

## Javanese Cockfighting : Significance and value

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### ABSTRACT

This article explained the Javanese cockfighting and their significance and value. Generally, the Javanese classify the chickens according to their feature and function, each feature has a symbolical significance according to its function. In this article also discussed about the fowl, status attributes and belief, selection, breeding and preparation of fighting cocks, and cockfighting, matches, role, and regulation and cultural significance of the practice and significance of cockfighting to germ-plasm conservation. The practice of the cockfighting of the society has a great significance to the effort of maintaining the genetic variability of indigenous fowls. It motivates people with limited settlement space to actively participate in breeding different varieties of fowl and it gives opportunity to the common with a limited capital to earn extra money from breeding only a limited number of cocks. After all, the cockfighting and all its other correlating activities are forming a unity which is consciously developed by the Javanese and merit to be regarded as an art and becoming a part of the sophistication of the fowl domestication.

Keywords : Javanese cockfighting, cultural significance and value, germ-plasm conservation

### INTRODUCTION

Cockfighting is an old form of cultural expression which is widely practiced by the people of South East Asia. In different regions, however, cockfighting is performed in various ways, engaging different varieties of cocks and confined to different rules. In Bali for instance, smaller cocks are engaged; sharp and pointed 4 to 5 inch blades are used as artificial spurs fixed to the heel of each opposing cock (see Geertz, 1972). The blood shed is of religious importance, the use of the artificial spur and is supposed to enable all the participants to sacrifice their beloved animals to the gods (God) within the limited time provided during the day of ceremony, which is usually known as the day of "*Labuh Getih*" or the day of blood sacrifice (for further detail of this ceremonial day, read Mooijen, 1926).

In Java no artificial spur is utilized in cocks pitting. Heavier but *leaner* cocks are matched. The fighting lasts much longer, the death of a cock is rarer and the fight might proceed to a draw after 5 or 6 rounds. At present cockfighting is forbidden by law. Members of society who consider themselves intellectual or progressive dismiss cockfighting as it is criminal, primitive, backward and uncultured. They regard those who are involved in cockfighting activities as barbarians and socially pathologic, and modernization for them is identical to the indiscriminate adoption of vulgar western attitudes and snobbism. Those who classify themselves as being orthodox or puritan,

religious and the most cultured, regard cockfighting as immoral, decadent and against the teaching of the religion they adopt. There is a tendency for modernization to annihilate traditional inherited values. Nevertheless, despite all the existing risks, stealthily held cockfights still prevail in big cities and in semisecret arenas in rural areas attended by *officinados* from different social categories and statuses. With the strict puritan policy of the government against gambling practices, the cockfighting *officinados* are certainly affected and the conservation of traditional values and knowledge of the long developed culture seems hard to maintain. It is not only the loss of cultural inheritance, but also the loss of the motivation to breed and to develop varieties which is quite significant.

The loss of "*bulu*" varieties of the local rice (*Oryza sativa*) is an example of the devastating effect of modernization and value changes in agricultural activities imposed on society without reserve and precaution. People tend to stress the importance of direct economic gain rather than paying attention to the preservation of available genetic resources.

### Fowl, status attributes and belief

Chickens (*Gallus gallus*) are relatively expensive for the Javanese. A small chicken of moderate size might cost about 1500 to 2000 *rupiahs* in 1982 or equivalent to about 2.50 - 3.00 dollars (now it is about 1,5 to 2.5 dollars for the present *rupiah* values in dollars, 2005), and an average earning of a laborer in that year was about 700 *rupiahs* per day (it does not change much, up to present in the rural areas of Central Java), slightly over than 1 dollar or a bit ore per day. Serving a chicken for the common people is practically a luxury. Even in old time, chickens didn't seem to be the main protein resources of the Javanese. Only in certain occasions the Javanese consumed chickens, particularly during the communal feast or thanksgiving ceremony, the "*slametan*".

At present the Javanese rely their protein resources mainly on salty fish, shrimp paste and beans, but in the old time pork might be one of the main protein resource beside the shrimp paste and eggs.

Chicken seems to have a different significance to the Javanese; it is neither valued as a protein resource nor as a delicacy. Certain colors of chickens are supposedly proper for certain communal feast or thanksgiving ceremony, but those chickens might not be suited to be pined. The Javanese believe for instance, that the sacrifice of a totally white or totally black feathered and skinned chicken is proper in some communal feast "*slametan*" to avoid bad luck or evil spirits. White roosters however, is supposed not to be pitted, it is a taboo. A totally black feathered and black skinned rooster (stone hen or chicken) is quite rare, and usually it is not of good quality to be pitted. Furthermore most of the totally black feathered and black skinned chickens are female, which are not to be pitted.

The Javanese classify the chickens according to their feature and function, each feature has a symbolical significance according to its function.

