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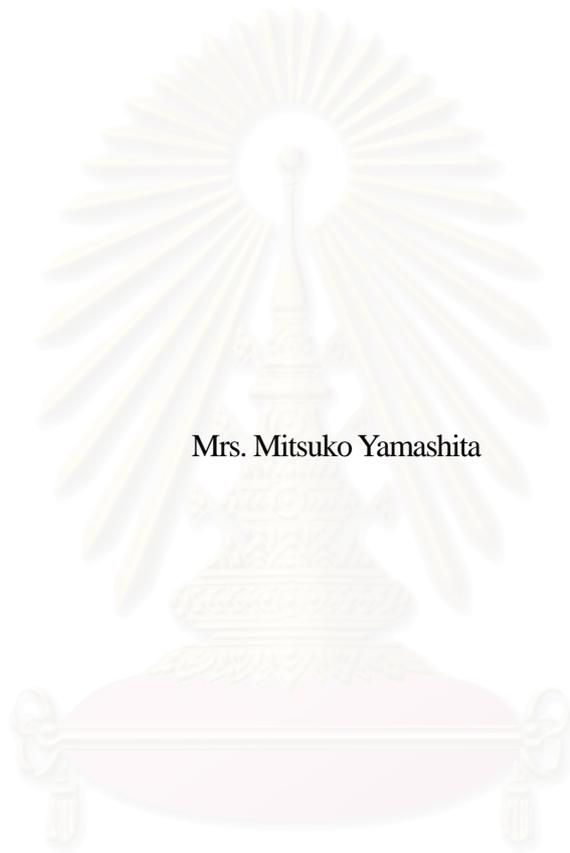
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**THE SURVIVAL OF THE JOE LOUIS THEATER : THEATER MANAGEMENT**



Mrs. Mitsuko Yamashita

สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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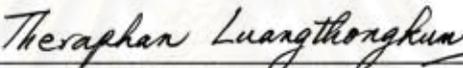
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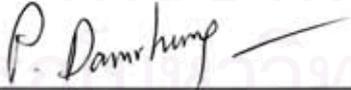
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วิทยานิพนธ์เรื่องนี้ เป็นการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีในการจัดการคณะละคร ซึ่งมุ่งประเด็นไปที่ ความอยู่รอดของคณะละครหุ่นโจหลุยส์ในช่วงทศวรรษที่ผ่านมา รวมทั้งศึกษาปัจจัยอื่นๆ ที่ทำให้โรงละครแห่งนี้ยังดำรงอยู่ได้ แม้ในเวลาที่ยากลำบาก หุ่นละครเล็ก เป็นการแสดงหุ่นประเภทหนึ่งในหลายประเภทของไทย หุ่นประเภทนี้เกิดขึ้นเมื่อราว ๑๐๐ ปีที่ผ่านมา คณะละครโจหลุยส์ จัดเสนอการแสดงหุ่นละครเล็กอย่างสม่ำเสมอ ณ โรงละครในเขตชุมชนเมือง มีชื่อเสียงแพร่หลายเป็นที่รู้จักและยอมรับทั้งในและต่างประเทศ ตามชนบทแล้วคณะหุ่นของไทยนั้นจะมีแสดงกันตามวาระโอกาสต่างๆ เช่น งานศพ เป็นต้น แต่คณะละครหุ่นโจหลุยส์ ทำสิ่งที่แตกต่างจากวาระการแสดงแบบดั้งเดิม นั่นคือเปิดการแสดง ในลักษณะที่เป็นแบบ “ธุรกิจการค้า”.

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ ได้พบว่า โรงละครโจหลุยส์ ใช้กลวิธีการจัดการคณะละครแบบสมัยใหม่ ที่เปลี่ยนแปลงคณะละครเล็กๆแบบครอบครัวให้มีการจัดการบริหารในแบบบริษัท มีการจัดระบบโครงสร้างองค์กรอย่างมีลำดับชั้นตอน อันประกอบด้วย คณะกรรมการบริหาร ผู้จัดการศิลปะ และคณะทำงานที่เน้นด้านธุรกิจ โดยใช้กลยุทธ์ทางการตลาดที่เรียกว่า 4 P ได้แก่ Place (ทำเลที่ตั้ง), Promotions (การส่งเสริมการขาย), Price (ราคา), และ Productions (สินค้า) ซึ่งส่วนเน้นลักษณะสำคัญคือ มีทำเลตั้งอยู่ในเขตเมือง ได้แก่สวนลุมไนท์ บาซาร์ อันเป็นศูนย์รวมของการค้าขายและความบันเทิง โดยที่คณะละคร นั้นสามารถอยู่รอดได้เพราะเป็นส่วนหนึ่งในศูนย์รวมการค้าขายและความบันเทิงแห่งนี้

ถึงแม้ว่า โรงละครโจหลุยส์จะใช้กลวิธีในการจัดการคณะละครแบบสมัยใหม่ แต่การจัดระบบ แบบแผน ทางศิลปะ ก็ยังคงระบบครอบครัวแบบเดิมไว้ การนับถืออาวุโส โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในหมู่คนเชิดหุ่นด้วยกัน ความสัมพันธ์แบบครูกับศิษย์ ยังมีความสำคัญมาก

ผลที่ได้รับจากการศึกษาในครั้งนี้ แสดงว่า กลวิธีในการจัดการคณะละครของโจหลุยส์เธียร์เตอร์นั้นมีลักษณะผสมผสาน ระหว่างระบบการจัดการแบบโบราณ กับการจัดการในแบบสมัยใหม่ และยังคงมีการปรับเปลี่ยนเพื่อหา รูปแบบที่เหมาะสมอยู่ตลอดเวลา การจัดการแบบสมัยใหม่นี้ช่วยให้คณะละครสามารถสร้างการติดต่อและความสัมพันธ์ ในแบบธุรกิจได้ อันจะช่วยเป็นประกันว่า โรงละครแห่งนี้จะอยู่รอดได้ท่ามกลางกระแสการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างรวดเร็วของโลกปัจจุบัน อย่างไรก็ตามรูปแบบการแสดง ที่มีเอกลักษณ์และศิลปินเชิดหุ่นที่มีฝีมือเป็นส่วนสำคัญยิ่งที่ทำให้โรงละครแห่งนี้ ขับเคลื่อนต่อไปได้ เพื่อรักษา รูปแบบการแสดง หุ่นละครเล็ก ให้ดำรงอยู่

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KEY WORDS: JOE LOUIS THEATER, THEATER MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION, DOLL-PUPPETRY, LAKHON LEK

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This dissertation examines the types of theater management that have contributed to the survival of the Joe Louis Theater in the last decade and other factors that have enabled the theater to thrive in difficult times. *Hun lakhon lek*, a Thai variant of doll-puppetry, emerged about a century ago. Joe Louis Theater stages regular performances of *hun lakhon lek* in an urban area and through domestic and international recognition it has established a strong foothold. The puppet theater in the past and to a certain extent in the present gave performances at occasions such as funerals. Unlike these ritual ties between the theater and the audience, the Joe Louis Theater has established a commercial relation with people.

The research undertaken reveals that the Joe Louis Theater uses modern theater management methods. A small family troupe has come to operate like a company. A formal hierarchical structure is found in this organization. This organization consists of a board of trustees, an arts manager and staff that emphasizes the commercial aspect. A strategy, molded by this organization, is practiced in the four P's: place, promotions, price and productions. It has urban, popular and commercial characteristics. Located them in Suan Lum Night Bazaar, which is a shopping and entertainment complex, Joe Louis Theater survives as a part of it.

While modern management methods are used in the Joe Louis Theater, there still exists traditional way of management, based on family members. Particularly, among puppeteers, the master-apprentice relationship plays a significant role.

The findings of this research suggest that the management methods used by the Joe Louis Theater are a mixture of modern and traditional methods. However, this mixture is changing. Modern theater management methods used by the Joe Louis Theater have created new cultural and commercial relations with people, and thereby ensured its survival in a rapidly changing world. Its presentation style and well-trained puppeteers have also enabled it to survive and thrive in difficult times, thus enabling the art form of *hun lakhon lek*, their artistic creations and their love for the art to survive.

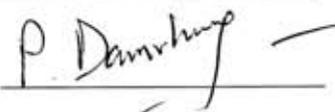
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, puppetry has survived in societies since ancient times. Many scholars believe that puppets were created during prehistoric times as images of worship and later crafted as puppets to teach ancient humans how to address problems of life (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:6). Puppets were used for performing in its early stage, and different societies created their own puppet theaters to convey a variety of ideas and messages. Thailand has shadow puppet theater and doll puppet theater. The oldest irrefutable evidence of puppet performances in Thailand dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Ayuthaya period (ibid.: 1998:8-9), although the earlier history of puppet performances is unknown. This early theatrical art has survived to the present as doll puppets, *hun* in Thai, that wearing embroidered costume with gold and silver threads, use crafted golden ornaments, mimicking dance-drama. This Thai puppet theater is modeled after human dance-drama, yet the puppets are smaller in size. The doll puppet theater, alongside human theater, is a significant part of the theater tradition of Thailand.

*Hun lakhon lek*, a Thai variant of doll puppet theater, emerged about a century ago, and has continued since then despite many social, economic and cultural changes. Puppet troupes have had diverse responses to a profoundly changing society. Traditional doll puppet performances are rare today. A key example of Thailand's puppet theatre organizations' adaptation to survive in a difficult time is the Joe Louis Theater. Its regular performances of *lakhon lek* in an urban area and its domestic and international recognition have established a strong foothold in recent urban Thai culture. This thesis will seek to answer how and why doll puppetry survived in the Joe Louis Theater to the present day?

In the past, especially the last hundred years, doll-puppet performances were

mainly seen at occasions such as funerals. Unlike these ritual ties between puppet theaters and its audience, the Joe Louis Theater established a commercial relationship with its audience. Understanding how and in what context the Joe Louis Theater became a commercially viable theater and how it maintains commercial relations with the audience are important but unanswered questions.

Different theaters use different management methods. The theater management of the Joe Louis Theater is closely tied to a rapidly changing society, continuing the tradition of *lakhon lek* but employing modern theater management methods. It has interested the author since the author learned of its distinctiveness among other traditional puppet theater organizations.<sup>1</sup>

### 1-1. Objective

This thesis aims to study two main things:

1. the types of theater management that have contributed to the survival of the Joe Louis Theater in the last decade.
2. other factors that have enabled the theater to thrive in difficult times.

### 1-2. Method of Study

This study analyzes Joe Louis Theater organization by using theater management methods. Since there are no books on theater management in Thailand, this study uses a model of theater management that comes from the United States. The

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<sup>1</sup> There are many *nang talung* troupes, shadow puppet theater in southern Thailand. They are often performed in a small communities. *Hun krabok* of Samut Songkram (province) and *hun krabok* of Phetchaburi (province) also perform occasionally.

study is based on documentary research, observation and interviews.

The documentary research includes books and articles. Since there are few academic works about puppet theater, magazines and newspaper articles are also used. To collect current information, the author volunteered at the theater for two years in the Public Relations Department, now restructured and renamed the Customer Relations Department. This gave the author the chance to observe various jobs of company staff members. The author made formal and informal interviews with directors, puppeteers and ordinary employees and observed their daily practices, audiences and performances. Intensive interviews were done during the research period from April 2004 to May 2006.

### **1-3. Limitation and Scope**

Rather than focusing on one aspect of theater management, the thesis takes a holistic approach in order to capture an overall view of modern theater management at the Joe Louis Theater. The main focus of the thesis is the organization, marketing and production strategies of theater management, showing how Joe Louis Theater organizes its troupe and how it became a modern arts organization.

In terms of time, the thesis is mainly limited to the last decades, from 1995 to the present.<sup>2</sup> In this time range, there is more emphasis on the last four years, when the theater moved to the current place in Suan Lum Night Bazaar, opposite Lumpini Park in Bangkok. Since the organization is still changing, the study attempts to use the latest data that the author could collect in the last two years.

### **1-4. Research Questions**

1. How does the Joe Lois Theater maintain the commercial relation with its

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<sup>2</sup> May in 2006

audience?

2. How and in what context has the Joe Louis Theater been able to become a commercial theater?

### 1-5. Hypothesis

Modern theater management methods have helped the Joe Louis Theater establish commercial relations with audiences in the last decade, thereby ensuring its survival in Thailand's changing society.

### 1-6. Terminology

#### 1-6-1. *Hun*

In Thailand there are two types of puppet theater: shadow puppetry called *nang* and doll puppetry called *hun*. First, shadow puppetry using two-dimensional flat cow-hide puppets has two variants: *nang yai* which uses the large shadow panels cut into figures, and which only performs the Ramakien (Thai version of the Ramayana), and secondly, *nang talung* which uses smaller cowhide figures, playing from the Ramakien and folk-plays. *Nang yai* has survived by keeping its ties to the court tradition and to old festivals. The *nang talung* is a popular form in southern Thailand similar to *wayang*, Indonesian shadow puppets. By contrast to these, *hun*, are three-dimensional doll-like puppets whose figures are modeled on characters from *khon* (classical masked dance) and *lakhon* (court dance) and are manipulated differently. *Hun* wears costumes and ornaments imitating those of *khon* and *lakhon*. The hands of the *hun* puppets are shaped like dancers' hands. *Hun*, Thai doll-puppetry is the three-dimensional puppet modeled after *khon* and *lakhon*.

Figure 1. *Hun krabok* Phetburi, at Sirindhorn Anthropological Center in 2004



Figure 2. *Nang talung* Bunyin Darasin Troupe, from video CD.



### 1-6-2. *Lakhon Lek*

Nai Krae Saphatwanich created puppets and gave performances at the palace of Waradit (Chakrabhand. 1986:73). It then came to be known as '*hun lakhon lek*', which literally means 'small dance-drama puppets' (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:84).

It was called '*hun khru krae*' by common people (Chakrabhand. 1986:73). Nai

Krae's *hun lakhon lek* or *lakhon lek* uses several puppeteers' manipulation. As the name 'small theater' shows, this puppet form is the miniature of the human *lakhon* (dance-drama). Several puppeteers manipulate a puppet figure and put the soul into the puppet. With the same music of *lakhon*, puppets dance and enact the drama.

The puppets that are used at Joe Louis Theater are called '*hun lakhon lek*' or '*lakhon lek*'. The Joe Louis Theater continues the tradition of Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* and several puppeteers manipulate each puppet. This thesis will focus on this *hun lakhon lek*. At the time of writing, the Joe Louis Theater stages regular performances of *hun lakhon lek*.

### 1-6-3. Joe Louis Theater<sup>3</sup>

This term will be used for the *lakhon lek* organization that is led by Sakorn Yangkeosod, popularly known as 'Joe Louis'. The Joe Louis Theater company was formally established in 2000, and Sakorn's fifth son, Pisutr Yangkeosod, became the managing director.<sup>4</sup> Before this time, the name Sakorn Natasin<sup>5</sup> Troupe was used for this organization. HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana gave this theater a new name, 'Nattayasala Hun Lakorn Lek',<sup>6</sup> in November of 2004. In this thesis, the name of Joe Louis Theater will be used throughout in order to avoid confusion.<sup>7</sup>

### 1-6-4. Commercial Theater

The term, commercial theater, can be defined in various ways. While it could mean the theater company that focuses on profit-making, it could also mean a theater

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<sup>3</sup> Spelling of the term "theater" will follow the company name of "Joe Louis Theater" in this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, his role can be called the arts manager.

<sup>5</sup> Natasin means arts of dancing.

<sup>6</sup> According to Teeravut Kittisurin, the Marketing Director of Joe Louis Theater, this new name is used for their playhouse and also used for the troupe. When they go to outside performances, this new name is used to introduce them.

<sup>7</sup> In 2004, the first daughter of Sakorn leads her own *hun lakhon lek* troupe. She created *hun lakhon lek* modeled on *likay*. Her troupe will perform at a permanent theater in Bangkok with the support of a duty free shop company in Thailand.

that does not receive a subsidy from the government. The author believes that the main motivation of arts organizations is not to make money, and it uses the term non-profit professional theater to refer to this aspect, borrowing from a common usage for similar theater organizations in the United States. Since Thailand and United States have different system for positioning arts companies in society and in law, being a commercial theater company in Thailand only means that the company does not have a foundation that can donate and then it receives tax exemption.<sup>8</sup>

The term ‘commercial theater’ in this thesis does not mean a professional theater company that focuses on profit-making like in the West, since Thailand has no professional company as such and non-profit arts organizations do not exist in the same sense as, for instance, in the USA. It is defined here as an independent theater, with its own initiative, and basically seeks ways to survive using modern management and money-making approaches to reach out to new urban audience.<sup>9</sup>

#### **1-6-5. Professional Puppeteers**

A professional puppeteer, in this thesis, is defined as one who works fulltime and earns his/her living at being a puppeteer and spends most of his/her time engaged in it. The word, ‘professional’ is thus related to how the person makes his or her living and not necessarily related to their quality.

#### **1-7. Literature Review**

There are not many academic texts on doll-puppets. The books that largely benefit to this thesis are mainly two books titled ‘*Hun Thai* (Thai Puppet)’ written by

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Langley listed the common characteristics of a non-profit professional theater that: first, incorporation; second, tax-exempt status; third, a board of trustees; fourth, a managing director and/or an artistic director and lastly at least one performer under some type of equity contract (Langley. 1990:13).

<sup>9</sup> A company that sometimes gets corporate and government support.

Chakrabhand Posayakrit (1986) and ‘*Hun Muang Thai* (Puppets in Siam)’ written by Anake Nawigamune (2000). The work of Chakrabhand is a detailed academic work by a researcher using vast historical evidence, including primary sources. The essential information about Thai doll-puppetry is documented. In the Anake’s book, his writings in journals and magazines on various thoroughly-researched topics since the mid-1970s are collected.

As for theater management, William J. Byrnes wrote ‘Management and the Arts’ (1999) as an introductory text for arts or theater management course. In its arts management evolution is studied along with management methods, marketing and fundraising. Stephen Langley (1990) focuses more on theater management and describes theater management methods practiced in the United States.

### **1-8. Significance of Study**

1. This thesis will add to our understanding of arts management in Thailand by examining the Joe Louis Theater organization.

2. This thesis will contribute to understanding the transformation of an arts organization in Thailand’s recently changing society.

3. This research will help to further our understanding of *hun lakhon lek* theater.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THAI PUPPETRY

The oldest written evidence of Thai doll puppetry dates back to the mid-Ayutthaya period (1628-1703). When the French mission led by De La Loubere's visited Ayuthaya in 1680s, *hun* was already a part of *mahorasop* (festival or royal entertainment). Thai puppet theater has been active since then. Mattani says that the *ban* (home, village), *wat* (temple), and *wang* (palace) have been the three important centers of Thai culture and arts (1993: xiii). *Hun*, Thai doll puppetry, both in the past and to a certain extent in the present has also been active in these places and has had strong ritual ties and is associated with traditions and customs. *Hun* has been active in social, political and cultural context of this country in each period. *Hun lakhon lek* emerged later in the Rattanakosin period. It is said that *hun lakhon lek* was created in 1901. Not only the art form and style, but also the management of the troupe has contributed to its survival.

*Hun lakhon lek* is a variant of Thai doll-puppetry. There are three major types of *hun*: *hun luang*, *hun krabok* and *hun lakhon lek* (Surapone with Foley. 2001: 82).

1. *Hun luang*, about one meter high, was manipulated by a central rod and had many strings attached to various parts of their bodies (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:30).
2. *Hun krabok* is manipulated by a central bamboo rod that controls the movement of the puppet. It has two other rods attached to their hands. It wears a cloak-style costume made of cloth. One puppeteer manipulates a puppet figure.
3. *Hun lakhon lek* is manipulated by several puppeteers<sup>1</sup> with a central rod

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<sup>1</sup> Today in 2006 at Joe Louis Theater, for main characters, three puppeteers manipulate

attached to the head and other rods attached to the hands. Strings control the wrist and finger movements. The costume, ornaments and hands' shape of these puppets imitate those of *khon* and *lakhon*.

