

In This Issue

S. MIYOSHI JAGER explores the genealogy and constructs of South Korea's dissident reunification discourse by locating it in the broader context of *chuch'eron* (the doctrine of self-reliance) and the rhetoric developed in the colonial period. She argues that this discourse, as espoused by the current student movement, centers on the familiar figure of the idealized, virtuous woman. This idealization portrays a traditional (Confucian) image of woman as lonely or anguished because of her separation from loved ones, but always virtuous and steadfast in the face of tremendous adversity. The idealized image of woman as embodying the essential identity of Korean national culture was upheld to oppose division of the country and to prevent its contamination by "western" values. In developing a rhetorical stance against division, the "romantic rhetoric of Korean reunification" appropriated the "woman's question as a way of addressing the perceived crisis of Korean self-identity." Thus, nationalism and sexuality merged in the discourse of Korean reunification.

LAUREL CORNELL argues that infanticide was not the root cause of the stagnation of Japan's population in the early modern period. She makes her case by examining the empirical data, by synthesizing the work in Japanese demography, by comparing her findings with those generated by European historical demography, and by building on demographic methodology and theory. Contrary to the current understanding of early modern Japan's population history that attributes population stagnation to deliberate infanticide, her interpretation highlights a host of factors, including cultural practices, to explain why population did not grow. Her findings raise larger questions about infanticide and premodern forms of family planning that are pertinent to other regions of Asia as well.

MICHELLE YEH focuses on the contemporary Chinese literary scene from 1985 to the present by looking at a phenomenon that she terms a "cult of poetry." An "unofficial poetry scene," this cult is notable for having produced avant garde and experimental poetry (as well as other writings) suffused with religious symbolism, particularly that of Christianity, and marked by a sense of alienation from the political and cultural milieu of post-Mao China in which consumerism has become pervasive. At a time when poetry and poets seem marginalized, this group deifies the poet as a hero. Yet, ironically, precisely because this cult raises poetry to the level of religion and places the poet on a pedestal, its literary products themselves have become a commodity in the international cultural marketplace. The author concludes that the paradoxes created by the cult of poetry are likely to play a significant role in shaping further developments in contemporary Chinese poetry.

MARTHA ANN SELBY provides a context for the ancient South Asian poetical genre of Prākṛit *gāthās*, short poems that usually possess erotic meanings, and the Sanskrit commentaries that were invariably attached to them. She describes the status of Prākṛit vis-à-vis Sanskrit both in terms of linguistic and literary standards before introducing us to examples of these poems and the interpretation of them prepared by later commentators. Male writers, these commentators overeroticized the poems themselves and foisted a highly male oriented view of the sexual pleasure of women's sexual lives even though the speaker in many of the poems is a woman. By

demonstrating how Sanskrit commentators sought to encode a particular genre of Prākṛit poetry, the author shows that “A poem is, in fact, a ‘patch’ between desire and reality.”

MING-TE PAN contends that accounts of rural credit in China which only see it as exploitative “usury” and only for purposes of consumption are mistaken. Drawing on evidence from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jiangnan, he argues that peasant producers profitably used credit as sources of capital for investment in silk production, thereby improving their incomes through the use of such loans. The author offers a wealth of data regarding rice and silk production to make his case, as well as a fascinating case study of a hypothetical household economy to illustrate the workings of a peasant household in a subsistence economy. The availability of credit, he concludes, was a positive benefit to peasant producers, notwithstanding the fact that interest rates were extremely high by modern standards.