

THE MANORA DANCE-DRAMA: AN INTRODUCTION

by

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In the southern provinces of Thailand, two entertainments were foremost in popularity until recent years, the shadow play called *nang talung*, and the song-and-dance show followed by a play called *manora* or *manora chatri*. The nature and past history of the *manora* dance-drama in particular has been the subject of confusion and misunderstanding, partly because of the name *manora* itself, and partly because of the unfamiliarity of the Bangkok Thai with the actual nature of this regional entertainment. The word *manora* (which is usually shortened in the southern dialect to *nora*) can have a number of meanings depending on the intention of the speaker. First it is the dance-drama, but it can also indicate the performer of the idiom. And when followed by a player's personal name it functions as a sort of title, as Nora Toem, who was the leading master and troupe leader of recent years. The phrase 'tua nora' can refer in general to a dancer or actor of the *manora*. At the same time however, *manora* also refers to a story which was particularly popular among the people of southern Thailand, a charming and very early Indian story found later in the Pannasa-jataka ('Fifty Jatakas') collection of jataka tales.¹ In fact *Manora* is the name of the heroine

1) Although especially popular in the south, the tale of Sudhana and Manohara is also known in other parts of Thailand, as well as in the Lao, Cambodian, Burmese, and Mon languages. Recent years have seen the publication of a number of literary versions taken from old manuscripts: for a central Thai version, see มะโนมาจากสมุดข่อยและภาพของนายเดือนบนนาค (Bangkok, 1957); and a southern Thai version in มโนหรรณพฉบับวัดมณีนิมมาวาส สงขลา edited by Suthiwong Phongphaibun (Songkhla, 1970). In Lao: *Thao Sithon* (Vientiane, 1969), and Cambodian: *Rueng Preah Sothuen* (Phnom Penh, 1963). A Mon text of the story is preserved in the collection of Dr. Su-et Gajaseni in Bangkok. Numerous Burmese literary works based on this story, dating from the sixteenth century, and Pali versions, are indicated in P. Jaini's valuable study of the tale, "The story of Sudhana and Manohara: an Analysis of the texts and the Borobudur reliefs," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXIX, Part 3 (1966), 533-558. No literary version of this story is yet known in Java, but the great temple of Borobudur dating from the 8-9th centuries contains reliefs representing scenes from the tale. Indian Sanskrit versions of the story can be dated back to the third century A.D.

of this story (from Sanskrit, Manoharā). She is a heavenly bird maiden who comes to marry a human prince named Suthon (Sanskrit, Sudhana) from whom she is separated and who makes a quest to her heavenly homeland to regain her. Now although there are clear correspondences between the story of Manora and the dance-drama *manora*, and while the dance-drama has most probably borrowed its name from the heroine of the story, it is quite erroneous to assume as many people have that the *manora* was merely a rural dramatization of the story of Manora and Suthon.

As it has evolved at least in the present century, the most characteristic features of the *manora* have been (1) its dance, made up of stylized attitudes which form the basic steps,² performed by the dancers attired in a curious beaded costume and to a plaintive and rather slow instrumental accompaniment, and (2) a clever, comic stream of rhyming verse in the southern dialect, sung, or rather intoned, to a musical background. Only after several hours of dance and songs did the players turn to the presentation of (3) a play, which might continue through the remaining hours of the night up to dawn. If in former days any strict conventions applied to the nature of the play, no trace of these survives. It can only be supposed that the play was a fairly down to earth combination of comedy, dance, and drama relating one of a body of popular stories, including the Suthon-Manora tale.³ The *manora* was described and illustrated in the pages of this journal by Nicolas⁴ in 1924 in an

2) There are by tradition said to be twelve basic steps (mae bot ม้าบ๊ต), each of which has a descriptive name suggested by the posture, as 'the spider weaving his web' (malaeng mum chak yai), 'Rahu seizing the moon' (Rahu cāp čan), or 'the half-open lotus' (bua yāēm).