## **2-1. *Hun luang* and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn*:**

### **Survival as Court Theater**

*Hun luang*, which has very complicated mechanism, inspired the creation of *hun lakhon lek*. The puppets of this oldest form of *hun*, *hun luang*, are preserved at National Museum in Bangkok today.<sup>2</sup> The oldest evidence of *hun luang* dates back to Ayutthaya period. In the early Ayutthaya period (1350-1628), the term *nang* is used as a performing art in the description of *mahorasob*, but the term *hun* can not be clearly identified as a performing art (Chakrabhand. 1986: 9).<sup>3</sup> In the mid-Ayutthaya period, there is some written evidence of *hun* as a performing art similar to other theaters such as *khon*. De La Loubere, part of the mission sent to Siam during the reign of Louis XIV, also described it.

In his memoirs, De La Loubere noted that the Thai puppets are mute and do not speak lines (spoken for them by narrators), while the Laotian puppets were much preferred by the crowds although these were only minor performances at the festivals. Laotian puppets also appear in the literature of the Isarn people, the inhabitants of northeastern Thailand who are of Laotian stock (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998: 9).

De La Loubere, who wrote probably the best account of seventeenth century Siam, reached Siam in 1687 in the reign of King Narai (1656-1688) (Wyat.1984: 116). Thus the emergence of Siamese puppet theater, *hun luang*, may be dated before 1687.<sup>4</sup>

*Hun luang* (Royal puppet) survived largely through court support since it had a

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each puppet figure.

<sup>2</sup> Year 2006

<sup>3</sup> Though the term *hun* can be found, it referred to the figurines that were not used for theatrical performances (Chakrabhand. 1986:9).

<sup>4</sup> Chakrabhand assumed that the emergence of *hun luang* was between 1376 to 1687 (*ibid.* 1986:10).

royal function.<sup>5</sup> *Hun luang* performed Ramakien as seen in the *khon* costume of *hun luang*. It is not difficult to think that the sophisticated puppet mechanism that has many strings below the puppet figure enabled it to imitate human dance-drama. Puppet theatre was a part of religious or royal festivals or rites as well as *khon*, *nang* and other performing arts (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:9).

During the reign of King Borommakot (1733-1758) of Ayutthaya period, it was done as part of the funeral rite of a prince.

The *khon* dancers, *hun* players, 'Lao Yuan' performers (from northern part of Thailand) and Chinese opera troupe made a great deal of noise and commotion setting up the stage and organizing the acts (ibid. 1998:10).

From the reign of King Rama I to King Rama V, many records relate *hun luang* at royal rites and celebrations (Chakrabhand, 1986: 14-50). The *hun luang* contributed to the establishment of legitimacy and consolidation of royal authority in each reign until that of King Rama V.'

In the reign of King Rama I, the *hun luang* received much royal attention and was performed in royal ceremonies such as royal funeral rites (Natthapatra and Promporn.1998:11). The king ordered *hun luang* puppeteers to train at the Wang Na (Front Palace) and Wang Lang (Back Palace) and Ramakien was performed in order to celebrate the completion of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (ibid. 1998:11). *Hun luang* performances became a necessary part of royal funeral rites (ibid. 1998:11).

King Rama I, who needed to establish a firm foundation for his position as the new nucleus for the reunification of the country, re-established *lakhon luang* and *khon luang troupes* as well as other court ceremonies of Ayutthaya (Mattani. 1993: 50). *Hun luang*, which can be traced back to the court culture of the Ayutthaya period, was also performed in order to establish the king's legitimacy. This continued until the reign of the King Rama V. From 1782, kings and princes had *hun* troupes both for entertainment and to enhance official events (Surapone with Foley. 2001: 82).

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<sup>5</sup> *Hun luang* is also known as *hun yai* (large) .

There should be a mention about the *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn* or *hun lek*. During the fifth reign, Vice-Regent Krom Phra Rachwang Boworn Vichaicharn (1838-1885), who revitalized Thai arts and crafts, founded his puppet troupe (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:94). His puppet figure is a little over 37 cm (ibid. 1998:94) and the puppet mechanism is modeled on *hun luang*, but it is smaller in size. The Vice-Regent commissioned Chinese artisans living in Bangkok to create a set of Chinese puppets modeled on the characters in Chinese opera (ibid. 1998:94). Later, a set of Thai puppets, modeled on Ramakien characters, were created.

Mattani examined the support both of the former dancers of the previous reigns and of private troupes belonging to other members of the royal family in the early period of the reign of King Rama V. She pointed out that the King encouraged other members of the royal family as well as private individuals to become patrons of theater troupes in order to create a sense of unity within the circle of aristocrats and members of the royal court and strengthen loyalty to the throne (Mattani. 1993:95). The same thing could be said for the puppet theater troupe. There could be a political intention to own the puppet troupe as well as personal artistic interest.

The puppet theater before the late nineteenth century, *hun luang* and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn*, were supported within a political context.<sup>6</sup> *Hun luang* were often performed at royal rites and festivals from the reign of King Rama I to King Rama V. The performance of *hun luang*, which derived from Ayutthaya court tradition, represented the king's legitimacy. The court supported *hun luang* performances. The patronage of *hun* by Krom Phra Rachawang Boworn Vichaicharn,<sup>7</sup> may also be connected with the political intention behind the performances.

Towards the end of King Rama V's reign, both *hun luang* and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn* lost their patronage and the performances of these puppets eventually disappeared. In the reign of King Rama VI, it seems that there

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<sup>6</sup> In the early reigns of Ratanakosin, private Chinese opera troupes were owned by most royal princes in their retinue, probably as status symbols, in the same manner as having *lakhon* troupes of their own (Mattani. 1993:103). The set of Chinese puppet of *hun lek* could be influenced by this idea as the set of Thai puppet of *hun lek*, depicting Ramakien, showed the status.

<sup>7</sup> He was the Vice-Regent, or Second King. In Thai, it is called *Maha Uparat*.

were no longer *hun luang* performances (Chakrabhand, 1986: 39).

From the late 1880s onward, there was acceleration in establishing modernized organizations. It was also a period of struggle and conflict with Western powers and a period of war.<sup>8</sup> The internal and external political situation in this period probably affected the Krom Mahorasop (Department of Entertainment) including Krom Hun (Department of Puppet). It caused the discontinuation of the *hun luang*.

Likewise, the performance of *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn* ceased. When the Krom Phra Rachwang Boworn Vichaicharn died in 1885, he left a legacy of artistic treasures that has been kept at the National Museum (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:94.). The last performance of his puppets was in 1886 (ibid. 1998: 94). Today the puppets of *hun luang* and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn*<sup>9</sup> are preserved and exhibited at the National Museum. It is possible to think that his puppet artists went out of the palace and performed in public areas when they lost patronage.

The loss of patronage caused the extinction of the *hun luang* and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn* performances.

## **2-2. Hun krabok and hun lakhon lek: Survival as Communal Theater**

*Hun krabok* (Thai rod puppet) were first made by Neng who was a native of Nakhon Sawan in the late nineteenth century. He was impressed by performances of the Hainan puppet and crafted a puppet in the Chinese style (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998: 58). *Hun krabok* are manipulated by puppeteers who sit behind a translucent painted backdrop. The rapid movements of the puppets match well with the very

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<sup>8</sup> There was Franco-Siamese dispute which is usually referred to as the 'Paknam Incident of 1893' when two French gunboats, the 'Inconstant' and the 'Comete', forced the bar of the Chao Praya River and opened fire on two Thai forts.

<sup>9</sup> They were restored by Chkrabhand in the 1970s. The Krom Silpakorn (Fine Arts Department) also revived and occasionally performs *hun luang*.

fast-paced themes of the *hun krabok* scenes (ibid. 1998:58). They perform folk stories such as Phra Aphaimani or Sang Thong (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:58), using popular stories with Chinese sound of Sor Ou, string instrument, which probably appealed to people.

*Hun lakhon lek* was created by Krae Saphatwanich in the early twentieth century. After he saw *hun luang* performance, he tried to create puppets that imitated those he saw. It is said that the creation was done in 1901. Since the mechanisms were too complex, those of *hun lakhon lek* became simpler (Chakrabhand. 1986:73) and were influenced from *hun krabok*. The hand movements are controlled by rods attached to its wrists.

According to Chakrabhand,<sup>10</sup> Piak Prasertkun, a leader of *hun krabok* troupe, also created puppets called *lakhon lek* modeled after *hun krabok* (Chakrabhand. 1986:145). Piak's puppet was manipulated by one puppeteer.

The artistic spirit of *hun lakhon lek* performance has been handed down from the past. As the name shows, the small puppets imitate human dance-drama. The puppets dance and dramatize the story like human dancers. Well-trained puppeteers enable the puppet to look life-like and puppets express human emotions, sorrow, anger, embarrassment and so forth. The puppets mime with its hands and fingers, controlled by rods and strings. With intricately embroidered costumes and tiny ornaments attached to the puppet's head, which also imitate the human dancers, a puppet moves like a human dancer by several puppeteers.

*Hun krabok* and *hun lakhon lek* were performed at both royal and public occasions. After the reign of King Rama V, when puppet theaters disappeared at most royal occasions, *hun krabok* was still favored at ordinary public events, particularly at funerals (ibid. 1986:106). Likewise, *hun lakhon lek* was done at funerals of common

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<sup>10</sup> Chakrabhand Posayakrit is a famous painter in Thailand as well as an authority on puppet theatres. He has created sophisticated *hun krabok* and has performances occasionally. A rare performance held in August of 2003 at Silapokorn University was filled with an enthusiastic audience. The highly refined puppets seem to attract intellectuals and middle-class people. In addition to this, his restoration work to puppets at the National Museum contributes to the preservation of those old puppets.

people. Their performances had strong ties to rituals and they played a vital part of tradition or custom among common people. Audience members were from the surrounding area. Hence, the troupes of puppeteers could survive because of communal support.

Evidences of *hun krabok* and *hun lakhon lek* performances in the royal occasions consist of the following:

In the mid-December 1897, a welcome awaited for King Rama V's return from his first trip to Europe, newly-introduced *hun krabok* were performed (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998: 15). After the end of the reign of King Rama V, not many puppet performances could be found at royal occasions. *Hun krabok* performances could be found mainly at the celebrations and festivals at Sanam Luang (Chakrabhand.1986:106).

One description of the performance at the palace of Waradit can be found. In 1922 on the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Prince Damrong Rachanubhab, *hun lakhon lek* was performed for two hours after dinner. (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998: 15).

On the other hand, both *hun krabok* and *hun lakhon lek* were favored by common people. Individuals would hire a troupe to perform (ibid, 1998: 58). *Hun krabok* and *hun lakhon lek* tropes have given performances outside the palace.

Chakrabhand wrote about the tradition of puppet performances at funerals. The person ordered to put the puppet performances at his funeral before his death or the person who put the funeral hired the troupe for the purpose of entertaining, which is a part of the tradition (Chakrabhand. 1986:106).

Apart from funerals, *hun krabok* was performed at the occasions like the top-knot cutting ceremony (ibid. 1986:106). *Hun lakhon lek* was also performed at ordination ceremonies and merit-making ceremonies for new house. It could be analyzed that they were performed at rituals like the rites of passage and Buddhist related making merit ceremonies. Individuals hired them to perform and audience enjoyed with no admission fee. Audiences were from surrounding area. These occasions for puppet theaters still exist at present.

Common people in a community hired them to perform at certain important

occasions like funerals or other ritual occasions. The puppet theater functions to show their social status in the community while imitating what royal people did with *hun luang* and *hun lek*.

### 2-3. *Hun lakhon lek* Performances

Nai<sup>11</sup> Krae Saphatwanit, who was a commoner, created *hun lakhon lek*. It has a simpler mechanism than *hun luang*. His puppet theater was called '*lakhon lek*'. This puppet theater thrived until around the mid-twentieth century.

Nai Krae Sapatawanit, the leader of a *lakhon nok*, non-court theatre troupe, in Ayutthaya, came down to Bangkok by boat and docked at the canal in front of the palace of Prince Damrong Rachnubhab when the performances of his troupe had decreased (Natthapatra and Promporn.. 1998:84). He then performed *lakhon* as his main livelihood and later served in the palace of Waradit as a royal page<sup>12</sup> (Chakrabhand. 1986:73). After he saw a *hun luang* performance that fascinated him, he made a similar version of the puppets (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:84).

The puppet of the *hun lakhon lek* is about one meter high, but originally it was smaller. It has a head, legs and arms that are the same as *hun luang*. When Nai Krae created it, he reduced the number of strings, which are attached to specific body parts, because the *hun luang* used too many strings to create (Chakrabhand. 1986: 73).

Two sticks, which are attached to arms, are visible to the audience. The hands and fingers were manipulated by the strings attached to the sticks. This art form is derived from *hun krabok* (rod-puppet) and *hun krom phra rachwang boworn vichaicharn* as the mechanism shows. Nai Krae appropriated it in the beginning and later distinguished it from the royal *hun luang*, *hun lek* and *hun krabok*. It was called '*lakhon lek*'.

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<sup>11</sup> Nai means mister.

<sup>12</sup> In Thai, his position is called '*mahatlek*'.



Figure 3.

Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek*, at Joe Louis Theater in 2005

He gave performances with these puppets at the the palace of Waradit and the royal audience responded with enormous enthusiasm (Natthapatra and Promporn. 1998:84). It then came to be known as '*lakhon lek*'. Anyone could hire this troupe and it was performed for the general public.

There is a description of a puppet theatre at a funeral in Anake's book. The year of the funeral is not stated but it was quite a long time ago. Anake wrote that the fee for the performance at that time was around 80 baht (Anake. 2000:108). He says if it was held now (1976), it would be around 2000 to 3000 baht. It could be before the World War II because in Nai Krae's time, they charged 100 baht for one show (ibid: 2000:108).

At the funeral of Phraya Nathakanuraku (Thongdii Suwannaphrot) at Makudkasatri Temple, there were 2 theatres of *lakhon lek*, one was Nai Piak and the other was Nai Krae Mae Yip with *hun krabok*, *nang talung*, *likay*, *khon* and two other theatres. There were 8 theatres in total (Anake. 2000:108).

*Hun lakhon lek* was performed at the funeral, which is the usual occasion for them. It seems that at this time, *hun lakhon lek* was thriving since *hun lakhon lek* was

performed by two troupes in this funeral. The reason of *hun lakhon lek*'s popularity could be assumed that hiring a puppet theater was more reasonable than hiring a human theater since it is easier to travel with small puppets and sets. It created the same beauty as human theater and had the same role in the community as regards to status. This might be one of reasons for puppet theater's popularity as well as its own artistic appeal.



Figure 4. Nai Krae's *lakhon lek* performance in the past. The place and time is unknown. (From Joe Louis Theater)



Figure 5. Nai Krae's *lakhon lek* performance in the past. It was manipulated by several puppeteers. The place and time is unknown. (From Joe Louis Theater)



Figure 6. Nai Krae's *lakhon lek* performance in the past. It was performed behind stage and puppeteers were not visible from the audience. The place and time for this picture is unknown. (From Joe Louis Theater)

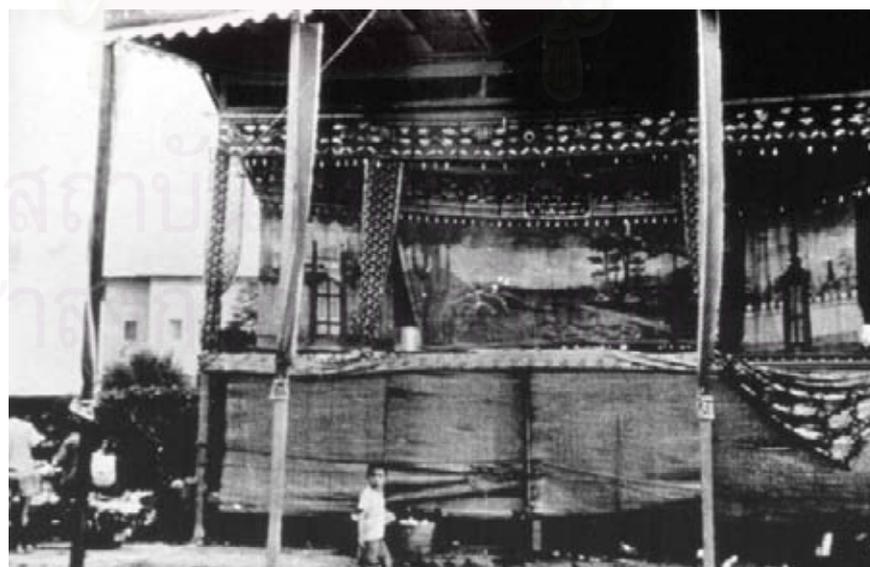


Figure 7. The stage of puppet theater in the past. The place and time for this picture is unknown. (from Joe Louis Theater)

## 2-4. Members of the Troupe

In this section, members of Ya Yip's (grandmother Yip) troupe are briefly explained. The organization consisted of family members. An old picture (see Fig. 9) of Ya Yip's (or Nai Thong Yuu's) troupe members shows that most of her troupe members had family connections to Nai Krae or Nai Khui, who had been a puppeteer in Nai Krae's troupe. Although it is unknown when and where this picture was taken, this can provide a brief image of the troupe in the past. Based on an interview with Sakorn Yangkheosod done by the Joe Louis Theatre staff and the author, most puppeteers could be identified in the picture.

In the picture, Mae Lek, relative, Ya Yip, Nai Thong Yu, Mae Pian, Chep Chai, Ya Lee (Arun) are recognized by Sakorn.<sup>13</sup> The person in front to the right is unknown. In the second line, from the left there are Nai Thong Deng, Nai Khui, Nai Thong Bai, Nai Thong Man. Thong Man, Thong Deng and Thong Bai were the sons of Ya Yip.

Based on their age, it is probably the period when Ya Yip had the leadership of the troupe.<sup>14</sup> The troupe members consisted of family members of Nai Krae and Nai Khui.<sup>15</sup> It is not difficult to assume that they were familiar with performing arts since they were little as they saw and were taught by their parents and relatives.

*Hun lakhon lek*, this human-like form of puppetry was popular in the first half of the twentieth century. It functioned well in a community and survived from one ritual to another around Bangkok, when it was not urbanized yet. The puppet dance and enact the drama like human dancers by several puppeteers' manipulation, accompanied with music. Members of Ya Yip's troupe, the *hun lakhon lek* organization are family members of Nai Krae and Nai Khui. Joe Louis Theater continues the tradition of the *hun lakhon lek*, which is the subject of this study.

Over time each kind of puppets in Thailand, *nang* and *hun*, had its own pattern

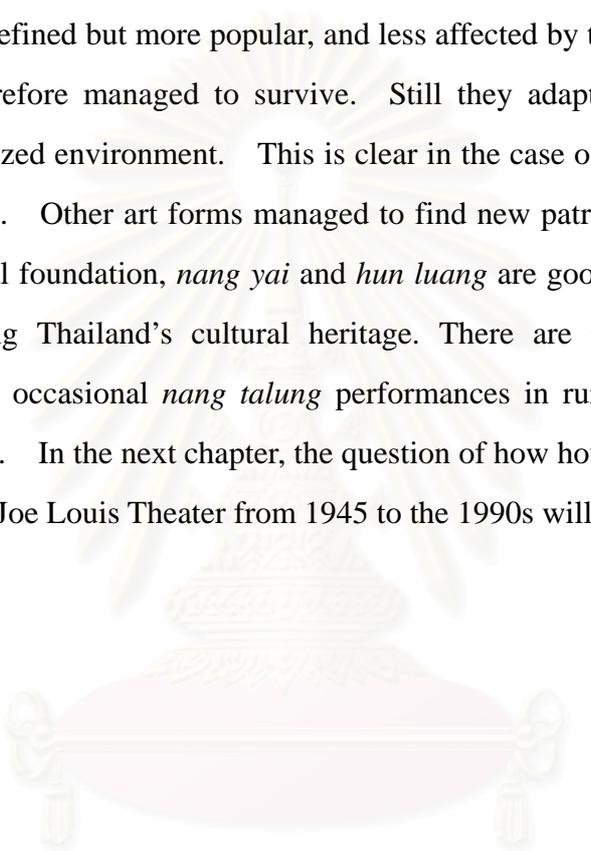
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<sup>13</sup> Fig. 8,9,10

<sup>14</sup> According to Sakorn, what they wore in the picture was different from what they wore usually.

