From Thēwadā to TV
Changing Identity of Nang Yai

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Unless otherwise acknowledged in the text or in the footnote, this thesis represents my original research.

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Chapter 1.
Introduction

1.1. Background

*Nang Yai* is an ancient theatre genre of central Thailand. It is sometimes still performed at cremations, local festivals and shopping centres, or for cultural shows at schools and cultural societies. However, it is nearly extinct in Thailand today and only three troupes remain.

*Nang Yai* literally means 'large-hides'. Its characters are crafted from beautifully perforated cow and buffalo hides which cast shadows and silhouettes against a screen lit by a coconut oil lamp (although electric lamps are used these days). As in the ancient Thai masked theatre, the form called *Khōn, Rāmakīn* (the Thai version of the Indian epic Ramayana) has been the exclusive subject of the performances.

Various studies on *Nang Yai* have been published describing it generally and its artistic aspects in particular. However, a study on its social and religious aspects has not yet been published. While it has been claimed that *Nang Yai* was the art form of royalty and aristocracy, the fact that rural monasteries in central Thailand today possess both troupes and shadow-panels raises the question of whose art form it really was. This thesis attempts to answer this question and, in doing so, discover some of the social roles of *Nang Yai* and the reasons for its decline in popularity.

1.2. Present circumstances of *Nang Yai* in Thailand

In modern day Thailand, the *Nang Yai* genre can be found in three exemplars. The foremost exemplar of *Nang Yai* is in the museums in Thailand where the shadow-panels have been preserved. They have lost their performers and have often been recovered from oblivion in the back-quarters of monasteries by Krom Sinlapakon (The Department of Fine Arts). Shadow-panels in National Museums in Bangkok, Lop Buri, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Chaiya and In Buri (a district of Sing Buri Province) fall into this group. The panels in the first mentioned four museums are believed to have come from Wat Phlaplāchāi in Petchaburi Province. The panels in the In Buri Museum are from Wat Prasuk in Sing Buri Province.¹

The second exemplar of *Nang Yai* is in the monasteries, again as mere panels without their performers. Questions as to why they remain in monasteries and who used them usually cannot be answered. Good examples are Wat Kasatrathirat in Phra Nakhon Si Ayuthaya Province\(^2\) and Wat Yai in Samut Songkhram Province.\(^3\) When abbots of these monasteries were asked such questions by this writer, the relevant information had already been forgotten. The abbots remembered only that seven deteriorated shadow-panels attached above the entrance of the main hall of Wat Kasatrathirat were presented to it by somebody who performed *Nang Yai* a long time ago.

The third, happier, exemplar of *Nang Yai* today is in the living theatre. Three active troupes can still be found in central Thailand. These are the Wat Sawangarom troupe in Sing Buri province, the Wat Khanon troupe in Ratchaburi Province and the Wat Bandon troupe in Rayong Province.\(^4\) These troupes are attached to monasteries which own the shadow-panels and the performers ask permission of them to perform outside. Accordingly, the performers call themselves *Nang Yai* of "such and such temple".

Today, none of the troupes seem to have enough popularity to ensure the continuity of this theatre genre. All performers of these three monasteries have said that the audiences are small and opportunities to perform are very few. On average, the troupes perform two or three times a year. Governmental help to preserve this theatre genre is minimal and concentrated on only Wat Khanon, as it possesses more than three hundred shadow-panels covering the entire *Rāmakian* story. One can only hope that the remaining two monasteries, Wat Sawangarom in Sing Buri Province and Wat Bandon in Rayong Province, are not going to be forgotten by the government authorities.

### 1.3. Scope of the study

For the purpose of this study, a theatre genre can be divided into two aspects: (1) its artistic aspects; and (2) its socio-economic aspects. The artistic performance of *Nang Yai* theatre involves *kān phāk* (recitation), *kān chōēt* (manipulation and dancing) and *dontri* (orchestra). Since the nature of this theatre genre does not allow women (including the author) involvement in its artistic performance, this study focuses on its social and economic implications, including the transmission of the art and the status of its troupes (both commercial and religious).

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2. Ibid, p. 88.
3. The fact that this temple has *Nang Yai* shadow-panels was informed by Dr. Terwiel.
As will be established through a review of the literature in Chapter 2, *Nang Yai* was a grand-scale theatre genre. The existence of troupes in villages in central Thailand which conducted a magnificent theatre must have been supported by particular social conditions. These social conditions are investigated here through two case studies.

As this thesis is limited to an analysis of these case studies, conclusions on the *Nang Yai* theatre genre as a whole are avoided. Detailed research on other *Nang Yai* troupes should be made, in order to reach broader conclusions. This is a matter of urgency as their performers are mostly aging and there are not many successors.

### 1.4. Methodology

The material for this thesis was researched using three methods: (1) library research; (2) interviews with *Nang Yai* performers and (3) observation of an actual performance.

#### (1) Library research

Library research was conducted in the Menzies, Chifley and Hancock libraries of the Australian National University, from December 1988 to February 1989. Most of the Thai sources on *Nang Yai* possessed by the National Library of Australia were also read during this period. In Thailand, additional library research was done in the National Library in Bangkok, the library of the Siam Society and that of Sinlapakon (Fine Arts) University in Bangkok from April 1989 to October 1989.

#### (2) Interviews

Interviews were conducted in Thailand in early 1989. The first few interviews were conducted in Thai by the author using a tape-recorder. However, two difficulties were encountered. First, the performers became nervous in the presence of a tape-recorder. Second, the performers sometimes spoke in a dialect hardly comprehensible to the author. Therefore, later interviews were conducted with the assistance of a Thai person and, in order to elicit more spontaneous conversation, the tape-recorder was used only as a supplement. Every interview record was cross-checked afterwards with the Thai assistant to confirm its accuracy. Details of the interviews are discussed in Chapter 3.

#### (3) Observation of a performance

A *Nang Yai* performance by the Wat Khanōn troupe was observed at Tarunā Primary School in Amphoe Muang, Ratchaburi Province, on 25th of May 1989. It was presented as an entertainment for the Ratchaburi exposition. Photographs of preparation for the performance, the *wai khru* (invocation) ceremony and of the actual performance of Hanumān presenting Phra Rāmā's ring to Lady Sidā were taken. A video recording
of the same performance made by Kantana company, was viewed later in order to confirm details of the performance.

In addition, the video called **Nang Yai of Wat Khanôn** made by **Samnakngân Sawŏem Sāng Ekalak không Chât** (the Office of Creating Thai Identity) and presently kept in the library of Sinlapakon University was viewed. It records a performance by the **Nang Yai** of Wat Khanôn in 1975.

### 2.2. Definition

**Nang Yai** is often introduced as a shadow play. In this study, a shadow play is understood as a pantomimed performance by a kind of dancing. In this section, comprehensive definitions of shadow plays are presented in order to define the particular characteristics of Nang Yai.

The reasons why human beings devised shadow plays are numerous. Since the Western shadow plays have a common objective, which is to convey messages from one human group to another, Thai shadow plays can be classified into three main categories:

1. **The first class** consists of the shadow plays performed in the **Nang Yai** in Malaysia and gentlemen and the **Nang Yai** in Thailand, which can be dramatically categorized. These shadow plays are prepared with costumes and separate for each role and costume. The audience only vary the messages conveyed with the help of dialogue, also known as Thai shadow plays.

2. **The second class** of the shadow plays are not considered as a dramatic shadow plays; but they are presented without the help of dialogue, known as the **Nang Yai** shadow plays. This class of Thai shadow plays.

3. **The third class** of the shadow plays are not considered as a dramatic shadow plays, but they are presented without the help of dialogue, known as the **Nang Yai** shadow plays. This class of Thai shadow plays.
Chapter 2.

Nang Yai through Literature

2.1. Introduction

This chapter surveys and analyses the literature on Nang Yai. Its first purpose is to refine our definition of Nang Yai, focusing on its artistic aspects. The second purpose is to consider various theories on the history and origin of Nang Yai and its religious significance. Third, some significant general characteristics of the Nang Yai theatre genre noted through the literature review are extracted. The chapter concludes with proposals for further field research.

2.2. Definition

Nang Yai is often introduced as a shadow-play, in that it uses a screen, perforated shadow-panels and puppeteers. It is also referred to as dance-drama since it is accompanied by a kind of dancing. In this section, comparisons with other shadow-plays are made so as to define the particular characteristics of Nang Yai.

The reasons why human beings devised shadow-plays are unknown. Yet, we see that shadow plays have a common objective, which is to try to animate the shadow-panels and shadow-puppets as if they are human beings themselves. The ways to animate them differ from one theatre genre to another. There are many genres, but they can be divided into three classes.

The first class consists of the smaller shadow puppets, called Nang Talung in Thailand, Wayang in Malaysia and Indonesia and Ayang in Cambodia. These have mobile legs, hands and mouths which can be independently manipulated. They have only one puppeteer, who manipulates the puppets and also narrates from a sitting position behind the screen. The audience sees only the shadows of the moving puppets on the screen. The narration is accompanied by an orchestra, the musical instruments of which vary from one country to another. This class of theatre play can be called "shadow-play".

The second class is the classical Andhara shadow-theatre of India. Large shadow-puppets (as large as Nang Yai shadow-panels) with mobile limbs are manipulated by puppeteers who stand away behind the screen. The audience can see the shadows of the
puppeteers and the manipulated shadow-puppets. There are two narrators separated from the puppeteers. This theatre genre can also be called "shadow-play".

The third class consists of the Nang Yai in Thailand and Nang Sbaek (Robam Sbaek or Sbaek Thom) in Cambodia. Large shadow-panels without mobile parts are used in these theatre genres. The panels are manipulated by puppeteer-dancers who hold two bamboo poles attached to a panel and dance, sometimes in front of and sometimes behind the screen, using Khon-like (masked-play) dance steps. Silhouettes of the "puppeteer-dancers" and the panels are seen when they are in front of the screen and their shadows are seen when they are behind the screen. The dance movements of puppeteer-dancers compensate for the inflexible and static panels. In contrast to the first class of shadow-play mentioned above, Nang Yai and Nang Sbaek have separate narrators to tell the stories. This theatre genre can be called "dance-drama", as the element of human dance is emphasized.

The examples given here indicate that the size and characteristics of the shadow puppets and panels seem to decide this mode of manipulation. This may cast doubt on whether the established definition of these three classes of theatre as simply 'shadow-plays' is appropriate. "Dance-drama" seems a more suitable term to describe Thai Nang Yai and Khmer Nang Sbaek (Robam Sbaek or Sbaek Thom).

2.3. Types of Tua nang (shadow-panels)

This section describes the characteristics of the tua nang of Nang Yai. Shadow figures used in Nang Yai can be considered, according to the number of the figures in a panel, his/her/their postures, activities and scenery. Prince Dhanivat describes the types of tua nang as follows;

As for the design, figures are made in singles as well as in couples, the latter usually fixed in a fighting pose. Groups, too, are made,

2. This word is first used by Mattani Rutnin, "Nang Yai: The Thai Classical Shadow Play and the Wat Khanon Troupe of Rajburi", a paper presented to an International Seminar on the Shadow Plays of Asia held in Tokyo in 1975. Papers are edited by Amin P. L. Sweeny and Goto Akira under the same name as the seminar. Reprinted from the Journal of East Asian Cultural Studies, vol. XV, nos 1-4, March, 1976, p. 54. The word is used in order to distinguish the performers of the Nang Yai class of theatre genre from the smaller class of shadow-plays, such as Nang Talung, Ayong and Wayang.
very often with backgrounds of celestial or human sceneries, such as mansions, forests, mountains, seas etc.\(^3\)

As he has indicated, shadow-panels may be considered in three categories; single, couples and group figures.

Single figures which depict various characters of the Rāmakian (Thai version of Indian epic Ramayana) can be sub-divided into three types. The first type, called Nang Khanēchōn (standing figures), depicts only royalty, who hold the highest position in society. Therefore, while in a standing position, they receive salutation from their subjects. The second type, called Nang Fao or Nang Wai depicts guardians and soldiers of both Phra Rāmā (King Rāmā) and Tosakan (the demon king). They are depicted in a sitting position with their faces looking up at a 45 degree angle, holding weapons under their arms, in wai (salutation) to the superiors depicted in Nang Khanēchōn. The third type, called Nang Ngā (flying figures), depicts both royalty and guardians or soldiers in flying positions. They sometimes raise both arms holding weapons in thā ho (flying position), which is the same position as used as in Khōn and Lakhōn (dance-drama performed by women). These shadow figures are often depicted in marching and single combat scenes.

While single figures themselves have limited abilities to tell the story of Rāmakian, group figures are able, to some extent, to tell of whole scenes. The group figure category is, again, divisible into three types. Nang Miāng, the first type of group figures, are carved panels in which either figures or sometimes only landscapes are found. They may depict, for example, Tosakan talking to his son Intrachit in a pavilion. The second type, Nang Čhap (clutching figures), usually depicts two figures holding or fighting each other: for example, Tosakan and Phra Rāmā, or a white monkey and a black monkey, in battle and so on. The third type of panels are called Nang Betalet (miscellaneous panels) and consist of odd characters and props like clowns, vehicles, weapons, and so on.

2.4. Textual Content of Nang Yai Performance

A full Nang Yai performance usually has three stages; wai khrū (invocation) ceremony, bōēk rōng (opening) and the main story. A performance can be held during either the day or night.\(^4\) If it is a day-time performance, the performers use coloured shadow panels, but

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kān phāk (the important supporting narration) is omitted, and the performance consists only of dance with the coloured panels, music and songs. One report states that only four stories of the dance, the pursuit of Mechala, Phratong bao lut, Balim and Sraburong, which are principally dances, are performed in day-time performances. This would suggest that the day-time performances are quick-and-easy-to-appreciate entertainments.

2.4.1. Bot Wai Khrū (Invocation Text)

Every night performance commences with a wai khrū. An invocation ceremony centres around texts called bot wai khrū. These texts are of unknown origin and, in their present form, date from the beginning of the Ratanakōsin period. However, they may well have been reconstituted even then from the memories of an earlier Ayutthayan form. During the invocation ceremony, panels of the three khrū, Phra Isūan (Shiva), Phra Nārāi (Vishnu) and Rūṣī (the hermit), are invited to the theatre, offerings are placed in front of them and the texts are recited by the nāi nang (troupe master). The English translation of the bot wai khrū of Wat Khanjōn troupe is recorded in Chapter 3 of this work. It is of unknown origin, but may have come from an authentic original as the Wat Sawāngārōm, Sin Buri Province, version is nearly identical to it. The latter was copied in an ordinary notebook by the nāi nang of this troupe from a samutkhoi (rice paper) version.

2.4.2. Bōṭk Rōṅg (Opening Story)

The wai khrū ceremony is followed by an opening story called Chap ling hūa kham (Clutching Black Monkey in the Dusk). However, some previous studies indicate that other opening stories were played. According to Panyā Nitayasuwan, an officer of Krom Sinlapakon (Department of Fine Arts, Thailand), texts for the recitation of other stories still exist. These include the Samuthorakhōt khamchan (Story of Prince Samuthorakhōt, in khamchan poetic form), Anirutha (a section of the Mahabharata on King Anirutha) and others. Similarly, Pratum Chumpheng noted that the Inao story (a Thai version of the

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8. Photographs of this notebook version of bot wai khrū (invocation text) were taken on 29th May, 1989 when this writer visited nāi nang at his house. This writer compared the bot wai khrū (the invocation text) of Wat Khanjōn troupe (reprinted in Wannakam prakōn nāi nang Yai Wat Khanjōn Changwat Ratchaburi, Bangkok, 1977) with the bot wai khrū (invocation text) of Wat Sawāngārōm.
Javanese Prince Panji legend) might have been included in the Nang Yai repertoire, as it exists in khamphāk (recitation text form) and a pseudo Nang Yai panel made of hard paper was ordered for it by King Rāmā VII. Another source states that other stories, such as Bōng tōn thāēng sūā, Hūa lan chon kan and Thāēng hok may also have been played. However, as this source does not mention the existence of khamphāk or records of actual performances, there is no proof that these stories were also part of the repertoire. No panels remain to prove any of these hypotheses, however, perhaps because nang (hides) are easily eaten by rats and therefore have a relatively short life span.

The Chap ling hūa kham story (Clutching Black Monkey in the Dusk) is the opening story usually played today. It is a typical morality play. There are two monkeys, one white and one black. The white monkey has good habits and speaks truthfully while the black monkey often lies and leads others into confusion. In the end, they argue and fight. The white monkey clutches the black one and tries to kill it. By chance, a Rūśī comes upon them, stops the fight and asks for the pardon of the life of the black monkey. In the end, the black monkey changes his nature as the Rūśī tells him.

