

In This Issue

Jainism is usually discussed in philosophical terms because of its radical ascetic approach to liberation of humankind from the sorrows of existence. L. A. BABB, however, takes up the question of how Jains solve the obvious and more mundane issue of establishing a viable social identity for their community of believers. Babb bases his account on field research concerning the Osvāls in the Jain community at Jaipur. He finds that texts and rituals of this group assert they are descendants of royal Rajput warrior families who renounced power in the quest for liberation. Babb also shows how certain key rituals of Jain worship help to establish and to reinforce this identity among both laymen and monks, thereby both affirming Jain social identity in this world and providing the Jain worshipers a means by which they can relate their present social lives to Jainism's greater cosmic patterns.

RICHARD H. DAVIS explores how, over centuries, divine images produced in India have accommodated widely different meanings. He begins with familiar present-day identities as museum art, and closes by reminding us that in museums these images typically play supporting roles in the narrative of national identity. As he notes, art historians usually emphasize qualities intrinsic to the objects, such as aesthetic elegance, iconography, and the sociopolitical context of production. Instead, Davis directs our attention to what Roland Barthes called the second-order, semiological meanings of objects by examining the extrinsic qualities of these divine images. He shows how, during the medieval period, these sacred objects were looted from their original locations. The looters, various Indian rulers, would often either destroy or carry away the objects to be installed elsewhere. There, in new sites, the divine images revealed the looter's power and indicated the subordination of the previous owners to a new political authority. Davis suggests these second-order meanings can help account for the moving and preservation of certain works and thus, in turn, can help explain how some survive as art in museums today. He concludes that in art history second-order, extrinsic historical meanings are worthy of attention and analysis.

MICHELE MARRA shows how Buddhism in medieval Japan appropriated and transformed Japanese conceptions of defilement. He argues that Buddhism appropriated such notions in a manner that expanded its own role as the source of powerful, universalistic truth. To illustrate his case, Marra discusses the Buddhist treatment of women who were considered defiled because of their activities as prostitutes or courtesans. He shows that Buddhism presented itself as a powerful means by which defilement from such women could be either avoided or expunged, both for those who associated with such women or, indeed, the women themselves. He gives examples of how courtesans' songs became transformed into a Bodhisattva's offer of enlightenment, while their promises of physical intimacy were equated with offers of spiritual salvation. Marra emphasizes how Buddhism managed to appropriate much of the power believed to be possessed by shamanesses in the native Japanese tradition. He shows how the blending together of the roles of courtesan and shamaness, the themes of defilement and purification as antecedents to enlightenment, were common to all kinds of medieval Japanese tales and stories, especially those of a Buddhist character. Thus, he concludes that Buddhism captured, transformed for its own purposes, and rendered harmless previously independent religious ideas totally distinct from the Buddhist tradition.

For centuries, historians have discussed and condemned the motives that led Sui Yangdi (r. 604–17) to build a new capitol at Luoyang in the early seventh century. VICTOR CUNRUI XIONG reexamines the questions involving both the reconstruction and the planning of this great medieval Chinese city, which had such a wide influence on later imperial capital cities in East Asia. He finds economic, political, and personal elements can be found in Yangdi's decision, as well as a clear parallel to the actions of his brother-in-law, the Northern Zhou Emperor Xuandi (r. 578–79). He also stresses how, rather than a bold departure from earlier urban designs, it is possible to find in Sui-Tang Luoyang strong elements of continuity with earlier medieval Chinese capital cities. The result is an interpretation that emphasizes how Yangdi's personality, reasoning, and goals seem to fit more closely the pattern of medieval China.

EUGENE COOPER and MENG ZHANG employ an unusual combination of anthropology and literature in their article on cousin marriage in China. They demonstrate how marriages of members of the Jia, Wang, and Xue families in the famous eighteenth-century Chinese novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, reflect patterns found in the course of fieldwork on twentieth-century genealogy in Zhejiang Province. They conclude that patterns of cross-cousin marriage and matrilineal parallel cousin marriage extend over centuries and reveal a general, society-wide practice used to widen or reaffirm networks of affinal connections. On the literary side, they suggest that in Cao Xueqin's novel, the marriage of Jia Baoyu to Xue Baochai, rather than to his favorite, Lin Daiyu, would be predictable from their anthropological perspective.