

BOOK REVIEWS

GENERAL

EPSKAMP, KEES P. *Theatre in Search of Social Change: The Relative Significance of Different Theatrical Approaches*. CESO Paperback No. 7. The Hague: Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries, 1989. Figures, bibliography. 209 pages. Paper fl25,—or US\$12.50. ISBN 906443681 9. (Order from Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries, P.O. Box 90734, 2509 LS The Hague, The Netherlands. Add US\$1.25 for postage and US\$10.00 for bank charges.)

This book is a welcome contribution as it gives the reader an insight into the emergence of "theater for development" in the Third World.

Although folk and popular forms of theatre have always played social and didactic roles in society, it was only in the late sixties and early seventies that they began to be used as educative media for development. This coincided with the change in the approach of multilateral, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to development work. Attention was given to small-scale local projects and the use of indigenous knowledge, technology, and communication systems. Local people were involved in decision making. Nonformal or adult education was stressed. The ideas of French engineer Maguerez and Brazilian educationalist Freire, who advocated "functional literacy," were implemented. Media such as slides, drawings, and the performing arts were employed to stimulate local action.

Where theater was concerned, development workers were influenced by Latin American theater proponents such as Briski, Buenaventura, and Boal, who wanted to use drama for social reform. The Latin Americans borrowed ideas from Brecht and Piscator, European playwrights who propagated didactic theater. Boal argued that audiences should be involved in the performance and the process of making theater. The focus shifted from performance or product to the working process.

Development workers were also influenced by the appearance of new forms of theater in the North Atlantic World in the sixties, where directors and writers were abandoned. Plays became the products of collective effort and improvisations. Theater was brought to the people through performances outside of playhouses.

Epskamp asks an important question in his book: "What is the educative role of theatre in processes of social change and development and how is the use of theatre as a small-scale medium to be evaluated in realizing development projects based on a participatory or interventionist model?" (11) To answer this question, he compares the methods used and the impact of theater on development processes in various countries such as Mexico, Ecuador, Kenya, Ghana, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Jamaica.

Epskamp stresses that for theater to be effective as a medium for education, local organizational infrastructures must be set up and action-oriented follow-up is vital. For instance, traditional theater that has been employed in Indonesia and Turkey in

national campaigns to spread information on child care, food, nutrition, and family planning, would have been more effective if follow-up had been introduced. On the other hand, through NGO initiatives in Mexico, Ecuador, Ghana, the Philippines, India, and Kenya, theater has proved an effective means for raising the social consciousness of target groups such as landless laborers, construction workers, slum dwellers, and the "untouchables" of India. Plays are based on the social problems in the community. The local people often create collectively and act out their own plays. During the process of improvising the play, the target group examines and analyzes the problems in its community. A number of realistic alternatives for action are considered. The work process is emphasized rather than the artistic product. Some rehearsals are held outdoors so that others who are not acting can also be involved. After the performance, discussions are held with the audience.

Epskamp also emphasizes that not just any form of theater can be effective in consciousness-raising. Some forms may be associated with national campaigns while others could have certain social values of the political elite already implanted. Rather than using traditional theater, NGOs have experimented with various types of shadow theater, masks, mime, and adapted local songs, music, and other means of expression.

This book should serve not only as an important piece of documentation on the history of theater for development but as a primary text for development workers and theater makers in the Third World. They can compare their experiences with those of other countries and learn from the case studies presented. However, to make this book of interest to social workers and a broader popular audience, perhaps the academic style of writing could be adapted, making the descriptions more evocative and the views and research activity of the author more integral to the book. The thoughts and feelings of the community workers presented in the case studies could be included. Photographs could also give readers visual impressions of the lively performances and action-oriented follow-up described.

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HIMENO MIDORI 姫野翠. *Geinō no jinruigaku* 芸能の人類学 [Anthropology of artistic performance]. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1989. iii+250 pages. Color plates, illustrations. Hardcover Yen 2,200; ISBN 4-393-42451-4. (In Japanese)

The opening lines of this book inauspiciously call to mind exclusiveness at Emperor Akihito's recent enthronement ceremonies. While foreigners were welcome at the Accession Ceremony (*Sokuirei seiden no gi*), which publicly acknowledged that a new emperor now occupied the throne, only Japanese could attend the quasi-religious Great Food Offering (*Daijōsai*), a symbol of divinely-sanctioned, inviolable separateness. This dual approach tells outsiders that the Japanese see themselves as above the fray embroiling the rest of humanity, living in a world outsiders cannot grasp.

This is the exact feeling that Himeno invites in her Introduction: "Moreover, the word *geinō* exists only in the Japanese language" (i). What does this mean? That the word *geinō* exists in no other language, as, say, the word *kimono* does? But the point is meaningless, because most Japanese words do not exist in other languages. If she means that the concept of *geinō* exists in no other language, she is off the mark.