

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 TRAVELLING THEATRE: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

We have little to go on in tracing the history of the wandering or travelling theatre in a world's perspective and can make no conclusive statement as to the original place from which its journey began. Of course, when attempting to explore the history of the travelling theatre in a European context, one must consider the travelling opera troupes in the United States of America. Such troupes appeared in the United States as early as the 1820s. In the mid-nineteenth century, such American tent shows gained prominence and became popular, especially in the summer. Performers in these temporary tents travelled by railroad from one place to another and performed their acts on a portable stage. These shows, known as Tent Shows, were an important part of American history from the mid to late nineteenth century. Many American writers mentioned the importance of these roving groups in the American entertainment industry and Don Carle Gillette statistically proved that tent theatre represented "a more extensive business than Broadway and all the rest of the legitimate theatre industry put together." (Ashby et al., 1982).

In the *Cambridge Paperback Guide to Theatre* an account of travelling theatre has been given as such: "Tent show: American touring entertainment. These plays or variety shows, dating from 1850s were staged under canvas. By the 19th Century, travelling troupes with repertoires, extensive enough to provide weeks' worth of entertainment, had become popular in the summer, when local Opera houses were too poorly ventilated to attract the public. The Chautauqua circuit, offering lecture meetings of an educational or religious nature, performed in brown tents to distinguish them from the white canvas of the show tents, which

were 50-60 feet wide. With bare benches or bleachers and a platform stage designed for portability. The earliest repertoires were imitations, often pirated, of the standard domestic fare, primarily melodrama. Later Tent showmen composed their own plays, carpentered to a limited company and familiar themes of rural life. After World War I, motor vehicles replaced rail transport, and tent shows proliferated. Some 400 shows were travelling through the U.S in 1927. But the catastrophic effects of depression, dust storms, unionization and competition from local cinema led to closure of hundreds of companies in 1930's. The Federal Theatre Project absorbed many of these entertainers and in the 1950 are only some dozen troupes survived" (Stanton & Banham, 1996. p.371)

Such shows became popular in regions where the audience could not support full- time playhouses. One of the first tent show entrepreneurs, Fayette Lodowick, traveled through river towns all over the United States making his money with traveling tent shows. These shows "were utilized for a variety of amusements including medicine shows, moving picture shows, vaudeville shows, circuses, musicals, concert companies, and any number of one-night stand dramatic troupes." (Slout, 1972).

The marquee theatre, which played a very important role in the American entertainment industry, evolved from the opera houses that existed in almost every major city by the end of the nineteenth century. Audiences always had problems with the poorly ventilated opera houses, which usually resulted in suffocation because there were not adequate ways for the audience to cool down. Since the tents were erected in open places, there were no problems with overheating or poor ventilation. With the rapid expansion of the American railroad network, these tent theatres boomed in the 1920s, allowing performers to tour America more easily and efficiently. As touring opera companies improved their operating procedures, tent theatres began to adopt the business methods used by opera houses. Instead of using circular areas for performance like the circus, tent shows used open platform stages to make the actors more visible and developed the best possible lighting for the actors.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, such tent shows became very

popular in America because, compared to closed opera houses, audiences could enjoy the performances without being exposed to the blazing heat in the summer. Thus, tent shows became popular especially in the western United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After the Great Depression in the 1930s, the popularity of tent shows gradually declined. As people became more concerned with money for food and clothing than such luxuries as entertainment, viewers who had a deep affection for tent shows were forced to leave these shows out of economic necessity. Actors and managers who had lost their opportunities to perform because of the Great Depression worked largely for radio.

Tent shows played a large role in American entertainment from the late nineteenth to the early to mid-twentieth century. They played a major role in the early twentieth century. However, immediately after the Great Depression and especially after the end of the World War, such shows ceased to be a major form of entertainment due to technological advances and the rapid development of the automobile industry. The majority of people were able to drive their cars to any theatre, and the new entertainment device such as television made its way into almost every household in the United States. Obviously, the rapid expansion of these new forms of entertainment made tent shows irrelevant and hundreds of tent show companies closed during this time and many never reopened. (Slout,1972).

