THE RESULTING EFFECT OF THE CHANGE IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION ON THAI CLASSICAL DANCE DRAMA OCCUPATION AT THE SHRINE: A CASE STUDY AT THE CITY PILLAR SHRINE AND THE BRAHMA SHRINE, RAJPRASONG, BANGKOK METROPOLITAN

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Abstract— Thai dance drama is one of the Thai Dramatic Arts and is performed as a votive dance at the Shrine. This research has two objectives in which they are: 1) to study Thai classical dance drama occupation in Bangkok, and 2) to discover factors affecting life subsistence of Thai dance drama group at the City Pillar and the Brahma Shrines. The study employs qualitative research method. The research found that the City Pillar Shrine is considered an ancient remains that was built at the same time of constructing the city of Bangkok two hundred thirty-three years ago. There are few customers to hire dance drama groups at the Bangkok City Pillar Shrine to perform their services due to the fact that the shrine is located within the historic site, managed by the government officials, and faces with inconvenient transportation. These incidents have a direct effect on a meager income of the dance groups in which their members are senior people. The group leader must find additional performance elsewhere to support the group. The Brahma Shrine is believed to grant happiness to all those who pay respect to. This belief draws many Thai as well as foreign believers to pledge their offerings that include dance drama performance. These performers dressed in Thai dramatic arts uniforms that are new and looked splendid. The dance drama performance adds more colors to the location and provides an opportunity for students majoring in Thai Dramatic Arts.

Keywords— The change in social and cultural dimension, dance drama occupation, shrine.

I. INTRODUCTION

Belief, religion, and ritual are spiritual attempts used by human to build hope and attain happiness in life. Thai society has been influenced by Indian civilization rooted in Brahmanism. To worship gods and sacred figures, the worshipers who ask for blessing must bring flowers, incense-sticks, candles together with exquisite dance drama coupled with beautiful music in order to praise gods dwelling in the shrine and, therefore, this brings about the votive dance (PreeyaMankoksung and staff, 2014: 48-49). In the beginning, there appeared to have dance drama performance but there was no record of it as an occupation. When Bangkok has become prosper specially after the World-War II, there were many people moving to reside in the city. The City Pillar Shrine is located inside an ancient remains in the middle of Bangkok Metropolitan. People who come to pay respect to the famous and most respectful Emerald Buddha must come to visit the City Pillar Shrine also. Hence, there was a dance drama occupation at the City Pillar Shrine.The Bangkok development plan for the past sixty years had an intention to see Bangkok as an opening venue for tourism and to build new area by using Rajprasong as a new business center.

Rajprasong area has been expanded where World Trade Center, Isetan Department Store and numbers of five-star hotels have flooded into the area. The Brahmin belief is also flourished as witnessed by many sacred statues decorated in front of this group of buildings by the names of Narayana, Shiva, and Ganesha. The performance starts from 10.00 hours in the morning up until 22.00 hours in the evening everyday. The Thai dance drama groups and their dancers have a secure profession with a steady income. Since the dance drama is sacred and respectful, there are a lot of worshipers hire the dance groups to perform their holy services. As a result, the dance drama occupation becomes a dependable source of income and brings happiness for the performers.

The Thai dance drama groups at the City Pillar Shrine that is located within the ancient remains encounter with dullness. The worshipers mostly are Thai who believe that city pillar gods would bring happiness and success to the city.

The change of thought and belief based on religion and ritual as a thrust to turn wishes into reality becomes a realizing concept at the present. The change in thought and belief discussed above has an impact on Thai dance drama occupation at the two shrines in Bangkok. This research will try to pinpoint that human's desires produce an effect on the way people pay respect to gods and, at the very same moment, dance drama occupation for the last following sixty years.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study Thai classical dance drama occupation in Bangkok Metropolitan.

2. To discover factors affecting life subsistence of Thai dance drama group at the City Pillar and the Brahma Shrine

II. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND RELATED THEORIES

1. Light, Donald W., and Keller, Suzanne (1979: 546-549) mentioned about the change in social and cultural dimension with and without plan, in general, the change in social and cultural dimension is due to internal and external factors.
2. The study of social conditions affecting the existence of belief system as mental rescue. The ritual performance reflects the importance between human and supernatural power based on anthropologist's concept.
   2.1 Turner, Victor (1967: 52-54) claimed that society has always changed and ritual is an expression of symbol with three special characteristics that are 1) condensation, 2) certification, and 3) polarization. It also includes social idealism, emotion, and feeling.
   2.2 Geertz, Clifford J. (1968: 26-29) agued that ritual is one of the symbols that can be used to explain reality and imagination in which they become one and can be expressed through culture.
3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has identified human needs in which they are 1) physiological needs, 2) safety needs, 3) social needs, 4) esteem needs, and 5) self-actualization. According to Maslow, the unsatisfied needs are the motivators for certain behaviors. Once those needs are fulfilled, the behavior ceases to exist.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. The study of historical documentation on Thai culture as influenced by Indian culture, the combination of beliefs on Hindu gods and Buddhism, and the erection of the City Pillar Shrine and the Brahma Shrine, Rajprasong, Bangkok.
2. The in-depth interview with the owners of dance drama groups at the City Pillar Shrine and the Brahma Shrine.
3. The participated and non-participated observation for a year
4. The focus group discussion among musicians and dancers, 10 of each location, totaling 20 persons.
5. The interview with 2 administrators, one at the City Pillar Shrine and another at the Brahma Shrine.
6. The interview with the 40 worshipers who hire the dance drama performance, 20 persons at the City Pillar Shrine and another 20 persons at the Brahma Shrine.

