, vowing[35] to bring salvation to his living and deceased relatives, then he makes offerings to the Sangha, those lowly and advanced [monks] of the ten directions who release themselves [in repentance] during the summer session. Only in this way can he save his deceased relatives, who will gain release from the three unpleasant paths of rebirth and ascend in purity to the paths of men and gods. Therefore, after making offerings to the Buddha, all of the food—the produce and raw items, rice and noodles that have been offered, etc.—becomes permanent [property] of the Sangha and is used in return to supply food for monks.

Tao-shih further allows that donors may alternatively choose to make offerings to the Buddha or to the Dharma. In these cases, a portion of the offering should revert to the Sangha.

The fifth and sixth questions raise doubts about the extravagance of ghost festival offerings. Responding to his questioner's concern that valuables and jewels exceed the simple offerings of food and incense allowed in *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, Tao-shih quotes from *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* to show that the lavish items given by King Bimbisāra to the Buddha and the Sangha were fully efficacious in bringing aid to his ancestors. While jewels and treasures are not necessary, they are perfectly acceptable as offerings.

The seventh and last question concerns the inclusion of flowers in offerings to the Buddha. Because Vinaya rules prohibited monks from adorning themselves with flowers, special precautions were needed to insure that flower offerings given to the Buddha (offerings which *were*

[35] Emending *yüan* to *yüan*[b].

allowed by the Vinaya) did not end up in the possession of the Sangha.[36] Flowers were permitted in the case of a lay donor supplying the offerings to the Buddha. Questions arose only when offerings at festivals had to be supplied by the Buddhist establishment itself.

In his response Tao-shih says that at small temples, flowers and fruits growing on the temple grounds—in Chinese eyes, temple land and its products belonged to the Buddhist Sangha—may be used for offerings to the Buddha. At larger temples, though, Tao-shih suggests that a distinction be maintained between the domain of the Buddha and the domain of the Sangha, with offerings of flowers to the Buddha being supplied out of the common property of the temple. Only when common resources are unavailable may Sangha-supplied flowers be given to the Buddha; while this kind of offering brings no relief to the ancestors (since no gifts are given to the Sangha), it effectively teaches charity and averts charges of Buddhist opulence. Tao-shih writes:

> If there is no common property, then there is no choice but to use permanent property of the Sangha, gathering various items of flowers, fruit, and all kinds of food to offer to the Buddha. This causes common people to give birth to good and to extinguish evil, and in this there is no loss. Although using permanent property of the Sangha cannot bring about the salvation of other people's living or deceased relatives, it does avoid the crime of being slandered and accused [of hoarding] by lay people.

Unlike most other entries in Tao-shih's encyclopedia, the document on offerings to the Buddha lacks a title and lists no author. A plausible argument may be made, however, for Tao-shih's authorship. Tao-shih was born around the year 600 and entered the monkhood at an early age.[37] Although it is unclear precisely which positions he held, Tao-shih was an important figure in the Buddhist etablishment in Ch'ang-an in the 650s and 660s: between 656 and 661 Tao-shih participated in the imperial reception of Hsüan-tsang's works, in 658 he was called by the emperor to live at Hsi-ming ssu, and in 664 he wrote a memorial to

[36] See, for example, 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), 5:170. This rule also figures prominently—as a potential source of clinging and duality—in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, in which unenlightened disciples of the Buddha try to shed flowers rained down upon them by a goddess; see *Wei-mo-chieh so-shuo ching*, trans. Kumārajīva (350–409), T. no. 475, 14:547c–48c.

[37] The *Ritsuon sōbō den* (completed 1689) by Eken reports that Tao-shih received full ordination in 615, which would place his birth sometime around the year 600, ZS. 64:177c.

the throne protesting a new edition of Taoist scriptures.[38] Tao-shih is reported to have written a short piece on the same subject discussed in the memorandum[39] and in at least one other case is known to have inserted his own writings, untitled and unattributed, into the body of his encyclopedia.[40] Tao-shih's position in the Sangha hierarchy, his interests in Vinaya and in the specific topic of the memorandum, and the precedent of smuggling his own pieces into the anthologies he compiled all lend weight to the likelihood that Tao-shih wrote the piece himself.

YANG CHIUNG'S "YÜ-LAN-P'EN RHAPSODY" (692)

The large-scale celebration of the ghost festival in Lo-yang (the site of the capital between 690 and 701) in 692 provided the occasion for an important prose poem by the early T'ang writer, Yang Chiung (650–ca. 694). The *Chiu t'ang shu (Old T'ang History)* describes the event:

> On the full moon of the seventh month in the first year of *Ju-i* [692], yü-lan bowls were sent out from the palace and distributed to Buddhist temples. [Empress Wu] Tse-t'ien went with the various officials to observe it at the Southern Gate. [Yang] Chiung presented his "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody." It was beautifully written and its words were striking.[41]

Lay people were not the only celebrants of the ghost festival in the T'ang. In most years, as in 692, the state supplied the offerings given at

[38] See *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. no. 2061, 50:726c; Lung-hsi Li Yen's preface to *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, T. no. 2122, 53:269b; and *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. 50:726c. A longer recension of Tao-shih's memorial is contained in *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, T. 53:703a–4c. A shorter recension is contained in *Ch'üan t'ang wen*, Hsü Sung (1781–1841) (Taipei: Ching-wei shu-chü, 1965), ch. 912, pp. 11993–94; and in *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai*, Nien-ch'ang (d. 1341), T. no. 2036, 49:581b–c.

[39] Tao-shih's work, entitled *Li-fo i-shih (Ceremonial for Reverencing the Buddha)* is listed in the last chapter of *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, T. 53:1023c; and in *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. 50:727a. The last chapter of *Fa-yüan chu-lin* did not assume its present form until ca. 800–1000, see Stephen F. Teiser, "T'ang Buddhist Encyclopedias: An Introduction to *Fa-yüan chu-lin* and *Chu-ching yao-chi*," *T'ang Studies* No. 3 (1985): 121. The fact that this text is cited for the first time at least 150 years after its alleged authorship may mean that the work was nothing but an extract from *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (completed in 668) that was later circulated independently.

[40] Tao-shih's memorial against the new edition of Taoist scriptures is inserted into *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, T. 53:703a–4c. See above for other recensions of his memorial.

[41] *Chiu t'ang shu*, Liu Hsü (887–946) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975), p. 5001.

the officially sponsored temples in the capital, and government officials were in attendance. Empress Wu's participation may also indicate that the imperial ancestors were singled out as beneficiaries of the offerings.

Yang Chiung's "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody" presents a vision of the festival illuminated by the stars and by the amber light of dawn. Yang, himself a stargazer of high repute,[42] evokes the cosmological and meteorological background of the early-autumn festival, a time when the western region of K'un-lun seems especially near. In Yang's rhapsody we feel the unearthly presence of spirits and magical birds, who are drawn noiselessly to the jewels and foods offered by Empress and commoner alike.

Outside of his surviving work, sources preserve few details of Yang Chiung's life. He was born in the year 650, and his family was from Hua-yin (present-day Shensi).[43] Yang held a succession of minor government posts, never rising to a position of power. He was called to the College for the Exaltation of Literature (Ch'ung-wen kuan) in the Palace of the Heir to the Throne in 681 and served as a local official in Ying-ch'uan and Tzu-chou (both in present-day Szechuan), among other posts.

It appears that Yang was best known for his acerbic personality and his elegant prose works. A Yüan-dynasty biography reports that Yang was in the habit of referring to some of his contemporaries as "unicorn lasts," a last or inverse mold around which was formed the shape of the mythical *ch'i-lin* ("unicorn"). The account reads:

> Whenever he heard of a pretentious courtier, he would call him a "unicorn last." When questioned about it, he responded, "One who plays at being a unicorn has to mark and draw all over himself to cover up his being an ass, to look like a different animal. But take away his skin and he's still an ass."[44]

[42] See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 36, 38, 86, 183.

[43] Yang's preface to his "Hun-t'ien fu" says that he was eleven years old in the fifth year of the Hsien-ch'ing era (660), which would probably place his birth in 650; *Ch'u-t'ang ssu-chieh wen-chi*, ed. Hsiang Chia-ta, Ssu-pu pei-yao ed. (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1970), ch. 10, p. 1r. See also Yang Ch'eng-tsu, "Yang Chiung nien-p'u," *Tung-fang wen-hua* (*Journal of Oriental Studies*, Hong Kong) 13:1 (January 1975):57–72. Short biographies of Yang are contained in *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 5001; and in *Hsin t'ang shu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975), p. 5741. See also the material assembled in the appendix to his collected works, *Yang Ying-ch'uan chi*, Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an, Series 1, Vol. 35 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1967).

[44] *T'ang ts'ai-tzu chuan*, Hsin Wen-fang (ca. 1304) (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), p. 6.

Yang's collected works in thirty *chüan* survived into the tenth century, and a good many of them are still extant.[45]

Yang Chiung's "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody"[46] begins:

I.

Flowing essence proclaims the fall,
Hsi Ho reports the dawn:

The moon in full gaze, round face shining white;
The great gate opening, cool wind wisping along.
The four seas calm, the hundred streams clear,
Yin and *yang* well settled, heaven and earth deep-set.

Sweep out the hostel palace!
Clean up the storied pavilion!
Make up the august residence!
Set out the azure curtain!

The *luan* bird flies, the phoenix soars,
Sudden streaks of brilliance.
White clouds billow, rosy clouds unfurl,
Bright then gathering dark.

In the first stanza Yang begins to sketch the cosmological background to the seventh-month festival: the modulations of *yin* and *yang*, the first full moon of autumn, the arrival of Hsi Ho (the Chinese Phoebus

[45] See *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 2075; and Wan Man, *T'ang-chi hsü-lu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1980), pp. 21–22. Yang's literary works are available in *Yang Ying-ch'uan chi; Ch'u-t'ang ssu-chieh wen-chi*, chs. 10–16; *Ch'üan t'ang wen*, chs. 190–97, pp. 2421–2516; *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1960), ch. 50, pp. 610–17; and *T'ang-shih chi-shih* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965), pp. 98–99.

[46] The textual history of Yang Chiung's "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody" is a knotty issue. The ostensibly earliest version of the piece is contained in *I-wen lei-chü*, the compiler of which died over fifty years *before* Yang Chiung wrote the piece, *I-wen lei-chü*, Ou-yang Hsün (557–641), p. 80. This is the shortest recension of the piece. Encyclopedias from the eighth and tenth centuries closely follow this recension, with the addition of a forty-four-character section in the middle (marked as Section IV in my translation); see *Ch'u-hsüeh chi*, Hsü Chien (659–729), pp. 79–80; and *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* (completed 983), Li Fang, p. 272b. In my translation I use the version in *I-wen lei-chü*, supplemented and collated with the version in *Ch'u-hsüeh chi*. Later recensions of Yang Chiung's rhapsody include an introductory section on the 692 celebration and a section at the end that more than doubles the length of the piece; see *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng* (completed 1725), Ch'en Meng-lei et al., 100 vols. (Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1964), pp. 694–95; and *Ch'üan t'ang wen*, pp. 2426b–28a. My translation of the entire piece is extremely tentative.

Apollo),[47] and a cooling wind blown all the way from the great gate in the western K'un-lun Mountains. In this weather preparations are begun for the celebration of the ghost festival in the official precincts of Lo-yang, while the first of many magical birds soars through the clouds.

Yang continues:

> II.
>
> Set out the Dharma offering,
> Adorn the yü-lan [bowls]:
>
> How fertile the wondrous goods,
> How prolific the art of creation;
> The green lotus blossoms, yet not in summer,
> The red fruit sways, yet not in winter.
>
> Brass, iron, lead, tin,
> Beautiful jade, red gems;
> Bright as the Sweet Spring trees hung with jade,
> Capped with golden bowls for catching dew.
>
> The statutes document the three axes,
> The forms pattern all varieties:
> Above, incredible breadth modeled after heaven,
> Below, rest and perseverance symbolizing earth.

In this stanza Yang Chiung assembles the jades and gems indigenous (again) to K'un-lun for the yü-lan-p'en offering.[48] Like the basins used to collect the life-prolonging dew of morning, these gifts reify and solidify the pure forces of the mysterious West. Yang also draws heavily on the symbolism of the *I-ching (The Book of Changes)* to intimate the potency of the gifts.[49] Like hexagrams and symbols (the "forms" being any pair of complementary opposites: heaven and earth, *yin* and *yang,* etc.), the items placed in the yü-lan bowl embody the universal process of change. Ghost festival offerings do not simply mirror the transfor-

[47] On the origins of Hsi Ho, see Mitarai Masaru, *Kodai chūgoku no kamigami: kodai densetsu no kenkyū*, Tōyōgaku sōsho, No. 26 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1984), pp. 477–505.

[48] Jade-decked trees appear frequently in T'ang poetry. They grow in numerous places, including the K'un-lun Mountains and the Sweet Spring Palace, see PWYF, p. 2595c.

