

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GRAND SHADOW PLAY AS THAI CULTURAL HERITAGE FROM FOLK WISDOM IN SAMKO DISTRICT, ANGTHONG PROVINCE

Orawatana Niamauthai

*Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, SuanSunandha Rajabhat University
Bangkok, Thailand
Email: orawatana.ni@ssru.ac.th, orawatana@hotmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Abstract – The study of The Performance of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province was aimed to reveal its story, how to play and to discover the way to inherit and preserve Thai cultural heritage. This research was conducted by documentary analysis, in-depth interview with the heads of the troupes, Thai classical dance masters and concerning people. This data collected was synthesized, represented in descriptive format and analyzed according to qualitative research method. The study says: The story behind of the Grand shadow play of the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe performing in Samko District, Angthong province has performed since 1999 for 17 years. The Grand shadow play performed by Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong province usually started with creating a large screen made by white canvas in rectangle shape. Its size was 16 meters length and 6 meters width sewing on all 4 borders with red fabric. At the top of the posts were embroidered in peacock tail pattern and golden flag. The shadow figures were categorized by its characteristics such as Phra (male), Nang (female), Yak (demons), Ling (monkeys) and others. The inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom cultural heritage of Samko district, Angthong province by Veera Meemhuan's troupe proposed the guideline for the Thai cultural heritage preservation in the grand shadow play. The state of knowledge of the grand shadow play performance has been passed on in the technique of performing, narration and dialogue method, creation and meticulous handicraft to make shadow figures. In order to preserve this cultural heritage, the shadow figures were kept in Kudi Sailenthorn museum at Samko district, Angthong province where the people to learn.

Keywords – Performance, The Grand Shadow Play, Thai Cultural

INTRODUCTION

The Grand shadow play is one of the oldest theatrical performing of Thailand. It has been praised as the classical show belonging to the high ranking and stated in the royal law. Normally the show for them like the shadow play must be the grand shadow play and performs only in the important royal occasion. According to Panee Seesuy (1996 : 76 – 82) mentioned that the features of the hide figures were meticulously crafted with fine Thai pattern based on the story to play. The hides were carved into several figures and painted with accurate colors according to the roles. Mostly they played the episodes of the Ramakian epic. The narration was made as same as Khon performance without singing and the music was used Thai Classical ensemble or Wong Pi Phat. The grand shadow play was assumed that it has been performed since Ayutthaya period, in the reign of King Ramathibodi III or King Narai (B.E.2199 or 1656 A.D.) The Great teacher or Phra Maha Rachakru was ordered by the King to compose a new story for the grand shadow play. It was implied that the show was held in the celebration of the King's 25th birthday anniversary. He brought the folk tale called Samuth Kojorn to adapt into the dialogue for the grand shadow play. This could be inferred that the grand shadow play would have been performed since Ayutthaya period, even more before in the reign of King Narai. There were many stories to play the grand shadow performance, it was not necessary to play only the stories of the Ramakian. The grand shadow play was a large hide carving into the characters of the stories which was categorized into 6 types which were Nang Fao, Nang Kanejorn, Nang Nga, Nang Muang, Nang Jab and others.

At present the grand shadow play was relatively rare to see. It could be the effect from cultural change, city life style or even the tradition and practice of the grand shadow play that was the complicated and strict ritual. This could cause the value of the grand shadow play had changed through time. To perform the grand shadow play, the performers, the musicians, the narrators and concerning people more than 20 people are involved including 30 - 60 shadow figures. Every time there must be a ceremony of worshipping

the deity and the teachers in order to blessing and pay respect. This was the rigorous ritual. Accordingly, it could be said that 'the grand shadow play was half show, half rite'. The show could be categorized into 2 types as day show and night show. The day show was filled with colorful shadow figures. On the other hand, the vivid color of the figures in the night show was not necessary as the night session was used extreme light so that the color was unclear. The study revealed that the grand shadow play at the present time was considered as the national heritage and preserved in several places such as Nang Yai Wat Sawang A-rom, Sing Buri province and Nang Yai Wat Khanon, Ratchaburi province. The grand shadow play exhibited at Kudisailane Museum was the troupe of the Master Veera Meemhuan where the 300 shadow figures were preserved and finally became the important learning center.

As a result of this, the researcher was interested in the Grand shadow play of the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe performing in Samko District, Angthong province which was one of Thai cultural heritage creating from wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. Therefore the researcher decided to study the grand shadow play in creating, performing, narrating and music in qualitative research format.

LITERATURE & THEORY

The study of The Performance of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province aims to 1)To study the story of the grand shadow play performing in Samko District, Angthong province.2) To study the performing method of the grand shadow play performing in Samko District, Angthong province.3) To find the proper method to inherit and preserve the cultural heritage creating from wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

This research was aimed to study the grand shadow play as the national cultural heritage creating from wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. Categorythe Grand shadow play.The elements of the Grand shadow play.The proper method to inherit and preserve the cultural heritage.The study was conducted from the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe, Thai classical dance masters and concerning people.The researcher her conceptual framework follow :

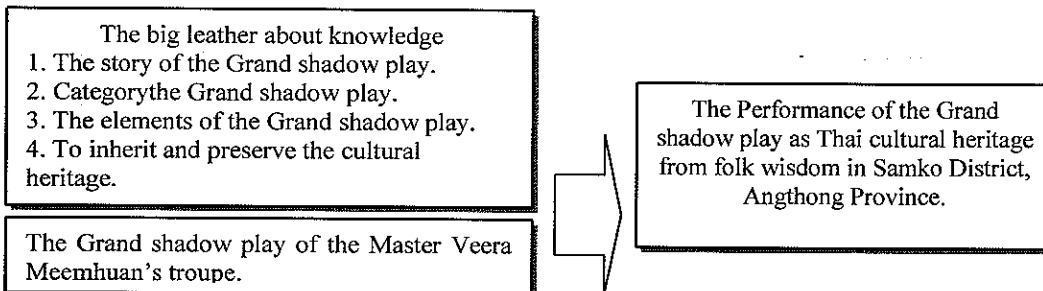


Figure 1 : The creation of study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province was qualitative research conducted by documentary research, in-depth interview and field study in order to discover the research answers which were the story of the grand shadow play and the guidelines leading to inheritance and preservation the cultural heritage from folk wisdom undertaken by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe. The research methodologies were as followings.

Step 1 : The study of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

The researcher collected data related to the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Provincethrough documentary research from books, textbooks, journals, researches concerned with the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. The in-depth interview with the owners of the troupes, Thai classical dancing teachers and concerning people was conducted by purposive collection method, field study, observation the demonstration including the interview with concerning people about the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

Step 2 : The Story of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

The data from document synthesis together with the interview and field study related to the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. Additionally, data from the interview with the owner of the troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people was conducted in order to establish the frame of the questions for the interview concerned with the story of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. The In - Dept interview with the owners of the grand shadow play troupes was made by Purposive Collection Method in order to collect data about the background of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. The purposive collection method had been used again in the interview with the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people about the history of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

Step 3 : The Study of the performing method of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

The data gathered from document synthesizing process and the data from the interviewing and field study related to the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province had been conducted. It was included the data collected from the interview with the owners of the grand shadow play troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people in order to establish the frame of the questions for the interview concerned with the performing of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province had been conducted. The interview with these related people was also concerned with the performing method of the show. After all, the data were concluded in order to evaluate the opinions and then, to be summarized.

Step 4 : The Study of the guidelines leading to the strategy of inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom in the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe.

The data received from documentary synthesis including with the interview and the field trip were evaluated about the performing technique of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province had been conducted. Also, the data collected from the interview with the owners of the troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people in order to establish the frame of the questions for the interview concerned with the guidelines to inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom in the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe. After all, the data were concluded in order to evaluate the opinions and then, to be summarized.

Step 5 : Data Analysis.

The data from synthesis process and the data from the interview with the owners of the troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people were concluded about the history and performing technique of the grand shadow play including with to discover the guidelines leading to the strategy of inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom in the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe.

Step 6 : The Synthesis of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province.

The data from the documentary analysis and the interview was synthesized and reviewed by the experts. The result was properly revised. The finding was written into report and presented before the advisor. The research was finished after all contents were approved according to the advisor's review.

Research Design : In order to conduct the research effectively and valid to the research objectives, the researcher specified all the detail related to research methodology which was composed of population, samples, independent variables, research tools and tool establishment, data collection and data analysis. The details were as followings.

1) Samples. The samples were composed of the owners of the troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people. All of them were selected by purposive collection method from 3 groups of population which were the owners of the troupes, 2 master of Thai classical dancing and 3 concerning people.

2) Independent variable. In this study the researcher aimed to study the performing of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province, therefore the independent variable in this study was the performing of the grand shadow play by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe.

3) Research tools. The researcher used the tools which were in-dept interview and an unstructured interview with the owners of the troupes, the master of Thai classical dancing and the concerning people in the study of the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province. The researcher categorized the aspects of the study in order to establish the explicit frame of the open-ended questions which were the history of the performing of the grand shadow play by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe and their guidelines to inherit and preserve this folk wisdom.

