



Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China

Christine Mollier

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"This book exemplifies the best sort of work being done on Chinese religions today. Christine Mollier expertly draws not only on published canonical sources but also on manuscript and visual material, as well as worldwide modern scholarship, to give us the most sophisticated book-length study yet produced on the textual relations between the Buddhist and Taoist traditions. She pushes past the tired, vague, and rather innocent-sounding trope of 'influence' to pinpoint much more complex and fascinating processes of textual repackaging, hybridization, adaptation, appropriation, reframing, pirating, remodeling, and transposing. Throughout, the urgent concerns of medieval Chinese people—life, health, protection, salvation—are sensitively and elegantly evoked. Anyone interested in Chinese religions, in the ways in which religious texts are formed, and in cross-religious interactions should want to read this book."—Robert Ford Campany, University of Southern California

"Since the inception of Taoism and the transplantation of Buddhism in China in the first few centuries of the common era, proponents of Taoism and Buddhism have engaged in shrill debate and sly mimesis. In the 1950s modern scholars began to insist that the two 'higher' religions of China could not be understood except in relation to each other. With *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, Christine Mollier advances the debate and effectively proposes new methods, new sources, and new conclusions. Mollier demonstrates that mutual self-fashioning in the history of religion ought best be understood through the sustained study of the concrete and practical aspects of religious life. Utilizing a dazzling array of sources—including medieval manuscripts, liturgies, canonical texts, statues, and hagiography—this eloquent intervention sets the standard for many decades to come. Her book alerts us to the existence and sophistication of a third tradition, one plying the shifting boundaries between Taoism and Buddhism."—Stephen F. Teiser, Princeton University

Christine Mollier reveals in this volume previously unexplored dimensions of the interaction between Buddhism and Taoism in medieval China. While scholars of Chinese religions have long recognized the mutual influences linking the two traditions, Mollier here brings to light their intense contest for hegemony in the domains of scripture and ritual. Drawing on a far-reaching investigation of canonical texts, together with manuscript sources from Dunhuang and the monastic libraries of Japan—many of them studied here for the first time—she demonstrates the competition and complementarity of the two great Chinese religions in their quest to address personal and collective fears of diverse ills, including sorcery, famine, and untimely death. In this context, Buddhist apocrypha and Taoist scriptures were composed through a process of mutual borrowing, yielding parallel texts, Mollier argues, that closely mirrored one another. Life-extending techniques, astrological observances, talismans, spells, and the use of effigies and icons to resolve the fundamental preoccupations of medieval society were similarly incorporated in both religions. In many cases, as a result, one and the same body of material can be found in both Buddhist and Taoist guises.

Among the exorcistic, prophylactic, and therapeutic ritual methods explored here in detail are the "Heavenly Kitchens" that grant divine nutrition to their adepts, incantations that were promoted to counteract bewitchment, as well as talismans for attaining longevity and the protection of stellar deities. The destiny of the Jiuku Tianzun, the Taoist bodhisattva whose salvific mission and iconography were modeled on Guanyin (Avalokitesvara), is examined at length. Through the case-studies set forth here, the patterns whereby

medieval Buddhists and Taoists each appropriated and transformed for their own use the rites and scriptures of their rivals are revealed with unprecedented precision.

Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face is abundantly illustrated with drawings and diagrams from canonical and manuscript sources, together with art and artifacts photographed by the author in the course of her field research in China. Sophisticated in its analysis, broad in its synthesis of a variety of difficult material, and original in its interpretations, it will be required reading for those interested in East Asian religions and in the history of the medieval Chinese sciences, including astrology, medicine and divination.

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