CULTURAL VALUE ASSESSMENT IN THEATRICAL HALLS: KARA'S MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS INHERENT POTENTIALS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The cultural unconscious, like Freud's unconscious, not only controls man's actions but can be understood only by painstaking processes of detailed analysis. Hence, man automatically treats what is most characteristically his own (the culture of his youth) as though it were innate. He is forced into the position of thinking and feeling that anyone whose behavior is not predictable or is peculiar in any way is slightly out of his mind, improperly brought up, irresponsible, psychopathic, politically motivated to a point beyond all redemption, or just plain inferior. (Edward T. Hall 1976, P.43)

Résumé

Les membres des groupes religieux et ethniques expriment leurs mœurs respectives dans leurs interactions quotidiennes avec les autres sans le savoir. Un musulman voudrait dire un salaam alek à son collègue de travail car c'est, selon lui, les salutations les plus précieuses qu'il / elle pourrait offrir à son ami proche, mais lorsque celui-ci n'est pas de sa religion, ce type de la salutation sera abstenue. Quand quelqu'un de Bassar salue respectueusement, il se penche pour montrer qu'il est devant une personne respectueuse. Dans ce cas, si une personne respectueuse de Bassar est accueillie sans se plier par une personne d'origine culturelle différente, non seulement elle remarquera la différence culturelle de cette dernière, mais elle se sentira également non respectée, quelle que soit la façon dont celle-ci le considérera. Par conséquent, devrions-nous vivre à Bassar, Bafilo ou Nyamtougou afin de connaître leurs modes de vie avant de venir vivre et de bien se comporter avec eux à Kara? Cet article met en lumière l'utilité de salles de théâtre et la représentation dans les spectacles susceptibles de renforcer le développement humain, inhérent aux villes multiculturelles telles que Kara. L'accent sera mis sur la valorisation des modes de vie ethniques individuels à travers les théâtres, sans laquelle les relations humaines au quotidien seront toujours une source de suspicion et de méfiance.

Mots clés: méfiance, théâtre, valeurs culturelles, ethnicité, multiculturalisme, religion, spectateurs, confiance mutuelle, Kara.

Abstract

Members of religious and ethnic groups express their respective morals in their quotidian interactions with others without knowing it. A Moslem would like to say a Salaam alek to his co-worker because it is, according to him, the most precious greetings s/he could offer to his/her close friend, but when this one is not from his religion, this type of salutation will be abstained. When someone from Bassar would greet respectfully, they would bend down to show that they are in front of a respectful person. In this case, if a respectful person from

Bassar is greeted by someone from a different cultural background without bending down, not only will he notice the cultural difference in the latter, but also feel not respected, no matter how the latter will consider him. Therefore, should we live in Bassar, Bafilo, or Nyamtougou in order to be acquainted with their ways of life before coming to live and well behave with them in Kara? This article sheds light on the usefulness of theatrical halls and representation in performance that potentially can enhance human development, which is inherent in the multicultural towns like Kara. The focus will be on the valuation of individual ethnic ways of life through theatrical venues, without which human relations in everyday life will always be a source of suspicion and mistrust.

Key Words: mistrust, theater, cultural values, ethnicity, multiculturalism, religion, spectators, mutual confidence, Kara.

Introduction

The cultural diversity that is forming the identity of Kara's population is nonnegotiable. That brings us to notice that this Togolese town is no more Kabye. Even before the creation of the University, many different cultural entities have been proliferating on the soil of Kara. We obviously notice the presence of various religious groups which have thus divided by many times the fundamental culture of a Kara subject. The educational arena is not the least in fashioning the mind of a young person in Kara. More tangible are the republican norms that bring to a common denominator all the Togolese citizens in terms of public facilities and services. Therefore, the most important thing that is ignored seems to be the inherent human development in the multicultural aspect of Karaian people's life.

