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LUANG VICHITR VADAKARN
THE USE OF THEATRE FOR PROPAGANDA

Kusuma Prasertsud

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of the
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the use of drama by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn (1898-1962) for nationalist propaganda purposes in Thailand. Luang Vichitr is known to have been one of the most influential figures in recent Thai history and the mastermind behind the shaping and implementation of the nationalist policies of Phibun Songkhram and Sarit Thanarat. His plays and songs were loaded with patriotic themes, instilling nationalist feelings in the Thai people, successfully conveying ideas about the origin of the Thai race, and forming a social and moral code. His plays have been analysed in order to understand why they were so popular and how they have influenced the Thai people's concept of art, culture, history and national identity. Until the student-led revolution in 1973, Luang Vichitr's historiography dominated the field of history. Since then, he and his works have become the subject of extensive scrutiny by many Thai and foreign scholars.

The purpose of this thesis is to further analyse his ideas, to highlight how central his role was in shaping the thinking of the military dictators that would subsequently hold power and to investigate how he exploited theatre and Thai history to influence the audience. The thesis begins with a detailed analysis of Luang Vichitr's early life and works. This is followed by a discussion of other important background information such as the changing role of theatre, the coup in 1932, Luang Vichitr's concept of "human revolution", the role of the Publicity Bureau and the establishment of the Drama and Music School under Luang Vichitr's directorship. The remaining four chapters analyse the 27 plays produced by Luang Vichitr between 1934 and 1957. The conclusions summarise the dissertation and assert that Luang Vichitr's ability to produce propaganda plays which were popular with their audience was of central importance for indoctrinating them with his ideas. Even one hundred years after his birth, the impact of Luang Vichitr's legacy on modern Thai society can still be observed, and this thesis aims to increase the understanding of Luang Vichitr's ideas, his manipulation of Thai history and the significance of his plays for disseminating his nationalist propaganda.

For my parents,
my grandmother
and Martin.

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Introduction

Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, (1898-1962) also referred to as Luang Vichitr was a controversial figure in Thai history. He is often seen by modern scholars as an eponym of the unscientific intellectual. Sulak Sivaraksa, a Thai social critic, calls him the architect of the personality cult of, and the one behind the thinking of Thailand's first two military dictators, Field-Marshal P. Phibun Songkhram (1938-1944 and 1948-1957) and Field-Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1958-1963).¹ Like Prince Damrong Rajanuphap (1862-1943), who was the most prominent historian and scholar during the final decades of the absolute monarchy, Luang Vichitr became the most important ideologue of the post-1932 era. Craig Reynolds, a prominent scholar of Thai history, suggests that Luang Vichitr, not Prince Damrong, should be regarded as the father of Thai history because his impact on modern Thai historiography is much more important and controversial.² According to the political scientist Chai-anan Samudavanija, Luang Vichitr created a state-identity and national culture which was superimposed on popular culture and local traditions and was based on the simultaneous creation of a historical imaginaire.³ For Chai-anan, the creation of this national identity has had an adverse effect on democracy in later periods.

Luang Vichitr's long involvement in politics and cultural development between 1932 and 1962 occurred in the context of unprecedented changes in the history of Thailand. The year 1932 marked the end of the absolute monarchy and, apart from brief periods, Thailand's political leadership was in the hands of authoritarian military leaders. Indeed, building on ideas and ideology developed and promoted by Luang Vichitr, the long rule of dictatorial governments lasted until the mid-1970s when it was ended by a

¹ Sulak Sivaraksa, "Sonthana Kanplianplaeng Lae Khwam To'nu'ang Kho'ng Udomkan Nai Sangkhom Thai" (Discussion on Changes and Continuity of Idealism in Thai Society), Recorded Discussion on a Thai Identity Crisis: Idealism in Thai Society, Chulalongkorn University, n.d., pp. 107-187.

² Craig J. Reynolds, "The Plot of Thai History," paper presented at the International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, 22-24 August 1984.

³ Chai-anan Samudavanija, "State Identity Creation, State Building and Civil Society," National Identity and its Defenders: Thailand, 1939-1989. Ed. Craig J. Reynolds, Australia: Monash University, 1991, pp. 59-86. See also the article by Chai-anan, "Pibul's Creation of State Identity: Subtle Synthesis of Historical Imaginaire," Bangkok Post, 17 August 1989.

bloody revolution led by students. One hundred years after his birth, the legacy he left continues to have an impact on contemporary Thailand and is deeply ingrained in today's society: its value system, social relations and political culture. Interestingly, Thailand's current economic problems have given rise to even more Phibun- and Vichitr-style tactics, such as the establishment of a new party named *Thai Rak Thai* (Thais love Thais) by Thaksin Shinawatra and the propaganda campaign "Thai Chuay Thai" (Thais help Thais). These are reminiscent of policies which emerged during Phibun's first regime based on Luang Vichitr's self-sufficiency and kitchen-gardening promotion which encouraged Thai people to buy Thai products even if they were of poorer quality.⁴

The starting point for understanding why Luang Vichitr was so successful in promoting his ideas was to develop an understanding of his early life and work. Luang Vichitr has often been described as a self-made man who climbed up the social ladder from rags to riches. A provincial boy of an unknown background who came to the capital in search of a better future, he held no academic degree, but advanced himself to become one of the most influential mentors of the modern era. Although Luang Vichitr was not a major politician or powerful military leader, he became a key ideologue to the two dictatorial regimes of Phibun and Sarit. He developed his ideas and nationalist ideology early in his life before his appointment as Director of the Fine Arts Department. He became an active writer on a wide range of subjects at an early age. He produced a wide range of work covering many subjects including history, politics, economics, current affairs, culture, psychology, Buddhism and literature. It might not be an exaggeration to say that Luang Vichitr produced the largest number of written works in modern Thai history. Because of the eloquent writing style, their comprehensiveness at the time, and the self-assertiveness in the way in which he presented his ideas he was seen as an authority on many subjects. Despite recent criticism, his works and ideas are still popular and are often lauded by bureaucrats and members of the military who view him as the exemplary distinguished government official and a great Thai scholar.

⁴ Kitchen-gardening was promoted by Luang Vichitr as a laudable activity because it symbolised the importance of hard work and self-sufficiency.

One of Luang Vichitr's most controversial legacies is his version of Thai history and in particular that concerning the origin of the Thai race. His theory of the purported Thai kingdom in Nanjao was well-received and outsmarted many of his contemporaries due to its comprehensiveness and persuasiveness. The theory inferred that the Chinese had driven the Thai race southwards into different countries in the Golden Peninsula. Luang Vichitr's theory called for a unification of the Thai race to form a powerful nation. This misrepresentation of racial origin, which led to the proposition that the Thais have the right and obligation to unite the minor Thais in other countries, is thought to be behind the condescending attitude of many Thais towards their neighbours, particularly the Laotian and Cambodian people. It also explains, for example, why still relatively few Thai universities devote courses to the study of Thailand's neighbours and why only few Thais have made an effort to develop relationships of mutual respect with their neighbours. Despite the efforts of modern scholars to challenge Luang Vichitr's version of history and its impact on contemporary attitudes and thinking, their works have yet to make a significant impression. Luang Vichitr's ideas remain deeply entrenched amongst Thais of all ages and the largely academic efforts to change this have not yet received the crucial support from the bureaucratic and educational system.

Luang Vichitr also strongly influenced Thai culture. Many of the *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates) and cultural decrees issued during Phibun's first regime, including the announcement of the 14 codes of the warrior under the name *Wiratham Kho'ng Chat Thai* (The Codes of the Warrior of the Thai Nation, 1944), were aimed at advancing the nation by improving the characteristics and habits of the population. They were based on Luang Vichitr's concept of *Manut Patiwat* (Human Revolution). Luang Vichitr felt that Thai people should have characteristics such as a sense of purpose, strong-mindedness and will-power, concentration and focus, sense of duty, self-confidence, industriousness and a willingness to work hard. This was largely influenced by his study of Pelmanism at the Pelman Institute in Paris and Bushido (the Japanese Code of the Warrior) through his fascination with Japan. He stressed that it

was necessary for Thai people to embark on a path of self-improvement by developing these characteristics.

In the sphere of the performing arts, Luang Vichitr was able to develop a dramatic formula for his propaganda plays by combining modified classical dramatic forms, new techniques (many of Western or Japanese origin), song and dance, spectacle, and popular stories drawn from history and mythology. Under his directorship of the Fine Arts Department and the Drama and Music School, popular theatrical forms such as *Likey* and *Lamtat* were not promoted. Classical forms such as the *Khon* and *Lakho'n* were also discouraged, as they represented the ancient regime and therefore were outdated in both style and content. Luang Vichitr's own dramatic creations contributed towards a shift from the traditional concept of aesthetics of refined and stylised dance movements, rigid application of the conventional use of music and themes which addressed philosophical and religious aspects towards more up-beat, realistic, audio-visual stage spectacles. Luang Vichitr's stage productions redefined the national standard for performing arts and he took further steps to superimpose the new national standard for art forms through directives issued by the Department of Fine Arts and later, the National Institute of Culture. As the Director of the Drama and Music School, Luang Vichitr produced thirteen plays, which were effective tools for him to disseminate and instil his nationalist ideas in public and to create a strong fellowship for his ideas and version of Thai history amongst the military and many bureaucrats. With Phibun's rise to power, the link between Luang Vichitr's plays and official policy-making became even stronger and Thailand moved steadily into the period of extreme nationalism.

After the end of Phibun's first regime and the Second World War, Luang Vichitr set up his theatre company *Vijitsin* and produced ten plays. However, they were not very successful and he was forced to turn to the writing of novels as a main source of income. When Phibun came to power for the second time, he called Luang Vichitr into service once more. He produced four more plays during this period. Although they did promote Phibun's rule and received full official support, they appear to have been less popular than the plays he had produced during Phibun's first regime. When Sarit took

over power in 1958, Luang Vichitr became the new dictator's right hand man. Although he produced no further plays, he became even more influential as Sarit relied heavily on Luang Vichitr's ideas and thinking. Today, Luang Vichitr's plays are still regularly staged, particularly at the National Theatre. His songs are still familiar to many, and his ideas and thinking are by no means forgotten.

Academic Works on Luang Vichitr

A number of works by Thai and foreign scholars have contributed to a greater understanding of Luang Vichitr's role and works. The first academic work was an M.A. thesis written by Chaliew Phansida.⁵ It contains details of Luang Vichitr's life with an annotated collection of his literary works. The thesis provides a good overview of Luang Vichitr's life and works, but it lacks critical analysis and, typical of a biographical study produced in Thailand, Luang Vichitr is portrayed in positive terms.

While Luang Vichitr's role in Thai society was still viewed rather uncritically at home, Thak Chaloeontiarana, who completed his Ph.D. at Cornell University in the same year, produced an insightful and critical examination of his influence over the Thai military dictator Sarit Thanarat and concluded that Sarit's paternal concept was actually derived from Luang Vichitr's ideas.⁶ In particular, in Chapter 4 of his thesis, Thak shows that Luang Vichitr exercised much influence over Sarit, and indeed it was by Luang Vichitr's assistance that Sarit successfully staged a coup against Phibun's government in 1957. The thesis also includes a discussion of the play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* which supported the father-style leadership of Phibun that was also adopted by Sarit.

⁵ Chaliew Phansida, "Chiwaprawat Lae Pho'nngan Wannakam Kho'ng Luang Vichitr Vadakarn" (The Life and Literary Works of Luang Vichitr Vadakarn), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1974. In 1977, Chaliew's book, Luang Vichitr Vadakarn Lae Ngan Dan Prawatsat (Luang Vichitr Vadakarn and his Historical Works), which was a revision from his M.A. thesis, was published by Bannakit Trading Press.

⁶ Thak Chaloeontiarana, "The Sarit Regime, 1957-1963: The Formative Years of Modern Thai Politics," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1974. Thak's dissertation was later published under the name Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism in 1979 by the Social Science Association of Thailand. In 1982, the book was translated into Thai and printed by Thammasat University Press.

The domination of Luang Vichitr's historiography ended in the mid-70s, when a successful student-led uprising against the military dictatorship enabled an intellectual revolution. From 1976 onwards, many scholars have critically examined the impact of Luang Vichitr's historiography and his ideas.⁷ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian wrote a long article on Luang Vichitr's nationalist historiography and discussed his works in a wider socio-political context.⁸ Kobkua divided Luang Vichitr's works and ideas into two periods. In the first period, between 1932 and 1944, Luang Vichitr's historical writings aimed at supporting irredentism, while in the second period, between 1948 and 1957, he produced historical works to support an anti-communism policy. Kobkua's study reveals that Luang Vichitr's approach to history was biased and that he selectively used material to support his *a priori* theories. In Kobkua's opinion, Luang Vichitr only used history to promote his nationalist ideology and did not have a genuine interest in the subject.

More recent work by Kobkua attempts to reassess Phibun Songkhram and his political contribution. Kobkua presents a not completely uncritical, but very idealised, picture of Phibun and his cultural and socio-political influence. In reassessing Phibun, Kobkua argues that Luang Vichitr was the mastermind behind many of the more controversial policies (such as irredentism) and that Phibun had always preferred the socio-cultural aspects of Luang Vichitr's ideas over his expansionist beliefs.⁹ Casting Phibun in a more positive light like this has become increasingly popular. This may be due to recent desire for a strong leadership (as symbolised by Phibun). Moreover, the idealisation of Phibun, viewing him as a defender of Thai independence and identity, is also a response by those who see the policies of the 1930s and 1940s as necessary

⁷ See for example Charnvit Kasetsiri, "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period," Perception of the Past in Southeast Asia. Ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr, Singapore: ASAA Southeast Asia Publication Series, 1982, pp. 156-170, Nakkharin Mektrirat, "Prawatsat Phumphanya Kho'ng Kanplian Rabop Kanpokkhro'ng Sayam Rawang Pho' So' 2470-2480" (An Intellectual History of Siam's Political Transformation during 1927-1937), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1985.

⁸ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "Kankhian Prawatsat Baep Chatniyom: Phitjarana Luang Vichitr Vadamarn" (Nationalist Historiography: A Case Study of Luang Vichitr Vadamarn), Thammasat University Journal 6: 1, June-September 1976, pp. 149-180.

⁹ See Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades, 1932-1957, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

today to defend Thai culture and identity against the onslaught of western ideas and values.

Luang Vichitr's significance to post-1932 Thailand is rightly observed by a foreign scholar, Craig J. Reynolds. He highlights the importance of Luang Vichitr's works in creating a perception of historical continuity and shows that his nationalism was significantly based on concurrent nationalist ideas dominant in Europe, particularly in Germany and Italy.¹⁰ Reynolds believes that Luang Vichitr, not Prince Damrong, should be regarded as the father of Thai history and that Luang Vichitr cannot be easily dismissed as an unscientific intellectual of the military who simply replaced monarchism with nationalism.¹¹ An extremely insightful study of Luang Vichitr was produced by Scot Barmé, whose book "Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity", shows how he actually shaped political power through a manipulation of Thai history and culture.¹² Barmé's analysis confirmed that Luang Vichitr played a central role in defining the meaning of "Thai-ness", was a vital instrument behind the irredentism which led to the Franco-Thai war, and was responsible for the rise to power by the military that persists in Thailand today.

In the field of dramatic literature, Pra-onrat Buranamat was the first to investigate Luang Vichitr's historical plays.¹³ She attempts to put the plays into a historical and socio-political context to study the relationship between literature and society. Although Pra-onrat provides a useful and detailed analysis of the themes, plots, characters and other dramatic elements of Luang Vichitr's dramatic productions, she does not show how and why his plays became so popular and were so effective as tools for propaganda. Indeed, her study only concentrates on a textual analysis and no other disciplines were adopted to further interpret the dynamism of drama. Following

¹⁰ Reynolds: 1984.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Scot Barmé, Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993.

¹³ Pra-onrat Buranamat, "Wikhro' Bot Lakho'n Prawatsat Kho'ng Luang Vichitr Vadamarn" (The Analysis of Luang Vichitr Vadamarn's Historical Plays), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1980.

Pra-onrat's work, Pisanu Sunthararak applied a Gramscian concept of hegemony in his Ph.D. thesis to recreate Luang Vichitr's worldview through a literary use of plays, songs and novels.¹⁴ While useful in some aspects, the thesis does not establish a clear link between the literary works and how they were related to a socio-political context at the time.

The most recent work that analyses Luang Vichitr's theatrical contribution is a Ph.D. thesis from Cornell University written by Jiraporn Witayasakpan.¹⁵ Jiraporn focuses on Phibun's national cultural policies and the nationalist plays of his "literary ally", Luang Vichitr, to analyse the development of theatre during the Phibun period and the impact of Phibun's nationalism on changes in theatrical forms, content and the concept of aesthetics amongst the Thai people. Jiraporn's analysis of Luang Vichitr's plays draws on Pra-onrat's work with further additions to the production process, but apart from Pra-onrat, Jiraporn is the only academic who has focused on the theatre plays of Luang Vichitr. For example, Mattani Moj dara Rutnin, who has written extensively about Thai theatre, does not detail Luang Vichitr's plays, which is exemplified by the brevity of the chapter covering the period between 1932 and 1957 in her otherwise very useful and thorough book.¹⁶

Aims of this Thesis

The re-emergence of Phibunism and the resurrection of ideas propagated by Luang Vichitr between the 1930s and 1950s, at a time of rapid change and economic crisis, highlights the continuing need to further our understanding of Luang Vichitr's legacy and his role in the fields of arts, culture, society and politics. The thesis begins with an analysis of Luang Vichitr's early life until he became director of the Fine Arts Department in 1934. The development of his ideology during this period will be analysed to provide an overview of the key elements of his beliefs and to facilitate

¹⁴ Pisanu Sunthararak, "Luang Wichit Watakan: Hegemony and Literature," Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986.

¹⁵ Jiraporn Witayasakpan, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts: Theatre in Thailand during the Phibun Period," Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1992.

¹⁶ Mattani Moj dara Rutnin, Dance, Drama, and Theatre in Thailand, Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for UNESCO, 1993.

investigations of his dramatic works during the later periods. His increasing involvement in politics will also be discussed to provide the context for the analysis of the plays. This discussion will also highlight the wide range of subjects and issues that Luang Vichitr concerned himself with and influenced.

Between 1934 and 1957, Luang Vichitr produced almost 30 plays. During these twenty-three years, Thailand witnessed a great deal of socio-political and cultural change. The plays were produced during four periods: (1) the post 1932-coup period, (2) Phibun's first regime, (3) the post-war period and (4) Phibun's second regime. His propaganda plays were particularly popular and influential between 1936 and 1940.

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to establish how Luang Vichitr, despite his lack of experience and qualification in the field of drama, was able to successfully use plays for propaganda. Particularly important for understanding the success of Luang Vichitr's plays, especially those between 1934 and 1940, will be the investigation into how he addressed, influenced and satisfied the aesthetic concepts and expectations of the audience. In this context, propaganda messages and key theatrical elements such as plot, music, songs, stage design, *etc.* of each play will be discussed and the differences between the plays during each period will be highlighted.

The research will also investigate how his various ideas are reflected in the plays and conveyed through dramatic plots, characters, dialogues, dances and songs. For example, an analysis of his historical plays will attempt to reveal how much he manipulated history for his own purposes. Again, differences in the ideas and messages communicated in the plays during each period will be highlighted and linked to a socio-political context. His plays were important instruments for him because through them he could instil his ideas in the masses and create popular support for nationalism, cultural mandates and other policies promoted at the time. The other main objective of this thesis, therefore, is to show more clearly how and to what extent Luang Vichitr's writings shaped the thinking of many in the military and bureaucracy, and in particular Phibun and Sarit.

Research Methodology

The thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach drawing on a range of academic fields such as social and political science, history, geography, literature and drama. A flexible and holistic approach is also applied to the analysis of the theatre plays. When investigating the plays, all dramatic elements will be analysed, not merely the text and plot. This is the only way to properly analyse Thai drama, in which dramatic elements cannot be analysed individually and in isolation. Although an essentially western framework of dramatic analysis is used, the framework has been adapted to fit the specific characteristics of Thai theatre style, particularly as it was evident during the 1930s to 1950s. The interdisciplinary approach is also reflected in the sources used. The research, which was carried out in England and Thailand, is largely based on primary sources. These sources include Luang Vichitr's written works, his playtexts, newspaper articles and various unpublished materials, as well as archival materials comprising official records, minutes, news clippings, pictures and magazine articles. Visits to the performances of Luang Vichitr's plays were carried out during a field work trip in Thailand. Several interviews have also been conducted with people who were close to Luang Vichitr such as his wife, relatives, actors and actresses and people who were involved in his productions. Additionally, interviews were conducted with other academics with an interest in this period or with Luang Vichitr. The thesis also draws on their and other scholars' works and ideas, in an attempt to integrate and further our knowledge and understanding of Luang Vichitr.

Organisation of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis provides Luang Vichitr's personal background and a discussion of his early works up to 1934, when he was appointed the Director-General of the Fine Arts Department and set up the Drama and Music School.

Chapter 2 consists of five sections, the first of which provides an overview of the development of traditional drama and the use of theatre for political and nationalist purposes by King Vajiravudh. The second section provides a brief background to the 1932 *coup d'état*. The importance of the Publicity Bureau is discussed in Section 3, while Section 4 examines Luang Vichitr's concept of a "human revolution". The

chapter ends with a discussion of the Fine Arts Department and the Drama and Music School, and how Luang Vichitr became the director of the Department.

The third chapter analyses Luang Vichitr's early plays. These were the plays he wrote after he had become Director of the Fine Arts Department (1934) and before he produced *Lu'at Suphan* (1936), his most popular and enduring play.

Chapter 4 concentrates on an analysis of Luang Vichitr's most successful propaganda play, *Lu'at Suphan* (Blood of Suphan). The purpose of a detailed analytical approach to one play is to deconstruct Luang Vichitr's theatrical formula and see how it is applied to present his nationalist messages with a maximum impact on the audience. Special emphasis is also placed on how traditional and modern music and songs were used at particular moments, showing Luang Vichitr's ability in manipulating emotions. The final part of this chapter focuses on the popularity of *Lu'at Suphan* in other forms of media, particularly when it was made into a feature film.

Chapter 5 analyses the next three plays that were produced by Luang Vichitr before Phibun came to power in 1938. Over this period, Luang Vichitr's propaganda campaign became more vocal than before. In particular, irredentism and racial unification became important themes during this period and were later adopted by Phibun's government, leading to the territorial conflict between Thailand and France between 1940 and 1941.

The final chapter is divided according to the plays produced during three periods: (1) Phibun Songkhram's first premiership between 1938 and 1944; (2) from the end of the Second World War until 1948 and (3) during Phibun's second premiership between 1948 and 1957. It will be demonstrated how the plays produced during Phibun's first premiership directly supported the government's policies, and in particular how they were related to the cultural mandates. The chapter compares Luang Vichitr's plays of each period, how the role of the plays changed and why they became less popular over time. The conclusions summarise the key findings of this research.

Chapter One

An Introduction to Luang Vichitr and his Early Works

This chapter provides an overview of Luang Vichitr's early career and his written works (1889-1934). Luang Vichitr was an ambitious man of modest background. His abilities and ambitiousness enabled him to play an important role in the development of Thai politics, arts and culture. These three areas were very much intertwined. Many government policies after the coup in 1932 directly concerned the Arts as well as the new conception of Thai identity and history. For instance, traditional court arts and customs no longer represented the country's high arts, but were instead replaced by newly introduced national arts and customs that demonstrated the modernity of the nation and the purity of Thai culture. Few people realise that the ideas behind these policies were inspired by Luang Vichitr.

Even fewer people are aware of the significant and lasting impact that Luang Vichitr's ideas have had on the development of modern Thailand. Luang Vichitr's plays are still regularly performed and his works and ideas were included in many official school textbooks. His thinking therefore penetrated several generations from a young age. Moreover, the acceptance of his ideas at a national level have led to the public viewing Luang Vichitr's works with great respect. His work is particularly well respected amongst Thai civil servants, many of whom were, and still are, involved in policy making. Their decisions and thinking have been deeply influenced by Luang Vichitr's ideas.

An increasing number of historians and scholars disagree with his ideas and are critical of the legacy he has left. Amongst these scholars are Sujit Wongthet, Thongchai Winichakul, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Nakkharin Mektrirat, Chai-anan Samudavanija and Somkiat Wanthana.¹⁷ They have tried to break with the legacy of Luang Vichitr that has become so firmly entrenched in Thai society. However, they have only reached a

¹⁷ Sujit Wongthet, see for example: "Khon Thai Mai Dai Ma Jak Nai" (Thai People Do Not Come From Anywhere), *Sinlapa Watthanatham* (Special Issue), 1984; Thongchai Winichakul, see for example *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994; and Charnvit Kasetsiri, see for example "The First Phibun Government and its Involvement in World War II," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 62, July 1974, Part 2, pp. 25-88.

relatively small Thai and foreign audience, mainly consisting of academic circles at universities and research institutes, and have generally failed to gain a wider audience for their ideas and/or criticism at a national level.

As stated in the introduction, the main objectives of this thesis are to reposition Luang Vichitr as the main *auteur* of many of Thailand's cultural and nationalist policies from the 1930s onwards and to analyse and demonstrate why Luang Vichitr was so successful in promoting his ideas. The starting point for this is to develop an understanding of his early life and works. It was during this period (1889 – 1934) that he developed his skills, ideas and nationalist ideology which would greatly influence the future development of Thailand.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the early life and work of Luang Vichitr. The second section examines some of his early works and thinking. The third section covers his activities and publications in the period shortly before the coup in 1932 until his appointment as Director of the Fine Arts Department in 1934. Particularly important during this period are his articles which appeared in the *Duang Prathip* journal. These articles provide the first clear evidence of his nationalist ideology. The Chapter concludes with an analytical summary of the key issues about Luang Vichitr's life and work until 1934.

1.1 Luang Vichitr's Early Life and Works

To the Thai general public, Luang Vichitr Vadamarn's life is a source of inspiration for those who want to succeed in life.¹⁸ His story is that of an individual who became successful through sheer effort and hard work. He was an unknown provincial boy who was both determined and cultivated. He went to the capital to further his

¹⁸ Not only could Luang Vichitr's life be said to represent a perfect model for the general population, but many still consider it to be particularly worthy of study for the younger generation. In 1984, the Ministry of Education published extra curricula reading material entitled *Chiwit Haeng Lakho'n* (Life is a Stage) which was a simplified version of Luang Vichitr's personal life story, suitable for secondary level schoolchildren. The book was compiled by Sutthilak Amphanwong, an official at the Ministry of Education, and 8,500 of the first edition were printed and sent to secondary schools across the country. Sutthilak Amphanwong, *Chiwit Haeng Lakho'n* (Life is a Stage), Ministry of Education, 1984.

education, worked his way up the bureaucratic ranks and, over a number of years, assumed a variety of different government positions. Luang Vichitr possessed a strong will for self-advancement. He was well aware of his lack of support and privilege and, therefore, coupled hard work with a great deal of caution in every step he took. During the first half of the 1930s, his efforts were rewarded by his appointment to the position of Director-General of the Fine Arts Department. From this moment on he became the most influential figure in Thailand's cultural activities. Even today, his works and cultural policies, based on nationalist ideology, continue to have a profound impact on Thai society.

1.1.1 From Kimliang to the Novice Thammarangsi

Luang Vichitr was born Kimliang Watthanaprida on 11 August 1898 in Tambon Sakraekrang, a small sub-district of the Uthathani province in Central Thailand.¹⁹ He was one of eight children whose parents, Mr In and Mrs Khlai, earned their living as petty traders along the river. The family lived in a bamboo house raft located near the house of his grandfather, Luang Sakon Raksa, who was a chief of the district. They, like other extended families, lived close to their relatives. As a favourite grandson, Kimliang was often asked by his grandfather to practise writing petitions. This helped him to develop a good command of written Thai.²⁰

¹⁹ Although the name *Kimliang* implies Chinese origin, he denied that his family had any Chinese connections. Instead, he blamed his name on the local fashion in his hometown. He declared that it was the fashion at that time that if a child's parent had a Thai name, the child should be given a Chinese name. Sathian Phantharangi, "Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn Palat Banchakan Samnak Nayok Rathamontri 2441-2505" (Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, an assistant of the Prime Minister 1898-1962), *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, vol. 2, 1962, p. 9. Despite his denial, doubts about his own origin continued to invite criticism, particularly when Luang Vichitr attacked Chinese living in Thailand. In 1938, he gave a lecture on the unification between Austria and Germany at Chulalongkorn University. This lecture was interpreted as a catalyst to express his anti-Chinese attitude which caused much criticism nation-wide. In the lecture he declared the Chinese in Thailand to be worse than the Jews in Germany because the Chinese liked to send their money to mainland China but never wanted to invest or spend anything on Thai soil. They were therefore just trying to exploit Thailand without being prepared to contribute to Thailand's advancement. This statement created serious discontent among the Chinese who questioned whether they would have to face the same destiny as the Jews in Germany. One press reporter challenged Luang Vichitr's idea by stating that if he wanted to drive all the Chinese from Thai soil, he himself should be included since his grandfather and father were from the same Chinese stock. So'. Bo'. 9. 2. 3/3.

²⁰ Writing legal petitions was significant because Luang Vichitr was required to develop very good writing skills. The petitions were one of the few ways for commoners to express the grief or get the attention of the ruling class.

The early death of his mother together with the family's poverty, contributed to a particularly difficult childhood. However, despite the poverty and a lack of time for childcare, his father recognised the importance of a basic education for his children. He encouraged them to learn the alphabet and provided them with a basic knowledge of classical Thai literature. Most of this instruction was undertaken by Kimliang's grandmother who often told her grandchildren stories from such classical literary works as the *Ramakien*, *Inao* and *Sangtho'ng*.

These literary classics had a significant influence on his early life, as they introduced him to traditional Thai concept of love and loyalty for superiors and especially for the King. Many of these classical stories also contained concepts of heroism as well as social and moral values. However, while the heroes of many of these stories conduct acts such as liberating their country, their heroic action was depicted as a demonstration of reverence for the King. It is highly likely that the young Kimliang was inspired and influenced by the nationalistic themes in these texts. However, as will be seen later, Kimliang developed his own version of nationalism which rejected the central role of a king and certain social values embodied in the classical texts. His nationalism emphasised self-discipline, loyalty and sacrifice for the nation itself, rather than for the king.²¹

After completing his elementary education, the family's financial difficulties almost prevented him from continuing his studies. However, his determination to progress and his belief that higher education was the means of doing so, lead him to enter a temple. At that time, it was customary for a poor child to be sent to the temple for education as it was popularly recognised as the centre of knowledge. It was the duty of monks to provide an education to the community. Rather than continue living in his home community, Kimliang chose to go to the capital. At the age of 13, he travelled to Bangkok and became a novice at the Mahathat temple, a religious academy where

²¹ For an example of literary classic which contains political implication see Klaus Wenk, Phali Teaches the Young: A Literary and Sociological Analysis of the Thai Poem Phali So'n No'ng, Hawaii University, 1980.

young monks were instructed in Pali in preparation for ecclesiastical examinations.²² By the time Kimliang started, the government had ordered two new subjects - Mathematics and Thai Language - to be included in the curriculum of the temple.²³ These subjects were introduced from the curriculum of secular education, as part of the government's overall modernisation programme.²⁴

During this period, Kimliang was given the Pali name *Thammarangsri*, which means "The Light of the Dharma". Its Thai translation is *Saengtham*, which he later adopted as one of his pen names. The novice Thammarangsri was an assiduous learner as well as a sharp rhetorician. He liked to keep up-to-date with events and always paid attention to activities beyond the confines of the temple. When King Vajiravudh promulgated the "decree of surnames", encouraging every Siamese citizen to take a surname, as in other civilised nations, Thammarangsri immediately did so, taking the surname *Watthana Prida*, meaning "the joy of prosperity". Some of his friends once teased him for his choice of the word *Prida* (Joy) because of its link with the then famous theatre troupe Pridalai of Prince Narathip.²⁵ However, his choice of name was

²² King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910) set up two Buddhist colleges during his reign: the Mahamakut Witthayalai (Mahamakut College) located in the Bo'wo'n'ratchaniwet temple and the Mahathat Witthayalai (Mahathat College) located in the Mahathat temple. The Mahathat College first opened on November 18, 1889. Its name was changed to the Mahachulalongkorn College in 1896. The college underwent its statutory upgrading from a Buddhist college to a Buddhist University in 1947. See Ruth-Inge Heinze, *The Role of the Sangha in Modern Thailand*, University of California, 1977.

²³ Under King Chulalongkorn's educational reform, the decree of 1875 on public monastery education laid its emphasis on (1) secular activity, (2) literacy as valued for Buddhist scholarship, for government service, and for personal advancement, (3) the instruction as well as the examination were exclusively secular and (4) the use of the new textbook Munlabot series of Phraya Sri Suntho'nwohan. See David K. Wyatt, "The beginnings of modern education in Thailand, 1868-1910," *Ph.D. thesis*, Cornell University, 1966, p. 99.

²⁴ The modernised monastery school which Kimliang attended was developed in accordance with the nation-wide educational reform initiated in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Prince Damrong, who promoted the development of the modern style monastery school, intended to have monastery schools turned into "culturally acceptable modes serving conventional functions". Wyatt, *Ibid.*, p. 616. The reform did not introduce new values but instead stressed traditional values of government service and Buddhist laymanship. The Mahathat temple was, therefore, a religious institution initiated by the king who believed in a certain kind of nationalism and wanted to use this institution to support his own elite nationalist concept. As Kimliang was among the first group of students who were taught under the modernised curriculum, it inevitably had a direct impact on his values as well.

²⁵ Sathian: 1962, pp. 11-12.

not only evidence of the attention he paid to non-ecclesiastical activities but also of the interest he had in popular theatre.

The novice Thammarangsri was introduced to journalism while still in the temple school. At that time, there was an attempt by the monks in the Ratchabo'phit temple to form an informal society called the *Samphahula* society (Friends Society). Its major objective was to publish its own newspaper for internal circulation. The society was admired by many novices at the Mahathat temple, and learning from the example, Thammarangsri and his novice friends formed their own Mahathat temple Society and distributed similar kinds of printed material.

The papers, which they wrote and posted on the wall of the temple, covered a wide range of subjects including fiction, history and Buddhism. However, literary freedom was sometimes abused by members using their writings to settle personal disagreements. This situation eventually escalated into a war of words which was resolved when the senior monk ordered the closure of the newspaper. This did not stop Thammarangsri who continued to spend his free time writing and on occasions submitting articles to the newspaper.

Although the *Samphahula* Society of the Mahathat temple collapsed, Luang Vichitr's enthusiasm to learn about new subjects continued. He began to pursue an interest in foreign languages, particularly with English and French. This new interest brought him into conflict with the regulations of the temple, which instructed students not to learn subjects beyond those set down in the temple curriculum. The temple feared non-regulated subjects would distract students from concentrating on religious affairs. Those who defied this regulation were punished by being ordered to do chores such as cutting the lawn or cleaning the temple. This, however, did not deter Thammarangsri who continued to teach himself French and English by reading foreign newspapers and English grammar books. In this way, he reached a good level of proficiency in the two languages. His good knowledge of English is evidenced by his translation of the

Phongsawadan Yeraman, a short account of German history, translated into Thai from the English language version of Professor Renouf.²⁶

He chose to translate this book because it contained detailed summaries of historical events. The book was divided into four parts: the ancient period, Germany and religion, Prussian civilisation and the unification of Germany.²⁷ The translation of this book had a direct influence on him. In particular, the account of the struggle for power between the races and the building of a country, in this case Germany, instilled in him some basic ideas about German nationalism.

1.1.2 From Novice Thammarangsri to Kimliang, the Clerk

There is insufficient evidence to explain why Thammarangsri decided to leave the monastery but it can perhaps be assumed that he saw more opportunity for personal progress in a secular life. Two factors that might have affected his decision were, firstly, that he achieved his academic aim to complete the *Parian* five with the highest scores and secondly, his command of foreign languages was improving and his love of writing was growing.²⁸ It seems that these factors added to his confidence and, as a result, he may have felt that he was ready to challenge the world outside monastic life. This speculation is supported by an incident covered in his biographical account which notes that despite being selected to chair a committee to draft the temple's new textbooks, Thammarangsri turned down the invitation. He obviously did not feel sufficiently challenged by the proposed task and only one month after becoming a full monk he decided to leave the monastery.²⁹

Kimliang's next move was to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he started his career as a clerk in the Consular Section. At only twenty years old, he was still young.

²⁶ Watthana Prida, "Phongsawadan Yeraman" (German Chronicles). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, n.d., p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-13.

²⁸ Pali learning can be categorised into nine levels or stages. The higher the level the more difficult the Pali lesson. Students who pass level three and beyond, up to level nine are called the *Maha Parian* (Great Parian).

²⁹ Sathian: 1962, p. 17.

His main duty was to draft reports and documents and send them to his superior. Although it was low-paid routine work of which no one took much notice, Kimliang nevertheless made an impact by becoming a valued subordinate.

There was no end to Kimliang's yearning for knowledge. Besides his daily work, he spent his spare time attending part-time law classes. However, he only managed to complete the first stage of the two-part Bar examination before he was assigned to serve his office abroad.

1.1.3 Kimliang Becomes Luang Vichitr: His Years Abroad

The young Kimliang's ultimate goal had always been to go abroad. The seed of his dream was sown when the government announced the opening of its official examination for a position abroad. This was the first time that ordinary civil officers were allowed to take part and it proved to be a turning point in Kimliang's life.³⁰ Having passed the examination ahead of the other candidates, he was offered the position of an assistant-secretary to the Siamese Legation in Paris. At the age of 22, he had managed to achieve his first ambition.

Of the three secretaries who worked under Prince Jarunsak Kritdako'n (Prince Charoon), the Siamese Minister in Paris at the time, Kimliang was the most junior and the only one with no prior experience of living abroad. As the most inexperienced official, he was usually called upon to do various menial tasks, sometimes even during his off-duty time or at night.³¹ Nevertheless, as an assistant-secretary, his principle task was to write and translate reports from English to Thai for the ministry in Bangkok. These tasks were given to him because his command of written Thai was better than

³⁰ In 1919, Prince Traidos (Devawongs Varodaya) initiated an opening examination to recruit a civil officer for a position abroad. Vichitr Vadakarn, Sawan Yang Mai Tho't Thing Khaphajao (Heaven Hasn't Left Me), Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1967, pp. 4-6.

³¹ The telephone system had a facility allowing the prince to make "emergency calls" directly to Kimliang, even in his bedroom. Luang Vichitr recalled this time as being very bitter and he had to endure the situation for two years, making him hate his superior for treating him that way. However, he eventually realised that being in such a situation helped him to develop greater patience in his work. Vichitr Vadakarn, Withi Thamngan Lae Sang Anakhot (How to Work and Build a Future), Bangkok: Khlang Samo'ng, 1991, p. 16.

the other officials in the embassy.³² Because of his capacity to write good reports and minutes, Kimliang was frequently chosen to accompany his superior to meetings. This helped him broaden his experience in diplomatic circles and gave him the opportunity to learn diplomatic skills. Because of these opportunities and the close contact he had with his superior, he was able to ensure that he was viewed as a worthy subordinate of great loyalty.

Not only did Kimliang seek to establish his popularity in his working place, he also sought to establish a good reputation elsewhere. This began by getting involved with Thai students as a language helper. He offered them help in composing letters requesting increases in their study allowances. Because of his eloquence, their requests were always granted. Before long, Kimliang had developed a reputation as a man of letters. Moreover, his popularity among the Thai students was reinforced when they became aware of his knowledge of classical Thai literature. As a result, many students considered him as their mentor.

Kimliang travelled extensively during his years in France. For three months of each year, he went to Switzerland to participate in the League of Nations' meetings. Being there, he claimed, was like being at one of the world's top universities where a variety of diplomatic skills practised by the world's most talented diplomats could be observed.³³ At the same time, he learnt a variety of communication skills important to his secretarial duties. His excellent command of these skills added to his confidence. He was given sole responsibility for writing the reports of these meetings, each of which was comprised of at least one hundred pages.

Kimliang was able to further improve his social skills through contact with other foreign secretaries. He saw this as an opportunity for future benefit as one day these people could become powerful authorities or ambassadors. In this, he was proved

³² The embassy employed twelve staff. Among them, seven were French, of whom three were French legal consultants, one was a French guardian of Thai students in France; three were French typists, and the other five were Thai officials including Vichitr Vadamarn. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

correct. For example, many years later, when he was appointed Thai ambassador to Japan at the critical time of the outbreak of the Second World War, he received kind treatment from those Japanese ministers whom he had previously known as secretaries. In addition to this, during his time in Switzerland he had come into contact with the author of the famous book "Bushido" whom he greatly admired.³⁴

During his time in Paris, Kimliang developed a relationship with a French colleague, Lucienne Laffitte, who was employed by the embassy as a typist.³⁵ It was at the embassy that the two met and it was Lucienne who helped him to improve his French. Kimliang and Lucienne were seen as a very compatible couple because of their similar interests in music and the arts. Their relationship soon turned into a romance and they decided to get married in 1925. The wedding was officially announced and subsequently celebrated by many Siamese and foreign friends and high-ranking officials. Their marriage was a symbol of the good relationship between Siam and France. Lucienne bore him a son and a daughter.³⁶

The information about this marriage is extremely sketchy. It appears that Luang Vichitr intended to keep this part of his life secret, away from public scrutiny. Neither his official biographies nor his autobiography reveal the marriage's existence. There exists only a brief account by one of his close friends. This account revealed that, Lucienne was a well-educated lady and that after they got married they moved to Thailand for a short period before she returned to France with her two children.³⁷

When Luang Vichitr returned to Siam in 1927, his wife and son moved with him. Their daughter was born later that year in Bangkok. Lucienne became a piano teacher, giving

³⁴ The concept of Bushido and other related issues will be discussed in Section 1.3.

³⁵ I would like to give credit to Scot Barmé for the discovery of the name Lucienne Laffitte from Luang Vichitr's employment file. Barmé: 1993, p. 58. Guillaume, the name that appeared in Vichitr Vadakarn's cremation volume written by Sathian, was almost certainly an invented name. Luang Vichitr's story that he was ordered to have daily meals at her residence does not contain any truth. Personal interview with Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn in April 1996.

³⁶ His first son, Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn, was born on 25th November 1925 in Paris. His daughter, Villae Vichitr Vadakarn, was born in 1927 in Bangkok.

³⁷ Sathian: 1962, p. 43.

lessons to Siamese children, mainly from wealthy families. She also participated in the Bangkok School's activities. She helped, for example, to organise activities and played piano in the annual drama called "Pandora" at the Watthana Witthayalai School in 1927.³⁸ Their two children were sent to the Catholic school in Bangkok to receive their education. Lucienne and the children stayed in Siam until 1933 before moving back to France. The reason why they returned to France and eventually got divorced several years later is unclear.

One possibility is that Lucienne found life in Siam too difficult. According to an interview with their son, Lucien, his mother wanted her children to be educated in France. She had also developed an illness. Moreover, increasing hostility toward the French made it difficult for her to live in Siam. France was a very powerful nation in Indochina with serious territorial ambitions. This brought it into direct conflict with Siam and eventually led to the Franco-Thai conflict (1940-41).

Another possibility is that Luang Vichitr was subjected to political pressures, which eventually led him to leave his foreign wife. His return to Siam coincided with the beginning of his progress up the ranks of government. Many of his positions were concerned with the nation's reputation and security. At the same time, his nationalistic ideology was more widely promoted and he was recognised as its architect. According to Barmé's interview with Luang Vichitr's half-brother, Witun Watthanaprida, King Prachathipok was not pleased that Luang Vichitr had married a foreigner believing that a true nationalist had no business marrying a French woman. The King consequently offered him money to send his wife back to France.³⁹ Whatever the reason, Lucienne decided to leave Siam in 1933. Their relationship ended a couple of years later.⁴⁰

³⁸ Watthana Witthayalai School's annual program, 27 March 1927. A copy of this program was kindly sent to me by Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn.

³⁹ Barmé: 1993, p. 58. Lucien denied this account. He did not believe the king would give money to his father since his father was just a civil servant. However, in a letter that Luang Vichitr sent to his mother, he wrote that he owed 7,000 ticals to the king. Personal interview with Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn.

⁴⁰ During the first couple of years, following their separation Luang Vichitr provided financial support for his family. However, he then informed his wife that he was experiencing financial difficulties and stopped sending money. He also stopped corresponding with them. The divorce was not settled until 1950. Personal interview with Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn.

The two possibilities are plausible and may have both contributed to the end of their relationship. However, they miss one major explanation, which is Luang Vichitr himself. Luang Vichitr was a very ambitious man who had set himself the ambitious aim to play a major role in his country's politics and nationalist policies. To his credit, when he met Lucienne he could not know where the future would take him and foresee all future implications of a marriage with a French lady. However, after the return to Thailand the marriage was quickly getting into the way of his ambitions. Luang Vichitr believed that personal love must always be second to love for one's nation.

Luang Vichitr's nationalistic view on this issue was revealed in a speech entitled *Khvam Rak* (Love).⁴¹ In this speech, he proposed that true love meant personal sacrifice since it necessitated loving someone more than oneself. For him, those who said they loved the nation did not show true love unless they were prepared to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for it. Of the four kinds of love he defined, *i.e.* parental love, brotherly love, romantic love and love for the nation, he said that love for the nation was the most important. The need to sacrifice personal love for the benefit of the country was to become a popular theme in several of his plays. This explanation would imply that he felt compelled to sacrifice his personal love for Siam. However, the way he ended their relationship appeared to have been less the action of a devoted nationalist but the action of a man whose marriage to a foreigner was seriously getting into the way of his personal ambitions.⁴²

While it lasted, the relationship benefited Luang Vichitr greatly and Lucienne Laffitte was instrumental in the early success of his writing career. She assisted him with the famous twelve volumes of the *Prawatsat Sakon* (The Universal History, 1929-1931), his first series on world history. She also helped him understand the foreign texts he used to write such as *Khvam Fan* (The Dream, 1929) - a book about the psychological theories of dream interpretation. The book consists of a range of theories drawn from

⁴¹ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Khvam Rak" (Love, 1930), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 330-338.

⁴² Luang Vichitr's second marriage was with Prapha Raphiphat, a school teacher and daughter of an aristocrat, on August 11, 1936. She bore him seven children. The relationship with his second wife had been very strong and lasted until his death.

Western countries such as Greece, France and America, as well as ancient Thai theory. While *Khvam Fan* centres around the science of psychology, *Prawatsat Sakon* is more academic. It is an extensive work which gathers historical facts from around the world: from ancient history to modern times and from the history of Europe to that of Asia. The first four volumes of the *Prawatsat Sakon* were sent to the Academie Française as an example of a Siamese work of excellence for the year 1930. The *Prawatsat Sakon* series turned out to be a testimony to Luang Vichitr's mastery of History. Despite obtaining no academic degrees, he called himself a "Professor" of History and was later invited to join an academic circle which gave him the position of lecturer in History at Chulalongkorn University in 1932.

Another important experience that had a tremendous effect on Luang Vichitr was the mind-training course he attended at the Pelman Institute in Paris. In his autobiography he said that the course was recommended to him by M.C. Nakkhat Mongol (Prince Chanthaburi), who not only encouraged him but also provided him with the application form. Initially unaware of the usefulness of the course, Luang Vichitr attended it out of fear of not wanting to disappoint the Prince.

The Pelman Institute or, as it was officially called, "The Pelman Institute for the Scientific Development of the Mind, Memory and Personality", was established by an Englishman named Christopher Louis Pelman in the late eighteenth century. During its early years of operation, it offered a course to improve the memory, advertising it on the basis that a good memory could lead to success. Later, the institute offered a course in mind and personality training, introducing its own scientific method and inventing its own kind of psychology called "Pelmanism". The Pelman course was divided into 15 lessons summarised in 15 pamphlets.⁴³ Each of these pamphlets

⁴³ The 15 lessons covered the following aspects: (1) the soul of Pelmanism, (2) your purpose in life: how to achieve it, (3) the will to conquer, (4) concentration and mental control: the remedy for mind-wandering, (5) the science and art of self-realisation, (6) your subconscious life, (7) driving out the inferiority complex, (8) self-expression and personality, (9) good judgement in business and affairs, (10) the scientific method: or how to handle your facts, (11) the money brain: an inquiry into its qualities, (12) creating new ideas: studies in imagination and originality, (13) the world of people and things and how to know them, (14) the use and abuse of reading: how to organise your mental life, and (15) Pelmanism in action. Pelman Institute (London), Pelmanism: The Pelman System for the Training of Mind, Memory and Personality, Worksheets - Lesson I-XV, 1950.

consisted of a foreword, theories and exercises. The institute claimed that demand was so great that other branches had to be opened around the world.⁴⁴ As stated in the introductory section of the course book, full development of the three branches (mind, memory and personality) of the human mind, was important because:

“[The Pelman course] shows you that there is an attitude of mind that is favourable to success, it discusses the means by which that attitude is created, maintained and strengthened, and it outlines the mental processes by which it is made effective in action. The course introduces you to some of the laws that govern feelings and thoughts. It emphasises the importance of habit, defines memory and its place in mental efficiency and sets the first of the exercise that will quicken your perceptions, enlarge your mental resources and at once start to build up your self-confidence. The emphasis is once more on mutual effort. We help you to apply Pelmanism to your own needs and circumstances but you, yourself, must practise the exercises. Only by doing so, can you get the full benefit of the training.”⁴⁵

The Pelman Institute's lessons on expanding the power of the mind, improving the memory, and developing one's personality had a great impact on Luang Vichitr. The understanding of the psychological theories developed by the Pelman Institute led him into further study in the area of Psychology. As a result of the course he adopted and made use of different kinds of psychological theories, introducing them into Thai society through his written works. Most of these works stressed the theme of the improvement of the human mind. Such works included *Witcha Paet Prakan* (The Eight Principles of Knowledge, 1928) a comparative analysis of Western psychology and Buddhist teachings; *Mansamo'ng* (The Intellect, 1928) a collection of various methods of improving the intellect; *Phutthamuphap* (The Power of Buddha, 1928) revealed the different mighty qualities of the Lord Buddha; *Khwam Fan* (The Dream, 1928) a collection of various theories concerning the interpretation of dreams; *Jittamuphap* (The Power of Mind, 1929) suggested a way to improve the basic qualities of mankind; *Latthi Yokhi Lae Mayasat* (Yogism and Magic, 1933) introduced the Yogi theories on occult subjects and the science of Metaphysics; *Kamlang Jai* (The Will

⁴⁴ The Pelman Institution's branches were opened in the UK, India, Australia, Canada, South Africa, France, Germany, Italy, Holland and Russia. The course was also conducted in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch and Russian.

⁴⁵ Pelman Institute (London): 1950.

Power, 1950) offered ways of stimulating and strengthening will power; *Kamlang Khwam Khit* (The Power of Intellect, 1951) set out ways to improve the memory and thought by the use of mental exercises and *Kutsalobai* (Strategies, 1964) suggested strategies for dealing with people.

In addition to attending the Pelman course, Kimliang sought to better himself by studying in his free time. He enrolled in a part-time Law course at the University of Paris.⁴⁶ Kimliang always made use of his spare time to engage in beneficial or productive activities. Outside of work, he liked to visit different historic places, museums and galleries in order to learn about the history and cultures of other people. To add to what he had learnt during these visits, he read and took opportunities there were to meet and talk with experts.⁴⁷

During his years in Paris his career steadily progressed. From Junior Civil Servant, he was promoted to senior secretary. In 1924 he was conferred a title of nobility, or “*Luang*”, and was thereafter called Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, a name he used throughout his career.⁴⁸ However, after six years in Paris, Kimliang’s involvement with the student community began to have serious repercussions. His superior, Prince Charoon, was not pleased with his role as an influential member of S.I.A.M. (*L’Association Siamoise d’Intellectualité et d’Assistance Mutuelle*). In 1926, the Prince wrote to King Prajadipok to alert him about the organisation of the Thai students in France, saying that he had heard about Luang Vichitr’s progressive political views regarding domestic political matters, which he referred to as “frightening”. He

⁴⁶ However, due to his transfer to London he did not complete the course.

⁴⁷ He accumulated extensive knowledge through extracurricular activities and self-study while staying in Europe. In the first volume of his book *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History) he professed that the success of the book was due to his thirst for knowledge and his visits to different places during his spare time in various countries. Vichitr Vadakarn, *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History, 1929), vol. 1, Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakan, 1971, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁸ “*Luang*: the fourth highest rank of conferred nobility; in the last year of the absolute monarchy normally held by young officials (civilian or military) beginning their careers, or by older officials holding relatively minor positions” See Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942. The meaning of *Vichitr* is beautiful, fine or elaborate. The word *Vadakarn* is derived from the Indian word *Va-tha*, which means saying, speech or parlance. The meaning of his new title and name could therefore be translated as “The Elaborate Speaker”.

pointed out that the constitution of the S.I.A.M. prohibited government officials taking an active part and that the association was to be a non-political club. He observed that, "Vichitr broke this rule and he took a very active part in it." The prince considered "Vichitr" a dangerous man" and that "[he] ought to be kept under observation" as he was "very ambitious", as detailed below.

"This man [Luang Vichitr] has destroyed the result of 13 years work amongst the students by creating discontent. He has given them everything they have asked for [sic.] . . . even increasing their allowances whether they deserved [it] or not. This shows that his thoughts are far reaching and he intends to court favour from the students whether it be for their good or not."⁴⁹

Shortly after Prince Charoon wrote his letter, Luang Vichitr was transferred to London as Secretary to the Thai Legation. Unlike many of his duties in Paris, which dealt with political issues, his duties in London dealt mainly with financial matters. Although he described Paris as a more exciting and lively city, Luang Vichitr preferred to stay in London. The main reason was the difficult time he had with his superior in Paris, Prince Charoon, whom he described as strict and bad tempered.⁵⁰ This situation had dissatisfied Luang Vichitr and led him to claim that the diplomatic service was not suitable for him.

After his difficult time in Paris, living in London proved more relaxed and less stressful for Luang Vichitr. His favourite place in London was Charing Cross Road where he visited many second-hand bookshops.⁵¹ He spent his entire salary on books and

⁴⁹ Batson: 1942, p. 80.

⁵⁰ It appears that the prince was aware of Luang Vichitr's involvement in politics. Luang Vichitr was very successful in increasing his influence through activities within and outside his duties and the Prince may have felt it necessary to oppose him. One way the Prince may have sought to obstruct Luang Vichitr was to cause his transfer to London and later Siam. There is no clear evidence of this, however, with hindsight, as Luang Vichitr's influence continued to increase rather than decline.

⁵¹ It is known that Charing Cross Road at that time was one of the places that members of various secret intelligent agencies used as a meeting place. Amongst these agencies were MI5 (Britain's Security Service, conducting counter-intelligence operations on British territory) and MI6 (Britain's Secret Service, gathering foreign intelligence; also known as SIS). For details see Roy Berkeley, A Spy's London, 1994. Whether or not Luang Vichitr realised the reputation of the area and mixed in these circles, or whether he went there purely for cheap books, remains unknown.

admitted that they were his only possessions of value. Luang Vichitr's time in London passed without incident. He stayed less than a year before being transferred to the Foreign Office in Bangkok.

Luang Vichitr returned to Siam in 1927 to continue his service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By this time, he had worked in many relatively important administrative posts. During his first two years he was appointed as a secretary of the Thai delegation to the League of Nations, and then later as a secretary of the High Commission of the Mekong project. He was subsequently promoted to the position of Head of the Consular Division and six months later was transferred to the Diplomatic Division in the same position. He served in this capacity for about two years before being appointed Head of the Political Division. His career continued its steady rise. In less than a year, he was appointed an Assistant Director-General of the Department of Political Affairs, the post he held until his resignation in September 1932.

1.2 Luang Vichitr's Early Works

Luang Vichitr's love of writing started at the age of sixteen. His first romantic story *Khvam Rak Kho'ng Khurak* (The Lovers' Love) was based on *Sao Khru'a Fa*, the Thai version of the tragic romantic story, Madame Butterfly. It was published in the *Sayam Muay* magazine in 1914. Although the story carried no significant message, it revealed Luang Vichitr's liking for the military. This was reflected in the name he gave to his protagonist. He himself later admitted that the honorific prefix "*Than*" which he used in conjunction with the protagonist's name (Lieutenant Chu'a or *Than* Nai Roi Tho Chu'a) was intended to show his admiration for the military. He regarded the military as a profession of great importance which deserved more respect and praise than any other profession.⁵² By the time Luang Vichitr had made this admission, he was already in contact with many of those members of the military who would later be instrumental in the 1932 coup. Whether or not Luang Vichitr really supported the military at the time of his first novel is unclear.

⁵² Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Niphon Anraek Kho'ng Khaphajao" (My First Composition, 1914), *Vichitr San*, vol. 2, pp. 297-310.

It was not until 1928 however that Luang Vichitr had managed to establish a serious writing career. In that year alone, he published three books, printed within a period of four months: *Witcha Paet Prakan* (The Eight Principles of Knowledge) in August, *Mahaburut* (Great men) in October and *Mansamo'ng* (The intellect) in November. This proved his determination to establish a new career amongst Siam's literary circles, despite the constraints of a full-time job.

His first book *Witcha Paet Prakan* (The Eight Principles of Knowledge) was written on Buddhism.⁵³ It introduced a non-didactic approach to learning about Lord Buddha's eight branches of knowledge. The book was not without controversy. In it, Luang Vichitr drew attention to two opposing views concerning the power of the Buddha. The first view represented belief in a supernatural power, the second view represented the more realistic belief that Buddha's powers were the result of his control over power of the mind. Luang Vichitr resolved the dispute by using a mixture of psychological theory and his knowledge of Yogism. For instance, he explained the enlightenment of Lord Buddha as being a result of his determination to reach his goal. Borrowing the notion of will-power from psychology, he included it as one of the eight principles of knowledge necessary to attain enlightenment. The book succeeded in reaching a wide audience by including anecdotes from other countries, in particular from the West, and by suggesting exercise to maximise knowledge. It was an original work, both in its style and in its approach to this subject. By successfully blending Western psychological theory with a Thai subject, Luang Vichitr had directly managed to introduce the idea of comparative study and modern science to Thai readers. *Witcha Paet Prakan* is the earliest evidence for his ability in blending Western ideas with popular local ideas or customs.

⁵³ The Eight Principles of Knowledge are: (1) *Wipatsanayan* (Meditation), (2) *Manoyitthi* (Will-power), (3) *Itthiwitthi* (Ability to show magical power), (4) *Thipsot* (Magical hearing), (5) *Jetopariyayan* (Mind reading), (6) *Buppheniwasanutthayan* (Reincarnation), (7) *Thipjaksu* (Clairvoyance), (8) *Asawakkayan* (Ability to suppress passion).

As a result of the tremendous impact of this first book, Luang Vichitr foresaw a bright future for himself as a writer.⁵⁴ Having had success with this blend of Thai and Western ideas, he went on to use it in other books. Two of these books *Phutthanuphap* (The Power of Buddhism) and *Jittanuphap* (The Power of the Mind) were published in January and June 1929 respectively. *Phutthanuphap* brought him even more success. It was selected as a Siamese book of the year and submitted to the Academie Française in Paris.

Luang Vichitr knew well how to apply his knowledge accumulated during his years spent as a monk and his years abroad. The years he had spent at the Mahathat temple gave him a strong background in Buddhism, this coupled with a sound knowledge of psychology acquired at the Pelman Institute, gave him a seemingly limitless source of material. *Phutthanuphap* suggested that people should not only follow the Buddhist teachings but also recognise the power of Lord Buddha. Luang Vichitr compared people who only chose to follow the Buddhist path to children without gratitude to their parents and only waited for the inheritance from their parents without showing them any respect.⁵⁵

In this work, Luang Vichitr attempted to answer many questions involving the personal cult and magical power of Lord Buddha. In order to achieve this task, he drew upon his knowledge of psychology, international issues and Buddhism. Luang Vichitr explained, for example, that Lord Buddha really did have magical powers (*Phuttha Patihan*), but that he had no intention to use his powers to suppress his enemies or non-believers because he did not wish to create fear or hostility. According to Luang Vichitr, Lord Buddha preferred his followers to appreciate what he preached and not to be afraid of his magical power.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The first run in 1928 comprised 1,000 copies and it was reported that once on the market, these quickly sold out. Within a week, 150 copies were sold; 500 copies were sold in a month, and by 1961, a fourth edition had been published and altogether more than 8,000 copies were sold. Vichitr Vadakarn, *Witcha Paet Prakan* (The Eight Principles of Knowledge), Bangkok: So'. Thamphakdi, 1961, preface.

⁵⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Phutthanuphap Kap Jittanuphap* (The Power of Buddhism and Mind, 1929), Bangkok, 1990, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Luang Vichitr continued to experiment with other material. Instead of focusing solely on Buddhist-related subjects, he turned his attention to the subject of the human mind and ways to improve it. *Jittanuphap* was the outcome of this shift in focus. In actual fact, the book was merely an adaptation of a work written by a French psychologist. However, at the time the subject it dealt with was new for many Siamese. Despite the lack of originality of his work, Luang Vichitr succeeded in establishing himself as a leading figure in the field of psychology in Thailand.

His interest in world history and in historical figures led him to write the book *Mahaburut* (The Great Men) printed in 1928. Luang Vichitr admitted that his writing of *Mahaburut* was inspired by the book "Self-help" by Samuel Smiles⁵⁷. Smiles (1812-1904) was an author and social reformer. His chief reputation was for the writing of biographies. He believed that "concrete examples of men who had achieved great results by their own effort best indicated the true direction and goal of social and industrial progress."⁵⁸ Similar to Smiles's works, *Mahaburut* contained a brief account of different well-known foreign historical figures drawn particularly from European history. Luang Vichitr selected figures to write about such as army-commanders, statesmen, politicians and warriors. People such as Bismarck, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Benjamin Disraeli, Okubo, Richelieu and Mussolini in particular, were chosen. From his point of view, these characters were "great men" because of the great contributions they made to the achievements of their countries. Despite the hardship endured during their early lives, these "great men" struggled and persevered to overcome their difficulties. Their ambition was the driving force which got them to the top. Luang Vichitr set out his objective for writing the book thus:

⁵⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Mahaburut* (The Great Men, 1928), Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1970, p. 120.

⁵⁸ Samuel Smiles, *Self Help: with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*. London: John Murray, 1876 (1869). *Self-Help* was a book with illustrations of character and conduct. To quote its success "20,000 copies were sold in the first year; 55,000 by 1864 and 150,000 by 1889." It was also translated into almost all foreign languages including "Dutch, German, Danish, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Arabic, Japanese, and the native tongues of India." Smith, *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1920, pp. 322-325. See also Justin Wintle, *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

“The aim of writing this book is to arouse the reader into changing weak and lazy behaviour, to become strong and assiduous. I believe that our motherland can be prosperous through the industry of people, people who are not lazy, and who hope to be prosperous themselves. Once individuals become affluent, it will help elevate and advance the country.”⁵⁹

Luang Vichitr wanted to use his selection of “great men” as role models for those who wanted to strive for success for both themselves and for their country. His book on great men highlighted their inferiority complexes, which stemmed from a variety of psychological and social problems. Napoleon for example was so impoverished during his childhood that he could barely afford a proper uniform to attend school. In addition, Mussolini faced such hardship as to have to resort to begging in order to survive.⁶⁰

Luang Vichitr’s book was an attempt to use the history of “great men” in order to demonstrate what strong drive could accomplish. He intentionally did not provide details about their heroic deeds, avoided discussions of the significance of their contributions to their countries, and particularly stayed clear of mentioning any of their negative characteristics such as their aggressiveness, abusiveness and hunger for power. According to him, these historical figures were models of success. Their personalities were there to be emulated. These were however not Luang Vichitr’s own ideas but those he had borrowed from Pelman’s theories on overcoming human deficiency.

Luang Vichitr’s belief that “poverty makes people strive to act positively” was apparently taken from Pelman’s theory on driving out the inferiority complex. According to this theory, the inferiority complex retards the development of the power of the mind and is an obstacle to success in life. However, with determination, a man can overcome this personality defect. The case of Napoleon was also cited in this theory. He struggled and overcame the draw back of a small stature through his

⁵⁹ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Mahaburut*, *op cit.*, pp. J-K.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

determination to succeed. Napoleon's actions, so the theory goes, were not motivated by power seeking but "to atone for the feeling of inferiority".⁶¹ Although an inferiority complex seemed to have a negative effect on a man, in the eyes of Pelman, it could be turned to good effect serving as "a stimulus to attain excellence".⁶² Thus, by applying Pelman's theory in *Mahaburut*, Luang Vichitr hoped to appeal to people who sought self-improvement. Moreover, by careful presentation of the historical figures he wrote about, he successfully managed to popularise Western concepts of mental and intellectual improvement in Siamese society.

Of the forty desirable qualities set down in *Mahaburut*, Luang Vichitr considered only five of them as important in order to achieve greatness. The first quality was to have a sense of purpose or aim in life. He recommended that people should set out their ultimate aim and should always set their targets higher than normally achievable. He suggested this method because it was quite common that during the course of pursuing an aim one's efforts may decrease or meet obstacles. Therefore, if people became discouraged and could not reach their higher aim, they would still be able to achieve the lower. Luang Vichitr explained, for example, that if a man wanted to be a writer, he should aim to be as good as *Suntho'n Phu*, the famous Thai poet. If the man could not be a famous writer, he still was a writer, although less famous.

In *Mahaburut*, Luang Vichitr referred to men who always aimed high. Alexander the Great, for example, aimed at conquering Asia, Napoleon's aim was to become the Great Emperor of Europe and Bismarck's aim was to set up a German Empire. To him, they were examples that the readers should learn to admire. More importantly, if someone was going to learn about other people's characteristics, one should only look at their positive sides. As Luang Vichitr said:

"Studying the stories of great men in history or observing people in high positions can benefit us in many ways. One thing we must remember is that we must always learn only from their positive traits ... Then, we try to emulate them. If we are interested in their negative parts, we will

⁶¹ Pelman Institute (London): 1950, p. 12.

⁶² *Ibid.*

never have a chance to correct our defects because we will see ourselves as perfect people.”⁶³

The second important quality was strong-mindedness. In his opinion, to be strong-minded, people must have four characteristics. Firstly, they should never complain about any difficulties or their own weaknesses. Secondly, they should always be very confident in their decisions no matter how other people might disagree or oppose them. Thirdly, they should never reveal their secrets to anyone or desire to hear others' secrets. Lastly, strong-minded people would never surrender to any misfortune but should learn from them to become stronger. Bismarck, for instance, showed his strong-mindedness by never being submissive to any other powers and never becoming discouraged by any criticism. Okubo never surrendered to his opponents and it was only after his death that the Japanese started to realise his contribution to their country. Mussolini experienced much hardship and once even had been a beggar, but he used his misfortune to fuel his ambition for success.

The third quality was to be able to concentrate and focus. He suggested that people should only concentrate on one idea at a time in order to deliver the best work. Luang Vichitr suggested that people should train their mind and body to attain greater concentration abilities. People with good concentration would be more in control of their life. They would be able to fall asleep to rest at any time, but would also be able to concentrate immediately on their work if woken in the middle of their sleep. He gave an example of an unnamed field-marshal who was able to defend Paris against German invaders because of his great ability to concentrate. While the battle went on, he could still concentrate on his work amid the loud noise. Once he felt the need or the opportunity to rest, he could sleep in any place at any time.

The fourth quality was to have self-confidence. Luang Vichitr said that one could be self-reliant if one had developed self-confidence. People did not dare to do certain things because they were afraid of making mistakes. This was a result of lacking belief in themselves. As a positive example, Luang Vichitr cited Okubo who dared to adopt

⁶³ Vichitr Vadakarn, Mahaburut, *op cit.*, pp. 8-9.

Western ideas to modernise Japan, despite much opposition. Okubo was very confident that Japan needed to adopt these ideas in order to prosper. He therefore pushed his policy ahead even though he was later assassinated by his opponents because of this. After Okubo's death, Japan emerged as one of the great powers in the world. For Luang Vichitr, Japan could never have become a powerful country without Okubo's self-confidence.

The last quality to achieve greatness was to have will-power. Strong will-power involves two characteristics. Firstly, people must always demonstrate a strong will to achieve their aims. Secondly, they had to have such a strong will that they could suppress others' will-power. Caesar used his will-power to keep his armies under his control. Napoleon used his will-power to control the French people and make them agree to serve under his command even though he was not a Frenchman.

Luang Vichitr understood the five qualities he described in Mahaburut very well as he himself struggled through many hardships during his early life. Still he had set himself very high aims and through sheer determination, self-confidence and will power he was able to progress in his career and attain a position of very high influence.

Throughout his life and career, Luang Vichitr maintained that his ultimate goal was neither wealth nor power but work. Only work, he said, could give him real pleasure, further his self-esteem and strengthen his determination. He once wrote a poem entitled *Khvam Suk Kho'ng Chan* (My Happiness) which was published in the *Wannakhadisan* Magazine in 1942. In writing this poem, he searched for his own meaning of happiness:

My happiness is in work that nourishes my mind.

My happiness is to think about something profound.

I think of doing this and that all the time.

I am happy when I see progress in the work of mine.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ This translation is taken from Manas Chitakasem, "Nation Building and Thai Literary Discourse: The Legacy of Phibun and Luang Wichit," *Thai Literary Traditions*. Ed. Manas Chitakasem,

Luang Vichitr took a great pride in his ability to work hard and long hours. When he was a novice, he took up the task of copying the text from the temple's only available textbook which was used by every novice to prepare for the examination. While other novices were waiting for the printed copy, Thammarangsi went on to copy it himself. After five months of intensive work, he completed the hand-written version of the textbook.⁶⁵ Even Prince Wan Waithayako'n, himself an accomplished scholar and diplomat, often referred to Luang Vichitr as a "working man".⁶⁶ This quality added to his confidence and eventually became an important part of his principle of self-development. Seeing his personal working experience as a good lesson, Luang Vichitr took the idea and also introduced different work ethics from various people for those who wanted to develop their future.

Luang Vichitr summarised his self-development experience in the book *Withi Tham Ngan Lae Sang Anakhot* (How to Work and Build the Future). He pointed out that *Withi* referred to the process of achieving success through the adoption of certain principles. These principles were based on his own work experience supported by examples. In this way, Luang Vichitr hoped to put himself forward as a role model for personal development.

The book is roughly divided into two parts. Initially, it deals with Luang Vichitr's observation of different personalities during his early career as a subordinate. The second part of this book concentrates on his later years when he started to assume higher positions. Many characters mentioned in the book were people of high rank with whom he had worked or had been in contact with, such as Somdet Phra Wannarat, Prince Charoon, Jaokhun Maitri Wiratkit and Monsieur Charles Lewak. As the title of the book suggests, Luang Vichitr concentrated on their work ethics, rather than on other aspects of their personalities. Somdet Phra Wannarat was noticeable for

Chulalongkorn University Press, 1995, p. 37. The original version of this poem was printed in *Vichitr Vadamarn Anuso'n*, vol. 2, 1962, pp. 169-173.

⁶⁵ Sathian: 1962, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Vichitr Vadamarn, *Withi Thamngan Lae Sang Anakhot*, *op cit.*, p. 43.

his punctuality, Prince Charoon showed great discipline and rigour in his work, Jaokhun Maitri adopted a technique of imitation in his excellent command of written Thai and English and Monsieur Charles Lewak was very methodical in his work. These were the qualities of the able and successful people he observed when he was a subordinate. Luang Vichitr clearly followed their example as he later developed these qualities and rose to high-ranking post himself.

In order to attain success, Luang Vichitr suggested the adoption of two principles: first, to learn from other people's experiences and second, to be ambitious in work.⁶⁷ It was during his years as a clerk that he was first introduced to the idea of positive thinking. He came to believe that people should only criticise positively and above all else seek to emulate the best qualities of their superiors.

He held the belief that a person could develop through observation of other people's work ethics. He said that problems could be solved by referring to solutions of similar problems. Moreover, he advised that spare time should be used to study the work of previous officials in order to see how they administered their work and to learn about their methods of management. He believed this would give experience and increase efficiency at work. As Luang Vichitr wrote:

“To observe the good sides of people is equal to collecting more and more precious treasure. The fact is that when we hail the good merit of people or when we adore somebody, we unconsciously absorb the good things of those people into ourselves. Children, who honour the courage of warriors and ancestors, may have inherited some degree of their courage. Sometimes we unconsciously change our own behaviour or ways of saying things to become like those whom we like. This is the purpose of inheritance from seeing the good sides of people.”⁶⁸

Again he stressed the importance of being ambitious. He believed everyone must have an ambition because this brought progress in life. Such ambition should not be used for

⁶⁷ To Luang Vichitr, people who can be defined as *Khon Keng* (able people) must possess three qualities: (1) they complete their work correctly and neatly, (2) they solve their problems immediately and always tackle difficult tasks first; and (3) they demonstrate great patience and endurance which enables them to get more work done than normal people. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

self-indulgent purposes but should serve as a stimulus in work. He stressed that a person should demonstrate ambition only to work and not to gain a fortune. For example, a clerk should be equally as ambitious as his head of section. He should be ambitious to tackle jobs that are more difficult and not just work hard on simple tasks. According to Luang Vichitr, there existed a relationship between ambition and emulating good traits in people:

“To be ambitious and to observe the positive behaviour of people are related subjects. To admire those who have more seniority than us without jealousy will inspire in us a feeling of desire to progress ourselves. [...] An ambition which derives from watching other people’s behaviour will give us an inspiring result.”⁶⁹

1.3 Luang Vichitr and the Period of Duang Prathip

In the period between his return to Siam and his resignation from Government, Luang Vichitr established a career as a writer in parallel to his career in the government. Together with a group of close associates, he set up a publishing company called the *Wiriyamuphap* (Power of Perseverance). It aimed to produce and promote his literary works.⁷⁰ Luang Vichitr derived a number of advantages from *Wiriyamuphap* - in particular the freedom that total editorial control gave.

Luang Vichitr’s involvement in journalism, particularly his writings in *Duang Prathip* (The Torch), was tantamount to “playing” politics. *Duang Prathip* was launched in 1931, three years after the establishment of *Wiriyamuphap*. Luang Vichitr had by this time gained some public recognition, based on his twenty-one published works. The launch of the journal was intended to coincide with the completion of his twelve volumes of the *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History).⁷¹ *Duang Prathip* was modelled on the French journal *La Rouge* and it was intended as an academic reference to be

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁷⁰ All associates were close friends of Luang Vichitr who had similar views and followed his style of writing.

⁷¹ Vichitr Vadamarn, “Suntho'raphot” (Speech, 1931), *Vichitr San*, vol. 2, 1965, pp. 291-298. In 1930, the first four volumes of his Universal History were selected to represent Siamese good books of 1930 sent to the Academie Française in Paris.

published on a regular basis.⁷² Amongst its principal contributors were Luang Vichitr himself and friends who shared similar ideas, such as Sathian Phantharangsi, Prapha Raphiphat (who was then his student and later became his second wife) and Phit Raphiphat, his brother-in-law.⁷³

In the interim period between the 1932 coup and his appointment as Director-General of the Fine Arts Department in late 1934, Luang Vichitr wrote extensively. The *Duang Prathip* journal was the main publication in which he used to publicise his political views. His early writings in *Duang Prathip* covered a wide range of subjects such as religion, medical advice, philosophy, cultural and social issues and, of course, politics.

1.3.1 The Speeches

In addition to writing books and contributing articles to *Duang Prathip*, Luang Vichitr also gave many public speeches, many of which were broadcast on radio and gained him wide respect. One of his speeches was entitled *Arayatham* (Civilisation).⁷⁴ In this speech, he discussed the meaning of civilisation and being civilised in terms of the individual. For him, a country which comprised a great civilisation was a country made up of good citizens. He went on to outline the qualities of a good citizen: sound knowledge, good morals, good behaviour, and a willingness to act for the benefit of others. In his opinion, Siam could almost be defined as a civilised country since the Siamese possessed nearly all the necessary qualifications. Despite the general lack of educated people, in his view, Siam still deserved to be called a civilised nation. His reason was that Siam had been able to liberate itself and maintain its own independence through the actions of its great leaders, whereas most of its neighbours had been

⁷² The *Duang Prathip* had the objective to focus more on information than on entertainment. All articles had to give informative messages regardless of their type. Its columns were general information, travel, history, home and foreign news, and correspondence. Sathian: 1962, p. 47.

⁷³ Sathian Phantharangsi was a close friend of Luang Vichitr and later was to become his biographer.

⁷⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Arayatham" (Civilisation, 1930), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 325-329.

colonised by European powers. Thus, in this way, Siam could be grouped together with other civilised nations.⁷⁵

Later, in 1931, he made another speech on the subject of *Khvam Kiat Khran* (Laziness) in which he tried to change undesirable aspects of the human character (his concept of *Manut Patiwat*, or the human revolution).⁷⁶ In this speech, he stressed the danger of laziness and the potential negative effect it had on national development. He suggested the creation of proper ethical guidelines to assist in the development of the state. Laziness was a malaise, he concluded, which not only destroyed an individual but was also counter-productive to an advancing nation.

He further addressed the question of individual qualities in his speech entitled *Laksana Kho'ng Khon* (Characteristics of People).⁷⁷ This speech consisted of five parts which were delivered in the period from September 1931 to May 1932. In the speech, Luang Vichitr defined popular identity as the necessity to be engaged in work. For him, the work environment placed an individual under rules and regulations which could help build that person's character. This process of character building resulted in an improvement in personal strength, endurance, and self-reliance. From his perspective, work was a necessity for an individual and was also a means to bring about national prosperity. Luang Vichitr further stressed that "a country without people who engage in work is a country that is uncivilised".⁷⁸ He also touched upon the notion of love and duty. As an example of a dutiful person he cited King Naresuan who performed his duty of liberating the country from the Burmese. He cited similar acts carried out by King Krungthon and King Rama I, who both took their duties seriously, ensuring that the Thai nation enjoyed independence and stability. For Luang Vichitr, only people who did their duty were able to develop a strong sense of identity.

⁷⁵ On the contrary, Luang Vichitr believed that Siam was comparable only to Japan and believed that Siam should become as great as Japan.

⁷⁶ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Khvam Kiatkhran" (Laziness, 1931), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 346-353.

⁷⁷ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Laksana Kho'ng Khon" (Characteristics of People, 1931-32), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 359-387.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

His speeches and articles were closely related to the same themes that Luang Vichitr wished to promote: the importance of a nationalist ideology and human revolution. While probably unpopular with some members of the government his speeches during this period earned him respect and credibility. His writings and public speeches changed dramatically with the end of the absolute monarchy in June 1932. After the coup, Luang Vichitr promoted his own political views more actively.

He was particularly vocal on how the new government should act and on what form the new constitution should take. This demonstrated his intense desire to be politically involved. Volume 33 of *Duang Prathip*, for example, included an article by Luang Vichitr which was aimed at advising the *Khana Ratsado'n* (People's Party) on how to design the country's parliamentary system. This article was immediately followed by another article which included examples of laws and constitutions from Japan and France for the consideration of Siam's new government. Moreover, Luang Vichitr was the first to publish a book on politics immediately after the coup. This book, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam* (Politics and Administration of Siam) was published at the end of July 1932. The book was hugely successful and sold several thousand copies within a few months. Luang Vichitr admitted he could not wait for the announcement of policies of the new government. He wrote that he wished this book to be a reference for current and future ministers as well as a textbook on Siam's politics.⁷⁹

The book is the first evidence of Luang Vichitr's intention to become the architect of the policies of the new regime. In the preface of the book Luang Vichitr admitted that he may have been too outspoken and critical in his book:

“It may be a daring act that I've addressed my views to the public. Some friends are so concerned about my comments that they feel my well-being might be threatened. Some take this opportunity to condemn me, even trying to persuade the People's Party to get rid of me. Rumour of this has already been printed in some newspapers. However, I myself do not heed such warning. Instead, I have asked some of my

⁷⁹ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam* (Politics and Administration of Siam), Bangkok, 1932, p. 1.

friends who are members of the People's Party that if they believed I betrayed them, they have the right to shoot me. I believe that at this critical point, it is necessary to make sure there are not any opponents in Siam. Unless they think I'm a traitor, I wish to continue my duties. I only want to see peace and prosperity in this country and wish to see the People's Party become stronger so that it can bring about improvement to our country."⁸⁰

Overall, the book was, however, relatively neutral in its approach. He wrote that he was not opposed to the old government nor the People's Party since his superiors were members of the old regime and he was also on friendly terms with the principle members of the People's Party.⁸¹ He claimed that he received letters from friends who had written that they saw him as a loyal and honest person. Some of his friends took his advice seriously and used it to implement their policies, telling him that they had always listened to his advice and comment.

Whether it is true or not, these claims added to Luang Vichitr's confidence and filled him with hope that members of the People's Party would not misinterpret his intention in writing this book and indeed still nominate him for the National Assembly.⁸² He had, after all, frequently expressed his concern about the direction the country should take to members of the People's Party and was close to several key figures including Pridi Phanomyong since 1920, when Luang Vichitr served as a diplomat in Paris.

However, Luang Vichitr's hope to be nominated for the first National Assembly was not fulfilled. Worse still, the new regime led by Phraya Manopako'n Nitithada (Phraya Mano, premiership 28 June 1932 - 20 June 1933) ordered the temporary closure of the newspaper in which he was closely involved.⁸³ When he found out that his name had

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁸³ The newspaper mentioned here is the *Thai Mai*. The proprietor of the *Thai Mai* was Lek Komet who had effected the transfer of *Duang Prathip* from Luang Vichitr before June 1932. After the merger, Luang Vichitr became a regular contributor to *Thai Mai*. See Sathian: 1962, pp. 46-50. Sathian reports that Luang Vichitr's resigned from the diplomatic duty before June 1932. He commented that Luang Vichitr mixed his government duty with his personal affairs in voicing his political views, so that eventually Luang Vichitr found it hard to separate his role in these two responsibilities. However, Sathian's assumption contradicts others who did their research in this period. Their work confirmed that Luang Vichitr did not resign from the government until

not been included on the revolutionary list and that he had not been nominated in the Assembly, he protested by resigning from the government.

There is no clear evidence as to why he was excluded from the new regime. Several explanations are possible. While he was close to Pridi, their relationship was more a personal one and ideologically the two had many differences. Luang Vichitr was also perceived as a loyal and obedient government official, hardly the material from which revolutionaries were made. Most significantly, however, was that he was closely associated with several royalists. According to Murashima, it was because of a radio talk on *Phra Mahakasat Kho'ng Rao* (Our Kings), in which Luang Vichitr had praised the King, as well as his close association with several royalists that made the People's Party exclude him from membership.⁸⁴ In this talk, Luang Vichitr addressed the significance of celebrating King Prachathipok's birthday. He stated that it was the day not only for entertainment but also for showing gratitude to the King's great deeds in bringing about happiness and prosperity to his subjects. Luang Vichitr also compared Siamese past kings to the *Thong Chai* (Victorious flag) of Siam which:

"The King of Siam is a truly victorious flag of Siam. It is the flag which will lead us to prosperity. It is the flag which gave us dignity when we were in the battlefield. If we won the battle, we had the flag lead us to the victory. If we lost, this flag was brought down to paint the blood with us and never abandon us. We have the King who we can rest our trust on and will be sure he can be in the situation of life and death with us."⁸⁵

It is likely that because of the sympathetic views towards the monarchy expressed in this talk that the People's Party excluded Luang Vichitr. It was very important for the People's Party to create stability and its own power base by eliminating the influence of royalists. Fears of a counter-coup by the royalists were high and justified when the

October 1932. See Judith A Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 35 and Eiji Murashima, "Democracy and the Development of Political Parties in Thailand 1932-1945," *The Making of Modern Thai Political Parties*, 1991, p. 14.

⁸⁴ "Phra Mahakasat Kho'ng Rao" (Our Kings) first appeared in a radio broadcast on 9 November, 1931 and later in the *Duang Prathip* on 11 November 1931. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Phra Mahakasat Kho'ng Rao" (Our Kings), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 388-390.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

Boworadet Rebellion broke out. Conflicts over policies with the palace led to the King going into foreign exile. Luang Vichitr's sympathetic views at the time were therefore not appreciated by the group that needed to promote the constitutional regime.

1.3.2 Bushido, Ambition and Nationalism: The Keys to his Ideological Success

After his resignation from the Government in 1932, his writings became even more politically pronounced. While now clearly supportive of the new regime he became more and more critical of some of the government's policies, particularly Pridi's economic policies. He also attempted to set up his own political party, the *Khana Chat* (Nationalist Party). This new party aimed to introduce a nationalist ideology into Siam. In the preface of the book *Khana Kanmu'ang* (Political Parties), which included a list of political parties in each country of the world, he defended his intention to set up his own political party. He commented that it was common within a democratic country for any citizen to form their own political party. To justify his belief that Thailand should have more parties, Luang Vichitr discussed the political systems of other countries which had more than one party.

In 1933, he wrote three significant articles published in *Duang Prathip* which revealed his personal views. They also revealed the importance of nationalism to Luang Vichitr and marked the beginning of his approach to include or combine nationalist ideas with almost any subject. *Bushido*, *Ambition* and *Latthi Chuchat* (Lit. the ideology of uplifting the nation or Nationalism) were probably the three most important articles that he contributed to *Duang Prathip* and would become the key to his ideological success.⁸⁶ The three articles are closely related and essentially summarise his thinking.

1.3.2.1 Bushido

Bushido, written in April 1933, was an article about the importance of "Bushido" (The Warrior's Code of Conduct) to the development of Japan as a civilised nation. In the article Luang Vichitr drew the reader's attention to two sources of information; the

⁸⁶ "Bushido" and "Ambition" are both Thai texts. The reason they were titled in English was that Luang Vichitr could not find suitable Thai equivalents for them; although he found close Thai words, they belied the meaning.



works of French historian René Grousset and *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, by Inazo Nitobe.⁸⁷

Drawing on Grousset's view of Japan's development, Luang Vichitr attributed Japan's success in modernising itself to particular characteristics the Japanese possessed. The characteristics he referred to included bravery, a taste for adventure and pride in themselves and claimed they were shared with people in the Western civilised nations. He suggested that these shared characteristics had their roots in codes of chivalry, which Samurai and knights followed. Luang Vichitr also claimed that the Japanese possessed these characteristics before coming into contact with the West as Bushido had long been practised as a system of national indoctrination.⁸⁸

In feudal Japan Bushido was extensively practised by the Samurai. Its code was based on the virtues of rectitude, endurance, frugality, courage, politeness, veracity, and loyalty to both ruler and country.⁸⁹ For Luang Vichitr, this code of conduct held great fascination. He identified some of the characteristics it supported (bravery, a strong-will and a sense of adventure) as being absent from the Siamese character. He consequently believed that the introduction of Bushido ideology would greatly benefit Siamese society.

His other source was Inazo Nitobe's book on the subject.⁹⁰ He had, some eight or nine years earlier, met the author in Switzerland. In 1937, at a reception held to mark the Siam-Japan cultural agreement, he expressed his admiration for Nitobe's works, stating:

⁸⁷ Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933) was a Professor at both Kyoto and Tokyo University. He published: The Soul of Japan in 1899. Later, it was translated into many languages. Between 1919-1926, Nitobe was a Vice-Commissioner at the League of Nations. Shigeyoshi Matsumae, Toward an Understanding of Budo Thought, 1987.

⁸⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bushido," Duang Prathip, 30 April 1933, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia. Infopedia, Future Vision Multimedia, 1994.

⁹⁰ Nitobe's book is selected under the following headlines: 1) As an Ethical System, 2) Rectitude or Justice, 3) Courage, the spirit of Daring and Bearing, 4) Benevolence, the feeling of Distress, 5) Politeness, 6) Veracity and Sincerity, 7) Honour, 8) The Duty of Loyalty, 9) Self-Control, 10) The Institutions of Suicide and Redress. Catherina Blomberg, Samurai Religion I: Some aspects of warrior manners and customs in Feudal Japan, 1976, pp. 58-59.

“I have personally admired and held Japan and the Japanese people in high esteem since my youth. During the six years that I stayed in Europe I made many Japanese friends. When I was in Switzerland I had the occasion to meet Dr. Inazo Nitobe, author of the famous Bushido. For more than three years I had an intimate friendship with this eminent scholar who taught me to understand Japanese culture and civilisation. It justified my admiration of Japan.”⁹¹

The aspect of Bushido that interested Luang Vichitr most was its strict way of teaching. His article gave the example of Bushido training for the young. He suggested that children should be led to a place of darkness or a cemetery in order to confront their fear.⁹² This aimed to develop a child’s courage, as well as to instil in them a sense of heroism. Stories of heroic acts were recommended as reading material for children as was the practise of the martial arts as a sport. However, the most important principle of Bushido was for a person to demonstrate loyalty to a superior, even to the point of taking their own life. Should a situation require it, a person should be willing to commit *hara-kiri* as a demonstration of loyalty.⁹³

The earliest influence of Bushido is apparent in the lyrics of the official version of the National Anthem. The song, which won the government’s competition in 1939 and was written by Colonel Luang Saranupraphan, called for Thai people to give up their lives in protection of the country’s independence. The translation of the Thai National Anthem by the National Identity Board is as follows:

Thailand is the unity of Thai blood and body.
The whole country belongs to the Thai people, maintaining thus far for the Thai.
All Thais intend to unite together.
Thai love peace, but do not fear to fight.
They will never let anyone threaten their independence.
They will sacrifice every drop of their blood to contribute to the nation, will serve
their country with pride and prestige-full of victory (*Chai Yo*).⁹⁴

⁹¹ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Speech by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn at the Dinner of the Reception”, *Siam Chronicle*, 4 April 1937, p. 8.

⁹² According to Blomberg’s work, Nitobe’s was considered as violent. One example which demonstrated the point was Nitobe’s mention of a father sacrificing his own son in order to save the son of his lord. Blomberg: 1976, p. 59.

⁹³ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Bushido”, *op cit.*, p. 3.

⁹⁴ The National Identity Board, *Thailand in the 90s*, revised edition, 1995, p. 7.

Luang Vichitr's admiration of Bushido was reflected in his view of Japan as a model nation. For him, the use of Bushido as a means to mould a strong nation was equally possible in Thailand as it had been in Japan.

“Japan is the most civilised country in Asia because of Bushido, which I have mastered. I am fortunate to have known Professor Nitobe, the author of the *Bushido* since he was in Switzerland. I have dreamt for over ten years of introducing the ideology to Thailand to fit it into the Thai context.”⁹⁵

During Phibun's nation-building period (1938-1944), Luang Vichitr took an active role in the process of instilling nationalist values in the populace. Luang Vichitr's articles on the importance of Bushido inspired Phibun to announce along with other nationalist programmes the 14 codes of the warrior under the name *Wiratham Kho'ng Chat Thai* (The Codes of the Warrior of the Thai Nation) in May 1944.⁹⁶ This announcement was used as an instrument to maintain order at war time as well as to inspire the creation of a more civilised society.⁹⁷ The announcement aimed at creating collective characteristics for the Thai people to observe. For instance, the people were told to love the nation more than their own lives, to follow their leader and to behave well to

⁹⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Latthi Chuchat” (Nationalism), Duang Prathip, 25 June 1933, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Nitobe's *Bushido* included, for example, Bushido as an ethical system, sources of Bushido, politeness, honour, the education and training of a samurai and the influence of Bushido. See Inazo Nitobe, “Bushido: The Soul of Japan,” Toward an Understanding of Budo Thought. Ed. Shigeyoshi Matsumae, 1987, pp. 36-85.

⁹⁷ While the original of Nitobe's *Bushido* was written in a very long descriptive form under different divisions of chapters, the *Wiratham* only provided fourteen lists with very brief sentences. The reason that the exclusive Bushido doctrine was shortened in the Thai version may lie in that the Thai version could achieve a quicker impact when it was transformed into a more militaristic style of command. Moreover, Thai people were used to this format since the Buddhist teaching they learned usually came in lists. Thai people are also taught by memorising from short notes. By providing *Wiratham* in the form of short lists, Phibun's government had adopted a familiar approach which reached to the heart of the psychology of the Thai people. The 14 *Wiratham* were: 1) Thais love their nation more than their lives, 2) Thais are great warriors, 3) Thais are hard-working in agriculture and industry, 4) Thais enjoy a good living, 5) Thais are properly dressed, 6) Thais speak according to what their hearts say, 7) Thais are peace-lovers, 8) Thais worship Buddha more than their lives, 9) Thais honour their children, women, and the aged, 10) Thais follow their leader, 11) Thais grow their own food, 12) Thais are best to their friends and worst to their enemies, 13) Thais are honest and grateful and 14) Thais leave behind property for their children. Suphap-Burut (The Gentleman), 17 May 1944, quoted in Thamsook Numnonda, Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941-45, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1977, p. 37.

friends but be tough with enemies. In an official statement, the government reasoned that it announced the *Wiratham* because it would ensure that people behaved with greater unity.⁹⁸ However, in September 1944 a few months after the *Wiratham* came into effect, Phibun was ousted after which a civilian government took office and the *Wiratham* along with all the other nationalist programmes were abolished.⁹⁹

1.3.2.2 Ambition

In May 1933, another article, "Ambition", was printed. Luang Vichitr explained that he opted to use this English term because it carried a more positive meaning than its Thai equivalent *Khwam Mak Yai Fai Sung*. For him, individual ambition was an integral part of the advancement of the world. He drew on world figures to exemplify his own concept of the "great men". These figures were intended as models of ambition, those who had striven to create a great reputation and power for their country. He pointed to Napoleon's ambition to rule over Europe, Richelieu's intent to make France Europe's leader and Bismarck's ambition to make the Prussians the dominant race in a German Empire. Luang Vichitr claimed that the acts of these men were justified. Because they had acted in the best interest of their countries, they were in effect above criticism.

