

The Preliminary Course of Training in Thai Theatrical Art

THAI CULTURE, NEW SERIES No. 13



THE PRELIMINARY COURSE OF TRAINING IN THAI THEATRICAL ART

BY
DHANIT YUPHO



PUBLISHED BY
THE FINE ARTS DEPARTMENT
BANGKOK, THAILAND
B.E. 2558



Dancers

“Nāng” Female Chāra^cter
Miss Nuengnud Keha

“Phra” Male Chāra^cter
Miss Srisukon Buaiam

Preface

Thailand is very rich in precious arts and cultural heritage which represents a long-lasting independence, prosperity and stability of the country. These various fields of heritage have been preserved, accumulated and inherited throughout generations until the present. This legacy brings pride, dignity and prestige to Thai people. Therefore, it should be shared with the world so that Thai wisdom can be appreciated.

The Fine Arts Department is responsible for the preservation, promotion, transmission and dissemination of arts and culture of the Thai nation. As such it has compiled and published a book series of 25 volumes written by experts in their respective fields. Their areas of knowledge include artistic works, architecture, music and dramatic arts as well as language and literature. Each series has been reprinted from time to time. In this publication, there are no alterations to the contents* although some illustrations have been added for the benefit of the readers.

The Department hopes that this series of books will be a resource among the international community to help them understand Thailand better through its unique arts and culture.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Mr. Borvovnvate Rungrujee	Director General of the Fine Arts Department
Dr. Pirapon Pisnupong	Deputy Director General of the Fine Arts Department
Mrs. Sunisa Chitrbandh	Deputy Director General of the Fine Arts Department
Mr. Sahabhum Bhumtittarat	Deputy Director General of the Fine Arts Department
Mr. Boonteun Srivorapot	Director of the Office of Literature and History
Mr. Pakorn Pornpisut	Director of the Office of the Performing Arts
Miss Suporn Rattanapong	Director of the Central Administrative Office

EDITORIAL BOARD

Mr. Chaovalit Soontranon	Miss Sukolrat Tharasak
Mrs. Phornphan Thongtan	Mr. Charat Singhadechakul
Dr. Pairoj Thongkumsuk	Mrs. Preawdao Promraksa
Miss. Vanpinee Sooksom	Mrs. Supornthip Suparakul
Mrs. Varanee Niamsorn	Mrs. Ratchanee Ngamchareon
Miss Rujira Chaikhampa	Mrs. Kamonchanok Pornpassakorn
Miss Siriporn Deeying	Miss Darapha Muangtawee

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mr. Singkhom Bourisuth	Mr. Thawatchai Ramanatta
Mr. Narongsak Sutawan	Mr. Navee Pongkarnjana
Miss. Nuda Pintan	

GRAPHIC EDITOR

Mr. Tanakorn Kamsap

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Mr. Weerayut Nartchaiyo

PUBLISHED BY

The Fine Arts Department, Na Phra That Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel. 0 2224 2050, 0 2222 0934

PRINTED BY

Rungsilp Printing Company Limited
85-95 Mahanakorn Road, Bangrak, Bangkok 10500, Thailand,
Tel. 0-2236-0058, 0-2266-5486 Fax. 0-2238-4028

(Mr. Borvornvate Rungrujee)
Director General
The Fine Arts Department

THE PRELIMINARY COURSE OF TRAINING IN THAI THEATRICAL ART

FIRST EDITION 1952

SECOND EDITION 1954

THIRD EDITION 1960

FOURTH EDITION 1963

FIFTH EDITION 1969

SIXTH EDITION 1971

SEVENTH EDITION 1980

EIGHTH EDITION 1990

NINTH EDITION 2015

SEPTEMBER, 2015 (B.E. 2558)

ISBN 978-616-283-206-2



MR. DHANIT YUPHO

was Director General of the Fine Arts Department from 1956 to 1968. He was born in Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand, in 1907, and learned Pali at Wat Mahathat, Bangkok, in 1918. He was also a graduate of the ecclesiastical doctorate of Thailand. He entered into the government service in 1934 and became Chief of the Research Section of the National Library in 1943. He was the Director of the Division of Music and Drama in the Fine Arts Department from 1946 to 1956. Mr. Yupho was also a lecturer in the history of Thai literature at Chulalongkorn University. He was the editor of Thai Culture, New Series and the author of the following publications:

The Economic Conditions of India in the Buddha's Time; The Khōn; The Classical Siamese Theatre; Artists of the Thai Dance-Dramas or Lakhon Vol. I; The Preliminary Course of Training in Thai Theatrical Art; Thai Musical Instruments; The Khōn and Lakhon Presented by the Department of Fine Arts, etc.







THE PRELIMINARY COURSE OF TRAINING IN THAI THEATRICAL ART

Masked plays, dance-dramas and Thai ballets are considered to be the classical forms of histrionic art which are peculiar to the Thai and are the symbols of their original and highly developed civilization. The artists who can perform well have not only to be intelligent but must also be trained. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy too has said “It is the action, not the actor, which is essential to dramatic art. Under these conditions, of course, there is no room for any amateur upon the stage. In fact the amateur does not exist in Oriental Art.” (Mirror of Gesture p. 3). The classical theatrical art of the Thai is typical of the cultivated art of the East and requires good training for its skillful execution. It cannot be staged off-hand at the pleasure of the actors. Furthermore even skilled exponents of this art who are out of practice begin to deteriorate.

