

LIKAY: A NOTE ON THE ORIGIN, FORM AND FUTURE OF SIAMESE FOLK OPERA¹

by

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Photographs by Pitaya Bunnag

The theatre in Thailand would not appear to be an art form of direct consequence to the population as a whole, in contrast for example with the hermetic and homogeneous cultures of Bali. In the accepted sense, there is remarkably little 'pure' theatre, that is, acting unsupported by music, song and dance. King Rama VI, Luang Wichit Wathakarn and their followers attempted to create such a genre in imitation of Western drama which these persons knew and admired, but the transplant did not succeed and performances appear as rare and pious curiosity pieces.

Thai theatrical forms, like those in most of Southeast Asia, are essentially spectacles; music, song and dance are usually an integral part of a performance. This theatre divides conveniently into high art and low art forms, but all too often the latter are ignored or derided at the expense of the former. The *khon* and *lakon* have received much attention from the Fine Arts Department²; these classical ballets-cum-recitatives rely more on costume and stance than on plot or interest. The stories are taken from classical tales, (usually the Thai *Rayamana*), are well-known and unfold at an

1) I am indebted to the assistance of Acharn Prapart Brudhiprabha of the College of Education, Pranakorn, Nai Garuna Chumpol of Wat Borwornives, Banglampoo, Mr. S. Singaravelu and his colleagues in the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Dr. David Morton of the University of California, Los Angeles, Pra Hom Huan and his and other *likay* actors, and friends and colleagues for their help in collecting material for this note.

2) They have also received the dubious favours of the various Thai dance-eating establishments which cater for tourists in the capital; whereas, however, the Fine Arts Department's performances spin out respectably through an evening, the episodes in these places (usually all the same—Rama fighting with Tosakan, Hanuman crossing the sea to Lanka etc.) are pared down to a maximum of five minutes a scene to avoid boredom.

agonizingly slow pace; they derive a great deal from the introverted Indian dance language of signs and gestures. Usually only an episode, which may or may not hang together by itself, is presented at any one performance. Both *khon* and *lakgn*, like Javanese classical dancing, were the exclusive products of leisure and inbred courts. They were probably never really closely followed by their aristocratic spectators³ and could only be considered popular, within their restricted audience, in the sense that they provided a break from routine. The rarity of their appearance on the stage today, and the relatively meagre audiences they attract, indicate that they are not popular forms with the public at large.

This is not surprising, for the public at large usually had no access to *khon* and *lakgn* when they were the preserve of the princely courts, and people away from the capital might well have never heard of these forms. The same may be said for *lakgn nai*, court drama, usually the Indonesian story of Inao, and exclusively performed by women of the court. *Lakgn nok*, drama outside the court, was a degree more popular. It moved at a slightly less static pace through its stories, such as Santong or Suwannahong, had background singing and introduced speech. It derived from court drama but was not radically different from it nor is it now noticeably more popular than *lakgn nai*. Performances today are extremely rare.

Popular drama took four main forms, one of which is already virtually dead—the *nang yai*, big shadow play, which used to be seen in the central area until the cinema and television appeared. It may or may not be significant that two of these popular forms are southern and continue to flourish in the south, namely *manora* and the *nang talung* (shadow play). In Nakorn Srithammaraj, for example, on important holidays like the New Year and Maka Buja the entire central city field is filled with some twenty *nang talung* in competi-

3) In the same way that 18th century European society attended the theatre or the opera paying little or no attention to what was going on on the stage, which was a pleasant distraction from the more important matters of eating, drinking, gossiping, love-making and political and social manoeuvring. Thai courts were, however, in the presence of their head probably more formal than European courts,

tion with each other. The plots are on the whole stylised, and so are most of the characters, in the same way as *commedia dell'arte*; but, like it, marked departures from the accepted norms are not only tolerated but encouraged.

The two southern dramatic forms are relatively fast-moving and contain a great deal of humour—often of an overtly salacious kind. Quick wit is appreciated, and so is a dirty pun. *Manora* is a live performance, unlike the *nang talung*; the ballet sequences, which involve the mythical bird manora, are interspersed with improvised dialogues, in dialect, which often have the audience roaring with amused approval at a particular remark.

The most popular, and nation-wide, dramatic form (as opposed to the simple entertainment *mawlam*) is *likay*, which for want of a better translation could be called Siamese folk opera. No temple fair would be complete without a *likay* troupe and performances, often lasting from 8 p.m. to dawn, rivet the attention of betel-chewing grandmothers and children alike. Wealthy members of rural communities sometimes offer a *likay* entertainment to people in their village and thereby win approval of their neighbours. Snippets of the *likay* type (properly called *lakon chaatri*) are performed at the Lak Muang near the Pramane Ground and are almost synonymous with the luck, not to say merit, that goes with prayers offered to the capital city's foundation pillar. Excerpts from *likay* are regularly shown on television, and the radio acts as an important means of propagating the dramatic form—it is normally possible to hear at least one *likay* performance a day on one or other of the many radio stations. A performance consists, as in *manora*, of a single story, usually one well known, and very often a folk tale. The style is to be found less in the story, the acting, the singing, or the dancing, than in the improvised dialogue and lines of the songs. This will be elaborated on below.

The origins of *likay* are singularly obscure. Prince Damrong maintained⁴ that *likay* was introduced from Malaya in 1880, asserting

4) พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ กรมพระดำรงราชานุภาพ ระเบียบตำนานละคร (เล่นที่วังวรดิศ ในงานฉลองพระชนมายุ ๖๐ ทศ วันที่ ๑๕ พฤศจิกายน 1922)

that in Malay it was called *dikay*, a kind of vocal incantation by Islamic precentors. Two persons responded in recitative and this would have become the introduction to *likay*, the overture known as *ok-kaek*, when the characters traditionally come on and greet each other in curious accents of Thai. If this really started off as a religious offering, it has moved quite some distance from its origins, since the *ok-kaek* part of *likay* is traditionally the most risqué. Montri Tramoj⁵ quotes Prince Damrong asserting that *dikay* was formerly a kind of Islamic chant. It would first have been recited by Moslems to offer their services at the court on the occasion of the royal merit-making in 1880. After that the Malays in Bangkok adapted the singing in a variety of ways and *dikay* became a kind of entertainment. In the reign of King Rama V, the performers sat in a circle: the vocalist started singing first, the drummers beat a one-ended drum (*ramana*) and followed suit. This performance was generally known as *likay*. Montri Tramoj maintains there is a Malay word *dikay* which is Arabic in origin meaning 'singsong'. He believes the pronunciation became *likay* in the same way that *dongdug* became *donglug* and *duandup* became *duanlup*. Later on, he says, Thai entertainers adopted *dikay*: singing *kaek* songs as a preliminary, followed by a *luk bot* in various languages. When a song is sung in a certain language a comedian is dressed in the costume of that particular nationality. *Dikay* was performed in this manner for some time. Afterwards it was influenced by *lakgn*, but *dikay* was different from *lakgn* in many aspects as a result of trying to please its audience: comic parts and more colorful dressing were added; elaborate dances were reduced so that the action was speeded up.

Montri Tramoj adds that the songs the performers sang were called *ban tun*. He maintains that there are two types of *likay*: one calls *handaloh* which is the origin of a present day *likay* as quoted from Prince Damrong, one called *lakuyoa* which becomes *likay lamtad* or *lamtad*—a form of entertainment consisting of two groups of singers singing impromptu songs in competition.

5) มนตรี ตราโมท การละเล่นของไทย 1954

'Susira'⁶ in an article published seven years after Montri Tramoj, repeats both his and Prince Damrong's account of the origin of *likay* and goes on to maintain there are two germ types of *likay*; the *likay ban ton*, coming from the Malay *dikay handara*, in which the singing is transposed into different regional dialects, and the *likay luk bot*, which is introduced with a *maebot* (long song) and short songs follow. The writer maintains that this form of drama existed in Ayuthian times, and was not so dressy or so long as present-day *likay*.

Yet another theory of the origin of *likay* is offered by W. Chayangkul⁷ who quotes the Thai encyclopaedia, which points out the existence of *yeekey* in Pattani, a form of vocal recreation. But he questions the supposed Malay-Javanese origin of the form, since he maintains the characters dress like people from the Indian sub-continent, and points out the overture to the "twelve languages set" contains Hindi and Tamil as well as Malay words. He quotes Pra Kru Si Mahapotkarat who maintained the Shi'ite Moslems of Persia performed a *dikon* as a religious act and imported this in the reign of King Rama II. He himself maintains that the dress and music are Hindu and similar to that to be seen in the *holi* festival; apart from a patter of words in the overture, though, there is not much evidence for this.

To add to the confusion, in central Thailand *likay* is often referred to as *yeekey*, perhaps for phonological reasons, on the parallel of *toa yeesong* for *toa lissong*, and sometimes even as *yakkay*. W. Chayangkul⁸ states that the words *likay*, *yeekey* and *dikay* do not exist in Malaysia proper, but that *dikay* is to be found in Pattani. This is so even today but *dikay* only survives in Pattani as *dikay hoo-loo*, something like *lamtad*, an ad-libbing poetical contest. *Likay* exists in Pattani now, but it is no different from the *likay* to be found in the centre of the country.

Contrary to W. Chayangkul, there is in Malay a word *dikay*, connected with the Arabic word *dhikrun*, which means 'remembrance'

6) สุศิระ นานุกุริยวงศ์สังคีตไทย (วารสารวัฒนธรรม ธันวาคม 1961)

7) ว. ชayangkul บ่อเกิดของลิเก (สังคมศาสตร์ปริทัศน์ มิถุนายน 1967)

8) op. cit.

or 'song', in praise of the Prophet Mohamed.⁹ The term also refers to the 'recital of songs' in praise of the Prophet, sung on the occasion of Malay wedding ceremonies especially in northern Malaya. Montri's *handaloh* and Susira's *handara* are probably corruptions of the Arabic *hadrah* (as may be the current Pattani *hoo-loo*), referring to a kind of dramatic performance combined with songs, originally performed by men in the guise of women in front of royal personages or the chief guests invited for Malay wedding ceremonies. There is no word *bantun* in Malay, but there is a very popular Malay quatrain verse form *pantun*, and it is not without significance that the rhyming schemes of the songs in *likay* are frequently in quatrains.

It is possible that Montri Tramoj's *lakuyoa* might be *lagu-yur*, which according to Dato Haji Mubin Sheppard¹⁰ is a tune often played to indicate weariness, sometimes as a result of travel. There seems to be some similarity between the Kelantan *ma'yong* and *likay*. According to Sheppard,¹¹ the *ma'yong* plays were brought from the Malay court of Pattani to the palaces of Kelantan at least 150 years ago, though the date of their appearance in Pattani is speculative. The comedians, as in *likay*, speak their comedy parts, but sing short serious passages, and there is much improvisation. The soloist has to recognise the tune struck up by the *rebab* player and fit in the first few words to the opening bars of the music.

