

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF THAI THEATRE MANAGEMENT

In Chapter I, the researcher presented introduction of the study. Chapter II summarizes history of Thai theatre management. This chapter is separated into three main periods to explain different characteristic of theatre management in Thailand. They are patronage theatre, commercial theatre, and educational theatre.

#### 2.1 Patronage Theatre

From generations to generations, theatre arts had been considered as a part of lifestyle of Thai people. Therefore, the kings and citizens from every level in the society supervised and preserved Thai theatre arts. In this regard, the researcher could divide the patronage systems into 2 aspects: the royal patronage and the public patronage. The royal patronage system had been existed in Thailand since the early period of Thai Kingdom. The former kings of Thailand were the great examples of this kind of management.

The female court dance troupe of King Borommakote during the late Ayutthaya period was the first official royal patronage existed in Thai theatre management. Accordingly, the court officers followed the kings' action by creating their own dancing troupe or theatre, in order to represent their status symbol. These situations were integrated in the lifestyle of court people including the royal family. The more high level they were, the more delicate theatre arts they had to maintain. (Jaruwan Waiyajet, 1986: 200)

The royal patronage has been consistently maintained up until present. King Rama IX and Her Royal Highness Queen Sirikit have created many patronages

towards Thai theatre arts. The most graceful royal patronage was the creation of insignia for the national artists who have done the great action for Thai theatre arts; which created a lot of mental support for Thai artists (Surapone Virulrak, 2004: 606-607).

It was noticeable that the royal patronage influenced through lifestyle of court people. Play productions depended on royal taste and noblemen's taste. Monarchy had played an important role and captive labors had joined as theatre crews in productions. Therefore, this did not only create the mental support among national artists and royal officers, in term of managing the troupes, but also encourage and maintain the standard of small group, which would develop the patronage among the troupe to the public patronage.

The public patronage was developed from the royal patronage. As Jaruwan (1986) mentioned that Thai theatre arts, since the old days, was considered as status symbol. The concept was true not only among royal society but also among the general public; there were a lot of competitions among the public troupe. Therefore, theatre arts became more and more competitive business, in order to gain more audiences.

In the period of King Rama I- King Rama III, it can be called the period of Patronage Theatre. The King in each reign had conducted royal policies to control discipline in management without western concept. The factor that caused those policies was construction of theatre building. In the reign of King Rama I, after the King had established some technical books of Thai classical dance format in order to be the reference of reserving and continuing Thai classical dance since Ayutthaya period, he had the Khon theatre built in the court which became the model of building theatre in palace or in noblemen's residences. His royal policies towards theatre arts became guideline for noblemen and citizen. The noblemen arranged their own Khon troupe

called Khon Lakhon Bandasak, whereas the citizen arranged Khon Lakhon Chaloeysak, which were totally performed by males. These arrangements influenced ideas of management in Thai society vary from different places of production. Under the reign of King Rama II, there were two significant sites established in the royal palace which highly influence toward Thai theatre arts and theatre management, called the Chinese Pavilion Mansion Theatre and Ronglakhon Ton Son (Pine Tree Theatre). The Chinese Pavilion Mansion Theatre was the center of court-lady plays; as this was the place where King Rama II preferred watching and invited royal relatives participating court-lady performance. Whereas Ronglakhon Ton Son was considered as the first performing arts college of Rattanakosin period; because this was the venue for training traditional performing arts to court ladies. Students from Ronglakhon Ton Son, then, became expert in traditional performing arts and they had responsibility to serve royal policies in theatre management. All of the background above reflects that theatre building enhances the idea of theatre management in Thailand based on royal policies but not with western concept combination yet. Theatre management during this period was not changed as long as there were policies led by King.

Under the reign of King Rama III, the idea of theatre management seemed to spread to public more than previous reign. Theatre arts was not supported by royal policy; hence, it became famous among citizen instead. In the same time, there were many women who clandestinely acted in playing performances. There was the origin of Lakhon Phuying (Women Plays). It affected many directions of theatre management in that moment such as how to treat women in troupes; actresses were more famous than actors, or how to create performances by using actors or actresses. These changes outside the court turned to grow little by little without royal permission. Then, the popularity of theatre arts among citizen led to new evolution of

Thai theatre arts when it was famous in entertainment industry such as casinos. It was the first time that performing arts was treated as commercial and was clearer in the latter reign.

## 2.2 Commercial Theatre

There was the great change of Thai theatre management in this period. Theatre arts was more significant to run play production in entertainment business. There was more Ngan Chang (hired jobs). Production management was more concerned for each hired job. In this period, the King Rama IV agreed and supported Lakhon Phuying by encouraging his royal concubines to play in many productions. In addition, the official announcement regarding the plays performed by actresses caused theatre troupes new theatre management and organization concept into more western style by concerning public relations, advertisement, ticketing, and promotion gradually. This change differentiated male and female performances by separating women for Lakhon and men for Khon. Anyway, Lakhon Phuying was more popular than performances played by males. This led to making productions with more consideration of audience's taste.