Luang Vichitr suggested that there were two types of ambition: personal ambition, which was a means of acquiring self-prestige, and political ambition, which sought the means to uphold the country's integrity. In his view, the former type of ambition should not be denounced, as raising the level of an individual's status could serve the best interests of the country. He said a man with good political ideals could only help advance the country if he had enough power thus, in order to materialise one's plan, it was sensible to develop personal strength first. If the ultimate aim of personal ambition was to benefit the country and the individual, it should not be criticised. According to Luang Vichitr the actions of Mussolini and Hitler were demonstrations of the "honest" intention of their personal ambition.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ So'. Ro'. 0201.55/46, pp. 11, 15.

⁹⁹ So'. Ro'. 0201.55/46.

¹⁰⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Ambition," Duang Prathip, 1933, p. 3.

Luang Vichitr particularly favoured political ambition. For him those who had it showed a “genuine” sense of ambition since it was a demonstration of their love for their country. Any negative consequences that resulted from the expression of this ambition on neighbouring countries were justified since it was done for the good of one’s own country.¹⁰¹ Such ambition was appropriate as it was intended to benefit the nation as a whole.¹⁰²

1.3.2.3 Latthi Chuchat (Nationalism)

At the beginning of that year, Luang Vichitr submitted an application to register his political party called the *Khana Chat* (Nationalist Party). The party was comprised of former high-ranking officials and some members of royalty, most of whom either had been left powerless by the revolution or were retired.¹⁰³ Luang Vichitr took the role of Secretary-General. The stated aim of the Nationalist Party was to promote the idea of democracy as well as nationalism. Its seven principles were:

1. National independence and the welfare of the people.
2. The promotion of political education.
3. Co-operation among party members on political matters.
4. The support of a basic policy that adhered strictly to the principles of democracy and to the system of a constitutional monarchy. A policy [sic] that maintained military power commensurate with the nation’s strength in order to maintain independence, and that upheld the advancement of the nation’s religion, education and its glorious traditions.
5. The preservation and promotion of domestically produced goods.
6. Priority given to the interests of the people over the interests of the government [sic].
7. Support of the nation’s agriculture and industry.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ This appeared to be of some concern to Luang Vichitr who may have feared that his nationalist policies would not gain enough followers for fear of offending neighbouring countries.

¹⁰² Vichitr Vadamarn, “Ambition”, *op cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Murashima: 1991, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Thai Mai, 10 January 1933, quoted in Murashima: 1991, p. 15.

The idea of establishing the Nationalist Party was widely criticised, particularly by the new government, who saw it as a rival to the People's Party. Luang Vichitr feared that if the Nationalist Party was not officially recognised, the opportunity to promote nationalism could be wasted. In mid 1933, when it became clear that the application to set up the Nationalist Party would be rejected, a frustrated Luang Vichitr wrote the article *Latthi Chuchat* (literally, the ideology of uplifting the nation or Nationalism). It made apparent his dedication to nationalism and his wish to promote it. Luang Vichitr was not the first to promote nationalism. King Vajiravudh embraced this political doctrine and promoted it using various measurements such as the para-military organisations, plays and numerous writings. However, King Vajiravudh failed to attract a wider audience.

Luang Vichitr was more successful because he completely devoted his life to nationalism and adopted a more systematic approach in its promotion. Although his attempt to set up a political party failed, he remained undeterred and promoted his nationalist doctrine through other channels. He wrote books, articles and plays and was directly involved in various cultural projects. His ideas were transmitted not only in book form but also through radio, speeches, lectures, film and stage performances. He was a man who possessed great communication skills and his ability to write and give speeches was particularly outstanding. His radio speeches also reached a very wide audience.¹⁰⁵

Because of his systematic approach and abilities, which eventually enabled him to gain the support of the government, Luang Vichitr's nationalist campaign was much more effective than that of Vajiravudh. Initially, however, even Luang Vichitr met some obstacles. Undeterred, in response to the government's opposition to his idea about the Nationalist Party, Luang Vichitr declared:

¹⁰⁵ Between 1929 to 1932, Luang Vichitr frequently gave speeches in various public places and via radio broadcasts. Most of his speeches dealt with non-political subjects such as women, love, dreams, laziness, *etc.* However, he indirectly managed to promote nationalist values, in particular by stressing that the individual should work for the benefit of the nation.

“If the government does not allow me to form the Nationalist Party I will promote nationalism under my own name. I will do anything that I believe will benefit the nation. People can stop me doing some things but they can’t stop me from loving the nation and from doing things for my country.”¹⁰⁶

Luang Vichitr chose to promote the nationalist doctrine because he believed that it could bring the country greatness, as it had in Japan and Italy. For him, nationalism was the most suitable ideology for Siam following the abolition of the absolute monarchy. The Siamese people should recognise the importance of the nation and do everything for its advantage.

The problem which retarded the development of the country was a lack of firm principles and a practical approach to the spread of political ideology. Luang Vichitr said that all Thais loved their country, but none knew what to do to assist in its development. For him, it was vital that the people understood the importance of nationalism in order to help their motherland. He believed that love of the nation was meaningless if it lacked a goal. People should have a goal and follow the right moral code to achieve these goals. He therefore suggested four principles for nationalists to adhere to:

1. people must regard the nation as most important;
2. people must wholeheartedly believe in Buddhism as it is the national religion;
3. people must respect the constitution and the monarchy; and
4. people must not be communists.¹⁰⁷

Luang Vichitr persistently criticised the flexibility and adaptability of the Thai character. Being flexible was of course not necessarily a bad characteristic but it could lead to compromising the character of the nation. Luang Vichitr believed that Thai people should maintain their nation’s character (the concept of *Laksana Chuchat*) and resist assimilation by others. He felt that Thais always welcomed foreign cultures. The

¹⁰⁶ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Latthi Chuchat”, *op cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Burmese, however having lost battles in the past and been brought to Thailand as captives, nevertheless resisted assimilation into Thai culture. In contrast, Ayuthaya had adopted too many elements of Cambodian culture which led to an identity crisis and eventually to its demise. From Luang Vichitr's perspective, the Thai people needed a means to preserve and strengthen their national character.

Luang Vichitr's guideline to forming real nationalists was based on two principles: the first was to make people realise the value of their national heritage, and second, to change their characters for the benefit of the nation. For people to appreciate their national heritage they needed to have knowledge of their nation's history and its arts. Thorough research of these and related subjects had to be encouraged. The lack of definite objectives in teaching or neglecting to stress "Thai-ness" undermined the nation. History texts he had seen provided a scant account of Thai history, largely focusing on the history of the Chinese. In the field of archaeology, the cultures of the Khmer, Indian, and Srivichai were paid more attention than that of Siam. Similarly, the indigenous arts were either ignored or looked down on, whilst the arts of foreign cultures were readily accepted. For Luang Vichitr, appreciation of other cultures without recognition of the "genuine" value of Thai culture was tantamount to destroying the Thai nation.

To correct the false attitudes created by improper education, Luang Vichitr suggested a number of changes:

1. emphasis should be placed on teaching patriotic stories;
2. history texts should be rewritten to take into account different learning abilities;
3. in the field of archaeology, there should be an attempt to uncover objects that could verify the country's civilisation; and
4. genuine Thai arts, customs and tradition should also be emphasised and the Thai language preserved and protected from the use of too many foreign words.

Luang Vichitr felt that the support of national products was beneficial to the national economy. It was necessary for the Thai people to buy products made by Thais as this would help national industry to survive and prosper. Without nation-wide support, national industry would die. Luang Vichitr stated that:

“If we do not hurry to educate people about nationalism, the Thai economy will decline and the development of the country will be stopped. I, therefore, dare to say that if my idea of nationalism is not adopted, the future of the Thai economy will be doomed.”¹⁰⁸

Luang Vichitr suggested people needed to become patriotic, honest, industrious, courageous, merciful, polite, dignified, dutiful and calm. All these characteristics, with the exception of industriousness, had been borrowed from Bushido. It was, according to him the responsibility of all people to help one another acquire his prescribed characteristics.

Luang Vichitr wrote that he might set up the “Society of Nationalism” to promote nationalism. This society would have five objectives:

1. research in national history, archaeology, language and arts;
2. preservation of national custom;
3. support of Thai produce;
4. teach people to have the eight desired characteristics; and
5. guide all members to recognise the importance of the nation and to do things for the nation’s benefit.¹⁰⁹

Members of this society would benefit from organised events such as talks, debates, museum visits and parties. The aim of the society’s activities would be to instil nationalist sentiment. Its members would have to consider Siam as the most important country but at the same time not act against foreigners. In the event that permission to

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

establish this society was not granted, its supporters would be advised to take all its five principles to heart.

In its third year of publication, ownership of *Duang Prathip* was transferred from the Wiriyaphap Company to the publishing company Thai Mai. In spite of this change of ownership, Luang Vichitr continued to contribute to *Duang Prathip* regularly. Shortly after the move, the two companies merged and the *Duang Prathip* journal was closed down by the government.¹¹⁰ Luang Vichitr continued his journalistic career in the merged company but began to become more directly involved in politics until he was finally made responsible for the Fine Arts Department and its School of Dance and Drama in 1934.

1.4 Conclusions

This chapter provided an overview of Luang Vichitr's early career and his written works (1889-1934). Despite coming from a modest background, Luang Vichitr's ambitiousness and willingness to work hard enabled him to progress in his career and make his mark in Thai politics and society. Many of his ideas would later reappear in his works and plays as well as in the cultural policies announced by the Phibun government in the 1940s. Luang Vichitr was directly involved in the drafting and support of many of these policies and his combined work and effort left a lasting legacy which continues to have a significant impact on modern Thailand.

Some of the ideas and themes that Luang Vichitr developed during this period were a sense of purpose, strong-mindedness and will-power, concentration and focus, a sense of duty, self-confidence, industriousness and a willingness to work hard. He stressed that it was necessary for Thai people to embark on a path of self-improvement by developing these characteristics. He himself, great men and his superiors, which he quoted in his works, proved that it was possible and important. The emphasis of the need for self-development continued after 1934 and became an important part of his plays and other works as well as the nationalist policies announced by the Phibun

¹¹⁰ Stowe: 1991, p. 35.

government. Many of the *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates) and cultural decrees were aimed at advancing the nation by improving the characteristics and habits of the population.

The use of historical role models was a technique that he continued to use in later periods, particularly in his plays for which he frequently used well-known Thai heroes and heroines. Luang Vichitr said that one should learn from one's superiors and other important people but that one should only look at their positive characteristics and ignore the negative ones. This black and white approach pervaded his plays and other works in which two-dimensional heroes and heroines were usually depicted as either completely good or bad.

During this early period of his life he also already demonstrated his great abilities in writing and speaking. His output was not only very eloquent but he was also able to integrate and use vast amounts of information from a variety of fields for his own purposes. His thirst for knowledge helped him to gain status and provided the basis for many of his books, articles, speeches and plays. Because of the quality of his output and his great knowledge, many people believed that what he said or presented was always true and factual.

He also developed his nationalist ideology during this period. His nationalist ideology particularly stressed that people should regard the nation as the most important thing in their life and that they should be prepared to sacrifice anything for the benefit of the nation. Fulfilment of duty and devoted patriotism were to come above any personal desires including love for a lover or one's wife. Communism was bad and people were told to be good Buddhists, defend the constitution and respect the monarch. This nationalist ideology also stressed the importance of the desirable human characteristics and these two strands of his thinking became almost inseparable. To be a good nationalist one should aim to be of use to one's nation, therefore one should aim for self-development, be prepared to work hard, and follow their leader.

This period also provided evidence for his ambitiousness, determination and systematic approach to almost everything that he did. His ambitiousness and high aims may have been behind the end of his marriage with his French wife, but they also earned him respect, status and influence despite his modest background. While he was very systematic, he was not a man to miss an opportunity and on several occasions he was able to swiftly adapt to new situations or change course to avoid obstacles or delays to his aims. When he started his career as a government official, he did everything possible to learn, become popular and advance himself. When his ambitions to get directly involved in politics was blocked by some of his opponents, he used journalism to remain involved in politics. His articles in *Duang Prathip* were particularly effective and his ideas became public knowledge.

This systematic approach in everything he did continued later into his promotion of nationalism. He would use every available tool from textbooks, speeches on radio, academic journals, government policy and of course plays to promote nationalism. Everything he did, every article he wrote, every speech he gave directly or indirectly revolved around the themes of self-development, duty and nationalism. By 1934 his abilities had become widely recognised and his nationalist ideology became useful to those who needed it to hold the nation together.

Chapter Two

The Use of the Arts in Politics and Nation-Building

Performing arts have played an important part in the social life of Thailand for many centuries. The various types of performing arts (*e.g.*, folk dance, dance-drama, plays, *etc.*) have been established, changed or developed to different degrees according to political and social circumstances. Throughout the history of Thai drama, those who patronised, sponsored and financed the dramatic troupes also directly controlled their activities. These patrons of the arts were usually members of the aristocracy, nobility or members of the royal family, often the King himself. Since dramatic performances of the old days were exclusive to the court, often serving as entertainment for audiences during royal functions and ceremonies, their impact was limited to a small elite circle.

During the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851-1868), when Siam's contact with the West increased, many court traditions and customs including performing arts were revived in order to exhibit the richness of Siamese culture to Westerners. The performances were adapted to suit the tastes of the Western audience. It was feared that Westerners would regard traditional Siamese productions as inferior. Plays were therefore modernised in order to present Siamese culture with a contemporary outlook.

The modernisation process continued throughout the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910). By then, more of the Thai elite had visited European countries. They brought back new ideas from Western theatre and were keen to experiment with Western techniques. They introduced new repertoires, incorporated realistic costumes, improved set design and stage effects, and created new music and dancing styles. Three new types of theatre, namely *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, *Lakho'n Du'kdamban* and *Lakho'n Phanthang*, emerged from traditional dance-drama.

Although dramatic performances had previously been used to support the legitimacy and authority of the absolute monarchy, the concerted use of drama to transmit social and political messages did not begin until the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI,

1910-1925). King Vajiravudh, known for his passion of drama, recognised its potential as a medium to achieve his nationalistic objectives. He also used drama to support his own legitimacy and power base, both of which had come under threat. However, his approach had a limited impact and failed to further his cause.

The influence of the royal court on drama ended with the coup of 1932 and the change to a constitutional monarchy. The monarch was no longer the patron of the arts. This role was assumed by members of the new government, who had different objectives. Although the performing arts had always changed with the times and the people who controlled them, the most profound developments began in 1932.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to provide a background for the examination of the use of arts for propaganda and nationalism after 1932 in the subsequent chapters. The first section reviews the role and characteristics of traditional Thai drama. Section 2.2 concerns the coup in 1932 and the role of the Publicity Bureau. The Publicity Bureau, responsible for radio programmes and other campaigns, was one of the key propaganda tools of the government. After Phibun became Prime Minister in 1938, the activities and messages of the Publicity Bureau were often co-ordinated or related to the messages in Luang Vichitr's drama plays. Section 2.3 introduces Luang Vichitr's concept of a "Human Revolution". This concept is important as it became an integral part of his nationalism and propaganda messages in plays and other works. The last section is about the post-coup role of performing arts and introduces the Fine Arts Department and the School of Drama and Music. Both were under Luang Vichitr's direction and became important tools for conveying his propaganda.

2.1 Traditional Thai Drama

2.1.1 Dramatic Types

Broadly speaking, there are two main types of traditional Thai drama: the *Lakho'n Ram* (dance-drama) and the *Khon* (masked dance-drama). The *Khon* performances are usually characterised by vigorous and highly-formalised actions. Dancers wear ornate, colourful papermaché masks, decorated with gold, lacquer, and jewels to portray

different characters.¹¹¹ The *Khon*'s dancing movements largely involve the lower body rather than the use of arms and hand gestures. The *Lakho'n Ram*, in contrast, is more graceful, sensual and fluid, the upper torso and hands being particularly expressive with conventionalised movements portraying specific emotions. *Khon* performances are solely based on the story of *Ramakien*, the Thai version of an Indian epic *Ramayana*, whereas the *Lakho'n Ram* performances can use a wider range of sources including *Ramakien*, the *Jataka* tales (stories about previous lives of Buddha) and folk stories. While the *Khon* can be performed in five different styles, *Lakho'n ram* can be further sub-divided into three categories: *Lakho'n Nang Nai* (in short, *Lakho'n Nai*, meaning the dance-drama of the ladies of the inner court), *Lakho'n No'k* (dance-drama outside the court) and *Lakho'n Chatri* (the Central derivative form of the Southern folk dance-drama).

Lakho'n Chatri, or *Lakho'n Nora Chatri* as it also called, is probably the oldest form of Central dance-drama.¹¹² However, it has probably been strongly influenced by, or may have even originated from, the Southern dance-drama *Manora* (or *Lakho'n Nora*).¹¹³ *Manora* refers to the Southern dramatic form and is also the name given to a tale taken from the *Pannasa-Jataka*, which is popular in other parts of Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia.¹¹⁴ *Lakho'n Nora* reflects Southern aesthetic tastes and its characteristics include dancing with rapid hand and foot movements accompanied by Southern music, and the wearing of long, curved bronze fingernails and Southern *soet*

¹¹¹ It was the *Lakho'n Ram* on which most future drama developments were based, including Vajiravudh's and Luang Vichitr's nationalist plays.

¹¹² Montri Tramot, *Kanla-len Kho'ng Thai* (Thai Entertainment), Bangkok: Matichon Press, 1997, p. 3.

¹¹³ The origin of *Manora Chatri* is still controversial and unclear. Ginsberg, for example, argued that *Manora* had already been a very popular form of dance-drama in the South and that *Manora* troupes moved or were relocated to Bangkok. See Henry Ginsberg, "The Manohra Dance-Drama: An Introduction," *The Siamese Theatre*. Ed. Mattani Rutnin, Bangkok, 1975, p. 63. Damrong, however suggested that the technique of playing *Nora Chatri* dance-drama was developed in Ayuthaya and then was brought to the South. See Damrong Rajanuphap, *Tamnan Lakho'n Inao* (The Tales of Inao), Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1964, pp. 5-7. Most textbooks and references on Southeast Asian theatre seem, however, to agree that *Nora Chatri* developed more from Southern Thailand / Malay influences than from Central Thailand or Ayuthayan influence. Damrong's view is quite likely an attempt by a centralist historian to inflate the importance of Ayuthayan influence to create a centralist cultural domination.

¹¹⁴ Ginsburg: 1975, p. 63.

head-dresses. These Southern characteristics later inspired central artists to develop a derivative called *Lakho'n (Nora) Chatri*. *Lakho'n Chatri* incorporated popular central dramatic elements and replaced the *soet* head-dress of the South with the *Chada*, *Mongkut* and *Ratklao* (head-dresses for queen, king and heroine). Also dropped was the Southern tradition of bare-chestedness and the wearing of *Pha-Nung* outfits, using instead a *Yu'n Khru'ang* costume; a conventional tight-fitted dress with ornaments and jewels.¹¹⁵

Lakho'n No'k is an offshoot of *Lakho'n (Nora) Chatri*. However, while *Lakho'n No'k* incorporated more dramatic elements, such as a wider range of stories, costumes and presenting techniques, it contained very few Southern dramatic elements and those that remained have gradually disappeared or fully blended with Central elements over time. *Lakho'n No'k*'s main features are its comic and melodramatic scenes, and its extensive use of "dirty humour". The dancing is fast and uncomplicated. Sometimes, actors in *Lakho'n No'k* ridicule court customs and practices. This was very popular with the ordinary people, who preferred the fast-developing plot and uncomplicated dancing of this dramatic form to that of the court.

In contrast to *Lakho'n No'k*, *Lakho'n Nai* was performed by all-female casts. It used graceful, slow, elaborate movements to articulate a highly artistic dance language, which expressed feelings such as love, anger and fear. This appealed to royal audiences, which preferred productions that reflected their 'sophisticated' life at court. Three stories were exclusively reserved for *Lakho'n Nai* performances. These were *Inao*, *Unarut* and *Ramakien*. They depicted domestic affairs, love affairs and ceremonies of royalty and the aristocracy. Strict guidelines were set down to reserve the three stories and their characteristic elements for the exclusive use of *Lakho'n Nai* performances. These guidelines differentiated *Lakho'n Nai* from the non-court drama and created an artistic hierarchy, with royal performances at the top and performances for commoners at the bottom.

¹¹⁵ Mattani: 1993, p. 11.

2.1.2 The Role and Development of Drama

Changes in the socio-political character of successive periods were reflected in the development of the performing arts. The Sukhothai kingdom (early 12th century - 1438), for example, was based on a patriarch system and the social hierarchy was less manifested than in subsequent periods. The ruled and rulers were living in a relatively equal society. Sukhothai's forms of entertainment mostly comprised a variety of dances and songs, and a form of dramatic creation with story and plot was yet to emerge. During this period people had much freedom to entertain themselves and no royal court dance troupe existed.¹¹⁶ This changed, however, during the Ayuthaya period (1350-1767). Special types of performing arts were now created and unique customs and ceremonies were invented to differentiate dramatic activities at court from those of commoners.¹¹⁷ Ayuthaya adopted a very hierarchical social system and borrowed the Hindu concept of *Deva-raj*, which deified the King above his subjects as the overall governor. It also adopted a form of feudalism (the *Sakdina* system) which defined social status by land entitlement, control and mobilisation of manpower (the *phrai* class), all of which further separated courtiers and the nobility from the rest of the population.¹¹⁸

It was during the Ayuthaya period that the royal dance troupe, which exclusively performed the dance-drama and the *Khon*, emerged. The Ayuthaya royal court was

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42

¹¹⁸ According to Suehiro, *Sakdina* is literally a compound word combining the Sanskrit *Sakti* (power) and the Thai word *Na* (land or field) to denote what is usually translated into English as a "feudal system." However, *Sakdina* society was quite different from Western feudal society in both the pattern of land ownership and power structure. Under the Thai *Sakdina* society, the King is the single and inviolable owner of the whole land of the country (*Jao Phaendin*) and the supreme chief over all of life. All of the people were hierarchically ranked by *Sakdina*. *Sakdina* ranking was measured by acreage of paddy fields which were nominally granted by the King according to status. High ranking officials would be granted a large amount of land whereas common people or peasants were usually granted only small *Sakdina* ranks of 15-25 *Rai*, and were requested to provide labour service during every other month or specific products in exchange for the usage of the king's land. These farmers were usually called the *Phrai* class. Under the *Sakdina* system, what was important for the ruling class was not the ownership of land, as in the Western feudal society, but the control and mobilisation of manpower (the *Phrai* class) that came with the land allocated. This is because the relatively scarce economic resource was not cultivable land but manpower. See Suehiro Akira: Capital Accumulation in Thailand: 1855-1985. The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1989.

governed by the Law of the Palace which dictated the lives of royal families and courtiers, including court dancers. Separate customs, ceremonies (including dance and dance-drama) and a royal language were used to legitimise and enhance the King's god-like position. Court performances were carefully selected and used as vehicles to support the king and his divinity. Royal dance troupes, the *Khon Luang* (royal masked dance-drama) and *Lakho'n Luang* (royal dance-drama), were set up and only they were allowed to perform the *Khon* and *Lakho'n* for royal functions and ceremonies. Only the children of the royal family and courtiers could be trained as court dancers. Teaching was very strict, sometimes tedious, and was usually given under the direction of very experienced dance teachers employed by the court. These factors and the highly sophisticated standard established at the court made it impossible for people outside the confines of the court to compete with the royal dancers. Furthermore, *Lakho'n Nai* was regarded as a *Kho'ng Luang* (royal possession) and it was solely the king's right to patronise female dancers. Even his heir-apparent was forbidden to train and have female *Lakho'n Nai* dancers.¹¹⁹ Outside the confines of the court, a dramatic form for common folk, *Lakho'n No'k*, emerged and was performed by an all-male cast.¹²⁰

The kings of the Ayuthaya period began to commission court poets to compose dramatic scripts for the court dancers to perform. The idea of writing the text created a set rule which further separated court drama from the entertainment of the public and created a sense of superiority. The stories selected for dramatic productions reinforced the King's authority. Many had a religious origin, such as the *Jataka* tales which depicted the previous lives of the Buddha. Others were taken from well-known ancient stories of foreign origin, such as *Ramakien* and *Inao*, which emphasised adventure, romance and the domestic affairs of heroes and heroines. However, the messages are always similar in that the hero's eventual victory over evil is a result of his righteousness. In *Ramakien*, the hero Rama was a Vishnu incarnation and possessed magical powers. His righteous leadership enabled Rama to triumph over the evil giant Totsakan and bring happiness to humankind. Thai monarchs used the cult surrounding Rama (and Vishnu) by leading the audience to associate the King, as the patron of the

¹¹⁹ Mattani: 1993, p. 78-79.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

performance, with Rama (or other heroes). Through this connection, the King was established as a sacred being. In this sense, if the King wished to maintain his divine position, he had to ensure the continued existence of these classical performances.¹²¹

On certain occasions of national importance, such as the *Somphot* (celebration) of the White Elephant and the *Somphot* of the Emerald Buddha, courtiers and people outside the confines of the royal palace were able to see the splendour of the *Lakho'n Luang* and the *Khon Luang*. However, these occasions were few and far between, and consequently the public rarely got to watch such performances. The subjects of these celebrations, the White Elephant and the Emerald Buddha, were carefully chosen as symbols of royal glory and merit. As such, they were regarded as the *Kho'ng Ku Barami* (King's possessions) and grand performances in their honour were essentially celebrations of the King himself. From the court's point of view, these occasions provided the opportunity to instil in the general public a belief of divine kingship. People gradually came to accept that their King really had *Barami* (the sacred power of those who upheld the ten virtues) as only he owned such prestigious and sacred objects. The spectacle, the refined and graceful style of court drama and the rarity of public performances made classical drama plays very special for the general public. However, the performances were so rare and their content was so different to that which the general public was used to that it was virtually impossible for ordinary people to fully understand and appreciate them. This suited the King's purpose - the public was not supposed to understand and appreciate the plays, but was instead supposed to watch the spectacle in awe.

Traditional Thai dance-drama, particularly at the court, reached its peak during King Bo'rommakot's reign (1732-1758). With the destruction of Ayuthaya by the Burmese in 1767, Thai drama then went into a temporary decline. King Thonburi (1767-82), on ascending the throne announced his intention to revive all the royal *Khon* and *Lakho'n* of King Bo'rommakot's reign in order to restore the glory of this golden era and its

¹²¹ So well thought of was this as a way of enhancing status that, even when the royal *Lakho'n* troupe was temporarily disbanded during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851), many aristocrats set up their own drama troupes as status symbols. See Damrong, *Tamnan Lakho'n Inao*, op cit., p. 157.

classical dance-dramas. By establishing himself as patron of a newly revived royal *Lakho'n* and by continuing the cultural lineage from the old kingdom, he intended to demonstrate that his kingship was as divine as that of the Ayuthayan monarchs and thus gain the support required for unifying the country. During this reign, an unprecedented change appeared in the tradition of the royal *Lakho'n*. The royal court troupes started to recruit male performers, but they performed the royal *Lakho'n No'k* rather than *Lakho'n Nai*, as the latter was still confined exclusively for the King.

The dramatic arts under King Rama I (1782-1809) continued to develop from the previous reign. However, this first Chakri dynasty monarch was more ambitious than his predecessor, as he pledged to bring back not only the glory of the old capital of Ayuthaya but also expressed the desire to surpass its great achievements in his cultural reconstruction.¹²² The cult of Vishnu was revived again during his reign. One important contribution of King Rama I in restoring the dramatic arts was a complete compilation of the dramatic text *Ramakien*, which was a literary masterpiece of which some parts had been missing since the fall of Ayuthaya. This monumental composition, supervised by the monarch, symbolically enhanced his position as one who, closely associated with Vishnu, saved, restored peace in and brought prosperity to the new kingdom.

However, despite Rama I's efforts, it was not until the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824) that Thai classical dance-drama entered a golden era once again. The absence of war with neighbouring countries and a relatively long and peaceful reign contributed to a prosperity in arts and culture and in particular the dramatic arts. The King himself was a poet and artist of great skills. He and his court poets revised traditional dramatic texts, which were previously produced only for reading or recitation, to render them suitable for stage performances of both *Lakho'n Nai* and *Lakho'n No'k*. King Rama II established a refined choreography for the royal *Khon* and *Lakho'n* and developed it to a high standard. His dramatic texts as well as his music and songs became models for later generations to master.

¹²² Mattani Moj dara Rutnin, Transformation of the Thai Concepts of Aesthetics, Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1983, p. 52

Dramatic activities went into a low ebb during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851). The monarch, who was a devoted Buddhist, was against all worldly activities at the palace. He prohibited every form of royal entertainment and banned the training of performers. Despite the discontinuation of court dance-drama, dramatic activities imitating the royal style began to flourish. Members of the royal family and aristocrats secretly sponsored or formed their own dramatic troupes outside the palace and trained their dancers according to the traditions of royal dance-drama. While the royal dance troupes were largely inactive, the private troupes increased and spread over a wider area, especially at nobles' houses. Court dance-drama became a status symbol for those patrons whose dramatic creations emulated the royal style which used to reflect the glory of the monarchy.

It was not until the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851-1867) that dance-drama began to change its role in Siamese culture. King Mongkut began to implement his modernisation policies by revising and restoring royal forms of entertainment and cultural activities.¹²³ Performances of classical dance-drama, which had ceased in the previous reign, were brought back to the Siamese stage in order to show the richness of Siamese heritage to the Westerners. Apart from providing entertainment and supporting the absolute power of the King, performing arts began to play another important role - that of projecting a civilised image of Siam. National entertainment was used to impress foreigners and to prove the progression of Siam's civilisation. King Mongkut started to modestly modernise classical drama and adapted performances for Westerners, as it was feared that Westerners would regard traditional Siamese drama as inferior and antiquated.

King Mongkut relaxed certain restrictions and opened the way to exploit performing arts for commercial purposes. One important consequence of the forced opening of the country in 1855 was the loss of the King's control over one of his most important sources of income: foreign trade. Consequently, the King had to find other sources of income and started to tax a variety of activities and products, including performing

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

arts.¹²⁴ A Royal Decree in 1861 granted permission for female dancers to be trained outside the court. Troupe-owning courtiers had secretly been training female dancers ever since royal *Lakho'n Nai* performances had been discontinued in the reign of King Rama III. By issuing the decree the King showed his open-mindedness and a willingness to support *Lakho'n Nai* troupes outside the court.¹²⁵ However, the decree also enabled performing arts to become a commercial product of great significance for its patrons. Through taxes levied on commercial productions, the government was able to achieve a substantial increase in tax revenues during this period.¹²⁶

Overall, however, many traditional dramatic conventions were still maintained. It has long been a strict convention that a proper classical dance-drama production requires a certain kind of dance, music and action that should all work in harmony. The characteristics of specific dance, music and action had been created to conform to specific interpretations of dramatic text. For instance, classical dance-drama consisted of the *Naphat* dance (the basic dance pattern of action, *i.e.* to walk, to go to battle, to cry, *etc.*) and the *Naphat* song (the basic song composed to accompany the *Naphat* dance). An audience has to know the meaning of each type of *Naphat* dance and song in order to follow the performance and to truly appreciate the classical dance-drama. Each *Naphat* song is designed to accompany a specific dancing pattern (or act). For example, if a character is walking to another place, he would perform the *Naphat* dance of walking accompanied by the *Samoe* song, a form of *Naphat* music which suggests the walking action. It is important to note that the *Naphat* dance can be performed at a very complex level to demonstrate the highly developed skills of the dance artist. This advanced level of the *Naphat* dance is considered sacred, and if one wants to perform it, it must be learned over many years from a highly experienced dancer.

¹²⁴ See Damrong: 1964, for example of taxation on various forms of performing arts.

¹²⁵ However, he still reserved three dramatic texts, *Unarut*, *Inao* and *Ramakien* exclusively for royal performances.

¹²⁶ Mattani: 1993, p. 83.

Another basic element of classical dance-drama is the *Ram Bot* (the language of gestures). *Ram Bot* is a language in which dancers will use their hands, body and feet in accordance with specific patterns of movement in order to act out the plot and to communicate emotions. As a fixed basic element of classical dance-drama the *Ram Bot* gave dancers little scope to demonstrate their own creativity and abilities. The only way for them to show their individual skills in performing the classical dance-drama was to perform the story in great detail and to dance as many *Ram Bot* as possible.

In classical dance-drama, dancers neither speak nor sing, and only dance (act). Therefore, it is necessary to have a narrator (*Khon Phak*) or a chorus to perform those tasks. Because the narrative (*Kham Phak*) and dialogue script are usually written in verse, narrators must have the skill to rhyme words, and at the same time must have a precise knowledge of the dancing and music in order to express the feelings of the characters at the right moment. The traditional use of a narrator slowed down the performances considerably. The narrators first had to tell the story of the scene. They then rhymed a description of the actions which the dancers performed. Finally, the narrator would rhyme the dialogue of the scene while the dancers performed the *Ram Bot*.

The dramatic conventions became less restrictive during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, (Rama V, 1868-1910). More of the Thai elite, including the King himself, had received a Western education or visited European countries. They brought back new ideas of theatre from the West and were keen to experiment with Western techniques and apply them to modernise Siamese theatre. The reformation of the administrative and other systems, modelled after the West, also paved the way for the modernisation of cultural activities. This Western-influenced policy was widely recognised as the beginning of the modernisation of Siam.

The modernisation of cultural activities, including dramatic arts, also received attention. The result was a large-scale adaptation of classical dance-drama, which started with the incorporation of Western elements such as realistic settings of stage performances to cater for modern audiences. The King's policy of "tradition meets

modernity” was clearly reflected in his cultural policy. He believed that while it was necessary to revive traditional dance-drama, it was also essential to adapt the old dramatic forms to suit the new generation. One reason for continuing the royal *Lakho'n* and the royal *Khon* was to demonstrate to Westerners, through its high sophistication and refinement, that Siam was a civilised country that could pride itself on its cultural achievements.

During King Rama V's reign, three new forms of experimental dance-drama created by princes and aristocrats emerged, namely *Lakho'n Du'kdamban* by Jao Phraya Thewetwongwiwat and Prince Narisaranuwattiwong, *Lakho'n Phanthang* by Jao Phraya Mahintara-sakthamrong and Prince Narathip Praphanphong, and *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, also by Prince Narathip Praphanphong. The creators had participated in the production of traditional dance-drama, but subsequently experimented with new techniques and ideas from other sources, particularly Western theatre. Searching for exciting elements to suit the new tastes, they applied new ideas and techniques to develop and modernise traditional dramatic genres, marking an era of modernisation in the history of Thai drama.

The length and repetitiveness of the classical *Lakho'n Ram* was reduced and the strict dramatic conventions relaxed so that the general public, who were unaccustomed to the classical conventions, could understand them. With the use of Western dramatic features and techniques the adaptations became more successful than the classical dance-drama of previous reigns. The outcome of this progression was a recognition that more realistic drama was preferred and welcomed by new audiences who have, themselves, been influenced by Western culture.

Lakho'n Phanthang (literally 'The Thousand Ways Dance-Drama') was developed from *Lakho'n No'k* and *Lakho'n Nai* with fewer of the *Naphat* dances but using more *Ram Bot*. This avoided the elaborate but lengthy dancing patterns of the *Naphat* tune. The costumes were changed in order to fit the setting and the nationalities involved in the play. The wearing of the *Yu'n Khru'ang* (the tightly fitting traditional dance costume) was no longer a strict practice. The plots were taken from Thai and foreign

tales and chronicles to introduce a new exotic flavour, in contrast to the traditional use of stories of religious origin. The international emphasis brought about much experimentation. Most conventional elements were replaced with new exotic techniques, reflecting the new generation's search for change and excitement. For example, Thai-Persian costumes were adopted in the production of *Arap Ratri* (an adaptation of Arabian Nights) and a Chinese war dance was introduced in the production of *Rachathirat*, a story taken from the tales of the Mon people.¹²⁷

Amongst the modern features in *Lakho'n Du'kdamban* (literally 'The Primitive Dance-Drama')¹²⁸ were the absence of a choral narrative and the complete omission of the introductory announcement of the characters, *i.e.* the "*Mu'a Nan...*" (at the moment that...) for a royal character and "*Bat Nan...*" (then...) for a character of lower status. The convention of narrating the story and action was also considered too lengthy, and redundant as the character was already on the stage. In *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*, dancers would sing as well as dance which did not apply in conventional dance-drama. To shorten the length of the performance, the *Naphat* dance was seldom performed and the action and development of the story were accelerated. A Western feature that was adopted, and is considered to be one of the most important steps in the modernisation of traditional Thai drama, was the three-dimensional and realistic set design, replacing the simple set design comprising a flat painted backdrop and a long bench as was used previously. Moreover, natural settings similar to the open-air of the West were used to heighten realism. The application of lighting and sound further added to the excitement and atmosphere of the production. All these innovations served to increase the popularity of the theatre. However, in contrast to *Lakho'n Phanthang* and *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, the use of classical repertoires and the refinement of *Lakho'n Nai* were largely maintained.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-123.

¹²⁸ The term *Du'kdamban* was originally the name of a theatre house where new classical adaptations were staged. Because this particular theatrical genre had never been given a name according to its form, people used the name of the venue to refer to this type of theatre. It should be noted that there is no relation between the word *Du'kdamban* (meaning ancient or primitive) and the way in which this theatre genre was performed and presented.

¹²⁹ Mattani: 1993, pp. 124-138.

Lakho'n Ro'ng (Singing Dance-Drama or The Dance-Drama Operetta) was an attempt to imitate the opera of the West. Performances were based on everyday domestic affairs or on adaptations of foreign stories, such as *Sao Khru'a Fa* from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. The language was colloquial and the costumes and setting were contemporary with the period of the play. Actors sang the lyrics, spoke the dialogue themselves but barely performed any dance movements. The outstanding feature of *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, which led to its popularity, was the choice of emotionally-charged lyrics, appropriate to the actions and situations in the plays, which were sung with deep feeling and thus had great impact on the audience.¹³⁰

During the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, 1910-1925), the monarchical institution was shaken by internal and external threats. The King was convinced that the only way to secure his throne was to introduce the idea of "elite nationalism" with an emphasis on loyalty to the monarchy. He chose drama as his main tool to propagate this new ideology and to spread his nationalist messages. King Vajiravudh's best known play in this context was *Phra Ruang* which constructs a myth of *Phra Ruang* as the first king of the Sukhothai empire.¹³¹ The play aimed to create a sense of "Thainess" and arouse patriotic feelings by depicting *Phra Ruang's* achievements in liberating Thailand from the *Kho'm's* rule and the subsequent founding of the first Thai Kingdom. He experimented with many forms of dramatic art for this purpose and even introduced *Lakho'n Phut* (spoken drama imported from the West) as a means of transmitting nationalistic themes to a wider audience. This was the first time in the history of Siam that drama had been explicitly used to transmit a social and political message.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-144.

¹³¹ King Vajiravudh wrote the play about *Phra Ruang* (King Sri Intrarathit) in three different versions: (1) *Khom Dam Din* (1912) was written in the style of *Lakho'n Ram* (classical dance-drama), (2) *Phra Ruang* (1917) was written in the style of *Lakho'n Phut Kham Klo'n* (poetical spoken drama) and (3) *Phra Ruang* (1924) was written in the style of *Lakho'n Ro'ng* (singing dance-drama). See Kanyarat Smitabhindu, "Kansu'ksa Kanphatthana Tua Lakho'n Nai Bot Lakho'n Phra Ratcha Nippon Nai Phrabat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Jaoyuhua" (A Study of the Development of Characters in King Rama VI's Plays), *M.A. thesis*, Sinlapakorn University, 1986.

Although the King introduced new forms of dramatic arts, he considered the use of classical dance-drama and the *Khon* as central to his bid to implant the concept of loyalty into the monarchy. For example, the episodes from the literary classic *Ramakien* (Ramayana), used for the traditional *Khon* performance, were carefully selected so that these scenes would show the importance of being loyal to the monarchy, or imply social and political significance. The King thought that *Lakho'n Phut* (straight spoken play) was more effective for his purposes as it consisted of direct speech without the lengthiness of the refined dance movement. King Vajiravudh's well-known *Lakho'n Phut*, such as *Huajai Nakrop* (the heart of the warrior), *Phra Ruang*, *Chuai Amnat* (the *coup d'état*) and *Mahatama* contained nationalist messages glorifying the monarchical institution, the duty of man towards the nation and sacrifice for the nation.¹³²

King Vajiravudh went as far as to involve the *Su'a Pa* (Wild Tiger Corps), a paramilitary group which he had set up to propagate nationalism, when he wrote a simplified version of the play *Phra Ruang* for them to perform. However, the King's obsession with drama and negligence of other important state affairs brought him into conflict with senior members of his administrative team. He used his control over entertainment and dramatic activities to counterbalance the power of his courtiers:

“It is therefore very clear that with the activities of the *Khon Samak Len* [the amateur *Khon* troupe] performed by the royal pages and court officials, the setting up of the *Rongrian Phran Luang* school [the royal cadet school], and the reorganisation of the *Krom Maho'rasop* [Department of the (royal) Entertainment], the king purposefully centralised all royal entertainment and dramatic activities around his own person in order to use them, not only for his own pleasure and entertainment in the tradition of King Rama II, but more so for his political schemes and ideas, and as a means to strengthen and glorify the institution of the absolute monarchy and to propagate concepts of national unity, patriotism, and great pride in the Thai cultural heritage.”¹³³

¹³² See Vilawan Svetsreni, “Vajiravudh and Spoken Drama: His Early Plays in English and his Original Thai Lakho'n Phut with Special Emphasis on his Innovative Uses of Drama,” Mphil thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1991.

¹³³ Mattani: 1993, p. 171.

Ultimately, however, King Vajiravudh's attempt to use drama as a tool for propaganda had only very limited success in supporting his objectives. There may have been several reasons for this. Firstly, although the plays were performed in the major urban centres of Siam (previously they were nearly always performed in the capital), access to dramatic performances such as the *Khon Samak Len* was still confined to the "King's clique", or, as they were described by King Vajiravudh, "friends of the same class". These were people belonging to the local nobility or other high-ranking people. Although dramatic activities were now more widespread than before, Vajiravudh's national indoctrination still targeted the elite in the urban areas, because he believed this to be the source of the problems and discontent.¹³⁴ However, he neglected an emerging middle class and people living outside of the large urban centre. This was perhaps his greatest mistake. The rising middle class, which became part of the rapidly expanding bureaucratic system and grew through the development of private sector ventures, was a far greater threat to the King's absolute monarchy than the elite, whose power was based on the *status quo*.

Another reason for King Vajiravudh's failure was the inadequate training of the actors in spoken drama. This was a significant shortcoming because most of his plays contained dialogue. Lengthy dance movements had been replaced by long monologues and lengthy didactic messages which were very demanding on the actors and tiresome for the audience to follow. Even with appropriate training, the long dialogues and didactic messages made the plays appear very unnatural, a fact perpetuated by the lack of variety in the plays as a whole.¹³⁵ These factors diminished the plays' impact and popularity. With the end of the absolute monarchy brought about by the emerging middle class, the role of dance-drama declined. In particular, the role of drama in politics ended, and was not revived until Luang Vichitr became Director-General of the Fine Arts Department in 1934.

¹³⁴ Vilawan: 1991, p. 198.

¹³⁵ Walter F Vella, "Siamese nationalism in the plays of Rama the Sixth," Search for Identity: Modern Literature and Creative Arts in Asia. Ed. A.R. Davis, Angus and Robertson, 1974, pp. 181-191.

2.2 The 1932 Coup d'Etat and the Establishment of the Publicity Bureau

The twenty-fourth of June 1932, marked the start of a new era in the history of Siam. This was the day that the centuries-long rule of the absolute monarchical government was overthrown to be taken over by a constitutional government. The group of people who overthrew the absolute monarchy called themselves *Khana Ratsado'n* (The People's Party) and comprised both civilian and military representatives. There were several reasons for the coup. Some were related to practical issues such as taxation, the secrecy of the monarchy, the neglect of public interest and domination of high office positions by princes.¹³⁶ The other reasons were related to the rising nationalism and constitutionalism.¹³⁷

Modern nationalism can be said to have been established in the reign of King Chulalongkorn through the King's various reform programmes which centralised the administrative, fiscal, military and educational systems.¹³⁸ He also sought to introduce a common culture, with Bangkok as the dominant cultural centre, the common religion being Buddhism and with the central dialect as the official language. Nationalism was further developed by King Vajiravudh and indeed became one of his key policies. His nationalistic programme was intended to ward off the threat posed by the Chinese domination of many economic activities and to strengthen the monarchical institution with the King as head of state.

These developments nurtured a growing nationalist sentiment among the people. As contact with the West increased, comparisons between Siam and Western countries were inevitably made. These comparisons were often unfavourable and a desire to push the country out of its state of "backwardness" and towards the modernity of Western

¹³⁶ Prudhisan Jumbala, Nation-building and Democratisation in Thailand: A political history, Chulalongkorn University, 1992, pp. 20-21.

¹³⁷ Nakkharin Mektrirat, "Prawatsat Phumpanya Kho'ng Kanplian Rabop Kanpokkhro'ng Sayam Pho' So' 2470-2480" (An Intellectual History of Siam's Political Transformation during 1927-1937), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1985.

¹³⁸ Likhit Dhiravegin, Nationalism and the State in Thailand, Monograph Series No. 8, Thammasat University, 1985, pp. 1-2.

countries resulted. A new generation, which had some experience of the West's apparently more advanced culture and political system, thought that it was time for Siam to change and modernise in order to put the country on a new footing. These nationalist sentiments and hopes were powerful forces in the abolition movement. The nationalist ideology which led to the coup in 1932 was different to that promulgated by the ruling elite, as it placed more emphasis on the importance of the nation than the monarchy.

Moreover, members of the abolition movement felt that modernisation of the political and administrative system was necessary to achieve the nationalists' aims of creating a modern and powerful Thai nation.¹³⁹ They believed that the king should be under the constitution rather than co-existing with it. As dissatisfaction with the ruling elite grew, this idea gained ground. The constitution was to replace the monarchy in the basic triad of *Chat-Satsana-Phra Mahakasat* (nation-religion-monarchy) to make it *Chat-Satsana-Ratthathammanun* (nation-religion-constitution). The combination of the belief in the importance of political change and nationalism that emphasised the Thai nation formed the constitutional nationalism, which brought about the coup in 1932 and dominated the political arena for the years to come.

Luang Vichitr regarded the 1932 *coup d'état* as the "turnover of the earth" (*Phlik Phaendin*). He felt that the coup was an appropriate measure undertaken by the People's Party in order to change the unfair system of the old government. The *Jao* (the aristocrats) and *Rat* (the people) could now live in harmony. He implied that people would have equal opportunities which were previously lacking and that now the voice of the people would be listened to first. Luang Vichitr put forward the view that the occurrence of the coup derived from the failure of the old system, which gave only the upper classes the right to exercise power. The majority of people had to follow their orders without criticism or objection. This led to a build-up of tension between the two sides until the people finally decided that the only way to challenge the aristocrats and to escape this absolute control was to change the whole system.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ The abolition movement was, however, far from united and many different ideologies existed. See Nakkharin: 1985.

¹⁴⁰ Vichitr Vadam, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam*, *op cit.*, pp. 88-97.

Luang Vichitr noted that it was important to prove to the people that they would now have a better quality of life than they had before the coup. Moreover, the People's Party should make the people understand the value of rights and liberty under constitutionalism. He cited the case of the Chinese government in particular which failed to emphasise changes from which the Chinese would benefit. Consequently, the only good change the Chinese perceived was "cutting their plait".¹⁴¹

During the first year of the new government, several of the old policies were abolished in order to erase the legacy of the old government's administration. This included, for example, the revocation of various economic laws and the reduction of agricultural taxation in order to destroy the old bonds and at the same time help improve the living standard of the people. In the political field, there was a reconstruction of the administrative system aimed at replacing the power base of the royal family and aristocrats with that of members of the People's Party.

The People's Party also substituted the role of the monarchy as the centre of the country, with that of the constitution. Their first task was to implant the new ideology of democracy under the *Ratthathammanun* (constitution) with the King as the constitutional monarch. The new government had to change the old belief that the monarchy was the highest institution of the country. Instead of showing their highest respect and loyalty to the King, the people should now respect *Ratthathammanun* as the highest symbol of the system.

The *Ratthathammanun* was widely promoted and given a special meaning in order to gain people's loyalty. To call for people's support, the government held a national celebration of the *Ratthathammanun* in Bangkok and in the provinces, with a long parade centred around a large sculptured model of the symbol *Ratthathammanun* comprising many officials, merchants and common people. The celebration was even made sacred by the Bhramanistic ritual of performing the *Joem* (a blessing ceremony in which the blessing is given by putting moistened fragrant flour on the item).¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁴² Yupa Chumchantra, "Prawatsat Nippon Thai Pho' So' 2475-2516" (Thai Historiography 1932-1973), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1987, p. 65.

Dissemination of the new ideology through the education system was another practical method adopted. The national curriculum and school texts were used, for example, to explain the constitution, the relation between the people and the state, the new system of the country's administration and the use of power by the king under the constitution. Books on social, political, economic, or religious subjects conformed to the government's promotion of the new system. In addition to the existing government institutions that were used in the campaign, the government decided to set up the Publicity Bureau.

The Publicity Bureau was established on 3 May 1933 to help the new regime disseminate information about the constitutional system, as well as to inform people about the government's policies. It had many responsibilities and its organisation was divided into five divisions: a Central Division, a Documentation Division, a Press Division, a Radio Broadcast Division and the Division for Promoting Knowledge and Information to the Public. This last division was the most important because it dealt directly with the government's policy and national campaign. It set out the following objectives:

1. To promote the democratic system and persuade people to pay respect to the constitution.
2. To urge people to love the nation, the religion and the monarchy.¹⁴³
3. To advise people to behave with morality and etiquette as is appropriate for civilised people in civilised countries, while at the same time preserving traditions and customs.
4. To guide and educate people about popular occupations in Siam.
5. To spread Siam's integrity and status to other countries.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ While the new government aimed to replace the importance of the monarchy with the constitution, it had to be very diplomatic in pursuing this aim. Its power base was still weak and the stability of its rule depended on the support or at least tolerance of those more positively inclined towards the monarchy.

¹⁴⁴ Suwimon Phonlajan, "Krom Khosanakan Kap Kankhosana Udomkan Thang Kanmu'ang Kho'ng Rat Pho' So' 2476-2487" (The Department of Publicity and the Promotion of the State's Ideology: 1933-1944), M.A. thesis, Thammasat University, 1988, p. 23.

In order to achieve these objectives, the new government had to address three issues. Firstly, they needed to stress the importance of the constitution as the new state symbol. This was reinforced by the recommendation to show respectful gestures so that people would learn to realise the value of the new symbol. With a constitution as the national symbol and the modernity and prosperity of the nation as the goals, people were encouraged to show their love and loyalty to the nation. Secondly, as “democracy” was introduced and the changes progressed, people’s definitions of civilisation were reassessed, while at the same time the need to preserve traditional customs and culture was recognised.¹⁴⁵ Lastly, to improve the state of the economy, the government had to persuade people to work harder and find any possible means of working for the benefit of the nation.

The Publicity Bureau went through many changes of name and divisional structure. After less than a year, it changed its name to the “Office of Publicity” and was transferred to the Office of the Prime Minister. This may have been because the government started to realise the advantages of being able to control this institution directly. In 1937, the bureau transferred responsibility for film and the performing arts to the Fine Arts Department, which was founded in 1933. The transfer could be interpreted as the beginning of a more systematic promotional campaign to be implemented by the two institutions.

In practical terms, the two institutions were dependent on each other and sometimes worked side by side to influence the public. The Office of Publicity went through another reorganisation and changed its name yet again, when Phibun assumed his first premiership in 1938, to become the *Krom Khotsanakan* (Department of Publicity). The department’s authority and importance in national affairs increased so much during this period that it later became known as “*Krabo’k Siang Kho’ng Ratthaban*” (the loud-speaker of the government).

¹⁴⁵ Culture was defined by the National Cultural Development Act, which was promulgated in 1940, as burgeoning development, good order, harmonious progress of the nation and good public morals.

A lack of advanced communication technology to facilitate the dissemination of information to a large population was a problem for the Department of Publicity in the early 1930s. For example, there were insufficient radio receivers to reach a wide audience, particularly in the countryside. To make up for this deficiency, a mobile unit was set up and speakers were sent to deliver speeches in different regions across the country. By 1937, several hundred speeches had been delivered in 37 provinces.¹⁴⁶

The contents of the speeches were strictly defined and controlled by the Division of Promoting Knowledge and Information to the Public. The reason for this was to maintain consistency on key issues regarding the constitution and the new system. Consistency was important, as the public was still unfamiliar with the new concepts and terminology. Therefore, speakers were recommended to read particular books that may help and guide them to compose their speeches with a high degree of uniformity.

One such book was *Bot Rian Ratthathammanun* (The Lesson of the Constitution), which was written by Luang Vichitr. *Bot Rian Ratthathammanun* contained very strong statements about the old regime's abuse of power and the consequent suffering of the people. Luang Vichitr claimed that it was not until the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932 that the country started to show any great change and development. According to him, this was because the constitution had the highest place in the country and was above the King. For this reason, the constitution could be used "to control not only the ordinary people and the government, but it should also control the monarch who is the head of the country".¹⁴⁷ His address may not have come as a surprise. Luang Vichitr had previously put forward similar ideas in his book, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam*, published in 1932.¹⁴⁸ He explained that the People's Party retained the King as head of state because the King was the only person who could link people from all classes together, and who could act as a respectable institution to protect the country from colonial powers.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Yupa: 1987, p. 65.

¹⁴⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Rian Ratthathammanun" (Lessons of the Constitution, 1933), *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, vol. 2, 1962, pp. 106-107.

¹⁴⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam*, *op cit.*, pp. 87-91.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

With Luang Vichitr's emphasis on the importance of the constitution, people were urged to do their utmost to protect this national symbol. The constitution became not only the most important symbol of the country, but it was also a symbol of the end of the old system. Luang Vichitr even stated that people who "opposed the constitution should be condemned as enemies of the nation".¹⁵⁰

Another means of reaching the public adopted by the new government through the Department of Publicity was the use of textbooks. The new government realised that using learning materials at schools and other institutions could have a great impact on people, particularly young students. Social and political messages and ideas were implanted in the books. Official publications encouraging nationalist sentiment were widely published. The government even set up special committees to investigate recommended textbooks for school children to make sure their contents were in line with those provided by the Department of Publicity.¹⁵¹

In 1936 the Department of Publicity published a book called *Khu Mu' Phonlamu'ang* (The Citizen's Handbook), which was the government's propaganda instrument to mobilise the public in support of the new concept. It used very simple language to impart information about the constitutional system and the duty of citizens under the constitution. New conceptual words such as *Chat* (nation), *Ratthathammanun* (constitution) and *Arayatham* (civilisation) were included in this book to familiarise the people with the new concepts. These words were vital for the government because on the one hand they acted as a guide as to how people should contribute to the country, while on the other hand, terms such as "civilisation" gave the impression that the absolute system was no longer applicable to the country, as it was now moving towards the stage of civilisation and catching up with the modern world. The following extracts selected from the book give good examples of the government's propaganda:

¹⁵⁰ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Bot Rian Ratthathammanun", *op cit.*, p. 116.

¹⁵¹ Suwimon: 1988, p. 47.

Chapter 1 - *Chat* (Nation)

1. *Chat* is a place where man lives in groups.
2. *Chat* is a big family.
3. The life of *Chat* will never end for it is immortal. The stability of *Chat* depends on the unity of everyone.
4. The feeling of loving *Chat* is in everyone's character.

Chapter 5 - *Ratthathammanun* (Constitution)

1. The previous governing system of Siam was called the absolute system.
2. Siam changed the governing system on the 24th of June, 1932.
3. The constitution is the highest law that controls the country's administrative system.
4. The constitution is the highest law and is more important than any other. Therefore, it should not be easily amended.
5. Our constitution has faced two adversities.

Chapter 19 - Siam under *Ratthathammanun*

1. The present Siam is a united kingdom that cannot be divided.
2. Under the constitution, citizens should have duties towards their country:
 - (i) Citizens should love *Chat*.
 - (ii) Citizens should respect the laws.
 - (iii) Citizens should have education.
 - (iv) Citizens should be soldiers.
 - (v) Citizens should pay tax to the country.
 - (vi) Citizens have a duty to work.
 - (vii) Citizens have a duty to vote for their representatives.¹⁵²

When Phibun came to power for the first time in 1938, the word and national symbol *Ratthathammanun* was given another meaning. It now also means "independence" (*Itsaraphap*) since, according to the People's Party, the country was "liberated" from the repressive ruling of the absolute monarchy. Thus, it was suggested that past monarchs had controlled their people, deprived them of their freedom, and prevented them from achieving economic and social prosperity. By extension, Phibun implied that his government would give freedom and equal rights to the people.

To Luang Vichitr, the notion of freedom and independence is related to the economy. In a newspaper article, he explained to the public that without the economic problems caused by the global economic crisis and Siam's economic dependence, the 1932 coup

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, appendix C.

may not have happened so quickly. The new government now had the responsibility to solve the economic problems, but it could only do so with the help of the people. Thai people should become more self-sufficient, energetic and engage in productive occupations by themselves instead of relying on the government.¹⁵³ Luang Vichitr's appeal was for the public to understand the true meaning of the freedom that was given to them, not to rely on the government, and to take up any work available. The appeal was an effective and practical way to enlist public support for the new government and allowed Luang Vichitr to disseminate his ideas on human revolution while at the same time gaining favour with the new regime.¹⁵⁴

Under Phibun, Siam entered a period of intense nation-building. Various programmes were embarked upon to implement his policies. Phibun's nationalist aim was to make the country as powerful as Japan and major Western countries. His ambitions required a great deal of public support and sacrifice, and various methods were thus employed in the building of popular nationalism. These included twelve guidelines for the public in the *Ratthaniyom* (State Conventions or Cultural Mandates), the passing of the National Cultural Act, the Royal Decree stipulating cultural activities and the use of nationalist plays, songs, newspaper articles, speeches, broadcasts, and slogans. Phibun hoped to use literature, drama and other aspects of the Siamese culture to effect a change in people's attitudes and lead the country to prosperity. Another important goal for Phibun was to promote complete loyalty towards his leadership amongst the people.

Mass communication played a vital role in supporting Phibun's policy. All available media were manipulated to gain public approval as well as to advise people on how to behave and think. The Publicity Bureau or the *Krom Khotsanakan* served as one of the government's main mechanisms to spread nationalist programmes across the country. As more and more communication equipment became available, the scope and reach of the *Krom Khotsanakan* increased and consequently became more effective.

¹⁵³ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam*, *op cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Setthakit Kap Itsaraphap" (Economy and Freedom), *Thai Mai*, 10 August 1932.

The promulgation of the censorship law, aimed at controlling the government's news and information, was another practical means to ensure that the 'right' messages were being relayed to the people. News which might appear to jeopardise the security of the country or suggested that people were opposed to the government was screened out before reaching the public. The press law imposed during Phibun's regime gave him complete power over the news distributed in the kingdom.¹⁵⁵ Phibun, in his capacity as Interior Minister, was directly responsible for controlling the press.¹⁵⁶ He had the authority to close, suspend or confiscate newspapers, magazines, and other publications if he considered them not to be in the interests of the nation. Newspapers were strictly censored and became an important voice for the government. They printed, for example, slogans such as: "The Nation will survive if we believe in Phibun Songkhram", or "Save the Nation by believing in Phibun".¹⁵⁷ Thus, through the censorship law and control over the media, particularly the press, Phibun's government strengthened its already tight control over mass communication in the country. The regime became increasingly authoritarian and forcefully encouraged the people to follow the leadership of Phibun.

Another media outlet established and controlled by the government through the Department of Publicity was the radio programme "*Raikan Sonthana Nai Man Lae Nai Khong*" (The Dialogue between Mr. Man and Mr. Khong). It was initiated by Sang Patthanotai, who assumed *Nai Man's* role in the radio programme.¹⁵⁸ The programme involved a question-and-answer dialogue on current affairs and the

¹⁵⁵ Sangchan Dangtoi, "Freedom of the Press in Thailand," M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1976.

¹⁵⁶ When Phibun became Prime Minister, he also held several ministerial posts such as the Minister of Defence, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Education. He was also in complete control of all three military factions as he was Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Special Commander of the Navy, Special Commander of the Air Force and a Supreme Commander. See Thamsook Numnonda, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941-45*, *op cit*.

¹⁵⁷ *Sri Krung* and *Pra Muan Wan*, quoted in Thamsook, *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁸ Sang Patthanotai had been a teacher and writer before joining the Department of Publicity as its Secretary. He joined because of his nationalist conviction and was later promoted to become the head of the Promoting Knowledge and Information Division. As the head of this division, he was in charge of the above mentioned radio programme. He also produced many books based on Luang Vichitr's book *Mahaburut* (The Great Men) and nationalist historiography.

government's policies, in order to persuade listeners to comply with the government's regulations. For example, on the issue of the Cultural Mandate No. 10, which ordered people to dress properly in public, the two characters discussed the advantages of this so as to explain to the public the need for the order and the importance of complying with it. This propaganda tool was so successful that listening to the radio programme was considered an appropriate way to show gratitude and loyalty to the nation. The following is an example of the dialogue between *Man* and *Khong* taken from the 14 September 1941 broadcast about the government's recommendations on dress:

- Khong: Certainly. The first thing we would see is that when our fellow countrymen dress themselves according to the persuasion of the government it would show the world that the people follow the state. And this spells the unity of the country.
- Man: Secondly, if the people do as suggested, it would make them get used to following orders. To accept orders is necessary for nation-building and for national defence in times of emergency. If we do not practise accepting orders in normal times, when needed in times of emergency, it would be awkward.
- Khong: The third thing about doing as ordered is that it would show to other people that the Thai nation is orderly, like a civilised nation. And in the end, we would leave the tradition of dressing ourselves as other civilised people to future generations.¹⁵⁹

Phleng Pluk Jai (patriotic songs) were frequently played as part of the Department of Publicity's radio broadcasts, either as an interlude during the dialogue programme of *Man* and *Khong*, or during state broadcasts.¹⁶⁰ A great number of patriotic songs were

¹⁵⁹ Thak Chaloemtiarana, ed., *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957*, Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987, p. 271.

¹⁶⁰ State broadcasts were of two kinds: one was the government-run Radio Thailand presentation of news which ran 4 times a day, from 7 to 8 am, 12.30 pm to 1 pm, 7 to 7.30 pm and 8 to 8.30 pm. and second was current affairs programmes with commentary (the popular military commentary programmes were entitled *Phu'a Phaendin Thai* (For the Land of the Thai) and *Sayamma Nusati* (The Conscience of Siam). Widespread and vociferous criticism over the government's monopolisation of news and the biased stance of news presentations during the May 1992 bloodshed led to the repeal of Decrees 15 and 17 issued by the National Revolutionary Committee in 1976 to fight communism. Decree 15 required that all radio stations relay news from Radio Thailand which is an agency under the Public Relations Department of the PM's Office. Decree 17 required, among other provisions, that television programmes must not promote communism and must not terrify the public. *The Nation*, 6 October 1994 and 7 October 1994. Additionally, the military programme *Sayamma Nusati* was abolished and the commentary programme *Phu'a Phaendin Thai* changed its name to *Jai Tu'ng Jai* (heart to heart) which has the soft tone of commendation instead of the militaristic commanding style of comment as in the past.

written before and during the Phibun regime with messages that emphasised the government's policies on love for the nation, glorifying the good deeds of national heroes and the virtues of patriotism. Nearly all of them were written by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, who produced the songs to accompany his ten nationalist plays. During the period between 1934 and 1938, he wrote at least sixty songs, many of which became widely recognised and are still popular in contemporary Thailand.¹⁶¹

Songs were used extensively in three different contexts. Firstly, to increase the significance of national days, songs such as *Phleng Chat* (The National Anthem)¹⁶² and *Phleng Wan Chat* (The National Day Song) were played. *Phleng Wan Chat* demonstrates the importance of the day the country changed its governing system on the 24th of June, 1932. Secondly, they were used to accompany plays written to stimulate patriotism and unity such as *Phleng Lu'at Suphan* (The Blood of Suphan Song) from the play *Lu'at Suphan* (Blood of Suphan) and *Phleng Lu'at Thahan Thai* (The Blood of the Thai Soldiers). Finally, they were used to accompany the *Ram Wong* dance (The Circle Dance). For example, the song *Ngam Saeng Du'an* (The Beauty of the Moon), which is about the beauty of a girl compared with the moon, stresses the enjoyment of practising the *Ram Wong* dance, which helps to build unity. Also, the song *Chao Thai* (The Thai People), which is about the duty of Thai citizens, reminds them of the reason they can practise the *Ram Wong* dance - because of the peacefulness and the independence of the country.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ See appendix for examples of patriotic songs.

¹⁶² For the history of the Thai National Anthem, see Sukri Jaroensuk, *Phleng Chat* (National Anthem). Bangkok: Ru'ankaew Kanhip, 1989.

¹⁶³ The origin of the *Ram Wong* dance is *Ram Thone* from the Northeast. The Fine Arts Department had revised the *Ram Thone* dance by altering some of its "impolite" elements, for example by forbidding dancers to touch each other or banning drinking while dancing. During World War II, the *Ram Wong* dance was officially promoted and every Wednesday afternoon, all government officials and businesses stopped to allow their employees to practise the *Ram Wong*. The standard *Ram Wong* structured by the Fine Arts Department was demonstrated regularly for the public at *Sanam Luang* (Phramen Ground). Like Western ballroom dancing, the *Ram Wong* dance was considered, at the time, a means of socialising in a civilised manner. It is interesting to note that as time has gone by, the *Ram Wong* dance is no longer a suitable social practice. Rather, it is now considered a low form of entertainment and has become a means of income for prostitutes in an establishment known as *Ram Wong Bat Diew*" (one Baht *Ram Wong*) where visitors can dance with a dancer for one Baht per song.

Phra Chen Duriyang, a well-known composer and leading musician, composed a song called *Sadudi Phibun Songkhram* (Long Live Phibun Songkhram) to glorify Phibun's heroic deeds in leading the Thai nation.¹⁶⁴ Songs written during this period clearly reflect the country's socio-political atmosphere and situation. Many of the government's policies were incorporated into the songs, or were accompanied by songs when dictated. Phibun's awareness of the usefulness of these songs resulted in two more cultural mandates which were to become symbols of the importance of the nation and its leadership for the general population:

- *Ratthaniyom* No. 4: Respect the national flag, the national anthem and the anthem for his Majesty the King; and
- *Ratthaniyom* No. 6: Respect the tune and the words of the national anthem.

The Department of Publicity, or as it is presently known, *Krom Prachasamphan* (the Department of Public Relations) was, and still is, widely recognised and regarded as *Krabo'k Siang Ratthaban* (The loud-speaker of the Government). Whenever there have been signs of political turbulence and unrest, this Department has always been the primary target to be seized because taking control of the Department was a prerequisite for a successful *coup d'état*. Furthermore, as already mentioned, news was strictly controlled and monopolised by the Department. This enabled the Government to screen, manipulate and censor all information.

Other media, for example film, were also used for propagating the government's new ideology and disseminating nationalist messages. Boonrak's research on the film industry in Thailand reveals that most of the leading figures in Thai politics who possessed their own filming equipment were less interested in film production than in the possibilities of using it for propaganda.¹⁶⁵ This, he claimed, started in the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the late 1890s, when one of the Princes made documentary

¹⁶⁴ Khun Wichitmattra, *Paetsip Pi Nai Chiwit Kho'ng Khaphajao* (80 years of my life), 1980, p. 459. See also appendix.

¹⁶⁵ Boonrak Boonyaketmala, "The political economy of cultural dominance / dependence / disengagement: The transnationalised film industry in Thailand, 1897-1983," *Ph.D. thesis*, University of Hawaii, 1984, pp. 108-109.

films about the King's activities and his royal visits to other countries. Later, in the reign of King Vajiravudh, the Royal State Railway Department's film-making centre, under the guidance of Prince Kamphaeng Bejra, was said to have produced as many as seventy-four propaganda films.¹⁶⁶

After the abolition of the absolute monarchy, newsreels and films continued to be useful mechanisms for the state to instruct the public. In 1941, the film *Ban Rai Na Rao* (Our Field Our Land) was produced in support of Phibun's Cultural Mandate No. 2, which advised the people that it was treason to act as agents for foreigners, and Cultural Mandate No. 11, which advised people on which daily duties they had to undertake to be good Thai citizens. The film also demonstrated how modern peasants should look. The peasants in the film wore Western hats, shirts and boots as Phibun had observed in the West.¹⁶⁷ The film actually promoted the Western mode of dress, and Thais were advised to adopt Western clothing to replace their traditional costumes, such as the *Pa Kha-ma* (cloth wrapped around the lower body). For Phibun, such "improper" dress was a reflection of the country's backwardness and caused him great embarrassment. For him, the way to restore the country's image was for Thai citizens to dress properly as citizens generally did in the West and other "civilised" countries. Feature films produced after 1932 were usually ordered by political ruling groups and served propaganda purposes. In 1934, the film *Lu'at Thahan Thai* (The Blood of the Thai Soldiers) was made to stress the importance of having a strong military force. This film was initiated by Phibun, who was then Minister of Defence.¹⁶⁸ Even the more liberal statesman Pridi resorted to producing a feature film, *King of the White Elephant*, to promote his ideas of peace.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁶⁷ Khun Wichitmattra: 1980., p. 456.

¹⁶⁸ Khun Wichitmattra, who was assigned to direct the film, confirmed the account that Phibun wanted to show the power of Thailand's three military forces: the army, the navy and the air force. He ordered Khun Wichitmattra to make the film as realistic as possible and sent advisors from each force to assist Khun Wichitmattra during filming. Khun Wichitmattra: 1980, pp. 410-411.

¹⁶⁹ Pridi made this film in English to present Thailand as a peace-loving nation to the international community. Its premiere opened simultaneously at cinemas in Bangkok, Singapore and New York on April 1941. See Dome Sukwong, *Prawat Phapphayon Thai* (History of Thai Cinema). Bangkok: Ongkankha Kho'ng Khurusapha, 1990. For the film script, see Pridi Phanomyong,

Fine arts were also manipulated to instil in the people a sense of nationhood. Paintings, sculpture and architecture were used symbolically and openly represented "Neo-Fascist-Art Deco". A large number of these were the creation of Thailand's leading artist, Sinlapa Bhirasri (whose Italian name is Corrado Feroci). Sinlapa Bhirasri is regarded by many artists and art students as the father of modern art in Thailand. His architectural contributions during Phibun's government are the carved figures on the walls of *Anusawari Prachathippatai* (the Democracy Monument) on Ratchadamnoen Road and *Anusawari Chaisamo'raphum* (the Victory Monument).¹⁷⁰ The Democracy Monument was built to permanently remind people of the day the People's Party brought about the change in the country's political system.¹⁷¹ The Victory Monument was built to honour civilians and soldiers who died in the Thai-Franco battle and to remind people of the sacrifices their ancestors made to preserve the country's independence.¹⁷² The monuments were officially opened by Phibun on the 24th of June in 1939 and 1941. The significance of the 24th of June was stressed until the end of the Phibun regime after World War II. Today, most people have forgotten, or do not

Phrajao Chang Phu'ak (The King of the White Elephant). California: Thammasat Association, 1990.

¹⁷⁰ Piriya Krairiksh and Paothong Thongchua, "Art in Thailand since 1932: A Brief History," Art since 1932, Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1982, pp. 12-16. *Ratchadamnoen* Road was built during the Phibun regime. It was said to be the introduction of a new style of road built to have a grand architectural style like France's Champs Elysée from the design of the road itself, the pavement, the traffic island, the lighting pole on the traffic island, the building alongside the road and the monument in the middle of the road. See Nithi Iewsriwong, Mai Het Watthanatham Ruam Samai (Notes on Contemporary Culture), Praew Publishing Company, 1994, p. 50.

¹⁷¹ The Democracy Monument was built as a memorial structure to stress the day of the 24th of June 1932 - the date of the birth of the democratic system (through the coup by the People's Party). Every detail in its decoration had a special meaning. For example, the 24 metre high wings were suggestive of the date 24 June; the 75 cannons buried underneath the monument were suggestive of the year 2475; and the 6 *Phra Khan* (double-edged knives) around the monument referred to the 6 principles of the People's Party. Phibun Hatthakitkoson, "Anusawari Thai: Kansu'ksa Nai Choeng Kanmu'ang" (Public monuments in Thailand: A political study), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1984, p. 25.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26. The Thai-Franco battle occurred as a result of the dispute over Thailand's lost territory in Laos and the left bank of the Khong river which was annexed by the French. The incident coincided with Phibun's policy on territorial expansion which supported his claim that the inhabitants were of the same "Thai" race. This incident was later used in support of pan-Thaism, which was the belief of Thai people that their blood-brothers were unjustly threatened by the French and that the Thais in Thailand should take action against France in order to liberate and unite them with Thailand. The conflict took place between 1940 and 1941. France lost and Thailand regained most of the lost lands.

know, that the monuments were constructed by one of the most authoritarian and repressive regimes in modern Thailand. The Democracy Monument has been the centre point of many pro-democracy demonstrations since the 1970s, but it was actually built by a government which used democracy and the constitution as a label and cover for what was really a dictatorial regime.

In conclusion, the establishment of the Department of Publicity was the result of a new understanding that a well functioning communication network and the use of modern mass media were essential for the government because this was the only way that the masses could be reached effectively. As the communication network was directly under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister, the information disseminated could be controlled and manipulated to suit the needs of the government or Phibun and to influence the public. Phibun's nation-building policies could only be carried out if he had the co-operation of all sides, particularly the general population in both urban and rural areas. To achieve this, Phibun and his associates made effective use of all available means provided by the Department of Publicity (and later also the Department of Fine Arts, on which more details will be provided below) to spread its propaganda which "asked" the public to approve and support the government's policies. The Department of Publicity was therefore purely an instrument for propaganda established to support the implementation of the nationalist policies of the post-coup era and Phibun's regime.

2.3 The Concept of the Human Revolution

During his earlier career Luang Vichitr wrote extensively about desirable human characteristics, self-advancement, duty and Japan's military code of warrior *Bushido*. He used these ideas to formulate the concept of the "*Manut Patiwat*" (Human Revolution) and used his definition of what constituted a "revolution" to justify the revolution of the People's Party in 1932. He argued that a revolution can be a force for the good and bring about many benefits for all the people. Without a revolution, there would not be enough change and as a result the nation would suffer. In order to be successful, however, a revolution must gain the support from the people. A revolution

is therefore a positive thing, but is also very difficult to undertake. It may start by way of a *Ratthaprahan (coup d'état)*, but after the coup, the real work of the revolution starts and may take many years to complete. This is because a revolution is not complete without changing the political, economic, financial and education systems. Most importantly, a real revolution requires one more change: the change in the behaviour and habits of the nation's people.¹⁷³

In Luang Vichitr's view, many revolutionary governments start by changing the political system, and then review the economic and education systems. These are considered the main mechanisms required for a nation to function properly. However, they also need to consider the human element, *i.e.* the general population of the country, in order to be successful in the long-term. Revolutionaries who ignore this can only succeed partially - and a partially successful revolution is like digging oneself a graveyard as it will almost certainly fail. This graveyard, according to Luang Vichitr, may not only consume the revolutionaries but also the entire nation and race.¹⁷⁴ He believed that the most important factor a revolutionary should pay attention to is the underlying attitude and way of thinking of the people. Compared with their Western counterparts, Phibun and Luang Vichitr agreed that the Thai people were still "uncivilised" and that this was causing the country to lag behind other nations. Luang Vichitr felt that this was partly caused by the people's behaviour and thinking. As the People's Party revolution intended to modernise the country, it was therefore

¹⁷³ In his Kutsalobai Sang Khwam Yingyai (Strategies to Achieve Greatness), Luang Vichitr referred to the greatness in carrying out a revolution since it meant real political greatness. Political greatness meant achieving independence since this was every country's goal. However, he made a clear distinction between a *Patiwat* (revolution) and a *Ratthaprahan (coup d'état)* in that a revolution means not only a change of leadership but also a change in the lives and hearts of the people - and it is the latter which is the most important thing. A revolution could be first achieved by staging a *coup d'état* in order to gain political power. After that a "real" revolution must be carried out. This kind of revolution, for him, was an improvement in the social, political, and educational aspects of life including the improvement of human behaviour. See Vichitr Vadakarn, Kutsalobai Sang Khwam Yingyai (Strategies to Achieve Greatness), Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1969, pp. 285-287.

¹⁷⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Manut Patiwat" (Human Revolution), Pathakatha Lae Khambanyai (Speeches and Lectures), vol. 1, Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1973, p. 322.

necessary to change the people's behaviour and mentality.¹⁷⁵ The revolution could only be complete and successful if accompanied by a human revolution.¹⁷⁶

Luang Vichitr gave a speech on *Manut Patiwat* at the Defence Society in 1939, which was also later transmitted via a radio broadcast. According to Luang Vichitr, revolutionaries often focused their activities on overthrowing the old political system or economic policy. In doing so, they tended to overlook the importance of changing people's attitude and behaviour. In other words, they ignored the importance of the human revolution. He suggested that there were four possible causes for this, as discussed below.

1. They believed too much in (political) theories. This was the result of idolisation of theory and the belief that theory could be effectively applied to everything. However, this belief ignores the fact that an important part of a nation is its people. Human issues need to be addressed and political theory means little to a large part of the population.
2. A fear of provoking resentment by trying to alter people's behaviour. Changing people's conduct and habits may involve the difficult task of telling them why they have to change: *i.e.*, because they are considered inferior and uncivilised. People do not like to change their habits and attempting to force them to do so is likely to create strong feelings of discontent.
3. Concern about the honour of the nation. This concern may have existed due to a fear that other nations could see that the people were not sufficiently civilised and therefore needed to be educated and directed.¹⁷⁷ Luang Vichitr said that in civilised countries, governments did not direct their people on what they should do or what they should not do because people already knew their duties. However, if the

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁶ According to Luang Vichitr, "Human Revolution" can have three different meanings. The first is about changing physical appearance. The second is about the status of the human being in society, for example the abolition of slavery or the class system and the introduction of rights and freedom for the individual. The third meaning or direction of revolution can be the change of people's behaviour, habits and attitudes. For Phibun and Luang Vichitr, the most important was the third way.

¹⁷⁷ He used this to justify the Cultural Mandates.

government realised that their people did not fully understand their duties as good citizens, then the government should be prepared to lose some face and correct the people's behaviour and thinking.

4. Fear that the revolution may backfire. When revolutionaries prepare or carry out a revolution, they declare that the old system is unsuitable for the country and its people. The system therefore has to be changed to make it suitable. However, by declaring this, it is difficult for the revolutionaries to do something about one major problem: the people. The revolutionaries do not dare to say that it is now the people who are unsuitable for the new system and so nothing is done.

According to Luang Vichitr, it does not matter how good the new political system is and how much effort has been put into improving the economic system if the behaviour and habits of the people are not changed. If the revolution was to survive, people had to change their behaviour and attitudes along the lines prescribed by the new authorities.

In his speech, Luang Vichitr argued that the government understood the importance of the human revolution very well, and had started to work on it seriously. The methods that were used included the *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates), public speeches on the radio by Phibun and others and the radio talks between *Nai Man Chuchat* (Mr. Uplifts the Nation) and *Nai Khong Rakthai* (Mr. Loves Thailand).¹⁷⁸ Luang Vichitr's thoughts and advice indeed seem to have had a profound influence on Phibun, especially with respect to his cultural programme. Phibun thus appointed Luang Vichitr as the chairman of the *Ratthaniyom* Committee which was responsible for the drafting of the

¹⁷⁸ For example, the Phibun government announced the National Cultural Act of 1942/1943 ordering: (1) orderliness in dress, behaviour and etiquette in public places, (2) orderliness in personal care and care of the home, (3) orderliness in personal behaviour looking to the honour of the nation and the Buddhist religion, (4) efficiency and etiquette in occupational pursuits, (5) spiritual and moral development of the people, (6) progress in literary and artistic works and (7) appreciation of all things Thai. Those who violate the act will be fined up to one hundred Baht or imprisoned for no longer than one month or both. H.R.H. Prince Wan Waithayakon, "Thai Culture" (lecture delivered before the Thailand Research Society, 27 February 1944), The Centennial of His Royal Highness Prince Wan Waithayakon, 1991, p. 35.

twelve issues of the *Ratthaniyom*.¹⁷⁹ The Cultural Mandates were not laws, but a set of guidelines calling for the co-operation of the public.¹⁸⁰ However, not following the *Cultural Mandates* was inadvisable and most people felt compelled to comply. Ultimately, the goal of the *Ratthaniyom* was to implant a new national consciousness in the minds of the people. The mandates could be announced promptly at the will of the leader (often based on suggestions by Luang Vichitr) and without having to pass through a parliamentary approval process. The cultural mandates, or, to use Luang Vichitr's term, *Kotmai Thang Jai* (law of the mind) became the most effective means of influencing the people's way of life, habits, beliefs, and customs. Changing these was deemed a necessary step forward in the creation of a modern Thai state and therefore it was a priority for Phibun and Luang Vichitr to 'brainwash' the people and make them accept the authoritarian regime.

Luang Vichitr explained that ordering people to grow vegetables in their gardens (Cultural Mandate No. 11), was a good example of the government's ongoing work on the human revolution.¹⁸¹ Growing vegetables in gardens was not only beneficial for the family, but also for the whole nation. This not only produced food, but also instilled a new and positive attitude in the people towards work which, in turn, brought about

¹⁷⁹ *Ratthaniyom* (or State Conventions or Cultural Mandates) were announcements aimed at changing the outlook of the people on a variety of subjects in an attempt to make Thailand a civilised country. Between 1939 and 1942, twelve *Ratthaniyom* were issued:

1. *Ratthaniyom* on the names of the country, people and nationality (June 24, 1939).
2. *Ratthaniyom* on protecting the country's security (July 3, 1939).
3. *Ratthaniyom* on the name of the Thai people (August 2, 1939).
4. *Ratthaniyom* on saluting the national flag, National Anthem and Royal Anthem (September 8, 1939).
5. *Ratthaniyom* on the use of Thai products (November 1, 1939).
6. *Ratthaniyom* on the tune and words of the National Anthem (December 10, 1939).
7. *Ratthaniyom* on calling the Thais to build their nation (March 21, 1940).
8. *Ratthaniyom* on the Royal Anthem (April 26, 1940).
9. *Ratthaniyom* on the Thai language and the duties of good citizens (June 24, 1940).
10. *Ratthaniyom* on the dress of the Thais (January 15, 1941).
11. *Ratthaniyom* on the daily routine work of the Thais (September 8, 1941).
12. *Ratthaniyom* on the treatment of children, the aged and the handicapped (January 28, 1942).

¹⁸⁰ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Pathakhatha Ru'ang Ratthaniyom" (Speech on the Cultural Mandates), So'. Tho'. 0701.29.4

¹⁸¹ *Ratthaniyom* No.11 (8 September 1941) concerned the daily life of the Thai people, who are to distribute their time properly for their occupation, their personal affairs and their recreation and repose.

benefits for the whole nation. He wanted people to become industrious and constructive instead of idle and lazy. Gardening, for Luang Vichitr, was not a trivial activity but a crucial part of the human revolution programme which fostered new virtues. Luang Vichitr intended to make the habit of building or growing something a part of the Thai people's mentality - he wanted to instil a work ethic in them:

“Kitchen-gardening is an important element of the human revolution. The point about kitchen-gardening is about generating extra income by growing vegetables, the more important purpose [of the this mandate] is about cultivating a working mentality and the attitude to create and build things for the nation . . .”¹⁸²

In Luang Vichitr's opinion, the Thai people were not strong and hard-working enough. They lacked mental strength and determination, rather than strength in the physical sense. History has proven that Thai people have always been able to defend their country or to re-establish Thai independence after defeat - even in extreme circumstances. However, after victories, they returned to their homes and enjoyed the riches of the tropical environment, which provided them with all they needed. Luang Vichitr explained that in modern times this was no longer sustainable. The nation could suffer military defeat on the battlefield, and it could also suffer defeat due to economic weakness, that is loss of the economic “war” between nations due to slow economic development. Using this argument, Luang Vichitr emphasised that the people's contribution was an integral and crucial part in the national development programme of the government.

According to Luang Vichitr, the absolute monarchy and the country's political and administrative system prior to the 1932 coup had given people erroneous beliefs and ideas. He particularly condemned the classical literature promoted by the old regime, which was influenced by other cultures, languages, and religions (*e.g.* Ceylon Buddhist teachings), for providing the Thai people with misguided values and the wrong role models. He criticised, for example, the literary classic *Ramakien* (Ramayana), a Thai version of an Indian epic, for portraying an inappropriate concept of leadership. He

¹⁸² Vichitr Vadamarn, *Manut Patiwat*, *op cit.*, p. 323. Gardening as a virtuous activity was highlighted in the story of Makatho in the play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*.

claimed that the achievements of the hero of this story, Phra Ram (Rama), were not the result of Phra Ram's courage, perseverance, or hard-work. Phra Ram was a physically fragile, indecisive and ineffectual, though handsome, hero who defeated his enemies without gallantry in combat. He won because of his divine royal birth, the support of other gods (Phra Ram was a god reborn in a human being), and the merit he had accrued in the past. Luang Vichitr bemoaned that Phra Ram, like many other heroes in Thai literature, was respected and adored for being successful without doing much. These were not messages and values that Luang Vichitr wanted to reach the people. They did not teach people to work hard and to fight for their nation, both of which were required in the building of a modern civilisation.¹⁸³

Luang Vichitr felt that literary works of the past often created the misconceptions that those who strove for nothing were persons with good karma or good merit. To him, if these incorrect perceptions and attitudes were not addressed urgently, it would bring great danger to the nation. Moreover, he lamented the fact that working was considered a lowly activity and was something undesirable. All this needed urgent attention and rectification. A love of work had to be instilled in the Thai people. Workers should be proud of their professions, instead of being embarrassed or dreaming of not having to work. The main aims of the human revolution, therefore, were to encourage a love of work and a striving for self-reliance and independence.¹⁸⁴

In order to correct public behaviour, professions which could influence the public should disseminate messages that were in line with the human revolution. Because of his experience as an author, Luang Vichitr fully recognised that writers can influence their readers in several ways. His opinion was that writers, and journalists in particular, possessed the power to persuade their readers to believe in what they wrote. Luang Vichitr felt that this special power should be used to benefit the government. Whenever

¹⁸³ The idea was developed in his earlier work, *Mahaburut* (The Great Men). See Chapter 1 for a comparison.

¹⁸⁴ In fact, Luang Vichitr's attitude towards the Thai people concerning their lack of industry was already apparent as early as May 1932 when he delivered a speech on *Khvam Kiatkhran* (Laziness) during a radio broadcast. He said that being lazy would not only curtail the development of oneself but it would also hold back the country's progression (*Thuang Khvam Jaroen*).

the government wanted something for which it required the public's approval, it should ask for help from the owners or the editors of newspapers, who could persuade their readership that the government's policies were correct.¹⁸⁵ Novelists could also help by providing new role models. They should write stories about tough, hard-working and diligent characters. This would create a new image of fictional heroes and heroines (as opposed to the undesirable image and values projected in classical literature such as *Ramakien*) as well as instil in the readers new attitudes and beliefs.

Luang Vichitr's concept of the human revolution received overwhelming support from the public. In a letter to Luang Vichitr, Phra Maha Tho'ngsuk, a senior monk in Saraburi province, asked for a copy of Luang Vichitr's speech to use for teaching the local people.¹⁸⁶ A similar request came from a monk from Phetchaburi province, who agreed with Luang Vichitr's nationalist ideas and plans to advance the country through encouraging the people to work harder.

"I wish to encourage people in their feeling of love for the nation, and desire to see the Thai nation progress with the helping hand of the present statesmen who are leading the Thai nation. Although I am a person under the Buddhist monk's yellow robes and people may not agree with my involvement in politics, I cannot stop myself from co-operating with the government to bring advancement to the Thai nation and the Thai people."¹⁸⁷

Requests such as these were significant as monks played a central role in educating people, particularly in the rural areas. Support from the monks in spreading Luang Vichitr's *Manut Patiwat* meant having representatives who had a powerful influence on the people.

Luang Vichitr believed that there were two national duties. One was to help the country maintain its independence and the other was a duty to further the country's reputation as a civilised nation amongst foreigners. To achieve the first goal, people's

¹⁸⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kamnoet Kho'ng Nangsu'phim" (The Emergence of Newspaper, 1930), *Vichitr San*, vol. 1, 1965, pp. 115-119.

¹⁸⁶ So'. Tho'. 0701.1/36, p. 76.

¹⁸⁷ So'. Tho'. 0701.1/36, p. 38.

habits and attitudes had to be changed. The second goal, which had more emphasis on culture, could also be accomplished through the manipulation and development of arts. His basic idea was that a nation such as Thailand, which had developed its own sophisticated arts, had gone through a long period of cultural civilisation and, therefore, would receive admiration and honour for this.¹⁸⁸

“Arts are a nation’s treasure. A nation that does not have its own arts is not a nation with respect. Although it can be regarded as a nation in legal terms, it cannot be regarded as a nation in reality. Any nations that are regarded as genuine nations must possess their own arts which differ from the others and must prove their original creativity.”¹⁸⁹

Art, according to Luang Vichitr, was important because it reflected the progress of the nation. Having unique and sophisticated art forms suggested a long history of struggle to preserve the nation’s own cultural identity, which in turn meant that the country had been civilised for a long period. When building the nation, art could be used as a tool to influence and educate the masses. As Luang Vichitr stated: “art is a very powerful tool in convincing people to go in the direction we want, so, why not use art for such a purpose?”¹⁹⁰ Furthermore:

“For the celebration of the constitution, we use the arts to remind the people of the importance of the constitution; for the launching ceremony of the new battleship, we use the arts to make people realise the importance of having a navy; for the celebration of New Year’s Day, we use the arts to promote the customs of the nation. . .”¹⁹¹

Luang Vichitr’s *Jitwitthaya Kanmu’ang* (Political Psychology) revealed his belief that emotion was more important than reason. He thought that to make the general public understand was more difficult than to convince them and get their approval. This was because understanding required reasoning, which was difficult to convey. However,

¹⁸⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Kansinlapako’n” (Fine Arts, 1935), Athibo’di Khon Raek Kho’ng Krom Sinlapako’n (The First Director-General of the Fine Arts Department). Ed. The Fine Arts Department, 1992, p. 66.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹¹ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Nattasin” (Performing Arts, 1936), Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso’n, vol. 2, 1962, p. 101.

the “hearts of the people” could be easily won through the manipulation of their emotions. Once ideas had been planted in this way, they would be hard to dislodge. For propaganda to be successful, it had to appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect.¹⁹²

In his essay on *Nattasin* (Performing Arts), written in 1936, Luang Vichitr wrote about two forms of entertainment: variety and drama. He was more interested in the dramatic form because it reflected people’s way of life and their activities. Moreover, entertainment with dramatic appeal created excitement and thus gained more interest from the audience. In his opinion, this was the reason that entertainment in narrative form, which had been popular in the old days, had developed into drama.¹⁹³ He stressed that the advantage of live demonstration was that it had a lasting impression on the audience. Therefore, if one wanted to issue instructions in an interesting way, one should choose a form of dramatic art:

“Life is about people, there is no better way than to tell a story of a person’s life than through people [actors] because this will have a much more lasting impression on the audience than any other method. If the intention is to teach without boring the audience, then it is necessary to use performing arts as an instrument to help in this. Plays are means by which a lasting impression is left through moving images.”¹⁹⁴

Since the earlier introduction of Western dramatic elements into Thai drama there had been a dispute about the appropriateness of changing traditional drama. One group of people, who, according to Luang Vichitr, understood little about dance-drama, felt that traditional performances were too long to enjoy. Another group of people, who overemphasised the importance of traditional and aesthetic elements, felt that adapted dance-drama performances and modern plays were too short. Luang Vichitr suggested

¹⁹² Vichitr Vadakarn, *Jitwitthaya Kanmu'ang* (Political Psychology, 1947), Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1950, pp. 62-63.

¹⁹³ In the past, people sought entertainment by listening to a story-teller. Later, they put the story into a poetic rhythm and recited it. This kind of recitation is known as *Kankhap Sepha* (Sepha recitation). From the Sepha recitation, the way people told stories developed and people began to perform them. This basic demonstration later developed into a dramatic form that made the performance more entertaining.