3) Twelve stories are traditionally said to comprise the basic repertoire of the old *manora*, and while the list of these varies slightly from informant to informant, they are basically the same stories which were performed in central Thai popular drama (*lakhon nōk*) in the nineteenth century, i.e. Sangthōng, Khawi, Laksana-wong, Chayachēt, Khun Chang Khun Phaen, Phra Aphai, Kraithong, etc.

4) René Nicolas, "Le Lakhon Nora ou Lakhon Chatri et les origines du théâtre classique siamois," *Journal of the Siam Society*, XVIII (1924), 84-110. This article bases itself mainly on Prince Damrong's notes on *lakhon chatri* included in his *Tamnan lakhon Inao* (Bangkok, 1921). Page references given here refer to the 1965 reprinting by Khlang Witthaya Press. Most of the photographs in the Nicolas article were published in the previous year in *Tamra fōn ram* (Bangkok, 1923).

article which unfortunately lacks any details of actual performance at that period. But Nicolas correctly identifies as partly synonymous the terms *manora* (or *nora*, as it is usually abbreviated in the southern dialect) and *chatri*. The term *chatri*, or *lakhon chatri*, is used in central Thailand to indicate a particular form of popular drama. But in fact this central Thai *lakhon chatri* finds its origins in the southern dance-drama *manora*. During the nineteenth century numerous southern *manora* troupes moved or were brought to Bangkok to settle and perform. A *chatri* performance is mentioned in the entertainments which accompanied the funeral rites of the father of Rama I.⁵ In 1920 there were still ten *chatri* troupes resident in the Lan Luang neighborhood of Bangkok, an area noted for its theatrical troupes. As time advanced, the transplanted *manora* performances altered in nature, to suit the different language and customs of the central Thai audience, and probably influenced by the indigenous central Thai popular drama, *lakhon nok*. Although in time it came to lose its southern character, the central Thai *chatri* clearly derived from the transplanted *manora*. The word *chatri* has also been current in the south in referring to the *manora*, and in fact an early southern literary reference to the dance-drama calls it *manora chatri*.⁶ But which of the two terms, *manora* or *chatri*, was earlier or more widely used in the south cannot be reliably judged.

5) Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, *Tamnan lakhon Inao* (Bangkok, 1965), p. 64.

6) In the southern Thai poem of the story of Suthon and Manora: *Manora nibat*, edited by Suthiwong Phongphaibun (Songkhla, 1970). The reference occurs in a *mahorasop* (entertainments) passage describing a variety of locally popular entertainments, a common element in Thai narrative poetry. The only known manuscript of this version of the Suthon-Manora story is dated 1868 (probably the date when the text was copied rather than its date of composition) and preserved in the museum-library of Wat Machimawat (Klang), Songkhla. The printed text preserves the original spellings.

The word *chatri* is of evident Indic origin, but obscure derivation. It has been variously attributed to Sanskrit 'Kṣatri', 'princely', and 'yātri', 'go, going' in the sense of wandering, peripatetic performances. As a Thai word its sense is 'valiant, manly'. The occurrence of similar words in India referring to dance-drama is highly significant. Jatra in Bengal and Chatri, played by itinerant Marathi players in Kannarese south India are both names of Indian forms of dance-drama. See "Notes and Queries. III. The Chatri." JSS, XXIII (1940), 43-4

Recent years have seen the transformation of the southern *manora* nearly beyond recognition of its former self. Many of the old troupes have survived, especially in Surat, Nakhon Sithammarat, Phthalung, Songkhla, and Trang. But in order to compete with new entertainments of vast appeal to the modern rural audience, such as the immensely popular *luk thung* (ลูกทุ่ง) idiom, they have resorted to emulating the modernized entertainments. A *luk thung* performance offers crooners in western dress singing long narrative ballads on romantic themes, accompanied by a western style band and interspersed with comic skits and jokes in front of a microphone. The most successful *manora* troupes today copy the *luk thung* formula while retaining perhaps just a smattering of the traditional dance and comic verse. Purely locally based players on the other hand carry on more or less as before, but their limited neighborhood performances are but a truncated version of the full *manora* program. By interviewing a number of older *manora* players who are now mainly retired, I have tried to learn what the *manora* used to be like, at least within living memory. A certain 'revivalist' spirit toward the old style of the *manora* can also be noted in recent years, and performances live and televised by the old master Khun Upatham of Phthalung have been organized by members of the faculty of the teacher training colleges at Songkhla.⁷