For want of attention, Thai theatrical art fell into decay for some time till in 1945, when the World War was drawing to an end. The Department of Fine Arts drew up a plan to revive the national arts of drama and music and one of its important proposals was to establish a school to teach the arts. Then, after peace was concluded, the department hastened to open the school, prescribe an advanced course of studies and take in students who had completed primary education. The students received a general education as well as training in theatrical art. The school, however, attaches more importance to the latter and in this article I shall therefore deal with only that part of their education. But it is difficult to describe without the aid of ocular demonstration and the readers may find it difficult to follow.





Fig. 1

Usually training is given in theatrical art every afternoon throughout the term. There are both boys and girls among the students. Boys who wish to learn the art of acting in masked plays are sent to the teachers of that art for selection. Then they are trained to play the part of hero (Phra), heroine (Nāng), demon or monkey according to their fitness. Students who have been selected to act demons or monkeys begin by learning the “Mae Thā” (แม่ท่า). Mothers of Postures, which will be explained later on.* But the boys who have been selected to learn the parts of heroes, namely, Phra Rām and Phra Lak-- who are also known respectively as the major hero and the minor hero those of the heroines, namely, Sīdā and Monthō-- who are also known respectively as the major heroine and the minor heroine, begin by learning “Ram Phleng” (รำเพลง), Dancing to music, just like girls who learn to take part in ballets. Girls who will learn to perform dance-dramas and ballets are placed in the charge of the teachers of those forms of art and are divided into two groups, namely, those who will act the parts of male characters and those who will act the parts of female characters because, though executed to the same music, the acting of each group is of a distinct kind.

* eg. The Khōn (Masked Play) No. 6 in this series.

When the students have been divided into groups they begin to learn on a Thursday, the Teacher’s Day. At first they are asked to kneel down, keep the bodies erect, open their hands and lay them, palms down, on the thighs. Then they are taught to resume the posture distinguished by five features, namely, keeping the head, the shoulders, the trunk and the waist erect and the hands fully stretched. In other words, they are trained to sit erect with expanded chests. (See fig. 1 and also notice the differences between the posture of the male and the female characters.)

Then they are taught to indicate the rhythm of their own movements by singing together “chā-chong-chā-thing-chong-thing” etc. (See musical examples 1 and 5)

Vocal Part chā chong chā thing chong thing

(1)

Sing :- chā chong chā thing chong thing

Tune

Vocal Part chā chong chā thing chong thing
 chā chong chā thing chong thing
 chā chong chā thing chong thing
 chā chong chā thing chong thing

(5) PHLENG CHA (LOW TUNE) SROI SON

Sing :- chā chong chā thing chong thing

chā chong chā thing chong thing
 chā chong chā thing chong thing
 chā chong chā thing chong thing



These sounds which are sung to indicate the rhythm are understood to have been adopted from the notes of the Tapone (ตะโพน), a kind of drum used in the “Piphāt band” to indicate the rhythm of what is called, not very accurately, “Phleng Chā” (เพลงช้า), Slow Tune. The strokes on the Tapone which accompany the Phleng Chā are indicated in musical example No. 7

(7) PHLENG CHĀ

Tune

Tapone

phring phring phring tup pa tup phring phring tup
 phring phring phring tup pa tup phring phring tup
 phring phring phring tup pa tup phring phring tup phring

(7) PHLENG CHĀ (SLOW TUNE)

Then the students learn to place their hands on the upper parts of their thighs, raise their seats, start and sway their waists slightly. Doing like this is called Krathop Changwa (กระตบจิ่งหวะ), “Beating the Rhythm”, and is meant to train the students, from the very outset, to recognize the rhythm.

When the students have learnt Krathop Changwa the teacher claps the hands, rattles or castanets and sings examples 1 and 7 to indicate the rhythm and teaches the students to dance. At this stages the students bend their fingers back, raise the palms of their hands a little above their thighs and sway their bodies, now to the right and now to the left. This part of the dance is called “Klom” (กล่อม). (See fig.2)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3





Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Then the students are asked to manipulate the fingers of their right hands as shown in **fig. 3**. After that they slowly raise their hands up to their breasts in salutation, (See **fig. 4**) and then bow and raise their hands above their heads like a person slowly doing homage to a king. (See **fig. 5**)

Afterwards they raise one of the knees and bring it forward, stretch the arms and bend one of the hands towards the head. This posture is called “Krai Khün Thā” (กรายขึ้นท่า). (See **fig. 6**)

Subsequently they begin to stand up and move rhythmically, executing various figures of which there must be more than ten. It has been noticed, however, that even students who very well remember every one of the figures take about one hour to execute all the figures. So it is surmised that there must be a great many of them.

The students have to practise dancing and singing in this way for not less than one term before they can dance all the figures executed to the Phleng Chā keeping to the correct rhythm. It is said that some students have no sense of rhythm and that even though they can dance in company with others, they often make mistakes in rhythm and move out of harmony with the rest.

