

# Reflection on Sepha Phrai: A Story of Commoners *in the City of Bangkok*

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## Abstract

This article deals with a contemporary literature entitled *Sepha Phrai* written in form of *klon sepha* Thai poem by Suchit Wongthet, a well-known Thai poet. It is a reflection on the story of *Sepha Phrai* which reveals the life and spirit of commoners in the city of Bangkok, telling the story of a proletarian family, starting from the fall of Ayutthaya period in 1767 up until the bicentenary of Bangkok in 1982. The story embraces four generations with Nai Get and his wife being the first. Nai Get's descendants are of various professions including builder, musician, business manager, prostitute, lawyer and farmer. *Sepha Phrai* provides historical, legal and sociological facts sympathetically in the form of versified story.

**Keywords:** *Sepha Phrai, Story-telling, Thai Literature, Life in Bangkok, Bangkok, Thailand*

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## Introduction

*Sepha*, the art of singing tales in rhyme, which still exists today, was one of the most popular Thai entertainment forms during the Ayutthaya period (1438 - 1767). Its peak in popularity would appear to have been towards the latter part of this period, being performed at every kind of festivity, including weddings, ordinations and other religious ceremonies. (See discussion in the section Historical Approach to *Sepha* Recitation). To quote Bidhaya Lankarana (1941:8) about *Sepha* entertainment during the reign of King Rama V: “*Sepha* entertainments are given on occasions when large numbers of guests are gathered, such as housewarming, birthday or tonsure ceremonies.” The *sepha* singers would sing the popular tales in rhyme to the rhythmic accompaniment called *krab sepha* which are two pairs of solid woodblocks, one held in each hand. An important feature of *sepha* is that the verses are all pre-composed distinguishing them from rural rhymes<sup>1</sup> which are purely extemporaneous. Although most of the *sepha* poetic songs are in the form of fictional tales, they nevertheless include references to various aspects of Thai life during the period of their particular composer-singer: religious, traditional environmental, political, and educational.



Figure 1. Showing a *sepha* reciter, Master Siri Vichavej, holding two pairs of *krab sepha*, one set in each hand. (Source: Assistant Prof. Panupak Mokhasak).

In spite of more than one hundred years' research into *sepha*, it is still proving difficult to pinpoint exactly where, when and how it originated. Damrong Rajanubhab or Prince Damrong (1972), one of the most of Thai scholars, was the first to carry out research in this field. Since it is highly likely that any written evidence which may have existed on *sepha* was destroyed during the Thai-Burmese war in 1767, Prince Damrong had no choice but

to rely heavily on principles of deduction and supposition when reaching his conclusions, having only the actual *sepha* poetic songs themselves to go by. Since the beginning of the Rattanakosin period (1782 until present), three *piphat*<sup>2</sup> songs have existed which include the word *sepha* in their title: *Sepha Nok*, *Sepha Klang*, and *Sepha Nai*. This led Prince Damrong to conclude that there must be some relationship between *sepha* and these *piphat* songs, and that the *sepha* melodies might well be derived from them. This argument has, however, been rejected by some scholars, Narisara Nuvadtivongs or Prince Narisara (1972) included, on the following grounds: the vocal part was in the past not only composed separately, but also performed separately from the instrumental part, which consisted of the *piphat* and *khruang sai*<sup>3</sup> sections. Evidence of this exists in the form of some of the *piphat* repertoire, for example *Sathukan*, *Tra* and *Rua* etc., which are played without any vocal part; there are also songs with no instrumental accompaniment whatsoever, such as *Chom Talat*, *Cha Khruan* and *Lom Nok* etc. Thai music has as a result been divided into three distinct types: *Phleng Rong*,<sup>4</sup> *Phleng Mahori*<sup>5</sup> and *Phleng Piphat*.<sup>6</sup> It is only in recent times that the vocal and instrumental parts have been combined. *Sepha* singing was not combined with the *piphat* ensemble until the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824), as seen at the beginning of the *sepha wai khru*<sup>7</sup> poem, composed in that period. The three *piphat* songs which include the word 'sepha' in their title probably only do so, therefore, because they were composed, especially to accompany *sepha* poetic songs. Furthermore, musicians argued that the *sepha* melodies and those of the three *piphat* songs were so divergent in their character that one could not possibly conclude that there was any relationship between them.