2.4.3. Rāmakīan

Finally the main story, the Rāmakīan, follows. Since Rāmakīan is an extravagantly long story, usually only a section is played. Phaop Pōsakrisana mentions that the Wat Khanōn troop has a repertoire the following sections: Hanumān Thawai Wāën (Hanumān presents a ring of Phra Rāmā); Sūk Sahasukman (the battle of one thousand princes of King Tosakan); Phao Lonkā (Fire in Lonkā); Nākhābāt (the Nākhābāt arrow of Prince Intrachit); Sūk Wirunmuk (the battle of Wirunmuk, a Yak in Tosakan's army); Sūk Mangkonkat (the battle of Mangkonkat, a Yak in Tosakan's army); Chut Phonmasot (a section of Phonmasot arrow of Prince Intrachit); Chut Sang műjang (Tosakan's army preparing for a battle); and Sūk Pralai kan (the last battle of King Tosakan). Although Wat Khanōn has more than three hundreds panels covering the entire Rāmakīan, the whole story of Rāmakīan has never been played within living memory.

Existing shadow-panels only depict the Rāmakīan. The Rāmakīan is an integral part of Thai life and of its moral code. Thai people may respect and try to be like its hero, Phra Rāmā, and its heroine, Nang Sidā. There are many versions of Rāmakīan in Thailand.

12. The content of this story is from "Nang Yai" by Omrā, p.35.
varying from the most famous version of Kings Rāmā I and Rāmā II (still often played in Khōn (masked play) at the National Theatre in Bangkok) to the various folklore versions known by the villagers in Thailand.

Although earlier literature notes the repertoire of Nang Yai, records of visual performances are not available, so two case studies focus on Rāmakīan texts. One of these examines the still active Wat Khanphī troupe in Ratchaburi Province, the other examines the already defunct Wat Taku troupe in Phra Nakhon Si Ayuthaya Province. Both studies concentrate on recording the texts of kham phāk, but don’t analyse their social implications. Therefore they provide little insight into the social significance of Rāmakīan or the extravagance of the Nang Yai performances. For example, there is no mention of the length of performances, how many khon chōēt (puppeteer-dancers) they needed to play a section of Rāmakīan, or how many tūa nang were needed and so on.

However, the literature on the Khmer theatre genre Nang Sbaek gives an insight into these matters.

Presently, the set of episodes performed lasts for seven nights, beginning at eight o’clock in the evening. Each session goes on for as long as there remain enough audience, often until one o’clock in the morning. Some twenty years ago, it took 16 days to relate everything which tradition had hung onto, and before that it took several weeks. Today it is no longer a matter of performing the complete legend but just episodes from it selected from among the best known of them. The troupe no longer has the opportunity of playing very often (a dozen times a year) and as the length of the big festivals has been cut short, the troupe can only perform popular episodes. Still it recently played for 17 nights to celebrate the cremation of a venerable monk.14

A comparison of modern and past performance of Nang Sbaek shows that the religious significance of this theatre genre and of the Ramker (the Khmer version of Indian epic Ramayana) is fading. In fact, performances of the entire Ramker take a long time, many performers do not take part and only popular sections are performed. The same is true of Nang Yai today.

2.5. Orchestra

A type of orchestra called *phi phat* forms an integral part of *Nang Yai* theatre. It consists of wind instruments and large and small percussion instruments. However, the exact composition of the orchestra varies with the status of the occasion. The following musical instruments are always included: *Ph lāng* (middle-sized oboe), *K lớng ting* (drums), and *Krông* (a kind of percussion instrument made of bamboo).

Phaop Pōsakrisana writes of the relationship of the orchestra with *kān phāk* and *kān charachā* (dialogue) as follows.

The orchestra, or *Wong pī phat* receives some short words from *khon phāk* [narrators] in order to know what tunes should be played next. These short words, or "key words" from *khon phāk* to the orchestra to direct the next tunes, are very important since they also tell *khon chōēt* the routines that they will dance to these tunes.

2.6. Original Audience of *Nang Yai*

Some early articles in Thai language on *Nang Yai* assume that *Nang Yai* was an art form for aristocrats and performed in Thailand since the Ayuthaya period. They note that *Nang Yai* was often played at aristocrats' cremations. These articles are, surprisingly, similar to each other and may well have been based only on Prince Dhanivat's articles as, up until 1974, no case studies in the Thai language on active troupes were reported. Thus, there are no original early accounts of the social class of the performers, audiences and patrons, if, indeed, such roles as defined in the modern context, existed.

The idea that *Nang Yai* was, since the Ayuthaya period, an art form for aristocrats seems to be based on two existing textual sources. These are the *Samuthorakröth khamchan* and *Kot Montianbān* (Palace Law). Both are early original Thai texts which contain

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18. "Nang Yai was an entertainment of the higher class people which cannot be lacked in important ceremonies." written by Områ Klamcharōēn, "Nang Yai", p. 27. "In ancient days, Nang Yai performances were believed to be ones of the higher class people. It was performed especially in the larger ceremonies like royal ceremonies and so on.", Panyā Nitayasuwan, "Nang Yai", p. 73.
references to shadow plays and their performance for royalty. Both texts have been repeatedly quoted by Thai and Western writers.

In fact, both these sources should be treated with caution. It is arguable as to who the real author of the *Samuthorakhot khamchan* was and as to when it was written. Presently, most believe that King Narai’s jurisconsultant, Phra Mahārāt Khrū (Great Teacher), left it uncompleted, and that the work was elaborated upon by the King himself and that it was finally completed by Somdet Phramaha Samonchao Krom Phrapromanuchitchinorot.²⁰ The English translation of the relevant part of *Samuthorakhot khamchan* is as follows.

His Majesty, Ramadhipati, of formidable might, recollecting the story of the Great Teacher having been Prince Samutagos, who, reincarnating from a heavenly life in celestial worlds, was born on earth and became skilled in the art of the bow, winning victory in a rival contest among heroic royal warriors and thereby won the hand of the beautiful Bindumali. His Majesty gave orders that a poem on the subject be composed and beautiful figures cut out of hide to depict this romance on the screen.²¹

The second source, or *Kot Montianbān*, is also of uncertain origin. It was re-written in the beginning of the 19th century based on surviving texts and memories of the Ayuthaya and Bangkok periods. Therefore, it is merely speculative to say that *Nang Yai* has been performed since the period of King Boromatrailokanāt in 1458, as Prince Dhanivat and most Thai scholars following him have said.²² In *Kot Montianbān*, we read only that entertainments called *Nang* (which indicates shadow-play although it literally means hides) or *Nang rabam* (shadow-dance with holding shadow-panels)²³ were an integral part of

²¹ Dhanivat, *Shadow Play*, p. 18. The transcription of Thai sounds are of the writer of this article and not the one of this writer. This poem was written in the form of Thai language used during the Ayuthaya period. Therefore, the word translated as "hide" in the last sentence of the above quotation appears as "Sbaēk" rather than "Nang". (Phra Mahārāt Khrū, *Samuthorakhot khamchan*, p.3) This, of course, is a Khmer word. It is difficult to understand why Thai scholars did not consequently recognize the possible influence of Khmer culture upon Thai shadow-plays when quoting this extract.
²³ It is assumed, as a result of these contents of *Kot Montianbān*, that the word "Nang Yai" is a relatively recent name adopted after people during the late Ayuthaya period or early Bangkok period encountered a smaller type of shadow-play (*Nang Talung*) from southern Thailand. The northern theatre genre may have been called "Nang", or "Nang Rabam", and later named *Nang Yai* since they needed to classify large and small *nang* (shadow-play).
State ceremonies. Kot Montianbān episodes on "the capturing of white elephants" and "the celebration in the 12th month" are described as follows:

When white elephants are found, they [soldiers] have to prepare water and conduct a ceremony for seven days....When an elephant or elephants are roped, light seven Nang [shadow-theatres], conduct seven dances, celebration for seven days and entertainments for 15 days. Together with them, Nang Ram [shadow-dance-drama without any narration of the story] throughout the return journey until they get to the capital. When they get to the capital, conduct celebration and entertainment for 15 days.24

On the 12th month, in ceremony of Trong Priang, lanterns are set free in the water. In the King's crematorium, pyrotecnic displays decorated with flowers are set up. Also two nang [shadow-plays] are set up....Boats are stopped to release lanterns. If the King is decent, blow horns and cry in acclaim three times [hō sām lā]. Then, play nang rabam [shadow-dance drama without any narration of the story]....If it is finished, break stones to release boats and cry in acclaim three times [hō sām lā]. When the boats have reached to the Puthathaisawan, set fire on flowers and start nang [shadow-plays].25

The notion that Nang Yai was an art form for royalty and aristocrats becomes all the more dubious when recent case studies on each existing troupes are considered. Local histories of the Wat Khanōn troupe in Ratchaburi Province were written by Euayporn Kerdchouay in 1973 and by Phaop Pōsakrisana in 1977.26 Phaop Pōsakrisana admits that there are Nang Yai lūang (Nang Yai of royalty) and Nang Yai chao bān (Nang Yai of villagers). Her book was the first to mention that Nang Yai was played for people of various socio-economic groups.

If it is possible to divide Nang Yai into two styles, it could be Nang Yai lūang [Nang Yai of city version] and Nang Yai chao bān [Nang Yai of village version]. Nang Yai lūang means Nang Yai performances for royal ceremonies and governmental ceremonies. Some Nang Yai chao bān are derived from this Nang Yai lūang and

25. Ibid, pp. 139-140.
modified to go with the tastes of villagers as is the same in Lakhôn Nai [Dance-drama performed only by women at court in olden days. Nowadays it is played for everybody at various theatres and restaurants]. In Lakhôn Nêk [Vulgar form of Lakhôn Nai. Mainly performed for villagers], for example, the story of Inao is played, too, with all characters as is the same in Lakhôn Nai. Yet, the story is choreographed in a fast one so that the villagers' would like it. And it is quite different from Inao in Lakhôn Nai.27

Both authors report that the Wat Khanôn troupe was started by a Khôn dancer in the local Ratchaburi court during the reign of King Râmâ the second. This Khôn dancer noted that local artisans were capable of making large leather shadow puppets. He reportedly gathered the villagers, formed a troupe and taught them how to dance according to his art, which was based on Khôn.28 If this story is true, it shows that Nang Yai at Wat Khanôn troupe might have evolved from the villagers' interpretation and imitation of Khôn which certainly was an aristocratic entertainment. Whether the story is true or false, Nang Yai at Wat Khanôn at least, was not exclusively the art of royalty.

Oral history tells that, like the Wat Khanôn troupe, other Nang Yai troupes were founded for the entertainment of local villagers. This writer visited Wat Bândôn in Rayong Province and discovered that it had bought shadow-panels from nearby Wat Papradû (Wat Kêng as locals call it), for this purpose. Its troupe was formed and by Khruû Si (Teacher Si) who was, again, an actor of Khôn sot.29 Wat Sawângârôm in Sing Buri Province bought shadow-panels from two parties, Wat Tuk (a temple which is located next to Wat Sawângârôm), and Khruû Pia. Khruû Pia was a Nang Yai puppeteer-dancer from Phra Nakhon Si Ayuthaya Province who presented the shadow-panels to the former abbot of Wat Sawângârôm and taught Nang Yai to the members of the Suphanakhôn family.30 Wat Taku in Phra Nakhon Si Ayuthaya Province bought shadow panels from a temple in Thong district, Ang Thong Province, in order to create an entertainment for local

27. Phaop Pôsakrisana, Nang Yai Wat Khanôn, p. 32.
29. Khôn sot, or also called Nang sot is a form of theatrical entertainment. Actors usually wears caps which are similar to Khôn masks, yet, show their faces and plays mainly comedies with gestures, actions and simple dancing. Actors usually speak, too, while they dance and act. Interview with nai nang (troup master) Choûm Khoparom, Nang Yai of Wat Bândôn, Rayong on the 31th of May, 1989. He and another aging puppeteer-dancer, Thôi Wanrudi used to be actors of Khôn sot before they started to play Nang Yai.
villagers. This temple used to be very famous for Nang Yai, even though it had already sold about 200 shadow-panels to a third party. The texts of the section of Rāmakīlan written on Samutkhoi paper remain in the hands of the abbot who used to be the reciter for the troupe.

Most of the recent historical information is drawn from literature which carefully recorded individual case studies, rather than drawing general conclusions as to the history of Nang Yai. The likely reason for this is that each troupe has a very different historical background. Further, even detailed histories of Nang Yai troupes are very difficult to record due to the lack of documentation concerning Nang Yai performances and the society in which the performances took place, so only oral histories handed down from generation to generation are available. Nevertheless, these case studies collectively indicate that, in recent generations, Nang Yai has not been an entertainment solely for the aristocracy.

2.7. Khmer Origins of Nang Yai

Most Thai scholars consider Nang Yai to have evolved during the period of Indian influence in Thailand. They point out that the Indian-influenced Srivijaya kingdom stretched out from the present-day Malay peninsula in the north and to Java in the south in the 9th century. Therefore, they argue that Nang Yai developed from another class of shadow-play, which is currently represented by Thai Nang Talung and Malaysian and Indonesian Wayang. Only Pratum Chumphengphan mentions that Thais adopted Khmer-style shadow play in the 20th century of the Buddhist era.(15th century in Christian era).

Simmonds, whose work will be discussed later in this chapter, in connection with bot wai khrū, hypothesized that Nang Yai was very likely to have originated from Khmer Nang Sbaek, at least, as far as the content of the bot wai khrū is concerned. In 1963, an article on the Khmer Nang Sbaek genre was published by Sheppard. It began by presenting an idea, suggested by "an eminent Thai scholar", that Nang Yai was brought to Thailand from India via Indonesia and the Malay peninsula, but goes on to recognize the

32. Ibid, p. 8 in Chapter. 2 This temple sold the shadow-panels for the price of 13,000 Baht to unknown party in unknown year.
33. Ibid, p. 9 in Chapter. 2. Texts of Suk Intrachit, Suk Wirunmuk and Nāng Lōjī remain in the hands of the abbot who used to be a reciter of this troupe along with some texts of other folk songs used in Chap ling hūa kham (Clutching the Monkey in the Dusk).
34. Pratum Chumphengphan, "Nang Yai không khon Thai", p. 36.
link with ancient Khmer civilization. Following interviews with scholars in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Sheppard concluded that the *Nang Sbaek* type shadow-play had come from India to Cambodia, and was introduced from there into the Malay peninsula. He posits that *Nang Sbaek* was introduced into the Malay Peninsula when a son of the Malay Raja of Ligor, aided by his Khmer consort, conquered the eastern half of the Khmer Kingdom and was proclaimed King Suryavarman I in 1002. A.D.

In support of his position, Sheppard argues that the method of manipulating the large leather figures, which is common to the classical Indian and ancient Khmer shadow play, is unknown in Indonesia. Its absence throws weight against the theory that the Khmer shadow play was introduced to Cambodia and Thailand from the south, via Indonesia. However, there is still not enough evidence to prove that Khmer *Nang Sbaek* came to Cambodia direct from India. Although the fact that the performers are not seated and the size of the shadow-panels indicate similarities, Khmer *Nang Sbaek* and the ancient Indian shadow-play are quite different. Khmer *Nang Sbaek*’s performers dance while holding fixed and immobile shadow-panels, while in India the performers do not dance, but merely manipulate their flexible shadow-panels from a standing position.

Sheppard also infers that Khmers introduced shadow-plays to Malays by noting similarities between the Malay shadow figures of about 100 years ago and the smaller type of Khmer figures used today. However, it is also possible to infer the reverse from these similarities, that is, the migration was from Malays to Khmers. Unfortunately, no final conclusion can be drawn either way as the historical record is incomplete. There is no archaeological evidence at all of large *Nang Sbaek* and *Nang Yai* type panels or related performances in the Malay peninsula. Yet, this is possibly because the leather hides easily deteriorate and because Islamization wiped out the previous culture of the Malay Peninsula. Taking these circumstances into account, this writer finds Sheppard’s argument, that the migration of shadow-plays was from Khmers to Malays, to be the more plausible.

37. This is not quite true. Some panels of a type of Indonesian shadow play called *Wayang Purwa* are about 1 metre high. See *Wayang Purwa, or the Shadows of the Past* by Ulbricht, Kuala Lumpur, 1970. Rather, it should be said that the method of manipulating the large leather figures accompanied dancing is unknown to Indonesia at present.
2.8. Religious context of *Nang Yai*—Wai Khru (Invocation)

The religious aspect of *Nang Yai* is clearly evident in the *wai khru* ceremony. The procedures of the invocation ceremony and the contents of the *bot wai khru* are described here through the literature.

2.8.2. Contents of *bot wai khru* (invocation texts)

In 1961, Simmonds\(^{40}\) compared two versions of *Nang Yai* invocation texts which were written at different times. The first one was found in the Oriental Collection of University of Edinburgh (called EB in his article) and the other was edited by Thailand’s Vajiranana National Library (called VN in his article) in 1920. Simmonds compared them in detail and identified the EB version as being earlier than the VN version.