When the students have learnt the rhythm to the notes of the Tapone, they change to “Lai Noi” (ไล่น้อย) that is to say, learning the rhythm of the “Sroi Son” (สร้อยสน) tune which is a variety of the Phleng Chā. (See example No. 2)

At this stage the students are trained to dance together and at the same time indicate the rhythm by singing “cha-chong-cha-thing-chong- thing” (ชะ-จ้อง-ชะ-ติง-จ้อง-ติง) and sometime the Lai Noi till the teacher finds the students can dance readily and correctly to the rhythm of the Phleng Chā. Then the students are trained to dance to the “Phleng Reo” (เพลงเร็ว), Quick Tune, imitating, at the same time, the notes of Tapone which the mouth thus; tup thing thing (ตูป. ติง. ติง) etc. (See example 3, 4 and 6)

(2) PHLENG CHĀ (SROI SON)

Vocal Part

noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi
noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi
noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi
noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi

(2) PHLENG CHĀ (SLOW TUNE) SROI SON

Musical score for Phleng Chā (Slow Tune) Sroi Son. It consists of four staves of music in 2/4 time, marked 'Sing' and 'SROI SON'. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi noi' are written below the notes.

(3) PHLENG REO

Vocal Part

tup thing thing tup thing thing
tup thing thing tup thing thing

Musical score for Phleng Reo (3). It consists of one staff of music in 2/4 time, marked 'Sing' and 'PHLENG REO'. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'tup thing thing tup thing thing' are written below the notes.

(4) PHLENG REO (QUICK TUNE)

Musical score for Phleng Reo (Quick Tune). It consists of four staves of music in 2/4 time, marked 'Sing' and 'PHLENG REO'. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'tup thing thing tup thing thing' are written below the notes.

(6) PHLENG REO

Tune

Vocal Part

tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing
tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing
tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing
tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing tup thing thing

(6) PHLENG REO (QUICK TUNE)

Musical score for Phleng Reo (Quick Tune). It consists of six staves of music in 2/4 time, marked 'Sing' and 'PHLENG REO'. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'tup thing thing tup thing thing' are written below the notes.

During this period in which the students are trained for many months to dance to Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo, the teacher sometimes demonstrates the movements and postures in order that the students may remember and imitate them. The students do so sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly. If their hands and feet do not look graceful, the teacher bends them to the required shape. Sometimes the students are also asked to tap the knees, knock the waists with their elbows and move their necks in order to learn to move rhythmically in the same way as in training for the Khōn. They are trained like this every day till the teacher considers they can dance to Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo tunes conforming correctly to the rhythm indicated by their singing. Later on they practise dancing to the music of the xylophone. One has to practise for about a year to be able to dance to Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo readily and correctly, and even longer to dance to them very well.



Movements of trained dancers have become such criterions of beauty that even the movements of women who have not learned to dance but walk rhythmically have been praised as comparable to the former. For instance Sudeshna (a king of gods) in Madanabādhā praised Madanā (a nymph) thus:

“Her hands are like the trunk of the heavenly elephant ridden by the king of gods. Her movements are like those in a dance.”

But some persons who have been learning to dance till old age are unable to dance well. In fact a student who learns to dance from the time he or she is eight to ten years old is generally able to dance better than one who begins to learn when older, say fifteen or sixteen years of age, unless the latter really has a talent for dancing.

Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo are known together as “Phleng Nā Phāt” (เพลงหน้าพาทย์), that is to say, instrumental music. Formerly, while training boys and girls to dance, vocal music was not used at the preliminary stage.

The method followed by teachers of old has been merely to teach the, basic figures of Thai dancing. For, as a matter of fact, students who can dance well to Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo can really acquit themselves with credit on the Thai stage. But usually when one had gained proficiency in dancing to Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo one was taught to dance to other items of instrumental music of the elementary grade like “Choet” (เชิด), “Smoe” (เสมอ), “Rua” (รัว) and “La” (ลา).

The above is only as much as I am able to relate. But what I have learnt by actual observation is, I feel, more difficult to describe and write about. In the case of some of the items I do not know how to write intelligibly, so I write briefly leaving out much of the information.

When the students are able to dance to items of instrumental music of the elementary grade, they are taught to interpret histrionically, words, generally those in the composition known as “Mae Bot” (แม่บท), The Alphabet of Dancing, which is sung to the tune of “Phleng Chom Talāt” (เพลงชมตลาด), The Song describing the Market.* There are two versions of the alphabet. The first which is a short list of the evolution used in Thai dancing, is found in the episode of “The Destruction of Nonthuk by Phra Nārai”** in the Rāmakien composed by King Rāma I. It is as follows***:-

