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# Editorial

# Digital Divides in Urban Areas: AI's Role in Bridging Gaps

Bussakorn Binson<sup>+</sup> Executive Director

In our rapidly evolving cities, artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming a cornerstone of urban living. Yet, as we embrace these technological advancements, the digital divide remains a significant challenge. Urban centers are often celebrated as hotbeds of innovation, but they also starkly highlight the disparities in access to technology and digital resources. This editorial explores how AI can help bridge these divides, emphasizing the critical need for equitable access to technology in our urban communities.

## Understanding the Digital Divide

So, what exactly is the digital divide? It's the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who don't. This gap is especially pronounced in urban areas, where socioeconomic factors can create significant barriers. A report from the Pew Research Center reveals that low-income households are much less likely to have high-speed internet access, which limits their participation in the digital economy (Pew Research Center 2021, 15).

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### AI as a Tool for Inclusion

Here's where AI shines: it has the potential to tackle some of these disparities with innovative solutions that enhance access to technology. For example, community-driven initiatives that use AI can help pinpoint areas in dire need of technological investment. Cities like San Francisco and Chicago are already employing AI algorithms to analyze data on internet access and identify neighborhoods lacking sufficient connectivity (City of San Francisco 2022, 22). By focusing on these underserved areas for infrastructure development, cities can take meaningful steps toward closing the digital divide.

AI isn't just about connectivity; it can also open doors to educational opportunities. Online learning platforms powered by AI can personalize educational content for students in underserved communities, making learning more accessible and tailored to individual needs. Projects like "AI for Education" are working to provide customized resources to students from low-income backgrounds (UNESCO 2020, 10).

### Community Engagement and Empowerment

For AI to truly bridge the digital divide, community engagement is essential. Local organizations play a pivotal role in ensuring that AI initiatives are designed with the community's needs in mind. Programs that empower residents to learn about AI and technology can foster a sense of ownership and agency. Take the "Digital Empowerment Project" in Detroit, for instance. This initiative trains residents in digital literacy and AI applications, equipping them to leverage technology for economic and social advancement (Detroit Digital Justice Coalition 2021, 5).



Figure 1. AI generated image "Urban Research Using AI."

### Policy Implications

Policymakers need to make equitable access to technology a priority in urban planning. This involves investing in infrastructure, promoting digital literacy programs, and ensuring that AI applications don't inadvertently reinforce existing biases. As cities adopt AI solutions, they must also establish frameworks to monitor and evaluate the impact of these technologies on marginalized communities (Mossberger 2020, 12).

### Conclusion

As our urban areas continue to evolve with the integration of AI, tackling the digital divide must be at the forefront of these changes. By harnessing AI to enhance access to technology and ensuring community involvement in planning and implementation, cities can pave the way for a more equitable digital future. Bridging this divide not only empowers individuals but also cultivates a more inclusive urban culture where everyone can thrive.

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# The Majruj Sound: Muslim Practitioners of Musical Performances in Bangkok

Pornprapit Phoasavadi\* (Thailand)

## Abstract

This research article deals with the Majruj performance of the Khon Lom Yen Club in Bangkok. The study took place in 2019-2020 investigating its background, transmission, Islamic views on performances, instruments, and musical contents. Research findings reveal that Majruj is a form of voice production based on traditional Islamic recitations accompanied by a variety of single-headed drums, while its lyrics adhered to Islamic teachings. The Khon Lom Yen Club was a gathering place of Islamic religious teachers who perform Majruj to propagate Islamic teachings to youths, support the learning of Al-Quran, and carry on the art of Majruj. The club members upheld the view that Muslims are allowed to sing and play music under conditions specified by Islamic laws. They learned their musical knowledge by rote, self-taught, as well as formal instruction. Most of the Khon Lom Yen club members were descendants of Malay Muslims who migrated to Bangkok during the early era of Bangkok settlement. At present, they gradually assimilated into a common set of national identity by speaking central Thai and adopting Thai names, while at the same time, maintaining their faith in Islam and their cultural identity through vocal performances.

**Keywords:** Majruj, Capella Hym, Khon Lom Yen, Anashid, Islamic Voice Production, Thailand

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## Introduction

Similar to Li-ke Riab and Nasep, Majruj is a kind of performing art forms in Islamic culture in the central region of Thailand. Islam, which was disseminated through the arrivals of Arab traders to Malaya and Thailand, has brought with it the Arabic language, traditions, arts, and culture. Muslims from different regions may have different performing arts. Southern Thailand Muslims perform Li-ke Hulu, Rong Ngeng, and Mayong while Muslims in Bangkok and the nearby provinces have Majruj and Nasep.

In Bangkok, the Muslim melodic recitation can be divided into three types as follows:

1. Anashid is from Arabic language. It means singing. Anashid or Nasyid is a kind of singing that is approved by the provisions of Islam. According to Nuamsamli (2021:64), when the word anashid arrived to the southern part of Thailand, it became nashid. Later, when the Muslim moved to Bangkok, the word anashid was shorten and became nasep. Chami (2019:141) explained that anashid (or anasyid) refers to recited, chanted, or sung poetry in the Islamic contexts. He also noted that the most recent genre of anashid is that of nashid or nasyid, popular in Muslim societies of Southeast Asia and serving to unify transnational Muslims in this region (Ibid:142). Uejitmet (2017:254) referred to anashid as follows:

Disseminating Islamic teachings can be done in various ways. One of the popular ways is the recitation called “anashid,” a prayer to glorify God chanting a cappella or accompanied with only single-headed drums. The occasions religiously allowed for the chanting of anashid are wedding ceremonies, Hari Raya festival, Maulid festival, and the anashid competitions (Uejitmet, 2017:254).

2. Majruj is a melodic recitation with religious contexts such as the praising of God and the prophets. The accompanying instrument is the single-headed drum. Though its contexts are similar to anashid, Majruj's rhythms are often faster. Anishchenkova (2020: 270) referred to the history of Majruj that it is a musical art genre of the Ta'if and Asian regions, in the west of Saudi Arabia, and is believed to be almost a millennium year old. It is performed by men. In Arabic, Majruj means “to pull” or “to extend,” in reference to the way it is sung, that is with longer note durations and holding the last syllable of each verse. Urkevich (2015: 212) said that the lyrics of Majruj have a poetic meter. They are romantic, eulogistic, and philosophic, and can vary greatly. Every participant sings while playing a frame drum or singled-headed drum. Other melodic instruments accompany Majruj performances in Bangkok.
3. Nasep, according to Numvol, P., Pansuea, V. and Tangdachahiran, J. (2013:71-72), is folk music of the Muslims with lyrics about Islamic teachings. The word “Nasep” was derived from the Malay word “Nasyid” or “Na-se” and has been shortened to Nasep after Muslims in Pattani migrated to live in today's Minburi District, Bangkok. At present, the performances of Nasep are accompanied by several instruments, such as violin, accordion, cymbals, and maracas to make the performances more enjoyable. Lyrics admiring the beauty of nature are introduced as well, though most of them remain religious. Binson (2022:16) who studied the Zainab band, a contemporary Nasep band that is popular in Bangkok, has found that besides the single-headed drum, the Zainab band

also added western and electric instruments. Its performances were adaptable from traditional Islamic Nasep to Thai country style or string combo, with or without dancers according to the event's host.

These three melodic chants are developed from the Al-Quran recitation which expresses in two styles, the concise recitation, used in the prayer, and the recitation in rhythmic prose which is developed into the Anashid chanting and Anashid is in turn developed into Majruj. The main objective of the Anashid is to remind people of God. Therefore, its contents are restricted to saying the names of God, praising the mightiness of the Prophet, and inducing people to do good deeds. As for Majruj, single-headed drums, Darbuka and Doumbek, are used to keep strokes and enhance more powerful tempo of the songs. The languages used are mostly Arabic and Malay, and currently, there are some Thai Anashid repertoire which was borrowed by the Majruj. The Majruj band in Bangkok often performs by using traditional songs since the rhythms of the contemporary ones do not balance with the contents of the lyrics.

### **The Background and the Management of Khon Lom Yen Majruj Club**

Khon Lom Yen Club was a gathering of 10 Fardhu Ain (basic Islam course) teachers who were all skillful Qari to do activities for common interests since 2014. They created a Facebook page "Chomrom Khon Lom Yen" to teach the recitation of Al-Quran and Arabic language to disadvantaged children, allowing them and those who were interested to easily access the Al-Quran lessons with no charge. They later founded a band performing Anashid and Majruj. Their performances were recorded as video clips presented on their page to conserve the recitation arts as there were only a few Anashid and Majruj performed these days and the new generation prefers the Nasep and the songs in Arab-Malay style. The Facebook page of Khon Lom Yen Club got many followers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, both in Thailand and abroad. When the club was widely known, it started its live performances in traditional festivals, school fairs, and charity fairs. Khon Lom Yen Club's specialty was the songs in Al-Quran reciting style since the singers were qari teachers who all passed national level contests.

The Khon Lom Yen Majruj Club consisted of 16 performers. All members worked together like a family. Since they all held their full-time work during the day, each performance depended on the convenience of the members, especially the lead singer, and the availability of the performing equipment such as the audio set. As some members of the club were teachers or students of the Masoh Hatuddeen school, the club borrowed the drums from the school and also used the school as the rehearsal locale. The duration of each performance was approximately 1-1.30 hours, and about 10 songs were played alternating with speaking at intervals to let the performers have some rest. The Khon Lom Yen Club performs Majruj was free of charge, accepting only expenses for meals and travel. The club members were intended to use their free time to promote knowledge of Islam, conserve and disseminate Islamic cultural arts, and help in charity activities.

Members of Khon Lom Yen Club were all Muslim. Most of them live in the eastern districts of Bangkok such as the districts of Wang Thonglang, Bueng Kum, Khanna Yao, Prawet, and Suan Luang and some owned houses by the San Saeb canal in the area. Few of them came from provincial areas, namely, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Nayok, and Phetchaburi. Most mem-

bers of the club were descendants of Malay Muslims who were moved from Pattani, an old kingdom in Southern Thailand, to Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin era. The Pattani Muslims were given arable lands and settled down on the eastern part of present-day Bangkok, especially by the Saen Saeb canal which was dug by Muslim labors in the reign of King Rama I. Subsequently, in the following eras, these Muslim people spread to settle along the newly dug canals in Pathum Thani Province and Nakhon Nayok Province, which remained as Muslim localities until today. Living in harmony with Buddhists, members of Khon Lom Yen Club were able to speak the Thai language fluently. Only two of them were still able to speak Malay which is Yingniyom, U., the band's drummer, who came from the Muslim community in Pathum Thani Province where people still kept speaking Malay, and Phetrod, M. who came from the Muslim community in Phetchburi Province and spoke mixed Malay and Phetchburi dialect with a rural accent. All members of Khon Lom Yen Club had studied Islam and the Arabic language according to their religious traditions. Most of them had finished the compulsory education of secondary school year 3 from formal and non-formal Thai schools. Some of them continued their study in vocational education and higher education. They all had their main occupation and perform Majruj as philanthropic activities to encourage morality in Muslim people and disseminate Muslim culture with no intention to get any income.

Singers of Khon Lom Yen Club used to be Qaris and have practiced reciting the Al-Quran correctly, clearly, and melodically. They explained that they have learned to pronounce each of the 28 Arabic alphabets skillfully, and have known their sound bases which started from the bottom of the neck up to the lips, all of which allowed them to chant the Anasyid better. The chanting of Majruj were developed from the reciting of Al-Quran in rhythmic prose style which consisted of four pitches and was often read from the low one or the chest. The reciting in rhythmic prose style and the Anashid chanting both included rising and falling intonations and tremolos, though trills and tremolos were used more in the Al-Quran reciting while the chanting of Anasyid is more flowing. Most of the Anashid and Majruj singers did not study music formally but they learned to pronounce the assigned words from the chest, neck, or mouth. The singing focused on the vocals of the lead singer with the chorus of the low, medium, and high voices. The Khon Lom Yen Club's band often rehearsed together with microphones on, since the sound of oral vocalization and microphone vocalization were different, so their voices had to be adjusted to be in harmony.

### **The Learning and the Transmission of Music Knowledge of Khon Lom Yen Club**

Drummers of Khon Lom Yen Club acquired their drumming knowledge as follows:

1. Self-learning. Drummers who acquired their drumming knowledge by self-learning are Yingniyom, U. who had learned from watching youtube for 8 years. Famud, K. who had also learned the Doumbek drum from youtube and Boonmalert, L. who has learned drumming by self-taught, learning from his friends and from music events in the school where he was a teacher.
2. Learning with the experts. A band's drummer, Yingniyom, U., has got a scholarship from the Indonesian government to study drumming with drum artists in Jakarta, Indonesia. He has learned various types of drums, from their notes to the ways to hold the drums, the ways to use each finger separately, and the drum beating from the basic one to the



solo. Back in Thailand, Yingniyom also taught the techniques he learned to his fellow drummers in the band.

3. Learning music in schools. A band drummer, Famud, K. has learned various musical instruments such as a drum set and guitars while he was in his secondary education.

In their performances, the drummers of Khon Lom Yen Club rehearsed individually before joining together. There were four drummers in the band, two players set the timing and supporting, and two play did the solo parts. The drumming style was of the ancient Arabic style added with Indonesian tricks transmitted from Yingniyom, U. They practiced by drumming to the songs without using musical notations. Most of the songs played were well-known ones. Therefore, lyrics were sent to singers to be individually practiced before gathering on the day of the event. Only unfamiliar songs were practiced together.

As for the transmission of the musical knowledge, Famud, K. taught drumming to interested youths on the condition that they must be experienced in Al-Quran reciting and Anashid chanting; and Yingniyom, U. taught his drumming tricks to his fellow drummers in the club. No ritual to pay homage to teachers or the drum was performed in the band. Only one prohibition was observed; women were not allowed to play drums as it violated religious law since it was considered as social behaviors to attract men.

Khon Lom Yen Club allowed to recruit female singers, Famud, Y. and Sukthaworn, K. Though not supported by Islamic laws which did not encourage women to appear as the center of attention in public, those female singers received good admiration from the audience which could be regarded that the Muslim society in Bangkok was quite open-minded, not seriously strict with the rules about women, and the gender equality was somewhat acceptable. However, women singers dressed modestly and wore hijabs conforming to Islamic laws and men also dressed in Islamic attire.

Besides entertaining their Islamic community with their Majruj, as the members of Khon Lom Yen Club were teachers of Islam. Therefore, they were entrusted to coach the children in the community and were invited to be speakers in Muslim youths' summer camps. Therefore, it could be concluded that the members of Khon Lom Yen Club played various roles in the community, promoting Islam, preserving their cultural art, and supporting the ethics of Muslim youths.

Khon Lom Yen Club performed Majruj in school's annual charity fairs, Muslim traditional festivals, organization events, and occasionally wedding ceremonies. They did not perform at funerals which are considered mournful events, and inappropriate for singing which was a cheerful performance.

### **Islamic Views Concerning Music and Musical Performances**

In Islam, there were various views regarding music and musical performances. Some strictly did not allow all kinds of music, and some allowed them on certain conditions. Daoh, R. (2010:14-15) said that Islamic rules allowed the singing of songs whose contents resided in Islamic morality, encouraged faith in Allah, and promoted good deeds. Women's singing could only be performed among the female audience and the only permissible musical instrument was the duff drum.

Partially different, Numvol, P., Phansue, V. and Tangdajahiran, J. (2013:71) observed that according to Islamic rules, the prohibition on playing and singing could be flexible in some cases such as on the occasion of welcoming important persons, wedding celebrations, proper fun fairs, pure sports, lullabies, where songs were spirited uplifting, encouraged people to perform religious activities and not related to contents such as romantic affairs between women and men. Al-Qaradawi, Y. (296-300) also stated that Islam allowed singing provided that it was not obscene or harmful to Islamic morals, no matter if it was the gesture in singing, song lyrics, or surrounding acts. Phoasavadi, P. (2020:119-121) also noted that in the Bangkok Anashid contests where women were allowed to join, there was a condition that the songs must not be obscene or sexually related.

However, Mahasiratanaroj, N. (2016:2) said that Islamic scholars were still debating whether Muslims could sing, play and listen to music. As such, scholars had interpreted religious laws differently. The first group viewed that singing and playing music was permissible in all cases since no religious ordinance (Hadith) directly stated against the ban on playing music and singing. The second group interpreted the hadith as being able to play music and sing in some cases, such as at weddings, parties, and welcoming travelers. The third group considered music to be forbidden under any circumstances and considered a great sin. Therefore, it was still an argument that depended on the views of each religious scholar. Accordingly, one still held a right to choose to believe in any aforementioned viewpoints. Khon Lom Yen Club can be seen to choose the viewpoints that allowed the singing and performing of music under some conditions which was a way to carry on the Majruj, one of the Muslim performing cultures, and at the same time using the Majruj to promote Islam to the new generation. The idea conforms to Binson, B. et al. (2011:43) who proposes that culture plays a crucial role in how individuals identify with their community and reflects one's way of life in society since culture carries the core characteristics of one's social group.

### **The Musical Contents**

Khon Lom Yen Club's music style was a chorus singing which emphasized the middle-range register, that of the leading singer, while the chorus opted for the intervals of a third or fifth. The melodies were usually slow according to the lyric's contents. Most of the times the club performed were of the Anashid repertoire. Some of which were old and some have just been brought from youtube or CD, originally from the Arab countries, and adapted into the club's style. The singing began with Anashid and was followed by the Majruj. Voices were tuned to the highest pitch in the song, a technique derived from the Quranic recitations. All songs of the Khon Lom Yen Club contained lyrics concerning the Prophets, praising God, and encouraging faith, without any romantic element.

The Khon Lom Yen Club has demonstrated 5 songs for the research, each has its details as follows:

The prelude, called Mogod Dima, was a drumroll piece. The function was to attract attention and prepare the audience's musical perception and concentration to focus on the performance.

The first tune was Tala Al Badru Alayna. According to the band leader, the band members believed that it was the chant that the Medina people used in welcoming and praising the Prophet.

The second tune was Nassam Alayna El Hawa. It was an old Arabic folk song glorifying the greatness of Allah in creating all natures. The Arabic tune was consisted of the unrhymed verse, the lead singing verse, and the chorus, and then returned to the unrhymed verse and the chorus again. It also included the half-spoken and half-singing verse as well.

The third tune was Ya Badrotim. It was a tune praising the Prophet Muhammad, telling of his proper behaviors and his words which should be followed.

The fourth tune was titled "Shuba Ruenung Bhand." It was an Indonesian song, that encouraged Muslims to think of God who created all natures.

The fifth tune was Ya Rasulullah (O the great Prophet of Islam). It was about the Prophet who received the Al-Quran from God. Muslims must follow the words and behaviors of the Prophet and must frequently praise the Prophet Muhammad and Allah.

#### **The Instruments of the Khon Lom Yen Majruj Club's Band**

The Majruj performances of Khon Lom Yen Club were accompanied by single-headed drums as follows:

1. The Tom Tom drum was a single leather-headed drum.
2. The Darbuka drum was an Arab-origin drum, used to play delicate rhythms. Two Darbuka drums, brought from Indonesia, were included in the band and the drummers are Yingniyom, U., and Boonmalert, L.
3. The Doumbek drum was also an Arabic-style drum giving a bass sound and was used to lead and control the band. Doumbek drummers of the band were Phueakphong, M. and Famud, K. who played their drums with consistent and supporting patterns while Yingniyom and Boonmalert played their Darbuka drums in solo styles.

#### **Drums of Khon Lom Yen Club's Band**



Figure 1. The First Doumbek drum. Source: Phoasavadi, photo taken on February 19, 2019.



Figure 2. The second Doumbek drum. Source: Phoasavadi, photo taken on February 19, 2019.



Figure 3. The First Darbuka drum. Source: Phoasavadi, photo taken on February 19, 2019.



Figure 4. The Second Darbuka drum. Source: Phoasavadi, photo taken on February 19, 2019.

## Discussion

The Khon Lom Yen Club began its activities with the teaching of Al-Quran recitation and went on to perform the Anashid and Majruj recitation, two old Islamic performing cultures which were presented strictly following Islamic laws. However, to approach the new generation, their performances were presented through Facebook, a modern electronic channel. Their way of presentation unites the old world with the modern world which was considered a cultural orientation or cultural dynamics. Binson, B. (2011: 382) explained



that, to survive, cultural orientation naturally occurs according to the changing surroundings and different cultural ecology. An example of such cultural orientation was knowledge transmission which was adapted from orally to electronically according to the present-day advanced technology. Similarly, musical performances were adapted from stage shows to presentations on social media spread along with globalization.

Historically and socially, most of Khon Lom Yen Club's members are descendants of Pattani Malays who were brought to Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin era and were the main laborers in digging the Saen Saeb canal. Therefore, they settled by the canal and in the eastern area of Bangkok. At present, these Pattani Malays assimilated to the mainstream society of Bangkok. Some of members of Khon Lom Yen Club have been educated in regular Thai schools. Though most of them were not able to speak Malay, they still held their faith in Islam and behave strictly according to Muslim ethics. They also transmitted their religious beliefs and cultural performance to the next generation. Sutthasat, A. (1977:76) referred to a cultural characteristic which made one proud of their roots and remained the collective memories so that it needed to be transmitted to the next generation to protect it from discontinuity and loss. Muslims tried their best to maintain their cultural identity though their musical practice that would not violate their religious belief. The ways of life of the Pattani Malays in Bangkok interacting with the main society can be explained as acculturation with integration strategy which Berry, J. W. (2017:23) pointed out that the process occurred when the non-dominant ethnocultural group was interested in both maintaining one's original culture and having daily interactions with other groups. Consequently, there were some degrees of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time, the members of the ethnocultural group participated as an integral part of the larger society. Bangkok can be considered a plural society but much needed to be discovered and promoted such as the Khon Lom Yen Club. Van Roy, E. (2017:xi) pointed out that Bangkok was a diverse town since the early Rattanakosin era as it was the city where people from Ayudhya migrated from war, the center to put the prisoners of war, and a port and market for foreign traders who settled down as small groups of various races. Today, there are still many communities of different ethnicities, different cultures, and beliefs in Bangkok. Though people in these ethnic communities have become Thai, they still maintained their original cultures as the Malay Muslims in this study.

Musical practices of Muslim communities in Bangkok were vibrant and still were not investigated thoroughly due to being under the dominance of mainstream pop music, folk music, and traditional music of the country. Some of major bands had ceased to perform and talented musicians changed careers. It was unfortunate that their biography, life history of their musical careers, and their musical achievements had not been recorded. Nuamsamli (2021) began to marvelously document the development of Islamic music cultures and identities in the central region of Thailand.

## Conclusion

Majruj was a kind of Muslim melodic recitation in Bangkok comprising of seventeen up to nineteen performers. It was a male chorus singing in unison accompanied by different types of single and doubled headed drums. Each singer accompanied himself with a drum. Drums were from the origin of Arabic music cultures and also other types of non-Arabic drums were included. As it was often sung with traditional songs, Majruj was still popular

among traditional gatherings in Muslim communities and traditional festivals in Bangkok. The Majruj band of Khon Lom Yen Club was a gathering of teachers of Islam religion. The objectives of their performances were to support the learning of the Al-Quran and Arabic language and to show in charity fairs and religious festivals free of charge to carry on the Muslim original cultural performance. Members of the band were all acquaintances; the band's management carried out between friends. The knowledge was transmitted to the youths through volunteering activities such as teaching in summer camps and presenting music performance clips on social media. As for the religious views towards singing and playing music, Khon Lom Yen Club's members viewed that Muslims could perform, sing and play music as long as the songs and the performance's surroundings conformed to Islamic laws; the lyrics concerning the praising of God and the Prophets, and the instruments used are single-headed drums. Most of the drummers learned drumming by rote and learned in school. Only one drummer methodically learned the drum course from abroad and came back to teach and develop the techniques of Khon Lon Yen's Majruj band to conserve the performing culture of their ethnic group.

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# Pi Chawa Performance in Muay Thai by Japanese People

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## Abstract

This article examines the integration of Thai urban culture into Japan through the musical performance of the *pi chawa*, a traditional Thai oboe, in *Muay Thai*, a Thai martial art, by a Japanese woman. Data were collected from workshops in Osaka (2016) and Hokkaido (2017), supplemented by two years of follow-up training in Thailand. This cross-cultural exchange not only enhanced cultural awareness and appreciation but also fostered community bonds and provided educational opportunities. As a result, Yayoi Kuriyama emerged as a proficient Japanese female *pi chawa* musician, now performing in an all-female *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble for *Muay Thai* matches in Japan. This integration highlights the broader benefits of cross-cultural learning in urban contexts, including economic boosts, social cohesion, and the preservation and innovation of cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** *Pi Chawa Performance, Thai Music, Thai Boxing, Pi Chawa Klong Khaek, Cross-Cultural Learning, Martial Art Music, Muay Thai, Thai, Japanese*

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## Introduction

*Muay Thai* is a Thai combat sport that involves stand-up striking and clinching techniques. According to the Royal Institute Dictionary, "Muay" in Thai means "fighting with fists" and can also mean "one" or "single" (Royal Society of Thailand, 2013). In *Muay Thai*, "Muay" symbolizes the unification of four elements: *Mongkol* (headband), *Pha Prajiad* (armband), *Chueak Khat* (rope wrappings) and *khatha akhom* (incantation), serving as a spiritual anchor for practitioners (Wasawanon, 2012).

*Muay Thai* has a long history dating back to ancient times. The Department of Physical Education states that during the Hariphunchai Kingdom, combat competitions involving various societal strata, including royalty and common villagers, were common during temple fairs or festivals. *Muay Thai* camps and schools would send fighters and trainers to compete for prizes. Inscriptions from the Yonok Chiang Saen Kingdom era, known as the Mangrai code or Mangrai law, suggest the origins of *Muay Thai* date back to 1839. Evidence of *Muay Thai* training persists through the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin eras, continuing to the present day (Department of Physical Education, 2013). *Muay Thai* is a popular sport in Thailand and abroad, known for its beautiful techniques (Figure 1).



Figure 1. One of *Muay Thai* techniques called *Khun Yak Chap Ling* (giant captures monkey), from <https://www.saranukromthai.or.th/sub/book/book.php?book=35&chap=3&page=t35-3-infodetail05.html>.

Mr. Khaya's "The Art of *Muay Thai*" details techniques such as *khun yak chap ling* (giant captures monkey) and *chorakhe fat hang* (crocodile swishing its tail) (Khaya, 2003). In *Muay Thai*, music is able to enhance performances, particularly when there is no clear winner, similar to its use in Khon and shadow puppetry. In *Muay Thai*, the *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble plays during *wai khru* (ceremony of showing respect to one's teacher & spiritual entities) and matches to heighten excitement and signal rounds with instruments like the *pi chawa* (Thai oboe), *klong khaek* (double-headed drums), and *ching* (hand cymbals).

Japanese interest in *Muay Thai* is evident in Thai festivals held in Japan since 2000, featuring *Muay Thai* stages and competitions. Professional *Muay Thai* events, like those at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo (Figure 2), further showcase its popularity. The Rajadamneon World Series held its first event in Japan on February 12, 2024, featuring *wai khru* performances and live music (<https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000001710.000031998.html>).

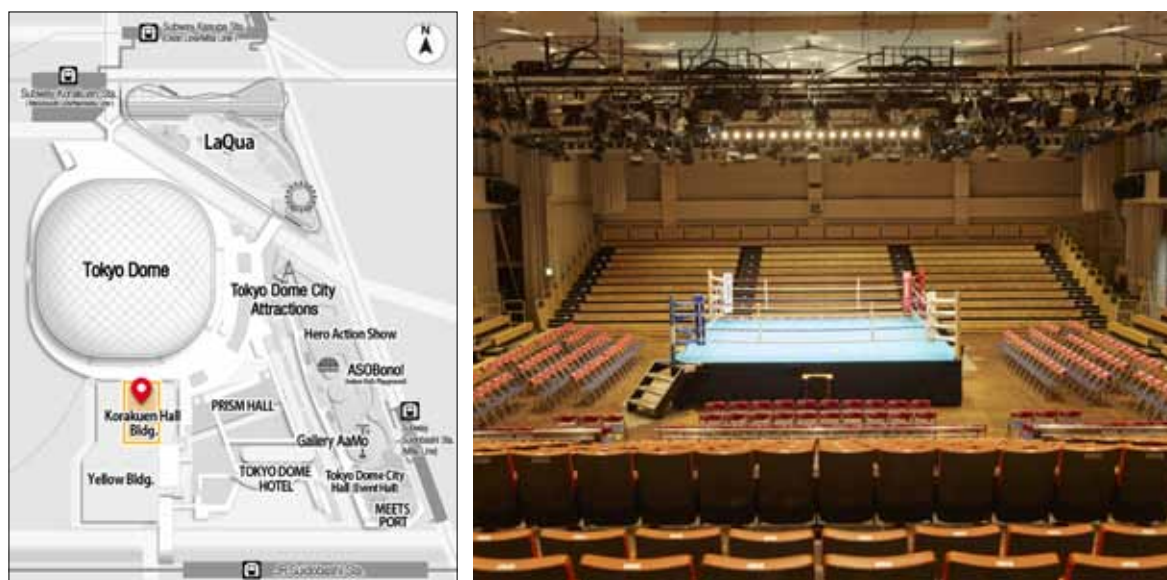


Figure 2. Left, the map of Korakuen Hall from URL: <https://www.tokyo-dome.co.jp/en/tourists/hall/>. Right, the ring in Korakuen Hall from URL: <https://www.tokyo-dome.co.jp/hall/>.

The author taught Japanese musicians how to play the *pi chawa* in Japan, first in Osaka (2016) and later in Hokkaido (2017), attracting significant interest (Figure 4). Japanese women Yayoi Kuriyama and Miho Orita trained in Thailand for two years, mastering the *pi chawa*. Yayoi Kuriyama formed a *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble in Japan, performing alongside *Muay Thai* matches. This article details *pi chawa* playing, sound control, breath control, ensemble practice, and pieces including paying respect to the teacher for *Muay Thai* matches in Japan.



Figure 4. Left, practical training workshop in Osaka, Japan, in the year 2017. Right, practical training workshop in Hokkaido, Japan, in 2018. (photos by Kumkom Pornprasit).

### Creating an Understanding of the Wai Khru Ceremony in Thai Musical Tradition

*Wai khru* is a significant ceremony in Thai culture that initiates learning various knowledge and history. People from different cultural regions often have diverse customs and traditions. Mutual understanding is essential when individuals from different cultures immerse themselves in a new culture. The author acknowledges the importance of Thai musical culture from personal experiences studying Thai music. Both of Japanese students received traditional teachings as a student learning to play the *pi chawa* with master Peep Konglaithong (National Artist), an expert in traditional Thai wind instruments. Additionally, they studied *Klong Khaek* with master Boonchuay Sanganan, an expert in Thai traditional percussion instruments affiliated with the Department of Fine Arts. Beyond the specialized knowledge of playing traditional Thai musical instruments, the crucial aspect of transferring knowledge from teacher to student involves approaching Thai music with humility, respect and attention to detail.

The practice of the *wai khru* ceremony before commencing learning involves transmitting feelings, thoughts, and teachings in moral ethics. Virtues, perseverance, and the embodiment of an exemplary artist are considered valuable model. It is a stratagem in Thai culture for every learner to pay respect to all teachers, whether celestial, deceased, or alive. The author allowed Kuriyama and Orita to demonstrate respect for teachers according to Thai musical traditions (Figure 5). For auspiciousness, they prepared offerings including incense, flowers, candles, and a six-baht silver offering, and recited chants to pay homage to the teachers, just like Thai musicians. They performed *wai khru* at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, to instill confidence in those who will continue to inherit the Thai musical tradition.



Figure 5. Japanese students paying respect, *wai khru*, to the teacher before inheriting knowledge. (photo by the author).

### Training to Control the Sound of Pi Chawa

Before delving into the process of controlling the sound of *pi chawa*, preparing the musical instrument is essential. The Japanese students had purchased their own oboes. Another crucial piece of equipment for blowing the *pi chawa* is the reed. The author had prepared the *pi chawa* reeds for them and taught them how to create the reeds so they could do it themselves when they returned to Japan. During that time, master Peep Konglaithong (Thai National Artist) kindly demonstrated the reed-trimming technique to Kuriyama and Orita (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Master Peep Konglaithong (Thai National Artist in white shirt), along with the author, imparting the technique of trimming *pi chawa* reeds to Kuriyama and Orita. (photo by Kumkom Pornprasit).

Controlling the sound of *pi chawa* is crucial. Traditionally, masters in Thai wind instruments do not teach students to play the *pi chawa* immediately. Every beginner must start by learning the *pi nai* (a Thai woodwind oboe). Once proficient in playing the *pi nai*, they can then begin learning the *pi chawa*. This is because the *pi chawa* requires more air to play compared to the *pi nai*, making it easy for the sound to go out of tune. Controlling the sound becomes more challenging, and a faulty foundation might lead to misunderstandings and improper playing techniques. For Kuriyama and Orita, the author allowed them to practice playing the *pi chawa* initially. Therefore, close supervision and control over various blowing techniques during practice are essential.

Training to control the sound of *pi chawa* must begin with controlling the mid-level sound to avoid distortion. This is a crucial step before practicing other sounds in subsequent steps. Clear sound control involves producing sound like speaking words in clear sentences. The player must use their tongue to control the *pi chawa* by pressing their tongue against its reed. However, this training step may cause the trainee's tongue to bleed or crack, which can deter some learners. Kuriyama and Orita practiced this step during their training at Chulalongkorn University (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The author teaching how to play the *pi chawa* at Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University. (photo by Kumkom Pornprasit).



Musicians with some background may be able to play without distortion. Afterward, they moved on to playing short melodies composed to utilize the three sound groups of pi chawa. After receiving the knowledge and method, Kuriyama expressed her feelings about the difficulty of controlling the sound of pi chawa: "I felt very happy to participate in the training. When I saw it in person, I realized that it was smaller and more beautiful than I had imagined. I also felt that it was very challenging to produce the sound. It was a great learning experience for me." (Kuriyama, Interview, 23 April 2023).

