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ТАРИХ – ИСТОРИЯ – HISTORY

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THE MASTER OF THEATER ART – ZHUMAT SHANIN

Annotation. The article discusses the public and political activities, creative works, innovations brought to theater art and the life journey of Zhumat Shanin, a prominent public figure who was the founder of the national professional Kazakh theater in the early 20th century. He was the director and artistic leader of the Kazakh theater organized in Kyzylorda, the capital of the country at that time. Additionally, the article explores Shanin's role in introducing young actors of his time to the arts, nurturing a whole generation of theater professionals, and his contributions as one of the founders of national dramaturgy and theater, based on fundamental scientific works, monographs, and archival documents.

Keywords: Zhumat Shanin; theater; art; Kyzylorda; playwright; director; creativity; public figure; director; actor.

Introduction.

The early 20th century in Kazakh life was filled with intense socio-political events and brought about complex and decisive changes in the cultural and spiritual realm. Playwright A. Ostrovsky said "A national theater is a sign of a nation's maturity." Indeed, when looking at the history of culture, it is clear that no nation's theater emerged by chance or suddenly. There is a deep connection with periods of spiritual awakening and economic growth. The emergence of theater art on Kazakh soil and the opening of a professional theater a few years later was a significant cultural event in Kazakh history. Along with this form of art, a new cultural and aesthetic system was established. The formation and early victories of Kazakh national theater art during its initial period of growth and development are closely linked to the name of Zhumat Shanin. In addition to Kazakh theater art, a new social figure—the director—emerged on Kazakh soil. This is because the development of theater art was connected to the creative work of the director. Interestingly, Zhumat Shanin, who brought theater culture to the Kazakh steppe, did not receive formal education in theater arts in Russia or Europe. Although he completed a one-year accounting course in Omsk, his natural intelligence, acumen,





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knowledge, and hard work allowed him to lay the foundation for the theater art of an entire nation.

Zhumat Shanin was born in 1892 in the Karatal at the foot of the Zheltau mountain in the beautiful Bayanaul region [1, p. 4].

Zhumat's grandfather, Shana, and his father, Turgynbai, were poor men who made a living through their own labor. Although his father, Turgynbai, was a resourceful man, he had no inclination for music or playing the dombra. On the other hand, his mother, Kaliya, came from a family with many singers, musicians, and artists. Zhumat's uncle, Altybai, often played Tatimbet's kyuis (traditional instrumental compositions) and sang Birzhan's beautiful songs wherever he went. He taught Zhumat how to play the dombra and sing. Additionally, young Zhumat's interest in the arts was likely influenced by the annual fair held in nearby Koyandy, near Karatal, where he could see and enjoy traditional Kazakh performances, including music, the arts of warriors and strongmen, horse races, and wrestling.

From an early age, the son of a poor family helped his father with heavy work leaving behind childhood games like riding colts, playing with sheep knuckles and chasing the game of "aqsuyek". The harsh realities of life caused Zhumat to mature earlier than his peers. Noticing that his son was more inclined toward words and writing than hard labor, Turgynbai dreamed of educating Zhumat. While selling wood in Omsk, Zhumat gradually began to learn the Russian language.

Research Materials and Methods

In the course of writing this research work, previously published and analyzed fundamental scientific studies, monographs, and archival documents were examined, focusing on the public and political activities, creative works, and life of Zhumat Shanin—a prominent public figure, founder of the national professional Kazakh theater in the early 20th century, and the first director and artistic leader of the Kazakh theater organized in Kyzylorda. The materials were selected, their content analyzed, and the necessary information was extracted. While writing the research, methods such as working with documentary sources on Shanin's life and activities, historiographical and bio-bibliographical cataloging, processing, and scientific analysis were employed.

The scientific article also analyzed data from the archives of the West Kazakhstan Regional State Archive, as well as the aforementioned monographic studies and data published in periodicals.

