

Re-Designing the Role of *Phalak* and *Phalam* in Modern Lao *Ramayana*

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Abstract

Parts of the story of Phalak and Phalam (Lakshman and Rama of the classical Ramayana) are the inspiration of dance traditions in past and present Laos. In the past 25 years, special local styles and the varying understanding of different roles have been replaced by a uniformed frame of dance performances. Nevertheless, dancers and musicians from families with a long tradition in dancing and teaching classical dance and its music have been fighting against the displacement of local styles.

In Vientiane, the capital of Laos, special complementary aesthetics were re-designed at the National Academy for Dance and Music. The main male roles Phalak and Phalam emerge in a female interpretation. They are not only performed by female dancers, but they are associated with contemporary female appearances. The understanding of these roles requires a gender opposing performance, where female dancers seem to be the most appropriate due to special physical and emotional demands of the dance drama. In Vientiane, female dancers in these two important traditional roles became a vital part of modern cultural self-understanding that underlines differences with other local cultures in Laos.

The revitalisation of dance traditions in Vientiane was to a great extent supported by the “Archives of Traditional Music in Laos” at the National Library in Vientiane. Re-researching historical sources, which help to understand local adaptations of seemingly well known literature, and creating audiovisual teaching materials were further outcomes of joint efforts, which were undertaken since 1999.

Keywords: *Lao dance tradition, Ramayana, modern role design, gendering characters, changing perception.*

Introduction

Phalak Phalam is the Lao name of the traditional dance drama *Ramayana*. *Phalak* and *Phalam* are the two young men in the *Ramayana* story. As the only male characters who do not wear masks in that drama, they are responsible for expressing the most established and desired characters of men in any imaginable society.

In Vientiane, the capital of Laos, as well as in some other parts of Southeast Asia, *Phalak* and *Phalam* are represented by female dancers. The tradition of distinctiveness in the appearance of *Phalak* and *Phalam* emphasizes special social skills such as controlling peace and conflict among people, infallibility of decisions, generosity and wisdom, vigour and determination, which are articulated in countless paintings, sculptures, and wood-carvings. On the other hand, male dancers are specialised in performing ghosts like *Totsakan*, animals like *Hanuman* and social outsiders such as the lonely monk *Phaleunxy*.

What does this gendering mean in terms of the performers' social self-perception? How is gender construction expressed in music and motion? How did the Lao society change due to increasing urbanisation, and how do these changes evidently influence cultural representations of local

traditions in public dance performances? Did the characters change or did the present view on these characters change compared to social reality?

The following article aims to throw light on these questions within the frame of our contemporary understanding of the *Ramayana*. Furthermore, local and historical differences can become clearer by unravelling the close relationship between social changes and cultural perspectives on character ideals represented in dance movements and music. This article starts with a closer view on literary sources. Then, the relevant part, from which the dance drama is created, will be summarised. The following discussion will outline some preconditions of the performance, its structure and local variety, as well as the importance of music in order to understand the roles.

Literary Sources

The modern version of the Lao *Ramayana* is one of the best known literature of this small inland country. Sachchidanand Sahai describes in the introduction to his Lao edition: “I have chosen to publish the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* first, primarily because, far from being simply the translation of a foreign narrative into the Lao language, it constitutes one of the finest examples of Lao literature (Joshi 1981: 21–28). In the course of an audience graciously granted to me, His Majesty King Sri Savang Vatthana described this work as a ‘moment of Lao literature executed in the purest Lao style’” (Sahai 1973: XVII). The mentioned audience was granted on the 26 September 1972. The Lao *Ramayana* is inseparably connected with the classical dance drama of the Lao majority and it is understood in many local variations, from which the *Phalak Phalam* of Vientiane is one of the most remarkable interpretations.

Phalak Phalam refers to *Lakshman* and *Rama*. Sachchidanand Sahai remarks, “The name of Phra Lam [*Phalam*] is invariably preceded by his younger brother’s, Phra Lak [*Phalak*]; because this combination produces a rhythmic effect” (Sahai 1973: XXIV). Sahai’s explanation was confirmed

by most linguists, although there were further suggestions of giving this order another cultural sense. To some, *Phalak* is supposed to be brave due to the voluntariness of his deeds, whereas *Phalam* as the King never had alternatives to demonstrate his prowess. This explanation was provided by elder dancers and teachers at the National Academy for Dance and Music who were familiar with the anonymous manuscript of the village *Ban Naxon Tay*, which was completed approximately in 1933.

The dance drama in Vientiane is based on *The Phra Lak Phra Lam or The Phra Lam Sadok*¹ (see Appendix 1) that differs significantly from other models in the region and has its roots in written sources at least from the 17th century found in various monasteries and villages from *Roi Et* in North Eastern Thailand, the temple *Wat Phra Keo* in Vientiane and the temple *Wat Kang Tha* in the village *Ban Bo O*. Further manuscripts discovered by unknown monks originate from the villages of *Ban Naxon Tay*, *Ban Hom* and the temple *Wat Nong Bon*.

Some basic manuscripts of the modern version of the *Ramayana* which are available include those found in:

- (1) *Roi Et* in North Eastern Thailand, which consists of two parts called *mat*. As shown in the scheme below, the first *mat* consists of twenty sections called *phuk* while the second comprises 23 *phuks*. One *phuk* is a bundle of palm leaves with engraved Pali or Lao text. One leaf carries approximately ten sentences of any kind of prose. The text is continuously written without regard on the leaf's format. Only the whole *phuk* is considered to be a definite unit of the story. The manuscript of *Roi Et* does not indicate any date (Puri and Sarahiran 1949). At present it is preserved in the Thai National Library, Bangkok.

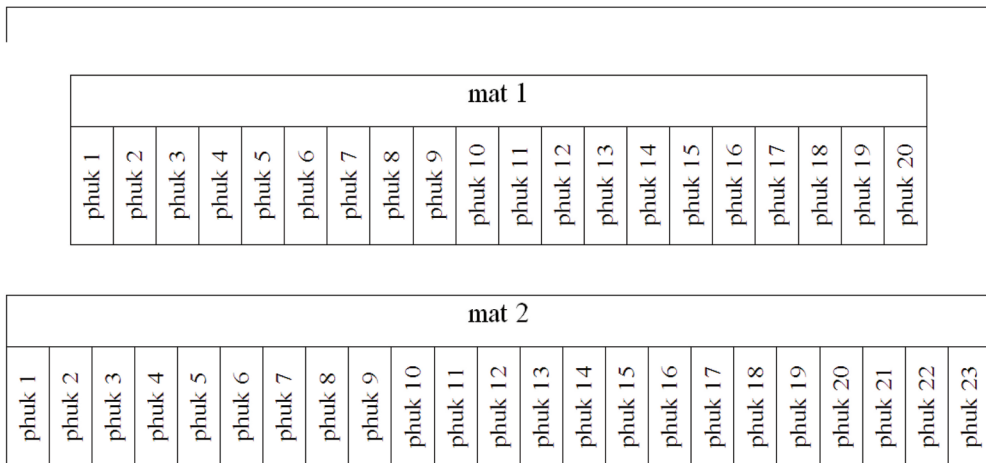
Complete work (manuscript of *Roi Et*)