Orita explained her feelings as follows:

"I went to watch a Muay Thai match for the first time and became interested in live performances. I then searched on YouTube and became fascinated by its power and intricate sound. There aren't many instruments used with the pi chawa. When professors from Chulalongkorn University came to organize a workshop at my university in Japan, I rented a practice room with Yayoi. Practicing pi chawa has improved my skills. I think the pi chawa is a very challenging instrument. It's difficult to control the sound consistently, and I find it hard to breathe while performing. I have to manipulate the pi chawa with my tongue, but I'm not very good at it." (Orita, Interview, 23 April 2023)

In addition to learning from the instructor, self-practice is essential because disciplined practice leads to rapid improvement. Kuriyama is disciplined and diligent in her practice, both while receiving instruction at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, and in Japan. To achieve a perfect performance, it is crucial for performers to sit in close proximity to one another and observe their co-performer's action, facilitating effective communication during the preparation phase. This arrangement contrasts with the traditional setup of pi chawa klong khaek ensemble (See Figure 8). However, this dedication enables her to quickly adapt to playing the pi chawa alongside the klong khaek and ching with high-quality sound.



Figure 8. Practicing pi chawa klong khaek in Japan. (photo by Yayoi Kuriyama).

### **Ra-bai Lom Practice (Circular Breathing Technique)**

The *Circular Breathing Technique* is a special aspect of playing the Thai flute and oboe. It allows the blown sound to be sustained for as long as desired, making it a marvel of Thai oboe playing. Therefore, mastering the technique of *ra-bai lom* is crucial for anyone learning to play the Thai oboe. This technique is challenging and requires specific skills. Even some professionals in Thai woodwind instruments may struggle with it. Kuriyama and Orita gained an understanding of *ra-bai lom* during their training sessions in both Osaka and

Hokkaido. However, they may still face difficulties in executing it perfectly. Currently, Kuriyama can perform this technique smoothly and play melodies continuously, demonstrating significant progress in mastering this intricate and beautiful Thai musical tradition.

*Ra-bai lom* involves regulating airflow within the musician's body to ensure continuous airflow. Many musicians train by blowing into a tube inserted into a glass of water, but the author finds this method challenging. Instead, the author teaches Kuriyama and Orita to practice with the flute itself, focusing on tongue control. They use their tongues to touch *pi chawa*'s reed. When blowing a melody, if the airflow stops, they employ the cheek puffing technique to keep air in their cheeks. When it is time to blow the note again and it's challenging to maintain, they squeeze air from their puffed cheeks while inhaling. This ensures continuous airflow, maintaining the melody without interruption. They repeat this process by puffing their cheeks again, ensuring uninterrupted airflow throughout the performance. While Kuriyama can practice and execute breath control, Orita finds it difficult.

### Assembling Pi Chawa Klong Khaek Ensemble

Once Kuriyama was able to play the *pi chawa*, assembling an ensemble became significantly important. The ensemble, which includes the *pi chawa*, *Klong Khaek*, and *Ching* (as depicted in Figure 9), is an integral part of royal ceremonies. This ensemble is used to perform pieces regarding weapons such as *krabi-krabong* (sword and blackjack), *ngow* (halberd), *hok* (spear), and *thuan* (lance).



Figure 9. The *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble (photos by the author).

The *pi chawa* (a Thai oboe influenced by a Javanese model) is a quadruple reed woodwind instrument. It consists of two main parts: the first part, resembling a long, tapered cone approximately 27 centimeters in length, has seven finger holes on the top to control the sound. The second part is similar in shape to a long tube, approximately 14 centimeters in length, resembling a horn. The sound of the *pi chawa* is produced by sequentially opening and closing the finger holes, similar to the fingering technique used in traditional Thai wind instruments and Western woodwind instruments (e.g., recorder). When the finger holes are opened one by one, the sound rises in pitch, and when they are closed, the sound lowers in pitch, following the sequence of the notes.

In the *Pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble, the *pi chawa* player sits in the front, directly in the center of the ensemble. The *Klong Khaek* players sit behind and close to each other. The *Ching* player sits to the right of the drummers. The reason for the drummers sitting close to



each other is that the rhythms played on the *Klong Khaek* are relatively complex. Drummers need to listen to each other to play together in sync. If they sit separately, they may not hear each other well, which could hinder coordination during performance. Even the *Ching* player sits close to the drummers, forming a cohesive group. This arrangement is unique to this type of ensemble setup.

### Pi Chawa Ensemble Accompanying Muay Thai

The pieces played during *Muay Thai* matches typically feature melodies with a moderately fast tempo known as *song chan* rhythm, carrying symbolic meanings related to weapons. Each weapon category is clearly distinguished within the piece. The composition of the pieces is determined by specific sections known as "special overlapping sections" or "special overlapping verses." The process of playing the *pi chawa* during *Muay Thai* matches involves the following steps:

Wai khru: Perform a piece named *Sarama*.

Round 1: Perform a piece named *Chao Sen*

Round 2: Perform a set of *Khaek* pieces,  
such as (*Khaek-Reo*, *Khaek A-wang* & *Khaek Nang*)

Round 3: Perform a piece named *Reo*

Round 4 and 5: Perform a piece named *Choet*

If a *Muay Thai* match consists of three rounds, the second round will feature the "*Khaek*" piece. At the end of the third round or the final round, it will conclude with the "*Choet*" piece. If the match consists of five rounds, rounds 2-4 will feature fast-paced "*Khaek*" pieces. The fifth round, which is the final round, will also end with the "*Choet*" piece.

Kuriyama and Orita have learned all the melodies of the *Muay Thai* process, including *Lom phat chai khao* and *Mon lam dap*, which are fundamental pieces that the *pi chawa* player must be able to perform. These two pieces were transmitted during the initial practical training sessions in Japan, twice. When the training continued in Thailand, the author transmitted the melodies of the combat dances to Kuriyama and Orita, such as *Khaek-Reo*, *Khaek A-wang*, and *Khaek Nang*. The set of *Khaek* pieces (Javanese idiomatic melody) was extensively transmitted to both of them, ensuring versatility in performance selection.

In addition, the author has also transmitted the drumming patterns, the method of blowing the *pi chawa* accompanying the *klong khaek* and *ching*. However, the exception is the "*Sarama*" piece, which is considered the pinnacle of *pi chawa* performance and has not been transmitted yet due to the absence of *klong khaek* performance skills. The performance of the "*Sarama*" piece requires both the *pi chawa* player and the drummer to have a mutual understanding of the melody along with the drumming rhythm. This demands both skill and comprehension, and the author hopes that Kuriyama will eventually be able to play it. Kuriyama expressed her feelings upon hearing the "*Sarama*" piece: "I was touring in December 2015. It was a *Muay Thai* competition. I felt like the music presented the dignity of the intense competition, especially the "*Sarama*" piece, which was impressive and wonderful. The *pi chawa* has a powerful sound and delicate rhythm." (Kuriyama, interview, 23 April 2023).

In this article, the author provides examples of two *pi chawa* melodies: "*Lom phat chai khao*" and "*Mon lam dap*." Both were transmitted during practical training sessions in Osaka and Hokkaido. These melodies were recorded in the group of sounds that are interconnected within the three groups of *pi chawa*'s sound, including CDEGA, GABDE, and EFGBC (Figures 10 – 13).



Figure 10. Notation of pi chawa melodies: Lom phat chai khao piece, part 1.



Figure 11. Notation of pi chawa melodies: Lom phat chai khao piece, part 2.



Figure 12. Notation of pi chawa melodies: Mon lam dap piece, part 1.



Figure 13. Notation of pi chawa melodies: Mon lam dap piece, part 2.

The transmission of *pi chawa* pieces to foreigners in this instance serves as one avenue to cultivate international Thai musicians dedicated to embodying the spirit and practice of the art. Both individuals are considered students akin to Thai apprentices, fostering a strong bond and readiness to transmit the cultural heritage of *pi chawa* as part of *Muay Thai* ceremonies. This cultural exchange is beautifully depicted in Japan, as stated by Kuriyama in her interview: "I learned about the *pi chawa* at the Takahara Cultural Hall of Osaka City University. Teacher Pattara Komkam taught me how to play the *pi chawa*. I am very happy to have participated in the training... I thank the teacher for graciously teaching me with wholeheartedness" (Kuriyama, Interview, 23 April 2023).

Currently, in Japan, there is a music band called Dok-Sakura (Cherry Blossoms), which is another band from Nagoya City that accompanies Thai boxing matches. The wind instrument player in this band is Japanese. They are considered the only music band in Japan that accompanies Thai boxing matches and has received acclaim, featured in the *Muay Siam* magazine on May 17, 2015. (Figure 14)



Figure 14 Dok-Sakura band in *Muay Siam* magazine (May 17, 2015), from URL: <https://livedoor.blogimg.jp/king-muay/imgs/e/0/e01554cb.jpg>.

However, for female musicians, there hasn't been much presence before. Kuriyama has been able to play the *pi chawa* and study the full repertoire of *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble performance. (Figure 15) It can be said that the knowledge passed down from the lineage of Phraya Sanoduriyang (Cham Sundaravadin), through master Peep Konglaithong (National Artist), to the author, and passed on to the Japanese students. This represents a significant academic advancement in the field of Thai wind instruments on the international stage. She has been able to play the *pi chawa* in the *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble at boxing stadiums in Japan, achieving success. Her latest performance was playing at a boxing match during an international festival in Osaka on March 10, 2024. (Figure 16)



Figure 15. Yayoi Kuriyama's *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble (by Yayoi Kuriyama).

In that event, Kuriyama's *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble had a rehearsal session with the boxers on March 2, 2024, and they were scheduled to perform as the third act alongside boxers from Turn Up Kickboxing and Fitness according to the event schedule. (Figure 16)



Figure 16. Thai boxing poster scheduled to fight on March 10, 2024 (by Yayoi Kuriyama).

### **Discussion: Cross-Cultural Learning and Urban Context Benefits**

The cross-cultural exchange highlighted by the integration of *pi chawa klong khaek* music into Japanese *Muay Thai* events represents a significant phenomenon in urban cultural dynamics. This fusion of Thai and Japanese traditions not only enriches the cultural tapestry of both nations but also exemplifies the broader benefits of such exchanges within urban contexts.

### **Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Diversity**

Urban centers are often melting pots of diverse cultures, and the inclusion of in Japanese *Muay Thai* events exemplifies how such cross-cultural interactions can enhance cultural awareness and appreciation. Yayoi Kuriyama's dedication to mastering the *pi chawa*, a traditional Thai oboe, underscores the deep respect and understanding that can be fostered through cultural exchange programs. This mutual appreciation fosters a sense of global citizenship and cultural empathy, vital components for harmonious urban living.

### **Economic Benefits and Tourism**

The cultural infusion of Thai traditions into Japanese events, such as *Muay Thai* matches, can significantly boost local economies. As noted, Thai boxing's evolution into a commercial sport has substantial economic implications. The introduction of authentic *pi chawa klong khaek* music to Japanese *Muay Thai* matches can attract tourists and cultural enthusiasts, increasing footfall in urban areas hosting these events. This influx of visitors can benefit local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and retail outlets, thereby contributing to the economic vibrancy of the city.

### **Strengthening Community Bonds**

Cross-cultural learning initiatives, such as the collaboration between Japanese and Thai musicians, can strengthen community bonds within urban settings. These cultural exchanges create platforms for shared experiences and collaborative endeavors, fostering a sense of unity and collective identity. Kuriyama's formation of an all-female *pi chawa klong khaek* ensemble in Japan not only promotes cultural heritage but also empowers women in both societies, highlighting the role of cultural initiatives in promoting social cohesion and gender equality.

### **Educational Opportunities**

The exchange of cultural practices provides valuable educational opportunities for urban populations. Workshops and training sessions, such as those attended by Kuriyama and Orita, serve as educational platforms where participants can learn new skills, gain historical insights, and develop a deeper understanding of different cultural traditions. These educational experiences enrich the intellectual landscape of urban centers, promoting lifelong learning and intellectual curiosity among residents.

### **Preservation and Innovation of Cultural Heritage**

Urban centers, with their dynamic and evolving nature, provide an ideal environment for both preserving and innovating cultural heritage. The practice of *pi chawa* music in Japan illustrates how traditional arts can be preserved through cross-cultural learning while also being adapted and innovated to fit new cultural contexts. This dual process of preservation and innovation ensures that cultural heritage remains relevant and continues to thrive in modern urban settings.

## Conclusion

The integration of pi chawa music into Japanese *Muay Thai* events is a powerful example of the benefits of cross-cultural learning in urban contexts. This phenomenon enhances cultural diversity, boosts local economies, strengthens community bonds, provides educational opportunities, and ensures the preservation and innovation of cultural heritage. As cities continue to grow and diversify, fostering such cross-cultural exchanges will be crucial in creating vibrant, inclusive, and harmonious urban societies.

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# Unearthing the Personal and Cultural Values

## *of Personalities in Photorealism Portraiture: The Iconography of the Works of the Ghanaian Fine Artist, Samuel Otu*

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### Abstract

The roots of portraiture are most likely to be traced to if not prehistoric times, at least ancient Egyptian civilization. Over time, various forms, styles and significance of this genre emerged progressively in line with the various artistic traditions in history. In these contemporary times, portraiture strives immensely on the advancement of technology thereby giving rise to photorealism not only in the West but also among African/Ghanaian fine artists. The Erwin Panofsky's three-step approach to iconographic analysis was used to examine five meticulously pencil-rendered portraits by the Ghanaian photorealist Samuel Otu in the light of contemporary portraiture. The paper utilized a series of one-on-one interviews with the artist amidst studio observation to obtain primary data alongside relevant secondary sources of data. It was revealed that beyond the subjectivity or likeness of the subjects portrayed, the artist used these masterpieces to draw the attention of the viewer to the contemporary challenges of the African society.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Art, Likeness, Portraiture, Photorealism, Ghanaian Art

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## Introduction

Portraiture is the reproduction or recording of an individual's appearance and personality in media such as photograph, painting, print, sculpture, and digital media. Portrait-making is an old form of art that traces its roots to if not prehistoric times, the ancient civilization of Egypt. Though portraiture serves a multiplicity of functions, it was primarily made in ancient times to exalt the noble, the powerful and to commemorate the dead (Pound, 2022). Through the ages, portraiture has been created in a variety of styles and media (Wango 2020). Freeland (2007) remarked more styles emerged as more people were portrayed, and the form changed. From ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, Byzantium through Renaissance to the modernism and post-modernism times, portraiture was executed in conformity with the prevailing styles of each artistic period. The turn of the twentieth century however, saw an expansion in the production of portraiture owing to the increasing interest in abstract and non-figurative art rendition exemplified in several avant-gardes such as fauvism, cubism expressionism, etc. with notable artists like Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Max Beckmann respectively. Whiles, there was a dip in portraiture in Europe and America by the mid-twentieth century, there came a revival by the 1960s and 1970s which culminated in the American art movement, Photorealism/Hyper-realism evolved from pop-Art (Ihringová 2022). Unlike the traditionally realistic portraiture of the modern and post-modern eras that required several sittings of the subject (sitter), photorealism uses the camera and photographs as references. It is not only a change in style and form of portraiture but also a change beyond its traditional representational purpose to include emotional, social, political and cultural elements (Lansroth 2015 as cited by Wango 2020). This latest approach to portrait making which strives on photographs and digital technology enshrined portraiture as an integral part of contemporary art practice not only in the West but also in Africa. Several young contemporary African fine artists are absorbed in photorealism sometimes referred to as hyper-realism including Ghanaian Samuel Otu. In 2014, Samuel Otu started a portrait drawing series called *The African Story* in which he identified some eminent African personalities, whose lives in his own words “have imparted their generation and the unborn generation in their countries, Africa and the world as a whole”. Quoting an African proverb to support his quest Samuel says “until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter”. He added that, the story of Africa has always been told by the West and it has been twisted to suit their interest but here he is to use his artworks as an African to highlight the contribution Africa has made and continues to make in making the world a better place.

## Photorealism as an Art Movement

Photorealism was an art movement that came into existence around the 1960s and 1970s in America. It is a genre of art that involves the reproduction of images as precisely as possible from photographs (Lansroth, 2015). Though the reproduced image(s) could be executed in painting, drawing, collage, sculpture or other mixed media, the emphasis however is on the accuracy or exactness of the representation of ‘reality’ (Gustlin & Gustlin 2022). Photorealism artists relied purely on the use of cameras and photographs as a primary impulse for the subsequent reproduction of the image(s) in paint or other media (Ihringová 2022). Photorealism differs from traditional realism of the pre-modernist era in that it uses a camera to record a visual occurrence before reproducing it on a support (Bent 2013). With the camera, information is gathered and the captured moment is then transferred onto the canvas by the photorealist artist in a way that gives a photographic appearance to the fin-

ished painting. According to Liu (2020), the main feature of photorealism is to use modern photographic techniques to make objective and realistic depictions of photographic results. The primary aim of photorealism is to reproduce images from photographs so that the human eye could not distinguish between the original and the resultant drawing or painting (Bent 2013; Mouka 2017). First named in 1969 by Louis K. Meisel, a New York art dealer, the photorealism art movement emerged in the United States and declared a clear preference for realism against idealism and abstract expressionism (Gustlin & Gustlin 2022). Some of the proponents of this photo-based art movement during the period include; Chuck Close, Ralph Goings, Richard Estes, Robert Bechtle, Duane Hanson, Audrey Flack, Charles Bell and Don Eddy (Taggart, 2021). The subject matter of the works of the early photorealists centered on ordinary everyday life themes. It ranged from industrial objects such as automobiles and motorcycles, simple urban life, to the representation of human faces (Ihringová 2022). Akin to all other art movements in the world, photorealism (sometimes referred to as hyperrealism or super-realism) gained the needed recognition in the global art space particularly in the latter half of the 1960s when the use of camera and photographs had received complete acceptance in everyday life (Odom 1981). With the prowess of digital technology today, photorealism as an art genre has become an integral part of the contemporary art world.

In Africa, the use of camera and photographs as references for image representation has a long history. This art genre remains an important part of contemporary African art as several young and upcoming fine artists continue to engage camera, photograph and other digital media for creating visual reality. Some contemporary African photorealist particularly in painting and drawing (using charcoal, graphite pencil and ballpoint pen) with international reputations include but not limited to; Kelvin Okafor, a Nigeria descent based in London, Ebuka Emmanuel from Nigeria, Solomon Ikechukwu from Nigeria, Richard Amankwah from Ghana, Enam Bosokah from Ghana, Thembalami Ndlovu from Zimbabwe and Eddy Ochieng from Kenya. The subject-matter of most of these contemporary African photorealists, centres largely on portraits, figure drawing (men, women and children) and animals. Beyond the traditional representation or communication purposes, the subject-matter of the contemporary African photorealists expresses the ordinary everyday socio-cultural, emotional and political life as well as women empowerment in the contemporary African Society (Wango 2020).

Kelvin Okafor renders photorealistic images of both ordinary and world leaders as well as celebrities. Some of such portraiture include but not limited to Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Princess Diana, Tinie Tempah and Amy Winehouse (Jones, 2013). These images of global or continental personalities draw, inspire and propel the viewer to higher accomplishments in life. Inspired by his dad's love, Ebuka Emmanuel rendered in ballpoint pen on paper, *Father's Love* (2021). In this photorealism artwork, a young contemporary African father is seen joyously holding his newly born baby. In a similar manner, Richard Amankwah rendered in charcoal and graphite on paper, *A Mother's Love* (2018). These photorealistic artworks are simply representations but an expression of the deep-seated love of parents for their children.

In advocacy for environmental protection and prevention of child labour, Richard Amankwah also uses his photorealist piece – *Galamsey Kid* (2021) to bring into remembrance the

numerous children involved in illegal mining operations (galamsey) in his country Ghana. Richard again, uses his photorealism artwork – *The Obstacles Around* (2021) to project to the world the challenges or difficulties that bedevil the success of the youth of the African continent. These challenges include political instabilities, economic hardships, corruption, weaker educational systems, and societal pressures among others. The portraits of *Mariam Ewurama Addy* who was a Ghanaian biochemist and *Rose Dieng Kuntz*, a Senegalese computer scientist executed by Enam Bosokah won him a collaboration with the Wikimedia Foundation aimed at expanding the visual representation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in Wikimedia projects and advancing knowledge equity (ArtAfrica.org November 7, 2022). With both images executed in ballpoint pen, Enam re-echoes the need for women's empowerment in a patriarchal African society.

Thembalami Ndlovu in his *Beauty In scars* (2022), executed in charcoal on paper, represented a Southern African woman in the left side view. The tribal mark on the face of this woman portrays the African pride in its culture no matter how others frown at it. Similarly, Ndlovu rendered *Traditional African* (2019), a young African woman fully adorned in African costume. Eddy Ochieng used his hyper-realistic painting titled – *Timeless* (2019) to portray how a community's culture is enduring in providing a true and authentic identity to its people culminating in a life of fulfillment. Ochieng depicted an elderly Kenyan Maasai man, well detailed with a pierced and stretched ear lobe which resonates with the culture of the people (Wango, 2020). All these are but a testimony of how expansive the role of portraiture has become. This paper sought to examine the subject matter of five of Samuel Otu's photorealism portraiture as part of a project he termed *The African Story Series* to see whether they are mere representations of the personalities made possible by his skill, or whether they convey certain social, political or cultural nuances of contemporary Africa. For the purposes of clarity, discussions on each portrait are preceded with a quote from the artist.

### **The Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Creation of Photorealistic Images**

The definition of photorealism today, is one that is contextualized. It is viewed either from the perspective of the manual reproduction of photographic images with drawing tools which is acknowledge as a genre or art movement (Hausken, 2024) or the rendition of photographic images with computer graphics (Akesson, 2024). Whatever the definition stance, the photorealist's primary aim is produce indistinguishable images as captured by a camera. The renewed interest in photorealism towards the end of the twentieth century also came with a rise in the use of digital imaging technology, computer graphics, and other digital equipment cross a variety of graphic media and forms of expression including within the field of fine arts (Hausken, 2024). Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the other hand, is the use of deep machine learning and algorithm models for mimicking or performing tasks in ways that humans do (Akesson, 2024). AI primarily relies on existing data to new content in response to users' text prompts and the output can resemble specific people or things which are named in the prompt depending on the parameters (Magnus, 2023). The application of AI to produce photorealistic images has advanced significantly in the recent years. AI algorithms are capable of developing multifaceted portraits in various styles, ranging from cubism to modern to Pop Art by simply varying parameters like stroke length to achieve a level of abstraction (DiPaola & McCaig, 2016).

With AI image generators today, the line between the work of the visual artist and AI generated art is blurred (Wong et al., 2024) and sparks debates about issues of creativity and authenticity. Despite the endless discussions surrounding this topic, it appears the advantages of AI systems and technology have made them indispensable to the process of creating art moving forward. AI technology is revolutionizing digital art by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of visual information transfer (Magnus, 2023). With AI today, photorealistic portrait works are produced and completed in a split second. It produces faster, massive and high-quality (hyper-realistic) contents than any traditional computer software or manual method. Some examples of AI technologies include but not limited to Dall-E, MidJourney, and Stable Diffusion. Artists, such as Mario Klingemann, appear to have embraced this creative opportunity and integrated AI systems into his portrait creation, blending art and technology. Scott Eaton uses AI to transform drawing and animations into figurative, digital imaging, and abstract sculptural forms (Wong et al., 2024). Other artists like Gene Kogan, Mike Tyka, Robbie Barrat, Ahmed Elgammal, and Stephanie Dinkins use AI as an artistic medium to create unique portraits and figurative artworks (Gülaçtı et al., 2021).

The use of AI across every discipline including photorealism, is however not without its own challenges and ethical concerns. Referring to the use of AI-generated pictures by the press to depict how an imminent arrest of former US President Donald Trump would look like and Amnesty International's use of AI to generate images to mark the second anniversary of police violence against protesters in Colombia are but a few examples of what Hausken describes as visual disinformation (Hausken, 2024). On the part of Chen (2024), avers that while AI technology is convenient, it also presents new challenges and challenges such as questions about the authenticity of AI-generated images, personal privacy, bias and fairness. Despite all the concerns around it, AI undeniably has a greater transformative potential to expand and enhance creative processes. While the use of AI has become the turning-point in art creation and the new normal for artistic productions of many creative artist across the globe including Samuel Otu of Ghana, his current photorealist portraits been discussed were produced without generative AIs.

### Methodology

The primary data for this paper was obtained from a series of one-on-one interviews with the artist amidst regular studio visits to observe his works. The interviews were voice recorded to collect the necessary data from the artist. The paper also utilized relevant secondary sources of data such as journal articles and other scholarly materials with the aim of examining the place of portraiture in contemporary African art making. Since photorealism portraiture is recognized as an art, it is appropriate to analyze it within the lexis of art. Curnow (2021) remarked that objects (artworks) anywhere in the world require a specific way of looking at and describing them through the use of a discipline-based vocabulary. Such a framework could include but not limited to a formalistic analysis, contextual analysis or Erwin Panofsky's three-step approach to iconographic analysis. The formal analysis is the result of closely looking at a work of art and its elements such as line, shape, color, texture, mass, and composition (Barnet, 2002). Contextual analysis refers to the cultural

context within which an artwork is presented (Wango 2020). Erwin Panofsky's three-step approach to the iconographic analysis of any given artwork involves the pre-iconographical description, the iconographical analysis, and the iconological interpretation of the artwork (Panofsky 1972). This need for a framework to analyze an artwork is a necessary ingredient to providing a significant interpretation of the artwork to the art history fraternity. Though there are a number of iconographic approaches, this paper discusses the selected portraits using the Erwin Panofsky's three-step approach to iconographic analysis. The main steps in Panofsky's analytical procedure include:

1. The pre-iconographical description of the works (primary or natural subject matter). In this stage, the work is thoroughly described. All the visible aspects in the composition are well described.
2. The iconographical analysis (secondary or conventional subject matter). This is the second stage where meanings are attributed to the visual elements in the composition of the work from secondary data or published articles.
3. The iconological analysis (tertiary or intrinsic subject matter). This is the third stage where deeper meanings are attributed to the work by associating the work to its historical and cultural contexts.

Panofsky's iconographic analysis was adopted by the authors to offer a more holistic analytical framework (Asamoah et al., 2021) for presenting detailed information about the portraits.

Ethical protocols were duly followed by the authors in every facet of the research including the photographic images that have been featured in the article. Credits to the original sources or owners of the images have been given while formal permissions have been sought from the artists and original photographers concerned. The artworks, *Kofi Annan* (figure 2) and *Nelson Mandela* (figure 3) were obtained from the public domain (internet) that did not necessarily require any formal permission while artworks figured 5, 6 and 7 were original photographic images that were duly obtained with formal permission. The president's image – *Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo* (figure 5) was obtained with permission from the presidential photographer at the presidency. The *Defiance* image (figure 6) was from the personal collection of the artist. The image of *Lowania Anku* (figure 7) was taken by the photographer hired for the marriage ceremony and delivered to the Samuel Otu (artist) by the couple to be reproduced. The couple have consented to the use of the image in this article.

## Results and Discussion

From the series of interviews and studio engagements with the artist, the responses were translated and presented as follows including verbatim responses.

### The Artist called Samuel Otu

Samuel Otu (Figure 1) hails from Asokore, a town in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. He had all his education in Kumasi the capital of the Ashanti Region. His nationality as a Ghana-

ian and for that matter African affects his work as his is drawn to depicting subjects from Ghana or of African origin. Graphite pencils and charcoal are the favorite media for him. In an interaction with the artist in his studio regarding his choice of medium, he said:

My favorite medium is graphite pencils and charcoal. Although, I also use wet media and other forms of dry media sometimes but I enjoy using graphite pencils and charcoal. Most of my drawings are in graphite and charcoal. My love for this medium goes back to when I was a child. Growing up, I was so much enthused about art and creating. Then I fell in love with this simple tool, graphite pencil, which I found to be easy to work with and very common in my community. I remember when I was in high school, our General Knowledge in Art teacher gave us an exercise to draw and shade any natural object that we could find around. He gave us instructions that we should shade the light areas with the hard graphites (H grades) and the shadow areas with the softer graphites (B grades) and I did just that. I drew a leaf and the outcome was amazing. The next day during afternoon break my colleagues in the Picture Making class came to tell me that the leaf that I drew looks so amazing. Apparently, the teacher while giving that class the same exercise he gave us used my drawing as an example to teach them how to shade. I wasn't the best student in my class so I was mesmerized by the fact that my teacher found my drawing so good that he used it to teach. This is how I fell in love with this medium and from that time onwards I kept pushing harder (Artist).

Having secured the photograph to be reproduced (in a digital format,) he places the image on the desktop of his laptop and places gridlines on the image. With his support (paper) other media set, Samuel Otu manually executes the work by observing and studying the image paying keen attention to the facial expressions and proportions. He begins the work by making preliminary sketches to establish an overall layout or shape of the portrait. He establishes the basic tone and shapes with his pencil in mass-shading technique and charcoal for the very dark toned areas to depict hair, black attire and shadows. This gives the image a sense of three-dimensionality and depth. He constantly refines the details and proportions as he progresses to capture the unique features and expressions of the subject and reveal their personality. Starting from his home country Ghana, Samuel Otu dreams of reaching the global limelight in the area of photorealism and to have his name etched in annals of the genre. To do this, the artist use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and twitter to share his works to build a following. He also hopes to use online marketplaces like Etsy and Saatchi Art to sell his works, participate in local, national and international art shows and exhibitions, secure a representation in museums and galleries that specialize in contemporary art. Samuel Otu is already a recipient of numerous commissioned works including the five works been discussed in this study. Samuel draws inspiration from his love to see people's face and also by the things people do to impact their lives positively and other people's lives, to their communities and to the world at large. *It is interesting to find that a story could be told without words by the look on a person's face. The message could be loud yet without sound* (Artist).



Figure 1. Samuel Otu working in his home studio, Asokore, Ashanti Region of Ghana. Source: Photographed by the lead researcher, 2023 Courtesy, Samuel Otu.

### Iconographic Analysis of Five Selected Works of Samuel Otu

The analysis of the works on the theme - *The African Story* series include; *Kofi Annan*, *Nelson Mandela*, *Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo*, *Defiance* and *Lowania Anku*.

#### *The portrait – Kofi Annan*



Figure 2. *The African Story* series (Kofi Annan), Samuel Otu, 2014, 16.5" x 23" inches, Graphite Pencils on paper. Courtesy, Samuel Otu's Collection.



*Dr. Kofi Annan a former UN Secretary-General who in my opinion is the greatest personality Ghana has produced after our first President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah... The role that Dr. Kofi Annan played at the United Nations brought peace to the world, justice, equality, hope and relief to many who were living in poverty amongst others (Artist).*

The portrait – Kofi Annan is a depiction of the first of the series on the theme, *The African Story* started in 2014. Rendered in the three-quarter view in political attire, the politically posed Nobel Peace Prize winner is depicted with a well-detailed face through tonal gradation and textured effects that harmonize the gray hair with the neatly shaved gray beard and mustache. With a very engaging but unintimidating gaze, the eyes are the center of attraction of the portrait. The gaze of the subject suggests that of a self-composed, dignified and calm expression without any tensed emotions either on the subject or the viewer. This conservative noble demeanor of the Ghanaian diplomat portrayed is one that is in tandem with his personality and the role he played as the UN secretary-general in bringing peace, hope, and relief to many in the world as alluded to by the artist. The portrait goes beyond the representation of a subject whose life forms part of the historical narratives of nations to reflect his inner moral attitudes.

#### *The portrait – Nelson Mandela*

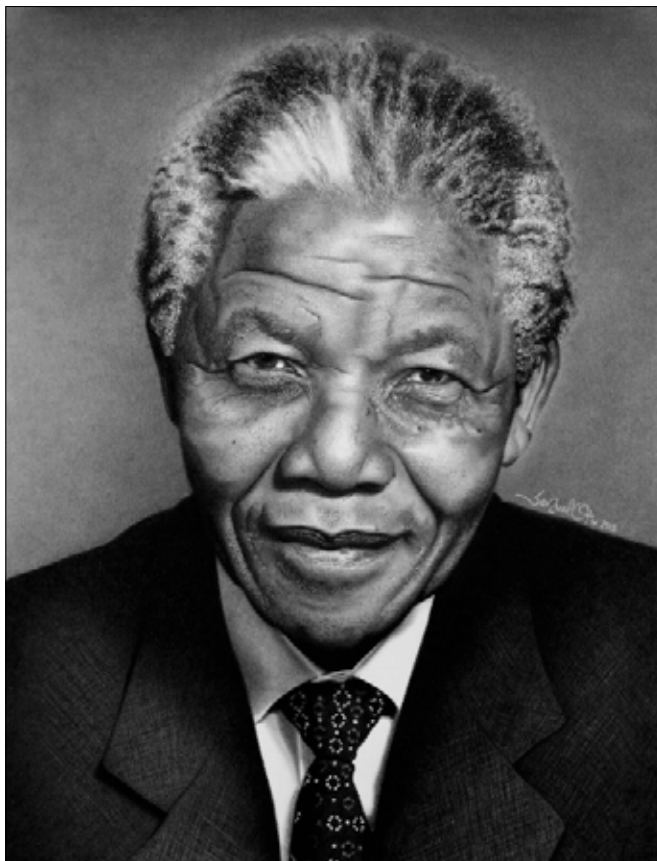


Figure 3. *The African Story* series (Nelson Mandela), Samuel Otu, 2015, 16.5" x 23" inches, Graphite Pencils on paper. Courtesy, Samuel Otu's Collection.



Figure 4. Nelson Mandela by Enam Bosokah, 2018, ball pen on paper. Source: Courtesy, Enam Bosokah's Collection.

*Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa....He was released from the prison and became the President and ruled for only one term then stepped aside paving way for others to rule. One most prolific character of his that shook the world was his ability to forgive. He is an example worthy of emulation (Artist).*

The Nelson Mandela portrait is a self-explanatory depiction of the former South African president in a front view with a very high degree of facial details and precision. His attire does not leave the 'viewer' with any doubt that the personality depicted belongs to the political elite society of Africa. The textured treatment of the subject's dense hair in a chiaroscuro effect is suggestive of grayness. The highly visible wrinkles on his face undeniably allude to his advancement in age. The demeanor of the subject can best be described as one of calmness with deep-seated determination and a high sense of accomplishment. This is revealed by the silent and gentle smile on the face with a focused gaze. His demeanor further depicts a complete absence of pain and bitterness thereby portraying a visual testimony of former president Mandela's statement of 'forgiveness' he made after his release from the prison; "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison." The use of the portrait by the artist to epitomize the inner virtue of 'forgiveness' of the former president is in line with the later part of an assertion made by Freeland (2007), that as more people were depicted over time, more styles were developed and the form of portraiture progressed from emphasizing outward details to paying more attention to expressing the interior emotions and moral attitudes of sitters. Though Nelson Mandela was not sitting directly as a model for either artist, the photographs from which the drawings were done

still captures the expressions. Enam Bosokah, a Ghanaian photorealist made a very similar rendition of the same former president of South Africa in 2018 (Figure 4) characteristically epitomizing the assertion by Freeland and reflective in Samuel's work. In Enam's portrait of the former president, the gesture of interior emotions herein been "forgiveness,' 'gratitude,' 'calmness' and 'joy' are well emphasized through the holding of the palms together coupled with a broad smile on the face.

#### *The portrait – Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo*



Figure 5. *Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo*, Samuel Otu, 2020, 22" x 30" inches, Graphite Pencils on paper. Courtesy, Samuel Otu's Collection.

*I drew a portrait of the president as a gift of my appreciation to him and his government for nominating me in 2019 to represent the nation at the Ghana Heritage Week exhibition in the United Arab Emirates. The job of the president involves deep thinking and reasoning beyond the ordinary in running the affairs of the nation (Artist).*

This depiction is a continuation of the theme explored by the artist. Executed in almost a complete three-quarter view and wearing a spectacle, the politically dressed seated subject rests on the arm of an office chair to the right with the right hand supporting the chin. With a very high degree of precision which is a fundamental quality of photorealism, the artist rendered the image of the current president of Ghana in graphite on paper. Using dark tones and lightening effects, the artist successfully created the feeling of hairlessness of the president and the effects of clearly opened eyes behind a transparently-glassed spectacle. As alluded to by the artist, the president's posture and gaze is one that reflects deeper

thoughts obviously bordering on how to surmount the teething difficulties of a developing country like Ghana, particularly in the wake of the global health crisis – COVID-19. Ghana upon recording her first case of COVID-19 virus on 12th March 2020, has suffered the negative impact of the corona virus pandemic on the socio-economic situation of the citizenry leading to job losses, and overwhelming healthcare systems (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey 2020). This certainly will set any president thinking deeper. Aphen (2011) asserted that the artistic portrait does a bit more than just referring to somebody and differs from the photographic portrait as the artist uses his or her artistic expressive skills to consolidate the self of the subject portrayed. Similarly, more than just a photographic portrait presented to the president as a gift, the artist used his photorealist prowess to depict the personality of the president in the circumstances, full of solution-finding thoughts that could befall any sitting president at time of a global pandemic that claimed millions of lives and imposed serious economic hardships on nations, particularly the third-world countries. The portrait presented to the president perhaps is the artist's way of reminding the president to stay focused and be tactical about the execution of plans for the country in the face of all the economic difficulties amidst the vilifications from the citizenry and political opponents.

#### *The portrait – Defiance*

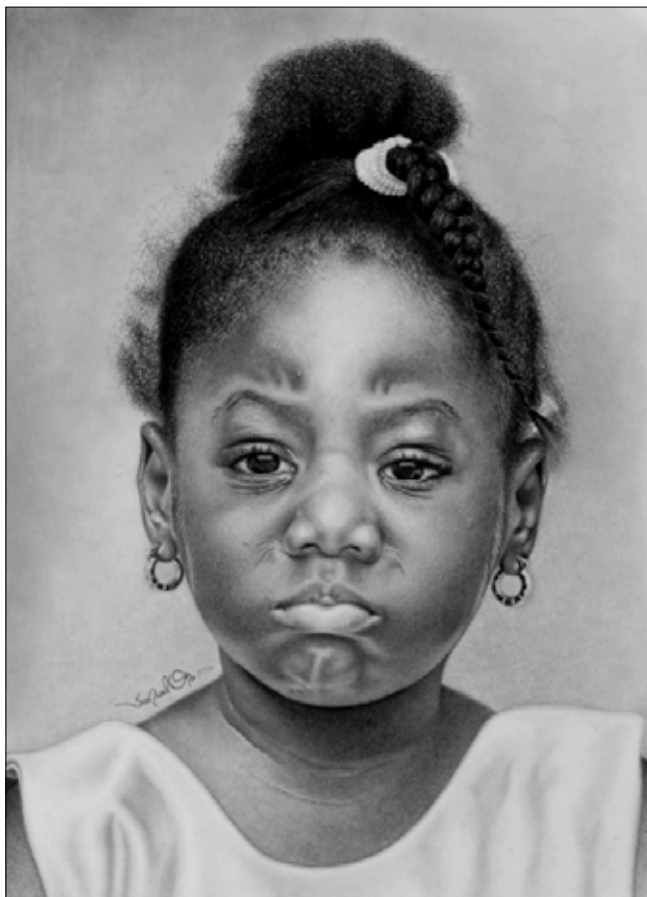


Figure 6. *Defiance*, Samuel Otu, 2014, 16.5" x 23" inches, Graphite Pencils on Paper. Courtesy, Samuel Otu's Collection.

*The portrait is to empower the African child. It speaks about the African child especially the girl-child and the youth in general to defile all odds in rising to take their rightful place in the family, community, economy and the global stage. It takes resilience and a fighting spirit to achieve that (Samuel Otu's comment).*

The portrait depicts a little girl probably of age three. Though the portrait is an unidentified sitter, it is integral part of the series of telling the African story by the artist. The graphite pencil work on paper rendered in a front view shows a black tenderly dense hair partly styled in a singular braided role held with a white ribbon and bent downwards towards the left. The subject is dressed in a sleeveless white dress, a pair of ear rings, wears a deep frowned face. The artist focused on the facial features by meticulously depicting every minute detail of the natural tender skin of the small girl through the use of tonal gradation. This meticulous facial detailing from the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose, lips to the chin resulted in the precisely depicted frowned gaze exerted on the viewer. The frowned gaze portrays a feeling of a deep anger revealed through the somewhat squinted eyes and enhanced by the appearance of a pair of caved-in on the forehead above the eyebrows, the scrambles surrounding the nose and the uneasy tightly lipped mouth. As remarked by Wango (2020), though hyperrealism and for that matter photorealism can be very engaging, not all portraiture reveals the intended meaning by the artist to the viewer; as such the viewer at times will have to derive his or her own interpretation. While the photorealist piece – *Galamsey Kid* (2021) by Richard Amankwah which clearly depicts the struggles of the African child, this well-composed and vibrant looking girl child (*Defiance*) does not necessarily suggest to the viewer the predicaments, the resilience and the fighting spirit of the African girl child as purported by the artist. The general adornment of the girl child in a full and neatly depicted dress, new pair of ear rings, a stylish hair coupled with the perceived healthy condition of the child rather alludes to the representation of a wealthier girl child contrary to the notation of resilience and the fighting spirit. However, it suffices to say that the artist chose of a child is probably to emphasize that fact that the struggle of the African begins at birth.

#### ***The portrait - Lowania Anku***

*The portrait of Lowania Anku (2019), talks about understanding and embracing cultural diversity. Lowania is an American citizen who is originally from Guyana. She came to Ghana to marry her Ghanaian boyfriend and on the day of their marriage she dressed in full Ghanaian traditional regalia from the Akan ethnic group (Artist).*

Succulent and very actively looking in a well-composed front view, the South American citizen originally from Guyana, is fully adorned in the Akan (Ghana) traditional regalia as a bride of a traditional African customary marriage. The meticulously treated black hair of the subject is crowned with a beaded necklace and the pendant of the necklace (an *adinkra* symbol of the Akans, *Gye Nyame* meaning 'except God') lies on her forehead in between the eyebrows. A set of four other necklaces are worn around the neck, partly covered with the bride's white round-shaped feathered hand fan. The body of the figure is skillfully wrapped with *Kente* (a popular Ghanaian hand-woven cloth) in a toga-like style leaving the right shoulder and hand uncovered. The detailed execution of the subject's face through tonal effects to reveal the succulent and fleshy forms is easily noticed by the viewer. This is evident in the velvet-textured hair, eyebrows and eyelashes coupled with the dainty nose and

mouth. The rendition of the eyes in sharp contrast of light and dark tones further brightens and illuminates the face thereby casting a very gracious and noble gaze on the viewer.



Figure 7. *Lowania Anku*, Samuel Otu, 2019, 12" x 16.5" inches, Graphite Pencils on Paper. Courtesy, Samuel Otu's Collection Permission.

While her Ghanaian traditionally adorned outfit attests to a bride-personality of a traditional African marriage ceremony at the same time cultural assimilation, her solemnly noble and gracious gaze reflects her undying passion to make a significant impact on African societies in the areas of domestic violence and physical abuse with special focus on vulnerable women and children. This argument of the social-service heartedness of the subject portrayed by the artist through her gaze is in tandem with the point made by Pereira (2015) who noted that 'besides the information that a portrait transmits to its viewers regarding the appearance of the subject ... a portrait contains a context, identity questions, social issues.' Similar in function to that of the *Traditional African* (2019) by Thembalami Ndlovu in which a young African woman is fully adorned in African costume, this portrait (*Lowania Anku*) is used as a means to showcase significant aspects of the Ghanaian culture to the outside world and the readiness to accept people into the Ghanaian cultural space. This was emphasized through the wearing of the Kente cloth, the beads and the Adinkra symbol – Gye Nyame as posited by the artist.

## Conclusion

The photorealist images of Samuel Out are very engaging as he tactfully uses the various postures and gazes of his images to reveal their true personalities as though they were seated directly before him. The gazes of the subjects encompassed underlying dimensions of emotions such as calmness, humility, nobility, determination and anger that communicate significantly to the 'viewer.' The portraits did not only typify the subjectivity or likeness of the subjects portrayed which has traditionally been a critical part of portraiture and enhances the connection between the 'viewed' and the 'viewer,' but have also been used as artistic expressions by the artist to tell the African story. The portraits of Dr. Kofi Annan, South African former president Nelson Mandela and Ghanaian president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo are depictions of illustrious African leaders whose leadership styles did not only benefit and won the admiration of Africans but also the globe. The *Defiance* and *Lowania Anku* portraits comment on the cultural aspects of the African society and the struggles faced by the youth, women and children on the continent. The meticulous detailing of the faces of his subjects as referenced from photographs coupled the overreaching range of issues the artworks addressed places the portraits in the light of contemporary photorealism portraiture.

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# Children's Animation Films: The Cultural Advancement Perspective

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## Abstract

The background of this research focuses on the phenomenon of the proliferation of foreign animated films that are easily accessible to children in the digital age, bringing opportunities and risks for children, the film industry, and local culture. It is important to understand how local animated films can adapt and compete with the dominance of foreign films, while supporting cultural promotion regulations. The purpose of this research is to examine the strategies of the local animation film industry in responding to these challenges and identify steps to improve the competitiveness of Indonesian animation films. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through literature study, observation, and in-depth interviews. The analysis shows that the availability of competitive local animated films can encourage the development of children's films rooted in local culture, strengthening Indonesia's distinctive children's culture industry. The research concludes that integrating local cultural elements, such as folklore, into animated films is an effective strategy to enhance cultural identity and values in Indonesian films, and instill cultural values in children. The responsibility of Indonesian filmmakers in preserving culture through animated films is crucial for the promotion of culture.

**Keywords:** *Children's Animated Films, Cultural Advancement, Local Animation Film Industry, Cultural Identity, Folklore Integration*

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## Introduction

Children's animated films are often viewed as merely a medium of entertainment, but philosophically, they also function as educational instruments that convey ideological values in a veiled manner (Ratelle, 2018; Cook, et al., 2023). From the perspective of educational philosophy, animation can shape a child's perspective on the world through the narrative, characters, and conflicts presented (Wilson, 2008; Zeng et al., 2021). Ideologies, such as the values of togetherness, tolerance, hard work, or even capitalism, can be subtly inserted into the story. Thus, animation is not only entertaining, but also influences the moral and intellectual development of children from an early age (Sheikh et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows that animation plays a role as a tool for cultural socialization, where it shapes children's reality about life and values that are considered ideal by society (Parry, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2014). As an industry, animation is also produced with an underlying ideology, which is not always a good thing. For example, Disney films are not simply a means of global entertainment but also may function as an ideological apparatus (Belkhyr, 2012:704; Wasko, 2020). The distinction between entertainment and material consumption is blurred in this globalization era. The success of an animation film is measured not by its positive influence on children but by the number of viewers, ticket sales, and merchandising. The economic aspect or consumerism is one of the ideologies behind the production of animated films, and therefore deserves to be criticized (Jenkins, 2014; Fritz, 2020).

The existence of children's films, as well as other cultural products in general such as: works of literature, philosophy, textbooks, works of art, and so on, is a hegemonic site, which is latent as a place for complex ideological battles (Williams, 1988:88-93; Zornado, 2021), and has the potential to have a destructive impact on society and even a nation. From the perspective of cultural theory, each of these products carries values and world-views that indirectly shape individual and collective consciousness (Schwartz, 2014; Rosenmannet et al., 2016). Cultural hegemony, as explained by Antonio Gramsci, works through consensus, where the dominance of a particular ideology is accepted as something "normal" or "natural." (Boothman, 2008). Therefore, these works are not simply neutral products, but rather means used to strengthen or challenge the dominance of a particular ideology in society, creating complex dynamics of power and resistance within it. Included in this context is the content of various Western ideologies that are not always in line with the cultural values that exist in the context of the society outside it.

As understood in the optics of the Gramscian perspective (Howson et al., 2008:1) and also Foucaultian for example (Foucault, 1980; 2002; 2007), that various cultural expressions as hegemonic sites in society, including the focus of this study is children's films, in addition to being a place of reflection of the worldview of the supporting community, as well as a media regime to construct the consciousness of the community. Issues of lifestyle, worldview, and community ideology are often constructed by the hegemonic sites in question (Condit, 1994; Murphy, 2003).

This is because, in the discourse of various cultural sites, the substance is related to what is called the representation of the power of language (Stephens, 1992; Fairclough, 2003). Heidegger, an existentialist, emphasized that language is the home of "Being," that is, reality that emerges and is expressed through language. For Heidegger, language is not only a means of communication, but an existential medium through which human existence and the world are interconnected (Kockelmans, 1980; Campbell, 2012). In line with this,

Habermas argues that language is also a means of domination, where power is disguised through narratives and discourses that define social reality (Ingram, 2005; Fairclough, 2013; Anastassov, 2018). Language, in this view, is not neutral; it represents the interests of power and ideology that latently regulate individuals' understanding of the world (McGroarty, 2010; Thompson, 2023). In other words, language shapes and manipulates social reality, so that those who master language have the power to control meaning, views, and culture (Ahearn, 2001; Jackendoff, 2009).

In line with the above view, there are therefore always two seemingly incompatible aspects of the spread and domination of Western cinema. Two competing but equally important themes emerge from an analysis of the global media landscape for children: opportunity and risk (Belkhyr, 2012:712). Animation films' positive and negative effects on children have been extensively studied in Indonesia. One of them has analyzed the influence of the film *Vicky The Viking* on drawings of elementary school children in 1995. The animation film can influence children's ideas and drawing. The other research results state that there is an influence between watching Japanese anime on the internet and imitation behavior (Zanitri et al., 2018:15) and almost all of these cartoon films are imported products that are not in accordance with Indonesian culture (Juliswara, 2014:161). Imported animation films definitely have advantages and disadvantages.

From the opportunity standpoint, imported films have a favorable influence on children, but the accompanying risks negatively affect cultural existence. As Souad Belkhyr suggest, the globalization of media and animated cartoons presents new opportunities to broaden children's perspectives and visions and offer them broader and more equal access to information. However, it also poses challenges to cultural identification and values (Belkhyr, 2012:712). Additionally, the globalization of animation films also increases the risk of child manipulation (Ostherr, 2005; Raiti, 2007). Disney's primary business consists of children's films, and it is well known that children are easily impressed and manipulated (Petschow, 2014:15). The permeation of the Disney' kingdom' into every facet of society consistently reinforces its image as an American cultural icon (Giroux, 1995).

It is anticipated that the dominance of American and Western culture through imported animation films may manipulate children to lose their native cultural roots (Kelts, 2006; Crane, 2014). Moreover, many people worldwide are familiar with Disney's classic animation films (Petschow, 2014:1), and their dominance is unquestionable. The characteristics of Western animation also influence Indonesian animation films. In the case of films showing acts or processes of cultural domination, the media depicts these real or fictional imperialist actions and thereby supports the hegemony of the United States and the Western world (Newman, 2011; Petschow, 2014:1).

Due to the prevalence of Western hegemony in imported films that threaten local cultural values, it is important to take appropriate measures to mitigate this threat. One of them is the provision of animated films that are in accordance with the culture and environment in which the film was born and presented. Local animation films can protect children with their own cultural treasures, help them shape their own media environment, and foster the development of their own worldviews and perceptions (Ghani et al., 2015; Brown, 2017). This can only be accomplished by providing competitive local animation products that

stimulate children's interests and equip them with sufficient knowledge and skills to enjoy a 'safe' watching experience throughout their lives (Belkhyr, 2012:712).

For this reason, this paper discusses how to respond to the above reality to enable Indonesian animation films to develop based on culture so that indigenous culture remains sustainable despite the hegemony of foreign cultures and the mandate of cultural advancement can be realized.

The research conducted in this study is qualitative in nature, characterized by a natural and holistic-contextual approach (Flick, 2013; Grønmo, 2019), especially related to the issue of the dominance of foreign films in relation to regulations on cultural advancement. Specifically, the qualitative research employed in this study adopts a critical worldview model, aimed at "challenging" specific socio-cultural realities or phenomena. The goal is to develop a new concept that is considered more effective or preferable (Alasuutari, 1996). The "lawsuit" against socio-cultural realities or phenomena referred to in this research is related to the dominance of foreign films in relation to regulations on cultural advancement in Indonesia.

Data collection was carried out through literature studies, observations, and interviews. Literature studies were conducted by reviewing scientific and popular articles which discuss animated films shown in Indonesia. In addition, research reports on animated films, both imported and local. Supporting data were obtained through observations of the screening of several local and imported animated films, while interviews were conducted with sources including academics in the field of animation, practitioners from animation studios, and users of animated films.

The data that had been collected was then validated using technical triangulation. Data collected from literature studies were then validated with other techniques such as observations and interviews, so that its validity was ensured. Consistent with the qualitative nature of this research, the data analysis technique employed in this study utilizes descriptive analysis methods (Puvanesvary et al., 2020), especially the model developed by (Miles et al., 2013). The application of the Miles and Huberman descriptive analysis model occurs concurrently and continuously throughout the research process, encompassing three main components: data reduction, data display (presentation), and conclusion drawing.

### Children's Culture

Culture, which is defined as "the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular person or society" (Petschow, 2014:1) is frequently discussed, but children's culture has received less attention (Christensen & Prout, 2005; Pugh, 2011). Children's culture, though rarely discussed, is an important part of their social and psychological development (Greenfield & Cocking, 2014). Children's culture is a set of ideas, customs, and behaviors that are unique to children, shaped through their interactions with family, friends, the media, and their immediate environment (Marsh, 2005; Garbarino, 2017). Unlike adult culture, children's culture focuses more on play, creativity, imagination, and learning through exploration (Lindon, 2001; Gaskins, 2014). Although often overlooked, this culture is important because it forms the foundation for the formation of their self-identity, values, and perspectives on the world (Adams, 2003; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). By paying attention to and under-

standing children's culture, we can support more balanced and healthy growth and development (Berk, 2015).

Children's culture, especially in the realm of animation film, has been largely ignored (Giroux, 1995). The scope of children's culture is rather extensive, including artifacts, media, children's literature, and childhood-centered myths and discourses. Children's culture refers to music, movies, television, toys, and other material goods and appropriate literature (Kidd, 2002:146).

The Children's Culture Reader, edited by Henry Jenkins of MIT and released by New York University Press in 1998, popularized the phrase "children's culture." The book contains a variety of scholarly papers on cultural topics about childhood, specifically describing how our culture defines what it means to be a child, how adult institutions affect children's lives, and how children construct their cultural and social identities. Children's culture requires special consideration while addressing children-related cultural progress so that children do not become objects or even manipulated.

### Children's Film

A significant distinction between 'children's film' and 'child film' is frequently confused. The book *Family Films in Global Cinema* explains the difference between the two, stating that child film – often confused with children's film, but in our usage, they are distinct – centres on a child or children (and their fears, fantasies, etc.), but is not intended primarily for their consumption, and may indeed be unsuitable for them (Brown et al., 2015:13). Children's films are suitable and potentially interesting for children. As in the terminology of "children's books" or "children's literature" for example, as books or literary works that place the child's point of view at the center of the story and at the same time offer a significant source of truth, expressed in appropriate elements and impressive language, children's films should also be defined.

The difference between children's films and children's films can be explained philosophically through the purpose and the intended audience. Children's films, while focusing on the experiences or perspectives of children, are not designed to be consumed by children (Hermansson & Zepernick, 2019). Philosophically, they delve into the psychological and existential depths of a child, often presenting more complex and ambiguous themes that may not be digestible by young audiences. In contrast, children's films are designed to prioritize the cognitive and emotional needs of children as viewers (Van Evra, 2004; Davis & Levine, 2013). They offer narratives that educate, entertain, and are meaningful, communicating universal truths with language and symbolism that children can understand, while still prioritizing pedagogical ethics that shape their morality and development (Carr & Harrison, 2015).

Children's films are commercially and critically successful; many films for children are produced annually (Parry, 2013). Today, thanks to technological advancements, children can access more films not only in cinemas and on television but also on VCD/DVD players, mobile phones, the internet, and VR boxes or VR glasses. In addition, various online platforms provide film services, including YouTube, Vimeo, Vidio, Veoh, TED, and Dailymotion, among others. In contrast to conventional media, children may pause, rewind, and fast-forward



to their favorite scenes or watch them again, making film viewing a unique experience. Toys, clothes, bedding, and film-related books can expand their experience of film narrative (Parry, 2013). Therefore merchandise can enhance children's narrative experience abilities.

### Children's Cultural Industry

On the other hand, the cultural industry has also penetrated the realm of children as its target (Cook, 2004; Schor, 2014). The culture industry understands and uses the vast knowledge available about child development to instill its ideology in children (Hill, 2013:228). The children's culture industry is expanding quickly, including films, television, toys, clothes, reading books, and necessities such as toothpaste, shampoo, and medicines. As part of the media, animation may be considered an industry that commercializes and standardizes cultural production (Belkhyr, 2012:704).

The children's "culture industry" is the mass production of popular culture by corporations, and it has systematically targeted children to persuade them to desire the commodities while promising pleasure (Hill, 2013:ii). The industry utilizes media in all its forms, including film, animation, and advertisement, to influence or shape children's lives. For example, even before the release of an animation film, various merchandise related to the film has flooded the market. However, apart from being a business that produces, distributes, and sells marketable items, animation has other features that are no less important, resulting from its cultural values and nature (Belkhyr, 2012:704).

### Elements of Local Culture

Films might comprise the seven elements of culture identified by Koentjaraningrat: language, knowledge system, social system or social organization, living equipment system and technology, livelihood system, religious system, and art (Koentjaraningrat, 1982). Numerous Indonesian animation films have included local cultural elements in various visual ways. Andrian Wikayanto's research on five animation film samples (Battle of Surabaya (1945), Adit Sopo Jarwo (2019), Keluarga Somat (2019), Knight Kris (2017), and Si Juki (2018)) revealed 375 cultural forms from 17 categories. These forms can generally represent everyday life prevalent in contemporary and traditional Indonesian culture, as well as fantasies that include tangible and intangible, verbal and nonverbal signs that reflect Indonesian cultural characteristics (Wikayanto et al., 2019:91).

Incorporating local cultural elements into films will further establish their identity. It is known that identity is a very important necessity, both in the context of its relation to individuals and society, even a nation (Poole, 2012; Zhuojun et al., 2014). This is because, when talking about identity, it will indeed be about an important authentic marker in its interrelation with other entities (Gilroy, 1997:301). For individuals, the importance of identity is related to the most fundamental issue, namely human values (Birt, 2002). In line with this perspective (Naskar, 2020) states, "The shape of a human is determined by character - no character, no human - no character, no humanity." Meanwhile, in the context of its intertwining with society, let alone a nation, the significance of the existence of identity, especially is more closely related to the treatise of forming social ties (Thorpe, 2018) and also the nationalism it must fight for (Joireman, 2003; Giordano et al., 2000). This is because there is no history of a nation without nationalism in it (Tang, 1996).

The phenomenon of promoting locality-based identity in the context of children's films can be seen in Orah (2021), who presents an animated character known as "therianthropic," which is a combination of local human and animal features, which is also accompanied by incorporating local ornaments into the costumes (Sugihartono, 2021:125). The presence of these ornaments (decorations) appears to strengthen the character's identity as an endemic animal that does not exist on any continent, as evidenced by the following respondent's response to "Orah is really Indonesian, komodo dragon, uenek neng Indonesia, wis ora enek...wis ora enek tandingane wis... – endemic animal, an endemic animal that only lives on the island, coincidentally the island is in Indonesia (S. H. Yudhanto, interview, 2021). For this reason, local animators should infuse Indonesian cultural identity into their animation works to shape the audience's impressions of Indonesian animation (Wikayanto et al., 2019:91).

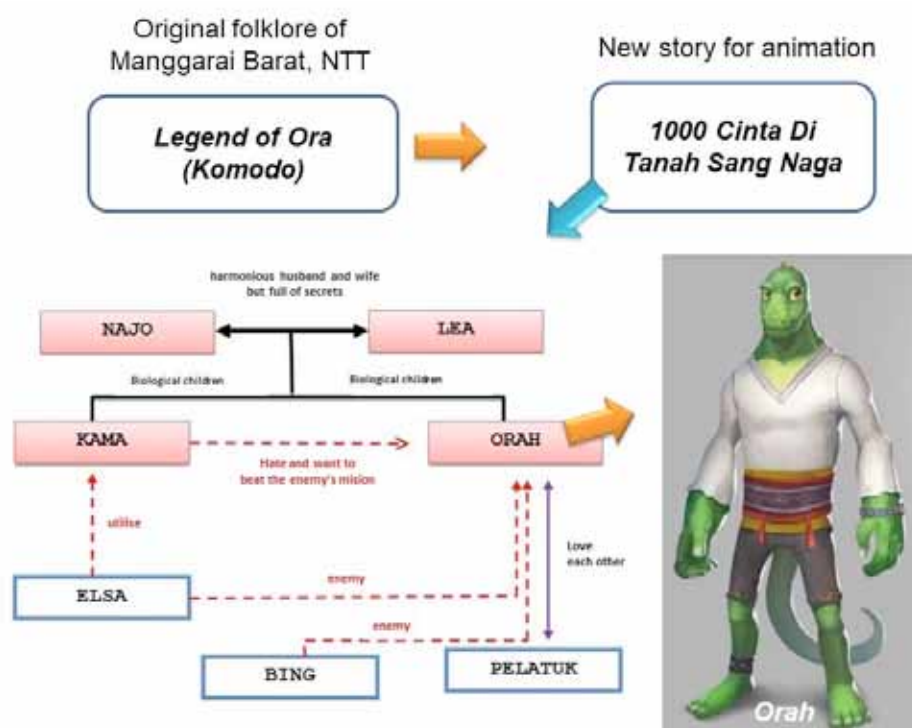


Figure 1. A model of adaptation-based development of local culture into animation character (Source: Sugihartono, 2021).

Orah's character design was well received by informants, a similar thing happened to other local animated characters. Orah's character is good, cool, so he gets Indonesian too (S. Yahya, interview, 2021). Children's acceptance of local animated films is no less than that of imported films. Some local animated films are successful and loved by children, such as Kuku Rock You (2014), Knight Kris (2017), Si Juki the Movie (2017), Kiko and Friends (2016). The other studies showed that in receiving the object the children could give a perception of the characters in the film (Jannah et al., 2021:171). Children can describe the characters and story content in animated films well and give positive assessments. Local animated films have more positive impact on children, because they are in accordance with their culture.

### Folklore as Ideas Source

Furthermore, in terms of cultural elements, the archipelago's extensive folklore might provide filmmaking inspiration. The story is the film's important aspect. Whether short or feature, every film begins with a script that serves as the blueprint for the film's construction. It provides the framework for film production and serves as the basis for decisions made from the early stages of preproduction to the final stages of postproduction (Ramirez, n.d.). The origins of animation lie in brief cartoons, fairy tales, narrative storytelling, or photography (Zornado, 2008:2). If, in addition to other film elements, one wishes to make a film in line with the local indigenous culture, then the story element is the best place to start, as animation films are derived from stories or fairy tales.

Indonesians have much folklore inherited from their ancestors, and some are currently evolving and thriving in the community (Sugihartono, 2022:45). According to Cultural Statistics in 2021, Indonesia is home to 944 folk tales, of which 477 are fairy tales, 372 are legends, and 95 are myths (PDTI, 2021). This quantity has enormous potential for adaptation into an animated film plot.

Humans have an endless appetite for stories. As youngsters, we consume fairy tales and myths; we like re-watching the same cartoons; and as we age, we become enthralled by different stories — in religion and history — in novels, comic books, and films (Bordwell et al., 2017). Because just 2% of Indonesia's film production consists of animated films, there is still a significant need for their development. Indonesia produced 3,423 film titles in 2021, including 69 animated films, 168 documentaries, 206 short films, 286 widescreen pictures, 929 television serials, and 1,762 ads. For this reason, Indonesia can use the 944 traditional stories listed above as a basis for future animation film production.

The folklore may be transformed into an animation film through both adaptation and deconstruction. An adaptation approach can be used if we wish to preserve the authenticity of the folklore, in which folklore originating from oral traditions is then translated into an animation film. Meanwhile, the deconstruction approach creates folklore more freely with the modern spirit and taste, facilitating the audience's acceptance of the animated picture.

The author once adapted the Timun Mas folklore into an animation film with the same title in 2012. The utilization of traditional art and performing arts distinguishes Timun Mas from other animation films with comparable plots. The creation of this animation cartoon Timun Mas refers to the motion of wayang kulit (shadow puppets) and the visualization of wayang beber (puppet show) (Sugihartono et al., 2012:91). As for the narrative, it holds fast to the original Timun Mas folklore. One of the findings from the creation of this work is the philosophy and meaning of movement in wayang kulit, when applied to animation films, may result in animation with distinct characteristics from those of Western animation principles (Sugihartono et al., 2012:97).

### Children's Development and Cultural Value

Figure 1. A model of adaptation-based development of local culture into animation character (Source: Sugihartono, 2021).

Orah's character design was well received by informants, a similar thing happened to other local animated characters. Orah's character is good, cool, so he gets Indonesian too (S. Yahya, interview, 2021). Children's acceptance of local animated films is no less than that of imported films. Some local animated films are successful and loved by children, such as Kuku Rock You (2014), Knight Kris (2017), Si Juki the Movie (2017), Kiko and Friends (2016). The other studies showed that in receiving the object the children could give a perception of the characters in the film (Jannah et al., 2021:171). Children can describe the characters and story content in animated films well and give positive assessments. Local animated films have more positive impact on children, because they are in accordance with their culture.

### Folklore as Ideas Source

Furthermore, in terms of cultural elements, the archipelago's extensive folklore might provide filmmaking inspiration. The story is the film's important aspect. Whether short or feature, every film begins with a script that serves as the blueprint for the film's construction. It provides the framework for film production and serves as the basis for decisions made from the early stages of preproduction to the final stages of postproduction (Ramirez, n.d.). The origins of animation lie in brief cartoons, fairy tales, narrative storytelling, or photography (Zornado, 2008:2). If, in addition to other film elements, one wishes to make a film in line with the local indigenous culture, then the story element is the best place to start, as animation films are derived from stories or fairy tales.

Indonesians have much folklore inherited from their ancestors, and some are currently evolving and thriving in the community (Sugihartono, 2022:45). According to Cultural Statistics in 2021, Indonesia is home to 944 folk tales, of which 477 are fairy tales, 372 are legends, and 95 are myths (PDTI, 2021). This quantity has enormous potential for adaptation into an animated film plot.

Humans have an endless appetite for stories. As youngsters, we consume fairy tales and myths; we like re-watching the same cartoons; and as we age, we become enthralled by different stories — in religion and history — in novels, comic books, and films (Bordwell et al., 2017). Because just 2% of Indonesia's film production consists of animated films, there is still a significant need for their development. Indonesia produced 3,423 film titles in 2021, including 69 animated films, 168 documentaries, 206 short films, 286 widescreen pictures, 929 television serials, and 1,762 ads. For this reason, Indonesia can use the 944 traditional stories listed above as a basis for future animation film production.

The folklore may be transformed into an animation film through both adaptation and deconstruction. An adaptation approach can be used if we wish to preserve the authenticity of the folklore, in which folklore originating from oral traditions is then translated into an animation film. Meanwhile, the deconstruction approach creates folklore more freely with the modern spirit and taste, facilitating the audience's acceptance of the animated picture.

The author once adapted the Timun Mas folklore into an animation film with the same title in 2012. The utilization of traditional art and performing arts distinguishes Timun Mas from other animation films with comparable plots. The creation of this animation cartoon Timun Mas refers to the motion of wayang kulit (shadow puppets) and the visualization of

wayang beber (puppet show) (Sugihartono et al., 2012:91). As for the narrative, it holds fast to the original Timun Mas folklore. One of the findings from the creation of this work is the philosophy and meaning of movement in wayang kulit, when applied to animation films, may result in animation with distinct characteristics from those of Western animation principles (Sugihartono et al., 2012:97).

### Children's Development and Cultural Value

When making culture-based films, it is necessary to consider the development of children. According to Maria Montessori, culture is an essential element for children in the first phase (ages 3 to 6 years), which lays the foundation for internalizing positive religious and cultural values, empathic attitudes, and ethical behavior patterns (Moretti, 2021; Frierson, 2022). Cognitively, thought creation, language development, and the formation of consciousness and self-awareness are based on several fundamental cultural elements and serve as the precursor to identity (Haines, 2000; Pumariega et al., 2010). The influence of certain developmental stages in the creative lives of children and adults is well documented in the creativity literature (Sternberg et al., 1995; Runco et al., 1997; Ishaq, 2014). The second phase (ages 6-12 years) is a period of social and cognitive development in which children learn how to live as members of their societies and culture and learn to serve themselves and others (Baker, 2001; Pumariega et al., 2010).