Research Results

During the period leading up to independence, many literary, cultural, and public figures who made immense contributions to the birth and formation of the Kazakh theater were unjustly accused. As a result, the theatrical atmosphere of that time, the issues of organizing ideological, creative, and artistic forces, remained outside the scope of genuine scientific research. The creative work of national intellectuals who significantly contributed to strengthening the foundation of the newly established theater during the early years of Kazakh theater, known for its exceptional creative uniqueness, often remained unknown. Nevertheless, researcher of Kazakh dramaturgy, Rymgali Nurgaliyev, in 1969, based on archival materials about Zhumat Shanin, published "The Fate of Talent," and S. Bekmakhumbetov, in his 1975 book "The History of the Kazakh Theater," covered the history of the Kazakh theater during the





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Soviet era, including the biography, directorial work, and dramaturgy of Shanin. When the Kazakh people recognized their national independence and became a sovereign nation, a significant task emerged: to account for the cultural heritage and art developed over centuries and to adapt it for the benefit of contemporary times. During this process, several works were published, including studies on the history of theater and the contributions of public figures who played a role in it.

In A. Sataev's "From the Purity of Our True History" and B. Nurpeis's "The Formation and Development Stages of Kazakh Theater Directing," new information was provided on the formation of theater art in Kazakhstan and the figures who contributed to it, including Zhumat Shanin. Additionally, during research on Kasym Amanzholov's work in the city of Oral, M. Azbanbaev's "Archive Kasym Karkaraly" also contains details about Shanin's work in Oral.

The renowned theater critic Bagibek Kundabek wrote about Zhumat Shanin, "The masters of art who emerged from among the people attempted to create a theater art in the European style and gained the community's admiration. However, it was extremely difficult for them to establish a professional approach to theater work on their own. The development of the theater cannot be limited to folklore, ethnography, and the traditional arts of the people. Such an art form would have a narrow scope and a short lifespan. The newly organized young troupe needed an organizer who was well-versed in theater art. Zhumat Shanin was well-suited for this role as the artistic director." Scholars and intellectuals like M. Auezov, K. Satpayev, and G. Musrepov, who personally witnessed Shanin's performances, highly regarded his work as a director and considered him a master of Kazakh theater art. His path to the arts and his immense contributions to the development of Kazakh theater art have been recognized in the science of Kazakh theater studies [2].

In the fall of 1913, driven by his love for art and knowledge, Zhumat came to the city of Omsk to fulfill his childhood goal of gaining an education. He found work as a manual laborer at the Seralijinov factory in Omsk. Understanding that he would not get far without education and professional skills, the ambitious young man realized that he needed to study. Working 12 hours a day at the factory, he spent one-third of his earnings on lessons in Russian, arithmetic, and other subjects with a Russian teacher in his free time. He continued his self-education in this manner, with some interruptions, until 1915 [3, p. 11].

During these years in Omsk, Zhumat Shanin interacted with young Kazakhs like Saken Seifullin and Nyghmet Nurmakov, who were studying at various educational institutions. He frequently participated in the activities of the youth enlightenment organization "Birlik" (Unity). While Zhumat had always been passionate about traditional Kazakh music, including the dombra and kobyz, his time in the city sparked his interest in Russian art. In a short time, he learned to play the mandolin and violin. Despite being prohibited from attending special events at the seminary, Zhumat still found ways to attend. He was particularly fascinated by the performances at the city theater [4].

Balancing his work at the factory with self-education and private tutoring, Zhumat enrolled in the bookkeeping course at the polytechnic in the summer of 1915. After completing the course in 1916, he became an assistant chief accountant at the





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Mashinsky factory in Omsk. However, soon after, World War I began, and by order of King Nicholas II, nearly a thousand people were conscripted for labor at the German front, where they endured great hardships. Zhumat only returned home after the February Revolution. It seems that his public and leadership qualities emerged during this time in the army, as other conscripted, illiterate men from different nationalities chose the educated, Russian-speaking Zhumat as their representative. He would advocate for their well-being, communicating their concerns to higher authorities. After being released from labor duties following the revolution, Zhumat safely returned home in 1917 and took up a position as an accountant at the Kyrgyz Cooperative in Karkaraly [3, p. 11].