Numerous informants described a typical traditional *manora* in terms of the following constituents: the performance, which could take place by either day or night, commenced with a musical prelude (โหมโรง, *hom rong*) by the instrumentalists, lasting perhaps an hour while the audience gradually gather at the place of performance.⁸ This prelude is followed by the singing of the invocation, which marks the actual commencement of the performance. Most Thai traditional entertainments begin with a sung invocation which serves as a formal prayer sanctifying the proceedings about to commence, and as an acknowledgment of the

7) As well as editing a collection of materials relevant to the history and characteristics of the *manora*. See Phinyo Chittham, ed., *Nora* (Songkhla, 1965). Suthiwong Phongphaibun of the College of Education was particularly of invaluable help to me in my own efforts to learn about the *manora*.

8) The place of performance varied from the smallest scale where the *manora* was performed on a few mats laid on the ground to a makeshift wooden stage with a painted backdrop and side curtains and, in later days, a sound amplifying system.

sources of the performer's skills. The *manora* invocation (in southern Thai Kat Khru กัทขรู from ขัทขรู and Sanskrit prakāśa) includes a summary account of the legend of the origin of the dance-drama. This origin legend of the *manora*, which is also told as a folk tale in southern Thailand, comprises a fascinating mixture of stories meriting detailed and separate attention from this general introduction. The reciter of the *manora* invocation, usually the leader of the troupe, chooses invocation passages from a body of texts which he knows by heart. Hence he can make the invocation either very long or relatively shorter, as he wishes. A lengthy invocation could last thirty minutes or more. The method in which the invocation is recited serves to preserve it in an ingenious fashion. As the reciter sings each line of the text, the 'chorus' (luk khu, ลุกขู), usually the other instrumentalists, take up his words and chant them to fill out a rhythmic measure. In so doing the chorus also come to memorize the texts. Thus they are orally transmitted in the performance itself, and with a considerable accuracy. The printed collection of invocation passages in the book *Nora* (pp. 7-26; see note 7 above) shows considerable uniformity in texts even from widely distant localities.

The invocation completed, the players now appeared, each in turn, beginning with the youngest and most inexperienced member of the troupe, to perform in solo the dance or the songs of the *manora*. There were set songs and skits, also employing the clown, or *phran*, wearing only a phakoma and the clown's mask. Requests from the audience were entertained during this sequence of songs and skits, called *kamphrat*. These might offer scenes of domestic life, a quarrelsome couple, a wayward husband, or a courtship scene. The succession of players culminated in the climax of the show, which was the appearance of the lead player, an occasion of great excitement in the case of a famous performer. The reputation of a renowned performer lay in his agility in the dance steps and in the wit, in sense, and rhyme, of his improvised verse (*mutto*, as well as on his probable good looks and general showman's charisma. Country people would walk an entire day to see a famous player, such as Khun Upatham (Nora Phum Thewa) of Phathalung.

The most popular performances in days past were in competition between two or more than two troupes. The more successful master

could win the audience away from the rival's performance and thus establish his own supremacy. One notable contest has become legendary in southern Thailand today, the victory of Nora Toem over the older Nora Wan who forfeited his two daughters to become the former's wives and co-players. In recent years Nora Toem was acknowledged to be the greatest manora master, and until his untimely death in middle age in 1970 he held his audience spellbound with his improvised verse on topical subjects. Annually he appeared with his troupe in Bangkok in September at the Duan sip (Tenth month) festival held at Wat Phichaiyat in conjunction with the annual fair of Nakhon Sithammarat province. On five successive nights of the fair thousands of young men from the southern provinces as well as many southern monks resident in Bangkok filled the temple courtyard while the troupe of Nora Toem gave them a taste of their home culture. After a two hour medley of songs and clowning by the various members of the troupe, roughly in the old style, i.e. dressed in the traditional costume and incorporating some of the traditional dancing, at a quarter past eleven the master appeared. Nora Toem was dressed in a western suit, and his whole performance consisted of improvised verses invented on topical subjects. But by this apparently limited fare the audience was held enthralled, eagerly appreciating every word, and roaring its approval of favored lines. The subjects of this improvised verse were commonplace, about presents brought to the stage by members of the audience, about letters of praise, and a meeting earlier in the evening with Seni Pramot in Lumpini Park. Into his stream of verse Nora Toem worked an announcement about someone's automobile keys which had been found. The master was displaying his skill at creating verse on topics which were obviously not prepared. In all his appearance lasted only fifteen minutes, but it was clearly the highest point of the audience's enjoyment.