In this context, children enter a very vital phase of growth and development known as the "golden age" (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Dekker, 2019), which is a period of stages of growth and development where at that time the brain and physique experience maximum growth (Floud et al., 2011). Therefore, providing and or conditioning the best learning environment, including for example through the means of children's movies, is something that will greatly affect the growth and development of children very significantly (Berk, 2001).

During these two phases, films are ideally suited for introducing and instilling cultural values in children. With the instillation of indigenous Indonesian cultural values, children will mature into distinct individuals. Films are an excellent medium for incorporating cultural values since watching films involves the subconscious. As Flitterman-Lewis (1987) suggests when we watch films, we also dream of them; our subconscious desires work together with desires that produce movie dreams (Zornado, 2008:2).

Animation films may instill cultural values effectively (Wells, 2008; Herhuth, 2017). Cartoon films greatly affect children (Bordwell et al., 2017). Many studies have demonstrated both the positive and negative impacts of animation films on children. In cartoons, the hero's character holds a more significant influence on children than any other elements, and cartoon heroes significantly influence children. Children always try to play the hero roles in the real world (Lamraoui, 2016:64). Therefore, animation techniques can be a remarkable instrument for bridging the gap between ourselves and our cultural aspects (Türkmeno lu et al., 2015:2).

### Children's Film and Cultural Advancement

Article 5 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture mandates the production of films related to cultural advancement. This article identifies the following objects for cultural advancement: a. oral tradition; b. manuscripts;



c. customs; d. rites; e. traditional knowledge; f. traditional technology; g. art; h. language; i. folk games; and j. traditional sport. In the explanation section, the so-called "art" includes performing, fine, literary, film, music, and media art. Films are implicitly the object of cultural advancement in the law.

Films have a strategic role in bolstering the cultural resilience of a nation; hence they are legally regulated. Article 3 of Law No. 33 of 2009 concerning Film regulates the goals of culture-related films, which include the development and preservation of the nation's cultural values, worldwide recognition of the nation's culture, and the production of films based on a living, sustainable national culture. Culture dominates film objectives, in which three of eight film objectives include culture. In addition, Article 4 states that films have the following functions: a. culture, b. education, c. entertainment, d. information, e. promotion of creative work, and f. economy. The primary role of film is now the preservation of culture. Culture, in this sense, aids development (Das & Chhaparia, 2023).

In addition, filmmakers play a crucial role in national culture. The preservation of national culture is mandated by Article 48, which states that every filmmaker is obliged to d) uphold religious values, ethics, morality, decency, and national culture. Consequently, it is fitting for filmmakers, including animation films, to use Indonesian culture in the creation of their work, which in turn participates in the advancement of culture. Furthermore, the Explanation section of Law No. 33 of 2009 mentions that both domestically produced and imported films circulated and screened in Indonesia are intended to promote and preserve the nation's cultural values. Romdhi Fatkhur Rozi examined ten titles of children-themed films and discovered that multiculturalism is present in most children's films in Indonesia through various types of moral teachings, demonstrating that some locally produced children's films have displayed encouraging cultural elements (Rozi, 2019:53). In fact, the primary purpose of exported Indonesian films is to introduce the foreign community to the Indonesian culture. Several children's films have won international acclaim, including *Denias*, *Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006) and *Laskar Pelangi* (2008). Films not only play a role in strengthening national identity through culture, but also serve as cultural diplomacy abroad.

## Conclusion

The existence and dominance of foreign, especially Western, films that are more accessible in the era of globalization presents two major challenges for Indonesian children's films, movies, and culture: opportunities and risks. On the one hand, easy access to foreign films introduces Indonesian children to a variety of global values, lifestyles, and cultures, which can enrich their insights. However, on the other hand, this dominance risks weakening local cultural identity if it is not balanced with works that promote Indonesian values. Therefore, the development of competitive local animated films is very important to strengthen Indonesian children's film culture and build a "cultural industry" that is distinctive, relevant, and interesting for children. In addition, the establishment of a center for children's cultural studies or research is needed to ensure that cultural development begins at an early age, with a focus on deeply rooted local values, so that Indonesian culture remains alive and thriving amidst the currents of globalization.

One strategic step to strengthen the identity of Indonesian films is to incorporate local cultural elements into films, especially in children's film production. The incorporation of cultural elements such as traditions, values, and local wisdom will not only enrich the

film's content, but also build cultural pride for child audiences. Indonesian folklore, which is rich in moral values and symbolism, can be a strong source of inspiration for animated film narratives. By focusing on the narrative element, which is the foundation of every animated film, traditional stories can be brought to life in a modern visual format that appeals to the younger generation. This approach not only preserves cultural heritage, but also allows children to grow up with a deeper understanding of their identity in a global context. The use of local stories in the production of animated films for children should start from animation studios or industries that have a deep understanding of Indonesian culture. Collaboration between story developers and animators is essential to ensure that characters, visuals, and cultural values can be integrated harmoniously and systematically. With this approach, every element—from character designs that reflect local traditions to narratives that raise relevant themes from everyday life—can be delivered in an interesting and educational way for children. As a result, typical Indonesian animation will not only be a means of entertainment, but also an effective tool in instilling pride and cultural understanding in the younger generation, as well as strengthening national identity amidst the influence of global culture.

Animated films have great potential in instilling cultural values, especially in the context of character education for children. The first (3-6 years) and second (6-12 years) developmental phases are critical periods in which children most easily absorb information and values that shape their character. Therefore, these phases are strategic moments to segment children's films based on culture, allowing for the introduction of local values systematically and interestingly. The obligation of filmmakers to create works that uphold the nation's culture is very relevant here, as regulated in Article 48 of Law Number 33 of 2009 concerning Film. Film, as a form of art, plays a role as an object of cultural advancement in accordance with Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2017.

In this context, animated films act as a very effective medium to convey character education to children through Indonesian culture-based content. By presenting local values in narrative and visuals, animated films are able to strengthen national identity and provide children with important provisions for their moral and ethical development. In addition to being a source of entertainment, animated films also function as an educational tool that not only entertains, but also educates, promotes, and preserves local culture. Through relatable characters and educational stories, animated films can help children understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, while also forming positive and responsible characters in the context of the wider community.

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# Healthy Aging Among Older Thai Adults with Passive & Active Music Participation: *A Qualitative Study*

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## Abstract

Music participation is a beneficial activity for seniors. This qualitative study examined the experiences of sixteen healthy older adults in Thailand who engaged in some way with music. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings revealed four themes. The first theme, “Music as Leisure vs. Identity,” highlights music's dual role in offering enjoyment and shaping one identity. The second theme, “Music's Role in Social Connections,” explores how engagement with music fosters relationships and builds a sense of community. The third theme, “Music for Well-being,” highlights music's contributions to health and well-being. The last theme “Music as Lifelong Self-Improvement vs. Contemplation” demonstrates music's role in personal growth, self-reflection and skill development. This study supports prior research and deepens our understanding of music's positive impact on the well-being of healthy older adults. Insights into their participation can inform initiatives to enhance the well-being of elders in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Older Adults, Seniors, Music Participation, Well-Being, Qualitative Study

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## Introduction

Participation in music whether through performing, listening, or composing among older adults has attracted considerable interest from scholars in Thailand and internationally (e.g., Davidson et al., 2014: 99-104; Hallam and Creech 2016: 21-25; Kirapon and Deelers 2017: 363-373; Lehmberg and Fung, 2010: 19-30). Previous studies indicate that music engagement in everyday life fosters a sense of purpose, autonomy, and social connection, while enhancing happiness, emotional well-being, and cognitive and physical development. Music also shapes perceptions of identity, beauty, and aesthetics, providing relaxation, stress relief, and motivation (Ponprasit et al., 2020: 91-103). Over the past decade, music educators have researched issues related to aging, particularly organizing music activities and developing instruments tailored for older adults to promote musical skills and well-being (Boonrod, 2021: 132-152; Phoasavadi, 2022: 258-271; Suttachitt et al., 2023: 94-111; Tissadikun, 2019: 95-108).

This raises important questions: “How does participation in music-related activities affect older adults?” “How do their experiences differ across these activities?” Although few empirical psychological studies have addressed these questions in the Thai context, the literature classifies musical participation as either passive or active. Consumers who listen to live performances or recorded music are passively engaged. Groarke and Hogan (2015: 95-115) show that listening to music each day enhances older adults’ social relationships and personal development, and encourages both social interaction and introspection. In contrast, active participation consist of playing instruments or singing, which foster creativity and connection through shared experiences (Creech et al., 2013: 87-102). Creech et al. (2014: 32-49) found that active engagement significantly improves self-esteem and strengthens identity, giving older adults a sense of purpose and autonomy in musical expression, while reinforcing social connections and contributing to a supportive community.

International empirical studies have examined the impact of older adults’ participation in musical activities. Sole, Mercadal-Brotons, Gallego, and Riera (2010: 264-281) identified choral groups, aesthetic groups, and music therapy groups, finding that participants in these groups reported improved quality of life, particularly in social terms, the formation of new friendships and personal growth. Older adults engaged in these activities to acquire knowledge and build connections. A qualitative study on singing among Chinese-Australian seniors found that participants enjoyed themselves, experienced relaxation, and had meaningful exchanges, all of which reduced their feelings of isolation and loneliness (Li and Southcott, 2012: 59-78). Research has also shown that music improves intergenerational relationships; for example, by joining a choir, older adults and children could spend time together, cultivating mutual understanding and cooperation (Varvarigou et al., 2011: 207-220). Hays and Minichiello (2005: 437-451) investigated the significance of music in the lives of Australian seniors, finding that it infused their lives with meaning, purpose, and satisfaction, thereby enhancing their quality of life. Their study also highlighted music’s spiritual role among older adults as a means of focus, expression, and reflection. Even among participants who identified as non-religious, music provided a profound sense of existence, allowing for introspection and self-reflection similar to that offered by religious practices. Li and Southcott (2015: 316-333) examined the significance of piano lessons in the lives of older Chinese men and women. The findings indicated that learning music promotes emotional and physical well-being, while offering a valuable lifelong learning experience

and that performing music gave them a sense of accomplishment. While prior research has established that both active and passive participation in music can enhance well-being, active participation has been linked to additional benefits, including shifts in thinking, emotional responses, a sense of life having meaning, self-acceptance, and identity (Packer and Ballantyne, 2010: 164-181). However, more recent studies have not explored whether older adults who engage actively with music have different experiences from passive music consumers. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further investigation. This study fills this gap by examining the experiences of Older Thai adults who are both active and passive participants in music. By gaining insights into the distinct ways older adults engage with music, the research contributes to promoting well-being and preventing mental health issues within Thailand's aging population. Understanding these experiences could inform future music-related initiatives and programs that support healthy aging and enrich the lives of older adults.

### Methodology

This qualitative study adopted a scientific phenomenological method grounded in Husserl's concepts to explore and clarify the experiences of older Thai adults who were actively or passively engaged with music. This approach focuses on understanding their lived experiences and revealing the underlying structures and meanings behind their interactions with music (Giorgi, 2017: 83-144).

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of healthy older adults without neurocognitive disorders. The first group consisted of eight older adults (1 male and 7 females) aged between 60 and 82 years, who passively engaged in music, primarily by enjoying and appreciating music. The second group consisted of eight older adults (6 males and 2 females) aged 61 to 74 years, who engaged actively in music by playing instruments, singing, or performing. All participants were recruited through recommendations from gatekeepers, including leaders of music communities, directors of senior citizens clubs, alumni from colleges and universities with music programs, and staff at local senior residences and nursing homes. This strategic recruitment ensured that the selected individuals had relevant experiences and insights, enriching the understanding of the impact of music impact on older adults. Figure 1's table presents the personal and demographic information for each participant in addition to musical involvement. This information is essential for contextualizing the findings and understanding the diverse experiences of the participants.

Based on Giorgi (2017: 83-144), the researcher conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to create a welcoming environment for informants. This approach encourages rich narratives, candid answers, and deeper insights into participants' lives. Questions like "How has music played a role in your life?" and "How has participating in musical activities affected your quality of life?" prompted thoughtful reflections on respondents' personal connections with music. To ensure a smooth interview, the researcher developed flexible guiding questions that allowed conversations to flow naturally. This adaptability enabled informants to discuss the topics they found most significant. By fostering an open and comfortable atmosphere, the researcher aimed to encourage the participants to share their stories and experiences. The content validity of the interview questions was rigorously verified by experts in qualitative research, ensuring

that they captured participants' experiences and aligned with the study's objectives. This careful attention to question design enhanced the reliability of the data, accurately capturing participants' voices.

Code	Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Occupation	Everyday Music Engagement
<b>Group 1: Passive Participants in Music</b>					
PA01	Orn	69	Female	University professor	Listening to music while working, exercising, or driving
PA02	Kai	62	Female	Writer / freelance translator	Listening to music, watching concerts
PA03	Toy	82	Male	Retired	Listening to music, collecting gramophone records, ballroom dancing
PA04	Suay	70	Female	Business owner	Listening to music while working or driving, watching the musical/singing TV programs
PA05	Jib	61	Female	Retired	Listening to music, watching the music performance
PA06	Paew	65	Female	Retired	Watching the musical/singing TV programs, listening to music
PA07	Cook	69	Female	Retired	Listening to music, watching music performances
PA08	Ya	72	Female	Retired	Casually listening to music
<b>Group 2: Active Participants in Music</b>					
AC01	Noon	65	Female	Retired	Performing singing or karaoke
AC02	Add	74	Male	Musician	Playing guitar, arranging music, and teaching music
AC03	Ake	69	Male	Retired	Playing guitar, singing, karaoke
AC04	Tee	62	Male	Musician	Playing guitar and keyboard
AC05	Pong	70	Male	Music teacher/ Instructor	Playing saxophone, teaching music in a high school, and being a music educator
AC06	Tiew	63	Female	Music teacher/ Instructor	Teaching music to young children
AC07	Karn	63	Male	Music teacher/ Instructor	Teaching music in a high school
AC08	Tar	61	Male	University professor of music	Teaching music at university, playing guitar, being a professional musician

Figure 1. Table of personal background information for each participant.

Following approval from Chulalongkorn University's Office of the Research Ethics Review Committee for Human Subjects (COA. 255/2564), the researcher began data collection. After obtaining informed consent, the researcher provided detailed information about the study and outlined the participants' rights, in accordance with the committee's approved procedures. Participants were required to sign a consent form to confirm their willingness to take part. The researcher then conducted one online interview with each informant, lasting approximately 1-2 hours. This online format was chosen to protect the health of older adults, who were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 during the data collection period (January – June 2022). The researcher employed Giorgi's (1985) approach to data analysis, a method well-suited for capturing the richness of participants' lived experiences. This process involved several steps:

1. Creating a verbatim transcript of each interview and reviewing the data to gain a comprehensive understanding of each informant's experience.
2. Conducting multiple readings to extract detailed information and identify meaningful units from the informants' descriptions, without initially imposing predefined definitions.
3. Engaging deeply with each meaning to grasp the core aspects of the musical experiences of older musicians.
4. Analyzing the complete meaning units, categorizing them, and identifying patterns that reflect the structure of the informants' experiences.
5. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the first author repeatedly read, analyzed, and discussed the data. The second and third authors, serving as advisers, validated the analysis, ensuring it aligned closely with the informants' experiences and minimized biases, errors, or misinterpretations

## Results

The findings reveal four main themes. The first, Music as Leisure vs. Identity, highlighted its dual role. The second, Music's Role in Social Connections, reflected its impact on interpersonal relationships. The third, Music for Well-being, illustrated its contribution to health and well-being. The fourth and last theme, Music as Lifelong Self-Improvement vs. Contemplation, emphasized its role in personal growth.

### Main Theme 1: Music as Leisure vs. Identity

Both groups of older adults considered music an important part of their lives. Group 1 (passive consumers of music) viewed music as "an activity they choose to engage in during their spare time" for entertainment and self-development. In contrast, Group 2 (active participants in music) described music as "analogous to an organ or a part of the body," emphasizing its inseparability from their lives. Under this main theme, the older adults discussed three subthemes:

#### Subtheme 1.1: Early Music Exposure

The members of both groups reflected on similar beginnings to their musical experiences in childhood. Group 1 noted they "grew up in an environment where music was played." Group 2 shared that they "absorbed a love for music from those around them." Here are some examples:

In fact, I've been listening to it since I was a child. Like, my mother listened to it when I was young. She turned on the vinyl player, played the records of Sawali, Charin, Jintana and other Chinese songs, good old Chinese songs, something like this. I'd listen to it all day and night. While mom was sewing, she would play music, and I would hear something like this. - Kai (Group 1 code PA02)

It started with my grandmother, really from the very beginning. My mother is a person who loves music, likes to listen, likes to sing, and she wants her children to feel that they can play music, especially Thai instruments. She'd ask me to play a little for her. There was a Thai hammered dulcimer at home, and mom would want me to play it. It was taught to me by my sister. She went to study, and I learned from her and occasionally practiced playing. I studied the dulcimer in school as a music subject, but just like playing it freely. I didn't take music seriously in the past because it's just like another subject that I had to study. - Tiew (Group 2 code AC06)

### **Subtheme 1.2: Fascination with Music vs. Deep Passion for Music**

Older adults in Group 1 noted that they have been listening to music since childhood, making it a regular and enjoyable part of their lives. They expressed strong preferences for a variety of types of music. The members of Group 2 expressed a passion for music that often overshadowed other aspects of their lives and led some to pursue careers in music. Here are examples:

Actually, I'm a music lover and I enjoy listening to all types of music, but most of them are foreign songs. I prefer international music and light classical music. Well, listening to music is like stepping up. I liked slow songs, fast songs, and preferred vocal songs when I was a teenager. - Kai (Group 1, code PA02)

I've been playing [music] since I was a young adult, but it's almost like playing by heart... Sometimes it's like, ah, I feel like singing today, something like this. Then, I listen to music while doing things like planting or gardening in the backyard. After taking a shower and allowing my body to rest for a while, if I feel the urge to sing, I'll pick up the guitar and sing some songs. But as soon as my hands start to hurt, I'll stop. - Aek (Group 2 code AC03)

Well, I'm really into jazz, but I don't know why, it truly drives me to seek it out. Since I've been listening to that cassette... the music has a slight retro jazz feel, but within the mellowness and smoothness, there is complexity underneath. So, it makes me feel eh!! [wonder]. Its complexity makes me curious and drawn in, as if I'm curious about it... - Tar (Group 2 code AC08)

### **Subtheme 1.3: Music as Part of Everyday Life vs. an Integral Connection to Life**

Older adults in Group 1 described music as a significant aspect of their daily routines. In contrast, Group 2 described music as an essential connection to life itself, reflecting a deeper integration of music into their existence. Here are examples:

My uncle listens to music while monitoring the stocks until noon. When the market opens in the afternoon, he turns it back on and enjoys music during his trading routine. – Jib (Group 1, code PA05).

Right now, it's like, how to put it, it's been a part of my life. Music meant two things to me: listening to it solely and playing along with it. If I have to separate, I separate between listening to other people's work and playing, umm the music that I like... Music adheres to me like my limbs, which are, after all, a part of my body. – Tee (Group 2 code AC04).

## **Main Theme 2: Music's Role in Social Connections**

Members of both groups reported similar experiences with music's ability to facilitate social interactions. The participants in Group 1 stated that "music contributes to their social activities," emphasizing how engaging in music creates opportunities to connect and build relationships with others, including people of different ages. According to one participant, "Besides happiness, I also gain experience; it keeps me up to date when someone talks to me. It's sort of, I mean, I can still talk to younger people as if I'm a modern person." – Jib (Group 1 code PA05). Another participant mentioned how singing together in school helped maintain connections and intimacy, stating, "Bind our relationship together so that we can be more intimate and love each other. Today, we are still connected because we used to sing together in school." – Ya (Group 1 code PA08).

In Group 2, participants indicated that "music strengthens social relationships." This led to the identification of two subthemes: Strong Family Connections and Social Interaction across Ages and Genders.

For Subtheme 2.1, participants described how music activities enhance family bonds, even among people with different tastes in music. Tiew (Group 2, code AC06) explained how new musical instruments or records create opportunities for conversation and connection among family members.

In terms of music, it emphasized bringing new musical instruments or a new stereo system to play music together. My son likes to bring something new, buy a record player or vinyl record, and when we turn it on, we can make conversation, such as asking about the new disc or being excited to hear this song, a new release. It gave us something to talk about, and most of the time it's a chat between father and son. - Tiew (Group 2 code AC06).

For Subtheme 2.2, participants noted that music facilitates connections across age and gender. They recounted forming friendships regular karaoke sessions and similar activities. One informant compared playing music together to "telepathy" and emphasizing the shared joy and energy of these experiences.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I had a group of friends who also liked to sing. We formed a group and set aside time to get together, such as every Friday to sing at a restaurant with karaoke and a piano. I'll have a meeting with these friends every Friday. – Add (Group 2 code AC01).

Another informant reflected:

Playing music together is like turning on the radio. A kind of telepathy... like communication without voice. This level is not easy for a new band to achieve; it's the level that results from constantly playing together for a long time. Relationships through sound are incredible... It's like when we were watching some bands play and had a lot of fun because of the energy that the bands immediately delivered to the audiences, it's like throwing happiness and energy toward the people who were listening. – Tar (Group 2 code AC08).

### **Main Theme 3: Music for Well-being**

The members of both groups view participation in music activities as a way to improve their health and well-being. This main theme highlights music's role in restoring physical vitality and mental acuity, helping them cultivate energy while promoting cognitive health and quality of life.

The theme has two subthemes: Music's Role in Mood Balancing, and Music's Ability to Relieve Fatigue. Notably, Group 1 described music as effective for "mental relaxation, contentment, and pleasure," while Group 2 viewed it as "the nourishing water for healthy physical and mental well-being." Through their shared experiences, participants identify music as an essential tool for navigating complex emotions and fostering a more positive outlook on life.

#### **Subtheme 3.1: Music's Role in Mood Balancing**

Participants in both groups described how music helped enhance positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment, and relaxation. Jib (Group 1, code PA05) noted, "I'm not easily dis-

tracted and don't obsess over things. Listening to music helps relieve loneliness and sets the mood. I occasionally listen to monks' sermons; this year is the first time I've started doing so." Tiew (Group 2, code AC06) shared, "When I'm alone, I just want to listen to music. It instantly responds to my mood. Some days, I seek calming music, while other days, I play lively songs and dance by myself." Both groups mentioned using music to alleviate stress and anxiety. Kai (Group 1, code PA01) said, "It helps us feel relaxed and shifts our mood, preventing confusion and stress." Noon (Group 2, code AC01) echoed this sentiment, stating, "When I feel frustrated with those around me—my kids, friends, or family—I retreat to my room to listen to music. It helps change my mood and allows me to forget the source of my anger."

### **Subtheme 3.2: Music's Ability to Relieve Fatigue**

This subtheme emphasizes the transformative impact of music, according to informants from both groups. They claimed that music both revitalizes their spirits and facilitates cognitive enhancement. Engaging with music stimulates the mind, contributing to improved memory and concentration. Ya (Group 1, code PA08) remarked, "It's probably a memory thing; it makes us listen and sing, helping us remember the lyrics and keeping our brains active. It prevents us from forgetting easily." Similarly, Pong (Group 2, code AC05) stated, "I believe music has beneficial effects, especially for the elderly. It plays a crucial role in our healing. We have the power to heal ourselves and don't need to rely on others. Sometimes I write songs when I'm free, which gives my life purpose and makes me feel valuable." This subtheme demonstrates the dual role of music in restoring physical vitality and mental acuity among older adults. This subtheme emphasizes the multifaceted role of music in mood balancing, revealing its potential to enhance emotional resilience and well-being among older adults.

## **Main Theme 4: Music as Lifelong Self-Improvement vs. Contemplation.**

Older adults in both groups shared varied experiences within this theme. Group 1 viewed music as a means of "Lifelong Self-Improvement." Group 2 saw it as "Lifelong Contemplation." These differing perspectives, shaped by participants' diverse backgrounds, offered valuable insights for each group within the fourth theme. Members of Group 1 examined three subthemes of "Music as Lifelong Self-Improvement." This theme demonstrates music's central role in lifelong learning and personal development. Participation in musical activities fosters empathy, patience, and an appreciation for beauty, linking musical ability to sophistication and social grace. Ultimately, music acts as a catalyst for growth, encouraging older adults to embrace new challenges and enrich their lives.

### **Subtheme 4.1 (Group 1): Acquiring Knowledge for Self-Improvement**

This subtheme emphasizes music as an essential tool for personal growth and knowledge across linguistic, social, and cultural dimensions. Participants noted that engaging with music deepened their appreciation for the Thai language and culture. Suay (Group 1, code PA04) shared that their mother learned English grammar by listening to Western music. "If we listened to that song frequently, we could learn many things – at least the grammar." This example illustrates music as an educational resource, allowing for natural absorption of language. Ya (Group 1, code PA08) remarked, "Music allowed me to experience the lives and emotions of others. Songs carry meanings like movies, resonating even after the artist is gone." This perspective emphasizes how music reflects social and cultural changes, fostering empathy and understanding. Overall, this subtheme underscores music's profound impact on lifelong learning and personal development.



#### **Subtheme 4.2 (Group 1): Promoting Positive Character Traits**

This subtheme emphasizes music's role in cultivating admirable qualities in Group 1. Participants remarked that engaging with music enhances personal skills while fostering refinement and social connections. Orn (Group 1, code PA01) expressed, *"I believe that those who can play music are refined individuals who know how to make friends and appreciate leisure and rest."* This perspective suggests that musical ability is linked to sophistication and social grace, encompassing traits like empathy, patience, and an appreciation for beauty.

#### **Subtheme 4.3 (Group 1): Embracing Lifelong Learning**

This subtheme highlights how older adults in Group 1 view music as a vital tool for personal development. Participants shared experiences of gaining new skills through various musical activities. Kai (Group 1, code PA02) illustrated this by describing how reconnecting with high school friends in the Suntaraporn band led him to learn singing techniques. He noted, *"They helped me with breathing and practicing the 'Buakaw' song, guiding my posture and encouraging improvement."* This experience emphasizes the supportive environment that fosters community and connection, further enriching their lives.

Older adults in Group 2 explored three subthemes of "Lifelong Contemplation," emphasizing music as a tool for introspection, personal growth, and deeper understanding. Participants expressed pride in their musical abilities and noted how music reconnects them with others and fosters development. Their experiences highlight music's transformative power, motivating engagement and enhancing connections with the world.

#### **Subtheme 4.1 (Group 2): Integrating Core Identity with Music**

This subtheme illustrates how the musical identities of people in Group 2 have become intertwined with their sense of self through regular engagement in music activities. Participants expressed that music is more than an interest; it is part of their identity, shaping their experiences and interactions. Their unique identities as musicians are often conveyed through their distinct singing voices or the sounds of their instruments. This integration of music into their identities allows them to express themselves in ways that words alone may not. Pong (Group 2, code AC05) said, *"I possess a whole musicianship. I met an old friend from high school who had never seen me play music, and when he heard me perform at a reunion in Ayutthaya last year, he exclaimed, 'Wow! What a divine level!'"* This moment not only reflects Pong's pride in his musical abilities but also emphasizes how music reconnects people with others and facilitates personal growth.

#### **Subtheme 4.2 (Group 2): Creating Meaning and Living a Valuable Life**

This subtheme illustrates how regular engagement with music gives the people in Group 2 a profound sense of value and purpose. Participants emphasized that music infuses their lives with meaning, making daily experiences more worthwhile. As Ta (Group 2, code AC08) stated, *"The only thing that keeps me alive is playing music. It gives my everyday life purpose and challenges me at this age. I don't want to grow old incompetently. I aspire to be a quality elderly person; for me, there is no retirement – I've been retired since I grew up."* This statement encapsulates the transformative power of music, by motivating individuals to remain engaged and proactive.

#### **Subtheme 4.3 (Group 2): Personal Growth with Understanding of the World and Life**

This subtheme reveals how music engagement significantly contributed to the personal growth and perspectives of people in Group 2. Participants noted that music shaped their musical identities while deepening their understanding of others and the world. As Aek (Group 2, code AC03) reflected, *"I used to be aggressive and hot-tempered, but music has transformed me into a kinder person who understands others' contexts."* Tiew (Group 2, code AC06) noted, *"I've become more understanding and less frustrated with others. After ten years of teaching, my perspective has shifted – I've learned to let go of high expectations and feel more at ease."* These reflections illustrate how engaging with music has broadened their understanding of life and enhanced their connections with others.

### **Discussion**

This study explored the experiences of healthy older adults in Thailand as they actively and passively engaged with music. Passive engagement consists of consuming music, such as listening to live or recorded performances; active participation includes creating music by playing instruments or singing. Two key findings are discussed here.

The role of music in enhancing health and well-being emerged as a prominent theme. The findings of this study support previous research on the significant benefits of active and passive participation in music for older adults in Thailand. Engaging with music both provides enjoyment and serves as a crucial aspect of identity, bringing joy, fulfillment and self-expression to their daily lives. Music allows older adults to build intergenerational relationships and strengthen family bonds. This social engagement helps combat feelings of isolation and enhances emotional resilience, creating a supportive network that contributes to their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Both active and passive participation in music strengthens social relationships, allowing older adults to engage in a variety of social activities. Participants reported improved connections with close family, acquaintances, and even strangers. This aligns with Southcott and Joseph (2013), who found that choir singing fosters a sense of community and belonging. Additionally, music activities enable older adults to express their identities and maintain their well-being. Many participants noted that playing and listening to music increased their joy and happiness while reducing boredom and irritability (Hays and Minichiello, 2005). Moreover, music promotes relaxation and alleviates fatigue, leaving older adults feeling invigorated, with some likening it to water for the mind. These findings resonate with studies by Greasley and Lamont (2011), which found that individuals who listen to music 21 to 40 hours per week are more likely to select music that helps manage their emotions or enhances specific activities. Laukka's (2007) research on older Swedish adults similarly showed that music is a popular leisure activity used to manage emotions, create enjoyment, and induce relaxation. Baker and Ballantyne (2013) also observed that older adults who engaged in music activities reported enjoyment and good health. While this study focuses on older Thai adults, the results are consistent with previous studies involving older adults in amateur music activities (Hays and Minichiello, 2005). This consistency underscores music's critical role in fostering emotional and physical well-being while providing valuable lifelong learning experiences and a sense of accomplishment (Southcott and Joseph, 2013; Li and Southcott, 2015).

It is important to note that this study was limited to healthy older adults without neuro-cognitive disorders. Additionally, the findings indicate that members of both groups have engaged with music since childhood. Family and community are crucial in instilling an interest in movement, influencing older adults to develop a love for music and integrate it into their daily lives. This ongoing engagement contributes to strengthened social relationships, continuous self-improvement, and overall well-being.

In addition, the differing impacts of passive and active participation in music were noteworthy. This study addresses a gap in the research by exploring the unique benefits of active versus passive engagement in music among older Thai adults. While previous studies have shown that active and passive participation can enhance well-being, active participation offers additional advantages, including improvement in cognitive processes, enhanced emotional responses, a deeper sense of life meaning, increased self-acceptance, and a stronger sense of identity (Packer and Ballantyne, 2010). The study reveals notable differences in self-development between the two groups. For those engaging passively with music, the impact is significant; it facilitates lifelong learning and cultivates positive traits like attention to detail and the ability to relax. This passive engagement often leads to enjoyment and appreciation of music, providing a soothing backdrop to daily life. In contrast, older adults who are actively engaged with music see it as integral to their identity, helping them create meaning in their lives and enriching their understanding of the world.

Older adults who simply consume music consider it a pastime that they engage in for entertainment and self-development. They appreciate music as a source of relaxation and fulfillment, but it is not part of their core identity. They noted that music enhances their social activities, so that they can connect with others across generations and acting as a catalyst for personal growth. Conversely, older adults who actively participate in music liken it to a part of their body that they cannot do without. This metaphor emphasizes their deep emotional and spiritual connection to music, suggesting it shapes their experiences and interactions with the world. They recognized music as crucial for building and enhancing social relationships, articulating how it not only improves their mood but also serves as a source of connection, community, and personal expression. They expressed pride in their musical abilities and noted how music reconnects them with others and fosters development. Their experiences emphasize music's transformative power, motivating engagement and deepening connections with the world.

These findings align with Hay and Minichiello (2005), who noted that listening to and playing music, and singing all enable older adults to explore their identities and emotions. Active participation is a powerful means of communication, allowing individuals to express themselves more authentically. Members of the active group likely have a long-standing relationship with music, leading to deeper integration of music into their identities and a more pronounced development of their psychological identity than passive consumers of music. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that while both forms of participation offer valuable benefits, the emotional and psychological connections forged through active engagement significantly enhance self-development and identity formation in older adults. This distinction highlights the importance of fostering opportunities for active musical participation in community programs and interventions aimed at improving the well-being of older populations.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The study confirms the centrality of music in the lives of older adults, often mentioning its multifaceted role in enhancing health and well-being. Music fosters social connections across generations, helping to combat isolation and contributing to emotional health through supportive community interactions. The study also distinguishes passive from active participation in music. Although both offer substantial benefits, active engagement—such as performing or creating music—brings additional advantages, including improved cognitive processes, greater emotional expression, and a stronger sense of identity. In contrast, passive engagement, like listening to music, promotes lifelong learning and relaxation, enriching daily experiences. These findings have implications for policymakers and service providers as they consider the diverse needs of older adults. Local policies and community interventions may focus on the importance of incorporating both active and passive music participation into community programs for older adults in Thailand to enhance their health and well-being. Initiatives such as music classes, community choirs, and listening sessions can encourage participation and promote lifelong learning. Organizations can design programs that offer opportunities for both performances and music creation, catering to diverse preferences. To maximize benefits, there should be efforts to encourage older adults to engage in singing, playing instruments, and joining music groups, with accessible workshops and classes. Policymakers can advocate for funding to support these initiatives, ensuring their accessibility. In sum, a balanced approach to musical engagement is essential, recognizing the unique benefits of both active and passive participation to improve the quality of life for older adults.

