

THE OLD-INDIAN THEATRE IN POLAND

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*"Here is in fact the source of all the languages, all ideas and of the poetry of the human spirit; everything, all with no exception comes from India."*¹

Friedrich Schlegel

In Polish critical literature there has been no attempt to present in a systematic way the phenomenon which is named "The Indian theatre."² No-one has attempted to provide an explanation of the influence that the Indian theatre had upon the formation of Polish theatrical life. Our knowledge, except for a small circle of specialists, is limited at best to the reading of *Shakuntala*. A sudden increase of interest in the Old-Indian theatre in the sixties of our century, the first theatrical performances of the original dramatic texts, suggested the significance of undertaking the investigation of the reception of the Indian theatre in Poland. The fundamental problem of the present article concerns the two greatest masterpieces of the Old-Indian drama—Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and Sudraka's *Clay Cart*.

A deeper, more serious interest in the Old-Indian drama can be noted at the close of the period of Polish Romanticism. Within the years 1851-65 a good number of syntheses of world literature appears, in which brief information about the Indian drama is given. In 1861 H.J. Grabowski translated — from German? — Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*.³ The Indian trend in Polish Romanticism is most closely connected with the oriental trend in Russian literature of Pushkin's time.⁴ It seems to be unquestionable also that the enthusiastic opinions of Goethe and Herder had a certain impact. Jan Tuczynski stresses Schopenhauer's contribution that compares the function of Indian culture in Romanticism to the revival of antiquity in the period of Renaissance.⁵ The first more extensive study of the Old-Indian drama that has appeared in Poland is the dissertation of Adam Tretiak, published in 1879.⁶ It constitutes an attempt to present the main tendencies as well as the most outstanding works and authors. A year later Teofil Krasnosielski edited

The Indian Literature where he published fragments of *Shakuntala* in his own translation.⁷

'Young Poland'

A real expansion of the theatrical Indian thought took place in the period of the "Young Poland."⁸ In the field of the critical works the sketches of Matuszewski⁹, Bruoer¹⁰ and Niemojowski¹¹ appear. All of them attempt to present the essence of theatre and a wider theoretical background, suggested by the model of classical Sanskrit drama. The analogy perceived between Sudraka's *Clay Cart* and Calderon's *Unbroken Prince* as well as Kalidasa's work and Lope de Vega's, the Old-Indian and Elizabethan theatres — emphasises the significance of the phenomenon. Apart from that, the polemics and discussions concerning the conventionalism, "idealization" in the Old-Indian art were undertaken. At the same time, rather extensive studies concerning the history of the Indian drama appear, whose authors are Swiecicki¹² Kwiatkowski¹³ and Zakrzewski.¹⁴

The Indian element in the "Young Poland" drama exposes itself first of all in the presented climate of *nirvana* and the desire to be liberated from suffering.¹⁵ The buddhist-Schopenhauerian trend is presented in the dramas of Stanislaw Przybyszewski — *The Golden Fleece*, *Snow* and Tadeusz Micinski — *The Polish Thermopylae*. In the art of Jan Kasproicz one can observe the element of Vedian complex — the transformation from the vision of the world, shaped by pain and the blind will of life to the vision shaped by harmony, peace, that liberates love.¹⁶ *The Indian Hymn of Love* — *Sita* refers to the conventions of the Old-Indian theatre by means of the world presented, stylistics and the dramatic construction.¹⁷ A similar phenomenon occurs in the dramatic poem *Savitri*.

The Indian theatre art influenced to a great extent also the formation of the "Young Poland" theatrical theories. On this ground the programme formulated by Przybyszewski *To Create New Art* was drawn up. Here lies the source of the famous proclamation *Theatre-Temple* by Tadeusz Micinski. Micinski writes: "Wyspianski will create the national temple. . . the mysteries of life on the earth will be revealed : we will hear kings and brahmen of the Indian drama, and *Shakuntala* will be rambling in the forest saving the soul of a man from the hands of the infernal god Yama."¹⁸

To give a more complete picture, it is worth while to mention the first Polish theatrical productions based on the motives of original Old-Indian texts.¹⁹

One may provide several reasons for such a vivid interest in the Old-Indian theatre. Tuczynski, to give an example, is of the opinion — similarly as Matuszewski a little earlier — that the return of the Indian trend and its

contribution to the neoromantic formula of the trend-structure occurs mainly on the basis of taking interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy which is so strongly connected with the culture and thought of India — both Przybyszewski and Kasprowicz could listen to the lectures on Schopenhauer's system at the university. It remains unquestionable nowadays that the contribution of the "Young Poland" in discovering the masterpieces of the Scandinavian and German dramatic art was enormous. Similarly, the modernists took interest in the Old-Indian theatre, looking for still another model of poetic, symbolic drama.²⁰ The visit of the Japanese theatre of Sada Yakko and Otoiro Kawakami in Europe had also its repercussions.²¹

In the period of twenty years between the Wars only Stanislaw Schayer deals with the Old-Indian theatre. He is the author of the first — and so far the only — translation of *Shakuntala* from the original, published in 1924. At that time in the *Polish Stage* his excellent study *The Classical Indian Theatre* appears.²² Polish theatrical criticism has not so far been enriched with a dissertation that would be more penetrating than his. *The Great Literature of the World* also presents Schayer's history of the Old-Indian drama.²³

After the war there appeared two sketches of Helena Willman — Grabowska²⁴ and the book of Andrzej Gawronski *The Beginnings of the Indian Drama and the Problem of Grecian Influence*, the latter written in the twenties, published only in 1949.

After 1956 the interest in the Old-Indian theatre grew stronger. A good number of articles-monographs appeared, written about the most outstanding dramatist — Kalidasa.²⁵ Another trend is constituted by the historical studies, sketches and contributions to the history of drama and the Old-Indian theatre.²⁶ Krzysztof Maria Byrski discovers the art of the Nestor of the Hindu stage — Bhasa, the art which was entirely forgotten — the translations of *The Shattered Thighs* and — *The Legation*.²⁷ The Old-Indian drama also reaches the stage. In Opole and Wrocław there took place the Polish world premieres of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and Sudraka's *Clay Cart*.

Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*

The most famous Indian play is Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. We do not know unfortunately the exact date of its creation. The latest investigations prove that the masterpiece was written in the thirties of the 5th century A.D. For a long time *Shakuntala* — similarly as the whole Indian literature — was only the "property" of the Hindu. The 18th century was the turning-point in this respect. In 1789 William Jones translated for the first time Kalidasa's drama into English.²⁸ Three years later, in 1792 Jones published *Shakuntala* in the original. A real success was the English translation done in 1855 by H. Williams, the translation was re-edited seven times. Another country in which interest in the Indian drama was particularly strong was Germany.