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Thep-pranom | <i>The Salutation of the celestials.</i> |
| 2. Pra-thom | <i>The preliminary movement.</i> |
| 3. Phrom sī-nā | <i>The four-faced Phrom.</i> |
| 4. Sot Soi Mālā | <i>Stringing a garland.</i> |
| 5. Kwāng Doen Dong | <i>The stag walking in the forest.</i> |
| 6. Hong Bin | <i>The swan in flight.</i> |
| 7. Kinnarin Liap Tham | <i>The kinnon walks around the cave.</i> |
| 8. Chā Nāng Non | <i>Singing the lady to sleep.</i> |
| 9. Phamon Khlaio | <i>The bee caresses the flower.</i> |
| 10. Khaek-Tao | <i>The cockatoo.</i> |
| 11. Phā Lā Phiang Lai | <i>The hillock reaching only up to the shoulder.</i> |
| 12. Mekhalā Yon Kaeo | <i>Mekhalā tosses her gem.</i> |
| 13. Mayuret Fon | <i>The peacock dances.</i> |
| 14. Yot Tong Tong Lorn | <i>The wind sways the tops of plantain leaves.</i> |
| 15. Phrom Nimit | <i>Phrom's creation.</i> |
| 16. Phisamai Riāng Mon | <i>Wedded love.</i> |
| 17. Yia thā | <i>Changing the posture.</i> |
| 18. Mačhchā Chom SāKhon | <i>The fish plays in the ocean.</i> |
| 19. Phra sī-kon Khwāng Chak | <i>Phra Nārai hurls the discus.</i> |

* Formerly the “Phra Thong” tune was used for this purpose.

** This Episode was filmed by the Fine Arts Department, entitled “The Diamond Finger.”

*** Many of these expressions have been borrowed from the translation of H.H. Prince Dhanivat Kromamün Bidyalābh Bridhyākorn .



THAI VERSES

(1) Thep-Pranom, Pra-thom, Phrom Sī-nā, Sot Soi Mālā (choet chin),(thang) Kwāng Doen Dong, Hong Bin,Kinnarin Liap Tham (amphai).

(2) (īk) Chā Nāng Non, Phamon Khlao,Khaek Tao, Pha La Phiang Lai, Mekhala Yon Kao (waeo wai), Mayuret Fon (nai amphon),

(3) Yot Tong Tong Lom, Phrom Nimit, (īk thang) Phisamai Riāng Mon, Yai Thā, Mačhchā Chom SāKhon, Phra Sī-Kon Khwāng Chak (ritthirong).

(see scores 8 and 9)

The second is a comprehensive list of the evolutions which H.R.H. the late Prince Damrong had taken the trouble to obtain and include in his book “Tamrā Fon Ram” (ตำราฟ้อนรำ), Treatise on Dramaturgy, published by the Vajirañān Library. It mentions the following:-

1. Thep-pranom	<i>The Salutation of the celestials.*</i>
2. Pra-thom	<i>The preliminary movement.</i>
3. Phrom sī-nā	<i>The four-faced Phrom.</i>
4. Sot Soi Mālā	<i>Stringing a garland.</i>
5. Chā Nāng Non	<i>Singing the lady to sleep.</i>
6. PhāLāPhiang Lai	<i>The hillock reaching only up to the shoulder.</i>
7. Phisamai Riāng Mon	<i>Wedded love.</i>
8. Kang-han Ron	<i>The blades of the windmill in motion.</i>
9. Khaektao Khao Rang	<i>The cockatoo retires into its nest.</i>
10. Kratai Chom Čhan	<i>The hare admires the moon</i>
11. Čhan Song Klot	<i>The moon is invested with the halo</i>
12. Phra Rot Yon Sān	<i>Phra Rot throws an epistle.**</i>
13. Mān Klap Lang	<i>The Evil One turns his back.</i>
14. Yuang Krai	<i>Walking gracefully.</i>

15. Chui Chai Khao Wang

16. Mangkon Riak Kao
Mučhalin

17. Kinnon Ram

18. Chāng Prasān Ngā

19. Phra Rām Kong Sin

20. Phamon Khlao

21. Mačhchā Chom Wārin

22. Long Lai Dai Sin

23. Hong Linlā

24. To Len Hāng

25. Nāng Klom Tua

26. Ram Yua

27. Chak Paeng Phat Nā

28. Lom Phat Yot Tong

29. Bang Phra Suriyā

30. Herā Len Nam

31. Bua Chu Fak

32. Nākhā Muan Hāng

33. Kwāng Doen Dong

34. Phra Nārai Kwang Čhak

35. Chāng Wān Yā

36. Hanumān Phlān Yak

37. Phra Lak Phlaeng Rit

38. Kinnon Fon Fūng

39. Yūng Fon Hāng

40. Khat a Čhang Nang

41. Thā Nai Sārathī

42. Traven Vehā

43. Khī Mā Tī Khlī

44. Tī Thon Yon Thap

Swaggering into the palace.

The dragon demands the gem from Mučhalin.

The Kinnon dances.

Elephants lock their tusks (in fight).

Phra Rām bends the bow.

The bee caresses (the flower).

The fish enjoys itself in the ocean.

Completely infatuated.

The swan walks gracefully.

The lion plays with its tail.

The lady sways from side to side.

Lascivious dancing.

Crushing talc (cosmetics).

The wind sways the top of plantain leaves.

Keeping out the sun.

The Hera (a kind of dragon) sports in the water.

The lotus plant raises its pod.

The serpent coils its tail.

The stag walks in the forest.

Phra Nārai hurls his discus.

The elephant scatters the grass.

Hanumān kills the ogre.

Phra Lak displays his prowess.*

The Kinnon dances in a group.

The peacock dances spreading its tail.

The cross.

The posture of the Charioteer.

Patrolling the sky.

Playing polo.

Beating the drums

* Many of these expression have been borrowed from the translation of H.H. Prince Dhanivat Kromamūn Bidyalābh Bridhyākorn.