Nora Toem's appearance was followed by that of two clowns, first one in a western suit and a red hat, then another in the traditional phakoma and clown's mask. They were followed at about midnight by a program of popular songs, but rain terminated the performance within a half-hour. Although the troupe performed for five successive nights during the fair, a play was included in the program on only two nights.



Photograph by Arthur D. Stillman

Nora Am of Røn Phibun district, Nakhon Sithammarat, demonstrates a dance step of the *manora* before a painted cloth background. The main parts of the costume are the crown (*soet*), beaded shirt (*thap suang*), trousers, tail (not visible), bracelets, and pendant cloth hanging from the waist. The cotton shirt and socks are recent additions to the costume.

One of these concerned a doctor and his girlfriend who was forced to marry another man. The husband proves dissolute, jealous and cruel. He shoots his wife in a drunken rage and sends his man to shoot the doctor, but the doctor's comic assistant, played by the clown, thwarts the plan. This is a typical modern manora plot, whose hero is usually a young government official or professional man. The treatment is a combination of low keyed melodrama and broad comedy. It is a relatively recent convention that the hero and heroine and other main characters in these plays speak in the central Thai (Bangkok) dialect, while only the comic characters and country people speak in southern dialect. This convention is observed even when the players themselves are barely familiar with the Bangkok accent, and is equally prevalent in the other southern form of traditional entertainment, the *nang talung* shadow play. It gives a fitting dignity to the appropriate characters and to the proceedings as a whole, reflecting the high status in the south attached to Bangkok ways when the occasion is in any sense 'official'. In the informal context, to be sure, the local accent is required.

The question of which stories in former days were popular for performance in the *manora* is difficult to resolve. The former prominence of the Suthon-Manora story can hardly be questioned. Today the *manora* dancer is still identified in part as a kinnara (*khinon* in southern Thai), the heavenly bird creatures who inhabit the mythical Krai-lasa mountain in Indic mythology, among whom the heroine Manora of the story was born a princess. The specified parts of the *manora* dance costume, twelve in all, include wings and a tail. The clown of the dance-drama is called *phran* (= hunter), a clear survival of the third main character of the Suthon-Manora story, the hunter named Bun. Further evidence comes from Kelantan where the *manora* spread from southern Thailand, for the hero of the Kelantan *manora* is called Pasiton, a local adaptation of the southern Thai 'Phra Suthon'. Moreover, part of the invocation text of the *manora* relates a summary of the Suthon-Manora story.⁹ All this evidence points clearly to the former predominance of the Suthon-Manora story within the *manora* dance-drama. And yet among more than ten

9) As no such text has been published to date, here follows the passage sung by Nora Thong of Songkhla town (transcribed from tape recording with the kind assistance of Khun Khwandee Rakphongse):

elderly *manora* players interviewed in various localities in southern Thailand, only one said he had ever performed the Suthon-Manora story. This was Nora Wan of Nakhon Sithammarat, the former champion who ceded his place to Nora Toem. His performance of a fragment of the story depicting Manora's capture was recorded by the Cambridge expedition in 1962 and is preserved in the sound library of the British Institute of Recorded Sound in London. The makeshift character of this performance suggests that it was hastily improvised rather than in any sense a survival from earlier days. The literary evidence on the other hand indicates that the Phra Rot story was once of great popularity, as each of the two known references to *manora* and *chatri* specifies that the story of Phra Rot was being performed. These are the poem quoted by Prince Damrong (*Tamnan lakhon Inao*, p. 64) about the funeral of the father of Rama I, and the Songkhla text of the Suthon-Manora story (*Manora Nibat*) see above, note 6).