In 1791 Georg Forster translated *Shakuntala* from English. However, it is only K.C. Kellner who can be called really successful as a translator, in his translation from the original into German. The translation appeared in Leipzig in 1896.²⁹

In Poland, the first attempt at translating was undertaken by H.J. Grabowski in 1861. The full title of the drama in Grabowski's translation was *Siakuntala or the Ring of Destiny, an Indian Drama in Seven Acts with a Prologue*.³⁰ In 1880 Teofil Krasnosielski presented in his *Indian Literature* a fragmentary — comprising only 1 act — translation of *Siakuntala*.³¹ A baroque, full of lofty apostrophes adaptation — the third one already — was presented to the Polish reader by Adolf Strzelecki in the small series *Books for Everyone*.³² The first, however, translation of *Shakuntala* from the original appeared in Poland only in 1924. The translation, done by Stanislaw Schayer, was re-edited in 1957 in the series *National Library* with the foreword of Sluszkiewicz. The translator based his work on several existing versions of the drama (the versions were: the Bengali, Middle Indian, Cashmere, and Dravidian ones).

The first observation on *The Ring of Destiny* was noted by Kazimierz Brozinski who considered that drama to be "the most beautiful of Kalidasa's creations."³³ The jocularity of *Shakuntala* was commented upon by Mecherzynski.³⁴ Lucjan Siemienski devoted a lot of place to the "exuberance of the images and luxuriance"³⁵ and Adam Tretiak to the Brahmanic determinism³⁶ of *Shakuntala*. Krasnosielski writes with ardour that "the whole charm of the drama lies in the masterly presentation of the main heroine who is shown to be full of charm, tenderness, sweetness and naivete, being simultaneously able to behave with dignity and show the female perspicacity."³⁷ The first one to provide an attempt of a total and rather complete estimation of *Shakuntala* was in Poland Swiecicki.³⁸ In describing the dramatis personae Swiecicki introduces the category of "manikin", stressing thus the schematization of comedy. The staging determinants hidden in the text of the drama were noticed by another commentator — Wiktor Brumer. The characters of fools from *Shakuntala* are Shakespearian clowns for Brumer (the example of Bottom from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is given).³⁹ The marionette-element in the study of character, lyricism and full of impressions atmosphere were discussed by Schayer.⁴⁰ The individualization of the characters' language (introducing numerous varieties of Prakrit words) in Kalidasa's creation was appreciated by Willman-Grabowska.⁴¹

Another, more complete attempt to acquaint the Polish reader with *Shakuntala* is due to Eugeniusz Sluszkiewicz. The most interesting observations there are the comments concerning dramatis personae. In the *Fatal Ring*, contrary to the two other plays of Kalidasa, the heroine — according to Sluszkiewicz — has no real rival, she fills the play with her own personality, and her only competitor can be nature. *Shakuntala* surpasses all the other

characters presented in Kalidasa's works in her ability to suffer with no complaint.⁴² The last sketch in which one finds a comment on the dramatic text of the *Fatal Ring* is the work of S. Michalski, published in 1961. According to Michalski, *Shakuntala* is "a fable of the fantastic-romantic nature, with a delicately depicted drama of the heroine whose charms Kalidasa presents in a number of stanzas."⁴³ Kalidasa is for him the glorifier of love and nature, the master of metaphor and comparison.

The works mentioned above were never a full discussion of the work, not even in the area of one selected aspect. Kalidasa's play has not yet been analyzed as a whole in Poland. The "theatrical problems" of the text left almost entirely undiscussed. There are no works in the Polish critical literature that would present the influence of Kalidasa's drama upon Polish drama. In the majority of cases the interests in *Shakuntala* were limited entirely to the ideological layer of the play, and the attempts to present its structural mastery were confined to the cliché and general statements. The genealogical classification of Kalidasa's masterpiece provided a lot of trouble to the critics. The aim of further investigation will not be, however, the philological interpretation of the text. It would trespass beyond the circle of the problems of our interest. We will attempt to signal the theatrical problems of the drama, presenting its stage adaptation more closely.

Performances

The history of performances of *Shakuntala* has not yet been fully established. The first realized stage adaptation of the drama took place in 1857 in England.⁴⁴ The next attempt to adapt the *Fatal Ring* to the stage was undertaken by A. Wolzogen in 1869. *Shakuntala*, in both the realistic performances lost its lyricism, the atmosphere of the richness of impressions, and in the first place its miraculousness. There were more fortunate endeavours to adapt the greatest play of Kalidasa to the stage, undertaken by the English. The greater success of the English is explained by some scholars by the strong connection of *Shakuntala* with the plays of Shakespeare. In 1899 *Shakuntala* was staged for the second time, in London. Further performances took place in 1912 and 1913. It may be worth while to note the fact of staging Kalidasa's play in Berlin in 1920 and after the war, in 1951. It was, unfortunately, impossible to collect more detailed information about the first stagings of *Shakuntala* in India. In France the first attempt to adapt it to the stage took place a year after the European premiere. The author of the scenario to the ballet-pantomime in two acts — *Sakountala* — (based on Kalidasa's text) was Teofil Gautier. The music was composed by Ernest Reyer. The play, intended as "a history of love and the fight against the magic" was performed against the gigantic scenery in Paris Opera-House on June 15, 1858.⁴⁵

It seems, however, that the strongest link with the Polish experiments of Jerzy Grotowski was the premiere performance of the Little Theatre of

Aleksander Tairow (1914). *Shakuntala* became for Tairow a splendid material for the polemics with the naturalistic theatre, and transposed onto the stage in the rhythmical-theatrical way constituted the mystery credo of the stage manager.⁴⁶

On December 13, 1960 there was the Polish premiere of *Shakuntala*, based on Kalidasa's drama. The premiere took place in Opole, at the Theatre of 13 Rows. The staging was preceded by a radio drama broadcast by the Cracow Broadcast Station of the Polish Radio.⁴⁷ Before the interpretation of Grotowski's spectacle it may be worth while to present a few observations that would register the "objective" stage reality. "According to the old custom of theatre the text of the play was treated by the stagemanager as the basis for the newly discovered sense and his own stage invention." Numerous abbreviations were done and pieces of *The Book of Manu* — a collection of Old-Indian customs — and *Kamasutra* — an Old-Indian handbook of the art of love — as the ritual texts were introduced.⁴⁸

The performance took place in an oblong, black-painted hall in which a platform was built in front of another platform that was constituted by the remnants of the stage and the public was located on both the platforms. As it seems, it was not the classical stage of the Laboratory Theatre because the real action took place on the middle stage improvised between the platforms, which was only partly demolished by the two stands of yogi-commentator, situated behind the public.⁴⁹

It is difficult to speak of the traditional scenery in Opole *Shakuntala*: The stage architecture — the work of Jerzy Gurawski — was constituted by two severe blocks: a huge hemisphere of the shape very close to geometrical hemisphere with very clearly marked seams dividing the block into two and a tall post slightly narrowing at the top, with its base contiguous to the ridge of the first construction. "The scenery is "two-phasic", it associates the symbolism of dream — the "Freudian" form in the centre of the stage — with children's symbolism — costumes designed by children."⁵⁰ Flaszen's declaration seems to be important, if one takes into consideration the "sub-title" of the staging: an Old-Indian erotic in two acts.⁵¹

For the first time in Poland the designs of costumes were done by ... the children from a School of Art, which resulted in an enormous diversity of the costume elements, variety of colours, and adherence to the "clothes" hierarchy of characters. The costumes represented here only children's naive image of the oriental world and it wouldn't be sensible to look for the conscious reference to European art, and more so — to the Indian one. The stage architecture and costumes functioned here according to the rule of point-counter-point. On one hand, the grey and simplicity of geometrical constructions, and on the other hand, "fabulous fancifulness" and colours;

