Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Abbreviations xi
Introduction 3

ONE Merit Accumulation in the Early Chinese Tradition 28

TWO Merit Accumulation for Status Advancement 61

THREE The Debate over Supernatural Retribution and Merit Accumulation 110

FOUR Preserving the Social Hierarchy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 157

Conclusion 229

Appendix Extant Morality Books and Ledgers of Merit and Demerit Published in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 241

Glossary 243

Sources Cited 261

Index 277