แล้วเจ็ดนางสาวโนรา ลูกสาวของท้าวเมืองชุมพร
 แล้วมามับกมทางเปรียบเหมือนกับนางขนอน
 ลูกสาวของท้าวเมืองชุมพร คิดหนีพระมารดา
 ข้างพี่ครองตามไปแล้วเข้าคิดอย่างไรน้องหนา
 แต่นางโนราตอบว่าฉันไปคอยคู่เสียให้ก่อน
 พอย่องเข้าไปแค่อีสาวแม่นอนหลับเมลิ้นตาบอกกับพี่ชายไป.. (?)
 แม่นอนเมลิ้นตามหลับแม่นอน ลักบักทางเสียก่อน แล้วจะจรไป
 สอดบักสอดหางแล้วเจ็ดนางโนราหนีพระมารดาขึ้นเวหาใหญ่
 เจ็ดสาวลอยฟ้าเข้าเมฆาลัย เห็นสระใหญ่โถมยงร้อนลงมา
 ดอดบักสอดหางแล้วลักซ่อนเอาไว้เจ็ดนางพากายลงในสระ
 เล่นงูกลืนนาง นวลนางดีใจขจัดเหตุเหงอโคลได้ชำระ
 เจ็ดนางเล่นน้ำอยู่ในสระ พรานบุญทุกขาเข้ามาเดินไพร
 ได้ยินเสียงไพร้องก๊กก้องฉาว ส่วนว่าพรานเต่าข่องเข้าไป
 แล้วเห็นเจ็ดสาว ตัวขาวผ่อง นวลละอองโสภามาจากไหน
 เรามา...? ให้ขจัดใจ...? อะไรไปถวายนายสุรน
 นายพรานบุญทุกขาแล้วคิดขึ้นมาได้แล้วจับนางไปถวายท่าจะได้ผล
 จะคิดอย่างไรหัวใจร้อนนัยมเกลอหนึ่งคนได้บาดาล
 ... กลายเป็นหนูเขี้ยวเคลือบมันมา... ตันโถมยงนำส่งสาร

In former times the *manora* master had a role in the community far beyond that of a mere entertainer. He was in fact the pre-eminent magician in the surrounding area, and was relied upon to perform rites involving the *khwan*, such as exorcisms, topknot ceremonies, ordinations, etc. A number of words in southern Thai refer to the *manora*'s ritualistic services: *rong khru*, *long khru*, *chōen khru*, and *song khru*. Apparently *nang talung* masters in contrast had no reputation for skill in magic. The *manora* player and his family were feared in the past because of their occult powers. And the master was held to be a threat to young girls, for he was thought capable of charming them into falling in love and following him. The *nora* also had a reputation for *cao chu* (amorous inclination), and families were known to forbid their daughters from watching the *manora* performance for fear of their being bewitched and led astray. In this context it should be mentioned that the country people in southern Thailand guarded their daughters with a strict eye

นายพรานเห็นแม่หญิงขึ้นนั่งอยู่บน ส่วนว่านายพรานย่องเข้าไป
 นายพรานหยับเรียกไม่ซ้ำหมายจะคล่องหัวตัวในสระใหญ่
 นายพรานเร่งรีบแสนดีใจคล่องลงไปถูกเจ้าสาวโนรา
 ทั้งหกคนพวกพหมันบ่นไปยังหน้าโขกนวลน้อง...
 นางคิดบ่วงนายพรานให้ร้ายราน ทรงโสกโสภาให้อาลัย
 นางโนราผู้ร้องนึ่งร้องให้มา ฟังพายุชลน่าน้ำตาไหล
 ทั้งหกคนพวกพหมันบ่นไปยังหน้าโขกนวลน้อง ร้องเสียงจ้ำ
 นายพรานก็พาหนางเดินแล้วข้ามช่องพะเนินห้วยเหวลา
 นายพรานก็พาหนางมาแล้วซ่อนไว้ที่ใต้ไม้กาหลง
 ว่ากาหลงเรียกว่ากาบี้ ถ้าใครเข้าใกล้แล้ววงยง
 ซ่อนไว้ที่ใต้ไม้กาหลงพาไปหาวยสุชนพระราช
 นางโนราเนออุ่นแม่ทองบุญหนักสุชนท้าวรักเป็นหนักหนา
 แต่วันนั้นไปทำศึกยังไม่ได้กลับมา เขาเอานางโนราบูชาเพลิง
 นางโนรามีบุญญาสาวมก สั่งให้เปิดจากสามเหลียง
 เอานางโนราไปบูชาเพลิงโคมฉินโนรินบ่นไป
 ว่าบ่นแล้ว แม่ไม่ได้ฟื้น ไปเกาะที่ต้นไม้พระไท
 โคมฉินโนรินแม่บ่นไปต้นสมนวลสมโยน้องหนา
 ออ.....