Human development may not be meant in "Quelle recherche pour le développement de Kara?" but among the true meanings of development, we have human development, which can also have many facets: such as social development, economic development, sanitary development, and even political development. All these facets of development are tagged under the label of human development, which can also be called cultural development if they stem from the cultural diversity of Kara. But how can diversity form a source of development, since the latter is homogeneously observed? Harmonious social life and the diminishing aspect of suspicion among coworkers could obviously regulate the cultural synchrony that would annihilate tensed tendencies.

Various venues have brought together the cultural agents of various ethnic groups, such places as civil services, market places, academia, and religious rooms. The same venues are sources of culture shocks. These places have the potentials of cultural fusion and harmonious lifestyle for attendants. But since the objectives of visiting those places have nothing to do with the cultural observation of individual ethnic groups, the percentage of creating channels of cultural synchrony seems to be very low. The cultural diachronization is even more possible in market places where individual interest is more at stake. In preaching spaces, only the religious affiliations play a communal role that is always taken according to individual cultural backgrounds. This is to say, people of different ethnic

groups may feel united by the religious principles that bring them together in front of a preacher. But once parted, they culturally exclude one another. Even while together in the religious space, they acquire the preacher's instructions and implement them according to their respective cultural and intellectual backgrounds.

Yet, a theatrical hall could stand as a space of cultural observation and/or study because of the exhibition of the details of one's culture in performance. The role that theater and theatrical halls play goes beyond their identification as performance and place of activities to reach the context of the cultural synchronization and social behavior. Jean E. Howard argues that:

> By 'the theater' I in part mean the actual plays performed on the public stage. To investigate how these dramas participated in various social struggles of the time means submitting them to ideological critique – that is, to an examination of the representational and narrative strategies by which they mediated social conflict. On the other hand, by "the theater" I also mean a material institution that not only *represented* social relations, but also *embodied* them in the way, for example, it constructed and positioned certain people as consumers, others as profit-taking shareholders, others as laborers and apprentices. Furthermore, while the public theater both embodied and represented social relations, it was itself an *object of representation,* an institution over whose meaning and value various social groups engaged in fierce discursive struggle. In so doing, they created certain distinctive narratives about this institution and a dense tropology of denigration and praise by which to define the worth and social effects of the public theater. (Jean E. Howard, 1995, *Place and Displacement in the Renaissance* 1-24).

Representations on the stages do not only constitute a social mediator but also prove the maturity of the community in bearing in mind the importance of the theatrical halls. This quotation therefore subdues the representational aspect of a scene in the advantage of the importance of the existence of stages. Consequently, a community's will to erect theater halls proves its maturity in understanding that through it, each ethnic group not only will exhibit its cultural values in the benefit of others, but should also grasp the various cultural differences that may be found among them. And thus, through scenic performances in theatrical halls, the variety of ethnic groups in Kara city would rather contribute to a particular synchronization of cultures conducive to a harmonious living standard, which is synonymous of cultural progress.

In this perspective, this article takes inspiration from ancient civilizations and the part that representations have played in the blossoming of those civilizations. Nonetheless, the use of logically verified cultural dynamisms here and there can be the source of examples that show the potentials of human development in the Karaian multicultural population. In this way, the first part of this paper is addressing the synchronization of a multicultural city life through theatrical venues where individual ethnic groups' cultural features are exhibited in performances and learnt in sociopolitical and cultural interests for a mass human development of a city. The second and last part of this article addresses the general

social function of theater and some examples of cultural tensions that spectators in a theater hall can reduce.

1. Potential Cultural Synchronies in Theatrical Arenas

 The culture in question here is not the one in Gramsci's observation as 'the complex superstructures' of a social formation – state and civil society, intellectuals, hegemony and so forth…" (David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 1985: 13-14) cited in (Julian Wolfreys, 2004: 39-40) but the one insinuated in "There is culture in the classical anthropological sense of a way of life, the fabric and texture of a people's distinctive manner of going about things." (Michèle Barrett, 1999: 1-2). Even if the diasporization of the world today gives this definition other tendencies, the functionality of the hybrid culture formed in this sense needs scrutiny. The unavailability of the strict sense of culture does not do away with the distinctiveness of ways of life regarding the prevailing ethnicities in our cities. In this ethnic contextualization, the acculturation does not function just because the individual cultural shower remains peripheral. The core belief in the neighbor's culture is not the target. Rather the superficial acquaintance with what would allow an individual to communicate and gesture with the native outside the cultural or religious arena is rather what should be acquired from a theater hall.

