



THE ROLE OF THEATER CLUBS AND SOCIETIES IN THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE OF THE RUSSIAN POPULATION OF THE TURKESTAN TERRITORY

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ABSTRACT

Based on archival sources and materials of scientific literature, the article shows the positive influence of the Russian theater on the development of culture and spirituality in the Turkestan region. Besides, in the research has shown the functioning of the Sunday School of the "Pushkin Society", the dramatic society "Volna", an amateur theater in Turkestan.

KEY WORDS: *Russian theater, amateur circles, repertoire, amateur soldiers, local Russian intelligentsia, Russian actress, performance, Samarkand street, Pushkin society, Sunday schools, "Volna" society.*

INTRODUCTION

Amateur circles, organizations, drama and theatrical societies of cultural and educational direction began to emerge in the 80-90s in Kizil-Arvat, Merv, Askhabad, Kokand, Tashkent and other cities. In the city of Verny, the "Society of Zealots of Enlightenment" (1899) appeared, in Samarkand - the "Circle of Folk Readings". But the most significant organization of this type was the "Pushkin Society" for organizing public readings and promoting public education in the Turkestan region [1]. The charter of the Society granted him the right to organize libraries, reading rooms, schools, courses, publish printed works, open branches in all cities and towns, and carry out book trade [2].

METHODS

The activities of the "Pushkin Society" took place under the supervision of the colonial authorities, sometimes even providing assistance to the society. This interest can be explained by the fact that the tsarist administration was frightened by the growing revolutionary movement in Russia. In order to counteract its spread to the outskirts, it was decided to direct the "minds of subjects in the desired

direction", using the experience of the central regions of the empire, where legal workers' organizations were created.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The "Pushkin Society", formed in 1901, began to function on January 15, 1902. Its activities were expressed in the organization of public reading departments, Sunday schools and book warehouses. The archive has preserved the program of public readings from February 17 to March 31, 1902. Acquaintance with the text of this program gives an idea of the public readings and their topics. For example, on February 17, public readings were held at the Tashkent railway station and in the audience of the Agricultural Society based on the works of N.A. Nekrasov "Frost, Red Nose" and Stanyukovich "Maximka"; On February 24, readings were held based on the works of M. Yu. Lermontov "The Song about the Merchant Kalashnikov" and A. Tolstoy "Sadko" [3]. The contingent of lecturers and organizers of the readings was selected very carefully and approved by the Governor General. The authorities were afraid of "the transfer of popular readings into the hands of unintentional people and



the conversion of readings into an instrument of anti-government propaganda.” According to the rules developed by the colonial administration, only persons of the Christian faith could be the chairman and deputy chairman of the “Pushkin Society” [4]. Information about the activities of the “Pushkin Society” was preserved in the Central State Administration of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the newspaper “Turkestan”. For example, the report of the society for 4 years of its activity from 1902 to 1905 has been preserved [5]. The Sunday schools of the “Pushkin Society” began to function in 1902. The number of students in them ranged from 50 to 80 people in men’s schools, from 30 to 40 people in women’s schools. Sunday school students were workers, small employees and their children. Persons approved by the governor-general or the director of public schools, after checking the “political and moral reliability” of those wishing to study in these schools, were allowed to take classes in Sunday schools [6]. Things were much better with the book warehouses of the Pushkin Society and the book trade. At the disposal of the society there were 2 warehouses and a book kiosk at the Resurrection market in Tashkent, serving on a large scale “spiritual needs for a book.” There were book warehouses of the society in Chernyaevo, Kokand, Samarkand, Andizhan, Bukhara, Perovsk, Chardzhui, Aulie-Ata and Petro-Aleksandrovsk. The newspaper “Russian Turkestan” reported that on September 7, 1905, on Sobornaya Street near the ZAKHO store, the head of the society’s book warehouse, Golbert, was selling leaflets from the Donskoy Rech edition devoted to topical issues of Russian public life [7]. So, the educational activities of the “Pushkin Society” in 1905 were carried out with the aim of conveying to the people the true meaning of the events taking place at that time. On the pages of the Russian Turkestan newspaper, members of the Pushkin Society declared: “It is high time to archive the short-sighted theory of superior and inferior races, according to which some nations are destined by Providence to dominate, while other inferior races are destined for gradual disappearance from the arena of public life. We have no doubt that the 6 million population of the Turkestan region will play a significant role in the economic life of Russia and other countries” [8]. But in order for it to play this role, it had to be helped in its political and cultural growth.