When all is said and done, it is hard to come to firm and justifiable conclusions about the provenance in time or place of *likay*. It might have had its origins in Malaya, and in part the male costumes could be said to bear this out. On the other hand, it uses the repertoire of hand gestures as in Indian dancing, and the actors of *likay* themselves maintain without any hesitation that the genre came from India and not Malaya. This, they say, accounts for the *ok-kaek* which is both a means of paying respect to the Indian originators and

9) I am indebted to Enche Ali bin Taib of the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, for most of the information in this paragraph.

10) *A recording of the Mai Yong* (Federation Museums Journal vol. XII 1967 Kuala Lumpur) p. 63

11) *op. cit.*

also of attracting an audience. The *ok-kaek* has, however, degenerated. The dance is often replaced now by a young man bellowing *kaek*-like gibberish into a microphone, invisible to the audience. When asked where he learned this, one performer volunteered that he bought records of songs coming from Indian films, listened to them and sang in the same manner, with no understanding of the meaning of the words.

Even more difficult is dating the appearance of *likay*. The evidence for the date of 1880 quoted by Prince Damrong and Montri Tramoj is somewhat slender. Moreover, it seems extremely unlikely that overnight *likay* was introduced and became immediately popular. One assumes there must have been some form of popular theatre before 1880. Utis Narksawat¹² maintains that *lakon nok* was taken by a person called Sataa from Ayuthia to the south to be transformed into *manora*; if this is so, one must assume *lakon nok* to have been popular, to some degree, about two centuries ago. Given that *likay* and *lakon nok* are now barely distinguishable except in degree of taste, one is forced to conclude that *likay* probably evolved from *lakon nok* and classical *khon* and *lakon*, was possibly influenced by Chinese opera (which was well-known) on the way, deliberately aimed at being more popular and lively and that it may well have incorporated elements from Malaya or even adopted its name from a known provincial spectacle.¹³

Today, the make-shift theatres in which *likay* is performed up and down the country are rudely utilitarian. The stage is raised,

12) อุทิศ นาคสวัสดิ์ ฤๅษณ์และการปฏิบัติดนตรีไทย 1969

13) At the International Conference on the Traditional Drama and Music of South-East Asia, Kuala Lumpur, August 1969, the Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia presented *yeekay*.

"The Yiké originated many centuries ago at the Court of the King of Cambodia. Originally, the cast was entirely female and the Yiké was performed by the Court Dancers as a variety [sic] from the classical ballet . . ." (Dance Drama Programme)

This seems rather fanciful, but it does lend credence to the belief that *likay* or *yeekay* essentially was derived from classical drama and is no more or less than a more generally acceptable (albeit less 'tasteful') form of it.

usually on empty oil drums or cut coconut trunks, above the level of the audience, which squats on the ground or may be provided with benches or chairs. The musicians sit to the left on the apron stage or slightly in the wings. There is no dressing room for the actors and actresses, who, amid scenes of indescribable confusion, make up and dress back stage, behind the backcloth. There may or, more usually, may not be a proscenium curtain; neon lights are usual and a microphone, excessively amplified and suspended from a bamboo pole over the stage, is essential (both these electrical items, more often than not, are run from power provided by a small generator). The painted backcloths¹⁴ are often incongruous: in what is meant to be a palace garden appears a suburban house with the latest Bangkok chic of multi-coloured walls and a meaningless glass veranda. The colouring of the palace audience hall is crude, in keeping with the characters in front of the backcloth. The props are few; a couch or a chair for the prince or person of dignity and often that is all. The audience is required to use its imagination; the hero might lead his perspiring lover on to the bright stage and say "Now we are in the forest, and it's night. Are you cold?" A human element appears, as sometimes happens, when the princess wanders in bearing a kettle in order to make tea for her father or her lover, or some other equally naturalistic and apparently inappropriate touch is added.

The actors were originally all male, but for some fifty years women have appeared in *likay*, though even now one sometimes finds that a male may be playing a female part. There might have been a time when the actors and actresses came from *likay* families; but from interviews this would seem to be rare now. Most of them drift into *likay* acting for want of a better job and from a dislike of staying at home on the farm. They work in troupes of anything between twelve

14) Faubion Bowers *Theatre in the East* 1956 maintains there is only a single backcloth in *likay* but this, now at least, would be very rare. Not all the changes of location in the action have their own backcloth, but most of them do. The scenes outside the palace are rarely given their own backcloth for reasons hard to fathom, unless it is felt that the audience knows these well enough but is not familiar with the interiors of palaces.

and forty players and work themselves up through the troupe. Invariably from the provinces and having completed four years of primary education, they are often attracted to *likay* by the apparent glitter and fun of the spectacle. They seem to have remarkably little professional feeling and, except for a few television stars and aging female impersonators, have no sense of their histrionic importance. Leading players can earn 100 to 150 baht a night and the others might get 50, 60 or 80 baht, depending on their age, talent, and time on stage. A young boy apprentice would think himself lucky to get 20 baht a night. The leader of the troupe, who decides on the night of the performance what the story to be staged will be and directs the entrances and exits of the actors from the wings, usually takes care of the earnings and expenses of the troupe. A simple *wai kru* ceremony takes place at the back of the stage before or even during the performance. Each actor carries a suitcase along to a performance with his own costume, but the distinguishing accoutrements, like the king's and queen's crowns, the animal headdresses and princely insignia, belong to the troupe. Each player makes himself up and dresses himself. A great deal of powder, rouge, lipstick, mascara and eyepencil are used, and each actor takes about an hour to dress and put on his make-up.

The dancing in *likay* is frankly second-rate, but it would be surprising if it were other. The actors and actresses are not trained in dancing, unlike the performers of *khon* and *lakon*, whose gestures and limited repertoire they borrow. The dance gestures are mostly performed by the hands and footwork is given little attention. The dancing is not continuous and the actors only dance when they feel the dramatic moment of the plot requires it. As they are often singing and rhyming *ad lib* at the same time, as well as thinking of what twist they can next give the plot, it is small wonder their terpsichorean talents appear limited.

Fantasy is to be found in the costumes, where imaginative bad taste is allowed to run riot. Never were jewels so gaudy or colours so clashing.¹⁵ The men uniformly wear bouffant breeches (the pleats

15) For this reason the phrase ^๔เหมือนผ้าไหม is used of anyone dressed extravagantly or of any gaudy object.

of which give them constant concern during the performance) held up with brocaded belts and have a fancy throw-over garment something like an undone waistcoat. They wear a flashy earring, a headband as a sign of rank and they all sport prominently Japanese watches with no concern for anachronism. The long off-white lisle stockings are supposed to have been required during the Second World War by the government concerned with proprieties of dress, considering bare feet uncivilised.¹⁶ The younger women wear the latest fashionable styles of dockside bars in shimmering sateens and silks. Paste and glass ornament every possible part; the few older women, who might play regal parts, are dressed more traditionally but with an even heavier encrustation of costume jewellery.

The music of *likay* is provided by a very small orchestra which plays a fairly limited repertoire of tunes.¹⁷ The instruments usually include two kinds of *ramana* drums, the metallic gong-chime (*gong wong yai*), a xylophone (*renat-ek*) and a wind instrument (*pi*). In an effort to save money the smallest band, the *kruang ha*, does without the *pi*. This is not the place to go into the technicalities of Thai traditional music¹⁸ but mention should be made here of the "twelve languages", *sibsong pasaa*, into which category some of the tunes are divided. These are tunes incorporating melodies known as Mon, Lao, Khmer and so on and may originally have had a special significance in *likay* (W. Chayangkul argues that in the traditional overture they do); for the most part, however, there is nothing special about the musical accompaniment to a performance, and purists would consider it a low art entertainment. The musicians have fairly frequent, if brief, breaks when the actors break into dialogue, and they too improvise, within

16) Bowers, op. cit.

17) James R. Brandon *Theatre in Southeast Asia* 1967 says

"It is said there are two hundred to three hundred traditional *likay* tunes of which around fifty are used regularly. According to one manager I talked to, a *likay* troupe can get along using just a dozen of the best-known tunes, however. These are of different types and are well-known to the audience." (p. 134)

18) Which was in any case comprehensively done in David Morton's excellent article "Thai traditional music: hot-house plant or sturdy stock" *JSS* volume LVIII part 2, July 1970.

a set of known variations, as they go along, taking their cue from the actors and the dramatic moment of the plot. The musicians are never in any costume and are not concealed from the audience when they pause for a cigarette break.

The plots of *likay* are conventional—full of the universal dramatic stock-in-trade of lost children of princes eventually reunited with their parents and assuming their rightful titles, of crossed lovers who are allowed to marry by reluctantly consenting parents, of daughters being carried off against their wishes to distant parts and eventually being restored to their homes. They deal with kings and queens, historical tales and stories of the wars between Thailand, Burma, the Mon and others. Popular classics of Thai literature are converted into *likay* entertainment, like *Khun Chaang Khun Paen*, a love-triangle involving the dashing lover and able warrior, the comic but faithful husband, and the beautiful wife who vacillates between true love and respectability. The social range of the characters is wide—from kings to crooks, with plenty of sympathy for the latter. The lower ends of society are allowed a good deal of freedom when speaking to their superiors and their roles often figure disproportionately to their place in society. The plots however have a firm root in folk legend and folk tales form the staples of *likay*.¹⁹ Two examples will suffice.²⁰

Seven-coloured Emerald

In a nameless city, King Hongse Thong ruled. He and his queen had three lovely children. The eldest was Princess Sroi Pradub, the second a son, Prince Hongse Yont, who was the Crown Prince. The king's youngest son was Prince Hongse Noi who was born of

19) Brandon (op. cit.) maintains that many "local myths and folk tales, converted into so-called *Jataka* stories by transforming the hero into a Future Buddha, are staged, especially in popular genre such as *likay* . . ." It has not been the experience of the author of this article to see any *likay* plays with such overt religious implications, and persons consulted feel the notion would be somewhat sacrilegious.

20) Both the examples given were witnessed at the Banglampoo theatre.

another queen. When the King became old, he decided to distribute the royal treasure among his sons but because only a man could become King after him, he gave nothing to his daughter.

One day the King spoke about the seven-coloured emerald. It had belonged to the King for many years. The King wished to give it to the elder Prince, Hongse Yont, because he would be crowned king after him. However, when the younger prince heard about this, he immediately felt hurt and complained to the King, asking why his father was unfair to him, since he gave the jewel to his elder brother and did not make up for this by giving him anything.