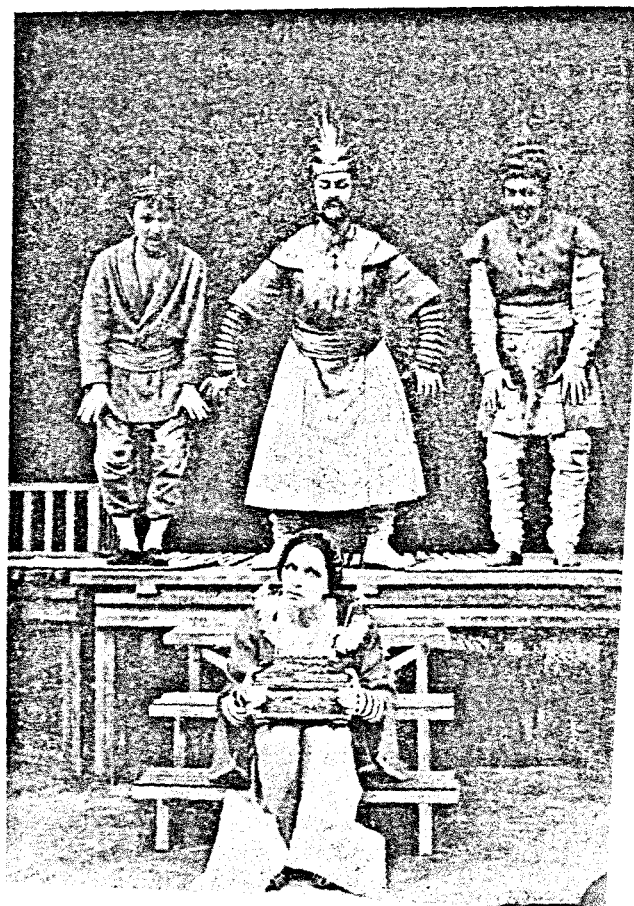
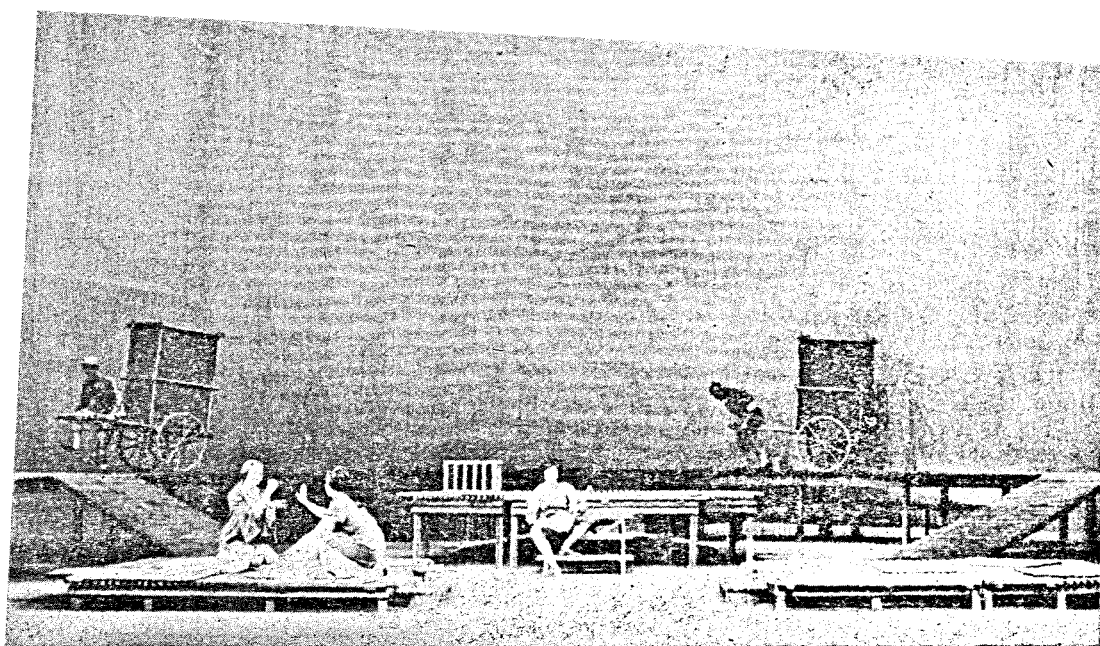


