

THE EVOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL THEATRE
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN THEATRE IN IRAN

by

Iraj Emami

Thesis Submitted to the Faculty
of Arts,

for

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh

September 1987



To

Husayn Ali Zadeh, Muhammad Reza Lutfi
and Muhammad Reza Shajarian.

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to describe and analyse the evolution of traditional theatre in Iran and its development towards occidental and modern theatre, up to the Revolution of 1979.

The introductory chapter consists of a brief historical background to the Persian theatre and a discussion of its roots.

Chapter II examines the origin of popular theatrical forms in Iran and its development from such popular narrative forms such as story-telling, poetic recitation, oratorical contest, public amusements and puppet theatre.

Chapter III concerns Taziya, the passion play of Iran, the most famous and influential form of theatre in the nineteenth century. Taziya's origin, form, music and all related forms of traditional drama have been examined in this chapter.

Chapter IV focuses on the evolution of Taqlid and its developed form, Takht-i-Hawzi, the popular Iranian comedy.

Chapter V looks at the development of theatre in Iran during the Qajar era when both comic and tragic theatre, or Takht-i Hawzi and Taziya grew in two opposite directions and the first direct steps towards the evolution of a written text for the performance of occidental theatre were taken.

Chapter VI is a survey of the formation of modern theatre in Iran and the role of education in its development. Also the impact of western culture on this evolution is examined.

Chapter VII focuses on the pre-revolutionary Iranian theatre under the later period of the rule of M.R. Shah and its censorship. This chapter looks at the cultural conditions and forms of protest against government pressure.

As an appendix to the Thesis there is a translation of the contemporary Iranian play "A Dog in the Harvest Place" by N. Navidi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF PLATES.....	(i)
TRANSLITERATION.....	(ii)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	(iii)
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.....	1
CHAPTER II POPULAR TRADITION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON IRANIAN THEATRE.....	17
Naqqālī.....	18
Shāhnāma Khwānī.....	28
Zūrkhāna.....	31
Sukhan-varī.....	31
Mārika-gīrī.....	34
Shamāyil Gardānī.....	35
Shahr-i-Farang.....	38
Khayma-shab-bāzī.....	40
CHAPTER III A BRIEF SURVEY OF TĀZIYA (PERSIAN TRADITIONAL DRAMA) Traditional and Western Influence of Drama on the Qajār Period.....	47
Naqqālī and its relation with Shabih-Khwānī...	54
Mawlūdī, The Bride of the Quraīsh(or The Bride of Bilqis).....	56
Muharram Commemorations.....	57

Rawza-Khwānī.....	58
Nawheh-Khwānī.....	58
Traditional Music in Iran and its Relation with Iranian Traditional Theatre.....	60
Persian Traditional Music.....	64
Persian Traditional Instruments.....	65
A Glance at the technical aspects of Iranian Traditional Music.....	65
How music is put to use in Ta'ziya.....	71

CHAPTER IV	THE EVOLUTION OF <u>TAQLID</u> AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRANIAN TRADITIONAL THEATRE (Takht-i-Hawzī or Rū Hawzī,).....	77
	The movement of <u>Taqlīd</u> towards Iranian Comedy Theatre.....	83
	Improvisation.....	90
	Scenery.....	98
	Lighting.....	99
	Music.....	100
	Women's theatre or 'theatrical games'.....	103

CHAPTER V	THE QAJAR PERIOD A NEW BEGINNING.....	113
	The New School. Discussion of Ākhūnd Zādeh and Mirzā Āghā Tabrīzī.....	127
	Āzarbāijānī Writers.....	134

CHAPTER VI	THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN THEATRICAL	
	THEORY FROM 1905.....	137
	The role of Education in the development of	
	theatre in Iran.....	137
	Sāzmān-i Parvarish-i Afkār.....	140
	Nūshin's Drama Class.....	145
	Anāhītā Open Faculty of Acting.....	146
	The Faculty of Dramatic Arts.....	147
	The Faculty of Theatre.....	148
	Faculty of Fine Arts.....	148
	University Theatre.....	148
	The Impact of the Western School on	
	Iranian theatre.....	150
	Governmental theatre.....	155
	The first step towards a national theatre..	158
	Governmental Groups.....	168
CHAPTER VII	THEATRE UNDER THE CENSORSHIP.....	170
	The impact of the Theatre of the	
	Absurd on Iranian Theatre.....	188
	Festival of Popular Tradition.....	194
	Festival of Tūs, 1975-1978.....	194
	The impact of Theatrical Activities	
	of the Marxist-Socialist School	
	on the Development of Iranian Theatre.....	195
	Contemporary Iranian Playwrights.....	204
	Bahrām Bayzāī.....	205
	Akbar Rādī.....	206

Bīzhan Mufīd.....	206
Nusrat Allāh Navīdī.....	207
Gurūh-i-Hunar-i Milli (the National Arts Group).....	208
The Ja'fari Group.....	220
Tiātr-i Ānāhītā (the Ānāhītā Theatre).....	221
Anjuman-i-tiātr-i Iran (the Iranian Theatre Association).....	229
CONCLUSION.....	231
APPENDIX.....	235
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	272

LIST OF PLATES

1. Sādiq Alī Shāh, The Famous Iranian Naqqāl.
2. A Painting, Parda, (Shamāyīl).
3. Shahr-i-Farang.
4. An Actor Acting in Tāziya.
5. A Group of Tāziya Actors.
6. A Group of Musicians Playing in Tāziya.
7. Jāfar Vālī and Fakhrī Khūrvash, in Amīr Arsalān, A Rū-Hawzī Play.
8. Kamāncha, Tār and Tunbak, Instruments used in Rū-Hawzī.
9. A View of Takīyya-yi Dawlat, (Tehran).

TRANSLITERATION

The system used for transliterating
Persian is that used by the Department of
Arabic at Edinburgh University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A deep appreciation is expressed to my Supervisor Dr. G.R. Sabri-Tabrizi who inspired and helped me during my years of education at Edinburgh University. I have a particular gratitude for Dr. M. MacDonald for his careful reading through of the various drafts of this thesis and his generous advice and guidance. I thank Miss Crawford, the Department Secretary, who gave considerable assistance. I express a special appreciation to my parents and my brothers, whose help was of inestimable value. I would like to thank Miss Christine Barnard for reproofing the manuscript. I thank very much Mrs Valerie Haemsirirat who very carefully typed this thesis.

Last but not least I would like to thank Mr Khalīl Dilmagānī and Mr Abbās Javānmard for their assistance in providing me with some documents about Iranian contemporary theatre.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

Iranian history has undergone many changes, both socially and politically affecting both the lives of its people and their outlooks. Art, and in particular the performance arts, which have, by their very nature been a reflection of social consciousness, has as a result been vulnerable to the ravages of time and social change in Iran. In a study of Persian drama it is therefore necessary to assess its development within the context of social structure changes which Iran has undergone. The principal performance art, drama, has been greatly influenced by a wide range of events in Persian history, and in order to appreciate it one must have comprehensive knowledge of Persian history and its role in the evolution of Persian theatre and the development of modern drama in Iran.

Although there are not enough facts and documents available to prove the existence of the theatre form as we know it from Ancient Greece to Ancient Iran, we know that the Aryan people had their own customs and fascinating rituals which were employed in certain festivals as well as in their entertainments. These ritual forms and festivals evolved into various theatrical forms and dramatic performances. A survey of theatrical forms and the dramatic arts in the Ancient World requires research into different religions and ritual customs, and this will give us certain ideas about the roots of this form in Iran. Around 540 B.C., Wishtaspa, a minor king of Khorasan (or Sistan) welcomed Zoroaster to his court.[1] Zoroaster was a sage who preached that the Mazdaist religion should adopt a more

[1] Jean Varenne, Zarathustre, Cit. Jean Hureau, Iran Today. Iran National Tourist Organisation, 1972. P. 86.

spiritual approach. The King became a convert, and Mazdaism spread gradually to the whole of Iran. An important and almost immediate development was the adhesion of the Magi to this almost doctrinal religion. The Magi were believed to be an Aryan tribe that had settled in the North-West of Iran, and were eventually to be identified with Mazdaism.

May be at the beginning they were not exclusively devoted to the rite, but they soon became so, spent all their time propagating the Mazdaist faith and were then regarded as the privileged priests of the rites established by Zoroaster, to such an extent that one century later, the Greeks described them as "The chiefs of the Magi" and that the work "magic" was considered outside Iran as representing the Zoroastrian religion until the anti-mazdaist polemic made it a synonym of sorcery.[1]

The people of Persia were composed of a number of nomadic tribes who were devotees of the Zoroastrian religion. The Zoroastrian Fire Temples (Ātash Kada), constructed by them were centred around large fires kept permanently burning to symbolise the sub-limit of holy essence. These fire temples were settings for regular prayer in praise and glorification of the magnaminous holy essence across the whole of Persia. These ceremonies were accompanied by musicians and dancers, whose performances were looked upon as a major part of the piety of the ceremony to honour the holy light.

The splendid burning candles and the radiant lanterns inside their tents not only illuminated and highlighted bright adornments but also created shadows. Dancers' figures were cast upon the curtains and veils inside the tent. This sort of activity suggests the beginning and indeed the foundation of shadow theatre which was to flourish later.

[1] Ibid. P. 86.

This provides no more than an assumption of the existence of shadow theatre, but it based upon strong historical facts that cannot be overlooked. However, if we assume that the origin of the theatre, or of any theatrical form, comes from people's religions and beliefs, it is necessary to prove the existence of ritual forms and ritual festivals related to the Zoroastrian religion.

Some part of these ritual dances gradually changed to secular entertainments in later periods. But this was gradually abandoned by the Persian religious authorities in the fourth century. [1]

Although these ritual dances were abandoned by the Persian religious authorities in the fourth century A.D., we can clearly see Islam as having its own kind of ritual dances, ceremonies and avant-garde theatre called Ta'ziya. The Ta'ziya of Iran is ritual theatre and derives its form and its content from deep-rooted religious traditions, even though it is Islamic in appearance. Although Iran was to undergo many changes in its history, its cultural heritage and drama always found means of expression.

The changing government could not affect the importance of rituals in Persian history, and the transformaiton of actual events into annual festivals and sources of entertainemnt. There are certian facts and historical references which confirm the existence of play houses, travelling entertainers, jugglers, dramatic dancers, etc. in the pre-Islamic period. Herodotus (485-425 B.C.), the Greek

[1] Raq̄s Dar Īrān, Majalla-yi Namāyish, No.2, Fine Arts Publication, T335/1956. P.10. cit. Mehrangiz Hatami Farahnakianpoor, A Survey of Dramatic Activity in Iran from 1850 to 1950, dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1977.

historian, briefly mentioned to the Magophonia, the annual Persian festival. The Magophonia was a celebration of the death of Mogh Smerdis, said to be an usurper of the Persian Emperor.

The Persians observe this day with one accord, and keep it more strictly than any other in the year. It is then that they hold the great festival which they call the Magophonia. No Magus may show himself abroad during the whole time that the feast lasts, but all must remain at home the entire day.[1]

In October 522 B.C., a magus who had usurped the Iranian throne was killed by Darius of the Achaemenian dynasty, thus beginning a general massacre of the magi. [2] This story became the play of the annual performance of mourning and lamentation for Prince Badria by the Persians. This annual commemoration entailed many theatrical forms and is in origin dramatic, although it was regarded not as a theatre, but as a memorial observation.

There are many other indications of the flourishing existence of Ritual Art in pre-Islamic Iran. Benjamin in his book Persia and the Persians suggests that the Magophonia festival was a base for the appearance and creation of Ta'ziya.

I venture to suggest that possibly the Persians may have borrowed the idea of such annual commemoration from a practice which seems to have obtained ages before of celebrating the slaughter of Smerdis the Magian by King Darius, the annual celebration being called by the Greeks the Magophonia. What form of celebrating this event was in vogue among the shiahs before the safavean period, we can only imagine from what occurred with more pomp and pageantry during that dynasty.[3]

[1] Herodotus, History of Herodotus by G. Rawlinson, third edition Vol.II, London 1975, P.P.475,476.

[2] Farrokh Gaffary, Evolution of Rituals and theatre in Iran, Iranian Studies, Autumn 1984, P.361.

[3] S.G.W. Benjamin, Persia and the Persians, London, 1887, P.376.

With the invasion of Persopolis by Alexander a great deal of Persian culture and traditon was also destroyed. Alexander, always thought of as a great soldier and warrior, deprived us of crucial information about Iranian culture. What he did leave us in the field of drama and literature are summed up by Husayn Nūrbakhsh's insight into Alexander's real reason for patronising the arts:

Alexander was the first person who stayed up all night to listen to the story tellers. He had a group of actors who made him happy and joyful by telling him stories. The purpose of this was not that he wanted to enjoy himself; the main reason was that he wanted to be surrounded by them and thus be guarded from any danger. He was followed by other kings in this manner.[1]

Crude story-telling therefore developed into the refinement of the theatre, having firstly begun as a means to aid the often precarious longevity of Kings.

The following quotation indicates a certain kind of annual ceremony commemorating the tragic death of Siyavush, the innocent young character of the famous Shāhnāma (Book of the Kings) by the great Persian poet Firdawsi. The dramatical death of Sīyāvūsh, who was killed because of jealousy by order of his enemy, Afrāsyāb, became a lasting legend, immortalized by Firdawsi. His head was cut off by Afrāsyāb's brother, Garsīyūz, and placed in a golden basin. This story dates back to about three thousand years ago. A mourning ritual with songs called Kīn-i Sīyāvush (revenge of Sīyāvūsh) used to take place in Bokhara, and at least up to 1974 a ritual known as Sīyāvūshūn existed in the southern province of Fars in Iran. [2]

[1] Husayn Nūrbakhsh, Dalgakhā-yi darbāri, Sanāi publishers, Tehran. 1335/1956, P.23.

[2] Jābir 'Anāsurī, Janbahā-yi Namāyishī-i-barkhī az marāsim-i-āīni dar Irān. Faṣṭnamā-yi Tiātr Vol.4, Tehran, 1357/1978. P.34. Also, Simin Dānishvar, Sūvshūn, Intishārāt-i-Khwārazmī, Tehran, 1353/1974.

In the year 211 A.D. the people of Fars rose in a revolt headed by a presumed descendant of the Achaemenian dynasty. During the ensuing Sassanid dynasty (224-651 A.D.), another major religion appeared, founded by the prophet Mazdak, which was known as Mazdakism.

Mazdakism was immediately followed by the populace and accepted. In the Mazdakian theology, music was the essential root of man's four reasons: Intelligence, Mind, Memory and Happiness. In their opinion dancing was the representation of the power of these four great reasons. Therefore, the art of music developed and reached its peak at this time. Thus, singers and composers were highly regarded by the people.[1]

In his book Iran, R. Ghirshman discusses the hierarchy of the Sassanian court. The courtiers were grouped in three classes, according to their birth and office. Members of the Royal Family and the knights of the royal retinue had the highest standing. There were also jesters, jugglers, clowns and musicians. The last played an important part in the court life and were likewise divided into three grades according to their skill in performing upon their instruments. Ghirshman does not discuss the existence of such jesters, jugglers and clowns among the people and the society as a whole, as opposed to the royal court, but even so, one has to conclude that these artists belonged to the society, and must have performed for the public as well as for the courtiers.

Other sources tell us of the existence of musicians, clowns, dancers and puppeteers in the Sassanid era. Thus we learn that one of the Sassanian Kings, Bahrām Gūr (421-438 A.D.) allowed several thousand

[1] Dr. Mehdi Barkeshly, "Mūsīqī Dar Irān, Irān-Shahr, Vol.1, P837. Cited in the Survey of Dramatic Activity in Irān from 1850 to 1950. Ph.D by Mehrangiz Hatami Farahnakianpoor. 1977, Brigham Young University. 1977, P.14.

Indian gypsies into Persia.

The poet Nizāmī Ganjavī tells us in his Haft Paykar of the Muṭrib (musician) pāy-kūb (dancer) and Lu'bat-Bāz (puppeteer), and how, in the time of Bahrām Gūr, 6,000 talented and skilful artists, musicians, dancers and puppeteers, were brought together from every city and town to entertain the people and to make them happy and joyful.[1]

From 651 to 820 A.D. Iran was under the power of Arab rulers. In the political field the victory was complete; in the cultural it was but shortlived, for the old culture of Persia was not to be destroyed in a day, especially when the Arabs had little of their own to offer in return, and what was an immediate political victory for the Arabs was to become, in the course of little more than a century, a cultural triumph for Persia. Persian art, Persian thought, Persian culture, all survived to flourish anew in the service of Islam, and impelled by a new and powerful driving force, their effect was felt in a widely extended field from the early eighth century onwards. The first dynasty of Islam, however, the Omayyad had its capital in Syria and drew from the inheritance of Byzantium rather than from that of Persia, and it was only when the capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad with the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty in 750 that Persian cultural ascendancy was re-established.[2]

With the passage of time, Persian art and Persian culture, independent of festivals by the Arab invaders, which were regarded as paganistic, survived and grew in variety.

One of those independent dramatic arts, and a component of festivals, which became more dramatic by the addition of gestures and action, was storytelling. By changing the subject of narration, story telling managed to survive and even grew in its more theatrical form. Story telling, by using religious stories,

[1] Nizāmī, Haft Paykar, Ibn Sīnā, 1334/1955. P.106.

[2] D. Talbot Rice, Persia and Byzantium, the Legacy of Persia, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968, P.41.

continued to develop and became more dramatic and popular.

Nevertheless many traditional and historical customs were affected by the Arab conquest of Iran. Iran's second era, however, developed less from the influence of the Islamic religion than from other influences.

Mard-Āvīz, of the al-Ziyār dynasty in the tenth century A.D. reinstated many of the festivities of the Sassanian era including the fire-game, which is still being practised on the last Tuesday evening (Chahār-Shanbā-yi Soory) of each year.
[1]

The Safavid era is a landmark in the history of Iranian theatre as the improvisatory theatre and passion play take shape in parallel. Folk plays and sacred drama developed in different social environments, for example the farce plays, which developed first as a one-man show in the courts, coffee houses and private parties. This kind of show may have included storytelling, a puppet show (Khayma-Shab-Bāzī) dancing, court-jesters, pahlavānī, sukhan-vari, ma'rika-gīrī and Shamāyīl-gardānī^[2]. Gradually some of these types of plays were presented as comic plays.[2] The Persian comedy like other dramatic forms began to develop, its form being completely different to that of the passion-play (ta'ziya). The Safavid period also confined poetry and literature to religious subject-matter, and that gave more weight to the content of ta'ziya and other dramatic arts related to religion, such as sukhan-vari, naqqālī (storytelling) and rawza-khwānī. It must be noted that the basic foundation of Persian passion plays took place during the Daylamite or Buyid dynasty.

[1] Habīb Allāh Shāmlūī, Tārīkh-i Īrān az Mād tā Pahlavī, Tehran, Šafī 'Alīshāh Publishers. 1343, 1964, P.335.

[2] For a discussion of these forms see below page 31.

It was in 1501 that Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi wrote his Rawzat al-Shuhadā (Garden of the Martyrs). This became a source for the Muslim priest or Mulla to recite, and such reciters came to be known as Rawza Khwāns, while the meetings that take place in the mosque are called Rawza Khwānī, lamentations on the calamities of the prophet's family. This poem and the way in which it was recited helped to preserve Iranian traditional music.

It was the region of Shah Ismail Safavi, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, that the Sh'ia sect was accepted as the official Persian religion. The Sh'ia believe that 'Alī, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, should have assumed the succession to the Prophet. They rejected the caliphs and felt that only 'Alī's descendants - the "imams", literally "those who pray" intermediaries between man and God could claim status as caliphs and that the umayyds and their successors were usurpers.

From the early sixteenth century the Iranians have celebrated the feast of 'Umar Kushān or Umar Sūzān; the killing of 'Umar or the burning of 'Umar. Religious people would burn a huge effigy stuffed with wood, straw, cloth and cotton representing Umar, while singing and dancing and insulting Umar and his followers.

At the present day Persians invoke the aid of Ali more frequently than that of the Prophet. They celebrate the death of Omar with rejoicings and bonfires in which he is burnt in effigy like another Guy Fawkes; and it is looked upon as a deadly insult if one man calls another Yazid or Shimr.[1]

In the mid-18th century the performance of passion plays (Tāziya-khwānī) in commemoration of the martyrdoms of the Imam 'Alī

[1] Ella C. Sykes, Persia and its People, Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 1910, P, 149.

and Ḥusayn first became customary. Ta'ziya developed and flourished under the patronage of the Qajar Kings, particularly Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh; the greatest of arenas, Takiyya-yi Dawlat, was constructed by the same king and Ta'ziya reached its highest peak and was well received and actively supported by the public.

At the time of the Safavis the Persian folk theatre also began to develop and took shape in parallel with Ta'ziya and other dramatic forms. Sir John Chardin gives us informaton in the Travels about how this development was taking place, giving us a clear picture of the existance of rope-dancing, puppet-show and jugglers. We can thus see how these comic and folk arts were mixed with other games and how the development was taking shape.

...they have of those who dance upon the ropes, puppet shows, and doings Feats of Activity as adroit and nimble as in any country whatever. They dance upon the rope barefoot. They draw a cord from the top of a Tower thirth or forty Toises high, quite down, and pretty stiff; they go up it and afterwards come down, which they don't do by crawling down upon the belly, as they do elsewhere but they come down backwards, holding by their toes, which they fasten in the rope, which of consequence cannot be very big. One cannot well see it without having a dread upon one especially when the rope-dancer to show his strength and Activity carries a child upon his shoulders, one leg on one side, and the other on the other, that holds by the forehead. They don't dance upon strait rope, as the rope-dancers in Europe do; but they make Leaps and Turns.[1]

Chardin's description also gives us information to which we shall refer in later chapters, under the general heading of Ma'rika-gīrī:

At the eight Course, the Tent was served with thirty Basons of Massiff Gold, full of good meat, to regale the Foot-men; and at three in the afternoon, the King appeared at the windows of the Pavilions, which were upon the palace, before the Great Gate, then began all the diversions which had been prepared for that purpose, each before him, without any regard to the spectators; the beasts to fight, the men and women dancers to dance, each company apart; the rope-dancers to fly about, the jugglers to play their tricks, the wrestlers to engage. This confusion of excercises and sports, where one did not know which to fix one eyes upon,

[1] Sir John Chardin, Travels in Persia, The London Argonaut Press, London, 1927, P.P. 201-202.

was the most whimsical sight in the world; but every one almost was intent upon the fighting of the wild beasts, which is one of the most ravishing sights among the Persians; among the rest, that of the lion or panther, with the Bulls; and upon the fight of the Buffler, the Rams, Wolfs, and the Cocks.[1]

In a third description Chardin tells us about puppet shows (Khaymah-Shab-bāzī) and about the appearance of another type of entertainment which was comic, and was performed by one man. This type of dramatic form catered to the popular theatre of Iran, rū-hawzī and takht-i hawzī, and reached its peak in the Qajar era. The entertainer who performed this type of secular and comic event was called maskhara or dalqak.

The Puppet shows and jugglers ask no money at the door as they do in our country, for they play openly in the public places, and those give'em that will. They intermingle Farce, and juggling, with a thousand Stories and Buffooneries, which they do sometimes masked and sometimes unmasked, and this lasts two or three Hours: And when they have done, they go round to the spectators and ask something; and when they perceive any one to be stealing off before they ask him anything, the Master of the Company cries out with a loud Voice, and in an Emphatical manner, that he who steals away, is an Enemy to Ali. As who should say among us, and Enemy of God and his Saints. For two crowns the jugglers will come to their House. They call these sort of Diversions Mascare.[2]

Iranian Kings always had clowns and buffoons (dalqak or maskhara). Kal 'Ināyat ('Ināyat the bald) was one of the most popular clowns in the court of Shah 'Abbās (1588-1629),[3]. These clowns were the most talented actors of their time performing on certain occasions in the Shah's court. These performances were mainly one-man shows with various themes derived from everyday life.

[1] John Chardin, Travels in Persia, Op. Cit. P.P. 201-202.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Husayn Nūrbakhsh, Dalqakhā-yī Mashhūr-i Darbāri. Op. Cit. P. 66.

Other forms of comedy, Kachal-bāzī, (The Play of the bald), Rūband-bāzī (The Play of Mask) and Baqqāl-bāzī (The Play of the Grocer) were also popular and performed at court. Gradually these one-man shows developed and came to be performed to the general public in tea-houses and on occasions of marriage, birth and circumcision[1]. Later as these comedies evolved the pool in the centre of court yards was covered by wooden platforms, beds and by carpets and thus the term ru-hawzi (over the pool) or takht-i-Hawzī (wooden beds over the pool) became the names for the Persian Comedy, the improvisatory traditional theatre of Iran.

About 1917 theatres of popular comedy opened in Tehran and survived a precarious period of closings and openings due to prudish elements. Their stage was at first square, surrounded by the audience, then three-sided with a large painted canvas of a garden scene hanging as a backdrop. Famous animators of the '20's were Akbar Sarshar, Ahmad Mo'ayed, Babraz Soltani, and two formidable siyahs: Zabi-holla Maheri and Mehdi Mesri. The players joked with the audience, and musicians accompanied them for time to time [2].

These comedies were entirely played by men and women's roles were acted by young men wearing exaggerated make-up. Men acting as women became customary and even until recently men took part in rū-hawzī plays instead of women. Women had their own traditional theatre and these performances took place at private parties in the women's quarters. Comedies such as Khāla Rowraw and Havū Havū were performed entirely by female casts. These acts had no tent and were improvised without any practice.

[1] Bahrām Bayzāī, Namāyish Dar Īrān, Tehran, Kāviān. 1344/1965. P.P.167-170.

[2] Farrokh Gaffary, Op. Cit. P. 373.

To avoid the critical aspect of Rū-ḥawzī plays these comedies were restricted by Reza Shah's consorship and from 1930 the censorship demanded texts for all plays before they were performed in public. These regulations and restrictions worked against the spirit of improvisation and the traditional strong political and social criticism. Comedy drama as we know it in the west began in Iran with translations of plays by Mīrzā Fath 'Alī Ākhundzāda who is credited as the first playwright in the western style in Asia[1]. He wrote six comedies in Azari Turkish, which were later translated by Mīrzā Muḥammad-i-Qarachadāghī into Persian. His collection of plays, Tamsīlāt, was published in Azari in Tiflis in 1859 and was translated into Persian and published in Iran in 1874[2].

Mīrzā Āghā Tabrizī was the first Iranian playwright who wrote farce in the new style in which he followed Ākhundzāda. He worked as a Secretary at the French legation in Iran. He was influenced by Ākhundzāda and read the latter's plays in Turkish; Ākhundzāda requested him to translate his plays into Persian, but he refused, writing to him in a letter dated June 1871 that he preferred to write his own dramas in Persian. He wrote six amusing satirical comedies in Persian whose style is similar to that of Ākhundzāda[3].

-
- [1] A.R. Navabpur, A Study of Recent Persian Prose Fiction with Special Reference to the Social Background, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Durham, June 1981. P. 88.
- [2] Yahyā Āryanpūr, Az Sabā Tā Nīmā, Tehran, Kitābhā-yi-Jībī, 1354/1975. Vol. 1, P. 35.
- [3] H. Šādiq, Panj Namāyish-nāma-yi Mīrzā Āghā Tabrizī, (Tehran 1977) P. 13-24.

The first step towards European theatre began with the construction of the first European-style auditorium by Mīrza 'Alī Akbar Khān Muzayyan al-Dawla. This theatre was constructed in the Dar al-Funūn high school in 1886. The first translation of the Misanthrope (Sarguzasht-i Mardum Gurīz) was performed in this theatre [1]. Later some other plays from Moliere were Persianized and performed in the same hall. The evolution of Iranian theatre and its development towards secular theatre began with the writing and translating of plays in 1912, after the constitutional revolution. Most of the translations were adapted and Persianized by the translators to make them more interesting for Persian audiences who did not have enough knowledge of Western Theatre. Thus Murtaẓā 'Alī Fikrī, wrote Hukkām-i Qadīm va Hukkām-i-Jadīd and Aḥmād Mahmūdī Kamāl-Vuzarā wrote seven plays, among them Hājji Riyāi Khān yā Tārtūff-i-Sharqī and Ustād Nawrūz-i Pīnadūz, adapted from dramas from Victor Hugo and Oscar Wilde by Rizā Kamāl Shahrzād. One of the most important plays of this period is Jāfar Khān az Farang Amada, written by Ḥasan Muqaddam (1896-1925), a comedy about westernized Iranians. Also 'Alī Naṣr (1893-1965), wrote 'Arūsī-yi Husayn Āghā.

Under the influence of a new national awareness, and also to avoid the censorship during the Reza Shah period (1925-1941) authors escaped into historical subjects. Ṣādiq Hidāyat, the gifted writer (1903-1951) wrote two historical plays: Parvīn dukhtar-i Sāsān, (1928) and Māziyār, (1933).

[1] A. Jannatī-'Aṭāi, Bunyād-i Namāyish Dar Īrān, Tehran: Ibn-i-Sinā, 1333/1955. P.59.

After the departure of Reza Shah 'Abd al-Husayn Nūshīn (1905-1970), the theatre director and Politician, a member of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party, translated and staged Moliere's Tartuffe, The Bluebird by M. Maeterlinck, Topaz by M. Pagnol and Volpone by Ben Jonson [1]. Nūshīn's theatrical activity ended with the 1953 coup. For the first time in the history of Iranian Theatre, Nūshīn used all the possibilities of stage craft, such as scenery, lighting, costumes and music which attracted both bourgeois and leftist intellectuals. 'Abbās Javānmard and 'Alī Naṣīriyān were two actors, playwrights and directors who together with Shāhīn Sar kīssiān formed a national art group, their first production in 1957 being two adaptations from Ṣādiq Hidāyat's short stories, Muhalil and Murda-Khūrḥā. Naṣīriyān and Javānmard both experimented widely to achieve a national theatre for Iran, both using traditional elements in contemporary plays; Naṣīriyān wrote Af'ī-yi Talāī (the Golden Serpent, 1957) inspired by the patterns and gestures of the traditional marikagīr. He later wrote Bulbul-i Sargashta (The Wandering Nightingale, 1959) also using folk elements. The first cultural and arts organisation which operated on a wide scale was the Department of Fine Arts. This department in 1964 became the Ministry of Culture and Art. In 1957, this department established the Department of Dramatic Art. A school of Dramatic Arts (issuing B.A. degrees) was founded and later the Faculty of Fine Arts of Tehran University was also created.

[1] Majīd Fallāḥ Zādah, Yādī az Nūshīn, Majalla-yi Fardā-yi Īrān No. 4, Tehran, 1361/1982. P. 302-303.

In 1960 the 25th Shahrivar Theatre was opened by the Department of Dramatic Art, where most of the plays performed were contemporary, mainly Iranian works. Plays by Sā'idi, Rādi, Bayzāi, Naṣiriyan, Mufīd, Hātami, Navīdi and many other playwrights were performed on this same stage. The National Iranian Television (N.I.R.T.) founded the Jashn-i-Hunar, Festival of Arts in Shiraz and promoted a theatre workshop, the Kārgāh-i-Namāyish in 1969. In this festival the National Iranian Television laid emphasis upon two opposite forms of theatre, traditional and modern contemporary. Two other festivals were organised by the N.I.R.T., one at Tus and in the city of Mashhad, and the other in Isfahan, both festivals being devoted to the promotion of traditional and popular theatre and related arts. After the Islamic Revolution all these festivals were abandoned and both the Faculty of Theatre and the School of Dramatic Art were closed for a few years. Thus the period of theatrical activity in Iran under consideration was relatively short-lived.

CHAPTER II

POPULAR TRADITION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON IRANIAN THEATRE

Theatre, because of its social nature, has always had a close connecton with popular traditions and has drawn closely from them. Indeed, a theatrical tradition that is to have an effect on the public cannot remain aloof from popular culture. Furthermore, there are plays which have been influenced by popular traditions or which have been written using local dialects and idioms.

This sort of drama is largely successful because it shares common roots with the general public. Because of this, some parables and popular tales which form the basis for plays have such beauty and depth that they are unforgettable, and for this reason they have lasted for hundreds of years in he culture and have roots thousands of years old.

Popular culture itself contains its own separate forms of theatre which, from the standpoint of performance of traditional improvisatory folk comedy, has always been a source of enormous pleasure for the general public. In some cases these theatrical folk traditions have served as a source of inspiration for the formal stage, thus showing the interaction between folk and 'elite' cultural traditions.

In other instances, different aspects of popular traditions such as parables, sayings, idioms, songs and folk-tales have aided the theatre. Of course the view of the author and his ability in conceptualising these folkloric materials increases their influence a hundred-fold, since in theatre, thoughts are conceptualised and appear in dramatic form. In other words, these things which have deep roots among the people begin to live and take shape in front of their eyes, and this is an extraordinary phenomenon in human communication which results in the strengthening of peoples' attachment to their nation and culture.

One of these folk theatrical forms which is known as the origin of the Persian theatre is "Naqqālī" story-telling.

Naqqālī

The Naqqāl (story-teller) is an actor who has learned and polished his profession in tea houses. The heroes and locale of his stories are always the same but on each occasion he adds a new vigour, freshness and vitality to the story. He re-enacts every scene as he tells of the deaths, fights, feasts and deeds of his heroes. He lives with his heroes. He shares their sadness and joy and moves his audiences with the same feelings.

Story-telling or 'epic declamation' consists of the narration of an event or story through prose or verse, using dramatic movements and gestures in the presence of an audience.

The naqqāl aims at amusing and arousing the emotions of the audience through performing harmonious and elegant movements, lyrically expressive and multifarious gestures, so that the naqqāl is imagined as one of the heroes of the tale. In other words, the naqqāl acts the part of a narrator and the protagonists of the tale, all at the same time.

The art of story-telling, Naqqali, dates back to at least the Parthian Gosan. In royal courts, public squares, or tea houses, the naqqāl recounted as he does even today, tales of epic legends or popular picturesque romances by means of mime, hand movements, and varied vocal pitches. In the seventeenth century a book (Taraz-al-Akhbar) was devoted to describing its technique [1].

Naqqālī in Iran was able to develop many different and splendid styles as it was able to reflect the spirit of the different epochs. This was due to the fact that Naqqali was the only form in which the performing arts could develop and also because it was in constant touch with the lives of lay people.

Naqqālī is one of the most original and most powerful aspects of the performing arts in Iran. It is a very difficult and specialised art with its roots deep in principles and traditions. In other words, it demands maturity and full knowledge of essential techniques and skills.

The task of the naqqāl consists of a detailed knowledge and understanding of the psychology of people in general and the audience in particular. The mastery of the naqqāl is directly related to the depth of his knowledge and understanding.

[1] Farrokh Ghaffary. Evolution of rituals and theatre of Iran, Iranian Studies. Autumn 1984. Page 364.

He should know very clearly at which parts of the tale the audience is aroused and thus be able to focus on these points in order to intensify the emotions even more. Using different physical gestures, the naqqāl can express the different physical and mental states of the protagonists, such as old age, youth, agility, meanness, fright, buffoonery, pride, drunkenness, anger and the physical postures such as riding a horse, seated, fallen on the ground, fighting, in chains etc. [1].

At all times he pretends to have something in his hand such as a trumpet, a sword, a horse on which he rides, a bow and arrow, a wall over which he climbs etc. By using various theatrical skills such as dramatic pauses, melodic words, whispering and immediately shouting, trembling of the voice, alternately changing the voice (for each protagonist) and especially by clapping the hands and stamping the feet and by expressive facial grimaces, the naqqāl employs all his performing talents.

It is due to this immaculate control that the audience can imagine him to be all the heroes of the story at a given time. Although this kind of acting appears to be exaggerated, it seems natural and usual to the audience because of the epic character of the stories. On some occasions when the performance of the naqqāl has reached its height in giving life and colour to the legend, the audience have begged for the life of their favourite hero to be saved by his mediation. Naqqālī does not require the use of a stage or props and

[1] Bahrām Bayzāī, Op. Cit. Page 79.

the naqqāl can gather people around him in any place without the use of any aids and start the narration of the epic. It is an interesting fact that they achieve the same dramatic impact that some drama groups do with the use of modern facilities.

Naqqālī is performed in both serious and comic styles. In the first part, performed in serious style, we hear the tragic story of the death of Suhrab at the hands of his father Rustam, probably the best-known heroes of Iranian mythology.

Suhrāb was conceived in the one night marriage of Rustam with the daughter of his enemy, the King of Samangān. The first time the father and son met is on the battlefield where they are engaged in a deadly combat. Twice Suhrāb emerges victorious in the fight but, in keeping with tradition, does not kill Rustam. The third time Rustam comes out the winner and immediately stabs Suhrāb to death. Rustam realises his fatal mistake only when Suhrāb, in the last moment of life, tells him that his father, Rustam, will avenge his death.

The second part, which is done in comic style, is an account of the espionage mission of Nasīm, an official of the court of Alexander, to the land of the enemy. Nasīm, who is a clever and witty old man, gets involved in many funny adventures during his mission. His real identity is discovered by the enemy, but each time, just at the point of being captured, he manages to escape by an ingenious plan.

For social and religious reasons, many forms of entertainment were restricted in the Islamic world. The story-teller was the only type of entertainer whose activities were less restricted, for he was able to ornament his art with the trappings of religion, make use of religious poetry and thus continue his work unencumbered. Of course, a great deal of the success of the story-teller was due to the immense popularity he enjoyed with the public at large, which did a great deal to vitiate the criticism of the religious authorities.

Ibn Qutayba, a writer of the ninth century AD cited a narrator who played his *ṭanbūr* (a kind of musical instrument) to instill a sense of serenity and joy after a tearful narration.[1] We do not, however, have any knowledge of the type of story that was told, but we can conclude that it was sad and most probably religious in nature, but the story-teller would play his *tanbur* in order to lift the audience's spirit and make them joyful.

Besides the story of *Rustam and Suhrāb* which was scripted for story-telling, *Kalila and Dimna* and the 1001 Nights (Arabian Nights) entered Iran and became widespread texts among the story-tellers.

Shāh Khusraw Anūshīrvān (AD 531-579) at one point was so much taken by the *Kalīla* and *Dimna* tales that he sent his physician, *Borzoye*, to India to obtain a complete version of that collection of stories, a mission which was completed successfully, but with great difficulty.

[1] Ibn Qutayba *Dīnavarī*, *Uyūn al-Akbār*, Vol. 4, page 91, Cited in *Bahrām Bayzā'ī*, Op. Cit., *Kayvān*, pp61-62.

There are numerous references to stories and story-tellers throughout Persian and Arabic literature. The practitioners of these could be found in every city square, in front of every mosque and at the city crossroads delighting the people with their craft.

Bayzā'ī, in his Namāyish Dar Īrān, says that story-telling was a musical art before the founding of Islam. The story-teller usually sang or told the story accompanied by a musical instrument (usually a harp). This form was called 'Qavvālī' [1].

'Āshiq, a similar form to story-telling, still exists in the north-west of Iran, Āzerbāijān. The 'Āshiq is a man who plays a Sāz (a long-necked plucked lute) and sings a song which is usually based on a story. The word 'Āshiq' comes from the Arabic, meaning 'lover'. Many of the tales and poetry of the 'Āshiq recites are concerned with lovers famous in Middle East literature, such as Khusraw va-Shīrīn, Laylī va-Majnūn, Aṣḡī va-Karam and Gharīb va Shāhsanam.

In cities, towns and villages throughout Iranian Azerbaijan, Asheqs (professional poet-musicians) entertain audiences in coffee houses and at weddings. Asheqs compose and perform songs in a variety of poetic forms. The longest of these forms is the oral narrative poem called the dastan in the Azeri dialect of Turkish. In his presentation of these tales, the Asheq observes a standard protocol, to stretch some segments of his entertainment, or to cut other parts short. It is this flexibility within the framework of an established presentation format that keeps these oral narrative poems from growing stale in the mind of the performer and in the perception of the audience [2].

[1] Bayzā'ī, Op. Cit., P.60.

[2] Charlotte F. Albright. The Azerbaijani Asheq and his performance of a Dastan, Iranian Studies, Volume IX, 1976, p220.

One of the most famous songs played and practised in the Azari language is 'Köroghlū' which in Turkish means 'son of the blind'. This heroic tale and also love story is one of the most popular stories among the Azerbāijānī people. It is performed out of doors and indoors in the coffee houses known as Qahvah Khāna.

Until the establishment of the coffee house as a regular city institution in Iran, story-tellers were counted as a species of public entertainer not distinguished from magicians, jugglers and other similar performers. All such persons performed in the open air, and it may be that even those who were not professional story-tellers would lace their acts with eloquent speech, eventually becoming famous enough to appear before kings, viziers and military commanders to liven up their celebrations and collect gratuities. At this early stage, however, there was no established guild system for entertainers. It was only under the Safavid kings that a governmentally recognised formal organisation of sufi dervishes called the 'A'jam order' was established over the Naqqāls, eulogists and other entertainers.

The term 'Naqqālī' should in fact be taken as having a more general meaning than just recitation of the Shāh-nāma of Firdawsī and other stories in coffee houses. Naqqāl in fact refers to anyone who uses the narrating technique (Naqqālī) in order to arouse an audience, or to make them laugh or cry. Thus we should include Rawza-Khwānī and Parda-Dārī, both recitations of the events of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his followers at Karbalā, the former in a private setting,

using sermonising and chanting techniques, the latter in public using a curtain or parda illustrated with scenes from the story as well as other entertainment forms depending primarily on language, as kinds of Naqqālī.

We see then that Naqqālī in its original form was not entirely secular but had a definite religious component. Indeed, some Naqqāls would narrate stories from the epics during the week, and turn to religious subjects on Fridays following the narration of the secular story.

Whereas the Naqqāls have a definite arena for their work, the coffee house, their practice has even carried over to radio and television. In the course of the history of the art, the repertoire of the Naqqāl was never limited to just a few epic stories; however, owing to the increased prosperity of the Iranian public, their work has decreased somewhat, and it is rare to be able to find a Naqqāl today who can narrate equally well, three or four different pieces of popular literature (such as the Shāh-nāma, Iskandar-nāma, Dārāb-nāma, Amīr Arsalān etc.). They are more commonly specialists in one piece of literature whose narrative techniques they have learned from their own teachers.

At one time in the past there were many stories which were immensely popular among the people and indeed were narrated for centuries with great success, but due to changed historical or religious circumstances they gradually lost their popularity. The delightful

epic, the Abū Muslim-nāma, was once extraordinarily popular, and was recited in all Persian-speaking areas of the world to the point that the Shiites thought it to be a Shia work and the Sunnites declared it to be a Sunni product. However, during the Safavid era Abu Muslim, as the result of a doctrinal conflict, was accused of having been a supporter of the Abbasids, and an enemy of the Shiites, and thus suffered an immense drop in popularity. Other stories such as Samak-i 'Ayyār, the Dārāb-nāma, Khurshīd Shāh, Amīr Hamza, Malik Jamshīd etc. took its place.

Among other writings the Iskandar-nāma was the most popular in the last century. Indeed, the killing of Shirzād by Iskandar was as popular an episode for listeners as the killing of Suhrab by Rustam in the Shāh-nāma.

Some stories were not ever presented in public but were rather performed in private assemblies, especially in the royal chambers during the Qajar era. Famous tales such as Amīr Arsalān, Zarrīn Malik and the Bath of Bulūr (Hammām-i Bulūr) were stories of this sort.

Sir Lewis Pelly in his book talks about the story-teller and the story of Suhrāb and Rustam.

As I watched some public story-teller seated in the bazaar on a rude dias, intoning the story of Suhrab and Rustam and gradually raising his voice until, towards the close of the hexameter it seemed to pause and then fall into the following lines, while the miscellaneous street assembly listened with



rapt attention, I fancied I had there before me a counterpart of the early recitations of the Iliad, and in the West we possessed no complete translation of this singular drama [1].

As Pelly pointed out, usually this type of performance took place out of doors, in bazaars, squares etc. But later, as their profession became more recognised and with the establishment of coffee houses, this place became a permanent stage for story-telling.

The teahouses, which were also called coffee houses, are the places where the tea is usually served. It was once a place which served as a playhouse for the naqqālī. It was in these places that this form of theatrical activity grew to one of its peaks. The people spent their leisure time listening to the epic-heroic stories [2].

The coffee houses were indeed the right place for Iranian people to gather and enjoy their rest time. Not only did they serve as a play house for the Naqqālī, but also other theatrical forms such as Shāh-nāma Khwānī and Chashm Bandī (magic), Khaymeh Shab-Bāzī (puppet show) and many other traditional Persian games.

These things were all a part of leisure activities in Iranian folk class life. The folk class of Iran consists of: working class, lower class, and the illiterate class. Conversation is the chief form of diversion and relaxation when groups of men gather to drink tea and to discuss opinions. Tea houses are the common places for people to communicate and share their experiences and express themselves. These meetings also help to perpetuate the stories, songs and ballads of the region and to keep alive the love of poetry which is so characteristic of the Persian people [3].

One can safely say that the coffee houses were the most important bases for preserving all traditional activity and custom.

[1] Sir Lewis Pelly, The Miracle of Hasan and Husain, Vol. 1, London 1879, P.IV.

[2] Naṣr Allāh-i Falsafī, Tārīkh-i-qahva-va qahva-Khāna Dar Īrān Majalla-yi Sukhan, Period 5, 1333/1954. P.P. 265-266.

[3] Hossein Adibi, An Analysis of the Social Economic and Physical Aspects of Urbanisation in Iran, Dissertation, United States, International University, 1972, P. 31.

Ismail-Beigi Shirazi comments:

There were three elements that started the trend of social rehabilitation and the move towards westernisation. The first cause was the rise of industrialisation and this brought about an ever-increasing number of jobs, specialisation and increasing salaries. It also created less leisure time for the workers which forced them to be very choosy as to how, when, where and with whom they should spend their time. This began to lessen the people's belief in myths and folklore. The last cause was the propagation of other types of public entertainment, such as radio, cinema and the western theatre [1].

Coffee houses were always full of customers, and hence different varieties of entertainment were performed there before the arrival of television. As a result of this new form, the coffee houses bought television sets in order to retain their customers. This meant that the people going there became entranced with recorded moving pictures as they were once captivated by the talents of the story-teller. Television dominated over the old art, the coffee houses had to concede that television was more popular and gradually live story-telling and other popular entertainments were dropped as an attraction.

Shāh-Nāma Khwānī

Firdawsi was born at Tūs in north-eastern Persia about 935 AD and came from an old Iranian family of landed proprietors. His claim to

[1] Foroud Ismail-Beigi, A study of the Evolutionary trend and the current atmosphere conditions of Shahnamih Khani in Iran, Ph. D. Dissertation, Detroit: Wayne State University, 1973. P. 98

fame rests on his Shāh-nāma, (Book of Kings), which comprises nearly 60,000 couplets of flowing Persian verse, and in which nearly four thousand years of Persia's history is chronicled. The poet seems to have spent thirty-four years of his life on his great work, which he commenced when he was forty and completed just before his death in 1025AD. His main aim throughout was to glorify the national history of his fatherland and its folk, whether in myth, story, religious tradition or popular tale [1].

This magnificent dramatic poetry, as Pelly pointed out, is comparable with Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. It contains a series of stories about the conflicts, courage and heroism of ancient Persian kings. This magnificent dramatic literary work became a fountain-head of ideas for 'Shāh-nāma-Khwānī'.

A thousand years had gone by since the glorious era of the ancient kings of Persia, while Firdawsi, father of the Persian poetry and language, with his new ideas and power of eloquence gave new life to those kings, heroes and valiants, immortalising their names in the monumental book. Nearly a thousand years have gone by since the composition and compilation of those glorious stories [2].

Shirazi states:

Shahnamikhani is one of the simplest forms of the classical theatre. It is classical, not in the sense that it is an old form of theatre, but in the sense that for centuries it has remained rather uniform in its manner of presentation and performance. There are at least 400 years of documented

[1] Bapsy Pavry, The Heroines of Ancient Persia, Stories retold from the Shahnama of Firdawsi, Cambridge University Press, 1930, P. 1

[2] Modjtabā Mīnuvī, Firdawsi va Shi'r-i Ū (Firdawsi and his poetry Anjuman-i Aṣār-i Millī, No. 56, Tehran. (1346A.H.sh), (1976-68), P. 62.

sources, verifying the existence of such a theatre, with all its basic characteristics intact [1].