He found strong Hindu-Brahmanic elements, such as the use of *tāi phrai* and hobby-horse dancing in the earlier version. In relation to *tāi phrai*, the EB version describes the process of making *tūa nang* and mentions that the hide of a cow which died when it was pregnant (*tāi phrai*)\(^{41}\) is used. In contrast, the later VN version mentions only *phra kho* (the hide of a sacred cow).\(^{42}\)

In relation to hobby-horse dancing, the EB version states that the master of the theatre holds the bridle of the rein, which suggests that he dances with a hobby-horse as was widely done in Thailand and Indonesia, and still is done in Bali.\(^{43}\) Hobby-horse trance dancing is a Hindu-Brahmanic practice, called Sanghyang Djaran in Bali. Before starting the dance, a dancer enters into a trance, putting red-hot coals into his mouth. This feature is clearly described in the earlier EB version, which also describes the dancing. In contrast, this Hindu-Brahmanic practice was soft-pedaled in the VN version, where it was written

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\(^{41}\) *Tāi phrai* literally means the death while one is pregnant. This content of EB version of *bot wai khru* (invocation texts) is similar to the statement of *nāi nang* Sawāng Chakêt in Wat Khanön troupe. He mentioned that the shadow-panel of Tosakan is made of the skin of a cow which died while it is pregnant.

\(^{42}\) Simmonds, "New Evidence on Thai Shadow-Play Invocations", pp. 547-548. *Phra kho* (sacred cow) is mentioned on page 550 in Canto three, verse two of VN version.

\(^{43}\) Ibid, p. 552., he said that Th. Pigeaud cites, in his *Javaanse volksvertoningen*, Batavia, 1938, many examples of dancing with hobby-horses at ceremonies such as marriages and hair-tonsures occasions both in Java and Thailand, on which the shadow-play was also performed. Pigeaud frequently mentions dancing in a circle by a number of men with hobby-horses. Quoting Hidding, with reference to a Sundanese performance, he [Pigeaud] states that the five men concerned were dressed as *Wayang* heroes. This suggests a definite connexion between hobby-horse dancing and the shadow-play. At the moment Pigeaud’s book is not available to the writer and cross-checking of its content is, therefore, impossible.
merely that the master holds the control of the troupe and has "red-hot charcoals into his mouth".44

In conclusion, Simmonds finds that,

[A]s far as the content of the invocation texts is concerned, these strong Hindu-Brahmanic elements, important lexical features, and verification of the earlier texts [shows], that the influence of Cambodia, and, more particularly, of the great civilization of the Khmer empire that lies behind it, cannot be discounted.45

It is likely that the earlier EB version was re-written as the VN version during a period when Thai nationalism began its upsurge in the beginning of the 20th century. Any elements which were "not Thai", such as erotic Hindu-Brahmanic practices, were edited and "sanitized" into a rather more moderate text which Theravada Buddhists could tolerate. The sexually suggestive trance dance with a hobby-horse between one's legs and the grotesque practice of putting hot coals in one's mouth may have seemed too obscure for court scriveners influenced by the prevailing "middle path" of Theravada Buddhism.

2.8.3. Procedures of wai khrū (invocation) ceremony

There are two interesting procedures in wai khrū as practised in Khmer Nang Sbaek which point to the link between Khmer Nang Sbaek and Thai Nang Yai. These are described by Brunet as follows.

It starts with a ritual ceremony which has a magic purpose, on the one hand, it has to ensure that the performance will materialize in good condition (Shiva and Vishnu are called upon) and on the other hand, it has to make the characters who are going to appear come to life. Three screams uttered by the dancers first of all call upon the deities to take part in the performance.....Then, proceeding to the "awakening of the figures". Furnished with a container of consecrated water he wets the eyelids of the leather figures, then, with a comb and a mirror he proceeds with their toilette.46

44. This content appears in the line 8 of canto 1 in VN version. For the details of this episode, see Simmonds, "New Evidence on Thai Shadow-Play Invocations", p. 552 and Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies, Dance and Drama in Bali, London, 1938, pp. 78-80 and particularly the photo opposite of p. 79.
46. Jacques Brunet, "Nang Sbek Cambodian Shadow-Dancing Theatre", p. 116. During field research, this writer found that attendance to "the toilette of deities" to awaken the holy figures, as found in Khmer Nang Sbek, was not practiced by any of the troupes visited in Thailand.
The Khmer practice of uttering three cries as mentioned above, is also practised by Thai
*Nang Yai* performers. The second manner of "awakening of the figures", attending to
their toilette, is not practised by Thai *Nang Yai* performers, but the invocation ceremony
itself is called *bōēk nā phra* which means "opening the faces of deities". Therefore it may
be supposed that attending to the toilette of the deities, or something like it, was once a part
of Thai invocation ceremonies, but, in the course of time, has been forgotten in all except
name.

These similarities suggest an early important connection between the Thai theatre genre
and that of Khmer culture. The more ancient and sophisticated form of this class of shadow
play seems to be the Khmer *Nang Sbaek*. In cases of cultural transition, it is usual for a
stylized and simplified version of the original cultural form to be received into the adopting
society. Therefore, it can be strongly argued that Khmer *Nang Sbaek* was transmitted to
Siam, where it was adopted and simplified as *Nang Yai*.

The origins of *Nang Sbaek* are lost in time. Jacques Brunet notes that there has been a
*Nang Sbaek* troupe in Siemreap, Cambodia since the 11th century. He argues that the bas-
reliefs of Angkor Wat were copied as shadow panels which, accompanied by music and
dancing, eventually evolved into *Nang Sbaek*. Yet, as he admitted, no written record are
available and his hypothesis remains unproved. His articles were written at the zenith of the
period when Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia attempted to foster nationalism amongst the
Cambodian people through their traditional cultures. *Nang Sbaek*, which may have existed
as traditional folk theatre, was most likely used to foster nationalism by being linked with
the great, ancient, Khmer civilization. Brunet's estimation of the origin and antiquity of
*Nang Sbaek* might have been influenced by this.

A relatively recent article written by Michael Smithies and Euayporn Kerdchouay in
1977 concerns the *Nang Yai wai khrū* ceremony performed by the Wat Khanōn troupe of
Ratchaburi Province. The article includes a translation of the *bot wai khrū* and a detailed
account of the procedure of the *wai khrū* ceremony. A comparison of the ceremony
described by Smithies and Euayporn in 1977 with that which this writer observed in
Ratchaburi Province on 5 May 1989 shows that the later ceremony was simplified. Some
procedures were omitted, probably to avoid boring the audience. This indicates that *Nang*

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47. The "Three cries" are called *hō sām khrang* or *hō sām rā* in Thai. They can be observed in the video
titled "*Nang Yai Wat Khanōn*" edited and taken by Samnakngān Sawōem Ṣāng Ekalak Ḋht, 1975.
The audience replies by shouting "*yiew".  
48. A *Nang Yai* performance by Wat Khanōn troupe at Tarunā Primary School on the 5th of May, 1989 for
the occasion of Ratchaburi Exposition. In the *Nang Yai* performance on the occasion of Ratchaburi
Yai performances are continuing to be reduced and simplified. It also signifies that the role of traditional theatre in Southeast Asia is changing as modern people become less attached to theatre genres which centre around religious ceremony.

2.9. Summary of Some Characteristics of Nang Yai as Drawn from the Literature and some Lacunae

The origin of Nang Yai has been argued over by both Thai and Western scholars. Thai scholars have seen Malaysia and Indonesia as its likely origin, while Simmonds sees ancient Khmer civilization as the origin of at least the style and content of the invocation ceremony and text. Sheppard also rejects the theory accepted by most Thai scholars and argues that this class of shadow-play was transmitted from India to ancient Cambodia and then, possibly through royal marriage, to the Malay Peninsula.

The issue is very difficult to resolve as evidence from the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia is missing. Traces of Hindu influence from before the Islamic conquest in the 13th century are sometimes difficult to find. However, the origin of Nang Yai does not seem to bother the Thai scholars too much. They often write that Nang Yai has been present in Thailand since the Ayutthaya period (Nang Yai kh/testing khon Thai tantae samai krung Sri Ayuthaya) and do not question its origin before then. The Thai scholars are principally interested in Nang Yai as it occurs in Thailand today and in its preservation.

The literature also indicates that Nang Yai involved many religious aspects, especially in its introductory invocation ceremonies or Thai Rāmakīan and Khmer Ramker, and is considered to possess supernatural power, as are its reciters. If Simmonds is correct, trance-dancing also introduced performances of the distant past. Early Nang Yai probably involved both the performers and the audience in a state of trance to some degree. The flitting shadows and dancing silhouettes of human-beings linked to divine images, themselves ethereal shadows and silhouettes pierced and illuminated by the light of smoky coconut lamps, do seem magical and as they dance and revolve amidst the sounds of traditional percussive melodies, a spirit of mystery and awe is tangible.

However, important socio-economic aspects of the connection between Nang Yai and religion are not reported in the literature. These must be examined soon, whilst troupe members are still alive and can recall the past. Similarly, data concerning the social status

Exposition, hō sām khrang was omitted. The recitation of three thūay (section) of bot wai khrū was reduced into one thūay only. For details, see Chapter 3.
and roles of *Nang Yai* performers, especially as indicated by the economic-arrangements for *Nang Yai* performances, has not yet been collected and analysed.

This work undertakes field research to collect some of this data. In particular, the socio-economic status and role of *Nang Yai* troupes and the pattern of this art's transmission down the generations are studied. The field research is reported in the next chapter.
Chapter 3.
Field Research

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses field research undertaken by this writer. It took the form of interviews conducted with the performers of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe in Sing Buri Province and Wat Khanōn troupe in Ratchaburi Province. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first introduces the setting of the field research. The second presents the series of questions asked during field interviews along with their intentions. The third part analyses data obtained during the interviews. The interview questions are attached at Appendix 2 and summarized interview transcripts are attached at Appendix 3.

3.2. Setting of Field Research

3.2.1. Wat Sawāngārōm troupe in Sing Buri Province

Wat Sawāngārōm is located in the Muang district of Sing Buri Province. It takes about two and a half hours to reach from the northern bus station in Bangkok. It is located on the left side of the road to Ang Thong from the main bus terminal in Sing Buri Province. Most performers live in the tambon (sub-district) called Ton Phō (Bodhi tree) which is located around the monastery.

Three sets of interviews were conducted with the puppeteer-dancers at the monastery and one with nāi nang Chağn Suphanakhōn at his residence. The puppeteer-dancers gather every day at the temple to clean the sanctuary and generally have fun, which is something they have probably done ever since they were young. Most interviews were often interrupted by the curious villagers and it was impossible to ask questions in their prepared order. Therefore, the interview questions were eventually memorized by this writer and asked at random in order to elicit more spontaneous reactions from performers.

3.2.2. Wat Khanōn troupe in Ratchaburi Province

Wat Khanōn is located in the Potharam District of Ratchaburi Province. It takes about two and half hours from the southern bus station in Thon Buri Province, along the highway
through Ratchaburi Province, to a narrower road to its Ban Pong District, which is about 20km past the Muang District of the Province. From Ban Pong, it takes another ten minutes to go to Tambon Soi Fa (Soi Fa sub-district) in the Potharam District. In Tambon Soi Fa, one goes down the unpaved road lined with banana trees to find Wat Khanōn on the right side.

From Wat Khanōn the writer was instructed to proceed to the residence of the nāi nang (head of the troupe) Sawāng Chakēt. At nāi nang's residence, interviews with a khon phāk (narrator) and nāi nang were held. In contrast to the interviews at Wat Sawāngārōm, these interviews were conducted without any interruption. As questions were asked, nāi nang Sawāng Chakēt recollected many things of the past and sometimes he did not stop talking. Therefore, the interview was conducted in an informal manner.

3.3. The Interview Questions

The overall aim in all interviews was to draw out the socio-economic aspects of Nang Yai troupe performances. Questions were framed following a literature review and an observation of a Nang Yai performance on 5 May 1989. At the latter, this writer could not ascertain the relationship between the performers, temples, audience, occasions, organizers and so on. An "official" explanation given by the director of Nang Yai Wat Khanōn offered only very limited insight into these matters. From these queries concerning the social aspects of Nang Yai troupes, the interview questions were developed. To distinguish Nang Yai as played in the past and in the present, some questions were asked both in present and past tenses.

The first four questions are intended to identify the performers by name, age, role of performance and date of interview.

The next nine questions aimed to clarify the internal organization of the troupe and the methods of transmission of the artistic aspects of Nang Yai, kān chōēt (manipulation and dancing), kān phāk (recitation of stories) and wai khru (invocation). Through this group of questions, three subjects were examined: motivation in learning/teaching; method of teaching; and the nature of the teacher-student relationship.

In relation to these subjects, Brandon describes some characteristics of the transmission of arts in Southeast Asian theatres as follows,
The forms and formulas of Southeast Asian theatre are preserved and transmitted to succeeding generations through traditional teaching methods conspicuously different from those used in the West.¹ A master of an artistic discipline---guru in Sanskrit and Indonesian, gru in Thai---is a revered person. He possesses "secrets" of his art, and may possess religious powers as well.²

He further described the example of a dalang of Wayang Golek (wooden rod puppets) in Jogjakarta,

[A dalang] the strong family system that supported the art of dalangship: there are only five names a dalang may take (Djermo, Gondo, Terit, Kuno, or Widi, his name). Although he teaches many people, he declared "a good dalang is the son of a good dalang." His son is being prepared to take his place when he becomes too old to perform. None of his other pupils receives training as thorough as that given his son. Master-disciple teaching has two sides to it, as these illustrations show: it tends to preserve traditions and hand them on to the next generation quite exactly; but, because the master teaches all he knows to only one or two pupils, the diffusion of knowledge of the art form tends to be limited.³

Brandon's proposition that the relationship between teachers of an art and students usually involves a very strong family relationship enabled this writer to raise this subject for confirmation.

Another group of questions were prepared by this writer to ascertain the eco-social status of a Nang Yai troupe. In main, this is determined by identifying whose patronage a Nang Yai troupe enjoys. According to the research and case studies made by Euayporn Kerdchouay⁴ and Phaop Pósakrisana⁵, in the case of Wat Khanōn, tūa nang (shadow panels) are the property of the temple. Therefore, financial relations between the monasteries and the performers were examined using questions which assumed that, as tūa nang belong to the monasteries, the performers must pay to the monasteries a portion of the money they earn in return for their use. If this assumption is correct, then, the performers are financially independent of the monasteries. If not, then it is possible that the

². Ibid, p. 155.
⁵. Phaop Pósakrisana, Nang Yai Wat Khanōn.
monasteries own both tua nang and the performers, in which case the monasteries may have full financial control.

Included in the same set of questions was an enquiry as to whether the nature of a patron affects the type of performance given. For example, if tua nang (shadow-panels) belong to monasteries, Nang Yai performances would probably be held mainly on religious occasions. Further, these questions attempted to clarify the hierarchy for making decisions related to organization of a performance. They aimed to examine the roles of monasteries and the performers in carrying out business. Of primary interest was the extent to which the performers have autonomy.

Following these ten questions, eight questions were asked in order to determine the status of a Nang Yai troupe according to the moral and financial support it receives.

A group of miscellaneous questions concluded the interviews. The first aimed to establish whether Nang Yai was a medium designed to spread the Rāmakian among villagers in Thailand. The second aimed to establish whether there were any other Nang Yai shadow-panels and troupes near the temples visited so as to find out whether it was a popular entertainment in these areas. The last three questions in the last section were concerned with the relationship between the audience and the performers, particularly during invocation ceremonies. They aimed to establish the extent to which the audience and the performers of Nang Yai share a common view. As is evident from the article of Michael Smithies and Euayporn Kerdchouay, the invocation ceremony held by Wat Khanôn troupe in 1974 seemed to have more audience involvement than the one this writer observed on 5 May 1989.

The overall aim in interviews was to draw out the economic and social aspects of a troupe's operation. Although the interview questions were designed to fall into different categories, they are necessarily inter-related and overlap each other. Therefore, analysis of data obtained during interviews was not necessarily done according to these categories.

3.4. Analysis of Interviews

7. Ibid, p.144. He mentions that the members of the troupe cry in acclaim three times and the master and his principal assistant stand to face the audience declaiming the wai khru text. From this description, it is clear that the wai khru ceremony was aimed at the audience rather than being a private matter for performers.
There are three essential parties concerned in every Nang Yai performance. The first one is the monastery which holds the means of this theatre production which are the tüa nang (shadow-panels) and other accessories like screens, poles and so on. Second is the promoter or organizer who hires a troupe. Third is the audience at the actual performances. Interviews were analysed in relation to these three parties.