Then Prince Hongse Noi met his uncle, and told him all about this, saying his father would not give him anything. The uncle told the younger prince not to worry, that he would get a fair share of the royal treasure because he was the son of the King.

In the meantime, the nobles in the palace learned about the younger prince's story and rushed to see the King and warn him that the royal treasure must be presented to the prince who was legally born from the first queen, that is, the elder prince.

However, when the time came to distribute the treasure, a thief stole the seven-coloured emerald and disappeared with it. So neither of the princes got anything from their father in the end.

Prince Tuan Thong (The Golden-lanced Prince)

(There was no traditional prelude [*ok-kaek*] when this story was performed. Instead, five women in Thai dress performed traditional Thai dances for ten minutes before the story proper began.)

Once there was a city named Kosampee, ruled by King Thepmongkol who was the best warrior of his time and without a rival. He had a son named Thep Thong, the child of his first queen. When he was getting old he wanted to make Thep Thong his successor to the throne. The king took part in various battles and conquered eleven provincial towns, including Muang Tamin which was the

strongest town of the lot. There was still one town left which he had not yet conquered, Muang Srivichai. Before he died he wished to make his fame renowned over the whole world, and discussed and planned the attack of Srivichai with his son. The court astrologer was called upon to predict whether this battle would be successful. The answer was unfavourable; he was told that he would lose this time because a woman would be involved. Having heard this, the king was very angry and, completely sure that the victory would be his, accompanied by his son, Thep Thong, he marched his troops towards Srivichai.

The scene shifts to Srivichai, where we learn the late king of Srivichai left two daughters and one son to succeed him. Princess Sroi Fah Thevi was the eldest child, and Prince Koot Chasing was the youngest. Since the prince was inexperienced and weak, he could not yet be crowned as he knew so little about warfare. Princess Sroi Fah was worried about the destiny of Srivichai and its people, and consulted her royal generals about what to do if Srivichai were attacked by enemies.

Then the worst happened. The Kosampee armies marched closer and closer to the walls of the city. Finally the decision was reached in Srivichai to keep up appearances by sending out the army under the direction of Prince Koot Chasing to meet the troops of Kosampee, even though Srivichai was well aware that the Kosampee troops outnumbered theirs. The result was that the young prince was killed in battle and died in the arms of his eldest sister. This caused deep sorrow to Princess Sroi Fah and she vowed to take revenge for her brother. On seeing that her people were being taken prisoners and precious objects and possessions were being looted, she disguised herself as a commoner and acted as though nothing particularly serious had happened. She went about singing songs, comparing girls to flowers making the world a beautiful place to live in and being unconcerned by the fortunes of war.

After his conquest of Srivichai, King Thepmongkol of Kosampee ordered Prince Them Thong and his men to collect all the citizens and precious objects of Srivichai together. When doing this, Prince Thep Thong met Sroi Fah, fell in love with her, and sent a page to his father to tell him about his good fortune. His father also became infatuated with his disguised prisoner, and the king was ignorant of the fact that this special prisoner was Princess Sroi Fah, the elder sister to Prince Koot Chasing, and that she had vowed to take revenge. Sroi Fah did everything in her power to keep both the king and the prince happy and finally she gained the King's complete trust. Then one dark and quiet night, while the king was sound asleep, she assassinated him with her golden lance. Nevertheless her anger had not yet abated, and she went to Prince Thep Thong's sleeping chamber and mercilessly thrust her lance into the prince's body until he was dead. Thus the prediction of the royal astrologer was fulfilled.

The performers required for this *likay* were as follows:—

Actors (Muang Kosampee)

King Thepmongkol, Prince Thep Thong and two pages

Actors (Muang Srivichai)

Prince Koot Chasing, Princess Sroi Fah and two pages

Eight musicians were required:—

2 big drums (<i>tapone yai</i>)	1 castanet (<i>chab</i>)
2 ordinary drums (<i>glong</i>)	1 xylophone (<i>renat</i>)
1 gong (<i>gong-wong</i>)	1 cymbal (<i>ching</i>)

From these examples, it can be seen that the audience can bask contentedly in the knowledge that right will triumph and evil will be overcome, no matter what the obstacles. There is a simplistic approach to life, a clear division between good and bad, that reflects the taste and attitude of the audience, and it is able to identify itself

with the characters in *likay* because of their usually down-to-earth approach to the situations they are involved in, which, albeit at a seemingly national level, are handled in a manner more appropriate to the village.

The closest to art that *likay* gets is in the remarkable ability of the actors to improvise not only the dialogue but also the sung rhyming quatrains and even the plot itself.²¹ Apprentice players have to recite verses at the beginning, but after they are well-versed in the art, they perform impromptu. No rehearsals are ever held, nor are they needed for experienced players; the leader directs them and the dancing, singing, and words, both verse and prose, are impromptu. This is typical of many folk theatres and strikingly similar to *commedia dell'arte*. Punning and vulgarisms are to the fore and much appreciated by the audience. An example, rather freely translated (without reproducing either the verse or the innuendo of the original), is given below; the story is actually a well-known folk tale:

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- 21) When interviewing some performers at the Banglampoo theatre one night, the author was able to witness a quite extraordinary improvisation of a performance put on by the troupe as a token of their esteem of Phra Hom Huan (infra) on his birthday. Until the leader arrived, only a few moments before the performance began, no one had any idea of what the story to be played would be. The actors and actresses made themselves up in preparation for standard interchangeable roles. When the leader appeared, he announced the story would be 'The Benefactor,' a story of a turtle dove; he gave the actors the barest outline of what they were supposed to do and then directed from the wings. After the story had already started and performers were acting on stage it was found the mask of the turtle dove had disappeared and arrangements were made to change the plot mid-stream; then the mask was discovered and the story shifted back to the original one selected. By this time at least one of the performers, dressed as a hermit, had forgotten who he was supposed to be, and just before appearing on stage dashed back and asked the leader what his name was and what was the name of the person on stage whom he was about to address.

Krai Thong²²(A modern *likay*; excerpts from the songs and dialogue)

Scene I

Chalawan

I, Phya Chalawan,
 Am the king of all the crocodiles.
 I am powerful and weapons cannot harm me.
 My father is dead;
 Only my grandfather, Tao Ram Pai, is left.
 I live in a magic cave,
 And all my enemies are afraid of me.
 I have two wives; the name of the first is Vimala,
 And the second wife is called Luim Laiwan.
 My wives are beautiful,
 So tender and so fair.
 Now, I have to bid farewell
 To my beloved ones.
 You should love each other
 While I am away;
 If either of you needs anything,
 Please let me know.

22)

เรื่องไกรทอง

(ลิเกสากล คัดลอกจากเพลงและบทสนทนาบางคน)

ฉากที่ 1

ชาละวัน	ข้าคือพระยาชาละวัน	เป็นเจ้าแห่งกุ่มภักดิ์แห่งหลาย
	มีฤทธิ์เดชมากมายผิวกาย	อยู่ขงกระพัน
	บิดาข้าตายมิได้อู่	คงเหลือแต่ปู่ท้าวรำไพ
	สถิตย์ในถ้ำแก้วกายสิทธิ์	บ้จมีศรหวาดหวน
	มีมเหสีถ้วห้องนวล	ละออองละออองค์
	ชื่อนางควี่มาลา	เบื่องชายชอเหลื่อมล้นวัน
	วันนพต้องขอลา	ดวงแก้วตาทั้งสอง
	เจ้าจงรักไคร่ปรองดอง	เมื่อยามทัพต้องผายผัน
	แม่นนัย้องต้องการสั่งไต่	จงบอกพมาเร็วพลัน

Vimala Please tell me where are you going?
Chalawan I'd better not tell you.
Luim Laiwan Couldn't you ask someone else to go instead?
Chalawan No, I have to do this by myself.
Vimala Then you must hurry.
 Have a good trip, I will be waiting for you.
 When the sun goes down, please hurry home.
Luim Laiwan My good husband, you must make haste and be
 back here with us as soon as possible.
Chalawan I will. I must go now, so farewell to both of you.

Scene II

(In front of the city of Pichitr)

Tapao Thong All kinds of birds are singing;
 They are singing sweet and soft melodies.
 When the dawn breaks, Tapao Thong,
 A young and beautiful girl,
 Makes her way to the riverside,

วิมาลา	ไปไหนคะพี่ชาละวัน บอกละด้วยซิคะ	
ชาละวัน	พี่จะไปไหนน้องทั้งสองอย่าเพิ่งรู้เลย	
เหลื่อมล้ายวัน	ให้ลูกน้องเขาไปแทนไม่ได้หรือคะ พี่ไม่ต้องไป	
ชาละวัน	ไม่ได้หรอก สิ่งนี้จะให้คนอื่นไปไม่ได้หรอก	
วิมาลา	ถ้ายังงั้นก็ไปซิคะ	
	ไปดีเถอะพี่ชาละวัน	ตัวหม่อมฉันจะรอคอย
	ตะวันขายบ้ายหน่วย	พี่อย่าลืมน้องไปไหน
เหลื่อมล้ายวัน	พี่ชาละวันคนดี	พี่ต้องเร็วรีบกลับ
	มาประทับขวัญ	เหลื่อมล้ายวันหาใจ
ชาละวัน	พี่ไปไม่ไปกลับ	พี่จะกลับมาเร็วไว

ฉากที่ 2

(ฉากหน้าเมืองพิจิตร)

ตะเภาทอง มวลวิหคนกลัษณาเรอขรียง
 ส่งสำเนียงเสียงก้องทำนองดนตรี
 พอได้เวลาณภาพ้องตะเภาทองสาวน้อย
 ออกมากอยเพื่อนสาวทราวมัทธา

Waiting for her friends to join her.
 She does not realise that danger is approaching;
 She jumps quickly into the water to bathe.
 At that exact moment, Chalawan appears.

Chalawan

Oh beautiful golden swan !
 Your skin is as fine and fair
 As an angel's who has
 Descended from heaven.
 My heart is on fire;
 Love is overflowing its banks
 And hard to hold back.
 This is a strange feeling;
 Chalawan must take her away
 To his cave.

Tapao Thong

Base black crow !
 Do not pretend that you are a swan.
 Oh lowest creature !
 How can anyone have any affection for you ?
 Not a grain of humility
 Not knowing that you are only an animal,
 Displaying only envy, petulance
 And full of hollow threats.
 Take care,
 Or you will turn into a corpse.