Among the many touring theatre groups, one of the most famous American Theatre is Puerto Rican Travelling Theatre (PRTT), founded by Miriam Colón in 1967. Nicolas Kanellos (2003) writes in *Hispanic Literature of United States: A Comprehensive Reference*, the mission of the Puerto Rican Travelling Theatre (PRTT) is to acquaint the public with important contributions by playwrights of Latin American or Hispanic descent, to present and produce truly bilingual professional theatre, to provide artistic development for emerging and established artists, and in this way to contribute to the diversity of American theatre and national culture. The founder of PRTT Theatre recognised that most professional productions were not accessible to the masses, especially those who came from economically backward communities. Therefore, Ms. Colon Valle,

the founder of PRTT and Artistic Director, made the decision to present the play for free on the streets of New York City, securing funding from then Mayor John Lindsay. Since 1967, PRTT has performed plays for free in parks, playgrounds, street corners, and other public places in New York and parts of New Jersey. Today, PRTT is best known for performing works by classic Hispanic authors and current Latino playwrights in English and Spanish. Colon continues to work as an actress on stage, film and television. She has appeared in many PRTT productions, including *The Boiler Room* and *Senora Carrara's Rifles*.¹

In tracing the history of the travelling theatre in Europe, we cannot ignore the existence of the German travelling theatre, which had been very popular since the eighteenth century. In Germany, the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II enacted a law in 1776 that permitted the establishment of private theatres and allowed theatre practitioners to operate freely at Habsburg Monarchy. This monarchical legislation also allowed any actor under the jurisdiction of Habsburg Emperor to entertain the public and earn money from his artistic profession. The said legislation created the opportunity for the theatre to develop as a private enterprise and encouraged theatre practitioners to establish both permanent town theatres and travelling theatre companies. Thus, it can be readily assumed that the removal of government restrictions allowed performing arts actors to form countless travelling theatre troupes. These troupes were mostly made up of actors from what is now Germany or Austria. However, German-speaking actors from the other countries of the monarchy also played an important role in these groups. These travelling German companies travelled throughout the Hapsburg Empire and entertained audiences in all parts of the monarchy. These travelling German theatres were the first to bring a kind of new taste in art to the common public through the medium of drama, and even the people in the far corners of the monarchy had an opportunity to enjoy the performances. Obviously, such an atmosphere had formed a section of the new audience and influenced their tastes and theatrical expectations.

¹ file:///C:/Users/ec/Downloads/the22690.pdf

The performance venues of the travelling German theatre companies were not limited to the territory of the Habsburg Empire. There were also companies that travelled much further. From the eighteenth century German travelling theatre also played in the Baltic States (Tallinn, Riga), Saint Petersburg and Moscow. In the nineteenth century, the German travelling theatre played at South Africa and in numerous cities in the U.S.²

²file:///C:/Users/ec/Downloads/gwendolin-travelling-theatre-companies-and-transnational-audiences.-a-case-study-of-croatia-in-the-nineteenth-century.pdf

In his research paper ‘Travelling Theatre Companies and Transnational Audiences; A Case Study of Croatia in the Nineteenth Century’ author Danijela Weber- Kapusta commented that these travelling theatres promoted identification with Viennese cultural life, which was an object of admiration, identification and imitation in Croatia and in other countries of the empire, that is, in a transnational context. He remarked “For more than 150 years the travelling theatres shaped the cultural identity of the Habsburg Monarchy, while also performing in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Riga and Tallinn, in countless cities in the USA and in South Africa. For the emerging nations, they facilitated the institutionalisation of the theatre, shaped the audience, criticism and the first professional domestic actors. They literally represented an institution without institutional (state) support.”³

