

System, and Self as Subject could stand alone as examples of scholarly writing that is lucid, informed, extremely well-crafted, and a pleasure to read. In the first essay Lee tells us that Ŏ Sukkwŏn used the "plain style" in his writing because he associated this with a nonchalant attitude suitable for expressing his views on whatever struck his fancy. This seeming nonchalance, however, may disguise the "studied art that he put into his work" (14).

In his essay on the value system Lee makes it clear that Ŏ Sukkwŏn adhered to the Confucianist values that structured and permeated Korean society. The Chinese emperor was ideologically the father of the Korean king and the Korean king was father of the Korean people. To be known in China was "the highest honor a writer could hope for" (46). In his work as an official interpreter Ŏ Sukkwŏn made seven trips to Peking, and his miscellany draws upon the China experience. But the "jottings" he provides for us are not from the official records but rather from his own experience with Chinese as well as Korean officials, statesmen, poets, and fellow humans of high and low degree. The word experience is key here, for Ŏ writes out of his own experience and his knowledge of the experience of others. It is this candid, experiential, subjective level of writing that moves Ŏ's writing close to the European essay form (with important differences) and makes it a beginning on the way to the formation of the novel.

This book belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in Korea, China, or East Asia, or, indeed, anyone interested in literature anywhere. Lee's scholarly comparisons of Ŏ Sukkwŏn's writing with cognate Western literary forms makes it accessible to students of comparative literature. And there is literally almost something for everyone in the *Miscellany*. My colleagues in anthropology will be most interested in Ŏ's comments on shamanism and folk beliefs. Most of all, Ŏ Sukkwŏn was an astute and wise observer of the human condition and for that alone he deserves a wide audience.

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#### CHINA

CUTTER, ROBERT JOE. *The Brush and the Spur: Chinese Culture and the Cockfight*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989. xiv + 255 pages. Appendix, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations, maps. Hardcover US\$28.00; ISBN 962-201-417-8.

This work aims to discuss China's traditional culture by means of the cockfight. There have been almost no previous examples of an attempt to study China's traditional culture by focussing on cockfighting or other amusements. For one thing, most people would think that a trivial activity like amusement would not provide sufficient material for a discussion of Chinese culture. A reading of Cutter's book, however, readily makes clear just how wrong such a view is.

Historical materials dealing with cockfighting exist in abundance; Cutter cites materials from the Zhou period (sixth century B.C.) that have the first mention of cockfighting, and sources up to the Qing: approximately 2,500 years of source material. On top of this, cockfighting appears throughout a wide spread of Chinese literature, from the works of such historical literature as the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 to philosophical works such as *Zhuang xi* 莊子 and *Lie xi* 列子, to the various forms of poetry produced by Court poets (*shi* 詩, *fu* 賦, *qu shi* 古詩, *ci* 詞, *yue fu* 樂府, etc.), and often enough it

is taken up as the main theme of the work. This should suffice to show the special position bestowed on cockfighting in Chinese culture.

From the contents of this book, which applies the scientific techniques of history, we learn numerous interesting facts, among them such things as that: 1) cockfighting was a pastime in China whose popularity was not restricted to any particular class of society, it being the favorite of emperors and high-ranking officials as well as of the general masses; 2) from about the fifth century cockfighting was made an annual event among the general populace, part of the spring festivals of Hanshi and Qingming; 3) from extremely early times on, there were specialist trainers who gave roosters special training and, before the fights, used such techniques as attaching metal spurs and smearing racoon dog grease or mustard on a rooster in order to instill fear in the other rooster.

The author's main aim was, however, not to describe the history of cockfighting in China but to pass on through cockfighting to compare Chinese and Western culture. This comparison begins from the moral assessment of cockfighting that can be extracted from historical materials; whereas in Europe (and of course we are talking about European society prior to the prohibition of cockfighting by the S.P.C.A.) people assessed it positively as a means to teach bravery, in China people assessed it negatively as a dissipation leading to ruin.

But the comparison does not stop here. A second, religious, contrast is extracted, one that possibly supports this contrast on an even deeper level: a contrast in religious views on animals, a contrast between the Christian view of animals and the Buddhist view of animals.

