

BOOK REVIEWS

INOURA, YOSHINOBU and KAWATAKE TOSHIO. *The Traditional Theater of Japan*. Tokyo/New York: John Weatherhill (in collaboration with the Japan Foundation), 1981. Cloth, viii+259 pp. Photos, appendices, index. US \$20.00, in Japan ¥3,800. ISBN 0-8348-0161-2

After the woodblock print and haiku poetry, Noh and Kabuki are the emanations of Japanese culture which have most fascinated Western observers. To confirm this, one need look no further than the dance pieces of William Butler Yeats, the theoretical writings and parable plays of Bertolt Brecht, or Paul Claudel's later plays, to mention the work of only the most prominent Western observers. However, despite this obvious impact, Western Japanologists, while turning out more than a sufficient quota of books on the history and development of woodblock prints and haiku, have yet to produce a companion volume on traditional Japanese theatre. If for that reason alone, the book under review here is significant; it is, as the blurb on the dust jacket rightly claims, "the first in English to present a comprehensive history of the traditional Japanese theater." It represents, moreover, the work of two eminent Japanese scholars who are thoroughly informed in the history of both Japanese and Western drama. Their book is the amalgamation into a single volume of an earlier, two-volume set, published in English in 1971 by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (Japan Cultural Society, now known as the Japan Foundation) under the titles *A History of Japanese Theater I: Up to Noh and Kyōgen* and *A History of Japanese Theater II: Bunraku and Kabuki*.

The new volume is a handsome, clearly organized book. Part One is divided into thirteen chapters covering Kagura, Gigaku, Bugaku, Gagaku, the whole gamut of prototypes of Noh, Noh, Kyōgen, and the relationships which several of these forms have with Chinese drama. Part Two is divided into seven chapters covering Tokugawa culture, Bunraku, and Kabuki. The three appendices include listings of the repertoires of, respectively, Bugaku, Noh, and Kyōgen. In addition, there are two groups of excellent photos, one group concerned with Noh and Kyōgen, the other with Bunraku and Kabuki. And there is an index.

In view of the fact that the two-volume edition of this work had been difficult to obtain and was, in any event, no longer in print, this new, one-volume edition is not only handy but welcome. Both authors cover their subjects thoroughly, yet concisely, often giving vivid description of body movement on stage and summaries of plays cited. Interesting, useful information abounds on every page. Professor Inoura takes up, for example, the several prototypes of Noh—Ennen, Sarugaku, Dengaku, Shugen—thereby allowing the reader to distinguish fearlessly their respective characteristics (pp. 46–80). In discussing Zeami's work, he not only explains that it bears evidence of close contact with Buddhism, a well-known fact, but with Shinto, as well, a fact often ignored (p. 94). Elsewhere, he indicates why the role of *waki*, ordinarily not nearly so important or dramatic as that of the *shite*, takes on greater prominence in such plays as *Funa Benkei*: the author of these plays, Kanze Kojirō

Nobumitsu (son of Zeami's nephew On'ami) wanted to heighten the dramatic effect of Noh and hence decided to experiment with its structure by making the role of *waki* more prominent (p. 100). In discussing the significance of the samisen in Bunraku, Professor Kawatake takes us back to its origin as the snake-skin-covered *jabisen* from Okinawa. *Jabisen* music became so popular in Japan that the instruments came to be made there. But, since appropriately sized snake skins were not available in Japan, cat skins were substituted. This change produced a concomitant change in sound, thus completing the "Japanization" of the musical instrument (p. 176). In addition to these many intriguing details, the authors consistently keep the Western reader in mind; by making frequent comparative references to the Western theatre tradition, they encourage one to form a sound international perspective.

The reader nevertheless should be prepared to experience a few jarring moments, which may be ascribed, at least in part, to lapses in the processes of translating and editing. Indeed, one encounters the first jarring moment when searching, in vain, for the names of the translator(s) and editor(s). Did Professors Inoura and Kawatake, both widely published in Japanese, write this book in English? One must go to Volume I of the original edition to discover that Mr. Makoto Kuwabara of the National Diet Library was the translator and Professor John Krummel of Aoyama Gakuin University served as editor. Surely, these two gentlemen are as deserving of recognition for their work in the new edition as in the old. Yet, in view of the occasionally awkward translation and editing, perhaps they now prefer the comfort of anonymity.