Fighting cocks do differ in body shape, leg scales, form of toes, and pattern of feathers, color (secondary sex character) and even the ideal sound of their crow. An ideal fighting cock is sometimes identified as "*Arjuna*"\* like if it has a golden orange plumage, or



"*Bima*" if it has a blackish red plumage. The Owning of good and ideal cocks, without necessarily being involved in cock fighting, is by some believed to be of good influence. The root of such a superstition probably lies to the old Javanese belief that a Javanese is only fully human if he is properly confined with five basic attributes:

- a. *Garwo*, signifies a wife, related to reproductive function and it also reflects the status achieved as a member of the society.
- b. *Wismo*, means a residence or a shelter. Different forms of houses are known in Java, each form has a different space arrangement, different roof shape and a particular name. A certain form of a house might indicate the status of the owner and indirectly shows publicly how wealthy the owner is.
- c. *Curigo*, or the traditional dagger, the "*keris*". What a "*keris*" means to the Javanese is discussed by Rasser (1959) in his description of the Panji culture. The higher the status of the owner, usually means the more elaborately decorated and expensive the "*keris*". According to Javanese belief, however, a different "*dapur*" (shape) of the "*keris*" is only proper to a certain individual of a certain social status and profession. Some specialists might think that the importance of the "*keris*" lies in its defensive meaning, but it doesn't seem comparable to the samurai of the Japanese. It's too short and sometimes the "*keris*" is too fragile to be a defensive weapon. The kind of ornament which is sometimes quite excessive tends; to make the "*keris*" merely a status symbol.
- d. *Turunggo*, literally means a horse and could be interpreted as a means of transportation, which should be owned by a functional dignitary, to control the region and its population. At present, wealthier people or government officials place significant importance on the kind of car they own. It is not that a car is important merely as a vehicle, it confirms status.
- e. The last but quite relevant with the importance of the cock to the Javanese is the "*kukilo*", literally means bird. This attribute includes the fowl, not as a protein resource or delicacy but as an alternative of the "*kelangenan*", beloved animals.

The fact that a fowl, particularly the rooster or the cock has gained an important place within the life of the Javanese could be traced to the existing legend and myth concerned with social figures and fighting cock, such as the tale of Cindaras and Sawunggaling and even described clearly in the supposedly 17th century Javanese novel *Pranacitra*.

Above all I think that chicken is a creature which despite its long history of domestication, has produced a wide variety, as wide as the varieties shown by the *kerises* as man product. Preference for a certain "*keris*" and a certain color of type of rooster has developed into the belief that only a certain personage may properly own a particular kind of "*keris*" and a particular color and type of rooster.

## Selection, breeding and preparation of fighting cocks.

The pride of possessing a good and well reputed fighting cock is not argued. It is certain that anybody who is able either by chance or by a consistent effort to posses and breed roosters of good quality might gain fame and probably also economic advantage. The price of rearing and breeding good fighting cocks, however, is sometimes beyond the buying capacity of most ordinary fighting cock *officinados*. There are good roosters of all kinds; there is however a strong tendency that people breed and believe that a certain form and color of roosters are more promising than others, in the sense that they are better fighters. The most desirable roosters are "*wiring kuning*" (golden orange), "*wiring galih*" (blackish red), rarely "*wido*" (greenish), but certainly not for "*lurik*" (striped, spotted, or *buik* in Balinese and *burik* in Sumatranese) and other mixed colored roosters (salad or *gado-gado* in color).

At present most fighting cock breeders select their roosters based on the performance of the roosters during the fighting and reputation of the stock. Some roosters might begin to crow between the 8th and the 10th month, but most of them will be well prepared for a fight only after a year. To delay the selection by one year will be too long and means extra expenses in rearing. Therefore all male chickens are separated after they are able to crow and have almost complete secondary sex feathers. As soon as they are prepared to fight, matched sparing partners are brought in to perform trials and selection at the same time.

The roosters which appeal to the taste of the breeder (who is also a cock fighting *officinado*) are preserved and the less appealing ones are usually sent to the market to be sold to lower ranking cock fighting *officinados*, or sometimes they are offered as a gift to the breeder's relatives and acquaintances. The role of the intermediate fighting cock retailer, the feeder and the handler in finding the purchasers is important. There is a possibility for the owner or the breeder to offer his roosters directly to some of his acquaintances or friends whom he meets in the pitting occasions. Good quality fighting cocks however, are usually bred by socially high status retired individuals (civil servants, wealthy families), and the involvement of an ex-dignitary (high status civil servant) in a mercantile activities is considered as improper.

A fighting cock is usually brought to the pit between the ages of 1 to 3 years, when its stamina is considered prime. It is possible for older cocks to be pitted, but these rarely show high tempo and attractive performance. The older the cock, the less frequent his strikes and blows, and the less active its movements.

A cock of good reputation is usually kept by the owner to interbreed with selected hens; he is well treated and fed, receives proper medical treatment when necessary and sleeps under a mosquito net.

Nevertheless, the price of even regular fighting cocks is at least 5 to 10 times higher than that of any meat producing chicken. Therefore the marketing of any fighting cock is unique and special. Up to the present, in many large towns, special birds market are still prevalent and in such markets fighting cocks are usually offered to cock fighting lovers, this is not the case for ordinary chickens. Fighting cocks and ordinary meat and egg producing



chickens are never mixed, particularly for those who rely their earning on fighting cock breeding.

