

THE POSITION OF IRANIAN TRADITIONAL AND RITUAL DRAMA IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE EMPHASIS ON THE RURAL AREAS IN IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Ritual traditional drama has its roots in the beliefs, behavior and the cultural structure of each nation, so the people communicate with these works in the best way, and accept the concepts and effects of these drama forms. Conveying these concepts in this way is easier in the developing countries, especially in the rural areas. This paper studies the ritual and traditional drama as a method in conveying developmental concepts and communications development in the rural communities of the developing countries. In this paper, the two methods in which we can use traditional and ritual dramas are provided.

At first, we address the position of ritual dramas in the rural participation assessment method for collecting rural data and implementation of developmental plans. And after that, we consider the role and characteristics of traditional dramas in conveying developmental concepts and education in the rural areas. we study the Iranian traditional and ritual dramas such as screen reading, narration, Takhtowzi and imitation, puppet show and Taziyeh (passion play) that now has a special position among the rural people.

KEYWORDS: Ritual Traditional Drama, Passion Play, Puppet Show

INTRODUCTION

As a particular communicative style, drama has influenced the lives of humans in a variety of aspects. The experiences had demonstrated that this kind of art has been an appropriate means for establishing cultural interactions and intellectual relationships, the most tangible form for introducing the philosophical and ideological themes and the most important ways for contemplating in human and cosmic issues at different ages. Similarly, this style can be an effective and accurate method for conveying social, political and cultural concepts. Drama is an extensive and universal phenomenon. Today, the human life is surrounded with and dominated by dramatic media through communicative and technologic achievements. Regardless of these coordinated and unified media with the drama communicative principle, we can look for various forms of the dramatic expression in every society. Although these expressive forms may differ from the conventional and accepted form of drama, but the substantive components such as showmanship (representation) and observation are among basic commonalities of all of them. It seems impossible to imagine a society in which there is no form of expressive drama –even in its most basic level- or find a human that has not been exposed to drama phenomenon during their lifetime, and fail to provide a simple and banal definition of drama. Moreover, the theories derived from archaeological findings and historical records shows that the drama is an ancient and old art. The art of drama has a long

history in the ancient civilizations of the and west the east like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Iran, India, China, Japan, Greece and Rome. And is often linked and close to the legendary and mythical origins and Religious rites of that cultural areas.

THE CONCEPTS OF DRAMA AND THEATRE, AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM

On the basis of their insight and perception, experts on the performing arts have provided various and more or less similar definitions for drama and theatre. Most encyclopedias have considered these two words as synonymous and equivalent to each other. However, at first examination of these definitions and paying attention to them, confirms the similarity and resemblance of these two phenomena, but knowing and comprehending mechanism of each artistic creation, reveals the conceptual differences. Drama and theatre, despite the common historical origins and utilization of fixed and specified principles such as recreation and visualization of live, and without intermediary between actor and the spectator, has walked two different paths, which the first one ended in the enduring traditions of the eastern drama and the other in the world of great transformations of the eastern theatre. It seems one of the oldest definitions of drama is presented by Aristotle. In the fourth century BC, he introduced drama in his lasting work named "Poetics" as "imitation of action."¹

Martin Aslian about the definition of drama says: "in Greek, the word drama merely means action. Drama is an imitative action, an action for imitation or representation of human behavior."

The term theatre is also derived from the Greek word "theatron" meaning the place of watching or an opera, and is a place where in real or imaginary events of the past is reconstructed and displayed in the present time and in front of the spectators.²

Erich Bentley has defined the theatre in its simplest way as including A (the actor) in the role of B (character) while C (spectator) is watching it.³In the first impression of reviewing the sample definitions, it is inferred that the words drama and theatre are synonymous and equal to an imitative or reconstructed phenomenon by the actors that are exposed to the spectators. These two are in common in some fixed principle which certainly presents the displayed incidents and occurrences at a single dimension of time and place to the spectators and finally feeling a collective experience. This impression is quite correct and accurate. Because both drama and theatre are presented on the basis of playing a role or performing a set of tasks or duties by the actors with the aim of being seen or inviting the spectators to participate in the process of performing.