Hall (1976) talks about the iceberg analogy of culture. He also talks about the external or conscious (we see around) & internal or unconscious parts of culture (which includes beliefs, values and thought patterns that underlie behavior). He has categorized culture as--

Internal	External
Implicitly Learned	Explicitly Learned
Unconscious	Conscious
Difficult to change	Easily Changed
Subjective Knowledge	Objective Knowledge (Edward T. Hall, 1976 –p.61)

Based on the above mentioned categorical features, Hall suggests that the only way to learn the internal culture of others is to actively participate in their culture. When one first enters a new culture, only the most overt behaviors are apparent. As one spends more time in that new culture, the underlying beliefs, values, and thought patterns that dictate that behavior will be uncovered. We cannot judge a new culture based only on what we

see when we first enter it. We must take the time to get to know the individuals from that culture and interact with them. (Singh et al, 2012)

This type of cultural familiarity could only be favored or made easier through theatrical channels where cultural entities of various ethnic groups should be exposed through performances. Performance, in its simpler meaning, is enactment. When the task is to enact a cultural value, the personae's role is to make vivid the behavioral quality of that value, which should be stimulated by an explanative fictitious environment. Because performance is central to theater and plays a presentative role in it, its significance takes a philosophical tendency to the extent of being varied according to individual scholars.

> Roach's definitions of performance assimilate the notions of Turner (to perform means to "carry out thoroughly" [1982:13]) and Richard Bauman (performance "actualizes a potential" [1989:262-66]) with Schechner's idea of performance as "restored behavior" or "twice-behaved behavior" (Schechner 1985:36-37 [3]). Though, like Liebler, Roach is indebted to Turner and van Gennep, he focuses on a Foucaultian concept of memory as embedded in history, or, as he phrases it, the "three-sided relationship of memory, performance and substitution [...,] a process that can be best described by the word surrogation" (2). The "memory" which is encoded in cultural performance--broadly interpreted to include gatherings in marketplaces, funerals, clashes of Carnival masqueraders--includes the often repressed and "forgotten" memories of "unspeakable violence" associated with circum-Atlantic trading and trafficking (4). From this perspective, the process of memory is a process of forgetting and then re-enacting what has been forgotten. Like Liebler, he uses the Girardian notion of a monstrous scapegoat or (in Roach's terminology an "effigy") (Milla Riggio, 1997).

The enactment or performance of a cultural entity receives its real meaning through the variation of cultural environments and the variation of targeted audience. The enactment of a ritual event, for instance, clearly illustrates the finishing objective of cultural transmission or the exhibition of a cultural value on the market of its vulgarization. This method is more pertinently impacting when a theatrical theme is taken from the field of social problems and psychoanalysis, as it is the case in the new departure in American theater, which gave birth to styles related to expressionism and radical realism (Heinrich Straumann, 1951 – p. 161). The simple and possible example in the context of Kara is when a native of Kara cannot understand why Moba (people from Dapaong of far North of Togo) call those Tem of Sokodé – central Togo – "Wawa", which means "fool or stupid." Even if the two ethnic groups can jokingly use the word among themselves, the native of Kara could think that ether of them must be fool/stupid, until the two ethnic groups are represented on a theatrical stage to perform an historical event that might have brought this issue of Wawa as cultural joke. This way of cultural representation on stages can even help the coming generations of each ethnic group to quickly assimilate their own cultural backgrounds without seeking it from their parents.

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It is in this perspective that Khalid Chaouch finds that Eugene O'Neil, as the first representative of the American theater, did a great deal to establish the modes of theater for the succeeding generations in the United States. His work illustrates one of the main trends in modern American drama where themes and expressions in performance are of common canvases (Chaouch, 2003 –p.136). One of its conspicuous features is what Marcus Cunliffe calls the combination of drab prose realism and of boldly inventive expressionist technique (Cunliffe, 1971 – p.437). The result here is the fact that, what is acquired in a theater hall may be forgotten but its practical enactment in real life becomes sub-consciously possible. The cultural impregnation that the audience acquires from a theatrical performance is the outcome of not only the intended effect of the performance but also that of the rhetoric used in the act of the latter. Thus:

> Rozik states that a performance's effect on the spectator is the most important factor and he therefore places rhetoric at the top of his hierarchy. Yet, I argue that this holds true for all kinds of performances, which always aim at triggering particular effects. The strategies or rules that are applied can also consistently be explained by taking recourse to rhetoric. Or, to refer to another example, when the iconic sign is reinterpreted as image imprinting and, accordingly, acting is not defined as an act of representation but of imprinting images on one's own body, the same can be said of a performance artist, a shaman, or other performers. In those cases the other participants will not understand this image as an index that describes a fictional character but will perceive it as a self-referential image that has an immediate somatic effect on them and, perhaps, read it as an element of a symbolic order to which the performance refers. (Erica Fischer-Lichte, 2009).

Thus, the cultural encounters in theater halls in a city like Kara could help melt the various ethnic groups in a harmonious daily movement that would lead to tension decrement in every aspect of life in Togo in general. A mosque would never be desacralized if Muslims in Kara or elsewhere in Togo happen to perform Islam in theatrical halls. The traditional Tem/Cotocoli practices would never be "confused" with Islamic ways of conduct if both and other cultural entities are represented in performances. A clear understanding of the culture of the "other" does not only help to avoid misjudgment but also open the floor for collaboration and meaning construction. "…plays are sites of contestation where a multiplicity of constituencies 'patrons, audiences, readers, actors, playhouse managers, printers' collaborate and compete in constructing a variety of meanings" (ibid.)

2. The General Social Functions of Theater

As a literary genre, theater does not create a lifestyle from a vacuum. From the existing social realms, and from a number of people's moral conducts of a given place, a theatrical topic stands to approve, appreciate or even to seek its correction through stage performances. Not mentioning the fact that theater itself is a company to employ workers – artists for the job – one can visualize the tremendous use that theater and theater halls can be for Kara's human development in particular. In this way, the apprehension of the

multiple functions that theater is replete with is first of all the contents. The consideration of the contents of some practical representations is paramount in the sense that is to be used in order to improve or denounce any one moral conduct in a given society. "For the artists of the Theater of May '68, theater practice was a way for them to examine, using their bodies and lived experiences, how they wanted the world outside the theater walls to be." (Kate Bredeson, 2018 – P. 64). This is to prove that the world outside theater walls can be molded by the representations inside theater walls. What is very obvious in the context of Kara's population is the misperception of the distinction between religion and ethnicity. The remedy to this mix-up would be to encourage religious and ethnic representations in performances through various types of theater.

Various types of theater could address the resolution of these social realities. The whole enveloped in the "Theater of the Oppressed," – which means according to Lavana Saxon –

> Theater of the Oppressed is an arsenal of theater techniques and games that seek to motivate people, restore true dialogue, and create space for participants to rehearse taking action. It begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act in the "theater" of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. We are "spect-actors!" — a term which Boal coined. Boal points out that when we are simply passive audience members, we transfer our desire to take action onto the char-acters we identify with, and then find that desire satiated as the conflict resolves itself on stage in films or in the news. (Andrew Boyd et al, 2012 – p.272)

The public orientation in the quotation above sounds collective struggle where performers and audience merge in the contents of the representation. Since the main objective of this article is to enlighten the collective gloomy assumption about religion (Islam) and ethnicity (Tem/Cotocoli), among many other ethnic groups' controversial relations, Theater of the Oppressed seems to be well indicated because "It provides tools for people to explore collective struggles, analyze their history and present circumstances, and then experiment with inventing a new future together through theater." (ibid.) Because the latter is made up of many technics, the valorization of each of those technics resides in the variation of the public reaction. Among those technics one can note: Image Theater, Forum Theater, Legislative Theater, and Invisible Theater.