and prevented them from meeting boys before their marriage, in contrast to the custom of other parts of Thailand. Older people were also known to fall under the charm of the *manora*, and become devoted followers of the troupe, helping out in any way possible and carrying the troupe's paraphernalia from village to village. Such a person was described by the expression 'mi ta sua nora'.

Because of the fierce competition between *manora* troupes, great pains were taken to attempt to spoil the rival's performance by means of curses, and to protect one's own performance from the rival's curse. Special formulas (*mon*, from Sanskrit mantra) were recited, consisting of Pali or pseudo-Pali words and phrases. The expression 'thūk khru' means to fall under the curse of a nora. Even today every nora wears around his neck and waist a barrage of protective charms and amulets, in various forms, but mainly small images of the Buddha. And to protect or sanctify his own performance, just before appearing each player makes a prayer which he combines with gestures in his own personal ritual. I saw one player grasp a handful of air from in front of the side curtain, then 'swallow' it, and convey it to his navel. Then he brought his thumb upwards from the navel and into the roof of his mouth. More simply a formula may be recited with the hands together in the usual gesture (*phanom mī*) of respect or prayer.

The size of the *manora* troupe varied considerably, as it still does today, depending on whether it is the minimal troupe gathered by a local player for neighborhood performance, or a travelling troupe providing a full and varied program. Until perhaps the first decades of this century all parts were played by males, and the female parts were taken by young boys. Three players are essential, to play the hero, heroine, and clown. Then musicians were required for the drum (*klōng*), oboe (*pi*), and rhythm markers (*ching*, a small cymbal; and *mong*, a pair of gongs). This traditional orchestra was later supplemented by a stringed instrument (*so*). Taken together with the troupe leader, who was usually but not necessarily a performer as well, a general assistant and apprentice performers, a small troupe had about twelve players in it. But larger troupes had, and have, extra actors, dancers, and musicians and assistants, to a total of 25 or 30 persons. *Manora* troupes generally form family

groups, at least in the nucleus of the company, but there is no clear transmission of a mantle from father to son. The expression of having 'nora blood' (mi chua nora) is as likely to mean a player whose great-uncle or grandfather was a player before him, as one who inherited the sacred crown and masks and costumes in direct succession from his father and his father's father. A young player in a modernized troupe spoke to me of his need to play in the *manora* lest a curse fall upon him for abandoning a family tradition. But career motivation among the Thai is not at all strong, and his assertion can as well be taken as justification for the path of least resistance as a serious consideration in choice of a career. Many older players said with a certain pride that they were educating their children so that they could get ahead in the world, having sent them to provincial teacher training colleges.

