

FEATURES OF THE GENRE OF CHINESE DRAMA IN ANTIQUITY



<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7394949>

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ANNOTATION

This article examines the importance of drama in the Chinese literatures, and the periods and features of development of drama in the world literature. It describes the emergence and nature of this genre, as well as the works of playwrights, shows the influence of drama in the progress of literature and performance art. The contemporary theater, themes and problems arisen on the stage have been discussed in the article.

Keywords: “Huaju”; “Oral Drama”; “Beijing Experimental Theater”; “New China”; “Southern Kingdom”; Natyashastra; Bharata Muni; Bhasa; Kalidasa; Classical Dance; Sanskrit Theater; Folk Theater; “Amateur Theater”.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматривается значение драмы в китайской литературе, а также периоды и особенности развития драмы в мировой литературе. В ней описывается возникновение и природа этого жанра, а также произведения драматургов, показано влияние драмы санскрита на прогресс литературы и исполнительского искусства Китая. В статье обсуждался современный театр, темы и проблемы, возникающие на сцене.

Ключевые слова: “Хуаджу”; “Устная драма”; “Пекинский экспериментальный театр”; “Новый Китай”; “Южное королевство”; Натьяшастра; Бхарата Муни; Бхаса; Калидаса; Классический танец; Санскритский театр; Народный театр; “Любительский театр”.

Drama as a literary work, the actor finds his own interpretation on the stage by the director. Thanks to Drama, theatrical art arose, and it was also the basis for the art of cinema. Genres of Drama are tragedy, comedy, drama (as a genre) and tragicomedies. Drama is one of the genres of dramaturgy. Since the era of

Enlightenment, drama has become one of the leading genres of artistic literature. The contradictory life of a person is expressed in it.

Looking at history, there are periods when the literature and art of each people blossomed, and in the 8th-5th centuries BC, ancient literature, in other words Greek literature was highly developed. During this period, the works of such geniuses as Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus are known and famous among the peoples of the world so far. Then the development of Roman literature occurs. In the 16th century, English literature began a new era of ascent in world culture through the creativity of such great men as Shakespeare, Marlow, Grin. In the 18th century in Germany, the rise of literature and art through Goethe, Shiller and a number of adepts is visible. In the 19th century, French literature was introduced to the world by such celebrities as Hugo, Duma, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant.

And in the East, the types of drama art have its own characteristics. Drama was formed as a complete genre in India, during the first millennium, in Japan in the 10th - 11th centuries, in China, which was considered one of the centers of ancient civilization in the 13th - 14th centuries.

The dramatic works of the famous 13th century Chinese playwright Guan Han Sin (关汉卿), Van Shi Fu (王实甫), Bay Pu (白朴), Ma Ji Yuan(马致远) and others have not lost their value until nowadays. These names connect us with the prosperity of Chinese drama and theater which later became known as classical and they took a special place in the history of the prosperity of Chinese culture, which was one of the genres of democracy for a while. In the 13th century, at a time when Chinese national art was under intense persecution by the Mongol invaders, the theater and dramaturgy remained one of the leading types of art. In the period of the Mongol Empire, the theater with its specific activities served as an influential tool in the artistic propagation of freedom ideas. But the popularization of advanced ideas for people required to find more accessible and understandable artistic forms. Sources of theatrical art go back to antiquity. At the first stage of the development of human society, when hunting animals and birds was a necessary factor for human survival, it was decided to worship nature and animals. In ancient China, the first forms of worship for animals were reflected in games and dances. You can see “peacock”, “dragon”, “lion fight” dances performed by classical dance masters in the streets and squares of China. The peculiarity of the dance art allowed a person to express his feelings with elegant gestures and to create a variety of stage views forms.

In the development of the genre of drama in Chinese literature, the first Chinese play was created by actors in small but very free form, namely genres called

“siven” (the text of the theater) (戏文) or “nansiven” (南戏) – “southern Siven” (the text of the Southern theater). Some features of these genres are preserved in contemporary southern Chinese theater and drama, such as the combination of singing (aria), prosaic dialogue, and pantomime (dance).

In the 13th-14th centuries, during the reign of the Yuan dynasty, the genre of drama “siven” was transformed into a new genre “szaszyuy” (杂剧)¹. It first appeared in northern China, and soon fell “siven” to the second place and began to develop not only in the north, but also in the south.

The spiritual world of the Chinese people has also changed over time. By the 10th- 13th centuries, the number of spectators capable of understanding the work of art has increased, and this was caused by dramaturgy and theatrical art. A mixed type of art, namely drama, music, the art of preaching, rituals of mass worship, folk performances, etc., developed. There was also a need for stage performances, designed for the higher strata of the Imperial palace. The development of Chinese dramaturgy also coincided with this period.

On the issue of the emergence of Chinese dramatic genres, literary scientists suggested in their research that the origination of Chinese dramaturgy genres caused the wide spread of ancient Indian culture in China. In this issue, a number of researches were carried out by the writer Zheng Zhendo and Syuy Dishan at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1925, Syuy Dishan 地地山, a literary critic, writer, raised the same issue in his article titled *The style of Indian drama and its details in Chinese drama* for the first time. The writer’s scientific research covered a number of problems, including comparative literary studies, the history of Indian and Chinese cultural relations and the impact of foreign culture on Chinese literature. Syuy Dishan believes that the emergence of Chinese dramaturgy is associated with the penetration of the teachings of the Mahayana school of Buddhism into the territory of East Turkestan. He also notes that in the 2 BC, the Sanskrit drama was formed simultaneously with the Mahayana Buddhism, and in the same period the teaching of the Mahayana school was widely spread even in the Khan dynasty (206BC- 220AC).

In 1911, manual copies of the Sanskrit drama were found in the Eastern Turkestan regions through the archaeological work of Henry Lyuders, the German scientist. All of them were published by the publishing house in Berlin, Germany. Ashvaghosha’s drama *Shariputrarakaran*, Kalpanamanditika’s *Kumarylata* and

¹ In the 杂剧 genre, a plot is told. The story is performed by an actor with arias and dances.

three unnamed texts were found among these. These dramas are considered to be sources written by Indian Brahman during the Gupta period.

Shariputraprakaran is one of the most ancient artifacts found in the Chinese territory. The text of the drama is devoted to the life of Gautama Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, Shariputra and Maudgeon. In this way, the first dramatic work that entered China was written on the basis of the motives of Buddhism literature which was translated into Chinese at that time.

The next finding is the text of *Maytrisimit*, written in the genre of the nataka which influenced on the wide spread of the Sanskrit drama in China. The text is written in the Toxar language. Later it was first translated into Uighur and Chinese. It is assumed that the writing of the text of the drama dates back to the 5th – 6th AC. The found text consists of 293 pages, according to which it is said that it influenced on the wider spread of Buddhism in Central Asia and China.

The drama's plot centers on 120-year-old Brahman Senboboli who sees the spirit of heaven in a dream, the spirit tells Senboboli that he must go to get Gautama Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism. Realizing that Senboboli can't afford it because of his very old age, the brahman invites Maytreya and his 16 disciples. Brahman tells Maytreya that in order to achieve spiritual freedom, he must recognize thirty two Buddha's qualities of body. In this way, Maytreya will visit many places, only when he meets Gautama Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, he will see thirty two qualities of the Buddha's psyche and choose the path of Buddhism.² The first drama in the genre of *szyuyben* written on the basis of the plot of the same drama was found in China.

In this way, in the 1st-6th AC through the *Great Silk Road*, Mahayana Buddhism spread widely and allow to get acquainted with the traditions of Indian dramaturgy to the Chinese people. But in the 8th century, due to the fact that the Arabs conquered the *Great Silk Road*, China's relations with India were almost lost.³

By the time of the Tsin dynasty, the first dramatic genres of *zhugundyao* and *szaszyuy* developed in China which gave the Chinese people the opportunity to get acquainted with Indian dramaturgy again. And this is explained by the fact that the Indian culture and the wide spread of Indian Buddhism dramaturgy in China is accompanied by the development of drama in East Turkestan. Chinese researcher

² Gen Shimin 耿世民 examines the early history of this text and cites it in his article "The Drama of Maitrisamiti in the Ancient Uyghur" (古代维吾尔语说唱文学"弥勒会见记") and the role of drama in the emergence and development of Chinese and Uyghur literature.

³ In 751 the armies of the Tang Empire (618-907) were defeated by the Arab army on the territory of East Turkestan, as a result of which a number of cultural ties with India were lost.

Liao Ben explains in his article *From the Sanskrit drama to the suszian drama*⁴ that the first drama appeared in China under the influence of Buddhism through this following scheme: the Sanskrit language-the Tohar language-the Uighur language-the Chinese language. This article also shows us that the influence of Sanskrit dramaturgy on the development of Chinese drama happened in a rather unusual way.

Jen Jendo, another literary scientist, discussed the influence of Sanskrit dramaturgy and theater on Chinese drama in his research. He notes that the manuscript of the Sanskrit drama *Shakuntala* was found in a synagogue on Mount Tyantai, as well as mentions that other manuscripts under the name chuantszi that embody the movements of Indian theater have been found.) All this proves that the developed Sanskrit dramaturgy of ancient India really had a huge impact on the development of Chinese dramaturgy. Zhen Zhendo's "The History of Chinese Literature" provides a detailed description of the early genre of drama, in which dramas are compared in Zizhui (杂剧) in parallel with Sanskrit drama: 1. In the plays of Sanskrit drama and the zaju genre, there is an aria and a replica, through arias the feelings and character traits of the main characters are revealed. 2. In parallel, the coincidence in the Sanskrit drama of the male role of Nayak with the male role of Shen (生) in the Chinese drama, the female role of Nike with the role of Dan (旦) is highlighted. 3. While in Indian drama arias and replicas of officials, kings, Brahmins, philosophers are written in Sanskrit, ordinary folk characters are written in Prakrit (common people), while in Chinese drama similar arias and replicas of officials, kings, Confucians, Taoists, Buddhists are written in Wenyan Yazzi, while Ordinary folk characters are written in Baihua Suji.

However, by the beginning of the 20th century, updates, changes in ideological direction, content, form took place. By this period, due to the economic, social, spiritual changes taking place in society, complex processes took place in National Art. The crisis situation in the traditional theater was the impetus for the active study of foreign culture and the development of dramaturgy and a new view of the theater.

This art came to China from the west along with revolutionary-democratic ideas. At the same time, the first examples of modern drama – " *xuaszyuy* " ("oral drama") – started to be published in the press. The so-called " oral drama " refers to the originality of this type of art, radically different from the traditional, old, syncretic musical form of drama. Poetic monologue - arias, usually performed in the archaic language, is replaced by a lively modern colloquial style in it. Not only in the

language, in the speech of the personages, but also in the division of the main artistic image tools, plays into curtains and acts, sharp differences were noticeable in the costumes and scenery of the heroes. A new art has emerged as a new form of perception of reality, a new sphere of the spiritual life of the people. Another aspect that distinguishes it from the traditional theater is the rise of important socio-political, moral-aesthetic and other important issues.

At the beginning of the 20's of the 20th century, the inflow of foreign literature into China intensified. Acquaintance with foreign dramaturgy paved the way for China to the treasures of world art from antiquity to modern times. Foreign dramaturgy prepared both writers and readers-viewers for a new Chinese drama. Chinese scenes G. Ibsen, A. Strindberg, B. Shaw of the plays of the show and others began to be put. Especially creativity of Ibsen has become very large. Also L.N.Tolstoy (*Living corpse, Ruler of darkness*), I.S.Turgenev (*Thunder, Wolves and herds*), A.N.Ostrovsky (*Human life, Dog Dance, King, Law and freedom*), A.P.Chekhov (*The Cherry Orchard; Sisters; Bear; Wedding*) and many other works were translated and staged into Chinese.

So, in 20 years of development of Chinese dramaturgy, three main principles are observed: the national heritage associated with traditional theater; mastering of foreign dramaturgy; modern national drama.

From the very beginning, modern national dramaturgy embodied multilayered art. The theater "*Xuaszyuy*" appeared on a literary basis. The first step was taken by progressive playwrights in the democratic spirit. Most of them went to foreign countries and got acquainted with the advanced culture there. Among them, Ouyan Yuytsyan, Sya Yan – went to Japan, Khun Shen, Syun Fusi – to the USA and got trained. This, in turn, left a bright mark in their creativity. The perception of world culture was realized through the country they visited, which is a foreign language they have. It was very difficult to track who, when and how affected them in a specific creative way. In general, these enterprising, entrepreneurial, enlightened people went through intellectual training in countries that were more advanced than China at that time. Having mastered another culture and historical experience, they do not break spiritual ties with their peoples. Returning to the homeland, they tried to awaken the consciousness of the people, to accelerate the development of society. Speaking of a new playwright in China, the plays written in colloquial language for the modern Chinese drama Theater are meant. The history of the new dramaturgy began with the plays of Tien Khan and Hun Shen on the household theme. The plays of the poet Go Mojo on a historical, acute social theme of Tsao Yu are considered

mature works of this playwright. As in prose, in dramaturgy and theater became a means of promoting the ideas of the revolution.

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