

THE NATURE OF RITUAL IN KAZAKH CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The growing interest in ritual underscores the relevance of this study as a fundamental aspect of human existence in Kazakh culture, as well as its intricate relationship with the art of theatre. In this context, the unique features of ritual text reproduction through diverse artistic mediums are unveiled. These symbolic codes have effectively created a universal language system, reflecting the symbolic form of human behavior with a clear orientation: ritual – play – theatre.

In this article, we aim to explore the nature of ritual as a metaphysical fulcrum of Kazakh culture and its profound influence on stage art, particularly in the oeuvre of the esteemed director, Azerbaijan Mambetov.

The personalization of the theatrical and ritual practices of the director Mambetov allowed for the revelation and substantiation of the mental images and principles of meaning formation and the sacredness of stage actions in his performances, which are similar in essence to ritual.

The idea of performance as ritual emerged in the West during a period of cultural and historical crisis. This phenomenon was linked to processes such as totalitarianism, wars, technocracy, pseudo-culture, the degradation of values, depression, and more. All of this led to a reevaluation of values and raised the question of the ontological status of art, thereby prompting an active search for new forms in every type of artistic expression.

In the realm of stage art, especially, the imperfection and insufficiency of the existing theatrical language became increasingly evident. A need arose to transform the methods of artistic interpretation and representation of reality. The leading cause of the theatrical crisis, according to 20th-century theorists and practitioners, lay in the crisis of the word. This, in turn, led to innovations in theatrical art, most notably in the use of ritual as a central guiding principle in artistic direction. Drawing on Eastern traditions rooted in movement, gesture, sound, and color – as integral components of ancient ritual performance – stage artists began constructing the plastic (non-verbal and physical) nature of theatre. Thus, the use of ritual became a defining direction in 20th-century directing.

Building upon this enduring direction, which continues to attract the attention of contemporary theatrical aesthetics, this study identifies the similarities and differences between Mambetov's theatrical concept and the views of such eminent thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze, Antonin Artaud, and others. It is imperative to note that the theatrical concepts of both Artaud and Mambetov align with Nietzsche's perspective on art. Notably, their methodologies for practically implementing Nietzschean worldviews – centered around the notion of “cruelty” and its realization within performances – reach the point of tragic experience. In this sense, both artists, echoing Deleuze's definition of theatre as “real movement” advocate for the creation of