Much like the storied itinerant theatre of European countries, the African nation of Nigeria has a strong foundation of theatre with brilliant sense of pantomime, colourful costumes and traditional drums, music and folklore. Nigerian opera by the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria originated in the early 1940s and uses Nigerian themes ranging from modern satire to historical tragedy. Although the plays are performed exclusively in the Yoruba language, audiences who are not of the Yoruba language could easily understand the content of a play as summaries were presented in other languages. Although there are currently more than a dozen travelling theatre troupes in Nigeria, only three professional troupes are particularly noteworthy among them. Among them, Ogunde was the first to form a professional touring troupe in 1945, whose plays are mostly satires on Yoruba types: the jealous husband, the miserly father, the reckless son. Others are about contemporary events in Nigerian politics. In 1947, Ogunmola organised some of his students into an acting troupe and formed his own Theatre Party.

³file:///C:/Users/ec/Downloads/gwendolin-travelling-theatre-companies-and-transnational-audiences.-a-case-study-of-croatia-in-the-nineteenth-century.pdf

The drama performed by this troupe traditionally makes use of folklore by incorporating praise poems, proverbs and incantations in the dialogues. Ladipo, who founded the third troupe, was a composer of church music who wanted to preserve the traditional arts and wrote cultural plays based on historical material. Although he was undoubtedly influenced by his predecessors, Ladipo's productions used ceremonial drumming, chanting, and singing, as well as traditional costumes that matched specific historical or religious groups. Some of Ladipo's actors had participated in religious rituals before joining the theatre troupe, so their ceremonial material was inserted into a contemporary form.⁴

In the book *African Popular Theatre: From Pre-Colonial Times to present Day*, David Kerr (1995) has written about the establishment of University of Ibadan Dramatic Society in Nigeria by Martin Banham and Geofrey Axworthy. The author also reports on the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre (MFTT) which was founded in Uganda in 1965. The aim of MFTT was to bring popular plays to the general public. This theatre had extensive logistical infrastructure and administrative arrangements such as a fleet of government vehicles and British Council Land Rovers, a huge backdrop which was brightly coloured, bleachers, trunks, props and costumes, stands, tape recorders, a transformer and even a mobile girls' dressing room. (Kerr, 1955, p.133)

In the Asian continent, we find mention of travelling artists and theatre groups in many parts, of which Japan has a richer tradition of travelling theatre since the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, there were about a thousand theatre groups in Japan, whose performances were mainly held in cities.

⁴<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=NIGERIAN+THEATRE+AND+DRAMA++EVOLUTION+AND+RELEVANCE+IN+A++MODE+RN+NIGERIA+By+Elo+Ibager+Ph.D%29++Department+of+Theatre+Arts++Delta+State+University%2C+Abraka> (accessed on 2nd March, 2021 at 9:00 pm)

The most famous theatre group in Japan in the twentieth century was the all-female Takarazuka Theatre, whose formation and organisational structure differed markedly from the all-male Kabuki Theatre.⁵ In the book *Japan's Modern Theatre: A century of Change and Continuity*, Brian Powell (2002), says unlike now, small towns very rarely possessed halls suitable for mounting productions planned for urban venues, particularly, as a perception that elaborate scenery was necessary. Powell (2002) further adds that the Imperial Rule Assistance Association⁶ and the *Johokyoku* were keen to promote ido-engeki (mobile theatre) as part of their drive towards the mobilization of all aspects of the nation's life, and supported fully, the establishment of an official organization to co-ordinate mobile theater activity. This was the Nihon ido-engeki Renmei meeting or Japan League for mobile theater and its founding meeting took place in June 1941(p.132)

⁵ The classical Japanese dance-drama Kabuki is known for its heavily-stylised performances. The performer of Kabuki often wear glamorous costumes and decorated themselves by elaborate *kumadori* make-up. Kabuki is thought to have originated in the very early Edo period(In the history of Japan the Edo period or Tokugawa period was in between 1600 and 1868)when founder Izumo no Okuni formed a female dance troupe who performed dances and light sketches in Kyoto. In 1629 after banning of woman performer the Kabuki theatre developed itself to a full-fledged male oriented performing group. Kabuki developed throughout the late 17th century and reached its zenith in the mid-18th century. In 2005, Kabuki theatre was declared by UNESCO as an intangible heritage possessing outstanding universal value. In 2008, it was inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

⁶ The Imperial Rule Assistance Association or Imperial Aid Association, was the Empire of Japan's wartime organization created by Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe on October 12, 1940, to promote the goals of his *Shintaisei* ("New Order") movement. It evolved into a "statist" rulingpolitical party which aimed at removing the sectionalism in the politics and economics in the Empire of Japan to create a totalitarianone- party state, in order to maximize the efficiency of Japan's total war effort in China.

The "Takarazuka Revue" theatre group was founded in Takarazuka, Japan, in 1913 by Ichizō Kobayashi, an industrialist, politician, and president of Hankyu Railways. At that time, Western song and dance shows were becoming popular in Japan, and the founder of Takarazuka Revue felt that an all-female theatre troupe would do well with the general public, as kabuki theatre had become old and elitist. In the late 1930s, the Takarazuka and other theatre troupes under the auspices of the Japanese Federation of Mobile Theatres (Nippon ido engeki renmei) sent their mobile troupes to various areas such as factories, farms, villages, hospitals, and even to war front areas in China, Korea, Manchuria, and the South - East Asia (Robertson, 2004) Before becoming a member of the Takarazuka Revue troupe, each young woman must train for two years at Takarazuka Music School. Currently, the Takarazuka Revue has three theatres in Japan: the Takarazuka Grand Theatre, the Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, and the Takarazuka Bow Theatre. Today, these three facilities together host over 900 performances per year. In addition to productions in these three theatres, the Takarazuka Revue also tours Japan and, for the past few years, has performed abroad.

In Russia, a popular mobile theatre was founded in Petrograd in 1903 by Gaideburov and his wife. In the book *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* James Von Geldern (1993) writes about Gaideburov's mobile folk theatre on the outskirts of Petrograd, which was the first to perform on the streets of revolutionary Russia in May 1917: This folk theatre Nadezhda Skarskaia, founded by Gaideburov and his wife, was financed by a wealthy social revolutionary, the Countess Sofia Panina. This People's Theatre initially performed on the streets of revolutionary Russia and was tasked with expanding the thin cultural offerings for the Petrograd workers. Gaideburov had close ties to the pre-war intelligentsia and knew how to mediate between educated and uneducated Russia. Though he found little recognition from the public at first, after a few years an educated generation emerged that could understand the aesthetic beauty of the drama. By 1907, the Popular Theatre had become completely mobile with the same actors, touring the provinces in the summer months with a modern repertoire aimed at the local intelligentsia.

According to the information in the book *Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*, edited by Colin Chambers (2006), by the late 1940s there was a whole range of specialist companies in Britain touring throughout the year for children's audiences in schools and theatres with a more serious purpose. These companies of which the most durable have been Caryl Jenner's Unicorn Theatre⁷ and Theatre Centre⁸ developed on the model that was very much successful in the Soviet Union since the 1920's and after the second World War in Eastern Europe where cultural enrichment was seen to be vital adjunct to education and where major building-based companies with considerable financial subsidy had been established working with the same resources and expertise as theatre for adult audiences (p.152)

In Britain, there are many theatre groups that travel to different parts of the country as well as abroad to entertain audiences. One of the pioneer groups among them is Footsbarn Travelling Theatre, a touring theatre that performs mostly in one of its circus tents but also in theatres all over the world. This theatre began its journey in Cornwall in 1971, rehearsing in the barn at Trewen, a farmhouse near the village of Trewidland. In 1984 the troupe left the UK to bring their brand of theatre to international audiences and remained without a base until 1991 when a farm in central France, La Chaussée, was purchased. In forty-seven years Footsbarn has created more than 60 productions and travelled to all six continents.