3.4.1. Troupe organization

The Nang Yai troupes of Wat Sawangaröm and Wat Khanôn are similarly organized. Each troupe consists of khon phák (reciters), khon chôët (puppeteer-dancers), khon chat nang (an organizer of shadow-panels according to the content of stories) and nai nang (troupe master). The performers of both troupes do not consider the monasteries to be part of them, as monasteries are not allowed any involvement in secular activities. At present, various outside institutions have become interested in preserving Nang Yai, and some changes in the internal organization of troupe are being caused by these pressures and stimulation from outside. Wat Khanôn troupe, especially, enjoys unusually close cooperation with its monastery, which has placed a monk as director of Nang Yai, and with Krom Sinlapakon. Cooperation was strengthened when a donation from Thai Princess Sirindon was given to establish a gallery in the monastery to show the tüa nang and protect them from rats.

Wat Sawangaröm troupe's performers are mostly in their sixties and have few successors. They have been offered similar preservation assistance from Krom Sinlapakon, yet the matter remains under discussion amongst the performers. At present, they seem to be reluctant to accept outside assistance as they wish to retain their traditional family roles and pride as custodians of Nang Yai. This problem is discussed in the next section of "transmission of art".

The monasteries hold the means of production, or shadow-panels of both Wat Khanôn and Wat Sawangaröm troupes. In the past, when a promoter wanted to hold a Nang Yai performance, he/she had to talk to senior members of the troupe or to nai nang. Then, the

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8. The idea that the monasteries are different institutions from the troupes themselves was distilled from interviews with performers from Wat Sawangaröm troupe and from an interview with nai nang Sawang Chakêt of Wat Khanôn troupe. The reason seems to be that, despite the fact that both troupes use the name of their temples, the monasteries are Theravada Buddhist institutions, which cannot involve themselves in secular activities such as financial negotiations and transactions, and so on.

9. See Appendix 3. Nai nang Sawang Chakêt and a reciter Lek Sunkâw mentioned very frequently that they perform Nang Yai for the monastery which owns shadow-panels.
performers, represented by *nāi nang*, asked the monasteries for permission to take shadow-panels out for performances and gave some amount of money to monasteries as a donation in return. The role of *nāi nang* was primarily to act as the manager of the troupe. He dealt with the negotiation of the price, means of transportation, meals and so on. After a performance, he divided money amongst the members of a troupe.

Wat Sawāngārōm troupe still maintains this tradition. However, Wat Khanōn troupe's internal hierarchy seems to have been altered since Krom Sinlapakon (Department of Fine Arts) started to get involved in it. As is evident from the interview with *nāi nang* (the head of the troupe) Sawāng Chakēṭ†¹⁰, the performers used to receive money from senior troupe members; but two years ago the director of *Nang Yai* at Wat Khanōn began to distribute money to performers.

Thus, a result of the active involvement of outside interests in Wat Khanōn troupe, the roles of senior performers such as *nāi nang* have been reduced. About forty or fifty years ago, *nāi nang* had a lot of independence in making all kinds of decisions. Nowadays, these decisions are made by Wat Khanōn. Its priority is the political and financial preservation of the troupe. Figures drawn from the interviews indicate that some 2,500 to 3,500 Baht of the total 7,000 to 8,000 Baht paid for a performance, almost one half may remain in the hands of the monastery to be used for preservation.†¹¹

### 3.4.2. Transmission of the art

In the past, transmission of the art was restricted to the family members.†¹² For example, a puppeteer-dancer in Wat Sawāngārōm troupe in Sing Buri, or Mr. Piam Suphanakhōn who is a grandson of khon rāēk (the beginner of this troupe), learned the art of dancing and manipulation from his elder-brother-in-law, Chīja Suphanakhōn. Another puppeteer-dancer, Mr. Sanun Ankelo, learned the art from the same teacher as Piam Suphanakhōn did, who is his cousin. Similarly, in Wat Khanōn, present-day *nāi nang*, Mr. Sawāng Chakēṭ, learned the art of dancing and manipulation from his lung (An uncle, older in age than one's parents). One of the reciters in Wat Khanōn troupe, or Mr. Lek Sungkāw learned

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10. See Appendix 3.
11. The performers are about 30 people including orchestra, which is not part of the property of the monastery, (see Appendix 3). An interview with Lek Sunkāw, a reciter of Wat Khanōn troupe, (see Appendix 3 interview of 29 May 1989) indicated that the amount of money they receive after each performance averages 150 Baht. Therefore, after 4,500 Baht (150×30=4,500) is taken from the 7,000 or 8,000 Baht received, some 2,500 or 3,500 Baht remain.
12. See Appendix 3. Four performers that this writer interviewed learned their art from their relatives.
the art of reciting from Khrū Un Changkēt, who is his ā (an uncle younger in age than one's parents).

In both troupes, transmission of the art is limited to small numbers of people. In the case of Wat Khanōn troupe, dekwat (boys who reside in a temple to help monks) have traditionally been puppeteer-dancers and their descendants are now performing. In case of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, the performers are the descendants of Mr. Nūam Suphanakhōn. The family is prominent in the district as he, although a commoner, was given an official title called Khun Bān Mōn kit pramūan.13

A strong contrast between these two temples is that, while Wat Khanōn troupe has been under the strong influence of its monastery, Wat Sawāngārōm troupe has not. At Wat Khanōn, dekwat (boys who reside in a temple to help monks) perform and, therefore, the performers are part of the monastery. On the other hand, at Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, the troupe consists of members of the Suphanakhōn family which has been traditionally a high ranking family in the district. Even though they call themselves the Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, they only interact with the monastery when they organize a performance and ask permission to use tūa nang. Therefore, the Wat Sawāngārōm performers are more independent of their monastery.

Both troupes use texts written on samutkhoi, or rice paper, for recitation. In the case of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, the texts are kept in the hands of nāi nang, Mr. Cha襳 Suphanakhōn, along with the text for puppet-manipulation and dancing. In case of Wat Khanōn troupe, texts written on samutkhoi (rice paper) are kept by Krom Sinlapakon and the texts written on ordinary notebooks are kept in the hands of reciters. They do not have any texts for puppet manipulation. This writer's request to examine the original texts written on samutkhoi was kindly refused by nāi nang Cha襳 Suphanakhōn, who explained "khru raeng" (teachers are powerful).

"Khru raeng" literally translates as "teachers (khru) are powerful (raeng)." According to nāi nang Cha襳 Suphanakhōn14, this means that "teachers' have supernatural power". It is a belief among Nang Yai performers that even shadow-panels and texts are possessed by the spirits of teachers of the past and that, if the performers made the latter unhappy, they

13. Suphit Anusāt, Nang Yai Wat Sawāngārōm, Lopburi, 1987, p. 19. It was the lowest title given to commoner by royalty.
14. See Appendix 3. In the interview with nāi nang Cha襳 Suphanakhōn of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, he told of a performer who was punished because he spoke in a rude manner while carrying shadow panels, which are very sacred.
would be severely punished.\textsuperscript{15} For example, if the performers show outsiders their original texts, which are considered as manifestations of the power of past teachers, they will be punished, as there is a chance that the teachings may leak to other troupes.\textsuperscript{16}

The dual factors, of transmission exclusively within the family and of belief in secret and supernatural nature operate to exclude outsiders. This was clearly expressed in an interview with Piam Suphanakho n, a puppeteer-dancer of Wat Sawangarom troupe. He said, "This Nang Yai belong to the Suphanakho n, if we do not have anybody to succeed us, let it die." \textsuperscript{17}

Although they have texts to instruct them, their way of learning their art is quite simple. For panel manipulation and dancing, they hold both sides of a bent bamboo stick and practise the various steps, following and copying their teachers' steps and grips.\textsuperscript{18} In actual practice, texts are not used at all. This type of instruction requires a small number of students, which restricts popularizing of the art. It is likely to have been factor in the decline in popularity of this theatre genre.

Choice of places for practising panel manipulation and dancing also reflect the performers beliefs in the powers of the shadow-panels. Performers often practise in front of houses and monasteries but never take the shadow-panels into the house,\textsuperscript{19} due to a belief that shadow-panels have the power to generate saniat (bad luck).\textsuperscript{20}

Two persons from Wat Sawangarom troupe, Piam Suphanakhun and Chaon Suphanakho n, explained that shadow-panels cannot be taken into houses because they have

\textsuperscript{15} See Appendix 3. In the interview with nai nang Chaon Suphanakho n in Wat Sawangarom troupe, he told of a performer who was punished by having expanding and shrinking sexual organs. It is guessed that he was honoured, first, by having a chance to carry heavy shadow-panels and dance, which gave him a chance to show his masculine power. Yet, he made the mistake of complaining of its heavy weight after the performance. It is very interesting that shadow-panels which are categorized as something masculine connected to men's sexual organs.

\textsuperscript{16} See Appendix 3. An interview with Piam Suphanakho n and Samphim Ditwiset of Wat Sawangarom troupe.

\textsuperscript{17} See Appendix 3. An interview with Piam Suphanakho n of Wat Sawangarom troupe. He meant that the performers in Wat Sawangarom troupe do not want any involvement from Krom Sinlapakon or whatever other organization, because they are not part of this dying art form. Also in a brief chat with Sanun Ankieo on 18 May 1989, he mentioned, "Our Nang Yai will die with us since we are all old without many successors.".

\textsuperscript{18} See Appendix 3. Interviews. Both troupes applied this method.

\textsuperscript{19} See Appendix 3. Both troupes do not practise steps and grips while taking shadow-panels into the house.

\textsuperscript{20} See Appendix 3. Nai nang Sawang Chaket of Wat Khanon troupe actually used these words.

\textsuperscript{21} See Appendix 3.
thēwadā (spirits of ancestors or the deceased). However, nāi nang of Wat Khanôn troupe, Sawang Chakêt, said that the shadow-panels themselves are a manifestation of the Rāmakīan, which, in his opinion, teaches us that tanhā phā chūa ēhōn tūa tāi (lust leads to evil until your death). Nāi nang Sawang Chakêt took as his example Tosakan, who is the king of Lonkā where demons live. King Tosakan lusted after and abducted beautiful Lady Sidā, who is the queen of Phra Rāma, the king of Ayuthaya. Without knowing that she was his own daughter, he tried to make her his queen. Eventually he had to fight over Lady Sidā with Phra Rāma, sacrificing members of his family in battles. The performers of nāi nang Sawang Chakêt's generation may have been afraid of this story becoming true in their own lives, if they brought the tūa nang into their homes.

Nāi nang Sawang Chakêt also mentioned another reason for the taboo, that the shadow-panel of Tosakan is made from the skin of a cow which has died whilst pregnant. Taking a panel made of a creature with such an unfortunate fate into one's house is, he thinks, bad luck.

Changing attitudes among the new, modern generation in Thailand undermine all of these supernatural reasons for venerating Nang Yai. Thus, transmission of the Nang Yai theatre genre is very limited to a small number of people who are members of the same family and who possess the same superstitions, handed down from generation to generation. These factors contribute to the decline in popularity of Nang Yai.

3.4.3. Types of support

This section examines how a Nang Yai troupe is supported. There are various other kinds of support for Southeast Asian theatres, as observed by Brandon.

Professional theatre troupes support themselves in a variety of ways. Underlying each means of support is the concept of a social contract which regulates the relation between a troupe and its supporters. The contract may be expressly stated or implied. It may be for a period of

22. See Appendix 3. An interview with nāi nang Sawang Chakêt of Wat Khanôn troupe. Nāi nang's idea that the story of the Rāmakīan itself has some supernatural power also supported by the episode of Ramker (Khmer Ramayana), and its chanting cited in "Ramker (Ramayana Khmer)", Kambuja, vol. 57, 1969, p. 177 as follows: The recitation must take place in the home. In spite of this, even outdoors under a mango tree, very far from the home, it happens that a large branch falls on the teller and his audience during one of Lanka's [Tosakan's country] battles!

23. See Appendix 3. An interview with nāi nang Sawang Chakêt of Wat Khanôn troupe. This kind of death is called tāi phrài, which appeared in an analysis of bot wai khru by Simmonds in Chapter 2.
several years or for a single performance. It may involve a large sum of money or a trifle. But always the basis of the contract is an agreement to render service for payment received. The service rendered by the troupe is a performance or performances; the payment received may be hard cash, housing, clothes, or a lifetime post. By the term "social contract," I mean to convey the idea that the contract is often more than a simple monetary agreement. It can encompass complex social obligations and privileges on both sides.24

According to Brandon, there are three main ways that professional theatre troupes are supported in Southeast Asia. The first and oldest is by government support. In days gone by this kind of support was extended to court artists by kings and princes25, while, the modern equivalent is subsidized State or municipal theatre.26 This support is characterized by long-term contracts which maintain the continuity of a prized theatrical heritage. Yet the difference between royal support and governmental support, is that if a court troupe is sometimes a private plaything, a subsidized troupe is a public utility.27

A second way of supporting theatre is by commercial support, which may be "direct" or "indirect". Salient features of "direct" support are that,

Tickets are sold to the general public, and the troupe receives as income at least part of the proceeds of the sale of tickets. If a troupe may function as a free and independent unit, assuming full financial responsibility---selling tickets, paying ticket taxes, assuming the risk of financial loss if audiences are small and, conversely, keeping profits if audiences are large. The troupe acts on its own initiative. In this circumstance the social contract is between the troupe and a multitude of ticket buyers. The duration of the contract is brief---a single performance---and its terms are business-like and simple---admission to one performance upon the payment of a fixed admission fee. This kind of contract gives a troupe no security at all.28

In the case of "indirect" support,

24. Brandon, Theatre in Southeast Asia, p. 188.
25 Ibid, p. 188.
27. Ibid, p. 191.
[A] troupe is invited to perform in a town for a specified period of time—usually several weeks or several months—by some local sponsoring organization which assumes direct financial responsibility for its engagement. Tickets are sold and from the proceeds the sponsoring organization pays the taxes, takes care of theatre rent, and pays the troupe a fixed fee for each performance, keeping for itself whatever profit is realized. Indirect commercial support involves two social contracts: one between the ticket purchaser and the sponsoring organization, and one between the sponsoring organization and the theatre troupe.29

The third way of supporting theatre, in which *Nang Yai* might fit, is that of communal support.

In communal support a troupe is hired by an individual or an organization to perform for a stipulated fee with the performance being offered by the sponsor as service to the community. Tickets are not sold and anyone may see the play without charge. As no one can offer their community continuous free entertainment, some special occasion is required to justify the expense of hiring a troupe. Religious occasions are perhaps the most important times at which performances of plays have become sanctioned as appropriate means of communal celebration. Professional troupes are invited to perform for temple anniversaries, birthdays of local guardian spirits, the end of the Islamic fasting period, and on religious holidays like the lunar New Year in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Java, Sunda, and Bali today just as they have for centuries in the past.30

The basic distinguishing features of communal support are three: funds to pay the troupe for its performance are not raised by selling tickets to the performance; the formal contract between sponsor and troupe is usually for a single night only; and implied in the social contract is the thought that the performance is being offered by the sponsor for the benefit of the community.31

As became evident through the observation of a performance and through interviews, the *Nang Yai* troupes observed receive mainly communal support. For example, anybody could come to see the *Nang Yai* performance at Ratchaburi on the 5th of May, 1989.

without buying tickets. From casual conversation and interviews with performers from the Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, some idea of the social contract between troupe and the organizers can be gained. According to Sanun Ankīeo (a puppeteer-dancer in Wat Sawāngārōm troupe) when somebody wants to have a Nang Yai performance, he/she asks nāi nang first about the availability of the troupe. Then negotiations concerning total fee, meals, transportation and so on commence and, when agreement is reached, the organizer places a deposit with nāi nang. The amount of payment depends on the occasion for the performance.

The type of support for this theatre genre relates to the types of occasions for which it is performed. From the interviews it was evident that in the past the usual occasions for Nang Yai performances were traditional ones, where the performances fitted into the religious and social fabric of the community. These include cremations, birthdays, celebrations of new houses and festivals. Cremations and birthdays are important opportunities for Theravada Buddhists to give tham bun (alms-giving). They believe in reincarnation and that, if one has accumulated merit, one will be reincarnated at a higher social station in the next life. People give gifts to the monastery and organize entertainments for cremations and birthdays as these are significant occasions in their lives to accumulate merit.

The religious nature and the association with monasteries of these occasions indicate that, to some extent, Nang Yai was performed for religious purposes. On the other hand, this aspect should not be over-emphasized as the performers wanted to create an entertainment of their own for villagers. In traditional Thai society, it is often inappropriate to separate entertainment and religion. Both are tied together in traditional culture, as to entertain is to give tribute to the gods and spirits and gain merit for oneself.

