



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Traditional Chinese Plays. Volume 3 by A. C. Scott

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Traditional Chinese Plays. Volume 3. Translated, described, annotated and illustrated by A. C. SCOTT. Pp. xvi + 93. Madison: THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS. 1975. \$10.00.

Professor Scott has put the theatrical world of two hemispheres yet further in his debt with this third volume in his series of performance-annotated translations of scenes from the Peking opera repertoire. Together with *The Classical Theatre of China* (1957), they constitute a unique resource for the student, and an essential (though, as the author warns, an incomplete) aid to the would-be producer. I have been unable to obtain the text from which the translations in Volume 3 were made, and so cannot discuss them in detail; the English style is the one familiar from previous volumes, and steers a middle course between the unactably stiff and the incongruously slangy. This practicable, straightforward quality probably reflects the beneficial influence of performance (How many translators routinely endure the salutary agony of hearing their work read aloud?). The descriptions of the stage setting and action, which continue to be the heart of the work, are extensive and illuminating, and help to indicate the degree of freedom available to the interpreter, among many other things that no translation could accomplish by itself.

The phonetic size and shape of the original, even where (as often and always in the verse portions) they are consequential to the impact of the whole, have not been reflected in the translation. At one point (the end of Scene 2 of "A Girl Setting Out For Trial," page 81) where the fadeout of the scene is mirrored by the dissolving of the text into purely phonetic (low-comedy punning) form, the translation for its part subsides into a transcription in a footnote. As a stage expedient this obviously will not suffice, and the note itself would have been an excellent place to have broken with the tradition of suppressing tones in Chinese transcriptions, and then to have pushed on into less charted but not less easy areas by indicating features like tempo (by a stage direction), prolongation (dash), pause (comma or semicolon), stress (underlining or *italics*) and pace (in|serted |vertical |bar at |metric |intervals). I am not a complete stranger to Chinese theater, and so am prepared to *imagine* how an actor would deliver these partly-transcribed lines, but I would rather be *told* how, by an authoritative earwitness. Unless Professor Scott goes to at least this much trouble with his transcriptions, however, he cannot convey to me what he doubtless knows. The scene, and with it the need for a convention adequate to these little challenges, is thus left very much up in the air.

In two ways, both of them economic, the present

volume falls short of its predecessors. The first is the per-page cost, which has doubled since Volume 2:

Volume	1	2	3
Date	1967	1969	1975
Pages	175	168	109
Cost	\$6.50	\$7.00	\$10.00
\$/Page	0.037	0.042	0.092

This drastic escalation (accompanied by a decline in the quality of the book, whose photographic illustrations are printed on ordinary paper, rather than glossily as of old) is far from being solely attributable to changes in the price of woodpulp. Is corporate mismanagement excluded?

Along with diminished accessibility due to price, the volume suffers from further restrictions apparently imposed by the author. Like Volume 2 (but not Volume 1—piratical types take note), the present work carries a draconic notice prohibiting unlicensed performances (*and* recordings, recitations, or repetitions generally). "Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned," it begins, and warned they assuredly will be. Experience with the royalty system in contemporary music suggests that this sort of talk will greatly inhibit the user of the work, without appreciably enriching Professor Scott himself, or the Asian Theatre Program at which he is to be addressed concerning performing rights. Such a result is, to this reviewer, uncomfortably at variance with the first line of the Preface: "The aim of this book is to increase understanding of traditional Chinese stage practice . . ." One feels somehow that Professor Scott, who enjoys the felicity of a position that enables him to accomplish the work he was clearly sent hither by the Jade Emperor to do, and whose livelihood is guaranteed him by the state while he does it, ought not so to compromise his handsome gift to us, in the very act of bestowing it.

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Japanese Patterns of Behavior. By TAKIE SUGIYAMA LEBRA. Pp. xviii + 295. Honolulu: EAST-WEST CENTER BOOK, UNIVERSITY PRESS OF HAWAII. 1976. \$5.95 paper.

The author of this excellent study is peculiarly well qualified to describe and analyze Japanese behavior, having the dual advantage of having been born and bred in the society and of possessing an objectivity arising from foreign training in anthropology. The result is that her book is characterized by a happy combination of intimate knowledge acquired by life experience, not simply field observation, and of extra-cultural perception