<sup>15</sup> Nai Khui's two wives, Ya Chuam and Ya Sap were also puppeteers in the troupe.

of development, and it evolved with the rest of Thailand's arts and culture as part of Thailand's socio-economic and political evolution, especially after Rama IV. Since refined puppets were closely tied to the royal court, nobility, and their patronage, as the importance of these social groups weakened since the 1930s, they had fewer uses in the new socio-political environment. By contrast, many communal art forms for rural people were less refined but more popular, and less affected by the predominantly urban changes, and therefore managed to survive. Still they adapted themselves into the more commercialized environment. This is clear in the case of *nang talung* troupes in southern Thailand. Other art forms managed to find new patronage from government bureaus or cultural foundation, *nang yai* and *hun luang* are good examples of this, as a way of preserving Thailand's cultural heritage. There are still today *hun krabok* performances and occasional *nang talung* performances in rural areas of central and southern Thailand. In the next chapter, the question of how *hun lakhon lek* helped to give rise to the Joe Louis Theater from 1945 to the 1990s will be considered.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



Fig. 8. Description of the Picture



Fig. 9. Ya Yip's Troupe (From Joe Louis Theater)

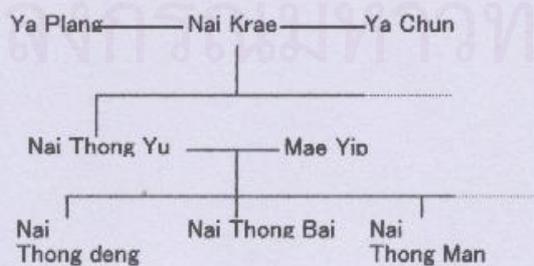
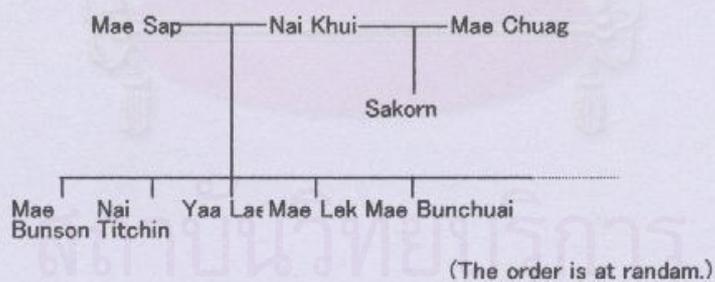


Fig. 10. Family Trees

# CHAPTER III

## BACKGROUND OF THE JOE LOUIS THEATER

### (FROM 1945 TO THE MID-1990s)

This chapter will clarify the historical background of the Joe Louis Theatre by focusing on the situation of Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* from the end of World War II to the mid-1990s. The chapter falls into two parts: from the period after World War II to the time of a modern audience in the mid-1980s and from mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. During the first period, Ya Yip (grandmother Yip) led the troupe and during the second period Sakorn Yangkheasod revived Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek*, forming his own *hun lakhon lek* troupe that combined more new elements for modern urban and foreign audiences.

#### 3-1. From 1945 to the Mid-1980s

After the death of Nai Krae in 1929,<sup>1</sup> *hun lakhon lek* performances became less frequent. Its popularity was later further challenged by other modern forms of entertainment, such as movies and televisions. The occasions for performing *hun lakhon lek* remained mostly like they were in the past, performed at funerals and on occasions like temple fairs, until new forms of entertainment started to replace them. They did not give regular performances. The troupe's organization remained basically

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a biography distributed at his funeral, he was born in 1847 and died in 1929 at the age of 82. Further, it is said that Nai Krae performed the role of 'Ngo' in the *lakhon nok* theater. Later, he created *hun lakhon lek*. Nai Krae's son, Nai Thong Yuu, also performed *hun lakhon lek* for a time. His wife, Ya Yip, inherited the puppets led Nai Krae's troupe. She led the *hun lakhon lek* troupe until their puppets were handed down to Sakorn Yangkheasod in the 1970s. The biography (Nangsu Gaan Sop) was distributed at the funeral of Krae held at Saket temple in Phranakhon province on July 16, 1930 (Anake. 2004(1):52)

a traditional family operation. Some wealthy person would hire the troupe to perform on certain occasions and the audience did not pay an admission fee. The occasional and sponsored format meant that the relationships between performance and audience was not commercial. Ya Yip, the wife of Nai Thong Yu, son of Nai Krae, a daughter-in-law, took over the leadership of Nai Krae's troupe and Sakorn Yangkheosod, whose father was a regular puppeteer in Nai Krae's troupe, sometimes performed in Ya Yip's troupe. Sakorn also performed *likay*, and later made his living by making *khon* masks.

Over 30 puppets were passed to Sakorn from Ya Yip in the 1970s due to the lack of suitable heirs in her family. This was partly because since the 1970s the puppeteers were so old and partly because they lacked heirs. There was also more competition from other mass media forms of entertainment as in movies and televisions.

Thus by the 1970s, the performance of Krae's *hun lakhon lek* was in danger of extinction. One can read: 'The performances of *hun lakhon lek* started to decrease after World War II' (Son, Yawnut and Phachari. 1997:29). Anek writes that in 1975 some puppet owners had to sell their puppets since they could not make a living by performing (Anake. 2000:71) and mentions that the popularity of puppet theater was gradually declining (ibid. 2000:71). This did not mean that there were no performances of *hun lakhon lek*. There are pictures of *hun lakhon lek* by Chuun Sakunkeo and Nai Bunrod in Anake's book. Although after the 1970s it seems that there were not many performances of *hun lakhon lek*, the form was still put on stage. Still, as the ages of puppeteers advanced and skilled heirs decreased, many people chose to watch films and television shows.

### **Absence of Nai Krae's Puppets Performances**

Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* stopped appearing on the stage approximately 1970s. In an article by Anake in 1980, one reads: 'The *hun lakhon lek* theatre was handed down to Ya Yip. But the performances had already stopped.' (Anake. 2000:42.). Eventually,

performances of *hun lakhon lek* ended.

Due to the lack of Nai Krae's family members' heirs, his *hun lakhon lek* was passed to Sakorn from Ya Yip. Sakorn created a Pho Kae puppet for worship. He sold all the *hun lakhon lek* except the Pho Kae to the Ancient City Company.<sup>2</sup> There were no notable performances of Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* until their revival in the mid-1980s.

Ya Yip passed down about 30 puppets to Sakorn. Surin, Sakorn's seventh son, says "It was in 1974. Our house was filled with puppets." (Thueng Luk Thueng Kon. 2004). Sakorn is not a descendant of Nai Krae's family.<sup>3</sup> Ya Yip had some children with Nai Thong Yu, a son of Nai Krae. Sakorn said why Ya Yip passed the puppets onto Sakorn in *Sarakadee* magazine: "None of Pa (Auntie) Yip's children were interested in it" (Sudara 1985: 94). Sakorn even reported that Ya Yip was afraid that her sons would sell the puppets to buy drugs.<sup>4</sup>

There was no suitable person in her family to inherit the puppets, Sakorn received the puppets on the condition that he would arrange her funeral when she passed away. Later, he was often asked for financial support, so he decided to sell Nai Krae's puppets to the Ancient City Company<sup>5</sup> in October 1978 (Anake. 2000:42). He shared the money he received with Ya Yip (Sudara 1985:94). More than 30 puppets of Krae's *hun lakhon lek* were kept at the Ancient City.

After Sakorn received Krae's puppets, he also made a puppet called Pho Kae to worship, keeping it at his house. "After selling Pa Yip's things (puppets), I didn't think that I was making puppets for a living. I made only Pho Kae to worship...."

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<sup>2</sup> Interview, Surin Yangkeosod, 2005

<sup>3</sup> According to Anake's book, Chun Sakunkeo offered to buy these (Nai Krae and Ya Yip's) puppets once (from Ya Yip), but Ya Chun did not receive the offer because she also had many puppets (Anake 2000:42.). The Ancient City is a Cultural Theme Park located in Samut Prakan Province. In the 320 acres of land, there are plenty of reproductions of palace halls, temples, traditional houses, ancient monuments etc.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>5</sup> Cultural Theme Park located in Samut Prakan Province. In the 320 acres of land, there are plenty of reproductions of palace halls, temples, traditional houses, ancient monuments etc.

(ibid. 1985:94). Pho Kae is the Rushi (or hermit) representing all teachers in performing arts from ancient times to the present, and is strongly part of *khon* (classical masked dance) and *lakhon* (court dance) traditions, but is not used in performances.

It is likely that in the Ancient City, *hun lakhon lek* was performed in exhibitions. When the author visited to the Ancient City in 2003, they were used in performances as visitors requested. A puppeteer controlled a puppet for a few minutes using a tape requested by the author. According to this puppeteer, two other puppeteers had already quit performing. Anake writes that, based on his observation of Krae's puppets in the Ancient City around 1979, 'There was nothing that I can write about yet'. He believed that performances using Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* had nearly disappeared.

Although there could have been *hun lakhon lek* performances at exhibition in the Ancient City, there were no notable performances of Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* from the time when they were passed to Sakorn until they were revived in the 1980s.

According to Surin, 'There were no performances of *hun lakhon lek* (by their family) before the revival of 1985'.

### 3-2. From the Mid-1980s to the Mid-1990s

From the mid-1980s, the use of puppets started changing again. As foreign tourism became a more important part of Bangkok's economy and culture, in the last three decades, Sakorn Yangkheosod revived Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek*.

#### Profile of Sakorn Yangkheosod

Sakorn is the only son of Nai Khui and Mae Chuang, who were both puppeteers in Nai Krae's troupe. Nai Khui was a *khon* dancer at Phraya Sunthontheprabam's residence.<sup>6</sup> He served with Phraong Chudchun and Phraong Chudchun, who gave him the name 'Prasithime'.<sup>7</sup> When he went to perform at a

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

palace, he helped Nai Krae's troupe. He then met Chuang who was an apprentice of Nai Krae.<sup>8</sup> Khui moved into Nai Krae's house with Mae Chuang at Klong Mahanak (Sudara. 1985:86). Nai Khui was a regular puppeteer in Nai Krae's troupe (Sudara. 1985: 86).<sup>9</sup> Thus, Sakorn learned *khon* and *lakhon* from his family, and was familiar with *hun lakhon lek* since his youth.

Mae (mother) Chuang gave birth to him when the troupe took a boat to a performance of Phra Apaimani. Yai (grand mother) Prang, the second wife of Nai Krae, named him 'Sud Sakorn', the same name as a character in Phra Apaimani and was later changed to Sakorn.<sup>10</sup> He has been familiar with *hun lakorn lek* since he was very young. According to the interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005:

Yupin: Did master Krae see Pho (Sakorn) control puppets from the beginning?

Sakorn: (We were) hit (by him). He (Nai Krae) did not allow us to control his puppets. Children crawled to the puppets. As far as I can remember, when he did not take care of children, I came to touch the puppets.<sup>11</sup> When there was a performance, I also went with my father. Then at the age of 7 or 8 years old, I stole a look at how he controlled the puppet.

Sakorn learned the monkey role in masked dance (*khon*) from his father, while Ya (Mae Chun) taught him the giant role. "Nobody taught me how to control the puppets. I know the *khon* and *lakhon* so I learnt it by myself" (Sudara. 1985:94).<sup>12</sup> When Sakorn was 8 or 9 years old, he performed in a children's theatre troupe in the palace of Phraong Chud Chom (ibid. 1985:90). "I did not live in the palace. When there were performances, I went into the palace like my father. It was not so often. At that time my father still performed the puppets for Krae..." (ibid. 1985:90).

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>11</sup> It is notable that Krae did not allow small children to control puppets. Puppets are not considered to be children's toys.

<sup>12</sup> Sakorn learnt various kinds of performing arts from his father such as *khon*, *lakhon*, music, *likay* and *lakhon chattri*.

Sakorn was not mainly a puppeteer to earn a living. Instead, he performed *likay* and inherited his father's *likay* troupe, but later made his living by making *khon* masks. During this time, puppeteers were not professionals, and they did not receive the monthly salaries, earning instead only what they got through their performances.

A monk gave Sakorn the nickname 'Liw' ('weeping willow') when he was around 12 or 13 years old in order to drive out a sickness.<sup>13</sup> When he started to perform *likay*, Liw soon became Louis. "I don't know about Joe. People started to use it and called me Joe Louis among themselves" (ibid. 2005).<sup>14</sup> When performing *likay*, he was known as Joe Louis.

When his father died after World War II, he inherited his father's Joe Louis Likay Troupe ('Likay Khana Joe Louis') (Sudara. 1985:91).<sup>15</sup> Sakorn had nine children with Mae Lek, and when it became difficult to perform *likay* to earn a living, he started making *khon* masks for a living and this has been his family business ever since. "When there were performances, Pa (Auntie) Yip called my father to perform everywhere and I also went to help to control the puppets. Then Pho died and I went to perform instead. Pa Yip gave money everytime..." (ibid. 1985:94)

Sakorn had earlier performed *hun lakhon lek* in Ya Yip's troupe, but it was not his main occupation<sup>16</sup> since he did not make his livelihood by puppet performances. As Sakorn said, the troupe leader gave money every time and it was not salary based.

### **Tourism Growth and Governmental Encouragement**

Tourism in Thailand began to develop as a growth industry from the late 1950s (Cohen. 1996:2). The main impetus for growth in tourism only came during the Vietnam War, when Thailand became a main destination for the Rest & Recreation of

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

<sup>14</sup> Joe Louis is a famous American boxer's name. Sakorn says that I don't know why 'Joe' was put on. It can be from the English word of 'joker' because I played joker (Sudara. 1985:91). People started to call him 'Joe Louis' by themselves.

<sup>15</sup> Likay Khana Joe Louis did not often put on performances in Bangkok. It performed in Bangplee, Bangyai etc (Sudara 1985:94)...

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

American GI's (Meyer. 1988:71-73 cited Cohen 1996:2). It has consistently grown since due to the development of the global economy. According to a statistical report of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), a huge growth started in the mid-1980s (TAT. 2000:4). Thai tourism has been encouraged by the government since it brings a large amount of foreign revenue to the country. The Tourism Organization of Thailand (TOT) was established during the dictatorship of Marshall Sarit (1957-63) and he created the physical infrastructure for tourism as part of his general policy for national development (Meyer. 1988:63 cited Cohen. 1996:2). From 1961, tourism has been one of the priorities of Thai National Economic Development Plans, and was especially prominent in the Fourth (1977-1981) and the Fifth (1982-1986) plans. These plans further stressed the need to use tourism as a foreign revenue earner (Kaosa-ard, Bezic and White. 1998:23). Within this context, *hun lakhon lek*, a traditional puppet theatre of Thailand, also received more attention.

### **Revival of Krae's *hun lakhon lek***

In 1985, Sakorn Yangkiosod revived Krae's *hun lakhon lek*. People became aware of *hun lakhon lek*, which had nearly disappeared as a performing art form. The revival of Krae's *hun lakhon lek* brought back a performing art form to the people of Thailand. Sakorn Natasin Troupe Laan Kru Krae (Nephew of Kru Krae), was formed by Sakorn Yangkiosod.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that people did not know about *hun lakhon lek* until Sakorn revived it. In 1985, Sakorn made a new set of *hun lakhon lek* and performed at a festival called 'Gaan Thong Thiaw Muang Thai'.<sup>17</sup>

"...TAT was interested in and wanted me to perform (*hun lakhon lek*) in an event for tourism in Thailand. I couldn't decide at first but after thinking, I decided to do it because I was getting old and I didn't know when I would die. I was also afraid that the knowledge was vanishing and wanted to do something for the continuation." (Sudara. 1985: 91)

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Surin Yangkheosod done by the author 17 May 2006

TAT asked Sakorn to present a demonstration of making *khon* masks at a festival<sup>18</sup> at Suan Amphon. When an officer of TAT visited Sakorn's house, he saw the Pho Kae puppet and offered to put *hun lakhon lek* on the program. According to Surin, there were only 28 days to the performance. Despite this, his father, Sakorn decided to create new puppets and perform. He had a ceremony to ask permission from Nai Krae. Surin<sup>19</sup> said "The ceremony was similar to the one for *wai khru*, but not the same. We offered rice, fruits and incense sticks etc. We thought if all part of one incense stick was burnt, Khru Krae allows us to perform. If some parts of the incense stick remained, he did not allow us, we thought." Sakorn revived Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* and performed at the festival called 'Gaan Thong Thiaw Muang Thai'.

Sakorn and his family made twenty puppets and went on to give three performances. All the puppets, with the exception of the Joker, were characters from Ramakien (Hoskin. 1988:27).<sup>20</sup>

TAT's interest in attracting tourists with traditional arts led to the puppet theater's revival and encouraged Sakorn to create and perform *hun lakhon lek* despite a near absence of *hun lakhon lek* performances during the previous decades.

"I was also afraid of Pho Khru (Krae)'s curse but I prayed to get a permission from him. He must not complain that children and grandchildren take a profession. I also don't want it to disappear....."<sup>21</sup>

He notably mentioned his children's future for what profession they would enter. He most likely hoped that they would perform *hun lakhon lek* from the beginning. Sakorn's concern about his children's future occupation along with his love

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<sup>18</sup> Gaan Somphot Krung Ratanakosin 200 pi

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Surin Yangkheosod done by the author 17 May 2006

<sup>20</sup> According to Surin, some Ramakien characters and Phra Apai Mani characters were made for the above performance. (The historical information is sometimes conflicting between articles and interviews.) Surin said the set of the Phra Apai Mani, which is smaller than the other puppets, was given to the temple called 'Wat Tuk'. He said that Ramakien episodes were performed in the festivals because people liked it.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

for puppets and his hope to revive *hun lakhon lek*, coincided with TAT's interest in attracting foreign tourists with art.

### **Tourism-Related Occasions**

In this period, new occasions related to tourism such as festivals, started appearing. They helped to support the continuation of *hun lakhon lek* performances. Although new occasions emerged, most performances remained conventional ones such as funerals. At these funerals, as with the new tourism-related occasions like festivals, the organizers of the event hired the troupe to perform and the audience did not pay an admission fee.

“There are over 20 puppets now and I will make more for the performance of TAT this December. There must be something new for them to see. I probably make puppets of Ramakien because audiences like them. There are a monkey and a giant fighting....” (Sudara. 1985:94)

There was another occasion planned by TAT at that time,<sup>22</sup> and Sakorn was planning to make more puppets for it. These tourism-related occasions supported the making new puppets and created the opportunities to perform.

Yupin Kulanit, who was a puppeteer since the early time of Sakorn Natasin Troupe, said in an interview with the author that in her experience most of the occasions were funerals.

On conventional occasions, performances lasted for hours and, according to Yupin, there were a few (2-3) performances per month. They performed at funerals, ordination ceremony and merit-making ceremony for a new house etc.<sup>23</sup> There were not many performances done all night long, but most were done from eight p.m. to midnight, and of these there were about ten times in a year. They were likely

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<sup>22</sup> The year and month are not certain.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Yupin Kulanit done by the author in 2005

performed for audiences for funerals from the surrounding area.

### **Organization of Sakorn Natasin Troupe**

The Sakorn Natasin Troupe, also called ‘Khana Sakorn Natasin Laan Khru Krae’, consisted of Sakorn’s family members, and some neighbors who had learned performing arts from Sakorn. The organization was small. Sakorn had nine children, two daughters and seven sons. All of them were the members of the Sakorn Natasin Troupe. Members in the Sakorn Natasin Troupe were mostly family members. Members were trained with performing arts since they were young. The organization still had the characteristics of traditional puppet troupe. When they did not perform, they made *khon* masks, which was still the main way they made their living.

Everyone in the house, wife or children, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, can make *khon* and *lakhon* masks. The money from selling *khon* masks helped 20 family members to get food and money in a month. (Sudara. 1985:90)

Hoskin looked at this small company as he stated:

It’s a well organized business with the extended family effectively dividing the labour; one fashioning the basic forms, another painting, someone else applying gold leaf, a daughter adding rhinestones, and so on through all the stages of manufacture. (Hoskin. 1988:26).

Sakorn taught his children *khon*<sup>24</sup> and formed children’s *khon* theatre. People

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<sup>24</sup> Mattani mentioned the origin of *khon* using possible evidence that *khon* was developed from the martial arts, in which soldiers stamped their feet in unison to the rhythm of drum beats. She also said that *The Indraphisek* and *Chak Nak Dukdamban* rituals may have developed into a complete masked dance-drama form of *khon* or may have co-existed with it. With regard to the connection to *nang*, she wrote that it has been argued that *khon* developed from *nang* because of its being performed by dancers in more elaborate patterns (Mattani. 1993:6-7). *Khon* is now a classical arts form trained and performed mostly on Royal and national occasions, by artists of the National Fine Arts Department. The *khon* done by Sakorn’s troupe is considered to be *khon chao ban*, folk or popular masked-dance, a form which emerged later on in the Ratanakosin period.

liked the children's *khon* theater of Joe Louis and there were people who hired them for events like birthday party of important persons and celebration of schools and shops (Sudara. 1985:94). Sakorn also taught his grandchildren. 'Khna Sakorn Natasin' was formed from his children and his grandchildren (ibid. 1985:91).

