

The Historical Significance of Theater Troops and the Works of National Intellectuals and Dramaturgs in the Kashkadarya Oasis During the Soviet Period

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the fundamental changes that occurred in the development of theatrical art in Uzbekistan with the establishment of Soviet power based on historical sources. The study covers the processes of subordinating the theater to ideological tasks in 1918–1930, the formation of amateur and semi-professional troupes, and the transfer of theater activities to centralized management by the People’s Commissariat of Education. The contribution of such creators as Abdulla Kadirov-Tanburiy, Ikroma Boltaeva, and Majid Mamatov to the formation and development of the musical drama theater in the Kashkadarya oasis is analyzed separately.*

Keywords: *Soviet, Theater, Uzbek, Russian, Bolshevism, Dramaturgy, Education, Party Affiliation, Class Affiliation, Internationalism, Director, A. Kadyrov, Karshi, Bukhara, Troupe, Shahrisabz, A. Shoibzoda, A. Kadyrov Ikroma Boltaeva, Zaynab Samieva, Qori Zokirov, Actress, Soviet.*

Introduction

The establishment of Soviet rule brought significant changes to theatrical activity as well. The new government paid serious attention to organizing professional Uzbek and Russian Soviet theatre. From this point on, theatre became a tool of communist propaganda. Between 1918 and 1920, amateur theatre circles and semi-professional theatre troupes were established. In addition, special decisions were adopted to create an Arts Department under the People’s Commissariat of Education (1918) and to organize the “Union for Theatre Affairs” (1919) [1].

For the purpose of promoting Bolshevik ideology, a special decree was issued on 18 May 1921 by the People’s Commissariat of Education on providing national theatres with revolutionary repertoires [2].

Despite such decrees, national intellectuals encountered significant difficulties in establishing theatrical work in practice. After the October Revolution, numerous amateur and semi-professional troupes began to appear throughout the Turkestan region. Theatre groups such as “Izchilar,” “Temur,” “Turon kuchi,” “Turk kuchi,” “Taraqiy,” and “Lochin” were opened under various schools.

Methodology

The Bolshevik government not only strictly controlled theatre repertoires but also the ideological content of the plays. From this period onward, intensive work was carried out to compile and expand the repertoire of Uzbek theatre. The repertoire of the Namuna troupe included plays promoting Bolshevik ideas, such as “Xarobalik” (Ruins) and “Mehnatga madhiya” (Ode to Labor), as well as works by foreign authors, including Schiller’s tragedies “The Robbers” and “Intrigue and Love.” The national theatre collective soon earned the respect and admiration of the audience. As noted in the newspaper *Ishtirokiyun*, “The participation of Turkestan workers in theatre, their interest in fine arts... the theatres being constantly full, tickets always being insufficient, and even Uzbek women attending theatre performances show clearly how strongly people aspire to culture” [3].

The years 1918–1924 marked the formative period of the Uzbek “Soviet” theatre. Despite the rapid imposition of Bolshevik ideology in the theatrical sphere, national intellectuals, playwrights, and critics sought to draw public attention to pressing social issues through their stage works. During these years, the plays of Fitrat, Cho’lpon, G’ozi Yunus, G’ulom Zafariy, and others addressed socio-political and everyday themes. In directing, figures such as Hamza, B. A’lamov, M. Uyg’ur, A. Ismoilzoda, R. Xojizoda, S. Olimov, and M. Qorieva contributed significantly to the developing national theatre. Owing to their efforts, actresses such as M. Kuznesova, M. Baxtiyorova, M. Qorieva, A. Nazirova, and V. Abdurashidova—and actors such as A. Hidoyatov, M. Mukhhamedov, F. Umarov, B. Qoriev, K. Yoqubiy, H. Islomov, H. Mahzumov, K. Ramazonov, Ye. Bobojonov, and O. Jalilov—emerged as prominent performers [4].

The establishment of the Soviet regime in the region created the need for significant changes in people’s worldview and spiritual life. Consequently, theatre—an important component of propaganda activities—rose to the forefront. Like other spheres of culture, theatrical directions were subordinated to party ideology and served the interests of the ruling doctrine [5].