The existing of the special bird market in Central & East Java big towns indicates that birds (include fighting cocks) and other pet animals already have a significant place in the life of the Javanese. In Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, several bird markets are also found in different part of the city, in some of them fighting cocks are offered by special retailers. The fighting cocks are usually brought in special small cages and each retailer usually does not offered more than 2 or 3 fighting cocks in one occasion.

Fighting cocks from different origins are well-known, but probably the most popular are those which are imported from Thailand, although in older times fighting cocks from Sumatra, Banten (Bantam), Southern part of west central Java and northern part of east central Java were also favored. A regular young stag but of good quality is priced at least about 20 to 25 dollars, while a cock which already has a name (reputation) in different pits might cost as much as a brand new car. It should be noted that the fighting cock buyers are rarely permitted to select the rooster they want trough trials, and morphological features are the only guidance.

Traditional choice of a rooster is based on morphological criteria among others are the color of the feathers or plumage as sex secondary character (around the neck and on the back just in front of the tail), the bone massiveness, the shape of the body and head, the form of the comb and beak, the form of the leg scales, the form of the spurs and the color of the eyes, beak and that of the leg, and the tail shape.

Traditional classification of fighting cocks are known by the *officinados* and were mentioned in the Javanese traditional astrological encyclopedia ("*Primbon*"), and there are at least a dozen names of good quality cocks with more than 20 kinds of plumage color, 5 different comb shapes and at least 4 different types of spurs which are observed among the fighting roosters.

The duck wing and spangles are not among the rooster type favored by Javanese fighting cock *officinados*, the English blue piles and black red cocks which are probably similar to the "wiring" variations are more appreciated by the Javanese. The Mack red and the golden orange colored cocks are probably the kind of male color that resemble most the original color shown by their wild ancestor's male, *Gallus gallus* or *Gallus bankiva*, the jungle red fowl.

In term of the form of the tail, the Javanese prefer the rooster with a thick abundant tail but a straight downward directed than a sickle form of tail. Such a straight and palm leaf-like tail is considered an indicator that the cock is a heavy bitter and a close body neck combatant. A long neck with thick feathers but relatively small head (snake like) is considered the mark of a tight and searching mouthed rooster; he is active and fast in taking initiatives. Long bodied roosters are considered to be more stable than the shorter ones, but a short tail might impair the body balance.

To enable one to select the proper rooster, therefore, one should be experienced and have keen powers of observation. Modernization and culture changes have degraded the traditional knowledge and criteria of good roosters prally passed from generation to generation, although some are still documented in "*primbon*" (the Javanese traditional astrological encyclopedia).

Cock breeders and cockfighting *officinados* of the middle class social status are usually unable to pay a hand to take care of and to prepare their cock. The higher the social status of the cock breeders or the cockfighting lovers (the wealthier they are and the more prestige they ought to preserve), the role of the feeder or the handler employed becomes important.

A feeder should be a real animal lover. He should be well trained in the routine care of the fighting cocks. Each morning he should wake up early to uncage the hens, young fowl and the breeder cock. Prepared cocks are usually kept in separate cages far from one another; they might not even be able to see one another.

The effect of a young stag accustomed to seeing an older one is sometimes disadvantageous, because he becomes afraid of a certain color of cock which resembles the color of the older cock. Each prepared cock should be bathed early in the morning and sunbathed for one or two hours between 9 to 12 o'clock. Such a practice is supposed to train the cock to maintain the physical condition and also to avoid insects and parasites.

Force feeding is sometime performed to strengthen the neck muscles by forcing into the beak a handful of solid freshly cooked rice. But the regular feeding is usually composed of morning watered rice (between 9 and 10 o'clock) and steamed unhulled rice in the afternoon. The afternoon portion is given if the cock has emptied the morning portion. The Objective of giving unhulled rice is to accustom the cocks to working with the head and the beak to take the served meal one by one. The fact that unhulled rice has a more or less hard husk helps to sharpen the beak of the rooster, but the most important thing is that the unhulled rice still conserves the nutritiously rich kernel and sheath which serves the roosters adequate feeding, without superfluous water input. The Javanese tend to keep the cock muscularly tight ("*keceng*"), preventing weight gain; this is considered the best shape for a prepared rooster. In such a case only experienced handlers, feeders and cockfighting lovers are able to observe and to judge by holding the breast around and to feel the neck musculature. Preparing a cock for pitting is strenuous work that needs a lot of regularity, patience and love. A good fighting cock owner usually limits the number of prepared cocks (which are supposed to be pitted) between 4 and 5, because he should be prepared to wake up earlier, to bathe the cocks, to put them into separate sunbathing cages, to lose them alternatively in the yard and to give them some physical exercise. A sparring can be given only to new cocks to obtain an idea whether the cocks are good to keep or should be discarded to avoid wasting energy and time. There are some cockfighting *officinados*, however, who prefer to spar their cocks because they belief that the cocks might have experience before being pitted. Other lovers, however, prefer not to engage their cocks in more than one sparring before the actual pitting.