	ไม่นึกว่าภัยมาถึงตัวจนลืมกายกลัวกุมภีร์ ในทันใดนั้นเองตะเกาทองก็กระโจนลงในน้ำ พอดีชาละวันก็มาถึง	
ชาละวัน	หงส์เอ๋ยหงส์ทอง งามดังเทพธิดา ใจนุ่มให้รู้มรรอัน สุดจะหักข่มจิต จำต้องอุตนางมา	ผิวพรรณผุดผ่องโตภา ขุดิมาจากสรวงสวรรค์ คาครักซ้อนซ้อนรัก ในฤทัยเจ้าชาละวัน แล้วพาไปถ้ำแก้วพลัน
ตะเกาทอง	กาเอ๋ยกาคำ เดียดจระเข้ฉาดโดยตรง ไม่เจียมตัวสักนิด มาอิจฉาอาฆาต ระวังตัวให้ดี	เจ้าอย่ามาทำเป็นหงส์ ใครจะรักลงคอ ไม่คิดว่าตัวเป็นสัตว์ มาสามารถงอนง้อ จะกลายเป็นผีหวังอ

Chalawan (Making an angry groan) Such hurtful words!
If I did not think that you were beautiful, you would
be dead by now.

Scene III

Phya Pichitr Oh dear! What has happened to my beautiful
(The Lord of daughter, Tapao Thong?
Pichitr) I, Phya Pichitr,
Am thinking of my daughter,
O, Tapao Thong,
Where are you now?
Are you with your lover
And making me sit here worrying to death?

(He goes off; a hermit enters down-stage, singing to himself)

The Hermit Become ordained;
Be not like the other novices who only think of
food and bed.
Become ordained;
Let the women wait and sleep by themselves.
He keeps thinking of Krai Thong
And does not see that he is approaching.

ชาละวัน จิจะ คำเจ็บจริงนะ ไม่สวสกันคนนี้จะปลิดชีวิตทั้งเสียเลย

ฉากที่ 3

พระยาพิจิตร (เจ้าพระยาพิจิตร)

แหม ตะเกาทองลูกเรามาไปไหนหว่า

ข้าคือเจ้าพระยาพิจิตร กำลังนั่งคิดถึงบุตร

บ้านถนนตะเกาทอง เจ้าไปล่องลอยอยู่ไหน

หรือไปหลงเสน่ห์เสน่หั่นมุ่ม ปลอญให้พ่อกลุ่มอุรา

(เจ้าพระยาพิจิตรออกไป ฤๅษีเข้ามาทางข้างล่างของเวที)

ฤๅษี บวชเป็นพระสละเป็นเถร ไม่เอาจอย่างเถรที่กินนอน

บวชเป็นพระสละไม่สึก ให้สีกานอนนี้ถจนน้ำลายไหล

นั่งครุ่นนึกไปถึงไกรทอง ไม่เห็นหน้าหลานบ่าวย่องเข้ามาหา

(Krai Thong enters)

The Hermit Oh, Krai Thong, you are already here. I was just thinking of you before you came in. Nice of you to come; tell me what brings you here?

Krai Thong I hear that Tapao Thong, the daughter of Phya Pichitr, the Lord of Pichitr, was taken away by Chalawan, and the Lord wants to find a crocodile charmer to quell Chalawan. Whoever can destroy Chalawan, will have as a reward half of the city and his daughter will be his too.

The Hermit It sounds good. Go then, you have all my blessings.

Krai Thong I am worried about leaving you behind.

The Hermit Don't, I can look after myself.

Krai Thong So, farewell to you, sir.

(On his way Krai Thong meets Tid Doang, a palace servant, who is looking sad and asks who he is)

Tid Doang My name is Doang. The name of our family begins with letter D. My father is Duad, my great-great-grandfather is Dang, my brother Dear and my wife Dong.

(ไกรทองออก)

ฤๅษี อ้อ พ่อไกรทองมาแล้วหรือ ข้ากำลังบ่นถึงอยู่พอดี
เออ เออ สวัสดิ์ เข้ามาธุระอะไรละพ่อไกรทอง บอกตาชี่
ไกรทอง มีพระเจ้าตา เรื่องมันเป็นอย่างนี้ คือว่าคนตะเภาทองลูกสาวเจ้าเมือง
พิชิตร์ ถูกเจ้าชาละวันลักไปเสียแล้ว และได้รับข่าวว่าท่านเจ้าเมือง
พิชิตร์ต้องการหาหมอจะเข้าไปปราบเจ้าชาละวัน ถ้าหากใครปราบ
สำเร็จท่านจะยกลูกสาวให้พร้อมทั้งแบ่งเมืองให้ครึ่งหนึ่ง

ฤๅษี เออ ดีมากเชียวละหลาน ตาอนุญาตให้ไป

ไกรทอง ตายอยู่ข้างหลังหลานก็ยังเป็นห่วง

ฤๅษี ไม่ต้องเป็นห่วง มันเป็นเรื่องของข้า

ไกรทอง ครับ ผมขอลาเจ้าตาก่อน

(แล้วก็เดินมาพบกับทิดโค้งซึ่งมีหน้าไม่สบาย และไกรทองก็ถามว่าเป็นใคร)

ทิดโค้ง ข้ามีนามว่าทิดโค้ง ชื่นชื่อโคลงด้วยตัว ดอ

นามของพ่อช่อควด นามของทวดช่อต่าง

นามของน้องช่อเคย นามของเมียช่อต้อง

- Krai Thong* All right, then your name is Doang. There is no need to tell me all the rest. Now, what makes you look so sad?
- Tid Doang* The Lord of Pichitr wants a crocodile charmer to destroy Chalawan.
- Krai Thong* All right, I'll lend a hand.
- Tid Doang* With your face, you shouldn't go near Chalawan at all.
- Krai Thong* Don't underestimate me.
- Tid Doang* Let's go, then, if you are not afraid.
- Krai Thong* Now we have come to the city of Pichitr after a tiring journey. A rest would be welcome, but there is pressing business to perform at the Lord of Pichitr's palace.
- (The Lord of Pichitr enters)
- Phya Pichitr* Who's that handsome man over there? He looks like a king to me.
- Krai Thong* My name is Krai Thong, a pupil of Acharn Wat Makarm Thoau and I wish to destroy Chalawan. If I prove unsuccessful I shall not return.

ไกรทอง	พอรู้ว่าโด่ง เขาถามว่าชื่อนี้ใครก็บอกมาทั้งโคตร
ทิดโด่ง	เจ้าโด่งเป็นอะไรไปหรือ หน้าตาไม่สมชายเลยบอกซิเราจะช่วย
	คือๆ อย่างนี้ครับคุณ พระยาพิจิตรต้องการให้หมอกระเข้าไปปราบ
	เจ้าชาละวัน
ไกรทอง	อ้อ ดั่งนั้นตกลงจะไปช่วย
ทิดโด่ง	หน้าตาอย่างนี้อ่าไปใกล้ชาละวันมัน มันจะกินเสียเลย
ไกรทอง	นี่เจ้ายามาประมารเราเลยนะ
ทิดโด่ง	ไป ไปกันถ้าไม่กลัว
ไกรทอง	ครั้นมาถึงเมืองพิจิตร ใครจะหยดพักกายา
	เดินทางมาเหน็ดเหนื่อย จำต้องไปเฝ้าเจ้าเมืองพิจิตร

(เจ้าพระยาพิจิตรออก)

- พระยาพิจิตร เอะ นั่นลูกเต้าเหล่ากอใคร หน้าตาหล่อเหลาเหมือนกษัตริย์
- ไกรทอง อ้อ ผมขอไกรทองเป็นศิษย์ของอาจารย์วัดมะขามเต้า จะมาขอจับ
- เจ้าชาละวัน ถ้าจับไม่ได้จะไม่ขอกลับมา

Phya Pichitr Your wish is granted, but do not risk your entire life upon it.

Krai Thong It doesn't matter. May I have some joss-sticks, candles, betel leaves, betel nuts, puffed rice and flowers.

Phya Pichitr Tid Doang, have all these things ready for the ceremony.

Tid Doang Yes, sir.

(Krai Thong casts a spell on the waters of the river)

Krai Thong So let Chalawan be afflicted. (He moves up-stage)

Chalawan (Alone down-stage)

Chalawan is on fire as though someone hammers at his heart.

Grandpa, please help me.

(His grandfather enters)

Tao Rum Pai I, Tao Rum Pai, live in a magic cave. I am a hunter and I raise fighting cocks. I am also good at gambling, especially horse races. My favourite food is glutinous rice with honey. Last night I dreamt that an angel cut off Chalawan's arms and legs, and drove me out of my cave. What could that mean? What's the matter?

พระยาพิจิตร เอาเถะละถ้าจับได้ แต่อย่าเอาชีวิตไปทิ้งเสีย

ไกรทอง ไม่เป็นไร ขอรูปเทียน หมากพลู ข้าวตอกและดอกไม้

พระยาพิจิตร เอา ทิดโต้งไปจัดมาให้เดี๋ยวนี้

ทิดโต้ง ครับเดี๋ยวนี้

(ไกรทองร้ายเวทมนต์ศาลาลงไปในแม่น้ำ)

ไกรทอง โอम्महाละลวยระหะระหะทุกขุมชน

ชาละวัน (อยู่ข้างล่างเวที)

เจ้าชาละวันให้รู้มรณังใครเอาหั่นมาทูปใจ

พระเจ้าปู่ช่วยด้วย

(ท้าวรำไพออก)

ท้าวรำไพ ข้าคือท้าวรำไพสลดข้อย ฌ ถ้าแก้ว มีอาชั้พดักแล้ว และเลียงไถ่ชน
เรื่องการพนันไม่ห่อแต่มาเบอร์เป็นทหนึ่ง ชอบกินแต่ข้าวเหนียวมัน
จมน้ำฝางเสาวคนช้ เมื่อคืนฝันว่าเทวัญองค์หนึ่งตัดแขนขาเจ้าชาละวัน
และไล่ฉันออกจากถ้ำ เหวร้ายตายได้อย่างไร
เป็นอะไรไปเจ้าชาละวัน

Chalawan That crocodile charmer is able to loosen my spell!

Tao Rum Pai All right, my boy, I'll do what I can.

Chalawan Thanks ever so much, grandpa.

(Tao Rum Pai goes off : Krai Thong addresses Chalawan)

Krai Thong Chalawan, I want to talk with you and put my cards on the table. If you return Tapao Thong, I will not harm you.

Chalawan I'll die before I give her up.

Krai Thong If that is your wish.

(The Lord of Pichitr enters)

Chao Phya Pichitr, may I follow Chalawan.

Phya Pichitr If you are brave enough, go after him.

