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Public Space: Civic Culture and Subordinate Culture

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Abstract

Public space is a physical spot where public activities occur. By comparing the theatre of Dionysus in Athens polis and courtyard theatre in ancestral hall in Ming and Qing dynasty, in view of the component of the space, the activities in the space and sense of time and space on the stage, this article describes how the civic culture and subordinate culture occurred in the theatres, analyses the effects that theatre spaces and senses of the time and space made on the political culture. In the last part, the article in view of environmental psychology reveals the connection between the space and culture, which are the persistent vitality in the two political cultures.

Keywords: Athens Democracy, Courtyard Theatre in Ancestral Hall, Theatre of Dionysus, Patriarchy.

In our daily language 'public space' is a word with both physical meaning and meta-physical meaning.¹Henri Lefebvre uses this word in view of city planning. As the representative in new Marxism, he criticized the production of space is the production of bourgeois social relations(Henri Lefebvre,1991.) David Harvey in view of geography talked about urban justice in a global sense and domestic sense. (David Harvey, 1996.) Both of them shared the common idea that in certain space citizens has interactions with each other and citizens interact with the power. These interactions have its political and social meaning. Michel Foucault perfectly analyzed these interactions, which was expressed in panopticon in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1995). So this article aims to describe how the political cultures occur in

¹ 'Public space' is in contrast with private space. 'Public' can be explained as openly accessible, by common resources, common effect and for the performance of public roles. (John R. Parkinson,2012). 'Public space' includes squares, parks, streets and civic buildings. It also refers to the virtualized cyberspace. 'Public sphere' has a similar meaning to public space, but mainly in an abstract sense, as Habermas indicated. In his *The Structure Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*(1989, Cambridge: Polity Press), he mentioned in the early modern period the coffee shop, salon and club were the beginners of the free speech. But in his writing, the public sphere fundamentally refers to a situation in which the citizens could have a free speech and participate in the policy-making. In this article 'public space' only refers to its physical sense.

the public spaces and how the spaces shape the citizens' behaviors and minds, which are the features of political culture.²

The Theater of Dionysus in ancient Athens polis was the representative at that time. It was built in 5th century BC. The courtyard theatres in the ancestral hall were built in Ming and Qing Dynasty, around 14th and 15th century. These two theaters were far away from each other in time. But they can be compared because both of them were the public space which offered daily entertainments in pre-modern society. Both of them were a part of regular life. The situation and manner of the audiences in this regularity were the core and stable part of political culture. What's more, there were political educations in a disguised or obvious way in both spaces.³

Part One The Components of Physical Space: Simple and Spacious v.s. Complicated and Delicate

The outdoors bowl-like architectures were in Athens and other Attica areas.⁴The theater of Dionysus was famous for its grand size (accommodating 17,000 persons) and relatively well reserved. It was used for the city Dionysus Day, which included the celebrations, drama competition, and political reward. Build on the slope of the hill, and it was in a semicircle. The stage was at the bottom, and the audience area gradually rose up. So the audience looked down in a clear view.

The courtyard theatres in the ancestral hall were popular in southeast China. It was located in the front part of the ancestral hall. The stage was build above the ground 1 or 2 meters high. The audience looked upon. The loggia on the second floor could be used only for the women. Compared with the bowl-shape outdoor theater which was made mainly by rough stones, the courtyard theater was much more delicate. Its mortise and tenon made the architecture structure sophisticated. Its elegant decorations revealed the glory of the family.⁵

These two theaters were different in size and style. They correlated the political culture profoundly. Firstly the clear view of the bowl-shape theater made it possible that the audience could look at the other audiences' expressions. So they could affect each other, especially in the drama comments. This interaction was described by Plato as 'Dramaturgical Politics,' which vividly explained the meaning of 'democracy.' So this space not only made the democracy possible but also made it more thoroughly. In the

² In this article political culture is used in the sense of Almond's civic culture, which refers to the political system internalized in citizens' cognition, emotion, and evaluation. (Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba,1963) As for the comparing of the subordinate culture and civic culture this article takes Cong Rinyun's *The Tradition of Western Political Culture* as a reference, especially in Chapter 3 Citizens' Way of Thinking, pp.121-173.(Cong Rinyun, 2002). In this article, civic culture features in participation with reason; subordinate culture features in obeying with affection.

³ In 16th Spain there were hotel theatres. Its inner planning and size were similar to that of the courtyard theatre. But it was not the public space.

