

Cuyler, Patricia L. *Sumo: From Rite to Sport*. New York: Weatherhill, 1979. Pp. 208. Index, selected bibliography, notes, charts, tables, diagrams, pictures, drawings. \$16.50.

Sumo, evolved from wrestling forms in ancient China and Korea and from indigenous Japanese shamanistic rituals, has become the national sport of Japan. Sumo attracts capacity crowds to its tournaments, millions more watch on television. Its champions have always been popular heroes. Their gigantic figures and reputations are known throughout Japan and arouse curiosity around the world.

P. L. Cuyler, a graduate of Princeton University, where she majored in Japanese history, has provided a valuable history of sumo. She traces the early Asian influences, the Japanese popularization during the Heian period, the beginnings of professional sumo as entertainment in the Edo period, to its development into a modern national sport. The use of black and white illustrations of sumo from prehistoric times, to the entertainment of the emperor and nobles, to the incorporation of sumo techniques into the martial arts used by feudal lords struggling for power in frequent civil wars, to professional entertainment during the Tokugawa shogunate enhances our perception of the place sumo has held in Japanese culture. It is disappointing that colored illustrations were not utilized to fully demonstrate the refined aesthetic sense so common to all Japanese life but especially attractive in rites and in sport.

Cuyler's explanation of sumo is detailed, comprehensive, and well written. She analyzes the anthropological and political aspects of the development of sumo with insight, but she does not explain or interpret sociologically how sumo evolved.

The sparse use of footnotes and the all-too-brief selected bibliography do not provide the validated evidence sought by researchers. This is particularly a concern in the recounting of stories from early Japanese literature that illustrate both the nature and importance of sumo during the Heian period and in recasting tales of warrior-wrestlers during the feudal period.

The lengthy presentation of the modern period of sumo as sport contains much useful information about the wrestlers, their training, their stables, and the organization and techniques of wrestling. The modern period is written in a narrative style, bordering on reporting, almost devoid of interpretation. The numerous charts, tables, diagrams and pictures used to illustrate the modern sport provide information and images, but they lack the artistic skill and quality of the earlier illustrations.

Cuyler set a demanding task for herself in examining the evolution of sumo from rite to sport. She has succeeded in presenting a chronological account in

which anthropological aspects are analyzed, but historical and sociological interpretations are often lacking. For example, Cuyler does not indicate what influenced sumo's loss of ritual elements, or what ritual elements survived, and why those particular elements survived.

It would be helpful if Cuyler had employed some model of ideal sporting types with polar characteristics and traced changes in the sporting types through actual historical stages. Such a process would assist the reader in comprehending the transformation of sumo. Without such a model, many questions in regard to the evolution of sumo remain unanswered.

As an historical source, *Sumo from Rite to Sport*, is not very useful. Footnoting deficiencies and the dependence on a selected bibliography weaken its effectiveness. As a source for the explanation of sumo ritual and for the use of illustrations of sumo from prehistoric to modern times, Cuyler's work is superior to any other attempted. It is hoped she will continue her interest in Japanese sport. She obviously has the academic preparation and personal interest to make further contributions to our understanding and appreciation of Japanese sport. Her work challenges other sport historians. We need similar histories and interpretations of sport's transitions from ancient ritual to modern sport.

Oregon State University

Arnold Flath