4) Data Collection. Data collection was conducted in this study was the following process. Data analysis from the relevant documents in order to specify the explicit frame of the interview. The researcher

had reached to the samples to ask for the permission to interview by herself. In the first step, data was gathered from the unstructured interview about the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province once a week for every week and received the significant data.

This study using the unstructured interview was conducted to collect data about the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province related to history, performing techniques and the guidelines to inherit and preserve this folk wisdom by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe, and also an observation for every week.

5) Data analysis : The process of data analysis could be divided into 2 part.

Part 1 : Documentary Research or documentary analysis had been categorized all data into several items that were related to the research objectives and grouping the contents to various aspects. The findings were mainly presented in descriptive research.

Part 2 : Conclusion and result analysis from the interview could be analyzed the data according to the frame of interview question. Documentary research had been conducted in order to discover the conclusion. Data analysis from the interview had been done in order to seek for the findings. Data analysis from related documents, data from the interview and field study had been underway to check and confirm the data accuracy.

6) Data presentation : The researcher concluded and synthesized the data in order to present the study of The Performance of the Grand Shadow Play as Thai Cultural Heritage from Folk Wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province of qualitative research.

RESULTS

1. The story behind of the Grand shadow play of the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe performing in Samko District, Angthong province has performed since 1999 for 17 years. The troupe was inherited narration and dialogue method from Mom Jaroonsa was Suppawas including the leather shadow figure making was taught by Master Sa-Nguan Rakmit, while the method of performance was trained by Master Krai Chang-Ngam and Master Lam Trinavi. The shadow figures were made from cow or buffalo hides with exceptional handicraft art for each character. This kind of shows was divided into 2 types which were auspicious thing and misfortune.

2. The Grand shadow play performed by Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong province usually started with creating a large screen made by white canvas in rectangle shape. Its size was 16 meters length and 6 meters width sewing on all 4 borders with red fabric. At the top of the posts were embroidered in peacock tail pattern and golden flag. The shadow figures were categorized by its characteristics such as Phra (male), Nang (female), Yak (demons), Ling (monkeys) and others. They were placed line up in order that the puppeteers could pick them easily. The music band for the show was the Piphatkrueang ha (Thai classical music band playing with 5 instruments) While the puppeteers performed, they had to dance as well. Their bodies and legs were important. They dressed in the red loincloth with a cylinder sleeve T-shirt, and a sash including a bow tie. The narrators were the key for the grand shadow play because they could persuade the audiences to appreciate with the show. They should be articulate and full of sense of humor. The story for the show in day session was performed with glamorous dancing; on the other hand, in night session there were Burg Phra ceremony to pray for the deities and Wai kru ceremony to pay respect to the late masters performed before the short story show.

3. The inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom cultural heritage of Samko district, Angthong province by Veera Meemhuan's troupe proposed the guideline for the Thai cultural heritage preservation in the grand shadow play. The state of knowledge of the grand shadow play performance has been passed on in the technique of performing, narration and dialogue method, creation and meticulous handicraft to make shadow figures. In order to preserve this cultural heritage, the shadow figures were kept in KudiSailenthorn museum at Samko district, Angthong province where the people to learn.

CONCLUSION

The story behind of the Grand shadow play of the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe performing in Samko District, Angthong province has performed since 1999 for 17 years. The Grand shadow play performed by Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong province usually started with creating a large screen made by white canvas in rectangle shape. Its size was 16 meters length and 6 meters width sewing on all 4 borders with red fabric. At the top of the posts were embroidered in peacock tail pattern and golden flag. The shadow figures were categorized by its characteristics such as Phra (male), Nang (female), Yak (demons), Ling (monkeys) and others The inheritance and preservation of the folk wisdom cultural heritage of Samko district, Angthong province by Veera Meemhuan's troupe proposed the guideline for the

Thai cultural heritage preservation in the grand shadow play. The state of knowledge of the grand shadow play performance has been passed on in the technique of performing, narration and dialogue method, creation and meticulous handicraft to make shadow figures. In order to preserve this cultural heritage, the shadow figures were kept in Kudi Sailenthorn museum at Samko district, Angthong province where the people to learn.

Discussion

According to the study across the related document analysis and data from the interview about the Grand shadow play as Thai cultural heritage from folk wisdom in Samko District, Angthong Province, there are several aspects to be discussed as the followings.