Figure 1 The structure of the manuscript of *Roi Et*

- (2) *Wat Phra Keo in Vientiane*, which originally consisted of 43 *phuks*, but half of the manuscript is missing. The remainder was preserved in the Lao Ministry of Cults in Vientiane and is presently kept in the Ministry of Culture and Information.
- (3) *Wat Kang Tha in Ban Bo O*, which consists of 44 *phuks*, divided into four *mats*, each comprising 11 *phuks*. Some of them are missing. The manuscript was copied in the year 2476 according to the Buddhist calendar (1933)
- (4) *Ban Naxon Tay*, which contains a complete text and is carefully preserved in the



Figure 2 The traditional way of collecting literature: Cabinets with their *mat* sections, in which the *phuks* are placed covered by white cotton bags. It is important to keep the exact order of *phuks* per *mat*. On the right side there is an ancient book shrine, which normally consists of eight *mats*.

monastery of *Ban Naxon Tay*, 40 km southward from Vientiane. It consists of 43 *phuks* divided into four *mats*. In the first part there are 10 *phuks*, and in each of the remaining three there are 11 *phuks*.

- (5) The manuscript of *Ban Hom* belongs to Mr. Chan Kam of *Ban Hom*, presenting another complete and well-preserved text. The second *mat* of the manuscripts from *Ban Naxon Tay* and *Ban Hom* contains several dates. Although the text is easily readable, it is not clear, how many *phuks* of the four *mats* have been counted due to the fact that some

phuk binders are broken thus many palm leaves are separated from their *phuk*-cover. Later Sachchidanand Sahai added (Sahai 1973: XLV), “Mr. Chan Kam, the owner of the manuscript informed me that his maternal grandfather, Phraya Ratsombat, an elephant merchant, had it reproduced from a manuscript which he had borrowed from a monastery at Ubon against a monetary security. Due to his great age, Mr. Chan Kam does not remember the name of the monastery, though he himself stayed there for some time. He recollects only that it was a very big monastery on the banks of the Mun river in Ubon”.

- (6) A manuscript of *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, identical to the manuscript of *Wat Phra Keo*, appears to be preserved in *Phnom Penh*. This manuscript is probably of Southern Lao origin, which cannot be confirmed due to its restricted access.
- (7) The manuscript of *Wat Nong Bon* is incomplete and does not contain any date. Only the first, second and fourth *mat* of this manuscript are traceable.

In addition to the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* published by Sachchidanand Sahai, the following four versions are known to exist in Laos:

- (1) the *Pommachak* in *Tay Lu*, found in *Muong Sing*;
- (2) the *Lanka Noi*;
- (3) the *Hleuang Khvay Thorapi*, preserved in the Royal Palace of Luang Prabang, and written in *Nyuon* language;
- (4) and the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* published by the National Library, Vientiane, in 1971 based on a transcription of the manuscript from *Ban Naxon Tay*. It was executed by Vo Thu Tinh and criticised by Sachchidanand Sahai in some elements for its simplification (Sahai 1973: XLI).

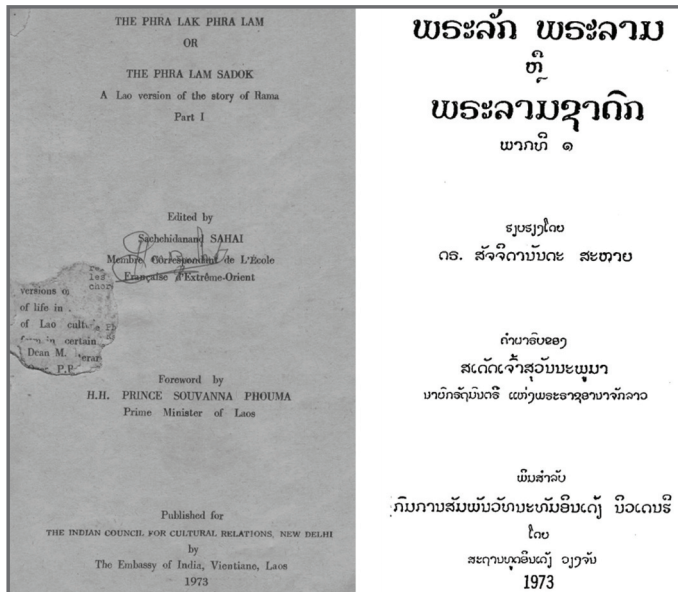


Figure 3 Title sheets of the original and of the handmade copy in the National Library of Laos: *The Phra Lak Phra Lam or The Phra Lam Sadok – A Lao Version of the Story of Rama, Part I*. Edited by Sachchidanand Sahai, Membre Correspondant de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. English Introduction XVII – XLV. Published for The Indian Council For Cultural Relations, New Delhi. The Embassy of India, Vientiane, Laos, 1973.

The classic literature preserved in monasteries (mostly consisting of 43 *phuks* in four *mats*), rewritten from memory and hence reflecting various versions, shows only the framework of the story, from which it was taken. The third and the fourth *mat* have especially been prepared for the dance scenario.

The Danced Story According to the Tradition of Vientiane

In the past, before 1960, excellent dancers from Vientiane were mostly co-educated in classical Cambodian dance styles. They could take part in *Ramakien*² performances in the lowland provinces of Thailand and they were familiar with versions from the Royal Court in Luang Prabang and other versions from Chiang Mai.

The current generation of teachers at the Academy for Dance and Music in Vientiane, is very much aware of the differences between other performances and its own version. Without doubt they are refining their dance tradition consciously and with a strong intellectual ambition.

The main characters of the *Phalak Phalam* dance drama of Vientiane are quite similar to the standard story:

- *Phalam [Rama]*, the King, living in the forest with his best friend and subsequent brother →
- *Phalak [Lakshman]*, and with →
- *Sida*, his wonderful wife, long-desired by →
- *Totsakan*, who changed for a moment his being into the lonely monk *Phaleunxy* luring *Sida* out of her safe home, and who supports →
- *Suphanakha*, who desires *Phalam* for his beauty and changed into a deer luring *Phalam* away from *Phalak* and *Sida*, and who is a relative of →
- *Ravana*, the humble demon of *Totsakan* who has to fight with →
- *Hanuman*, the eagle and the monkeys, who are on the side of *Phalak* and *Phalam*, supported by the forest's →
- Flowers, trees and water waves, who help *Phalam* to find *Sida*.

