



Fine Arts Department, Bangkok, Thailand

# The Beliefs and Culture in the Archaic Siamese Play 'Nang Manora'

**Sutheera Satayaphan**

Art Official, The Office of Literature and History

PhD student, Asia-Africa Institute, Universität Hamburg

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บทละครจากวรรณคดี

๒๕๖๑ • กรุงเทพมหานคร • มติชน • ๒๕๖๑



สำนักวรรณกรรมและประวัติศาสตร์  
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จากบริษัท เวล เกร็ด เอ็นจินีริ่ง จำกัด โดยวิธีประกวดราคา E-Bidding  
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สงวนลิขสิทธิ์ 7110.007.0533/62

# Introduction to the Archaic Siamese

Archaic Siamese Play = Siamese drama play written in 18th century (Late Ayutthaya – early Bangkok period)

- Author and exact date are unspecified
- Performed in traditional Siamese dance-drama
- Occasions:
  - inner court → Lakhòn nai
  - outside court → Lakhòn nòk
- Audiences: Courtiers, people



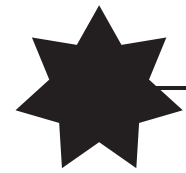
# Historical Context

AYUTTHAYA  
PERIOD: KING  
NARAI  
(1656 -1688)

THE AYUTTHAYA  
PERIOD: KING  
BOROMMAKOT  
(1733-1758)

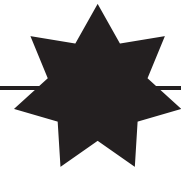
THE FALL OF AYUTTHAYA  
IN 1767 &THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THONBURI & BANGKOK

TRANSMISSION TO  
THE PRESENT DAY

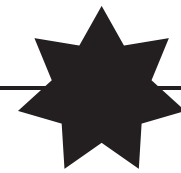


The flourishing era  
of Siamese arts and  
culture; literature,  
merchant,  
diplomatic, etc.

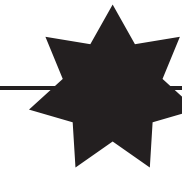
"Nang Manora"  
springs from Thai  
folklore, illustrating  
the blend of myth  
and cultural beliefs  
in performance.



The golden age of Arts  
and Culture of Late  
Ayutthaya



After 1767, Thonburi  
and Bangkok  
Kingdom had been  
established  
respectively. Also,  
arts and culture had  
been restored by  
following Ayutthaya.



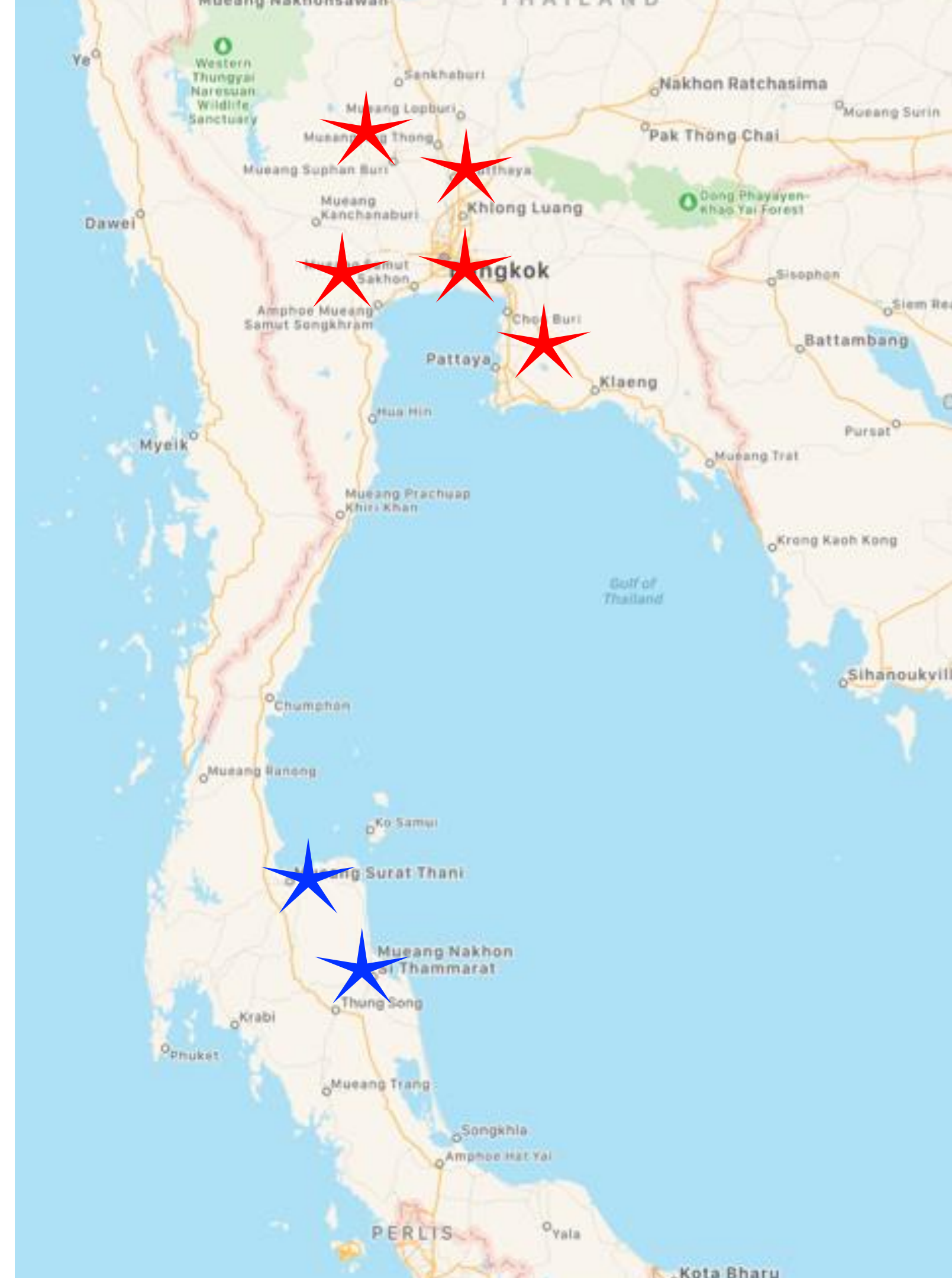
Oral tradition +  
Performance have  
preserved "Nang Manora,"  
with variations enhancing  
its cultural richness  
across different Thai  
regions

