

THE RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION OF LANNA TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE, THAILAND.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to study the re-contextualization of Lanna traditional music in Chiang Mai societies. The discipline of ethnomusicology is being used as a fundamental method in this research in study to musical forms, social contexts, and the conception of re-contextualization phenomena in the modern period.

Results of the research show that the two important social factors to the traditional music re-contextualization depending on the internal and external factors. The musical forms of Lanna traditional music are developed by the concept of re-contextualization. It divides to three main groups; the avant-garde, popular and experimental music.

The re-contextualization of Lanna traditional music in the twentieth-first century shows that the social paradigms influence to the music composers, tradition musicians, and audiences. The Lanna traditional music has changed by the new social contexts which serve for community entertainment than religion as the previous time. Despite, the new music in the twentieth-first century will become the new traditional or the neo-traditional music for people in modern societies contexts.

Keywords:

Traditional Music, Lanna Music, Contemporary Music, and Re-contextualization of Lanna Traditional Music

Introduction

Every culture has its own music characteristics. The world paradigm has been changing day by day. If we fast forward the revolution of music from the past to the present day, we can see the difference in music both systematically and in a social context which are been played in ceremonies, the entertainment and in the religious sense. Music is an essential part of a human life. There are diversities in culture in the World. However, the Western popular culture has more influence in Asia due to the mass media. Thai people are still conserving their own traditional music by the reason of the Nationalism.

Chiang Mai is the capital city of Lanna Kingdom. It was the great kingdom called “Lanna Kingdom” before Nineteenth century, when the Western colonial ideology came over to Asia. There are varieties of ethnic groups who lived in Chiang Mai, for example, the High Land people are divided into the *Mong*, *Akha*, *Lahu*, *Mien* and *Karen*, and the Low Land people are the many groups of *Tai*, for example, *Tai Lue*, *Tai Yai* or *Shan*, *Tai Yong* and *Tai Yuan*. In every ethnic group, they have their own music attribute which will be played in difference occasions.

The traditional music in Lanna plays a different but vital role in society, for instance, music is being played as part of the funeral ceremony, the spiritual dance ceremony, and the Buddhist ceremony. Nevertheless, Western modernization has influence in traditional music. The younger generations who are exposed to popular music do not understand traditional music. Furthermore, the older generations are against “New Music” because they have no information about Modern music.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate highlighting the re-contextualize of Lanna traditional music between old and new function of using traditional music in the modern periods. Moreover, the fieldwork in Northern Part of Thailand will conclude the result of how traditional music can still stand in modern times and thus the result can be studied and applied to develop Lanna traditional music in the proper manner too.

Throughout, the Lanna traditional music has been changing almost all the time. Although popular music has influenced many young people in the present times, some traditional musicians attempt to compose the new music with their traditional music instruments.

Despite the problems faced in similarities, the traditional music in Lanna is hastily changing during Modernization. The culture will change due to the change in paradigm as we all know. Indeed, traditional music might disappear from society due to the influence of Modernization.

In brief, similar modern music influence can be seen to occur in every inch of the World. The phenomenon and rate which music is changing appears rapidly. To add further, the study of the traditional Lanna music situation might affected to the re-contextualize function of Lanna music in the modern time.

Materials and Methods

The ethnomusicology methods used in the fieldworks include the observation of the participants, the formal and informal interviewing. The whole process will be in two main music cultural styles. Firstly, the traditional music style, for instance, the old music recording which is accompanied by the court dances. Secondly, the contemporary music or new traditional music influences by using the traditional music instruments in the new various styles. For example, the traditional musical instruments are played with the popular music and western classical music. In addition, the interviewing of the musicians and music composers who have learnt the traditional musical skills and attempted to create traditional music to a new style are included. It seems that these styles of music are more accepted amongst the younger generation.

Music in Traditional Contexts

There are various meanings in the word “traditional” music. To understand traditional music in different social cultures, we have to concentrate on their ritual perception, religious, political, social, economic, and philosophy each time. Traditional music is always inherited from generation to generation by a transmission process.

According to Robert Allen, the tradition meaning is the handing down of information, belief, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another, an inherited pattern of thought or action, a convention or set of conventions associated with or representative of an individual, group, or period, and cultural continuity in social attitudes and institutions.

Further, Lesley Brown said in the new shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principle that tradition means oral delivery of information or instruction, the action of handing down something, from generation to generation; transmission of statements, beliefs, customs.

