

As for the Arabian Peninsula, the author pays attention to the royal family, especially to King Fayṣal. He argues that despite the overreaching presence and power of the royal family and its protectors, the institutionalization of power in Saudi Arabia remains very limited and that the regime fears a sudden uprising. He rightly shows that the enormous profits generated by the oil boom have created immense wealth for the ruling class and the state while widening the gap between them and the masses, who are becoming increasingly restless in this precarious situation. The client role of the Saudi state, dependent for survival on the USA, makes this unstable situation all the more volatile (p. 197).

Many events which we are witnessing today have their roots in the period analysed in this book. Arab politicians are often referring to these events; therefore we can hope that the reader could find enough material for the understanding of many developments. The authors in this work use a wide heuristic base – the list of used sources and literature points to an extraordinary understanding of all issues related to the subject and this can be a guarantee of an eloquent and undistorted interpretation of events. It is important to appreciate the precise and very reliable scientific transliteration of Arab proper names.

The book *The Middle East in International Politics, 1971 – 1990* provides a reliable guide for further study for both scholars and students. In this even-handed and well-researched work, Arab sources were utilized to a level which is not common in Central European historiography. This balanced account is insightful, often fascinating, always judicious and readable. The monograph under review is an excellent historical work surpassing the standard level of works covering the same subject. It will undoubtedly find its place in the wider scientific research of Near Eastern history in the twentieth century.

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RUMÁNEK, Ivan R.V. *Japonská dráma nó – žánr vo vývoji* [Japanese Noh Drama – a Genre in Development]. Bratislava: VEDA, 2010. 459 p. ISBN 978-80-224-1148-6. In Slovak.

The monograph offers a new approach to the classical Japanese noh drama. Instead of just listing the facts which are generally well-known from dozens of other publications in various languages throughout the world, it treats noh from the point of view of the course of time. This methodology has enabled the author to postulate on the internal processes in this powerful theatrical tradition and unveil the external mechanisms of political and social powers which exerted an influence on noh's ongoing formation over the course of centuries. At the end, the monograph even provides a prospect: an attempt at formulating the possibilities of noh's further development into the future. In this new approach, the book is definitely a contribution to both Japanese and theatre studies. It is written with expertise but in a readable style and its only drawback is that it is written in Slovak, which limits the scope of concern to the Slovak and Czech readership.

The book starts with a quotation by Vlasta Hilská, the founding figure of Japanese studies in the former Czecho-Slovakia, saying that Japanese theatre is at such a stage of

development that it can hardly develop any further unless it influences Western drama to shift into new forms. This was the general view in the first half of the 20th century and Rumánek sets off to challenge this statement by showing that *noh* was never a static phenomenon; it has always been and never ceased to be a “genre in development” and it is exactly this development that he propounds in detail in his book.

The publication starts with a general introduction of the contemporary status quo and shows the position *noh* has in present-day Japanese society. The five traditional schools (or “streams”) are listed, and names of the most prominent actors are mentioned. After this general information, the focus is shifted onto a detailed account of *noh*’s history. Its roots are searched for and found not only in *bugaku* and *sangaku*, which are the usually given origins of *noh*, but also Shinto and Buddhist rituals which provided the background and basis for future *noh* performance: Rumánek shows how the domestic tradition of New Year *okina* performances were mingled with seasonal Buddhist festivals and how the originally Buddhist *jushi* (mantra charmers) dances were gradually overtaken by professional *sarugaku* (monkey plays) performers, which came to be called *jushi sarugaku*. Later on they engaged in the Shinto *okina* dances too, thus giving the basis for the *sarugaku okina* performances which are believed to be the oldest form of *noh*. *Okina* even exist today as an archaic prelude to the most official and ceremonial *noh* performances and its development of reduction step by step from five to three and even only to two pieces is explained. Interestingly, the point is emphasized that there has always been a serious-humorous dichotomy seen in *noh* today, what with its unseverable combination with the *kyogen* farce, which leads Rumánek to the opinion that *kyogen* cannot be regarded as a later, younger form; it was only put down in writing much later due to the much lower social status *kyogen* actors had to endure.

Rumánek then goes on to the very pre-phase of the formation of the classical *noh*, the situation with the *sarugaku* and *dengaku* troupes in the 14th century in central Japan. The synthesis of the earliest records and references to these troupes provides as clear a picture as possible about this period, and then the author introduces the results of his own fieldwork, which in my opinion is the most novel and surprising part of the book: he did research in the village of Yuzaki in the central Nara basin where, according to local legends, the founder father and son Kannami and Zeami were meant to have lived. Rumánek met with people and studied local materials which gave him an outline of the story: Kannami¹ came to Yuzaki around the mid-14th century and joined the local troupe, being himself an experienced actor (his mother was supposed to have been an actor too). A talented dancer and singer, he fathered Zeami. According to the local legends, the decisive point in the development of *noh* – its appreciation by the 3rd Ashikaga shogun Yoshimitsu – happened not in Kyoto, but earlier in Yuzaki when the shogun crossed the Nara Basin when negotiating between the two schismatic imperial courts – one in Kyoto and one in Yoshino to the south of the Nara Basin. On his way the shogun was entertained at Yuzaki, where performances were held to honour his visit, and the young shogun caught the favourable eye of the boy Zeami. This changed the fate of Kannami and Zeami, because the shogun invited them to Kyoto and became their

