



## THE ROLE OF THEATRE ART IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL LIFE IN SURKHANDARYA REGION IN THE 20TH CENTURY

**Bozorov Umid Sayfiddinovich**

*Master's student at the University  
of Exact and Social Sciences,*


**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu ilmiy ishda XX-asrda Surxondaryo viloyatining madaniy hayoti rivojida teatr san'atining ahamiyati va o'rni o'rganiladi. Teatr san'ati nafaqat madaniyat sohasining muhim qismi sifatida, balki jamiyat hayotidagi ijtimoiy, siyosiy va ma'naviy o'zgarishlarni aks ettiruvchi vosita sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Ishda Surxondaryo viloyatidagi teatrlarning tarixi, ularning shakllanishi va rivojlanish jarayonlari, shuningdek, turli davrlardagi ijtimoiy-siyosiy muhit teatr faoliyatiga ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, mahalliy teatr jamoalarining ijodiy faoliyati, repertuar tanlovi, milliy va xalqaro madaniyat bilan aloqalari hamda teatr san'ati orqali xalq hayotining turli jabhalaridagi o'zgarishlar yoritiladi.*

**Kalit so'zlari:** *Surxondaryo viloyati, madaniy hayot, teatr san'ati, repertuar, madaniy an'analar, ijtimoiy-siyosiy ta'sir, teatr va ommaviylik, qadriyat, urf-odat.*

The rapid development of society and the world's continuous advancement toward new peaks of progress have further increased the socio-political importance and responsibilities of every field. In particular, it is difficult to measure the contribution of cultural sectors-which possess immense potential in promoting diverse ideas and perspectives globally, and in uniting large audiences regardless of age or gender-within the fixed frameworks of today's life.

Studying the cultural life of the Surkhandarya region helps to identify the local impact of these changes. Originating in the first half of the 20th century as a socio-cultural phenomenon, the Surkhandarya Regional Musical Drama and Comedy Theatre has a long and rich history, promoting social, political, and cultural realities through artistic expression.

Thanks to independence, the region's forgotten values, customs, various traditions, and arts have been revived and regained their significance. During the Soviet era, this majestic oasis was often dismissed with scorn-"What kind of culture or signs of progress could there possibly be in such a remote area?" However, the ancient, unique, and historical past and culture of this region have now found their true recognition and have begun to be re-explored.



During the Soviet era, despite being established in an isolated city, our theatre continued to present works of art even in the years when repression and persecution were at their peak, thanks to the talents that emerged from among our people. As in all spheres across our republic, the decision made at the Second Congress of the Uzbek government in November 1925 laid the foundation for organizing clubs, teahouses, and public socio-political and cultural-educational institutions in the city of Termez as well as in the districts and villages of the region.


From that day on, in addition to the establishment of numerous cultural institutions such as libraries and clubs throughout Surkhandarya, steps were taken toward founding the first regional theatre in the history of the region.

Due to the fact that Termez was a border city, not all residents of the region had free access to it; at certain times, ordinary citizens could only enter the city with special documentation. As a result, not all of the region's working population had the opportunity to attend the theatre performances.

In 1933, the first regional kolkhoz-sovkhoz theatre was established in the Jarkurgan district, adjacent to the city of Termez. This theatre, organized for the general public, initially gathered theatre enthusiasts and art lovers from among the local population. The theatre's first repertoire mainly consisted of short stage performances, songs, and dances. Notably, Qori aka Madaminov, a local resident, played a significant role in the establishment of the Jarkurgan theatre. As the theatre's first director, he traveled across all districts of the region in search of talented amateurs with a passion for the performing arts. These performers initially entertained the public with songs and dances.

The repertoire of the folk theatre, which was based on humorous poems and songs, gradually expanded to include short scenes from plays such as "Halima" by G. Zafariy and "Tor-mor" by K. Yashin. In September 1935, the government of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution to establish the "Surkhandarya District Theatre." The Jarkurgan kolkhoz and sovkhoz theatre, with its two years of activity, laid the foundation for this district-level theatre. The Surkhandarya District Theatre, formed with the involvement of professional actors and directors, opened its curtain on November 5, 1935, with the performance of "G'alibiyat" ("Victory") by Afandikhon Ismoilov. The play was directed by Afandikhon Ismoilov himself, who had previously gained experience at the Youth Theatre named after Y. Akhunbabaev.

The performance of "G'alibiyat" served as the initial step in uniting the theatre troupe. The company gained wider fame among the public with the play "Halima", and subsequently staged works such as "Rustam" (1936) by U. Ismoilov, "Marriage" (1936) by Gogol, and "The Rich Man and the Servant" by Hamza.