Persians seem to have two historical sources: one is real history and the other, mythological history. The majority of the Persian folk class are more aware of mythological history than the real one. This mythological history is gathered and written in the Shāh-nāma. The most popular and famous mythological character in Iran is Rostam. The story of Rostam consists of seven episodes which the Persians call Haft-Khwān-i Rostam. These seven episodes became the main source of Shāh-nāma Khwānī, and are known by the majority of Iranian people.

Although the Persian audiences know the whole content of the Shāh-Nāma, it is the way in which Shāh-nāma Khwān, the man who performed the Shāh-nāma acts and amuses them that makes them able to listen to him one hundred times over and still enjoy the same story and be amused night after night. Usually the story takes a long time to come to an end and the audience comes to the same coffee house every night to hear and follow the same story.

One of the methods the Naqqāl uses to make audiences concentrate is the ṣalavāt. Ṣalavāt is the praising of God, the prophet Muḥammad, and the family and the descendants of the prophet Muḥammad. The Shāh-nāma Khwān usually calls out for a new ṣalavāt after which he continues the story, when he feels that he is losing the audience's

[1] F.I.B. Shirazi, Op Cit. P.98

attention, if they talk to each other, or switch lights on or if there are any kinds of interruption. When the story reaches an interesting and exciting point such as when the hero is about to be killed, or to start fighting, the naqqāl also calls for a new ṣalavāt.

Zūrkhāna

Zūrkhāna is an institution where traditional exercises take place to the accompaniment of a drummer, who also recites verses from the epic poem the Shāh-nāma. These drummers are called Murshid. The Shāh nāma Khwān was not only popular in towns and cities, but was also largely accepted by the illiterate people in all Iranian villages and small towns. Whenever all the farmers of one village gathered together in one place to help each other with their tasks, they would invite the local naqqāl, then they would serve tea, dates and sweets. This ceremony would take place every night in a different place in the same village with the same people until the whole job was done, and the story was finished at the same time.

Sukhan-Vari

Sukhan-vari is a highly complex art, at once a display of extraordinary intellectual dexterity and deep knowledge, and at the same time a highly entertaining contest. It is found exclusively in Iran, and is unfortunately nearly extinct.

Sukhan-vari, (Eloquence), at the height of its popularity, was a practice centred in the 'Ajam order of Dervishes. This order was given authority during the Safavid era over all entertainers and oral artists dealing both with sacred and secular themes. The practice of Sukhan-vari reflect not only levels of skill in oral art, but also ranks of office within the 'Ajam order.

Though the practice could be used as a means both for testing and challenging others, it became formalised as an entertainment associated especially with the month of Ramadan, when the citizens, having fasted from dawn to dusk, often remained awake all night until the morning meal just before dawn. The practice of Naqqālī with its strong narrative techniques added greater strength to the Sukhan-vari traditions, and was likewise a featured entertainment in the month of Ramadan[1].

Sukhan-vari was held in large coffee houses in the traditional quarters of Iranian cities and required the presence of a complex array of persons: singers, speakers, assistants, poetry chanters, as well as contestants and judges of the contest [2].

The Naqqāl, or leader of the assembly, would take his place at the

[1] Dr. M. J. Maḥjūb, Namāyish-i-Kuhan-i-Irani va Naqqālī, Shirāz, Jashn-i-Hunar, 3, 1346/1967. P.P. 27-28

[2] Bahram Bayzāī. Op Cit. P76.

sardam, a place of leadership designated by numerous ritual objects hung on the wall: the skin of a lion, tiger or leopard; two crossed sticks from which hung a ritual axe; a sackcloth; a cow's-horn trumpet; a dervish's stone on which he would normally take his seat; a lion cloth; a gesturing stick; a picture of the first Shia Imam, Ali; and a dervish' begging bowl (kashkūl).

The programme would begin with the singing and chanting of ghazals, lyric poems in classic style. Eventually another dervish, the opponent in the contest, stands at the door of the coffee house listening to the ghazals until he sees a point at which he can announce his presence to the assembly, ideally tying in the references of his announcement to the theme of the ghazals just presented.

At this point, the first section of the Sukhan-vari is begun. Each side has the right to challenge the other to mental feats, such as producing numerous lines of poetry all beginning and ending with the same letter, or producing correct catalogues of information. Each side also has the right to call on others to help him in his efforts.

Both sides are strictly limited as to the manner in which they can answer. To answer correctly they must pay strict attention to the form of the questions. Throughout all of this mental dexterity, there are judges standing by to make certain that no mistakes are made by either party.

If one or the other of the two contestants makes a mistake, or cannot answer the riddle of the other, or fails to perform a task set for him, he loses his clothing and possessions are gradually removed from him each time he is adjudged to have lost, until he is left standing with only a bare minimum of clothing [1]. In effect, since the contestants are dervishes, the loser has lost his title as a dervish. If the contest continues to pass through all the stages, the loser may win his clothing back, or he may continue to lose and suffer punishments such as having to perform ridiculous stunts, or being beaten. All of this adds to the enjoyment of the spectators.

Ma'rika-Girī

Ma'rika originally and in the literal sense, is said to mean a battlefield, however, it refers here to a place where a person stands and performs artistic endeavours, while other people gather around him.

The reason that such terminology is used here is that, as in the battlefield, each man who has a talent for war and combat uses it and some men are busy exhibiting and showing off their talent and bravery while others merely pass the time away and amuse themselves[2].

[1] Dr. M.J. Mahjūb, Ibid, P.28.

[2] Mawlānā Husayn Wāiz-i-Kāshifī-yi Sultānī, Futuwwat-Nāma-yi-Sultānī. ed. Muḥammed Ja'far Mahjūb. No.4 of the series of Farhang-i-Āmiyāna. Tehran, Bunyād-i-Farhang. Page 273.

Ma'rika-gīrī means the holding and performance of a ma'rika.

In general, some traditional and popular theatrical forms were performed out of doors in a circle in any open air location known as Ma'rika, and performers were known as Ma'rika-gīr or Murshid. Ma'rika-gīrī also applies to Pahlavānī (wrestling and strong-man acts), Mār gīrī (snake acts), Parda Dārī or Shamāyīl Gardānī, Shumurta-Bāzī and Chashm Bandī (magic), Rope-Dancing, Lutīāntarī (monkey acts), Shahr-i-Farangī (Magic lantern shows), and Dalī (improvised poetic prose or lampoons).

Shamāyīl-Gardānī

'Abbās Bulūki-Fard, the old and expert naqqāl from the Qahva Khāna generation says that

Parda-dārī or Shamāyīl-gardānī are born from Ta'ziya, but Sadeq-i Humāyūnī, a scholar who has been researching for a long time on Ta'ziya has a different point of view. He says that the text and content of Ta'ziya has nothing to do with what is in the Shamayil-gardānī [1]. Shamāyīl-gardānī means 'moving portraits around'

Here crowds gather around a narrator who shows them pictures drawn in oil on canvasses, illustrating such religious episodes as the exploits of 'Alī, the punishments inflicted upon the infidel in hell, battles of Muḥammad against the unbelievers and scenes from the events of Karbalā' [2]

[1] Islamic theatrical art: Shamāyīl-gardānī Majalla-yi Javānān-i Imrūz 818, 1361/1982, P.5.

[2] Ihsan Yar-Shater, "Persia", The Readers Encyclopedias of World Drama, ed. John Gassmer and Edward Quinn, New York: Thomasy, Crowell Co. 1969, P.650.

Practitioners of Shamāyīl-gardānī play their trade in city squares in traditional sections of large cities, religious shrines, and in smaller towns, but they have no fixed location of performance.

Parda-Dārī and Shamāyīl-gardānī are recitations of the events of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his followers in the plain of Karbala, the former in a private setting using sermonising and chanting techniques and the latter in public using a curtain or parda (a framed canvas 3m x 1.5m) illustrated with scenes from the story [1].

In Shamāyīl-gardānī the Naqqāl of the story establishes the most subtle and exact relationship with the audience by the means of poetry, techniques of Naqqālī, oration, and specific music (Dastgah). It is possible that the presentation of Shamāyīl gardānī is an advanced form of Naqqālī. Shamāyīl gardānī presents religious stories, using verse and prose, using the colloquial language of the people. Thus Parda Dārī or Shāmāyīl gardānī can be categorised as a colloquial religious play, or more appropriately it can be classed as a one-man show in which the themes and events of Ta'ziya are performed by one man only. Dominantly the themes of these plays are taken from the history of the events of Karbala and other religious books. Tapestries and paintings are the main props of the Naqqāls,

[1] Bahrām Bayzāī, Op cit. P.73.

and these images developed and evolved continuously. The tapestries and pictures used for this purpose are devoid of perspective and technical refinements, and are called Tea House Paintings.

The Shamāyil-Gardān identifies the oppressed protagonists, i.e. Imam Hussayn and his kin through the use of sorrowful and lamenting songs which are composed in a specific musical arrangement, used in Ta'ziya. The enemies of the descendants of the Prophet are identified by the use of coarse tone of speech and no music is used. One of the characteristics of the tapestries used, the colouring and the composition of the faces, very clearly reflects the faith and the undying love of the painters for the sacred family of the Prophet, and their hatred for the enemies of the sacred family. In the most of these pictures the latter are portrayed with unpleasant and ugly faces, closely-shaven bald heads, long and upturned moustaches, bulging eyes, and altogether a very unpleasant and bloodthirsty appearance. However, the sacred family are portrayed with a halo, gracious beards and moustaches, tongues and plaited hair and graceful outfits which are usually in green colours, while the faces of the women and girls are covered by veils. Some of the painters of these pictures are 'Abbās Bulūki-Fard, Husayn Hamadāni, Fath Allāh Ghullar, Hasan Ismā'īl-zāda and Qullar Āghāsi.

The Naqqāl excites and encourages the active participation of the audience by requesting Salavāt and the damnation and cursing of the enemies of the sacred family, or honouring of the sacred ones, blessings for the dead and prayers for the sick, as soon as he detects any kind of boredom and passivity; he then proceeds with the



story. The majority of the shamāyil-gardāns abandoned this kind of work and were absorbed into other forms of performing arts. Some of them gave performances only on the days of Muharram and the sphere of their activity was limited to the small towns and villages. However, the tendencies of society towards industrialisation and the development of capitalism, and the establishment of cinemas, theatres, television and radio, brought about a lack of interest on the part of the public to this kind of art.

Shows of this kind usually take place in the streets and in the bazaar, and the people join the audience by putting a coin in the bowl of the Naqqāl. Sometimes people can watch the show for hours without even paying. Usually when the story reaches its climatic points the Naqqāl interrupts the story and this functions as a hint that the audience should put money in the brass bowl of the Shamāyil-gardān so that he continues with the story. At this point, those people who are not willing to pay any more, leave the audience and others wishing to watch the show join in.

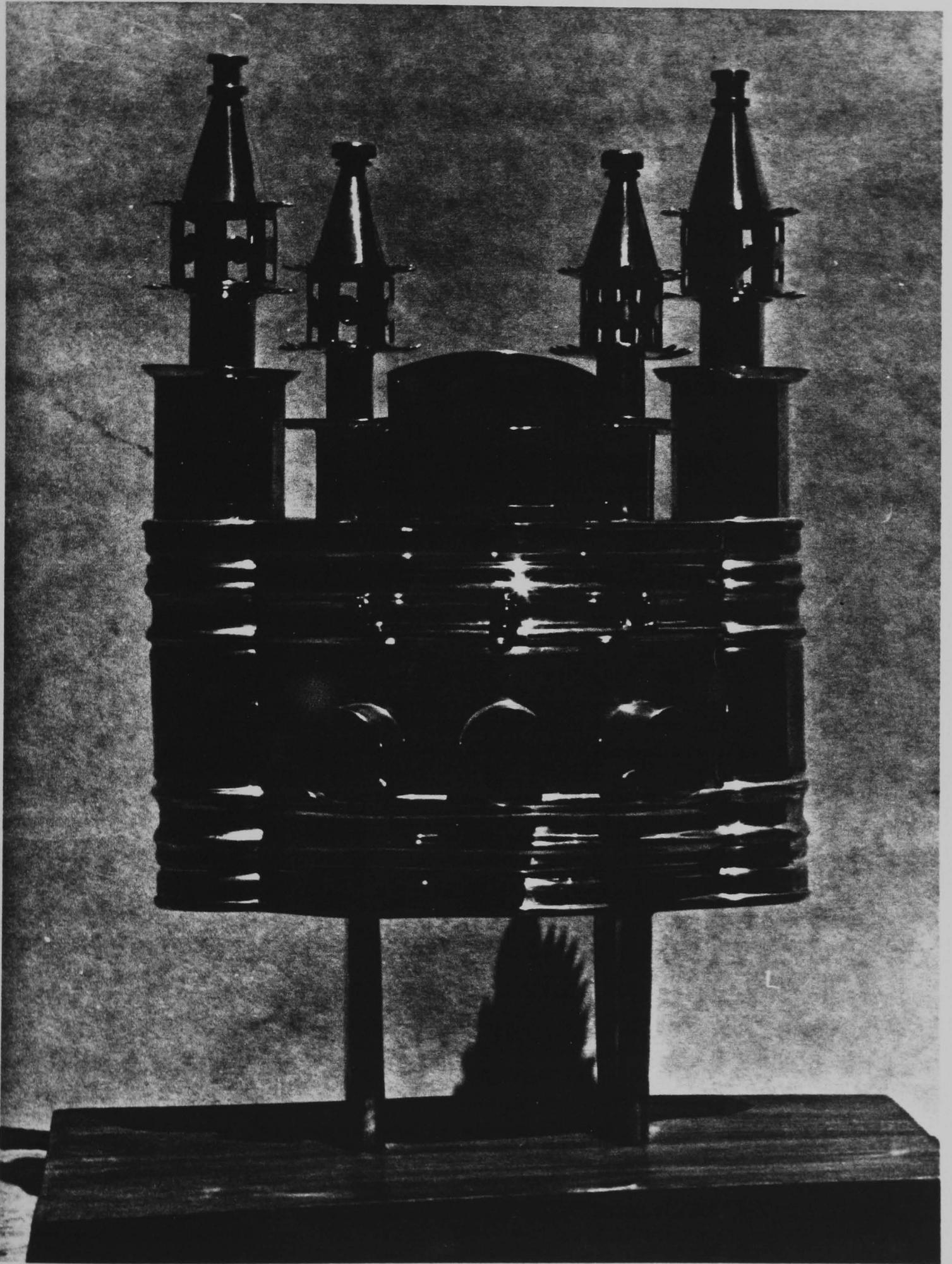
Shahr-i Farang

Shah-i Farang can be categorised as one of the branches of Naqqālī. In Shahr-i Farang the Naqqāl presents the stories with the use of an instrument called a Shahr-i Farang. In the past paintings and in recent times photographs have been used for this purpose. Thus the Naqqāl tells the story in a colourful, exciting and interesting language. The difference between the work of Naqqāls in Naqqālī,

Shamāyil-gardānī and Shahr-i Farang is that in the two former cases there is a large audience to address. In the latter case, however, the number of the audience is only three. The roots of this instrument should be sought in the primitive technique of cinema and therefore it is a very old means of entertainment. This form of art can be related to the art of Sāya-Bāzī (shadow plays), with some differences. The origin of these two art forms is the Fānūs-i-Khiyāl [1]. Fānūs-i-Khiyāl is the ancestor of cinema. It consisted of a lantern in which a candle was lit, covered by a glass case on which painted images would be reflected on a wall or curtain and thus the resulting effect was very similar to the images obtained by projectors used in the cinema or by the old-fashioned Magic Lantern. It is believed that this invention came from China and that it was from the Far East that it found its way to Iran and Europe. Fānūs-i-Khiyāl is based on the same principle as the projector except that the latter is operated by electricity.

The Fānūs-i-Khiyāl has been drawn upon occasionally in Persian literature and poetry in reference to Sāya-Bāzī (shadow theatre). However, the difference between the equipment used in Shahr-i Farang and in Sāya-Bāzī is that in the former two mirrors are installed. The first mirror reflects the image on the second one in front of which there are three round openings covered by lenses which magnify the image. The spectator places his eyes on the opening and thus

[1] Bahrām Bayzāī. Op. Cit. P.113



views the pictures after having paid for the show. The pictures are all arranged in a sequence and so the Shahr-i Farangi tells the story as the pictures move. Usually the stories are based on the old tales and folkloric stories of Iran. The most famous of these is the story of Amīr Arslān and Farukh Laqā. Sometimes the stories which are presented by the Shahr-i Farangi are from religious stories, if he is in a holy city like Qumm or Mashhad. With the advent and fast development of cinema, and especially with the widespread use of television and modern means of communication, this kind of art faces a gradual decline and except in isolated villages which are far from the towns and cities this form of art has become very rare indeed.

Khayma-Shab-bāzī

Exactly how and when puppet shows (Khayma-shab-bāzī) began in Iran is still unknown. Evidently up to the present time no concerted effort has been made to confront the question as a whole. There are many theories about the origins of Iranian puppet theatre. In his book Namāyish dar Irān, Bayzāi comments that

Iranian nomads, observing the shadows cast by their camp-fires on their tents, initiated this form of entertainment. In the developing of this idea, shadow-plays were refined and puppets were created thus giving birth to Khayma-shab-bāzī [1]

[1] Bahrām Bayzāi, Op. Cit, P83.

Owing to the fact that the puppet show found its way to Europe from the East, it seems quite unlikely that it could have gone unnoticed in Iran.

Shadow theatre spread from the Far East, and having first being recorded in Java, China and India, it came to Turkey and travelled westward. Some scholars like Berhold Laufer or Hermann Reich, however, have claimed that puppet or shadow theatre originated in the Mediterranean area and spread later to the East, but this theory has been rejected on many grounds, more particularly on the grounds that there is no record of shadow theatre in ancient Greece or Byzantium. In these days it is an accepted fact that it came westward from Asia. However, there remains still a controversy concerning by which route it came to Turkey [1].

Since Iran shared a common border with old India this geographic factor has to some greater or lesser degree visibly contributed to the production, development, standardisation and continued existence of the puppet show in Iran.

As we turn to the glorious commercial ages before the Islamic era, which gave birth to the celebrated silk route to the East, it is understandable that this period of unlimited commercial and cultural exchange opened up new horizons. The travellers most probably brought with them painting, ceramics, silk with highly complex designs and woven cloth as well as puppets from India and China. As records show, a wide range of exotic goods and products were exchanged and it can perhaps be assumed that puppets were among those items exchanged.

[1] Metin And, Karagöz, Turkish Shadow Theatre, Dost Yayınları - İstanbul. 1979. P.21.

Dr. George Jacob has put forward a thesis based on Dr. Pischels theory on puppet-theatre, that it is most probable that gipsies emerging from north-west India about one thousand years ago, traced a path across Asia and Europe. It is quite likely that they brought the Indian shadow theatre with them and stopping in Asia Minor, might well have popularised that art in Turkey [1]

Omar Khayam illustrated puppet show and shadow puppet in his quatrain.

ما لعبت کما نلیم و فلک لعبت باز
 از روی حقیقت و نه از روی مجاز
 باز چه همی کنیم بر نطع وجود
 اقسیم بصندوق عدم یک یک باز

Tis all a chequer-board of nights and days,
 where destiny with men for pieces plays.
 Hither and thither moves, and mates and slays,
 and one by one back in the closet lays [1].

این صرخ و فلک که مادر او حیرانیم
 فانوس خیال از او مثالی دینیم
 خورشید چراغدان عالم فانوس
 ما چون صوریم کاندرا و حیرانیم

[1] Georg Jacob, Geschichte des Schatten Theaters in Morgen-und Abendland, (Hanover, 1925) PPT09-110. Cited by And in Karagöz.

[2] Rubāiyat-i Ḥakīm Omar Khayām, Muhammad Mihdi Fūlladvand ed. Tehran, 1348/1969. P.71.

For in and out, about, above, below
Tis nothing but a magic shadow-show,
played in a box whose candle is the sun,
round which we phantom figures come and go. [1]

Khayyam in his poem talks about Lu'bat; the meaning of the word in Persian is puppet, and Lu'bat-bāz means puppeteer. He drew upon the puppet show and illustrated and compared man's life with that of a puppet at the end of a show, as they all sink down in the box of the puppeteer one by one. The world is man's stage on which they play their role one by one, and they vanish in the box of non-existence.

Chardin in his description refers to the puppet show in the seventeenth century:

The other end of the place, which is to the north, had likewise its companies for diversion, and for show there were the rope dancer, companies of women dancers, companies of footmen ready to dance, bodies of jugglers for a thousand several sorts of tricks, such as leger-de-main, fencers, puppet show, etc. [2]

The stock characters in Khayma-shab-bāzī were generally taken from folklore and were popular and therefore easily identifiable to the Persian audience.

In harlequinades (maskharez bazi) puppet shows (kheimeh-shab-bazi) and shadow plays (fanus-e-khiyal) which were performed by clowns and puppeteers both for popular and for royal or aristocratic audiences, the central figure was often a comic, bald man called "Kachal". The humorous character of Kachal makes a sharp contrast with the selfishness of kings and cunning of viziers [3].

[1] Ibid. P. 106.

[2] Chardin, Travels in Persia, Op. Cit. P.207.

[3] A.R. Navabpour, Op. Cit. P.74.

The stock characters in Pahlavān Kachal, which is the most popular play, were Sarv-i-nāz Khānum 'arūs (blushing bride), Şamşām Humāyūn (div), Mukhliş-i Sarkār (yours truly), Siyāh the black face (or Fīrūz-Kākā), Hāji var-dar va-Buraw (thief), Mullā (the religious man), the comic hero Pahlavān-Kachal (the bald-headed hero), and Pahlavān-Panba (man of straw). There were musicians called Lūti who accompanied the puppeteer during the performance of the puppet show. The melodies were usually played by Kamancha or Tar and assisted by Tunbak (zārb).

Khayma-shab-bāzi is improvisatory and is based on Persian folk stories and the technique of operating is either a glove puppet, which is operated by hand, or a marionette manipulated by strings from above; rod puppets were also employed. The puppet shows were performed at courts, private ceremonies and, commonly, on street-corners for the public.

The Turkish scholar Metin And, in his book Karagöz gives more detailed information about Persian puppetry:

In Iran we find exactly the same two kinds of puppetry, the marionette designated as Kheimh shab bazi (night tent or booth play) or shab-bazi (night play) which is like the cadir hayal of central Asia, with the platform at ground level. The number of puppets are as many as sixty or eighty. The reason for its being performed in the evening hours and the artificial light is that the strings that control the puppets are then less visible to the spectators. There is a small orchestra consisting of a drum (Tonbak), fiddle and a clapper player. The other kind, the glove puppet theatre, is called Kachal-Pahlavan, taking its name from its main character where Pahlavan means hero, artist or athlete and Kachal means bald-headed [1].

[1] Metin And, Karagöz, Op. Cit. P. 106,

Puppets are usually operated by two people; one stands off the platform and takes part in the dialogue or directly in the action with the puppets, and his assistant inside the booth manipulates the puppets. The puppets are made by the puppeteer. The head and the neck are made of wood or papiermache. The man in the booth sometimes speaks the parts directly and sometimes through a small wind instrument called Sūtak (whistle) held between his lips.

James Mew in his Modern Persian Stage talks about Pahlavān Kachal.

The following is a synopsis of this kind of play from his book:

There is a favourite piece in which Pahlavan Kachal betakes himself under the guise of a most pious Muslim to the house of a certain Akhwund, or rector of a parish. He sighs, weeps, groans, prays, recites verses, from the Koran or elsewhere, and quotes scraps of morality after the most approved fashion. The Akhwund, delighted with his visitor and edified by his religious zeal, begins to imitate and to emulate him. Pahlavan Kachal displays his theological knowledge, his acquaintance with the traditions and the patristics of Islam, and recites legends in favour of the virtue of giving alms. Voluntary charity meets his highest panegyric. He quotes many lines of the mystic poetry so dear to the Persian heart, the poetry which under the profane semblance of love and wine, celebrates the activity and wisdom of Allah the all-merciful. The Pahlavan begins to describe the delights reserved for the charitable in Paradise. Far indeed is he from saying with Chaucer in the "Knight's Tale", that as he never was there he can say nothing about it. On the contrary, he speaks as an eyewitness. He sings of heaven and its houris with the grace of antelopes, of its splendid banquets and its sparkling wine. The Akhwund is in ecstasies. He tastes already those rivers of milk which never grow sour, and those seas of purified honey which never become dry. He reposes already under the perpetual shade, or couches whose linings are of thick silk interwoven with gold. He gathers fruits from gardens of palm-tree and pomegranates. He sees damsels advancing to meet him, with complexions like rubies and pearls, beautiful damsels with eloquent deep black eyes. He dances with delight, thereby demonstrating - as evolutionists tell us - his descent from the ape, he gives Pahlavan, that second Iago, his purse, bids him buy a banquet, and produces Khullari, the most excellent wine of Shiraz, which by some strange chance is found in a corner of his room, hidden away with a guitar. The piece of course may be extended at

pleasure. It is a vivid and never ill-timed representation of the Tartuffe of the religion of Islam [1]

Kayma-shab-Bāzī was improvisatory and creative and had no written text. The same scene may be shortened or lengthened according to the audience's request. It is entertaining and carries a strong theme of social criticism and hence it is one of the most popular forms of theatre in Iran.

Owing to the various forms of repression, religious, social or political, and to the outspoken criticisms which were voiced through the puppet shows, this form of art held a very valued place for the general public.

The criticisms, demands and expectations of the people were portrayed in the puppet shows, usually outside the text of the story, and this was the only way that the people's views about their social conditions could find a mode of communication with the authorities.

However, subtlety, cynicism and criticisms which were all part and parcel of the puppet shows differed according to the kind of audience which viewed the show at the time. Even more interesting was the fact that censorship could not damage the shows since the criticisms were given outside the text on an improvisatory basis and hence the puppet shows remained untouched by the bias of repressive authorities.

[1] James Mew, The Modern Persian Stage, The Fortnightly Review, LIX, 8 (January-June) 1896, P.P. 905-906.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF SURVEY OF TA'ZIYA (PERSIAN TRADITIONAL DRAMA)

Traditional and Western Influenced Drama in the Qajar Period

Ta'ziya is an original form of Persian religious theatre. It is ritual and derives its form and content from deep-rooted religious traditions, yet is strongly Persian although it is Islamic in form.

The conventional meaning of the word TA'ZIYA has somewhat departed from its original and literal meaning. The literal meaning is 'mourning for a dearly departed'; but the conventional meaning now specially applies to a form of religious or passion play based on certain formalities, ceremonies and traditions. Contrary to its literal meaning, sorrow and grief is not an essential element of it because it may occasionally be a happy or even a comical presentation [1].

Ta'ziya as serious or religious drama is known also as Shabīh-Khwānī, corresponding in many respects to the mystery or miracle play.

Shabīh (dramatisation) in the Ashura mourning ceremonies and in connection with the social changes appearing in Persian society, earned an important place in the past which was founded upon traditional values. Today it has a respected place in Iran's national culture [2].

It appears that the basic formation of the Ta'ziya took place under the Daylamite dynasty:

[1] Dr. M.J. Mahjub, Traditional Persian Drama. 3, Festival of Arts, Shiraz - 1967.P.1.2.

[2] Mayel Baktash, Taziyeh and its Philosophy. 3, Festival of Arts, Shiraz - Persepolis, 1967.

It is related in the history of Ibn-Kathir the Syrian that Muizzud-Dowla Ahmad Ibn Buwayh issued orders in Baghdad that during the first ten days of Muharram all the bazaars of Baghdad should be closed, and that the people should wear black for mourning and betake themselves to mourning for the chief of martyrs (the Imam Husain) [1].

Ta'ziya is a ritual Shiite production, a comprehensive and broad spectacle embracing the entire community. Consequently it enjoys a dimension beyond its form which extends to the depths of myth, belief and articles of popular faith. Ta'ziya could only have come into existence in Iran because of the peculiar national and religious circumstances which have played an important part in its creation.

Its plot is based on the legend of the plain of Karbala, and the complete story is known by the Persian audience. This fact does not change in any way the great attraction of this kind of play.

Muhammad is recognised as the greatest and last of the prophets by Muslims; after his death, in 11AH (632 A.D.) the Islamic community was faced with the problem of providing new leadership. This event divided them almost immediately into two factions. These factions were as follows:

Those who espoused the ancient Arabic tradition of succession by election and those who desired succession by inheritance, through blood-relationship to the prophet. The former are known as Sunnites, the latter as Shi'ites [1]

[1] E.G. Browne, A History of Persian Literature in Modern Time (A.D. 1500-1924) P 31.

[2] Peter J. Chelkowski, Taziyeh, Indigenous Avant-garde Theatre of Iran, Surush, Nirt Publications Tehran N.d. P.5

To the Shia, 'Alī the son-in-law and who eventually became the fourth caliph was the true successor of the prophet. To the Shia 'Alī is so exalted that they call him the "Lion of God" the "Friend of God" and other high titles. Unfortunately, 'Alī was assassinated and his son Ḥasan became the leader of his community, only to be faced by the opposition of Mu'āwiyā, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty.

Since Ḥasan was a man of peace, he did not want to cause a civil war. Therefore he abdicated from the caliphate in favour of Mu'āwiyā, but reserved the succession for himself after Mu'āwiyā's death. However, after Mu'āwiyā's death his son Yazīd succeeded to the Caliphate, and, as the Shia believe Ḥasan was poisoned through Yazīd's conspiracy.

His younger brother, Ḥusain, was of quite different character. He was war-like, full of energy and resolve. His marriage with Shahrbānū, the daughter of Yazdajird, the last of the Sassanian kings of the Persian dynasty, gave him an additional claim to Persian regard.

After Ḥasan's death, his brother Ḥusayn did not give up the leadership of the Muslims to Yazīd. He persisted in his efforts to claim his right to the Caliphate. In the meantime the people of Kūfa, a city near Baghdad, asked Ḥusain to go to Kūfa and join them as their leader. The Kūfans promised him their support in fighting against Yazīd.

Ḥusain set out with his family and a group of followers towards Kūfa, hoping to overthrow Yazīd, usurper of the true Caliphate. Ḥusayn had not arrived in Kūfa, when he noticed the city of Kūfa was already seized by the follower of Yazīd, Ibn-I-Ziyād, the new governor of Kūfa. Ḥusain was a man of courage: he would fight and die rather than give up the Muslim leadership. It was on Thursday, the 1st of Muḥarram, 61 A.H. (680 A.D.) that Ḥusain received some letters from the governor of Kūfa that stated he must swear allediance with Yazīd or else he and his men would be trampled under the feet of Yazīd's army [1].

The seige began on the first day of the Muslim month of Muḥarram and came to its bloody end on the tenth day, called 'Āshūrā. It was in the 61st year of the Muslim calendar which corresponds with 680 A.D. Soon after, the battle-field and tombs at Karbalā' became a place of sacred pilgrimage for Shi'ites throughout the Islamic Empire [2].

Before the establishment of the Shia sect as the official faith of Iran by the Safavids, Mawlānā Ḥasan Wā'iz-i Kāshifī wrote a book in the 9th century A.H. entitled Rawzat al-Shuhadā', describing the massacre of Karbalā'.

-
- [1] Sir Lewis Pelly, The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain, London, W.M. H. Allen and Co., 1819, Vol. 1., pXIII.
- [2] Peter J. Chelkowski, Taziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran, p5.6.

A collection of biographies of the martyred Imams entitled "Rowzato Shohada", written by Kashefi (D. 1504), a preacher at the Teymurid Court, became so popular that the customary Shi'ite recitation of the stories of the martyrdoms acquired the generic name rowzeh-khwani [1]

Later, whenever there was a gathering to mourn the martyrdom of the Imam, a man would recite - eloquently and dramatically - passages from the book to the accompaniment of wailing and lamentation. Centuries after the event, although many other books have been written along the same lines, and although the narration of the sufferings and martyrdom of the Imam have undergone changes to the extent that the narratives are now in full verse and recited by heart, none the less the procedure is still called Rawza-Khwānī. The reciters of the book usually chanted the passages to effect a greater impression on the audience. Thus, the outstanding chanters had to have a good voice and some knowledge of Iranian music.

In the first year of the 16th century when, under the Safavid dynasty, Persia, which had always been a strong cultural power, again became a political power, Shi'ite Islam was established as the state religion and was used to unify the country especially against the aggressive Ottomans and Uzbeks who were adherents of Sunnite Islam. The Muharram observances received royal encouragement; commemoration of Hosain's martyrdom became a patriotic as well as a religious act [2].

Ta'ziya plays may be divided into several categories. One of them is comic and light religious plays which can be divided into two groups:

[1] Navabpour, OP cit p61.

[2] Peter J. Chelkowski Op. cit. P.6.7.



1. Plays which are about the rightly-guided Caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān) and which in fact poke fun at them. It has been mentioned that when the Shia sect became the official religion of Iran during the Safavid period, enmity between the Shia and the Sunnis was continuously encouraged by the government of the time in order to compete with the powerful Sunni Ottomans of Turkey.

This state of affairs prevailed until much later times and only during the reign of Nādir Shāh Afshār did it relax somewhat. It was inevitable that plays of this kind would come into existence. As examples of this class of play, The Battle of Khaybar, The Garden of Fadak, The Caliphate of 'Umar, Yazdigird, and The Battle of Trench may be cited.

2. Comedies whose stories are not about the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. These plays are not as riotous as the former group and most of the stories are taken from the narratives of the Quran. Among these are Yūsuf and Zūlaykhā, The Binding of the Thumbs of the Demon and Solomon and Bilqīs.

Another group of plays that are concerned with the events after the tragedy at Karbalā, that is after the martyrdom of Imam Husain, like The Remorse of Yazīd, The Causes of the Returning, Shahrbanū, and The Secession of Mukhtār.

The stories and characters of Ta'ziya drama are all known by the audience in advance, and all are written in poetry. Basically, these stories came from the tragedy of Karbalā. The Ta'ziya plays do not regard the unities, and there are no barriers of time and

the space. Most of the Ta'ziya repertoire includes Shi'ite stories either from the tragedy of Karbala or Quranic stories as its core, and the plays are based on a development of these stories. The texts of Ta'ziya plays were simple but the stories were strong enough to engage the participation of the audience. These texts gradually became more developed and literary.

In fact, it may be said that the 20th century rural Taziye is the unconscious avant-garde of the 'poor theatre' [1].

The tragic story of Ta'ziya plays is built around the character of Imam Husain. The female characters are played by males, often by a young boy.

Regarding the characteristics of Ta'ziya, the principal requirements for a performer of Ta'ziya (ta'ziyakhwān) are that he should be educated, have a fine voice, a good name, experience and enthusiasm. All performers of Ta'ziya recite their part from a script that is given to them an hour before the start of the play, and they have not practiced it. Each script contains only the poetic lines relating to the actor (shabīkhwān). The script is then acted out with the addition of the movements and actions of the actors themselves as they perform, influenced by the experience they have gained in the part in previous years and under the guidance of the director (fihrist gardān). A great variety of melodies is used and the poetic lines can be sung in various dastgāhs. The performer (shabīkhwān) is free to choose the melody he likes. And as a result of this many folk tunes and old melodies have been preserved.

[1] Chelkowski, Op. Cit. P.16.

Female shabīkhwāns wear a long black dress that reaches their ankles and they also put on a black veil and scarf. Those who play the Imams and the Martyrs wear a black cloak (qabā) together with a black turban [1].

The thing which makes ta'ziya special is the fact that most of the performers (shabīkhwāns) are from amongst the best and most educated people and the ceremonies are performed out of devotion to the Prophet's family.

Naqqālī and Its Relation with Shabīh-Khwānī

Naqqālī is an art whereby the naqqāl (story-teller) tells and recites a poem or a story before an audience, employing all his powers and performing all the roles. In the course of this recitation the naqqāl aims to communicate interesting pieces of advice. These characteristics are enough to show that he must clearly have total control over his voice, so that he can vary the pitch and tone wherever he wants at just the right moment yet preserving the balance; and so that he can increase or lessen the volume at will and according to the requirements of the subject. He must even have mastery over his different moods and facial expressions, sometimes needing to show anger, love, disobedience or oppression.

[1] Murtazā Hunarī, Ta'ziya Dar Khūr, Ministry of Art and Culture, 1955 A.D., P.7

And he has smoothly and with ease to combine his inner wishes and desires with the running tone of his narration and show their reflection in his facial expression. He has to speak like a hero, laugh with the audience, cry with them, cry out with them in joy and join them in grief and mourning. Until twenty or thirty years ago naqqāls sometimes used to put on chain-mail and helmets, and likewise gave these also to their pīshkhwān to wear [1]. Thus they would act out the death of Suhrab as they narrated it. Sometimes when they were going to put on a show about the killing of Suhrāb, Shīrzād or Isfandiyār they would invite the leading members of the local quarter (mahalla) to the qahva khāna. Most of these meetings fell on a Thursday evening. And at the end of this type of gathering the naqqāl would be asked to intercede for Suhrāb, Shīrzād and the others and perform rawza. He used to sing and pray. It is interesting to note that even today two particular traits, clearly those of the naqqāl, are evident in ta'ziya: first the mournful signing in certain of the dastgāhs of Iranian music as used by the mazlūmkhwān-hā (victims) and which is a hang-over from religious naqqālī. Second, the exaggerated modes of expression full of life and pomp as used by the ashqiyā (wicked ones) and which is a hang-over from epic naqqālī.

[1] The pīshkhwān is man who give recitations before the beginning of the show.



MAWLUDI

The Bride of the Quraish (or the Bride of Bilqīs)

One of the theatrical presentations especially for women which may be called a kind of female religious or miracle play is The Bride of the Quraish.[1]

This play is usually performed on the occasion of the Birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad or on the anniversary of his Sending. The players, all women, number from five to seven. The performance is customarily opened with prayers and praises of the Prophet and Imam ʿAlī. The story in brief is thus: on the third day after the death of Lady Khadija (the wife of the Prophet and mother of Fāṭima), the Quraish tribe holds a wedding celebration and some women are sent to the Prophet in order to invite his daughter Fāṭima to attend. The motive for extending this invitation is to show disrespect to her in her mourning and sorrow, and at the same time to flaunt their own position and wealth. The Prophet declines the invitation for Fāṭima, but Gabriel is sent by God to instruct him to let her go. But Fāṭima who has only old and ragged clothes to wear is ashamed. At that instant Gabriel and several other angels appear bringing rich garments and ornaments for her and she goes to the wedding wearing them. The bride, seeing Lady Fāṭima so magnificently attired, suddenly suffers a stroke and dies on the spot. The Quraish tribesmen prostrate themselves before Fāṭima, kissing her hands and begging her to intercede with God so that the bride be brought back to life. Lady Fāṭima prays and the bride is revived. Many of the women assembled for the wedding accept Islam.

[1] Bahrām Bayzāi, Op Cit. P.P. 162, 163.

This play is accompanied by the rhythmic beating of tubs, poetry, and song, and the performers wear special costumes. The spectators, all women, assist the performers in the production. During the course of this Mawlūdī (Nativity) gathering, whoever has a special need or wish prays to God that it be granted [1].

Muharram Commemorations, Rawza-Khwānī

Rawza-Khwānī is a theatrical representation of a tragic and religious tale, the dramatic narration of the life and death of Shi'ite martyrs. These recitals were taken from the Rawzat al-Shuhadā'. Rawza-Khwānī is static. The narrator, a mullāh is seated on a raised pulpit, his audience gathered in a semi-circle either in a house or takiyya. Rawza-khwānī uses partly narration and partly singing; when narration, the same style as naqqālī is used and when singing, one of the dastgāhs of Persian traditional music which is mostly sad and mournful.

In cities such as Meshed, where the priests set their faces against theatrical representations, the populace attends ruzakhana, or recitals of tragic tale, which are given by the mullahs in different houses. Three or four priests will be hired by a pious man to give a recital, and the hearers attend in black clothes and carry large pocket handkerchiefs. It is de rigueur to weep profusely, even though some priests have not the power of moving the listening crowds; but to be unmoved stamps a man at once as an unbeliever. The priests say that such a one will be consigned to hell at his death, while every tear shed in remembrance of Husein washes away many sins [2].

[1] Dr M.J. Mahjub, Traditional Persian Drama, Op. Cit. P.11

[2] Ella C. Sykes, Persia and its People, P155-156.

Rawza-khwānī and its more developed form Ta'ziya-khwānī, greatly helped to preserve Persian classical music. Persian traditional music survived under religious cover, especially that of Ta'ziya [1]

Nawheh-Khwānī

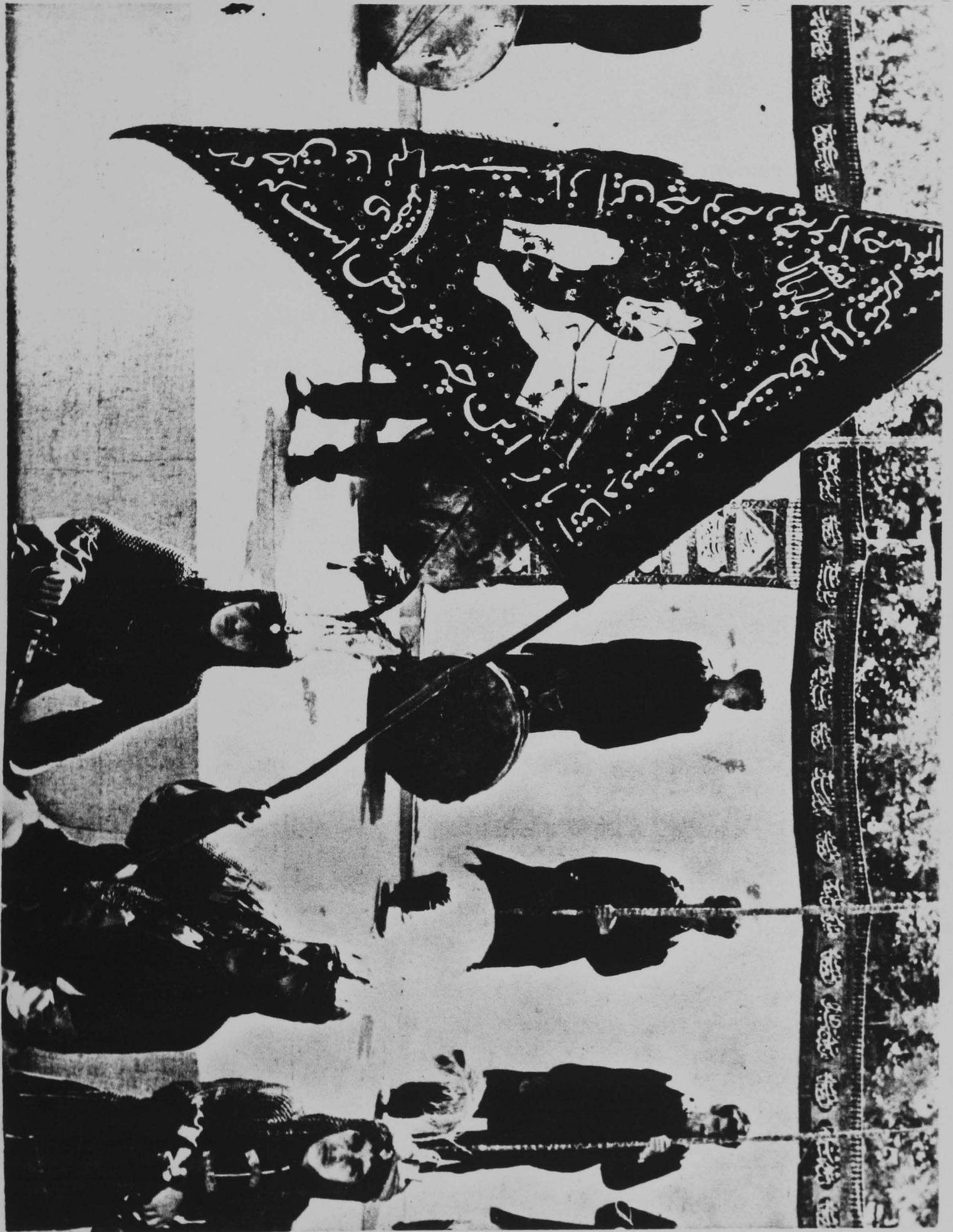
One of the important activities which commemorate the month of Muharram is the formation of the Dasteh (group). A Dasteh consists of a group of people gathered into a religious procession. All wearing black, they begin with processions, beating their bare breasts, and singing sad and grieving songs. These songs, which are called Nawheh, reflect the Shi'ite Muslim's sentiments towards the martyrdom of Imm^a Husayn.

When the Muharram begins, the devout give up shooting and their usual amusements. They dress in black, leaving part of the chest bare, and walk with naked feet in the different processions, beating their breasts with much vigour. Princes and merchants join processions for one, two, or more days, especially if they have recovered from any illness [2]

These dastehs may be observed at their best during the last ten days of Muharram, until 'Ashūrā, the day of Imam Husayn's martyrdom. Most of these dastehs show the scenes of 'Ashūrā with great theatricality.

[1] R.A. Khāliqī, Sarguzasht-i-mūsiqī-yi Irān, Safī 'Alī Shāh Tehran - 1353/1974 p.p.332-336

[2] Ella C. Sykes, Persia and its People, p149.



Scenes such as the cut off and bleeding head of Imam Ḥusayn placed upon a tray accompanied by the singing of Quranic verses or the Azān (the actor's body is concealed from the spectators); camels with hundreds of pigeons flying over them; horses painted to appear covered in blood representing the famous horse Zuljanāh of Imam Ḥusayn; lions (actors acting as lions), drummers and musicians playing sad melodies, groups of musicians playing lutes, clarinets, trumpets and tabl (big drum) could be observed in these processions and tragic carnivals. These events took place in the streets of cities and villages in Iran. Binning gives a description showing how ta'ziya and these festivals were related.

Towards the end of October, the Moharram festival commenced. This feast is of ten day's duration, The principal day is the tenth and last, called the ashoora or more commonly, roozi katl (day of massacre), as on this day Hussein was slain at Karbala. Many Persians fast during this day. In various parts of the city, were erected takiyas or temporary theatres, roofed with canvas, in which was represented a kind of dramatic performance, celebrating the melancholy fate of these holy personages, as style of drama much akin to the religious shows, denominated mysteries and moralities once common in England; and as in those shows, the female parts are acted by boys [1].

However, these religious ceremonies and festivals were parts of a ta'ziya as a whole and nawha-khwani, rawza-khwānī, and dasta all helped to present traditional Persian drama and traditional Persian music.

[1] Robert B. M. Binning, Two Years' Travel in Persia, Ceylon, Vol. II, London. W. M. H. Allen & Co, 1857, PP 409-410.

Traditional Music in Iran and Its Relation with Iranian Traditional Theatre

While the nature of Persian music is already known to the Persian people, it may be necessary to give a brief background and to explain some of the technical aspects of traditional Persian music in order to give some idea of the subject to non-specialist readers.

Historical Background

Owing to religious, social and political pressures, Persian music has the peculiarity of having developed very slowly over the past 3,000 years. Research has been hindered by the lack of material and by the fact that, until the twentieth century, most music was passed down by rote and was not notated. However, we can be fairly sure that present-day Persian classical music is similar to that of ancient Greece. Both kinds of music are improvised using melody types (nomoi or dastgāh). The Sassanian period was a golden age for the flourishing of Persian music. From A.D. 224 to 642 musicians enjoyed an exalted status at their court and music flourished, especially under King Khusraw Parviz II (A.D. 591-628). Many musicians worked under his patronage [1], such as Ramtīn, Bāmsād, Nakisā, Āzād, Sarkash and the most important - Bārbad.

[1] H. Farhat. (Iran Art Music), New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. ed Stanley Sadie, London 1980, P. 292

During the Sassanian period, music reached a high level of development. It was only at the court of the Sāmānid dynasty (874-999 A.D.), based at Bukhara, that an important revival of Persian literature and music took place. This is where Ibn Sīnā (980-1037 A.D.), an important writer on music, lived and worked. Besides being a doctor of medicine and politically active, he wrote on music in the Kitāb-Shifā and the Kitāb-Najāt.

Among the great Persian theoreticians during this period we should include the name of Al-Fārābī (872-950 A.D.), whose writing on scales, intervals, modes, rhythms and the construction of intervals became the basis for many later Muslim theorists [1].

Unlike Ibn Sīnā, he was a practical musician and also a member of the Sufi branch of Islam. The Sufis, in contrast to the main branch of Islam which on the whole disapproved of music, believed that it was mainly through music that people could achieve a closer recognition of God. Thus, they championed music, and it is significant that most of the important Persian musicians of the late medieval and modern period were either members of Sufi orders or influenced by them.