This contrast, however, was not drawn inductively from historical materials on cockfighting; it is deduced from the basic views on animals held by the respective religions. That is, on the basis of its position that animals are to serve as food for human beings, as stated in the Book of Genesis (or to put it another way, its teaching of the absolute dominance of human beings over animals), Christianity basically gives approval to cockfighting as well. Buddhism, however, teaches—as is clearly stated in the *Fan wang jing* 梵網經—that animals are reincarnations of humans of a previous existence (they are ancestors, in other words), and it censures the blood sport of cockfighting as a crime of cruelty to ancestors and ancestor murder.

This contrastive comparison between China and Europe as shown through cockfighting is both brilliant and fascinating. Still, why is it that in China even today, despite the pressures to ban cockfighting on moral and Buddhist grounds, cockfighting continues to exist and remains so popular? The author reserves an answer to this question.

But the fact of the continuation of cockfighting is a strong argument for thinking that, rather than explaining it as the result of Chinese people's fondness for cockfights overcoming the doctrines of Buddhism, or explaining it (as Cutter seems to) as a rationalization by Chinese that the pains suffered by the cocks in a fight are the penance suffered as compensation for sins committed in a previous life, and there is no wrong on the part of those people who set them upon each other, would it not be preferable to say that some cultural mechanism is at work that assesses cockfighting positively? Assuming that, besides the Buddhist cultural mechanism viewing it negatively, there is a cultural mechanism positively encouraging the practice of cockfighting as a plus activity, it might be appropriate to seek that mechanism in Taoism. In Taoism, which anteceded Buddhism and acted as an important foundation for Chinese culture through all the periods taken up in this book, there is no intrinsic notion that destroying life is wrong. Under the yin and yang theory Taoism gave to roosters a yang sym-

bolism and a symbolism of the sun.

It was at the time of the spring Hanshi festival that this symbolism functioned. The Hanshi was a day when fires were not used and food was eaten cold; since fire, like the cock a yang symbol and symbol of the sun, was temporarily extinguished and then relit, it was a fire-renewal custom, the object of which was the encouragement of the rebirth of all things in spring. To have a rooster, which was a yang symbol, fight another rooster at this time was, from a Taoist viewpoint, the same in substance as a fire-renewal custom. Thus cockfighting takes its place as an indispensable spring ritual, and Taoism, which assessed it positively in this form, can be thought to have guaranteed its continued existence.

In conclusion, let me say that the book contains English translations (with the Chinese texts) for a good deal of the extravagant amount of source materials, and it builds upon the fruits of research on Chinese history by Chinese, European, American, and Japanese scholars. In addition, it has appropriate, detailed notes, which themselves constitute an outstanding outline of Chinese culture with cockfighting at the core.

I recommend this book not only to scholars dealing with cultural anthropology but also to anyone who has a broader interest in Chinese culture.

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DESPEUX, CATHERINE. *La moelle du phénix rouge. Santé et longue vie dans la Chine du XVI siècle* [The marrow of the red phoenix. Health and long life in sixteenth-century China]. Paris: Guy Trédaniel Editeur, 1988. 300 pages. Selected bibliography; lists of Chinese characters for names, book titles, and technical terms; glossary of alchemistic terms. No price. ISBN 2-85707-281-3. (In French)

This recent book of one of the most prolific writers on traditional Chinese religious and health practices, which will delight students of Taoism and traditional Chinese medicine, is a translation of the *Chifeng sui* 赤鳳髓 (The Marrow of the Red Phoenix) of the late Ming dynasty. A compilation of a variety of texts on breathing techniques, gymnastics, and inner alchemy, the *Chifeng sui* is included in the *Yimen guangdu* 夷門廣牘 (Wide Tablets of the Gate of Silence) by the literatus Zhou Lǔjīng 周履靖. Like many writers on health practices, he was a well-educated member of the aristocracy who suffered severely from various illnesses during his youth and childhood.

The *Chifeng sui* is dated to 1578. It comprises six texts on different breathing techniques, three on gymnastics, and one on inner alchemy, combining successfully the most important health and longevity practices then current. Most of the textual materials are dated to the Song and Yuan dynasties. Techniques discussed include breathing according to the six sounds (*liuzi jue* 六字訣), nourishing primordial breath (*funai yuanqi* 服內元氣), embryo respiration (*taixi* 胎息), the five animals pattern (*wuqin xi* 五禽戲), the elegant exercise in eight sections (*baduan jin* 八段錦), and the sleep exercises of inner alchemy (*shuigong* 睡功). All these techniques are still being practiced as part of Qigong 氣功 in China today.

Despeux's book follows the basic outline of the *Chifeng sui*. It begins with a historical introduction on the author and the sources, identifying wherever possible