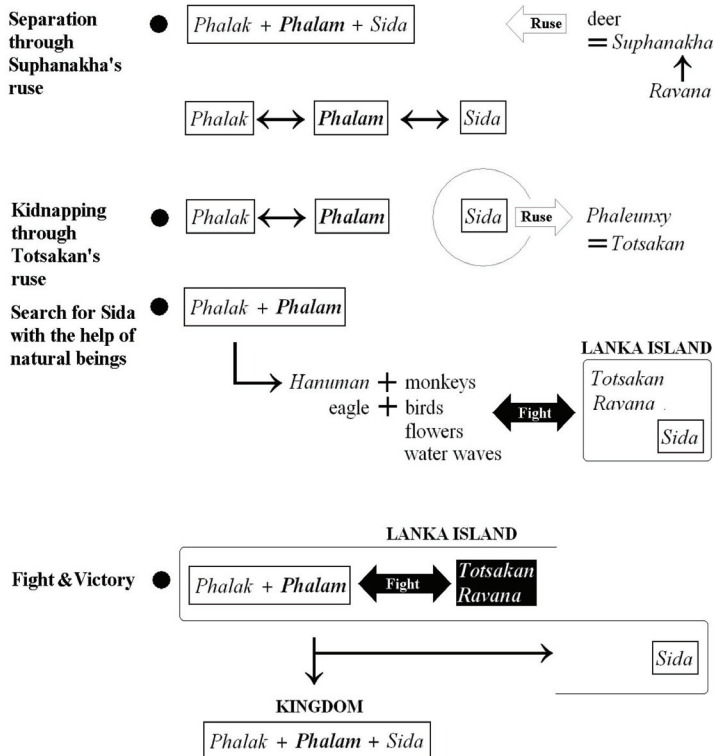


Figure 4 Rough scheme of the danced story according to the Vientiane tradition, which is taken from the fourth *mat*; separation, kidnapping, search, fight & victory (white bold arrow = ruse; black bold arrow = fight; black slim arrow = spatial movement. See also Appendix 1).

The danced story is mainly taken from the 4th *mat* with the scenes of the tricky separation of the three friends – *Sida*, *Phalam* and *Phalak*; the kidnapping of *Sida* by *Totsakan* and *Ravana*, the long journey through the forest to the coastline with a dramatic capture of Lanka Island in search for *Phalam*; and finally the fight, won by the good heroes *Phalam*, *Phalak*, *Phalam* and his army of monkeys. Finally *Phalam* returns to the city with his wife and *Phalak* rules the kingdom.

The rough scheme of the drama follows this well-known structure, from which various parts can be refined and largely elaborated.

Preconditions and Structure of the Performance

It is always assumed that a part of the whole story is basic knowledge, for example, the first and the first four *phuks* of the second *mat*, which comprise the first and the end of the seventh *kanda* in the *Valmiki* version (see also Appendix 1). This part is not included in the dance acts, but plays a role in providing the fundamental mood of the performance. It is a contextual precondition to understand the way of perception through the audience. The development scheme of the drama concerning the main persons *Phalak* and *Phalam* is based on these assumingly known topics. Hence, the audience is supposed to have certain knowledge of the second *mat* of the traditional literature, which consists of the following:

- *Phalam* and *Phalak* are brothers. Before they were born, their father had an unbalanced relationship with his wives. Poor victims of his thoughtless ambitions in the past cursed him to feel burdened with guilt;
- the birth of *Phalak* and *Phalam* and their circumstances as twins; although *Phalak* is the ‘pathfinder’, he is considered to be the younger brother, since *Phalam* was the child with the king’s sign as the incarnation of God Vishnu;

- the safe life of *Phalak* and *Phalam* in comfort and luxury, well protected from danger and bad influences;
- their first challenge in early youth when *Phalam* was fighting against the demons of the forest and rescued the villagers, a deed, which was noticed with unease by *Totsakan* and *Ravana* in the distant Lanka island;
- the adulthood of the brothers and the marriage of *Phalam*, which was arranged with special intention; *Phalam* used a sacred bow that represented Shiva in another appearance. Only the one who respects that bow in the right way, could win the decisive competition;
- The drama's key incident, which is rarely performed in any dance drama related to the *Ramayana* story, occurs prior to their birth. In this case, it refers to the obligation of *Phalam*'s father who had to finally decide against *Phalam* as his successor to the throne due to the fact that he was provoking a weak moment among his wives when one was blackmailing him.
- *Phalam*'s voluntary willingness to accept the consequences of his father's retribution; he settles in the forest with his most faithful friends: his wife *Sida* and his friend, brother and general *Phalak*.

All these details – mostly spread orally or through public reading in the monasteries – form the background of *Phalak's* and *Phalam's* reception and evaluation. These imaginations lead the knowing audience to follow the performance from a certain evaluative perspective. The audience interacts through its attention and considers historical preconditions of the story. Thus the infallibility of *Phalam's* and *Phalak's* father as well as the intelligence of *Sida* are questioned. Rather than acting as an independent and creative character, *Sida* (the only real female character) emphasises the relationship of the two friends.

The real performance is structured from the above mentioned parts of the 4th *mat* as shown in Figure 4. Important elements in presenting the brave characters of *Phalak* and *Phalam* in the danced story are composed by developing the conflict and using an embedded story, which is merely a small part of the whole literary work and which is largely elaborated and enriched with individual interpretations. This embedded story is closely connected to the core story of the literary drama, culminating in blank despair, because of *Sida's* kidnapping as a result of her weakness, absence of consideration, short thinking and inexperience. In the process of solving this situation, *Phalak* and *Phalam* are benefiting from honors acquired in their early youth. Hence, they experience solidarity from animals and plants of the forest. They seek for a solution of the complex problem through their joint fight against the enemy. Despite earlier misunderstanding, they demonstrate that teamwork wins against lonely fights and a sage wins over an unforgiving character. More importantly is the lesson that a real hero is one who does not easily accept the role of a hero.

Due to the demonstration of good examples in education and noble mindedness, the emphasis on *Phalak's* and *Phalam's* characters was and is still addressed to the whole society, including the numerous female spectators. Therefore the aspect of attentive interaction deriving from background information is especially noteworthy.

The final conclusion of the core story is always open to further embedded stories and generates the conditions for the serial formation of the drama. In the past, various additional parts of the story were performed weekly to entertain the people over a period of months.

Varying Contents in the Vientiane Version of the Story

The Vientiane version of the story differs from other literary models in various ways. Even the most widespread and simple versions of the *Valmiki Ramayana*, the so-called standard story (see Appendix 1), describes the birth of *Rama* and his brothers in this way: “In due course of time

Rama [=Phalam] was born to *Kausalya*, *Bharata* to *Kaikeyi*, and *Sumitra* gave birth to two sons: *Laxmana* [=Phalak] and *Shatrughna*.” (Shah 1999).