Happily, however, there are few such lapses, and the book suffers little because of them. As for the English, it is quite readable, though clearly—at times too clearly—a translation. One heaves a sigh at such times and, the meaning not in doubt, pushes on. Far more worthy of question is why the chapter on the relation of Noh and its prototypes with Chinese drama is placed at the end of Part One, after the chapter entitled "Nohgaku Today," and not much earlier, as both chronology and logic would dictate. In addition, although one is happy to see the listing of Noh and Kyōgen pieces in the appendix, one wonders why the translators of Kyōgen plays in Western languages are included but not the translators of Noh plays. What is more, why are Kabuki plays and their translators completely omitted?

On a substantive level, too, one encounters problems. Professor Inoura delves somewhat into circular reasoning when he writes that medieval drama, represented by Noh and Kyōgen, "made great advances . . . and in every respect showed a strong medieval character" (p. 10). Exactly what that character is he never quite specifies, though he mentions, almost in passing, the more sophisticated use of masks and the "merger" of Buddhism and Shintoism in their influence on drama. Further on, in his discussion of Zeami's treatises, he writes that Zeami "makes comments always with reference to practical needs . . ." (p. 90). But for the Western reader (for whom this book is presumably intended) a different, or at least further, explanation is needed. Zeami may have been in his own time and context quite practical. But the Western reader will invariably be nonplussed to read Zeami's advice that the actor be, for example, elegant, then search in vain for any indication of how, practically, to achieve that elegance.

Professor Kawatake, for his part, falls into two glaring inconsistencies. One involves his obvious disdain for nontraditional Japanese theatre. He relegates modern developments, such as Shimpa and Shingeki, to the realm of Western-influenced Japanese culture, condemning them as "not . . . uniquely Japanese" (p. 133). He is perhaps correct in his dim assessment of such experiments as Shimpa. But Shingeki, which emerged as much in reaction to what many in Japan perceived as the stagnant

traditions of Noh and Kabuki as in response to Western theatre, has in the postwar years assimilated the Western impact to such a degree that it now stands on its own as a substantial, very Japanese form. Furthermore, Professor Kawatake appears to overlook the fact that one can find in the beginnings of Noh and Kabuki certain aspects of Chinese or Korean origin. These traditional forms may well be more "Japanese" in a traditional sense than Shingeki. But to claim that they are uniquely so is hardly accurate, and to condemn Shingeki because it is a modern, Western-tinged phenomenon is, at best, not befitting a scholar of Professor Kawatake's stature.

His other inconsistency is actually an oversight, one in which he is not alone. How often have we in the West heard the claim that Kabuki's famed *onnagata* are, as Professor Kawatake asserts, "more woman-like than women . . ." (p. 189), that they express feminine beauty which women themselves are "not capable of expressing . . ." (p. 142)? Not to belittle the *onnagata*, whose art is often stunning, but this notion is surely open to question. Why, we may ask, can women not effect male roles with more masculinity than men? Professor Kawatake entertains not even an inkling of this obvious question; rather, he accepts as axiomatic the conventional wisdom on *onnagata*. He goes on in similar vein to discuss the fact that *onnagata* were required to live as women in real life in order to act "as if they had stepped out of actual life and onto the stage" (p. 193). But why were actors in other Kabuki roles, the merchants, the braggarts, the murderers, the thieves, not also required to live their roles in real life? Why is it that even today women are deemed incapable of rendering true femininity on the Kabuki stage? Why does Professor Kawatake not broach these questions? Of course, the fact that he does not reveals as much about the prevailing Japanese attitudes toward women as it does about Kabuki. Some objective discussion of this phenomenon would not only be germane but enlightening, adjectives which amply describe the rest of Professor Kawatake's portion of the book.

Admittedly, these are all mere quibbles when considering the work as a whole. One might have hoped for more insight and analysis to accompany an otherwise fascinating historical excursion. But the value of this book is as an introduction and as such it makes for good reading. Even scholars who might not find it a work to savor will be hardpressed to deny its usefulness. For it provides the means to a substantial end: an accurate grasp of the history and development of the very workings of traditional Japanese theatre.

OHNUKI-TIERNEY, EMIKO. *Illness and healing among the Sakhalin Ainu: A symbolic interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. xvi+245 pp. Appendices, bibliography, subject index. Hardcover £20.000. ISBN 0-521-23636-3.

Illness and healing among the Sakhalin Ainu is a valuable book in terms of its presentation of Ainu ethnomedicine, its analysis of the Ainu symbolic structure and its discussion of Ainu shamanism. In the studies of ethnomedicine the analysis of field data usually precludes any development of a broader perspective other than that of taxonomic classification. While the value of these studies is apparent, they seldom provide insight into a people's medical system as a whole or the principles of perception that underlie the classification of illnesses. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's book is a significant exception in that it attempts to relate the various cognitive, sensory and emotive factors