# Forms of Lakhon Nok

Lakhòn : Thai dance drama widely perform in Central and Southern Thailand

Lakhòn nòk : Thai dance drama performing outside the royal court, it is opposite to Lakhòn nai which performed and belongs to the royal court

- Lakhòn chatri : one of the oldest form of lakhòn nòk, developed from Norachatri which is renown in the Southern Thailand
  - Plays titled 'Phra Rotthasen (Rot-Meri)' and 'Manora' are mainly performed in Lakhòn chatri
  - Nowadays, Troupes of Lakhòn Chatri have been found in Central, Eastern and Southern Thailand. They still show in several occasions.



# The Siamese Drama Plays

Drama plays performed in the royal court: 4 plays

- Inao (*Eenaung*)
- Ramakian (*Yama Zat burm.*)
- Unarut
- Dalang



Drama plays performed outside royal court: 19 plays

- Karaket
- Khawi
- Kraithong
- Kobut
- Chaichet
- Chaithat
- Phikunthong
- Phimsawan
- Phinsuriyawong
- Phra Rot Meri
- Mongpa
- Maniphichai
- Manora
- Sangthong
- Sangsinchai
- Sinsuriwong
- Suwannahong
- Suwannasin
- Sowat

# Historical Background of *Manora* Play

Manora < Suthanachadok (Sudhana jataka, (th. สุธนะชาดก)) the 2nd story in *Pannasa-jataka* or *Zimme pannasa* (a non-canonical collection of 50 stories of the Buddha past lives).

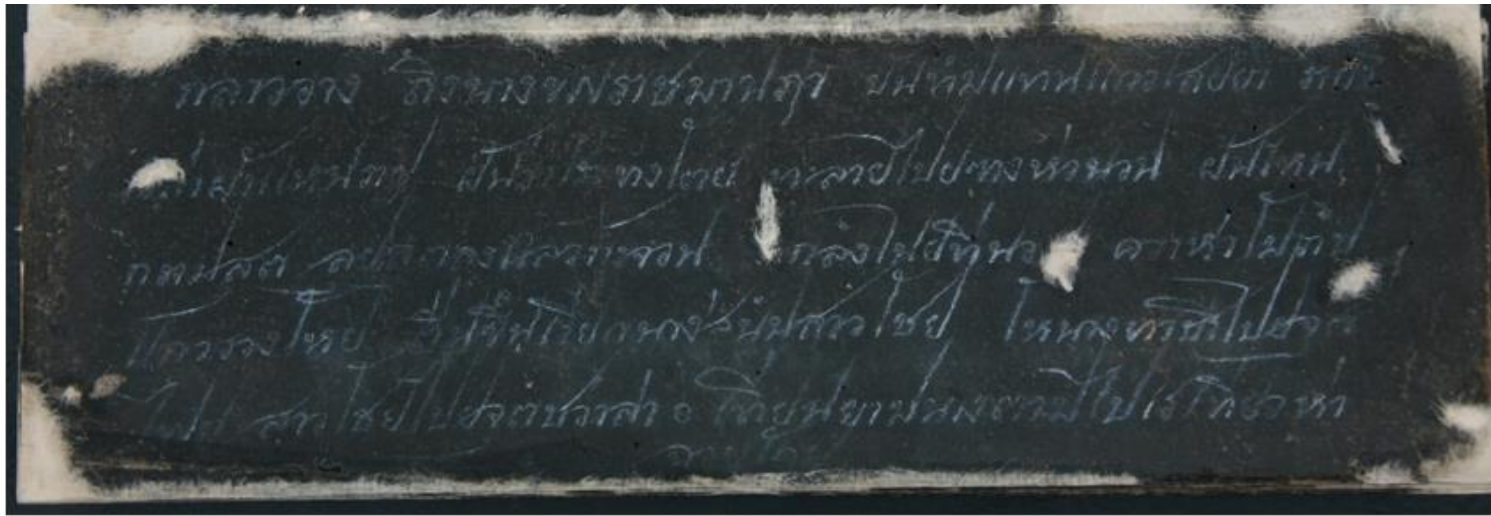
**Nang Manora as a dramatic play comes from local tales**

