

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### Masaryk University

**Applicant**

**Habilitation thesis**

**Reviewer**

**Reviewer's home unit,  
institution**

**Ivan Rumánek, PhD.**

The okuni soshi manuscripts as testimony of a point of fracture in classical Japanese theatre

**Andrew Gerstle**

SOAS University of London

### **[Review text]**

I have read through the thesis and the appendix (translations).

The topic of the origins of Kabuki is very important to the field of Japanese Theatre. Dr Rumanek has formulated clearly his aims, method and approach. There is a good tight focus on a group of key visual and literary early Kabuki texts. The review of previous scholarship is thorough. The analysis of terminology is also clear and concise. He tracks carefully through the different sources to come to his conclusions. We have not had anyone attempt an analysis of these texts for some time, particularly outside of Japan, so this work is important in its analysis and in presenting translations of the texts.

The sources, both literary and visual, that he focuses on are difficult both linguistically and in terms of interpretation. Rumanek's deep background in historical linguistics and Nō theatre studies serves him well in the analysis of the texts in question. The texts have previously been analysed by Japanese scholars. Rumanek consults these findings but in some case comes to different analysis and conclusions. The analysis and contribution of translations of the texts is significant for the international field of Japanese studies.

The level of language and analysis is high and rigorous. The secondary sources cited cover the field. The close analysis of the Kyōdai text is exemplary. His conclusion—that the transition from *issei* to *ko-uta* and from religious to humour, eroticism and parody—is key to the transition from medieval Nō theatre to nascent Kabuki is well argued.

The analysis is excellent overall, but it is still difficult at times to keep the differences among the texts clear in the reader's mind. For publication it would be useful to have charts comparing the different texts, including the different visual images. It would be worthwhile to have the translations with the visual images.

**Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence (number of questions up to the reviewer)**

...







How can we distinguish late Nō plays which have more characters and more stage action from nascent kabuki? What are the differences, similarities?

Kyōgen (within Nō) has elements, of course, of humour and parody. Is this different from that in Kabuki?

Can you summarize your argument about which of the texts of Okuni Sōshi is the oldest and why?

What is the significance of cross-dressing in kabuki?

Can you explain briefly the moment of fracture, as you call it, of the transition from Nō drama to Kabuki?

How does the character Narihira differ in Nō and kabuki?

Would you argue that Okuni and Sanza were real life people as well as stage characters?

Is the link with Christianity significant for early Kabuki?

What do you mean by *mugen kabuki*?

### **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled *The okuni soshi manuscripts as testimony of a point of fracture in classical Japanese theatre* by Ivan Rumanek, PhD., fulfils requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Theory and History of Theatre, Film and Audio-Visual Culture Studies.

Date: 24 January 2024

Signature: