History 170A
Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors
Jade Emperor — counterpart to the human monarch — stood at summit of celestial hierarchy

Temples found only in largest cities
This 19th century print contains many auspicious symbols. At bottom, a unicorn brings a son (dressed in official robes) to the family. Top: Stove god rides galloping horse to Heaven.
Stove God on Domestic Altar

§ Stove God bears witness to family members’ conduct

§ At New Year’s, travels to court of Jade Emperor to report on conduct of family members

§ While Stove God is away, no one supervises behavior (season of indulgence, e.g. gambling)
Tudigong 土地公
(Local tutelary deity)

§ Tudigong acted as divine guardians for the local community (village, neighborhood)

§ Usually worshipped in their own temples or small shrines
Chenghuang were the divine equivalents of local magistrates, charged with maintaining public order and morals.

Also known (somewhat inaccurately) as “City God,” because temples usually located in towns and cities.
Tudigong Pay Respects to Chenghuang

§ At major festivals, local people carry images of all the local tudigong to the chenghuang temple to offer homage to their bureaucratic superior

§ Known as “attending court audience” (chaotian 朝天)
Offerings of Pig Sacrifices

§ Meat offerings were believed to enhance the power of the gods
§ Local groups each prepare a collective offering to the god
Stove God and Calendar

Couplets on either side of Stove God reads:

“Going up to Heaven, speak of good things;
“Returning to your palace, bring auspicious blessings”

At front, a basin contains precious objects (jewels, silver, coral) symbolizing wealth and prosperity
Worship at the Family Altar

§ From *Qing Customs*, a Japanese illustrated guide published in 1800
Family Alar

This altar features images or names of the gods
Central image: the three martial heroes from

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Hungry Ghosts

Hungry ghosts (*preta* in Sanskrit) were conventionally depicted as emaciated figures with deformed shapes (swollen bellies, tumor-like chins, bodies covered with hair)

Southern Song painting from a set of six paintings depicting the six realms of existence in Buddhist doctrine
Deliverance of the Soul

A group of five monks present food offerings to the spirit of a deceased woman, which enable her soul (top left) to ascend to heaven.

In contrast to the ogre-like hungry ghosts, the released soul is depicted in elegant dress.

From a set of Southern Song paintings of *The Five Hundred Arhats* (Buddhist saints).