The *khon* dance training helped with their manipulation of the puppets since the puppet theater was basically modeled on *khon*.

### **Sakorn's Style**

After reviving puppets, Sakorn also modified *lakhon lek*. The most prominent differences between Nai Krae's *lakhon lek* and Sakorn's *lakhon lek* is probably its performance style. In Sakorn's style, puppeteers are fully visible to the audience. Dance movement, especially the foot movement of *khon*, is combined with the puppet manipulation in a Ramakien program.

Pisutr Yangkheosod, Sakorn's fifth son, explained that they couldn't manipulate the puppets well at first. "Then, our father suggested us dancing together with its puppet manipulation... Then the puppets could come alive." (Thueng Luk Thueng Kon. 2004). The puppeteers, Sakorn's children, could not manipulate the puppets well since they had not been trained as puppeteers. However, they had been trained in *khon* since they were little. Pisutr also stated that many people wanted to see the puppeteers during the performance. Then the puppeteers started to perform in front of the stage instead of backstage (ibid. 2004).

With regards to the puppet, Sakorn made some modifications. For instance, his puppets can nod and lean. Based on the author's observation, inside the Hanuman puppet's head, there are two pieces of wood attached to the central rod and these wooden controllers give the puppet a wider range of motion. Sakorn says that Nai Krae's puppets could not nod but could turn.<sup>25</sup> Only Nai Krae's Phi Sua Samut, one of the characters in Phra Apaimani, could nod.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Sakorn done by theater staff and the author in 2005

To add more vitality to the puppets, Sakorn's chose to combine dance and puppet manipulation. The use of three puppeteers is also supported in this way. Following audience preferences, the puppeteers started to come out from the stage. Sakorn's puppets have some features that Nai Krae's puppets lack.

### **Repertoires**

Sakorn's puppets perform pieces from the Ramakien (Thai version of the Ramayana). The big battle scene, 'Yok Rob' is performed at most occasions and some other episodes were added on to it. The selection of episodes was determined by how long the show was supposed to be.<sup>26</sup> The available puppets also affected the selection of the stories. Some programs performed by this troupe were the following:

'Yok Rob'

'Nang Loy' ('Totsakan Kiaw Nang', 'Hanuman Chap Nang')

'Narai Prab Nontuk'

'Hanuman Aa Sa'

'Phrakaned Sia Nga' etc.

According to Somphon Phanmontha, who has been a puppeteer of this troupe since 1989, 'Phra Apaimani' was first performed for the Sun Thon Phu festival in Rayong province, which has been promoted as an event for tourists.

Thus the main reasons for the selection of the Ramakien episodes were the number of puppets that they had and people's preferences. For the relatively unexpected occasions that occurred along with the ritual occasions, it might be difficult to make long-term planning.

"When it was good night, someone who wanted to hire us would come to our house. Then we decided that we were going to perform the next week. We couldn't plan what we were going to perform (several months in advance like in the present). We

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Yupin done by the author in 2005

performed with the puppets that we had. We didn't know how many puppets we had. We were just making them."<sup>27</sup>

It is reasonable to think that it was difficult to make long-term planning for the relatively unexpected occasions.

### **Performances of *hun lakhon lek* in 1987 and around 1990**

Some *hun lakhon lek* performances done between the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s survive on video recordings. Performances of *hun lakhon lek* recorded in 1987 and around 1990 will be described and analyzed briefly.

#### ***Hun lakhon lek* Performance in 1987**

It is interesting to note that this period of *hun lakhon lek* performance consists of a lecture demonstration of this art form and had more academic interest than today.

The two-hour show performed by Khana Sakorn Natasin on October 28, 1987 at Bangkok Bank Musical Art Center consists of an explanation, a demonstration and a performance of *hun lakhon lek*. It seems that the program was to be used as an introduction to a traditional culture for the audience.

Sakorn and a master, Tirayut Yuangsi, from Wittayalai Natasin in Chiang Mai explain what *hun lakhon lek* was and the history. Sakorn says:

“The performance in the past was behind the stage. I feel the puppeteers in the past were not perfect. They were drunk, bumped into each other and fell down. Now I made them to perform in front of the stage. In people's preference, performing in front is better than in back. Uniform is also like this.... (Sakorn Natasin Troupe. 1987)”

The puppeteers wore white shirts and pants with *phakhaoma* (loin cloth often used by Thai men in regular daily life). The puppeteers manipulated the puppets in the

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Yupin done by the author in 2005

front of the screen so the audience could see them. Sakorn implies that it is more sophisticated than before.

The show in 1987 was a show with small lecture demonstrations of how the puppeteers manipulate the puppets as they dance, in the same position like *khon*.



Figure 11. Demonstration in the performance of 1987. From video tape. Totsakan was manipulated by sons of Sakorn.

The main performance was 'Pali Sia Sattaya' from Ramakien. There was no scenery and no special lighting, but there were live music and comic interludes.

### Comic Interludes

This part is a folk piece derived a lot from *likay* comic characters and slapstick humor. Jekheng, Tapad, a female character and a male character were parts of a performance in the comic interludes and in the beginning of the show as an MC in the story. Jekheng is a Chinese character with a white face, a Chinese costume and braided hair. Tapad is the name of another comic character, identifiable by his stretched mouth. They usually comment on the show. A female puppet wears red dress with a frill like those seen in *likay*. In the comic interludes some parts were

spoken by puppeteers. An assistant carried a microphone for the puppeteers of comic characters so they could speak into it. The comic interludes were improvised.

With Thai yodeling from troupe members, which can be often heard in rural festivals, these comic puppets appear. Jekheng and Tapad talk about the event and introduce characters in the story throughout their dialogue. There are some earthy actions taken by the man and Jekheng against the female puppet. The male puppet touches the breast of the female puppet. The female puppet hits him very hard in his head. Jekheng presses himself against her. When the male puppet also presses himself against her, she gets angry. She chases and hits him several times.

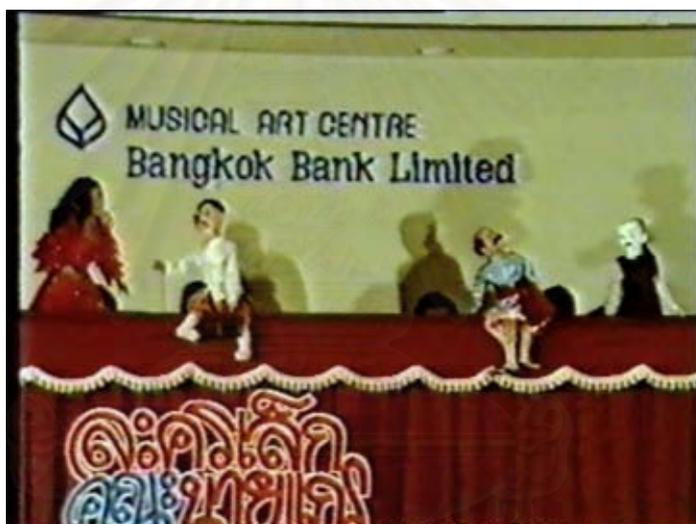


Figure 12. Comic characters in the performance of 1987. From the video tape.

### ***Hun lakhon lek* Performance around 1990**

The performance in this videotape is said to be around 1990 according to an interview with a puppeteer in this show. The explanation attached to the video says that this tape was made for entertainment and for distribution and preservation Thai culture.

The performance is 'Phrakhaned Sia Nga' and the Phrakhaned puppet is manipulated in front of the stage. The forest scenery is behind. Puppeteers wear blue

uniforms with *phakhaoma* and there is no special lighting. The orchestra is accompanying the show and it starts with the comic characters. Jekheng, Tapad and a male puppet appear on the stage, introducing Sakorn and talk about characters in the story. The piece includes three comic interludes.

### **Analysis of the Performances**

These two shows include both urban and rural elements. As Sakorn said, uniformed puppeteers look sophisticated. The show time is probably planned for the videotape recording. The puppeteers' movements are synchronized, which later became their distinguishing technique and develop into a regular show that requires dance training from the puppeteers. The comic interlude showed Sakorn's strength as a popular folk entertainer, blending elements from his knowledge of *likay*, popular *khon*, and his knowledge of comic characters, helping to create strong bonds with his audience.

The shows recorded in these videotapes were not performed at a usual occasions like a funeral. It can provide a fragment of the image of the performances in this period. The mixture of urban and rural elements can be seen in the performances. These videotapes reveal that the performances of that time had new elements, including comic interludes, that attracted new young university-educated and foreign audiences. These were important and show the strong side of Sakorn since he was able to refine and integrate folk elements into his performances. His ability to connect with audiences through comic relief and refined popular performances, and giving it a more local flavor.

### **Conclusion**

During the decades after 1945, *hun lakhon lek* was performed less and less frequently, and seemed to have ended at a certain time. A changing society, with new patronage patterns and audience expectations helped to limit puppet performances to

temple fairs as it was replaced by film, popular music concerts and *likay* troupes. Gradually, the troupe disbanded and its puppets were sold to the Ancient City arts organization, where they became well-known in a new cultural setting. In this way *hun lakhon lek* performances had mostly disappeared by the 1970s until Sakorn Yangkheosod revived Nai Krae's *hun lakhon lek* in 1985. Tourism helped to attract more attention to traditional arts due to tourism development and to revive *hun lakhon lek*. Sakorn created a new style with puppeteers dancing with puppets, making the puppets more lively and sometimes performed in front of the stage. Sakorn Yangkheosod, who is basically a folk artist practitioner, but skilled in many arts form such as *khon*, *likay* and *hun*, as well as familiar with the modern business of making masks and *lakhon* ornaments, revived the art form. Some additions can be found in its presentation of the performances such as the combination of puppeteers' *khon* movements with puppet manipulation and the new repertoire, which consisted of excerpts from Ramakien instead of *lakhon* stories as in the old days. While these new kinds of occasions, tourism-related occasions like festivals, emerged, ritual occasions still dominated *lakhon lek* performances until quite recently.

Between these two periods, there were relatively few changes. There were no regular performances and the puppeteers were not professionals. The organization consisted of mainly family members. Neighbors were also hired in the period of Sakorn Natasin Troupe.

Although new occasions not related to old traditions appeared, there were still strong relations to conventional occasions such as funerals. For both of these occasions a person or organization hired the troupe for the cost of production and the performances, so audiences did not have to pay any admission fees. The Sakorn Natasin Troupe was organized as a small group that mainly consisted of family members, relatives and friends. Despite all these hired performances, the troupe could not make a living by performing only *hun lakhon lek* and so it still relied mainly on making *khon* masks for sale.

# CHAPTER IV

## THEATER MANAGEMENT

### (MID-1990S TO THE PRESENT)

From the mid-1990s to the present, the *hun lakhon lek* organization, led by Sakorn Yangkheosod has experienced profound changes. The organization was incorporated as the Joe Louis Theater Company Limited and Pisutr Yangkheosod, the fifth son of Sakorn, became its managing director and artistic director. It is run by a board of trustees and puppeteers become professionals.

This chapter examines the types of theater management at the Joe Louis Theater. It attempts to show both the modern and the traditional parts of management methods. It also analyzes how modern theater management methods have helped the Joe Louis Theater establish commercial relations with audiences. The other factors that have enabled the theater to thrive are also explored.

#### 4-1. Social Context of Thailand

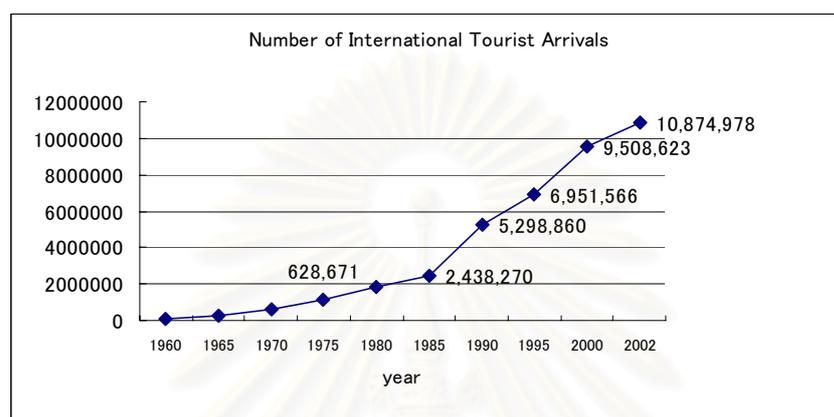
In the last few decades, foreign tourists and urban Thais have played a large part in shaping Bangkok's economy and culture. This section will explore how foreign tourists and urban Thais are part of Bangkok culture.

##### Foreign Tourists

Foreign tourism has rapidly grown in Thailand in the last few decades and this growth has been strongly promoted by governmental institutions. The government selected destinations to promote. Tourists often chose their destination based on media such as magazines, guide books, television etc. The foreign tourism has strongly

influenced recent Thai society.

The figure below shows the growth in the number of tourists to Thailand over the last few decades. After a period of tourist growth during the Vietnam War, it has consistently grown afterwards due to the emergence of a more globalized economy.



(source:TAT)

Figure 13. Number of International Tourist Arrivals

According to a statistical report done by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the massive growth started in the mid-1980s and has continued thereafter (TAT. 2000: 4, 2003). The highest amount of foreign revenue came in 1982 and it has maintained a high position among industries that bring foreign revenue since that time (ibid. 2000: 63).

Tourism has been promoted by the Thai government since the Fourth Plan of National Economic Development Plans (1977-1981) (Kaosa-ard, Bezic and White, 1998: 23). Major strategies like the restoration and conservation of tourism resources, were also proposed in the Seventh Plan (1992-1996). The Eighth and Ninth plans have continued to emphasize restoring and conserving tourist resources (ibid, 1998: 23). Additionally, several new tourist destinations and activities were promoted by the government like the Bun Ban Fai Festival.<sup>1</sup> The government has encouraged tourism by improving infrastructure and promoting diversity tourist destinations.

<sup>1</sup> The tourism impact on Bun Bang Fai festival is reported by Akin Rabibhadana (Tourism and Culture: Bang-Fai Festival in Esan, TDRI 1992). Since 1977, it has become an international event in 2006 and promoted by TAT as one of tourists' attraction.

## Urban Thais

As a consequence of rapid economic growth of Thailand in the last few decades, Thai society, particularly Bangkok, has become an advanced capitalist economy. Economic development in the last decades has helped to industrialize Bangkok and turned this city into a capitalistic economy. For instance, Nontaburi,<sup>2</sup> located in the urban fringe, is now a part of the metropolis.

Bangkok's new urban middle class has emerged and plays a large role in Thai urban society. Thailand's rapid economic development since the mid-1950s has helped to expand the array of jobs in trade, banking, and manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> These new groups of people, middle-class or urban Thais, have increased their economic power and have become strong consumers as the economy has grown.

Today's urban consumption-oriented middle-class Thais have often adopted tastes that are convenient, western-oriented,<sup>4</sup> fantastic, etc.<sup>5</sup> Urban Thais are exposed to mass media like television and advertisements, and imagine a modern life-style seen in the mass media. Television and advertisements reflect urban life and reinforce popular tastes.<sup>6</sup> Although their tastes and life style are more complex than this simple portrayal, these general characteristics have some truth.

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<sup>2</sup> Nontaburi is Sakorn family's hometown.

<sup>3</sup> The economic boom generated an increasing demand for medical, dental, legal, educational, and other professionals (Keyes. 1987:171).

<sup>4</sup> Paritta wrote about Thai traditional dance practitioners and concluded that the Thai middle class embraced traditional forms of dance rooted in court (Paritta. 2002: 237). She discussed that this contrast with the middle class who were simple consumers of western-oriented goods.

<sup>5</sup> Department stores arose in response to western retailing patterns and the increasing purchasing power of urban consumers who developed tastes for imported products (Paritta and Askew. 1993:8). Pasuk and Baker wrote about 'city Thais' in the context of new huge stores, discos and pubs (Pasuk and Baker. 1998:159). In the mid-1980s, huge discos emerged and by the early 1990s, Bangkok's inner ring road was studded with aircraft-hangar-sized entertainment complexes (Pasuk and Baker. 1998:159). By the end of the 1980s, the fascination with the newest, the best, and the fantastic has spread out beyond new youth culture to the broader middle class. Pasuk and Baker claim that whether big or small, they offered novelty and fantasy (ibid. 1998:159).

<sup>6</sup> On television, dramas, game shows and advertisements etc. reflect and shape urban people's concerns, and become role models for popular consumption. Pasuk and Baker mention one concept of ads as "You've got the money. Let others know!" such as fantasies of luxurious whisky and credit cards, cars and clothes, mobile phones and condominiums (Pasuk and Baker. 1998:165).

There have also been changes in traditional performances due to urban transformation. Even in urban Bangkok, temple celebrations have often incorporated traditional performances such as *likey*, *lakhon chatri*, or *lamtad*. As urban communities have transformed, many forms of entertainment have become less and less communal (Parrita and Askew. 1993:20).

It is within the context of these socio-economic changes that the Joe Louis Theater became a commercial theater. Foreign tourists and urban Thais became core part of their audience base. Because there were many projects related to tourists, the troupe started to see opportunities for a revival of *hun lakhon lek*. Many tourist promotion fairs permitted this art form to be recognized and to attract new audiences. The regular growth of foreign tourists and their money has influenced Thai society. Governmental agencies continue to promote tourism since it has brought an enormous amount of revenue to the country. In Bangkok, because of the rapid economic growth in the country in the last few decades, the urban economy has become advanced capitalist. Joe Louis Theatre is also exposed to the mass media like television and commercials that construct people's popular tastes.

## 4-2. Organization

### 4-2-1. The Establishment of a Permanent Theater: Venues

In 1996, Sakorn Yangkeosod was named a National Artist in *hun lakhon lek*, and this strengthened his claim to promote high art at the Joe Louis Theatre. Another earlier influence was his seeing Japanese Bunraku theater, which motivated him to establish a permanent theater for *hun lakhon lek*. To realize their father's dream, the children oversaw the building of an open-air theater in Nontaburi and started to stage regular performances that were strictly separate from ritual occasions. All of these things helped to produce a wider recognition for *hun lakhon lek*. The Joe Louis Theater sought out many ticket buyers and attempted to act on its own initiative to establish a strong foothold in a broader market.

The reasons to establish a permanent theater were discussed on a television program<sup>7</sup> with Sakorn, Pisutr, Surin and Sorayut Sutasanajinda, a popular television host. They explained that they hoped to do it for *hun lakhon lek* after Nai Sakorn was named a National Artist.<sup>8</sup> They were also concerned to transmit *hun lakhon lek* to the next generation, and so started to plan the establishment of the Joe Louis Theater for *hun lakhon lek* performances. The Joe Louis Theater was incorporated officially in 2000. The fifth son, Pisutr Yangkheosod, became the leader of this company.

As an organization grows in size, levels of management increase, and the hierarchy tends to become more formal (Byrnes.1999: 9). The Joe Louis Theater organization today in 2006 has a more formal hierarchical structure. When the permanent theater was established in Nontaburi, more staff had to be employed. And when the theater was re-established in its present Suan Lum Night Bazaar location, more people from outside the Yangkheosod family had to be hired. By 2006, and unlike troupe members in the old days, most theater members are not Yangkheosod family members. The small family troupe has become a theater that is run like a non-family company.

#### **4-2-2. Formal Hierarchy and Commercial Aspect of Organization**

How did the small family troupe become more like a company? Staff members were added and people from beyond the family were employed. The organization has become more formal, with multiple levels of staff arranged into a hierarchy. In the Joe Louis Theater organization, business-related sections have been emphasized in their management as seen by the fact that there are some employees in the marketing department.