[1] H. Farhat, The Dastgah Concept of Persian Music, (Diss. U. California), 1965 P.7

In addition, many of them wrote mystic poetry. During the twelfth century, many of Fārābī's works were translated into Latin, and through the Arab presence in Spain his works came to be used widely in European universities. This was one of many important means by which theories from the East were incorporated into European culture [1].

Even after the Mongol invasion, Persians continued to write theoretical treatises as they had done under Arab domination. However, the terrible reality experienced by the Persian people during the Mongol period left a legacy of great mystic poetry, which is of importance in the history of the country's music. The history of poetry in Persia has always been closely linked to that of music, which poetry featuring significantly in the music. Prominent poets include the thirteenth century poets Sādi and Rūmī, and the fourteenth century poet Hāfiz, whose poems have been used in Iranian music for a long while. Works of art from the Turko-Mongol period depict many instruments, including the lute (ūd), the harp (chang), the kettle-drum (qudum), cymbals (sinj), the oboe (surnā), the vertical flute (nāy), the psaltery (q. ānūn) and the trumpet (buru)[2]

[1] Ella Zonis, Classical Persian Music, an Introduction, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, P.33

[2] H.G. Farmer, An outline History of Music and Musical, A Survey of Persian Art, ed. Pope and Ackerman Oxford, 1939. P.P. 2783-2804.

The renaissance of Persian culture started under the Safavid dynasty, after many centuries of foreign domination. Unlike other arts which flourished in the Safavid era, music was not favoured. This may be linked to the renewed emphasis on religion. The Safivids made the Shia branch of Islam the official state religion; while encouraging religious writings, they opposed the deviance of the Sufis, who had always been the main supporters of music. At this time music lost its social standing and respectability and consequently suffered a loss in patronage.

From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, no important treatises were written on the theory of music. Despite the early preoccupation with the theoretical side of music, this lapse created the idea among musicians that in fact their music had no theoretical basis, but was a purely practical art. It was during the twentieth century that there was a renewed interest in theory. At the beginning of the century there were two significant figures in the field of Persian music, Mīrzā 'Abdullāh [1] and 'Alī Naqīvazīrī. [2] Another most important figure at the time was Mūsā Marūfī [3]. Persian traditional music is an art which had traditionally been confined to small groups of performers, often just one or two and a small audience.

[1] Khāliqī, Op. Cit. P.P. 115.120

[2] See Khāliqī, Sarguzasht-i Musiqī-yi Īrān, Op. Cit, II edition

[3] Ibid P.112

Persian traditional Music

Traditional Persian music or Iranian classical music was rarely performed in public before the twentieth century. This was a result of the hostility of the religious authorities.

Music was restricted therefore to royal courts, parties at private homes, and to the gatherings of certain Sufi orders. Persian music is usually played by a small group of performers. Persian classical instruments are gentle and quiet. The nature of this music is improvisatory and creative. The core of each piece is a brief and simple musical idea which the player expands during the performance by means of improvisations into a large and elaborate composition.

This repertoire, therefore, is merely a point of departure and source of inspiration, in which the musician is at once both performer and composer. As a result, no two performances by different musicians will be the same, and even performances by the same may differ. A variety of terms or names are referred to identify Persian music: Mūsiqī-yi-Asīl (noble music); Dastgāh-i-mūsiqī, or the music of the Radīf and Mūsiqī-yi-Sunnatī (traditional music). The repertory is known as the Radīf which literally means "Row". The radīf of Persian music includes about three to four hundred pieces known as gūshahā. The exact number is not known and there is continual disagreement about this among musicians.

Persian Traditional Instruments

The instruments most used for classical music in Iran are generally quiet, with a subtle tone which highlights the melodic and ornamental nuances. Usually a single melodic instrument is used, with the accompaniment of a tunbak (goblet drum) in the rhythmic parts.

The melodic instruments used for the performance of classical music in Iran are: tār and the sitār, from the family of long-necked lutes; a bowed stringed instrument, the kamāncha; a struck zither or dulcimer, the santūr and a vertical flute, the nāy. These are widely used throughout Iran. All of the instruments may be used alone or in ensemble, for solo work or accompaniment [1].

A Glance at the Technical Aspects of Iranian Traditional Music

Although founded on the same general principles as Arabic, Turkish, and even Indian music, the traditional music of Iran is an independent and distinct system that must be understood on its own terms.

The music of Iran has experienced many changes, particularly in this century. Persian music is partly composed, partly improvised. The traditional music of Persia is preponderantly instrumental, but the style as well as the terminology is derived from vocal models;

[1] Ella Zonis, Op. Cit, P.P156-175.

the words of both composed and improvised singing are usually taken from the great classics of Persian literature and from the poetry of Sufism, the mystical movement of Islam which has always been concentrated in Iran.

The improvisations, which form the central portions of performances, are based on a model - the radīf - which a student must memorise painstakingly before he may improvise upon it in his own personal style.

The scales of Persian music are complex, using besides the whole and half tones found in Western music, three-quarter and five-quarter tones. When Persian musicians use Western notation they employ special signs to supplement the system: ♭ (Koron) to show a quarter-tone flat, and ♯ (Sori) to show a quarter-tone sharp.

Rhythm is also complex, extending from the completely free, though mainly intermediate forms, to the sharp, driving repeated patterns of the chāhār mizrāb.

One of the most important elements in Iranian traditional theatre, both Ta'ziya and Rū-hawzī, is traditional music. Both Ta'ziya and Rū-hawzī employ special Radīfs and Dastgāhs to achieve their aim better. However, certain Radīfs and Dastgāhs of Persian traditional music with certain instruments have been used for each form, either Ta'ziya or Rū-hawzī; sad and doleful tunes for Ta'ziya, joyful and rejoicing tunes for Rū-hawzī.

Traditional Iranian music, imbued with original vocal and instrumental characteristics, is considered one of the richest kinds of music in the world.

In addition to the common intervals of Western music, Iranian music enriches itself with special intervals which are called quarter-tones. These intervals are not always quarter-tones, but are constantly variable owing to their function. The intervals used in Iranian music are comprised of the major and minor keys, plus those special quarter-tones which are characteristic of Iranian music.

Each Iranian Dastgāh is based upon a very distinctive scale. The position and preponderance of the notes in each scale creates the character of each Dastgāh. Iranian music consists of seven Dastgāhs and five Āvāzes (small Dastgāhs), all of which have various parts called Gūshas (corners).

The seven Dastgāhs and five Āvāzes are as follows:

Dastgāh Māhūr, Dastgāh Shūr, Dastgāh Chāhārgāh, Dastgāh Humāyūn, Dastgāh Navā, Dastgāh Rāst-panjgāh, Dastgāh Sihgāh.

Āvāz Abū-ʿatā, Āvāz Bayāt-i-Turk, Āvāz Afshārī, Āvāz Dashtī, Āvāz Bayāt-i-Iṣfahān [1].

Persian traditional music is a great and inseparable part of popular art and theatre in Iran. It plays a major role in Ta'ziya, Rū-hawzī, Khayma-shab-bāzī, Naqqālī, Shāhnāma-Kwānī, Zurkhāna, Rawza-khwānī, Nawha Khwānī, and Shamāyīl-gardānī.

[1] See Ella Zonis, Op Cit p.p. 62-96

Ta'ziya Music

Over the course of its history of some thousands of years Iranian music has been affected by its contacts with civilisations and cultures such as those of the Greeks, the Turks, the Mongols, the Arabs and others. These contacts have produced mutual influences. At the same time Iranian music has borrowed from other music what was conducive to its growth and development, while preserving its own identity and lending the borrowed element an Iranian character. During the course of all the ups and downs that Iranian music has experienced it was in the Sassanid period that it reached its apogee.

The Iranian music that we have today is what has been passed down from the Qajar era.

The music which is known in modern Iran as traditional music (musiqī-yi aṣīl) is spiritual in character. It has been nurtured and given its strength by the real spiritual guides (i.e. not the clergy). It has been passed down to us by ear (by word of mouth). Regarding this music it has been said that music is a form of melody, that is, it is formed out of a comparatively large number of small melodies which in Iranian music are called gūshas. The gūshas follow a strict code or system which is called radīf [1].

Every dastgāh, in consideration of the intervals its notes represent, may be seen to have its own special effect. But the important factor in determining the dastgāh's character is the style of performance.

[1] Dr Daryūsh Şafāt and Ḥasan Mashhūn, Dumaq āla dar bāra-yi Musiqī-yi- Irān, Intishārāt-i Jashn-i Hunar, P.62

Musicians, for example have classed Mahur as joyful because of its natural intervals, although at the same time sad melodies can be produced in this dastgāh. In the dastgāh chāhārgāh sections are performed which are at complete variance with its essentially sorrowful character. Examples of this are the martial sections that are sung in the zūrkhāna. There is a gūsha in this dastgāh called Rajaz in which a wedding tune is set, whereas the gūsha Mansūri in the same dastgāh is sad and heart-rending.

The dastgāh-i-humāyūn is also like this. It is similarly on the face of it a dastgāh which produces sadness, but in its performance in the zūrkhāna we are on the contrary rather struck by its pompous nature. The reason for this is the presence of the drum (Tonbak) which works by dividing up and emphasising certain notes.

Āvāz-i Dashti is also in a sad key, but if it is performed in this style it becomes transformed into something happy. Thus we see that every dastgāh is a collection of numerous gūshas, each of which has its own character, and that overall there exists no unity between the various gūshas. Not all the gūshas of the dastgāh Māhūr, for example, possess the joyful quality which is attributed to this dastgāh. An example of this is the gūsha Shikasta in this dastgāh which is similar to Āvāz-i Afshāri, or the gūsha Dilkash which is like Shūr, or Rāk which is very similar to Āvāz-i Isfahān [1].

[1] Riḏā Qāsimi, Musiqi Dar Ta'ziya, Majalla-yi Rastākhiz-i Javān, N.90 1356/1977 p.71.

In fact, unlike the āvāz and the dastgāh, every gūsha more or less has its own particular character. And because each gūsha is a melody and every melody must have a particular character, so some gūshas are either very happy or very sad, while others are a mixture of the two.

In order to make an approximate judgement about the different types of Iranian music we can look at the intervals in the various scales. In this fashion, therefore, if we look at the scales of Shūr or Si-gāh we see that the intervals are, for example, of the order of three-quarters of a tone, three-quarters of a tone, a whole tone, three-quarters of a tone, a whole tone and so on. And so their intervals are moderate and are not greatly different from each other. This is the reason why, as regards their character, these two dastgāhs are tempered and do not excite strong feelings. Chāhārgāh, however, is by no means uniform as to its intervals. The interval between its first two notes, for example, is three-quarters of a tone, between the next two one and one-quarter tones and between the third and fourth notes one-half a tone. As a result of the differences between the intervals a lack of moderateness and uniformity is produced.

If exciting festive and epic pieces are performed in this dastgāh, it is precisely because of this arousing quality which it has. Māhūr, however, has a natural scale and so when a sound is produced in Māhūr it takes other sounds with it so that we hear everything as one sound. Furthermore, it does not have quite the same exciting quality that the dastgāh Chāhārgāh has.

In this fashion we can say in general that Chāhārgāh is exciting and Māhūr has a natural scale.

Humāyūn and Isfahān have both excitement and gentleness. Shūr has a scale of moderate character and in character Sigāh too is similar to it; it also has a sad and sorrowful quality. Navā is mysterious and is executed in the scale of Shūr, but its furūd is not in the scale of Shūr. Rāst-i Panjgāh, from the point of view of its scale, is like Mahur, or calm and attractive.

And finally, the āvāzes which have been derived from the dastgāh Shūr generally have the same quality as Shūr, but are more powerful. For example, if we are looking for something sorrowful in Shūr, then we choose Dashti, or if we want to induce a sense of contemplation we use Afshāri. The thing which finally determines the effect is the style and method of performance [1]

How Music is put to use in ta'ziya:

Ta'ziya usually employs two kinds of music, vocal and instrumental. Pieces qit'as are most often played before the start of the ta'ziya for two reasons: first, in order to announce the performance and attract people's attention, since ta'ziya is usually performed in an open space.

[1] See, Mahmūd Karimī, Radīf Āvāzi Mūsīqī-yi Sunnatī-yi Iran, M. Taqī Masūdiya, Tehran, Surūsh. 1985.

Second, in order to create the right atmosphere and prepare the audience, loud instruments such as the tabl, duhul (large drums) and trumpet are generally used.

When the ta'ziya actor gets ready for battle the music that is played is also martial music. And as a rule this sort of music is also used to divide the scenes. At times, such as for the donning of battle dress, the music aims to predict the turn of events and as such takes on a discursive role.

The non-vocal music in ta'ziya by and large consists of attractive sounds that together serve to reinforce and sometimes express the general feeling of each scene as need be. The decorative and splendid aspects of its sound are recalled; they represent martial music. The reinforcing and instigating aspects lend an air of inspiration and suggestion to the scene. The nawhakhwāns on the one hand, and the harmony of the trumpet, cymbals and drum (kūs) on the other, create now moments of sadness with separation, defeat and enslavement and now warlike scenes. In battle scenes with sword-fights, the cymbals are most prominent and conjure up the sound of clashing arms [1])

[1] Sādiq Humāyūnī, ʿAnāṣur-i-Sāzanda Ta'zia, Majalla-yi Rūdakī, fifth year, Tehran 1355, 1976 p5.

Although most of the singing in ta'ziya is done without instrumental accompaniment, this is not always the case. At those points when this occurs the clarinet and flute (nāy) is usually used [1].

During the performance the ta'ziya singers naturally have to observe completely all the details and niceties of the musical mode, the dastgāh. The choice of dastgāh is also taken on the basis of experience and it is not without reason that:

...each character maintained his singing in one particular key. Hurr would sing in Chahārgāh in order to show his bravery and bravado. The women would sing in Humayun or Shushtari. But the singing was always simple and was unaccompanied by instruments except for sometimes when they would sing along with a clarinet or flute (nayy-i labak) especially in Bayāt, Dashtī, Dayr Rāhib and Ta'ziya-yi Sulaymān [2]

Those who sing the parts of Imams generally sing in dignified modes such as Panjgāh, Hudī and Navā. Hazrat-i 'Abbās, who is martyred in the lap of his father and took his severed hand up in his other hand, sings the gūsha Rāk. For this reason this gūsha became known as Rāk-i 'Abd Allāh [3]. If the call to prayer is performed during the course of the ta'ziya it is done so in Āvāz-i Kurdī-yi Bayāt. Balance is observed in the passages of question and answer, so that if the Imam and Hazrat-i 'Abbās are involved in such a piece, and the Imam is singing in Shūr, then 'Abbās will give his reply in Shūr, also.

[1] 'Abdullāh Muṣṭawfī, Sharh-i-zindagāniyi-man, Tehran, first ed. ilmi, 1342, 1963 P.164.

[2] Rashīd Yāsami, Adbiyāt Muāsir-i-Īrān. First Ed. Tehran, 1316, 1937. P. 124

[3] A. Mustawfi, Op. Cit. p.390

The harmony on the one hand of the nawhakhwāns (singers of elegy) and on the other of the instruments such as the drum (kūs), trumpet and cymbals sometimes conjured up mournful moments of separation, defeat and enslavement and sometimes scenes of battle. In the sword-fights the cymbals are most prominent in order to represent the sound of clashing weapons. The drum (tabl) is used especially when characters came on stage or when a decisive event occurs. In the second instance the drum (tabl) will fulfill the function of predicting events. The role of the clarinet and even the trumpet is to play touching and sad tunes during the mournful scenes and so make them more effective. In spite of all this these principal instruments as a rule are played together and it seldom happens that they accompany the singing. The reason for this is probably that to have instrumental accompaniment might work to the detriment of the poetry, in that it would be less clearly audible and so the audience would grasp less of its content. So perhaps the fact that it could hinder the singing and its audibility is the basic reason for this.

[1]. Nawhakhwānī involves singing in unison, employs interesting and lively music.

....Something about these groups (dasta) that is interesting is the harmony and smoothness of their movements together and their theatrical quality that sometimes becomes dance. In addition there is unison which features in 'nawha' (elegy) and in 'dam', and also the intricate adornments with abstract patterns which they move about, all of this giving the group (dasta) grandeur. The groups (dastas) usually move along with the rhythm of breathing while a single performer sings a nawha or someone plays the cymbals and the movements are patterned accordingly [2]

[1] Bayzai, Op. Cit, p155.

[2] Ibid, p50.

The music of speech in ta'ziya

What distinguishes ta'ziya from a modern play, aside from the characteristics of the play itself, are the facts that its speech is in poetic form and it is recited in a musical form.

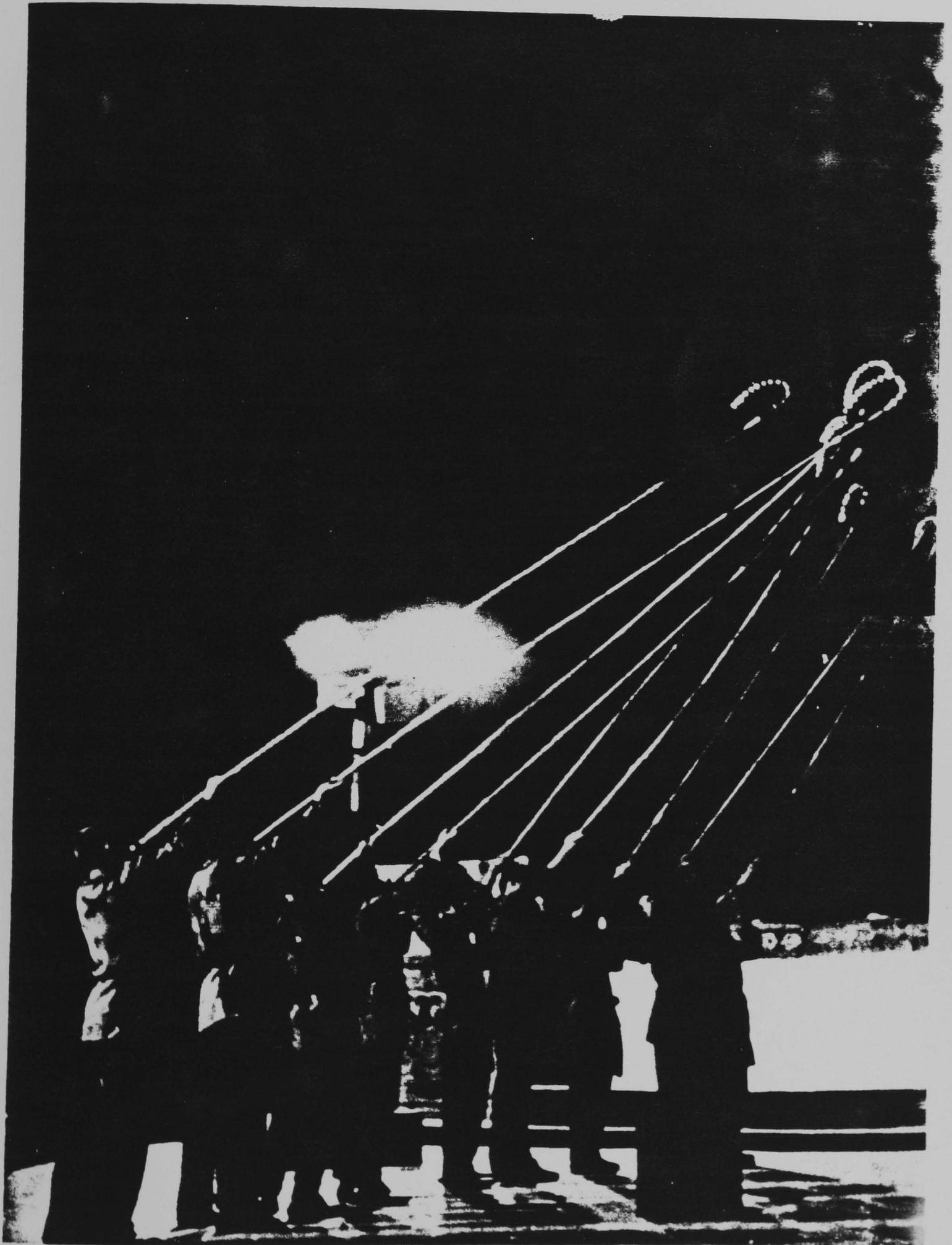
Iranian Musical Instruments Used in Ta'ziya

The Nāy

The simplest and perhaps the oldest instrument used for the performance of Persian Classical music and in ta'ziya is the Nāy. The Nāy is made of a long piece of cane. Near the lower end are five holes on the front and generally one hole in the back. The player holds his instrument slanting downwards, blowing across the upper edge. An unusual feature of the Nāy is the two different mouth positions. To blow the tones of the lower register, the player holds the instrument against one side of his nearly-closed lips. The notes of the upper register are produced by inserting the end of the instrument between the two upper front teeth.

Duhul

The duhul is a shallow drum used to accompany the surnā. The duhul is a large instrument from 60 to 120 centimetres in diameter but its depth is only 20 centimetres. The duhul is covered on both sides with goat skin and is played with a wooden stick.



Naqqāra

The naqqāra is a kind of large kettle drum that is actually a pair of drums, one larger than the other. The body of the naqqāra is made either of copper or heavy pottery, to which sheepskin is attached by means of a rope.

Karnā

The karnā is an extremely long trumpet, often seven or eight feet in length, with a wide bell.

Surnā

The surnā, a shrill wind instrument, is the principal instrument for celebrations in Persian villages. In the cities, it is played for religious drama such as ta'ziya. The surnā is a short, conical instrument of about thirty five centimetres in length, the bore being two and half centimetres at the top and seven centimetres at the bell. The mouth piece is a double reed. European instruments such as trumpet, cymbals and clarinet are also widely used in ta'ziya music.

CHAPTER IV
THE EVOLUTION OF TAQLĪD AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF IRANIAN TRADITIONAL THEATRE
(TAKHT-I-HAWZĪ OR RŪ HAWZĪ).

The term taqlīd refers to a kind of Iranian play that is light rather than sad in tone and strictly speaking consists of comedy. Originally the play was performed quite freely at no particular site or time, and depending on what was possible, might be performed on a platform set up over a hawz or small pool, in a garden, on a tea-house platform or in a hall. Eventually, as it evolved, it came to be performed on the stage of an auditorium. Taqlīd dates back to Safavid times, though it was in Qajar times that taqlīd had one actor, then parallel with other theatrical trends it developed in the direction of a full play. The principal performers of the first of these light and amusing plays were the dalqaks or jokers. The dalqak's job is to tell jokes and make fun of people, and these jokes rely basically on improvisation. By and large he uses his own mental powers and imitates what he finds in nature. In fact, the dalqak works by mimicking and exaggerating nature. Despite the development of theatrical knowledge improvisation still persists to an extent. Gradually the plots in taqlīd expanded and instead of one actor, have come to include two or more performers. In addition to this expansion the plot has also developed, and so too there have been developments with the characters and the creation of roles.[1]

[1] Bahrām Bayzāi, Op. Cit. P.51.

The Arab invasion abolished most of the pre-Islamic festivals which they regarded as pagan festivals. Pre-Islamic kings always had court jesters and clowns, and these were independent of the festivals and ceremonies. Their arts somehow survived and even grew and developed through different phases, one of these forms being the Maskharah-Bāz (clown) who was named Ghūlak (lit. a small ogre). In fact, ghūlak was a funny character imitating an ogre using a mask and wearing multi-coloured clothes. Sometimes ghūlak did not use a mask but painted his face and then started with a funny and dramatic dance. Bayza'i believes this character may still be found in puppet shows in the south of Iran [1].

One of the first forms of taqlīd was Lālbāzī, a play without words, or in other words, pantomime. The reason for this may have been the lack of written text for this kind of performance. Lālbāzī was always based on stories which had a great deal of movement to fill the gap created by having no words. Bayzā'ī in his Namāyish dar Īrān (Theatre in Iran) gives an example of this kind of performance. The scene is a garden and the characters are a gardener, a passer-by and a tree; in this example, the tree is not used as a prop but is a character. The passer-by quietly enters the garden and goes across to pick some fruit from the tree. In the middle of this action, an amusing quarrel starts when the gardener

[1] Bahrām Bayzā'ī, Ibid. P.51.

comes and catches the passer-by. When the quarrel ends and the passer-by is gone the gardener sits down to rest with his back against the tree, but the tree changes its place in a ridiculous manner and so there is another funny and amusing act between tree and gardener [1]. Taqīd was a result of the development of theatrical forms such as Maskhara-bāzi and Baqqāl-bāzī (Lit. the play of the grocer), Kachalak-bāzī (Lit. bald-play), and Sūratak-bāzī or Rūband-bāzī (Lit. play with mask).

In the latter, actors walked on stilts wearing long robes. These comedies were performed in tea houses as well as in private houses on the occasion of marriages, births, and circumcisions. Masks are still used in today's popular comedies [2]. As with other forms of dramatic art one can say that the Safavid era was a landmark in the development of Persian comedy. This continued to develop until the end of the 19th century and eventually became known as Takht-i-hawzī or Rū-Hawzī and Siyāh-bāzī. The term Rū-hawzī literally means "over the pool", Takht-i-hawzī means "wooden beds over the pool" and Siyāh-bāzī means "black play". Rū-hawzī theatre is the most famous form of traditional comedy in Iran, comparable to Italian Commedia del Arte and French farce. Sir John Chardin gives some information in his description of traditional forms of amusement which were

[1] Bahrām Bayzā'i, Ibid, P.52.

[2] Farrokh Gaffary, Evolution of Rituals and Theatre in Iran, Iranian Studies, Autumn 1984, P. 372.

popular in the second half of the 17th century. This information leads us to see how these comic forms were mixed with games to amuse people.

One cannot well see it without having a dread upon one, especially when the Rope-Dancer to show his Strength and Activity, carries a Child upon his Shoulders, one Leg on one side, and the other on the other, that holds by the Forehead. They don't dance upon a strait Rope, as the Rope-Dancers in Europe do; but they make Leaps and Turns. Their finest Turn is this, They give the Rope-Dancer two hollow Basons, like Soop Dishes; he puts them upon the Rope, the bottoms of the Basons being one against the other and he sits in that Bason which is uppermost, having his Backside in the hollow of the Bason; he takes two Turns, backward and forward; then at the second Turn, he causes the undermost Bason to fall dexterously, and rest upon that which is uppermost, upon which he again takes two Turns, and then makes it fall again, and he himself is astride upon the Rope [1].

These forms of traditional amusement later become more popular and were regarded as one of the forms of the Ma'rika-giri. Besides these dancers and other forms, Chardin gives information about jugglers and puppet shows and Chashm Bandi (magic) another form of Ma'rika-giri.

Their Jugglers make use of Eggs instead of Balls under their Cups to play their Tricks withal: They put about seven or eight Eggs in a Bag, which they have stamp'd upon beforehand, and which they cause to be done by those of the Spectators, who have a mind to it; and in a moment afterwards they will cause these Eggs to become Pidgeons or Pullets.

....The Puppet-shows and Juglers ask no Money at the door as they do in our Country, for they play openly in the public Places, and those give 'em that will. They intermingle Farce, and Juggling, with a thousand Stories and Buffooneries, which they do sometimes Mask'd, and sometimes Un-mask'd, and this lasts two or three Hours: And when they have done, they go round to the Spectators and ask something; and when they perceive any one to be stealing off before they go to ask

[1] Chardin, Travels, P. 202.

him for any thing, the Master of the Company cries out with a loud Voice, and in an Emphatical manner, That he who steals away, is an Enemy to Ali. As who should say among us, An Enemy to God and his Saints. For two Crowns the Juglers will come to their House. They call these sort of Diversions Mascare, that is to say Play, Pleasantry, Raillerie, Representation; from whence comes our work Masquerade [1].

Besides the Persian Juglers, of which there are in all the Towns of the Kingdom, as I have been saying, there are Companies of Indian Juglers in the great Cities, especially at Ispahan, but who don't know any more than those of the Country. I admire at the Credulity of many Travellers, who have seiously reported that these Juglers know how to produce in a Moment, such and such a Tree loaden with Flowers and with Fruit; make Eggs hatch upon the Spot, and a thousand other wonderful things of that Kind" [2].

These descriptions are clear enough for us to see how this development was taking place, as he mentions Masquerade and actors wearing masks and he admires the ability of jugglers and conjurers. There were troupes of musicians and dancers in the seventeenth century. These troupes were called Mutribhā-yi majlisi [3].

Mutrib was the name given to those creators of joy (tarab) whom we nowadays call groups of musicians or an orchestra. There were two sorts of mutrib: first, those whose sole profession was music, and second, those who played music but had other jobs besides.

At that time, minstrels or musicians were categorised into two groups. Male groups consisted of a Tār player, Kamāncha player and drummer, plus one singer, one or two dancers and a few actors.

[1] Chardin, Travels, P. 203.

[2] Chardin, Travels, P. 203.

[3] Bayzāi, Op. Cit, P. 168

The dancers were in the main made up of pretty looking young men who would also wear women's clothes on occasion for their performances. These groups performed specifically for male gatherings. However, there were also women's groups entertained both male and female gatherings, usually taking part in wedding celebrations and large festivities. Depending upon the type of party given and the discernment of the host as to how much the group was worth paying, a choice would be made for either a first rate group of entertainers or rather in favour of a second rate group.

Naturally, the first class entertainers had a more glamorous repertoire and when invited to perform they would attend with a selection of trunks containing a variety of outfits for their performances. During the reign of Muẓaffar al-Din Shāh, women's musical groups such as Munavvar and Gulīn were highly fashionable and very famous [1].

According to Bayzā'ī, the final development of the characters like Ghūlak, Maskhara Dalqak (clown), and Şuratbāz (actor with mask), was Siyāh, the main character of Rū-hawzī plays.

The hilarious activities of characters such as Ghūlak, Şuratbāz, Dalqak and Maskharahā, the satirical songs of these jesters and street entertainers, and the mimes, whether or not including dance and funny performances, were all generally called Taqlīd and the people who performed these were called Muqallid or Taqlīdchī. Of the numerous types of Taqlīd some found a permanent form, for example Maskhara-bāzī, Dalqak-bāzī and Lāl-bāzī.

[1] Ruḥallāḥ Khāliqī, Sarguzasht-i-Mūsiqī Dar Īrān, Vol. I, Tehran, Safī'Alī Shāh, 1353/1974. P.P. 470-471

Amongst those entertainers one was known as Ghulak-baz who would dress as a Div for their performance of a particularly funny dance; he would wear a mask for this performance and also a colourful outfit.

The jesters whose performances were mainly satirical in content, who dressed in worn-out colourful clothes, and who would pass comic insinuations and make strongly sarcastic remarks, especially against the wealthy, were called Maskhara. Many of the characteristics of their acts were later taken by the Takht-i hawzī or black-faced clowns [1].

The Movement of Taqlid Towards Iranian Comedy Theatre

One of the most important places in which the process and development of taqlid may have started was the royal court. Shah 'Abbās the Safavid ruler (1588-1629) for his enjoyment and amusement had a few Dalqak (clowns) the most famous of whom were Dallala Qizī (a woman clown), Kachal Muṣṭafā (Muṣṭafā the bald) and the most distinguished, Kal 'Ināyat. Of these clowns Kachal Muṣṭafā had a terrible end. Falsafī writes about him thus:

A story about the wiles of Shah 'Abbās goes like this:

One day whilst being entertained by rope dancers he angrily orders his jester to leave the dais. The jester whose prerogative it was to follow the king everywhere except to his harem, leaves the dais, only to return again without the king's knowledge.

[1] Bayzā'i, Op. Cit. P.P. 51-52

Upon discovering his presence, the king, whether through genuine anger, or in order not to lose face amongst his followers, draws his sword from its sheath and severs the jester's head from his body; then in venomous anger Shah 'Abbās descends to the royal stables and departs leaving the poor man's body behind [1].

Karbalāi 'Ināyat, who was famous as Kal 'Ināyat ('Ināyat the bald) was a talented actor who performed different short plays for the Shah and his guests. Besides the King's court and his Divan Khāna (the interior courtyards), coffee houses (qahva khāna) became one of the main places for performing taqlīd. Coffee houses were large places mainly providing facilities for travellers, and one of the things they had was entertainment. Coffee houses usually had a platform in the middle for performing. These coffee houses were maybe the first indoor places to have performances for the public. These performances became regular and popular.

It is in the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh that we see that the Rū-hawzi theatre grows and reaches its peak. Peter Chelkowski believes that the ta'ziya was the groundwork which prepared the Iranian public for a secular theatre by the end of the nineteenth century.

[1] Naṣr Allāh Falsafī, Zindagāni-yi Shāh 'Abbās-i Avval, Third Edition, P. 129, cited, H. Nūr Bakhsh, Da'iqakhā-yi-mashhūr-i-Darbāri, P, 71-72.

The epic passion play of Iran had prepared the public to deal with modern drama. In some of its aspects it represents the early English-Latin mystery and miracle cycles, from which modern western drama evolved. Indeed by the end of the nineteenth century it was on the brink of giving birth to a secular Iranian theatre. This does not mean that the religious theatre would have disappeared; rather it would have paralleled the newly-emerged secular theatre, grown from the ta'ziyeh. Unfortunately, the native intellectual elite that had resisted other western-motivated innovations in literature joined in the campaign against the ta'ziyeh as merely a backward and superstition-ridden ritual. The production of western-style dramas was encouraged and praised by the whole spectrum of the literate public, as well as by the government. [1]

The Takiyya-yi dawlat (royal arena) indeed was not only used for the representation of the ta'ziya; it was built for that purpose only because of the religious authorities, but other comedies such as rū-hawzī were also performed on the stage of the same circular theatre. This is clear from the following account:

This Mushīra was a theatre near the Shams al-'Imāra which used to be called 'Tiyārt'. And when we were told to produce some taqlīd we did just that. I was seven when we were brought there; there was a play on at the Takiyya-i dawlat called Sulaymān and Bilqīs and it was played by Sayyid Muhammad Ta'ziyakhwān. Next there was Āqā Mu'addab who founded the traditional theatre (Ti'atr-i sunnatī). The ticket was one rial with two cups of tea..... Zabīh Allāh Khān also blacked up.

[1] Peter Chelkowski, The literary Genres in modern Iran. Iran under the Pahlavis. George Lenczowski, Editor, Hoover Institution Press, Stamford University, 1978, P. 360.

In fact no-one ever dared black up alongside him. You'd remember every word he said for the next five years and still laugh about it. Āqā Mahdī talked well and sang well and had a really beautiful voice [1].

In the reign of Ahmad Shah, in addition to homes and tea-houses taqlid was also performed in a few auditoria which had been created. At this time also ta'ziya plays such as 'Hazrat-i Sulayman and Bilqis' and 'Yusuf and Zulaykhā' were being performed in the Takīyya-yi dawlat at Tehran without any relation to the subject-matter of Āshūrā. Taqlid has been performed as an entertaining play at festivals, marriages and circumcision ceremonies for a very long time.

The taqlid groups were mainly a source of gaiety and amusement in many great celebrations and gatherings, but at the same time because of their critical nature they were also the cause of displeasure and anger on occasion. The lack of a script gave them the liberty to change and add to their speeches as they found fit. Their improvisatory skills were mainly used for expressing and looking into questions of interest to the general public at any given time. These taqlids would slowly develop in the progress of the show and songs and dances would also be gradually included.

[1] Interview with Muḥammad Yūsufī. Association of Theatre workers and artists of Iran, Bulletin No. 2, 1360/1981.

Due to the fact that religious authorities were against plays and play-houses, the taqlīd groups would also focus upon them as a subject for criticism. Such activities led to the gradual escalation of criticism and aversion of the religious authorities towards the theatre and in particular the theatre of the Dār al-Funūn school. Eventually the clergy built up their opposition towards theatrical practice and under their instigation the general public was also swayed against the Dār al-Funūn and finally theatrical practice at that place was prohibited. The factors which stopped the progress of development of the theatre were firstly religion, secondly pressure from the ruling authorities in the form of censorship and thirdly the belief of the general public who saw the performances of the Muqallid as something bad. Thus the anti-Taqlīd propaganda of the religious establishment forced the regressive trends in Taqlīd theatre.

The actors of comedies and joyous theatre were condemned and repressed; this kind of repression was so intense that some Muqallids and players, under pressure, retired from their professions, returned to the Maktabs and assumed the roles of Hājjiīs in their new lives. The degree of pressure at the time caused great players such as Ismā'īl Bazzāz, the master of Taqlīd, after the closure of Dār al-Funūn to renounce his role in that theatre and later to assume the role of a religious thinker [1].

[1] Hiva Goran, Kūshishhā-yi Nāfarjām, Intishārāt-i Āgāh, 1981, P.91

Later the evolution of these comedies and their increasing popularity led to their being staged in public. Usually Iranian houses have a pool in the middle of the yard, and the pool was covered by a wooden platform and on top of that a carpet, so the term Rū-hawzī (over the pool) or takht-i hawzī (wooden cover on the pool) became the common name for this kind of play. Later the same kind of act was also called siyah bāzī. Rū-hawzī's main character is black (Siyāh). He blackens his face and his hands with burnt cork and grease, and talks with the accent of former black Iranian slaves.

Maybe the origin of the black face comes from the time when Iranian Muslims brought black slaves from Mecca back home as servants. During the Safavid period, the Portuguese who were involved in building military fortifications on the southern coasts of Iran also brought a number of black African slaves. When the Portuguese departed they left the blacks behind [1].

The rū-hawzī stories came from varied sources, mainly from Persian folk tales. They were various types of plays, historical, epic, fantasy and plays dealing with everyday reality. As rū-hawzī was improvisatory and creative the stories were rather simple and not written.

[1] Reza Khaki, The development of the black-face clowns in traditional Iranian theatre, Iranian Centre for Performing Traditions, Shiraz Art Festival. International Seminar on Improvisatory Theatre, 19 August 1977.

The most famous character in rū-hawzī is Almās, a black servant. Names such as Mubārak and Yāqūt are also used for the same character. Characters in rū-hawzī as in Ta'ziya had a special name such as Siyāh-pūsh (the actor who always acts as black), Shāh-pūsh (the one who acts as a king), Vazir-pūsh (the actor who acts as prime minister), Zan-pūsh (the one who acts as a woman, usually a man dressed as a woman). The main character of rū-hawzī, Siyāh, usually criticises and makes fun of upper-class people, governors and even Islamic authorities, making use of funny and amusing language, and improvising whatever they thought would be appropriate at the time.

Rū-hawzī is a social and political form of theatre as well as being entertaining. One of its most important elements is dancing, singing, music and improvisations.

The ru-hawzi is a type of folk drama, staged in private parties and festivals. Using certain stock farcical characters, the actors improvise upon current local gossip, historical or political events, and Iranian lifestyles in general. It was intended that this nostalgic revival of the ru-hawzi would provide a fresh impetus to the world avant-garde theatre [1].

[1] Chelkowski, The Literary Genres in Modern Iran, Op. Cit. , P. 361.

Improvisation

Improvisation in rū-hawzī is such that everything is left up to the performer, with the result that each performance is different and apparently new. The actors in rū-hawzī possess varying degrees of skill and ability. For this reason, sometimes when one of the actors is rather weaker this gives greater room to the stronger actor and lets him swing the performance the way he likes. At times this tendency becomes so pronounced that the stronger and more subtle actor assumes overall control of the whole play. The actors in rū-hawzī need most especially to have a good knowledge of each other's character, acting ability, inclinations, taste and all the other things that have a bearing on the performance. Indeed it is these factors which most of all determine the shape the performance is to take. And the more the actors know each other the closer they are to each other, the more successful they are at improvisation.

The process of improvisation in rū-hawzī is just the same as it is in Iranian music. The Iranian musician freely improvises within the structure of a dastgāh in various gūshas and plays questions and answers within the limits of the dastgāh. The performance of rū-hawzī is the same: the basic theme of the play is determined by the players. Each actor assumes a role and within the established framework improvises by means of action and reaction. The rū-hawzī actor must be good at speaking, not in the sense that he should simply speak well, but rather that he should be capable of giving a discourse about a couple of lines that lasts some hours. His speaking ability is helped a good deal by a powerful imagination.

As a rule the performer talks for hours about social affairs that are going on around him.

The Style of Acting in the Performace of 'takht-i hawzī'

As has been said, the acting in takht-i hawzī plays relies upon a basis of the one man dalqak (Clown, jester) play: this term signifies acting and clowning according to the performer's character and potential for the imitation of others. There were, in the past, be it in the context of the family, the local neighbourhood or the town, individuals who were particularly witty and gifted in the way of mockery and being amusing and who used to make people laugh by gesturing and mimicking others. In addition, they understood people's points of weakness and where they could be criticised, and they did just that. By constitution these individuals were witty, amusing and always ready with a quip. These sorts of people gradually, as a result of their clowning and the reputation they gained therein, began to play at parties and gatherings and found themselves begin singled out for the purposes of humorous entertainment.

These short and humorous one-man plays gradually became professional and eventually this had the result that they left the private environment and came to be performed at large public gatherings. Most of these individuals had other jobs as well, but gradually according to the strength of their interest they abandoned their original jobs to concentrate on earning their livelihood from acting.

These people gradually attained mastery without recourse to any particular teacher or master. In fact their real teacher was society and the people around about them, and they became skilful in their art by imitating the way certain people walked and spoke, their accents and amusing actions and the way of life of ordinary people. In fact their work consisted of a highly polished wit and the ability to spot those weak points, which lent themselves to criticism in others; with this basis they would inflate and exaggerate such points as they found and make a play out of it. Gradually these people gained experience and special expertise in this kind of role. In other words, according to their physique and stature and their style of speech they eventually achieved particular skills in the performance of an individual role such as that of the landowner, the Ḥājji or the governor. Thus in group performances it was immediately apparent who would take which role. Without any director or anything written down, they simply had a general scheme for the plot as a whole amounting to no more than a few lines. Then they would change their clothes, sometimes borrowing from the audience a hat, a shawl or a stick and with that they would immediately be ready to perform a complete play.

Sometimes the skill of these people was such that in time their family name was changed and its place taken by the name of the role they played. This was the case with famous actors like Zabih Allāh Mahiri who became known as Zabih Allāh Siyāh due to his outstanding performances in the role of 'Siyāh', and Babrāz Sulṭānī who became known as Babrāz Khān due to his acting in the role of governor and Khan. They usually imitated somebody they had seen and knew and the

spectator also as a rule knew the person they were imitating. Because of this the audience could judge the skill of the actor when caricaturing someone by simply recalling the original character whom they knew themselves. The different parts in the rū-hawzī plays were not always performed in one fashion, rather they varied in accordance with the type of gathering and the group who were playing. For example, the 'Siyāh' role, the basic part in rū-hawzī, has been performed in different regions and by different actors using different accents and types of voice. Let us say that the basic origin of the Siyāh in rū-hawzī is the black slave who used to be employed in the houses of the notables. Thus it was natural that they did not know Persian properly and could not pronounce it well, so having their own special accents when they spoke. This was suited to becoming a subject for mimicry and comedy. And so usually comic situations were created from this character, namely the characteristic of not understanding or pretending not to understand language. For example the servant, who is the Siyāh, very often intentionally misunderstands what his master, the Ḥājji, says; then after a great deal of wrangling he finally understands, but in his last words he says something that shows that in fact he missed the Ḥājji's point and in this way very funny situations are created. It can be said that most actors who play the various comic roles in Iranian theatre possess qualities that exist in the very parts they are playing; these individuals had begun by exhibiting these characteristics, then added to this by imitating others and finally they found themselves acting in the plays themselves. Most of these people in their daily life also acted out the part they liked

and made efforts to move and talk in the same way as the character they wished to represent [1].

Since rū-hawzī plays were always accompanied by music and dancing, the actors also had a knowledge of these and at the requisite times would make use of these skills. Most of the actors who played the Sīyah also sang and the javānpūshs (young men) were also skilled at dancing.

In another way it can be said that takht-i hawzī plays were complete or fully rounded plays and their actors were skilled in a great variety of arts including imitation, singing, dancing and sometimes acrobatics. The particular qualities these actors possessed were as follows: a lively turn of speech, a pleasing appearance, a humorous temperament, and entertaining character, the ability to change quickly and improvise on the spot, a good voice, a knowledge of music and a body suited to dance as well as skill in a variety of dances. The takht-i hawzī play is a pure and independent entity, one that is no slave to the literary text and possesses a rich theatrical quality. The essence of this kind of play lies concealed in imitation and in the exaggerated portrayal of every action. The takht-i hawzī actor aims, with his exaggerated playing which even goes as far as the costume and make-up, to portray for the audience some thing which represents a satirical version of his daily life.

[1] ^cAli Nasirīān, Sāatī Bā Ali Nasirīān, an interview, Majalla-yi Rūdakī, No. 34-35. Tehran, 1353/1974. P. 5.

The takht-i hawzi actor has direct contact with the audience and delivers many of his words directly to the audience, and even at times brings them into the play [1]. In takht-i hawzi plays there is always an alienation between the actor and his part, and this division is generally preserved. This is the same as in Brecht where the 'placing of divisions' is the rule. In takht-i hawzi plays just as in ta'ziya the actors regularly throughout the play abandon their parts and their portrayal of those parts, thus showing that it is a play that is being witnessed.

Because rū-hawzi does not use a written script the actor becomes most important of all, and it is he that effectively writes the script.

Each time rū-hawzi is performed the form of the play and the progress of the plot take on a new guise. This variation is dependent on a number of conditions and exigencies that include the daily situation, the personal life of the actor and the spectators present in the auditorium or place of performance. A rū-hawzi play is basically dependent upon the actor. The principal difference between theatre that works from a written script and that which relies on improvisation is that the player is playing in the present and not in a past sense, and that the actor does not memorise his

[1] William O. Beeman, A Full Arena, The Development and Meaning of Performance Tradition in Iran, Modern Iran, The Dialectics of Continuity and Change. State University of New York, Albany USA, 1981. P.345.

part, but rather creates the part as he goes along. It is important for a rū-hawzī actor to have a powerful imagination which can help him each and every moment to bring about a new happening through his words. Another factor that has a bearing on the actor's improvisation is his creativity. Improvisation is related to the powers of imagination, quickness of response and intelligence of the actor. In fact rū-hawzī has the same bases as Commedia dell'Arte.

Due only to the improvisatory capability of the actors, the commedia dell'arte openly confessed that it was using but a restricted number of characters, always the same; however, since it was a 'comedians theatre' and not a 'text theatre' the apparent limitation of roles came as surprisingly rich source of possibilities, contrary to any expectation. Each comedian would perform the one role throughout his life; forever, he would be no-one else than Scapino, or Harlequin or Matamoro [1].

It is indeed the same in rū-hawzī. Each actor whether he is professional or amateur, would play the one character throughout his life; the rū-hawzī actor will be Siyāh, Hājji, Zan-i Hājji, Hākim forever and will play no-one else.

The Characters of Rū-hawzī

The Siyāh is the most important figure of rū-hawzī performers. The actor who usually plays this part is called siyāh-pūsh (the one who wears black). Unlike the literal meaning of siyāh pūsh, he wears most distinctive clothing, often red, but has a black face. The

[1] Enrico Fulchignoni, International Seminar on Traditional Improvisatory Theatre, The Structure and Growth of Commedia dell'Arte, Shiraz Arts Festival, August 19, 1977.

other important character in Rū-hawzī is Hājji. Hājji is a traditional Iranian petty merchant who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. He wears traditional petty merchant's clothes, a turban and a beard. Zan-i Hājji (Hājji's wife), or Zan-Pūsh (the one who wears women's clothes) is a man playing a woman's role. Another character is Shāh-Pūsh (the actor who wears king's clothes).

Make-Up

Make-up in takht-i hawzī is simple, with great exaggerations. Actors are responsible for their own make-up and the materials they use are usually very simple. For example, Siyāh uses burned cork or soot to blacken his face, and Hājji uses white cotton wool, simply hanging it with a piece of string from his ears as a beard

Actors do not pretend that this make-up is realistic and sometimes it happens that, in the middle of acting, in an exciting moment Hājji's beard falls off in such a case he will without any difficulty pick it up and put it on again. They use flour on hair, beards and moustaches to give the impression of age of the characters. Hājji also uses sheepskin for his beard and moustache, and his bushy eyebrows. Zan-i Hājji has the most exaggerated make-up; to make a man into a beautiful woman they use lipstick. Wigs and all sorts of traditional masks are also used for demonic characters and hence are attached to their heads. For the same character they also use a hat with horns attached and makeup the face.