¹⁹⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Nattasin”, *op cit.*, p. 81.

a compromise. Traditional dramatists should cut out unnecessary elements in old dramatic forms, *i.e.* the repetitiveness of the narrative poem in the dramatic texts, and should use dance-drama to influence and teach people.¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, modern-minded reformers should appreciate the value of the traditional art forms.

Luang Vichitr positioned himself as an arbitrator for these two groups. Actually, the aims of the modernist camp suited his propaganda goals well. However, he was aware that cutting out too many traditional dramatic elements would lessen the value of Thai drama, particularly as he was also concerned with proving that Thailand had a long history of civilisation and arts. While his proposed compromise was aimed at solving the conflict, it also served his own aims. For propaganda to be effective, he knew that the classical form had to be simplified to make it easier for ordinary people to understand and follow. Luang Vichitr's role in this process had a profound impact on traditional dramatic arts and eventually brought about a replacement of the old aesthetic values with the new.

The reason that many people failed to appreciate works of art, Luang Vichitr believed, was due to a lack of knowledge and education. Luang Vichitr lamented that the work of the arts was *Ngan Nerakhun* (a thankless task) and that a person who supported the arts was also looked down upon.¹⁹⁶ Luang Vichitr concluded his essay on *Nattasin* in a grand style, showing how strongly he intended to instil nationalistic feeling and pride in his readers. He quoted the wife of an American senator who had said that Thai dance was among the best dramatic arts in the world and that the Burmese, Shans and Thais (in Laos) should agree to praise Siam as the centre of arts: "Siam is the heart of the Golden Land whereas Athens is the heart of Greece".¹⁹⁷ By quoting her, Luang Vichitr showed his extreme nationalism by implying that Siam was the apex of cultural civilisation in the region and was already recognised as such by other civilised people.

¹⁹⁵ See So' Tho'. 0707.1/187, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Nattasin", *op cit.*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106. Luang Vichitr did not mention the name of the senator's wife. He only wrote that she was the wife of an American senator who was once an American ambassador in Paris. Although he does not provide a name, it does reflect Luang Vichitr's preference in referring to foreign sources or examples as a way to increase the authority of his claims.

Luang Vichitr developed a new form of drama which he used for two purposes: for his “cultural propaganda” and to achieve his human revolution. His drama had an emotional impact in order to win over the minds of people. He believed that people would unconsciously receive didactic messages through dramatic experiences. It would be a great failure if such messages were expressed in a form of direct teaching as people would not respond to an approach which was too serious, or too direct:

“We should praise writers. In fact, novels and non-fiction both contain values and can be used for teaching. The people will unconsciously absorb these values during the course of reading them. Moreover, a revolutionary or a person who wants to revolutionise the minds and thoughts of people should not write in an academic way but put the relevant contents into the form of a novel or play. . . . Novels and plays are tools that can have an enormous impact. They have the capacity to influence the minds of the masses.”¹⁹⁸

Luang Vichitr linked the use of arts to his human revolution. The two could be used together to increase each other’s effectiveness. Through performing arts, he could convey messages and nationalistic ideas that would inspire the audience and encourage them to take up the new ideology. Luang Vichitr chose to promote his concept of human revolution through his authorship of stage plays. He wrote, produced and directed every play himself. As a writer, he could develop his characters as strong-willed, educated and industrious, thus projecting them as role models of “good” people. His models were never bored or discouraged while helping to develop the nation, they never thought twice about sacrificing their lives for the nation and never questioned what the government wanted them to do. His cleverness in plotting plays with an emotional appeal that could evoke strong sympathy was a source of inspiration and motivation for his large audience. In addition to this, his position as Director-General of the Fine Arts Department provided him with full financial support and authority to manage his plays. As a producer, there was no need for him to struggle in

¹⁹⁸ Vichitr Vadamarn, “Khvam Ru Bang Ru'ang Kiewkap Kanpraphan Lae Kanlakho'n” (Some Knowledge about Writing and Drama, 1956), Athibo'di Khon Raek Kho'ng Krom Sinlapako'n (The first Director-General of the Fine Arts Department), 1992, p. 82.

getting financial sponsorship, as his plays had a self-administered state-subsidy. In addition, as a director, he could emphasise his propaganda messages.

2.4 The Fine Arts Department and the Drama and Music School

Krom Sinlapako'n (the Fine Arts Department) was re-established on the 29th of January 1933, one year after the abolition of the absolute monarchy.¹⁹⁹ Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, then Chief of Protocol of the Foreign Office, a lecturer on History at Chulalongkorn University, and an established writer, was appointed as its Director-General.

It was part of the government's plan to bring exclusive court customs and important art objects under the care of the Fine Arts Department as part of Siam's national heritage. This plan was carried out very cautiously. The Department was projected as the academic centre for all kinds of art. This was to benefit the development of national education in the arts. The Department would also revive national arts, traditions and customs which were considered to be associated with "Thai-ness", to arouse the people's sense of pride in their heritage. Another objective of the Department was to stage its dramatic adaptations to an international audience. Providing performances for foreigners would help to strengthen the national economy through the development of the tourist industry and project an image of a developed society with modern arts.

Luang Vichitr's appointment was controversial. He had gained much recognition for his diplomatic and political achievements, but none of his previous duties, apart from his writing, had involved the arts. Within a week, *Thai Mai* newspaper published a three-part interview series on Luang Vichitr about his new responsibility in the Fine Arts Department. The newspaper suggested that his contributions to the field of arts

¹⁹⁹ The Fine Arts Department was first established during the reign of King Rama VI by combining works from *Krasuang Yotha* (the Ministry of Civil Engineering) and from *Krom Phiphitthaphan* (the Department of Museums) to be *Krom Sinlapako'n* (the Department of Fine Arts) under the Ministry of the Palace. Later, it merged with *Ratchabandittayasapha* (the Royal Institute) and changed its name to *Sinlapako'nsathan* (the Place of Arts). The Fine Arts Department was dissolved in 1926. The Director of the Fine Arts Department, "Kham Banyai Ru'ang Kitjakan Krom Sinlapako'n" (Lecture on the responsibilities of the Fine Arts Department, 1953), So'. Tho'. 0701.1.1/ 14.

were possibly less productive than his contribution to politics. In defence, Luang Vichitr argued that he had not been the first choice for the post and that the government had earlier approached another person.²⁰⁰ However, the position was eventually granted to him with the support of Phibun Songkhram and Pridi Phanomyong because his knowledge of literature would be useful for one of the main duties of the Director-General, which was to look after the National Library.²⁰¹

However, while it is true that he had an outstanding knowledge of literature, his duty towards the National Library was only of minor importance. One of his main responsibilities was actually to set up and run *Phanaek Lakho'n and Sangkhit* (the Entertainment Section).²⁰² He had little experience in this area. While he was a strong admirer of French theatre and knew the songs and music of many of the productions by heart (to the extent that they were later to inspire some of the musical compositions in his plays) he had almost no direct experience in the field of performing arts.

On the charge that he had more to contribute to politics than to art, Luang Vichitr admitted that despite his deep love of the arts, he viewed himself as a diplomat and not an artist. Now that he had become the Director-General, he felt that it was necessary to force himself to become an artist.²⁰³ However, he argued that his new responsibility for art and culture would actually be very beneficial to the nation. He believed that the arts enhanced the human mind and helped fulfil human lives and were necessary for humankind. In his view, art differentiated men from animals. Besides, art could exert moral control over people. Luang Vichitr recommended that if the government wanted to develop the country into a modern civilisation with strong public morals, the government should uphold the arts along with political and economic reforms.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Withi Tham Ngan Lae Sang Anakhot*, *op cit.*, p. 157.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² The entertainment affairs were the additional tasks for the existing sections of the library, museum and fine arts. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-161.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁰⁴ *Thai Mai*, 4 February 1933.

Luang Vichitr also argued that the Fine Arts Department could support the political goals of the government, as people who were aware of their national heritage would be more devoted to the nation. Luang Vichitr was confident that “to increase political awareness, people will have a strong feeling of devotion to the nation when they realise what national heritage is.”²⁰⁵ He pointed out that the arts were important for two reasons: they instilled in people pride of their cultural roots; and they helped the country to gain international recognition. The arts were important to the government, which believed that showing off Thailand’s rich cultural heritage would position Thailand, in the eyes of its own people and more importantly in the eyes of foreigners, above its neighbouring countries.

It is therefore likely that Luang Vichitr was given his new post because of his own ambitions and his close association with Pridi and Phibun. The three had first met in Paris.²⁰⁶ There they were influenced by the deep admiration of the educated French for the arts. During the Boworadet Rebellion in 1933, Luang Vichitr had proved to Pridi and Phibun his skills and usefulness. Although initially excluded from a direct involvement in politics, he had been able to gradually gain influence and was given the post of Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, this position did not completely fulfil his ambitions and it is quite likely that he was involved in some unofficial negotiations, possibly with the support of Phibun and Pridi, to attain this important position at the Fine Arts Department.

Very soon after he was given the post of Director of the Fine Arts Department, Luang Vichitr set up Thailand’s first *Rongrian Nattaduriyongsat* (Drama and Music School). The school was modelled upon France’s *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* and *Ecole de la Danse et Musique* and through this Luang Vichitr set about using arts as a propaganda tool to promote nationalism, educate people and to correct the behaviour of Thai people.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ So'. Tho'. 0701.1.1/14, p. 1.

²⁰⁶ Pridi was a close friend of Luang Vichitr. During their years in France, they were known to be very active members of the Thai student club. (See Chapter 1) Luang Vichitr also dedicated his *Universal History* series volume 3 to Pridi and wrote: “For a friend who can die for me”.

²⁰⁷ Vichitr Vadamarn, “Kanchai Sinlapa Phu'a Oprom” (The Use of Arts for Giving Instructions). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadamarn Room, Thailand National Library, n.d., pp. 1-5.

He argued that he had not initiated the idea to set up the School, claiming that it was already part of the government's plan and that he had been drafted by Jao Phraya Thammasakmontri, the Minister of Education. Again, this explanation is significantly understating the extent to which he was responsible for setting up the School.²⁰⁸

Luang Vichitr had in fact been actively involved in defining the purpose of the School. He wrote the Charter of the School and in the first draft suggested that its students should become *Anu Samachik Samakhom Khana Ratthathammanun* (Junior Members of the Constitution Society) and get involved in the promotion of the constitution.²⁰⁹ This proposal indicates his own political ambitions and his intention to use the School as a political propaganda tool.²¹⁰ Like the *Hitler Jugend* in Germany, where youths were encouraged to support the regime, this approach of engendering nationalism at an early age would contribute to the spread of nationalist ideology.²¹¹

Luang Vichitr believed that the Department and its School should not only aim at elevating the standard of the arts in education and promoting works of art to the public, but also play a significant role in supporting the new regime. In order to achieve this, they had to provide artistic resources and materials to increase patriotism and promote nationalism to the public. The role of the Department and its School was to be a state mechanism for the nationalist campaign. Luang Vichitr's idea of using the School to consciously influence the public reflected ideas developed elsewhere, in particular Germany, Italy and Japan. In Nazi Germany, for example, earlier in the year

²⁰⁸ However, this account seems to contradict Khunying Praphaphan's account. In an interview, she said that because Luang Vichitr had spent many years in France, he wanted to establish an institute similar to the French *Ecole de la Danse et Musique* in Thailand. She further stated that Luang Vichitr's idea was quickly endorsed without any objections by the Minister of Education as they were very close friends and Luang Vichitr used to be his assistant. Vibun Vichitr Vadakarn, "Prawat Chiwit Khunying Praphaphan Vichitr Vadakarn" (Biographical Account of Khunying Praphaphan Vichitr Vadakarn), *Anuso'n Khunying Praphaphan Vichitr Vadakarn*, 1993, p. 19.

²⁰⁹ So'. Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 40.

²¹⁰ Luang Vichitr was one of the founders of this Society and its Secretary-General.

²¹¹ Phibun had founded *Yuwachon Thahan* (a military youth corp) early in 1936. Luang Vichitr tried to create a similar youth corp for civilians.

the Ministry of Popular Entertainment and Propaganda had been placed under the control of Adolf Hitler's chief manipulator, Joseph Goebbels.²¹²

The motion to make the students of the School members of the Constitution Society met strong opposition.²¹³ Luang Suphachalasai, a member of the Constitution Society, argued that students had not developed sufficiently mature judgement to participate in such political activities. Moreover, their involvement could create great confusion and trouble for the country.²¹⁴ There is further account neither of how Luang Vichitr responded, nor regarding the implementation of this idea. However, all references to the support of the constitution had to be deleted in the final version of the regulations of the School.²¹⁵

Nevertheless, Luang Vichitr's intention to modernise performing arts and use the School for political propaganda remained unchanged. He only needed to be more cautious in implementing his plan. Although the official aims of the School, listed below, did not include any references to the support of the constitution, they reflected the influence of Luang Vichitr:

1. to uphold the national arts of Drama and Music, and adapt traditional dramatic production in conformity with the modern tastes and objectives;

²¹² Barmé: 1993, p. 115. Goebbels took office as Reichsminister of Propaganda in 1933 at the age of thirty-five (coincidentally Luang Vichitr was born in the same year as Goebbels and took up a similar post around that time) and was the youngest minister in any government in the world at the time. However, the major difference in duty between him and Luang Vichitr was that Goebbels used film as a propaganda medium whereas Luang Vichitr employed theatre. Goebbels' most infamous propaganda film was *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) which projected the anti-Jewish sentiment by showing rats intercut with pictures of Jews. See Laurence Rees, Selling Politics, London: BBC Books, 1992, pp. 18-25.

²¹³ Seriphap, 13 July 1934.

²¹⁴ So' Tho'. 0701.48/4, p. 132.

²¹⁵ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 9. There are also hand-written notes on the earlier proposal, probably by Luang Vichitr and his secretary, which indicate that the direct references had not been agreed on - probably because of their political nature. Although the direct references had been taken out, Luang Vichitr's informal notes regarding the establishment of the school provide further evidence for Luang Vichitr's firm intention to use the school as a political propaganda tool. So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 44. Even though the references were taken out, the first play he himself wrote and directed was *Luk Raththammanun* (Children of the Constitution).

2. to educate artists and musicians so that the dramatic arts could be used to help improve the education and morality of the people; and
3. to help drama and music artists to carry out their professions with the same honour and respectability as in other countries, and to prevent a recurrence of the old days when artistic professions were looked down upon and detested.²¹⁶

The first objective, to preserve and popularise traditional arts, recommended that not all dramatic conventions should be preserved. Instead, some elements should be altered or omitted to produce a new piece of work which was more in conformity with modern times. However, Luang Vichitr did not give a clear example of how he would achieve this and it appears that his real intention was modernisation rather than preservation. He effectively disguised his intention by arguing that without some alteration traditional arts would be marginalised. Although this appears to be a valid argument, his real aim was to mix traditional arts with more modern (civilised) western techniques, to make theatre more dramatic and less sophisticated.

Traditional performing arts, particularly classical forms such as *Lakho'n Ram* and *Khon* (as opposed to drama for the public with folk elements), were too elitist, refined, and slow moving for public consumption. Because of their complexity, traditional performances were not effective in influencing the larger public, which was accustomed to more entertaining and faster moving performances such as the *Likey* or *Rabam* folk dances. However, these types of drama were not acceptable to Luang Vichitr as they did not represent proper Thai art and culture. In order to serve the aims of propaganda, it was necessary to search for appropriate artistic means which would appeal to a wider audience. Luang Vichitr chose to use the modernised dance-drama style. Alterations were made and new elements were introduced to make the plays more spectacular, thus increasing their popularity and achieving a wider dissemination of the messages they contained.

Luang Vichitr particularly wanted to make use of history and myths to create a strong impact on the audience, which would help him to convey his nationalist messages more

²¹⁶ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 9.

effectively. As a self-taught historian, he realised the power of history and mythology. He once compared historians with God, claiming that historians were more powerful than God because they could alter the past.²¹⁷ He knew that the use of myths could be very effective, because they could be turned into historical “facts” if properly presented and built into a real historical context.²¹⁸ Moreover, Luang Vichitr was aware that myths were popular with Thai audiences as most stories performed in the *Khon* and *Lakho'n* were based on religious mythology concerning the births, wars, love affairs, conflicts, and miracles of the gods, god-incarnations, semi-gods, divine rulers and superhuman beings. However, Luang Vichitr preferred myths related to the acts of Thai heroes protecting the Thai nation over religion and superstition. He was following an old tradition of Thai rulers up to the Rattanakosin/Bangkok era, who had frequently manipulated chronicles to recreate or modify history. He was also following the example of King Vajiravudh, who had used history for nationalist purposes.

The apparent preservation of traditional arts was important because Luang Vichitr needed to please those who were against the introduction of new elements. His position and authority were still not very strong and doubts in his ability to ensure the long-term survival of the School persisted. The resources of the School were initially very limited and, as it lacked its own building, part of the National Museum had to be used. Gaining support from others and explaining to them why traditional drama had to be adapted was therefore important. In a letter to Prince Chulajakkaphong, Luang Vichitr wrote about his approach to preserving traditional drama.²¹⁹ He explained to the Prince that the artists who were working outside the Fine Arts Department would

²¹⁷ Somkiat Wanthana, “The Politics of Modern Thai Historiography,” Ph.D thesis, Monash University, 1986, p. 341.

²¹⁸ A similar view can also be found in his book *Kutsalobai Sang Khwam Yingyai* (Strategies to Achieve Greatness, 1952) which he illustrated how various well-known people had reached their achievements in life by different means. The most interesting view in Chapter Two, is, on achieving greatness through ritual as a way of reassuring mass support. Luang Vichitr noted that ritual was a powerful tool by which to achieve greatness. Although ritual was constructed from a false foundation, in terms of a psychological aspect, he said, ritual was a mind-convincing approach to restrain one’s desire. Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kutsalobai Sang Khwam Yingyai*, *op cit*.

²¹⁹ Prince Chulajakkaphong is the grandson of King Rama V and a cousin of King Rama VIII (1935-1946) and the present king (Rama IX, 1946-present). He received his education in England where he pursued a degree in History at Cambridge University. He was known as the only royal biographer of the *Chakri* Dynasty, having written: Lords of Life: A history of the kings of Thailand. He was also very influential at the time.

change the country into one dominated by artificial foreign culture by emulating inartistic foreign dance and musical tunes and mixing them with Thai lyrics. These artists, according to Luang Vichitr, were destroying Thailand's traditional arts and activities.²²⁰

“The preservation of traditional arts cannot be achieved by just practising old techniques. . . . This will only result in gradual decline. Traditional arts can only be preserved by using new techniques and forms of presentation, for example, using modern settings and lighting which are more beautiful than the old ones. The presentation needs to be modernised, but the genuine essence of traditional arts remains the same.”²²¹

Luang Vichitr had been keen to increase his control over the performing arts and establish the Department (and thus the School) as their centre. After King Prachathipok's abdication in 1935, he was able to effect the transfer of the cultural section of the Royal Household to the Fine Arts Department. Most significant for the School was the transfer of artists from the Royal *Khon* and *Lakho'n*.²²² Luang Vichitr justified this transfer by arguing that these artists had to contribute to the maintenance of the constitutional system and that their duty was to entertain the public as a whole. Furthermore, the change of the system of government meant that their employment under the court patronage was no longer appropriate. Luang Vichitr thus stressed to them that they should be proud of their new role, which, if compared with previous duties, was of far greater importance because it contributed to the needs of the whole nation. Amongst their main duties were:

“To protect and preserve national arts, to demonstrate to foreigners that we have civilisation and culture, to help the people live happily and joyfully, to educate the younger generation by using arts as a tool, to persuade the Thai race, which is dispersed in different regions, that the centre of civilisation and culture is Siam.”²²³

²²⁰ So' Tho'. 0701.31/4, p. 115.

²²¹ So' Tho'. 0701.1/187, p. 2.

²²² Vichitr Vadamarn, “Suntho'raphot Athibo'di Krom Sinlapako'n Klao To'nrap Kharatchakan Thi On Ma Jak Krasuang Wang” (Speech of Director of the Fine Arts Department on welcoming transferred officials from the Ministry of Palace, July 1935), *Athibo'di Khon Raek Kho'ng Krom Sinlapako'n* (The first Director-General of the Fine Arts Department), 1992, pp. 74-79.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

The transfer significantly increased Luang Vichitr's authority and control over performing arts in Thailand. In addition, the artists were vital resources for the Department as they were talented professionals who were widely experienced in traditional drama and held in high esteem.²²⁴ However, the transfer also created problems for Luang Vichitr as the loyalty and ideological conviction of the newly transferred artists was uncertain.

Luang Vichitr believed that under the constitutional regime, artists were supposed to carry out their work for the benefit of the new political system. In order to do this, they had to have political views concordant with his own. Artists were also expected to have a certain level of education and so had to take lessons in general subjects along with their classes in artistic skills. Luang Vichitr believed that to improve the education of artists meant to improve the quality of arts in general. Uneducated artists might destroy the country's desired image of "high civilisation and culture". Their loyalty to the new political system would be questionable due to their lack of education. Consequently, new regulations for artists were imposed. For instance, artists who worked for the Fine Arts Department now had to attend classes to improve their general knowledge and to bring them up to secondary school level. Class attendance was taken seriously and absenteeism could have a serious impact on promotion prospects.²²⁵

The School's education programme placed some emphasis on learning languages, particularly languages used in neighbouring countries, such as Burmese, Cambodian (*Khamen*), Vietnamese (*Yuan*), Mon, Malaysian (*Malayu*) and Tai.²²⁶ Lessons on

²²⁴ "This transfer of personnel and resources was of particular significance in that it saw Wichit, as the head of the department, emerge as a type of cultural czar who had the power to shape and influence the arts for the benefits of the state." Barmé: 1993, p. 119.

²²⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Suntho'raphot Athibo'di Krom Sinlapako'n Klao To'nrap Kharatchakan Thi On Ma Jak Krasuang Wang", *op cit.*, p. 79.

²²⁶ *Tai* refers to the whole Tai race, whereas *Thai* refers to Thai people living within the boundaries of the Siamese/Thai state. Luang Vichitr referred to the teaching of *Thai Tang Tang* which can be interpreted as different Tai-related languages or Thai dialects of different regions in Siam/Thailand. In this context, *Thai Tang Tang* will be referred to as Tai. See So' Tho'. 0707.31/2, p. 47.

national customs and traditions, performances, arts and mythology, as well as western notation and speech techniques also formed part of the curriculum.²²⁷ When Luang Vichitr was asked during a newspaper interview why students had to study other non-arts related subjects, he answered that it was necessary for a school that was part of the Fine Arts Department, *i.e.* a governmental department, to teach such subjects to its students. To be qualified and effective in improving the behaviour of Thai people, and to increase their respect for the constitution, artists had to provide the audience with role models and first needed to be appropriately educated themselves.²²⁸

Luang Vichitr could not be certain of the loyalty of the transferred artists to the new political regime and the constitution as they had been closely affiliated with the monarchy. Moreover, their long period of training in traditional ways and their deep-rooted beliefs in traditional values could create obstacles to the transformation of dramatic arts. Nevertheless, he had to rely on this group of artists and endeavoured to re-educate them on subjects prescribed by the Fine Arts Department, *i.e.* his own work.²²⁹

Strict selection criteria were applied when considering entrance applications from outside the School. Successful applicants were grouped into four categories: *Nakrian Uppatham* (school-sponsored students), *Nakrian Saman* (general students), *Nakrian Phiset* (special students) and *Nakrian Oprom* (trainee students). Applicants who wanted to become *Nakrian Uppatham* had to be between seven and fifteen years old. They had to prove their Thai nationality as well as make a commitment to work for the School after graduation. The *Nakrian Saman* did not have such an obligation. However, they were required to pay full fees and had to prove their determination to

²²⁷ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 13.

²²⁸ Thai Mai, 3 May 1934.

²²⁹ To change the artists and to lift the educational level of artists in general, a new and standardised education programme was set out by Luang Vichitr. With the exception of mathematics and science, which were replaced by arts subjects, all artists were to receive a standard education in the same subjects as learned by students in normal schools. So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, pp. 28-29. In addition, in the regulation for officials of the Entertainment Division under the Fine Arts Department, under article 11, it prohibited officials to perform or teach outside the Department unless the Department granted permission. See Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n, 1962, pp. 68-69.

pursue a professional career in the field of drama and music after graduation.²³⁰ *Nakrian Phiset* were part-time students who only learned a selected number of subjects and paid by the hour. The School gave no guarantees for future careers to these students.²³¹ The last group of students comprised trainees who were senior staff members from other schools sent to train in the fields of drama and music.²³²

The School's assessment of its students was divided into the Standard Examination of the Ministry of Education on General Subjects and the Standard Examination of the Fine Arts Department in Artistic Skills. For the latter, special examination committees were put in charge.²³³ For students who were to study drama and music subjects, the School divided them into three groups:

1. the youngest, who would be trained to preserve traditional styles, they were not pushed to take part in stage productions but had to be able to complete the basic dances;
2. the intermediates, who had already learnt the basic patterns. They would be trained to perform whole stage episodes in order to be prepared for staging productions by the School and
3. the adults, who would be trained in dance-drama with the intermediate group. If any students were unable to learn the dance-drama, they could be trained in spoken drama instead.²³⁴

If students could sing a higher number of traditional songs and play more musical instruments, they would be given higher grades. To establish a new method for learning music, Western notation was used to record traditional Thai music and was made a compulsory subject to all but those who already had some knowledge of traditional music (they were allowed to continue in the old style of recording by

²³⁰ Students funded by the school were grouped as school-sponsored students or '*Nakrian Uppatham*'.

²³¹ So' Tho'. 0701.31/ 2, p. 46.

²³² So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, pp. 10-13.

²³³ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 14.

²³⁴ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, p. 31.

memorising teacher's demonstrations).²³⁵ The ability to read Western notation of traditional music was considered essential in order to pass the examination.

The School had strict directives on how to teach the performing arts and music. The students were required to study the performing arts predominant in central Thailand before they were allowed to train in the regional performing arts. The music taught at the School had to be Thai music, but for new musical adaptations, copying from selected foreign music was allowed, but this had to be fully adapted to maintain a Thai identity. Moreover, copying foreign music was only allowed if it was deemed to be in harmony with natural Thai music. Variation or change of the Thai language was not allowed.²³⁶

The regulations of the School also required that the students would provide entertainment to and educate the public, so that they would appreciate the arts.²³⁷ Luang Vichitr regarded this as his third objective, important because the School's public performances were monitored by several government committees. The committees were especially set up to assess the standard of the department's productions as well as to promote its reputation to the public.²³⁸ Satisfying these committees was imperative because Luang Vichitr's appointment as the Director of the Department of Fine Arts had been widely criticised by both the press and officials, because of his lack of experience in the fields of drama and education.²³⁹ Luang Vichitr

²³⁵ Western notation is a system representing music (graphically). Putting Thai songs or music into western notation form is not a simple task because Thai musical scales differ in their arrangement from those of the Western scales. See also Phra Chen Duriyang, Thai Music in Western Notation, Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1990, p. 8.

²³⁶ So' Tho'. 0701.31/2, pp. 32-33.

²³⁷ Their regular duties were to perform for the radio broadcasts, for various Royal functions and for various charitable organisations, both private and official. So' Tho'. 0701.31/12, p. 85.

²³⁸ The committees appointed by the government were (1) the Committee for the adaptation of sets and costumes designs, which consisted of experts in these fields such as Luang Pradit Phairo', an expert on the classical Thai Music, and Nang Tuan Phattharanawik, an expert on Thai classical dance-drama. (2) The Committee responsible for the publicity, which consisted of, for example, Luang Samanmairirak and Nai Wo' Krasaesin. So'. Tho'. 0701.31/12, pp. 85-86. (3) The Committee which examined the play before the public viewing which consisted of Princess Laksami Lawan, Phraya Anirut Thewa, Director of the Publicity Bureau and representatives from the Radio Broadcast Committee. See preface in *Lu'at Suphan*, 1936, p. 3.

²³⁹ Luang Vichitr. Withi Thamngan Lae Sang Anakhot, *op cit.*, pp. 157-164.

admitted that people questioned his ability to ensure the long-term survival of the Drama and Music School. One of his priorities was therefore to prove to the public, and in particular the Ministers who were responsible for the School's budget, that it was necessary to have this School and that he was capable of ensuring the School's survival.

Finally, the School also aimed to encourage tourism and thus benefit the country's economy.²⁴⁰ The arts were used to entertain foreign visitors and to show the long tradition and culture of Siam. Luang Vichitr used these events to make foreigners believe that Siamese art and civilisation were more advanced than those of other nations in the region. He later proposed the establishment of the Division of Cultural Promotion (to be part of the School of Fine Arts):

"The Fine Arts Department has asked for a budget for the establishment of a new division - the Division of Cultural Promotion, similar to the Culture Propaganda Bureau in Japan. The works of drama and music are to be included in this division . . . so that they can attract more visitors to Siam which will help improve the economy of the country."²⁴¹

To gain international recognition, in 1935 thirty-five members of the theatre troupe of the School were sent to perform in Japan, Korea, and Manchoukuo. The troupe was fully sponsored by Y. Yatabe, the Minister for Japan in Siam. Two years later, Japan sent artists in exchange as part of a cultural mission between the two countries. This cultural mission fulfilled two goals. Firstly, they promoted the dramatic adaptations of the new regime and proved that works of arts conducted under state control could obtain recognition from the international community. Secondly, and most importantly, the tour was used as a conduit to strengthen the still-youthful relationship between Siam and Japan. In this respect, the tour was a success, as both countries signed the Siam and Japan cultural treaty in 1937. In the words of Luang Vichitr:

"The idea of sending the artists from Siam to Japan and vice-versa is to make the people of either country understand the culture of its friend.

²⁴⁰ So' Tho'. 0701.1/ 187, p. 7.

²⁴¹ So'. Tho'. 0701.1/ 187, p. 7.

Japan and Siam are two oriental countries, which, in spite of the invasion of modern civilisation, keep their own arts and national character intact. It is being felt increasingly that the moral and intellectual co-operation between these two countries is of utmost importance. This is the result of the realisation of the fact that in the East, Japan is the head and Siam is the heart.”²⁴²

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, the changing role of the arts in Thailand, particularly the performing arts, was reviewed. Five major periods can be identified (1) the Sukhothai period, (2) the Ayuthaya and early *Rattanakosin* (Bangkok) era, when the performing arts deified the King and asserted the King's authority; (3) the reigns of King Rama IV-VI, when the performing arts were first subjected to western influences and were used to project an image of civilisation internationally and to provide a source of revenue (the introduction of taxation); (4) the reign of King Vajiravudh, when, for the first time, a King actively used the performing arts and literary works as a tool to disseminate royalist and nationalist messages and finally (5) the period after the abolition of the absolute monarchy when the performing arts were used for nationalist propaganda purposes and as a major tool in Luang Vichitr's "Human Revolution".

Because Luang Vichitr's focus was on addressing the importance of the people in the revolution, he was much more successful in achieving his goals than King Vajiravudh, whose plays and literary contributions were confined to the elite community. Luang Vichitr's programme to change the people and their behaviour in order to create a new national culture achieved a much deeper penetration into the national psyche. Key to this were three institutions: the Department of Publicity; the Department of Fine Arts; and the Fine Arts School within the Department of Fine Arts.

The Drama and Music School was set up to promote the arts in the new constitutional era and to provide human resources in the field of the arts to transform ideology into practice. Under Luang Vichitr's manipulation, works of art, especially dramatic arts,

²⁴² Vichitr Vadakarn, "Speech delivered by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn at dinner given to Nippon-cultural visitors", *Siam Chronicle*, 4 April 1937, p. 8. This quote was taken from the *Siam Chronicle*. The original was in English and the author decided to leave the text unchanged.

reflected his opinion that they had a high value for the purposes of propaganda. In the role of the Director of the School he demonstrated his powerful ability to mobilise the masses through the arts.

It is clear that Luang Vichitr saw the arts as potentially beneficial in helping the country to get out of its stage of “backwardness”. To him, a civilised country was a country with a national culture. A country without its own national culture was a country without pride. Luang Vichitr himself is best placed to precisely sum up his ideas and motives for his use of the arts:

“It is obvious that our achievements in the sphere of the arts put Siam in the forefront of the cultural and artistic world. His Majesty’s Government, being anxious to maintain the Siamese arts as objects of national pride, regards encouragement of art as one of the most important affairs of the State. I have thought, however, since I was appointed Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts three years ago, that to encourage art only out of aesthetic consideration is, practically, to be unaware of their full value. In my opinion, the arts can be beneficially employed for many purposes. . . . This is the reason why I have devoted a great part of my energy to make the world understand our culture.”²⁴³

The task facing Luang Vichitr was going to prove very difficult. He had almost no serious direct experience of stage production, not to mention any formal qualifications in drama or music. Although he had been a keen theatre-goer while abroad and had also written several short plays, those visits and plays were not valuable in terms of the responsibility he was given now. The few plays he had previously written did not help him to establish his credibility as a serious playwright because their performances had been confined to small groups and their purpose was mainly to provide light entertainment for social functions or small charities. The challenge for him now was to promote his School and ultimately use drama as a vehicle for political indoctrination.

Luang Vichitr was successful because his plays were written with simple plots and stories drawing mostly from historical events. Heroes and heroines in Luang Vichitr’s

²⁴³ Vichitr Vadakarn, “A message from the Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts”, Siam Chronicle, 4 April 1937, p. 12. The original was in English and the author decided to leave the text unchanged.

plays spread political and nationalist messages through the employment of passionate language and songs to arouse patriotic feelings. Although the plays had a central role they were supported by other media such as the radio. The radio programmes instilled Luang Vichitr's messages through the endless repetition of propaganda songs and also bolstered other elements of the nation-building programme, for example the Cultural Mandates. Luang Vichitr successfully helped Phibun to implement an integrated programme of nation-building and cultural modification which deeply instilled an imaginary concept of nation (*Chat*) and *Thai-ness* in the Thai people. This not only created a unified nation strong enough to resist external threats and pressures, but more importantly, supported the nationalistic and totalitarian regime of Phibun.

Chapter Three

Luang Vichitr's Early Plays

This chapter analyses Luang Vichitr's early experimental plays: *Luk Ratthathammanun* (Children of the Constitution, 1934), *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* (King Naresuan Declared Independence, 1934), and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* (Phra Ruang's Daughter, 1934). These were the plays he wrote after he had become Director of the Fine Arts Department (1934) and before *Lu'at Suphan* (1936), his most popular and enduring play.²⁴⁴ This chapter analyses Luang Vichitr's early experimental plays and shows the extent to which he achieved his personal and political goals. These plays conveyed specific nationalist and/or political messages, but should be regarded as experimental because Luang Vichitr was still seeking to create his own dramatic innovations to create maximum impact on the audience. Although these plays were very immature in terms of their stories, length of performance and the dramatic technique, they are worthy of study as they provide important background before Luang Vichitr fully developed his style of propaganda.

In 1934, less than two months after the establishment of the Drama and Music School, Luang Vichitr saw an opportunity to introduce his works to the public. The Fine Arts Department hosted a grand celebration and religious ceremony of the installation of the Buddha image *Phra Phutthasihing* at the National Museum. Luang Vichitr used the opportunity to include performances by the students of the Drama and Music School in the entertaining programme. The day was very important to him because it was the first time he had an opportunity to gain recognition both for his directorship of the school and as a playwright. Although at this stage the latter did not gather any serious momentum, it can be said that Luang Vichitr preferred to articulate his views not by using other people's works but by choosing to take up the writing task himself.

²⁴⁴ Before becoming Director of the Fine Arts Department, Luang Vichitr had only directed one play, *Sala Chip Phu'a Ngan* (Sacrifice Life for Work). *Sala Chip Phu'a Ngan* was a children's drama which extolled the virtues of industriousness and hard work. It appeared some months before the 1932 revolution and was performed at the Benjama Rachalai School by the school's students. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Sala Chip Phu'a Ngan" (Sacrifice Life for Work), *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, vol. 1, 1962, pp. 102-108.

The entertainment program consisted of the *Rabam* dances and four short plays. Particularly noteworthy were *Luk Ratthathammanun* (Children of the Constitution), a 45 minutes spoken drama and *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* (King Naresuan Declares Independence), a historical drama. Both were the works of Luang Vichitr himself and will be analysed in the following two sub-sections.

3.1 Luk Ratthathammanun

Luk Ratthathammanun (Children of the Constitution) had three purposes.²⁴⁵ The first purpose was to create an emotional impact on the audience to love their constitution, to recognise their duties to the constitution and to make personal sacrifices for it.²⁴⁶ The play suggested that the constitution was a sacred entity and sought to demonstrate to the audience that the love for the constitution of the country could turn a bitter love-hate relationship between a mother and her step children into one of true love and mutual sympathy. Secondly, and related to the first purpose, Luang Vichitr also exploited the Boworadet Rebellion, which had just ended, as a background of the play and referred to the act of the rebels as the enemies of the constitution. Finally, the Boworadet Rebellion was an effective current historical event, which gave Luang Vichitr the opportunity to refer to his vital support during the rebellion, to confirm his loyalty to and enhance his own standing within the new regime.

The play is about the period between June 1932 and the Boworadet Rebellion in October 1933. This period had been critical for Luang Vichitr, especially in terms of his role in the changing political environment. Although he had shown his support to the People's Party, Luang Vichitr was still working in the government and had close links with old regime. He was therefore facing a dilemma and needed to determine and find a definite role for himself. Luang Vichitr had been particularly keen on a nomination for the planned national assembly. He used every opportunity and means to

²⁴⁵ The analysis of the play in terms of detailed messages and dramatic elements can only be very limited because despite extensive research the script of the play could not be found. The information used to discuss the play is based on contemporary periodicals, other secondary sources and Luang Vichitr's works.

²⁴⁶ Prachathippatai, (July 14, 1934).

voice his personal views on political, social, economic and other matters in order to raise his political profile and gain acceptance in political circles. The most notable work which he wrote immediately after the end of the absolute monarchy was the book *Kanmu'ang Kanpokkhro'ng Kho'ng Krung Sayam* (Politics and Administration of Siam, 1932). In writing this book, Luang Vichitr showed his eagerness to raise his profile, particularly to members of the people's party and those who would be in the new government.²⁴⁷

He was gravely disappointed to learn that he had not been nominated for the National Assembly.²⁴⁸ In protest, he resigned from government in October 1932. After his resignation, he became quite critical of some of the policies of the new government, particularly the single-party system. At the beginning of 1933, Luang Vichitr led a group of royalists, military officers from the old regime and conservatives in their attempt to establish a second party, *Khana Chat* (Nationalist Party).²⁴⁹ This party was divided into several factions and had members who supported the old regime as well as members who were not supportive of the old regime but critical of the new one. This latter group was particularly critical of the People's Party and some of its policies. When it became clear that the Nationalist Party would not be officially recognised, the royalist-led factions within the Nationalist Party together with former influential old guards and powerless princes developed a plan for a counter-revolution.

²⁴⁷ The events during this period and Luang Vichitr's role and works are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

²⁴⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Khana Kanmu'ang* (Political Parties), 1932, pp. 1-5. Luang Vichitr did not provide an explanation why he had not been nominated in the Assembly. However, he pointed out that in democratic countries it was a common practice to have different political parties. He believed that although different parties carried different policies, their ultimate goals are the same: bringing about prosperity for the country. To him, a country of democracy is where the citizen led the government, therefore, the citizens had the right to form any political party which was appropriate for their country's governing.

²⁴⁹ In fact, Luang Vichitr's desire to form another political party was expressed in the book *Khana Kanmu'ang* (Political Parties) written in August 1932 - many months before the announcement of the setting up of Nationalist Party. In part three of this book, Luang Vichitr made several observations relating to global political issues. His responses to these issues reflected his strong preference to promote Nationalism as a way of contributing to the prosperity of the nation. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-246.

It is not known whether Luang Vichitr knew about this plan or whether he was not certain of its success. What is known is that during the period leading to the Boworadet Rebellion (June - October 1933), Luang Vichitr quite swiftly began to align himself with the People's Party²⁵⁰. When the Boworadet Rebellion broke out, Luang Vichitr took the initiative to direct a propaganda campaign during the two-week rebellion to gain the support of the public and suppress the "enemy of the nation". The task was carried out by the newly formed Publicity Bureau under his supervision.²⁵¹ Luang Vichitr used leaflets and radio messages to stress its intention to protect the constitution and the monarchy and to condemn the rebellion as a plot to destroy the constitution. It was the first time that a propaganda campaign using leaflets and radio programmes to "explain" the ongoing situation to the public had been used. The propaganda campaign had two effects. Firstly, the majority of the public began to rally behind the government. Secondly, the campaign lifted the constitution to the status of a sacred entity which nurtured the well-being of the nation.²⁵² This sacredness of the constitution and the intent by the Phahon government (premiership 21 June 1933-11 September 1938) to protect the constitution created the political legitimacy of the government and discredited the rebels who had become the enemy of the constitution and therefore the nation:

"We must uphold and protect our constitution because it belongs to the nation. It is the device protecting the well-being of nation. An enemy of the constitution is an enemy of the nation. Those who love the nation and express their well-wishes for the nation must protect the constitution and act in accordance with the constitution."²⁵³

Luang Vichitr's initiative demonstrated to the government the power of propaganda, *i.e.* that information could be effectively distorted to suit the mood of the people and influence them. The result of the suppression of the Boworadet Rebellion also

²⁵⁰ See Murashima: 1991, footnote 57, p. 33 and Barmé: 1993, pp. 86-92.

²⁵¹ Nakkharin Mekrirat. Khwan Khit Khwan Ru Lae Amnat Kanmu'ang Nai Kanpatiwat Sayam 2475 (Ideas, Knowledge and Political Power in Siam: The 1932 Revolution), Bangkok: The Siam Studies Institute, 1993, pp. 172-173.

²⁵² The constitution was included as the fourth element in the pre-existing official conception of Thai national unity, that is, Nation, Religion and King. Barmé: 1993, pp. 107-113.

²⁵³ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Rian Ratthathammanun", *op cit.*, p. 106.

demonstrated to them Luang Vichitr's ability to use rhetoric skills and his knowledge of psychology, history, religion and other subjects to respond to the opposition's announcements, which were written by equally educated scholars. Luang Vichitr managed to arouse patriotism and a call for sympathy towards the government under the constitutional system. He did it so convincingly that it earned him respect and acceptance within the government circle. It was a new experience for the government that it was necessary to use propaganda in order to win the hearts of the people and thus to accept and show loyalty to the new government under the new system.

The Boworadet Rebellion exposed the fragility of the People's Party's authority due its lack of support from several important groups such as the royalists, who had initiated the rebellion. Without taking any measures, the People's Party could face further incidents caused by political opponents. Although the rebellion was actually caused by other factors (for example, dissatisfaction with the regime and its policies) and was not directed against the constitution, the rebellion was interpreted as a serious direct threat to the constitution which underpinned the new political system. In the month after the rebellion, the Assembly therefore passed the "Act for the Protection of the Constitution" giving absolute power to the authorities to deal harshly with any opposition. Other measures such as amendments to school curricula were adopted to make the constitution a central part of Thailand's political system.

These measures were actually based on Luang Vichitr's ideas. He had proposed the Act and measures to promote the constitution when he became a second-category member of the National Assembly under Phahon before the rebellion.²⁵⁴ He had also

²⁵⁴ Nakkharin Mektrirat, Kanpatiwat Sayam Pho' So', 2475 (The Siamese Revolution 1932), The Foundation of the Social Science and Humanity Textbook Project, 1992, p. 165 and Ro' Ngo' So' 6/2476, (27 July 1934), quoted in Nakkharin, *ibid.*, p. 260. Outside the role in the parliamentary system, Luang Vichitr had also written several articles to explain the importance of the constitution. His article entitled "Bot Rian Ratthathammanun" (Lessons of the Constitution) is a particularly clear example. In this article, he linked the importance of the constitution to the well-being of the Thai people and that "if the constitution abides, the Thai people will be happy; but if it is destroyed, the Thai people will suffer". Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Rian Ratthathammanun", *op cit.*, p. 106. Therefore, he suggested that it was essential that people should understand how much they could benefit from having a constitution as well as its limitations. In general, the article explained at a high level how the new administration (Constitutionalism) differed from the old one. Within ten subtitles, the one regarding the advantages of the constitution clearly reflected Luang Vichitr personal view. The ten subtitles are (1) What is a constitution?, (2) What is the advantage of a constitution?, (3) a background, (4) the

put forward the idea to the Educational Ministry that the promotion of the constitution should be included in the school curriculum and that students should be made to memorise a simplified version of the constitution which would help to stabilise the constitutional system in the future.²⁵⁵

Luang Vichitr was also behind the move to make the constitution sacred, thus replacing the monarchy as the main pillar of the nation. However, until the Boworadet Rebellion, Luang Vichitr's ideas had been ignored. Now he was to become an important member of the regime. The play *Luk Rattathammanun* had been a good opportunity for Luang Vichitr to both promote the constitution and at the same time to communicate to the audience that he had always fully supported the new regime and the constitution.²⁵⁶ With this, he wanted to deflect any possible criticism of him being opportunistic in a time of crisis.

There exists little evidence about the play and how it was perceived by the public. Barmé interprets the scarce evidence that is available and suggested that the reception of the play may have been lukewarm.²⁵⁷ This was probably because the play was unconvincing from a dramatic point of view and therefore failed to impress the audience. Luang Vichitr based a very short spoken play on a contemporary event and plot and performance were not very lively and dramatic. The play had the feel of a narration of political events in the style of historical chronicles. Before him, King Rama

monarch, (5) right and duty of the people, (6) the Assembly, (7) the cabinet, (8) the juridical system, (9) epilogue, and (10) the application of a constitution and its temporary acts. Although he did not say explicitly when referring to the disadvantages of the administration without a constitution, it is understood that he referred it to the absolute administrative system. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-112.

²⁵⁵ Ro'. Ngo'. So'. 6/2476, (27 July 1934), quoted in Nakkharin: 1992, p. 260.

²⁵⁶ The period before and after the Boworadet Rebellion and Luang Vichitr's role are analysed in details in several works by, for example, Scott Barmé, Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity, (1993), Thawatt Mekarapong, History of the Thai Revolution: A study in political behaviour, (1983), Nakkharin Mektrirat, Khwan Khit Khwan Ru Lae Amnat Kanmu'ang Nai Kanpatriwat Sayam 2475 (Ideas, Knowledge and Political Power in Siam: The 1932 Revolution), (1990) and Kanpatriwat Sayam Pho' So' 2475 (The Siamese Revolution 1932), (1992) of the same author, and Eiji Murashima, "Democracy and the Development of Political Parties in Thailand 1932-1945," The Making of Modern Thai Political Parties, (1991). Combined they provide a good account of Luang Vichitr's changing position during this time and Barmé accurately recognised his great ability "to survive the shifting sands of Thai politics."

²⁵⁷ Barmé: 1993, p. 120.

VI had already experimented with pure spoken plays for propaganda purposes. Vajiravudh had imported Victorian plays directly into Thailand, but his spoken plays had also not been very successful (see Chapter 2). While it is perhaps easier to convey messages in spoken drama, pure spoken drama performances like *Luk Ratthathammanun* are not effective in creating a strong dramatic impact on the audience. This was particularly the case in Thailand where the audience was used to more entertaining types of theatre including elements of dance and music. Appealing to these expectations and aesthetic tastes was one of the challenges that Luang Vichitr had to master. To get the attention of the audience and create a lasting impression, it was necessary to make use of stage design, dance and music and Luang Vichitr had to experiment further to create the desired impact. Luang Vichitr probably realised that this form of performance was not popular with the audience and thus ultimately not effective in conveying his messages and did not attempt to create pure spoken plays again.²⁵⁸

3.2 Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap

Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap (King Naresuan Declares Independence) was another play written by Luang Vichitr and performed during the same celebrations. He claimed that this was his first *Lakho'n Prawatsat* (historical play).²⁵⁹ In writing it, Luang Vichitr used a well-known period in Thai history as the background: the liberation of the Ayuthaya Empire by King Naresuan the Great in 1584. This year marked the restoration of the Ayuthaya Kingdom after it had been occupied by the Burmese for over 15 years. In Thai history, King Naresuan was one of the most renowned kings of the Ayuthaya period. In 1592, he led the Siamese troops against a

²⁵⁸ Barmé suggests that the play's reception was lukewarm because it was contemporary. According to Barmé, after *Luk Ratthathammanun* Vichitr had come to the view that historical drama was more suited to promoting nationalist ideas. *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Lakho'n Prawatsat*, or historical plays refer to plays which used historical episodes or stories about well-known people or heroes and heroines as the background. Most of Luang Vichitr plays, with the exception of *Luk Ratthathammanun*, *Lu'at Suphan* and *Anusawari Thai*, were historical plays. Luang Vichitr once admitted that historical plays are not history. Although they must be based on history, they were dramatised, embellished and enriched by non-actual historical events that were indistinguishable from historic reality to the audience. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Sriharat Decho" (Sriharat Decho, the Warrior). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, n.d., p. 1.

large-scale Burmese incursion. According to the chronicles, the outcome of the battle was decided by single combat on elephants between King Naresuan and the Burmese Crown Prince who led the Burmese troops. King Naresuan dramatically defeated the enemy by killing the Burmese Crown Prince on his elephant back. Luang Vichitr liked to make use of historically important people (great men as he called them) to increase the significance of the play and the impact on the audience. His favourite Thai rulers included King Ramkhamhaeng, King Naresuan and Taksin. While Taksin's role in Thai history is more controversial, King Naresuan and King Ramkhamhaeng were two of the most renowned kings and were revered and respected by the Thai people.²⁶⁰ Luang Vichitr used them in several of his plays and transformed them into national heroes who had restored Thailand's independence and lifted the country's achievements.²⁶¹

3.2.1 Summary of Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap

The play begins with Phra Naresuan talking to his soldier about the suffering the Thai people have endured since the country was defeated by the Burmese fifteen years ago. Phra Naresuan is leading a Thai military force under command by the occupying Burmese. Naresuan is summoned to assist Nandabayin in a campaign against a rival prince in Ava (region of the Mon people) who started a rebellion against the Burmese. After learning about this, Phra Naresuan contemplates the possibility of restoring Ayuthaya's independence. He sees an opportunity because King Bayinnuang, who had conquered Ayuthaya fifteen years ago, had recently died and his successor, King Nandabayin, was a less capable leader and warrior.

En route to the area of the rebellion, Phra Naresuan becomes suspicious about Nandabayin's orders and consults with his soldiers on what to do. While Phra Naresuan's men lay in waiting, a Mon monk comes to report to Phra Naresuan about the plot to kill him. Two Mon commanders received orders from the Burmese king to

²⁶⁰ After Ayuthaya's second defeat by the Burmese, it was Taksin who liberated Thailand from the enemy and set-up Thonburi as the new capital. However, despite his heroic deeds for the nation, Taksin was later executed by King Rama I, founder of the new Chakri dynasty, allegedly for being mad and incapable of running the country (See also Chapter 5, in which a play by Luang Vichitr about Taksin's life will be analysed).

²⁶¹ Somkiat: 1986, pp. 284-301.

ambush Phra Naresuan. However, they ignored their orders and wanted to defect to Phra Naresuan. They inform him that King Nandabayin plotted to kill him on the way to Ava. Upon learning of the King Nandabayin's evil plan, Phra Naresuan decides to take the opportunity to perform a ritual by pouring holy water on the ground and declares independence for all the Thai people. Subsequently, the Mon people volunteer to join him in the attack of the Burmese capital at Pegu. Phra Naresuan then leads his Thai and Mon followers into battle with the Burmese.

The Burmese troops and Phra Naresuan's armies meet at the River Satong and fight gallantly. Phra Naresuan creates a miracle when, after firing his gun into the far distance across the River Satong, his bullet actually hits the Burmese Commander and kills him. This miracle shocks the Burmese troops and results in the victory of the Thai over the Burmese. At the end of the play, the character playing Phra Naresuan delivers a speech in grand style, clearly Luang Vichitr's own words, to praise Phra Naresuan's heroic act:

Phra Naresuan: Listen to my voice today and tell all the Thai people that the soul and spirit of King Naresuan the Great will always protect the Thai nation. I wholeheartedly believe that Thais are able people. Though sometimes we lost independence, we will always have an able Thai who will come to restore independence. The Thai nation will prosper and Thai people will win through the power of patriotism. Let us learn from King Naresuan the Great who restored independence at this time. Let the Thai people sacrifice their lives. Let the Thai people paint their blood on the earth and kill all enemies.²⁶²

3.2.2 Analysis of Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap

The story of the play follows the events as described in the Thai chronicles fairly closely, but Luang Vichitr tried to dramatise the main plot by shortening traditional elements and developing the plot around two important historic events: the declaration of independence and the famous battle between King Naresuan's army and the Burmese troops at the River *Satong*. The importance of King Naresuan to the Thai

²⁶² Vichitr Vadakarn, "Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap" (King Naresuan Declares Independence), *Vichitr San*, vol. 1, pp. 125-133.

nation has been enormous and the day of a famous battle on elephant backs has been made the "Thai Armed-forces Day."²⁶³

The play draws on earlier work by Prince Damrong, particularly his Royal Autograph historical work, and earlier *Phongsawadan* (chronicles) from the Ayuthaya and Rattanakosin periods.²⁶⁴ Luang Vichitr built extensively on Prince Damrong's work on Thai history but took it a step further by manipulating the accounts to serve his nationalist policies. Prince Damrong's chronicle had created the nation myth which was also strongly encouraged by Luang Vichitr and Phibun Songkhram, but Luang Vichitr's later accounts stressed the importance of nation-building and nationalism whereas Damrong's and earlier accounts still put more emphasis on the role of kings and dynasties.²⁶⁵ This shift of emphasis is one of the most remarkable features of the play when compared to the previous historical works.

²⁶³ Manas Chitakasem, "The Literary Use of History: The Evolution of a Thai Poetical Genre", paper presented at the sixth International Conference on Thai Studies, Chiang Mai, 1996.

²⁶⁴ In 1950, Prince Damrong's work Phra Ratcha Prawat Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharat (Biography of King Naresuan the Great) was first published. The book is divided into three parts: (1) When the country was in chaos, (2) King Naresuan liberated the country and (3) King Naresuan expanded the country's territories. See Damrong Rajanuphab, Prince, Phra Ratcha Prawat Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharat (Biography of King Naresuan the Great) 1967. *Phongsawadan* is a chronological record of events directly concerned with the ruling elite, initially mainly the monarchy and the court and later the government. Thai historical study has relied heavily on chronicles. Many of the chronicles can be called royal chronicles as they describe events involving the king, the royal family or other members of the royal court. The national history framework of *Phongsawadan* writing received an official recognition with the publication of the "Phongsawadan - the royal letters version in 1912" (The Royal Autograph chronicle). Prince Damrong, a royalist and historian, was largely responsible for its publication. Because of this work, he is widely regarded as the father of Thai history.

²⁶⁵ Charnvit writes about the changing emphasis that "Luang Vichitr's history focused on nationalism as the heart of all the historical events. He put aside the role of the monarchy, predominant in the writing of the *Phongsawadan* and Prince Damrong. Thus Thai history was interpreted according to the purity and glory of the Thai race; everything was aimed at creating a new nation. His interpretation of Thai history showed uncomfortable similarities to Nazi and Fascist writings of the period. Luang Vichitr is very much criticised for his methodology. Being a politician *par excellence*, he often ignored facts and accuracy. His writing sometimes rested upon hearsay and his own imagination. He unabashedly glorified the Thai race at the expense of others, many times by totally ignoring their existence or significance in history. Luang Vichitr's history was very popular. It became an ideological weapon of the new ruling elite, especially the military which sought justification to rule the country. Furthermore, Luang Vichitr had the advantage of exploiting the mass media to disseminate his interpretation of history. After the coup of 1932, he used this position of Director of the Fine Arts Department to propagate his conceptualisation of history through music, plays and songs. These were presented on stage and the Radio of Thailand. His skill in writing and sense of public sentiments contributed to the spread and popularisation of his version of Thai history, no matter how politically biased". See Charnvit: 1982, pp. 156-170 and Charnvit Kaset Siri, "Thai Historical Philosophy," Thai Historical

The works of Damrong and the information contained in many of the chronicles has become a subject of heated debate in recent years. Many historians have provided significant evidence to show that royal chronicles, which have been the primary source for conventional historiography in Thailand, are not always reliable.²⁶⁶ During the period of dynastic transition, chronicles were sponsored by kings who were both usurpers of the throne and restorers of order or independence. These kings sponsored the writing of new chronicles in an attempt to support political and cultural restoration. These chronicles were often written in a way to attest to the new ruler's ability to restore political and social order, independence and unity. The chronicles also attempted to support legitimacy and authority of the new ruler by stressing political and military achievements. After the fall of Ayuthaya in 1767, the new Bangkok dynasty which began in 1783, sought to reassure the people that the country would be protected by the strong leadership who could, like King Naresuan, defeat the Burmese aggression. In this sense, the destruction of Ayuthaya in 1767 is therefore similar to the year 1569 when Ayuthaya was overrun by the Burmese for the first time. Like King Naresuan in 1592, the saviour had emerged to revive the nation and mark the beginning of a new dynasty. The King Naresuan episode was imaginatively employed in the Royal Chronicle to make this point.²⁶⁷

Philosophy, 1975, pp. 273-294 and Dhida Saraya, Tamnan and Tamnan History: A Study of Local History, The Office of National Culture Commission, 1982.

²⁶⁶ Manas: 1996, p. 13. Other scholarly research suggested in Manas' work includes Nithi: 1978, Charnvit's "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period" (1982), Somkiat's "*So'ng Satawat Kho'ng Rat Lae Prawatsat Niphon Thai*." (1984), Wyatt's "The Bangkok Monarchy and Thai History" (1985), Winai: (1994), and Thongchai Winichakul's "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973" (1995).

²⁶⁷ Nithi Iewsriwong, in his Bangkok History on the Ayuthaya Chronicles, suggests that the stories concerning the Siamese - Burmese wars were additions to what was written in the *Luang Prasert* Chronicle of Ayuthaya and that they were, in fact, originally composed in the early Bangkok period. In other words, the past, which Bangkok rulers were interested in reconstructing in order to legitimise their political position, concerned the wars with the Burmese from the reign of King Mahachakkraphat (1548-69) to reign of King Naresuan (1590-1605). Nithi Iewsriwong, "Prawatsat Rattanakosin Nai Phraratchaphongsawadan Krung Sri Ayuthaya" (Bangkok's History in the Ayuthaya Chronicles), 1978, pp. 15-16, quoted in Sunait Chutintharanon, "The Image of the Burmese Enemy in Thai Perceptions and Historical Writings," On both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese-Burmese Relations. Eds. Sunait Chutintharanon and Than Tun, Asian Studies Monographs No. 050, Chulalongkorn University, 1995, pp. 1-32. While the Bangkok rulers made the first destruction of Ayuthaya by the Burmese similar to the second to highlight the ability of Thai rulers to restore order and independence, the two events were actually very different. The first attack served to strengthen the Ayuthaya Kingdom internally, the second brought a great deal of damage both physically and spiritually and changed the attitude of

During the reign of King Rama IV, when the impact of Western colonialism was being felt, Prince Damrong further replotted the story about King Naresuan in the Royal Autograph chronicle. It was at this time that the sense of unity amongst the Thai people was required for the formation and maintenance of the nation-state. History was employed once more for the benefit of the present. King Naresuan was now presented as a king on a mission to free Thailand from Burmese occupation. The war was no longer just between the two kings but was now portrayed as a war between the peoples of Thailand and Burma. King Naresuan thus gained the reputation of being the greatest Thai warrior-king who expelled the Burmese and restored Thai independence. The culmination of King Naresuan's achievements is considered to be when he defeated the Burmese Crown Prince during a combat on elephant backs. Fighting on elephant back was considered the most difficult type of warfare and the description of this victorious event for the Thai side in Thai historical sources served further to underline the glory and valour of King Naresuan.²⁶⁸

Interestingly, Luang Vichitr has not included the scene of the fight on elephant back in his play. Instead, Phra Naresuan miraculously kills the Burmese Crown Prince with a single gun shot from across the river. However, the scene is actually not performed on stage but replaced by the sound of gunshots behind closed curtains and a dialogue

the Thai ruling class towards the Burmese. Before 1767, despite the defeat in 1569, the Burmese had not been considered a dangerous and implacable enemy (a view confirmed by Burmese chronicles of the time who also showed no evidence of particularly hostile attitude to the Thai neighbour). It was only later that Burma was made Siam's enemy number one. Sunait: 1995, pp. 3-5.

²⁶⁸ The historical foundation of this event has recently been questioned. The *Luang Prasert* chronicle of Ayuthaya (1680) mentions the combat, but the account given is very brief and rather unclear. By contrast, only the royal chronicles compiled and written in the early Bangkok period, almost two centuries after the event, extensively describe and particularly commemorate the 1592-93 campaign of this warlike king. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Lieberman, who compared the Burmese chronicle *U kala Maha-ya-zawin-gyi* with the letter by Father Pimenta, a Spanish born theologian, concluded that it was quite likely that the Burmese Crown Prince was actually killed by a Siamese firearm rather than in direct combat with King Naresuan. Lieberman, 1986, p. 242, quoted in Manas: 1996. An even more thorough study of this subject was undertaken by Sunait who translated *U kala Maha-ya-zawin-gyi* in full. Sunait does not provide any firm conclusions but appears to support the critical view of the event as presented in Thai chronicles. Sunait, 1994, pp. 72-79 quoted in Manas, *ibid.*, 1996. See also Sunait Chutintharanon, "Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605," Ph.D thesis, Cornell University, 1990 and Victor B. Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c.1580-1760, Princeton University Press, 1984.

between Phra Naresuan and his right hand man Ratchamanu about what happened during the battle. Luang Vichitr may have decided to leave out the battle involving elephants because he still relied on the old concept of a leader with supernatural powers as depicted in many traditional Thai dramas. Another reason could, however, have been that he knew that he did not have the resources and skills to recreate the battle scene effectively on stage. In any case, subsequent plays of Luang Vichitr did not include miraculous achievements but stressed hard work, brevity, perseverance and patriotism instead.

More recent research by Winai Phongsriphian also doubts the authenticity of the other events which were depicted in Luang Vichitr's play and Damrong's historic works: *The Declaration of Independence*. Winai doubts that that Phra Naresuan really ever declared independence and provides evidence that the whole episode, including young Phra Naresuan's journey as a hostage to Burma, is based on very limited actual evidence from the Ayuthaya period and was probably made up during the reign of Rama I. According to Winai, the authors of the chronicles had limited information about what happened, but they chose this version because it supported the legitimacy of the new Chakri dynasty. Once this interpretation of events found its way into Thai official history, it became more and more difficult to distinguish between myth and reality, particularly as historians like Prince Damrong (and later Luang Vichitr) further authenticated this version of history through their emphasis on the Thai history of this event.²⁶⁹

Although the version of Thai history as displayed in Luang Vichitr's plays can nowadays be largely rejected, at the time it had a significant effect on the national consciousness and the Thai-Burmese relations. Although the battle was almost 400 years ago, Luang Vichitr ruthlessly used it for his own contemporary objectives.²⁷⁰ The Burmese were presented as evil people attempting to destroy Buddhism and everything

²⁶⁹ Winai Phongsriphian, "Khwaam Samkhan Kho'ng Ratchakan Phra Naresuan Maharat Nai Prawatsat Thai" (The Importance of King Naresuan's Reign in Thai History), *Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharat 400 Pi Kho'ng Kan Khrongrat* (King Naresuan the Great: 400th Anniversary of the Ascend to the Throne). Ed. Wutthichai Munsin, Office of Prime Minister, 1990, pp. 58-117.

²⁷⁰ Thongchai: 1994, pp.141-161

Thai. The war against the Burmese is therefore portrayed as the “just war” where the Siamese belong on the side of “justice” and thus King Naresuan has the “religious mission” to bring about that justice.²⁷¹ On this point, Luang Vichitr was following the footsteps of Prince Damrong who has largely been responsible for making Burma Thailand’s number one enemy.²⁷² The destruction of Ayuthaya had occurred several centuries ago and Burma was now a powerless colony of Britain, but it still proved to be the ideal “national enemy” due to the historical background of this claim which was effectively manipulated to blur the time span:

“Through textbooks for school and college students, nationalist government, especially military regimes, successfully instilled in the minds of the young the image of the Burmese as an enemy of the Thai nation. Undoubtedly, the political purpose underlying this national propaganda relates to an attempt of the government to stir up a sense of nationalism and at the same time legitimise their ruling authority, by claiming that they like all the brave ancestors who fought against the Burmese, take as their primary concern the task of protecting the nation, religion, and the monarchy from external invasion. Viewed in this light, the negative attitude of the Thai towards the Burmese does not occur solely as a result of their past relationship. It is, rather, the outcome of political manoeuvres by the Thai government to stabilise their power and authority and secure their own interests.”²⁷³

The negative attitude of the Thai towards the Burmese is a product of the manipulation by the new Bangkok dynasty, Prince Damrong, Luang Vichitr and others via state’s mass communication system (TV, Radio), plays, books, the education system *etc.* This manipulation has made it difficult for Thai to objectively view the Burmese. This fact was recently commented on in a number of articles in the Bangkok Post newspaper and Matichon weekly magazine.²⁷⁴ According to Charnvit the period between 1934

²⁷¹ Sunait Chutintharanon, Phama Rop Thai: Wa Duay Kansongkham Rawang Thai Kap Phama (Burmese fought Thais: On the Warfare between Burmese and Thais), Bangkok: Matichon Press, 1994.

²⁷² The relationship between Thailand and Burma was exploited in several plays, the other significant plays with this theme included, inter alia, *Lu'at Suphan* (1936), *Phrajao Krunghthon* (1937) and *Su'k Thalang* (1937).

²⁷³ Sunait: 1995, pp. 27-28.

²⁷⁴ Associate Professor Srisakra Vallibhotama of Sinlapakorn University’s Faculty of Archaeology was quoted in the Bangkok Post say that “In fact, this anger should have long since faded. But instead it has been nurtured and passed on from generation to generation.” Srisakra claimed that the reason for its durability is that in each historical period since the two defeats, Thailand’s

and 1945, “a rash” of Thai-Burmese novels and plays like *Lu'at Suphan* and *Khun Pha Muang* became popular and gave full support to the government’s nationalist policies. They used Ayuthaya as the main setting and portrayed the Burmese as wicked enemies to Thailand’s independence. He concludes, “It seems that Thais can’t distinguish between fact and fiction.”²⁷⁵

Despite doubts about the accuracy of the historical account about this important period, King Naresuan’s glorious victory of the past has been used repeatedly to serve the objectives of the present rulers. A publication by the Thai National Identity Office which recalls this part of history with great pride and glowing passion:

“Eventually, kingdoms would fall- as did Ayuthaya in 1569, and people would be subjugated. Then, reflecting the inherent Thai resiliency, a warrior-king would emerge, phoenix-like, from the ashes of defeat to initiate a new cycle of kingship and revive the nation from the brink of annihilation.”²⁷⁶

While *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* contained many messages about the importance of the Thai people to unite behind the leader, the importance of courage and fighting spirit, the need to make sacrifices to gain (or maintain) independence, it also contained first ideas about what would eventually become the concept of Pan-Thaism, which stresses the rightful claim of the Thai over other nations/races living on the Golden Peninsula. The play lends support to this by including the episode of the

leaders have always used the image of the Burmese aggressor as a goal to stir up patriotism. *Bangkok Post*, Outlook: Burma - Fact vs. fiction, 3 January 1997. Charnvit Kasetsiri, “Thai Mo'ng Phama: Saita Kho'ng Rat Chat Sayam-Thai” (Thai sees Burmese: Through the Eyes of the Siam-Thai Nation-State), *Matichon Sutsapda*, 31 December 1996, pp. 53-54 and 7 January 1997, pp. 42-43. See also Sunait Chutintharanon, *Burengno'ng Kayo'din No'ratha: Kasat Phama Nai Lokkathat Thai* (Bayinnuang Kyawhtin Nawrahta: Burmese King from a Thai Perspective), Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing Ltd., 1995 and *Phama Rop Thai* (Burmese fought Thai), *op cit*, pp. 31-32.

²⁷⁵ Charnvit Kasetsiri, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, 3 January 1997.

²⁷⁶ National Identity Office, 1984, p. 29, quoted in Manas: 1996, p. 13. In more recent issue of Thailand in the 90s, although the glorification of King Naresuan has been toned down he is still being proclaimed as “the greatest Thai military leader” who “emerged to declare Ayuthaya’s independence and to defeat the Burmese in several battles and skirmishes, culminating in the victory of Nong Sarai, when he killed the Burmese Crown Prince in combat on elephant back.” The National Identity Board. *Thailand in the 90s*, revised edition, 1995, p. 26.

Mon soldiers and people voluntarily uniting with the Thai forces and attacking the Burmese enemy under Phra Naresuan's command.

3.3 Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang

In August 1934, the Drama and Music School started to charge admission fees for public performances. Of the six performances, only the short-play *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* (Phra Ruang's Daughter) was written by Luang Vichitr himself. The story of Phra Ruang, the thirteenth century hero, was brought into the Siamese stage for the first time by King Vajiravudh. He introduced his three version of the story which were staged into three different dramatic genres, all of which aiming for political purposes.

The intended meaning of the name *Phra Ruang* in King Vajiravudh's play and Luang Vichitr's is different. King Vajiravudh's *Phra Ruang* refers to King Sri Intharathit who was the founder of the Sukhothai dynasty and, as his plays stresses, the Thai monarch who liberated the Thai people from the *Kho'm* rule. The name *Phra Ruang* in Luang Vichitr's play, however, refers to King Ramkhamhaeng, the third King of Sukhothai and who is claimed to be the innovator of the Thai writing system and behind many other of Sukhothai's great achievements, particularly its territorial expansion. Despite the different emphasis, Luang Vichitr shared the view of King Vajiravudh that the period of Sukhothai under the rule of King Ramkhamhaeng (Phra Ruang) was one of glory. Sukhothai was Luang Vichitr's ideal past and was the period when the first Thai historical document, the Ramkhamhaeng stone inscription, was recorded.²⁷⁷ The stone inscription contains details about Sukhothai's social system, religion, writing system, territory and other achievements. The Ramkhamhaeng stone inscription is believed to be one of the oldest pieces of evidence that the realm of Sukhothai was almost as great as the present geo-body. This confirmed Rama IV's claim that various races and states were united under his sovereignty. Territorial expansion was also the theme of Luang Vichitr's play about King Ramkhamhaeng and the Sukhothai period.

²⁷⁷ Ramkhamhaeng stone inscription has become a focal issue over its authenticity. Some suggested that the stone was not made during the reign of king Ramkhamhaeng but during the reign of King Rama IV of Bangkok period. See James R. Chamberlain, ed., *The Ramkhamhaeng Controversy* (Collected Papers), Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1991.

3.3.1 Summary of Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang

Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang is about Makatho, a Mon national, eloping to the Mon kingdom with the daughter of Ramkhamhaeng, the King of the Sukhothai Empire. On their way, they have several discussions and the play ends with Makatho, while crossing the border, writing a plea to the King asking for forgiveness. In the note, he explains that he intended to take the King's daughter with him as inspiration to fulfil his ambition of becoming the King of the Mon people. Makatho then vows to repay his debts to the King. Once he has become King of the Mon, he will contribute to King Ramkhamhaeng's territorial expansionism by leading the Mon people under the rule of King Ramkhamhaeng.²⁷⁸ Upon learning about Makatho's confession and intent, King Ramkhamhaeng decides to let them go.

3.3.2 Analysis of Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang

The play appears to be closely related to historical events and facts as described in the stone inscriptions, chronicles and the works of Prince Damrong. Although the reliability of the historical chronicles and the stone inscription has been tested and questioned in detail by many, it is still interesting to analyse the differences between the chronicles and the play as this helps to identify particular manipulations undertaken by Luang Vichitr.²⁷⁹ The storyline of the play is particularly close to the historical work *Rachathirat* which was written during the reign of King Rama I.²⁸⁰

An analysis of *Rachathirat* and several other chronicles provides useful insights into where Luang Vichitr applied historical fiction to serve his propaganda ends and where he built upon existing historical sources. *Rachathirat* is a compiled history of the Mon people in which an account of Makatho, the first Mon king is included. It focuses on

²⁷⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn. "Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang" (Phra Ruang's Daughter). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, n.d.

²⁷⁹ See more details and discussion on the chronological records of different periods in Dhida Saraya. *Tamnan and Tamnan History*, *op cit.*

²⁸⁰ Jaophraya Phra Khlang (Hon). *Rachathirat* (History of Mon Chronicle). Bangkok, 1969. References to *Makatho* can be found in page 11-12 of the same source.

Makatho's background before his rise to power. *Rachathirat* mentions a supernatural phenomenon which Makatho experiences and which is interpreted as a sign of Makatho's future greatness. Following this experience, Makatho moves to Sukhothai and succeeds in becoming King Ramkhamhaeng's trusted *Khun Wang* (a position comparable to Interior Minister). One day the King is informed of an encroachment onto Sukhothai territory by foreign troops. King Ramkhamhaeng decides to lead his army to fight off the intruders leaving an opportunity for Makatho to be with the King's daughter. However, their relationship is exposed and Makatho is warned to face a disastrous end if the King finds out about the relationship. Thus, Makatho decides to elope with the King's daughter. The King sends his troops to catch them. As Makatho approaches the border, he realises that he should show some gratitude to King Ramkhamhaeng and decides to leave a letter explaining his actions. He explains that he experienced a supernatural phenomenon when he was young and that a prediction had subsequently been made that he would be supported by King Ramkhamhaeng and later would become the King of Raman. At the end of the letter Makatho pleads for the king's forgiveness.²⁸¹

It is interesting to note that Luang Vichitr left out the supernatural phenomenon. Although he had included a miracle in the play *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*, when Phra Naresuan kills the Burmese Crown Prince with a single shot from great distance, Luang Vichitr was actually a strong opponent of the belief in supernatural phenomenon and supernatural powers.²⁸² He criticised the themes of classical dance drama in which heroes and heroines used supernatural powers or were helped by the gods to achieve their goals. He felt that these stories created the wrong value system for the Thai people. His goal was to show that it was possible to achieve a target through discipline, hard work and intelligence. Thus including the account of the supernatural phenomena would have been inconsistent with his message to the

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² In the play *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*, Phra Naresuan kills the Burmese Crown Prince with a single shot from great distance and across a river. Later, Phibun's nationalist cultural policy denounced superstition and Luang Vichitr generally avoided supernatural characters in his nationalist plays. It is not clear, whether Luang Vichitr was actually the mastermind of this policy or not.

audience. Instead he projected an image of a “modern hero”, that was driven by the desire to achieve greatness through his own determination and skills.

Other differences between Luang Vichitr’s play and *Rachathirat*, are also noteworthy. In the play, Makatho writes to King Ramkhamhaeng and refers to the King’s expansionist plans. *Rachathirat* (and the other chronicles for that matter) does not mention King Ramkhamhaeng’s expansionist plans. Furthermore, *Rachathirat* does not mention Makatho’s intention to unite the Mon kingdom with the Sukhothai Empire. These were additions made by Luang Vichitr in an attempt to rewrite history. The significance of this is that Luang Vichitr establishes that Thailand used to be an expansionist country even during the Sukhothai period and that Mon and other peoples sharing the Golden Peninsula sought to unite under Thai leadership. This message had already been stressed in the play *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and was now stressed again. By establishing such an impression, he created the historical pretext for future policies building on this idea. Indeed, the idea was built on more in several plays to follow. Particularly significant is that Makatho, who was a Mon himself, wants to lead the Mon people to unite with Thailand. Makatho, as a former minister of King Ramkhamhaeng, is indebted to the King because it was the King who enabled Makatho to become what he was. By extension, the play creates the impression that all Mon people are indebted to King Ramkhamhaeng and thus the Thai people in general.

Apart from *Rachathirat*, the account of Makatho is also mentioned in other chronicles such as *Kham Athibai Phraratcha Phongsawadan Chabap Phraratcha Hattha Lekha* (Explanation of the Royal Autograph Chronicle), *Prachum Phongsawadan* (Collections of Chronicles), *Phongsawadan Mon Phama* (Mon-Burmese Chronicle) and *Kham Hai Kan Chao Krung Kao* (Testimonies of Ayuthaya People). However, the details about Makatho in each chronicle vary significantly. In the *Kham Hai Kan Chao Krung Kao*, King Ramkhamhaeng is said to have considered the international ramifications of following Makatho to bring him back for punishment. In the end, the King decided that it would be better to let Makatho escape.²⁸³ In Luang Vichitr’s play,

²⁸³ Fine Arts Department. *Mon Thi Kiewkap Thai* (Relationship between Mon and Thai), Bangkok, 1979, pp. 30-31.

the focus is clearly on expansionism and King Ramkhamhaeng does not show any concerns about Sukhothai's international reputation. Instead, he is depicted as strong and righteous leader who accepts Makatho apology and allows him to set up his own kingdom in the knowledge that it will benefit the greatness of the Sukhothai kingdom.

The account of Makatho in the *Kham Athibai Phraratcha Phongsawadan Chabap Phraratcha Hattha Lekha* is short but significant as it asserts that Makatho is actually a Thai and not a Mon. The chronicle stresses the achievement of Makatho as a Thai in becoming the King of the Mon people. However, this appears to be the only historical account that tries to make this point whereas other chronicles refer to Makatho as a Mon. In Luang Vichitr's play, however, Makatho is a Mon because Luang Vichitr uses him to convey the message that the Mon people have always been willing to unite with the Thai and live under Thai rule. Again, this gave early support to his concept of Pan-Thaism, the idea that Thais have a rightful claim for leadership over other races and nations in the region.

Other chronicles provide only very short details of Makatho. In *Phraratcha Phongsawadan Chabap Phraratcha Hattha Lekha* (The Royal Autograph Chronicle) Makatho's rule as a King of the Mon only provides verification of the date that King Ramkhamhaeng ascended to the throne. The other detail worth mentioning is that this chronicle contains details of the territory of the Sukhothai Empire under King Ramkhamhaeng.²⁸⁴ This chronicle was officially endorsed when it was first published in 1912. Later, Prince Damrong added a foreword and some articles to make the Royal Autograph Chronicle a complete historical work outlining the entire Thai history from the first Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, Ayuthaya, and to Bangkok.²⁸⁵ While *Rachathirat* provides some more details about Makatho, most chronicles only briefly mention Makatho and exploit his achievement in order to enhance the greatness of King

²⁸⁴ Fine Arts Department. Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Chabap Phra Ratcha Hattha Lekha Lem 1 To'n 1 (The Royal Autograph Chronicle Volume 1 Part 1 with historical introduction, including article on the chronicles of Siam by Damrong Rajanuphap), 1952, pp.132-135

²⁸⁵ Dhida, Tamnan and Tamnan History, *op cit.*, p. 91. Prince Damrong's work became a mastering model to subsequent scholars including William Clifton Dodd's The Thai Race, W.A.R. Wood's A History of Siam, and Luang Vichitr's Sayam Kap Suwannaphum (Siam and the Golden Peninsula).

Ramkhamhaeng. While Luang Vichitr's play is similar to *Rachathirat*, it is clear from that play that Luang Vichitr's intention was less to stress Makatho's achievements but to emphasise the grandeur of Sukhothai under King Ramkhamhaeng and the territorial, artistic and cultural achievements.

The use of history for contemporary purposes has already been discussed in some detail in the context of the play *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*. In the 19th century, Siam came under pressure from European colonial powers. With the threat from the western powers, the Siamese kings needed to prove the long history and unity of Siam and the legitimate claim over its territories. Until then, the new dynasty had perceived itself as a continuation of Ayuthaya, destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. However, there had been a Thai kingdom before the Ayuthaya period which, according to historical accounts, covered even greater territories. The discovery of the stone inscriptions from the Sukhothai period made it possible to trace Siam's origin back to this ancient Thai kingdom in the 13th century which possessed a territory almost equivalent to present-day Thailand, possessed its own alphabet and appeared as a harmonious society with a prosperous Thai culture. This was quite a remarkable change because there were probably as many similarities between Sukhothai and Ayuthaya as there were differences. Moreover, Sukhothai had been competing with Ayuthaya for dominance in the region until it was finally eclipsed by the newcomer. This construction of Siam's past as a progression from the Sukhothai days was largely created by Prince Damrong in his chronicle, particularly the Royal Autograph chronicle which was the first piece of work covering the whole of Thailand history.

With the play *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, Luang Vichitr wanted to remind the audience of Thailand's long culture, heritage, origin and geographical reality. His purpose was to create a sense of Thai identity and ultimately patriotism and nationalism. This was achieved by reminding the audience of its long history of achievements and traditions of the Golden Sukhothai's under King Ramkhamhaeng and of the negative foreign influences that have spoilt Thai culture.²⁸⁶ Characters

²⁸⁶ In Luang Vichitr's view, slavery was a Khmer contamination that was introduced during the Ayuthaya period and he lauded the purity of Thai society and culture at Sukhothai. For him, everything that was Khmer was contaminating Thai culture and arts and he portrayed Pali versus

talked at length about the great territory of the Sukhothai Empire and King Ramkhamhaeng's innovation of the Thai alphabet. For Luang Vichitr, Sukhothai, particularly during King Ramkhamhaeng's reign, was an ideal Thai state where Thailand's civilisation reached its zenith and its people were full of patriotic qualities.

King Ramkhamhaeng was depicted as having laid the foundations for the development of Thai culture both in the material and religious spheres. Luang Vichitr even claimed the dynamism of King Ramkhamhaeng was reflected in the sphere of the arts. For example, the Buddha images made in this reign supposedly reflected characteristics of the dynamic King as they were usually sculpted in three postures: walking, standing, and warding off the enemy; thus representing the ideas of advancement, industriousness and perseverance respectively.²⁸⁷ Luang Vichitr's attempt to impose a nationalist interpretation of Sukhothai's architecture and religious sculpture was not based on any real evidence or facts.²⁸⁸ The play also made the point that it was King Ramkhamhaeng who had brought the Buddha image of Phra Phutthasihing to Sukhothai. When explaining to Makatho the greatness of her father's kingdom, King Ramkhamhaeng's daughter points out that her father was even able to bring the Phra Phutthasihing image, which used to be located in Ceylon, to Sukhothai. Through this dialogue, Luang Vichitr cleverly referred to the recent installation *Phra Phutthasihing* at the National Museum and at the same time created the impression amongst the audience that Sukhothai's Buddhism was superior to Ceylon's Buddhism (the country where Buddhism had originated). As he writes in his important book *Prawatsat Sakon*

Sanskrit elements in the Thai arts as an opposition of pure versus corrupt. The Sanskrit Ramakien introduced a weak and lazy hero into Thai literary culture, thus damaging the entrepreneurial spirit and diligence that prevailed at Buddhist Sukhothai. See also Reynolds: 1992, pp. 313-332.

²⁸⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Watthanatham Sukhothai" (Sukhothai's Culture, 1939), *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, vol. 2, 1962, pp. 120-121. Luang Vichitr disregarded the rest of Buddha's images in other postures claiming that although there were said to be made in the Sukhothai period, they were not made in the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng. Such postures included the Buddha image in sleeping posture and meditation posture. *Ibid.*, p. 121

²⁸⁸ Even the account of Thailand's art history by Prince Damrong's own son, Professor M.C. Subhadradis Diskul, points out that during the Sukhothai epoch, Buddha images appeared in as many as four positions: seated, reclining, standing and walking. Although the walking posture may indeed have been a Sukhothai contribution to Buddhist sculptural styles, overall the four postures were hardly the positions one would associate with a dynamic king but reflected Buddha's different postures for meditation and teaching. M.C. Subhadradis Diskul, *Art in Thailand: A Brief History*, Amarin Press, 1986, p. 20.

(Universal history), this was yet another achievement by the Thai people dating back several centuries:

“The father and son like governing system of Sukhothai is certainly better than the master and slave system of the Ayuthaya. Not only are the people happier. . . , they are also able to contribute to the prosperity and expansion of the Great Sukhothai. . . . Within the period of 60 years, Sukhothai had built very extensive roads which were bricked in a very wide size similar to modern roads. . . . Sukhothai was also miraculously able to build great ancient religious places. . . . The ceramics industry was so advanced that even today we cannot match it. Contacts with other countries were handled very skilfully and Sukhothai’s contact with Ceylon led to Ceylon’s revered Buddhist image, *Phra Phutthasihing*, becoming Thailand’s great national asset.”²⁸⁹

The play also emphasised the literary achievements made by King Ramkhamhaeng who had laid the foundation of the Thai writing system when he invented the Thai alphabet known as *Lai Su’ Thai*. In the play *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, there is also dialogue praising the king for his invention of the Thai alphabet. Luang Vichitr chose a moment when he could impart this information without ruining the dramatic flow. The play includes a scene in which the character reveals Luang Vichitr’s motive by means of reading out a written note. After listening to the warning of the King’s daughter, Makatho decides that he should leave a note explaining to the King his intention to be the ruler in the Mon country and to facilitate King Ramkhamhaeng’s expansionist plans in order to make Thailand’s territory even greater. In reply to Makatho’s idea, King Ramkhamhaeng’s daughter points out that it was her father who had created the very writing system that Makatho was about to use:

The king’s daughter: You must use exactly the same kind of writing system which my father has invented. He is the first person who defined the Thai alphabet.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History), vol. 2, 1971, pp. 95-96. The same emphasis on the Ceylon’s Buddha image also appears in the play delivered by the daughter of King Ramkhamhaeng.

²⁹⁰ This could be interpreted as further evidence in a play of Luang Vichitr’s early ideas of Pan-Thaism, the idea that all other nations and kingdoms in the so-called Golden Peninsula were or should become effectively part of a Greater Thai nation because of racial or other similarities. Luang Vichitr would further develop this idea more strongly in some of his later plays.

Luang Vichitr pointed out that although King Ramkhamhaeng had never heard of Europe, the writing system he invented coincided with the writing systems used in Europe as it also placed consonants and vowels on the same line (level).²⁹¹ According to Luang Vichitr, this reflected the King's prescience and thus the sophistication of the Sukhothai civilisation. King Ramkhamhaeng's alphabet was also a simplified adaptation of Mon, Burmese and *Kho'm* alphabets. Therefore, King Ramkhamhaeng had invented a system that could be learnt and used not only by the Thai people to learn the alphabet but also by the entire Thai race:

“Why did King Ramkhamhaeng invent the alphabet? The answer to this question can only be that King Ramkhamhaeng showed his far-sightedness. He foresaw that in the future Mon, Burmese, Khmer, and Thai would be trading, communicating and exchanging culture with each other. The alphabet the King invented was easy to study and use by all nations of the Golden Peninsula. The King's idea behind the invention was to make a compromise between the Mon, Burmese, and Khmer languages. He also used advanced technique by placing consonants and vowels on the same line as is common in European writings.”²⁹²

Luang Vichitr explained that if King Ramkhamhaeng's writing system had survived, all nations, including the Burmese and Khmer would be using only this writing system. Even foreigners would find it easy to learn the Thai language.²⁹³ However, the use of King Ramkhamhaeng's writing system was discontinued because of Khmer influence. He pointed out that only King Ramkhamhaeng's stone inscription used this writing system. The next stone inscription dated 60 years later used a Khmer style writing system with only very few Thai style alphabets remaining. By the time the sixth stone inscription was produced, the writing system used was pure Khmer. However, according to Luang Vichitr, the Thai language, including much of King Ramkhamhaeng's writing system, was still used in every day situations at that time, but for any official or religious purpose, the Khmer language and writing system was used.

²⁹¹ See also Reynolds: 1992, pp. 313-332

²⁹² Vichitr Vadakarn. “Watthanatham Sukhothai”, *op cit.*, pp. 125-126

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 125-126.

This practice symbolised for him the preference for everything foreign (Khmer) rather than Thai during the late Sukhothai and particularly the Ayuthaya period of Thailand.²⁹⁴

In the play, Luang Vichitr creates the impression that the concept of a Nation-State has existed since the Sukhothai period. Although the word Sukhothai is used when, for example referring to King Ramkhamhaeng's daughter (*Luk Saw Jao Sukhothai* - daughter of the king of Sukhothai) or the kingdom in general, terms such as *Khet Daen Thai* (Thailand's territory), *Khet Raman* (Raman territory), *Anakhet Kho'ng Thai* (National boundary of Thailand) and *Mu'ang Thai* (Thai kingdom) are used when referring to a national boundary. By doing so, Luang Vichitr made use of the anachronistic devices to address his present time issues.

This concept of a nation-state had been introduced for the first time in the chronicles of the Rattanakosin era, but was actually a reaction to the attempts by Western powers to increase their influence in Southeast Asia. Before then, national boundaries in a modern sense did not exist and had little importance anyway. While the amount of territory under control was of some significance, other factors such as the number of people under control, control of rivers and fertile land, and access to trading routes and ports were much more important. However, to counter the threat posed by France, Britain and other colonial powers, it had become vital for a country like Thailand to define its national boundaries and their national identity. According to Somkiat, the terms *Mu'ang Thai* and *Prathet Thai* (both broadly meaning Thailand), for example, were used for Sukhothai and Ayuthaya regardless of the anachronism. This was done purposefully in order to blur the time span, so that the past could be lifted out of its context, and presented to the audience to cause particular sentimental effects.²⁹⁵ Thongchai added that:

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126. Luang Vichitr's play contributed to the belief in the importance of the stone inscription. However, nowadays many of the new generation of historians doubt the authenticity of the King Ramkhamhaeng stone inscription and believe that it was produced during the *Rattanakosin* period.

²⁹⁵ Somkiat Wanthana. "The Politics of Modern Thai Historiography," *Ph.D thesis*, Monash University, 1986 in Thongchai: 1994, pp. 154-155

“Anachronistic devices make the past familiar to the present, hence the possibility of transferring values, emotions and other meanings, particularly patriotism and chauvinism, from the present back to the past and thus into our memory.”²⁹⁶

By using these words in the play, Luang Vichitr also indicates his belief that all the Tai-speaking peoples should unite under Thai leadership (the concept of Pan-Thaism), including not only those who lived in Thailand but also those in Laos, Burma, Southern China, *etc.* The Mon and *Kho'm* were included in Luang Vichitr's definition because of cultural and racial similarities.²⁹⁷ In fact, Luang Vichitr argued that the original *Kho'm* people died out and were replaced by Thais, but that the term continued to be used by other nations. He conceded that the Thais had assimilated some *Kho'm* cultural traditions but insisted that they were now incorrectly referred to as *Kho'm*.

The fact that the play also manipulated the true geographical coverage of Sukhothai's territory is also linked to this. The large territory of Sukhothai is supposed to have had created the impression that Thailand has a rightful historical claim over much of the “Golden Peninsula”, which included Burma, Laos and Cambodia. In a dialogue between Makatho and King Ramkhamhaeng's daughter, Makatho begs the King's daughter to be more patient as they had nearly reached the border. In reply, the daughter points out to Makatho that her father will succeed in following them since the territory of Thailand is so vast:

The King's daughter: Do not think that my father will not be able to follow us, not to mention that we can get into the Mon territory. No matter how far we go, my father will be able to reach us. Don't you know that in the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng, the territory of Thailand has expanded greatly: to the North, we reach Luang Phrabang; to the East, we reach the Mekong River; to the South, we reach the Malayu Peninsula; and to the West, we reach the Gulf of Bengal. The King was even able to order the relocation of Phra

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Reynolds has observed “On the nationality question, Luang Vichitr believed that Sukhothai monarchs ruled over Mon, Khmer, Malay and Chinese, but he made Pali-Buddhist-Thai the idiom of membership” Reynolds: 1992, p. 325. Therefore, although Mon had initially influenced the Thai, the Mon were very similar to the Thai and eventually submitted to Thai leadership.

Phutthasihing, the Buddha image of Ceylon, to Thailand.
How can you possibly escape my father's reach?!