⁷ The Unicorn Theatre is a UK theatre for audiences aged 2–21. The theatre was founded in 1947, by Caryl Jenner, originally as a mobile theatre; In 1961, Jenner began presenting children's productions at the Arts Theatre in the West End, and in 1967 the company took over the lease of the theatre which then became Unicorn's permanent performing base until 1999.

⁸ Theatre Centre is a UK-based theatre company touring new plays for young audiences aged 4 to 18. Founded in 1953 by Brian Way, the company registered itself as a charity and at present an organisation under Arts Council England National Portfolio. The primary aim of the Theatre Centre was to provide a place where unemployed actors might meet and practise their art. The productions of the Theatre Centre usually presented informally on the floor of the school hall, in the round. Today, Theatre Centre shows tour to schools and venues around the country.

Red Ladder is another British theatre company with a 50-year history. The company is regarded as one of the UK's leading national touring theatre companies, producing new theatre and campaigning for social change and global justice. Red Ladder is funded by Arts Council England and by Leeds City Council. Founded in London in 1968, the company has a troubled history with roots in the radical socialist theatre movement in the UK known as agitprop. On its official website, the company explains its vision as follows: "We make theatre about how we live now and how we hope to live. The world needs to change and the future is yet to be written. The shared experience of theatre is about change and imagination, where together we can invent a better, kinder and more just way of living." Similarly, this group has made it their mission to create a platform through theatre for voices that are rarely heard and stories that are overlooked. The said website also states: "We make theatre in Northern England but our world is huge and we can soar across borders. We are forward-looking, but not forgetful. We are full of heart, humour and big ideas. We make new plays, empowering, supporting and inspiring writers and theatre artists to tell stories that start on their (often Northern, often working class) doorsteps and take radical leaps of imagination, challenging the systems that marginalise and oppress, and make inclusive, inquisitive, embracing, bracing, laughing, crying, thinking, drinking, dancing, singing theatre. We will go wherever the audience is – to pubs and clubs, to housing estates and to theatres with velvet seats. We'll meet you there, for a good night out that ends with you stepping back out into a world that now feels different, full of possibility, and capable of transformation."⁹

Travelling theatre is a popular form of entertainment in Denmark. There are quite a number of theatre companies in the country, where groups of children and young people travel around the country in fleets of vans, trailers and minibuses. They drive to the next location, unload, set up and take down the stage

⁹ <http://www.redladder.co.uk/about/who-we-are/> (accessed on 12th March, 2021 at 8:00 pm)

set and move on. Such theatre festivals have existed in the country since 1971 and they are appreciated by different audiences. Audiences can come for just one weekend and choose from an incredible 200 performances in two days. The plays are usually performed both indoors and outdoors and sometimes schools are used for the performances. The whole thing is an organisational tour-de-force with an important cultural policy goal: government support for theatrical distribution and production. Among these travelling groups, Teater Patrasket is a renowned group that has been touring all over Denmark and much abroad since 1985. The group performs its plays in both Danish and English - or without words at all. Teater Patrasket makes theatre for children and their main audience is children. In its official face book page, the group reveals its objectives as follows “We seek a physical and visual expression. And we strongly believe in the relieving and humanizing effects of humour. Comedy as a surplus that gives us strength and distance to overcome the different adversities of life. Besides working with our own productions, we also teach and direct plays in which the children are the actors. We regard this as an important part of our activity which continuously keeps us in touch with our audience.”¹⁰

In Finland, the Engels Teater ('Engel Theatre'), a historical theatre in Helsinki, performed regularly between 1827 and 1860. The theatre had its own building and provided space for travelling theatre companies that performed in Helsinki. These were either Swedish-speaking companies touring Finland or German-speaking companies on their way to Saint Petersburg. The Finnish National Theatre, considered the oldest Finnish-language professional theatre, was founded in 1872 in the centre of Helsinki on the north side of the Helsinki Central Railway Station Square. This group was renamed Finnish National Theatre in 1902. Since this theatre group was not given a permanent home until 1902, it functioned primarily as a touring theatre for the first thirty years.