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# Reformatting the Performing Arts: Wayang Climen

## *as a Tradition-Based Entertainment Solution for Urban Audiences in Yogyakarta*

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### Abstract

The reformulation of Wayang performances into Wayang Climen has provided a fresh avenue for urban audiences to access tradition-based entertainment, which plays a crucial role in the transmission of cultural knowledge and values. After limited performance opportunities due to COVID-19 restrictions, puppeteers are now vying to put on elaborate performances. However, such performances are often expensive, space-intensive, and lengthy, making them inaccessible for urban communities with restricted resources. This study explores how puppeteers have reimagined performances by streamlining their duration, reducing venue requirements, and narrowing thematic focus to retain the essence of traditional Wayang while making it accessible to urban audiences. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research examined "Wargo Laras," group in Yogyakarta. Data collection methods included observations of performances and in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that Wayang Climen have successfully redefined traditional Wayang by adopting a more flexible structure and maximizing available performance elements within compact settings.

**Keywords:** *Reformatting Performing Arts, Traditional Base, Wayang Climen, Urban Society, Shadow Puppets, Indonesia*

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## Introduction

Urban communities, often lacking access to tradition-based entertainment that fosters the transmission of cultural knowledge and values, are gaining new opportunities through efforts to reformat Wayang or shadow puppet performances. This research highlights the significant work of various dalangs or puppeteers who have innovatively adapted the traditional Wayang format without sacrificing its cultural essence. Originally, Wayang performances were lengthy, requiring substantial venues and incurring high organizational costs; however, these have been transformed into shorter, more accessible versions with reduced costs, which can appeal to urban audiences. Various artists have attempted to make Wayang more relatable to urban settings, such as Nanang HP's Wayang Urban (Kompas.com) and Jliteng Suparman's Wayang Kampung Sebelah (WKS, 2024). Yet, these adaptations have yet to achieve broad popularity among urban audiences. A promising alternative is Wayang Climen (climen literary means brief or what is necessary), which brings renewed hope for urban engagement with tradition-rooted entertainment. This phenomenon merits deeper exploration, as Wayang Climen aligns well with urban lifestyles entertainment while preserving essential cultural elements rooted in traditions.

To date, few comprehensive studies focus on shadow puppet or Wayang performances specifically designed for urban communities. Existing research typically centers on other forms of wayang, such as Wayang Orang, Wayang Beber, and Wayang Kampung Sebelah. For instance, Ashari (2015) examined the resilience of Wayang Orang in Solo, especially within the Sriwedari performance group, amidst modern communication technological advances. Murni (2014) explored the creative process and visual characteristics of Wayang Beber Kota in Surakarta, while Haryadi (2018) addressed the urban narratives embedded in Wayang Beber Metropolitan. Studies like Purwasito and Pitono's (2017) work on Wayang Kampung Sebelah analyzed its adaptation within modern Javanese society. Seminal works, such as *The Dalang Behind the Wayang* (1985) and *Phenomenology of Puppet Theater* (2005), offer anthropological perspectives on Wayang but primarily address traditional rural settings rather than the urban context. Moreover, these studies do not delve into strategies employed by puppeteers to engage urban audiences or attract sponsors—both critical aspects for the art's sustainability in cities. Given the untapped potential of urban sponsorship and audience engagement, research focused on reformatting Wayang for urban audiences remains a relevant area of study.

The purpose of this research is to complement the shortcomings of previous studies that have not paid attention to wayang performances for urban communities. Previous studies have focused more on pop wayang shows or spectacular wayang shows. To bridge this gap, this paper addresses three issues related to (1) the shortening of performance duration, which provides more open access to the wayang audience; (2) simplification of the performance space/venue, which has implications for reducing the financial burden of organizing wayang performances; and (3) simplification of story themes that are contextual to urban society, which can attract urban audiences who lack knowledge about the world of wayang. The discussion of these three matters provides knowledge about the Wayang Climen performance which is an alternative tradition-based entertainment for urban people who do not have much time, place, and money. These three things will be described sequentially in the subsections of this article.

The central argument of this article is that wayang performances should be redefined for urban audiences. Traditional wayang, a product of the palace culture of the keraton era, maintains an aesthetic, thematic, and stylistic structure that reflects royal court or keraton

traditions. However, as society evolves, so too must the structure of wayang to align with the aesthetics, ethics, realities, and tastes of contemporary urban culture. Reducing the performance duration from an all-night event to 2-3 hours enables urban audiences, who often prioritize time and efficiency, to enjoy wayang without compromising their next-day commitments. Simplifying the performance space addresses the reality of limited urban spaces and minimizes production costs, making wayang performances more affordable and feasible for city communities to host. Additionally, simplifying Wayang Climen story-lines offers a refreshing, accessible format that retains the depth of its messages, inviting audiences with minimal background in traditional wayang to enjoy the performances.

## Literature Review

### Reformatting as a Means of Adaptation in Performing Arts

Reformatting is the process of adapting or rearranging artworks to suit new mediums and audiences without altering their core essence (Baera et al., 2023). In this regard, Lischer-Katz (2022) suggests that reformatting requires artists to bring innovation and creativity, enabling the artwork to not only adapt to the new medium but also meet the evolving needs of audiences. In performing arts, reformatting typically involves transforming a performance from a large stage and lengthy duration to a more concise and accessible format (Dalila & Hidajad, 2022; Li et al., 2021). The transformation process, as noted by Putra & Soewarlan (2022), became especially relevant when artists faced restrictions on live performances during events like the Covid-19 pandemic. To fill the creative void, artists turned to digital platforms as an alternative means of producing and presenting performing arts. This shift aimed to preserve the interactive, dynamic exchange between artists and audiences despite physical limitations (Hartini & Haryati, 2023; Putra & Soewarlan, 2022).

In recent years, reformatting in performing arts has seen considerable advancements, particularly in the simplification and shortening of content (Serdaroglu, 2020). Traditional art forms like theater, dance, and music, often performed live over extended durations, are now being adapted into more compact formats for platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Baldin et al., 2024; Christensen, 2022). Gono & Rakhmad (2021) found that social media requires artists to present works in shorter durations—often in minutes or even seconds. A common reformatting approach is the conversion of performances into streaming videos, which allows audiences to access these art forms at their convenience, as seen in the adaptation of wayang performances (Escobar Varela, 2019; Jufry et al., 2024). Thus, reformatting serves not only as a method for updating traditional works but also as a tool for expanding their cultural relevance and audience reach in the modern era (Liu et al., 2022). Embracing the concept of reformatting is essential for sustaining and innovating within the performing arts, allowing them to resonate with contemporary audiences while maintaining their traditional essence.

### Traditional Base

Tradition, or the "traditional base," encompasses a set of values, norms, practices, and customs passed down across generations within a community (Anoegrajekti et al., 2018; Asavei, 2021; Elfondri et al., 2021). This broad concept of tradition includes cultural activities such as art, rituals, language, and value systems that provide a foundational frame-

work for strengthening communal bonds (Pekka Korhonen & Adam Cathcart, 2017; Shevko, 2020; Smorchkov, 2021). According to Bisyarda (2016), tradition serves not only as cultural heritage but also as a means of sustaining values and practices rooted in historical and collective experience. In the realm of art, tradition plays a critical role in creating works that mirror social realities, often acting as a medium for expressing cultural identity (Hudayana, 2021; Kalista et al., 2024). Artistic creations grounded in tradition frequently embody symbolic meanings that connect individuals to their community, reinforcing a sense of belonging to their cultural heritage.

Tradition impacts multiple aspects of human life for several reasons. Firstly, it represents a community's identity, serving as a defining characteristic of its distinct cultural traits (Kistanto, 2016). Secondly, tradition functions as a societal regulator, offering guidelines that shape interpersonal behavior and community interaction (Alavi & Azizi, 2021; Limbu, 2020; Vaško et al., 2020). Thirdly, tradition acts as a platform for social interaction, facilitating communal bonds (Montasir et al., 2023; Yohana, 2023; Zhakaeva, 2021). Moreover, tradition provides a basis for community policy, passing down a set of norms and values across generations (Adom, 2019; Fernando & Larasati, 2024; Imamah et al., 2024). In this regard, tradition plays a crucial role in shaping collective awareness, beliefs, and norms within society (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020; Steffensen & Havgaard, 2020; Idrus, 2014). As Nurhadi et al. (2018) suggest, tradition manifests in symbols, music, art performances, and traditional rituals within daily life, thereby legitimizing societal worldviews, beliefs, and norms.

### Urban Society

The term "urban" is an adjective describing anything associated with cities or urbanized areas. When applied to people, "urban" often refers to individuals or communities who have migrated from rural villages to cities. Jean Paul (n.d.) observed that urban society tends to prioritize knowledge, and he noted that it is characterized by high levels of mobilization and centralization. In terms of urban management, cities are often structured with advanced layouts and a strong emphasis on knowledge and innovation (Addie, 2017). Research by Fuller and Stevens (2019) highlights how urban societies are closely linked to domestic spaces, which urban residents utilize in various ways to promote their social and economic development. They argue that urban communities face a wide range of domestic challenges, leading them to creatively adapt their environments to address these needs.

Other studies address the political complexities within urban communities. According to Smiechowski (2021), urban societies are deeply intertwined with political dynamics, often exhibiting intense political competition and varying degrees of politicization. Modern urban communities can be categorized by specific criteria related to their ways of life and knowledge advancement. Mamichev and Dergacheva (2021) distinguish between two types of urban societies: "biosphere urban communities" and "technosphere urban communities." Biosphere urban communities depend on natural resources and maintain a close relationship with nature, both individually and collectively. Technosphere urban communities, on the other hand, rely on artificial technology, with a lifestyle dominated by manufactured and controlled technological systems. The reliance on technology in technosphere urban societies reflects the broader trend of urban environments where controlled, human-made advancements support daily life. The lifestyle of urban society is also closely associated with work and the bustling activities of city life (González, 2021). Based on the findings of

several studies, modern urban communities are heavily influenced by technological advancements, which shape their lifestyles and interactions. Consequently, traditional rituals and symbolic practices within urban communities are often infused with or modified by modern, knowledge-driven perspectives.

### Methodology

This study was conducted in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a city renowned for its rich cultural heritage, particularly its traditional arts like wayang (shadow puppet) performances. Despite Yogyakarta's cultural vibrancy, the frequency of wayang performances has been declining. This trend is largely due to the conventional wayang formats that require large venues and considerable funding, making them inaccessible to a broader audience. With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, public activities have resumed, including wayang performances. However, many dalangs (puppet masters) have gravitated towards staging conventional, large-scale performances that entail high costs. This model restricts wayang's accessibility for the majority of the population, especially those without access to large spaces or the means to fund such events. Typically, only wealthy individuals or organizations with access to significant resources can afford to host these elaborate performances.

This qualitative research employs a case study approach to explore and understand Wayang Climen, an alternative, condensed format of wayang performance that is more accessible for urban audiences. Observational data was collected through live performances and recorded shows available on YouTube, with particular focus on wayang performances by the Wargo Laras group. The group was selected based on two criteria: (1) its high frequency of performances, and (2) the group was the first to adopt the Wayang Climen format during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, Wargo Laras, under the leadership of renowned dalang Seno Nugroho (SN), was among the most active wayang groups in Yogyakarta, performing almost daily across various regions in Indonesia. With a large fanbase throughout the country, their shows consistently attracted significant audiences.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, restrictions on public gatherings forced Wargo Laras to halt their live performances temporarily. In response, the group innovated by creating Wayang Climen, a shorter, two-hour wayang performance streamed live and subsequently uploaded to YouTube. This adaptation was met with an overwhelmingly positive response, garnering thousands of online viewers (Merdeka.com). For each show, Wayang Climen led to a surge in requests from individuals, companies, and agencies for live-streamed studio performances, underscoring a growing demand for tradition-based entertainment that is accessible in format and scope.

The informants for this study include leaders and members of the Wargo Laras group, performance sponsors, and audience members. Members of the Wargo Laras group consist of the dalang (puppeteer), pengrawit (gamelan musicians), and sinden (female vocalists). Interviews were conducted with sponsors who organize Wayang Climen performances and with active audience members who engage with the performance.

Data collection began with a review of secondary sources, including Jliteng Superman's blog and performance recordings available on YouTube. This was followed by in-depth interviews with key informants, such as the leader of the Wargo Laras group, performing puppeteers (dalangs), vocalists (sindens), sponsors, and audience members. Data analysis was performed following the methodology outlined by Miles and Huberman (2014). During data reduction, data were organized based on themes and objectives, and displayed through tables, illustrations, images, and quotations. Verification involved linking data points to establish internal coherence, followed by situating the data within its socio-cultural context to ensure further validation.

## Results

Wayang Climen is a wayang performance that has been restructured to align with contemporary trends and meet the needs of modern audiences. The reformatting of Wayang Climen is evident in three key findings from this study.

### Shortening the Duration of the Performance

The duration of the Wayang Climen performance was reduced by simplifying scenes and focusing on the main characters. This reformatting reduced the traditional all-night puppet show, typically lasting around 7 hours, to a shorter, more accessible format. Figure 1 and 2 provide further details on this context.

No	Story /Play	Show duration	Source
1	Semar Mbangun Kayangan (Semar Build Heaven)	2:16:39	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/kaBLbBFC3Og?si=juunKn5srQVcDIAH">https://www.youtube.com/live/kaBLbBFC3Og?si=juunKn5srQVcDIAH</a>
2	Semar Mantu (Semar Wedding)	2:17:35	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/N5QuGBsvmYY?si=o4eRqMq-VBjTt0-4">https://www.youtube.com/live/N5QuGBsvmYY?si=o4eRqMq-VBjTt0-4</a>
3	Petruk Dadi Ratu (Petruk Become King)	3:07:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/W41VrkvGE5M?si=eeNFURv4iR7C0Byc">https://www.youtube.com/live/W41VrkvGE5M?si=eeNFURv4iR7C0Byc</a>
4	Catur Sagotra	2:34:51	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/KgWYy1mlyPI?si=cbHe7_0vSw2L-8Vj">https://www.youtube.com/live/KgWYy1mlyPI?si=cbHe7_0vSw2L-8Vj</a>
5	Kresna Duta (Kresna as Envoy)	3:17:46	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/0lz6G9hJibw?si=M2ZBuN_cm8yaEn0i">https://www.youtube.com/live/0lz6G9hJibw?si=M2ZBuN_cm8yaEn0i</a>
6	Bima Sakti	2:16:15	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/vPQuLxuxZhA?si=pyH31uDz5tlyR7JU">https://www.youtube.com/live/vPQuLxuxZhA?si=pyH31uDz5tlyR7JU</a>
7	Bima Labuh (Bima Bumbu)	3:40:47	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/NTZyjp1fyil?si=WMhDjUbSa2nFU31z">https://www.youtube.com/live/NTZyjp1fyil?si=WMhDjUbSa2nFU31z</a>
8	Bima Bungkus (Bima Born)	2:38:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/67PBVmrAtpc?si=0nEF0KplYPRSyumN">https://www.youtube.com/live/67PBVmrAtpc?si=0nEF0KplYPRSyumN</a>
9	Pandhawa Nawur Kawula	2:54:18	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/Z0h0j2vEKc4?si=yTlvwlxjRna7kthA">https://www.youtube.com/live/Z0h0j2vEKc4?si=yTlvwlxjRna7kthA</a>
10	Pandhawa Makarti (Pandawa Working)	2:22:50	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/hh191ddS0Aw?si=IN3jW_EIVddguTyP">https://www.youtube.com/live/hh191ddS0Aw?si=IN3jW_EIVddguTyP</a>

Figure 1. Duration of Wayang Climen performance by Wargo Laras.

Patet	Scene	Country/setting (12)	Figure (30)
Nem 21.00 - 00.30	I	Amarta (1)	Puntadewa (1), Bima (2), Arjuna (3), Nakula (4), Sadewa (5), Krisna (6), Petruk (7)
	II Limbukan	Keputren (2)	Limbuk (8), Cangik (9)
	III	Paseban Jawi (3)	Petruk, Antasena (10), Gatutkaca (11), Setyaki (12)
	IV	Suralaya (4)	Guru (13), Narada (14), Krisna, Arjuna, Pasukan Bajobarat (15)
	V	Kendalisada (5)	Anoman (16), Malingraga (17), Malingsuksma (18)
Sanga 00.30- 03.00	VI Gara-gara	Araaramba (6)	Gareng (19), Petruk, Bagong (21), Semar (22)
	VII	Karangkadempel (7)	Semar, Anoman (23), Abimanyu (24), Puntadewa, Bima, Nakula, Sadewa, Anoman, Antareja (25)
	VIII	Alang-Alangkumitir (8)	Semar, Wenang (26)
	IX	Pacrabakan (9)	Abimanyu, Anoman, Gatutkaca, Antareja, Malingsuksma, Abimanyu, Malingsuksma
	X	Krendayana (10)	Malingsuksma, Durga (27)
Manyura 03.30- 04.30	XI	Perut Semar (11)	Wenang, Puntadewa, Bima, Nakula, Sadewa, Nurcahya (28),
	XII	Karangkadempel (12)	Jajalwreka (29), Semar, Bagong, Krisna, Harimau (30), Pasukan Bajobarat

Figure 2. Table division of scene elements of conventional wayang performance Semar Mbangun Kayangan (Semar Builds Heaven) play by Hadi Sugito (<https://id.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=semar+mbangun+kayangan+ki+hadi+sugito&type=E210ID739G0#id=1&vid=1bec6d73fb517145dc241abd3ed1a39e&action=click>).

Patet	Scene	Country/setting (4)	Figure (12)
Nem 20.00- 21.30	I	Amarta (1)	Puntadewa(1), Bima (2), Arjuna (3), Nakula (4), Sadewa (5), Krisna (6), Bagong (7)
	II	Boundary of Amarta (2)	Krisna, Durga, Raksasa (8), Jajalwreka (9)
Sanga 21.30- 22.00	III	Karangkadempel (3)	Gareng (10), Petruk (11), Bagong
	IV	Karangkadempel	Semar (12), Puntadewa, Arjuna, Bima, Antasena
Manyura 22.00- 22.30	V	Batas Karangkadempel (4)	Semar, Jajalwreka, Krisna
	VI	Karangkadempel	Semar, Krisna, Puntadewa, Petruk, Bagong

Figure 3. Table division of scene elements of Wayang Climen performance Semar Mbangun Kayangan (Semar Builds Heaven) play by Seno Nugroho (<https://www.youtube.com/live/kaBLbBFC3Og?si=juunKn5srQVcDJAH>).

Figure 3 shows that the duration of Wayang Climen performances ranges from 2 to 3 hours, typically starting at 8 p.m. and finishing between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. This is a significant reduction compared to traditional wayang performances, which generally run from 9 p.m. until 4 a.m., lasting around 7 – 8 hours. This reduction in duration is achieved through a simplified performance structure. By comparing the structure of the play Semar Bangun Kayangan in both the conventional and Wayang Climen formats, one can observe the shifts, reductions, and modifications made in the performance. In the Wayang Climen format, the play lasts approximately 2 hours, compared to 7,5 hours in the traditional format (Figure 2 and 3).

The conventional wayang performance structure comprises IX court scenes divided across three segments, or *patet*: *Patet Nem* (scenes I - IV), *Patet Sanga* (scenes V and VII), and *Patet Manyura* (scenes VIII and IX). In *Wayang Climen*, the duration is shortened by reducing the number of scenes, focusing only on the essential parts of the story. This creates a streamlined narrative with a simplified conflict. Such adjustments were confirmed by the following informant:

The short duration requires the dismantling of the performance structure so that the short duration does not reduce the quality of the all-night performance, and that the audience still gets a complete presentation of the play. To maintain the quality of the performance in a shorter time frame, the structural adjustments involve modifications in plot, language, and characterization. These adjustments include: Plot reorganization: Crafting an effective scene layout that flows continuously, with reduced pauses between scenes. Language simplification: Making the language more communicative and accessible for modern audiences. Characterization enhancement: Strengthening character portrayals and behaviors to make the characters more vibrant. For example, scenes involving *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* are omitted, while *Panakawan* and *Limbuk-Cangik* are reinterpreted as main characters integrated into the primary storyline rather than appearing as side characters.

Efforts to reduce the duration of wayang performances have been ongoing since the 1980s. The Department of Puppetry at the Karawitan Academy of Surakarta developed *Wayang Padat*, while Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta introduced *Komposisi Pakeliran* in 1989. Artistically, *Jliteng Suparman* pioneered *Wayang Climen* in 2010, but these early attempts did not achieve sustained popularity. The turning point came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when social restrictions (PSBB) prevented gatherings. In response, *Seno Nugroho* (SN) and the *Wargo Laras* group began performing *Wayang Climen*, broadcasting live from the *Wargo Laras* studio and uploading performances to YouTube, which drew widespread sponsor interest. This success led other puppeteers to adapt, with *Manteb Sudarsono* launching *Wayang Online* and *Purbo Asmoro* introducing *Wayang Virtual* (figure 4). These performances were streamed from homes or studios via YouTube channels (figure 5, left). During the PSBB and subsequent Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) phases, *Wayang Climen* performances were held at the homes of viewers or sponsors, allowing public access while following health protocols (figure 5, right). However, as the pandemic subsided, many puppeteers returned to conventional formats, despite the significant market potential *Wayang Climen* offers for urban audiences.

No	Puppeteer	Show name	Source
1	Seno Nugroho	Wayang Climen	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/laexx3SoFqA?si=yY0Ojb0yvsuEaRrx">https://www.youtube.com/live/laexx3SoFqA?si=yY0Ojb0yvsuEaRrx</a>
2	Jliteng Suparman	Wayang Climen	<a href="https://youtu.be/V1UnVmcX7Es?si=PJKXiX6lTPBjGq1Y">https://youtu.be/V1UnVmcX7Es?si=PJKXiX6lTPBjGq1Y</a>
3	Manteb Sudharsono	Wayang Online	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/ljECrImW4TQ?si=MJI5DVsk0o56EIPh">https://www.youtube.com/live/ljECrImW4TQ?si=MJI5DVsk0o56EIPh</a>
4	Purbo Asmoro	Wayang Virtual	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/j3MVB9S_W7U?si=nNYU98oyMjqcIEFe">https://www.youtube.com/live/j3MVB9S_W7U?si=nNYU98oyMjqcIEFe</a>
5	Cahyo Kuntadi	Wayang Elektrik	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/H2ixUbldH-0?si=vUtxy4eNLGd2Kh-w">https://www.youtube.com/live/H2ixUbldH-0?si=vUtxy4eNLGd2Kh-w</a>
6	Sigid Aryanto	Wayang Online	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/rYsdRVEJO6c?si=30UAOcmUVBq3bqCL">https://www.youtube.com/live/rYsdRVEJO6c?si=30UAOcmUVBq3bqCL</a>

Figure 4. Shows various terms used by the puppeters to name their versions of *Wayang Climen*.



WYANG KLIT		KI SENDU NUGROHO	
UPCOMING SHOW		OCTOBER 2020	
02 OKT '20	CLIMEN-HUT ke 25, PT. Widodo Makmur Perkasa (Pendopo Sedayu)	05	Climen-Muhammad Prakosa Anggota DPR MPR RI fraksi PDI P Dalang: [Ki Eko "Egoet"]
08 OKT '20	CLIMEN-HUT ke 39 Paguyuban Warga Kab. Bantul (Pendopo Sedayu)	12	Climen-Ibu Hj. Ginijanti Dalang: [Ni Elisha Orcarus A.]
10 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Bapak Nawardi dan Ibu Sri mulatih, Kotagede, Yogyakarta. (Pendopo Sedayu)	18	Climen-SMK Taman Siswa Nanggulan Dalang: [Ki Geter Pramuji Widodo]
11 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Bpk. Drs. Bambang Wisnu Handoyo (Pendopo Sedayu)	19	Climen-PT. Irawan Djaja Agung Dalang: [Ki Kiswan Dwinawaska]
15 OKT '20	SEBALU NATAS-Aula Kantor Desa Purwokerto, Kec. Ngadiluwih, Kab. Kediri, Jatim (Tertutup untuk umum)	26	Climen-Bpk. Fx. Suprianto Dalang: [Ki Geter Pramuji Widodo]
16 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Ibu Sugiyarti, Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan, Banten (Pendopo Sedayu)	28	Climen-Gereja St. Petrus Pekalongan Dalang: [Ni Elisha Orcarus A.]
17 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Bpk. Nanok, Jakarta (Pendopo Sedayu)	29	Climen-Sri Lestari, Klaten Dalang: [Ki Sumaryono]
18 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Bpk. Isardiadi, Jakarta Timur (Pendopo Sedayu)	30	Climen-Ibu Hesti Sunu Dalang: [Ki Geter Pramuji Widodo]
21 OKT '20	CLIMEN- WJNC (Wayang Jogja Night Carnival), di Balakota DIY. (Tertutup untuk umum)		
23 OKT '20	CLIMEN- PT. Irawan Djaja Agung (Pendopo Sedayu)		
24 OKT '20	CLIMEN- HUT UMS ke 62 (Pendopo Sedayu)		
28 OKT '20	CLIMEN- PT. Sejahtera Damai Berkarisma kerjasama PWKS Jabodetabek (Pendopo Sedayu)		
29 OKT '20	CLIMEN- Yayasan Pangudi Luhur Pusat Jl. dr. Sutomo No 4 Semarang, Jawa Tengah. (Pendopo Sedayu)		
31 OKT '20	CLIMEN- KEMENDIKBUD. Dirjend Kebudayaan, Jakarta (Pendopo Sedayu)		
JADWAL BERSIFAT SEMENTARA. SEWAKTU-WAKTU BAPAT BERUBAH		JADWAL BERSIFAT SEMENTARA. SEWAKTU-WAKTU BAPAT BERUBAH	
BALANG SENDU @BALANGSENDU LIVE @WARDIARAS_CLASSIC BALANGSENDU LIVE		@dalangsenaonline @wardiara_classic @darmusda DalangSena Live	

Figure 5. Wayang Climen performances schedule in 2020 during PSBB (left) and 2021 during PPKM (right).

### Simplification of Performance Space

Wayang Climen performances require only a modest physical space, which is considerably smaller than that needed for conventional wayang. The setup involves a simplified 3-meter screen and a limited set of gamelan instruments. A single set of Slendro gamelan, typically played by five or six musicians, suffices for the performance. In contrast, traditional wayang performances generally demand a stage at least 8 x 10 square meters in size, 2 sets of gamelan instruments, (Pelog and Slendro), and 14 musicians. This reduction in space requirements allows Wayang Climen to be performed in more accessible urban venues, such as a village hall measuring 4 x 6 square meters—an ideal setting for these compact, adaptable performances.



Figure 6. Wayang Climen stage (left) and conventional performance (right).

Wayang Climen performances play a vital role in restoring the habitat of wayang performances, as emphasized by following informant:

Historically, Wayang performances were hosted in the open yards of homes, making them accessible as a community-centered art form. However, with living spaces becoming increasingly limited, especially in urban areas, it is often impractical to set up the large 8 x 10 square meter stage typically required for traditional wayang. This spatial limitation has led to the need for a reimagined, compact format that can fit more easily within contemporary living conditions.

The simplified space requirements of Wayang Climen have significant financial implications, making it a more affordable option for organizing wayang performances. Traditional wayang involves considerable costs, including honoraria for the dalang (puppeteer) and crew, as well as rental fees for a full set of gamelan instruments and a comprehensive sound system. In contrast, Wayang Climen's minimalistic setup, with a smaller screen and reduced gamelan ensemble, lowers both the spatial and equipment demands. The performance typically involves a smaller team: five musicians (pengrawit), two sindens (female singers), one live streaming operator, and one sound system operator. This format keeps the costs manageable, with typical expenses ranging between IDR 5,000,000 and IDR 10,000,000, making it affordable for many families or urban communities in Yogyakarta, as expressed by the following informant:

By reducing the equipment and spatial requirements, Wayang Climen creates a financially accessible option for those interested in preserving and enjoying Wayang performances. Traditional Wayang shows can be prohibitively expensive, limiting their reach to wealthier audiences. Wayang Climen offers an economically viable alternative, thereby broadening access to this cultural art form and ensuring its sustainability in modern urban environments.

### **Simplification of the Story Theme (Wayang Scripts)**

The themes or storylines in Wayang Climen performances are light-hearted, contextual, and highly entertaining. Unlike traditional wayang, which often centers on epic heroes like Arjuna, Bima, and Krishna, Wayang Climen focuses on more relatable, humorous characters—particularly the punakawan figures: Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. Notably, the character Bagong frequently appears as the lead in various stories (see Table 6), which is an uncommon practice in conventional Wayang performances. Traditional Wayang typically emphasizes characters from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, where the punakawan only feature in specific comedic or interlude scenes, such as the Limbukan and Gara-gara scenes. In Wayang Climen, however, the punakawan are interwoven throughout the main scenes alongside the story's central characters. In fact those characters are transformed into main characters by the dalang.

This approach, with its accessible and contextually relevant themes, allows audiences – particularly those less familiar with traditional Wayang – to engage with the performance and follow the story more easily. By blending humor and familiar, everyday character interactions, Wayang Climen creates an inclusive storytelling experience that broadens its appeal and preserves the essence of Wayang within a modern framework.

No.	Wayang Climen Play	Source
1	Bagong Lara (Bagong Sick)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/0bjpQSbReKk?si=47EjDFfVWys2fb-K">https://www.youtube.com/live/0bjpQSbReKk?si=47EjDFfVWys2fb-K</a>
2	Bagong Rabi (Bagong Married)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/ljuINctF1B4?si=R_MYs9ONjLex4-xl">https://www.youtube.com/live/ljuINctF1B4?si=R_MYs9ONjLex4-xl</a>
3	Bagong Ruwat (Bagong do Purification Ceremony)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/hWkJZhqycNQ?si=nPA2pPlmUKnhOhF">https://www.youtube.com/live/hWkJZhqycNQ?si=nPA2pPlmUKnhOhF</a>
4	Bagong Pandhita (Bagong becomes a Shaman)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/Iq1U0pHMMRs?si=zJ6KgVDoApjk17Xj">https://www.youtube.com/live/Iq1U0pHMMRs?si=zJ6KgVDoApjk17Xj</a>
5	Bagong Krida (Bagong Works Hard)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/JZ0UfUYyWDM?si=4MdrZjeAgGbGdaOD">https://www.youtube.com/live/JZ0UfUYyWDM?si=4MdrZjeAgGbGdaOD</a>
7	Bagong Kembar 3 (Triplets Bagong)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/zeUNaC69mfM?si=YToomzKsv8-i7kx0">https://www.youtube.com/live/zeUNaC69mfM?si=YToomzKsv8-i7kx0</a>
8	Bagong merantau (Bagong Goes Away)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/5S74hYiLmyE?si=Jl2w15C-RBzz1N3u">https://www.youtube.com/live/5S74hYiLmyE?si=Jl2w15C-RBzz1N3u</a>
9	Bagong Kuliah-Bagong Mbangun Kampus (Bagong Lecture)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/u29t0g-wCRE?si=5WkX7O609pjOlkUP">https://www.youtube.com/live/u29t0g-wCRE?si=5WkX7O609pjOlkUP</a>
10	Bagong Ratu (Bagong becomes King)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/7TMSDgflJJw?si=tSjJwkExXg2pxc-hn">https://www.youtube.com/live/7TMSDgflJJw?si=tSjJwkExXg2pxc-hn</a>
11	Bagong Duta (Bagong becomes an Envoy)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/6NBANKzQgSI?si=bzNbrS_6-BQFC7ih">https://www.youtube.com/live/6NBANKzQgSI?si=bzNbrS_6-BQFC7ih</a>
12	Bagong Mbangun Pabrik (Bagong Builds a Factory)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/EkqLCqiGtLc?si=6Fm5iNOjbelVAeVc">https://www.youtube.com/live/EkqLCqiGtLc?si=6Fm5iNOjbelVAeVc</a>
13	Bagong Mbangun SPBU (Bagong builds a gas station)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/9_RWp7LSctf?si=zVCcWN8UyCR4ApOE">https://www.youtube.com/live/9_RWp7LSctf?si=zVCcWN8UyCR4ApOE</a>
14	Bagong Convicted	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/l3Fy4izM7hY?si=IYCI_YgIca0lhhy1">https://www.youtube.com/live/l3Fy4izM7hY?si=IYCI_YgIca0lhhy1</a>
15	Bagong Mbagun Pawiyatan (Bagong Builds University)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/Csln1c-UsVQ?si=xj9r6Co18y5g_xCe">https://www.youtube.com/live/Csln1c-UsVQ?si=xj9r6Co18y5g_xCe</a>
16	Bagong Mbangun Padepokan (Bagong Builds a Padepokan)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/C2C2RZ2X0nU?si=357G1z--a9ljmcT9">https://www.youtube.com/live/C2C2RZ2X0nU?si=357G1z--a9ljmcT9</a>
17	Bagong Mbangun Desa (Bagong Builds the Village)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/QzR383x-Zzg?si=nF96fgov3hPaQPGQ">https://www.youtube.com/live/QzR383x-Zzg?si=nF96fgov3hPaQPGQ</a>
18	Bagong Mbrantas Korupsi (Bagong Eradicates Corruption)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/cULCS119wXs?si=YWUOqBvNjcE22K8y">https://www.youtube.com/live/cULCS119wXs?si=YWUOqBvNjcE22K8y</a>
19	Bagong Njaga Kahyangan (Bagong Guards Heaven)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/KL3LIwP0U3w?si=eAHQWvNrW9qAJcA5">https://www.youtube.com/live/KL3LIwP0U3w?si=eAHQWvNrW9qAJcA5</a>

Figure 7. Wayang Climen scripts with Bagong as the main character.

The simplification of story themes in Wayang Climen enables audiences with limited familiarity with Wayang traditions to easily follow and appreciate the performance. By addressing relatable, everyday issues, the narrative becomes accessible and engaging, as conveyed by the following informant:

Entertainment remains central to the performance's structure, where Wayang Climen seamlessly blends spectacle with guidance, rather than treating them as separate elements. This approach to "entertaining storytelling" allows the characters to be dynamic and engaging, inviting the audience to enjoy a lively presentation without detracting from the performance's underlying messages. In Wayang Climen, humor is skillfully woven into the storytelling, not by putting comedians on stage but through the expressive speech and vocal skills of the dalang.