Today the occasions for performances of Nang Yai are more varied, and include cultural displays, television performances and simple theatrical amusements. However, the type of social contract and communal support is the same as in the past.

What is noteworthy about the new performance occasions is that they are increasingly dissociated from religious purposes. Examples of recent occasions include performances by both the Wat Khanōn and Wat Sawāngārōm troupes for the Siam Society, where the

32. Conversation with Sanun Ankīeo, a puppeteer-dancer of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe on the 14th of May, 1989. Also see Appendix 3.
34. See Appendix 3.
34. An interview with Achān Supit Anusāt, Lopburi Tepsatri Teachers' College, Lopburi, on the 29th of August, 1989.
audience was comprised of foreigners and Thais who came for study purposes. Wat Sawangaröm troupe has performed in the National Theatre at Chiangmai, in "study performances" at various teachers' colleges and for Channel 3 in Lampun. Wat Khanôn troupe has received help from Krom Sinlapakon (The Fine Arts Department) to find audiences, which resulted in its performing at the River City Shopping Complex in 1988.

In looking at the relationship with different groups of people surrounding a Nang Yai troupe, one thing is quite clear. The lack of interest from "insiders", or the members of families of Nang Yai performances, ironically, has led to the involvement of "outsiders" such as foreigners and cultural organizations, for preservation. In the case of Wat Khanôn, this eventually changed the power structure and social status of the troupe from a family dominated troupe performing for religious occasions to a semi-governmental troupe performing for any occasion. In case of Wat Sawangaröm troupe, there are very few "insiders" interested in retaining the tradition (Similar to Wat Khanôn troupe), yet the present performers wish to die holding on to their tradition.

3.4.4. Note on wai khru, (invocation ceremony), as an indicator of declining religious content

The content of the bot wai khru of Wat Khanôn, regularly recited during its wai khru ceremony, was translated by Michael Smithies and Euayporn Kerdchouay in 1974. They also detailed the procedures of the ceremony as Mr. Euayporn Kerdchouay was allowed to sit next to the former nai nang, Laож Thongmisit, to record this ceremony. The original texts in Thai are divided into three thuay, although the translation of their recitation was not. Therefore, the translation was reorganized by this writer in order to clarify these thuay. Paop Pôsakhrishna's book35 which recorded the kan phak of all the Wat Khanôn troupe's repertoire was consulted in order to clarify these thuay. The bot wai khru is translated as follows:

"I shall pay respects to the mighty king Totsarot, the almighty god of the earth. I shall pay respects to the king, to whom no one in the whole country can compare, for he stands guard over all his people, the slaves, farmers, officials, and he protects even the lords. But before going to have an audience with the king, I must according to the old tradition let my wife know of my departure. After this I shall pay respects to my teachers, from whom I learned all that I know."

35. Phaop Pôsakrisana, Nang Yai Wat Khanôn, pp. 41-49.
"When my teachers were instructing me or were with me, I seized the reins of knowledge, for they were all truly skilled. Sometimes they would gather in a circle and teach the art of dancing. Some of them to do this would put mortars and pestles in the centre, bend the bows with their feet, and carry at the same time live charcoals in their mouths. Some of them would tread on the edges of swords, and carry swinging lanterns from their mouths. Some would tie their bodies in three places and stab themselves with swords, and show their magic arts by scattering their guts over the ground. Then they would quickly start to shoot their arrows, but these would be transformed into soldiers."

"With the very best musicians, I pay respects to the great king. Then I pay respects to our lord. When he ordered it, then I commanded that the search be started for the cow's skin to be brought in and I made into a shadow figure. I fashioned the skin into the figures of Rama, and also Sita his wife along with him; and also a strong Lakshna was made. Before the play starts today, there must be special offerings. On my left, I shall pay respects to Rawana and on my right I shall pay respects to Rama. Thūay 1

"I wish the powerful almighty hermit, whose skills are so famous, to bless me with bountiful grace. May success, prosperity, happiness, please come to me in victory."

"I pay respects to the Buddha, who through his compassion for all living creatures attained Nirvana. And also before starting, I pay respects to the legendary king Anirut. I pay respects to the spirits living in the remote jungles, the spirits of the forests, streams, and of every valley in the mountains. I pay respects to the gods of the river, of all the caves and the woods. I pay respects to the teachers who instructed me and the old masters who are still alive."

"I am going to play the story of Rama. I asked my teachers to help me to draw cleverly and guide the art of cutting. I beg my teachers to help me to sing superbly, and also the help the dancers to give a marvellous performance. I want to play the shadow play and to receive the admiration of the audience."

"Cut down four wooden posts and set them up to raise the screen on them; the screen will have a red border on its four edges and white
cloth will be at the centre. Bring on the figure of Siva, surrounded by stars, on a chariot riding through the sky, where the sun seems to shine so brightly. And show the pictures of Lanka, the city of the demons, and also the large powerful city Ayuthaya: all this I shall show for you to see."

"Now is the time to begin and hear the gongs, drums and long drum which will play for you and make you happy. Our shadow play is not bad, and has been played for quite a long time, and no one has ever been discontented with it."

"I beg the good spirits to protect me from any evil powers and aid me from any one who criticizes my shadow play for being bad, or for not being beautifully performed. I beg the goodness of Rama and Lakshna to enter into every figure of the shadow-play."

"After finishing this introduction, I shall mark, check and add the finishing touches to the figures, in honour of Rama. I shall bring on the cut-out figures, so that all of you can see with your own eyes. I invite you all to come to see only the shadow of these figures of this eternal story on the screen."

"My old master taught me the art, my teachers instructed me and I ask for the protection of our lord to help me not to be defeated and shamed. If anybody tells me I am beaten by the others, I shall not despair or be frightened, for if someone else wins, I shall take lessons from him. Now, make haste my friends, make up the fire behind the screen and do not obstruct the light. Now I shall perform the shadow play for you all to see."

As is evident from this bot wai khrū, the wai khrū ceremony is dedicated to the various Hindu gods, the legendary kings and the performers' teachers in order to bring success to their performance. This bot wai khrū is of unknown origin and in its present form dates from the beginning of the Ratanakōsin period, but may well have been reconstituted even then from lingering memories of an earlier Ayuthayan form. Euayporn Kerdchouay mentions that these wai khrū texts vary slightly between troupes. For example, a troupe from a village which has huge old tree might include in its bot wai khrū an invocation of the spirits of that tree. This writer's field research did not discover similar

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37. Ibid, p. 143.
local variations, rather the *bot wai khrū* of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe is nearly the same in content, excepting spelling mistakes and some different choices of words, as the one of Wat Khanōn troupe.

The Wat Khanōn troupe's *wai khrū* ceremony procedures observed by the writer on 5th of May, 1989 in Ratchaburi were different from those described by Smithies and Kerdchouay in 1974. The two differences concerned the utterance of the *hō sām khrang* (cry in acclaim three times) and the direction faced by the *nāi nang* during recital of the *wai khrū*. First, the *hō sām khrang* described in their article as performed by the *nāi nang* and the performers was omitted in 1989. In performances by the Wat Khanōn troupe, the *hō sām khrang* is, these days, uttered by only one *khon phāk* in the section of *Hanumān thawai wāēn* (Hanumān presenting ring of Phra Rāma) in the *Rāmakian* itself.

However, the *hō sām khrang* was also observable in the video "Nang Yai Wat Khanōn" recorded by Samnakngān Sarōēm Sāng Ekalak khōng Chāt (the office of the Creation of Thai Identity) in 1986. The audience answered "yiew" to each cry of "hō" by the performers, so that one hears *hō yiew, hō yiew, hō yiew*. The *hō sām khrang* recorded in this video looks, at least superficially, as if it is just for fun, performers and audience preparing themselves to enjoy the performance. Yet, there must be some deeper significance because it is always held during the *wai khrū* ceremony. Brunet's description of Cambodian *Nang Sbaek* provides a useful comparison.

The master then utters three loud cries which are taken up by the dancers and the spectators. These cries invite Tevoda, Indra and all the Brahmanic gods to come and watch over the spectacle, and at the same time invite the spirits of the gods to attend the rites which are about to commence.\(^{38}\)

It can be assumed that *hō sām khrang* in *Nang Yai* of Wat Khanōn shared a similar function\(^{39}\) since the cries were uttered before the recitation of *bot wai khrū*. Additionally, the *hō sām khrang* and answer of *yiew* serves a theatrical function, it confirms that the performers and audience wish to share the common experience. However, in contrast to current Wat Khanōn troupe practice, the *nāi nang* Chaṅ Suphanakhōn of Wat Sawāngārōm explains that the *hō sām khrang* is for *saksit* (supernatural power) and that

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38. See Appendix 3. He mentions *hō sām khrang* was for fun, but to draw good luck, popularity and fun. The time for the crying *hō sām khrang* was usually decided on an astrology.
there is no answer back from the audience, which keeps quiet.\footnote{38} The gradual degeneration in practice of the \textit{hō sām khrang} as performed by Wat Khanōn troupe indicates that the significance of the practice has been lost.

The second difference between the Wat Khanōn troupe \textit{wai khrū} procedures observed by this writer in 1989 and those described by Smithies and Kerdchouay in 1974 concerns the direction faced by the \textit{nāi nang}. In 1989, the first \textit{thūay}, or section of the \textit{bot wai khrū}, was recited by the \textit{nāi nang} sitting and facing the three holy figures of Phra Isūan (Shiva), Phra Nārāi (Vishnu) and Rūshī (the hermit). Yet, in 1974, the practice was for the members of the troupe to cry in acclaim three times and the master and his principal assistant to face the audience declaiming the \textit{bot wai khrū}.\footnote{41}

What does this change mean? The clue might lie in the fact that there are two types of prayers uttered in Southeast Asian theatre. One is a prayer for private matters and the other is a prayer for the audience.

In troupes of many genres performers say prayers prior to performance. The saying of prayers may be a purely private matter, the performer reciting a prayer backstage out of view of the audience. Or it may recited in front of the audience and partially for the audience. The performer in this case is carrying out a public religious ritual.\footnote{42}

The \textit{wai khrū} of \textit{Nang Yai} of Wat Khanōn observed in 1974 by Smithies and Kerdchouay seems more "a public religious ritual" than "a private prayer". However, they commented that, even in 1974, the modern audience was restless during the \textit{wai khrū}.\footnote{43} Most no longer believe in the presence of \textit{Thēwadā} and \textit{saksit}. This comment was supported by an interview with \textit{nāi nang} Sawāng Chakēt of Wat Khanōn troupe.\footnote{44} Therefore the change in direction faced, which in effect excludes the audience from a public religious ritual, might have occurred because of a loss of interest on the part of the audience.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Appendix. 3.
\item Smithies and Kerdchouay, "Wai Kru", p. 144.
\item Brandon, \textit{Theatre in Southeast Asia}, p. 221.
\item Smithies and Kerdchouay, "Wai Kru", p. 147.
\item See Appendix 3. He mentioned that some procedures like \textit{hō sām khrang} had died along with some musical instruments like the \textit{Krōng} and \textit{Mālō} which often needed several people to play them. According to \textit{Thai Musical Instruments} written by Dhanit Yupho, Bangkok, B.E. 2530(1987), p. 12, one person may play the \textit{grong} using one-stick, or he may use two hands, holding one beater in each hand. Several players may also beat the \textit{grong} together, but it is most important the the beating be in unison so that the rhythm is precise and regular.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
3.4.5. Geographical Distribution of the *Nang Yai* theatre genre

Several miscellaneous questions examined the localities of *Nang Yai* theatre performances in days gone by. Answers to questions such as 'Where did you go to perform *Nang Yai* when you were young?', 'How did you go to the sites of performances?' and 'Where did other performers come from?', show a limited geographical distribution of *Nang Yai* performances.

In the case of Wat Khanôn troupe, the oldest member of the troupe, *náï nang*, Sawâng Chakêt, answered that he went mostly to the temples in Ratchaburi Province when he was young. A main reason for the poor distribution of performances was the limitation on transportation. Performers went to performance sites by cart and boat, which were the most common means of transportation in those days. These limiting factors constrained the popularity of Wat Khanôn troupe to its local area.

Similarly, in case of Wat Sawângârôm troupe, the performers traveled by boat. According to Piam Suphanakhôn, they went as far as Chai Nat and Nakhon Sawan. *Náï nang* Chaôn Suphanakhôn confirmed this, with the addition of Uthai, probably meaning Amphoe Uthai, Phra Nakhon Sri Ayuthaya Province. The furthest place that Wat Sawângârôm troupe used to travel to when its performers were young was Amphoe Chunsâeng of Nakhon Sawan Province. In the case of Wat Sawângârôm, taking into account that the temple faces the River Chao Phraya which connects Sing Buri Province and Nakhon Sawan Province, the long journey to Chai Nat is understandable.

As means of transportation have advanced, people from various cities in Thailand can organize *Nang Yai* performances. Now performances are no longer limited to the troupe's local provinces, but can include distant provinces, too. In the case of the Wat Sawângârôm troupe, performers have been to Chiangmai, Lamphun, Sukhothai and Ayuthaya. Performances in the first three places were not for religious ceremonies, but for a theatre in Chiangmai, for a television station in Lamphun and for a student study in Teachers' College.

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45. See Appendix 3. After repeating, "I cannot remember", Sawâng Chakêt said that the performances were mainly in temples in Ratchaburi Province.
46. See Appendix 3.
47. See Appendix 3.
48. See Appendix 3.
49. See Appendix 3.
50. See Appendix 3.
in Sukhothai. This gives evidence of the change in role of this theatre genre from a largely religious function to an amusing entertainment.

Another question aimed at delineating the distribution of *Nang Yai* performances was, 'Were there any other temples which could play *Nang Yai* when you were young?'. According to Piam Suphanakhôn, Sanun Ankëo and Chaõn Suphanakhôn of Wat Sawangärôm troupe, Wat Prasat in Amphoe In Buri, Sing Buri Province could do it. Today only the shadow-panels remain there without any performers. The performers of Wat Khanõn troupe could not recollect any other *Nang Yai* troupes. We can only imagine from those shadow-panels remaining at the temples in Central Thailand, that *Nang Yai* must have been a flourishing art in olden days with a good number of troupes serving mainly limited geographical areas. It would be interesting to compare *Nang Sbaek*’s troupes' geographical distribution but not much study has been made of this.

Another survey question which did not draw any positive answers concerned whether *Nang Yai* theatre genre was the only medium for villagers to learn the *Rámakian*. Most answered that it may have been. It is very likely, when you look at the stories played in various theatre genres in Thailand, that *Nang Yai* was the only theatre genre for villagers to know *Rámakian* along along with Nang Talung of olden days.54

3.5. Conclusion---From Thēwadā (spirits of deceased) to TV

*Nang Yai* as performed by both Wat Sawangärôm troupe and Wat Khanõn troupe initially had a religious context. In a physical sense this meant attachment to the monasteries and in a spiritual sense it meant dedication to the Hindu gods, *khru* (teachers) and the *Rámakian*. Forty or fifty years ago, *Nang Yai* was part of a performer's everyday life and of the cultural life of a district. It had a festive entertainment dimension for the audience and for the *thēwadā* (spirits of the deceased) so that at the same time it entertained and accumulated merit for performers and their sponsors. It was performed for religiously significant occasions such as rich people's cremations, birthdays and so on. It was organized along the lines of what Brandon termed "communal support" by people from nearby areas.

51. Chatting with Piam Suphanakhôn and Sanun Ankëo on the 14th of May, 1989 at the temple.
52. See Appendix 3.
53. According to the interview with the performers, "Wat Prasat" has shadow panels. Yet, an interview with Suphit Anusat, this writer of *Nang Yai Wat Sawangärôm*, and a visit to this temple, established that Wat Prasuk, In Buri District, Sing Buri Province, is the right name. This is also confirmed by Tepsatri Teachers' College in Lopburi's publication, *Ekasan wandap thi nung khömun thâng watthanatham Changwat Sing Buri*, Sing Buri, p. 37.
54. *Khôn* (masked-play) has also played *Rámakian*, yet for royalty and aristocrats only in olden days.
Performers came from the same family and shared common values and superstitions. These features were determined by socio-economic conditions, such as less-advanced means of transportation and the common expenditure of extra money for merit-making.

Advanced technology, particularly improving communication and transportation, has led to the gradual decline of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe and of Wat Khanōn troupe. Improved transportation to facilitate the export of greater quantities of cultivated rice from the central plain of Thailand together with increased amount of disposable money income, has resulted in local people becoming more interested in traded goods for their pleasures. They devote less of their time to the monasteries and merit-making. Therefore, today's Nang Yai organizers come from various cities in Thailand to provide what Brandon called "communal support" for various purposes. Accordingly, performance occasions have changed from traditional religious ones to miscellaneous modern ones. These do not require the descent of Thēwādā (spirits of ancestors and deities) to preside over performances. The Wat Khanōn troupe has changed, whether successfully or not, to accommodate modern audiences and organizers. If a troupe resists change, as Wat Sawāngārōm does, it faces declining popularity and numbers of performances.

