

PERSONAL SALVATION and FILIAL PIETY

TWO PRECIOUS SCROLL NARRATIVES OF
GUANYIN AND HER ACOLYTES

Translated and with an introduction by
Wilt L. Idema



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(Continued from front flap)

The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was a handsome prince when he entered China. As Guanyin, the bodhisattva was venerated from the eleventh century onward in the shape of a beautiful woman who became a universal savior. Throughout the last millennium, the female Guanyin has enjoyed wide and fervid veneration throughout East Asia and has appeared as a major character in literature and legend. In one tale, Guanyin (as the princess Miaoshan) returns from the dead after being executed by the king, her father, for refusing to marry. The most popular version of this legend is *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* (*Xiangshan baojuan*), a long narrative in prose and verse and a work of considerable literary merit. It emphasizes the conflict between father and daughter, in the course of which all conventional arguments against a religious lifestyle are paraded and rebutted. A lengthy description of Guanyin's visit to the underworld, which focuses on the conflict between grace and justice, is also included.

Personal Salvation and Filial Piety offers a complete and fully annotated translation of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*, based on a nineteenth-century edition. The translation is preceded by a substantial introduc-

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tion that discusses the origin of the text and the genre to which it belongs and highlights the similarities and differences between the scroll and female saints' lives from medieval Europe. There follows a translation of the much-shorter *The Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl*, which provides a humorous account of how Guanyin acquired the three acolytes—Sudhana, Nagākanyā, and a white parrot—who are often shown surrounding her in popular prints.

As the first English-language translation of major "precious scrolls," *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety* will appeal to a wide range of readers—from scholars of Chinese literature to students of Buddhism. Beyond the field of East Asian studies, it will interest specialists in comparative religion and literature and feminist theologians. Because of its lively and moving narratives, the text is suitable for courses on popular Buddhist religiosity (particularly female religiosity) in Chinese society.

WILT L. IDEMA teaches Chinese literature at Harvard University.

Also in Classics in East Asian Buddhism

THE ORIGINS OF BUDDHIST MONASTIC CODES IN CHINA

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"A solid foundation for further research on the topic. I recommend this book most highly to all serious students of East Asian Buddhism."

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Jacket art: Anonymous untitled woodblock print depicting Guanyin seated on Mt. Putuo surrounded by her acolytes. From Wang Shucun, ed., *Guanyin baitu* (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 1995), p. 66.

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