The dalang's interaction with the musicians (pengrawit) and singers (pesinden), who respond to the story's unfolding events, further enhances the comedic and interactive aspects of the performance. This collaborative dynamic creates a form of humor that is both spontaneous and deeply rooted in the characters, making Wayang Climen an engaging and meaningful experience.

No.	Image	Event	Source
1		Auction of a painting	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/WIL9bPMXcho?si=p84Sp6OoshmAMEu3">https://www.youtube.com/live/WIL9bPMXcho?si=p84Sp6OoshmAMEu3</a>
2		Election socialization	<a href="https://youtu.be/7SZIOPE_uSo?si=0JwxZtix2IhB70m">https://youtu.be/7SZIOPE_uSo?si=0JwxZtix2IhB70m</a>
3		Company anniversary	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/syqjsz4TvEw?si=feZYpmU0Uy4SZG3M">https://www.youtube.com/live/syqjsz4TvEw?si=feZYpmU0Uy4SZG3M</a>
4		School birthday	<a href="https://youtu.be/2V9vmaIQRYc?si=rS3PgSjU6G1HzjIK">https://youtu.be/2V9vmaIQRYc?si=rS3PgSjU6G1HzjIK</a>
5		Birthday	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/y0hKyeELXUM?si=WSSwQQMjngsMSmnv">https://www.youtube.com/live/y0hKyeELXUM?si=WSSwQQMjngsMSmnv</a>

Figure 8. Wayang Climen performance posters, part 1.







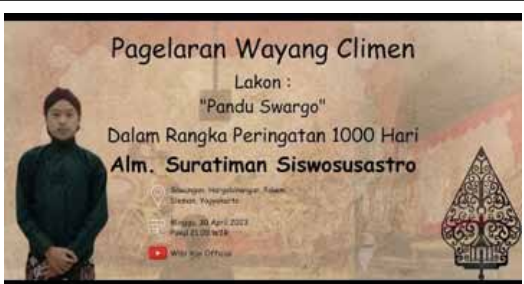
No.	Image	Event	Source
6		Wedding Anniversary	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/Pj_X9KljLyY?s_i=6M4G2TUaQpMTnzLc">https://www.youtube.com/live/Pj_X9KljLyY?s_i=6M4G2TUaQpMTnzLc</a>
7		Church Anniversary	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/M5y5fTsRh90?s_i=xYm8xh7BHceH56GN">https://www.youtube.com/live/M5y5fTsRh90?s_i=xYm8xh7BHceH56GN</a>
8		Thanksgiving	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/12vOdCKOkL8?si=NGQBoWVYcrELJrZX">https://www.youtube.com/live/12vOdCKOkL8?si=NGQBoWVYcrELJrZX</a>
9		Commemoration of the Isra Miraj of the Prophet Muhammad	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/YaZK99R2514?si=KHOUc0kXoZPuY-8B">https://www.youtube.com/live/YaZK99R2514?si=KHOUc0kXoZPuY-8B</a>
10		100th anniversary of death	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/live/hpg6qYr5uVI?si=7xZ4r2ibSGGJV65x">https://www.youtube.com/live/hpg6qYr5uVI?si=7xZ4r2ibSGGJV65x</a>

Figure 8. Wayang Climen performance posters, part 2.

The posters for Wayang Climen performances (see figure 8) suggest that this art form enjoys a broad appeal across various audiences and community contexts. These performances have been showcased at a range of events, from personal celebrations like wed-

ding anniversaries and thanksgiving ceremonies to institutional gatherings such as school, university, and corporate anniversaries. The narratives presented are highly relevant to everyday life, often functioning as symbolic expressions of social critique or protest. Consequently, the characters portrayed frequently include more relatable, everyday figures—individuals who are seldom, if ever, featured in traditional Wayang performances.

## Discussion

Research analyzing the adaptation of performances into Wayang Climen reveals that simplifying various aspects of traditional Wayang effectively caters to urban audiences constrained by limited public space, time, and familiarity with the art form. This study identifies three key strategies for this reformatting. First, the duration of performances is significantly shortened. Second, the spatial requirements for staging are minimized. Third, themes are simplified to enhance accessibility. Collectively, these adaptations render Wayang Climen an appealing alternative for urban communities seeking tradition-based entertainment without the need for large venues or disruption to daily routines.

Wayang Climen has found particular success in Yogyakarta, a city with deep cultural ties to Wayang. Although previous attempts to simplify wayang faced resistance due to concerns that such changes would undermine traditional rules (*pakem*) and dilute the art's essence, the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a shift in community acceptance. With restrictions on large gatherings and increased time spent at home, Wayang Climen emerged as a safe, home-based entertainment option for biosphere society like Yogyakarta people (Mamichev & Dergacheva, 2021). Its simplified themes allowed even those unfamiliar with Wayang to engage with the performances. During the pandemic, these shows were streamed live from studios or the homes of puppeteers. This approach has continued to resonate post-pandemic, as Wayang Climen performances are now well-suited for urban public spaces, while retaining live-streaming options to reach a broader audience (Baldin, 2024).

The success of Wayang Climen during the pandemic can also be viewed as a form of resistance by puppeteers against government-imposed restrictions on socio-economic and cultural activities, particularly the arts. Throughout this period, the public was bombarded with alarming statistics related to COVID-19, often overshadowing discussions about resuming economic activities. Puppeteers utilized Wayang idioms and symbolic language as tools of subtle resistance, articulating their dissent through live performances aimed at challenging the dominant narrative. In this context, the puppeteers exemplify Scott's (1990) concept of employing both hidden transcripts and public transcripts simultaneously. Such strategies of blending hidden and public transcripts are commonly practiced by artists (Hariyanto, 2018).

This research demonstrates that the acceptance of Wayang Climen by urban communities is closely linked to the efforts of Seno Nugroho (SN) in challenging the traditional dominance of Wayang performance stages. SN, often referred to as the "King of Live Streaming" (Kompas.com, 2020), successfully dismantled longstanding myths regarding the popularity of Wayang performances, which were previously dominated by renowned puppeteers. By breaking down these myths, SN has become a prominent public figure. Leveraging his popularity, SN constructs narratives through playful use of idioms and language as forms of resistance. This is realized by reducing performance duration, simplifying musical in-

strumentation, and altering performance venues. He emphasizes the entertainment aspect while selecting "new" plays that resonate with the context of the pandemic (Alavi & Azizi, 2021). Notably, the punakawan character Bagong has emerged as a central hero figure in this adaptation. Bagong is closely associated with SN and reflects the imagination of the "common people," who are often stigmatized as foolish yet are portrayed as brave and critical. In this way, Bagong serves as SN's alter ego, embodying the essence of the commoners despite their lowly stigmas (Prasetya et al., 2024). Through this character, SN articulates a discourse of community resistance that was difficult to express during the pandemic. The high levels of stress experienced by people during this time highlighted the need for entertainment to strengthen social connections and provide motivation to navigate challenging circumstances (Phongnil, 2024). Wayang Climen, presented via live streaming as if it were coming directly to the audience, served not only as a source of entertainment but also as a means of reinforcing community resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study indicate that Wayang Climen, a reformatting of traditional all-night performances, achieves brevity by omitting certain parts of the narrative, resulting in a more compact presentation. This compactness contrasts with the concept of pakeliran, which is tailored for a limited audience with a deep and rigid understanding of Wayang (Sudarko, 2002). In contrast, Wayang Climen targets a broader audience, offering concise durations and straightforward narratives that are simple, fluid, and easily accessible to those with limited familiarity with Wayang. This significant reduction in performance time allows urban dwellers to enjoy the show without it interfering with their schedules or raising concerns about the following day's activities (Fuller & Stevens, 2019). Moreover, Wayang Climen performances are frequently delivered through online media, with YouTube being the most commonly utilized platform. This study supports the findings of Simatupang & Sampurno (2014), which emphasized that YouTube is widely favored for its familiarity and accessibility, facilitating engagement with a diverse audience.

In the post-COVID-19 landscape, puppeteers are once again competing within the entertainment industry, often resorting to grand, spectacular stage performances that cater to popular culture. Many puppeteers invite famous guest comedians or viral *sinden* from social media, presenting repetitive content that exploits themes of body shaming, verbal sexual violence, and the marginalization of people with disabilities for comedic effect (Multimedia, 2024). This contest for spectacular Wayang performances is particularly prevalent in urban areas. However, the dynamic nature of these spaces has rendered such grand productions increasingly impractical due to high costs and limited venues. In this context, reviving Wayang Climen – which gained significant popularity during the pandemic – is especially relevant. This revival should be driven by a reactualization program organized by community-based social movements. It is anticipated that these communities will help reshape perceptions and conceptualize urban spaces beyond the frameworks established by the state and urban planners, fostering collaborative living environments (Larasati et al., 2022). Thus, the reactualization and reformatting of Wayang performances into Wayang Climen for urban communities become vital for producing spaces that fulfill the right to the city. This approach alleviates the burden of traditional *pakem*, creating a communicative space where artists and audiences can engage in dialogue and reflect on urban issues in a more open and humane manner.



## Conclusion

This study reveals that concerns regarding Wayang Climen performances diminishing the value of traditional Wayang are unfounded. Instead, the research shows that Wayang Climen has emerged as an alternative form of entertainment for urban communities. Despite being shorter and simplified, the performances retain the essence of traditional Wayang, rich in cultural and philosophical values. The public has received the show positively, as it offers a more accessible format that aligns with the needs of modern audiences. This context illustrates that the adaptation of traditional art forms like Wayang Climen demonstrates tradition's capacity to transform in response to societal needs while preserving its cultural meaning and value. Thus, Wayang Climen not only serves to preserve cultural heritage but also ensures its relevance in contemporary changing times.

Furthermore, this research contributes significantly to the development of Wayang performance art. The performance model presented can serve as a valuable learning tool for aspiring dalangs or puppeteers. Traditional methods of Wayang education often require extensive time and involve complex techniques, while the Wayang Climen model offers a simplified format that still maintains the core essence of the art form. This approach opens up opportunities to accelerate the learning process without sacrificing the depth of the craft. Additionally, this research introduces a new perspective on how traditional arts education can adapt to the demands of a modern society that values time efficiency and accessibility. In this regard, Wayang Climen not only represents an adaptive performance form but also functions as an innovative pedagogical medium.

Despite its significant contributions, this study has limitations regarding the sample, which focused on a single case. The analysis centers on a Wayang Climen performance by one puppetry group, serving as the primary reference for data collection and analysis. Consequently, the findings cannot provide a comprehensive overview that could inform policy decisions. Therefore, further research needs to include a broader range of cases from diverse contexts, enabling comparative analysis and offering a more thorough understanding of Wayang Climen performances.

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# The Dramaturgy of Nostalgia and New Media in *Sandiwara*, West Sumatran Folk Theater

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## Abstract

This study describes the changes in the dramaturgy of *sandiwara*, a folk theater in West Sumatra. The research was carried out using a combined research method: literary studies and artistic methods, through a project of making play scripts and dramaturgical worksheets. Research data was collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and individual interviews. The results of the qualitative analysis show that writing a play script can build a play's creative ethos in *sandiwara*, bring up the quality, and originality of the ideas and themes. One of the drivers of creativity in *sandiwara* is nostalgia, the longing for the events of *sandiwara* as a medium for evoking the memories of ancestors, hometown, rural creative space, and knowledge production space. The process of designing dramaturgy worksheets shows that *sandiwara* performers' perceptions tend to be optimistic about the progress of new media. *Sandiwara* performers see new media as an opportunity to elevate their performance and showcase their contemporary spirit.

**Keywords:** *Sandiwara*, Folk Theatre, Dramaturgy, New Media, Nostalgia, Indonesia

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## Introduction

*Sandiwara* is the name of a folk theater that began and developed in West Sumatra from the 1960s to 1990s, rooted in *opera melayu* and *tonil* (Pramayoza 2013). The history of *sandiwara*'s growth stretches back to the late 19th century when Kerchoff reported the development of a new type of artform called 'maleisch toneel' in West Sumatra (Van Kerckhoff 1886). This theatrical artform, which later became popular as *opera melayu*, was allegedly the response of the local population after watching *wayang parsi*, which at the same time was also developing throughout Southeast Asia (Meddegoda 2020). In Malaysia, local communities adapted imitations of *wayang parsi* into a type of performance known as *bangsawan* (Sooi Beng 1993; 1989). Meanwhile in Java, Indonesia, *wayang parsi* inspired the growth of performance called *komedie stamboel* (Cohen 2013; 2006).

Around the 1920s, the style of *bangsawan* and *komedie stamboel* performances grew in West Sumatra, as seen by the birth of the Padangsche Opera with plays based on adaptations of novels by well-known Minangkabau authors, including the novel *Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Roesli (Cohen 2003). At the same time, *randai*, the traditional theater of the Minangkabau community, also began to grow, especially since Kweek School students in Bukittinggi in 1924 brought a story entitled *Cindur Mata* to the *tonil* stage (Navis 1985).

As for the *sandiwara* style, it grew in the 1940s, evident from the progress of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia*, an itinerant *sandiwara* group, who raised the spirit of patriotism and nationalism (Pramayoza 2020). From the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia* Group, the Smiling Hawaiian music group was born, a well-known band in their time. The performance of *sandiwara* in the style of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia* also gave birth to musicians, including Zubir Said, who composed the Singapore national anthem, Asbon Majid, leader of the Gumarang Orchestra, as well as Elly Kasim, a legendary regional pop singer from Indonesia (Idris et al. 1996). From the performance of the *sandiwara* in the style of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia*, writers also emerged, including the author of Indonesia's first female novel, *Selasih Saliguri*, alias Sariamin Ismail (Rampan 2009).

Since the 1950s, the Nagari (villages) in West Sumatra have been the site of ongoing artistic creativity in *sandiwara*. Not only in the theater field, but *sandiwara* is also a laboratory for renewal in dance. For example, in Padang Magek, Tanah Datar Regency, the *tari mulo pado*, a traditional dance that depicts the arrival of the ancestors of the Minangkabau people, which in the 1970s was the opening dance of *sandiwara* with the play script *Cinduo Mato*, was then developed into a stand-alone dance. (Wahyuni, Yusfil, and Suharti 2017). Almost the same thing happened to the *tari tangan*, a traditional dance that depicts harmony in Minangkabau society, in Padang Laweh, Sijunjung Regency, that now can be performed at various public gatherings after experiencing a renewal in *sandiwara* (Hasnah Sy. 2013). Likewise, with the development of the *tari melayu*, traditional dance which is considered to be the culture of the Malay community on the east coast of the island of Sumatra and the Malaysian peninsula, in the 1960s because it found a place as an interlude in *sandiwara* performances (Erlinda 2012). *Tari melayu*, functions as an interlude in *sandiwara* performance, to fill the time between acts, when the crew changes the setting to show changes in the location of the next scene.

But nowadays, the *sandiwara* tradition in West Sumatra is experiencing an existential threat, due to the reduced number of performers and the stagnation of the creative process, in terms of creating play scripts and performances. Moreover, changes in the lifestyle



of the *sandiwara* audience are a particular threat because new types of work result in less time for watching a performance (interview with Syamsul Hidayat, 29 August 2022; Romi Armon, 3 September 2022; Ridho Ardian, 5 September 2022). Moreover, now that the *sandiwara* audience can access streaming shows anytime, exacerbated by the pandemic, where various performing arts have shifted to online media (Pramayoza and Birowo 2022), the audience for *sandiwara* live performances is decreasing.

This research was conducted to review the current condition of *sandiwara* in West Sumatra, which is suspected, as is also the case in many folk theaters in Southeast Asia, at present they are experiencing a dilemma to survive in the old dramaturgy or to adapt to various media advances undergoing modernization (Ngoc 2014; Hiep and Son 2019). Of course, these two choices are also not easy for performers in West Sumatra because new dramaturgy requires mastery of various new tools and knowledge, for example lighting and projector arrangements or sound system settings, while sticking to old dramaturgy means that in the end they will lose their appeal to the audience.

### Research Methods

This research generally applies an Indonesian theater studies approach (Pramayoza 2023). The study aims to analyze the case study of contemporary *sandiwara* dramaturgy, carried out using artistic research methods (Hannula, Suoranta, and Vaden 2014), namely in the form of a series of collaborative activities between the research team and *sandiwara* artists in the three villages. Two activities carried out consisted of: the creation of a play script, followed by the design of dramaturgical worksheets. There are three Nagari (village) used as research locations in West Sumatra: Nagari Duo Koto in Agam Regency; Nagari VII Koto in Lima Puluh Kota Regency; and Kubu Gadang tourist village in Padang Panjang City. The research subjects in the three villages were selected based on search results on the internet about *sandiwara* activities over the last ten years (see: Figure 1).

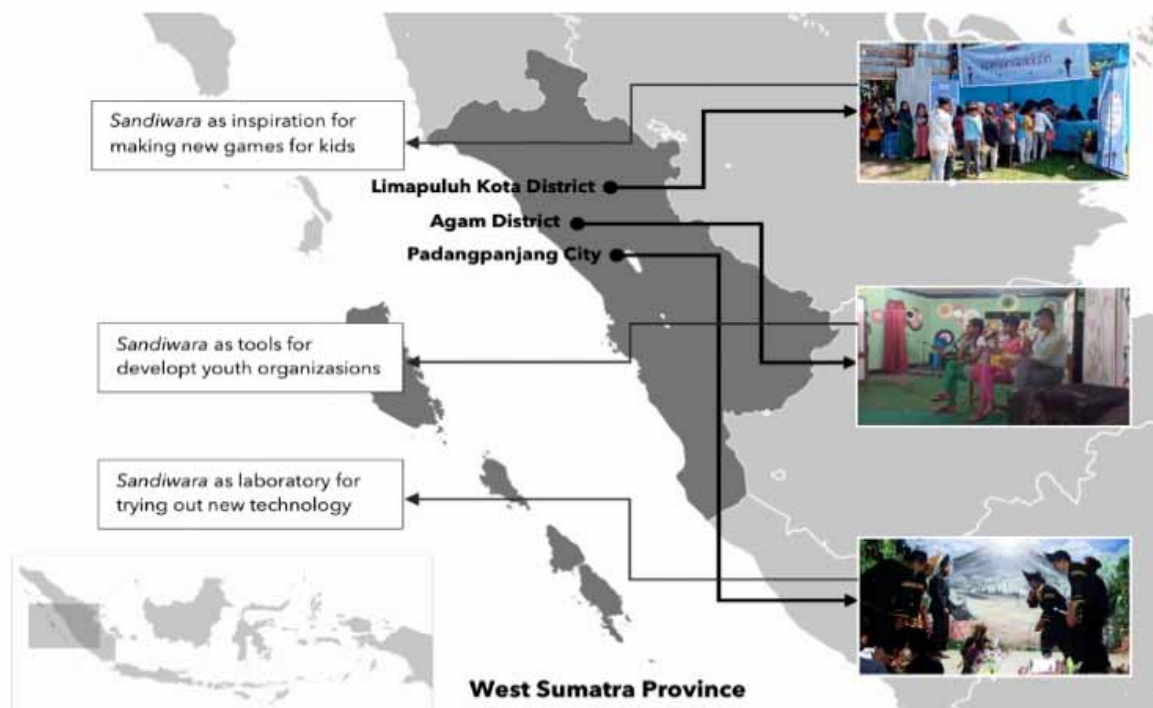


Figure 1. Research map of current dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in West Sumatra, map source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1e/Lokasi\\_Sumatra\\_Barat.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1e/Lokasi_Sumatra_Barat.png), modified by researcher.

There are three people as the main informants in this research, who are the new generation of *sandiwara* in the three Nagari where the research was conducted. Syamsul Hidayat (27 years old), is a young man in Nagari Duo Koto, Agam Regency, who develops new play texts for *sandiwara* in his hometown, while managing *sandiwara* production management through the Muhammadiyah youth organizations he is involved with. Romi Armon (35 years old), is a young man from Nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency, who developed a children's games festival with the scenario of a small town, as a form of extension of *sandiwara* tradition in his village. Meanwhile, Ridho Ardian (29 years old), a young man from the Kubu Gadang tourist village, Padang Panjang City, is active in reviving *sandiwara* tradition in his hometown by writing new play and raising funds for staging and productions.

The primary data collected centers on the memory and knowledge of *sandiwara* performers obtained through direct interviews and focus group discussions. Both data were used to formulate play scripts and dramaturgical working papers. In this case, the dramaturgical working paper is a staging plan, which contains plans for various visual aspects of the *sandiwara* performance, including casting, costumes, settings, hand props and lighting. Additional data was obtained from searching various netizen responses and comments regarding *sandiwara* for the keyword 'sandiwara,' 'sandiwara kampung,' 'sandiwara in West Sumatra,' etc. Furthermore, searches are carried out on social media and other digital platforms. In addition, secondary publication sources were also used from several previous studies.

The analysis is carried out through the joint practice of writing play scripts and dramaturgical working papers, in which the research team encourages and assists *sandiwara* artists in discussing matters that are considered necessary from the writing of play texts and dramaturgical working papers to identifying changes in *sandiwara* dramaturgy and exploring potential future changes. The research departs from the understanding that dramaturgy is related to: (1) the internal structure of a play text; and (2) external elements related to the performance, the concept behind the performance, the political value of the performance and expectations of audience response (Luckhurst 2005:10; Turner and Behrndt 2008:17-18).

## Research Results

### The Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* as a History of Innovation

During the investigation, it was found that the origin of the word '*sandiwara*' in Indonesian performing arts is unclear. However, there is an opinion that this word was popularized by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian Education, as a term to represent a genre of dramatic art developed by native Indonesians, in this case, to avoid the word '*tonil*' being absorbed from the Dutch colonial language (Soedarsono 2002)(Soedarsono 2002; Pramayoza and Yuliza 2023). Ki Hadjar Dewantara wrote in 1936 that '*sandiwara*' is a type of literary art, which is embodied in the form of conversation accompanied by performers (dramatic personae) who carry out all these conversations accompanied by movement and behavior to manifest a story like an event that is real (Pramayoza 2013).

Since the 1950s, *sandiwara* has grown in West Sumatra as a form of 'folk theater' with hybrid dramaturgy, namely a mixture of various styles of dramatic performance, including *opera melayu* and *tonil*, with the addition of modern theater influences (Pramayoza 2013). Elementary schools were the main growth areas for *sandiwara*, including SPG (Teacher

Preparatory Schools), formerly known as Teacher Schools (See: Figure 2). However, the most advanced schools of their time, including INS Kayutanam and Dinniyah Putri, also staged *sandiwara* as one of the extra-curricular activities apart from being an evening of entertainment on important school events (Rasyad, Salim, and Saleh 1991; Navis 1996; Martamin et al. 1997).



Figure 2. Illustration of *Sandiwara* activities by students at Sekolah Guru (Teacher School) in the 1950s. Source: (Thaib and Dasiba 1956).

But, neither the *sandiwara* performers in Nagari Duo Koto in Agam Regency, Nagari VII Koto in Limapuluh Kota, nor the Kubu Gadang tourist village in Padang Panjang City, no longer remember precisely when *sandiwara* started in their Nagari. However, there is a common childhood memory among performers that the *sandiwara* evening performances were fun and exciting events and a source of learning (interview with Romi Armon, 3 September 2022). The training process for the performance of *sandiwara* conducted with organizational formation and, at the same time, was a medium for learning social criticism (interview with Syamsul Hidayat, 29 August 2022). The *sandiwara* performance event is also remembered as a field of creativity, which gave birth to artistic talents, such as play writers, new actors who are able to portray evil characters, dancers and singers, musicians who create special songs to accompany scenes, presenters, etc. (Interview with Ridho Ardian, 5 September 2022).

*Sandiwara* was then used as one of the benchmarks in cultural development in West Sumatra. A form of development of artistic activities reported in 1954 by the Cultural Bureau of Central Sumatra Province was the various research efforts on the growth and development of folk arts. The report continues with an overview of these arts' multiple forms and contents. In addition to the development of fine arts and sculpture, it is also stated that the Bureau has purchased *sandiwara* equipment that may be used for staging purposes by the general public: "[...] have also been able to provide various equipment of *sandiwara* such as screen, curtain wings, martial arts clothes, all of this is permanently loaned to art studios or the public who will put on performances not only in Bukittinggi but also in other areas that need them." (Thaib and Dasiba 1956)

Thus it becomes increasingly apparent that the growth of *sandiwara* from the beginning was part of government cultural development, innovation and renewal. The root of this view is *toneel* learning in Dutch schools during the colonial period, which was part of the 'ethical politics.' Most native students who had the opportunity to go to school during the Dutch East Indies period were involved in staging this *toneel* while also diligently watching films to make themselves part of modern society. This engagement, for example, was carried out Sutan Sjahrir and Soekarno, two of the founders of the Indonesian Nation. Sutan Sjahrir performed *toneel* when he attended school at AMS Bandung (Marzek 1994). While Soekarno later founded two *toneel* groups, namely *Toneel Club Kalimutu* in Ende and *Toneel Club Monte Carlo* in Bengkulu (Adams and Sukarno 2018).

The opportunity to study *toneel* from the Dutch colonials was then used by indigenous students to produce innovation, namely, writing play scripts and renewing their oral traditions. For example, it was later proven that the Kweek School Bukittinggi students changed their *kaba* (Minangkabau people's term for oral storytelling), *Cinduo Mato*, into a play script entitled *Tjindur Mata*, later published into a book of play scripts in 1942 (Gani 1942). Not only that, but the introduction to *toneel* later also gave birth to *randai*. This dramatic art is now recognized as a traditional theater art in West Sumatra (Cohen 2003), which continues to experience innovation in form and function (Latrell 1999).



Figure 3. Visualization of the texture of the *Sandiwara* performance in the past, from the 1960s to the 1980s.  
Source: (Pramayoza 2013).

In short, *sandiwara* is a site where various innovations in the arts have occurred since its inception. For example, in West Sumatra, initial research showed that teachers and cultural activists in the villages used *sandiwara* as an educational medium and a laboratory for experimentation. (Pramayoza 2013; 2020). The results of the experiment then resulted in conventional dramaturgy of *sandiwara* (see: Figure 3), including: (1) dividing the performance into acts and interludes (comedy, pantomime, music, dance, and auction); (2) making *dekor* (decoration) with stage components in the form of *layar bergambar* (illustrated screen), *sebang* (curtain wings), and *strongkeang* (lamps); (3) *carito* (story), as the text play, consists of *carito minang* (in Minangkabau language) and *carito moderen* (in Bahasa); with the words of



a character called *buah kato* (dialog) in a lyrical language style, resembling a rhyme; and or prose language style, an exclamation of language in everyday life (Pramayoza 2013: 99-155).

### The New Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* with New Media Intervention

Based on the findings of research conducted in the three subjects Nagari, there is a strong indication that the development and changes in *sandiwara* dramaturgy in West Sumatra in the last 20 years, or to borrow Barbara Hatley's term 'post-reformation,' were also influenced by two elements, namely: (1) new technologies as staging devices; and (2) changes in script writing strategy. Changes can also be viewed in a dramaturgical way because they involve fundamental elements of dramaturgy, namely the structure that takes place in the text of the play and the texture on the surface physically, both of which can be considered a socio-cultural text as well as a local political text.

Texturally or on the surface, it can be seen that now *sandiwara* in West Sumatra tends to start acquiring or adopting several media developments, which indirectly indicate the infiltration of new media into the daily life of people in West Sumatra. The definition of 'new media' in *sandiwara* can be interpreted as the involvement of various communication media in the image and sound delivery, which were not commonly used before (Hujatnikajenong 2006). In practice, this new media also seems to lead to transmedia (Rae 2017: 162), namely using multiple media at once in a performance or using different media to convey various scene in *sandiwara* performances.

The striking use of LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) projectors as staging devices, a luxury object or equipment a decade ago, can now be rented or borrowed from private owners. LCD projectors are a media technology now often used for various entertainment needs. For example, in creating new *sandiwara* performances, LCD projectors replace the essential component of a typical *sandiwara* dramaturgy, namely *layar bergambar* (literally means a screen with pictures) as a backdrop, which in the past had to be done by making large paintings. Using an LCD projector, *sandiwara* performers in Nagari can easily design a background that they can change based on the needs of the scene, dramatic rhythm, or story plot being presented. Practice like this means that, dramaturgically, now with an LCD projector, *sandiwara* performers can produce certain visual effects in performances, which previously could only be produced in films, especially the rapid changes in scene space (see: Figure 4).

Apart from using LCD projectors, what can also be seen as a significant change in today's *sandiwara* performances is using electronic keyboards, local known as '*orgen tunggal*.' The use of *orgen tunggal* cannot be separated from the development of the creative industry, in this case, local popular music in West Sumatra. The local popular music industry made the use of *orgen tunggal* very massive in West Sumatra in the early 2000s, used in almost all forms of entertainment and events (Asril et al. 2018; Syeilendra 2016). One expert interprets this as a part of the tendency of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra to '*badu-nia*' or entertain themselves, escape from the pressures of their lives (Gusti Asnan 2018:2).



Figure 4. The new dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in the present involving new media, since the 2000s, as seen in the performance of the *sandiwara* group in the tourist village of Kubu Gadang, Padangpanjang City (above), and *sandiwara* group in Kawai, Tanah Datar Regency (below). Source: <https://www.pasbana.com/2020/12/sandiwara-bujang-sambilan.html>; <https://hariansinggalang.co.id/menonton-sandiwara-di-kawai-lintau/>.

There was a time when the *sandiwara* traditional stage was a vehicle for expressing and identifying oneself as an artist in society. In the 1960s to 1980s young people used the *sandiwara* stage to display their skills and sophistication in playing musical instruments. At that time, the musical instrument being popular was the combo band. With almost the same motivation, since the early 2000s, the combo band in *sandiwara* has been replaced by the *orgen tunggal*, which is seen as more effective and efficient because it only consists of one piece of equipment, contrast to the combo band, which includes a set of instrument that require more space and significant effort. Using the *orgen tunggal* also encourages dramaturgical changes because it makes it possible to simplify the stage of *sandiwara* performances, where not too many music instrument need to be placed, but can still produce the various sounds needed. After all, *orgen tunggal* can still produce music and sound effects for *sandiwara* performances.

Apart from that, its use, which tends to be more concise and practical, makes this *orgen tunggal* in *sandiwara* performances a field of creativity because it allows many people to participate in learning it. Younger *Sandiwara* performers use this opportunity to explore their skills and, at the same time, test their musicality. The ease of using the *orgen tunggal* is now also supported by the digitalization of music, where various songs, from traditional to experimental ones, can be obtained easily. This sophistication provoked *sandiwara* performers to be creative, make sound compositions, and rearrange old pieces.

The exciting thing is the songs that can be accessed by the performers of *sandiwara* using *orgen tunggal* are even songs that some combo band players cannot perform because they require high skills. Now, with *orgen tunggal*, this can be achieved in a way with a technique similar to karaoke, where the old songs are then stored on one disc to make it easier for the operator to find any piece requested by the singer or the audience who contributed the music in the *sandiwara* performance.

One other use of new media that perhaps was not planned or realized by *sandiwara* performers in their practice today is the use of lighting technology. This technology is a significant change in the artistic arrangement of *sandiwara* performances. With easy access to the sale of equipment for the entertainment industry, including recently through different online buying and selling platforms, *sandiwara* performers also have access to buy and utilize new lighting technology for the needs of *sandiwara* performances. The types of lights commonly used are LED (Light-Emitting Diode), with Par 64, Par 32, and Moving Head specifications, also widely used by popular local entertainment stages.

These three LED light types are used in *sandiwara* performances for lighting techniques. In the *sandiwara* stage, there is an effort to organize and not solely depend on technology. Of course, this change also has a dramaturgical impact because by using this newer lighting technology, *sandiwara* performers can have the opportunity to adjust the light intensity and the color change of the light for their performances. The lighting system can now also function as a provider of time information and amplify the atmosphere of the scenes in *sandiwara* performances.

The new media, which *sandiwara* performers are also looking at as one of the possibilities for updating the form of appearance of their performances, is stage rigging, which is now developing as part of the growth of the creative industry in Indonesia. Today, the rigging stage is a sight that is very easy to find in various festivals that are expanding in Indonesia, as well as in various music concerts, performances of religious activities such as sermons, or even large gatherings for political needs.

*Sandiwara* performers in various Nagari see the rigging stage as a way out because many villages with *sandiwara* traditions no longer have market stalls and school halls, which have conventional stage venues for *sandiwara* performances (Pramayoza 2013). Its construction, which is very flexible in terms of size, relatively weather resistant, and can be placed anywhere outdoors, are some of the reasons for the popularity of the rigging stage.

The shape of the rigging stage also makes it easier for *sandiwara* performers to place images in the background to reflect the pictures they want. The upper part of the stage rigging also makes it easier for them to install show lights, as well as to install sound system devices. Meanwhile, after the show ends, the rigging stage allows them to immediately dismantle it and reuse the land used as the stage for their other needs. This convenience is essential because the area used for performances in several Nagari is usually productive land used daily for farming or sports.

Viewed as a whole, both because of coercion of circumstances and because they are part of progress, the performers of *sandiwara* seem to be very grateful for the advancement of stage technology in several aspects. If it is returned in its original sense, that all devices used in staging are mediums used to convey messages, the various changes implemented in today's *sandiwara* performances can be seen as the development of new media in *sandiwara* (Barry 2006).



### The New Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* as Estuary of Nostalgia

The development of new media in *sandiwara* dramaturgy today is accompanied by a strong indication that nostalgia for *sandiwara* plays an important role. In this case, nostalgia means a sentimental longing for the past, a resource that allows someone to maintain their perception of the meaning of their life (Routledge et al. 2012; Andersson 2011), where one of those longings is for the atmosphere and events of *sandiwara* performances in the past. The first indication of nostalgia for *sandiwara* is the role of the school as a center for *sandiwara* activities. Nazif Basir, one of Indonesia's leading playwrights and directors from West Sumatra, recounts where he first became acquainted with the world of theater:

Before continuing school from Bukittinggi Middle School to High School in Yogyakarta in 1951, in my village, Balingka, IV Koto sub-district, Agam Regency, it had become a tradition every Eid al-Fitr to hold *sandiwara* performances for three consecutive nights [...] By clearing the school and setting up benches flat as a stage, then equipped with a screen to open the stage lid, the audience sits in a row sitting on chairs in other classrooms which have had their partition walls opened (Basir 2013, accessed November 7, 2021).