(Suddenly entering the cave, Krai Thong explains to Tao Rum Pai that he only wants Tapao Thong back but Chalawan turned down his request. Tao Rum Pai is at his wit's end and decides to let fate take care of events)

ชาละวัน อ้ายหมอจระเข้ตัวนั้นมันสามารถแก้มนต์คาถาของข้าได้

ท้าวรำไพ เอมามาจะเป่าให้

ชาละวัน ขอบขอบคุณพระเจ้าปู่

(ท้าวรำไพออก ไกรทองสนทนากับชาละวัน)

ไกรทอง นี่เจ้าชาละวันเราขอพูดดีๆ ขอให้เจ้าคืนตะเกาทองมา แล้วเราจะไม่เอาเรื่อง

ชาละวัน เราไม่ยอมให้ใครเด็ดขาด ถ้าจะเอามาเราให้ตายเสียก่อนซิ

ไกรทอง ถ้าจะเอาอย่างนั้นก็คิดแล้ว

(เจ้าพระยาพิจิตรออก)

เจ้าพระยาพิจิตรครับผมจะขอติดตามไปครับ

พระยาพิจิตร ไปขีลลานถ้ำเก่งจริง

(ไกรทองตามเข้าไปทันที่และได้ชี้แจงว่าได้ขอร้องให้ชาละวันคืนตะเกาทองแต่ชาละวันไม่ยอม ท้าวรำไพสวดมนต์จะห้ามเลยปล่อยไปตามยถากรรม)

Scene IV

(Luim Laiwan and Vimala make their entrance followed by Tapao Thong)

Vimala Luim Laiwan, do you know something?
Luim Laiwan Has anything happened?
Vimala Yes, I heard that Chalawan captured a human to be his wife.
Luim Laiwan Who told you this?
Vimala I heard our men gossiping. I really want to see what she looks like,
Luim Laiwan So do I. I imagine she will look pretty but it's hard to say how.
Vimala I shall take you there.

(Tapao Thong enters)

Tapao Thong Who are you? How did you get here?
Vimala So haughty! You really want to know how we could enter this room? Why shouldn't we! Both of us are Chalawan's wives.

ฉากที่ 4

(เหลื่อมล้วยวันกับวิมาลาออกพร้อมกับตะเกาทอง)

วิมาลา คุณเหลื่อมล้วยวัน เธอรู้อะไรหรือเปล่า?
 เหลื่อมล้วยวัน เปล่า ฉันไม่รู้เรื่องอะไรเลย
 วิมาลา คือว่าพี่ชาละวันนั้นจับนังมนุษย์มาเป็นเมียอีกคนหนึ่ง
 เหลื่อมล้วยวัน คุณรู้มาจากไหน?
 วิมาลา อ้อ ก็พวกลูกน้องมันพูดกันซี้ ฉันอยากไปดูหน้านังมนุษย์เหลือเกินละ
 เหลื่อมล้วยวัน ฉันก็อยากดูว่านังมนุษย์มันจะสวยแค่ไหน
 วิมาลา ถ้าอย่างนั้นไปดิ้นซะหน่อยไป

(ตะเกาทองออก)

ตะเกาทอง นี่คุณมาจากไหน เป็นใครจึงเข้ามาในที่นี้ได้
 วิมาลา แหมหมั่นไส้ คุณถามว่าทำไมเราจึงเข้ามาได้ อ้อเราทั้งสองเป็นเมียของพี่ชาละวันนะสิ

- Luim Laiwan* What kind of a girl are you, grabbing our husband behind our backs. Such a shameless and thick-skinned girl! You deserve to be pinched and beaten.
- Tapao Thong* People born to be swans should not get mixed up with crows.
- Luim Laiwan* Oh, you broken-winged swan, how shameless of you to grab our husband!
- Vimala* So proud of being born a swan but with no sense of decency about other peoples' husbands!
- Tapao Thong* Why all this abuse! You don't gain my respect from this. Why don't both of you examine yourselves thoroughly and find out what caused your husband to be unfaithful? And then, may I ask who is to be blamed?
- (Krai Thong comes on)
- Krai Thong* Who are you three making such a fearful noise?
- Vimala* We two are Chalawan's wives but that girl there has grabbed our husband.
- Krai Thong* What is your name?
- Tapao Thong* My name is Tapao Thong. Chalawan locked me up in this place.

เหลื่อมล้วยวัน คนอะไรไม่รู้จักเจิมตัวมาแย่งผัวเขาหน้าไม่อาย หน้าด้านเหมือนกับ
หนึ่งกอง มนน่าจะกองเสียให้ตาย

ตะเภาทอง เกิดเป็นหงส์จะอยู่อย่างหงส์มีอาจร่วมวงศ์กับกาได้

เหลื่อมล้วยวัน หงส์กับกาก็มาลักผัวเขาไม่รู้จะเอาหน้าไปไว้ไหน

วิมาลา ทำเป็นรู้จักศักดิ์ศรีตัวดีขีมาแย่งผัว

ตะเภาทอง เทียบตัวเขาก็คือตัวเองใครจะเกรงก็หาไม่ ไม่ก้มหัวดูเงาของตัวเอง
บ้างไม่รู้จักรักผัวแล้วจะโทษผู้ใด

(ไกรทองออก)

ไกรทอง นี่แน่แม่นางทั้งสามเป็นใครจึงมาทะเลาะกัน

วิมาลา ถิ่นทั้งสองเป็นเมียพี่ชาละวัน แต่นั่นคนนั้นจะมาแย่งพี่ชาละวันของ
เราไป

ไกรทอง นี่แม่นางชื่ออะไรนะ

ตะเภาทอง ถิ่นชื่อตะเภาทอง แต่ถูกเจ้าชาละวันเอามาขังไว้

- Krai Thong* So, you are the Tapao Thong I am searching for!
Tapao Thong Thank you so much for risking your life to save me.
Krai Thong Could either of you tell me where Chalawan is?
Vimala We don't know.
Luim Laiwan Who are you and where do you come from?
Krai Thong My name is Krai Thong. I come from the city of Pichitr to take Tapao Thong away from this place.
Vimala Oh, I see, looking for a lost girl-friend?
Krai Thong No, we are only friends. Please don't jump to the wrong conclusion. We are not lovers.
Vimala Luim Laiwan, don't you believe what he tells you. How come you know her so well if you don't love her?
Krai Thong You can see with your own eyes that we have only just become acquainted.
Vimala If Chalawan knows about this, he will be very angry.
Luim Laiwan Look! Here comes Chalawan.

(Chalawan enters)

- Chalawan* How dare you do this to me! I will not let you get away with this – flirting with my wives.

- ไกรทอง อ้อ ตะเภาทองของฉันทกำลังตามหาเธออยู่
 ตะเภาทอง ขอขอบคุณท่านที่ช่วยเหลือนฉันทมาจนถึงที่นี่
 ไกรทอง น้แม่นางทั้งสองชาละวันไปไหนเสียละจ๊ะ
 วิมาลา ไม่รู้เรื่องย่ะ
 เหลื่อมล้ยวัน ท่านเป็นใครมาจากไหนคะ
 ไกรทอง ฉันทชื่อไกรทองมาจากเมืองพิจิตรเที่ยวตามหาคุณตะเภาทอง
 วิมาลา อ้อ เขาเที่ยวตามหาแฟนของเขาซินะ
 ไกรทอง เปล่า เราไม่ได้เป็นคู่รักกันหรอก
 วิมาลา อย่าไปเชื่อเหลื่อมล้ยวันไม่รักแล้วจะรู้จักกันอย่างไร
 ไกรทอง ก็คงจะเห็นได้ว่าเราเพิ่งรู้จักกันเดี๋ยวนี้นะ
 วิมาลา พี่ชาละวันรู้เขาคงจะโกรธใหญ่เลยที่เดียว
 เหลื่อมล้ยวัน โน้นพี่ชาละวันมาแล้ว
 (ชาละวันออก)
 ชาละวัน จิ๊ชะ ครึ่งนี้เราจะไม่ยอมจะเป็นตายร้ายที่สุดแต่เคราะห์กรรม เพราะ
 อ้ายหมอนมันมาจับเมียดังนี้

Krai Thong Chalawan, you were wicked in taking Tapao Thong away by force.

(Chalawan menaces him and Krai Thong picks up a spear ready to advance. Chalawan becomes very angry, and snatches up his sword. The fight begins. The noise is so loud and the action so violent that it seems as though the cave will collapse. Finally Chalawan loses his ground and falls down in a faint. Both his wives run forward to support him.)

Vimala Oh Chalawan, are you all right?

Luim Laiwan Chalawan, Chalawan, are you badly hurt? Please answer me.

Vimala Tapao Thong, I beg of you to request Krai Thong not to kill him. He is already badly wounded.

Tapao Thong Please do not harm him any more, Krai Thong. Have pity on his wives.

Chalawan Tapao Thong, you are very kind. Vimala and Luim Laiwan, I bid both of you farewell. (His breath becomes weaker and weaker and he dies.)

ไกรทอง พี่ชาละวันชวนกันไปลักเอาตะเกาทองมา

(ชาละวันจ้อง ๆ มอง ๆ ทำเปรียบเทียบว่าขึ้นเนื้อเข้าไปหาเสือ ไกรทองโกรธ
เลยจับหอกไล่เข้าไป ชาละวันก็โกรธเลยจับดาบเข้าประทะกันอย่างถล่มทลาย ปรากฏว่า
ชาละวันสู้ไม่ได้ก็สลับกรรยาทั้งสองก็เข้าไปประคอง)

วิมาลา พี่ชาละวันเป็นอะไรไปคะ

เหลื่อมล้นวัน พี่ชาละวัน พี่ชาละวันเป็นอะไรไป เป็นอะไรไปคะตอบจิกะ

วิมาลา คุณตะเกาทองช่วยอ้อนวอนคุณไกรทองที่เถาะว่า อย่าชั่วเดิมนึกเลย
เพียงแค่นี้ก็บาดเจ็บมากแล้ว

ตะเกาทอง คุณไกรทองขาพอนแล้วคะสงสารเมียเขา สอนเขาแต่เห็นทีจะพอ
แล้วคะ

ชาละวัน คุณตะเกาทองน้ำใจคุณประเสริฐนักจักจะหาที่เปรียบไม่ได้ เมียทั้งสอง
ของพี่ พี่ขอลาก่อนแล้ววันนี้อ (พร้อมกับสิ้นใจตาย)

The doyen of Thai *likay* is Phra Hom Huan.²³ He watched *likay* in his childhood in Ayuthia and formed his own troupe which performed in the provinces, only coming to Bangkok during the Second World War. He has given his name, which he says is his real name, to his troupe, and it is so famous that the name, or part of it, is often borrowed by other troupes. He maintains that formerly *likay* was considered vulgar, but it was promoted during Pibul Songkram's period, when the use of language was controlled. His troupe used to perform regularly at the Banglampoo theatre, a hot, fetid place over the Banglampoo food market by the canal.²⁴ Since the reduction in the number of *likay* troupes, his own is more and more in demand for up-country performances, and appearances at the home base become ever rarer and more unpredictable. Hom Huan takes upon himself the credit for introducing female players into *likay* in the reign of King Rama VII and points to sexual interattraction as the reason for the popularity of this innovation. Performers are often held to be morally loose by the upper class, possibly because of some of the language used in *likay*,²⁵ though this sweeping generalisation is frequently made of actors and actresses in many countries and at various periods of history. Sexual emphasis is noticeable in *likay* though; the women are pert and curvacious, the men swaggering and handsome, and both play up rather than down their physical attributes of good looks and stance.

