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Aristophanes

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The Dionysia was the second largest festival in ancient Athens to honor Dionysus, God of wine and madness. People will get out from work and have fun with different kind of entertainment. The main event of The Dionysia was the dramatic tragedy and comedy competitions at the theatre of Dionysus. Out of all tragedy and comedy plays from 425 BC to 388 BC, there are twenty-six tragedies plays and eleven comedy plays have survived.¹ The comedy in that time was related to real state current situation. All of comedy plays that have survived were written by Aristophanes, a famous comedy playwright in that time. His plays not only amused audiences but also satirize political and social issues. Aristophanes' plays are very important sources about old satire comedy and affect the existent of satire comedy today so that people have ways to express their political opinions.

Aristophanes was well known from his plays. Except for interpreting of what he says about himself in his plays, there is not much information about his life. Aristophanes was also known as the father of comedy. He is the writer who uses his felling to write the plays rather than reason.² The main purpose of his writing is to entertain the audiences and win the dramatic competition.³ His eleven survived plays are The Acharnians, The Knight, The Clouds, The Wasps, Peace, The Bird, Lysistrata,

¹ K.J.Dover. Aristophanic comedy. 1972. p.1-3

² Soylent Communication. "Aristophanes." NDB. 30 January 2013, <<http://www.ndb.com/people/843/000087582/>>

³ Wikipedia Contributor. "Aristophanes." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 30 January 2013, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristophanes>>

Thesmophoriazusae, The Frogs, Ecclesiazusae and Wealth.⁴ Since his play was more and more accepted, the satire also widely spread and makes an influence to Athenian society.

The play that made Aristophanes won the Dionysia competition is Peace, wrote in 421 BC.⁵ Peace is a story of Athenian name Trygaeus who was bring peaceful to the Peloponnesian War. All the farmers and citizen were appreciating this peace except for the merchant who lost their profit from the war.

Lysistrata (411BC) is a story of an Athenian woman that tries to stop the Peloponnesian War, but Athenian women living at that time had no right to comment about the war or any legal decision. She organizes the secret meeting of all Greek women including Sparta women who were an enemy and persuade them to tell their husband to not go to the war, if not they will deny to have sex with their husband. In the end all Athenian and Sparta men were left the war and go back home, because they cannot bear not having sex with their wife.⁶ This play effect the women right to request in the society. Aristophanes want to present that women should have right as same as men since women are also the part of the democracy society and show the power of women that if they really want to make a social impact, they can. In other view there are others ways to end the war not just only fight. But as we know the war was keep going and finally Athenian was defeated. This plays may be the starting point of the right to vote of women now a day.

Plutus or Wealth was written in 388 BC. It this play Aristophanes wrote about Plutus, God of wealth who was blinded by Zeus. Since Plutus is blind, he could not be

⁴ Wikipedia Contributor. "Aristophanes." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 30 January 2013, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristophanes> >

⁵ Wikipedia Contributor. "Dionysia." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 8 February 2013, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysia>>

⁶ SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Lysistrata." SparkNotes LLC. n.d.. 8 February 2013 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/lysistrata>>

able to distinguish between good and bad people so the wealth was distributed randomly instead of distributed to good people. After Plutus' eyesight was restored, the city's economics and society turn out to be better.⁷ This play effect the problem that many countries face now a day which is income distribution and poverty. Even the economics of the country is growing very fast but most of the money goes to small number of wealthy person who should have enough. To solve this problem government and millionaire should help the poor who don't have a chance by providing knowledge so that they can improve their skill and have more income. This will make society more equality and better.

The example of satire in Thailand is Thammasat Chinese Opera. This satire play adapts Chinese opera to satirize current situation in the country especially political. Thammasat Chinese Opera was compact and easy to understand. The play was conduct and played by collegians of Thammasat University usually in freshmen welcoming fair to show first year students that the university always involve with the moral and political situation in Thailand. In special case like when there was a political protest, Thammasat Chinese Opera also played satire comedy to make protestors more relax. The last time that Thammasat Chinese Opera got involved is the protest to expel the Prime Ministry Thaksin Shinawatra.

Aristophanes survived plays teach us about perspective of ancient Greek citizen to the democracy and way they expressed and perceived opinions. In the democratic country, everyone is equal and have a freedom to say and express opinions. His plays also present the past issue that still be a politic problem for now a day. No democratic system is perfect, there always be ways to improve it. A lot of people may think that political is complicated and arching so they deny thinking about it. Satire is a way for

⁷ Luke Mastin. "Plutus(Wealth)." Classical Literature. 9 February 2013. < http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_aristophanes_plutus.html>

people to express their opinions about society to others in simple and entertain way so that more people will be aware of current situation and will not be cheated by authority.