The popular parts performed in Lakhòn, for example,

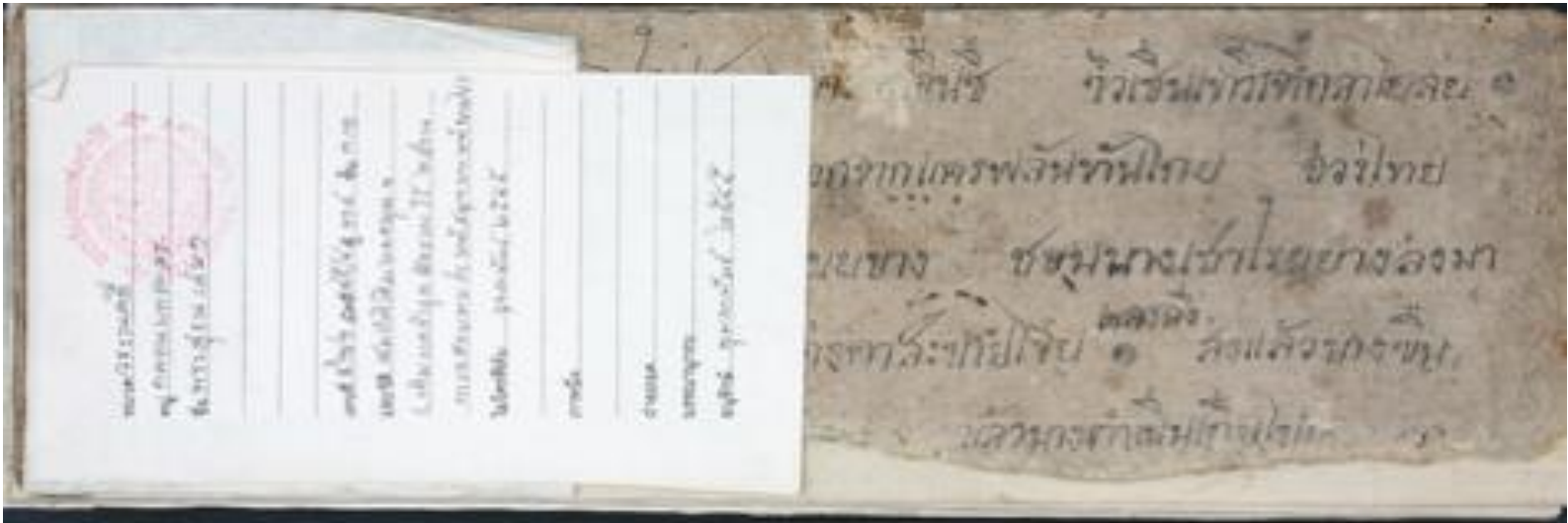
- Phran Bun caught Manora (พราหมณ์จับนางมโนห์รา)
- Manora was sacrificed (Th. มโนห์ราบูชายัญ)
- Phra Suthon arranged his marriage. (Th. พระสุธนเลือกคู่)



# The Manuscripts of Archaic Drama Play: Manora

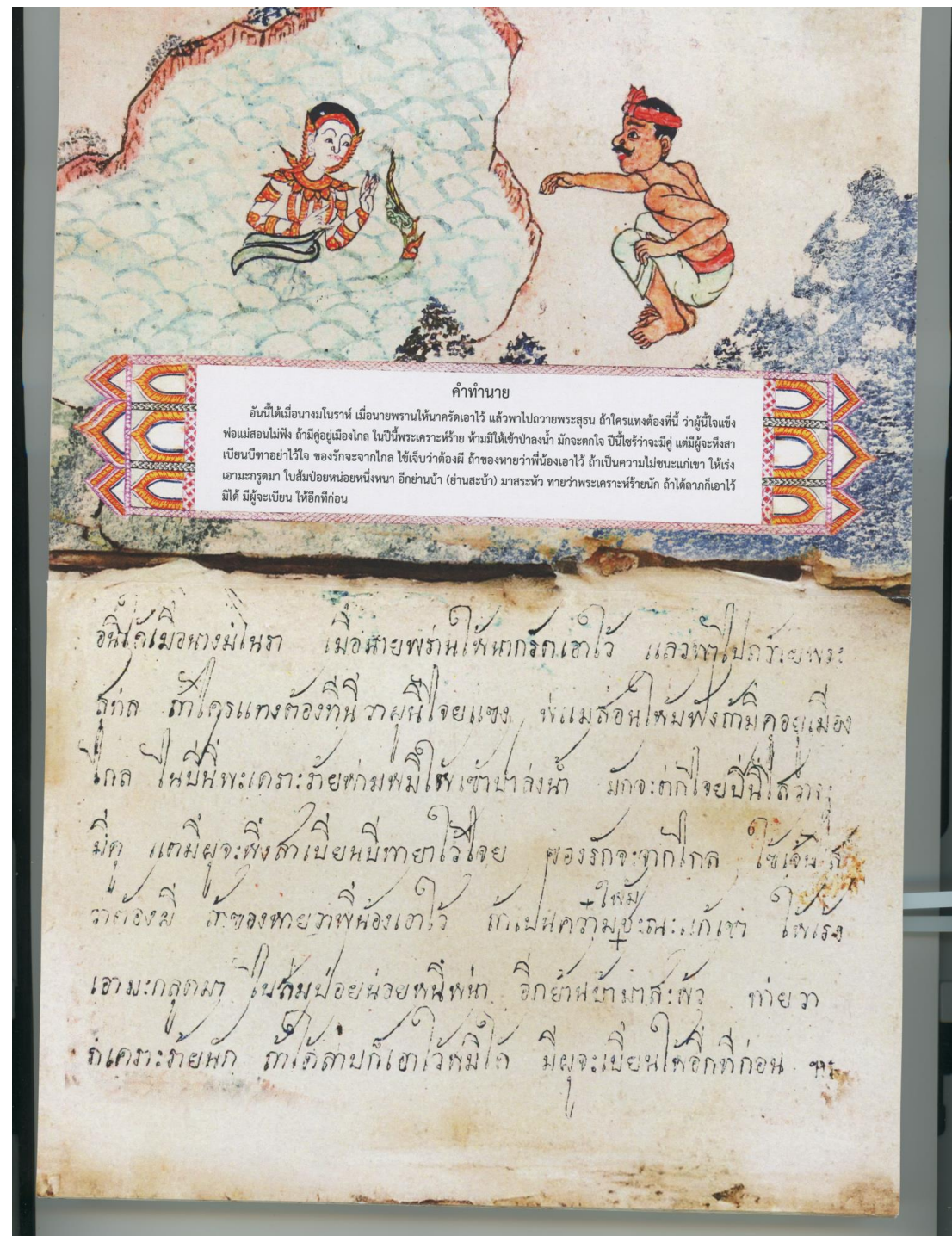


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# Beliefs and Culture in Nang Manora