Kalidasa's "Shakuntala", TV Theatre, Wroclaw 1972

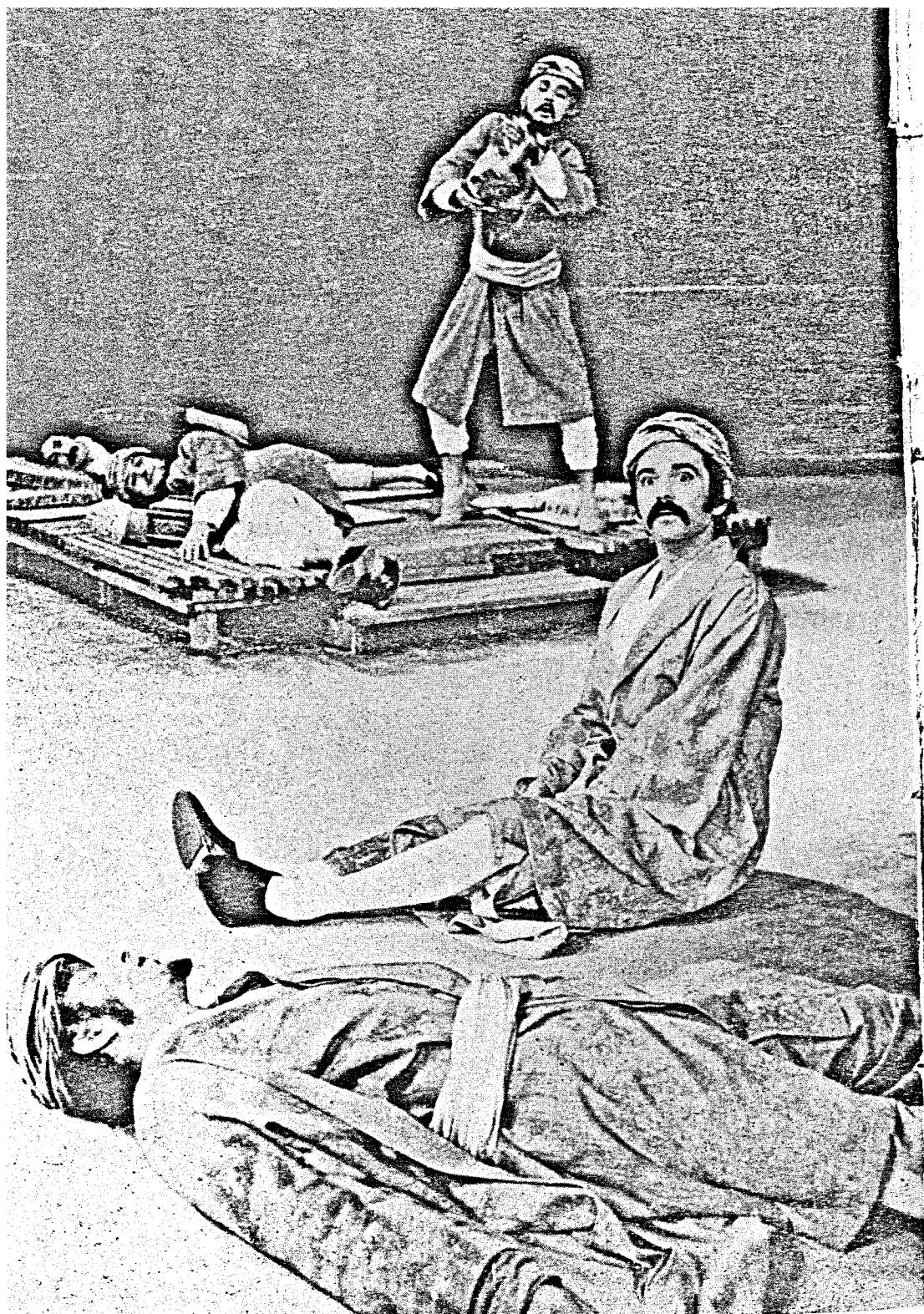


Two scenes from Sudraka's "Wasantasena", Stowacki Theatre Cracow 1973





*Two scenes from Sudraka's "Wasantasena",
Polish Theatre, Wroclaw, 1971.*



a complex, hidden symbolism of dreams and the symbolism of a childish imagination; intellectualism and naivets.

Finally, actor that "constitutes the matter and form, shape and content, is Alpha and Omega of expressiveness" represents for the Laboratory Theatre the same significance as metaphor in poetry.⁵² *Shakuntala* was acted by a small group of actors; if one considers the fact that in the drama text there are 34 characters plus hermits, disciples, courtiers and king's train.⁵³ The function of the "community" was transmitted in the performance to the public.⁵⁴ In the actors' interpretation a significant characteristic came to be various manners of speaking, composed artificially. A stage word was not only a carrier of meanings, but it also contributed with its sound effects, created complexes of sounds, irritated with its artificiality. In the staging of *Shakuntala* it was possible to speak of the "specific architecture of sounds, language and singing."⁵⁵ In the way of word transmission Grotowski referred to the conventional sacral tenors.⁵⁶ Smuggling liturgical allusions in the way of speaking stayed frequently in the antithetic relation with the "objective" meaning of a word.

The scenes imitating the performance — conversation of the director with the main actress — refer univocally to the Hindu yoga system. The sacred words directed to God Shiva are uttered by the actress and manager standing head-over-heels. It is not the classical standing upside down — *vigartakarani* — which is one of the basic figures of yoga arrangement.⁵⁷ Grotowski introduces elements of "strangeness" into oriental gestures, in the form of complicated figures — a different arrangement of legs, supporting with a hand, head twisting. The systems, presented in such a way are not a sports show of yogis but an explicit parody, a distorted imitation. It is easy to detect here a rule of contrast, directing the whole organization of gesture systems in the performance. On the one hand sophisticated, absolutely incomprehensible for the public travesties of the Indian mimic arrangements, and on the other traditional, everyday, conventionalized gestures. A requisite was also acted in a gesture way — not only in its being static — e.g. a galloping chariot, a fluttered deer, a man-tower. Lights didn't have any significant function in the performance, similarly to music. There was no so-called mechanical music in the production. It seems that Grotowski attached a great importance to sound natural effects — the sound of steps, rustle, rhythmical knocks — and — as it has already been mentioned — he introduced specific musical variations of the verbal sounds.

Interpretation

A brief formation of the interpretative conclusions will be a reply to the question concerning "Indianism" of Grotowski's theatre, containing also a polemic voice directed both towards the "written" declarations of the creator of the Laboratory Theatre and the earlier attempts of interpretation

undertaken by K.M. Byrski⁵⁸ and Z. Osinski.⁵⁹ The staging of *Shakuntala* constitutes the most flexible research material for explaining the exegesis of the Laboratory Theatre. The performance of the *Fatal King* in Opole was planned to be a staging — a parody of the traditional models of the Old-Indian art — the parody of texts, ideas, parody of costumes, gestures and mimics, and finally — parody of the generally prevailing image of India. *Shakuntala*, read as an erotic comedy of a mystical tenor — the expression might be perceived to be a little strange, but seems to be the closest one to the sense — was given in Opole the character of a custom, ritual performance. It is clearly seen not only in application of the general human, universal themes — God-man-love — but in the first place in introducing a whole alphabet of conventional signs consciously schematized. In the performance the traditional recitation of a prayer — *nandi* — was preserved as well as the prologue — conversation of the manager with the actress. During the interval between the acts the stage — following the example of the Old-Indian theatre — was not empty “katharsis” — wailing performed by the actors. “Indianism” of staging may be still more explicitly seen in the analysis of the so-called formal media. Grotowski definitely eliminates for the first time in *Shakuntala* the division into stage and theatre-room. All the next stagings of the Laboratory Theatre will be realized on the open stage which is a direct reference to the Old-Indian stage practice where there was no curtain dividing theatre-room from stage; there was only a curtain hiding the dressing room.⁶⁰

The scenery solutions turned out to be forerunning in comparison to the stage innovations introduced earlier. The staging of Kalidasa's drama was the first case in the history of the Theatre of 13 Rows without the participation of a scenery manager whose work was taken by a stage architect. Jerzy Grotowski's function — henceforth a regular theatre - collaborator — will be limited mainly to the functional organization of stage space. Also here the contribution of the Old-Indian tradition seems to be of some importance. The Hindu theatre organized in the first ages of our era was a wandering theatre; the lack of a constant theatre building resulted in some stage technique properties, i.e. almost a complete lack of decoration whose vision was transmitted by means of word and mimics. In this respect Grotowski almost entirely accepted the Old-Indian convention. It is important that mimical arrangements — also in all the later stagings — are not a completion, an illustration of a spoken word, but — as it seems — take the function of an equivalent medium of artistic expression.

Another aspect of the staging of *Shakuntala* was significant for the creative initiation of Jerzy Grotowski. The staging was the first performance — part from *Misterium Buffo* — in which he gave up “mechanical” music introducing artistically perfect equivalents in the form of musical recitations and carefully directed natural effects of sound. It would be easy to trace the thread uniting the Laboratory Theatre with the Indian theatrical practice.

Omitting quite obvious influences of philosophy and the culture of India — about which Zbigniew Osinski writes so suggestively taking as an example the ideas of Krishnamurti — one might wish to support the thesis that the Laboratory Theatre makes an extensive use of the climate, idea of the Old-Indian theatrical art.⁶¹ It certainly cannot be the matter of schematic transferring the models — which could be done only partly with reference to the staging of *Shakuntala* — but of a distant, not always clearly realized transposition of general assumptions of the Old-Indian stage practice. That the hypotheses assumed here are right is proved by some declarations of the stage-manager: "At some period oriental theatre was something exciting for me. It was then when it seemed to me that it is possible to look for signs and construct a work of art consciously. . . there is something in the oriental theatre that I know, in Peking Opera before the cultural revolution, in Kathakali's theatre in India — I am speaking of these theatres because I had an occasion to observe their work from the inside — there is something magnificent in them, beautiful."⁶² In another place Grotowski will say: "...their aesthetics does not concern me at all. I do not think that it is possible to take from them any techniques, or that they are able to inspire us directly."⁶³ Difficulties in grasping the phenomenon of the Laboratory Theatre during its evolutionary transmutations do not allow for a univocal conclusion.