Besides, Lanna traditional music is usually played in the Lanna royal court and the Buddhist and Animist's ceremony. The transmission of information from generation to generation is important in their musical culture. Lanna traditional music has a similar meaning as folk music (ดนตรีพื้นบ้าน) and court music (ดนตรีราชสำนัก). In present day, the Lanna royal court disappeared from society after unification with Bangkok under the absolute monarchy in 1939. Moreover, the Lanna traditional style of music was replaced by the music from central Thailand for a political reason that attempted to make people in Northern Thailand more Nationalistic.

In Lanna society, a traditional music has three main functions; 1) Religion Music, 2) Court Music, and 3) Social Entertainment Music.

Religion Music

Traditional music in Northern Thailand remains as an emerging influence and potent force in ceremonial practices like traditional house-warming as well as in religious rituals such as funeral affairs. Ceremony, particularly those conducted by Buddhist and Animist is an integral and important part of the society at large. In sharp contrast with the people of Bangkok, Lanna people are conscious of their own traditional music and culture. Regionalism though wields a stronghold in the Northern Part of Thailand, traditional music, nevertheless, was an important symbol of Lanna culture. In essence, Lanna traditional music possesses different meanings in their respective countries.

Lanna people believed in the Buddhism and Animism which music is a part of religion activities, for example, Buddhist chanting in the annual of great preaching ceremony and Animism music accompaniment for in the spiritual dance.

Court Music

In earlier times the Kingdom of Siam (central Thailand) was related with the Lanna Kingdom when King Taksin joined forces with King Kawila in 1782. During the reign of the last king of Lanna, Jao Kawirorot, King Rama V of Siam was engaged with Chao Kawirorot's daughter Chao Dararatsami in 1886. After Chao Dararatsami became the consort princess of King Rama V of Siam she brought music and dance teachers from Siam to teach at her palace in Chiang Mai. As a result Lanna music has been heavily influenced by Siamese music since 1908.

Early in the nineteenth century the Lanna kingdom was under the power of the Siam kingdom. Musicians serving the consort princess Dararatsami had to change their allegiance to their new patron, the central Thai government. The Fine Arts Department was established by the Thai government in 1911. Lanna musical forms were gradually changed by the central Thailand's nationalistic policy towards its tributary state. For example, the mode of music learning was being changed from the aural traditional to the notation system using the Thai alphabet. Lanna people were told to use the Thai language as their official language. More and more, Lanna music came under the influence of central Thai music as well.

Music in the Lanna court began to change because it owed its support to the central Thai government. The masters of music in the court also worked in the Dramatic Arts School in Chiang Mai. They adapted much old Lanna music to the classical Thai music style using the Thai alphabetical music notation. In the nineteenth century the Thai government had a policy of a united culture in all parts of Thailand. The

Dramatic Arts School in Chiang Mai was under the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Regional folk music was not allowed to be taught as a major subject in the Dramatic Arts School. Students learned the arts and music from the central Thai point of view – that national unity was more important than regional differences. The model of a unified nation was considered more important than the beauty of its musical and cultural variety.

Social Entertainment Music

In an agricultural society folk music is normally used as a part of daily life, such as in courtship, in singing lullabies, nursery rhymes and other poetic expressions. Folk musical forms are not strictly-fixed compositions. They can be altered to suit the performer's needs. Many folk songs have a short cyclical melody with variations caused by changing lyrics. So the folk genre is the most lenient among the all music genres. Normally folk music originates in the village and is intended to be understood and appreciated by small groups of listeners.

Folk music can be compared in informality to the speaking of a local dialect. The original Lanna language is a descendant of a mono-syllable Sino-Tibetan tongue which was brought south during the great population migrations nearly a thousand years ago. The language has been augmented by the influence from Pali and Sanskrit languages used in the sacred Buddhist scriptures.

Results

Music is a cultural part of every community and society. Lanna music is the legacy from an ancient kingdom established long ago in the mainland of Southeast Asia. There two other interesting social aspects of Lanna music. The first is that the accompaniment music for spirit dance is symbolic of the transformation from the spiritual world to the human world. The other is that the Buddhist chanting inside the temple is a narration of the texts of the Buddha's stories which are enhanced by the different intonations of the Pali and Sanskrit languages.