In the case of Wat Sawāngārōm troupe, extinction now threatens. The performers still believe their art only belongs to the Suphanakhōn family and, although they have few successors, they would not like "outsider" involvement. Yet, they have preserved a Nang Yai genuine tradition to date.

In case of Wat Khanōn troupe, Nang Yai is being preserved but, ironically, the ancient spirits of Nang Yai are fading away along with the old performers. The new generation of performers is supported by the preservation thrust of Krom Sinlapakon and the Office of Creating Thai Identity. Their knowledge of the old beliefs and superstitions so closely connected with their performances is negligible. However, a comparison of the little audience gathered for a Nang Yai performance held at the Tarunā Primary School in Ratchaburi Province in 1989 as against the hundreds of people gathered in the next ground on the same night for a Bingo game leads one to conclude that any effort to keep this theatre genre alive is worthy.

55. Preservation of the Nang Yai theatre genre is part of a Thai Identity program conducted by the Office of Creating Thai Identity, which is part of Prime Minister's Office. The various preservation activities include publication of book and offering opportunities for performances.
Chapter 4.

Conclusion

*Nang Yai* has a long history. Since this thesis is based on limited recent sources, it is appropriate to limit its conclusions to a few points on the past and present of *Nang Yai*, as well as addressing some questions concerning future research on *Nang Yai* and its cultural preservation.

The literature review and evidence from existing *Nang Yai* troupes and panels indicate that it is very likely that Thai *Nang Yai* was adopted from ancient Khmer civilization. Thais took over much of the ancient Khmer civilization in the 13th century, although the adoption of *Nang Yai* probably began sometime before that time through Khmer interaction with Thais, such as by marriage, military expansion and so on. It is likely that, during this period prior to Thais taking over Angkor Wat, related forms of entertainment, including *Nang Sbaek* type shadow-dance-drama and *Khôn* (masked-play) were already common.

Today, no written sources are available to prove the link from *Nang Sbaek* to *Nang Yai*. However, comparison of the content of *bot wai khrú* (invocation texts) and some procedures of *wai khrú* (invocation) ceremony, shows *Nang Sbaek* -type Hindu influences which support *Nang Yai*’s Khmer origin. This also leads to the conclusion that Thai *bot wai khrú* may have later been rewritten by Thais so as to eliminate some Hindu aspects.

Most of the Hindu aspects of *Nang Yai* are denied, or at least discouraged, by modern Thai scholars and performers. Although they are acquainted with the *Nang Yai* of no more than 60 years ago, at best, they assert that it was introduced into their villages and temples only as a form of entertainment. The assertion that it has never been an integral part of religious ceremony is ill-conceived, given that *Nang Yai*’s unusually lengthy *wai khrú* (invocation) ceremony before every performance is clear evidence of a former major religious significance.

Calculating from the present age of the interviewees, we can also say that only 50 to 60 years ago, *Nang Yai* was principally performed for important religious ceremonies, such as cremations, birthdays, celebrations of new houses and local religious festivals. The troupes performed for the general community and were hired by organizers for fixed prices.
for, most often, just one night. Performers never went out in search for opportunities to perform. They went only to perform for communities on special request and, because of the limited means of transportation, they went only to temples nearby.

Internal organization of a troupe commenced with the nāi nang (troupe master) at its pinnacle together with his family members. Anybody who wanted to hold a Nang Yai performance had to negotiate with the nāi nang. The nāi nang was more than the organizational head of a troupe, his role in wai khrū (invocation) ceremonies shows him acting also as its spiritual head.

The wai khrū ceremony was a lengthy affair, but had meaning for both the audience and the performers. In the case of Wat Khanōn troupe, the hō sām khrang (cry in acclaim three times) invited the ancestors' spirits to attend the ceremony and was responded to by the audience.

Modern technology, transportation and economics has introduced many other kinds of entertainment, such as movies, television and radio, which have replaced Nang Yai. On the other hand, Nang Yai performances can be held anywhere and organized by anybody in Thailand. While the popularity of Nang Yai has contracted, the reputation of surviving troupes of Nang Yai has spread out.

Motivations for organizing Nang Yai performances have also changed, from religious merit-making purposes to commercial, academic, cultural and nationalistic purposes. The trend of changing motivations has been accelerated by the impetus received from Krom Sinlapakon's cultural preservation efforts. Krom Sinlapakon's facilitation of opportunities for Nang Yai performances by Wat Khanōn troupe is laudable as it helps protect this theatre genre from dying away. However, one of the costs of governmental assistance is the more rapid demise of traditional aspects of Nang Yai, which are being completely ignored. These are the roles of the nāi nang and the wai khrū.

First, the role of nāi nang of Wat Khanōn troupe has become less relevant since his replacement by a "director of Nang Yai Wat Khanōn", a monk acting on behalf of Krom Sinlapakon. Distribution of money after each performance has been managed by this "director" for two years now, instead of by the nāi nang. The nāi nang and his family are no longer the embodiment and custodians of Nang Yai in a community.

Second, intangible cultural properties, the superstitions, taboos and ancient wai khrū procedures are not being preserved. Instead, tangible aspects, the tūa nang (shadow
panels), their manipulation and the dancing forms, are emphasized. As aspects of the former have been losing currency for some time, it is a matter of greater urgency that they be recorded for posterity, before they are absolutely lost. However, simple convenient use of modern audio-visual technology predicates a greater emphasis on the visible aspects of a performing art, rather focusing on the invisible aspects which form its heart. This problem has been commented on elsewhere.

Another aspect which needs attention is the hidden meaning of a performance. Under the increasing influence of the advanced technology the emphasis is shifting from the content to the format i.e., carriage of the dancers, the physical charms of the performers, glitter of the dress and jewellery, etc., etc., take precedence over the real message of the performance. Is this really justified, would the documentation with such lop sided emphasis?!

In relation to this matter, it is interesting to note that Khmer Nang Sbaek is reported to have "survived" the horrors of war during the Pol Pot regime and the subsequent Vietnamese occupation. Surviving aged performers have been gathered from their homes in Battangbang and Siemriep to teach their art to a younger generation in the Fine Arts University in Phnom Phenh. Yet, it is quite doubtful that what they teach and "preserve" of Nang Sbaek includes its dimension of "transcended spirits". The location in which they teach their art is a modern public institution, not traditional at all, and the people whom they teach are not related to them at all; both factors would inhibit the transmission of Nang Sbaek's secret and supernatural dimension. Yet, it must be kept in mind that, once the visible aspects of a performing art are recorded, it may possibly be, at least physically, "revived". Khmer Nang Sbaek is a living example.

Nang Yai's inclusion into the Thai Identity Program also needs attention in this sense. Most of the Thai scholars write of Nang Yai as Nang Yai không khon Thai, or 'Nang Yai

2. Suvit Suvit-Sawasdi, "Journey into Kampuchea", Bangkok Post, Sunday Leisure Extra, Bangkok, Sunday, April 30th, 1989. A picture of a performance of Nang Sbaek, or the scene of war council of Phra Rama's side was depicted on page 1 along with the explanation that "cultural traditions have survived the horrors of war as this performance in Phnom Penh attests to.
3. Telephone conversation with Dr. Yoshiaki Ishizawa, Director of Asian Culture Institute, Sophia University, Tokyo on the 13th of September, Bangkok, 1989. He has come back from research in Cambodia.
has been of the Thais' and it is generally considered to have been part of Thai culture since time immemorial. Therefore, history has simply not been a focus of study. In future, a focus of studies on this class of theatre art, not only on Nang Yai but also Khōn (masked-play) and Lakhôn (dance-drama played only by women), needs to be the search for historical reality. Research is needed in the immediate future as there are only three active Nang Yai troupes remaining in Thailand and their performers are aging.

The artistic aspects of Nang Yai, kān phāk (narration) and kān chōēt (manipulation and dancing) also require detailed study. So far, the only available study is by Ākhom Sāyākhom4, who was a Khōn dancer. His article mentions "techniques of manipulation and dancing", but not how he learned the techniques, which he possible drew from the steps of Khōn (masked-play). However, research on these artistic aspects of Nang Yai may be difficult to conduct because villagers often do not teach them to outsiders. Women are, needless to say, excluded.

The section of the Rāmakīan played in Nang Yai vary from one troupe to another. Therefore, a study on this subject, comparing the royal versions of Rāma I, Rāma II and Rāma VI might be quite interesting. Even through performers usually will not show "outsiders" the authentic textbook written on Samutkhoi paper, attendance at and recording of performances could be used to obtain the texts of the narrations. Presently, there are no translations of these.

More work needs to be done to put this theatre genre into the context of Thailand’s rural economic development. Of particular interest would be an examination of merit-making practices and the development of the rice trade, as it would appear that the effort put into merit-making declined markedly when the rice trade increased. Perhaps rural communities came to rely less on their internal resources for their spiritual and personal satisfactions.

More use of the system of arts support to assist individual expert artists might protect this art form more effectively than current efforts as in the accomplished artist, it retains its full cultural integrity. This approach has been particularly successful in Japan, where communities gather around "living national treasures". Certainly, Thailand needs to take determined action to protect its rich cultural and spiritual landscape from the steam-rolling incursions of modern commerce.

Appendix 1.

Hanumān Thawai Waēn

Phra Rāma, in his pursuit of Sīdā, his Queen, who was abducted by King Tosakan, traveled through a jungle. Phra Wisawakam (God of constructing) used his magical powers to create a temporary royal pavilion for Phra Rāma's overnight stay. He also brought the royal attire from Phra In (God Indra, God of Thunder and Rain) to the pavilion so that Phra Rāma could leave his monastic life. Sukrīp and Hanumān, the monkey warriors, led Thao Maha Chompu to have an audience with Phra Rāma to prepare the military forces for the battles with Tosakan, the King of Giants.

Phra Rāma commanded Hanumān, Ongkhot and Chompupan to lead a reconnaissance mission to the City of Lonkā and to find suitable locations for military bases. He ordered Hanumān to bring his ring and a "sabai" breast and shoulder wrap to Sīdā. Hanumān then led a military contingent to the southwesterly direction.

Beneath this lotus pond lurked a gigantic ogre named Paklan. In its former life, the giant used to be an angel serving [Phra Isawan, or Shiva in the following paragraphs] (God of Creation, Preservation and Destruction of the World²). He incurred the wrath of by committing adultery with one of the celestial angels. The God [Shiva]'s curse turned the banished angel into a green ogre-guardian of the pond. The curse would be lifted when it was killed by Phra Rāma's soldiers. Only then could the giant return as an angel to heaven once again.

Acting upon the order of Phra Rāma to survey the routes to Lonkā, the three soldiers reached the pond inhabited by Paklan, the green ogre, during the night. Ongkhot observed that there was an unusual amount of animal bones piled near the pond. He therefore asked to sleep between Hanumān and Chompupan.

In the dead of the night, the giant rose to the surface of the lotus pond to find the sleeping monkey soldiers. It was infuriated because its guarded territory had been trespassed. Seeing the three elegantly uniformed soldiers asleep with Ongkhot in the

2. Phra Isawan is Thai version of Hindu god, Shiva. In the original text, it is translated as Vishnu for unknown reason.
middle, it believed that Ongkhot must be the troops' commander. The giant made a bee-line to Ongkhot and kicked the sleeping monkey soldier.

The sleeping Ongkhot was furious when he was rudely kicked by the giant. A fierce battle raged on between the giant and the monkey troops. Finally, the giant was captured.

The captured giant was interrogated and revealed to its conquerors its adulterous affairs with the angel named "Mali" and subsequent celestial judgement by God [Shiva]. It implored Ongkhot to promptly kill it and, hence, lift the cruel curse.

The abandoned palace once belonged to King Tawan of Mayan city, who had been killed by God [Shiva] after an affair with an apsara (female angel) named "Rampa" through an abatement of another angel, "Pusamālī" When Hanumān, Ongkhot and Chompupan reached the outskirts of the deserted city, Hanumān ordered the troupes to wait while he went to survey the city alone.

Because of her involvement in the adultery, Pusamālī was banished by God [Shiva] to a solitary confinement in the palace for 30,000 years. The curse would be lifted only when she met Phra Rāma's soldier and directed him to Lonkā.

Hanumān saw the lovely Pusamālī making flower garlands alone in the palace. Pusamālī told him of her sufferings because of [Shiva]'s curse. Hanumān wasted no time in courting her and volunteered to free her from the torment.

Hanumān introduced himself as the ace commander of Phra Rāma's troops and the son of Phra Pai (God of Wind) on his way to Lonkā. Pusamālī refused to believe his story and retorted that the yawn of a true son of the God of Wing must turn into the moon and stars. Hanumān then proved it to Pusamālī. His yawn indeed turned into the moon and stars.

Pusamālī was convinced that Hanumān was telling the truth. Hanumān started flirting with Pusamālī with sweet words and soft caresses and finally consummated the amorous affair. [Shiva]'s curse on Pusamālī was broken.

After this delightful interlude and having been told of the direction to Lonkā. Hanumān had to leave Pusamālī to complete his mission. He then casted her up into the air. Pusamālī soared upwards and returned to her celestial court.
When Hanumān led the simian troops to the ocean, he begged the Goddess of the Ocean to direct him to Lonkā. Learning that Hanumān was an ace soldier of Phra Rāma, she pointed to the southwest. Hanumān then exercised his magical power to transform himself into a mountainous proportion enabling the monkey troops to cross the vast ocean on his colossal body and tail.

After many more adventures, the troops reached Mount Hematiran which stood on the coast of the mainland opposite the island of Lonkā. They were totally exhausted and did not want to push on the arduous journey to Lonkā. To inspire the dispirited soldiers, Hanumān gave a homily citing the exemplary noble death of the "Sadayu" bird who sacrificed its life for "Avatan" (a reincarnation of [Shiva]). The homily was intended to encourage the monkey-soldiers to be responsible for their assigned duties, to persevere in the face of hardship and to sacrifice themselves so that their feats would be immortalized as in the case of the "Sadayu" bird.

The "Sampati" bird, the older sibling of "Sadayu", had been cursed by Phra Āthīt (God of the Sun). All of its feathers had been seared from its body. The plumage would be restored only when the soldiers of Phra Rāma together cried out 3 ceremonial cheers. When Sampati overheard Hanumān's homily, it emerged from the cavern to inquire Hanumān of the invocation of its younger sibling's story. It then pleaded with Hanumān and his troops to free itself from the curse in return for the direction to the soldier's destination, the city of Lonkā.

Set free from the curse at last, Sampati, with its resplendent plumage, showed its gratitude by taking Hanumān, Ongkhot and Chompupan on its back and flied out over the ocean in the direction of Lonkā. Hovering over the island, it told the three commanders to take note of Mount Nilakala as a point of reference to the city. Hanumān then asked his companions to leave him so he could observe the terrain alone.

The Ogress, appointed by King Sahabodibrahom, the founder of Lonkā to guard the passage to the city against any intruders, was patrolling the ocean as usual. Suddenly, she saw Hanumān soaring in the sky near the island. Determined to intercept the intruder, the Ogress rushed to attack Hanumān with her gigantic mouth wide open, ready to chew up Hanumān.

3. At present, Wat khanōn troupe cries three times (hō sām khrang) at this scene rather than crying in wai khru ceremony.
Intercepted and attacked by the Ogress, Hanumān fought back bravely. He demonstrated his great magical power by entering the Ogress' wide open mouth, going into her left ear and emerging unscathed from the right ear. The ferocious combat finally wore down the Ogress of the Ocean.

Hanumān, sensing imminent victory, plunged into the intestines of the weakening Ogress and ripped open her abdomen with a swift slash of his blade. Hanumān then soared over the ocean toward the city of Lonkā.

Mistaking Mount Solot for Mount Nilakāla, Hanumān landed at the foot of the mountain. Seeing an ascetic in his ashram (the retreat of an ascetic), Hanumān transformed himself into a small monkey and inquired him about the right direction to Lonkā. He found out that he had already overflown the destination. So he asked the ascetic for a permission to stay with him overnight. The ascetic let him stay at a large pavilion. Hanumān decided to play a trick on him. To test the magical power of the ascetic, Hanumān turned himself into a gigantic being, bigger than the pavilion itself, and then called out plaintively that he felt very uncomfortable trying to sleep in such a small place!

Phra Narotrushi, the ascetic, was praying when he heard Hanumān's feigned grumbling. He got up and realized that Hanumān intended to test his magical power. Reciting the magical incantation, he created a sudden rainstorm. Hanumān, shivering in the cold rain, surrendered to the ascetic's superior magic. His body shrank back to its normal size.