Such statements completely contradicted the goals and hopes of the colonial administration, which, with the help of the legal “Pushkin Society”, sought to distract the working people from the struggle for their rights. Tsarist repressions against members of society - A. Boreisha, V. Korniyushin, A.

Khudash, A. Golbert, G. Mikhin, L. Kistiyakovskiy and others - led at the end of 1907 to almost complete inactivity. However, the popularity of society among the Russian working population was quite large. The success was ensured by the fact that in his cultural and educational work a prominent place was given to the theater. In 1909, during the preparation of the program for the 100th anniversary of N.V. Gogol, the Council of the “Pushkin Society” attracted the dramatic society “Volna” to hold the anniversary celebrations. They jointly prepared the performances “Inspector” and “Marriage”. Both performances were held in April 1909 with great success and then were repeated several times. On January 17, 1910, a unified program of work was developed and the repertoire of the People’s Theater was determined, in the creation of which, along with others, members of the Pushkin Society, together with Volna, participated. It should be noted that in addition to establishing a strictly classical repertoire, members of the society have done a great job of attracting a wider audience. On the eve of each performance, its organizers sought to notify “the railway workshops and ask the military units to allow the lower ranks to attend the performance” [9]. Thanks to the efforts of the organizers, during the days of the performances, the large hall of the theater was overflowing with students, workers, soldiers, who watched with eager attention such performances as “Thunderstorm”, “Poverty is not a vice”, “Guilty without guilt” and other immortal creations of A.N. Ostrovskiy performed by the best amateur actors - P. M. Voronin, R. L. Kalashnikova, E. M. Likhovich, L. F. Dobrynina, S. P. Yudin and others.

At the public readings, members of the “Pushkin Society” paid special attention to the promotion of the works of the writer A. M. Gorky. Since 1899, the local democratic press regularly reprinted individual notes and reports about Gorky from the central newspapers. The newspapers “Russian Turkestan”, “Samarkand”, “Askhabad”, “Trans-Caspian Review” constantly wrote about the productions of “Meshchan” and “At the Bottom” in the theaters of the country and abroad, reported on the responses of the capital’s press to these performances, emphasized the literary and artistic meaning of Gorky’s works. Separate excerpts from Gorky’s works, his articles on certain issues appeared in local newspapers. The most active members of the Pushkin Society were B. Lanovsky, A. Urenius, Yu. O. Yakubovskiy, A. Vasiliev, A. P. Kurashov, G. M. Chubenko, T. E. Pasechnik and his wife E. A. Pasechnik [10]. Theatrical art was closely connected with the cultural and educational work of the progressive people of Russian society. Many public meetings and cultural and educational societies had



their own amateur theaters. The beginning of the Russian theater was laid by amateur circles and societies that began to emerge shortly after the arrival of Russians in Turkestan in Tashkent, Samarkand, Andizhan, Namangan and other cities of the region. In the very first issue of the *Turkestanskiye Vedomosti* newspaper published in 1870, it is mentioned that not only a “library” has been created at the Tashkent club, where all the best newspapers and magazines are received, but also “family evenings, performances are arranged ...” [11]. The first performances were amateur. They were staged by members of meetings for a limited circle of relatives and were frankly entertaining. As a rule, it was a one-act comedy, vaudeville or farce. There could be no question of staging works of critical content, both because of the creative weakness of the amateurs themselves, and because of various restrictive laws that prevented the military or civil collection of critical drama from entering the stage. It should be borne in mind that in each charter of a military or civil assembly there was a special note, according to which all plays chosen by amateurs for staging had to have censorship permission not only from the Main Directorate for Press Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, but also from the local chancellery. Performances, as stated, for example, in the note of the Charter of the Samarkand Public Assembly, approved on October 15, 1890, can only be staged on its stage “with the permission of the local police authorities.” Moreover, each performance must be attended by a representative of the police, for which the board allocates an “appropriate seat” [12]. Those who violated the charter were threatened with severe punishment. The Code of Civil Laws of the Russian Empire gave the governors the right to “close by their own power the meetings of various private societies, clubs and artels, in the event that anything contrary to state order and public safety and morality is found in them” [13].

