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Arcadio SCHWADE  
Ruhr Universität  
Bochum, Germany

ORTOLANI, BENITO. *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*. Handbuch der Orientalistik, Fünfte Abteilung Japan, Zweiter Band Literatur, Theater, Musik, Erster Abschnitt. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990. xix+352 pages. Glossary, bibliography, index. 70 photographs. Cloth \$195.—/US\$100.00; ISBN 90-04-09314-1. ISSN 0921-5239.

Benito Ortolani is a scholar well qualified to provide an accurate history of the Japanese theater. *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism* is a welcome addition to the field, helping to fill the need for a solid scholarly overview of the subject.

The reader may be somewhat disappointed if he or she expects to see all genres of the theater covered in uniform depth. The size of the book does not allow such a treatment, and the author's objectives are more specific:

Proportional priority was given to areas which are less known and in which satisfactory syntheses are either nonexistent or hard to reach, such as the period of origins, *kagaku*, *gigaku*, and the origins and theories of the *nō*. Other important areas which are covered by excellent and easily accessible studies, such as *kabuki* and *bunraku*, were given a comparatively shorter treatment. (xviii)

The book's intended objectives are achieved superlatively, and the serious reader is handsomely rewarded.

The most valuable section of the book is formed by its early chapters: chapter 2, "Kagura"; chapter 3, "Gigaku"; chapter 4, "Bugaku"; and chapter 5, "Theatrical Arts from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century" (this entry is particularly good). These chapters present a wide and detailed treatment of areas that are usually covered rather hurriedly.

Ortolani introduces at length the research of Gotō Hajime, whose view on the relationship between *sangaku* and *sarugaku* is as follows:

The ceremonial *sarugaku*, performed by the conservative court musicians who also performed *bugaku*, was more formal and reflected the imported Chinese contents. On the other hand, the informal *sangaku* of the countryside freely displayed the native comic elements, and developed original Japanese realistic contents in the style of *monomane*. (58-59)

Ortolani suggests two theories for the origin of *Nō*. The first "includes interpretations that concentrate on the study of performers," and the second "proceed[s] from the analysis of playtexts, records of actual performances, and written chronicles" (85). The latter method "has revealed . . . a connection between *nō* and shamanistic rituals of possession" (87). As an example, the author introduces Honda Yasuji's theory

tracing the development of the principal role, the *shite*, back to *kamigakari*, the divine possession typical of Japanese shamanism.

Ortolani makes a refreshing point in his chapter on Kabuki, which begins not with the usual reference to the actress Okuni but with a consideration of the *kabuki-mono*, a band of masterless samurai and the offspring of important samurai families. The group's violent actions, with their potentially revolutionary implications, led to the execution of a *kabuki-mono* in 1612 (155). Ortolani credits the strict policy of social stability enforced by Tokugawa Ieyasu and his immediate successors with affecting "the very life and development of the theatre."

In addressing the issues implicit in the title "Contemporary Pluralism," I expected the author to give a fuller treatment to the underground theater movement. Ortolani devotes only six pages to the topic, however. This area should have been addressed more fully, since the energy to build the Japanese modern theater of the future will undoubtedly come from the groups of artists either belonging to the *angura* movement or opposing it and just about everything else.

Chapter 12 is devoted to tracing the history of Western research on the Japanese theater. It comprises, in effect, an annotated, well-organized bibliography that provides a very useful overview of what has been done so far. This, in addition to the book's extensive regular bibliography, should help any readers who aspire to go further in their study of the Japanese theater. The compilation of these references was an extremely time-consuming task, expertly executed and effectively presented.

In spite of this reviewer's deep appreciation of the valuable work presented in the book, it should be pointed out that it is not without flaws. Let me cite some of the misstatements, although the total number is small. Presenting a reading of *saibaraku* (20) where *saibara* 催馬樂 was apparently intended only aggravates the already complex issue of dealing with this form. The leader who spearheaded the reorganization of *gagaku* and *bugaku* performers into two groups, Kyoto and Edo, was not Toyotomi Hideyoshi, as Ortolani states, but Tokugawa Ieyasu (43). Ortolani also says that *gagaku* and *bugaku* are now studied in "Japanese universities such as the Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku and Kokuritsu Ongaku Daigaku" (43); the latter should be Kunitachi Ongaku Daigaku. He also speaks of "the luxurious, marvelously equipped Asahi-za theatre in Osaka," when what is meant is the National Bunraku Theater, opened in 1984 (214).

Andrew T. TSUBAKI  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

RUCH, BARBARA. *Mō hitotsu no chūseizō: Bikuni, otogizōshi, raise* もう一つの中世像: 比丘尼・御伽草子・来世 [Another perspective on the Japanese medieval world: Buddhist nuns, children's stories, and life after death]. Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1991. xx+276+xii pages. Color plates, illustrations, key word index. ISBN 4-7842-0663-9. (In Japanese)

Barbara Ruch, professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at Columbia University and director of the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, is one of the leading authorities on the study of medieval Japanese culture. Her many original contributions, particularly in the area of popular literature, religion, and cultural history, were formally recognized in 1991 when she was awarded the first Minakata Kumagusu