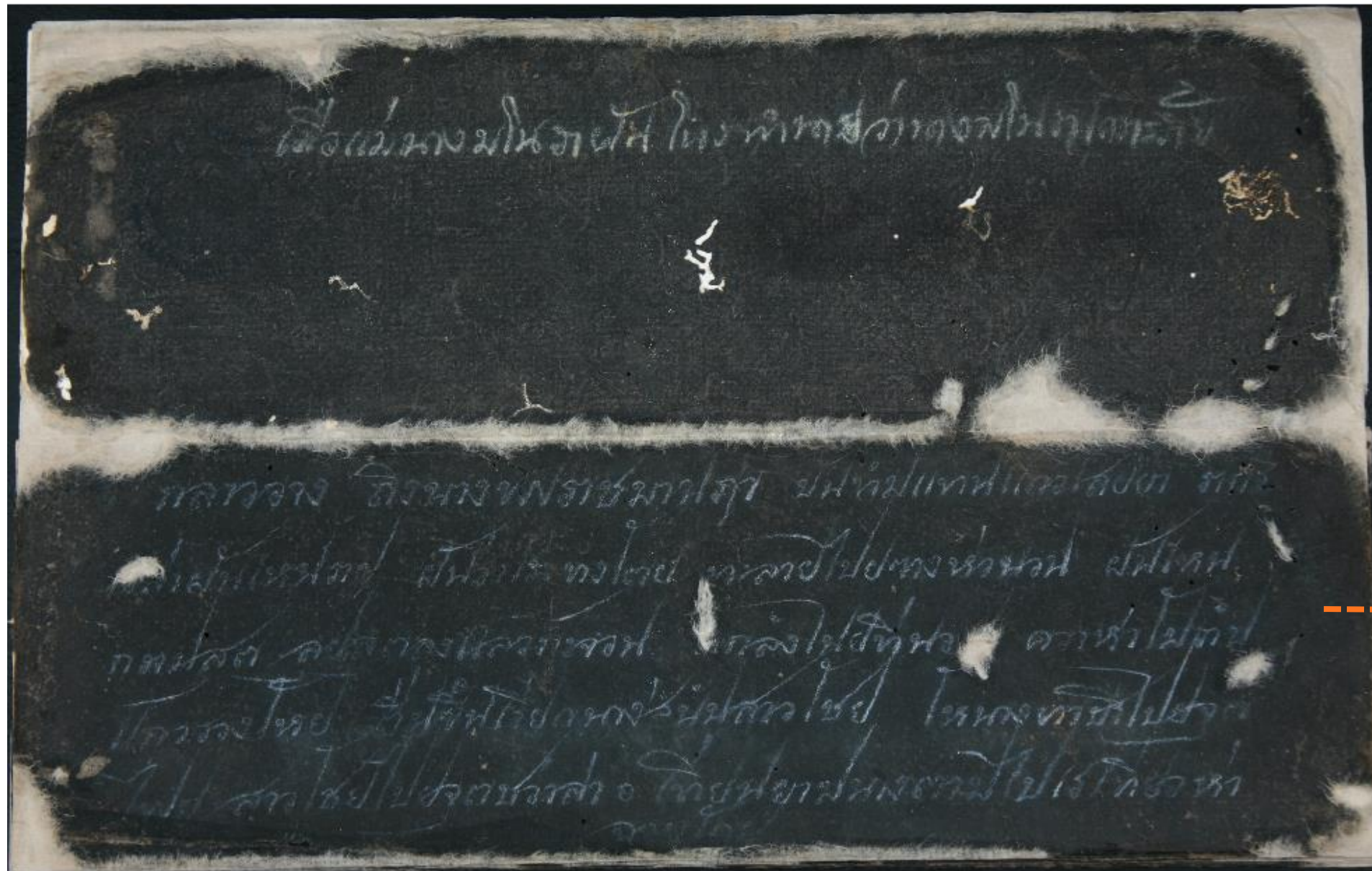
## DREAM INTERPRETATION

Dream interpretation plays a significant role in the play, offering insights into characters' subconscious thoughts, and highlighting the Siamese view of dreams as prophetic and meaningful experiences.

## FORTUNE TELLING

In "Nang Manora," fortune telling serves as a crucial narrative device, reflecting the characters' desires and fears, deeply rooted in the cultural context of Siamese beliefs.

