

The book is beautifully written, and Mann has gone to some length to make it reader friendly. The book includes a “Zhang family chronology” which connects the lives of members of the Zhang family with events in Changshu and China more generally. A family tree at the beginning of the book helps the reader keep track of who is who in this very complex family.

Mann’s method may well engender controversy, but it lays bare the kind of imaginative work that is so central to history writing and which we normally mask. It will be a terrific book to use in the classroom, not simply because of its analytical subtlety but also for the methodological challenge it poses to the conventional practice of history. There may be places where the reader may want to imagine things differently. That, however, is the reader’s prerogative, and Susan Mann in this marvelous book has given us all that we need to set our own scenes.

ANN B. WALTNER
University of Minnesota

Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes. Translated and with an introduction by Wilt L. Idema. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 227. \$50.00.

This book provides a first English translation of two precious scrolls celebrating Princess Miaoshan 妙善 (Wonderful Goodness), the female incarnation of Guanyin, and her two acolytes, Shancai 善才 (Good-in-Talent) and Longnü 龍女 (Dragon Girl). Of the two precious scrolls, *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* (Xiangshan baojuan 香山寶卷) is much better known to scholars as well as among devotees of Guanyin than the much shorter *Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* (Shancai Longnü baojuan 善才龍女寶卷). However, since the two acolytes of Guanyin appear in *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* and since *The Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* introduces some themes which have much intrinsic interest, it is good to read the two together.

The story of Princess Miaoshan is full of drama and pathos. Of the various stories transforming the Indian bodhisattva Avalokite vara into the Chinese female Guanyin, this is without doubt the most successful. By the late imperial period the story had become widely known among the common people through drama, storytelling as well as public chanting of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*, particularly among women audience. It is no wonder that many people came to know Guanyin through the story of Princess Miaoshan. When I did research on my book on Guanyin, I interviewed many women pilgrims in different parts of China. While there might be some minor differences

in details, the story they told me was basically the same as the one I first heard from my grandmother when I was a young girl. It goes something like this:

Miao-shan was the third daughter of King Miao-chuang. She was by nature drawn to Buddhism, keeping a vegetarian diet, reading scriptures by day, and meditating at night from an early age. The king had no sons and hoped to choose an heir from among his sons-in-law. When Miao-shan reached the marriageable age, however, she refused to get married, unlike her two elder sisters, who had both obediently married the men chosen by their father. The king was greatly angered by her refusal and punished her harshly in different ways. She was first confined to the back garden and subjected to hard labor. When, with the aid of gods, she completed the tasks, she was allowed to go to the White Sparrow Nunnery to undergo further trials in the hope of discouraging her from pursuing the religious path. She persevered, and the king burned down the nunnery, killed the five hundred nuns, and had Miao-shan executed for her unfilial behavior. While her body was safeguarded by a mountain spirit, Miao-shan's soul toured hell and saved beings there by preaching to them. She returned to the world, went to Hsiang-shan, meditated for nine years, and achieved enlightenment. By this time, the king had become seriously ill with a mysterious disease that resisted all medical treatment. Miao-shan, disguised as a mendicant monk, came to the palace and told the dying king that there was only one remedy that could save him: a medicine concocted with the eyes and hands of someone who had never felt anger. She further told the astonished king where to find such a person. When the king's messengers arrived, Miao-shan willingly offered her eyes and hands. The father recovered after taking the medicine and came to Hsiang-shan with the royal party on a pilgrimage to offer thanks to his savior. He recognized the eyeless and handless ascetic as no other than his own daughter. Overwhelmed with remorse, he and the rest of the royal family all converted to Buddhism. Miao-shan was transformed into her true form, that of the Thousand-eyed and Thousand-armed Kuan-yin. After the apotheosis, Miao-shan passed away and a pagoda was erected to house her relics.¹

A summary of the story is necessary, I think, because this provides a background when I discuss Idema's analysis of the plot of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* which he does at considerable length in the introduction (pp. 1–43). Professor Idema is a seasoned translator and learned scholar of Chinese vernacular novel, drama and prosimetric literature. Prior to this English translation, he had translated *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* into Dutch. I find his discussion on the relationship between Dunhuang manuscripts such as *yinyuan* 因緣 (tales of cause and conditions) and *shihua*

¹ Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokite vara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 293–94.

詩話 (tales with poems) and precious scrolls such as this one illuminating (p. 12). His hypothesis that “the precious scrolls continued the tradition of the transformation texts [*bianwen*] and other genres of Buddhist prosimetric storytelling known from the manuscripts discovered at Dunhuang” (pp. 42–43) convincing. His translation of the texts is a joy to read. There is little room for improvement. My comments will, therefore, be confined mainly to Idema’s interpretation of the story.

Glen Dudbridge is the first Western scholar who studied the story of Princess Miaoshan and traced the origin and evolution of the legend.² Other scholars who take up the subject, including Idema and myself, are indebted to his pioneering work. According to Dudbridge, the earliest version of the legend is a stele inscription written by Jiang Zhiqi 蔣之奇 (1031–1104), the prefect of Ruzhou 汝州 (in present day Henan province) at the request of the abbot of Incense Mountain Monastery (Xiangshan si 香山寺) when Jiang went to view the image of the Thousand-eyed and Thousand-armed Guanyin enshrined there in 1100. The abbot told Jiang the story of Princess Miaoshan, a story which he claimed to be based on a book brought to him by a mysterious monk who, in turn, said that the book was revealed by a divine spirit to the monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), famous equally for his knowledge of the Vinaya and his interest in the miraculous. Princess Miaoshan was said to be the human manifestation of Guanyin. Dudbridge correctly theorized that by having a literati-official write down the story and inscribed it on a stele, the abbot hoped to revive the fortune of his monastery which served as a cultic centre for Guanyin worship. Jiang was transferred to Hangzhou in 1102 and he most likely brought the story to his new post, for a stele erected in 1104 at the Upper Tianzhu Monastery 上天竺寺, a pilgrimage centre for Guanyin devotion, repeats the same story of Princess Miaoshan as Guanyin. The story underwent expansions in subsequent periods during which details not found in the original version were added. *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* represents the most elaborate version. However, although the earliest surviving version of the text is dated 1773, this can be regarded as the terminus of the story’s evolution but by no means its beginning. (The version Idema used in this translation is a shorter version which has been widely circulated since the nineteenth century.) In the preface of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*, the author Puming 普明, a monk of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery, says that he wrote the precious scroll after he had a vision of Guanyin on the night of the fifteenth of the eighth month of the second year of the Chongning 崇寧 era, corresponding to 1103. This would mean that he wrote this text only after a short time after Jiang Zhiqi’s first visit of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery. This coincidence is indeed, as Idema says, “almost too good to be true” (p. 11). While the attribution of the authorship and the dating of the precious scroll cannot be taken seriously, its genealogy should certainly be traced back to the original inscription.

² Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miaoshan* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1978; rev. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

When one examines the story of Princess Miaoshan, two themes stand out. First and foremost is the painful conflict between personal salvation and filial duty. In order to practice Buddhism, she has to renounce the life of a householder. But by refusing to follow her father's order to marry a husband of his choice, she defies the patriarchal authority and suffers persecution and death. Any monk or nun who opted for the monastic life in traditional China undoubtedly faced similar dilemma, although not to this extreme degree. It is therefore not surprising that many Chinese women could identify with the heroine of this story. The second theme is that only a true Buddhist, though viewed as unfilial from a societal standard, can perform the great filial piety of which ordinary worldlings are incapable. This refers of course to Princess Miaoshan's voluntary sacrifice of her eyes and hands to save her father, in contrast to her two obedient sisters who refused to do so. By performing this extreme act of self-sacrifice, she proves that she is far more filial than the king's other daughters. The initial conflict is thereby resolved. This story serves as a charter for women's resistance to marriage. Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, her example could have very well inspired the practice of *gegu* 割股 (cutting flesh from the thigh) as a last resort to save a dying parent or parent-in-law, a filial act much favoured by women in late imperial times.³

