

Cricket Fighting

By Leonel Borralko

CRICKET FIGHTING, a version of cock fighting, started in China during the early part of the Sung Dynasty (960-1270 A.D.), and for about a thousand years afterwards was considered one of the favorite sports of the Chinese people.

Legend has it that once upon a time, an emperor of the Sung Dynasty called to his palace two of his generals and ordered them to stop the "war" between them and to settle their differences by matching crickets against each other instead of their men.

Since then, the legend continues, cricket fighting became a national sport in China and had always been popular among the Chinese people until 1949, when Mao Tse-tung took over the Chinese mainland completely and banned the sport from Chinese soil.

It was also outlawed in Hongkong, partly because the British government is against

gambling, and partly because the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Hongkong has strong objections against it.

Cricket fighting, however, took root in Macao where it takes place at the "Voice of Autumn Club," situated at the fifth floor of the Central Hotel, Macao's biggest casino. It is held every day for about two months, from August 22 (the first day of the seventh moon in the Chinese calendar) until the middle of October (about the last day of the eighth moon).

TO THE Chinese businessmen, cricket fighting is a chance to build a stable of winners, win distinction in much the same way as a horse owner. For tricycle coolies, hotel workers clerks and other workers, cricket combats are a time for fun and a chance to bet and make winnings.

Before each combat, the watching people make their bettings, which sometimes run to sums of four figures.

After the bettings are made, two crickets are placed together in a small wooden arena of about fifteen to twenty inches in diameter, and the owner of each cricket irritates his own insect by touching its antennae with a long brush made of whiskers of a certain type of mouse, mostly found in rice fields, and then directs the insect against the adversary, while two referees watch the combat.

Once the crickets meet, there is no peace, and the combat concludes only when one of them runs away or is rendered incapacitated by the bites of the adversary.

The winner, characteristically, will rub parts of its forewings together to produce a chirping sound, then takes a rest for the next twenty-four hours. There is a ruling to the effect that a cricket can not fight more than once during the day.

The loser is usually given away, as it is considered unfit for further fightings.

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How do you pronounce February?

IF YOU wish to pronounce it *FEB-rooeri*, go ahead. But you will be just as correct if you say *FEB-yoo-eri*, which is the more common and natural pronunciation. It is difficult for us to pronounce two *r*'s when they occur close together in the same word; therefore, it is customary to drop the first *r* not only in *February*, but in other words such as *su(r)prise*.

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