

**THE HARMONY OF THE ART OF UZBEKISTAN TRADITIONAL PUPPET  
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**Annotation:** This article is about the history, performance style, and professional characteristics of the Uzbek traditional puppet theater.

**Keywords:** puppeteer, image, puppet, screen, stage, actor, theater, clown, performance, art

Puppet theater is not an art form that appeared yesterday or today. Its history goes back several thousand years. It has witnessed great realities on its complex path of development. Each past era has left its mark on its development. This is natural, any type of theater is a product of this era. Whatever ideology, whatever idea an era promotes, it is reflected in art, and whatever it condemns, it encourages to abandon. However, at all times, puppet theater has not lost its folk spirit, miraculous power and educational significance. It has always sought to embody large-scale realities, universal, philosophical ideas.

Puppet theater actors have always tried to preserve their art, to protect it from people who do not understand it, and to convey it to generations with all its charm. At a time when clowns, actors, and performers of the performing arts were expelled, exiled, and mercilessly punished, puppeteers escaped this difficult fate. In the eyes of religious leaders, the “Risaali Lu’bat,” which calls for goodness, spiritual purity, and obedience, becomes the talisman of life for performers, a “license” that gives them the right to act independently, in modern parlance.

“The scholars issue a fatwa that states that a puppet show can be seen once, explaining this as follows: “The puppet comes out of this hole, makes one move, and enters another hole. A person is born from a mother, comes into the world, makes one move, and finally enters the grave. Therefore, this play can be seen once, but not twice. Because this is a play created by Satan, and whoever sees it twice loses his faith.””<sup>1</sup>.

However, over time, the requirements in it were not followed, and religious leaders, officials, and heads of state were subjected to sharp satire and criticism. In addition, it was not always easy to obey the requirements and strict laws established in traditional theater, which was based on oral dramaturgy. Therefore, puppet theater actors promoted the principles of optimism, love of life and enjoyment rather than the passivity, renunciation, and Sufism emphasized in the treatise.

Above, we have discussed the role of a traditional theater actor in the performance, and we have tried to determine the specifics of his performance as much as possible. At the beginning of this chapter, we found it appropriate to dwell separately on the creative path, spiritual world, and emotional experiences of puppet theater performers. After all, this is a truly exemplary, rich school with a rich history and can serve as an example for today's actors.

<sup>1</sup> Кадыров М. Узбекский традиционный театр кукол. – Т.: 1979. С.67.

Giving life to a puppet is an art. However, this was not accepted positively in all eras. However, the puppet theater, which boldly continued its path, was able to combine elements of philosophical and religious teachings in its field.

As is known, in the “Treatise on the Puppet”, there is a wonderful legend about the emergence of the puppet theater. It describes this type of art as a “devil's play”. They do not believe that an ordinary person can create a miracle performed by it with his own hands. As if this power can only be achieved with the help of magic. However, the leading scholars of their time have a different interpretation of this strange phenomenon.

In this regard, the thoughts of the famous historian and scholar Huseyn Voiz Kashifi about the puppet theater game are valuable for us. “I was present at a tableau (in the sense of a play – M.Q.) and saw a person sitting with a tent over his head and two figures (puppets) pointing at him. Sometimes he would answer in one figure language with a man's voice, and sometimes he would answer in another figure language with a girl's thin and delicate voice. Without changing his posture, he would say his words in such a way that one could hear the questions and answers (of the two figures) spoken in different voices (easily)... All this was the speech and actions (words and movements) of the person inside the tent, which I was fascinated by. If anyone,” he continued, “thought carefully, he would know that these are several motionless and powerless, tongueless and handless (puppets), which are as if they are eloquent and mobile by the actions of the puppeteer (puppeteer).”<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Kashifiy often watched puppet theater performances. Judging by his words, it can be understood that the puppet theater actor and his achievements in the harmony of movement and speech were quite noticeable. Depending on the character, gender and appearance of the puppet, a separate voice tone was found, and this was conveyed to the viewer in a clear, understandable and artistic manner. Moreover, the fact that he amazed an advanced, intelligent person of his time like Kashifiy, means that the performance of puppet art in the Middle Ages was truly at a high level.

Both before and after Kashifiy, there were many books written about the traditional form of puppet theater, its acting and performances. The works of Al-Farabi, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Omar Khayyam, Nizami, Shamsi Tabrizi, Alisher Navoi, Pakhlawan Mahmud clearly describe this art form, making metaphorical and philosophical analogies.