⁴ David Wiles(1977). The Odium of Herodes Attius and Pnyx were the examples.

⁵ In beam frame, architrave, crescent beam, diagonal bracing, sparrow brace there were delicate decoration designs, such as figures in popular dramas, flowers, animals.

courtyard theatre, all the audience was straightly faced to the stage and on the same horizon. So they could not look at the others' expressions, except the one next to him. The information was one-way from the actors or actress to the audience, who were a passive receiver. The audience could affect each other. But this effect was an emotional release, which was expressed by applauses or signs with the plots.

Secondly, the courtyard theater was back to the gate of ancestral hall. Thus the audience had to turn around to watch the show on the stage after they entered the gate.⁶ So the courtyard theater was totally separated from the space out of the ancestral. This separation also had its psychological indication. There was a sharp contrast between the delicate theater with an interesting story, colorful clothing and melodious voice and the rough and dull farming daily life. The audience in the courtyard theater could get a sense of satisfaction from the entertainment, which was the psychological reason for their obedience. Additionally ancestral was only open to the family members. The ancestral was 'our' space, and there was a 'their' space outside. The individual who crouched and committed in this 'our' space could recognize themselves and get the comfort and nutrition in mind. As for the Athenian citizens they did not need to turn around. Especially when entered from the higher entrance they could have a clear view immediately. What's more, when they entered into the theater from the daily life⁷, they did not need to 'switch' because their daily life and activities in the theater were homogenous. Both of them were filled with participation. The audience in the theater of Dionysus was all the citizens in the polis. They had no mind about 'our' and 'their' space.

Thirdly the stage in Athens theatre was at the bottom. The audience looked down, which was the position of the master or lord. The stage in the courtyard was quite high. The audience sat or stood to look up in an upward direction. Their body was in a lower position. In Chinese culture, the position of the audience implied the social meaning. Generally speaking, the one who was in the higher position held more power and was in a nobler situation.⁸

Fourthly in view of the architectural structure courtyard theatre was attached to the ancestral hall, so its function was the derivative of the ancestral hall, which was the tip

⁶ In this part, the author was inspired by a Japanese architecture, who argued that Japanese 'taking off shoes' outlined the outer-space and inner-space. Lu Yuan Yi Xin(2017).

⁷ Pericles ever praised that in Athens there were many games, worship ceremonies and celebration days all year along. This democracy was based on the slavery. So the citizens could be a full-time participant. In the Ming and Ding dynasty, the main force in the rural era was peasant or tenant peasant. Their main task was to keep body and soul together. Going to the courtyard and watch the drama was a 'seasoning' in life.

⁸ Drama watching was popular in the imperial palace. The emperor's physical situation was totally different from that of the audience in courtyard theater. In the Chengde Summer Palace, there was an imperial theatre building, which had 3 stories. There was a stage in each story. At the beginning of the drama, the 3 stages would have the same scenery and content. Then the bottom stage was the main one. The middle stage and upper stage were blank. The emperor and the other audience were on the opposite. They were in the 2 story building. Only the female was allowed to step into the 2nd floor. The emperor was on the first floor. The author cannot make sure the exact height of the emperor. But it can be deferred that the perfect place to enjoy the beginning of the drama is between the bottom and the middle story, where the emperor sits. So his position should be above the bottom stage, and his eyes are in a downward direction, which indicates the superiority of his power.

of the despotic empire. The Dionysus theatre was an independent building, which was one of the buildings where democratic activities occurred.

Part Two The Activities in the Spaces: Institutionalized Participation and Spontaneous Response

Dionysus Day was initiated in the Attica countryside. Tyrant Peisistratos organized it into a city festival. The theater was built to celebrate the day. It lasted 5 days in Elaphebolion and Gamelion, including celebrations, drama competition, and political reward.