¹ Kannami is the form of the name Rumánek uses as the alternative for Kan’ami; he states that both forms are used in Japanese *noh* scholarship and that furthermore the former is easier to pronounce, which is why he chooses to use this one.

patron. Zeami was given an education with the most prominent scholars of the day, which led him later to produce dramatic texts of high literary quality for which noh is highly appreciated until this day. The author however attempts a highly scholarly approach, not giving in to fascinations by local legends he has personally recorded, but carefully comparing them with other opinions like that brought by another noh researcher, Tom Hare; he also mentions the sober opinions of prominent Japanese scholars like Omote Akira, who challenges the veracity of the Yuzaki legends and sceptically proclaims them unfounded.

The next part of the book discusses in detail the individual classical noh authors, starting from Kannami and his contemporaries, moving on to the next generation of Zeami and his followers. The figure of Zeami as the founder of what Rumánek terms as classical noh is given central attention. He was not only a talented actor but a troupe leader and theatre manager, a highly educated playwright who gave the noh texts their highly valued literary quality aimed at meeting the exquisite tastes of his Kyoto aristocratic audiences.

Particular attention is paid to the tradition of manuscripts. The oldest extant manuscripts surprisingly come down to Zeami's own hand and Rumánek follows the two manuscript traditions, the *kamigakari* and *shimogakari* (upper and lower lineages) underlying the two basic versions many of the plays usually have.

There are not only noh plays; noh playwrights starting from Zeami left behind a precious bulk of noh treatises which provide a rich panoply of various approaches to noh practice from the writing of noh plays through acting and aesthetic discourses. Lists of treatises by the individual authors are provided together with the lists of the most probable plays written by the respective playwrights, though the authorship of most plays is dubious, as is duly pointed out.

Then the focus is shifted onto the plays themselves; the range of the topics is exposed, their literary and other sources are identified and their inner structure explained.

Of special interest is a short but important chapter (p. 221) which shows how noh provided a powerful influence on the official royal art of *kumi udui* in the former Ruchu Kingdom on the Ryukyu islands.

The next bulky chapter analyses the noh performance from all its aspects, from music and musical instruments through rhythm, acting, dance, costumes, masks and the language. The musical theory is explained with its roots in China and India; Rumánek emphasizes noh's original musical character which, according to him, is less remarkable in the modern practice than it used to be several centuries ago and gives evidence of how tonally rich the noh singing originally must have been based on the *goma ten* marks which accompany the scenario text. They were originally a true music notation; on a few concrete specimens he shows how the *goma ten* notation works and what changes have occurred in the practice of their singing. Very revealing is also the comparison of two specimens of the same passage as sung in two different noh schools. As the author writes, he could penetrate deep into the noh practice due to his one year practical course in noh singing and dancing in Tokyo during his extended research stay aimed at writing the book. In the rhythm sections he reveals the delicate rhythmical patterns underlying the whole noh play. Here Rumánek propounds a courageous hypothesis that the basic noh rhythm, *hiranori*, might have its roots in the Greek hexametre chant of Central Asia which, he hypothesizes, might have penetrated into the local Buddhist practice similarly

as Greek sculpture did after Mahayana Buddhism was formed in the area, it spread further east, eventually reaching Japan in the Buddhist chants inherited from China.

Each play is divided into component parts called *shodan*, each of which has a special function in the whole of the play and their tight connection to the performative scenic practice is shown.

The description of the specific stage pronunciation, and linguistic, grammatical and poetological characteristics of noh plays close this extended chapter.

In consensus with the initial quotation of Vlasta Hilská mentioned above, Rumánek gives an outline of how noh was perceived and received in the West, giving concrete examples. He includes the most recent foreign non-Japanese noh projects witnessed in Bratislava (*Naša pani kňahne – Anna Hlaváčová*) and London (*Pagoda – Jannette Cheong*).

This is the outline of the first part of the publication. In its Conclusion, the author states that noh is indeed a genre in development and tries to see the possible directions of its further development.

The second part of the book provides five noh plays in Slovak translation – one from each of the five traditional noh play categories. In his translations, the author and translator tries to convey as much of the original Japanese poetic as possible into his Slovak translations, thus offering the reader a direct insight into what the text of a noh play is really like. The third part is the Slovak translation of the first and most famous treatise by Zeami, the *Fushikaden*; as the author notes, the translation is a centennial celebration of this mystery text being disclosed to Japan's general public in the early 20th century.

The book is concluded with useful indexes and maps, and the whole bulk of the text is intermingled with dozens of illustrations from the author's own archive. This makes the book an even more valuable source for anyone who is interested in noh in general as well as for specialists who will find detailed and ample information on the various aspects this publication of expertise covers.

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