The Role of Shadow Puppetry in the Development of Phatthalung Province, Thailand

2013 NIU Southeast Asia Club Conference

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Shadow Puppet Theater
Carved puppets (traditionally leather) + light source = shadows on a screen
Shadow Puppet Theater
Around the World

India
(Kerala)
Tolpava
Koothu

China
(Shaanxi)

http://foter.com/Shadow-Puppets

www.vyshakhullas.wordpress.com
Shadow Puppet Theater
Around the World

Central Asia (Turkey)
“Karagöz and Hacivat”
www.exeter.ac.uk

Europe (France)
“Le Chat Noir”
www.schattentheater.de/files/englisch/geschichte/geschichte.php
Shadow Puppetry in SEA

Indonesia
(Java)
– Wayang Kulit
Shadow Puppetry in SEA

Thailand

Nang Yai
(Traditional)
large

Nang Talung
(Traditional)
small
Shadow Puppetry in SEA

Malaysia (Kelantan) – Wayang Kulit
Shadow Puppetry in SEA

Cambodia

*Sbaek Touch* (Left 6); *Sbaek Thom* (Right)
Research Questions: Nang Talung in Phatthalung Province Today

1. What role does *Nang Talung* play today in Phatthalung?
2. How have changes in *Nang Talung* supported Phatthalung’s development?
3. How do these changes help *Nang Talung’s* survival?
4. How does the status of *Nang Talung* in Phatthalung contrast to Shadow Puppetry in Cambodia?
Phatthalung

- Southern Region surrounded by Andaman Sea and Gulf of Thailand
- Phatthalung Province landlocked - no beaches
• Large, shallow Songkla Lake on the east and mountains on the west.
• Backpacking, mountain climbing, and bird watching
• **Major attraction** – Thale Noi Bird-watching Festival
Shadow Play Handicrafts Village
Mu 1, Ban Bang Kaeo, Tambon Tha Madua, Amphoe Bang Kaeo, Phatthalung

Research site

- In rural area 22 miles from Phatthalung City
- 60 miles from Hat Yai, Songkla Province
Im Chanchum’s father was a popular puppetmaster (nai nang)
• Retired from performing to set up Village
• Now just leather crafting
Nang Talung puppets

For performing *Nang Talung* troupes
Troupes outsource to Village
Nang Yai as decorative art
Includes images popular in Thai culture

Royal family - Rama IX, the Great, and Queen
Nang Yai as decorative art

• New function for nang “puppets”

Diversification I

• Sold to art collectors & tourists

• Not just puppet figures - Hand crafted to order

Meditating monk
Crafting Elephants!
Nang Talung crafting family
Diversification II

Souvenir key chain tags
Cambodia

- Khmer Rouge (1975-79) government
- Destroyed Sbaek Theater

- Development = Restoration and Healing
(1) Little Angels Orphanage
Siem Reap, Cambodia

Sery Rathana
Founder & Director
Little Angels Orphanage

• Founder **Sery Rathana** – orphan, survivor, & puppetmaker
• 70 Children 4 – 18 Years old
• In school 4 hours a day

**Humanitarian Art**

• **Craft** *Sbaek* puppets the rest of the day
Carving
Shellacking & Painting
Drying
Tool Making

Home Made Crucible
Puppets sold to support Orphanage
(2) Sovanna Phum Art Association
Phnom Penh

Siem Reap
Mann Kosal - Artistic Director
Graduated - Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh
Founded Sovanna Phum 1994
Revives - Traditional Khmer Arts
"New Contemporary Dance and Mixed shadow Puppets Theater (Sbeak Thom), Mask Theatre"
Results
Research Question 1
What role does Nang Talung play today in Phatthalung?

- Nang Talung - part of Phatthalung’s cultural heritage and identity
- Even without performance, Nang Talung is a tourist attraction
Research Question 2

How have changes in Nang Talung supported Phatthalung’s development?

• Major change: diversification to production

• Outsourcing Nang Talung puppet production to Phatthalung, The Village

• Shadow Play Handicrafts Village – “Essential” cultural site for Phatthalung tourist industry development
Research Question 3

How do these changes help *Nang Talung’s* survival?

- *Nang Talung* faces same competition from modern entertainment as *Wayang Kulit* but still popular with Thai people.
- Diversification from performance to Decorative Art creates a new market – collectors and tourists.
Research Question 4
How does the status of *Nang Talung* in Phatthalung contrast to *Sbaek* Theater in Cambodia?

• **Lineage** - extremely important to Shadow Puppet folk art
• **Thailand** - *Nang Talung* – lineage preserved without interruption
• **Cambodia** –
  1. lineage destroyed by Khmer Rouge
  2. Now: needs reconstruction including Humanitarian Work
Recent work by Lim

- Echoing Spirits 2011
- Gotcha! 2012
- Liberation 2012
- Taming 2012
- Going Home Where The Heart Is 2012
Thank you

Please visit my website:

www.siewlianlim.com
Bibliography

• Lim, Siew Lian. Transmitting the Ramayana from India to Southeast Asia and the West through Shadow Puppetry and Visual Art. Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, U.S.A., 2010