

KHON

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A REPORT

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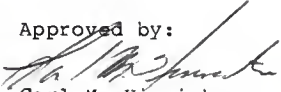
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## Introduction

"Khon" or masked play is a very sophisticated form of Thai classical dance which dates as far back as the 14th century. Its unique and original feature is that each dancer wears a mask which prevents any form of vocalization. All dialogues and chants must be done for him by the others. The repertoire of the masked play is taken from the Ramakien, which, like the Ramayana of India, is an epic describing the war between Tosakanth or Ravana, king of the demons of Lonka, and Rama, king of Ayodhya.

Ramakien is a Thai version of Ramayana, the famous Indian epic known in every Asian country. It was adapted and modified to suit Thai customs and tastes. Additional Thai episodes have been written and more characters have been included. Thus, the Thai version has become longer and more complicated than the Indian Ramayana. A few kings of the Rattanakosin period (Chakri Dynasty) attempted to create their own version: King Rama I's version is the complete one, while that of King Rama II is the most famous for its beautiful poetical rhymes and rhythms.

"Khon" has proved from the very beginning to be a dance form which is very popular and highly regarded by the

Thai people for its unique characteristics. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to provide information about all of the arts which comprise khon.

Chapter 1  
The History of Khon

"Khon" is one of the oldest forms of Thai classical performing arts which is known by the other name of "Siamese Masked Play"(1). It is the play which consists of Thai dancing art forms rhythmically matching music, narration and dialogue as well as singing(2).

Khon, moreover, is the performance which demonstrates a very good model of the original Thai Arts. It is believed that the origin of khon or masked play was comprised of various art forms: the ancient "chak nak," the grand shadow play and the fighting techniques from Thai classical martial art called "krabee krabong"(3).

During the 15th century, all the actors or the "performing artists" were unable to utter any sound since they had to wear masks of different shapes and colors which conventionally represented the heads and faces of ogres, monkeys, men, and gods, etc. Therefore, "recitative artists" or the narrators are required to participate and appear on stage(4). The actors have to perform two kinds of dancing, one called "tent" which uses mostly legs, and

the other called "rum" which uses only arms in a very slow manner. The narrators and the singers do the speaking and singing parts. In the 20th century, the performance of khon developed so that the actors who played the part of men, women, gods as well as the angels no longer wore masks like those who performed the part of demons or monkeys. They now wear only crowns or tall-pointed headdresses. Nevertheless, all the khon players still perform mute, with the speaking being done for them by other persons(5).

"Khon" has been developed from three different art forms, the ancient "chak nak," the grand shadow play, and the Thai classical martial art. The use of masks and headdresses as well as the way the performers dress in khon derives from the ancient "chak nak," the performance of the traditional "Milk Ocean Stirring Ceremony," which was performed for the public as a part of the Coronation Celebration activities of Thai Kings. It is an open-air performance with a large number of performers dressing and wearing masks and headdresses personifying demons and angels. The aim of this performance is to glorify the new king and insure the people's loyalty to the monarch(6).

Khon derives directly and indirectly from the grand shadow play in many ways. It is believed that the

movements of the feet and the trunks of the actors impersonating ogres and monkeys were originally adopted from those of the persons who held up the leather figures while staging the shadow play(7). The only story used for both performances, the grand shadow play and khon, is called "Ramakien or Ramayana" which has men, women, demons and monkeys as its characters(8). The narrations and dialogues in the shadow play are very similar to those in khon(9). The songs, the music, widely known as "pleng na part," and the instrumentations in the grand shadow play have been used in the performance of khon as well(10). The performances of "khon na jaw" which means khon in front of the shadow screen and that of the grand shadow play are alike except that the "khon na jaw" has a raised stage(11).

An episode in the presentation of khon is called a "chud"; whereas in the other forms of dramatic presentation such an episode would be known as a "tawn". The latter term signifies a section; while the former means a "set". The reason why the "chud," or, set, should be adopted only for the khon, and not for other forms of entertainment, seems to lie in the following fact. The khon was originally inspired by, or even originated from, the grand shadow play. When a shadow play was presented, it was necessary to select the numerous figures for screening and



arrange them in sets for presentation in the order in which they were to be shown. Thus, the word "set" came to be used for the episodes of the khon, such as the set of the "Fire-Ordeal of Sita," etc.,(12).

Khon derives also from Thai classical martial art, "krabee krabong," which is one of the Thai fighting techniques(13). It is the fighting that teaches Thai people to know how to use all kinds of Thai weapons, to have good skill and be alert in self-defense and to determine who is better in fooling, avoiding, or provoking the opponent(14). Thus, many styles of fighting have been invented, for example, how to approach the opponent beautifully while holding swords or how to pull back the feet from the opponent(15). The music and rhythm are produced by Thai flutes and drums. The people practicing or showing their combat expertise must rhythmically match their movements to the music. Hence, a dance about fighting then appears(16). Since the performance of khon emphasizes the art of fighting, the styles of fighting from "krabee krabong," etc., have been adopted and shown in the khon(17). Khon has brought the art of dressing from the ancient "chak nak" and the art of fighting from Thai classical martial arts together with the story and the body movement of the characters from the grand shadow play.

## Chapter 2

### The Development of Khon

The exact date when khon appeared for the first time in Thailand is not certain, but it is known that by the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya(1656-1688), khon was being performed. King Narai also allowed the men to build the pavilion for masked plays(18).

During the reign of King Narai, the French envoy, Monsieur de La Loubère, who came to deliver a royal message to the king of Siam, recorded all the incidents that he encountered including the performing arts. He had mentioned the performance of khon in his written chronicles. Monsieur de La Loubères gave the following definition of khon:

Khon is the performance of dancing and showing gestures to match with the music produced from the bamboo stump and many other kinds of musical instruments. The performers wear masks and hold weapons in their hands as if they are going to kill one another. Each performer has never spoken even a word though he may perform so many gestures. Almost all the masks look so ugly and they seem to look more like animals, demons than human beings(19).

The evolution of khon involves how and where khon is performed. It also involves the stage that used to play khon before any theatre or government agency took the

responsibility for khon as the national performance art. Since the time of King Narai, khon has continually developed.

Khon Glarng Plang or open-air khon.

"Khon glarng plang"(fig. 73 and 74) is the performance of khon involving no pavilion. This type of khon is performed on the ground, in an open-air space, because most of the episodes in this kind of khon are about marching the army and making war(20). The audience is able to sit around the playing area, and the natural environment is used as scenery by adding a little decoration (21). The story is told by the narrators and there are no songs at all(22). The only music produced is called "pleng na part," which is the music used to support the marching army.

In the Ayutthaya period, the group of musical instruments that were used for the performance of khon was called "pipart kreung ha," which means Siamese orchestra. "Pipart kreung ha" consisted of five wood and percussion instruments: (1)"pi glarng" is one type of Thai flute, (2)"ranard"(fig. 1) is like a xylophone, (3)"kong wong yai"(fig. 2) is a group of small gongs strung in a

semi-circle on a frame, (4)"tapon"(fig. 3) is a two-faced drum, (5)"klong tudd"(fig. 4) is a double-headed drum.

Thus, the performance of an open-air khon which uses a large performing area and has war as its main theme needs at least two sets of Siamese orchestras. These orchestras are placed on the left and right hand side of the playing area(23). The battle between "Plub Plaa," which has Rama as its chief, and "Lonka," which has Tosakanth as its chief, is very popular for an open-air khon. Most of the characters in this episode are demons and monkeys(24).

#### Khon Rhong Nok or Khon Nung Rao.

"Khon rhong nok" or "khon nung rao"(fig. 76) is a type of open-air khon which is performed in the closed area instead. "Khon rhong nok" has a raised stage and uses scenery. On the left and right sides of the stage, the floor is lifted a little higher for the Siamese orchestra booths(25). Sometimes, instead of being placed on the left and right hand side of the stage, these two orchestras are placed in the front and at the back of the stage(26). This kind of khon has no singing parts. There is only narrative and dialogue(27).

"Khon nung rao" is performed in a pavilion called "rhong". It is unusual in that there is no large bench on the stage for the performers to rest while waiting for their parts. A very long rail is placed against the longer side of the pavilion, and some space in front of the rail is left for the performers to walk along. The pavilion for "khon nung rao" is usually roofed. After finishing their roles, the performers sit on this rail pretending it is a bed or a seat(28).

The performance of "khon nung rao" includes another type of presentation called "khon norn rhong" which means "overnight khon". In the afternoon on the day before the real opening, the two Siamese orchestra groups begin the overture simultaneously(29). While these two Siamese orchestra groups are producing the music, the performers come out and beat the cadence rhythmically with the music. When the orchestra overture is over, the episode of "Pirab Wandering in the forest" is acted. This episode begins with Rama getting lost in Pwa-Thong Garden, which belongs to Pirab, while Pirab himself goes out hunting for food. The play breaks at this point, and there is an overnight intermission. The presentation continues the next morning. It is because of this overnight intermission that "khon nung rao" is called "khon norn rhong"(30).

### Khon Rhong Nai

"khon rhong nai" is another type of masked play which is performed within the royal palace for the king's amusement(31). "Khon rhong nai" has been adapted from the performance of khon and "lakon nai," Thai drama which is played by only female characters. It is the combination of the dances, narratives, dialogues of khon and the songs, music, and dances (using hands moving in a slow gesture) of "lakon nai"(32). There is a chorus leader and a chorus similar to those in "lakon nai". "Khon rhong nai" was performed from the final reign of Ayutthaya until the reign of Thonburi. Later, "khon rhong nai" was revived and continued its popularity through the reign of King Rama III, Rattanakosin Era(1824-1851).

The placing of the two groups of musical instruments for "khon rhong nai" on the left and right of the stage is still the same. However, the booths for placing these instruments are leveled to the same height of the stage itself. Apart from the addition of scenery and curtains, "khon rhong nai" also has a square seat called "tang" for the performers to sit as in "lakon nai"(33).

The Kings and their poets have carefully, appropriately, and beautifully composed in verse the narrations, the dialogues, and the singing texts of the play for the performance of khon. Moreover, the performance itself has been improved precisely. Later on, the pavilion has been built for khon like that of "lakon nai" and therefore this type of khon is called "khon rhong nai"(34).