Fighting cocks are usually quite well treated, although they might lose the battle. They will not be maltreated by the owner. After the battle a suffering cock is usually isolated and properly treated with warm water baths and receives regular medicaments. Soft meals are given to him until he shows signs of recovery. Such a cock is usually turned loose in the back yard with some hens and younger chickens, to regain more strength and confidence. To obtain back his courage he needs several months of consistent effort by the owner. Sparring with lower quality of cocks is necessary to give him the opportunity to feel confident by letting him win the fight against the sparring partners. There is a belief,



however, that a loose fighting cock rarely regains the same courage and endurance once he performs, and people tend not to bet heavily on a once loose cock, although it is not rare that a really good cock can win the following match miraculously after a defeat. The rehabilitation effort of once defeated cock is an art not everybody can master. The Javanese believe that fate and misfortune are sometimes unavoidable (*nasib sial* = "naas"), therefore some Javanese (even at present) still practice the traditional astrology before pitting (based on calculations of "*neptu*" - the traditional astrological indicators).

State of the art, a good cock fighting *officinado* or lover, a breeder and a feeder is professional if he knows the art of loving, selecting and rearing fighting cocks; nevertheless the knowledge of traditional cock classification and astrology is to the Javanese of accessorial importance.

### Cockfighting: Matches, Role, and Regulation

At present most of the cockfight matches are held within a rectangular enclosure of about 3-4 meters by 3-4 meters. This ring or pit is formed on moist or soft ground to prevent the rooster's feet from being traumatized. The enclosure is usually prepared from gunny rice sack. In earlier times or even now in some rural areas in Java, the cock-pit is performed in a round pit, which is dug to a depth of about 30 cm below the ground surface with a diameter of about 3 meters. People will stand and sit around the pit on the ground.

There has not been any formal or legal pit, although matches have been known since the Dutch colonization, even though during the 70's some semi legal pitting were performed in Surakarta and Jogjakarta (the cultural centers of Central Java) with the alleged purpose of fundraising for development projects. In Jakarta, however, cock-fight matches are always illegal, although other forms of gambling's were legalized by the former Governor Ali Sadikin. The reason was that the cockfight matches did not contribute enough tax revenue compared to that obtained from other gambling sources.

Based on my experience and observations, the number of matches in a given pit will not exceed 6 to 7 times a day. The amount of the formal or inside bet (wage) which is pooled either by the umpire Or the owner of the pit will be around 100 to 500 dollars in a middle class (to upper middle) owned pit, in a given match, which is low compared to the money circulation in a casino within a given time; particularly if one takes into consideration the fact that the match might end with a draw after 5 rounds, which is about 90 to 100 minutes. One round in a Javanese cockfight match takes about 15 minutes with an interval of about 4 to 5 minutes.

The pit owner is allowed to take 20% out of the total bet of the winning party (or about 10% of the total of both side bets), as well as 20% of the side bet which is counted and pooled by the teller or the Pooler during the course of the match. Nevertheless, the total income Obtained by the pit owner does not seem to be regarded large enough to be taxed by the Jakarta Municipal authority. Up to the present the cockfight matches remain illegal. Therefore matches are performed in a limited ring, a semi-secret situation, patronized by a strong man or godfather who is supposed to protect the spectators or the audiences from being raided by the police or the military district commands.

To assure that the audience will not be raided, a regular informal taxation is usually paid either collectively or by the owner of the pit to the authority personals. In ancient Java, the cockfight might be subjected to taxation by the royal family, which conserved the order and also the art or cock fighting, as do the Balinese. However an exemption from cockfight taxation was possible as is shown by the found inscription in *Asahduren* from the 11th century in Bali (see Boedhihartono, 1972).

Some roles are confined to the Javanese cockfighting matches. First is certainly the owner of the pit, who is (particularly in big cities) usually a middle class or even upper middle class personage, either retired civil servant, an influential figure in the society due to his financial status or even a retired member of the army. The owner of the pit is usually a man who is a lover of the cockfight and a keen sighted person with regard to the kind of good roosters. In many cases the pit owner is also a breeder of fighting cocks, a profession which is quite appreciated by a person of older age.

The pit owner is the person who is in charge of and arranges the cockfight. As it has been mentioned above, he has the right to receive 20% of the winnings or in practice each opposing party is charged equally 10% of the betting amount. The formal bet or the inside bet should be collected from both parties before the match begins; the owner is usually the one who keeps the money, only in rare cases the umpire will hold the money (particularly if the owner and the umpire have a good relationship). The owner is usually allied to some poisons that also support him in dealing with the authorities or the military district commands in case of problems.

The spectators or the audience usually rely on the owner and his allies in dealing with the military commands and the police, even though it is not rare that among the spectators there are one or two persons of a greater influence. Problems with the authorities usually have a better chance to be settled, something not likely with fanatic mobs.