¹⁰ <http://patrasket.dk/en/about-the-theatre/> (accessed on 15th March, 2021 at 7:00 pm)

John M. Ruganda, Uganda's best-known playwright in the 1960s and 1970s, founded the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre and was elected its chief organiser in 1966. In 1971 Ruganda was instrumental in the formation of the Makonde Group, an amateur theatre group that performed various plays in local languages throughout Uganda. Around the same time, he was Creative Writing Senior Fellowships on the faculty of literature Makerere University. A year later his life was put in danger and he fled into exile in Kenya. He later went to the University of Nairobi and founded the Nairobi Free Travelling Theatre and also worked for the company Oxford University Press. As a student of English drama, Ruganda wrote plays for his local audience and for his Free Travelling Theatre Movements, he opted for plays that sought out audiences in his home country. He wanted people to not have to go through the hurdles and financial costs to enjoy drama in the theatre hall, so he brought the drama to them. He found a large, untouched audience for theatre beyond the universities and secondary schools; an audience that had not studied Shakespeare. He made political agitation relevant by taking it to the masses and the movement became a threat to the ruling regime.¹¹

¹¹ *file:///C:/Users/ec/Downloads/NV080312pg52.pdf (accessed on 2nd April, 2021 at 2:00 pm)*

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ASSAMESE THEATRE AND BHRAMYOMAN:

Although there are a large number of traditional folk performances in the Assam region, containing both dramatic and musical elements, formal theatre in this part of the country was developed with the Bhakti movement or the neo-Vaishnavite movement propagated by the great Assamese saint Sankardeva. Noted folklorist Assam Dr Birendranath Datta, Nabin Chandra Sarma and Prabin Chandra Das in their book *A HandBook of Folklore Material of North-East India* have mentioned various folk dramas that existed and were performed in different parts of this region. About 'bhaona' the author says, "Theatrical performances on the pattern of the great sacred artists Sankardeva and Madhavadeva are an extremely valuable element of the artistic heritage of Assam. Though an ideal bhaona performance of a play written by the two great saintly artists and some of their followers is classical rather than folk in character, the links of the bhaona with the local folk tradition are unmistakable. While many elements of the model for the bhaona have been adopted from earlier folk drama institutions, an actual bhaona at the performance level takes on a distinctly folk and popular character." (p-206). The authors further mentioned oja-pali, dhuliyas, putala nach, kushan gan, bhari gan and other forms of folk dramas which had a great impact on the emergence of Ankiya nat.

Mahanta (2011) mentioned that a dramatic form of high quality was created in the early 16th century in the eastern part of India in Assam. The personality behind this formation was the social reformer, poet, playwright, musician and propagator of neo- Vaishnavite movement, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva. His chief disciple Mahapurush Madhabadeva followed in the footsteps of his guru and wrote plays that helped establish the Assamese drama and stage. These plays created by the duo were called Ankiya nat, though neither Srimanta Sankaradeva nor Madhabadeva used this word, but Natak, Nat or Jatra. (pp.58-59)

Satya Prasad Barua in his book 'Assamese Theatre' has rightly mentioned the development of commercial activities and revenue generation in Assamese theatre in the following words.

“The proscenium theatre movement in Assam developed in urban and semi-urban areas on the basis of amateur theatres. Theatrical activities were carried on more or less as a pastime and the performances were held during Durga Puja and other festivals in purpose- built theatres. Performances were open to members of the clubs or societies that managed the theatres, as well as to their friends, relatives and acquaintances, without charging an admission fee. Tickets as such were rarely sold, and if any money at all had to be raised to cover the expenses that membership fees did not cover, it was through donations.

