

In her study of a group of literary texts, mostly poems, on candles and candlelit scenes from the Liang dynasty, XIAOFEI TIAN redefines Palace Style poetry. Focusing on the “poetics of seeing,” she argues that this poetry does not mainly deal with boudoir life and romantic love --as many scholars have maintained--but instead represents a new way of relating to the phenomenal world, and that this was a significant change in the history of Chinese poetry. Profoundly influenced by Buddhist teachings about illusion, illumination, meditation through visualization, and the all-important concept of the thought-instant (*//nian//*), Palace Style poetry, Tian shows, concerns highly particular moments, which were best illustrated by the fleeting images of light and shadow created by candles.

JACK W. CHEN finds much of significance in imperial poetry, or poetry written by emperors, a subgenre that has been generally ignored by literary critics. Making Tang Taizong the central focus of his article, Chen characterizes the imperial poetic voice. He accepts that the imperial role constrained Taizong’s expression of individual personality. At the same time Chen analyzes writings by preceding rulers, beginning with Han Wudi, to demonstrate that Taizong used his own careful readings of earlier imperial poets to craft a poetic voice and identity that situated him within a literary genealogy, as well as to rethink poetry’s relationship to sovereign representation.

Taking Dizang’s appearance in a Japanese painting of Maitreya raig/o as a point of departure, ZHIRU uses popular narratives as well as visual and epigraphic sources to reconstruct a largely neglected connection between Dizang and Maitreya in Tang China. This relationship, she shows, illuminates the strategies that Chinese Buddhist clerics deployed in making the Dizang Bodhisattva into an important object of Buddhist piety in East Asia. Returning to the Japanese context, Zhiru in conclusion argues that the writings of S/osh/o (1202-1292), a key figure in the promulgation of the Maitreya cult during the Kamakura period, reveal his familiarity with Chinese narratives that assimilated the Maitreya myth into Dizang worship.

Examining the depiction of the circulation of objects in the late Ming novel *//Jin Ping Mei//*, SOPHIE VOLPP argues that the novel's emphasis on the illegitimate exchange of objects

is closely linked to its well-documented apprehension that the five Confucian bonds of human relations have deteriorated. She analyzes in particular the novel's treatment of the illegal manufacture and illicit presentation of the python robe, a type of presentation robe second in status only to the imperial dragon robe, showing how anxieties regarding the deviant consumption of the python robe in *Jin Ping Mei* resonate with concerns in the official and unofficial histories of the late Ming.

In his study of wet nurses (*menoto*), THOMAS D. CONLAN explores the transformation of an informal role into an established institution that affected politics from 950 to 1330. From the eleventh century, nurses and their families became retainers to their lords, and these allegiances often superseded kinship ties. Retired emperors drew their retainers from the ranks of their *menoto* kin, who replaced Fujiwara regents in raising princes. Provincial warriors also relied on *menoto* to establish a core of loyal retainers. After 1230, the court institutionalized the office of wet nurse, and then that of wet-nurse “father,” an office shared by several nobles of mid- to high rank. The personal wet-nurse bond was thus replaced by formal and impersonal ties.

[J.H.S.]