** Phra Rot = Prince Rothasen, see story in The Khōn and Lakhon by Dhanit Yupho, pp. 85-90.



CHOM TALAT

(8)

Andante Moderato

THIỆP ... PÁA HỒM ... PÁA THỒM ... PHƯỜM ... ỒI.
 THIỆP ... KHẸNG ĐỒM ... ĐỒM ... ỒI ... HỒM ...
 ỚI ... CHÁ ... VẮNG HỒM ... ỒI ... PHƯỜM ...
 HỀ ... HỀ ... LÁ ... TỜM KỂ ... ỒI ... ỚI ...
 TỜ ... TỜM ... TỜM ... LỜM ... ỒI ... PHƯỜM ... HỀ ...
 VAI ... THÁ ... HẠCH ... ỒI ... CỜM ... ỒI ...

ỒI ... ĐỒI ... ĐỒI ... HỀ ... LÁ ... ỒI ... ỚI ...
 ỚI ... ỒI ... ỒI ... ỚI ... ỚI ... ỚI ... ỚI ...
 HỀ ... HỀ ... ỚI ... HỀ ... LÁ ... ỒI ... PHƯỜM ...
 HỀ ... HỀ ... ỚI ... HỀ ... ỚI ... ỚI ... ỚI ...
 HỀ ... ỚI ... THẦM ... HỀ ... HỀ ... ỚI ... HỀ ...
 HỀ ... HỀ ... ỚI ... HỀ ... HỀ ... HỀ ... ỚI ...

TO RITORNELLO
 PHƯỜM ... ỒI ...
 LỜ ... ỚI ...
 PHƯỜM ... ỒI ...
 HỒM ... ỚI ...
 ĐỒM ... ỒI ...

(9) CHOM TALAT (RITORNELLO)

Andante Moderato

45. Ngū Khwāng Khon

*The snake throws its body forward
(as if it were throwing a hammer).*

46. Ram Krabī Sī Thā

Four postures of the rapier-dance.

47. Chīn Sao Sai

The Chinese disembowels himself.

48. Chanī Rai Mai
tree.

The gibbon swings from tree to

49. Mekhalā Lo Kaeo

Mekhalā tosses her gem.

50. Kinnon Liap Tham

The Kinnon walks around

51. Nang Nā Fai

the cave.

52. Sua Thamlai Hāng

*The shadow play Character
who is always blamed for trouble
The tiger destroys the hunter's
cottage.*

53. Chāng Thamlai Rong

The elephant destroys the stable.

54. Čhong Kraben Tī Lek

*Tucking up the loose ends of the
loin-cloth and hammering iron.*



55. Thaeng Visai	<i>Guardian deities fight with spears.</i>
56. Klot Phra Sumen	<i>Reaching out to Meru mountain.</i>
57. Khrua-wan Phan Mai	<i>The creeper twists itself around the tree.</i>
58. Pralai-Wāt	<i>The storm of universal destruction.</i>
59. Yang Khit Prakrit Tham	<i>Inventing.</i>
60. Krawat Klao	<i>Doing up the hair.</i>
61. Khī Mā Liap Khai	<i>Riding the horse and inspecting the camp.</i>
62. Kratai Tong Raeo cave.	<i>The hare caught in the trap Khlaeo Tham escapes into the</i>
63. Chak So Sām Sai violin.	<i>Playing on the three stringed</i>
64. Yai Lam Nam	<i>Changing the song.</i>

Dancing to the “alphabet” of either version is a model of Thai theatrical art which our ancestors have been able to preserve for us by handing it down from generation to generation, at least from the time when Ayudhyā was the capital of Thailand, and is learnt from the verses of King Rāma IV which give its history thus:-

*“The story of Phra Narai destroying Nonthuk,
At the beginning of Treta Age,
Was one that had come down from ancient times
When it reached Ayudhyā.”*

In fact the greater part of the “Alphabet of Dancing” has been adopted from the evolutions which accompany Phleng Chā and Phleng Reo to which the students learn to dance at the beginning. But while interpreting words histrionically some more postures and gestures were found necessary to make the spectators understand the words better. So they were either invented outright or adapted from those already executed to Phleng Chā, Phleng Reo and other items of instrumental music of the elementary grade. Thus the introduction of the histrionic interpretation of words amounts to fixing their meanings by the movements and gestures, and, reciprocally, the first occasion in which the hitherto nameless movements and gestures were made to conform to the names given to them now in the same manner as the evolutions of Indian dancing which are provided with names in the “Nātya-sātra” of the sage Bharata. I understand

that formerly the names were used for giving the students a general idea of the evolutions. For instance, the teacher would tell them that “Sot Soi Mālā” referred to the movements of stringing a garland and how the students should execute them to make them appear beautiful, or, again, how to execute the figure “The stag walks in the forest” beautifully. Then the students would be able to use their imagination and understand what was required of them. Thus in the case of the latter figure they have to remember that by nature the stage is timid and cautious and walks looking to the left and to the right. A poet has compared this to the shy behaviour of maidens saying;

*“Saw a stag walking gracefully glancing
sidelong like young women who wait upon
a king with his sword and articles of toilet.”*

