introduced a rival focus. Tracy Miller has written her thorough book on the Chinese sacred site of Jinci, but the Ise Shrine in Japan has long stood as the essential monument for academic study. Miller recognizes the need for this comprehensive approach in her first chapter. A useful site map shows the topography of the Jinci area and documents the environmental features of the complex; this map is the key for the entire book as it contains an index of the main buildings discussed. In this chapter readers are given a brief history of Jinci before entering the site for details. The statement of the author’s methodology is significant for understanding the scope of the research involved in the project. The physical structures of Jinci, linked to both ancient history and legendary stories, are explained in the second chapter. The “Flying Bridge,” for example, invites readers to investigate its form and meaning. Currently made from marble but originally built of wood, the cross-shaped bridge deck could refer to the linkage of the terrestrial and celestial worlds. Among the spirits in Jinci, the Sage Mother is the most widely worshipped. Her royalty has a triple sense: she was the daughter of a kingdom founder, the wife of a dynasty king, and the mother of the succeeding young king.

The Jinci complex differs from

Notes
4. The reconstruction differs from that offered by Mertens, Städte und Bauten der Westgriechen, fig. 204, in the placement of the metopes, the height of their plinths, and the pitch of the roof.

Tracy Miller
The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jinci
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007, 265 pp., 40 color, 22 b/w, and 12 line illus. $45, ISBN 067402513X

Ise Shrine in Japan has long stood as the essential monument for academic study of sacred architecture in East Asia, but with her thorough book on the Chinese sacred site of Jinci, Tracy Miller has introduced a rival focus. The Divine Nature of Power contains the first comprehensive research on the topic published in the English language. In contrast to the Ise Shrine, whose legendary founding dates back roughly two thousand years, Jinci has a legacy of some three thousand years and is a shrine dedicated to regional spirits, not a sacred site for the entire Chinese nation. Furthermore, the Jinci site does not have a tradition of periodic reconstruction, as at the Ise Shrine; rather, the site is characterized by gradual historical changes over a long period of time.

The Jinci site is a compound full of woods, canals, ponds, halls, and pavilions, adorned with statues of male and female spirits of the region. Jinci is located in China’s central-western province Shanxi and was once part of the ancient kingdom of “Jin.” Of the examples of pre-Song dynasty architecture in China, over 70 percent of the edifices with historic significance survive in Shanxi, which is also the site of the oldest preserved wooden structures in the country. Jinci is neither a single historic building nor a group of buildings from a similar time period; rather, it is a mix of buildings of different sizes and styles, constructed during different dynasties. Furthermore, over time Jinci has accumulated art and landscape designs from diverse periods. While most residents of Shanxi are unaware of the many older “treasures” in their province, they are very aware of Jinci, which is a source of regional pride. Residents of Shanxi believe that Jinci carries ancestor blessings to all the Jin descendants.

The historical and physical complexity of the Jinci site poses a serious challenge to the scholar. It necessitates a comprehensive investigation of diverse subjects: history, mythology, anthropology, and landscape in addition to art and architecture. Miller recognizes the need for this comprehensive approach in her first chapter. A useful site map shows the topography of the Jinci area and documents the environmental features of the complex; this map is the key for the entire book as it contains an index of the main buildings discussed. In this chapter readers are given a brief history of Jinci before entering the site for details. The statement of the author’s methodology is significant for understanding the scope of the research involved in the project. The physical structures of Jinci, linked to both ancient history and legendary stories, are explained in the second chapter. The “Flying Bridge,” for example, invites readers to investigate its form and meaning. Currently made from marble but originally built of wood, the cross-shaped bridge deck could refer to the linkage of the terrestrial and celestial worlds. Among the spirits in Jinci, the Sage Mother is the most widely worshipped. Her royalty has a triple sense: she was the daughter of a kingdom founder, the wife of a dynasty king, and the mother of the succeeding young king. The Jinci complex differs from
many other historical compounds in China where symmetrical formality is the rule in planning. The more “organic” format of the Jinji site reflects the importance of the sacred landscape. The geometry and orientation were determined by the historic relationship among structural groups of diverse art and architectural styles. In chapter seven, Miller summarizes the dynastic changes and related social events associated with the site. Again, the documents she presents provide convincing interpretations. The chapter’s conclusion circles back to the introduction to add deeper meaning to the title of the book, The Divine Nature of Power. At this site, the water and the woods together with the architecture and the allied arts formed a sacred environment, identified as the sacred spirit of Jin, which both governs and serves the Jin region.