Furthermore, Nazif Basir said that the production process for *sandiwara* performances in his hometown was usually led by two brothers named Rasyidin Rasyid and Anis Rasyid, who had studied during the Japanese colonial era at INS Kayu Tanam, led by Engku Syafei. The *sandiwara* performance at Balingka, a Nagari in Agam district, was performed using scripts written in Indonesian, including Pelarian dari Nusa Kambangan, Dokter Syamsi, Puputan Bali, Penjaga Kubur, and Tuanku Imam Bonjol. The various titles of the plays mentioned show the wide range of possible genres of stories in *sandiwara*, ranging from tragedy, heroism, adventure to horror.

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* has even become a way for Minangkabau migrants in Jakarta to visit their hometown in the past imaginatively. This kind of nostalgia can be seen in the staging of the play script entitled Palimo Alang Bangkeh, a performance that only have a short time to prepared and supported by actors who were picked from here and there. Even though it was produced under minimal conditions, this *sandiwara* performance was entertaining. Nazif Basir, who took part in the production said it was an experiment in a non-rhetorical way, not presented in rhymes but in everyday Minang language, which seemed to satisfy the audience (Pusat Data dan Analisa TEMPO 2019).

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* a decade ago emerged in a mail group called *Palanta r@ntau-net*. The participants in the mail group connected *sandiwara* performances in their hometowns with developments in the Nagari and as one of the good memories of youth organizations in their hometowns. They also remember the bad characters they played in *sandiwara*'s performances back home and use them as an example in instilling good values in the younger generation. The *sandiwara* performance in his hometown was also remembered by the participants in the *Palanta r@ntau-net* email group as a way for them to remember those who are now gone, recognized for their services as well as for their humor or ability to entertain the audience. Similar to the story of Nazif Basir's introduction to theatre, an immigrant named Wady Afriadi wrote that in 1989, when he was a teenager and in junior high school, he had watched a *sandiwara* performance in his village. According to him:

At that time, around Payakumbuh, the Mudiak area, Guguak District, and its surroundings, people often held sandiwara during school holidays. At the sandiwara, all kinds of skills from the village youths and parents who are still young at heart appear. Sandiwara is usually held in the local elementary school building. Starting approximately after the Isya prayer, it will only end at dawn (Afriadi 2004, accessed February 12, 2022).

*Sandiwara's* performance has also become an archetype in one's memories of his life struggles. In his description, Sjamsir Sjarif wrote:

In 1964-65, when the Liberation of West Irian was in full swing, I watched a sandiwara performance presented by Zuster School students at the Bukittinggi National Building. One of the things that became a memory and is still in my mind to this day is the smart girl with impressive colorful lighting, singing *Senja di Kaimana*. I still remember some lyrics; sometimes, I mutter when the twilight looks bright (Sjarif 2011, accessed February 16, 2022).

One's involvement in *sandiwara* is a way of building an image of the character, as reminiscent of Hanifah Damanhuri, who wrote:

Her full name is Eriwarni, and she is a sweet, agile, versatile woman with a melodious voice. At the farewell ceremony held every year by SD [Elementary School] in my village, several times Warni played the leading role in sandiwara, who was part of the farewell ceremony. The performance that people remember the most is when Warni sang the song *Oto Tri Arga* in a duet with Nofen (the late). The collaboration of a sweet girl and a handsome boy with a stunning voice and matching rocking attitude made the stage lively (Damanhuri 2013, accessed February 16, 2022).

*Sandiwara* is also a way to commemorate a role considered very well performed by someone. This type of memory is shown in the description by Sjamsir Sjarif in another article, who wrote:

When I was a child, I watched sandiwara [titled] *Si Ambuang Baro*, based on a true story at Balaigurah, Ampek Angkek. I was reminded of *Aciek Cipeh*, the village's source of trouble and the Nagari's instigator. *Aciek Cipeh* is played by a woman whose mouth is open and who works happily to incite people against each other. As a result of the intrigue of his instigation, the main characters, who were very good, ended in murder and bloodshed. A sad story because of what *Aciek Cipeh* did (Sjarif 2013, accessed February 16, 2022).

Memories of a similar *sandiwara* that appeared in a mail group called *Palanta r@ntau-net* ten years ago are now appearing on a more up-to-date platform as a video. One of them is what a YouTuber quite popular in West Sumatra does on his channel @Wadya, under the title: "Mengenang *Sandiwara* Pentas di Tiakar Guguak Era 80-90an." (Remembering the *Sandiwara* Performance at Tiakar Guguak in the 1980-90s). In his content, Wadya revisits not only the school where the *sandiwara* was performed but also the performers of the *sandiwara*, including performers, playwrights, directors, and the gatekeepers at the entrance to the theater, which in this case is the SD building that was transformed. Wadya also invited them to reminisce by looking at old photos stored in each other's albums. The video shows that staging *sandiwara* in one's hometown is one way to build good memories about the people and the village. That is just as important as being a modern person in their time (see: Figure 5).

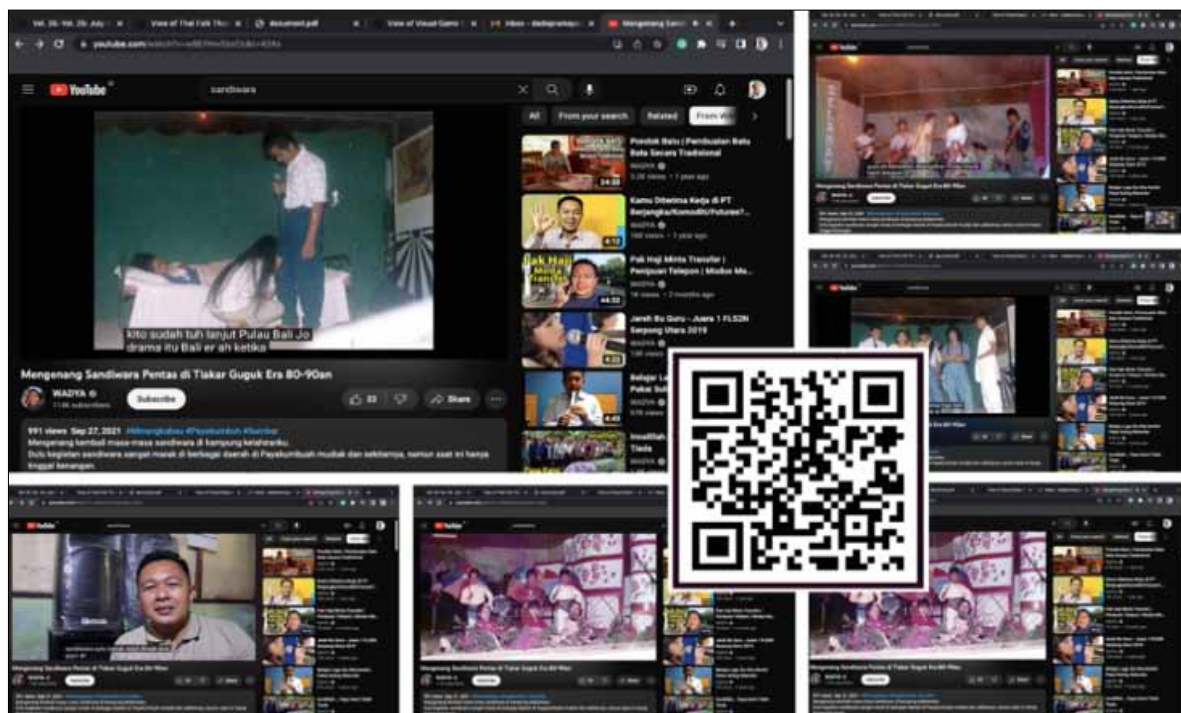


Figure 5. Video created by @Wadya, Youtuber in West Sumatra for his nostalgia about *sandiwar*a tradition in his hometown in, see QR Code for quick viewing.

Similar to the nostalgia seen in the *Palanta r@ntau-net* mail group and @Wanda Youtube channel, nostalgia for *sandiwar*a performances is also a way to create meaning for *sandiwar*a performers in the three Nagari, namely: the beauty of hometown, the importance of friendship, and also the sense of good and evil. The power of nostalgia for *sandiwar*a leads to a creative force that encourages the emergence of themes for writing new play scripts today. For the *sandiwar*a performers in the three research subject villages, writing the play itself, or as they often refer to it as the 'scenario,' is one way of indicating or expressing their progress or the modernization they have absorbed. Nostalgia for *sandiwar*a performances in the past in their country is also very useful in building imagination about the forms of the arrangements.

Three forms of developing play texts for *sandiwar*a emerged from the three Nagari. The first shows a desire to make play texts as a way to document knowledge and local history. Passion like this appeared in the tourist village of Kubu Gadang, where the *sandiwar*a performers wanted the research to produce a scenario about *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang*, a female martial artist who is the pride of the Kubu Gadang community.

The *Sandiwar*a performers of Kubu Gadang Tourism Village, Padang Panjang City, want to write down the life history of *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang* as a form of knowledge and role model for the younger generation, as well as a form of their pride. The further aim of writing the script for the play *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang* for them is to form a separate identity from *sandiwar*a performances in their village, which they hope can also become a commodity of cultural tourism because Kubu Gadang Village is a village that specifically places village development in the tourism sector.

Meanwhile, in Nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency, nostalgia for *sandiwara* performances in the past underscored the shared memory of *sandiwara* as a positive activity that could not only entertain society as a whole but also become a medium for training and educating children. In this case, what is meant as the past practice is to remember the storyline of *sandiwara* and be creative in constructing expressions in words or poetry that will be recited in *sandiwara* performances. Interestingly, the nostalgia for *sandiwara* was then used by one of the cultural performers in this Nagari to create a festival called the *Festival Olek-Olek*, where children play the role of city residents.

All participants in the *Olek-Olek Festival* work together to organize the festival's location. All the necessary attributes have been prepared, including the medium of exchange in money, several city offices, including the mayor's office, and various agencies' offices. The children then enter the scenario of being able to hold general elections, choose the mayor and then organize the city in an orderly manner, enforce the rules, and obey the applicable laws. The town also has law enforcement officers, consisting of traffic police, immigration office employees, prosecutors, and judges. In addition, some act as Health Services and Sanitation Services (see: Figure 6). All of this was part of Romi's nostalgia for *sandiwara* in his childhood when he had the opportunity to understand patterns of relationships in society through *sandiwara* (interview with Romi Armon, September 3, 2022).



Figure 6. Dramaturgical developments of *sandiwara* in the present as games and simulation, two scenes from Nagari Duo Koto (above), and two scenes from the festival held by Romi in nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency (below). Photo courtesy of Syamsul Hidayat & Romi Armon.

Meanwhile, in Nagari Duo Koto Maninjau, Agam Regency, the performance of *sandiwara*, which was organized by two youth organizations, namely Muhammadiyah Youth and Tarbiyah Youth, was used as a way to explore values of kindness and nobility from the past. At the same time, *sandiwara* production is also used to record and re-inventory rich stories from the past that belonged to their Nagari. Two *sandiwara* organizers from different organizations then jointly tracked down and, at the same time, rewrote stories that they believed were popular in the past and were played in their hometown, but now fewer people

know the plot. Based on that, a play script entitled *Puti Amai Nilam* was created, which tells the story of kindness, sincerity in helping others, and patience in facing slander.

The resulting play script shows that writing *sandiwara* nowadays, both for Muhammadiyah Youth and for Tarbiyah Youth, is a way to do written documentation of various oral stories that prevailed in their society and were once popular. Moreover, writing *sandiwara* plays is also helpful in building good relations with the older generation in the Nagari. They believe this relationship will be very productive for building cooperation to advance the Nagari and their community in the future, not only in the field of *sandiwara* and the arts but also in social and cultural life in general.

### Conclusion

Various new communication tools have entered into present-day *sandiwara* performances, originating from the infiltration of the media into the social life of *sandiwara* supporters. Thus the existence of new media in *Sandiwara* dramaturgy has happened and has been well received by its West Sumatran audiences. Moreover, the existence of this new media is not seen by most of *sandiwara* supporters as a threat. Thus, it can potentially encourage renewal in the *sandiwara* dramaturgy.

However, there are still some supporters of *sandiwara* who object to the use of new media in *sandiwara* performances, and this also means a subtle rejection of the new dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in general. This attitude is mainly based on great nostalgia for the atmosphere and form of *sandiwara* from the past, which of course cannot be completely found anymore when they watch *sandiwara* with the intervention of new media today. This type of audience usually chooses not to watch *sandiwara* performances with new dramaturgy. This difference in artistic tastes can of course still be seen as beneficial, because it allows for the creation of two styles of *sandiwara* performances. On the one side, classical *sandiwara* with old dramaturgy, which fulfills the nostalgic desires of some audiences, and contemporary *sandiwara* with new dramaturgy on the other side, which is proven to be able to attract the attention of young people and children.

From the beginning, the nature of *sandiwara* is a hybrid theater, which selectively and independently combines several forms and concepts from different dramatic art traditions, enabling the tradition of *sandiwara* performances to make the necessary appropriations for new media. Another strength that can be harnessed from within *sandiwara* to take advantage of technological advances and new media to renew and advance *sandiwara* in West Sumatra is nostalgia, namely the longing of many people for *Sandiwara* performances in their hometowns. Nostalgia for *sandiwara* is felt not only by those who still live in their hometowns but also by those who live far away overseas.

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* is helpful for: first, reconstructing the themes of the play, which are deeply embedded in the memories of present-day *sandiwara* performers and embedded in the memories of the audience. Second, nostalgia for *sandiwara* can be used to reconstruct the dramaturgy typical of *sandiwara* in the past, which was very close to the latest technological developments in the performing arts at that time. Third, the actual nature of *sandiwara* can also be a capital for revitalization and innovation in *sandiwara* by utilizing the spirit of progress and modernization stored in the tradition of *sandiwara* performances.



Furthermore, this nostalgia for *sandiwara* is a valuable asset and strong enough to encourage the tradition of performing *sandiwara* in West Sumatra to become an essential part of the development of the local creative industry and in the movement for the advancement of culture. This possibility is wide open because in the tradition of performing *sandiwara*, various cultural assets owned by an area can be displayed selectively so that the performance of *sandiwara* can function as a form of cultural performance from a region. In that case, *sandiwara* has the potential to become one of the icons of cultural tourism in West Sumatra and generate sufficient capital to encourage the growth of creative industries in West Sumatra.

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# Pattern Creation to Communicate the Identity of

## *Art in the Early Rattanakosin Period for Hotel Uniforms in Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok*

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### Abstract

For tourism in Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok, tourists can recognize the prominent identity of arts and cultural arts in the area and communities through received experiences. Hotel uniforms in Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok, were created from the prominent artistic patterns for identity recognition which directly affected the aesthetic image of Bangkok. This article aimed to find Rattanakosin's artistic styles and patterns that promote the Thai identity of hotel uniforms in Bangkok. Both qualitative and quantitative research was used. The three significant temples as the prototypes of artistic architecture in the Early Rattanakosin Period were studied. The results revealed that styles and patterns found in the subject temples around Rattanakosin Island included patterns from glazed tiles of Thai-Chinese arts. Motif patterns were influenced by Tribhumi ideology with Mount Meru as the center of the universe, surrounded by divine beasts and servants in all four cardinal directions.

**Keywords** Identity, Art, Early Rattanakosin Period, Hotel Uniforms, Bangkok, Thailand

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and political conflicts in the country have hugely affected tourism in Thailand. Thus, the public sector drives economic recovery as a key mission of cultural arts, one of the long-term integration plans. The Marketing and Tourism Policy 2014 suggests speeding up development and image promotion under the creative economy policy, developed from the body of knowledge of intellectual property, innovation, and creativity that connects with the values of cultural arts to apply along with creative economy development. (NSTDA,2022) Thus, the creative tourism trend focuses on exposure to experiences, cross-cultural exchange, and exploring experiences in the aesthetic values of cultural heritage and charismas that can be found in old communities as well as temples full of valuable stories and history in a certain area. In Thailand, the creative tourism trend has increased yearly from 2019 by 5% per year (Pocharee, 2016). It can be found as a soft power that depicts the prominences of communities and unique aesthetics of temples to publicize through accessible social media quickly for people of all ages in a wide range. Joseph Nye defined soft power as the ability to convince others or to make them follow desirable objectives without forcing, through attractiveness as a key factor (Charoenvattananukul, 2022).

Bangkok is famous as a summer tourism city that tourists worldwide want to visit most in the Asia Pacific. It is also ranked one of the world's top 3 tourist cities for tourists from the U.S. and the UK (Kanokwan, 2022). The most famous tourist area is Rattanakosin Island full of significant historical stories. The top 4 tourist attractions include 1) Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram or Wat Pho, 2) Wat Phra Sri Rattana Satsadaram or Wat Phra Kaew, 3) the Grand Palace, and 4.) Wat Arun Ratchawararam or Wat Chaeng (Planet, 2023). Most tourists enjoy their visits and admiration of Thai architecture with exquisite patterns decorated in the temples, monasteries, and stupas as a prominent, memorable, and impressive identity that motivates their return to admire such aesthetics in the future. In other words, the aesthetics of Thai arts is a positive cultural identity. Identity refers to prominent and lasting personalities. For a group of individuals, it basically refers to a group of individuals with prominent and specific differences that can be observed and perceived. Philosophically, identity refers to self-awareness that generates the feeling of the permanent existence of a certain individual (Sangsehanat, 2018), including strategic adjustment to generate strengths according to the tourism trend under higher expansion rate and competition. Thus, hotels must adjust strategies in terms of price, services, physical images, and design to generate a prominent and memorable identity. Employees as the representatives of hotel image are indispensable to pay high attention to service styles, physical images, and uniforms according to services, operation, environment, and hotel interior & exterior design. Several research articles state that hotel employees are compared to a promise between hotels and their customers. They are regarded as intangible service brands that must fully embrace the congruent and communicative meanings of those hotels (Keller, 2003). Employee uniforms require semantic styles or so-called brand symbols that facilitate customers to perceive concrete services; to understand hotel image directly; and to recognize services, characteristics, and unique prominences. Mr. Chatchavalvong, a national designer, stated that to generate good confidence and marketing promotion, hotel uniforms should give precedence to communicative stories on clothes, patterns, and motifs used for narration that should be according to hotel service styles. In general, hotel uniforms in Thailand are usually inserted with Thai cultural arts, e.g., textile patterns and local patterns in order

to depict prominences of hotel locations. The aesthetics of local arts generate recognition and impression for tourists. Likewise, the fabric patterns, colors, and uniform design of each department in hotels also represent the roles and duties of its employees.

Mr. Polpat Asavaprapha stated that raising stories of “Thainess.” is significant in generating differences, prominent identity, and recognition among tourists. They will obtain valuable and exciting experiences from aesthetics of art in those communities from patterns on clothes, which generate recognition of how the inhabitants of a city embrace image and cultural arts through hotel characteristics. However, designers should present full styles and patterns in terms of colors, motifs, and clothing structures that should combine hotel characteristics and prominences of cultural arts of that certain area/community in order to design the hotel uniform with prominent, graceful, and memorable image according to the hotel, its landscape, the community and the area.

Thus, the researcher used Sala Rattanakosin Bangkok as the prototype to study the prominent hotel image, hotel services, styles, and the key patterns of cultural arts in involved communities. To implement the research, architectural aesthetics of the Early Rattanakosin Period were studied in order to find styles and semantic patterns that communicated prominent identity and generated tourist recognition to be used for decoration on hotel uniforms in Rattanakosin Island.

### Literature Review

Identity refers to unique qualities and singularity. It is a prominence reflecting the charisma of a certain area. Identity is fixed and unchangeable (Office of the Royal Society, 2007). Finding the identity and the prominences of a city basically includes 3 key components, i.e., the structure and physical attributes of the area that reveal its story. Identity is physical images comprised of the area, environment, and unique styles that generate the image of the city. These finally lead to the meaning of that city. To clarify, it is to define/give the meaning of what appears to be the city. All cities usually include something that reveals their “self,” characteristics, or structures that are obviously different. Thus, the meaning of “area” is significant for images of those cities, which affect the perception process and attitudes toward the areas (Kongkarat, 2016).

To depict cultural prominences and architectural patterns in the Early Rattanakosin Period and to find styles and semantic patterns that reveal identity, the researcher studied art and architectural aesthetics as follows. Arts and architecture in the Early Rattanakosin Period (King Rama I - III) After the establishment of Bangkok as the capital, arts and architecture were succeeded by the Ayutthaya Period. King Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke the Great (King Rama I) would like to create Bangkok as the Late Ayutthaya Period combined with Chinese art, i.e., patterns of potteries and glazed tiles for building decoration with arrangement of utilization space and buildings in the traditional Thai style, which became most prosperous later in the reign of King Rama III. Then in the Middle Rattanakosin Period (King Rama IV - VI), arts and architecture were changed. King Rama IV adapted Western culture to Thai society, including Western-style construction and Western culture, e.g., constructing upcountry seasonal resorts for temporary stay and for showing social class through architecture in modern society. In this reign, it was regarded as an adaptation to the modern age with the most obvious Western influences. Next, in the reign of King Rama V, architectural works played symbolic roles in revealing the civilization and prosperity of Thailand to

the eyes of Western countries. The significant architecture included the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, the Vimanmek Mansion, and the Amphorn Sathan Residential Hall. In the Rattanakosin Period (King Rama VII - present), architecture and artworks were various and changed continuously. Constructions were imitated from ancient architecture combined with modern one as combined aesthetics, e.g., the combination of aesthetics from structures, materials, and design that relied on steel and glasses more than previously.

### Architectural Identity Styles

Architectural identity styles in the Rattanakosin Period included architectural styles of temples and palaces, e.g., Wat Phra Kaew, Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn, Wat Chana Songkhram Rajwaramahaviharn, and Wat Suthat Thepwararam. Later in the reign of King Rama III, arts were changed from traditions to combined ones, i.e., Thai, European, and Chinese styles. Most architecture was a combination between Thai - Chinese art, e.g., buildings with glazed tiles on pediments and roofs without Chofa, Bai Raka, and Hang Hong. Door arches and windows were decorated with flowers. Monks' dwellings were changed from wood buildings to brick and cement ones. Temples were decorated with imported Chinese sculptures and stories of Himmapan creatures (Nildej, 1997).

1. Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram or Wat Pho: It is a first-class royal monastery and royal temple of King Rama I of Chakri Dynasty because King Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke the Great granted his benevolence to establish Wat Photaram, an old temple in Bangkok in Ayutthaya Period as a royal temple near the Grand Palace. Also, under the altars of Phra Buddha Theva Pratimakorn and the principal Buddha image in the temple hall is where the relics of King Rama I are kept.



Figure 1. Phra Maha Chedi of the Four Reigns in Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahaviharn. Source: [www.dhammajak.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=58289](http://www.dhammajak.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=58289).

Phra Maha Chedi of the Four Reigns in Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahaviharn was located behind the white walls, of which the entrance arch is Thai-



Chinese architecture. The pagodas (chedis) were decorated with glazed tiles in various patterns. Each of the pagodas includes a base with a twelve-piece wooden recess. The angle of 42 meters high was added to the pagoda (Phra Maha Chedi of the Four Reigns, 2023). The first one with green glazed tiles named Phra Maha Chedi Sri Sanpetdayarn was constructed in the reign of King Rama I to cover the image of Buddha 'Phra Srisanpetch.' The second one with white glazed tiles named Phra Maha Chedi Dilok Dhammakaroknitarn was constructed in the reign of King Rama III, and dedicated to his father. The third one with yellow glazed tiles named Phra Maha Chedi Muni Batborikharn was also constructed in the reign of King Rama III, and dedicated as an offering to Lord Buddha. It is regarded as his own royal pagoda. The last one, in dark blue glazed tiles, represents the reign of King Rama IV. It was imitated from the style of Phra Chedi Srisuriyothai of Ayutthaya Period as an offering to Lord Buddha, too.



Figure 2. Wat Phra Chettuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Ratchaworamahawihan. Source: [www.dhammadjak.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=58289](http://www.dhammadjak.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=58289).

Phra Mondop (Hor Trijaturamuk [the Buddhist Library]): King Rama III granted his benevolence to establish this place's architecture with a crowned, gabled roof tetrahedron; decorated with multi-color glazed tiles and exquisite patterns. The Tripitaka or Buddhist Scripture is kept inside. There are pavilions around Phra Mondob. The wall in the pavilions displays the mural paintings about the beginning of Ramayana and Khao Thip Stirring Tradition. The outer wall includes a stone inscription of a Thai verse proverb called "Klong Lokaniti." At the entrance arch is where the 2 giants of Wat Pho stand on both sides. There is a legend that the giants waged war with the giants of Wat Chaeng until it finally became the origin of Ta Tian.

2. Wat Arun Ratchawararam or Wat Chaeng: It is an old temple constructed since Ayutthaya Period, located in the west of the Chao Phraya River. It was initially called "Wat Makok" according to the name of Bang Makok Subdistrict where the temple is located. Then in 1767, when King Taksin the Great intended to move the capital to Thonburi instead, he proceeded with the military force by the river and arrived in front of Wat Makok right at dawn. For this reason, he changed the name from Wat Makok to "Wat Chaeng" to be the remembrance of auspiciousness for his arrival at this temple at dawn.



Figure 3. Left, The great prang of Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn). Right, Ceramic Decorative Tile Pattern at Main Prang Of Wat Arun Ratchawararam Temple. Source: [www.arun-sawas.com/article/ลายไฉติมกับลาย-กระเป๋-2/](http://www.arun-sawas.com/article/ลายไฉติมกับลาย-กระเป๋-2/).

Assoc. Prof. Somkid Jiratanakul, Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University, described the style of the stupa's shape at Wat Arun as a "Chom Hae-shaped spire," referring to the shape of a stupa with a curved peripheral line like "a fishnet" weighing down while being lifted up. The stupa of Wat Arun was regarded as the most fascinating stupa in the Rattanakosin Period (Online, 2017), surrounded by 4 small stupas in 4 directions. Inside the stupa are paintings of Indra riding an Erawan elephant, hindered by the glass wall. The base of the stupa is a 3-layer Thanksin base, with the sculptures of Mara and swords supporting the base in a zigzag position. There are 4 arches and there is reincarnated Narayana. On top of the stupa are Theppenom and Norasingha to suppress giants. The stupa was constructed according to Tribhumi ideology. The stupa itself is like Mount Meru in the middle of the Blue Sea and surrounded by the small stupas in all 4 directions as the representatives of 4 continents in Tribhumi, i.e., Utaragurudavipa in the north, Buraphavithadavipa in the east, Amarakoyandavipa in the west, and Jambudvipa in the south where humans live. Around the base of the stupa is where Himmaman creatures are holding every layer of the stupa over their heads. Kinnarah, Kinnari, and giants are at the bottom, followed by monkeys above, and angels on top, respectively.

3. Wat Ratchaorasaram Rajwaramahaviharn or Wat Ratchaoros: It is located on the river bank of Khlong Sanam Chai (Thonburi). The north of the temple is adjoined to Khlong Bang Wa, 258 Bang Khun Thian District, Bangkok. Wat Ratchaoros is a first-class royal monastery and Rajwaramahaviharn is regarded as the royal temple of King Rama III, Chakri Dynasty. It is an old temple before Rattanakosin. In other words, it is a private temple constructed in the period that Ayutthaya was the capital. It was initially called "Wat Jom Thong," sometimes called "Wat Chao Thong," or "Wat Kong Thong." Wat Ratchaoros was mostly decorated with Chinese art and was the first temple that was constructed in a different style from other usual traditional temples. Thai arts in the sanctuary and the hall did not use Chofa, Bai Raka, and Hang Hong. The roof of the sanctuary was tiled with Thai glazed tiles. Monks' dwellings were changed to buildings. Thai-Chinese art was used for decoration. For ex-



ample, the doors and windows of Phra Buddha Sai Yat Hall were decorated with Xiao Gang instead of Thep Panom. The pediments of the sanctuary and the hall were decorated with glazed tiles. It was the first time of delicate and suitable application of art as the symbol of a fascinating religious place (Chutima070, 2015).



Figure 4. Left, Gable of the temple. Right, decorated tiles inside the temple. Source: [www.becommon.co/culture/temple-1/#accept](http://www.becommon.co/culture/temple-1/#accept).

Door and window arches were decorated with stucco in as chrysanthemum pattern. The door outside was decorated with pearl revealing the fine and delicate pattern of the dragon over the cloud. Inside was drawn with the image of Chinese porters. The wall in the sanctuary was drawn with the pattern of Chinese oblations. Some parts imply the meaning of blessings “Hok, Lok, Xiu” according to a Chinese belief. The ceiling was drawn with the golden chrysanthemum on the red ground. The stupa-like pagoda is regarded as architectural art developed to its peak in the reign of King Rama III. The stupa-like pagoda refers to the place where deities reside. It is the simulation of Mount Meru according to a belief of Brahman. For prominence, the body of the pagoda was adjusted for the smaller and higher base, resulting in its slimmer and smaller top; like the small pagoda in front of the sanctuary or the 4 corer pagodas of the sanctuary in Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram. Inside the arch is where an angel holding a double-edged knife was enshrined. The pagoda was decorated with Chinese glazed tiles as the key material according to the royal style (Arts in Rattanakosin Period, p. 70).

Uniforms for four- to five-star hotels in Thailand are designed to incorporate motifs inspired by traditional Thai temples, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and artistry of the region. This design approach not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the uniforms but also pays homage to the country's architectural and artistic achievements. So Sofitel Bangkok Hotels is a distinguished establishment within the Urban Luxury Style category, expertly designed by the renowned French designer Monsieur Christian Lacroix. The interiors reflect the hotel's commitment to cutting-edge design and innovation, aligned with its overarching concept. The design philosophy is inspired by the five essential elements: earth, water, wood, metal, and fire, which are also creatively integrated into the uniforms of the front-line staff.



Figure 5. Left and right, the front office uniform of So Sofitel Bangkok. Source: [www.metrostaycation.com/2019/12/so-sofitel-bangkok.html](http://www.metrostaycation.com/2019/12/so-sofitel-bangkok.html).

### Research Question

1. Which semantic styles and patterns can communicate the identity of hotel uniforms in Rattakosin Island, Bangkok?

### Research Methodology

This is a mixed methods research, divided into 5 steps as follows. 1) Literature reviews: This part was divided into 2, i.e., to study significant architecture and arts in the significant temples in Rattanakosin Island, i.e., history, structures, styles, and motifs; and the second part was to study the hotel uniform, i.e., image, occasion, and function. 2) Interviews with the experts about concepts and identity creation of Thainess and Thai hotel uniform design process. 3) Qualitative and quantitative data collection: First, qualitative data was collected, i.e., paper doll data, and styles as well as motifs of employee uniforms. Next, quantitative data was collected, i.e., 300 sets of questionnaires from the hotel employees about the uniform style (Occasion) and function. 4) Analysis and conclusions of the structure, uniform style, motifs, and colored uniform. 5) Case study: The front office uniform of Sala Rattanakosin Bangkok.

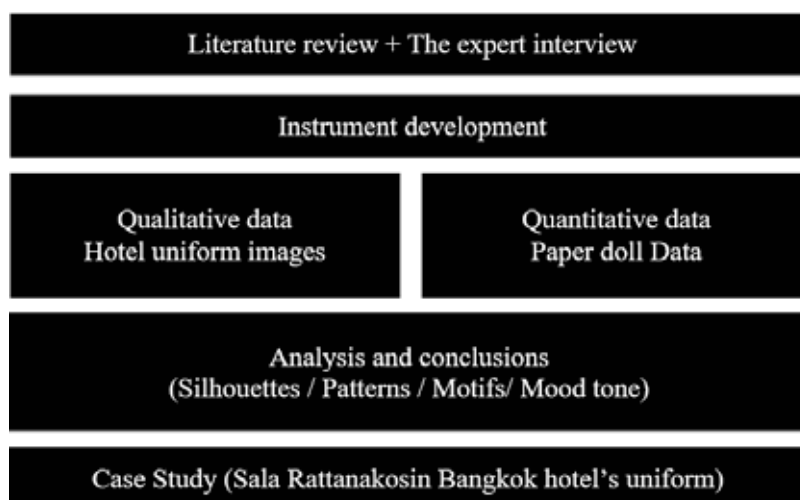


Figure 6. Conceptual Framework. Source: Edited by Author.

The conceptual framework started from literature reviews related to significant architecture and arts in significant temples in Rattanakosin Island, i.e., 1) Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram, 2) Wat Arun Ratchawararam, and 3) Wat Ratchaorasaram Rajwaramahaviharn to study prominent identity, patterns, and motifs to reveal artistic aesthetics of Rattanakosin Period. The next step was to interview the experts, i.e., fashion designers and hotel entrepreneurs involved with hotel uniform design as well as preparation to find methods to develop the research instruments, followed by qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, conclusions, and the case study, respectively.

## Results

The summary of findings from group interviews conducted with experts in hotel uniform design—including the Director of Marketing Communication and the Marketing Manager from Pullman King Power Hotel, as well as fashion designers in the hospitality industry—reveals several key insights. It can be concluded that the important variables influencing the design style of employee uniforms can be categorized into three main components:

- **Hotel Concept and Target Audience:** This variable influences the style and interior decoration of the hotel, contributing 40% to the overall design of employee uniforms.
- **Hotel Operations Style and Architectural Design:** This factor also accounts for 40% of uniform design considerations, reflecting the operational style and architectural elements of the hotel.
- **Inspiration from Management:** This component accounts for 20% and stems from the management team's insights. It shapes the perspective, vision, and innovative ideas that the hotel aims to convey, ensuring that the design of employee uniforms is contemporary and aligned with the prevailing fashion trends of the time.