But understanding the mechanisms of artistic creation, performing drama and theatre, has clarified the conceptual difference between these two words. In this way we can understand the difference and distinction of cultural reviews and insights of eastern and eastern societies in confrontation and encountering this phenomenon and become familiar with the two mainstreams of evolution and maturation of performing arts in the east (drama) and west (theatre) in the history of its existence.

A comparison between drama and theatre from the view of artistic creation mechanism

Theatre	Drama
Shows the nature of essence of the phenomena	Its aim is to show concrete and empirical reality ⁴

¹Essays on Aristotle's Poetics; By Amélie Rorty

²The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies; By Erika Fischer-Lichte, Germany

³The Essential Theatre, Enhanced; By Oscar Brockett, Robert Ball; page 6

⁴Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 7

Is based on philosophical thought	Is derived from religious thought
Usually implies social and human implications	Is based on mythical, legendary and religious themes
The performing is continuous and permanent	The performing is occasional (seasonal)
Usually is performed in dramatic halls	Can be performed in any place and space
Needs scenery, lightning and technical equipment	Can be performed without decoration and scenery
Is based on defined and distinguished deeds and words	Is based on improvisation
Movements, speech and meaning has an important role in it	Hint, dance and songs has an important role in it
It has complicated stories	It has a simple narrative and fictional line
Is based on pre-written script	Has no pre-existing script
The script has literal values	The script is based on merely performable values
Uses literary specific language and sometimes poetic language.	Uses simplified and slang language
The characters of the theatres have deep psychological and sociological features.	The characters of the drama have no psychological and sociological complications.
Performers are able to play various roles	Performers are skilled in playing specific roles
Relies in innovation	Relies on the bodily and acoustic skills of the performer
The spectators are neutral viewers.	The spectators actively participate in performing
The spectators are usually intellectuals and elitea	The spectators are usually from public class people

Of course it is important to note that conceptual comparison of drama and theatre, on the basis of formal and traditional components of showing has been done. Today the boundaries of drama and theatre have undergone serious changes, so that we cannot draw a decisive line between these two phenomena. For example, with the emergence of new phenomena such as Happening, multimedia showings, modern dances and dramatic circuses in the west during recent decades, plenty of debates about the boundaries of theatre and whether we should call these new emerged forms as theatre or not has been discussed. However, several factors led the theatre in the west, which its roots is in the culture and thinking of the ancient Greek and Rome, to become a dynamic element in which over time and being effected by prevalent beliefs and views in each period, has undergone tremendous transformations. Due to utilizing a transformation oriented culture, theatre in the west was able to become a fluid and flexible phenomenon and never to stop in the fence of freezing thoughts and ideas. Due to its unique nature, theater has always been fed from outside resources and has been able to expand its boundaries on the basis of creativity, innovation and ingenuity of its creators and through liberating itself from the concept of traditional authenticity (a concept that everything must be like this and not otherwise) and to reach a new originality. Also a significant part of the theatre of the west in the ancient times has been preserved in that times, owing to its stability on the philosophical views and its tie with a special kind of literature (dramatic literature) remained secured from the risk of forgetting. While drama in the east was not able to save itself from limitations of the stabilized criteria and the difficult concept of traditional originality, and to pace the path of evolution and maturation. As a result, some forms of eastern drama art, due to adherence to all executive procedures and arrangements and relying on the oral culture in conveying fictional narrations and dramatic teachings, despite the benefit from richness of unique techniques of performing, their artistic values has decreased or forgotten over time. And also as change on the basis of feeling the need and understanding exigencies of the time (understanding the concept of time) did not existed in the believes of the eastern drama artists and creators, and if ever it existed, social and political conditions hardly permitted its occurrence. As a result, drama was failed to adjust and coordinate itself with social demands and interests of people in the later ages, and thus drama lost its place it benefitted in the past. Drama in the ancient civilizations like Iran, Egypt, India, China and Japan had such a story. The ancient civilizations of the East were never able to create drama and did not go further beyond drama. While ancient civilizations like Greek and Rome, rapidly paced the transition stage and formed the artistic independent activity of the

theatre.

Artists and theorists like Brecht in the west, helped dynamics of their dramatic structure by utilization of ritual dramas potentials and exploiting its techniques and structures. The west was able to transfer principles and criteria of theatre's entity and thereby provide backgrounds for maturing and expanding the culture, philosophy and their own believes among other cultures.