The organizers and participants of the first amateur performances were well acquainted with the code of laws and the rules established by the local administration. Therefore, serious plays were staged outside the walls of meetings and clubs - in private homes. This is exactly what the amateurs of theatrical art, topographers of the Turkestan military topographic department, did in 1872, staging N.V. Gogol’s comedy “Marriage”. Having rented the house of the merchant Pervushin for one evening, they played the play, as one of the eyewitnesses of this event notes, “quite diligently, although some were not accustomed to the stage and lacked self-confidence.” The performances of the officers of the 10th line battalion of the Tashkent garrison were also

of a purely private nature, when they staged separate scenes. The amateur theater in Turkestan found its development in the activities of public organizations of a different type - various musical and dramatic circles and societies that exist on funds received from the sale of tickets. The initiators of performances for the people in Turkestan were the soldiers of military units stationed at that time in various cities of the region. For the first time, such a performance took place in Tashkent on February 26, 1872. It was staged by the lower ranks of the Turkestan sapper company in their barracks [15]. Beginning in 1876, “every winter season” performances were organized by the soldiers of the 18th Turkestan line battalion in Kokand [16]. Several performances were staged in 1880 by the soldiers of the military team of the city of Aulie-Ata [17]. Also, several performances a year for a number of years were shown by soldiers of the 4th Turkestan Line Battalion in Osh and the 16th Turkestan Battalion in Andizhan. Soldier’s performances in New Margilan were a common occurrence [18]. Folk performances organized since 1885 by soldiers of the 5th Orenburg Cossack Regiment and the 3rd Turkestan Rifle Battalion in Tashkent became especially widely known. Performances were shown in the open air in front of the barracks, free of charge for everyone. The soldiers of the rifle battalion built a special theater to show their performances. Here, as an eyewitness wrote, “for a relatively insignificant fee, soldiers, ordinary people and a merry little play and acrobats will watch, and they will laugh at clowns, and they will see live pictures” [19]. The great success of the soldiers’ performances among the people soon aroused the anxiety of the authorities, even more than the activity of amateur circles and societies. But, if the authorities had to somehow reckon with amateurs, among whom were people with position, and limited themselves to half measures, then the reprisals against the soldiers were harsh and decisive. Their productions were controlled by the officers, who took the initiative into their own hands and declared that they would use the theater, primarily for the purpose of “educating in the lower ranks the qualities necessary for future defenders of the fatherland” [20].

Control over the activities of folk theaters emerging in Turkestan was carried out in accordance with the government order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 1888, it demanded that all information “on existing and newly opened folk theaters” be reported to the Main Directorate for Press and that constant police supervision be established behind them. By the same order, special censorship was established over the repertoire of the folk theater. People’s theaters could stage only those plays that are provided with a



“special approval signature” of the Main Directorate for Press Affairs. “Copies of plays that are not provided with the seal and stamp of the Main Directorate should by no means be allowed by police officials to be performed on stages, both permanent and temporary folk theaters.” The governor-general even signed an order, on the basis of which all district chiefs appointed special persons from the military and civilian departments “to control the performances.” In Kokand, for example, this was charged to the tax inspectors Nelovetsky and Kurochkin, as well as to Captain Muravyov, who “was the representative-manager of the Military Assembly Committee of the 18th Turkestan Line Battalion, by virtue of this very circumstance, was already forced to enter into relations with the organizers performances”. In Osh, the control over the performances was carried out by the titular adviser Kruglov, in Namangan - lieutenant Karetnikov, etc. As a result of such measures, the names of Russian classics almost completely ceased to appear in the repertoire of soldiers' theaters. A stream of cheap vaudevilles and farces poured onto the folk stage, comic scenes by home-grown authors “from European life and ... from Turkestan camp life”, plays like “Found a scythe on a stone”, which was staged by Lieutenant Levkovich in the 2nd Turkestan Rifle Battalion in the “spirit leavened patriotism”, with “inappropriate praise of the service of soldiers.” The establishment of draconian laws in relation to folk theaters naturally led to a sharp reduction in their number in the region, and soon to widespread closure. Already in 1896, one of the progressive-minded reviewers had reason to say with regret: “We have no folk theater for the common people, no tea rooms, no folk readings, nothing at all, except drinking establishments” [21].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Russian theater in Turkestan, given the fact that its work developed in one of the colonial outskirts of Russia, constantly defended realistic and democratic traditions. The Russian theater undoubtedly contributed to the acquaintance of the local population of the region with Russian, European theatrical culture and served as one of the foundations for the emergence of national theatrical art. For the first time in the region, amateur theaters were created, professional theater troupes acquainting local viewers with the works of Russian and foreign classics, with the best novelties of progressive drama of that time.

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