



Article

Interpretation of National Values in Uzbek Theater: Historical Evolution and Modern Processes

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Abstract: This article analyzes the organic connection between national values and Uzbek theater from historical, theoretical, and practical perspectives. It provides a scholarly examination of the ways in which national values, traditions, and spiritual-enlightenment ideas have been interpreted on stage throughout the various stages of the formation and development of Uzbek national theater—encompassing the era of Jadidism, the Soviet period, and the era of independence.

Keywords: National values, Uzbek theater, stage interpretation, Jadidism, "Padarkush" (The Patricide), spiritual heritage, directorial concept, dramaturgy, universal human values, aesthetic principles

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1. Introduction

National values represent one of the most fundamental socio-spiritual categories determining the historical development, spiritual life, and cultural heritage of every nation [1]. These values are formed based on centuries-old life experiences, customs, traditions, moral perspectives, aesthetic ideals, and social relations [2]. Alongside literature and visual arts, theater occupies a special place in the continuous transmission of national values from generation to generation [3]. As an important cultural institution that artistically expresses society's spiritual needs and influences social thinking, theater possesses the capacity to preserve, develop, and modernly interpret national values [4].

Throughout its stages of formation and development, the Uzbek theater has expressed the people's national worldview, spiritual-moral criteria, and historical memory through the art of stage performance [5]. The development of national dramaturgy, directing, and acting art has evolved in close connection with socio-political changes in the people's life, striving to manifest the essence of national values in new artistic forms during every historical period [6]. Therefore, the Uzbek theater is significant not only as an integral part of national culture, but also as an important socio-educational system that summarizes the spiritual experience of the people and promotes their moral and aesthetic ideals [7].

During the years of independence, as a result of state-level support for fostering self-awareness, re-evaluating historical heritage, and developing national culture, theater art was elevated to a fundamentally new stage [8]. In repertoire policy, the proportion of works reflecting national history, spiritual heritage, customs, family relations, patriotism, humanism [8], and national ideas increased, and special attention was paid to the harmony

of national and universal values in directorial interpretations [9]. This process not only demonstrated new facets of national theater aesthetics but also enriched the theoretical views regarding the scenic interpretation of national values [10].

At the same time, globalization, the expansion of cultural dialogue, the digital information environment, and the development of modern artistic thinking pose new tasks for the national theater [11]. Reinterpreting national values not through traditional repetition, but based on modern aesthetic principles, directorial research, and new stage technologies, has become one of the important directions of today's theater development [12]. From this perspective, studying the laws of expression of national values in the Uzbek theater, their historical evolution, and modern processes from a theatrical standpoint is considered an urgent task [13].

Each stage of Uzbek national statehood is the history of our people restoring their national values, enriching them with new content, and continuously improving them [14]. Our people's centuries-old traditions, culture, customs, various holidays, rituals, and rich ancient heritage play a special role in restoring and developing our national values [15].

There are certain values without which the culture of a given period would remain flawed and inadequate. Values refer to all elements of material and spiritual culture that are significant for man and humanity. A value is considered the material and spiritual wealth created and being created by humanity. The importance of values lies in the fact that they serve to regulate and correctly guide people's behavior.

"Value is a philosophical, sociological, and axiological concept used to indicate the universal, socio-moral, and cultural-educational significance of certain phenomena in reality. Everything, every phenomenon, and event significant for society, man, and humanity—freedom, goodness, equality, peace, truth, enlightenment, culture, material and spiritual wealth, historical monuments, beauty, moral traits and virtues, traditions, customs, and rituals—is considered a value".

Values, like culture, can be divided into material and spiritual values. Material values can include economy, technology, health, wealth, convenient living conditions, clean water, quality food, and other amenities that create physical conveniences for humans. Spiritual values include scientific, moral, aesthetic, religious, artistic, and other values. Some values acquire a historical, periodic character and may change with the change of epochs. At the same time, there are also values that possess permanent, universal significance. For example, values that inspire a person to heroism and loyalty to the Motherland. Artistic and moral values are also considered universal values. The highest values are expressed in criteria such as goodness, kindness and compassion, labor, life, love, justice, truth, and happiness. These blessings are called values because people cherish them for their personal significance. The reason these blessings are called values is that people cherish them because they enrich their personal and social life.

2. Method

In the history and theory of the Uzbek national theater, the scenic interpretation of values initially dates back to oral folklore and the traditions of folk performance art (puppetry, qiziqchi and clown performances). At the beginning of the 20th century, under the influence of the Jadid movement and the ideas of enlightenment, our national theater was elevated to a new stage. The dramas of enlighteners such as Mahmudhoja Behbudiy, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Cho'lpon laid the foundation for the first conscious artistic interpretation of national values on stage. During this period, stage interpretations were mainly based on the ideas of calling society to enlightenment, fostering national self-awareness, and criticizing outdated customs.

In this study, the history of the scenic interpretation of national values, its stages of formation, development tendencies, and artistic-aesthetic features are analyzed based on

modern methodological approaches of theater studies. Furthermore, the correlation of national values with dramaturgical structure, directorial concept, stage images, and acting mastery, as well as the factors of their influence on the audience's spirituality, are theoretically substantiated.

In modern cultural studies, the scenic interpretation of national values is evaluated as a multifaceted creative process arising through the synthesis of dramaturgy, directing, acting art, scenography, and musical decoration. In this process, the artistic interpretation of national traditions serves not only to restore historical reality, but also to reveal their modern spiritual content, demonstrate national self-awareness, and show their harmony with universal values.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Theoretical and Historical Evolution of Values in Uzbek Theater

"The 'Militant Godless' organization, invented by the Soviet totalitarian regime, played a special role in the fight against our national-spiritual values, especially religious values. Branches of this organization were established in all enterprises and institutions. Although certain positive results were achieved in its activities—such as resisting the marrying off of young girls, bride price (kalym), and cases of mistreatment of women—a ruthless struggle was waged against clergy and religious believers".

Values possess a social character and are formed and developed in the practical activities of people over centuries. The supreme value among all values is human life and the human being. Freedom, liberty, stability, peace, and harmony are values of exceptional importance in social development and human life.

"Moral values occupy a special place in the system of national-spiritual values. Morality, which conveys the meanings of multiple behaviors and conducts, is considered a phenomenon of spiritual life, one of the forms of social consciousness, and a concept related to spirituality. Morality is a collection of stable norms and rules that regulate the historically formed behavior, deportment, mutual relations in social and personal life, and relations of people toward society".

Formed over many millennia of human history and evolving into a certain system, morality regulates the mutual relations of human society. In the course of societal development, moral concepts, norms, and ideas are enriched and complicated, and the level of humanism rises. "The content of complex moral concepts—good and evil, conscience and lack of conscience, happiness and unhappiness, humanism and antihumanism, loyalty and betrayal—is influenced not only by national conditions, but also by the interests, ideologies, historical changes, and political, geopolitical, and global problems of various social groups, strata, and classes".

Universal values refer to values that are of vital importance to the entire society and all of humanity, reflecting the existence, past, present, and future of mankind, the main directions, rules, requirements, and procedures of living, as well as the most primordial hopes, dreams, and ideals of people. Universal technologies, production, management organization, cosmonautics, cybernetics, and information technology that enable common use for all humanity are among universal values. Universal values include achievements, discoveries, created wealth, and directions and means of spiritual perfection related to culture, spirituality, science, religion, art, law, politics, and forms of social consciousness. Man, his life, goodness, beauty, justice, truth, freedom, equality, friendship, love, happiness, and patriotism are the highest universal values—ideal values. Universal values are deep and broad in content and acquire a pan-human significance. They correspond to the aspirations of all nations, nationalities, and peoples.

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Even under the conditions of ideological restrictions during the Soviet period, national values were preserved and developed in unique forms on stage. Through classical dramaturgy (Hamza, Said Ahmad, Uyg'un, and others), interpretations of this period depicted eternal values such as our people's historical past, industriousness, family relations, and norms of ethics and etiquette. However, due to ideological pressure, scientific literature notes that certain national-religious values and customs were restricted or portrayed critically.

Only with the years of independence did the scenic interpretations of national values acquire their new, genuine content and true appearance. Restoring national values, living historical memory with vitality, and conveying the heritage of great ancestors to the people through the stage were elevated to the level of state policy. During this period, the following renewal processes were observed in theater art: A new approach to historical figures and past heritage: Through the life and activities of Amir Timur, Mirzo Ulugbek, Alisher Navoi, Babur, and other great figures, the values of courage, patriotism, and science-enlightenment were widely highlighted. Utilization of folklore and ethnographic sources: Folk oral art, rituals (Navruz, weddings, lullabies, and satirical games) were adapted to the stage language, enhancing the national color of performances. **Psychological interpretation and philosophical depth:** Values began to be revealed not merely as external attributes or ethnographic exhibitions, but within the context of human psychology, inner experiences, and complex spiritual problems related to the times.

Today, in an era of intensified globalization processes, new aesthetic searches are required in creating stage interpretations of national values. Directors are striving to form a sense of national pride and self-awareness in the hearts of the younger generation by harmonizing traditional theater forms with modern stage art technologies.

The processes of formation and development of stage interpretations of national values constitute a dynamic artistic phenomenon that is constantly enriching and adapting to the demands of the spirit of the times and the national mentality. Studying the scientific and theoretical foundations of these processes remains one of the urgent tasks facing modern theater art.

The spiritual development of a nation that has embarked on a path of solid progress is determined by the degree of preservation and transmission of its historical memory, national values, customs, traditions, and cultural heritage to future generations. National values are a complex spiritual system formed in the historical development process of the people's centuries-old life experience, social relations, moral criteria, and aesthetic views, and they are considered one of the important factors ensuring the stability of national culture. Theater art occupies a special place in the artistic expression of this spiritual heritage. This is because the stage not only reflects reality but also actively influences the formation of society's spiritual needs, social views, and national thinking through its artistic recreation.

In modern cultural studies, the scenic interpretation of national values is evaluated as a multifaceted creative process arising through the synthesis of dramaturgy, directing, acting art, scenography, and musical decoration. In this process, the artistic interpretation of national traditions serves not only to restore historical reality, but also to reveal their modern spiritual content, demonstrate national self-awareness, and show their harmony with universal values.

Observation of the stages of development of the Uzbek national theater shows that the features of the expression of national values on stage have been formed in close connection with societal development, the socio-political environment, and cultural processes. Although national customs, spiritual views, family relations, labor culture, humanism, tolerance, and patriotic ideas were expressed in various artistic forms during different stages of theater history, their main essence has always consisted of reflecting the spiritual thinking of the people.

During the years of independence, the interpretation of national values in theater art was elevated to a qualitatively new stage. As a result of the strengthening of the process of national self-awareness, the fundamental renewal of attitudes toward historical heritage, and the support of national culture at the level of state policy, artistic expressions of national values gained broad opportunities on stage. This paved the way for the formation of new aesthetic approaches in directorial thinking, a deeper reflection of the national spirit and historical memory in dramaturgy, and the refinement of national psychologism in acting performance.

At the same time, globalization, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, and cultural integration processes are giving rise to new forms and methods of expressing national values on stage. This poses the task for the national theater of reinterpreting traditional values based on modern artistic thinking while preserving them. From this perspective, scientifically researching the laws of formation and development of stage interpretations of national values acquires significant theoretical and practical importance not only for theater studies, but also for cultural studies, art history, and spirituality.

In this section, the history of the scenic interpretation of national values, its stages of formation, development tendencies, and artistic-aesthetic features are analyzed based on modern methodological approaches of theater studies. Furthermore, the correlation of national values with dramaturgical structure, directorial concept, stage images, and acting mastery, as well as the factors of their influence on the audience's spirituality, are theoretically substantiated.

Only when a person comprehends the world, understands the events and changes that have occurred and are occurring in the world, do they begin to understand what is important for their life. People living in a given society determine the world of values in their own way. Values are not things, but rather an attitude toward things, events, and others, acting in life by adapting to and targeting values. There are certain values without which the culture of a given period would remain flawed and inadequate. On the example of individual culture, this situation can be described as follows: a value is something without which the complete or partial existence of an individual loses its significance. For example, for a person in love, their beloved; for parents, their child; for a scientist, science is such a value that if deprived of it, life loses its interest.

According to their sphere of operation, values are divided into regional, national, and universal types. National values are a complex socio-psychological phenomenon, encompassing the nation's language, culture, history, customs, traditions, all material and spiritual wealth, and all aspects of economic and socio-political life.

In ensuring the achievement of perfection by an individual, the structural components and fields of culture perform major tasks in developing labor culture, raising political awareness, and educating moral and aesthetic refinement in society. According to the social differentiation of the individual, labor culture, relationship culture, moral culture, and artistic-thinking culture occupy an important place. As a social structure, culture encompasses scientific knowledge, thinking, moral-aesthetic values, moral-legal regulations, customs, and traditions. The role and influence of theater art, which has developed since ancient times, are considered important in instilling the essence of national values into the minds of people living in socio-cultural life.

3.2. Detailed Analysis of Dramaturgical Works: "Padarkush" and "Baxtsiz kuyov"

Mahmudhoja Behbudiy's drama "Padarkush, or the Plight of an Uneducated Child" determined the development process of the Uzbek professional theater and Central Asian theater in general. This work is considered not a program of the Jadid movement, but a work reflecting national self-awareness, the crisis of values, and the ideas of enlightenment.

The socio-political and cultural awakening movement that emerged in the Turkestan region at the beginning of the 20th century placed important tasks before national art and literature. During this period, theater art emerged as the most influential means of opening the eyes of the people and pulling them out of the swamp of centuries-old backwardness and ignorance. The drama "Padarkush," written by Mahmudhoja Behbudiy, became the starting point of national professional theater art.

"Padarkush" is not merely a drama on everyday domestic themes, but a socio-philosophical warning showing what tragedies the falsification of national values, lack of education, and spiritual poverty can lead society to. The study of the stage interpretation of the work through the prism of directorial and acting mastery retains fundamental significance today in researching national self-awareness and the development of enlightenment.

The issue of raising children and morality, which is necessary for the development of the nation, occupies a leading place in the work. The drama is built very strictly and consistently in terms of composition, consisting of three acts and four scenes. At the center of the work stands the image of Boy (The Rich Man)—a typical representative of the rich of Turkestan of that period. Although his financial and social status is high, he has a narrow worldview, is far from enlightenment, and understands religious canons falsely. Intellectuals and enlightened scholars strongly recommend that he educate his son Toshmurod and teach him modern science and knowledge. However, Boy deprives his son of education with false views such as "our ancestors became rich without studying, my son does not need science, knowing how to read and write is sufficient."

In the development of the work's events, it is shown that Toshmurod, left uneducated, untrained, and unsupervised, falls into corrupt ways and surrenders to hedonism under the influence of negative characters such as Davlat and Tangriqul. The dramatic knot begins when Toshmurod runs out of money in a brothel and breaks into his own house at night to steal his father's wealth. At the climax point, the son confronts his father over money and kills his own biological father—"patricide" (padarkushlik) takes place. "In the resolution of the work, the capture of the murderers, the destruction of Boy's household, and the bitter elegy uttered by sensible heroes over the triumph of ignorance ring out as a social verdict on society".

In the drama "Padarkush," the system of national and religious values determines the overall ideological direction of the work. The Jadids, particularly Behbudiy, did not oppose traditional values; rather, they depicted their internal rot and falsification. In Eastern and Islamic culture, a father is the sultan of the household; raising a hand against him, let alone arguing, is considered the gravest sin (gunohi kabira). The naming of the work "Padarkush" also has symbolic meaning.

In our national values, wealth should serve the development of society, schools and education, and helping orphans and the destitute (through waqf and zakat systems). In the performance, however, Boy grudges spending his funds on opening national schools or sending his son abroad to study, while at the same time people around him spend money on feasts, debauchery, and vain entertainment. This spiritual contradiction proves that national values have also fallen into crisis.

The tragedy in the drama "Padarkush" is caused not by divine forces of fate or accidents, but by clear social causes—ignorance and the degradation of the environment.

In the performance first staged in Samarkand, the directing and organizational work was carried out by Behbudiy himself and his associates (e.g., M. Aliyev). Although the technical capabilities of the theater of that period were limited, the directorial solution relied on symbols. On one side of the stage, Boy's house and the pleasure-house representing darkness and ignorance are reflected, while on the other side, books and the world of intellectuals representing the light of enlightenment are depicted.

The performance "Padarkush" has not lost its relevance over the years. Its subtext showed that inattentiveness to child-rearing is treason against the nation's gene pool and future, and that the indifference of society members to surrounding events creates conditions for the sprouting of crime and spiritual degradation. The stage interpretation of the drama is the foundation of the Uzbek theater, depicting national values and the problem of their crisis. The school of directing and acting mastery was formed and developed through this work.

The socio-political and cultural awakening movement that emerged in the Turkestan region at the beginning of the 20th century—the Jadid movement—was the main factor in the formation of national literature, press, and theater art. For the awakening of the nation from its centuries-old slumber and its emergence from the swamp of ignorance and superstition, Jadid intellectuals chose the theater as the most influential tool. As Mahmudhoja Behbudiy emphasized, "Theater is an exemplary house (ibratxona)".

The approach to national values remained the constant focus of attention of the "Turon" theater. Abdulla Qodiriy's 1915 drama "Baxtsiz kuyov" (The Unfortunate Groom) is considered a continuation of the searches in the theater. This work is entitled "A four-act tragedy taken from the daily life of Turkestan" and depicts the most painful point in the family-everyday life of that period—human tragedies arising as a consequence of lavish weddings, false prestige, and forced economic dependence.

Following the foundation of the Jadid movement and the national theater, the Uzbek theater went through a complex and contradictory stage of development during the period of the Soviet totalitarian regime. Despite being under the pressure of military-political ideology, theater art found unique forms and styles to reflect national values, historical memory, and customs on stage. For instance, representatives of the directing school such as Mannon Uyg'un, Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy, and Toshxo'ja Xo'jayev elevated stage aesthetics to a new stage by harmonizing classical dramaturgy and national ethnographic features. Appealing to the spiritual roots of the people through national history and the image of heroes (Mahmud Kashgari, Alisher Navoi, Ulugbek, and others) became an important trend of the development period.

During the years of independence (1991–2024), the Uzbek theater entered a period of genuine development and free interpretations. The opportunity was created to interpret national values without ideological boundaries, with artistic-aesthetic and philosophical depth. In modern Uzbek dramaturgy and directing, the transformation of national values and the problems of preserving the spiritual profile of man in the conditions of globalization and the digital age took a leading place.

During this period, the following development trends clearly manifested themselves: Directors moved beyond mere domestic-ethnographic depictions to revealing national values through symbols, metaphors, and philosophical generalizations. Through the fate of Jadids, great thinkers, and national freedom fighters, the conscience, beliefs, and patriotic feelings of today's man were harmonized. Works of world classics (Shakespeare, Sophocles, Brecht, and others) were staged through the prism of national values, ensuring the integration of Uzbek theater art into the international arena. All of this fully proves that the scenic interpretation of national values has not remained stagnant, but is a dynamic artistic process that is continuously renewing and developing in accordance with the breath of the times and the spiritual needs of society.

3.3. Stage Mechanisms and Expression of Spiritual-Educational Ideas

In the theory of culture, the expression of spiritual-educational content through stage means is viewed as a complex artistic process manifested in the mutual harmony of dramaturgical material, directorial concept, acting performance, stage plastics, scenography, and musical solutions. In this process, it is of key importance to convey the main signs of the people's spirituality—such as national customs, rituals, family relations, kindness and compassion, respect for elders, honor for youth, hospitality, and tolerance—to the audience through a system of stage images.

Especially during the years of independence, the number and content of stage works dedicated to the artistic interpretation of the people's spirituality, national traditions, and customs in the national theater repertoire rose to a new stage. This process was formed as a result of the intensification of social needs related to fostering national self-awareness, preserving cultural heritage, and instilling the national idea into the consciousness of the general public through the medium of theater art. As a result, national values were interpreted in stage works in harmony with the worldview of modern man, further expanding the educational and enlightenment capabilities of the theater.

