



Sacred Economies: Buddhist Monasticism and Territoriality in Medieval China (Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies)

Michael J. Walsh

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Buddhist monasteries in medieval China employed a variety of practices to ensure their ascendancy and survival. Most successful was the exchange of material goods for salvation, as in the donation of land, which allowed monks to spread their teachings throughout China. By investigating a variety of socioeconomic spaces produced and perpetuated by Chinese monasteries, Michael J. Walsh reveals the "sacred economies" that shaped early Buddhism and its relationship with consumption and salvation.

Centering his study on Tiantong, a Buddhist monastery that has thrived for close to seventeen centuries in southeast China, Walsh follows three main topics: the spaces monks produced, within and around which a community could pursue a meaningful existence; the social and economic avenues through which monasteries provided diverse sacred resources and secured the primacy of Buddhist teachings within an agrarian culture; and the nature of "transactive" participation within monastic spaces, which later became a fundamental component of a broader Chinese religiosity.

Unpacking these sacred economies and repositioning them within the history of religion in China, Walsh encourages a different approach to the study of Chinese religion, emphasizing the critical link between religious exchange and the production of material culture.

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