This claim is largely based on historical chronicles and King Ramkhamhaeng's stone inscription, now viewed as either being manipulated accounts or outright fakes. The impact of *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* was to add another facet to the story by depicting King Ramkhamhaeng as a Thai ruler who was on an expansionist drive. Luang Vichitr's manipulation of history supported his vision of a Greater Thailand that should include large parts of Burma, Khmer, Laos and even Southern China and Vietnam. This vision would gain more prominence in the following years, particularly once Phibun came into power. Much of Luang Vichitr's work and his version of history has been discredited. To a large extent, Luang Vichitr's version of history rests on the evidence provided by the stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng. However, the authenticity of the inscription is now widely discredited. Michael Wright, a historian on Thai studies, is convinced that the stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng was probably created during the Rattanakosin era (more specifically, during Rama IV's reign). He has also summarised a wide range of works by other scholars that the Sukhothai kingdom was not the greatest kingdom in the area and that it only gained importance as a centre of trade, religion and culture in its late period. According to him, King Ramkhamhaeng was perhaps a less important ruler than his successors.²⁹⁸ The play, nevertheless, shows Luang Vichitr's great skill in combining historical facts with fiction. In this way he was able to make the audience believe that the whole play, including the concept of a nation state and the glory of the Sukhothai period, was depicting historical reality. This ability to create myths and his own version

²⁹⁸ Other scholars critical of the authenticity of the stone inscription include Chai-anan Samudavanija and David K. Wyatt. In the article on "Pitdown 3 - Further Discussion of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription" written by Michael Vickery, the author refers to a group of historians who review their position on the authenticity of Ramkhamhaeng's stone inscription. One of those referred to was Professor David K Wyatt who "for nearly thirty years [has been] the most faithful western defender and imitator of Thai traditional history" now had changed his view and argued that the Sukhothai Kingdom was not the greatest kingdom in the area and only in the late Sukhothai period did it become the centre of Buddhism, culture and trade. Page 106. See also footnote 106 of the same article. Michael Wright also refers to the increasing evidence that early Ayuthaya was actually ruled by the Khmer. Michael Wright, "A Pious Fable: Reconsidering the Inscription I Controversy: A 'Demonic' View," The Journal of The Siam Society, 83, Parts 1 and 2, 1995, pp. 93-102. Furthermore, see also Chamberlain: 1991.

of history would become a key contributory factor to the success of his subsequent plays.²⁹⁹

3.4 Analysis of Dramatic Elements in Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap and Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang

Apart from the content, Luang Vichitr also experimented with the dramatic form. As already discussed in the context of the play *Luk Ratthathammanun*, during this period, Luang Vichitr was still in search of the right mixture of dramatic elements. Like King Vajiravudh, Luang Vichitr failed to apply pure spoken drama to the Thai context. *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* therefore followed the conventions of traditional dance-drama and derivatives developed during the reigns of Rama V and VI more closely. However, he shortened the use of several dramatic elements of the traditional style as he felt that they were too lengthy and elaborate for his purpose and the modern times. The simplification and reduction of traditional elements had the benefit of making the plays somewhat easier to perform. Traditional dancing and acting required extensive training, which was important as many of his actors he had available were still young apprentices. However, the main reason for the modernisation and condensing of traditional drama was to make his propaganda plays more effective in putting across the messages to the audience.

Having realised the inappropriateness of pure spoken drama, he therefore integrated his spoken messages into a mixture of traditional and modernised dramatic elements. Dialogues in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* were longer than in traditional dance-drama and used more colloquial language, partly spoken by the performers themselves rather than narrators.³⁰⁰ However, at the same

²⁹⁹ Luang Vichitr produced a number of revisionist works on Thai history that expressed the new ideology in a stridently chauvinistic manner. Such works include *Sayam Kap Suwannaphum* (Siam and the Golden Peninsula, 1933), *Pathakatha Prawatsat* (Lectures on History, 1934), *Thai Riak Ro'ng Dindaen Khu'n Jak Farangset* (Thailand claims Territories back from France, 1941) and *Ngan Khonkhwa Ru'ang Chonchat Thai* (Research on the Thai Race, 1961).

³⁰⁰ Part of the dialogue in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* still used poetical language but this may have been more to create variety (some spoken dialogues were rather long) than to conform with conventions. Although chorus still accompanied the play, the text was cut down to make the play less lengthy. In traditional dance-drama each stanza would contain at least four lines of poetry

time, the actors were still required to perform dance movements in line with classical Thai dance-drama. They were accompanied by a chorus and narrators. Their roles were to narrate the actions and express the feelings of the characters. Thus while not completely departing from classical dance-drama conventions, the longer dialogues in plainer language allowed Luang Vichitr to experiment with conveying longer messages to the audience.

Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap stresses the victory of the Thai people over the Burmese and the declaration of independence by King Naresuan. *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* is about the supposedly glorious Sukhothai period and the role of Makatho in supporting King Ramkhamhaeng's alleged expansionism. In both plays the development of the plot is very simple and corresponds quite closely to historical records - with some amendment to suit Luang Vichitr's requirements. The dramatic impact of the victorious ending of the play, when King Naresuan declares victory and independence in his speech, leaves the audience with a very positive feel. Likewise, *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* has a "happy ending" with a generous King Ramkhamhaeng deciding to let Makatho and his daughter go in the knowledge that they will contribute to the further expansion of the Sukhothai kingdom. However, from the audience's point of view the play left a great deal to be desired because of the linearity and shortness of the plot and the lack of romance and dramatisation.

Both plays stress the greatness and achievements of the two kings, King Naresuan of Ayuthaya and King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai. The two monarchs are Luang Vichitr's ideal great men and he used them in several of his plays. However, the greatness of King Naresuan derives from his ability to restore the country's independence, whereas the greatness of King Ramkhamhaeng lies in territorial expansionism and other achievements such as his literary innovations. Both plays also contain early indication about Luang Vichitr's ideas on Pan-Thaism, as several important statements are made about Thailand's relations with other countries and races. For example, cultural and social similarities are stressed (such as the writing

and could be extended to ten or more, but for *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* Luang Vichitr used only two lines.

system introduced by King Ramkhamhaeng) and the Mon and other people are shown to be looking up to the Thais, willing to unite against a common enemy. Both plays have their male characters as leading roles, except in *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, in which the king's daughter plays another leading character. The characters in *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* and *Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* are people from the ruling class or royal origin. While this conformed to the conventions of traditional drama, he broke with this tradition by getting his characters involved with state affairs such as the expansion of territory and the recovery of the country's independence. In traditional drama, the heroes and heroines would usually get involved in romances and heroic acts, which they achieve due to their royal birth or via other magical or heavenly abilities. Luang Vichitr was strongly against the use of traditional characters such as Rama (in the Ramayana) whom he rejected for being weak and pretty. Luang Vichitr intended his characters to portray the quality of strong, decisive and brave leaders. His characters were meant to provide role models to the Thai people whom he wanted to change. While they are presented as role models, their characteristics are rather flat. Actions of the characters do not appear to a critical audience as being related to their true motivation. Luang Vichitr had predetermined their actions and paid little attention to the development of his characters. Thus, the personal background, personality or motive of the characters is of little importance in the plays. The main role of the characters is to act as a medium (voice) to put across Luang Vichitr's ideas. While he was able to insert his messages, the shallowness of the characters and their unnatural actions reduced the dramatic effect of the plays.

Another limitation of the brevity of the two plays was the limited number of scenes and settings. *Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* is set in the Ayuthaya period and the events in the play take place within a day. The play is limited to three scenes, the hall of the palace, the outdoor camp and the riverbank. The first scene illustrates how Luang Vichitr still maintained the use of traditional dramatic elements in his play. The scene where the king presides over his ministers at the hall of the palace to discuss the enemy's occupation of Ayuthaya, is a very common scene in Thai traditional dance-drama. In conformity with traditional drama conventions, the scene is accompanied by a poetical narrative sung by a vocalist. The poetical narrative describes the conflicting

situation and at the same time introduces the main character. This is followed by a dialogue in which the characters talk about similar details as already provided in the narrative, thus repeating the same messages. Luang Vichitr adopted this formula by beginning his play with introducing Phra Naresuan who summons his soldiers to talk about how he will restore the independence of the Thai people:

Scene at the palace's hall.

The *Piphat* ensemble performs the song *Wa*. The curtain is drawn and Phra Naresuan and four of his senior soldiers appear on stage:

Chapi

At that moment (<i>Mu'a Nan</i>)	the honourable Phra Naresuan
who's been vengeful in his heart since the loss of Ayuthaya	is looking for a way to restore independence

Singto

He receives news about a rebellion in Ava	that makes him extremely joyful
It may be the opportunity to pay back	and restore the sovereignty of <i>Krung Thai</i> (Thailand)

Naresuan: My friends and soldiers! Thai people have been under the Burmese rule for over 15 years. Ayuthaya has fallen to Burma for the first time since the Year of the Snake in 1569. It was defeated by the Burmese King Bayinnuang of Hongsawadee. King Bayinnuang has now died and the new King of Hongsawadee appears to be less capable. Perhaps this is a good opportunity for us to regain our independence.

The borrowing of traditional dramatic convention is also apparent in the fighting scene where the actual fighting action will not be played on stage.³⁰¹ In depicting a battle scene between scene 2 and 3, Luang Vichitr relied on the use of music and sound effects to create the effect behind closed curtains and off the stage. The audience is left to imagine the scene as the narrative describes the movement of the army followed by sound effects imitating gun shots and fighting.

³⁰¹ One could of course also argue that he was forced to leave out this scene because of limited resources and space.

Ratchamanu: Everybody! Let's take over Khraeng city and then take Hongswadee.

The *Piphat* ensemble performs the music piece *Kraw No'k*. Phra Naresuan leads his army en route to the enemy.

Once he finished moving his army
to regain the dignity of the Thais and make it well known
the front lie and the last line do not stop
shouting to shake the earth

he could go for battle with Hongsa,
Ayuthaya still has good people,
we are well armed and will not flee,
the army enters Khraeng city.

Choet (*Naphat* music). The army leaves the stage. The *Piphat* ensemble stops playing for two minutes. There is the sound of gun shots being exchanged for about three minutes. After the shooting ceases, the *Piphat* ensemble performs the musical piece *Krat Rua*.

Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang is based on similar borrowings from traditional elements. The play is set in the Sukhothai period and the events happen within the same day. As Luang Vichitr's emphasis in *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* is not the action but the dialogue, the play has only one setting which is the hill at the Thai-Burma border. Luang Vichitr was probably constrained in the resources he had available, but the dramatic form chosen by him did not translate well into a short-play and reduced the overall variation in the play and thus the dramatic impact. The dialogues of the character in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* are in both poetical (the *Klo'n Paed* verse form) and colloquial language. There appears to be no clear pattern in the use of each form but in general colloquial language is used when Luang Vichitr wanted to stress a nationalist message such as King Naresuan's eulogising monologue at the end of the play. Despite the fact that the plays are set in the period of Sukhothai and Ayuthaya, the dialogue is in contemporary language and the style is more like written language rather than naturally spoken language. Sometimes, characters express opinions that do not seem to differ from one another. Rather, their speeches sound like a single line of thought from Luang Vichitr who uses his characters as a medium. Poetical dialogue is used to create some variation, particularly after long dialogues in normal language, but the poetical dialogues were shortened to a length not exceeding more than four lines.

Very brief stage directions appear in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* only to announce and explain the entrance and exit of the characters. In *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, more details were added in the stage directions, but they were still not as important as they would be in later plays. The narrative in poetical language, on the other hand, did play a very important part in both plays. In *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*, a poetical narrative is used to provide background information to the story, to express the feelings of the characters, as well as to introduce the characters. This part is performed by the narrator(s) and a chorus, as in the traditional dance-drama. With this, Luang Vichitr followed the conventions of the *Khon* and the *Lakho'n* when the appearance of the new character was preceded by the introductory phase “*Mu'a Nan*” (“At the moment, ...”, used for higher status character) and “*Bat Nan*” (“Then, ...”, used for lower status character). However, introductory phases are not used for every conversation of the characters.³⁰² Interestingly, while the poetical narrative is used to interrupt dialogue in prose, the messages and the story line are repeated. Luang Vichitr used this very effective technique because he was able to cater for the preferences of both traditional and modern audiences.

Only traditional Thai music performed by the *Piphat* ensemble is used. Three types of traditional music were used in the two plays. Firstly, *Phleng Banleng* (the instrumental ensemble) was used to create a particular atmosphere to accompany the story, secondly, *Phleng Ro'ng* (vocal music) is sung by the vocalist or a chorus, and lastly *Naphat* music is used to accompany particular actions or feelings of the characters. For example, in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*, the opening scene begins with the *Piphat* music playing two musical repertoires, the “*Wa*” followed by the “*Cha Pi*”. These two songs are regularly performed in *Khon* and *Lakho'n* performances in which the *Wa* is played as part of *Phleng Hom Rong* (the overture suit) and the *Cha Pi* is played to accompany the reciting of poetical narration - usually at the beginning of the story. The *Naphat* music is used to accompany particular actions and expressions. Some *Naphat* music, for example *Choet*, is used for moving the army to fight, *Kraw No'k* is used to accompany the action of preparing the army (traditionally, it is used for

³⁰² The introductory phrase was first skipped in *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*. Like many other changes he introduced, Luang Vichitr relied heavily on the modernised dramatic versions that appeared during Rama V's reign.

non-human or lower status character going to fight), and *Samoe* is used when a character makes a movement from one place to another, including making an entrance or exit to and from the stage.

Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap also contains what appears to be his earliest attempt to use the *Phleng Pluk Jai* (patriotic songs) in support of his nationalist messages. In the second scene, King Naresuan orders his soldiers to prepare for the march towards Khraeng. At this point, the *Piphat* ensemble performs the musical piece *Kraw No'k*. According to the traditional conventions, this would be used to accompany the action of the army marching to the battlefield and would contain lyrical descriptions of the two armies. While using the *Kraw No'k*, Luang Vichitr did not follow this convention. The lyrics in the song are instead about the honour of the Thai race and the need to sacrifice oneself for the nation. As both plays involve foreign characters the *Phleng O'k Phasa* (Thai music with foreign dialects) is used to give the play a further touch of exoticism. This was borrowed from the *Lakho'n Phanthang* which has as its distinctive feature the use of foreign elements such as foreign costumes, characters, and music. However, although the use of this type of music is intended to create an alien atmosphere by imitating foreign tunes, it is difficult to identify where the musical repertoire originated from or which nationality it represents because they have been adapted to Thai style.³⁰³ The main impact on the audience was therefore an added foreign element, although it was not possible to tell the place of origin. *Phleng O'k Phasa* in Mon dialect is used for example in *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* because the play involves Makatho who is Mon by "nationality".

3.5 Conclusions

While Luang Vichitr was still experimenting with various dramatic elements and the best way to integrate them, he was on firmer grounds with regard to making sure that his plays were well received and heard of. The performances were carefully planned and a couple of days before the actual performance took place, Luang Vichitr began a

³⁰³ See Pamela Myers-Moro, *Thai music and musicians in contemporary Bangkok*. Center for Southeast Asia Studies, 1993, pp. 73-81.

publicity exercise. He hosted a grand party and previewed a dress rehearsal of the performances to the press, ministers, diplomats, and many important business people. Effectively he put on a whole show to impress them. Their reactions were generally very positive. The *Prachathippatai* newspaper, for example, congratulated him for his efforts and for his successful implementation of his idea to set up the Drama and Music School to preserve Thai arts and culture.³⁰⁴

However, one incident caused some criticism. Some considered the play about King Naresuan the Great as blasphemous as there was a report in the press of an alleged incident on stage when King Naresuan was about to pour the sacred water on the ground to declare Thailand's independence. It was said that the electricity went off and that this happened because Luang Vichitr had failed to pay respect to the gods of dance and drama which was traditionally carried out before starting a performance.³⁰⁵ Being criticised as being a *Hua Mai* (literally, new head), or overly progressive person, on the last day of the show, Luang Vichitr agreed to perform this respect by playing a ceremonial act to ensure the performance could continue without any such incidents.³⁰⁶

The criticism of Luang Vichitr suggests that to some extent he still had to conform to his time and that he had yet to establish his full authority. He still had to accommodate the concerns of the old-guard. Under these constraints, the production and reception of three plays analysed above should be regarded as important steps and achievements in Luang Vichitr's plan to use drama to influence the public. Particularly after the relatively positive reception of *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, he could talk more openly and confidently about his plans to

³⁰⁴ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4

³⁰⁵ Due to its religious background and origin the arts of *Khon* and *Lakho'n* were regarded as sacred. At the beginning of the performance, an invocation rite, the *Wai Khru* ceremony is performed for the dancers and musicians to worship Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the Triple Gem), the gods, spirits of teachers, parents, the sacred institutions (such as the monarchy) and the supernatural beings in the universe. It is seriously believed that without this rite, the dancers and musicians would not succeed in their artistic performances no matter how talented and well-trained they were. Those who *Phit Khru* (do wrong to the teachers, *i.e.* do not follow the teaching of the teachers) may be struck down by misfortunes, illness or even death. Mattani Rutnin, Transformation of the Thai Concepts of Aesthetics, Paper No. 13, Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1983, p. 26.

³⁰⁶ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4

the public and the press. In an interview with the *Prachathippatai* newspaper he was asked about the plays he would use for next stage performances of the Music and Drama School. In reply, Luang Vichitr remarked that the plays should incorporate a story about the Thai constitution so that they could help to promote an understanding of it. As he had experienced in France, he said, when the French performed seven plays, three of them had to be plays about the promotion of their constitution. In Siam, it was not necessary to strictly follow the same convention because the School's other objective was to revive traditional Thai arts.³⁰⁷

After the first three plays, the Drama and Music School began to sell tickets for performances to the public on a more regular basis. The aim of these public performances was to collect more money for the building of the first permanent theatre of the School.³⁰⁸ Performances were of various kinds of drama and music in the field of performing arts. Tickets were priced from between twenty-five Satang to one Baht fifty Satang.³⁰⁹ Although they still only reached a limited audience, the performances proved to be quite successful, helped to raise funds for the construction of a permanent theatre building and raised the public profile of the School.

Raising the public profile of the School was an important ambition of Luang Vichitr as he required a successful means to promote nationalism. His promotion of the Drama and Music School reached a grand scale when he celebrated his birthday in August 1935 with a "dusk till dawn" programme of entertainment and sports. The party took

³⁰⁷ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4. However, this interview was given after the performance of the play *Luk Ratthathammanun* and none of Luang Vichitr's plays written after this interview supported the constitution in the same way as *Luk Ratthathammanun*. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Luang Vichitr was now prepared to speak more boldly about his plans to use the School for political purposes.

³⁰⁸ Initially, the school used parts of the National Museum's building as classrooms and as a temporary theatre. The permanent theatre mentioned here is not the same one as the current National Theatre. In fact, it was a small auditorium constructed next to Thammasat University and was named the Sinlapakorn Theatre. However, in 1960 the theatre caught fire. Many documents were lost and the damage was so great that the whole building had to be demolished. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Ngan Kho'ng Krom Sinlapako'n" (Works of the Fine Arts Department, 1935), *Athibo'di Khon Raek Kho'ng Krom Sinlapako'n* (The First Director-General of the Fine Arts Department), 1992., p. 50. Later, during the Sarit's regime and by Luang Vichitr's initiation, the National Theatre as known today was built.

³⁰⁹ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4

place in the central hall of the School. Stage shows ranged from simple performances such as the recitation of poetry, *Rabam* dances, short plays, Japanese dance and Japanese music to more sophisticated shows such as the *Khon* dance-drama and the *Mahori* Thai classical music ensemble. These shows consisted of contributions by students and teachers of all levels. His lavish birthday party was criticised by the press, condemning him for spending government money for his own ends. One press article compared the entertainment to those enjoyed by the court of King Rama VI and he was ridiculed as behaving like “a Sultan in a Turkish Harem”.³¹⁰ The *Krungthep Warasap* newspaper even highlighted its critical commentary with the publication of the full-length schedule of the party.³¹¹ However, it appeared that Vichitr did not act against the press and the criticism eventually died down.

As much as he had to establish his full authority in the field of dramatic arts, he also had to be more considerate in his approach to promote the School. Although it appears as if he had been given the mandate by the Phahon and later Phibun government to use the Department, and particularly the School, for propaganda purposes there were others who did not fully agree with this. The public performances of his Drama and Music School, apart from a few dramatic creations, were merely the revival of traditional dance-drama and classical dances. Luang Vichitr now needed a major breakthrough. These kind of performances did not sufficiently contribute to building a reputation as a leading nationalist playwright. The plays that Luang Vichitr had written himself were just short-plays and only *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* had been shown to the public on more than one occasion. The other political plays had only been shown on a one-off basis during special occasions.

Whereas *Luk Ratthathammanun*'s spoken drama style had been too “dry”, *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* were performed in a traditional, though modernised, dance-drama style. The modernisation Luang Vichitr tried ranged from changes to the music, plot and dialogue. Luang Vichitr's plays *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* broke with the

³¹⁰ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/1

³¹¹ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/5

convention of traditional dance drama with regard to the hero. In a typical classical dance drama, the hero, often a king or prince, would be chasing beautiful women and killing evil demons. In Luang Vichitr's dance dramas, the royal hero would instead be taking a greater interest in the liberalisation of the country and the expansion of the country's boundaries. However, all three plays lacked the successful combination of plot, songs, music, dialogue and other dramatic techniques which made his later plays so successful. One of their main weaknesses was of course their shortness, possibly caused by lack of resources.

Luang Vichitr had yet to develop his own form of drama which would allow him to use plots with political messages and combine these with both traditional and modern, often western, theatre techniques. Furthermore, the plots were too short and not fictitious enough to sufficiently entertain the audience. The plays had the feel of being linear and too similar to historic chronicles and thus reduced the emotional impact on the audience. Luang Vichitr's experimental plays also did not have enough actions or set changes; instead he made use of narratives and a limited number of scenes with different stage designs. The plays also made use of very few characters compared to later plays where each play used at least thirty actors. This must have due to the resource constraints under which Luang Vichitr was running his School. These resource constraints were also behind the problems with the place to perform as there existed no proper theatre and the temporary building was small, therefore creating poor sound quality. Finally, Luang Vichitr's early plays do not make use of romance and the melodramatic conflict between love, duty and patriotism. This was a major omission as Thai people have a particular strong preference for stories with strong romantic plots and most popular Thai dance-drama included some kind of romantic relationship to entertain the audience.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that the early performances were failures. With the possible exception of *Luk Ratthathammanun*, the response to the performances of the new Drama and Music School appears to have been quite positive. It must also be recognised that Luang Vichitr was new to his responsibility and not always given a free hand. Rather, he was probably operating under constraints and against opposition from some of the actors, committees and other outsiders. He had to

take a gradual approach to slowly prove his own and his student's abilities to the public. In the beginning, it also appeared as if not everybody agreed with his mandate to write political plays and rather saw the preservation of traditional performing arts as his responsibility. Despite this, Luang Vichitr managed to stage several political plays and was praised by newspapers and officials. The experimental plays must be seen in this context. Despite the constraints, Luang Vichitr had been able to experiment to find the right mix to create the maximum impact.

Chapter Four

The First Success: Lu'at Suphan (1936)

Luang Vichitr's early experimental plays did not provide him with the breakthrough he required to further his ambitions. It was not until 1936 that he was to achieve what proved to be one of Thailand's most popular and enduring plays - *Lu'at Suphan* (Blood of Suphan). It was his first full-length play and became the hallmark of his dramatic career.³¹²

Lu'at Suphan was not based on a particular incident in Thai history and therefore should not be regarded as a historical play. Instead, it was largely a product of his own imagination, inspired by a trip to *Suphanburi* province.³¹³ Luang Vichitr wrote in the introduction of the play that he was taken to see many different sites during this trip. While inspecting the sites, images of the war between the Burmese and the Thais during the Ayuthaya period flashed into his mind. He thus saw *Suphanburi* as providing an ideal background for a play involving the conflict between the Thai and the Burmese. It is, however, more likely that Luang Vichitr was inspired by the story of the *Bang Rajan* battle, which was mentioned in the royal chronicles written in the Rattanakosin period.³¹⁴ The story of villagers attempting to resist the nation's enemy in *Lu'at Suphan* and the episode of the *Bang Rajan* battle have several similarities. In both cases, for example, the villagers die because of their lack of weapons. There exists no evidence to prove this suggestion, but the chronicles were very familiar sources to Luang Vichitr.³¹⁵ Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 1, most of Luang Vichitr's works

³¹² The play is still frequently performed at the National Theatre in Bangkok and it is always very popular.

³¹³ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Lu'at Suphan" (Blood of Suphan, a playtext 1936), n.d., p. 1 (preface).

³¹⁴ Particularly the Royal Autograph Chronicle (*Phongsawadan Chabap Phra Ratchahatthaleka*) and Prince Damrong's "Our Wars with the Burmese" (*Thai Rop Phama*) referred to the *Bang Rajan* battle. The *Bang Rajan* battle was briefly mentioned for the first time in the chronicles written in the Thonburi and early Rattanakosin periods. However, a more detailed account was provided in the Royal Autograph Chronicle which was compiled by Prince Damrong and published in 1912. See Sunait: 1996. Sunait suggests that the inclusion of the *Bang Rajan* episode in the royal chronicle was to remind commoners that they also had a duty to protect the nation state. For a further discussion of the battle, see also So'nnarong Piyakan, *Wirakam Banphaburut Thai* (Heroism of Thai Ancestors), Bangkok: Ruamsan Press, 1993, pp. 89-92.

³¹⁵ Prince Damrong's Royal Autograph Chronicle is one of the Thai references Luang Vichitr used in his book *Sayam Kap Suwannaphum* (Siam and the Golden Peninsula) published in 1933.

and ideas were not based on original and creative thoughts but on his ability to synthesise or adapt other people's ideas or works for his own propaganda purposes.

With *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr was so successful in his manipulation of existing fiction that it had stronger impact than his other plays, which were more closely related to historical fact. Luang Vichitr successfully led his audience into believing that the story of *Lu'at Suphan* was a historical reality. The play had such a lasting effect that the actions of its characters came to symbolise the nature of the *Suphanburi* people, and many incidents in *Lu'at Suphan* are believed to have really happened.³¹⁶

4.1 Summary of *Lu'at Suphan*

Lu'at Suphan is a tragic story of a love affair between Mang Rai, a high ranking Burmese soldier and son of the Burmese Army Commander, and Duang Jan, a Thai villager from *Suphanburi*. During their invasion of *Suphanburi*, the Burmese capture many villagers and treat them harshly, forcing them to engage in hard labour whilst providing them with insufficient food and water. Mang Rai, a Burmese soldier sympathetic to the plight of the Thai captives, tries to help them and even interferes when a fellow soldier, Mang Ratho, tortures the villagers. He falls deeply in love with a Thai prisoner, Duang Jan, and endeavours to prove his love for her by defying the Burmese army and releasing the Thai prisoners.

News of Mang Rai's sympathy for the Thais and his treasonous acts soon reaches his father, Mang Mahasuranat, the Commander of the Burmese Army. He refuses to let

³¹⁶ The Suphanburi people are generally regarded as being particularly brave and unified. They are seen to have a particularly strong love for their homeland. Former Prime Minister Banharn Silapa-archa was able to build on the "Suphanburi spirit" which assured him the loyalty of the majority of the people in Suphanburi. A good example of the Suphanburi spirit is an incident involving the Governor of Suphanburi at the time. In August 1993, there was a press report about the Suphanburi "mob" comprised of local politicians, officials, monks and businessmen, who came out on the streets to protest against the Ministry of Interior's order to transfer the Governor of Suphanburi. The famous and respected monk, Phra Thep Suwanmoli went even further, aiming to protect the governor and his integrity. The governor, who was well known for his rhetorical abilities, composed a song called *Suphan Kho'ng Rao* (Our Suphanburi). The song was an explicit statement that Suphanburi belonged to the Suphanburi people and that anybody looking down on Suphanburi's dignity or interfering in its affairs was to be considered an enemy. *Thai Rat*, 28 August 1993.

Mang Rai go unpunished and orders his execution to show that although Mang Rai is his son, he, as the Commander of the Burmese army, will carry out his duties strictly. Mang Ratho, who informs the Commander about the escape of the Thai prisoners, is also beheaded because he broke the army's rules by torturing the Thai prisoners.

After unsuccessfully trying to save Mang Rai, Duang Jan rejoins her people, who are temporarily hiding in the forest. She soon discovers the dead bodies of her parents who have been killed by Mang Ratho's followers in revenge for the death of their leader. Duang Jan resolves to avenge the death of her parents and leads the poorly-armed *Suphanburi* people to fight the Burmese. They fight gallantly, but due to their lack of weapons, they are all killed.

4.2 Analysis of the Play

Lu'at Suphan's success had a powerful impact on almost every stratum of Thai society (see Section 4.4). It was so successful that it set a new benchmark for nationalistic drama, both in terms of staging techniques as well as in relating political messages.³¹⁷ It was a new style of play which incorporated both traditional and modern dramatic elements. With this combination, Luang Vichitr catered to the almost opposing aesthetic tastes of both the urban elite and the commoners. In order to meet the expectations of the wider public, some of the graceful and slow dance movements are replaced with swifter versions, the plot is more rapidly developed and new ideas and storylines are used. On the other hand, *Lu'at Suphan* was not a complete break with tradition and many customary elements were maintained. Luang Vichitr continued, for example, to use classical music (though alternated with modern music) and, in accordance with classical drama convention, the actors involved in "intimate" scenes were all female.

³¹⁷ Somphop Jantharaprapha, a popular dramatist during the 60s and 70s, followed Luang Vichitr's footsteps in his making of historical drama. However, although many of his plays resembled Luang Vichitr's plays in that they eulogised past heroes and heroines as well as presented a substantial spectacle on stage, they were not intended to arouse patriotism nor were they used for political propaganda. See Jakkrit Duangphattra, "Somphop Jantharaprapha Kap Wannakam Bot Lakho'n Prawatsat" (Somphop Jantharaprapha and Historical Plays), *Sinlapakorn*, 35, vol. 6, 1992, pp. 109-121.

Lu'at Suphan was popular because it catered to the aesthetic tastes of the audience. The term "aesthetic", in the Thai sense, can be broadly defined as referring to the human perception and sense of what is beautiful and enjoyable.³¹⁸ Thai people generally regard things which are refined, formal, graceful, stylised, elaborate in design or intricate in craftsmanship as *Ngam* (aesthetically beautiful), as opposed to anything rough, uncouth, informal, wild and disorderly.³¹⁹ On the other hand, extreme complexity, which may create confusion or conflict, is aesthetically as unacceptable as too much simplicity or barrenness. However, it must be noted that aesthetics in Thailand have changed over time and vary geographically, ethnically and socially and no absolute standard exists. A dichotomy has always existed between the values of the elite or the urban centre and those of commoners or the rural periphery.³²⁰ The extent of variation in aesthetic tastes by geographic location and social class has depended on the influence of the centre and the ruling classes at any one time. The separation of court and popular aesthetics was most clear and evident under the absolute monarchy. The refined and graceful lifestyle of the royal court was the role model that the public was expected to admire and aspire to. However, although aesthetic values of commoners were strongly influenced by the values of the royal court and everything close to it, the dichotomy was still very evident. In the field of theatre, for example, dramatic arts were divided into high and low art forms. Court performances were regarded as refined and elaborate while their popular counterparts were considered coarse and vulgar.³²¹ Although commoners looked up to the arts forms representing

³¹⁸ Jiraporn: 1992, p. 22.

³¹⁹ See Mattani: 1983. Generally, words like *suay* (beautiful), *ngam* (gorgeous), *phairo'* (melodious), *sunthari* (fine), *sunthariya* (graceful) and *sunthariyasat* (aesthetics) are used in relation to the subject of aesthetics. The nature of the Thai aesthetic values for poetry, for example, rests on the concept of *phairo'*, a word of Khmer origin meaning "sweet, melodious, musical, pleasing to the ears." This concept pervades all forms of Thai literature and especially Thai poetry with its form and sound resembling music. See Manas Chitakasem, "From Eroticism to Realism: A Thai Poetic Journey through Time," *Tenggara*, 35, 1995, pp. 108-124.

³²⁰ Jiraporn: 1992, p. 22.

³²¹ Both art forms have, however, substantially borrowed from each other. See Chetana Nagavajara, "An Aesthetics of Discontinuity: Contemporary Thai Drama and Its Western Connection," *Comparative Literature from a Thai Perspective* (Collected Articles 1978-1992), Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University Press, 1996, pp. 239-240.

the court and on rare occasions were allowed to watch royal drama performances, they generally enjoyed more basic entertainment.³²²

Aesthetic values developed over time from an appreciation of a very ritualistic and complex style in the early Ayuthaya period, to a taste for a somewhat simpler style in the late Ayuthaya period, culminating in to an increasing preference for realism in the Bangkok period. This development can be found in Thai literature as well as dance-drama. Before the reign of King Rama V, strict dramatic conventions were imposed and no further development was allowed, making aesthetic values relatively fixed. The introduction of greater realism and spectacle (particularly with respect to visualisation on stage and costume design) occurred in dance-drama during King Rama V's reign, when the modernised drama forms of *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, *Lakho'n Du'kdamban* and *Lakho'n Phanthang* were developed.³²³

Both classical and popular Thai drama forms were not suitable for Luang Vichitr's propaganda purposes for a number of reasons. The coarse and vulgar language of popular entertainment forms such as *Likay* (popular dance-drama) and *Hun Krabo'k* (rod puppet) were not considered sufficiently civilised or sophisticated, an important aspect in Siam's quest to appear cultured and modern in the eyes of other nations.³²⁴ On the other hand, Luang Vichitr did not want to use classical dance-drama either. It too was closely associated with the old regime (the absolute monarchy) and the slow and stylised elements which marked classical dance-drama were incompatible with his intention to use drama for propaganda purposes. Even the modernised forms of drama that had developed during King Chulalongkorn's reign (Rama V) were not appropriate

³²² See Jiraporn: 1992. and Chetana, *ibid.*, pp. 237-246.

³²³ The adaptation of Western elements in Thai theatre started during the reign of Rama V and resulted in new theatrical forms, for example, *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*, *Lakho'n Phanthang* and *Lakho'n Ro'ng*. See Chapter 2. By the time *Lu'at Suphan* was staged, the popularity of court-style classical dance-drama performances had therefore already greatly decreased. This was due to changing tastes, the emergence of film and commercial theatre in the form of singing drama. See Jiraporn on the development of commercial theatre in Thailand before 1932. Jiraporn: 1992, pp. 39-42.

³²⁴ This argument is supported by the exclusion of *Nang Talung* (Southern style shadow puppet) and *Hun Krabo'k* (rod puppet), the entertainment forms popular among commoners, from the curriculum of the Drama and Music School. *Itsara*, 1 September 1934, p. 2.

as each of them had a “weakness” in one area or another and, apart from *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, had also lost their initial popularity. Nevertheless, they provided a wide scope of ideas for Luang Vichitr to exploit.³²⁵

The spoken drama adopted by Rama VI was also considered inappropriate for Luang Vichitr's purposes. Normally, from a propagandist's point of view, spoken drama can be very well-suited because it enables the direct delivery of propaganda messages. However, in Thailand this form of drama would fail to capture the attention of the audience, who were not used to plays which relied on just one medium (*i.e.* spoken language instead of a mix of music, dance, songs, dialogues *etc.*). Given this preference for variation, it would be particularly difficult to maintain attention because the traditional Thai audience could be undisciplined and lacking in concentration.³²⁶ *Khon* and *Lakho'n* productions could be extremely long, some spanning more than 20 hours over two consecutive days. Indeed, an uninterrupted performance of the entire *Ramakien* (with over three hundred characters) would take longer than one month. The audience often chatted during performances (and even ate) and did not pay full attention. This was due to the setting of traditional Thai theatre as well as the length of the performances. Folk theatre (and also some of the court performances shown to the public) was usually performed in the open air, mostly on an improvised stage. The audience would sit on a lawn with nothing to prevent them from chewing beetle-nuts or eating whilst enjoying the stage performance.³²⁷ Even the elite had become less interested in stylised and refined plays. Commercialisation of Thai theatre had started with the decree of 1861 (see Chapter 2) and of the modernised plays introduced during

³²⁵ *Lakho'n Du'kdamban* used, for example, classical stories and costumes reminiscent of the traditional style. Overall, it still had the feel of a refined classical dance-drama, although many elements were shortened or condensed. *Lakho'n Phanthang* was very exotic, but not particularly Thai. Even *Lakho'n Ro'ng*, on which Luang Vichitr appeared to have drawn most heavily, was not appropriate in some areas. For example, dancing was very limited (with no Thai-style dancing at all) and the play was too foreign, *i.e.* it did not use many (traditional) Thai drama elements. Based on western opera, the audience also tended to focus more on the melody of the songs and music than the content, which made the play ineffective for a propagandist.

³²⁶ Chetana Nagavajara, “The Persistence of Music Drama: Reflections on the Modern Thai Theatre,” *Tenggara*, 23, 1989, pp. 106-114 and Chetana, “An Aesthetics of Discontinuity”, *op cit.*, pp. 237-246.

³²⁷ Chetana, “An Aesthetics of Discontinuity”, *op cit.*, pp. 237-246. No evidence appears to be available about the behaviour of the elite at court performances.

Rama V's reign, only the *Lakho'n Ro'ng* had preserved its popularity. A return to pure classical dance-drama would therefore not have been appreciated even by the majority of the western-educated elite.

Although Luang Vichitr would probably have preferred to completely supersede classical dance-drama with an art form more suitable for propaganda purposes, such as spoken drama, he knew that an attempt to do this was not appropriate and would result in failure. In the field of dramatic arts, most of Siam's heritage was based on court-influenced dramatic forms and abandoning these roots would not have been acceptable to the audience. Moreover, classical dance-drama still had many supporters, including the artists from the royal household, who had been recently transferred to the Fine Arts Department and upon whose support Luang Vichitr depended. Luang Vichitr also wanted to avoid emulating the failure of King Vajiravudh, whose propaganda plays proved to be ineffective and were limited to a small audience. Luang Vichitr therefore needed to take the aesthetic tastes of his various target audiences into account by combining old and new elements and yet find a way to insert his messages. This task was complicated by the differences in the aesthetic values and expectations of commoners and the elite.

In order to achieve the optimum formula, Luang Vichitr combined different forms of drama, particularly those created during the reign of King Rama V: *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*, *Lakho'n Phanthang* and *Lakho'n Ro'ng*. These three modernised dramatic forms introduced many new elements and have become a useful source of inspiration for later dramatists. The first two forms were relatively limited in popularity, and the most important was *Lakho'n Ro'ng*. Many private drama troupes emerged when this form was created. Its widespread commercialisation and attractiveness inspired Luang Vichitr to synthesise it into his own style of propaganda. The adaptation of elements from *Lakho'n Ro'ng* made his plays acceptable to the ruling class, who considered classical dance-drama to form part of their heritage. Also, of all three forms, *Lakho'n Ro'ng* was the most suitable for the masses. In combination with contemporary themes, more advanced theatrical techniques and other inventions or

breaks with tradition, he further increased the realism and spectacle and catered to the tastes of the commoners in the audience who looked for enjoyment and entertainment.

Viewed today, *Lu'at Suphan* might look like a pot-pourri of different elements combined without artistic unity. Actors danced, sang and talked with styles derived from various theatrical sources. Performances featured both western and traditional Thai ensembles. While actors performed stylised dances to traditional Thai music, they assumed real-life movements when nationalist songs were played on western musical instruments. However, a more appropriate term than “pot-pourri” that might be used in reference to the play is “total work of art.”³²⁸ By creating this “total work of art”, Luang Vichitr showed his understanding of the nature of the Thai audience. Their preference for dramatic variety has been termed as the “aesthetics of interruption” or the “aesthetics of discontinuity”.³²⁹ Although the individual artistic elements did not appear to fit together, the overall effect of *Lu'at Suphan* was cohesive and entertaining and proved to be popular with a wide range of people. Word, music and dance worked together to create a dramatic experience, a “total work of art”, that spoken drama in its purest form could not achieve. Both Thai classical dance-drama and Thai popular theatre, like the *Likay*, are based on this tradition.³³⁰

Luang Vichitr successfully nurtured these “aesthetics of discontinuity” and thus created an artistic framework within which he could insert his political messages. The changes and new elements he introduced influenced the aesthetic values of his audiences, creating a preference for greater realism and spectacle, and worked together to achieve the dramatic impact which made *Lu'at Suphan* so successful. The next section attempts to analyse the messages contained within *Lu'at Suphan*, followed by a detailed examination of the dramatic elements he chose to introduce, maintain or change in the play.³³¹

³²⁸ Chetana, “The Persistence of Music Drama”, *op cit.*, pp. 106-114 and “An Aesthetics of Discontinuity”, *op cit.*, pp. 237-246.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ It should be noted that this is a Western analytical framework. As mentioned earlier, in Thai theatre, the dramatic elements, particularly dance, music and song, cannot be separated.

4.2.1 The Plot

A good plot should have unity, *i.e.* each action or scene should initiate the next rather than stand alone without any connection with preceding or following actions.³³² *Lu'at Suphan* was Luang Vichitr's first play that met this criterion. Unlike his previous plays, in which the plot development was constrained to fill a shorter time, he now developed a proper plot which included characters involved in conflict and entanglement, rising and falling action, and resolution. Prince Wanwaithayako'n Wo'rawan (Prince Wan), a grandson of King Mongkut and the owner of the then popular newspaper, *Prachamit*, commented that Luang Vichitr had created a well thought-out play. *Lu'at Suphan* showed patriotic Thais prepared to give up their lives to protect the nation and evil Burmese soldiers like Mang Ratho receiving the appropriate punishment (death). Moreover, while the good and kind hearted Burmese soldier exists (Mang Rai) he is punished with death, despite being the son of the Burmese army's commander. The commander cannot let his son go free as he has failed to carry out his duty. Hence, everything is forced into the right place and, in Prince Wan's opinion, Luang Vichitr created a great play with a good plot.³³³

As a nationalist propagandist Luang Vichitr still had to thread his messages through the plot. In *Lu'at Suphan* he was able to do this very skilfully. The issue of the Thai-Burmese relationship is introduced via the relationship between Duang Jan and Mang Rai during a time of war. The war brings these two characters together and as a result they fall in love with each other. Starting with a soldier-prisoner relationship, the two characters come into conflict through their responsibilities towards their nations, despite their feelings towards each other. Although they are in love, they must remain in their roles of defender and intruder. The tension rises when the relationship

However, this framework is convenient and facilitates the discussion of which new or western elements were incorporated by Luang Vichitr to achieve his goal.

³³² Jonnie Mobley, NTC's Dictionary of Theatre and Drama Terms: A Comprehensive, Easy-to-Use Guide to Drama and Theatre, National Textbook Company, 1992, p. 114.

³³³ Wanwaithayako'n Wo'rawan, Prince, "Kho' Sangket Kho'ng Phu Du Bang Than" (Observations from Some Viewers), Athibo'di Khon Rak Kho'ng Krom Sinlapako'n (The First Director-General of the Fine Arts Department), 1992, p. 118.

intensifies and becomes more complex. Duang Jan and Mang Rai now become more concerned about their duties to their countries, which brings them into conflict with their feelings. Duang Jan wants the Suphan people to be free and Mang Rai wants the Thai people to have a less hostile attitude towards the Burmese. Both want the two sides to become friends. Further drama is created when Mang Rai frees the Thai prisoners to prove his love as well as to demonstrate his good intentions and changed attitude towards the Thai people. Another pre-climax plot emerges when the Burmese commander disagrees with Mang Rai's approach and orders him to be beheaded. The "journey" of Mang Rai has now come to an end but Duang Jan has yet to meet her destiny. The denouement finally unfolds as Luang Vichitr leads Duang Jan to her fate. He characterises her actions as those of a true nationalist, who after experiencing intense suffering and the loss of her loved ones, realises that to be a true nationalist she must be ready to give up her life for her country. In the end, she stands up and bravely fights the enemy until she is killed. Ending in this way, the play has a powerful impact on the audience.

Step by step Luang Vichitr brought his play to its dramatic climax, while at the same time implanting nationalist messages into the minds of his audience. With the death of the Thai people, including Duang Jan, Luang Vichitr shocks the audience, who were wishing for or expecting the Thai villagers to overthrow the cruel Burmese. However, Luang Vichitr is then able to exploit this upset state of the audience. The Burmese commander delivers a closing monologue praising the courage and unity of the Thai people while observing that their defeat was due to poor armament. This speech at the end of the play allows the audience a certain satisfaction. Its main message is that the Thai villagers did their duties as Thai people (or nationalists) but they died because they did not have enough weapons. Now it is the duty of the audience to join the government in defending the nation against its enemies and expand the military forces.

The Use of Romantic Love, Duty and Patriotism

Luang Vichitr's main concern was to attract the audience's attention in order to facilitate the promotion of his nationalist messages. In order to achieve this, he made effective use of sentimental plots and what was to become his most popular theme: the

conflict between romantic love, patriotism and a strong sense of duty. This would prove to be his most successful formula, a sentimental plot filled with romantic love and ending with tragedy.³³⁴

Lu'at Suphan contained a mixture of emotions such as love, revenge, sadness, joy and patriotism. The skilful use and interplay of these sentiments increased the variety of the play and in this way Luang Vichitr avoided the monotony of typical dance-drama. For example, the play starts with a vengeful and sorrowful atmosphere as the Thai people are tortured by their enemy. Following this scene, a romantic mood is created when the main characters fall in love and each express their own meaning of love. The audience is affected by the romantic emotions, but Luang Vichitr then uses the technique of contrast to create shock by separating Duang Jan and Mang Rai. He even puts Mang Rai on trial and ends his life, leaving the young heart-broken woman alone. The audience is left to ponder what went wrong, as Mang Rai had tried his best to create amity between the two nations. This creates a mood of disbelief, surprise and a sense of unfairness.

Khvam Rak (romantic love) has always been an important element in Thai literature and drama. Whether the main subject was adventure, heroic deeds, the life of the Buddha and the *Jataka* tales (previous lives of the Buddha) or religious and moral teachings, romance frequently formed an important element greatly enjoyed by readers or the audience.³³⁵ However, in the great tragic romances such as *Phra Lo'* and *Inao* the romantic theme has a deeply religious meaning. In both stories love causes suffering in life and it is stressed that worldly existence is impermanent. This traditional *Bun-kam* (merit-karma) concept, that the suffering and happiness a person experiences in the present life is the consequence of deeds committed in past lives, was no longer relevant or useful for Luang Vichitr's dramatic works. The conflict between worldly desire and religion was replaced by a conflict between romantic love and patriotism. True love for another must exceed the love for oneself. If the love for the other person

³³⁴ Luang Vichitr had personally discovered that plays with sad endings were more popular than plays with happy endings. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Ngan Lakho'n" (Works on Dramatic Arts, 1938). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, p. 4.

³³⁵ Mattani: 1983.

was less than the love for oneself, it could not be regarded as true love. In the same way, those who expressed that they loved their own nation, but were not prepared to sacrifice the things they held dear, could not be regarded as true patriots. The only way one could express true love for the nation was to be willing to give up personal gain for its benefit:

“Those who say that they love the nation but are not prepared to sacrifice their belongings or lives for the nation, do not deserve to be called patriots”.³³⁶

The concept of love in war (*Rak Rawang Rop*) is a theme which Luang Vichitr employed particularly effectively. Mang Rai values his love for Duang Jan very highly. He is prepared to give up everything for her, even though he can foresee his fate:

Duang Jan: I want to know when the Thai and Burmese will stop killing each other. We have been fighting for 200 years. How many more years do we have to fight?
Mang Rai: Duang Jan, let me tell you honestly that I love you. I will do everything for you.
Duang Jan: There is nothing you can do for me, especially at this time of war.

(The *Piphat* ensemble plays the *Ton Wo'rachet* song and Duang Jan and Mang Rai keep a moment of silence)

Mang Rai: Duang Jan, I am going to take a risk: I am going to free you and your parents. You must find a place to hide. We will soon move our troops from here.
Duang Jan: If they find out that it was you who freed us, you will be severely punished.
Mang Rai: According to the rules, I will be sentenced to death. But, I might get special treatment because I am the son of the commander. I will probably get two or three lashes on the back, but I can bear that because I am prepared to sacrifice my own flesh and blood for love.

³³⁶ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Khwam Rak”, *op cit.*, pp. 332-333.

Mang Mahasuranat, Mang Rai's father, is an example of a person who carries out his duties whatever the implications and cost to himself. He represents a man full of justice and devoted to the principle of duty, even when this means executing his own son. Duang Jan represents a Thai lady of high moral standards, strong courage and a deep sense of love for her country. She is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice by giving up her life to protect the honour of Thailand, and thus provides a role-model for ordinary Thai citizens. *Lu'at Suphan's* melodramatic ending, when Duang Jan declares that she is prepared to die for the nation, creates a haunting impact on the audience:

Duang Jan: I have nothing left . . . no one that I love and care for. I only have my life, which I will sacrifice for the nation. There are not many of us. We do not have weapons but the blood of Suphan has never shown a hint of cowardice. We will fight with any weapons we have. If we could kill only one Burmese and all be killed ourselves, we are prepared for that. Come. Where is the blood of Suphan? Come all together. The blood of Suphan [people] is brave. Come together. Come to die together.

The monologue is supported by the song *Lu'at Suphan* which follows immediately:

The Blood of Suphan has been brave in battle
it fought gallantly and did not know surrender
never afraid of enemies
anybody who has a weapon, take it and go to fight

Chorus - Come together, die together - *Lu'at Suphan*
The Blood of Suphan will attack - without any fear
We cannot be happy because the enemy has invaded our land
- this makes us feel deep sorrow, for our poor Thai nation
They torture and kill us because we are the prisoners
- why should we be still?

- Chorus -

Thailand belongs to the Thais, not to others - let us fight and take back our country
Even if we have to die, we must not care - let's get together and attack.

- Chorus -

This melodramatic ending is important as the stunned audience does not easily forget the play and the messages contained within it. This is of course the objective of Luang Vichitr, who wants to ensure that the propaganda messages are received and remembered.

Luang Vichitr also wanted to emphasise the importance of a sense of duty. He thus creates an intense conflict between the love of a father for his son and a commander's duty towards his nation. In the scene when Mang Mahasuranat is informed that his son has broken the army's rules (by freeing the prisoners), he insists that the official punishment by execution should be upheld.

- The commander: . . . Mang Rai has no authority to free all the prisoners on his own. That action severely broke the army's rules. Capture and execute him!
- The senior officer: Mang Rai should not receive punishment as severe as that.
- The commander: I must do what I said. I said we must execute all those who freed the Thai prisoners.
- The senior officer: But this kind of punishment does not necessarily mean a death sentence. Mang Rai is your own flesh and blood.
- The commander: My own flesh and blood . . . I have already given up for the nation. It does not matter if it means sacrificing my own son, even my own life I am prepared to sacrifice at any time.

In this dialogue, Luang Vichitr effectively dramatises his message about duty. He simplifies the plot and consciously makes Mang Mahasuranat a two-dimensional character who has no doubts about his priorities. The message is very clear; duty is more important than love for one's son.

Creating an understanding amongst the audience about the importance of a strong sense of duty was one of Luang Vichitr's main goals. He considered this to be one of the characteristics that Thai people needed to help Thailand become stronger and catch up with the western world. In his serialised radio broadcast on *Laksana Kho'ng Khon* (Characteristics of People), Luang Vichitr included the sense of duty as one of the key personal characteristics a good human being should have. He established guidelines to assess whether the people of a country had the "right qualities". In his view, a strong sense of duty was one of the most essential qualities to have.³³⁷ He felt that everybody was born with duties that should be carried out until the day of death. Such duties included paying gratitude to parents and patrons and being loyal to the nation. Those

³³⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Laksana Kho'ng Khon" (Characteristics of People), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, 1932, pp. 382-387.

who fulfilled their obligations deserved to belong to the human race. Those who did not were burdens to others and should be exterminated.³³⁸

A person who works hard and fulfils all duties, which could even involve the sacrifice of his or her life, could overcome any obstacles and should be regarded as being of good character. A human's virtues should be judged not by social status but by the fulfilment of duty. If a country's population had a strong sense of responsibility, it would be possible to maintain sovereignty and economic prosperity. The sense of duty and love for one's nation are inextricable. First used in *Lu'at Suphan*, romantic love was often brought into conflict with a sense of national obligation in order to dramatise a play's storyline, but there was never any conflict between sense of duty and patriotism.

In his concept of duty, Luang Vichitr had been heavily influenced by the Japanese and their concept of Bushido, the Samurais' code of conduct.³³⁹ The path of the Bushido was absolute loyalty to a patron. This was considered essential for Samurais, who must act according to their patron's command and must always be prepared to give up their lives for them. It was considered shameful for a Samurai not to carry out his duties, and this would lead to him committing hara-kiri.³⁴⁰ Luang Vichitr had a deep belief in the importance of a sense of duty and hence this theme recurred in most of his plays. Characters from all social strata (king and commoner, male and female, foreign and Thai) were used to convey this message.

The most important and dramatic conflict in the play is between romantic love and patriotism. Duang Jan's and Mang Rai's love for each other comes into conflict with their sense of duty for their own nations. In this conflict, Luang Vichitr cleverly plays with the words *Rak* (Love) and *Chat* (Nation) which, if combined, mean patriotism (*Rak Chat* - Love the Nation). The audience is made to realise that patriotic feelings

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 382-383.

³³⁹ A Thai text on Bushido appeared in Duang Prathip (30 April 1933). See also Chapter 1 of this thesis.

³⁴⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bushido", *op cit.*

should take over romantic love as, for a true nationalist, individual love comes second to patriotic loyalty and must be sacrificed if necessary. Luang Vichitr used this successful formula in many of his subsequent plays.

Death on the Stage

At the end of the play, Mang Rai is executed and Duang Jan and the other villagers die in battle. The events happened on stage, which represented a break with classical dance-drama convention - scenes which call for blood and extreme cruelty were traditionally considered distasteful by Thai audiences. Luang Vichitr was not however the first to bring death on stage to a Thai audience. As already mentioned, dramatic arts went through modernisation and innovation during Rama V's reign. One such break with tradition was the depiction of death and tragedy on stage, and technical devices were developed to ensure their realistic portrayal. Prince Narathip set the precedent with his well-known tragic-romantic production of *Phra Lo'*, at the end of which the death of the hero and the two heroines were performed on stage. To have the characters die on stage was considered a revolutionary act and a daring break with tradition.³⁴¹ However, there is no evidence that such events were frequent in other plays in the period to follow. Nevertheless, Luang Vichitr set out to capture the success of Prince Narathip's innovation and increase its dramatic impact by further advancing its realism. In addition, he may have been influenced by the Japanese *Kabuki* plays, in which suicides and murders are executed with great artistic skill, creating scenes of macabre beauty and style on stage.³⁴²

By showing the tragic deaths of his protagonists on stage, Luang Vichitr generated shock and sentimentality so that the audience would muse over the play and its messages after the performance. The endings aroused patriotic sentiments by celebrating heroic sacrifice and the triumph of nationalism. Luang Vichitr's ultimate goal was to make the audience follow the courageous examples set in the play.

³⁴¹ Mattani: 1983, p. 39.

³⁴² Before writing *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr had been to Japan. He had always been very impressed by Japanese arts and culture, including the performing arts.

4.2.2 The Characters

Luang Vichitr's decision to have an ordinary woman in a leading role was unusual, as was the way in which she was characterised. Until then, most Thai literati and dramatists had typically only focused on a woman's beauty, femininity, maternity and submissiveness to her superiors and husband. Luang Vichitr's women have a more modern outlook. In *Lu'at Suphan*, Duang Jan shows her strength by resisting the aggressor's harsh treatment. She holds up her dignity and is willing to die rather than see her beloved motherland remaining in the hand of the enemy. This nationalist quality appears in the first scene when Mang Rai comes to stop the Burmese' harassment of Thai prisoners. He tries to comfort his prisoners and asks Duang Jan if she has been hurt. Duang Jan's immediate response is very sharp and loaded with bitter anger, which is very rare for Thai women, and particularly different to how women were normally portrayed in literature and drama:

Duang Jan: I have no more pain. My physical pain is not as painful as the pain that the Thai nation is experiencing during this invasion. This is the pain which is overwhelming me.

It is very interesting to note that Luang Vichitr does not create Duang Jan to represent an individual character, but aims to use her to portray the collective behaviour and thinking of the Thai people. Thus, there are many occasions on which Duang Jan speaks out on behalf of the whole nation expressing the feelings of the Thai people towards the nation's enemy:

Mang Rai: Are you from *Suphanburi*?

Duang Jan: I was born in *Suphanburi*. I truly am the Blood of Suphan. The Blood of Suphan hates the Burmese more than any other people.

Mang Rai: But there must be one day when the Blood of Suphan will become friendly to the Burmese.

Duang Jan: I do not know.

Duang Jan is further used to solicit the audience's support of Luang Vichitr's embedded messages. He realised that the depiction of personal sacrifices by women, elderly people or commoners for the well-being of the nation would have a strong impact on the audience. In a speech on the role of women, Luang Vichitr explained

that women were frequently made victims of political conflicts and actions.³⁴³ They were often required to make sacrifices for the benefit of the nation. He gave the example of a princess who had to marry a prince from another country. She did not like him, but agreed to marry him in order to strengthen the relationship between the two countries involved. The tragedy of Duang Jan having to sacrifice herself for the benefit of the nation had a much greater impact on the audience than would a soldier dying on the battlefield. To portray Duang Jan in a leading role as a martyr to the Thai nation created an enormous emotional impact on the audience. It was particularly effective in arousing sentiments in men. Male viewers were likely to feel that if a poor woman could sacrifice this much for the nation, then a man should be able to do even more. For the female part of the audience, Duang Jan represented an honourable role-model.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Phuying" (Women, 1930), *Vichitr San*, vol. 3, pp. 339-345.

³⁴⁴ In the past, Thai women had always been seen as "the back legs of an elephant"; *i.e.* their role was to take care of her husband, children and home. Women had never been allowed to participate in politics or the country's defence activities. After the end of the absolute monarchy, new governments tried to change the old image of women and sought ways to upgrade their status in society. The first female warrior who was promoted by the government was Lady Mo (Khunying Mo or Thao Suranari), a villager of Nakho'n Ratchasima (a province in the Northeast). Under the leadership of Lady Mo, the local people suppressed a rebellion by Prince Anuwo'ng against the central government during the reign of King Rama III. Lady Mo's monument was inaugurated in 1934 and since then has become a place of worship as well as being the symbol of the glorious past of the people of Nakho'n Ratchasima. Many forms of writings have been produced to glorify her heroism. Luang Vichitr also wrote a song, *Ratchasima*, as a form of tribute to Lady Mo's heroism, which according to Saiphin Kaewngamprasert was included in *Lu'at Suphan*. However, there is no evidence of this in the play's script. However, it is possible that the song was sung during the intermission. Luang Vichitr may have done this to stress the importance of women, particularly the courage of ordinary women in protecting the nation from its enemy. This song was later chosen to be the song representing the province and has since been broadcast during local functions and festivities.

When Phibun came to power, he implemented an unprecedented programme to elevate the status of women. Phibun's wife, Lady La-aid wrote a song called *Do'k Mai Kho'ng Chat* (Flower of the Nation) to emphasise that women as well as men should help in building the nation. The National Council of Culture, which was created in 1942, had a "Women Department" attached to implement programmes promoting the status of women. The Women Military Corps, a Military Academy for Women also came into existence during this period. Songs to celebrate the virtues of Thai women were commissioned. See Saiphin Kaewngamprasert, *Kanmu'ang Nai Anusawari Thao Suranari* (Politics in the Monument of Thao Suranari), Bangkok: Matichon Press, 1995 and Chetana Nagavajara, "Unsex me here": An Oriental's Plea for Gender Reconciliation," *Comparative Literature From a Thai Perspective*, Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University Press, 1996, p. 185.

Another difference to classical dance-drama is that the play does not celebrate divine kingship. Instead, ordinary people are the heroes and heroines who sacrifice their lives for the nation. Characters speak simple language and behave in ordinary ways. Their ultimate goal is to further a noble cause, that of the nation. In classical dance-drama, characters of lower class rarely appeared on stage. On those occasions when they did, they were frequently overlooked as they only played in supporting non-speaking roles. The main characters were typically kings, princes, princesses and heavenly beings. In his use of ordinary people Luang Vichitr was not a pioneer, but followed the example of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). Most of the characters in King Vajiravudh's plays were not royalty and many of them, as in Luang Vichitr's play, acted to further the cause of the nation. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, King Vajiravudh's plays were quite exceptional in Thailand's dramatic history and reached only a small audience. Moreover, while mixing old and new, Luang Vichitr's plays can be more closely associated with traditional dance-drama, and this was certainly his intention as he considered folk drama as uncivilised and coarse. Therefore, the use of ordinary people in *Lu'at Suphan* must be considered to be a significant break with the conventions of traditional dance-drama. *Lu'at Suphan* also paints the villagers as highly honourable and noble. Most importantly, however, the audience finds it easier to associate themselves with the ordinary characters in the play than they would with royal heroes.

The use of ordinary people as protagonists in *Lu'at Suphan* may have also been inspired by the story of the *Bang Rajan*. Both stories focus on the courageous deeds of Thai villagers trying to hold off the Burmese to protect the country's independence. *Bang Rajan* was the first official account in Thai history that ordinary people participated in defending the country. According to the chronicles, this had until then only been carried out by the Kings' armies. The inclusion of the heroic story of *Bang Rajan* in the chronicles was an attempt to manipulate the national consciousness into recognising that it was not only the duty of the rulers to protect the nation, but also the duty of each and every ordinary citizen.³⁴⁵ The shift of emphasis from the study of

³⁴⁵ See Sunait, *Phama Rop Thai*, *op cit.*, pp. 33-36. By the time Luang Vichitr's play was performed, a historical novel based on the *Bang Rajan* episode had gained significant popularity. The writer of this popular literary genre, *Mai Mu'ang Doem*, had written two books, *Thahan Ek Phra Banthun* (A great soldier of Phra Banthun) and *Bang Rajan* (*Bang Rajan* Battle) which stressed the heroism and patriotism of the local people. Dhida Saraya, "From Intellectual Politics to Local

court activities to the concept of *Chat* (Nation) was a result of the indirect impact of the colonial threat by western powers on Thai historiography.³⁴⁶ The subject of the *Bang Rajan* villagers who bravely defended their village against the Burmese was deliberately employed in the new Chronicle in order to extend the scope beyond the boundary of the Royal Capital. With the advent of the newly conceived “nation-state”, every Siamese subject, members of the royal family as well as commoners, now became part of the *Chat* (the Thai nation).³⁴⁷ Everyone now had the duty towards the nation. This is also the message that Luang Vichitr wanted to convey to his audience. The endings of *Lu'at Suphan* and the *Bang Rajan* battle are highly comparable, as the people of *Bang Rajan* and *Suphanburi* both meet their deaths due to a lack of weapons.

Luang Vichitr also uses the characterisation of Mang Rai to move the audience and increase the dramatic impact. He thought that people would sympathise with those who faced up to their agony with courage and dignity. In *Lu'at Suphan*, Mang Rai is a dignified, honest and brave soldier. The audience was moved to tears on realising that Mang Rai's effort and courage to help the Thai prisoners would result in his death. However, the outcome was particularly shocking for the audience because Mang Rai accepts his condemnation without resistance or hesitation. Shortly before his death, he still does not show any despair or self-pity. He does not beg his father for his life, but, instead asks to be forgiven for not being a good soldier. By including this scene, Luang Vichitr managed to upset the audience and so succeeded in drawing the audience's attention to the virtue and great sacrifice of Mang Rai.³⁴⁸

History” in *Prawatsat Tho'ngthin* (Local Histories), 1986, pp. 20-21. The event was therefore widely accepted as real and Luang Vichitr cleverly exploited this popular belief in his play.

³⁴⁶ Nithi: 1978, p. 246. Dhida Saraya, who has studied the relationship between Phongsawadan writing and local history has very similar views. In one of her works she writes that Siam had to reaffirm its claim on various border towns. The court therefore encouraged the writing of the *Phongsawadan* which supported Siam's claim over the land annexed some time in the past. Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan & Tamnan History*, *op cit.* See also Charnvit Kasetsiri, “Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period”, *op cit.*, pp. 156-170.

³⁴⁷ Nithi: 1978., pp. 171-254. See also Sunait, *Phama Rop Thai*, *op cit.*

³⁴⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thang Su Nai Chiwit* (Fighting Path of Life), Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1964, pp. 300-301.

As was usual for the time, the leading characters, both male and female, were acted by women.³⁴⁹ This particular aspect had nothing to do with the promotion of women, but was due to the tolerance level of the audience towards public displays of intimacy. Luang Vichitr explained that he could not use men to play the male roles because the Thai people still considered the portrayal of relations between women and men as taboo and inappropriate for publicly staged performances. The use of actors that matched the gender of the characters would jeopardise the whole plot because it would require the cutting of scenes which showed the opposite sexes expressing their intimate love by touching. These scenes were considered important for the dramatisation of the play and the entertainment of the audience. However, although Luang Vichitr used females to perform male roles, he received complaints from civil servants and students' parents regarding his "intimate" scenes. *Lu'at Suphan* includes several scenes where the hero and heroine show their intimacy by holding hands or touching each other. Therefore, using only women to perform such acts was the best way to avoid an audience's resentment. Luang Vichitr concluded that this tradition would remain for a long time, stressing that even in Japanese opera they still used females to assume male roles.³⁵⁰

4.2.3 Setting and Scenery

The increased realism and spectacle of the settings and scenery were important factors underpinning *Lu'at Suphan's* success. In order to grab the attention of the audience, Luang Vichitr relied heavily on techniques developed for modernised dance-drama projections that had sprung up during the reign of King Rama V, but also used (newer) Western and Japanese techniques to provide the spectacular and realistic effects,

³⁴⁹ The leading roles in *Lu'at Suphan* performances at that time were taken by Suwanna Suwannaso'n who took Duang Jan's role, Praphai Kanjanaphokhin in Mang Rai's role and Latda Saratayon as Mang Mahasuranat. All three were students of the Drama and Music School. Phanida Sitthiwan, "Luang Vichitr Vadakarn Phu Sang Lakho'n Lae Phleng Prawatsat" (Luang Vichitr Vadakarn: The Man who Created Historical Plays and Songs), The 10 parts of Radio Series, The Fine Arts Department, 1986.

³⁵⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Khvam Mungmai Kho'ng Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu" (Objectives of the Play *Ratchamanu*), Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483 (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, p. 31.

settings, and scenery on stage.³⁵¹ *Lu'at Suphan* is set in the 1760s when the Burmese invaded Ayuthaya for the second time. *Suphanburi* was a province the Burmese army used as a camp *en route* to central Thailand. The story takes place over two days and is structured into six scenes (*Chak*) which largely use the camp and the surrounding forest as a background:

- Chak 1: First day: Mang Rai and Duang Jan meet. The setting suggests a ricefield near the *Suphan* River.
- Chak 2: The night of the same day, Mang Rai frees the Thai prisoners. Again, the setting depicts the ricefield near the *Suphan* River. There is a campfire to suggest night-time.
- Chak 3&4: Day two: The escape of the Thai prisoners is discovered and Mang Mahasuranat orders the beheading of his son Mang Rai. Scene 3 depicts the army camp of Mang Mahasuranat. Scene 4 is set up as the forest where Mang Rai is to be beheaded.
- Chak 5: This scene shows the forest where Duang Jan discovers the dead body of her parents.
- Chak 6: The place where Suphanburi people fight the Burmese and eventually die.

All scenes are outdoors, and thus there is no requirement for elaborate interior decoration. For outdoor scenes a natural setting is of prime importance. Because the scenes cover a long time span (day and night), Luang Vichitr needed to employ special lighting effects in order to make the scene more realistic. For this, he was aided by Khru Mot (Teacher Mot) who was particularly well known for his expertise in creating realistic scenery and stage effects. Under Luang Vichitr's directorship of the Fine Arts Department, Khru Mot became the leading stage designer, responsible for set design, lighting and other special effects. He was also recognised for his skill in creating

³⁵¹ Again, Luang Vichitr did not outrightly innovate but rather built on the ground made by the modernised drama forms *Lakho'n Phanthang*, which used spectacular and exotic designs, *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*, which innovatively used three-dimensional and realistic set design, and *Lakho'n Ro'ng* which used settings which reflected the period of the play.

shocking effects on stage, his fires appearing so real that the audience did not realise that they were fake.³⁵²

Another example of a new technique to increase the play's realism was the use of a semi-circular bridge walk extending from the two sides of the stage and making a semi-circle around the audience for the military processions.³⁵³ This idea had been inspired by the Japanese use of *Hanamichi* in the Kabuki theatre and was skilfully adapted to create a highly spectacular scene.³⁵⁴

Luang Vichitr was fortunate to receive assistance from such an able artist as Khru Mot. However, he was constrained by the limited resources and finance available to him. Stage design therefore had to be not only realistic and spectacular, but at the same time easy to implement and cost effective.³⁵⁵ Most of the set, for example, comprised

³⁵² Mot Wo'ngsawat (Khru Mot) graduated from the *Pho'chang* School (Artistry Training School) and was well known for his special skill in stage design. Khru Mot later published an autobiography in which he provides an account of his work under Luang Vichitr. Khru Mot explained that his secret for making realistic fire was that he used a long piece of satin cloth. This cloth was stretched from one side to another and from the bottom end to the top so that the fire would appear to be spreading all over the place. If the fire scene occurred inside a building such as the palace, he would drill holes through the painted billboard of the palace. The stage crews would then wave the satin cloth from backstage. When the light touched the waving cloth, the audience would see the "fire" through the holes.

Khru Mot recalled that when he was asked by Luang Vichitr how to make the audience cry at the play *Lu'at Suphan*, he suggested his idea of creating a realistic visual image to create a shocking effect. He said he would set a scene showing the Burmese entering a temple. The audience would see them giving some signal and shouting to each other and then witness the Burmese set fire underneath the Golden Buddha image until golden liquid ran out of the image. Khru Mot guaranteed to Luang Vichitr that this realistic image would bring the audience to tears. However, Luang Vichitr was concerned about such an excessive impact and rejected Khru Mot's idea. He said he could not do what had been suggested since one of the goals of the play was to improve the relations between the Thai and the Burmese. Mot Wo'ngsawat, "Prawat Nai Mot Wo'ngsawat" (An Autobiography of Mot Wo'ngsawat). Mimeograph. Burachat Room, Thailand National Archive, n.d., pp. 8-9. See also Sudara Sutchaya, "Khru Mot Wo'ngsawat: Sinlapin Nak O'kbaep Wethi Lakho'n" (Teacher Mot Wo'ngsawat: The Stage Designer), *Poet Kru Sinlapin* (Collected Stories of Thai Artists), Mu'ang Boran Press, 1989, p. 203. A personal interview with Khru Mot Wo'ngsawat in 1994 confirmed that a great deal of attention was paid to every detail. If a play was of Javanese origin or from a particular period, he would make sure that the set and costumes matched the place and time accordingly. If a scene required a particular mood or action such as a character running away into the forest, it would portray a forest with a miserable and frightening atmosphere. Personal interview with Mot Wo'ngsawat (28 March 1994).

³⁵³ Mattani: 1978, p. 699.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ Sudara: 1989, p. 202.

painted cut-outs of bushes, stones and trees. Even the backdrop consisted of painted images of landscapes, forests and the sky.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, at the time the attention to detail and the strife for perfection despite modest means was exceptional, and contributed significantly to the sense of the realism which made the plays so popular.

4.2.4 Dramatic text

(1) Stage Directions

In a radio broadcast Luang Vichitr explained that in order to use the arts effectively for politics it was first necessary to set a purpose and specify the intended messages.³⁵⁷ This first step provides the framework for the subsequent steps and assists in the development of performances that will be effective in conveying nationalist messages to the audience. When writing a dramatic text, Luang Vichitr focused particularly on how to make it appeal to an audience. He took control of all stages of the dramatic development and emphasised a thorough process of planning, practice (rehearsal) and review.³⁵⁸ The plot was only a vehicle for Luang Vichitr to introduce different

³⁵⁶ Khru Mot stated that the materials used in making sets were only pieces of cloth and cut-out wooden boards and there was no use of real plants or flowers. Personal interview (28 March 1994). In the only available original sketch of a scene in *Lu'at Suphan*, the scenery is a painted backdrop of a ricefield in perspective with a foreground of bamboo trees (suggesting a provincial area) and small bamboo-huts with the mountain behind in the background. See Pho'. So'. Bo'. 22, 2.2. "Chak Lakho'n Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan Pho' So' 2478" (Scenery of the Play: *Lu'at Suphan*, 1935), Thailand National Archives, n.d.

³⁵⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kanchai Sinlapa Pu'a Oprom", *op cit.*, p. 2. and "Ngan Lakho'n", *op cit.*

³⁵⁸ Following the integration of any comments from experts in charge of music, dance, casting, and set design regarding the plot, the first rehearsal of the dancing parts would take place. Again, experts were consulted before the text (dialogue) was added. Dancing/acting, music and dialogue needed much alteration before the dramatic script took shape. To bring this idea into practice, Luang Vichitr provided a printed draft (*Ton Rang*) of the play for various people, such as Fine Arts officials, its students and those who were interested in theatre, in order to hear their comments. He took public responses very seriously. In the printed draft of the play, *Ratchamanu*, for example, instructions were given as to how people should provide feedback. See the Appendix (Illustrations) for *Ton Rang Bot Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu* (Draft of the play *Ratchamanu*). The final step before putting it on stage was to pass the final comment from a special committee. This committee was exclusively appointed by the government and consisted of six members and non-members of the state. See Vichitr Vadakarn, "Lakho'n Lu'at Suphan - Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng" (Blood of Suphan - Writer's Notes, a playtext, 1936), p. 3. The committee's responsibility was to advise Luang Vichitr about what needed to be changed or done before they authorised him to have the play performed in public. However, it is likely that their real influence and authority was rather limited and that it was Luang Vichitr himself who determined whether a play had enough quality to put it on stage for public viewing.

messages into one play. Many scenes and dialogues were deliberately created to convey these messages.

As a propagandist, Luang Vichitr wanted to make sure that his plays maintained their dramatic impact and were disseminating his messages in the way he had intended. In order to achieve this, he needed to maintain a certain degree of control. Apart from spreading his word through the process of dramatic development, he also used the introduction and stage directions. Starting with *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr had the purpose of the plays summarised for the audience before the actual start of the theatrical performance. This had taken the form of an actor reading out the introduction that Luang Vichitr had written. The introduction explained how the play had come about and what the audience should learn from it. Stage directions were meticulously used for the first time to ensure that certain scenes and messages (through visual imagery) were executed in exactly the same way as he had intended, even if the play was performed by others or many years later. The stage directions, which form part of the play's script, describe in detail particular actions and scenes. This was new in Thai theatre, but Luang Vichitr believed that to teach people more effectively, it was necessary to depict a story of people's lives through moving images rather than static pictures.³⁵⁹ In the first scene of *Lu'at Suphan*, the stage directions highlight the image of the Burmese as a ruthless people by describing in detail the suffering of the Thai villagers under the harsh Burmese treatment. In one scene Luang Vichitr shows an elderly man, Duang Jan's father, asking his daughter for drinking water. When Duang Jan brings the drinking water to her father, Mang Ratho, the Burmese villain, approaches the old man and snatches the drink from his mouth. He then pours the water on his feet and forces the old man to drink from his feet. Showing disrespect to the elderly and the use of feet are some of the worst taboos in Thai culture. The act summons the audience's sympathy for the old man and the other Thai prisoners, and at the same time deems the Burmese to be an immoral enemy.

³⁵⁹ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Nattasin", *op cit.*, pp. 80-81.

(2) The Dialogues of the Characters

In contrast to classical dance-drama, poetic dialogue plays a very small part in *Lu'at Suphan*. It is rarely included in the narrative and only sometimes appears as a variation from the long dialogue in prose. Most of the characters' dialogue is in colloquial language and the play relies substantially on this to advance the plot and to propagate nationalist messages.³⁶⁰ He also used other techniques to promote these messages. Both the Burmese and Thais speak the central Thai language and very often collective pronouns such as *Phama* (Burmese) and *Khon Thai* (Thai people) are used instead of an individual's name or rank. This technique enables Luang Vichitr to remind the audience that the play was primarily about the relationship between the Thais and Burmese. The romance was simply a device to construct an engaging plot around this message.

Dialogue in the form of soliloquy is also used to express the feelings of the characters. This technique is commonly used in Greek and Shakespearean theatre, whereby a character is allowed to think aloud and talk to himself.³⁶¹ It is a technical device used to give the audience an insight into the character's mind. The use of soliloquy in *Lu'at Suphan* is in fact a tool for Luang Vichitr to convey his key message. This form of speech not only increases the link between the actors and spectators, it also amplifies the message. In *Lu'at Suphan*, the first soliloquy is spoken by Duang Jan when she describes her grief over the loss of her parents and then calls for the people of *Suphanburi* to fight. The second appears at the end of the play when the Burmese commander hails the courage of the Thai people while drawing attention to the weakness of the Thai military. While these speeches appear to be naturally related to the feelings of the characters, they are actually devices used by Luang Vichitr. The use of soliloquy allows him to relate his nationalist solution to the conflict.

³⁶⁰ The main messages and some other characteristics of the dialogue are analysed in the section on the key messages of the play.

³⁶¹ See Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 131-137.

(3) The Narratives

The narrative in *Lu'at Suphan* is still in the conventional *Klo'n Paet* verse form and is recited by vocalists (or narrators), the chorus or sometimes the actors themselves.³⁶² A narrative aims to give information about the story in general and the actions and feelings of characters, as well as to introduce new characters on stage. It is generally accompanied by traditional Thai music using various melodies depending on which emotion the narration represents. The music is generally played at the end of each line, leaving a short break for the narrator to ready himself for the next line.

The tradition of having the introductory phrase *Mu'a Nan* (At that moment . . .) to introduce a new character is also used, but only for the first appearance of the Burmese commander on stage. This is to give some background information about him directly without requiring the other characters to refer to him. Other characters' appearances do not follow the convention and are not introduced by this phrase, thus speeding up the performance. Characters already on-stage refer to the imminent appearance of new characters in their conversations. Music is also used to attract the audience's attention when characters leave or enter the stage.³⁶³

4.2.5 Costumes

Luang Vichitr's intention was to use more realistic costumes (*i.e.* period dress and costumes appropriate to the status and role of the characters) rather than traditional outfits. In traditional dance-drama, dancers wear tight-fitting embroidered costumes, with elaborate shining decorations and head-dresses (used for those of high rank and social status). Luang Vichitr however noted that the actions of the characters were more important than the beauty of the costumes and thus he preferred to use more realistic costumes.³⁶⁴ The Thai characters dressed in outfits similar to those worn by typical villagers, *i.e.* the women wore the *Pha Tung* type of skirt and plain long-

³⁶² The *Klo'n Paet* verse form is a popular type of poetical genre widely used in classical dramatic texts.

³⁶³ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Ngan Lakho'n", *op cit.*

³⁶⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Lu'at Suphan - Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng", *op cit.*, p. 5.

sleeved tight shirts, while the men wore short trousers and short-sleeved cotton shirts in navy with the *Pha-khao-ma* checked cloth wrapped around their waists, typical of farmers' attire.³⁶⁵ This created an effective contrast between the wealthy Burmese intruders and the poor Thai villagers, and the audience was led to sympathise (and identify) with the latter.

In his use of such costumes, Luang Vichitr was again significantly supported by others. One of the main resources he had was the talents of Khunying Chin Silapabanleng, daughter of Luang Pradit Phairo'. She was responsible for the costume and make-up design in Luang Vichitr's productions and was recognised for her extraordinary creativity in making use of cheap materials to create expensive-looking costumes, as well as her ability to give male hair-styles to the female characters who were playing male roles.³⁶⁶ However, Luang Vichitr's use of costumes in *Lu'at Suphan* did not completely depart from traditional dance-drama convention. The Burmese soldiers did not wear uniforms and were still dressed in classical-style outfits (although somewhat less elaborate than typical classical costumes), with a piece of cloth wrapped around their heads to indicate their Burmese nationality. Moreover, he was also not the first to explore the use of more realistic costumes. In *Lakho'n Ro'ng* costumes were as contemporary as the situation in the play and in *Lakho'n Phanthang* the actors wore national and realistic period costumes and no longer dressed in the *Yu'n Khru'ang* way.

4.2.6 Dancing and Acting

Luang Vichitr required his dancers/actors to practice acting according to the mood of the music before learning the lines of their character. However, dancing and acting remained a mixture of the old and the new. For example, both inexpressive conventional dancing patterns and contemporary natural expressions were used. When

³⁶⁵ Although this description is based on a later performance of *Lu'at Suphan*, it can be assumed that the costume used originally was similar.

³⁶⁶ Suwanni Chalanukhro', one of Luang Vichitr's actresses, recalled that Khunying Chin managed to turn the long hair of a female cast member into a very short hair style for the male character she was playing without cutting her long hair. Suwanni Chalanukhro', "Sinlapa Mo'radok Kho'ng Khunying Chin Silapabanleng" (Artistic Heritage of Khunying Chin Silapabanleng), Anuso'n Khunying Chin Silapabanleng (Cremation Volume for Khunying Chin Silapabanleng), Bangkok, 1991, pp. 76-78.

the characters speak in colloquial language, a natural acting style is used. Natural expressions were used to highlight emotional scenes. Phanida Sitthiwan described the style of acting in Luang Vichitr's production as different to the traditional *Lakho'n Ram* style (dance-drama style in which the *Naphat* dance and the *Ram Bot* dance are basic principles) but not completely modern, whereby actors use their personal experience to express emotions depicted in the play (the source/explanation technique often associated with Stanislavski acting). She defined it as *Kam Kam Bae Bae* acting, which literally refers to a dance style that uses the act of closing and opening of hands.³⁶⁷

Phanida further pointed out that sometimes when the characters of high status (such as the Burmese Commander in *Lu'at Suphan* or kings, princes and princesses in subsequent plays) came on stage, they would perform the conventional language of dance (*Phasa Tha* or *Ram Bot*). For example, if a character said "I am going to fight", then he would perform a specific dancing language using specific hand gestures and movements in order to mimic the text. However, despite Luang Vichitr's use of *Naphat* music, the dancers did not perform the *Naphat* dance (a special type of dance music accompanying specific dancing patterns) which is usually required in classical dance-drama.

Luang Vichitr's style of acting aimed at combining the graceful dance movement found in Thai classical dance-drama with the realistic movement commonly found in spoken drama of the West. However, unlike classical dance-drama, where the dancing part was given special emphasis (as a non-verbal language), the role of dancing for Luang Vichitr was only to make the overall performance more spectacular and beautiful. He knew that his target audience did not expect to see the art of the sophisticated language of dance. However, he wanted to show them the beauty of classical dance, and therefore selected parts of his play which were suitable for showing simplified versions of classical dance without interrupting the development of the plot. A complaint from a viewer of the play, however, suggests that Luang Vichitr was not

³⁶⁷ Phanida Sitthiwan used to join Luang Vichitr's production team as an Assistant Director between 1954-1957. She also graduated from the *Nattaduriyangsat* School and had seen, as well as taken part in, Luang Vichitr's early plays. Personal interview with Phanida Sitthiwan (29 March 1994).

completely successful with all his adaptations. The viewer was confused by the mixture of traditional dancing steps and sword fighting in the battle scene between Mang Rai and Mang Ratho.³⁶⁸ Overall, however, the play's success suggests that most of the audience was at least positively entertained by the acting and dancing content of *Lu'at Suphan*.

4.2.7 Music and Songs

The most remarkable dramatic element introduced by Luang Vichitr was the use of two kinds of music within the play: Thai classical music (*Phleng Thai Doem*) and Thai modern songs (*Phleng Thai Sakon*). A third type of music, patriotic songs (*Phleng Pluk Jai*), is a sub-category of *Phleng Thai Sakon*.³⁶⁹ The songs and music of *Lu'at Suphan* partially contributed to the play's success and it is very likely that if people were asked what they remembered most from the play their answer would be the songs. In fact, these songs were (and still are) more popular than the songs in most of his other plays. They created such a lasting impact on many generations because Luang Vichitr had created a play with a very good plot based on a dramatic storyline. The songs were used to compliment particular parts of the story in order to stir emotions. Music has always played an important role in Thai theatre, as it appeals to an audience's emotions and helps to carry messages.³⁷⁰ The songs aroused the audience's feelings, inducing sympathy or even anger with the characters that they identified with. This technique was successfully used by Luang Vichitr to emotionally involve the audience up to the point that they shed tears. Moreover, the well-written lyrics, accompanied by sweet melodies and catchy tunes, are easier for an audience to memorise than plain words. Many of the lyrics had been penned by Luang Vichitr himself who was known for his great rhetorical skills. He wrote poignant and powerful

³⁶⁸ Observations from some viewers, for example, Prince Wanwaitayako'n and Chao Phraya Ram Rakhop from the Ministry of Justice. "Kho' Sangket Kho'ng Phu Du Bang Than", *op cit.*, p. 114-126.

³⁶⁹ However, it can be said that after the success of *Lu'at Suphan* it must have become clear to Luang Vichitr that combining a full-length play with a spectacular stage design, a plot based on historical details or myths, further dramatised through conflict between love, duty and patriotism, dance, and the effective use of songs was a successful formula which now only required refinement.

³⁷⁰ Chetana: 1988, pp. 106-114.

songs, with a combination of potent and moving lyrics, and emotionally charged songs full of metaphors and meaningful phrases. For example, in the song *Duang Jan*, Luang Vichitr cleverly played with the different meanings of the words *Duang Jan*. *Duang Jan* can refer to the name of the protagonist in the play, but it also means “the moon”. Mang Rai compares his feelings of love towards Duang Jan with the inability of making the moon become his:

Mang Rai: *Duang Jan* (name), your face is as beautiful as the *Phra Jan* (the moon).

Duang Jan: Don't flirt with me. I am moon covered by clouds (the Burmese?). (Only) When there is an open sky, will the moon shine all over.

Mang Rai: But the moon does not come down. So I have no hope.

The song *Duang Jan* falls into the *Phleng Thai Sakon* category. *Phleng Thai Sakon* usually refers to a musical piece composed with Thai lyrics and performed with Western musical instruments. It first appeared in the reign of King Rama V when the first Royal Anthem was composed by a foreigner, Pyotr Shchurovsky. Later, the son of King Rama V, Prince Bo'riphat, composed *Phleng Thai Sakon*-style music for brass and marching bands. However, his musical creations did not have any lyrics. It was not until the late 1920s that the modern style with Thai lyrics emerged. Phran Bun, a well-known composer and dramatist of the time wrote new lyrics to be used in his singing-style drama (*Lakho'n Ro'ng Baep Phran Bun*). As the performance was widely acclaimed, *Phleng Thai Sakon* became popular.³⁷¹

During the reign of King Rama VII, two motion picture companies were formed, *Sri Krung* and Thai Film. Films produced by these studios made use of this new musical genre and thus made another contribution to its popularity.³⁷² The most well-known

³⁷¹ Kanyarat Lo'mmaninoppharat, “Phra Bun: Nak Praphan Phleng Thai Sakon Run Bukboek” (Phra Bun: A Pioneering Composer of Modern Thai Music), *Concert Diew Ko' Lu'm Khrang Thi So'ng* (Concert: Soon we will forget, 2nd performance), 1993, pp. 27-32.

³⁷² *Phleng Thai Sakon's* popularity was further increased when Suntharapho'n transcribed many Thai classic music pieces into Western notation. Suntharapho'n's music combined elements of both classical Thai music and modern music. In doing so, he created a link between old and new. In 1939, he formed a musical group called the Suntharapho'n Band under the Publicity Bureau. Most of the musical repertoire created in this period were patriotic songs or songs that promoted the government's campaign. See Phunphit Amattayakun, “Itthiphon Phleng Thai Thae To' Suntharapo'n” (The influence of Thai Classical Music on Suntharapo'n), *Suntharapo'n Wichakan*, 1989, pp. 36-48 and Nuruemon Tubchumphol, “Kanchai Su' Nai Kansang Udomkan

song-writer at the time was Manit Senawinin, who composed the first modern Thai musical repertoire *Kluai Mai* (Orchid) for the movie *Pu Som Fao Sap* (The Miser) in 1933.³⁷³ In 1935, Manit collaborated with Khun Wichit Matra, an author of the *Lak Thai* history book and a famous director and composer of the 1930s, in composing songs for a propaganda film under the commission of the Ministry of Defence. The songs included love and marching songs using both tunes which borrowed from the West and new creations with Thai lyrics.³⁷⁴

Luang Vichitr was certainly aware of the popularity of the modern Thai songs, as he introduced the same kind of musical repertoire into *Lu'at Suphan*. In the preface of *Lu'at Suphan*, he described the technique he had used in composing new songs for this play. He claimed that in writing modern Thai songs such as *Yak Yen* (Difficulty) and *Mang Rai*, he had to maintain the standards and rules of both traditional and Western music. He explained that his songs were written in these stages:

1. After combining the tune and lyrics, he would call Sang Atthawasi to make the notation.
2. Next, he would give the notation to Luang Pradit Phairo' or Chu'n Silapabanleng to modify and correct according to the principles of Thai classical music.
3. If he was satisfied with the modified version, it would then be sent to Phra Chen Duriyang to check how well it conformed with the principles of Western orchestration and to create the melody which would be used to accompany the singer or provide background music.³⁷⁵

Thang Kanmu'ang: Su'ksa Jak Bot Phleng Kho'ng Thang Ratchakan (2475-2530)" (The Role of Media for Political Ideologination: A Study of the Royal Thai Songs (1932-1987), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1988, pp. 61-62.

³⁷³ Manit Senawinin had demonstrated his immense talent in composing a great deal of Thai modern music, especially for movies produced by the *Sri Krung* production company in the 1930s. He worked as a music composer for Sri Krung before his death in 1936. See Kanjanakphan, Yuk Phleng Nang Lae Lakho'n Nai Adit (The era of music, film and theatre in the past), Ru'angsin Press, 1975.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

³⁷⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kansang Phleng Mai" (The creation of new songs, 1936), "Lu'at Suphan" (Blood of Suphan, a playtext, 1936), n.d., p. 4.

Classical Thai music, which is performed by a percussion ensemble (*Wong Piphat*) and a stringed ensemble (*Wong Khru'ang Sai*) is used to provide background music, to accompany vocalists and to create the required mood for the performance. Most classical Thai music pieces were not new compositions but old pieces widely used in traditional and modernised dance-drama. Luang Pradit Phairo', a talented musician and former head of the Royal Classical Ensemble of King Rama VI, was responsible for selecting appropriate tunes for the play. Once again, with the aid of such a skilled artist, Luang Vichitr was able to achieve the required standard of classical music used in his production.

In *Lu'at Suphan*, a special tune from the classical music repertoire called the *Phleng O'k Phasa* (literally, branching off into foreign language) is adopted to emulate exoticism. Thai performing arts of the old days included the *Phleng O'k Phasa* whenever foreign characters appeared. In the performance of *Sang Thong*, for example, foreign princes join in the husband candidacy for Princess Rotjana and their appearance is accompanied by the *Phleng O'k Phasa*. It is usually composed by copying an entire melody from a foreign canon or adopting some foreign musical elements to create a strong exotic flavour.³⁷⁶ This type of music formed a prominent dramatic feature in *Lakho'n Phanthang* and is available in twelve foreign melodies including Indian Sikh, Javanese, Burmese, Mon, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Western, Chinese, Indian, Southern Thai (*Kha* minority) and Southern Thai (*Talung* minority).³⁷⁷ The significant aspect of adopting the *Phleng O'k Phasa* is that the foreign feature of the tune gives a “dialect” touch to the Thai music, which, in turn, adds to the feeling of “alien-ness” or “foreign-ness” in the overall atmosphere of the performance.

Classical Thai music is alternated with modern Thai music. *Phleng Thai Sakon* (Modern Thai Music), performed by the Western orchestra, is used to express the

³⁷⁶ Dusadee Sawangviboonpong, “Phleng Phasa”: Thai Musical Dialect”, *M.Mus. thesis*, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994, p. 37.

³⁷⁷ Sa-ngat Phukhaothong, *Kandontri Thai Lae Thang Khaosu Dontri Thai* (Thai Music and its Access), 1989.

feelings of the characters and to stress nationalist messages. Generally, if the purpose of a song is to express particular feelings, for example the love of lovers, a duet will be used to achieve the purpose. *Phleng Duang Jan*, a song with a slow and sad tune, for example, is sung by the lovers to express their feelings for each other. Another type of modern Thai music in which the nationalist message is conveyed, is the patriotic song (*Phleng Pluk Jai*). The rhythmic pattern of this type of song is very quick and the tune is arousing and catchy. Its function is often to accompany the actions of the crowd in their marching to fight the enemy. The lyrics are full of words expressing the deep grievance caused by the destruction of peace and dignity by foreign intruders. The most important function of this type of song is to remind the audience of the need to make sacrifices to protect the nation.

In order to fully understand the structure of the play, it is necessary to examine the play by dividing it into “beats”³⁷⁸:

Scene 1 The ricefield near the Suphan River

Characters 1) Suphan villagers (Thais)
 2) Mang Ratho (Burmese soldier)
 3) Mang Rai (Burmese soldier)
 4) Duang Jan (Thai)

Beat 1

Story: The opening scene shows the people of *Suphanburi* engaged in hard labour. Some are physically tortured by the Burmese. The general atmosphere is very sad because the Burmese have invaded *Suphanburi* and the people of *Suphanburi* are prisoners of war.

³⁷⁸ A dramatic beat represents one self-contained action or expression of feelings by one or more characters. Characters can be involved in many actions in each scene, creating several dramatic beats. Each dramatic beat contains its own message, but is often connected to the next. In order to reconstruct how Luang Vichitr makes use of music and song, it is instructive to divide the play into its dramatic beats.

Vocal music: *Khlu'n Krathop Fang* is sung by the chorus to narrate the events of the scene and to express the sad feelings of the *Suphanburi* villagers.

Naphat music: *Thayoi* is played as background music to express deep grief and melancholy. *Thayoi* is usually performed to accompany simultaneous walking and crying.