#### Khon Na Jaw

"Khon na jaw"(fig. 75) is the type of khon in which the pavilion has been changed into that of the grand shadow play(35). The screen of the grand shadow play used for khon has been developed into what is called "jaw kwae" which means that both left and right sides of the screen are cut out as doorways, and are used as the main entrance and exit for the actors(36). The right side of the screen facing the audience is painted as the "Plub Plaa," the camp of King Rama, while the left side is the Lonka Royal palace of Tosakanth. Sketched on the upper part of the white screen are "Makkalah", the goddess of lightening, and "Ramasoon", the god of the thunder, the sun and the moon(37). Later on, the area in front of the screen is raised to be a stage for "khon na jaw"(38). The ways of

performing of "khon na jaw" and "khon rhong nai" are the same except that the former one is staged in front of the shadow screen(39).

"Pipart," the musical instrument group for "khon na jaw" is reduced to only one group and is situated in front of the pavilion facing the audience so that it is more convenient for the narrators to call for suitable music as in the performance of the grand shadow play(40).

The four types of khon mentioned above are not divided into sections or scenes. They have no scenery appropriate to the places of action and the events mentioned in the story; therefore, the audience members themselves have to imagine their own scenery while the show proceeds.

#### Khon Chark or Masked Play Provided with Scenery.

"Khon chark"(fig. 77) is a type of masked play that changes the scenery to suit the places of action and the events mentioned in the story(41). It is believed that "khon chark" originated during the reign of King Rama V(42). The story written for "khon chark" has been divided into acts and scenes. "Khon chark" has the same performance style as "khon rhong nai," that is to say the



process of dancing (using both hands and legs), singing, or playing music comes from the mixture of khon and "lakon nai" as well.

The art of khon performing has been gradually cultivated. While the performing methods have been improved, the old traditions of khon still remain. It was customary that khon was performed only for the entertainment of kings. Later on, the noblemen started to practise and perform khon themselves. Hence, there is the performance of khon presented for many important events such as the celebration in the honor of the founding of the capital temple or the coronation ceremony.

## Chapter 3

### The Story Used for the Performance of Khon

In Thailand, the Masked Play usually has the Ramayana as its sole source. Some efforts have been made to include other stories, the Mahabharata for example, but they are not well accepted by the audience.

The Thai version of Ramakien was derived from the Indian "Ramayana" which is known world wide. Like the Ramayana of Indian, Ramakien is an epic describing the war between Tosakanth, king of the demons of Lonka, and Rama, king of Ayodhya. The conflict arose out of the abduction by Tosakanth of Sida, the beautiful and virtuous consort of Rama, from their forest retreat where Rama and his consort as well as his brother, Laksaman, were undergoing a term of penance in keeping with their mother's words to an intriguing step-mother. The heroic brothers found allies in monarchs of the forest, Sukrib of Khitkhin and Thao Mahajambu of Jambu. Rama later acquired another ally in Pipek, the brother of Tosakanth(43). The war went on for a long time until the virtuous side (Rama) finally won.

However, much of the Thai culture has been interwoven

with the original version (Ramayana) so that astute observers will note that Thai Ramakien is quite different with only the essential chronological events and the main dramatic personalities faithfully preserved. By comparison, the Thai version is much longer and includes many more fantastic incidents than the Indian one(44).

For khon performances, certain episodes will be selected by Thai dramaturges for certain occasions. For example, the "Floating Lady" episode which is about the death of Sida (Rama's wife) will usually be chosen to be performed at events of grief and sorrow, such as a cremation, while the "Battle between Rama and Ravana" episode will be selected for cheerful occasions. Sometimes, certain episodes are arranged to present a complete story of the life of some prominent characters such as that of Hanuman, the brave soldier of Rama. The popular episodes include "Pali Instructing his Brother", "Maiyara's spell on the army", "The Ramawatan Series" and lastly the episode of "The Judgement of Mali-Waraj"(45).

The Thai versions of Ramakien so far discovered were written by four kings in four literary styles. All are written in verse(46). King Taksin of Thonburi reign(1767-1782) composed only some episodes just for the

royal dramatic performance. The version written by King Rama I of Rattanakosin reign(1782-1809) is assumed to be the most complete one. His purpose was to make understandable the whole story from the beginning to the end.

It is evident that the version written by King Rama II(1809-1824) was specifically composed for the performance of royal drama because he chose only those episodes that could be played in the royal drama, for example, the episode of "The Floating Lady" or the episode of "Hanuman Presents the Ring". The version by King Rama VI(1910-1925) is deliberately written for the performance of khon. King Rama VI adopted his Thai version of Ramakien from that of King Rama II so that it could be completed within a limited time. King Rama VI changed the singing text of the play into narration and dialogue in order to confine the time. Moreover, his main purpose for composing this new version was to conserve the Indian version "Ramayana" as much as possible.

The reason that the story of Ramakien was chosen for the performance of khon is that the story of Ramakien emphasizes the battle between the king of the demons of Lonka and the king of Ayodhya. The characters in Ramakien

are classified into two groups to fight with each other throughout the play. Therefore, each character in Ramakien is more appropriate for the performance of khon than those from any other literary work since there are more fighting scenes; so the characters can be more active in their movement and gestures. According to Indian belief, whoever has a chance to read, listen or see the performance of Indian Ramayana will have good luck, long life and merit. Thus, since there exists the Thai version of Ramakien, it is a very good opportunity for Thai people to share this luck. Moreover, the story of Ramakien teaches people to do good deeds and avoid bad acts. The story points out that righteousness will finally win.

In summary, it is these facts that make Ramakien appropriate for the performance of khon. Still, the story of Ramakien is long and includes a number of episodes that can be easily selected to be performed for any event(47).

Chapter 4  
The Language of Khon

In our daily life, we use two kinds of language, one of which consists of sound, uttered by the mouth and heard by the ear, called vocal language, and another which consists of expressive movements of the limbs and body perceived by the eye and called gesture language. It is known that the latter has been used from primeval times when men did not know how to speak. Therefore, the gestures that were used in place of vocal language might have been sufficient for the daily needs of men and are divisible into three categories<sup>(48)</sup>: gestures signifying familiar actions as standing, walking, sitting, lying down, saluting, etc; gestures signifying feelings such as love, hatred, anger, joy and sorrow; gestures that do not fit the other categories such as acceptance, refusal, and calling.

However, the above categories blend into one another and are not clearly divided. When used in ordinary life, these gestures are common and vulgar. In the theatre, the gestures used are refined so as to give aesthetic pleasure since beauty and aesthetic pleasure are the principal objects of art. For the same reason, theatrical art uses

the gestures to accompany vocal and instrumental music. Thus, the gestures in khon and dance drama are only elegant variations of those used in ordinary life. In other words, while players are acting masked plays, they are communicating with us in the language of the plays; and, if we know this language, we understand the gestures. It is not, however, very difficult to understand the language of the masked play if we only pay it the same amount of attention which we do to the conventions of music.

## Chapter 5

### The Masks for Khon

Since khon is the dramatic performance in which the performers have to wear masks or headdresses, it is worth discussing them in order give a few guidelines when viewing khon. It is known that the sole basis for the performance of khon is "Ramakien" and the main theme is the war between King Rama of Ayodhya, his allies, Sukrib of Khitkhin and the great king of Jambu, who are called the "Plub phaa" side; and the king of the demons of Lonka and his allies, who are called the "Krung Lonka" side. Since both the "Plub phaa" and the "Krung Lonka" sides have so many followers, the masks are used to indicate to which group the performers belong.

In the former time, almost all the players except those who performed women, angels, king's wives and demon's daughters such as Montho and Nang Suphunnamutchha, had to wear masks. Later on, those who performed men and gods stopped wearing masks. Even the giantess started wearing make-up instead of the demon masks. Consequently, the characters that still wear masks are those that personify monkeys, ogres, demons and other animals only.



It is believed that if a khon performer performs well, he will be able to deceive the audience's eyes and make the audience believe that the mask he is wearing changes corresponding to the mood and role of its character.

### The Categories of Khon Masks

The masks for khon have been classified into eight categories according to the consideration of the characters in the story of Ramakien. There are four kinds of masks for gods and angels. The God Siva's Mask(fig. 28 and 29) has a white face. Narayana's Mask(fig. 30 and 31) has a blue purple face, and a "monkut yod chai," a kind of crown that is separated into many levels with a pointed-top. The God Brahma's Mask(fig. 32 and 33) has four white faces. Indra's Mask(fig. 34 and 35) has a green face, and a "monkut yod dern hon," a kind of crown that is separated into three to four levels at the bottom with a blunt top.

The masks for buddhist monks in khon are separated into two main types, the Mask of Hermit's Master and the Pirab Buddhist Monks's Mask. The Mask of Hermit's Master(fig. 36 and 37) has a gold or beige face. The Pirab Buddhist Monk's Mask is subdivided into the Pirab Bald Head

(sometimes called "Pirab Pa") which has a gold and black face(fig. 16), and the Pirab Decorated Head which has a gold face, and a "monkut yod dern hon" (see above).

The masks for human beings, which are those of King Rama and his relatives, are separated into four types. Each of these human being's masks has a "monkut yod chai" (see above). King Rama's Mask(fig. 38 and 39) has a white face. Laksaman's Mask(fig. 40) has a gold face. Prot's Mask(fig. 41 and 42) has a red face. Sattarut's Mask(fig. 43 and 44) has a purple face.

The masks for hermits and philosophers are separated into two types, the Hermit's Mask and the Philosopher's Mask. The Hermit's Mask(fig. 45 and 46) has a headdress shaped like a crown which has been painted to resemble tiger's fur. The Philosopher's Mask has a white face with a crown gathered in folds on the top, and binded around at the ears.

The point head-decoration and crown are separated into three main types which are Chadah, Crown, and Tiara. Chadah(fig. 19, 20 and 21) is a point head-decoration worn by main actors and gods. Crown(fig. 17 and 18) is worn by actress who performs an angel or a woman. Tiara is worn by a woman giant.

The masks for the demons in khon are separated into six different kinds which are the Big Demon's Mask, the Small Demon's Mask, the Foreign Demon's Mask, the Mask for Main Soldiers of the Demons, the Mask for Minor Soldiers of the Demons, and the Mask for the Low Class Demons. The Big Demon's Mask is a mask that is worn by Tosakanth(fig. 7), King of the demons. This mask has a green or black face with a grin, and is open-eyed. The crown of this mask is separated into three levels: the second and third levels have two and four small faces, respectively.