The Clay Cart

The authorship of *Clay Cart*/*Mritchthakatika* — is often attached to Danin, Bhasa, and lately more and more frequently to the legendary king Sudraka who was supposed to reveal his creative self in the prologue to the *Clay Cart*. Accepting a hypothetical attitude towards the problem one might also assume that *Mritchthakatika* was created around the 4th c A.D. Europe got acquainted with the Indian masterpiece only in the 19th c. The first attempt of translation was undertaken by the Englishman Horace H. Wilson — the translation was "transplanted" upon German ground by Oskar Ludwig Wolff. A philological edition of the text took place in 1848 in Bonn — the author: Adolf Friedrich Stenzler. Two years later the translation was published in Russian in *Moskvitanin*.⁶⁴ It is known that at the time there existed, apart from that, the other versions: Danish and French.⁶⁵

The Polish critical reception of the *Clay Cart* is not very ample. It can be explained by the lack of generally accessible complete translation of the drama. Only Tadeusz Pobożniak, the later translator of the drama, in 1964 delivered a short paper on the problem of popular character of *Mritchthakatika*.⁶⁶ He also noticed multiplot — so unusual for Indian drama — and tragi-comical elements in the *Clay Cart*, pointed out the similarity to Shakespeare's plays. It may be worth while noting that the greatest masterpiece of the Indian theatre — apart from *Shakuntala* — has not so far been analyzed in a penetrating way.

The history of staging the *Clay Cart* by Sudraka was initiated in Europe by the French stagings. In 1850 Mery and Gerard de Nerval endeavoured to adapt the Old-Indian drama to the requirements of the new theatrical art. The stage adaptation in the Paris Odeon, under a slightly modified title *Chariot l'enfant* (*A Child's Cart*) was the first theatrical test of *Mritichhakatika*.⁶⁷

After 1850 one can observe a particular popularity in translations and stage adaptations of Sudraka's drama. One of such adaptations was the work of Emil Pohl and was entitled *Wasantasena*. It was staged in Berlin and Munich with a great success.⁶⁸ In the nineties' of the previous century it had its Polish realization.⁶⁹ The Warsaw press announces the staging of *Wasantasena* in the Great Theatre, benefit performance of Helena Marcello-Palinska.⁷⁰ According to the reviewer of the *Echo* what was staged was a melodrama. It resulted to a great extent from the specificity of the "dramatic material." Pohl reduced the lofty fragments, as well as the deeper motives for the sake of a clear, collectivized love story with a happy end. Because of the general outline of the whole, and obvious — with such assumptions — focus on the verbal message, the success of the performance depended on the actors. The star of the evening was Marcello-Palinska who "impressed as usual with its dramatic power and a marvellous play of features."⁷¹ From the critics' reviews it comes out that she based her acting on the contrastive presentation of the feelings of Wasantasena — courtesan. "Her play abounded with the accents of tenderness and explosions of true passion." The opinion of Rabski — who is the reviewer of *Kurier Warszawski* — about Frenkiel's acting sounds enthusiastically — Frenkiel played in the Warsaw performance one of the best parts in *Wasantasena* — the part of the royal brother-in-law Samsthanaka. "He created one of those characters that are included into an artist's unchangeable repertory. It was a psychological synthesis, glittering with a brilliant humour."⁷² The critics agree that Wojdalowicz's art, who presented an outstanding comical temperament acting the part of a buddhist monk. Finally, Wasantasena's lover — Tscharudatta "dressed by Ladnowski in a philosophical peace interrupted only with outbursts of love." Writing about the group scenes Rabski criticized very strongly the stage manager's qualifications : "the crowd stood on the stage as metal soldiers. Everything was forced, so drowsy, so artificial that it created the impression of marionettes and not alive people ... we have had Meiningen's Theatre in Warsaw, but no trace was left after them on our stage."⁷³ The Polish staging of *Wasantasena* — as it may be concluded — was acted in the old convention of starring, and the attempts to introduce a crowd onto the stage — in which the Theatre of Jerzy von Meiningen excelled — failed entirely. The staging of Pohl's adaptation was a comparatively early forerunner of the Polish stagings of the most ancient dramas. However, it is only the staging by Krystyna Skuszyanka can be considered to be the premiere of the *Clay Cart*.

In the case of Wroclaw *Wasantasena*⁷⁵ the most attractive is the possi-

bility of scening the "Indianism" of the staging. The Polish *Wasantasena* and the model of the Old-Indian theatre. The realization of the *Natya-sastra* patterns in Skuszanka's staging.⁷⁶ The question about stylization, theatrical pastiche. Another variant is an autonomous inspection. Finding the principles ruling the staging in itself, without any attempt of a diachronic analysis.

When staging the *Clay Cart* Krystyna Skuszanka had at her disposal a "fresh" and only (so far) translation of the drama from Old-Indian.⁷⁷ The author of the translation was Tadeusz Pobożniak, mentioned earlier. The staging of the full text of *Mritchchhakatika* would require, because of its volume, at least a double 4-5 hour spectacle. The necessity of a greater dynamization of the action required the elimination of detailed descriptions of the court-hall and gardens, eliminating some episodic characters. Skuszanka resigned completely introducing a narrator onto the stage, distributing numerous parts of the text among the actors' voices. In the constant attempt to reduce tiresome parts and the parts that were not significant for the tempo of the stage action, she very often left the text fragments inessential for the plot development but theatrically "attractive". The fundamental principle which directed Skuszanka's work in adapting Sudraka's drama to the stage seems to be the artistic intuition, director's understanding to what the text itself obliges and the theatrical possibilities dreaming in the text.⁷⁸ The scenario presented in the Polish Theatre in Wrocław was faithful to the drama to a great extent, and the changes introduced into it were supposed to serve a better preparation of the score to the requirements of the 20th century stage and the tastes of the contemporary public.

Also with respect to the scenery Wojciech Krakowski preserved the main idea of the theatrical Old-Indian visual elements. The only architectonic elements that organized the stage movement and pointed out the stage space were carefully composed landings. Symmetrical distribution of the open-work elevations gives to the whole architecture the character of classical perfection. The longest wooden construction runs semicircularly in the back of the stage limiting, or closing, the "area" of events. The three remaining elevations — two low ones and a higher one in the middle — of more or less the same surface, constitute the main plain of events. Each of the constructions, isolated from the remaining ones, is combined with the proper surface of the stage with gently sloping runways or a staircase. The whole construction is of amphitheatrical character, from the lowest elevations on the sides to the highest ones at the back. The invoice of the architectonic solutions suggests — operating with a very simple symbol — reference to "something in the style of building in the Hindu town Awanti."⁷⁹ The elevations built of a whole mass of equally distributed thick wooden poles create a kind of a "bathroom" floor. The exoticism, "Indianism" of the construction is accentuated with inconsistency of planes, their "bamboo" structure. A semantic triparticism is created in the staging, if one takes into consideration the place of action,

which is to a great extent suggested by the construction of the stage architecture. Simplifying, one might present it as follows :