While the earlier organization operated mainly through family relationships to

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<sup>7</sup> “Thueng Luk Thueng Kon” 2004

<sup>8</sup> Surin said the following; “I hope that the Joe Louis small puppetry performances will bring fame and recognition to the country, the same way that water puppetry has for Vietnam. As long as I’m alive, I’ll try every way I know how to make that happen.” (Heamakarn. 2004).

the charismatic leader, Sakorn Yangkheosod, presently the organization operates as a formal hierarchy. The structure of the organization is more formal, with a managing director and an artistic director under the overall arts manager, Pisutr Yangkheosod. The structure falls into an artistic side and a business side, and permits somewhat specialized workers. Multiple levels of staff are arranged into a formal hierarchy seen in the modern arts management of the Joe Louis Theater organization.

Compared to the business staff, the puppeteers do not have as much of a formal hierarchy. While there are many posts in the business spheres, there are few posts in the performing section for puppeteers. Instead, there we see traditional leadership format based on a family-like relationships and a master-apprentice relationship.

#### **4-2-3. Modern Theater Management in the Joe Louis Theater**

Although the Joe Louis Theater is not established as a non-profit organization largely due to the different legal system in Thailand, it has administrative patterns and positions that are not different from those of modern arts organizations. There are positions such as the board of trustees, artistic director, managing director, and many departments that have helped this traditional troupe to become a modern company. The key positions for running this theater company are the arts manager and board of trustees.

The fifth son, Pisutr Yangkheosod, became the arts manager and shares the role of artistic director with the seventh son, Surin, who is the artistic director. Their father, Sakorn Yangkheosod is president and consultant.<sup>9</sup> Pisutr Yangkheosod is the arts manager of the Joe Louis Theater company. He takes care of all aspects of the organization, including the business part. His responsibilities as an arts manager at Joe Louis Theater include marketing, publicity, financing, directing the productions, and

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<sup>9</sup> Sakorn ran a *likay* troupe in the past, where people typically shape the performances and give monetary rewards to performers.

creating the shows. He is involved in writing the script, designing the scenery, and directing the productions with Yupin and Surin. Pisutr Yangkheosod is both arts manager and an artist, having retired as a puppeteer several years ago.

The board of trustees, or the board of directors, consists of three family members, and one from outside of family who has a business background. Pisutr Yangkheosod (fifth son), Surin Yangkheosod (seventh son), Yupin Kulanit (Pisutr's wife) and Chaivut Kittisurin (Pisutr's friend) are the board of trustees. Many staff members in the Joe Louis Theater concentrate on business matters throughout the year.

'The duties of arts manager have changed to meet increasingly complex demands in a rapidly changing society where the arts organizations and artists are located. In the United States today, at some major museums, even directors are being selected based on their business training' (Byrnes. 1999:32).

The responsibilities of the arts manager in the Joe Louis Theater include marketing, publicity, financing and production work. The current arts manager has an artistic background and is supported by members with modern business knowledge. Like some modern arts organizations in the United States as the above quotation shows, the Joe Louis Theater is operated by an arts manager who has an understanding of business. The theater therefore runs with an artistic sensibility.

### **Mission of the Joe Louis Theater Company**

The mission of the organization is 'the reason to be' (Byrnes. 1999:92). One main reason for its existence is to expand the recognition of *hun lakhon lek* as a key part of Thailand's cultural heritage.

### **Board of Trustees**

The board of trustees or board of directors consists of three artists and someone

who is an expert in business management. In the chart of the organization, the board of trustees can not be seen. The members have other responsibilities, arts manager, artistic director and managing director. The artistic director deals with artistic sections and managing director deals with commercial sections.

Pisutr Yangkheosod, the fifth son of Sakorn Yangkheosod, learned *khon* and *lakhon* from his father when he was young. He was once a puppeteer in the Sakorn Natasin Troupe, where he specialized in the role of *phra* character. He made a living by making *khon* masks like other members of the family did and does not have formal business education. Pisutr, an artist, is the Joe Louis Theater's arts manager today.

Surin Yangkheosod, Sakorn's seventh son, is currently the theater's artistic director. He learned *khon* and *lakhon* from a young age from Sakorn Yangkheosod, and specializes in the role of *yak* (giant). He leads the puppeteers, directing and creating the productions with Pisutr and Yupin. He also teaches the puppeteers today.

Yupin Kulanit was a neighbor of Yangkheosod family, and learned *khon* and *lakhon* at the Witthayalai Natasin. She was a puppeteer in Sakorn Natasin Troupe earlier on and is the wife of Pisutr Yangkheosod. She writes and helps to direct the productions with Pisutr and Surin. She also teaches the female puppeteers.

Chaivut Kittisurin runs his own communication technology company and is a close friend of Pisutr Yangkheosod since they were young. He majored in communication science at the university and does not have formal training in the performing arts field. He then worked in a communication technology company as a general manager, taking care of foreign customers. He then formed his own company. He has worked with Pisutr since the Joe Louis Theater company was established. Currently,<sup>10</sup> he has a responsibility of managing director.

### **Theater Company Staff**

When the theater was established in Nontaburi in 1999, the members of the

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<sup>10</sup> May of 2006

organization was small. In addition to family members, mostly Sakorn's children, 7 to 8 puppeteers performed *hun lakhon lek*. According to Yupin, these 7 to 8 puppeteers were not regular puppeteers. Yupin said "We did everything". Their jobs were not very differentiated. After that, the number of the members gradually increased.

In 2003, the company had around 50 staff, consisting of about 25 puppeteers, a few backstage crews, and around 25 other workers. By February 2006, the Joe Louis Theater company had grown to more than 80 staff members, plus 45 restaurant members. Theater staff members include 42 puppeteers, 11 backstage crew, 3 light and sound staff, and 20 staff not tied to the performing section.

Currently, only 5 to 6 puppeteers are from Sakorn's family—either grandsons or granddaughters. The rest of the puppeteers have no direct connection to Sakorn. They are people who have studied *khon* and *lakhon* mainly at the Witthayalai Nattasin.<sup>11</sup> In the theater company organization, four children of Sakorn, including Pisutr and Surin, continue to work at the Theater.

The chart of the organization, which is to be found in the office of the Theater, shows a formal structure with multiple levels of staff arranged in a hierarchy.

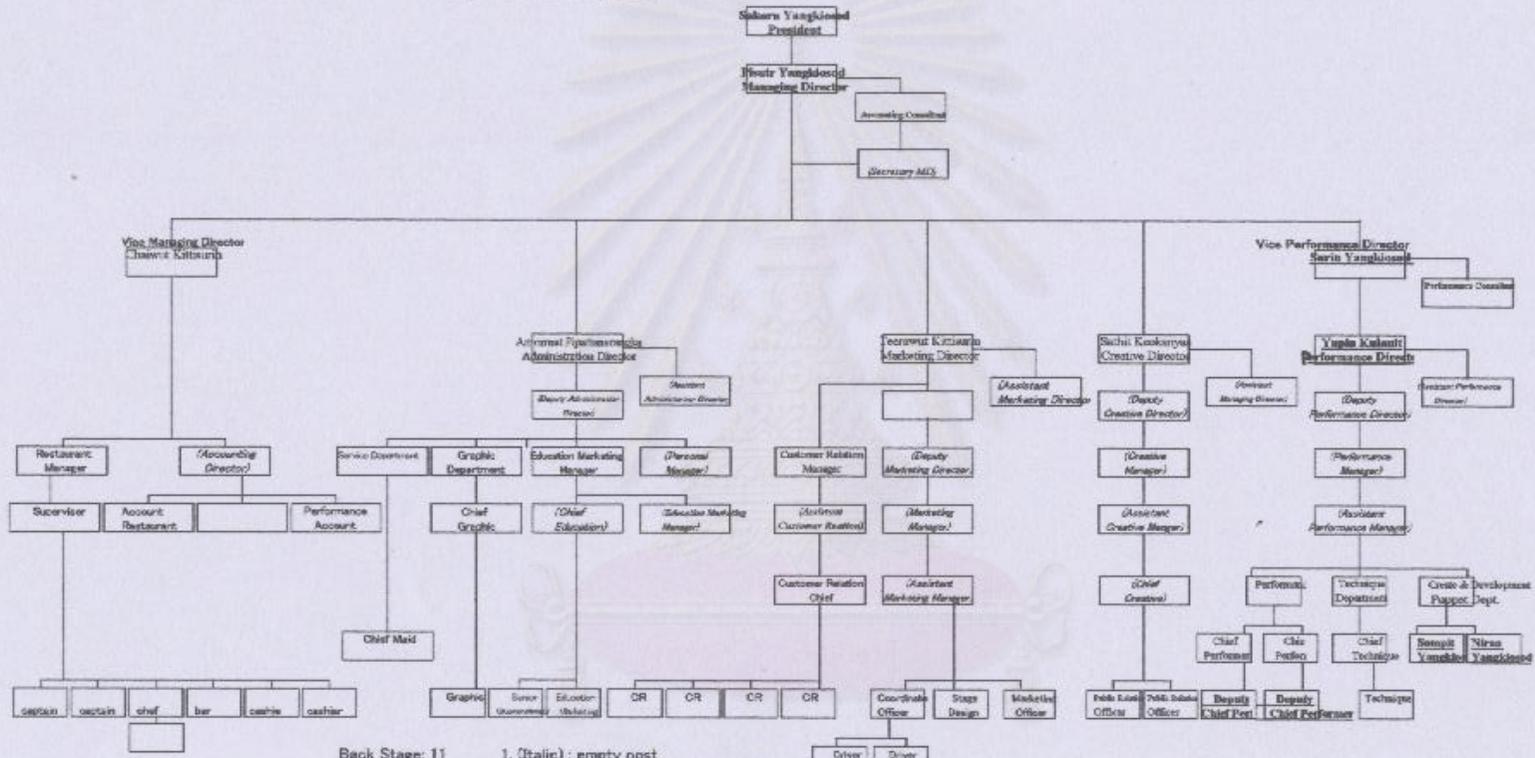
While there are many positions in the business sections, there are not many positions among puppeteers such as principal dancers. There were two chief performers who are not family members. They do office work relating puppeteers such as scheduling as well as performing. The two deputy chief puppeteers are a grandson of Sakorn and a daughter-in-law of Sakorn (Surin's wife, Sriwiukarn Sangsommart). Among puppeteers, direct family members to Sakorn play a significant role to organize puppeteers.

The traditional type of management is still used, however, modern management methods are clearly seen in the business sections. This shows the mixture of traditional and modern management in this organization. As the business staff increase, the traditional way has been merged into the modern way.

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<sup>11</sup> Witthayalai Nattasin is the national institution for training young practitioners in classical dance and music in their formal education.

Figure 14. Chart of Organization



Back Stage: 11  
 Performer: 40  
 Restaurant: 45

1. (Italic) : empty post
2. Bold and underline: Yankiosod family member
3. This chart was made by author based on the chart in the office.
4. Company staff name is cut off.

สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

### **Resident Professional Puppeteers**

Puppeteers now receive a monthly salary and they do not have other jobs. Their specialized duties are tied to puppetry. There are frequent rehearsals and practice sessions. The starting salary for a puppeteer who has just finished Witthayalai Nattasin is around 8,000 baht per month.<sup>12</sup> They are employed by the theater company and come to the theater everyday except on their one day off a week. They usually come before 12.30 p.m. and finish after 9.00 p.m. There is a time card for them to punch.

The basic puppeteers' duties are: 1. Performing both at the theater and at outside performances. 2. Repairing and taking care of puppets. 3. Rehearsing and practicing for performances. 4. Welcoming customers with puppets. There is a backstage crew who create sceneries and sets. They move sceneries and sets in a show.<sup>13</sup> Lighting and sound are controlled by the technical staff. Their jobs are specialized.

Puppeteers, who are over 30 years old, are few in the organization. Majority are in their 20s. Practicing is usually done when they have free time. Formal rehearsals are organized for several months before the start of new productions. In February 2006, intensive rehearsals were planned for the new production called 'Kulamawatan, Tamnan Pra Rahoo'. In February 2006, there were 27 rehearsals from one p.m. to 5 p.m. Three rehearsals started from 3 p.m. There were fewer performances for school programs that month. When they have outside performances, some puppeteers do not attend the rehearsals.<sup>14</sup> After all the rehearsals and practices, the puppeteers end up being very well-trained and the details for the show are clearly

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<sup>12</sup> Chaivut and Pisutr are planning to raise the salary at present in 2006. Interview with Chaivut Kittisurin in 2006

<sup>13</sup> About two years ago, in 2004, puppeteers still had to help to move sceneries and sets during the show.

<sup>14</sup> The observation of rehearsals is as follows: Surin Yangkheosod stood in front of some puppeteers on the stage and showed the giant's movement while expressing character's emotion. Puppeteers learn the dance movement before they manipulate the puppet. The first puppeteers, who control the central rods, in each character, dance and demonstrate their movement to make sure the meaning of the mimes and character's emotion. The positions where they stand on stage are also strictly rehearsed.

designed.

### **Rituals**

Despite all of these modern management forms, the troupe has retained a central traditional ritual, namely the *wai khru* (honoring the teachers) ceremony. *Wai khru* is regularly conducted by Sakorn at the Joe Louis Theater. According to Surin, in the Nontaburi theater, there were *wai khru* once every year. In the Bangkok theater at Suan Lum Night Bazaar, there have been three in the last four years. When the theater had a serious financial problem in 2003, *wai khru* was not conducted. Two years later, a large *wai khru* ceremony was done when Sakorn was very ill. After his children decided to have a *wai khru* ceremony, Sakorn suddenly recovered and conducted the ceremony himself. The textbooks of *wai khru* ceremony were handed down to the third son and the seventh son of Sakorn as part of this ceremony.

Recently, ceremonies for new productions (for 'Homrong' and 'Kulamawatan Tamnan Pra Rahoo') were conducted by Pisutr (the fifth son) and Surin (the seventh son).

The rituals were done by Sakorn and, to a certain degree, functioned as rites of unification for the theater. Pisutr, the arts manager, and Surin, the artistic director, conducted two ceremonies.

Today, most members in the organization are from outside the family and there are many business staff members who do not have a master-apprentice relationship with the leader. Modern ways and changes, such as wearing ID cards during working time, have been used to manage the organization in addition to the ceremonies. Still the *wai khru* ceremony has been regularly practiced after the year 2003 as part of what one could call the 'spiritual management' of the troupe, in part to bind together the employees to a common goal for the troupe, since they came from different artistic and practical traditions or since they work in different roles in the company. This commonly practiced ritual done by everyone helps to make the employees feel united and as if they are working towards the same direction.

### 4-3. Marketing

#### Marketing Strategy in Four Ps

The marketing strategy seen in the place, promotions, price of tickets, and production can be characterized as urban, popular and commercial. It tries to broaden their audience, particularly to foreign tourists and urban Thais.

The productions are staged in an accessible place, using promotions and reasonable ticket prices that attract people. With spectacular lighting and sets, the show runs quickly so as not to bore the audience, unlike performances in the past. Popular elements that have connection to other popular entertainment attempt to bring attention to the theater. One of productions' emphasis is on entertaining the audience. The theater, using this marketing strategy, appeals to a broader group of people.

#### (1). Place: venue

When the theater organization was incorporated officially in 2000, accessible urban location was considered a part of the theater's strategy. First, the open-air theatre was built in Nontaburi<sup>15</sup> on the outskirts of Bangkok in 1999. The theatre was then invited by the Bangkok Market Place Company which runs Suan Lum Night Bazaar to move to its current location in the center of Bangkok in 2002.<sup>16</sup> At the Suan Lum Night Bazaar, there is a variety of small shops selling furniture, clothes, accessories etc as well as restaurants.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Nontaburi is Sakorn family's hometown.

<sup>16</sup> On July 10<sup>th</sup> 2002, HRH Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the opening of the Joe Louis Theater in Bangkok.

<sup>17</sup> In August 2004, the Phuket Night Bazaar Co.,Ltd. invited the Joe Louis Theater to stage the *hun lakhon lek*. According to the press release on September 2005, in the Phuket International Night Bazaar, a 170 rai project on By Pass Road nearby Phuket downtown, Arts and Cultures play major role in developing the project. Arts and Cultures include Arts and World Spirits Museum, Joe Louis Theater, Thai Boxing Stadium, the outdoor light and sound performance, and Thai heritage festival (Press Conference was held on Sep., 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005). In the list of the complex, there are water market, China town, health and beauty center, Butterfly Park etc. Their aim is to increase the number of tourists to Andaman and support Phuket to be a world class destination (Press Release on Sep. 2005). As a part of this mega project of tourism, the Joe Louis Theater was offered to perform in it and they received. This decision does not mean the theater organization will move to Phuket. The Joe Louis Theater wants to perform in Bangkok, too. One new place after the end of the contract with Suan Lum Night Bazaar, Phuket where have plenty of foreign tourists was accepted.

Figure 15. The Number of audience at Joe Louis Theater (from January to June 2005)

	show days	Total	Total Thai	Total Foreigner	walk-in foreigners	tour and guide	foreigner's percentage
January	25 days	2095	1573	522	437	85	25%
February	28 days	2014	1385	629	471	158	31%
March	26 days	2217	1571	646	507	139	29%
April	28 days	2923	2390	533	464	69	18%
May	29 days	2842	2388	454	387	67	16%
June	30 days	2109	1675	434	338	96	21%

Source: Joe Louis Theater Ticket Sales Report

- \* People who purchased 600 baht ticket, who were from tour companies and who came with guides are counted as foreigners.
- \* People who used advanced tickets (sold at fairs) are counted as Thais.
- \* The audience members who used free tickets are not counted.
- \* Group people 1199(from Jan. to Jun.) who include foreigners, is counted as Thais. So the foreigner's percentage increases if they are counted as foreigners. Based on my observation, these groups have both Thais and foreigners.
  - \*In February, there was a special performance on the 6th. All audience members, 53 people are counted as Thais.
  - \*In June, there were two special shows on the 25th and 26th. All 277 people for two days are counted Thai.

The theater is located in an urban area. It tries to provide accessibility and convenience for a wider range of people.

The Bangkok theater has 324 seats.<sup>18</sup> The audience purchases the ticket for *hun lakhon lek* performance at this theater. According to the data from the Joe Louis Theater from January to June 2005, about 12,000 people came to see the performances at Joe Louis Theater. Approximately 15 to 30 percent of the audience is foreigners. In the context of increasing foreign tourists, foreign tourists have become a part of this theater's audience.<sup>19</sup>

Urban Thais, who live in Bangkok are part of audience at this theater. A part of them are possibly middle-class people. According to the customer registration records at Joe Louis Theater, which has thousands customers on record, most people are from various areas in Bangkok, Ladprao, Thonburi, Sukhumvit etc. Outskirts of Bangkok such as Nontaburi are also found in the records. People are relatively well-dressed compared with the audience at the performances in a small community like a temple. Thais, who brought their foreign friends, are also many. Company workers such as Bank, Telecommunication Company, Trading Company etc are often seen. They bring their parents, children, boyfriends and so forth.

## **(2). Promotions**

### ***Publicity and Media Relations***

Langley says that media relation is the avenue by which to obtain the widest free coverage (Langley. 1990:447). Newspapers, magazines and television programs from local and international companies, have come to take pictures and shoot their programs. Interviews to directors, Pisutr and Surin are often done. A press conference is usually held before new productions. Both Thais and English writing media people are usually invited to the press conference.

In order to broaden the audience, this theater finds that having good media

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<sup>18</sup> There are now more than 400 seats.

<sup>19</sup> Figure 15

relations is important part of their strategy. Pisutr Yangkheosod said in a newspaper “Word of mouth and media coverage have been very effective...”(Pawit. 2003).



Figure 16. ‘Phuying Thueng Phuying’ Channel 3.

Puppeteers visit popular television program for New Year promotion in 2006.

Articles on various aspects of the country’s traditional culture often include some mention of the Joe Louis theater, but the history of *hun lakhon lek* and of Sakorn Yangkheosod are more often written about than the productions. The brief information about the show is introduced. Most television productions are filmed in the lobby before the show. For example, in the 5-minute program, an MC from their production company, rather than the theater staff, introduces the theater in the lobby with the Hanuman puppet and walk around the small puppet gallery for four minutes. The show is introduced in the last minute. Another part of the pattern is the interviews of Pisutr and Surin Yangkheosod.

The theater as a part of country’s culture has been introduced by both the international and domestic media. The local television companies often introduce it as an entertainment place. After the Public Relation Department was separated from the Customer Relation Department in September of 2004, these patterns are continued. This is part of the theater’s strategy.

### ***Discount Ticket***

Although urban Thai people are familiar with paying admission or buying tickets for films or some modern theatre pieces, the price of attending the puppet shows are quite high in comparison to those for films. To broaden the audience base for this puppet performance, the troupe has used a discount strategy. This is one strategy to promote the performance and attract more audience to the performances.