The Small Demon's Mask is subdivided into Pipek(fig. 13, 14 and 15) which has a green face with a grin smile, and a "monkut namtao thong", a type of crown that has a bottle gourd shape, Indrachit(fig. 47 and 48) which has a green face with crushed teeth, and a "monkut yod dern hon" (see above), and Kumpakan(fig. 49 and 50) which has a green face with a grin, open-eyed, and a bald head with three little faces at the back. The Foreign Demon's Mask is worn by the demon who relates to Tosakanth such as Sahasdecha and Maiyarab. Sahasdecha(fig. 51 and 52) has a white face. Maiyarab(fig. 53 and 54) has a purple face.

The Mask for the Main Soldiers of the Demons is

subdivided into Mahothorn which has a green face with a grin, and Paovanasoon which has a white face with a grin and is open-eyed. The Mask for Minor Soldiers of the Demons has a grin. Most of these masks are bald and colorful. The Mask for the Low Class Demons is usually trimmed with gold paper.

There are seven kinds of masks for monkeys. The Mask with "Monkut Yod Bud", a type of crown worn only by monkeys, is worn by the actors who perform monkeys named Pali and Sukrib(fig. 57 and 58). The Mask with "Monkut Yod Chai" (see above) is worn by Jambuban and Jambuvarach. The Mask with "Monkut Yod Sam Grib," a type of crown that is separated into three petals on the top, is worn by Ong Kot(fig. 59 and 60). The Mask for the King of Monkeys is worn by Hanuman(fig.22, 23 and 24), Nillapat, and Nillanon.

The Bald Head Mask or 18 Monkut Mask is comprised of sixteen Open-mouthed Masks, and two Close-mouthed Masks which are worn by monkeys named Pimolpanorn and Sattaplee. The Mask of "Tiowpetch" and "Jungkieng"'s Group is covered with lacquer and gold leaves. There are only nine of these masks. The Mask for Low Class Monkeys is worn by an actor who performs a wild monkey. This type of mask is made of red clothes and trimmed with gold paper.

Since there are about thirty of the bald head masks for monkeys (monkeys that wear no crown), they may look much alike; therefore, there is an agreement to differentiate the color of body and face of each monkey(49). For example, the monkey with light red or orange body is "Nillanon". The monkey with greenish neutral tint body is "Nillapasun". The monkey with copper-colored body is "Nilla-ek". The monkey with faded rose body is "Komut". The monkey with dark purple body is "Kayool," etc.

The body of each monkey is the same color as the face. Even though most monkeys have different colors, there are still some of them which are of the same color. For example, the monkey could be "Hanuman" if it has an open-mouthed mask and holds a three-pointed spear with a short handle, or this monkey could be "Sattaplee" if the mouth is closed and a double-edged knife with short handle is in its hand. Therefore, to differentiate one monkey from the other, the audience has to observe many factors apart from colors.

The Mask for Animals is the mask that imitates the head of the animals. There are several masks for animals

in khon; for example, the mask of the golden deer, the mask of Erawan(Indra's three-headed elephant), and the mask of a draught horse.

In the performance of khon, even though the color or the characteristic of each character may be very similar, the audience will still be able to know and understand what is going on in the story. Most of the khon characters which have the same colors or characteristics usually appear in different episodes. Thus, it is quite possible not to see the different characters which are of the same color and manner at the same time.

## Chapter 6

### The Characters in the Performance of Khon

It is a tradition for the performance of khon that almost all the performers, except those who perform the buffoon, have to wear masks or headresses. Generally, the performance of khon is composed of various kinds of characters, such as demons, monkeys, men and women. All of the khon characters have absolutely different manners and costumes.

#### Demons

There are many demon characters in the performance of khon, but the important ones are Tosakanth, Kumpakan, Indrachit, Rammasoon, Maiyarab and Viroonjumbang. One who personifies a demon has to be tall and have square shoulders. He has to balance himself well. Moreover, he has to have a strong, stout and dignified look. A good example to mention is Tosakanth, king of the demons, who is an important character in the story of Ramakien.

Tosakanth is an immoral and wicked demon. He has many typical styles of actions. For example, when Tosakanth is

angry, he will stamp his foot furiously. He will turn his face around to show that he is glad or wiggle his arms and legs when he is happy. Even when Tosakanth is shy, he will have his own style of showing it. When he courts the disguised "Benjakai", his own niece, whom he believes is "Sida", Rama's wife, Tosakanth uses his arms, legs, body, etc., to show his shyness. Here, Tosakanth will shake his shoulders, brush and clean his clothes, wipe his face, touch his chest with his hands, etc. The actions of Tosakanth when he is shy are very popular. They are usually admired by the audience because they really contrast with his characteristic as a demon and are very difficult to do.

### Females

There are many performers who perform as females in the "Ramakien", including human beings, female giants, fish, and naga(a legendary serpent). Each character shows her species by wearing a headdress or both a headdress and tail as her symbol. The females in the khon are "Nang Sida", human being, "Nang Montho", human being, "Nang Benjakai", female giant, "Nang Suphunnamatcha", fish, "Nang Savaha", human being, "Nang Kakkanasoon", female giant, and "Nang Summanakka", female giant.



The women are divided into two types according to their characteristics. The Queen Type is the main actress of the story. Therefore, the way she walks, talks, etc., will show that she is a refined, high class person. Apart from not being in a nervous hurrying manner, she is able to keep her real feeling inside as well, no matter what she really feels. For example, when she is sad, she will not cry out loud. This main actress will give only a polite smile to show that she is happy. Unlike other actresses, the queen will not stamp her feet when she is angry. What she will do to show her anger is to give only sign of annoyance.

The Ordinary Women are the actresses who act and emphasize only a particular manner in each role. This type of actress will have adroit, forceful and quick manners. For example, even when Nang Benjakai disguises herself as Nang Sida, she still has the manners that contrast with the characteristic of Nang Sida herself. However, the performer who is trained in playing the role of an ordinary woman is always better at the art of acting than the one who performs the queen because the queen does not have to use a lot of actions.

## Males

Even though khon is known as the masked play in which the performers have to wear masks, nowadays there is an exception for those who perform human beings, gods, angels such as King Rama, Lakaman, the god Siva, the god Brahma, Narayana, and King Rama's relatives. Instead of wearing masks, the characters mentioned above usually wear headdresses.

In the case where the story chosen for the performance needs to have two main actors who are of almost the same importance, it is necessary to divide the two roles into the first important role called "pra yai," and the second important one called "pra nong". "Pra yai" means the main character who is superior when compared with the second character or "pra nong". In the story of Ramakien, king Rama will be called "pra yai," whereas Laksaman will be "pra nong". Those actors who have a grand and dignified manner will have more chance to be chosen as "pra yai". Thus, a person who can dance nicely and beautifully but lacks a dignified manner can only be "pra nong".

## Monkeys

Almost all of king Rama's soldiers, except Pipek (Tosakanth's brother) who is a demon by birth, are monkeys. The characteristics of those who perform monkeys are taken from the nature of the monkey itself. These performers, especially the one who performs Hanuman (king Rama's brave soldier), have to learn how to turn somersaults, and to hop and skip about rhythmically with the music. It is difficult to train for the role of a monkey, and only a few people have the expertise to play this character.

Chapter 7  
Training for the Khon

Since khon has its own styles and characteristics, whoever wants to study drama and khon in the school of acting has to be trained in the following fundamental techniques. In Tapping the Knee(fig. 61), the students have to sit in a row on the floor with both legs tucked back to one side. The trunks and the bodies have to be kept straight(50). Then, they open up the palms of their hands, turn them over and place them on the knees. After that, they must hit both hands on their knees one after another and count the rhythm regularly. This method of practicing teaches the students to realize the sense of rhythm which is called "musicality". The "musicality" is the main principle for those who study music and acting throughout the world(51).

For Knocking the Waist(fig. 62), the students, again, have to sit in a row on the floor with both legs tucked back to one side, then, knock the left and right elbow at the waist one after the other. While knocking the right elbow at the waist, the students have to lean their heads to the left. Similarly, while knocking the left elbow at

the waist, the student has to lean his head to the right. This is done to the sound of a drum in the rhythm of "toop-pring-pring"(52). This method of practicing is called "flexibility". It helps the upper part of the body get accustomed to the flexibility.

Stepping at the Pole(fig. 63) is used to train almost every khon performer except those who play women parts(53). The students have to stand in a row one after another facing the same direction. The student who is at the head of the line has to stand facing one of the poles; and raising his hands to the face level, touches the pole. The rest of the students do the same thing except that they have to touch other students' backs instead of the pole, and stand about one and one half feet behind. Then, the students start stamping the floor in a "one-two-three" rhythm(54). After the students are good at the "one-two-three" rhythm, they practice another rhythm called "ta-leuk-teuk" which is the technical term used especially in khon. The "ta-leuk-teuk" means the way of tramping the floor right-left-right or left-right-left alternately while freezing the forelegs and lowering oneself by bending the knees(55). The practicing of stepping at the pole accustoms the legs to correct angular poses and strengthens them for angular movements(56).

Pressing into angles(fig. 64) is used to train those who personify demons and monkeys(57). The pressing into angles helps to bend and retain the body, arms, legs, and breast into fixed angles so that there can be no undignified stooping at any moment during the dance(58).

Spreading the Legs(fig. 65 and 66) is learned only by those who personify monkeys(59). It helps the students know how to use the upper part of the legs when needed. Moreover, this spreading the legs method trains the student to straighten out their legs in order to make a straight line.

Turning a Somersault(fig. 67 and 68) is used only for training for monkeys roles. In the performance of khon, there are three different styles of turning a somersault: (1)turning a somersault and falling over backwards which is called "Teelangka Hok Muan", (2)turning a forward somersault and landing right side up which is called "Unthapa", (3)turning a somersault and then sliding to the side which is called "Pasurin"(60).

After practicing these fundamental styles, the students are taught to practice some modified styles until they master dancing rhythmically.

