THE GHOST FESTIVAL IN MEDIEVAL CHINA

By Stephen F. Teiser

PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

	Preface	xi
	Acknowledgments	xv
	Abbreviations	xvii
ONE:	Introduction	3
	The Spread of the Ghost Festival	3
	The Significance of the Ghost Festival	10
	The Forms of Religion in Chinese Society	15
	The Place of Buddhism in Chinese Society	20
TWO:	The Prehistory of the Ghost Festival	26
	Antecedents in Indigenous Chinese Religion	27
	The Monastic Schedule	31
	Taoist Parallels	35
	Conclusions	40
THREE:	An Episodic History of the Ghost Festival in Medieval China	43
	The Canonical Sources: The Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra and The Sūtra on Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness (ca. 400-500)	48
	Tsung Lin's Record of Seasonal Observances in Ching-ch'u (ca. 561)	56
	The Pure Land Yü-lan-p'en Sütra (ca. 600-650)	58
	Hui-ching's Commentary Praising the Yü-lan-p'en Sütra (ca. 636-639)	63
	Tao-shih's Memorandum on Offerings to the Buddha (ca. 668)	66
	Yang Chiung's "Yü-lan-p'en Rhapsody" (692)	71
	Government Offerings According to the T'ang liu-tien (ca. 739)	77
	The Celebration under Emperor Tai-tsung in 768	78
	Poems and Celebrations under Emperor Te-tsung (r. 779–805)	83
	The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother from the Dark Regions (ca. 800)	87
	Tsung-mi's Commentary on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra (ca. 830)	91

CONTENTS

	The Suppression of Yü-lan-p'en in 844	95
	The Lecture Text on the Yü-lan-p'en Sūtra (ca. 850)	99
	Chih-yüan's "Hymns in Praise of Lan-p'en" (ca. 1020)	103
	Postscript: The Ghost Festival after T'ang Times	107
FOUR:	The Mythological Background	113
	An Example	114
	Mu-lien's Biography	116
	Hungry Ghosts	124
	Mothers and Monks	130
	Conclusions	134
	Appendix: The Buddha's Ascension to the Heaven of Thirty-three to Preach to His Mother	136
FIVE:	Mu-lien as Shaman	140
	The Chinese Background	141
	The Buddhist Background	147
	Mu-lien as Shaman	157
	Conclusions	164
SIX:	The Cosmology of the Ghost Festival	168
	The Cosmology of The Transformation Text on Mu-lien Saving His Mother	170
-	Ghost Festival Cosmology in Context	179
٠	Conclusions	190
SEVEN:	Buddhism and the Family	196
	The Bonds of Kinship	197
	The Power of Monks	203
	Conclusions	208
EIGHT:	Concluding Perspectives	214
	A Sociological Perspective	214
	A Ritual Perspective	217
	An Historical Perspective	221

CONTENTS

Character Glossary of Chinese, Korean, and	
Japanese Words	225
Bibliography	231
Index	265