

Abstracts

Sinhalese Astrology, South Asian Caste Systems, and the Notion of Individuality

STEVEN E. G. KEMPER Pages 477–497

Astrology is a neglected cultural form in the study of South Asian society. It is also one which pays attention to the individual in ways that seem to fly in the face of scholarly understandings of Asian societies as places where individuality has little importance. The ideology of caste, the institution most often taken as an analytical entry to South Asian societies, gathers people into groups on the basis of their gross similarities and fixes a person's condition for life. Astrology treats individuals as distinguished by subtle differences and liable to momentary changes. The paper argues that caste ideology and astrology have a common vocabulary and logic, one which is genealogical and combinatorial, and suggests in turn several conclusions about the relationship of individuals and society in South Asian cultures.

Kyōshi: Japanese “Wild Poetry”

DAVID POLLACK Pages 499–517

In Japan between 1770 and 1790, the craze for witty, comic verse forms such as *kyōka* and *senryū*, infected the ancient and noble tradition of poetry written in Chinese to produce *kyōshi*, “wild Chinese poetry.” Written in both Edo and Kyoto by poets of the lower samurai and educated townsmen classes, *kyōshi* ranged from silly puns and parodies of long-petrified Chinese verse forms to serious poems that used new subjects, language, and perceptions to revive the old genre, *kanshi*. Of the major poets, Ōta Nampo (Shokusanjin) of Edo, well-known as a master of *kyōka*, was equally famous for collections of witty *kyōshi*, while Hatanaka Tanomo (Dōmyaku Sensii) revived the Chinese “folk song style ballad” as a vehicle for descriptions of daily life in and around Kyoto. Because *kyōshi* was the product of a unique conjunction of literary, social, and political factors, it was almost forgotten by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The Concept of “Soul” in Chinese Folk Religion

STEVAN HARRELL Pages 519–528

While all variants of Chinese religion assume the existence of one or more “souls” (*ling-hun*), very little has been said about what these “souls” are or how the concept varies from one religious tradition to another. This article explores the “soul” in the folk variant of Chinese religion, arguing that while the “soul” may be conceived as multiple in abstract, theoretical discussions, people actually behave as if the “soul” were a single entity. To show what this entity is, the contexts in which the “soul” can be described clearly, i.e., those contexts in which it is separated from the body, are enumerated. The image that emerges of the “soul” indicates that the Chinese concept *ling-hun* has a dual nature that incorporates the cultural aspect of being human and the individual personality.