Scenery

Ru-hawzi used no scenery except for the erection of a painted scene on canvas, usually a view of a garden, although there was no relation between the painted canvas and the subject of the play.

the wearing of false beards and moustaches was usual for actors. And by way of scenery they also used to construct small frames out of wood and then in order to show a difference they would paint on curtains and draw them in front of the specators [1].

This was due to the turn of the century and the evolution of rū-hawzī towards secular theatre. Before the mid-twentieth century theatre houses used a painted landscape as a backdrop. By the second quarter of the twentieth century and the popularity of rū-hawzī plays, and their move to a permanent place such as Lālazār, Tehran's centre of entertainments. Scenery in the European style came into common use for rū-hawzī play in theatre houses.

The other independant groups were not affected by this. There was a platform or simply the ground, if the troupe was performing in the coffee house, and indoors, a platform covered with a rug could represent any location, such as Ḥājji's store, Ḥājji's home, the street or any other place. The platform or the rug would define the performing area. The characters would always announce to the audience what the next scene would be; by going around the carpet and returning to the same place the actor would change the scene, going for example from home to shop or vice versa, and of course he would announce that by telling the audience.

[1] Nāsir Najmī, Dār-al-Khilāfa Tehran, Tehran, Sipih, 4th Ed. 1356/1977, P. 259.

The rū-hawzī stage in private houses in the yard had the same platform, using a wooden bed covered with a rug to cover the pool. The pool was always in the middle of the yard and audiences sat around the pool. There was no curtain and no props. An actor would approach the platform by passing through the audience. Sometimes they would change and apply their make-up among the audience. The musicians, usually three players, on Tār, Kamāncha, and Tunbak, were seated at the side of the platform. The actors and musicians would not leave the performing area during the performance unless there was a reason for doing so. They would perform for hours and hours, providing the audience showed they required it by paying attention, clapping and whistling.

Lighting

In the past lighting in rū-hawzī only fulfilled the function of making things visible, and most of the time the plays were performed in the daytime in the open or in qahvakhānas (tea-houses). Thus, during the day there was no need for extra lighting. But at night, with scientific progress and the discovery of electricity, in the course of time, lamps were placed over the stage and lanterns along the sides. Later on still, with the further development of rū-hawzī and its paving the way for professional theatre, the role of lighting gradually increased still further and modern projectors were also used. With the course of time and due to the wishes of the people and their enthusiasm for the comic theatre of the Lālazār area of Tehran, in the years 1970-1978 more changes were brought about: sometimes theatres gave four or five performances

and employed all the stage facilities such as modern costume, scenery and lighting. Gradually the plots of these plays changed under the influence of translated and modern plays. And sometimes even in these plays, which were later known as 'Lālazārī plays', a term synonymous with rū-hawzī but not strictly correct, sometimes not even a trace of the Siyāh was left and only the form of the production was preserved.

Music

One of the fundamental components of rū-hawzī ever since its beginning has been the accompaniment of music. Unfortunately, due to the short history of written music, the musical compositions of the by-gone ages do not exist in any written or concrete form. But it appears that they have been handed down generation by generation, always by verbal recitation. The joyous and gay music associated with the ru-hawzī is in direct contrast to the sad and mournful tunes played in the ta'ziya. The normal traditions of these plays suggest that the musicians accompany the acting throughout, and that sometimes the actors too take part in playing the music, and generally have good enough voices to accompany the musicians with songs. The rhythm of the music is light and the emphasis on certain notes is greater. Among the most important instruments used in rū-hawzī are the Tār, Kamāncha and Tunbak.

Musical Instruments in Rū-hawzī

The performance of Iranian comedy without music is inconceivable, since by and large the singing and dancing is accompanied by the

kamāncha, tār and tunbak and sometimes also a singer who is usually one of the musicians. Each player, in addition to his special role, has his own special dance, and sometimes also when performing their roles the actors sing. The entrance of the actors is usually accompanied by happy and rhythmic music and dance. Sometimes before the start of the play itself the players sing tasnīfs as a prelude, which is done in order to prepare the audience better. The siyah has his own special dance, which makes much use of movements of the arms and head with very delicate and supple movements to a 6/8 rhythm. The Ḥājji's dance is gentle and he mostly leans on his stick, feeling the rhythm with his whole body. The Hājji's wife behaves coquettishly, and her movements and dance are thoroughly coquettish. Sometimes the dialogues and conversation take on a rhythmic character to the beat of the tunbak, and this form of dialogue is occasionally repeated. The relationship between music and the actor in light Iranian theatre is an inseparable one.

The Tār (lit. string/chord).

One of the most popular instruments used in rū-hawzī is the Tār. This is one of the most popular plucked instruments in Iran, and probably dates from the late eighteenth century in its present form. A long neck (about 95cm long) is formed to a double-bellied mulberry-wood body whose front is made of sheep-skin membrane. A small bridge placed on the membrane supports six strings which are usually tuned in pairs (cc',gg,'cc'). Five of the strings are made of steel, and the lowest one is of brass. There are twenty-six movable gut frets along the neck, usually covering a range of c to g.

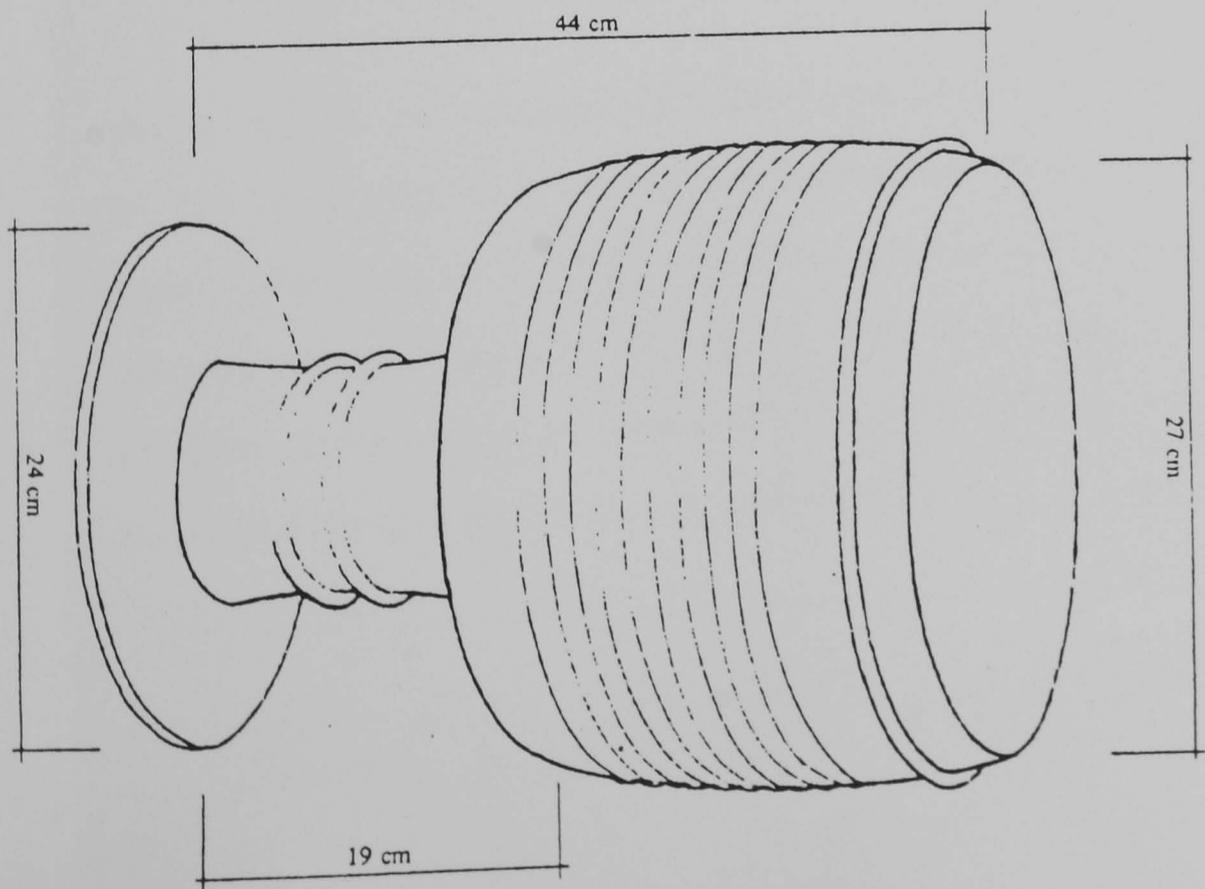
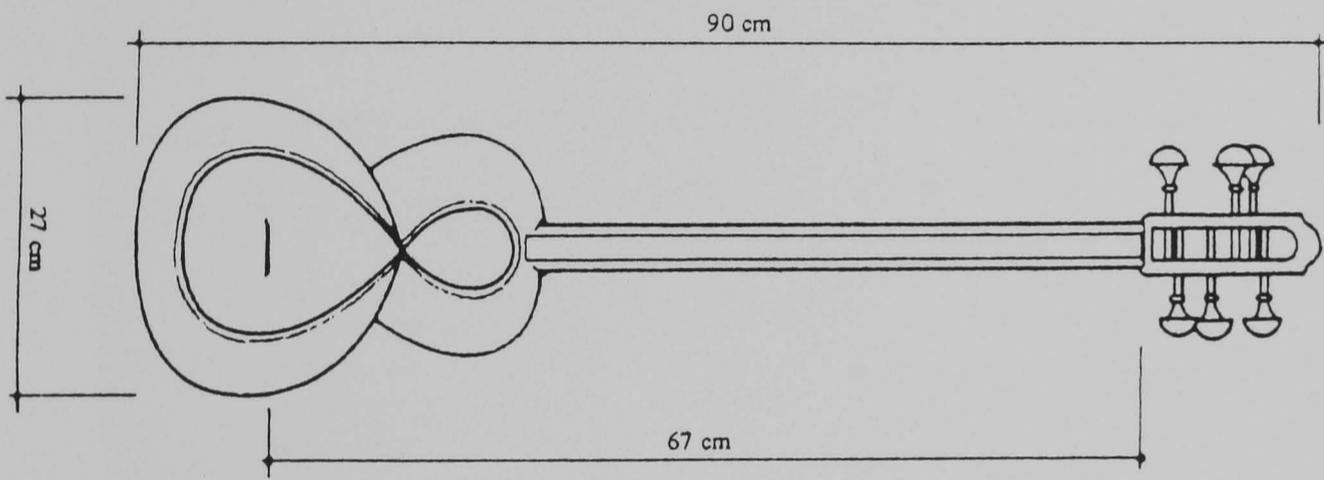
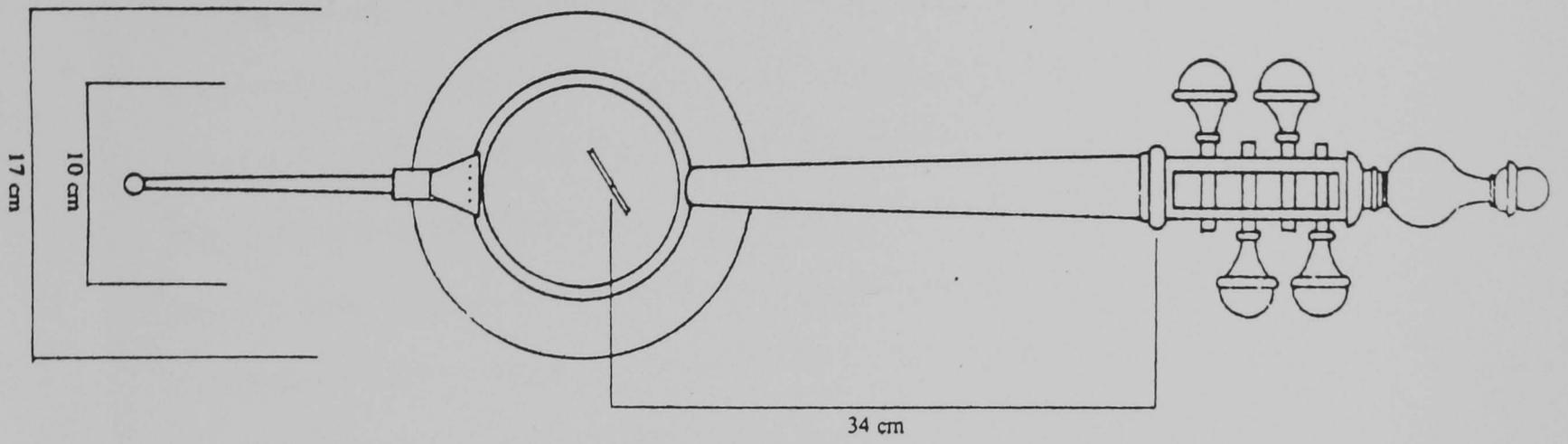
The instrument is plucked with a small metal plectrum, which is held in the right hand, while the neck is supported by the left hand and the body of the instrument rests on the player's knee. The tar is used both as a solo instrument and to accompany voices as well as in ensembles to native instruments.

The Kamāncha

The Kamancha is a bowed, spiked fiddle, which is found commonly in the Middle East. The spike, extending as on the western cello from the bottom of the instrument, ends with a flat metal plate, which rests on the player's thigh. The round body has a flat sheepskin membrane for the face, the neck no frets and the instrument is about the size of a viola. The Kāmancha usually has four strings. The left hand supports the neck of the instrument which may be rotated while playing and the right hand holds the bow.

The Tunbak

The tunbak or zārb is a one-faced goblet drum, the chief percussion instrument of Persian classical music. The upper end is covered by a sheepskin membrane which is glued to the wooden body. An average tunbak is forty centimetres high and the playing face is twenty-five centimetres in diameter. The drum is played with the fingers and palms of both hands, and is held diagonally across the player's lap with the widest section on his right thigh. Some players have evolved an elaborate technique by means of which they produce a wide variety of sounds.



Women's Theatre (Theatrical Games)

Bāzihā-yi namāyishi are in fact games which are more in the nature of theatrical performances than games or pastimes. In one way it is possible to look upon bāzihā-yi namāyishi as domestic theatre created in response to the restrictions encountered by women outside the home, and which has limited them to female-only parties without men. They have created these games for something to do, as recreation and so as to conjure up a joyful atmosphere. Another name given to these names is bāzihā-yi zanāna (female games). Usually the performers of this type of game or show are women who work without any prior practice simply by knowing what it is about. Bāzihā-yi zanāna mostly have a social origin.

The meaning of bāzihā-yi namāyishi is a series of domestic games or pastimes that are both artistic and humorous, and have many of the qualities for serious, standard theatre. The varied and subtle movements of the actor in these games, and her expression of states of mind and reactions, are of the highest order in the way they eloquently convey meaning and comprehension; with only the smallest expenditure on costume and adornment the actress succeeds in portraying well even the most difficult characters and states of mind. These games are performed by members of the family without any prior introduction [1].

Maybe one of the reasons for the formation of women's theatre could be the prohibition of their participation in theatre groups in the past. As a result of these limitations, women formed their own home-based performances in which they were able to undertake and perform major dramatic roles which could reflect their talents and to establish a kind of female solidarity.

[1] A. Anjavī Shirāzi, Bāzihā-yi Namāyishi. Amīr-Kabīr, Tehran, 1352/1974. P. 129.

One of the most well known women's or domestic games is one that is found in most of the towns and villages of Iran. It is called 'Khāla Raw-raw' (Aunty Go-go) and is usually performed at parties, weddings and circumcision celebrations when the women are on their own. This play is extremely popular and for this reason the groups of rū-hawzi players and travelling mutribs (minstrels) also know it well and perform it at public gatherings of men and of women. Rū-hawzi groups and bands of mutribs usually have boys with good looks who act out these plays: they make themselves up very stridently and suggestively and act and dance coquettishly to the lively music of the tar, kamancha, tunbak and suchlike. It can be deduced from reading the poetry used in this play that its subject concerns sensual and fickle women who have a different man every few days. The expression 'khāla raw-raw' was probably chosen because of this, since it means that the woman is in constant motion like a rawravak or child's go-cart. The play shows a time when the woman is due to give birth and does not know who the father is [1].

The play is like this: one plays Khāla Raw-raw and another plays the midwife. 'Khāla', meaning aunt, is a title given to respected old ladies. A third woman, who can play the drums, also participates with the other two, and so does any other woman there who happens to be a player of the tar or another instrument. Meanwhile the guests present at the party also have an important role in the performance, and they both take part in the dialogue and clap and snap their fingers.

[1] A. Anjavī Shīrāzī, Op. Cit. P.1.

The one who takes the part of Khāla Raw-raw is a young and beautiful woman with a lively tongue who normally wears her ordinary party clothes, tying a few prayer chādurs to her stomach to make it look as if she is pregnant. She makes up in front of everybody and gets ready for the performance. When she is ready she slowly begins to dance. At the same time she sings to the accompaniment of the drum and musical instruments, and the question and answer session begins. There now follows an example of the poetry that is usual in this play:

خاله: خاله رو رو ورو ، رشته پلو، عدس پلو، گندم و جو، چن ماهه داری؟ خاله
چرا نمی زائی؟
زائو: خاله جون قربونتم، حیرونتم، صدقه بلاگردونتم، آتیش سر قلیونتم ، رفیق
راه گرمونتم يك ماهه عروس، دو ماهه دارم، خاله حالشا ندارم.
خاله: خاله رو، رو ورو، رشته پلو، عدس پلو، گندم و جو، چن ماهه داری؟ خاله
چرا نمی زائی؟
زائو: خاله جون قربونتم. حیرونتم، صدقه بلاگردونتم، آتیش سر قلیونتم، رفیق
راه گرمونتم، دو ماهه عروس، سه ماهه دارم، خاله حالشا ندارم.
خاله: خاله رو، رو ورو ورو، رشته پلو، عدس پلو، گندم و جو، چن ماهه داری؟
خاله چرا نمی زائی؟

Khala : Aunty Go-go-go, noodles an' rice, lentils
an' rice, barley and wheat and all things
nice. How many months is it now then?
Why don't you give birth, Aunty?

The Woman
in Labour : My dear, my darling, my dazzler, I'm forever
your companion on the road to Kerman
and I'll always be the fire that lies
hidden in your ciggies (hookah). Married a
month and two months gone. I'm not in the
mood.

This poem is repeated until she comes to nine months. At this point the rhythm of the drums changes and the mother-to-be starts howling and screaming to show that labour had begun. And of course the

crowd present join in this section enlivening it with their clapping and snapping their fingers.

جمعیت

اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا

زاتو

دائی دائی جون
زن دائی جون
ننه ما بگین
باباما بگین
خاله ما بگین
پاشنه پام
شقیقه هام
اینور دلم
اونور دلم
دسته کلیدا
زیر نمدا
بردار و بیا
اوی کرسومی

The Woman
in Labour : Uncle, uncle dear.

The rest,
together : Oh dear, oh dear.

The actress playing the part of the pregnant woman names all the members of her family, then all the parts of her body.

The Woman
in Labour : My ankles, my temples, over here in the
middle, down there in the middle.

اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا
اوفینا

پاشنه پام
شقیقه هام
اینور دلم
اونور دلم

And finally the time for delivery arrives and once again the rhythm of the drum beat changes.

The Woman
in Labour : Dear Lord, my time has come but not the
father of my child.
Dear Lord, my time has come but not the aunt
of my child.

At this point some of the women go into another room and bring a khwāncha (white tablecloth). They join in the delivery scene. The woman in labour produces a chādūr or a bundle from under her stomach. One of the women from the crowd becomes the midwife and picks up the bundle and wraps it in swaddling clothes. Then they dance and sing holding the bundle which represents the baby. Of course the clapping and snapping of fingers carries on all through this. The mother finally takes the baby and leaves the room dancing [1].

Another of these women's plays is one called Qanbar Sīmā, which is performed at circumcision celebrations, weddings, the festivals held seven and forty days after the birth of an infant and at women's parties and get-togethers. This is the story of a husband who has been completely carried away by the hope of something better and wants to take a second wife. The first wife, who is the mother of his children finds this out from Qanbar Sīmā, who is the master's servant and agent. This play is performed by two women, one of who plays the children's mother and the other Qanbar Sīmā. Men are most certainly never present at these all-women performances. The woman who now has a rival wife dances and acts, and in doing so employs mockery and makes faces; she mostly reinforces her words and

[1] A. Anjavī Shīrāzī. Op. Cit. PP. 3-7.

expresses her state of mind with her eyes and eyebrows and by moving her face and hands.

The whole play is accompanied by a group of women playing the tunbak and musical instruments. These sort of plays derive all their humour from daily life and develop themes from this origin. As a rule the plays have a critical side as well as being happy and comic. The poetic lines of the play are very long and deal wholly with the story of the husband's going to take another wife and the wife's criticism of him. When the children's mother hears that her rival's baby had died and her husband has grown tired of lovemaking with his new wife her acting changes; she becomes happy and sings lines about the return of her husband while all present too rejoice.

'Murcha dara' (she's got ants) is the name of one of the most private of these women's plays. It is performed at weddings and parties when the women are alone together and basically is simply a striptease. The play begins with the tunbak player commencing, then someone present gets up and starts dancing slowly. As the play proceeds the rhythm of the tunbak speeds up. All through the play the actress makes gestures to show that an ant has bitten her and so she takes off her clothes one by one until finally she is naked and dances passionately. Even young boys are forbidden from attending this play.

Actress : I've got an ant on me.

The rest : Where, where?

During the course of these questions and answers the actress each time points to a part of her body and says:

'Here, here, here!'

بازیگر: مورچه داره !
جمعیت: کجات داره؟
بازیگر: مورچه گزیدم!
جمعیت: کجاته گزید؟

بازیگر: اینجام و اینجام و اینجامه گزید.
و دوباره شروع به نشان دادن اعضای مختلف بدن خود میکنند.
بازیگر: چکار کنم؟
جمعیت: بکن و بریز! بکن و بریز!

During this short dialogue the actress each time indicates a part of her body and names it. Some start with the head and neck, then go on to the chest, the stomach, the navel and so forth. The dance is the most important part of this play and is performed skilfully and flirtatiously.

Actress : I've been bitten by an ant.

The rest : Where's it bitten you?

Actress : It's bitten me here, here, here.

She starts once again to point to the different parts of her body.

Actress : What shall I do?

The rest : Take them off, take them off.

The actress takes off her clothes one by one and while dancing throws them aside. The rest all clap excitedly and the rhythm grows faster. The actress goes just as far as she likes in taking her clothes off as she dances and this depends on both her own

inclinations and the privateness of the gathering. This play is performed in different parts of Iran under different names.[1]

Another of these women's games which is performed in private female gatherings is called 'Ay taḥ bi-bāgh rafta būdī' (Hey, did you go to the garden?). One woman takes the main part, gets up in the middle of the gathering and begins her lines flirtatiously and coquettishly. The singer sings half a couplet and the guests who are seated around together sing the other half in answer. The actress dances and snaps her fingers while she sings and the play is accompanied by the tunbak or daff. Every time the woman dancing in the middle names a part of her loved one's body, she points to that part on her own body.

جمعیت

بله بله بله رفته بودم
بله بله بله دیده بودم
سر یارت درد میکرد

واخ سر یار سر بندد میخواد - بگیرم و من ماچش کنم ایشالله - زیر بغلم و خوابش

خواننده

آی تو بباغ رفته بودی؟
یار منه دیده بودی؟
کجای یارم درد میکرد؟

کنم ایشالله.

آی تو بباغ رفته بودی؟
یار منه دیده بودی؟
کجای یارم درد میکرد؟

سر یار سر بندد میخواد - آبروی یار و سمه میخواد - بگیرم و من ماچش کنم ایشالله
زیر بغلم و خوابش کنم ایشالله.

بله بله بله رفته بودم
بله بله بله دیده بودم
چشم یارت درد میکرد

آی تو بباغ رفته بودی؟
یار منه دیده بودی؟
کجای یارم درد میکرد؟

[1] A. Anjavī Shirāzī, Op. Cit. P.P. 54-56.

Singer : Hey, did you go to the garden?
The rest : Yes, yes I did.
Singer : Did you see my loved one?
The rest : Yes, yes I did.
Singer : Your loved one's head was painful.

And this continues until they reach the sexual parts of the loved one's body. At this point the drum beat gets faster and the dancer moves quickly and erotically [1].

Another of the most well-known women's plays, one which criticises men who take more than one wife, is called 'Havū havū dāram, havū' ('I've got a rival, rival, rival wife'). This part is usually played by a woman who makes herself up to look as if she has been broken by a great deal of suffering and made prematurely old. All the blame for her becoming worn out and ugly is laid at the door of the rival wife. The play is performed with great skill and theatricality. Knowledge of the lines and finer actions help the actress to perform with greater vividness. As a rule this play is performed with tunbak accompaniment and the audience answer what the actress sings. The actress describes on by one all the parts of her body: first she shows them in good condition and then, in her second series of movements, she shows them distorted and twisted, all because of the rival wife.

[1] A. Anjavī Shīrāzī Op. Cit. P.P. 101-106.

رنگ رقص

دل بیقرارم هوو چه روزگاری داشتم حالا هوو کرده همچی	هوو هوو دارم هوو روزی که هوو نداشتم به چش' داشتم به همچی	بازیگر و جمعیت: بازیگر:
--	--	----------------------------

رنگ رقص

دل بیقرارم هوو چه روزگاری داشتم حالا هوو کرده همچی	هوو هوو دارم هوو روزی که هوو نداشتم به دهن داشتم به همچی	بازیگر و جمعیت: بازیگر:
--	--	----------------------------

Actress
and
the rest : I've got a rival, rival, rival wife.
I've got no peace of mind.

Actress : When I had no rival wife, oh how happy I
was. I had an eye just like this, but now
my rival's made it like this.

Or for example, the actress takes her foot and most probably kicks
with it in the air, and then twists it and makes herself look
lame.[1]

[1] A. Anjavī Shirāzī. Op. Cit. P.O. 49-53.

CHAPTER V

THE QAJARID ERA - A NEW BEGINNING

During the Qajar dynasty, especially during the reign of Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shah who ruled Persia from 1848 to 1896, both the Tragedic theatre of Iran (Ta'ziya) and the comic theatre of Iran (Rū-hawzī) grew in two opposite directions. The personal interest of Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh played a major role in this process. Perhaps it is necessary to mention Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's characteristics and interest in theatre to get a better understanding of the elements of the progression of the art. One of the teachers of the French language who came to Tehran in the middle period of Muḥammad Shāh Qajar's reign and continued to teach French in the Dar al-Funūn College until his death in 1850 wrote thus in a letter:

Mirza Taqī-Khan Atabakī handles everything and doesn't care about foreigners at all. I visit the Shah only at greetings and since I have known Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shah, and how he has left affairs to Amīr, this is the first time that I see he has done something right. It seems as if he has acted reasonably. He himself spends his time with women in his inner house, and can't handle governmental affairs. [1]

Since Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh cared about free-living and the women in his haram of whom there were many, the need for having humorous clowns and joyful entertaining was obvious. As a result of this Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh was fond of art, especially as an amusement.

[1] Dr Khalīl Saqafī, Maqālāt-i-Gūnāgūn, Tehran, 1322/1943 cited by Husayn Nūrbakhsh in Karīm Shīra-ī. Tehran, Sanāī 1356/1977 p.p.18/19

This can be seen clearly in three descriptions of his journey to Europe. He writes about entertainments that he has seen. In the first he sees mime and dancing:

In the evening we went to the theatre; there was a ballet and a representation in which nothing was spoken. A woman, who dances very well, and whom I had previously seen when I was here five years ago, danced again tonight [1]

In the second description he is referring to an opera:

In the evening I went to the theatre, which is a small one of five tiers, and lighted by gas. It was crowded with people. I sat alone in the special box. Men and pretty women sang, and the performance was a dramatic version of an old legend, and was very good [2].

We left together, the Emperor going to his apartments, I to the theatre.

This theatre was built ten years ago by the present Emperor, and is very handsome and roomy. The theatre had been closed on account of hot weather, but for the sake of our special amusement, and as an act of hospitality, H.M. the Emperor ordered the company to continue the performances, paying them £400 a night. The theatre was well filled, and the performance was very good [3].

Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh, who saw everything as a form of entertainment, made frequent visits to theatres on his travels, the effect of which prompted him to order the construction of a playhouse at Dār al-Funūn (Iran's first modern college), and Takiyya-yi Dawlat (the Royal Arena).

[1] A Diary kept by His Majesty, the Shah of Persia, during his Journey to Europe in 1878. Albert Houtum Schindler and Baron Louis De Norman, London. Richard Bentley & Sons. 1879 p.95.

[2] Ibid, pp142-143

[3] Ibid, p 244

Dār al-Funūn, the first European-style college, was founded by in 1851 by Amīrkabīr, the Prime Minister of Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh.

Mohammad Shah dismissed Qaimmaqam and put him to death in 1835, and Nasir-al-Din Shah similarly dismissed Amirekabir in 1851 and put him to death in 1852. Amirekabir left lasting achievements, however, with the foundation of the Darol Fonun, Iran's first modern College, in 1851, and the establishment of a regularly appearing government gazette, which gave an impetus to printing. The Darol-Fonun employed Iranian and European professors and used Persian and French in its courses [1].

Amirekabir, the prime minister of Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh, was a great patron of a higher political system including education, art, and modern sciences. It was he who in his short period of official duty (1848-1851) took the first step in modernising Iran [2].

According to Hasan Moqaddam, cited by A.J. 'Atāī, the Persian scholar, there was a small playhouse built in Dār al-Funūn with a capacity of 300 [3]. Qajar kings also had private theatres; Fath 'Alī Shāh had two separate theatres for men and women, and a group of actors acting for men and a group of actresses acting for women. For this purpose they were paid by the government [4]. At the Dār al-Funūn theatre, actors were European tutors, teaching at schools, who had formed their own group [5].

[1] A. R. Navabpour, Op. cit p8.

[2] E.G. Brown, History of Persian Literature in Modern Times, Vol. 4, Cambridge University Press London 1924, P.152.

[3] A. Jannatī-'Atāī, Bunyād-i Namāyish Dar Irān, Ibn-i sinā, Tehran, 1955, P.59.

[4] Yahyā Āryān Pūr, Az Sabā tā Nīmā, Tehran, 1351, 1972 p323

[5] Muḥammad Hasan Khān Itimād-al-Saltana. Rūznāma-yi Khātirāt; Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1345/1966 p472.

Apart from foreign theatre groups, there were others who also performed in the Dār al-Funūn theatre. One such group was the Armenian theatre group:

Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shah will go to the theatre tonight to watch the Armenian play [1].

The theatre was influenced by the style of Comédie Française, because many of the Persian experts at the time were educated in France. "The Misanthrope" by Molière was translated into Persian verse and was one of the first plays shown in this theatre. The order was given by Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh, and the founder of the theatre was Muzayyin al-Dawla "Naqqāsh Bāshī" who translated the play from French into Persian himself. Naqqāsh Bāshī was one of the students who was sent to Europe and on his return he was chosen by Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh to build and form the first theatre in western style.

To make it more comprehensible to native Persians, the translator substituted the Persian title for the French, Persian idioms for French, etc. Thus the play became as Persian as the translator could make it. Later, more plays by Molière translated into Persian appear, but they were seldom received with great enthusiasm [2].

Rāfi' Hālātī, director, actor and sculptor, in his diary writes about the Dār al-Funūn theatre and give detailed information:

The playhouse had a seating capacity of three hundred: it was an east-west hall about 18 metres in length, 10 metres in width and with a height of 9 metres. At the end of the hall, on the east side, instead of a stage, there was a large platform, 1.5 metres high across the width of the hall.

[1] I'timād-al-Saltāna, 1306 H.Q./cited by H. Gūrān, Kūshishhā-yi-Nā Farjām, P.74.

[2] Jannatī-'Atā'ī. Bunyād-i Namāyish Dar Īrān, P.60.

On the west side there was a large wooden, crescent-shaped door, made by inlaying, behind which was a long vestibule. Near the entrance there were two spiral staircases, one on each side of the vestibule. Another vestibule connected the back of the large platform to the street behind the theatre through a wooden door. There was also a dressing-room on each side of this vestibule; these two rooms were connected by a corridor. The semi-circular ceiling was decorated by coloured plaster moulding and coloured lanterns; burning gas provided light [1].

It is in the reign of the Qajar Kings, that we see the influence of Western culture growing rapidly in the country. This movement had much influence on the development of the national drama.

One of the other factors affecting Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh and the court's artistic orientation was the political and cultural links between the Qajar court and Europe. Iḥsān Ṭabarī, in his book "Iran in the Past Two Centuries", writes:

The question of Iranian orientation towards the Western civilised ways is in itself an intensive field of study. It is briefly reminded that the Western way of life, not only recently but from the ancient Roman and Greek times, has been clearly distinctive from the East. Multi-storey buildings, sitting on chairs, sleeping on the bed, using spoons, emancipation of women from veils, ballroom dancing and so on, have been the features of European life for centuries. The initiation of certain aspects of European life has a long history in Iran ... [2].

This, as mentioned before, was widely practiced during Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's time.

Nevertheless, due to the resistance offered by local customs, an odd mixture of Iranian and European civilisation came about.

[1] Khātirāt-i Rāfi Hālatī, in possession of author.

[2] Iḥsān Ṭabarī, Īrān Dar Dū Sada-yi- Pishīn, Intishārāt-i-Tūda, Tehran, 1360/1981. p133.

For instance, the ballet costume, which Nāsir-al-Dīn Shāh had seen in European "charity" shows, became the crinolined skirt of the women in the court which was called shalīta (derived from the French pronunciation of the word charité). Also, shows and circus performances were introduced at the Takiyya-yi Dawlat and Ta'ziya [1].

Seeing the Albert Hall in London the Shah ordered a new play-house to be built in much the same style as that theatre. His purpose in building this play-house was to spread the style of European entertainment and theatre in Iran, but he changed his mind when the religious authorities opposed him. The play-house was called the Takiyya-yi Dawlat and was built in 1869 [2].

The Takiyya-yi Dawlat (Royal Arena) was located at the southern side of the Gulestan Palace area, and to the south-west of Shams al-Imāra. It was a wide area like a circle which was surrounded by beautiful trees.

The most famous and influential of the nineteenth century Taziyeh theatres was the Tekieh Dowlat, or Royal Arena theatre in Tehran. (Construction started in 1304 A.H.) under the patronage of Naser-ed-Din Shah ... Taziyeh reached the peak of its development. According to many travellers its dazzling splendour and its intensity of dramatic action overshadowed even the opera of the Western capitals [3].

The American envoy, Samuel Benjamin, who attended the Muharram celebrations, left a vivid description of the Takiyya-yi Dawlat:

I was invited to attend on the fifth day of the Taziyeh. We arrived at the Tekieh toward noon. On alighting from the carriage I was surprised to see an immense circular building as large as the amphitheatre in Verona, solidly constructed of brick.

[1] Iḥsān Ṭabari: Īrān Dar Dū Sada-yi-Pīshīn, Op. Cit. P.134.

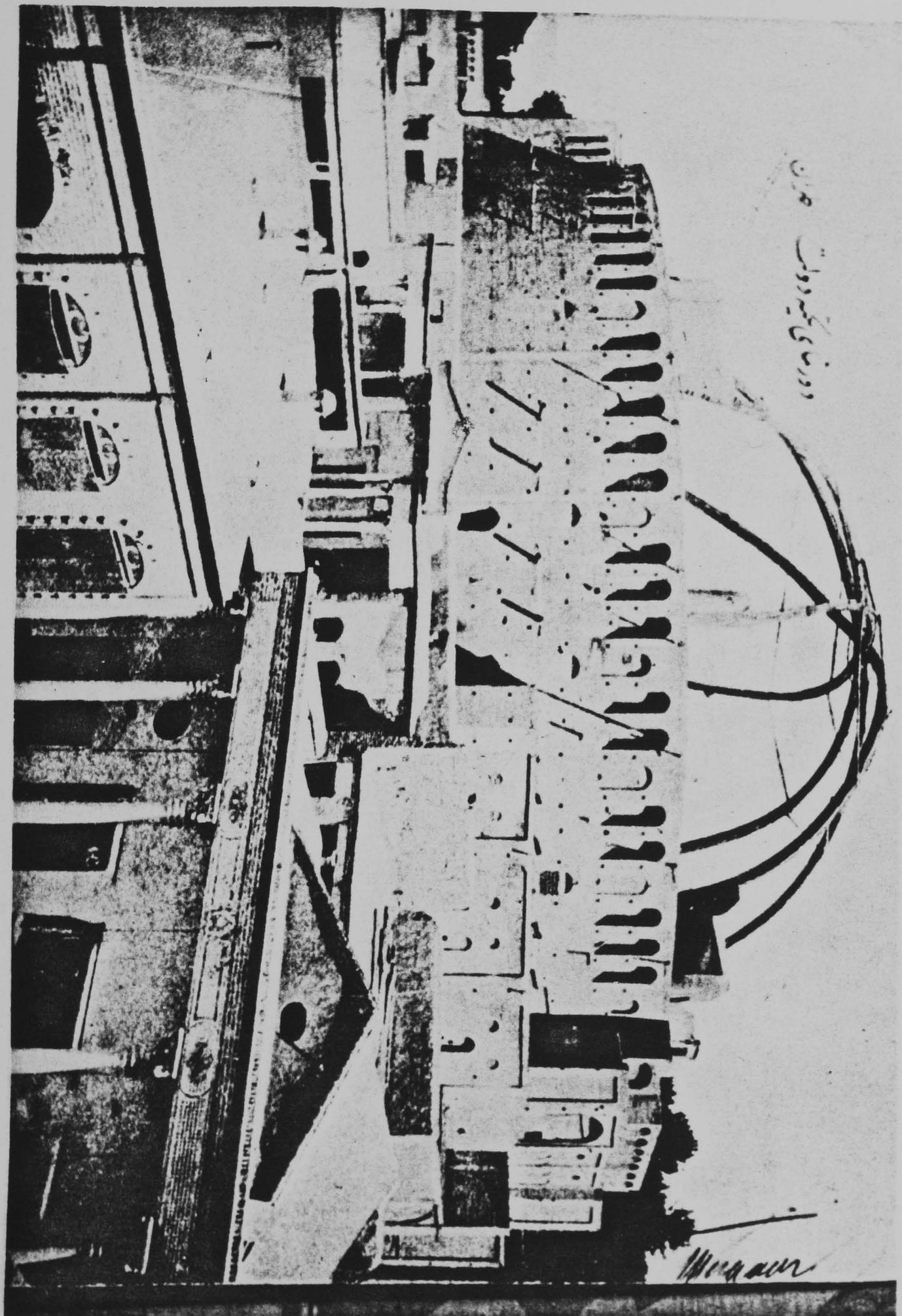
[2] B. Bayzā'i, Namāyish Dar Irān, p159.

[3] Peter J. Chelkowski. Taziyeh, Indigenous avant-garde Theatre of Iran, Surush, NIRT Publication, p12.

Ferashes, or liveried footmen, cleared the way before us. Thrashing their slaves right and left, they opened a way through the crowd that packed the great portal; and entering a dark, vaulted vestibule I groped, or rather was impelled by the throng, towards a staircase crowded with servants whose masters had already arrived. Like all stairs in Persia these were adapted to the stride of giants. A succession of springs upward finally landed me on the first gallery, which led around the building. A few steps in the twilight and then an embroidered curtain was raised and I entered the box of the Zahir-e-Dowleh (Shah's son). It was in two parts, the first higher than the other; stepping into the front and lower division, I was invited to recline at the left of my host upon a superbly embroidered cushion of velvet; the seat of honour is at the left hand in Persia. The walls of the loggia were of price, and the choicest of rugs enriched the floor. A number of Persian gentlemen of lower rank occupied the back part of the apartment by invitation ...

On looking over the vast arena a sight met my gaze which was indeed extraordinary. The interior of the building is nearly two hundred feet in diameter and some eighty feet high. A domed frame of timbers spliced and braced with iron, springs from the walls, giving support to the awning that protects the interior from the sunlight and the rain. From the centre of the dome a large chandelier was suspended, furnished with four electric burners - a recent innovation. A more oriental form of illuminating the building was seen in the prodigious number of lustres and candlesticks, all of glass and protected from the air by glass shades open on the top and variously coloured; they were concentrated against the wall in immense glittering clusters. Estimating from those attached on one box, I judged that there were upwards of five thousand candles in these lustres ...

... in the centre of the arena was a circular stage of masonry raised three feet and approached by two stairways. On one side of the building a pulpit of white marble was attached to the wall ... but I soon discovered that all the architectural details of this remarkable building were secondary to the extraordinary spectacle offered by the assembled multitude. The entire arena with the exception of a narrow passage around the stage, was absolutely packed with women, thousands on thousands. At a rough estimate it seem to me that quite four thousand women were seated there cross-legged on the earthen floor, which was made slightly sloping in order to enable those in the rear to see over the heads of those before them.



دوربینی تخیله دولت

W. H. R. A. M.

... refreshments were served in our box repeatedly, and cigars for myself ... but after the performance began, all smoking and refreshments were banned as indications of frivolity inconsistent with the Tragical events of the dramas [1].

Dr Mahdī Furūgh also in his descriptions gives more information about Takiyya-yi Dawlat:

It was by 1869 A.D. that the greatest event took place in the world of the Persian Ta'ziya. This was the construction of the Takiyye-i-Dawlat (the Royal Arena Theatre). It had a seating capacity of 20,000. The construction of the whole building cost 150,000 Tomans [2].

and Edward G. Brown mentions:

lastly the actual librettos of the dramatised taziyas, to be seen at their best at the royal Takya of Tehran during the first ten days of the month of Muharram [3].

Nūshīn, the theorist, scholar and director, describes the method of performance of Ta'ziya as follows:

Ta'ziya was performed on a platform in the middle of the Takiyya instead of a stage. There was no scenery and curtain. The style of performance was realisation with symbolism. That is to say the Euphrates was represented by one or two glasses of water, and the palm plantation by a tree branch in a vase. The audience were quite familiar with this representational style and were not surprised at all. The play, like old Greek plays, started with an ensemble as an introduction (prologue). The 'sympathetic characters' or the so-called Imām-khwāns started their roles with ritual songs; the actors playing these roles were selected out of well-known singers. The antipathetic characters or the so-called 'Shimr-khwāns', on the contrary, played their roles singing in a harsh voice and in an unbalanced and unrhythmic manner [4].

[1] Benjamin, Samuel G.W., Persia and the Persians, Boston 1887 cited in Chelkowski, pp12,13,14.

[2] Mahdī Furūgh, Īrān Shahr, Vol. 1. Unesco-Iran, Publication Tehran 1963. P.908.

[3] Edward G. Brown, A History of Persian Literature in Modern Times. Op. Cit. P 194.

[4] A.H. Nūshīn, Majalla-i Payām-i Naw, No. 9. cited in Bunyād-i-Namāyish dar Īrān, p39.

It is thought that from the early days of the birth of Ta'ziya, its actors were not professional and the majority of them earned their living by other means. Each town, village or country had its own group. Most of the performers came together on the mourning days when each person played his favourite role at which by this time he was quite good and experienced enough. The Shimr-Khwāns were usually detested by people. On the other hand, people were most sympathetic towards the 'Imām-khwāns'. Quite often people, charged with emotion after seeing the show, would attack the 'Shimr-khwān', causing injury or pain. To avoid such incidents, the process of alienation was carried out by many 'Shimr-khwāns' who would join the people in mourning for Imam Husayn by beating their heads and crying before the scene in which Shimr would kill Imam Husayn. (This act is comparable with Brecht's alienation). With such an act they express their bereavement so that none of the spectators will take revenge on them. Ta'ziya can be considered on the same footing with the greatest universally famous tragedies, and has attracted the attention of many informed writers in the world [1].

As no Mohammedan woman may appear in public, the actors are all men and boys, who mostly play their parts well and with conviction, the honour of appearing in the Tazieh often descending from father to son. Indeed, parents in the audience will sometimes beg that their boys may be allowed to stand upon the stage for short time in such parts as that of Husein's little nephew or of his infant son Abdullah.

[1] F. Ghaffāri, Tāziya va ruhawzi, Faṣlnāma Tiatr No. 7 Tehran, nod, P.70

Many of the actors are clad in suits of armour; there is no "scenery" but horses and camels give an air of reality to the moving tragedy of the "Family of the tent". The European spectator speedily forgets the primitive mise en scene, and cannot fail to be impressed by the passionate emotion evinced by the great audience as the play proceeds [1].

One point worth noting is the use in Ta'ziya of terminology belonging to traditional religious play in which, as the literal meaning of Ta'ziya conveys, the mourners gather in commemoration of the lost dear one and to perform lamentation.

The interesting point is that this type of religious show is not only used in mourning and memorial sessions, but also appears in many happy and joyful performances. This is, however, an exception and not a general rule. But even in its exceptional form, it draws from the general rules of Ta'ziya in relation to costumes, manner of performance and other Ta'ziya conventions. Obviously, the prime theme of Ta'ziya has always been sorrowful and it has been used as a tool to create an emotional discharge for people through weeping. Later, comedy Ta'ziyas were performed on the stage of Takiyya-yi Dawlat. I'timād al-Saltāna writes about them:

Last night the Ta'ziya of Fatimas wedding was on the stage in Takiyya-yi Dawlat. They have somewhat vulgarised this Ta'ziya. Especially last night's production was vulgarised very much. It was so vulgar and comical that the spectators laughing could be heard from the back of the Takiyya, so much so that those who were present said this production is even funnier than the comedies shown in European theatre [2].

Māyil Baktāsh in his Book Namāyish-i-Īrānī (Iranian Theatre) writes:

[1] Ella C. Sykes, Persia and its People, Methuen & Co. Ltd London 1910. pp151-152

[2] Ītamād-al-Saltāna, Rūznāma^{-yi} Ītimād-al-Saltāna, 4th Muharram 1299 H.Q. P. 145

Ta'ziya or shabīh is an Iranian theatre which has developed in the mourning ceremonies as a religious institution and which has found a performing potential through its social functioning. Historically, Ta'ziya is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon. On the one hand it links with society, and on the other, it has gone through an almost complete phase of evolution from the religious and mourning performances reaching towards the boundaries of free theatre in a natural process [1].

Although the content of the book is made up of three Ta'ziyas, it is interesting to note that the title of the book is Iranian Theatre, which seems to mean that the author regards Ta'ziya as the original Iranian theatre

The book contains the following three Ta'ziyas:

- (i) "Fātima-Zahrā Goes to a Wedding"
- (ii) "Yaḥyā-Ibn-Zakaryiās Ta'ziya"
- (iii) "The Story of Shīr-Afkan"

On this subject, Māyil Baktāsh writes about the role of Takiyya-Dawlat in establishing and creating the art of the theatre that we understand today. As E.A. Reed writes:

Tazieh initially had 'distressing and religious' content. However, with the new social base provided by Takiyah Dowlat, and with adapting a new technical base for acting, many funny and comical movements were incorporated in the Taziehs. In the Tazieh, new emotional criteria were created; a particular place was given to comedy and to making the audience laugh. So much so that the work Tazieh (in the context of religious tragedy) was replaced with 'Shabih'. Tazieh affected Persian poetry and helped to preserve Persian traditional music.

[1] Māyil Baktāsh. Namāyish-i Irānī. A Collection of three Ta'ziya sessions by M. Baktash and F. Ghaffāri. Intis hārāt-i Jashn-i Hunar 1350/1971 p5.

At the beginning of the present century Iranian poetry assumed a dramatic form but, like the Greek drama, and the 'mysteries' of the Middle Ages, it is the offspring of a religious ceremony, and the great attraction of the Persian stage is a Moslem passion play, even the drama of the empire being under the control of her conquerors [1].

The monarch did not take criticism lightly under any circumstance and was never prepared to give way to other people's opinions. Far from giving concessions, the Shah's response to the opposition to the dictatorial monarchy was the use of force and violence.

Even when the Austrian Comte De Montfort, the head of the Tehran security forces, and Kāmran Mīrzā Nāyib-al-Saltāna the governor of Tehran, sought Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's approval for the foundation of a club by a number of youths, the Shah wrote the passage below on the margin of their letter:

Nāyib al-Saltāna, the youth make a mistake in founding a club. If they go ahead with it I will burn their father. Even the writer of this letter must be punished so that he will not dare to be so cheeky from now on [2].

It is obvious that Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh was only in favour of reform to the extent that it would not jeopardise his dictatorial rule. In other words, his love of theatre and art was not deep nor in the interest of society and the people. It can therefore be said that theatre was shaped out of the social needs in which, like a mirror, social problems were reflected. This mirror, at times, to a limited extent reflected critical satire and comedy in Rū-hawzī plays.

[1] Elizabeth A. Reed, Persian Literature Ancient and Modern, Chicago, S.C.G. Riggs and Company, 1893, p410.

