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LIKAY: THE THAI POPULAR THEATRE FORM
AND ITS FUNCTION WITHIN THAI SOCIETY

By
Gary Bryden Carkin

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Department of Theatre

1984

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1984

ABSTRACT

LIKAY: THE THAI POPULAR THEATRE FORM AND ITS FUNCTION WITHIN THAI SOCIETY

By

Gary Bryden Carkin

Likay, Thailand's most popular theatre genre, evolved through centuries of adaptation and change, its popularity continuing to the present time. The purpose of this study was to determine the meaning the genre holds, and the function it serves, in relation to contemporary Thai society.

The study is based upon an analysis of fifty-five performances occurring in the various regions of Thailand between November, 1980 and March, 1982. The paper considers these performances from the point of view of theme and structure and discussed how the elements of Likay act as symbolic extensions of the basic theme as well as project secondary messages.

The introductory chapter includes the definition of Likay, the justification of the study, a review of Likay literature, research methodology, and the scope of the study.

Chapter Two, The Origin and Historical Development of Likay, traces Likay's evolution from its origin in dikir, a Muslim chant, to dikay or yikay, improvised sketches depicting foreign mannerisms, through its amalgamation with classical and folk elements of Thai dance-drama, to its

maturity in the 20th century.

Chapter Three, *The Nature of Likay Performances and Their Content*, explains the environmental context in which Likay performances occur as well as the nature of the religious ceremonies with which they are connected. Analysis of Likay plots and themes shows a "rite of unification" which seeks, through symbolic action, to affiliate the Likay audience with the Thai King and the traditional institutions of Thai culture and society.

Chapter Four, *Likay Performance Elements as Symbolic Indicators*, explains how the stage-house, scenery, music, songs, movement and dance, dialogue and monologue, characters, costumes, and make up act as symbolic extensions of the internal themes of Likay. Improvisation is shown to be the most essential element of a Likay performance, organizing and informing the structure. Throughout the chapter, the relationship between the structure of Likay and the structure of Thai society itself, is stressed.

The final chapter summarizes the dissertation, offers conclusions, and suggests areas for future research.

This paper is dedicated to
my parents, Beatrice F. and Laurence E. Carlin,
whose understanding and encouragement
assured its completion.

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On a personal level, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Farley Richmond, my dissertation chairman, for his encouragement and consistently sound advice, and Dr. Surapone Virulrak of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, for his expert guidance while pursuing the research in Thailand. Without Dr. Virulak's advise and introductions, the research would have proceeded much more slowly.

I owe many thanks to the Likay performers who graciously transported me to performances, answered questions, and directed me onward to places of research interest. Their cooperation brought me continued encouragement.

I am especially indebted to my assistants, Mr. Thanusak Damrangsuk, Mr. Charoon Chaisorn, Mr. Supod Kanvijit, and Mr. Praphan Murob for their perseverance and dedication through long and often tiring, hours. Their alert interest brought much to the study.

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PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The guide below may be referred to for pronunciation of the Thai words in the text.*

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Usual English Letter</u>	<u>Approximate Pronunciation</u>
i	i	<u>ee</u> as in <u>see</u>
ee	ee, ez	<u>ee</u> as in <u>see</u>
e	e	<u>e</u> as in <u>pet</u>
ae	a	<u>a</u> as in <u>and</u>
ay	a, ay	<u>a</u> as in <u>made</u>
a	a	<u>a</u> as in <u>father</u>
u	oo, u	<u>u</u> as in <u>you</u>
o	o	<u>o</u> as in <u>gone</u>
as	ow	<u>ow</u> as in <u>prow</u>
oi	oy	<u>oy</u> as in <u>boy</u>
ai	i, y	<u>y</u> as in <u>my</u>
ua	oo	<u>oo</u> as in <u>poor</u>
b	b	<u>b</u> as in <u>samba</u>
p	p (after s)	<u>p</u> as in <u>spy</u> (unaspirated)
ph	p	<u>p</u> as in <u>pie</u> (aspirated)
d	d	<u>d</u> as in <u>Sunday</u>

*The guide follows that of the U.S. Foreign Service Institute's Thai language manual, 1970.

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Usual English Letter</u>	<u>Approximate Pronunciation</u>
t	t (after <u>s</u>)	<u>t</u> as in <u>sty</u> (unaspirated)
th	t	<u>t</u> as in <u>tie</u> (aspirated)
k	k (after <u>s</u>)	<u>k</u> as in <u>ski</u>
kh	k	<u>k</u> as in <u>Korea</u>
ch	ch	between <u>ch</u> in <u>cheat</u> and <u>sh</u> in <u>sheet</u>
r	r	<u>r</u> as in <u>red</u>
l	l	<u>l</u> as in <u>long</u>
m	m	<u>m</u> as in <u>me</u>
h	h	<u>h</u> as in <u>hen</u>
f	f	<u>f</u> as in <u>fun</u>
s	s	<u>s</u> as in <u>such</u>
n	n	<u>n</u> as in <u>need</u>
ng	ng	<u>ng</u> as in <u>sing</u>
w	w	<u>w</u> as in <u>we</u>
y	y	<u>y</u> as in <u>yet</u>

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Likay is Thailand's most popular theatre genre. Between 800 and 1000 troupes dot Thailand's (population 53,000,000) cities and rural areas.¹ Performing at commercial theatres, market places, fairs, house warmings, Buddhist ordinations, cremations, and on national holidays, Likay is loved, even revered, by the majority of Thailand's population. Although a number of studies have described Likay as a theatre genre and articulated its dimensions as a performance medium, an in-depth analysis has not been made of the purpose and meaning it holds within the context of Thai society. The present study was designed to address the question of the meaning of Likay and to determine the cultural and esthetic factors which support Likay's continued popularity.

Purpose

The principle purpose of this dissertation is to study the content and characteristics of Likay as it was performed in the various regions of Thailand between 1980 and 1982 in order to determine the meaning it holds, and the function it serves, within the framework of Thai culture and contemporary Thai society.

¹

From a 1979 mail survey conducted by Surapone Virulrak included in his dissertation, "Likay: A Popular Theatre in Thailand," University of Hawaii, 1980, and my own estimates, based on interviews with Likay professionals in major Thai cities.

The secondary purpose of this dissertation is to document principles and practices of Likay production and performance which may be useful to Western and/or Asian theatre practitioners.

Definition of Likay

Likay is a theatrical performance offered in connection with Thai traditional celebrations such as funerals, ordinations, house warmings, temple foundings, fairs, national holidays, and special ceremonies to praise the gods. It is also presented commercially in market places and enclosed theatres. It combines classical Thai dance and music with modern songs and improvised dialog accompanied by a five piece orchestra. Stories are taken from traditional Thai literature, folk tales and legends, as well as modern media. A few are originally composed. A story-teller provides the scenarios to the actors immediately before performance and the plot is revealed in short, episodic scenes improvised in serio-comic fashion. A narrator fills in necessary details using an offstage mike. Characters and costumes are stock and easily identifiable as hero, heroine, clown, or villain, and although the plot is usually set in earlier times, language includes allusions to the present.

Troupe membership numbers from ten to twenty performers and the troupes generally tour from place to place, performing under the guidance of a troupe manager. From November to July, during the dry season, the troupes perform primarily out-of-doors at temples, fairs, and

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private homes. From August to October, troupes perform in enclosed theatres of either a permanent or semi-permanent variety close to market places. Outdoor performances are sponsored by private individuals and offered free to the community. At the indoor performances a small admission fee is charged. Floral leis laced with money are presented to favorite performers at both indoor and outdoor events.

The overall definition of Likay is based upon performances observed in the four major regions of Thailand: the Central, the Northeast, the North, and the South. The only major difference within Likay performances throughout Thailand is of a regional nature: the local dialect is used by clowns. All other characters use Central Thai (standard Thai) speech.

Justification and Review of Literature

Likay is generally accepted as traditional Thai art, and although the genre has been described in detail elsewhere, an analysis of the meaning it holds, and the function it serves in relation to the larger Thai social context has not before been undertaken. This study attempts to build upon the work of previous writers by connecting an understanding of what Likay is with a description of Thai social structure in order to establish what Likay does, how it does it, and what purpose it tends when performed within the parameters of Thai society. It is generally accepted as traditional Thai art, and although

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the genre has been described elsewhere, the reason for its popularity has not been articulated.

In English, the only comprehensive study of Likay has been by Surapone Virulrak, whose 1980 dissertation described the history and elements of Likay in detail. However, Likay has been examined in a general way by Bowers, Brandon, and Smithies.² A brief discussion of their work follows.

Faubion Bowers' 1960 Theatre in the East contained the first English language examination of the genre. Bowers noted the popularity of Likay, its commercial success, its presence at temple fairs and national celebrations, and its special connection to religious functions and suggested that hundreds of Likay troupes performed nightly in Thailand the year round.³

Bowers described Likay's origin as coming from dikay ichai, a Muslim chant, then changed according to Thai popular tastes to become a series of scenes improvised around a plot devised by a story-teller. Serial plays, lasting a week or more, were popular during the 1950s,

² Faubion Bowers, "Thailand: Dance and Drama," Theatre in the East: A Survey of Asian Dance and Drama, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960) pp. 130-164; James Brandon, Theatre in Southeast Asia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Michael Smithies, "Likay: A Note on the Origin, Form, and Future of Siamese Folk Opera," in The Siamese Theatre, ed. Mattani Rutnin (Bangkok: Somphong Press Ltd., 1975), pp. 75-101; Surapone Virulrak, "Likay: A Popular Theatre in Thailand," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1980, pp. 340.

³ Bowers, p. 156.

and many were expanded into sequels.⁴

In describing performance style, Bowers said that Likay incorporated the classical elements of the lakhon and khon and the piphat orchestra to support the action of the characters who represented standard role-types.

Bowers spoke of the realism of Likay as opposed to the knon and lakhon, the predominance of royalty as the causitive elements of the plots, and the complexity of the improvised, but rhymed, verse-making. In speaking of the content, Bowers noted that plays of Thailand's problems with Burma had been typical in the past, but were presently outlawed because of the government's attempts to improve relations with that country, and that anti-Communist plays were, at the time, the accepted fare. In general, Bower's report delivered a very broad picture of Likay, with specific points as to what was happening to Likay in 1955. The observations of major interest were those related to Likay's popularity, its eclectic nature, and the government's influence in urging Likay toward an anti-Communist stance.

In Theatre in Southeast Asia, James Brandon defined Likay as spoken drama mixed with songs and dance with characters moving in lakhon nai dance style. He notes the use of improvisation. piphat orchestra, and the use of Jataka stories, local history, Arabic stories, and

⁴ Bowers, p. 157.

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adaptations of movies which supply the plot-lines to Likay.⁵ Brandon explained the role of the troupe manager as being that of producer, stage manager, actor, and story-teller.⁶ He described the troupe as being comprised of a manager, seven actors, three actresses, and five piphat musicians. In general, Brandon's observations supported Bower's and showed that the basic nature of the genre remained similar to Bower's observations.

Michael Smithies', "Likay: A Note on the Origin, Form, and Future of Siamese Folk Opera," written in 1971, drew upon historic materials. As the title suggests, his focus was on Likay's origin, form, and future popularity.

In discussing the origin of Likay, Smithies agreed with Bowers that it was to be found in dikay, the Islamic chant which was brought to the Thai court to entertain royal guests. He suggested that Likay evolved from lakhon nok, classical khon, and lakhon.⁷ In addition, Smithies described some of the material to be found in Likay, including a full transcription of Kraithong, a typical Likay story, and offered a sketch of the social milieu of Likay, its lower-class audience, and its emphasis upon sexual attributes of performers and performances.

⁵ Brandon, p. 329.

⁶ Brandon, p. 207.

⁷ Smithies, pp. 75-77.

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However, he felt that Likay was dying as a result of the competition of television and film, but offered some hope for Likay because of its adaptability, its quality of improvisation, and its humor.

In general, Smithies' material presented a broad outline of the genre with conjectures as to Likay's origin, historical development, and the future prospects of the form without analyzing the prevailing social factors which make Likay so appealing to its audience.

The most comprehensive and detailed description of Likay undertaken to date has been Virulrak's 1980 dissertation, "Likay: A Popular Theatre in Thailand." Although limited to one area of Thailand -- Nakansawan Province -- Virulrak's study offered a detailed description of the origin and historic development of Likay, an examination of Likay elements, and the socio-economic milieu in which Likay operates.

Virulrak agreed with Bowers and Smithies in that the origin of Likay was to be found in the Muslim chant dikay, but he showed also how a Buddhist funeral chant, the suat phramalai was combined with the dikay to create a new form called yikay sip songphasa. From this form, Likay was derived and Virulrak traced the form's development through to the 20th Century, demonstrating how Likay was adapted depending upon the social conditions of the times. In addition, he noted the continued popularity of Likay based upon the existence of 1,000 troupes operating throughout

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Thailand in 1978-1979.⁸ Virulrak's dissertation supplied a concrete itemization of all aspects of Likay as it existed in Nakonsawan in 1978-1979 without, however, demonstrating what it does, or how and why it is important to its Thai audience.

In conclusion, the work of the writers mentioned above supplies a strong foundation for an understanding of what Likay is in itself, without discussing the reason for Likay's popularity, or how it links with Thai society at large. Together, the studies offered information as to the origin, nature, and historical progression of Likay upon which the present study of Likay's function and meaning was based.

Methodology

The research methodology for this study can be divided into essentially three areas or approaches: 1) Library Research, 2) Interviews and, 3) Observation of Likay Performances.

1. Library Research

Preliminary reading in Asian Theatre, Anthropology, and Likay, in particular, occurred at Michigan State University between 1977-1980 under the guidance of Dr. Farley Richmond. Subsequent library research was done at the facilities of the Siam Society and Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Here, Professor Surapone Virulrak of the

⁸Virulrak, p. 119.

Communication Faculty was able to offer much needed information as to Likay's history and manner of functioning, and aided me in planning the logistics of the study.

2. Interviews

Interviews with actors, actor-managers, and Likay musicians were conducted to gain data about the performance factors of Likay and to establish a socio-economic performer profile. Over one hundred interviews were conducted with interviews divided equally according to sex and region.

To check and compare the information obtained from performers, one hundred audience interviews were also conducted. The questions were designed to elude information as to income, occupation, life style, reasons for interest in Likay, knowledge of Likay and its place among Thai theatre forms, and expectations and needs served by attending Likay performances.*

All interviews were conducted in Thai by myself and four Thai assistants: Mr. Tamsak Damroongsak and Mr. Charoon Chaisorn, graduates of the Faculty of Communication of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok; Mr. Supod Kanvijit, graduate of the Political Science Faculty of Ramkhamhaeng University also in Bangkok, and Mr. Praphan Murob, a third year student of political science at Ramkhamhaeng University.

* For list of questions for actors and managers, see Appendix C. For the list for musicians, see Appendix E. For the list of questions for the audience, see Appendix F. For audience responses, see Appendix G.

Some interviews occurred in private homes or in the offices of Likay managers. Most interviews, however, occurred prior to performance while travelling with the troupe, or while actors were waiting backstage for the performance to begin. Since we travelled with the troupes to most performances, the period between five and eight-thirty p.m. proved most congenial for performer interviews. Interviews of this type followed a tighter format than those in homes and usually lasted about one-half hour per performer. Those occurring in homes lasted from one to four hours.

4. Observation of Performances

It is estimated that there are between 800 and 1,000 Likay troupes in Thailand.* These troupes perform most frequently during the months of March, April, and May, and intermittently throughout the year. In surveying troupes and performances, I tried to see as many different troupes perform as possible in a variety of settings and situations. In all, fifty-five performances were observed in their entirety. Of these, thirty-seven were completely notated and essential language translated. The plot summaries in this thesis were selected through observation following this process. In addition, five performances, selected as representative of the various styles of Likay, were fully video taped.

The field research was conducted in the twenty-three

* My own and Virulrak's estimates.

provinces of Thailand where Likay is the most pervasive.* Although most of the information in this study was gathered from the central region of Thailand, an attempt was made to include provinces in the north, northeast, and south as well, in order to compare performance elements and techniques between regions. In most cases, they proved to be identical.

The fifty-five Likay performances were observed in the following provinces:

<u>Province</u>	<u>Number of Performances</u>
Angthorn	(1)
Ayutthaya	(6)
Bangkok	(9)
Chainat	(1)
Chonburi	(4)
Kanchanaguri	(2)
Lopburi	(3)
Nakhonratchasima	(11)
Nakonsawan	(6)
Nonburi	(1)
Petchaburi	(2)
Pichit	(2)
Phisanulok	(1)
Ratburi	(3)
Singburi	(1)
Ubonratchathani	(2)
Total	<u>55</u>

The performances fall into the following regional breakdown:

Central Provinces: 30
 North and Northeastern: 16
 Southern: 6

* For list of provinces where research was conducted, see Appendix B.

Information from interviews of Likay performers and audience members was obtained in the following provinces:

Central

Ayutthaya
Bangkok
Nakonpathom
Nakonsawan
Kanchanaburi
Supanburi
Lopburi

Northern

Sukhothai
Chiangmai
Phitsanulok
Pichit (Tapan Hin)

Northeast

Nakonratchasima
Ubonratchathani

Southern

Petchaburi
Prachuapkhirikan
(Banburi)
Ratburi

Most performers were residents of the province in which they were performing, or of the general region. Most were attached to one base troupe, although some performed with other troupes from the same area from time to time when needed and the demand for performances necessitated exchanges of personnel.

The focus of the observation was on the content and elements of Likay: the plots, themes, structure, movement, songs, character types, costumes and make up, music and instrumentation, etc., in order to analyze them as symbolic indicators of Thai values and ways of relating to the world. The thirty-seven plays used as a basis to analyze content were translated in performance by me, and Mr. Tamsak Damroongsak and Mr. Charoon Chaisorn, my two Thai assistants. This enabled me to check by own understanding of language and plot developments with two native speakers of Thai.

In addition to the fifty-five performances viewed in their entirety, I watched portions of many others, both live



Figure 1. Provincial capitals where research was conducted.

* Source: Randell M. Reid

and on television. Most of these were of a serial nature, and only partial stories were performed.

Scope of the Study

The material in this dissertation is organized so as to provide an understanding of how Likay functions within Thai society and to suggest the meaning it has for its Thai audience. Since the emphasis in this study is on Likay's content and meaning to a Thai audience, discussion of the genre's elements is delayed until themes and plot structures are analyzed in order to clarify how Likay's formal elements act as symbolic extensions of themes and content. Those readers who would like a general overview of Likay's formal elements, should turn to Chapter Four before reading Chapter Three.

Chapter One has supplied an introduction to the study, its purpose, justification, a review of Likay literature, and the methodological framework on which the study was based.

Chapter Two traces Likay's historical development from its origin to the present, noting basic changes in the genre, its place amidst other Thai theatre genres, and its ability to adapt to a changing socio-cultural milieu.

Chapter Three describes the content, themes, and plot structure of Likay, and defines how each relates to Thai social behavior, psychology, and life concerns.

Chapter Four discusses how the theatrical elements of Likay work symbolically to support the general function and

purpose of Likay events. Because the elements of Likay have been described in detail elsewhere,^{*} the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Likay's form without, however, dwelling on data which might obscure the emphasis placed upon Likay's elements as symbolic extensions of themes.

^{*}See, for example, Virulrak's dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LIKAY

The following is a cursory view of Likay's emergence as popular entertainment and its evolution into the form as it is practiced in Thailand today.¹ The process has been eclectic and demonstrates the Thai ability to adapt and integrate elements of diverse nature which are reflective of the state of the culture as a whole.

The Origin of Likay

(pre-1767 to the 1820's)

Likay appears to have had its inception in Muslim chant practiced by the Shiite sect. The Muslims came to Thailand as merchants and immigrants from Iran and the Malya states from 1220 onwards and many became influential within the larger Thai community. In speaking about Likay's origin, Kukrit Pramot, Thai statesman, man of letters and the theatre, says:

At the end of the 4th reign and the beginning of the 5th (the 1860's), an entertainment called likay appeared. The word likay comes from a chant celebrating the god of the Muslims of the Shiite sect, which is called dikir in Persia. The Shiite sect had its origin in Persia (Iran) (and was) distinguished from other sects by its religious chants. The Shiite Muslims migrated to Siam and were subjects of the king of Siam since the Ayutthaya Period (pre-1767). When there were royal ceremonies, the Muslims came to chant their hymns for the king. These chants were called dikir and the Shiites chanted with very beautiful voices. Their chants came to be well known. Gradually, when the

¹For more detailed description, see Surapone Virulrak's 1980 dissertation, "Likay: A Popular Theatre in Thailand," University of Hawaii, 1980.

members of the royal family had celebrations, they invited the Shiites to come in order to hear their chants and to show their high status. In their manner, the Siamese appropriated the dikir chant; afterwards they chanted as the Shiites, adapting local legends to the dikir. The word dikir became likay or yikay. However, they kept an²ok khaek overture which indicates the Muslim origin.

Maha Vajiravudh (Rama VI) describes the changes in more detail.

In the original likay (dikay), devotees or dervishes were seated in a ring, and chanted certain prayers of hymns to the accompaniment of tom-toms or large tambourine-like drums called ramana. Occasionally there were solos. Later, the irreverent amongst the Malays improved upon the original likay by interlarding jokes into the solos. The Siamese, seeing the humorous side of the affair, began to imitate the likay performance. This was how the likay obtained its footing as a form of secular entertainment.³

The name of the form evolved from the original dikir of the chant to dikay, yikay, and later to likay. Virulrak explains the change as having occurred in the following fashion.

The letter d in Malay language is pronounced as dj which has no equivalent sound in the Thai language and the closest Thai pronunciation is yikay which has become the legitimate name of the genre.⁴

The Second Period

(from the 1820's to the 1880's)

The popularized dikay, or yikay performances as they

²K. Pramot, "The Likay," Traditional Siamese Theatre and Music, 1972, p. 95.

³Maha Vajiravudh, "Notes on the Siamese Theatre," The Siamese Theatre, ed. by M. Rutnin. (Bangkok: The Siam Society) 1975, p. 3.

⁴Virulrak, p. 30.

soon came to be called, were combined with another popular form stemming from Buddhist origins, the suat phramalai, according to Virulrak.

It is the story of a Buddhist saint, Phra Malai, who made his journey through many heavens and hells and brought back to the Buddhists in the world the news of happiness in heaven and the suffering in hell so that they would lead good lives and live happily in heaven after death. The tradition of chanting the suat phramalai at funerals in Thailand dates back to the Ayutthaya Period, or before 1767. By the Bangkok Era during the reign of King Rama I (1782-1809), this Buddhist chant had already lost its religious value, and by the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) this chant had become decadent -- the monks tried to make this chant more interesting by including witty repartee and adding risqué jokes instead of disseminating the text.⁵

Thus, a kind of comedy emerged, wherein foreigners were caricatured. This was called an okphasa, or performance of a foreign language. Dhanit Yupho says of the performance:

During the priest-chanters heyday, there were various paraphernalia for the performance in their yam (bag) such as make-up, earrings, a Malay hat, a Chinese hat, and a mirror. They sat with their knees up and hid their faces behind their fans, holding the handles in their toes. The bags were laid in front of them to support the small mirrors. In this way, they could do various styles of make-up. The audience in those days did not feel that this was out of place. On the contrary, they appreciated and supported the performances by insisting those priests perform in competitions with other entertainments. The priests usually won because they gained a greater audience. This performance gradually disappeared when the Priest Governance revolutionized the Education of Buddhism.⁶

The suat phramalai remained popular, however, and was

⁵Chai Ruangsins, Prawatsat Thai Po. So. Dan Sangkhon (Bangkok: Kittiphan) 1976, p. 507. Cited by Virulrak, p. 39.

⁶D. Yupho, ed., Sinlapa Lakhon Ram Ru Khumu Nattisin Thai (Bangkok: Siwapon) 1973, p. 223. Virulrak, p. 39.

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taken over by the laymen, many of whom were ex-monks anxious to continue performances because of the financial reward involved. When performed by laymen, the suat phramalai came to be called the suat kharahat which meant "chant of the Laymen."

Two elements should be noted here as significant to Likay's development. First, the only set piece used in the suat kharuhut was a bench supporting two clowns -- a punch man (or the clown delivering the punch line) and a female impersonator who sat stage left and stage right. Two choruses sat center stage. Secondly, the song lyrics and the dialogues were improvised as the clown characterized the mannerism of foreign women. Such improvisation, also characteristic of the lakhon nok (theatre outside the palace) was to become the hallmark of the fully developed Likay. The whole performance was called the sipsongphasa, or the twelve foreign themes.

The Third Period

(from the 1880's to the 1890's)

Virulrak reports that the combination of yikay and suat kharuhut became popular rapidly. Casino owners invited troupes to perform with performances of lakhon ram (Thai dance) and added a piphat orchestra to the performances of the combined form called yikay sipsongphasa. These became known as yikay piphat. With this addition, lakhon ram dances were performed between the themes of yikay sipsongphasa.

During this period, lakhon ram stories were also

incorporated into yikay sipsongphasa. Taken from Thai classic literature, legends, and folk tradition, they included such stories as Kraithong, Laksanawong, Yorpaklin, Khun Chang Khun Phaen, Phra Aphaimani, the Rothasen (a Buddhist rebirth story) all of which were adapted to a foreign theme (mon, Vietnamese, etc.).⁷

That yikay sipsongphasa offered major innovations to the formation of present-day Likay is evidenced by the foregoing. The addition of the orchestra, the lakhon ram dances and repertoire, and thus additional characters and a single story-line created a unity in the form which, previously, had been disparate, based as it was, on individual comic sketches and jokes. The next period, the Likay Songkhruang, was to see Likay's flowering.

The Fourth Period

(from the 1890's to 1942)

"Likay songkhruang was the name given by contemporary actors to distinguish it from Likay after World War II. Likay songkhruang means Likay with elaborate costumes, music, dances, etc., and indicates the culmination of Likay as a dramatic form."⁸

According to Maha Vajirudh, the word yikay was changed

⁷Most of these stories are contained in a book, Nangsue Yikay Sipsongphasa (Books of the Yikay Sipsongphasa) written by anonymous authors. It may be obtained from Prof. Maj. Pha-op Posakritsana, Director of the Thai Identity Project, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁸Virulrak, p. 67.

into Likay during this era⁹ and major developments in the genre occurred including: 1. the building of public Likay theatres, 2. a new style of costume (adaptations of the costumes of the court of King Rama V), 3. a new style of performance (integrating the yikay ramana or yikay with drums and the yikay piphat or traditional orchestra, the dance of the lakhon ram and nearly all the elements of the lakhon nai, including the Inao story), 4. new musical compositions especially written for Likay and, 5. the introduction of actresses into the performance around 1914.

During this period Likay increased in popularity not only in Bangkok, but spread throughout the provinces as well. Troupes either had a home base in Bangkok or a provincial capital and travelled to outlying villages, or kept perpetually on the move. Virulrak mentions the Dokdin Suasa-nga troupe which travelled constantly up and down the Chao Phrya River in a large boat loaded with sets, costumes, musical instruments and accessories for Likay, performing at various communities along the river's edge.¹⁰ Other troupes walked to each new engagement or went by train, carrying their costumes, scene drops, and properties with them.¹¹ As a result of Likay's expansion and need to travel during the Likay songkhruang period, most Likay communities today are located near the local railway station.

⁹Maha Vajiravudh, p. 3.

¹⁰Virulrak, p. 87

¹¹Personal interview with Chumnian Photong, April 11, 1981.

Likay also increased its popularity through radio at this time. The Likay troupes which performed on radio spread interest in the form to the outlying areas of Thailand, and the stars of Likay became sought-after celebrities.

The Fifth Period

(from 1942 to 1944)

In 1942, the Japanese moved into Thailand and occupied the country. The Thais were forced to cooperate with the Japanese. However, the government in power promoted nationalism and a cultural revolution which changed the name of Likay to natadontri, meaning a form which stressed speaking, singing, acting and music in equal proportion.¹² Female impersonators were out-lawed, dancers had to pass a national qualifying examination in lakhon ram, and heavy censorship was imposed. Normal street dress and military uniforms were incorporated in contemporary stories concerning the war.

Despite the imposed changes, Likay increased in popularity because the cinemas had been closed down. Likay troupes took over the movie theatres and performed cycles of plays in serial fashion, keeping audiences coming back night after night. In so doing, Likay proved itself a viable alternative to the film. The status of Likay performers was enhanced and the habit of Likay-going was entrenched in the lives of the mass audience.¹³

¹²Virulrak, p. 90.

¹³Virulrak and from personal interviews with Likay actors.

The Sixth Period

(from 1944 to the present)

At the war's end, the war-time government was pushed out of power, the so-called cultural revolution declared over, and former stories, dances, music, and female impersonation reinstated to Likay, returning it to its condition during the pre-war period. However, new styles of costumes were developed in the early 1950's, the actors beginning to wear feathers in their headbands and embroidered vests, the women adopting evening gowns of the 50's period.

A practice of giving flower leis with money attached to favored performers also developed after the war and encouraged actors to free-lance rather than become permanently attached to one troupe. The leis and money-giving could substantially increase a performer's income, as it was not shared with the other members of a troupe. Consequently, "stars" developed who were more concerned with individual showmanship and their sex-appeal than with other aspects of Likay. Female patrons particularly (called mae yok), began sponsoring male stars, either through maternal affection and love of Likay, or in return for sexual favors, or a combination of the two. Thus, troupe leaders began offering performances with a number of "stars" performing to ensure large audiences. Leis competitions were also incorporated, wherein mae yok would attempt to out-do one another in decorating their favorite performer. The tradition still remains in vogue and encourages many young men to become Likay actors

for the patronage they may receive as performers.¹⁴

The phleng lukthung, or popular country music, was introduced into Likay during this period as well. These songs, roughly equivalent to American "Country-Western", were injected to increase popularity of Likay with the rural audiences.

More recently, phleng lukkhung, or popular city music, has been added to Likay for a similar reason, these songs being used in Likay when performances are in Bangkok, or a large provincial capital. These, as well as Western songs, are well received.

Likay has suffered from the competition of films and television since World War II, particularly in relation to youthful audiences, but has regained popularity in the provinces since 1975, partially because of regular television exposure and newspaper acclaim of Somsak Phakdi, a Likay actor, troupe leader, and popular television Likay regular. Televised troupes have become quite sought-after outside of Bangkok, much as radio troupes heightened Likay's popularity earlier.

During the student uprisings of the 1970's, Likay was also used as a part of the political right's propaganda war against the National Student Organization. Movie stars were employed to perform in Likay which had royalist and nationalist themes. These performances were called likay dara and

¹⁴Virulrak and personal interviews with Likay actors.

also helped to increase Likay's popularity.¹⁵

From the foregoing, we can see the strength of Likay as an adapting and adaptive form. With its roots in Muslim and Buddhist ritual, it has drawn upon other forms, notably the lakhon nok and lakhon nai, amalgamating them and adding its own distinct contributions, always with an eye to popular tastes. Its tradition is opposed to the court tradition which emphasizes esthetic refinement and traditional literature. On the contrary, Likay has always incorporated the folk tradition whether in the embryo form of lakhon jatri (an early genre, based on Jataka stories), in the improvisation emerging from dikay or the suat phramalai, or in material taken from the lakhon nok. The need for Likay is demonstrated often. Professor Hiranburana remarks: "In all the festivals (both) popular and religious, a Likay troupe is indispensable."¹⁶

Besides cremations, ordinations, house warmings, celebrations for the opening of a new temple or market, ceremonies to repay the gods for prayers answered or a good harvest, and commercial Likay, the following religious and secular festivities always include performances of Likay.

April The Buddhist New Year (Songkran)

¹⁵Personal interview with Chanchai Rungniran, May 28, 1981.

¹⁶Suphong Hiranburana, "Le like, sociologie d'un theatre populaire." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Toulouse, France: University of Toulouse, p. 84.

May The celebration of the birth and the enlightenment and the death of Lord Buddha (Visaka Bouja)

The end of October to the end of November:
offering of vestments to the monks (Thod Kathin Festivals)

November The festival of Loy Krathong (Giving thanks to the goddess of the water)

December The King's Birthday

January New Year (Western)

February Maka Bouja (The celebration of the day when all the Buddhist saints gather.)¹⁷

The following chapters will describe performances of Likay as it was performed throughout Thailand on these occasions from December, 1980 to April, 1982. In Chapter Three the emphasis is placed upon Likay content and plot structure as symbolic indicators of the Thai relationship with reality. Chapter Four demonstrates how Likay elements help to structure and reinforce through symbolic acts the primal symbols of Likay.

¹⁷Hiranburana, p. 84.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF LIKAY PERFORMANCES AND THEIR CONTENT

For a clear understanding of Likay and of how Likay affects its audience, a brief examination of cultural, psychological, and historical influences is necessary. In this chapter, the context -- physical and psychological -- in which Likay performances occur will be discussed and performance content related to the sociological milieu. The approach will be to define the primary symbols existent in Thai culture and relate these to Likay content and its symbols, thereby showing the relationship of Likay to contemporary Thai social thought and behavior. Leslie White has said:

Articulate speech means communication of ideas; communication means preservation -- tradition -- and preservation means accumulation and progress. The emergence of the faculty of symboling has resulted in the genesis of a new order of phenomena: an extra-somatic, cultural order. All civilizations are born of, and are perpetuated by, the use of symbols. A culture, or civilization, is but a particular kind of form which the biologic life perpetuating activities of a particular animal, man, assumes.

Human behavior is symbolic behavior; if it is not symbolic, it is not human. The infant of the genus *Homo* becomes a human being only as he is introduced into and participates in that order of phenomena which is culture. And the key to this world and the means to participation in it is -- the symbol.¹

James Peacock has noted that theatrical action is not "technical action" directed toward achieving empirical ends.

¹Leslie A. White, The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1949) p. 39.

Instead, it is "symbolic action: designed to express emotion, moral ideas, and general perceptions about the nature of reality."² So, the action of a Likay performance is symbolic. Likay -- and theatre in general -- does not affect technical action directly, but indirectly, preconditioning and reinforcing cultural (symbolic) modes of behavior operationalized in the "real" world. Thus, since Likay is the popular theatre of Thailand, a look at the symbolic action inherent in the form should open a window into the Thai mind, so to speak, wherein the seed for action -- the symbol -- is lodged and nourished.

A "symbol" has been defined as "an act, sound, or material object having cultural significance and the capacity to excite or objectify a response (there must be some symbols around which interaction can be organized -- W.F. Whyte)."³ It is the work of this chapter to analyze the symbolic action found in Likay content in an attempt to establish the meaning which Likay holds, and the function it serves, for its Thai audience.

Primary symbols of Thai life reveal a synthesis of many historical influences. These symbols can be seen in the picture below taken in a Likay manager's home. The picture is of an altar. The images show, symbolically, an ordering

²Much of the inspiration for the present study came from James L. Peacock's, Rites of Modernization, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) The section cited is on p. 305.

³Encyclopedia of Anthropology, ed. by David E. Hunter and Phillip Whitten (New York: Harper and Row, 1976) p. 378.

of religious beliefs which, taken together, summarise the Thai world-view. Buddhist emblems are placed at the top of the poster, symbolizing the supreme position which the institution of Buddhism holds in the Thai mind. Slightly below the Buddhist emblems are placed pictures of the Thai royal family, indicating the relationship of the king and queen to the Buddhist order. An Indian-style statuette of Muni Bharata (the mythical master-teacher of Indian theatre) is placed next to a Thai-style statuette of the teacher in Khon costume only a little lower than the pictures of the royal family. Finally, posters of the Indian god, the baby Krishna, are placed beneath those of the royal family. Supportive of the whole are pictures of the rose, the universal symbol of love. The hierarchical arrangement which



Figure 2. Prime Thai symbols: Buddha images, the Royal Family, pho kru (the master-teacher), the baby, Lord Krishna.

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can be seen in the picture graphically illustrates the structure of Thai religious and social belief. Likay performances incorporate these symbols, while the performances themselves are placed within contexts which directly relate to the religious ideas thus symbolized. The following pages describe the physical and psychological environment in which Likay performances occur.

The Context of Likay Performance

The Physical Context: The Occasion and Location

Likay plays are most often performed in relation to some larger religious ceremony: an ordination, a cremation, a housewarming, the founding of a new temple. They are meant to augment the larger ceremony, to offer entertainment to the participants of the larger ceremony, and to give pleasure to the gods who watch over a community's life. Likay performances are events that occur year round, their numbers increasing or decreasing according to the events of the lunar calendar. Although they are based on historical material and dressed in period costume, their purpose is not, primarily, to celebrate the past, but to celebrate the present and insure the future by means of stories, themes, and conventions recognizable to a Thai audience. Their general purpose is rooted in ancient tradition -- that of entertaining and pleasing the gods in order to insure the security and prosperity of the community and nation. However, their concern is to entertain, and influence, a temporal audience as well.

Traditionally, Likay performances have been geared to rural life. In the past, many Likay performers also worked in the fields, thus, they had time to perform only when they were free from agricultural duties. This period was roughly from March to June. These three months are today the time when Likay performers perform almost continually -- up to thirty days each month. It is a time when the general rural population has free time as well. The period of harvesting is over, or almost over, the crops are in and money is in the pockets of the farmers (in a good year). It is time for all sorts of celebrations such as: the ngan fang luk nimith (placing of a sacred object in the grounds of a new temple), the ngan kae bon and kae bon lang (honoring of the gods for prayers answered. or a good harvest), for ngan tam bon son baan mai (house warmings), ngan sop (cremations), and ngan buat (ordinations). Ordinations are especially prevalent during this period as schools and universities are on vacation. In Thailand it is the custom, still very much observed, that all males spend some time as a monk before marriage. Thus, the monasteries see a great influx of students in March, April, and May, and Likay troupes are kept busy performing at these ordinations.² These

²It should be noted that the one ceremony which Likay is not connected with is the marriage ceremony. I was told that the reason for this is that marriage leads to sexual intercourse and, since Likay is associated with pho kru (the teacher), Likay actors feel that his spirit would be insulted if they performed at a wedding ceremony. Personal interview with Kritsawat Nantawong, March 14, 1981.

performances are usually held out of doors, as they are sponsored by an individual or a group. Still other performances are at fairs and, on a more continuous basis, near market places.

To understand the place that Likay holds in relation to such ceremonies, it is necessary to describe briefly the religious and social background which surrounds the Likay performance. The major influence is religious, and concerns the three belief systems which comprise the Thai world-view: 1) Animism, 2) Hinduism, or Brahmanism, and 3) Buddhism. The ancient Thais were Animists, and in Thailand today Animistic belief is a part of everyday life, influencing thought and behavior. Likay plays, both in terms of performance context and plot content, speak to extant Thai Animist beliefs.

The Psychological Context: Thai Belief Systems

Thai Animism

To the common animistic idea that spirits reside in such things as rice, rivers, trees, and mountains, the Thais added the concept of the phi, free-ranging spirits that often attach themselves to certain locales. Originally, they included good gods as well as evil, all the good phi coming from the thewada, or Hindu derived gods. However, the word phi has degenerated from its original meaning to denote possibly dangerous spirits.³

In the Thai world-view, both phi and thewada inhabit an external realm of power, known in the Pali Buddhist scriptures as the saksit, or amoral spiritual field. Included

³Phya Anuman Rajadhon, "The Phi," Journal of the Siam Society, vol. XLI, pt. 2, Jan., 1954, pp. 153-178.

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in this realm also are the preet, those spirits who are bent on doing harm to man.

Besides the thewada, the phi, and the preet, there are particular spirits of place. There is the praphum, the local spirit lord who controls and cares for the area of one's house.⁴ In every Thai household or compound he is respected and sheltered by a miniature house or temple placed either in the yard outside or in one corner of the house. He must be honored, "waid" and fed from time to time in order to insure the protection of the house and its inhabitants from burglary, disease, and even marital disputes.⁵

Outside of the house and compound, there is the phi ban, or protector of the village. Beyond the phi ban, there is the phi wat, or spirit of the temple compound, and the phi muang, the spirit who resides at the city pillar.⁶

The power of the local spirits is localized. They are lords of a domain, and every domain has a lord. To insure protection and good fortune, one must pay homage to the local lord and get on good terms with him through the presentation of certain signs, i.e., the wai (sign of obeisance, palms

⁴Niels Mulder, *Everyday Life in Thailand: An Interpretation*, Bangkok: Editions Duang Kamol, 1978), p. 26.

⁵In the Thai home in which I lived while doing my field research, a ritual was observed twice monthly wherein the master of the house waid (raised hands in obeisance) three times, prayed, and placed flowers, food, and drink on the praphun altar located on the central wall inside the house.

⁶Mulder, p. 26.

together and fingers toward the forehead), the bow, the giving of gifts of food and flowers. Mulder notes: "They all want and need to be respected and supplicated for insuring the welfare of their territory."⁷ Their psychology is that of the humans they watch over.

Other spirits are in charge of the realm of action. They insure the growth of rice, rain in its proper season, answer prayers, and even cure disease. The power of these spirits is widespread.

To receive the beneficence of both kinds of spirits, ritual action must be performed in a precise manner. Through the mechanism of ritual, a contract is established between the protecting spirit and, if the ritual has been performed correctly, the spirit, it is thought, is obligated to respond.

Basically, the saksit powers react to presentation such as the right ceremony, proper words, appropriate movements and formulae. The contracts are mechanical and people know how to perform their side of the contract. In the manipulative contracts, power is never seen as being located in man himself, but in his knowledge of the correct form that makes saksit power respond.⁸

It is within this psychological environment that Likay plays its part. Performances are offered in order to placate the spirits at the "transitional" celebration noted earlier: the house warmings, the ordinations, the cremations. The spirits must be kept in good humor in

⁷Mulder, p. 26.

⁸Mulder, p. 29.

order that the community may enjoy a bountiful rice harvest, continued blessings of health and fecundity, and that the souls of the dead may laughingly release their grasp on life at cremations. To facilitate these moments, Likay acts as a mediator between man's world and the external power which surrounds him.

Thai Buddhism

Theravada Buddhism is a venerable institution. But for the rural Thai, Buddhism does not serve so much as an intellectual belief system, but as a means of protection against the unpredictable powers which surround him -- the thewada, the phi, and the evil preet. Buddhism represents a solid moral force which can be relied upon in such an unpredictable and dangerous universe. As Likay performances deal with the external realm, Buddhism addresses the inner realm of the person and the community. Mulder puts it this way:

A village community may insure auspiciousness and feel itself protected by the power of merit that is generated and accumulated in its village temple. The discipline of the monks, their chanting and preaching, the occasion to make merit, the magical power vested in its Buddha image: all serve to increase the feeling of protection, continuity, and the insurance of auspiciousness in a world where one knows oneself to be surrounded by potentially harmful power.⁹

It is this combination of two spiritual concerns which links the presentation of Likay to the transitional ceremonies presided over by Buddhist monks: the ordinations, the house

⁹Mulder, p. 33.

warmings, the cremations, and the temple fairs. Together, they are thought to offer protection in an unstable world.

The Hindu influence: Brahmanism

A third concept, animist in origin, but integrated with Hindu-Brahmanic belief is, in Thailand, referred to as the khwan, a vital essence or power similar to the Hindu concept of mana. One may gain control over this power by one's own action, notably aestheticism, and through ritual. Retention of the khwan is vital to continued well-being of the individual and the community, and its power is conceived to be in all humans, in rice, and in certain animals. It has been described by Charles Keyes in the following manner.

The vital essence exists in plural forms, occupying 32 parts of the human body...In practice, villagers... think of the "vital essence" as unity. The "vital essence" must be in the body of the human, the rice, or the animal lest the human or animal suffer misfortune and eventually die...Thus, periodic rites are performed in order to secure the "vital essence" to the body, such rites for humans occurring on such occasions as a radical change in status, a shift in residence, or a serious accident, or disease.¹⁰

The rites linked to the khwan ceremonies are Brahmanic. At the present time, the king of Thailand oversees, with a Brahman priest, the first sowing of the rice seed in a yearly ceremony outside the palace in Bangkok. Certain formulae, purported to have special efficacy, accompany a symbolic first plowing and scattering of the seed.¹¹ In

¹⁰ Charles F. Keyes, The Golden Peninsula, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.) 1977, p. 111.

¹¹ Suphong Hiranburana has noted the same, in her "Le Like, sociologie d'un theatre populaire," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toulouse, 1975.

past times, the hair of children was tied in a knot until puberty to insure preservation of the life essence within the body. Today, the wrists are tied with string on children and adults at times of sickness or trouble, and in Thai weddings, the prime symbol of unity is the string draped across the wrists of the wedding couple. Other Brahmanic ceremonies connected with the khwan insure the incorporation into the community of outsiders, or those who have been outside and in contact with danger. The khwan ceremonies even accompany ordination into the monkhood.¹²

To summarize, the khwan can be seen as a unifying power within the individual, the family, the community and the nation. The khwan ceremonies, with their Brahmanic ritual, integrate animist concepts with Hindu practices and occur alongside the presentation of Buddhist prayers and chants. Each system -- animist, Buddhist, and Brahmanic -- have practices aimed at increasing, or at least stabilizing, spiritual power, the animist through the placation of the spirits, the Buddhist through merit-making ceremonies and activities, the Brahmanic through ritual aimed at securing the "vital essence" within the individual and the community. These practices serve as protection against the amoral powers envisioned to exist in the external world -- the world outside of the family, the home, and the community -- which, whether viewed in terms of the "real" or the

¹²Mulder, p. 41.

supernatural realm, is unruly and unpredictable. Likay performs beside these ceremonies, mediating between the gods and men as a rite which is believed to give the gods pleasure and a sign of a community's respect in regard to the supernatural elements which envelope it. As we shall see, Likay is structured to further illustrate in dramatic fashion the means to maintain protection from evil forces and secure power within the structure of Thai society itself.

Likay Content, Structure, and Theme

As Likay performances act as rites which may be seen as aiding the prospects of a village or a community through the care and power of the local gods, the content of Likay plots focus on a temporal symbol of protection and unity: the King. That the king is seen as a religious figure in Thailand has been focused upon by Frank Reynolds, who terms this phenomenon "civic religion."¹³

A "civic religion," as defined by Reynolds, is a religion in which a nation celebrates itself, in Thailand as expressed through the three symbols of Thai nationhood: King, religion, and nation. Mulder has noted that the center of this "civic religion: is in the "here and now," a combination of power and goodness that is not expressed in a cosmic or supernatural principle." "The centre of the

¹³Frank E. Reynolds, "Civic Religion and National Community in Thailand," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26/2, pp. 267-82, 1977.

Thai cosmos," he says, "is clearly in this world."¹⁴ In Likay, as in the Thai community in general, this center is celebrated in the idea of Kingship and, indirectly, in the nature of the Thai king, for Likay functions, in a most essential way, as a rite of national unification.

The Unifying Theme: Symbolism of Kingship

To understand how Likay may function as a "rite of unification," we must first examine the Thai notion of Kingship.

The historically derived concept of kingship

The Thai concept of kingship is of ancient origin and contains elements of all three major belief systems which characterize the Thais: animism, Brahminism, and Buddhism. Brandon has written:

Because the animist believed that spirit resided in everything and that man could accumulate power of other things and people for his own protection, it followed that the king, as ruler of the state, was expected to amass more spiritual power than anyone else. It was believed the king's authority varied in direct proportion to the amount of magic power (mana) he was able to create or appropriated.¹⁵

That the concept was compatible with the view of kingship held by the Indianized Khmer states, allowed the Thais to incorporate the broadened Brahmanic concept as they assimilate other aspects of Hindu culture through contact and subjugation of the Khmers during the 10th and 15th centuries. Brahmanism offered the belief of the god-king, and with the

¹⁴Mulder, p. 40.

¹⁵Brandon, p. 15.

worship of Shiva, Vishnu, or Krishna came the idea of the king as a reincarnation of one of the Hindu gods. Brandon's description of this element helps to define Likay's relationship to Thai kingship.

A vital element of Brahmanism was the belief in the institution of the god-king. The king was considered a living god, a human being in whom one of the Hindu gods, usually Shiva or Vishnu, was reincarnated. The god-king was divine protector of the community. He commanded total power, political, social, and religious, and toward him were directed all the aspirations of the community. The devotion of the people to their god-king was expressed periodically in ritual acts of worship carried out by special court officials, some of whom were musicians, dancers, and actors---some kind, there is no doubt.¹⁶

Through its content and structure, Likay tends to sustain the concept of the god-king, yet integrate it within the framework of Thai Buddhism.

Kingship and Buddhism

Chief among the concepts to which Thai Buddhists attach particular importance, are the concepts of karma and merit. Karma can be seen as a predilection toward good or bad action depending upon one's past lives. Good karma is produced by good action, bad karma through evil action. The concept of merit is tied to the concept of karma in that right action produces merit, and merit is reflected by one's station in life. It follows then, that a king, by the very nature of things, must possess a remarkable degree of merit and, as a result, be worthy of a commensurate amount of adoration.

¹⁶Brandon, p. 16.

Lucien Hanks, in an article entitled, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle," has described Thai social order in the following way:

Each Thai regards every other person in the social order as higher or lower than himself... Based on these differences in social standing, a hierarchy arises where each person pays deference to all who stand above him and is deferred to by all below. At the top is the king, and at the bottom some lone person who survives miserably in the dank jungle. Between these extremes fit the persons who carry out the tasks needed for living: the administrator, the merchant, the clerk, the peddler, farmer, laborer, and so on. The important thing to remember is that the Thai categorize not people, but tasks. A person's merit varies when he does good and bad deeds, so that Thai, to a greater or lesser extent, as the Buddhist doctrine explains, move up and down the scale from job to job because of accumulated merit. Every person has the potential for changing from a laborious and painful occupation to a gentler one.¹⁷

Thus, the king, in the Thai view, as possessor of great merit, is connected with the moral order of Buddhism and, at the same time, because he is king, the external (saksit) order over which Brahmanic rites have domain. He then, is the chief mediator between the two domains -- one, inner and moral, the other, external and amoral. As such, he is a figure worthy of adoration. He is seen as the great protector and unifier. As Likay performances mediate between the natural and supernatural realms, acting as rites which insure protection from the spirits, Likay performances are structured to represent and celebrate the unifying effects of

¹⁷ Lucien Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle," in Change and Persistence in Thai Society, (ed. by) G. Skinner and T. Kirsch, 1975, p. 198.

kingship and hierarchy. Accordingly, we must now address ourselves to the question of how Likay, through its content and thematic structure becomes, par excellence, a rite of national unification.

The concept of kingship within Likay: identification and national unity

Likay performances have dealt with the idea of kingship from around the end of the 19th Century. Contemporary Likay plays follow in the tradition, dealing primarily with the life of the Thai aristocracy in times past. Drawn from the time when Thailand was composed of numerous city-states, the plays are concerned with the intrigues of the courts of Sukhothai, Chiangmai, Lopburi, Kanchanaburi, Ayutthaya, and wars between the Thai states and the Mon and Burmese kingdoms. Although some modern stories are used in Likay, either drawn from popular novels or the movies, the majority of the plays show problems involving Thai royal families which have then, repercussions for the kingdom at large. These stories may be adapted from traditional Thai literature, legends, and even folk tales. They depict inner or inter family feuds: father against son or son against father, brother against brother, family against family. As a result of the feuds, there occurs a separation, poverty, and often, confusion of identity and a life at a temple or rural hide-away for offspring. A love interest develops, either between a prince and a commoner, a commoner and a princess, or a prince and princess. From separation and a life of poverty,

the prince or princess finds his or her way back to family and rightful identity and, therefore, rightful station in life. Each family is reunited and families are unified through marriage of princes and princesses. thus unifying and enlarging the state.

From such a general outline, we can see that the key themes in Likay are those of identity and unity. Professor Hiranburana of the Department of Education in Bangkok has noted that the general plot structure in Likay is similar to that of other Asian tales, notably the story of Rama and Sita in the Hindu tale, the Ramayana. In that story, Rama, a reincarnation of Vishnu, is visiting the forest with his wife, Sita. While there, Sita is abducted by the demon-king, Ravana, and taken to Lanka (Ceylon). The remainder of the story tells of Rama's attempts to reclaim his wife. In Thailand, the tale is known as the Ramakien and is filled with Thai names, customs, and manners. There are many versions. Hiranburana also mentions that another favorite Thai story, Inao, follows the pattern introduced by the Ramayana as Inao must search for his fiance Busba. But, according to Hiranburana, the original plot structure for Likay seems to have been taken most directly from the Thai literary tale of Chantakhorob, it too, reminiscent of the Ramayana, but with a few noticable Thai touches. That story is as follows:

Chantakhorob is the history of a young prince who has finished his studies of the arts of war and literature with a sage. The sage gives him a bottle and tells

him to open it only when he arrives at the city. But Chantakhorob opens it on his way home and a beautiful woman comes out. This woman is called Mora. She becomes his wife. They continue on their way together. By chance, they meet a bandit of the forest. He wants to kill Chantakhorob and take Mora for wife. They battle. Chantakhorob asks his wife to give him his sword. Mora, attracted by the beauty of the bandit, gives the blade to her husband and the handle to the bandit. Chantakhorob is beaten and the bandit goes away with Mora.¹⁸

Hiranburana neglects to say whether or not Chantakhorob then embarks on a search to reclaim his wife, but we must presume that he does, for Kukrit Pramot has written that there is but one basic story-line for all of Likay. He describes it:

A prince of the royal household goes to a temple or to the forest to study with a hermit or a monk. When he finishes his studies, he leaves. On the way to the Court, he meets a beautiful woman in the forest. He falls in love with her and courts her. Then a bandit or giant attacks him and the prince must battle for his beloved. However, the bandit or giant succeeds in kidnapping the lady. The prince must then embark on a long search to retrieve the woman that he loves.¹⁹

In each version the elements of royalty studying away from the Court in the country, a beginning of the passage home, a love interest, a fight, and ensuing search for beloved, are kept intact, making the plot structure, in its simplest form, a matter of separation marked by a movement toward reunification -- the basic theme and movement of the Ramayana.

Contemporary Likay performances follow the pattern as

¹⁸Hiranburana, p. 86.

¹⁹K. Pramot, Lai Chivit, p. 163.

outlined above with infinite variation and with one significant difference: a subplot is developed which focuses on the non-royal, or common, elements of Thai society, the rural poor. A parallel plot involving the conflicts and love interests of the rural underclass evolves after the major (aristocratic) plot has been established. The two plots are then brought together so that they intertwine, the aristocratic characters enlisting the help of the commoners. The basic motif of the need for unification is then reinforced by the characters of the two classes pursuing their differing goals within the goal, solution, or "happy ending" defined by the aristocratic characters. Thus, the subclass is "legitimized" into the working of the pattern of unity sought for by the upperclass. Unity is achieved by serving the needs of the upperclass, and identity is established in the same way.

In the following section, Likay supporting themes and plot types are examined and scenarios of typical performances are included so that the reader may gain an idea of how Likay integrates the major theme of kingship and national identity with supporting, but varied, plot types.

Major Supporting Themes and Plot Types

Likay dramatizes such a "rite of unification" through varied, but limited, plot types. In thirty-seven performances notated for plot and themes, four general plot categories emerged: 1) Offspring of a royal family are separated from one another or from their parents when they

are infants. When they have grown to adolescence, they search for each other or for their parents. Often, because they don't know the other's real identity, disaster ensues. This type of plot was observed nineteen times. 2) A domineering and sexually aggressive female is jealous of another woman's (usually a princess's or a queen's) power, or sexual attraction, or both. Her attempts to obtain position and power create havoc in the Court. Seven plays were of this category. 3) Student friends, usually of the same temple-school, fight each other over the women they want to marry. Since the men love the same women, but the women love other men, a "love-chase" ensues. Six plays were of this category. 4) Fantasy plays involving ghosts, animals, and human beings with supernatural powers which create havoc in the world of men. There were five plays of this type.

Although the general plot categories of Likay plays are limited, the plots themselves are endlessly varied to maintain audience interest. Within the general plot constructs however, a pattern of reoccurring ideas and themes emerges which forms the inner content found in Likay performances. The internal themes support the primary focus on Kingship and movement for unification under a king. Table one lists these and the number of times they were found in performance.

From the table, a content profile emerges. Almost exclusively, Likay plays deal with Court, or aristocratic

Table 1. List of Internal Themes.

<u>Internal Theme</u>	<u>Times Theme Appeared</u>
Court, or aristocratic life	32
Common life	5
The problem of poverty	15
The "capital" or Bangkok the place to go for a better life	10
Work with the Court or with the king the best kind of work	37
Living at a temple because parents are poor	10
Studying at a temple	17
Both parents are dead	17
One parent is dead	12
Offspring do not know parents	17
Offspring do not know each other	10
Parents don't love offspring	6
Offspring don't love parents	5
Quarreling brothers	8
Quarreling brother and sister	2
Quarreling sisters	5
Quarreling between parents and offspring	2
Separation between rich and poor	7
The need for political unity	11
Aristocracy inept at practical functions, must be advised and helped by commoners	25
Love between princes and commoners	17
Love between princes and princesses	29
Love between commoners	15
Violence as a means to achieve desired action or result	63
Physical violence as punishment	23
Fighting as a result of insult	8
Rape, or attempted rape	21
Rape as punishment	11
Humor a means to achieve desired action or result	0
Happy ending (family, lovers united)	25
Chaotic ending (people scattered and unsatisfied)	4
Unhappy ending (people punished as a result of previous action)	8

life. Only five plays were observed to focus primarily on the lives of commoners. Linked to the emphasis on the aristocracy, is the continually occurring theme that suggests that work with the Court is the best kind of work. This is underscored by the reoccurring themes of the aristocracy needing the help of commoners when it comes to the level of practical affairs, and the (logically following) assumption that the capital, or Bangkok, is the place to go for a better life (and work related to the king). The motivation for this move is focused upon in what can be termed as "the problem of poverty" -- with its concomitant solution -- working in the capital in some kind of service to the king. This solution can also be seen as representing in one way an achievement of political unity.

Apart from the themes of separation and/or antagonism between family members -- which themes are of staple Likay -- Likay demonstrates love between royalty more than it does love between royalty and commoners, or love between two commoners (thus extending the assumption that the lives of the aristocracy are of more importance than the lives of commoners).

An interesting factor is the incidence of violence in Likay. Violence manifests primarily in terms of fighting, execution, or rape. In total, acts of violence occurred 126 times in the thirty-seven performances which I notated, making Likay a fairly violent medium of entertainment.

Not recorded in the table, but important to an

understanding of Likay, is the fact that contemporary themes and modern situations and characters are integrated within the basic plot settings of ancient city-states (12th and 13 Century A.D.) and royal feuds. Thus, such concerns as the price of gasoline, the presence of "chicos" or street toughs, the use of toilet paper as a sign of civilization, or the evils of life in Bangkok, may be voiced outside the walls of 17th century Ayutthaya, which in real time, was capital long before Bangkok existed. In this, there is no discrepancy for the Thais watching Likay, it simply adds an air of timelessness for the imaginative Thai.

Set in the past, but incorporating modern situations, Likay works on two levels: establishing the past with the present, and sustaining time-honored traditions in demonstrating solutions to present concerns.

Having surveyed themes and plot types in general, we need now examine each in more detail in order to determine how Likay plots and themes serve the overall function of a "rite of unification" in specific terms.

In Likay performances, an actor appears and announces his character and objective. After principle characters are introduced singly, the plot develops by means of episodes wherein they confront each other. The scenes are generally short, the action is fast, jumping from place to place rapidly. There is always a mixture of romance and comedy, against a background of opposing forces fighting for possession of territory. The characters themselves are clearly

differentiated types: kings, princes, villains, clowns, denoted through costume and through their statements about themselves. The following examples of plots and plot types were selected from thirty-seven plays notated in performance. Since scripts do not exist for these Likay plays, the action was notated as it happened and language checked from tapes made at performances. The plays were chosen as typical of Likay and representative of the various plot types. In the summaries, Likay's stock character types are shown in parentheses, their stock Thai names followed by the English equivalent.

Plot type one

Offspring are separated from each other and parents. They search to find their real parents. Because of the original separation, confusion and disaster ensues. In this story, royal twins are separated in childhood as a result of an adopted son's jealousy. Telling their mother that they will be a danger to the state, the adopted son manages to have them removed from the palace to the country. When the twins are adolescents, they begin the search for their real parents. The villain (the adopted son) tries to foil their attempts, creating problems which slows their process towards reunion and an understanding of their true identity. The following scenario was performed by the Rungroot Ponakon Troupe from Nakon Pathom at Kanchanaburi, March 10, 1981.

King Chatbodi's (chao...king) queen (mae...mother)
Sri Prapai has not been able to bear a son, so the king

and queen adopt Sangathit (kong...villain). They promise Sangathit that when he grows to adulthood, he will become king. Years pass, and as Sangathit reaches the age of twenty, the queen bears two twin boys. The king goes back on his promise and tells Sangathit that he can no longer expect to be king because he has now two boys of his own. Sangathit is jealous.

The babies have circular marks on their hands showing that they have some kind of magical power. Sangathit offers to predict the future of the babies, and seeing that one will grow up to be a great king, lies, and says that they will grow up to be bad and not worthy of being king. The queen, upset at hearing this, asks Sangathit what to do. He replies that the babies should be taken to another city until they are twenty, because if they are kept in the present city, the people will become poorer and poorer. The queen goes to another city with the babies, accompanied by a soldier. Sangathit disguises himself as a robber and goes to the forest to attack the queen and kill the babies. (The crisis-meeting in the forest).

On the journey, the queen gives one baby to Munsri (chok...clown), the soldier who is accompanying her, and takes the other baby herself. Munsri takes the baby to his house to bring it up. (The separation of offspring).

Sangathit appears, disguised as a robber, and attacks the queen. They fight, and the queen escapes with her baby, but becomes tired, so sleeps. While she is sleeping, a

monkey comes to her and steals her baby. She wakes, and distraught by not seeing the child, goes to search for it. (The second separation.)

Time passes. Roi Yan (phra ek...hero), the prince raised by Munsri, has grown up and wants to become a soldier. (The search as adolescent begins.) Munsri allows him to go to the palace with him and his real son Rumchoi (chok... clown) to become soldiers (commoners aiding aristocracy).

Back at the palace, King Chatbodi, now aged, wonders about his sons. Sangathit says not to think about them. Mansri appears and introduces his son Roi Yan to the king, saying that they would like to become soldiers. (Desire to work for the king.) The king is pleasantly surprised by Roi Yan because his features resemble the queen's. The king puts Sangathit in charge to drill them as soldiers.

Pitpern (nang ek...heroine) and Nawarat (nang rong... subrette) are sisters living in the country. Sangathit meets Pitpern and falls in love with her. (The love-meet in the forest). Roi Yan also falls in love with Pitpern and this angers Sangathit. Sangathit orders Roi Yan to jail.

The prince (phra ek...hero II) who was stolen by the monkeys appears. He has been raised by them, cannot speak (he sings), and resembles a monkey in his movement. He is travelling to the city. (The search of adolescence).

While Munsri is on guard watch, Sangathit plans to kill the king. He throws torches of fire into the king's bedchamber and, Munsri, seeing the torches fall, gathers

them up. The king awakens, and at that moment, Sangathit enters and accuses Munsri of having tried to start a fire to murder the king. Munsri accuses Sanghathit of the same. A fight ensues, and suddenly the monkey prince appears and helps Munsri. They get away. Sanghathit is sure the monkey prince is Roi Yan. He goes to check the jail to find out how Roi Yan could escape. Roi Yan is there, and doesn't understand what Sanghathit is talking about. Sanghathit angers, and swears that he will kill Munsri. Roi Yan, determined to help Munsri, escapes from jail.

Rumchoi, at the market, meets Pitpern and Narawat. He tells them that Roi Yan is in jail. The ladies buy food to take to the jail, but on their way they meet the monkey prince. Thinking it is Roi Yan in disguise, they talk to him. The monkey prince can only make unintelligible sounds. The women and Rumchoi become exasperated. Rumchoi thinks that the jail has affected his mind and tries to teach him to speak. The women take him to buy some clothes.

Roi Yan appears and meets Rumchoi. Rumchoi is amazed that he has changed so quickly. Roi Yan thinks that he's crazy and wants to see Pitpern immediately. When they meet, there is much confusion. Rumchoi tries to sort it all out, but can't. Roi Yan, seeing Pitpern friendly with the monkey prince, angers. He fights with the monkey prince. The play ends in chaos, the brothers fighting.

The play has the typical pattern of travel to the country, the crisis in the forest, separation, and adolescent

return toward the Court in search of identity. Details differ with each Likay play, and the twist in this scenario is that although there is a hint of recognition on the part of the king that Roi Yan might be his son (his face resembles the queen's), in fact it is not acted upon, and the remainder of the play is devoted to the confusion created by the lack of the heros' knowing who they are and the ensuing conflict. The moral here might be: that separation from the Court creates commensurate lack of identity (one hero thinks he's a monkey!) and that lack of identity with the Court creates further confusion and chaos (for oneself and for the state).

Plot type two

Problems created by a jealous and sexually aggressive female cause disunity and disruption in the Court.