Beat 2

Story: The hero, Mang Rai, makes his first appearance in the scene. He shows his sympathy to the Thai captives and orders his soldiers to be merciful to them. Mang Rai then confronts the villain, Mang Ratho, who does not heed his warning and instead continues to abuse the Thais. While Mang Ratho is trying to steal the gold necklace from Duang Jan, the heroine, Mang Rai comes to stop him. The confrontation ends with a sword fight and the hero manages to offend the villain by injuring him.

Naphat music: *Phama Doen* is played to suggest the action of walking (entry) by the Burmese character.³⁷⁹

Ensemble music: *Phama Ram Khwam* is played to accompany the fighting. The tune gives a feeling of excitement and provocation.

Beat 3

Story: Mang Rai tries to comfort Duang Jan and assures her that he will protect the Thai prisoners from unscrupulous treatment by the Burmese. Mang Rai then asks her if they can become friends.

Vocal music: *Phama Plaeng* is played to accompany the dialogue (poetic speech) sung by Mang Rai. The word *Plaeng* (literally meaning transforming or changing) could also denote the changing image of the Burmese as represented by Mang Rai.

³⁷⁹ This tune, although it is not *Naphat* music, serves the same purpose.

Beat 4

Story: Duang Jan takes vengeance on Mang Rai by saying to him that she will never be friends with the Burmese. Mang Rai tries to calm her down by telling her that at least tonight the Thais will have a peaceful sleep as he will guard them. At the end of the scene, Mang Rai makes his exit.

Vocal music: *Nakkharat* is played to accompany the dialogue (poetic speech) sung by Duang Jan. This song is usually sung to express fierce anger.

Naphat music: *Thai Phleng Ram* is played to accompany the exit of a character.

Scene 2 The ricefield near the *Suphan* River at night

Characters 1) Mang Rai
 2) Duang Jan

Beat 1

Story: Mang Rai comes to nurse Duang Jan's parents who are ill. His act impresses Duang Jan and leads her to realise his affection is genuine. Mang Rai expresses his love for her and later decides to free all the Thai prisoners.

Modern Thai music: *Yak Yen* is the first *Phleng Thai Sakon* (modern Thai song played by a Western Orchestra) to appear in this play. *Yak Yen* is sung by Duang Jan to express her sadness at being in captivity. The song creates the melancholic atmosphere of the scene.

Ensemble music: *Thai Nam* is played as an introduction to the opening of the scene.

Vocal music: *Phama He* is sung by Mang Rai in the courting scene. The tune is very sweet and the lyrics include the use of the *Wa Do'k* feature (literally to speak or utter flowers). To sing the *Wa Do'k*-like lyrics the vocalist follows a certain poetic format and includes references to various flower species.

Vocal music: *Kop Ten* is usually sung to express grief and mourning but in this scene it expresses the changing feelings of Duang Jan, who discovers her affections for Mang Rai.

Ensemble music: *Ton Wo'rachet* is played as background music while the two characters are thinking.

Ensemble music: *Mu Long* is sung by Duang Jan to thank Mang Rai who has freed all the Thais.

Vocal music: *Phama Lom* is sung by Mang Rai while he does the courting action and expresses his love to Duang Jan.

Beat 2

Story: After Mang Rai frees all the Thai people, Duang Jan returns and asks him to escape with them. Mang Rai declines her offer, reasoning that he must uphold the dignity of a soldier by waiting for his punishment. As they are about to depart, they declare their love for each other and promise that they will wait for the time when they can meet again.

Naphat music: *Cheot Ching* is played to arouse a feeling of excitement, and is typically used to accompany the action of catching-up or searching for something. In this scene, the song accompanies the runaway action of the villagers.

Modern Thai music: The song, *Duang Jan (The Moon)* is a duet sung by Mang Rai and Duang Jan when they swear their love for each other.

Ensemble music: *So'ng Kuman* is played as background music to create an unhappy atmosphere.

Scene 3 The army camp of Mang Mahasuranat

Characters 1) Mang Mahasuranat (Burmese Commander)
 2) Mang Ratho
 3) Four High-ranking soldiers (Burmese)
 4) Mang Rai
 5) Duang Jan

Beat 1

Story: After it is reported to Mang Mahasuranat that Mang Rai let the Thai prisoners escape, he decides that Mang Rai's punishment should be death by beheading. Duang Jan tries to intervene by attempting to convince Mang Mahasuranat that she was responsible for Mang Rai's act. Mang Mahasuranat, however, ignores her plea. Realising that she cannot influence his decision, she bids farewell to Mang Rai.

Ensemble music: *Phama Ram Khwan* is played to introduce the opening of the scene. The tune is arousing.

The vocal music: *Phama Khwe* is sung by the chorus to introduce the Burmese Commander.

Naphat music: *Thayoi Yuan* is played to express a feeling of deep sorrow. This tune is used to accompany the action of walking and crying simultaneously as the Burmese soldier leads Duang Jan away from Mang Rai.

Beat 2

Story: Mang Mahasuranat orders the soldier to take Mang Rai away to be executed. After realising his destiny, Mang Rai spends his last minutes bidding farewell to his father and teacher.

Ensemble music: *Sok Phama* is played as background music to create an atmosphere of mournfulness. This song is usually performed at funerals.

Scene 4 The place of execution

Characters 1) Mang Rai
 2) Duang Jan
 3) The executioner

Story: Mang Rai is beheaded. Duang Jan rushes to the scene only to see the dead body of her loved one. She weeps over her great loss.

Ensemble music: *Pi Klo'ng* is played as background music to accompany the action of preparing for the execution. The song is usually performed to accompany a sword dance or a boxing dance.

Naphat music: *Ot* is played to accompany the action of crying and expressing deep sorrow. This *Naphat* tune is only used when a character cries when sitting; if a character cries while walking then a different *Naphat* tune, the *Thayoi*, is used.

Modern Thai music: *Mang Rai* is another *Phleng Thai Sakon* song sung by Duang Jan to express her sadness.

Ensemble music: *Phram Kep Hua Waen* is played as background music to create a sad atmosphere. The song is usually performed at funerals.

Scene 5 The forest where Duang Jan's parents are murdered

Characters 1) A woman (Thai)
 2) Duang Jan
 3) *Suphanburi* villagers

Story: Duang Jan comes back to the hiding place in the forest to find the bodies of her parents, who have been killed by the Burmese. Her grief turns into a desire for vengeance and she leads the *Suphanburi* people into battle against their aggressors.

Naphat music: *Cheot Ching* is played when a character is searching for something. In this scene Duang Jan is looking for the dead bodies of her parents.

Naphat music: *Ot* is played to accompany Duang Jan's sorrow when she finds the dead bodies of her parents.

Ensemble music: *Lu'at Suphan* is played as background music accompanying the act of Duang Jan standing up to fight.

Scene 6 The place where the people of *Suphanburi* fight with the Burmese and confront their death

Characters

- 1) *Suphanburi* villagers
- 2) Duang Jan
- 3) Burmese soldiers
- 4) Mang Mahasuranat

Story: Despite their lack of weapons, Duang Jan and the people of *Suphanburi* fight the Burmese. All villagers, including Duang Jan, are killed but their resistance is praised by the Burmese commander, who comments on the brave Thai blood.

Modern Thai music: *Lu'at Suphan* is the only patriotic song in this play. The tune is rousing and fits the action of going to fight. It is also sung by the crowd (*Suphanburi* villagers) when they are marching to fight the Burmese.

Naphat music: *Cheot Ching* is played as background music to enhance the excitement of the fighting.

Naphat music: *Mahachai* is played after the battle scenes. It is usually performed during the honourable appearance of high-ranking people such as the royal family or the Prime Minister. In this case, it is performed to enhance the commander's epilogue praising the Thai nation and wishing it prosperity.

From this division of the play into beats, there are several points that should be noted regarding the use of classical and modern Thai music:

1. Music was used extensively throughout the play.

2. Because Luang Vichitr stressed sentimentalism, when there is a scene involving emotional expression he adopts modern Thai music with sad tunes. These songs include *Duang Jan*, *Yak Yen* and *Mang Rai*.
3. A patriotic song (*Phleng Pluk Jai*) is used only in the marching action and is sung by the crowd. *Lu'at Suphan* emphasises the bravery of the *Suphanburi* people in their fight against the enemy. The lyrics are simple but so powerful that some of its passages have lived on for many generations. To popularise the song, Luang Vichitr usually provided a copy of it to his audience so that after they listened to it once or twice, they were able to sing along with the cast.³⁸⁰ This technique was valued by Luang Vichitr who noted that “no matter what message is in the song, the participation of the audience in singing along is the best way of attaining unity”.³⁸¹
4. Although *Naphat* music is traditionally played to accompany the *Naphat* dance, in order to display the beauty of dance as well as the talent of the dancer, the function of the *Naphat* music in *Lu'at Suphan* is only to support realistic actions of the characters. Sometimes, *Naphat* music and ensemble music can be used interchangeably, but the strict convention of using of specific *Naphat* tunes for specific actions remains the same.
5. The lyrics of traditional tunes, although having a similar function to modern Thai music, are more important to the narrative part in developing the plot than in expressing the feelings of the characters. All vocal music in *Lu'at Suphan* is based on the *Sam Chan* songs, in which the speed of singing is at its fastest and the slurring of words is kept to the minimum.

³⁸⁰ Princess Laksamilawan also observed that all modern Thai songs were written in everyday language without royal words (*Rachasap*) and were easy to remember even for young children, who could memorise the lyrics. She said that each song was composed with very simple notation and just 5-6 notes were enough for it to be composed as a song. If the purpose of creating new songs was to popularise the messages of the plays, the princess observed that it would have been useless to use Western notations as they were too sophisticated for the people to understand and memorise. So' Tho'.0701.31/15, pp. 58-59.

³⁸¹ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kanchai Sinlapa Pu'a Oprom*, *op cit.*, p. 2.

4.3 Main Messages

In the preface to the play Luang Vichitr stated that he wanted to address the image of the Burmese people in Thailand. He pointed out that the way in which the Thai people were told to hate the Burmese was no longer suitable for modern times. To be in line with current times, Thai people should seek ways of building up friendships with their neighbouring countries. Thai people were used to seeing the Burmese as cruel and aggressive, as Burma had become Thailand's foremost enemy when the Burmese destroyed Ayuthaya for the second time in 1767. As already discussed in the analysis of the play *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* in Chapter Three, the second destruction of Ayuthaya was more devastating than the first, which had had a strengthening and vitalising effect. The sacking of Ayuthaya in 1767 was far more extensive and forced the shift of the capital to Thonburi and, eventually, to Bangkok.

Antipathy towards the Burmese served to support the legitimacy and authority of the new dynasty (and later the new regime) after the abolition of the absolute monarchy. The new ruling dynasty was very concerned with the Burmese threat and did much to portray them as the enemy of the Thai race and Buddhism. Even when the Burmese came under the rule of the British, their image as Thailand's main enemy persisted. Although by then almost two hundred years had passed, history was referred to in order to solve Thailand's contemporary problems. By the early twentieth century the Burmese no longer posed a threat to Thailand. However, because Burma's negative image had been preserved and embellished for almost two hundred years, it remained the ideal enemy. In addition, the Western colonialists were too powerful and too much of a real threat to Thailand to make it sensible to use them for this type of confrontational propaganda.³⁸²

³⁸² Nithi makes his observation on why the Burmese have been made Thailand's arch-enemy. He says that Thailand had essentially seven choices: the Western colonial powers like France or England, China, Japan, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia. The last three countries were considered to be too pitiful to be worthwhile enemies of Thailand. China would have made a good enemy, too weak to be a real threat, but the relationship between Thailand and China was not very significant, so it would have been difficult to find historical heroes. Japan would have been an unwise choice given its rising significance as a counter balance to the Western powers, while the Western powers themselves were too powerful to be directly affronted with the label "national arch-enemy". The Burmese were an ideal choice because of the well-known historical incidents and because of its decent size and past achievements. Yet, Burma did not actually exist in a political sense as it had become a colony of England. This had the benefit that however ugly and

Luang Vichitr and others such as Prince Damrong were very much behind the preservation and embellishment of the negative projection of the Burmese. Because of their works, the Thai people still had hostile feelings and prejudices towards their neighbour. Luang Vichitr's historical works on Burma also reflected his perception of the Burmese nation and its people as violent and uncivilised.³⁸³ It is, therefore, an interesting paradox that Luang Vichitr stated that he felt that these bitter feelings should be put aside and that the hatred between the two countries must cease.³⁸⁴ In fact, he realised there was another way of exploiting this enemy. Unlike his predecessors, who sought to condemn the Burmese as evil or immoral, Luang Vichitr addressed their positive image in order to pinpoint weaknesses of the Thai people. Thus, while partially adopting the traditional image of the Burmese in his play, Luang Vichitr also attempted to create a new consciousness in the Thai people, to make them more aware of their weaknesses.

However, further analysis of the play and its messages will show that the overall message of *Lu'at Suphan* was actually much more complex, and that the play had several additional objectives: firstly, to stress the importance of duty; secondly, to highlight the need for Thailand strengthen its military forces and thirdly, to encourage the Thai people to change certain habits (weaknesses).

Lu'at Suphan ends with a nationalistic monologue by the Burmese Commander. After all the Thai villagers are killed, the Burmese Commander praises their courage and their love of nation but ends with this observation:

cruel the Burmese were depicted, it did not matter as Burma did not exist as an independent nation state. Nithi concludes that it is ironic that although the situation between Thailand and Burma has completely changed, the attitude of Thai people has not changed because of the historic embellishment by the ruling Thai elite a hundred years ago. Nithi Iewsriwong, "Phama - Sattru Mai Mi Tua Ton" (Burma: The Enemy without a Self), *Matichon Sutsapda*, 7 January 1997.

³⁸³ Luang Vichitr's historical works on Burma includes "Prawat Prathet Phama" (Burmese history, 1932), *Vichitr San*, vol. 5, pp. 687-695, *Sayam Kap Suwannaphum* (Siam and the Golden Peninsula, 1933), pp. 104-112 and "Chok Chata Kh'ong Chat" (The Nation's Fate, 1950), *Pathakatha Lae Khambanyai* (Speeches and Lectures), vol. 2, Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1973, pp. 257-297.

³⁸⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Lu'at Suphan", *op cit.*, p. 1.

The Commander: The blood of Thai people is not bad. They are courageous and patriotic. They are not afraid of dying, which no other nationals can be. The only negative thing (about the Thais) is that they do not have enough weapons. To fight the battle without sufficient weapons is like an insect flying into the flame. It is a pity, for the Thai blood is good blood. If only Thai people owned the same amount of weapons as the other countries, it would make Thailand one of the strongest and most prosperous countries. No other nation in the world would compete with the Thais.

By pointing out that the Thai people were insufficiently armed for the battle, Luang Vichitr reasoned that the defeat by the Burmese army was not due to the weakness of the Ayuthaya society or the mistakes of individuals, but to the failure to equip the Siamese army with materials and weapons. The Thais should learn from this lesson. They should now realise the true cause of their past defeat and join together to prevent a recurrence. Moreover, Luang Vichitr suggested that some strengths of the Burmese should be noted: their courage and skill in battle as well as their discipline, sense of duty and fairness.³⁸⁵

Despite the emphasis on the lack of weaponry that resulted in the defeat of the *Suphanburi* people, Luang Vichitr later changed the Burmese Commander's ending epilogue. The new emphasis placed in the epilogue was on establishing a friendship between the two countries:

The Commander: It is such a severe thought that two very close neighbouring countries such as Burma and Thailand have been fighting and killing each other for hundreds of years instead of having a good friendship. History must change its course and we should start all over again to form a good relationship between the Burmese and the Thais. The citizens of the two nations should become close friends.

It is not known when he changed the message. However, his message to improve relations between the Burmese and the Thais lent support to the concept of Pan-Asianism. Luang Vichitr's paradoxical and somewhat conflicting objectives may

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

become more understandable by drawing a comparison with Japanese propaganda at the time. Japan had embarked on an avid promotion of Pan-Asianism. This was based on the premise of an underlying solidarity between the Asian civilisation in opposition to the West. Japan wished to become the centre of Asian civilisation and power. Thus, while friendship and unity amongst the Asian nations was promoted, this was to happen under Japanese rule or leadership. During the Second World War, the Japanese became very fierce and cruel occupants responsible for massive atrocities, particularly in China and Korea. Luang Vichitr, who had developed close links with the Japanese, took on this idea of Pan-Asianism and expressed it for the first time in *Lu'at Suphan*.

Characterisation was one of the techniques Luang Vichitr used to achieve the goal of promoting better relations between the two nations. He created two opposing characters, the hero (Mang Rai) and the villain (Mang Ratho). Mang Rai is characterised as an extraordinary gentleman who is not only kind, helpful and gentle, but also a Burmese who was concerned about his country's negative image. Mang Ratho, on the other hand, is depicted as greedy, cruel and immoral and represents the evil side of the Burmese. Despite being a son of the commander and a chief of the prisoners' camp, Mang Rai was characterised as being sympathetic with the Thai people. Mang Rai even describes how the Thais had suffered under the control of his own countrymen. If Luang Vichitr had chosen to have a Thai man describe the evilness of the Burmese people, the impact would not have been so great. In the conversation between Mang Rai and his father, Mang Rai explains that his reason for freeing the Thais was that he wanted to change the bad image of the Burmese. He also describes the cruelty and immoral acts of the Burmese who invaded Thailand, which reflected Luang Vichitr's own personal view on the Thai-Burmese battle:

Mang Rai: There are many reasons (for letting the Thais go free). In this war with Ayuthaya, our reputation has been drastically tarnished. At the time of King Bayinnuang's war with Ayuthaya, we came as real warriors. This time, we come as robbers and looters. This man, Mang Ratho, tried to snatch the golden necklace from a woman. Can you tolerate this kind of behaviour? We have treated the Thais too harshly. I could not tolerate our cruelty and so I decided to free them.

By the positive characterisation of Mang Rai, Luang Vichitr was able to combine two different messages in the same play. The combination was carefully executed. Superficially, the play promoted friendship and highlighted the virtues of the Burmese. In doing this, he moved towards achieving several important objectives, such as appeasing the Burmese, which was an important first step forwards establishing Thailand as a sub-centre of culture and power in Asia. *Lu'at Suphan* also focused on the duty of ordinary citizens to protect Thailand and, by linking the defeat of the Thai villagers to their lack of weapons, the play also highlighted the need for modernisation and armament of the military forces. In addition, the Thai people were encouraged to adopt some of the characteristics of the Burmese, such as discipline.

However, more deeply entrenched in the play were scenes showing the cruelty of the majority of the Burmese, the courage and sense of patriotic duty of the Thai people in defending their nation and the ability of ordinary people to become involved.³⁸⁶ Mang Rai's positive portrayal and the commander's final message are hence rather isolated from the rest of the play. Overall, the play does more to promote discipline, a sense of duty and nationalism amongst the Thais than to create friendship and put aside hostile feelings and prejudices. The message in the patriotic song *Lu'at Suphan*, which has since been on everybody's lips, does not stress the friendship between Siam and Burma, but instead arouses a sense of patriotism.

4.4 The Success of *Lu'at Suphan* and Its Use in Other Media

As discussed above, *Lu'at Suphan* was performed with at least two different endings. However, regardless of which version was performed, the responses from the public and the media appear to have been very positive, and the play was a great success for Luang Vichitr.³⁸⁷ His attempt to promote Pan-Thaism was successful, while it also

³⁸⁶ Sunait points out that although Luang Vichitr stated the intention to promote a Thai-Burma friendship in the play, the popular song *Lu'at Suphan* does not contain or support such an intention. Instead, the song, which appears to have an even wider impact on the masses than the play itself, only concentrates on arousing patriotic feelings by further depicting the Burmese as an enemy of the nation. Sunait, *Phama Rop Thai*, *op cit.*, footnote 69, p. 55.

³⁸⁷ Observations from audiences, for example Prince Wanwaithayako'n and Chao Phraya Ram Rakhop from the Ministry of Justice. "Kho' Sangket Kho'ng Phu Du Bang Than", *op cit.*, pp. 29-

furthered his aim to encourage the public to donate money to help the military buy more weapons.³⁸⁸

The play was performed to packed houses in the Department of Fine Arts theatre for months and was later performed in many other places, such as schools and provincial theatres. While there was some minor press criticism of Luang Vichitr for depicting intimacy between a Thai woman and a Burmese man, the reaction from newspapers in general was enthusiastic, the music and songs being singled out for special praise.³⁸⁹ There do exist, however, even more press reports which show that many journalists shared Luang Vichitr's views regarding the blood ties between the Thais and Burmese.³⁹⁰ They commented that because the two countries were the nations of the Golden Peninsula (*Suwannaphum*), they should be regarded as members of the same family.³⁹¹ Over time, many nationals in this peninsula had intermarried. Ethnic groups had mixed with each other until it was difficult to tell them apart. Accordingly, both nations should stop fighting and develop closer relations, as Luang Vichitr had proposed in the play.³⁹²

To many government officials, *Lu'at Suphan* became an essential play to watch and study. The Ministry of Education used the play to educate students from the three military forces, the police force as well as school children. The Interior Ministry later issued an honourable award to the play.³⁹³ Until quite recently, Luang Vichitr's plays and songs have been used by the government to stimulate a sense of national unity and

34) as well as the press, for example: *Sri Krung* (1, 11 November 1936), *Krungthep Warasap* (1 November 1936), *Sri Krung* (25 December 1936) and *Ratsado'n* (23 January 1937).

³⁸⁸ So' Tho'. 0701.48/4, p. 315.

³⁸⁹ *Phadung Chat*, 13 March 1937.

³⁹⁰ Siang Thai (Pseudonym), "Wijan Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan" (Critique of *Lu'at Suphan*), *Sri Krung*, 25 December 1936.

³⁹¹ According to Luang Vichitr's definition, the boundary of the Golden Peninsula defined a shape in the form of an axe on which could be drawn a vertical line - from the border of Yunnan province in Southern China (Hunan) to the land's end of the Malay Peninsula - and a horizontal line from *Phombutra* River in Burma to the Mekong Delta. The *Suwannaphum* territory therefore covered six countries: Siam, Burma, Yun (Vietnam), Laos, Khmer (Cambodia), and Malay (Malaysia). Vichitr Vadam, *Sayam Kap Suwannaphum*, *op cit.*, pp. 18-23.

³⁹² So' Tho'. 0701.48/4

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

patriotism.³⁹⁴ Even Burmese officials were impressed, and asked for the play's script to be translated into their own language for circulation within Burma.³⁹⁵

Two feature films were produced following the play's stage success. The first film was made in 1936 by the *Nakho'n Phapphayon* Company under the ownership of *Cho' Sukhumalajan*, and aimed to be as realistic as possible.³⁹⁶ Research was carried out, for example, to ensure that the correct period costume was worn. Luang Vichitr was elated that *Lu'at Suphan* was to be made into a feature film. He knew that it would help him to reach a wider audience and therefore better disseminate his message:

"I am so pleased that *Lu'at Suphan* is to be made into a film. I am convinced that the film will be produced to the same high quality as the theatre performance since film has more advantages than plays in that there is no limitation in terms of location. The film can present more realistic pictures than the play, which can only be performed on the stage. Another reason for my satisfaction is that the film will help to disseminate *Lu'at Suphan* to many big cities where the play cannot be staged."³⁹⁷

Lu'at Suphan was chosen to be made into a film because it had already been hugely popular, and as a story of a national struggle it was more attractive to the film company than competing stories at the time.³⁹⁸ The film-makers received special attention and assistance from well-known experts. Some of the cast came from the

³⁹⁴ One example of such use occurred during the short regime of Premier Thanin Kraiwichien, an extreme rightist who came to power through the support of the military leaders after defeating the leftist uprising in October 1976. See Mattani Moj dara Rutnin, The Humanities and Education for Development in Thailand: The Development of Theatre Studies at the University Level, paper No.9, Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1980, p. 15.

³⁹⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Lu'at Suphan" (The Blood of Suphan), Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n, vol. 2, 1962, p. 18. The Bangkok Times reported that when Luang Vichitr made his visit to Burma in 1938, he had already become well known to many Burmese people. As the author of the famous *Lu'at Suphan*, which had been filmed and shown in Burma a year earlier, he was praised by the Burmese for his attempt to promote a cordial friendship between the two nations. The Bangkok Times, 8 February 1938.

³⁹⁶ Krungthep Warasap, 6 November 1936.

³⁹⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Nam Kho'ng Luang Vichitr Vadakarn" (preface of Luang Vichitr Vadakarn), Phapphayon Thai Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan (The Film *Lu'at Suphan*), Nakho'n Phapphayon Company, 1936, p. 7.

³⁹⁸ Cho' Sukhumalajan, "Mu'a Ko'n Lu'at Suphan Ja Pen Phapphayon" (Before Lu'at Suphan was Made into a Film), Phapphayon Thai Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan (The Film *Lu'at Suphan*), Nakho'n Phapphayon Company, 1936, pp. 9, 11, 13.

then famous *Pridalai* theatre troupe. In addition, a Burmese resident in Thailand helped research the accuracy of the period costume for the Burmese soldiers from old Burmese newspapers. An experienced director from the then famous *Hatsadin* film company, Mo'm Ratchawong Anusak Hatsadin, also participated. The film's publicity was also enhanced by the presence of Princess Laksamilawan, who was the owner of the *Pridalai* theatre troupe, Luang Vichitr and his students from the Drama and Music school.³⁹⁹

Lu'at Suphan was again made into a film in 1980, this time produced and directed by the famous director *Choet Songsri*. Thorough research of both Thai and foreign documents is reported to have been undertaken in order to ensure historical accuracy. It is said to have taken as long as eight months of technical preparation before filming, four months to prepare the film's script, and eleven months to film. The production notes also show that the film had the longest footage ever shot in Thai film, and was one of the most expensive films ever produced in Thailand.⁴⁰⁰ The production of the two feature films provides proof of Luang Vichitr's success as a playwright and of the audience's positive reception of *Lu'at Suphan*. The films also helped Luang Vichitr to establish a reputation for being able to write well-conceived plots that could be used in any kind of media.

The government, for its part, made a great effort to ensure that *Lu'at Suphan* reached as wide an audience as possible. For example, shortly after its premiere in Bangkok, the play was broadcast in serialised form over Siam's rapidly expanding state radio network.⁴⁰¹ The Ministry of Education also played a key role in disseminating the work by sending copies of the script, bound in book format and including a complimentary critique, to government schools both in the capital and the provinces so that it could be studied in class. Copies were also reported to have been given away to the public at

³⁹⁹ Suphalak [of *Prachachat*]. "Khunnasombat Kho'ng Lu'at Suphan" (Qualities of *Lu'at Suphan*), *Phapphayon Thai Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan* (The Film *Lu'at Suphan*), Nakho'n Phapphayon Company, 1936, pp. 15, 17, 19, 21.

⁴⁰⁰ Soemwit Bannakhan Printing. *Lu'at Suphan*, 1980. Sujit Wongthet also made *Lu'at Suphan* into a historical novel under the same name. See Sujit Wongthet, "Niyai Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan" (Novel *Lu'at Suphan*), *Lu'at Suphan*, Soemwit Bannakhan Printing, 1980, pp. 43-253.

⁴⁰¹ *Krungthep Warasap*, 13 November 1936.

religious gatherings to encourage them to see the play.⁴⁰² The *Krungthep Warasap* newspaper was given permission to reproduce the script for circulation among its readers.⁴⁰³ Between August and December 1936, it was performed as many as thirty times.⁴⁰⁴

That the government should have so favoured the play is not hard to understand, as Luang Vichitr appeared to have consulted the Ministry of Defence when he prepared *Lu'at Suphan*.⁴⁰⁵ In essence, the play complemented the efforts made by the Ministry of Defence under Phibun to bolster the popularity of the armed services and legitimise the military's growing domination of the state. It also supported the military's campaign to buy more arms and weapons. In the previous year (1935), the Ministry had sponsored the production of a documentary-style propaganda film entitled *Lu'at Thahan Thai* (The Blood of the Thai Military). This film was particularly interesting in that it featured elaborately-staged battle scenes involving the military services, accompanied by martial music and song. *Lu'at Suphan*, whose title could have been influenced by the film, further contributed to the Ministry of Defence's campaign by promoting the view that constant military vigilance was necessary to maintain independence. At the same time, the play linked the military to a particular notion of Thai identity, a notion not dissimilar to that developed by Vajiravudh. Luang Vichitr, like Rama VI, portrayed the Thais as embodied in the metaphor *Lu'at Suphan*, as a martial race; courageous, loyal and prepared to make personal sacrifices in the face of extreme danger. These qualities were crystallised in the anthem *Lu'at Suphan*, which is played in the last scene as Duang Jan calls on the villagers to support her and march into battle.

4.5 Conclusions

The success of *Lu'at Suphan* ensured the survival of the Drama and Music School, enabling it to secure the required funding from the state. One member of parliament,

⁴⁰² Sri Krung, 1 November 1936.

⁴⁰³ Vichitr Vadamarn, Thai film "Lu'at Suphan", Phapphayon Thai Ru'ang Lu'at Suphan (The Film *Lu'at Suphan*), Nakho'n Phapphayon Company, 1936.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ NARA: RG59 892.00 PR/92, Bangkok Monthly Political Report. November 1936.

who had the authority to allocate financial grants to the Fine Arts Department, was very moved by the morality of *Lu'at Suphan*. He showed his admiration of Luang Vichitr's play by approving a contribution of 6,500 Baht to the School. Although this was much less than Luang Vichitr had requested, the money helped to improve the temporary stage by replacing the old fabric roof of the theatre with one made of tin.⁴⁰⁶ To Luang Vichitr's credit, as a result of its strong emotional impact *Lu'at Suphan* laid a firm foundation for the future of the Drama and Music School:

“One day a member of parliament was invited to view the play *Lu'at Suphan*, which was famous for bringing people to tears. This member of parliament was very senior. While he was attending the play, he cried so much that other people noticed. The newspapers wrote about it too. He cried because of seeing *Lu'at Suphan*, which made him understand [the importance of the School] and persuaded him to give priority consideration to the Fine Arts Department's budget. Later on, whenever he had to approve government funds for the Fine Arts Department, he no longer opposed us.”⁴⁰⁷

Phibun, who was known to be a great admirer of Luang Vichitr's productions, was particularly moved by *Lu'at Suphan*. When he was invited by the Drama and Music School to talk about his impressions, he specifically addressed the new style of Luang Vichitr's play as an appropriate and effective tool to instil nationalism:

“The new style of drama under the Fine Arts Department uses the story of national history whilst simultaneously arousing the people to love the country. This is not an easy task that anyone can successfully do. Otherwise, *Lu'at Suphan* would not have been able to produce its historical record of more than 40 performances, which nobody in the realm of the Siamese dramatic arts has equalled. Despite the fact that the Fine Arts theatre has revised the national arts form, it has also used it as a tool to convince our Thai friends to wake up and realise the value of the nation.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ Vichitr Vadakarn, Withi Thamngan Lae Sang Anakhot, *op cit.*, p. 165.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Phibun Songkhram, “Khwam Rusu'k Kho'ng Khaphajao Nai Ru'ang Rongrian Sinlapako'n Phanaeng Duriyang” (My Feelings about the Drama and Music School's Performing Art Division), *So' Tho'*. 0701.31/ 15, pp. 15-16.

Lu'at Suphan's success with the audience, particularly with the military, officials, members of the government and of course Phibun was very important because it gave a significant boost to Luang Vichitr's authority and influence. His next three plays, which will be analysed in the following chapter, built on this success and led to Phibun's appointment of Luang Vichitr as his key propagandist when Phibun came into power in 1938.

The play also had a lasting impact on the dramatic tastes of the audience. In creating *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr drew on both traditional and modernised elements and combined Thai and foreign influences. Dance, music and songs played an important role in *Lu'at Suphan* and the song *Lu'at Suphan* is still very familiar to many Thais. In order to achieve this, Luang Vichitr had relied very much on the innovations introduced in *Lakho'n Du'kdamban*, *Lakho'n Phanthang* and particularly *Lakho'n Ro'ng*. However, by further introducing new techniques, using an exciting plot, and mixing the elements in an entertaining way, *Lu'at Suphan* superseded the dramatic forms it so heavily drew from. To the present day audience, Luang Vichitr's *Lu'at Suphan* (and other plays) might look like a pot-pourri of different elements combined without artistic unity. Actors danced, sang and talked with styles derived from various theatrical sources. A performance featured both western and traditional Thai ensembles. While actors performed stylised dances to traditional Thai music, they assumed ordinary movements when nationalist songs were played on western musical instruments. However, Luang Vichitr showed his understanding of the nature of the Thai audience, which preferred theatrical performances of familiar stories containing new theatrical elements. Though the individual artistic elements did not appear to fit together, the overall "total work of art" put on display was cohesive and entertaining. Luang Vichitr's theatrical contribution was to create a new theatre genre which was more spectacular and, most importantly, more realistic. *Lu'at Suphan* and the plays to follow started to change the audience's aesthetic values towards an expectation of greater realism in theatre performances.

The plays also delivered several important messages. Luang Vichitr wanted to create a play that could be used to improve the relations between Thailand and Burma. This

fitted in well with his idea of Pan-Asianism and he appears to have been successful, to the extent that Burmese officials even requested a copy of the script in order to stage performances in Burma. The Burmese were also shown as having certain qualities or personal characteristics, such as greater discipline and a strong sense of duty, that the Thai audience should adapt. In particular, a sense of duty towards the nation and the need to sacrifice everything for the nation, even personal love or life, were stressed through both Burmese and Thai characters. Although the play emphasised the need to improve relations with the Burmese, it also contained many images of a hostile and evil enemy and, overall, a Thai audience would not leave with a very positive impression of the Burmese. The play made a strong case for the need to build a greater military force with better weapons by stressing that the Thai villagers were defeated because their enemy had superior arms. This message made the play particularly important with the military, which was seeking to increase its power and influence.

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Chapter Five

Building on the Success (1936 -1937)

Following the success of *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr's reputation in the realm of dramatic arts was on the rise. He went on to produce three more full-length propaganda plays before Phibun became Prime Minister in 1938. The first of these plays, *Ratchamanu* (Ratchamanu), was performed in 1936. The other two, *Phrajao Krungthon* (King Krungthon) and *Su'k Thalang* (The Battle of Thalang) were staged in 1937. In these plays, three important new issues were addressed: 1) racial issues and racial unification, 2) Thai-Chinese relations and 3) the importance of sea-defence. The three plays were more didactic and nationalistic than *Lu'at Suphan*, and more closely based on historical episodes and myths, which were modified by Luang Vichitr to suit his propaganda purposes. The plays were able to stir patriotism and the audience was successfully led to believe that they represented true historical facts and developments. This chapter will investigate how Luang Vichitr conveyed his messages and highlight how he used or further changed dramatic elements to maintain public interest.

5.1 Ratchamanu (Ratchamanu)

Ratchamanu, Luang Vichitr's second full-length play, which focuses on the relationship between Thailand and Cambodia. The title *Ratchamanu* refers to the name of the main protagonist, who was constructed to be one of King Naresuan's greatest soldiers. Luang Vichitr stated in the introduction of the play that the main objectives were: 1) to correct the misconception that the Thai people were cruel to the Khmers, 2) to demonstrate that Thailand had a good reason to attack Cambodia; to explain that while it had been necessary for the Thais to teach a lesson to the bad Khmer king, the true heartfelt relationship of the two peoples was still intact, 3) to express the idea that Khmer people and Thais shared Thai blood and were of the same origin and 4) to advise Thai people to have mercy on the Khmers as they were of the same race.⁴⁰⁹ The most important idea imparted is that of racial similarity.

⁴⁰⁹ Vichitr Vadamarn. "Khwan Mungmai Kho'ng Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu", *op cit.*, pp. 23-31. However, he does not mention the names of any of the Western historians.

The plot of *Ratchamanu* does not develop very differently to that of *Lu'at Suphan*. The story revolves around a bi-national love affair that occurs during a time of war and ends in separation. One difference is that in *Ratchamanu* a triangular relationship develops between a Thai villager Saen (Ratchamanu), Phenkhae, a Khmer girl of the ruling class, and Phraya Mano, a Khmer official and military commander.

The play begins with Phraya Mano leading his troops into Thailand's Northeastern region and rounding up Thai villagers who live close to the Thailand-Cambodia border. Saen is amongst the Thai captives taken to Cambodia. He lives and serves the Governor of *Bo'ribun*, and becomes acquainted with Phenkhae, the Governor's daughter. One day, Khmer rebels try to kill Phraya Mano when he comes to visit to Phenkhae. Saen, who has been warned about this potential assassination, bravely fights the rebels and saves Phraya Mano's life. His courage leaves Phraya Mano and Phenkhae's father deeply impressed. After the incident, Saen confesses his love to Phenkhae and tells her that he wants to go back to Ayuthaya and become a soldier. Although Phenkhae has similar feelings towards Saen, she lets him go but warns him not to attack her country.

Saen escapes to Thailand with the help of Phenkhae and joins King Naresuan's military forces. He is subsequently promoted and given the name Ratchamanu. King Naresuan orders Ratchamanu to lead the Thai troops to capture the King of Cambodia, Phraya Lawaek. Ratchamanu takes his army into Cambodia and uses the opportunity to visit Phenkhae, only to discover that she has married Phraya Mano earlier that same day. Ratchamanu captures Phraya Mano and takes him to Ayuthaya. On their way, Phraya Mano recalls that Ratchamanu is Saen, who once saved his life. He also discovers that they love the same woman. Ratchamanu decides to release Phraya Mano so that he can return to Phenkhae. However, Phraya Mano refuses because he would like to meet King Naresuan. He also confesses to Ratchamanu that he and other Khmers have never agreed with the way Phraya Lawaek behaves towards Thailand and that he believes that the Thais and Khmers are the same people. In the end, Phraya Mano is released by King Naresuan and allowed to return to govern the Cambodian city of Battambang.

The play ends with Ratchamanu telling his soldiers that the people living in the Golden Peninsula are of the same race.

5.1.1 Background of the Play

According to Luang Vichitr, one of the main objectives of the play was to correct the allegation made by Western historians that the Thais were very cruel to the Khmers.⁴¹⁰ He wanted to demonstrate in the play that the wars between Thailand and Cambodia did not stem from Thailand's expansionist attitude but from the need for self-defence (*Po'ngkan*) and the need to punish an aggressive enemy (*Prappram*). Luang Vichitr even wrote that Cambodia should appreciate that on many occasions Thailand had actually helped to defend the Khmers from Vietnamese aggression. This was a very one-sided interpretation of historical events as both Thais and Vietnamese had vied for supremacy over Cambodia and Thai attacks had devastated Cambodia on several occasions. In fact, it was the destructive territorial battles in the 19th Century that gave the French the excuse to intervene and take over control of Cambodia. As he did with so much of history, Luang Vichitr chose to ignore such details so that he could prove to the public that Thailand had a "just" cause to defend itself. He distorted the whole history of warfare between the Thais and Khmers and highlighted King Naresuan's attack on Cambodia five hundred years ago.

According to Luang Vichitr, attacks and infringements by Khmer troops on Thai soil were regularly made each time Thailand was engaged in war with the Burmese. He observed that the Khmers frequently attacked when Thailand was still recovering from recent wars. For example, many wars with Cambodia occurred during the reigns of King Maha Thammaracha and King Krungthon, throughout which the Thais were involved in intensive warfare with the Burmese.⁴¹¹ Among the many wars between the Thais and Khmers, the war which took place during the reign of King Naresuan was the bloodiest. During this period, the Khmer king, Phraya Lawaek, frequently took

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

advantage of Thailand's military weakness in the wake of its wars with the Burmese.⁴¹² King Naresuan ordered an attack on Cambodia to do "just" warfare and teach the evil Khmer king a lesson. His triumph over the Khmers allowed Thailand to enjoy a long period of peace.⁴¹³ King Naresuan ordered the defeated Khmer king, Phraya Lawaek to be beheaded, and used Phraya Lawaek's blood to wash his feet.⁴¹⁴ Although Luang Vichitr noted that this act seemed rather barbaric, he supported the view that it reflected the true nature of the war, that is a war which was not between the people of Thailand and Cambodia but, in essence, only between their kings.⁴¹⁵ The Khmer king was behind the Khmer attacks and his acts did not reflect the wishes of the Khmer people. The Thais did not want to fight the Khmer people but it was a necessary measure in order to punish the Khmer king and stop the infringements. In referring to a Thai royal chronicle, Luang Vichitr further adds that while the punishment of Phraya Lawaek may have been cruel, King Naresuan showed great mercy to all other Khmers, including Phraya Lawaek's family.

The play's preface continues by giving Luang Vichitr's version of the racial ties between the people of the two countries. Regarding the origins of the Thai race, the Thai people had inhabited the Golden Peninsula long before the Sukhothai period (13 AD). Thai, Khmer, and Laos people were therefore actually of the same race - the Thai race. Thai people came to dominate the peninsula after the fall of the empires ruled by the *Kho'm* and *Champa* people. The people now known as Khmers and Laotian are actually a group of Thai people (*Thai Noi* or Lesser Thai) who settled in lands previously occupied by the *Kho'm*. However, as the *Kho'm* empire had virtually

⁴¹² King Naresuan had just liberated Thailand from Burmese rule - see Chapter 3: *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* (King Naresuan Declares Independence).

⁴¹³ Vichitr Vadamarn. "Khwam Mungmai Kho'ng Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu", *op cit*.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*. In his article on the importance of King Naresuan the Great in Thai history, Winai Phongsriphan suggests that the incident never occurred. Winai reasons that this and other events were included or appeared in a manipulated form in the Royal Chronicle of Ayuthaya (*Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayuthaya Chabap Phitsadan* - which was compiled during the reign of Rama I) to claim Thailand's political legitimacy over Cambodia. Winai: 1990, pp. 62-64. Another historian also supports the view that Phraya Lawaek was never beheaded by King Naresuan. Somkiat Wantana suggests that according to information recorded in memoirs of a foreign officer in Cambodia, Phraya Lawaek managed to escape and later died in Vientiane. Somkiat Wantana, "Prawatsat Niphon Thai Samai Mai" (Modern Thai Historiography), Academic Paper No. 49, Thai Khadi Su'ksa, 1984, p. 114.

⁴¹⁵ Vichitr Vadamarn. "Khwam Mungmai Kho'ng Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu", *op cit*.

disappeared, the Khmers have nothing to do with the *Kho'm* from a racial point of view.⁴¹⁶ The *Thai Noi* people settling in former *Kho'm* lands were only given the name Khmer because they lived on the same lands and assimilated certain *Kho'm* traditions and customs. However, many of the customs and traditions, as well as folk tales and eating habits, remained essentially Thai. Luang Vichitr also claimed that many of the similarities in the physical features such as the shape of the face and skull proved his view.

Although Luang Vichitr's theories have now completely lost their credibility, at the time his statements were very influential. His theories carried much weight as he had created a reputation for himself as an authority on history. Moreover, he was very assertive on this matter and stated that those who believed that the present day Khmers were descendants of the *Kho'm* were wrong:

“The present day Khmers are a branch of the lesser Thai (*Thai Noi*), who just happened to settle in the land of the ancient *Kho'm*. They [unintentionally] received the same education as the *Kho'm*. Thus, they were regarded as Khmers. The Khmers' case also coincided with another group of the lesser Thais who had been mixed with the *Lawa* and so were called 'Laos' people. In fact, they are all Thai people.”⁴¹⁷

His explanation went even further, comparing the demise of the ancient *Kho'm* to the extinction of other ancient civilisations:

“In the same way as the present Egyptians are not of the same race as the Egyptians of Cleopatra, the modern Greeks are not the same race as the Greeks of Socrates and the inhabitants of Rome at the present time

⁴¹⁶ The book “Thailand's Case” was written by Luang Vichitr in English and aimed at soliciting international approval of Thailand's demand for territories in the 1940 dispute with France. It was dedicated “To the brave patriots who sacrificed their lives in the battlefield for the recovery of our lost territories and for upholding our national honour. In Thailand's Case, Luang Vichitr wrote: “In the [sic] 16th Century [sic] Buddhist Era, [...] the name “Khmer” was considered [sic] obsolete. A new name was invented, that is “Cambudja” which means “Born in the [sic] Gold Peninsula”. The coming into existence of this new name “Cambudja” marked the end of the old Khmer Race and the birth of the new people who have 90% [sic] Thai blood.” Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, Thai Commercial Press, 1941, p. 130.

⁴¹⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Khvam Mungmai Kho'ng Lakho'n Ru'ang Ratchamanu”, *op cit.*, p. 26.

are not the Romans of Julius Caesar, it is an established fact that the present Cambodians are not the Khmers of fifteen centuries ago.”⁴¹⁸

Although *Ratchamanu* was Luang Vichitr’s first play using the concept of racial unification, the idea was not new to readers of his written works. Luang Vichitr’s version of Thai history, in particular his emphasis on the grandeur of the Thai race, can be traced back to his twelve volume series of *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History - see Chapter 1) which was printed between 1929 and 1931. The whole of Volume 3 is devoted to the history of Thailand, from ancient times to the fall of Ayuthaya in 1767. In the preface of *Prawatsat Sakon*, Luang Vichitr pointed out to his readers that the Thai race was one of the greatest in the world as it had existed even before the Chinese settled in China and occupied many other countries including Vietnam, Laos, Burma and India. Thai blood had gradually lost its “purity” and ended up being regarded as Burmese, Laotian or even Chinese. If this dilution was not stopped immediately, the Thai blood risked extinction. Uniting all descendants of Thai stock would not only keep Thai blood intact, but would also create a great empire with land of more than 20 million square-kilometres (covering almost the entire area of the Golden Peninsula) and comprising more than 60 million people.⁴¹⁹ With this idea in mind, Luang Vichitr applied his racial theory in the play to promote a fraternal friendship between Thailand and Cambodia. In addition, the blood ties between the two countries should not be undermined by the fact that Cambodia was under French colonial rule:

“Thais must treat Cambodian people like relatives who share the same blood. Even though Cambodia is currently a colony [of France], this is just a political status. Our hearts must be bounded by sympathy towards each other. . . In the past Thais tended to look down on their colonised neighbours. We should stop doing so and leave political issues to politics. Our human relationship is above politics. People must improve their relationships with each other regardless of whether they are colonised or independent. Any attempt to create hatred between neighbours is not a good method of promoting friendship.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand’s Case*, *op cit.*, p. 130

⁴¹⁹ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Prawatsat Sakon* (Universal History), vol. 3, pp. 1-17. See also Vichitr Vadakarn, *Sayam Kap Suwannaphum*, *op cit.*, pp. 5-47

⁴²⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn. “Khwam Mungmai Kho’ng Lakho’n Ru’ang Ratchamanu”, *op cit.*, p. 27.

Luang Vichitr's racial theory later played a significant part when it was used to represent an intellectual view from Siam during the Thai-Indo-China conflict (1940-1941). Luang Vichitr made a radio speech to counter allegations made by Saigon that his theory of Thai racial origin was part of his expansionist plan.⁴²¹ In his response, he referred to the eminent French Orientalist, Professor Louis Finot.⁴²² Professor Finot had compared the journey (expansion) of the Thai race to a flow of running water and the spread of a giant cloth. According to Professor Finot, the area this giant cloth covered was from the South of China, spanning Tonkin, Laos and Siam, to Burma and Assam.⁴²³ This, of course, included Cambodia.

Luang Vichitr's racial theory was aimed at stirring the spirit of nationalism not only amongst the Thais but also amongst the Cambodian and Laotian people under French rule.⁴²⁴ He cleverly referred to a map of Indochina which had been prepared by the

⁴²¹ When France's rule was weakened by the on-going war in Europe, Thailand saw its chance to reclaim lost territories. The two countries signed a confidential agreement to begin negotiating the possibility of resetting the border along the Mekong River. However, just two weeks later Germany invaded France and the subsequent Vichy government disavowed the agreement that Phibun had obtained. France's inflexibility contrasted with the Britain's approach which had been more flexible, allowing the readjustment of the Burmese - Thai border. Moreover, the last minute change meant a significant loss of face to Thailand and particularly Phibun. Joseph Wright, *The Balancing Act: A History of Thailand*, Bangkok: Asia Books, 1991, pp. 105-106. France's decision to not negotiate led to nation-wide protests against France demanding the return of territory back to Siam as people who lived under French occupation were brothers of the Thais in Thailand. The anti-French campaign was stirred up by Luang Vichitr. Luang Vichitr claimed that Thai people had no choice but to resort to military means in order to claim back the lost territory. Doing so was a humanitarian act of justice. He emotionally charged his message by describing Cambodian people as being the arms and legs of Thai people. The arms and legs of the Thais were routinely tortured by the French. Thai people therefore had no other choice but to do something against that pain by taking their arms and legs back. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Khwam Samphan Thang Chu'achat Rawang Thai Kap Khamen" (Racial Relations between Thais and Khmer, 1940), *Pathakatha Lae Khambanyai* (Speeches and Lectures), vol. 2, 1973, p. 8. See also Barmé: 1993, pp. 163-164.

⁴²² Vichitr Vadakarn, "Khwam Samphan Thang Chu'achat Rawang Thai Kap Khamen", *op cit.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴²³ Louis Finot in Luang Vichitr's Thailand's Case (1941): "*La marche de cette race singulière qui, souple et fluide comme l'eau, s'insinuant avec la même force, prenant le couleur de tous les ciels et la forme de tous les rivages, mais gardant sous ses aspects divers l'identité essentielle de son caractère et de sa langue, et de sa langue, s'est épanchée comme une happe immense sur la Chine méridionale le Tonkin, le Laos, le Siam, jusqu'à la Birmanie et l' Assam.*" Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand's Case*, *op cit.*, p. 124.

⁴²⁴ On his activities to arouse such sentiments amongst the Laotian people under French rule, see Barmé: 1993, pp. 163-164.

French government. The map had been painted in such a way so as to show that the Thai and the Cambodian blood had greatly mingled:

“The colour on the map shows the Thai blood which has mixed with the Khmer blood as far back as 30 years ago. The French Indochinese government believed that the Khmers and Thais were of the same blood. They tried to include Thailand under the French rule. Alas, now France has changed its view and states that the Thais and Khmers are of different races.”⁴²⁵

Luang Vichitr's ideas on racial unification were reinforced by Germany's example of uniting the German race to form the great German (Großdeutschland) nation.⁴²⁶ In 1938, Germany forced the *Anschluss* (annexation and/or unification) with Austria, despite objections from other nations.⁴²⁷ Germany ignored these protests and used a show of military force to achieve the unification. Although Germany and Austria shared the German language and had many other similarities, both countries had long existed as independent states and indeed in the past had frequently competed with each other for supremacy in central Europe. Luang Vichitr defended his approach towards the Khmer issue by referring to Germany's unification with Austria in his article “One Road to Peace”, which was published in the daily newspaper *Prachamit*.⁴²⁸ He began this article by saying that everyone talked about peace but nobody could suggest a method to achieve it. He said that peace was often defined as tranquillity and the absence of mortal strife. However, in his opinion, this definition was purely theoretical. In reality, peace meant the opposite: peace meant war, not tranquillity, and was often

⁴²⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Khvam Samphan Thang Chu'achat Rawang Thai Kap Khamen”, *op cit.*, p.16

⁴²⁶ Richard J. Aldrich suggested that the model of German National Socialism was more attractive to Siamese nationalists than Japanese militarism or Pan-Asian ideas. According to Aldrich, Germany's concept of creating a *Großdeutschland* by incorporating German speaking areas from neighbouring states echoed the radical ethnic ‘Thai’ ambitions held by some Siamese of recovering territories lost to Britain and France in order to create a “Greater Thailand”. Richard J. Aldrich, *The Key to the South: Britain, the United States, and Thailand during the Approach of the Pacific War, 1929-1942*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 154.

⁴²⁷ Even before 1938 Germany had made progress on the unification issue by successfully re-annexing territories that it had lost on the border with France (The Ruhr area was remilitarised in March 1936 and the Saar territory was re-unified by plebiscite). Michael Freeman, *Atlas of Nazi Germany: A Political, Economic and Social Anatomy of the Third Reich*, Longman, 1995, pp. 134-136

⁴²⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, “One Road to Peace”, *Prachamit* (6 May 1938).

achieved through armament. How to attain peace depended on individual points of view. For instance, a mighty king would consider that his goal of achieving peace was fulfilled when he had conquered the whole world, whereas other kings would be satisfied if they could defeat that mighty king. Therefore, the ways to achieve peace in theory and practice, according to Luang Vichitr, were very different and not complementary to each other.

However, mankind had now entered a dangerous and uncertain period, within which it was necessary for the countries of the world to make new attempts to maintain peace. According to Luang Vichitr, peace could be best achieved by “a new division of the world based on one race, language and culture”. He pointed out that this had already been successfully undertaken by Germany. According to Luang Vichitr, Hitler’s party announced its programme openly in February 1920 when very few people expected Adolf Hitler to govern Germany. Article 1 of the party’s programme said that “it is our desire to unite all Germans to form the great German State.”⁴²⁹ This article closely reflected Hitler’s ideology as later published in his semi-autobiographical work *Mein Kampf* (My Fight):

“Today it seems to me providential that Fate should have chosen Braunau on the [river] Inn as my birthplace. For this little town lies on the boundary between two German states which we of the younger generation at least have made it our life work to reunite by every means at our disposal. Germany-Austria must return to the great German mother country, and not because of any economic consideration. No and again no: even if such a union were unimportant from an economic point of view; yes even it were harmful, it must nevertheless take place. One blood demands one Reich. Never will the German nation possess the moral right to engage in colonial politics until, at last, it embraces its own sons within a single state.”⁴³⁰

⁴²⁹ Ibid. Luang Vichitr referred to the 25-point party programme of the NASDP (*Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei* - National Socialist German Worker’s Party) which was announced on 24 February 1920. The original wording of the first article of the programme was: “*Wir fordern den Zusammenschluß aller Deutschen auf Grund des Selbstbestimmungsrechtes der Völker zu einem Großdeutschland*” (We demand the unification of all Germans based on the right of self-determination of the people to Great-Germany state). NASDP, *Programme of the Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei* (Programme of the National Socialist German Worker’s Party), 24 February 1920.

⁴³⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (My Fight). Trans. Ralph Manheim with introduction by D. Cameron Watt, Pimlico, 1992, p.3

According to Luang Vichitr, the Nazi party's programme had been followed and proclaimed openly during the whole period of development before it came into power. Vichitr continues to assert that when Hitler came into power, the article of his programme pertaining to unification became even more prominent. Luang Vichitr particularly praised Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, to whom Hitler had given all responsibilities for the propaganda campaign. Goebbels had masterminded the skilful campaign in which Germans and Austrians were portrayed as one people, and which had allowed the German Reich to annex Austria peacefully in the *Anschluss* of 1938. Luang Vichitr wrote:

“Herr Goebbels is the most competent propagandist of the current time. Without a propagandist such as Herr Goebbels it would have been difficult to hope for such success as Germany has achieved.”

With hindsight it seems obvious that Hitler (and later also Goebbels) sent many signals to the international community that should have been strong enough to warn them about his intentions. However, the reality was that Hitler was very careful not to upset the power balance before the party (and Germany) was ready. In particular, the issue of Austria's annexation was handled with great care and the press was skilfully controlled to handle the Austrian question appropriately. Moreover, it was not until some time after Hitler had come into power that Germany began to reveal its territorial ambitions.⁴³¹ Nevertheless, Luang Vichitr was very impressed by Hitler's programme and Goebbels' campaign. In his view, Hitler's unification programme not only made the Austrians feel German, it also affected the racial improvement policy by making the Germans strong and wise. Luang Vichitr proclaimed that the fact that it led to suicides exemplified the programme's success because people felt they were not strong and wise enough to be Germans. He noted:

⁴³¹ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War, 1939-1945*, London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979, pp. 32-33. Richard Overy also appears to agree with the view that after announcing the Nazi party's programme publicly, it was not until much later that the creation of a Pan-German state was pursued: “In 1937 Hitler turned to the question of creating a Pan-German state by absorbing the German populations of Austria and Czechoslovakia. In two years the goal was realised.” See Richard Overy, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Third Reich*, Penguin Books, 1996, p.54.

“Of all the work of the Nazi party, it is that mentioned above which I have followed with most interest, and I have long been convinced that Austria would soon unite with Germany, for the single reason that she felt herself to be German. . . The fact that Germany has been able to absorb Austria without difficulty is one of the first proofs of the principle that the unification of people of one race, language and culture under single rule is ‘one road to peace’.”⁴³²

Although Germany resisted foreign opposition by using military force, Luang Vichitr felt that the act was justifiable. He believed that other countries would soon follow Germany’s example of racial unification:

“If they [countries of which people of the same race, language and culture are still scattered] cannot achieve this by peaceful negotiation, they will have to increase their armed strength and take the opportunity to intervene by force. While their armed strength may not be sufficient, their efforts must be by means of publicity, to strengthen racial feelings in those people who are still separated and make them realise where the centre of their race is.”⁴³³

Luang Vichitr remarked at the end of the article that peacemakers, in particular the League of Nations, should adopt the principle of dividing the world on the basis of race, language and culture immediately, as he was convinced that this was the “road to peace”. He claimed that territorial gains could be made by Thailand using the same methods as Germany. Almost immediately, his ideas were supported by others, including a young army captain named Phayom Chulananda. In a lecture to military cadets, Captain Phayom took Luang Vichitr’s ideas even further. He suggested that the Burmese, Annamese, Khmers and Malays were all descendants from original Thai stock, and on the basis of this preposterous claim, he reasoned that it would not be difficult for Thailand to effect an “*Anschluß* of these peoples”.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Vichitr Vadakarn, “One Road to Peace,” *Prachamit* (6 May 1938), attached to F.O.371/22207, pp. 4-5.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴³⁴ Phayom’s speech was published in the Siamese Army Journal “Yuddhakos”, 10 August 1938 and translated in Sir Joseph Crosby’s report dated 19 August 1938. Crosby remarked that the claims made by Phayom were ridiculous and that “if the knowledge and mental equipment of Captain Phayom Chulananda are representative of his class, one is forced to the conclusion that Siam’s enemies can have very little to fear from an Army which is officered by men of such a type.” F.O. 371/22207, 1938, p. 168.

The play's pronouncement of racial similarity created much controversy. In a letter to the press, a correspondent stated that he regarded Luang Vichitr's account of Thai-Khmer relations in *Ratchamanu* as pioneering because he had never before encountered a similar attitude.⁴³⁵ The introduction to the play confirmed to the correspondent that the Khmer race had become extinct, and that people living in Cambodia were not Khmer at all but part of the Thai race, the Lesser Thai. He expressed his deep appreciation of Luang Vichitr's intellect and thanked him for bringing this fact to light in public.⁴³⁶ Another letter, however, by a student of Khmer studies, was written in protest at the play's claims. The student wrote that Luang Vichitr had distorted the truth to support his nationalist aims, arguing that he had used his authority as an academic and government official as a way to attract people's attention and achieve mass support.⁴³⁷ The writer argued further that Luang Vichitr did not have any scientific proof to support his claims that the Khmers had virtually disappeared, and that people who lived in Cambodia were not Khmer but Thai.⁴³⁸ It is not so clear however what Cambodia's people felt about Luang Vichitr's theories. An official document of the Royaume Du Cambodge, the *Livre Blanc* (The White Book), written in 1961, criticised Thailand's attitude and actions towards Cambodia and referred to Luang Vichitr as the "mastermind" of the anti-Cambodian press campaign.⁴³⁹ It also cited several passages from *Thailand's Case*, in which Luang Vichitr gave reasons for annexing Cambodia and Laos. The *Livre Blanc* continued to condemn Luang Vichitr because he "shamelessly" distorted history to justify the annexation of neighbouring land. By pointing to the following passage in *Thailand's Case*, Cambodian officials rightly proved their point:

⁴³⁵ Published letter by a reader living in Nakho'n Ratchasima province to the editor of the *Pramuanwan* Newspaper. *Pramuanwan* (10 January 1936).

⁴³⁶ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4, p. 338.

⁴³⁷ Letter by a student of Khmer studies to the editor of the *Itsara* Newspaper. *Itsara* (21 January 1936).

⁴³⁸ So'. Tho'. 0701.48/4, pp. 379-381

⁴³⁹ *Livre Blanc* (White Book), 1961, pp. 4-5. The *Livre Blanc* was kindly presented to me by Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn during my interview with him in Paris. I would like to express my gratitude to Lucien on this matter. Royaume Du Cambodge. *Livre Blanc* (*Sur la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande*). Le 23 Octobre 1961.

“. . . But it is an established fact that the Khmers and the Cambodians are not the same people. . . The coming into existence of this new name “Cambudja” marked the end of the old Khmer race and the birth of new people who have 90% Thai blood.”⁴⁴⁰

However, the condemning view expressed in the *Livre Blanc* may have been influenced by the French, or could have been the view of the elite which was fearful of losing its power base. The British Ambassador to Thailand at the time, Sir Joseph Crosby, provides evidence that Luang Vichitr’s overtures may have had a strong appeal amongst the general populations of Thailand’s neighbours:

“It is not to be expected that the ruling chiefs of the semi-independent Thai principalities under British or French protection should welcome in the least the prospect of being drawn within the orbit of Siam. But the chief (or “King”) of Luang Phrabang, in French territory, hit the nail upon the head when he observed to an acquaintance of mine some time ago: “I do not myself at all want to be swallowed up by Siam, for in that case I should soon lose much [sic] of my royal prerogatives as I am allowed by the French to retain, but there is no [sic] denying the fact that my people look to Bangkok as the religious and intellectual centre *par excellence*. . . These folk can be reached by the Siamese, many of whom are growing race conscious and are beginning to conceive that they have a mission to discharge towards their fellow Thais in other countries.”⁴⁴¹

Sir Joseph Crosby was clearly concerned about the emerging irredentism movement under Luang Vichitr’s leadership.⁴⁴² He had Luang Vichitr’s article “One Road to Peace” translated and enclosed it in a report which was sent to his superiors.⁴⁴³ In this report, Crosby described Luang Vichitr as somebody who “fancies himself as a Siamese Dr. Goebbels.”⁴⁴⁴ Crosby was concerned because Luang Vichitr had referred to an emerging imperialist movement in Siam which aimed to use racial and cultural

⁴⁴⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand’s Case*, pp. 129-130, quoted in *Livre Blanc*, *op cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁴¹ Report by Sir Joseph Crosby dated 6 May 1938. FO. 371/22207, 1938, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁴² While foreign observers such as Crosby often referred to Luang Vichitr’s ideas as irredentism, they are often also referred to Pan-Thaism.

⁴⁴³ The article in Thai text was published in the *Prachamit* (6 May 1938) and was enclosed in a report by Sir Joseph Crosby dated 9 May 1938. FO. 371/22207, 1938, p. 104.

⁴⁴⁴ F.O.371/22207, 1938, p. 104.

ties [similarities] to unite other Thai races in neighbouring countries under Siam's leadership. This, of course, also included people of certain countries which were occupied by the British, French or Chinese. Although Siam was not in a position to realise such a goal, Crosby and other Government officials felt that these cultural and racial overtures were potentially more dangerous than a direct military threat because Thailand's colonised neighbours might find the offer preferable to colonial rule.

Ratchamanu was thus rightly seen as an early attempt to build popular backing for military elements in the government that could be used to create a modern Thai empire, by re-establishing the control over the people and territory it had controlled before the intervention of the Western colonial powers.⁴⁴⁵ Luang Vichitr may have foreseen that his racial version of history would be positively received by the army, in particular when it was confirmed that his idea was also endorsed by Phibun. In his lecture to the Military Education Section of the general staff of the army, Luang Vichitr amplified his idea that Thailand might either end up becoming a powerful nation, or perish:

“We only have two choices: becoming a powerful nation or being swallowed up by other Powers. If we have our lost territories back, it is very likely that we will emerge to be a powerful country. If we can have the entire lost lands returned to us, we will not only have more land and increase numbers of people, but we will effect the most important thing: our territory will greatly expand. It will reach up to the North of *Sipsong Chuthai* where the people share the same Thai blood, consider themselves as Thais, speak Thai and have a Thai mind.”⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Between 1867 and 1907 the territories lost by Siam to France could be summarised as follows:

1. 1867 Cambodia (except Battambang, Siemreap and Sisophon)
2. 1883 Sipsong Chuthai
3. 1893 The left bank of the Mekong (Laos)
4. 1904 Right bank enclaves opposite Luang Phrabang and Pakse
5. 1907 Battambang, Siemreap and Sisophon

See more detail about the Thai - Indo-China conflict in Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy 1932-1946*, Thai Khadi Su'ksa, 1985, Chapter Six.

⁴⁴⁶ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Kansia Dindaen Thai Hai Kae Farangset” (The Loss of Thai Territories to France, 1940), *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, vol. 1, 1962, pp. 181-208.

5.1.2 Analysis of the Play

Although its plot was carefully created, *Ratchamanu* failed to have great emotional impact as it lacked coherence and consistency. In comparison with *Lu'at Suphan*, which is often hailed as one of Luang Vichitr's best, *Ratchamanu* contains too many messages and long dialogues which disrupt and overload the play. In order to ensure that audiences would be able to follow the play and absorb all its messages, Luang Vichitr included an exposition in which the purpose of the play was summarised for the audience before the start of the theatrical performance. This involved an actor reading out the introduction that Luang Vichitr had written, explaining how the play had come about and what the audience should learn from it. In *Ratchamanu*, the exposition was more detailed and important than it had been in *Lu'at Suphan*. *Ratchamanu's* exposition outlines in detail Luang Vichitr's version of the historical episode on which the play was based, as he intended to make sure that the audience would accept his own interpretation. The exposition also summarised the issues he wanted to raise in the play:

“To correct any misunderstanding of an allegation that Thais were very cruel to Cambodian people, to show that Thailand has never attacked Cambodia without any reasonable explanation, and to create a new understanding that battles between Cambodia and Thailand in the past only occurred when Cambodia was ruled by a bad king such as Nak Phra Sattha - but our hearts are blinded with unity, to urge Thai people to be thoughtful to Cambodian people as we share the same race, religion and culture, and to honour our great soldier who showed his courage, I, therefore, decided to create the play *Ratchamanu*.”⁴⁴⁷

Although the plot was relatively weak, the play presented great variety and spectacle. The play begins with the *Piphat* ensemble playing the modern Thai song *Ma Phuak Rao* (Come Together), and the Thai villagers enter the stage in pairs to dance the newly choreographed “torch” dance. Such a spectacular opening was a new technique, contrasting with *Lu'at Suphan* where a more traditional style had been employed (although the opening scene of *Lu'at Suphan* was very shocking for the Thai viewers). After the torch dance, Saen enters the stage and talks to the villagers who continue to

⁴⁴⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Khwam Mungmai Kho'ng Lakhon Ru'ang Ratchamanu” (Objectives of the Play *Ratchamanu*), *op cit.*, p. 27.

dance until a gun shot interrupts them. The song and the dancing depict the happiness of the Thai villagers before the Khmer troops arrive. The remainder of the scene, which shows the capturing of the Thai villagers by the Khmers uses dialogue in prose. The scene is ended by the traditional *Khru'ang Sai* ensemble playing the *O'k Phasa* tune *Khamae Thom* (Sad Khmer) in a slightly Cambodian style. The tune is very melancholic, and accompanies the march of the captured Thai villagers as they are led into Cambodian territory.

The continued use of a combination of various dramatic elements, in particular the extensive use of music, is also evident in Scene 2. This scene follows the tradition of opening with a recitation of a poetical narrative. This short narrative, which is followed by the *Piphat* orchestra performing the tune *Rum*, describes the feelings of Saen who wishes to return to Thailand. A colloquial dialogue is then spoken by characters who are involved in the scene. The conversation is interspersed with traditional music in the background to create the appropriate mood or to attract the audience's attention whenever characters make their entrance or exit. Traditional *O'k Phasa* music of a Cambodian dialect is also used for background music.

Scene 2 also includes the tumultuous battle between Saen and the Khmer rebels. This particular episode is emphasised by adding a special *Piphat* tune *Choet*, which is designed to accompany the action of fighting. At the end of the scene, before making his escape, Saen confesses his love to Phenkhae. Here, a romantic mood is created by playing a modern tune *Phenkhae* softly in the background. Phenkhae starts to cry and tells Saen that she will wait for him, but also warns him to never attack the Khmer people:

Phenkhae: No matter how deeply I love you, there will always be another thing that I love more - the Khmer country. If you become a soldier in Ayuthaya, go to fight other countries! Do not come to attack Cambodia.

Saen: A soldier must act in compliance with orders. A soldier does not have any choices to make.

Phenkhae: But you can choose to go to fight somewhere else before you are ordered to come to Cambodia. No matter how many enemies you have, I will stand by your side. But if you become

an enemy of the Khmers, I must be with my people and my country.

The modern love song *Phenkhae* is sung in duet style by Phenkhae and Saen at the end of Scene 2. The use of a duet in a romantic scene had been used before in the highly popular *Lu'at Suphan* to stimulate a similar emotional impact. After the singing is over, the *Khru'ang Sai* ensemble starts to perform a soft and sweet tune while the curtain is closing and drawing up again for the next scene. The romantic ending to Scene 2 generates a strong impact on the audience, which is presented with this hopeful romance between a Thai commoner and Khmer lady of good background.

Moreover, the dialogue exchanged between the two characters typifies Luang Vichitr's technique of using female characters to address the nationalist cause. Similar to Duang Jan, Phenkhae is portrayed as a woman with strong nationalist characteristics. She worships her country more than anything else and is willing to sacrifice even her loved one if that helps protect her country from an enemy's threat.

In Scene 3, Phenkhae's father tries to convince her that she should marry Phraya Mano. Phenkhae refuses, but vows to him that she will agree to marry Phraya Mano if Ratchamanu ever comes to attack Cambodia:

Phenkhae: Father, please forgive me. I am not naughty or arrogant. Although I truly love Ratchamanu, I still adore you more than anybody else. Alright, if it appears for certain that Ratchamanu volunteers to attack Cambodia, I will definitely marry Phraya Mano. Please wait and see a bit longer.

Phenkhae clearly demonstrates that love for one's own country is the ultimate love and must be placed above any personal emotion. Phenkhae is not only a female character, but a foreigner too. This has an even stronger impact on the Thai audience as it is reminded of the enemy's strong nationalist character. The audience is led to feel that if a Khmer girl feels so passionately about her nation, then it must learn to be like her and show its love for the Thai nation even more vigorously.

Luang Vichitr uses several scenes to support his assertion that the only reason for Thailand to attack Cambodia was to punish the evil Khmer king (Phraya Lawaek). One such scene features King Naresuan and his ministers in consultation about the encroachment of Cambodian troops led by Phraya Lawaek. The Thai people generally have high respect for their King, and his words are regarded as authoritative and absolute. Therefore, the King giving the same reason for the attacks makes Luang Vichitr's reasoning very convincing to the audience:

Phraya Sriharat: I received a report today that Phraya Lawaek has again sent his troops to rob and capture Thai villagers who live near the border. Phraya Lawaek has done this four times already.

King Naresuan: From which part of the country did they come?

Phraya Sriharat: From the Northeast.

King Naresuan: That is the way Phraya Lawaek likes to act. When he sees that we have lost to Burma or are engaged in another battle, he comes to rob and take Thai people away to Cambodia. He has always done this.

Phra Ekathotsarot: If they know that we will take serious action against them, they will definitely learn a lesson.

King Naresuan: We must teach Phraya Lawaek a lesson by attacking Cambodia. We are not going to subdue the Khmer people, we are just going to punish Phraya Lawaek. After that, the Khmers and the Thais will live in peace and happiness.

The hero Ratchamanu is also used to promote non-political messages. Luang Vichitr wanted to demonstrate a strong friendship between men which he believed was more powerful and lasting than the one between men and women. He presented this particular aspect through the portrayal of Ratchamanu and Phraya Mano. While both characters differ in many ways (Ratchamanu was Thai and a prisoner; Phraya Mano was Khmer and held a high-ranking post) they fall in love with the same woman. Moreover, they are both willing to give her up for a noble cause. When Ratchamanu realises that Phenkhæ is already married to Phraya Mano, he tries to come to terms with it. He realises Phraya Mano's willingness to do anything to express his gratitude to him, even it means ending his life so that Phenkhæ will be free from commitment. Although Ratchamanu loves Phenkhæ as much as Phraya Mano, he is so moved by this that he decides to free Phraya Mano:

Ratchamanu: *Jao Khun*, I have decided to set you free so that you can return to Phengkhae. I believe Phengkhae is having a difficult time. . You married her lawfully, so you are bound to take great care of her. For myself, I will regard Phengkhae as if she is my own sister. If you take good care of her, I will certainly regard you as another close relative of mine.

Luang Vichitr also wanted to portray all the characters in *Ratchamanu* as “good” people. Ratchamanu carries out his duty successfully and although he manages to capture his enemy Phraya Mano, he does no harm to him, but instead sets him free. Phraya Mano, who is ordered to capture Thai people, eventually admits his sympathy with the Thais and says that he only complies in order to fulfil his duty. He and other Cambodians have always disagreed with the order to invade Thai territory. In Scene 8, when Ratchamanu decides to let Phraya Mano return to Phengkhae, Phraya Mano refuses his offer. Phraya Mano claims that Ratchamanu would be in great danger if he set him free, and that Ratchamanu should instead present him to King Naresuan in order to receive the appropriate punishment. Ratchamanu then replies to Phraya Mano that the only reason for the invasion was to punish Phraya Lawaek, echoing Luang Vichitr’s justification of Thailand’s attack on Cambodia:

Ratchamanu: There is not much to know. The only reason that the army of King Naresuan invaded Cambodia was to punish Phraya Lawaek. If you vow not to be an enemy of the Thai people, I am sure you will be set free.

Phraya Mano: To be frank, I am not an enemy of the Thai people. I myself see that the Thai and Khmer peoples are of the same race - they are like the same piece of gold. Really, I am not talking to please you so that you let me go. Not only myself, but even the Governor, Phengkhae’s father, does not agree with Phraya Lawaek attacking Thailand. We just do not know what to do.

In fact, throughout the play, the Thais and Khmers are presented as having positive and friendly attitudes towards each other. Apart from wishing to stress the need for a positive attitude towards the Khmer people, Luang Vichitr had generally intended to show only good characters in *Ratchamanu*.⁴⁴⁸ Thus there is no villain in the play

⁴⁴⁸ His remark (in the introduction to the play) reflected his personal view that when learning from others, one should only look at their positive sides (see Chapter 1).

(Phraya Lawaek is only eluded to and Phraya Mano's attackers are supporting characters). Phraya Mano, who is supposed to be an enemy of the Thai people, shows no hatred towards Saen, his Thai captor. Instead, he sympathises with the Thai people. Luang Vichitr also portrays him as a grateful man, who is indebted to Saen for saving him from his Khmer rivals. Thus in Scene 8, Phraya Mano vows to repay Ratchamanu's good deed even if it means giving up Phenkhæ:

Phraya Mano: Ratchamanu, I have vowed before the holy spirit that now I love you more than Phenkhæ. I love you more than myself because you are the lord of my life. You saved my life. If I must give up Phenkhæ for you, I am prepared to do so.

The eighth scene also introduces one of the most important issues: the racial similarity between Thai and Cambodian people. The racial link is only fully compounded at the end of the last scene (Scene 9), when Ratchamanu replies to the observation by one of his soldiers that Thais and Khmers look the same. However, omitting this message until the end of the play makes it seem like an additional piece of information which is not connected with the rest of the play. Nevertheless, the audience is now ready to accept this claim as the play has depicted the Khmer people in a positive light, and has stressed the need for a good relationship between the Thais and Khmers:

Ratchamanu: Of course, they are Thais like us. A long time ago they happened to occupy the land previously occupied by the *Kho'm (Kho'm Boran)*. So, they were called "Khmer". Khmer is just an assumed name. In fact, they are Thais and our brothers and sisters.

Soldier: We should be friends and no longer fight each other.

Ratchamanu: That is right. People who live in this Golden Peninsula are of the same family. The Thais in Siam are the eldest brothers. We have never invaded any countries and we have never surrendered to anyone. If the enemies come, we will fight them off to protect our freedom. We must tell the world that we are like poisonous snakes. Although we are small we are full of venom. We must love the nation. We must love the country, love Thailand and uphold the Thai nation. We must take care of our country for being the place where Thai people live. We offer good friendship to our neighbouring countries for we are the older brother in the Golden Peninsula. Soldiers! Love Thailand!

(All) Soldiers: Love Thailand! Love Thailand!

The play ends with the emotional song *Rak Mu'ang Thai* (Love Thailand). The song, notable for the way the word “Thai” was used to express a range of meanings, became one of Luang Vichitr’s best known and most enduring songs. It was broadcast over the radio so frequently that it assumed the status of an unofficial state anthem.⁴⁴⁹ Again this is the technique Luang Vichitr liked to use when there was a need to arouse nationalist sentiment, a dramatic device he had successfully applied before in *Lu'at Suphan*:

Love the country of the Thai, uplift the Thai Nation
Make it glorious, make it to be Thai (free)
We Thais are born Thai (free) and die for Thai (freedom, independence)
We are never weak or soft, we will not lose to anybody
Daring enemies, wherever they come from,
If they threaten Thais (the people, our freedom and independence), they will regret it
Love the country of the Thais
We Thais are born Thai. . .

- Curtains Close -

Overall, although the plot had some weaknesses and some of the dialogue appeared artificial (and not born out of the characters real feelings), the play was entertaining and proved to be a success with its audience.⁴⁵⁰ The earlier analysis of the variation of dramatic elements in Scene 2 emphasised the use of a mix of new and traditional elements which had proved popular in the play *Lu'at Suphan*. *Ratchamanu* made up for some of its weaknesses by introducing novel dramatic elements. More songs, music and dance are used to increase the entertainment value of the play. Particularly spectacular is the military procession and flag dance performed by the soldiers in Scene 5. This scene is in some ways the most spectacular in the play, strongly arousing the audience’s nationalist sentiments. Besides the marching of soldiers, the scene contains two patriotic songs, *Thahan Kho'ng Chat* (Soldier of the Nation) which is sung by the soldiers to accompany their flag dance, and *Daen Isan* (Isan Land), sung by the Thai soldiers after King Naresuan announces that they are going to reclaim the Northeast

⁴⁴⁹ All school students in present-day Thailand have to learn to sing the song *Rak Mu'ang Thai* (Love Thailand) in their fourth year of primary education (which used to be the final year of the minimum education that students had to take until it was increased to six years).

⁴⁵⁰ According to Crosby, *Ratchamanu* and other plays during this period were received with tumultuous applause by the Bangkok public to the extent that performances were staged outside Bangkok. Report by Sir Joseph Crosby dated 6 May 1938. FO. 371/22207, 1938, p. 97.

region, the land that belongs to Thailand. *Daen Isan* is accompanied by the dancing of the officers of the army. Both songs drum up support for irredentism.

The scenery in *Ratchamanu* also displays an increased variety. There are both outdoor and indoor scenes, including a ricefield, a house, a bedroom, a forest and the palace halls. At over 15 years, the time span covered by *Ratchamanu* was longer than Luang Vichitr's previous plays. *Ratchamanu* was also the first play in which the leading characters wore several different costumes. Saen and Phenkhae had three and five outfits respectively. Luang Vichitr reasoned that it was necessary to provide different costumes because the leading characters appeared in many scenes (the play had three more scenes than *Lu'at Suphan*). They should appear in different outfits to add excitement and increase the attractiveness of the performance. In traditional drama, changing outfits was impossible because the *Yu'n Khru'ang* dress was very tight, heavy and difficult to wear. Luang Vichitr's play benefits from the fact that costumes are realistic, which means that they are easier to wear and change.⁴⁵¹ Traditional costumes are still worn in the play, but only in scenes which require formality, such as the scene in the palace of King Naresuan.

5.2 Phrajao Krungthon (King Krungthon)

In 1937 Luang Vichitr produced his third full-length play *Phrajao Krungthon*, which eulogised King Krungthon (or, as he was more commonly known, King Taksin, Jao Tak, or Phraya Taksin) who had reigned between 1768-1782. Like King Naresuan who defeated the Burmese in 1584, the most important contribution of King Krungthon to the history of Thailand was the liberation of Thailand from the Burmese occupation in 1767. That year marked the end of the Ayuthaya empire as well as the inauguration of the new capital Thonburi near the *Chao Phraya* river by Phrajao Krungthon. Luang Vichitr aimed to depict the King's final 14 years in *Phrajao Krungthon*, from when he started his fight against the Burmese, through his successful period up to his tragic demise. In doing so, he based the play's script heavily on two

⁴⁵¹ Since the success of *Lu'at Suphan*, the financial situation was also improving, enabling Luang Vichitr to afford more elaborate costumes for his actors.

historical records: the Memoir of Krom Luang Narintho'nthawi and the Royal Commentary of King Rama V.⁴⁵² The dialogue of King Krungthon in the play was very similar to the King's own words as recorded in these two sources.⁴⁵³

Luang Vichitr hoped that the audience would appreciate the sacrifices that the king had made in exchange for the country's unity and peace. However, the most important message of the play was intended for the Chinese living in Thailand at the time. Phrajao Taksin was himself half-Chinese and his army depended heavily on Chinese volunteers. Luang Vichitr wanted to portray a history of struggle for national independence in which the Thais and Chinese had fought alongside.

The exposition of *Phrajao Krungthon* is more significant than that in *Ratchamanu*. It is longer and contains a complete summary of the play, which is set out in exactly the same order as it is performed on stage.⁴⁵⁴ Without the exposition, the play would have been difficult to follow as it was lengthy and lacked the romantic interest of *Lu'at Suphan* and *Ratchamanu*. However, from a dramatic point of view, the impact of *Phrajao Krungthon* was reduced by the long exposition because the play became very repetitive and less exciting. Publicly, Luang Vichitr defended the use of the exposition (or later the *Chak Nam*, literally a preceding scene) by arguing that spectators would often arrive late and miss the important first scene. With the exposition being part of the official programme, the late arrivals would at least be in time for the first scene of the performance.⁴⁵⁵ Luang Vichitr's argument may seem rather naive, but in fact it concealed the real reasons for the *Chak Nam*. By describing the objectives and the play's key points clearly before the performance, Luang Vichitr was able to ensure that his ideas and messages would be received by the audience and, to some extent, would shape the viewers' perspective before they actually watched the play.

⁴⁵² Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng" (Writer's Notes: Phrajao Krungthon), Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483 (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, p. 75.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Khvam Ru Bang Ru'ang Kiewkap Kanpraphan Lae Kanlakho'n", *op cit.*, pp. 93-94.

The first half of the play is about Phraya Taksin's heroic defence of Ayuthaya against the invading Burmese. After his victory he crowns himself King Krungthon and the first part of the play ends with an eulogising dialogue about his greatness:

Praphai: You will not find any kings like King Krungthon, who liberated the country from an enemy and restored the country of Siam. Though the life of Ayuthaya is ended, Krungthon is reinstated. King Krungthon has granted a new life to the country.

Krungthon (Krungthon Capital)

Krungthon reinstated	Krungsri Ayuthaya
In the war against the Burmese	Ayuthaya fell
Many people died	everything was destroyed
Jao Tak then comes to rescue	uplifting the nation
He leads Chinese and Thais	to fight together with him
in fierce battles	and kills all enemies
Krungthon is then built	as a new capital
King Krungthon put down all rebels	chasing out all opponents
Thai dignity is now restored	because of King Krungthon
who revives the life	of our Siam

The second part of the play concerns King Krungthon's personal affairs and political rivalries. Luang Vichitr now reverses the image of a courageous fighter into that of an ailing man who faces many adversaries and turbulent years. The audience is led to sympathise with King Krungthon's tragic fate. King Krungthon's family affairs are disrupted by disloyalty and jealousy. Worse still, he encounters further foreign threats, while at the same time his rule is frequently challenged by internal politics. These problems cause the King to develop signs of madness. Although he tries to seek peace through meditation and Buddhism, the King's mental state continues to deteriorate. His erratic leadership is ended when he is forced to surrender to his opponents. The king is captured by the coup leader and executed. The last scene depicts the funeral ceremony of King Krungthon attended by Thai and Chinese citizens. They are reminded of how they fought together during King Krungthon's reign. The song which follows, *Jin-Thai Samakkhi*, further supports this message.⁴⁵⁶

Jin-Thai Samakkhi (Chinese-Thai Are United)

Chinese, Thai	are brothers and sisters
They must love,	they must agree,
to strengthen friendship	forever.

⁴⁵⁶ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Phrajao Krungthon" (King Krungthon, a playtext), Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483 (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, pp. 77-114.

Since for thousands of years	Chinese and Thai have been brothers and sisters.
They have been united	and have never been in dispute.
When China faced difficulty, the Thai welcomed them	to live in Thailand together
When Siam faced a serious threat	Thai and Chinese helped to liberate the Thai nation.
They will be united like brothers and sisters	the two nationals won't be separated.
In times of happiness, they enjoy themselves together	In times of sadness, they never abandon each other.

Mainly due to King Krungthon's partial Chinese origin and the participation of Chinese people in his liberation army, the play provided a good background for Luang Vichitr to promote a positive relationship between the Thai and Chinese people living in Thailand. Luang Vichitr used King Krungthon's life to arouse nostalgia amongst Chinese contemporaries, impressing them with their ancestors' commitment and loyalty under Thai leadership. Now that their forebears had set an example, it was therefore up to them, the new generation, to follow the ancestral footsteps by making the same sacrifices and showing the same commitment for their adopted country. Throughout the play, this message is emphasised. One scene, for example, shows the Chinese and Thais trying to save the capital. When trying to estimate how much reliable manpower he has to fight the Burmese, Phraya Taksin asks his soldiers to give him a report about the Chinese. Their spokesman replies in a way that leaves the impression that there are a substantial number of Chinese volunteers, and that all the Chinese of Ayuthaya are willing to sacrifice themselves for the nation:

Chiang Ngoen: We have many [people] but only about three hundred men that we can really trust.

Jao Tak: How many Chinese volunteers?

Phichai: I am controlling about two hundred men.

Jao Tak: Are they good people?

Phichai: Yes, they are. Every single Chinese is willing to die for Thailand.

Jao Tak: Very good. We must show that Ayuthaya has never lacked good men.

The manipulated account of the Chinese participation in the country's defence is dispersed throughout the play. Scenes which are unrelated to the life of King Krungthon are deliberately inserted to stress this theme. An example is the scene in which Praphai tells the Thai and the Chinese boys about how their forefathers helped to drive out the Burmese. The boys who quarrel about the claim that their fathers joined in the war now come to realise that actually both nationalities went into the same battle against the Burmese invasion. The dialogue in this scene appears to have been deliberately kept simple so that even a young audience would understand it:

Praphai: All right. They both went to the battle. But do you know there are a lot of Chinese who are living in Thailand?
Thai boy: Yes, I do. There are many of them.
Praphai: Do you know why there are many Chinese here? Do you? No? Well, let me tell you the story. In China, there are too many people and so it's very difficult to earn a living. The Chinese thus migrated to Thailand to work for their living. The Thai people had no objections and the Chinese were able to live happily in Thailand realising the Thai people's gratitude. Whenever there were threats to the country, Thai and Chinese people held together and helped liberate the nation.

The increased usage of entertaining features such as dances and songs is due to the seriousness of the plot. They serve to provide a balance to the play, which is overburdened with historical details. It would be very difficult to maintain the audience's attention without giving them a break from serious matters with some light entertainment. Moreover, *Phrajao Krungthon* did not contain any romantic elements, nor did it generate the sentimentalism which was so effective in Luang Vichitr's previous successes. Therefore, Luang Vichitr had to add more entertaining elements to ease the tension of the play.

In *Phrajao Krungthon* Luang Vichitr makes use of comic relief for the first time. He adopted this technique to mock the customs of the court. In Scene 2, he creates a comic situation in which a court minister refuses to give up unnecessary court customs during the fighting. Jao Tak is very annoyed to see that the minister (Jao Khun) refuses to come down from sitting in the carrier and walk across the bamboo bridge to meet him:

Jao Tak: My goodness ! You really need to be carried here. (Jao Khun and his servant arrive) My lord, please shut your umbrella before you're be shot by the Burmese.

Jao Khun: I cannot shut my umbrella as this may tarnish my dignity! To come down from the carrier and walk here is more than enough for me. How dare you demand me to shut my umbrella!

Witticism and humour also appear in the dialogue when one particular phrase *Thup Mo' Khao* (literally, smashing the rice-pot) is used. In Scene 8, before the coronation parade of King Krungthon enters, the soldiers who are waiting to welcome the King talk about Phraya Taksin's method to prepare them for the fight. They refer to the tactic of *Thup Mo' Khao* by which Phraya Taksin orders his troops to smash their belongings to make sure they win the battle, otherwise they will not have anything to eat:

Chiang Ngoen: Luang Rat! Have you got a new rice-pot?

Rat: Not yet.

Phrom: What is this about the rice-pot?

Chiang Ngoen: Have you already forgotten? When we were about to attack Janthaburi, Phraya Taksin ordered us to smash all rice-pots. If we had not got hold of Janthaburi, then we would not have had anything to eat!

Phichai: What's next?

Chiang Ngoen: Since Luang Rat smashed his rice-pot at that time, he has always sneaked out and begged other people for something to eat.

Rat: So why should we have the rice-pot? If we can't attack any city, we will be ordered to smash the rice-pot anyway.

Luang Vichitr appears to have drawn on comic elements from *Lakho'n No'k* in order to create more variety and capture the audience's attention. The inclusion of the comic relief in Scene 8 was probably intended to reduce the seriousness of the formal invocation that follows. After the amusing dialogue there is a set pattern of invocation poetry and dance to honour King Krungthon. When the king ascends the throne he extends his best wishes to all his subjects and urges the Thai and Chinese people to love each other:

Song: Mangko'n Noi (Khru'ang Sai responses)

I am glad to receive your thoughtfulness	It is good that you think that way
When we liberated Siam	Both Chinese and Thais joined forces
But now we are in peace	We should have a good friendship with each other
May I wish Thai and Chinese people love each other	and help protect the sovereignty of Siam.

Another innovation included in *Phrajao Krungthon* was the preview of songs and dances on stage before the exposition at the beginning of the performance. The key songs and dances were performed in a show to enable the audience to familiarise itself with them before they appeared in the performance. Luang Vichitr wanted the audiences to understand the meaning of the songs so that they would fully appreciate their value. In other plays, he would normally have the characters speaking the lyrics before they actually sung. With this new approach, the audience would have time to follow the text of the songs and fully absorb the messages.⁴⁵⁷ In *Phrajao Krungthon*, the songs *Ayuthaya* and *Jin-Thai Samakkhi* were especially selected for the preview show. Luang Vichitr noted that the song *Jin-Thai Samakkhi* was written to promote friendship between Chinese and Thai people, which was the fundamental purpose of the play.⁴⁵⁸

Another theatrical element that was included in the play was drawn from traditional dance-drama. Luang Vichitr made use of the *Ram Boek Rong* (Overture Dance) which is performed before the beginning of the first scene. *Ram Boek Rong* is commonly performed in traditional *Khon* and *Lakho'n* performances, and can be played in two different styles. The first style is a *Boek Rong* with a short story, such as the tale of the white monkey triumphing over the black monkey (an episode taken from the *Ramakien*). The other is a short dance without a story showing the beauty and gracefulness of traditional dance movements. *Boek Rong* performances usually preceded the actual play, including *Phrajao Krungthon*.⁴⁵⁹ Like the overture in

⁴⁵⁷ Vichitr Vadam, Ngan Lakho'n, *op cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁸ Vichitr Vadam, "Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng" (Writer's Notes, *Phrajao Krungthon*), *op cit.*, p. 76.

⁴⁵⁹ Somthawin Wisetsombat, Wannakhadi Kanlakho'n (Dramatic Literature), Bangkok, n.d., pp. 152-153.

Western opera, the *Boek Rong* is used to “warm up” the audience for the actual performance. In *Phrajao Krungthon*, the *Boek Rong* dance was performed by eight male and female dancers. While executing the dance, the dancers also had to sing the song *Krungthon* (traditional version), accompanied by the *Khru'ang Sai* ensemble. The song's lyrics stress that while the Thais were saddened by the demise of Ayuthaya, Phraya Taksin emerged from the ashes and rescued the whole nation. He founded the new capital at Thonburi and revived Siam. All Thai people are therefore indebted to him and should always remember and exalt him. After the lyrics have been sung, the *Khru'ang Sai* continues to play the melody of the song until a small bell gives the signal to stop. The *Piphat* ensemble then begins to play the *Naphat* tune *Samoe* to accompany the action of departing as the dancers leave the stage. In adding the *Ram Boek Rong*, which was accompanied by the song *Krungthon*, Luang Vichitr not only wanted to eulogise King Krungthon, but also intended to create a sacred atmosphere for the play. He took the play very seriously, and demanded, for example, that a spiritual house be set up in front of the stage. A picture of the city pillar symbolising the body of King Krungthon was placed inside the spiritual house. The pillar was brought to the temple to undergo a religious rite and then brought back to the stage so that the audience would be blessed by the King's spiritual power.⁴⁶⁰ The use of *Ram Boek Rong* and the spiritual house are devices employed by Luang Vichitr in an attempt to glorify King Krungthon and turn him into a god-like leader.

Mainly due to King Krungthon's partially Chinese origins the story provided a useful tool for Luang Vichitr to stimulate a positive relationship between the Thais and the Chinese living in Thailand. The loyalty and influence of the Chinese became a serious political issue during the reign of King Rama VI. Their increasing role in commerce and trade had aroused anti-Chinese attitudes and various government decrees were promulgated to curb their influence. In the period after the death of King Rama VI in 1925 and before Phibun came to power in 1938, less direct measures were used and new governments favoured assimilation policies. The Nationality and Nationalisation Law was applied to Chinese people born in Thailand, which forced them to become Thai nationals. The government permitted fewer hours of Chinese lessons and

⁴⁶⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng”, *op cit.*, p. 75.

instruction in Thai was encouraged. Restrictions on business activities were introduced against aliens (mainly the Chinese) but not against Thai citizens of originally foreign origin.⁴⁶¹ However, from mid-1936, the Thai Government began to adopt a more conciliatory approach to the Chinese, and Sino-Thai diplomatic relations improved.⁴⁶²

In supporting this new policy, and also in an attempt to solicit the support of the powerful Chinese community in Thailand, Luang Vichitr adopted a psychological approach in his play. He tried to arouse Chinese loyalty by constructing the plot in a way that stressed the contribution of the Chinese towards Thailand in overcoming its national crises and portraying a fraternal relationship between the Chinese and Thais. From attending the play the Chinese might realise their part in past struggles of the Thais and their role in saving the Kingdom. Their ancestors had fought side by side with the Thai King, creating a history of which Chinese living in Thailand must be proud. Although not as popular as the previous plays, *Phrajao Krungthon* appears to have done well at the box office. However, it seemed to have lacked popularity among the Chinese.

In his excellent work on politics during the reign of King Taksin, Nithi Iewsriwong questions whether King Krungthon did indeed have significant support from the Chinese community as Luang Vichitr had claimed.⁴⁶³ Nithi suggests that although the Chinese community in Ayuthaya was small, it comprised many different ethnic Chinese groups. Loyalty or co-operation was strictly prohibited across the ethnic Chinese groups. Most of the Chinese who came to settle in Ayuthaya were Hokkian Chinese, whereas King Krungthon belonged to a rather small group of Taejiw descent. Moreover, while most Chinese migrated to Ayuthaya because of the political crisis in China, the Taejiw came to Ayuthaya due to their poverty and shortage of land. Therefore, the Chinese who supported King Krungthon appear to have lacked

⁴⁶¹ William G. Skinner, "Chinese Assimilation and Thai Politics", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 16, 1957, pp. 244-245.

⁴⁶² Barmé: 1993, p. 128

⁴⁶³ Nithi Iewsriwong, *Kanmu'ang Thai Samai Phrajao Krung Thonburi* (Thai Politics in the Reign of King Krungthonburi), Sinlapawatthanatham Special Issue, 1986, pp. 59-62.

economic power and social status.⁴⁶⁴ It therefore seems rather unlikely that King Krunghthon was supported by a large and loyal Chinese population, and those Chinese that supported him may have been rather insignificant in Ayuthaya's social and economic hierarchy. King Krunghthon appeared to have recognised the limitations of his own descent and tried to dissociate himself as a leader of the Taejiw group. However, according to Nithi it seems he did so with only limited success, because the Chinese of Taejiw descent became the most significant Chinese group.

It is not clear whether Luang Vichitr was aware of this fragmentation of the Chinese community in the 18th century. However, his approach was to only use historical information and events that suited his nationalist propaganda purposes. Gaps or areas where he did not have any knowledge were ignored.⁴⁶⁵ Thus while he may not have had knowledge of all the historical details, his approach would probably have been to simplify history anyway. In the play, Luang Vichitr undoubtedly created a simplified version of the Thai-Chinese relationship and intentionally disregarded potentially contradictory information.

It should therefore not be surprising that the Chinese community did not respond to Luang Vichitr's overtures. They may have been occupied with other matters, or did not feel that the play was relevant to them. However, Luang Vichitr appeared to have been very disappointed about the lack of support from the Chinese and dropped all illusions of a fraternal relationship between the Thais and Chinese. Several months later, Luang Vichitr publicly expressed his disappointment during a special lecture on the unification of Germany and Austria at Chulalongkorn University. He accused the Chinese of only showing nationalism towards China and having no respect for other nations even if they lived overseas. To elaborate his point, Luang Vichitr referred to the lesson he had learnt from his play *Phrajao Krunghthon*. He said that despite free

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ Luang Vichitr also plotted his historical writings around the concept of "great men". He believed that changes or development of historical dimension could only be achieved through the act of "great men". See Atcharaphorn Kamutsamai, "Naew Kankhian Prawatsat Kho'ng Luang Vichitr Vadakarn" (Historiographical Writings of Luang Vichitr Vadakarn), Prawatsat Lae Nak Prawatsat Thai (History and Thai Historians). Eds. Charnvit Kasetsiri and Suchart Sawatsri, Bangkok: Praphansan Press, 1976, pp. 262-290.

ticket gifts for the Chinese business community, no one came to his play even though it concerned the friendship between them and the Thais. In contrast, when he granted permission for a Chinese charity to perform *Phrajao Krungthon* as part of their fund-raising to help Chinese people in China, the play received much attention from the Chinese people. Luang Vichitr was upset about this, and subsequently decided to change his tactics by asking the Chinese to buy and send Thai rice instead of cash to China. When he finally proposed spending the proceeds on a monument to King Taksin as a symbol of Thai-Chinese unity, less than fifty Chinese people came to see his play.⁴⁶⁶ Having learned from this experience, he pointed out to his audience that the reason behind this was that the Chinese always acted in a way that would only benefit their own people.⁴⁶⁷

Luang Vichitr and his “predecessor”, King Vajiravudh now shared an anti-Chinese sentiment in their attempts to dehumanise the Chinese in Siam. While King Vajiravudh referred to the Chinese as “Jews of the East” Luang Vichitr condemned the behaviour of the Chinese as “worse than the Jews”. The Jews were better than the Chinese in the eyes of Luang Vichitr because they did not have their own motherland and their wealth only benefited their adopted country, whereas the Chinese often transferred their wealth to China and Thailand never gained any benefit from it, even though Thailand was their adopted country and provided the source of income.⁴⁶⁸ As a Minister of State, Luang Vichitr’s remark created a furore that could have jeopardised diplomatic relations between the two countries. A newspaper noted that his opinion could lead to further suspicion from the international community that Thailand wanted to adopt an Imperialist stance for its foreign policy.⁴⁶⁹ The Chinese were particularly alarmed,

⁴⁶⁶ The idea of building the Taksin Monument was initiated in 1934 but it was not until 1935 that the proposal was allowed to go ahead. Thailand’s well-known artist, *Sin Phirasi* suggested seven different designs. However, due to many interruptions in the country’s political climate and several changes of government, the process of construction was delayed. It was not until 1954 and the return of Phibun to power for a second time that the construction of the monument was completed. Piboon Hatthakitkoson, “Anusawari Thai: Kansu'ksa Nai Choeng Kanmu'ang” (Public Monuments in Thailand: A study of Political Implications), M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1984, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁶⁷ Sayam Niko'n (19 April 1938)

⁴⁶⁸ Sayam Niko'n (18 April 1938)

⁴⁶⁹ Prachamit (24 July 1938)

fearing they might face the same treatment as the Jews in Germany. It was reported that a powerful Chinese merchant paid a personal visit to the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs to express his anxiety over the issue.⁴⁷⁰ However, the supporters of Luang Vichitr regarded the lecture as a gesture of true Thai nationalism.⁴⁷¹

The Yuthakot journal, an official organ of the military, immediately printed Luang Vichitr's lecture for circulation. The Chinese-language newspapers also provided a Chinese translation of the lecture as a warning to the Chinese community.⁴⁷² A caricature was drawn showing Luang Vichitr's hypocrisy by picturing him writing the song "Chinese-Thai Unity" with one hand and erasing it with one foot.⁴⁷³ Outcries concerning the lecture were published in vernacular papers and Luang Vichitr's controversial stance was covered on almost every newspaper's front page for weeks.⁴⁷⁴ Negative reactions were reported to come from the anti-nationalist camp of the Assembly. Lieng Chaiyakan, a representative from Ubon Ratchathani province, filed a no-confidence motion against Luang Vichitr in Parliament. Lieng was opposed by Luang Vichitr's supporters, and it was later reported that he had been hurled into the pond of the parliament building.⁴⁷⁵

The whole political episode which was sparked off by Luang Vichitr's remarks saw a change in policies regarding the Chinese living in Thailand. The government under Phraya Phahon clearly reserved its comments on the issue. In fact it did not know how to take action against one of its own ministers. Phraya Phahon, when asked to comment on Luang Vichitr's anti-Chinese attitude, responded to members of the Assembly that his government did not consider Luang Vichitr's view as representing

⁴⁷⁰ Thai Mai (21 April 1938)

⁴⁷¹ Prachamit (26 April 1938). In the Warasap newspaper, it was reported that Chulalongkorn students went to see Luang Vichitr at his residence to express their good wishes and at least ten Members of Parliament went to see him to ask him not to resign from the government. Warasap (24 July 1938)

⁴⁷² Thai Mai (22 July 1938)

⁴⁷³ San Sayam (26 July 1938)

⁴⁷⁴ See Thai Mai (22, 27, 28, 31 July 1938), Prachamit (23, 26, 27 July 1938), San Sayam (24 July 1938), Sayam Nikon (26 July 1938), Warasap (24, 28, 29 July 1938), Phadung Chat (23, 26, 28, 29, 30 July 1938), Sayam Review (30 July 1938; 6 August 1938).

⁴⁷⁵ So'. Bo'. 9.2.3/5, pp. 9-10.

that of the government. Many criticised Luang Vichitr as living in his own small world and turning a blind eye to many positive contributions the Chinese had made to Thailand.⁴⁷⁶

Without any further evidence, it appears to be impossible to determine Luang Vichitr's real motivations behind the play. He certainly sympathised with King Krunghthon's misfortune and often expressed the view that even with the suffix "the Great", King Krunghthon still deserved to receive the same recognition as other great men of the world such as Napoleon.⁴⁷⁷ With regard to the Chinese, one could speculate that with the play *Phrajao Krunghthon* Luang Vichitr really wanted to arouse nationalist feelings amongst the Chinese and test their loyalty as well as determine their intentions. On the other hand, however, Luang Vichitr may have anticipated the reaction from the Chinese community and used their reaction against them. After the play was performed, the Chinese were no longer considered as contributors to the country's achievements and independence, but as villains who were trying to exploit Thailand either for personal benefit or the benefit of China. This turnaround coincided with increased activities of the communists in China and developing tension between China and Japan, which also affected the mood in Thailand.

5.3 Su'k Thalang (The Battle of Thalang)

In 1937, soon after he wrote *Phrajao Krunghthon*, Luang Vichitr produced his fourth full-length play, *Su'k Thalang*. With this play he aimed to re-enact the glorious history of the well-known local resistance of the people of *Thalang* (Phuket) against the Burmese invasion during the reign of King Rama I. Primarily, he wanted to stress the importance of Thailand being able to defend itself against naval attacks. The play was thus used as a tool to gain support to build a battleship. The story of the local

⁴⁷⁶ Prachamit (27 July 1938)

⁴⁷⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, Prawatsat Sakon (Universal History), vol. 5, p. 378. Luang Vichitr showed his sympathy for the King's misfortune. In his *Prawatsat Sakon* Volume 7, he referred to King Taksin as follows: "No matter that he was a mad man or the son of the Chinese (*Luk Jek*), he did a great deal for Siam. He liberated the country, upgraded the status of the country from chaos to perfection, helped expand its territories up to the left bank of the *Khong* river. Apart from King Ramkhamhaeng, I don't see any other kings who achieved this." Vichitr Vadakarn, Prawatsat Sakon (Universal History), vol. 7, p. 150.

resistance unravels around a theme of domestic conflict, as had been developed earlier in his play *Luk Ratthamanun*.

The story of *Su'k Thalang* revolves around the conflict between a mother, Sutjai, and her two adopted children, No'm and Nu'ang. When Sutjai finds out that her only real son, Sutjit, has fallen in love with Nu'ang, she becomes certain that her suspicion of No'm and Nu'ang trying to take over the family's inherited wealth is well founded. This leads her to chase them out of the household. Khun Phimon, her ailing husband, tries to stop her but dies while witnessing his wife's act towards his beloved adopted children. Years later, when Thalang is attacked by Burmese troops No'm and Nu'ang become group leaders in Thalang's army, led by the wife of Thalang's governor, Khunying Jan, and her sister, Muk. After hearing about the Burmese invasion, Sutjit decides to join Thalang's army, and at the army camp, Sutjit and Nu'ang are reunited. The battle of Thalang against the Burmese results in the glorious triumph of all the Thalang people. However, there is no sign of Sutjit's return after the battle. Meanwhile Sutjai, who has changed completely, apologises to No'm and Nu'ang for her unkindness in the past and asks them to return home. No'm, who sees the opportunity to raise money for the construction of a battleship, agrees to return with her. At the end of the play Sutjit, who was thought to have died in the battle, reappears and tells everyone what he has learnt during his captivity. He emphasises the importance of good defences, and subsequently everyone agrees to build a battleship.⁴⁷⁸

5.3.1 Analysis of *Su'k Thalang* (The Battle of Thalang)

Su'k Thalang stressed the potential dangers that might threaten Siam in the future. International tension was rising at that time and the possibility of a World War became a reality. War had broken out between China and Japan, and Siam became concerned that the war would spread to Southeast Asia. Its dispute with France over territory in Laos and Cambodia also intensified, and Thailand felt particularly vulnerable to any attacks by sea because of its long coastline and strategic position.⁴⁷⁹ France had already

⁴⁷⁸ Vichitr Vadamarn, "Su'k Thalang" (The Battle of Thalang, a playtext), n.d., pp. 1-29

⁴⁷⁹ Richard J. Aldrich, The Key to the Sough: Britain, the United States, and Thailand during the Approach of the Pacific War, 1929-1942, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 180-195

humiliated Siam in 1893 during the infamous incident when three French gun-boat penetrated Thai defences at Paknam, sailed up the Chao Phraya river and forced Siam to surrender its territories to the left of the Mekong river. This defeat became one of the most embarrassing events in Thailand's history.⁴⁸⁰

The first message appearing in the play places an emphasis on one's duty for the nation. The play shows that when the nation is at war, a good patriot must be prepared to join in the country's defence. Luang Vichitr characterised Sutjit as one who cares about his country and who shows no hesitation to serve the army. In Scene 3, after Sutjit sees that the Burmese troops have landed in Thalang, he immediately calls upon his servants to join Thalang's forces, although his mother tries to prevent him from going:

Sutjit: Mother, you cannot stop me from joining the force. I am a man. I have a duty to protect my country. I must go to fight.
Sutjai: There are enough people already. You mustn't go.
Sutjit: If everybody thought like you, there wouldn't be anybody joining the fighting. Come my friends, let's go and fight together!

The emphasis on duty also showed the many equally important ways how one could make a contribution to fighting off the enemy. For example, when Sutjit is offered a responsibility in the supplies group instead of being allowed to take part in the front line, he expresses his disappointment to Nu'ang. Nu'ang, however, responds that he should regard working in the catering group as being as important as fighting in the battlefield:

Sutjit: You punish me too much by putting me into the catering group.
Nu'ang: Do you have any difficulties in the group?
Sutjit: The issue is not that of having any difficulties but that I do not have a chance to do my duty like a real warrior. You do not give me a chance to go to the front line. I am so ashamed!
Nu'ang: But the catering group is doing an important duty as well. If they do not do their job properly, for example, leaving the soldiers to starve, then the soldiers will not be fit enough to fight. People who cater

⁴⁸⁰ See Walter E. J. Tips, *Siam's Struggle for Survival: The 1893 Gunboat Incident at Paknam*, White Lotus, 1996. Twekiat Janprajak, *Kho'phiphat Khetdaen Thai-Lao (Thai-Lao Border Disputes)*, Thammasat University Press, 1997, pp. 9-28.

for food are also warriors. They brave the dangers as much as the soldiers do. You should not look down on the duty in the catering group.

The emphasis on duty is once more repeated when the Thalang people finally triumph over the Burmese. The Thalang heroines, Jan and Muk, declare the victory and remind the people of Thalang that a war can occur at any time so they must be prepared for it and be ready to sacrifice their lives to protect the nation. This nationalist message echoes the previous plays of Luang Vichitr, who liked to use a hero or heroine to promote his ideas. Like King Naresuan (in *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*), Duang Jan (in *Lu'at Suphan*) and Ratchamanu (in *Ratchamanu*), the two Thalang heroines' call is final: that the Thai people must be willing to give up their lives to protect the nation. The modern song *Krao Thalang*, which immediately follows the victory declaration, serves to support the same message⁴⁸¹. The song is accompanied by a military parade dance in which the heroines, No'm and Nu'ang, a villager carrying Thai flag, Thalang people, and other soldiers march in a militaristic fashion to create a spectacular image of the homecoming army on stage:

- Jan: Thai people! Thai of Thalang's blood! We have succeeded in protecting the city of Thalang. Our enemy has withdrawn. I want to tell you that we should be proud of our success in making this essential contribution to the nation.
- Muk: Everyone can go back to their jobs. The only thing I want to remind you is that an attack can occur at any time. Therefore, we must always prepare ourselves. Whenever the enemy comes, we must be able to take up our weapons and protect our country as we did just now.
- Jan: We must show the world that if anybody wants to invade our land, we are ready to give up our lives for the nation. If the enemy wins, let them get only the land but there will be no people left to serve them.

⁴⁸¹ The tune *Krao Thalang* may have been devised from the traditional *Naphat* music tune, *Phleng Krao*. In the performances of *Khon* and *Lakho'n*, this particular tune is played to accompany the action of going to the battle. The tune *Krao No'k* is especially designed to accompany the movement of human characters going into a fight whereas *Krao Nai* is used for non-human characters entering a fight. See Montri Tramot, *Dontri Thai* (Thai Music), The Bangkok Bank, 1995.

Krao Thalang

Any attempt to invade our Thalang	will be severely retaliated
Thalang belongs to all Thai people	we will chase out the enemy - Chai Yo!
Thai blood is brave and never been cowardly	in any battles
It is willing to sacrifice even life	And never lets any enemy look down upon it

[Stage Directions:]

The Krao Thalang dance should follow these steps:

1. Jan and Muk stand at the top level of the platform.
2. No'm and Nu'ang stand at the lower level in the far left and right. The soldier holding the Thai flag stands in the middle.
3. The soldier with the Thai flag starts dancing first. Then, groups of soldiers enter the stage in lines. Male and female soldiers enter alternately and sing the song in alternate lines.

Another propaganda issue raised in *Su'k Thalang* was the importance of naval defence and the need for Thailand to acquire a battleship. Plays had been used before to raise funds for the navy, during the reign of King Vajiravudh. For example, King Vajiravudh had produced the play *Mahatama* (The Mahatama) to stress the importance of sea power in defending the country. This resulted in Siam acquiring the modern warship *Phra Ruang*.⁴⁸² King Vajiravudh's *Mahatama* had only limited success because its plot was based on a Western story and was therefore alien to the Thai people. Learning from this, Luang Vichitr employed Thailand's own historical battle as a background to his play. Thalang's (Phuket's) location was well suited to support his claim that Thailand, with its long coastline and dependence on trade via river and sea routes, would always be vulnerable if it was not guarded by well-equipped gunboats or battleships. The call for naval defence appears in Scene 7 when No'm tells his sister that he will return to Sutjit. Nu'ang protests at first because she does not want other people to think that their return is because of Sutjit's wealth. No'm eventually tells her that his decision to return to Sutjit's wealth concerns his plan to build a battleship:

No'm: Because Thalang is an island, an enemy can approach us from anywhere by sea. When an enemy sends their naval fleet, we will not have any battleship to fight them. The only thing we can do is to wait until the

⁴⁸² It took about 5 years of fund-raising before the *Phra Ruang* Royal Warship was eventually purchased from Great Britain. It arrived in Siam in 1920. Kanyarat: 1986.

enemy land and then start fighting. This is unacceptable! If an enemy comes by sea, we must have a battleship to fight them off.

The absent Sutjit, who also realises the importance of sea defence, reappears and supports No'm's plan. Even Sutjai accepts its necessity and promises to donate her money for the cause. When No'm reveals his intention to build a battleship for the government, Sutjit immediately congratulates him, echoing the message spoken earlier by No'm:

Sutjit: No'm! Are you going to build a battleship for the government?
No'm: (nods his head)
Sutjit: That's exactly what I want! Since being held hostage by the Burmese, I have gained more knowledge about how to build a battleship. Come on. Let's think this over. Mother, will you donate the money?
Sutjai: I give the money to the three of you. I do not want anything. I just want to visit the temple and give alms, that's enough.
Sutjit: I am pleased. Our country is surrounded by the sea. When the enemy comes by sea, we must use the battleship to defend ourselves. We cannot wait until the enemy lands and then start fighting. Last time, although we managed to fight them off, our country was turned into a battlefield and it caused more harm than good. We must build a battleship!

The last scene re-introduces the idea of Pan-Thaism when Nu'ang gives a speech to thank her guests for coming to her wedding celebration. Nu'ang's remark about how the Thais have come to occupy and rule the Golden Peninsula (*Laem Tho'ng*) is followed by a song on the same theme, *Laem Tho'ng*, which echoes Luang Vichitr's irredentism:

Into the Golden Peninsula came the Thais to rule over it as Thais (*i.e.* as freemen), and we, the Thais, in this Golden Land should love one another.

Into the Golden Peninsula came the Thais to rule over it as the Thai Land; and then we became separated into branches. The Thai of Siam live by the rivers Jao Phraya, Ping, Wang, Yom and Nan.

By the River Mekong the Thai also have land over which to rule. The Thai Yai live on the Salwin River. The Islamic Thai live on the Pattani River. Further down there are Thai, too.

May all Thai youths of the Golden Land love one another in unity. It is the aim of the Thais of Siam that there should be a friendly relationship between all in the Golden Peninsula.

The song reiterates the claim that all people living on the Golden Peninsula belong to the Thai race and, as Crosby remarked in one of his letters to his superiors, this also included people living in French-occupied Laos, the Malay states (the suzerainty over which was passed from Siam to Great Britain in 1909) and the Shans living in equally British-controlled Burma.⁴⁸³ Crosby rightly commented that there was no immediate threat, but that Thailand would be able to embarrass Britain and France in the event of a European war.

Although Luang Vichitr clearly depicted the bravery of the two heroines, Khunying Jan and Muk, he did not portray their leading the Thalang people against the Burmese. The scene that Luang Vichitr has led the audience to anticipate, showing the courageous fighting of the Thalang people, is simply left out. Moreover, the heroines do not appear on stage very often and, in fact, their roles can be regarded as secondary to those of other characters. As a result, the delivery of nationalist messages by Khunying Jan and Muk was unconvincing and appeared superfluous.

5.4 Second Version of Su'k Thalang

Towards the end of 1937, Luang Vichitr had changed and revised the entire structure of *Su'k Thalang*. In the new version, the roles of Khunying Jan and Muk are more significant as they become personally involved in Khun Phimon's family. Their closer integration into the family helped to smooth the development of the plot. This was an improvement over the first version of the play, where the natural flow was frequently interrupted, as the actions of the heroines and the family conflict were largely mutually exclusive. Another change was made in the characterisations of No'm and Nu'ang. Luang Vichitr wanted to promote self-reliance and diligence as qualities that the audience should adopt for themselves, so he portrayed No'm and Nu'ang as self-reliant farmers, proud in their profession.

The play begins with the birthday celebration of Khun Phimon, a wealthy retired soldier from Thalang. Khun Phimon's adopted children, No'm and Nu'ang, who have

⁴⁸³ Report by Sir Joseph Crosby dated 9 May 1938. FO. 371/22207.

left the family because of his wife's jealousy, come to visit him on his birthday. Sutjai, Khun Phimon's wife, is very unhappy about their appearance because she is afraid that the visit may rekindle the love of her natural son, Sutjit, towards Nu'ang. The Thalang heroines Muk and Jan also pay a visit to Khun Phimon on this occasion. They converse with him about his desire for Muk and Jan to adopt No'm and Nu'ang. In reply, the heroines express their sympathy but tell him that they cannot force this on No'm and Nu'ang, who prefer to be independent and lead their lives like good peasants.

While the peasants are working happily in the ricefield, the Burmese suddenly land on the island. As in the previous version, Sutjit joins the Thalang army but is told to work in the catering group because Nu'ang, who is now the leader of the group, wants to teach him a lesson.

The first round of fighting is very fierce. Sutjit and Nu'ang eventually reconcile their relationship and Sutjit later joins the front line. The second round of fighting is even more aggressive and bloody. Although the Thalang army can claim victory over the Burmese, the losses are heavy and include No'm, who dies on the battlefield. Nu'ang becomes blind and Sutjit vanishes. After the battle, Nu'ang moves into Muk's and Jan's house. Meanwhile, Sutjit is kept prisoner on board the Burmese battleship together with other Thai captives. They eventually make their escape and Sutjit visits Muk and Jan to take Nu'ang back. Sutjit tells Nu'ang that his mother has changed and he promises that he will take care of her. He also reveals his wish to donate his money for the construction of a battleship. The play ends with a song stressing the vulnerability of Thalang's location to a naval attack and suggests that a battleship would be needed to fight off the enemy.

In this version of *Su'k Thalang*, the idea of self-reliance is stressed as the characters No'm and Nu'ang choose not to be with either Khun Phimon or Thalang's two heroines, but instead decide to live as hard-working, independent peasants. In the scene after Sutjai expresses her hatred towards Nu'ang, No'm teaches his sister the value of being self-reliant as a way of preserving their dignity:

No'm: If you already feel guilty, then there is no use in punishing you. Once we are hurt, we must remember it. We must uphold our dignity although we do not have parents and are poor. Khunying Jan and her sister asked me to become their adopted child but I declined. I have tried to live on my own only to retain our dignity. You must not do anything which would destroy our dignity.

The emphasis on self-reliance, which was completely absent in the first version of the play, is now one of the main messages. Self-reliance is the theme of the song *Chao Rai* (Peasants) which concerns a peasant who, although poor, is able to live an independent life as a farmer. The chosen profession of the leading characters was peasantry - although this actually contradicted the fact that Thalang's population was mainly engaged in mining rather than agriculture. Characteristically, Luang Vichitr was less concerned about historical accuracy than putting his message across to the audience. He wanted to make the audience aware of the importance of agriculture and peasantry as well as the importance of participating in every form of resistance to fight off the country's enemies. Moreover, he wanted to change the characteristics of the Thai people by extolling the virtues of industriousness and self-reliance - qualities which he felt were lacking and inhibiting Thailand's development.

A brief but important dialogue in which No'm and Nu'ang call for other peasants to join the Thalang troops to fight off the Burmese provides a good example of Luang Vichitr's message to the audience that everybody has a duty to protect Thailand:

(The *Piphat* orchestra performs the *Phleng Choet*. From time to time there is the sound of gun shots in the distance. The peasants are making loud noises shouting that the Burmese have already surrounded the city).

No'm: The Burmese are besieging Thalang. All of us, the *Chao Rai* (peasants) must go to fight off the Burmese.

Nu'ang: We must protect our city!

Others: All *Chao Rai*, let's go. Everyone must go!

A scene in which Sutjit and other Thai prisoners of war are held on the Burmese battleship is included in the second version of the play. It shows Sutjit trying to escape from the enemy's ship in the middle of the sea. Sutjit wakes up the other Thais from

their sleep, telling them to be more aware that they are in the hands of the enemy and could be killed at any time. Sutjit sings the song *Tu'n Thoet Chao Thai* (Thais, wake up!), teaching the Thai people to always be prepared.

Tu'n Thoet Chao Thai (Thais, Wake Up!)⁴⁸⁴

Thais wake up; do not indulge in slumber and fun.

The fate of our country depends on our efforts.

If indolent, we will [sic] be destroyed; let us wake up and help our motherland.

Although the country is in glory, we cannot become careless.

Should the enemies come, we could [sic] all be annihilated; remember comrades and let Thais wake up.

The Thai nation never surrenders to anyone; we fight to the death.

We fight to maintain the Golden Peninsula; brothers and sisters, we will never allow our motherland to be destroyed so let us wake up, brothers and sisters of the Thai nation.

Like other local myths, such as *Bang Rajan* and *Thao Suranari*, the heroism of the Thalang people, under the leadership of Jan and Muk, lent strong support to the central government. Their actions were successfully exploited as they represented local people in a remote part of Thailand trying to defend the nation. Ordinary people who took part in the fighting were celebrated as national heroes. This recurrent theme of local achievement in national historical narratives helped the state to strengthen its legitimacy and control over the population. The battle of *Thalang*, which was mentioned briefly in the chronicle during the reign of King Rama I as an example of people supporting the central government, was later embellished in the reigns of King Rama V and King Rama VI (by adding, for example, various places the heroines were supposed to have visited).⁴⁸⁵ In modern-day Thailand, the *Thalang* myth has become part of Phuket's identity, both spiritually and physically, and is a symbol of local support for the Thai Nation state. A monument to the two heroines has been built and the bicentennial anniversary of their heroism is celebrated.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ This English translation is taken from Thak Chaloemtiarana, Ed., Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987, p. 320.

⁴⁸⁵ See Dhida Saraya, "Mo'ng Prawatsat Tho'ngthin Thalang-Phuket" (Looking through the local history of Thalang-Phuket), Prawatsat Tho'ngthin (Local histories), Mu'ang Boran Press, 1986, pp. 37-45.

⁴⁸⁶ See 2328-2528: 200 Pi Wirasatri Muang Thalang (1785-1985: 200 Years of the *Thalang* Heroines), 1985.

As with *Phrajao Krungthon*, the dramatic flow of the play was weak, largely due to Luang Vichitr's insertion of nationalist messages. In order to make the play attractive, he used many songs and dances and *Su'k Thalang* was a testimony to his ability as a playwright. Whilst he had previously been constrained in his resources, the success of his plays and the support and influence that he had gained enabled him to stage an extravaganza which used 119 actors and 53 musicians and singers.⁴⁸⁷

5.5 Conclusions

It took Luang Vichitr several years to make his breakthrough as a playwright. He had no previous experience, and at first had to experiment with dramatic forms and performances to find a mix popular with the audience and yet also suitable for conveying nationalist messages to influence and manipulate the audience. He was able to make his mark with *Lu'at Suphan*, which proved to be a great success. The three subsequent plays analysed in this chapter built upon the achievement of *Lu'at Suphan*. Although not quite as successful as *Lu'at Suphan*, which probably remains his most successful play, they did prove popular with audiences and further established his key role as a promoter of nationalist policies through use of the theatre.

Luang Vichitr's literary skills were evident in his witty dialogue and rhyming lyrics, which were appealing and easy to remember. Music and songs were used to underline emotional and nationalist messages. However, his dialogues had a tendency to be rhetorical and his plays contained long monologues to emphasise nationalist themes by, for example, praising heroic sacrifice and glorifying the greatness of the "ethnic Thai". His determination to insert nationalist propaganda messages into the plays did, however, limit or reduce the dramatic quality of his plays. *Su'k Thalang* and *Phrajao Krungthon* in particular became too complicated, disjointed, and overloaded. *Su'k Thalang* even had to be rewritten to improve the plot and its dramatic impact. Even then Luang Vichitr used this opportunity to include new ideas, such as the importance

⁴⁸⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kham Nam" (Preface, the play *Su'k Thalang*), Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483 (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, p. 120.

of self-reliance and industriousness, as illustrated by the hard-working, but proud, peasant farmers.

Patriotic songs and dances were increasingly used in the three plays to emphasise the nationalist messages contained in the dialogues. In addition, popular dramatic elements such as the marching of soldiers and a flag dance were added to make the plays more entertaining. However, due to the increase in nationalistic messages, the plots suffered and the plays became dull and didactic. Nevertheless, they still proved to be quite popular with the audience due to the realistic and spectacular costumes and scenery. Therefore, despite weaknesses in the plot, the plays were popular and continued the trend towards greater realism and spectacle in contemporary theatre.

The most important aspect of the plays was that Luang Vichitr used drama to publicly express and disseminate his views on various issues such as irredentism, policy towards the Chinese, and the need to build battleships and strengthen the armed forces in general. This was remarkable because by doing so he was able to influence the government's thinking towards nationalism. By 1938, he was ready to become a key figure in support of the next regime under Phibun Songkhram, who came to power later that year.

Chapter Six

Luang Vichitr's Plays After 1937

This chapter covers the plays produced by Luang Vichitr during the following three periods. (1) Phibun Songkhram's first premiership between 1938 and 1944, (2) from the end of the Second World War until 1948 and (3) during Phibun's second premiership between 1948 and 1957.⁴⁸⁸ Out of these three periods, the first is considered most important because the plays prepared the ground for, or continued to support, many of the government's policies. For example, the Cultural Mandates that had been issued by the Phibun government and were so influential in changing many aspects of Thailand's economy, society, political system and everyday life. The plays produced during the subsequent periods were, for several reasons which will be discussed in the sections below, much less influential and also less successful than Luang Vichitr's previous plays. The three periods are discussed in chronological order in the following pages. The chapter's conclusions compare Luang Vichitr's plays in each period and analyse why the plays became less popular over time.

6.1 Plays Between 1938-1940

In 1938, army commander Phibun Songkhram became Thailand's third Prime Minister. He was to stay in office until 1944, and during these six years Thailand underwent tremendous changes economically, politically and culturally. Phibun's premiership coincided with Thailand's territorial dispute with France and the Second World War. He introduced a policy of nation-building (*Nayobai Sang Chat*) which involved various measures to arouse nationalist feelings among the populace.⁴⁸⁹ These measures included the twelve *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates) and other decrees and laws concerning daily activities of the Thai people and Thai culture. Luang Vichitr played a vital role and was the "mastermind" of this nationalist programme. He formulated the

⁴⁸⁸ Luang Vichitr's directorship of the Fine Arts Department ended in 1942. His last full-length play before the Pacific War broke out was *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* (King Phamu'ang) staged in 1940.

⁴⁸⁹ The period has also been called a period of hyper-nationalism due to the extremity of the ideas put forward and the intensity of the nation-building programme which covered almost every aspect of not only economics and politics but also the daily lives of the Thai people and foreigners living in Thailand. Barmé: 1993, p. 138.

twelve *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates), supported the promotion of the 24th of June as National Day, adopted the 1st of January as Thai New Year instead of the 13th of April and was centrally involved in developing the irredentism concept into a widely accepted and supported movement.

Luang Vichitr's popularity and influence seem to have increased with Phibun's increasing authority. By the time Phibun assumed his premiership for the first time, Luang Vichitr's propaganda theatre had already gained wide recognition, particularly among the military officials. Luang Vichitr had succeeded in establishing himself as a leading nationalist playwright and had proved that plays could have a powerful impact on the masses. Phibun himself publicly admired Luang Vichitr's dramatic work and even expressed that it was a perfect tool for stirring nationalist sentiment.⁴⁹⁰ While Phibun was influenced by European developments (particularly in Germany and Italy), it was Luang Vichitr's dubious version of Thai history that shaped his understanding of Thai national heritage and destiny. Luang Vichitr served under Phibun and helped him to fulfil many of his ambitions. In doing so he was able to influence Phibun in many ways, and both men demonstrated very similar attitudes on many issues. Thus, when Phibun rose to power, he invited Luang Vichitr to serve his regime as its nationalist architect. Through the guidance of Luang Vichitr, Phibun was able to make unprecedented use of the arts and culture to call for mass support under his regime. His premiership left many legacies whose influence can be felt even in contemporary Thailand.

Luang Vichitr's genius in adapting many sources of knowledge and his deep sense of nationhood provided him with the opportunity to work in a variety of posts during 1937-1944. He was directly involved in the formulation and promotion of many policies, particularly in the cultural sphere. As proof of his ability in promoting nationalism and gaining popularity with the military, he was appointed as chairman of

⁴⁹⁰ Phibun Songkhram, "Khvam Rusu'k Kho'ng Khaphajao Nai Ru'ang Rongrian Sinlapako'n Phanaek Duriyang" (My Feelings about the School of Fine Arts, Drama and Music Department, 1938), So'. Tho'. 0701.31/15

the *Ratthaniyom* Committee in 1939.⁴⁹¹ In this post he was responsible for drafting the twelve *Ratthaniyom*. He also chaired a special committee promoting good conduct amongst citizens, headed the Government Broadcasting Committee, and was a member of the Performing Arts Committee. One of the most important elements of the nationalist programme was the campaign for an ideal “Thai culture”. The government passed a series of laws on national culture forcing people to wear “proper” dress and to behave in a “proper” way. This resulted in various changes in the Thai lifestyle, some of which persist today.⁴⁹² The wearing of western trousers, skirts and even hats was first encouraged and later made mandatory through *Ratthaniyom* No. 10. Some old customs, such as chewing betel nut, were prohibited in order to make Thailand appear more civilised to the outside world. Phibun believed that Thailand’s apparent uncivilised outlook was the pretext used by the colonial powers for interfering in Thailand’s affairs.⁴⁹³ In facing this vulnerability and looming war, the government had to be prepared to protect the nation by embarking on a modernisation programme which covered the economy, politics, social life and particularly culture. Although adopting certain elements of Western culture while at the same time promoting Thai nationalism appeared contradictory, both Phibun and Luang Vichitr believed that they had to select certain Western customs and combine them with traditional Thai values.

The first *Ratthaniyom*, published in June 1939, announced that the country’s name was to be changed from Siam to Thailand.⁴⁹⁴ The purpose of this name change was to

⁴⁹¹ *Ratthaniyom* (State Conventions or Cultural Mandates) were announcements aimed at changing the outlook of the people on a variety of subjects in an attempt to make Thailand a civilised country. Between 1939 and 1942, twelve *Ratthaniyom* were issued (see Chapter 2, page 97).

⁴⁹² Craig Reynolds has extensively analysed the impact of the Phibun regime on modern Thailand. See, for example, Craig J. Reynolds, Ed., *National Identity and its Defenders*, 1991. For more details on Phibun’s policies in the 1940s, see Thamsook Numnonda, “Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941-1945,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977.

⁴⁹³ On the issue of the dress code, the government tried to convince the public that adopting Western-style outfits was not a preference but a necessity. One of its reasons was that dressing correctly (by following the government’s prescription) could help maintain the nation’s independence. If the Thai people kept wearing the old fashion, which was unhygienic and disorderly, it could be a pretext for Western powers to interfere in Thailand’s affairs, possibly leading to an eventual colonisation. (3) So’. Ro’. 0201.55/42.

⁴⁹⁴ Luang Vichitr went to considerable lengths to use history to justify this name change. According to him, Thai people, in everyday language, were already used to calling their homeland *Mu’ang Thai* (Land of the Thai) rather than Siam. Siam was the name of the Kho’m controlled territory into which the Thais settled in the 12th and 13th centuries. At that time, the Kho’m governed two

rejuvenate Thailand's image and symbolise the transformation of the nation as a whole. Thai people were led to believe that they were entering a new era which would strengthen the nation, bring prosperity, and make Thailand more civilised. They were made to believe that to achieve this transformation, they would have to follow the leader and strictly comply with the government's orders and decrees.

Several Cultural Mandates aimed to influence the economy, society, culture and even the daily lives of the Thai people. In particular, *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 advised the Thai populace on how to safeguard their nation. Thailand's geo-political position made it vulnerable as the possibility of the war in Europe spreading to Asia was increasing. At the outbreak of the Second World War in the Asia Pacific region, Thailand decided to side with Japan.⁴⁹⁵ In 1941, Japanese troops were allowed to set up bases in Thailand so that they could easily reach Burma and Malaya. Shortly after this, Thailand declared war against the Allies. This gave Phibun the opportunity to call upon the Thai people to be strong nationalists and follow his rule. The uncertainty of the war enabled him to implement his programmes with little resistance as he was able to claim that under his leadership Thailand would not only survive the war intact, but could become a great nation alongside Japan in the Pacific region.

states: a Northern State called Siam and a Southern State called Lawo. Once the Thais gained independence from the Kho'm, they established their first kingdom, naming it Sukhothai. This has been the custom every time a new Thai capital/empire was established (Ayuthaya, Thonburi, Rattanakosin *etc*). However, many foreigners were used to the name Siam because they relied on Chinese records. Thailand thus was forced to adopt the word "Siam" again when King Rama IV had to sign an amity treaty with the West. To Luang Vichitr, the continued use of Siam was undesirable because it had nothing to do with Thai people, and created an artificial distinction between the name of the country and the language. Siam did not include any of the people that belonged to the Thai race. The most important reason for changing the name to Thailand was that it enabled all Thai people to identify with the Thai nation. Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kanriakchu' Prathet Kho'ng Rao Wa 'Thai'" (The Naming of Our Country 'Thai', 1939), *Vichitr San*, vol. 5, p. 777-782. When Pridi briefly came into power in 1944, the name of the country was briefly changed back to Siam again, only to be changed to Thailand again when Phibun came into power for a second time. Since then the name of the country has been subject to intensive debate on several occasions. Charnvit Kasetsiri, "The First Phibun Government and its Involvement in World War II", *op cit.*, p. 38. See also Reynolds: 1991, pp. 4-6 and pp. 20-21.

⁴⁹⁵ There has been much debate on whether the siding with Japan was opportunistic or a result of Thailand under Phibun recognising that there was no other option. Britain had lost all credibility with regard to protecting Thailand's interests when it lost two battleships at the beginning of the Japanese offensive. See Judith A. Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 1991; Joseph J. Wright Jr., *The Balancing Act*, 1991; Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier*, 1995. It appears that Thailand indeed used the alliance with Japan to reclaim territory lost to Britain and France but also that it had no hope of being able to resist the Japanese forces in a military encounter.

The most controversial *Ratthaniyom* was No. 10, which was issued in January 1941. Phibun had become increasingly obsessed with creating the right image for Thai society and the *Ratthaniyom* forced people to change the way they dressed. Luang Vichitr used his distorted version of history to claim that some of the dress changes were not really imposing Western customs on Thai people but were in fact emulating the way their ancestors had dressed. *Ratthaniyom* No. 11 went as far as prescribing the daily lives of good Thai citizens. For example, a day should be divided into working time, a personal routine and a time of relaxation. People's eating habits should be changed so that they now eat four meals a day. The time allocated to sleeping was recommended to be six to eight hours. Planting kitchen vegetables and animal husbandry were encouraged. Chatting with neighbours and friends was considered a proper way of socialising.⁴⁹⁶ The enforcement of the Cultural Mandates increased when the National Cultural Maintenance Act of 1940 was amended in 1941, placing a greater emphasis on proper behaviour and defining the means by which offenders could be penalised.⁴⁹⁷

While the Cultural Mandates mainly brought about changes to Thai behaviour and attitudes only at a superficial level, Luang Vichitr was keen to make fundamental changes. He revived his concept of the human revolution (see Chapter 2) and gave several lectures and speeches on this subject.⁴⁹⁸ The most important speech was delivered at the Publicity Department on 6 March 1940, entitled *Watthanatham Sukhothai* (Sukhothai Culture). The lecture was based upon Luang Vichitr's manipulated version of Sukhothai's culture to support contemporary policies. Using history to support his call, Luang Vichitr defined a cultured race as one which possessed four basic characteristics: industriousness, a love of precision and neatness; an appreciation of beauty and perseverance.⁴⁹⁹ Several of his plays produced during

⁴⁹⁶ Thamsook Numnonda, "Pibulsongkram's Thai Nation-Building Programme during the Japanese Military Presence, 1941-1945", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (September 1978), Singapore University Press, pp. 235-236.

⁴⁹⁷ See Thak Chaloemtiarana, Ed., *Thai Politics: 1932-1957*, *op cit.*, pp. 255-260.

⁴⁹⁸ Amongst the speeches and lectures given during that period are: "Watthanatham Sukhothai" (Sukhothai Culture, 1939) and "Manut Patiwat" (Human Revolution, 1941).

⁴⁹⁹ Barmé: 1993, p. 109.

this period (and during later periods for that matter) also supported this concept. The idea to revolutionise Thai culture culminated when the National Council of Culture was set up by Phibun in early 1942.

Luang Vichitr produced a total of six plays during this pre-war period. The first three plays, *Jaoying Saenwi* (Princess Saenwi), *Mahathewi* (Mahathewi), and *Benjaphet* (Twenty-Five) were written and staged in 1938. Two plays, *Anusawari Thai* (The Thai Monument) and *Nanjao* (The Kingdom of Nanjao) were staged in 1939. *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* (King Phamu'ang), his final play during this period, was staged in 1940. The plays contained many messages that Luang Vichitr had already imparted on his previous audiences. However, they now contributed more directly to the state's policies and were crucial elements in his nationalist programme. Many of the plays, for example, directly supported the Cultural Mandates that Luang Vichitr had formulated himself. Other plays contained messages on the significance of Thai culture, identity and unity or supported the irredentism movement. In the following sections, the key messages of the plays will be analysed. They will be specifically examined to highlight their support of official policies. A clear example of how Luang Vichitr used drama to support the regime's policies is the play *Anusawari Thai*, which aimed to promote *Ratthaniyom* No. 2. Most of the plays of this period actually preceded the policies implemented by Phibun, testing the reaction of the public to certain ideas, and preparing them for the policies that were to be announced. The success of the plays and the acceptance of the ideas and messages by the public enabled Luang Vichitr to convince Phibun that it was appropriate to publicly announce them in the form of decrees.

6.1.1 Jaoying Saenwi (Princess Saenwi), 1938

The play revolves around a tragic romance between two royalties of the rival states, Khemmarat and Saenwi. It is set in two ancient Shan principalities in the North at a time before the establishment of the Sukhothai Kingdom. In the preface of the play Luang Vichitr wrote that while the name "Saenwi" can still be found on contemporary maps, the same is not the case with "Khemmarat", which is the former name of the

present-day city Chiangtung (or Kengtung in the Shan State of Burma). Khemmarat was home to the lesser Thai branch until they were forced to migrate to the South. The lesser Thais of Khemmarat moved southwards to the central plain of present day Thailand and were replaced by the greater Thais.⁵⁰⁰ Saenwi, however, was one of the cities in Laos whose people were of the lesser Thai branch. The play was therefore constructed to show the relationship between Thai Noi (Lesser Thai) and Thai Yai (Greater Thai).⁵⁰¹

The King of Khemmarat wishes to improve the relationship with his neighbouring state, Saenwi. He sends a special envoy, led by his two sons, to carry out this task. The King of Saenwi welcomes their diplomatic advances and entertains them with performances danced by his two daughters. Shortly after the warm welcome, the King of Saenwi has to travel to Phukam state (Pagan, *i.e.* Burma) to prepare the wedding ceremony for his eldest daughter (Princess Saenwi) who is engaged to marry the Prince of Phukam. In his absence, Princess Saenwi continues to host the foreign guests. The Princess becomes intimately involved with the elder prince of Khemmarat and soon they fall in love. Their relationship causes concern amongst Saenwi's ministers as both the prince and princess are already engaged. The situation, however, appears to be resolved by Prince Khemmarat's decision to leave Saenwi. Shortly after this, the King of Saenwi returns and learns about the affair. He is very angry and feels so humiliated that he orders an attack on Khemmarat in revenge. In retaliation, the King of Khemmarat appoints his son to lead the army to attack Saenwi. Princess Saenwi tries to avert the war by sending a messenger to Khemmarat's army. The messenger tries to convince the prince to withdraw his troops to avoid further bloodshed as Princess Saenwi, who became the state's leader upon the death of her father, promises to promote friendship between the two states. The prince, however, believes this is a trick and orders his army to continue the invasion of Saenwi. When Princess Saenwi learns of Khemmarat's undeterred invasion, she evacuates the whole city to avoid further loss

⁵⁰⁰ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Jaoying Saenwi" (Princess Saenwi, a playtext), Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483 (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, p. 163.

⁵⁰¹ Luang Vichitr provides no evidence for this and makes sweeping statements which were, at the time, often accepted by the public as few other people had a comparable knowledge of history and his official position lent credibility and authority to his statements.

of lives and commits suicide by stabbing herself. The Khemmarat troops finally arrive in the city only to find it completely deserted apart from the dead body of the Princess. The Prince is devastated and decides to stay in the deserted Saenwi. At the end of the play, the spirit of Princess Saenwi appears and leads Prince Khemmarat into heaven.

The play *Jaoying Saenwi* clearly supported Luang Vichitr's irredentism. Like *Ratchamanu*, the pretext of the common race, *i.e.* the Thai race, appears to support the irredentist principles. Luang Vichitr, as already discussed in the previous chapter, was the main proponent and intellectual leader of this grand aspiration to create a great Thai empire under leadership of the Thais in central Thailand. The Thais in Siam should learn to uphold a good relationship with relatives of the Thai family regardless of the country they come from.

For the first time, Luang Vichitr used a *Chak Nam* before the first scene to introduce the main messages and provide historical background information.⁵⁰² In *Jaoying Saenwi's Chak Nam*, a teacher talks to her pupils about their activities during the school vacation. To link their conversation with the story of the pending performance, the teacher corrects her pupils, who have mistakenly viewed Thailand's Northern neighbour:

- Pupil 1: I went to Saenwi, boarded a Northern train to Lampang and then took the car to Chiang Rai. From there I crossed the border at Mae Sai and entered the Ngiew's territory.
- Teacher: Don't use the word Ngiew! Ngiew is a wrong word. The correct one you should use is Thai Yai (greater Thai). Thai Yai is a branch of the Thai race, the same as us, except that we are Thai Noi. The people who are called Ngiew are our elder brothers. Therefore, you must call them Thai Yai. It is wrong to call them Ngiew.

The message to not use the name "Ngiew" supported earlier messages and directives about the use of specific words.⁵⁰³ A year earlier in 1937, the Fine Arts Department

⁵⁰² The acted *Chak Nam* is better than the reading of exposition as it improves the flow of the play and thus looks more natural for the audience. However, the messages can be clearer conveyed in the spoken exposition.

⁵⁰³ Ngiew is an informal word which the Thais (central Thais) use for minority tribes such as the Shan (which Luang Vichitr preferred to call Thai Yai).

had warned about the inappropriateness of the word “Ngiew” in its complimentary lecture to one of the Department’s concerts *Phra Aphaimani*. During the concert, the leader of nine different states challenged Nang Laweng, the heroine of *Phra Aphaimani*, by singing nine different types of *O’k Phasa* music (music in foreign tunes) including Laotian and Ngiew in competition. The lecture which accompanied the concert noted that now, as the Thai people knew about the common origin (the Thai race) of all Thais, Laotian and Ngiew should no longer be regarded as separate. They were of the same race, spoke Thai, shared the same history, practised the same traditions and called themselves Thais. The only difference was that they settled in other countries.⁵⁰⁴

The use of names for other branches of the Thai race soon became the subject of a new public policy when the Phibun government issued *Ratthaniyom* No. 3 in 1939.⁵⁰⁵ This *Ratthaniyom* prescribed that all Thais should be called “Thai” regardless whether of they were *Thai Nu’a* (Northern Thai), *Thai Isan* (Northeastern Thai), *Thai Islam* (Muslim Thai) and *Thai Tai* (Southern Thai) or from other Thai branches.⁵⁰⁶ The *Ratthaniyom* tried to forge a “Thai” consciousness amongst the Lao and Shan people living within Thailand or on its borders, as they were the target of Luang Vichitr’s irredentist ambitions.⁵⁰⁷ To further support this policy, the Fine Arts Department, under Luang Vichitr, soon ordered that the words “Lao” or “Ngiew” should be erased from all traditional songs and, if necessary, replaced by neutral words. The department issued a list of 59 songs that needed to be renamed. For example, the song *Lao Kham Ho’m* was changed to *Kham Ho’m* and *Man Ngiew* was changed to *Man*.⁵⁰⁸ The cutting of words in some songs created confusion, for example, the song *O Lao* had to be called *O* which could be mistaken for being the name of other songs such as *O Pi* or *O Buchakan*.

⁵⁰⁴ So'. Bo'. 4.2/1

⁵⁰⁵ *Ratthaniyom* No. 3 can be viewed as an extension of *Ratthaniyom* No. 1, which already prescribed the name of the country (changing it from Siam to Thailand) and Thais had to refer to themselves.

⁵⁰⁶ So'. Tho'. 0701.29/1, p. 86

⁵⁰⁷ See also Barmé: 1993, p. 151.

⁵⁰⁸ So'. Tho'. 0701.29/1, p. 333-335.

The importance of a unified Thai race is highlighted in Scene 6 of *Jaoying Saenwi*, which is perhaps the most emotional scene of the play. In this scene, Princess Saenwi and Prince Khemmarat see each other for the last time as the prince is due to return to Khemmarat. That night, the princess comes to bid farewell to him and her younger sister also leads a group of girls to say good-bye. They sing the song *Thai Noi Thai Yai* (Lesser Thai, Greater Thai) which echoes Luang Vichitr's manipulated version of the history of Thai race:

Thai Noi Thai Yai (Lesser Thai, Greater Thai)

Thai Noi (Lesser Thai), Thai Yai (Greater Thai), although we live far apart, we are still Thai.
We must aim at accumulating goodness, promoting unity, and never dislike each other.
We must love each other more than mere friends because we are from the same Thai descent.
We are the old brothers and sisters since the ancient age.
We have shared good and bad times and became a Thai nation.

Luang Vichitr also inserted one of his favourite messages in the play: that love for the nation is above any kind of love. Like Mang Rai in *Lu'at Suphan*, who places his love for a woman above his love for the nation and receives appropriate punishment, Princess Saenwi and Prince Khemmarat have to give up their lives for similar reasons. In Scene 6, when the prince is ordered to attack his beloved Saenwi, he contemplates refusing his father's command. His aide, however, advises him that he should love the nation more than Princess Saenwi and sings the song *Rak Chat* (Love the Nation) to remind the prince that love for the nation is eternal:

Rak Chat (Love the Nation)

Whatever kind of love, no matter how great, can never last
Like the love of a lover, no matter how deep, can turn bitter later
But the love of nation, how passionate and utmost it holds
will inspire one's courage to sacrifice even life
and to love until our blood runs dry.
Our bodies, we never regret, as when we die, our bodies will be burnt into ashes
We can give up anything except our nation
Never let anybody come to destroy us.

After the song, Prince Khemmarat responds that he loves his nation as much as others do, but that he still wants to be able to love a woman. In reply, his aide warns him that he can do so provided that the woman is in a position to return his love (Princess

Saenwi is already engaged to marry another prince). The whole episode reminds the audience that love for the nation is the most important thing and one's personal passion must be whole-heartedly sacrificed for the nation.

While both *Ratchamanu* and *Jaoying Saenwi* were about the unification of the Thai race involving Thais living outside the Thai borders in the late 1930s, there are many differences between the two plays. For example, unlike *Ratchamanu*, there is no foreign enemy in the play *Jaoying Saenwi* and the people of Saenwi do not drive out their invaders. While one of the main messages of *Ratchamanu* was to demonstrate that the Thais have not been cruel to the Khmers, the secondary message in *Jaoying Saenwi* was the importance of duty to the nation. By falling in love with each other, the two protagonists fail to fulfil their duties as leaders of their respective states. Luang Vichitr stated that the play also aimed at giving a lesson to those who over-enjoy their freedom and are too self-centred.⁵⁰⁹ The outcome may not only affect oneself but could cause greater harm to the nation as a whole. Princess Saenwi and Prince Khemmarat are portrayed as almost perfect role-models, except for one thing - they are too self-centred. They act only to serve their own desires and disregard any potential effect on the nation. The consequence for both of them is that they have to die while causing a great deal of damage to their own countries.⁵¹⁰

Like Mang Rai in *Lu'at Suphan*, who is punished for not carrying out his duty, Princess Saenwi and Prince Khemmarat also meet their appropriate destinies because of their irresponsibility and short-sightedness. Princess Saenwi loses her father because of her refusal to marry a man he has engaged her to, and subsequently she even loses the city she governs and the people she loves. In the end she has to commit suicide to preserve the little dignity she still has. Prince Khemmarat has to attack Saenwi, the city he has lived in and which is governed by his loved one. He not only has to attack Saenwi against his will, worse, he loses the woman whom he had hoped to save. After the Prince discovers the dead body of Princess Saenwi, he laments to his close aide that:

⁵⁰⁹ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Jaoying Saenwi", *op cit.*, p. 163-164.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Prince Khemmarat: Lead the Khemmarat army back! I want to stay here.
 Prince's aide: How can you stay here alone? Saenwi is no longer a human city.
 Prince Khemmarat: I want to stay in Saenwi because it is not a city of humans. I am fed up with human cities. I do not want to live in the human world!
 Prince's aide: What about your father and the nation?
 Prince Khemmarat: I have not failed to carry out my duty. I have sacked Saenwi as my father has commanded. I have fulfilled my duty for my nation. From now on, I want to be free.

Luang Vichitr noted that the tragic end of the play would imprint the audiences' memories so that they would ponder over the need to strengthen friendships between these Thai branches to prevent the tragedy recurring.⁵¹¹ Although the ending of *Jaoying Saenwi* is similar to *Lu'at Suphan* in that the two protagonists finally die, it contains fewer nationalist messages than *Lu'at Suphan* and contains no fighting scenes. Instead, the play is full of romantic and spectacular scenes in which dances and songs are presented in their ultimate beauty.⁵¹² Despite the lack of action and fighting scenes and a slow development of the plot, the romance of the two protagonists together with the dances and songs were entertaining and left an emotional impact on the audience before the nationalist messages were presented. The play is still very popular and the songs have often been used by the Thai government during periods of difficulty, such as during the Laotian crisis in 1960-62 and during the dispute with Cambodia over the Phra Viharn temple on the Cambodian border in 1962.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² Pra-onrat suggests that the plot of *Jaoying Saenwi* was inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in that it is about the conflict of the two families which leads to the tragic death of their beloved children. Pra-onrat: 1985, pp. 110-119.

⁵¹³ The play also influenced Thailand's foreign policy during the Second World War. In May 1942, Siamese troops marched into the Shan States and occupied the area around the old city of Kengtung. In August 1943, Japan and Thailand signed a treaty which recognised Siam's suzerainty over Kengtung. The victory in the Shan States came just in time to give Phibun's regime a much needed boost as Thailand and its people had increasingly come to suffer from the war and the demands made by the Japanese. As part of the same treaty, the administration of the Malay states Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu went to the Siamese. Charnvit: 1974, p. 60. See also Kobkua's comments on these events and Luang Vichitr's role in negotiations. Kobkua: 1995, pp. 264-266

6.1.2 Mahathewi (1938)

The second play of the 1937-44 period is *Mahathewi*. The play is set in the reign of King Chairacha of Ayuthaya (1534-1546). According to Luang Vichitr, this is a period of great political instability for the Chiang Mai kingdom. The play shows the determination of Princess Jirapha of Chiang Mai, who despite many adversaries is able to unite the ethnic Thais of the northern Lanna-Thai states with the Thais living in Central Thailand in the Ayuthaya kingdom by arguing that they are all members of a big Thai family. The play is another precursor of Phibun's campaign to promote strong unity amongst the different ethnic Thai groups under the central government.

Chiang Mai, under the leadership of Princess Jirapha's father King Ketkloa, is shaken by political rivalry. King Ketkloa wants to unite Chiang Mai with Ayuthaya but is opposed by several of his ministers who prefer to side with the Burmese. After eleven years, King Ketkloa is finally overthrown by his own son and is forced to go into exile with his daughter. Jao Sai Kham, who replaces King Ketkloa as the King of Chiang Mai, remains on the throne for only a short period before being overthrown by his own ministers because of his dishonesty. King Ketkloa is then asked to resume his kingship despite his deteriorating health. However, Chiang Mai's power struggle continues. Saen Dao, an influential minister, who is affiliated with the Burmese and has an ambition to be the ruler of Chiang Mai, assassinates King Ketkloa. With Burmese support, Saen Dao declares himself King and forces Princess Jirapha into exile for a second time. Chiang Mai under Saen Dao's leadership is divided into small factions and the number of political rebels increases.

Meanwhile, the news of the plight of Chiang Mai reaches its neighbouring states. The rulers of Lampang, Chiang Rai, Chiang Saen and Phan send their troops to topple Saen Dao's dictatorship and invite Princess Jirapha to become the head of state. However, political rivalry remains a threat to her reign. After ascending to the throne, Queen Mahathewi tries to revive her father's policy of unification with Ayuthaya. Her endeavour soon encounters opposition from her senior ministers, who would prefer Chiang Mai to remain an independent state. Her quarrel with the ministers develops into a battle but she is saved just in time by the miraculous arrival of Ayuthaya's

troops. After the incident, Chiang Mai unites with Ayuthaya under King Chairacha for the first time. The play ends with a speech by King Chairacha which emphasises the need to unite different Thai branches to form a great Thai nation.

Luang Vichitr argued that Princess Jiraprapha should receive even greater recognition for her valour than Jan and Muk, the two heroines of *Thalang* in the play *Su'k Thalang* (see *Chapter 5*), as she was not only a woman who stood up against tyrants but was also the first Northern Thai figure who exhibited an ambition for the unification of the Thai race. He noted that while other Thai heroines were great warriors, Princess Jiraprapha should be remembered as a great politician.⁵¹⁴ In plotting the play, Luang Vichitr drew on several historical records to create a dramatic story. He claimed that *Mahathewi* was the second full-length play after *Phrajao Krungthon* that very closely followed historical facts. Luang Vichitr's sources of material for writing the play included *Tamnan Yonok* (Northern Chronicle), Prince Damrong's notes on the royal chronicle, and Pinto's letter, the memoirs of a Portuguese who lived in Ayuthaya.⁵¹⁵ However, the historical facts were embellished to add dramatic appeal to the play. Luang Vichitr argued that this was necessary because otherwise the performance would turn into a dull historical documentary (*Tamnan Klang Plaeng*).⁵¹⁶ The explanation, however, covered his intention to also distort the historical facts for his own purposes. The main manipulation involved the role of Princess Mahathewi and her alleged intent to unite with Chiang Mai (rather than Burma). In historical reality, Mahathewi fought impartially against the Burmese and the Siamese. In the play, however, the princess is depicted by Luang Vichitr as helping to unify Lanna-Thai with Ayuthaya to build a great nation.⁵¹⁷

Compared with *Su'k Thalang*, in which the heroism of Jan and Muk appears as a poorly-integrated part of the plot which is essentially about a family conflict,

⁵¹⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng" (Writer's Notes, the Play *Mahathewi*), *Vichitr Wannakhadi: Bot Lakho'n Amata Phontri Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 2479-2483* (Vichitr Wannakhadi: Plays of Major Luang Vichitr Vadakarn 1936-1940), 1962, pp. 227-228.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ Charnvit: 1974, p. 40, footnote 31.

Mahathewi is Luang Vichitr's first successful attempt in scripting the story of a heroine by focusing only on her heroic deeds. Luang Vichitr wanted to eulogise Queen Mahathewi's leadership. In order to do so, he first showed to the audience the difficulties that Princess Mahathewi had to endure before achieving her ambition. In this way, the audience would more fully appreciate her sacrifices and achievements. As in almost all the other plays written by Luang Vichitr, signs of a romance develop between Queen Mahathewi and Phraya Phitsanulok. However, from the outset her love towards him is secondary to her duty to the nation. For example, when she is courted by Phraya Phitsanulok, she keeps her composure and does not allow herself to indulge in personal passion:

Queen Mahathewi: Let's forget it. We must always care for the nation more than for our own private life. I will never forget you and will always remember you. Sometimes my heart tells me to go beyond the line, but I can't imagine actually doing so.

(Phraya Phitsanulok kneels down and opens his arms to embrace the queen. The queen only holds his hands and steps back.)

Queen Mahathewi: Please don't do that, my dearest man. We have been on the right path. Please do not lead us astray.

Another aim of the play was more closely associated with the government's objectives at the time. Luang Vichitr said the aim of writing *Mahathewi* was also to correct a misunderstanding amongst many people that Chiang Mai was one of the Siam's tributary states, *i.e.* was under the rule of Siam. In order to correct this misunderstanding, he stated that Thai people lived in different regions of Thailand: the North, the Northeast, the South and the Centre, were all of the same Thai race:

"The unification of the Thai people [from the North] with Thai people [the central Thais] cannot be compared to colonisation or to becoming a tributary state. It is about the unification of those who share the same Thai blood to live in one country and under one constitution. They have equal rights and duties. However, if Thais were forced to join other

nations or other races, this would lead to them having to give up their independence and live as slaves of others.”⁵¹⁸

This message is supported in Scene 6 when the rulers of the Lanna states make a visit to Princess Jirapha while she is still in exile in the forest. They convince the princess to return to Chiang Mai as they will help her to topple Saen Dao. In exchange for her return, the princess reveals her wish to unite Chiang Mai and other Northern states with Ayuthaya to form one great Thai nation. Miraculously, the rulers unanimously agree with the idea and they further comment:

King of Lampang: I have thought about it before. Ayuthaya is now strong and powerful enough for us to be able to depend on it.

King of Chiang Saen: We are all of the same [Thai] race, not others.

King of Chiang Rai: In ancient times, our nation used to be a great nation. But now, we have been split up and scattered around into small groups.

King of Chiang Saen: If we were united, the Thai nation would return to its former glory as a great nation as it is befitting for the Thai race.

The argument of common race is used several times in the play to counter the challenges by Queen Mahathewi’s opponents about the suitability of uniting with Ayuthaya. In Scene 7, Queen Mahathewi is in conflict with her ministers who question her policy to unify Chiang Mai with Ayuthaya. Through the comments of the characters, Luang Vichitr is able to provide his reasons for why the unification was necessary. The main message is that all Thai people are of the same race, and therefore uniting with Ayuthaya is not the same as siding with the racially different Burmese. The following dialogue reflects the ideas that Luang Vichitr used previously in *Ratchamanu* when he raised the issue that Cambodia was not originally inhabited by *Kho'm* but was by Thais:

Minister 2: How can we be united. People in Ayuthaya are Thai but we are Laotian.

Queen Mahathewi: Only ignoramuses believe that we are Laotian. We are not Laotian but Thai. Our territory is called Lanna – Thai. As I am

⁵¹⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn, “Kham Chijaeng Kho'ng Phutaeng” (Writer’s Notes, the Play *Mahathewi*), *op cit.*, p. 228.

the ruler of Chiang Mai, if I hear anybody say that we are Laotian, I will behead that person!

Minister 3: There is one more thing we should consider - our independence.

Queen Mahathewi: Why?

Minister 3: At the moment, we have our own independence. Why should we give up our independence in order to be ruled under Ayuthaya?

Queen Mahathewi: Who told you that we have to sacrifice our independence? Who told you that we will be ruled under Ayuthaya? We are going to be united, not ruled. We form an independent nation, not lose our freedom. We are of the Thai race. When we unite with other Thais we will still be Thais. But to be united with another nation [the Burmese], that would lead us to lose our independence and live as slaves!

In another scene, Queen Mahathewi asks Phraya Phitsanulok to go to Ayuthaya to request support to suppress her opponents who want to unite Chiang Mai with the Burmese:

Mahathewi: I believe that there is only one way that you can help myself and Chiang Mai to regain a state of happiness.

Phraya Phitsanulok: Which way?

Mahathewi: You should return to Ayuthaya to inform the King to send his army to suppress the plotters.

Phraya Phitsanulok: I already intend to do what you have just suggested.

Mahathewi: The reason why I suggest this to you is that I think Chiang Mai cannot maintain its independence. Chiang Mai must reunite with other Thai families. I actually regard the people of Chiang Mai as Thai race and therefore they must be with other people of the same Thai race. If Chiang Mai is still independent like this, there will be no time when we can obtain peace and happiness.

This is an important scene because it creates the impression that Chiang Mai asked Ayuthaya for assistance and that Chiang Mai would not have been able to maintain its independence without the help of the Thais of the Ayuthaya kingdom. In reality however Chiang Mai was striving to maintain its independence from both the Burmese and Ayuthaya.

6.1.3 Benjaphet (Twenty-Five, 1938)

Benjaphet was the last play to be staged in 1938. Central to the plot of *Benjaphet* were the actions of a female protagonist, Princess Yupphadi of Hongsa. The play begins with a *Chak Nam* set in contemporary Thailand. The *Chak Nam* shows two characters wondering about the origin of the Yupphadi stupa. The play that follows is set up as a flashback. The first scene is about the birthday celebration of the Princess. Because she has reached the age of 25, King of Hongsa grants her permission to mix with ordinary people who join in the celebration. Soon the party is interrupted by the arrest of a bandit leader who had secretly sneaked in. Princess Yupphadi comes to his rescue and the bandit invites her to observe how he and his comrades live in the jungle. Princess Yupphadi is curious about their way of living and accepts the offer. She disguises herself as a man and follows the bandit into the jungle to a cave which is used by him and his comrades as a hiding place. Upon her arrival, her real identity is exposed by one of the bandits. Because the cave is under a curse that says it will collapse once a female steps into it, the other bandits become hostile towards her. The Princess shows no fear and instead urges them to give themselves up to the government officers. She guarantees that under her protection, they will be granted bail and be allowed to restart their lives by entering any legitimate profession of their choice. Some of the bandits would also be appointed as her own private soldiers. The cave starts to tremble, and since they have no choice, they follow the Princess's advice.

Back at the palace, the Princess is reprimanded for disappearing and her father orders her to marry a prince of his choice at once. At first Princess Yupphadi is unwilling to comply with her father's command, but she finally agrees in exchange for the appointment of her own private soldiers. A conflict arises as her husband dislikes her bandits-turned-soldiers. He commands her to abolish her private soldiers and expel them from the palace. Princess Yupphadi becomes very angry and declines to do so. However, after her father's intervention, she agrees to let her soldiers go, on the condition that they will receive exceptional privileges from him as compensation. Princess Yupphadi bids farewell to her beloved soldiers and asks them to build a new town in her memory. After they leave, unable to live without them, the Princess

commits suicide. At the end of the play, when the bandits learn about Princess Yupphadi's death, they decide to build a stupa and a new city in her memory.

Benjaphet is different from Luang Vichitr's previous productions as it does not contain nationalist jingoism, nor does the play's plot incorporate any historical details. The story of *Benjaphet* is unfamiliar to the Thai audience because it relies heavily on Western ideas. Some of these ideas were derived from the adventures of Robin Hood (when the bandits rob the rich to help the poor) and from Shakespeare's "As You Like It" (when the female protagonist disguises herself as a man to search for adventure). Luang Vichitr may have wanted to experiment with Western sources in order to make the play seem exotic. Although the play lacks focus and contains very long and unexciting dialogues, it is successful in delivering the main messages which stress that even people from the lower ranks of society, such as the bandits, can change and engage in useful and legitimate occupations to develop the nation. This message is particularly emphasised when Princess Yupphadi arrives at the bandits' cave. After entering the cave, she realises that despite their money and jewellery, the bandits are living in very poor conditions and are not enjoying their lives. She therefore suggests to them that they give themselves up and take up legitimate employment:

Yupphadi: Everybody looks very strong and could be a strong resource for the nation. Why don't you look for work which would benefit the nation? Why are you hiding here?

Bandits: If we leave this cave, we will be put in prison.

Yupphadi: Does any of the money, gold or jewellery which you illegally accumulated bring you any benefit?

Bandits: No, that is true. We can't do anything with all those valuable items.

.....

Yupphadi: You should give up being bandits. I will lead you to the city and will guarantee that none of you will be punished.

Bandits: Where will we live? What shall we do? What do we eat?

Yupphadi: You will be provided with accommodation. You will set up your own family. You will become soldiers of the government. You will dress in soldiers' uniforms and will receive respect from the public. You will carry out useful tasks for the nation.

Towards the end of the play, Princess Yupphadi is forced to abolish her personal guard. However, the former bandit, Samingtho'ng, reassures her that she should not worry about them as they will not be bandits again, but will engage in legitimate jobs:

Samingtho'ng: At first we thought that the best solution would be for us to return to the jungle. However, we vow not to be bandits any longer. Therefore we will engage in legal occupations and we will always consider ourselves to be yours and the nation's soldiers. If you ever need us, we will come immediately.

Overall, the play was probably not very popular because of various shortcomings, such as the unusual plot and story-line and the lengthiness of the dialogues.

6.1.4 Anusawari Thai (Thai Monument, 1939)

The fourth play of the pre-war period, *Anusawari Thai*, was written to support *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 which advised the public on how to safeguard the nation.⁵¹⁹ The play also gives clear evidence of how Luang Vichitr quickly captured the public's attention on the newly inaugurated Democracy Monument and used it as a background to the plot. Phibun's regime is known to have commissioned many monuments as symbols of its power. The Democracy Monument was constructed to commemorate the end of the absolute monarchy brought about by the People's Party, of which Phibun was a member, on the 24th June 1932, the date also announced as the National Day. Although the monument mentioned in the play appears to be fictitious, and bears no resemblance to the actual Democracy Monument, Luang Vichitr certainly intended to create a feeling among the audience that monuments held a sense of sacredness and secrecy.

⁵¹⁹ The *Ratthaniyom* advised the public: (1) Members of the Thai race should not undertake any sort of business without first thinking of the benefits accruing to, or the safety of, their nation. (2) Thai nationals should not reveal anything to foreigners that is detrimental to the nation. (3) Thai nationals should not act as agents or mouthpieces of agents without first being satisfied that it is of benefit to the nation. They should not express opinions indicating that they side with other nations when an international problem or question arises. (4) Thai nationals should not buy land on behalf of other nationalities in any way which may be considered harmful to the nation. (5) Whenever it is known that a person is treacherous to the nation it is the duty of the Thais to suppress his further actions. Barmé: 1993, p. 150.

Unlike the three previous plays, *Anusawari Thai* introduces a contemporary plot to promote current policies. The message is strong and clear: those who act against national security would be severely punished. The play was written in the context of increasing conflict with France over territories lost and the threat of Western powers (and Japan) who used their representatives to find out about Thailand's intentions and who tried to influence Thailand's policies. Moreover, Thailand also faced an increasing threat of infiltration by communists from mainland China. The *Ratthaniyom* was therefore very important, because the Thai government could not allow its ambitions to be known by foreigners. It could use the threat as a pretext to prohibit Thai citizens from having much contact with foreigners during these difficult times.

Anusawari Thai is about a Thai architect whose responsibility it is to supervise the construction of a monument. The architect comes into conflict with a high-ranking person who acts as a foreign agent and tries to obtain the secret plans of the monument by persuading the architect to sell the blueprint to him. Realising the motive behind the man's deal, the architect refers to the government's *Ratthaniyom* and the fighting begins. The architect is killed by a gun shot. Coincidentally, the son of the architect and the son of the high-ranking man are close friends and the latter hopes to marry the sister of the former. Soon, the truth of the murder comes out and the son of the dead architect takes revenge by shooting his best friend's father. The case then goes to court and the young man is eventually set free as he has killed a foreign agent to protect the nation. The son of the dead agent inherits his father's wealth but decides to donate all the money to the good cause of the monument. After being rejected by his girlfriend, he decides to lead his life as a farmer in the North of Thailand. The play ends with the celebration of the opening of the monument.

Anusawari Thai was perhaps the least popular play of the period.⁵²⁰ It was certainly very controversial because Luang Vichitr gave the impression that spies and traitors deserved to be killed. Earlier, he had tried to make public lynching legal. This notion was rejected and created quite an outrage.⁵²¹ In the play, this obscure message was

⁵²⁰ Charnvit: 1974, pp. 40-41 (footnote 31).

⁵²¹ Stowe: 1991, p. 124.

particularly stressed in Scene 5. In this scene, Phuangngoen, the architect's son, is defending himself against murder charges at the court. Luang Vichitr presents the idea that Phuangngoen should not be found guilty of the charges because he did so to protect the nation in accordance with *Ratthaniyom* No. 2.

Phuangngoen: Your honour, I am being prosecuted for first degree murder. I have already pleaded guilty, but there is one point I want to argue. It is a fact that I killed, but what I killed was not a human being - it was a dangerous animal which was about to damage the nation and cause trouble to all of us. The dead man had engaged in illegal activities, took advantage of the poor, was an agent for foreigners for whom he bought land and he was a spy for our foreign enemies to whom he revealed the nation's secrets. He killed my father because my father protected the nation's secret. The reason I killed him was not because I took revenge for my father. I killed him because I wanted to protect the nation. If your honour still believes that the dead man is a human being, then I killed a man who sold the country to foreigners. It is an international custom to execute foreign spies.

Judge: But such an act must not be carried out by one person. It is the responsibility of the government to do so.

Phuangngoen: That is right. The court has to decide according to the law. But I decided according to the Cultural Mandate. Please take that into account. I killed a man to protect the nation for the benefit of the public which is much more important than myself. I would like to know that the law will punish me. To measure against the principle of *Ratthaniyom* No. 2, this man had breached the principle in every way. If you punish me, then I can truly say that I died for the nation. That is all I have to say.

Phuangngoen is eventually set free. The idea that the public should safeguard the nation by complying with *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 is portrayed in the dialogue between Phuangngoen's brothers and sister, who discuss why traitors may need to be executed as punishment for the ultimate crime:

Phuangtho'ng: . . . If somebody breaches *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 by betraying the nation, that person can be killed.

Phuangkaew: Who would be the one to kill such a person?

Phuangtho'ng: Anybody who strongly loves the nation may kill a person who betrays the nation.

Phuangnak: Wouldn't he be afraid of being jailed?

Phuangtho'ng: No, he isn't afraid because he is prepared to make that sacrifice for the nation. He killed the nation's traitor to do good for the nation. Even if he has to go to jail, he won't be afraid.

- Phuangkaew: But Phuangngoen, our brother, he was not sent to jail.
 Phuangtho'ng: That is because the judge recognised that real justice had to be maintained. It is true that the judge has to decide according to the law, not the *Ratthaniyom*. But to kill a traitor of the nation is an act of protecting one's nation.
- Phuangkaew: This is what he said in his statement in the court.
 Phuangtho'ng: That's right. The law never prosecutes a person who has killed to defend himself or his property. Therefore, the law should not punish a person who has killed to protect the nation, because to protect the nation is more important than to defend himself or his property.

The play also depicted the father as a role model who raised his six children to take up vocational occupations. This was a precursor of *Ratthaniyom* No. 7, in which Thai people were encouraged to become more industrious and willing to undertake laborious work, in order to build the nation. Overall, this message did not, however, feature very strongly and probably did not make much of an impact amongst the other controversial messages that the play conveyed to the audience.

6.1.5 Nanjao (The Kingdom of Nanjao, 1939)

The fifth play, *Nanjao*, is set in the 13th century and concerns the migration of the Thai people from their original homeland, Nanjao, a purported kingdom in Southern China (Yunnan) to present-day Thailand. In writing the play, Luang Vichitr intended to show that the Thai people naturally occupied Nanjao and had enjoyed a good life until they were forced to migrate by the invasion of the Chinese, who tried to assimilate and dominate the Thais. The Thais were driven southwards to escape the intruders. The play is an ultra-nationalistic saga which dramatises the threat that the Chinese posed to Thailand. The Chinese are depicted as villains who have previously invaded and dominated land owned by the Thais. The Thais now live in their only remaining land, and yet again the Chinese are trying to take control of many aspects of the Thai economy and society.⁵²²

⁵²² Chai-anan, a Thai political scientist, has commented that the play created a historical imaginaire of the origin of the Thai race which became the official version of the history of the Thai people. The play had two effects. It aroused strong nationalistic feelings amongst the Thais because they now knew about the long development of their culture and civilisation. However, a very negative effect is created because the play shows how the happy Thai kingdom had to succumb to the invasion by the Chinese. The play compared what allegedly had happened hundreds of years ago with contemporary Thailand. Although the Chinese were not aggressors, their dominant position in the economy once again posed a serious threat to the future of the Thai nation. Chai-anan

Luang Vichitr's version of Thai history is depicted first in the *Chak Nam* in which two techniques are used to convey the story of the migration of the Thai race. Firstly, Luang Vichitr had two characters exchange their knowledge about Thai history by citing a relevant poem. Their recital is accompanied by groups of dancers, each of which represents a branch of the Thai race. Each group performs the dance while their poem refers to how they settled in the current land. The other technique is the use of a large map on stage. After the two characters finish their poem, one of them says that to be more clear about the route of the migration, a map must be shown. After the character shows the route of the migration, his friend comes up with the idea that Thais should no longer be divided, but should be united so as to become a great nation just as they were in the past, giving clear support to the government's irredentist policies.

The play itself starts with a villager taking the injured Prince of Nanjao to his home to nurse him. He found the prince unconscious near a waterfall and does not know who he is. While recovering, the prince develops a close relationship with the family's daughter, Kingkaew. Meanwhile, the King of Nanjao orders a search for his son. When the Prince is found, he confesses that he would prefer to live a simple life and does not want to return to the palace. The King becomes very concerned and one of his ministers suggests that they could secretly arrest his son. Another minister reports to the king that the Chinese are sending a mission to strengthen the relationship with the people of Nanjao. The Chinese suggest that such a goal could be achieved by a marriage of the Prince of Nanjao to the daughter of the Chinese Emperor. The King of Nanjao agrees. Meanwhile, Kingkaew finds out who her family's guest really is. While the Prince still refuses to return to the palace, the Chinese diplomatic mission arrives. The King of Nanjao manages to persuade his son to marry the Chinese Emperor's daughter and the Prince returns to the palace. In the village, the rumours spread about the infiltration by Chinese. Many Thais begin to serve the Chinese and adopt Chinese customs and fashions. Kingkaew and other villagers predict that the Thais in Nanjao

Samudavanija, "Pibul's Creation of State Identity: Subtle Synthesis of Historical Imaginaire," Bangkok Post (17 August 1989).

will soon be assimilated and eventually Nanjao will become part of the Chinese Empire. Thus, the villagers under Kingkaew's leadership decide to migrate southwards to find a new land in which establish a new Thai nation. On his wedding day, the Prince of Nanjao decides to escape and joins the migrating party. However, the journey is hard and many fall ill, including Kingkaew who soon dies. The Prince now becomes the leader and announces that the people should follow Kingkaew's wish to walk to the new land at *Laemtho'ng* (Golden Peninsula) which will be named *Prathet Thai* (Thailand).⁵²³

The Chinese assimilation is presented in the play in several scenes. The most notable example occurs in Scene 5 when a huge Chinese mission parades into Nanjao. The Prince of Nanjao argues with his father that his father's decision to marry him to the Emperor's daughter is a mistake. He warns his father of the future arrival of increased numbers of Chinese people, which might cause a virtual disappearance of the Thai people:

Prince: The Chinese are cleverer than us. They are very industrious and are more resourceful. Soon, they will assimilate all the Thai people of Nanjao.

King of Nanjao: How can you say that! There are millions of Thai people in Nanjao. They only come in tens or hundreds. How can they possibly swallow us up?

Prince: They will surely come in thousands, in hundreds of thousands and in millions until their people flood all over our kingdom.

King of Nanjao: Why don't we persuade them to become Thais?

Prince: If they agree to become Thais, then we are very lucky. I'm afraid that before we actually turn them into Thais, they will have already made us become Chinese. We cannot blame them because everyone loves their own nation. The Chinese love their nation just like we love ours.

The Prince confesses to Kingkaew that he would like to join the migration towards the South. He can no longer bear the Chinese intrusion and is particularly concerned that the assimilation of the people of Nanjao by the Chinese is rapidly accelerating:

⁵²³ That *Kingkaew* knew that their new homeland would be called *Prathet Thai* is a typical anachronism / foresight used to create a link between the historical past in the play and contemporary Thailand.

Prince: Thai nobles and ministers start to adopt Chinese outfits because the Chinese bring them cloth and silk as gifts. Some people learn to speak Chinese so that they can give some favour to the Chinese who will be close to the future Queen of Nanjao. Instead of the Emperor's daughter studying Thai as she will be living in the Thai kingdom, Thai people have begun to learn Chinese. Never before have I heard our ministers complain about the heat. Now they use small Chinese fans and imitate the manners of the Chinese ministers. I can no longer live here, otherwise I may have to kill somebody. I will kill those who give up Thai blood to become foreigners. Let me join you, Kingkaew. Let me go with you to build a new nation.⁵²⁴

The remainder of the play emotionally portrays the hardship that the Thai people endure during their migration. However, Kingkaew is a commoner who foresees the collapse of the Thai Nanjao kingdom and realises the need to resettle in the Golden Peninsula to build a new nation:

Kingkaew: [Explaining the need to migrate.] This is not the coward's way but the only way in which we can preserve our nationhood, independence and Thai identity. If we do not have anywhere to go, certainly we will fight until the end and we will probably die before the Thai nation is extinguished. But we still have a choice. Father, I remember that you once told me that there is plenty of land in the South where we could settle. We should go there. We do not leave like cowards, but with the clear intention to maintain our Thai-ness.

Father: If we agree to go, then we have to abandon our land here.

Kingkaew: We will inaugurate a new kingdom. We will establish Thailand. If we don't do this, the Thais in Nanjao will become extinct and the Thai race will soon vanish. If, however, we go there, we can build a Thai nation. Once the Thai nation in Nanjao disappears, we still have a Thai nation over there. In the future, the Thais will agree that we have done the right thing in leaving Nanjao to build a new Thai nation. The new generation of Thais will certainly not regard us as cowards.

The play's strong anti-Chinese messages matched political developments of the time. Since the production of *Phrajao Krungthon*, which had tried to depict the Chinese in a more favourable light, Luang Vichitr's views on the Chinese in Thailand appeared to have markedly changed. Moreover, the policies of the Phibun government, which pursued a "Thai-ification" of Thailand in all areas including language, economy,

⁵²⁴ So' Tho' 0701.1/43.

society and culture, together with the rise of communism in mainland China, meant that the Chinese living in Thailand were now seen in a very different light. The play also shows how the ancestors of the Thai people fought to preserve their land and what sacrifices they had to make to build a new nation. Their past struggle is a lesson to the present generation and functions as a reminder to the audience to love and protect their homeland. The hardening attitude towards the Chinese suited Thailand's relationship with Japan, the major contender for dominance in Asia-Pacific.⁵²⁵ With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Chinese societies and organisations in Siam undermined Sino-Thai relations. Phibun's government adopted a very offensive stance by passing several laws forcing the Chinese out of business and discriminating against them in many ways. At first the Chinese protested strongly against these measures.⁵²⁶ Charnvit, however, suggests that the new laws helped to mobilise the majority of the people to support the government, while at the same time conciliating Japan and paving the way for greater co-operation between the two countries.⁵²⁷

Nanjao also supported the Thai-ification programme implemented through various Cultural Mandates. These and other measures had been introduced to encourage the sole use of Thai products and close many professions to foreigners, particularly the Chinese, in order to reduce their influence in the economy and society. For example, *Ratthaniyom* No. 9, issued in June 1940, aimed to promote the use of the Thai language and even led to the closure of Chinese schools. In order to support the Thai-ification programme, Luang Vichitr had given several lectures reminiscent of some of his earlier speeches and broadcasts on the subject of the human revolution. The most important of his new series of lectures was given at the Ministry of Defence in November 1939. Luang Vichitr wanted to encourage Thai people to lose their disdain for manual labour which threatened the state's attempt to "Thai-ify" the economy.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ Charnvit: 1974, p. 44.

⁵²⁶ Barmé: 1993, p. 155.

⁵²⁷ Charnvit: 1974, p. 45.

⁵²⁸ Barmé: 1993, p. 154. Thai people, particularly those in urban areas, tended to have a preference to be government officials as such positions generally brought prestige and respect. Few worked in trade or vocational positions. Such jobs were generally taken by Chinese, Indians and other foreigners. See also Akira: 1989.

Nanjao also prepared the grounds for *Ratthaniyom* No. 10, which was issued in January 1941. This mandate had been ready for implementation since 1939. The mandate considers western-style clothing to be the most appropriate form of attire - including the wearing of trousers and even hats. Based on evidence in newspaper articles, Barmé suggests that in the play *Nanjao*, Luang Vichitr tried to give the impression that the wearing of trousers was actually a Thai tradition that had developed during the 9th and 10th centuries in the Nanjao Kingdom. All characters in the play wear long trousers.⁵²⁹

It is interesting to note that while Chinese customs and ways of dressing were depicted as a threat to the Thai culture, the preparation of the *Ratthaniyom* on Dress considered introducing many European customs and attire. However, Luang Vichitr justified the new dress codes using history once again. In a radio broadcast in April 1941, Luang explained why the public should follow the mandate. He said that other nationalistic nations such as Japan, Turkey, and China had dropped their traditional dress and adopted dress codes which followed Western styles instead. In Luang Vichitr's opinion, changes introduced in these countries were bitterly rejected by the people because it was completely against their traditions. He further argued that the Thai government's orders were not introducing alien customs and dress codes. To substantiate this claim, he manipulated history to show that Thai people had worn trousers in ancient times. During the pre-Nanjao period, trousers were very wide. This changed during the Nanjao period, when trousers became tighter around the legs to permit walking. This was necessary because Thai people of that period had to walk great distances due to the forced migration to the South. After the migration, trousers became shorter because the Thais had moved into a hotter geographical area. During the Chiang Saen period, the style of trousers remained similar, except that patterns started to appear on the fabrics due to the people's interest in arts. During the Sukhothai and Ayuthaya period, Thais gradually adopted the "Jungkraben" style of cloth which wrapped-around the body and then hitched up between the legs (first worn

⁵²⁹ Barmé: 1993, pp. 156-157.

over trousers, which over time were dropped).⁵³⁰ Luang Vichitr's intention was to convince the Thai people that the government only wanted them to revive old Thai traditions and that it was not about following the West. He went even further, suggesting that the West may have imitated the East as the West only began to wear trousers a thousand years after the Thais.⁵³¹

In order to make the play more entertaining, *Rabam* dances alternate with the dialogues and, as in most of Luang Vichitr's plays, *Nanjao* contains a romantic subplot (which is, once again, used to stress the importance of love for the nation over personal love). In one scene, the Prince of Nanjao and Kingkaew talk about the meaning of love. When the Prince asks Kingkaew whether she has ever been in love, she confesses to him that she has been in love for a long time:

Kingkaew: The one that I love is above all people in Nanjao.

Prince: What, are you in love with my father?

Kingkaew: No, he is not the one I love. The loved one is even above the King of Nanjao. He is the one I love, I adore, and even would sacrifice my life and blood for.

Prince: Who could that be? I don't know anybody who could be above my father.

Kingkaew: It is the nation. My love is the love for the nation.

Prince: What?

Kingkaew: Are you surprised? Did you think that a stupid farm-girl like me does not know how to love the nation? No other kind of love will imprint in my heart more than my love for the nation. Love for the Thai nation.

[The scene is followed by the patriotic song *Rak Thai* (Love Thailand) - sung by Kingkaew and the Prince.]

It has been suggested by Charnvit that *Nanjao* was the most important play of the period. Apart from supporting the Thai-ification programme and cultural policies, the play also had a powerful impact in the area of public understanding of Thai history, as

⁵³⁰ Luang Vichitr himself liked to wear trousers in this fashion. When he urged that people should drop the old dress, he asserted that even himself who had always dressed in that fashion found no difficulty to take up a new style. Such a spirit was also the way to show a sacrifice for the country.

⁵³¹ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Panha Ru'ang Kantaengkai" (Questions on Dress), A radio broadcast on 12 April 1941, So'. Tho'. 0701.1/43.

until then few had concerned themselves in detail with the ancient history of the Thai race.⁵³² Through Luang Vichitr's play, it became a popular belief that the Thais had been driven out of their homelands by the Chinese. Despite increasing evidence that this account may be incorrect or at least incomplete, the belief is still strong, even amongst younger generations of Thais.

6.1.6 Pho'khun Phamu'ang (King Phamu'ang, 1940)

Pho'khun Phamu'ang, the last play produced during the pre-war period, is about the building of the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai. It is set in the period prior to Thailand's attainment of complete independence from Khmer rule. Pho'khun Phamu'ang is the leader of the Thai army which defeats the Khmers and enables Sukhothai to become independent. Because he is married to a Khmer woman, Pho'khun Phamu'ang declines to be crowned King. When his wife learns that the Thai people have gained independence and that her husband refused to take the throne because of her descent, she decides to commit suicide. The message is that love of the nation should be placed above any personal love.

The play yet again proved Luang Vichitr's adeptness in using and manipulating the past to justify or affirm contemporary realities. He moulded the account of Sukhothai to support his human revolution, *i.e.* the Cultural Mandates and other activities that were intended to achieve the human revolution and cultural changes.⁵³³

The play *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* was written entirely in *Klo'n* verse form. One possible reason for this could be that Luang Vichitr had produced the play hastily due to his other responsibilities.⁵³⁴ This assertion is based on the fact that Luang Vichitr started

⁵³² Charnvit: 1974, pp. 40-41 (footnote 31).

⁵³³ On the important lecture entitled *Wathanatham Sukhothai* (Sukhothai Culture) delivered at the Publicity Department on 6 March 1940 see Barmé: 1993., p. 160 and footnote 103. See also Chapter 3 of this Thesis.

