

Characteristics of the Organizational and Creative Development of Theaters in the Ferghana Region

Rakhimova Charos

PhD student at Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, Department of Art History and Cultural Studies, specializing in "Theatrical Art."

charosrakhimova961@gmail.ru

Abstract. This article explores the distinctive organizational and creative developments of theaters in the Fergana region, with a specific focus on the Kokand Music and Drama Theater during the early stages of the European Uzbek theater's evolution. The analysis centers on the role of the creative team in shaping the theater's repertoire.

Key words: *regional theater, musical drama, creative ensemble, repertoire, developmental stages, artistic traditions.*

Introduction

Uzbek theatrical art, a notable phenomenon in the cultural history of the twentieth century, has traversed a distinctive creative trajectory. The establishment of theaters in the Fergana region has played a significant role in this narrative, gaining recognition as a distinguished artistic collective during the years of independence. The historical evolution of this creative space, along with the performance techniques of dramatic works, continues to function as an informal educational institution.

Among the various theaters in the Fergana region, the Kokand Musical Drama Theater, established relatively early, serves as a substantial foundation for numerous cultural centers, highlighting the organizational and creative dynamics of the pre-independence era. This context warrants careful consideration.

From a contemporary perspective, it can be asserted that the European-style theater, which first entered the region in the early twentieth century, is now fully integrated into the socio-political, spiritual, and educational fabric of society. Recent years have witnessed a growing interest from the global community in Uzbek culture and art. The status of our theaters has been revitalized, reflecting an expansion of the cultural needs of our populace.

Historical accounts indicate that Kokand was once a prominent hub of culture and enlightenment in Central Asia, as well as a flourishing site for national folk art. When considering the origins of Uzbek national art, it is with great pride that we acknowledge Kokand as the birthplace of structured and developed Uzbek national theatrical art. Its profound roots extend back to the reigns of the Kokand khans, notably Amir Umar Khan, Madalikhan, and Khudoyorkhan.

The emergence, development, and establishment of Uzbek national theatrical art occurred through the contributions of individuals residing and working in Kokand and the broader Fergana region. These individuals were closely associated with renowned artists, poets, askiyas, hafizes, musicians, singers, and dancers from both prominent cities and villages throughout the valley.

Prominent actors such as Bidyorshum, Zokir Eshan, Sa'di Makhsum, Rozi Gov, Normat Qiziq, Shomat Qiziq, Usman Qiziq, Rustam Qiziq, and Matkholiq Qiziq were influential figures in Kokand during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Among the most celebrated singers were Boymat Hafiz, Saydali Hafiz, Abdurahman Pari, Ogul Hafiz, Zuhra Qiziq Iqlim Dodho, Huvaydo Otin, Oynisa Hafiz, Isirga Otin, and Hamdam Bachcha, alongside esteemed dancers such as Farzinkhan Bachcha, Oq Bachcha, Chontak Bachcha, Kumush Bachcha, and Chnrvon Bachcha. These artists collectively laid the foundational groundwork for professional Uzbek theatrical art, not only in Kokand but throughout the entire republic.

Historical records indicate that during Khudoyorkhan's reign in Kokand, the royal palace housed a troupe of 30 actors, a dance ensemble of 60 performers, and a folk ensemble comprising 75 members. The repertoire of this troupe primarily included compositions and performances of works such as "Mudarris," "Auliyo," "Khan Hajvi," "Zarkokil," "Qalandarlar," "Dorbozlik," "Kelin Tushirdi," "Qazi," and "Sudkho," amounting to approximately 200 plays, narratives, and parables across various genres and formats.

In the latter half of the 19th century, significant political changes in the Turkestan region, including the conquest of Central Asia by Tsarist Russia and the dissolution of the Khudoyorkhan Khanate in 1896, led to the imposition of foreign cultural and spiritual influences in Kokand. This attempt to replace the long-standing national culture, spirituality, and traditions resulted in the establishment of the first European-style musical-drama troupe in the city following the dissolution of the Kokand Khanate. Rozi Gov Nazarmat oglu, who had been a member of the Kokand Palace troupe until 1876, was appointed as its leader, a position he maintained until 1915.