In this section, the mechanisms of artistic expression of spiritual-educational ideas and national customs in stage works are analyzed based on modern theoretical approaches of theater studies. Furthermore, the interpretation of national traditions in dramaturgy and directing, their mutual connection with character traits, stage conflict, artistic symbols, and directorial solutions are scientifically substantiated. Here, the stage interpretation of national values is researched not only within the framework of traditional depiction, but in close connection with modern social reality, spiritual needs, and universal values.

The main purpose of this section is to theoretically and practically analyze the scenic interpretation of spiritual-educational ideas and national customs in theater art, and to scientifically substantiate their artistic-aesthetic functions and educational significance. This serves to evaluate the modern development trends of national theater art, determine the mechanisms of promoting national cultural heritage through the stage, and further refine scientific views in this direction within the science of cultural studies.

The theater stage is the mirror of the people's life, a spiritual bridge between their past, present, and future. The artistic interpretation of national customs, traditions, and educational ideas in stage works possesses the property of directly influencing social consciousness. National customs (weddings, rituals, hashar [community work], mourning, hospitality, etc.) are considered not as ethnographic decoration or background in theater performances, but as an important dramatic detail that determines the ideological direction of the work and reveals the inner world of the characters.

Our people's values such as kindness and compassion, the neighborhood (mahalla) institution, respect for elders, and the sanctity of the family are shown on stage through metaphorical and symbolic images. "The admonitions and advice of elders, a mother's blessing, and the solidarity of the neighborhood community serve as resolutions in complex life situations. This evokes a sense of respect for national values in the audience".

Theater art ruthlessly exposes vices rooted among the people that do not meet the demands of the times, but instead ruin human destiny, such as false customs, ostentation, squandering, and regionalism. "Many modern dramas criticize the tragedy of young families tearing apart due to materialism in match-making matters, excessive expenses at weddings, and ritualism".

During the years of independence, a number of performances dedicated to the harmony of national and universal values were staged in the repertoires of the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theater, the Musical Theater named after Mukimi, the Youth Theater, and regional theaters. National music (maqom, bakhshi art) and traditional costumes were effectively utilized in the performances. Diverse approaches to works

reflecting national values and the artistic interpretation of customs attracted the attention of audiences. Especially, experienced directors' recourse to the ethno-modern style brought a fresh breath to traditionalism. If national customs and the ideas of spiritual elevation are interpreted on the theater stage with high artistic mastery, the theater can fully fulfill the highest goal it has set for itself—the task of spiritually purifying and elevating society. The scenic interpretation of national customs in theater art is considered one of the effective means of forming feelings of national pride, patriotism, spiritual responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage in the younger generation. Especially, the artistic interpretation of national virtues such as family relations, generational succession, hospitality, tolerance, respect for elders, and honor for youth further strengthens the educational function of the theater.

In general, it was theoretically substantiated that the artistic interpretation of spiritual-educational ideas and national customs in stage art is one of the main criteria of national theater aesthetics, and that they acquire high artistic value in the synthesis of dramaturgy, directing, and acting performance. At the same time, it was proven that the theater retains its significance as an influential socio-cultural tool serving to preserve national cultural heritage, reinterpret it on the basis of modern artistic thinking, and serve the spiritual development of society. These conclusions will serve as a theoretical-methodological basis for researching the scenic interpretation of family values and their artistic-aesthetic features in subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

4. Conclusion

The processes of formation and development of stage interpretations of national values constitute a dynamic artistic phenomenon that is constantly enriching and adapting to the demands of the spirit of the times and the national mentality. Studying the scientific and theoretical foundations of these processes remains one of the urgent tasks facing modern theater art.

The scenic interpretation of national values in Uzbek theater has demonstrated a continuous historical evolution. From the early enlightenment ideas of the Jadid movement and the socio-philosophical warnings against ignorance in Behbudiy's "Padarkush", through the ideological adaptations and preservation of heritage during the Soviet period, to the rich philosophical depth, ethno-modern approaches, and state-supported national self-awareness in the era of independence, the theater has served as a pivotal socio-educational institution.

Ultimately, these findings serve as a theoretical-methodological basis for researching the scenic interpretation of family values, spiritual elevation, and their artistic-aesthetic features, reinforcing the theater's role as a mirror of national consciousness and a bridge between cultural tradition and modern reality.

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