[2] Faraydūn Ādamiyyat, Fikr va Muqaddama-yi Nihzat-i Mashrūtiyyat Dar Irān, cited by I. Tabarī, Irān Dar Dū Şada-yi Pishīn, p112.

An important point which has briefly been mentioned before is the imitation of European theatre during Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's period which, although in a way it enlarged the theatrical field in Iran was, however, based on a shallow understanding and thus had only a superficial influence.

Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's perception of European civilisation, which had originally been through hearing and then through seeing, was not a deep one. It was the way of life, i.e. clothes, goods, mannerisms, house, towns and items capable of catching the eye of an overseas observer which caught his attention most, rather than the basis of progress in European society.

Nevertheless, Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shah's actions, despite falling short of radical reforms, had some influence over theatrical work, even though not directly related to representational arts.

The erection of memorial statues in squares, the assembly of an encyclopedia called Nāma-yi Dānishvarān, the translation of certain famous European novels, the introduction of military marches, the alteration of men's and women's court dress, and so on, could have had some influence over the performing arts.

Coffee shop paintings went through a phase of considerable development, leaving many valuable pieces known as Qajar-style paintings. It is in this stage that the development of cheerful plays (Taqlīd Namāyishhā-yi Shād) in the Qajar period ought to be considered.

People close to the Shah and those frequenting the court did not have the courage to criticise or question the monarch, and could not always speak their mind, as is illustrated by the saying of the well-known poet 'Ubayd Zākānī'

Become a fool or a busker - then can you seek justice from junior and seniors [1].

Clowns and entertaining musicians were in a position to use a freer language to express themselves in the presence of the Shah and still remain unharmed.

Karīm Shīra-ī was exempted from exercising courtesy towards Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh, his close aides, and the other princes. He was allowed unlimited freedom in using both characters and subjects from the king's court in any form he wished in order to provide entertainment for the king [2].

In essence the formation of light Iranian plays began with the one man show acts of Dalqak bāzī. During Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh's reign the form and content of Dalqak bāzī, with the presence of famous Dalqaks such as Karīm Shīra'ī, the foundations for the Rū-hawzī plays were laid. It may be relevant to say that during this era, theatre groups specialising in light play productions were established, the most famous of which were Kārim Shīra'ī's group and Ismāīl Bazzāz's group [3].

[1] 'Ubayd Zākānī, Kulliyāt-i-'Ubayd Zākānī, 'Abbās Iqbāl, Intishārāt-i-Iqbāl, 1332/1953. P. 119

[2] H. Nūrbakhsh, Karīm Shīraī, Op. Cit. P.31

[3] H. Gūrān, op. cit. p76.

This kind of performing act which at that time took the form of Baqqāl bāzī for the main part, became fully developed and were to become the two fathers of what was finally to become known as the Rū-hawzī plays.

In contrast to these plays, Ta'ziya did not evolve in any significant form, and it may be reasonable to suggest that the peak of the Ta'ziya Theatre was to remain in the Takiyya-yi Dawlat, even though such plays had the potential for creating a national theatre; regrettably, however, this potential was never fully realised and the form was stunted in its growth.

Ta'ziya had, during its flourishing period, surpassed many aspects of the theatre which western playwrights were exploring long afterwards, so much so that examples can be found even in the works of more modern playwrights such as Brecht. But whereas such forms could have developed to become of major theatrical significance, its progress gradually slackened and finally reached a point of stagnation.

THE NEW SCHOOL - The Discussion of Akhundzada and Mirzā Āghā Tabrīzī

Theatre, in its fuller form and content found its way to Iran through the Caucasus.

The first playwright for this kind of theatre was Mīrzā Fath 'Alī Ākhūndzāda who sent a few Turkish dramatic pieces to Iran through Jalāl ad-Dīn, the son of Fath 'Alī Shāh, and these pieces were translated into Persian and staged for private court audiences [1].

In Az Sabā tā Nīmā Yahyā Āryanpūr also refers to Ākhūndzāda as the first Iranian playwright in European style. The first Persian plays in European style that we can refer to, he says, are those written by Mīrzā-Fath 'Alī Darbandī (known as Ākhūndzāda) (1812-1878) essayist, novelist, playwright and scholar, who was by heritage Persian.

Ākhūndzāda emerged as a Russian citizen after the 1826-28 war between Russia and Iran, but he could not forget his own home country of Iran. He wrote six plays, all in Azarbayjani Turkish and published in Tiflis in about 1859 A.D. They were translated into Persian by Mīrzā Ja'far Qarajadāghī in 1874 A.D. [2]

The names of these six plays are: "Vazīr Khān-i Lankarān", "Khers Ghaldur Basen", (Duzd Afkan) "Mard-i Khasīs", "Mullā Ibrāhīm Khalīl Kīmīyāgar" and "Yūsuf Shah". In his Literary History of Persia Edward Browne reports three plays which he assumes to have been written by Mīrzā Malkam Khān, as the first Iranian plays.

The writer who is credited with being the first Persian playwright of the New School was Prince Malkam Khan. He wrote three plays at an unknown date. Later parts of them were published in Persian in the Tabriz Newspaper, "Ittihad" (Union), in 1326 H.Q. (908 A.D.) [3].

[1] Malik al Shu'arā Bahār, Majalla-yi Payām-i Nuvin, no. 7 p28.

[2] Yahyā Āryanpūr, Az Sabā tā Nīmā, op cit. p345.

[3] E.G. Browne, Persian Literature in Modern Times, p463.

After his study and discussion of the Persian and European translations of the plays, Brown wrongly attributes the play of Mīrzā-Āghā Tabrīzī to Malkam Khan. The names of these plays in English are:

1. The Adventure of Ashraf Khān, Governor of Arabistan
2. The Methods of Government of Zamān-Khān of Burūjird
3. Shāh-Quly Mīrzā Goes to Karbalā and spends some days at Kirmānshāh with the Governor Shāh Murādmīrzā [1].

These plays were published in Berlin in 1340 H.Q. (1929 A.D.) under the title of "A Collection of Three Dramatic Pieces Attributed to Mīrzā Malkam Khān Nāẓim-al-Dawla" and were printed by the Kāviyānī press. After the first Persian newspaper Akhtar (Star) was printed outside Persia, Prince Mīrzā Malkam Khān (Nāẓim al-Dawla) (1833-1908), son of Mīrzā Ya'qūb Khān, an Armenian of Julfa of Isfahan who was Persian envoy at the court of St. James', founded and put in circulation a newspaper called Qānūn (Law) in London in A.H. 1307 (1890 A.D.). The newspaper was written by himself.

Yaḥyā Āryānpūr's observations on these plays indicate that the dark, horrific and lawless ages of the despotism of Nāẓir-al-Dīn Shāh have been depicted as a comedy through the use of a humorous script which will give rise to laughter among the readers of the present day.

[1] Jamshīd Malik Pūr, Adabiyāt-i-Namāyishī Dar Īrān, 1 ed. intishārāt-i-ṭūs, 1363/1983. p185.

Yet the truth is that those people who experienced the injustices of that time and were yearning for freedom and western culture would find the texts of those plays far from tasteful and probably very distressing, however truthful they may have been. Āryan Pūr believes that these three plays are written in an unpolished, everyday language and that they do not observe the rules and technical principles of western theatre such as the unity of place, time etc. [1]. Therefore the staging of these plays will prove impossible. For instance in the first act of "The Rule of Zamān Khān" the house master of court sends an errand boy to fetch Vartanus the innkeeper. The errand boy goes and knock on Vartanus' door, speaks to him and they come back talking until they reach the governmental offices. At this point the Governor is seated in the middle of a garden in the same governmental building and is speaking to Mirza Jahangir. Yet the conversations show that these events do not take place in one single day but extend over a few days, from Thursday to Saturday. Contrary to the views stated above, Mīrzā Aghā's plays can be staged and the lack of unity of time and place does not present any obstacles to the performance of the plays. Moreover it should be noted that in Mirza Agha's time all plays were acted on the basis of improvisation, with no stage, curtain or props. Therefore the process of fetching Vartanus and taking him to the governmental offices could not have presented any technical problems, since all these are conveyed by the used of theatrical conventions and thus could be performed on the same basis as the Rū-hawzī and Ta'ziya.

[1] Yahyā Āryān Pūr. op.cit. p360.

The use of these techniques can be seen in the works of European playwrights such as Brecht. However, it is certain that these plays were produced as a result of progressive thought and as an alternative to the cheap court plays which were performed for the sole purpose of entertainment. All of these plays were comedies and involved very interesting subject matter. They were an illustration of social and political criticism rather than true entertainment. An exchange of ideas and correspondence between Mīrzā Āghā and Ākhūndzāda took place with the view of actualising this aim.

Ākhūndzāda and Mīrzā Āghā used to correspond with each other and Mīrzā Āghā was one of the followers of Ākhūndzāda [1].

By writing critiques on the plays of Mīrzā Āghā, Ākhūndzāda helped him to become familiar with the more developed techniques of play writing in European style. In a letter to Mīrzā Āghā, Ākhūndzāda enclosed a copy of his own writings as a critique of Mīrzā Āghā's works and an instruction on the ways in which realism could be developed in Eastern plays. He instructs Mīrzā Āghā to work towards the deepening of the content of the play and to take on the spreading of democratic thoughts as a serious duty. He further proceeds to point out the strong and the weak points of his plays and gives him directions for their improvement.

I hope that you will complete, print and publish your writings according to my advice, and thus do a service to your people. I hope you will carry on writing plays of this kind and teach the young and talented writers the technique of dramatic art which is the highest of the European arts, so that they can use their imagination and produce plays.

[1] H. Sadīq, Panj Namāyish-nāma-yi Mīrzā Āghā Tabrīzī, Tehran, 1356/1977 P.20.

Be it that from your efforts this new and highest technique in play writing will find its fame among our people [1].

The other plays written by Mīrzā Āghā Tabrīzī are:

"The Love Story of Āghā Hāshim Khalkhālī", "Hājī Murshid the Alchemist", "Baqqāl-bāzī dar Huzūr" [2].

Mīrzā Āghā Tabrīzī was one of the students who were sent to France in 1260 H.Q. (1840 A.D.). Eventually he became one of the interpreters of the European tutors in Dār al-Funūn. Working closely with the European tutors at Dar al-Funun for whom theatre was a part of their culture, could be another reason for him getting to know their technique. He was very close to the theatrical events which were happening at Dār al-Funūn. I'timād-al-Saltāna gives information about the Dār al-Funūn theatrical activities in his diary:

For some nights in the college of Dar al-Funūn it appears that the Minister of Education has opened a play-house. The actors who are European have not been trained to act and do not know Persian at all; they speak Persian in a parrot manner [3].

The six plays of Ākhūndzāda were translated into Persian by Mīrzā Ja'far-i Qarajadāghī. These plays are:

1. The Adventures of Mullā Ibrāhīm Khalīl the Alchemist
2. The Thief-catching Bear
3. The Vizier of Lankarān
4. The Adventure of Mard-i-Khasīs
5. The Adventure of Vukalā-yi Murāfa'a (the advocates)
6. The Miser [4]

[1] Ibid, p18

[2] See H. Sālik. Panj Namāyish-nāma-yi Mīrzā Āghā Tabrīzī. Tabriz 1357/1978 A.D.

[3] Memoirs of I'timād-al-Saltāna. 1303 H.Q. p472.

[4] Mīrzā Fath-'Alī Ākhūndzāda, Tamsīlāt, Shish namāyish nāma va-yik Dāstān, translated by Mīrzā Ja'far-i-Qarajadāghī, Intisharat-i-Khwārazmī, 1349/1970

Navabpur writes:

There has never been any question of the popularity (as reading matter) won by the Persian translations of the plays of Fath Ali Akhond Zadeh, or Akhundof (1812-1878). As a dramatist in the European mode, he was the pioneer in the whole of Asia [1].

The progressive writers of that time were put under much pressure from the government, the upper classes and the religious authorities. These created difficulties in the printing, publishing and particularly the performing of plays and therefore the writers had to find a less obvious language in which to speak to their audience, and tell them more symbolically what was happening at that time. In his letter to Mīrzā Āghā, Ākhūndzāda advised him to alter his play about Ashraf Khān, the governor of Arabistan. He advised him to use a different name for the Governor in his play, not a real name, and to be more careful about the language used to avert any danger from the government [2].

Mīzrā Āghā Tabrīzī was the first Iranian playwright who wrote a farce criticising the regime of the time and showed the corruption and social problems of the lower class and the suppression of the people.

In conclusion, the works of the playwrights of the new school were the products of the pens of progressive and politically-orientated writers. They exemplified the turmoil amongst the social strata in their plays and presented them as social satires and comedies.

[1] A.R. Navabpour, op.cit. p88.

[2] H. Sālik, op.cit p15.

This stands in direct contrast and opposition to the works produced by their contemporaries, which were directed principally to the amusement of a selected elite - an audience which demanded meaningless and directionless comedies of very little artistic value. In this way the first steps towards play-writing in Persian under the influence of social and cultural issues in the form of comic plays were taken by the likes of Mirza Agha Tabrizi. These were the first direct steps towards the evolution of written texts for the performance of comic plays in Iran.

Azarbaijani Writers

Among the writers of Azarbaijan who certainly had a large part in the development of the Iranian Theatre and in the Constitutional Revolution of Iran one may name the following: ^{Uzayr} ~~ozir~~ Hāji Baigūf, Jalīl Muhammad Qulīzāda, Narīmān Narīmānuf. These individuals seriously participated in the constitutional movement with their writings. Their writings found a special place among the constitutionalists, especially those of Azarbaijan. Hāji Baiguf is known not only as the founder of opera in Azarbaijan and Iran, but can also be regarded as a strong principled writer and freedom-lover.

Until 1905 Hāji Baiguf concentrated his activities upon writing and after that he turned in earnest to the business of studying and practising in the fields of western and Azarbaijani music.

Hājī Baiguf studied in earnest the capacity for change existing in these two forms of music and he was determined to create a synthesis of theoretical western music with local and national musical forms. The result of Hājī Baiguf's efforts was the opera 'Lailī va Majnūn' that was staged in 1908. [1]

The operas which Hājī Baiguf wrote and prepared for the stage consisted of the following: 'Lailī va Majnūn'(1907), 'Shaikh Sinan' (1909), 'Rustam va Suhrāb' (1910), 'Shāh Abbās va Khūrshīd Bānū' (1912), 'Aslī va Karam' (1912), 'Hārūn va Lailī' (1915) and 'Kūr Ughlī' (1937). The operas Lailī va Majnun, Aslī va Karam and Shāh Abbās va Khurshīd Bānū were performed in the cities of Tehran, Tabriz and Rasht.[2]

Along with national and historical operas Haji Baiguf also put his hand to comic operas. In these he deals with everyday matters and subjects for criticism. He also uses the comic critical style. His operas have been received in most countries including Iran. In this field he created works like 'Zan va Shauhar' (husband and wife), 'Mashhadī Ibād' and 'Ārshīn Mālālān'.

In the period of the constitutional revolution Iranians had a very strong cultural link with Azarbaijan and likewise Azari writers had an important role in the events of the constitution. In 1920 Jalil Muhammad Qulizāda personally staged one of his own plays by the name of 'Murdahā' (the dead) in Tabriz. This link was to cause Azari writers, who followed the style of Mirzā Fath-Ali Ākhūndzāda after him, to continue this path with works having Iranian themes.

[1] Jamshid Malik Pur, Adabiyāt-i namāyish dar Īrān, Dawrān-i Inqilāb-i-Mashrūta, 2nd Vol. P.93.

[2] Ibid. P. 94.

In 1899 Narīmān Narīmānuf wrote the historical play 'Nādir Shāh', in 1907 'Abd al-Rahīm Haqqverdiev wrote 'Muḥammad Shāh Qājār' and in 1916 Ja'far Jabbārli wrote the play 'Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh'.

Jalīl Muḥammad Qulizāda (1866-1932) was one of the founders of the critical realism movement in Azerbaijani literature, a movement that got underway with the writings of Ākhūndzāda. Muḥammad Qulizāda had the greatest part of the formation of critical and social thinking in the literature of Azerbaijan. He wrote the play 'Kamāncha' in 1905 and published the newspaper 'Mullā Naṣr al-Dīn' in 1906. This newspaper in fact became the organ of the democratic Azari writers [1].

[1] Ibid, P.139

CHAPTER VI

THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN THEATRICAL THEORY FROM 1905

The Role of Education in the Development of Theatre in Iran

In 1905, a group of well-known Iranian intellectuals gathered for the first time with the aim of spreading the Dramatic Arts, and founded a club called "The Culture Club".[1] Their objective was to free Dramatic Art from the exclusive circles of the aristocratic elite and take it among the people. Most of the productions by this group were characterised by political views and criticisms, and were performed in the main parks of Tehran such as Atabak Park, Zill-al-Sultān Park, Amīn-al Dawla Park, etc. The founders of this group were Muḥammad 'Alī Furūghī, 'Alī Akbar Dāvar, and Sayyid-'Alī Naṣr, also known as the founders of Iranian contemporary theatre. Later, with increased efforts and under the supervision of 'Abd-al-Karīm Muḥaqqiq al-Dawla, they established the "National Theatre", situated on the second floor of Farus Printers in Lālazār Street. [2] The theatre had a relatively well-equipped hall and was used for productions inspired by or adapted from European

[1] Rashīd Yāsami, Adabiyāt-i Mu'āsir-i Īrān, 1st ed., Tehran, 1316/1937, P. 27.

[2] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P.125

plays. In those days, theatre was a powerful tool in the enlightenment of the people and was becoming increasingly popular. This encouraged Sayyid 'Ali Naṣr, who had returned to Iran after spending some years abroad, to take up theatrical activities in Iran. He obtained official permission from the Vizārat-i Ma'ārif (The Ministry of Culture) to establish the "Comédie Iran" which continued to function for ten years. Later, in 1924, Mahmud Ṣahīr-al-Dīnī founded the Comedie Akhavān; in 1926, Ismā'īl Mihrtāsh established the Jāmi'a-yi Bārbud; Sīrūs Theatre was founded by Ārādāsh Nāzārīān in 1929; in 1930 the Nakisa Theatre was established under the management of Arbāb Aflātūn Shāhrukh, and in 1931 the Studio Drām-i-Kirmānshāhī was founded under the supervision of Mīr Sayf-al-Dīn Kirmānshāhī [1]. The development of Iranian theatre meant that professional and educated actors were now required. The first School of Theatre, namely the Madrasa-yi Ti'atr-i Shahr-dārī, was subsequently established in 1939. Before the establishment of this school, plays were managed and produced by people like directors, writers, actors and technicians. However, there was no systematic method of education in any of these centres to train theatrical personnel, and only the direction of actors and the provision of the costumes and scenery were undertaken by experienced people and occasionally by those educated abroad. One such centre which brought about fundamental changes and created a new atmosphere in scenery was Mīr Sayf-al-Dīn Kirmānshāhī's Studio Drām.

[1] Jānātī Aṭāi, Op. Cit. P 76.

He concluded his theatrical studies in Moscow and was an expert in design, painting and scenery. For two years he ran a class in his studio, at which he taught the techniques of scenery and was the only teacher of the class [1]. The volume of work and his occupation as a director did not allow Kirmānshāhī to open other classes. The first official centre for theatrical studies was the Shahr-dārī Theatre Class, which started to function under the supervision of Daryābaigī, who had returned to Iran after four years of studying in Germany. A contemporary account states:

Five months ago, the establishment of a drama class under the supervision of Mr. Daryabaigi, who had concluded his theatrical studies at a public institution in Germany, was advertised and a place in the Theatre Building (Firdawsi Street) was allocated for its venue. Following the advertisement, 150 educated men and women, eager and talented in the subject, applied for admission and 25 of them who met all the requirements of the course and had the artistic capability, were admitted to the class. In the short time since the commencement of the course, the twenty-five pupils have managed to gain the total satisfaction for their director and tutor, Mr. Daryabaigi, and are ready to exhibit the level of their talent and artistic capability. A grand theatrical performance and dinner party will therefore be arranged for next month [2].

Amongst Daryābaigī's assistants were Abū al-Ḥasan Ṣabā for teaching music, Madame Cornely for keep-fit exercises and Ṣafavī for acrobatic training and sports.

The newspaper Iṭṭilā'āt commented on the results of the Drama Class as follows:

[1] Rāfi'ī Ḥalātī, Personal talk with author.

[2] Iṭṭilā'āt, 18th October 1935.

It is delightful to see a new movement rising in the theatrical arts. Those who saw last Friday night's performance of the Theatre Class, supervised by the director of the class, would agree with the writer of these lines that a new movement is born in theatre and this art is fast departing from lifeless imitation. The modern style adapted in Ali Daryabaigi's plays which were performed by the art students of the Theatre Class, caused much hopeful and optimistic reaction. Best of all was the music of the play, which was written in classical Iranian style with new and creative adaptation [1].

Originally, the duration of the course was designated as two years, but no-one graduated in the two and a half years running of the course.

Sāzmān-i Parvarish-i Afkār

In 1939 an organisation called Sāzmān-i-Parvarish-i Afkār ("Organisation of Mind Development") was established. This department was established to direct and develop the collective mind of Iranians. One of the divisions of this institute was theatre, and 'Ali Naṣr was appointed as the head of this department[2].

In the same year a school of acting was opened with official permission from the Ministry of Culture. The college would issue diploma certificates to its graduates, signed by Maṣṣūr-alMulk (the Prime Minister) and Ismā'īl Mir'āt (Minister of Culture and the principal of the college). The college continued to function

[1] Itṭilā'āt, 18th January 1936.

[2] H. Gūrān. Op. cit. P.173.

until 1959. Originally, it was founded and managed under the direction of Sayyid 'Ali Naṣr, and after he left Iran for China, Dr. Namdar became head of the college. The budget of the college was provided from a 2% allocation by the Tehran Municipal Council. The college was first situated at 'Aynal-Dawla Park north of Sipāh Square, and then moved to the street of Saint-Louis School in Lāla zār which is now occupied by the offices of the newspaper Kayhān. After a while, the college moved again to a house in the Arab residential area belonging to one of the staff of the Foreign Ministry called Vālī. Even that venue did not last long as the college was moved to the School of Commerce at the end of Surayyā Street. After a short while, the college was once more displaced, this time to a few rented rooms in Dār al-Funūn, and was finally moved to the home of Dr. I'timādī in Sarchashma.

Meetings of the Sāzmān-i Parvarish-i Afkār were held every Friday night in Firdaws Park. Most of the activities of the organisation were based on speeches and propagnada issues which after a while became unbearably boring for the people. Hence, Sayyid 'Ali Naṣr was asked to organise and perform brief entertaining pieces in between the speeches. At that time, Sayyid 'Ali Naṣr was running the Comédie Iran. Among the people whose artistic potential flourished in those days were 'Alī Aṣghar Garmsīrī, Majīd Muḥsinī, Ṣādiq Bahrāmī and Jamshīd Shaybānī. In the college, which was run in the style of European theatre schools, many subjects were taught by the following masters of the relevant arts:

Sayyid 'Ali Naṣr: Head of the college, teaching History and Acting.
 Dr Mahdī Nāmdār: Later head of the college, teaching Acting.
 Muṭī' al-Dawla Hījāzī: Persian Literature.
 Rashīd Yāsami: Persian Literature.
 Mushīr Humāyūn Shahrḍār: Theory of Music and Persian Classical Music.
 Ismā'īl Mihrtāsh: The Theory of Music and Persian Classical Music.
 Javād Mārūfī: Theory of Music and Persian Classical Music.
 Rāfi'ī Hālatī: History of Costume, Stage Design and Make-up.
 'Alī Daryābaygī: Acting
 Abdal-Husayn Nūshīn: Acting.
 Fażl Allāh Bāyigan: Acting
 Ozhic Baghdāsāriān: Gymnastics and Dancing.
 Āzar Sipāhi: Gymnastics and Dancing.
 Hasan 'Alī Naṣr: French Language.
 Dr. 'Alī Kānī: English Language
 Dr. Mahdī Furūgh: Voice and Speech.
 'Ali Aṣghar Garmsīrī: Study of Theatre and Criticism. [1]

The college trained a number of skilful artists and managed to change the direction of Iranian theatre towards progress. Most of the leading figures of theatre who are still active today are amongst the graduates of the college.

[1] H.A. Tabāṭabāi, naqsh-i marākiz-i Amūzish-i Ti'atr-dar Tahavvūl va Gustarish-i Hunar-i Namāyish dar Iran dar Panjāh Sāl-i Shāhanshāhi-yi Pahlavi, Ministry of Culture and Art, Tehran 1976. P. 29.

The first cultural and arts organisation which operated on a wide scale was the Department of Fine Arts, which was established in 1950 and functioned autonomously. This department was originally under the old Ministry of Culture which after a few years, in 1964, became the Ministry of Culture and Art. In 1957, this department established the Department of Dramatic Arts. At first, both the study of theatre and performance were taught at the Department of Dramatic Arts. Later, in 1964, the first polytechnic for the study of theatre, namely the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, was opened by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. A year later, in 1965, Tehran University opened a Dramatic Arts course in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Alongside the organisations belonging to or dependent on the government (which followed the University's theoretical system and regulations), teaching within the independent theatrical groups and organisations had a special role to play in the advancement of the art of theatre. The importance of the latter type of teaching was that it combined theory and practice, as opposed to the University's teaching methods which concentrated on theory more than practice. Amongst the theatrical groups which trained and introduced some famous artists to society, was the Jāmiá-yi Bārbud which was one of the well-known and active theatrical centres in Iran. It was managed by Ismā'īl Mihrtāsh who was skilful both in music and singing, and years of effort by him to combine music and theatre culminated in the birth of Iranian Opera. In 1924, Mihrtāsh had set up a club which was joined by enthusiasts. Until 1926, when the Jāmiá-yi Bārbud was formed only a hand ful of musical plays had been

produced in Iran [1].

This group has produced some interesting operas of national stories such as 'Laylī and Majnūn' and 'Khusraw and Shīrīn' with unique and attractive costumes. Jāmiā-yi Bārbud has mainly worked in the field of national theatre, and some valuable dramas on national themes, written and supervised by Rāfi'ī Hālatī who is amongst the greatest artists of Iran, have been produced by this group[2].

In order to find their actors, the practice of such theatrical groups was to take a certain number of enthusiasts for training, and after the completion of the course, some were picked to join the group. Those who graduated from such non-governmental institutions either did not receive any certificate or, even if they did, the certificate did not have any official educational value. In 1942, for example, the Jāmiā-yi Bārbud used to hold its classes in Sa'dī Street which was its base at the time. Classes ran over a period of eight terms and the teaching personnel were:

Khān Malik Sāsānī	:	History of Theatre.
Rāfi'ī Hālatī	:	Stage Design and History of Costume.
'Alī Daryābay gī	:	Acting
Khān Bābā Ṣadri	:	Practice.
Muḥsin Suhayl	:	Stage Design and Make-Up.

[1] Janāti Aṭāi. Op. Cit. P. 74.

[2] 'Alī Naṣirīān, Nazari-Bi-Hunar-i-Namayish Dar Iran, Majāla-yi Namāyish, No. 9, 2 Period, P. 18.

Dr. Nāzīr Zādah Kirmānī : Persian Literature.
Ismā'īl Mihrtāsh : Iranian Classical Music.
Mīr Ḥasan Shabāhang : Foreign Language.

Those who joined later were:

Haik Kārākāsh : Acting
Valī Allāh Khākdān : Stage Design and Costume[1].

On reviewing the personalities who were teaching the course, one may consider the standard of the classes of the 'Jāmiā-yi Bārbud to have been on the same level as that of the faculties of Dramatic Arts. It was such a high level of teaching standards which enabled the institution to produce some of the best artists of Iran.

Nūshīn's Drama Class

In 1935 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Nūshīn and his wife Loretta went to the Moscow Festival and from there to Paris from where, after one year, they returned to Iran. In 1944 Nūshīn established the Farhang Theatre. The first play to be presented by this theatre was Volpone by Ben Jonson, translated and directed by Nūshīn himself. Later Nushin and his group went to the Firdawsī Theatre where they performed The Blue Bird by Maurice Materlinck.

Nūshīn's method of teaching drama to his students was through actually working on and performing plays. In other words, he

[1] H.A. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Op. Cit. P. 38.

combined theory and practice. However, in 1944 he officially started a drama course in the Firdawsī Theatre. The duration of this course was one year, the classes being held every evening. Nushin was the only teacher on this course. Speech and voice training were very important to him so he always started the course with this and with the book *Fann-i Ti'atr* which was written by himself and was a basic book for his teaching. He also used to teach speech and voice through the Shāh-nāma. Nūshīn introduced Stanislavski's methods to Iran, though in general his teaching was through practice. Later in the Sa'dī Theatre, which was founded by Āmū'ī, there was a drama class taught by some of Nūshīn's ex-colleagues including Muḥammad 'Alī Ja'fari, Maḥdī Amīnī, Ṣādiq Shabāvīz, Nuṣrat Karīmī, Muṣṭafā Uskū'ī and Māhīn Uskū'ī (or Suhaylā). These were later some of the most active artists in the Iranian theatre.

Nūshīn's drama classes and his artistic personality had a great impact on the theatre of this period, and his work has had a lasting effect. Indeed it was a landmark in the history of Iranian theatre.

Ānāhītā Open Faculty of Acting

One of the independent bodies which made a great contribution to the development of Iranian theatre and from which a great number of contemporary actors and directors emerged was the Ānāhītā Theatre in Tehran. The first period of the course in the Ānāhītā Theatre started in 1958.

The directors of the Anahita Theatre for developing the art of theatre have established a drama course, and they want to get all the enthusiastic and talented youth into the classes. This action of the directors should be greatly welcomed [1].

This Faculty of the Anahita Theatre with its facilities and possibilities, which were limited, started to train the artistes. A great number of present day artistes began in the Anahita Theatre Faculty. Plays such as Othello, Much Ado About Nothing, Sixth Floor, The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro, Streetcar Named Desire and many others were shown in Tehran and also toured all over the country. Generally, Stanislavski's method was used, which was because the directors Mahīn and Muṣṭafā Uskū'ī were trained and educated in that method in Moscow. In teaching and training the students they put more emphasis on the practical side, especially speech and voice, and they would choose the most talented students to perform in professional productions as part of their training.

The Faculty of Dramatic Arts

In 1964 a Faculty of Dramatic Arts, dependent on the Ministry of Culture and Arts, was established. This Faculty was an improvement on and development of the former Open Faculty of Dramatic Art, which was an evening school. The Faculty had five departments: play

[1] Majalla-yi Pušt-i Tehran, No. 25, Second Year 1957. Cited by H. A. Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Op. Cit. P.57.

writing and dramatic literature, cinema, television and radio, acting and direction, stage design and scenery. In 1975 puppetry also was added to the other subjects. This was the first higher education faculty to have an educational programmed and diploma. The diploma was equivalent to the B.A. degree. The duration of the course was four years full-time, and students were chosen by entrance examinstion and interview by the college board.

This faculty introduced young active graduates to the world of the arts and large numbers of them later became highly active in theatre, cinema and television.

Faculty of Theatre, Faculty of Fine Arts

In 1965 Tehran Universtiy opened the Faculty of Theatre in the Faculty of Fine Arts. This was the second institute of higher education in theatre in Iran. The Faculty of Theatre was more important than the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, with better tutors, most of them educated in Europe and America.

University Theatre

In 1956 Dr, Frank Davidson, an American, was invited to Iran by the Faculty of Letters of Tehran University, and he opened a drama course at the University. Students were chosen to take the course after passing an entrance examination. This course consisted of classes in acting, stage design, make-up, costume design and playwriting. The basic system which he used on the whole course was

Stanislavski's method. He also had another drama course in the Iran-America Society and in addition worked with professional groups in co-operation with Dr. Valā and actors of the Tehran Theatre. Our Town (T. Wilder) was directed by him and was performed in the Tehran Theatre. He also worked with The Little Tehran Theatre, which was formed by English and American residents in Tehran.

Usually the duration of his courses was very short and was based on practical work. With his students from the Iran-America Society, he directed a performance of Tennessee William's The Glass Menagerie in Tehran, and later he took it on tour to the Sipahan Theatre in Isfahan.

In 1957 Professor George Quinby, another American lecturer, came to Iran and established a theatre course at the Faculty of Letters. The duration of this course was exactly one academic year. Only students studying in the Faculty of Letters could attend and the course was considered as four units of their subject. Among the areas in which he specialised were theory, the history of American theatre, the development of theatre in America from the nineteenth century and analysis of twentieth century American theatre. Also Quinby established two individual classes in the Bureau of Fine Arts: one on playwriting and the other on stage design. At the end of the playwriting course he chose seven plays written by the students and gave them to the other students to rehearse. Later he chose the three best to be performed in the Farabi Theatre. Among the writers who emerged through this process and won prizes were Lu'bat Valā and Khalīl Dilmaghānī.

Other students of this group who later became famous in the theatre were Jāfar Vālī, Parvīz Bahrām, Muḥammad ‘Aṣimī, Bīzhan Mufīd, Hūshang Laṭīfpūr, Fahīma Rāstkar and Jamāl Mirṣādiq ī.

The University Club, under the direction of Professor Quinby performed plays such as Billy Budd by H. Melville, The Second Man by S. Behrman, Cage by Lubat Volā, The Golden Carriage by Khalīl Dīlmaghānī, and The End by Jāfar Vālī. All these plays were performed by students of the Faculty of Letters.

In 1958 Dr. Belcher, another American, came to Iran and stayed for two years. He also formed a drama course in the Faculty of Letters which was also a unit of the subject. Also, in co-operation with the Little Tehran Theatre he produced Antigone by Anouilh, as well as several other plays including The Proposal by Chekhov.

The Impact of the Western School in Iranian Theatre

The present influence of western ideas in Iranian theatre really began with the restoration of the Shah in 1953, which brought about the emergence of the Americans on the Iranian theatrical scene. The first American to have an impact was Dr. F. Davidson who in 1956, as seen above, formed a theatre class in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tehran. He also taught in the Iran-America Society and worked with various new theatrical groups. He was a product of Stanislavski's method school of acting and produced various plays in Iran including The Glass Menagerie and Our Town in the Tehran Theatre.

A second American Professor, George Quinby, who arrived in Iran in 1957, played a more important role in introducing western theatre to Iran. He initiated a theatrical club at the University of Tehran. Besides his practical work he also lectured on the history and theory of American theatre and formed two classes in the Fine Arts Office, playwriting and stage scenery.

The first western play he produced in Iran was Billy Budd, which fortunately had an all-male cast (actresses in Iran at that time were still suspect). The play was received quite well by the audience, but criticised by the University authorities as being "anti-authority" [1]. His second production, Behrman's Second Man, a high comedy with a cast of two men and two women, was received enthusiastically by the audience, but Quinby was obliged by the authorities to edit later productions to exclude kissing and to remove an actress from the actor's lap to the arm of his chair [2].

Meanwhile his lectures on American theatre had proceeded from Uncle Tom's Cabin through to contemporary plays, of which those of Eugene O'Neill were the most popular. Following the showing of Second Man in Isfahan, he was asked to lecture on O'Neill at Abadan. After this he went back to America and returned to Iran in 1962 as a Fulbright lecturer. Shortly he presented Long Day's Journey into Night by O'Neill, in English, using a cast of American and English actors, alternating with an Iranian cast of his former students in

[1] Jāfar Vāli, Personal Talk with Author.

[2] Parvīz Bahrām, Personal Talk with Author

Persian, at the recently completed Iran-America Theatre in Tehran. This was a new and modern building with a theatre reasonably good in lighting and other equipment, most probably the best theatre at that time in Iran. The play was translated by Maḥmūd Kiyānūsh for the Persian performance. The Iranian cast were :- Fahīma Rāstakār, Parvīz Bahrām, Hūshang Laṭīfpūr and Kāwūs Dustdār.

In addition to Long Days Journey into Night, Quinby centred his directing around two other O'Neill autobiographical plays:- Ah, Wilderness!, for the University Drama Club for six performances at the New Theatre at the Faculty of Fine Arts, and The Straw, with a cast of young professionals from Dr. Valā's Theatre School, also at the Iran-America Theatre in Tehran.

By staging these three plays in Persian, the director's hope was to leave a clear impression with local audiences of:-

- (a) the America of O'Neill's boyhood before the First World War and the youth he wished he might have had;
- (b) the tragic family circumstances which were to affect his entire career, and
- (c) the way in which he rose above his selfish wish for death to become a champion of man's courageous fight against fate.

Quinby had also tried to encourage young dramatists by offering a seminar on playwriting at the Iran-America Society in Tehran.

It is interesting to note traditional attitudes to theatre and the conditions in Iran at the time of Quinby's arrival there.

In a letter for possible publication in the "O'Neill Newsletter", a new theatre magazine in Tehran, he describes the prevailing attitude thus:

I suggest the production of "Yellow Jack", since American doctors were at the time involved in fighting certain contagious diseases. However, Dr. Siassi, the distinguished head of the School of Letters, doubted that a Persian audience could accept a play dealing with disease as (Being) dramatic"; "... for "Long Days" ... with identical cut texts, the English version ran three hours; the Farsi four hours! Iranian actors love to milk a script for all that's in it, and "the theatre chairs from India barely arrived in time for the first performance"; "For "The Straw" I was offered the actress originally in the opposite part in '57, but she had rounded out so lushly (perhaps as a result of becoming a movie star) that she couldn't play a dying consumptive" [1].

A third American of some importance was Dr. F. S. Belcher who went to Iran in 1958 and stayed for over two years, during which time he established a theatrical class in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tehran. This was a formal class and part of the Department's course. He also produced The Emperor Jones by O'Neill which was banned, Jean Anouilh's Antigone, Anton Chekhov's The Bear and The Hairy Ape, among others.

Most of the plays staged by Davidson, Quinby and Belcher were at either the Iran-America Society or the British Embassy; a few were at the Tehran Theatre and the University of Tehran and some were also performed in other cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz and Mashhad. Sometimes the actors were American and British and some of the productions were even in English.

[1] Quinby, Unpublished letter in position of author.

In addition to the direct activities of the American producers mentioned above, in 1957 the Iranian authorities set up a Department of Dramatic Arts under Dr. Mahdī Furūgh, a graduate of London's R.A.D.A., in the Fine Arts Office (later the Ministry of Culture and Arts). This department set about spreading knowledge of western theatre in various ways:- by awarding an annual prize for the best Iranian plays and the best translated Western plays; by forming theatrical classes and groups (including marionette groups); by broadcasting theatrical productions on television; by printing various theatrical publications. The Department of Dramatic Arts, in co-operation with the Iran-America Society also held a semi-festival for four nights in October 1958, the contents of the programme being music, dance, plays and an art exhibition. The event was held in Farhang Hall, Hafiz Street, Tehran and included a mixture of American and Iranian cultural groups. One of the third night of the programme the one-act play Vultures (Murdah Khurhā) by Ṣādiq Hidāyat was performed. The play was presented by the National Dramatic Group; the cast included the actresses Ṣafavī, Kāvūs ī, Ḥamīda and Chihir-Āzād and the actors Naṣīriyān and Javānmard [1].

On the same night as the one-act plays, Aria da Capo by Edna St. Vincent Millay was presented by The Little Theatre of Tehran under the direction of Sergio dello Strologo. On the third night The Game of Chess, a one-act play by Kenneth Goodman, translated into Persian by Muḥammad Anṣārī, was also presented. This was presented by the

[1] Hasan Shīrvānī, Fa'āliyathā-yi Hunarī Dar Panjāh Sāl Shāhanshāhī -yi Pahlavi. Op. Cit. P. 64.

University of Tehran Theatre Group under the direction of Dr. Francis S. Belcher, visiting professor at the University of Tehran, in co-operation with Khalīl Dīlmaghānī. The cast of the play comprised: Muhammad Ansārī, Īraj Gūrgīn, 'Alī 'Ātifī and 'Abbās Tajallī.

These were the first steps to promoting "American-Iranian friendship", or, more correctly, the infiltration of American cultural standards into Iranian society in order to bring Iran more strongly into the western sphere of influence after the restoration of the Shah. In this respect it is important to note that the translators were impelled, during the American-backed Shāh's regime, to choose more cryptic playwrights such as Ionesco and Beckett, in preference to overtly anti-capitalist writers such as Brecht [1].

Governmental Theatre

In 1957 The National Bureau of Fine Arts was established, an office attached to the government but apparently dependent on the Ministry of Culture. Later this organisation became one of the important ministries under the organisation was "The Ministry of Culture and Arts". The main function of this ministry was to preserve and develop culture and the arts. Under the auspices of the National Bureau of Fine Arts, a "Bureau of the Dramatic Arts" was established, with Dr. Mahdī Furūgh, a graduate student of RADA, as principal.

[1] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P.246

This bureau endeavoured to spread the national theatre of Iran and knowledge of Western theatre throughout the country. By employing intellectual and experienced actors, the directors and writers of this bureau tried to undermine the independent groups which were politically radical and therefore dangerous opponents of the government's policies. This strategy was largely successful. Nevertheless, most of the progressive actors and directors employed by this governmental bureau still endeavoured to spread their own social points of view and, using the large facilities of the bureau, were able to communicate directly with the people. This was inevitable in spite of the control exercised by the bureau. The bureau made a contract with the private television channel, Sabit T.V., (the first television channel in Iran) to produce regular weekly television programmes for theatre. The standard of plays and performances was indeed high, and plays were chosen carefully on the one hand to be relevant to Iranian audiences and, on the otherhand, to pass government censorship. At that time there was no pre-recording system at Ṣābit T.V. and programmes went out live, so there was great responsibility on the general director of the bureau in choosing acceptable plays and ensuring that actors would not do any ad-libbing during the performance.

Among the directors and actors there were a few who had graduated in drama in Europe. These made a great effort to translate European plays into Persian and introduce them to Iranian audiences. Most of these plays were performed on the same weekly television programmes, and chosen carefully in respect of liberal tastes but so as not to fall foul of the censor. Some of these translations were later published.

Most of the educated directors of that time were fascinated by the "Theatre of the Absurd". Many modern western plays were translated and performed by these groups.

The other activities of the bureau were:

1. Publishing a fortnightly theatrical magazine.
2. Founding an open dramatic school for the study of directing, playwriting, acting, stage design, etc.
3. Arranging touring companies throughout the country.
4. Awarding an annual prize for the best new Persian play in order to encourage new native writers.[1]

One of the first stage production of the bureau was Strindberg's The Father, directed by Mahdī Furūgh. Also Ghosts was performed, directed by Hamīd Samandaryān, a student graduate who had studied drama in Germany. Another director who was actively working on modern plays was 'Abbas Maghfūriyān who also graduated in Germany. He translated and directed The Zoo Story by Edward Albee. This play was most probably the first western play with just two actors to be performed in Iran and needed considerable daring to begin with. The first performance was on television, and the cast comprised Maghfuriyan as Jerry and Parvīz Fannīzāda as Peter. Later the same play was performed on stage by the same group, but instead of Fannīzāda, the part of Peter was taken by 'Izzat Intizāmī, one of

[1] Khalīl Dilmagānī, Citd. by H. Shirvānī. Op. Cit. P.P. 66-67.

the most distinguished actors at that time in Iran. In a third production of this play, Iraj Emami played Peter, and in a fourth production, Jamshīd Mashāyikhī played the part. In both of these productions Maghfūriyān performed the role of Jerry. For many years this was a very convenient play to put on, firstly because there were no women in the cast, secondly because only two actors were involved, and thirdly because it required very simple scenery, just two benches. Later The Department of Dramatic Arts was expanded and became the Faculty of Dramatic Arts.

The First Step Towards a National Theatre

The Namāyish (Theatre) Magazine, one of the national bureau of Fine Arts' publications, awarded an annual prize for the best new play. The winning entries for the best plays were: Bulbul-i Sargashta by 'Ali Naṣīriyān, and Sarbāzān-i Jāvidān by A. Jannatī - equal first prize; Kūrush Pīsar-i-Māndānā by Kūrus Ṣalāḥshūr - second prize; and Arūsakhā by Bīzhan Mufīd - third prize [1]. Among these plays by far the best and most lasting was Bulbul-i Sargashta, which was the first publised in Namāyish 10 Vol. 1, and first performed in Tehran in the winter of 1958 by the National Arts Troupe in the Farabi Theatre. It later played fifteen nights in the summer of 1959 in the Jami'a-yi Bārbad Theatre. It was also performed in Isfahan, Shiraz, Abadan and the oil-producing areas, under the auspices of the National Bureau of Fine Arts.

[1] Majalla-yi Namāyish, 2 Period, No. 9 1336/1957.

In addition it played four nights at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre as the Iranian representative at the Theatre of Nations Festival in Paris in April 1960. It was also performed at the 25th of Shahrivar Theatre in Tehran in 1966.

The Story:

Once upon a time there was a man who had a young son and a daughter. One day the man took a wife. Now the children had a step-mother called Bābā's wife.

The man was a thorn-picker and one day he and his son wanted to go to the fields to pick thorns. Bābā's wife said, "You should make a wager between yourselves. Whoever picks the most thorns must cut off the head of the other".

The father and son agreed. They departed for the fields and began to pick thorns. By chance, the son picked more thorns than the father. When it came to wrap up their piles, the son said to his father, then, "Bābā dear, I am thirsty". "Fine", replied the father. "Go to the spring and quench your thirst". When his son left to get a drink, the father took a mound of thorns from the boy's piles, and placed them on his own. After they wrapped up their piles, the father said. "Let's weigh our loads and see who picked the most". They weighed the thorns and the father's portion was heavier". He grabbed his son, threw him down and cut off his head.

He went home with his son's head and gave it to his wife and said, "Take this and fix it for dinner". Bābā's wife took the boy's head, placed in a pot and lit a fire under it so that it would cook. At noontime when the girl returned from Mullā Bājī's house she said to Bābā's wife, "I am hungry". Baba's wife replied, "Fine. Go help yourself to the Ābgūsht in the pot and come eat with your mother".

When the little girl lifted the lid of the pot she recognised her brother's forelock stewing in the boiling water. She struck her forehead twice and exclaimed "Oh woe is me! Woe is me! I have lost my brother".

She softly closed the lid on the pot and ran in tears to Mullā Bājī to tell her what had happened. Mullā Bājī said, "Do not touch the Ābgūsht. After they have eaten it go and collect your brother's bones. Wash them in rosewater and bury them in the corner of the garden. Plant a rosebush over the exact spot and on the night of the seventh Thursday go and water the bush with rosewater".

The little girl went and did all that she was told and waited for the night of the seventh Thursday. On the night of the seventh Thursday, she noticed a nightingale perched on a branch in the rose bush. The nightingale was singing this song:

I am a wandering nightingale,
From beyond the mountains and across the dale.
By my cowardly father I was killed,
For dinner by my whoring mother swilled.
My kind-hearted sister
Seven times by bones with rosewater washed
And under a flowering tree she buried me.
Now I am a nightingale.
Whish...whish...!

He then flew away. The nightingale flew off to a needle-seller's shop, alighted on the ground next to the wares and began to sing.

I am a wandering nightingale,
From beyond the mountains and across the dale.
By my cowardly father I was killed,
For dinner by my whoring mother swilled.
My kind-hearted sister
Seven times my bones with rosewater washed
And under a flowerig tree she buried me.
Now I am a nightingale.
Whish...whish...!

The needle-seller said, "What, what are singing? Sing it again for me". The nightingale replied, "Very well. If you close your eyes, I will sing it again". When the storekeeper closed his eyes, the nightingale swiftly grabbed a claw full of needles and flew away.

Next he flew to the roof of Bābā's wife. He perched on the roof and sang:

I am a wandering nightingale,
From beyond the mountains and across the dale
By my cowardly father I was killed,
For dinner by my whoring mother swilled.
My kind-hearted sister
Seven times my bones with rosewater washed
And under a flowering tree she buried me.
Now I am a nightingale.
Whish...whish...!

When his song was finished, Bābā's wife raised her head and said, "What, what are you singing? Sing it again for me". The nightingale replied, "Very well. If you close your eyes and open your mouth I will sing it again".

When Bābā's wife closed her eyes and opened her mouth, the nightingale dropped the needles into her mouth and flew away. Next he flew to the candy-maker's shop and sang the same song. when he had finished, the candy-maker said, "What, what are you singing? sing it again for me". The nightingale replied, "Very well. if you close your eyes, I will sing it again". When the candy-maker closed his eyes, the nightingale grabbed a claw full of sweets and flew away.

Next he flew to his sister's spinning wheel, alighted, an sang his song.