The umpire or the referee is supposed to direct the cockfight matches. He decides when the match should begin and end, when the handler can intervene with the rooster, and it is he who decides whether the match ends with a draw or a stalemate. A referee is almost absolute in his decision, even in many cases the pit owner who is not involved in betting can give suggestions. An umpire is therefore a man of great experience in cockfighting business, should be well accepted by the cockfight lover community and trusted in his decision and judgment in dealing with the opposing parties. He receives payment from the pit owner. The teller or the Pooler is the person who is in charge of the side betting which proceeds during the match between the spectators. Each moment during the match there will be wagering contracts which are offered by the spectators to other spectators. If a contract is agreed by two persons (or one person against several other persons), the teller, then will write their names, the amount of the bet and the proportion of the bet. It is usual for each spectator to make more than one contract with different spectators in each match; therefore the function of the teller is quite important, to prevent confusions and quarrels. At the end of the match, the teller should count the total losses and the total winnings of each of the spectators involved in the side betting. The teller will pool all the money from the losers, and distribute the winning minus 20% to the winners.



The amount of the side bet runs from a few dollars (a minimal of about ten dollars is usual in a middle class cockfight pit) to several hundreds or even thousands of dollars. The total amount of the side bet is usually much larger than the total amount of the formal or the inside bet, which is certainly quite contrary to that observed by Geertz (1972) in Bali. This is understandable if we regard that in Bali a cockfight lasts but only a few minutes.

Each opposing party will wage a similar amount in inside bets, but this is not the case for side betting. The person who backs the underdog rooster in a given moment wage usually is to be given odd, or the short side number in Geertz term. The known odds paradigm shot by the spectators in Jakarta will be 10 to 9, 10 to 8, ...10 to 1 or even 10 to 1/2, which means that those who back the underdog for 10 to 1 (or to be given) for 100 dollars will win 100 dollars if the underdog wins the match and lose 10 dollars if the opposite happens.

The man who wants to back the underdog will simply shout "... 8 to be given, 7 to be given, 5 to be given ..., etc", the word to be given is "*nahan*" or "*asor*" (the latter is Javanese), which means 8 to 10, 7 to 10, 5 to 10..., etc. While the people who prefer to back the favorite of the moment will shout "I give 8, I give 7, I give 5....or even I give 1 to the red (which means that red is in a helpless position)", meaning 10 to 8, 10 to 7, 10 to 5....., 10 to 1 for the red. If an agreement between the spectators is reached then they tell the teller that one gives for instance 6 for 50 dollars to the other, the contract is done. The word to give in a cock match is known as "*ngeberi*" (Javanese) or "*unggul*" (Javanese). The Javanese odds, however, is slightly different. The basic odd is not 10 but one, therefore they will offer 1 to 2, 1 to 3, 1 to 4, etc. If a spectator offer "*apit unggul*" or he wants to give double for the ill favor rooster it means that he wants to pay twice the sum offered by any body who bets for the underdog and if the latter can win the match, instead he will accept the sum offered if the favor cock wins.

A professional gambler and a good cockfighting observer is usually able to take an advantage from the changing condition of the cocks during the match. If in a given moment he wagers for the red which happens to be the underdog 5 to 1 for 10 dollars, and a few minutes later he bets for the greenish (the opponent) 2 to 1 for 15 dollars while this cock is becoming an underdog, whatever the winner, he will be the winning bettor. This is so because if red is the winner, he will receive 50 dollars and loses 15 dollars, but if the greenish is the winner, he will receive 30 dollars and loses 10 dollars. The problem will be that in some cases the underdog has no opportunity to wage for the opposing cock in a reserved condition. The second problem is that not all the spectators who are involved in betting are experienced in betting, not all of them are keen observers and are able to wage at the right moment.

Observing a blow or a strike thrown by a rooster during the fight is not easy to tell precisely whether or not it hurts the opposing rooster. A real lover and a fanatic usually sticks to his own cock, there is no way for him to avoid the chance of losing money. To avoid disorders and quarrels between the bettors, it is the tellers who are engaged and responsible for all the deal among those bettors. To facilitate the work, the tellers are obliged to recognize all the bettors' names, to come regularly to know the names of the regular visitors.

There are certainly underhand side betting which does not pass through the hand of the tellers, and such a bet is the responsibility of neither the tellers of the pit owner. The inside bet is usually quite straight forward because the pitting is only engaged if the inside bet has been collected and fulfills the demand of the cocks' owners and the minimal amount required by the owner of the pit. There is solidarity between members of a village or between friends to contribute in the inside bet fulfillment, but socially high status cock owner usually has enough money to pay all the inside bet by himself, it is a matter of status standing.

During the pitting, the opposing cocks are usually confined to professional handlers who are already accustomed to taking care of fighting cocks. The handlers or the "*botob*" (Javanese) put the cocks in the pit according to the order given by the referee, and during the intervals between the rounds, the handlers refresh, recondition and bathe the cocks. The function of the handler is to care properly for the rooster in his hand during the pitting without regard to who is the owner. He is supposed to satisfy both the owner and the spectators, particularly those who are involved in gambling. He is supposed to lie sincere in treating the rooster in his hand because there are handfuls of money wagered in his side, although he is also supposed to obey all the command given by the umpire and common regulation. The integrity of a handler therefore depends on his ability in properly treating his cock, his ability to refresh, to reanimate and to sense what is the remedy for his cock weakness during the pitting, but more important than his integrity is his sincerity and his sense of moral responsibility toward the spectators. Once he is considered dishonest (engaged in fraud or receiving bribe from the opposing party to injure the cock in his hand for the benefit of that party), it will be hard for him to regain the trust of the spectators. The sincerity and loyalty of the handler toward the party sides is one of the characteristics that a handler should demonstrate besides his quality and experience in handling the cocks.