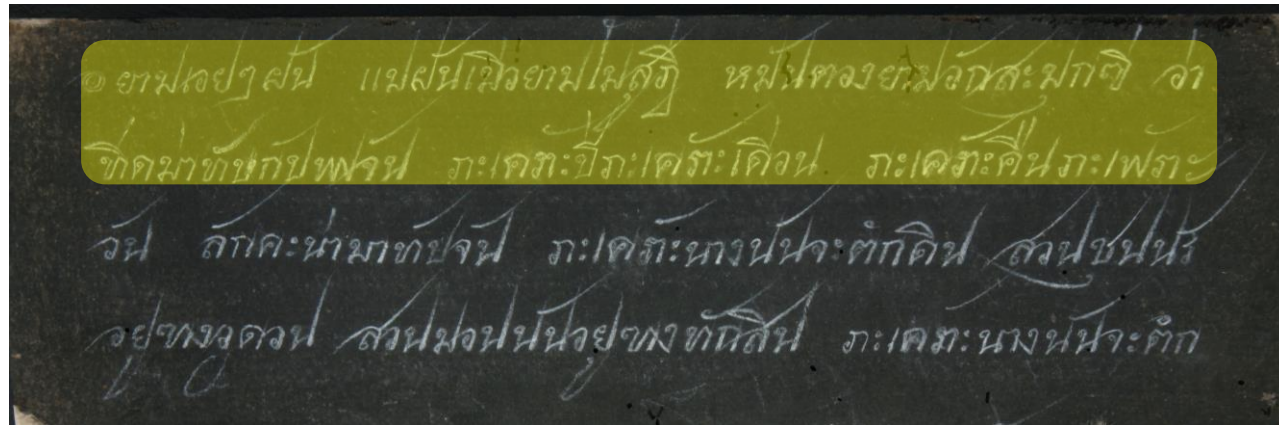
# Beliefs: Dream Interpretation



Saying to her mother, she is sleeping and has a nightmare about her dormitory is collapsing and lost her molar tooth

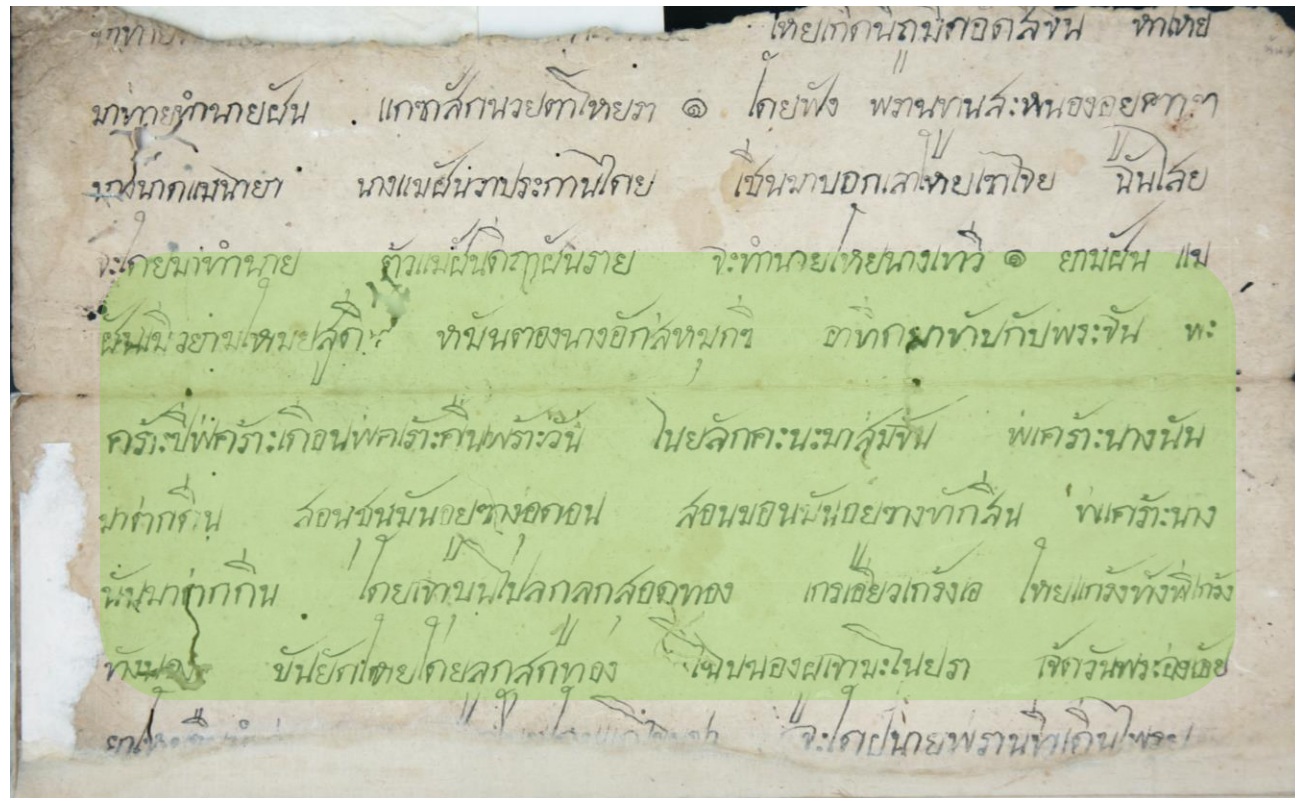
Episode : Manora's mother had a nightmare, prophet predicts her daughter, Manora, would have a misfortune.

# Beliefs: Dream Interpretation



The verse is the prophecy of astrologer

‘The dream, it falls into Aksamukkhi. The year, month, night and day, your ascendant falls into moon position so the fate is falling down. At that time, the waxing moon corresponds to the North whereas the waning moon is on the South. The fate will belong to the youngest daughter...’