Lanna music has a long history which has greatly influenced the self-concept of the Lanna people. It has become an integral part of the individual, the community and the society. However, the acceptance of musical styles from Siam and from Western countries has brought great changes to the original Lanna music, although many have sought to preserve their music from change. Nowadays Western music is being accepted more and more. New forms of popular music are spreading as never before. Traditional songs are being written down in the Western notation system. Triggered by Western music, ideas of traditional music and music itself have diversified. Not only are Western instruments being accepted, but new types of music - mixtures of Western music and Lanna traditional music are incorporated into contemporary music. Also the number of regional cultural and educational centers has expanded thanks to the increase in cultural promotion.

Changing of traditional music to re-contextualization in Lanna is the consequential case study to understand social movement in the post-modern period. The domination of globalization has bridged communication between people from different cultures through mass-media such as an internet, television, and broadcasting. The new culture rapidly 'attack' people through the mass-media in many countries. We can understand the change in musical trends due to the change in the social paradigm.

At the end of nineteenth century, globalization has affected the social, political, economic, sciences, and the arts. The global framework was reorganized into a new

technology of communication in the World. Eventually, globalization extensively influenced the agricultural sector and the manufacturing industries in Lanna at the same time. Traditional music assimilated into musical forms and function to serve the new societies.

However, the concept of re-contextualization has replaced Western art music because of the halt in development of western classical instruments in the late nineteenth century. The contemporary music composers were looking for an individual authenticity that is depicted in the culturally inherited goal.

In my fieldwork in the northern part of Thailand, I attended many music concerts from 2004 to 2007. There were many advertisements on music concerts. Comparing with traditional music concerts in Lanna, the re-contextualization Lanna music can be divided into two main groups such as the Western music influence, and the experimental movement.

Music in Re-Contextualization

During the nineteenth century, Western music has strongly influenced the World. Western colonialism arrived in Asia in the early nineteenth century. After the return of independence to many colonized countries, Nationalism and Internationalism ideas appeared in Asia. Although the Western musical culture was symbolic in the internationalism, but traditional music represented the nation in the globalization period.

During the twentieth century, traditional music was a common symbol reflecting one's national identity and cultural representation. It also provides flavor to the originality of music. Unless contemporary music which relies heavily on learning methodology, social support and mass media promotions, traditional music revolves around meticulous learning, a process passed from the old to the new generation.

Definition of Contemporary Music

The definition of the word “Contemporary” appears during the revolution of music and arts since 1990s. At that time, the World was evolving socially to the state of enlightenment. Industrialization, modernization, and mass communication became the essential infrastructure of the modern society. According to Frank Denyer, the contemporary world is synonymous to the industrialized world, which is the real world we live in.

The contemporary world holds different definitions by various scholars. According to Robert Allen, the word contemporary has several meanings; happening, existing, living, or coming into being. Lesley Brown, on the other hand, stated in her dictionary that the meaning of contemporary refers to belonging to the same time; existing or occurring together in time.

Thus, the word "contemporary" is closely associated with the word “modern”. As mention in Robert Allen's penguin English dictionary, the meaning of the word “modern” is a type of characteristic during a period of time extending from a particular point in the past to the present time. It can also refer to the characteristic of the present or the immediate past.

The Re-Contextualization of Religion Music

The chanting in Buddhism was transforming from the Mahayana original believe to the Dheravadha in Lanna by the National political reason. Original chanting style allows the monk to do a chant more than three sounds, however, the Dheravadha do not allows.

Thus, the music in the spirit dance is still appearing in Lanna society. Local musician added more western music instruments with their traditional ensemble. Musicians are still playing the traditional song accompaniment the spiritual dance in ceremony which has structure of using music for the ritual but the new music instruments from the western affected to the original music. It is a loud rhythmic pattern. The local music instruments play together with the western music instruments.



Figure 1: Lanna Buddhist chanting in the Annual of the Great Preaching ceremony.



Figure 2: Lanna traditional music accompaniment the spiritual dance

The Re-Contextualization of Court Music

During 1860-1932, Lanna court music was strongly in Chiang Mai by supporting of the Lanna Royal Family. Many court musicians and dancers were moving out from the court after the National Revolution in 1932. Lanna was a part of Thailand. The court musicians and dancers applied to work as the government officer in music

schools and universities. The court music was transferring to the institute of music where supported by the Thai government.

Lanna Royal family was slightly ended after the 1932. The court music was necessary for supporting to the court. Lanna court music was becoming the symbolic of the regionalism which students can learn from the school. It is mean the end of court music and Lanna Kingdom. However, many young musicians learn music from court master musicians and preserve their traditional music continually.



Figure 3: Court dance in the consort princess Dararatsami's palace.

Photo: The National Achieves of Thailand

The Re-Contextualization of Social Entertainment Music

Changing of musical style in the social entertainment music are various kinds of musical form which can show the changing of Lanna culture from the agriculture society through the modern society. The external factor for western culture is the most important to changing Lanna people's paradigm. Many music composers influence by the western contemporary music compositions. Moreover, there are many influences to the local musical forms by the mass communication which had produced by the television programme.

The social entertainment music can divide into three mains genres including; 1) Avant-Grade Music, 2) Popular Music, and 3) Experimental Movement.

Avant-garde Music

Avant-Garde music is one important musical style in the twentieth century. There was conflict in two main ideas between nationalism and internationalism after World War II. Traditional musical instruments were the new 'material' for Western art music composers to use after the postwar time. There were two main avant-garde music styles from Europe, firstly, Dodecaphony by Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern, secondly, objectivism by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez.

However, the people of Lanna could not identify readily with Western music. When avant-garde music was first performed in Lanna, there was high resistance from the local people. It was because avant-garde music was not harmonious sounding and difficult to comprehend. Music composers found it difficult to create avant-garde music in Lanna.

Although avant-garde music was complex for the people of Lanna to comprehend, there were a few avant-garde music composers who graduated from the United States of America. Surat Kemaleerakul combined Lanna traditional music instruments with the Western musical instruments in his avant-garde music composition. In 1996, Surat Kemaleerakul performed his avant-garde music “*Lanna overture black and white*” in Chiang Mai. His music composition included Lanna music instruments such as *sa-lor*, *seung*, *klong tengting*, *pin pia*, and a set of gongs to be combined with the violin, viola, and double bass.

Popular Music

The influence of popular culture from United States of America came over to Asia during the industrialization period. The production of musical records had importance media influences. Mass audiences were the new target group for music business. Some traditional musicians were promoted in society by mass-media such as television, radio broadcasting, and cyber technologies.

Lanna people started listening to American’s folk songs since 1960-70s. American’s folk song was popular amongst teenagers. Teenagers were interested in the new arrival of the Western musical instruments which was accompanied by fashion in popular culture. Guitar rapidly replaced the traditional musical instrument which was used for courtship between boys and girls.

Many people in conserving their traditional musical instruments against Western popular culture do not play the guitar in the social context of Lanna. However, there are some musicians who have combined the traditional musical instruments with the guitar. Jaran Manopej composed folk song with the accompaniment by guitar, *seung* traditional music instruments, and lyric in Lanna language. Jaran’s song was popular in Chiang Mai, and Thailand. His music was representative of Lanna’s popular folk music.

Jaran Manoprej was an original Lanna’s popular folk musician. Many musicians were following his musical style such as those found in the music of Suthari Weshanon, Pathinya Tangtrakul, Kamlaa Thanyaporn, and Wong Prommaj.

On the other hand, traditional folk singing also changed into popular music. Traditional folk singing known as *sor* is normally accompanied by *pii jum*, the bamboo free reed flutes ensemble to sing with synthesizer keyboard. New music is accompanied by synthesizers called “*sor string*” (ซอสตริง) because the synthesizer keyboard can produce the rhythmic and attractive sound like a string combo band. The “*sor string*” is performed with dancers sometimes and the audience can participate by dancing with the entertainment of new music. However, the original singing style of *sor* still appeared in the *sor string*. Bunsri Rattanang, a professional singer of *sor* was in the process of changing his traditional singing style to the new entertainment of “*sor string*”.

In brief, the mass-media is the foremost element of public relations in popular culture. In Lanna, there are two main styles of traditional music in popular music. Traditional musical instruments were played together with western music instruments due to popular cultural influences during the 1960-1970s. Lanna traditional music in popular music influence is accepted only in local areas, but, it cannot be amplified to the international level.



Figure 4: The Akha hill tribe “Moses” Hip Hop supper star.

Experimental Movement

The experimental music is one trend for traditional music to develop in the twenty-first century. There are several methods for traditional musicians to experiment around with their music to evolve into new trends, for example, using cyber technology, and collaboration with different instruments.

Lanna music has many musician groups who have good basics to play and good experiences in traditional style. Traditional musician groups play traditional music in three main different styles. 1) *Lai Muang* 2) *Changsaton* 3) *Thip*

The *Lai Muang* group has its own base in the folk music. *Lai Muang* group attempts to conserve the *pin pia*, an old instrument in the new presentation. *Lai Muang* used the old musical instrument in old and new techniques. Also, the music arrangement is interested in *Lai Maung* group, for example, the ensemble of *pin pia* used two or three of *pin pia* played alongside with other string instruments and bamboo flute. The new ensemble of *Lai Muang* also arranged the folk song to be played with *pin pia* as the main instrument.