## Chapter 8

### The Garments for Khon

Khon characters have their own traditional garments(61). A male wears a long-sleeved brocaded shirt with glittering decorations and shoulder straps. Underneath the brocade, an actor wears an undergarment which ends in a loin cloth. Hanging in front of the brocade are "chai wai," a decorative flap of cloth suspended from the belt, and "chai krang," a scarf with the ends hanging down over both knees. An actor also wears a headdress and a lot of ornaments such as "grong thong"(necklace), breast plate, embroidered girdle, bracelet, armband, anklet, etc. In former times, an actor had to wear a mask. Later on, he wore only make-up and a headdress instead.

A female wears a short-sleeved shirt inside before covering it with "sabai," a shawl used by a woman to wrap over one shoulder around her chest and back. Then, she has to wear a brocade folding in the front. Most of the females have to wear headdresses or tiaras according to their status. Apart from all the garments, an actress also has to wear a lot of ornaments such as "grong thong,"

"pahurat"(ornaments for the arms), "sungwahn"(sash of gold and diamond or chain worn from both shoulders across the breast), etc. In former times, those who performed female giants such as Nang Summanakka or Nang Kakkanasoon had to wear masks, but later on they just put on make-up instead.

A demon wears clothes very similar to those of the other males except that the demon does not need to have an end of the loin cloth when wearing his undergarment. What he has is only a piece of cloth hanging down from the waist to cover up his bottom. The demon has to wear a different kind and color of mask according to the position he is assigned in the story.

A monkey wears clothes very similar to those of the demon except that the monkey will have a tail hanging inside the piece of cloth that is used to cover up the bottom part. The monkey will wear a different color of shirt according to its individual color specified in the story of Ramakien. There are no shoulder straps on the monkey's shirt, and the shirt will be made in a curled and twisted design indicating the hair of the monkey. Each monkey also has to wear a mask of a different color and style.



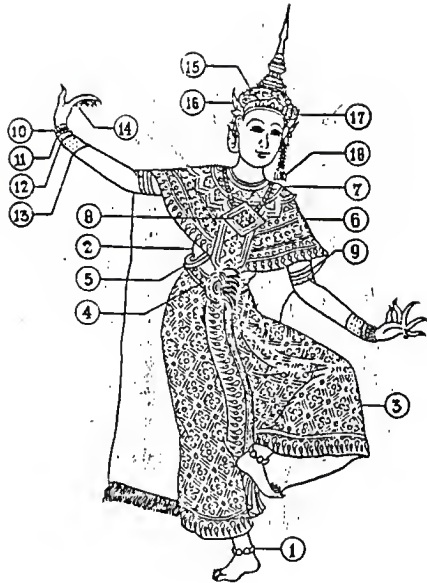


### The Garment for Main Actor

1. Anklet
2. Close-fitting shorts or undergarment called "sanab plao"
3. Thai lower garment called "poosa"
4. "Chai krang", a scarf with the ends hanging down over both knees
5. Shirt in the literary term called "chalong ong"
6. "Rat ong", waist band or girdle
7. "Chai wai", a decorative flap of cloth suspended from the belt
8. "Suwan krathob", the cloth hanging in front of the lap
9. "Punneng", belt
10. "Krong khlo", necklace made of a piece of decorated cloth
11. "Tup soo-ung", breast ornaments or breast plate
12. "Indra thanu", shoulder straps
13. "Fah hu rat", ornament for the arms
14. "Sung wahn", chain worn from both shoulders across the breast or sash of gold and diamonds
15. "Taab tid", embroidery worn on the waist and the back
16. "Chadah", headdress shaped like a crown
17. "Dokmai petch", flower decorated on the left side of the head

18. "Gunjiek", the bouquet worn over the ear
19. "Dokmai tudd", flower decorated on the right ear
20. "Ou ba", bouquet hanging on the right side of the head
21. "Tummarong", ring
22. "Wann robb", a kind of Thai bracelet
23. "Pawalum", wristlet
24. "Thong korn", bracelet or armband

Remarks: Sometimes, an actor does not need to wear all of the ornaments mentioned above

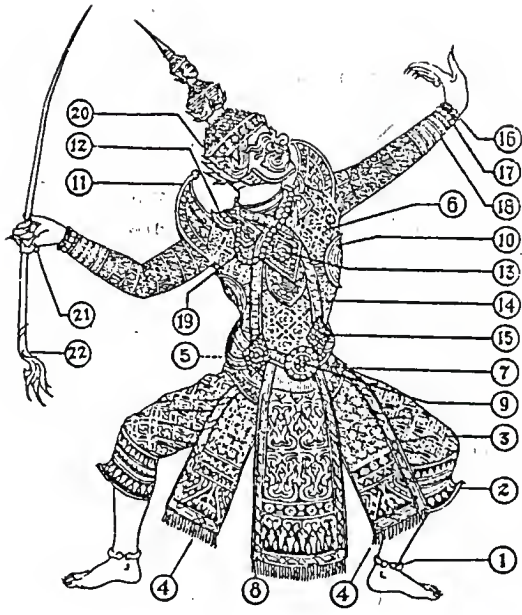


The Garment for Main Actress  
See explanation on following page.

The Garment for Main Actress

1. Anklet
2. Inner shirt for an actress
3. Thai lower garment for actress called "Panoon nang"
4. Belt
5. "Sa ing", girdle or waistband
6. "Sabai", a shawl used by a woman to wear around her chest and back
7. "Naum nang", necklace made of a piece of decorated cloth
8. "Taab tub", embroidery worn on the chest
9. "Pah hu rat", ornament for arms
10. "Wann rob", a kind of bracelet
11. "Pawalum", wristlet
12. "Kamlai takaab", a kind of bracelet
13. "Thong korn", bracelet or armlet
14. "Tummarong", ring
15. "Monkut", crown
16. "Gunjiek", the bouquet worn over the ear
17. "Dokmai tudd", flower decorated on the left ear
18. "Ou ba" bouquet hanging on the left side of the head

Remarks: Sometimes, an actress may not wear all of the ornaments mentioned above.



The Garment and Ornaments for Tosakanth  
 See explanation on following pages.

The Garment and Ornaments for Tosakanth

1. Anklet
2. Close-fitting shorts or undergarment called "Sanab plao"
3. Thai lower garment called "Poosa"
4. "Chai krang", a scarf with the ends hanging down over both knees
5. "Hoi kon", a piece of cloth hanging down from the waist to cover up the bottom
6. "Chalong ong", apparel (also simulating armor)
7. "Rat patre", waist band or girdle
8. "Chai wai", a decorative flap of cloth suspended from the belt
9. "Punneng", belt
10. "Rat ook", a breast-cloth
11. "Indra thanu", shoulder straps
12. "Krong soh", necklace made of cloth with interwoven thread of golds
13. "Tup soo-ung", breast ornament
14. "Sung wahn", chain worn from both shoulders across the breast
15. "Taab Tid", embroidery worn on the waist and the back
16. "Wann rob", a kind of bracelet
17. "Pawalum", wristlet

18. "Thong korn", bracelet or armlet
19. "Prakum klo", a string of beads
20. "Hau khon", a mask of khon. In this picture is the mask of Tosakanth
21. "Tummarong", a ring
22. "Kun sorn", a bow

Remarks: The other king of demons and other demons wear similar kind of garments and ornaments, but are of different colors. There are all together about 100 demons in the khon. However, some of the demons who are less important do not need every one of these ornaments.





The Garments and Ornaments for Hanuman

See explanation on following pages.

The Garments and Ornaments for Hanuman

1. Anklet
2. Close-fitting shorts or undergarment called "Sanab plao"
3. "Poosa", Thai lower garment
4. "Chai krang", a scarf with the ends hanging down over both knees
5. Monkey's tail
6. "Hoi kon", a piece of cloth hanging down from the waist to cover up the bottom
7. Shirt, in this case indicating hair on monkey's body
8. "Rat sa ew", waist band
9. "Hoi na", a decorative flap of cloth suspended from the belt
10. "Punneng", belt
11. "Krong klo", necklace made of a piece of decorated cloth
12. "Tup soo-ung", breast ornament
13. "Sung wahn", chain worn from both shoulders across the breast
14. "Taab tid", embroidery worn on the waist and the back
15. "Pah hu rat", ornament for the arms usually sewn on the shirt
16. "Wann rob", a kind of bracelet

17. "Pawalum", wristlet
18. "Thong korn", bracelet or armlet
19. "Hau khon", a mask of khon. In this picture is the mask of Hanuman
20. "Tri petch", a three-pointed spear with a short handle

Remarks: The other monkeys in the performance of khon wear similar type of garments and ornaments, but are of different colors. There are about 40 monkey's masks. Nevertheless, some monkeys do not need to wear every one of these garments.

## Chapter 2

### Musical Instruments for the Performance of Khon

Khon is the only entertainment that is praised as the greatest and oldest form of Thai classical performing arts, and is performed only for a grand celebration. The orchestra for khon is called "wong pipart" or "pinpart" and is composed of a Thai flute, Thai xylophone, gong, double-headed drum, and two-faced drum. The size of the orchestra has varied according to the era or the status of the host. Since there are five different types of khon, the composition of the orchestra will differ for each(62).

### Khon Glarng Plang or Open-air Khon

"Khon glarng plang" is the performance of khon that performs on the ground in a large, outdoor area. The only kind of orchestra used for this kind of performance in the Ayuthya era(1347-1767) was called "pipart kreung ha" as mentioned when describing the development of khon. There are at least two groupings of this Siamese orchestra: one is placed on the booth near the demon side and the other is placed near king Rama's side. If there were only one group of the musical instruments, the performers who have to

dance, rhythmically matching the music, might not hear the melody, and thus might be unable to dance in unison. Sometimes, it is believed that if the area of performance was very large, and decorated with trees, there must have been more than two groups of this Siamese orchestra. Whenever a khon performer goes near a particular group, that group will be the one which produces the melody in the middle tone.

#### Khon Nung Rao or Khon Rhong Nok

"Khon rhong nok" is performed on the built pavilion. The style of performing is like moving the open-air khon into a pavilion. Therefore, the musical instruments used for "khon rhong nok" are very similar to those of an open-air khon. There will be two small booths a little bit higher than the pavilion on the left and right of the performance area for the two groups of the Siamese orchestra.

In former times, the orchestra for this kind of khon was "pipart kreung ha". Later on, there were additions of a xylophone and a group of small gongs to the "pipart kreung ha," which was called "pipart kreung koo" instead. Since the sites for the two Siamese orchestra groups are

near each other, the melody is produced by both groups. The right Siamese orchestra group is always the group that starts the melody, and then the two groups will make music alternately.