The Lao version modifies the birth strongly: *Phalak* is the elder twin of *Phalam*. He cleaned up the way into the world for *Phalam*, the incarnation of God Vishnu. Another easily observed difference is the Lao version of *Suphankha*'s goal: *Suphanakha* attacks *Sida*, but not the two brothers. She forgot the reason of her visit to help *Ravana* in conquering *Sida* and to decimate the fighting energy of the two men. She was too fascinated by *Phalam* and *Phalak* and therefore she acts jealously against *Sida*.

A few other surprises refer to the interpretation of *Totsakan*'s and *Ravana*'s roles. In particular, *Totsakan*'s and *Ravana*'s fates are narrated from a different viewpoint. In doing so, they give detailed information about the reason of their tragic characters. They are regarded as disrespecting social order and having conservative thoughts. The story allows a more differentiated access to their individual backgrounds, marked by injustice against them, despair and revenge. These characteristics are always kept in mind when dancing the story and playing the accompanying music, although the prehistory of *Totsakan* is not the subject of the dance drama. Seen from the perspective of the local audience, some sympathy with these two characters always exists, which is not found in the version of other regions (Bolland and Singh 2006).

Furthermore, *Hanuman* is considered as the son of *Rama*. He takes on the form of a monkey for three years after having eaten a special fruit called *nikhot*. He lived together with *Nang Phengsi*, the daughter of a sage who deliberately transformed herself into a monkey after the consumption of *nikhot*. The loyalty of *Hanuman* is based on the relationship with the two young men rather than on pure sympathy. Thus he is not seen as a representative of the creatures living in the forest or as a symbol of *Phalam*'s and *Phalak*'s touch with nature. To clarify this point, the forest's nature is kept in a neutral distance to the roles. Other interpretations of *Phalam*'s and *Phalak*'s attitude

towards nature (Sarkar 1983: 210–220) such as their supposed fraternisation with all creatures in ideal harmony as a sign of true nobility seem to be quite extreme modernisations.

The most distinguishing feature of the Vientiane version is the emphasis of the uncovered core attributes of the two main characters *Phalam* and *Phalak* resulting with the nearly impossible task of choosing male couples as dancers for these roles, although the classical tradition of surrounding cultures in Thailand, China and Myanmar describes an exclusive cast of male dancers. Similar mixed gender performances are only known in Cambodia (Jacob 1986), where female dancers are trained in male roles as well, although enough male dancers are available. Another interesting resemblance is found in the specific repertoire of gestures and dance movements in Malay shadow theatre practices.

“Females are the Better Males”

Searching for a deeper reason regarding this matter of female dancers playing main male roles, I was working with the Vientiane dance ensemble and the lecturers of the Academy for Dance and Music. Ladda Phommalath (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), one of the choreographers, made the following remark on this issue:

In the past, we’ve already seen that boys cannot dance in the same beautiful manner as girls. Therefore, we teach girls to dance male roles as well. The movement patterns of girls are worked out much more artistically. If we observe a boy dancing this role in the same style as we need it in the drama, he always looks like a homosexual...

Metkham Sengkham (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), a musician playing the spike fiddle *sò* in the *Phalak Phalam* orchestra, added the following:

Girls are soft, springy. Boys are somehow stiff, unpolished, with angular movements, not nice at all. Of course, you may observe boys dancing the roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam*; in Thailand they do so, but we don't have such 'boys' here; you cannot find appropriate boys who are able to perform the dance accordingly.³

In fact, in the past at the court of Luang Prabang, the role of *Phalak* and *Phalam* were often played by transgender or homosexual dancers who knew male socialisation consciously by reflecting their permanent anti-male acting although at the present very rarely in Laos. Those artists were



Figure 5a and 5b Masks of the *Phalak Phalam* of Luang Prabang, workshop close to Wat Xiengthong. The green face is the face of king *Phalam*.

specialists in performing *Phalak* and *Phalam*. As far as the dancers are completely covered by their masks (see Figure 5a and 5b), it was not a problem to continue acting as a male dancer even after 1975, when the newly proclaimed order of Lao civilization avoided the supposed decadence of homosexuality as it was observed in Luang Prabang or in the *Thai Khon* dance drama, where transsexual dancers were not viewed as unusual.

Nouth Phouthavongsa (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), choreographer and lecturer, does not exclude male dancers from the role of *Phalak* and *Phalam*, but in her opinion:

Boys are not nice because of their dance movements. They always appear somewhat fearful, uncomfortable, and clumsy. It requires a lot of time to shape their movements. Have a look at our students; they should move elegantly and easily, just beautifully. We could have male dancers in these roles but it would take a very long time to train them properly.

Despite some of these more or less practical suggestions resulting from the actual situation among the students in Vientiane, there were other ideas as well. Supposedly, I agree with Thongbang Homsombat and Kongdeuane Nettavong, both involved in researching traditional dance as well as basic literature at the National Library that the reason does not really lie in the doubtful dancing skills of male dancers or in their body quality. It is rather the question if the further development in the changing environment of the growing capital Vientiane modifies male socialisation (Homsombat and Nettavong 2005).

In Laos, we can observe contradictory cultural directions which embrace an opening towards regional development through modern media on the one hand and social isolation from certain economic changes on the other. It is well known that in such a prospering environment, manliness is highly propagated by advertisements for Western products as well as by character schemes from

television soaps following the modern Euro-American way of life. In relation to “manliness” and the global discussion of gender reception in societies such as Laos, young boys (especially in Vientiane, where access to electricity and media became standard in the late 1990s) change their movements according to their entire motional⁴ repertoire. They obviously cannot switch back into the traditional mode of conservative adaptation and humility in their gestures and steps. While representing the movements, they are afraid of coming too close to the modern “femaleness”, which changed accordingly from the shy and humble shadows of men in the past to the self-confident, softly moving but firm beings who demand respect in all spheres of life today.

In other words, conservative male heroes such as the king and his best friend, brother and general, embody motional characters of contemporary female appearances. They are of a special “third” gender which seems to be slightly different from transgender or homosexuality. It is moreover a historical reflection of continuity and traditional stability through a complex expression of humankind in its ideal imagination. This imagination has to be demonstrated by *Phalak* and *Phalam* in its contemporary understanding.

Music and the Changing Role of *Phalak* and *Phalam*

In the dance drama, music plays a very important role, particularly at times of actual disorientation, due to the fact that music is keeping the link to a safe continuity of traditional values. Music also verifies the individuality of the main roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam*. Music is a significant part of demonstrating the named core attributes of *Phalak* and *Phalam*: “truth, simplicity, love, and worship of God”. The use of different parts of the repertoire, integrating popular melodies and combining different ensemble constellations controls the stability of the role and its incorporated gender.