The *Changsaton* group, established in 1994, is the Lanna contemporary band that plays Lanna traditional music instruments in the contemporary style. *Changsaton* has experimented with Western and Eastern ideas. *Changsaton* had played in many concerts in Chiang Mai. Also, *Changsaton* performed abroad in countries such as Japan, France, and America. *Changsaton* has three albums in to date; the *kittathippayadha* which is collaborated with Western classical music instruments, the *himmalaya*, an experimental style to play in the Western avant-garde music, and the *kita-anata* which is composed in new music using various music instruments around the World such as *tabla*, *djembe* drum, and *jaw harp*. *Changsaton's* music also comes with the accompaniment of contemporary Lanna dances. *Changnao* is a contemporary dance in which the choreographer created elephant dance movements with new music composed and performed by *Changsaton* group.

The *Thip* played Lanna musical instruments with various kinds of World musical instruments under the producer Brigkop Vora-urai. For example, *Thip* were the

collaboration between Lanna's bamboo flute, synthesizer keyboard and new jazz music style in the album name "*Klu*"-Bamboo in a skyscraper.



Figure 5: The seven of *Pinpia* (Lanna ancient plucked instrument) player in the new social context.

However, experimental music in Lanna is very difficult to be accepted in extensive groups. This is due to the different musical experiences and backgrounds and the regionalism mindset that people have in mind. They think about the conservation of one's culture as the only one model.

Discussion and Conclusion

In twentieth-first century, traditional music has transformed to new musical forms in different styles. The forms of traditional music are changing because of the internal and external social factors. The mass-media and influence of the popular culture are the external factors and the policies from government are the internal factors.

Globalization makes communication between countries to other countries more efficiently and effectively. The influence from Western popular culture has power over Asia through propagation in the mass-media. Musical trends from the West have influences in Asia as well. Nationalism appeared in Lanna during the twentieth century. Musicians attempted to combine traditional with new music materials such as technologies, computers, and Western musical instruments. In addition, nationalism and internationalism strongly influenced the change in traditional music culture.

To add further, Western culture has affected the traditional systematic music in Lanna in two mains styles; 1) Avant-garde, 2) Popular music, and 3) Experimental music

Avant-garde and popular music have influences from Western musical cultures known as the "external" social factors. Avant-garde music appeared in Lanna through the music composer who had learnt Western classical music. The traditional musical instruments in avant-garde music are symbolism of nationalism or regionalism. They represent music from Asian culture to Western culture. Furthermore, Western popular culture was readily admired in Lanna. Traditional music was presented in a new way through the mass-media to accrue the number of audience.

The important process to develop traditional music in the twentieth-first century is through experimental music, otherwise known as “internal” social factors. Traditional music in experimental style came from local musicians who experiment their traditional music with technologies, conceptual arts, and orchestration with various instruments.

Various new experimental styles in the phenomenon of “Neo-Traditional” music in Lanna were socially concurred in wide spaces. Traditional musical instruments were used with Western musical instruments. Experimental music was used in the movie’s soundtracks and musical arts pieces by itself. New musical forms in different styles have appeared from the experimental methods.

The conservation and re-creation used in traditional development process is due to the concept in regionalism. However, nationalism from central Thailand has influenced the educational systems in music. The people of Lanna placed more concentration in the nation’s music than to local music. Through nationalism, the essence of beauty in music and arts changed from acceptance in varieties of arts to only one model in classical arts from central Thailand.

In addition, the meaning of traditional music in Lanna has differed due to changes in social factors in the twentieth-first century. The social factors are divided into two groups: 1) external 2) internal

The external factors had influences from Western culture such as those of avant-garde music and popular music. Avant-garde music is basically from Western arts music. Popular music has influences from Western popular culture with propagation and communication done through the mass-media.

The internal factors come from the paradigm of local musicians. It is to create new music which uses traditional musical instruments in many experimental musical styles. Local music composers and musicians who have experiences in traditional music backgrounds experiment with internal factors for their composition. Experimental music is under the concept of regionalism and nationalism. The music is represented in the regional and national level.

In short, regionalism, nationalism and internationalism were important contributing factors towards the musician’s concept of re-contextualization to compose and create contemporary music by using traditional music instruments in several exists. The new music in the twentieth-first century will become the new traditional or the neo-traditional music for people in modern societies contexts.

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