Though "khon nung rao" has another type of presentation called "khon nong rhong," the way of producing the melody for this type of khon has not changed. That is to say the right Siamese orchestra group will still start the overture, and the second group will produce the melody. These two orchestra groups will produce the music alternately. After the overnight intermission, each will start playing the melody alternately as usual.

#### Khon Rhong Nai

"Khon rhong nai" is a mixture of the performance of khon and "lakon nai" (a dance play all performed by females). Therefore, in this type of khon as in all khon, there are both narrations and dialogues and a chorus and a leader of the chorus as in "lakon nai". The pitch of the music is lowered to produce a more beautiful sound. "Pi glarn'g," the Thai flute producing a middle tone, has to be changed into "pi nai," the Thai flute producing a lower tone, instead.

From the Ayuthya era(1347-1767) to the reign of king Rama III of the Rattanakosin era(1824-1851), the only musical group used for the khon performance was "pipart kreung ha" except that there was the addition of a double-headed drum during the reign of king Rama I(1782-1809). During the reign of king Rama III, the orchestra was changed from "pipart kreung ha" to "pipart kreung koo". Later in his reign, the orchestra developed into what is called "pipart kreung yai," which is composed of two Thai flutes, a different tone of Thai xylophones, two groups of small gongs, a double-headed drum(sometimes there need to be three of these drums), a two-faced drum, two cymbals and a gong.

The tradition of using two groups of musical instruments to produce melody is still there except that there was no booth built for these instruments; so the two Siamese orchestra groups are placed on the ground at the same level as the performance area. These two orchestral groups, however, still produce music alternately. The musicians have to be smart, clever and alert; in other words the musicians have to know what is going on in the story. At times they have to produce a long melody; or if they try to find a chance to interject some short melody into the story, the other orchestra group has to play the

long melody.

The alternation of the two Siamese orchestra groups shows not only how well each group can produce its own music, but also how beautifully the music they produce will combine. If any performance of khon needs only one group, that group will always be placed on the left hand side of the pavilion or on the opposite side from the singer.

### Khon Na Jaw

Even though the pavilion for "khon na jaw" is changed to that of the grand shadow play, the method of producing music for this type of khon is still the same as mentioned in "khon rhong nai" except that there is only one Siamese orchestral group. This Siamese orchestra group will be placed in front of the pavilion, facing the performers as in the performance of the grand shadow play. Later on, the Department of Fine Arts made a change so that the Siamese orchestral group is now placed behind the grand shadow screen near the leader of the chorus which makes communication between the orchestral group and the performers much more comfortable.



## Khon Chark

The only thing that is changed in "khon chark" is the scenery in order to suit the places of action and the events mentioned in the story. The other elements of the performance such as the method of producing melody and the musical instrumentation, still remain the same as those of "khon rhong nai".

## Chapter 10

### The Narrators and the Narrations in Khon

The only characteristic that makes khon and the grand shadow play different from other kinds of performance are the narrative parts. Even if an audience member could not see the performing area, he would be able to know that there is khon or a grand shadow play being performed on stage by its narration and speaking parts. Even though khon and the grand shadow play are very similar to each other, two things make these two kinds of performance different(63). Before starting the performance, the grand shadow play uses narrations called "berk na pra," which is the verse used to pay respect to gods and teachers. Then, there is a display of the shadow figures during which the gods battle each other three times. This is called "part sam tra". In khon, there is no "part sam tra". The sounds of the drums in the grand shadow play contain both middle and high tones, while in khon only the middle tone is produced by the double-headed drum.

Since most of khon performers have to wear masks, the narrators for khon performances are very important. They have to know and understand the chosen story very well.

These narrators have to be fully conversant with their subject. It is most desirable that the narrator should also know the rhythm of the dancer's movements so that he can regulate his recitations and pause in consonance with the requirements of the techniques of the dance, since it is mostly through the narrator's utterances that the dancer's action progresses. Khon, therefore, has to rely for its perfection upon the coordination of the dancers, narrator and the orchestra(64).

In the performance of "khong glarng plang," the narrator stands very close to the performers(65). The narrators are also divided into two groups: one group standing near king Rama's side, the other being near Tosakanth's side. However, some of the narrators may stand near other places where the particular events happen. In the performance of "khon nung rao" and "khon na jaw," the narrators stand near the right and left painted doors of the scenery.

In "khon rhong nai," the narrators sit next to the singer in front of the two Siamese orchestra groups. One or two persons sit at each side of the orchestra group because they also have to narrate what is going on in the story. In the case of having only one orchestra group, the

narrator will sit next to the singer on the right side of the pavilion across from the orchestra group. In "khon chark," the narrators and singers sit in front of the stage next to the orchestra group(66).

In ancient times, all of the narrators were men. In each performance, there must be at least two narrators; otherwise, they may not be able to answer the other character's question instantaneously. Nowadays, however, the Department of Fine Arts allows a woman narrator in order to suit some events in the story. The narrators play a very important role in making the performance of khon more vivid.

The narration in khon is divided into six different types:

Park Mueng or Park Plubplaa

This type of narration is used when the main actor appears and resides in the royal palace or in the town, such as when king Rama resides in the town or when Tosakanth rests in the throne hall. This kind of narration is called "park mueng". However, the narration of king Rama going out of the royal palace to rest in the royal

pavilion is called "park plubplaa"(67).

The principle of "park mueng" is that the narrator is able to narrate the particular verse with emotion. For example, the narrator is able to narrate more quickly or slowly as needed if he wants to narrate the anger, happiness or sadness of the character.

#### Park Rod(including Park Chang and Park Ma)

This type of narration is used when the character goes out fighting, riding in a chariot or on an elephant or horse(68). In this type of narration, the narrator has to watch the rhythm and the style of each actor when he moves so that there will be a unity in the dancing group.

#### Park Chom Dong

This type of narration is used to relax the audience(69). For example, there is a narration describing the birds, the forest, and nature scenes on the way back home after king Rama has already defeated the demons in order to make the audience relax. This type of narration is then called "park chom dong". The other purpose for "park chom dong" is to give the audience an image of the

forest as well as to delay the action so that the next character can come out. This style of narration may have both high and low musical tones alternately.

#### Park Oh

This type of narration is used to describe the sadness of the character. It is used when the character cries or weeps and wails unceasingly.

#### Park Bunyai

This type of narration is used to describe the state of being of anything(70).

#### Park Bettarret

This type of narration is used for general occasions or for describing some small things or events which cannot be put in any types mentioned above(71). For example, it is used to describe the story of Pali teaching his brother, Sukrib, or when Hanuman and Ongkod make an offer to King Rama to ask the hermit Kobut for the heart's box.

Remarks: In some theories the narrations are divided

into only five types by combining the fifth and the sixth  
which are then named "park bettarret".

## Chapter 11

### Dialogues

The dialogues for khon are written in the form called "rai yao" which is composed of alliterative and rhyming lines of unequal length. This kind of dialogue can determine how brilliant the narrators are because sometimes the narrators have to invent their own dialogues for the particular moment.

There are two types of dialogues in the performance of khon which are Kra Too and Tum Nong. "Kra too" is the dialogue that is written and composed by the khon masters with a very fine and highly finished style for each particular episode. Those who are going to speak "kra too" need to have a very good memory because all the "kra too" is already set in the story. This "kra too" will be spoken only in the particular moment mentioned in the story. That means when it is the time for "kra too," one of the narrators will speak the first "kra too" while the other will speak the next one.

"Tum nong" is subdivided into dialogue in the chanting rhymes mode and in the speaking mode. The dialogue in the



chanting rhymes mode is used to describe the character when he is feeling sad or thinking about something in his mind. Sometimes, it also serves as narration, for example, telling what the character is doing or is about to do before the character starts to say something. The dialogue in the speaking mode is used when the characters talk with one another, or when a character speaks to himself, such as when he gets angry and grumbles.

The most important thing for the narrator is that he has to make his voice appropriate to the particular character for each particular emotion. For example, if he is narrating the main actor, he has to make his voice sound gentle and polite, but when he narrates the demon's voice, he has to make his voice sound strong and evil.

## Chapter 12

### The Singers in Khon

The singers are classified into two groups which are the leader of the chorus and the chorus(72). The leader of the chorus will start the verse and sing until the end of the first phrase. Then, it is the responsibility of the chorus to continue the second phrase. While the chorus sings their parts, the chief of the chorus will prepare himself for the next line. The leader of the chorus has not only to sing his parts correctly but also to know the characteristic of the performers so that he will be able to sing that song in slow or fast rhythm as needed.

The chorus has to sing together and in unison. There should be at least two and not more than six chorus singers because if there are too many, the audience will not be able to hear the singing clearly. However, some of the songs may need only the chief of the chorus (73).

In "khon na jaw," the chorus sits behind the shadow screen and watches the performer through the sheer cloth at the bottom of the screen. In "khon rhong nai," if there are so many chorus members that they can be divided into

two groups, each group sits in front of each Siamese orchestra group. If the chorus cannot be separated into two groups, the one group will then sit in front of the orchestra group on the right side of the pavilion. If there is only one orchestra group, this orchestra group will be placed on the left side of the pavilion whereas the narrators and the chorus will sit in a row on the right side opposite the orchestra group. In "khon chark," the chorus sits with the orchestra group in front of the stage. However, the position of the chorus may be changed as needed.

## Chapter 13

### The Saluting Ceremony for Khon

The saluting ceremony for khon is the ceremony to pay homage to the ancestor who founded khon and to khon's teachers as well. Therefore, it is necessary for every khon student to participate this saluting ceremony.

Besides this saluting ceremony, there is another ceremony for khon called "pitee krob". In "Pitee krob," the elder teachers and performers in khon bring the masks of the hermit, the crown, the headdresses, etc., used in the khon performance. These are called "teacher's masks" and are put on the students' heads one by one. For example, those who are trained to be monkeys have to put on monkeys' masks, those who are trained to be actresses have to put on headdresses, etc. After the "pitee krob," khon teachers will lead the students in the dance rhythmically matching the movement to the music. This dance is not only to pay homage to the ancestors, but also to let the teachers check whether or not the students dance well and beautifully enough. The saluting ceremony for khon is usually done on Thursday which is believed to be the Teacher's Day.