The best example of this theme, and interesting because it was set in the present and used plot elements from stories as diversified as "Cinderella," the Indian classic, "Shakuntala," and the Thai story of a Kinnari princess (a heavenly, bird-like creature who is captured and wooed by an earthly prince only to fly out of his grasp at the end) was performed by the Bunchob Sithisan troupe of Ayutthaya at Nontaburi Province, March 29, 1981. The title is "Rachini Bang Srithong" (The Queen of Bang Srithong). In the following scenario, a handsome prince meets a mute girl and falls in love with her. Her stepmother and stepsister (both itchas, or sexually aggressive women) plot to take her place at Court. They try to kill the heroine, but she is saved by the magical

means of a good doctor. In the end, heading for higher things, she puts on wings and leaves both the Court and her prince. The play fashions a moral lesson regarding sexuality, femininity, and society.

Sopadhet (kong...villain) is amassing troops to conquer a kingdom. Saeyumporn (phra ek...hero), who is studying at a temple, is called back to the Court to protect the kingdom. (The journey through the forest).

Boonerang (pho...father) has a son, Laam (chok...clown) and a daughter (nang ek...heroine). His first wife has died and he has remarried. His new wife's name is Malee. She has a daughter by her first husband whose name is Malai. Ruangrong is mute, and she is bossed around by her step-mother and stepsister. (The "Cinderella" motif). Malee also dominates her husband. When he appears, she tells him to go to Chiangmai to buy her some clothes (he is a wealthy merchant). He goes. Malee and Malai continue to bully Ruangrong.

Prince Saeyumporn, returning from the temple, happens to see Ruangrong washing clothes outside the house. (The meeting). He speaks to her, but she is shy and runs inside. Following her, he meets Malee, who, impressed with his looks, invites him in. He tells her why he is there, and she introduces her daughter to him. Obviously it is the wrong girl, but as he is about to leave, Laam produces Ruangrong. The prince tells her that he loves her and wants her to be his wife, and gives her a ring to prove his love. She

accepts both, but when he mentions how pleased he will be to hear her speak, Laam tells him she cannot. The prince, fearful that the Court would not approve of a speechless queen, departs, leaving her with the ring. (The "Shakuntala" motif).

A Muslim diamond merchant appears. Malee would like a diamond, so invites the merchant in. She is attracted to the merchant, and asks him to stay the night, telling him that she will come to his bedroom at four a.m.. (Introduction of the sexual theme.)

She goes to his room at the designated time, passing Ruangrong's and Laam's room on the way. Laam follows his stepmother to the merchant's bedroom and watches the action through a crack in the wall. Ruangrong appears and he tells her that they must tell their father.

Just as the merchant is leaving, Boonerang comes home. (He has been warned of trouble at home by the omen of a snake crossing his path.) He sees Malee waving good-bye to the merchant and asks who she is saying good-bye to. Laam takes him aside and tells him the whole story. Boonerang confronts Malee with it, but is swayed by her refutations and tears. He takes her side against his son and daughter. Laam and Ruangrong go to the garden, dejected.

Prince Saeyumporn, meanwhile, is dreaming of Ruangrong. He wakes, and sees Ruangrong everywhere. (A stock Likay routine). The king, thinking that his son is lovesick, orders soldiers to bring Ruangrong to the Court.

Malee and Malai are plotting to get Ruangrong's ring.

They fight with her, obtain the ring, and decide to go to the Court. Perhaps the prince can be made to marry Malai who now has the ring.

Laam finds his sister on the floor and goes to get help. A local doctor arrives, and recognizing that Ruangrong is a mute, says that he will try to cure her. He tells her that the prince has ordered all the women of the area to appear in a beauty contest so that he can select the most beautiful for his wife. (This is a stock Likay situation.) The doctor urges her to go and she leaves.

At the Court, Malee, Malai, and local girls try-out in the beauty contest. Ruangrong appears, disguised as an Indian. (The Shakuntala motif.) She is selected to be the prince's wife. The Court is thrown into dismay when they find out that she cannot speak, but the king says that there is no law against a mute woman becoming queen. He declares that the wedding ceremony will occur in three days.

Malee and Malai talk with the sister of the prince who is indignant that her brother should marry a mute. They connive to frame Ruangrong by getting the diamond merchant to sleep with her so as to prevent her from being able to marry the prince. They give Ruangrong a sleeping potion and, while she is sleeping, the merchant climbs into bed with her. Malee and Malai call the prince and Ruangrong is discovered sleeping with the merchant. The prince is furious and calls for a trial.

A Court trial ensues, wherein the king says that he

wants to get more facts. He orders the merchant to jail. The prince, furious, orders Ruangrong to jail and then to be burned. She is taken away.

Laam tells his father, Boonerang, what has happened and Boonerang goes to the Court and demands to see his wife and stepdaughter. They deny knowing him, and he is removed from the Court.

With the help of a soldier (chok...clown), Burngrong manages to escape from jail.

The prince gets drunk, trying to soothe his grief concerning Ruangrong. Malee and Malai spying their chance, put a drug in his drink and Malai hauls him into bed. Malee screams "rape!" and summons the king to witness. The king is led to believe that while drunk, the prince has tried to rape Malai. He orders them to be married in three days.

Ruangrong returns to find the local doctor. He has made some medicine which will cure her. He gives it to her and she is cured. She tells him about the events at the palace and he says, "Never mind, you can live with me."

Sopadhet, the king's son by a minor wife,²⁰ is amassing troops again to march against his half-brother, Saeyumporn. He is jealous of Saeyumporn because, he says, the king gives

²⁰Traditionally, Thai kings had a major wife, the queen, and many minor wives. The tradition was also practiced by other royalty as well as commoners, it being an indication of status and wealth. The practice continues today, but on a much reduced scale and it is not condoned by the present dynasty.

everything to Saeyumporn and nothing to him. Because an attack is imminent, marriage preparations are stopped at the palace.

The princess and a soldier have followed Ruangrong to the doctor's house. The doctor wants to know who framed Ruangrong. The princess, seeing that Ruangrong can now speak, tells the whole story. They all go together to the palace where the princess tells everything and puts Malee and Malai in disgrace. Malee swears that she will kill Ruangrong. Malee goes to the doctor's house disguised as an old woman and, finding Ruangrong alone, gives her a lethal drink. Ruangrong drinks it and falls unconscious. The doctor and her father arrive. The doctor covers her with a magic cloth which will make her fly. She will fly to the palace to find out what is happening there. (The Kinnari bird motif.)

Laam, her brother, has helped Saeyumporn to defeat Sopadhet. The king will give him anything he asks. He asks that Ruangrong be cleared of all suspicions. The king calls the Court together and gets the whole truth from the diamond merchant, the princess, Malee and Malai, and the soldier who helped Ruangrong to escape. When the truth is fully known, Ruangrong flies in and around, chased by the prince. Everyone chases after her, as she flies away.

The nexus of this plot is in the work of Malee and Malai. They are aggressive, self-willed, and sexually provocative. Through this type of plot, Likay appears to be demonstrating

the need for chaste behavior on the part of Thai women. Aggressiveness, selfishness, and sexuality are linked to offer a moral lesson of what Thai women should not be; the kind of behavior demonstrated by Malee and Malai can only lead to social disruption, Likay seems to say. In relation to this, it is also interesting to note that the heroine, Ruangrong, is mute throughout most of the play.

Another popular theme appears to be the compliment of the female version previously discussed. This type of plot focuses on male sexuality and the disastrous effects which occur when sexuality is allowed to dominate other interests and values.

Plot type three

Young men, graduating from a temple school, destroy their friendship fighting over women.

In the scenario below, the theme of uncontrolled sexuality on the part of young men is contrasted with the code of honor which traditionally emanated from the temple school. The story shows how rampant sexual desire tears down the moral code handed down by teachers and Buddhist doctrine, leading to chaos and misery within the social fabric. The plot structure of this performance, with its very short scenes, profusion of similar characters, and fast-paced, violent action, was aimed at the teenage audience in particular, and is a good example of "teenage Likay," or Likay "Wai Woon." The best presentation of this plot type was by the Prasak Baya troupe performing at Thonburi, January 11,

1981. The name of the play is "Rak Tong Harm" (Mustn't Love").

Mangrai (phra ek...hero I) has grown up in the palace (a Mon Kingdom) having been brought there as a child by his mother. He is in love with Raywadi (nang ek...heroine) and wants to marry her, but the queen won't allow it because he is a commoner and she is a princess. He decides to leave the palace and look for a job.

Mangrai's older brother, Mangkayaw (phra ek...hero II), a student at a temple school, is in love with Kantima (nang ek...heroine II), the daughter of his teacher. He discusses his love with her, and she says that she loves him but can't marry him because she is the daughter of his teacher. He says that he'll try to stop loving her, but that it will be difficult. He goes to practice sword fighting with his friend, Bangkhyo (phra ek...hero III). They discuss how they don't like one student whose name is Mango. Their teacher then comes to talk with them, saying that he is pleased to see that they are sword fighting well and that now that their course is ended, they should remember two things: 1) they must fight together, not against each other and, 2) they must use their swords together for good purposes only. They place their swords together and swear this, but one falls to the ground signifying that in the future one of the students will break his vow.

The plot next returns to Mangrai, for the younger sister of Raywadi is searching for him because she is in love with

him. She meets Mango (kong...villain, one of the students from the temple school) who stops her and attempts to rape her. Mangrai appears and stops Mango, whereupon Mangkayaw comes to Mango's rescue because they are students of the same temple school. Mangrai however, manages to beat them both. Mangkayaw is dejected because he is beaten. He takes out a picture of his mother and looks at it for moral support. Mangrai recognizes it as the picture of his mother also. Recognizing that they are brothers, Mangrai lectures Mangkayaw, and tells him never to fight over anything which concerns a woman. They decide to go to see their mother. Mangkayaw has not seen her because he has been studying at the temple for a long time.

Bangkya meanwhile, returns to the temple to meet Kantima. He is rich, and tells Kantima this. Kantima replies that she doesn't love him now, but perhaps she will in the future.

Mangrai and Mangkayaw, continuing onward, discuss how they would like to kill Mansuradit, the man who killed their father. Mangkayaw happens upon the daughter of Mansuradit, Pasida, at a temple. He thinks that he would like to make love to her, but Mango comes to stop him, saying that she is his lover. They fight. Mango is driven off, Mangkayaw asks her to be his wife and takes her away to make love, after which, they proceed to the temple of the teacher. Mangkayaw asks for permission to stay at the temple with his wife and the teacher allows him to do so. Kantima is saddened when she sees that Mangkayaw has a new wife.

Mango arrives at the temple. When asked, the teacher refuses to tell Mango where Mangkayaw is, so Mango strikes the teacher and they fight. Kantima, seeing this, stops Mango, and tells him that Mangkayaw and Pasida are in the garden. Her father strikes her and, accusing her of betraying the lovers because she is in love with Mangkayaw, tells her to go quickly and tell Pasida to find Mangkayaw.

Kantima goes.

Mango, meanwhile, finds Pasida first, stops her, and carries her off to rape her. Kantima meets him and he knocks her down. She runs off to find Mangkayaw.

Meeting Mangkayaw, Kantima tells him that Mango has found Pasida and raped her. Furious, Mangkayaw accuses Kantima of telling Mango of their whereabouts. He strikes Kantima and carries her off to rape her as punishment. Having been raped, she enters again and Mangkayaw says that if he can't find Pasida, he'll be back for more. He leaves to find Pasida.

Kantima's father enters. She tells him what has befallen her. He says that she was wrong to betray Pasida. He strikes her, and saying that he has lost the respect of his students, ties her up and leaves. She calls for help.

Bangkyyo finds her. She tells him what has happened. He says that he loves her just the same. The teacher meets Bangkyyo, and Bangkyyo says that he will kill Mangkayaw for the teacher. The teacher says that if Bangkyyo cannot find Mangkayaw and take him to his brother, Bangkyyo can't come

back to the school again.

Mango, fleeing with Pasida, is met by Mangrai. They fight and exit fighting.

Mangkayaw is met by Bangkyo. Bangkyo accuses him of being a bad man and wants to fight. Mangkayaw won't fight him because they share the same teacher. He tells Bangkyo that if he follows him, he'll be dead. Bangkyo does so, and they fight.

Mango, fleeing from Mangrai, meets Bangkyo and Mangkayaw. He fights with Bangkyo. The teacher enters and fights with Mangkayaw, but Mangkayaw rushes away. Mango and the teacher then fight and Mango is killed. (And thus the unity, sworn to by all, is broken, shattered by the malevolence of Mango and the sexual interests of the friends.)

The ending is especially significant to a Thai audience because the person of the teacher is held sacred. That he is brought to kill a student shows how the student's actions have lowered even him. Likewise, the rape of the teacher's daughter by Mangkayaw is a very disrespectful act in regard to the teacher. The plot demonstrates the chaos and corruption resulting from impassioned sexual interests. The plays in this category tend to be the male counterpoint to the female aggressiveness found in those of the previous theme category. Elements of the first plot type category are also found in categories two and three, re: separation from parents and resulting loss of knowledge of one's full identity. However, as the examples show, the degree of emphasis

reshapes the moral, or theme.

Plot type four

Plot type four consists of fantastic stories involving animals with supernatural or human attributes and ghosts which create havoc within man's world. The plots draw heavily from Thai folk and traditional literature.

Thai traditional literature abounds with stories or legends reminiscent of Western fairy tales or the stories of King Arthur. The stories stem from folk literature, originally transmitted orally. Magical conditions prevail, and the stories often center around beings -- spirits, gods, or supermen -- who, according to legend, lived in an actual area of Thailand and who had the power to change their appearance. Thus, Khrai Thong is the tale of Chalawan, a legendary crocodile who had a cave beneath the water and lived with two human wives. In the cave, he became a man, but in the water, he was a crocodile. Khrai Thong, the hero in the story, saves one of the wives with the aid of magic. Khun Chang and Khun Phaen, another ancient tale, springs from the oral tradition and was, in past times, recited at auspicious occasions such as the cutting of the top-knot²¹ and the house-warming.²² The story tells of the military and

²¹The ceremony in which the knot of hair, tied on the head to keep the "vital essence" within the body, is cut, marking the child's entrance into puberty.

²²According to Dhanit Yupho, Thai Dance Drama: The Khon and Lakon, Bangkok: Dept. of Fine Arts, 1958, p. 203.

and romantic exploits of the Thai hero, Khun Phaen. Another folk-tale performed in Likay is the story of Sang Thong, originally told in Pali as a Buddhist birth story.²³ Once again, the locale is purported to be an actual place in Thailand (in this case, Uttaradith) and the story is fanciful, dealing as it does, with a prince born in a conch shell. He is raised by an ogress who takes human form, possesses pools of silver and gold which tint a person that color when immersed in them, a negrito disguise, and crystal shoes and golden staff which render their wearer capable of flying in the air. He discovers the magical paraphernalia, the ogress dies, and he goes on to perform great feats, armed as he is with the magical fare.

The following play, performed by the Sai Thong Buthong troupe of Nakonsawan, July 4, 1981, interweaves the adolescent love story with the fantasy quality of traditional Thai literature and Court drama. The story deals with the magical powers possessed by animals and half-human creatures. In it, a human is beloved by a "ti nakorn," a creature with the body of a man, but the head of a dragon. Since the girl's father is against the marriage of his daughter with such a creature, the ti nakorn arranges to have a spirit take over the girl's body. Meanwhile, the man chosen by the girl's father to be her husband meets a tigress in human form in the forest. He falls in love with her and marries her. However, the father

²³Yupho, p. 123.

of the girl (a king) locates the desired husband of his daughter and persuades the man to forget the tigress and marry his daughter. He does, and the tigress returns for the blood of his new wife, the king's daughter. A battle ensues, and the new wife is battered by her husband who, when no blood emerges from her wounds, realizes that all along he had been married to a ghost. The scenario, in greater detail, goes like this:

King Kotasin wants his daughter, Suwanee (nang ek) to marry Prince Bancha (phra ek) of another friendly king's city. He prepares to find out why his friend has not yet sent his son to propose to his daughter.

Chieb (chok) is in love with Chumnian (nong rong). He proposes to her and she says that she will wed him, but he must give her 30,000 baht (\$1,340) and a house of good wood. He says that he is poor. He must become a robber in order to get these things to marry.

Rachain (phra ek II) is the younger brother of Bancha. He has been travelling for three months and is on his way to the temple where Bancha is studying to get his brother to go home. They meet, and Bancha doesn't want to return home, but Rachain tells him that King Kotasin wants him to marry his daughter. They leave for home. (The return from the country to the Court.) On the way, in the forest, they meet Chieb, who tries to rob them. (The forest meeting and crisis.) They fight, and overpower Chieb. Chieb pleads for mercy, saying that he is a poor man. Bancha and Rachain say that he may

become a soldier and go everywhere with them. (The disenfranchised should help the state.)

Suwanee waits to see her father, King Kotasin, and is unhappy. She knows what her father wants and is afraid because she has a husband already and is pregnant. Her husband is a ti nakorn, a creature with a human body and the head of a dragon. King Kotasin meets her, sees that she is pregnant, and is furious. She tells him that she has lived for a week in the forest with a ti nakorn and loves him. Her father says that she had better marry Bancha quickly.

The ti nakorn is in the forest. He has been meditating for two and one-half months. From his meditation, he perceives that Kotasin has made Suwanee marry Bancha. He is sad and wants to help her. His older brother tells him not to go, as the humans are dangerous. But the ti nakorn goes anyway. He meets Suwanee and Kotasin. The ti nakorn politely tells Kotasin that he wants to help Suwanee. Suwanee then leaves so that they can talk. The ti nakorn says that the king mustn't marry her to Bancha. They fight because the king gets upset. The ti nakorn is weak from fasting and meditating. He turns into a dragon to have more strength, overpowers Kotasin, and the king flees. The ti nakorn does not want to eat Kotasin, so he returns to his cave.

Suwanee finds her fallen father. A ghost enters (a phi khong koi: a spirit that has waited in the area for 3,000 years). The phi wishes to enter Suwanee's form, so changes

Suwanee into a gibbon while entering her form. The ghost takes over Suwanee's body and because of this, Suwanee appears no longer pregnant. Presently, the king revives, and they travel on to find Bancha.

They finally meet King Kotasin's friend, King Rachan, who tells them that they must travel to find Bancha. They do so.

Meanwhile, Bancha, Rachain, and Chieb are attacked by a tiger in the forest. Rachain flees. The tiger follows. The mother of the tiger, however, meets Chieb and Bancha. They wound it with an arrow. It flees.

The tiger meets her daughter, Dao Ruang. The tiger, Sua Dao, dies. Rachain and Chieb meet Dao Ruang (who is in human form) and Dao Ruang asks who killed her mother. Rachain says that Bancha did it, but tells Sua Dao not to be mad, because he loves her. At this point, a supernatural voice is heard that prophesizes that Dao Raung will have a husband by the name of Bancha and that when they are married, Bancha will find another wife and Dao Ruang will die because Dao Ruang was as Sua Dao, a tiger. Her grandmother, who had brought her up in the forest, changed to become human by putting a nail in her head and singing Pali verses. If the husband of Dao Ruang marries again, the soul of Sua Dao (the tiger) will come to live with the soul of Dao Ruang (now a human), making her hungry for human blood. They go to meet Bancha and, meeting him, Dao Ruang falls in love with him. They go to make love and be married.

Rachain is dejected because he has no lover. He is jealous of Bancha who has a wife already. He meets his father and tells him that Bancha is married, having met a girl in the forest. His father, furious, goes to look for Bancha.

Rachain meets Bancha in the forest. The king is angry with his son because of the marriage. They fight, but Chieb and Rachain rush to stop the fighting. King Kotasin comes to meet the whole group. He wants to know if Bancha wants to marry Suwanee. King Rachan talks to his son and convinces Bancha that it is the best thing to do. They leave for town.

As the palace, the group gathers. Suwanee is presented to Bancha and he takes her for his wife.

Rachain, in the forest, says that Bancha has been in town for seven months and hasn't returned yet. Dao Ruang, coming back home from gathering flowers, asks Rachain about Bancha. He tells her that Bancha has married Suwanee. Dao Ruang thinks of what her grandfather told her in the past. She says that there is one way to change the situation; she must become fully human. Rachain must kill Suwanee and when the blood flows, she will bathe in the blood and become human. Rachain says that he will help, but suddenly, Dao Ruang changes. The tiger spirit of her mother, Sua Dao, comes to her, and she, now feeling as a tiger, want to eat Rachain. Rachain flees.

At the palace, everyone is sleeping. Suwanee gets up. She is hungry for blood. (As mentioned early on, she is a

ghost.) She says that King Rachan, Bancha's father, has known right from the beginning that she was a ghost because many soldiers have died around the palace. She will go to kill Rachan.

Rachain races into the palace and tells Bancha that Dao Ruang is turning into a tiger and needs the blood of Suwanee. Terrified, Bancha goes to find Suwanee and, finding her, strikes her, trying to raise some blood, but no blood appears. Rachain does the same, but raises no blood. Then King Kotasin appears, and seeing his daughter fallen, starts to fight Bancha, but Chieb and Rachain stop the fight. They all stand and stare in horror, looking at her bloodless wounds, realizing that all along, she has been a ghost.

The plot in this play has been altered somewhat. One hero moves from the Court to look for work outside the palace, whilst the other hero (his brother) moves from the traditional setting of the temple-school toward, one imagines, the palace. There is the usual incident in the forest, with the switch this time being that there is an attempted robbery, but not abduction. Instead of crisis and separation, there is a joining of forces (Chieb, the thief, joins Bancha and Rachain in order to become a soldier). The novel element of the plot is that instead of one character playing antagonist, the supernatural becomes the antagonist in the forms of the ti nakorn, the phi khong koi (waiting ghost), and the tigers. Strange forces are at work, and these characters combined together, create the supernatural realm which suddenly

breaks through into the natural realm of human beings. These supernatural entities trick man, creating confusion and horror.

It must be noted that the supernatural, as antagonist, is to be feared. No good comes from contact with these forces. The play says: "Beware the elements of the supernatural. They may enter your life at any moment." It is a theme which engenders fear of the unknown in the Thai audience and links with the animistic beliefs so basic to Thai mentality.

Analysis of Major Themes and Plot Types: How They Serve a Rite of Unification

One sees from the examples of Likay themes and plot types how Likay serves as a "rite of unification."

First, Likay teaches a moral. Each play rather explicitly teaches the nature of good and evil as they are conceived in the Thai mind. Starting from the bottom up, so to speak, we have the animistic milieu: fear of spirits and the supernatural world from which they emanate. We have seen earlier (in the section on Thai animism) that these saksit powers are thought to be unruly and malevolent for the most part. Thus, when Likay focuses on the supernatural, or when the supernatural is incorporated with some larger theme, the end result for the Thai audience must be increased awareness, concern, and fear on the part of the individual Thai, in regard to this unseen, but everpresent realm which surrounds him. Likay teaches fear of the supernatural.

Second, Likay teaches sexual morality. Both plot types

two and three demonstrate how the sexual drive, when left unbridled, creates havoc and misery for all concerned. Likay plays tend to emphasize the need for feminine restraint more than for male. However, both are addressed. Thus, Likay teaches fear of the sexual drive: it must be restrained, or chaos, evil, will result.

Finally, and most importantly, the great theme appearing in almost all Likay plays of separation engendering chaos and unnatural occurrences, works as a leitmotif which at once arouses fear and the need for affiliation: the urge toward unity. Where the esthetic undergirding of much Western drama is arousal of fear and pity, in Likay, it is the arousal of fear and the need for unity in affiliation. And since, in Thailand, all things are hierarchically structured, the means to affiliation are through the king or one of his appendages -- the government, military, police -- and so on. In affiliation with the king, his agencies, and his Way (the Thai "civic religion," Thai culture) there is protection, there is hope, and there is a sense of identity.

In rallying toward national unity, Likay plays use time-honored plot structure. The basic plot for all Likay plays parallels the Ramayana, as we have seen (the study in the forest temple-school, the crisis-meeting in the forest, the abduction, the quest, the reunion). Focus on Thai kings and royal problems helps to keep audiences mindful of the nature and the importance of the king's station. That this is felt to be necessary for the orderly functioning of the nation

is also reflected in the fact that the Thai kings of the present dynasty have adopted the appellation "Rama" as their kingly title. Here, Likay can be seen as binding ancient myth (of the Ramayana) with Thai history (The historically based plots of Likay, actual or legendary) with the actual, present state of Thailand and its king. To the Thai, when watching Likay, the past lives in the present. Equally, the present is justified by the past. Likay teaches the Thai "Way," traditional values and orientation, and offers a sharpened sense of identity as Thai through affiliation and identification with its dogma.

The term "dogma" is used advisedly, referring to the tenets of the "civic religion" mentioned previously. Likay plays express the Thai "way" of doing things, traditional manner of relating in the world, the proper means to affiliation. The inner themes or messages in Likay reveal, in particular, Thai "articles of faith." We have seen that Likay functions as a rite of unification through its basic plot and content elements. Likay also addresses the means to affiliation and national unity through minor, but no less pervasive, supporting messages. Discussion below focuses on the minor plot messages which, together, form a pattern, credo, or morality for Likay-goers.

The Internal Themes

The "muang Thai" concept

We have mentioned that the archetypical plot structure for Likay is that of the Ramayana: separation and

reunification. The basic plot-frame is then made Thai by placing it within the action of Thai history. It is here that Likay begins to act as allegory, for the crisis of separation of persons in Likay plots is also indicative of the separation of the power of the national state as reflected in the presence of the many ancient city-states of which Likay speaks. These ancient city-states were called muang by the early Thai, meaning "city," and today the word is used with the same meaning. However, the term has also come to mean "country," muang Thai thus being the equivalent to "Thailand." It is this movement, from primary identification on the part of the rural Thais with their region or local large city, to identification with the nation as a whole that Likay automatically conveys. Likay does this through seeming paradox. When focusing on regional disputes -- Chiangmai vs. Lopburi or Sukhothai, Ayutthaya vs. Kanchanaburi, etc., Likay heightens regional awareness, sense of history, and pride. However, by emphasizing the role of the aristocracy, particularly the King's role within Thai culture, Likay demonstrates the binding and healing powers of the Royal Office. Thus, since the Royal Office now oversees the governing of the entire Thai nation, Likay helps to move Thai identity away from a regional perspective to a national one.

Service to the King is the best kind of occupation.

Supportive of the concept of the King being the national protector of the Thai state, is the message, continually

reiterated in Likay, that service to the King (in the military or government) is the best kind of work. Found in every performance, the message has direct existential relevance.

Steven Piker has noted the breakdown in the traditional structure of rural Thai life. He writes:

Whereas traditionally virtually everyone had subsisted by rice agriculture on family-owned land, today a slight majority of village families finds subsistence in other ways. The most important local alternative has proved to be agricultural wage labor. In addition, local crafts have sprung up...and a number of small-scale food selling operations. And at least some members of most landless families take whatever short-term nonagricultural wage labor they can to supplement their incomes.²³

It is precisely the problem of large numbers of unemployed or underemployed rural workers shifting from rice agriculture to labor in industry to which Likay speaks, encouraging and reinforcing a traditional alternative -- service in the government or military -- as a means of absorbing a group which otherwise might, through frustration from the inability to find employment in the industrial sector, become anti-social and disruptive.

The aristocracy must be aided and advised by commoners.

Another theme which is highly prevalent in Likay (twenty-five incidences were recorded in this study) is that the aristocracy needs the commoner to help in the overall

²³Steven Piker, "The Post-Peasant Village," in *Change and Persistence in Thai Society*, ed. by G.W. Skinner and A.T. Kirsch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) p. 311.

functioning of the state. The idea emerges logically from the Thai understanding of hierarchy in social relationships, the law of karma, and the concept of merit. Since those of high status should be, according to traditional belief, protected from menial tasks, there is need for those of less exalted status to perform the rudimentary, day-to-day functions which are necessary to the proper running of the state. Likay demonstrates this need in its plot constructs by Likay kings and princes enlisting the services of the peasant class to serve as soldiers, body-guards and, in general, act as aides to those of the aristocracy. The commoner is shown as being dutifully regarded through improved social status as a result of affiliation with the aristocracy and/or status-enhancing marriage. Thus, Likay announces to its rural audiences that there is a place for them within the national social structure, and that upward mobility may occur through affiliation with agencies associated with the king.

Life at Court.

Likay plays deal almost exclusively with Court life. Again, the reason for this appears to lie in the hierarchical world-view from which the Thai perceives life. The aristocracy, because of their increased merit, accordingly, should demonstrate an humanity greater than the norm and, equally, a state of being higher than that of the commoner. To the Thai, the aristocratic mode of behavior offers a way of living which should be emulated. Likay audiences look to

the aristocratic characters for instructions both in regard to morals as well as manners. Here again, Likay serves a pedagogical function in terms of problem-solving and decorum.

Conversely, the very low incidence of themes centered around the lives of the common people is informative. Only five plays out of the thirty-seven studies were based upon the problems of ordinary folk, suggesting once again, the very great interest the Thai person has in the aristocracy, and the importance placed upon "high" birth. And since the behavior of the aristocracy is the acceptable model, the common behavior of the peasant becomes humorous in comparison, the Likay clowns, as soldiers and servants, demonstrating the earthy cleverness of the peasant class. The common life, as enacted in Likay, is reflection of a reality familiar to the peasant, while Court life demonstrates a reality to which the Thai heart aspires. Likay shows that improved behavior patterns emerge through association with aristocratic agencies.

The capital (or Bangkok) is the place to go for a better life

Just as Likay demonstrates that aristocratic life is a model to be respected and emulated in terms of behavior, so the home of the aristocracy -- the capital or, nowadays, Bangkok -- is viewed as a place to go for a better life, the implication being that the nearer one is to the aristocracy, the more one is apt to share in the fruits of that life. Audience informants stated, almost unanimously, that they

would like to go and find work in Bangkok; the reasons they didn't go were based upon family or occupational considerations related to the region in which they lived. If freed from such obligations, they said, almost instinctively, that they would go to Bangkok. Only two plays, set in modern times and composed of relatively original material, suggested that Bangkok was not a place to go because of the "evils" existing there. Likay, typically, encourages migration to Bangkok.

The problem of poverty

Poverty is a serious problem in Thailand. For the majority of Thais, life is insecure in terms of money. There is constant fear of not having enough. This very real economic threat connects with the "philosophical" and psychological belief in spirits and the concept of saksit powers as unruly and possibly dangerous. The world, as soon through the eyes of a Thai, is dangerous. Money, and the means to it, is one way to assuage the existential predicament. Likay teaches four ways to solve this problem.

1. Poverty can be eliminated thorough affiliation with power.

In a time when increasing numbers of rural Thais are becoming disenfranchised from their land, Likay encourages their absorption into national service of some kind. Likay demonstrates the benefits of such affiliation in terms of status, lifestyle, and also in terms of fulfilling the needs of the upper echelon of Thai society. Likay teaches

that poverty can be alleviated through affiliation with the king and his agencies.

In regard to the tendency of seeing affiliation as a means of obtaining upward mobility within Thai society, Mulder has written:

It is neither things, ideas, nor personality expression in their own right that are appreciated as ways to accepted achievement. The achievement motive that Thai culture fosters is social and traditionally expressed in the achievement of affiliation.²⁴

Traditionally, affiliation within Thai society has tended to be connected with some structure of power. Individuals group themselves around a person who is in command of relatively greater resources and who has the power to distribute the resources to others in the group. Such a group, in Thai terminology, becomes a khana -- literally, a group of people associated with a higher authority who, or which, has power to distribute either power, or resources, or both. As a member of khana attains more resources to distribute, the individual begins to form an entourage of people who are, in turn, dependent upon him or her for resources. A "patron-client" relationship is thus established with the obvious result that the larger the size of one's entourage, the greater is one's status and show of power. Mulder has described the pattern thusly:

Summarily, the Thai way to resources is the way of power: rulers, government officials, gangsters, or police have the means of power and can thus command, control, and exploit those who are closer to the means

²⁴Emphasis added. Mulder, p. 29.

of production. The people who are in direct control of the means of production, who labour and produce, suffer from power; their way out is to acquire power by shifting their position from producer to servant of the government and by placing themselves under the protection of those who have more power.²⁵

In Thai society, to gain power -- and thus position and status --- the tendency is to seek the patronage of one who has more resources than one can command alone, to become a client of a superior power, to join a group -- a khana -- in order to benefit from the resources distributed, and in Thailand today, affiliation with a dependable group is the concern of every Thai who wishes to rise within the social hierarchy.

Affiliation with power reinforces hierarchy. Since the order of social relationships in Thai society is hierarchical and focuses on a single individual, the primary order of loyalty is vertical as well. Clients of a particular patron establish loyalty to a patron more than they do to other clients of the group. Thus, class loyalty is diminished. Those on the same hierarchical level are less inclined to affiliate with each other than to affiliate with those above or below -- with those above for the benefits to be derived, with those below for the psychological benefits of showing status and the accompanying obligation of benevolence.