There was, however, a kind of commerce in a very modest form among the yatra parties, oja-palis and Dhulia Circus, who also performed rural plays and puppet shows or presented ojpali and dhulia shows and charged fees for them to make a living as poor villagers without making any kind of financial profit. These groups were in great demand during pujas and festivals and moved from place to place, unlike the amateur theatre troupes who were stuck in one place.” (pp:82-83)

Barua describes how Bhramyoman theatre developed as a source of income thus: "At that time Achyut Lahkar, a promising yatra organiser from Pathsala, a village in lower Assam, in collaboration with his energetic brother Sada Lahkar organised their theatre troupe Nataraj Theatre for purely commercial reasons by converting their yatra troupe into Nataraj Opera. They got the impetus for this when they visited different parts of Assam with their yatra troupe and found that the audience really wanted better, modern theatre instead of the old-fashioned yatras" (pp. 85-86)

Dr. Jayant Kumar Sarma and Kishor Kumar Kalita in their book *Theatre on Wheels: A brief history of mobile theatre in Assam* (2020) have analysed the emergence of mobile theatre in Assam from the point of view of revenue sources and opportunities as follows: “If we look back in the history of mobile theatre, we

would see that during the 1960s mobile theatre had emerged as an alternative platform capable of providing sustenance to those amateur cultural workers who had been working in *yatras* and other traditional form of theatrical performances without getting any stipulated and assured wages or remuneration. Before the advent of mobile theatre, performing artists were mainly farmers, farm workers, artisans or daily wage earners who had engaged themselves with theatre for satisfying their creative urge, for providing entertainment and for their spiritual/religious satisfactions. Theatre was not a livelihood.”

The Bhramyoman theatre of Assam, unlike the *Yatras*, brought professionalism and a business perspective to the traditional form of theatrical performance. It provided a permanent income to a large number of amateur artists and also introduced a kind of norm for the remuneration of artists and other non-performing employees. The financial stakes and business risks involved in a *yatra* party were much lower compared to the larger set up of a mobile theatre. Braja Nath Sarma had tried to bring some professionalism to the *yatra* parties, but business and profit were not a priority. Sadananda Lahkar had a very successful *yatra* party, but again, profit or business was always secondary.

But Bhramyoman was a different ball game all together involving considerable amount of investments. Pioneer of this mobile theatre Achyut Lahkar elaborated on this apprehension. “I started the Nataraj Theatre at my own risk. At that time nobody was convinced that this form could do better business and hence everybody was reluctant to offer any financial support. I had to manage everything. As you know that producing a professional theatre show can be expensive and sometimes risky. There is a huge financial outlay before the show opens; auditioning and rehearsing, designing and building sets, designing and making costumes and props etc. And there is an element of risk concerning how popular the show might be. A well-known classic or musical will usually be less risky venture than a new play by an unknown writer. If the show is a success, there could be a financial return but if it is a flop, the losses can be catastrophic”^{vi}. He, however, amply proved his business acumen and developed a profitable model for mobile theatre” (pp: 224-226).

Talukdar (2003-04) in his work titled *The Drama of Mobile Theatre of Assam: A Critical Study* has made a detailed study of the dramas of the mobile theatre of Assam. He states that the theatre group spends nine months of a year together, rehearsing for the first two months and travelling to all corners of the state for the remaining seven months. Their only means of livelihood during these seven months are two trucks loaded to the brim with suitcases, wires, nets, poles, lamps and everything they need for an outstanding performance. He suggested that an in-depth study on the economic aspect of mobile theatre in Assam is quite possible, which inspired the researcher to explore this possibility of a systematic study on the subject from the economic point of view only.

Kalita (2011) in his paper titled *Bhramyoman Theatarar Itihas* has written a comprehensive history of mobile theatre in Assam. He highlighted the history of mobile theatre in Assam. This includes the evolution of mobile theatre in Assam, the names of the theatres till 2010. It also includes a detailed account of 31 theatres.