## Chapter 14

### The Customs and Traditions in Khon

There are important customs and traditions that khon performers use. Before performing any khon, khon performers always have to pay homage to the "triple gems" (Buddha, Buddha's teaching, the Buddhist clergy) and the teachers who teach them. On the day of performance, it is necessary for the actors to pay respect to items used in the performance such as the garments, the chariot, the weapons. Two teachers's masks are placed on a shelf to be worshipped by the performers. They are the mask of the hermit which is called "Na Pra Ku" or "Poh Kru" and the mask of "Pra pirab". Some performers may pay respect to the mask of gods such as the god Siva's mask or Narayana's mask as well. When constructing the pavilion for khon, there must be a ritual to venerate the guardian spirit so that there will not be any accident happening during the performance of khon.

After finishing the performance, all khon performers have to pay homage to the teachers and teacher's masks one more time. They also have to ask for forgiveness from every performer according to their seniority because they

may have insulted each other without any intention while performing.

In the performance of khon, there are many prohibitions to which the performers must adhere. For "khon nung rao", the performers must not sit on the bed or rail if they are not performing at that moment. The performers must not change anything on the masks. It is the duty of the teacher to correct the masks if there is anything wrong. The performers must not play with the weapons outside the performing time. The performers must not walk across the weapons. They must not play with any of the musical instruments. The masks of monkeys and demons must not be placed together. The masks of the hermit must always be placed in between the two groups of masks mentioned above(74).

In former times, the performance of khon was just for the king's entertainment. Therefore, the public could not play or even practice khon. Later on, the king realized that khon might help train Thai people in the martial arts; therefore, he allowed the nobleman to learn how to perform khon. It is noticeable that the status of khon varied with the reign of each king. Nowadays, the Department of Fine Arts of the nation is the one that takes

responsibility for Thai dramatic arts. Therefore, a performance of khon is presented at least once a year at the National Theatre. The performance period is normally during the summer time from March to June. Since khon is one of the Thai classical performing arts that represents the whole sign of Thai culture, it is often performed to entertain visiting dignitaries.

Illustrations



Fig. 1. Ranard or Thai Xylophone, เครื่องดนตรีไทย  
ชุด๑ (Thai Musical Instruments 1) Chart. (N.p.:  
Siam Gallery Company, n.d.).



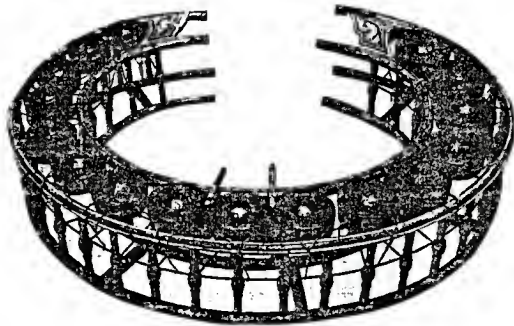


Fig. 2. Kong Wong Yai or a group of small gongs strung in a semi-circle on a frame, เครื่องดนตรีไทย ชุด ๑ (Thai Musical Instruments 1) Chart. (N.p.: Siam Gallery Company, n.d.).

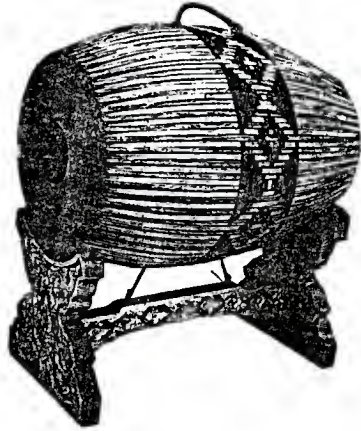


Fig. 3. Tapon or Two-faced Drum, เครื่องดนตรีไทย ซุดอ  
(Thai Musical Instruments 2) Chart. (N.p.: Siam  
Gallery Company, n.d.).



Fig. 4. Krong Tudd or Doubled-headed Drum, เครื่องดนตรีไทย ซอ (Thai Musical Instruments 2) Chart.  
(N.p.: Siam Gallery Company, n.d.).



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

Fig. 5 and 6. Siamese Orchestra Group,  
photographed by author.



Fig. 7. Mask of Tosakanth, king of the demons,  
photographed by Tom Chauwivat.



Fig. 8, 9, and 10. Mask of Tosakanth,  
photographed by author.



Fig.11.



Fig.12.

Fig.11 and 12. Mask of Saeng Ah-Tidd, one of the demons who is in Tosakanth's side, photographed by author.



Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.



Fig. 15.

Fig. 13, 14, and 15. Mask of Pipek (Tosakanth's brother) photographed by author.





Fig. 16. Mask of Pra Pirab, photographed by author.



Fig. 17.



Fig. 18.

Fig. 17 and 18. Actress's Crown, photographed by author.



Fig. 19, 20, and 21. Chadah or Headdress for actor, photographed by author.



Fig. 22.



Fig. 23.



Fig. 24.

Fig. 22, 23, and 24. Mask of Hanuman (Rama's brave soldier), photographed by author.



Fig. 25. Mask of Surasane(one of the 18 Monkut Masks), photographed by author.



Fig. 26.



Fig. 27.

Fig. 26 and 27. Mask of Waiyabutra(one of the 18 Monkut Masks), photographed by author.



Fig. 28.



Fig. 29.

Fig. 28 and 29. Mask of God Siva, white face,

การดูหนัง (The Way of Watching Khon)

(Bangkok: Wattanapanich, 1985) 49.



Fig. 30.



Fig. 31.

Fig. 30 and 31. Mask of Narayana, blue purple face, The Way of Watching Khon 50.



Fig. 32.



Fig. 33.

Fig. 32 and 33. Mask of God Brahma, four white faces, The Way of Watching Khon 51.



Fig. 34.



Fig. 35.

Fig. 34 and 35. Mask of Indra, green face, The  
Way of Watching Khon 52.





Fig. 36.



Fig. 37.

Fig. 36 and 37. Mask of Hermit's Master, gold face, The Way of Watching Khon, 54.



Fig. 38.



Fig. 39.

Fig. 38 and 39. Mask of King Rama, white face,  
The Way of Watching Khon 56.



Fig. 40. Mask of Laksaman, gold face, หัวโขน  
(Khon Masks) (N.p.: n.p., n.d.) N. pag.



Fig. 41.



Fig. 42.

Fig. 41 and 42. Mask of Prot, red face, The Way of Watching Khon 58.



Fig. 43.



Fig. 44.

Fig. 43 and 44. Mask of Sattarut, purple face,  
The Way of Watching Khon 59.



Fig. 45 Mask of a hermit (one of the Hermit's Mask), purple face, Khon Masks. N. pag.



Fig. 46. Mask of a hermit(one of the Hermit's Mask), lotus petal color, Khon Masks. N. pag.



Fig. 47.



Fig. 48.

Fig. 47 and 48. Mask of Indrachit (one of the Small Demon's Mask), green face, The Way of Watching Khon 63.





Fig. 49.



Fig. 50.

Fig. 49 and 50. Mask of Kumpakan (one of the Small Demon's Mask), green face, The Way of Watching Khon 77.



Fig. 51.



Fig. 52.

Fig. 51 and 52. Mask of Sahasdecha (one of the Foreign Demon's Mask), white face, The Way of Watching Khon 66.



Fig. 53.



Fig. 54.

Fig. 53 and 54. Mask of Maiyarab (one of the Foreign Demon's Mask), purple face, The Way of Watching Khon 67.



Fig. 55.



Fig. 56.

Fig. 55 and 56. Mask of Sattasoon(one of the Foreign Demon's Mask), light red face, The Way of Watching Khon 65.



Fig. 57.



Fig. 58.

Fig. 57 and 58. Mask of Sukrib, red face, The  
Way of Watching Khon 82.



Fig. 59.



Fig. 60.

Fig. 59 and 60. Mask of Ong Kot, green face, The Way of Watching Khon 84.



Fig. 61. Tapping the knee, the first step of training for the khon, Khon (Khon) (Bangkok: The Trade Organization of Council of Teacher, 1983) 113.



Fig. 62. Knocking the waist, the second step of training for the khon, Khon 113.

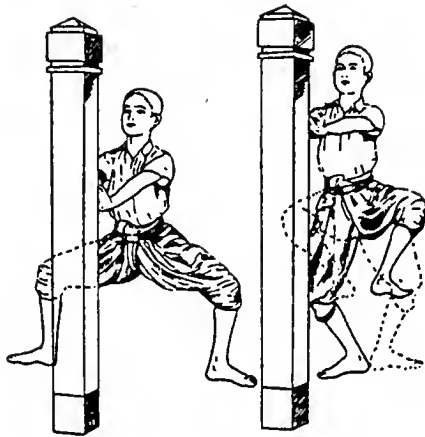


Fig. 63. Stepping at the pole, the third step of training for the khon, Khon 113.



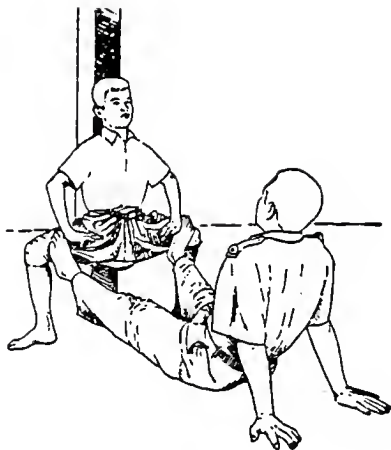


Fig. 64. Pressing into angles, the fourth step of training for the khon, Khon 113.



Fig. 65.



Fig. 66.

Fig. 65 and 66. Spreading the legs, the fifth step of training for the khon, Khon 117.

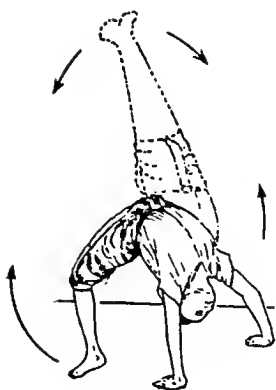


Fig. 67.



Fig. 68.

Fig. 67 and 68. Turning a somersault, the sixth step of training for the khon, Khon 117.



Fig. 69. King Rama and his brother, Laksman, photographed by Tom Chauwivat. King Rama is in red and green costume while Laksman is in yellow and purple one.