To punish Hanumān for his insolent behaviour, the ascetic threw his walking stick into a nearby pool and changed it into a leech. At dawn, Hanumān arose and walked to the pond to wash his face. The leech suddenly attached itself on Hanumān's chin. Hanumān futilely tried to pry the leech from his chin. In a panic, he rushed to plead the ascetic to help him. The ascetic afterwards asked Hanumān not to insult other people. Hanumān repented and begged for forgiveness.

The female demon named "Akattalai", with four reddish faces and eight club-bearing arms, was the commander of the patrolling forces guarding the city of Lonkā. When the demon saw Hanumān approaching Lonkā, it commanded the patrolling forces to surround and capture him.

Hanumān was besieged by the club-wielding Akattalai and its forces. Undaunted, he battled with them bravely. Through his masterful stratagem, Hanumān managed to kill all
of his adversaries. Left alone, Hanumān and Akattalai engaged each other in a ferocious one-on-one combat.

Hanumān soon gained the upper hand in the combat, stepping on the demon’s shoulder and seizing its club. The unarmed demon was swiftly beheaded by Hanumān’s sword. That evening, Hanumān reached the city of Lonkā, now deprived of its guardian demon.

When Hanumān reached the city’s gate at dusk, he turned himself into a young giant roaming the city’s streets among the giant dwellers and security forces. He still had not heard anything about Sidā. To facilitate the search, Hanumān recited a magical incantation that put the entire city to sleep.

After putting all the giants to sleep, Hanumān changed himself back into a monkey warrior searching for Sidā. The first palace he entered belonged to the giant Piphek and his consort. Hanumān found a shale writing board, a notebook and a pencil. Therefore, he assumed that the giant must be an astrologer. The lady beside Piphek looked too old to be Sidā. Hanumān then went into the second palace.

In the palace, Hanumān found a young fanged giant asleep with his "Sinlapachai" arrow. Peering at Inthorachit’s consort, Hanumān thought that, though her face was youthful enough, she looked like someone who had already borne a child. That could not possibly be Sidā! So, Hanumān resumed his search for Phra Rāma’s Queen in another palace.

Hanumān found King Tosakan and Queen Montō sleeping in the inner chamber of their palace. There was still no trace of Sidā. He continued his relentless search until dawn. Without success, Hanumān returned to Phra Narotrusi, the ascetic, and revealed the purpose of his mission in Lonkā to find Sidā and present her with Phra Rāma’s ring before Phra Rāma himself would lead his army to Lonkā to free her from the hands of the King of Giants, Tosakan.

After Hanumān learned from the ascetic that Sidā was confined in Tosakan’s garden palace, he rushed to the garden to find her. Using his camouflaging magical power, he made himself invisible. Hanumān spotted Sidā in the palace but she was heavily guarded by King Tosakan’s courtesans. He could not approach her for fear that the mission would be jeopardized.
Even since King Tosakan brought Sidā to the garden palace, he was agonized by the unrequited passion for her. One day, he decided to visit Sidā. After telling all the ladies in-waiting that he was going to the garden palace, the love-sick Tosakan, elegantly fitted in his most elaborate attire, set out to the garden where Sidā had been confined.

King Tosakan went into the garden palace trying to console and court Sidā. But she scolded and insulted him. Tosakan tried to approach her, but every time he would be repulsed because it felt fiery hot near her. In the end, Tosakan had to exit the palace in shame and anger, shouting and yelling at the obsequious ladies.

After Tosakan's departure from the palace, all the court ladies reproached and insinuated Sidā. Sidā wept distressfully. Late that night, when the court ladies who were commanded to watch over her were all fast asleep, Sidā sneaked out of the palace. She decided to take her own life by hanging herself from a branch of a tree. But she was saved by Hanumān who had been following her. Hanumān told Sidā what Phra Rāma had said and presented her with the ring and an intricately woven gold "sabai" breast and shoulder wrap.

It was already dawn after Hanumān had presented the ring and the "sabai" to Sidā. He mused that, since he had already traveled that far to the city of the giants, he should as well demonstrate his magical power to the giants. Flowering and fruit-laden trees were felled and uprooted in great numbers by Hanumān's might.

Hanumān was a son of Phra Pai, the God of Wind. [Shiva] blessed him with immortality and bestowed him all magical power and spells. If he was killed, he would come back to life again. He could turn into a four-faced being with eight arms. His yawn could turn into the moon and stars. He was indeed invincible! Hanumān's mighty power terrified all the giant soldiers guarding Tosakan's garden.

Seeing Hanumān wrecking Tosakan's garden, the giants yelled and screamed for their fellow soldiers to help capturing him. Hanumān pretended to retreat and drew the giant soldiers together so he could kill them all.

Hanumān fought back against the besieging giants. Using uprooted trees as his weapons, he killed a great many giant soldiers. The remainders were very frightened. It could not be just a wild monkey, they thought! The survivors quickly fled to report the incident to "Sahatsakuman", their Lords and Masters.
"Sahatsakuman" meant the 1,000 sons of King Tosakan and his 1,000 court ladies. When they learned about the incident from the retreated soldiers, they became incensed at the inability of their soldiers to defeat even one wild monkey. All the soldiers were immediately commanded to prepare the army to surround and capture Hanumān.

Hanumān fought and killed nearly all of the attacking giant soldiers. With his invincible magical power, Hanumān also killed off the "Sahatsakuman", all 1,000 of them.

The surviving giant soldiers of the 1,000 Princes hastily retreated to break the sad news to King Tosakan. King Tosakan was shocked and furious. He immediately commanded Mahoton to summon Prince Inthorachit for an urgent audience with him. Tosakan asked Inthorachit to take the matter into his own hands and commanded Mahoton to conscript more giant soldiers to support Prince Inthorachit's force.

Prince Inthorachit was a son of King Tosakan and Queen Montō. He had two sons, Yamaliwan and Kanyuwek, from his wife, Princess Suwankanyuma. Prince Inthorachit was as heartless and brutal as his father, Tosakan. God [Shiva] bestowed the "Phrahommat" arrow on him. He also gave Inthorachit miraculous magical power which could transform him into God Indra. Phra Rāma (another reincarnation of [Shiva]) gave him the "Nākhabāt" arrow. After he had volunteered to capture Hanumān for King Tosakan, Inthorachit led his forces out of the city of Lonkā to capture Hanumān.

When Inthorachit and his forces reached the garden, he found Hanumān blocking his way, Hanumān pretended that he was just a foraging wild monkey in search of fruit but was bullied by the horde of giants. He had to defend himself. If Inthorachit intended to capture him, then, he had to try to take him by force. Inthorachit was incensed by Hanumān's arrogance.

Prince Inthorachit witnessed the punishing defeat and heavy losses of his giant soldiers in their battle against Hanumān. He realized that Hanumān could not possibly be just an ordinary wild monkey. The army must not be further annihilated. He selected his "Nākhabāt" arrow, bent the bow and fired at Hanumān.

Hanumān was entwined in the coils of the "Nākhabāt arrow" (the arrow having turned into "Nākha" or "Serpants") and by the ropes that Inthorachit's soldiers put around him. If he really wished to set himself free, he could do so easily. But Hanumān thought he could better use his surrender as a subtle ploy to create chaos in the city of Lonkā.
Appendix 2.
Questions asked to the performers

Date and the place of the interview:

Name:

Age:

Role in a troupe:

The age started to join the troupe:

What is your teacher's name?

Is your teacher your relative? If so, how is he related to you?

How did you learn your art from your teacher?

Where did you practice your art with your teacher and why?

Do you have any students now? If yes, how many?

Do you have any children? If yes, how many and what are they doing?

Do you have any textbooks? If yes, who keeps them?

Whom are you going to teach your art?

Why did you start to learn an art of Nang Yai?

When was your first performance and where was it?

What was your first performance for?

What kind of occasions did you/do you play Nang Yai?

If somebody wants to have a Nang Yai performance for his/her occasion, whom in a troupe should he/she talk to?

Where have you been for Nang Yai performances quite recently?
Where did you go for *Nang Yai* performances when you were young?

How did you/do you go for the sites of performances?

Do you choose customers or organizers?

Whom do these *Nang Yai* panels belong to?

Do you ask permission to take panels for performances?

From where did other performers come from?

How much did you/do you get for each performance?

Do you have any record for money transactions?

Did you/do you travel in search of opportunities for performances?

How much do you pay for a temple for donation after each performances?

Did you/do you have other occupations?

Did the villagers have other ways to know *Rāmakītan* except *Nang Yai* when you were young?

When you were young, were there any temples which had *Nang Yai* panels and could perform it?

When you were young, did you have more audience than you do now?

Why do you conduct invocation ceremony every time?

In the invocation ceremony, what does *hō sām khrang* (cry in acclaim three times) mean?

Did/do the audience answer the shouting?
Appendix 3
Interviews

3.1. Wat Sawāngārōm, Sing Buri Province

Date and the place of the interview: 18th of May, 1989 at the temple.
Name: Piam Suphanakhôn
Age: 63
Role in the troupe: a puppeteer-dancer
The age started to join the troupe: 16
Name of his teacher: Chïa Suphanakhôn
Blood relationship with his teacher: Piam is a grandson of khon râēk (the pioneer of this troupe) and his teacher was an elder-brother-in-law.

How did you learn your art from your teacher?
I just copied as my teacher did. He taught me how to make steps and how to grip the panels.

Where did you practise your art with your teacher and why?
We often practised in front of the houses or the temple since the Nang Yai panels should not stay at home.

Do they have any thēwadā (spirits of ancestors or deceased)?
Yes, that is why they cannot stay at home.

(Mr. Sanun Ankieo joined the interview. He learned manipulation and dancing from Mr. Piam Suphanakhôn and his teacher, who was his cousin.)

Do you have any students now? If yes, how many?
Yes, three.

Do you have any children? If yes, how many and what are they doing?
One daughter. But women cannot perform. Sanun is a capable man, he has nine children. (Sanun followed Piam with a big laugh). But only the youngest one performs Nang Yai, the rest of them are mainly teachers and government officials. Can you imagine my son, who is a policeman, who often scolds people, performs Nang Yai?
When was your first performance and where was it?
When I was 16. I went to Nakhon Sawan for the cremation of the owner of the market. (Sanun) Yes, that was my first one, too.

Do you have any textbooks? If, yes, who keeps them?
Yes, we do. The nāi nang (the head of the troupe) keeps them.

Whom are you going to teach your art?
At present, we would not mind teaching anybody, any boys since the women are not allowed to perform Nang Yai. But nobody seems to be interested in it.

What kind of occasions did you/do you play Nang Yai?
We used to play for cremations, birthdays, celebration of new houses and festivals. Nowadays for school students to study.

How much did you/do you get for each performance?
I cannot remember since we used satang (a currency unit used in olden days). Nowadays we get from 5,000 to 8,000 Baht for a performance which means that each person will get about 200 Baht.

If somebody wants to have a Nang Yai performance for a special occasion, to whom in a troupe should he/she talk?
They should get in touch with us or with the nāi nang (the head of the troupe).

Do you have any record for money transactions?
No, we do not have any record. We do not have to waste our money for tax.

Where have you been for Nang Yai performances quite recently?
We went to Chiangmai, Lamphun, Sukhothai and Ayuthaya.

Where did you go for Nang Yai performances when you were young?
Chai Nat, Nakhon Sawan ....cannot remember.

How did you/do you go to the sites of performances?
By boat and cart/ by car.

Did you/do you travel in search of opportunities for performances?
No, never ever.
Do you choose customers or organizers?
Since we like to perform, we do not choose customers.

Whom do these Nang Yai panels belong to?
They belong to the wat (monastery).

Do you ask permission to the temple to take panels for performances?
Yes, everytime.

How much do you give to a monastery as donation after each performance?
As much as we feel comfortable. (about 1,000 Baht)

From where did other performers come?
They are from the same village.

Did you/do you have other occupations?
(Piam) I am a rice grower. (Sanun) I used to be a school teacher, but now I am retired and clean the temple every day.

Did the villagers have other ways to know Rāmakīn except Nang Yai when you were young?
No, we did not. Khōn 1 (masked-play) was only performed in Bangkok.

When you were young, were there any temples which had Nang Yai panels and could perform it?
Yes, Wat Prasat in In Buri district 2 could do it.

When you were young, did you have more audience than you do now?
Yes, a lot.

Why did you start to perform Nang Yai?
(Piam) I was born in the family of nang (shadow-play). That's why. (Sanun) I wanted to do it because my friend (Piam) enjoyed it so much.

Why do you conduct invocation ceremony every time?
To protect our performances.

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1. As was discussed in Chapter 2 and three, Ramakīn has been played exclusively in Khōn.
2. Amphoe In Buri, Changwat Sing Buri. I later found out from the conversation with Suphit Anusat, the author of Nang Yai Wat Sawāngārīm, it is Wat Prasuk, Amphoe In Buri, Sing Buri Province.
In the invocation ceremony, what does ほさま响 (cry in acclaim three times) mean? Just for fun and make ourselves ready for performances.

**Did/do the audience answer the shouting?**

No, they did not./No, they do not.

Date and the place of the interview: 29th of May, 1989 at his house

Name: Chaľn Suphanakhľn
Age: 63
Role in the troupe: a puppeteer-dancer and năi nang (the head of the troupe)
The age started to join the troupe: about 20
Name of his teacher: Pi Suphanakhľn and Āchăn Mŏm
Blood relation with the teacher: Manipulation from Father. And method of wai khrū from Āchăn Mŏm. We kept quiet for a while when Āchăn Mŏm came to ask a performance for his school.
Occupation: Rice grower and kamnan (the head of the tambon district).

*How did you learn your art from your teacher?*

For the manipulation, the teacher just took me in front of the house and temple and we had a session of practice of steps and grips.

*Where did you practise your art with your teacher and why?*

We practised in front of the house and temple as the panels have thēwadā (spirits of the ancestors or deceased).

*Do you have any children now? If yes, how many?*

Yes, we have four.

*Do you have any students now? If yes, how many?*

Three.

*When was your first performance and where was it?*

---

3. This three times of shouting is translated from ほさま响, (See Chapter 1 and 2) which is held during an invocation ceremony.
Nakhon Sawan for the cremation of the market owner.

Do you have any textbooks? If yes, who keeps them?
We have bot wai khrū, or the textbooks of invocation ceremony and the textbooks for manipulation.

Whom are you going to teach your art?
I do not have anybody.

What kind of occasions did you/do you play Nang Yai?
Cremations, festivals........

How much did you/do you get for each performance?
I cannot remember since money values have changed so much.

If somebody wants to have a Nang Yai performance for a special occasion, to whom in the troupe should he/she talk?
They should talk to me. (Hearing this, his wife said that Piam Suphanakhon and Samphim Ditwiset can deal the business with the customers, too.)

But Mr. Sanun Ankieo said that he can deal with the customers, right?
No, he cannot do it since he is from somewhere else. Piam and Samphim are brothers of this man (pointing nāi nang, or head of the troupe).

Do you have any record for money transactions?
No.

Where have you been for Nang Yai performances quite recently?
Sing Buri, Ayuthaya, Bangkok, Chiangmai, Lamphun, Sukhothai etc.

Where did you go for Nang Yai performances when you were young?
Nakhon Sawan, Uthai, Chai Nat etc.

How did you/do you go for the sites of performances?
By boat and cart/by car.

Did you/do you travel in search of opportunities of performances?
No.
Do you choose customers or organizers? 
No.

Whom do these Nang Yai panels belong to?
They belong to the temple.

Do you ask permission to take panels for performances?
Yes, everytime.

How much do you pay to the monastery for donation after each performances?
From about 2,000 to 1,000 Baht.

From where did other performers come from?
From the same village.

Did you/do you have other occupations?
I helped my parents to grow rice and studied.

Did the villagers have other ways to know Rāmakīan except Nang Yai when you were young?
I do not know......maybe no.

When you were young, were there any temples which had Nang Yai panels and could perform it?
Yes, Wat Prasat in In Buri District.

When you were young, did you have more audience than you do now?
Yes, a lot.

Why did you start to perform Nang Yai?
(With a big laugh) I was born in the family of Nang Yai. That's why.

Why do you conduct invocation ceremony every time?
To protect our performance.

In the invocation ceremony, what does hō sām khrang (cry in acclaim three times) mean?
For Saksit (supernatural power) power and pay respect to the teachers because they are powerful (khrū ṭāēng).

Did/do the audience answer the shouting?
No, they keep quiet.

What is *khrū rāēng*?

I cannot explain...............well, I know an example. It is an story of unexplainable happenings. There is science at present, but you have to believe in magic at the same time. We have to be careful. One day three men carried *Nang Yai* panels over shoulders after the performance while complaining about their heavy weight, using the swearing words meaning men's sexual organs. All the sudden his sexual organs started to spread as big as arms and shrank. It kept on expanding and shrinking until he went to the temple and asked a monk to pour over some holy water to stop it. Since then, he is always fainted before he performs because of *khrū rāēng* (teachers are powerful). As everybody says, he spoke in a bad manner and was cursed and punished by the teachers.

