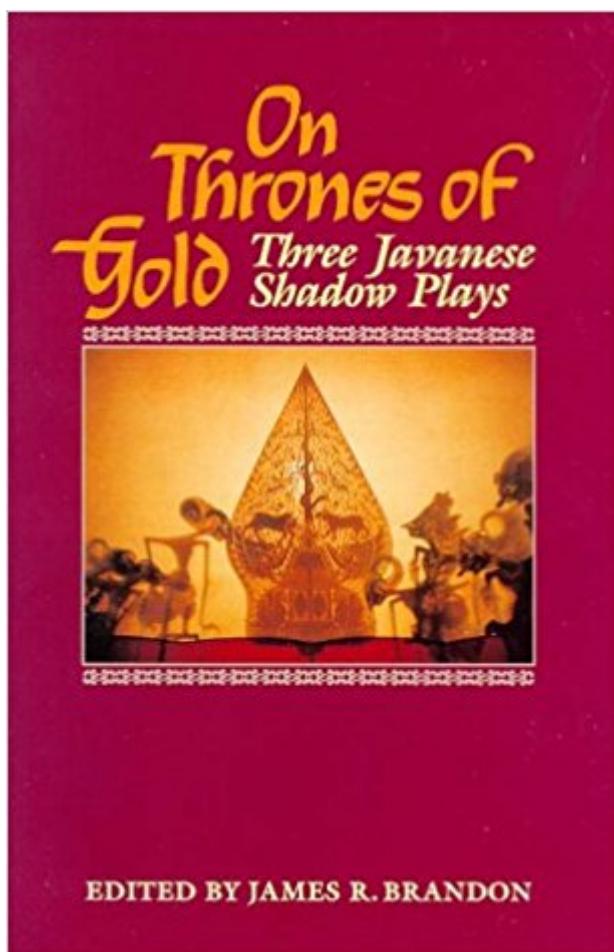


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On Thrones Of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays



Synopsis

Perhaps the best English language puppetry book in years Library Journal Accessible and unexpectedly involving an essential book for anyone seriously interested in wayang

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation)

James R. Brandon is emeritus professor of Asian theatre at the University of Hawai'i.

I feel humbled in writing this review after reading Walter Koenig's posted here, since he knows one of the translators and is himself a specialist. I can only claim to have a passionate desire to absorb these wonderful works into my psyche. I have a purely imaginative identification with Indonesian culture. It is no doubt idealized, romantic, and unrealistic, but it is also deep, abiding and completely sincere. I have owned the original hardback edition for the past 40+ years, but it still looks new because I have cared for it like the treasure that it is. James Brandon's eighty-page introduction is a model of clarity and completeness. A plethora of black and white photographs illustrate every moment of each play. In your mind, you can link them into flowing movements. I have done so frequently. Drama is notoriously transient because it so often relates to timely issues which fade in people's minds. These plays, however, tap into archetypal currents and will never fade in significance. In the past several decades the gamelan music of Indonesia has been much recorded.

Buy it. Listen to it. Its sounds are so compelling providing a threshold to enter the world of the plays. In my hometown, a classical music company, The Schubert Club, invested in a specially designed and constructed gamelan orchestra. Musicians and dancers came as well, who taught both appreciation of the music, and techniques of performance. Next month they are performing a fully staged dance-drama on the same Rama-story that appears in Brandon's book as one of the puppet plays.

This Book is still one of a kind. Since it was published in 1970, it is still the only reliable Book which gives the complete Text of three Wayang Kulit (Javanese Shadow Puppet) Lakon (Plays). "The Reincarnation of Rama" from the Ramayana and "Irawan's Wedding" and "The Death of Karna" from the Mahabharata. The Book begins with a fine introduction to Wayang, the Plays, Performance and Translation. The translation from Javanese was rendered by Pandam Guritno, one of the foremost Javanese Wayang Scholars of all time, whom I knew personally. Next follow the texts of the three Plays, which include 143 illustrations. James Brandon has also included descriptions of the action that takes place and the musical pieces that are played. The reader can thus review three performances through reading. At the end of the Book are useful Appendices, Notes on Sources, a good Glossary and a now outdated Bibliography. This Book is useful for those who are interested in Wayang, Javanese Culture, Theater Arts, Sanskrit Literature and many other subjects. That is what makes Wayang so wonderful. It is many things in one.

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