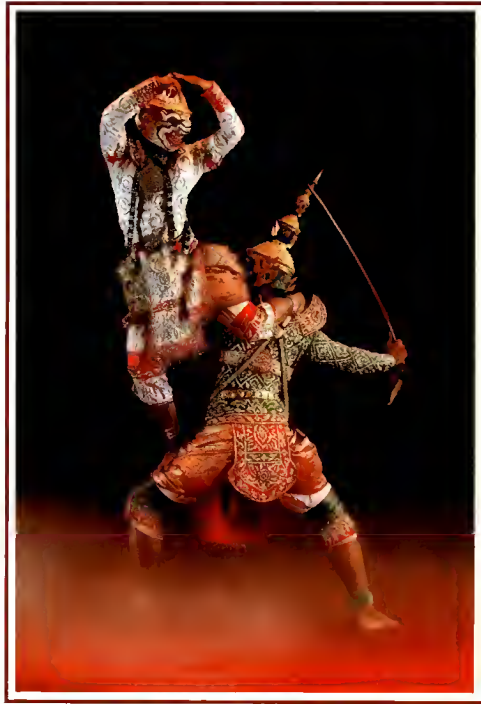


Fig. 70. The fighting between Hanuman and  
Tosakanth. Photographer unknown.



Fig. 71. The fighting between Hanuman and  
Tosakanth. Photographer unknown.



Fig. 72. The fighting between King Rama,  
Laksman, Hanuman and Tosakanth. Photographer  
unknown.



Fig. 73. The performance of "khon klarng plang".

Hanuman is wooing his wife to be, Mutchu.

Photographer unknown.





Fig. 74. The Performance of "khon klarng plang",  
performed at Thammasat University, การแสดงและ  
การละเล่นพื้นเมืองของไทยในภาคกลาง (The Stage Show  
and Local Games in the Central Part of Thailand)  
(Bangkok: The Lardpraow Teacher Council, 1982)  
5.

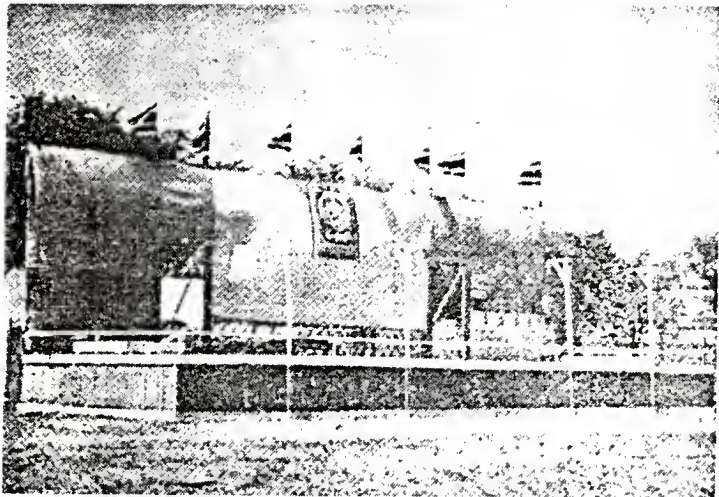


Fig. 75. The stage for "khon na jaw", Khon  
following p. 40.

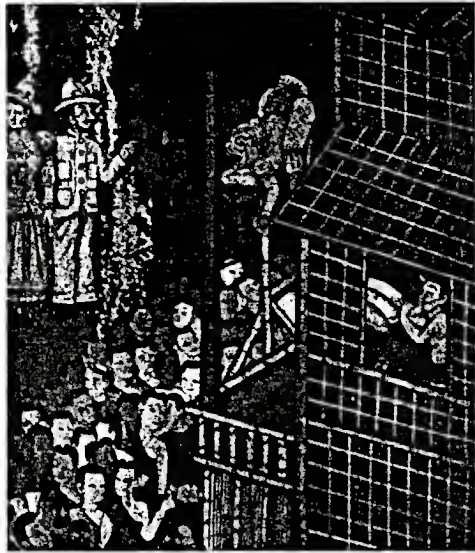


Fig. 76. The performance of "khon nung rao" from  
the painting in the Marble Temple's wall, Khon  
6.



Fig. 77. The performance of "khon chark".  
The fighting scene between Plub Plaa's and  
Lonka's sides. Photographer unknown.

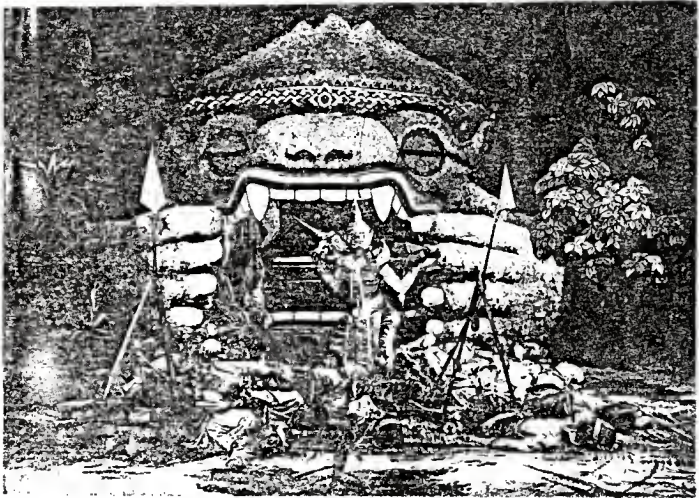


Fig. 78. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Maiyarab the Magician, The Khon and Lakon (Bangkok: Dept. of Fine Arts, 1963) following p. 17. Maiyarab kidnaping the sleeping Rama from the mouth of the colossal sleeping Hanuman.



Fig. 79. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien; the Episode of Maiyarab the magician, The Khon following p. 17. Hanuman fighting with a small white fish-tailed monkey, Mutchanu, his son.



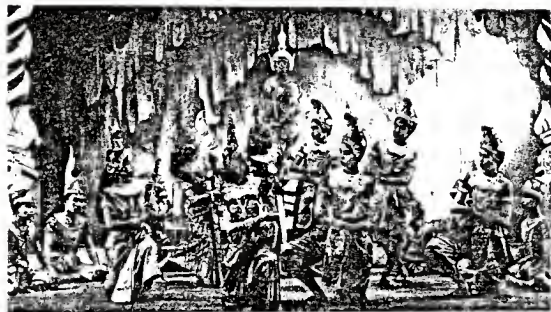


Fig. 80. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of the Fire-Ordeal of Sida and the Battle of the Demon Banlaiyakalp, The Khon following p. 49. A demon prince, Banlaiyakalp, in the nether region of Nagas.

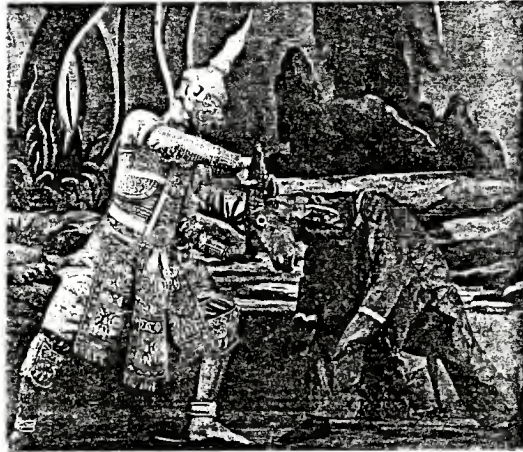


Fig. 81. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of the Fire-Ordeal Sida and the Battle of the Demon Banlaiyakalp, The Khon following p. 49. Banlaiyakalp fighting with Hanuman who had temporarily transformed himself into a wild buffalo.





Fig. 82. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 54. Rama pursuing Marich who is disguised as a golden deer.

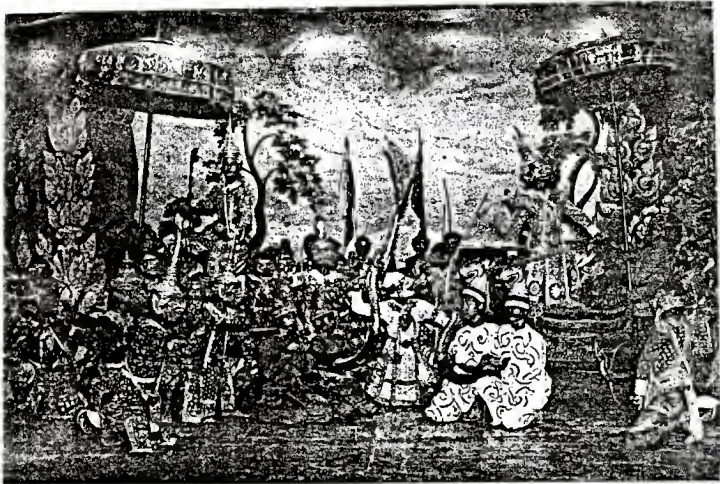


Fig. 83. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 62. The battle-scene of Laksaman and Indrachit, Prince Royal of Lonka.

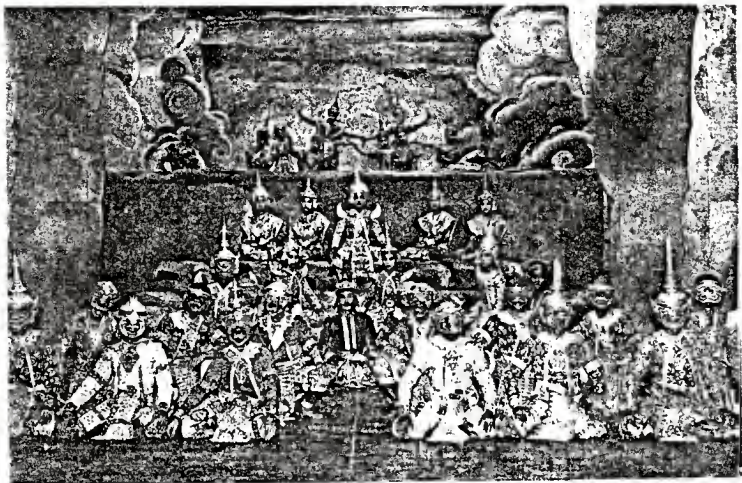


Fig. 84. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p.62. The celestial beings celebrating the victory of Rama over Tosakanth.