There are several similarities between *sepha* and the art of story-telling, suggesting that the former may have developed from the latter. The tales told by story-tellers were performed, as with *sepha*, at celebrations marking auspicious occasions, and always after sunset. Both tell the story of one particular family, including their everyday life and the society and culture in which they find themselves. *Sepha*, however, deviated from the tales in that it was always in verse form, whereas the tales are normally in prose. *Sepha* has also only consisted of *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*,<sup>8</sup> whereas the tales have been told in several different stories. Prince Damrong (ibid.) is of the opinion that at first the art of story-telling only existed in prose form. Later on, the narrators started to embellish their stories with rhyme, probably resulting in stories combining both prose and verse.

Prince Damrong (ibid.) further stated that the tradition of *sepha* singing had been influenced by Indian singing, where the popularity of story-telling was mentioned in the *Saratha Samutchai* bible over 700 years ago. Since this form of entertainment has been very popular in Thailand for hundreds of years, it has been assumed that the tradition had come to Thailand from India. Wongthet (1986) has, however, proved that the *sepha* tradition in Thailand is not related to the Indian tradition – the only thing they have in common is the name *Sepha*. But nobody in fact knows the actual origin of the term 'sepha.' Wongthet stated that *sepha* performance is an indigenous tradition of those people speaking the Thai-Lao language. In this connection the word 'khab', which has been used as the title of many singing performances, including *sepha* needs to be considered. Montri Tramot (1960) mentioned that the word *khab* was included on a stone inscription of the Sukhothai period (1238 - 1438) as follows: “เสียงพิน เสียงเลื่อน เสียงขับ.” He then gave an opinion that the term *khab* refers to the technique of singing only the melody without rhythm. The technique has been used widely amongst the indigenous peoples of Thailand, though it is known under

different names, depending on the region. Thus, in the north it is called *khav so*, whereas the northeastern people call this singing style *khav lam*.

There is written evidence from the Ayutthaya period referring to the word *sepha*, although it was used then in the title of the governor having responsibility for prisoners, rather than being used in a musical context. This led Kukrit Pramoj (1989) to conclude that the term *sepha* meant prison and that it was the prisoners who created this kind of song. Kukrit further stated that the sound of *kraps*, which are used for accompanying the *sepha* recital, is similar to those of the sound of chains when they are struck. He also believed that the *krap*'s pattern has been developed from the sound of clanking chains. However, the word *sepha* was not only used for the prison governor, but also as the title of various other officers, including the royal musicians. It would be better to say, therefore, that the word *sepha* was the title for government officials. It was later replaced, however, by the term *chao phanak-ngan*, to cover all government officials, even musicians. Nowadays the term *sepha* is used to refer to a particular style of song, though how this came about is not certain. Further to this, in the northeast of Thailand there is a performing art that is similar to *sepha* and has been performed by the indigenous people for a long time called *mo lam kap-kaep*. The word *kap-kaep* comes from the sound produced by two pieces of *krap* which are used to accompany the *khav lam*, a kind of story-telling. Wongthet (ibid.) is of the opinion that *mo lam kap-kaep* confirms the original use of *krap* in singing tradition, and that this kind of performing art has been created by people who spoke Thai-Lao language. Therefore, it would be better to assume that because of its characteristic, has been developed from *mo lam kap-kaep* rather than from the sound of clanking chains.

As stated previously, *sepha* developed from a prose form into a verse form and, eventually, into a type of song with various melodic accompaniments. The melodies are named according to the style they are in – for example, *sepha mon*, *sepha lao* and *sepha thai*. The *sepha thai* melody seems likely to be the original style as it has similarities to indigenous songs and is sung when Thai characters appear in the story. Later, about the beginning of Ratanakosin period which many of musical features were arranged and refined, the other styles were created. Whenever the story refers to the Mon or Laotian peoples the melodies turn into *sepha mon* or *sepha lao* respectively. It should be noted that only the Thai, Mon and Laotian styles are still in existence. This is, presumably, because the main characters in the Khun Chang Khun Phaen, are from these three groups, and that, in fact only this, the most popular of *sepha* stories, has been consistently recognized and performed. Other styles, such as the Burmese and the Khaek (Indian) were only been sung or performed rarely and, consequently, through time, have become all but extinct.

The *sepha* melodies consist of an introduction part, a main part and a cadence which is repeated continuously throughout the work. There are several variations on these components, and multiple interpretations of the main parts. The melodies are, in fact, sung in such a way that they reflect the changes of mood within the story, veering from tenderness to anger and from happiness to violence in accordance with the piece. All of this is revealed through the singer's use of variations in speed, scale and ornamentation in order to create sometimes very subtle distinctions. This diversity in *sepha* performance grew out of a keen competitiveness amongst the singers, ever eager to impress their audience, and extended to differences in emphasis in the spoken words, phrases and conversations of the story. The

wittiest and most versatile interpretation would win the day. All of this, was, in the most popular *sepha* performers, allied to a beautiful voice and well-honed style of speaking.

In the late of Ayutthaya period, the performance of *sepha* was very popular amongst the common people of every part of Thailand. It was performed, in particular, at celebrations or auspicious occasions such as wedding ceremonies and the shaving of the top-knot.<sup>9</sup> *Sepha* entertainment was comparatively cheap, requiring, as it did, only one reciter, as opposed to the multiple performers required in, for instance, a play. This contributed to its wide popularity. However, Simon de la Loubère (1969:68), the French ambassador to Thailand during the reign of King Narai (c.1678) wrote on his diary: "... The singing accompanied with *krap* [presumably *sepha*] which are played by the singer himself ... is performed together with many other instruments." It should be noted that the "many other instruments" mentioned by La Loubère are still unclear what exactly they were. We must, therefore, remain aware of the fluid and unfixed nature of *sepha* performance, which was the case also with other forms of commoner entertainment.

### **Sepha Literature**

When a *sepha* performance became very popular – with the performers or the audience – it may have achieved written form. All physical evidence of this, however, is likely to have been destroyed almost completely during the great Thai-Burmese war of 1767. This literary form of *sepha* would have differed from plays and sermons in that there was no fixed reliance on the text (Prince Damrong, *ibid.*). The singers would have consulted the written form only when their memory failed them, and, further, would have jealously guarded their own favored text from their rivals (Prince Narisara, *ibid.*). Consequently, if these examples of *sepha* literature ever existed they were largely unknown on a wider scale, and ultimately disappeared. At the beginning of the Rattanakosin period there was only one *sepha* story still recognized: Khun Chang Khun Phaen. Some parts were in verse and others in prose, but all had been kept alive through an oral tradition with little written down. This changed as singers began to record the poetry in writing, and abandoned the extemporized forms. These written verses were then refined, and the prose elements changed into verse form also. It became popular amongst poets to write *sepha* literature, and they plundered the Khun Chang Khun Phaen, taking from its great length favorite episodes and embellishing and expanding on them, resulting in the great variety of versions still extant. Many of the poets remain anonymous, and Prince Damrong (*ibid.*) presumed that this was due to shame at the rude nature of their material (though this is traditional) being at odds with their elite status in society. He said one of these poets was, in fact, King Rama II who wrote such episode as "Phlai Kaew makes love to Nang Phim" and "Khun Phaen forces his way into Khun Chang's house and makes love to Nang Kaew Kiriya. Additionally, apart from writing himself, King Rama II encouraged the royal poets to compose *sepha* verses which were sung to him by his singers while he was having his hair cut. In due course, the extemporized forms of *sepha* waned in popularity, to be replaced by such written versions as the above, perceived as they were, to be more beautiful in rhyme and meaning. Later, other *sepha* stories were composed, such as Phong Sawadan, Si Thanon Chai and Chiang Miang, but none rivalled the popularity of Khun Chang Khun Phaen.

Prince Damrong (*ibid.*) said that the Khun Chang Khun Phaen achieved its popularity due to the story's closeness to everyday reality of commoner life. Prince Narisara (*ibid.*) felt that its attraction lay in the unwillingness of its theme to yield to the wishes of the audience.

Since the theme of the story of Khun Chang Khun Phaen is widely known by the audience, they, however, may not be attracted simply by this, but the art of the singer and his powers of story-telling when describing popular episodes such as love-making couples, beautiful descriptions of nature, comic scenes, quarreling rivals and even departure speeches. So, on the one hand *sepha* entertainment developed as a written form and was refined in terms of rhyme and the use of words; and on the other hand its attraction as extemporized entertainment faded away.