I am a wandering nightingale,
From beyond the mountains and across the date
By my cowardly father I was killed,
For dinner by my whoring mother swilled.
My kind-hearted sister
Seven times my bones with rosewater washed
And under a flowering tree she buried me.
Now I am a nightingale.
Whish...whish...!

When his song had finished, his sister said, "What, what are you singing? Sing it again for me". The nightingale replied, "Very well. If you close your eyes and open your mouth, I will sing it again". His sister did just that and the nightingale dropped the sweets into her mouth and flew away [1].

In 1964 after the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Art, the art of theatre came under the control of a new organisation called the Bureau of Theatre. This new bureau tried to attract other independent theatre groups by employing the leader of the group, thereby scattering the group or attaching it to the bureau in order to have direct control of its activity. As part of this strategy the bureau employed one of the famous progressive ex-members of Nushin Theatre who had his own theatre group, Ja'farī at the Kasrā Theatre; after this the Kasrā Theatre was closed down and, thus one of the most important bases for theatre of protest was silenced.

[1] 'Alī Naṣīriyān, Bulbul-i-Sargashta, Andīsha, Tehran, 1354/1975. P.P. 17-20.

The Bureau of Theatre was actually the same as the Bureau of Dramatic Art but under new management and new direction, which was even more illiberal and restrictive. The first important event organised by this new bureau, after it replaced the Bureau of Dramatic Art, was the Iranian Theatre Festival. This was the first festival of Iranian traditional and contemporary theatre. The festival took place in 1965 at the 25th Shahrivar Theatre, a new building, reasonably equipped and specially built for the Ministry of Culture and Art. The theatre was built in the centre of Tehran in the south part of the Park-i-Shahr.

Among the productions at the festival was [1] Amīr Arslān by Parvīz Kārdān, a play based on an Iranian folk story, directed by 'Alī Naṣīriyān. The play was one of the early plays written in the rū-hawzī style and performed also in the same manner. Among the actors and actresses the most important were 'Izzat Intiḏāmī, 'Alī Naṣīriyān, Mahīn Ṣaḥābī, Ja'far Vālī and Fakhrī Khūrvash.

Of the other plays at the festival the one probably most acclaimed by the people and the critics alike was The Stick-wielders of Varāzīl by Dr. Ghulām Ḥusayn Sā'idi (non-de-plume: Gawhar Murād), one of the most progressive dissident writers of Iran. The Stick-wielders of Varāzīl was a landmark of modern Iranian playwriting.

[1] Parvīz Kārdān, Amīr Arsalān. Intishārāt-i-Padīd, Tehran, 1336/1957.

It was directed by Ja'far Vālī, and the main roles were acted by I. Intizāmī, J. Vālī, A. Naṣīriyān, J. Mashāyikhī, M. Dawlat-ābādī. P. Fannizāda and M. Kishāvarz.

The Third play, Kāliska-yi Talā'ī, was written and directed by Khalīl Dilmaghānī. M. Kishāvarz, J. Mashāyikhī and F. Ta'idī were the main actor and actresses in the play.

The fourth play was Bihtarīn Bābā-yi Dunyā by G. H. Sā'idī, directed by I. Intizāmī with 'Alī Naṣīriyān, J. Mashāyikhī and J. Vālī.

The fifth play was Pahlavān Akbar Mīmīrad by Bahrām Bayzā'ī, directed by 'Abbās Javānmard. The actors in this play were Dawlatābādī, Javānmard, Fannizāda and Bakhshī.

The last play Kūrush Pīsar-i Māndānā by K. Ṣalāḥshūr, directed by Rukn-al Dīn Khusravī.[1]

There was also a programme presented under the direction of Parviz Ṣayyād called "Iranian Collection", a collection of popular and traditional plays and also traditional theatrical forms. In the naqqālī section, an extract from Rustam and Suhrāb, from the Shāhnāma, was performed by M. 'Alī Shāh, one of the most famous naqqals of Iran. The second Naqqal was Murshid Burzū who performed an extract from the Iskandar Nāma, another Persian epic.

Other performers at the festival were Ibrāhīm Mūsavī, Parda-Dārī.

[1] H. Shirvānī, Op Cit, P. 70.

Ta'ziya, a puppet show was performed by the Akbar Sarshār Troupe, in which one of the most experienced and famous actors of improvisatory theatre of Iran; Zabīh Allāh Māhiri acted the main role of Siyāh.

As a first result of this festival many young, talented actors, writers and directors were introduced to the art-loving public and were encouraged to further their careers. Most of these people were later to become the main nucleus of Iranian national theatre. Later still, as a result of the development of cinema and television, some of these left the theatre for these more lucrative and prestigious spheres. At the festival, and in state-supported theatre in general at the time, most of the audience was from the educated middle classes, as a result of the direction of social and political trends after the coup d'etat which had destroyed the emerging awareness of the working classes. In the commercial theatre which was based in Lālazār Street in Tehran, the policy of the owners, backed by the government, was to divert the working classes to entertainment for entertainment's sake without any real theatrical, social or political pretensions. Before the coup d'etat this area had been the very heart of the theatre of protest (just as in pre-Nazi Germany the night clubs and cabaret had been the focus for strong political and social satire - as shown by the early career of Bertolt Brecht).

At this time the Bureau of Theatre became one of the major bodies presenting theatre and, soon, theatrical activity throughout the country was under the control of the bureau. It employed student

graduates of drama from the universities and dispersed them throughout the country to form theatre groups in all the other major towns, naturally under the control of the bureau. This policy was obviously to further strengthen the political and social control of the Bureau over theatre in Iran as a whole. Another policy of the Bureau was to try to gather all writers as members of the Bureau by paying them 5,000 Tomans (£300) for each play written, provided that it passed the Bureau Council's regulations. The Bureau very astutely formed a censorship council without any great trouble. After the performance of plays like "The stick-wielders of Varāzīl" which had had a great impact on the public, of the implications of which the authorities were fully aware, as a safeguard the Bureau decided to form a council for reading plays and to pass them for showing, or reject them. Five important figures who were members of the Bureau were on the council - 'Alī Naṣīriyān, 'Izzat Intiḏāmī, Dāwūd Rashīdī 'Abbās Javānmard, who resigned in 1977, and 'Azīmat Zhāntī, the director of the Bureau. After the decision of this council, which considered all aspects of the plays, there was a SAVAK colonel who made the final decision as to whether a play was overtly political or against the interests of the government. If it was obviously political and openly anti-government, the council would not, of course, pass it to the SAVAK representative to read. It was not that the council itself was necessarily pro-censorship, but in order to protect their own position they were obliged to take this course of action. Fully realising the limitations of the censorship the council would thoroughly vet a play and, in consultation with the writer, adapt it as necessary before passing it on to the higher authority, i.e. the SAVAK colonel. From the

Bureau's point of view it was preferable to have active theatrical people on the council who could more easily understand and appreciate the symbolic nature of much "political" drama. This was only the first step of the censorship. Even if a play, having been read and passed by the council, had been stamped with the council's "approved emblem", it did not receive the final approval for public showing until a performance of it had, in fact, been viewed by the council when the play had been fully rehearsed and prepared for production. This prevented any surreptitious alterations or insertions by the writer or director after the council's original approval. The membership of the council was not constant. For a short time Muḥammad 'Alī Jāfarī and Jāfar Vālī also were inactive members of the council. This was to give an impression of democratic and liberal views to the council.

The aim of the government was to destroy the social theatre of the time and to end political agitation. The point is that these artists were attracted to the governmental theatre because of its professionalism, and they were the most talented artists from our society. But we should not unfairly forget their good qualities just because they worked for the governmental theatre [1].

Governmental Groups

The governmental theatre could be divided into two divisions, one the Department of Theatre attached to the Ministry of Culture and Art, and the other, those groups and theatres who were financed and established by the National Iranian Television. Of the latter the

[1] Maḥmūd Dawlatābādī, Nigāhi bi-Sīūpanj Sāl-i Ti'atr-i-Mubāriz, Nashr-i Burnā, Tehran 1979, P. 124.

main groups were Ti'atr-i-Shahr (The City Theatre), the most modern type of theatre at the time, with a complex of three theatres. The idea was to build something like the National Theatre in London, to support groups like Kārgāh-i-Namāyish (The Theatre Workshop). The groups in the Department of Theatre were:

1. Gurūh-i-Hunar-i-Millī, (National Art Group). Directors of this group were 'Abbās Javānmard and his wife Nuṣrat Partūvī.
2. Gurūh-i Mardūm (People's Group) whose directors were 'Alī Naṣīriyān and 'Izzat Allāh Intizāmī.
3. Gurūh-i Shahr (The City Group). Directors were Ja'far Vālī and Muḥammad 'Alī Ja'farī.
4. Gurūh-i Mitrā (The Mitra Group) whose directors were Khalīl Dilmaqānī and Rukn al-Dīn Khusravī [1].

There were above seventy professional actors and actresses who were permanently employed by the Department of Theatre. They were divided between these groups which also occasionally used independent actors and actresses as guests in their productions.

[1] H. Shīrvānī, Op. Cit. P.P. 71-72.

CHAPTER VII
THEATRE UNDER THE CENSORSHIP

After the successful coup d'état of 1953 the Shah and his ruling establishment were determined to consolidate his power. He installed General Zāhidī and General Bakhtiyār as Prime Minister and Military Governor of Tehran respectively, with General Hidāyat as Chief of General Staff. Most of the other coup leaders were placed in key positions. Financially the Shah was backed by the United States of America, while receiving technical assistance from the Israeli intelligence service, CIA, FBI and the British Intelligence⁽¹⁾.

In 1957 he formed a new secret police force, the Organisation of National Security and Information (Sāzman-i Ittīlā'āt va Amniyyat or Savak). Martial law, the military tribunals, and the 1931 decree banning all kinds of collectivist ideology, were used by the Shah and his military government to block any progressive activities. These laws were not only used to crush the Tudeh Party and the National Front but also to prevent any cultural or artistic activities. These laws were so drawn up as to become a strong weapon against all opposition.

[1] Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, Princeton University Press, 1982, P. 419.

From 1953 to 1957, the poets and short-story writers along with the essayists could publish fewer works in the open, having to resort to allegories and metaphors in order to escape the increased censorship and the Secret Police. The combination of the CIA, British Intelligence Service, and the powerful families led by General Zahedi, swept aside the Mossadeq reforms, crushed the opposition through purges, trials and imprisonment, and in 1957, established the Savak (security organisation), principally to control the press and creative writers[1].

Gradually having achieved enough power to exert pressure, Savak expanded its network, becoming more active in society, setting up an array of controlled trade unions and scrutinising anyone working in universities and the civil service. They tried to take control of cultural activities such as the publication of newspapers, novels, poetry and plays, while also placing restrictions on all gatherings and meetings. They even announced that all public gatherings held outdoors must not exceed three people and that otherwise they would be risking arrest. All wedding and birthday parties needed special permission from the local police station. However, notwithstanding the extreme restrictions against progressive art, poets, writers and directors did not cease their activities and indeed found new and creative means of avoiding the harsh censorship.

Among the several outstanding poets of this period, including Ahmad Shamlu, Nadir Nadirpur, Nima Yushij and Mahdi Akhavan-Sales, was Siyavush Kasrai who in 1957 summed up the legacy of August 1953 and the subsequent conflicts with the regime:

It was one day
A dark and distasteful day
Our fortunes blackened by
Our oppressors
Our enemy prevailed over our life....

[1] The Little Black Fish and Other Stories by Samad Behrangi, Translated by Mary and Eric Hoogland, Three Continents Press, Washington DC, P. 106.

And in those days, the significance of bravery
Was buried and
Life itself had meaning only in the arrow.
The work of a hundred thousand swords only had
significance[1].

The Government was forced to give some leeway to alternative artistic activities as a means of venting aggressive opposition. Thus, just as they had imported American military advisors, they also brought in cultural advisors from America.

The Iranian-USA Cultural Society and the British Embassy became the venue for staging plays which the American advisors directed. Tehran University, which had a limited number of halls, was also used occasionally as a place for staging such plays. Some of the productions were in English and most of the actors were the staff of either the British or American Embassies. As these activities became more expensive plays were taken to cities such as Tabriz, Mashhad and Isfahan. These were the first artistic events to take place since the 1953 coup d'etat, since artistic and cultural activities had ceased for over two years. The other arts in Iran suffered as badly as the theatre in this period and it was perhaps only poetry which proved to be impossible to suppress completely.

Ahmad Shamlu, one of Persia's outstanding poets, published a collection of poetry in 1957, entitled *Havā-yī Tāza* (Fresh Air, dating from between 1947 and 1956. Among his poems of 1953 he writes:

[1] The Little Black Fish and Other Stories, Op. Cit. P. 107.

Fog has covered the desert fully,
The lights of the hamlet are hidden,
A warm surge is in the desert's blood,
The desert is exhausted,
Utter no word,
It is out of breath,
In the warm delirium of fog,
Sweat is pouring from its joints slowly[1].

In this poem entitled 'Fog', Shāmlū pictures the whole atmosphere of the 1953 coup d'etat in symbolic language. Two years before the coup, Shāmlū's poems show a difference in his use of language since they are full of hope.

From the scar on Aba'i's heart,
Girls of the plain,
Girls in expectation,
Girls of narrow hopes,
In the (immense) vast plain,
Among you, who - say it!
Among you who
is polishing Aba'i's weapon
for the day of revenge [2]

Nīmā Yūshīj, the father of new Persian poetry, was an active poet during the 1941-1953 period. Thi famous poem below, Āh, Ādamhā (O, Men), was a warning to the people of Iran about the tragic incidents of 1953.

O Men, who sit along the shore and laugh,
Someone is drowning in the sea,
Someone continues to wave his arms and legs,
About the roaring, sombre, and poderous sea.
Someone calls to you from the water,
His arms tiring from the fight with the ponderous waves,
His mouth open, his legs wide with terror [3].

There was more build-up of suspicion against writers who actively

[1] Ahmad Shāmlū, Havā-yī Tāza, N.I.L. Publishers, 1974, 4th Ed. P. 51.

[2] Ābā'ī is the name of a revolutionary Turkman Leader

[3] Nīmā Yūshīj, Zindigī va Āsar-i-ū. Şafī 'Alī Shah, Tehran, 1334/1968. P. 178.

criticised socio-political and economic issues. Among these writers was Šamad Bihrangī, a teacher from Azarbaijan who wrote mostly children's stories, concentrating on poverty and the effects of socio-economic problems.

Thus in 1973 all of Behrangi's writing, with the exception of the story of 'The Little Black Fish', were officially banned by the branch of the security in charge of censorship[1].

There were several reasons why The Little Black Fish was not banned. This book was sponsored and published by the Kānūni Parvarish-i Fikrī-yi Kūdakān va Nowjavānān (The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults), and it also won prizes in several international festivals, which forced the government to try to keep a liberal face by allowing its publication.

Bihrangī's death in 1968 was untimely. He was found in the River Aras in Azarbaijan, and the circumstances of his death were suspicious. It seems fairly clear that his death was due to his activities as a teacher and writer.

Ghulām Ḥusayn Šā'idi, psychiatrist, playwright, author and political activist and perhaps the most outstanding figure in Iranian theatre, was Šamad Bihrangī's closest friend and like him a native of Azerbaijan. Between the years 1957 and 1969 Šā'idi was active in both creative writing and social issues. He began his political activity with the Democratic Party of Azarbaijan, which was suppressed in 1946. In 1947 his interest in creative writing reached

[1] M. and E. Hoogland, Op. Cit. P. XII.

a turning point with the publication of his stories in two Persian language newspapers (Faryād, Javānān-i Āzarbāyjān), which were founded and run by the Tudeh Party.

After the suppression of the D.P.A. and later of the Tudeh party, Sā'idi, still was active until the coup d'etat of August 1953, in front organisations of the Tudeh party. A few days after the coup, Sā'idi was arrested but was soon released. One of his early works as a playwright was published in 1961, the three act play Kalāta-yi Gul[1]. Later the same year he wrote Bāmā va zīr-i Bāmā[2] (Roofs and under the Roofs), a play based on the events of the constitutional revolution, and Lāl-Bāzihā, [3] a few short plays for acting without words (pantomime).

From 1967 to 1969, Samad Behrangi, Gholam Husayn Sa'edi, Jalal Al-Ahmad, M. Azarm, Khosrow Golesorkhi, and Fereydon Tonakabani took the lead in the revolutionary current of contemporary Iranian literature. Each paid for such activism in terms of execution or imprisonment [4].

Any liberation or progressive movement was suppressed by the army, police and Savak. The opposition were arrested and tortured without any charge. Even if a play or story had the approval of the authorities to be published and distributed or put on the stage, still the writer or director of a play could be at risk.

[1] Kalāta yi Gul, Tehran. 1340/1961.

[2] Bāmā va zīr-i Bāmā, Panjnamā yīsh az Inḡlāb-i-Mashrūtjāt. Ashrāfi, Tehran, 1345/1966.

[3] G.H. Sā'idi, Lāl Bāzihā. Chāp-i-Payām, Tehran, 1353/1974.

[4] The Little Black Fish and other stories. P. 110.

This usually happened when the establishment was made aware of the content of the work after the reaction of people towards it.

This happened in the case of the writer Feridun Tonakaboni who was arrested by Savak after the publication of his

'Yaddasht-ha-ye Shahr-e Sholugh' (Memories of a City in Turmoil', 1969), even though this book had previously been approved by the censorship which was none other than Savak itself [1].

After the Shah's White Revolution and land reform in 1964, Sā'idi wrote Chūb bih Dasthā-yi Varāzīl [2], The Stick Wielders of Varazil). In the same year, this play was directed by Ja'far Vāli. It was maybe one of the best productions in contemporary Iranian theatre, with a fine cast of the most distinguished actors, such as Intizāmī, Naṣīriyān, Mashāyikhī, Fannīzāda, Dawlatābādī, and Kishāvarz.

Choob Bedasthay-e Varazil has strong political overtones. It criticises foreign powers who come in the name of help and aid but, in practice, exploit and plunder the country's resources while the natives starve [3].

The play looks at the problem of third world countries in a worldwide context[4]. The story takes place in the imaginary village of Varāzīl, in a traditional peasant community, whose farms have been devastated by a horde of wild boar.

[1] Reza Navabpour: 'State Heroes and Revolutionary Characters in Some of the Modern Fiction of Iran'. Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists 1979-80. new Series, Volume 11.

[2] G.R. Sā'idi, Chūb bih dastha-yi Varāzīl. Tehran: Murvarīd, 1344/1965.

[3] G.R. Sabri-Tabrizi, Gholam Hoseyn Sa'edi, A voice for the Poor, Index on Censorship 4, 1986, P. 12.

[4] Maḥmūd Kiyānūsh, Bar-rāsi-yi Shir va Naṣr-i Fārsī-yi M uāṣir. Tehran, Rāz, 1344/1976. P. 128.

In the face of their difficulty and the hardships inflicted by the wild boar they are helpless and have no weapons with which to defend themselves except sticks and drums. In an attempt to solve the problems, they decide to employ hunters to defend the rest of the farms from the boar. This idea comes after they send people to the neighbouring village to discuss the problem with them. They employ an Armenian hunter, whom they call Monsieur, who is happy to hunt the boar for food.

He brings two hunters with him to the village and asks the peasants to provide them with food and accommodation. The hunters are well fed and treated with typical peasant hospitality. They kill the boar and it seems that their mission is completed, but they show no sign of intending to leave. The villagers realise that their first problem has been solved and that now they face another much greater problem. Their first approach to the hunters fails, so they go to Monsieur and ask him to do something about his hunters. He suggests hiring two more hunters to free them from the first ones. They feed the second party of hunters, who also decide to stay and do not do anything about the first party of hunters. Later both sets of hunters face each other for a fight. They all turn towards the villagers and point their guns towards them.

The Stick Wielders of Varāzil is one of the best plays that Sā'idī has written. In it he has used powerful symbols in a realistic form.

The alternating use of symbolism and realism was due to the censorship of the time, and these two forms combine in such a way for playwrights to get round the restrictions of censorship was to use symbolism. Thus, strict censorship was a powerful factor in the growth of the Iranian symbolist tradition, not only in the theatre, but in other literary forms such as poetry. This was true to such an extent that a playwright could address his audience using symbols that would be immediately familiar to them. Very few playwrights managed to achieve a balance in their use of realism and symbolism, and the result was often confusing. Generally speaking, Sā'idī fulfils the role of the responsible playwright. He understood what was happening in his country and uses this style to make people aware of the political situation. In Chūb bih Dasthā-yi Varāzīl, Sā'idī shouts to the people through one of his characters:

Ahoy Varazilis! Night came....too late.

Sā'idī's characters in this play represent people in traditional roles in Iranian society, such as the fanatical Muslim and the village represents the country as a whole. The main message of the play is that people should think and act for themselves in order to determine their own fate, rather than depending on others who may turn out to be unworthy. One criticism that could be made about this play is that it does not take account of the role of women and young people in society, since all the characters are male. Chūb bi Dasthā-yi Varāzīl was written during a period of transformation and social upheaval in Iran, when many farmers moved to the towns to find work and left their families in the villages.

The economic problems faced by women and the responsibility they bore caring for children often put them in a worse situation than the men, yet these aspects are not touched on in Sā'idi's play. One of the reasons for this may have been the difficulty of finding actresses at the time; in other words, plays without female characters were less of a problem.

From 1966 onwards, the government instituted more formalised procedures for tightening up the mechanism of the censor, and censorship became harsher. The government propaganda became more sophisticated and more crude [1].

On 11th April 1968, the Iranian Writers' and Artists' Association (Kānūn-i Nivīsandigān-va Hunarmandān-i Īrān) was established. The main aim of this Association was to struggle against censorship and suppression. The Association was established by a large number of writers and poets, theatre actors and directors and painters. The authorities refused to recognise the Association, where upon the Kānūn issued a declaration of intent and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister. It was determined to protect writers' and artists' interests and freedom of thought. Their specific demands were:

1. A request for the official registration of the Writers' Association of Iran and, as its legal right, officially to be allowed to carry on its activities in freedom.

[1] Farzaneh Pirouz, A Critical Assessment of G. H. Sa'idi's Pre-revolutionary writings. Oxford University. M Litt. Thesis, 1984.

2. Every obstacle to the establishment of a place or a club for the gathering of members of the Association in Tehran and the Provinces to be removed.
3. Legal provision be made for publishing a Journal of the Writers' Association and for its unimpeded distribution throughout the country.

The letter was signed by ninety-eight writers and artists.

The authorities refused to recognise the association and resorted to a variety of administrative measures to silence it [1]

Most of the active members of the Kānūn suffered, for example Sā'idī who was severely beaten by the secret police and, in 1968, was dismissed from the hospital where he was practising by order of Savak. In 1967 Sā'idī wrote 'Ā-yi bī-Kulāh ā-yi bā-Kulāh (Short A, Long A) [2]. In this play he looks at people's ignorance, using symbolic language. It is about a society which has been too occupied with its own petty troubles to listen to those who know what is going on [3]. The play takes place in a newly-emerging shabby neighbourhood outside Tehran. Public services such as street lighting, water, police protection etc. have not reached the locality. The act begins when the people are disturbed in their

[1] Ibid, P. 25.

[2] G. H. Sā'idī - Ā-yi-bī-Kulāh Ā-yi bā-Kulāh, 5th Ed. (Tehran, Agah,), 1357/1978.

[3] Reza Navabpour, Op. Cit. P. 280.

sleep and frightened by an old man who raises the alarm, claiming to have seen a thief in an unoccupied house. He brings the entire locality out into the street.

At the end of the first scene, a poor old woman comes out of the house, surprising the people, and the danger turns out not to be serious. The second scene begins with the hushed entry of a gang of armed thieves into the unoccupied house. But this time the people, who have been informed once again by the old man and his neighbour, who have seen the thieves, do not pay attention and they pay for their mistake. A group of thieves, who have been hiding and waiting for the right moment, come out and burgle their homes. The thieves represent the western powers, who are ravaging the country.

But the emphasis is on the people's passivity, which makes them an easy prey for the thieves. It is their reluctance to act together, their preference not to see, their determination to ostracise those who reveal unpleasant truths that ultimately account for the tragedy that has befallen them [1].

[1] Farzaneh Pirouz, Op. Cit. P. 43.

Sā'idi's main message is that people should have a commitment and responsibility to society and act against exploitation in any form, otherwise their ignorance makes them easily exploitable.

In 1968, Sā'idi wrote Dikta (Dictation). The play is an example of symbolism that has been written under the influence of heavy censorship. Sā'idi regards society as a classroom and he makes the people sit an exam. In Dikta Iranian society is accurately portrayed in an age of suffocating restrictions, and Savak's methods of interrogation are represented in the play. Success can be ensured only when there is absolute commitment and belief in the dictates of the authorities and hope is the only way to salvation.

To hope is to believe.
Success comes with closed eyes and ears.

The play takes place in a classroom, representing an interrogation room. The headmaster makes a speech explaining the rules of the examination. In this play, Sā'idi does not use complicated language and his symbols are by and large familiar and easily recognisable. The assistant headmaster is in reality a Savak interrogator and advisor, and he uses the system of brutality and kindness, encouragement and threats.

With regard to the obedient and submissive student we profess respect, and in regard to the disobedient, obstinate and rebellious student we have a deep loathing that cannot be concealed at all. But in spite of this we attempt to put such a student on the right track and not reject him[1].

The student refuses to abide by these rules. The examiners arrive, and a last warning is given to the student.

- Teacher : To hope is to believe.
- Headmaster : To hope is to believe. That's right, it's true.
To hope is to believe, that is it.
- Student : No, to hope is not to believe.
- Teacher : Why don't you listen? Listen carefully.
To hope....is to believe.
- Student : No it isn't!
- Teacher : Yes it is. Yes it is. [2]

For Sa'idi, the good and obedient student is one of those weak, compromising and submissive people who submit to and precisely carry out what is dictated.

'Dikta' was directed by D. Rashīdī in 1968 and it was performed in the twenty-fifth of Shahrivar Theatre. The play was very successful and aroused a great deal of interest.

The 'Age of Suffocation' is one of the most productive periods in the history of Persian literature. Starting with Hidāyat, the following are amongst the writers of the age of suffocation: Chūbak, Jalāl Āl-i Aḥmad, Dānishvar, Sā'idī, Gulshirī, Aḥmad Maḥmūd, Maḥmūd

[1] G H Sā'idī. Dikta va Zaviya, Tehran, 1348.1969. P.P. 12/13.

[2] Ibid. P. 20.

Dawlatābādī, Gulī Taraqqī and others. In modern poetry too this period witnessed a great blossoming. In either case the writer or artist is able to escape from the invisible veils and use his powers of thought. When thought and reflection are employed, interesting symbols come about[1]. In the age of suffocation and the only playwright who escaped from the invisible veils was Sā'idī. He employed symbols and indeed worked harder than other playwrights and faced danger. In 1971 Sā'idī wrote Jānishīn (The Successor). In Jānishīn Sā'idī looks at the problem of the death agony of the 'Centre of the Existing Power' and the efforts of the creatures in the periphery of the power to gain the succession. The successors, the three characters of the play, the pretenders to the succession, are witnesses of the death agony of the absolute power, and describe the scenes of being present at the point of death to themselves and to the audience. The appearance of the centre of power is ferocious, dreadful and distorted, and the appearance of the claimants themselves, ridiculous, awkward and meaningless. They have only one thing in common, hunger for power and the excessive desire to obtain the seat of authority. And in order to achieve this they, like the power on the brink of certain doom, do not possess any weapon other than deceitful and empty works and promises which will never be fulfilled. The purpose behind the shower of words which flow from the mouths of these three characters during the whole length of the play is not that it will ultimately culminate in a clear and simple expression, but will carry some

[1] Alifbā. Pā-yī Şuhbat-i Sīmīn Dānishvar, No.4. 1362/1983. P. 152.

obvious meaning.

Jānīshīn is a social play and deals with personal and psychological matters[1]. The play has three characters present over the coffin of a despot who is dying. The deposed governor has been tied up in a wardrobe in his coffin and the new leaders are arguing amongst themselves about who should be his successor. The people are in the courtyard waiting for decision of the new leaders, but the latter are unsuitable and incapable of leadership and their words and actions are repetitive and cliched. The claimants say strange things and make odd assertions. They threaten one another and while so engaged the deposed governor creeps out of a corner of the wardrobe carrying a machine gun. He goes onto the balcony and pulls the trigger and the claimants creep into the wardrobe. Jānīshīn is a criticism of revolutions which have no strict plans. It is undoubtedly an allegory of the 1953 coup.

The play, satirical and suitably coded though it is, puts its message across perfectly clearly. The confusion and egocentric opportunism of the self-appointed leaders of the people opens the door to the monster of a military coup. The dictatorship has, at a particular historic moment, been weakened but is not completely dead [2].

Jānīshīn was not given a permit for distribution, and did not appear on stage in Iran before the Islamic revolution. The first performance of Jānīshīn was directed by the present author in London in 1979.

[1] G. H. Sā'idī, Jānīshīn, Tehran: N.I.L., 1349/1970

[2] Farzaneh Pirouz, Op. cit. P. 47

The play 'Māh-i'Asal' (honeymoon) was written by Sā'idi in 1974 but was not permitted to be published until 1978.

In his later works Sa'idi moves from the satirical criticism of individuals such as the mulla, the doctor and the policeman to satire of the entire social system, where the sense of law and social relationship has taken a rigid and pernicious form. Education consists of passive obedience and memorising of what is dictated by the ruling interests. Law consists of punishment or the protection of those who have, against those who have not. Politics and freedom are based on abstract philosophy or, rather are a game in which a few men of self-interest take part. Freedom is the freedom of the jungle. Sa'edi's satire of the educational system, passive intellectuals, abstract philosophers, law, politics and the mass media is illustrated in his plays 'Dicteh-va Zavieh' (1969), 'Ma Namishenavim' (1970) and 'Cheshm Dar Barabar-e-Cheshm' (1971) [1].

Chasm dar barābar-i-Chasm (An Eye for an Eye) was one of the satirical comedies which Sa'idi wrote to experiment with the rū-hawzi style.

The sultan and his executioner want to meet out justice by blinding an eye. They do not care how they are going to do it or who their victims will be. Meanwhile a thief who has been blinded while on a robbery, goes to the sultan to plead for justice. He blames the old woman who is the owner of the house where the robbery was carried out. On that night he accidentally bumped into a large needle which was hanging from the wall. The old woman accused the grocer for selling the needle to her. The grocer in turn blamed the blacksmith who had made the needle. The blacksmith advises the sultan and makes him understand that they should blind the sultan's master-

[1] G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, Social Values in Modern Persian Literature. Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists. New Series, Volume 8, 1976, P. 15

hunter, who always closes one eye while shooting. The master-hunter recommends the nāy player who closes both eyes while playing. In the end it is a nāy player who is the victim. Sā'idī criticises injustice quite openly without using symbolic language. The other important plays which were written by Sā'idī are: Panj Namāyish Nāma az inqilāb-i Mashrūtiyyat (Five Plays from the constitutional Revolution), Khāna-yi Rawshani (The House of Enlightenment)[1], Bihtarīn Bābā-yi-Dunyā (The Best Daddy in the World)[2], Parvār Bandān (The Animal Fattening Farm 1969). Amongst these plays Parvār Bandān is the most important. Parvār Bandān[3] condemns the enslaving organisation of the system for the manner in which it destroys and sign of self-determination[4]. Parvār Bandān was directed by M. Ja'fari in 1969.

Sā'idī was arrested several times on charges connected with his writings. The last time was in May 1974 when he was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment. However, in early 1975 he was released, owing to internal and external pressure. Sā'idī was forced to renounce his former opposition and discuss the country's rapid progress in front of the television cameras. The programme was never shown [5]

[1] G. H. Sā'idī, Khāna-yi Rawshani, Tehran Ashrafi, 1347/1968.

[2] G. H. Sā'idī, Bihtarīn Bābā-yi-Dunyā, Tehran. N.I.L. 1345/1966.

[3] G. H. Sā'idī, Parvār Bandān, Tehran. N.I.L. 1348/1969.

[4] Farzaneh Pirouz, Op. Cit. P. 38.

[5] Farzaneh Pirouz, Op. Cit. P. 17.

but he stated (in Kayhān, 19th June 1975) that he would write for the success of the Shah's white revolution in future, although he never fulfilled any such promise. Sā'idi left Iran for the United States where he gave lectures denouncing the Shah's regime. Later he jointed the leading poet Shāmlū in London where they published a weekly newspaper, 'Irānshahr'. After the fall of the Shah, Sā'idi gave enthusiastic support to the revolution. He later became disillusioned with it and went into hiding for nearly a year before he was able to go abroad in May 1982. He died in exile in Paris on 23rd November 1985.

Among the authors whom the Savak imprisoned during the years 1970-1976 were Sā'idi, Bihāzīn, Dawlatābādī, R. Barāhani, Sa'id Sulṭānpūr, Tunukābunī, M. Āzarm, Hūshang Gulshirī, Muhsin Yalfānī and 'Alī Shari'ati.

The Impact of the Theatre of the Absurd on Iranian Theatre

The influence of Absurd theatre began with the translating of the absurd plays into Persian on a large scale. Plays by Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Max Frisch, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and Fernando Arrabal, were translated and most of their important plays were performed.

Obviously the instrument by which the drug of the theatre of the Absurd is injected into the people's minds are theatrical institutions and festivals which are under the direct surveillance of the government [1].

[1] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 254.

The most active institutions and festivals were Jashn-i Hunar, the Shiraz Festival of Arts in Shiraz (1967-1977). This festival was founded by N.I.R.T., emphasising the cultural life and promoting traditional and contemporary theatre. Most of the plays were chosen from among the absurd and modern plays, and usually foreign groups and directors were invited to perform them at great expense, while Tehran, Iran's biggest city with a population of eight million, had only two good theatres. The Art festivals spent large amounts of money to invite theatrical, musical, and dance groups from all over the world. Famous artists such as Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Jerzy Grotowski, Shuji Terayama, Peter Schumann, Andre Gregory, etc [1], were invited to the Festival. At the same time progressive, independent, Iranian theatrical groups had great trouble obtaining funding and facilities for their productions. Many of them gave up and left the theatre altogether.

Theatre workshop, Kārgāh-i-Namāyish, was founded and promoted by the Festival to put on its own theatre productions. The Shahr theatre (City Theatre) was also built by N.I.R.T. In 1971. The aim of Kārgāh-i-Namāyish was to experiment with new theatrical ideas. Another institution which collaborated very closely with the City Theatre and the Theatre Workshop was the Iranian-USA Society. These three theatrical organisations were providing facilities for the absurd plays.

[1] Farrokh Gaffary, Evolution of Rituals and Theatre in Iran, Iranian Studies, Autumn 1984. P. 380.

Plays from the theatre of the Absurd like The Chairs (Ionesco), Antigone (Anouilh), End Game (Beckett), The Typist and The Tiger (Shisgal) and The Lesson (Ionesco) were performed between 1965-1968. In 1967, the Arts Festival awarded a prize for the best Persian play. Amongst the winning plays the First Prize went to Nuṣrat Allāh Navīdī, for his magnificent play Sagī dar Kharmanjā (A Dog in the Harvest Place) and Second Prize to 'Abbās Na'lbandiyan for Puzhūhishī-yi Zharf va Suturg va Nuvin dar Sangvāra hā-yi Dawra-ye Bīst-u Panjum-i Zamīn Shināsī va yā Chāhār-dahum, Bīstum va Ghayrih, Farqī Namīkunad (A Modern, Profound and Important Research into the Fossils of the 25th Geological Era, or 14th, 20th etc. it makes no difference). It is clear from the nonsensical title of the play that the writer has been under the influence of the theatre of the Absurd, without having any theatrical knowledge or background. However, the winning play, 'A Dog in the Harvest Place' was a progressive play influenced by social realism. It did not appear on stage in any of the institutes of N.I.R.T. and was staged for the first time in 1973 by an entirely different group and organisation which was not interested in performing Absurd plays. The play was directed by 'Abbās Javānmard with Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī (National Art Group). The 'Puzhūhishī-yi Zharf' was directed by Arbi Ovanesian and performed at the Shiraz Festival. The play, like other Absurd plays, received wide publicity.

Unlike Navīdī, Na'lbandiyan became the most promising figure in contemporary Iranian theatre owing to publicity through government-run media and progressive critics.

The play was performed in different cities and shown on television and was presented at international festivals as a good example of Iranian modern theatre.

The characters are consequently faceless and the plot ignores human and social realities. Nevertheless, this play was performed in several cities, and later was also filmed and shown on television at a time when realistic drama had ceased to enjoy official patronage and was being obstructed by the authorities in various ways [1].

Nevertheless, Na'ibandiyān's work was at once identified with the theatre of the Absurd although he did not have any previous experience of writing plays for theatre of the Absurd and he was short of philosophical knowledge of that kind of theatre.

From 1968 until 1971, Absurd plays such as Waiting for Godot (Beckett), Hercules and the Augean Stables, Chūb-i Zīr Baghal (The Crutches) (A play by Bahman Fursī, a Persian playwright), A Modern, Profound and Important Research...., Death Watch, Strip-Tease, Act Without Words, Come and Go, another similar work by Na'ibandiyān, Sandali-rā Kinār Panjara Biguzārīm... and many other Absurd and supposedly Absurd plays were performed in the Theatre Workshop.

This kind of theatrical activity was promoted by the authorities to ensure ignorance of realistic theatre. From 1971 to 1976, City Theatre was one of the most active theatres of this kind. Most of those plays were translated into Persian and even those plays which were written by Iranian writers, either working for the Theatre Workshop or the City Theatre, were weak imitations of the Theatre of the Absurd.

[1] Navabpour, A study of Recent Persian Prose Fiction with Special Reference to the Social Background. Op. Cit. P. 241.

'Abbas Na'ibandiyan is a good example of this kind of playwright. The other playwright who first started his work in realistic and narrative style was Ismā'īl Khalaj, who wrote and directed a few plays for the Theatre Workshop. Among his plays the most important is Guldūna Khānum. This is a narrative of sorts, set in a dirty, rundown tea-house. Three men, Aḥmad-āghā, the tea house owner and Agharižā, a grumpy, lazy onion peddler, share the misery of loneliness and being parted from their wives. All three have at one point been married to someone called Guldūna. They are all hoping that one day they will be united with their wives. The prostitute's given name also happens to be Guldūna. Her presence, however, adds nothing but more misery to the miserable atmosphere of the tea-house and the group gathered in it. Guldūna Khānum was one of the five plays by Khalaj. These plays were all performed in Theatre Workshop from 1970-1971. Amongst the other organisations and institutions who also paid attention to the western school were the Theatre Department of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the Theatre Department of the University of Tehran, The Faculty of Dramatic Arts and Kānūn-i-Parvarishi-Fikrī -yi-Kūdākān-va-Nawjavānān (The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults).

The Faculty of Dramatic Arts and the Theatre Department of the University of Tehran, which was founded in 1966, both have irregular theatrical activities. This irregularity mainly originates from censorship. Many productions of the two educational institutions, because they do not correspond with the policy of the western school, are banned and hereby cause a lot of unrest. 'St. Joan of the Stockyards' by Brecht is the latest and the worst example. The play was due to be staged at The Faculty of Dramatic Arts in February 1978. The production was banned and consequently, because of the students' protest, the Faculty was closed for several weeks.

Moreover, the director who was a lecturer in the Faculty, and who is one of the best Iranian directors, Ruknul-din Khosravi, was dismissed. Without Carter's human rights noises, many students would have been beaten up and thrown into prison [1].

To follow up the idea of promoting experimental theatre, the Theatre Department of the Ministry of Culture and Arts founded a small theatre in the Theatre Department's building for showing experimental plays named Khāna-yi-Namāyish (The Show House). The Theatre Department spread its activities in the country and had many branches in the provinces. At the beginning the aim of the department was to spread knowledge of Theatre in the country, but later it acted as a censorial body [2]. The Theatre Department, in collaboration with the N.I.R.T. Theatre Unit, organised an annual festival to promote the theatre in the provinces. The Theatre Festival of the Provinces began in 1976, but did not last more than two years as it did not continue after the Islamic Revolution.

The plays were selected from provincial theatre groups by a committee. The plays should be written by an Iranian playwright. These groups were not affected by western culture yet and most of their subjects had traditional roots.

[1] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 266.

[2] Ibid. P. 267.

ANNUAL FESTIVALS

Festival of Popular Tradition

The Committee of Arts Festival of Shiraz also had another festival in 1975 emphasising culture and tradition. The Festival whose aim was to develop the traditional theatre and rituals took place annually from 1975 to 1978 in Isfahan. Iranian improvisatory theatre and other forms of theatre related to popular tradition were performed and were given a special place in the programme. Theatrical troupes from all over the country came to the festival and performed different stories, all based on rū-hawzī and taqlīd. The Festival gave an opportunity to both comic and tragic theatre in Iran, and ta'ziya and rū-hawzī and other types of popular shows such as Par-da Khwānī, Shahr-i Farang, Naqqālī, Puppet Theatre, Folk Dance, Pahlavānī (acrobatics), and Āshiqī from Azerbaijan were performed. For the performing artists, the Festival was an opportunity to show their skills, which were threatened by the effect of mass communications, and they hoped that these occasions would help to promote the recognition and possibly presentation of a living tradition.

Festival of Tus, 1975-1978

From 1976 another annual festival was organised by N.I.R.T. to celebrate the achievements of the greatest men in Persian literature - in particular, those who originated from Khorasan. The festival

was setup in Mashhad and Tus, the two major towns in the province of Khorasan. The first festival concentrated mainly on the works of Khorasan's most famous son, Firdawsi of Tus. Scholars from all over the world discussed the intricacies of the Shāhnāma and similar works of epic literature. Artists presented films and plays inspired by some of the episodes in the national epic, and at the same time athletes from Khorasan and the Caspian littoral displayed their skills in the traditional martial arts, which have survived from the days of Firdawsi and even earlier. Another feature of the Festival was story-telling sessions or Naqqālī, performed by a Naqqāl or Shāhnāma-khwān.

The Impact of Theatrical Activities of the Marxist-Socialist School on the Development of Iranian Theatre

The cultural activity of the Marxist-Socialist school, especially in the theatre, begins with the formation of the Tudeh Party of Iran. The Tudeh Party emerged after the abdication of Reza Shah and the release of the 'less dangerous' political prisoners[1].

In 1937 twenty-seven members out of the fifty-three Marxists who had been imprisoned formed the Hizb-i Tūda-yi Īrān (The Party of the Iranian Masses). The Tudeh Party, besides its political activity,

[1] Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, Op. Cit. P. 281.

gave a special place to cultural activities.

The Tudeh Party was soon able to succeed in using culture and art, particularly theatre, as a vehicle to its full extent. Most of the leading intellectuals and artists either became members or gave sympathy to the Tudeh Party

Tudeh influence among intellectuals, especially writers, was even more impressive. In addition to prominent writers such as Bozorg Alavi, Noshin, Tavalloli, Parvizi, al-Ahmed, Aram, and Golestan, who were active in the organisation, numerous other well-known writers sympathised with the party, particularly in the period before 1947. They included Nima Yushej (Ali Esfandiyari), the father of modern Persian poetry; Bahar, the veteran democrat and living symbol of classical poetry; and Sadeq Hedayat, generally considered the leading figure of modern Persian literature[1].

The Tudeh Party also won the sympathy of many talented younger authors as well as lesser-known older intellectuals. They included Ṣādiq Chūbak, the author of a collection of short stories entitled Khayma-yi Shab Bāzi (The Puppet Show); Bihāzin (Maḥmūd I'timādzāda), a former naval officer, who had translated Shakespeares's Othello and combined Hemingway's realism with Balzac's social criticism in a collection of short stories entitled Bisū-yi Mardum (Towards the People); Sāid Nafīsī, a highly regarded professor of literature, translator of French, and historian of the Arab conquest of Iran; Muḥammad Afrāshta, the editor of a popular satirical paper named Chilingar (Locksmith), and talented poet who, despite retaining the classical form, dealt with everyday issues and revolutionary ideas; Aḥmad Shāmlū (Bāmdād), the leading disciple of Nīmā Yūshij; Muḥammad Muin, a professor of literature and prolific writer on Iranian

[1] Ervand Abrahamian, Op. Cit. P. 334.

history, Nādir Nādirpūr and Muḥammad Tafazzulī[1].

Among these artists and writers the man who took responsibility for the Tudeh Party's theatrical activities was ' Abd al-Husayn Nūshīn. Nūshīn's artistic personality became apparent, particularly in the period of Firdawsi's Hazāra (thousandth anniversary celebrations).

Many of the world's orientalists visited Tehran during this festival. During that period, Nūshīn, with the aid of the composer Minbāshīān, staged three pieces from Firdawsi's Shāhnāma, namely Rustam and Tahmīna, Zāl and Rudāba and Rustam and Kayqubād. Nūshīn himself played the role of Rustam in the first and third pieces. Loretta, who later married Nūshīn, was working with him. Nūshīn's success caused an angry and unfavourable reaction among the pro-government intellectual circles of Reza Shah's time. They disapproved of Nūshīn's opposition to the ruling system and tried hard, with little success, to introduce other actors in order to outshine him. Nūshīn met Taqī Arānī, who was publishing the magazine Dunyā[2], and this acquaintance let Nūshīn to the field of politics and he became involved in political activities. After the arrest of the fifty-three, Nūshīn took up the invitation to the Festival of Soviet Theatre and, together with Loretta and Husayn Khayrkhwāh, went to Moscow. There he met Stanislavski and learned

[1] Ervand Abrahamian, Op. Cit. P. 334-335.

[2] Ervand Abrahamian, Op. Cit. P. 314.

from his school. After returning to Iran, Nushin engaged in various theatrical and literary activities and translated some of Shakespeare's plays. He, together with intellectuals such as Ṣādiq Hidāyat, Faẓl-allāh Muhtadī (Ṣubḥī), Nīmā Yūshij and others, began to work for the Majalla-yi Mūsīqī (Musical Magazine). The magazine was published under the supervision of the composer, Minbāshian, in 1939. Nūshin, together with some other actors, founded the School of Dramatic Arts in Tehran in 1939, but later he criticised the administration of the school and reduced his activities therein. After September 1941 he broadened his activity in social, artistic and literary fields. Together with friends freed from prison or returned from exile, Nūshin participated in the founding of the Tudeh party. In 1942, he was elected a member of the Central Committee of T.P.I. and remained in this position until his death. The party encouraged artistic and literary activities in which Nushin and other intellectual artists were quite active. By staging in the party's club short sketches, declamations of revolutionary poems, such as those of Abū'l-Qāsim Lāhūtī, a series of programmes entitled "Quiet, I am Talking to You" and directing the play The Three Thieves, the Party for the first time contributed to the social and political education of the working class and revolutionary intellectuals. Nūshin, together with Husayn Khayrkhwāh, Ḥasan Khāshī and the people's poet, Afrāshta, created an attractive and interesting school of revolutionary and artistic thought. In 1944, as the result of the development of theatre in Iran, the first real theatrical group, called Farhang, was established by Nūshin and his colleagues, Loretta, H. Khayrkhwāh, H. Khāshī, S. Shab-āvīz, J. Rīyāhī, T. Mihrzād, N. Karīmī, M. Uskū'ī, J. Ja'farī, S. Bahrāmī and

T. Kahnamā'i[1]. This group performed Topaze and Volpone; other productions by Farhang Theatre were The Merchant of Venice, The Three Thieves, Mirzā Kamāl al-Dīn (an adaption of Moliere's Tartuffe) and Vazirkhān-i Lankarān by Ākhūndzāda.

In the period in which Nushin was contributing to the development of the theatre in the country, the Iranian traditional theatre which belonged to the Feudal Society was in the process of deterioration. The superficial and moderate modernisation of Reza Shah speeded up this process. Dramatic arts, such as Shabīh Khāwnī, Tāziya, Baqqāl bāzi and Taqlīd, Rū-hawzi, Khayma-Shab-bāzi, Mārika giri and Naqqālī, Sokhanvari, and Hājī Firūz, were not as popular as before. After the revolutions powerful impulses appeared in the spiritual life, in which steps towards the imitation of western theatrical and dramatic arts were taken, and categories and expressions of this art such as scripts, scenery, make-up, actors, stage, screen, tragedy, comedy, etc. penetrated into the language

The political parties of the time which were publicising for the party, made arrangements within their organisations to attract writers, actors and artists to work with Nushin. The support given by party members and some other people strengthened the newly-born Farhang Theatre and then Firdawsi so that it became quite famous in a short time, and dominated the theatrical community between 1943 and 1947[2].