Whenever the two friends appear, the very slow *pheng phanya doen* is played with two leading melodic instruments such as the duct flute *khui* and the two-string spike fiddle *sò*. They are

gently accompanied by the whole ensemble consisting of the xylophones *lanat-ek*, *lanat-thum*, the gong circle *khongvong*, the zither *khim*, the pair of cymbals *sing*, the double headed barrel drum *taphon*, the drum pair *kong that*; and the mouthorgan *khen* (Jähnichen 2001: 184–196). The two melodic instruments are not played completely in unison as in other pieces. Thus, they create an unusual phrase splitting that supports each other (see Figure 6). Similar melodic progressions are only found in various folk songs of the Vientiane area such as *Dok Buathong* or *Duang Champa* (Jähnichen 2001: 66–70). Therefore, the piece *pheng phanya doen* reminds one of a peaceful rural culture, which underlines a particular traditionalism.

The musical score is presented in a standard Western staff notation. It begins with a tempo marking of a quarter note equal to 68 beats per minute. The first two staves are labeled 'khui' and 'sò'. The score consists of 12 staves in total, showing the intricate interlocking of the two melodic lines. The music is written in a 4/4 time signature and features a variety of rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. The overall texture is characterized by a delicate and complex interplay between the two instruments.

Figure 6 Transcription of *khui* and *sò* in the piece *Pheng phanya doen* according to a recording made in March 2007 at the National School for Dance and Music in Vientiane.

In this relation, it is worth mentioning that this seemingly important point is no more identified with an evident male life form. The question is if this exclusive music was ever identified with any clear male character, or if it symbolises a real third gender that is reserved for divine beings such as kings, princes, goddesses, and other characters of extraordinary nobility.

Bounmanh Yiengkang (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), the musician playing the leading xylophone *lanat ek* in the *Phalak Phalam* orchestra commented:

I have to know which one of the melodies we have to use for which character, and how to form the personal expression of the dancer. That is a very important point in creating an individual performance.

Bounthieng Sisakda (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), the player of the circle gong set *khong vong* added to the discussion:

The melodic basics are always different, for example, when *Sida* enters the stage you choose one pattern and when *Phalam* comes you choose another one, depending on the dance style. The different melodic basics are among others called *pheng doen*, *pheng he*, *pheng kao* and *pheng sok* for each role. While fighting you have to use *pheng soet* using the big drums, *Phalam* is going with *pheng kaonay Vientiane* and *pheng kaonay Luang Prabang*. *Phalam* needs the *pheng kaonok* or *pheng phathum*. While walking through the forest or in the palace the *pheng phanya doen* is the best for *Phalam* or in general for any movement types carried out by kings and queens.

The same musician reflected the special role of *Phalak* and *Phalam* in this way:

Totsakan is hiding his face behind his mask. You never know what he looks like in reality. But everybody connects his mask to a bad ghost, because his movements reveal that nature. *Hanuman's* – the general of the monkeys – movements express that he is a reliable animal. *Phalak* and *Phalam* do not hide their faces; they have to be true characters, and we have to emphasise these characters in the way we are playing their music.

The final decision to introduce female dancers for the main male roles in general results from Vientiane's tradition where the roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam* are played without masks. The blank faces in their true beauty have to be reflected in a special sophisticated musical repertoire.

***Phalak* and *Phalam* as Examples of Good Men**

The attributes of good men as *Phalak* and *Phalam* are named in this order: beautiful, peaceful, sage-like, intelligent, brave. They should be able to change their mind after re-thinking, to take life as a challenge and benefit from it, to protect the lives of others, to strive for a satisfied community, for the happiness of all people despite their social status or ethnic background. This is also a very remarkable point, as these characteristics are considered as conservative traditionalism. Compared to *Phalak* and *Phalam*, *Totsakan*⁵ has a revolutionary character. He does not respect traditions as he makes use of his body power. At the same time he feels and shows his mentally powerless state. Therefore, he is inevitably forced to fight. *Totsakan* as well as *Ravana* are real men acting like earthy men in the story as well as on stage. Being caught in their determination, these men reflect human weaknesses and serve as a note of warning shown to male audiences and prospective mothers.

To personify the divine signs of the two main males *Phalak* and *Phalam*, it is necessary to show their faces, since beauty is the first important attribute. Therefore, the faces have to be beautiful, even in colour and form, and without beard, with open minded eyes and a soft mouth.

They express their love of peace and their sage character by slowing down their steps in front of other beings. They are not running around and even in fighting scenes, they seem to think before they act. The instrumental ensemble plays in moderate tempo, with higher sound intensity and rhythmically well accentuated. To represent their sage and intelligent nature, they are exploiting the whole repertoire of different gestures and facial expressions repeatedly, softly, and in slow motion thus they are watched and accepted with sympathy.

To some degree, female dancers took over the main male roles as there was a lack of traditional dancers with the spirit of the “third gender”. Periods of need also existed in the past when men were not available due to war or reconstruction work. Moreover, the female dancers in the role of *Phalak* and *Phalam* were educated as leaders of the dance troupe and equipped with more experiences and confidence than other female dancers.

The only non-hidden female face is that of *Sida*, the wife of *Phalam*. Her dramatic function is based on provoking a situation, in which the noble character of the couple *Phalak* and *Phalam* can be demonstrated. On the other side, she shows the difference between a male role that is carried out by a female dancer and an actual female role. It is most evident in the scene when *Phaleunxy*, the bad demon in the body of a lonely monk, lures *Sida* out of her hut by exploiting her religiosity. Her arm movements never go beyond the middle position of the body whereas men and ‘good men’ use the whole space around their heads to ‘speak’. As we may observe in Lao social practice, this motional pattern as well as small fast steps for women and long slow steps for men are still common consensus.

Male dancers play the parts of all the demons and the animals, except the deer which is mostly performed by a female dancer, because the deer does not cover its face. Nevertheless, all animals are males including the deer.

Female dancers play all roles without masks and the “abstract nature” as trees, flowers and water (waves), with peaceful, quiet and sensitive dance patterns. The only aggressive female role of *Suphanakha* performs a bad example with a moralising function. She acts for only one scene at the beginning delivering the necessary incident from which the continuing story is developed.

The main target of the drama, composed through all these necessary roles, is to show the ideal being embodied in *Phalak* and *Phalam*, although both are not equally seen regarding their characters by the audience. The educational background of the drama implies a definite individuality of *Phalak* and *Phalam*. They are different in their position hence they follow different rules and they lead to different expectations. In present practice, the Lao dance drama *Phalak Phalam* gains a great part of its popularity from exactly these differences and preferences, which are widely discussed after performances.

Our team from the National Library asked the two female dancers who play the main male roles, whether they would like to be married to *Phalak* or *Phalam*, if they were given a choice. Suksavan Sengaphay (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), who is performing both roles, answered surprisingly:

As a Lao woman, I think, I would like to have a husband like *Phalak*. *Phalam*'s love is somehow exclusive; you would feel like an object he owns, watches over. You are always in danger of being suspected. You have to prove your love again and again. And the ghost *Totsakan* shows his love just because of his extraordinary body power. Therefore, the character of *Phalak* seems to be the best one.