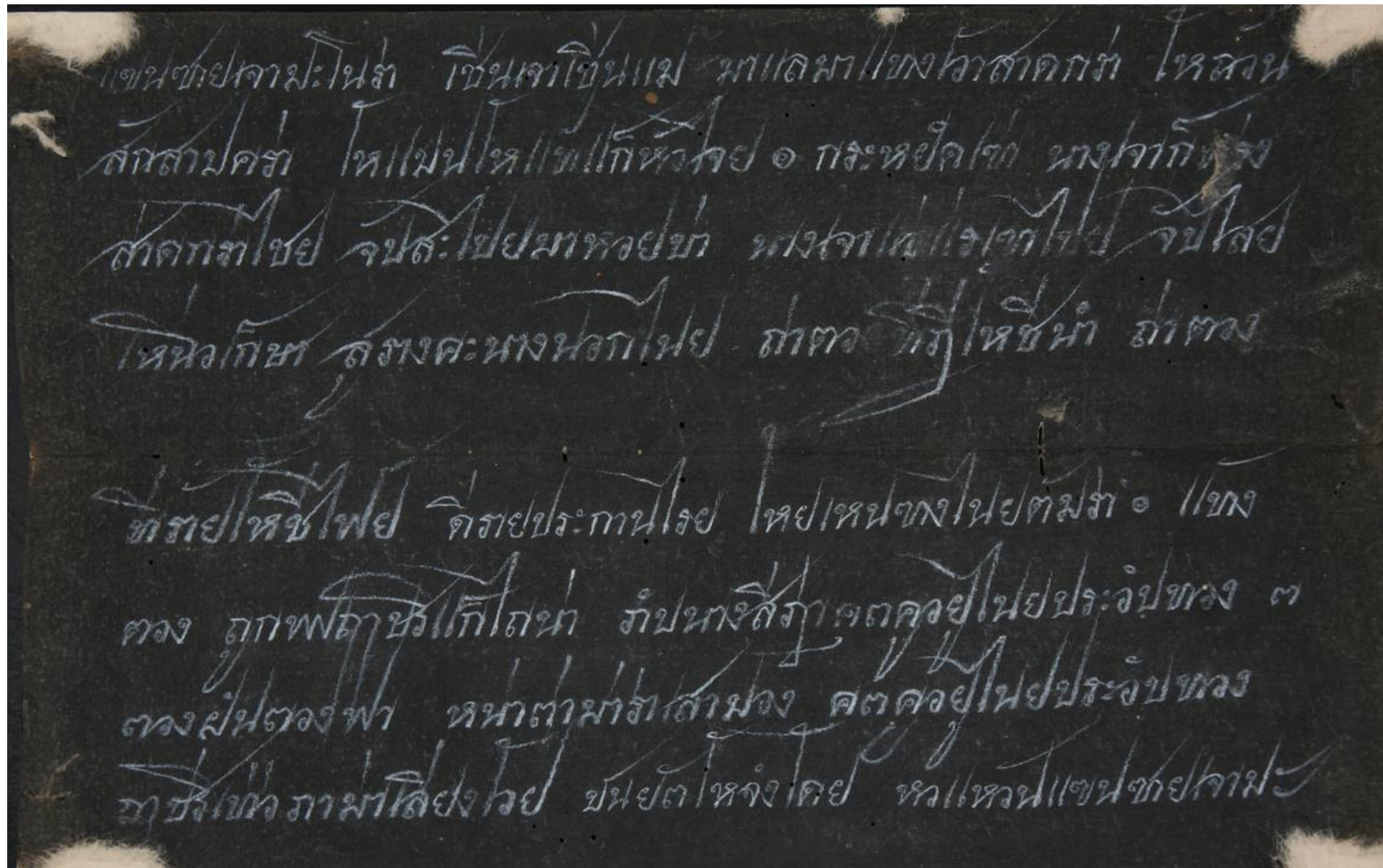
Episode : Manora’s mother had a nightmare, prophet predicts her daughter, Manora, would have a misfortune.

# Beliefs: Dream Interpretation

## Dream in a Siamese Dance Drama

- a hint of storyline
- Nightmare depicts the fate of main characters
- In Manora drama, a nightmare is added to start the chapter, to introduce characters, and to create more scenes including dialogue.
- Dream is a significant motifs found in several drama.

# Beliefs: Fortune Teller *Thaeng Sastra*



The *Thaeng Sastra* is a kind of prophecy in the Southern Thailand.

*Sastra* (skt.) = book

*thaeng* (th.) = to stab



# Beliefs: Fortune Teller *Thaeng Sastra*

- Prophecy treatise staving (thaeng sattrā) is a prophecy treatise practicing in the south. The etymology of sattrā could be explained to different ways: some of which presumably derives from śāstrā in Sanskrit which means a treatise.
- The prophecy is practiced by using a tool which is flat and sharp made by wood or horn and stabbing into the treatise. The page that is stabbed by such tool is a prediction.
- The thaeng sattrā is basically written in the grayish manuscript with a small size 13 x 18 to 20 cm. The prophecy treatise composes with text and illustration. Its text is written in both prose and verse form. The prophecy text refers to folktales and literature such as ramakian, phra malai kham luang, sang thòng, phra suthon, phra rot-meri, and suwannasamchadok etc.