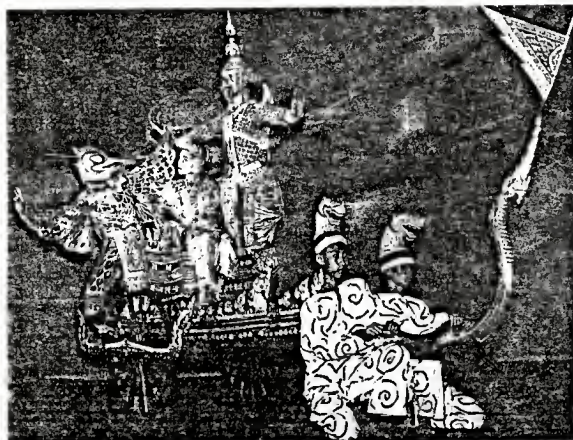


Fig. 85. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 60. Sida being taken away by Tosakanth.



Fig. 86. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 60. Hanuman presenting a shawl and a ring to Sida.





Fig. 87. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 60. The monkey army of Rama building the causeway.



Fig. 88. The performance of "khon chark" from Ramakien: the Episode of Rama in the Forest, The Khon following p. 60. Hanuman departs from the golden fish, Nang Suphunnamutcha.

## Appendix

Ayuthya Era 1347-1767

King Narai 1656-1688

Thonburi Era 1767-1782

King Taksin 1767-1782

Rattanakosin Era 1782-present

King Rama I 1782-1809

King Rama II 1809-1824

King Rama III 1824-1851

King Rama IV 1851-1868

King Rama V 1868-1910

King Rama VI 1910-1925

King Rama VII 1925-1932

King Rama VIII 1934-1935

King Rama IX 1935-present



Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dept. of Fine Arts, prod., โขนเรื่องรามเกียรติ์  
ชุดรามาวตาร (Mask Play: Ramakien "The Incarnation of  
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<sup>2</sup> Amara Klamcharoen, ed., สุนทรียะของนาฏศิลป์ไทย (The  
Beauty of Thai Dramatic Art) (Bangkok: Sutisarn, 1978) 16.

<sup>3</sup> Dept. of Fine Arts, prod., โขน เรื่องรามเกียรติ์ ตอน  
ท้าวผกิตวิรชว่าความ (The Khon: Episode of "The Judgement of Thao  
Mali-Waraj."), the National Theatre, Bangkok, 16 Apr. 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Dept. of Fine Arts, The Khon: Episode of "The  
Judgement of Thao Mali-Waraj."

<sup>5</sup> Klamcharoen 16.

<sup>6</sup> Dept. of Fine Arts, The Khon: Episode of "The  
Judgement of Thao Mali-Waraj."

<sup>7</sup> Panee Sisuy, สุนทรียะของนาฏศิลป์ไทย (The Beauty of Thai  
Dramatic Art) (Bangkok: Ju Jeen Thai, 1982) 42.

<sup>8</sup> Vimonsri Upramai, นาฏกรรมและการละคร (Dramatic Performance and Drama) (Bangkok: Charoenphol, 1981) 90.

<sup>9</sup> Sisuy 42.

<sup>10</sup> Klamcharoen 18.

<sup>11</sup> Sisuy 42.

<sup>12</sup> Dhanit Yupho, The Khon and Lakon (Bangkok: Dept. of Fine Arts, 1963) 52.

<sup>13</sup> Upramai 91.

<sup>14</sup> Klamcharoen 18.

<sup>15</sup> Sisuy 42.

<sup>16</sup> Klamcharoen 18.

<sup>17</sup> Upramai 91.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Education, Dept. of Academic, การ  
แสดงและการละเล่นพื้นเมืองของไทยในภาคกลาง (The Stage Shows and  
Local Games in the Central Part of Thailand) (Bangkok: The

Lardprow Council of Teachers, 1982) 4.

19 Ministry of Education 4.

20 Sisuy 43.

21 Upramai 91.

22 Klamcharoen 19.

23 Upramai 91.

24 Songsak Prangwattankul, บทละครไทย (Thai Drama)  
(Bangkok: Burasarn, n.d.) 84.

25 Upramai 91.

26 Prangwattanakul 85.

27 Klamcharoen 20.

28 Ministry of Education 4.

29 Sisuy 43.

- 30 Klamcharoen 20.
- 31 Yupho, The Khon 3.
- 32 Klamcharoen 20.
- 33 Upramai 92.
- 34 Sisuyay 44.
- 35 Upramai 92.
- 36 Dhanit Yupho, 1984 (Khon) (Bangkok: The Trade Organization of Council of Teachers, 1983) 40.
- 37 Prangwattanakul 87.
- 38 Klamcharoen 21.
- 39 Sisuyay 44.
- 40 Upramai 92.
- 41 Klamcharoen 21.

42 Sisuy 44.

43 Dept. of Fine Arts, prod., โขนเรื่องรามเกียรติ์ ชุด นางลอย (The Khon Ramakien: Episode of Floating Lady), the National Theatre, Bangkok, 16 Apr. 1981.

44 Dept. of Fine Arts, The Khon: Episode of "The Judgement of Thao Mali-Waraj."

45 Dept. of Fine Arts, Mask Play: Ramakien "The Incarnation of Rama."

46 Upramai 97.

47 Upramai 116.

48 Yupho, The Khon 4.

49 Yupho, Khon 102.

50 Upramai 100.

51 Yupho, Khon 112.

52 Upramai 100.

- 53 Yupho, Khon 112.
- 54 Upramai 100.
- 55 Yupho, Khon 114-115.
- 56 Yupho, The Khon 51.
- 57 Upramai 101.
- 58 Yupho, The Khon 51.
- 59 Upramai 101.
- 60 Yupho, Khon 118.
- 61 Prangwattanakul 90.
- 62 Yupho, Khon 121.
- 63 Yupho, Khon 128.
- 64 Yupho, Khon 129.

65 Yupho, Khon 136.

66 Yupho, Khon 139.

67 Yupho, Khon 130.

68 Upramai 104.

69 Upramai 105.

70 Yupho, Khon 132.

71 Yupho, Khon 133.

72 Yupho, Khon 137.

73 Yupho, Khon 138.

74 Yupho, Khon 182.

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\_\_\_\_. The Khon and Lakon. Bangkok: Dept. of Fine Arts, 1963.

เครื่องดนตรีไทย ชุด๑ (Thai Musical Instruments 1) Chart.  
N.p.: Siam Gallery Company, n.d.

เครื่องดนตรีไทย ชุด๒ (Thai Musical Instruments 2) Chart.  
N.p.: Siam Gallery Company, n.d.

โขน เรื่องรามเกียรติ์ ตอนท้าวมาลีวราชว่าความ (The Khon: Episode of "The Judgement of Thao Mali-Waraj"). Prod. Dept. of Fine Arts. The National Theatre, Bangkok. 16 Apr. 1981.

โขน เรื่องรามเกียรติ์ ชุดนางลอย (The Khon Ramakien: Episode of Floating Lady). Prod. Dept. of Fine Arts. The National Theatre, Bangkok. 8 Nov. 1979.

โขน เรื่องรามเกียรติ์ ชุดรามาวตาร (Mask Play: Ramakien "The  
Incranation of Rama"). Prod. Dept. of Fine Arts.  
The National Theatre, Bangkok. 29 Mar. 1987.

KHON

by

Orasa Tanticharoenkiat

B. A., Chulalongkorn University, 1986

AN ABSTRACT OF A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

(Department of Speech)

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1988

The purpose of this report is to provide information about "khon" which is one of the Thai classical dance forms, and is also known by the name of the "Siamese Masked Play". During the 15th century, all of the performers had to wear masks of different colors and shapes which conventionally represented the heads and faces of ogres, monkeys, men, and gods, etc. By the 20th century, the actors who played the parts of men, women, and gods as well as the angels no longer wore masks like those who performed the part of demons or monkeys.

Khon developed from three different art forms, the ritual ancient "chak nak", the grand shadow play, and the Thai classical martial art. The repertoire of khon is taken from the Ramakien which is an epic describing the war between Tosakanth, king of the demons of Lonka, and Rama, king of Ayodhya. The musical instruments used in the performance of khon are called "pipart kreung ha" which consists of five wood and percussion instruments.

The performance of khon comprises five different types which are "khon glarng plang", "khon rhong nok", "khon rhong nai", "khon na jaw", and "khon chak". "Khon glarng plang" is an open-air khon. "Khon rhong nok" is a type of

open-air khon which is performed in the closed area instead. "Khon rhong nai" is a type of masked play which is performed within the royal palace for the king's amusement. "Khon na jaw" is a type of khon that is performed in front of the screen of the grand shadow play. "Khon chak" is a type of khon that changes the scenery to suit the places of action and the events mentioned in the story.

The performance of khon is composed of various kinds of characters, such as demons, monkeys, men and women. Each type of character has an absolutely different manner and costume. There are six fundamental techniques that are used to train the performer of khon: tapping the knee, knocking the waist, stepping at the pole, pressing into angles, spreading the legs, and turning a somersault.

The narration in khon is divided into six different types: "park mueng", "park rod", "park chom dong", "park oh", "park bunyai", and "park bettaret". "Park mueng" is a type of narration that is used when the main actor appears and resides in the royal palace or in the town. "Park rod" is used when the character goes out fighting, riding in a chariot. "Park chom dong" is used to relax the audience. "Park oh" is used to describe the sadness of the character.

"Park Bunyai" is used to describe the state of being of anything. "Park Bettarret" is used for general occasions. In the performance of khon, the dialogues are written in the form called "rai yao" which is composed of alliterative and rhyming lines of unequal length. The most important thing for the narrator is to make his voice appropriate to the particular character for each particular emotion.

There are two groups of the singers in khon: the leader of the chorus and the chorus. There should be at least two and not more than six chorus singers in the performance. The position of these singers changes according to the type of masked play that is presented.

For khon, there are the ceremony, customs, tradition as well as prohibitions that the khon students or performers have to follow. For example, every khon student has to pay homage to the ancestor who founded khon and to the khon's teachers as well. Before and after performing any khon, khon performers have to pay homage to the teachers who teach them. The performers must not change anything on the masks.

Since khon is a very sophisticated form of Thai classical dance and it also represents the whole of Thai

culture, it is chosen to be performed to entertain visiting dignitaries. Nowadays, the Department of Fine Arts of the nation is the one that takes responsibility for Thai dramatic arts. The performance of khon, therefore, is presented at least once a year at the National Theatre.