While Idema takes note of these points, his interpretations, however, are drastic different. He wants the reader to focus on two key elements of the story: the sinfulness of female sexuality and the incestuous intention of the father. The result of reading the story in this new light will reveal it to be a family-complex tale about father and daughter. Idema uses the hagiographies of French female saints in the thirteenth century collected by Brigitte Cazelles as the lens to dissect the Miaoshan story, for it "shares with its medieval European counterparts an emphasis on issues of gender and sexuality, pitting male lust against a female desire to be the sole mistress of her own body" (pp. 22–23). Like the male author of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* who dwelled on Miaoshan's suffering, male poets who wrote about the female saints, showed a "remarkable preference for legends whose storylines involve the disrobing, torturing, cross-dressing, or physical transformations of mute and powerless heroines" (p. 15). The French female saint has to overcome the temptation of the male protagonist who may be a tyrant, a father, a suitor or the devil himself in order to remain a virgin as the bride of Christ (p. 15). Miaoshan, similarly, has to do the same except her adversary combines three roles in one: father, tyrant and suitor. The father, according to Idema, is "sexually frustrated" (p. 20) because he fails to sire a son. He is definitely a tyrant and a dominating control freak. But in what way can we see the king as Miaoshan's suitor and potential rapist as Idema suggests? The argument hinges on one central point. After the king has the White Sparrow Nunnery 白雀寺 where Miaoshan stays burned down (which Idema interprets as "symbolic rape," p. 21), Miaoshan is paraded naked through the streets of the capital, subjected to public gaze and open humiliation. She is then put in a cell. The king pays her a midnight visit to make a last attempt to change her mind before sentencing

³ Yü, *Kuan-yin*, pp. 338–47.

her to death. Idema detects “incestuous motives” in the king’s behaviour and language. The father calls her “a slut” (*dizi* 弟子) and a “she-devil” (*yaojing* 妖精). When the king meets Miaoshan in her cell, he urges her once more to get married. Idema asks us to visualize the scene: “During his nighttime visit to his naked and shackled daughter in her cell, he describes to her the pleasures of the flesh in great detail. And even if we grant that the father himself may not be aware of the full implications of his complex and strong emotions toward his daughter, his daughter is fully aware of her father’s unconscious intentions and repulses his advances in the terms that leave little room for doubt:

When Marvelous Goodness heard this, she replied, “My father the emperor, dear daddy, you are misled and deluded and unenlightened, and your perverse heart is all ablaze. This is not the behavior of a lord and emperor in possession of the Way! Daddy, you are the ruler of the myriads of people, the lord of the whole nation. If you cannot control your family, how can you control the nation? If you are a Son of Heaven and an emperor of men, in possession of the Way, how would you, a father, ever think of entering this side palace at midnight, in the third watch, and urge your daughter to marry a husband? How would it look if the world came to know of this?” (pp. 20–21)

In the text, the king tells Miaoshan, “In this world nothing surpasses the affection between husband and wife who share cushion and coverlet: their love is bigger than mountains and seas! . . . If you would know the pleasures of the forest of hundred flowers, you’d be happy to die for it” (p. 110). While the first passage is a stock phrase describing the joy of conjugal life, the second is often used to describe the decadent wish of a man in search of sensual indulgence. To what extent can these be taken to be descriptions of “the pleasures of the flesh in great detail” is open to question. Idema tells us that these two passages are not found in all editions. The edition he uses to make the translation, for instance, does not contain these two passages and he has to amend it by comparing with other editions. It is possible that because the editor found the passages too provocative and thus left them out. This would confirm the view Idema advances here. On the other hand, Miaoshan’s scolding of her father could be based on less sexually charged reasons. She could be chastising the king for his addiction to sensual pleasure (of having many concubines) and not for his unconscious desire to ravish *her*. As for her criticism of his entering the cell in the middle of the night, can we take this as Miaoshan’s adherence of propriety which insists on strict segregation between the sexes, even between parent and child?