1. The most important events for the action,
climaxes, happy end central elevation
2. The events directly connected with the
relation Wasantasena-Tscharudatta
(their meetings, love monologues) low elevations
3. Other events the stage plane

Krakowski's construction is "a highly useful area of play."⁸⁰ Functional elements are obtained by the visual accuracy and understanding of the main idea of the text. It also may be referred to the scenery elements. Two-wheel carts, being a very explicit stylization of an Eastern chair, the so-called Arba, apart from the "carriage" functions play visually, with its bamboo construction supporting "oriental meanings", and are apart from that the theme and source of dramatic conflicts (act VI is entitled: *Change of Carts*). Krakowski's scenery composition is completed by the patterned, unicoloured background filmed on the semi-circular horizon. It stresses, contrasted with a light-brown wooden tone, the largeness of the open space. Open for the actor.⁸¹

In the staging of *Wasantasena* an economical use of a requisite is applied with a great consequence, which is characteristic for the Indian stage. The suggestions of the scenery-manager do not — even here — trespass the text of the drama. In the majority of cases the requisite is played pantomimically. Only in the case of impossibility of substituting a requisite with a mimic arrangement — because of communication, theatrical expressiveness — it is introduced on the basis of oriental stylization e.g. cushions in Wasantasena's house, a box with jewelry, musical instruments.

Costume in Skuszanka's performance is a particularly exposed means of artistic expression. It constitutes frequently the only source of information about a character. Through a clear imitation, reference to the Indian semantics of colour it creates the oriental climate of the spectacle, it carries a lot of encoded meanings (e.g. a yellow frock of a buddhist monk, being an absolute surprise for the Polish public, finds the Indian equivalents of sense in miraculous phenomena, unearthly and holy matters.)⁸²

The information problems of a mimical requisite and sense "carrying" costume — signalled slightly — stay in the integral connection with the pure art of an actor. Rejecting the possibility and purposefulness of the full reconstruction of Kathakali's theatre, Skuszanka was able to combine "the original historionic inventiveness, independent and miscellaneous in its individual variants" with the classical Old-Indian convention.⁸³ She declared

to choose "a symbolic play from a distance" — constant demolishing the stage illusion, theatricalization, a histrionic pathos. The actors' method presented in the Wrocław performance, selected out of numerous interpretative possibilities, is a combination of various forms of European theatre, which — with their climate, atmosphere, means of artistic expression — summon the model of the Old-Indian theatre which is encoded in the text of the drama.⁸⁴ Skuszanka deliberately creates the fusion of the Old-Indian conventions with the European ones, attempting on one hand to present the oriental theatrical code — or at least its idea — and on the other hand — simultaneously — to construct the comical situations. The analogies to the Old-Polish stagings of Kazimierz Dejmek are only superficial. Skuszanka preserves the general sense and the expression of ideas of the *Clay Cart*. "Metatheatricalness" of the Wrocław performance comes out of the essence of the Old-Indian drama — commenting on one's action, uttering the paraphernalia, descriptions, determining the place of action. Comicality resulting from the fusion of the two different theatrical conventions is created in theatre, without the earlier cuttings or fundamental changes in the structure of the text. The theatrical system of arbitrary signs, particularly within the range of mimics and scenic gestures, yields humoristic effects in spite of the fact that its origin seems to be originally Indian.⁸⁵

Skuszanka introduces directly onto the stage a whole group of musical instruments, such as: a gong, drums, bells, plucked instruments — a kind of banjo, Indian *vina*.⁸⁶ The instrument is simultaneously the source and the visual symbol of sound. The music in Skuszanka's staging creates the atmosphere, is combined with a gesture and stage movement, suggest meanings. It is the background and the word.⁸⁷

Krystyna Skuszanka's performance fascinates with its precise and clear composition, based on the conception of stylization realized consequently. The scenic vision of the stage manager was "read" from Sudraka's text being the source of inspiration of numerous theatrical solutions.

The present sketch does not fully present the problems suggested in the title. We have limited ourselves only to the superficial interpretation of the purely theatrical phenomena. We have only signalled the influence of the theatre and Old-Indian thought upon the formation of the Romantic and Young-Polish drama. The problems of the Old-Indian theatre, signalled in the university lectures, have been omitted here.⁸⁸ The interpretation of the television premiere of *Shakuntala* was given up here because of a completely different stylistics of the phenomena.⁸⁹ The staging was intended as a verbal illustration of the animated, relief Indian images and was a much poorer artistic equivalent in comparison to Kalidasa's text. It constituted, however, a consecutive example of revival of the most ancient drama, being an announcement of the new attempts of adaptation of the Old-Indian dramatic masterpieces. The Polish theatre is here still greatly indebted.

APPENDIX

1. Emil Pohl *Wasantasena* (an adaptation of the *Clay Cart* by Sudraka). *Wasantasena* — Helena Marcello-Palinska. Warsaw, Variety Theatre, May 8, 1898 (European premiere — 1850 Paris).
2. Erazm Dluski *Urvasi* (according to Kalidasa's *Wikramorvasi*). Directed by Tadeusz Pawlikowski. Lwow, The Polish Theatre, February 25, 1902 (European premiere — 1890 Munich).
3. Rabindranath Tagore *Postal Office*. Translated probably by Jan Kaspro-wicz. Directed by Stanislaw Wysocka. Kiev, The Polish Theatre, the hall: "Link", September 28, 1918 (European premiere — 1913 London). Warsaw, Variety Theatre, September 18, 1920. Directed by Stanislaw Wysocka. Cracow, Slowacki Theatre, September 9, 1924. Directed by Stanislaw Wysocka.
4. Rabindranath Tagore *Post Office*, Directed by E. Winogronowna. Warsaw, The House of Janusz Korczak's Orphans, July 18, 1942. Bydgoszcz, The Theatre of Proposals, 1956. It was not possible to collect any further information. Transl. Bohdan Gebarski. Directed by B. Radkowski. Warsaw, TV Theatre, November 6, 1958.
5. Balwant Gargi *An Indian Woman*. Translated by Jadwiga Zylinska. Directed by Aleksander Gassowski. Poznan, The Polish Theatre, June 25, 1956.
6. Rabindranath Tagore *A Victim*. Bydgoszcz, The Theatre of Proposals, 1958. It was not possible to collect any further information.
7. Balwant Gargi *Broken Twigs*. Directed by Maryna Broniewska. Warsaw, TV Theatre, January 26, 1958.
8. Kalidasa *Shakuntala*. Directed by Jerzy Grotowski. Opole, The Theatre of 13 Rows, December 13, 1960 (European premiere — 1857 London). Directed by Jowita Pienkiewicz. Wroclaw, TV Theatre, January 21, 1972.
9. Sudraka *Wasantasena*. Directed by Krystyna Skuszanka. Wroclaw, The Polish Theatre, September 24, 1971. Cracow, Slowacki Theatre, March 31, 1973. Directed by Krystyna Skuszanka.
10. Thomas Mann *The Change of Heads* (according to *Ramayana* by Valmika). A monodrama by Anna Lutoslawska. Wroclaw, TV Theatre, April 9, 1972.*

* Within the years 1956-1960 the Indian plays were presented on the Polish Radio. It is known to me that Rabindranath Tagore's texts (*Post-office* — twice *Tschitra* and *A Victim*) had their radio adaptation. In 1958 Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* was realized by the radio theatre.

