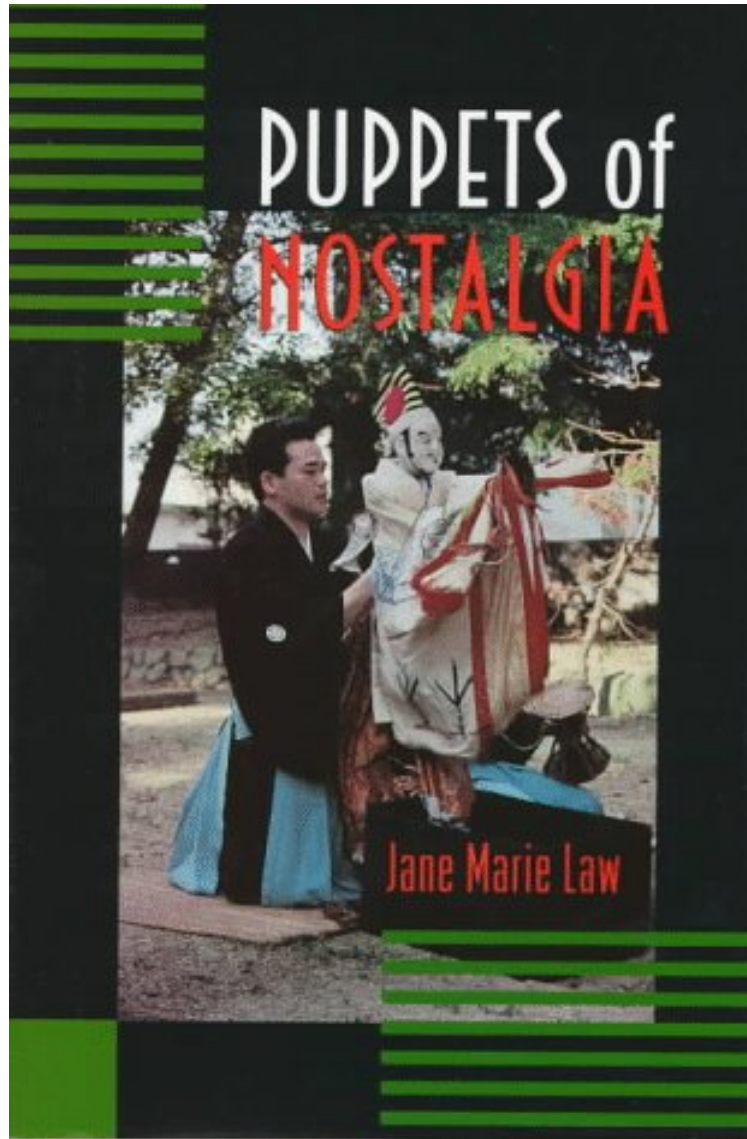


Puppets of Nostalgia

Jane Marie Law

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Jane Marie Law : Puppets of Nostalgia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Puppets of Nostalgia:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A much needed, study of the revival of Japanese folk a artBy Dr. D. J. Ashmore Travellers to, and scholars of, Japan have always marvelled at the wonderfully intricate and romantic Bunraku puppet theatre tradition. However, few writers in the English language have ever gone beyond the form of the art which is known to us today to look at the root and branch of puppet tradition in Japan. Yet, though the Bunraku

tradition can be said to be the ultimate evolved form of Japanese puppet art as a whole, in ignoring the traditions which gave rise to it students of the art are unable to appreciate some of the aspects of the art to their full extent. This is why this work by professor Law is of such great import to the world of Japanese theatre arts. In deconstructing a single puppet theatre tradition - the Awaji Island school (possibly the oldest in Japan and probably the branch of the art from which most if not all later schools emerged) - right down to its most basic elements, the reader is made acutely aware of the fact that puppet arts did not spring into being, whole and immaculate, in the nineteenth century as some descriptions of the rise of Bunraku might have it, neither were they the product of the partnership of Chikamatsu Monzaemon and the Takemoto Theatre as other schools of thought maintain. Professor Law shows her audience quite clearly how and (the probable reasons) why puppet arts became important to the Japanese people and - which is more - why they retained their popularity long into the Early Modern era when such arts were being almost universally discarded or marginalized on the continent. She reminds us of the socio religious aspects of the art which have become so divorced from the very touristy puppet theatre traditions which form the of the Bunraku Association and presents to the reader physical evidence of the survival of other, older traditions which are equally deserving of study as the monotheistic National Puppet theatre (and, one might argue, which are far more deserving of recognition because of the way in which some of these traditions even now teeter on the brink of oblivion - driven there by the academic indifference of a century and more). In brief then. A most marvellous book, which has opened up the world of Japanese puppet arts in a way never attempted before. Clearly the most important work in this area of study for many decades.

Puppets of Nostalgia is the first major work in any Western language to examine the ritual origins and religious dimensions of puppetry in Japan. In a lucid and engaging style accessible to the general reader, Jane Marie Law describes the "life, death, and rebirth" of awaji ningyo shibai, the unique form of puppet theater of Awaji Island that has existed since the sixteenth century. Puppetry rites on Awaji helped to maintain rigid ritual purity codes and to keep dangerous spiritual forces properly channeled and appeased. Law conducted fieldwork on Awaji, located in Japan's Inland Sea, over a ten-year period. In addition to being a detailed history and ethnography of this ritual tradition, Law's work is, at a theoretical level, a study of the process and meaning of tradition formation, reformation, invention, and revitalization. It will interest scholars in a number of fields, including the history of religions, anthropology, cultural studies, ritual and theater studies, Japanese studies, and social history. Focusing on the puppetry tradition of Awaji Island, *Puppets of Nostalgia* describes the activities of the island's ritual puppeteers and includes the first English translation of their performance texts and detailed descriptions of their rites. Because the author has lived on Awaji during extended periods of research, the work includes fine attention to local detail and nuanced readings of religious currents in Japan that affect popular religious expression. Illustrated throughout with rare photographs, the book provides an in-depth view of a four-hundred-year-old tradition never so thoroughly revealed to Western readers. Originally published in 1997. The Princeton Legacy Library uses the latest print-on-demand technology to again make available previously out-of-print books from the distinguished backlist of Princeton University Press. These paperback editions preserve the original texts of these important books while presenting them in durable paperback editions. The goal of the Princeton Legacy Library is to vastly increase access to the rich scholarly heritage found in the thousands of books published by Princeton University Press since its founding in 1905.

From the Back Cover "A major contribution to the fields of ritual studies, history of religions, theater, and the anthropology of modern Japanese society. The author writes in a lively, captivating style without sacrificing scholarly rigor. The 'transcendent' quality of this work stems from Jane Marie Law's synthesis of sound historiography and ethnographic fieldwork."--Avron Boretz, Hobart and William Smith Colleges "This is a sophisticated, post-modern, cross-disciplinary study. It breaks new ground in its examination of non-ecclesiastical religious experience and the role of ritual specialist/popular entertainers and serves as an example of how to address the issue of the meaning and creation of 'traditions.' Jane Marie Law has asked, and answered splendidly, all the right, most interesting questions about tradition formation, reformation, and revival."--Susan Matisoff, Stanford University