If the students learn guiding facts like this and use their imagination, they can form a mental picture of a stag walking in the forest and represent it with their movements and gestures which need not be alike provided they are beautiful. For instance, Thai artistes formerly represented the stag walking in the forest by spreading both the hands and bringing the palms to the front. But now they stretch the forefingers and middle fingers out, clench the others, stretch the arms down till the palms are level with the seats, invert the hands so as to bring the palms below, raise the first and second fingers up till they are level with the waists and move them from side to and up and down alternately. But the artistes of India clench the first, second and third fingers, and stretch the thumbs and little fingers out. That is their way of representing the stag walking in the forest. We cannot say whose representation of the figure, ours or theirs, is more correct since technique depends upon personal taste, guided by the artistic tradition, customs, manners and beliefs of one’s nation, So, in spite of such mannerisms of the dancers all representations of a figure according to its name are satisfactory, provided that the spectators can recognize their purport and their beauty from the point of view of art. So I understand that the names of these figures were formerly used by the teachers merely to help the students in inventing the appropriate movements and gestures by themselves, according to the injunction “Dance with your head.” But some well-informed persons have objected to this. They say the evolutions which have names from the alphabet of dancing are



correct only when they are performed according to rules. But the objection can be correct only for the time subsequent to that in which the rules become stereotyped. When their names have come to be interpreted in a stereotyped manner, to execute them differently has, of course, been considered incorrect. Thus teaching the theatrical art has come to mean training the students to remember the evolutions, that is to say, training their memory more than their imagination. But the practice is beneficial too, since without it the old way of executing the figures named in the lists would have been changed beyond recognition, if not forgotten altogether, and would not have come down to us in the forms in which they were prevalent during the Ayudhyā period.

A COMPREHENSIVE LIST* OF FIGURES WHICH FORM THE ALPHABET OF THE DANCING

1. Thep-pranom	The salutation of the celestials.
2. Pra-thom	The preliminary movement.
3. Phrom Sī-nā	The four-faced Phrom.
4. Sot Soi Mālā	Stringing a garland.
5. Chā Nāng Non	Singing the lady to sleep.
6. Phā Lā Phiang Lai	The hillock reaching only up to The shoulder.
7. Phisamai Riang Mon	Wedded love.
8. Kang-han Ron	The blades of the windmill in motion.
9. Khaektao Khao Rang	The cockatoo retires into its nest.
10. Kratai Chom Čhan	The hare admires the moon.
11. Phra Čhan Song Klot	The moon is invested with the halo.
12. Phra Rot Yon Sān	Phra Rot throws on epistle.
13. Čho Ploeng Kān	Lighting the fire of universal destruction.
14. Mān Klap Lang	The Evit One turns his back.
15. Phrom Nimit	Phrom's creation.

16. Yuang Krai	Walking gracefully.
17. Chui Čhāi Khao Wang	Swaggerring into the palace.
18. Mangkon Len Nam	The dragon sports in the water.
19. Kinnon Ram	The Kinnon dances.
20. Čhāng Prasān Ngā	Elephants lock their tusks (in fight).
21. Phra Ram Kong Son	Phra Ram bends the bow.
22. Phamon Khlaio	The bee caresses the flower.
23. Yai Thā	Changing the posture.
24. Mačchā Chom	The fish disports in the ocean.
25. Long Lai Dai Sin	Sākhon
26. Hong Linlā	Completely infatuated.
27. Sing-to Len Hāng	The swan walks gracefully.
28. Nāng Klom Tua	The lion plays with its tail.
29. Ram Yua	The lady sways from side to side.
30. Čhāk Paeng Phat Nā	Lascivious dancing.
31. Lom Phat Yot Tong	Crushing talc (cosmetics).
32. Bang Phra Suriyā	The wind sways the tops of plantain leaves.
33. Herā Len Nam	Keeping out the sun.
34. Bua Čhū Fak	The Hera (a kind of dragon) sports in water.
35. Nākhā Muan Hāng	The Lotus plant raises its pod.
36. Kwāng Doen Dong	The serpent coils its tail.
37. Nārai Kwāng Čhak	The stag walks in the forest.
38. Čhāng Sabat Yā	God Nārai hurls His discus.
39. Hanumān Phlān Yak	The elephant strikes its legs with a bunch of grass (to free the latter from earth etc.).
40. Phra Lak Phlaeng Rit	Hanumān destroys the demon.
41. Kinnon Fon O	Phra Lak displays his prowess.
42. Nok Yūng Fon Hāng	The Kinnon dances gracefully.
43. Khat Čhāng Nāng	The peacock dances spreading its tail.
44. Sārathī Čhak Rot	The cross.
	The Čhārioteer drives the Čhāriot.