Through an examination of the sequential developments within the cultural and literary milieu of Kokand, the identified period encompasses the first quarter of the twentieth century, which constitutes a lengthy duration prior to independence. This period holds considerable significance in the advancement of socio-cultural life and society. It is pertinent to investigate the organizational and creative evolution of the Kokand Musical Drama Theater during the following phases:

1. The Initial Phase of Organizational and Creative Development (1915-1940);
2. Organizational and Creative Processes During World War II (1941-1945);
3. The Phase of Organizational and Creative Advancement in the Postwar Era (1945-1960);
4. The Period of Expansion in Organizational and Creative Development of Theaters (1961-1990).

Although the ancient Uzbek theater effectively utilized costumes, it did not permit the artistic implementation of elements such as lighting, set design, props, makeup, or wigs. Actors often endeavored to convey these aspects live on stage. Notably, by the late eighteenth century, a dramatic circle led by Ruzigov Nazarmat oglu was established in Kokand, evolving into a formal group in 1915 under the guidance of Hamza Hakimzoda Niyazi and Mirshohid Mirakilov. This group serves as the foundation for the present-day Uzbek State Musical Drama Theater named after Hamza, which commemorated its 95th anniversary.

It is important to emphasize that the trajectory of theater development in Kokand has been extensive, with the Uzbek People's Theater, particularly puppet theater, evolving over the centuries. Additionally, performances by professional and semi-professional traveling theater companies, circuses, and various concert ensembles from Russia, Azerbaijan, Tatarstan, and Armenia sparked significant interest among the intellectuals and youth of Kokand.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudi's play "Padarkush," which premiered in Samarkand in 1913, was staged in Tashkent in January 1914, and later in Kokand in February 1914, inspired a group of enlightened and progressive youth to establish a similar creative troupe in the city. Consequently, a traveling troupe was formed in the fall of 1912.

The inaugural productions of this troupe included the plays "Hungry Letters" and "Old Turkey," which were adapted from Azerbaijani works. Azerbaijani director Ali Askar Mahkamov played a significant role in these productions. By the fall of 1914, these two performances were presented to the public at the Public Assembly building in the new city, featuring young amateur Mirshohid Mirakilov alongside his brothers, including Mirzohid Mirakilov.

The Kokand State Musical Drama Theater is one of the earliest theaters established in the Fergana Valley of the Republic of Uzbekistan. As previously mentioned, it was founded in 1915 by prominent figures in Uzbek National Theater, including poet, playwright, and statesman Hamza Hakimzoda Niyazi, along with People's Artist of Uzbekistan Mirshohid Mirakilov. The theater was recognized as a semi-professional institution in 1918 and achieved professional status in 1925. In 1927, it was designated as a "State Theater" by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

As a state theater, its repertoire was developed in accordance with the relevant directives. Notable productions included "Arshin Mal Alan" (directed by K. Yoqubov, with artistic contributions from P. A. Koval) and "Lolaxon" (directed by Zanjirali Mirzatov, with P. A. Koval as the artist) in 1930. Subsequent performances in 1931 featured "Attack," "Two Communists" (both directed by K. Yakubov, with P. A. Koval), as well as Sabir Abdulla's "Struggle for Cotton" (directed by Zanjirali Mirzatov, with contributions from D. Begmatov), alongside "Comrades" and "Marriage" (directed by K. Yoqubov, with P. A. Koval). In 1932, productions included "Halima" (directed by K. Yakubov), "Who is Right?" (directed by Zanjirali Mirzatov, with P. A. Koval in both performances), and "Inside" (directed by Mirobid Musaev). The following year, "Malikai Turandot" was directed by Kurban Nazarov, with S. Gabidov as the artist.

In 1934, the theater staged "Tor-mor" (directed by N.V. Molchanov, with S. Gabidov), "Victory" (directed by Eryigit, with S. Gabidov), and V. Shkvarkin's "Stranger Child" (directed by N.V. Molchanov, with contributions from Malishevsky), as well as "Farhod and Shirin" (directed by N.V. Molchanov, with E.P. Carlson). By 1935, the repertoire included "Burning" (directed by Muhsin Hamidov, with P. A. Koval), "Skapen's Tricks" (directed by Zanjirali Mirzatov, with Malishevsky), and "Rustam" (directed by N.V. Molchanov, with Malishevsky).

