

SHAO WEN LIANG 邵文良, Editor. *Chūgoku kodai no spōtsu* 中国古代のスポーツ [Sports in ancient China]. Japanese translation by Zeng Li qing 曾麗卿, Liao Quang zhen 繆光楨, Luo Xian qiao 羅仙樵. Tokyo: Baseball Magazine Sha, 1985. 245 pages. Hardcover Yen 15,000; ISBN 4-583-02455-X. (In Japanese)

This volume is mainly a pictorial essay about Chinese sports. Its original Chinese text is translated into Japanese. The authors take the whole period before the Opium War of 1840 as "ancient times." As a consequence the sports dealt with in this book cover a long period of several thousand years, starting with the 5th century B.C. and running up to the 19th century A.D.

177 beautifully produced photographs, each one accompanied by a short explanatory note, make this book very attractive. Most of the material presented comes from recent archaeological discoveries of the last thirty years. The forms of sport included are classified into the following thirteen categories: archery, wrestling, martial arts, football, polo, golf, swimming and boat race, board games, health gymnastics, horse riding, skating, children's play, and acrobatics.

Not a real treatise of the history of sport, *Sports in Ancient China* is mainly a documentation of Chinese sports through the centuries and will therefore be useful to historians and anthropologists of sport. It offers helpful material, among others, concerning the problem of the diffusion or spread of certain forms of sport from the ancient Chinese Civilization to the rest of the Far East and to the tribal populations of South East Asia.

Unfortunately, however, the book is not free from certain inadequate assumptions. For example, a scene which depicts the paddling of a long and narrow bird-boat represented on a bronze drum from Earlier Han is interpreted as representing a scene from a dragon-boat race. However, as already Robert Heine-Geldern and Victor Goloubew have suggested, this representation should be interpreted as a mythical bird-boat carrying the dead to the other world.

Notwithstanding some shortcomings in interpretation, the book is of great documentary value. It is at the same time a pioneering work in the field of Chinese sports history.

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