In 1945 Nūshīn left the theatre and the Farhang Theatre changed its name to Pārs Theatre. In 1947, with the aid of Vāsiqī and 'Amū'i

[1] A. Jannatī 'Atā'i, Bunyād -i Namāyish Dar Īrān, P. 78.

[2] A. Jannatī 'Atā'i, Op. Cit. P. 82

Nushin founded the Firdawsi Theatre in the Lalazar. The theatre began its activity by producing An Inspector Calls by Priestley.

Due to the insistent attempts of Nushin and his colleagues in the theatre, there was created a leap forward in Iranian theatre that changed the rest and increased competition. This qualitative change was so palable that all those who were competing with Nushin, acknowledged it[1].

Some believed that the influence of the party played a great role here, but what is certain is that the party would advocate any social movement in the direction of progress, and theatre was one of them. The success of Nushin and his theatrical group was due to its content and its standard which embodied a dynamic, popular and striving theatre.

There is no doubt that the combination of artistic and social activities by Nushin and his colleagues attracted the support of the progressive and working class movement in Iran and increased the propagation of his views. But the cause should be sought in the rich content of the work produced by this group; the high quality of the plays, their progressive social content, skilful direction, decoration, expression and all these things which make a play excellent. And all this was due to the artistic and political personality of Nushin.

[1] From a Private Conversation with L.P. Elwell-Sutton.

Plays by Nūshīn and Khayr-Khwāh were performed on an international scale. The only weakness on the stage was the lack of co-ordination among the actors; each actor played perfectly on his own and if they could have solved this problem, everything would have been excellent [1].

In 1947 Nūshīn published his most important social drama, called Khurus-i Saharī. The play was written under the influence of Gorky's works and was never performed. When the the Government declared the Tudeh Party illegal, that arrest and detention of the leader and active members followed. Nūshīn was also detained.

The Ferdowsi theatre fell, like a ripe fruit, into the hands of the rightist theatrical men, Dr. Namdar (Head of the School of Acting) and A. Dehgan (an MP and supervisor of Tehran Theatre) [2].

During his detention, with his help from prison and under the supervision of Loretta, his wife, the Sa'dī Theatre was founded. In this theatre, his friends and students like Khayr Khwāh, Khāshī, Shabāvīz, Riyāhī, Ja'fārī, Mihrzād and others took part. The Sa'dī Theatre also achieved fame in 1951 after staging Lady Windermere's Fan directed by Loretta. Nūshīn managed to escape form prison with several key members of the Tudeh Party, and lived in hiding, occasionally giving instruction from there to his wife and other colleagues.

In November 1951, police banned the performance of La Robe Rouge (The play written by Eugene Brieuz, 1858-1932,). Police raided the theatre and caused extensive damage to it [3]. The actors and the

[1] From a Private Conversation with L.P. Elwell-Sutton.

[2] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 184.

[3] Majid Fallah Zadeh, P. 185.

directors took refuge in the Majlis and went on hunger strike[1]. As a result there took place in Tehran a strong protest by the people and the press against the police commissioner, General Muzayyani.

Nushin was the first Iranian artist to write a book on acting; it was published in 1952. The book, Fann-i Hunar-Pīshagī, was written by Nūshīn while he was in prison. It concentrated on the teaching of theatre, and in it reflected his rich experience as an actor and director.

Among the other plays staged by the Sa'adī Theatre were Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton (1904-1952), Best Sellers by Edouard Bourdet, and Montserrat by Emmanuel Robles. In August 1953, all the newly-arisen hopes collapsed when Musaddiq was overthrown by the coup[2].

Nushin fled the country and settled in the Soviet Union. While in exile he worked on the Shāhnāma and produced a dictionary of this work. During his exile he could not continue to work in the theatre but concentrated on the literary field and wrote short stories and novels like Khān va Digarān, Lāla, etc.

[1] From a Private Conversation with M. ja'fari.

[2] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 186.

For the Iranian theatre and its development, the years 1943 to 1953 signified the beginning of a very important era in two different theatrical fields; one in the field of the scenic representation of a play, and the other in the field of a Marxist dramatic literature[1].

Nūshīn, as the first Iranian director who staged occidental plays in their original form, had a great impact on Iranian dramatic art and its development. He encouraged Iranian writers to try their hand at writing plays and translating good European plays. Nūshīn himself translated plays by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Gorki and Sartre.

Nūshīn's other theatrical activities were his collaboration in publishing a theatre magazine and in the Actor's Union. The Actors' Union was banned after the coup, and the theatre magazine also did not continue to be published.

Marxist-Socialist theatre activities continued after the coup with the translation of Marxist playwrights such as Brecht. From 1962 until 1967, most of Brecht's writings were translated. Among them the most famous ones which affected the socialist school movement were: The Exception and the Rule, translated by Bihāzīn, He Who Said Yes, He Who Said No, translated by Dr. M. Rahimi and performed in 1969 by Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī, directed by A. Javānmard [2], Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, A Man's a Man, The Good Person of Szechuan, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Herr Puntila and his Man Matti, Round Head and Pointed Head and The Mother. Other plays

[1] Majid Falla Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 186.

[2] Hamid Shu'ā'i, Namāyish va Filmnāma Dar Iran, Tehran, Hermin Co. 1976

translated were: An Enemy of the People, The House of Bernarda Alba, A View from the Bridge and Accident in Vichy. Most of these plays were produced by amateur and independent theatre groups and university theatrical groups. There is no doubt that producing plays of the Marxist-Socialist school was very difficult under the conditions of the time, but with the development of the political movement it was inevitable.

Contemporary Iranian Playwrights

The first important play which perhaps marks the beginning of contemporary Iranian drama was Bulbul-i Sargashta (Wandering Nightingale) by 'Alī Naṣīriyān[1], who was one of the main members of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Milli (National Art Group). He was influenced by Iranian traditional theatre, particularly rū-hawzī. He wrote quite a few plays in this style and was one of the best actors, being famous for acting Siyāh. Naṣīriyān concentrated on producing plays, most of which were written by himself. In 1957 he wrote Af'ī-yi Talāi (The Golden Serpent), inspired by the traditional forms related to theatre such as naqqālī and Ma'rika-giri. Among Naṣīriyān's important plays are Lāna-yi Shughāl (The Jackal's Lair)[2].

[1] 'Alī Naṣīriyān, Bulbul-i Sargashta, Tehran, Andisha, Publishers, 2nd E. 1975.

[2] 'Alī Naṣīriyān, Lāna-yi Shughāl, Tehran, 2nd Ed. N.I.C., 1974.

His production of Bunghāh-i-theātrāl (The Theatre Company) presented first at the festival of arts in Shiraz in 1974, is a straight scripted version of a comic improvisatory performance. It was popular at its original showing [1]. Pahlavān Kachal (The Bald Hero)[2], Bunghāh-i Theātrāl (The Theatre Company), and Siyāh (Black Clown). Naṣīriyān was director of the Gurūh-i Mardūm (People's Group), Part of the Department of Theatre in the Ministry of Culture.

Bahrām Bayzā'i

Bayzā'i is one of the leading playwrights, theatre and film directors of Iran. His work is influenced by ritual and traditional elements of eastern theatre, although his philosophical view is not clear in his works.

Bayzā'i is still wandering among various philosophical concepts and as a result his work suffers from a sort of philosophical anarchism[3].

His first success came after writing his famous play Pahlavān Akbar Mīmīrad (Akbar the Wrestler Dies)[4]. He also wrote Hashtumīn Safar-i Sindbād (The Eight Voyage of Sindbad) and has experimented with these three plays for puppet theatre. Also he has written one of the best books on Iranian theatre, Namāyish Dar Īrān.

[1] William O Beeman, Op. Cit. P. 373.

[2] 'Alī Naṣīriyān, Pahlavān Kachal, Sukhan Magazine, 15th Period, No. 5, 1965.

[3] Majid Fallah Zadeh, Op. Cit. P. 273.

[4] Bahrām Bayzā'i, Pahlavān Akbar Mīmīrad, Tehran, Sā'id Publishers, 1965.

Akbar Rādī

Among Iranian playwrights who follow the objectives of The Marxist-Socialist School is Akbar Rādī. He has written many successful plays, all of them dealing with social problems. His works are purely realistic and do not employ any symbols. His style is influenced by Chekhov and Ibsen[1]. Amongst his important plays are Ufūl, Irsiyya-yi Irani (Iranian Legacy), Az pusht-i Shīshahā (From Behind the Windows), Sayyādān (Fishermen) and Marg Dar Pāiz (Death in Autumn).

Bizhan Mufīd

Mufīd became known as a talented playwright and director with his very famous play Shahr-i Qissa (The City of Tales). The play is a social satire in a kind of rhythmic prose. It fleetingly explores problems such as poverty, lack of human compassion, social injustice which breeds a deep-rooted mistrust, woman and love and other psychological, sociological and moral issues that exist in human relationships. The City of Tales is based on a children's story. The central plot, a black comedy, unfolds as the inhabitants of the city of tales exercise their devious intrigues on the elephant, who is a naive and ignorant newcomer to the city. They each try to sell him something, and when he refuses the inhabitants of the city try

[1] Muḥammad 'Alī Sipānlū, Nivīsandigān-i Pīshraw-i Irān, Kitāb-i Zamān, Tehran, 1361/1982, P. 231.

to persuade him to part with his tusks which they know are of great value. When the elephant refuses to sell his tusks, they take his tusks and plant them on his head and cut off his trunk. Gradually the inhabitants of the city of tales pressurise the elephant into declaring his identity. By the end of the play the elephant has lost all his money and, most important of all, his true identity. The play's characters are all animals representing humans; thus as the fox is a mullā, the parrot is a poet, the donkey a woodturner etc.

The form of the play is an interesting collage of folkloric stories, protagonist and music and thus yields a highly original play which could come very close to the hearts of the Iranian people. Mufid wrote a few other plays in the same style which did not have the same success as this one. He also wrote a comedy based on rū-hawzī style, which was one of the most successful works of its kind at the time, Jān Niṣār (Devoted) [1]. Mufid died in exile in the USA in 1985 after escaping from Iran.

Nusrat Allāh Navīdī

One fine playwright whose works definitely belong to the 'Marxist-Socialist School' is Navīdī. Unfortunately, because of

[1] Bīzhan Mufid, Jān Niṣār, N.I.R.T. Publication, 1973

disagreement with pro-establishment intellectuals, Navidi's work has not been published at all. Nevertheless he became known and began his artistic activities as a playwright by winning first prize at the Shiraz Art Festival for the best play of the year ('A Dog in the Harvest Place'). This play was never produced by this organisation as they were opposed to realistic and sociological plays. However, they were not able to ignore the quality of his work.

The other reason that Navidi has not been established as a playwright is that his plays were not published. From 1966 to 1973 his play 'A Dog in the Harvest Place' was not produced, and it was directed for the first time by 'Abbās Javānmard with an entirely different group to the N.I.R.T. establishment. Many of his other plays were then banned by the censorship or did not reach the stage owing to lack of financial backing. I have chosen and translated 'A Dog in the Harvest Place' as an example of contemporary Iranian drama[1].

Gurūh-i Hunar-i Milli (The National Arts Group)

In the years 1954-55 during the period of suffocation, when artists had no hope and there was a deathly silence in the world of politics and art in Iran, all brought about by the coup d'etat of 1953, there existed no bright spot in the state of Iranian theatre.

[1] See Appendix.

At that time a number of graduates from the Hunaristān-i Hunarpīshagī (Acting College) came together in order to find a new goal and path in the field of drama. This group's movement and the fruit of their steady application was not at the time evident, but in later years it came to form a distinct point of reference in the history of Iranian theatre. These young people met in the house of an old man called Shāhīn Sarkisiyān who loved the theatre and had a perfect knowledge of a number of foreign languages. They translated the theoretical writings of great western writers such as Gaston Batie, Charles Dulong, and Max Reinhardt, and discussed and examined carefully various methods of performance. Thus, they kept up to date with the latest advances in western theatrical performance.

This academic learning was experimented with in various plays. However the translation of the bulk of My Life in the Arts by Stanislavski and Notes on Soviet Actors by Cherkasov, and also of the correspondence and dialogues of Stanislavski, Nemrovich-Danchenko and Chekhov, which formed part of the necessary basis for the transformation of a worn-out theatre and for the creation of a progressive drama, completely changed the way of thinking and inspiration of the members of the group. The success of the progressive thought of these three people, which had opened up new horizons for theatrical workers in Russia and the world, ultimately put an end to all the doubt and bewilderment of this group and gave them a definite goal. This was the first era of lasting research aimed at finding a path and a high goal in modern theatre.

Also it was benefiting from the production techniques of Stanislavski that the plays Miss Julie by Strindberg, and All my Sons by Arthur Miller were experimentally produced. After a year and a half's work and experiment of various kinds, some thought that the work had finished, but another group felt that, by employing the subjective style and at the same time using a semi-awareness of foreign plays (with all their dramatic potential), it was not possible to attain everything that was desired. As a group they sought to rely upon the experiences of the Moscow Arts Theatre, on the basis of both their own feelings and their experiences of that year and a half or so with the National Arts Group. This group felt that such a subjective system was the basic path to a national theatre, since they had found in practice that the problems, troubles, contradictions and variations of every land as a rule, (though not always), are grown from the society of that country. With their earnest and clearcut set of beliefs, this group necessarily went its own way and split off from the main group [1]. The second, stronger group began the difficult task of bringing out plays and performing them according to the new style of performance. It was as a result of the coming together and the continued research of this group that finally in the year 1957 the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī (The National Arts Group) was formed. First 'Abbās Javanmārd began the operation with the drawing up and production of two one-act plays called Muhalīl (The Mediator) and Murda-khūrḥā (The necrophagous Ones) adapted from two stories by Sadiq Hidayat, the celebrated Iranian writer.

[1] Personal interview with Bahman Fursī.

After a few months of rehearsal and experiment the work was ready. Majalla-yi Sukhan, one of the most highly esteemed Iranian journals concerning literature and the arts, invited the Gurūh-i Hunar-Millī to perform its first production at the anniversary festival of the magazine. The group found itself in a huge experimental melting-pot. These young artists had to produce their modest offering before the leading artists, writers and critics taking part in the festival. With very few or almost no resources the group set to work. They took their own equipment to the University hall (tālār) and with great difficulty decorated the bare stage of the universtiy amphitheatre. Then with a dire lack of resources, they presented their first experimental play to the audience. After the performace they found that with that groundwork they had completed, their modest production had an appreciative reception and that altogether they had made a good start. This success was important to the members of the group and those involved in the production for two reasons. On the one hand, it gave the young artists of the group hope and encouragement for the future, and on the other it presented other workers in new Theatre with a clear and approved target. Without delay the play Af'ī-yi talā'i (The Golden Snake), written and produced by 'Alī Naṣīriyān, was rehearsed and got ready. In May 1957 all three plays, representing the group's first full programme of drama, were performed in the Fārābī Hall of the university of Tehran. This performace had a special significance for the artists of the group because the insertion of the brochure of the group's points of view on theory an practice under the title 'Only a national drama can answer the needs of our limited theatre', drew the group into an idealogical debate. This could have had very

disturbing and unpredictable consequences. Fortunately however, the programme was warmly received by both artists and critics, and proved to be a further cause for satisfaction on the part of the group [1].

This programme was performed on stage in the Iran-France Institute late in May 1975 and at the invitation of the Oil Company, in the towns of Abadan and Masjid-i Sulaiman the same year.

The reception of the above plays of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī strongly encouraged them to repeat their performance in Tehran. Following these performances Doctor Vālā, the owner of three theatres, the Tehran, the Nasr and the Alburz in Lālazār invited them to stage the above plays in one of his theatres. As a result of this invitation the group was faced with its first professional experience in a location free of intellectuals, or rather comprised of ordinary people, and once again made a success of it. The group did not continue its work in Lālazār, because of the danger of slipping into the trap of commercial theatre in the Lālazār ambience; for all producers and actors, even if they were possessed of sufficient theatrical knowledge and sense, after a period spent producing quick and popular works could be in danger of losing their artistic potential.

[1] Personal interview with 'Abbās Javānmard, Director of Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī.

The following are amongst those who were involved at this time and took part in the formation of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī:

Women: Raqiyya Chihra Āzād; 'Iṣmat Ṣafavī; Nasrīn Rahbarī; Akhtar 'Abbāsī.

Men: Aḥmad Barātlū; Ismā'īl Dāvar Farr; Jamshīd Lāyīq - actors. 'Abbās Javānmard, 'Alī Naṣīriyān - actors and producers. Shāhin Sarkīsiyān - overall director of the group.

In 1959, the play Bulbul-i Sargashta (The Wandering Nightingale) written by 'Alī Naṣīriyān won first prize for playwrights in the journal Namāyish, and 'Abbās Javānmard prepared it for the stage with the co-operation in production of Aḥmad Barātlū. This play was first performed in 1958 in the Farabi Hall at the Namāyish journal festival, and then again in 1959 in the towns of Isfahan, Shiraz, Abadan, Masjed-i Sulaiman and Gachsaran. The successful performance of Bulbul-i Sargashta in the provinces persuaded the group to stage the play for fifteen days during June of that year at the Barbad Society, and this became the second experience of performing in the centre of popular theatre and amongst ordinary people. During the period of the production of Bulbul-i Sargashta new people joined the group, such as Muḥammad Nūrī, Parvīn Ārāsta, Aḥmad Nūrbakhsh and Manūchhr Anvar. In 1960 the International Festival of Theatre in Paris invited the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī to participate actively in the festival, the first time an Iranian group had ever performed in an international festival. It performed the play for four evenings, from the 8th to 11th April, on the stage of the Sarah Bernhardt

theatre. Bulbul-i Sargashta met with a good reception and general approval at the hands of the French newspapers and critics. The success of the play was a very valuable bonus for the young members of the Guruh-i Hunar-i Milli and those working in the new Iranian theatre. It encouraged the writers and workers who were involved here and there in writing and performing national theatre to continue their work. Bahram Bayza'i, the well-known Iranian writer and director, turned to writing for the theatre and began his experiments after seeing Bulbul-i Sargashta [1].

To all intents and purposes, the group's work came to an end after their trip to Paris and participation in the festival. The Guruh-i Hunar-i Milli broke up from within. This occurred probably because of the continued run of success, personal pride and the development of inclinations at variance with the original, central line of the group.

The various members of the group were able to work together for a time in order to advance private motives and opinions but this was not sufficient to keep together the basis elements of a young and newly founded group that had only recently achieved stability. The Guruh-i Hunar-i Milli collapsed at this time, but the beliefs and aims of the vast majority of the group's workers, namely the wish to create a national theatre, did not disappear.

[1] Private conversation of the author with Bahram Bayza'i.

The foundation of private television in Iran, 'Channel 3', in 1962 drew the artists of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Milli towards the performance of television drama, a move made out of necessity rather than enthusiasm. In this same year, in the Office for Dramatic Arts, 'Abbās Javānmard laid the foundations for the creation of six different television drama groups, and the artists of the Guruh-i Hunar-i Milli automatically found themselves at the centre of this large-scale piece of co-operation. This ceaseless, busy activity also had the following benefits in spite of all the troubles encountered:

1. The concentration of scattered artists in one unit of production.
2. The creation of continuous work and activity.
3. The propagation of the idea of creating a national theatre among artists and audience.

The television programmes and the renewed activity of the group once again brought the artists of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Milli together. The group performed a play by Nuṣrat Partūi, first on the television and then on stage at the Sipahan Theatre in Isfahan. The success of the plays Ālūnak (The Hut) by Kūrush Ṣalāḥshūr and Ghurub dar Dīyār-i Gharīb (Dusk in a Strange Land) by Bahram Bayza'i, directed by 'Abbās Javānmard, excited in the members of the group the desire to return to the stage.

In 1962, due to the efforts of 'Abbās Javānmard and the co-operation of nearly all the former artists, the group officially began a new period of existence. Apart from the television programmes, the

group drew up a continuous programme for the stage and, relying upon its past experience, formed itself into an organisation once again. In order to safeguard its organisation and aims it compiled a new constitution. At this time, in order to complete its numbers, the group arranged six-monthly courses of instruction for young people, and in all three such courses were completed. About fifteen people joined the second Guruh-i Hunar-i Milli after completing this course.

The number of active members in the group increased and this had a reciprocal effect in lightening the production and organisation responsibilities of 'Abbās Javānmard. First, Bīzhan Mufīd, who had worked with the group before and had been intimately involved with the first nucleic group, returned to join the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī. He conducted very useful experimental work in the field of improvised theatre. Next, Bahrām Bayzā'ī, who by that time had become a well-known writer, turned to directing, and for the first time directed two works by himself called Mirās (The Inheritance) and Ziyāfat (The Party). Other writers such as Akbar Rādī, 'Alī Ḥatamī and Nāṣir Shāhīnpar also began useful work in co-operation with the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī. The result of these activities was the successful performance of plays on television and on the stage which may be taken to represent as a whole the period of blossoming in the history of the group's activities.

In 1965 the international festival once again invited the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī to take part in the seventh international festival of theatre in Paris. The group participated with three plays, Ghurūb dar Diyār-i Gharīb written by Bahrām Bayzā'ī, Ālūnak by Kūrush

Ṣalāḥshūr and a second play by Bayzā'ī, Qissa-yi Māh-i Pinhān (The Story of the Secret Moon). These plays, directed by 'Abbās Javānmard, were successfully performed in the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre between the 2nd and 5th of June. The technique of production of Ghurūb dar Diyār-i Gharīb and Qissa-yi Māh-i Pinhān, which were played by the actors in the style of traditional Iranian puppets, or rather the actors played the role of puppets on strings, was itself very tricky and difficult. These plays were also later performed in the Shiraz Arts Festival.

After returning from Paris the group performed Pahlavān Akbar Mīmīrad written by Bayzā'ī and directed by 'Abbās Javānmard at the Festival of Iranian Plays in Tehran. This play was staged in the 25 Shahrivar Hall for three nights. In 1973 the group took part in the Second Festival of Third World Theatre with the plays Ghurūb dar Diyār-i Gharīb and Qissa-yi Māh-i Pinhān: these two plays were staged in the Shahr Theatre in Tehran for four nights.

It was at that time that the group undertook various pieces of research and experiment into indigenous styles. Amongst these experiments were the performances of Shahr-i Āftāb Mahtāb (The City of Sunlight Moonlight) by 'Alī Ḥātāmī and directed by 'Abbās Javānmard and Sultān Mār (King Snake) written and directed by Bahrām Bayzā'ī.

Next, in order to amalgamate the style of traditional Iranian theatre, ta'ziya and rū-hawzī, with the techniques of epic theatre, especially Brechtian style, he chose two works, one by Brecht and

the other by 'Ali Hātami. By exchanging the performance styles of these plays he began a significant and creative new concept. After this experiment Javānmard turned with his associates to the concept of alienation in the subjective style. The results of this could be seen in the plays Firfirahā (Tops) by Bahman Farzāna, and Tāmārzūhā by Nuṣrat Allāh Navīdī. In this experiment Javānmard aimed to demonstrate that it was also possible to make use of the alienation style and epic theatre in the subjective style, and thus he acquired another way of inspiring and imparting ideas.

Along with the above experiments, the activities of the group expanded further, in particular to include the performance of the following plays in various experimental styles: Qissa-yi Tilism-i Harīr va Māhīgīr (The Story of the Silken Amulet and the Fisherman) written by Hātami and The One Who Says Yes Then Says No by Brecht. These two plays, directed by 'Abbas Javānmard, were staged with an exchange of the production styles of epic theatre and traditional Iranian theatre. The following plays were also staged: Sultān Mār (King Snake) written by Bayzā'i and directed by himself, an experiment in the field of takht-i hawzi; Rāspūdi written by Javāhiri and directed by Bīzhan Mufīd, an experiemnt in the field of improvisation; Firfirahā by Farzāna and Tāmārzūhā by Navīdī, directed by 'Abbās Javānmard, experiments in the field of alienation in subjective work.

In order to maintain continued experimental work and also to help young group, the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī founded a small theatre called Khāna-yi Namāyish in the building belonging to the theatre

office of the Ministry of Art and Culture. In this centre, apart from research into theatrical matters, new groups from Tehran and the provinces found the opportunity to perform their plays before an audience, taking advantage of free facilities and help from all sides. The most important works performed at the centre consist of the following:- Escorial by Michel Du Coudrou, directed by Muṣṭafā Dalī, performed by the Gurūh-i Bāzīgarān-i Āzād (The Free Actors Group); Summer by Ramon Weingarten, directed by Rizā Karam Rizā'ī, performed by the Gurūh-i Duvvum-i Hunar-i Milli (The Second National Arts Group); Sayyid Kāzim by Ustād Muhammad, directed by himself and performed by the Gurūh-i ti'atr'i Dīgar (The Other Theatre Group) and Namāyish-i Rayl (The Rail Play) written by Dawlatābādī, directed by Rizā Muhammad and performed by the Gurūh-i Āzād-i ti'atr-i Qazvīn (The Free Theatre Group of Qazvin).

During the second cycle of activities on the part of the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Milli, over fifty people were engaged and constantly busy both morning and afternoon in the first and second groups. They prepared and performed programmes that had previously been designated for the stage and television. Amongst these artists were some who also engaged in cinema work, such as Bayzā'ī, Mirlawhī, Nawzarī, Zhaykān and Mahjūb, who created significant works in the Iranian cinema.

After the performance of Tamārzūhā, written by Navīdī, in the 25 Shahrivar hall, permission for which had only been obtained with great difficulty, nearly all the proposed plays of the group, even after preparatory rehearsals, became subject to censorship. Among

the plays that were censored were Master Puntila and his Servant Mati, Bayzāi's Dīvān-i Balkh and Hashtumīn safar-i Sindbād (Sindbad's Eight Journey). Precisely the same fate befell plays and scenarios for television serials, such as Mardī az Dunyā (A Man from the World), Pahlavān-i Sargardān (The Errant Strongman) and Shawhar-i Āhū Khānūm (Āhū Khānum's Husband), by 'Alī Muḥammad Afghānī. In response to the political and social conditions of Iran, the activities of the Gurūh-i Hunar- Millī and the atmosphere in which they worked became more restricted daily.

The political climate of the time meant that government employees and artists, especially arts groups, had to go along with the political goals of the government. The Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī was one of these, since it necessarily found itself in this situation of account of its affiliation to the Ministry of Art and Culture during the second period of its activity; but still it had sensibly avoided this sort of thing due to the personal politics and resignation of 'Abbās Javānmard. A year and a half's struggle by the group with government theatre officials ended without any useful result. At that point, 'Abbās Javānmard retired from running the theatre also and the Gurūh-i Hunar-i Millī as a whole ceased to function.

The Ja'fari Group

Muḥammad 'Alī Ja'fari, one of Nūshīn's students, formed a theatrical group. This group was based in Lālazār, Tehran's theatrical centre at the time. Ja'fari was joined by Nūshīn's wife, Loretta, and some

of Nūshīn's old friends, such as Nuṣrat Karīmī. They presented Lady Windermere's Fan, Montserrat and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Later Ja'farī, Loretta, Karīmī, Bahrām and Tūrān Mihrzād formed a group in The Kasrā Theatre. Kasrā Theatre was in Shāhriżā Street and formerly a cabaret theatre. The theatre was rented by Dr. Valā, with a subsidy from the Department of Fine Art. Plays like A View from the Bridge and Lady Windermere's Fan were directed by Bahram and Ja'fari. For the opening of A View from the Bridge, the theatre invited Arthur Miller, but this invitation was frustrated by Savak, who did not let the theatre invite Miller[1]. Kasrā Theatre and groups working with it soon faced financial difficulties and censorship. After employing Ja'farī and a few other actors and actresses, the Department of Theatre attached to the Ministry of Culture and Art dissolved the Kasrā Theatre and it became a cinema. Muḥammad * Alī Ja'farī, a leading actor, director and unionist, died in 1986 after two years imprisonment by the Islamic government for his pro-Tudeh Party stance and activity in the theatre union.

Ti'atr-i Ānāhītā (The Ānāhītā Theatre)

The Ānāhītā Theatre and Drama School was founded in 1958 by Muṣṭafā and Mahīn Uskū'ī, who had returned from Moscow where they had studied acting and directing. From the very beginning a large

[1] Private conversation of the author with Parvīz Bahrām, director of A View from the Bridge.

number of experienced artists and also of young people interested in the arts and in learning theatrical skills were attracted to this theatrical group. The Ānāhītā Theatre began amid financial difficulties and without a government budget.

When first formed the Ānāhītā Arts Society had the name 'Kānūn-i Dūstdāran-i Ānāhītā' (Centre for the Friends of Ānāhītā). It was the same sort of literary gathering as has previously been mentioned, and its purpose was to enable intellectuals to help the newly founded Ānāhītā Theatre [1]. The Ānāhītā Theatre was an important happening for art-lovers. This theatre not only filled the vacuum arising from the lack of any scholarly or non-popular theatre, but also inspired hope in art-lovers. A group of intellectuals came together and formed the centre. They took swift and effective steps towards preparing and providing equipment and an auditorium [2].

The following were amongst the friends of the Ānāhītā Centre: Jalāl Āl-i Ahmad, Siyāvūsh Kasrā'ī, Maḥmūd Itāmādzāda (Bih-Āzīn), Muḥammad 'Alī Maḥmūd, Dr. 'Izzat Allāh Humāyūnfarr, Muḥammad Faqīh, Hūshang Sayhūn, Dr Hūshang Kāvūsi, Nāṣir Khudāyār, Khāṭira Parvāna and a large number of the country's renowned artists and intellectuals. Amongst the well-known artists who joined the group were 'Izzat Allāh Intizāmī, Ja'far Valī, Parviz Bahrām, 'Ali Naṣīriyān and a large number of others.

[1] H. Shīrvānī, Fa'aliyathā-yi-Hunari. Dar Panjāh Sāl-i Shāhanshāhī Pahlāvī, Tehran, Ministry of Culture and Art, 1355/1976. P. 68-69.

[2] Muḥammad 'Alī Maḥmūd; 'Nigāhī bi sī-u Panj Sāl-i ti'atr-i Mubāriz, Dar Rūz-i Jahānī-yi Ta'atr', Chāp-i Munīr, 1979. P. 16.

Taking into account what was feasible, Kū-yī Yūsuf Ābād was chosen as a site for the theatre, which was not at the time in the centre of the city, and Ānāhītā opened with the play Othello translated by Bih-Āzin on the evening of 18th March 1958. Othello was perhaps one of the longest-running of Ānāhītā's plays, and ran for 185 nights. The performers in this play were Muṣṭafā Uskūī, Mahīn Uskūī, Parvīz Bahrām, Mahdī Fathī, Ja'far Vālī, Muḥammad 'Alī Kishāvarz, Vālī Shīrandāmi and various other of the artists of the Ānāhītā Arts Centre. Later on, these artists became some of the best-known names in the theatre of Iran.

Possibly those who had lost hope in the theatre after the bitter experience of the 1953 coup were able to find a new hope as a result of the very agreeable formation of the Ānāhītā Theatre. Very soon intellectuals gradually drew close to the Ānāhītā and helped in their own way through proposals for translation work and co-operation.

The result of this co-operation was the staging of plays such as A Doll's House by Ibsen and The Sixth Floor by Alfred Jarry. Also works such as A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams and The Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman were very soon staged [1].

[1] Majalla-yi Ānāhītā, Hunar va Sīnimā, 1961, No. 5. P. 10,11,12.

The production of these plays was so admirable that it represented a serious blow to the superficial theatre of the day, and as a result people came to realise fully what theatre was all about and which art form they should opt for. In The Little Foxes, the characters of the play were broken up in such a way that the spiritual aspects of real life were conjured up and the audience completely forgot the existence of the theatre and the stage; the audience found itself believing in the characters as if they were acting out real life and at the same time felt that the play was talking about problems existing in their own society and country.

One of the most important developments to take place in Iranian theatre, and one which occurred in the Ānāhītā Theatre, was the creation of scientific and analytical exercises and rehearsals. As a rule these were run with the participation of a number of the best poets, writers and sociologists and began with a profound analysis of the plays. Amongst the other steps taken by the Ānāhītā was the inauguration of a theatrical tour to various parts of the country; all the plays that were performed in Tehran were at other times of the year taken to the country's larger cities and performed there too. This also had a meritorious effect in raising the level of awareness of the audience, although sometimes as a result of a play being somewhat heavy the audience grew tired and the play was not well received. But this in itself created comparisons and those who were interested could choose what they wished to see. Anahita's services to culture also had an effect on the methods of other groups and those who were interested in raising the people's level of culture were forced to abandon superficial work and turn to plays

that talked about the people and society. Another of Ānāhītā's activities which was not of long duration was the producing of television programmes, and these again speak eloquently of the group's progressive aims. Plays such as White Nights (Dostoevsky), Wolves and Lambs (Ostrovsky), The Bear (Chekhov) and a number of other similar plays were shown on television. In 1961, the group rehearsed Altona (J-P Sartre) which was apparently banned. In 1962 the Majalla-yi Ānāhītā, a monthly journal of art and cinema, began to be published and this represented a great step forward in the direction of building up and propagating the methods of Iranian theatre. This journal included a translation of the history of the theatre and the principles of the art of cinema directing, and also serious research into the arts as well as publishing plays and literary works [1].

The role and importance of the Ānāhītā Theatre and its drama school can also be realised from the fact that it can perhaps be regarded as the first mahfil (circle) or mizūn (maison) in the European sense. One of the definite purposes of the organisation of this drama school, apart from that of training actors and carrying out activity on the stage, was to create a maktab or school in the sense of a western arts of theatre school, and as to function as a centre for artistic and literary thought and effort. The need was to bring together actors, playwrights, writers and intellectuals so that they

[1] Ānāhītā, Māhnāma-yi Firdawsī, No. 5, Second Period, P. 14-29.

could work together on the basis of a devotion to the cause of elevating art, literature and culture; so they could as far as was possible initiate organised and responsible efforts and come up with ideas designed to bring the art of Iranian theatre into harmony with the rich, prestigious and ancient art, literature and poetry of Iran.

The publication of the journal Ānāhītā represented not only means of documenting these admirable artistic endeavours but also formed the organ of the community at large representing contemporary art, literature and culture in Iran. In spite of all the limitations and the lack of means that at that time necessarily unsettled and so often halted such publications, a conspicuous attempt was made to contain within its limited format the art of world theatre with all its present day breadth and importance. An energetic and very highly executed depiction of the contemporary theatre was one of the valuable aims of the journal Ānāhītā.

The Anahita theatre can without a doubt be regarded as one of the most important aspects of the history of contemporary Iranian theatre. The influence of this group on the community representing Iranian theatre and art is well known. Furthermore, the dispersal of individuals who studied in the Ānāhītā and then, retaining that set of attitudes, became active in other groups has a significant effect in the process of development of the Iranian theatre.

In 1961, after accepting a subsidy from the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Ānāhītā was gradually absorbed by the Ministry.

The breadth and diversity of the fields of artistic, cultural, literary and social endeavour on the part of the Ānāhītā Theatre and Drama School was both impressive and worthy of praise. The meetings which were instituted and seriously kept up by Ānāhītā, and which met every so often, testify to the start of a cultural life that was both creative and democratic and which augured well for the daily increasing and unity of the energetic members, representing as they did the perfection of artistic society. These meetings on the one hand consisted of more or less well-known representatives of the schools of traditional and classic Iranian art alongside the active leaders of contemporary theatre and on the other of sociologists, thinkers, writers and poets[1].

The theatre and drama school of Ānāhītā carried out many steps towards advancing Iranian theatre. But what may be regarded as the weakness of this arts centre was its lack of encouragement of people to produce their own national and indigenous theatre. Ānāhītā had concentrated its efforts on introducing knowledge of valuable works from around the world and of Stanislavski's method. This was a useful task, but the art of the nation and indigenous theatre was in decline and needed the help of experienced and skilled artists. Throughout its artistic activities before the Islamic revolution, the Ānāhītā theatre did not stage even one Iranian play. This was the reason why the students of art and the actors who were brought up in this group did not realise the critical point that in the end Iran itself also needed its own playwrights, and they expended most of their energies on translating and performing foreign plays. Had they encouraged Iranian writers this would have afforded talented people the opportunity of acquiring a sound knowledge of the theatre

[1] Muhammad 'Alī Mahmīd - from private notes drawn up for the author.

and made them fully aware of the correct methods of production, which would have had a beneficial effect upon writing in Iran. The following may be mentioned as amongst those who, after leaving Anāhītā, became some of the most active members of the Iranian theatre: Parvīz Bahrām, Mahdī Fathī, Valī Shīrandāmī, Sirūs Ibrāhīmzāda, Maḥmūd Dawlatābādī, Īraj Imāmī, Nāṣir Raḥmānīnīzhād, Sa'īd Sulṭānpūr, Shukūh Najmābādī, Mahīn Shihābī, Rizā Kulāhdūzān, Muḥammad 'Alī Kishāvarz and a number of other students of the Anahita who played on various stages of Iranian theatre[1]

The period of activity of the Anāhītā Theatre, like all other free and independent theatres, was not long, owing to financial problems and the government's strict censorship of the theatre. But those few years of continued and unremitting activity by the Anahita had a profound influence upon the formation of realist theatre in Iran. Furthermore a number of the artists from this theatre later founded the Gurūh-i Anjuman-i Ti'ātr-i Īrān (The Iranian Theatre Association Group) which can be regarded as the contemporary theatre group which has put up the most resistance to censorship and government pressure.

[1] Nigāhī bi Si-u-Panj Sāl-i Ti'ātr-i Mubārīz. Op. Cit. P. 118.

Anjuman-i-Ti'ātr-i Īrān (The Iranian Theatre Association)

In 1968 Sa'īd Sultānpūr and Nāṣir Raḥmānīnīzhād together with a few other actors, most of them from the Ānāhītā Theatre, formed a new group called Anjuman-i-Ti'ātr-i Īrān. The group had no financial support and started with the financial aid of its members. The first artists who formed the group were: Sa'īd Sultānpūr, Nāṣir Raḥmānīnīzhād, Maḥdī Fathī, Maḥmūd Dawlatābādī, Īraj Imāmī, Bīzhād Farāhānī, Muḥammad Rizā Kulāhdūzān, Muḥammad Rizā Sādiqī, Īraj Rād and many other enthusiastic actors. The first production was Accident in Vichy by Arthur Miller, which was very successful at the time.

The group identified itself with the militant wing of The Marxist-Socialist School and as a result of this most of the artistic organisations were opposed to it, especially the Department of Theatre where they received scripts for censorship. The other establishments such as N.I.R.T. did not agree to show any of their plays. Even when they did agree to produce the play Trāktor (The Tractor) by Navīdī, after a few months of rehearsals they postponed it after seeing the performance. The result was obvious after the play was seen by the committee, they did not approve the production of the play. In 1969, the Censorship forced the group to change the title o. Public enemy . This play was translated by Amīr Husayn Āryanpūr and directed by Sa'īd Sultānpūr. The play Amūzgārān (teachers), written by Muḥsin Yalfānī[1] was banned

[1] H. Sho'āi. Namāyishnāma va Fīlmnāma Dar Iran. P. 17.

after a few nights performance and most of the actors were arrested and imprisoned, among them Sa'īd Sulṭānpūr, Nāṣir Raḥmānīnīzhād, Masūd Sulṭānpūr, Muḥsin Yalfānī and many others, for writing and performing anti-government plays. They received sentences of 2-11 years. The group started its activity after the Islamic revolution for a short-lived period, staging 'Abbās Āghā Kārgar-i Īrān Nāsiyunāl (Abbās Āghā Works in the Iran National Car Company) by Sa'īd Sulṭānpūr. Sulṭānpūr was executed by the Islamic government for his leftist activities on 21st June 1981.

Amongst the other independent theatre groups who did not continue their activities for the same reasons mentioned before were, Gurūh-i Ti'atr-i Zamān, founded by Mahīn Uskūī after she left Ānāhītā and was separated from Muṣṭafā Uskūī and Gurūh-i Tiātri Sivum (Third Theatre Group) founded by Vālī Shīrandāmī, one of the leading actors who also left Ānāhītā Theatre. The group had only one production in 1970, Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller. The other theatre groups were: Gurūh-i Tiātr-i Zinda (The Live Theatre Group) founded by Farhād Majdābādī and Gurūh-i Kūch, founded by Bihzād Farāhānī.

The government and its cultural establishment was strongly opposed to progressive theatres and therefore most of the independent theatrical groups had little chance of continuing as they faced financial difficulties and severe censorship.

[1] H. Gūrān. Op. Cit. P. 210-211.

CONCLUSION

The traditional (and Modern) theatre of Iran evolved to from various theatrical forms and dramatic performances the roots of these forms go back to 2500 years ago, and have come together from different religions and ritual customs. These customs and rituals, which had a strong influence on the people, were not affected by changes of governments or rulers. They evolved into annual festivals and became sources for entertainment as well as lamentation and mourning. Certain facts confirm the existence of play houses, jugglers, dramatic dancers, etc, in the pre-Islamic period. The Magohponia festival and the annual performances of mourning and lamentation entailed many theatrial forms which were in origin dramatic. The Magophonia is suggested as having been a base for the appearance and creation of Taziya. Story telling, which is regarded as a prime form of theatre, developed throughout Iranian history; the art of story telling or naqqālī is the oldest dramatic form of art in Iran and dates back to ancient Iran. The natural process of this dramatic form evolved within most of the theatrical forms - Taziya, Rū-hawzi, Mārika giri Shahr-i-Farang. These sources prove that Iran had traditions of dance, music, clown and puppet shows which dates back to the Sassanid era. Although these Arts came under attack from the Islamic rulers after their victory, their suppression was short-lived. With the passage of time, Persian art and Persian culture, independent of the festivals which by the Arab invaders, regarded as paganistic, survived and grew in variety. Story telling, by changing the subject of narrators, managed to survive and even grew in its theatrical form, Naqqālī by using religious stories, and continued to develop and became more dramatic and popular.

In the Safavid era comic theatre took shape and farce developed first as a one-man show in courts and then with the establishment of coffee houses evolved in private parties and was performed for the public. This kind of show may have included naqqālī, Khayama-Shab-Bāzī, Dalqak-Bāzī, Sukhan vari and Mārika giri, and gradually some of these types of plays were presented as comic plays. The Persian Comedy developed and reached its peak in the Qajar era. The Safavid period also confined poetry and literature to religious subject matter and that gave more weight to the content of Tāziya and other dramatic arts related to religion, such as Sukhan vari, Naqqālī, and Rawza-Khwānī. Tāziya developed and flourished under the patronage of the Qajar kings, particularly Nāsir al-Dīn-Shāh, when it reached its highest peak and was well received and actively supported by the public. These two forms of theatre, Tāziya and Rū-hawzī, are purely Iranian in origin and should be regarded as a traditional Iranian theatre, comic and tragic in nature. The first steps towards occidental theatre were taken with the translations of Ākhūndzāda from the Azari language into Persian and by the writing of the first plays in Persian by Mīrzā Āghā Tabrizī. Although Ākhūndzāda and Mīrzā Āghā Tabrizī wrote modern plays at their time. Their style as far as time and movement were concerned was the same as that of Tāziya and Rū-hawzī. Thus we can say that we had a complete text for performing Ru-hawzi for the first time, written by Mīrzā Āghā Tabrizī (Baqqāl Bāzī Dar Huzūr). Later both Tāziya and Rū-hawzī attracted some of the contemporary playwrights and theatre directors and became sources of experiment for some contemporary writers who were in search of a means of combining the traditional theatre and modern

theatre. 'Alī Naṣīriyān in his Afī-yi Talāi is inspired by the patterns and gestures of the traditional elements, Naqqālī, and Mārikā giri; in his Siyah, Pahlavān Kachal, and Bungāh-i Ti'ātrāl, he tries Rū-hawzī style successfully. Other writers have made similar experiments. Thus Bayzāi has written Sultān Mār in Rū-hawzī style, and brings old traditions together with the modern elements onto the same stage. P. Kārdān wrote Amir Arslān ~~Ar-Salam~~, the famous folk story, in Rū-hawzī style and finally Sā'idi wrote Chashm Dar Barābar-i - Chashm in Rū-hawzī style. The modern movement belonging to the Marxist branch of theatrical activities began with Nushin and this movement was followed by Ānāhitā theatre, Zamān theatre, Anjuman-i Tiātr-i-Īrān, and many other amateur theatrical activities. Both Tāziya and Rū-hawzī were given a special place in The Shiraz Festival. This was due to a contradictory phenomenon which took place in the Shah's period. On the one hand there was greed for riches culminating, sometimes, in corruption and superficial westernisation. On the other hand, there was an attempt, officially encouraged to emphasize national cultural identity and the revival of the traditional heritage. This contradiction affected theatre more than any other art. In Jashn i-Hunar alone there were Tāziya, Rū-hawzī, Naqqālī, Shamāyil-gardānī, etc and on the other hand such plays as 'Abbas Nalbandiyan's Puzhūhish-i Zharf-u Suturg Dar... The other two Festivals organised by N.I.R.T. concentrated on popular tradition and traditional art. At the same time popular theatres in Lālazār were surviving by changing their theatrical programs to dances and other such amusements. The search for a Secular theatre with traditional elements incorporated into a modern form has been the main aim of most of the new wave playwrights in Iran. They all

have acquired drama techniques from western playwrights. Since they had no techniques of their own, one can easily observe the influence of European dramatic techniques on most contemporary Iranian Drama.

The efforts of Iranian playwrights and some theatrical groups to achieve an indigenous theatre have been maintained with great enthusiasm. Despite all their efforts and struggles to achieve their aims, however, their success has not been great. This is due to several reasons, the first of which is that religious authorities have always been against all forms of dramatic art, even the Tāziya. In addition, Iranian playwrights, especially contemporary writers have always been under the pressure of heavy censorship. This has been totally against the nature of Rū-hawzi, a free form of theatre with no text and therefore no restriction. To avoid censorship and to ease the process of formalities, the theatre directors and producers resorted to translated texts more than to Iranian plays. Although there was a superficial attempt by official authorities to encourage cultural activity and revive the national heritage, the result was limited to occasional international and national festivals, rather than being deep-rooted in the society. Thus all the limited efforts of the contemporary theatre culminated in little result, and fell far short of their ambitions. Although a short-lived period of theatrical activity followed the 1979 Islamic revolution, it was soon suppressed. Iranian theatre today continues only due to the activities of a few individuals.

APPENDIX

A DOG IN THE HARVESTPLACE

by N Navidi

Night Watchman

Heydar

Robabeh

Dervish 1,2,3.

Mossayeb

Children

Bakhtiar

SCENE 1

: (Stage: Harvest place, a heap of straw, some wheat. The stage is dark, It is night, a ray of light moving slowly from the left of the stage lights the wheat, then creeping up the straw-heap moves round it and finally stops over the heap.

There is silence in the harvest place but the barking of the dogs in the village adjacent to the harvest place is heard. The barking is accompanied by the voice of a night watchman who is roving the village).

Night Watchman : (Hums the beginning of a song).

(There, on a heap of straw, under a shabby black cover, a man is asleep. Gradually he wakes up, then pushes the cover aside, raises his head and looks about him. Carefully he shakes the straw from his head and face. He looks about him. Carefully once more and making sure there is nobody around, he gets up cautiously and sits by the straw heap. Then he gets up and, keeping low, looks around him, again. there is nobody there. Satisfied, he grins happily. He has a hard, sunburnt face and his shabby outfit is of locally-made material. His shirt is torn in several places, exposing the black, straw-covered hairs on his chest).

Heydar : (Whispering). That is good, there is nobody here... (Hurridely he digs a hole admidst the straw heap).

Night Watchman : (Singing).
(Heydar, startled, gets up on his knees, looks about him frightenedly and then hurriedly starts removing the straws again).

Heydar : A....h....a that is better (smilingly).
That's better. But no! It's not big enough!
(He makes the hole in the heap a bit larger and then, satisfied but hastily gets up and starts walking on tiptoe. From the other side of the heap, he pulls out a large, open can and shakes out the straw which is inside it. The can makes a metallic noise, startling Heydar. He looks about him and this time passes the can more carefully from one hand to the other as he goes towards the wheat).

Heydar : In the name of Almighty God....
(He kneels down and fills the can carefully. He is disturbed by the noise the can makes When the can is full, he picks it up and carries it carefully to the hole in the straw heap. Once again, he looks about him and returns to fill the can again. (Up to now, the light ray follows Heydar with every move he makes).