Whatever the case, it reflects, as other *sepha* tales and, indeed, other story-telling forms do, Thai society in all its myriad manifestations: cultural, religious, political and traditional. In the precise evocations and everyday details of Khun Chang Khun Phaen it is possible to hear the story of the Thai people, and to believe that it has been passed down unbroken from generation to generation of *sepha* singers. Indeed, some believe that it is here that anyone seeking insights into Thailand's social and cultural history should look and not in the libraries of academic studies and other such ideologically distorted treatises.

Nowadays, *sepha* has evolved into different forms such as *piphat sepha* and *sepha mahori*. *Piphat sepha* shows the primary evolution of *sepha* from vocal to instrumental style. *Sepha mahori* portrays the secondary evolution of *sepha* and the use of *sepha* from literature to a musical entertainment. Since it was changed into written form, *sepha* stories have been acted out in different forms as well, appearing in the current forms of *sepha ram* and *sepha* recitation. *Sepha ram* or dancing *sepha*, is combined with *piphat sepha*, in the form of a musical play. *Sepha* recitation, which is still performed at the present time, is not extemporized any more, but is sung either from old *sepha* literature or from a recent composed work. Although there are many kinds of *sepha* performance still being recognized, their popularity seems to be diminishing.

In 1982, Suchit Wongthet,<sup>10</sup> a well-known poet, wrote a *sepha* story called "Sepha Phrai" (*Sepha* of commoners) to contribute to Bangkok's bicentennial celebrations. It was later reprinted in a special edition of Silapawatthanatham Journal entitled "Phrai Khab Sepha" (A Commoner recites a *sepha* story) in 1986. Sepha Phrai was not only a contribution to the Bangkok's bicentennial celebration, but also a milestone of Thai contemporary literature, contributing an applaudable new *sepha* poem to the society.

Sepha Phrai is not very long, consisting of 2028 lines of *sepha* verse within 35 sub-headings and 29 lines of *aew khiao so*, another kind of extemporized song. The poem was composed in the old *sepha* traditional way, where, according to the poem, "... every verse is entirely spontaneous." The poet refers to both starting and completion dates which reveal that it took him approximately one year to complete the poem and get it published. The title of the work reflects both the subject and the style of the piece in that it is a song of the common people written in their own tradition. The chosen meter is the *klon sepha* which follows the general rules of *klon*, the eight syllables per line and the use of particular opening words for each section: for example "klao thueng" (hear about), "khra nan" (at that time), and "ma cha klao thueng" (I'll tell you about").

Although the poem thus uses story-telling forms and traditions, it is, in fact, a history of real-life events. It uses as its starting point the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, and continues with the Thonburi period (1767 - 1782) and the setting up of Bangkok, historical events run-

ning parallel with the ebb and flow in the fortunes of a family of proletarian commoners or peasants, following them right up until modern times and ending with the bicentenary of Bangkok in 1982.



Figure 2. Cover of Silapawattananatham Journal, "Phrai Khab *Sepha*". (Source: Author).

### Story of Sepha Phrai

We start with Nai Get recalling the fall of Ayutthaya and its conquest and demolition by the Burmese during the great Thai-Burmese war. He has fled together with his wife, E-Ga, and five children to the new city of Thonburi which the king of Thailand has established as the capital. When the capital city moves to Bangkok, he and his family follow and work as builders of the new city's palace. Of Nai Get's five children, only two sons, Ai Oep and Ai Joi, and a daughter, E-Yen, are mentioned in the story; Ai Oep, married to E-Pin, follows in his father's footsteps as a builder; Ai Joi does nothing but sing and play music; E-Yen, whose husband has died in battle, has a daughter called E-On who, is later, to be brought up by Ai Oep. E-Yen is sold to Seng, a Chinese man and eventually becomes one of his wives and gives birth to his two sons, in the process becoming his favorite wife and then business manager.

Not long after the completion of the Bangkok palace the Burmese troops return and Nai Get is killed in the ensuing war while Ai Oep loses his eye. He comes back home to discover that his newborn son is dead and his wife married to another. Ai Joi meanwhile has avoided

the conflict and has been increasing his prowess as a musician, teaching his many children to play music too; one of them, Ai Thap, becomes a brilliant ranat (xylophone) player and eventually a court musician of very high rank.

E-On, the daughter brought up by Ai Oep, marries a fisherman's coolie and gives birth to three girls. After her husband vanishes at sea, E-On sells herself to Seng, the Chinese owner of a Sampheng brothel. Her eldest daughter is then abducted by the song of a powerful and feared local personage never to be seen again. The other two are raped by criminals and with their honor lost, are persuaded to join their mother in prostitution. Although apparently forsaken in this shameful profession, they gain spiritual redemption by instituting the building of a temple dedicated to their mother, a temple in which her ashes will later lie.

Ai Joi, the feckless musician, has two sons, Ai Jom and Ai Jan who lead wicked and disruptive lives. One day, they go to the brothel and, drunk, quarrel with E-On's daughters who are, unbeknownst to them, their own cousins and eventually kill them. Consequently, they have to flee to the countryside to evade arrest. This, however, leads to the revenge massacre of their entire family by the brothel guards.

The dead prostitutes have one child each: one is a boy named Chu and the other is a girl named Choi. They are taken to the temple that their mothers have built and are brought up there by monks, nuns and the other prostitutes. Choi is later brought up by the wife of a consul from abroad and learns to speak foreign languages. Chu becomes a popular monk and eventually leaves the order to enter the nobility; he studies law and marries the daughter of a lawyer, rising in his profession.

The fugitive brothers change their names into Ging and Garn, learning music and becoming good citizens. They forget the past, marry and become farmers: Ging has a son named Ai Plian and Garn has a daughter named E-Plaeng. E-Plaeng works for a refugee family from Bangkok, and when they return to their home city she follows them, later becoming the mistress of a chef and giving birth to a child. She then marries a builder, live with him on a boat and gives birth to another child, a girl. Her cousin, Ai Plian, meanwhile has been working in the paddy-fields, following his parents. When circumstances make farming impossible, he too, goes to Bangkok, staying with E-Plaeng and becoming a builder also. The story ends with the two of them working on the renovation of the Grand Palace, which their ancestors have built and with which the poem began.

### **Evaluation**

In the Sepha Phrai, Wongthet reveals a close knowledge of the history and social situation of the Thai people. He has successfully married literature and social history, poetry and social event. The poem is studded with milestones in the Thai history such as celebration marking the birth of the new capital city in 1782, the conscription of the Cambodian and Laotian peoples into slavery etc. and with graphic descriptions of the poverty and anguish which characterized the lives of prostitutes at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period. In contrast with much other modern Thai literature, including Wongthet's own other works, this work deeply involves itself in the essence of the common people and their situation rather than concerning itself with the political perspective of the major figures of history.



Wongthet has set out to write the story purely in the spirit of a commoner and his writing style reflects this: the use of simple words and peasant vernacular, everyday speech and earthly expression. He never allows himself the pity of an outsider but rather, the fellow feeling and stoicism of one who is himself a commoner, of someone who seeks to understand and is, 'phrai.' In contrast to classical *sepha* literature, the Sepha Phrai has no immutable standard of human perfection, with which it sets out to judge its protagonists, but, instead reveals and understands the difficulties inherent in the life of ordinary people. He doesn't rely on the stock scenes of romantic love, punning or set piece argument to court popularity and the approval of his readers as traditional poems did, but believes wholeheartedly in the power, truthfulness, and quiet dignity of his material. The result is a poem not just of value for its content, but also for its remarkable technical beauty: the lives of the commoners are contained within a complex web of rhyme, metaphor and aural harmonies, all of which seduce the listener into entering the very essence of what it is to live life as a common man –

... the noise of the tug boat is so loud it is  
as if the river were being consumed, mountain uprooted.  
The tug pulls the wife, the child and their grief forward  
and also pulls him to wards Bangkok ...

However, in one matter, that of describing sexual love, Wongthet does adhere to the precedents of classic Thai poetry, by couching his seduction scene and the ensuing sexual act in the allusive language of the natural world and by using the extended metaphor of a boat sailing down a water way, with all the variations that this entails:

... the boat lowers its sails, speckled black,  
enters the canal, takes a shortcut:  
the canal isn't wide, nor narrow, it is just right –  
right for the passage of a Chinese junk boat.

The term '*phrai*' itself, according to the dictionary edited by George Bradley McFarland, means a 'citizen' or a 'commoner.' It is often misunderstood amongst present-day Thais, who think that it means 'slave', in Thai, '*thas*.' This is because, in the past, both terms sometimes overlapped. In the strongly hierarchical society of old Thailand, the term *phrai* denoted a social position fixed by law: namely, the lowest freeman above a slave. Slavery at that time, however, was a kind of profession which nowadays would be called being a servant and it was common for *phrai* to sell themselves, their wives or children into slavery as mentioned in the poem that:

Nai Get ... sold his wife into slavery,  
To save money – just enough for the basic necessities.  
...  
The three daughters were of great help.  
He sent them to work as slaves, to earn money.