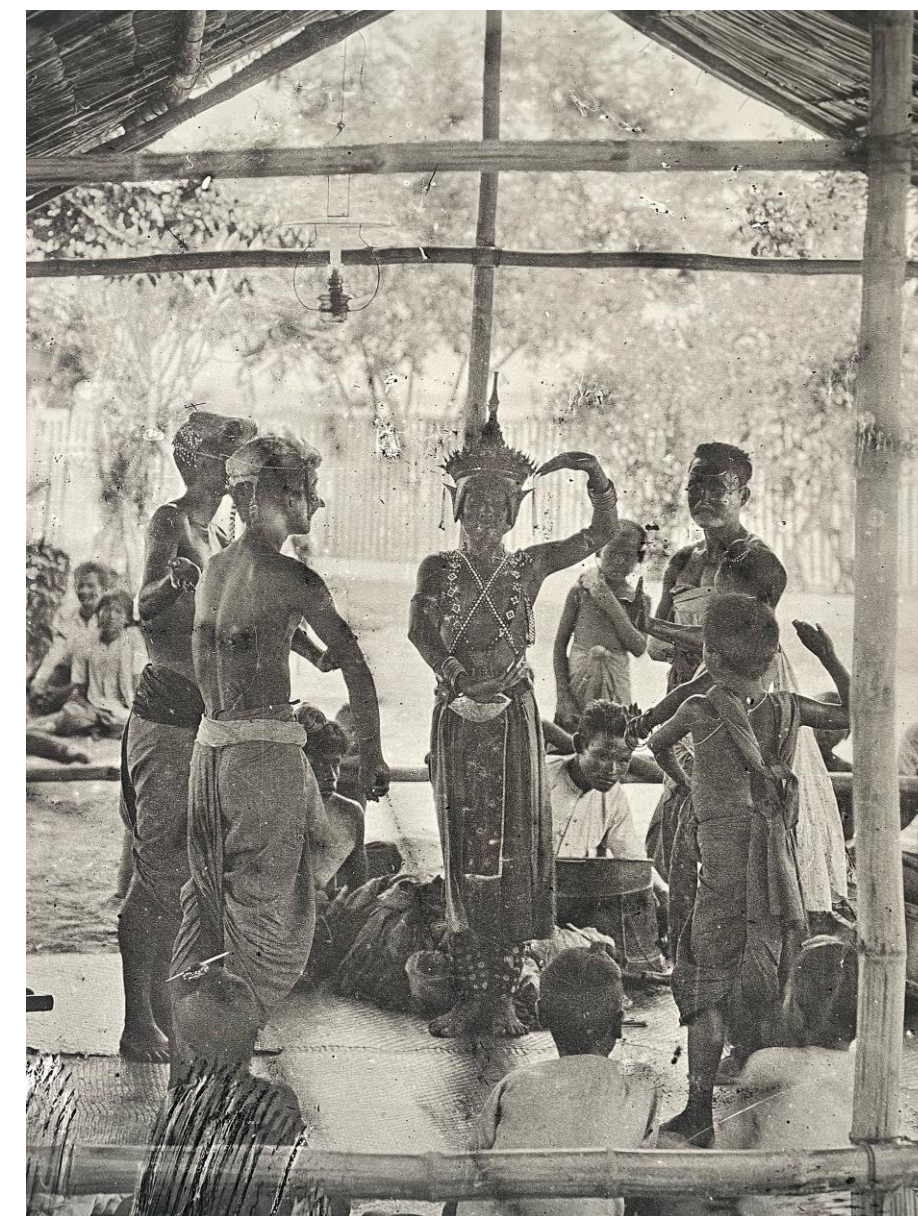
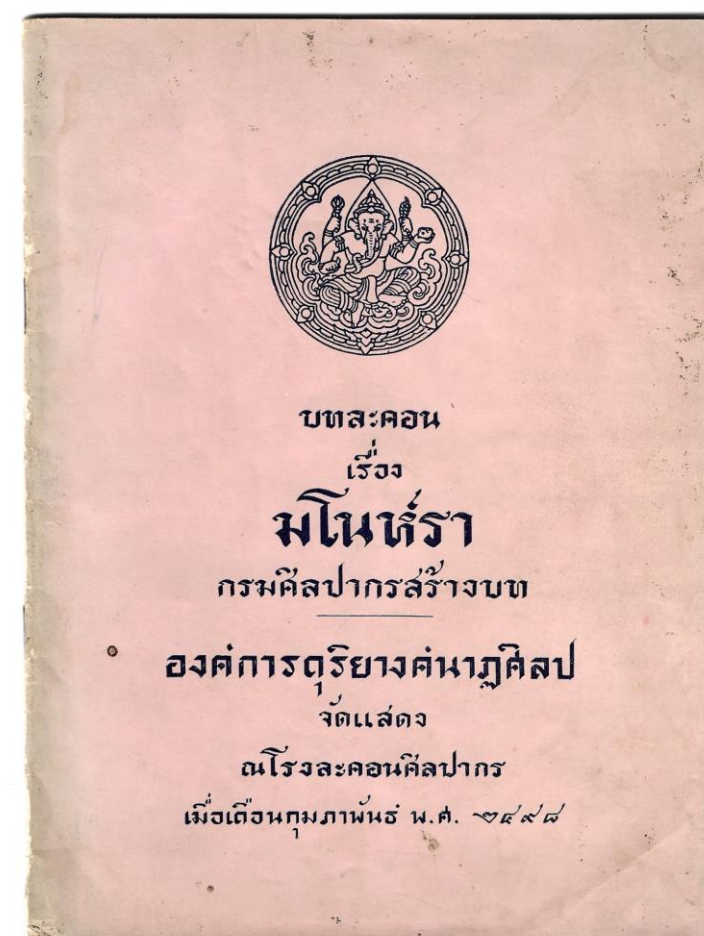
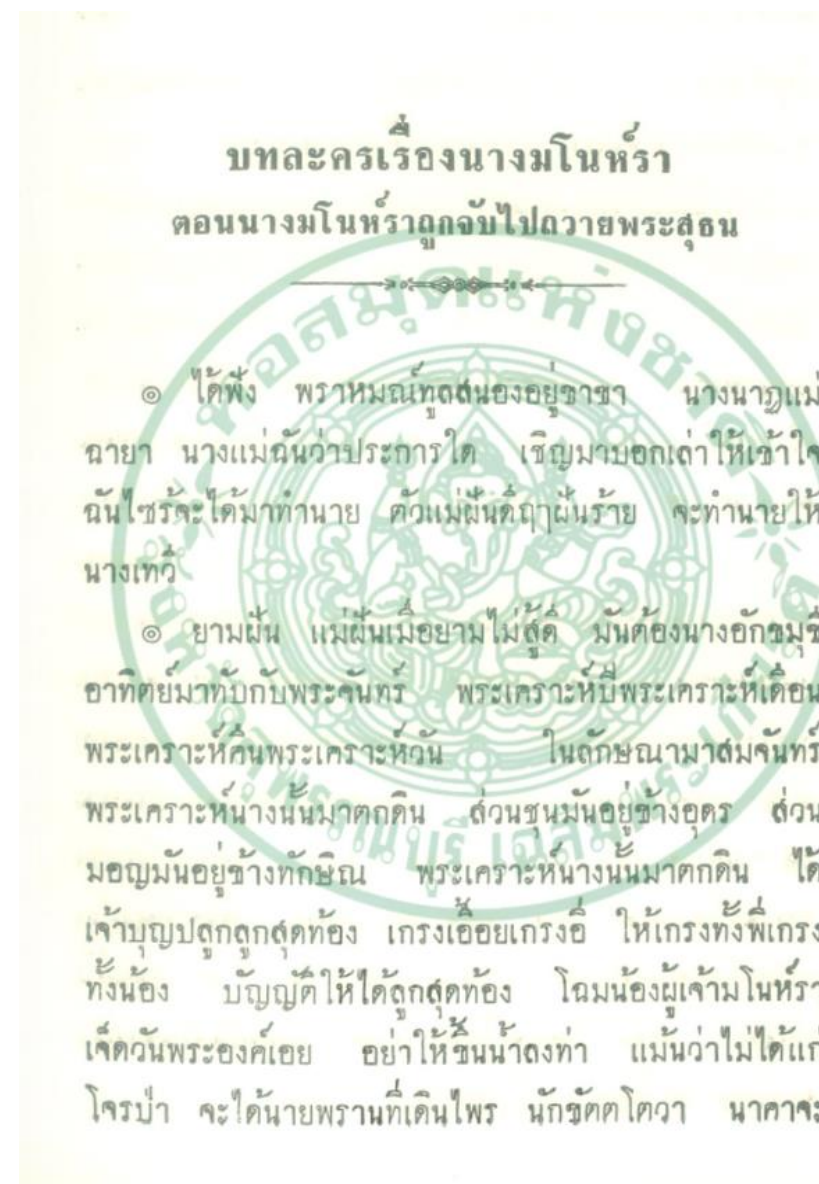
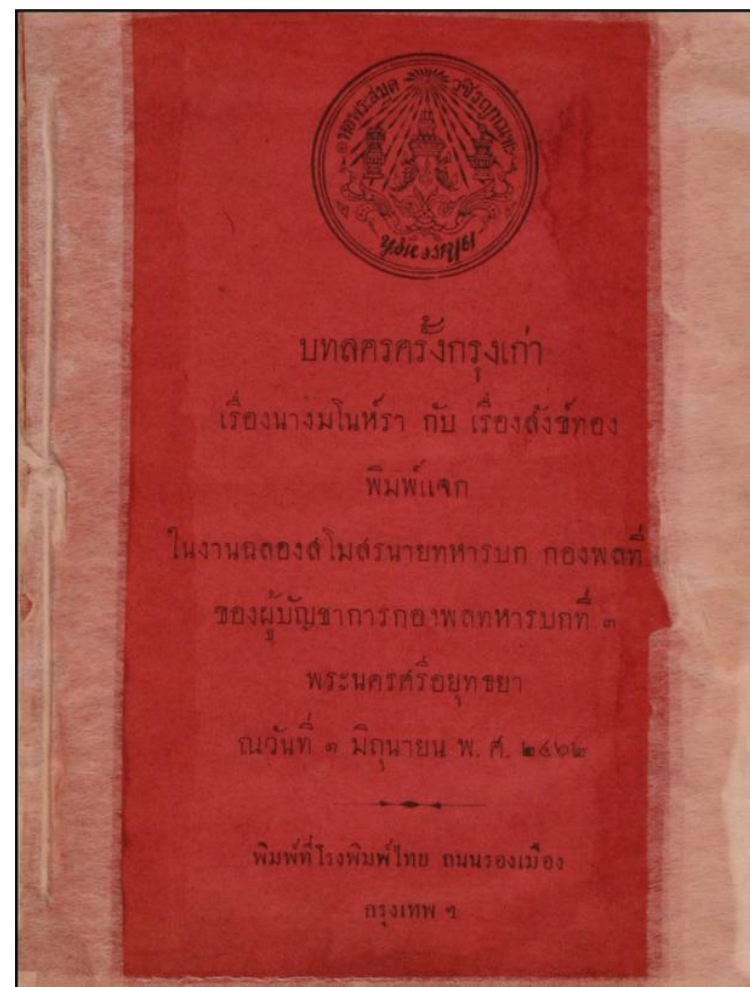
# Predictions in *Thaeng Sastra*

Predictions	Literature/folktales
1. The hermit ploughed the field and found a golden casket with Sita inside.	Ramakian
2. Sammanakkha pointed at Sita's face, then her feet and hands were cut off by Rama.	Ramakian
3. The Golden swan was trapped in a snare	Phya Hong (folktale)

# Transmission of Nang Manora

The **narrative style** of "Nang Manora" plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity, intertwining traditional elements with storytelling that reflects the rich heritage of Siamese folklore.

- The drama play has been rewritten and performed several time since 1955.
- This drama play still maintains the motif of a nightmare of Manora's mother, the scene of *Thaeng Sastra*.



# Conclusion

- Manora play likely predates the reign of King Narai (1656 - 1688 C.E)
- The origins of the Nang Manora play have been explained in two ways: one is an apocryphal birth story known as the *Paññāsa Jātaka* (or *Panyatsachadok*), and the other is a local tale
- The drama play titled 'Manora' recorded ancient Thai beliefs, including **dream interpretation** and **local fortune-telling** and traditional games among villagers.