The data analysis is based on the document pertaining to the social development of Thai people and dance drama occupation together with context analysis of the change in social and culture dimension and factors affecting dance drama occupation.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 The situation of dance drama occupation at the City Pillar Shrine and the Brahma Shrine

The City Pillar Shrine is a historical site in Bangkok Metropolitan in which King Rama I had been graciously presided over on the royal celebration. The latest renovation was done in 1986 and has invited five guardian angels who protect the city in which they are Phar SeuaMeuang, Phar Song Meuang, Phar KarnChaisri, Chao Jettakoup, and Chao PorHorklong. The City Pillar Shrine is located within the ancient remains and it is right opposite Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Royal Palace. The Shrine is under the care of the War Veterans Organization of Thailand for the past following sixty years.

At the City Pillar Shrine, the dancers are quite senior people. These people perform their services for more than thirty years and are considered experts in Thai traditional dramatic performance and dance drama. Since there are few jobs available at the shrine, the owner of the dance group must try to find jobs elsewhere. As a result, performing dance drama services outside of the shrine become major sources of income for the group. In some occasion, the dance group must perform the show with other dancers such as students from various universities for the sake of great numbers and spectacular performance.

The dance drama occupation at the Brahma Shrine, Rajprasong, there are a lot of customers both Thai and foreigners who come to ask for the votive dances all day long. There are two groups of dance drama performing their services at day time and night time. Both dancers and musicians make a lot of money.

5.2. Factors affecting life subsistence of Thai dance drama group at the City Pillar and the Brahma Shrine.

The City Pillar Shrine is the abode of national gods and is considered the sacred place for the country. Thai people will go there to pay respect during the New Year festival while the Chinese people will visit the shrine on Chinese New Year Days. Each year the War Veterans Organization of Thailand will organize an oblation at the City Pillar Shrine and a consecration of religious articles to be distributed among soldiers patrolling in the southern part of Thailand. During this ceremony, there will be many worshipers who hire dance drama groups to perform votive dances. In general, the dancers and the musicians will earn about 300 baht per day.

The interview together with the participated and non-participated observation with people who come to visit the Brahma Shrine reveal that people have strong faith that the gods could provide blessings to human. The provision of dance drama to the gods would be done before and/or after the pledge. This practice is based on the belief that Brahma could grant happiness to human since he is a very merciful god. Moreover, the surrounding areas, say World Trade Center and Isetan Department Store, are covered with various Hindu gods such as Shiva, Narayana, and Ganesha. This makes this area become a perfect holy destination for Thai as well as foreign believers to come and worship gods in Brahmanism. The location is easily accessible and there are numbers of world-class hotels and shopping centers await for the enjoyment.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study of "The Resulting Effect of the Change in Social and Cultural Dimension in Thai Classical Dance Drama Occupation at the Shrine: A Case Study at the City Pillar Shrine and the Brahma Shrine, Rajprasong, Bangkok Metroplitan" is related with the study of social and cultural perspectives in which belief, custom, and ritual are human's performing activities in order to maintain power over the nature and beg this supernatural power to grant happiness based on wants and needs of human. Beliefs are power that causes certain behavior. Ritual activities are symbols to create belief in a solid manner as argued by Victor Tuner and Clifford Geertz, and are also concerned with motivational theory mentioned by Abraham Maslow. This research has a relationship with the study implemented by PetchawanRattanapun (2000) on "The Behavior of Sacrificial Offering and Religious Belief: A Case Study of Dragon Temple Kammalawat, Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok" in which it found that an oblation is mental issues and an obligation that bring happiness in profession and spiritual happiness. The sacrificial offering toward sacred items is necessary in order to guarantee success. YuthanaVaroonpitikul (1998) conducted a study on "The Traditional Chinese Vegetarianism of Chinese Society in the South: A Case Study of Chinese People in AmphoeTakua Pa, PhangNga Province"and found that the Hokkien traditional vegetarianism performed in the shrine is the community's identity that provides an opportunity to create happiness through the ritual. This study is also relevant to the studies of ChaowalitRuangprad(2006) on "Belief and Custom of Muslim's Merit Making in Phar Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province"and KrongkraewReangpetch (2006) on "The Components of a Thai Musical Folk Drama of PornthepPornthavee Group" that maintains the singing identity for the performance. Belief, custom, and ritual are of collective activities. Belief is human's thought in relevant to his needs. Since human is bound under the power of nature therefore human prefers to obtain blessings from the ones above. On this respect, making an oblation to the Brahma and pledging dance drama are deemed preferable. The City Pillar Shrine is a national sacred item since in the past. There are a few worshippers at the Shrine and this has an effect on the Thai classical dance drama occupation at the site. As opposite to the belief toward gods at Brahma Shrine, the national sacred gods at the City Pillar Shrine is believed not to be able to grant an instant blessing.



Fig.1. Dance Drama Groups

SUGGESTION

A group of Thai dancers at the pillar of the city is composed of the old with professionally competence in performing art in both dancing and singing especially Thai Classical Dance: Rikae Antithetically, incomes are not enough to survive and perform. It is necessary that government must take care of each one in terms of health insurance, life insurance, and emoluments for dancers and singers in long run. Considering this research, Thai classical dancing and ways of dancers 'lives should be studied next time.

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