This tradition has carried on right up until now, particularly in the north of Thailand; people still sell their children illegally to work in factories or the brothels. Wongthet describes the feelings of the slaves in dispassionate terms, telling us that Nai Get's ancestors were: "never thinking about being free, never dreaming of being anything other than slaves." But 'phrai,' could upgrade themselves in order to escape from the lower class into the higher stratas which Ai Thap and Maha Chu manage to do in the poem. There were, as Wongthet also points out, the *phrai* who remained poor and were never able to escape the hard life, people such as Ai Plian and E-Plaeng. Slavery was abolished at the beginning of the 19th century in Thailand, and the term *phrai* is no longer in official use; it is, however, still used by the Thai elite to discriminate socially against poor people.

Wongthet presents substantiated historical, legal and sociological facts sympathetically in the form of his versified story. For instance, Wongthet's depiction of temple life is historically valid: temples were centers of society where people were educated:

Wat Mai Yai-On (the name of temple) increases its generosity,  
It provides for the homeless orphans and  
they also study with the monks ...

There was and is, constant movement between society and the temple and the story of Maha Chu (in the poem) is a typical illustration of the problem of ridding oneself of worldly desire as a monk, or having to rejoin and make your way amongst the ranks of the ordinary people. Wongthet also accurately displays the status of musicians in the Rattanakosin period: how they learnt music, how they earned money, who their audience and patrons were, and how they got promotion. He uses many Thai musical terms and takes it for granted that the reader will understand them. The similarity between the life of Luang Phairo Siang So, the most skillful fiddle player in Thai music history and Ai Joi's story in the poem, makes the reader believe that Wongthet has taken the information from Luang Phairo Siang So's biography. Playing music in the gaming house, for example, was a common means of making a living and giving popular performances at the end of the 18th century. His use of a sociological framework is not moralistic but depends on the simple recounting of the facts: the evil guys are not condemned, but nor are the good guys elevated. Wongthet does not sing the praises of the poor or other unfortunates in this life. The prostitutes earn 'merit' just like the nobility, crime remain unatoned and the culprits become respectable citizens. In his depiction of the modern period, however, he allows himself the ironic observation that despite Thailand's advances even now: "the government is heartless, uninterested, ignores the lives of the people, dislocating the subjects from the King, but seeing to the foreigners on the street." Expanding on this he also explains the status of the builders metaphorically as the scaffolding which is ignored and thrown to the ground:

... like the bamboo pole which are tied together  
in order to build the scaffolding,  
when the hall and the jedis were finished  
they dismantled the scaffolding, threw it to the ground –  
rotting bamboo right across the road.  
No one pays attention to it.

## Conclusion

Wongthet shows the full range of Thai society while concentrating on the fate of the many who remain poor. Fatefully, blindly, event upon event happens, turning poetically into stories and in the end becoming, so to speak, 'history.' Nothing, in the end, being beyond the scope of the poetic imagination. The boundaries of reality and song are constantly blurred and in reading the poem, one learns more not only of the social conditions of the commoners of Thailand's past but also of their tenacious spirit and its legacy for the Thailand of the future. *Sepha Phrai* might not archive the popularity of other *sepha* stories; it does, however, reflect the genuine endeavor of a writer who would like to bring back the *sepha* heritage and the knowledge it contains to Thai society.

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## Endnotes

- 1 An old kind of rhymes composed in free verse.
- 2 A type of Thai musical ensemble where percussions are the main instruments.
- 3 A Type of Thai musical ensemble where strings are the main instruments.
- 4 Songs without an instrumental part.
- 5 The repertoire played by only the *mahori* ensemble which contains the stringed instruments mainly.
- 6 The repertoires played by only the *piphat* ensemble.
- 7 *Wai-khru* means to pay respect to teachers.
- 8 The most famous story in the Ayutthaya period until the present time.
- 9 This signifies entry to adulthood for both male and female.
- 10 Office of the National Culture Commission granted Suchit Wongthet the title "Artist of the Nation" (Silapin Haeng Chat) in 2002, but he declined it.

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