By 1921, the supervision of theatre activity within propaganda work was assigned to the Department of Artistic Affairs under the Cultural and Educational Administration. As a result, theatres, as cultural-educational institutions, came under strict ideological control. Stage productions performed in theatres were subordinated to the ideological system and transformed into instruments of propaganda. The main mission of theatre groups was to promote the Soviet era through performances directed at rural communities, district workers, women, and children.

In 1924, an amateur artistic circle was established under the city’s Department of Public Education. This collective was led by tambur-player Abdulla Qodirov. Abdulla Qodirov (known as Tanburiy) was born in 1896 in the Hazrati Imom neighborhood of Shahrisabz, in the family of Mirza Abdulqodir Qorovulbegi. In addition to receiving religious and secular education at the Mir Arab madrasas in Shahrisabz, Qarshi, and later Bukhara, Tanburiy attained mastery in calligraphy.

Due to his high level of literacy, Tanburiy was appointed as a scribe (mirza) in the court chancery of Amir Olimkhan. In 1920, the political situation in Bukhara became extremely tense, and as the Amir’s scribe, Tanburiy faced constant persecution. In 1928, he established the first theatrical troupe in Qarshi. In 1932, the troupe founded by Tanburiy became the basis for the present-day Qarshi City Theatre, which is considered the

foundation of the Mulla To'ychi Toshmuhammedov Regional Musical Drama Theatre. At that time, it was extremely difficult for women to appear on stage, yet two local women managed to perform at the Qarshi theatre.

Abdulla Qodirov—Tanburiy, a renowned musician and master instrument maker who lived and worked in Qarshi, played a significant role in the establishment of the Qashqadaryo Regional Musical Drama Theatre. Thanks to his initiative, an amateur artistic circle composed of the youth of Qarshi and Shahrisabz was created in the early 1930s. Later, the amateur group under the Navoi School in Qarshi, led by Bahrom Komolov, began its activities with musical programs and eventually progressed to performing select stage scenes [6].

Result and Discussion

The Qashqadaryo Regional Theatre was established on 2 August 1932 on the basis of the amateur art groups of Qarshi and Shahrisabz, under the initiative of A. Shoibzoda, head of the Qarshi District Department of Education, and A. Qodirov. According to the recollections of veteran artists, the first performance staged at the newly founded theatre was the play “Halima”, in which the role of Halima was portrayed by the talented actress Zaynab Samieva.

In the early years of the theatre's formation, the value of each artistic work was assessed primarily by how well it conformed to the ideological criteria of “partisanship,” “class loyalty,” and “internationalism.” However, despite the pressure exerted by the administrative-command system of the period, the local population—who had long adhered to national and religious traditions—managed to preserve their cultural identity.

The leaders and members of the artistic circles gathered young talents from across the districts of the Qashqadaryo oasis. Among the artists active in the circle were Ikroma Boltaeva, Zaynab Samieva, Qori Zokirov, Quدرات To'raev, Rauf Boltaev, Naim Sattorov, Mamatqul Jalilov, Niyoz Ostonov, and Salomat Ro'zieva. On the basis of this circle, the Qarshi City Theatre troupe was officially formed on 2 August 1932, with Abdulla Qodirov serving as its first director. Considerable contributions were also made by B. Azizov and S. Vohidov, who had been sent from Tashkent to support the development of the theatre. During this period, M. Fayzullaeva, B. Kamolov, Kh. Mustafoqulov, Kh. Ibragimova, M. Mamatov, and others began their artistic careers.

The Qashqadaryo Drama Theatre trained several prominent Uzbek actors, including Farogat Rahmatova, an Honored Artist of Uzbekistan, and Zaynab Sadrieva and Ikroma Boltaeva, both People's Artists of Uzbekistan [7].

One of the actresses who played an important role in the artistic development of the theatre was Ikroma Boltaeva, born in 1916 in the Kitob district of Qashqadaryo region. Raised in an orphanage during her childhood, Boltaeva first studied at a pedagogical college and later graduated from the Tashkent Theatre Technical School. In 1932, she appeared in her first role at the Qashqadaryo Regional Theatre, playing Tursunoy in “Hujum” by V. Yan and Cho'lpon. She later worked at the Samarkand Regional Theatre from 1934 to 1945, performing major roles such as Jamila (Hamza, “The Rich Man and the Servant”), Maysara (“Maysara's Deed”), and Lady Milford (F. Schiller, “Intrigue and Love”).