Date and the place of the interview: 29th of May, 1989 at the temple.
Name: Samphim Ditwiset and Piam Suphanakhôn
Role in the troupe: Puppeteer-dancers
The age started to join the troupe: Questions not asked.
Name of your teacher: Questions not asked.
Blood relationship with your teacher: Questions not asked.

Where is the furthest place that you went in young days? How long did it take? How did you go there?

Amphoe Chumsaeng, Nakhon Sawan, by boat but I cannot remember how long it took.

Who was a carver? Where does he live?

He died about 20 years ago. His name was Kham Janphû. He used to live nearby, but he did not have any children. Therefore, we do not know what happened.

When you were young, how many sections of *Rāmakīan* did you use to play? Have you ever played entire *Rāmakīan*?

No, I have never played entire *Rāmakīan*. It was only a section per night. If some sections were required by an organizer, we used to play a section a night for several nights.

After these questions the conversation changed into *wai khrū* (invocation) ceremony and *bot wai khrū* (invocation texts). Mr. Piam Suphanakhôn said that the texts themselves
have khru rāēng (teachers' power) and other people cannot see them. If a nāi nang (the head of the troupe) shows the texts to somebody else, their troupe will never become popular since it always possible that person may sell and leek the contents of the texts to other people and other troupes.

He also said," This Nang Yai belongs to the Suphanakhōn, if we do not have anybody to succeed, let it die."

3.2. Wat Khanōn, Ratchaburi Province

Date and place of the interview: 20th of May, 1989 at his place
Name: Sawāng Chakēt
Age: 76
Role in the troupe: Nāi nang
The age started to join the troupe: 16 as a puppeteer-dancer
Name of your teacher: Bo Chakēt
Blood relationship with your teacher: Lung (an elder uncle).

Where was the first performance?
I cannot remember.

Which part of Rāmakīn did you play?
Hanumān presents the ring to Lady Sidā.

Do you remember other performances?
Not well.

What occasions do the Nang Yai for?
Cremation for abbots and rich family.

From whom did you learn?
Bo Chakēt as a puppeteer-dancer. He is a relative as he is an elder "uncle". But since Japanese came, we stopped playing for about 10 years. I was about 30. I remember Nang Yai since I was 11 years old because I was a dekwat (boys reside in monasteries to help monks).

Where did you go for performances?
Various places. I cannot remember because of my old age mainly in Ratchaburi Province.

Does the temple have a record of old performances?
No.

Where did you practise?
At the house of Bo.

Was it inside or outside?
In front of the house.

Why not in the house?
You may have a sanlat (bad luck).

Can you take the Nang Yai panels into the house?
No, we usually do not take them in for some reasons, but I do not know why. They are bad luck. Maybe leathers used as the panels of Tosakan, Rūṣī and Phra Rāma are made of leathers of cows that died during pregnancy. We have believed that the panels themselves are Rāmakīan, which manifested a good example of an old teaching tanhā phā chūa chōn tūa tāi. In other words, a Yak or Thosakan abducted Lady Sidā, who is his own daughter to have her his own wife. However, he did not know that Sidā is his own daughter. In the end, it developed into a fight over Lady Sidā. Thosakan had to fight with Phra Rāma by sacrificing his comrades for generations. That is what we called tanhā phā chūa chōn tūa tāi.

This story is a story of Devas in India. We create the story in this manner. First, Rāma created and then, after Rāma died, another man called Kīan continued. That’s why we call it Rāmakīan. In fact, Rāma and Kīan are father and son and helped each other to create this story of tanhā phā chūa chōn tūa tāi.

What is hō sām khrang (cry in acclaim three times) in invocation ceremony for?
Yes, we have it. It was fun. It is for fun. We shouted at the right time decided on astrology so that we could draw good luck, popularity and fun.

In Expo why did not you shout?

4. In this conversation, nāi nang (the head of the troupe) Sawāng Changkēt did not use the word tāi prāi (death during pregnancy), yet, he explained as "Nang thi au mā nam mā Chāk wūa mī thūng lēw tāi." which is translated in the paragraph.
5. This Buddhist teaching literally means that "lust leads evil until your death."
This time we did not because it is a waste of time. Modern people do not like it much. At present, we do not shout when the invocation ceremony is finished. But we shout when Hanumān is marching. This hō (cry in acclaim three times) follows the time. In olden days, they liked to hō (cry in acclaim three times). Nowadays we do not have anybody hō (cry in acclaim three times), therefore, we do not. Other things has gone extinct, too, as the time has past. We had Krōng 6, mālō 7 and hō (cry in acclaim three times). But they all are gone. These people get bored if the ceremony goes long.

Did you have a lot of audience to answer?

Yes, a lot. The audience do not shout as hō (cry in acclaim three times). But they answer back as yiew.

Why are you the nāi nang (the head of the troupe)?

Because nobody can remember the textbook of wai khrū (invocation). But I could remember how to invite thēwadā (spirits of the ancestors). Not only that all the people died already and I am the one remains.

Do you teach him (a reciter sitting next to him) how to do the invocation ceremony?

No, not yet.

Do you have a textbook?

Yes, here (pointing to his stomach.)

Does he (the reciter) have a saksit (supernatural power) power to conduct the invocation ceremony?

No, not yet.

How did you go to the sites of performances?

By boat and cart.

How much did you/do you get for a performance?

75 satang / 200 Baht for each.

Who gave you money when you were young?

The elders gave me.

---

6. This is a long musical instrument made of bamboo for percussion. Its body is empty and is played by several men. Also see orchestra in Chapter 1.

7. According to the Thai dictionary Phochananukrom chabap banthitsathan published in B.E.2525(1982), this musical instrument is made of bamboo and it is played as a percussion by hitting the body with two sticks. It originally from China. p. 643.
Who give the money to you now?
That monk. (pointing the director of Nang Yai Wat Khanőn)

When did the monk start to give you money?
Two years ago.

How did you learn wai khrū (invocation ceremony)?
I just watched the seniors doing. We invite 108 thēwadā (spirits of the ancestors) to see the performance. We believe that they come and extend their mercy over our performance. If we do not invite them, they maybe angry and have ourselves cursed. It is very dangerous.

Date and the place of the interview: 29th of May, 1989 at nay nang Sawāng chakēt's house.
Name: Lek Sunkāew
Age: 49
Role in the troupe: Khon phāk (a reciter)
The age started to join the troupe: 47
Name of your teacher: Un Chakēt
Blood relationship with your teacher: A father's "younger brother".
Occupation: Government official (a clerk in the primary school of Wat Khanőn)

Why did you start to play Nang Yai?
When the famous reciter (Laŋ Thǒngmīsit) died, we did not have anybody to succeed. And then the monk came to me and asked if I could join them.

Where was the first performance?
It was at Wat Nangnőn in Bangkok. I do not know what kind of occasion it was for.

How do you study?
I listened to the recorded predecessors' narrating and reciting until I can do it by myself completely.

How much do you get?
In the Siam Society and River City, we get about 200 Baht each. But I am not sure since it was dealt through the monk. When I started to practise recitation, I promised to the
monk that I will not take any money because I started to join this troupe very late and I am not skilled. I am reciting for the monastery.

When somebody wants to have a performance for his/her occasion, whom in the troupe does he/she talk to?

They should talk to the monastery first. Especially to the abbot since he is the one that keeps Nang Yai panels.

How do you divide money?

The monk (he is called the director of Nang Yai Wat Khanōn) gives all the performers, which consists of 29 people\(^8\) money. Every performance they receive about 150 Baht for manipulation.

Do the other performers' have other occupations?

Yes. Money received in a Nang Yai performance does not really matter to them since they are helping the activities of the monastery. I promised that I will help the monastery.

Do you travel from one place to another in search of opportunities of performances?

No, never ever.

Do you choose customers?

No.

Do you have textbooks?

Yes, we have a text written on Samutkhoi (rice paper) paper\(^9\). I have a textbook of my handwriting.

How many students do you have for narration?

No, not at all since I am studying now.

Do you teach anybody who is interested in narration?

I only teach to the family members because of Khrū räēng (teachers' power).

---

8. He said that they have 29 puppeteer-dancers in this troupe, however, at the performance that I saw in Ratchaburi on the 5th of May at Tarunā primary school only had 16 people. As the orchestra consisted of 15 people, there are totally 31 people. Probably he meant 29 as a number consisted of the performers in the orchestra and the troupe. Total cost of a performance is about 7,000 to 8,000 Baht, therefore, some 2,500 to 3,500 Baht is remained in the hands of the monastery as donation.(150 Baht X 30=4,500 Baht 8,000-4,500=3,500 Baht, 7,000-4,500=2,500 Baht.)

9. In fact, a textbook written on samutkhoi paper is kept in Krom Sinlapakon.
How do you relate to the first reciter in this troupe?

No relation.

What is hō sām khrang (cry in acclaim three times)?

In Rāmakīan, when the bird, Samphati, met Hanumān, who is the soldier of Phra Nārāi, he cried three times.¹⁰

Excuse me, I asked hō sām khrang (cry in acclaim three times) in the wai khrū ceremony (invocation ceremony).

We do not hō (cry in acclaim three times) in wai khrū (invocation ceremony) at all.

Do you have any children?

Yes.

Do you want to teach them?

Yes, but they are not interested in it at all.

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¹⁰ For the detail of the story of Hanumān Thawai Wāen (Hanumān Presenting Phra Rāma's Ring to Lady Sidā), see Appendix 3.
Appendix 4.
Observation of a Nang Yai performance

At Wat Khanôn, a monk acts as the director of Nang Yai Wat Khanôn troupe. He is responsible for the financial transactions which fund performances and for their organization of performances. This writer obtained information concerning performances by going to Wat Khanôn and making inquiries of the director.

Preparation for the performance started 5.30 PM and took around three hours. A white screen, which measured 12 by 6 metres with a 20 centimetre red band about it as a frame, was erected. The screen was raised one metre above the ground. The key person preparing the tua nang (shadow-panels), was a man called khon êhat nang (organizer of shadow-panels), who sorted shadow panels into the order of appearance in the story. They were going to play Hanumân thawai waen (Hanumân presents Phra Râma’s ring to Lady Sídâ) on that night. Some fifty odd panels were laid on the ground in order of appearance in the performance. Most of the panels used in this section of the story are called Nang Mûang and they are about 2 metres high and 1 to 1 1/2 metres in width. They sometimes depict active figures, perhaps fighting, embracing or sleeping, and sometimes depict only scenery, as is explained in Chapter 2. An audience which who is familiar with the Râmâkian can, to a large extent, follow the story simply by watching the sequence of a set of Nang Mûang.

The director of Nang Yai Wat Khanôn was acting mainly as public relations officer and dealt with interviews from radio stations and a television company. A video company, Kantanâ Co Ltd, recorded the performance for a Channel 7 television programme called 'Let's do it', which went to air on 2 July, 1989 and treated Nang Yai as an ancient and unusual affair.

At around 8:40 PM, the wai khrû ceremony (invocation ceremony) started. Three holy figures of Phra Isûan (Shiva), Phra Nârâî (Vishnu) and Rûṣî (the hermit) were placed against the lower frame of the screen with the hermit in the middle and the bot wai khrû (invocation text) was recited by nîi nang (troupe master), Mr. Sawâng Chakêt (see pictures attached.) With the help of fragrantly burning incense and the silence of the audience (amidst the laughter and excitement of about 300 people packed into the adjacent
ground for a massive Bingo game), the wai khrū ceremony seemed to create a serious religious atmosphere among the small audience of 30 or so. When the invocative recitation stopped temporarily, music started and the nāi nang played a taphōn (a small drum placed on a support: see picture). This was symbolic as this musical instrument is considered to be the orchestra's leader (see pictures). Then the music stopped and another section of the wai khrū began. Following its completion, nāi nang Sawāng Chakēt took a bowl of water and sprinkled it at every corner of the screen, upon the orchestra, the puppeteer-dancers, behind the screen and even upon the video camera and cameraman. As was clear from the interview with the nāi nang Sawāng Chakēt, some of the wai khrū procedures were omitted. Yet, it was still a lengthy ceremony taking 40 minutes and some of the audience seemed to get bored. During the wai khrū, a video-camera was recording for Channel 7 and a microphone and two lights were set up in order to follow the procedures of nāi nang Sawāng Chakēt. Yet, the nāi nang did not seem to become nervous and he carried out the procedures as usual, with dignity.

Then, bōek rōng (an opening story) followed. Its tale was the chap ling hūa kham (Clutching the Black Monkey in the Dusk), as described in Chapter 2. This took about 40 minutes to complete and involved three khon phāk (reciters). Interestingly, the nāi nang played the role of Rūsi, who acts as a mediator in the fight between the two monkeys. He dissuaded the white monkey from killing the black monkey and then admonished both of them, advising that fighting is very bad and that life is precious, and so on. Following upon this, as if the nāi nang had noticed that the audience was a bit bored, a tua talok (clown figure), was taken to the screen and spoke with the voice of nāi nang, "It was too long, wasn't it? What is next? Rāmakīan? Then, let's go on to the Rāmakīan."

Phra Rāma's figure was taken to the screen and recitation of the texts and soul-stirring beats of klōng yai (a set of big drums) began the play of Hanumān Thawāi Wāēn (Hanumān Presenting Phra Rāma's Ring's to Lady Siḍā). Nāi nang Sawāng Chakēt now moved in front of the klōng yai and led the recitation. The story of Hanumān Thawāi Wāēn is attached at Appendix 1.

Kān chōēt (manipulation and dancing) was performed by 16 khon chōēt (puppeteer-dancers). Since the artistic aspect of the performance is not the main focus of this study, it is only briefly mentioned here. As described in the literature, the steps used in front of the screen were very similar to these of Khōn (masked-play), which are characterized by forward facing side-ways movements. Hence, the audience can see the entire figure of the tua nang and the puppeteer-dancers' movements. Dancing steps used in this Nang Yai
performance were much quicker than those of Khôn as seen by this writer in the National Theatre of Bangkok. In addition to side-ways movements, there were running steps done along the front of the screen with the faces of khon chōet side on to the screen. In this case, the figures of tua nang were rarely seen by the audience. Only the dark shapes of dancing human figures with their arms raised up were seen. In these two types of steps, the audience sees the silhouettes of the puppeteer-dancers and the the tua nang in front of the screen. The third type of step consisted of manipulation and dancing behind the scree, which meant that the audience could only see the shadows of the dancers and the panels.

Manipulation of tua nang requires movement of the torso, shoulders and legs. Movements of the legs seemed to be particularly closely coordinated with the music. Different types of music were signalled by "keywords" at the end of kham phāk (narration). For example, the words, batnī chōet, batnī ēt, batnī sukphāt and others, spoken by khon phāk seemed to act as signals for certain types of steps and music to commence.
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_____ "The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play", *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol.37, part 1, 1948, pp. 115-120.


Euayporn Kerdchouay, Also see Smithies and Euayporn Kerdchouay. "Nang Yai Wat Khanon", *Anakot(Our Future)*, no.2, B.E.2516 (1972), pp.29-38.


*Kham phāk Nang Yai chai phāk dōi Nāi Laŋ Thōŋmēshit*, Wat Khanōn Ratchaburi. editer, year and place published are unknown. Photo copies of Nāi Laŋ's notebook which contains kham phāk, or recitation texts of Rāmakīn of Wat Khanōn.


Nang Yai Wat Khanôn, a video edited by Samnakngän Sawōēm Sāŋ Ekalak không Chät, taken in Changwat Ratchaburi, or Ratchaburi Province, and edited in Bangkok, 1975.

Nang Yai Wat Khanôn/ Nang Yai Wat Sawāngārōm, a video taken and edited by a company called Kantanā. The performance held on the occasion of Ratchaburi exposition on the 5th of May by Wat Khanôn troupe. It was on air on the second of
July on channel seven, while the one of Wat Sawângârûm was not shown since the permission was not available from the performers, Bangkok, 1989.


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Somphan Lekhaphan. Rāi ngān kān syksā Nang Yai Wat Taku Amphoe Bāngbān Changwat Phra Nakhon Sri Ayuthaya, Center of Thai and other foreign language research, The Faculty of Humanities, Ramakhamheng University, Bangkok, B.E. 2523 (1980).


1. Pfam Suphanakhon

2. Pfam and a panel of Phra Rama
3. Samphim Ditwiset

4. Chaon Suphanakhon
5. Sawang Chaketi

6. Lek Sunkae w and "director of Wat Khanon troupe"
7. Preparation of a performance on 5 May 1989

8. Wai khru ceremony on 5 May 1989
9. Phra Rāma's war council

10. Tosakan's soldiers' marching for battles