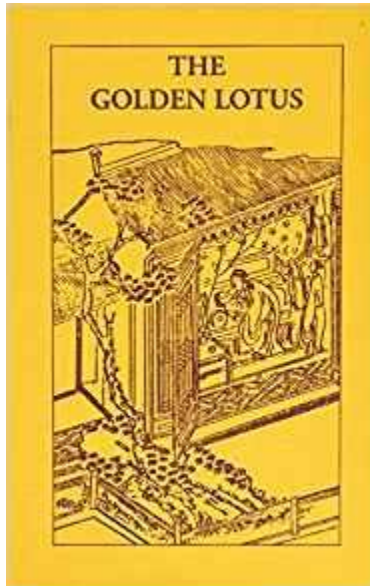


A Fascinating Insight into Chinese Lifestyle



A review on The Golden Lotus

Translated by Clement Egerton

I started reading it secretly, because I was told it was a very erotic Chinese novel, one knows about, but one does not read. But I was curious and what a treasure I came across once I started reading. It is truly a story about deception, crime, virtue and above all Chinese customs. It gives an interesting inside into everyday life before the Chinese revolution. The proper handling of affairs after the birth of a child, wedding arrangements, the preparations and conduct of a funeral; how to behave when you are invited and what has to be done when you are the host. And no matter whether you are a good person or a cheater these things have to be followed and conducted in a certain way and they give us an interesting insight in the way of life, their moral

point of views and their meaning of life altogether. In all the fiction novels I read up to then, the roles of the hero and heiress, of the good and the bad guys were clearly defined. In the Golden Lotus you will find no such thing. Nobody is all good or bad, they all have their burden to carry and they do it to the best of their abilities. The society and its unwritten rules and regulations are very complex. Even so it might not look like it on the surface everybody, whether born into the rich or the poor world has a chance. Because of the morale of the story, most of the characters choose the easy way by lying and cheating their way through life. And because the final truth is, the way you treat your fellow men, that way you will be treated too, in the end only the... but that would be spoiling it. What I found so interesting was the way that everyday things were conducted. It is corruption pure in almost everything. Yet it is done with so much sophistication and ingenuity that you cannot help yourself admiring it. Everybody has a price, and just in case that it might not work there is always blackmail or even murder. And because the official justice system is just as corrupt you might just get away with it in this life. But the Chinese do believe in reincarnation and there is the catch. The message that comes across is so beautifully hidden between the lines, yet so clear. It does not matter where you are put in life it's what you make of it. If you are good your next life will be so much better. In this case however one of the main characters is so bad that Buddha personally has to take care of him in the end. I found it a fascinating story and can only highly recommend it.