The concept of affiliation reinforces the traditional pattern of "entourages" and "circles." That the entourages which characterize Thai social structure may be linked to

²⁵Mulder, p. 4.

each other horizontally has been described by Hanks as the phenomenon of the "circle." Circles are extensions of the entourage and link entourages horizontally. Since modern living necessitates resources -- and power -- beyond the limits of an entourage, reciprocal relations are established with other entourages. Hanks suggests:

The Thai social order consists of congeries of linked circles with minimal functional differentiation. The specialized institutions of our scene are lacking. No universal order all the people, and no special economic apparatus supplies the consuming public. Indeed, there are no publics, no masses, nor even a proletariat; instead of these, segments of the population are provided more or less adequately according to the circle of their affiliation.²⁶

Likay suggests that affiliation with the royal entourage, in other words, the military of government, is the surest path to increased economic security. Conversely, Likay discourages involvement in other groups which do not fall within the direct hierarchy of government and/or military power, thus diminishing rural tendencies to join power structures (entourages) outside the central (royalist) sphere. Likay clearly serves to reinforce the traditional sphere as a path of fruitful affiliation.

2. The problem of poverty can be solved by becoming a thief.

The second most prevailing solution to the problem of poverty as seen in Likay performances is to become a thief. Theft is legitimized by the following logic. Mulder says:

²⁶Hanks, 1975, p. 206.

In presentation society and individual meet... The importance of being thought to be whom one presents, and the desire for social acceptance make individuals invest heavily in appearance and presentation.²⁷

Since the presentation of self is more important socially than real action of self, status achieved through illicit means is quietly condoned (psychologically) within the social framework rather than remaining in poverty -- as long, of course, that one is not found out. In the character of the Likay thief there is a pride found in impersonating a righteous individual while at the same time taking from others what one would like for oneself. This duplicity is seen also in Thai folk tales where the cunning thief gains much sympathy by successfully duping the people whom he seeks to exploit. The thief, in Likay, teaches that duplicity is one way to exact economic security in a world which, after all, is governed by the same self-interest.

3. The problem of poverty can be solved through appropriate social behavior.

Although the example of the thief is an extreme pattern of behavior as presented in Likay, the example underscores an entrenched social attitude which represents a third means of rising above the problem of an impoverished social condition. That attitude can be summed up in the term, "role-playing." Mulder has written:

In ordinary everyday interaction one prefers to take pleasant, or at least appropriate presentation for social reality. Interaction between presentations,

²⁷Mulder, p. 70

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or 'faces,' should be smooth and fluid, and there is great security in kindness as a means to keep interaction...free of trouble and hierarchically clear and in order; the investment of presentation is perhaps most heavily psychological, serving security and safety needs and the needs for acceptance and recognition. Thai behavior is strongly other-directed, not only in the search for recognized status, but as much, and perhaps even more so, in the quest to make the other kindly inclined toward ego by display of kind and smooth behavior.²⁸

The employment of such a social mechanism is a means to upward mobility within Thai society and it also allows those in authority to get things done without fear of rebellion, whilst those lower in the hierarchy have the hope of ingratiating authority to the point where they will be raised in status, and thus, monetarily. Likay teaches deference to, and accommodation with, those of higher status as an acceptable and traditional method of gaining upward social mobility. Through affiliation and the proper decorum, Likay performances say, higher status may be gained.

4. The problem of poverty can be solved through "correct" political means.

In most Likay performances, the call for political unity is implicit, emerging from major and minor themes which are related to the issue of unity. Sometimes however, the statement is delivered explicitly and made a motif throughout the performance. Thus, statements calling for the support of the king, the elected officials, or the military, in order that poverty may quickly be relieved and the Thai people prosper, were heard in eleven performances. Such

²⁸Mulder, pp. 69-70.

messages serve to reinforce the idea that association with the government is the means of upward mobility.

Separation between Rich and Poor

A less pervasive motif which sometimes appears in Likay is the question of the separation, or the distance, between the rich and the poor. By 'rich' is meant not the aristocracy, but the sell-to-do middle class. Here, Likay reinforces the general themes of the need to affiliate with the aristocracy by portraying the aristocracy as benevolent and dutifully enacting the authority into which they were born, whilst the well-to-do middle class is portrayed as basically self-serving, arrogant, and seeking to distance themselves from the peasant poor. The peasant, characterized in Likay as sincere and hard-working, but sometimes in need of assistance, is exploited by the wealthy in Likay. Requests for employment, loans, or help for a sick loved one are shown to fall on deaf ears when addressed to the rich. Likay teaches that a surer way is to trust in the larger benevolence of the state and the people and the system that connect it.

Other Themes and Plot Elements

Fear of Separation

The remainder of the internal themes focus on the issue of separation, either psychic, in the case of quarreling family members, or physical, in the case of distance from the Court. It is important to realize that, for the Thai, separation holds much more significance than for Westerners. To be separated from family and community is to be exposed

to the demonic supernatural forces that roam the earth. For the Thai, separation from family means terror. It is no wonder that in Likay, if separation occurs, association with a community of monks is frequently sought.

However, association with a community of monks cannot continue indefinitely unless one joins the community as a novice. Thai is not the case in Likay because Likay does not purpose a spiritual answer to the aspect of separation, but a secular one. In the journey from the temple through the forest a crisis or mishap occurs in Likay plots, and this occurs precisely because one is alone. The remainder of a Likay plot reveals how one can overcome the crisis of separation through proper affiliation. The answer to the plight of separation is to join the national entourage.

Violence

Violence, as a means to secure a desired end or as a punishment, is endemic to Likay. The high incidence (killings, attempted murder, fights to restore honor, retributive violence, and rape were recorded 126 times in thirty-seven performances) found in Likay of violence may be interpreted in several ways. Obviously, violence may serve to heighten dramatic interest. It also reflects accurately the period of history in which most Likay plays are set. That it does serve as symbolic action, however, can be seen in its relation to other alternatives which might serve equally well to manipulate the environment. Likay offers limited choices. Thus, if a suitor fails in winning a lady's heart through

words, she is raped. If an adversary does not submit, he is fought. If honor is insulted, the offender is killed. In Likay, there is demonstrated a short fuse between desire and violent recourse to achieve fulfillment of that desire. Logical, and even psychological, ploys are missing, except for the aforementioned strategies of 'polite' behavior which, in any case, shifts like mist whenever will is frustrated.

Although there is brutality depicted in Likay, there is also love, and lest it be thought that Likay characters -- and, by implication, the rural Thai people -- are intent on brutalizing each other, the "happy ending" where the lovers are united and the family is restored is the preferred plot ending according to informants for this study. Such an ending completes the psychic journey from separation and external terror to wholeness in family and community, that area wherein defenses may be dropped and moral values assumed. Twenty-five performances related to this study brought the "happy ending" to completion after demonstrating the chaos engendered by disunion. The remainder, either when ending in chaos, or with an "unhappy" ending, served to demonstrate against the pitfalls of action tending toward separation of people, community, and the national state.

Summation of Content and Symbolic Analysis

W.F. White, in the Encyclopedia of Anthropology, defines the symbol as: "an act, sound, or natural object having cultural significance and the capacity to excite or objectify a response (there must be some symbols around which

interaction may be organized)".²⁹

The symbol of kingship

In Likay, the great symbol which integrates the form and supplies the motive power for both character motivations and audience response is the station of the king. As mentioned earlier, the king represents both moral goodness and secular power. He is at once connected with the domain of the home, family, and Buddhism as well as the amoral powers at large in the world -- the saksit forces -- between which he mediates. As such, he is seen as the great protector of the people, unifying the moral and the saksit realms and controlling, not only the supernatural manifestations of evil (the phi), the bad spirits and the like, but also such manifestations emerging through individuals in the society, be they generals, politicians, civil servants or the overtly anti-moral and anti-social elements: the thieves, murderers, and exploiters of the poor. He is the protector of the family, of the community (and we have seen in the muang Thai concept how the city is also the state, the state, also the community and family). As grand protector of the family, community, and nation-state, he is at once the father of all Thais.

The king is also the grand protector of Buddhism. As protector of the Buddhist Sangha (Brotherhood of Monks), the moral dimension of the position of the king is enlarged,

²⁹Encyclopedia of Anthropology, p. 378.

placing him not only as the head of the Thai family, but as the protector of the religious system through which most Thais develop their moral being. In a very real sense, to the Thai, the king is the most important person on earth, the intermediary between the supernatural and the real world. He stands as a religious figure as well as a secular one. Uniting heaven and earth, he is seen as a Divine One. Likay performances, in both their ritual, ceremonial aspects, as well as in their plot structures and subject matter, seek to affirm this One. They are rites of unification, and work in much the same way as the Christian Mass does in showing the way and offering a means to affiliation with His Person, His Body.

The capital as symbol

Connected with the overall content, and intricately woven into the fabric of Likay performances, is the symbol of the capital. Since the king is seen as the Holy One, the capital and the Court become, by extension, Holy Places. Kreung Thep, the Thai name for Bangkok which means "City of Angels," acts as a magnet, attracting attachment to, or affiliation with, the Court or, nowadays, government service. As the physical extension of the Holy One, Bangkok is invested symbolically with moral charm, goodness, and light in the mind of the Thai.* Conversely, the "evils" of Bangkok

* As further manifestation of the symbol, the capital, on days of celebration, particularly those of the birthdays of the King and Queen of Thailand, is bedecked with thousands of lights, illuminating every area of the city.

(poverty, overcrowding, and crime) are noticeably not accounted for.

As Likay content reinforces the symbol of the Court and the capital as a place for moral fulfillment, Likay characters show how linking oneself to the capital opens paths to their own spiritual and material development. Consciously or unconsciously, Likay preaches that salvation may be achieved through living in, or at least visiting, Bangkok. Conversely, the very lack of attention in Likay to the problems of rural people in Thailand also contributes to centering the focus on the king and the capital as primary means of solving existing economic and social ills. Attaching oneself to the king's entourage and the king's city, Likay teaches as the method of individual development.

Rural society as symbol

Likay reinforces perception of rural people as "other." Through the behavior of the clowns -- the servants, soldiers, farmers, and low level policemen -- Likay teaches the rural folk who they are. The image projected is rough, bumbling, ignorant, but at the same time possessed of an earthy cleverness, as a group, very much different from the aristocracy. In such manner, Likay separates the people from the aristocracy psychologically and spiritually, yet unites them as a group where the values of quick wit, clever repartee, and aggressive action are celebrated. It teaches them that they are not like, nor have they to be like, their brothers in higher places. However, Likay also teaches that the rural

peasant-farmer has a part to play in the total working of the state. Likay legitimizes peasant status and shows jokers and clowns assisting those in higher places with necessary mundane activities and functions of a lower order. In this way, Likay unites a social group (the rural poor) and encourages that group to identify with the entire nation-state through uniting with that state in government or military service. The people however, are shown to be rooted to the earth, while the aristocracy is seen as linked to heaven.

From separation to unity: primal symbolic action

Likay plays are integrated by plots that move from situations of separation to situations of unity. Such is accomplished by stories wherein the hero or heroine, or both, experience relative isolation because of separation from parents, lack of knowledge about their true identity and confusion about their status. Through the process of the play, the characters are led to a reunion, the splintered members of the family are reconciled and, since they are usually members of the ruling class, the nation is strengthened through their unification. The "aides de camp" are the servants, soldiers, clowns who, representative of the rural population, assist in their own way to achieve the sought-for goal of reconciliation and unification through affiliation with the king's agencies. The sought-after happy ending is consummated by all levels of society "playing their roles" in the human drama which act as allegories for the national process. While satisfying on the emotional level,

Likay plays show how unity is important to the nation-state and how it may be achieved through affiliation with the traditional hierarchical structure.

Having discussed the themes and plot types of Likay and considered their implications in light of the chief symbolic indicators of the genre, we turn now to an analysis of the genre's elements and how they act as symbolic extensions to the major themes and purpose of Likay. As we shall see, Likay elements, and in particular, the way in which they are organized, may also be seen as indicators of the Thai world-view and of the way the Thai meet, and structure, social reality.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIKAY PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS AS SYMBOLIC INDICATORS

Likay evolved by using minimal methods to bring meaning and entertainment to peasant and working-class audiences. No lavish theatres built for Likay exist. No government subsidies were ever forthcoming to support Likay troupes. For financial reasons as well as esthetic, the building blocks for Likay were rudimentary, its elements suggestive rather than explicit. These elements are today a language, they comprise a code which connects with an inner world of value and belief which registers a way of relating to the world. In this chapter, Likay elements are discussed, as is their organization and the resulting esthetic. The final chapter will be devoted to conclusions as to how the code serves the audience it speaks to: Thai society.

Likay's code is drawn from three major Thai theatre genres: the Khon, the lakhon nai, and the lakhon nok. The Khon is the most classical of Thai theatre genres. According to Prince Dhaninivat, the Khon drama developed from the Nang Yai, or Shadow Play, and is based upon the story of Rama, as found in the Ramayana.¹ To the story were added a five piece orchestra, masked actor-dancers, and a chorus which told the story while the actors performed the action of the tale in dance-pantomime.² Movements were based upon

¹Prince Dhaninivat, J.S.S. vol. 37, Part. I, 1948, pp. 26-27.

²Coedes, The People of the Indo Chinese Peninsula, p. 500.

those delineated by the Natyasastra, the instruction book for the Indian dance-drama.³ Special dances, called rabam, were inserted into the Khon, and these too depicted the actions of Rama through specific dance choreography.⁴ These dances became more generally known as the lakhon-nai, or dance-play within the court and were performed exclusively by women without masks for the edification of the king and the court circle.⁵ The lakhon nok, or dance-play outside the palace, developed from lakhon jatri, a folk drama comprised of stories from the Jatakas, or Buddhist Birth stories. Both lakhon jatri and the lakhon nok were improvisational genres, the unmasked actors dancing and reciting within limits set by classical poetry and choreography, but improvising the arrangements in accompaniment to the basic five piece orchestra.⁶ Later, the lakhon nok drew heavily upon the lakhon nai and the sacred rabam dances were incorporated, adding their Hinduized aspect to the dance-drama of the lakhon nok repertory. As noted in Chapter II, Likay, in the 19th Century, emerged and assimilated the conventions and performance elements of the lakhon nok, but brought with it its own unique background. As an

³Nicolas, "Lakhon NORA or Lakhon Cattri and the Origins of Classical Siamese Theatre," J.S.S., vol. 18(2) 1924, pp. 101-105.

⁴Dhanit Yupho, The Khon and Lakhon, (Bangkok: The Department of Fine Arts) 1963, p. 195.

⁵Nicolas, p. 105.

⁶Nicolas, "The Folk Theatre of Siam," J.S.S. vol. 2(1), 1927, p. 84.

amalgamation of Thai classical and folk theatrical traditions, Likay today incorporates the spirit of both in its improvisational form.

Organization of Performances

Likay is definitely not a court-sponsored affair. However, from the discussion of themes and content to be found in Likay in Chapter III, it might be supposed that performances of Likay were organized from the "top down", that is, through government sponsorship in an attempt to indoctrinate the masses. Such is not the case, however. Likay performances are freely sponsored by individuals or groups to augment Thai occasions of celebration. They are freely chosen and privately sponsored. They are organized in essentially three ways.

Organization at Home

To organize a performance of Likay at a home, the sponsor, an individual, or representative of a family or community, contacts a Likay troupe manager and hires a troupe for a half, or all-night performance. If Likay is to be performed in connection with a temple fair, several monks perform the same duty. The name of the play is not usually mentioned, as the criteria for selection depends upon the artistic merits of the troupe and the tastes of the sponsor, the important point being that Likay will perform, not what it will perform. All that is mentioned is the date, the length of the performance, and the price, typically, in 1980-82, about \$250. The remaining

responsibilities are left in the hands of the topoe, or troupe manager. He or she gathers the musicians, actors, the set pieces, the musical instruments, and lighting and sound equipment and arranges transportation to and from the place of performance.

Organization at Wiks

If performances are to be held at a permanent or semi-permanent Likay theatre called a wik, a small admission fee is charged (10-20 baht, or \$.50-1.00), the gross return being shared among the performers. In such cases, it is the duty of the troupe manager to organize the production aspects as well as oversee publicity activities.

Organization by Merchants

Likay is often sponsored by merchants of a particular market area, especially newly opened markets. On these occasions, a Likay troupe may perform regularly for an extended period of time, its presence at once believed to please the local gods and thus ensure prosperity of the market, to please the customers and thus attract more business, and without doubt, to please the most avid fans of Likay, the middle-aged female merchants. To pay for such performances, the merchants themselves pay a set fee for each performance.

The Mae Yok

A secondary means of support for individual Likay actors comes from "mae yok." The term has been ascribed to the female fans of Likay who give leis laden with money to

their favorite performers. Not only has "yoking," as it has come to be called, become a tradition in at least commercial Likay, the mae yok often competing amongst themselves in leis presentation contests for favored performers, but many of these women sponsor Likay troupes as well as individual performers through gifts of cars, busses, television, jewelry, and other luxury items. The motivation for this kind of sponsorship is not altogether esthetically derived as, according to informants, the aim of such sponsorship is to establish sexual liasons with the actors.⁷ According to Virulrak, the term, mae yok is a reduction of the term mae yok kha (mother who raises her legs) and mae yok yong (mother who admires).⁸ Whatever their motivation, these ladies are firmly tied to Likay and are its major supporters in the market-place as elsewhere.⁹

⁷Surapone Virulrak and Likay actors.

⁸Virulrak, p. 254.

⁹According to one informant, Supod Kanvijit, many of the merchant fans of Likay have, or have had, difficult marriages wherein their husbands have deserted them for other women, or have preferred to spend most of their time and money on a new family (polygamy is not uncommon in Thailand). As a result, the mae yok of Likay have started their own businesses in the market place in order to support their families. However, work in the market has denied them time to watch over the family, and the lack of a father's presence removes discipline from the family. As a result, their sons turn delinquent and do not measure up to what the mothers would like them to be. The mae yok, says Kanvijit, then see the Likay stars (phra ek) as surrogate sons and sometime lovers, their refined and delicate demeanor expressing the Thai ideal of Manhood.

The Audience

Audiences for Likay range from Thirty or forty people at a day-time market performance to between 350 and 700 at community occasions, temple fairs, house warmings, ordinations, and the like. Audiences are heterogeneous: about sixty-five percent are women, twenty percent children, and the remainder, men. At Saturday morning performances at market places, audience sex and gender is even more evenly distributed. This contrasts markedly with the wik, or enclosed, performances where admission is charged. On these occasions, the audience is approximately eighty-five percent middle-aged and female, the remainder being children who enter free when accompanied by an adult. This fact relates to the mae yok tradition, as it is primarily women who care to pay for Likay.

The Likay Stage-House

There are three kinds of stage-houses built for Likay performances. One kind is permanent and located on temple grounds, while another is semi-permanent and put up at fairs and near market places. The third is temporary and set up for ordinations, house warmings, and other occasions where the performance occurs for one night only at private homes.

The stage-house design remains fairly standard for all three types. The front of the stage is divided from the backstage by a backdrop erected when the troupe begins setting up for performance. The front stage area is

approximately 20' wide and 16' deep. The backstage is 20' wide and 10' deep. Both are covered by a slanting roof which protects the actors from the rain or sun.

On the stage right side of the stage-house is a separate area for the orchestra, which measures about 6' wide and 16' deep. Another roof extends over this area.

Most monasteries and temples have a stage-house situated on the temple grounds, indicating the theatre's close association with religious life. In fact, the stage-house is considered sacred, the area where the actors perform is considered particularly so. No shoes may be worn on the stage or the area behind it, which is the actor's dressing and "green" room. A bust of Muni Bharata, or pho kru, the master teacher of the theatre, is placed at the middle of the wall of the backstage room. Incense, coins and flowers are placed in front of it and props are placed below in order that they may be well-protected from evil influences and gain power from proximity to the bust. The bust is "wiad" (paid respect), by the stage manager before a performance and prayed to for strength in performance and protection from evil spirits who might mar the event.

The stage-house as thus described, acts as a mini-temple wherein the theatrical rite will be executed. The area of the stage-house is consecrated (through prayers, offering of coins, the wai, and burning of incense) and the performers perform certain ritual actions which show their respect for the spirits residing there and nearby, as well

as the great tradition handed down to them by the originator of the theatre, Muni Bharata.



Figure 3. Likay permanent stage on temple grounds.



Figure 4. New permanent Likay stage-house.



Figure 5. Permanent Likay stage with backdrop.



Figure 6. Semi-permanent stage-house at a fair.



Figure 7. Semi-permanent stage at a temple fair.



Figure 8. Temporary stage house.



Figure 9. Permanent Likay stage in a market.



Figure 10. Semi-permanent Likay market stage.



Figure 11. Temporary stage at an ordination.



Figure 12. The backstage area.



Figure 13. The bust of Muni Bharata
(or pho kru) on altar.



Figure 14. Incense, money, and flowers placed in front of the bust of the master-teacher, pho kru.



Figure 15. An elaborate altar for a university performance of Likay.



Figure 16. Busts at a Likay manager's home.



Figure 17. Busts at a wai kru ceremony.

The Set and Lighting

Into the quasi-religious environment of the stage-house is placed a wing and drop set. A throne room is painted on the backdrop with traditional Thai style pillars and windows placed in perspective which leads the eye to the central point of the canvas, a huge throne. This is the essential backdrop for Likay, and although there may be others used -- depicting country scenes or town squares -- the palace throne room sets the primal image for the plays, in keeping with the essential concern of Likay, that of royal power and authority. The backdrop, although differing in decorative detail, is seen in every performance of Likay.

To each side of the backdrop are doorways. The opening on stage right is used for entrances and the stage left doorway is used for exits. Between the two openings, and directly in front of the central point of the backdrop, is placed a bench, usually with a triangular pillow placed on one end. The bench is the focal point and is used in all scenes in a variety of ways. It most often is used as a throne but may be used to suggest a wall, an upstairs room, or the top of a mountain. Chairs are placed stage right and stage left of the bench. Straw mats are placed on the stage floor in front of the bench, and sometimes a cloth is draped over the bench to create a more sumptuous effect and to protect the actor's clothes from splinters and dirt. Wings, painted to blend with the backdrop, are placed stage left and right about three and a half feet downstage from

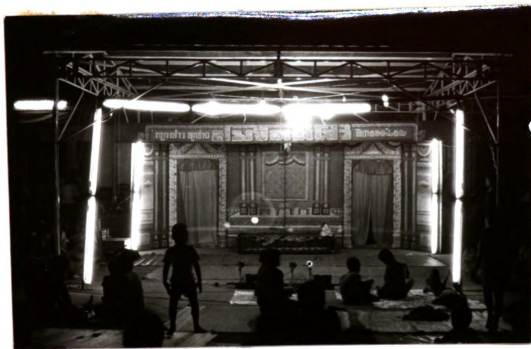


Figure 18. Fluorescent light bulbs surround the stage.



Figure 19. A New Year's audience at Ubon Ratchathani.



Figure 20. The backdrops.



Figure 21. Other backdrops.



Figure 22. Backdrops depicting modern interiors.



Figure 23. "Wings," created downstage of exits.



Figure 24. Actors erect the set.



Figure 25. Lights are put up.



Figure 26. A typical Likay setting.

the backdrop.

The setting and its arrangement described above is derived from the lakhon nai, or dance-drama within the palace. In image and character, it reflects the aristocratic tradition of the court drama. Its presence outside the palace walls, then, extends the aristocratic tradition to the mass audiences to which Likay plays. It brings the world of the court and the aristocracy into the presence of the rural or working class person and connects him/her, at least imaginatively, with the concerns -- historic and contemporary -- of the ruling class. It reinforces through design and through tradition, the idea that the center of Thai life, as the center of the drama, lies in the preservation of the court and the person of the King.



Figure 27. Fluorescent bulbs surround the stage.



Figure 28. Colored 500 watt bulbs.

Lighting

The lighting for Likay emphasizes Likay's nature as a rite. It is general, and is composed of fluorescent bulbs placed vertically at the sides of the stage, and above, at the front. Additional bulbs hang over the playing area. On occasion, colored footlights are used -- not to attain natural colors -- but to signal appearance of the supernatural or to add special effect to dances. These may be used intermittently during performance, the overall action of the play being lit generally, and the actors signalling through body position and language the time of day or amount of light to be imagined for the scene.

The Orchestra

Likay is accompanied by a musical ensemble called the piphat khruangha, or five piece orchestra.¹⁰ The smallest of Thai ensembles, it accompanies the Khon and lakhon as well.¹² It is comprised of a ranat ek, the lead alto xylophone, the khong wong yai, a large circle of gongs, the pi chana or pi nai, an alto oboe, the taphon thai and taphon mon, a set of two faced drums, the klong that, two taphon drums placed on a stand in a standing position, and the ching, a pair of small cymbols. In addition, Western

¹⁰ Piphat is the name for a Thai orchestra. Khruangha means five pieces.

¹¹ For further description of Thai musical instruments, see David Morton, The Traditional Music of Thailand (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).



Figure 29. The taphon drums, the ranat, and the pi nai.



Figure 30. The klong that drums and the khong wong yai.



Figure 31. The taphon thai, the taphon mon, and khong wong yai.



Figure 32. The ranat ek, and taphon drums.

type instruments, such as snare and base drums, electric guitars, and trombones are increasingly used.

The Music

Tunes taken from the lakhon ram repertoire comprise the greater part of Likay musical material. The tunes were originally used in the lakhon nai and lakhon nok in order to convey certain emotions or signal special conventions. Each tune's meaning also changes with the kind of tempo used: in Likay, medium, fast, and very fast. The traditional slowest speed is not used.

The Homrong

Before the performance begins, there is performed a musical prelude called the homrong. It is the same prelude which is used for Khon and lakhon, is comprised of thirteen set tunes and serves "to invite the divine spirits of the theatre arts to preside over the stage, to protect the performers from evil spirits, and to assure the success of the performance."¹³ It also has the practical function of alerting the Likay audience that a performance is at hand.

Each tune has a special significance and must be played in a set order. However, the musicians may insert other tunes after the third, fourth, tenth, and twelfth tunes. The proper execution of the tunes in their proper order is believed to insure the success of the play.

¹³Virulrak, p. 171.

Tunes from the Lakhon Ram Répertoire

As the tunes of the homrong have special meaning for the spirits and the audience, the lakhon ram tunes used within the Likay performance have special significance for the actors and the audience. Each tune has attached to it, through traditional usage, an association with a particular emotion, or action. These tunes, as much as speech, convey to the audience what the actor is feeling and what he is about to do. They are, in themselves, a kind of language, or code, which not only signals a particular emotion in an actor, but arouses it in the audience. To the tune, the actor improvises appropriate lyrics to express his sadness or hate, anger or grief.

The lakhon ram tunes are used also for special dances, such as the horse-riding dance wherein the actors prance in horse-fashion to indicate a journey on horseback, the sword-fighting dance used in battle scenes, the ax dance, the kris dance and dances taken from other Thai genres such as the manora buchayan from the Manora story. The tunes are particular to the dances and indicate the action -- journey, battle, preparation for battle, etc. -- which the dance suggests.

The Ranikloeng Tune

The ranikloeng tune is a tune unique to Likay, especially created for Likay, and runs as a Likay musical motif throughout a performance. Actors use the tune in entering and leaving, or when ending a section of a scene.

Thai Folk and Popular Songs

Popular country songs (lukthung) are used to add entertainment value to the presentation of Likay. The lukthung are modern for the most part and are not usually incorporated or connected with the action of the play. Instead, the play's action is stopped and the songs are performed in "variety show" fashion while other performers wait onstage. Other songs, called lukkhrung, or popular Thai songs, are performed in similar fashion. These differ from the folk songs by having a contemporary beat -- slow rock, or samba and the like -- but deal usually, as the folk tunes do, with love and physical beauty.

Modern Western Tunes

Popular Western music is also used in Likay. The songs are sung for strictly entertainment purposes and rendered most usually in Thai. In 1980-82, "The Bump," "I Love You More Than I Can Say," and "One Way Ticket," were used most frequently.

Indian Songs and Dances

Indian songs and dances, taken from Hindi movies, are used in Likay occasionally. They are most frequently used in the ok khaek, or introduction, wherein the actors welcome the audience, and most likely are part of the yikay tradition of sipsongphasa which performed sketches mimicking foreigners .

Summary: The Meaning of Likay's Musical Elements

In summary then, the piphat orchestra, the lakhon ram tunes, and the ranikloeng motif impart to Likay a traditional, classical character. The tunes are well-known, and they impart emotion from a personal as well as a cultural storehouse of meaning. They also are a part of sacred tradition, so deepen the religious and Brahmanic function of the rite. They must be performed with the proper execution and timing to insure their pleasure with the gods, and thus, the god's pleasure with the Likay performance.

The modern songs or Thai folk tunes break with tradition and are aimed directly at the pleasure of the audience. They are about love, or comic situations between husband and wife. They link the human to the divine aspects of Likay and in this manner, follow the overall themes and structure of Likay.

The Dance

Dance in Likay is divided, as in Likay's music, between the traditional and modern. Most importantly, the whole form is governed by the lakhon ram gesture system which is used to accompany the words set to the lakhon ram tunes. While lyrics are improvised, performers follow the ancient tradition passed down from the Natayasastra, indicating through gesture what is being said or sung. Thus, sound and movement blend together in units of meaning as actors sign to traditional tunes and sing new words to the accompaniment of the orchestra. Movement and sound unite old, with



Figure 33. Doing the Ram Thawai Mur at an ordination ceremony.



Figure 34. A Likay phra ek performing the "horse dance."



Figure 35. A battle scene to music.



Figure 36. Actor performing
"graceful walking."



Figure 37. A nang ek and phra ek perform "the bump."



Figure 38. Male and female clowns perform "the bump."



Figure 39. The yam rua gesture used for flirting.



Figure 40. The gesture: "going."



Figure 41. The gesture: "coy rejection."



Figure 42. "Shy-
ness."



Figure 43. "Together-
ness."



Figure 44. The yam rua
gesture.

new, meaning.

In addition to the patterned gesture system, there are performed elaborate dances which are called rabam and, with the lakhon ram tunes, were taken from the lakhon nai and lakhon nok repertoires. These dances were, in early times, considered sacred, and many still possess a ritualistic function.¹⁴ However, according to Virulrak, for most lakhon ram dances, the Likay actors do not follow the traditional choreography precisely, but loosely adapt it and add individualistic expressive elements.¹⁵ Other dances, particularly the samoe which depicts "graceful walking" and is used often when an actor first appears onstage, adheres to classical movement, as does the movement of the ram thawaimu, a dance in praise of the gods, done in pairs and performed at ordination and kae bon (merit making) ceremonies. The strictly executed movements on these occasions are themselves a prayer to the gods.

In contrast to the classical dance of the lakhon ram suites are modern Western dances using "rock" or "disco" movement and rhythm. These dances are generally improvised by the performers and are accompanied by such tunes as are popular at the moment. As previously mentioned, in 1980-1982, "The Bump," and "I Love You More Than I Can Say" were the most frequently performed. Like their counterparts,

¹⁴See Nicolas, 1927, p. 86-87 for a description of the rabam performed at Ayuthaya during the 17th Century.

¹⁵Virulrak, pp. 180-184.

the modern songs, the contemporary dances are not truly extensions of the plots of Likay, but worked in where their entertainment value may be appreciated by the audience.

In summary, the dance in Likay is, for the most part, structured along classical lines loosely adapted and suited to the performer's individual taste. Although classical in nature, it has individualized expression, and novel elements may be added. Similarly, modern dances are totally improvised and reflect modern times in their movement and choreography. Like the songs they run parallel to they express modern social elements within a traditional framework.

Movement

Movement in Likay follows the same dichotomous pattern as music and dance. On the one hand, it is governed by conventions brought from the lakhon nai as well as maintaining its own set of conventionalized movement patterns. On the other hand, spontaneous movement, improvised according to the needs of the plot, is very much a part of Likay. First, we examine the more formal movement aspects.

Movement Conventions

In general, movement flows from stage right to stage left in Likay. Entrances are made from the stage right entrance and exits are made through the stage left doorway. The movement pattern for an actor's first entrance always follows the same prescribed pattern, the actor entering, dancing a few steps downstage, then stopping and bowing to

the audience. He places his hands in the position of a wai and thus salutes the audience. Often, he does a full wai, touching his head to his hands close to the floor. He then continues to dance downstage in a circular fashion using the dance-movement convention called "graceful walking." He moves to upstage left, and turns to face the audience upstage center. Here, the actor sings, introducing his character and his part in the action of the play. After finishing his introduction, he moves in a half circle clockwise, lifts his foot, and seats himself on the bench. Here, he repeats in speech what he previously said in song. This is called the cheracha sam khamrong. After completing the spoken introduction, he stands in front of the bench, and, singing as to where he is going and what he is going to do, dances again in circular fashion counter-clockwise to stage left, making a turn out downstage to the audience just before he exits. The total pattern is illustrated below.