Since ancient times, music, song, and the art of eloquence have been a significant part of Kazakh culture, with a tradition that dates back to the era of Kaz Dauysty Kazybek bi. Growing up in this culturally rich environment, Zhumat developed a deep passion for the arts. It was in this place that he met his lifelong partner, Zhanbike, and they eventually married.

In April 1920, Zhumat joined the Communist Party. That same year, he became the chairman of the Zaisan District Executive Committee. However, he did not confine himself to his official duties; he engaged closely with local poets and bards, from whom he transcribed the epic "Arqalyq Batyr." He later transformed this epic into a complex drama, which was first performed by the "Es Aimaq" theater troupe in Semey, where he was the director. In 1921, Zhumat was elected as a member of the Pavlodar District Party Committee, and in 1922, he became a member of the District Party Committee and its Presidium. During his time in these significant public roles, his organizational skills became increasingly evident. His leadership qualities, such as consideration for others, patience, enthusiasm, fairness, and foresight, which are essential for any leader, began to shine through. At the recommendation of the Semey Provincial Party Committee, Zhumat was elected chairman of the Zaisan District Executive Committee in March 1922. In this position, he undertook numerous urgent tasks related to establishing Soviet power and educating the masses in a revolutionary mindset [2].

The regions of Zaisan, Tarbagatai, and Altai, rich with fascinating legends, stories, and epic tales, greatly fueled Zhumat's imagination from a young age, as he was deeply passionate about the folk literature of these areas. Despite holding high positions in his career, Zhumat befriended and grew close to the local singers, musicians, poets, falconers, horse trainers, and wrestlers. He would spend long days listening to their songs, and sometimes he would accompany hunters for weeks. It was from the revered poet and eloquent bard Erzhan that Zhumat first heard the epic "Arqalyq Batyr" and transcribed it. He later used this material to write his famous tragedy, "Arqalyq Batyr." During his time in Zaisan, Zhumat befriended well-known local poets like Karybai and Botabai, drawing on the rich folk heritage for plots and ideas for his future plays.

After serving in the eastern regions of Kazakhstan, Zhumat returned to Semey and, by the end of 1923, was elected a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kazakh ASSR and a delegate to the All-Russian 10th Congress. In April 1924, at the fifth provincial party conference, he was elected a member of the provincial party committee. From September 1925 to 1926, Zhumat served as the deputy head of the Semey provincial administration of the All-Union Khozsindikat organization [1, pp. 10, 13].





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All these roles significantly influenced Zhumat's social outlook, deepened his worldview, and helped him grow as a public and social figure. However, they did not allow him to fulfill his deep-seated dreams or pursue his passion for the arts. During brief pauses in his official duties and in his spare time, Zhumat engaged in creative work, exploring the art of theater, which had not yet taken root in Kazakh soil, and delving into the genre of drama, which had yet to gain prominence in Kazakh literature.

In the first issue of the "Tang" magazine published in Semey in 1925, he released a one-act play titled "Torsykbai the Trickster." He also brought the tragedy "Arqalyq Batyr," which he had collected from the people of Zaisan, to the stage of the city club in January 1924, performed by local artists. Through the "Arqalyq Batyr" epic, he subtly hinted at the political pressures within the governance system. The play, imbued with the idea of freedom, resonated well with the audience and remained a staple on the stage since the theater's opening. Zhumat also became the artistic director of the "Es Aimaq" drama troupe, founded in Semey in 1920. Under his direction, plays like Mukhtar Auezov's "Enlik-Kebek" and Saken Seifullin's "Red Falcons" were staged [5, pp. 146-147].

