The emphasis on the performance dimension of Japanese theater is certainly another of the anthology's virtues, but also, in my view, a (small) vice for two reasons: the descriptions of what the actors are doing at a given moment in a play are at times not very helpful and, again at times, a distraction, interlaced as they are with the words of the text. This has become a convention in translations of Japanese plays; the problem is that no amount of description can adequately describe what happens on stage, what it looks or sounds like—so how much is too much? The inclusion of photographs along with the descriptions helps; I applaud the intent and effort, but since there is no substitute for being there, I would have preferred a little less in the way of stage directions, or perhaps a different formatting. On the whole, however, the anthology is a notable achievement and especially welcome for those who teach courses in Japanese theater.

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BROWNLEE, JOHN S. *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu.* Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1997. ix +256 pages. Bibliography, index. Cloth, ¥8,000; ISBN 4-13-027031-1.

Historians research the past wearing the spectacles of their values and hats that have labels on them such as teacher, scholar, and advocate. When they write to describe and explain the past on the basis of the data they have collected and in accordance with their perceived role, they never sit in a vacuum. They are influenced by a number of factors, some of which they are conscious of, some of which they are not.

One factor that has long been particularly influential among Japanese historians is the interpretation of the myths in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki,* two texts written in the early eighth century that describe *inter alia* the origins of Japan as being created by deities, and the imperial family as being founded by the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. Brownlee, in the book under review, shows the influence of these creation myths in Japanese historiography by examining "how Japanese historians between 1600 and 1945 dealt with the ancient myths of their origins as a people and of the imperial house" (3). His purpose, he states, "is to explain not the origins of Japan but the thought of the historians who dealt with those origins" (12). Throughout the book, Brownlee introduces some of the more important events and circumstances in the lives of influential historians, and analyzes their scholarship in relation to the national myths. By the end of the book one point is overtly obvious: the political implications of the founding myths had a profound effect on how the major historians throughout the modern period up to the end of World War II wrote on the origins of Japan. The fact that Japanese historians were influenced by myths that had political implications will not shock most readers, but Brownlee's demonstration of how it influenced different historians and the extent to which many publicly supported the myths while privately doubting them may be a surprise to many.

In the first part of this two-part book, Brownlee introduces in chronological order key historians of the Tokugawa period (1600–1868), including Hayashi Razan, Arai Hakuseki, Yamagata Bantō, Date Chihiro, Motoori Norinaga, *et alii.* He identifies two mainstream approaches to history—Confucian (particularly Neo-Confucian) and National Learning (*kokugaku*)—and shows how, on the basis of their different historical methods and theories, they formulated different interpretations of the founding myths. He claims that throughout

the Tokugawa period Japanese historiography became more secularized and based on "rationalism" (54), especially among Confucian scholars, while among scholars of National Learning "rationalist scholarship appeared weak and tenuous" (61).

The second part of the book, which is over ninety pages longer than the first part, deals with historians who were academically active between 1868 and 1945, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Shigeno Yasutsugu, Kume Kunitake, Mikami Sanji, Kuroita Katsumi, Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, Tsuji Zennosuke, and Tsuda Sōkichi. The second part is similar to the first part in that it introduces key historians and their scholarship, but differs in the amount of attention given to the social and political contexts in which historians worked. Brownlee vividly shows the political pressures many of these historians worked under, and how some historians who questioned nationalists' historical stances were persecuted (e.g., Kume Kunitake, Tsuda Sōkichi). In the 1930s and during WW II virtually every mainstream historian publicly supported the historicity of the myths, even though almost all did not believe they were historically accurate. On page 157, concerning Tsuji Zennosuke's acceptance of the historicity of the myths, Brownlee asks "To what degree was he obliged by nationalists to conform to conventional values?" This question could have been profitably asked of each historian of the time; regrettably, an answer to this question is not provided for any of them.

Brownlee's lucid narrative and the inclusion of how the origin myths affected not only the scholarship but also the lives of historians instills the book with a vitality that is too often absent from publications on historiography. His use of the term "rational" (and its derivations: rationalist, rationalism) and the theoretical structure underlying much of his narrative are, however, problematic. He claims that Japanese historiography became more "rational" in the Tokugawa period, at least among Confucian scholars, and that later scholars gave up "rationalism" for "nationalism." He repeatedly uses the term "rational," or derivatives of it, to describe key historians or their work (e.g., Hayashi Razan censored "his private rational beliefs for the public interest" [28]; Date Chihiro produced "the first constructive account of Japanese history based on rationalism" [54]; and Kuroita Katsumi went "from rationalism to nationalism" [145]). It is hard to accept the claim that Japanese historiography became more "rational" or that certain historians were more rational than others without greater clarification of what the author thinks constitutes "rationalism." The term *rationalism* is like a long unwound string: if not used carefully in a straightforward manner, it will soon be filled with hard-to-untangle knots. For example, what does Brownlee mean exactly when he says that Kuroita Katsumi went "from rationalism to nationalism"? Does he mean that by taking a nationalistic stance that accepted the myths as historical fact Kuroita was not acting rationally, or that the only rational choice for Kuroita was to deny them? It seems to me that from the perspective of Kuroita's understanding of the importance of the state (whether we agree with that understanding or not), his decision to support the nationalistic stance and not publicly deny the historicity of the origin myths can be seen as based on sound judgment, and therefore perfectly rational.

The loose use of the term *rational* and the theoretical structure largely based on "rationalism" are significant flaws in the book, but for anyone interested in modern Japanese historiography or in how the political implications of myths can influence historiography, Brownlee has provided a valuable book. I suspect, however, that what will prevent many from reading this book will not be what is in it, but what is on it: an 8,000-yen price tag.

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