The grand shadow play by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong Province had been originated by Master Veera Meemhuan. He was interested in the grand shadow play and he kept practice until he could manage the first show in B.E. 2542 (1999) or 17 years ago. He was taught the narration technique by Mom JaroonsawasSuppasawas, hide figure carving technique by Master Sa-NguanRakmitr and performing technique by Master Klai Chang-Ngam and Master Lam Trinavi. The grand shadow play was held. The hide figures were made of cow and buffalo hides according to the characters in the stories. The hides could be divided into 2 types, namely auspicious hides and misfortune hides. It was in accordance with SurapolWirunrak (2006 : 141 – 143) stated that the grand shadow play was one of the oldest Thai classical dancing that traced back to the early Ayuthaya period. The grand shadow show presented both the hide figures and their shadow on the screen. Nowadays the grand shadow play was performed in the original tradition format as well as using the grand hide figures applied together with acting.

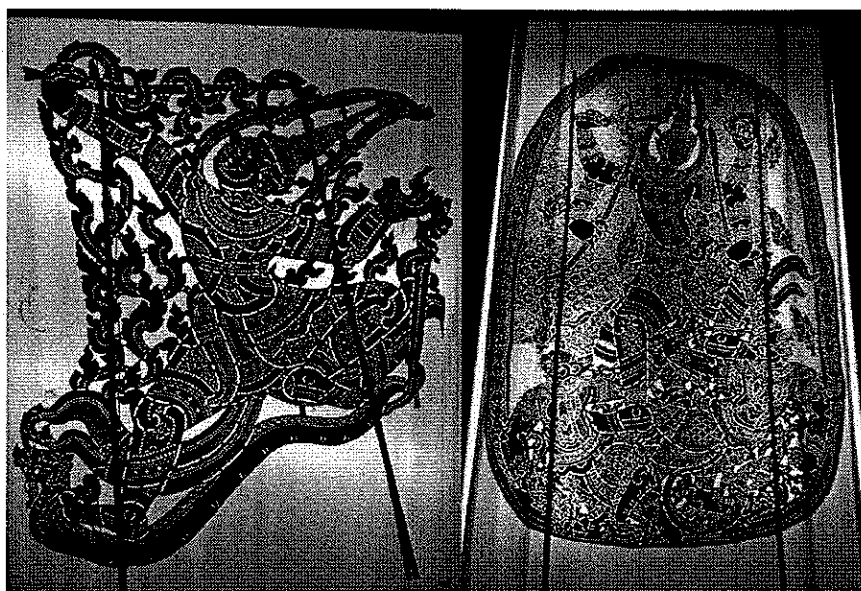


Figure 2 : The grand shadow play show
Source: OrawatanaNiamauthai (interviewed on August 10, 2016)

Before the grand shadow play of the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong was staged, the 16 meters length and 6 meters width screen using a white canvas in rectangle shape was built. The screen also was sewn at all 4 edges with a red strip, and at the top of 4 posts, they were the flags embroidered in peacock pattern. The hide figures were separated into the different groups such as Phra (male), Nang (female), Yak (demon), Ling (monkey) or extra roles. They were stacked up nice and orderly so that they would be easily picked by the performers without any mistake. The music for the grand shadow play show was used 5 instruments Thai Classical ensemble or Wong Pi Phat Krueng Ha. The performers mainly used their bodies and legs when they performed. They dressed in white T-shirt and wore loincloth together with a sash and put on with a hat and a bow tie. The narrators were also the key part. They made the show enjoyable, excited or sad. It was all depended on the narrator's ability. The stories to perform could be divided as the day show was included with spectacular Thai classical dancing, while the night show was started with a ceremony of worshipping teachers (or Wai Khru in Thai). After that the short story was begin. According to SuwareeRatanapan (1999 : 15 - 40) stated that the art of the grand shadow play was

depended on almost all composition of the performance especially the finest hide figures, elegant choreography delivered by the performers, the narration in sentimental tone or exciting tone, beautiful music including comedy parts between the show. The composition of the show was comprised of the locations, hide figures, worshipping teacher ceremony, the prelude show, the stories, Thai Classical ensemble or Wong Pi Phat, narration and dialog, the performers and performing technique.



Figure 3 : The grand shadow play show
Source: OrawatanaNiamauthai (interviewed on August 10, 2016)

The inheritance and preservation of Thai grand shadow play performance as folk wisdom heritage in Samko District, Angthong Province by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe was undertaken as cultural preservation as well. They transferred the state of knowledge through the grand shadow play, the narration, performing technique, the hide figure production and the hide figure storage method. All of the figures were considered as Thai cultural heritage and they were well preserved in Kudisailane Museum in Samko District, Angthong Province.