Director Shanin proved himself to be a true artist in Kyzylorda. According to a special resolution of the Commissariat of Education, Zhumat Shanin was invited to Kyzylorda. Upon his arrival in Kyzylorda, he became the director and artistic director of Kazakhstan's first theater. Zhumat spread his wings and, in addition to staging works by contemporary Kazakh writers, he skillfully brought Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' Pushkin's 'The Stone Guest' and 'The Miserly Knight,' Beimbet Maylin's 'Maidan,' and Ilyas Zhansugurov's 'Kek' to the stage, introducing them to Kazakh audiences—a significant innovation in the nation's culture [1, p. 33].

In 1927, leading a group of artists, he participated in an ethnographic concert in Moscow, a successful step that opened the way for the director's further creative endeavors. As a result of these artistic achievements, Zhumat Shanin was one of the first to be awarded the title of People's Artist of Kazakhstan in 1931. His directorial talents also received high praise from the cultural community during Kazakhstan's tenday event in Moscow in 1936 [6, p. 70]."

It is well known that the success of Juman Shanins's initial steps in establishing the national theater of Kazakhstan was greatly influenced by the support and guidance of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the People's Commissariat of Education. As reported in the October 29, 1925 issue of the newspaper "Еңбекші қазақ": "On October 28, 1925, the People's Commissariat of Education convened a meeting of educators to discuss the creation of a Kazakh theater. Previously, theater performances were sporadic, carried out by active and studying youth on their own initiative. Now, the government has taken the initiative to establish a Kazakh theater. Our future theater will be adapted to the needs of the people and will serve not just as a place for political propaganda but as a powerful tool to promote education and discourage harmful customs. The task of establishing the theater and inviting the necessary people has been entrusted to the Education Commissariat. Since there are very few plays written in Kazakh and those that exist have been performed many times, a prize will be announced for good playwriters. The People's Commissariat of Kazakhstan has allocated 40,000 som for the creation of the national theater. Eight people from the Semipalatinsk region have been invited to join: Amire Kasheubaev, Isa Bayzakov, Juman Shaniny,





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Kazhymukhan Munaitpasov, Kalibek Kuanishbaev, Kusain Muzdybaev, Zarubai, and Mayra. 1,500 som has been allocated for their travel expenses. There are also plans to invite actors from other regions." Thus, from October 5, 1926, Juman Shanin began working as the director and artistic manager of the first Kazakh drama theater. Additionally, Juman played a role in promoting the artistic talents of singer Amire and poet Isa before many performances, contributing to the public's appreciation for music and poetry.

Juman Shanin, while fostering the development of theater arts, also brought traditional Kazakh games to the stage, reviving many of our national traditions in the theater. During those years, Shanin expanded his artistic horizons, revealing his directorial talent and dedication to dramaturgy. His written plays were staged in the theater, published in journals, and later released as individual books. As a director, he raised the cultural standards of the theater troupe by creating a weekly schedule that detailed the hours allocated to stage performance, music theory, solfège, music listening, singing lessons, choir, piano, and violin classes, thereby contributing to the actors' educational development. This shows that Shanin started the reform of the Kazakh theater from within, focusing on internal discipline. Previously, actors might have spent their free time without a plan and performed without memorizing their lines. Shanin imposed strict regulations and penalties for breaches of discipline. All these measures were seen as a path to enhancing the actors' mastery, which was considered crucial for the theater's success.

K.S. Stanislavski's famous saying, "Theater begins with the coat rack," highlights the idea that nothing escapes the watchful eye of the director in the art of theater. Zhumat Shanin also wrote fluently in Russian. Evidence of this includes some of his Russian-written materials, such as his articles "On the Work of the Kazakh State Theater," "On the Second Anniversary of the Kazakh Theater," and "Dramaturgy is Growing."

Between 1932 and 1933, Zhumat worked as a director at the neighboring Kyrgyz State Academic Theater. In 1934, he contributed to the creation of the Abai Opera and Ballet Theater, directing operas such as "Kyz Zhibek," "Zhalbyr," and "Er Targyn" with E. Brusilovsky and K. Zhandarbekov. This involvement is a sign of his multifaceted talent. During the 1936 Decade, Zhumat's directorial skills were highly praised by Moscow audiences and prominent cultural figures.