NOTES

1. The quotation in Jan Tuczynski's translation. Cf. J. Tuczynski, *Schopenhauer and "The Young Poland."* Gdansk 1969, p. 85.
2. An attempt of presenting the Indian theatre is K.M. Byrski's work, *The Most Ancient Theatre*. "Pamiętnik Teatralny" 1969, no. 1-2.
3. Kalidasa, *Siakuntala or the Ring of Destiny*. Transl. H.J. Grabowski, Warsaw 1861.
4. Cf. A. Zajaczkowski, *The Orient as a Source of Inspiration in the Romantic Literature of Mickiewicz Times*. Warsaw 1955, p. 6.
5. J. Tuczynski, "Indianism" in the Polish Romanticism (in) *The East in the Polish Literature*. Wrocław 1970, p. 32.
6. A Tretiak, *On the Old-Indian Drama*. "Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki" 1879, pp. 961-1113.
7. T. Krasnosielski, *The Indian Literature* (in) *The World Literature*. Vol. 1, Warsaw 1880, pp. 59-144.
8. A lot of interesting remarks can be found in the book: J. Reychman, *A Cape, A Mountaineer's Stick and a Secret Sign*. Cracow 1971.
9. I. Matuszewski, *The Ideal of Heroism in the Old-Indian Drama. Literary Studies in Us and Strangers*. Warsaw 1901, pp. 325-361.
10. W. Brumer, *Old-Hindu Theatre*. "Museion" 1913, book 11, p. 107.
11. Cf. "Prawda" 1895, no. 25.
12. J.A. Swiecicki, *History of the Indian Literature* (in) *History of World Literature*. Vol. 4, Warsaw 1901, pp. 327-366.
13. R. Kwiatkowski, *World Literature*. Vol. 2, Warsaw 1908, pp. 50-56.
14. J. Zakrzewski, *World Literature*. Vol. I, Warsaw 1908, pp. 30-41.
15. Cf. Tuczynski, *Schopenhauer and the Young Poland*. Gdansk 1969, p. 153.
16. Tuczynski writes more about it in: *The Indian Motives in Kasproicz's Lyric Poetry*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1971, book 3, pp. 85-115.
17. J. Kasproicz, *Sita. An Indian Hymn of Love in Three Scenes*. Poznan 1917.
18. T. Micinski, *Theatre-Temple*. "Sowo Polskie" 1905, no. 207. Cf. also the note of B. Frankowska (in) *The Theatre Thought of the Young Poland*. Warsaw 1966, pp. 433-434.
19. In 1898 an adaptation of the *Clay Cart* was presented on the stage of The Great Theatre in Warsaw. The second staging is the premiere staging of Erazm Dluski's *Urwasi*, a musical fantasia based on the Indian tale and making use of a motif from Kalidasa's drama *Wikramorwasi*. F. Pajaczkowski wrote in a more detailed way about Pawlikowski wrote in a more detailed way about Pawlikowski's spectacle/who was the director of *Urwasi*, Lwow Theatre directed by Tadeusz Pawlikowski 1900-1906. Krakow 1961, pp. 241-156. Cf. the review: "Gazeta Narodowa" 1902, no 58.
20. Such a thesis was put already earlier by Irena Slawinska. Cf. I. Slawinska, "The Young Polish" *Battle for the Theatre* (in) *The Theatre Thought of "the Young Poland."* Warsaw 1966, p. 12.
21. Cf. J.A. Kisielewski, *On the Japanese Theatre*. Lwow 1903.
22. S. Schayer, *The Classical Indian Theatre: "Scena Polska"* 1924, book 7, pp. 5-25.
23. Schayer, *The Indian Literature* (in) *The World Great Literature*. Vol. 5, Warsaw 1936, pp. 85-99.
24. H. Willman-Grabowska, *The Indian Theatre as a Function of India's Ideology and The Culture of the Language*. "Sprawozdania PAU" 1949, no. 2, pp. 33-36; — *Folk Elements in the Indian Theatre*. "Sprawozdania PAU" 1951, no. 6, pp. 436-439.
25. Cf. Willman-Grabowska, *Kalidasa*. "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 1956, nos. 19-20; — S. Michalski, *Kalidasa*. "Zeszyty Naukowe UL" 1961, book 20. — The most extensive study of Kalidasa's dramas is the introduction written by Eugeniusz Sluszkiewicz to the edition of *Siakuntala* in *The National Library*, cf. Kalidasa, *Siakuntala*. Wrocław 1957.

26. G. Spychalska-Wilczurowa, *The Classical Indian Drama*. "Przegląd Humanistyczny" 1962, book 6, pp. 77-85; — Byrski, *The Most Ancient Theatre*, op. cit., pp. 11-35; *Ibid.*, *Theatre and Victim*. "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 1968, no. 2.
27. Bhasa, *The Shattered Thighs*. Transl. by M.K. Byrski. "Dialog" 1969, no. 2, pp. 72-87 (also there the article of Byrski, *Bhasa and the Indian Theatre*); — Bhasa, *Legation*. Transl. M.K. Byrski, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 1968, no. 2. Apart from that Byrski revives the Sanskrit convention of theatre with one actor. Cf. "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 1969, no. 3.
28. The information presented here is taken to a great extent from Sluszkiewicz's introduction to the edition of *Siakuntala* of 1957.
29. More important German translations that were not mentioned by Sluszkiewicz: the translation of Gerhard (1820), Hinel (1833), Schreder (1847).
30. Kalidasa, *Siakuntala or the Ring of Destiny, an Indian Drama in Seven Acts with a Prologue*. Translation by H.J. Grabowski, Warsaw 1961, p. 206.
31. Krasnosielski, op. cit.
32. Kalidasa, *Siakuntala*. Translated by Adolf Strzelecki. Warsaw 1905.
33. Cf. K. Brodzinski, *A Selection of Writings*. Wrocław 1966, p. 241 (first edition in 1818).
34. K. Mécherzynski, *A Review of the Literature of the Eastern Nations, Greek Poetry of the Middle Ages and Polish Poetry of the 16th and 19th centuries*. Krakow 1851, pp. 34-37.
35. L. Siemienski, *A Review of the World Literature*. Vol. 1, Krakow 1855, pp. 150-170; — In the same year interesting remarks on *Siakuntala* were formulated by J. Kremer, *Letters from Cracow*. Vol. 2, Wilno 1855, pp. 233-234.
36. Tretiak, op. cit., p. 961.
37. Krasnosielski, op. cit., p. 41.
38. Swiecicki, op. cit., pp. 327-466.
39. Brumer, op. cit., p. 107.
40. Compare Schayer's introduction to the first edition of his translation : Kalidasa, *Siakuntala*. Warsaw 1924.
41. Willman-Grabowska, *Kalidasa*, op. cit., pp. 271-281.
42. Sluszkiewicz placed his remarks in the quoted introduction to the edition of *Siakuntala* in the National Library.
43. Michalski, op. cit., p. 190.
44. Sluszkiewicz considers the year 1869 to be the date of European premiere. The Information given here follows *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*. London 1957.
45. Cf. *Theatre. Mystere, comedie et ballets*. Paris 1872, pp. 471-492 The French translations of *Siakuntala* appeared much later. The most famous translation, done by an outstanding scholar dealing with the Indian culture, professor Abel Bergoique, professor of College de France, comes from 1884.
46. A Tairow, *The Notes of the Director and the Proclamations of An Artist*. Transl. J. Ludawska. Warsaw 1964, pp. 50-54.
47. Cf. O. Jedrzejczyk, *The Opole Siakuntala*. "Gazeta Krakowska" 1960. no. 107, p. 6.
48. *The Codex of Manu* was created — according to W. Jones around the 5th century A.D.; it is based on the old customs which prevailed in the Hindu settlements on the banks of the Ganges. Cf. S. Radhakrishna, *Indian Philosophy*. Warsaw 1958, p. 478.
49. Cf. J. Lau, *The Search for the Theatre of the Middle*. "Argumenty" 1961, no. 4, p. 6.
50. L. Flaszen, *A regulation for the public, and in particular for the reviewers*. Opole 1960 (programme).
51. Cf. Z. Freud, *An Introduction to the Psychoanalysis*. Warsaw 1958, p. 131. Guruawski's architectonic form is similar to phallus — on the basis of a direct allusion — that functions as one of idols in the Indian culture.
52. Flaszen, *On the Actor's Method*. Wrocław 1965 (programme).
53. In the staging of *Siakuntala* almost a whole team of The Laboratory Theatre participated. The cast of the performance was as follows : *Siakuntala* — Rena Mirecka, *King Dushyanta* — Zygmunt Malik and A. Jacholkowski, *Barbara Barska*, *Ewa Lubowiecka*, *Andrzej Bielski*, *Adam Kurczyna*.