⁵³⁴ Barmé suggests that Luang Vichitr "hastily" wrote the play *Nanjao* in order to support the state programme of "Thai-ification". Barmé: 1993, p. 155. However, it is more plausible that the "hastily" written play was *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* (for the above-mentioned reasons). *Nanjao* actually included significant stage spectacle, an important *Chak Nam* and a large map which was specially prepared.

to write his plays in *Klo'n Paet* form before adding other elements, such as the characters' dialogue, into the play. Other factors which suggest that the play was written in a hurry are that there is no *Chak Nam* and that Luang Vichitr included only two patriotic songs, both performed at the end of the play. Moreover, if Luang Vichitr had intended to show off his ability to write a play in verse form, he would typically have stated this in the introduction of the play.

6.2 The Period from 1940 to 1948

Shortly after the *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* was staged, the tension between France and Thailand had dramatically increased, resulting in the outbreak of a short war (December 1940 to January 1941). Despite a humiliating defeat at sea, Thailand proved to have a military advantage, which resulted in the Vichy government's agreeing to a cease-fire a month later. The Japanese stepped in to mediate over the border dispute and by May, a settlement was decided. The settlement was not completely satisfactory for either side. Siam regained the Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Sisophon and Siemreap, and small area of Lao at Pakse. The reclaimed territories made up only one-fourth of the territories Thailand had lost to France. Moreover, the agreement brokered by Japan forced Bangkok to pay France a substantial sum as compensation for the ceded territories. However, these were trivial details for the propagandist Luang Vichitr, who was able to depict the outcome as a major success and linked the leadership of Phibun to this achievement. To commemorate the event, the large Victory Monument was built in the middle of Bangkok and thousands of troops returning from Eastern territories paraded before it. Through Luang Vichitr's plays, the irredentist policy had gained wide public support and the vast majority of people were behind the regime. Phibun alerted the whole nation to his victory by sending his troops to parade in all major urban centres. Riding on his success, Phibun took the unprecedented step of promoting himself to Field Marshal in July 1941. As the ultimate tribute to "The Leader", one of the regained provinces, Siemreap, was renamed in his honour to *Changwat Phibunsongkhram* (Phibunsongkhram Province).

Supported by Luang Vichitr, Phibun created a leadership cult around himself. Phibun had already escaped several attempts on his life and was rumoured among some superstitious Thais to be in possession of “magical powers” that rendered him invulnerable to physical harm.⁵³⁵ Phibun became increasingly self-indulgent in his ideas about his own grandness and was accused by some of his own advisors of Napoleonic delusions.⁵³⁶ Shortly after his self-promotion to Field Marshal, Phibun ordered a ban on the display of any pictures of ex-King Prajadipok. At cinemas his picture was projected on the screen before each feature and the audience was asked to rise before it and sing the national anthem. In the media, Phibun was now referred to as *Phunam* (The Leader) instead of mere “Prime Minister”. This led to his critics suggesting that he was aping Adolf Hitler of Germany, who liked to be called *Der Führer* (The Leader) by the German people. Phibun developed a form of totalitarian leadership which, although coloured with ideas based on developments in Europe (Germany and Italy in particular), was essentially very Thai and modelled on his conception of the rule of Thai monarchs such as King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai, King Taksin and even King Rama V. Phibun believed that a strong-willed leadership was required to lead the Thai people through these difficult times.⁵³⁷ The outbreak of the war in Asia-Pacific only strengthened his conviction and led him to increasingly use his authority over the bureaucracy to control the people.

After the victory over the French, Phibun used every available medium to remind the nation that the threat of war was not over. In September 1941, Phibun pushed through the act on the “Duty of the Thai People during War.” The act made it treason for any Thai to surrender in the event of an invasion and commanded every citizen to do their utmost to resist an invading enemy. Anyone convicted of failing in these duties, the act concluded, “must be executed or jailed for life.”⁵³⁸ This act was very similar to *Ratthaniyom* No. 2, which had been supported by Luang Vichitr’s play *Amusawari Thai*.

⁵³⁵ Kobkua: 1995., p. 16.

⁵³⁶ Wright: 1991, p. 91.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵³⁸ Thak: 1987, pp. 448-450.

In August 1941 Luang Vichitr was given the post of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He continued in the post of Director General of the Fine Arts Department until 1942, when he was promoted to Minister of Foreign Affairs. The appointment marked the end of his production of plays during this period. He continued to be influential in the sphere of domestic policy-making, particularly in the area of culture, but his plays had achieved their purpose - they had successfully given rise to the irredentism movement and created a public understanding of Thai race and Thai history in the way he had intended. In addition to numerous writings, four out of the ten full-length plays which he had produced up until then were about irredentism and the Thai race, including *Ratchamanu* (1936), *Jaoying Saenwi* (1938), *Mahathewi* (1938) and *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* (1940). He was therefore ready for more important tasks.

Luang Vichitr was well suited to his new post at the Foreign Ministry. He was involved in several missions and negotiations. In 1940, for example, Luang Vichitr promoted friendlier relations with the Japanese when a Treaty of Amity and Friendship between the governments of Thailand and Japan was commemorated in Tokyo with a special performance and concert at the Nippon Gekijo. He played an even more vital role in the negotiations with France and Japan during the Thai-France War. In December 1941, the Thai government signed a treaty of alliance with Japan and declared war on the allies in January 1942.⁵³⁹ Japanese forces were allowed to occupy Thailand.

The declaration of war on the allies in 1942 led Phibun to further tighten his grip on the country. In the same year, he set-up the National Council of Culture (*Sapha Watthanatham Haeng Chat*). Phibun clearly demonstrated that he was aware of the importance of revolutionising and controlling national culture. The Council, which became very influential under Phibun, was divided into five bureaux: (1) the Bureau of Mind, (2) the Bureau of Tradition and Customs, (3) the Bureau of Arts, (4) the Bureau

⁵³⁹ A copy of the translation by the Translation Division, Treaty and Legal Department of the Thai Foreign Ministry is provided in Thak Chaloehtiarana, Ed., *Thai Politics: 1932-1957*, *op cit.*, pp. 450-457. Thak also provides a translation of the Declaration of War on Great Britain and the United States of 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 457-458.

of Literature and (5) the Bureau of Women. Since Luang Vichitr had been involved in the area of fine arts, he was appointed as head of the Bureau of Arts. A large number of government decrees were announced in 1942 - many defining and influencing the development of music and performing arts.⁵⁴⁰ Their aim was to modernise traditional art forms to make them appropriate for a civilised country.

Phibun felt that it was necessary for Thailand to become a modern nation in order to survive further threats by any of the western powers, and be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Japanese. In order to create a modern Thai nation, Phibun and Luang Vichitr believed that Thailand had to adopt some European values and customs, while on the other hand Thai people had to retain their Thai values to maintain a sense of nationality.

Phibun's delusions of grandeur led him to declare in 1942 his intention to build a new capital in the malaria-infested North. Officially, the new capital was declared necessary because of increasing bomb raids on Bangkok by the Allies, although in reality Phibun wanted the new capital to symbolise a new era. Phibun increasingly lost touch with reality and when news of Japanese defeats had become ever more frequent, his public image became tainted and his political support diminished. His opponents, who had been ousted or moved into non-political posts, now had the advantage of not being associated with the increasingly ominous alliance with Japan. Many of them believed that Thailand should negotiate with the Allies, particularly since the Free Thai Movement had at least gained Thailand some recognition, particularly in the US, that it had not entirely sided with Japan. In July 1944, Phibun's government collapsed when he was outmanoeuvred by his opponent Pridi, who was the leader of the Free Thai Movement. Phibun was stripped of all military powers and had to resign. A new government was formed which consisted mainly of members of the Free Thai Movement.⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴⁰ On the way music and performing arts were influenced, see Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades, *op cit.*, pp. 123-124 and Jiraporn Witayasakpan, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts: Theatre in Thailand during the Phibun Period", *op cit.*, pp. 156-167.

⁵⁴¹ Charnvit: 1974, p. 62.

Meanwhile, in 1943 Luang Vichitr was sent to Tokyo in the capacity of Thai Ambassador to Japan, where he remained until the end of the war in 1945.⁵⁴² After the war, he, Phibun and over thirty others were jailed as war criminals. Luang Vichitr was sent to the Japanese prison outside Tokyo. However, he was soon extradited to a Thai prison where all war criminals were released a year later, when the war crimes act under which they had been held was pronounced unconstitutional.

6.2.1 Vijitsin Theatre Company: A Struggle for Survival?

After his release from prison in March 1946, Luang Vichitr did not get involved in politics immediately, choosing instead to keep a low profile. The post-war period was marked by disillusionment within the Thai people by many of the policies that had been promoted by Luang Vichitr and Phibun. Thailand was forced to return all the territories it had gained during the Second World War, and just barely escaped being treated as harshly as Germany and Japan. Thai people did not want to hear about politics and instead sought entertainment and romance.

It was also a period of personal difficulty for Luang Vichitr, who tried to generate income by writing popular novels. He was successful in doing so and gained a new reputation as Thailand's leading novelist. Amongst the most successful novels were *Huang Rak - Hew Lu'k* (Deeply in Love), *Fakfa Salawin* (The Skyline of Salawin) and *Banrang Chiangrung* (Chiangrung's Throne). Luang Vichitr and some of his former artists and actors also formed a theatre company called the Vijitsin. Similar to his novels, Luang Vichitr's plays were made for commercial rather than political purposes. Over three years, he was able to produce as many as ten plays, of which six were produced in one year alone: *Dap Saenmu'ang* (The Sword of Saenmu'ang) in 1946, *Chana Man* (Triumph over Evil) in 1947, *Sriharat Decho* (Sriharat Decho the Warrior) in 1947, *Jaoying Kannika* (Princess Kannika) in 1947, *Tai Dap Na* (Die in

⁵⁴² According to Charnvit, Japan was the first nation to raise diplomatic relations with Siam from ministerial to ambassadorial level. This move was psychologically very important and won over many Siamese leaders. *Ibid.*, p. 58. On Luang Vichitr's role in negotiations of foreign policy matters, see also Kobkua: 1995, pp. 262-273.

the Future) in 1947, *Lan Lu'at - Lan Rak* (The Field of Blood-The Field of Love), in 1947, *Petcharat-Patchara* (Petcharat-Patchara) in 1947, *Ru'ang Pikkhanet* (The Story of Pikkhanet) in 1948, *Khrut Dam* (Black Garuda) in 1948 and *Chok Chiwit* (Luck of Life) in 1948.⁵⁴³

However, compared to his fame before 1941, his popularity as a playwright had seriously declined and his plays were less successful than his books. The shortcomings of privilege and facility in this period hardly matched that he had enjoyed before. Even to stage a public performance, Luang Vichitr had to rely on renting a private venue at the Chaloem Nakho'n theatre house. Most of the income was spent on renting the venue, hiring actors and making stage properties and costumes. Actors who joined the Vijitsin were old students of his who admired his dramatic works and were less concerned about financial return. However, despite their loyalty, the Vijitsin's major stars were mere familiar old faces. At this time, many private theatre companies sprung up, each of which competitively promoted their new stars to attract the public. Many of them outshone the actors from the Fine Arts Department who had been previously admired by the public, but whose popularity was now in decline. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for Luang Vichitr to compete with rival theatre troupes. Artistically, his plays were hardly different to those he had produced during earlier periods. The main selling points of his plays were sentimentalism and a romantic theme. Although these plays put less stress on nationalist themes, many were still burdened with patriotic flavours. However, when the military became more active again in 1947, Luang Vichitr attempted to revert back to his 1930's style of propaganda plays. *Tai Dap Na* was written in 1947, and had the struggle of the Thais under Chinese rule as its main theme. However, according to Pra-onrat, the play flopped with the audience, which was still tired of nationalism and *Lakho'n Pluk Jai* (Nationalist Plays). The public was seeking entertainment and pleasure after several years of hardship brought on them by the war.

⁵⁴³ Pra-onrat provides a short analysis of the plays during this period. See Pra-onrat: 1985, pp. 110-119. See also Jiraporn: 1992, pp. 199-200. Jiraporn's analysis of the plays during this period is largely based on Pra-onrat's, but she also provides short summaries of the plays. Jiraporn: 1992, pp. 346-348.

Overall, the plays produced during this post-war period were not very successful and made a loss to the extent that Luang Vichitr almost had to sell his house.⁵⁴⁴ When Luang Vichitr produced plays during the 1930s and early 1940s, he had no serious competitors. This had changed with the collapse of Phibun's first administration. Many new theatre groups had sprung up, such as Nattayako'n, Phakawali and Wijitkasem as well as the Fine Arts Department, which was now under the directorship of a traditionalist who devoted most of his time to reviving Thai traditional performing arts and dance-dramas such as the *Lakho'n Ram* and *Khon*. Now that Luang Vichitr faced competitors which were capable of producing quality plays and catered to the modern taste of the audience, his plays failed with the audience. He also found it difficult to compete with the emerging Thai and foreign cinema as well as popular music ensembles. Furthermore, Luang Vichitr, lacking political status and unable to promote the themes of his plays through lectures and articles, did not have the official support that had contributed to his success after *Lu'at Suphan* in 1936. He also lacked the resources and specialists that had enabled him to produce the spectacular scenes and great performances that characterised his earlier plays.

6.3 The Anuphap Series: The Revival of Propaganda Theatre

In 1948, a group of military commanders staged a successful *coup d'état* against the then Prime Minister Luang Thamrong Nawasawat and invited Phibun to become Prime Minister. Phibun accepted, and his second premiership lasted until 1957.⁵⁴⁵ Phibun's second term was very different to his first, and his policies were much more cautious and subdued. Phibun now declared his determination to uphold democracy, support the

⁵⁴⁴ Sathian: 1962, p. 92. The other two plays during this period worthwhile of mentioning are *Sriharat Decho* and *Khrut Dam*. Both plays are reminiscent of the play *Luk Rattathammanun* which Luang Vichitr used to highlight his sometimes misunderstood contribution to the suppression of the Boworadet Rebellion and the promotion of the constitution for the nation's good. The two plays are about the unjust punishment of loyal warriors fighting for the good of the nation. Luang Vichitr used them to give his view on his own arrest after the war, which he felt was only because he had devoted his life to nationalism.

⁵⁴⁵ Phibun had been back into the political limelight by General Phin Chunhawan who staged a coup against the government that had been led by Pridi. Pridi had increasingly lost domestic and international support because of his close association with socialism. Kobkua: 1995, p. 3 and p. 22.

monarchy, protect Buddhism and eradicate communism.⁵⁴⁶ He no longer demonstrated his grand vision for the nation and, in particular, territorial expansion was no longer on his agenda. Instead, his main concern was political survival. Compared to his first administration, Phibun's hold on power was much weaker. He did not have direct control over the military. His premiership was largely attributable to a power struggle between the 1947 coup leaders, in particular Sarit Thanarat and Phao Sriyanon.⁵⁴⁷ The main policies during Phibun's second administration were the fighting of communism, supported by a pro-western foreign policy, and domestic policies aimed at strengthening Thai culture.

Between 1938 and 1944, Phibun had established himself as The Leader (*Phunam*). However, during his second premiership, he developed a new father-figure (*Pho'khun*) style of leadership.⁵⁴⁸ While similar in some aspects, the *Pho'khun* image was less fascistic than the *Phunam*, which aimed to gain public respect and obedience. Phibun was a leader and father who loved his people (in the manner of the ancient *Pho'khun*, the paternal King of which King Ramkhamhaeng was the archetype) and would protect them from evils such as communism. Cultural, social and religious programmes, many reminiscent of policies promoted during his first administration, were employed to strengthen the minds of the people against communism as well as to promote his father-style leadership.⁵⁴⁹ Phibun adopted this new approach to protect himself from

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3 and p. 24.

⁵⁴⁷ Wright: 1991, pp. 186-187.

⁵⁴⁸ "There was a marked difference in the implementation of leadership between his first administration and his second. The tactics and methods employed to promote the *Phunam* version of leadership were open and extensive, innovative and imaginative, dynamic and convincing, educational, and ideologically motivated. They also encompassed every aspect of the social, political, and cultural life of the indigenous society. Conversely, those employed to spread the Paw [Pho'] Khun version of leadership were subtly introduced, low-keyed, indirect, more defensive than dynamic, more traditional in their concept than innovative, and more self-centred than ideological." Kobkua: 1995, p. 84. See also Wright: 1991, pp. 187-189.

⁵⁴⁹ "To achieve this target, Phibun relied on his programmes of cultural revitalisation which stressed virtues such as filial piety, honesty, personal sacrifice, patriotism, and pride in the glorious past. Religion and art were also highlighted. To condition the public's mind to the Paw Khun leadership and the selected virtues, legendary and historical figures such as King Ramkhamhaeng and King Mengrai were introduced by the Luang Vichitr plays during that period. These plays depicted King Ramkhamhaeng and King Mengrai as having a benevolent and father-style leadership approach with which Phibun liked to compare his own style". Kobkua: 1995, p. 85-86.

In 1948, in order to create the organ to implement his policies, Phibun re-established the National Council for Culture which in 1952 became the Ministry of Culture. See Barmé on the continuing

the rivalry of Sarit and Phao, who were an increasing threat to his rule. Under the *Pho'khun* approach, Phibun also made himself appear as a patron of Buddhism, sponsoring the construction of new temples and the restoration of ancient shrines.

In 1950, Luang Vichitr was called back into service. Initially, he was appointed Acting Rector of Thammasat University where he was already giving lectures in Economic History. In 1951, Luang Vichitr fully returned to the political arena when he joined the cabinet as a Finance Minister and later as a Minister of Economic Affairs. However, the ministerial post was short-lived as he was soon appointed as Thai ambassador to India. It is not clear whether this amounted to a demotion or whether other reasons were behind this change of position. In any case, after his transfer to India Luang Vichitr assumed similar posts in Europe, where he would stay for as long as five years.

Between 1954 and 1957, Luang Vichitr assisted Phibun with the programme of revitalising Thai culture and tradition and glorifying the long history of the Thai nation. In the plays that emerged, the idea of *Pho'khun* was revived and Phibun was portrayed as the benevolent father of the Thai people. Luang Vichitr produced four full-length plays which addressed Thai traditional values and nationalism, all of which shared the same beginning word *Anuphap* (Power). They were (1) *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* (The Power of King Ramkhamhaeng) in 1954, (2) *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala* (The Power of Sacrifice) in 1955, (3) *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak* (The Power of Love) in 1956 and (4) *Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat* (The Power of Morality and Vow) in 1957. The first three plays addressed the establishment of the Thai nation as their main theme while the last play, *Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat*, stressed the importance of adhering to Buddhism. The year of the last play, 1957, marked the end of Luang Vichitr's alliance with Phibun.

influence that Phibun's institution has on Thailand: "More recently, two new cultural bodies, the Office of the National Culture Commission and the National Identity Board have been created within the Ministry of Education and the Prime Minister's Office respectively. These are highly conservative institutions whose functions are essentially concerned with defining and deploying official Thai culture; The establishment of such organisations is an interesting development and one which reflects the abiding influence of Wichit and the work he undertook on behalf of the state during the 1930s and early 1940s." Barmé: 1993, p. 163.

Although Luang Vichitr's *Anuphap* series promoted nationalism and stressed the importance of the nation above everything else, it did so this time as a weapon against communism - which was portrayed as being un-Thai or even anti-Thai. The plays were staged in a grandiose manner reminiscent of how they were performed in the 1930s and 40s. However, despite government support and much publicity, the plays, with the possible exception of the first (*Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*), did not receive the same overwhelming acclaim from the audience as those from the earlier period, nor did they have the same impact. They were also different in one important aspect: while in earlier periods Luang Vichitr's plays had helped to shape Phibun's thinking and popularised policies and ideas such as irredentism, the *Anuphap* plays were now supporting the policies of Phibun. A good example of how Luang Vichitr's role during this period had changed is the *Pho'khun* idea. While Phibun was undoubtedly influenced by Luang Vichitr's ideas about the Sukhothai era and used King Ramkhamhaeng as a role model as portrayed by Luang Vichitr during Phibun's first regime, Phibun now actually readopted Luang Vichitr's ideas without the latter having any significant input. Luang Vichitr was called on for assistance and was given a specific briefing to support Phibun's new image as the *Pho'khun*.

Anticipating the end of Phibun's power, and possibly also being dissatisfied with his not-so-significant role, Luang Vichitr began to side with Sarit Thanarat, Thailand's most powerful general at the time. He assisted Sarit Thanarat in drawing up a masterplan for a coup to overthrow Phibun's regime. Sarit had long respected and admired Luang Vichitr's ideas and works. He posted a personal letter to Luang Vichitr asking if he could draft several crucial documents for the revolutionary team, including an economic plan and the revolutionary's proclamations if the coup proved to become successful. Sarit was right in taking Luang Vichitr's advice, as he eventually staged a successful coup against Phibun in 1957. He immediately appointed Luang Vichitr as Deputy Director of the Revolutionary Headquarters (Civilian Section) and a Chairman of the Revolutionary Council's Committee for Educational Planning. However, the most striking post was that of "Pralat Banchakan", or Assistant to the Prime Minister, which held the same authority as the Prime Minister. Luang Vichitr would advise the Prime Minister in his state affairs and policy-making. His political career now had

reached the highest level, and he had much influence on Sarit who relied heavily on his opinions. Luang Vichitr was known to have drafted nearly all of Sarit's speeches and other government announcements. In 1962 Luang Vichitr died from a heart problem at the age of 63.

6.3.1 Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng (The Power of King Ramkhamhaeng, 1954)

Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng was very similar in its theme to the play *Pho'khun Phamu'ang*, which was produced during the first Phibun regime. One of the main objectives of the play was to stress that the Thai people living in Nakho'n Srithammarat, *i.e.* the South, have been part of Thailand for centuries since Nakho'n Srithammarat was liberated from foreign rule during the Sukhothai period by King Ramkhamhaeng.⁵⁵⁰ In addition, the play emphasised the benevolence of King Ramkhamhaeng, with which Phibun's leadership is associated, and the heroic deeds of Sams'o'n, one of King Ramkhamhaeng's soldiers.⁵⁵¹

The play begins with Sams'o'n arriving in Sukhothai with the intent to kill King Ramkhamhaeng in revenge for the murder of his father. Sams'o'n's plan is exposed by the King when Sams'o'n prays before a revered Buddha image while the King is hidden behind it. Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng reveals himself to Sams'o'n, who then attempts to kill him, but is captured by Pho'khun's soldiers. They intend to execute Sams'o'n, but Pho'khun stops them from doing so. After an interrogation, the King realises that Sams'o'n is strong-willed and shows deep gratitude to his father. The King thus decides to appoint Sams'o'n as one of his soldiers instead of killing him. Sams'o'n becomes one of the King's favourite soldiers and an indispensable force in many battles.

⁵⁵⁰ Wyatt suggests a rather different way in which Nakho'n Srithammarat became part of the Sukhothai empire. He also doubts whether King Ramkhamhaeng went to Nakho'n Srithammarat personally. David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, Yale University Press, 1984, pp. 55-56. Wyatt's work is in some areas now slightly out of date, but amongst English accounts of the whole of Thai history, it is probably still one of the best.

⁵⁵¹ For a full translation of the play, see Thak: 1987, pp. 744-794.

The next part of the play shows the benevolence of Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng when he is informed of the elopement of his daughter with Makatho, his trusted nobleman. Makatho is intercepted by Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng, but Pho'khun realises that Makatho intended to return his gratitude by conquering the country of the Mon. Impressed by Makatho's desire to become a great leader, Pho'khun allows Makatho to continue his mission. When learning about the romance between Sams'o'n and his niece, Pho'khun decides to prevent a similar incident by arranging a wedding for them. However, Sams'o'n feels so greatly indebted to Pho'khun that on his wedding night he decides to fulfil Pho'khun's wish to free Nakho'n Srithammarat from Sriwichai's rule. Sams'o'n confesses his plan to his newly wed wife and explains to her that he wants to give Nakho'n Srithammarat as gift to Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng. Sams'o'n's loyalty greatly impresses his wife and she decides to help him. Sams'o'n's mission to the South proves successful. Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng and his army arrive just in time to witness the liberation of Nakho'n Srithammarat. The play ends with Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng ordering the transfer of the revered Phra Phutthasihing Buddha image from Ceylon (which had been situated in Nakho'n Srithammarat), to be reinstalled in Sukhothai and everyone paying homage to this revered Buddha image.

The play stressed the benevolence and father-style leadership of Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng and the heroism of Sams'o'n who unites Nakho'n Srithammarat with Sukhothai by defeating Sriwichai. Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng shows mercy to Sams'o'n who had intended to kill him, and instead makes Sams'o'n one of his soldiers and accepts him as his nephew-in-law. The play is similar in some ways to the earlier play *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*. In *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang*, which also portrays the elopement of Makatho and Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng's daughter, King Ramkhamhaeng is depicted as a great ruler particularly concerned with expanding the territory under Sukhothai's rule. Reflecting the changing circumstances in the 1950s, when Thailand had no hope of gaining more territory (having just been humiliated by having to return all territories temporarily gained during the war), *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* is not about foreign territories but about the South at a time when it was still controlled by the foreign kingdom Sriwichai.

Samso'n's mission does not involve any expansion of Thai territory but is used to remind the audience, at the time of the communist threat and problems with Muslim resistance in the South, that the South was part of Thailand. Luang Vichitr makes the point that the Thais in the South always wanted to unite with the other branches of the Thai race. This is particularly stressed in a scene in which the governor of Nakho'n Srithammarat meets with a representative of Sriwichai who is dissatisfied because he is not co-operating with Sriwichai in controlling the unrest:

Governor: People in Nakho'n Srithammarat are Thais. They need to be free like the rest of the Thai family in the North. The best way (to put an end to the unrest) is for Sriwichai to grant independence to Nakho'n Srithammarat. If you do this, peace will come once again.

Representative: What you said, does it mean that you have lost all loyalty to Sriwichai?

Governor: Not at all. It doesn't mean we don't show our loyalty to Sriwichai now. The fact is that we never have been loyal to Sriwichai.

Apart from stressing the need to keep the Thai race united, the play also stresses that love for the nation is more important than anything else - one of the nationalist's favourite messages. This point is supported by Scene 3, which includes a dialogue between Samso'n and Benjamat on their wedding night. Samso'n, who feels deeply indebted to Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng for life and his niece's hand, reveals his plan to liberate Nakho'n Srithammarat, which is currently under Sriwichai's rule, and unite it with the Thais under Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng's rule. The dialogue stresses one of Luang Vichitr's favourite messages of how the nation must come before any individual love. After Samso'n has told her about his plan, Benjamat asks what Samso'n could possibly love more than her. Samso'n replies:

Samso'n: What I love more than you is the nation. I do apologise as it is not such a good idea to tell a woman this. It is common to reassure a woman that a man loves her more than the sky or heaven, and more than everything on this planet. But I want to be honest with you. Please let me have one more thing that I can love more than you - that is the nation.

Benjamat: I don't know. I want to love a husband more than a nation.

Samso'n: A husband is only a tiny unit of the whole nation. Why do you love only sawdust, not a tree? Why do you love a tiny pebble, not the whole

house. If the nation collapses, you will never know how to find your husband.

Although the tone of the play and the characterisation of Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng differed to *Phraratchathida Phraruang* in being less expansionist, Luang Vichitr still stressed to the audience that to create a strong nation, their forebears had to fight hard. In Scene 3, Benjamat is made to realise the importance of fighting in order to maintain the nation. The dialogue between Sams'o'n and Benjamat was intended to elicit an emotional impact on Thai audiences:

Benjamat: Why do people want to fight?
Sams'o'n: You should understand this better than I do.
Benjamat: Why?
Sams'o'n: Because you are the niece of King Ramkhamhaeng, the leader who brought greatness to the Thai nation. He bestowed the greatness of the Thai nation as an inheritance on us.
Benjamat: We must preserve this inheritance.
Sams'o'n: We won't be able to preserve it unless we enlarge it and make it stronger. If we are ignorant and only interested in pleasure, this inheritance will soon disappear. Letting that happen would be very sinful of us. I am not from Sukhothai. I even share the blood of those who are Sukhothai's enemies. Nonetheless, I still hold this belief. You are a Sukhothai citizen and the niece of King Ramkhamhaeng. Why don't you think the way I do?
Benjamat: I must confess that deep in my heart I begin to agree with what you have just said.
Sams'o'n: Let us think of the ancestors of the Thai nation who braved through adversities to build the nation. They were soaked in their sweat and bathed in blood in order to maintain the Thai nation.

According to Barmé, the play was praised by the Ministry of Culture, which was under the direct control of Phibun.⁵⁵² The play strongly supported Phibun's paternal leadership approach.⁵⁵³ King Ramkhamhaeng is referred to and refers to himself as

⁵⁵² Barmé: 1993, p. 163.

⁵⁵³ See also Thak: "*Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* was an attempt to recreate in simplified form the essence of Ramkhamhaeng's greatness and the traditional concept of Thai leadership. The play represented Luang Vichitr's latest ideas on the type of Thai leader who could make the country great and prosperous. Ramkhamhaeng was portrayed more as a very able leader than as a monarch. He was the father of his people and his benevolence was appreciated by all. He ruled with compassion and decisiveness, and his officials were told to treat those under their responsibilities as their own children. The benevolent paternalism of Ramkhamhaeng was like that of a father who has the interest of his children at heart and whose actions no matter how severe are carried out in good faith. Because of this, the king or *Pho'khun* could never become a

Pho'khun, the benevolent father of the Thais who is loved by all his subjects within the Thai domain:

Samso'n: You are Pho'khun!
Pho'khun: That is correct, I am Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng.
Samso'n: Ruler of Sukhothai?
Pho'khun: There is no ruler of Sukhothai, only father, father of the city and Pho'khun.

(In hatred Samso'n tries to attack Pho'khun but, after wounding several men, is captured by Pho'khun's soldiers. Pho'khun then tells his soldiers not to kill Samso'n.)

1st officer: This man should be executed.
Pho'khun: But I do not want him executed. I want to keep him.
2nd officer: He dared to attempt to kill the Pho'khun who is worshipped and beloved by all his subjects within the Thai domain. No one has ever dared to think of harming Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng.
Pho'khun: That is precisely why I want to raise him. He is different from others. Release him and tend to the wounded.

According to the Ministry, so many people had flocked to see the play that regular performances could not cope with the overwhelming demand. The Ministry therefore had to increase the number of performances.⁵⁵⁴ Luang Vichitr made every effort to make a successful return to the theatre stage. Being his first officially sanctioned play for many years, he incorporated many dramatic techniques and much stage spectacle. He started with the *Chak Nam* in which more fantastical dresses were used. For example, dancers wear costumes of fish, fruits and wheat while dancing to the modern song *Nai Nam Mi Pla - Nai Na Mi Khaow* (In the Water, there are Fishes - In the Field, there is Rice). The song sends a message about the happiness of the citizens of Sukhothai who enjoyed a good living standard with plenty of food. After the dance, the dancers dressed as villagers come to the front of the stage and begin to read the

tyrant. Under the *Pho'-Luk* principle, the benevolence of the *Pho'* was axiomatic and an intrinsic part of the leader's nature." Thak Chaloemtiarana, "The Sarit Regime 1957-1963: The Formative Years of Modern Thai Politics," *PhD Thesis*, Cornell University, 1974, p. 238.

⁵⁵⁴ "Jaeng Khwam Krasuang Watthanatham Ru'ang Chomchoey Phupraphan Bot Lakho'n Ru'ang Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng" (Announcement of Ministry of Culture on Praising the Author of the Play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*), *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 71 (August 1954), p. 1807-8, quoted in Chaliew: 1974.

stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng, which outlines some historical background of the King before the actual performance begins.

In order to emphasise the good things in Sukhothai, short shows are performed during the interludes. In *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*, there are three interludes, the first of which occurs after the end of the first scene. A bell dance depicts the justice system employed during Sukhothai, in which King Ramkhamhaeng ordered a bell to be hung in front of the palace so that the people could come to petition by ringing the bell. The second interlude show appears after Scene 3. The dance imitates Western ballet, accompanying the song *Phap Thoe* (Her Picture), a Thai adaptation of France's *Million D' Arlequin*. The dancers finally unfold pictures of Thai flags and the song is sung to remind the audience to keep that picture in their hearts. The last interlude show is a dance to the patriotic song *Ton Trakun Thai* (Thai Ancestors). The song stresses the bravery of Thai forebears in their fighting against the country's enemies to protect the sovereignty of Thailand. The new generation should therefore follow in their footsteps.

Another new technique was the use of flashbacks during the play. The first flashback occurs when Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng tries to explain to Sams'o'n why he had to kill Sams'o'n's father. Instead of simply relating the story, Luang Vichitr enacted a flashback which summarised the elephant-back battle during which Sams'o'n's father was killed by Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng to protect his own father, Pho'khun Sri Intharathit. The fight is described in poetical narration and accompanied by traditional dance. A second flashback is used to tell Sams'o'n how Makatho used a single coin given to him to build a huge garden. The scene stresses that King Ramkhamhaeng is less impressed by Makatho's and Sams'o'n's military campaigns than by Sams'o'n's innovation and willingness to take the initiative and build a nation (or a garden in the first instance). The ending also uses a new technique to create excitement and variation. It imitates a Western-style finale in which the whole cast appears on stage and sings selected patriotic songs.

6.3.2 Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala (The Power of Sacrifice, 1955)

Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala is about King Mengrai's mission to unite Hariphunchai (or Lamphun) with other Thai states of Lanna in order to create one great Thai nation in the North. Luang Vichitr originally entitled the play *Pho'khun Mengrai* (King Mengrai) because he aimed to glorify King Mengrai's act in uniting the Lanna kingdom. However, the title was later changed to *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*, possibly because he wanted to include the play in the series about the establishment of Thailand and promote the importance of making sacrifices - a message which Luang Vichitr had endlessly stressed in many of his earlier plays.

King Mengrai orders Khun Fa, the hero, to carry out the unification mission. He instructs Khun Fa to avoid any bloodshed. Before he sets off to Hariphunchai, the King reminds Khun Fa that the success of the mission depends on the power of sacrifice. The mission for Khun Fa is to serve under Phraya Yiba, the King of Hariphunchai, until he is fully trusted. Then, Khun Fa would use this trust to oust Phraya Yiba. During the mission, however, Khun Fa falls in love with a courtier, Jammari, who is suspicious of the real purpose of his presence in Hariphunchai. She wants him to leave Hariphunchai for Sukhothai with her. Blinded and almost overpowered by love, Khun Fa almost abandons his mission. Khun Phan, his close friend, intervenes. In Scene 2, Khun Phan reminds Khun Fa that he is about to break his vow by giving up his duty because of a woman. Khun Fa reacts strongly, demonstrating that in his heart he still values duty over love for a woman:

Khun Fa: What makes you suspect that I may value a love for a woman more than a government's duty?

Khun Phan: The human heart is not very easy to control.

.....

Khun Fa: If some day you see me love a woman more than my duty, that day you can slash me with your sword.

Khun Phan captures Jammari and leads her away. Khun Fa believes that Jammari is dead and an argument between the two breaks out. This scene is then used to stress the power of sacrifice. At the moment Khun Fa almost abandons his duty, he suddenly

recollects King Mengrai's words teaching him to hold a belief in the power of sacrifice in order to achieve a great task:

King Mengrai: Khun Fa, you are a clever man. You have fulfilled many tasks. I assign one more task to you to figure out how you can unite Hariphunchai with Lanna without any bloodshed. . . . Don't forget that this is an important mission for the nation and can only be achieved by the power of sacrifice. A sacrifice is something that has a lot of power. The power of sacrifice will always inspire you to accomplish all the tasks.

Remembering King Mengrai's words, Khun Fa finally gives up his beloved woman (although he thinks she is dead) to complete the mission of unifying the two kingdoms. Meanwhile, Khun Phan travels with Jammari to Chiang Rai to report to King Mengrai. He urges the King to send an army to Hariphunchai to remove Phraya Yiba. With the help of Khun Fa, King Mengrai's army triumphs over Hariphunchai without any bloodshed. Khun Fa is appointed as the new ruler of Hariphunchai, and King Mengrai builds a new city named Nakho'nphing Chiang Mai. At the end, Khun Fa reveals his desire to unite Hariphunchai with Lanna to strengthen the Thai nation.

In the preface of *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*, Luang Vichitr wrote that the play was based on ideas taken from a chronicle of the North, *Phongsawadan Yonok* (Chronicle Yonok). According to him, the chronicle mentioned King Mengrai wishing to unite Hariphunchai without resorting to war. King Mengrai plotted a conspiracy by sending his minister to destroy the Hariphunchai people's faith in their leader so that his military mission would face minimal resistance. Despite additional dramatisation, including a love story and other episodes in the plot, Luang Vichitr was able to convince the audience that the play faithfully followed the development of King Mengrai's mission.⁵⁵⁵ The most important issue that he intended to raise in this play was the ardent effort and sacrifice of a person attempting to unite the Thai nation.

⁵⁵⁵ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Lakho'n Ru'ang Pho'khun Mengrai" (King Mengrai, a playtext). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, 1955.

King Mengrai's reign falls into the same period as Sukhothai under King Ramkhamhaeng. The timing allows Luang Vichitr to conclude that King Ramkhamhaeng and King Mengrai were carrying out the same mission (uniting the Thai race and nation) but they divided their responsibilities by looking after the South and the North respectively. This message is evident in the play when King Mengrai reveals his plan to unite Hariphunchai with Lanna, the same task that King Ramkhamhaeng has carried out in the South:

- Pho'khun: I try to unite all Thai regions for no other reason than to build a strong Thai Kingdom.
- Minister 1: We do understand your reasons well.
- Pho'khun: King Sriintrathit has built a strong Sukhothai Kingdom. His son, King Ramkhamhaeng, who has just reigned for 3-4 years and who is much younger than me, is very capable and every day that passes by Sukhothai becomes more prosperous and strong. Our Lanna Kingdom must not fall behind Sukhothai.
- Minister 1: Have you ever suspected that one day Sukhothai under King Ramkhamhaeng and our Lanna Kingdom may have to fight.
- Pho'khun: I have never worried about this. Sukhothai has never encroached Lanna. The Sukhothai and Lanna kingdoms should be friends because we have pursued the same task of building a firm root for the Thai nation. King Ramkhamhaeng manages the South and I manage the North. Finally, both kingdoms will be united as one Thai kingdom.

Although *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala* contains less stage spectacle than the previous play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*, its *Chak Nam* contains a more significant message than any other play of the period. In the *Chak Nam*, Luang Vichitr's dubious version of Thai history is related through a live show. He creates a *rendezvous* scene in which different Thai branches come alive on stage and talk about how they have come to occupy their land. The dancers represent each of the Thai regions: Central Thai, Lanna Thai, Greater Thai, Thai of Lan Chang, Thai Ahom, and Thai of Sipso'ng Chu Thai, and are all dressed in their regional costumes. A dancer who represents a Central Thai or a Thai of modern times poses a question to the representative of each Thai branch:

- Central Thai: Are you a Thai Ahom?
- Thai Ahom: Yes, we are Thai Ahom. We live in Assam, a region which is in today's India.
-

Central Thai: Are you the Greater Thais?
 Greater Thai: Yes, we are the Greater Thais. We are slightly different to you because you are the Lesser Thais. But we all are part of the Thai race.

.....

Central Thai: What about you? Which Thai branch do you represent?
 Thai of Sipsong Chu Thai: We are Thais of the Sipsong Chu Thai. In fact, we are the forebears of all of you.

Central Thai: What do you mean by that?
 Thai of Sipsong Chu Thai: Because the Thais of Lan Chang, the Thais of Lanna and the Thais in Thailand are all descendants of the Thais of Sipsong Chu Thai.

6.3.3 Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak (The Power of Love, 1956)

Luang Vichitr was commissioned by Phibun to produce a play about the fifth son of King Bo'rom, who founded the Thai Kingdom at Ayuthaya.⁵⁵⁶ *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak* is the last play about the establishment of the ancient Thai kingdom. Like its two predecessors, its main purpose was to glorify the past of the Thai nation. Its secondary message was the need to sacrifice personal love for the nation.

The play is about Nguain, the fifth son of King Bo'rom of Sipsong Chu Thai, who is sent on a mission to help King Bo'rom to establish an independent Thai state in Ayuthaya. In order to do so, King Bo'rom requires the help and resources of the Lawo kingdom in the South. Like King Mengrai of *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*, King Bo'rom wants to achieve this without shedding too much blood. He therefore asks the King of Lan Chang, Khun Lo', who is his eldest son, to send his younger brother, Nguain, to Lawo. He wants Nguain to marry Princess Jutharat in the hope that the marriage will inspire the King of Lawo to send Nguain to head another Southern state of Ayuthaya. However, Nguain falls in love with the wrong woman. This occurs because when he arrives, Princess Jutharat plays a game by impersonating Manlika, her close friend. Khu'an Phet, a close friend of Nguain and part of the mission, falls deeply in love with the Princess, not knowing who she really is. Nguain on the other hand, falls in love with Manlika, believing that she is the Princess. The situation starts to get out of hand when Lan Chang's representatives impress the King of Lawo during a

⁵⁵⁶ Pra-onrat: 1985, p. 131.

successful battle against an enemy of Lawo. In order to reward Lan Chang, the King of Lawo asks Khun Lo' how he can reward them. In reply, Khun Lo' urges the King of Lawo to marry his daughter to Prince Nguain. However, it is too late to change his daughter's mind as she is deeply in love with Khu'an Phet. The truth is revealed and to solve the situation, Khu'an Phet volunteers to join another battle. He promises to vanish or even die so that the Princess can eventually change her mind and save the relationship between Lan Chang and Lawo by marrying Nguain.

Princess Jutharat continues to reject the wedding proposal as her heart is still with Khu'an Phet, who is feared dead. To resolve the situation, the King adopts Manlika as his daughter and weds her to Prince Nguain. He later appoints them to be the king and queen of Ayuthaya as recommended by Princess Jutharat. Meanwhile, Khu'an Phet survives, but is badly injured. Unaware of this, Princess Jutharat begs her father to set up a wedding ceremony with Khu'an Phet's spirit. The King starts to pity his daughter and tells her that Khu'an Phet is still alive. At the end, Khu'an Phet and Princess Jutharat are reunited and the King performs a wedding rite to them.

In order to echo the theme about the power of love, Luang Vichitr enacted a dialogue between the Princess of Lawo and Khu'an Phet, a soldier of Lan Chang. In Scene 8, after Khu'an Phet volunteers to subdue Lawo's enemy, he comes to meet the princess in the garden and tells her that he is prepared to die in the battlefield because of his love for her:

Princess: That is a very light reason for your sacrifice in the war.

Khu'an Phet: That isn't a light reason. A warrior can die for something he loves, be it the nation, his family, his dignity, or his ideology. If we are not willing to die for something that we love, we can't see any reason why we should die. Only love has the power that can motivate people's willingness to die. There is nothing else that holds a strong power which encourages people to die.

Princess: Is there any thing else?

Khu'an Phet: People are talking about sacrifice. We believe in the power of sacrifice but don't forget that people could only sacrifice for something they love. If not for a love of one thing or another, then people will never make sacrifices.

Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak was the last of the *Anuphap* series and the last to glorify Thailand's past. Of the three plays, it appeared to be least well written, but it introduced some new techniques and boasted considerable spectacle. In the preface of the play, Luang Vichitr wrote that he was finally ready to apply a technique he had seen in France.⁵⁵⁷ This new technique was used between Scene 2 and Scene 3, which are set in the royal garden and the palace's hall respectively. Although the technique is not described anywhere in detail, it was probably the use of a rotating stage. In addition, Luang Vichitr also copied a new technique from Vienna. It involved the construction of very large background scenery which was used throughout the play (only items in front of the background scenery were changed from one scene to another). Again, Luang Vichitr was able to draw on official support and resources to create spectacle in his plays, without changing the underlying traditional approach.

6.3.4 Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat (The Power of Morality and Vow, 1957)

Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat was written in support of Phibun's policy to use Buddhism to promote nationalism and himself (as the protector of Buddhism). The timing of the play coincides with 2500th year of the Buddhist calendar and thus the play had a special meaning. The play demonstrates how the five Buddhist principles (*Sin Ha*) help resolve problems and protect those who observe them. Khwanchai, a young soldier, wants to practice Buddhism. He is recommended by an old man to uphold the five Buddhist principles: not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie and not to consume alcohol. Strictly following these principles, says the old man, will help Khwanchai to overcome any adversities.

Khwanchai is later taken to Phathai mansion to see Phraya Phathai, the ailing owner of the house. Phraya Phathai forces Khwanchai to marry his niece, Unru'an, reasoning that it is the only way to preserve his wealth. He wants to prevent Unru'an marrying the heir of the rival family because all the family assets will be transferred to them. Khwanchai upholds the Buddhist principles, and soon Phraya Phathai dies. The

⁵⁵⁷ Vichitr Vadakarn, "Bot Lakho'n Kiewkap Ru'ang Tang Anajak Ayothaya" (Draft Script of the Play about the Establishment of the Ayuthaya Kingdom). Mimeograph. Vichitr Vadakarn Room, Thailand National Library, 1956.

saddened Unru'an cannot do anything apart from asking Khwanchai to stay with her for the time being, at least to put her uncle's spirit in peace. She advises him that to avoid any scandal, Khwanchai should disguise himself as a woman.

Khwanchai now acts as a female friend of Unru'an. He becomes popular as he helps to teach the Phathai residents the art of sword fighting. On one occasion, Unru'an's lover wants to show off his own skills and challenges Khwanchai, but he is completely humiliated by Khwanchai's superior ability. One day, the city is attacked by its enemy. Khwanchai rushes to join the army, which is led by Unru'an's lover, now governor of the city. He saves the governor's life and eventually leads a successful fight against the enemy and saves the city. However, the governor wants to claim the victory for himself and forces Khwanchai to co-operate. Khwanchai categorically refuses, arguing that he has to uphold the Buddhist principle of not lying. The governor takes Khwanchai prisoner and soon afterwards, the governor finds out that Unru'an's female friend is in fact Khwanchai. He condemns Unru'an for shamelessly staying with a man and decides not to marry her. Unru'an now wants to teach the governor a lesson. Her plot involves staging another attack on the city. There are not enough men to fight and the cowardly governor is eventually forced to free Khwanchai so that he can protect him again. When everyone realises his cowardice, the truth is exposed and the governor is disgraced. After he apologises to everyone, he starts to follow Khwanchai's path by observing the five Buddhist principles. Khwanchai bids farewell to all and makes his way back to his humble home after refusing any reward. Upon his departure, he promises to come back whenever they need help and thanks the old man for teaching him how to uphold the five Buddhist principles.

Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat was perhaps the least popular play of the period. Although the title of the play includes the word *Anuphap* it has nothing to do with the establishment of the ancient Thai kingdoms. The main point of the play was to promote Buddhism. Luang Vichitr characterises the main protagonist, Khwanchai, as a man who firmly upheld the five Buddhist principles:

Unru'an: I am prepared to make this sacrifice (of marrying you) to save your life and satisfy my uncle.

- Khwanchai: To make a sacrifice is a good thing, but we should do it only to uphold the five principles. You already have a lover and you shouldn't make a sacrifice for me, not for a man whom you have just met. Myself, I have just vowed to uphold the five Buddhist principles which may make sacrifice necessary. If I have to die, I am prepared to do so.
- Unru'an: I will always remember that you had to suffer because of me.
- Khwanchai: Well, it is not certain yet that I have to die or suffer because of you. If we firmly uphold the Buddhist principles, any difficulty can be overcome.

However, the play does not seem to give strong support to the religious message. While Khwanchai appears to be guided by the five principles, the message gets rather lost amidst the adventures and events. The Buddhist messages that Luang Vichitr inserted did not mix well with the plot which had been partially borrowed from an unnamed German play.⁵⁵⁸ The Buddhist values appearing in the play are certainly different to the values portrayed in the German original.⁵⁵⁹

6.4 Conclusions

Between the production of *Lu'at Suphan* in 1936 and *Pho'khun Phamu'ang* in 1941, Luang Vichitr's plays had significant influence on the Thai people's perception of their own history, the Thai race and Thai culture. The plays and other activities by Luang Vichitr, notably his written articles, speeches and radio broadcasts, created mass support for irredentism. Most of his plays were precursors to policies later officially adopted by the government, and in some cases they gave further support to policies already in place. As Phibun's power rose, leading to his first premiership in 1938, Luang Vichitr's plays increasingly benefited from official support and were able to

⁵⁵⁸ Vichitr Vadakarn's personal letter to his son Vicharat, 18 May 1957, *Vichitr Vadakarn Anuso'n*, 1962, p. 145.

⁵⁵⁹ The year in which the play was produced had significant implications to Phibun's policy. Phibun organised a nation-wide celebration of the Twenty-fifth Centenary of the Buddhist era, advertising himself as the promoter and protector of the religion.

See also Kobkua: "Religion was significantly employed to illustrate Phibun's enormous field of merit, understood in the context of Buddhist teaching to be a source of political legitimacy. Phibun was most visible in the traditional role of merit-making through the government's programmes of temple building and restoring, of the King's 'entering monkhood' ceremony, the grand-scale celebration of the Twenty-fifth Centenary of the Buddhist Era, and others - all of which indicated his vast store of merit befitting the champion or patron of the religion, and the concept of a great leader in the Buddhist tradition." Kobkua: 1995, p. 86. See also Thak: 1987, pp. 716-717 and pp. 726-730.

reach the majority of Thailand's population. With the fall of the first Phibun administration in 1944, Japan's loss of the war and the forced relinquishment of territories, many Thai people were disillusioned with the policies promoted by Luang Vichitr and Phibun. After his release from prison in 1946, Luang Vichitr had to revert to writing popular novels and staging commercial plays in the name of his own Vjitsin theatre.

In the post-war period people were tired of propaganda plays, partly because the policies they promoted were unsuccessful, leading to the Alliance Pact with Japan and later the declaration to side with the Allies. This was therefore a period during which Luang Vichitr was not very involved in politics and while his plays were still nationalistic in flavour, their main selling points were romance, adventure and escapism. The impact of his plays, and even their popularity, was significantly reduced without the direct official support and resources from the Fine Arts Department. Luang Vichitr now also faced significant competition from other theatre groups as well as the emergence and escalating popularity of Thai and Western cinema and television. Under these circumstances, his plays flopped at the box offices and caused him to suffer substantial losses.

Luang Vichitr was called to assist Phibun for a second time in 1954 while he was an ambassador in Switzerland. Phibun did not have direct control over the military and his power was often challenged by the rising influential military personnel. In addition, young King Phumiphol and his beautiful wife were competing with Phibun for popularity among the Thai people.⁵⁶⁰ Many of Phibun's socio-cultural policies in this period were carried out with caution and discretion. Although Phibun revived the idea of nationalism in his second administration, this time it was not to promote irredentism, but instead to fight against communism. Another rationale behind Phibun's new policies was to promote himself as a benevolent father-like leader of the Thai people. This was supposed to differentiate him from the recently returned King Phumiphol and from his rivals Phao and Sarit. When Phibun commissioned Luang Vichitr to write new plays, he apparently did not give him a free hand. This was a significant change to the

⁵⁶⁰ Wright: 1991, pp. 193-194.

previous period, in which Luang Vichitr was able to shape the thinking of Phibun and many of his plays were precursors of policies and decrees later declared by the government.

While the first play of the *Anuphap* series may have been reasonably or even very successful, overall, the impact of the plays during Phibun's second administration was not comparable to their impact during the 1930s and 40s. Luang Vichitr was given all the support and resources required and he continued to use his old recipe of a "total work of arts" with substantial spectacle on stage and the introduction of new techniques. However, artistically - and even in their content - his plays had not developed very much. A number of factors contributed to the comparatively low impact of the plays. Most of the time Luang Vichitr was based in Europe, and he therefore did not have the personal contact required for supervising the staging of his plays (with the possible exception of *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*). Competition for the audience's attention had also increased. Cinema, and more recently, television, had become even more popular than they had been during the immediate post-war period. These developments had changed the expectations and aesthetic tastes of the audience. Luang Vichitr, who had originally introduced the audience to realism in plays, could no longer keep up with the changes in tastes he had instigated. It is not suggested that the plays had no impact at all, but their lack of influence does perhaps partially explain why Luang Vichitr produced no more plays after 1957.

Conclusions

This research showed how Luang Vichitr used theatre to disseminate his ideas and nationalist ideology. From a young age Luang Vichitr, then still known by his real name Kimliang, proved himself to be an ambitious person who used his literary skills and willingness to work hard to advance himself. From the study of Luang Vichitr's early life and works it was demonstrated that he was not deterred by obstacles and used every means available to achieve his aims. Early on he began to publish many articles and books and gained wide recognition for his writings on subjects like psychology, the power of the mind and history. Many of his works were not original, but showed his great ability to draw on various subjects and blend foreign and Thai sources together successfully. His writing on self-advancement and the importance of emulating role-models later developed into the concept of the "human revolution" which became an important element of his nationalist ideology whereby the individual should seek self-improvement in order to advance the nation. His ideas and his nationalist ideology gained popularity amongst the military and consequently Phibun Songkhram became one of his most important supporters. As Luang Vichitr gained wider recognition, his ambition and aims became increasingly politically oriented and he became increasingly vocal in expressing his views. His breakthrough may have come when he was able to prove himself to those he wanted to be associated with by showing his understanding of how to influence the masses during the Boworadet Rebellion. After this event, his popularity with the military and parts of the government greatly increased.

Luang Vichitr realised the power of the arts, particularly drama, for propaganda. Although he had achieved a wide readership for his works and articles, he knew that the impact of drama could be much greater. He wanted to use plays to disseminate his ideas and ideology to a wide audience and thus saw the position of the Director-General of Fine Arts Department as a great opportunity. Immediately after his appointment, Luang Vichitr set up the Drama and Music School, despite having no relevant experience in this field. His ideas for the Fine Arts Department and particularly the School were strongly influenced by the German Ministry of Popular Entertainment

and Propaganda, which had been placed under the control of the Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's chief propagandist. His early plays were essentially experimental and not particularly successful. However, they contained many of the messages that would later provide the foundation of the Phibun government's thinking and policies. *Luk Ratthathammanun*, his experiment with a purely spoken play, stressed the importance of the constitution, while *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap*, his first historical play, was used to disseminate messages about the importance of unity amongst Thai people and the importance of courage and sacrifice for the nation, and gave a first indication about what would later turn into his influential irredentism, the idea of a grand Thai nation uniting all Thai races. *Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap* and *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* provide good examples of Luang Vichitr's masterly use of snippets of historical facts or even myths for his nationalist purposes, thus creating a distorted version of Thai history which the unsuspecting audience accepted as reality and which still continues to be believed by many Thai people today. Finally, *Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang* attempted to create an image of a modern nation with a long and continuous history that could be traced back to the Sukhothai empire. Although Luang Vichitr's early plays were not very successful, they nevertheless enabled him to experiment with different dramatic elements and plots, and their messages made him popular with many in the military.

With *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr was able to achieve his major breakthrough. Phibun, who was already known to be a great admirer of Luang Vichitr's productions, was particularly impressed by *Lu'at Suphan* and its effectiveness in spreading nationalism. *Lu'at Suphan* was successful because of its exciting plot and because it satisfied the expectations of the audience. Luang Vichitr's earlier plays had not made use of romance and the melodramatic conflict between love, and duty and patriotism. This was a major omission as Thai people have a strong preference for stories with romantic plots, as traditional Thai dance-drama typically included some kind of romantic relationship to entertain the audience. In creating *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr drew on both traditional and modern elements and combined Thai and foreign influences. Dance and music, the key elements of Thai theatre, combined with emotional songs, greater realism and spectacle, played an important role. In particular, the introduction of

emotional patriotic songs that supported the nationalist messages became a highly successful feature of his plays and the song *Lu'at Suphan* is still very familiar to many Thais. In order to achieve this, Luang Vichitr did not create any innovations himself but relied heavily on the ideas introduced in modernised classical theatre which had emerged during Rama V's reign, particularly the *Lakho'n Ro'ng*. However, by further introducing new techniques, borrowing from popular performing arts, using an exciting faster-moving plot, and mixing the elements in an entertaining way, *Lu'at Suphan* and other plays to follow superseded the dramatic forms they drew from. To the present-day audience, Luang Vichitr's plays may look like a pot-pourri of different elements combined without artistic unity. However, he showed his understanding of the nature and aesthetic expectations of the public at that time, and although the individual artistic elements do not appear to fit together, the play as a whole had sufficient cohesiveness and was very entertaining. Luang Vichitr's theatrical contribution was to create a new theatre genre which was more spectacular and, most importantly, more realistic.

However, Luang Vichitr's ultimate achievement was to create a successful dramatic formula that was well suited to disseminating his messages. The patriotic songs underpinned the dialogues of the characters and remained in the minds of the audience long after the play. He used techniques such as soliloquy to connect with the audience and amplify the messages. Using a female leading character was particularly effective and was used in several other plays. Not only was he able to arouse nationalistic feelings amongst his female audience, but this technique also achieved a strong impact on the male audience, which was led to feel that if a woman can do an act of heroism, a man should also be able to do it or even better it. Anachronisms, such as the knowledge of present day facts, and the use of contemporary Central Thai spoken by all characters made the stories more intelligible and familiar to their audience and enabled Luang Vichitr to transmit values, ideas, and sentiment. Another technique that was further developed to make the plays more effective for propaganda was the *Chak Nam* (introductory scene). Starting with *Lu'at Suphan*, Luang Vichitr incorporated introductory scenes in which the historical background and main messages of the play were read out to the audience. In *Jaoying Saenwi*, Luang Vichitr further developed

this technique by using actors to discuss the background of the plays, which made the scene livelier and the transfer of messages more subtle and effective.

The messages contained in *Lu'at Suphan* were very popular with the military. The play stressed the importance of duty and sacrifice, particularly towards the nation. It also made the point that armament was very important because the villagers had only lost in battle because of their lack of weapons. *Lu'at Suphan's* success with the audience, the military, officials, members of the government and Phibun was very important because it gave a significant boost to Luang Vichitr's authority and influence. *Lu'at Suphan* became compulsory viewing for many officials, students and pupils, and several films related to or based on *Lu'at Suphan* were produced. The plays that followed built on the success and dramatic formula of *Lu'at Suphan*. These enabled Luang Vichitr to publicly express and disseminate his views on various issues such as human revolution (*Su'k Thalang*), irredentism and racial unification (*Ratchamanu*), policy towards the Chinese (*Phrajao Krungthon*), economic self-reliance (*Su'k Thalang*), and the need to build battleships and strengthen the armed forces in general to an ever increasing audience. *Ratchamanu* in particular was a masterpiece of manipulation of history for propaganda and gave a significant boost to his causes of irredentism and racial unification which gained substantial support amongst the military and with Phibun. However, from a dramatic point of view, his determination to insert nationalist propaganda messages into the plays reduced their overall quality. *Su'k Thalang* and *Phrajao Krungthon* in particular became too complicated, disjointed, and overloaded. Nonetheless, the plays remained popular because of the increased use of songs and dance, and the addition of popular dramatic elements which made the plays more spectacular and entertaining.

By the time Phibun came to power, Luang Vichitr had established himself as an authority in the field of drama. The direct support that Luang Vichitr's plays lent to the government's policies substantially increased under the leadership of Phibun. It has been shown that the cultural policies, irredentism and the drive for racial unification (*Ratchamanu* and *Jaoying Saemwi*) were based on ideas and concepts developed by Luang Vichitr and propagated by him through his plays. In his other official positions

(he chaired, for example, the Committee for Cultural Mandates), Luang Vichitr was able to implement ideas that he had presented in earlier plays or use plays to give further support if required. For example in the play *Nanjao*, he used a large map showing the migration of Thai ancestors from Southern China to the Golden Peninsula as well as anachronistic devices to give the impression that contemporary Thailand was facing a similar situation to one that had occurred in the past and had to make a stand against its foreign and internal enemies (particularly the French and the Chinese). The anti-Chinese message of *Nanjao* related to the government's anti-Chinese policies. *Nanjao* and certain other plays also contained scenes in which characters dressed in modern (Western) outfits in order to provide support to the planned Cultural Mandate on how to dress.

During Phibun's first premiership, Luang Vichitr's plays received significant official support, which undoubtedly contributed towards the widespread success of his plays. However, it was shown that the plays would not have enjoyed their continued popularity without Luang Vichitr's recognition that their entertainment value was more important than their artistic content. Adopting the style of Goebbels, Nazi-Germany's chief propagandist, Luang Vichitr used very simple, even naive, stories, language and songs to convey his messages but at the same time, in most of his plays, he was able to ensure that the plays were entertaining. As long as the plays were entertaining and spectacular, the people would come to see them. His plays therefore had more of a historical-cum-political value than artistic value, but they were more effective than King Vajiravudh's spoken propaganda plays, which failed to attract the general population, and were dull in comparison. After 1940, Luang Vichitr produced no further plays, but through the use of plays he had achieved his aims and assumed various important positions, such as that of Foreign Minister and later Ambassador to Japan.

After the Second World War, Luang Vichitr did not have any official position. He initially failed to recognise the changed mood of the public which, after the hardship of the war, sought light entertainment rather than nationalistic plays. Moreover, without the official support and access to resources that he had enjoyed as Director of the Fine

Arts Department, Luang Vichitr was unable to respond to significant competition from other theatre groups as well as the emergence and escalating popularity of Thai and Western cinema and television. Under these circumstances, his plays flopped at the box office and Luang Vichitr had to revert to writing popular novels until Phibun returned to power in 1957. During Phibun's second regime, many of Luang Vichitr's ideas were revived by Phibun and used to counter separatism and communism and as well as to support Phibun's authority. Phibun, however, did not allow Luang Vichitr to regain the pivotal position he had held during 1938-1943, instead sending him to Switzerland as Ambassador. His abilities to influence the masses were called into service again to simply follow Phibun's specific instructions on how to support the latter's leadership and fight communism and separatism. On Phibun's behalf, Luang Vichitr produced four plays during this period. *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*, for example, supported Phibun's leadership by associating it with the benevolent father-style leadership of King Ramkhamhaeng. While *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* was reasonably successful, overall, the impact of the plays produced during Phibun's second administration was not comparable to those written during the 1930s and 40s. Although Luang Vichitr was given all the support and resources he required and was able to create great stage spectacles, artistically his plays had not developed very much. Luang Vichitr's plays did not keep up with the changes in aesthetic concepts that he himself had instigated and could not compete with the increasing popularity of other forms of entertainment.

In 1957, with Luang Vichitr's help, Sarit overthrew Phibun and made Luang Vichitr his right hand man. Luang Vichitr produced no further plays. However, his plays are still occasionally staged at the National Theatre and many of his cultural policies and ideas on the history of the Thai people are still deeply entrenched in modern Thai society. This can be observed from the continued practice of saluting the tricolour flag in the morning and evening, the singing of the national anthem by school children and the way Thai people dress in western clothes despite the tropical heat. Moreover, government bodies such as the National Identity Board continue to promote an official version of Thai Culture and institutions, such as the army schools, the Nattasin school, the National Theatre and the National Library, and are still extremely conservative and

remain uncritical of his legacy. The National Library even inaugurated a room in honour of Luang Vichitr, which is used to protect his works from physical and intellectual attack. Luang Vichitr's legacy is still particularly strong in the minds of many politicians, members of the military and government officials. This research has shown how Luang Vichitr was able to create this lasting influence on Thai culture, society and politics. He produced a vast amount of written works, many of which are still popular, but it was his use of plays which enabled him to successfully transmit his ideas and values.

Appendices

Appendix I: List of Luang Vichitr's Main Plays

	Experimental Plays
1934	<i>Luk Rattathammanun</i> (Children of the Constitution) <i>Phra Naresuan Prakat Itsaraphap</i> (King Naresuan Declares Independence) <i>Phra Ratchathida Phra Ruang</i> (Phra Ruang's Daughter)
	Full-length Plays Prior to Phibun I
1936	<i>Lu'at Suphan</i> (The Blood of Suphan) <i>Ratchamanu</i> (Ratchamanu)
1937	<i>Phrajao Krungthon</i> (King Krungthon) <i>Su'k Thalang</i> (The Battle of Thalang)
	Full-length Plays During to Phibun I
1938	<i>Mahathewi</i> (Princes Mahathewi) <i>Jaoying Saenwi</i> (Princes Saenwi) <i>Benjaphet</i> (Twenty-Five)
1939	<i>Amusawari Thai</i> (The Thai Monument) <i>Nanjao</i> (The Kingdom of Nanjao)
1940	<i>Pho'khun Phamu'ang</i> (King Phamu'ang)
	Full-length Plays After The Second World War (Vijitsin Period)
1946	<i>Dap Saenmu'ang</i> (The Sword of Saenmu'ang)
1947	<i>Chana Man</i> (Triumph over Evil) <i>Sriharat Decho</i> (Sriharat Decho the Warrior) <i>Jaoying Kannika</i> (Princess Kannika) <i>Tai Dap Na</i> (Die in the Future) <i>Lan Lu'at - Lan Rak</i> (The Field of Blood - The Field of Love) <i>Petcharat-Patchara</i> (Princess Petcharat and Princess Patchara)
1948	<i>Ru'ang Pikkhanet</i> (The Story of Pikkhanet) <i>Khrut Dam</i> (Black Garuda) <i>Chok Chiwit</i> (Luck of Life)
	Full-length Plays During Phibun II (Anuphap Series)
1954	<i>Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng</i> (The Power of King Ramkhamhaeng)
1955	<i>Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala</i> (The Power of Sacrifice)
1956	<i>Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak</i> (The Power of Love)
1957	<i>Anuphap Haeng Sin Sat</i> (The Power of Morality and Vow)

Appendix II: Illustrations



Illustration 1: Luang Vichitr's early life: Novice Thammarangsi at the Mahathat temple, Bangkok.



Illustration 2: Luang Vichitr's early life: Shown here during his time in Paris, Luang Vichitr served as an assistant-secretary to the Thai Legation.

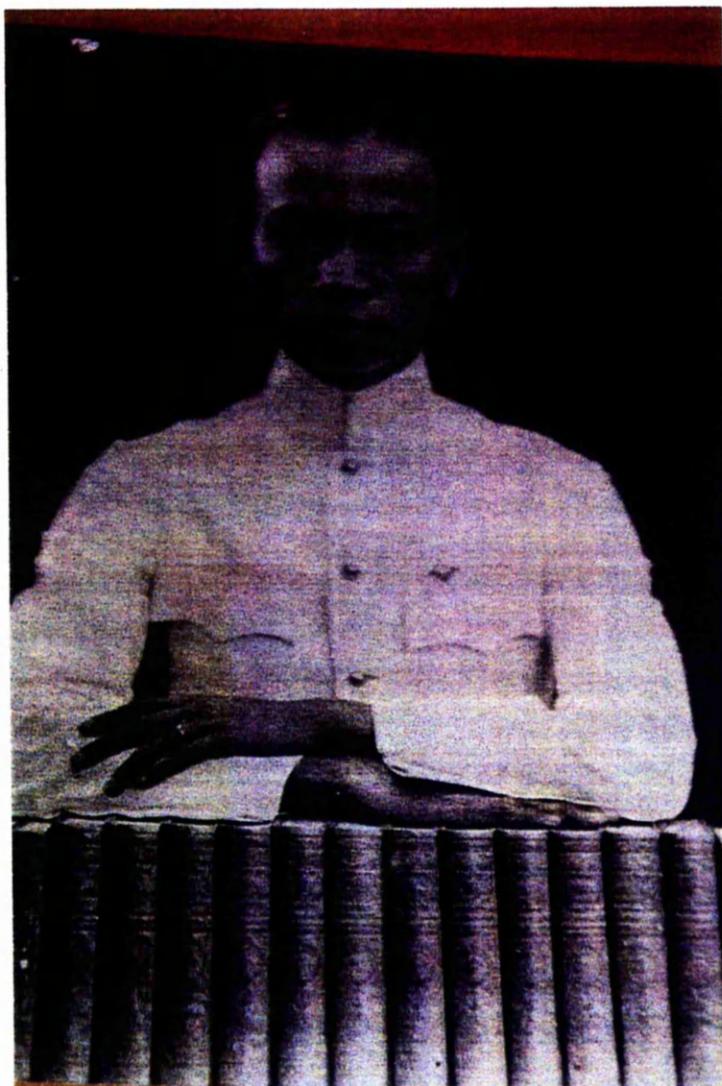
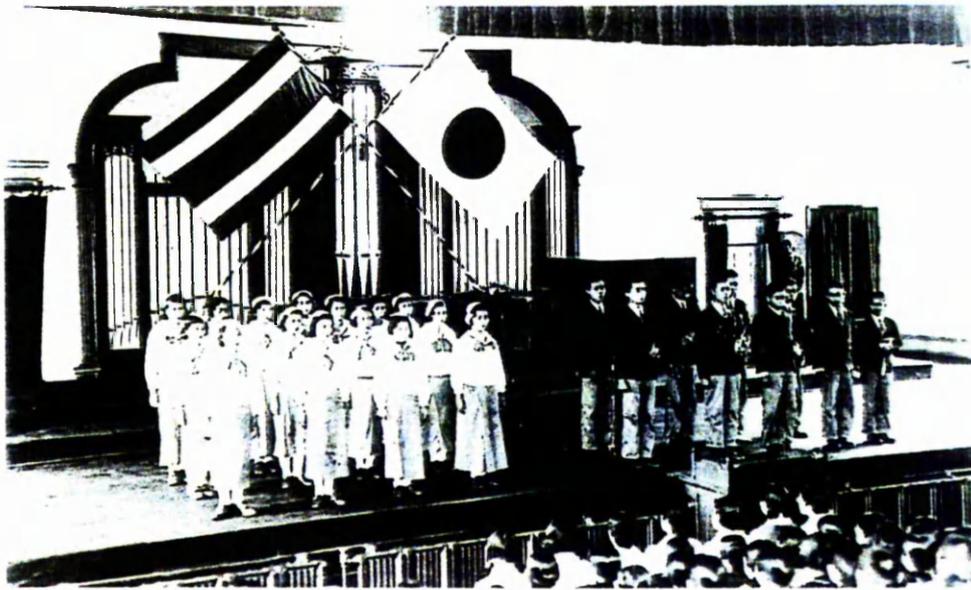
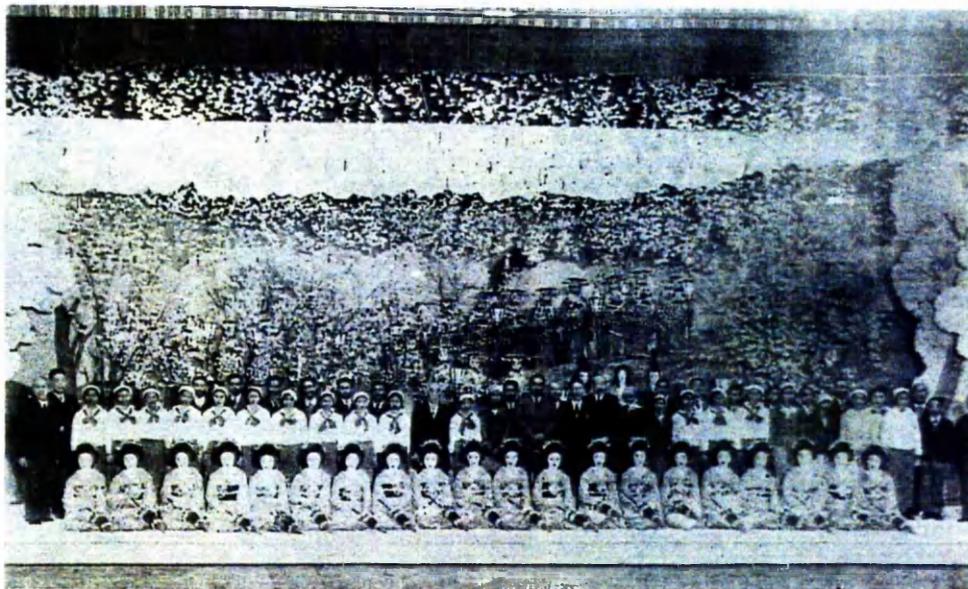


Illustration 3: Between 1929 and 1931, Luang Vichitr completed his 12 volumes of the Universal History (*Prawatsat Sakon*), two of which were awarded Siamese books of the year. Although he had no academic qualifications in this field, the success of *Prawatsat Sakon* enabled him to call himself a “Professor of History”.



Illustrations 4-5: 35 Students of the Drama and Music School were sent to Japan in 1935 as part of a Thai-Japan cultural exchange programme. (Courtesy of the National Archives, attached photo in personal document of Khru Mot Wo'ngsawat).



A Message From The Director-General Of The Department Of Fine Arts



I wish to express my appreciation of the meritorious work of the Siam Chronicle in issuing a special number about Siamo-Japanese Cultural Missions.

This special number will explain clearly how far the friendly relations between Japan and Siam have been developed in the field of culture.

It is obvious that our achievements in the sphere of arts make Siam stand in the forefront of the cultural and artistic world. His Majesty's Government, being anxious to maintain the Siamese arts as objects of national pride, regards the art encouragement as one of the most important affairs of the State. I have, however, since I was appointed Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts three years ago, had in mind not to encourage the arts only out of aesthetic

considerations is, practically, to be unaware of their fullest value. In my opinion, arts can be beneficially employed for many purposes, especially for creating true amity between nations. The said amity is impossible without full comprehension of arts and other aspects of culture of each other. This is the reason why I have devoted a great part of my energy to make the world understand our culture. The success of the cultural mission from Siam to Japan and vice versa is for me a great reward for the energy spent.

The Siamese are born artists and the artists are the foes of none. We are always ready to offer our friendship to people in every corner of the world and to accept theirs. I am extremely happy to find the Siam Chronicle working for the same ends as myself. I am quite confident that since the Siam Chronicle is a national paper for international readers this special number will be read with much interest.

I also wish the success of the work of the Siam Chronicle in bringing the world before Siam and Siam before the world.

Vichitr Vadakara

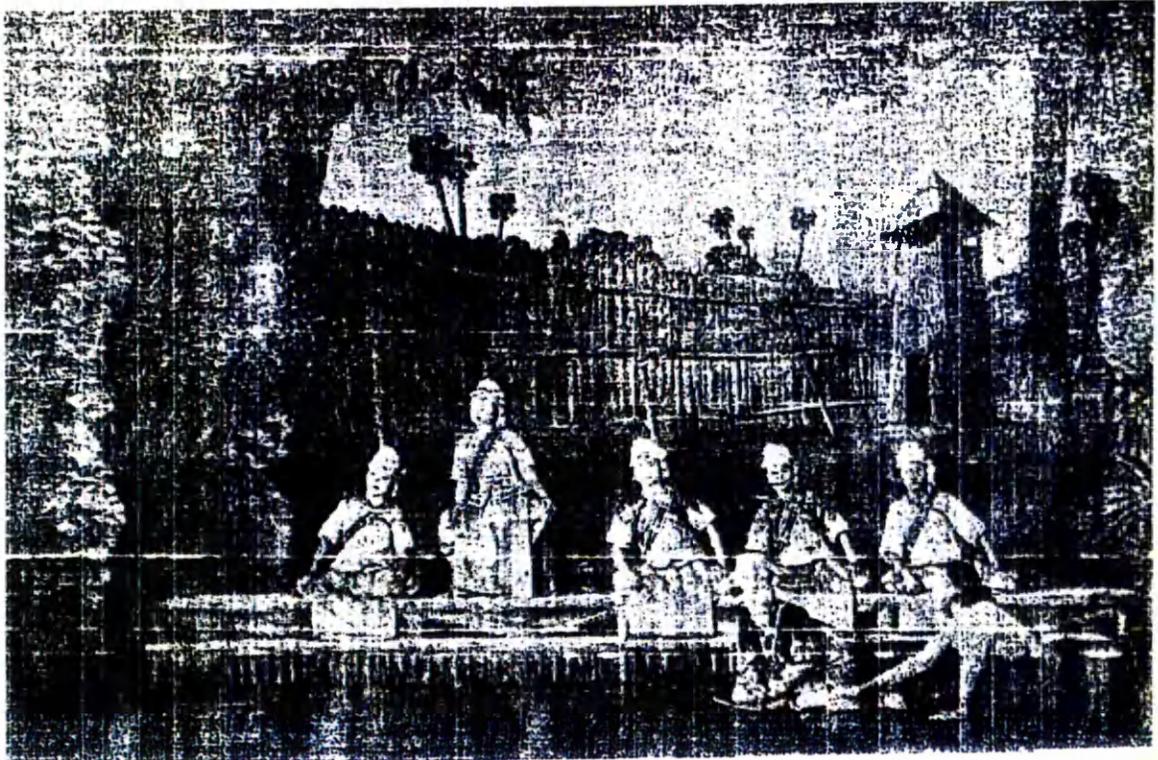
Department of Fine Arts
Bangkok 1st April 1937

Illustration 6: Message from Luang Vichitr, Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts on the importance of the arts, published in a special issue of the Siam Chronicle which provided coverage of the Siam-Japan Cultural Mission. (Siam Chronicle 4th April 1937, So' Tho' 0701.48/7).



Illustrations 7 - 8: Billboards advertising Luang Vichitr's plays, *Lu'at Suphan* (The Blood of Suphan, 1936) and *Jaoying Saenwi* (Princess Saenwi, 1938) at the Sinlapako'n theatre. The billboards also show how many times each play had been performed. (Courtesy National Archives, Photo no. 002 Ho' Wo' Yo' 41/42).





ภาพ ตอนหนึ่ง ใน เรื่อง “ เด็ดตศุพรวณ ”

Illustration 9: A scene in the original play, *Lu'at Suphan*. The scene shows the elaborate backdrop which was to become typical of Luang Vichitr's plays.

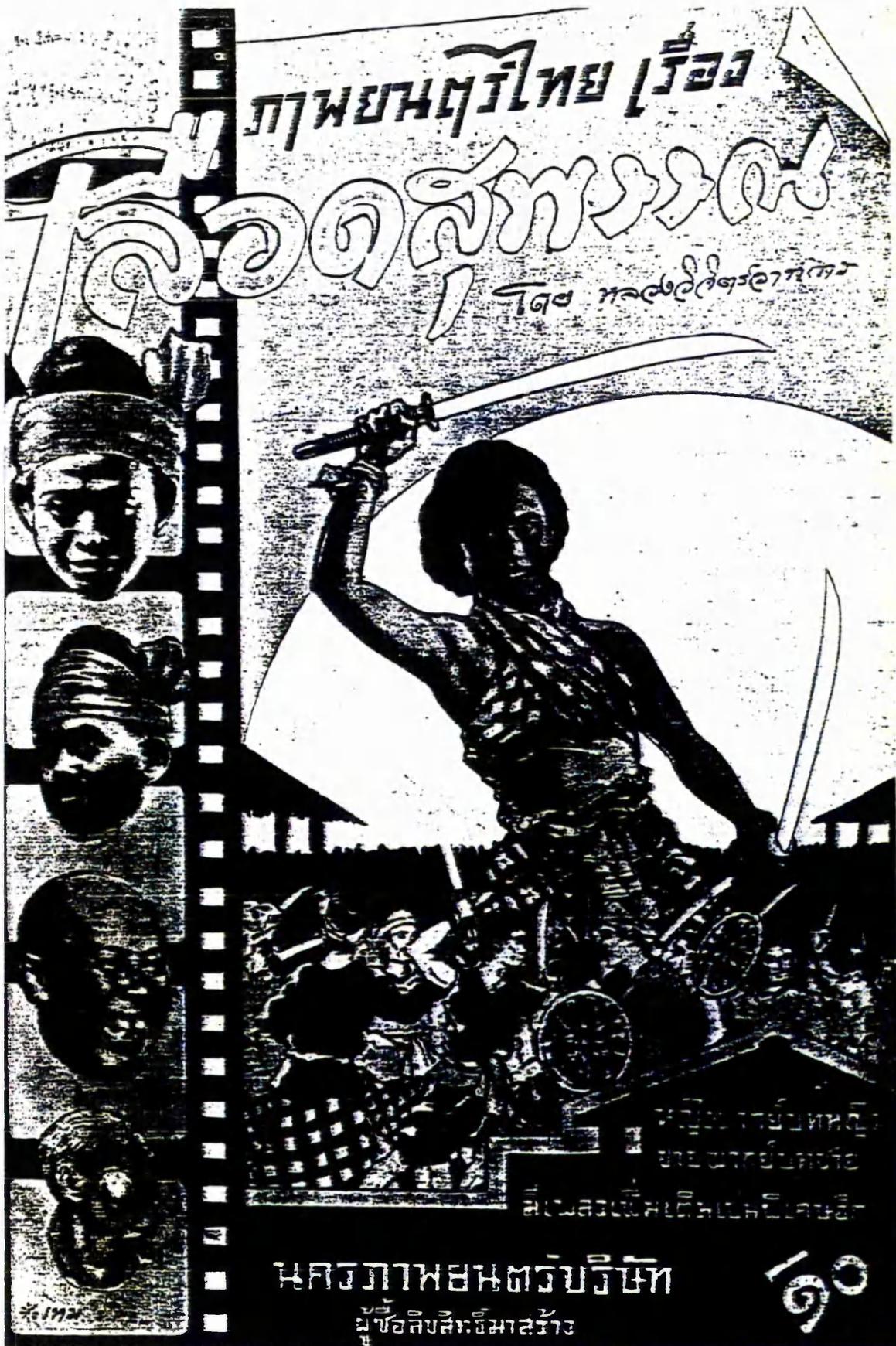
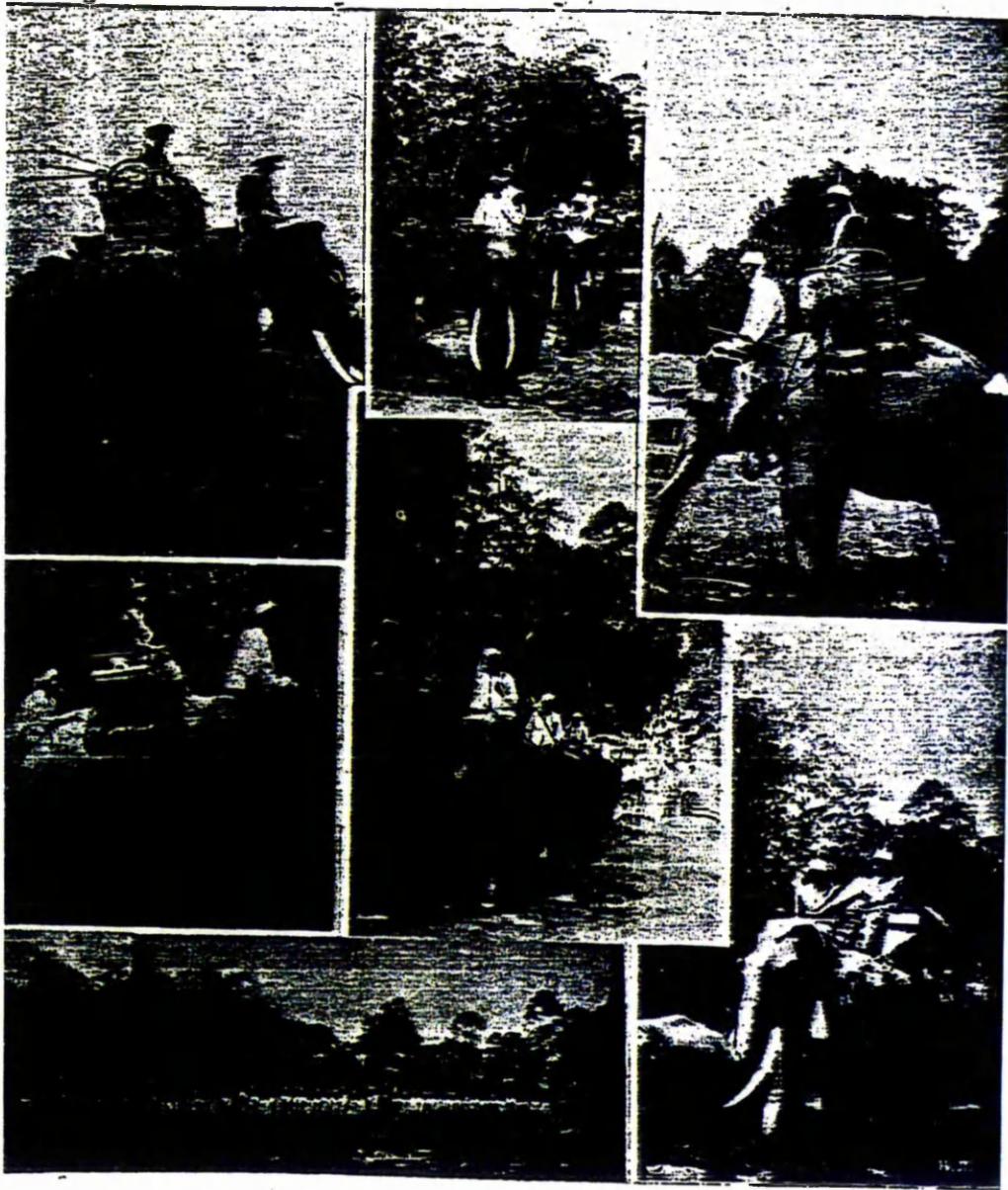


Illustration 10: An advertisement of the feature film *Lu'at Suphan* produced by the Nakho'n Phapphayon company in 1936.

ทัพพม่า



กำลังยกทัพรามาอย่างมืดฟ้ามัวดิน

Illustration 11: An epic scene in the film *Lu'at Suphan*, picturing the Burmese invasion of Suphanburi.



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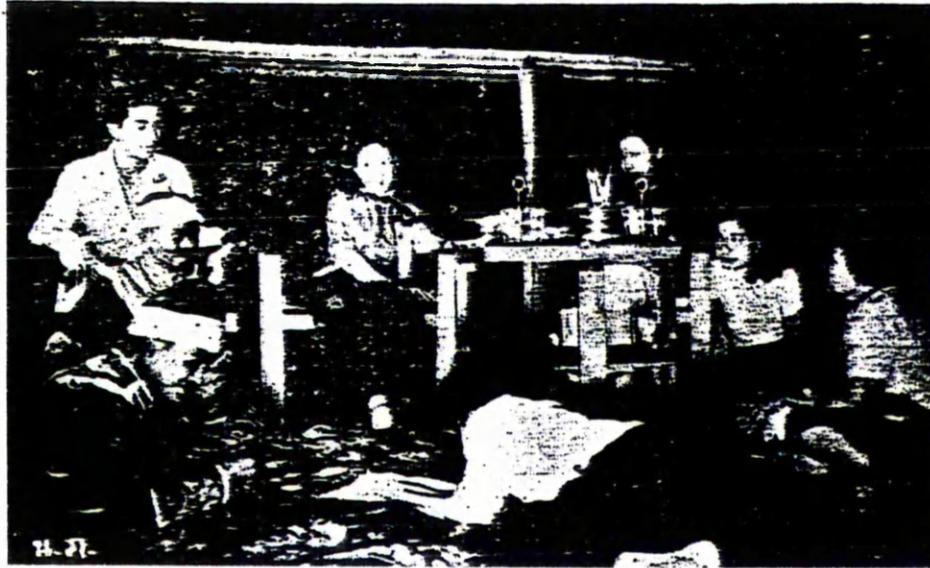
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Illustrations 12-13: Like the play, the film included a scene depicting cruel treatment by the Burmese of their Thai prisoners. The picture shows the villain, Mang Ratho, forcing the old man to drink water from his foot before kicking him. Thai people consider the foot to be most offensive part of the body and the scene was therefore very offensive.

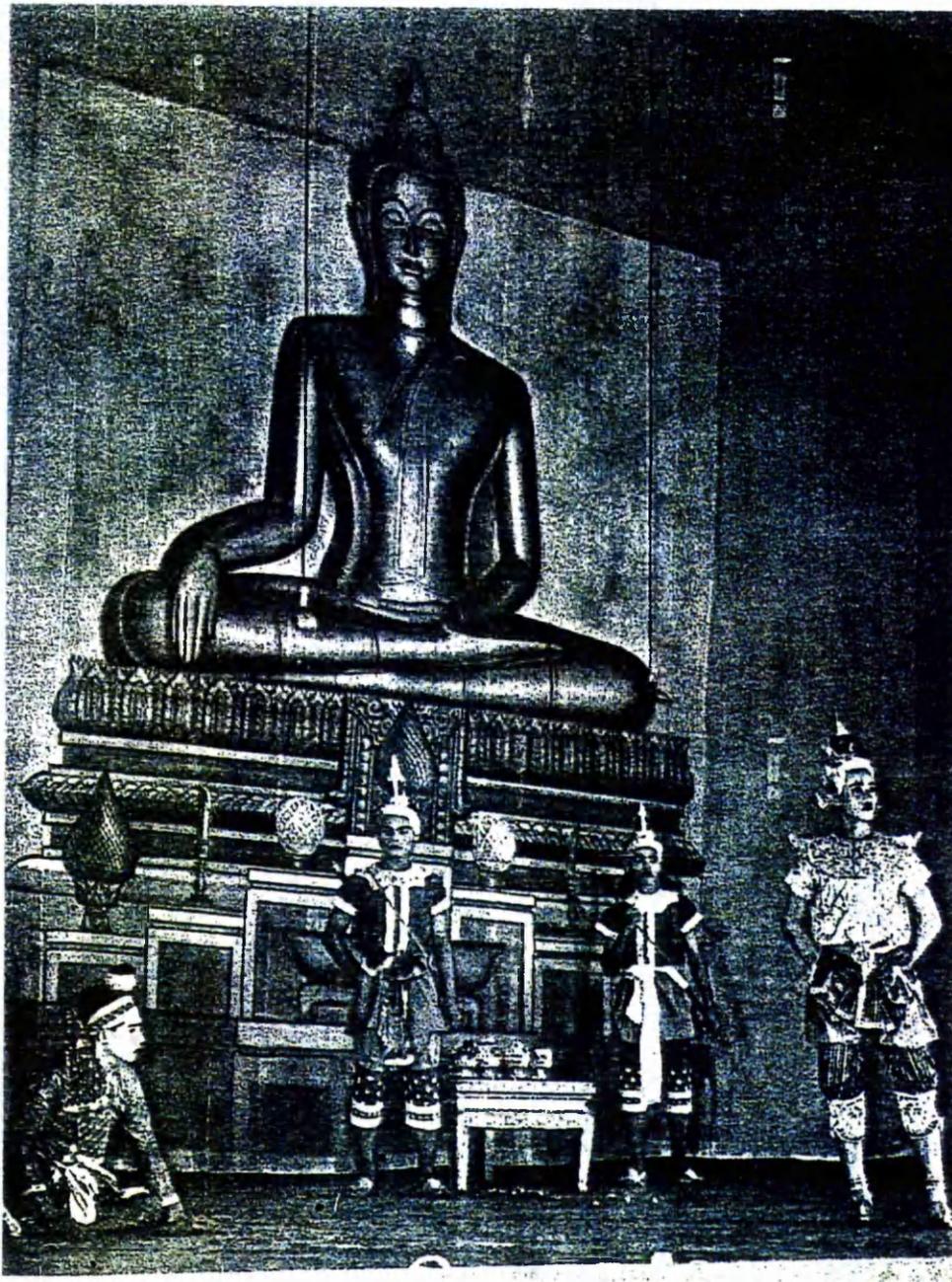
พระนางสิขมณีลาวรรณทศพระเนตร์การสร้างภาพยนตร์เรื่องนี้



Illustrations 14 - 15: The film had already received much publicity during its production because of visits from well-known people including Princess Laksami Lawan, the patron of the then famous dramatic troupe, and Luang Vichitr Vadakarn.



หลวงวิจิตรวาทการกำลังให้พระเออและนางเออทดลองร้องเพลง



Illustrations 16 - 18: Scene from the original play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng* (The Power of King Ramkhamhaeng, 1954). The picture shows Sams'o'n (sitting on the far left) surrendering to King Ramkhamhaeng (standing on far the right) after a fight has taken place in the Sri Chum temple.