The discount tickets are sold at events or exhibitions such as traveling fairs.<sup>20</sup> With a special price and a special expiration date for the ticket, the theater attempts to sell a large number of tickets at these fairs in Sirikit Convention Center or Impact Arena Muangthongthani, where various exhibitions can be found. The tickets for this theatre's performances are most often sold at events relating to tourism.

Joe Louis Theater's tickets are often sold at a discount price at fair for travel promotion held in the various exhibition halls in Bangkok. People who are consumers of travel packages come to purchase discount tickets for the *hun lakhon lek* performance at these events. They normally ask how much the ticket is discounted and when the ticket will expire as well as the theater's location and show time. Many of them have heard about the Joe Louis Theatre through the media like television. They are also a part of the theater's audience.

### **(3). Price**

Every audience member is required to purchase a ticket. The ticket price for Thais and foreigners were not the same until recently. The price for foreigners was 600 baht and the price for Thais was 200 baht. Since September of 2005, the price was revised to 300 baht for everyone and 500 baht for VIPs. This price was changed due to the new production called "Homrong" (The Overture).<sup>21</sup> Foreign tourists are expected to have contributed to the theater's financial survival as well as Thais.

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<sup>20</sup> Figure 17

<sup>21</sup> At present, the ticket price for a new production called 'Kulamawatan Tamnan Rahoo' is 900 baht for foreigners and 400 baht for Thais. According to the theater, the raising of the ticket price is due to having a live music orchestra.

Figure 17. Special Price Ticket Sales

Date	Ticket sale	Name of the Fair	Venue
Feb. 17th to 20th	518	TTAA Fair	Sirikit Convention Center
Feb. 25th to 27th	1779	Thiawthai tuatit Fair	Sirikit Convention Center
Mar. 26th to 27th	189	Book Fair	Sirikit Convention Center
Mar. 20th	47	Rakluuk Family Fair	Impact Arena Muangthong thani
Apr. 1st	49	Book Fair	Sirikit Convention Center
Apr. 1st to Apr. 6th	203	Mahakam Kaichon Fair	Impact Arena Muangthong thani
May. 12nd to 15th	2800	Thailand Travel Fair	Sirikit Convention Center
June 2nd to 5th	541	Amazing Thailand Fair	Sirikit Convention Center

Source: Joe Louis Theater Sarupyot Khaytualuangna

\*Based on my observation, most of people are Thais.

Special price ticket (150baht) sales at fairs from January to June 2005

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The ticket fee for movie theaters is around 100 baht in Bangkok. Based on this fact, it is reasonable to think that 200 to 300 baht ticket is suitable to urban Thais, who can afford to go to see the movie. Three times price for foreigners can be also suit to the foreign tourists market as seen in the higher price offered for foreigners in the souvenir shops.

#### 4-4. Production

As the company has a large prospective and potential audience, the company creates new productions to broaden their repertoire and create variety for them. The program started changing more often in the second year, 2003-2004. Although they sometimes have financial problems they would like to at least change the program twice a year. New productions have continued to be created at the Joe Louis Theater although the financial situation does not allow many new productions in a year.

1. June 2002 – March 2003 (around 9 months): ‘Norasighawatan’
2. March 2003 – April 2003 (around 1 month): ‘Yok Rob, Nang Loy’
3. April 2003 – September 2003 (around 5 months): ‘Sud Sakorn’
4. September 2003- February 2004(around 5 months):  
‘Sud Sakorn and Yok Rob, Nang Loy’
5. February 2004 – April 2004 (around 3 months): ‘Yok Rob, Nang Loy’
6. May 2004 – December 2004 (around 7 months): ‘Suk Maiyarab’
7. December 2004 – September 2005 (around 9 months): ‘Kumnuet Totsakan’
8. September 2005 – December 2005 (3 months): ‘Homrong’
9. December 2005 – April 2006(around 4 months): ‘Kumnuet Totsakan’
10. April 2006 - : ‘Kulamawatan Tamnan Pra Rahoo’

Apart from *hun lakhon lek*, various forms of performing arts were mixed in with the productions. *Nang yai* (Thai shadow puppet), *khon* (Thai masked-dance),

human actors and video presentation projected onto the screen etc are mixed in the productions partly.

‘Yok Rob, Nang Loy’: -

‘Sud Sakorn’: *Nang talung*, human actors

‘Suk Maiyarab’: *Khon*, video presentation

‘Kumnuet Totsakan’: *Nang Yai*

‘Homrong’: video presentation

Except for ‘Yok Rob, Nang Loy’, which was rerun at the Joe Louis Theater in Bangkok, a mixture of various performing arts can be found. The flexibility of this theater can be seen.

### **Urban, Popular and Commercial**

If we look closer at the productions, we can see that they embraced their new and wider audience base, who can enjoy and have fun at the show. By analyzing the productions at the Joe Louis Theater, some patterns can be found in their production strategies: 1. Urban’s Spectacular, 2. Popular: Well-known elements, 3. Commercial: Time.

#### **(1). Urban Spectacle**

By creating elaborate and decorative scenery, and the usage of light and sound technology, the production emphasizes the spectacular.

In ‘Suk Maiyarab’, the large set including Hanuman’s face and arms, the pond lit by blue lighting and the moon and stars done by lighting with sound effects help to make the spectacular show.

The Joe Louis Theater considers that the spectacular elements are an appealing part of this production, as seen in the letter from this theater company to media people.

It says;

.... Maiyarab Battle, that has the development of the performance style, is beautiful and maintains Thai identity having scenery, lighting, color and sound...

(April 14, 2004. Letter to media persons for press conference of new production)

## **(2). Popular: Well-known elements**

In productions, there are popular elements that can be found in relation to mass media.

Guide books, brochures and televisions created their image of Thailand in their country. The exotic like Ramakien is known as Thai elements. The popular destinations such as Temple of Emerald Buddha or restaurant theaters performing short programs of *khon* have also these elements. It can be said that Ramakien-like exotic elements are popular to go to see for foreigners in Thailand. At this theater, three of five programs are from Ramakien episodes.

The ‘Homrong Hun Lakhon Lek’ used the same story as the film. The movie ‘Homrong’ became popular after its release in Thailand. Pisutr says that “We’ve heard that many people watched the movie several times. We hope they will do so with this new production too.” (Nilubol. 2005).

Using a well-known movie story based on Thai great musician, the theater attempted to broaden its audience among Thai.

## **(3). Commercial: Running Show Time**

In a year, regular performances are done everyday except for a few holidays.<sup>22</sup> The convenient show time is set at the Joe Louis Theater for the audience. The regular

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<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the regular show is sometimes canceled due to the rental of the theatre for other events like music concerts. These are less than 2-3 cancellations of regular performances in a month based on my observation. As well as other incomes, the rental fee of the theater and often with the puppet performances help the finances of this theater.

performance currently starts at 7.30 p.m. everyday. The show is for one hour and 15 minutes. The show is always on time at this theater. Audience members come to the theater on time and wait for the show in the lobby. This is in contrast to a performance at traditional occasions that has a more flexible schedule and where people can come after the show starts and leave early easily. Compared to the past, the length of performance is short. The show is quickly run. The running show time is controlled.

In the show, entertaining the audience is focused. With spectacular lighting and set, the show runs quickly not to bore the audience. Popular elements that have the connection to other popular entertainment attempts to lead the attention to the theater. The productions emphasize on entertaining audience and the next example, a pattern of entertaining the audience seen in productions, can be support this analysis.

Figure. 18. Analysis of Productions

	Yok Rob Nang Loy	Sud Sakorn	Maiyarab	Kumnuet Totsakan	Homrong
Spectacular	○	◎	◎	◎	◎
Well-known elements	△	◎ (Sud Sakorn)	◎ (Hanuman)	○ (Hanuman)	◎ (movie)
Running time	1 h.	1.15 h.	1.15 h.	1.15 h	1.15 h.
Visiting audience	◎	△	◎	◎	×

◎ : can find a lot

○ :can find

△ :can find a little

× : can not find at all

Visiting audience by the puppeteers is often seen in the productions and it strongly appeals to the audience members. In 'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai', Hanuman and Banjakai visit the audience at their seats. They greet and kiss the audience members. Sometimes, Hanuman often behaves comically such as stealing an audience member's bag. This visit lasts about 15 to 20 minutes. The puppet's movement is improvised with some patterns. An aspect of entertainment is emphasized. Both foreigners and Thais are entertained by puppeteers' wit.

In the productions, some other patterns, which contributed the theater's survival, can be found.

1. introduction and explanation of *hun lakhon lek*
2. mixture of tradition and modern. In the productions created at Joe Louis Theater, the elements, giving life to the puppets and a mixture of various presentation forms can be found.

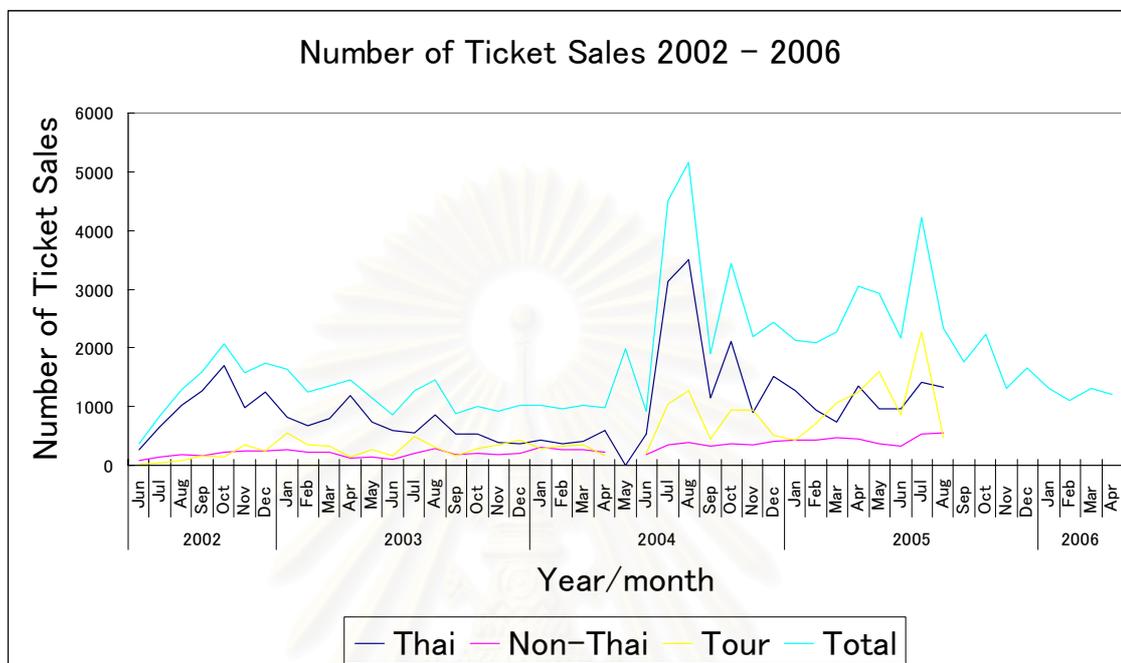
#### **4-5. Financial Aspect**

In order to understand the survival of a theatre company such as the Joe Louis, it is necessary to consider its financial aspects. This study has found that the company earns its income through four main ways:

1. The income of the theater company derives from revenue from ticket-paying audiences at regular performances
2. specially commissioned outside performances
3. performances for school program
4. restaurant and souvenir shop
5. receiving some money from institutions

#### 4-5-1. Regular Performances

Figure 19. Number of Ticket Sales 2002-2006<sup>23</sup>



This figure of Ticket sales from 2002-2006 has showed the development audience from early 2002.

There was no record of numbers audience in Nontaburi.. According to the theater staff, in Nontaburi, there was sometimes no audience at all. The current theater in Suan Lum Night Bazaar, which provides accessibility, convenience and also other attractions such as shopping, has attracted many Thais and foreign tourists.

From this graph figure a peak in income level from May of 2004 can be seen, after which it has fallen but remains relatively high. While the audience levels were not so high (the graph falls from April 2003), they rose up to their highest levels from May to August of 2004. Several significant events account for these data.

1. In April of 2003, when the new production 'Sud Sakorn' had begun, there was a rise in the audience levels. Although creating a new performance more frequently produced more box office, it remains quite expensive to create new

<sup>23</sup> The graph was made based on the ticket sales report of Joe Louis Theater. Tour include both groups of Thais and foreigners.

productions. Still the company has a bigger repertoire of performances than it did in the first two years of its existence. When the theater started new productions, the number of Thai audiences increased, suggesting that putting on new productions each year attracts more people.

2. This graph figure shows a significant rise of the graph in the first month of the new production of 'Suk Maiyarab' during May of 2004. This was influenced by the new promotion strategy, whereby the ticket prices were discounted from 200 baht to 150 baht for Thais and (from 600 baht to 150 baht for non-Thais) in first month, May of 2004. Discount tickets were also made available a few months in advance.

3. At the time of the theater's financial crisis, in July of 2004,<sup>24</sup> there were interviews of Pisutr and Surin Yangkeosod done by television programs, newspapers and magazines. The media influence strongly affected the number of Thais in the audience. After that time, audience numbers have been kept high.

4. The line tracking foreign tourists in the audience did not change much. Considering that the price of the ticket for foreigners is three times more than the Thai ticket price, the small ups and downs also had a large affect on the theater's survival. Foreigners were not much affected by the short-term promotions, but the number of foreign tourists has gradually grown since July of 2002, when this form of puppetry and the theater's productions became accessible and comprehensible by the provision to foreign audiences of brochures and programs in the English language.<sup>25</sup> The various articles in magazines, guide books and interviews on foreign television program have probably also affected this gradual growth.

5. The worldwide SARS epidemic from March to July of 2003 affected the number of non-Thai audience members at the theater. The external environment, which can not be controlled, thus also affected the theater's survival.

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<sup>24</sup> See appendix.

<sup>25</sup> All brochures and programs have been prepared since July 2002 by a patron of the theater, Prof. Dr Charles Henn., whose avowed aim is to make the art of Thai theatrical puppetry accessible to non-Thais, and, consequently, to change for the better the reputation of Thailand as a tourist destination. (Interview by the author, May 2006) The libretto for each production has also been translated for surtitles, but surtitles could not be properly projected until late 2003 when a projector and a screen were bought for that purpose. See also note 26.

#### 4-5-2. Outside Performances

Apart from the regular performances at the theatre, there are outside performances. Occasionally, someone hires the troupe and puppeteers go to perform. This traditional way is still practiced, yet, conventional occasions such as funerals are hardly seen on their schedule.<sup>26</sup>



Figure. 20. Outside Performance at Siam Paragon (Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> 2006)

On the day of children's day, parents brought their children to the new shopping complex. In the picture, many children can be seen.

Traditional occasions have been gradually replaced by modern occasions such as business-related and tourist-related occasions. In three months from October to December 2005, 29 performances were done outside. Most frequent occasions are at a party at a hotel. According to Teeravut Kittisurin, who is the marketing director, companies organize these parties for anniversaries, celebrations and new product promotions. There are some overseas performances every year.<sup>27</sup> The other organization invites the troupe to come.

<sup>26</sup> Figure 21

<sup>27</sup> See appendix for details of frequency and country. Brochures and programs for overseas performances have been produced, and other assistance and advice for overseas trips rendered, by a patron of the Joe Louis Puppet Theater, Prof. Dr Charles Henn. See also note 24.

Figure 21. Schedule of Outside Performances (Joe Louis Theater)  
(from October to December 2005)

							1	2	
							October	1. hotel (wedding)	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
				1. hotel 2. museum	1. hotel				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
		1. hotel 2. restaura	1. embassy (farewell party)			1. Bitec (exhibition)			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23			
1. hotel 2. hotel (in Pattaya)	1. hotel								
24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
	1. event organized by government		1. hotel	1. party (Sud Sakorn) 1. flower festival (Sarabiro)					
31									
							1	2	
November		1. hotel		1. hotel		1. PR 2. Samut- prakan (organized by government)			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
1. party **				1. museum					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20			
1. hotel	1. hotel	1. festival 2. festival 3. temple (festival) 4. hotel			1. hotel (in Prachuap)				
21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
	1. hotel		1. hotel 2. university		1. hotel 2. restaurant 3. hotel				
28	29	30	*8-11 overseas performance in China (organized by government)						
	1. hotel								

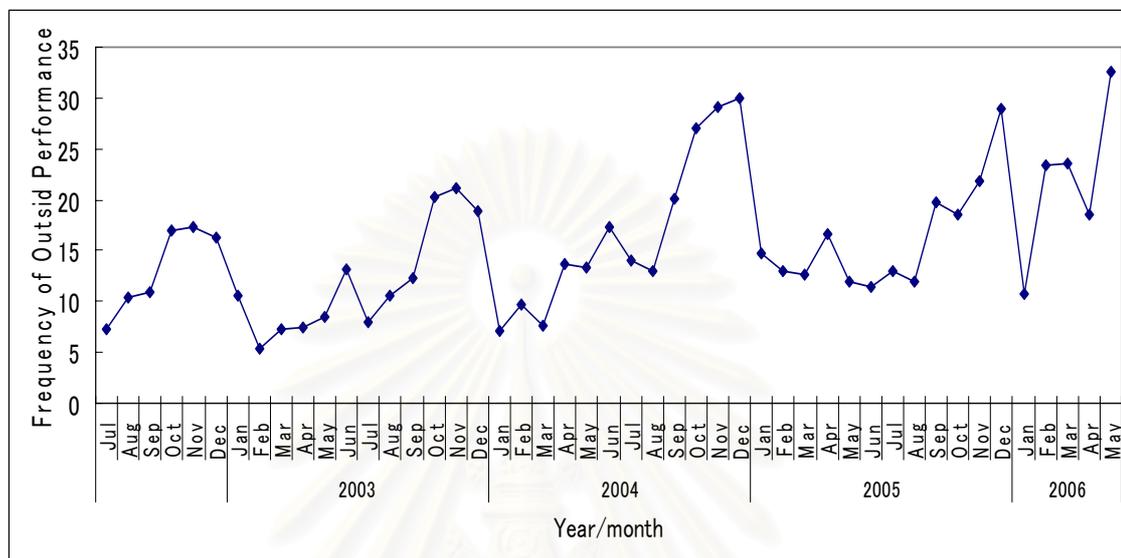
		December		1	2	3	4
				1. exhibitio for magazi 2. hotel	1. hotel (Rachaburi) 2. hotel (Phuket)	1. hotel 2. hotel	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1. university 2. festival (Sanam Rang)		1. party for anniversary (in Saraburi)					1. funeral 2. hotel
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
	1. restaura	1. restaura	1. hotel	1. hotel 2. hotel	1. universi 2. festival (in Pisanulok) (elephant festival)	1. hotel 2. funeral	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
1. press conferenc	1. dinner in a boat 2. hotel		1. hotel	1. hotel	1. hotel		
26	27	28	29	30	31		
					1. hotel ( in Hua hin) 2. hotel ( in Cha am) 3. count down party		

Source: Joe Louis Theater, Marketing department and personal interview to the assistant manger of Marketing department

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## Analysis of Outside Performance

Figure 22. Frequency of outside performances<sup>28</sup>



As seen in the high frequency of audience members in December every year, when there are many parties, the frequency of outside performances is season-based. During the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in October of 2003, there were many occasions related to this meeting. According to Teeravut Kittisurin, the marketing director of Joe Louis Theater, since the contact person is usually hotel staff and other organizers, he does not always know what kind of meetings and parties they were exactly. Most occasions were not directly connected to APEC, however, there were many occasions that were indirectly connected to the APEC meeting.<sup>29</sup>

After the Tsunami disaster in December of 2004, outside performances were decreased. In the international arena, the *hun lakhon lek* was hired based on the fact that it is a representative of Thai culture.

<sup>28</sup> The calculation of frequency was made by the author based on the data collected by Teeravut Kittisurin from his notebooks for this thesis. The number of frequency in this thesis can show only the approximate number. Since the amount of income is not available, this way was taken to analyze.

<sup>29</sup> Interview (18 May 2006)

### 4-5-3. Outreach Programs for Schools

In addition to regular performances and outside performances, the theater stages performances for schools at the theater. School teachers take their students to see the puppet show as part of a field trip. In the mornings or afternoons, or both, the show lasted around two hours.