In 1933, based on the decree of the Kazakhstan Regional Party Organization on "Measures for the Development of National Art," efforts were initiated to establish a Kazakh studio theater in Oral in 1934. The legal entity responsible for organizing and financing the theater was the "Narcompros" – the People's Commissariat for Education. Although a decree and order were issued in Almaty, the actual progress on establishing the studio theater in Oral stalled. As a result, in 1935, the West Kazakhstan Party Committee had to intervene directly and tasked the Komsomol organization, which had begun to be called "Light Cavalry," with overseeing the studio's activities.

During this period, active Komsomol poet Qasym Amanzholov, who was close to the arts, was appointed to manage the organization. The studio and theater in Oral were initially established in May 1934 and Qasym Amanzholov led the theater studio until January 1937. After Zhumat Shanin arrived from Almaty, he took over the studio from





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Qasym, transferring it to the professional cadre of the capital's theater art. Thus, from 1935 to 1936, Qasym Amanzholov successfully and honorably fulfilled the party's special assignment, demonstrating his organizational skills for the benefit of the people and the needs of culture and art.

Given the opening of theaters in regional centers and the lack of specialist personnel, Zhumat Shanin was sent to Oral in December 1936. He was warmly received by the First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Izhmukan Kuramysov. Zhumat Shanin began to establish a musical-dramatic theater, continuing the work started by Qasym in a professional manner. The Kazakh musical drama theater, led by Qasym since 1935, was eventually moved to Atyrau in 1948 due to "financial shortages" and "lack of personnel" [7, p. 155].

Zhumat Shanin, along with his wife Janbike and son Qasym, resided at 35 Chapayev Street in Oral. At that time, his son was studying at the Almaty Music College. Janbike, his wife, was also involved in the arts and was a naturally talented singer. Both were impressed by Janbike's performance in the role of Kamka in the opera "Kyz Zhibek" during Kazakhstan's Decade in Moscow in 1936. Zhumat Shanin served as director until October 15, 1937. This period coincided with the height of political repression. While working in Oral, he was persecuted and arrested. On October 15, 1937, Shanin was charged by the West Kazakhstan Regional NKVD with offenses under Article 58-7 of the RSFSR Penal Code (sabotage), Article 58-8 (terrorist acts), and Article 58-11 (organization of counter-revolutionary activities). On February 26, 1938, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR sentenced him to death. However, in 1958, Zhumat Shanin was posthumously exonerated when it was determined that his crimes were insufficient. The verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR from February 26, 1938, was overturned by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR on May 6, 1958, and the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence of a crime [3, p. 1]. The powerful talent who led the new wave of Kazakh art was executed on February 26, 1938, alongside I. Zhansugurov and B. Maylin in Almaty.

Regarding Zhumat Shanin's family, his wife Janbike Shanin, originally from the Karaganda region, became involved in theater life due to Zhumat's influence. A naturally gifted singer, Janbike quickly adapted to the art world and became a recognized artist. Unfortunately, in 1938, she was arrested as the wife of a "class enemy" and sentenced to 8 years in ALZhIR (the female labor camp). She endured the harshest conditions of prison, initially working in manual labor and later in the sewing workshop. She completed her sentence and was released in 1946 but passed away in 1950 due to the hardships and severe illness she suffered. Their son, Raupbek, born in 1918, was one of the notable Kazakh violinists, having studied at the conservatories in Moscow and Almaty. Raupbek, who was left orphaned by his father and his mother, passed away in 1939 due to health problems. Their second son, Qasymkhan, born in 1925, followed in his father's footsteps in the performing arts. After Zhumat's arrest, the Shanin family was deported to southern Kazakhstan. There, Zhumat's brother, Akish Shanin, and his wife Mäpish found work at the regional drama theater. Young Qasymkhan joined the theater's ballet group in 1940 and spent his entire career in theater. He studied at theater institutes in Moscow and Tashkent from 1950 to 1956 and