In addition, theatre management in this reign was clearer in terms of public relations, advertisement, ticketing, and promotion. The other word is marketing was more powerful in Thai theatre arts since that time. The main factor that caused marketing concern was there were many permanent theatre constructions. This period caused theatre companies and led to star system. After King Rama V repealed the slavery system, theatre managers could identify the target audiences. Most of them were merchants and middle class because people could independently earn their living and could collect more money enough to pay for performance tickets.

### 2.3 Educational Theatre

Since the Reign of King Rama VI, Thai theatre management had great evolution with the reason of royal interest, so, it was revived and had more prosperous. In this reign, theatre management in Thailand gradually had proper organized and put into educational system. In terms of organization, theatre arts was set under government sector and was developed reign after reign. In the same way, it was involved into education system and still keeps expanding to many education institutes in all level. Once again, royal support influenced smoothness of theatre management in both government sectors and educational institutes.

According to evolution of Thai theatre study, King Mongkut was the first king who introduced arts of music and drama to new academic system. Formerly, music and theatre study were provided only in gurus' houses. These people are persons who had reputation or expert in each field, or were trained from gurus in royal residence. The King comprehended dramatic arts in western way; it was drama with main point, which communicated both entertainment and knowledge to the audience. He realized the significance of encouraging thinking development so that it would be changed in society and the country. King Mongkut gave permission to other members of the royal family and nobles to train and perform the Lakhon Phuying and also to consorts and Fai Nai ladies who wished to leave the royal service and reside outside the royal palace. This gave opportunity to some Lakhon Luang dancers and teachers to train and teach in other theatre troupes, some of which became very successful in the Fifth and Sixth Reigns.

In addition, there was expansion of traveling troupes in latter time because the transportation was more convenient. This caused new style of theatre management in Thailand. Each theatre troupe had main station at home, in the same time, each

traveling troupe wandered into main provinces in each part of the country, and stayed there for a season, then, moved to other provinces. This made people in other provinces could appreciate theatre arts from the city although there was no theatre building in those provinces.

In the Sixth Reign, King Vajiravudh was a main force behind the upsurge of literary creations in the first quarter of the twentieth century. He specified arts, drama, and music in new academic system, which combined traditional Thai arts and western style together. He reorganized the Krom Mahorasop towards the end of the first year of his reign. He set up a special school called Thahan Krabi Luang School to train children of officials and good families in the art of Khon and Lakhon, as well as in formal education and military training. When the King established the Krom Sua Pa Phran Luang Raksa Phra-Ong (Department of Wild Tigers Royal Guards), which was developed from the Wild Tigers Corps, he promoted the status of the school to Rongrian Phran Luang Nai Phra Borom Rachupathum (School of Royal Scouts under Royal patronage). There were about one hundred students, selected from all walks of life. They were taught six years of formal education in ordinary subjects and could pursue their artistic interest in receiving further training in music and classical dance-drama. The objectives of establishing the school were to train juveniles to have skill of performing arts, and to preserve arts and culture of Thailand in performing arts, dramatic arts, and music. With the setting up of this school, which was attached on the one hand to the Krom Mahorasop, and on the other to the Wild Tigers Corps, which was the King's personal political instrument in the movement he set up to propagate nationalism and a support of the absolute monarchy, the King was able to implement, instruct, and propagate his political schemes and policies through dramatic activities, and to create among these close associates, a strong sense of

loyalty to the throne, patriotism and group spirit which he realized vital to the unity of the country.

In terms of theatre study, parents preferred not to let their children learn theatre arts because it was considered as the insignificant and disgrace subjects. However, when Their Majesty the King and Queen Sirikit let the crown prince and princesses study Thai theatre arts at Rongrian Chitlada, this attitude had been changed and also influenced noblemen let their children to study theatre arts. Starting from small theatre arts school and the course conducted by the Department of Fine Arts, more and more parents have encouraged their children to practice theatre arts both classical Thai dance and ballet. Theatre arts have been a part of course syllabus in public and private school; therefore, the needs of instructors and lecturers have been increased. Consequently, the Suan Sunandha College of Education has been established to teach Thai theatre arts. In 1963, Faculty of Arts Chulalongkorn University had new subject "Introduction to Theatre", which was the first time in Thailand that university teach western theatre. It led to the establishment of the Department of Dramatic Arts teaching Bachelor of Arts in dramatic arts since 1971. In the same decade, the College of Education in performing arts expanded to the provinces. Chiang Mai was the first province of the campus of Performing Arts College.

At present, there are many universities which provide Bachelor degree in theatre arts. However, there are just some of those which own their theatres for academic and artistic activities. Lately, many people has more interested in theatre arts, so, there are expansion of theatre arts curriculum in universities. This causes prosperous of theatre arts and development of theatre management in many theatre organizations and also in entertainment industry.