In 1946, Ikroma Boltaeva moved to Tashkent, where she became one of the leading actresses at the Hamza Theatre (now the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theatre), continuing her artistic activities until the end of her life.

Her artistic mastery was significantly shaped under the guidance of Mannon Uyg'ur and Yetim Bobojonov. Among her notable roles were Portia (Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar"), Varvara (A. Ostrovsky, "The Thunderstorm"), Hafiza (A. Qahhor, "The Master of the Spoken Word"), Shakarbuvi ("My Dear Mothers"), and Marhamat (Uyg'un, "Parvona").

Ikroma Boltaeva also appeared in films produced by the "Uzbekfilm" studio. In Sh. Abbasov's film "Mahallada duv-duv gap", her portrayal of Halima—a sincere and affectionate mother who wholeheartedly wishes for the happiness of her only beautiful daughter, Sayyora—is performed with remarkable warmth and realism. Boltaeva was also active in social and community work. For many years, she served faithfully as the chair of the trade union at the Hamza Theatre. Her artistic contributions were duly recognized: in 1956, she was awarded the honorary title of "People's Artist of Uzbekistan." She also became a laureate of the State Prize of Uzbekistan. Ikroma Boltaeva passed away in 1993 in Tashkent.

In 1933, a movie theater building was opened in the city, and sound films were screened there for the first time. By 1935, the House of Culture in Qarshi housed a library, museum, and theatre clubs.

In 1936, the theatre began to be referred to as a state theatre. During these years, M. Ermatov became the chief director and S. Vokhidov worked as a director-pedagogue. From 1936 onward, the theatre was financed from the state budget, and 12,697 soms were allocated for the decorative design of staged productions. The number of theatre staff expanded to 69 people, which greatly contributed to the artistic and technical quality of its performances.

In 1938, under the leadership of Muhiddin Ermatov, the Qarshi City Theatre staged the play "Farhod and Shirin." The choreography for the production was arranged by the renowned ballet master Gavhar Rahimova.

Although theatres during the Soviet regime provided cultural and spiritual recreation for the public, they lacked creative freedom. Theatres, like other cultural institutions, were tasked with promoting and reinforcing Soviet ideology. During this period, plays such as "Hujum," "The Punishment of Slanderers," "Awakening," "G'unchalar," "Border Guards," and "Maysaraning ishi" were performed for the public.

One of the artists who laid the foundation of the Qashqadaryo Musical Drama Theatre was Majid Mamatov. Born in 1923 in Qarshi, Mamatov joined the regional theatre in 1942. He performed leading roles in productions such as "Toshbolta Oshiq," "Ikki bilak uzuk," "Besh kunlik kuyov," "Xolisxon," "Layli va Majnun," and "Shoxsanam va G'arib." [8]

Conclusion

During the wartime period, 51 theatres operated across Uzbekistan, of which 35 were local and 16 had been evacuated from other regions. These included the Hamza Academic

Theatre, the Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Muqimiy Musical Drama Theatre, the M. Gorky Russian Drama Theatre, and others. On their stages, audiences saw many acclaimed productions such as K. Yashin's "Death to the Invaders" and "Oftobxon," I. Sulton's "The Flight of the Falcon," H. Olimjon's "Muqanna," Uyg'un and I. Sulton's "Alisher Navoiy," S. Abdulla and Chustiy's "Qurbon Umarov," H. Olimjon, Uyg'un, and S. Abdulla's "The Sword of Uzbekistan," Tuyg'un and A. Umariy's "Qasos," Ismoilzoda's "Farzand," and others.

From July 1941 to 1944, theatres in Uzbekistan staged 203 new productions, performed 13,568 shows and concerts, and served 6,667,303 spectators.

After the re-establishment of Qashqadaryo Region in 1943, three theatres from across the republic provided cultural services to the region's workers.

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