
The E-San Mural Paintings: Character Poses From Local Literature To A Creation Of A Dance Performance Entitled Hoop Hoy Roy Rob

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Abstract

This research aimed to 1) study the characters' poses from local literature in E-san mural paintings and 2) create a dance performance entitled "Hoop Hoy Roy Rob". The research is qualitative with the target group consisting of the E-san mural paintings from six temples, consisting of Wat Pa Lelai in Maha Sarakham Province, Wat Sa Bua Kaew and Wat Sanuanwaree Phatthanaram in Khon Kaen Province, Hua Wiang Rangsi Temple, Phutthasima Temple, and Pho Kham Temple in Nakhon Phanom Province. The result showed that the characters' poses from local literature found in the E-san mural paintings consisting of the characters' poses in battles, including standing, walking, sitting, hand movements, foot movements, head tilting, and body movements, very similar to dance poses. The poses can be compared to the dance poses of Shiva from the book of Natya Shastra and the dance poses from the Thai dance textbooks. These poses were analyzed to create the poses used in dance performances through the concept of choreography that led to the creation of the dance performance entitled Roob Hoy Roy Rob, consisting of 6 following steps: 1) studying the characters' forms from three local works of literature, including Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong found in the E-san mural paintings, 2) creating the dance poses by using the characters' poses, 3) creating a creative dance performance by using all male performers and dividing the performances into three parts, 4) designing the costumes of the dance performance through the study of the characters' poses in the mural paintings in the research area, 5) design various ways of forming lines, and 6) adding songs and music. The songs were newly created, starting with the E-san Lae melody using the traditional flute called Pi and other E-san musical instruments found in the painting mixed with Western musical instruments to create a more beautiful and interesting melody.

Keywords: E-san mural painting, Characters' forms, Local literature, Dance performance creation

Introduction

E-san is a large region with continuous development. The E-san culture has been preserved and passed down through the generations, reflecting the beliefs and livelihood of the people from the past to the present. The arts and culture of the E-san region in the past received influence from the Lan Xang and the Khmer Kingdoms. After the decline of the Khmer culture, the area was replaced by the Lan Xang culture. The region also received the Buddhist influence from Ceylon Buddhism, replacing the animism belief that existed in the region since

ancient times (Samosorn, 1989). Religious faith led to the passing on of the beliefs, society, and culture that can be seen in structures related to Buddhism, such as in the temples, Sims, bell tower, hall of Buddhist teaching, and pagodas. The arts that can provide a good reflection of the E-san society and culture are the E-san mural paintings, or what the local people call “Hoop Team”.

The mural paintings are an art form and one of the cultural heritage of Thailand, passed down through the painters in the past who painted these precious works of art. Apart from having artistic values, the paintings also record historical stories, customs, and traditions, as well as the livelihoods of the people in the past for the later generations to learn from (Jompru, 2019). Additionally, the paintings also reflect the cultures in the different eras. Mural paintings were created with inspiration from the local literature, especially Ceylon Buddhist literature, merged with the local culture, which the painters used to create these paintings as Buddhist offerings, as well as a medium to instill the religious faith in the local people (Sudee, 2014). The stories found in the mural paintings can be divided into three following groups: 1) stories related to Buddhism, 2) stories related to local people’s livelihood, and 3) stories from the local literature (Akachonniyom, 2005). The local literature found in the E-san mural paintings consisted of only five stories: Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, Suriwong, Karaked, and Pachit and Orapim.

Most of the stories found in the E-san mural paintings were fun stories with hidden moral teachings. Since the E-san people were religious people, local tales were often merged with the Chatakas. The local literature in the mural paintings is well-known literature since it can be seen in the text used by the monks to teach during different religious festivals (Saimuang, 2013). It can be observed that these pieces of literature contain stories of departing, searching, fight with giants where the protagonist ended up with victories. These stories align with the Buddhist teaching, “Good overcomes evil”. This is especially true in the three pieces of literature, Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong. The paintings consist of outstanding scenes of battles which are the focus of the stories. General people can understand the stories as soon as they see the paintings. These three pieces of literature show the different forms of characters that the painters painted. Another interesting point that can be seen from the poses of the characters in the literature is their costumes which the painters beautifully painted. Some characters have similar costumes while some have different ones. The fact that the costumes were different was that each painter had the freedom to paint and came from a different background. Therefore, the study of the characters’ forms in all three pieces of literature revealed the details in the costumes, headwear, hairstyles, and other ornaments, most of which were well-preserved from the past. Furthermore, adapting the poses of the characters from the study to create a new piece of work is one way to preserve this cultural heritage in the form of a performance.

The presentation of art performances can be presented in two ways: 1) traditional performance, where the traditional forms were used, reflecting the uniqueness of each nation, and 2) creative performance where the movements and forms were based on the imagination of the creators or the performers. The poses used in the performances are not strictly tied to the traditional movements and are often adapted based on the periods and the popularity amongst the audience (Watcharapan, 2016). In addition, Wirunrak (2000) explained the word choreography as “thoughts, designs, creations, forms, and methods in creating a performance”. Therefore, the creation of the performance or the choreography is a creation of performances where creative thinking is necessary. These creations mostly rely on the concept of choreography and a creative thinking process as a tool to create artworks that rely on the principles and aesthetics based on the concept of creative performances. In using the images found in the E-san mural paintings to create a performance, the researcher used the images from the battles between humans and giants from the three pieces of literature, Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong since these three pieces of literature have similar stories. The research focused on using the forms of the characters to create dance poses and costumes for the perfection and aesthetic of the performance.

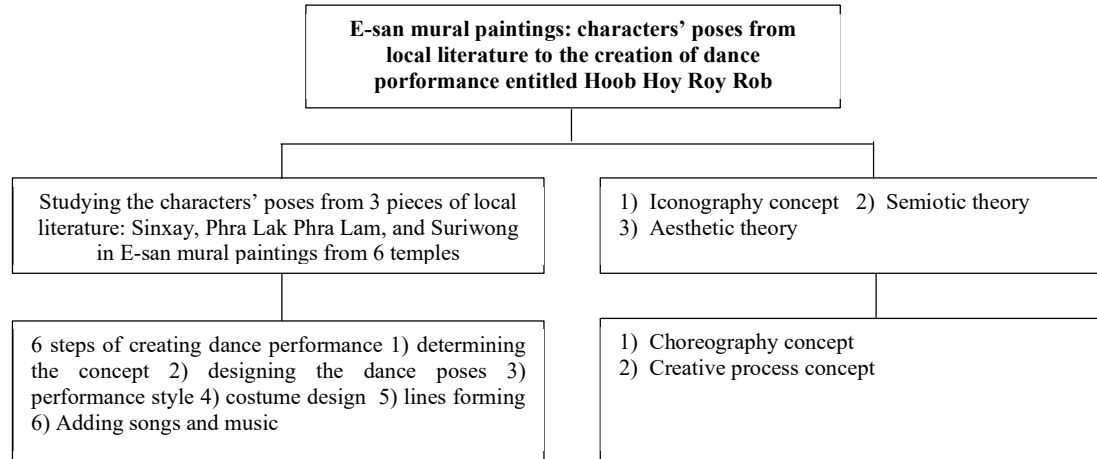
From the reasons and importance mentioned, the researcher was interested in studying the Ean mural paintings: characters’ forms from the local literature to the creation of the dance performance entitled “Hoob Hoy Roy Rob”. The research areas consisted of 6 temples in three provinces, including 1) Wat Pa Lelai, Maha Sarakham Province, 2) Wat Sa Bua Kaew, Khon Kaen Province 3) Wat Sanuanwaree Phatthanaram, Khon Kaen Province 4) Hua Wiang Rangsi Temple, Nakhon Phanom Province 5) Pho Kham Temple, Nakhon Phanom Province and 6) Phutthasima Temple, Nakhon Phanom Province. From the field visits to all six temples, these temples contain the clearest, most beautiful, and most perfect battle scenes from the three pieces of literature. The research result will help in the preservation and inheriting of the nation’s arts and culture for the future.

Research Objectives

1. To study the characters’ poses from local literature in E-san mural paintings
2. To create a dance performance entitled “Hoob Hoy Roy Rob”

Research Framework

This research is the study of the characters’ poses from local literature in E-san mural paintings using qualitative research methods to create a dance performance entitled “Hoob Hoy Roy Rob”. The conceptual framework is as follows.



Research Methodology

The study of E-san mural paintings, local literature to the creation of a dance performance entitled Hoob Hoy Roy Rob. The research methodology is as follows.

1. Target Group

The researcher applied the purposive sampling method and divided the target groups into two following groups: 1) target groups of objects, which refers to the E-san mural paintings that contain characters’ poses in battle scenes from local literature from three provinces, including six temples. 2) target groups of people, which refers to three groups of informants, including key informants, casual informants, and general informants.

2. Research tools

2.1 Survey forms to study the target groups to survey primary data with the scope of surveying the ecology, geography, physical aspect, social aspect, cultural aspect, way of life, and access to data.

2.2 Two types of interviews: 1) structured interviews and 2) non-structured interviews

3. Data collection

3.1 Collecting data from documents through the study of books, textbooks, theses, the internet, documents from government offices, academic institutions, and individuals.

3.2 Collecting data from the field through surveys, structured and non-structure interviews

4. Data analysis

4.1 All document and field data were categorized and grouped to find the answers based on the objectives

4.2 Reviewed the completeness of the collected data

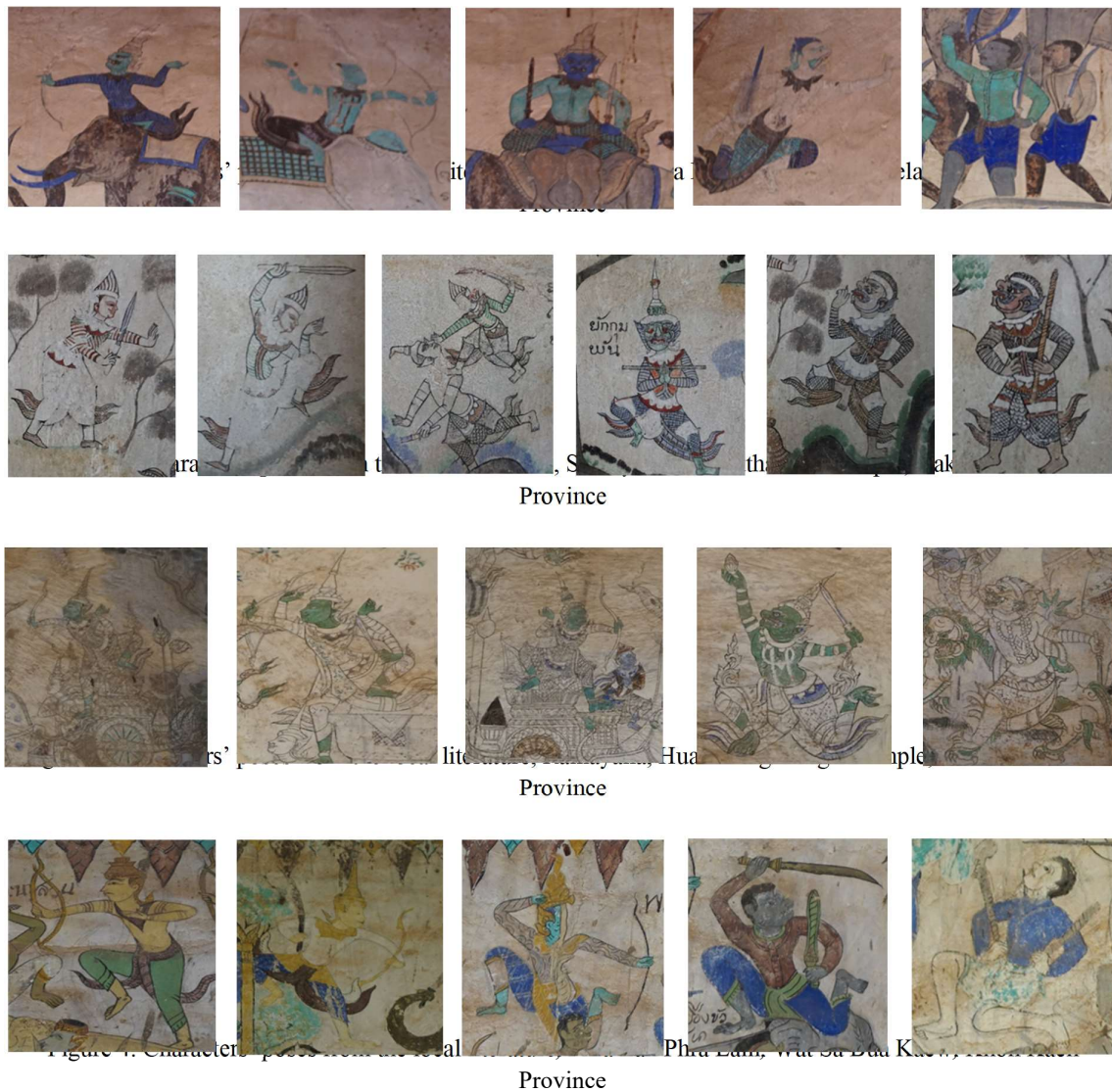
4.3 Used the triangulation method to verify the data and analyzed the data qualitatively for verification

4.4 The result was used to create a dance performance entitled “Hoob Hoy Roy Rob” using a creative process consisting of six steps 1) 1) determining the concept 2) designing the dance poses 3) performance style 4) costume design 5) lines forming 6) Adding songs and music

Research Result





From the study of data related to the research topic and field visits to survey the E-san mural paintings in the six temples in the research area, it was found that the characters' poses in the battle scenes from three pieces of literature, including Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong in the E-san mural paintings consist of the following poses: standing, sitting, walking, hand movements, foot movements, head tiltings, and body movements. These poses align with the poses used in dancing. The poses from the mural paintings show a lot of similarities when compared with dance poses from the Natya Shastra text, the dance poses of Shiva, and the Thai dance textbook from the era of King Rama I. Iconology concept and Semiotic Theory were used to study and interpret the form and symbols of the characters in the E-san mural paintings. The aesthetic theory was used as a guideline in studying the poses of the characters, which was a beautiful work of art that the painters had left as historical beauty for the later generations to see before they disappeared with the times.

The following are some examples of the characters' poses from local literature in the E-san mural paintings that were researched in the six temples and analyzed into dance poses.










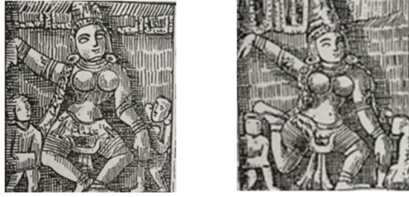

The character’s poses found in the mural paintings in all six temples can be compared to the Natya Shastra and the dance posture text to show similar poses to those of dances. The following are the comparisons of poses from the six temples.

Characters’ poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p>Characters’ poses from Pho Kham Temple in Nakhon Phanom Province</p>	  <p>Pose 62 Vinivṛttam Pose 86 Skalitam</p>	 <p>Chang Sabut Ya</p>




The characters’ poses from Wat Pa Lelai can be compared to the 62nd pose called Vinivṛttam (looking around) and the 86th pose called Skalitam (slipped), which are the most similar. The pose can be compared with the Chang Sabut Ya pose in the Thai dance poses text.

Characters’ poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p>Characters’ pose from Phutthasima Temple</p>	  <p>Pose 41 Daṅḍarēchitam Pose 60 Dōlāpādām</p>	 <p>Pralaiwat</p>




The characters’ pose from Phutthasima Temple can be compared to pose 41 Daṅḍarēchitam (swinging baton and crouching) and pose 60 Dōlāpādām (foot swinging). The pose can be compared with the Pralaiwat pose from the Thai dance pose text.

Characters' poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p>Characters' pose from Hua Wiang Rangsi Temple</p>	 <p>Pose 29 Rēchitanikuṭṭam Pose 106 Nāgāpasarpitam</p>	 <p>Jong Kra Ben Ti Lek</p>


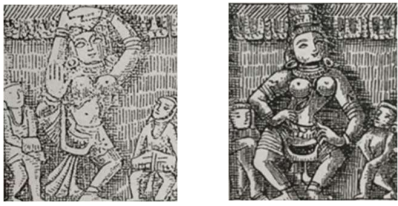

The characters' pose from Hua Wiang Rangsi Temple can be compared to pose 29 Rēchitanikuṭṭam (moving hands and stomping) and pose 106 Nāgāpasarpitam (slithering snakes). The pose can be compared with the Jong Kra Ben Ti Lek pose from the Thai dance pose text.

Characters' poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p>Characters' pose from Wat Sa Bua Kaew</p>	 <p>Pose 80 Mayūralalitām Pose 106 Nāgāpasarpitam</p>	 <p>Khon Ting Ok Phrom Si Na</p>

The characters' pose from Wat Sa Bua Kaew can be compared to pose 80 Mayūralalitām (peacock dancing) and pose 106 Nāgāpasarpitam (slithering snakes). The pose can be compared with the Khon Ting Ok and Phrom Si Na poses from the Thai dance pose text.

Characters' poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p>Characters' pose from Wat Sanuanwaree Phatthanaram</p>	 <p>Pose 28 Ardhamattalli Pose 25 Ūrdhvajānu</p>	 <p>Ngu Kwang Khon</p>

The characters' pose from Wat Sanuanwaree Phatthanaram can be compared to pose 28 Ardhamattalli (a little drunk) and pose 25 Ūrdhvajānu (lifting knee high). The pose can be compared with the Ngu Kwang Khon pose from the Thai dance pose text.

Characters' poses	Dance poses from Natya Shastra	Dance posture from Thai Dance poses text
 <p data-bbox="264 451 532 510">Characters' pose from Pho Kham Temple</p>	 <p data-bbox="618 478 961 537">Pose 50 Lalātatilakam Pose 19 Kaṭṣamam</p>	

The characters' pose from Pho Kham Temple can be compared to pose 50 Lalātatilakam (anointing the forehead) and pose 19 Kaṭṣamam (hands on the waist). The pose can be compared with the Ti Ton Yon Tup pose from the Thai dance pose text.

The creation of a dance performance entitled Hoob Hoy Roy Rob

The work creation relied on the creative work process, which according to Tylor's (1964) concept, does not require the highest level of creation or innovation, the product of creative thinking can be at any level. Additionally, Peerapong (2003) stated that choreography creation is thinking and designing, the creation of forms, and methods, as well as improvements of works in the past. Therefore, Choreography is a kind of work that encompasses concepts, dance styles, dance poses, line formations, costumes, and songs and music in one performance (Wirunrak, 2000). In this creative work, the researcher combined different dance poses found in the E-san mural paintings, mostly aligned with the dance poses of Shiva in the ancient book of Natya Shastra, as well as the Thai dance poses that can be found in the Thai dance poses text from the time of King Rama I. the creative process consists of six steps.

1. Creative concept

An important aspect of creating a performance is a concept. The concept can be compared to the guideline the researcher used in creating the work that follows set objectives to clearly communicate the meanings. In terms of using the images found in the mural paintings to create a dance performance, the researcher chose the images of the characters in battle scenes as the main concept. The images were interpreted as humans representing Dhamma and the giants representing evil. The giants always lose the battle, similar to the Buddhist teaching that Good always overcomes evil.

2. Design of dance poses

The researcher applied the knowledge acquired from studying the characters from local literature in E-san mural paintings in the design of the dance poses for the performance. The following are the examples of the poses.

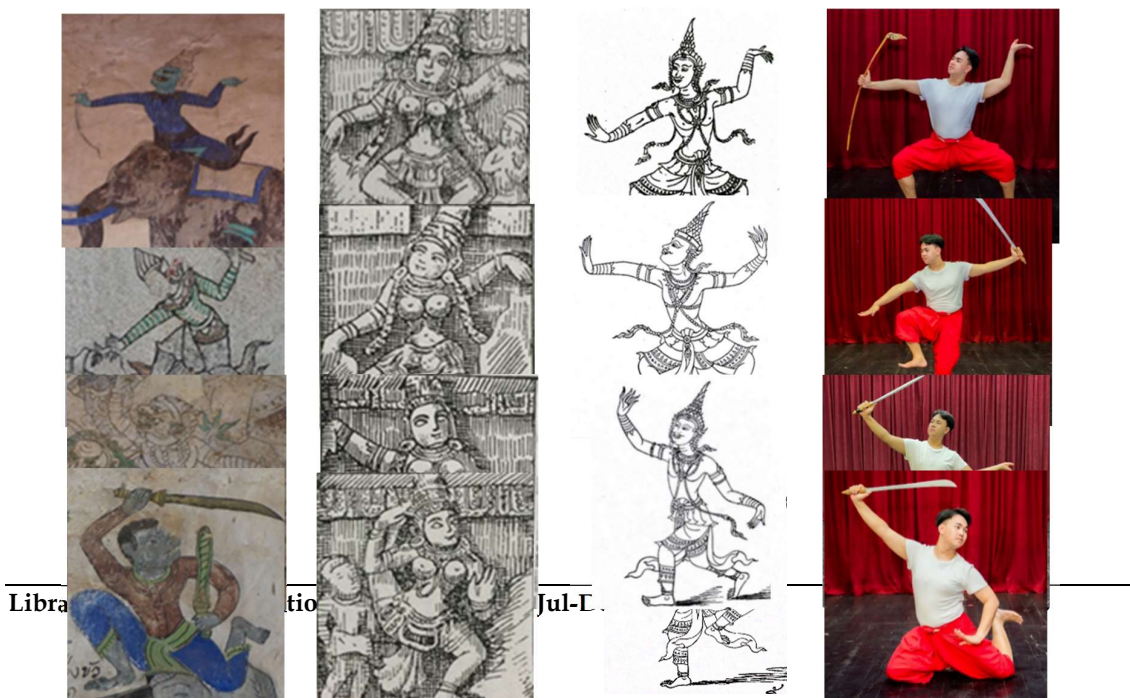




Figure 7 The design of the dance poses from studying characters' poses in the E-san mural paintings from six temples

Sources: Saeng Manawitura (1998) and Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (2003)

Performance style

The performance is a group performance, with all male performers. The performance is divided into three parts.

Part 1 "Entering the battlefield". The story starts off with an E-san melody and lyrics talking about the fight between people and giants that exist in the E-san mural paintings, comparing the characters to good and evil.

Part 2 "Engaging the battle". Presenting the march of the army of both humans and giants, the battle, and taking turns attacking

Part 3 "The retreat of the giants". Humans chase after the giants, reinforcing their victory. The story ended with the defeat of the army of giants to human, reflecting the Buddhist teaching of Good always overcomes evil.





3. Costume design

The researcher designed the costume by studying the characters. The paintings of the characters in the E-san mural paintings include the costumes, headwear, ornaments, and weapons, allowing the design to be as close to the paintings as possible.



Phra Lam



Suriwong



King



Sinxay

Giant



Human Soldier

Giant Soldier

Figure 11 Costume design for the performers based on the characters in the E-sam mural paintings

4. Line formation

The research design line formations based on the width, length, and height of the stage to determine the position, size, and direction, creating new forms. The different line formations are as follows.

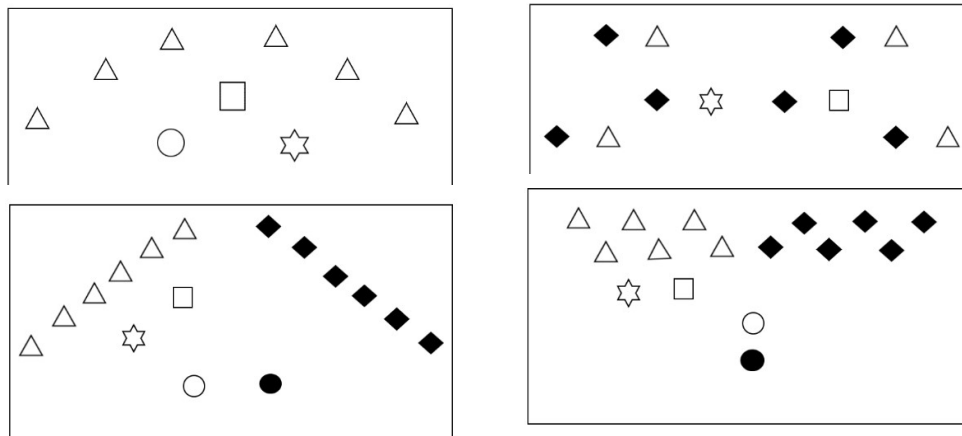


Figure 12 Line formations

5. Adding songs and music

The main and clearest evidence in designing the music for the performance is the image of the traditional flute band and E-san musical instruments found in the painting. The instruments consist of Ranaad, Gong, drums, Kaen, and E-san Saw. The rhythmic instruments consist of Ching, Chap, Krub, and Mong. A new song called “Hoob Hoy Roy Rob” was composed. The beginning consists of a vocal singing in Lae E-san melody, followed by the drums to help increase the intensity of emotions as the army marches into the battlefield between humans, representing the good and the giants, representing evil.

Conclusion and Discussions

The characters’ poses in the three pieces of literature, Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong that exist in the E-san mural paintings in six temples consist of different poses in the battle scenes. The poses include standing, walking, sitting, hand movements, foot movements, head tilting, and body movements, reflecting all the dance poses. The poses can be compared to Shiva’s dance in the Natya Shastra and the Thai dance poses text and are similar to the dance poses. The poses were interpreted as symbols through the use of the Semiotic Theory and Iconology concept, explaining the meaning of the images. These characters’ poses reflect words, and each pose has a meaning in itself.

The study of the creative process, choreography concepts, and dance performances from relevant literature revealed various aspects that could be integrated, such as the dance poses, the costumes, and the music. The creation of dance performances requires six steps 1) creating a concept, which the researcher applied the concept by Tylor (1964), Wirunrak (2000) and Peerapong (2003) as a guideline in the creation. The images of the fight between the characters from the three local literature, Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Suriwong were used as the main concept. The three pieces of literature have similar stories where humans represent good and the giants represent evil. Whenever they fight, giants always lose, similar to how Dhamma overcomes evil, which is part of Buddhist teaching. 2) the design of poses from studying the poses of the characters in the local literature, 3) performance style, with all male performers and three different parts, 4) the costumes were designed to be as close as possible to the characters 5) various line formation based on the movements, and 6) adding songs and music by combining Thai, E-san, and Western music to create an exotic and beautiful melody.

Suggestions

In this research, the researcher chose the target group that can be found in the battle scenes from only 6 temples. There should be additional study of characters in the E-san mural paintings with similar dance poses, as well as characters found in other historical artifacts to be used in the creative process to create more dance performances.

In this performance creation, the researcher created a stage performance by analyzing the valuable E-san mural paintings to create dance poses, showing the marching into battles between humans and giants. If the results are used for other types of performance, such as light, color, and sound performances, the beauty of the past will be revived for the later generations to recognize their values and help with future preservation.

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