Performing the *manora* was never a full time profession. For most of the year a player pursued his normal occupation, usually farming, and in the dry season joined the troupe for a life of daily travelling and performance. The dry season on the east coast of the peninsula lasts hardly for three months, from March to May, and rain is too frequent during the rest of the year to allow for other than occasional and locally based performances. Today the travelling troupe leads an astonishingly arduous life during the active season, setting off at dawn from the site of the previous night's performance, packed into a dilapidated bus for a full day's travel over bumpy dirt roads, to arrive at their appointed engagement with only a few hours to spare to set up in the makeshift stage prepared for them. An all night performance may begin at eight, and behind the painted cloth backdrop of the temporary stage as many as fifteen people manage to dress and make up in a very cramped space, usually with an infant or two asleep under a small mosquito net, apparently oblivious to the deafening blare of popular songs. The actors catch whatever sleep they can when they are not on stage. By four in the morning the show is over, but by six the bus must be packed and ready for another day's journey to the next engagement. The fee for a large modern troupe may be 1500 baht per night, while a small local group may get 200 or 300 baht. A theoretical fee of 600 may have to be reduced to 300 because of friendship between the troupe leader and the

host who hires him. At these rates, the *manora* is hardly a lucrative enterprise, and the various members of the troupe earn no more than a subsistence wage, perhaps between ten and twenty baht a day plus five baht as a food allowance. The *manora* master in former times could be either quite well to do, especially if he were a renowned player, having many wives, or quite poor. In either case he was always a prominent member of the rural community, both for his role as a magician and as an entertainer.

The occasion for *manora* performance today is most typically a temple fair, either an annual fair for a district or province, or a fair sponsored by the temple for some money raising purpose. At larger fairs it is normal to charge three or five baht per person for admission. In former days wealthy private individuals would also sponsor a performance on the occasion of a wedding or funeral celebration, or for the purpose of *kae bon* ('releasing' or 'correcting' a vow). In this last context, the performance serves as an offering to a particular spirit in thanks for the granting of a boon besought by the supplicant. Upon praying for the favor, the supplicant vows an offering in return. If the favour is granted, he must placate the spirit with the promised offering, lest he incur misfortune upon himself from an angered spirit. This important function of the *manora* as an offering for a favor granted by a spirit was adopted in central Thailand when the *manora* troupes migrated from the south. *Lakhon chatri* was supported by *kae bon* supplicants. To this day a debased form of this tradition is still performed in Bangkok at the Lak Muang (City Pillar) located opposite the corner of the Emerald Buddha temple outside the palace walls. Two troupes perform on alternate weeks, presenting short dance offerings and a longer extended performance of a play which is stretched out throughout the length of the week's engagement. Various supplicants make contributions to the cost of the performance. In fact the vast growth of the metropolis in recent years has resulted in a great increase of 'business' at the Lak Muang. A red and white plastic board now lists the various merit making commodities available to the public.

Finally, mention should be made here of certain semi-ritualistic performances of the southern *manora* which until recent decades also formed part of the repertoire. The *khlong hong* (กัณฑ์หงษ์) and the *thaeng khe* (แทงเข้) were generally enacted only for the topknot cutting ceremony especially of a newly trained manora player, which was an initiation into the dance-drama, or for the *kae bon* ceremony of some person in the community. The *khlong hong* ('noosing the bird') was performed by the entire troupe, but led by the clown who on this occasion abandoned his clown's dress in favor of that of a hunter. His apparel as a hunter for the *khlong hong* is said by tradition to consist of twelve articles, including his weapons and supplies for survival in the forest—dried foods, salt, flint, crossbow, arrows, knife, and a noose. The hunter must dress at some place away from the place of performance, ideally in a wood behind some bushes. Then he comes to the performance sight where seven members of the troupe are dancing in the dress of kinnara maids. With his noose the hunter nooses in turn each of the seven dancers, winding his noose around them and then twirling them around. The dancers must not become dizzy and lose their balance or bad luck will follow. To anyone familiar with the Suthon-Manora story it is apparent that the *khlong hong* is merely an adaptation of a key incident in the tale where the hunter Bun captures the kinnara maiden Manora while she is bathing in a forest lake with her six sisters. The *thaeng khe* ('stabbing the crocodile') similarly represents an incident from the story of Kraithong.

For the time being, the history and origins of the southern Thai *manora* must remain obscure. Nothing points clearly to its origin in Indian or Javanese dance-drama, but expert comparative study of the music, dance steps, and costume may yet yield convincing evidence. In the meanwhile the *manora* deserves greater recognition for what it clearly is, an original and valuable cultural form of the southern Thai people.