

BOOK REVIEW

Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof (Ed.), *Puppetry for all Times: Papers Presented at the Bali Puppetry Seminar 2013*. Singapore: Partridge Publishing, 2014, 2015. 389 pp. ISBN 978-1-4828-2810-8.

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Puppetry for all Times is the end result of the Bali Puppetry Festival and Seminar 2013 held in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia. The Seminar brought together puppetry experts and enthusiasts to discuss its significance and impact from its early origins to innovations made for its continuing preservation. This book is a much needed attempt to relevantize the shadow play in the context of traditional and modern culture in society.

The book begins with Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof's "Wayang from Within: Approaching Southeast Asian Shadow Play", which calls for a re-examination of Southeast Asian puppetry with his proposed *mandala* theory to re-examine possible Indian, Chinese and Filipino influences in localized Southeast Asian puppetry, with specific references to borrowed and local elements, Semar and other comic characters, aesthetics, rituals and function of puppetry as well as the significance of the *gunungan* and the *dalang*. This is followed by the largely unknown "Kheimah-Shab-Bazi" or traditional Iranian puppetry by Simin Amirian. She provides a condensed summary of its origin, dating back 1400 years, and evidences in Persian poetry, its popularity in Iranian theatre as well as details of a performance. Lydia Kieven's paper provides visual evidences of early Javanese wayang and Keith Rawling's "The Sutradhar and the Ringgit" attempts to re-examine the origin of puppetry in general in the context of ancient and borderless cultural exchanges as well as etymology of puppetry terms in Indian, Indonesian, Egyptian and Portuguese civilizations.

The history of various puppetry is also emphasized in certain papers. Bhaskar Roy Barman's "Puppetry in India" narrates in detail the history and types of puppetry present throughout India, stressing the uniqueness and purpose each serve to its respective society. Conversely, Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti's paper focuses solely on the Indonesian *wayang po-te-hi*, a Fujian puppetry brought by Chinese immigrants in the 17th century, and the passage to firmly establish itself as a fusion heritage of Chinese-Javanese Peranakan culture. On the other hand, Trivono Bramantyo's "Panji Story: From Version to Version" illustrates the various localizations of the Panji cycle, all of which revolve around the love story between Prince Panji and Princess Kirana. I Nyoman Sedana's paper then proceeds to discuss the preservation of puppetry through experimentations by puppetry students at an institutional level. He presents examples of Balinese and international puppeteers incorporating variations of repertoire, film and new vocal techniques, computer effects, more flexible puppets as well as introducing women puppeteers.

On Malaysia's heritage and conservation of its puppetry, Nur Afifah Vanitha Abdullah's "The Voice of a Master Puppeteer in a Malaysian Shadow Play" accentuates the role of the puppeteer's voice in delivering a puppet's hierarchical and emotional characteristics. Yousof's contribution to Malaysian puppetry is significantly expanded in Yau Sim Mei's paper which details his 40 years of experience with Malaysian puppetry and the academic and non-academic initiatives taken to preserve this dying art form.

In Danilo Liwanag's "Performing Puppetry" and Peter Wilson's "Traditional Forms-Modern Techniques" are experienced puppeteers who elaborate on innovative ways to perform puppetry in the Philippines and Australia respectively, two countries without a tradition of puppetry. However, both approach puppetry differently, with the former relying less on technology and more on the puppeteer's physical manipulations and the latter experimenting with technology to enhance puppetry performance. Similarly,

Khor Kheng Kia's "Wayang Kulit Kelantan in Digital Media" concentrates on the preservation of the critically endangered wayang kulit Kelantan into computer-generated virtual puppetry for various purposes, including further accessibility to the audience's personal interaction. A collaborative paper by Mahmoud Deghanharati and Mahtab Mahdavifar demonstrates functional and aesthetic similarities and differences on how the television is a successor of the wayang. Finally, David Novak's paper studies how a Malaysian graffiti artist has adopted puppetry images to promote non-commercialism and non-conformism to mainstream culture in the context of graffiti art.

This book is a good introduction to the various traditions of puppetry and its evolution in form, function and performance, as presented in several new and original papers. What particularly stands out is the critical re-assessment of puppetry origin that moves away from its previously-assumed Indian roots. Rawling's discussion of puppetry terminologies and its historical context in various non-Indian cultures brings a new angle to the origin theory, while Yousof's viewpoint theorises Java as being the centre of puppetry origin in Southeast Asia. Two largely-unknown puppetry forms are also highlighted in this book: the Kheimah-Shab-Bazi of Iran and wayang Po-te-hi of Indonesia. Both Amirian and Mastuti's papers bring attention to a once-celebrated theatre form and a relatively new and foreign import into the Indonesian puppetry repertoire respectively.

This book also brings in both traditional and contemporary academics as well as practitioners to remark on ongoing issues with traditional puppetry's conservation. Further post-traditional developments in puppetry are also observed and developed to keep up with a more globalized audience. This is evident in the contributions of Sedana who bridges between the traditional and modern, Wilson who manifests new puppetry technology and enhances the traditional, and Khor who digitalizes the traditional for the modern audience.

All in all, this book is a clear display of shared enthusiasm in the ancient traditions of puppetry, its transformation onto the modern screen and for the modern audience as well as encouraging the audience to take on the role of the puppeteer.

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