

Article Abstracts

ANDREA S. GOLDMAN analyzes a literary genre known as “flower registers” (*huapu* 花譜), which chronicled the charms and talents of the cross-dressing boy actors of Qing dynasty Beijing. These texts, she shows, were informed by the rhetoric of literati writings about taste and distinction, the eroticizing discourses of courtesan-connoisseurship literature, and the nostalgia of urban memoirs. *Huapu* authors genuinely appreciated the players of the metropolitan demimonde, but they also found that the genre offered rich parables for articulating their concerns with talent concealed and virtue unblemished. By writing *huapu* they could distinguish themselves as true connoisseurs—different from the moneyed patrons of the playhouses—and reinvent a status distinction that was being eroded in the socioeconomic sphere. These texts are thus equally revealing of actors and their author-aficionados.

The popular and influential *Śūraṅgama sūtra* receives a fresh look in JAMES A. BENN’s study. Although Japanese, Chinese, and European scholars have firmly established the scripture to be an eighth-century Chinese Buddhist apocryphon, its contents and their parallels in non-Buddhist Chinese sources invite further exploration. Benn notes some connections with other Chan-related apocrypha, such as the *Vajrasamādhi sūtra* and the *Yuanjue jing*, but his main focus is on tracing ideas in the *Śūraṅgama* back to works of secular literature that were well known in Tang China. Some passages were clearly influenced by Chinese, rather than Indian, ideas about certain natural phenomena, animals, and demonic beings. The *Śūraṅgama sūtra*, Benn argues,

was a sophisticated attempt to create an entirely new hybrid cosmology that would attract the interest of the monastic and lay intelligentsia in China.

HOK-LAM CHAN examines the symbols of legitimacy that various anti-Yuan forces used. Han Liner and Xu Shouhui, two competing anti-Mongol leaders of the White Lotus-Maitreya society, adopted the name of the “Song” dynasty (960-1176) and its Fire patron to legitimate their state. Zhu Yuanzhang also favored the Song symbols while he was serving in Han’s regime. When founding his own dynasty, however, he adopted the name “Ming” and the Fire symbol traceable to Pure Land Buddhism. Then, to secure his new legitimacy, he obliterated traces of his former subservience to Han Liner and covered up Xu Shouhui’s Song state in the *Yuan shi*. This tampering of pre-Ming evidence, Chan concludes, has misguided modern historians, particularly Wu Han, who incorrectly claimed that the anti-Yuan rebellions and the dynastic name “Ming” were inspired by Manichaeism.

In her study of political movements that “opened up the way for prestigious posts” (*t’ongch’ong* 通淸), SUN JOO KIM focuses on a tension in the social status system of the Chosŏn period (1392–1910). The state and its hereditary ruling elites (*yangban*) tried to protect their privileged access to high bureaucratic posts by pushing aside their competitors: the sons of *yangban* by concubines, administrative clerks, technical specialists, and northerners. Yet, the Confucian meritocratic values, which the Chosŏn dynasty itself upheld, provided these disadvantaged status groups with strong arguments for demanding that the court improve their social and political position.

Analyzing memorials through which the marginalized status groups asked the court to abolish discriminatory policies, Kim shows that their commitment to pedigree as a determinant of status constrained and fragmented their anti-discrimination efforts.