

ARMENIAN THEATER ACTIVITY IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE 1930s

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Abstract

The article analyzes the activity and creativity of the Armenian theater in Uzbekistan and its contribution to the development of national theatrical art using examples based on archival materials.

Keywords: theater, art, Armenian, fraternal, drama, plan, staged, theatrical groups, director, national, production, script.

Theatrical art has been developing in a unique way in Uzbekistan since ancient times. It is widely acknowledged by many experts that modern theater as we know it today entered Turkestan in the 1870s. Initially, Russian theater was introduced following the Russian conquest of Central Asia, followed by Tatar, Azerbaijani and Armenian theaters. However, all these theatrical troupes were organized for the Russians and other relocated ethnicities. The truth is that most of the local population didn't understand plays in Russian or Armenian. Nevertheless, these theatrical endeavors had a positive impact on the creativity of Turkestan artists. The activity of the Armenian theater was closely related to the Azerbaijani theater, as Azerbaijani writers and theatrical groups presented their works on stage.

Furthermore, under the guise of promoting and preserving the culture of minority nationalities, special attention was paid to spreading international Soviet culture. In the Uzbek SSR, a number of theaters of minority nationalities were operating, a notable example being the Armenian State Drama Theater in Uzbekistan.

According to information from 1934, the Armenian State Drama Theater was located at 67 K. Marx Street in Tashkent, with a seating capacity of 288 in the auditorium and a staff of 18 people. This shows that the theater was equipped to

serve not only people of Armenian origin but also local people and representatives of other nationalities.

In 1934, Uzbek theaters presented performances not only in Russian and Uzbek, but also in other languages of the Union republics. This was monitored by the government. The distribution of theaters by language of performance was as follows: 11 performances were planned in Uzbek, 1 in Kazakh, 2 in Russian, and 1 in Armenian. No performances were planned in Tajik or Jewish. Interestingly, even the number of spectators expected to attend was pre-planned. For example, it was anticipated that 4,874 spectators would attend Uzbek performances, 300 Kazakh performances, 770 Russian performances, and 230 Armenian performances. This demonstrates that the Armenian theater planned to stage performances in neighboring languages. These efforts are commendable, but the quality of the performances and linguistic challenges faced by the actors had a negative impact on the overall experience, as there were many shortcomings in pronunciation.

According to information about the Armenian Theater in 1934, 90 performances were planned, but only 24 were actually staged. Likewise, 90 performances were planned for tours, but only 71 were actually held. For instance, during 1934, there were 16 performances in Samarkand Oblast, 7 in Kokand, 9 in Andijan, 22 in Ashgabat, 10 in Merv, 3 in Chardara, and 4 in Samarkand City. This example shows that tours were conducted not only within Uzbekistan, but also in neighboring republics. During these tours, the repertoire of the Armenian Drama Theater named after O. Abeylan in Tashkent in 1934 included works such as Shirvanzade's "Nomus", Jabbarli's "Sevil", Prokofyeva's "Obod", Vagarshyan's "Halqada", Schiller's "Betrayal and Love", Sukhovo-Kabillitsa's "Krechinsky's Wedding", Shakespeare's "Othello", Shirvanzade's "Nomus tufayli", "Yovuz ruh", Dumas's "Qarindosh", and Nar-Dos's "O'ldirilgan kabutarlar" and were staged and shown to audiences throughout the year.

As evident from these examples, the increasing workload led to an increase in the number of theater actors and staff. As of January 1, 1935, the team of the Tashkent Armenian Drama Theater grew from 18 to 23 people, with only one person, the accountant, being of Russian nationality. As this example shows, the theater's national composition primarily consisted of Armenians. This situation continued until the 1950s.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Soviet government, through theatrical performances in republics such as Uzbekistan, widely spread Soviet ideology and gradually implemented its Russification policy. National theaters in Uzbekistan were somewhat neglected in the second half of the 20th century. Through this policy, attempts were made to create a so-called “international culture,” which was essentially Soviet culture.