The audience is remarkable, consisting (particularly in the capital) almost entirely of women of the lower class; they are usually fruit-vendors, market sellers, or peasant farmers. Like the innumer-

23) He has been in and out of the monkhood several times, but says he intends to stay a monk now. He maintains he does not have a religious name, hence the apparently incongruous title Phra Hom Huan. Being a monk does not appear to keep him away from the *likay* theatre, however.

24) In spite of its lack of facilities and attraction, the Banglampoo theatre apparently costs 6,000 baht a month to rent. Tickets cost five to ten baht each.

25) The Hom Huan actors vehemently deny that *likay* is less than respectable in its language. *Likay lao*, they maintain, is salacious, but *likay thai* is blameless.

able children whom they bring along, or who come by themselves, to run half naked across the stage or fall sound asleep on the floor, they are entirely unimpressed by any sense of occasion.

“At likay, the women gabble, eat, drink, spit betel juice on the earthen floor, call raucously across the auditorium to each other, and in imperious voices order vendors to bring them food or soda-pop, even during the performance.”²⁶

Both in Bangkok and in the provinces the predominance of women over men in the audience is overwhelming. This class, age, and type of audience likes what it knows and likes to know where it stands; it prefers the uncomplicated world of black and white, good and bad; it likes true love to run true and it likes a happy ending; it also feels sympathy for the clowns and the servant class; and it is quick to appreciate an indelicate remark.

The sad thing is that this folk art is rapidly dying. In Bangkok in 1956 Bowers²⁷ states that at least twenty *likay* theatres were operating. In 1970 there is not one which regularly offers performances. There are various reasons for this. The cinemas offer air-conditioned pleasures at a more or less commensurate price, and the television performances of *likay* have done quite the opposite of encouraging people to watch it live. They have moreover prettified, cleansed and in a word devitalised *likay* to the extent that it is scarcely

26) Brandon, op. cit. p. 256. His unidentified ‘knowledgeable Thai aristocrat’ does not appear to be very knowledgeable at all in maintaining (p. 261) “Most of the women in likay audiences are of the wealthy merchant class or wives of the minor nobility. Some are widows, some are still married. They love to make a show of themselves in the theatre. They squander their husbands’ money on actors with whom they are infatuated.” Whoever the informant was (clearly a man), he obviously had not been to a *likay* performance in many decades. One glance at the audience tells one that the women there have no more money to squander in life than the occasional price of a *likay* ticket, and no member of ‘the minor nobility’ would be seen dead in the company of such sweaty, betel-spitting, toothless, nose-picking crones.

27) op. cit. p. 156

different from *lakgn*, apart from the fact that the actors do the singing and not singers. In making *likay* respectable and boring, the two principal television stations have accelerated its decline. There are also economic reasons for the smaller number of troupes: there are many lucrative occupations, of greater or lesser moral probity, available in the capital to people who want to earn a living and enjoy themselves at the same time, and *likay* does not now represent the only avenue to a life of liberty. Performances in the capital, except at temple fairs, are increasingly rare.

In the provinces, however, *likay* still survives, but as the pace of development accelerates and the cinema and television extend beyond the towns, so *likay* is likely to find its popularity dimmed with both actors and spectators.²⁸ We are still a long way yet, though, before television or even electricity reaches every village and *likay* will continue to be the mainstay of rustic entertainment and the adjunct of temple fairs for some time. The speed with which it has declined in popularity in the capital²⁹ is startling; whereas formerly it played to packed houses, it is rare to find a *likay* performance in the capital with more than half the space set aside for the audience filled. One *likay* leader interviewed³⁰ thought that *likay* would probably survive in the provinces, but that without government support it may die even there.

As *likay* is considered a low art form for the uneducated, it is not going to receive much support from official circles in its struggle for survival. If it goes under, it will be because it has not adapted.

28) If, however, the strength, adaptability, resilience and popularity of *nang talung* in the south is anything to go by, then *likay* looks like being with us for many years yet.

29) Bowers, op. cit. 1956

"Every night from eight to midnight persons from all class, ricksha coolies, white-collar workers, and even those among Bangkok society who are genuinely keen on the theatre, pack these Likay houses . . . There are hundreds of Likay troupes who perform nightly the year round . . . Likay has never played to an empty house . . . If an all star cast is assembled for any special occasion, it is impossible to get tickets."

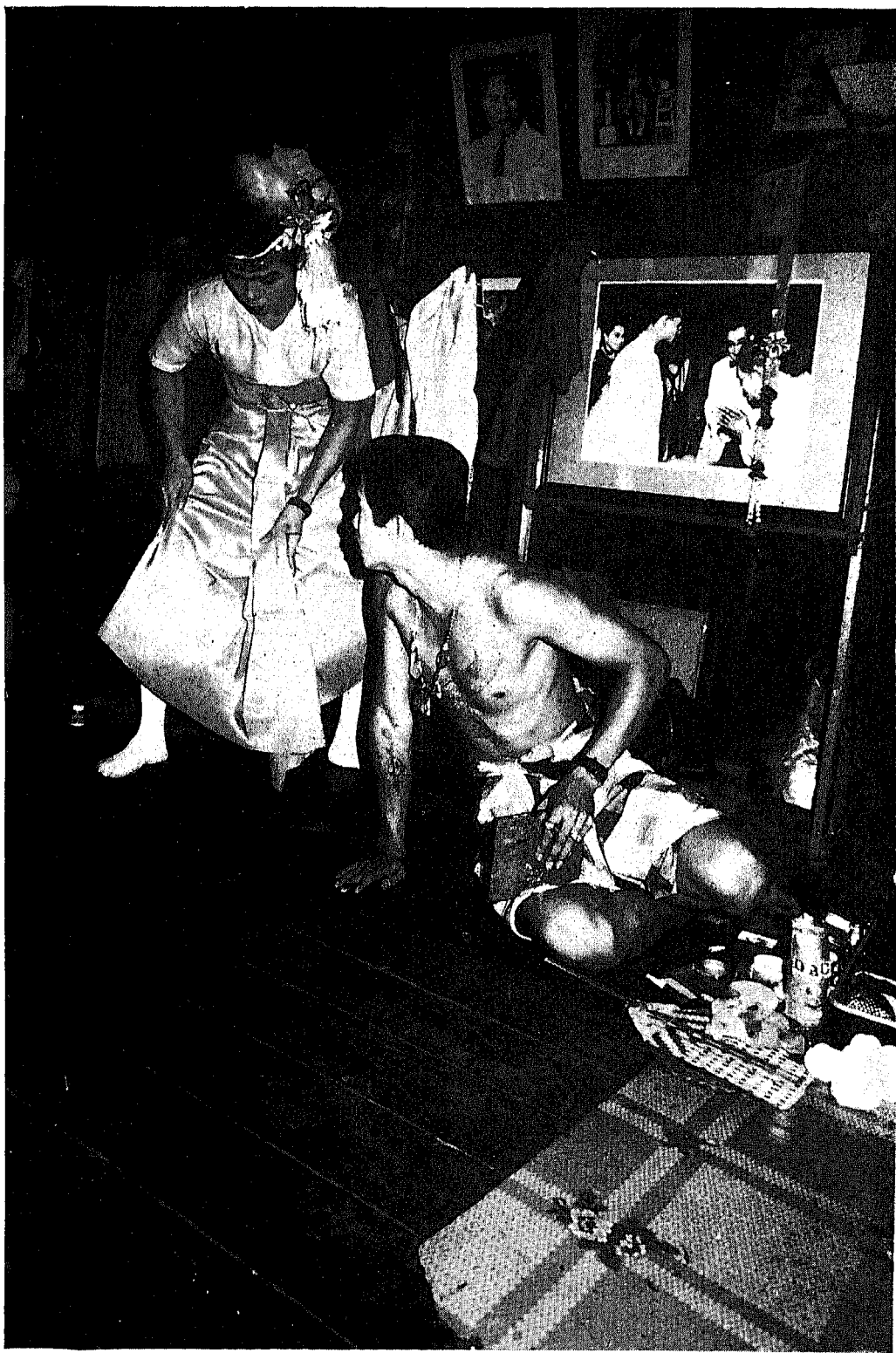
30) Actually one now leading Hom Huan's troupe.

Given its flexibility and potential for topicality, there is no reason however why it should not continue, unless the actors become fossilised by their own recently acquired traditions.

It is to be hoped that *likay* will survive, for it is truly popular Siamese theatre. Its origins are obscure but are probably older than has been thought, and it is most likely an amalgam of different theatrical forms rather than an adaptation of any one form. It is flashy and vulgar, its sentiment is soap-opera and so are its plots; the acting is stereotyped and the characters stock. But just because this is so it should neither be ignored nor despised. Popular theatrical forms have a fascination of their own. The skill of *likay* is in the improvisation, the rhyming, and to a lesser degree the punning and the jokes, which only its devotees can appreciate properly, but as its patrons, mostly aged females, get older, it will increasingly find itself without an audience. As the gap between the capital and the provinces becomes more marked, its effects are seen even in folk art, for the sophisticated capital no longer enjoys this form of entertainment in all its brassy glory, preferring other more superficially modern but no less brassy pleasures. How long this folk art will survive is anyone's guess, but it is to be hoped that it will be handed down in some form to the future, for otherwise, apart from the regional theatre of the south, there will be no genuinely popular live Siamese theatrical form.