* Please see the Picture of the evolution in this book.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 45. Traven Vehā | Patrolling the sky. |
| 46. Khī Mā Tī Khī | Playing polo. |
| 47. Tī Thon Yon Thap | Beating the drums. |
| 48. Ngū Khwāng Khon | The snake throws its body forward
(as if it were throwing a hammer). |
| 49. Chak Krabī sī Thā | The four postures for unsheathing
a rapier. |
| 50. Čhīn Sao Sai | The Chinese disembowels himself. |
| 51. Chanī Rai Mai | The gibbon swings from tree
to tree. |
| 52. Khōn Thing Ok | Khon beats his breast.* |
| 53. Mekhalā Yon Kaeo | Mekhalā tosses her gem. |
| 54. Kinnon Liap Tham | The Kinnon walks around
the cave. |
| 55. Nang Na Fai | The shadow play Character
who is always blamed for trouble. |
| 56. Sua Thamlai Hāng | The tiger destroys the hunter's
cottage. |
| 57. Čhāng Thamlai Rong | The elephant destroys the stable. |
| 58. Čhong Kraben Tī Lek | Tucking up the loose end of the
loin-cloth and hammering iron. |
| 59. Visai Thaeng Trī | The guardian deities fight with
tridents. |
| 60. Čharot Phra Sumen | Reaching the Sumeru mountain. |
| 61. Grua-wan Phan Mai | The creeper twists itself around
the tree. |
| 62. Yuang Phai Kathin | The oar-sweep of a boat in
a Kathin procession. |
| 63. Pralai-wāt | The storm of universal
destruction. |
| 64. Yang Khit Pradit Ram | Still inventing a dance. |
| 65. Krawat Klao | Doing up the hair. |
| 66. Khī Mā Liap Khai | Riding the horse and inspecting
the camp. |
| 67. Kratai Tong Raeo | The hare is caught in the trap. |
| 68. Chak So Sām Sai | Playing on the three-stringed
violin. |



* Khon is name of a Demon Prince.



THE ACCOMPANYING ILLUSTRATIONS OF POSTURES



เทพปรนอม

Thep-pranom
The salutation of the celestials



ประถม

Pra-thom
The preliminary movement



พรมสี่หน้า

Phrom Si-nā
The four-faced Phrom



สอดสร้อยมาลา

Sot Soi Mālā
Stringing a garland



ช้านางนอน

Chā Nāng Non
Singing the Lady to sleep



พาลาเพียง ไหล่

Phā Lā Phiang Lai
The hillock reaching only up to the shoulder.



พิสมัยเรียงหมอน

Phisamai Riang Mon
Wedded love



กังหันร่อน

Kang-han Ron
The blades of the windmill in motion



แขกเต้าเข้ารัง

Khaektao Khao Rang
The cockatoo refires into its nest





กระต่ายชมจันทร์

Kratai Chom Čan
The hare admires the moon



พระจันทร์ทรงกรด

Phra Čan Song Klot
The moon is invested with the halo



พระรถโยนสาร

Phra Rot Yon Sān
Phra Rot throws an epistle



จ๋อเพลิงกาล

Čho Ploeng Kān
Lighting the fire of universal destruction



มารกลับหลัง

Mān Klap Lang
The Evil One turns his back



พรหมนิมิต

Phrom Nimit
Phrom 's creation



เยื้องกราย

Yuang Krai
Walking gracefully



ดูยฉายเข้าวัง

Chui Čhai Khao Wang
Swaggering into the palace



มังกรเล่นน้ำ

Mangkon Len Nam
The dragon sports in the water





กัณนรรำ (ก)

Kinnon Ram A
The Kinnon dances



กัณนรรำ (ข)

Kinnon Ram B
The Kinnon dances



ช้างประสานงา

Chāng Prasān Ngā
Elephants lock their tusks (in fight)



พระรามโค้งศร

Phra Rām Kong Son
Phra Rām bends the bow



ภมรเคล้า

Phamon Khlao
The bee caresses the flower



ย้ายท่า

Yai Thā
Chānging the posture



มัจฉาชมสมุทร

Mačchā Chom SāKhon
The fish disports in the ocean



หลงไหลได้สิ้น

Long Lai Dai Sin
Completely infatuated



หงส์ลีนลา

Hong Linlā
The swan walks gracefully



สิงโตเล่นหาง

Sing-to Len Hāng
The lion play with its tail



นางกล่อมตัว

Nāng Klom Tua
The lady sways from side to side



รำยั่ว

Ram Yua
Lascivious dancing



ชกแป้งผัดหน้า

Chak Paeng Phat Nā
Crushing talc (cosmetics)



ลมพัดยอดตอง

Lom Phat Yot Tong
The wind sways the tops of plantain leaves



บังพระสุริยา

Bang Phra Suriya
Keeping out the sun



เหราเล่นน้ำ

Herā Len Nam
The Hera (a kind of dragon) sports in water



บัวชูฝัก (ก)

Bua Chū Fak A
The Lotus plant raises its pod



บัวชูฝัก (ข)

Bua Chū Fak B
The Lotus plant raises its pod





นาคาม้วนหาง

Nākhā Muan Hāng
The serpent coils its tail



กวางเดินดง (ก)

Kwāng Doen Dong A
The Stag walks in the forest



กวางเดินดง (ข)

Kwāng Doen Dong B
The stag walks in the forest



นารายณ์ขว้างจักร

Nārai Kwang Chak
God Nārai hurls His discus



ช้างสะบัดหญ้า

Chāng Sabat Yā
The elephant strikes its legs with a bunch of grass
(to free the latter from earth etc.)



