

**THE OECONOMY OF
HUMAN LIFE:
TRANSLATED FROM AN
INDIAN MANUSCRIPT**

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The Oeconomy of Human Life: Translated from an Indian Manuscript by Robert Dodsley

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ROBERT DODSLEY

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THE
ŒCONOMY
OF
HUMAN LIFE.

TRANSLATED FROM
AN INDIAN MANUSCRIPT,
WRITTEN BY AN ANCIENT BRAMIN.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
AN ACCOUNT OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SAID
MANUSCRIPT WAS DISCOVERED.

IN A
LETTER
FROM AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN NOW RESIDING
IN CHINA
TO THE EARL OF *******.

London:
PRINTED BY T. BICKARD,
FOR S. AND E. HARDING, PALL-MALL.

1795.

Advertisement.

THE spirit of virtue and morality, which breathes in this ancient piece of Eastern instruction, its force and conciseness, and the hopes that it may do good, have prevailed with the person to whom it was sent, to communicate to the public what was translated only for his particular amusement. There are some reasons which at present make it proper to conceal not only his own name, but the name of his correspondent, who has now resided in China several years, and been engaged in

ADVERTISEMENT.

a business very different from that of collecting literary curiosities. These reasons will not subsist long, and as he seems to intimate a design, on his return to England, of publishing an entire translation of Cao-tsou's whole journey, the public will then, in all probability, have an opportunity of being satisfied concerning any particulars which they may be curious to know.

TO THE
EARL OF E****.

Peking, May, 12, 1749.

My LORD,

IN the last letter which I had the honour of writing to your Lordship, dated Dec. 23, 1748, I think I concluded all I had to say in regard to the topography and natural history of this great empire. I purposed in this, and some succeeding ones, to have set down such observations as I have been able to make on the laws, government, religion, and manners, of the people. But a remarkable occurrence has happened lately, which engrosses the conversation of the literati here; and may hereafter, perhaps, afford matter of speculation to the learned in Europe. As it is of a nature which I know will furnish some entertainment to your Lordship, I will endeavour to give you as distinct and particular an account of it, as I have been able to obtain.

Adjoining to China on the west, is the large country of Thibet, called by some Barantola : in a province of this country, named Lasa, resides the grand Lama, or high-priest of these idolaters, who is revered, and even adored as a god, by most of the neighbouring nations. The high opinion which is entertained of his sacred character induces prodigious numbers of religious people to resort to Lasa, to pay their homage to him, and to give him presents, in order to receive his blessing. His residence is in a most magnificent pagod, or temple, built on the top of the mountain Pontala. The foot of this mountain, and even the whole district of Lasa, is inhabited by an incredible number of Lamas, of different ranks and orders, several of whom have very grand pagods erected to their honour, in which they receive a kind of inferior worship. The whole country, like Italy, abounds with priests, and they entirely subsist on the great number of rich presents, which are sent them from the utmost extent of Tartary, from the empire of the Great Mogul, and from almost all parts of the Indies. When the grand Lama receives the adorations of the people, he is raised on a magnificent altar, and sits cross-legg'd upon a splendid cushion : his worshippers prostrate themselves before him in the humblest and most abject manner ; but he returns not the least sign of respect, or ever speaks, even to the greatest princes ; he

only lays his hand upon their heads, and they are fully persuaded that they receive from thence a full forgiveness of all their sins. They are likewise so extravagant as to imagine, that he knows all things, even the secrets of the heart: and his particular disciples, being a select number of about two hundred of the most eminent Lamas, have the address to make the people believe he is immortal; and that whenever he appears to die, he only changes his abode, and animates a new body.

The learned in China have long been of opinion, that in the archives of this grand temple, some very ancient books have for many years been concealed: and the present emperor, who is very curious in searching after the writings of antiquity, became at length so fully convinced of the probability of this opinion, that he determined to try whether any discovery of this sort could be made. To this end, his first care was to find out a person eminently skilful in the ancient languages and characters. He at length pitched upon one of the *Han-lins*, or doctors of the first order, whose name was *Cao-tsou*, a man about fifty years of age, of a grave and noble aspect, of great eloquence, and who, by an accidental friendship with a certain learned Lama, who had resided many years at Peking, was become entirely master

of the language, which the Lamas of Thibet use among themselves.

With these qualifications he set forward on his journey : and to give his commission the greater weight, the emperor honoured him with the title of *Colao*, or prime minister ; to which he added a most magnificent equipage and attendance, with presents for the grand Lama, and the other principal Lamas, of an immense value ; also, a letter, written with his own hand, in the following terms :