Of course expressing these cases does not mean there was no drama in the west or the theatre was not formed in the east, rather it suggests that the dominant and prevailed current in the west leads to the theatre and in the east to the drama. Despite all these, eastern drama enjoyed such characteristics in its lifetime that has made it drastically distinguished and highlighted from other dramatic forms in other domains. Unlike western drama that is concerned about outside and material, drama in the east has amazingly benefited from specific metaphors, techniques, codes and symbols due to its attention to the inside and spirit of the phenomena. Thus, many theorists, thinkers, and artists of the western theatre, with the purpose of emancipating and liberating this art from historical dominance of the literary foundations, and enriching that with pure, rich and dramatic animate images in their fields of theorizing and artistic creations, have benefited a lot from the tradition of western dramas. On the other hand, today some eastern countries like china, India, and Japan have tried hard with realizing the importance of this important part of capital and cultural heritage of them in the field of education and maintaining their national dramatic traditions, and had provided areas for innovative development of their many dramatic forms.

RITUAL AND TRADITIONAL DRAMAS IN IRAN AND THE POTENTIALS OF THESE DRAMAS

In all the eastern countries and particularly in Iran, there are various forms and structures as traditional and ritual drama. All of these dramatic genres have their roots in the religion or public culture of the people. That's why in all parts of these countries, it is difficult to find a person that is not familiar with any of these dramatic forms or at least has not watched it for once. In this article, we address some genres of Iranian ritual and traditional drama which have a special status at the present time among people especially rural populations.

VARIOUS KINDS OF IRANIAN DRAMA UNDER STUDY

Screen Reading (Pardekhani)

It is a kind of Iranian religious drama. In this drama, someone narrates the disasters of religious saints (especially Shiite saints) with a rhythmic language. Screen reading comes from narration and drawings of the folks.⁵ The structure of Screen reading is based on two elements: 1- screen (Parde) and 2- screen reader (Parde Khan).

Screen is a fabric that one or two disastrous events of the family of the Prophet is painted on it. The main subjects of these drawings are the incident of Karbala and the events that occurred before and after it. But gradually some moral instructive stories were added to it. In the coffeehouse screen reading, some tales of Sahnameh are also used.⁶

Narration (Naghali)

Narration is one of the important and original displays in the traditional dramas. This showing is on the basis of

⁵Drama in iran; BahramBeyzayi

⁶Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 43

tradition of storytelling, narrative and is along with the principles and techniques of telling the story and Character building. Narration is performed by the narrator.⁷ The narrator narrates a story or event by a combination of prose and poetry to motivate and entertain the audience. Through dramatic modes, the narrator provides an atmosphere for the audience to easily be able to put oneself in place of the story's characters. Narration, in terms of content is of three kinds: narrating the stories of shahnameh, narrating historical legends and fictions and narrating religious incidents.⁸

Puppet Traditional Shows

In Iran, various kinds of puppet shows in various spots has been and are popular. Of them we can mention Sayehbaazi (meaning shadow play), Punchinello, Haji Mubarak, Puppeteer, King Salim play, Kham baazi and Jijiviji. But now, except puppet show, most of these dramas are faded and has no more any place among people, hence, we will focus only on this form of puppet theatre.

Puppet Show

This dramatic form has three elements: puppeteer, music band and mentor and puppets.

The puppeteer in this drama speaks for the puppets with a snorter or whistle and also handles the puppets. The puppeteer plays the key role of the show.

Music band and the mentor are an integral element of the show. In most cases a elastic instrument like fiddle and to accomplish fiddle we use orchestral drum as a percussion instrument. Most the time the mentor himself is player of orchestral drum. Mentor sits beside the tent and has the role of translator or interpreter of the puppets, because the voice of the puppets is heard through a snorter or wistle, and by this the mentor makes sure all the audience very well hear all the dialogues. Mentor also forms the story by the puppets and aside from translating their words, narrates the story and sings the lyrics and songs of the show.