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Actors dressing backstage



Hair styling before the performance



Preparing for a performance



The wardrobe mistress inspecting garments



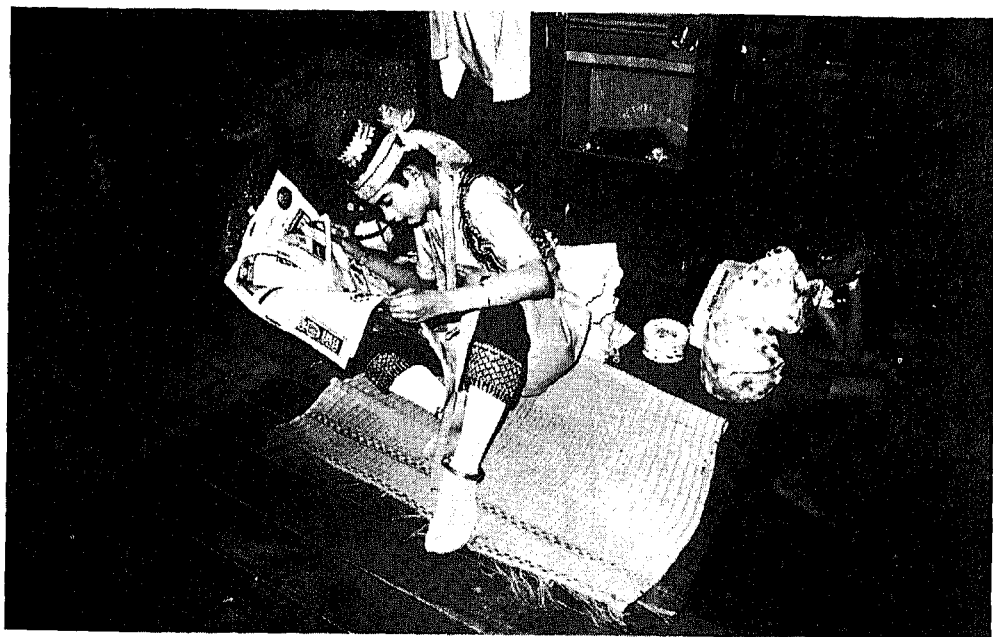
The *ok-kaek*: the introduction, performed backstage



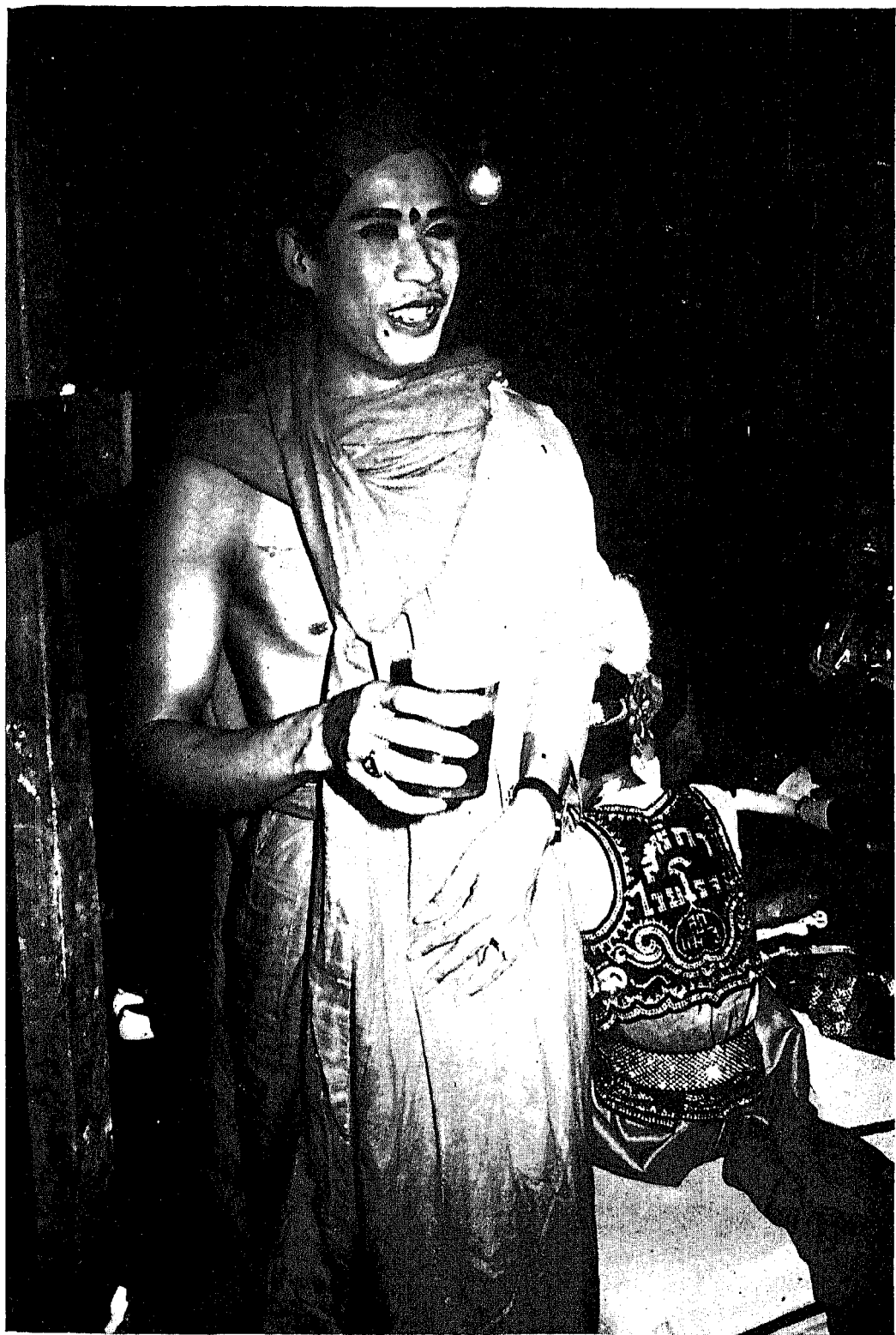
The leader of the troupe assigning roles to actors