หนุมานผลาญยักษ์

Hanumān Phlān Yak
Hanumān destroys the demon



พระลักษมณ์แผลงฤทธิ์

Phra Lak Phlaeng Rit
Phra Lak displays his prowess



กัณทรฟ้อนโอ

Kinnon Fon O
The kinnon dances gracefully



นกยูงฟ้อนหาง

Nok Yūng Fon Hāng
The peacock dances spreading its tail





ซัดจางนาง

Khat Chāng Nāng
The cross



สารสิทธิ์จักรรถ

Sarathī Chak Rot
The Charioteer drives the Chariot



ตระเวนเวหา

Traven Vehā
Patrolling the sky



ขี่ม้าตีคี่ลี

Khī Mā Tī Khli
Playing polo



ตีโทนโยนทับ

Tī Thon Yon Thap
Beating the drums



งูขว้างค้อน (ก)

Ngū Khwāng Khon A
The snake throws its body forward
(as if it were throwing a hammer)



งูขว้างค้อน (ข)

Ngū Khwāng Khon B
The snake throws its body forward
(as if it were throwing a hammer)



ชักกระบี่สี่ท่า

Chak Krabi Sī Thā
The four postures for unsheathing a rapier



จีนสาวไส้

Chīn Sao Sai
The Chinese disembowels himself





ชะนีร่ายไม้

Chānī Rai Mai
The gibbon swing from tree to tree



ขอนทิ้งอก

Khon Thing Ok
Khon beats his breast



เมขลาโยนแก้ว

Mekhalā Yon Kao
Mekhalā tosses her gem



กัณนรเลียบบถ้ำ

Kinnon Liap Tham
The Kinnon walks around the cave



หนังหน้าไฟ

Nang Nā Fai
The shadow play character
who is always blamed for trouble



เสือทำลายห้าง

Sua Thamlai Hāng
The tiger destroys the hunter's cottage



ช้างทำลายโรง

Chāng Thamlai Rong
The elephant destroys the stable



โจงกระเบนตีเหล็ก

Chong Kraben Ti Lek
Tucking up the loose
end of the loin-cloth and hammering iron



วิไสยแทงตรี

Visai Thaeng Tri
The guardian deities fight with tridents





จรดพระสุเมรุ

Charot Phra Sumen
Reaching the Sumeru mountain



เครือวัลย์พันไม้

Krua-wan Phan Mai
The creeper twists itself around the tree



เอื้องพายุกฐิน

Yuang Phai Kathin
The oar-sweep of a boat in a Kathin procession



ประลัยวาท

Pralai-wat
The storm of universal destruction



ยังคิดประดิษฐ์รำ

Yang Khit Phradit Ram
Still inventing a dance



กระหวัดเกล้า

Krawat Klao
Doing up the hair



ขี่ม้าเลียบค่าย

Khi Mā Liap Khai
Riding the horse and inspecting the camp



กระต่ายตองแร้ว

Kratai Tong Raeo
The hare is caught in the trap



ชักขอสามสาย

Chak So Sām Sai
Playing on the three-stringed violin



THAI CULTURE, NEW SERIES

Already Published

1. INTRODUCING CULTURAL THAILAND IN OUTLINE
by Phya Anuman Rajadhon
2. THE ROYAL MONASTERIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE
by Luang Boribal Buribhand & A.B. Griswold
3. SHADOW PLAY (The Nan)
by H.H. Prince Dhaninivat Kromamün Bidyalabh Bridhyākorn
4. THAI BUDDHIST ART (ARCHITECTURE)
by Professor Silpa Bhirasri
5. THAI LACQUER WORKS
by Professor Silpa Bhirasri
6. THE KHŌN
by H.H. Prince Dhaninivat Kromamün Bidyalabh Bridhyākorn & Dhanit Yupho
7. KHŌN MASKS
by Dhanit Yupho
8. CONTEMPORARY ART IN THAILAND
by Professor Silpa Bhirasri
9. THAI LITERATURE IN RELATION TO THE DIFFUSION OF HER CULTURES
by Phya Anuman Rajadhon
10. THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE THAI LANGUAGE
by Phya Anuman Rajadhon
11. THE CUSTOM AND RITE OF PAYING HOMAGE TO TEACHERS OF KHŌN, LAKHON AND PIPHAT
by Dhanit Yupho
12. THAI WOOD CARVINGS
by Professor Silpa Bhirasri
13. THE PRELIMINARY COURSE OF TRAINING IN THAI THEATRICAL ART
by Dhanit Yupho
14. THAI TRADITIONAL SALUTATION
by Phya Anuman Rajadhon
15. THAI MUSIC
by Phra Chen Duriyanga
16. THAI MUSIC IN WESTERN NOTATION
by Phra Chen Duriyanga
17. AN APPRECIATION OF SUKHOTHAI ART
by Professor Silpa Bhirasri
18. THAI IMAGES OF THE BUDDHA
by Luang Boribal Buribhand & A.B. Griswold
19. WHAT IS A BUDDHA IMAGE?
by A.B. Griswold
20. THAI TRADITIONAL PAINTING
by Elizabeth Lyons
21. THET MAHĀ CHĀT
by Phya Anuman Rajadhon
22. THE TOSACHĀT IN THAI PAINTING
by Elizabeth Lyons
23. THE ROYAL PALACES
by H.H. Prince Dhaninivat Kromamün Bidyalabh Bridhyākorn
24. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN THAILAND
by Dhanit Yupho
25. DHARMAKAKRA OR THE WHEEL OF THE LAW
by Dhanit Yupho