Figo (2011) in his paper titled *Bhramyoman Theatre*, wrote that mobile theatre in Assam was introduced to provide financial security to the artists working with mobile theatre. At Achyut Lahkar it states, "In Assam, the situation of performing arts and artists is deplorable. Unlike other Indian states where the stage flourishes in urban areas, the prospects of a city-centric theatre movement in Assam are slim. That's why, in search of a wide market, we put together this theatre group."

Figo and Patgiri (2013) in their paper titled "Long March", a biography of Ratan Lahkar, stated that Kahinoor Theatre was the first theatre to be funded by Central Bank of India from its inception (1976). This theatre brought real professionalism to the world of mobile theatre in Assam. How the producer of Kahinoor theatre popularised mobile theatre in Assam, why National School of Drama, New Delhi wanted to take this entrepreneurial venture to the rest of the country and how a big cinema like "Titanic" can be staged on a very low budget is discussed in detail in this book.

Rahman (2013) has explored the history, form and aesthetics of mobile theatres in Assam in his work "Nine Months", a documentary funded by India Foundation for the Arts and Infosys Foundation. It charts the changing themes and repertoire in this theatre genre, the experiences of directors, actors, technicians and stagehands, and also documents the impact of globalisation on theatre practise. This documentary has been aired on NDTV 24X7 and screened at many film festivals. The film begins with the premiere of a play being staged in a rural village in Assam. Thousands of villagers flock to an open field where a makeshift double stage has been set up and plastic chairs are lined up in rows, while backstage the actors are busy putting the finishing touches to their make-up.

A large number of books have been written on Assamese theatre and on Bhramyoman that include: S.N Barman's *Srimanta Sankaradeva: Kriti aru Krititva*, H.K Barpujari's *Asamar Navajagaran: Ana-Asamiyar Bhumika*, Satya Prasad Barua's, *Assamese Theater*, U.C Bhagawati's *Jatrar Pora Bhramyomanoloi*, Sailen Bharal's *Asamiya Lokanaty Parampara and Natak*, Manikuntala Bhattacharya's *Moi Desdimona Hobo Khuzu*, B Talukdar's (eds) *Brajanath Sarmar Silpi Manar Sapon*, T Choudhury's (ed.) *Mancha Kala*, B Das's *Jivan Natar Bhaoriya Brajanath Sarmar Upanyaxuxam Jivan*, A.Figo's (Transcript) *Mahanayak Achyut Lahkarar Atmajibani Bhramyoman Theatre*, A, Figo, A & P Patgiri's, *Bhramyoman Theaterar Adhunik Khanikar Ratan Lahkarar Jibani Grantha: Long March*, N.B Handique's (ed.) *Naty-Chinta*. Dhemaji: Kiran Prakashan, A Hazarika, A *Manchalekha*, G Jalan and P.K Sarma's (eds.) *Cha, Pohar aru Barnil Jatrar Pachta Dashak Krishna Royar Jivan Parikrama*, K.K Kalita's *Bhramyoman Theaterar Itihaas*, Vol-I, P.Mahanta's *Natakar Katha*, A.Mazumdar's *Ei Jatra Jai Jatra* and *Bhramyoman Theatre: Pratyasha, Prapti aru Aprapti*, P.K Nath's *Natak: Praschin aru Adhunik*, S Neog's, *Chalacchitra Sahitya*, P. Rajbangashi's (ed.) *Asamiya Natak Parampara aru Parivartan*, D Pathak's *Brajanath Sarmar Jivan Aru Krit*, R Pathak's *Natak aru Natak*, B Raichoudhury *Barpetar Aitihya*. A Sarma's *Asomiya Chalacchitar San-pohar*, B.N Sarma's *Biplabi*, D Sarma's *Brajanath Sarma*, D Sarma & K

Kalita's *Jiban Silpi Adya Sarma: Kriti Aru Kritittya*, M.N Sarma's *Aitihāsik Patabhaumit Pathsala*, N.C Sarma's *Axamar Lokanat*. Guwahati: Bani Prakash etc.