In March 1941, this region was officially declared the "Surkhandarya Oblast." From that day onward, the theatre began operating under the name "Surkhandarya Regional Musical Drama Theatre." During those difficult and challenging years for our people, Uzbek theatres not only offered spiritual support to audiences but also sought to guide them toward hope and enlightenment. "In those years, the people's unwavering belief in victory and their aspirations were reflected in art and literature with tremendous force."

This period was not easy for the Surkhandarya theatre troupe either. Many of the leading artists-Nishon Khodimetov, Obid Rikhsiyev, Obid Ibrohimov, Qayum Tulaganov, Muhammad Shermuhammadov, Nurmat Azizov, Khurshid Odilov, and Sobir G'aniyev-were sent to the front lines.


The dedication of young actors who had graduated from the Tashkent Theatre Technical School in 1939, along with the experienced actors who had been working at the theatre prior, helped preserve the theatre's status and continued operation. Artists who remained on the home front—such as Zokhid Olimov, Oliya Olimova, Hasan Mukhiddinov, Khadicha Bobokhonova, Tillokhon Latipova, Abdurakhmon Tolipov, Manzura Hamidova, Omina Fayyozova, and Kifoyat Muslimova—used theatrical performances to uplift the fighting spirit of the people and to strengthen their hope in victory.

During the war years, the theatre troupe also gained experience and achieved notable success in creating distinguished examples of Uzbek dramaturgy. In particular, the staging of works portraying individuals who fought for the homeland and national interest-such as Hamza's "Maysara's Deed", "Tahir and Zuhra" by S. Abdulla and T. Jalilov, and K. Yashin's "Nurkhon" and "Oftobkhon"-demonstrated the theatre's growing achievements in producing musical performances.

In the post-war years, due to the difficult conditions within the theatre, actors began to leave the troupe one after another. This was mainly due to the relentless workload and the poor living and working conditions faced by the actors. The theatre's operations were essentially "on wheels," with the creative team traveling hundreds of kilometers within a single day and night. They barely had time to rest or check on their families before preparing for another journey, all while getting ready for the next performance or concert.

These harsh conditions placed many actors in a difficult situation, eventually forcing them to leave the theatre. As a result, many plays were removed from the theatre's repertoire, which led to a gradual decline in audience numbers. Over time, increasing expenses and mounting financial difficulties forced the Surkhandarya Regional Musical Drama Theatre to suspend its activities for an indefinite period.





The theatre troupe endured extremely tough circumstances during World War II. Throughout the war, the troupe embarked on creative tours across the republic, regularly presenting theatrical performances and concert programs to people on the home front and in labor battalions. The departure of many actors to the front lines further worsened the situation within the troupe.

In 1957, the Surkhandarya Regional Musical Drama Theatre was re-established in the regional capital, the city of Termez. Commenting on this event, the newspaper “Culture of Uzbekistan” wrote: “The approved staff of the new theatre will allow it to stage plays currently being performed in republican and regional theatres. At present, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan is selecting creative personnel for the theatre. The theatre will begin presenting its performances starting from the first of August this year.”


The theatre went through extremely difficult times again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Harsh living conditions and a lack of sufficient creative opportunities led to frequent turnover among directors and actors. Each visiting director sought not only to introduce new works into the repertoire but also to impose their own vision and direction on the creative team. This situation had a severely negative impact on the theatre’s creative atmosphere and unity.

Most regrettably, in 1972, director R. Orifjonov, who had come to understand both the organizational and artistic potential of the theatre and had been staging productions accordingly, left the theatre along with several actors. Concerned about this instability, the theatre’s director, Z. Olimov, realized the urgent need for a dedicated and hardworking director. That same year, he sent M. Ravshanov—who had already staged several productions and gained public recognition—to a two-year directing course in Moscow.

In 1965, the theatre troupe was given a summer venue located in a park in the city center. However, this building could only be used during the warmer months. In colder seasons, the creative team conducted rehearsals behind the drawn stage curtain, or occasionally in the private office of the director. Producing theatrical performances under such conditions posed significant challenges for both directors and actors.

Once again, the theatre turned to the Officers’ House (military cultural center) for support. Using its own funds, the theatre rented the building for ten to fifteen days at a time. After presenting and reviewing their performances there, the troupe would be forced to go on tour to different locations.

While staging these works presented many challenges for the theatre troupe, it also served as a significant creative school and a guarantee of success. Over the



years, the Surkhandarya theatre developed its expressive tools and gained experience in mastering modern theatrical impact on audiences, progressively defining its ideological and aesthetic program.

As a result, the repertoire increasingly included works reflecting the evolving role and value of individuals in a changing world, as well as their struggles for personal interests.

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