

In This Issue

The topics that the articles in this issue discuss range from local organization in medieval South India to films about village life in contemporary North China. Their variety is appropriate to the theme of SUSANNE HOEBER RUDOLPH's presidential address—comparison. Rudolph proposes that students of Asia develop an integral comparative approach, which would use the particularities of individual societies to build generalizations about them all. She further proposes not the imposition of ready-made comparative formulas derived from studies of the West but a combination of their demystified rationalist worldview with the Asian phenomenology of the symbolic.

The AAS's Fulbright Lecturer, T. N. MADAN, continues the discussion of the role of the symbolic in Asia that was introduced by Rudolph. Madan presents an anthropologist's view of the problem of secularism in present-day South Asia. He concludes that secularism, seen as an alien cultural ideology, has been unable to take hold in India and that the only way for it to be successful is for both secularism and religion to be taken seriously.

PAMELA KYLE CROSSLEY turns to China and the way the Qing court used a series of documentary works to define the social and spiritual lives of the Manchus. Focusing on *Researches on Manchu Origins* (*Manzhou yuanliu kao*), completed in 1783, she examines the court's attempts to reconcile eighteenth-century ideas about the origins of the Manchu clans, the cultural history of Northeastern Asia, and the legitimacy of the court itself.

In a piece of scholarly detective work, JAMES HEITZMAN uses temple inscriptions from the Chola period (849–1279) to reconstruct the growth of temple sites in South India as focal points for political, economic, and social organization. By tracing patterns of land gifts from agrarian lords to the temples, he is able to map the landowning networks of three study locations; based on them, he suggests comparisons with premodern urban development in other world areas.

JANET R. GOODWIN considers the role of contributions to temples in medieval Japan. She examines documents pertaining to a *kanjin* (public subscription) campaign conducted by Kasagidera, a temple in Yamashiro Province and, because of the evidence they contain, raises questions about the role of established schools in the popularization of Japanese Buddhism. She finds that, although the change in character of medieval Buddhism is generally attributed to the rise of new pietistic movements, the established schools sought broad-based support among the populace by their subscription campaigns, in an effort to revitalize themselves both economically and spiritually.

The review article in this issue is somewhat unusual: in it, VIVIENNE B. SHUE discusses the three films contained in Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon's *Long Bow*

Trilogy. Shue finds these films about life in a North China village unusually valuable because they present the people of the village not as exemplars of an exotic and self-contained “way of life” but as individuals inhabiting a complexly textured world of large power constellations, intimate social relations, and deep moral dilemmas. She argues that the films are at their best when they reveal the tensions and ambivalences the villagers face as they interpret their own experience and struggle to invest their lives with meaning and dignity.

Finally, JEROME SILBERGELD provides a state-of-the-field essay about recent trends and developments in the study of Chinese painting by art historians in the West. He is especially concerned with changes—often interdisciplinary in character—in scholarly inquiry, which have come to distinguish Western studies from traditional Chinese art history and methods. He discusses some 250 books and articles, dividing them into the areas of stylistic studies, theoretical studies, studies of content, and studies of context.