Figure 23 Schedule of Shows for School Students

Feburuary 2005		
date	time	Show
2	15:00	Totsakan
4	10:00	Maiyarab
5	15:00	Maiyarab
7	10:00	Sud Sakorn
8	10:00	Kiaw, Chap
8	13:00	Maiyarab
12	15:00	Totsakan
14	13:00	Maiyarab
17	13:00	Kiaw, Chap
19	10:00	Sud Sakorn
19	13:00	Maiyarab
21	10:00	Maiyarab
21	13:00	Maiyarab
22	10:00	Maiyarab
22	13:00	Maiyarab
24	10:00	Maiyarab
24	13:00	Maiyarab

Source: Education Department of Joe Louis Theater

(Kiaw, Chap: 'Totsakan Kiaw Chap Nang Sida' and 'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai')

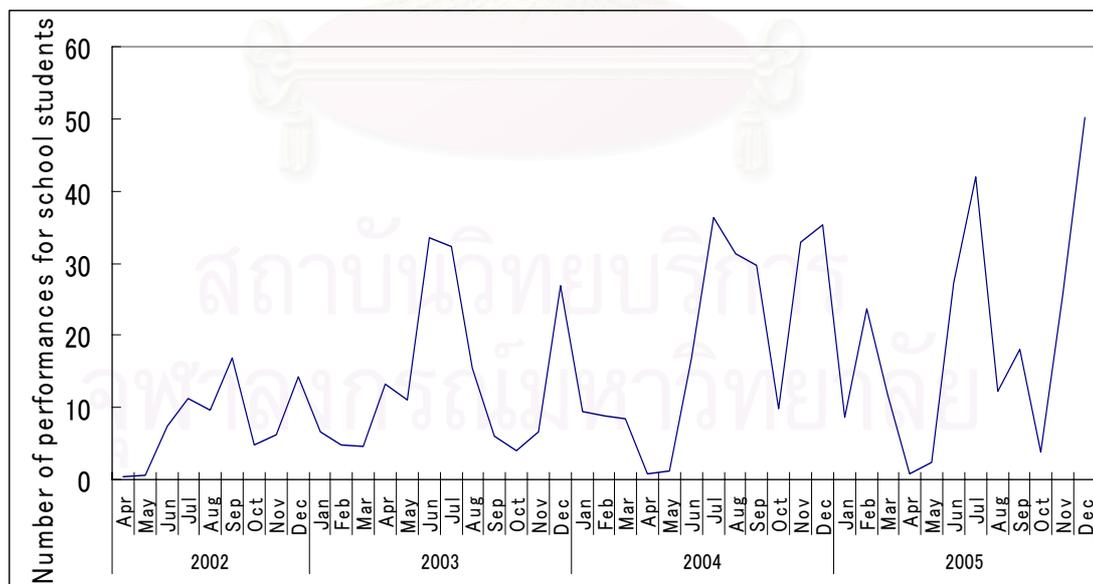
Totsakan: 'Kumnuet Totsakan')

In February 2005, there were 22 shows in a month.<sup>30</sup> According to the statistics done by Joe Louis Theater, there were 69 performances for school students at the theater in 2002, 158 performances in 2003, 232 performances in 2004 and 231 performances in 2005.

In the context of increasing interest in teaching traditional Thai culture, *lakhon lek* is frequently performed for school programs. School students, from both primary and secondary schools, are brought by their teachers. Most of the seats are full and makeshift seats are often added so that around 300-400 students come at a time. Based on my observation of the show of ‘Sud Sakorn’, the students often laughed with enjoyment, especially in the scene with the Elvis Presley puppet singing. ‘Sud Sakorn’ was the show that was connected to Thai school texts, so students knew it almost by heart.

### Analysis of Performances for School Students

Figure 24. Number of Performances for School Students<sup>31</sup>



<sup>30</sup> Figure 24

<sup>31</sup> The graph was made based on the author's estimate calculation since the sales amount is not available. The numbers in data is not accurate.

When the local schools are closed for the holidays such as in April, there are a few performances for school students in a month. Although the number is not accurate, it is not difficult to estimate the large contribution of school program to the theater's survival. Any program stressed in school literature courses, like 'Sud Sakorn' or excerpts from the Ramakien, will receive more interest from schools than less familiar stories.

#### **4-5-4. Restaurant**

The Joe Louis Theater started their open-air restaurant in January of 2004. The income has gradually grown and in 2005, it consistently made a lot of money throughout the year. As a profit earner within the theater company, it has supported the theater.

Customers at the restaurant are both people who attend the show and do not attend the show. The theater attempts to share the customers between the theater and restaurant. Announcement for the show is done at the restaurant and the picture of puppet is used in the menu book. The food is Thai food and on weekend the music, mixture of Thai style and modern style, is played on the stage at the restaurant.

In the current place, Suan Lum Night Bazaar which has many small shops, the theater survives as a part of it with their restaurant, as department stores in Bangkok have shops, restaurants and movie theaters. The theater restaurant provides the convenience for the audience and contributes to the survival of the theater.

#### **4-5-5. Patronage and Cooperation**

Royal patronage as well as other forms of assistance, support and patronage, material and immaterial, have played a major role in the survival of the art of Thai theatrical puppetry and the Joe Louis theater.

### **Royal Patronage:**

Royal patronage has taken the form of visits by senior members of the Royal family. In the Thai cultural context, these visits raise the profile and signify the interest and the concern for both the art and for the theater that perpetuates it by Thailand's much-revered Royal family. The timing of these visits has often been crucial in staying impending crises <sup>32</sup> or in stirring public interest and support and, certainly, media coverage.

Royal visits have included the following:

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited to the theater in 2002

HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana visited to the theater for some productions.

HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana gave this theater organization the new name, Nattayasala Hun Lakorn Lek in November of 2004.

### **Individual Patronage:**

There has been only one individual (non-institutional, non-corporate, non-commercial) patron of the Joe Louis Theater, namely, Professor Dr. Charles Henn. Immediately after attending a performance in an almost empty auditorium in July 2002, Dr Henn offered his help in making the art accessible and the performances comprehensible to non-Thais. <sup>33</sup> He has since that date translated into English all

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<sup>32</sup> For example, the acceptance by HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana of an invitation by the Joe Louis theater to attend a performance in August 2004 had the effect of quietly and amicably settling, through her good offices, a dispute between the theater and Bangkok Market Place Co. Ltd (the management of Suan Lum Night Bazaar) concerning rental increase that threatened to close the theater.

<sup>33</sup> "I had walked past the theater several times, but always thought it was a theater dedicated to the American boxer, Joe Louis. I have no interest in boxing. One evening in July 2002, I visited the Suan Lum Night Bazaar with a friend from overseas and wandered into the theater. That was a turning point in my life. I was utterly enchanted by the puppetry I saw – it was unique, exotic and exquisitely beautiful - yet, there were only three other people in the auditorium. The art was sadly unappreciated by Thais and obviously inaccessible by and unknown to non-Thais - or at least I had never heard of it. Being completely bi-lingual, and having been deeply touched by the beauty of this art, I headed straight for the ticket window of the theater and offered my help. A week later, the theater invited me over for a chat. They

brochures; programs of all productions; brochures and programs for overseas performances; prepared the script, edited the video and recorded his voice for certain documentaries and advertisements relating to the puppets and the theater; introduced and liaised with foreign journalists and impresarios; and generally advised and assisted the theater on a variety of matters. He stated his three conditions for rendering assistance to the art and the theater in July 2002 and has maintained them ever since: first, he does not want to be paid for his assistance, and will not assistance if he is paid; secondly, he does not want free tickets, or, after the restaurant at the theater was opened, any free means; and, thirdly, he does not want any profile or publicity for his assistance.<sup>34</sup> He has given to the theater the copyright for everything he has written for the theater or about puppetry.

The benefits of Dr Henn's patronage cannot be measured, but there can be no doubt that his patronage has contributed to the survival of the art and of the theater that perpetuates it.

### **Cooperation and Support:**

The Joe Louis Theater has the cooperation and support of both governmental and private institutions. Seeking cooperation is a part of the theater management methods at Joe Louis Theater.

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were obviously but naturally suspicious for they could not fathom my motives. Later, I explained to them why I had walked by but never came into the theater, and suggested the name of the theater be changed if the theater wanted to go 'international'.' (Interview by the author, May 2006)

<sup>34</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the theater insisted to Dr Henn that he attend a performance in the presence of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana. Dr Henn yielded to their pressure, and upon arrival at the theater, was surprised when Her Royal Highness presented him with a gilt figurine of a *hong* (mythological swan and a symbol of all that is good and noble) with the inscription, 'in recognition of the patronage given to the Thai performing art of traditional Thai puppetry'.

### **(1). Government**

Ministry of Culture provided a financial support for the costs of producing ‘Homrong’.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand, the National Cultural Commission, the Ministry of Culture, and the Foreign Ministry have each arranged, individually or with the co-operation of others, for the Joe Louis Theater to give performances overseas.

### **(2). Companies**

Thai Prakan Chiwit (Thai Insurance Company) provided a financial support for two years. (2005- 2006 for two years)<sup>35</sup>

DTAC (Communication Technology Company) provided a financial support for two years. (in 2005 for one year)

The increase interest in *hun lakhon lek* at the Joe Louis Theater as part of the country’s culture has supported the survival of Joe Louis Theater by creating an image, making it accessible to non-Thai people, raising recognition in other countries and supporting the financial aspect of the theater.

The support from other institutions and individuals contributed to the theater’s survival, however, the theater does not have regular financial support. The period and the amount of support has been limited. Although the theater seeks cooperation, it does not have enough support at present. The Joe Louis Theater survives independently. When the theater succeeds to have firm financial support, their survival will be stronger. The survival as a part of country’s culture might be more emphasized.

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<sup>35</sup> If it is extended, it will be longer.

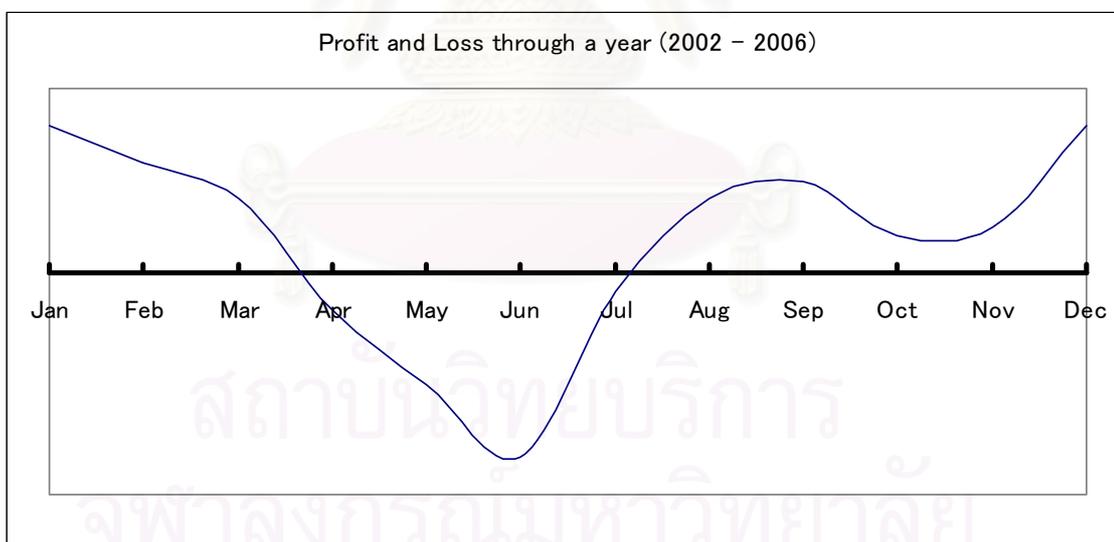
#### 4-5-5. Profit and Deficit

##### *Expenses*

According to Chaivut, most new productions cost 400,000 baht to 650,000 baht.<sup>36</sup> As the staff and puppeteers increase, the total salary has increased. In 2006, it was about 1,500,000 baht, and in 2005, it averaged about 1,200,000 baht per month.

The contract between Suan Lum Night Bazaar and Joe Louis Theater changed in the middle of 2004. The theater started to pay a 300,000 rental fee to Bangkok Market Place, Co. Ltd., the management of the Suan Lum Night Bazaar. Before this, the theater paid a 30,000 rental fee and a part of the ticket sales to the Suan Lum Night Bazaar. The theater started to run the restaurant by themselves from January of 2004. The income from restaurant supported the rising expenses.

Figure 25. Profit and Loss through a Year



According to Chaivut Kittisurin, a member of the board of trustees, from April to July in every year, the theater has a deficit. This line was drawn by the author based on his drawing based on his memory of profit and deficit.<sup>37</sup> The center line is

<sup>36</sup> 'Homrong' cost approximately four times of the other productions.

<sup>37</sup> According to Chaivut, the data from him is 70 percent accurate. Interview (18 May 2006)

zero.

The performances for school students start around July. The company can then make a profit. The deficit period is also a low season for foreign tourists, according to Chaivut. In December and January, there are many outside performances.

Outside performance and performances for school students played a significant role. In terms of outside performances and performances for school, as a country's representative of their culture, the Joe Louis Theater survives.

The Joe Louis Theater survives more independently than before. The company started to pay a high rental fee to Suan Lum Night Bazaar. However, the restaurant has largely helped the theater since then. It could be analyzed that the theater survives as a part of a place, which provides other attractions such as eating, shopping and entertainment.

## **CONCLUSION**

After the theater moved to Suan Lum Night Bazaar in Bangkok, ticket sales increased. Promotions also affected ticket sales. The discounted tickets sold well. New productions have attracted a larger audience, especially at the beginning of the production. In an urban area, productions have been publicized to a lot of people through the mass media. Urban, popular and commercial strategy functions to a certain degree to establish a commercial relationship with people.

At its permanent theater, the company tried many different strategies to help the theatre, and the company survives and thrives. They create new productions to draw the interest of urban Thais, and have hired more young professional puppeteers. Playing the basic program 'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai' and 'Totskan Kiaw Nang Sida' at outside performances in various international conferences contribute to its financial survival. The outside performances and performances for school children contribute to its survival. In these two occasions, the survival as a country's culture is more clearly observed as seen in the impact of international conferences on outside

performances. It should be noted that the external environment, which affected foreign tourists, influenced ticket sales and outside performances. It showed that it is a high risk to rely on foreign tourists.

The theater always has had financial problems. In spite of this, they have survived for four years in Bangkok. Financially, outside performances, the kind of traditional venue, contributes the theater's survival much more than ticket sales by regular performances at their permanent theater. Yupin Kulanit says "Keeping the theater (staging regular performances) is difficult. We can gain money by going to perform outside and outside performances makes much more money (than regular performances). But there would be no development if we do not have a theater and give regular performances. We also could not keep puppeteers without all this."<sup>38</sup>

The income of restaurant greatly supports the theater organization. *Hun lakhon lek* theater survives with their restaurant. The theater survives as a part of shopping and entertainment complex. The restaurant earns much and makes a profit.<sup>39</sup> Large part of the income comes from the restaurant, followed by money received for special outside performances, and then performances for school programs. Regular performances of *hun lakhon lek* place fourth in terms of money-making.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Yupin Kulanit. 17 May 2006

<sup>39</sup> All of this financial information comes from Chaivut Kittisurin, the managing director.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

From the mid-1990s, the Joe Louis Theater organization began to create a place in the wider cultural marketplace in urban Bangkok, in the context of Bangkok's socio-economic changes in the last decade. It first established an open-air permanent theater in Nontaburi and staged regular performances. Audience members purchase tickets to see the show, and ticket sales are expected to support the theater organization. This organization includes professional puppeteers who receive monthly salaries from the theater company and do not have other employment. The theater organization has evolved from a family structure to a more complicated business one.

Despite these new developments, the Joe Louis Theater still performs at traditional venues. Individuals or groups sometimes hire the troupe, and the troupe members go to an outside place to perform. However, business-related occasions have replaced the ritual occasions such as at funerals, ordination ceremonies, and merit-making ceremonies for building a new house. There are also a certain number of outside performances for cultural festivals organized for tourists.

The Joe Louis Theater turned into a commercial theater after they moved from their first permanent theatre in Nontaburi to a tourist center spot in Suan Lum Night Bazaar. Although they now rent their theatre space, the new venue is able to attract more audience, from both urban Thais and foreign tourists. Part of the reason for the success of the Joe Louis Theater has been its use of modern theater management methods, which help to form commercial relationships with the audience and ensure its survival.

## Arts and Theatre management

The moment of revival was the starting point of *hun lakhon lek* organization by Sakorn. At the very beginning of the organization, spiritual management was used. Sakorn was the person who conducted the ceremony for asking permission to Nai Krae to create puppets. The ritual reinforced the master-apprentice relationship between the troupe leader, Sakorn and puppeteers. Sakorn's children were the puppeteers in his troupe. The troupe was strongly supported with the relationship between children and father, and apprentice and master. The ceremony also made sure that the puppeteers believed they would be punished by the curse, if they treated the puppets without respect.

As a corporation, Sakorn Natasin Troupe, once more like a traditional folk performing troupe has transformed itself, using many strategies and tactics of (non-profit) arts organization in the company's management. With help from business friends and management practices, the company began as an independent theatre company which although commercial, operated differently from commercial theatres in the West.

The company itself was led and moved through these years because of the National Artist, Sakorn Yangkheosod, who was a traditional artist skilled in performing and directing folk *khon*, *likay* and *hun lakhon lek*. The business side of the family is also noteworthy, and was initiated by the father, who sired nine children. In order to survive, he used his diverse and detailed knowledge of the performing arts to train his young children in performing and running his arts troupe, even as he continued in the business of making masks and dance theatre-ornaments as the main source of his income to support the big family.

With these backgrounds it gave visions and practical training to his sons and daughters. Although the troupe has moved forward into new direction in both time and pace, the process of developing the arts form and the placement of staff is still done by family members. Among the puppeteers, family members play leading roles and its organization is less formally arranged than on the business side.

At present in 2006, the mix of the traditional Thai way of family run troupe merged into a modern style of management. The arts manager in Joe Louis Theater organization is the fifth son of Pisutr Yangkheosod. He has an artistic background and does not have formal education in the area of business. Members in a board of directors and managing staff, who have business experiences, are interwoven to support the arts manager. Although the structure and some positions in the Joe Louis Theatre organization are modern, the people in the key decision-making positions are family members and good friends. These close family-like ties in the organization create their own internal business culture that has worked well as the company has evolved. Yet the company is also open for staff from outside the family and has many departments for stage management, ticketing, restaurant and the outreach program.

As the theater organization grows in size, more people from outside were employed and many business staff members were employed. While the charismatic leader in the family like Sakorn Yangkheosod organized the troupe in the past, the arts manager supported by a formal hierarchy organizes the company. It can be considered that in the traditional performing arts troupe, the charismatic leadership was also supported the master-apprentice relationship. The important *wai khru* ceremony is still done annually, and it is important for unifying the arts practitioners and other employees, by helping to create a spiritual ensemble with a common direction for the more diverse company. Therefore, the organization uses a blend of traditional and modern management types.

The Joe Louis Theater has used modern marketing strategies to survive. As a modern urban venue that reaches out to new well-educated urban Thais, tourists, and young people in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, the troupe also aims to fulfill its mission as of keeping alive part of Thailand's rich cultural heritage. Its strategic plans aimed to adjust themselves to the problems of remaining a cultural organization in modern and a new tourist-accessible location in the heart of Bangkok. Convenient, fast and reasonable ways were planned to give access to modern people in this global economic society. The Joe Louis Theater's strategy functions to broaden the audience. There were also other types of performance introduced to broaden its appeal.

The outside performances and performances for school students, which give a large part of income, are supported by the survival as part of Thailand's culture. Likewise, it is not difficult to think that foreign tourists also see the theater as a part of Thai culture. When considering the admission fees and regular performances done for tourists, the box office income from performances does not produce the bulk of income for the theater company. In fact, it contributes less income than that which is derived from the restaurant business, and the specially commissioned outside performances and outreach programs.

The increased interest in *hun lakhon lek* at Joe Louis Theater as a part of the country's culture can be evidenced by the support from the royal family, some government subsidies and some private funding and other private support. When seen together, these contributions from diverse sources helped to make the theater and its art recognized by people from other countries and to push the puppetry art form into one bearing the stamp of traditional Thai culture in many international venues. They also support financial aspect in a certain degree.