Anulin Phakayson (Jähnichen and Homsombat 2007), dancer of *Phalam*, added:

Phalak is the polite younger brother who worships *Phalam*, as he is the king of the country, the elder brother, and the person who is more experienced. Why does *Phalak* not desire *Sida*? Surely, *Phalak* respects his brother's love... There is a misunderstanding caused by the fact that we are living under new conditions and now we have to re-design the different positions of the main persons. Traditionally, the drama should show their hierarchy. In doing so, the younger brother is always in a lower position. But now we are living in a modern society without a king and we are confronted with the problem to perform the right relationships of the historical subject matter. For example, *Phalak* and *Phalam* are dancing on the same level of the stage, so that someone who does not understand the story could have the impression that a woman has two husbands.

In fact, both roles represent alternative versions of good men in contemporary society. Therefore, they have to be continuously re-designed according to these current demands.

Musical Control of the Drama

How does music keep this traditional constellation alive? In which way can music be individualised and how does the ensemble control the staging?

Besides the right choice of the respective parts of the repertoire, the most efficient way to control the staging and to structure ongoing actions is the free metric intersection at the beginning of each part. This part can be performed by the *lanat-ek* player, who is the leader of the group. He is sitting in the front row and observes the stage carefully. With his melodic pattern in free

meter, he paints a line of dynamic movements according to the dancers' response and according to their approach to the respective scene. His decisions are transmitted by the *sing* player, who organises the entry of the other instruments into the musical flow.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'lanat ek' and the bottom staff is labeled 'sing'. Both staves show a melodic line that accelerates towards the end. Below the 'sing' staff, there is a rhythmic pattern consisting of a sequence of symbols: (x), o, x, o, x, o, x. To the right of the 'sing' staff, there is a tempo marking 'accel.' followed by a right-pointing arrow and a quarter note symbol with the number '174' next to it.

Figure 7 Free metric introduction to *Totsakan's* dance around *Sida*, *Phalam* and *Phalak*, who are sleeping in the forest. After accelerating, the *sing* player keeps the meter through closed (x) and open (o) sounds. Transcription after a recording made in March 2007 at the National School for Dance and Music in Vientiane.

Musicians also control the staging by changing the arrangement that is not always prescribed. Instead of the *lanat ek*, a *khen* or a *sò-u* (a two-string spike fiddle with a coconut resonator) is used for free metric solo passages. The arrangement can be contrasted by grouping the flute *khui* with string instruments such as *sò* and *khim*, which alternate with the xylophones *lanat ek*, *lanat thum* and the gong circle *khongvong*. Contrasting sound colors create the imagination of a discussion. This method is often used in scenes, where the two friends are asking for help on their way to Lanka Island.

The image displays a musical score for the piece *Pheng nangnak*, specifically a transcription for *lanat ek*. The score is presented on ten staves, each containing a line of musical notation. At the top left of the score, there is a tempo marking: a quarter note followed by "= 130". The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *F* (fortissimo). The music is written in a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The overall structure of the score shows a complex, rhythmic melody with frequent sixteenth and thirty-second notes, characteristic of traditional Southeast Asian music.

Figure 8 Transcription of the piece *Pheng nangnak*¹ for *lanat ek* as it is played from the Vientiane *Phalak Phalam* ensemble.

The use of drums is not arbitrary but depends strongly on roles and scenes. The drum pair *kong that* is only played in scenes with demons and in the fighting mode. The *kong that* is very important in free metric intersections. Quite the reverse, the *taphon* is only played in solid metric pieces using the neutral mode or the court mode, thus it is taboo to touch the *taphon* in scenes with demons and monkeys.

In some scenes with high dramatic tension, for example, in the scene where *Phalak* and *Phalam* find the deadly wounded eagle, the *sing* player keeps the meter without any accompaniment, thus emphasising the silence of the dead and the dreadfulness of the moment.

Another method of role design is the integration of local folk melodies or other sections of popular songs commenting on special interactions. An integration of song fragments occurs very rarely and is exceptionally used to characterise the demons in scenes, where they are acting with *Phalak*, *Phalam* or *Sida*. An appropriate example is the version of the piece *Pheng nangnak* for *lanat ek*. It is used in marching scenes and is played with a special solid rhythm. When this rhythm is replaced by straight eights (see transcription in Figure 7), a change of movement is implied, that is, the character is limping hastily.



Figure 9 Transcription of the folk song melody *Pheng nangnak*, from which the dramatic version derives.

The repertoire is structured in neutral mode, fighting mode, monkey's mode, and court mode melodies that can be resized, modified and worked out in many different ways. The four main modes are not only characterised by different melodies, but also by a certain tempo and a definite volume, which have to be constantly kept and controlled by the *sing* player. The structure of the music repertoire demands at least knowledge of the following nine pieces:

Piece	Mode	Roles
<i>Pheng doen</i> <i>Pheng he</i> <i>Pheng kao</i> <i>Pheng sok</i>	Neutral mode	Different melodic basics for all roles
<i>Pheng kaonay Vientiane</i> <i>Pheng kaonay Luang Prabang</i>	Fighting mode	<i>Totsakan /Ravana</i>
<i>Pheng kaonok</i> <i>Pheng phathum</i>	Monkey's mode	<i>Hanuman</i>
<i>Pheng phanya doen</i>	Court mode	<i>Phalam, Phalak, Sida</i>

Knowledge of a piece is not yet sufficient with the blank melodic and rhythmic outline of it. In fact, it is necessary to know all rhythmic variations, all extensions and possibilities to vary this outline, which describes only the frame that has to be filled with musical creativity by the musician. Furthermore, the musician has to be able to suggest musically the movements of the dancers or their direction, and to interpret the role.

In cooperation with the *lanat ek* player, mode changes take place in a transitory time span that is needed to draw the attention of the audience to the next scene. The audience wants to be prepared and does not expect to be surprised by sudden changes. Nevertheless, melodic inventions in free

The extension of a piece depends on the length of the scene. All basic melodies contain so called turning patterns. Those patterns are always open for further changes, melodic closing or recapitulation with another arrangement. The *lanat ek* player decides which turning patterns to use.

♩ = 140

The image displays a musical score for the *pheng kaonok* instrument. It consists of ten staves of music. The tempo is indicated as ♩ = 140. The score features a complex melodic line with various rhythmic patterns. Two specific sections are highlighted: a rectangular box on the third staff and an oval on the sixth staff, both indicating turning points in the melody. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

Figure 10 Example of the core melody of *pheng kaonok* used for *Hanuman* and certain fighting scenes with placement of turning points.