Spectators are usually male adults and only rarely are young children brought into the pitting by their parents or relatives. Some are simply cockfighting lovers, owners of fighting cocks, and professional gamblers. Cock fighting *officinados* or lovers might come without bringing any cocks and being engaged in moderate wagering. A true gambler, however, will put a lot of money on each match and become the sponsor of almost all matches between opposing parties. A true gambler will unhesitatingly cover the inside (formal) bet shortage of a party to allow the match to proceed, although in many cases the party which is on the inside bet shortage has a less convincing fighting rooster. The gamblers usually put the weight on the outside betting, oft which they are able to take advantage with the alternating events, covering the lost of betting on one side by betting on the opposing side. The fighting cock lovers and owners come and pit their cocks: most of them will leave the pit after finishing their cock matches, but the gamblers usually stay from the beginning up to the end of the pitting which is at about 6 o'clock in the evening.

Most of the children brought by their parents or relatives are either passive spectators or engaged in other activities with each other in the vicinity of the pit. The children might start to learn what the roosters mean to their parents and adults, they learn how the adults behave in an interactive relation to others, to their acquaintances or even to the newly recognized individuals met during the pitting.



The children begin to learn the kind of game that the adults are engaged in. Ladies are practically never involved in cock fighting activities. Cock fighting is a "man's business". At present, however, high ranking officials who are interested in cock fighting might bring their wives along the pitting occasions, although the ladies will not be directly involved in the pitting, because they tend to crowd outside the pit, chatting among themselves and eating small snacks while waiting for their husbands. In many cases in which the pit is arranged in less spacious and in less opened to public, ladies are rarely seen.

Ladies whose husbands enjoy and love cock fighting, however, consider that having a husband whose hobby is well recognized is better than a husband who has a concealed hobby. Therefore ladies voluntarily help their husbands to rear the chickens and to take care of their fighting cocks.

### Cultural significance of the practice

The significance of cock fighting to the Javanese seems quite evident. It is neither a newly introduced nor an imported form of cultural activity, but it has deep roots and has developed and won a place as an expressive culture not less old than the culture of "wayang" and "keris". Whether, good fighting cock has a symbolical significance for the owner does not seem to be argued, particularly if we refer to what Radcliff Brown stated that whatever has meaning is a symbol (see Beatie, 1982 page 69).

The classification of fighting Cocks is basically similar to the classification of ladies and *kerises* (traditional Javanese daggers), a certain feature (or features) of a cock indicates a particular behavior which might be related to luck and misfortune. Javanese cock fighting as practiced today, neither colored by nor incorporated within the rituals related to religious activity, nevertheless has great significance as a cohesive and an interactive gathering liberating each spectator from any status boundary.

An almost complete and comprehensive description of traditional Javanese cock fighting, which is almost unchanged in style, role, betting and scene up to this day, was presented in a classic Javanese romance "*Pranacitra*" which was considered by Hazeu (see Dutch translation and comments by Berg, 1930) to have originally been written at the beginning of the 17th century from an older troubadour tale. It clearly describes that is propel traditional Javanese high ranking official (such as Tumenggung Wiroguno, the commander) was assigned different attributes justifying his high social status (Berg page 11). Included among the attributes were swords, *kerises*, concubines and also the fighting cocks (page 24). The author of the romance was even trying to describe the attitude of the high ranking official during the pitting and in facing the defeat of his rooster, did not hesitate to bet for the opponent rooster (see Berg, page 129). It is clear that in the past the Javanese author had realized that in a certain critical situation a high standing personage might ignore his self respect and his own social status.

The Javanese cock fighting is quite different from that of the Philippines or the Hispanic societies in (the new world and that of the Balinese, in which artificial spurs are attached to the opposing cocks. Therefore a cock lover in Java who considers that it is worth to save the cock from being helplessly tortured might accept the loss of money and

takes the cock from the pit. This is similar to the throwing of towel on the side of the helpless punished boxer. Such an above attitude seems quite rarely performed by the professional gambler who places the value of money above all.

Based on the existing legends, myths and classical romance such as the *Pranacitra* mentioned previously, it seems that being engaged in cock fighting in old Javanese moral and ethic is not considered immoral behavior. Berg in his *Pranacitra* presented a photo probably taken prior to 1930 which shows a crowd of Javanese children between 7 and 10 years of age each holding a different kind of rooster surrounding a pair of combating roosters.

Fowls are certainly a common domesticated animals among the Javanese and almost inseparable from their quotidian life. Its wide varieties indicate that fowl had been domesticated for a long time in Java.