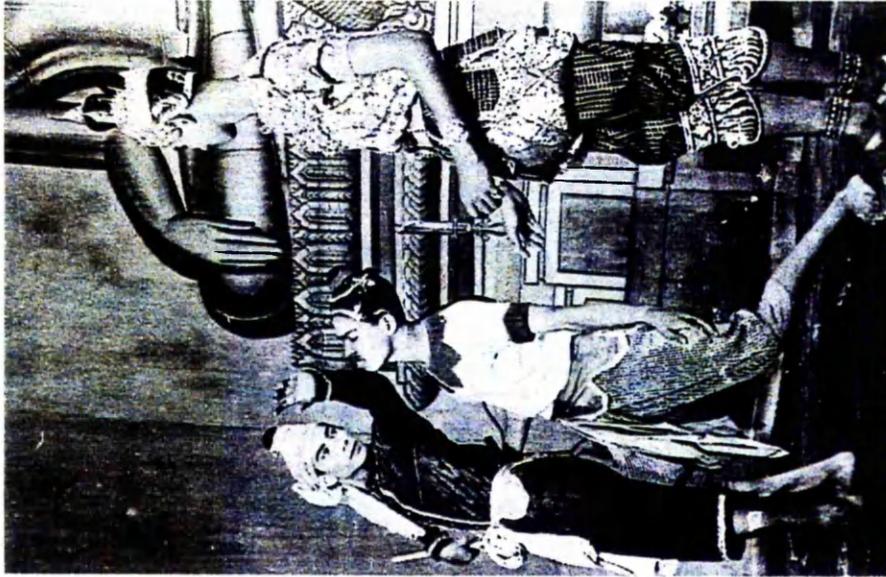
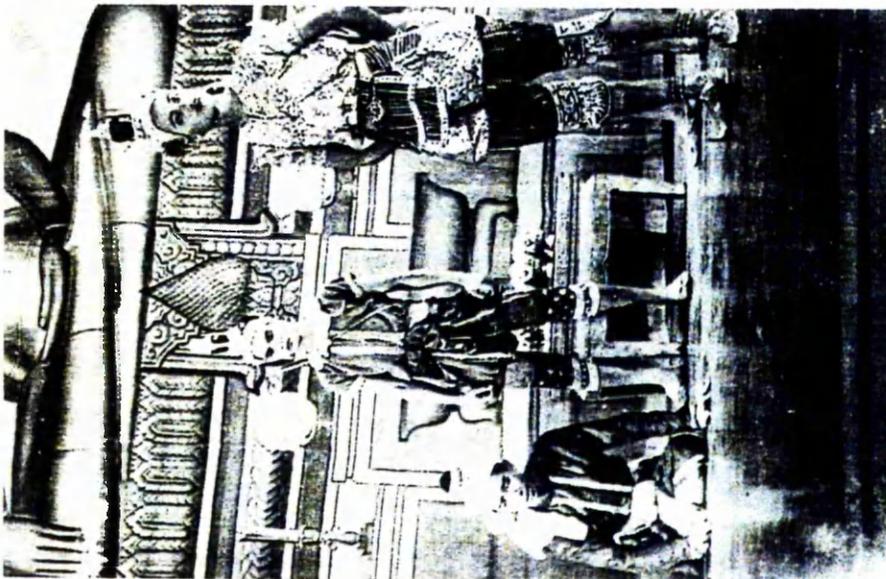


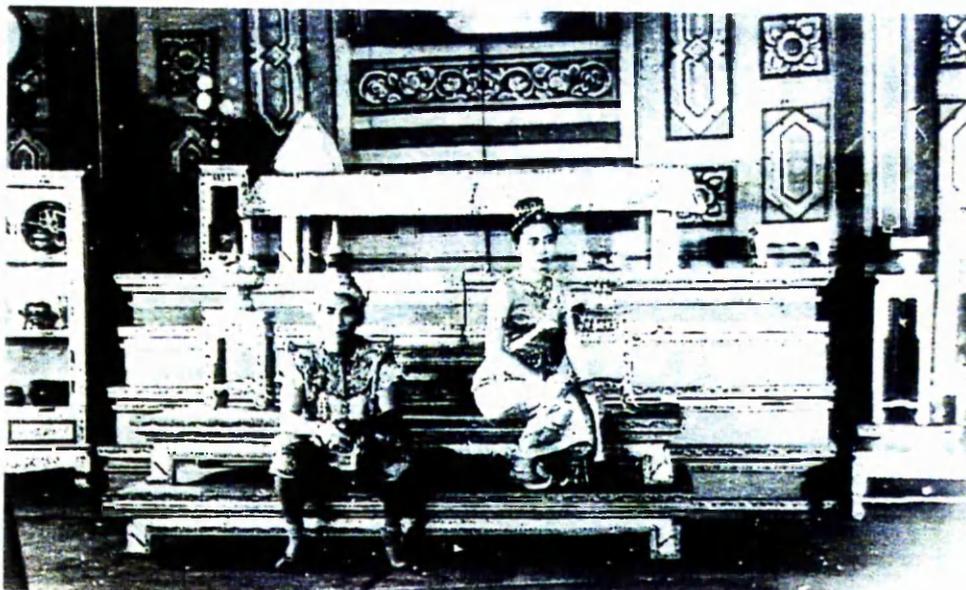
Illustration 17: *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*

Illustration 18: *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*





Illustrations 19 - 20: Scenes of the *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*. The illustration above shows Makhatho in an elephant stable. Showing moving paper-maché elephants on stage was a technique introduced by Luang Vichitr to increase realism. The illustration below shows Sams'o'n and Benjamat on their wedding night. Sams'o'n confesses to Benjamat that he wants to free Nakho'n Srithammarat from Sriwichai's rule and present it as gift to Pho' Khun Ramkhamhaeng.



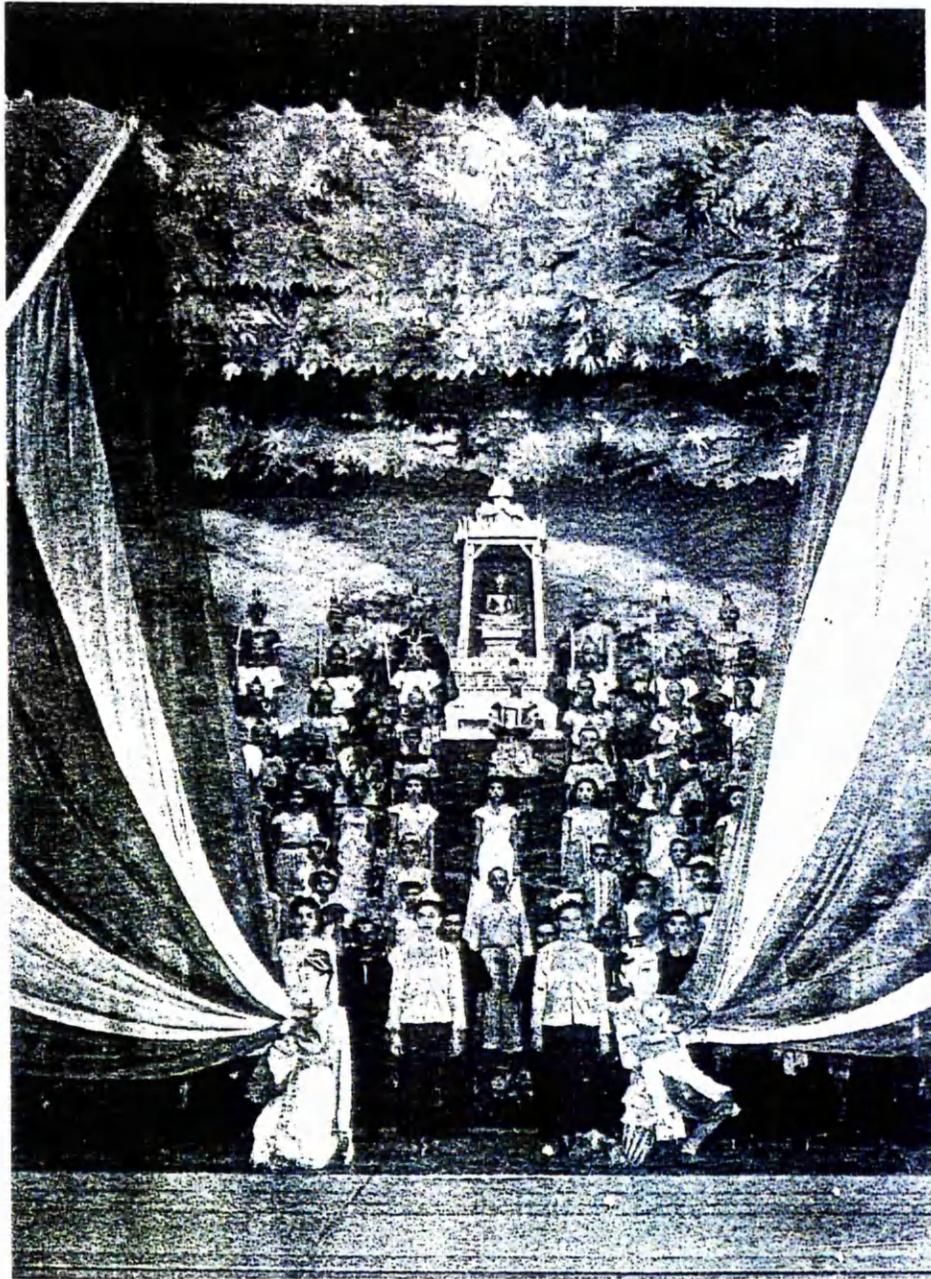
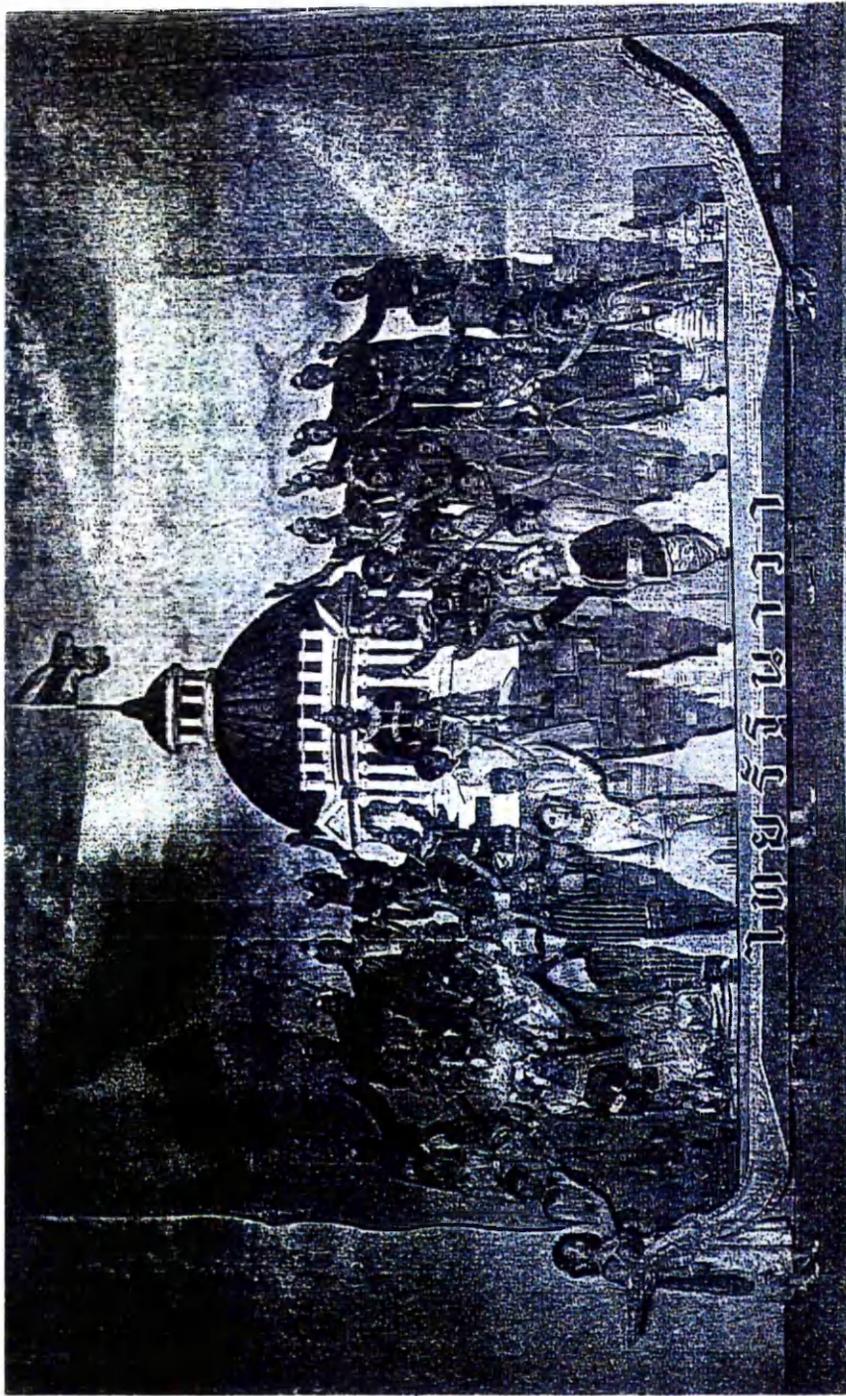


Illustration 21: The grand finale from the original play *Amphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*. The picture shows the celebration of the arrival of the Phra Phutthasihing, a revered Buddha image from Ceylon, which was to be installed in Sukhothai. Next to the image are the King, soldiers and people who are surrounded by a huge tricolour flag of Thailand. This scene shows the spectacle that Luang Vichit relied on to make his plays popular. It also gives an example of the anachronistic devices he liked to use to address contemporary issues in historical plays (see also Chapter 3).



“ช่วยกันรักษาชาติไทย” ในเพลงพุทธรูปบูชา

Illustration 23: A grand finale from the original play *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*. Miniature Buddha images and other symbols of Thailand's heritage are depicted in the Thai-nation boat (*Thai Rattha Nawa*). All Thais were urged to protect these symbols of the Thai nation.



Illustrations 24 - 25: Original sketches of a set design drawn by Khru Mot for the play *Mahathewi* (Princess Mahathewi, 1938). (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So' Bo' 22, 2-5).





Illustration 26 - 27: A drawing of an outdoor scene in the play *Mahathewi* (Princess Mahathewi, 1938). (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So' Bo' 22, 2-5)



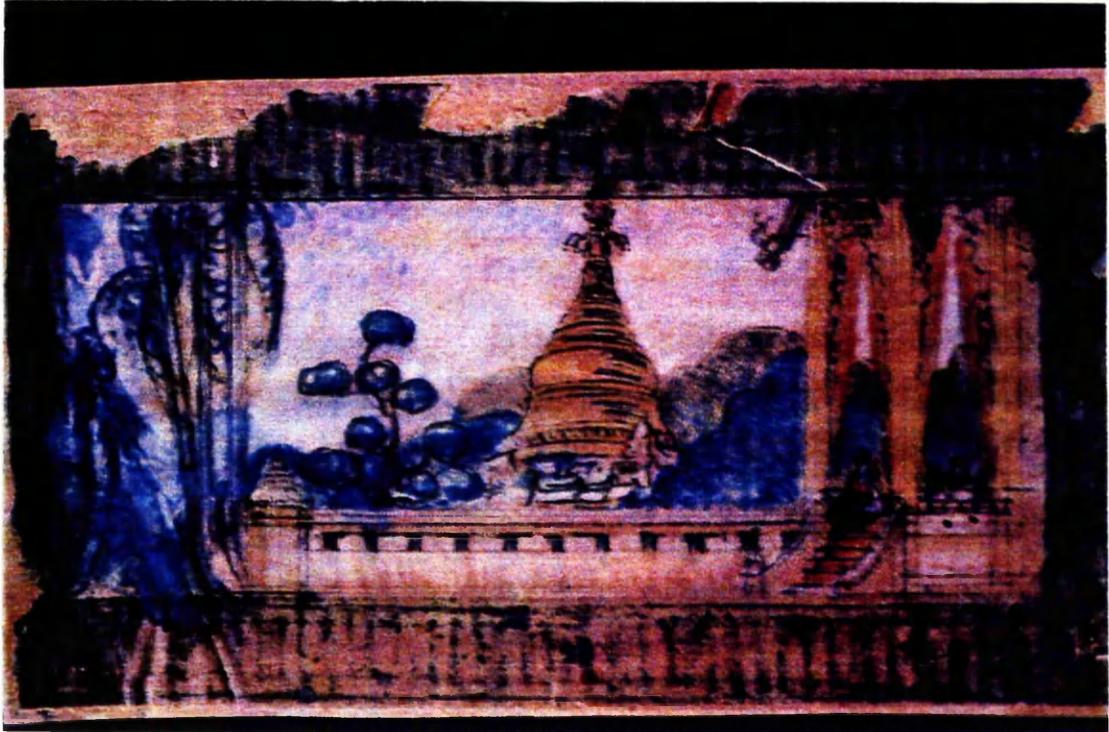
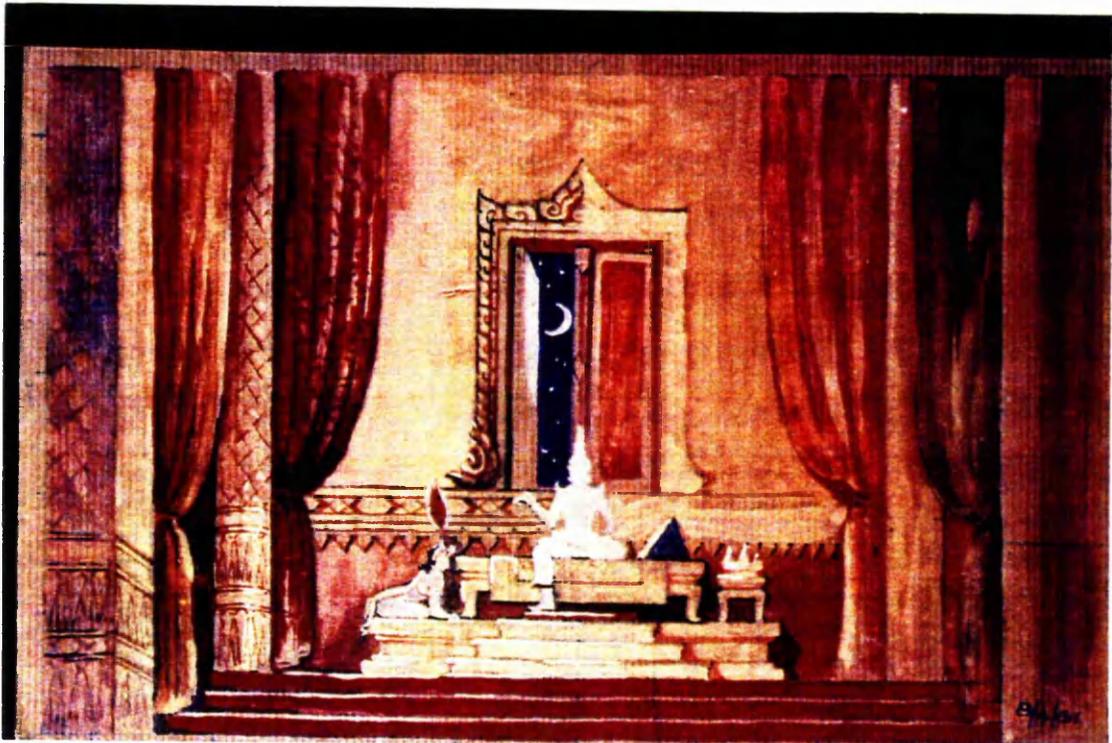
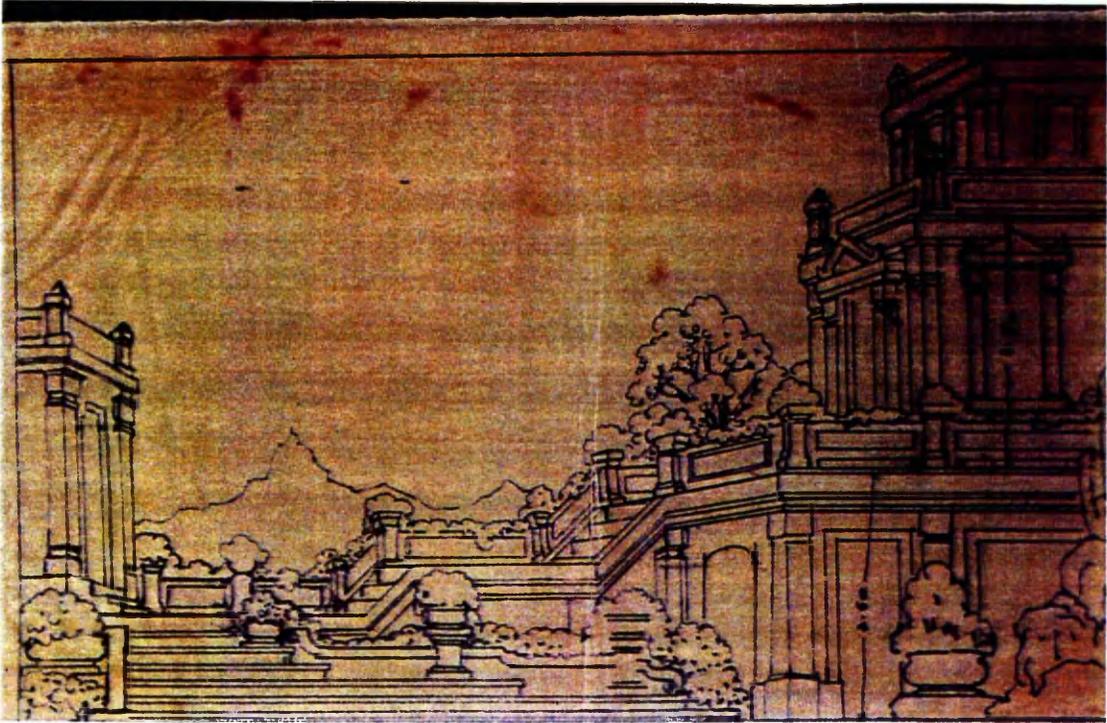
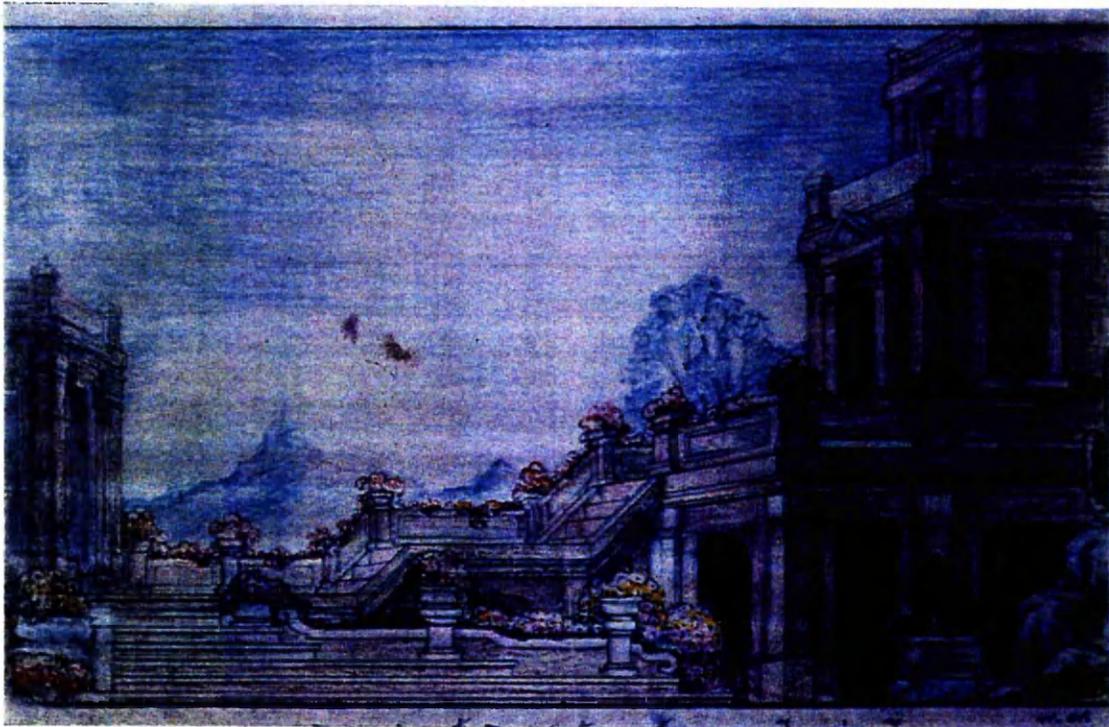


Illustration 28 - 29: A drawing of a palace scene in the play *Mahathewi* (Princess Mahathewi, 1938). It shows how Khru Mot combined the use of wings and drops, and staircases to create depth and dimension. Lighting is also used to simulate moonlight and sparkling stars. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So' Bo' 22, 2-5).



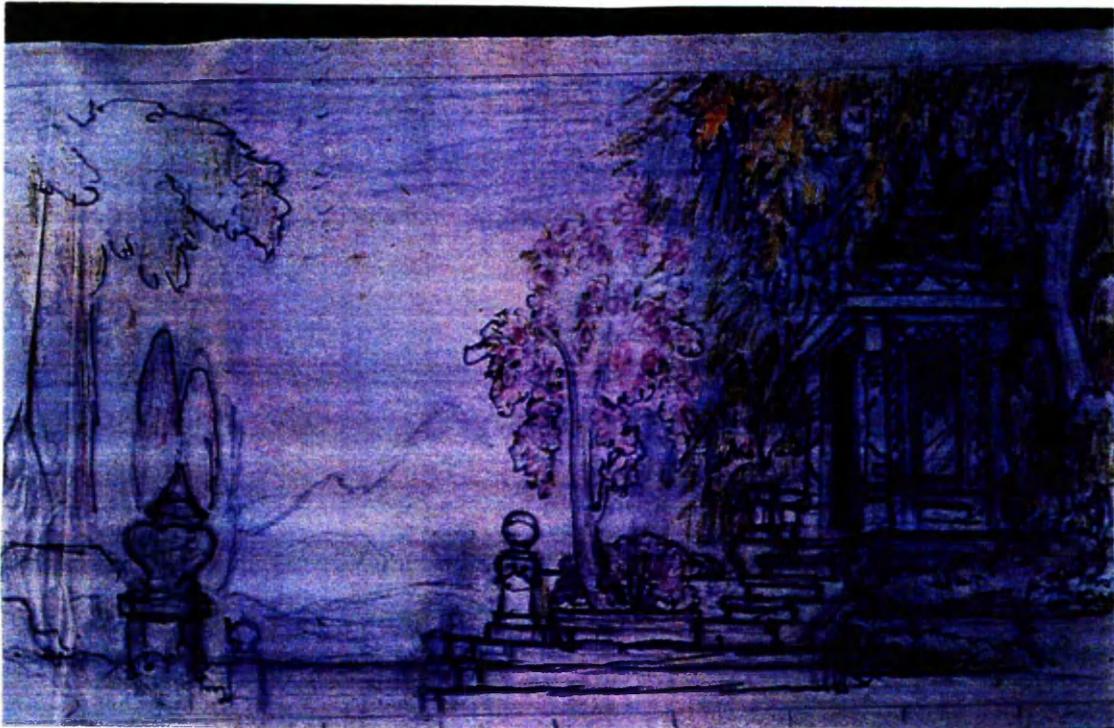


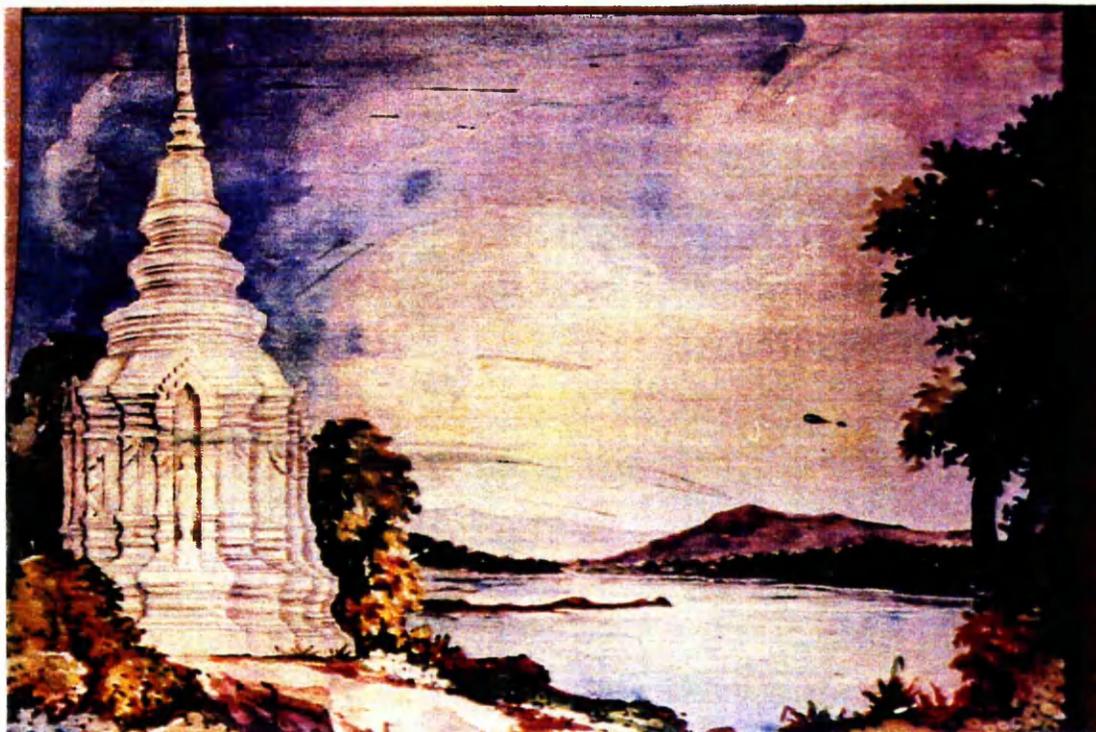
Illustrations 30 - 31: A sketch of the palace garden in the play *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Rak* (The Power of Love, 1956). The pictures show how the painted backdrop would be combined with a large permanent building which was set in profile with different tiers of staircases. The set was also to be decorated with pots of real flowers to heighten realism. Khru Mot's design was influenced by European settings of the same period. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So' Bo' 22, 2-18)





Illustrations 32 - 33: A similar design of a palace's garden in the play *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So' Bo' 22, 2-23).





Illustrations 34-35: Above - A large painted backdrop featuring a riverside scenario with a large stupa in the far left, from the play *Anuphap Haeng Khwam Sia Sala*. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. So'. Bo'. 22, 2-17). Below: sketch of Elephant Fighting Scene.

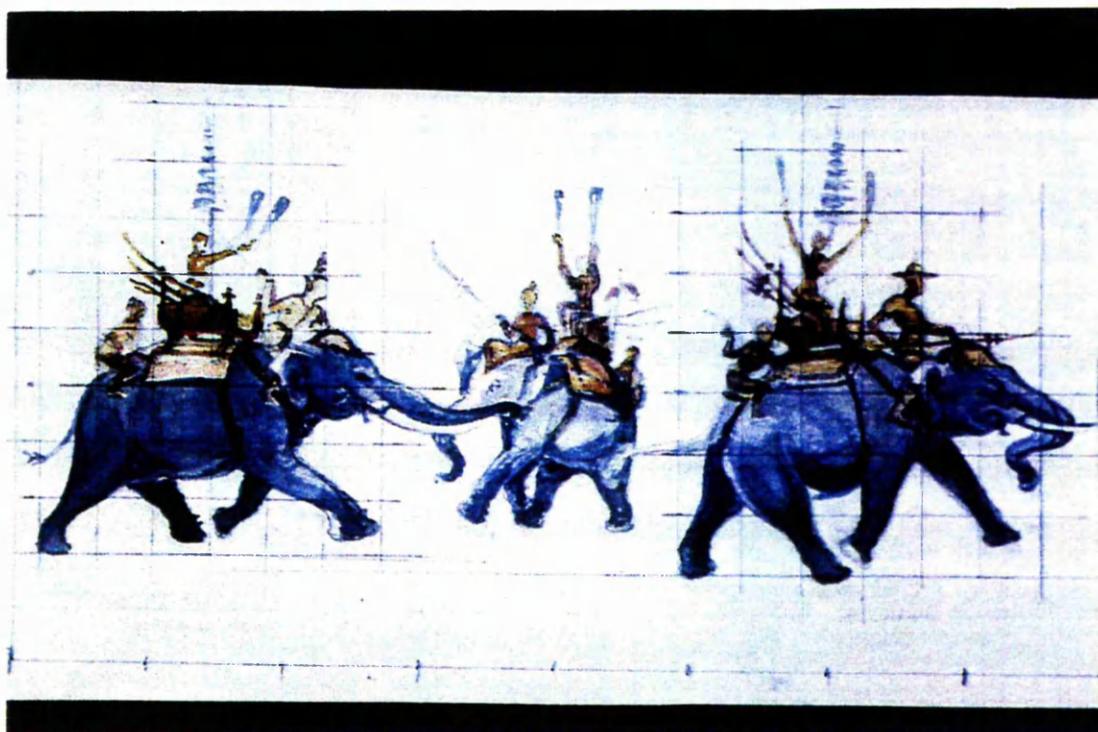




Illustration 37: Interlude show featuring a dance to the popular patriotic song "*Ton Trakun Thai*" (Thai Ancestors) in the play *Anuphap Pho'khun Ramkhamhaeng*.

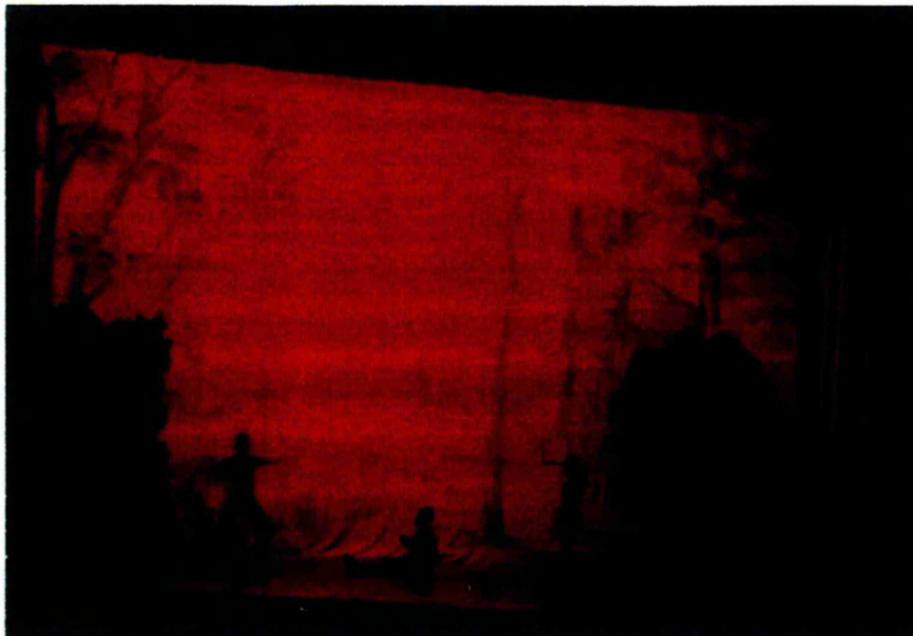


Illustrations 38 - 39: A revival of *Lu'at Suphan* at the National Theatre in 1992. The illustration above depicts the first scene when Mang Ratho forces an old man to drink water from his foot. The illustration below shows the last scene when Duang Jan calls upon the people to fight the Burmese.





Illustrations 40 - 41: (*Lu'at Suphan again*) The execution scene when Mang Rai is beheaded. This revival borrowed the technique of a shadow play to portray the scene, using the red light to create a frightening atmosphere and symbolise death.





Illustrations 42 - 43: Costumes in the play *Lu'at Suphan* were based on innovations first used in *Lakho'n Phanthang* (which has as its distinctive feature the use of foreign elements such as foreign costumes, characters, and music). The picture above shows Duang Jan and Mang Rai in their casual dresses. The picture below shows Mang Rai and Mang Mahasuranat in Burmese soldier uniforms.





Illustrations 44-45: Costumes for dancers during an interlude show a mixture of typical villager's attire and clothes representing other nationalities, e.g. Laotian (above).





Illustrations 46-47: The unique musical application in Luang Vichitr's plays is the use of a Thai musical ensemble (Illustration 46) and a Western orchestra (Illustration 47).

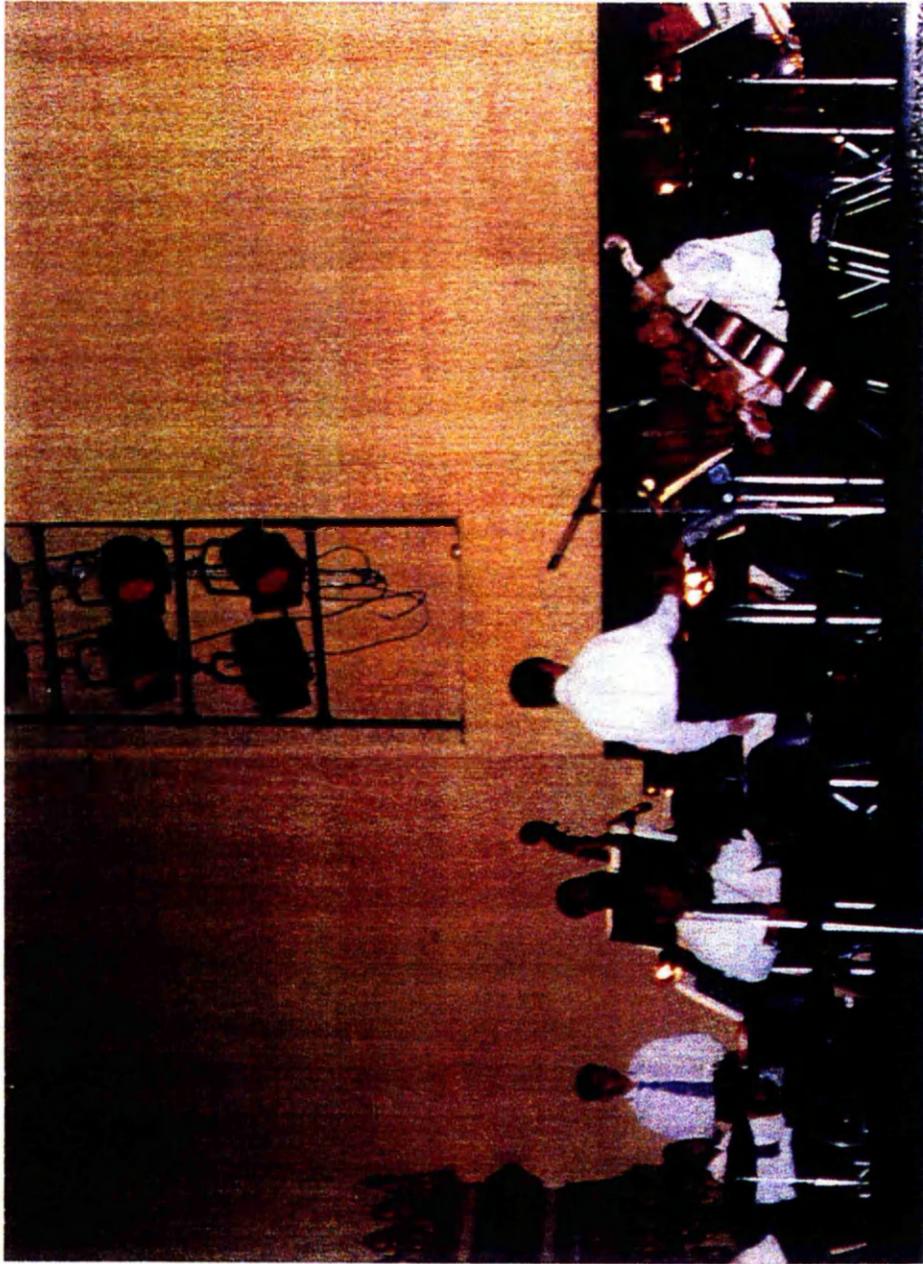
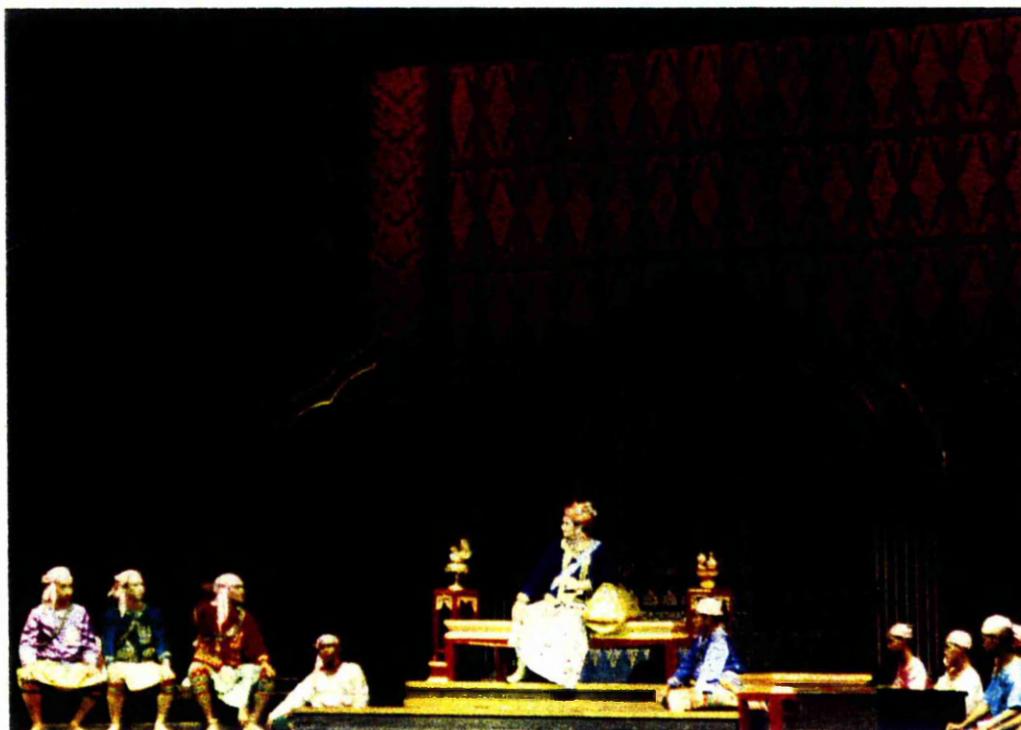
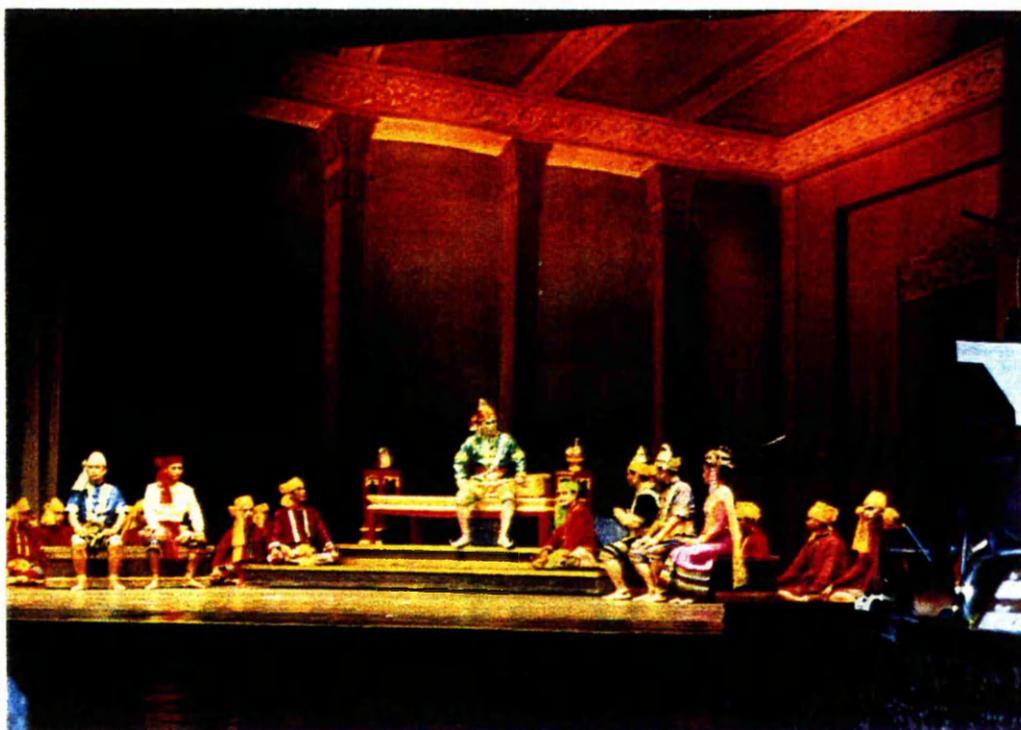


Illustration 47: The Western orchestra.



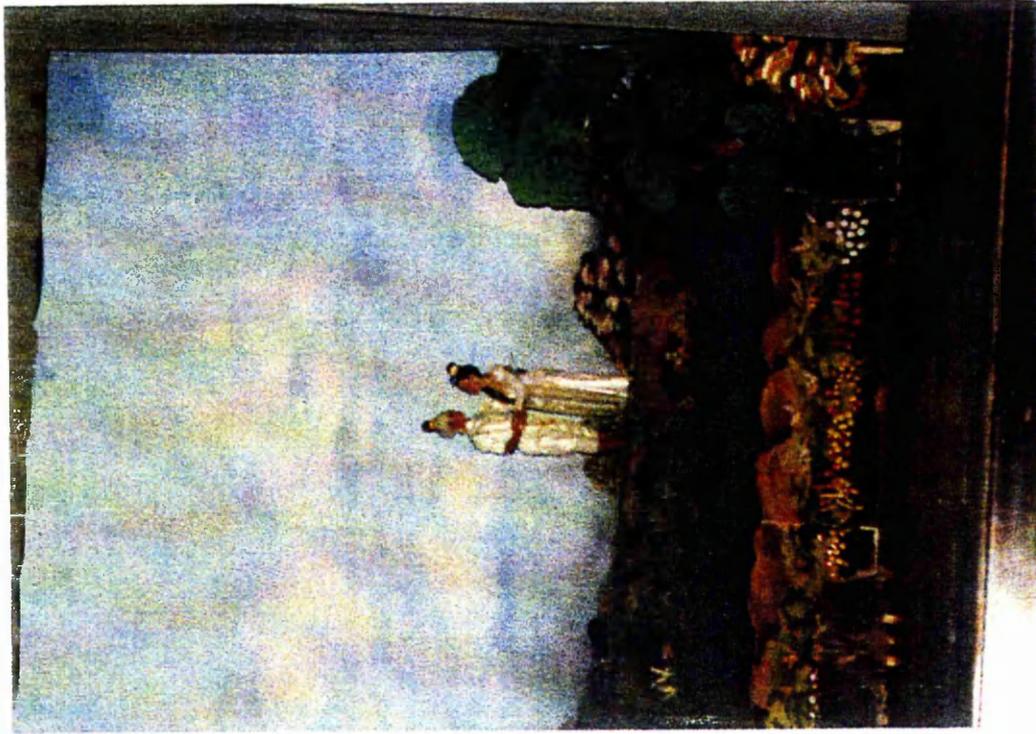
Illustrations 48-49: Scenes in the palace halls from the play *Jaoying Saemwi*, a common element found in the traditional dance-drama.





Illustrations 50 - 51: Dances and songs form an integral part of Luang Vichitr's plays. They are performed as part of the play, during an interval, and while scenes are changing. Overall, dance movements were newly choreographed and did not follow traditional dance-drama conventions. However, at times conventional movements (*Ram Bot*) were adopted in order to show the beauty of Thai classical dance.





Illustrations 52 - 53: Romantic scenes are another important element of Luang Vichitr's plays. Both illustrations are taken from the revival of the play *Jaoying Saenwi*. The illustration above depicts the final scene when Prince Khemmarat is reunited with his beloved Princess Saenwi in heaven. The illustration below shows the scene at night when Princess Saenwi comes to bid farewell to Prince Khemmarat.





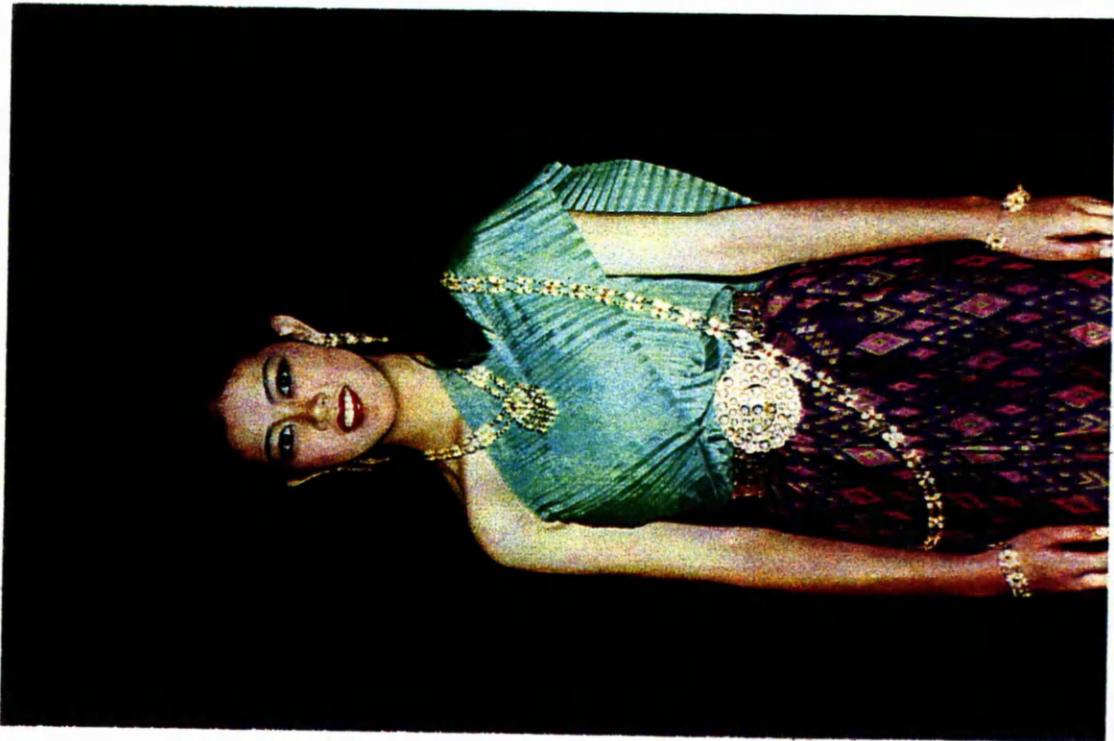
Illustrations 54 - 55: Above: Typical scene of a crowd during an evacuation of Saenwi. Below: An emotional suicidal scene depicting the prolonged mourning of the heroine in the play *Jaoying Saenwi*. Luang Vichitr relied on the use of a large number of characters and innovations such as the presentation of death on stage were used to create spectacle and have a strong emotional impact on the audience.





Illustrations 56 - 57: Bright colourful costumes with decorated jewels, head-dresses and ornaments of the hero and the heroine in the revival play *Jaoying Saenwi*.





Illustrations 58-59: Costumes for supporting roles, *i.e.* lady-in-waiting and courtiers are less elaborate (revival version of *Jaoying Saemwi*).





Illustrations 60-61: Dances and songs in intervals created additional variety and were sometimes used to further emphasise Luang Vichitr's propaganda messages. Above: dancers wear different styles of costumes representing different branches of Thai race, singing the song *Ruam Thai* (United Thai). Below: dancers holding the Northern style umbrella painted in the three colours of the national flag.





Illustrations 62-63: Above: another scene in which dancers hold the Northern style umbrella painted in the three colours of the national flag. Below: performers of the drum dance, a dance based on popular theatre elements added to create more spectacle.





Illustrations 64 - 65: Luang Vichitr's plays introduced intimate scenes of courtship in which actions of touching and holding were required. During Luang Vichitr's times, these scenes were performed by an all-female cast. Nowadays, revival productions use both male and female actors (illustration from the revival of the play *Jaoying Saenwi*)





Illustrations 66 - 67: A play *So'n Anong* by Khun Wichit Mattra shows Luang Vichitr's influences such as the use of modern dance within the performance and a scene of villagers gathering.





Illustrations 68-69: Luang Vichitr's plays (or plays influenced by Luang Vichitr) are still popular, particularly with wives of military and government officials to whom the plays bring back memories of the past. Above: audience coming to see the revival performance of *Lu'at Suphan* at the National Theatre in 1992. Below: People coming to see the revival performance of *So'n Anong* at the new Chaloemkrung Theatre in 1993.



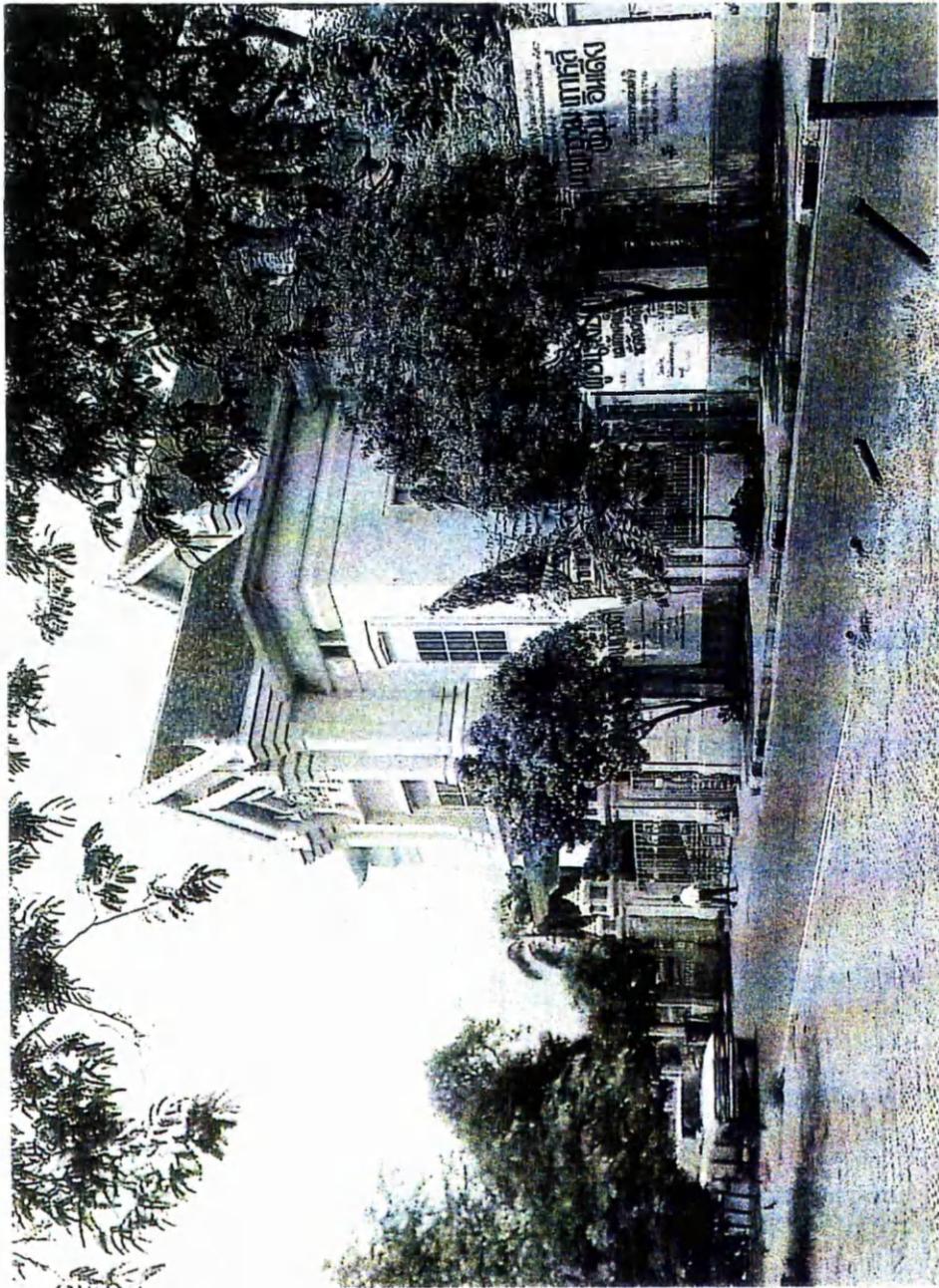


Illustration 70: The present National Theatre of Thailand is located next to the National Museum at Sanam Luang. The construction of the theatre was initiated by Luang Vichitr during Sarit's regime. *Silapawattanatham* (Art and Culture Magazine), Year 14, Vol. 9, July 1993.

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ต้นร่าง

พระละคร ๕๐๖

ราชวงศ์

หมายเหตุ

บทละครเล่มนี้ เป็นต้นร่างเขียนด้วยมือ ได้พิมพ์ขึ้นภายหลังที่ได้ซ่อมใหญ่แล้ว สามครั้ง และแสดงจริงแล้วสามครั้งด้วย ในบทละครเล่มนี้ไปก็ยังมีที่ในเรือไป ความประสงค์ในละครพิมพ์และกรรรมนี้ เพื่อส่งเสนอแก่ท่านที่มีความรู้ และสนใจในวงการละคร เพื่อขอความกรุณาให้ช่วยพิจารณาหรือขอความเห็นต่าง ๆ มาเป็นประโยชน์แก่การ เพื่อทำประโยชน์ต่อวงการนี้ยิ่งขึ้น

นอกจากนั้น กรมศิลปากรจะได้แจกหนังสือเล่มนี้ แก่ข้าราชการและ นักเขียนของกรมนี้ ในที่นี้ถึงกับ

หนังสือเล่มนี้ ไม่ใช่สำหรับจำหน่าย และถึงแม้จะนำไปอยู่ในมือของผู้ใด กรมศิลปากรก็ถือว่ายังเป็นสมบัติของกรมนี้อยู่ ฉะนั้นการจำหน่ายหนังสือเล่มนี้ เป็นการไม่ชอบด้วยกฎหมาย

(โปรดดูหลังปก)

Illustration 74: Example of a draft of the play *Ratchamanu* which Luang Vichitr circulated among experts to collect their comments on his work (see footnotes - Chapter 4, section 4.2.4).

คำขอของกรมศิลปากร

กรมศิลปากรเคยได้รับความกรุณาจากท่านที่ใฝ่ใจในศิลปกรรม ช่วยวิเคราะห์
วิจารณ์ ถึงข้อสังเกต ข้อแนะนำ ในเรื่องละครของกรมนี้มาแต่ก่อน จึงหวังว่าจะ
ได้รับความกรุณาในเรื่อง "ราชมณู" นี้เช่นเดียวกัน

ต้นร่างบทละครเรื่อง "ราชมณู" นี้ ได้ทำช่องข้อสังเกตไว้ทุกหน้า และเมื่อ
ส่งไปเสนอแก่ท่านผู้ที่มีผู้ใด จะได้ส่งให้สองเล่ม และจะได้ส่งสมุดที่อธิบายความ
มุ่งหมายของการผูกเรื่อง ควบกันไปด้วย

ท่านผู้ได้รับเสนอบทละครเรื่องนี้ ขอได้โปรดกรุณาแก่กรมศิลปากร
สองประการ คือ

๑. ขอคำวิพากษ์ หรือวิจารณ์ ที่กรมนี้จะพิจารณาได้

๒. ขอข้อสังเกต โดยครอกในช่องข้อสังเกต ว่าควรแก้ไขบทละครเรื่องนี้อย่างไร
แล้วส่งคืนมายังกรมศิลปากรเช่นเดิม

กรมศิลปากรขออภัยโทษที่รบกวนท่าน แต่ขอขอบคุณล่วงหน้า โดยหวังว่า
จะได้รับความกรุณาจากท่าน

ความมุ่งหมายของเรื่อง "ราชมณู" นั้น นอกจากที่ได้แถลงไว้ในหน้า ๔
ของสมุดแสดงความมุ่งหมายของบทละครแล้ว ในเชิงประพันธ์ยังมีความมุ่งหมาย
อีกสองประการ คือ

๑. ใกว่าจะแสดงว่า ไม่ควรมีชีวิตระหว่างชายด้วยกัน มีกำลังแรงยิ่งกว่าความรักระหว่างชายกับหญิง

๒. คนทุกคนเมื่อออกแสดงตัวในเรื่องราชมณู เป็นคนดีทั้งนั้น ตัวละครที่
ออกแสดงใน เรื่อง "ราชมณู" ไม่มีตัวร้าย ตัวโกง ตัวผู้กระทำความผิด แม้แต่คนเดียว
กรมนี้ผู้เรียบเรียงละครเรื่อง "ราชมณู" เป็นละครแสดง "คนดี" ทั้งหมด

ขอท่านได้พิจารณาวิจารณ์ ว่าบทละครที่ตีพิมพ์เสนอแก่ท่านนี้ ได้แสดง
ความมุ่งหมายจริง ๆ หรือไม่ ถ้ายังมีไม่ได้เสียจริงๆ จะควรแก้ไขอย่างไร

กรมศิลปากร

๑๓ มี.ค. ๒๔๘๑

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์พระจันทร์ ๑๓๓ ถนนวิภาวดีรังสิต แขวงจตุจักร เขตจตุจักร กรุงเทพมหานคร ๑๐๑๐๐

Continued - Illustration 75: Example of a draft of the play *Ratchamamu* which Luang Vichitr circulated among experts to collect their comments on his work (see footnotes - Chapter 4, section 4.2.4).

บทละคร
เลือดกษัตริย์

ตัวละคร

นางสาวทองจันทร์ (นางเอก)	เด็กหญิงสุพรรณมา สุวรรณศรี
นายทอง บิดาทองจันทร์	นายแต้ม มัทย์มางกูร
นางจันทร์ มารดาทองจันทร์	นางสาวชดอ นนະເສດ
มังราย (พระเอก)	นางสาวประไพ กาญจนโกศล
มังมหาสุรนาท (แม่ทัพพะม่า)	นางสาวศักดิ์ดา สารทายน
มังระโฮ (นายกองพะม่า)	นางสาวประภา เป้าประเสริฐ
นายทหารผู้ใหญ่ของพะม่า คนที่ ๑	นางสาวจำเนียร นิยมสินธุ์
นายทหารผู้ใหญ่ของพะม่า คนที่ ๒	นางสาวสสววย เกยูรวงศ์
นายทหารผู้ใหญ่ของพะม่า คนที่ ๓	เด็กหญิงอัมพร ชัยกุล
นายทหารผู้ใหญ่ของพะม่า คนที่ ๔	นางสาวดวง เชื้อประทุม

Illustration 76: A list of the cast in the original play *Lu'at Suphan*. It shows that except Duang Jan's father, all male parts were performed by female actors. The role of Duang Jan's father had to be performed by a male actor because it may have been too controversial to show the Burmese villain Mang Ratho kick a woman on stage.



พิมพ์จำหน่ายแล้ว

บทร้องและทำนอง ของ หลวงวิจิตรวาทการ

เขียน	๑. เพลง 'รักเมืองไทย' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
กา	๒. เพลง 'เห็นกันแต่ไกล' 'เชิฐชมดอกไม้' 'วิญญาณแสนหวี' ... ๒๐ สต.	ทาน
วา	๓. เพลง 'รักชาติ' 'ราตรี' 'แสนระทม' ... ๒๐ สต.	รวม
ไนต์	๔. เพลง 'ความฝัน' 'ไทยน้อย-ไทยใหญ่' ... ๒๐ สต.	กัน
เพลง	๕. เพลง 'ชากเย็น' 'เลือดสุพรรณ' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
แบบ	๖. เพลง 'มั่งราย' 'ดวงจันทร์' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
ต่าง	๗. เพลง 'มาพบเรา' 'แดนอีสาน' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
ของ	๘. เพลง 'เพ็ญแข' 'ใจเจ้าเอ๋ย' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
จำหน่าย	๙. เพลง 'คลื่นกลาง' 'ขวัญใจ' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
บุญ	๑๐. เพลง 'แหลมทอง' 'ชาวไร่' 'คืนเกิดชาวไทย' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
เรื่อง	๑๑. เพลง 'แสงจันทร์' 'ศึกกลาง' ... ๒๐ สต.	๒๕
ยื่น	โอกาสพิเศษของท่าน - ผู้เขียนตำราไนต์เพลง	
กระทรวง	ของ " นายบุญเรือง " ขนตระวัณ "	๒๕
ศึกษา	ภาส ไชยชิตวาไรไนต์เพลง และตั้งสยอย่างใด เชิญมารับคำอธิบาย ที่ โรงพิมพ์	๒๕
วัฒนธรรม	โดยมติของเสวยความขย การ สือยคังจังหวัดสอคนสคมป. ค่าตอบ ๑๕ สต.	๒๕
การ	ถ้าครโรงเรณโคประสงค ให้ ไปสอนที่โรงเรียน เราสอนให้ฟรีตามประกาศ.	๒๕
ศึกษา	โรงพิมพ์บุญเรือง ๑๕๑๙ ถนนประมวญ รับพิมพ์: - ไนต์เพลง, หนังสือยก, แบบฟอร์ม, ๑- มีตัวอักษรที่ไทยและอังกฤษ.	๒๕
การ	มีจำหน่ายทั่วไปในพระนคร ราคาเล่มละ ๒๕ สตางค์	

Illustration 78: An advertisement for Luang Vichitr's songs which were on sale for 20 Satang.

ท่านเป็นคนไทย รักชาติไทย

ต้องอุดหนุนคนไทย

ต้องดื่มแต่เบียร์ไทย

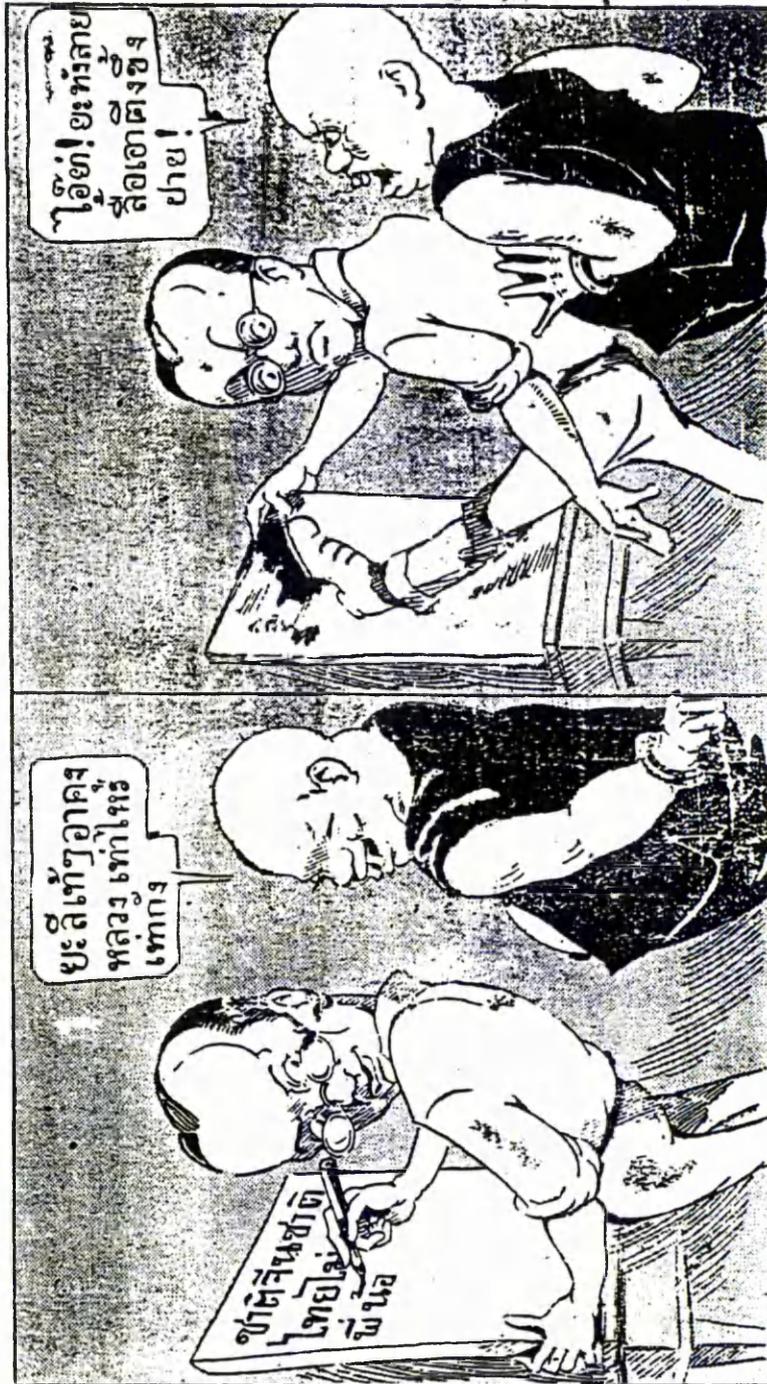


เบียร์ไทยทำสดรสดี

ราคาเขาวัว

บริษัทบุญรอด บริวเวอรี่ จำกัด

Illustration 79: Typical jingoism in an advertisement during 30s-40s. This advertisement stated that true Thai patriots should only drink Thai beer (Singha Beer, Bunro't Brewery).



สารคดี ๖๖๐

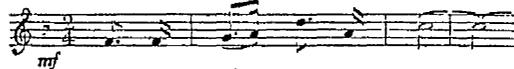
Illustration 80: Caricature criticising Luang Vichitr's controversial attitude towards the Chinese, firstly advocating Thai-Chinese brotherhood and then, in a controversial lecture stating that the Chinese are worse than the Jews.

* เพลงวันชาติ *

ฉลองวันชาติ
๒๔ มิถุนา
พ.ศ. ๒๔๗๕

บทร้องแต่งทำนอง
โดย
นายบุญธรรม ตราโมท

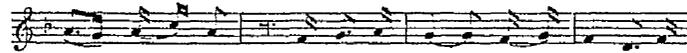
Allegro



๑. อี สิบ สี่ - มี ตุ นา - -
๒. ชาติ ประ เทศ - เหมือน ชี ภา - -



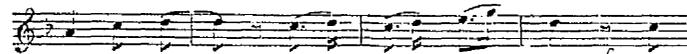
- หน ม หา - ศรี ส วัลดี - - ป รุ ม
- ราษฎร ประ ษา - เหมือน ร้าง ภาศ - - ต้า แม่ ว่า



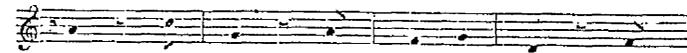
ทุกข - ขอ - รั - รุ ธรรม - ม บุญ - ของ - ไทย. เริ่ม ระ
ชี - วิศ มลาธ ร้าง ภาศ ก็ เป็น - ปฎิ กุศ. พวก เรา



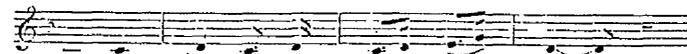
นอม แขนบ อา - ร ณะ ประ ษา - ธิป ไทศ - ทัว -
ต้อง ร่วม รัก พิ ทักษะ - ไทย - โภ บุญ - อีก รั -



รา - มกุร ไทย - ได้ - สิทธิ เส - ร์. ส้า
ฐ ธรรม บุญ - ฤ ประ เทศ - ของ - ไทย. เสธ

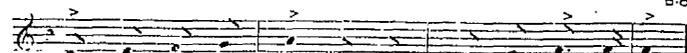


ราษฎร ส้า เริง บัน เห่ง เค็ม ที่ เพราะ
ภาศ เสธ ษนม ษอม ทน เสธ ให้ เสธ



ชาติ เรา มี เอ - ก ราษ - สม - บุรณ. -
ชาติ ประเทศ ไทย อย่า ษอม ให้ - เสธ - เถษ. -

(สร้อย)



ไทย จะ คง เป็น ไทย. ต้อง ร่วม ใจ เห่ง ไทย ษ โธ.

Illustration 82: The song "Wan Chat" (National Day) celebrating the 24 June 1932 when the absolute monarchy was ended. See also Chapter 2 on the use of songs to promote the national day.

“สดุดีพิบูลสงคราม”

ทำนอง
พระเจนศรัียางค์
จังหวัด ปทุมธานี

คำร้อง
สุนทรีจิตรมาศรา

จังหวัด ปทุมธานีอย่างสง่างามและองอาจ

ไชโย วีระชนชาติไทย ต-ลอค ส-มิยะ ที่ไทย

มีประเทศไทย คงชาติด้วยคนดีของ

ไชย ท่านผู้นำพิบูลสงคราม ขอเรีย นามเกริก

ไกร ขอตำรง - ลู่ - ชาติไทย - นำชาติให้ไพ บูลย์ เทอญ

Illustration 83: The song “Sadudi Phibunsongkham” (Glorify Phibunsongkham), see also Chapter 2.

เพลงเลือดสุพรรณ

จังหวะเร็ว (เท่าทหารเดิน)

เลือด สุพรรณ เคย - พายุน้ำ ทวี - ลึก เห็น อีก ถ้ำ สู ไม่ ฐู๋ นั
- ไม่ คั่น กรำ ขาม ใจ ต่อ โฟ ฐู๋ - ฐู๋ ไค บั มีค - พัว คำ มา ฆ
มา ค้อย กัน มา ค้อย กัน เลือด สุพรรณ ธิอ เลือด สุพรรณ - เชา ประ ฐน ฐน ฐน - เชา

Illustration 84: Extract from the patriotic song "Lu'at Suphan" from the play *Lu'at Suphan*.

ตื่นเถิดชาวไทย

บทเพลงในเรื่อง
"ศึกกลาง"

บทร้องและทำนองของ
หลวงวิจิตรวาทการ

Allegro.

ตื่น - เถิด ชาว ไทย - อ้อ! หลับ - โหล - ลุ่ม - หลง - ชาติ จะ
เรื่อง - คำ - รง - ก็ เพราะ เรา ทั้ง - หลาย - ต้า มัว หลับ มัว หลง - เรา ที่
คง ละ - ลาย - เรา ต้อง เร่ง ขวน - ขวาท - ตื่น - เถิด ชาว - ไทย - บ้าน
เมือง - ชาม เพื่อง พัง รุ่ง เรือง - ก็ อ้อ! ลืม ขวน ขวาท - ผลอ - คิว - คึก มา -
- เรา จะ พา กัน ตาย - จำ ไว้ เถอะ ส - หาย - ตื่น - เถิด ชาว ไทย -

ตื่น เถิด ชาว ไทย
ชาติ จะ เรือง คำ รง
ต้ามัว หลับ มัว หลง
ต้อง เร่ง ขวน ขวาท

บ้าน เมือง ชาม เพื่อง พัง รุ่ง เรือง
ผลอ คิว คึก มา
จำ ไว้ เถอะ สหาย

ชาติ ไทย เรา ไม่ น้อม ออม ใคร
หวัง ผดุง แหลม ทอง
อ้อ! ให้ ชาติ คุณธ หาย

อ้อ! หลับ โหล ลุ่ม หลง
ก็ เพราะ เรา ทั้ง หลาย
เรา ที่ คง ละ ลาย
ตื่น เถิด ชาว ไทย

ก็ อ้อ! ลืม ขวน ขวาท
เรา จะ พา กัน ตาย
ตื่น เถิด ชาว ไทย

จะ ชี จม ชีพ สลาย
เรา ที่ น้อม หูยง ชาติ
ตื่น เถิด ชาว ไทย

Illustration 85: The patriotic song "Tu'n Thoet Chao Thai" (Thais, Wake Up!) from the play *Su'k Thalang*.

รักชาติ

จิ๋วหวะเดิน.

๑. ความรัก อันโต — แม่ รัก เท้าไหน — ยัง ไม่ ยั้ง — ชื่น — เชน
 รัก คู่ รัก แม่ รัก - คัง กลิ่น ชม อจ ชม ชื่น ชื่น ได้ ภาย หลัง

๒ แต่ ความ รัก ชาติ - รัก แสน พิ - ส - วาท รัก สุข ถ่า - ลัง ก่อ เกิด มานะ
 ขอม ส - ละ ชี - วัง รัก จน กระ-หัง — หมก เลือดเนื้อเรา.

๓. ชี - วิต รุ่ง ภาย เรา ไม่ เสีย คาง คาง แล้ว ก็ เผา ทุก สิ่ง ขอม ตลาด
 - เว้น แต่ ชาติ ของ เรา ไม่ ให้ ใคร เว้า เหวี่ยง ช่า ทำ - ลาย.

Illustration 86: The patriotic song "Rak Chat" (Love the Nation) from the play *Jaoying Saenwi*.

ไทย น้อย ไทยใหญ่



จังหวะเดิม.



๑. ไทย น้อย ไทยใหญ่ — แม่ อยู่ ห่างไกล — คง เป็น ไทย — คิว กั้น —



— ต้อง มุ่ง ความดี — ต้อง ส-มาน ไม — พรี — ไม่ มี เศษศ ธนัท — วิก



ซึ่ง กว่า ส-หาบ — เพราะ ว่า เรา เป็น สาธ - ไส-พิศ เคี้ยว กั้น — พี่ น้อยเก่า แก่



— มา แต่ ปาง บรรพ — วิวรรค สุข สันติ — อยู่ เป็นชาติ ไทย —



๒. ตั้ง กุศลใจ — เนา แต่ ชาติอื่น เขา - มา - แฉ่ง เอา ไป — ไทย จึง ต้อง จร



— ช้ำ ถิ่น ไร่ อดม — ลง มา ทาง ใต้ — จึง พบ แคน ทอง - ไทย



เรา เขา ของ — ชิด ถิ่น มั่น ไร่ — เจ้า อยู่ ครอบ ครอบ



— คิน - ทอง ของ ไทย - ไทย น้อย ไทย — ใหญ่ — ชาติ ไทย คิว กั้น —

Illustration 87: The patriotic song "Thai Noi-Thai Yai" (Lesser Thai, Greater Thai) from the play *Jaoying Saenwi*.

แหลมทอง

บทเพลงในเรื่อง
"สุกธลาง"

บทร้องและทำนองของ
หลวงวิจิตรวาทการ.

สร้อย *Allegro.*



แหลมทอง ไทยเข้าครองเป็นแดนไทยรักกัน - ไว้เราพวกไทยในแดนทอง
เนืองนอง



แหลมทองไทยเข้าครองเป็นแดนไทยแล้วชาย-แขกแตกกันไปเป็นสา-ขา



ไทยสยามอยู่แม่ น้า เจ้า-พระ - ชา และ ปัง ชมิ วัง ชม นาน น - ที่

ไซง สากร ไทย ก็ จอง-ครอง ที่ ดิน

สาละวิน ไทยใหญ่อยู่ เป็น ที่

ไทยอิสลาม อยู่ ล่า นาคาน

คือ ลง ไป ไทย ก็ มี อยู่ เหมือน กัน

ขอ พวกเรา ชาว ไทย ของ แดน ทอง

หมางใจ ปอง ผูก รัก สมคร มั่น

ไทย สยาม มั่ง จิตต์ คัด สมพันธ์

ผูก ไมตรี ทวี กัน ใน แหลมทอง.

Illustration 88: The patriotic song "Laem Tho'ng" (Golden Peninsula) from the play *Su'k Thalang*.

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เบ็ดเสร็จกรมศิลปากร

1. ศธ. 0701.1/17 ขอคำวิพากษ์และเขียนความเห็นคำนำ
2. ศธ. 0701.1/19 Lecture on the evolution of Siamese Music given by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn at the meeting of the Rotary Club Theatre Royal. (2480)
3. ศธ. 0701.1/24 บทละคร *นาฏดุริยางค์* (2481)
4. ศธ. 0701.1/35 ข้อวิจารณ์เรื่องควรใช้คำว่า สยาม หรือ ไทย โดย ป.ส. ศาสตร (P.S. Sasti) (2482)
5. ศธ. 0701.1/36 อธิบตีแสดงปาฐกถา *มนุสสปฏิวัติ* (2482-2483)
6. ศธ. 0701.1/43 ปาฐกถา ปัญหาเรื่องการแต่งกาย ของหลวงวิจิตรวาทการ (2488)
7. ศธ. 0701.1/45 การแสดงละครของกรมศิลปากร (2484)
8. ศธ. 0701.1/46 พระยาอนุমানราชชน (2484-2508)
9. ศธ. 0701.1/187 รายงานอธิบดีกรมศิลปากรในการนาฏดุริยางค์ที่ปฏิบัติอยู่ในเวลานี้ (ม.ท.)

เบ็ดเสร็จกรมศิลปากร

แบ่งส่วนราชการ

10. ศธ. 0701.1.1/2 บันทึกรายงานของอธิบดีกรมศิลปากร (2476-2479)
11. ศธ. 0701.1.1/14 ความเป็นมาของกรมศิลปากร (2485)
12. ศธ. 0701.1.1/20 หน้าที่ราชการของสภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติ (2495-2497)

สำนักงานเลขาธิการกรม กรมศิลปากร

นโยบายการสร้างชาติ

13. ศธ. 0701.29/1 เรื่อง รัฐนิยม-วัฒนธรรม-ศีลธรรม (2478-2498)
14. ศธ. 0701.29/4 เรื่อง ปาฐกถา (2482)
15. ศธ. 0701.29/13 ปัญหาเรื่องการแต่งกาย
16. ศธ. 0701.29/20 เรื่อง พระราชกฤษฎีกากำหนดวัฒนธรรมทางศิลปกรรมเกี่ยวกับการแสดงละคร (2485)
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18. ศธ. 0701.29/23 เรื่อง การควบคุมการแสดงละครและดนตรี (2485-2486)
19. ศธ. 0701.29/24 เรื่อง พระราชกฤษฎีกากำหนดวัฒนธรรมทางศิลปกรรมเกี่ยวกับการแสดงละคร (2485-2487)
20. ศธ. 0701.29/25 เรื่อง ส่งบทละคร (2485-2487)
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23. ศธ. 0701.29/35 เรื่อง รัฐนิยม (ม.ท.)

สภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติ

24. ศธ. 0701.30/8 นัดประชุมกรรมการสำนักวัฒนธรรมทางวรรณกรรม (2490-2498)
25. ศธ. 0701.30/10 เรื่อง นัดประชุมกรรมการสภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติ (2493-2495)
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28. ศธ. 0701.31/2 เรื่อง การตั้งและวางระเบียบการโรงเรียนนาฏดุริยางค์ศาสตร์ (2477)
29. ศธ. 0701.31/3 เรื่อง คำสั่งเกี่ยวกับโรงเรียนนาฏดุริยางค์ (2477-2479)
30. ศธ. 0701.31/4 ตั้งโรงเรียนศิลปากร (2477-2482)
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33. ศธ. 0701.31/17 เรื่อง ขอสถ่างโรงเรียนศิลปากร (2480-2481)
34. ศธ. 0701.31/19 รายงานของโรงเรียนศิลปากร (2480-2482)

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35. ศธ. 0701.40/1 ที่มาของคำว่าละคร (2467-2517)
36. ศธ. 0701.40/27 เชิญชมละครของกรมศิลปากร (2491-2496)
37. ศธ. 0701.40/29 ความเห็นเรื่องการนำละครของกรมศิลปากรไปแสดงตามโรงแรมสรรพ (2492)
38. ศธ. 0701.40/30 การบรรเลงเพลงด้วยเครื่องดนตรีสากล (2492)
39. ศธ. 0701.40/44 การแสดงละครของกรมศิลปากร (ความเห็นของนายพยนต์ ศรีประสิทธิ์) (2495)
40. ศธ. 0701.40/68 การจัดการแสดงละครเรื่อง *ยานภาพพจน์นรามค้ำหนง* ทางโทรทัศน์ช่อง 7 (2503)

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41. ศธ. 0701.48/1 ตัดข่าวจากน.ส.พ.เกี่ยวกับความเป็นไปของกรมศิลป์และข้าราชการในกรม-ศิลป์ (2476-78)
42. ศธ. 0701.48/2 แดงการแก่ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2477-2479)
43. ศธ. 0701.48/4 ข่าวเปิดเตล็ดจากหนังสือพิมพ์ (2477)
44. ศธ. 0701.48/5 ส่งข้อความที่ลงในหนังสือพิมพ์เกี่ยวแก่กรมศิลปากร (2477-2478)
45. ศธ. 0701.48/7 The Siam Chronicle
46. ศธ. 0701.48/6 แดงการแก่ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2479-2480)
47. ศธ. 0701.48/8 แดงการแก่ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2480-2484)
48. ศธ. 0701.48/9 แดงการแก่ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2481-2482)
49. ศธ. 0701.48/10 แดงการแก่ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2482-2483)
50. ศธ. 0701.48/11 ส่งข้อความตัดจากข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ (2483)
51. ศธ. 0701.48/12 ข้อความตัดจากหนังสือพิมพ์เรื่อง วิจารณ์ของหลวงวิจิตรวาทการ (2483-2484)
52. ศธ. 0701.48/13 ส่งข้อความตัดจากหนังสือพิมพ์ (2484)
53. ศธ. 0701.48/14 ส่งข้อความตัดจากหนังสือพิมพ์ (2484)
54. ศธ. 0701.48/167 ข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์เกี่ยวกับดนตรี ละคร ทีวี (2509)
55. ศธ. 0701.48/336 เรื่อง ละคร "สมเด็จพระนเรศวรมหาราช" (2515-2516)

56. ศธ. 0701.48/537 เรื่อง *เจ้าหญิงมณฑรี* (2518)

So'. Ro'. = สำนักนายกรัฐมนตรี (Office of the Prime Minister)
กองกลาง สำนักเลขาธิการคณะรัฐมนตรี (Central Division, Secretariat of
the Cabinet)

ภาพยนตร์

57. (3) สร. 0201.53/1 เบ็ดเตล็ดเกี่ยวกับการภาพยนตร์ ของสำนักงานโฆษณา
(กรมโฆษณาการ)
(24 มีย. 2475-10 พย. 2477)
58. (3) สร. 0201.53/6 เรื่อง นายชากี กับ หิโมเด ขออย่าให้ฉายภาพยนตร์เรื่อง
"เสียดทหารจีน"
(7-27 กย. 2476)
59. (3) สร. 0201.53/8 เรื่อง เชิญประชุมและรายงานประชุมคณะกรรมการแห่งสภาพิจารณา
ภาพยนตร์
(27 มีค. 2476-20 สค. 2483)
60. (3) สร. 0201.53/9 สำนักงานโฆษณาการทำภาพยนตร์เพื่อโฆษณาให้ราษฎรรักการ
ทหาร (ภาพยนตร์เรื่อง *เสียดทหารไทย*)
(22 พค. 2477-16 ตค. 2478)
61. (3) สร. 0201.53/10 กรมเสนาธิการทหารเรือขอให้สำนักงานโฆษณาการ
ช่วยโฆษณาภาพยนตร์เรื่อง "รักชาติยิ่งชีพ"
(30 มีย. 2477-6 กย. 2477)
62. (3) สร. 0201.53/15 फिल्मภาพยนตร์ประมวลข่าวประเทศไทย
(26 พย. 2485-30 พย. 2486)
63. (3) สร. 0201.53/22 ภาพยนตร์อบรมประชาชน (9-16 มีค. 2494)
64. (3) สร. 0201.53/31 การจัดทำภาพยนตร์ของหน่วยราชการหรือเผยแพร่กิจการโดยการถ่าย
ทำภาพยนตร์
(3 มีค. 2497-3 ธค. 2498)
65. (3) สร. 0201.53/57 การถ่ายทำภาพยนตร์เรื่อง *ยานภาพแห่งความเสียสละ และ ยานภาพ
แห่งความรัก* (12 มค.-24 เมย. 2500)
66. (3) สร. 0201.53/58 คำชี้แจงของกระทรวงอุตสาหกรรมเกี่ยวกับการถ่ายทำภาพยนตร์เรื่อง
"ดาวรุ่งชู"
(22 มีย.-4 กค. 2500)

วัฒนธรรม

67. (3) สร. 0201.55/2 การส่งเสริมจรรยาและคุณภาพทางใจของประชาชน (วัฒนธรรม)
(15 กย. 2480-16 มีค. 2485)
68. (3) สร. 0201.55/12 การค้นหาวีรบุรุษมจิตรใจ
(9 เมย. 2485-31 สค. 2486)
69. (3) สร. 0201.55/16 เรื่อง สภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติ (ปีกทั่วไป)
(30 มีย. 2485-12 สค. 2492)
70. (3) สร. 0201.55/21 ความตกลงทางวัฒนธรรมระหว่างประเทศไทยกับประเทศญี่ปุ่น
(29 กย. 2485-8 พย. 2487)

71. (3) สร. 0201.55/22 กัมการสภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติและสำนักวัฒนธรรม
(29 กย. 2485-20 กย. 2494)
72. (3) สร. 0201.55/24 การเผยแพร่และจัดตั้งสถานวัฒนธรรมไทยในญี่ปุ่น
(20 พย. 2485-20 กพ. 2486)
73. (3) สร. 0201.55/26 วรรณคดีสมาคม
(22 ธค. 2485-26 มีย. 2486)
74. (3) สร. 0201.55/42 เบ็ดเตล็ดเรื่องวัฒนธรรม
(15 พค. 2486-8 กย. 2493)
75. (3) สร. 0201.55/44 การเผยแพร่วัฒนธรรมตามอำเภอ
(24 พค.-13 กย. 2486)
76. (3) สร. 0201.55/46 วีระธรรม
(10 เมย.-18 กย. 2487)
77. (3) สร. 0201.55/71 การแสดงละครของกระทรวงวัฒนธรรมและสภาวัฒนธรรมแห่งชาติ
เรื่อง *ฮานภาพแห่งความเสียสละ*
(1-9 กันยายน 2498)
78. (3) สร. 0201.55/74 เงินรางวัลบทธละครเผยแพร่วัฒนธรรมทางวิทยุกระจายเสียง
(28 กค.-11 ตค. 2499)
79. (3) สร. 0201.55/75 กรมศิลปากรขอเงินสร้างเครื่องละคร ฯลฯ
(7 พย. 2499-14 มค. 2507)

ดนตรีและนาฏศิลป์

80. (2) สร. 0201.104/4 บันทึกการประมุกัมการวัฒนธรรมปรับปรุงและส่งเสริมการดนตรีกับ
ละคอน
(3 กย. 2485-10 ตค. 2488)
81. (2) สร. 0201.104/5 เงินบำรุงวัฒนธรรมเกี่ยวกับละคอนและดนตรี
(1 ตค. 2485-21 มค. 2487)
82. (2) สร. 0201.104/6 จัดตั้งบริษัทแสดงละครสมัยใหม่และปรับปรุงการแสดงละครและดนตรี
(25 กพ.-20 พค. 2486)
83. (2) สร. 0201.104/7 กรรมการอำนวยการแสดงอุปรากรและเรื่องสร้างมหาอุปรากร
"ดารณี"
(31 สค. 2486-20 ตค. 2488)
84. (2) สร. 0201.104/8 เบ็ดเตล็ดเรื่องละคอนและดนตรี
(27 ตค. 2486-7 พย. 2492)
85. (2) สร. 0201.104/9 การประกวดนาฏดนตรีทางวิทยุกระจายเสียง
(2 มีค.-8 ตค. 2494)
86. (2) สร. 0201.104/10 องค์การนาฏศิลป์
(15 มีค. 2495)

กรมโฆษณาการ

บทสนทนา นายมัน ชาติ - นายคง รักไทย

87. (2) สร. 0201.18.1/1 บทสนทนายหว่างนายมัน กับนายคง แสดงทางวิทยุกระจายเสียง
ประจำเดือน ตุลาคม 2484
(14 กย.-27 พย. 2484) ปีที่ 1/2 แผ่นที่ 1-86
88. (2) สร. 0201.18.1/2 เรื่อง ให้ส่งบทสนทนา นายมัน - นายคง ให้แก่หนังสือพิมพ์และ

101. จ/2497/10 พิธีเปิดตึกที่ทำการกระทรวงวัฒนธรรม
 102. มท. 0201.2.1.18/1 ขอให้เสนอนามบุคคลที่เห็นสมควรเป็นกรรมการสภาวัฒนธรรม
 แห่งชาติ
 103. สบ. 4.2/1 คำบรรยายประกอบคำขวัญร้องทำนองภาษา ในเรื่อง พระอภัยมณี
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 106. F.O. 371/23598 (1939) Luang Vichitr and irredentist
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Sinlapakorn
Thai Mai
Thai Rat
The Nation
Warasan Thammasat
Warasap
Yuwachon Thahan

Interviews

1. Vichitra Rangsiyanon Luang Vichitr's daughter.
2. Samphan and Suphap
Phanmani Former leading female actors in Luang Vichitr's plays and the founders of the first private School of Dance and Drama, *Nattasin Samphan*.
3. Wong Sisawat Former supporting actor and an assistant director during the period of the *Anuphap* series. At present, he is an adviser to the revival productions of Luang Vichitr's plays for Thailand National Theatre and also a music teacher at a girl's school in Bangkok.
4. Mot Wo'ngsawat A prominent stage designer of the Fine Arts Department between the 1930s and 1950s and participated in every Luang Vichitr production (since the beginning until the last play). Mot has been awarded Thailand National Artist in the field of Fine Arts.
5. Phanida Sitthiwan A former assistant director in Luang Vichitr plays during the *Anuphap* series. At present, she works as a producer, writer and director of many dramatic productions for the Fine Arts Department and private sector. She also gives a regular lecture on Thai Drama at the Drama Department, Thammasat University.
6. Panya Nittayasuwan A former supporting actor in Luang Vichitr's plays. He is well-known for his expertise in traditional theatre and the *Khon*. At present, he is working for an Entertainment Division of the Fine Arts Department and occasionally lectures in Thai Drama at the Drama Department, Thammasat University.
7. Bunnak Trantranon A teacher in Thai dance-drama at the Drama Department, Thammasat University. She is also a senior expert on traditional theatre working for an Entertainment Division of the Fine Arts Department.
8. Phuangnoi Wasantachat A member of Luang Vichitr's regular audience. She is now a house-wife and still a loyal fan of Luang Vichitr's revival productions.
9. M. R. Saisawatdi
Sawatdiwat Thomson A member of Luang Vichitr's regular audience. She is a senior member of the *Samakkhi Samakhom* Thai Society in England.
10. Dome Sukwong An expert on Thai cinema and the founder of the National Film Archives of Thailand.
11. Lucien Vichitr Vadakarn Luang Vichitr's son with his first wife.