The first technic – Image Theater -, consists in performing a scene of oppression that will be source of critical reflection on behalf of spectators who will be called upon for a denouement. Here the simplest example is to bring on stage a representation of the desacralization of a mosque in Kara for a political misconduct by a member of Tem/Cotocoli ethnic group. The immediate reaction of the spectators will resolve the problem because it would be crystal clear in their reaction that the mosque is not solely for that ethnic group whose misbehavior leads to this religious oppression. Forum Theater, on

the other hand, calls for a real intervention of the spectators on stage, act for the liberation of the protagonist who is being oppressed.

Legislative Theater takes Forum Theater to the government and asks spectators who act to not only attempt interventions on stage, but to write down the successful interventions into suggestions for legislation and hand them in to the elected officials in the room.

Invisible Theater finally brings the performance on the public space where the passive social relation will turn out to be an active real dialogue. In this way, Augusto Boal said of one invisible theater intervention, "The actor became the spectator of the spectator who had become an actor, so the fiction and reality were overlapping." (Ibid., p. 273).

The resolution of various culture shocks and the implantation of confidence among members of different ethnic groups could maximally be possible through theatrical performances. Because the fictitious atmosphere (entertainment) easily brings together people from different horizons, edifying theater halls in a city like Kara would be very positive. And it would be much more efficient if structured well in university curricula with valuable infrastructure on the campuses.

Conclusion

The prevailing mistrust among ethnic groups in the multiculturally growing city of Kara and the increasing confusion between ethnicity and religion – Islam – has been notoriously remarkable to the extent of hindering human development in that city. Among many ways of solving this cultural problem is the proposal of using theatrical halls on campuses as well as in towns. The multicultural city that Kara is can be explained by the presence of various ethnic groups, which has been noticeable even before the opening of the University in that city in 2004. Kara had been standing for a county or a regional capital. Surrounded by towns like Bassar in the West Bafilo in the South and Niamtougou in the North, Kara is an administrative city that freely receives the flow of the populations of each and every mentioned city made up of different ethnic groups. It is in this perspective that this article has addressed the issue into two parts.

The first part has pointed out the potential cultural synchronies that could be felt in the theater showgrounds. To avoid misunderstanding of other cultural practices one has to witness the practice of the latter in theater since it is not always possible to live with the other in the source of their cultural beliefs. In the same part we have also shown the distinctiveness between Islamic religion and the ethnicity of Tem/Cotocoli, which have always been considered one. It is not only the members of that ethnic group can be found in mosques. Therefore, desacralizing mosques in Kara for misbehavior emanating from a member of an ethnic group is an enormous misunderstanding. And it is only through on-

stage performances that a solution to this human flaw can be envisaged. Through the same dramaturgical means, the coming generation of an ethnic group can easily learn about its own cultural background instead of waiting to hear from its own cultural members or having to travel up the original localities before getting to understand or learn its own cultural entities or the cultural entities of neighboring ethnic groups for a more harmonious life.

On the other hand, the second part has approached the various theatrical technics the stage may use in solution to ethnic mistrusts and confusion between religion and ethnicity. In this part we have cited many on-stage strategies coined by Andrew Boyd enveloped in "Theater of the Oppressed." These strategies are specific in involving the spectators in acting as real performers. Through this engagement the spectators may express their feelings that may come to a tangible resolution of a problem raised in the contents of a scene while in the realms of theater.

Thus, the usefulness of representation in performance is undeniable, which therefore encourages well-structured university curricula with this literary genre in the center and the presence of theatrical halls on the campuses and in towns.

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