It follows that the art of puppet theater also functioned as a popular, folk and artistically high genre of the performing arts in those times. It is also noteworthy that when it comes to the traditional puppet theater of this period, we witness that most researchers interpret its creative function in a philosophical and mystical direction. That is, the whole world, all creatures in it, people are puppets controlled before the puppeteer - the creator. This refers to the form of puppet art, its general performance. More precisely, the technique of puppetry, the method of control are mentioned.

Such views are found not only in the East, but also in the works of European philosophers in the most ancient times. For example, the great scholar Aristotle said: “Man is a puppet set in motion by the gods (Olympus).” According to the Greek historian Xenophon, at the Athenian feast of Kalias, Socrates wanted to see another type of performance instead of a puppet show. This historical event, says the famous actor, “detracts from the honor of our profession, but proves that puppet theaters were also popular in those times.

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<sup>2</sup> Қодиров М., Қодирова С. Қўғирчоқ театри тарихи. – Т.: Талқин, 2006. 90-б.

Another incident proves that puppet theater was also popular in ancient Rome. In those days, Julius Caesar was forced to forbid puppeteers from using the genre of speech. Perhaps they used words that would have offended Caesar”<sup>3</sup>.

The primacy of the democratic spirit was relevant not only for the Western, but also for the Eastern traditional puppet theater. In the Uzbek traditional puppet theater, the puppeteer also fulfilled the task of reprimanding some of the wrongdoers, investigating their inappropriate actions, and punishing them with the help of puppets when necessary. It is no secret that he, in turn, called for order in society in matters of upbringing and morality. Puppeteers, in addition to being unrivaled performers, were also engaged in propaganda activities. Puppeteers played an important role in the spiritual, moral and spiritual outlook of the people. If the spiritual significance is manifested in enriching people's inner world and teaching them to think, the moral principle is manifested in exposing the vices of society, showing them to oneself and eliminating them through the example of puppets, and the spiritual aspect is manifested in cleansing the human heart from dust, nourishing the inner spirit, being a balm for the people's pain in difficult times, and being together in their good and bad days.

The good days of the people are their celebrations, weddings, performances, and holidays. On the other hand, on the bad days, they are manifested in suffering from some kind of worry or illness. According to sources, some childless families would invite puppeteers to their homes with their children. The house, filled with children's laughter, would brighten the hearts of the owners of the house and help them forget their troubles, at least for a moment. After the performance ended, the puppeteers would pray for the owners of the house and express their good intentions. If the puppeteers' prayers were answered and a child was born in this family, they would find the puppeteer from anywhere, shower him with gifts and greetings.

Rarely do representatives of this field deserve such respect and attention among the people. First of all, only God knows whose prayers will be answered. However, ordinary people sincerely believed in the honest work of puppeteers, their pure hearts, and their joy-giving puppets, and knew very well whose intentions could be granted.

Of course, puppet actors were not shown such respect and honor in all eras. The masters of this field overcame difficulties with humility, willpower, and patience. It is like the art of clowning. You share joy, but you do not show your sadness to anyone, especially not to the audience.

The lessons of demandingness in the matter of the audience were taught from teacher to student. It was especially taught that in any situation the theater team should serve the people equally in good and bad times.

The puppeteer approached his work with great responsibility and strong faith. He believed in the sacred, divine power of his profession. Therefore, he did not betray his profession even in any difficult situation.

The puppeteers, like traveling actors, traveled from house to house, from village to village, from state to state. Some creative journeys lasted for years. According to M.F. Gavrilov, these journeys lasted for many years. One of such journeys lasted 28 years (1898-1926) in the work of the puppeteer Yuldosh Tursunbaev. Usually, serious preparations were

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<sup>3</sup> Икромов Х. “Кўғирчоқ театрининг илк қадамлари”. “Давр ва театр”. – Т.: Ўз.М.Э., 2009. 8-бет.

made for such long journeys. The screen was renewed, the puppets were restored, and the musical instruments were returned.

A knowledgeable person in his field, who had certain achievements, experience and skills in his field, could speak several languages, and was respected and respected, went on trips. During such trips, the puppeteer closely studied the life, lifestyle, traditions and customs of other countries. This gave an impetus to further enrich his worldview and thinking, and to keep abreast of events in the world. In addition, it played an important role in strengthening mutual cooperation and friendly relations between nations.