The Dionysus Day was a democratic festival for all the citizens in polis, as an entertainment as well as a political activity. The actors were from the citizens. They were members of the chorus or took part in the show. The archon was in charge of the execution of the festival including organizing the show, supervising the audience, managing the competition, ordering the patrons for the drama teams. At that time it was common that the rich citizen offered the money to support the drama team. That was a chance for them to be outstanding. In the age of Pericles, citizens could get the subsidy for watching the drama. The judges were chosen by drawing lots. So every citizen could have the chance to be a judge. 'The institutions of drawing lots and evaluating the drama were the same as that of making decisions in citizens' assembly. So the democratic idea was duplicated and carried out'. (Wang Shaoli, Zhangjiyun2007) The theatre was a 'container' which accommodated the institutionalized participation. Beside these practices and training, the theatre was the classroom for political education. The man who was more than 18 years old and whose father has sacrificed for Athens could go upon the stage and received the weapons and armors offered by the polis. The representatives of Delian members offered their tributes on the stage. This scenery was a perfect stimulus to evoke the sense of citizen pride. As Michel Foucault comment, in this ardent passion, the community found its vigor and immediately formed into a grand unity. (Michel Foucault, 2002)

Ancestral hall was the symbolic architecture of Chinese ancient patriarchal society. It was the embodiment of the political power in the rural era. 'Family and State have the same structure' were a common idea. So subordinating the state and subordinating the family was the same. The courtyard in the ancestral hall firstly was used to amuse the forefathers. That was the reason why the stage was back to the door and faced the shrine. The theater also could amuse the living persons. This amusement had its political education in disguise. For example, in Sanmen County Bao's ancestral hall there were two sentences carved in the lintel: 'in order to keep the authentic customs the dramas today tells the old stories; praising the kind and criticizing the evil in order to keep the offspring obedient.' (Xue Linping, 2008) The drama show in the courtyard theatre was well organized. In the lunar festivals, new spirit tablets into the ancestral, the weddings and funerals there would be shows. The actors and actress were professionals and got payments. In the family, there was special budge for the shows. The budge was from the

land which was used to support the theater in purpose. The budge was also from the punishable payment in unfair trade, which was regulated in written documents. The lists of the plays were decided by the fathers of the family. So most of the family members were the only audience. Compared with the citizens in Dionysus theatre, the Chinese audience was freer in the body. They didn't have certain seats, though the good seats were reserved for the seniors or respected person. The citizens in Dionysus theatre were seated by the clans, and they had to vote for the winner of the drama competition. So their watching was the basis for decision-making. As the passive part in the show, the audience in the courtyard theatre did not have a substantial effect for the play. They could applaud or cheer with the plots, which indicated that they were immersed in the play. This situation was different from the identity of the citizens who were the judges of the play.

So in a word in the theatre of Dionysus, the citizens had their institutionalized participation, while in the courtyard theatre the audience has their amusement mainly. The two spaces were different in view of the audience's activities though they were both for entertainment.

Part Three The Idea about Time and Space Fabricated on the Stage: Simulation-Reflection v.s. Virtualization-Detachment

Tragedy and comedy were the two types in Ancient Athens drama. The tragedy was superior in quantity and art achievements. The tragedy aimed at 'solemnity or gravity,' rather than grievance or pity. It praised the leading character's persistence and strength in fighting with the fortune. He was doomed to be a failure, but his persistence was praiseworthy. Tragedy used the simulation to tell the story. As Aristotle said, tragedy was the simulation which was solemn, integrated and had a certain length and which was in media of language and actors' body action.⁹The tragedy was a one-act play, which means there was one scenery. The songs were intervals between the sections. Comics were the ironical ways to criticize the bad citizens (Li Yongyin, 2015).

The dramas in the courtyard theatre could be diversified into fairy tales, hero legends, and folk stories. Virtualization was the main method to organize the drama, which meant to express the other sceneries and places by using certain gestures and actions. So virtualization was a fabrication on the stage.¹⁰

So the Athenian drama tended to make the reality reappear by simulation; the courtyard drama tended to fabricate an imagined space by virtualization. 'The western drama was the art in space; Chinese drama was the art of spaces.' (Lan Fang 2008)

⁹ I. Bywater, *Aristotelis De Arte Poetica*, Oxford University Press, 1995. The author here used the Chinese version, Luoniansheng trans. 2006, p.30.

¹⁰ For example, in TianHePei the actress used the hurried and mincing steps and waving the long sleeves to express that she would fly in the sky. In NanTianMen the actor used his shivering to express that it was cold and snowy. LanFan(2008)

These two tendencies were expressed in the costumes. The Athenian actor wore the mask, which was bigger than face and in bright color in tragedy and comedy. Sometimes the actors would wear 'Te spithridates Robe' which was stuffed by something soft to make the figure fat, and boots with a thick sole to make the figure tall. The robes were also in bright color and in simple and serious style, no relation to the figures' character. These costumes aimed to make the actors clear when they were watched from away. The actors in comedy usually wore the nude tight dress, sometime with a tail or thick genitals to make the figure silly. (Zheng Chuanyin, Huang Pei, 2008) In the Ming and Qing dynasty, the costume and properties were much more complicated. The actor was a professional man and drama was an industry. The colors and dressings with certain meanings matched with different figures in the play. And these matches were well-known.