But no other explanation is acceptable. For Idema, the conflict between Miaoshan and her father is the “hidden horror story of the patriarchal family”: a story of the father who tries to impose his will on his daughter and the daughter tries equally hard to refuse “to allow her father to dispose of her person.” As a result, “both become extremes of male and female will and desire. While the father goes to the extreme of symbolic rape (torching the convent) and seduction (the midnight visit to his daughter’s cell), the daughter counters with her unnatural auto-defloration [pricking her tongue to magically

put out the fire engulfing the White Sparrow Nunnery with red rain]" (p. 21). The tradition interpretation of the tale, which Idema so nicely captures with the title of the book, "personal salvation and filial piety," is replaced with sexual politics.

The second theme that Idema wants to draw the reader's attention is the sinfulness of female sexuality. He says, "I read Miaoshan's repeatedly expressed fear of death and of the punishments of hell as well as her refusal to marry as an expression of her fear of her own female, and therefore sinful, sexuality" (p. 25). Miaoshan's refusal to marriage is therefore not because of her desire to pursue a religious vocation, but because of her fear of death. This reading leads to two other drastically revisionist interpretations. The first is the cause of the king's horrible disease, the *k mal*-illness. *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* states clearly that it is a punishment meted out by the Jade Emperor because the king's anti-Buddhist actions. It has the Jade Emperor declare, "In the mortal world lives a certain king of Raised Forest, / Who, inexplicably raving mad and completely insane, / Defames the Buddha, destroys the Dharma, kills nuns." His crime is to attempt to eliminate "the Three Jewels" (p. 130). Professor Idema, however, finds a different cause. Since it is necessary to have women engage in sexual acts in order to continue the patriline and since female sexuality is sinful, "by causing his daughter to sin, the father commits a sin for which he must suffer the karmic consequences, in this case the rotting away of his diseased body" (p. 25).

Instead of reading of the text as a "charter for marriage resistance," as it has traditionally been done, Idema suggests that it "may also be read as a guide to marriage under the conditions of the sinfulness of female sexuality: a woman behaves without sin and virtuously, as a filial daughter, not if she agrees to marriage because of her own lustful desire, but rather if she agrees of her own free will to make a sacrifice of her own body for the sake of her father's well-being and the continuity of his patriline. By this act of hers, her father is retroactively freed from the sin of forcing her to sin, and the patriline can be vigorously continued. In this respect, the final healing of her father's illness is indeed the crowning episode in *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*" (p. 25). Seen in this light, the text is "a tract designed to persuade daughters to accept marriage, to accept being sacrificed for the sake of the patriarchal family" (p. 26).

These alternative interpretations are of course fascinating to contemplate. However, I feel they are etic and not emic ones. While it is nearly impossible to know the real intention of the author in composing the text, we can nevertheless arrive at some hypotheses based on how the text has been received and understood by women throughout history. I think most people, both men and women, who are familiar with the story of Princess Miaoshan as told in *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* would find Idema's interpretations startling. This is not because the story is devoid of gender and sexuality issues, but because they pale compared to the far bigger issues of personal salvation and filial piety. Perhaps because Idema hopes to draw students of comparative studies into the conversation (p. 3), he opts to focus on gender and sexuality which are indeed problems of universal concern.

There are a few editorial mistakes and points which need clarification:

1. On page 33, *The Precious Scroll of the Parrot* (*Yingge baojuan*), a text describing the white parrot who is a third acolyte of Guanyin, is said to be a “sectarian reworking” of a fifteenth-century tale. Why and how is it a “sectarian” text?
2. On page 37, in reference to the disappearance of the apricot tree as one of the judges, it should read *The Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* instead of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* as we have here.
3. Footnote 47, we read, “To this day *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* is recited by female pilgrims visiting the Upper Tianzhu Monastery at Hangzhou” (p. 197). I would be most interested in learning the source for this information. As far as I know, village women in Jiangsu and Zhejiang are familiar with the text. Villagers often invite women specialized in chanting it (*xuanjuan* 宣卷) to their homes on special occasions. But when women pilgrims go on pilgrimage to Upper Tianzhu, they do not recite the text which is very long. Instead, they sing songs which are very much like gathas, paying homage to Princess Miaoshan. These songs provide a brief biography of the princess and make clear that she is Guanyin. This is based on my field work in 1986–1987. I translated several of the songs I collected.⁴
4. Footnote 70 states that “in Ming and Qing times, Guanyin may also be portrayed as a protectress of children in hell” (p. 198). Again, I want to know the source of this interesting statement. I am not aware that Guanyin has ever served the Chinese counterpart of the Japanese Jiz 地藏.
5. Footnote 112. When Guanyin is called Mother Guanyin (Guanyinmu 觀音母), it does not mean that she is identified “with the Eternal Mother of sectarian belief” (p. 203). In late imperial times, among various female forms of Guanyin, one is the matronly mother. She is called Guanyin Laomu 觀音老母. In sectarian scriptures, not only Guanyin but other bodhisattvas such as Wenshu 文殊 and Puxian 普賢 are also so called. They are invoked as Mother Wenshu and Mother Puxian respectively.⁵

The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain and *The Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* are important mediums through which ordinary men and women come to know Guanyin. The story of Princess Miaoshan has inspired and instructed Chinese women down the ages. We owe a great indebtedness to Professor Idema for making these texts available to an English readership. Students of Chinese Buddhism, popular religion and literature can now understand why these texts have enjoyed so much popularity in

⁴ Ibid., pp. 505–9.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 467–86.

China. They may also come to admire this brave and spirited young girl who is believed to be the manifestation of the great bodhisattva Guanyin.

CHÜN-FANG YÜ
Columbia University

Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China. By Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008. Pp. xxiii + 332. \$39.95.

中國歷史饑荒頻仍，史不絕書，故外人著書，有以《中國：饑饉的國度》為名者。遺憾的是，上世紀八十年代以前，這一領域所刊布較具份量的論著，屈指可數。中國歷史上的災荒中，論災情之重、被災面積之廣，以 1876–1879 年出現於山西、直隸、河南、山東及陝西五省的華北大旱災最為突出，單是死亡人數即估計達 900 萬到 1,300 萬，其中山西一省災情尤為嚴重，估計死亡人口最高達全省之半。針對這次大旱災作較為深入的學術研究，直至 1980 年，就所見，似僅有 Paul Richard Bohr, *Famine in China and the Missionary: Timothy Richard as Relief Administrator and Advocate of National Reform, 1876–1884*,¹ 以及筆者《光緒初年 (1876–1879) 華北的大旱災》兩種。² 因當日主客觀條件所限，這兩種先驅性論著對這一研究領域雖不無貢獻，但其中有待發覆之處顯然尚多。

上世紀八十年代以降研究景況大為改觀。中國大陸和歐、美學界，藉著新材料（特別是原始檔案）的發掘、新取徑的運用和新視野的開拓，饑荒研究欣欣向榮，成果豐碩。單就這兩年，二本高素質的中國饑荒史論著便相繼在美國問世，其一為李明珠教授所撰的 *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market, and Environmental Decline, 1690s–1990s*,³ 另一即為本書。前書從著手研究至出版成書，歷時逾二十年，為洋洋逾五百頁的長時段研究，以原始檔案為基礎，從社會經濟史角度切入，聚焦於近三百年間直隸（今河北省）地區的災荒及抗災的歷史經驗，窮究其間的自然環境、農業資源、國家政策、社會經濟進程（如人口壓力、市場等）、人的意志等錯綜複雜的互動。與出自資深學人筆下，側重於長時段的社會經濟層面的前書相較，本書作者為後起之秀，全書所論者為發生於十九世紀七十年代的山西大旱，透過這

¹ Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1972.

² 香港：中文大學出版社，1980 年。

³ Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.