Puppets in this dramatic form, each has their own unique character. The most important puppet in this show is Mobarak which the story revolves around him, this puppet is the same character of "siahbaazi" show at the "Takhtehhowzi" and imitation ceremonies. Of course this similarity in the appearance, but in the personality constructs have some differences with that character. His face is mere black and has his own specific dances and songs. In most the puppet show stories, Mobarak is in love with another puppet called Taiyareh, and the story revolves around this subject. From the other puppets in the puppet show, we can mention Jaarchi (beadle), Pahlavan (athlete), Parry (fairy) and ...⁹

TakhtehHowzi (Imitation)

Iranian exhilarating shows are commonly known with who terms of Takhtehhowzi and imitation. The title takhtehhowzi refers to the place of performing these shows that was formed by putting a platform on the pond in the yards of the houses.¹⁰ From this kind of show we can refer to feminine imitations, BaghghalBaazi, KachalakBaazi and Siyahbaazi, and because of being played in joyous and wedding ceremonies, they were showings mixed with dance and

⁷Drama in iran; BahramBeyzayi

⁸Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 45, 53, 54

⁹Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 56,57

¹⁰Drama in iran; BahramBeyzayi

music.¹¹

Taziyeh (Passion Play)

The dramatic tradition of Taziyeh (passion play) has an honorable and valuable place in the structure and context of Islamic–Iranian culture. The importance and nobility of this place is explained and defined in relation to interdependence of Tazieh with the intellectual, ideological and religious foundations of Iranian national culture and its flexible and amendable features.¹²

Taziyeh is a sacred behavior and a cultural incident and ethic, particular to Sites of Iran. In the both views of spectators and performers, Taziyeh is not just a show, but rather is an excuse for remembering and commemorating the suffering, thirst, imprisonment and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (pbuh) and his companions; yet the elements such as text (inscription), music, costumes, accessories, scene and have a fully theatrical and dramatic function. The Taziyeh showing is more narrative of the event of Ashura in the year 61A.H, coinciding with the 680 AD, in a region known as the Dessert of Karbala and recounts the hardships and sufferings of The third Shiites Imam, his companions and children. But this showing is performed in all days of the year and there are various meetings regarding the Holy Imams and divine saints in this dramatic form.¹³

On the basis of the role they play, role players of Taziyeh can be divided into four categories:

Saint players, the perverse, the middle people and animals¹⁴

Saint players or oppressed players appear in the role of prophets, imams and their followers. This group sing their poems with good songs in Iranian Music archives and all their dialogues are rhythmic.¹⁵

The perverse character players are those who play the role of enemies and opponents of the imam and the prophet and Ahlul Bayt (the family of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)). These people do not sing, and read their poems and sometime their prose with yelling and violence.¹⁶

Middle persons have secondary roles such as Jinns, angels, messengers and These people, depending on the kind of their character, sing or read in a rude or coarse manner.

In Taziyeh, where needed animals are used Animals such as: camel, horse and...and where the animal is supposed to have dialogue to human, the role reader of animal is used and goes on the stage.¹⁷

It also has a group for directing and organizing, this group is divided into three parts:

Organizers of Tazyeh, director of mourners, supervisors and observers¹⁸

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¹¹Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 58

¹²Drama in iran; BahramBeyzayi

¹³¹³Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 59,61,63

¹⁴Dram in iran; BahramBeyzayi

¹⁵Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 75,76

¹⁶Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 77,78

¹⁷Drama In Iran ; ShahabPazoki ; page 80

¹⁸Dram in Iran; BahramBeyzayi

As mentioned above, the ritual dramas enjoy public acceptance and a high communicability in the rural areas and this characteristic is one of the most important and prominent characteristics that makes this drama an effective tool for conveying developmental concepts or political and cultural awareness. At first we consider the methods in which we can use these dramas as an effective tool:

Participation Rural Appraisal (PRA)

PRA is a method for collecting field data from rural areas and also application of developmental plans in these areas with participation of rural people. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act. PRA has sources in activist participatory research, agro ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, and rapid rural appraisal (RRA). In RRA information is more elicited and extracted by outsiders; in PRA it is more shared and owned by local people. Participatory methods include mapping and modeling, transect walks, matrix scoring, seasonal calendars, trend and change analysis, well-being and wealth ranking and grouping, and analytical diagramming.¹⁹ In this method we want the rural people to present us their information through communicating and companion with them. On the other hand, we maximize people's participation in the developmental programs and use their information and support.

PRA has various techniques and methods which are generally divided into three parts:²⁰

Icebreaking

That is we do something to break the ice of communication between the informer and us. Using a variety of games that is particularly for these situations greatly help us and lower down the contraction degree of the people's body that are sitting beside us. This technique is mostly used to establish an effective communication between the informer and the researcher and is the most important and sensitive part of this method.