Figure 11 *Pheng kaonok* in a version with the gong circle set *khongvong*, the xylophone ‘on one leg’ *lanat ek*, the xylophone ‘on four legs’ *lanat thum*, the pair of drums *kong that*, the duct flute *khui* and the cymbals *sing*, transcribed in 2000 as Code-No. 263 of the Archives of Traditional Music in Laos at the National Library in Vientiane.

The musical act is concentrated on moderating individual expressions with the conservative and highly acceptable tradition represented in the roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam*. A free metric elaborated introduction for all actions of *Phalam* shows the importance and the precision of his thinking. Even the same piece is played differently for *Phalak* or *Phalam* or *Sida* to emphasize their dissimilar positions. *Phalak*’s appearance is accompanied by softer rhythmic accentuation. It is yet slower in tempo than the same piece for *Phalam*. *Phalam*’s movements require a faster tempo along with a rich melodic ornamentation. The following transcription shows the named musical difference between the ‘neutral’ situation and a scene with *Sida*:

♩ = 110

The musical score consists of seven staves of music. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 110. The music is written in a neutral mode and features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several measures with a boxed-in section, likely indicating a specific performance technique or a section of the piece. The notation includes various ornaments and phrasing slurs.

Figure 12 The piece *Pheng dokmai*¹ in the neutral mode. *Pheng dokmai* means “music of flowers”. It is performed in the context of long walks through the beautiful and wild landscape. It is also played additionally to the basic pieces when *Phalam* is waiting in the deep forest surrounded by whispering flowers.

This musical score shows a specific section of the piece, focusing on the marked bars. It features a single staff of music with a complex rhythmic pattern, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notation includes various ornaments and phrasing slurs, and the bars are marked with small numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) indicating specific points of interest or performance techniques.

Figure 13 The marked bars in the ‘neutral’ version are transcribed in a version accompanying *Phalam*’s appearance.

Triplets are used to show rhythmic diffusion in the emphasised parts of the rhythmic units. This playing technique may characterise weakness and indetermination of a person. Additionally, it accelerates movements on the main beats in contrast to persisted gestures that reflect *Sida*'s slow understanding although she performs strong emotions. *Sida* appears inexperienced with any separation from *Phalam*. Her weakness yet highlights his strength and guidance. On the other hand, *Sida*'s only merit is being beautiful and faithful. The common understanding of an ideal wife of a very important person such as *Phalam* is masterly interpreted with these two attributes. She is not regarded as a person who is able to solve any problems (see Figure 14a and 14b). Musically illustrated through unsteady distribution of rhythmical elements, *Sida* remains a shy and helpless person scampering with small steps and sudden stops. The isolation from her husband does not inspire her confidence. This combination of learned helplessness and submissiveness is considered to transmit a very female impersonation as most of the dancers interviewed explained.



Figure 14a *Sida* and *Phalam*. *Phalam* explains to *Sida* how to behave in the forest. **Figure 14b** *Sida* and *Phaleunxy*. *Sida* is impressed by the monk's suggestion. Guest performance on the 8th July 2006 in Wrocław, Poland, on the occasion of the festival "Asian Voices".

Another example of musical design is given in Figure 8 with the piece *Pheng nangnak*. It shows the rhythmically formulated determination of a person with a strong will and a clear aim such as *Totsakan*. This rhythmical structure contrasts strongly from pieces in the court mode and pieces in scenes with *Phalak* and *Phalam*. The melodic frame is demanding and thoroughly elaborated. *Totsakan's* weak parts seem to be those straight melodic progressions, with which the appearance of *Phalam* and *Phalak* have to be introduced (see *Pheng phanya doen* in Figure 6). The fast tempo and the constant high volume do not leave space for re-consideration of any step or gesture. This combination of musical elements is regarded as a perfect fit for a strong male character. It is also obvious that this appearance of maleness is by no means categorically rejected. It serves most and foremost to emphasise the distinctiveness of *Phalam* and *Phalak*, who have to be the admired models in all matters.

To adapt the model function of *Phalam's* and *Phalak's* characters into a contemporary context, solo parts deriving from various parts of the Vientiane folk song repertoire are integrated to accompany their appearance.

The image displays a musical score for a Khui solo. It consists of ten staves of music written in a single system. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 80. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A black line is drawn across the bottom of the tenth staff, indicating the end of the Pheng phanya doen section. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat.

Figure 15 *Khui* solo according to the folk melody *Lao damnoenxay*² accompanying the appearance of *Phalak* and followed by the *Pheng phanya doen* (marked with a black line).

Those inserts operate as strong contrasts and clear the atmosphere from tension. The shorter the performances the higher the concentration of tension, hence the audience needs relaxation, which is consciously associated with exemplary leadership qualities. Appropriate attributes such as “peaceful, careful and thoughtful” express an aspiration for a moderate pace of social development. Thus slow motion and calming melodies without pushing drums become an equivalent for the main role model. On the other hand, such an appearance of *Phalam* and *Phalak* as models are considered to be definitely not male compared to present manifestations of maleness in the urban context.

Therefore, the music is the permanent reconstruction tool of gendering the different roles. The music helps the dancer to find the right movement flow and to structure gestures and steps accordingly. Finally, the music is also responsible for the ambivalent being of the couple *Phalak* and *Phalam* who represent traditional conservativeness on the one hand, and actual demands of moral education in the social frame of the growing urban environment on the other.

Conclusion

The traditional principle represented in the dance drama *Phalak Phalam* of Vientiane states that good dancers have to behave like good men, who are intelligent, thoughtful, peaceful, who speak and move softly. Set in this actual context of Lao society and re-designed for contemporary performances, good men appear with certain femaleness.

The music supports this principle in the specific local application. Dancing as a codified body expression was already in the far past a special field of professional transsexual artists who were able to articulate such particular social interactions in their corresponding meaning. They could become specialists in expressing the desired ideals due to their individual strangeness. Thus, they were seen as social outcasts, but they were also accepted as an indivisible part of the dance

ensemble. This special position enriched their artistic experiences. Presently, the takeover of the main male roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam* by female dancers seems to follow the changed thoughts about good male qualities. These thoughts are not anymore linked to the ruling class of male leaders, as the situation might have been in the past. Regarding this point, *Phalak* and *Phalam* miss a very deciding attribute: the readiness to expand their power. They are not searching for challenges (see also Pinch 2006: 61–64 and Phalgunadi 1999). Their simple life in the forest is challenging enough. Although they are highly motivated to fight with the demons, their spirit of competition is not based on preconditions and fighting methods similar to those of their opponents playing the roles of *Totsakan* and *Ravana*. On the contrary, dissimilarities are clearly exhibited through different individual dispositions. They do not destroy their opponents, but they restore the balance of power. Finally, they succeed because of their different approaches and their different characters. This mode of fight is not compatible with the present construction of competitiveness, in which one wins by scores according to joint rules.