Chickens are playmates for children. Chickens are an important part of the sacrifice in thanksgiving feasts: the *slametan*, and other form of sacrifices. The rooster's crow is used as day marker early in the morning (particularly in peasant societies). Chicken was becoming the only domesticated animal and an alternative protein resource in Java, probably after the *Islamization* of Java which prohibits the eating of pig and dog. Rooster ownership serves the symbolical need (related to traditional belief, superstition and social symbol) and it also serves both as a means of entertainment as well as means of fulfilling the artistic and aesthetic needs.

In the past (and probably still today) the Javanese has had the superstition that a proper noble family should have access to combined attributes, which include certain form of "*keris*", a formal public appearance using certain kind of designed batik according to the occasion and in possession of a certain color of a rooster. Because fowl had been long domesticated in Java, different varieties of fowl can be observed in Java; from the small to large, from the featherless to the most thickly feathered, the wrinkle feathered, the spine-like feathered, from the most colorful to the almost uniform colored feathered fowl and from the less highly prized simple crow to the roosters with long and highly prized crow. Different kinds of fighting cocks are not exceptional; all of the varieties provide possible choices that breeders or fowl lovers in general can make.

The belief and superstition that a certain kind of fowl (such as the *wiring kuning* which is sometimes said to be Arjuna) can bring luck to the owner, that a certain type of traditional dagger *keris* can bring luck to the owner, probably grew from the preference of ancient legendary and successful figures for certain types of *keris* and certain features of roosters. Through generations idol identification became a belief and superstition of proper association between status, profession or character and attributes. Apart from the preference and value of the cocks, cock fighting is almost generally recognized in South East Asia; the Iban in Kalimantan (see Sandin, 1976; Freeman, 1952), the Sumatrans (see the poem presented by Vaughn Collins, in his unpublished paper in UC Berkeley, South East Asia Meeting, 1984), the Balinese (Geertz, 1972), and also the Javanese (see Boedhihartono, 1972) are among the ethnic groups in which cock fighting is still popular.

Cock fighting is certainly not a sport in the sense that the lovers or the participant gain physical well being. It is a sport for the feeder or those people who are engaged in the preparation of the cocks before they are brought to the pit, because the feeder or the



owner of the cocks should wake up early in the morning to bathe and to put each cock within its Own separated sunbathing cage, to prepare for the sparring if it is considered necessary, to prepare feeding and to arrange for the time to free each cock within an enclosure or a yard. A well organized schedule should be planned for each cock until he attains the age of 1 year and is supposed to be adequately talented to be pitted. A successful breeder is one who is able to select cocks of good quality and maintain discipline in Caring for his chickens according to the schedule.

The selection of good quality in chickens and roosters is not an easy task. Without knowledge and experience it does not seem possible to distinguish the good quality of ordinary cocks. A good quality cock should fulfill several criteria which only well experienced cockfighting lovers or *officinados* can observe. First, of course its body shape, the proportion of the parts, the color of the feathers or the secondary sex character feathers, the form of the tail and the constitutional condition. Second, is related to its behavioral aspects such as the aggressiveness, the courage and the virility. Third is the *ausdauer* or the stamina, the ability to fight and the potential to withstand blows and damages done by the opponent.

Morphology is only one part of the criteria needed to obtain the desired quality of a cock. Behavioral quality is only observable through testing and rarely will a cock breeder sell a cock after it has been tested through sparring. Those cock breeders who sell the cocks through testing will usually set higher prices than the regular ones, particularly if he knows that the cocks are of good quality. The buyer and the breeder rely merely on morphological appearance and pedigree for the quality of young roosters. But it seems more practical for the cock fighting lovers to raise their own cocks and to pit them if they consider that they have the confidence in the result of their effort to breed.

Cock fighting is therefore not merely a game of chance, but it is a fifty-fifty game in which chance and effort play important roles in the outcome. A good cock fighting *officinados* might win both money and fame as a good cock breeder.

Cock fighting is an art on its own merit, because the preparation and the selection of the roosters need a lot of energy, feeling and sensitivity which is not equally owned by everybody in the society.

The cockfight itself is an orderly and patterned undertaking, structured around a system of roles and rules (see Del Sesto, 1975), and particularly in Java, cockfight has been refined to such an extent during the history that it has almost a uniform arrangement which does not seem to have changed for a long period of time, particularly if we refer to the *Pranacitra*.

Cock fighting might be interpreted as a means of entertainment and art by which man can achieve some purposes such as : internal stress sublimation, competitive instinct fulfillment and rivalry, pride and satisfaction, emotional control in disappointment, but above all in such an occasion more freely interaction takes place between the visitors during the interval of two matches. More personal contact (face to face) can be made between cock fighting lovers or *officinados*, because there is an opportunity during the long day of pitting and during which visitors can discuss different subjects including more serious matters such as business and professional contracts.

Gambling in cock fighting is relatively limited; money is not the only motive that attracts the spectators to come to such a gathering. Because of that it will be hard to substitute the cock fighting matches with roulette or cards.

Cock fighting at the present, particularly in South East Asia, seems to have a significant meaning in the preservation of genetic variability of domesticated fowl. With the intensification program, in which high yield varieties of rice and fowl were introduced, genetic variability of both local rice and fowl are seriously depleted. The governmental agency has never taken into consideration the unmeasured value of the traditional cultural inheritance that contributes to the enrichment of our domesticated fowl variability.

Westernization and modernization or even the introduction of external cultural values is considered as total annihilation of the national cultural inheritance, I consider that such a behavioral attitude is due to the lack of effort to understand the proper significance of the local Cultural values.

Cock fighting and the belief and superstition that some forms of fowl have different significance maintain the motivation in preserving the genetic variability of local domesticated fowl.

Cock fighting helps the maintenance of traditional separate marketing of pet animals which render it easier for the government to control the possible poaching and marketing of protected endangered species.

The marketing of fighting cocks has a special place which gives also the opportunity to some to have a routine employment and to earn their livings. Personal inter relationship between individuals interested in cock fighting has a significant place within the society: it provides a place for the society to exercise their solidarity and to become involved in a fair competitive game and to accept rules. The solidarity feeling is more accentuated by the fact that at the present time, cock fighting is not protected by any legal form of law and therefore harassment might come from the authority individuals or sectaire puritans. After all, refusal and appreciation of cock fighting is depending is a matter of the ability to rationalize and belief.

### **Significance of cockfighting to germ-plasm conservation.**

The practice of selecting, breeding, raising and caring of fighting cock certainly has become a traditional customary to some of the Javanese, particularly those members of the royal family in the past. Members of the royal family usually engaged expert for the selection of the proper rooster to be pitted. They also paid people for the caring, breeding and the raising of their chicken husbandry. Each members of the royal family usually have their own favorites rooster according to different criteria, such as the color of the plumage, the form of the spur and the phalanxes, the morphological type of the comb, etc. So that each family actually breed different variety of fighting cock. Such a practice is of cause enrich the existing fowl variety within the island, without neglecting the fact that the commoners usually are raising consumed chicken for their protein resource fulfillment.



Although at present there are communities which preferred for instance to raise fowl for its particular crow, plumage or other particular traits.

The present regulation for the annihilation of the practice is certainly damaging the effort of maintaining of the local genetic variation of our domestic fowl.

## CONCLUSION

Although it is limited in a closed audience, cock fighting is still practiced by many. It is not likely that having a fighting code or performing cockfighting has anything to do with sexuality or inalienable potential. Although a cock with a heavily swollen neck, being badly beaten by the opponent looks like (with some imagination of course) a male sexual organ. To the Javanese a cock is promiscuous animal, a man who is addressed as a "cock" (*jago*) might not be very happy<sup>1</sup>.)

Whether a cock could be a surrogate for one's personality, is only one of the other ethnic view of an occidental who consider that the native live in a totally different system of belief.

The American for instance, usually addresses the coward as a "chicken".

To have a good cock, a real fighter is something prestigious and of great pleasure, but being identified as a "cock like" is something else, To some members of the Javanese society owning and pitting a cock is merely an effort to fulfill the traditional belief that complete Javanese should possess all attributes mentioned above.

Cockfighting lovers might also be involved in gambling. Some housewives, however, prefer cock fighting to be the choice of their husband's form of entertainment rather than other more "mysterious"<sup>2</sup> form of entertainment.

Cock fighting is simply a means to entertain and a form of cultural expression which was probably first developed in rice cultivating societies. It is certain that cock fighting could be regarded as a means to instigate one's inner conflicts. In the old days cock fighting was considered as a proper metaphorical means to settle conflict between two opposing parties.

Cock fighting is not a game of chance, it urges the *officinados* to intensely participate and keenly observe the fighting to really enjoy, and it consumes time and energy to breed, to select and to prepare fighting cock. Cock fighting could be symbolically as well as functionally significant, depending on how we regard.

The practice of the cockfighting of the society has a great significance to the effort of maintaining the genetic variability of indigenous fowls. It motivates people with limited settlement space to actively participate in breeding different varieties of fowl and it gives

<sup>1</sup> The Indonesian word "*jagoan*" is addressed to people who pretend or behave as a "superman". The word "*jago*" as an adverb is supposed to mean extraordinary.

<sup>2</sup> Mysterious hobby might be related to adultery.

opportunity to the common with a limited capital to earn extra money from breeding only a limited number of cocks,

To some pursuing a cockfight is only a means to have the opportunity to get contact with important persons, to enable them to pursue a certain goal, which is more important than the cockfight; to other cockfighting is only a means for socialization as well as for socializing.

At present the term "*kukilo*" is sometimes interpreted literally by many, and it resulted in the habit of keeping birds in a very colorful small cages.

Keeping birds in small cages and isolating male from female results on in decrease of bird population in the wild.

After all, the cockfighting and all its other correlating activities are forming a unity which is consciously developed by the Javanese and merit to be regarded as an art and becoming a part of the sophistication of the fowl domestication. Hence it has a place in the philosophy of life of the Javanese.

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Plate 1. Watering the cock before being pitted



Plate 2. See how the cock should be held during the watering



Plate 3. Red plumage, Wiring in Javanese, Biring in Sumatranese and Biing in Balinese



Plate 4 : Greenish plumage , Wido in Javanese Ijo in Balinese and Hijau in Sumatranese



Plate-5 : Strenuous fight between two opposing cocks