The appendices are notable for their rich contents. Among the identified structures, Miller redates the Sage Mother Hall to 1038–87, some twenty years later than the estimates of other scholars as well as the “official” published date given by the state authority. This redating has the significant effect of removing the structure from the “Tian-sheng” period (1023–1032).

The high quality of the book puts it at the forefront of Chinese architectural studies. Small size booklets and tourist guides on Jinji have been in print for years, and journal articles deal with the art, architecture, and local history as separate issues. It was only in 2005, when Li Gang and Dong Xiaoyang published Zhongguo Jinji (Jinji of China), that a full-scale scholarly Chinese language book on the subject appeared. Although Zhongguo Jinji contains similarly comprehensive research on the topics that Miller addresses, her book is not simply an English version of Chinese sources. Miller adds further research along with new arguments and interpretations. Her extensive quotations from the classical documents, presented in dual-language format, enhance the depth of the scholarship. Readers with Chinese linguistic background will benefit especially from this format, and English readers need not fear that they are missing any major sources. The bilingual glossary of terminology will also be a great help to readers. Terms are listed in phonetic order in both Chinese and English, as half of the terms are highly specific, even for native professionals.

Miller’s book seems to point to new trends in the study of Chinese art and architecture and exemplifies the closely linked academic cooperation among scholars that is leading to more synthetic work and deeper insights. If Alexander Soper represents the first generation of scholars in the field who introduced this country to the field through great surveys, and Nancy Steinhardt represents the second generation who firmly established the topic with her studies of style and dynasty in Chinese architecture, then Miller, who worked with Steinhardt, represents the third generation. She adds new dimensions to the field by investigating the Jinji site in great detail, incorporating the work of Chinese scholars, and carefully managing and presenting the original documents.

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Mario Bevilacqua, Heather Hyde Minor, and Fabio Barry, editors
The Serpent and the Stylus: Essays on G. B. Piranesi
Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, Supplementary Volume IV

Sarah E. Lawrence, editor
Piranesi as Designer
New York: Smithsonian Institution, 2007, 359 pp., 96 color and 149 b/w illus. $60, ISBN 0910503958

If there were any doubts, these two books demonstrate that Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s fertile imagination and graphic virtuosity continue to engage scholars and architects alike. But the books approach the eighteenth-century Italian architect and graphic artist from different perspectives: The Serpent and the Stylus gathers papers presented at a scholarly conference held in Rome in 2001, while Piranesi as Designer accompanied an exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York in 2007–8.

The essays comprising The Serpent and the Stylus offer a fresh view of Piranesi, one that not only captures an ephemeral “state of the question” but also serves to redirect subsequent research in new and productive channels. As noted in its introduction, the book is aimed more toward opening up new avenues of research and presenting new evidence than toward achieving a synthetic view of Piranesi. As an exhibition catalog, Piranesi as Designer is at once more focused and more diffuse. John Wilton-Ely provides a masterful overview of Piranesi’s multifaceted career structured around the objects on display in the exhibition as well as others brought in for purposes of comparison. Unlike most exhibition catalogs, however, the objects are not treated in separate entries, but in the discursive and thematic essays comprising the volume. Sarah E. Lawrence, for example, drawing on Piranesi’s theoretical writings, treats Piranesi’s “aesthetics of eclecticism”; Alice Jarrard explores connections between Piranesi’s scenographic compositions and the theater; and Peter Eisenman considers the relevance of Piranesi’s reconstruction of the ancient Campus Martius for postmodern architects and urban planners.

In spite of their very different geneses and assumptions concerning their intended audiences, both books are essentially collections of essays, which, considered together, serve to illuminate five major issues and themes in Piranesi’s art.

Piranesi’s Formation
Three essays in The Serpent and the Stylus illuminate Piranesi’s formative years. Mario Bevilacqua’s “The Young Piranesi: The Itineraries of his Formation” questions prevailing assumptions about Piranesi’s early career and advances orig-