At present, the financial status of the theatre is still sometimes shaky. The Joe Louis Theater still seeks more support and collaboration from other institutions, individuals and organization, ranging from government agencies to corporations and individuals. It would certainly like to behave like arts organizations in foreign country which receive funds from their government and from fundraising drives. After four years of experiences and struggles, the company, along with its administration and staff, has created a flexible and adaptable organization culture that fit well with how urban Thai art forms fit within contemporary Thailand. As such, it has gained experience in dealing with problems and in learning how to function well in a contemporary Thai society, a part of a globalized world. Using an array of modern and traditional management practices it has created a framework for survival that is flexible enough for local and traditional knowledge as well as international and modern practices and trends.

In terms of the theater's financial development, the company found that its strength lay in its ties to royal patronage, government support, and spiritual

management. Combining traditional ritual ceremonies and modern management practices has permitted the organization move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an exemplary traditional Thai performing art worthy of understanding and learning from.

During the last few years, the company has learned about the main sources of their income and started to learn more about how arts organizations in foreign country have been able to survive, starting to employ more fundraising, direct sales strategy, to learn more about generating subsidies, and developing outreach programs which are all central to modern arts management for cultural organization.

Like arts organization in many other parts of the world, the puppetry central to Joe Louis Theater is the core feature used to attract interest and support from many sponsors and audiences. To ensure its survival in a world that is more and more run by the rule of the bottom line, the formerly traditional family-run arts organization has had to become an independent company has had to alter its management practices. The Joe Louis Theater company has thus used skillful puppetry to attract audiences into a broader spectrum of money-making ventures it uses. Its art is the nucleus of a larger set of income-generating activities. The theatre's puppet shows are part of a company with a broader view of how to achieve its artistic survival in contemporary Thailand. Their survival depends mainly on income from restaurant from their outreach and outside programs, and from grants and gifts different organizations. So, when the Tourism Authority of Thailand promotes the theater as a traditional Thai art form for foreign tourists, it also hopes to draw tourists into the heart of Bangkok's night shopping center, the Suan Lum Night Bazaar in Lumpini Park, thereby creating some new income for the theater and for Thailand.

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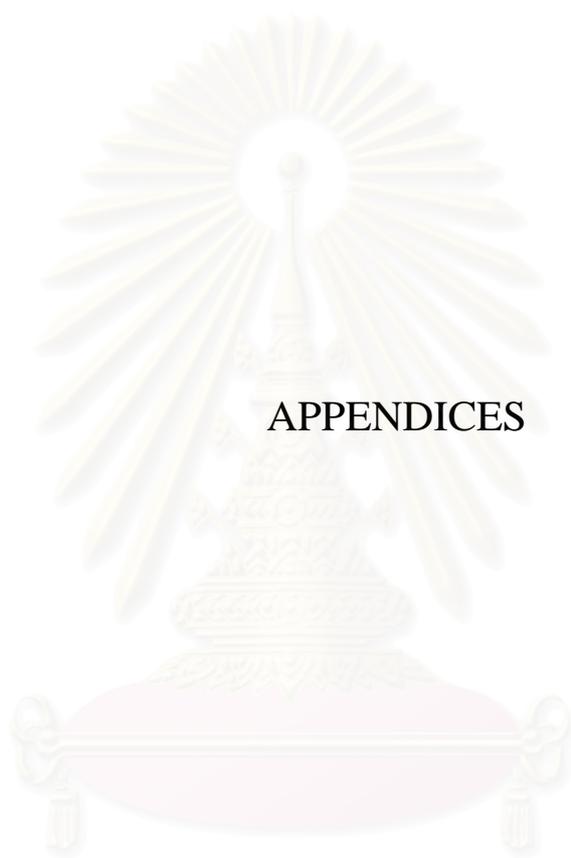
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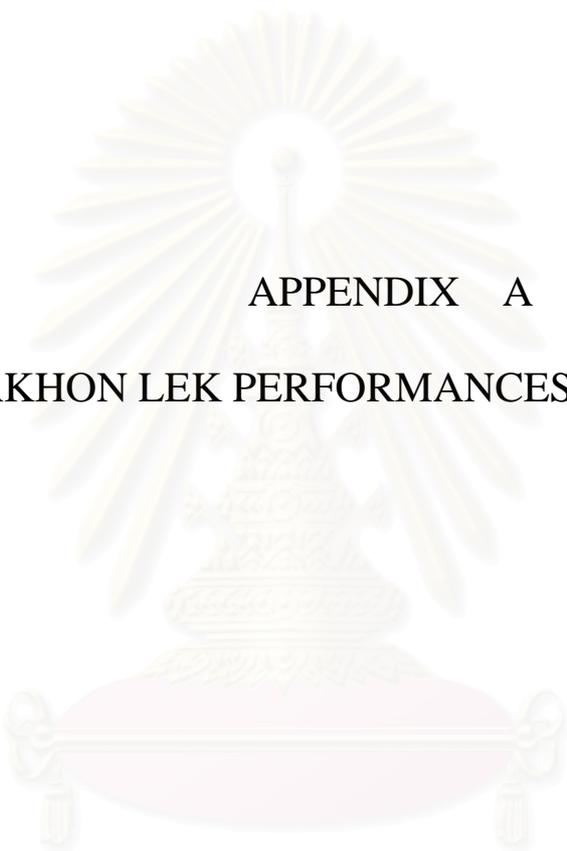
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## APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A  
LAKHON LEK PERFORMANCES IN THE PAST

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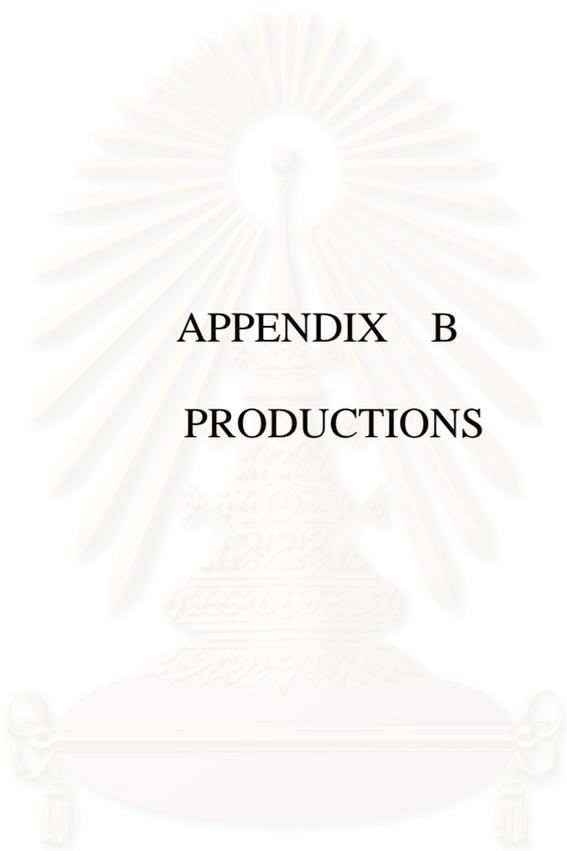
In Anake's book, a picture of Nai Krae's troupe in Sayamratsapadawichan in March of 1962 was cited (Anake. 2000:42). In the picture there are two puppeteers carrying puppets beside M.R. Kukrij Pramot. The picture is originally from a television program called Khongdii Khongrao in 1961 (ibid. 2000:42). Anake mentioned this television program:

One puppet figure had 2 to 3 puppeteers looked busy. One controls the body, the other controls legs. Both must stand and control. They didn't sit or kneel like the performance of *hun krabok* or Piak's *lakhon lek*. (ibid. 2000:41)

Chuun Sakunkeo, who is the daughter of Nai Piak and is known as the owner of a *hun krabok troupe*, mentioned the following:

.... directly speaking, Mae Yip's puppet control was beautiful but it (*hun lakhon lek*) can't be controlled by only one. It was hard. Very hard. It must be controlled by 2 to 3 puppeteers. I can't say correctly about Mae Yip's puppet anyhow. It can nod. The hand can hold and point. It can do everything. I can't... and (the puppet was) controlled in standing (style). Sometimes, they (the puppeteers) were running, coming and going. They bumped into each other and fell down sometimes. (Phleng Yang Mai Sin cited in Sudara. 1985:94)

Sakorn also mentioned about the puppeteers that bumping into each other and falling down. This can show the difficulties of several puppeteers' manipulation.



APPENDIX B  
PRODUCTIONS

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## 1. 'Norrasingh'

The first program of the Joe Louis Theater at the Bangkok theater was 'Norrasingh'. Norrasingh is the name of the warrior that Phra Narai transforms into. This story is a part of the literature called as 'Narai Sip Phan' (Ten incarnation of the god Narai). Since there is no record of regular shows for this program, in this thesis this production is not analyzed.



From 'Norrasingh' at Thailand Cultural Center on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2004.  
Scene 2, Hiranta is seated on the throne.



From 'Norrasingh' at Thailand Cultural Center on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2004

Scene 4, Norrasign right after God Narai transforms into Norrasign.

### **Ramakien Productions**

The Indian epic, Ramayana has prevailed since the ancient time in Southeast Asian region. Different societies created different versions of Ramayana. Ramakien is Thai version of Ramayana. 'Good defeats evil', the fundamental theme in Ramakien is depicted in this production.

#### **2. 'Yok Rob, Nang Loy' (Phra Ram and Totsakan in Combat, Floating Lady)**

'Totsakan Kiaw Nang Sita' and 'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai' are the parts of an episode called 'Nang Loy' (Floating Lady) in Ramakien. This program was performed while they were at the Nontaburi theater. Later 'Yok Rob' (Prince Rama and Demon King Totsakan in Combat), in a different part of the Ramakien, was added to these two parts to make a new program. From September 2003 onwards, 'Raw Duang Duen' was added to this program. Show time is approximately for one hour including introduction.

'Totsakan Kiaw Nang Sida': Totsakan tries to seduce Nang Sida, the abducted consort of Phra Ram. Nang Sida transforms back into Nang Benjakai, Totsakan's niece. Totsakan finds his mistake.

'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai': Hanuman tries to capture Nang Benjakai and she tries to escape into the sky. At the end, Hanuman succeeds in capturing her.

'Yok Rob': Totsakan challenges Phra Ram and Hanuman to combat. Phra Ram beats Totsakan with Hanuman's support.

'Raw Duan Duen': This is based on the folk song of the same name. A man seduces a female.

The show of 'Yok Rob, Nang Loy' consisting of these short pieces is about one

hour.



From 'Yok Rob' at Joe Louis Theater. (Personal recording) Totsakan and Hanuman is in combat.



From 'Totsakan Kiaw Nang Sita' at Joe Louis Theater (Personal recording). Totsakan is seated on the throne.

### 3. 'Suk Maiyarab' (The Battle of Maiyarab)

'Suk Maiyarab' is an episode of Ramakien. Maiyarab, king of the underworld, kidnaps Phra Ram for Totsakan. Hanuman goes to seek Phra Ram. On the way, after

the fighting with giant mosquitoes, Hanuman meets his son, Machanu, who he has never met before. With Nang Pirakuwan's help, Hanuman beats Maiyarab in their battle. The show is around one hour 15min.



Act 1. 'Suk Maiyarab' at Joe Louis Theater, (from VCD)  
Maiyarab is seated on the throne.



'Suk Maiyarab' at Joe Louis Theater, (from VCD)

Act 1. Maiyarab shows his anger. Nonyawik and Wayuwek are the audience.

#### 4. 'Kamneut Totsakan' (The Birth of Totsakan)

This is the story of the previous life of Totsakan and Phra Ram. Nontuk, low-class demon, is teased by angels. Nontuk, bald demon, asks for a diamond finger, which can destroy anything from Phra Isuan (God Siva). After he got the diamond finger, he gets revenge on the angels. Phra Narai (God Visunu) lying on the five headed Naga (serpent) heard this. Phra Narai transforms into Nang Apsorn. Nontuk's heart is captured and dances following her. After he destroys his leg with his diamond finger, he complains to Phra Narai that he has only one finger while Phra Narai has twenty fingers on his four arms. Phra Narai tells Nontuk that Nontuk will be reborn as a demon having ten heads and twenty arms and Phra Narai will be reborn as a human. Then Nontuk is killed by Phra Narai.

Since the show was not long enough, 'Hanuman Chap Nang Benjakai' was added a few weeks later after the regular show started. The show is about one and 15 hour long.



'Kamneut Totsakan' at Joe Louis Theater. January, 2005. (Personal Recording) Act 4. Phra Narai defeats Nontuk.



‘Kamneut Totsakan’ at Joe Louis Theater. January, 2005.

(Personal Recording)

Act 4. Nang Yai and hun lakhon lek appear after Phra Narai defeats Nontuk.

### 5. ‘Kamneut Sud Sakorn’ (The Birth of Sud Sakorn)

Sud Sakorn is the name of a character in a Thai tale called Phra Apai Mani. Phra Apai Mani was written in a *klong*<sup>1</sup> verse by Sunthon Phu in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is one part of the popular repertoire of *lakhon nok* (non-court theater).<sup>2</sup>

After Phi Sua Samut gave up to take Phra Apai Mani back, the mermaid gives birth to a son named Sud Sakorn. When he grows up, he goes to seek his father Phra Apai Mani with Manilmankon (sea-horse). Sud Sakorn meets some obstacles such as an attack by ghosts in his adventure. At the end, a Rusi (hermit) comes to help and teach.

The show was made for one hour and 15 minutes, although according to theater staff, at first it was a little longer.

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<sup>1</sup> A kind of poetic form

<sup>2</sup> This was a part of the repertoire of Nai Krae’s lakhon lek troupe. Sud Sakorn was being performed on the day that Nai Sakorn was born.



'Sud Sakorn' at Joe Louis Theater (From VCD)  
Scene9. Elvis and Sud Sakorn riding on Ma Nilmanakorn.



'Sud Sakorn' at Joe Louis Theater (Personal Recording)  
Scene 10. Rusi teaches Sud Sakorn.

## 6. 'Homrong' (The Overture)

This is based on the movie called 'Homrong'. The story is based on the life of Luang Pradit Pairoh, who lived from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Luang Pradit Pairoh also known as Sorn Silapabanleng is a Thai great music maestro.

Sorn is a ranat (xylophone) player. Sorn grew up as a ranat player. He learned the essence of playing ranat through difficulties and competes with Khun Inn, evil-like rival. In the end, Sorn wins. The show is approximately one hour and 15min.

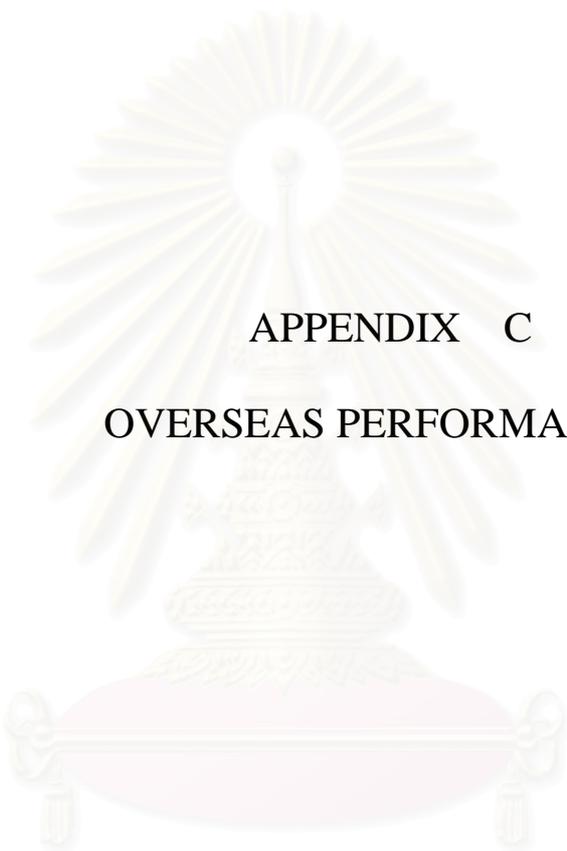


'Homrong' at Joe Louis Theater. 16<sup>th</sup> September,2005. (Personal Recording) Scene 2  
Suwan and Khru Sin walk near the traditional style house.



'Homrong' at Joe Louis Theater. 16<sup>th</sup> September,2005. (Personal Recording) Scene 29.  
Sorn competes with Khun Inn playing ranat. The detail is projected onto the screen.

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

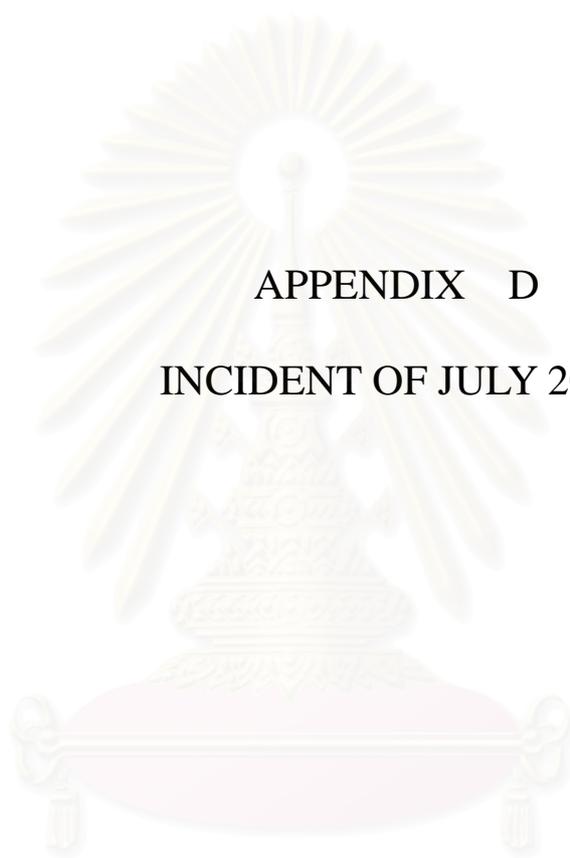


APPENDIX C  
OVERSEAS PERFORMANCES

สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Date	Country	Contact
November, 2000	Germany	Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)
September, 2003	Belgium	Embassy
June, 2004	Korea	TAT
September, 2004	Korea	World Culture Festival
May-June, 2005	Italy	Institution in Italy
June, 2005	Vietnam	TAT
September, 2005	Japan	TAT
September, 2005	Finland	Thai Government
September, 2005	Australia	Ministry of Culture
September, 2005	Russia	Ministry of Culture
November, 2005	China	Ministry of Culture
February, 2006	Cambodia	Imperial Hotel

The data was collected for this thesis by theater staff of Joe Louis Theater based on Tiravut's (Marketing Director) passport and his memory.



APPENDIX D

INCIDENT OF JULY 2004

สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

On July 2004, the electricity in the restaurant and the lobby was cut due to the debt that the Joe Louis Theater owed to the Bangkok Market Place Company, the developer of Suan Lum Night Bazaar. This incident triggered public sympathy.

The Joe Louis Theater is the only puppeteer troupe in the Kingdom to combine the *khon* mask dance with puppet manipulation. This century-old art is recognized also one of Asia's three ancient puppet techniques, along with Vietnam's water puppets and Bunraku of Japan. The Joe Louis family might not survive on its own. As a national treasure, they need help from the government (Rojana. 2004).

Culture Minister Anurak Chureemas commented that "But we are going to help promote the theater and give it support funds, as it helps conserve the country's culture" (Rojana. 2004).

This is from the English newspaper, The Nation. It was talked about as a poor puppet troupe that tries to preserve the country's culture. Local newspapers and televisions were also talked about this incident.

After this incident, the audience numbers increased dramatically for a while. It shows people's interest in Joe Louis Theater as a part of the country's culture. Supporting the country's culture has partly contributed to the survival of the Joe Lois Theater.

The Public Relation Department and the Customer Relation Department, which operates the box office, were separated and new staff members who have working experience in the mass media were employed around September 2004. Media relations have been more a focus since the middle of 2004. This could be influenced by the financial crisis as well as the modern and popular characteristics of 'Homrong', that started in mid-September of last year. More people from mass media have an interest in the theater and the theater has also been more focused on media relations.

## BIOGRAPHY

Mitsuko Yamashita was born in Kyoto, Japan. She received her Bachelor of Arts at English Language and Literature Department, Kyoto Notre Dame University. She joined the Master's Degree Programme in Thai Studies at Chulalongkorn University in 2002 and graduated in 2006.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย