quest for a contemporary Zen humanism adequate to the religious needs of the world today. In addition, this collection of essays offers eloquent testimony to the truth of Langdon Gilkey's appraisal of Professor Abe as one of the leading Christian theologians in the world today. By any measure, Professor Abe is one of the great figures in the current dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity. These essays will only confirm this assessment.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE TEN KINGS and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism. By Stephen F. Teiser. Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 9. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1994, pp. xxiii + 340. ISBN 0 8248 1587 4

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SOMETIME BETWEEN the 7th and 10th centuries a new cast of characters appeared in Chinese depictions of the netherworld. By the 10th century the deceased no longer merely returned to the soil or went to the Yellow Springs, but were instead required to pass through a huge underworld tribunal consisting of ten courts. In each of these ten courts presided a figure that bore a striking resemblance to magistrates that the deceased would have encountered in the contemporary Chinese bureaucracy. The members of this netherworld judicial system were collectively known as the ten kings. Many of the images of these subterranean courts are now more familiar to us from the recent articles and books by Stephen F. Teiser, who has served to some extent as our modern day Mulian. Judging from other recent studies on the Chinese afterlife by Anna Seidel, Albert Dien, and Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, among others, in addition to the work of Jacques Le Goff, Phillipe Ariès, and Alan Bernstein on Western materials, Teiser does not exaggerate when he says that the topic of "death has come back to life" (p. xv).

The book under review, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,* would appear from its title to be a study and translation of a noncanonical medieval Chinese Buddhist text.[1] While Teiser provides both an excellent translation and an analysis of the content of the scripture, the reader soon discovers that the text itself is not the main focus of this study. In fact, it is precisely the other issues and topics

[1] Hereafter I will refer to Teiser's study as *The Making of Purgatory,* and the Tun-huang text as the *Scripture of the Ten Kings.*

"around" the text examined by Teiser that set this study apart. In addition to detailing a significant transformation in Chinese depictions of the underworld, Teiser's work presents an exciting alternative to traditional textual studies by focusing on heretofore less emphasized aspects of texts, including their production, format, and usage.

In terms of its own production, *The Making of Purgatory* is divided into an Introduction, the core consisting of three parts (Ch. 2–17), fourteen appendixes, a glossary of Chinese characters, an impressive annotated bibliography of Tun-huang manuscripts, a bibliography of secondary sources, and is illustrated with thirty two artistic reproductions. Taken as a whole, *The Making of Purgatory* is an impressive scholarly apparatus, making this book not only essential reading for all students of Chinese religion, but also a valuable research tool.

Although *The Making of Purgatory* is one of the first extensive treatments in English of Chinese conceptions of the afterlife, it is important to acknowledge what the book does not attempt to cover. Teiser states that he does not intend to present an "overview in English of Chinese, Buddhist, and Chinese Buddhist concepts of the afterlife" (p. xiv), nor will it explore the "comparative implications of the Chinese Buddhist notion of purgatory" (p. xv). Considering the amount of interdisciplinary scholarship now available on conceptions of the afterlife in other cultures, it would seem the time is ripe for this discourse on death and the afterlife to be directed at China. Teiser's work is a significant step in that direction.

Prior to spending the remainder of this review discussing and evaluating the contents of this ground breaking study, I will pause to consider the use of the term "purgatory." Whenever a category that emerges from one specific cultural context is borrowed to describe a practice in another culture, there is bound to be some contention and negotiation of its applicability. Not many years ago there was lively debate over the appropriateness of using the Western term "apocrypha" for Chinese Buddhist indigenous scriptures.[2] At that time it was asked whether noncanonical texts were best referred to by the term "apocrypha" or "pseudepigrapha," and the ensuing discussion was helpful for clarifying the terms used in the Chinese context. While Teiser scrupulously avoids using the term "apocrypha" for describing the noncanonical *Scripture of the Ten Kings,* he does not shy away from using the imported Western term "purgatory." Before settling on the use of the term "purgatory," however, we ought to subject it to the same rigorous analysis that was given to the term "apocrypha."

[2] Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), p. 3.

In the *Introduction* Teiser states that the "vision of the hereafter and its social realization are sufficiently analogous to the medieval European situation to merit the label of "purgatory," which may be defined as the period between death and the next life during which the spirit of the deceased suffers retribution for past deeds and enjoys the comfort of living family members" (p. 1). Rather than establishing the applicability of the use of "purgatory" Teiser merely presupposes its adequacy without further discussion. Although he is explicit that this book is not meant to be a comparative study of conceptions of "purgatory," there still seems to be a need for discussing and justifying the usage of this term, a term that even in its native Western context is plagued with conceptual difficulties. As Ariès and Bernstein have shown, the meaning of "purgatory" has changed and evolved throughout Western history.[3] The most common understanding of "purgatory" during the medieval period was its primary reference to a place where one's sins were cleansed by fire, literally expurgated, in order for the soul of the deceased to face God directly.[4] "Purgatory" was regarded as a place of judgement and punishment where one's faults were corrected. In a few other contexts "purgatory" merely referred to a place serving as an ante-chamber or way station for the soul on its journey to heaven. Finally, while Teiser relies on Le Goff for help in defining his use of the concept of "purgatory," it is unclear how he can argue for the applicability of this term to the Chinese Buddhist context given Le Goff 's opaque statement that religions with doctrines of reincarnation or metempsychosis cannot accommodate the idea of "purgatory."[5]

I linger on the nuances of this term for the purpose of gaining some clarity on what actually transpires in the afterlife in the Chinese Buddhist context. When categories like "purgatory" and "hell" are used, for example, it is often difficult to discern where "purgatory" ends and "hell" begins.[6] If in the

[3] Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 148 and p. 463, and Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[4] Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 7.

[5] Le Goff, 1984, p. 5.

[6] In the future it might also be worthwhile to question the appropriateness of the term "hell" in the Chinese Buddhist context. In its strict sense,the term "hell" refers to a "place of eternal torment," whereas the Chinese "hells" are places of limited duration. Once the traces of the deceased's bad karma are burned off they are reborn to a less painful existence. For the Western conception of "hell" as eternal see Bernstein, 1993, p. 3. Further, it seems that the traditional Indian conception of various hells, for example, the eight "hot" hells below the earth found in the Pali Abhidharma literature, are in some ways closer to the definition of "purgatory" used by Teiser, in that

Scripture of the Ten Kings "purgatory" is a hell-like place of retribution, as Teiser suggests, how are we to distinguish the purgatorial realm from the horrific hells, or more precisely the underground prisons, to which one may be sentenced after being on trial in the ten courts? What is imagined to happen in this "third place" between death and rebirth? Are the ten courts primarily places of judgement or places of retribution and punishment? While Teiser's initial definition of "purgatory" emphasized the retribution that the deceased undergoes there, throughout the rest of the discussion in the *Introduction* it seems that the emphasis is on the juridical aspect of this realm. Although threats of punishment are used, there remains a chance for escape if the correct rituals are, or have been, performed (p. 7).[7] The torture endured by some in the ten tribunals seems to be due to a lack of ritual attention and is not necessarily an expurgation of the deceased person's sins. Those sins are dealt with upon rebirth as an animal, hungry ghost, or hell being, unless one's ancestors fulfill the ritual protocol outlined in the *Scripture of the Ten Kings,* or one had planned ahead with premortem offerings on one's own behalf, a practice that will be discussed below. The ten tribunals may be unpleasant places, as anyone who has dealt with any kind of Chinese bureaucracy can attest, but they were not so much the place where the deceased suffered retribution for past deeds, as they were a highly bureaucratic, if not corrupt, administration that used threats and intimidation of much worse punishment to come.

Until a thorough comparative work is done on the Western and Chinese Buddhist conceptions of the afterlife and the fate of the deceased in the netherworld, it might be more prudent to stay as close as possible to the Chinese terms that are used. By using "underground prison" for *ti-yü* 地獄, and by referring to the place where the ten kings perform their duties as "courts" or "tribunals," we do not sacrifice meaning or intelligibility. In fact we gain clarity by retaining the Chinese emphasis on the judiciary and bureaucratic aspects of the netherworld, where the deceased is also pictured in artistic representations as a criminal.

Leaving the issue of terminology behind, the remainder of Teiser's *Introduction* provides a sketch of the territory he will traverse in this study. He presents a fascinating account of the integration of Buddhist and Chinese notions of death and the afterlife. Rather than present the ten kings and their tribunals as either an Indian Buddhist "conquest" model or a Chinese

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the hells are a temporary infernal region where one's bad karma is burned off such that one's next rebirth will be more pleasant.

[7] On the importance of the juridical aspect of the netherworld see Donald E. Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution: A Study and Translation of T'ang Lin's Ming-pao chi* (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1989), p. 143.

"sinification" model, Teiser urges a more complex understanding that retains the relative weight of both the Indian and Chinese systems, what Teiser has elsewhere called a "successful synthesis model."[8] Buddhism added the doctrines of karma and retribution to the Chinese conceptions of the afterlife, and in turn the Chinese bureaucratic structure altered the Buddhist system. The result of this synthesis was a bureaucratic retribution system whereby karma was legislated by Bodhisattva-like judges, whom Śākyamuni urges to be fair and compassionate in their judgements (p. 7 and p. 63).

Part One, titled "Traces of the Ten Kings,"attempts to establish the ubiquitous presence of the ten kings in a large collection of disparate sources and representations. Here, Teiser demonstrates his agility with reading a wide variety of textual sources and genres, finding the traces of the ten kings in memorial rites (prayers), artistic representations (illustrated scriptures and hanging silk paintings), Chinese essays, encyclopedias, dreams, miracle tales and in some Uighur and Japanese materials. By the 10th century the ten kings were the primary recipients of veneration and offerings made by ancestors on behalf of the deceased. By shifting the focus from the scripture itself to the cultural practices associated with the ten kings Teiser is able to provide a glimpse of the religious life of a notoriously elusive level of society that is usually occluded in the writings of elites.

Given that *Scripture of the Ten Kings* was deemed noncanonical, Teiser is compelled to ask how we can explain the successful spread of the ten kings throughout medieval Chinese society. How, in other words, did they achieve and maintain their power over such a wide array of medieval Chinese society without the benefit of propagation in the official repository of Buddhist scriptures? Teiser proposes that there were other means for texts to gain legitimacy outside of being recognized as canonical, including acceptance and use among lay Buddhists. Another legitimation strategy was to ground the ten kings in indigenous Chinese sensibilities by associating them with famous wonderworkers and monks who used Taoist techniques or thaumaturgical powers. Authenticity and legitimation in the sinification process, Teiser clearly shows, had two sides. "Looking westward, Buddhists in China were compelled to demonstrate a living connection to India. Looking to the east, they had to explicate that foreign grounding in a style that was unquestionably Chinese" (p. 62).

An underlying notion, adapted from the Chinese side, essential to the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* is that the fate of the deceased is not determined solely

[8] Stephen F. Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory," in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), p. 124.

on the basis of actions in one's past life. Indeed, one of the main messages of the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* is that the "Buddha proclaims that the sufferings of the spirit after death can be obviated only by worshipping the ten kings" (p. 19). Although we are more accustomed to hearing about postmortem rites held by surviving ancestors to aid the deceased on the important nodes when they passed through each of the ten tribunals (weekly for 49 days, on the 100th day, during the first year, and during the third year after their death), in this study Teiser makes the important point that in fact premortem rites were regarded as more efficacious than postmortem rites (pp. 27–30). Premortem rites, referred to as *ni-hsiu* 逆修 or *yü-hsiu* 預修, entailed sending offerings to the ten kings on one's own behalf while still alive in order to "bank" the profits of ritual investments, which would then be available during one's postmortem passage through the ten courts. Teiser calls these premortem offerings "anticipatory rituals," or "preparatory rituals," and their importance is highlighted by the fact that the compound *yü-hsiu* 預修 appears in the full Chinese title of *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* [*Yen-lo wang shou-chi ssu-chung yü-hsiu sheng-ch'i wang-sheng ching-t'u ching* 閻羅王授記四衆預修生七往生淨土經]. Later in *The Making of Purgatory* Teiser cites an example of this practice in the story of "An Old Man of Eighty-five" who dedicates the merit of copying scriptures in his own blood to himself (p. 121ff).

Postmortem memorial rites were, however, still considered efficacious and widely practiced. In discussing the rites that were usually performed by the Buddhist church, Teiser makes some pertinent forays into the economics of the ritual. While noting the obvious fact that only those families with surplus resources could afford the services of monastics, Teiser also shows how those of lesser means pooled their resources "in mutual-aid 'societies' (*she* 社) organized expressly for the purpose of defraying the cost of funerals" (p. 78).

Part 2, "The Production of the Scripture," begins with two important chapters (Ch. 7–8) on the material nature of the text, or what Teiser calls the "textual practice of *The Scripture of the Ten Kings*." Here he examines issues of format, production technology, binding, and writing, and attempts to connect these details to how they may reflect different uses of the scripture. For example, Teiser shows how scrolls were used in communal settings, whereas booklets were better adapted to services where monks chanted the text, and one miniature version of the scripture most likely served a talismanic function.

When Teiser turns to the uses of the text he cautiously examines some of the less studied aspects of traditional scriptures, drawing our attention to the prayers and colophons appended to the text. The prayers appended to the *Scripture of the Ten Kings,* Teiser tells us, "are extremely important for our knowledge of medieval religion, yet they have not, I believe, been taken seriously enough either as literary genre or as religious act. Some of them provide

the most detailed knowledge we have about how the doctrines of the text were put into practice" (p. 88). By focusing on these textual "frames" rather than the content of texts we may begin to get a better sense of the relationship between medieval Chinese Buddhist doctrines and practices. Teiser's treatment of a handwritten copy of the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* recently "rediscovered" in the Tientsin Municipal Art Museum shows the value of paying attention to prayers and colophons. This version of the scripture provides a rare glimpse into the religious life of Chai Feng-ta, a local official from the Tun-huang region who commissioned the copying of ten scriptures for the posthumous benefit of his wife.

In subsequent chapters (Ch. 10–12) Teiser extends his analysis of textual colophons to discuss the practice of copying the scripture by "an old man of eighty-five," a troubled nun, and by a man who copied texts on behalf of his ox. The variety of cases adduced in this section make it clear that "the ritual of copying the scripture [was] the best means to ensure safety in the realm of the ten kings" (p. 162). A final chapter (13) in this section is devoted to a young monk named Tao-chen who dedicated himself to acquiring and repairing a large quantity of scriptures (sixty or more Tun-huang texts), including the *Scripture of the Ten Kings,* and other objects (bronze bells, scripture cases, incense bowls, etc.) which he donated to a temple as offerings on his family's behalf.

In Part 3, "Text," Teiser continues to insist on a wider interpretation of the term "text." "*The Scripture of the Ten Kings,*" he reiterates, "includes far more than just writing, and those portions—including pictures, songs, chants, and prayers—need to be taken just as seriously as the words of the sūtra proper" (p. 165). Chapter 15 provides a helpful overview of important aspects of genre, language, and grammar. Teiser discusses elements of "Buddhist Hybrid Chinese," and the vernacular elements in the scripture as well as the uses of "prophecy" (*shou-chi* 授記) and "hymns" (*tsan* 讚). In Chapter 16 he uses the artistic representations of *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* as a reference point to explicate characters and components of the netherworld bureaucracy. Finally, Chapter 17 is a complete translation of *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* [*Yen-lo wang shou-chi ssu-chung yü-hsiu sheng-ch'i wang-sheng ching-t'u ching*, Pelliot collection #2003], based on six tenth-century manuscripts found in different Tun-huang collections.[9] Teiser's translation of the text is clear, precise and a useful research tool for the specialist due to the copious annotations and references.

[9] It would have been helpful for the specialist if the full Chinese title was given on the first mention of *The Scripture of the Ten Kings,* since it takes some searching to find out exactly which version of the text is being referred to.

With the method employed in this study, Stephen Teiser remains one of the most effective scholars at accessing medieval Chinese religion as it was practiced at the popular level of society. It also places him at the forefront of at least two emerging fields in the study of Chinese religion: namely, Tun-huang studies, and studies of Buddho-Taoism. As Teiser notes, there has been a recent resurgence in Tun-huang studies, though these efforts have been primarily located in China, Japan, and France. While some American scholars have begun to recognize the importance of Tun-huang materials, Teiser's effort in *The Making of Purgatory* demonstrates the potential of what those materials can contribute to our understanding of Chinese religion.

In a recent volume of *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Franciscus Verellen rightly situated Teiser's *The Making of Purgatory* within the emerging field of "Buddho-Taoist studies," alongside the formative works of Erik Zürcher, Michel Strickmann, Timothy Barrett, Herbert Franke and Anna Seidel.[10] Throughout *The Making of Purgatory* Teiser deals in sophisticated ways with the continuities between Buddhism and Taoism during medieval China, and he refuses to treat this "Buddhist" text in isolation from contemporary Taoist developments. Teiser shows, for example, how by the 12th century the Taoists had produced their own set of ten netherworld gods that were clearly influenced by the Buddhist set of ten kings.

While Stephen Teiser is certainly capable of flying high with the elites as they soar into rarified philosophical speculations and doctrinal formulations, we are fortunate that he has dedicated so many years to toiling in the depths of the netherworld, where he has been able to provide us with a glimpse of some of the once obscured beliefs and practices associated with the afterlife in medieval China.

[10] Franciscus Verellen, "Taoism" in *Journal of Asian Studies,* vol. 54 no. 2 (1995), p. 328.