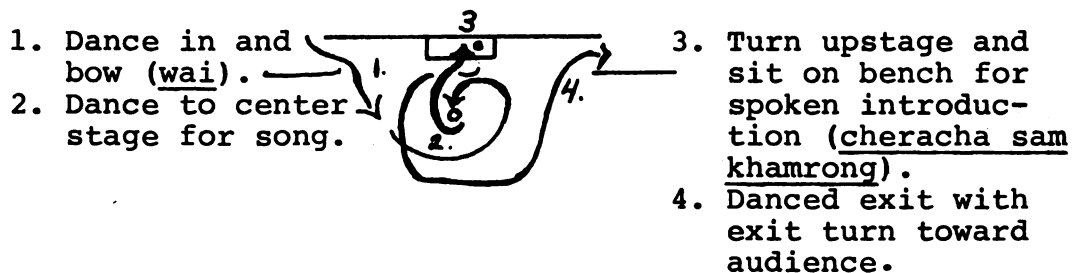


Figure 45. Entering movement.

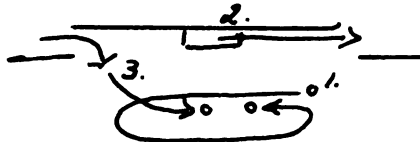
Movement patterns for later entrances are not as complex, the performer moving directly to the actors with whom he wishes to interact. However, there are a series of movement conventions that signal certain actions. They



Figure 46. Actor seated for the cheracha sam khamrong.

are used for travelling, sleeping, making love, the passage of time, establishing the inside and outside of a building.

When a trip or journey needs to be indicated in Likay and dialogue needs to be kept onstage, the actors move in a circular movement, counter-clockwise around the stage. Thus, two actors may be talking with another who is seated on the bench. They decide to go to another place to meet another person. They proceed to move and speak stage right. The actor on the bench exits stage left. The two travelling continue their movement counter-clockwise down-stage, move up stage left, turn, and move stage right to meet the actor for the next scene entering from the stage right entrance.



1. Actors about to travel move stage right and cross down left.
2. Actor on bench exits.
3. New actor enters from stage right.

Figure 47. Movement for a journey.

Sleep is indicated by sitting on the bench, one leg underneath the body, one foot on the floor. The actor then strikes a still upright position, the body slightly inclined, and closes his eyes. Although action may be occurring all around him, an actor in this position signals that the character is asleep.

Love making and rape are indicated by the same convention. An actor, after exchanging words with a lady, will pick her up completely off the floor and carry her through

the stage left exit. The orchestra accompanies the movement, and a few moments later they reappear through the stage right entrance or a new set of actors appears. The audience knows that the couple has bedded down within the reality of the play.



Figure 48. The convention indicating "sleep."



Figure 49. The convention of love making.



Figure 50. A clown makes off with a lady.

Fighting

Sword fighting and battle scenes are generally choreographed in Likay. As such, they may be placed in two different categories: 1) traditionally choreographed, using stylized movement, 2) newly choreographed, using realistic movement.

The sword fighting scenes uses traditional choreography set in a fixed pattern wherein the actors circle each other for five steps, close in and clash swords five times, pass each other, turn, walk five more steps in the opposite direction, meet and clash swords again. This may be repeated several times, until one or the other is struck or "killed," or is forced to run off the stage, signifying that he is beaten. The pattern may be illustrated as follows.

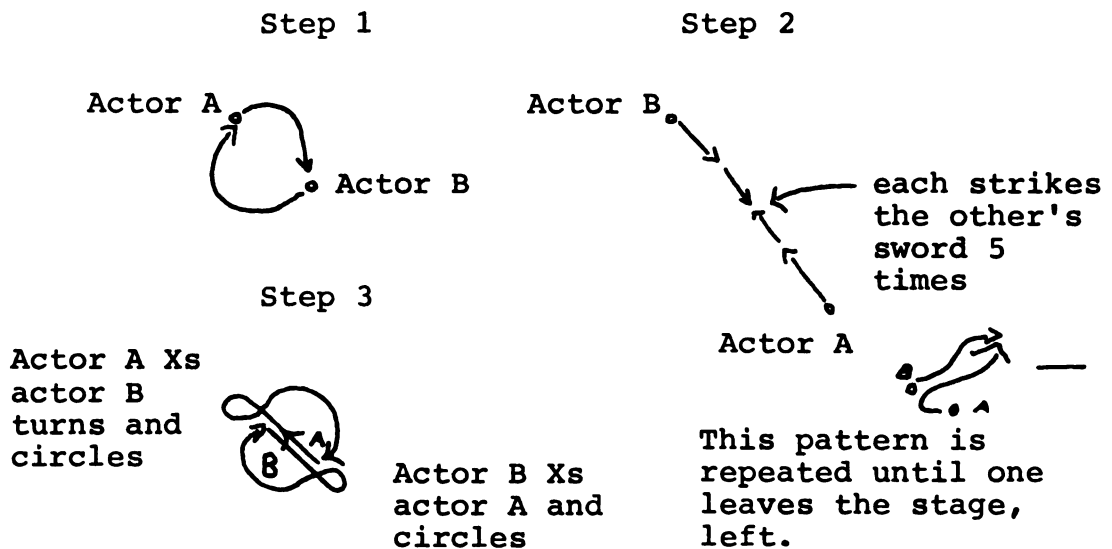


Figure 51. Swordfighting movement.

When the actors return stage right, the audience knows that there has been a jump in the passage of time. Fight scenes are traditionally carried out in this manner. The fighting begins onstage. The actors, after a brief skirmish, exit stage left and re-enter stage right, thus telescoping the fight. The audience knows that the use of convention implies a much longer battle than the actual time used. Another technique used for expanding time is the use of slow motion, the actors slowing their movement in battle which conveys the psychological time of the event. When using slow motion, the actors may exit and return, or not, depending upon their choice.

Movement convention also dictates use of the stage when the inside and outside of a building must be shown simultaneously. By convention, the upstage area of the stage, in the vicinity of the bench, is considered to be the inside of a building, the downstage area, the outside. An actor may be "inside," seated on the bench. Another actor may appear from stage right, looking for him, He is "outside," and by stage convention, cannot see "inside," nor the other, "out," The entering actor may walk downstage, mentioning that he is on a street, or walking through the forest looking for the hut of so and so. He may then see the house, imagined though it may be, and cross upstage to knock on an imaginary door. The actor inside the house upstage may ask, "Oh, who can that be?" and cross to open the imaginary door. Other action will work the stage in

the same fashion, using the downstage, extreme left and extreme right areas for exterior, the central and upstage area for interior.

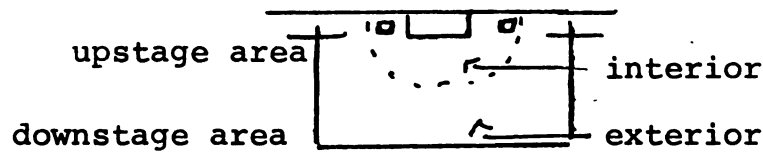


Figure 52. Indoor-outdoor conventions

Besides the particular movement conventions, there are conventions for seating and standing that are dictated by Thai social customs as well as conventions of Likay.

Women and those of low social status play to stage right, those of higher social position, to stage left. Thus, a king will be seated to the left of his queen and certainly left of his clown. The person of higher status will be approached from stage right as well. Vertical positioning is also important, and the higher a character's status the higher the character is seated in the scene. The king is usually seated in the bench, or sometimes on a chair situated on top of the bench. Those of more equal status, the queen for example, may be seated on the bench to his right. Those of lower, or non-royal status may be seated on the floor either to his left or right.

Pantomime

Since scenery is not specially built for every Likay performance, the actors must use pantomime when depicting needed scenic devices. In the use of the convention whereby downstage and upstage signal exteriors and interiors



Figure 53. Actor using the bench as a throne.



Figure 54. Actors arranged according to status.

respectively, the actor mimes opening windows, looking out, opening and closing doors, knocking at windows and doors and the like. Using the downstage area, or when the scene is an exterior, the actor may mime climbing over rocks or logs, picking flowers and smelling them, getting into cars and so forth. In all, the actor develops the necessary scenic devices through his own imagination and defines them by use of pantomime.

Asides

Asides are integral to Likay. Every character uses asides when needed in the performance to express his inner thoughts or feeling. Often the performer uses asides from a standing position onstage, simply turning out and speaking directly to the audience. On other occasions, the actor crosses downstage to its edge, and directs his speech to the audience. This is particularly true of the clowns, who often fill in aspects of the plot as they joke about the hero's action occurring upstage of them.

Summary: Meaning and Function of Movement in Likay

The conventional movement patterns in Likay stem from the lakhon nai and the lakhon nok. Some conventions -- as the counter clockwise movement for travel can be traced to the Natayasastra. The pantomime in Likay is a uniquely Thai insertion, not based on rules of the Natayasastra, but upon observation of nature. The asides may well be taken from the 18th and 19th century European theatre convention which was known to the Thais through travelling companies touring

Southeast Asia.*

Traditional movement rules bind about fifty percent of a Likay performance. The gesture system, the movement pattern for first entrances, travelling, sword fights and the like, all these are interspersed with freely improvised movement, especially on the part of the clowns. The clowns are not bound by any movement conventions in Likay, neither do they execute the gesture system, but rather, create their movement based upon their own impulses and sense of theatre craft. Aristocratic characters, too, free themselves from conventional patterns in scenes of spoken dialog (as opposed to sung), playing the scene in totally improvised fashion. They alternate between the set form inherent in the lakhon ram dance and song (which demands use of the gesture system) and purely naturalistic movement motivated and improvised from a basis in the dramatic action.

The two-fold approach to movement, song, and dance, establishes the underlying Likay esthetic. The conventional elements connect Likay with the traditional forms of Thai dance-drama associated with the court and thus are in harmony with the overall theme and content of Likay plays. They state, in a visual way, the unity of Thai tradition and focus on the cultural heritage personified in the aristocracy.

Through the traditional breaks the natural, improvised

* Author's conjecture.

movement of the clown-servants and soldiers, as well as sections of dialog between commoners and aristocrats. The old and new is thrown into contrast, and the new, especially in monologues of the clowns, comments on the old. In this way, the common man is given a democratic voice and Likay establishes a dialog between established tradition and contemporary concerns, thus serving a process of unification as the function of a release valve. The common man is allowed expression, emotion is vented and played out before aristocratic characters as if the real aristocracy were heeding the expression.

Language and Speech

Language and speech also have two levels of expression. Although all language is improvised in Likay, aristocratic characters must improvise much according to formal Thai literary conventions. Poetic expression is used for the lakhon ram songs and in dialog set to the ranikloeng tune where the tua lakhon, or gesture system, is employed. When first entering the stage and introducing his character to the audience, the actor uses verse, as he does when singing, to express intense emotion and when leaving the stage and telling where he is going and what he is going to do.

Thai verse, called klon, is a complicated matter, especially emphasizing the rhyme of the verse. The following is based upon Prince Bidyalankarana's description found in The Siamese Theatre by Mattani Rutnim: Klon poetry is composed of eight syllables in a line, but may extend to

ten on occasion. The last syllable of the first line (syllable eight) is rhymed with the first, second, or fourth syllable of the next line, binding the two sentences together. The last syllable of the second line is rhymed with the last syllable of the third line and the rhyme is retained in the first, second, or fourth syllable of the fourth line. The fourth line ends with a new syllable (called, in Thai poetry, the "throw-word") which is rhymed with the last syllable of the second line in the next stanza, maintaining the same pattern for rhyme at the end of the first line of the second stanza. The pattern is repeated throughout the poem.¹⁶ In Likay, the pattern is called the klon pat.¹⁷

Colloquial expression is used after the actor finishes his introductory song and repeats the information in simple speech. This convention, known as the cheracha sam khamrong serves the purpose of clarifying what may have been hurried or compressed by the actor because of the poetic constraints of verse-making. It allows the actor to express his character in very prosaic terms and solidify the necessary points of the plot.

Colloquial language is also used in dialog sections of performance. Both clowns and aristocracy employ the

¹⁶Prince Bidyalankarana in "Sebha Recitation and the Story of Khun Phan," *The Siamese Theatre*, (ed. by) M. Rutnin, *ibid.*, pp. 189-191.

¹⁷According to Virulrak, p. 202.

language of the market place in freely improvised speeches. regions outside of central Thailand, the clowns employ a regional dialect while the aristocratic characters maintain standard, central Thai speech. The same practice is followed in asides and in monologues.

The flow between colloquial language and poetic verse parallels the pattern of stylization and realism seen in the other elements of Likay mentioned previously. colloquial language propels the story-line, is used in dramatic confrontations and in the development of comic routines and monologues, while poetry is used in the songs and monologues of the aristocratic characters supported by the lakhon ram and the ranikloeng tunes. It is used to express feeling, to define character, and generally, to heighten esthetic effect. In its movement between colloquial and poetic, language in Likay is similar to Shakespearean format: it serves to make the action clear and establish audience identification with characters, it prolongs important moments in order to express an emotion or to examine a feeling. Altogether, the two domains of speech used in Thailand -- the one common, colloquial, the other, aristocratic and literary -- are recreated and placed together in one world, the world of Likay, as a reflection of a unified state containing two interacting systems and traditions: the aristocratic, generated from above, the common, from below.

Character, Costumes, and Make Up^{*}

We have discussed the major elements of Likay: the dance and movement, the music and song, the language and speech, etc., in relation as to how each supports the general theme and function of the genre: unification of the nation state. We saw how each element connects with the mentality of the rural Thai audience, functioning to pull the non-aristocratic tradition into connection with the aristocratic, yet legitimizing the common tradition through popular entertainment features. The larger tradition, the aristocratic, was seen to be Hindu derived, stemming from the Natyasastra and the Thai adaptations of the same as seen in the lakhon ram, the rabam, the tua lakhon (the gesture system), and the indigenous, though classical, literary tradition of klon verse. The smaller tradition was seen to manifest in the use of colloquial language, free movement, and popular music and dance. Through character types, make up, and costumes, two other influences are introduced into the complex of Likay: the Buddhistic and Animist elements present in Thai society.

Likay's characters personify doctrine found in Buddhist scripture. The characters are types, morality-play figures who, or which, through their behavior and temperament underscore and indeed, teach, Buddhist doctrine.

* Since characters are typified in Likay, and since costumes and make up follow type, the three will be discussed together in the following pages in order to more clearly show their interconnection.

Charles F. Keyes has pointed out "That although the end of Buddhist discipline is the obtainment of Nirvana, in fact, most Thai Buddhists concern themselves with the more mundane realm."¹⁸ They concentrate in obtaining merit in order to relieve suffering in this world and to assure a better (less painful) existence in their next rebirth.¹⁹

Likay characters number those with a high degree of merit and thus, high position; the kings, princes, princesses, and other royalty. They embody the Buddhist virtues of wisdom: right understanding and right thought, morality: right speech and right action, mental discipline: right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.²⁰ They also number those riddled with the three cardinal vices; greed (lobbha), anger (dosa), and delusion (mobha).

The vice of greed includes being stingy, selfish, avaricious, and lustful after wealth one did not inherit. Those whose behavior could be characterized as dosa are people who give vent to passionate temper of expression, to aggressiveness, and to lust for power over others. Those who do not avail themselves of the opportunity to learn the teachings of Buddhism and who ignore the advice of Buddhism may be described as being deluded.²¹

Characters embodying these characteristics are the male and female villains in Likay, the kong and itcha. Their greedy and aggressive behavior is the cause of much suffering and

¹⁸Charles F. Keyes, The Golden Peninsula, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1977) p. 117.

¹⁹Keyes, p. 117.

²⁰See Keyes, p. 85 for a broader explanation of Buddhist doctrinal precepts followed by the Thais.

²¹Keyes, p. 117.

social disruption as seen in the Likay plots. Between the two extremes are those characters who definitely are not royalty, but aspire to a higher position in life and therefore attempt to live simple lives of goodness and mercy based upon the precepts of the Buddha. They are the good, common people who are rewarded in the end by closer association with royalty. Intervening at times is the Animist element: the bad spirits (phi) and evil demons (preet) who form the supernatural subculture of Thai Buddhism. They are spirits who, because of their action in life, have become demoted on the cosmic scale. From the supernatural realm they continue to pursue their cruel and aggressive behavior to which they pertained in life. Animals too, abound. They are seen to possess a spirit and supernatural intelligence that may be used for good or evil.

The Chao

Starting at the top of the Likay pantheon, we have the character of the king (chao). It is important to the understanding of how Likay functions to emphasize that the role of the king is a minor role in Likay. Instead of focusing on the king's role and action, Likay plots emphasize the role of his son, the phra ek, or star of Likay. The king is a background figure, his presence felt through the settings (a throne room), the themes of Likay, the royal family members, the poetic language and classical movement, dance, and vocal traditions of the aristocracy. All these manifest his presence more strongly than a finite characterization.

Thus, in performance, he is seen only from time to time. His character varies according to the plot, but is generally benign, wise, and commanding. However, Likay seeks to cast his aura over the stage, rather than inserting his physical presence and personality extensively into the action of the plot. His character hovers over the whole performance in this way, his identity that of a semi-divine.

The Phra Ek

The phra ek represents the pinnacle of the traditional male ideal in Thai society. He is prince, the protagonist of the drama, the culmination of that merit and behavior of many previous lives. It is here that is seen the Buddhist element most explicitly. Hiranburana has pointed out the Buddhistic tradition of the Thai popular drama.²² She draws upon Nicolas²³ to show that the lakhon nok was derived from the lakhon jatri which, in turn, was derived from the Jatakas. As we know, the stories of the lakhon nok were inserted into Likay. The character of the phra ek then, probably is most likely derived from these ancient performances and stories which depicted the princely life of the Buddha. These ancient tales had their origin in India, so we may conclude that they, in their turn, were influenced by Hinduized conceptions of princely behavior and personage as especially personified in the Hindu man-god Krishna, the

²²Hiranburana, p. 975.

²³Nicolas, 1924, p. 88, 1927, p. 46.

reincarnation of Vishnu in the Bhagavata Gita and the most sprightly and amorous of the Hindu gods.

The star of Likay, the phra ek, the adolescent prince, personifies the Thai ideal of manhood. He manifests both masculine and feminine characteristics, an indication of his Hindu heritage, and very much a part of the aristocratic Thai tradition. In appearance, he is slim, delicate, polite, shy. He has led a sheltered life, studying at a temple-school, but he is acquainted with skills of horse back riding and swordsmanship. In keeping with his station, he has been protected by guardians, the king, or the soldier-clowns who take care of the practical, moment to moment issues which effect the hero. Although he has desire for action, he must seek action through the acquiescence of his protectors who aid him in his conquests. He is romantic, but unacquainted with the physical act of love and must be taught by his soldiers. In all, he is demure, sincere, loving, innocent, and undefiled by the experience of living. In this sense, he resembles a boy, although in external physique he resembles a man. In many ways he is an androgenous figure: graceful, alert, spiritualized, possessing a male form, but chary of its use.²⁴ He is nonsexual, yet sexual, nonphysical, yet very physical. He is spiritualized matter and, as such, represents duality in unity -- love, spiritualized and

²⁴Other authors have noted the androgenous qualities of the male Thai ideal. See F. Bowers, Theatre in the East, "Thai Dance," 1956.

physicalized. In his type, he resembles the old Hindu gods, Shiva, the dancer, and Krishna, the lover.

The phra ek is a Buddhist phenomenon also. In his quietness and shyness he demonstrates the Buddhist virtues of "right concentration," "right understanding and thought," in his politeness, "right speech and right mindfulness," in his sense of duty and will to action, "right effort and right action." The phra ek combines the Buddhist virtues with the outward form of a Krishna. As the king's son, he is an extension of the king's moral strength and protection, and his behavior thus stands as a model for those who would follow in the King's Way, or the Thai traditional way. Moreover, he is physically appealing, morally right, and romantically inclined. Like Krishna, he entices the beholder toward a larger unity through the path of love. For Krishna, the larger unity is Vishnu, for the phra ek, it is the king.

The Vishnu-Krishna, king-phra ek parallel is striking. In speaking of the bhakti movement related to the worship of Krishna in medieval India, Richard Lannoy says:

The aim of all mystical eroticism is to create unity from duality. Krishna, like Dionysus, is a god of transgression, and his divinity is all the more numinous and potent because he rejects the rule of reason... Krishna is divine in proportion to his superiority as a great lover...In ancient times, worshippers were encouraged to commit excesses during festivals as the surest way to achieve catharsis, ecstasy, the purging climax of the orgiastic feast, the surmounting of duality...Transfiguring ecstasy was believed more easily obtainable through adulterous, abnormal, or incestuous intercourse, an 'acte gratuit' in which the least concern with utility is finally obliterated,

time suspended, death overcome. For this reason it is not surprising to find what some would call "unnatural acts" frequently portrayed on the erotic temple friezes.²⁵

The phra ek connects the Likay worshipper, the mae-yok and other fans of Likay, to the unity symbolized in the king. While the king is a distant figure, the phra ek is immediate and obtainable, and through demonstrating love for the Likay phra ek, one links with that ultimate unity, the source of all goodness and power, the king. Thus, the phra ek effects the process of unification in at least three ways: esthetic, sexual, and spiritual. He pleases the eye, delights the body, and fulfills an essential longing for wholeness.

The Phra Ek Costume

Underscoring the typology of Likay character, the costumes for all male aristocratic characters are roughly similar. The phra ek costume was originally patterned after the costumes of King Rama V's court (1864-1910) and mixes traditional Thai male dress with theatricalized court and military attire of the period.²⁶ As such, it is suggestive of Thai history and a stable Thai tradition which runs from ancient time to the present.

The most distinctive part of the aristocratic male

²⁵Richard Lannoy, The Speaking Tree. London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 64.

²⁶Virulrak, p. 73.

costume is the phanung, a broad loincloth which is draped around the lower half of the body and wrapped in one of three styles. It is of ancient origin, worn originally by the Mon and Burmese, but adopted by the Thai sometime during the fourteenth century. In its oldest form, it hung loosely to just below the knees. Likay actors and managers have nowadays heightened the wrapping style to where it hangs from the waist to just above the knees. The actor wraps his phanung in the Mon, Burmese, or slightly altered version called the Somsak Phakdi style which was designed by that well-known Likay actor-manager. The difference in wrapping styles however, is not meant to indicate national or character differences, but simply serve to give variety to the costuming within the mold of type.

The remainder of the phra ek costume can be traced to either court or, simply, theatrical tradition. The crown, or panchuret yot is of two varieties. It may be a low crown, without a top, and thus, is called a panchuret. According to Virulrak, this type of crown was worn by Inao in the story of that name which played within the lakhon nai repertoire during the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824).²⁷ The yot, or top-piece which comes to a pinnacle, is suggestive of the chada, or classic style of the Thai king's crown. The style was also used in the lakhon ram.²⁸ The khon nok,

²⁷Virulrak, p. 310.

²⁸Ibid.

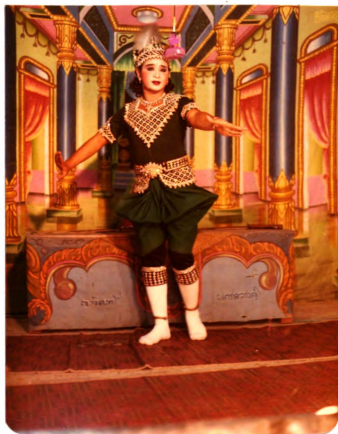


Figure 55. A phra ek character in Thai style costume.



Figure 56. A phra ek character in Mon style costume.

or feather which is placed in the crown (usually behind the headband) may be traced to the "Phrachada Mahachomphu," a crown designed for King Rama V.²⁹ The sua (jacket or shirt) is a modified version of court dress, suggesting through embroidered rhinestones and a draped necklace the chain of order and medals worn by the king. White kneesocks (thungnong) complete the costume, they also were a court fashion.³⁰

The Phra Ek Make Up

The make up for the phra ek seeks to diminish individual differences and to accentuate the type. Thus, it is highly stylized and formalized to the point that it is often difficult to distinguish between different male figures playing the phra ek character. Although the actor portraying the phra ek may range from eighteen to thirty-plus years of age, the aim is to present an ideal, adolescent type. For this, the lines of the face are molded to form delicate features which appear plaintive and express a character which is in need of protection. Their eyebrows are drawn rising toward the bridge of the nose and moving downward toward the sides. Their eyes are accentuated with false eyelashes, mascara, and shadow. Cheekbones and nose are highlighted, and lips are drawn full with lipstick. The result is

²⁹Quoted by Virulrak, in interview with Montri Tramot, p. 311.

³⁰Virulrak, p. 313.



Figure 57. Phra ek make up.



Figure 58. Phra ek make up and costume.

strikingly androgenous.

The Nang Ek

The nang ek, or heroine, is the female counterpart to the prince. Like the prince, she represents the Thai ideal for her sex. Often, she is a princess or member of the court. She is delicate and refined, exhibiting the Buddhist virtues of right behavior, right speech, and right thought. She is sheltered, and must play a passive role, reacting to events, rather than acting directly. She is a virgin, uneducated and inexperienced in the area of love. Also, like the phra ek, others must help her to pursue her desires, while her feelings remain hidden and discreet. The "good" Thai woman is thus exhibited. Uneducated and unaggressive, she waits for the right man, her prince, to woo and win her and sweep her away against her expressed desires. Her place is in the home and her duty is to act as a good servant and mother and be receptive to her husband's will. Any demands which she can legitimately make relate to her duties toward home and family, i.e., a better home, more money for the children, education for the offspring, etc..

The Likay model for the "good" Thai female fits perfectly with other descriptions of the acceptable Thai wife and mother. In writing about Thai women in Everyday Life in Thailand, Niels Mulder says:

The prime symbol of moral goodness is the phrakhun, or the pure bunghun that the mother has to her children. She cannot be but good, she cannot do but give and care, she is always benevolent and forgiving, she feeds, loves, and gives without expectation of

return...She sacrifices herself for her dependents who depend upon her for reliability, stability, and continuity in life. She is a moral refuge, a haven of safety, and the source of the moral identity of her offspring.³¹

The nang ek supplies the Thai female with a traditional role model which matches the phra ek's example of the ideal male.*

The Nang Ek Costume

The nang ek costume, in startling contrast to the male lead's, is modern. It is a Western, 1950's ball gown of chiffon which appears in various styles and colors. The basic costume is accented with a rhinestone necklace, bracelets, and earrings. A rhinestone tiara is placed on the head. Although Western, it demonstrates the aristocratic character of its wearer much as the panchuret yot does for the male. The attire suggests modern affluence, if not opulence, and is a result of the custom, established during WWII, of wearing contemporary clothes in Likay because of the inability to attain at that time, the older, more traditional Likay fashion. The female costume has, however, stratified in the 1950's version, possibly modelled on the Tahi queen's fashion of the period. It supports the female archetype in its extreme softness and flower-like femininity, as well as suggesting status and wealth.

³¹Mulder, p. 36

* See pp. 150-153 for description of Thai male ideal.



Figure 59. A typical nang ek costume.



Figure 60. Another type of nang ek costume.

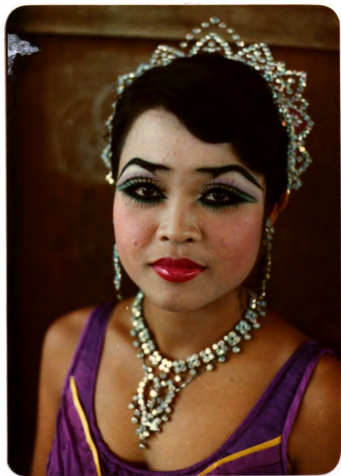


Figure 61. The nang ek make up.



Figure 62. Nang ek and phra ek.

The Nang Ek Make Up

The style of make up for the female lead follows the same principle as does make up for the phra ek. Idealization and standardization is the rule. The nang ek make up tends toward an abstract feminine quality devoid of character differentiation. Eyes and cheekbones are emphasized and the face is painted to appear as smooth and unblemished as possible. The purpose is to create the purest representation of Thai womanhood.

The Kong

The kong, or villain, is the opposite number to the phra ek. He personifies the Buddhist cardinal vices of lobbha (greed), dosa (anger), and mobha (delusion). Whereas the hero is polite, shy, demure, and graceful, the villain is lean and powerful, but rude, abrasive, aggressive and coarse. His voice rasps, and he uses obscene and vulgar language. He is without a moral conscience, is self-willed, and a slave to the lower passions. A personification of evil, he opposes everything valued in the Buddhist worldview. While the protagonist is honest, unemotional, reserved, obedient and dutiful, the antagonist is his extreme opposite. In such personification, the kong is the negative aspect of the Buddhist morality-play structure of Likay.

The Kong Costume

The kong costume is similar to the phra ek's, denoting aristocratic background and spiritual (but not moral) equality to the phra ek. Seldom does the Likay

villain emerge from a non-aristocratic background, although in a few Likay plays with an original plot structure, this was the case. In most Likay plays however, two spiritual forces are at battle: the one tempered by Buddhism, the other, amoral, and of the saksit order. For example, in a play observed twice for this study, the villain is non-aristocratic. However, he draws spiritual power by praying to the "gods of the thief" at the shrine for thieves. The gods of the saksit realm respond to whomsoever approaches them properly. Thus, the villain uses the headress, regalia, and phanung of the phra ek costume although he expresses quite different temperament and conscience.

The Kong Make Up

The kong make up is designed to be less delicate than the phra ek's. The villain's looks are heavier, often with thick eye brows and a mustache. Often, a cabalistic mark is drawn on his forehead, connecting him, in the mind of the audience, to dark spiritual forces. In all, he is saksit power opposing Buddhist morality. When he attacks, he attacks both Buddhism and the traditional Thai order. In terms of a moral lesson, he teaches that to act as he does is to act both against Buddhism and the Thai state.

The Phra Rong, the Nang Rong, the Chok Kong

We have discussed the phra ek, the nang ek, and the kong. These characters are the principles of Likay. Next to them, however, they have a double, or a shadow. The phra rong accompanies the phra ek as a friend, brother, or



Figure 62. The kong make up.

confidant. He is generally younger than the phra ek, but dresses in phra ek costume and helps the hero on his quest, advising, and doing battle when needed.

As the phra rong serves the phra ek, so the nang rong serves the nang ek. She is friend and confidant to the nang ek and resembles her in terms of shyness, refinement, and sex appeal. She is usually more outgoing as a rule, and in Likay fulfills what in the West would be termed the role of subrette. Her costume and make up is similar to that of the nang ek and she is most often courted by the phra rong, her male counterpart.

The kong generally has a friend or subordinate who accompanies him in his travels and aids him in his designs. He is called the chok kong, and is humorous but malicious, sadistic, and sexually oriented. Just as the phra ek has his helper in the phra rong, the kong has his accomplice in the chok kong. However, the chok kong usually wears not the aristocratic costume of the kong and phra ek, but the more common attire of the clown per se, the chok. The chok kong's make up also is that of the chok.

The Chok

The chok are the clowns of Likay. They are the non-aristocrats, usually peasants who, in the course of a Likay performance, become servants or soldiers in the company of the prince. There are usually two clowns in Likay, often a younger and an older, with similar characteristics. They are unrefined, uncaring about protocol, totally free in

behavior and speech, extremely witty, orally fixated, and cowardly. They represent, in unrestrained fashion, the libido of the Thai audience, expressing in uninhibited ways the urges which at most times are repressed. They cater to the earthly needs of their aristocratic charges.

As the phra ek projects the image of the ideal Thai male, so the chok projects the image and spirit of the folk. He is wily and clever, his natural intelligence getting him into and out of scrapes and mishaps generated by his sometime craftiness and guile. Unlike the phra ek, who is motivated by a high sense of duty working through traditional values, the chok is motivated by economic concerns and momentary pleasures. He combines an alert self-interest with a sense of wit and humor that makes his self-seeking adventures acceptable, even praiseworthy, as he views life with humorous detachment, yet desire for gain. Here is seen the Buddhist principle of disinterested action embedded in the rural Thai heart. The chok is not concerned with greed, but survival. He needs to grasp opportunity where and whenever he can. If he wins, he wins. If he loses, he loses. He says and does whatever is most suitable for the occasion in order to secure the sought for affiliation and status missing in his rural existence. He has learned not to depend too much on words, but on actions, and has a cynical attitude toward human motivation in general, which he believes, like his own, is centered on gain. Yet, as he pokes fun at revered traditional and ceremony, he stands in

awe of their aristocratic derivation, and is a willing steward and protector of those who command power. Through the chok, the rural folk see their place within the Thai world-view. As soldiers, servants, body-guards, and lower-level police, they are born to serve and protect the interests of those who protect them. It is the wheel of their fate, the Thai way to social, spiritual and moral evolution. In all, the role of the chok legitimizes the rural Thai, warmly and positively showing them their function within the total nation-state as practical administrators to things of nature, as the aristocrats and monks manage the spiritual aspects of life.

The Chok Costume

The costume of the chok, though varying widely depending upon individual taste, is in keeping with the freedom of his character. Often, he wears a baggy phanung which hangs to his ankles reminiscent of the rural Thai garb of past times, over which is worn a shirt or vest. Sometimes, modern costume is worn: simple T-shirts and blue jeans decorated to taste. Usually, modern attire is worn in plays set in the present, but jeans may just as well appear in ancient settings. In short, there is no hard and fast rule governing chok costume, though it should be humble and funny and represent type rather than cling to period authenticity.



Figure 64. A clown loses "her" wig.



Figure 65. A "drag" beauty contest is often a routine in Likay.



Figure 66. A clown uses modern travelling bag.



Figure 67. Traditional clown costume.



Figure 68. Clown doing stand up comic routine.



Figure 69. Clowns doing a "slapstick" routine.



Figure 70. Clowns in various styles of attire.

The Chok Make Up

The make up of the chok, like the costume is up to the actor. In most cases, he uses very little make up, simply highlighting and shadowing his features to make them appear natural under the lights. If anything, the chok accents imperfections in his physiognomy which emphasize his individuality. Closer to nature, he need not mold himself to an ideal but, in contrast to the phra ek, celebrate his individuality. The concept which emerges from this principle in Likay is that the higher one is in the social hierarchy, the less individualized expression is allowed; the lower one is, the more so.

The Chok Ying

The chok ying is the female clown. Seen less frequently than her male counterpart, the chok, she is a companion to the nang ek, but expresses herself much more freely than does the heroine. She is the heroine's alter ego, expressing in vulgar terms what a heroine may feel. She is usually a "lady in waiting," and dresses in the traditional ball gown, but with less refinement and with a comical touch. Her make up emphasizes older and chubbier features as compared to the heroine's.

The chok ying serves a purely comic function and doesn't fit squarely into the morality-play schema of Likay. However, like the male chok, she is a commoner closely allied to the princess and, as such, serves the purpose of legitimization found in Likay's structural arrangement. She



Figure 71. The chok ying at left.

is a rough version of the princess, a "lady in waiting" who will always wait. Yet she too has her function in serving the court and the princess. She advises on love and courtship much as the nurse does in "Romeo and Juliet." She is the spiritualized heroine's link to the natural order, and it is in this way that they interact.

The Itcha (Female Antagonist)

Of much greater significance to the moral concepts which Likay demonstrates is the itcha. Not found in Likay plays where there appears a male antagonist, the itcha replaces the kong in some Likay plays. She is the heroine's opposite number. Where the nang ek is retiring, passive, shy in demeanor and speech, the itcha is aggressive, outspoken, argumentative, and openly flaunts her sexual charms. Whereas the nang ek must be wooed, the itcha attacks her male targets with great abandon. She, as the nang ek, is usually uneducated, but displays a craftiness and kind of masculine bravado with which she hopes to manipulate the masculine world which surrounds her. She is portrayed as sexually loose, foul mouthed, unworthy of respect, and takes the brunt of many sexually oriented jokes and actions. Such a woman is seen as a troublemaker, continually disruptive of the environment through which she moves like a bull. The message to the Thai woman is clear: evil results from being self-willed, outspoken and sexually explicit. Such behavior outsteps the Buddhist and Thai manner of womanhood and motherhood. This is not the way to be. It's bad for



Figure 72. Chok ying and itcha confront phra ek.



Figure 73. An actor puts on make up.

oneself, against Buddhist doctrine, and therefore bad for Thai society.

Itcha Costume and Make Up

The itcha costume is similar to that of the nang ek, but with make up she strives towards a grossness of appearance that reflects, according to Thai popular thinking, a degeneration in character. Physically, and in behavior, she teaches the Buddhist and traditional Thai way inversely.

The Pho, Mae, and Dek (Father, Mother, Children)

As the itcha dramatizes through her "liberated" manner the way of family and social disruption, the pho, mae, and dek roles demonstrate models for being a father, mother, or child. Highly sympathetic, the pho and mae as characters simply express their titles. They are archetypes. They have the interests of their children in mind, are dedicated to the protection of their young, and strive to do the right thing by them and for them. Never do we see a pho or a mae beat their children, only a kong father, or an itcha mother do so. (They are called by their unsympathetic titles: kong, itcha.) The pho and mae are always benign, always loving, demonstrating the benevolent Buddhist way toward their young. It is interesting that their roles are limited to only this facet. They represent, as their titles suggest, the family, the moral domain against which the male and female villains seek to intervene and cause disruption. The morality play pits the family -- morality -- against the unruly forces of the kong or itcha whose power comes from the purely saksit



Figure 74. The dek, or child.

domain, unchecked by Buddhist doctrine and practice. The family is seen as part of the throughline which unites Buddhism with the moral goodness of the king. Family, Buddhism, Monarchy, the three institutions form, in tripartite, the total moral field for the Buddhist Thai.

The dek, the children, pursue their goals in such a way as to support the family unity. They are never disruptive. Instead, they are sympathetic models for children in the audience, showing that "good" children are dutiful and follow their parents wishes and try to tend to their parents needs.

Costumes and Make Up

Costumes for the pho, mae, and dek roles follow natural, modern, attire. They are usually dressed in unostentatious rural garb which creates an identifiable link with the rural audience. Make up is light and accents natural lines.

Miscellaneous Characters

Miscellaneous characters number spirits, demons, and animals that appear in Likay. The latter may be natural phenomena or supernatural. Most often they link with the supernatural, as do the spirits and demons. These characters form the basis of the Thai belief system, and are reflective of the animism inherited through Thai oral tradition, folk tales, and literature. They offer a panorama of images -- symbols -- emerging from the deepest levels of the Thai psyche which have now become inextricably intertwined with

the Buddhist system. Their types are ancient: ghosts of ancestors, bad phi (spirits) that are attached to a domain, or that hungrily roam at will searching for human souls to destroy, and beings of human consciousness locked into animal form.

In the morality-play drama of Likay, the appearance of the spirits, ghosts, and other supernatural characters links with Buddhist precepts. These characters are the result of human spirit gone wrong. They are the damned, the devolved: spirits who in life turned from the Buddhist Way and the aristocratic model, following the path of the kong and the itcha, the way of passion, ambition, and greed. Full of hate, frustration, and violence, they demonstrate the downward end of bad action and so, support the ideal way revealed through the phra ek and nang ek. Likay's message is, "If you don't want to end like this, then follow the Way designated through Likay: support the king, the aristocratic tradition, Buddhism, and traditional family roles. To follow the Way means upward affiliation in this life and/or the next. To do otherwise is to separate yourself and thus expose yourself to the possibility of creating downward karma and diminution. Through Buddhist doctrine and service to the king there is salvation."

Costumes and Masks of Supernatural Characters

Costumes for supernatural characters may be of the natural world or highly imaginative. They vary greatly, and masks are worn to complete the non-human effect. Often,

animal head masks are used, designed with the head of an animal situated on top of the actor's head. These masks, from the lakhon nai repertoire, are often used to portray legendary beasts with human and superhuman characteristics. Full head masks, fashioned after those worn in the Khon drama, are also used for super-humans or super-animals. These reflect a mythological heritage. More modern, full-faced masks made of papier mache and rubber convey the idea of skeleton, evil spirit, or decayed flesh. Half face masks may reflect a supernatural presence in a human. In all, the masks are used as signs which strikingly and immediately convey their supernatural intent.

Summary of the Meaning of Likay Characters

We have seen how Likay is a "rite of unification" in its themes, and how it extends the process of unification through its aural and visual elements, alternating formalized aspects of Thai culture and tradition with freely formed, improvised elements. In the process, Likay draws upon the Hindu derived, larger tradition, as well as the folk tradition, amalgamating them in one form. Through the character types of Likay, the Buddhist tradition is added and even focused upon, the characters teaching Buddhist moral doctrine through action and demonstration of temperament.

As the supreme example of the Buddhist Way for those engaged in secular life, the phra ek supplies a model of valued behavior and is linked, as a prince, to the king.



Figure 75. Full head masks used in Likay.



Figure 76. "Demon" full head mask.



Figure 77. Costume for a supernatural animal.



Figure 78. Ghost costume and mask.



Figure 79. Masks of evil spirits.



Figure 80. An animal head mask.

He is reflection of the king's moral strength, goodness, and wisdom in action, a symbol of ultimate merit. Yet, he is also physically appealing, romantically inclined, and genuinely approachable. As a moral symbol which may also be related to on a physical basis, his presence in Likay forms a concrete, tangible link with the ideal toward which the Thai spirit tends. Not only may the model be assumed through behavior, but interaction may be established and acted upon within the limits of the performance (in the presentation of leis) and beyond the construct of the play. Love for the phra ek is motivated by, and legitimized as, love for the king.

As the phra ek is the supreme model for the Thai, combining aristocratic behavior and Buddhist morals, the kong is the supreme antagonist. In attacking the phra ek, he attacks the king and the Buddhist Way. As a personification of the cardinal vices of Buddhism -- greed, anger, self-will -- his role demonstrates the danger of non-Buddhist behavior, and shows how such behavior will destroy the state and thus the protection and authority upon which the masses depend for their well-being, i.e., the king.

The nang ek supplies the model for womanhood in general. Through her character, she teaches that a "good" Thai female has a fixed station in the Buddhist hierarchy and she demonstrates acceptable behavior within that station. She is obedient, concerned with the welfare of her family and her husband first and foremost. She rarely concerns herself

with affairs of power outside of the household.

The nang ek,s opposite number, the itcha, demonstrates the same principle as the nang ek, although inversely. As the kong reinforces the male model as seen in the phra ek, the itcha does so in relation to the female model as seen in the nang ek. Whereas the nang ek is "good," the itcha is "bad." As such, she reinforces the primary function contained in the female roles, that of teaching through type a Thai woman's way of being and doing in the world.

The character of the chok in function, serves to legitimize the rural person. Seen as witty, clever, helpful, yet unschooled, the rural Thai see their own station and behavior reflected on the stage. It is reflected warmly and positively. Through the help of the chok, the goals of the aristocracy are achieved. The chok too, are seen to have their rightful function within the total nature of the state. In fact, without them, there would be a great gap in the fabric of the nation-state in areas demanding knowledge of nature and her ways. As the aristocracy is devoted to the things of the spirit in Likay, the peasantry is devoted to the realm of nature. The combination of the natural with the spiritual in fixed relationship ensures the unified functioning of the state.

Background characters, such as mae, the pho, and the dek, further illustrate family membership roles. The mae is typically "mothering," the pho, concerned with matters of power and achieving outside of the household. The dek, also



Figure 81. Likay phra ek with long wooden spear.



Figure 82. Likay clown holds slapstick (maithakhap).



Figure 83. Cardboard animals worn by Likay actors.



Figure 84. Modern plates and bottles are used in Likay.



Figure 85. Rolled towels indicate babies in Likay.



Figure 86. Clowns and phra ek in Likay.



Figure 87. Typical male and female attire.



Figure 88. Actress in Indian costume.



Figure 89. Actor in Muslim attire.

typically, are seen as gently supportive of their parent's aims and projects, whether within or outside of the household.

Th- miscellaneous characters, the spirits, demons and animals that appear in Likay, are reflective of Thai Buddhist-Animism as handed down through Thai literature, oral tradition, and folk tales. They offer a panorama of images emerging from the deepest levels of the Thai cultural consciousness which serve to motivate the Thai toward "good" action by reflection upon the result of bad action. As such, they reinforce the tendency to behave according to Buddhist teaching and the Traditionalist Way delineated by Likay.

In Likay then, the characters serve to project Buddhist moral drama. Whereas the themes are predominantly supportive of a "national faith" related to king and country, the characters link Buddhist and Animist belief systems to the overall design of the themes. National secular and national religious faiths are combined to form a whole, reflective of primal Thai values.

Likay Conventions

There are a number of conventions which are unique to Likay and which support its function as a rite of unification. They include the ok khaek, or introduction of the play, the use of narration and, most importantly, improvisation.

The Ok Khaek

The ok khaek is the only remaining element in Likay derived from the original dikay performances wherein the

habits and manners of foreigners in Thailand were mimicked. Its essential element is the repetition of the words "Hey hatcha, hey, hey, hey, salamana la, la, la," a combination of Hindi and Malay, and "Halewanga kho choen ma chom Likay," a combination of Tamil and Thai meaning: "Welcome. Please come in and see Likay."³²

The purpose of the ok khaek, which follows immediately upon the musical prelude (the homrong), is to welcome the audience to the performance and to introduce the actors and the story. Differences in the ok khaek reflect troupe management choices based upon the performance style of the troupe and purpose of the occasion. The introduction may be done over a backstage microphone with little fanfare. This is rare however. Usually, there is a presentation of special acts, dances which reflect special national types, and even a parade of the company on some occasions. While these are occurring, an announcer will tell about the fame of the troupe, the kind of Likay for which the troupe is known (teenage, traditional, etc.) introduce the principal performers and the type of roles they will be playing, and advertise future performances of the troupe. After the introduction, the troupe's song is sung and sometimes the sadudi maharacha, or "Glorification of the Great King." The national flag and pictures of the king and queen are often in evidence, and the audience is exhorted to patriotism,

³²According to Surapone Virulrak and other Likay informants.



Figure 90. Actresses performing ok khaek.



Figure 91. Actresses saluting the audience.



Figure 92. A sponsor presenting leis and money.



Figure 93. An entire company parades.

national unity, support of Buddhism and of the king and queen. The show then commences.

The effect of the ok khaek is to remind the audience of Likay's ritualistic character and to heighten the official sense of occasion. It also expresses the ancient tradition of Likay, stemming as it does from Muslim chant and the later sipsongphasa which incorporated various national themes in its presentation. It deepens the link between historic tradition and the royalist themes of Likay.

The Use of Narration

Narration is used throughout Likay. From the initial introduction of actors and characters, the stage manager, over a backstage microphone, relates the aspects of the story which cannot be performed on stage and fills in the leaps of time and place that are so typical of Likay. Primarily to serve this practical function, the use of narration adds an esthetic influence which is in keeping with the themes of Likay. Narration lends an epic quality to Likay, it creates a distancing effect and adds to the objectification of the action so that the audience is made to feel that they are viewing an ancient and quasi-historical story.

Improvisation

The key to Likay's success as a popular theatre genre is certainly to be found in its improvisational character. No plot words are memorized, nor movement "blocked," nor songs and dances pre-packaged and arranged for performance.

Instead, each performer has learned in his early training in Likay, the traditional mudras, or gestures, the lakhon ram dance sequences, a repertoire of memorized poems, and the melodies of the lakhon ram songs to which improvised words are added in performance. Shortly before the performance begins, the story teller or stage manager (often, one and the same) will tell the actors the name of the play, the general story-line, and establish the names of the characters. Since each performer specializes in a stock Likay type, the play, in that sense, is pre-cast. The actors discuss what each character will do in the play, and agree on the basic outline of the first scene and then separate to prepare their opening presentation. In performance, the onus of responsibility is placed fully upon the actor, for it is he who must organize important moments and take charge of articulating the play's meaning through his action.

Once parts and action-lines are organized the performance commences, the actors playing each scene according to instructions of the story-teller, but "taking stage" or "giving it" based upon their own minute to minute decision-making process. The process, and the challenge of it, has been described by Likay actors as an exercise in prathi phan wai phrip, which means the full use of the faculties: memory, observation, perception, and intuition "in order to be able to control the moment and to stay on top of it."³³

³³Personal interview with Kritsanat Nantawong, February 28, 1981.

The term, combining the concepts of quick wit and strength of action, is the key to the Likay esthetic.

Likay actors then improvise from their repertoire of memorized dances, songs, and comic routines, developing original dialogue between more formalized elements. The switch back and forth between the two domains keeps dramatic tension and audience interest high. One informant described the process as "slippery," saying that the goal of the actors is to keep one jump ahead of the audience and to keep the audience's interest by not saying or doing the expected thing.³⁴ Taken together, the concepts of prathi phan wai phrip and "slippery" action and speech produce the creative heart of a Likay performance. It is tradition, firmly based and deeply assimilated, being used to manipulate and bring creative shape to the moment.

The chain of original moments, recreated fresh from traditional form, is not only the heart of the Likay experience, but it is also the Thai manner of relating to events in the real world. In speaking of the Thai focus on the moment as formal modis operandi, Mulder comments:

It is an immediate reaction and accomodation with immediate circumstances. To be successful, this coping with the present presupposes a good talent for improvisation and results in the direct satisfaction of smartness and one-upmanship. Negatively speaking, it also is a strategy to avoid disappointment with long term commitments, policies, plans, and principles, these latter not figuring highly in Thai reality

³⁴ Wisan Ariyapanya, a friend and frequent Likay observer, clarified this point for me.

construction. Reality is rather the situation as it presents itself at any given point in time...³⁵

It is this relation to an ever-changing reality which gives Thai life much buoyancy and sense of play. In theatrical terms, it is the playing of the "now" in the most dynamic fashion in order that the quality of the moment will produce fruit in coming events. A good "now," produces a good future in the karmic scheme of things. The seed of future events is sown in the present. Such, at least, is the frame of reference of Thai Animism and Buddhism. Mulder claims:

...Acceptance of reality in its temporary presentation with few past or future references fits the Animistic frame of mind and also curiously fits with popular Buddhist concepts. Of the Buddhist recognition of the nature of reality, that is, impermanence, suffering, and non-selfhood, the quality of impermanence has found deep roots in Thai cultural being. The present as it presents itself is real, is the only thing to hold to and to deal with...To the Thai mind the present is 'paramount reality,' and that reality is the same as its own timeless essence.³⁶

Likay reinforces this modus operandi and parallels its movement in the 'real' world with its playful presentation in performance. The generating of dramatic action in Likay corresponds to the Thai method and manner of relating to things in the larger world, the Likay performances offering in microcosm what may be observed in less intensified proportion in everyday Thai interaction. Mulder again:

Thai culture is deep down a very strong Animist peasant culture...An Animist culture or system of

³⁵Mulder, p. 165.

³⁶Mulder, pp. 167-168.

perception is characterized by a world view in which the own group is perceived as the stable moral center of the world. (Family, community, king.) That center is surrounded by a sphere of amoral power. (The phi, thewada, antagonists, and bad spirits of Likay). There is no supernatural centre of the cosmos and no synthesis of power and moral goodness. In the Thai national, 'civic' ideology of Nation (the encompassing ritual community), Religion (common ritual and beliefs), and King (uniting...moral goodness and...righteous power) the national community celebrates itself and is seen as the safe 'home' in an unruly wider world.³⁷

Likay, through improvisation aimed at being 'slippery,' an performance focused upon one-upmanship, demonstrates the Thai means par excellence for staying on top of the unruly wider world. Likay teaches, as well as celebrates, the uniquely Thai way of dealing with the world: the prathi phan wai phrip of the Likay actor, the most preferred tool with which to confront the exigesis of life, celebrating at the same time, in the way of Likay, the Thai way of being in the world. The esthetic which binds Likay together may be likened to the esthetic which binds Thai society together: the art of improvisation.

Likay's Structure

The structure of Likay plays derives from the combination of thematic material which informs the genre and the conventions which give it life, especially, the convention of improvisation. Epic in nature, Likay demonstrates a means of 'strength in unity' through traditional Thai norms of behavior and belief expressed by means of classic and modern

³⁷Mulder, p. 177.

performance elements. The two elements (classic and modern) create in fact, a tension, and a cycle which shows the past emerging and containing the present, and the future emanating from the tension between ancient and contemporary elements. In Likay, the future of Thailand is framed within traditional Thai concepts of being and becoming, inspired by the centrally creative impulse of improvisation. Let us now see how this is so.

The play starts with a musical introduction, the homrong, which is part of the classical repertoire. Comprised of thirteen set pieces, other tunes may be inserted and improvised upon. The thirteen tunes must be included however, and played in exact order, for they serve a sacred, as well as practical function. They call upon the gods of theatre to protect performers from evil spirits and thus, serve as ritual. The tunes also alert the audience that a Likay performance is imminent. In sum, the homrong cleans the atmosphere of supernatural impurities and brings the audience to the performance.

After the classical musical introduction, a sung, spoken, and danced introduction, the ok khaek is performed. It is strictly presentational in mode, and welcomes the audience, announces the company, and celebrates the Nation and the King and Queen. Remnants of the origin of Likay, the dikay and yikay appear in the words of greeting, which are a mixture of Hindi, Malay, Tamil, and Thai.

Next, the play proper begins with an actor dancing onto

the stage. After the presentational dance, the actor sings. Both dance and the song's tune are from the lakhon ram repertoire. The words of the song are improvised in poetic form. Following the song, is the cheracha sam khamrong, or spoken repetition of the song in prose, and explanation of character and purpose. Included in this monologue is mention of the next person who will appear and what their connection is with the speaker. This is followed by a song which tells the audience where the actor is going and what he is going to do. Finally, the actor dances off the stage. The same pattern is repeated for introduction of every major character who is necessary for the beginning action of the plot. In this way, the exposition is clarified.

Following the presentation of characters, a series of scenes, called naphat, occur. These are interactive scenes and the form becomes much more improvisational at this point with three or more people on stage during the scenes. Popular songs, country songs, lakhon ram tunes, or the ranikloeng tune (Likay's special tune) may be used at any point during these scenes, the actors deciding which is most appropriate. Dialogue is improvised and the action may be stopped at any time while a mae yok awards a favorite phra ek with money or leis. Often, a character sings a song before exiting and always mentions the name of the character who he plans to see next. That character will appear in the next scene and, thus, continuity of the story's action is made clear. The action of these scenes continues until the

major plot line is established. There is no fixed number and the duration of each scene depends on the judgment and ingenuity of the actors.

When the major plot has been firmly established, the subplot is introduced.* Where the major plot usually involves royalty, the subplot is usually concerned with commoners. Whereas the major plot is based on a serious issue, the subplot offers comedy. So, the chok (clowns) are introduced. There are the common village people, and the subplot draws upon typical events within village life. As choks, the introduction of characters included in the subplot is much less structured than that for the major plot line. The actors simply introduce themselves by speaking in prose (often, a dialect, if the play is outside of Bangkok) and then sing a country song or two, tell a few jokes in stand up comedian style, mention the person they are about to see, and exit. The interactive scenes, or naphat, then follow until the subplot is clearly established.

The subplot then enters into the major plot and the characters of both plots interact as they pursue their objectives in the play, the commoners interacting with the aims of the aristocracy. These scenes, combining characters and concerns of both plot lines, continue throughout the remainder of the play, mixing the comedy supplied by the commoners with the more serious concerns of the aristocracy.

* Usually, there is only one subplot developed in Likay performances.

The structure of a Likay performance may be summarized as follows:

Table 2. Structure of a Likay Performance.

<u>Homrong - Ok Khaek</u> ---		<u>Introduction of Characters, Plot A (serious)</u>
Classical	Traditional	Formal Presentation*
Sacred	Presentational	Formal Dance
		Formal Music and Poetry (The Aristocracy)
		Breaks for "Yoking" (presentation of leis)
<u>Development of Plot A</u>		<u>Introduction of Plot B (comic)</u>
Formal Music		Comic Monologue
Popular Music		Country Music (The Commoners)
Country Music		Popular Music
Formal Poetry		Breaks for "Yoking"
Improvised Dialogue		
Breaks for "Yoking"		
<u>Development of Plot B</u>		<u>Development of Plot A with Plot B</u>
Improvised Comic Routines		Formal Music-----Country Music
Country Music and Dance		Formal Dance---Country and Popular Dance
Popular Music and Dance		
Breaks for "Yoking"		Formal Poetry----Comic Routines
		Improvised Dialogue
		Breaks for "Yoking"

The diagram shows how Likay, as a symbolic medium, pulls the Thai nation together. First, the homrong offers a series of classical tunes in ritualized fashion which stems from the Brahmanic-Hindu religious tradition. Second, the ok khaek presents a welcoming ceremony which stems from

* I have here used the word "formal" to denote a fixed format using classical Thai music. In the case of poetry, the word "formal" seems more appropriate, since the words of the poems are not classical, but improvised, although delivered according to a fixed form.

Muslim tradition but which now pays homage to the king and queen of Thailand. Third, through formal, classical music, dance, and poetry, the aristocracy of ancient Thailand is presented. Fourth, through the use of the same elements, a plot is developed that includes ancient national concerns. Fifth, the common people are presented through the use of informal comic monologues, popular and country music and dance. Sixth, a plot is developed that has roots in country life, has interest for the country folk, and is a plot with which they can identify. It is projected through improvised comic dialogue, routines, country and popular music and dance. Finally, the two plots combine and the two dramatic modes are mixed, the one serious, the other, comic. The mediums of expression are also mixed, alternating between formal, classical music, dance, and poetry, and more popular fare. Throughout, a presentational style of performance is maintained with constant breaks occurring in the action for the convention of presentation of leis, or "yoking." Thus, the audience and actors are in constant interaction, the give and take between them being an integral part of the performance.

The Likay performance then, can be seen on three levels. It is a sacred rite (associated with cremations, ordinations, merit making, house warmings, and foundings of buildings) to please the gods and which prevails upon them for protection from evil spirits. It is also a rite which celebrates the King and the unity of the Nation and, finally, it

legitimizes and bonds the rural life style with the major, aristocratic tradition.

Audience Reaction

Audience reaction to Likay shows that Likay's appeals are diverse: it attracts many different people for many different reasons.* In a sample study conducted with over one hundred audience members from the four major regions of Thailand, the following information was recorded.**

Most people go to Likay for simple entertainment. They view it as a relief from their work, a time to "soothe their mind," to enjoy the comedy, the dancing and the singing, to view the beauty of the performers and the acting. They go for the pleasure which a performance of Likay brings them. Of audience members sampled, fifty-two percent were of this order.

Others also admire Likay as an example of Thai art (forty-eight percent), and enjoy it as part of their national heritage and tradition. For some, it contributes knowledge about the world, the nation, and life in areas from which they are removed (fourteen percent). For others, Likay teaches good morals, "the right way to live," proper behavior, and the right way to solve problems. Fifteen percent were of this opinion. Twenty percent acknowledged that they

* For description of a total performance, please see appendix A.

** For specific items categorized according to region, see appendix G at the end of the dissertation.

thought about a Likay performance afterwards and how it related to their personal lives. Fifteen percent thought about the performance's artistic merits and demerits.

The statistics gathered in relation to audience reaction to Likay supported the thesis suggested earlier that Likay offers a modis operandi in regard to relating and acting in the real world. Forty-seven percent rated the acting as the single most important element which drew them to Likay performances. Audience members reported enjoying the intensity of emotion, the verbal wit and clever reparte, especially of the clowns, and the pattern of action devised by the clowns to achieve upward mobility in Thai society. Next in popularity was the singing. Thirty-two percent said that they enjoyed the country and popular songs used in Likay the most of any aspect. The dancing ranked third in appeal. Only fourteen percent rated the dance numbers as their major interest in viewing Likay. Six percent came to Likay to observe the costumes, and one percent for the special effects.

Although the clowns ranked first in terms of attractiveness of behavior and method of action, the phra ek (male lead) ranked first in terms of character, thus supporting the contention that major interest in Likay is created by the model of sex appeal and moral goodness supplied by this character.

Audience interest in older stories confirmed the importance of the epic quality in Likay which traces the emergence

of Thailand as a national state with a king as its head. Such stories as Phra Aphaimani, Chanthakhorob, Khun Chang and Khun Phaen,* as well as other Thai classics were preferred by sixty-three percent of the audience, as compared with thirty-seven percent who favored new stories. Related to this finding was that sixty-two percent favored the emphasis placed in production on historical events rather than on real-life situations. An interesting comment made in the south was that "too much emphasis upon real life situations might get in the way of the story." Pleasure in Likay was to be found, this informant suggested, bound to the aristocratic elements of plot-action.

Likay viewers liked a mixture of sadness and comedy, according to replies during interviews. And this is exactly what Likay most often gives them. Forty-four percent ranked "sad-comic" as the most preferred, while strictly comic or strictly sad ranked twenty and sixteen percent respectively. Ten percent preferred material of strictly epic nature, with the emphasis on history and battle.

When asked if they liked the actors to keep their material within the plot of the play or direct things to the audience, twenty-six percent preferred the presentational while seventy-four percent enjoyed the representational elements, thus supporting the contention that an important element in Likay is the playing out of national process.

*These stories are mentioned in Chapter Three under "Likay Content."

A happy ending, with the nang ek and phra ek together and wed, or about to be wed, was almost unanimously approved (ninety-one percent). Only nine percent enjoyed the ending where things are left in chaos. None enjoyed a sad ending.

The continuance of Likay is assured, according to seventy-eight percent of those interviewed. Their reasons differed, but the majority cited either Likay's entertainment value or its existence as a traditional Thai theatre art form. Bangkokians also noted that Likay is highly adaptable, so would probably change and continue integrating new audience tastes with old. Only the southern audience sample was equivocal, suggesting that Likay would continue "as long as there is nothing else to do."

Summary: Audience Reaction

Audiences see Likay as good entertainment and also as a traditional Thai form of theatre art. They appreciate the humor, the singing and dancing, and the romantic interests of the nang eks and phra eks. Although only one-eighth of the Likay audience believes that Likay has didactic value either in the area of general knowledge or of moral behavior, a full thirty-five percent takes the performance home with them, thinking about it and discussing either the merits of the story or the artistry of performance with friends and family members.

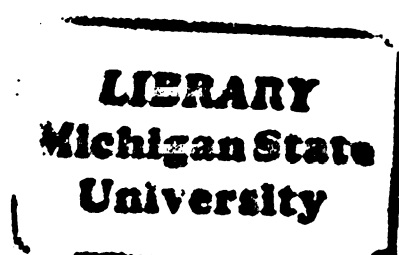
The elements of Likay appear superbly tailored to the needs of the rural/working-class audiences. Traditional elements give a sense of belonging to a national culture

(old stories are much preferred), a feeling of heritage and pride. New elements, such as country or popular songs and music, add modishness and a feeling of being up-to-date (than samai). Successful improvisation (prathi phan wai phrip) (strong, clever action) offers a behavior model for upward striving rural masses.

Likay plays to its audience. Since it is highly improvisational, performances may alter depending upon audience tastes and the immediate response of audience members. Players are alert to the moment -- both inside and outside the context of the play -- and deal with both aspects of performance with agility. The audience is made part of the performance in this way, and gains a sense of satisfaction from its element of control, demonstrating through the convention of mae and pho yok giving leis and money to the actors and actresses. Happy endings, with the hero and heroine together, complete the sense of satisfaction, and leave audience members feeling that they have participated in a national, as well as an esthetic, process: a rite, in fact, of national unification.

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THESIS





RETURNING MATERIALS:
Place in book drop to
remove this checkout from
your record. FINES will
be charged if book is
returned after the date
stamped below.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In studying Likay, my purpose was to show how a theatre form, or genre, relates to the society within which it functions. A popular theatre genre, to be popular, must have contained within itself, symbols which mesh, or 'fit', with prevailing norms of action (symbolic action) and concepts of right behavior inherent within a particular society. That such symbols do exist and are related to subsequent patterns of behavior deemed acceptable by a group which empathizes with them as they are condensed, heightened, and clarified in theatre, is the starting hypothesis of this thesis. That some individuals may disagree and deviate from the behavior patterns demonstrated in a theatre performance nonetheless presumes that overall, the behavior patterns generated by the major symbols of a work possess empathetic material. This, after all, is one reason people go to the theatre and allows theatre to be a meaningful part of a culture's life.

If we agree with the proposition as stated above -- that popular theatre (or that theatre, to be popular) uses symbols and symbolic actions with which a mass audience may identify -- we must next ask ourselves why Likay possesses so much appeal for the Thai. In this way, we may not only draw some conclusions about the nature of Likay, but gain some insight into some basic norms which serve as the foundation of Thai social behavior.

The Message

We have seen that Likay performances have a religious component; that is, they are connected to rites -- part Buddhist, part Animist, part Brahmanic -- which seek to gain protection and favor from the gods. As such, the performances themselves adhere to a reitualistic function: action which seeks to secure supernatural reaction.

The presentation of Likay as a rite to secure protection for the community, the group, stems from Brahmanic ritual and Animist belief and is furthered by the internal structure and themes of Likay. Incorporating the Hindu-Animist concept of kingship, the plots celebrate the notion of the group unified by the power of the king as primal mediator between supernatural forces and the community -- nation. He is depicted as the supreme protector, the main source of moral assurance in an unruly world.

A limited number of plot-type show a variety of ways in which the world, society, and individuals become disunified and separated: through jealousy, covetousness, through uninhibited sexual behavior, or by supernatural intervention. These plots, in their specific movement, work along principles of Buddhist doctrine. The plots show how, through proper behavior (a combination of Hindu-Buddhist principles) individuals may move from separation to unity or, through improper behavior, how relations may dissolve into chaos.

The modis operandi of proper behavior is demonstrated by the 'good' characters -- the hero, heroine, family

members, and servant-clowns -- as opposed to the 'bad' characters -- the villain and his/her accomplices. The good characters are drawn according to the precepts of Buddhist virtue: they demonstrate calm, balance, quiet speech and humble behavior. The bad characters reveal self-will, aggressive behavior, and unruly speech.

Beyond the principles demonstrated through temperament of character, the proper way to unity is demonstrated in terms of plot action and direct verbal exhortations: principles to be used in the temporal, secular world. Affiliation with the king (government and military) is good, service to those higher in the hierarchy helps to knit the national fabric (and thus, keep one protected), upward marriage is condoned, as is a physical move to the capital. Theft and violence, although not condoned, are seen as facts of life.

Within the complex of good and evil, class differences are reinforced and, at the same time, integrated. The rural peasant and urban working classes are legitimized as needed for the proper working of the state by fulfilling necessary physical duties. Likay plays show how each class reciprocates with the other, the underclass supporting and protecting the upper, the upper protecting and guiding the general population. Upward mobility is demonstrated as being possible through proper service to the established hierarchy.

Thus, Likay uses a Brahmanic context to dispel Animist fears through demonstration of Buddhist principles personified in characters that tend toward social relationships

which in their nature support the working of the contemporary Thai state.

The Medium

If, to quote McLuhan, "the medium is the message," then Likay is an elegant masseuse. The building blocks which project Likay messages to rural and working class audiences have been hewn by centuries of folk and classical theatre practice.

Typically, Likay performs out-of-doors, near a temple. On some occasions performances are at fairs, market-places, or private homes. However, in each case, the presentation is essentially in the open-air, easily accessible to a mass audience.

Stage-houses are standardized to accommodate the various troupes using their domains and when in use, with the bust of Muni Bharata or Pho Kru placed in the backstage area, acquire a sacred dimension. Ritual prayers are said to the bust and offerings made to protect the actors from evil spirits and safeguard the performance. Actors chant mantras while putting on their make up, thus reinforcing the ritualistic-religious dimension.

The homrong, or instrumental prelude, also reinforces the sense of ritual. Each tune must be executed according to precise classical rules. The actors stop applying their make up at intervals to wai (make sign of obeisance) to the bust and to the gods, as music is played by a traditional orchestra.

The setting is predictable: a throne room, a bench, two chairs on either side of the bench, a pillow at one end of the bench. The stage is generally lit, and lighting is changed only for special effects such as intrusions of the supernatural. There is no attempt at realism in lighting.

Tunes for Likay are from the lakhon ram traditional repertory. They are well-known to the audience and signal emotional associations. These are mixed with popular Thai songs of a contemporary nature, creating a blend of past with present associations. Popular Western songs are sometimes added as are Indian songs and dances.

Dance follows the lakhon ram tradition as does the gesture system, although individual variation is allowed and even encouraged. Western rock and roll and disco routines augment the traditional dance patterns. The mixture further supports the blend of past with the present.

Conventional rules are used for stage movement which quickly signal the meaning of the action occurring on stage. Sleep, eating, making love, doing battle, going on a journey, all are conveyed by simple conventions of movement. The stage has conventional areas denoting "inside" and "outside" of buildings. Pantomime and improvisation with the two stage chairs create other necessary dimensions of staging. A presentational quality is used throughout, with frequent, asides and direct contact with the audience.

Rhymed verse is used by the aristocratic characters, improvised, and sung to lakhon ram tunes and movement in

duets and solos. When interacting with other characters, colloquial speech is improvised which propels the action of the plot. Clowns create extended routines based upon improvised verbal play.

Costumes express levels of power. The aristocratic characters, good or bad, wear similar costumes derived from court fashion: the male costume is designed from traditional attire -- a mixture of ancient and 19th Century styles, the female, from formal 1950's fashion. The clowns and other commoners wear traditional rural garb: loose pantaloons, or modern jeans or mini-skirts. Other national attire is sometimes worn when appropriate to character such as Malayan or Indian styles. Costume is used to designate type.

Make up follows suit, the hero following strict rules to create a delicate, almost effeminate appearance, the heroine striving for a depersonalized image of feminine beauty. Villains, male or female, strive for a gross, rough quality in contrast to the refined characteristics of the protagonists. Clowns and family members are more realistically made up, as are animal characters when they appear. Supernatural characters use grotesque masks and costumes.

The meaning of costumes, characters, and make up relates to the Buddhist morality-play complex of Likay which functions to serve the overall theme of unity under kingship by supplying appropriate behavioral models which support the process and the institution of the monarchy.

Within the complex of strict convention and received

tradition, improvisation frees action, speech, and movement. The goal is to do the surprising thing, use the startling word, execute the imaginative movement. Freed from having to design the overall fabric and structure of the performance, the Likay actor concentrates on the moment, creating out of the imposed structure feeling and thought which speaks for, and to, his Thai audience. Improvisation shows creativity at work within the complex of human relationship, not in the design of social, political, or philosophical doctrine. Because of this, Likay can be essentially humanist drama, centered on essentially human concerns, and solutions found through essentially humanist ways. The center of Likay is in the fierce contending of human emotions which live and grow within the received aspects of traditional Thai society: Buddhism, Animism, the Brahmanic conception of the state.

The improvised sections of Likay alternate with the traditional, structured segments of dialog, dance, song, and movement. This brings the humanist heart of Likay within the classical tradition and adds to it by making the past appear as part of the present, the present and future created out of the structure of the past, thus reinforcing the status quo.

The present and the future are created in Likay performance by underclass rural and urban actors and audience. This too creates an added dimension as, because the performance is improvised, actors and audience participate in the



Figure 94. Likay phra ek receiving a baht from a "mae yok."



Figure 95. Phra ek receiving leis.

working out of a process which acts as an analogy to the actual national social process of underclass aiding in the achievement of national goals. Thus, Likay serves in microcosm (through symbolic action) what the Thai state wishes to achieve in macrocosm: integration of the peasant and working class in supportive roles within the traditional hierarchy.

Since Likay is a process -- which changes and adapts with changes in society -- its future looks healthy, according to informants. As long as Thailand has a king (or queen) Likay will most likely prevail, nurturing the national process, reinforcing traditional patterns of behavior and thought, and offering release of class tension through celebration of self found in the improvisation of the Likay actors. That this is the principle upon which Thai society operates -- strong, creative improvisation based upon humanistic principles within a framework of received traditions -- is the central conclusion of this paper. Likay functions as an axis within this process: a rite of unification and legitimization.

Suggestions for Future Research

The Mae Yok

The relationship between Likay heros, or phra ek, and female sponsors of Likay is an area which deserves deeper investigation. This study has alluded to the bond which is established between Likay mae yok and actors. However, more precise information about the life history of these

women, case studies, and in-depth examination of their feelings, motivations, and nature of the relationship with Likay actors might provide more concrete evidence of the archetypical basis to the relationship which could be described according to Jungian psychological terms.

The Impact of Likay Performance on Thai Society

The present study considered Likay from a theatrical and social point of view. Further research might employ a more quantitative approach in a study which would define more precisely what impact Likay has in relation to rural society. Some questions to be considered are: What messages are remembered? What messages are acted upon? Are new messages easily recognized? Does Likay effectively change behavior in the direction of government policy and royalist interests? Such research might aid in the development of a model for Likay to be used to support national development concerns.

Study of Likay Performers and Lifestyle

The lifestyle of Likay actors is intriguing. They form a subculture within the larger structure of Thai society and their way of life, in many ways, is reflective of the improvisational current which brings Likay together: prathi phan wai phrip. Their energy, their highly creative personalities, their relative distance from the establishment and their resulting objectivity in relationship to it, would be a rewarding area for anthropological or sociological research. They form a dedicated contingent in the world

of Thai art and are frequently misunderstood by the society in general.

A Comparative Study Between Likay and Derivative Genres

A number of less pervasive Thai genres are derived from Likay. In the northeastern region there is likay lao, molam mu, molam ruang. In the south, there exists likay barat, likay hulu, likay bok, likay pa, likay khaek daeng.

A study which compared and defined these genres on the basis of their content and performance techniques would greatly expand our knowledge of Likay as a total performance medium.

GLOSSARY

bhakti: An Indian movement related to the worship of Lord Krishna.

bunkhun: An act of goodness.

Chantakhorob: The story of a Thai prince on which the structure of Likay is based.

chada: Classic style of the Thai king's crown.

chao: The character of the Thai king in Likay.

cheracha sam khamrong: The spoken repetition of what previously has been sung in Likay.

ching: A pair of small cymbals.

chok: The clowns in Likay.

chok kong: The clown who is companion to the villain in Likay.

chok ying: The female clown and companion to the Likay heroine.

dek: The "child" character in Likay.

dek wat: Temple boys who help the monks in Thailand.

dikay: An ancient Muslim chant.

dosa: The vice of intemperateness of emotion. In Buddhist canons.

homrong: A musical prelude used for Khon, lakhon, and Likay performances.

itcha: The female villain in Likay

Jataka: Buddhist Birth Stories.

kae bon: To make merit.

karma: Predilection towards good or evil based upon one's

past actions.

khana: A group organized for a particular objective.

Khon: The most classical of Thai dance-dramas, performed by men.

khon nok: A feather placed in a Thai crown.

khong wong yai: A large circle of gongs.

khwan: A vital essence or power.

kinnari: A legendary creature: half-bird, half human female.

klon: Thai verse.

klon pat: A type of rhyming pattern used in Likay.

klong that: Two taphon drums placed on a stand in a standing position.

kong: The male villain in Likay.

Kreung Thep: The Thai name for Bangkok meaning, : City of Angels."

lakhon jatri: A folk drama comprised of stories from the Jatakas. Not performed today.

lakhon nai: Dance-drama performed within the palace.

lakhon nok: Folk drama performed outside the palace walls.

lakhon ram: Traditional Thai dance-drama.

Likay: Type of popular theatre in Thailand.

Likay dara: Likay performed by movie stars.

Likay Song khruang: The name given to the period of Likay's maturation - 1890 to 1942.

lobbha: The vice of greed according to the Buddhist canon.

lukkhrung: Popular Thai songs.

lukthung: Popular Thai country songs.

- mae: Mother; the character of the "mother" in Likay.
- mae yok kha: Mother who raises her legs.
- mae yok yong: Mother who admires.
- maitakhop: a bamboo slapstick used by the clowns in Likay.
- Muni Bharata: The first teacher of the dramatic arts.
- nang ek: The heroine of Likay; female star.
- nang rong: The female companion to the heroine in Likay.
- nang yai: Large puppets made of leather; the Thai shadow play.
- naphat: The short improvised scenes occurring in Likay.
- natadontri: A theatre form composed of equal proportions of singing, speaking, acting, and music.
- nay ruang: The story-teller in Likay.
- ngan buat: A Buddhist ordination ceremony.
- ngan fang luk nimith: A Buddhist ceremony where a sacred object is placed in the ground; usually at the opening of a new temple.
- ngan kae bon: A merit-making ceremony.
- ngan sop: A cremation ceremony.
- ngan tam bon son baan mai: A house-warming ceremony.
- ok khaek: The portion of Likay where the company is introduced and the audience is welcomed.
- panchuret: A crown without a top.
- panchuret yot: A crown with a high top.
- phanung: A broad loincloth worn as part of the Likay male costume.
- phi: A spirit or ghost.

- phi ban: A spirit protecting a village.
- phi khong koi: A spirit waiting in one place.
- phi muang: The spirit that resides at the city pillar.
- phi wat: A spirit of a temple compound.
- pho: The "father" character in Likay.
- pho kru: The Thai name for Muni Bharata, the master-teacher of theatre according to Hindu belief.
- phleng: Term used for "song" in Thailand.
- phra ek: The hero of Likay.
- phrakhan: An act of goodness that must be reciprocated.
- phra rong: The male companion to the hero in Likay.
- pi chana: An alto oboe used at Likay performances.
- pi nai: An alto oboe used at Likay performances.
- piphat khruanzha: The Thai five-piece orchestra.
- prathi phan wai phrip: The full use of all one's faculties which allows one to remain in control of a situation.
- preet: Evil demons.
- rabam: Thai dances which originally were considered sacred.
- Ram Thawai Mur: A dance performed as an offering of thanksgiving to the gods for prayers answered.
- ranat ek: A lead alto xylophone.
- ranikloeng: A tune created especially for Likay; it runs as a motif throughout performances.
- sadudi maharacha: "Glorification of the Great King," a national Thai song often sung during the ok khask of Likay.
- saksit: The realm of spiritual power morally neutral.

Sang Thorn: A Buddhist birth story.

samoe: A turn used in Likay to accompany "graceful walking."

sipsongphasa: Twelve improvised foreign themes which made
fun of foreign characteristics.

suat kharuhat: The suat phramalia performed by laymen.

suat phramalai: A Buddhist chant.

taphon mon and taphon thai: A set of two-faced drums.

than samai: Modern, up-to-date.

thewada: Indian-derived gods.

thung nong: White knee socks worn in Likay.

ti nakorn: A mythological creature, half man, half animal.

tua lakhon: The gesture system used in Likay.

wai: To pay respect by pressing palms together and raising
them in front of the face.

wai roon: Teenage, adolescent, chaotic.

wat: Thai Buddhist temple.

wik: A Likay theatre.

yikay: The early name for Likay.

yikay ramana: Yikay with drums.

yikay sipsongphasa: A combination of yikay and the suat
kharuhat.

yot: The top-piece of a Thai crown which comes to a pinnacle.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A TOTAL PERFORMANCE

The following is the April 11, 1981 performance of Rung Chai Wai Roon troupe of Nakonrathasima.

The occasion is an all-night performance for a ngan sop (cremation ceremony) for a well-to-do landowner in a village about one hundred kilometers from the provincial capital of Nakonrathasima. The village is approached by travelling approximately twenty kilometers on dirt roads off the main highway and the population numbers about 700. The houses of the village lie beside orchards and rice fields, and the road twists between them to the wat (temple) at the furthest edge of the village. There is no electric lighting. Only kerosene lamps light the interiors of the houses.

The wat is sizeable, and consists of the temple itself, a building for community functions, monks quarters, and a large grassy area with a permanent stage built to Likay specifications. A corrugated tin fence encloses the grassy area. At the rear of this area is a crematorium, upon which a wooden casket has been placed. The figure below illustrates the arrangement.

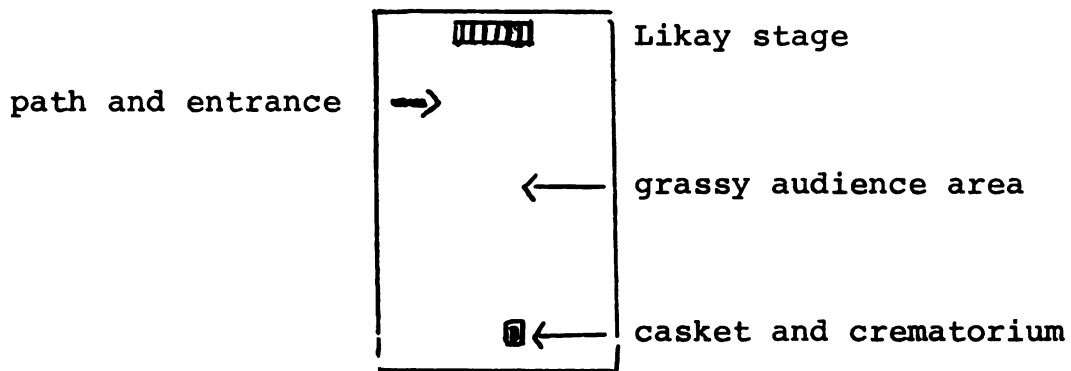


Figure 96. Design of performance area.

A large crowd is gathering, moving on foot down the gravel roads from the village to the wat, flashlights in hand to light the way. People carry grass mats to sit on at the performance. They are mostly family groups. However, males are walking with males, and women are walking in groups with their children. All are in a festive mood.

Beside the community building, and leading up to the enclosed area, are portable stalls on wheels in which are meats, candies, cookies, fruits of all varieties, cigarettes, and soft drinks. Incandescent torches burn beside the stalls.

Within the enclosed area, there is a large group of about 200 people gathered already, the older women having drawn up their mats and started chatting with each other. Children play around the sides of the area, on the stage, or go behind to watch the Likay actors prepare for their performance. Men of all ages stroll about the wat grounds, or stand at the edge of the enclosed area talking. Younger women sit further back in the enclosed area talking and

giggling, or walk in groups within the compound encouraging the young men by their theatrical display of disinterest.

The troupe has already set up. A truck is parked at the stage right edge of the stage next to the orchestra. The stage itself is lit by fluorescent lights powered by a generator behind the stage. The actors are putting on make up and costumes, the musical instruments -- which include a Western drum set and a trombone as well as the traditional instruments -- are set out, and the orchestra is about to begin. It is 8:30 p.m..

The ranat ek player, the leader of the orchestra (no conductors here) places incense sticks between the strands of the lei which drapes over the taphon Thai drum, lights the incense, places his hands together in wai fashion, and prays to the gods of music to help the musicians in their performance. The musicians gather and sit behind their instruments at a leisurely pace. It takes a matter of minutes, but when all the musicians have gathered, the ranak ek player begins the sathukan. The other musicians follow. This marks the beginning of the homrong, or prelude, and as it begins, the troupe leader goes to the rishi head backstage, kneels, prays, and offers flowers, incense, and six baht* in coin and places these on, or in front, of the rishi altar. The actors all stop their make up and costume preparations at this point, and, raising their hands in wai

* Thai currency. 1 baht is approximately 5 cents.

fashion, pray with the troupe leader to be protected from evil spirits and helped by good during their performance. As the sathukan finishes, they all shout chaiyo (glory!) three times.

While the musicians continue to play the tunes of the homrong, and the actors continue making up and dressing, the nay ruang (story-teller) tells the plot of the story he has decided upon to the main actors. He assigns roles to all and discusses the proper names for the characters in the play, giving each actor an overall idea of what he or she is supposed to do in the play. Many have performed in similar stories, so have suggestions as to plot-twists as the story-teller outlines the general story. Once characters, names, and general actions in the play are decided upon, the actors begin to think about what they will say in their opening rhymed verse and song as they continue putting on their make up and costumes. There is little conversation during this time, and when there is, it is to do with the work of the play. The actors have their jewelry and costumes in suitcases next to them and each works on his own make up using a small, individual mirror. The make up is applied first, and once it is set to the actors satisfaction, he begins to wrap material around him to form his breeches. Vestments and jewelry are added after the breeches.

Meanwhile, the orchestra has continued to play the homrong, injecting additional tunes in the acceptable places. As the prelude nears completion, the ranat ek player looks

to the story-teller to see if he should inject some more tunes before the final wa tune. The story-teller takes a look to see how the actors are coming along and tells the ranat player, "Ten more minutes." The ranat player injects more tunes into the prelude to fill in the time and lets individual players perform a solo piece.

Then, at 9:15 (most often the play begins at 9:00 p.m.), when the players appear ready, the story-teller tells the ranat ek player to go ahead and play the wa. The wa is played, and a group of about seven or eight actors and actresses gather around the backstage microphone readying for their part in delivering the ok khaek. The wa finishes, and rather than going into the songs of the ok khaek, the story-teller, who this night is also the troupe manager, signals the electrician and sound man to play the recorded tape advertising the troupe. It speaks about the fame of the troupe, and its style of presentation, which is youthful (wai roon). The recorded section ended, the orchestra begins the ok khaek tunes proper. The style again is very fast, up-beat, exhilarating. The youthful group bursts into "Hey hacha, hey, hey, hey, salamana, la, la, la" with gusto. This greeting is repeated several times. Then, the singers switch to a national song, keeping the same up-beat tempo. They sing of the nation, of the joy of being Thai, of the King. A phra ek takes the lead in the singing. His voice is strong, clear, radiant. The other performers produce the background filled with youthful shouts and cries. The song

ends, the orchestra keeps playing and changes to a lukthung (popular country song). Then, there is an orchestral build, and two children appear onstage, a boy and a girl. The music changes again to an Indian rhythm. The girl is in Indian sarong, the boy, in traditional Thai Likay costume of the Mon style. The singers continue singing backstage, the little boy and girl dance in psuedo-Indian style to the changing color of lights which is done roughly in time with the music. The narrator announces that five members of the troupe have spent time as monks at this temple. (The music, dance and song, and changing light continues throughout the narrator's voice-over.) He then announces the names of the actors and actresses and the roles that each will be playing. The dance and the music come to an end. There is no applause (the Likay audience considering it unnecessary because of Likay's ceremonial function). The children bow and exit left. The orchestra then changes to a traditional Thai tune and female dancers, dressed in full-length chiffon evening gowns, perform a dance from the lakhon ram repertoire, this one being from "Lac Chalern Sri." The song is sung again from backstage over a microphone as the orchestra plays and the dancers dance. The lights continue to change as before. At the end, this time there is applause, the audience clearly aroused by the music, singing, dance, and light show.* The narrator announces the name of the play:

*This performance occurred half-way through my research observations. It was the first time I had heard such

Tung Ruang Thomg (Meeting the Golden Field) and the music changes to the samoe tune for the first actor's entrance.

An actor dressed in phra ek costume appears and dances to the movement of "graceful walking." It is announced over the loudspeakers that this is King Sin Too Tham Ruang. After dancing a few steps (which clears him from the entrance-way), he stops, makes a wai to the audience, and then continues his "graceful walking" in circular fashion to upstage center in front of the bench, where he turns and signals the orchestra to stop. The actor has already decided upon a tune and lyrics for his explanation of character and exposition. He begins. It is a soulful tune, the tarani kan saeng. The orchestra picks up the tune immediately, and the actor sings that: "Everybody thinks that a king is a happy man. But I am not. Because although I am a king, I live everyday with a broken heart." Then, swinging up and sitting on the bench, he begins the cheracha sam khamrong. He says, "My name is King Sin Too Tham Ruang. I am worried, because everyday the people of this capital are attacked by thieves. The name of the major thief is Roman. When I sent soldiers to kill Roman, Roman killed them all." He stands up, and then sings to the tune of the song mai, "I have made up my mind to disguise myself

responsive applause, previous performances marked by giving of leis with money as show of appreciation, but not the more generally expressive round of applause. However, applause tended to be much more prevalent in the Northeast of Thailand in contrast to other areas.

as a farmer and go to the country villages to try to find Roman." He dances gracefully off stage left, as the orchestra plays the pathom tune.

The music changes to the samoe and the next player dances on. He brings his hands together and makes a wai to the audience. The announcer says that this is Roman, that he is a good dancer of the "Horse Dance" (Ma Yong), and that he usually plays as a hero (phra ek), but tonight will play the villain. Roman dances around to the upstage position and sings. As he is singing, the backdrop begins to change. The scene had been an inner palace scene, painted in bright colors which glowed when lit by different colored lights. Rolled down in front of the previous scene (while Roman sings a plaintive tune, a phleng soi) is a backdrop depicting the country with a stream and waterfall. Roman sings that he loves Ruang Thong, but that she doesn't love him. He is afraid of everyone now that the king has ordered him killed. He repeats this in speech in the cheracha sam khamrong, and adds that the king has announced that if anyone can kill Roman, the king will pay 50,000 baht. The actor then changes to song again, and does the gestures for the "Horse Dance." He sings that he is going to see Ruang Thong, and the place is the Khao Pranong Cave, for that is where he lives. The music picks up and Roman gallops off, one musician playing the sound of hooves to accompany the dance.

Ruang Thong enters and moves through the same pattern.

She sings that her life is not good because she doesn't like Roman. Then, she says that she doesn't know why Roman loves her. She sings that she is on her way to see her father. She exits.

At this point, the narrator announces that the body is about to be cremated, so the audience will be given a chance to pay their last respects to the dead. The lights on the stage dim a little. The musicians disperse, and loud, mournful recorded music is played through the loudspeakers. About one-fourth of the audience (of around 500) moves toward the casket. Fireworks have been set up around the crematorium in which the casket has been placed in full view (figure 97).

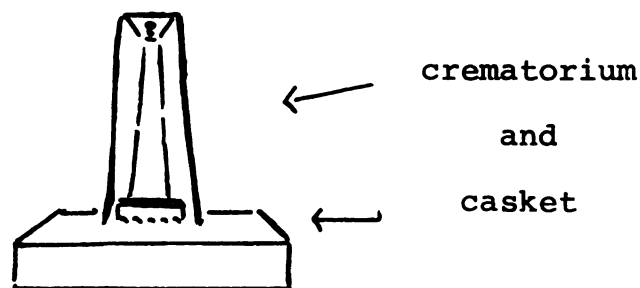


Figure 97. Crematorium and casket.

Logs are placed under the casket and sprayed with gasoline. The fire is lit and as the flames gather momentum, a monk's voice accompanies the music of mourning, singing: "The dead have gone, never, never to return." The fireworks are set off and light up the sky, rockets explode, sparklers whirl, and loud explosions synchopate the music. The spirit of

the dead is being released by these means, the fireworks being a gala "send-off." Through such a display, the dead, it is hoped, will not linger near the earth and become phi (ghost, or bad spirit). The fireworks help to insure that the spirit will not return. After the fireworks have subsided, and flames enshroud the casket, the orchestra returns to the stage and breaks into a traditional lakhon ram tune. Then, as the audience re-seats itself, the action of the play begins again.

Ruang Thong enters again. She sings that she is at her house waiting for her father. She knows that today Roman will come to take her away. Her father enters. (Another backdrop is rolled down. It is a city square.) He sings that his name is Tao Thip and that he is Ruang Thong's father. Then dialogue begins. Ruang Thong tells her father the problem about Roman, and her father tells her to leave the house before Roman comes. Ruang Thong begs her father to run away with her, but he says, "No," he must work hard in the fields and gardens. He exits.

Roman enters. (The backdrops are rolled back up to reveal the inner hall scene.) Roman moves to Ruang Thong and, using the overhead microphone, says that he wants to bring Ruang Thong back to his cave, adding that he will give her everything that she wants. Ruang Thong replies that she wants to stay with her father and that she doesn't want to go with Roman. Roman says that if she doesn't go with him, he'll apply an axe to her father. Roman exits



Figure 98. Fireworks lift the spirit heavenward.



Figure 99. The casket is burned.

stage right to wait for Ruang Thong's answer. Ruang Thong sings (directly out to the audience) that she is sorry because from this day on she will never see her father again. She will have to go with Roman. Roman re-enters. He sings that it is safe if Ruang Thong lives with him. They exit.

The story-teller, using the backstage microphone, says that the time has changed. It is now three months later.

Ruang Thong and Roman enter. The story-teller announces that Ruang Thong is now pregnant (backstage narration). Roman sings a lukthung (country song) about the joys of love. Ruang Thong sings, using the ranikloeng tune, that outside she looks happy, but inside she cries all the time. (The song is sung directly out to the audience.) Stopping the singing, she crosses to Roman and tells him that she is pregnant. Roman reacts with happiness and says that if he has a son, he will be a good man. He says that he didn't use to rob the village people, but he has a gun to protect himself. (He pulls out a pistol). He says that he wants to rob just one more time. He needs to rob, he says, because he doesn't have any money now and he wants to have some to give the baby. He says, "My hand is used to touching a gun. This will be the last touch." (The lights have been going up and down in intensity during this scene.) Roman says that he will rob a merchant or a man who gives gifts to the poor. Ruang Thong says, "Okay." Roman exits. When he has gone, Ruang Thong, in a speech to the audience,

says that she can't stay with Roman because of his (bad) habit. The story-teller narrates that Ruang Thong will write a letter. Ruang Thong takes out a piece of paper and mimes using a pen. As she writes, she sings that she will leave the cave. (The backdrop is still the inner hall scene in "royal" decoration here.) She continues, "When you have read this letter, stop. Don't follow. Although I leave you, I will never forget you." She puts the letter on the bench, turns, and with a last, sorrowful look at the cave, exits.

Roman enters. He is just back from the robbery and carries a brown brief case. He sees the letter, goes to it, picks it up, and reads it. As he reads it silently, Ruang Thong, using the backstage microphone, narrates what Roman is reading. As she does so, Roman moves to the bench and sits. He finishes reading and sings (using the tao thong tune) that he is grieving. He sings, "Why didn't you tell me if you didn't love me?" He gets up and crosses out.

Tao Thip enters, and Ruang Thong runs on to meet him. She carries a light airline bag, supposedly full of clothing. (The backdrop begins to change.) Tao Thip tells Ruang Thong that Roman is sure to follow her to the house. He warns her to leave and to go to the capital because in the capital there are many soldiers and police that can help her. (The backdrop finishes unwinding, revealing an outdoors view of village houses and a stream.) Ruang Thong exits.

Roman enters and approaches Tao Thip. Roman says to

him, "Don't be afraid, but tell me where Ruang Thong is." Tao Thip lies, telling Roman that she is on her way to a village nearby. (The name of a village close to the performance is used.) Roman kneels in supplication. He says that he knows that Ruang Thong hates him, but he loves her very much. Tao Thip replies that Ruang Thong has not come to the house and he doesn't know where she is. (Two mikes are used in this scene, one hand held, the other, overhead.) Tao Thip tells Roman that if Ruang Thong does go back to Roman, she must tell Tao Thip that she really loves Roman. Roman says that he feels sad when he thinks of the words in the letter. He becomes more menacing, and tells Tao Thip that he is sure that Ruang Thong has come to the house. He takes out his gun and shoots it in order to scare Tao Thip. (Real blanks are used.) Tao Thip reacts humorously. (He is a chok, in fact). (The music of the piphat orchestra builds dramatically, using the chai choet tune. Roman demands to hear the truth. He sings (using the ranikloeng tune), "I'm sure she's come here and I worry about Ruang Thong because I love her." At this point, a "mae yok" approaches the stage and signals that she wants to give Roman something. Roman crosses to the edge of the stage. The woman hands the actor a baht coin (\$.05). The actor takes it and goes back to the action. There is no wai or other sign of thanks from the actor.* Roman crosses back

*The poverty of the Northeast Region keeps gift giving at a minimum and one baht, or fruit, is not an uncommon

upstage. He sings, more angrily now, "I know that she must have come here, because I found Ruang Thong's handkerchief on the way!" He yells at Tao Thip that he has lied. Furiously, he grabs Tao Thip by the neck, and strangles him on the bench. Then, realizing what he has done, he becomes shocked by his own behavior. "Oh," he sings, "I have become a worse man than ever before because now I have killed my father-in-law." He grieves over the body of his father-in-law, lifts it up, and carries the body offstage. As he goes, he sings that he is going to follow Ruang Thong.

Ruang Thong enters. She is tired from walking. She slumps on the bench and takes the sleeping position which shows that she has gone to sleep. King Tham Ruang enters. He has disguised himself as a country person. (Still wearing his phra ek costumes, he has "disguised" himself by tying a pakhama around his waist, signifying that he has donned country apparel. The "pakhama" is simply a plaid cloth.) The king thinks that Ruang Thong is in some kind of trouble. He says that he doesn't know how to help her. She wakes up and sings that she is thinking of her father. She quickly gathers her things together in her bag. (The

gift. This is in contrast to the Central Region, where leis with ten, twenty, and one hundred baht notes are placed over the actor's heads. The presentation of leis, fruit, or money, may occur at any time during a performance, but usually occurs after a song, dance, or at an actor's initial entrance. The wai is the usual gesture of thanks. The lack of any "thank you," may reflect the actor's impatience of the timing of the gesture -- in the middle of a dramatic scene and/or the small amount given.

music picks up tempo with the action.) The king says, "Don't hurry," She replies, "I must." Ruang Thong tells the king that she is in a hurry because she is running away from Roman, a thief. The king replies that in fact he is in disguise. He is the king of the city where she is now and if Roman should follow her to the capital, he will kill him. He adds that he has fallen in love with her. Ruang Thong says that she cannot love him because she is pregnant already. The king asks, "Who is the father?" Ruang Thong replies that Roman is the father because she had to agree to marry him when he threatened her father's life. The king retorts that it wouldn't be safe for her to continue to try to run away. He says that he wants her to stay with him in the palace. Ruang Thong says that she will, if: 1) she will be queen after her baby is born, 2) the king must love and consider the baby as his own, and 3) the king must not tell anyone about her past life. The king replies that he wants her to forget about everything in her past life and to begin anew. They exit.

The foregoing introduces the main plot. The performance has run for almost two hours (including the cremation), and now the sub-plot is introduced.