It is important to highlight the dedicated efforts of the Kokand Musical Drama Theater during World War II. Between 1939 and 1941, young and talented individuals such as Murodjon Ahmedov and Mahbuba Mansurova joined the theater's team. In 1940, the theater's creative ensemble presented a play by playwright Sabir Abdulla and composer Tokhtasin Jalilov, based on the Uzbek folk epic "Tohir and Zuhra," directed by K. Nazarov. Key roles in this production were performed by Valijon Hamroyev as Tohir, Sabokhon Karimova as Zuhra, Kurban Nazarov as Khanbobo, and Solijon Ahmedov as Nozim.

Furthermore, during the war, the theater produced performances such as "Kurban Umarov," "Oftobkhon," "Farhod and Shirin," and "Layli and Majnun," as noted by one of the leading playwrights, Kommuna Alimova.

In the post-war years, the creative ensemble of the Kokand Musical Drama Theater continued to present significant works, including "Farhod and Shirin," "Alpomish," "Layli and Majnun," "Golden Lake," "Maysara," and "Nurkhan." Murodjon Ahmedov adeptly portrayed the characters of Farhod, Alpomish, Majnun, Tursunali, Mulladost, and Haydar in these productions, while the roles of Khisrav and Navfal were performed by the talented actor and director Solijon Ahmedov.

The 1970s were notable in theatrical history for their abundance of plays. During this decade, the theater's repertoire expanded to include productions such as "Navoi," "Hotel Lady," "Painful Teeth," "Parvona," "Hamza," "Five-Day Groom," "Nodira," "Caravan Wind," "Horizon," "Two Boys," "Malay," "Karakum Tragedy," "Sepsiz Qiz," "Bakhtim Menin," "Kuyovning Omonati," "Before the Court," "Ali Clown," "Blood-Splattered Willow," and "Bride of Five Sums." The results of the ensemble's prolific creative endeavors garnered recognition from esteemed art critics and theater scholars both domestically and internationally. Consequently, in 1979, in response to widespread demand from theater enthusiasts, the Kokand Theater regained its designation as a "Musical Drama Theater."

In the early 1980s, the theater ensemble comprised over 130 artists. In the spring of 1987, the theater relocated to a magnificent new building with a seating capacity of 750 in the Furkat Park of Culture and Leisure. This momentous event inspired the ensemble to pursue innovative projects and to create ideologically significant works.

Over the years, a number of existing performances were revitalized, including "Friend's Call," "Mother," "Face to Face," "Iron Woman," "Black Belt," "Rifle," "Pearl," "Muqimiy," "Moon Eclipse," "At Night," "Yoriltosh," "Yulchi Yulduz," "Nomus," "Tahir and Zuhra," and "Toshbolta Oshiq," which were restaged by the new generation of artists at the theater. The creative team also began to explore historical works, notably a two-part philosophical play based on Sabir Abdulla's "Alpomish," produced in 1988. Azimjon Azizov's play "Aksado" ("Face to Face") was also successfully staged, achieving third place at the Republican Theater Festival, alongside works such as "Iron Woman" and "Black Belt."

Based on the insights gathered from theatrical sources, cultural institution websites, and archival data reflecting the activities of these entities, we can conclude that the Kokand Musical Drama Theater, during its initial creative formation, functioned as an amateur performance troupe and traveling company. Over nearly a century, it has evolved into a cohesive artistic community, attracting both amateur performers and professional actors. In response to contemporary demands, the theater not only staged works that adhered to the policies and ideologies of the former Soviet Union but also engaged with masterpieces of national, classical, and world drama. This approach has enabled the Uzbek populace to remain connected to global cultural narratives while experiencing exemplary works of international drama. Throughout its history, the creative forces of the theater have successfully studied the theatrical practices of various cultures and mastered the intricacies of artistic expression through numerous tours and cultural exchanges. These outcomes are indicative of the revitalization of theatrical activity in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and the educational foundations established in the years of independence since 1991 have undoubtedly provided significant support for the theater's ongoing cultivation.

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