Trust Building

At first, along with fully introducing ourselves and the purpose of coming to this village, we should try to create mutual trust.

Empowerment

To help people provide us with the information of their village themselves and also obtain new information during the work. Here we should do something to heighten the self-confidence of the villagers and to believe this fact that they are able to help us. For example, the job we did ourselves was to gather woman of the village and guide them in drawing the map of the village by themselves. In this map, at first the residents regarded the mosque as the starting point and specified the location of their houses in relation with it. Through this method, we could have access to the map of the village and also, when the work was done, and after seeing the result that was a perfect map drawn by themselves, woman became sohappy and self-confident.

¹⁹[World Development; Volume 22, Issue 7](#), July 1994, Pages 953; The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal; [Robert Chambers](#);

²⁰International Social Work July 1999vol. 42 no. 3 277-294; Planning, communities and empowerment
An introduction to participatory rural appraisal; Arnon A. Bar-On & Gerard Prinsen

This technique, more than being a technique for collecting data and implementing the developmental plans, is a tool for empowerment of the people.

The first stage of this process is very essential and important. If we can communicate with people in this stage and enter the village environment; rest of the stages will be done easier and faster. This article regards the ritual and religious dramas like Taziyeh, narration and screen reading as the best strategy for this stage. As mentioned above, those who are the performers of Taziyeh in this respect people create a deep and emotional relationship with them. In the rural areas, in each region, people have their own showing group of Taziyeh. In these groups, those who are the saint performers of Imams have an honorable place among people. However Taziyeh is performed in most regions only in ten days in Moharam each year, but people especially respect the performers of the role of the saints all the year. In the highest level, the one who performs the role of Imam Hussein (called Hussein performer), the Shiites' third Imam, must be morally respected and justified apart from technical characteristics like mastery of sing-song and musical archive. Thus, performer of the role of Imam Hussein or each one of his companions, are particularly respected among people immediately after the play is over, and many people easily trust him.

Thus, if the research or developmental group, before starting the research, collecting data, or explaining and implementation of developmental plans, be able to organize a Taziyeh ceremony, they can reach to the two of their most original goals.

Gathering All Classes of People at the Gathering Place

The ritual and religious dramas has no age and gender limitation for their audiences, and on the contrary, all people try to attend this ceremony like a religious duty. One of the major problems of communicating with rural people and their gathering is failing to maximize attendance of people in the gathering place. In most cases, women do not attend these meetings and men prefer any decision must be made through them. But each one of religious dramas' forms such as screen reading, narration, and Taziyeh is a mourning gathering, and as a religious ceremony, all the people try to take the lead for attending. Creating an intimate and emotional with people after the show as mentioned above, after the show, people accept you among themselves and you have passed both the stages of ice-breaking and building trust. People particularly respect you and try to assist you in all the matters. Thus, achieving all of the research goals or the plan would be facilitated.

TRANSFERRING THE CONCEPTS AND TRAININGS, WITH THE HELP OF TRADITIONAL DRAMAS

Showings such as "Ruhowzi" and puppet show in most rural areas are held in the joyous and wedding ceremonies. The concepts of these showings are mostly ironical and near to satire, but by maintaining the structure, this capability exists in the drama to change as easy as concepts and stories. This incident has occurred repeatedly in the theatre of Iran, and the most prominent of this issue is biennial festival of traditional ritual drama. The old story has been replaced by social and political stories of the day that are also attractive and believable for the audience. With the developmental concerns and social, political and cultural awareness, these new stories are extremely important from two perspectives

Familiarities of Rural Areas with the Dramatic Forms and Accepting Them

In the rural areas, when your communicative form is known, people will accept them easier, because in most of these areas people have guard against modern issues and new forms of communication. As a result, this communicative form can easily influence twice as much any new communication form. On the other hand in these dramatic styles, this

capacity exists that we specifically choose our own audience. Drama can be only for men, it can be specific to the woman with changing in the form and performers. We can use puppet show for the children, this showing is commonly performed for all the social classes. dramatic traditions .ormsopment of many dramatic f.eir many dramatic forms . limitations of infrastructural facilities in these areas: considering these infrastructural facilities, limitations of such utilities as electricity, telephone and in these areas, these showings can be the best and the most effective form of education or communicating.

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