This is what N.Kh. Nurjanov, a researcher of Tajik traditional folk theater, writes about this. "There was sincere friendship and mutual respect between Uzbek and Tajik artists, and representatives of each country would invite them to their country during trips. Sometimes Uzbek and Tajik artists would go out together and celebrate New Year, weddings and holidays together"<sup>4</sup>.

Just as Uzbek puppeteers could speak Tajik fluently, Tajik actors also performed in Uzbek. According to researcher M. Kadyrov, there were Tajik neighborhoods next to Uzbek neighborhoods. As a result, the language, customs, and lifestyle of both nations became intertwined.

Uzbek puppeteers were versatile actors and were also unrivaled in their musical skills. According to the puppeteers' manual, each puppeteer had to be proficient in playing the doira, nagora, karnai, and surnai. In particular, the surnai played a key role in the puppet show. The puppeteer was required to master playing the surnai to perfection. For this reason, many puppeteers received the title of "mehtar," that is, "a skilled surnai player."

In addition, many puppeteers were familiar with such art forms as trickery and imitation. According to M.F. Gavrilov, the famous puppeteer Egamberdi Karimbayev of his time was a close associate and student of the puppet actor Tursunboy. Tursunboy often exchanged roles with Egamberdi, and both of them were able to demonstrate their skills both in trickery and in puppetry. One of such puppeteers was the famous master puppeteer Tursunboy Abduzhabborov (1838-1898), originally from Margilan, who settled in Tashkent. In addition to puppetry, he was also well-versed in the art of trickery. His puppet show and the show of puppeteers like Egamberdi Karimbayev played together, forming a single whole.

As for the art of mockery, most of our critics, even European scholars, have proved that the roots of the art of puppet theater go back to mockery, that is, the art of simile. According to ancient religious views, a memorial ceremony for the deceased was held, and in it, a conditional executor wearing a special mask imitated the words and actions of the deceased, performed dialogues and actions that commemorated him. This created a kind of small show with dialogues, like a performance of a two-person piece.

Over time, the ceremony of embodying the image of the deceased moved away from its function and meaning. It only retained its shape. Masks fell into the hands of talented clowns, and the ceremony turned into a small spectacle.

Masks are the main tool of clowns in creating an image, and they were widespread in Central Asia before the Arab invasion. Later, during the Soviet period, clowns' masked performances became popular. Clowns K. Muminov, K. Bobozhov, and Y. Kurbanniyazov widely used masked performances in their performances.

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<sup>4</sup> Кадыров М. Узбекский традиционный театр кукол. – Т.: 1979. С.96.

The art of puppetry is also a unique form of imitation art. In both, the performers try to bring to life the image of some creature or human being. One is through a mask, the other through a puppet. Therefore, in some features, the art of clowning is close to the art of puppetry. The critic M. Kadyrov lists the similarities of both types of art. These are convention, irony, humor, contradiction, eccentricity, and spectacle.

This is why we said above that puppeteers were also well aware of the art of imitation. The similarities of both types of art, the unity of their historical roots and their harmony with each other are also reflected in the performances of these artists.

The image of a puppet occupies a leading place in the performances of many clowns. In traditional theater, puppets were embodied as the main characters in the performances of clowns such as “Shingulmurod”, “Yogoch Polvon”, “Podachi”, “Chopon”, “Chopon Bola”, “Mayramkhan”, “Qimorbazlik”. In such performances, the clown, along with playing his role, also brought the puppet to life. In this case, the conflict was built between a living person and a puppet, they communicated with each other, argued, quarreled, quarreled and finally came to a compromise. For example, the criticism of “Indamashon” by the famous comedian Aka Bukhor Zokirov is a performance of this nature.

From the above, it can be concluded that puppetry is a broad art form that has developed as an independent art form. At the same time, it has been able to fully demonstrate its charm through other art forms. The skills of the performers of the Uzbek traditional puppet theater were not limited to the tent (screen). They expanded their capabilities by performing live as entertainers, tricksters, and comedians. They did not limit themselves to playing with special puppets, but tried to combine all types of art in their performance. This indicates that the puppeteers seriously began to develop their performing skills, work tirelessly on themselves, and fearlessly strive for innovation in the development of the industry.

Before the emergence of a professional theater, the performers of the traditional puppet theater won the hearts of the audience with their unwavering enthusiasm and served as a great school for the formation and independent standing of professional puppet theater actors.

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