



Chindian Myth of Mulian Rescuing His Mother – On Indic Origins of the Yulanpen Sūtra

Debate and Discussion

By Xiaohuan Zhao

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Challenges the widely held belief regarding the authenticity of the *Yulanpen Sūtra*, the scriptural source for the Yulanpen Festival or Hungry Ghost Festival in East Asia, throwing new light on their Indic origins.

This book addresses the thorny issue regarding the authenticity of the *Yulanpen Sūtra*, the scriptural source for the Yulanpen Festival or Hungry Ghost Festival in East Asia. The *sūtra*, which features Mulian (Skr. Maudgalyāyana) adventuring into the Preta realm to rescue his mother, is catalogued in the Chinese Buddhist bibliography with the Indo-Scythian Dharmarakṣa (Ch. Zhu Fahu, ca. 266–308) given as the translator. However, in modern Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarship, the *sūtra* is more often than not regarded as a Chinese Buddhist apocryphal scripture and the Mulian myth as an apocryphal story created by Chinese Buddhists to foster the sinicisation and transformation of Indian Buddhism mainly on the grounds that there is no extant *Yulanpen Sūtra* in Indic sources and that the *sūtra* stresses Confucian filial piety and ancestor worship. This book challenges these widely held beliefs by demonstrating that filial piety and ancestor worship are not peculiar to Confucian China but also inherent in Indic traditions and that the *sūtra* is a Chinese creative translation rather than an indigenous Chinese composition.

Readership

The book is aimed at scholars and students of Buddhism and Chinese culture and theatre as well as members of the general public who have a genuine interest in Chinese and Asian religion and culture.

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