Hence, the re-designed roles of *Phalak* and *Phalam* do not only affect the choice of female dancers, who correspond better to motional demands of the roles. They affect the common understanding of past societies in Laos. On the one hand, the drama glorifies in a very conservative way, power and order under the wise leadership of a humble king and his intimate friends. The longing for such traditional solutions throw light on present social problems. This ideal may have never been paralleled in the past. On the other hand, past conflicts are seen as simple in a way that even womanly performing leaders could solve them. Thus, the story appears ridiculous and childish to a part of the audience, especially to those people, who are not well educated in traditional literature. This seems to be a deciding point in the reception of the main male roles. The decline of education in traditional oral literature and a missing understanding of the religious background resulting from it dismantles the given gender order in the danced drama. Subsequently, dance as an art is affected by shallowness in general due to the fact that persons in charge of cultural decisions show little interest in religiously labeled performances. The number of inscribed male

dance students at the National School for Dance and Music dropped since the dance drama was re-designed and historically reviewed with regard to local tradition.

In 2002, a very simple and short version of the Lao *Phalak Phalam* was performed at the National Culture Hall. The organisers intended to remove the appearance of ‘unclear’ gender positions and thus to improve the dance drama for ‘international presentation’. They engaged male dancers for the main male roles. This performance was not accepted by the public, especially by the strong Buddhist hierarchy, which could not agree with the obvious immaturity of the young dancers.

Thus it proves that not only motional patterns, which cause a female connotation, characterise the main male roles. The spiritual determination of the dancers that has been obviously lost among male performers had to be re-interpreted accordingly. Unfortunately, this spiritual determination represented by female dancers in the role of *Phalak* and *Phalam* does not seem to apply to present imaginations of femaleness. Although women in Laos are meanwhile richly blessed with leadership qualities in professional and home affairs, the ideal of good females still follows the *Sida* model. However, it does not prevent steady comparison of *Phalak* and *Phalam* with contemporary women in reality. This process of comparison may indicate the growing acceptance of women in social practice and the continuously deconstruction of their still ongoing conservative idealisation.

Finally we can summarise that social changes lead to varying gender roles and to changes of their representation in the dance drama. The feeling of re-designing the main male roles *Phalak* and *Phalam* in Vientiane’s version of the *Ramayana* is the result of gender deconstruction concerning traditional femaleness rather than an effeminacy of male qualities. We see *Phalak* and *Phalam* as slightly female, since these qualities are also reflected among women of the Lao society, a fact, which could not be observed to that extent in the past. Thus the imagination of good male qualities is still traditionally associated; but the real appearance of these qualities in the fast growing capital has a present-day female face.

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Appendix 1: Comparison between literary sources of the *Ramayana* and the distribution in *mat* of palm leaf manuscripts.

The danced story derives in variations from the grey marked fields (see also Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1990). Considering that each *mat* comprises nearly the same number of *phuks*, the importance of knowledge from the first and second *mat* is clearly shown in their extension compared to the other *mats*. This knowledge is orally transmitted.

<i>Valmiki Ramayana</i>		<i>Phra Lak Phra Lam</i> published by the National Library, Vientiane, in 1971 based on a transcription of the manuscript from <i>Ban Naxon Tay</i>		
Booktitle	Contents	<i>Mat</i> of the manuscript in <i>Ban Naxon Tay</i>	<i>Mat</i> of other copies preserved in Lao monasteries, rewritten from memory	
Bala Kanda	Book of the young Rama which details the miraculous birth of Rama, his early life in Ayodhya, his slaying of the demons of the forest at the request of Vishvamitra and his wedding with Sida.	1 (10 phuk)	1 (10 phuk)	1 (10 phuk)
		2 (11 phuk)		
Ayodhya Kanda	Book of Ayodhya in which Dasharatha comes to grief over his promise to Kaikeyi and the start of Rama's exile.	3 (11 phuk)	2 (11 phuk)	2 (11 phuk)
Aranya Kanda	Book of the Forest which describes Rama's life in the forest and the abduction of Sida by Ravana.	4 (11 phuk)		3 (11 phuk)
Kishkindya Kanda	Book of Kishkindya, the Vanara kingdom in which Rama befriends Sugriva and the Vanara army and begins the search for Sida.		3 (11 phuk)	
Sundara Kanda	Book of Sundara (Hanuman) in which Hanuman travels to Lanka and finds Sida imprisoned there and brings back the good news to Rama.			4 (11 phuk)
Yuddha Kanda	Book of the War, which narrates the Rama-Ravana war and the return of the successful Rama to Ayodhya and his coronation.		4 (11 phuk)	
Uttara Kanda	Epilogue, which details the life of Rama and Sida after their return to Ayodhya, Sida's banishment and how Sida and Rama pass onto the next world.			

Appendix 2: Audiovisual Sources

Vientiane 2005–2006 - Interviews and discussion with:

- Anulin Phakayson, 37, dances the role of *Phalam*,
- Ladda Phommalath, 43, choreographer
- Metkham Sengkham, 37, musician, playing the spike fiddle *sò*
- Nouth Phouthavongsa, 46, choreographer
- Suksavan Sengaphay, 40, dances the role of *Phalak*
- Anulin Phakayson, 37, dances the role of *Phalam*
- Bounmanh Yiengkang, 54, musician, playing the leading xylophon *lanat ek*
- Bounthieng Sisakda, 47, musician, playing the circle gong set *khong vong*

Recorded and published in: “No tears” – documentation on the modern Lao *Ramayana* in Vientiane. Archives of Traditional Music in Laos, ed. by Gisa Jähnichen and Thongbang Homsombat. July 2007, Vienna.

All photographs, reproductions, transcriptions and tables are made by the author.

Notes

1. *Phra Lam Sadok* derives from Pali language and means “Ten Beings of King Rama”.
2. *Ramakien* is the popular version of the traditional *Ramayana* in Thailand. *Khon-dance* is the highly developed and sophisticated court performance of it.
3. *Metkham Sengkham* indicated with a respective gesture that he is in doubt about such boys.
4. Motional (adj.), deriving from motion, which means the act or process of moving; passage of a body from one place to another; movement, the act of moving the body or any of its parts; a meaningful movement of the hand, eyes, gesture.
5. Called *Haphkhanaxuan* according to Vo Thu Tinh’s edition or *Totsakan* according to the current popular use in Vientiane.
6. A folk song version of *Pheng nangnak* is archived under signature 592 in the Archives of Traditional Music in Laos at the National Library, Vientiane.
7. A folk song version of *Pheng dokmai* is archived under signature 593 in the Archives of Traditional Music in Laos at the National Library, Vientiane.
8. A folk song version of *Lao damnoenxay* is archived under signature 72 in the Archives of Traditional Music in Laos at the National Library, Vientiane.