A new actor enters dressed in phra ek costume. His name is Chetchawan, he sings, and he lives at a wat. He then performs a lengthy version of "graceful walking." As he is dancing, the story-teller says that this troupe performs traditional Likay. After finishing his dance, the

actor sings a lukthung (popular country song) and then a lukkhrung (popular modern song) entitled (in English) "I Love You More Than I Can Say." The lyrics are in Thai and are altered from the original version to say: "My love for you is beyond description. You are the best woman in the world. I will love you till my death. When I think about you, I cannot eat, sleep, or do anything."

When he finishes the song, an old woman moves forward to the stage and gives him a few baht. The actor wais her, and steps back upstage to sing another lukthung. When he finishes, he asks the audience not to blame him if his voice is not clear. He performs every night and that's the problem. He then goes into the cheracha sam khamrong, saying that he is indebted to the monk, his teacher, who taught him everything -- in terms of book knowledge as well as fighting. "I am a dek wat (temple boy)" he says, "and I am very poor." He then sings, "But now there is a television in the wat these days. As for me, I must go to see my friend Iboon."

A new actor enters. He is dressed in T-shirt and loose, calf-length trousers which indicate that he is a joker (chok). He tells the audience that his name is Iboon, and that if they would like him to sing a song, they should clap their hands. They do. He begins a lukthung. The narrator (story-teller, troupe manager) announces that his real name

is Sayan Sonya Noi^{*} and he performs under the name, Son of Saiyan. The lukthung is a love song. At the end of the song, he gives a deep wai to the audience. Then he goes to the side of the stage to receive money from a person whom he says is a phy yai ban (big man of the village). He is given one baht. "Such a lot of money!" he exclaims. "Oh, I will use it to play hilo" (a popular card game). He continues, "I am an orphan, but I have a friend. His name is Chetchawan and he loves Mattana. I think that they should go away together."

Chetchawan enters, hitting Iboon on the head with a maitakhap (slapstick). He hits Iboon's head again and then his genitals. Then he explains to the audience, using the Northeastern dialect, that he is Chetchawan. "People around here don't like us, because they know that we are poor dek wat (temple boys). But never mind. Who cares what people think!" Iboon tells Chetchawan that he should find a good job in the capital (Bangkok). Chetchawan replies that he knows the best job is that of a soldier. (The backdrop changes again, from village houses and a country stream, to a wat and street of modern houses.) Chetchawan says that he wants to test Iboon to see whether he is clever or foolish. If he is clever, Chetchawan says that he will go to the capital with Iboon and they both can become soldiers. Chetchawan says, "Count from one to ten, like this." He

* Saiyan Sonya is a famous Thai singer. Noi means the less-or, or smaller. In this case, son of.

starts, forgets, starts again. Iboon tries to help. Numbers get mixed up. Chetchawan gets angry. He hits Iboon again with the maitakhap. Iboon says a number. Chetchawan hits again. Again a number is given but in the wrong sequence. They continue the hitting and counting routine. Then, having had enough, Iboon says that they had better go to the field in front of the wat, because their teacher, the monk, has requested it. They exit.

A thirteen year old boy enters. He sings a short lukthung and is given one baht. He sings that he is an orphan. Et Dao is his name. He is in love with Buapen. He dances off.

Another joker enters. He wears an open vest and breeches. He moves downstage to the audience and says that the night before he played at Bak Chang (a nearby village). He smiles and flirts with the audience. Then he says that his name is Anao. He is an orphan, but he has friends. One friend is named Wisanu. Wisanu's mother's name is Kamluang. Wisanu likes joking very much. Anao is going to see Wisanu. He exits.

Wisanu enters, dressed in phra ek costume, singing that he is the best man in the village. He is Kamluang's son, he says. He must drink. (He has an empty beer bottle in his hand. He pretends to drink and sways drunkenly.) Anao comes on, meeting Wisanu. He tells Wisanu that Mattana wants to go to the wat because there will be a celebration. Wisanu says "never mind," he is no longer interested in

Mattana because Chetchawan is in love with her. They exit together.

Mattana enters in fluffy evening gown -- traditional Likay costume for women. She wais the audience and then sings that she is Mattana and that she has an older sister whose name is Sri Nuan. She says that she knows that she's not high class, especially "in this village." Her mother and father died years ago. She is in love with Chetchawan she says, but not Wisanu, because he drinks too much. Two other girls move onstage. They are in red chiffon dresses. Mattana wears yellow. One girl sings that her name is Sri-Nuan and that her friend's name is Sabai. She stops, moves downstage, and begins to sing a lukthung called "Sao Kun Son" (Girl of Kun Son -- a town in northeastern Thailand. Since the play appears to be set in northeastern Thailand, the song has some relevance to the production.) When she finishes, she says, "Good evening, everyone." She then says that she hates Chetchawan because she knows that Chetchawan is a poor person. Mattana tells her that it is time to go to the wat. They decide to go, and cross upstage and exit.

Two new actors enter, dressed in black. One says that his name is Tanan and that he is a thief under the command of Roman. He and his friend with him (a younger actor, clearly an apprentice in Likay) plan to stage a robbery at the celebration being held at the wat. They cross up and out.

Chetchawan, Iboon, Wisanu, Anao, Sri Nuan, Sabai, and

Mattana enter from the usual stage right. The women cluster there. The males are at stage left. Iboon tells them all that he wants to make some money for the wat in order to build a new temple. He says that they should stage a Ram-Wong (a modern Thai dance done in pairs or in a circle using the "walking" gestures of the lakhon ram). Mattana and Sri Nuan will dance with whomever pays in order to raise money for the wat. (This, a typical Thai fair attraction.) Chetchawan wants to dance with Mattana. Wisanu gets angry about this, saying that Chetchawan has no money. Iboon tries to intervene by stopping Chetchawan and they begin to fight. As they fight, the thieves enter from stage left and grab Mattana and Sri Nuan. Iboon and Chetchawan, seeing this, stop their fight and make a run to tackle the thieves. A tussle ensues, moving counter-clockwise. Chetchawan and Iboon manage to rescue Mattana and Sri Nuan from the grips of the thieves, but the thieves manage to escape stage left. The others run out after then.

Iboon and Sabai enter and cross to stage center. He says that he loves her "ever so much." He asks her to sing a love song for him and says that he will sing too. They start a phleng Thai, an improvised folk song between two lovers. He: "You are certainly a beautiful lady, but unfortunately, not as beautiful as my mother." She: "Yes, your mother is certainly beautiful. Also, it's unfortunate that she's a whore." He: "Yours is too, you know. She's a mia ban (literally, wife for the house). But never mind.

Right now I'd like to dig a hole."

At this point, Chetchawan and Mattana enter. Iboon goes to Mattana, takes her aside, and jokingly, tells Chetchawan to go wait outside while he takes care of Mattana. He pulls out a mat (that he had carried on and placed on the bench before singing the duet). He says to them both that he has a love potent that will make their marriage possible. They sit on the mat while Iboon goes upstage right and out, and crosses back on with a bottle. He places it on the mat. Mattana and Chetchawan tell the Sang Cha Mae (love potent) that they are in love.

Wisanu enters with a woman. She says that she's Mattana's mother. Her name is Sung On. She hates Chetchawan because she wants Mattana to marry Wisanu. Chetchawan has no money. She goes up to Chetchawan and says that if he wants to marry Mattana, she wants 100,000 baht (\$5,000). She laughs and says that she knows that Chetchawan has no money. She grabs Mattana and Sabai and they exit stage left.

Chetchawan sings (out to the audience) that he is a poor temple boy, like a dog, and that Mattana is a bright flower. He stops singing and says that he also has a scar on his head given to him by Wisanu. Anyway, he says, he will go to the capital to make the 100,000 baht to give Mattana. Iboon says that he is in the same boat, because he too has no money. He then sings a lukthung with lyrics to the effect that if a man wants to marry he should earn 100,000 baht. They exit.

Wisanu and Anao are on their way, they say, to the capital with Adao. They enter stage right and do the counter-clockwise circular movement indicating travel. When they reach upstage center, they mime seeing a wall (upstage). "There is a poster on the wall," Anao says. They go to look. As they are looking, the story-teller reads over the backstage microphone: "This paper can be used to wipe the bottom." They look at another. "If a man or woman from this village wants to wear underwear made of silk, they can buy some from this company." "Come on," Wisanu says. "We've got to get to the capital in time for the competition in swordsmanship where the king will select his soldiers." They cross around downstage center and exit stage left.

A new actress enters, dressed in traditional gown. She moves downstage and up to the singing position and sings that she is the daughter of Ruang Thong and the king. Her name is Amatatewee. She says that her father tells her at Pai Yan Village there is a very bad thief. She crosses left and exits.

The king enters. He says that now he needs more soldiers. He is a happy man because he has lived long with his queen (Ruang Thong). He crosses left and exits.

The king re-enters with Amantatewee, Chetchawan, Iboon, Wisanu, Anao, and Adao. The king asks their names. They do the name routine, which means that Iboon, Anao and Adao, being clowns, have last names like Lum (forget), Khrai (who),

or Aray (what).⁴² When the king asks Iboon, the exchange goes as follows:

King: What's your name?

Iboon: Lum (forget).

King: What? (aray na? (Adao's last name)).

Adao: Yes?

King: What's his name?

Adao: Lum. (forget).

King: Khon lum, la? (You forget, do you?)

Adao: Mai lum, khrap. (No, I don't forget, Sir.)

King: Then what's his name?!

Adao: Lum, khrap!

King: What!!? (Aray!!?)

Adao: Yes, Yes (Krap. Krap.)

King: WHAT'S HIS NAME?!

Ado: LUM, KHRAP! LUM, KHRAP! (Forget, Sir! Forget, Sir!)

King: (To Iboon again.) What's your name?!?

Iboon: Lum, khrap. Iboon Lum, khrap. (Forget, Sir. Iboon forgets, Sir.).

King: Oh!

With a moan, the king gives up the process of finding out Iboon's name and starts on Adao. The whole process repeats itself with Khrai (who).

⁴²The "name routine" is what I have called the comic routine using Thai words as proper names that is seen repeatedly in Likay. The "names" may differ in each performance, but the routine remains the same.

So the performance continues, with a heady combination of comic routine, romance, and pathos. Chethchawan wins the swordsmanship contest and is made a general. He then falls in love with Amantatewee.

Roman is brought back into the plot. He has continued as a thief for the past eighteen years and, still searching for Ruang Thong, has recently found out that she may be in fact the queen. He can't believe this, so determines to meet her. He manages to do so, and Ruang Thong says that she'll never go back. She tells him that she miscarried when asked about the child. Roman, furious, strikes her, but the king intervenes in time and soldiers, with guns blazing, follow after Roman.⁴³

Chetchawan and the princess have a "love scene" wherein they declare their love for one another. The joker-soldiers do the "Bump" downstage while the lovers speak upstage. They announce their love to the king, who tells Chetchawan that he may marry the princess if he can kill Roman. Chetchawan and the soldiers exit to search for Roman.

They come to Sri Nuan's and Mattana's "house." The women play in the upstage area. The men mime knocking at the door, using the downstage area as the street. The

⁴³The king intervenes with a sword. The soldiers use guns. This is an example of how Likay typically mixes time periods. Similarly, the traditional costumes of the king and hero are mixed with the modern attire of the joker-soldiers. The joker-soldiers have not changed costume when becoming soldiers, but remain in the clownish garb which marks them as such.

women are fearful, and hide in a tunnel (they climb onto the bench). Conversation ensues, and Sri Nuan says that at 2:00 A.M. she will signal and a soldier may come to sleep with her. At 2:00 A.M. there is a scramble to see who will be able to get into the house. Chetchawan wins and, seeing Mattana, sleeps with her. Sri Nuan assumes the "sleeping pose" as do Chetchawan and Mattana. She then tells Chetchawan that she has 100,000 baht, has waited for him for a long time, and now he can marry her. In reply, he sings a lukthung, "The Last Kiss."⁴⁴ Sound effects are made backstage over the microphone -- the sounds of birds chirping, signifying morning. Chetchawan goes on his way with the joker-soldiers.

Wisanu enters, says that he's a guard at the palace, and exits stage left.

The king meets Ruang Thong and Ruang Thong tells him that she is fearful because now Roman knows that she is queen and may expose her past. The king comforts her, saying that her past will remain a secret. They exit left.

Wisanu enters and, meeting the princess, says that he loves her and that they are of the same status. The princess, shocked, repulses his advances, and runs offstage

⁴⁴The lukthung used here is related to the plot and its meaning is that this will be the last time that they are together, Chetchawan's affections going to the princess. The song reveals the character's intention and is not, according to convention, heard by the other characters onstage, but is for the audience's benefit.

left, Wisanu following. He returns with the king, and tells the princess that she has done a wicked thing, that she is in the court to serve the king, and that she is a "blackbird" (a term signifying low birth). The princess, very upset, exits left.

Ruang Thong decides that she must tell her daughter everything, and does so, saying that the king has gone back on his promise. She tells the princess to still respect the king as her father. Amantatewee, crushed at the news, falls asleep on the bench as Ruang Thong sings that she loves her daughter now as much as in the past. (A lukthung). Ruang Thong says that now she must run away because the secret is out and she does not want to shame the king. She sits and writes a letter (similar to the one she wrote to Roman). She sings the words as she writes, saying that it breaks her heart to go, but that she must. She exits left.

The princess wakes to find the letter. The king enters, says that everything that Ruang Thong has told her is true. (Ruang Thong has signed her old name.) The king assures Amantatewee that he "loves her like his eyes."

The next scene returns to Sri Nuan and Mattana. They are counting money, are robbed and kidnapped by Tanna, the robber-aid of Roman. They are brought to Roman, who is sympathetic to Mattana. Mattana however, is furious, and asks Roman what he thinks he's doing holding her up, since she helped him in the past. Roman says that he wanted to persuade her to be his wife in the past, but that she

wouldn't be persuaded. Mattana, exhausted, goes to sleep on the bench. While Roman is out, Tanna crosses to Mattana, lifts her up, and carries her out, stage left.

Mattana enters again, her clothes askew, and says that she thinks Roman slept with her. Angrily she accuses him of it. He denies it, saying that he is an upright thief and wouldn't do such a thing. He tells Mattana to go home, he'll deal with the culprit. She exits. He signals his men with shots from his pistol. They run in. He accuses Tanna, and after a brief tussle, Tanna confesses. Roman tells him to "go." Tanna does so.

Chetchawan meets Mattana and she tells him that he must find a new woman because she has been "dirtied" by one of Roman's men. Chetchawan asks her to show him and his men Roman's cave. She says that she will, and then return home to wait for Chetchawan.

Roman and his men enter and Chetchawan and his men meet them. They battle, using swords and traditional, patterned choreography. Roman escapes.

Ruang Thong enters. She is tired from walking and takes the "sleeping pose" on the bench. A tiger (an actor in tiger costume) enters and mauls her. However, a gorilla enters and fights with the tiger. The tiger races off-stage and into the audience. The gorilla follows. Ruang Thong picks herself up, and limps off-stage. The animals chase back up onto the stage and exit, stage left.

Roman enters, saying that he has escaped from the

soldiers. Ruang Thong enters, and Roman sees that she is injured. She tells Roman that she had to leave the palace because her secret was out. Their daughter is still living in the palace, she says. She would like to see her, but she wants to die in Roman's cave. Roman sees that in fact she is dying, and sings a song of grief using the ranikloeng tune. He sings that he is sorry that he could not help his wife. He says that if he had his wife's magic spirit, he would go to the next life and be happy. The piphat changes the tune to a cremation ceremony tune. The phi sound is woe-ful. Roman says that from this day the village is named Ruang Thong. He sings a song to the phleng mon tune, picks up Ruang Thong's body, and carries it off stage left.

Roman goes to the king and asks to see his daughter. The king refuses and they fight. Roman defeats the king and meets the princess. There is a flash of recognition. Says Roman, "You look like Ruang Thong." The princess then realizes that, in fact, Roman is her father. The piphat changes again to sorrowful cremation music as background. The king tells the princess that she will have to make a decision: "Who is the better father?" Roman says that he wants to hear her say but one word, "Father." The princess says that she has waited for him for a long time, but she cannot say this to him because she is the daughter of the king. (The narrator, on backstage microphone, says that she will decide.) She sings. The drums of the piphat reverberate here, the rhythm mounts, increasing tension and pathos. The king,

she sings, has nourished her and cared for her. He has been a father. Roman sings that he wants her to look into his eyes. "The king has asked for one of two ways. Do you want to be the sun, or do you want to be the moon?" The princess says that she decides to be the sun. She chooses the king. She will let her father go. Roman turns and exits right. The princess and king are on alone. She stand silent, and in tears. The hurt of rejecting her real father has been immense. She turns out to the audience and says that she does this because she thinks of the institution of the nation and the king. They exit left.

Chetchawan and the joker-soldiers cross, singing the traditional marriage song, "Chao Bao -- Chao Sao" (Bride and Groom). Marriage plans are in the making, says Chetchawan. The wedding day is being planned. They exit left.

Wisanu enters and says that he hates Chetchawan for winning the love of the princess. Out.

The soldier-jokers enter and Chetchawan enters. The princess enters as well, and sits to the right of Chetchawan on the upstage bench. The king enters "to prepare the marriage ceremony," he says. Wisanu enters suddenly, and going directly to the king, says that he wants to tell him something. Just as suddently, Roman enters and shoots Wisanu. Wisanu collapses. Everyone is stunned. Roman says that only the princess can arrest him. He turns to her and says that once again, he asks her to say that one word: "Father." They exit together, stage left, and re-enter

stage right.⁴⁵ He asks the princess why she hates him. She does not answer. He shoots into the air and exits alone.

Chetchawan and Roman enter again. Roman has been persuaded to put down his gun and give himself up. Chetchawan has it. He says that he should punish Roman, but finds it difficult because of the past which has tied them together. Chetchawan says that people can punish Roman on three grounds: 1) as a robber, 2) as a rapist, 3) as a man who tried to doom the princess and therefore tried to destroy the institution of the king. Because of these things, says Chetchawan, the best way to punish him is to kill him. At this, the princess collapses in the king's arms. Chetchawan and the joker-soldiers exit with Roman.

The princess revives, and pleads with the king to help Roman because she doesn't want her father killed. The king agrees. They exit rapidly stage left.

Chetchawan enters, holding a gun on Roman. (The back-drop changes to out-of-doors.) Chetchawan says that he must kill Roman because of the Law. Chetchawan asks Roman if he wants anything after he dies. The soldiers tie black cloth around his hands and eyes. Roman says that he wants Chetchawan to bring his body to the hole near Ruang Thong's grave. The soldiers line up for the execution. (It is

⁴⁵The passage out and back here indicates passage of time. They have been talking together longer than the stage time.

actually dawn by this time, the sun just edging its way up. Executions in Thailand happen at just this time. The whole scene is played with mounting tension timed to the dawning sun). The soldiers fire. Roman falls.

The king and princess run on. It is too late. Roman is dying. (Recorded music begins to play.) The king looks away as Roman makes his dying speech. Roman simply looks at the princess and says, "My daughter." He slumps, and dies. The princess cries over the body. The soldiers cover Roman's body with a blanket. Chetchawan tells the soldiers to take the body to the grave beside Ruang Thong. The princess, hysterical, blames everyone for Roman's death, especially the king. She runs off left. The others follow.

They enter again. The princess is with Chetchawan and the joker-soldiers. They comfort her. She tells them all that she didn't know that Roman was her real father.

The actors wai the audience indicating that the performance is over.

The performance over, the audience (which by now has dwindled to about two hundred) do not applaud, but simply wake their children or friends sleeping on mats and wrapped in sweaters or blankets in the cool morning air, roll up the mats, and hazily make their way down the lane leading from the wat. They will go home, eat, sleep some more, or immediately get ready for school or work in the fields.

The Likay actors bustle about, packing up the rishi head, the garments, jewelry, and make up. The musicians

heave their instruments onto the top of the truck. The crew and some of the actors remove all scenery, lighting, and sound equipment from the stage, leaving it as it was found, an empty structure waiting to receive the life of the next Likay troupe.

* * *

The sample performance above illustrates how Likay is a unique blend of traditional and modern elements. It has been noted earlier under the heading "Play Themes and Structure," that a basic story-line for Likay is the abduction of a woman from the country by a robber-kidnapper, her presence to be found later in a royal household, her lover conducting a life-long search for re-union with her. In this performance, the basic plot-line is altered, as is typical for Likay. The robber-thief becomes the lover as well, and the abduction to the city and the palace is not an abduction at all, but a rescue. In combining the traditional role of the hero in search of his beloved with the role of the robber-abductor, the character gains much depth, and the story tilts from the standard story of a royal household to find its base setting within the country, incorporating major themes with which country people can identify, i.e., that of poverty, the need to obtain money somehow -- by robbery or by becoming soldiers, or by going to the capital to find work. The sub-plot produces the traditional Likay hero in the form of Chetchawan, although consistent with the slant of the production, he is not a prince leav-

ing the wat upon completion of his studies, but in fact, a poor temple boy (dek wat). Again, the attempt of the troupe to relate story and characters to the audience may be discerned. The introduction of many teenage country people in the plot gives the adolescent members of the audience something with which they can identify. The plot-line also suggests that they can improve their status by joining with government, i.e., the king's forces, and working for the king's interests. Further, that need for commitment to the king and the nation should override natural family bonds, as implicit in the princesses rejection of her father. Likewise, when Chetchawan decrees that Roman must be executed, he surmounts his natural instincts toward Roman, and he executes Roman in the name of a "higher law" related to the king and country.

It can be said then that the major explicit theme is, in the performance cited, that of the need to support the nation, king, the law, and that upward mobility is achieved through such service and all that is connected with it, that is, government service, and that to accomplish it, a move to "the capital," or urban area is often necessary. Beneath the more explicit message, is another, communicated on the level of affect. That is, the hardship of life and the cruel working of a fate that brings anguish and suffering. This can be said to be the Buddhistic motif. Roman and Chetchawan have the same basis in poverty and are ostracized from a society which they wish to manipulate in

order to bring relief from such hardship and suffering. They choose different ways however. Roman chooses the anti-social, and Chetchawan, raised in the temple and having been taught by monks, chooses the social. Thus, the Buddhistic motif is combined with a secular pattern for salvation, i. e., work for king and country. Such a message is the leit-motif of Likay, occurring to a greater or lesser extent in every performance.

In the midst of this basically serious plot, are plenty of comic goings-on, the joker-soldiers being an integral comic element, keeping the story light when it tends to get too serious.

APPENDIX B

LOCATIONS WHERE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

1. Angthorn
2. Ayutthaya
3. Bangkok (Kreungthep)
4. Chainat
5. Chaingmai
6. Chonburi
7. Kanchanaburi
8. Lopburi
9. Nakonpathom
10. Nakonratchasima
11. Nakonsawan
12. Nonburi
13. Nong Khai
14. Petchaburi
15. Pichit (Tapan Hin)
16. Phitsanulok
17. Prachuapkhirikan (Banburi)
18. Ratburi
19. Singburi
20. Suphanburi
21. Thonburi
22. Ubonratchasima
23. Udon Thani

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR ACTORS AND MANAGERS

1. Name.
2. Name of troupe. How many members are there in the troupe?
3. Place of performing. Homebase of troupe.
4. Age of person.
5. Sex.
6. How long have you performed in Likay?
7. What role do you usually perform?
8. How did you get interested in Likay as a career?
9. Who taught you to play in Likay?
10. Are you married/ How many children have you?
11. Do you have relatives in this troupe?
12. Do you have relatives in other troupes?
13. Were your parents involved with Likay? Are they now?
14. What is the address of this khana?
15. Do you play only with this troupe, or do you play with other troupes too?
16. What is the farthest you have travelled to play Likay?
17. What is the farthest that this troupe has travelled to play Likay?
18. What is it that you like about playing Likay? Why do you like to play in Likay?
19. How much do you earn for one performance?
20. How often do you perform?

21. Do you have any other occupation?
22. What value do you think Likay has for Thai people?
23. Do you think that Likay will continue to be popular for a long time? Why?
24. Do you own your own costume?
25. How much is the value of each costume? What is the value of all the costumes you own?
26. Where did you buy your costume?
27. Why do you perform with this troupe? What especially do you like about it?
28. What is your education? Where did you study?
29. What do you think will happen to Likay in the future? Why do you think that Likay will continue to be popular?
30. How much does this troupe charge per performance?
31. Does this troupe perform mostly new or mostly old stories?
32. How much do you/ does the troupe earn when performing in March, April, and May? How much the other months?

For Managers

33. How long have you managed Likay?
34. Do you usually supply the story, or do some of the other actors?
35. What is the cost of the scenery and lighting equipment?

APPENDIX D

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

A. Poetic Forms

1. What poetic forms are usually used in Likay?
2. How are they formed? Are there translations available?

B. Signals

What signals are used

1. to start the music?
2. to stop the music?
3. to speed up the music?
4. to slow down the music?
5. to indicate what particular song will be sung?
6. to indicate that a dance will be inserted?

C. Terms

Are there special names for any Likay conventions:

1. in the movement?
2. in speaking?
3. in the singing?
4. in the acting?
5. in the comic routines?
6. in the music?
7. in the plot or structure of Likay performances?
8. in the structure of the stage, set, and performance building?

D. Actor's Choice of Songs

1. What governs the choice?
2. What are the names of the songs you like to use and their mood?
3. What is the name for the tune used when first entering? For other entrances?

E. Instrumentation-names and function.

F. The thua lakhon (dramatic gesture) -- How many are used and what does each look like?

G. Training

1. How does a training session begin?
2. What is the ritual action that the student-to-be performs? What is its significance?
3. How does training usually proceed? Step by step.
4. When does the student start practicing verse?
dance? singing? actual performance? How long is the usual training?

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS FOR MUSICIANS

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you live? What's your address?
4. What instrument or instruments do you play?
5. How long have you been playing it/them?
6. Where did you learn to play the instrument(s)? How long did you study it/them?
7. What instrument do you play most?
8. Do you play for other troupes? Where are they located?
9. How much do you earn per each performance? How much do you earn per month?
10. How often do you perform?
11. Do you have any other occupation?
12. Are you married? How many children do you have?
13. How many songs can you play?
14. How many tunes do you usually play in the prelude?
 - a. What are their names? How are they different?
 - b. When do you play foreign tunes in the prelude?
 - c. What foreign tunes are commonly used?
15. What are the different kinds of music used in the Likay performance?
 - a. What is the name of different speeds or rhythms?
 - b. What are the names of tunes accompanying the actor's movement or dance, such as:

1. When the actor makes his first appearance on stage?
2. When the actor has fast movements such as running, fighting? What tune is used for an actor's later entrances?
3. What tune is used to accompany crying, grief, sadness?
4. What tunes is used for sudden change, such as transformation of characters or a physical change, the disappearance of a character, or the appearance of a supernatural power?
5. What tune is played for surprise or shock?
6. What tunes are played for sleeping?
7. What lakhon ram tunes accompany the dances, such as:
 - a. the horse and horse-riding dance?
 - b. the sword fighting?
 - c. the kris dance?
 - d. the axe dance?
8. What are the names of the lakhon ram tunes used for singing? What emotion do they express? How many are used in each performance?
9. What other Likay tunes do you typically play? What are their names? When are they used?
10. Do you use any tunes from other traditional entertainments such as the lamtat, or khon, or hun krabok, or others?

16. What value do you think Likay has for Thai people?
17. What is the cost of the instruments used in the piphat orchestra of this troupe?

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FOR AUDIENCE MEMBERS

1. What is your age?
2. What is your sex?
3. What work do you do?
4. How much do you earn?
5. What religion are you?
6. In what province do you live?
7. In which province were you born?
8. How much schooling have you?
9. How often do you go to see Likay?
10. Do you ever give gifts to the actors or actresses?
11. Do you know any of the actors personally?
12. Do you go to Likay to see a favorite troupe?
13. Do you go to Likay to see a favorite actor or actress?
14. Do you go to Likay to see a famous actor or actress?
15. Where do you usually see Likay? at a wat? at the market? at other festivals? anywhere else?
16. How do you know when and where Likay will be performing?
17. At what age did you first see Likay?
18. Do you usually come to see Likay alone or with others?
19. What part of Likay do you like most: the singing? the dancing? the story? the acting? the joking? the costumes? the special effects?
20. What character do you like most: the phra ek? the nang ek? the kong? the chok? others?

21. What kind of stories do you prefer, old stories or new ones?
22. Do you prefer love stories, or stories of kings and battles?
23. Do you prefer funny stories, sad stories, or stories which are both sad and funny?
24. Do you prefer polite comedy or comedy which is coarse?
25. Do you prefer the singing or the speaking?
26. Do you know most of the stories by heart?
27. What story that Likay uses do you like most? Why?
28. Do you stay until the end of the performance?
29. Do you talk or think about the performance after it is over?
30. If the story ends and the villain wins, how do you feel?
31. What kind of ending do you like to see?
32. What do you think about the costumes of the actors?
Do you like them? What kind of costumes do you like to see?
Old or new fashions?
33. Do you like the actors to speak about actual situations in life, or do you prefer them to speak about things historical?
34. Why do you come to see Likay? Is it important to you?
35. What other entertainments do you enjoy, such as movies, television, radio, ramtat, mawlam, ngieu? Others?
36. Do you think Likay will continue to be popular in the future? Why?

APPENDIX G

RESULTS OF AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

(In Regional Categories) N=North, NE=Northeast,
C=Central, S=South

Do you have a favorite troupe?

N. 16% NE. 30% C. 10% S. 6%

Do you have a favorite actor?

N. 16% NE. 25% C. 16% S. 7%

Character Preference

Phra Ek: N. 9% NE. 10% C. 8% S. 18% = 45%

Nang Ek: N. 8% NE. 5% C. 2% S. 6% = 25%

Kong: N. 0% NE. 2% C. 2% S. 0% = 4%

Chok: N. 8% NE. 8% C. 9% S. 1% = 29%

Kinds of Stories Preferred

Old: N. 18% NE. 19% C. 15% S. 11% = 63%

New: N. 7% NE. 6% C. 10% S. 14% = 37%

Emphasis Placed Upon Historical Events:

N. 14% NE. 16% C. 20% S. 12% = 62%

Emphasis Placed Upon Real Life Present Day Situations

N. 11% NE. 9% C. 5% S. 13% = 38%

Theatrical Mode

Sad: N. 2% NE. 3% C. 4% S. 7% = 16%

Comic: N. 5% NE. 3% C. 3% S. 9% = 20%

Sad-Comic: N.16% NE.16% C.15% S. 7% = 44%

Historical-Battle (Epic)

N. 2% NE. 3% C. 3% S. 2% = 10%

Preferred Stylistic Approach

Presentational Elements Emphasized (performing outside the action of the story): N. 7% NE. 7% C. 3% S. 9% = 26%

Representational Elements Emphasized (performing within the action of the story): N. 18% NE. 18% C. 22% S. 16% = 74%

Content Preference

Singing: N. 9% NE. 8% C. 11% S. 4% = 32%

Dancing: N. 3% NE. 4% C. 4% S. 3% = 14%

Acting/Comic Routine: N. 12% NE. 13% C. 10% S. 12% = 47%

Costumes: N. 1% NE. 0% C. 0% S. 5% = 6%

Scenic Effects: N. 0% NE. 0% C. 0% S. 1% = 1%

Reaction to Likay

Think about the show after the performance:

N. 11% NE. 5% C. 8% S. 10% = 34%

Think about the show in relation to life:

N. 7% NE. 3% C. 5% S. 4% = 19%

Think about the artsitry of the performance:

N. 4% NE. 2% C. 3% S. 6% = 15%

Audience Reaction as to the Function of Likay

Educational-Contributes to General Knowledge

N. 10% NE. 3% C. 0% S. 2% = 15%

Moral-Contributes to Good Morals

N. 7% NE. 8% C. 0% S. 0% = 15%

Esthetic-Its purpose is to Create Pleasure.

N. 8% NE. 18% C. 25% S. 21% = 72%

Artistic-It is a true Thai art form:

N. 18% NE. 20% C. 10% S. 0% = 48%

Entertainment-Its simply another form of entertainment:

N. 7% NE. 20% C. 15% S. 25%

Audience Reaction as to the Future of Likay

Likay will continue to prosper.

Yes: N. 22% NE. 24% C. 12% S. 20%

No: N. 0% NE. 0% C. 0% S. 0%

Don't No: N. 3% NE. 1% C. 13% S. 5%

Likay will continue to prosper because:

N. It is part of Thai art and tradition. 18%

It is good entertainment and it makes people happy. 4%

NE. It is an important Thai art and part of the national

tradition. 20%

C. It is Thai art. 10%

It is adaptive, so can change with audience

interests. 10%

S. The audience seems to like it and, while there is

interest in it, it will last. 6%

As long as there is nothing else to do, Likay will

continue to entertain. 10%

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