What is the relationship between the ideas about the time and space and the political cultures? The simulation tended to construct a real space in order to evoke the reflection of the problems in reality. To be further in a democratic system the citizens' reflections whether advocating the democracy or disagree with the democracy were based on their own thinking. This thinking was on the citizens' reason and became the precondition for their action. So the relation between the Dionysus theatre and the civic culture was that the former not only provides the physical space for the latter but also built an abstract space which evoked the citizens to think over their democracy. The courtyard theatre tended to build an illusory by virtualization which fabricated a society with the idea of morality and politics. This fabrication was a detachment and escape from the evil reality. In aesthetic narcissism, the individuals were not eager to have a revolution. The entertainment from the narcissism¹¹ was the redemption in a subordinate culture. The subordination did not seem to be so oppressive because of the detachment and narcissism. The rational reflection was absent.

Part Four Public Space and Political Culture: 'Place Ballet'

The Dionysus theatre and courtyard theatre were the buildings which had certain functions in order to meet the needs. Meanwhile, these buildings shaped the persons' mind. The physical space and persons' social activities interact. The physical feature and social feature are intertwined.

How do the interactions and intertwines happen? Henri Lefebvre supposed that the representations of space which included the symbols, languages, and ideology could be a bridge between the spatial practice and representational space.¹² Michel Foucault analyzed the social functions of panopticon by way of body 'discipline.' In environmental

¹¹ The author took Lan Fan's idea as a reference. He believed that ancient Chinese society was agricultural, which was static and closed. In literature and ideas, the main focus was emotion. Compared with Plato and Aristotle, who were inclined to rational discussion, the Chinese thinkers such as Lao Zi and Confucius were inclined to moral cultivation, which was expressed by narcissism in literature and drama. LanFan(2008)

¹² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, tr. D. Nicolson-Smith (Oxford, 1991) 33, from David Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning*, Cambridge University Press 1997, p.20.

psychology, 'place attachment' can be used to explain the affection and space. And the affection is a basic and core part of culture. In the place attachment, David Simon's 'place ballet' brilliantly and vividly describes that a group of persons who share the same values and have similar views of world and life often visit a place regularly and finish the certain tasks. Their actions are in regularity and repetition, just like ballerinas' performance with rhythm on the stage. The persons can have the sense of security in the place where they had their 'place ballet.' This sense of security comes from their familiarity, which can grow into an unselfconscious regularity. (David Seamon 1980)

The theatre of Dionysus and the courtyard theatres were the places with 'place ballet.' In the whole daily life, the theatre of Dionysus was one of the places where citizens took part in the public activities. The tributes and Agora were similar places. In the Ming and Qing Dynasty, there were temple theatres and street theatres. They were in a relatively open area, and the stages were above the audience. The plays in these theatres were similar with that in courtyard theatres. The theatre of Dionysus and the courtyard theatres were an ordinary part in the life. Similar places and sceneries existed. So 'place ballet' could be extended to normal regularity and next generation.

In political psychology 'collective subconsciousness' could describe this widespread 'place ballet.' It is the core of political society and offers persistent support for the political institution. Athens suffered two failures in the Peloponnesian War and two periods of the oligarchic institution. But the exiled democratic leaders finally overturned the oligarchy and recovered the democracy till Athens was conquered by Macedonia. In the Ming and Qing dynasty, the patriarchal power was the tips of the central imperial power. It regulated the rural order not only in political affairs but also in morality. The idea that family and state were homogeneous made all the social relations soaked with the idea of subordination. The end of the despotic monarchy was the emperor's abdicating the throne. But the restoration and military -based kingdoms were the resurgence of the emperor. It was until the anti-Japanese war that the idea of surviving surpassed the daily subordination.

Conclusion

This article aims to explore the civic culture and subordinate culture by comparing the two different physical spaces and their ideas about time and space. It does not mean that space is the prerequisite condition and does not favor any one of them in politics or morality. These spaces are for political socialization in nature, which can be found in any political community. The critical linkage between the space and culture is the individual, whose cognition and feelings are of vital importance. To study their political cognitions, analyze their emotions and predict their actions in certain spaces are the approaches to study political culture in view of public space.

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