SCENE 2

: (Stage is the same as before, the harvest place. There is no sign of disturbance in the straw or the wheat pile. Voices are heard from the vicinity of the harvest place. Heydar is sitting by a pile of beaten wheat crop, sieving it. A child with shabby, torn clothing, a dirty face and wiry hair full of straw bits, is holding a bunch of desert thorn with which he is clumsily sweeping the harvest place. Robabeh, Heydar's wife, is beating a pile of wheat in front of her with a wooden flail, separating the wheat from the straw (chaff).

A child not older than 3 or 4 years is sitting by Robabeh on the ground and sobbing).

Robabeh : Man! What am I to do with the children this year? (Pointing at the wheat). This is all we have, and it will be gone in an hour like a piece of sacrificial lamb!

Heydar : Have a little patience, woman! If I am in charge, I know what to

Robabeh : (Shrugging her shoulders). I don't know, you have either found a treasure, or else you're planning to steal something.

Heydar : No, woman. I have neither found a treasure -nor am I going to steal. Just be patient a bit. (The child's sobbing turns into sudden crying).

Robabeh : (Spitefully). Shut up, damn you!

Heydar : What does she want, woman?

Robabeh : How should I know, the greedy thing. She wants water-melon.

Heydar : Well, give her a few handfuls of wheat to eat.

Tobabeh : As if there's so much of it that we can afford to buy water-melons! (She keeps beating the crop with the wooden flail as if beating somebody)

Heydar : (Stopping what he is doing). Come....come. I will give you some wheat....come. (The child comes forward and holds her shirt with her hands. Heydar puts 3 or 4 handfuls of wheat in her skirt and the child goes away happily. The other children look at her with envy).

Heydar : Don't eat it all yourself, give some to your borthers, all right? (The child, happy, starts to run, then the run changes to a drunken walk. She goes off stage).

Robabeh : I wish God would take you away to relieve me of the burden.... Don't fall into the straw. Don't let anybody cheat you.... (nagging). The beloved God gives you and me nothing but children! One every day! One every day!

Heydar : Woman, be thankful and complain less. He provides for his creatures.

- Robabeh : (Pointing at the wheat). This is what he has provided for us. The moment they come it will be gone.
- Heydar : Be thankful, everything will be all right.
- Robabeh : How, and where will it come from? (A Dervish walking through the harvest place is chanting).
- Dervish (1) : (Chanting in praise of the Prophet Mohammad and his successor Ali, heard from the vicinity of the scene). Greetings to Mohammad and his followers.
- Heydar : (Whispering). Greetings to Mohammad and his followers.
- Robabeh : (With anger). Look at him! Look at him! How much wheat does he want?... He must be kidding! Not everybody with a turban on his head is....(Dervish's voice is heard as he comes closer).
- Dervish's voice : (Chanting verses again, followed by whispers of greeting to Mohammad and his followers).
- Dervish (2) : (From the other side, chanting verses in praise of the Almighty's kindness and virtue).
- Robabeh : Look at the way they have barged in here. Some of them are so healthy and strong that you couldn't cut their necks with an axe. They have become an added burden in addition to our own suffering. (Heydar is thoughtful).

Dervish : Hello, there! God give you strength. Good harvest! (Starts reading verses again).
(Robabeh, starting at the Dervish angrily keeps beating the wheat as if she is striking the Dervish on the head. Dervish pays no attention and goes on).

Dervish : (Chanting verses in praise of Ali. Heydar gets up).

Dervish : Oh, Almighty, fulfil their needs, bless their harvest. My holy ancestor Fatameh will bless your fortune, so that it is not wasted on doctors or taken away by tyrants. (Heydar goes to the wheat pile).

Heydar : Here you are, come. (Dervish goes closer and opens up his large bag which already contains 12-15 kilos of wheat. Heydar pours handfuls of wheat into his bag. Robabeh is looking angrily at the Dervish, his bag and her husband's hand which is filling up the bag with wheat).

Robabeh : He has taken enough, man! He wouldn't be satisfied if you give him all of it. It's a good job that you've got so little to give!

Dervish (2) : (Nodding his head). Charity keeps misfortune away! (Nodding his head).

Robabeh : (Pushing the Dervish). Go away, go on.

Dervish (2) : (Puts the bag hurriedly on his back and starts walking). Oh...oh...my good man. May God save you from this woman!

Robabeh : (Shaking her fist furiously). Oh...oh...shame on lazy layabouts.

Heydar : (Reproachfully). What has come over you today woman! You snap at people like a dog.

Robabeh : Yes, yes, but I have become like a dog. Isn't that true? This fat so-and-so comes and takes my children's bread and butter away!

Heydar : What do you think he can do! Go away and steal?

Robabeh : He can work. He is not disabled.

Heydar : (Nodding). Work! (Laughing bitterly). Do you know of any? If you do, give it to your husband so that your children are not always hungry.

Robabeh : Because there is no work, should he come and take my children's bread away from them?

Heydar : Well, woman, he also has a wife and children.

Robabeh : Oh, so he has a family too! You should feel sorry for your own children who are here and do not even have a piece of bread to eat.

Heydar : Woman! God is charitable. He will sort everything out. (Laughing). This year will pass as quickly as a wink, and next year we shall have a bigger harvest.

Robabeh : (Nodding). Keep hoping for the impossible. Every year has been worse than the one before.

Ever since I came to your house you have kept hoping for next year, just like my father. He also made many unfulfilled promises until my mother died with her hopes shattered.

Dervish (3) : (Chanting verses).

Robabeh gets up. Heydar looks at her frightenedly).

Heydar : What are you going to do, woman?

Robabeh : (Angrily). Leave it to me! (Shaking the flail in her hand).

Heydar : Don't be stupid.

Robabeh : Do you think you are sleeping on hidden treasure? I think not! Tomorrow my children will ask for their daily bread... and where will you be? Tomorrow when the harvest has been collected, you will leave us and go away and will come back next spring as poor as before. Tomorrow my children will suffer more. (Nervously). Do you know, man! I am quite serious about this, even if I have to kill....

Heydar : I tell you be quiet, don't create such a nasty scene.

Dervish (3) : (Approaching from the other side and chanting verses, reciting the martyrdom of Hossain).

Robabeh : Oho....Gholam-e-Ali. Oho, if you dare come closer... (Shaking the flail threateningly. The Dervish enters. In his hands there is a tapestry depicting scenes from Hossain's

martyrdom).

- Dervish (3) : (Starts chanting half-way across the stage).
Come and look. This is where Hossain met his martyrdom at Karbala, the fallen one with the slashed head is Ali Akbar, son of Hossain, the apple of the eye of Fatemeh, daughter of Zahra... (Going on and on). Oh. Almighty, for the sake of Ali Akbar, son of Hossain, bless their lives and business. Oh.... Almighty, for the sake of Fatameh's broken heart...
- Robabeh : We have been blessed and it won't be necessary for you to beg. Go on, get away.
- Heydar : (Disturbed). Could you shut up woman! (Stopping what he was doing). A proper bitch!
- Robabeh : Think what you like. I won't let you give away one single grain of wheat. (She gets up and stands straight). Just see if you can!
- Heydar : (Laughing bitterly). In the name of God!
- Dervish (3) : (Chanting while retreating).
- Robabeh : (Making faces). That...that...that...we must give...We must not give...I won't give. Your God should also know that I won't give any, go on, go on, get lost.
- Dervish (3) : (Shaking his head, shrugging his shoulders and laughing). It is up to you. Give if you like, don't if you don't. (Going away).
- Heydar : (Hurriedly). Oho, you Ali's devotee. Oho, Gholam-e-Ali. Oho, wait a second.

Robabeh: : Let him get lost.

Dervish(3) : You will be punished for this.

Robabeh : It can't be anything worse that we are already
faced with!

Heydar : God have mercy on you! That is enough, I tell
you to stop it. (Coming forward).

Robabeh : I told you I won't give a single one to
anybody. (Runs towards the Dervish, beating
him with the flail). Go on, go on, get lost,
I tell you, get lost.

Heydar : (Running forward). Woman, woman, you are
mistaken, do you think everything will be all
right if we don't give this poor man a few
handfuls of wheat?

Robabeh : What do you think, a few handfuls to this one,
a few handfuls to that one and a few to some
others.

Heydar : How much does that amount to? Not more than 6
Kilos.

Robabeh : 6 Kilos might seem nothing to you. Last year
during your absence I fed them for a week with
just 6 Kilos.

Heydar : I tell you to go.

Robabeh : I won't, I won't. (To Dervish). Get lost....
(Heydar takes her hands and pulls her towards
the side of the stage).

Heydar : Woman, go....go....

Robabeh : I won't. (She pulls her hands away and runs towards the Dervish, but...)

(Mossayeb's voice from outside) : Oh what has come over you? What is going on?

Robabeh : (Suddenly astonished, after some silence). Aha...Man! As God is my witness. If you give even one grain of wheat to them I will rip my stomach open. (To Dervish). You! Get lost. Get lost. Why are you so astonished? Go...go...! (Mossayed comes in. He is a fat man, dressed like Heydar, but his clothes are much newer. He has got some sacks in one hand, and a leather-covered notebook and a pen in the other).

Mossayeb : Ha,...ha...what is going on here? (To Heydar). Why don't you stop your wife?

Heydar : (Fed up). I don't know what I shall do, Mister Mossayeb, she is getting like a bitch and keeps snapping at people. (He pushes his wife and shoves her aside).

Mossayeb : (Throwing a few sacks in a corner). Uncle Heydar, God bless your crops.

Robabeh : Go on. Tell me what will they survive on?

Mossayeb : That is enough, that's enough. Don't worry so much, my sister! Do you think it's you who created them! He who created them will also provide for them.

Do you think that if it were (pointing at the wheat) not for these few handfuls of wheat, something would happen them? Would they die? No, if it were like that, there would not be a living soul on earth.

Heydar : You tell her Mossayeb, it is my fault that the crop is not good? She has driven me crazy with her constant nagging.

Mossayeb : My good man, the land is so hard that even the cows pulling the ploughs blame one another. All right, come forward. Gholam-e-Ali, come, I will give you a share.

Dervish (3) : (Going forward, avoiding Robabeh). God bless you.

Robabeh : Oh, don't try to catch fish in muddy water!

Heydar : (More sternly than before). Oho...oho...I hope God will shut you up. We are indebted to Mister Mossayeb.

Robabeh : Yes, I know! I know! That is why he has come with so many sacks. (Mossayeb puts handful after handful of wheat carelessly into the Dervish's bag).

Robabeh : (Goes forward). Oho, oho...whom do you think those belong to? (Mossayeb ignores her and puts in a few more handfuls. The Dervish keeps thanking and praying for Mossayeb. Mossayeb, after finishing what he has started, gets up and rubs his hands calmly).

Mossayeb : Oh, do you think I am the Dervish that you can beat me up? (Laughs).

Dervish (3) : (Puts his bag on his back and starts going off).
Mister Mossayeb, when...

Robabeh : Didn't I tell you they were catching fish in muddy water. (She runs towards the Dervish). Empty your bag, do on, empty it, go on. (She pulls the bag from his hands).

Heydar : (Runs forward, hits Robabeh's hands and pulls the Dervish away from her). O God damn your father, woman.

Dervish : (Running off the stage hurriedly, saying Ah, Ah and shaking his head).
The elder child looks with envy at his brother eating water-melon and moves gradually towards him.

Robabeh : (Pointing at Mossayeb's sacks). Let me see, what ...

Mossayeb : (Laughing). Well. Obviously, to collect your debts.

Robabeh : All we owe you...Yes?

Mossayeb : Naturally, the shop's account is not like other things. The goods in the shop are not mine. They belong to others. They also want every penny I owe them...and...

Robabeh : Don't you see that we don't have anything this year?

Mossayeb : Yes.

Robabeh : Yes!

Mossayeb : What do you mean by all this?

Heydar : Woman, you never thought of that when you and your children were fed at the expense of his shop day and night!

Robabeh : My children and I? What about you? If you tea and tobacco were late, you would have yelled ad raised hell. (Making faces).

Heydar : (Quietly). Look Mister Mossayeb, don't pay any attention to her, brother, today....

Robabeh : Yes, I am acting like a bitch today. (The elder child has got close to the younger one, wheedling and begging for a bite but the younger one is retreating step by step towards Robabeh and shaking his head).

Robabeh : (Pointing at the children). Look at them, always hungry, always dreaming of fruit. But what am I saying, it's not you who's in pain, it's my heart which is turning inside out, that (pointing at Heydar) who is their father has a heart like an ox's, and you Mister Mossayeb, and your attitude is known, if not only my children but the whole world died of hunger, you wouldn't care... you're just concerned about your own stomach and those of your children.

Mossayeb : What about the days and nights you were fed by my shop, it was all right then?!

Robabeh : Nobody forced you to .

Mossayeb : Nobody forced me to? I see, serves me right! You are right, I shouldn't have given you anything but as I have, I am now going to take it back.

Robabeh : Who is going to give it to you?

Mossayeb : Who is going to?

Robabeh : You bet, my children are to die because you lent us a bit?

Mossayeb : What do you think? You are exaggerating.

Heydar : Just ignore her. Now, tell me how much we owe you.

Mossayeb : (Opens his account book and turns the pages. The older child, dying to have a bite of the watermelon, goes to his mother).

Child : Mummy. (Impatiently). Mummy. (Robabeh's attention is fully directed to Mossayeb who is searching in his account book).

Robabeh : (To the child). Leave me alone, damn you.

Mossayeb : The total of your debts is let me see, 5483.5 Rials.

Robabeh : (Horrorified). What? (Clasping her head with both hands). My God. (Pointing at the wheat). This is all we have! (To Heydar). What are you going to settle the debts with? With these few grains?

Heydar : (Shocked). Well, as much as the wheat can account for.

Robabeh : I always told you to dut down on your tobacco. I'm always telling you to drink less tea. What are you going to do now? I am not giving a single grain away even to my father.

Mossayeb : (Impatiently). Well brother, are you going to clear my accounts? Is it for your wife to decide? Is she....

Heydar : When I am here, I make the decisions.

Robabeh : You bet, I am nobody. (The younger child eventually condescends to give the elder brother a bite of the water-melon, provided that the elder one has a bite whilst the younger one is holding the water-melon in his hands. But as the older one's teeth get into the water-melon, he holds both his brother's hands and takes 3 or 4 bits. After a fruitless struggle, the younger one starts shouting loudly, lets go of the water-melon on the ground and runs off the stage).

Heydar : Oh you greedy thing! (Runs after the elder child and throws one of his shoes after him). If you ever come back....

Robabeh : (Runs to the child, picks up the water-melon from the ground and cleans the dust off with her shirt). Come, take it, it doesn't matter, doesn't matter. (The child pushes the water-melon into his hands).

Robabeh : Here you are, eat it, damn you. You have made hell for me.... If I didn't have you, I would have none of this misery.

Mossayeb : Well, are we going to settle the account?

Heydar : (Secretively). Of course. (Puts his hands on his eyes).

Mossayeb : Be quick then!

Heydar : (Quietly). Let me (Gesturing with his head and hands, indicates that he means to get rid of Robabeh).

Robabeh : (Puts the crying child down). You bet! I am not going to move from here!

Mossayeb : (Impatiently). Well, Madame Robabeh, what do you say I should do then?

Robabeh : Madame!....I am no Madame! It's your wife who is Madame! Who, God save her, is announced wherever she goes.

Mossayeb : What am I supposed to call you then? Infidel?

Robabeh : Even "Robabeh" is too much for someone in my position! Call me miserable, hungry, destitute!

Mossayeb : All right! Destitute!

Robabeh : Destitute! Your ancestors are destitute!

Mossayeb : What do you want me to do?

Robabeh : How should I know, do whatever you want. It is between you and(pointing to Heydar). Neither God nor the Prophet want you to become the murderer of my children.

Mossayeb : What....?

Heydar : (Getting up). Woman....woman....don't do anything to force me to show my ugly side in front of these people.

Robabeh : Do whatever you like. (Takes one step forward). Do you know, my man? I am sick and tired of this life. I can't bear to see the suffering of the children any more.

Heydar : In the name of the Almighty!....

Mossayeb : (Putting one hand on the other, sorrowfully). This is the way poor me earns a living! Cheat the others and give it to these people to eat. And this is the way they pay their debts! (Angrily, bends over towards Robabeh). You heathens, am I responsible for feeding your children? From the beginning of the Autumn, you start buying on credit, well, then, you should also be thinking of paying back....do you think it is all free?

Robabeh : (Pretending to be cool and calm). I don't understand a single word of all this. My life depends on every single grain of wheat here.

Mossayeb : (To Heydar). This is another way of cheating people.

Heydar : I tell you to stop this nasty behaviour.... The children will not die of hunger. It doesn't matter even if they do die....

I am not going to cheat anybody....I will honour my debts.

Mossayeb : (Angrily). You shouldn't have borrowed, nobody asked you to, woman (Shaking with anger).

Heydar : Give it to him, for Almighty's sake! Don't make this poor man suffer any more!

Robabeh : (Sobbing). Am I telling lies? What are the children going to eat tomorrow? (She goes forward, holds Mossayeb's arm and forces him to sit down; she herself sits in front of him). Mister Mossayeb, you are my brother too, sit down, sit down so that I can open my heart to you, you tell me Mister, you tell me....

Mossayeb : (Surprised). I tell you?

Robabeh : Yes Mister. You tell me, what I can do with the children this year if you take the wheat away? This is all we have, we have God in the sky and this on earth. In the name of God, we have no hope anywhere else.

Heydar : Aha, that's better....that's the way to behave.

Mossayeb : All right, my sister, what do you want me to do? The few Rials I have are not mine, they belong to other people.

Robabeh : (Begging). give them away, be charitable for the sake of your children, don't let my children die of hunger.

Mossayeb : What, you're telling me to write off your debts?

Robabeh : No, no....Okay, wait a minute. What will happen if the children and I die of hunger, will God be happy?

Mossayeb : No, my sister, no, my dear, what do you mean?

Robabeh : Will it make God happy, will he reward you?

Mossayeb : (Gets up). I have my problems too. Do you think it is my own money, so that I can just forget about what you owe me? You have not been to the town so you can't appreciate what kinds of beasts I have to deal with if I'm two days late with the payment. They won't even return my greeting. I have also thousands of problems. I'll have nothing to do with yours. (To Heydar). Hurry up, hurry up, brother. Hurry up and pay up. I have work to do.

Robabeh : (Stretching out her hands to Mossayeb). You heathen, you have no humane feelings. (Crying). Don't you have any children of your own? (Mossayeb picks up his sacks and goes towards the wheat pile).

Mossayeb : (To Heydar). Come on, fill them up, come on.

Heydar : (Goes and takes the sacks from Mossayeb). I will help you. (Both of them sit by the pile and hurriedly pour the wheat into the sacks.

Robabeh stands there for a while and looks at them with a puzzled and helpless expression on her face, then starts walking with sudden decision).

Robabeh : Aha! (She runs to Mossayeb and, before he realises what she is doing, she takes the bottom of his sack, pulls it up and empties the wheat back into the pile, then goes to Heydar and does the same thing. Next, in front of their astonished eye, she throws herself on the pile and starts sobbing and crying).

Robabeh : I won't let you, won't let you, won't let you. My life depends on every single one of these grains.

Mossayeb : In the name of God!

Heydar : Just look at the shrew.... God in his world of light, has made a bitch as my companion.

Robabeh : Yes, I am a bitch. I am a bitch with four puppies who are crying with hunger. Does that satisfy you? If you dare touch me....

Mossayeb : (To Heydar). This is all because you are too soft. If she were my wife I would have taught her such a lesson that she'd bark for the rest of her life!

Heydar : Don't force me to break your arms and legs, woman!

Mossayeb : No, she is not going to give in!

Heydar : (Pushing Robabeh). You dirty slut, go away.
(Kicking Robabeh. Mossayeb nods approvingly).

Robabeh : Now I know that you are in it together, you want to kill my children with hunger. Wait here, I will show you. (Starts walking). You wait! Do you think I will let my children starve to death?

Mossayeb : Do what the hell you want to. I wouldn't waste time up here if I was frightened of your threats.

Robabeh's voice : Wait there, I will be back this very minute.
(From outside).

Mossayeb : Oh, God save us from a cracked wall, a wild day and a quarrelsome woman.

Heydar : Oh, God, she is going to make more trouble.

Mossayeb : Hurry up, fill the sacks quickly before she gets back. (hurriedly). Hurry up, hurry up.

Heydar : (Sitting down and constantly turning and looking at the place where Robabeh went out; he gets busy filling the sacks).

Mossayeb : (Pointing at the pile). This won't settle your debts.

Heydar : This is all there is, you expect me to go and borrow?

Mossayeb : But there's so much straw and so little wheat.

Heydar : Mister Mossayeb. Nobody is as poor as me this year. God be my witness, I have not paid the rent, I have no seeds to plant and no bread. This is all I have.

Mossayeb : Be honest! That's all the wheat you have?

Heydar : Are you suggesting that I hidden some?

Mossayeb : Lame Ramazan had half the amount of straw and twice as much wheat as this.

Heydar : Thank you very much! Mister Mossayeb, one whole year I have had to work like a dog, and now I have to listen to such talk.

Mossayeb : Well, there's so much straw and so little wheat!

Heydar : Then you are suggesting I have stolen it? That's funny, stealing ones's own belongings.

Mossayeb : Well, I don't know, you must have done something to it!

Bakhtiar : (A bent old man with a white beard, coming in from the other side of the stage).
You (laughing), what has come over you today?

Mossayeb : I don't know, ask him and his wife. I have taken care of them for a whole year, and now it is time for them to pay up, they are making a nasty scene.

Bakhtiar : God give you strength, and bless your crops.

Heydar : Welcome, Uncle Bakhtiar. How should I know? This is how God wants things to be for poor me. (Laughs bitterly).

Mossayeb : (Filling the sacks). Well Uncle Bakhtiar, is it my fault? If I don't give them credit, they start begging, and if I do

Bakhtiar : Look Mossayeb, nobody wants to cheat, but times are bad (shows his palm). Come and pick a hair from here.

Heydar : Who wants to be accused? ... (Pointing to where Robabeh went out). Do you think that she is acting like a bitch without good reason? ... She and her children will have to starve for a whole year.

Mossayeb : So what? If you can't afford it, don't eat! ... Go on, fill it up ... why are you waiting?

Heydar : Look Mossayeb, for the sake of your children. (Turning to Bakhtiar and making faces at him to elicit his support and intervention).

Bakhtiar : What can I say? Well Mossayeb, come to terms with them. You can still be kind to them.

Mossayeb : What?

Heydar : (Begging). Look here, Uncle Mossayeb, God be my witness, I'll go to Abadan, I'll go, maybe if I'm lucky I'll go to Kuwait.

Bakhtiar : Mister Mossayeb. Somehow, ... I mean, come to terms with them as far as you can.

Mossayeb : (Nervously). What! ... What are you telling me to do? Forget what is owed to me, is that it?

Heydar : God forbid! You won't lose a thing, I will send it to you from Kuwait.

Mossayeb : Oh yes! Money grows on trees in Kuwait. If you really mean it, send some for your children. What silly talk! You must be kidding man.

Heydar : (Begging). You know Uncle Bakhtiar, I swear to God what I say is not for my own sake, it for his sake. There she is, she's coming.

Mossayeb : (Looking). So She's coming back! What are you afraid of? Do you think she can escape paying her debts by putting on this silly act?

Bakhtiar : I tell you to come to terms with them, don't step on the bitch's tail, a hungry stomach can commit murder!

Mossayeb : Let her do what the hell she likes ... she won't get anywhere with this silly show of parading a few sick, helpless children.

Bakhtiar : (Nodding). God, what are these people to do? (Laughing sarcastically). They say each will be given his daily bread! Daily bread ... daily bread!

Mossayeb : (Getting up nervously and looking at Dervish as if seeking somebody, then suddenly turns to one side and shouts). Oho ... Alimorad ... Oho ...

Alimorads voice: O ... h ... o ...

Mossayeb : Bring the donkey in and carry these four loads to the shop.

Robabeh : (From outside). You just try and take them!
 (She comes in with two of her sons and three small girls in from of her. She has a knife in her hand. The children are frightened to death, as is shown by the expressions on their small, pale faces). Go forward! (She pushes them). Go forward! They ... look at them, they are hungry ... hungry, they want bread. Bread ... bread (screaming and crying). Bread ... bread ... bread ... They want bread. Come, come and answer them. Answer them and then take the wheat.

Mossayeb : Why should I answer them ... God should do that ... My God ... a hundred thousand like them die every day in the world and nobody cares.

Robabeh : (Breathing hard). I won't let you. I won't let them die. (Shows a knife).

Mossayeb : Let us see!

Robabeh : You shall! (Pushing the children forward).

Heydar : Here you are ... (To Bakhtiar). You tell me, what can I do?

Mossayeb : (With sarcasm). Be proud of her ... be proud of her. She is to be proud of!

Bakhtiar : (Nodding and laughing bitterly). What can I say to them?

Robabeh : What can you say? Starving your children to death and giving what you have to this fat man so he can become fatter still!

Bakhtiar : (Laughs). God held us. Now it is my turn.

Robabeh : Am I telling lies?

Mossayeb : Now I am a fat man! I shall teach you a lesson to remember. (Turns aside and yells). Oho.

Robabeh : (Shouting in the same direction) ... Oho ... if you put one foot here, Alimorad, I will tear your guts out.

Mossayeb : No you won't!

Robabeh : Oh won't I (She pushes the children forward). Go forward go ... go ..., you helpless creatures. (Children cast a frightened look at Robabeh and Mossayeb).

Heydar : Damn your father, woman! You should fear God and be less disrespectful.

Robabeh : Respect ... respect ... you wretched man, you can be respectful on an empty stomach, we are respectful when we've got enough to eat. (To the children). Go forward, go forward. We only die once.

You sit here, (she sits one of the children on a sack), and you sit here (sitting another one on another sack), and you too (sitting every child on a sack and she herself holding the knife, stands in their midst). Now try to take the wheat!

Bakhtiar : Well, I did tell you that a hungry stomach could kill.

Mossayeb : Come to terms with them? I swear to God that I shall be paid to the last penny they owe me!

Robabah : Do it then! Do it, what are you waiting for? (One of the children gets up, and move away). Sit down, sit down, you!

Mossayeb : Oho (Shouting). Alimorad!

Robabah : Oh yes, he will come right now!

Alimorad : (From outside). count me out brother!

Mossayeb : So that is the way it is? You have a dog loose here. (Angrily, he goes and picks up a half-empty sack).

Robabah : (Holding the arm of one of the children, goes forward and puts the knife to the child's stomach). Will you put it down? I am talking to you, will you put it down or not! (Mossayeb keeps staring).

Heydar : (Runs forward and forces the child's arm out of Robabah's grip and pushes the child aside) Damn your father and mother, woman! Damn your ancestors, woman!

Robabah : (Runs to another child who runs away, then to another one. She catches one of the children and puts the knife to his stomach). Put it down, do you hear me, put it down!

Mossayeb: : Damn your father if you don't kill them! ... I'd like to see how you do it!

Dervish's sons : (Entering chanting).
 (They are all astonished and stare as the Dervish's son enters the scene).

Robabeh : What ... (Dervish's son, holding a small axe with a wooden handle, a metal pail and a large cloth bag, enters, immediately puts the pail down and starts chanting and striking a small bundle of chains on his back).

Dervish's son : (Singing about the parting of Karbala's martyrs from members of their family).

Robabeh : What? You here again? Wait, I tell you! (Running after the Dervish's son, who doesn't know what has been going on).

Bakhtiar : (Nodding). God Almighty, a hundred sins and one repentance!

Mossayeb : (Looking at Heydar, nods to him). Now I understand it! You told her ... You yourself told her to act like this ... You made her behave like the bitch she is!

Heydar : (Astonished). I? I told her to act like this so that I needn't pay my debts? So you are saying that I taught her all this! Wait then, I will kill her to satisfy you and put your mind at rest! (He runs out in the same direction that Robabeh ran after Dervish's son. Immediately Robabeh's screams, followed by the sound of blows being struck, are heard. The screaming children run forward

where their mother is heard. While running, one of them kicks the sack and the wheat falls out all over the place).

Heydar's voice : You dirtly slut! You shrew of a woman! You have put me to shame!

Mossayeb : (Satisfied). That's it! That is the way it should be! The bitch has got used to such shameful behaviour. (While talking, he sits down and puts the wheat spilt on the ground back into the bag).

Bakhtiar : (Looking at Mossayeb angrily). What's that supposed to mean? (Gets up). You too, what are you doing? Getting as ass out of the mud? You might as well kill her! (Goes toward Heydar and Robabeh. Heydar is hitting Robabeh. She has stopped talking).

Heydar's voice : How's that now? Can you open your mouth anymore?

Now you can't behave like a bitch and snap at people. (Bakhtiar and Heydar come back with Bakhtiar holding a broken stick. He is shaking all over and his lips are covered with saliva).

Bakhtiar : You fool! Is that the way to beat a woman? Why, have you gone crazy? (To Mossayeb). You heathen. What do you want from these people? Why do you wish innocent blood to be spilt?

Mossayeb : What! What are you talking about ... ? You tell me not to collect what they owe me ... Anyone who want to get back what he is owed would have to spill blood!

Bakhtiar : I did tell you that a hungry stomach has no moral sense. A hungry stomach can cause bloodshed.

Mossayeb : (Sewing the top of the sacks). I don't understand the argument. I want back every penny I lent. (Robabeh, with bloody head and face, dust all over and dishevelled, creeps onto the stage with sobbing children following her).

Mossayeb : (With surprise) What? She has come to life again?

Heydar : What do you say I should do with her? Can I cut her head off? (Robabeh nods, meaning yes he could. Mossayeb and Bakhtiar look at Robabeh dumbfounded. Robabeh creeps forward a few steps. Sits down; her tears, mingled with dust, have turned muddy.

Robabeh : (Sobbing). You can. Yes you can. I swear to God. (Pointing at the two of them). For God's sake put an end to my misery. Kill me so that I am released from all thes. I can't bear to see my children hungry. Come, come and put my eyes out ... come and tear my bleeding heart out so that it does not burn inside me

anymore; come, for God's sake, come, come.
(Sobbing, throws herself on the ground.
Heydar turns his face to wipe his tears.
Bakhtiar nods with sorrow and looks at
Mossayeb with anger).

Mossayeb : (Nods). God Almighty. What a business!
(Lifting his head and looking up). God, take
her away. Take her away. (After staring at
Robabeh for a while). God Almighty, now they
will accuse me of profanity ...

Heydar : No, no Mister Mossayeb, no (sobbing), don't
you worry, this is what the Almighty has
wanted for this helpless creature and me.

Bakhtiar : (Looking up). Oh, God Almighty, is it right
that a man should labour for a year and then
live like this?

Mossayeb : No, brother, this is no way to run a business,
this is no life. If I ever collect the Rials
which people owe me, I swear on the graves of
my ancestors I will never run a shop again.

Robabeh : Mister Mossayeb! I swear to God, that those
few grains of wheat are all we have and you
want to take them. (Crying). Well, I
shouldn't say that ... you are also right.
(Crying bitterly). But what am I to do with
the children? (Laying her hands on the
wheat). I swear by this God's gift that even
at harvest time we don't take much home.

That's my children's share and this is my own. We are naked and starving. (Crying hard). And ... and ... you

Mossayeb : (Disturbed). Well, what do you tell me to do? All right, come. (Let go of the sacks). Come, we'll do as you say, give as much as you want to ... come ... (Facing Bakhtiar). But you be our witness Uncle Bakhtiar, from this moment there won't be a penny on credit, not a penny, so don't come to the shop begging.

Robabeh : (Happily). Aha ... whatever I can give, whatever I can give? (Laughs). All right, no credit, not a penny credit, not a penny. God grant you a long life just so long as my children have their bread, just enough bread to keep us from starving to death, that is better, better, God grant you a long life, a long life. God keep your children healthy for your. God give you integrity. (Laughing and crying ... weakly gets up on her knees and goes to Mossayeb). Come, let me kiss your hands.
Come so that I may kiss your foot, come and let me have all your miseries, come ... come. (Mossayeb retreats as Robabeh gets closer to him).

(Curtain drops)

SCENE 3

- : (The scene is the same as before, the harvest place. Half of the wheat has been taken by Mossayeb. Robabeh is sweeping up the wheat. Heydar's eyes follow Mossayeb as he gets further away)
- Heydar : (Satisfied). Well, woman, that something, now. God willing, we've got rid of that one. But between ourselves, if you were not here, Mossayeb wouldn't leave and let us get off so lightly. (Without noticing Robabeh who is looking at him with anger). Now, woman (Pointing to the wheat), we'll spread these for seeds.
- Robabeh : (Shocked). What? Those for seeds? Saved from the wolf to be gotten by the lion? Oh ... no ... that is impossible unless you kill me. (Gets up). I don't care about seeds. These are for my children's bread.
- Heydar : (Laughing). Well, woman, that (Pointing at the straw heap) is for the children's bread.
- Robabeh : (Shocked). Give that to your ancestors!
- Heydar : (Laughing hilariously). Give that to your ancestors! What do you think I am talking about? No woman, look ... (He goes towards the straw, but cowers back before he get to it ... cautiously). But woman, you must not tell nobody ... right?!

Robabeh : (Curiously). Right! ...

Heydar : (Gets closer to the heap and looks carefully about him). Look! (He sits down and removes the top layer of the straw). Look ... look, this is for the bread! ...

Robabeh : (Happily shocked) What?

Heydar : Hush ... yes woman.

Robabeh : When did you hide it, is there much?

Heydar : Yes, there is. One night ...

Robabeh : Why didn't you tell me?

Heydar : (Covering up the wheat cautiously). Well, (get up) well, if I had told you, we wouldn't have any wheat to use as seeds. (Laughs)

Robabeh : You should be burned for the beating you gave me!

Heydar : (Goes to Robabeh). Come, it doesn't matter. Doesn't matter, for the children's sake, come, instead ...

Robabeh : (Retreats). No man, no man. People are watching us ... no.

T H E E N D

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adibi, Hossein. An Analysis of the Social Economic and Physical Aspects of Urbanisation in Iran, Dissertation, United States, International University, 1972
- Albright, Charlotte, F. The Azerbaijani Ashiq and his performance of a Dastan. Iranian Studies. Vol. IX, 1976.
- Ākhūndzāda Mīrzā Fathālī, Tamsīlāt. Shish Nāmāyish nāma va Yik Dāstān, Translated by Mīrzā Ja'far-i-Qarajadāghī, Intishārāt-i Khārazmī, 1349 /1970.
- And, Metin. Karagöz, Turkish Shadow Theatre. Dost Yayınları, Istanbul, 1979.
- Āryanpūr, Yahyā. Az sabā tā Nīmā. Kitabhā-yi Jībī, Tehran, 1351/1972.
- Abrahamian Ervand, Iran Between Two Revolutions, Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Ādamiyāt, Farīdūn. Fikr-i Āzādī va muqadāma-yi Nihzat-i-Mashrūtiyyat, Sukhan, Tehran, 1350/1971.
- Ānāsurī, Jābir. Janbihā-yi-namāyishī-i-barkhī az marāsim -i-āini Dar Īrān, Faṣlnāma-yi Tiātr, Vol. 4, Tehran, 1357/1978.
- Bayzāi, Bahrām. Namāyish Dar Iran, Tehran, Kāviyān, 1344/1965.

- Bayzā'i, Bahrām. Pahlavān Akbar Mīmīrad, Tehran, Saīd Publishers, 1344/1965.
- Browne, Edward G. A History of Persian Literature in Modern Times, (A.D. 1500-1924), Cambridge University Press, 1924.
- Baktāsh, Māyil. Taziyeḥ and its Philosophy, Third Festival of Arts Shiraz, Persepolis, 1967.
- Baktāsh, Māyil. Tiātr-i-Īrānī, A Collection of Three Ta'zia Sessions by M. Baktāsh and F. Ghaffārī, Intishārāt-i-Jashn-i-Hunar, 1350 /1971.
- Barkeshly, Mehdi. Musīqī Dar Iran, Īrān-Shahr, Vol. 1, Cited in M. Hatami Farahnakianpoor.
- Benjamin, S.G.W. Persia and the Persians, New York, G.P. Putman & Sons, 1901.
- Beeman, William O. A Full Arena, The Development and Meaning of Performance Tradition in Iran, Modern Iran, The Dialectics of Continuity and Change, State University of New York, Albany, USA, 1981.
- Binning, Robert B.M. Two Years' Travel in Persia, Ceylon, Vol. II, London, Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1857.
- Chardin, Sir John. Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia, London, Argonaut Press, 1927.
- Chelkowski, Peter. The Literary Genres in Modern Iran, Iran under the Pahlavis, George Lenczowski, Editor, Hoover Institution Press, Stamford University, 1978.

- Chelkowski, Peter J. Taziyeh, Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran, Surush, N.I.R.T. Publications, Tehran, N.D.
- Dawlatabādi, Mahmūd. Nigāhī-bi-Sī-u Panjśāl-i tiātr-i Mubāriz, Nashr-i Burnā, Tehran, 1358/1979.
- Fallāh Zādeh, Majīd. Yādī Az Nūshīn, Majalla-yi Fardā-yi-Īrān, Tehran, No. 4, 1361/1982.
- Fallah Zadeh, M. The Theatre of The Absurd and The Iranian Theatre. M.A. Thesis, Manchester University 1979.
- Falsafī, Nasr-allāh. Tārikh-i-qahva-va qahva Khāna Dar Īrān, Majalla-yi-Sukhan, Period 5. 1333/1954.
- Farhat, Hurmuz. The Dastgah Concept of Persian Music, (Diss. U. California), 1967.
- Farhat, Hurmuz. Iran Art Music, New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. 1. Ed. Stanley Sadie, London 1980.
- Fulchignoni, Enrico. The Structure and Growth of Commedia dell'Arte, Shiraz, International Seminar of Traditional Improvisatory Theatre, Shiraz, Art Festival, August 19, 1977.
- Ghaffāry, Farrokh. Evolution of Rituals and Theatre in Iran, Iranian Studies, Autumn, 1984.
- Ghaffāry, F. Ta'ziya va Rū-hawzī, Faṣlnāma-yi Tiātr, No. 1. Tehran Intishārāt-i Farhang va Hunar. N.D.
- Ghaffāry, F. Baktāsh, M. Tiātr-i-Īrānī, Intishārāt-i-Jashn-i -Hunar, 1350/1971.

- Gūrān, Hivā. Kushishhā-yi Nāfarjām, Intisharat-i Āgāh, Tehran, 1981.
- Haery, Mahmoud. Iranian Traditional Improvisatory Theatre, Ph.D. New York University 1982.
- Hatami Farahnakianpoor Mehrangiz. A Survey of Dramatic Activity in Iran from 1850-1950, dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1977.
- Herodotus, History of Herodotus by G. Rawlinson, Third Edition. Vol. II, London 1975.
- Hoogland, Mary and Eric. The Little Black Fish and other Stories by Samad Behrangi, Three Continents Press, Washington D.C. 1976.
- Humayūni, Šadiq. ‘Anāsūr-i-Sāzanda Ta‘zia, Majallay-i Rūdakī, Fifth Year, Tehran, 1355/1976.
- Itimad-Al-Saltāna, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān. Rūznāma-yi Khātirāt. Ed. Īraj Afshār, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1345/1966.
- Jannatī-‘Atāī, A. Bunyād-i-Namayish Dar Īrān, Ibn-i-Sinā, 1333/1955.
- Karīmī, Maḥmūd, Radīf-i-Āvāzi-i Musīqī-yi Sunnatī, Iran, M. Taqī Maṣūdiyā, Tehran, Sūrush, 1985.
- Kardān, Parviz. Amīr Arsalān, Intishārāt-i-Padīd, Tehran, 1336/1957.
- Kiyānūsh, Maḥmūd. Bar-rasī-yi shīr va naṣr-i fārsī-yi mūāsir. Tehran, Rāz, 1355/1976.
- Khayām, ‘Umar. Rubāiyāt-i-Hakīm ‘Umar Khayām. Ed. Muḥammad Mihdī Fūllādvand, Tehran. 1348/1969.

- Khāliqī, Rūhallāh. Sarguzasht-i-Mūsiqī Dar Īrān. I Vol, Tehran, Safī 'Alī Shāh, 1353/1977.
- Khaki, Reza. The Development of The Black Faced Clowns in Traditional Iranian Theatre, Iranian Centre for Performing Traditions, Shiraz Art Festival, International Seminar on Improvisatory Theatre, 19 August 1977.
- Mahjūb, Muḥammad Ja'far. Traditional Persian Drama, Third Festival of Arts - Shiraz 1967.
- Mahjūb, Muḥammad Ja'far. Namāyish-i-Kuhan-i-Īrāni, Intishārāt-i-Jashn-i-Hunar, 1346/1967.
- Mahmīd, Muḥammad 'Alī. Nigāhī bi Sīupanj Sāl-i-Tiātr-i Mubāriz, Dar Rūz-i Jahāni-i-Tiā'tr, Munīr, Tehran, 1358/1979.
- Mansūri, Parviz. Sāz Shināsī, Intishārāt-i-idāra-yi Kull-i-āfarīnīsh-i-Hunārī, 1355/1975.
- Malik Pūr, Jamshīd. Adabīyyāt-i-Namāyishi Dar Īrān, Vol 1&2 Intishārāt-i-Tūs, Tehran, 1363/1983.
- Mew, James. The Modern Persian Stage, The Fortnightly Review LIX, 8 (January-June) 1896.
- Minuwī, Mujtabā. Fidawsi-va Shir-i-u, Anjuman-i-Aṣarī-i-Millī, No. 56. Tehran, 1346/1967.
- Mufīd, Bīzhan. Jān Nisār, N.I.R.T. Publications, 1352/1973.
- Mustawfi, 'Abd-Allāh. Sharh-i-Zindigāni-yi man. Tehran, Intishārāt-i-Zāvar, 1341/1962.
- Najmī, Nāsir. Dār-al-Khilāfa, Tehran, Sipīhr, 4th Ed. 1356/1977.

Nāṣir-al-Dīn Shāh,

A Diary kept by His Majesty the Shah of Persia, during his Journey to Europe in 1878. Albert Houtum Schindler and Baron Louis De Norman, London. Richard Bentley & Sons, 1879.

Naṣīriyān, 'Alī.

Lāna-yi-Shughāl, N.I.C Tehran, 2nd Ed. 1353/974 Naṣīriyān, 'Alī. Pahlavān Kachal, Majalla-yi-Sukhan, 15th Period, No. 5, 1334/1965.

Naṣīriyān, 'Alī.

An Interview, Majalla-yi Rūdakī, No. 34-35, Tehran, 1353/1974.

Naṣīriyān, 'Alī.

Bungāh-i-Tiātrāl, Andīsha, Tehran, 1357/1978.

Navabpour, A.R.

A Study of Recent Persian Prose Fiction with Special Reference to the Social Background. Ph.D Thesis, University of Durham, June 1981.

Navabpour, A.R.

State Heroes and Revolutionary Characters in Some of the Modern Fiction of Iran, Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists. New Series, Volume I. 1979-80.

Nizāmī,

Haft Paykar, Ibn Sīnā, Tehran 1334/1955.

Nūrbakhsh, Husayn.

Dalqakhā-yi-darbāri, Sanā'ī, Publishers, Tehran, 1335/1956.

Pavry, Bapsy.

The Heroines of Ancient Persian Stories retold from The Shah nama of Firdawsi, Cambridge University Press, 1930.

- Pelly, Lewis. The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain, London. W.M.H. Allen and Co, 1879.
- Pirouz, Farzaneh. A Critical Assessment of G.H. Sa'edi Pre-Revolutionary writings, Oxford University. M. Litt. Thesis. 1984.
- Qāsimī, Rīzā. Mūsīqī Dar Ta'zīa, Majalla-yi Rastā-Khiz-i-Javān, No.90, 1356/1977.
- Reed, Elizabeth A. Persian Literature Ancient and Modern, Chicago S.C.G. Riggs & Co. 1893.
- Sabri-Tabrizi, G.R. Ghulam Hoseyn Sa'edi, A Voice for the Poor, index on Censorship. 4, 1986.
- Sabri-Tabrizi, Social Values in Modern Persian Literature, Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists, New Series, Volume 8, 1976.
- Ṣadiq, H. Panj Namāyish-nāma-yi Mirzā Āghā Tabrizī, Nashr-i-Āyanda, Tehran, 1356/1977.
- Ṣafvat, Dāryūsh and Mashhūn, Ḥasan. Dū Maqāla Dar Bāra-yi Mūsīqī-yi Iran, Intishārāt-i-Jashn-i Hunar, N.D.
- Shāmlū, Ahmad. Hava-yi-tāza N.I.L. Publishers, 4th Ed. 1353/1974.
- Shāmlū, Ḥabīb Allāh. Tārikh-i-Iran az Mād ta Pahlavi, Tehran, Ṣafī'Alī Shāh Publishers. 1343/1968.
- Anjavī Shirāzī. A. Bāziḥā-yi Namāyishi, Amīr Kabīr, Tehran, 1352/1974.
- Ṣā'idi, G.H. Bihtarīn Bābā-yi-Dunyā, Tehran N.I.L. 1345/1966,
- Ṣā'idi, G.H. Parvār Bandān, Tehran, N.I.L. 1348/1969.

- Sā'idī, G.H. Jānīshīn, Tehran, N.I.L. 1349/1970.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Khāna-yi-Rawshānī, Tehran, Ashrafī, 1347/1968.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Ā-yi-bī-Kulāh, Ā-yi bā-Kulāh, 5th Ed. Tehran, Agah, 1357/1978.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Dikta va Zāviya, Tehran, 1348/1969.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Bāmhā va Zīr-i-bāmhā, Panj Namayish Az Inqilāb-i Mashrūṭiyyat. Ashrafī, Tehran, 1345/1966.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Lāl Bāzihā, Payām Publishers, Tehran, 1353/1974.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Kalāta-yi Gul, Tehran, 1340/1961.
- Sā'idī, G.H. Chūb Bih Dasthāyi Varāzil, Tehran, 1344/1965.
- Sālik, Hamīd. Panj Namāyish-nāma-yi Mīrza Āqā Tabrizī, Intishārāt- i-Nobel, Tabriz, 1357/1978.
- Ṣāqafī Khalīl, Maqālāt -i-Gūnāgūn, Tehran, 1322/1943.
- Shīrvānī, Ḥasan. Mansūri, Parvīz, Faāliyathā-yi Hunarī Dar Panjāh Sāl-i Shāhanshāhi-yi Pahlavī, Intishārāt-i Farāng va Hunar, 1355/1976.
- Shirazi, Foroud Ismail-Beigi. A Study of the Evolutionary trend and the current atmosphere conditions of Shahnamih Khani in Iran. Dissertation, Detroit, Wayne State Universtiy, 1973.
- Shoāie, Hamīd. Namāyish va Fīlmnāma Dar Īrān, Tehran, Hermin, Co. 1355/1976.
- Sipānlū, Muhammad Alī. Nivīsandigān-i Pīshraw-i-Īrān, Kitāb-i-Zamān, Tehran, 1331/1982.
- Sykes, Ella C. Persia and its People, Methuen & Co. Ltd. London, 1910.

- Sykes, Percy. A History of Persia, 2nd Ed. MacMillan & Co. London, 1921.
- Ṭabarī, Ihsān. Iran Dar dū Sada-yi-Pishin. Intishārat-i-Tūda, Tehran, 1360/1981.
- Ṭabaṭābāī, H.A. Naqsh-i Marākiz-i-āmuẓish-i Tiātr Dar Tahavvūl-i-Hunar-i Namāyish Dar Iran, Dar Dawra-yi Pahlavi, Ministry of Culture and Art Publication, Tehran 1355/1976.
- Ṭabrizī, Mirza Āgā. Panj Namāyish-nāma, Ed. by H. Ṣadiq, 2nd Ed. Nashr-i-Āyanda, 1356/1977.
- Talbot Rice, D. Persia and Byzantium, The Legacy of Persia, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Varenne Jean, Zarathustra, Cit. Jean Hureau, Iran Today, Iran National Tourist Organisation, 1972.
- Yarshater, E. Development of Persian Drama in P.J. Chelkowski (ed), Iran Continuity and Variety (New York: New York University, 1971).
- Yāsami, Rashīd. Adabiyāt-i-Muāsir-i-Irān, 1st Ed. Tehran, 1316/1937.
- Yūsufī, Muḥammad, An Interview, Association of Theatre Workers and Artists, Bulletin No. 2, 1360/1981.
- Yūshij, Nīmā. Zindigī va Āsar-i-ū, Safi 'Ali Shah, Tehran, 1334/1968.