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went on to portray numerous roles in theater and film. In 1968, he became the chief director of the musical drama theater opened in Jeti-Su, South Kazakhstan. Throughout his acting career, Qasymkhan staged and performed in productions such as "Kyz Zhibek," "Zhalbyr," "Sh. Ualikhanov," "Abai," "Arshin Mal Alan," "Zhayau Musa," "Shuga," "Zhuldyzdar," "Tay Qyzy," "Prague Chestnut," "Mayra," and "Amangeldy," among others. He also appeared in films like "Karash-Karash Oqiğasy," "An Qanatynda," and "Aldar Kose." Unfortunately, Qasymkhan's life was also cut short, and he passed away in 1969 at the age of 44. His descendants currently reside in Almaty [2].

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new social figure in theater—director Zhumat Shanin-emerged in Kazakh culture. He laid the foundation of the national theater, organized it, and significantly contributed to its professional development and creative growth. Without formal theater training, Shanin managed to deeply enhance his knowledge while teaching the unique aspects of stage art to performers from rural areas. From his early creative and organizational efforts, Shanin paid special attention to raising actors' cultural standards, conducting theater operations according to a specific plan, and ensuring that the repertoire included high-quality dramatic works with educational and ideological value. As a reformer of Kazakh theater, he made substantial contributions. He established a weekly work schedule for actors, which included classes in stage art, music theory, solfeggio, music listening, singing, choir, violin, and piano. He also provided the first theoretical lectures on European theater art to actors who had not graduated from specialized institutions. Shanin's guidance allowed many actors to develop as individual stage artists, as he did not view actors merely as reciters of dramatic material or performers of directorial requirements. Instead, he regarded actors as crucial creators of character. Actors trained under Shanin were ready to work with Russian directors in the 1930s.

Despite having to contend with the harsh realities of his time, Zhumat Shanin remained an unparalleled figure and masterful director, vividly portraying the truths of his era in each production. He will forever remain in the hearts of the people.

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Сдыков М. Н., Калиева А. С. ТЕАТР ӨНЕРІНІҢ ШЕБЕРІ – ЖҰМАТ ШАНИН

Андатпа. Мақалада XX ғасырдың басында қазақтың ұлттық кәсіби театрының негізін қалаушы, сол кездегі ел астанасы Қызылорда қаласында ұйымдасқан қазақ театрының директоры, әрі көркемдік жетекшісі, көрнекті қоғам қайраткері – Жұмат Шаниннің қоғамдық-саяси қызметі, шығармашылығы, театр өнеріне әкелген жаңалығы және өмір жолы берілген. Сонымен бірге, қайраткер Жұмат Шаниннің өз заманындағы жас әртістерді өнер жолына қосып, театр мен театр өнерпаздарының тұтас тобын тәрбиелеп, драматургия саласындағы және ұлттық театрдың негізін қалаушылардың бірі ретіндегі қызметі жайлы жазылған іргелі ғылыми еңбектер, монографиялар мен архив құжаттары негізінде зерттелген.

Кілт сөздер: Жұмат Шанин; театр; өнер; Қызылорда; драматург; режиссер; шығармашылық; қоғам қайраткері; директор; әртіс.

Сдыков М. Н., Калиева А. С. МАСТЕР ТЕАТРАЛЬНОГО ИСКУССТВА—ЖУМАТ ШАНИН

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается общественно-политическая деятельность, творчество и жизненный путь Жумата Шанина — основателя национального профессионального театра казахов, директора и художественного руководителя театра, организованного в тогдашней столице страны, городе Кызылорда, а также видного общественного деятеля. Также обсуждается его вклад в развитие театрального искусства, включая подготовку молодых артистов и воспитание целой группы театральных деятелей. Исследование основано на фундаментальных научных трудах, монографиях и архивных документах, посвященных его роли как одного из основоположников драматургии и национального театра.

Ключевые слова: Жумат Шанин; театр; искусство; Кызылорда; драматург; режиссер; творчество; общественный деятель; директор; артист.