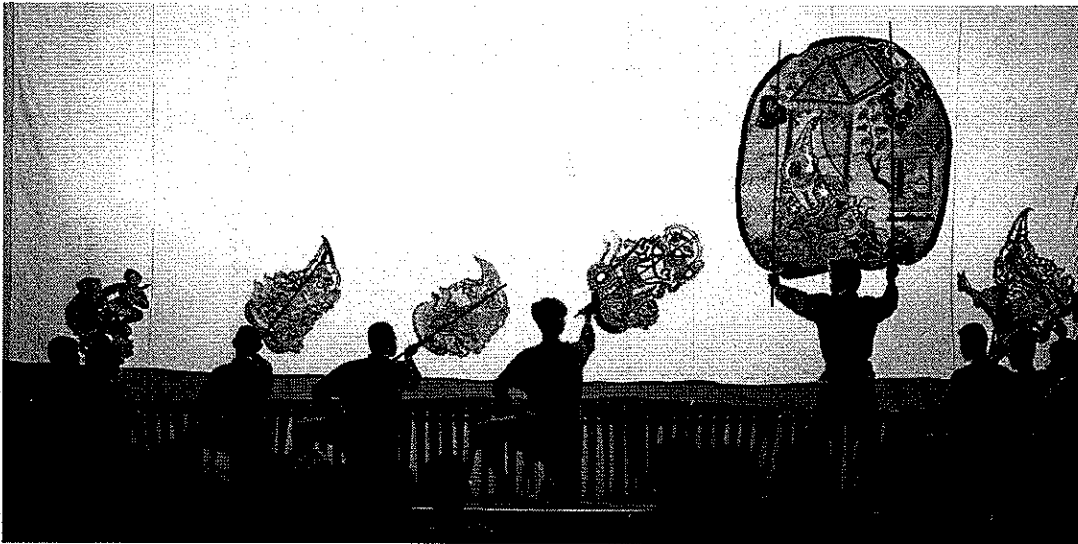


Figure 4 : The grand shadow play show
 Source: OrawatanaNiamauthai (interviewed on August 10, 2016)

It could be concluded that the grand shadow play performance by the Master Veera Meemhuan's troupe in Samko District, Angthong Province has made their hide figures by engraving in finest pattern according to the characters of Ramakian. They had trained the performers, the narrators and the musicians for the show, and they also built a large screen on the location. Additionally, they preserved the art and culture of the grand shadow play through their storage technique of hide figures. Moreover, they gave the state of knowledge in the grand shadow play to people including demonstration in several places.

SUGGESTION

1. There should be the studies of the grand shadow play performing at the present time in order to create the guidelines for Thai cultural preservation.
2. Data collection and restoration about the performing technique and making of the grand shadow play should be managed in order to be easily retrieved.

REFERENCES

- AmornratSindhuchai. (1997). Thai Classical Dance Equipment Production. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- AmmaraKlamcharoen. (1992). Classical Dance Teaching. Bangkok: Odeon Store Publishing.
- ArpornMontreesat. (1974). Graduate Diploma in Teacher Profession of The Teacher Council (Classical Dance). Bangkok: Business Organization of the Office of The Welfare Promotion Commission for Teachers and Educational Personnel
- NawaratThepsiri. 1996. The Criteria of Beauty in the Costumes of Male Actor - Female Actor in Classical Dancing Drama. The Report of Aesthetics in Thai Classical Dancing, Master of Fine and Applied Arts. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- OrnanongPanyawong. (1996). Role of Thai Classical Dancing in Restaurant: at Old Chiangmai Cultural Center. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- OrnwattanaShinnaphan. (2006). Baan KruengLakhon: Cultural Production and Management. Bangkok.
- PaneeSeesuyay. (1996). The Aesthetic of Thai Classical Dancing. Department of Dance and Drama. DhonburiRajabhat University. p.76 – 82.

- PattamawadeeSenanarong.(1994). Classical Dance Business on Locations.Bangkok: Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University. Copied.
- PongpanBoonlert. 2007. Thai Heritage Preservation for Khon Costumes. Bangkok: Variety Dailynews.p.4.
- SurapolWirunrak. (2006). Thai Classical Dancing in the reign of King Rama IX.Chulalongkorn University Press.P.141 – 143.
- SuwareeRatanapan. (1999). The Grand Shadow Play At Wat Khanon. Bangkok. Ram Thai Press. P.15 – 40.
- The Department of Fine Arts. 2004. Thai Drama Costume and Its Development: Costumes of LakhonNai of The Department of Fine Arts.Bangkok Rungsilp Publishing. p.95
- WorawitSomcharoensap. 2003. The Embroidery Pattern of Royal Costumes in 'Yuen Krueng' of Phra. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.Drama Costume and Its Development: Costumes of LakhonNai of The Department of Fine Arts.Bangkok Rungsilp Publishing.p.95.