54. Cf. A. Falkowski, *The Sense of Existence of Heresy*. "Współczesność" 1961, no. 10, p. 4.
55. J. Lau, op. cit., p. 6. The reviewers found a reference to the Indian incantations in the manner of word transmitting in *Siakuntala*. Cf. M.L. *A Foreign Woman on Opole*. *Sztandar Młodych* 1961, no. 5, p. 2.
56. Z. Raszewski wrote about the voice possibilities of Grotowski's actors — with reference to the other stagings, in: *The Theatre of 13 Rows*. "Pamiętnik Teatralny" 1964, book 3, pp. 235-242.
57. Cf. the patterns of yoga postures (in) R. Schmidt, *Fakire und Fakirtum in alten und modernen Indien*. Berlin 1907.
58. Byrski, *Grotowski and the Indian Tradition*. "Dialog" 1969, no. 8, pp. 86-91.
59. Zbigniew Osinski in his latest work on The Laboratory Theatre does not consider the meaning of the influence of the Indian stage practice in the formation of Grotowski's theatre convention. Cf. Z. Osinski, *Conventions and Anti-Conventions in the Laboratory Theatre*. "Teksty" 1972, no. 3, pp. 33-47.
60. Cf. Schayer, *Classical Indian Theatre*, op. cit., p. 9; J.S., *The Indian Classical Drama*. "Filomata" 1930, book 13, pp. 120-136.
61. Osinski, *Dionysius Theatre. Romanticism in the Polish Contemporary Theatre*. Cracow, 1972, pp. 155-159.
62. The meeting with Grotowski (documents). "Teatr" 1972, no. 5, p. 20.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
64. The information follows Tadeusz Pobożniak's one that is given in the reference notes in all the more important translations and stagings of the *Clay Cart*. Cf. T. Pobożniak, *The Reception of Mrichchhakatika in Europe*. Wrocław 1971 (the programme of The Polish Theatre).
65. W. Rabski, *On Theatre*. *Kurier Warszawski* 1898, no. 127, pp. 1-2.
66. Pobożniak, *Mrichchhakatika, An Old-Indian Folk Drama*. "Sprawozdanie z posiedzenia Komisji PAN" Cracow 1964, (January-June), pp. 98-101.
67. Rabski, op. cit., p. 2.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Matuszewski, op. cit., p. 328.
70. "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne" 1898, no. 17, p. 201.
71. Rabski, op. cit., p. 2.
72. Al. R., *Wasantasena*. "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne" 1898, no. 20, p. 234.
73. Rabski, op. cit., p. 2.
73. Rabski, op. cit., p. 2.
74. Jacek Lipiński wrote in a rather extensive way about the performances of J.G. von Meiningen's theatre. Cf. J. Lipiński, *Guest Performances of the Theatre from Meiningen in the Light of the Theatre Criticism of Warsaw* (in) *Warsaw Theatre of the second half of the 19th century*. Wrocław 1957, pp. 320-354.
75. *Wasantasena (Mrichchhakatika)*. The authorship attributed to the king Sudraka. The translation from the original by Tadeusz Pobożniak. The edition of the text and directing: Krystyna Skuszanka. Scenography: Wojciech Krakowski. Music: Zbigniew Karnecki. Choreography: Leszek Czarnota. The Polish premiere: September 24, 1971 in the Polish Theatre in Wrocław. *Wasantasena* — Anna Lutosławska, Tscharudatta Janusz Peszek, Tadeusz Pokrzywko, Samsthanaka — Igor Przegródzki and others.
76. *Natya-sastra* — the most famous apart from *Dasa-Rupel* — Indian theoretical theatrical treatise (around the 3rd century A.D.).
77. It may be worth while mentioning that the staging of the *Clay Cart* was not the "Indian" debut of Skuszanka. Earlier she did the radio adaptations of *Chitra and Victim* by R. Tagore. Cf. A. Kowalska, *From the History of Reception of R. Tagore in Poland*. "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 1961, no. 4, p. 269.
78. It has been authoritatively confirmed by the authoress of the staging in a direct conversation with me.
79. Cf. J. Kelera, *A Certain Smile*. "Odra" 1971, no. 11, p. 85.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
81. Functionality of the visual elements constitutes the programmatic idea of Krakowski. Cf. W. Krakowski, *On the Current Problems of Scenography*. Teatr 1956, nos. 15-16, p. 14.
82. Wasantasena's costume may be interpreted in an analogous way. The semantics of colour would indicate the representation by the title character of: cheerfulness (basya), erotica (sryngone), heroism (vina) and bliss. Cf. J. Auboyer, *Everyday Life in the Old India*. Warsaw 1968, p. 29.
83. Kelera, op. cit., p. 84.
84. Cf. B. Frankowska, *Wasantasena*. "Literature" 1972, no. 13, p. 10.
85. Cf. J. Ciechowicz, *Indian Premiere*. "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1972, no. 6, p. 7.
86. Vina is a kind of a Hindu zither.
87. Music is a very important component of all Skuszanka's performances. In a conversation she named the staging of the *Clay Cart* a musical performance.
88. At Warsaw University the lectures on *Siakuntala* and *Urwasi* were conducted by Hieranmoy Ghoshal. Cf. H. Ghoshal, *The Book of Walhalli*. Warsaw 1971, p. 388.
89. Kalidasa, *Siakuntala*. Directed by Jowita Pienkiewicz, scenography: Michal Jedrzejewski, TV direction: Cezary Lagiewski. Premiere: January 21, 1972, TV Theatre Wrocław. *Siakuntala* — Jadwiga Skupnik, Dushyanta — Andrzej Hrydzewicz.

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