

BOOK REVIEW

Cornaby, William Arthur. *A String of Chinese Peach Stones* London, Charles H. Kelley, 1895. Reprinted by Gale Research Company, 1974. pp. vi + 479.

"From a thousand hills the birds are all gone,
The myriad paths no longer footworn.
But one aged man remains in the cold,
With Coir cape sheltering his shoulders old;
In his little boat fishing the bends all weary,
While the snowflakes fall on the river dreary."

Taoist Poem

(A Twenty Leg Essay)

A String of Chinese Peach Stones

The author, Reverend William Arthur Cornaby (1860-1921), a Wesleyan Methodist missionary, compiled a series of tales about Ki-ma-kow village in Hanyang Hsien (county) in Hupeh Province, China during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). The tales describe the social life and customs of the Chinese peasant and the Mandarin gentry during a time of turmoil and transition. Outbreaks of anti foreign hostility toward missions and missionaries are portrayed amid day-to-day life in a farming village.

The spelling of Chinese words in this book is that of the Wade-Giles system which is the standard form of Mandarin romanization. Two problems exist in using this format: 1) there are inconsistencies in the use of Wade-Giles and Cornaby's standard missionary spellings, and 2) the People's Republic of China have created their own romanization system which is replacing the Wade-Giles in American texts.

The descriptions of plant and animal life are detailed mixtures of scientific fact, historic example, and cross referencing from Chinese and Western literature. The illustrations are numerous and unique: a water buffalo formed from Chinese characters (p. 9), a pen sketch of an ancestral tablet (p. 59),

modern mutilations showing lotus feet and the golden lotus lilies they were meant to resemble (p. 124), a Chinese ink brush painting depicting loneliness (p. 401), and a reduced facsimile of a page in the Taiping Bible which was used as a spiritual guide by the leaders of the Taiping Rebellion (p. 247).

The festivals, religious holidays, and their accompanying foods, traditions, and ceremonies are presented in minute detail. Cornaby's penchant for description is a boon to the sociologist using the technique of content analysis to discern patterns, events, and norms in Chinese village life. Cornaby also provides references to Chinese works which go into greater depth on whatever topic he is discussing. All of these illustrations, descriptions and minute portrayals are interwoven, and each chapter is a tale of life in Ki-ma-kow village.

For those interested in the Chinese language, each Chinese name, place, or character is translated, and its historical roots exposed by use of folklore, linguistic analysis, or poetry. For example, Cornaby describes "a man secreting himself in a hencoop crawling in sideways like the old tortoise that he was" and explains that "sideways" is a term used for a man who is the opposite of straightforward. The tortoise is supposed to walk irregularly, literally, and metaphorically.

Folklore, occult rites, and temple rituals come alive as the individuals in Cornaby's collected tales encounter different aspects of war and rebellion. Opium, immortal rabbits, art, and artists are discussed as the tales unfold and different people in the village react to their particular situations.

This 1895 reprint, while not a scientific or methodological study, presents an encompassing picture of Chinese village life which sensitizes the reader interested in "things Chinese." Cornaby tends to mythologize some aspects of the peasantry and Chinese life, thus, the reader should be aware that he is receiving nuances, not hard analysis. It should also be noted that Cornaby's approach is based on a Christian, western and apostolizing attitudes which at times affect his interpretations and perceptions. *A String of Chinese Peach Stones* is recommended reading for those interested in pursuing knowledge of Chinese village life and

for those interested in reading literature for entertainment.

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Moos, Rudolf H., editor. *Human Adaptation: Coping with Life Crises*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Health and Co., 1976. 438 pp. + author and subject index. Paperback.

Moos has edited a collection of articles dealing with human adaptation patterns and concomitant coping strategies employed by people in dealing with a variety of life crisis and/or life transition situations. While the articles draw heavily from psychiatric and psychological literature, the reader will be introduced to literature from other fields such as sociology during the course of the book. Moos is not content to focus on one perspective or "school" concerning human adaptation and coping. Rather he provides a "broad overview" which looks at the "important dimensions of adaptation and of coping behaviors" which may occur during the life course (vii).

The articles are ordered along a life course or developmental lifestage sequence. After reviewing the "state of the field," the subsequent sections consider coping and adaptational situations pertinent to successive life stages. The "early years" are considered in the first three articles, "bereavement in childhood" in the following articles, "the high school and college years," intimacy, marriage and parenthood transitions, and so on, through retirement, death, and bereavement events. Each period or life stage event(s) is considered in three or four articles. The last four sections, consisting of eleven articles, concern "coping with unusual stress." In this last section such things as natural disaster, imprisonment in concentration camps, skyjacking and rape are discussed by authors from a variety of academic backgrounds.

This book will be helpful in several sociological areas; namely, adult development, sociology of aging, social gerontology and certain social-psychology areas. In all fairness, Moos also suggests the book for certain areas in psychology as well.

This is a timely book of readings in that it comes when the subject of human adaptation to life crises and/or life transitions is of particular concern to academicians and researchers alike. With the recent barrage of disasters around the country i.e., the winter weather conditions particularly in the eastern part of the U.S., the concomitant energy and food shortages, etc. they are for certain going to pose new human adaptation situations for which this book will come in handy to anyone interested and concerned about human adaptation mechanisms and coping strategies.

Too, this book offers heuristic academic enterprise. A rarity as textbook readers go. Many of the thirty-five articles are worth reading and it is sure that the extensive footnotes and references will lead to other worthwhile readings. Certainly, *Human Adaptation: Coping with Life Crises* is a "must" reference work for anyone interested in loss and change, life crises and transition, human adaptation, coping capacities, and strategies.

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Kephart, William M. *Extraordinary Groups: The Sociology of Unconventional Life-Styles*. St. Martin's Press—(New York) 1976. Pp. 311. Paperback.

There is within the current sociological literature an oversized variety of attempts to make sociology, as literature, an appealing product for the bulk of students whom we teach. Perhaps one noteworthy dilemma can be cited regarding such emphasis on generating material which will, hopefully, entice the average student into a more sensitive awareness of social diversity. Too often what is produced tends uncontrollably towards narcissistic Americana. Kephart has written a book better than many aimed at engaging the curiosity of college students while in a subtle pedantic manner slipping in basic concepts such as sanctions, ethnocentrism and social control. The introduction of *Extraordinary Groups* elicits the reader to study these "other groups" in order to gain a more humble attitude towards his own milieu. Yet one cannot but wonder if Kephart has himself avoided