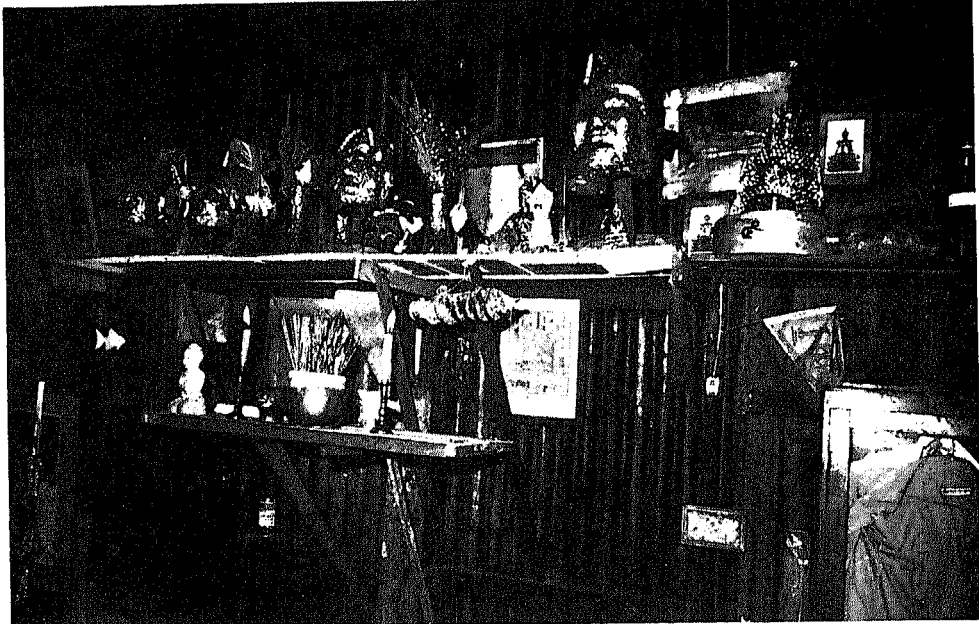
Devising a dramatic turn to the plot



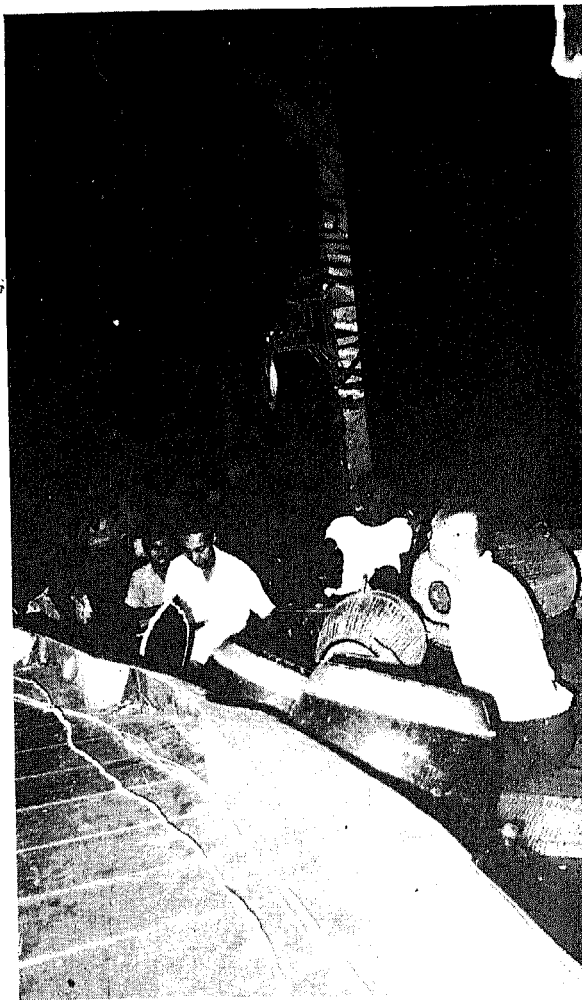
Waiting to go on stage

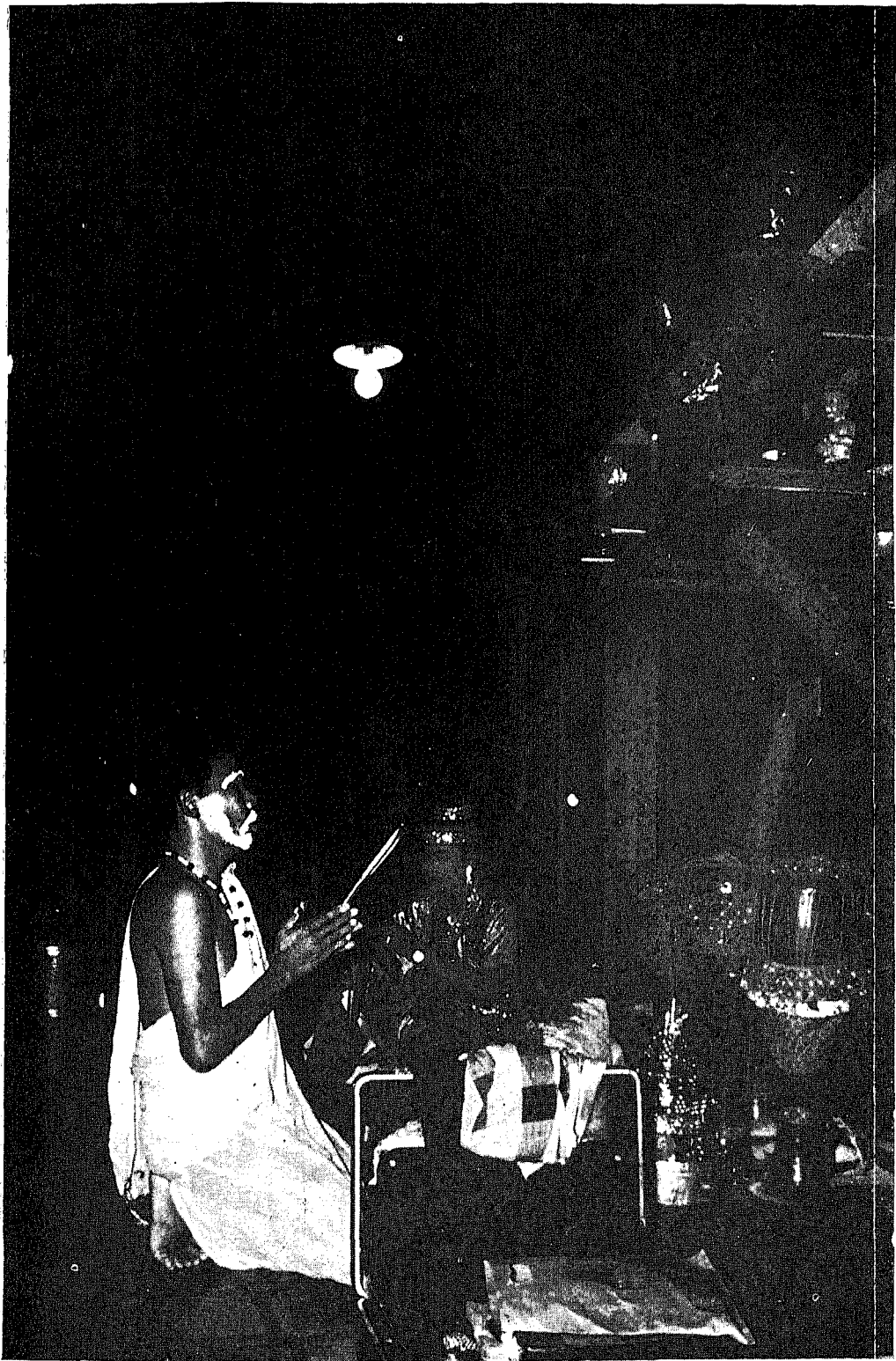


An actor dressed as a monk taking refreshment backstage

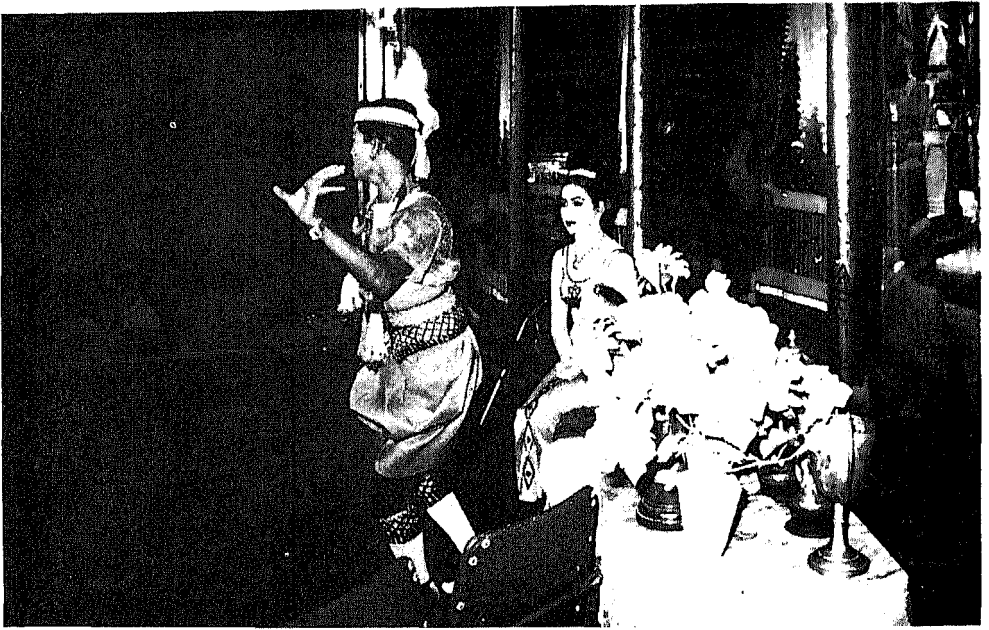


The *wai-kru* altar

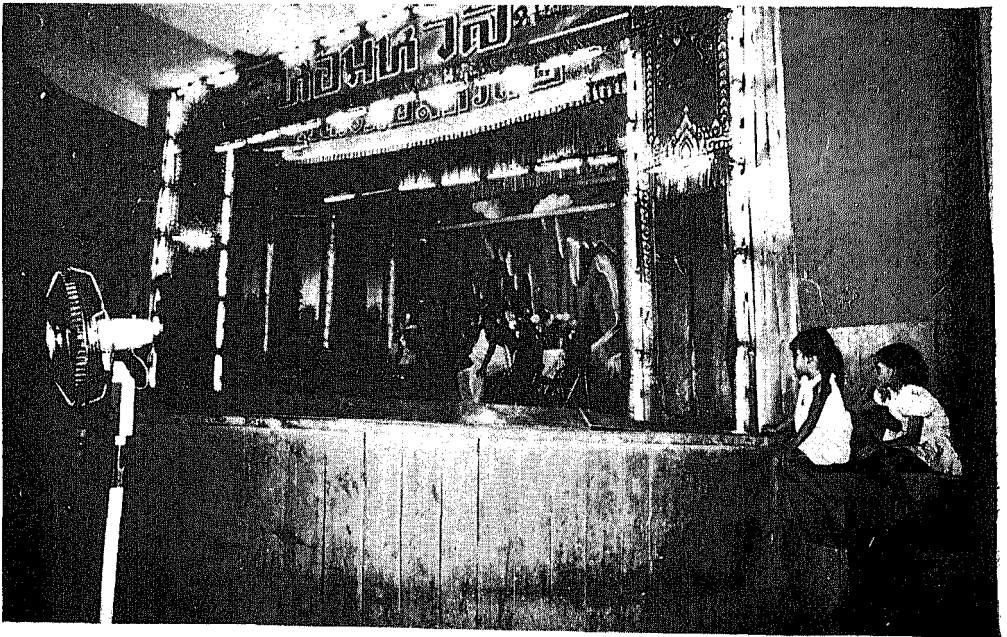




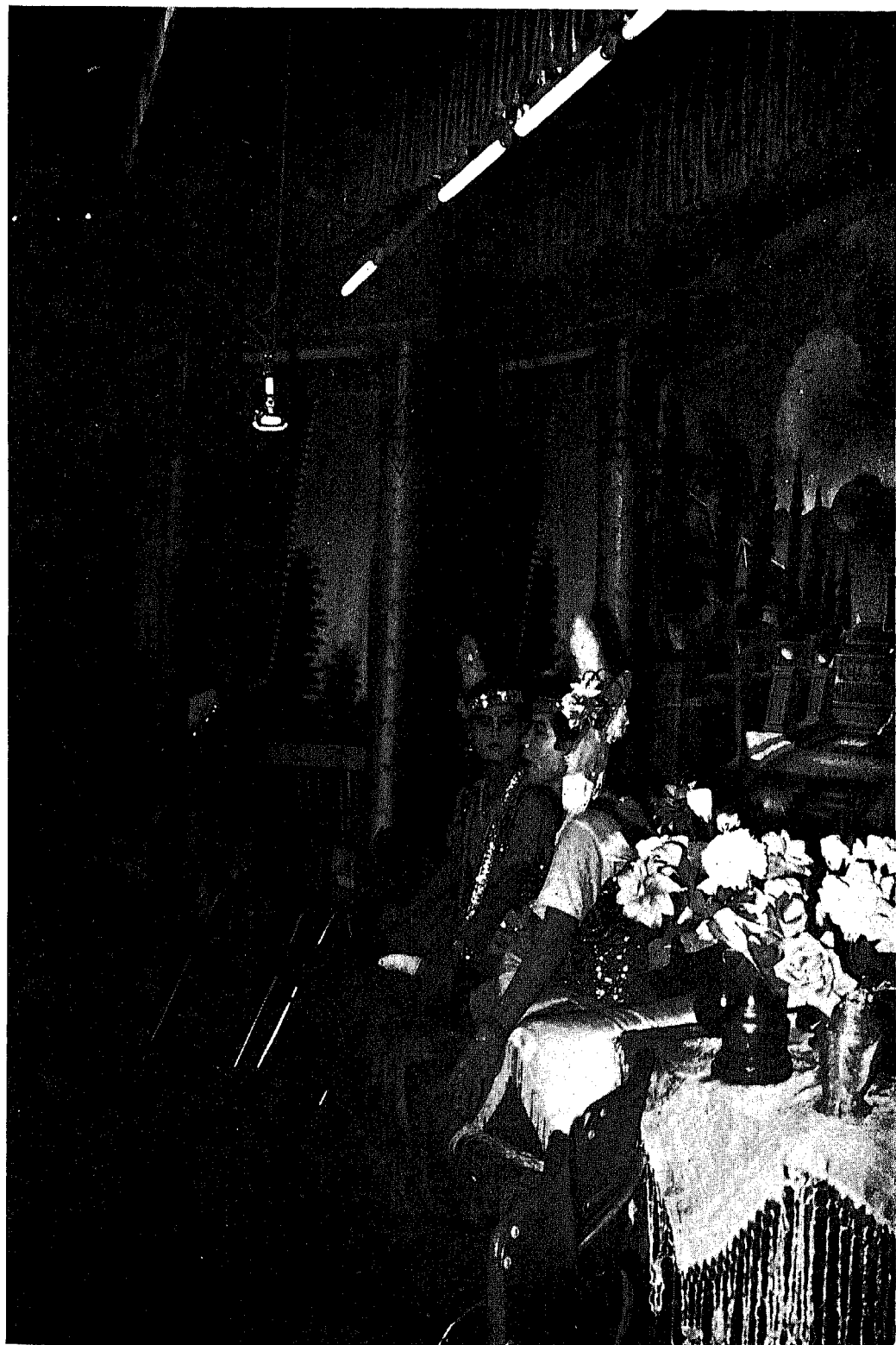
An actor performing the *wai-kru* before going on stage



On stage; notice the watch



On stage; in the hermit's cave



On stage



The wardrobe mistress seated among the audience