[49] Under the *k'un* hexagram, *The Book of Changes* notes, "The good fortune of rest and perseverance depends on our being in accord with the boundless nature of earth"; *Chou-i yin-te*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 10 (reprint ed., Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), p. 3; translation from Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, third ed., trans. Cary F. Baynes, Bollingen Series, No. 19 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 388.

mations taking place in the three worlds ("axes") of heaven, earth, and man; they are the most luminous concrescences of that very process.

Yang continues:

III.

Exhaust strange powers,
Explore miracles:

Young sons and princes
Pull and heave as if bound;
Jade women, lustrous consorts—
They glide and stretch unending.

The singing western phoenix, the purple phoenix,
The dancing great phoenix, the kingfisher;
A deadly dragon, angered, fierce,
A mad elephant, raging, drunk.

Frightful spirits,
Hidden shades:

Even Li Lou's nimble eyes
Can't make out their profound subtlety,
And Artisan Shih's purity of heart
Isn't enough to root out their obscure secrets.

While other yü-lan-p'en literature attributes "mighty spiritual power" only to the assembly of monks, here all orders of being share in the numinosity of the festival. The more elusive members of the human world, the rarer and sacred members of the animal world,[50] and the mysterious spirits of the disembodied world all participate in the majesty of the day, while raging dragons and elephants evoke an atmosphere of force. The world abounds with these delights, yet they remain beyond the ken of even the most clearheaded.[51]

The marvels of the ghost festival are seen only indirectly, reflected in the clouds and star tracks of the firmament. Yang rhapsodizes:

[50] The four kinds of numinous birds are all types of phoenix. They appear in much Han and Six Dynasties literature and usually presage good events. The purple phoenix, for instance, appeared auspiciously as the Chou took power.

[51] Li Lou lived during the time of the Yellow Emperor. His eyesight was so good that he could discern a hair at one hundred paces. He is mentioned in *Mencius*, 4A:1; *Meng-tzu yin-te*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 17 (reprint ed., Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), p. 26. Artisan Shih was a famous workman of ancient times; his full name was Shih Po. He is noted for his equanimity in Chapter Four of *Chuang-tzu*; see *Chuang-tzu yin-te*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 11, ll. 64ff.

IV.

Teeming, thronging,
Misty, merging:
The five colors form beautiful patterns
Like fine, lustrous ether
Making streaks across a bank of clouds.

Growing, glistening,
Flourishing, flashing:
The three lights make a wondrous vision
Like paired jades and a string of pearls
Shining bright in the Milky Way.

(The "three lights" are the sun, moon, and stars; "paired jades" probably describes the sun and moon in the sky together, while "a string of pearls" indicates the stars.)

Yang's rapture closes by descending from clouds and precipitous crags to the service taking place in the foreground:

V.

How distant—
Mount T'ien-t'ai rising abruptly,
Surrounded by reddish clouds.
How near—
Steep, rough mountain standing alone,
Canopied with lotus blooms.

Shimmering, the imperial quarters in the jasper terrace,
Crimson, the immortals' home in the golden gate.

Towering—
Tall as Great Brahmā's among all the heavens.
Broad—
Spread far as the Ganges' sands among all the dharmas.

Above they sacrifice great storehouses to seven generations of ancestors,
Below they offer all kinds of animals to the Three Vehicles.

Mountain clouds and imperial offerings are brought together in the end; the vault of heaven and earthbound temples alike serve as ritual space for the confluence of forces that occurs in the ghost festival. The "jasper terrace"—not only the beautiful terraces of Lo-yang, but also the many mythical abodes of long-lived spirits, including the Queen

Mother of the West[52]—reaches the heavens and touches the clouds. In the end we are brought back to earth, much enriched for the flight, able to see the fuller significance of both the riches in the imperial offering and the meatier items offered by common folk.

Yang Chiung uses the occasion of the ghost festival to embark on a journey. The day is one of cosmic flux, of connection and communication, during which Mount K'un-lun, its treasures and immortals, are particularly close. The many references to mountains, clouds, and fabulous birds, as well as the mythical geography deriving from such sources as the *Huai-nan-tzu*, are part of the abundant store of symbol and myth from which T'ang authors drew their favorite flourishes. Phoenixes, dew drops, and different kinds of jade are all emblematic of the rarified state of purity so ill served by the epithet of "immortality." That such a "Taoist" theme is present in a prose poem on a "Buddhist" topic should surprise only those who assume such categories to be exclusive. To label these themes as "Taoist" (and not "Buddhist") is to obscure the specialness of the day, the closeness of distant mountains, the purity of mountain mists.

Yang Chiung's "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody" also shows—far more beautifully than a discussion of transactional analysis or ritual fields and dramas—that ghost festival offerings constituted not merely an economic system of exchange between parties living and dead, but more importantly an experience rich in luminosity and celestial significations. Making offerings was not a mechanical transaction, it was an act in which the actors quaked with awe and their prestations shone with brilliance. Festooning temples with banners and flowers was not an act of quiet decoration. Participants and the world in which they lived were transformed through the rituals of the ghost festival. How could it be otherwise with divine women, marvelous birds, and unseen specters converging under the first full moon of autumn?

Yang's rhapsody was well known in the T'ang, and it was preserved in a number of private and officially sponsored literary encyclopedias. Some of Yang's symbolism is also echoed in later poems on the ghost festival.

Government Offerings According to the *T'ang liu-tien* (ca. 739)

A work presented to Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–756) in 739, the *T'ang liu-tien (Administrative Rules of the Six Departments under the*

[52] See Wang Ch'i's comments on Li Po's series of poems, "Ch'ing-p'ing t'iao-tz'u," in *Li T'ai-po wen-chi*, ed. Wang Ch'i (ca. 1758) (n.p.: Pao-hu-lou, 1758), ch. 5, p. 22v.

T'ang), preserves a description of the bureau in charge of supplying the official offerings during the ghost festival. The responsibilities of the government office in question, the Central Office (Chung-shang shu) of the Imperial Workshop (Shao-fu chien), include the construction of the various tablets, clothes, musical instruments, and other objects used in state ritual.[53] In noting the duties of the Central Office throughout the year, the *T'ang liu-tien* states that, "during the seventh month . . . on the fifteenth day, the office furnishes yü-lan bowls."[54]

Some of the regulations in the *T'ang liu-tien* describe ideal measures that were not carried out during the T'ang, but in other respects it presents an accurate picture of administrative theory and practice under Hsüan-tsung.[55] While the rules in the *T'ang liu-tien* do not in every case represent actual government practice, there is no counterevidence to dispute the passage in question. Furthermore, the more specific the rule (like the one in question), the more likely that it represents actual practice. Hence, it may be concluded that the Central Office of the Imperial Workshop was probably responsible for supplying the objects used in imperial ghost festival offerings in the mid-T'ang dynasty.

The Celebration under Emperor Tai-tsung in 768

Emperor Tai-tsung's (r. 762–779) celebration of the ghost festival in 768 is the most thickly documented of all imperial celebrations during the T'ang dynasty. Tai-tsung's devotional style appears to be consistent with his unbounded patronage of the Buddhist establishment,

[53] On this office, see Robert des Rotours, trans., *Traité des fonctionnaires et Traité de l'armée, traduits de la Nouvelle histoire des T'ang (chap. XLVI–L)*, 2 vols., Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Vol. 6 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1948), pp. 462–67; and *Hsin t'ang shu*, pp. 1269–70.

[54] *T'ang liu-tien* (completed 639), ed. Chang Chiu-ling, Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen, Series 6, Vols. 117–19 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1976), ch. 22, p. 10b. This passage is elided in the corresponding chapter of the *Hsin t'ang shu*, p. 1269. Rotours, *Traité des fonctionnaires*, p. 465, n. 2, writes, "in fact it is certain that the authors of the *Hsin t'ang shu* intentionally suppressed this passage, because they sought to do away with all evidence of Buddhism." The *T'ang liu-tien* and the *Hsin t'ang shu* also note the responsibilities of the Central Office for furnishing items on 2/2, the Cold Food Festival (105 days after the winter solstice), 5/5, 7/7, and the New Year Festival; see Rotours, *Traité des fonctionnaires*, pp. 463–66.

[55] The *T'ang liu-tien* incorporates segments of the revised laws promulgated in 719 and 737. See Denis C. Twitchett, "Hsüan-tsung," Chapter 7 of *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), pp. 354, 414–15; and Robert des Rotours, "Le T'ang lieou-tien décrit-il exactement les institutions en usage sous la dynastie des T'ang?" JA 263:1–2 (1975):183–201.

which included temple construction, mass ordinations, large feasts, and special support of the Tantric monk Pu-k'ung chin-kang (Amoghavajra) (705–774).[56] Sources allow us to chart the route followed by the T'ang emperors' ancestral tablets as they were carried to and from the Palace Chapel in the imperial quarters of Ch'ang-an. The sources do not focus on the celebration of the festival at public, state-supported temples, but rather on the semiprivate rituals that Tai-tsung performed for his own ancestors, the preceding Sons of Heaven, in the context of the imperial ancestral cult. The rituals he performed were typical of other imperial celebrations during the T'ang. It also appears that Tai-tsung used the occasion to make special provisions for the salvation of his mother, who would not normally have been included in the formal imperial rites.

While many of the imperial festivities were shielded from public view, in most respects they resembled the popular celebration of the ghost festival. Music, dancing, and ornate banners filled the streets of the city, and large crowds must have joined the imperial procession—already swollen by ranks of officials and musicians—as it made its way to Chang-ching ssu just outside of Ch'ang-an.

The earliest (also the most complete) description of the celebration of 768 in Ch'ang-an is contained in the biography of Wang Chin (d. 781) in the *Old T'ang History*. Wang Chin, the younger brother of the famous poet Wang Wei (701–756), was the high official usually blamed for Tai-tsung's heavy patronage of Buddhism. According to Wang's biography:

> On the full moon of the seventh month Tai-tsung made yü-lan bowls in the Palace Chapel. They were decorated with golden kingfisher feathers and cost a million cash. He also set out ancestral tablets for seven generations from Kao-tsu on down. They were completely clothed in pennants and dragon parasols, with their venerable names written on the pennants so that people would know [which tablet represented which ancestor]. These tablets were carried out from the imperial precincts to be displayed in the Buddhist and Taoist temples. On this day all of the officials with their insignia were arrayed at the Gate of Bright Accord to await the procession. Banners and flowers, singing and dancing, and shouts of welcome filled the streets.
>
> The celebration was an annual affair, but knowledgeable people

[56] For the institutional history of Buddhism during Tai-tsung's reign, see Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 77–89.

ridiculed its untraditional nature. The destruction of the teaching [of the Sage-Emperors] began with Wang.[57]

A thirteenth-century account by the Buddhist historian Chih-p'an (ca. 1260) adds a few details:

In the seventh month an edict established the yü-lan-p'en assembly. Ancestral tablets for seven generations from Kao-tsu on down were taken from the Imperial Ancestral Temple and set out in the Palace Chapel. Banners and flowers, music and singing accompanied them all along the road, and all of the officials received them and paid obeisance. The celebration was an annual affair.

The next day numinous fungus sprouted in two rooms of the Imperial Ancestral Temple.[58]

These two accounts provide a tantalizing picture of the nature of imperial celebrations during the T'ang. The spirit tablets of the imperial ancestors were taken from their usual niches in the Imperial Ancestral Temple (*t'ai-miao*) to the Palace Chapel (*nei tao-ch'ang*), where Tai-tsung made the yü-lan-p'en offering. In theory the Imperial Ancestral Temple was the locus of the emperor's ancestral cult, but during the T'ang few emperors actually performed ceremonies there.[59] Tai-tsung decided not to make ghost festival offerings in the Imperial Ancestral Temple, which was located in the Imperial City (*huang-ch'eng*), the cordon of government offices in the north-central part of Ch'ang-an.[60] Instead he chose to have his family's ancestral tablets brought to the Palace Chapel, which was located in the part of Ch'ang-an designated as the emperor's living quarters, the Palace of Great Illumination (Taming kung).[61]

[57] Translation from *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 3418. Cf. the translation by Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, "Filial Piety in Chinese Buddhism," HJAS 28 (1968):93, which deletes the historian's criticism in the last two sentences. The account (minus the last sentence) is also reproduced in *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, p. 272a–b.

[58] *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:378; see also T. 49:451a.

[59] See Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), esp. pp. 123–41.

[60] See *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao*, Hsü Sung (1781–1848), in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō: shiryō hen*, ed. Hiraoka Takeo, T'ang Civilization Reference Series, No. 6 (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1956), ch. 1, p. 11v.

[61] The Palace of Great Illumination was built under T'ai-tsung (r. 626–649), and Kao-tsung moved his residence there in 662. During the T'ang "Palace Chapel" appears to have been the generic term for the ritual space within the imperial living quarters in which any Buddhist or Taoist event was held. Seasonal observances like the ghost festival and the Buddha's birthday, irregular events like feasts, ordinations, and prayers for rain, as well as debates between Buddhists and Taoists were all held there. On the *nei tao-ch'ang* in T'ang times, see *Ta-sung seng-shih lüeh*, by Tsan-ning (919–1001), T. no. 2126,

The imperial ancestral cult was limited to the imperial family. Tai-tsung took part in the ghost festival for the sake of his own ancestors, with the proceedings largely closed to the public. Our sources indicate that when they were taken out of the emperor's family temple and placed in public view, the spirit tablets were so completely covered that their names, which were engraved on the tablets themselves, had to be written on the cloth-and-feather coverings so that people would know which tablet was which. Through these tablets, all of the T'ang emperors who preceded Tai-tsung (Kao-tsu [r. 618–626] and the six succeeding emperors) were present at the service held in the Palace Chapel.

The celebration of 768 was opened to the public only after the conclusion of the imperial service. After Tai-tsung had made his lavish offerings in the Palace Chapel, the tablets were paraded through the Palace of Great Illumination and eventually taken to public temples. While the procession still remained within the imperial precincts, a host of officials gathered at a small gate internal to the Palace of Great Illumination, the Gate of Bright Accord (Kuang-shun men), to join in the procession.[62] After bowing to the T'ang ancestors, the government officers took their place in the cortege as it made its way out of the imperial quarters.

The ceremony described above—Tai-tsung's offerings in the Palace Chapel and the procession of ancestral tablets through the Gate of Bright Accord—represents only one-half of the imperially sponsored celebration. Other sources show that the celebration continued outside the walls of Ch'ang-an at Chang-ching ssu. An eleventh-century collection of documents notes that in 768:

> In the seventh month [the emperor] sent special yü-lan bowls to Chang-ching ssu, which had recently been completed. To supplement [his repayment of] unbounded kindness [that his parents had bestowed], he decreed that all of the officials go to the temple and make a procession with incense.[63]

54:247b–c; Michihata Ryōshū, *Tōdai bukkyō shi no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1957), pp. 24–28; and Naba Toshisada, "Tōdai ni okeru kokugi gyōkō ni tsuite" (1955), reprinted in *Tōdai shakai bunka shi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1974), pp. 33–48. For the history of the *nei tao-ch'ang* in the Chin and Sui dynasties, see Yamazaki Hiroshi, *Zui tō bukkyō shi no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), pp. 85–115.

[62] On the location of the Kuang-shun men, see *Ch'ang-an chih*, Sung Min-ch'iu (1019–1079), in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō*, ch. 6, p. 7v; and *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao*, in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō*, ch. 1, p. 17r. Tai-tsung had had a Buddhist statue installed at the Kuang-shun men in 765, see *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. 49:377c.

[63] *Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei*, Wang Ch'in-jo (962–1025), 12 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü,

Chang-ching ssu was located just outside of Ch'ang-an, near the northern end of the eastern city wall.[64] Chang-ching ssu had been established only the year before. It was named after Tai-tsung's mother, who was given the honorific name of "Chang-ching" (Dowager Who "Displays Respect"), and the temple was constructed to make merit on her behalf. The temple proved to be a thriving center of monastic and lay activity through the end of the T'ang dynasty.[65]

What is particularly noteworthy about the latter half of the 768 ceremony is that it was probably not performed for the benefit of the emperor's male ancestors, but for the sake of his mother, who had no official place in the imperial line residing at the Imperial Ancestral Temple. This second, maternal aspect of the celebration, performed after the rites affirming the patriliny, may well be the unmentioned insult that Liu Hsü equates with "the destruction of the teaching [of the Sage-Emperors]." While all versions of the yü-lan-p'en myth clearly show Mu-lien performing the service for his departed mother, most emperors apparently gave offerings only to their male ancestors.[66] In following Mu-lien's example, Tai-tsung was an exception: he used the ceremony of 768 to make extensive provisions for his mother's salvation.

Where Liu Hsü sees the destructive effects of the Buddhist and matrilineal slant given to the festival, Chih-p'an points to its miraculous results when he reports that, "The next day numinous fungus sprouted in two rooms of the Imperial Ancestral Temple." Sources prior to Chih-p'an's thirteenth-century account make no mention of this auspicious sign, although the *Old T'ang History* reports that fungus did sprout in two rooms of the Imperial Ancestral Temple on the thirtieth day of the seventh month two years before, in 766.[67]

1960), 1:577a. See also *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* (completed 1084), Ssu-ma Kuang, 10 vols., (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1955), pp. 3496b–97a.

[64] See *Ch'ang-an chih*, Sung Min-ch'iu, in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō*, ch. 10, p. 12r.

[65] See *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*, pp. 3493b–94b; and *T'ang hui-yao*, Wang P'u (922–982), Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng, No. 27 (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1969), ch. 48, p. 6r–v. For more background on the construction and later history of this temple, see Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 83–84.

[66] It is highly unlikely that Empress Wu was represented by a spirit tablet in the Imperial Ancestral Temple after the reigns of her two sons, Chung-tsung (r. 705–710) and Jui-tsung (r. 710–712). If she was so represented, there would have been seven spirit tablets *in addition to* Kao-tsu's in the procession in the Palace Chapel in 768.

[67] In my opinion the most reasonable date for the fungus sprouting is 7/30/766. The *Old T'ang History* records the event for the seventh month of the year 766: "on the *kuei-wei* [thirtieth] day a fungus plant sprouted in two rooms of the Imperial Ancestral Temple," *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 283. It is my guess that this event was too well known and too

Poems and Celebrations under Emperor Te-tsung (r. 779–805)

The pattern of ghost festival celebrations under Emperor Te-tsung (r. 779–805) reflects the broader fluctuations in the official attitude toward the Buddhist establishment during the T'ang dynasty. It would appear that both state support for public celebrations as well as the emperor's own participation in the festival waned at the beginning and waxed at the end of Te-tsung's reign. While the sources allow only a spotty reconstruction of celebrations during these years, they do preserve two noteworthy poems written on the occasion of the ghost festival in 791. One poem, by Te-tsung himself, draws on a largely Buddhist vocabulary to praise quiescence and the virtue of charity. The second poem, written by Ts'ui Yüan-yü, combines a mild rebuke of the emperor for his self-absorption with an appreciation of the cosmological significance of the early autumn ritual.

In his early years, Emperor Te-tsung sharply reduced the high level of spending on Buddhist and Taoist establishments characteristic of his father's rule.[68] In 780 he marked the second ghost festival of his reign by putting an end to celebrations in the palace. The *Old T'ang History* notes that, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month in autumn, the practice of setting out yü-lan bowls in the palace was ended, and monks were not ordered to appear in the Palace Chapel."[69]

The banishment of Buddhist symbols and rituals from the imperial ancestral cult, which probably lasted for only eleven years, apparently had little or no effect on the popular celebrations of the ghost festival, for we find the Buddhist histories reporting that, sometime during his reign, the emperor himself went out to An-kuo ssu in northeast

useful—as an auspicious sign—for Buddhist historians to pass over in silence. Chih-p'an included the event in a Buddhist scheme by changing the date (from 7/30/766 to 7/16/768) so that it affirmed the efficacy of yü-lan-p'en offerings. Tsu-hsiu, a Buddhist historian who wrote the *Lung-hsing fo-chiao pien-nien t'ung-lun* in 1164, included the event in a Buddhist scheme by moving Tai-tsung's famous celebration of the festival to the day before the fungus sprouted. But Tsu-hsiu neglected to change the original sexagenary designation of the date, so that on his accounting the yü-lan-p'en offerings were made on the unlikely date of 7/29/766; see *Lung-hsing fo-chiao pien-nien t'ung-lun*, in Z. 2B, 3:3, p. 297rb. Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang*, p. 83, accepts Tsu-hsiu's date of 766. (Tsu-hsiu incorrectly records the year as the first year of Ta-li. The year was in fact the second year of Yung-t'ai, since the reign name was not changed from Yung-t'ai to Ta-li until the eleventh month; see Tung Tso-pin, *Chung-kuo nien-li tsung-p'u*, 2 vols. [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960], 2:270.)

[68] For the institutional history of Buddhism during Te-tsung's reign, see Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang*, pp. 88–89.

[69] *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 780.

Ch'ang-an to observe yü-lan-p'en festivities.[70] A late source hints that imperial offerings in the Palace Chapel had been resumed in 786, but this possibility cannot be established with certainty.[71]

By the year 791 Te-tsung had in any event reverted to the practice, begun by his father in 768, of attending ghost festival services at Chang-ching ssu. Several sources preserve records of the event, which probably occurred on the night of the fourteenth:

> On the seventh month of the seventh year [of Chen-yüan, i.e., 791], the Emperor visited Chang-ching ssu and composed a poem:
>
> 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.
>
> I have heard tell that the immortal teaches
> Tranquility, honors no-birth.
>
> My offerings are baskets of the seven goods,
> To perfect charity before other actions.
>
> With name and form both silent
> How do pleasures maintain their glory?
>
> Autumn's golden wind fans a light breeze,
> Distant smoke thick and crystal blue.
>
> Pine garden peaceful, mossy;
> Bamboo hut, sonorous chimes.
>
> Pitch dark, utterly quiet thought—
> The Way triumphant, externals quelled.
>
> Consciousness at base is not for speaking—
> Whetting my brush, feeling again fills the void.

[70] *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:451a. [Ta] An-kuo ssu was located in the eastern half of the Ch'ang-lo quarter of Ch'ang-an. It was established in 710 by Emperor Jui-tsung and contained murals painted by disciples of the famous painter, Wu Tao-hsüan (ca. eighth century). See *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao*, in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō*, ch. 3, pp. 17v–18r.

[71] Chüeh-an (ca. 1354) in his *Shih-shih chi-ku lüeh*, T. no. 2037, writes that in 786, "The yü-lan-p'en assembly was reinstituted just like in Tai-tsung's time," T. 49:829c. Tai-tsung had celebrated the festival in both the Palace Chapel and at Chang-ching ssu, so if Chüeh-an's account is reliable, it would suggest that Te-tsung reinstituted celebrations in both places in 786. Other sources make no mention of the 786 celebration.

All of the officials were in agreement, and it was written on the temple walls. Later, Ching-chao Yin Hsüeh-ku asked permission to have the emperor's poem engraved in stone and filled in with gold.[72]

The festival in this year must have been a raucous event, as Te-tsung refers to crowds from the four corners[73] lining the streets leading to the temple. The emperor makes use of Buddhist terminology in portraying his offering as an act of charity[74] and in describing a path of meditation that ends in quiescence and a heightened state of awareness. For Te-tsung the Buddha's teaching of emptiness complements the mild autumn breeze and reverberating temple bells that penetrate the temple gardens. In the poem's precious ending, Te-tsung's moment of quiet, ineffable illumination gives way to expression as he picks up his brush to try his hand at verse.

Fortunately Te-tsung's poetic efforts gave rise to a fine piece by Ts'ui Yüan-yü, a poem entitled, "Accompanying the Sage's Poem Written on Chung-yüan at Chang-ching Ssu." Ts'ui was from Po-ling (present-day Shantung) and occupied various posts in the central government, including Auxiliary Secretary of the Board of Rites (Li-pu yüan-wai-lang) and Erudite in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (T'ai-ch'ang po-shih). In both positions his responsibilities demanded a thorough knowledge of the protocol and practice of state-sponsored ritual.[75] I render his poem below:

The mysterious Way cannot be expressed in basic speech,
Taking different paths, assuming other names.

But the Sage possesses its essentials,
Fully transforming all creatures.

[72] Translation from *T'ang hui-yao*, Wang P'u, ch. 27, p. 14r; emended on the basis of the recension in *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, p. 7. The account in *T'ang hui-yao* is reproduced in ch. 29 of the *Yü hai*, Wang Ying-lin (1223–1296) (Taipei: Hua-wen shu-chü, 1964), pp. 607b–8a. The brief account in the *Old T'ang History* dates the event on the fourteenth, *Chiu t'ang shu*, p. 372.

[73] "People from all over" translates "*chao-t'i*," a transliteration of the Skt., "*catur deśa*," meaning "four quarters," often used in the expression "monks of the four quarters" (*chao-t'i seng* or *chao-t'i k'o*). See CWTTT, 12212.90.

[74] In *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, King Bimbisāra offers "bowls of the seven jewels" *(ch'i-pao p'en-po); Ching-t'u yü-lan-p'en ching*, in Jan Jaworski, "L'Avalambana Sūtra de la terre pure," l. 52.

[75] For Ts'ui's biography, see *Chiu t'ang shu*, pp. 3766–67; *Hsin t'ang shu*, p. 5783; and *T'ang-shih chi-shih*, pp. 533–34. His surviving works are collected in *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, pp. 3521–22; and in *Ch'üan t'ang wen*, ch. 523.

A phoenix calls from the royal gardens,
Dragon palaces form outer walls;

Flower garlands arrayed in the rear halls,
Cloud chariots parked in the front chambers.

Pine, bamboo—full of the new season,
Porch windows cool and fresh.

Fond memories of K'ung-t'ung—
Flute music, play on.

Outside of form, complete silence;
Forgetting words, reason made pure.

If within the realm sincerity may be called great,
Then the empire will rest at ease.

Yielding comes from making things equal;
How can the brave heart of Yao maintain its glory?[76]

Ts'ui's poem gains its force by posing a Way of action as a conclusion to the Way of stillness touted in Te-tsung's poem. Ts'ui begins with an echo of the transcendent silence in Te-tsung's poem and then further explores how that silence may be used to order and harmonize the social world. While the Way itself remains transcendent to words, it finds instrumental expression in the actions and virtues of the Sage. Thus, the empire is ordered when the Sage—and certainly both Te-tsung and the Buddha fall under this hallowed rubric—cultivates responsiveness and yielding.[77] The virtues of quiescence and meditation are to be seen in their broader ramifications, in their effect upon the empire.

In his description of the Sage's experience, Ts'ui commands a much richer stock of allusions than does Te-tsung. The call of the phoenix is usually heard, for instance, when the Great Gate opens in K'un-lun,[78] and cloud chariots are a favorite mode of transport for sky-bound goddesses, holy men, and dragons. In Ts'ui's poem, as in Yang Chiung's

[76] *Ch'üan t'ang shih*, p. 3521.

[77] In his line, "If within the realm sincerity may be called great," Ts'ui alludes to the *Tao te ching*, ch. 25: ". . . the Way is great, heaven is great, earth is great, and the king is also great. Within the realm there are four things that are great, and the king counts as one"; *Lao-tzu tao te ching chu*, Hsin-pien chu-tzu chi-ch'eng, Vol. 3 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1978), p. 14; translation following D. C. Lau, trans., *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 82. For Ts'ui, as for the Taoist and Buddhist sources to which he alludes, the perfection of virtue by the Sage is inevitably related to the social order.

[78] See PWYF, p. 643c.

"Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody" written a century before, the ghost festival effects the rupture that brings the cool mountains of K'ung-t'ung (in Kansu and Honan) closer to hand.

The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother from the Dark Regions (CA. 800)

The "transformation text" (*pien-wen*) concerning Mu-lien narrates a story that had wide circulation in T'ang China. The value of this prosimetric tale, which grew out of oral storytelling traditions, is that it demonstrates the particular kinds of appeal that the ghost festival and Mu-lien had for the popular imagination in medieval times. As a reflection of Chinese religion at the grass roots, *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* presents a view of the world in which gods, heroes, and concepts of foreign origin are fully synthesized with indigenous ones. The focus of the transformation text is different from that of the canonical sources. Its version of the Mu-lien myth is almost exclusively concerned with Mu-lien's tour of hell, sparing no detail in narrating the punishment of hell dwellers, the inexorable laws of karma, and the unbending magistrates who administer punishments. In the transformation text Mu-lien satisfies simultaneously the demands of filiality and world renunciation, wielding the powers of the shaman and those of the monk to deliver his mother from the tortures of hell.

A mature understanding of the significance of transformation texts in the social, literary, and religious history of China has emerged only in the past few decades. Building on the earlier work of those Chinese scholars who first edited the *pien-wen* manuscripts discovered at Tun-huang, current studies have begun to answer with more certainty questions concerning the literary form, the pictorial aspects, the audience, and the origins of transformation texts.[79]

[79] My summary in the next four paragraphs draws most heavily on the work of Victor H. Mair, including *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts," *Chinoperl Papers* No. 10 (1981):5–96. See also Mair's forthcoming study of the Indic origins and pan-Asian development of picture stories, *T'ang Transformation Texts*, Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming). See also Pai Hua-wen, "What is *Pien-wen*?" trans. Victor H. Mair, HJAS 44:2 (December 1984):493–514; and Kanaoka Shōkō, *Tonkō no bungaku* (Tokyo: Daizō shuppansha, 1971). For representative earlier studies, see Hsiang Ta, "T'ang-tai su-chiang k'ao," *Kuo-hsüeh chi-k'an* 6:4 (January 1950):1–42, reprinted in *T'ang-tai ch'ang-an yü hsi-yü wen-ming* (Peking: Sheng-huo tu-shu hsin-chih

Transformation texts represent a Chinese adaptation of the *chantefable* form characteristic of Buddhist sūtras and stories. Prose portions in *pien-wen* are often in the vernacular language, while their metrical sections are heptasyllabic, with varying rhyme schemes. The extant *pien-wen* manuscripts are neither scripts for the performance of stories nor independent literary pieces. Rather, they lie somewhere between the poles of a precise written record of an oral performance and an independently circulated written text. The Tun-huang manuscripts of this prosimetric form also reflect the less-than-advanced stage of literacy achieved by the lay students who copied them.

Both internal and external evidence confirms the pictorial aspect of *pien-wen* performance. Transformation texts almost always introduce long verse sections with the phrase (or one of its variants), "Please look at the place where [a particular event, e.g., Mu-lien's encounter with King Yama in hell] occurs, how does it go?" At these junctures in the performance, storytellers would direct their audience's attention to a new picture, which depicted the next scene described in the story. Contemporary accounts make it clear that some storytellers used painted scrolls that they turned to expose a succession of scenes, while some had recourse to the "transformation pictures" (*pien-hsiang*) adorning the walls of temples and monasteries.[80]

Other sources provide important clues concerning the performers and the audience of T'ang picture tales. They were recited, sung, and illustrated not by monks, but by professional entertainers, often female singers. The most frequent audience for these performances consisted neither of monks nor literate lay people, but the masses at large, those people who gathered in and around Buddhist temples during the numerous seasonal festivals (including the seventh moon) that punctuated the Chinese year. Common people flocked to these grand spectacles not simply to make offerings, but also to be part of a large, festive gathering, to purchase rare items and display their own family's wealth, and to hear the poems and watch the pictures depicting favorite stories from the popular tradition. Within the compass of popular Chinese lit-

san-lien shu-tien ch'u-pan, 1957), pp. 1–116; Cheng Chen-to, *Chung-kuo su-wen-hsüeh shih*, 2 vols. (1954; reprint ed., Taipei: Commercial Press, 1965), 1:180–270; Lo Tsung-t'ao, "Pien-ko, pien-hsiang, pien-wen," *Chung-hua hsüeh-yüan* No. 7 (March 1971):73–99; and Paul Demiéville, "Les Débuts de la littérature en chinois vulgaire," *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus* (1952), reprinted in *Choix d'études sinologiques* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 121–29.

[80] For a picture scroll (narrating Śāriputra's battle with Raudrākṣa) with verses on the back, apparently for use by storytellers, see Akiyama Terukazu, "Tonkō-bon gōmahen emaki ni tsuite," *Bijutsu kenkyū* No. 187 (July 1956):1–35; and idem, "Tonkō ni okeru henbun to kaiga," *Bijutsu kenkyū* No. 211 (July 1960):1–28.

erature such *pien-wen* as *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* are unsurpassed in entertainment value.

Pien-wen not only entertained—*The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* abounds with blood and entrails, metamorphosing animals, cosmic battles waged against the spooks and guardians of hell—they also educated. That is, the "transformations" or manifestations of Buddhas, gods, and heroes spoken of in these texts were also intended to enlighten their audience. Short of complete illumination, they edified and instructed common people in the ethics and cosmology of Chinese Buddhist folk religion. The *pien-wen* version of the Mu-lien tale demonstrated the efficacy of charity, the donation of gifts to monks by lay people. Through explicit lectures from the likes of King Yama and other functionaries of hell and through the example of particular kinds of hells corresponding to particular kinds of sinful acts, the transformation text drove home the inevitability of karmic retribution.

The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother relates the Mu-lien myth as it was told to the "masses," unfiltered by the monastic establishment and uncensored by Confucian tastes. It is an expression of the values and interests of the vast majority of Chinese people, who took part in the ghost festival as small donors and willing listeners, not as Buddhist converts or government officials. Its value is further enhanced by the large number of extant manuscripts, which, though not without lacunae and other problems, constitute a nearly complete text.[81] Lines from a "Mu-lien transformation" (*Mu-lien pien*) are quoted in a humorous dialogue between the poet, Po Chü-i (772–846),

[81] Victor H. Mair's translation in *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* further increases the value of this text. I have also consulted the translation by Iriya Yoshitaka, "Dai mokkenren meikan kyūbo henbun," in *Bukkyō bungaku shū*, ed. Iriya Yoshitaka, Chūgoku koten bungaku taikei (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975), pp. 54–81. Waley's incomplete but elegant translation may still be consulted with advantage; Arthur Waley, trans., *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang: An Anthology* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960). My references are to the Chinese text in THPWC, pp. 714–55, usually following Mair's emendations. *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* is also collated in Chou Shao-liang, ed., *Tun-huang pien-wen hui-lu* (Shanghai: Shang-hai ch'u-pan kung-ssu, 1955), pp. 149–85. For other studies, see Aoki Masaru, "Tonkō isho *Mokuren engi, Dai mokkenren meikan kyūbo henbun*, oyobi *Gōma ōzabun* ni tsuite," *Shinagaku* 4:3 (October 1927):123–30, reprinted in *Shina bungaku geijutsu kō* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1942), pp. 172–82; Kuraishi Takeshirō, "*Mokuren henbun* shōkai no ato ni," *Shinagaku* 4:3 (October 1927):130–38; Kawaguchi Hisao, "Tonkō henbun no sozai to nihon bungaku: *Mokuren henbun, Gōma henbun*," *Nihon chūgoku gakkai hō* No. 8 (1957):116–33; Kanaoka Shōkō, *Tonkō no bungaku* (Tokyo: Daizō shuppansha, 1971), pp. 249–57; and idem, *Tonkō no minshū: sono seikatsu to shisō*, Tōyōjin no kōdō to shisō, Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1972), pp. 189–232.

and a visitor that took place in 825 or 826 in Su-chou (present-day Kiangsu).[82] The current text of *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* may be dated roughly to the year 800, although the unwritten traditions on which it draws probably extend back several centuries before that.

The story of the founding of the ghost festival (the main focus of the canonical yü-lan-p'en sources) forms but a fraction of *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother.* Instead, the audience's attention is given over almost entirely to Mu-lien's quest for his mother, Ch'ing-t'i. The transformation text begins with a brief account of Ch'ing-t'i's previous actions, her avaricious lies and refusal to donate food to monks, which land her in the deepest of all hells, Avīci Hell. Most of the story focuses on Mu-lien's efforts to find his dear, departed mother, whom he believes to be free of sin. He finds his father in Brahmā's Heaven, but not his mother. Descending beneath the surface of the continent of Jambudvīpa, Mu-lien questions a long succession of hell dwellers and bureaucrat-gods concerning her whereabouts. The narrative serves as a guidebook to the hells. It points out such important landmarks as the Watthellwedo River, which all sinners must cross, and it details the titles and functions of all of the members of the underworld bureaucracy from the lowliest gaolers and messengers to King Yama and the Magistrate of Mount T'ai. It spares few details in describing the tortures undergone by hell dwellers, while the heavens (Brahmā's Palace and the Heaven of Thirty-Three, where Ch'ing-t'i eventually achieves rebirth) are mentioned summarily in uninspired terms.

In *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother,* Mu-lien emerges as a brave adventurer willing to risk anything for the salvation of his mother. While the Buddha does break down the gates of Avīci Hell to release Ch'ing-t'i, the hero of the story is clearly Mu-lien. It is Mu-lien, a merely human disciple, who braves the spears and flames of hell, and it is Mu-lien who undertakes the journey to the other world to communicate with ancestral spirits. The transformation text is not primarily concerned with abstract values like filiality or wisdom, with rebirth in the Pure Land or achieving the unproduced state of *nirvāṇa,*

[82] The dialogue between Po Chü-i and Chang Hu is first recorded by Meng Ch'i (ca. 886) in *Pen-shih shih,* contained in *Pen-shih shih, Pen-shih tz'u,* Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh ts'an-k'ao tzu-liao hsiao ts'ung-shu, Series 2, No. 2 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), p. 23. See also Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772–846 A.D.* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), pp. 44, 219. The dialogue is also included in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (completed 978), Li Fang, 5 vols. (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1959), p. 1948.

or with the exemplary enlightenment experience or soteriological role of the Buddha. Rather, the *pien-wen* story expresses the more concrete and visceral interests of the popular imagination: the experience of the spirit medium, the frightening realities of the underworld, and the rituals needed to help the ancestors escape suffering.

The transformation text reflects in its own way the fascinating synthesis of originally Chinese and Indian motifs characteristic of Chinese religion from medieval times onward. The hells that it describes are staffed by deities originating in Indian tradition as well as by indigenous bureaucrats, all of whom administer a single karmic law. Mu-lien holds the sword of the Chinese shaman at the same time as he tours the cosmos in the guise of a meditating monk. *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* also offers a dramatic and convincing account of the ultimate harmony of family life and monasticism. It is precisely his powers of meditation—the province of the monk—that enable Mu-lien to provide for the salvation of his ancestors. Mu-lien achieves the status of filial son because he is a monk and vice versa, thus demonstrating the potency of combining renunciation with worldly responsibility.

The myth related in *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother* remained an enduring part of popular Chinese culture after the T'ang, its characters and plot forming the basis for plays and precious scrolls even in the twentieth century.

TSUNG-MI'S *Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* (CA. 830)

The *Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, written by Tsung-mi (780–841), stands as eloquent testimony to the centrality of the ghost festival in early ninth-century Chinese society and to the genius of its author, a highly placed scholar-monk who gave systematic expression to the tradition of Sinicized Buddhism.[83] For Tsung-mi, the presuppositions

[83] Okabe Kazuo provides a good, brief introduction to the place of the yü-lan-p'en commentary in Tsung-mi's work in "Shūmitsu ni okeru kōron no tenkai to sono hōhō," IBK 15:2 (March 1967):574–78. On Tsung-mi see also Furuta Shōkin, "Keihō shūmitsu no kenkyū," *Shina bukkyō shigaku* 2:2 (1938):83–97; Kamata Shigeo, *Shūmitsu kyōgaku no shisōshiteki kenkyū: chūgoku kegon shisō shi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppansha, 1975); Takamine Ryōshū, *Kegon shisō shi*, second ed. (Tokyo: Hyakkaen, 1963), pp. 299–316; and Yamazaki, *Zui tō bukkyō shi no kenkyū*, pp. 223–37. For two recent studies in English, each of which significantly revises traditional views of Tsung-mi, see Yün-hua Jan, "Tsung-mi: His Analysis of Ch'an Buddhism," TP 58 (1972):1–54; and Peter N. Gregory, "The Teaching of Men and Gods: the Doctrinal and Social Basis of Lay Buddhist Practice in the Hua-yen Tradition," in *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen*, eds. Peter N.

and practice of the ghost festival represent a synthesis of core Chinese values with the tenets and rituals of Buddhism. In his lengthy commentary, over eleven times longer than the sūtra, the festival emerges not as an inchoate or sloppy mixture, but as the positive expression of a well-reasoned, all-encompassing hierarchy of values. The ghost festival is not viewed from the heights of an otherworldly philosophy or through the lens of meditative culture, approaches we might expect of such well-read monks as Tsung-mi. Instead, Tsung-mi demonstrates the relevance of the festival to the realities of social life of the vast majority of Chinese people. The regulating principle of the householder's life is never even questioned; Tsung-mi simply assumes the importance of the ancestors in Chinese family religion. For Tsung-mi filial devotion is the one consistent teaching of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, and he articulates this concept through every source available to him, including Mahāyāna sūtras and the Chinese classics.

Tsung-mi's commentary also retains a singular place in the narrower world of Chinese Buddhist exegesis. By the Southern Sung dynasty, it had become the standard commentary on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, spawning numerous subcommentaries and sub-subcommentaries.[84] For many of these later commentators it was Tsung-mi's language, not that of the original sūtra, which now deserved exegesis.

Tsung-mi, whose surname was Ho, was born in 780 in the prefecture of Kuo (present-day Szechuan).[85] As a youth he combined a traditional course of education as preparation for a career in government with a lay interest in Buddhist writings. At the age of twenty-seven he left the householder's life and began a period of travel and study with

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Gregory and Robert M. Gimello, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 1 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 253–320.

[84] Tsung-mi's commentary was the basis for dozens of Chinese and Japanese subcommentaries. The extant Chinese subcommentaries include: *Lan-p'en ching shu-ch'ao yü-i (Further Meanings of the Commentary on the Lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Jih-hsin (ca. 1068, Z. 1, 94:4; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsin-chi (A New Record of the Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Yüan-chao (1048–1116), Z. 1, 35:2; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsiao-heng ch'ao (A Consideration of Filial Devotion in the Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Yü-jung (Sung), Z. 1, 94:4; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hui-ku t'ung-chin chi (A Record of the Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra Which Comprehends the Old and Understands the New)*, P'u-kuan (ca. 1178), Z. 1, 35:2; *Yü-lan-p'en ching hsin-shu (A New Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Chih-hsü (1599–1655), Z. 1, 35:2; *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu che-chung shu (Commentary Giving Equal Measure to [Tsung-mi's and Chih-hsü's] Commentaries on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Ling-yao (Ch'ing), Z. 1, 35:2; and *Yü-lan-p'en ching lüeh-shu (Condensed Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra)*, Yüan-ch'i (Ch'ing), Z. 1. 35:2.

[85] Biographical details in this paragraph and the next are drawn from *Sung kao-seng chuan*, T. no. 2061, 50:741c–43a; *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:293c; and Takamine, *Kegon shisō shi*, pp. 299–316.

different teachers. He went to a monastery near Kuei-feng Mountain (near Ch'ang-an) for the first time in 821 and would return there frequently in later years. In 828 Tsung-mi lectured on Buddhism during the ritualized debates held on the emperor's birthday and was later bestowed a purple robe and the rank of Monk of Great Virtue. Tsung-mi died in 841 and was later granted the honorific title "Meditation Master of Concentration and Wisdom" (Ting-hui ch'an-shih).

Tsung-mi embraced many seemingly divergent trends in his life work, a distinction that is apparent in his posthumous elevation to the status of patriarch in two "schools" of Chinese Buddhism, Hua-yen and Ch'an. Tsung-mi read broadly in the Buddhist canon, and he wrote and lectured extensively on Hua-yen texts. He studied with meditation teachers and lived in seclusion during various periods of his life, writing important commentaries and compiling a lengthy collection of Ch'an texts. Tsung-mi also took an interest in the details of daily life and wrote several works on monastic ritual. Modern scholarship has recently portrayed Tsung-mi as a thinker of great catholicity, pluralistic in his acceptance of divergent forms of Buddhism, synthetic in his melding of thought and practice, and all-embracing in his affirmation of core Chinese values. As Peter Gregory writes, "By creating a framework in which Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism could be synthesized, Tsung-mi not only transcended the polemical intent of the earlier debates between the three teachings, but he also laid out a methodology by which Confucian terms—infused with Buddhist meaning—were later to be resurrected in the Confucian revival of the Sung dynasty."[86]

Tsung-mi's catholic interests are perhaps most apparent in his *Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, written between 822 and 841.[87] The first chapter of the commentary discusses the general significance of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, while the second chapter contains a phrase-by-phrase exegesis.

Tsung-mi begins by singing the praises of filial devotion:

> Beginning in formless chaos, filling all of heaven and earth, uniting men and spirits, connecting noble and poor; Confucians and Buddhists both revere it—it is the Way of filial devotion. Re-

[86] Gregory, "The Teaching of Men and Gods," p. 268.

[87] For the date, see Furuta, "Keihō shūmitsu no kenkyū," pp. 88–90. I have used the Taishō edition of Tsung-mi's commentary, *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu*, T. no. 1792, occasionally emended on the basis of Sung subcommentaries. The Taishō text is based on Ming and Tokugawa recensions, which were based on a copy belonging to Chu-hung (1535–1615).

sponding to filial sons' sincerity, saving parents from distress, repaying broad heaven's kind virtue—it is the teaching of yü-lan-p'en.[88]

For Tsung-mi filial devotion is the Tao, the origin and goal of all teachings. It begins in the "formless chaos" (*hun-tun*), the primal condition devoid of names and dichotomies, expanding without discrimination to inform all processes and every form of life. It is a universal truth, the single Path followed by all religions, and it is precisely through yü-lan-p'en that this truth is made fully real.

After a section paying homage to the Buddha, Tsung-mi presents his own analysis of the sūtra. Śākyamuni established the ghost festival, says Tsung-mi, for several reasons: to repay the kindness his parents had shown in raising him, to repay Mu-lien's filial efforts, to teach filiality to others, and to establish an effective way of making merit. Here (and throughout his commentary) Tsung-mi quotes extensively from traditional Chinese as well as from Buddhist sources, exploring different dimensions of the concept of filial devotion. Tsung-mi proceeds to place *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* within the systems of doctrinal classification current in the ninth century. Among the Three Baskets (Sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma), it belongs in both the category of Sūtra, since it teaches a method of deliverance, as well as the category of Vinaya, since it teaches a means of control. Within the Five Vehicles (humans, gods, *śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas), it constitutes a vehicle for humans and gods, a method of cultivating virtue through good deeds to achieve rebirth in the higher heavens.[89] Tsung-mi summarizes the basic teaching of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* in four concepts: "filial obedience, making offerings, rescuing those who suffer, and repaying kindness."

In the second chapter of his commentary Tsung-mi notes the textual history of the sūtra and explains the meaning of the term "yü-lan-p'en":

"Yü-lan" is an expression of the western regions meaning "hanging upside-down."[90] This derives from the soul of the Honored

[88] *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu*, T. 39:505a. Cf. Jan, "Tsung-mi: His Analysis of Ch'an Buddhism," pp. 22–23.

[89] Okabe quite reasonably equates these two vehicles with the "Teaching of Men and Gods" (*jen-t'ien chiao*), which Tsung-mi formulates in his *Yüan-jen lun (Inquiry into the Origin of Man)*, T. no. 1886; see Okabe, "Shūmitsu ni okeru kōron no tenkai to sono hōhō," p. 576. See also Gregory, "The Teaching of Men and Gods," passim.

[90] *Tao-hsien* occurs in *Mencius*, 2A: "At the present time, if a state of ten thousand chariots were to practice benevolent government, the people would rejoice as if they had been

> One's [Mu-lien's] mother being bogged down in the dark paths, suffering hunger and thirst and a fate akin to hanging upside-down. Even the mighty numinosity of her sagely son could not bring an end to her fiery fate. The Buddha ordered that a bowl filled with all kinds of food be offered to the Three Honored Ones [*śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas*, bodhisattvas] out of respect for the luminous kindness of the great assembly and to deliver [those who suffer] from the affliction of hanging upside-down.[91]

Tsung-mi divides the sūtra into three sections: an introductory section on Mu-lien's unsuccessful effort to save his mother; a section on the principal teaching of the sūtra (the Buddha's establishment of the ghost festival as a method for aiding the ancestors); and a section on the propagation of the teaching, in which Mu-lien carries out the offering to the Sangha and his mother attains deliverance.[92]

In his exegesis Tsung-mi draws on the avadāna of Mu-lien's mother to explain how she arrived in hell, quoting, without attribution, from *The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. Hui-ching did not mention the previous lives of Mu-lien or his mother in his earlier *Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, and Tsung-mi's is the first commentary to take account of this version of the Mu-lien myth, a version made popular in the noncanonical *Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* and in *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother*.

The length and the exegetical style of Tsung-mi's commentary make it difficult to summarize further, although in later chapters I shall draw frequently on its line-by-line comments.

The Suppression of Yü-lan-p'en in 844

A diary kept by the Japanese monk Ennin (793–863) preserves an important record of the celebration of the ghost festival in the temples of Ch'ang-an in the year 844. Ennin's record is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it confirms that the celebration of the ghost festival enjoyed great popularity among the T'ang people, who came in large

released from hanging upside-down"; *Meng-tzu yin-te*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 17 (reprint ed., Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), p. 10; translation following D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 76. For other Mencian terminology in *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, see Fujino Ryūnen, "*Urabon kyō* dokugo," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* No. 353 (1956):340–45.

[91] *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu*, T. 39:506c–7a.

[92] Tsung-mi divides *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* differently than does Hui-ching. *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* also follows Tsung-mi's divisions.

numbers to provide lavish offerings to Buddhist temples in the capital city. Second, it sheds significant light on the suppression of Buddhist institutions carried out during "Hui-ch'ang," the reign name given to the years of Emperor Wu-tsung's (r. 840–846) rule. The drastic measures of these years effectively crippled Buddhism as an institutional religion, destroying much of its economic base of support and emasculating the ranks of its monkhood. But Ennin's account also suggests that this T'ang-dynasty cultural revolution had only inconsequential effects on the practice of the ghost festival.

The effect of the Hui-ch'ang suppression on the practice of Chinese Buddhism is known to later history through the journal Ennin kept during his stay in China. This unparalleled literary artifact remains one of the best single sources on the practice of Buddhism in the T'ang dynasty and still serves as a lode tapped by social historians investigating political and institutional history, economics, and international relations in ninth-century China.

Born in 793 in eastern Japan, Ennin studied Tendai thought and practice under the eminent master Saichō (767–822) at Enryakuji on Mount Hiei.[93] After Saichō's death Ennin rose to some prominence as a teacher and lecturer, but went into seclusion at the age of forty. His hermitage ended early, however, when he was appointed to a Japanese delegation to China. The embassy arrived in China in 838, and for the next nine years Ennin trekked through much of eastern, central, and northern China, recording his peregrinations in his diary, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki (The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law)*. In 847 Ennin returned to his homeland, where he was immediately accorded an honored place in the clergy. As the abbot of Enryakuji Ennin lectured to the clerical elite and taught Buddhist rituals to emperors. In his later years Ennin successfully introduced the use of *maṇḍalas* and the ceremony of consecration (Skt.: *abhiṣeka*) into mainstream Tendai practice. In recognition of his teaching and accomplishments, as well as his discipleship under Saichō, Ennin was posthumously bestowed the title of "Great Teacher of Compassion and Insight" (Jikaku daishi).

[93] Ennin's diary, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki*, is still the best biographical source for his years in China. I have used the critical edition of the diary in Ono Katsutoshi, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki no kenkyū*, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Suzuki gakujutsu zaidan, 1964–69). Ono's translation and notes are invaluable, as is Reischauer's translation, 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). For Ennin's years in Japan, see *Zoku gunsho ruijū* (Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1923–28), 8:684–700; Ono, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki no kenkyū*, esp. 4:345–450; and Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1955), pp. 20–38.

The suppression of Buddhism witnessed by Ennin stretched over a number of years, culminating in a series of edicts promulgated in the year 845 which formalized and made even more severe many of the measures taken prior to that time.[94] The Buddhist clergy was repeatedly purged, limits were placed on ordinations into the Sangha, and private property belonging to monks was seized by state authorities. Pilgrimages to holy places were prohibited, as were donations to shrines, and local officials were directed to close most of the smaller temples within their jurisdiction. Finally, in the most damaging series of edicts, most of the property belonging to the larger Buddhist temples, including land, slaves, grain, cash, and cloth, was transferred to state coffers, bells and statues were melted down for copper coinage, and all monks under the age of forty were returned to lay life.

There can be no doubt that the Hui-ch'ang suppression dealt an unprecedented blow to Chinese Buddhist institutions, from which they never fully recovered. In the historical records the suppression rings out as the death knell to organized Buddhism. But the real effects of the suppression remain beyond the reach of analysis, largely because all of the surviving records of the suppression (Ennin's diary, Buddhist histories, and standard histories) are so heavily colored by the political interests of either the staunch defenders or the avowed enemies of the Buddhist establishment. Viewed in a broader context, the Hui-ch'ang suppression followed the pattern of the other well-known persecutions of Buddhism in 446 and 574, with a similar interplay between economic, political, and ideological factors. Furthermore, the years following the Hui-ch'ang suppression were marked by a strong infusion of money and land into the Buddhist church, which now received heavy official support under the revitalizing reign of Emperor Hsiuan-tsung (r. 846–859).[95]

If the effects of the suppression on Buddhism as an institution were less horrific than the Buddhist historians claim, its effects on noninstitutional forms of Buddhism were even less damaging. The practice of mortuary ritual, the annual round of festivals, feats of magic and curing

[94] On the Hui-ch'ang suppression, see Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang*, pp. 114–36; Kamekawa Shōshin, "Kaishō no kaibutsu ni tsuite," *Shina bukkyō shigaku* 6:1 (July 1942):47–68; Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, "The Economic Background of the Hui-ch'ang Suppression of Buddhism," HJAS 19:1–2 (June 1956):67–105; Ono, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki no kenkyū*, 4:544–63; and Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels*, pp. 217–71.

[95] Hsiuan-tsung's name is correctly transliterated as Hsüan-tsung. I follow standard practice in using the irregular form to avoid confusion with Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–756). For details on the rebuilding of Buddhist institutions under Hsiuan-tsung, see Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang*, pp. 136–51.

by popular preachers—there exists little evidence showing that these forms of religious life were very much affected by the Hui-ch'ang suppression.

Ennin's description of the celebration of the ghost festival in 844 is a case in point. He writes:

> Offerings are made at the various temples in the city on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. At each temple [people] present flashy candles, colored cakes, artificial flowers, fruit trees, and the like, vying with one another in their rarities. Customarily the offerings are set out in front of the Buddha halls, and the whole city wanders among the temples at their pleasure. It is quite a flourishing festival.
>
> This year the offerings set out in the various temples surpassed those of normal years, but an edict ordered that all of the flowers, medicines, and the like offered at the Buddha halls of the various temples be taken to the Hsing-t'ang kuan to be sacrificed to the Celestial Venerables. On the fifteenth day the Son of Heaven visited the Taoist temple [i.e., the Hsing-t'ang kuan]. He summoned the people to come and see, but they scolded, "Seizing the Buddha's offerings to sacrifice to gods and spirits—who would dare come and watch?" The [Son of] Heaven was surprised that the people did not come. The various temples were extremely distressed that their offerings had been seized.[96]

According to Ennin the celebration of the ghost festival in Ch'ang-an in 844 drew a large number of people to Buddhist temples, where they made offerings typical of medieval times: fancy fruits, festive foods, specially decorated candles, and paper flowers. The ongoing suppression of Buddhism apparently had no effect on the major participants in the ghost festival. It is only at the instigation of the emperor that we see any change in public opinion. And, if Ennin's account may be trusted, Emperor Wu-tsung's order to seize the offerings given at Buddhist temples only served to strengthen the predilection of "the people" to give presents to the Sangha: attendance was minimal for the emperor's visit to the Hsing-t'ang kuan, a major Taoist temple located in the northeastern corner of Ch'ang-an.[97] Yü-lan-p'en was so well es-

[96] Ennin, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki*, text in Ono, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki no kenkyū*, 4:70; translation mostly following Ono, ibid., 4:72; cf. Reischauer, trans., *Ennin's Diary*, p. 344.

[97] The Hsing-t'ang kuan was built in 730 and restored in 806. It was located just opposite the [Ta] An-kuo ssu in the southwestern corner of the Ch'ang-lo quarter and just

tablished among the residents of the T'ang capital that most people boycotted the imperial celebration when it was moved to a Taoist setting.

Ennin's account also sheds important light on the logic of ritual transactions in Chinese religion. Neither the emperor nor the common people questioned the efficacy of making offerings to the Buddhist church or to the Taoist church. If the emperor had doubted the efficacy of such offerings, he would not have shifted the gifts from Buddhist to Taoist recipients. If the people had not believed that offerings to either church would bring results, they would not have made the offerings, nor would they have objected to the switch. The events of this year demonstrate that offerings in Buddhist temples to Buddhist deities and offerings in Taoist temples to Taoist deities were interchangeable. By taking advantage of this functional equivalence (as well as the popularity of making offerings on the fifteenth day of the seventh month), Emperor Wu-tsung insured that the celebration of the ghost festival in 844 would not be forgotten.

The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra (CA. 850)

The appeal of the ghost festival to a specifically Buddhist but nonmonastic audience may be judged from an untitled manuscript fragment kept in the Taiwan collection of Tun-huang manuscripts, the title of which may be reconstructed as *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*.[98] The text is a record of a lecture on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* in which a monk presents an oral exegesis of the sūtra to a lay audience gathered for the specific purpose of receiving instruction on yü-lan-p'en. During the T'ang such lectures were an important means of propagating Buddhist teachings among lay people affiliated loosely with Buddhist temples. Surviving manuscripts of the "sūtra lecture text" genre serve as an index of which sūtras were most popular as lecture topics.[99] The thematic focus of *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* is the concept of filial devotion, explained by reference to Mu-lien and by an ex-

south of the imperial living quarters in the northeastern corner of Ch'ang-an. See *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao* in *Tōdai no chōan to rakuyō*, ch. 3, p. 18v.

[98] The text is Tun-huang MS. no. 32 in the Taiwan colletion, photographically reproduced in *Tun-huang chüan-tzu* (Taipei: Shih-men t'u-shu, 1976), Vol. 2. I reconstruct its title as *Yü-lan-p'en [ching] chiang-ching-wen*.

[99] Other popular sūtras for which there survive sūtra lecture texts include the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, sūtra lecture texts included in THPWC, pp. 517–645; the *Diamond Sūtra*, sūtra lecture text in THPWC, pp. 426–50; *Fu-mu en-chung ching*, sūtra lecture texts in THPWC, pp. 672–94; and the *Lotus Sūtra*, sūtra lecture text in THPWC, pp. 488–516.

tended discussion of the hardships that parents undergo in the process of nurturing and raising children. Unfortunately the surviving text represents only a small fraction of an entire lecture on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. The lecture text is not mentioned in earlier scholarship, so that until now its significance for the development of the ghost festival in medieval Chinese religion has not been explored.[100]

In style and content, *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* reflects the interests of its audience, which was probably composed of lay people with a minimal level of literacy. As a genre, "sūtra lecture texts" (*chiang-ching-wen*) fall midway between the commentaries written for monks and well-educated lay people on the one hand and the transformation texts performed for the benefit of the unlettered masses on the other. Sūtra lecture texts grew out of the "popular lectures" (*su-chiang*) delivered by monks to lay people who periodically came to temples to receive instruction in Buddhist texts.[101] People who attended these lectures represent an audience more specialized than the commoners who merely made offerings at Buddhist temples and less specialized than monks, for whom Buddhism defined a distinctive form of social life. The actual surviving texts of the sūtra lecture text genre discovered at Tun-huang are either transcripts of these teaching sessions or notes compiled for use by the lecturer. Like transformation texts, they combine prose and verse portions, their language shows many traces of the vernacular, and they are oriented largely toward a nonmonastic audience. But in their exegesis they follow more closely the text of the sūtra, and they lack one essential characteristic of the transformation tale, the pictures around which the narrative was organized.

An investigation of the literary form of *The Lecture Text on the Yü-*

[100] Even the most recent book-length study of the myth of Mu-lien, Ch'en Fang-ying's *Mu-lien chiu-mu ku-shih chih yen-chin*, neglects *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. The lecture text is miscatalogued as a *pien-wen* in the catalogue of the Taiwan collection of Tun-huang manuscripts; Li Ch'ing-chih, *Kuo-li chung-yang t'u-shu-kuan so-tsang tun-huang chüan-tzu chiao-tu cha-chi* (N.p.: mimeograph, 1973), pp. 11r–v; see also P'an Ch'ung-kuei, "Kuo-li chung-yang t'u-shu-kuan so-tsang tun-huang chüan-tzu t'i-chi," *Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao* 8:2 (August 1968), pp. 368–69. See also Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative," pp. 5–96, Item no. 598. Victor H. Mair first alerted me to the importance of this text, and Timothy Tsu generously helped in transcribing it and solving many problems of orthography.

[101] On sūtra lecture texts and popular lectures during the T'ang, see Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 240–55; Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels*, pp. 183–87; Hsiang Ta, "T'ang-tai su-chiang k'ao"; and Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative," pp. 5–6, 90–93.

lan-p'en Sūtra yields a general idea of how popular lectures were conducted. Near the beginning of the text the lecturer instructs his audience "to invoke Kuan-shih-yin Bodhisattva three [times],"[102] and the lecture was probably concluded with a similar ritual. The lecturer-exegete announces each section of the sūtra with the stock formula, "Please sing the next section of the sūtra. It reads. . . ."[103] At this point either a cantor or the audience recites a passage from the scripture, and then the lecturer explains the meaning of the passage. In his exegesis the lecturer usually uses poetry in seven-word lines. Whoever recorded *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* (the lecturer himself or a note-taking listener) uses the words "The Buddha's Son [or Disciple]" (*fo-tzu*, Skt.: *Buddhaputra*) as a stage direction to indicate where the lecturer ("The Buddha's Disciple") begins his exegesis. The transition from the end of one exegetical section to the next is usually marked with a rhetorical question, "Now what about [e.g., Mu-lien attaining the Way]?"[104] Judging from the lecturer's promise to his "lay disciples" (*men-t'u*) that "I will explain [this topic] to my lay disciples on another day,"[105] it may be inferred that the sermon on the ghost festival formed part of a regular program of religious instruction.

The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra opens with several verses setting forth the general idea of saving one's ancestors from the woeful states of existence. Following this preface, the preacher announces the title of the sūtra on which he will lecture, calling it "The Sūtra on the Purity of Yü-lan." The preacher also discusses the organization of the text, dividing it into three sections: "an introductory section," "[a section on] the principal teaching," and "a section on the propagation of the teaching."[106]

After these preliminaries, the lecture text presents a line-by-line exegesis of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*. Unfortunately the manuscript breaks off halfway through its explanation of the fourth sentence of the sūtra, although the few surviving sections provide helpful clues as to which subjects a lay audience found pertinent to the ghost festival.

The two major themes of the surviving portions of *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* are charity and filial devotion. The virtue of charity is emphasized in the exegesis of the locale described in the sec-

[102] *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, in *Tun-huang chüan-tzu*, p. 1.

[103] *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, in *Tun-huang chüan-tzu*, pp. 2, 3, 4.

[104] *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, in *Tun-huang chüan-tzu*, p. 3.

[105] *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra*, in *Tun-huang chüan-tzu*, p. 2.

[106] Cf. *Tsung-mi Commentary*, T. no. 1792, 39:507a; and *Hui-ching Commentary*, T. no. 2781, 85:540a.

ond sentence of *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra,* the garden of Jetavana trees in the kingdom of Śrāvastī. The explanation notes that the garden was established through the pious contribution of the rich layman, Anāthapiṇḍika.

The bulk of the lecture text constitutes a sermon on the requirements and rewards of filial devotion. The text describes the generic filial son as one who waits diligently at his parents' side, always putting their comfort and needs ahead of his own. Mu-lien is identified as the paragon of devotion, since he used his powers of spiritual penetration to bring help to his poor suffering mother.

The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra draws extensively on the concept of reciprocity to elucidate further the theme of serving one's parents and ancestors. Fully half of the surviving lecture text concerns the "ten kindnesses" (*shih-en*) bestowed by parents (especially mothers) upon their children. These "kindnesses" summarize the travails of childrearing. Children enter the world owing a debt to their parents. The debt must be repaid by providing them with material support in old age and with ritual aid (including yü-lan-p'en offerings) after their death. The "ten kindnesses," a frequent topic of late-T'ang apocrypha, are: (1) carrying the pregnancy safely to term, (2) enduring suffering as birth approaches, (3) forgetting sorrow in giving birth to a son, (4) taking the bitter and foregoing the sweet, (5) avoiding wetness and keeping the child dry, (6) nursing, feeding, and raising the child, (7) cleaning up the child's filth, (8) acquiring bad karma through actions for the child's benefit, (9) longing for the child when far away, and (10) being always compassionate and sympathetic.[107]

The one extant manuscript of *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* lacks a colophon and any other data that would supply a certain date. It divides *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* into the same three sections as does Tsung-mi, and, as noted above, it contains references to the "ten kindnesses," a concept that was quite popular in the late T'ang. On this admittedly slim basis, *The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* may be dated roughly to the year 850.

[107] The "ten kindnesses" form the main subject of several versions of *The Sūtra on the Importance of Kindness Bestowed by Parents (Fu-mu en-chung ching). The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra* quotes from this source, many versions of which survive from the late T'ang. The list of ten kindnesses in the sūtra lecture text matches the list in *Fu-mu en-chung t'ai-ku ching,* printed from a Korean woodblock dating from the late fourteenth century and contained in Makita, *Gikyō kenkyū,* pp. 52–55. See Chapter Seven, below, for another discussion of this sūtra.

CHIH-YÜAN'S "HYMNS IN PRAISE OF LAN-P'EN" (CA. 1020)

History does not preserve any record of the actual prayers used in the ghost festival during the medieval period, but later sources may be used to reconstruct loosely the mechanics of the ritual in the late T'ang. One such source, entitled *Lan-p'en li-tsan-wen* ("Hymns in Praise of Lan-p'en"), was written by the monk Chih-yüan (976–1028) and incorporated in a more complete liturgical text a century later. Although it was written and used after the medieval period covered in this chapter's survey, it is included here because it preserves the earliest surviving liturgy for ghost festival ceremonies. Chih-yüan's hymns, nominally addressed to the Three Treasures, were probably chanted by lay people as they made offerings in the temples of south China.

Chih-yüan, whose surname was Hsü, was born in 976 in Hang-chou (present-day Chekiang).[108] He entered the monkhood at an early age, studying T'ien-t'ai teachings and meditation under the monk Yüan-ch'ing (d. 996). He later took up residence at Mount Ku, which had a beautiful view of the surrounding lakes in Chekiang. Many students flocked there to hear his teachings. Chih-yüan was afflicted by growths on his neck, which also supplied the topic of many of his poems on suffering and retribution. His friends included the recluse-poet Lin Pu (965–1026) and the monk Tsun-shih (964–1032). He died in 1028 and was posthumously bestowed the title "Great Master of Dharma Wisdom" (Fa-hui ta-shih).

Chih-yüan's interests ranged far beyond the sectarian disputes within the T'ien-t'ai school for which he is best known in Buddhist historiography. He wrote several essays disputing the interpretations of

[108] Biographical details in this and the next paragraph are drawn primarily from Chih-yüan's biography in *Shih-men cheng-t'ung*, Tsung-chien (Sung), Z. 2B, 3:5, pp. 414rb–16rb. Shorter accounts and extracts from Chih-yüan's writings are included in *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T. no. 2035, 49:418c–19a, 446c–47b; *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai*, Nien-ch'ang (d. 1341), T. no. 2036, 49:661b–c; and *Wang-sheng chi*, Chu-hung (1535–1615), T. no. 2072, 51:136c–37a. Chih-yüan's autobiographical piece, "Chung-yung-tzu chuan" is contained in *Hsien-chü chi*, Z. 2A, 6:1, pp. 55va–57ra. Lists of Chih-yüan's works are contained in MBDJ, p. 3550b; and in the appendix to *Hsien-chü chi*, Z. 2A, 6:1, pp. 107va–8ra. For Chih-yüan's place in the schism pitting the "Non-mountain School" against the "Mountain School" (*shan-wai, shan-chia*) in T'ien-t'ai doctrine, see Michihata Ryōshū, *Chūgoku bukkyō shi*, second ed. (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1958), pp. 183–84, 205–6; Shimaji Taitō, *Tendai kyōgaku shi* (1933; reprint ed., Tokyo: Nakayama shobō, 1978), pp. 151–233; Chiang Wei-ch'iao, *Chung-kuo fo-chiao shih* (1933; reprint ed., Taipei: Ting-wen shu-chü, 1974), ch. 3, pp. 20–30; and Kuo P'eng, *Sung yüan fo-chiao* (Fukien: Fu-chien jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1981), pp. 170–76.

T'ien-t'ai doctrine offered by Chih-li (960–1028), but he also wrote commentaries on Pure Land texts and on such core Mahāyāna sūtras as the *Heart, Nirvāṇa,* and *Diamond Sūtras.* Chih-yüan consistently taught the harmony of the Three Teachings, and the poems and letters collected in his *Hsien-chü pien* (roughly, "*Essays in Idleness*") attest to his broad reading in all genres of Chinese literature. He also wrote a subcommentary on Tsung-mi's commentary on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra, Lan-p'en ching shu chih-hua ch'ao (Collected Blossoms from the Commentary on the Lan-p'en Sūtra),* which is quoted extensively in a later subcommentary.[109]

Chih-yüan's "Hymns in Praise of Lan-p'en" forms the skeleton of a later work by Yüan-chao (1048–1116), who lived at Ling-chih ssu (present-day Chekiang) and also wrote his own subcommentary on Tsung-mi's commentary on *The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra.*[110] Yüan-chao's *Lan-p'en hsien-kung i (Ceremonial for Lan-p'en Offerings)* combines Chih-yüan's "Hymns in Praise of Lan-p'en" with some brief invocations and explanatory passages. Chih-yüan's six hymns are addressed to the immediate recipients of ghost festival offerings: the Buddha, the Dharma (as embodied in sūtras), and the Sangha (represented by bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas, śrāvakas,* and Mu-lien). I translate below the six hymns, each prefaced by an invocatory line:

I. With one mind we bow deeply to Śākyamuni Buddha, the Chief Teacher of Lan-p'en, who always repays familial kindness.

Over many kalpas of cultivation he perfected the Way of the sages,
At Mu-lien's sorrowful request he expounded the true vehicle.

His father the king[111] leapt into space to pay him respect;
Farmers and fishermen, hearing his words, set aside their plows and nets.

In cultivating the cause and collecting the fruit, he always takes refuge in filial devotion;
In transforming others and practicing it himself, he fully repays [his parents'] kindness.

We pray that he regard all sentient beings with his compassionate eye,
Causing them all, living and dead, to receive his gifts.

[109] Chih-yüan's commentary may be partially reconstructed from the citations in Jih-hsin's (ca. 1068) *Lan-p'en ching shu-ch'ao yü-i* (1068), Z. 1, 94:4.

[110] *Yü-lan-p'en ching shu hsin-chi,* Yüan-chao (1048–1116), Z. 1, 35:2.

[111] Or "Fathers and kings."

II. With one mind we bow deeply to the ultimate teaching of Lan-p'en, the Sūtra Collection, which repays kindness and saves from suffering.

The golden mouth speaks forth an unbounded teaching;
For repaying kindness there is only this fortuitous event [of yü-lan-p'en].

To relieve suffering it specially calls upon monks who have freed themselves;
It shows compassion in handing down the Lan-p'en Dharma.

Happily rejoicing and spreading the teaching, its words are complete;
With the translation of the Dharma, the Way becomes luminescent.

Kings and counselors, rich and poor, everyone carries it out,
The brilliance of its wondrous precepts surpasses sun and moon.

III. With one mind we bow deeply to the Bodhisattva Monks, those sages and worthies who have freed themselves and gained the Way.

Their compassion and wisdom practiced to the full, they are called great men;

Seeking enlightenment above and transforming others below, they move through the Sangha.

They aid beings, forever boarding the boat of the Six Perfections,
They benefit others, forever sending them to the shore of the Three Emptinesses.[112]

Their internal realization would extend to all the Buddha realms;
In accord with conditions they sometimes manifest themselves in the form of a *bhikṣu*.

And now as they descend to this sacred place,
We pray that they will release all of our living and dead relatives from suffering.

IV. With one mind we bow deeply to the Monks who have Awakened to Causality *[pratyekabuddhas]*, those sages and worthies of the ten directions who have freed themselves and gained the Way.

[112] The "Six Perfections" are giving, morality, patience, vigor, meditation, and wisdom. The "Three Emptinesses" are emptiness, marklessness, and desirelessness.

Their sharp wisdom is not passed down from masters or teachers;
By examining dependent origination they awaken to the unborn.

Preaching the Dharma and transmitting the lamp they call sectarian practice;
Cultivating the mind without companions, they evoke the parable of the *lin* [female "unicorn"].

With true emptiness completely realized, they regard splendor and decline;
With afflictions fully eliminated, they lend an ear to mild sounds.

And now as they descend to this sacred place,
We pray that they will release all of our living and dead relatives from suffering.

V. With one mind we bow deeply to the Monks who have Heard the Voice [of the Buddha, i.e., *śrāvakas*], those sages and worthies of the ten directions who have freed themselves and gained the Way.

In mountains and under trees, they complete the [summer] retreat;
Contemplating deeply the Four Noble Truths, they attain a surplus [of understanding].

Noisily they overturn fully the fruits of birth-and-death,
Silently they have already experienced the mind of *nirvāṇa*.

With the six penetrations and self-mastery, they pass over Māra's realm;
Roaming freely in the eight forms of liberation, they are called a field of merit.

And now as they descend to this sacred place,
We pray that they will release all of our living and dead relatives from suffering.

VI. With one mind we bow deeply to the Honorable Mu-lien, who entered the Way to repay his parents, giving rise to the teaching which profits life.

Most accomplished at spiritual penetrations, he abides among those who have nothing more to learn;
To repay his parents' kindness, he left the houscholder's life.

With just his own power it was hard to end his dear mother's misfortune;
He cried out in sorrow and sought instruction from the Thus-Come One.

He gave rise to the subtle words that bring aid to later generations,
And extolled the Way of filial devotion that profits all beings.

And now as he descends to this sacred place,
We pray that he will release all of our living and dead relatives from suffering.[113]

Postscript: The Ghost Festival after T'ang Times

A reasonable survey of the vagaries of the ghost festival in post-T'ang China would fill several volumes. Sources for the study of Chinese social history began to proliferate after the T'ang, and the myth of Mu-lien was repeated and reworked in a variety of new literary forms. In light of its vitality after the medieval period, a highly selective survey of the ghost festival in later times is offered here simply as a postscript.

Like many other forms of religion in late medieval China, the celebration of the ghost festival took on ritual forms deriving from the Tantric tradition.[114] The influence of Tantra on the practice of the festival may be gauged primarily from the rapid production of liturgical texts beginning in the late T'ang. Just how widespread these Tantric practices were at that time is harder to judge, although certainly before the Ming dynasty many rites performed during the ghost festival could be traced back to liturgical texts attributed to the great Tantric masters, Śikṣānanda (652–710) and Amoghavajra (705–774).[115] Such liturgical

[113] Translation from *Lan-p'en hsien-kung i*, Yüan-chao, Z. 2B, 3:2, p. 90ra–b.

[114] Yoshioka Yoshitoyo provides a comprehensive bibliographical survey of Tantric-influenced texts on feeding hungry ghosts in *Dōkyō to bukkyō*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon gakujutsu shinkōkai, 1959), pp. 369–432. Makita Tairyō traces the practice of feeding hungry ghosts from the Sung through the Ming in "Suirikue shōkō," *Tōhō shūkyō* No. 12 (July 1957):14–33.

[115] See, for example, *Chiu mien-jan o-kuei t'o-lo-ni shen-chou ching*, Śikṣānanda, T. no. 1314; and such texts attributed to Amoghavajra as *Chiu-pa yen-k'ou o-kuei t'o-lo-ni ching*, T. no. 1313; *Shih chu o-kuei yin-shih chi shui-fa*, T. no. 1315; and *Yü-ch'ieh chi-yao chiu a-nan t'o-lo-ni yen-k'ou kuei-i ching*, T. no. 1318. For a more complete listing, see Yoshioka, *Dōkyō to bukkyō*, 1:412–30. See also Ferdinand Lessing, "Skizze des Ritus: Die Spiesung der Hungergeister," in *Studia Sino-Altaica: Festschrift für Erich Haenisch zum 80. Geburtstag, in Auftrag der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1961), pp. 114–19; and de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 1:76–84.

texts as *Chiu-pa yen-k'ou o-kuei t'o-lo-ni ching (The Sūtra of Dhāraṇīs for Saving Hungry Ghosts with Burning Mouths)* record the *dhāraṇīs* to be spoken, describe the *mudrās* to be performed, and provide the names of the many Buddhas to be invoked in making offerings to hungry ghosts, mendicants, and the Three Jewels.[116] While these liturgies had no intrinsic connection to the fifteenth day of the seventh month, they were used at various rites throughout the year, including the ghost festival.

The Sung dynasties saw the growth of a liturgical tradition centering on the "Assembly of Water and Land" (*shui-lu hui*), a kind of mass dedicated to wandering spirits. Offerings to spirits haunting waterways were dumped into streams and rivers, while presents destined for souls suffering recompense in the hells were thrown onto the ground. This ritual too was practiced at irregular intervals throughout the year, including the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Tsun-shih (964–1032) was particularly active in propagating the Assembly of Water and Land.[117] Within a century after his death, the ritual had acquired an elaborate origin myth associating its rise with the patronage of the monk Pao-chih by Emperor Wu (r. 502–550) of the Liang dynasty.[118] In Ming times Chu-hung (1535–1615) was quite active in revitalizing and revising liturgies used in the assembly.[119]

The relative profusion of sources on daily life and customs beginning in the Northern Sung permits the reconstruction of many of the details of ghost festival celebrations in the newly arisen urban centers of China.[120] These sources show that from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, the seventh-moon festival brought together all classes of society in Buddhist temples and in markets where an astonishing va-

[116] T. no. 1313, 21:464b–65b.

[117] Texts on the Assembly of Water and Land written by Tsun-shih include *Chih-sheng-kuang tao-ch'ang nien-sung i*, T. no. 1951; and those collected in *Chin-yüan chi*, Z. 2A, 6:2. Tsung-hsiao (1151–1214) collects a number of important works in his *Shih-shih t'ung-lan*, Z. 2A, 6:3.

[118] See Makita Tairyō, "Hōshi oshō den kō," *Tōhō gakuhō* 26 (March 1956):64–89; and idem, "Suirikue shōkō," pp. 21–24.

[119] Some of Chu-hung's works on feeding hungry ghosts are included in chs. 18–21 of his *Yün-ch'i fa-hui* (Nanking: Ching-ling k'o-ching-ch'u, 1897). See also Chün-fang Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 184–85.

[120] For a good overview, see Sawada Mizuho, *Jigoku hen: chūgoku no meikai setsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1968), pp. 128–35. See also Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276*, trans. H. M. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), p. 195.

riety of goods were sold. In most locales offerings were placed in bamboo bowls, some of which were decorated with drawings of Mu-lien saving his mother.[121] Sometimes the bottom half of a length of bamboo was splayed into several strips that served as legs; spirit money was then placed inside the top half, and the entire offering was transmitted to the other world by fire.[122] Sometimes the bamboo bowls were saved for use in divining the weather, in which case the bowl was flipped over onto the ground and the direction in which it ended up pointing was taken as a prediction of the coming winter: if pointing north, a cold one; if pointing south, a warm one; if pointing east or west, a temperate one.[123] Goods sold in markets included melons, lilac flowers, peaches, pears, poultry, rice, noodles, and paper goods (clothes and money) for use by the dead.[124]

Uncommon events were believed to occur on the full-moon festival of the seventh month. Legends report living persons ascending to mansions in the sky[125] and deceased relatives being allowed to leave the dark regions to visit their old homes on this day.[126] Even nonhumans went through unusual transformations during the ghost festival, as reported in a tenth-century collection of tales:

> Formerly in the T'ang, before he had assumed office, on chung-yüan Prefect Lu Yüan-yü set out banners and statues and placed a yü-lan [bowl] between them. All of a sudden he heard a chirping sound coming from the bowl. Yüan-yü looked and saw a tiny dragon barely an inch long, which was relaxed yet a little odd-looking, gentle and lovable. At this he took some water to moisten it. The dragon stretched out its legs and bristled its mane, growing several feet long. Yüan-yü took a great fright. A white

[121] *Shih-wu chi-yüan (chi-lei)*, Kao Ch'eng (ca. 1078–1085) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1971), ch. 8, pp. 23r–v (pp. 585–86).

[122] *Sui-shih kuang-chi*, Ch'en Yüan-ching (S. Sung), *Sui-shih hsi-su tzu-liao hui-pien*, Vols. 4–7 (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1970), ch. 30, pp. 1v–2r (pp. 970–71).

[123] *Lao-hsüeh-an pi-chi*, Lu Yu (1125–1210), in *Hsüeh-chin t'ao-yüan*, Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng, No. 46 (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan), ch. 7, p. 1v.

[124] See *Shih-wu chi-yüan (chi-lei)*, ch. 8, pp. 23r–v (pp. 585–86); *Sui-shih kuang-chi*, ch. 30, pp. 1v–2r (pp. 970–71); *Tung-ching meng-hua lu*, Meng Yüan-lao (ca. 1235), in *Tung-ching meng-hua lu, wai ssu-chung* (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), pp. 49–50; *Lao-hsüeh-an pi-chi*, ch. 7, p. 1v; and *Wu-lin chiu-shih*, Chou Mi (ca. 1280), in *Tung-ching meng-hua lu, wai ssu-chung*, p. 381.

[125] See the story of Ts'ui Wei in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, pp. 216–20.

[126] See the story of Wang Tsu-te in *I-chien chih*, Hung Mai (1123–1202), 4 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1960), p. 360.

> cloud arose from the bowl, and the dragon left, following the cloud.[127]

In the Southern Sung capital of Hang-chou, those whose relatives had recently died went to sweep off their graves. Mountains of paper money were burned for use by ancestors in the underworld, and freshly printed sūtras on "Mu-lien, the Most Venerable" were sold in markets. And in K'ai-feng, according to Meng Yüan-lao (ca. 1235):

> In theaters,[128] having passed the seventh night [the festival marking the meeting of the Cowherd and Weaving Maiden], singing girls next staged the drama of Mu-lien saving his mother. It went straight through the fifteenth day with throngs of spectators.[129]

While no texts of the week-long drama (*tsa-chü*) on Mu-lien survive from Sung or Yüan times, it is clear that the Mu-lien myth took on new life in the genres of literature and drama that succeeded transformation texts after the T'ang. In fact the mythology of the ghost festival spread throughout so many genres that even a brief survey is beyond the scope of this study, and a few examples will have to suffice.[130]

It is generally thought that a play recorded by Cheng Chih-chen in the Ming dynasty preserves the general outline of the Northern Sung drama noted by Meng Yüan-lao. Cheng Chih-chen's work, entitled *Mu-lien chiu-mu hsing-hsiao hsi-wen* ("A Play on Mu-lien Practicing Filial Devotion by Saving His Mother"), adds significantly to the plot of the story contained in *The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother.*[131] In the play version Mu-lien's mother is not inherently

[127] Story of Lu Yüan-yü translated from *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, p. 3438.

[128] I follow Sawada in emending *kou-ssu* to *kou-lan*; see Sawada, *Jigoku hen*, pp. 141–42.

[129] Translation from *Tung-ching meng-hua lu*, p. 49.

[130] For good overviews of the literary history of the Mu-lien myth in Sung and later times, see Chao Ching-shen, "Ch'üan-shan chin-k'o," in *Ming ch'ing ch'ü-t'an* (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), pp. 154–62; idem, "Mu-lien chiu-mu te yen-pien" (1946), reprinted in *Chung-kuo min-chien ch'uan-shuo yen-chiu*, ed. Wang Ch'iu-kuei (Taipei: Lien-ching ch'u-pan shih-yeh kung-ssu, 1980), pp. 219–36; Ch'en, *Mu-lien chiu-mu ku-shih chih yen-chin*; Ch'ien Nan-yang, "Tu jih-pen Kuraishi Takeshirō te Mokuren gyōkō gibun yen-chiu," *Min-su* No. 72 (August 1929):1–7; Kuraishi Takeshirō, "Mokuren kyūbo gyōkō gibun ni tsuite," *Shinagaku* 3:10 (February 1925):5–24; Piet van der Loon, "Les Origines rituelles du théâtre chinois," JA 265:1–2 (1977):158–62; Sawada Mizuho, *Hōkan no kenkyū*, revised ed. (Kyoto: Kokusho kankōkai, 1975), pp. 123–26; and idem, *Jigoku hen*, pp. 141–48.

[131] I have consulted two editions of Cheng Chih-chen's play, one on microfilm from the National Library, Peking, in 8 ch., entitled *Hsin-k'an ch'u-hsiang yin-chu ch'üan-shan mu-lien chiu-mu hsing-hsiao hsi-wen*, Chin-ling shu-fang ed., ca. 1573–1620; and one in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an ch'u-chi* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1954), Vols. 80–82.

greedy. Rather, after her husband dies, her evil brothers persuade her to give up a vegetarian diet and to withhold offerings from monks, actions for which she is reborn in hell. Mu-lien sets out to rescue his mother, but before the underworld search begins, the play includes a number of scenes portraying Mu-lien's journey to the west. Mu-lien, like the Tripiṭaka monk Hsüan-tsang in the novel *Hsi-yu chi (Journey to the West)*, enlists the aid of a monkey, he passes through the Black Pine Forest, and he depends at every turn upon the compassionate guidance of Kuan-yin. Cheng Chih-chen's play also marks the first appearance in ghost festival mythology of Mu-lien's fiancée, Ts'ao Sai-ying, who joins the Buddhist order of nuns after her betrothed becomes a monk.

Another important literary guise in which the myth appears is that of the "precious scroll" (*pao-chüan*), a genre that embellished popular stories in a form containing sections in vernacular prose and sections sung to the tune of folk songs and operas. In the early Ming *Mu-lien san-shih pao-chüan (The Precious Scroll on the Three Lives of Mu-lien)* was especially popular.[132] This tale adds two incarnations to the relatively simple life Mu-lien leads in the transformation text. First, Mu-lien was too successful in his battle with the armies of hell. When he broke open the gates of hell with his staff, eight million souls escaped from purgatory, but they must still be returned to purgatory to complete their karmic retribution. This provides the occasion for Mu-lien's second incarnation: he returns to the world above ground as the salt merchant-rebel leader Huang Ch'ao, whose peasant revolt between 874 and 884 effectively marked the end of the T'ang. As Huang Ch'ao, Mu-lien kills over eight million people, thus redressing the balance of karma he had disturbed by letting hell dwellers go free. The underworld administrator King Yama, however, judges that a large number of pig souls and sheep souls have still not been returned to their places in the underworld, and so Mu-lien is reborn on earth a third time—as a butcher, who quickly meets the quota set by King Yama. Eventually, both Mu-lien and his mother work out their karmic punishments and are reunited with Mu-lien's father in the heavens.

Mu-lien's transformations in Ch'ing and modern times make a fascinating story, but one which cannot be told here in this brief postscript. Sources for a survey of the mythology and practice of the ghost

[132] For bibliographical references on several *pao-chüan* on Mu-lien saving his mother, see Li Shih-yü, *Pao-chüan tsung-lu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), Item nos. 273–81, 332.

festival in the past three hundred years, however, are readily accessible. They include Chinese records of seasonal observances; detailed reports from Japanese ethnographers; appreciative accounts by visiting diplomats, missionaries, and wives; and the masterful study by the Dutch Sinologist and ethnographer, de Groot.[133]

[133] After local gazetteers, the imperial encyclopedia provides a convenient overview of local practices: *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng*, ch. 68, pp. 692–94. Suzuki's report on Taiwan and de Groot's on Amoy remain the best studies of modern practices: Suzuki Mitsuo, "Bon ni kuru rei," *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 37:3 (1972):167–85; and Jan J. M. de Groot, *Les Fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoui*, 2 vols., trans. C. G. Chavannes, Annales du Musée Guimet, No. 12 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1886), pp. 404–35. Other accounts include: Juliet Bredon and Igor Mitrophanow, *The Moon Year: A Record of Chinese Customs and Festivals* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1927), pp. 376–86; Valentine R. Burkhardt, *Chinese Creeds and Customs*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: South China Morning Post, 1953–55), 2:53–64; F. J. Dymond, "The Feast of the Seventh Moon," *The East of Asia Magazine* 2:4 (December 1903):376–78; Wolfram Eberhard, *Chinese Festivals* (1952; reprint ed., Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1963), pp. 129–33; Huang Yu-mei, "China's Ghost Festival," *Free China Review* 32:11 (November 1982):68–72; Claudine Lombard-Salmon, "Survivance d'un rite bouddhique à Java: la cérémonie du *pu-du (avalambana)*," BEFEO 62 (1975):457–86; Duane Pang, "The P'u-tu Ritual," in *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*, eds. Michael Saso and David W. Chappell, Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 18 (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), pp. 95–122; Reichelt, *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 92–114; Tanaka Issei, *Chūgoku saishi engeki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppansha, 1981), pp. 230–41; Tun Li-ch'en, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, second ed., trans. Derk Bodde (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), pp. 60–63; and de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 1:84–88.