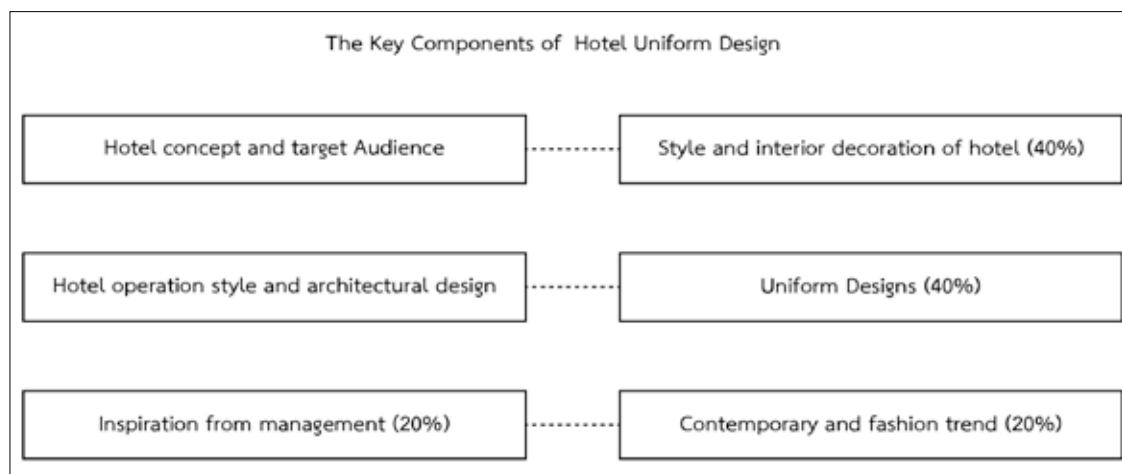


Figure 7. The key component of hotel uniform design. Source: Edited by Author.

The hotel operating style can be categorized into six distinct styles, one of which is the Urban Luxury Hotels Style. This particular style emphasizes both architectural grandeur and opulent interior decoration. It positions itself as an innovation leader, showcasing a unique presentation of contemporary Thainess that distinguishes it from other offerings in the market.

To achieve this differentiation, particular attention is paid to the front office staff uniforms, which are designed to reflect the uniqueness of the hotel's identity. This is accomplished by incorporating distinctive patterns, motifs, and design elements drawn from traditional Thai temples, sculptures, and stucco decorations, as well as traditional Thai clothing. Such thoughtful integration of cultural aesthetics into the employee uniforms not only elevates the overall guest experience but also reinforces the hotel's commitment to showcasing its heritage in a contemporary context.

Summary of Qualitative Data Results

The analysis of qualitative data from the Paperdoll dataset comprises two distinct components:

- 1. Front Office Staff Uniforms: This section encompasses a comprehensive range of employee roles, with a specific focus on the uniforms of Receptionists, Front Office Managers, Butlers, Hall Porters, Doormen, Guest Relations Officers, and Concierges.
  - 2. Hotel Architectural Style and Interior Decoration: This segment investigates the aesthetic elements of three hotels that align with the criteria for Urban Luxury Hotels:
- InterContinental Bangkok Hotel
  - The Siam Hotel
  - So Sofitel Bangkok Hotel

This dual focus provides a thorough understanding of both staff presentation and the visual appeal of hotel environments, emphasizing the integration of design elements that embody the luxury and sophistication characteristic of this hotel category.



Figure 8. Key design and functionality of Intercontinental Bangkok front-line staff uniform. Source: Edited by Author.





Figure 9. Key design and functionality of The Siam Bangkok Lobby area and front-line staff uniform. Source: Edited by Author.



Figure 10. Key design and functionality of Intercontinental Bangkok front-line staff uniform. Source: Edited by Author.

Summary results for all three hotels indicate that significant emphasis is placed on uniform tailoring for employees across all three establishments. The employee uniform style showcases a streamlined structure that enhances a polished appearance. The design principles promote a sense of politeness and humility. The fabric selection primarily includes polyester, which is valued for its durability and resistance to wrinkling. This choice ensures that the uniforms maintain their integrity after frequent laundering, preserving their shape over time.

Notably, there is an incorporation of Thai identity into the uniform design, which can be categorized into two distinct types as detailed below:

1. The design of the uniforms adheres to the stylistic elements of traditional Thai attire from the Rattanakosin era, while being adapted for contemporary usage to ensure comfort and practicality in hotel operations. This design is particularly suitable for roles that involve walking, sitting, lifting, and providing assistance to guests. The uniform incorporates traditional methods of draping and fabric usage characteristic of early Rattanakosin-period attire. For example, the male uniform features a cylinder-sleeved shirt with a stand-up collar, adorned with five gold buttons, paired with a loincloth. In contrast, the female uniform includes a loincloth complemented by a cloth draped elegantly over the shoulder, along with a pleated sarong. This thoughtful integration of traditional elements into modern uniform design not only highlights the Thai cultural heritage but also ensures ease of movement and functionality for staff.
2. The fabric design employs patterns inspired by the artistic and architectural elements of Thai temples from the Rattanakosin period, as well as influences from Thai and Chinese art during the Art Deco period. The motifs are derived from stupas, intricate stucco work, and ceramic decorations, such as plates, bowls, and cups, featuring designs that reflect Buddhist beliefs. These patterns represent a fusion of Thai and Chinese traditions and incorporate themes related to various deities, such as those found in the Tribhumi tradition, including representations of Phra Sumeru. Additionally, the designs include vine, leaf, and floral motifs, as well as geometric shapes, which contribute to the creation of printed fabrics that honor the rich cultural heritage of the region.

### Summary of Quantitative Data

**Study Overview:** A formal questionnaire was administered to a sample of 300 hotel employees in Bangkok to evaluate their preferences concerning clothing styles and requirements for hotel uniforms. The survey aimed to gather insights on the following key areas:

1. **Preferred Clothing Styles:** Participants were queried regarding the specific styles of clothing they favor while performing their professional duties. The intent was to identify preferences that align with both comfort and the professional image expected in the hospitality industry.
2. **Functional Requirements:** The questionnaire sought to ascertain the necessary functionalities of the uniforms, including aspects such as ease of movement, practicality for various tasks, and features that could facilitate monitoring and management within the operational framework of the hotel.
3. **Fabric Preferences:** Employees were asked about the types of fabrics they consider most suitable for hotel uniforms. This inquiry encompassed considerations related to comfort, durability, and ease of maintenance.
4. **Challenges Encountered:** The survey also aimed to identify any issues that employees experience concerning their uniforms. This included exploring topics such as discomfort, restrictions in movement, concerns regarding durability, and specific problems associated with fabric choices or uniform design.

### Key Areas of Focus

1. Employee Preferences: Understanding the styles that enhance personal presentation and fulfill job-related requirements.
2. Functional Design: Identifying the essential features of uniforms that support daily tasks and activities.
3. Choice of Fabrics: Determining materials that provide a balance of aesthetic appeal and functional durability.
4. Experience Issues: Collecting insights into prevalent challenges faced by employees to enhance overall satisfaction and performance related to uniform wear.

This comprehensive evaluation aims to inform uniform design and selection processes, ensuring they effectively address the needs and preferences of hotel employees, thereby enhancing their job performance and overall satisfaction.

The needs for hotel uniform Styles Data	Frequencies	percentage
<b>Top</b>		
Formal Blouse	75	25.00
Shirt Blouse	70	23.33
Shirt	40	13.33
Suit Jacket	95	31.67
Casual Jacket	20	6.67
<b>Bottom</b>		
Skirt	53	17.67
Business Formal Pant	125	41.67
Belted Crepe Peg Pants	79	26.33
Short Pants	19	6.33
A-Line Skirt	24	8.00
<b>Dresses</b>		
Formal Dress	60	20.00
Maxi Dress	35	11.67
Jumpsuit	5	1.67
<b>Accessories</b>		
Belt	10	3.33
Hat	25	8.33
Hair Accessories	8	2.67
Scarf	5	1.67

Figure 11. The need for popular hotel uniform styles data. Source: Edited by Author.

The table displays the need for popular hotel uniform styles.

The upper garments:

- Suit Jacket for 31.67 percent of the responses.
- Formal Blouses for 23.33 percent of the responses.
- Shirt Blouses for 23.33 percent of the responses.

The lower garments:

- Business Formal Pants for 41.67 percent of the responses.
- Belted Crepe Peg Pants for 26.33 percent of the responses.
- Skirt for 17.67 percent of the responses.



#### Dresses and Accessories:

- Formal Dress for 20.00 percent of the responses.
- Hat for 8.30 percent of the responses.
- Scarf for 1.67 percent of the responses.

In conclusion, the data presented underscores the preferences of hotel employees regarding uniform styles, revealing a strong inclination toward tailored and professional options. The Suit Jacket and Business Formal Pants lead the selections for upper and lower garments, respectively. Meanwhile, Formal Dresses and accessories, although less popular, still play a role in the overall uniform aesthetic. This valuable information enables hotel management to make informed decisions in the design and selection of uniforms, ensuring they meet employee preferences while maintaining a cohesive and professional appearance.

The comprehensive evaluation of uniform requirements among 300 hotel employees highlighted several key features that align with their needs. The findings indicate the following preferences:

1. **Aesthetically Pleasing and Functional Design:** Employees prefer uniforms that incorporate visually appealing patterns, enhancing their personal presentation. The garments should be designed for ease of wear, allowing for flexibility in activities such as walking, standing, and sitting. This feature received the highest preference ranking, accounting for 4.02 percent of the responses.
2. **Durability and Low Maintenance:** Uniforms must be durable and easy to maintain, with vibrant colors that resist fading. This requirement is crucial for maintaining a professional appearance over time and accounted for 3.99 percent of the responses.
3. **Professional Appearance:** The clothing should be styled in a way that enhances the employees' professional presentation, promoting an image of credibility and dignity. This aspect garnered 3.98 percent of the feedback, highlighting its importance to the employees.
4. **Monitoring and Management Functions:** Incorporating functionalities within the uniform for monitoring and managing employee activities also emerged as a significant need, receiving 3.91 percent of the responses.
5. **Fashion Trend Alignment:** Finally, there is a desire for attire that aligns with current fashion trends, which can contribute to the overall control system within the hotel environment. This feature accounted for 3.60 percent of the feedback received.

These insights underscore the importance of combining aesthetics, functionality, and professionalism in the design of hotel uniforms to meet the diverse needs of employees effectively.

#### **Summarized Results of Architectural and Art Styles in the Early Rattanakosin Period**

Architecture in that period reflected Thai–Chinese styles. Thai architectural structures were changed from wood to stucco as the key material. Temples, sanctuaries, stupas, and pagodas were decorated with glazed tiles according to Tribhumi ideology describing the

3 celestial worlds, i.e., heaven, earth, and hell; with Mount Meru as the center of the universe, surrounded by the Sattaboriphan mountains in 7 rings. Mount Meru and the Sattaboriphan mountains are surrounded by the Blue Sea spread in all directions across the universe. The outer periphery of the Sattaboriphan mountains in the 4 main directions is surrounded by 4 continents, i.e., Utaragurudavipa in the north, Buraphavithhadavipa in the east, Jambudvipa in the south, and Buraphavithhadavipa in the east. Each continent includes humans with different characteristics. Deities and beasts around are divided into 2 groups, i.e., 1) the one from a Chinese belief that includes auspicious animals like dragons, swans, and peacocks above the scenery of houses, pets, mountains, and trees; 2) the one from Jambudvipa in Hinduism – Brahman. Himmaman creatures include Kinnorn, Kinnari, support giants, support monkeys, and support angels. The last part was decorative stucco art from glazed tiles influenced by Chinese art. The decoration mostly included the patterns of flowers, leaves, and vines in neat layers from the base to the top around sanctuaries, stupas, and pagodas.

### Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahaviharn



Figure 12. Moodtone and motif, Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahaviharn. Source: Edited by Author, ([www.shershegoes.com/wat-pho-reclining-buddha/?utm\\_content=buffer4e0c2&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=pinterest.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.shershegoes.com/wat-pho-reclining-buddha/?utm_content=buffer4e0c2&utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest.com&utm_campaign=buffer)).

1. Motifs: They referred to using glazed tiles for decoration around sanctuaries, i.e., symmetric geometric shapes such as triangles, rectangles, circles, trapezoids, ovals, leaf patterns, and vine patterns neatly arranged into flowers in layers.
2. Temple decorative styles: They included 1) temple decoration, i.e., cascades, Chinese stone pagodas, Chinese buildings, Chinese stone dolls (beasts, Chinese and Thai peoples, stucco giants holding clubs, and sculptures of Chinese fighting noblemen with giant-like faces; and 2) pattern arrangement, i.e., put in rows and layers, which made sanctuaries looked prominent and dimensional; and also small shape arrangement in order in all 4 directions.

### Wat Arun Ratchawararam



Figure 13 Moodtone and motif, Wat Arun Ratchawararam. Source: Edited by Author, ([www.ferretingoutthefun.com/2020/09/08/4-days-in-bangkok/](http://www.ferretingoutthefun.com/2020/09/08/4-days-in-bangkok/)).

1. Motifs: They referred to tiles with Thai–Chinese art that included geometric forms, flowers, leaves, vines, and inflorescences of which edges were cut in small curves before arranging in order.
2. Temple decorative styles: They included 1) putting in rows (Striped): Tiles were arranged in a distance with equal space to reveal the continuity of the patterns of leaves, flowers, and vines in order that look smooth and flowing. 2) Layered: Most patterns were not arranged far from one another. Each arranged layer was different. One row included a single pattern fully arranged in order around pagodas, resulting in more prominent and fascinating looks of architecture.

### Wat Ratchaorasaram Rajwaramahaviharn



Figure 14. Moodtone and motif, Wat Ratchaorasaram Rajwaramahaviharn. Source: Edited by Author, ([www.becommon.co/culture/temple-1/#accept](http://www.becommon.co/culture/temple-1/#accept)).

1. Motifs: Temple halls were decorated with glazed tiles, i.e., geometric patterns, triangles, rectangles, trapezoids, vines, and flowers. Pediments were decorated with glazed tiles in scenery images, i.e., mountains, trees, and clouds. Auspicious animals according to a Chinese belief included chickens, couples of swans, butterflies, horses, and dragons. Outside Porter's doors were decorated with the image of a dragon over a cloud. Porters' faces were painted with curves and sharp edges around their eyes, along with a cloud pattern on their faces.

2. Temple decorative styles: 1) entrance/door arches were decorated, with Chinese stone pagodas that included glazed tiles and sculptured marbles. 2) Around temples were decorated with Chinese ballast dolls made of gray stucco.

### The Summarized Results of Prominent and Unique Motifs of Arts in the Early Rattanakosin Period.

1. Motifs: They were prominent in decoration with glazed tiles and Thai – Chinese art, i.e., geometric patterns, triangles, rectangles, trapezoids, vines, and flowers; along with Chinese ballast dolls, i.e., noblemen, Chinese and Thai peoples, stucco giants holding clubs; and 2 styles of stucco pattern, i.e., 1) Stucco auspicious animals according to a Chinese belief (chickens, couples of swans, butterflies, horses, and dragons); and 2) stucco flowers, vines, and leaves.
2. Temple decorative styles: They included 1) putting in rows (Striped): Tiles were arranged in a distance with equal space to reveal the continuity of the patterns of leaves, flowers, and vines so that look smooth and flowing. 2) Layered: Most patterns were not arranged far from one another. Each arranged layer was different. One row included a single pattern fully arranged in order around pagodas, resulting in more prominent and fascinating looks of architecture.

### Case study: Front-line Uniforms for Hotel Staff at Sala Rattanakosin Hotel



Figure 15. The top, Key design and functionality of Sala Rattanakosin Hotel front-line staff uniform. Bottom left, The entrance of Sala Rattanakosin Hotel. Right, the dining room of Sala Rattanakosin Hotel. Source: Edited by Author, ([www.salahospitality.com/rattanakosin/rattanakosin-gallery/](http://www.salahospitality.com/rattanakosin/rattanakosin-gallery/)).



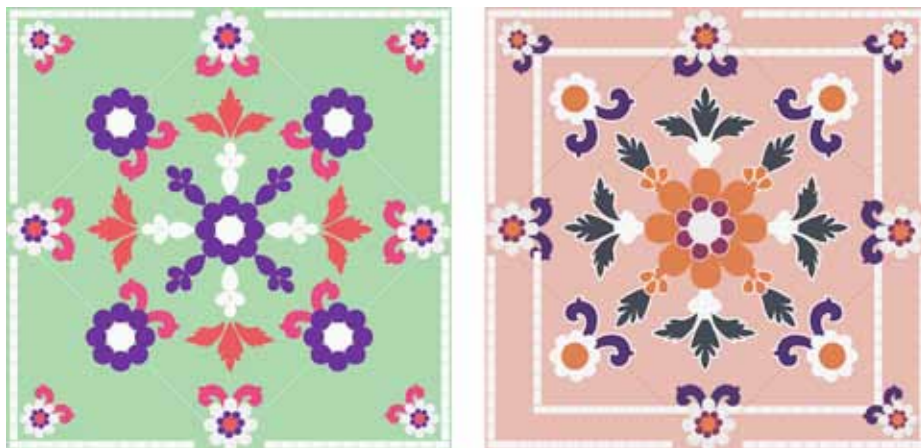


Figure 16. Pattern design 1 pattern intimated by Rattanakosin temples and Arts. Source: Designed by Author.



Figure 17. The patterns for Sala Rattanakosin hotel staff uniforms. Source: Designed by Author.

The design of the hotel uniform, as presented in the case study, draws inspiration from the prominent temples and artistic traditions of Rattanakosin Island. The patterns were adapted with a redefined color palette, as illustrated in Figure 15, where adjustments were made to enhance the mood and tone of the fabric design. This careful selection of colors aligns harmoniously with the architectural embellishments of the hotel and the reception area, strategically situated on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya River. The intent is to provide guests with an atmosphere of relaxation, immersed in the historical essence of Bangkok while enjoying picturesque views of Wat Arun, famously known as the "Temple of the Dawn," which exemplifies the beauty of the early Rattanakosin period.

The interior decoration of the Front Area is characterized by its emphasis on simplicity while preserving the cultural essence of the historical community through the use of traditional architectural elements. The entrance features dark brown folding wooden doors that reflect a blend of Thai and Chinese cultural influences. The design maintains a straightforward rectangular structure, enhanced by the interplay of light within the space. The color

scheme for the interior incorporates a palette of white, cream, brown, black, green, yellow, orange, and blue. This selection was purposefully curated to highlight the beauty of Wat Arun, with the researcher adjusting the color tones to align with the cool, ambient lighting experienced during nighttime at the temple. Consequently, the chosen colors predominantly comprise pastel cream and pastel orange tones, which collectively create a harmonious and inviting atmosphere for guests.

### Conclusion

According to the feedback from the interview with the manager of Sala Rattanakoin Bangkok, it was found that the hotel uniform prototype for showing in the hotel embraced aesthetics, prominence, and a more contemporary look than the traditional one. That was because the colors and patterns of the uniform depicted stories and patterns from decorative glazed tiles and pastel colors to design with the hotel's color tone. This helped create emotions and feelings of grace, aesthetics, tenderness, and simplicity but with the charm of Thainess that were perfectly combined. The patterns of flowers, leaves, and vines arranged in order created the feeling of Wat Arun atmosphere opposite the hotel, which location is a significant highlight for tourists to take photos and absorb its aesthetics in the evening on the bank of the Chao Phraya River. As for the results of the interviews with tourists, most of them preferred the classic and simple uniform. The pastel colors even enhanced prominent and soft looks, with perfectly decorated fabric patterns. As a consequence, they were impressed by the hotel atmosphere and would like to come back here again in the future. Similarly, hotel employees viewed that the uniform looked fascinating and prominent, with the Thai style; and that wearing it could increase their self-confidence at work. The patterns and color tones create feelings of tenderness and peace. The printed fabric from the patterns of flowers, leaves, vines, and geometric shapes could reveal the identity and aesthetics of Wat Arun in the Rattanakosin Period efficiently, which made the uniform look more fascinating and pleasant to wear, with pastel colors that can be simply worn for both men and women. Employees said that the hotel uniform with patterns from temples even increased attractiveness and excitement for tourists. This pattern design revealed the care and attention that the hotel gave to their employees, and could create great impressions for tourists.

### Acknowledgments

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# Debussy and Siamese Whole-Tone Scale Music

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## Abstract

This article explores Claude Debussy, Siamese whole-tone scale music, and urban cultural connections between France and Siam in terms of history, theory, and its inspiring creativity to music. Playing an important role in Western music, whole-tone scale expresses spirit and philosophy of the East along with unique improvisation and rhythmic patterns. More importantly it has been influential to a number of Western masterpieces such as music by Debussy, Béla Bartók, and Klaus Pringsheim. Siamese 7-note whole-tone scale music had a close connection with France since the diplomat to Siam, Simon de la Loubère was recognized to be the first foreigner who notated Siamese song *Say Samon* in 1667. The publication had been published in English version by a London publisher 26 years later in 1693. By that time Siamese, Khmer (Cambodia), and Laos have shared the same element in music and repertoire. The cultural performances and music representing of France colonial in Paris Exposition Universelle 1889 might touch many artists and music composers' hearts.

**Keywords:** Debussy, Whole-tone Scale, la Loubère, Paris Exposition, Siam, Say Samon, Urban cultural exchange, Thailand

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## Introduction

Debussy has been recognized as one of prominent impressionist composers among Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, and Gabriel Faure. His unique compositional style is related to whole-tone scale and quartal-quintal harmony which are similar to southeast Asian music especially Indonesian gamelan and Siamese Piphat and Mahori ensembles. Nonetheless, Debussy's whole-tone scale has 6 equal temperament notes, whereby Indonesian scale has 5 notes and Siamese scale has 7 notes respectively.



Figure 1. Claude Debussy (1862-1918).

Debussy was born on 22nd August 1862 in a small city called Saint-Germain-en-Laye, about 19 kilometers west of Paris, France. He was the eldest among five children whose father ran a China shop and his mother was a seamstress. By the time that the business failing, his family moved to Paris in 1864. They managed to own a small apartment in Paris whereby his father worked in a printing factory. Through bad experiences, Debussy had shown his gift in music at early age and started taking piano lessons at seven. Outstandingly, he entered, the Paris Conservatoire in 1872, when he was only ten years old. Debussy immediately impressed the jury with his impressive improvisation of which he preferred to express other than the conservative sound interpretation. He had been at the conservatoire for 11 years and studied piano with Mme. Maute, who claimed to be one of Frédéric Chopin's pupils. At the same time, he studied composition with Ernest Guiraud, music history and theory with Louis-Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray, organ with César Franck, solfège with Albert Lavignac, and harmony with Émile Durand (Lockspeiser, 1963:10-11). Furthermore, his

piano playing was successful; he won the prestigious prize in composition, “Prix de Rome.” He had won second prize in 1883 from the cantata *Le Gladiateur* and won the first prize a year later from the work *L’ enfant prodigue*. The work had been guided by Guiraud in year 1884, from his Cantata *L’ enfant prodigue*, based on the story of the Prodigal Son. The prize had granted Debussy to study at the Villa de Medici in Rome for four years from January 1885 to March 1887. Over there, he managed to meet Giuseppe Verdi and heard Wagner’s operas which influenced and inspired him tremendously for writing his own compositions in the future.

Claude Debussy was a composer who worked on new colors of orchestration and integrated music theory. His philosophy was to challenge and against the traditional ways in finding new characterizing role of woodwind and brass sections in order to produce more creative and productive ways. One of those repertoires that can demonstrate those colorful laboratories well is *La Mer* (for orchestra, 1905.) The work has been admired as the pioneer of Impressionism. His music is a creative and imaginative work of art like sounding poetry. Other popular works in the same genre are *Clair de lune* (*Moonlight from Suite bergamasque*, 1890-1905), *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, 1894), and his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902). His final works include piano pieces *En blanc et noir*, (*In Black and White*, 1915) and set of *Douze Études* (*Twelve Études*, 1915.)

Debussy’s composing style had been criticized against those of Richard Wagner (1813-1883), the German Romantic opera pioneer. In the meantime, the Impressionism term that identified itself as “*Fantasies and Dreams*.” It was until 1894 when Debussy had proved his genuine composing signature. The *Prelude à l’après-midi d’un Faune* was the first innovation that inspired him to the next phase of his later works. The remarkable techniques that described Debussy’s composing style are the use of six-note whole-tone scale and the unresolved augmented chord progression.

In 1908 Debussy married a singer, Emma Bardac, and later had one daughter, Claude-Emma Debussy. Emma inspired Debussy to compose the piano piece in 1908 *The Children’s Corner* which was dedicated to her. Debussy spent his later years in life as a critic, composing music, and traveling internationally to perform his own works. Later in 1918, Debussy, 55, died tragically because of the earliest colostomy operations of rectal cancer ever done. Even worse when Claude-Emma outlived her noted father only about a year. She died of diphtheria in 1919 after a mistake was made by the doctor who gave her the wrong treatment. Debussy was buried in Paris at Passy Cemetery, with his wife and daughter near him. Debussy’s death was a great lost in music contribution.

### Indonesian (Javanese) Gamelan

Javanese gamelan has been believed to be the most imaginative inspiring and influencing to Debussy’s whole-tone scale as well as the idealistic quartal-quintal harmony, the harmonic figure similar to gamelan repertoire. In fact, the tuning called Pelog (7-note scale) is not exactly whole-tone scale differed from Slendro which is a pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, and A). Pelog has a unique tuning depending on its harmonic series and the melodic mode. More importantly, there is nothing associated with the tuning of the 12 chromatic function.

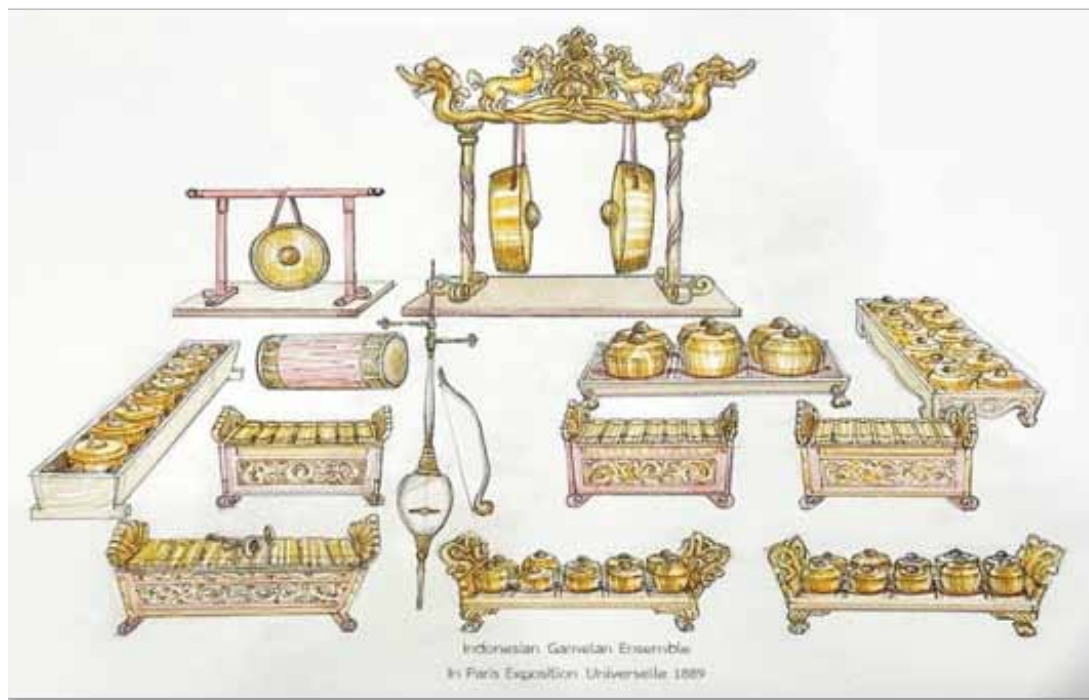


Figure 2. Indonesian Gamelan ensemble in Paris Exposition Universelle 1889.

### Siamese Mahori Ensemble

Both Thai traditional music and gamelan music have been accompanied by the intricate and varied rhythmic patterns, played by different sizes of drums and designed percussions. Actually, music in the southeast Asian region shared common ground technique and repertoire from Siamese Music. Ayutthaya Kingdom had played an important role in ruling Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnamese for centuries. More importantly, they had shared the cultural performing tradition, court music beyond repertoire as well as instrumentations and playing techniques. Principle of practice is based on 7-note whole-tone scale accompanied by various tuning drums and a small pair of cymbals called “Ching.”

The region known as the “Golden Land” is the Southeast Asia peninsular comprised of Thailand (Siam), Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore. Siam had a close connection with many European countries such as Portugal, France, and the Netherlands since Ayutthaya Kingdom. Especially, France, in the reign of King Narai the Great (1656-1688) of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, Siamese received Simon de la Loubère as French diplomat of King Louis XIV to be in Siam from October 1687 to January 1688. During his visit, la Loubère wrote all observances about Ayutthaya and the royal palace. A fine violinist and well educated himself, music was certainly part of his interest. La Loubère managed to record melodic singing styles in detail. However, he did not mention the different tuning system between Just Intonation used in Europe and Siamese whole-tone music. He only stated that there was no half tone in Siamese music.

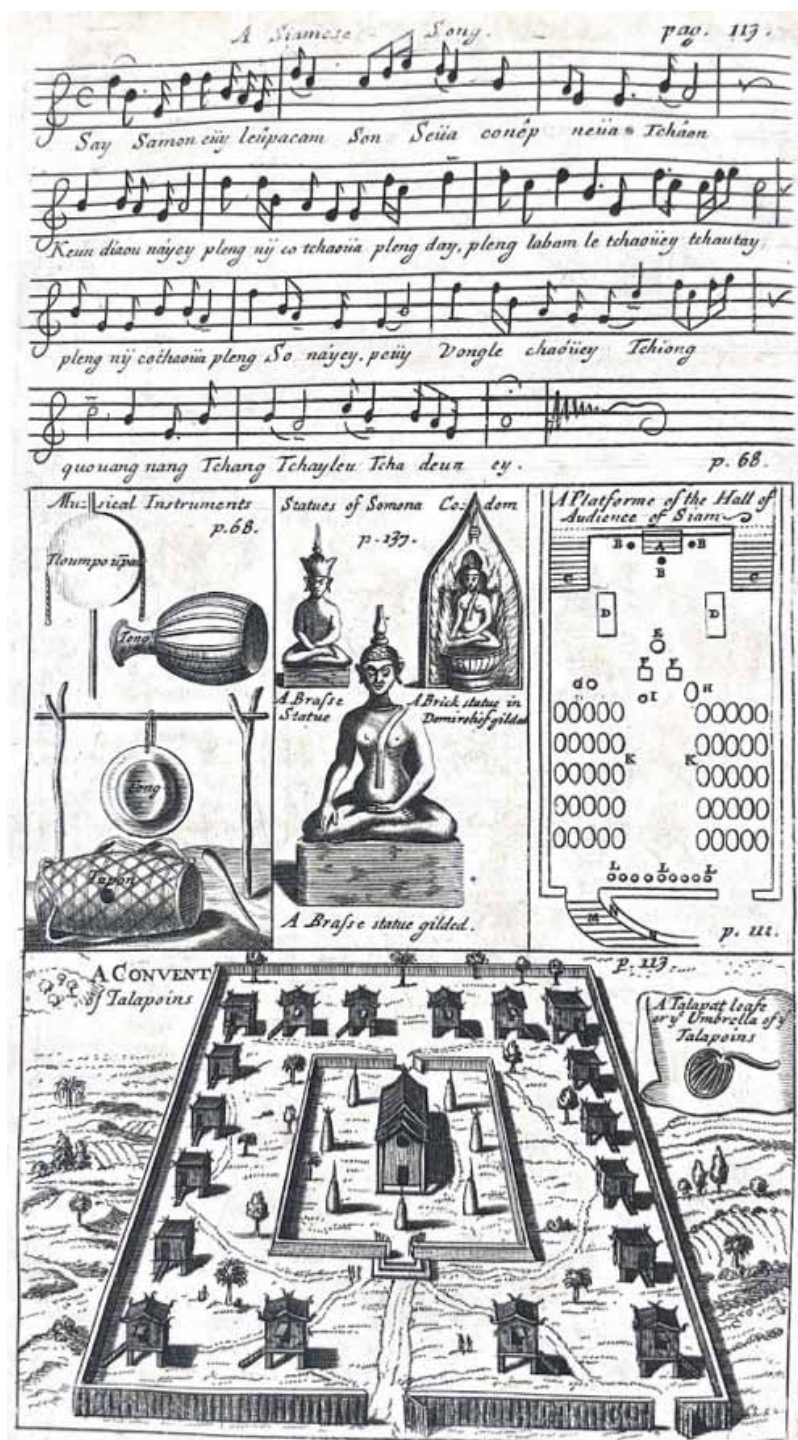


Figure 3. Picture of "Say Samon" music notation by la Loubère in 1687, recognized to be the first whole-tone music notated. English publishing version, London 1693 (la Loubère, 1693:113).



**"Say Samon"** transcribed  
from La Loubère notation accompanied by Baroque Counterpoint

**Moderato**

The musical score is presented in a standard Western notation format. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The score is divided into four systems, each containing six measures. The measures are numbered 1 through 24. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the counterpoint is written in the bass staff. The counterpoint consists of various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, which are played in a steady, rhythmic fashion.

Figure 4. Picture of Say Samon accompanied by Baroque counterpoint.

Besides, the first ever written whole-tone music was notated by Simon de la Loubère in 1687. The important page of history was turned when Siamese sent the first embassy to France in 1686 led by ambassador Kosa Pan. The three Siamese ambassadors and their group had left Ayutthaya on December 22, 1685, and arrived at the port city Brest on June 18, 1686. They remained in France from June 1686 to March 1687 and presented King Narai's letter to King Louis XIV at Versailles on September 1, 1686. They still spent several

months traveled to North of France before returning to Brest. There was no substantial evidence showed the connection between France court and operatic composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) who was born in Florence (Italy), and paid his visit to see Kosa Pan and the Siamese musicians. Anyhow, King Louis had assigned a court composer, Michel-Richard Delalande (1657-1726) to compose 2 pieces of procession music, *Entree des Siamois* (Welcome Siamese) and *Air des Siamois*, to perform by a large ensemble during the procession ceremony. These 2 compositions showed relation between French and Siamese monarchy in the history. Even though the functions of whole-tone scale and pentatonic scale in Siamese music did not show the relevance but the ethnicity and essence of eastern flavors still existed.

### Debussy and the Exposition Universelle

Debussy attended the Javanese music performance at the Exposition Universelle in 1889. The event was known as the 1889 Paris Exposition, a world's fair held in Paris, France from May 5 to October 31, 1889 and was also the occasion that the Eiffel Tower was built and launched as the highlight attraction. More importantly, there were ethnic music and dances around the world especially the colonial countries presented in the Expo. Neither clear evident nor contents supported that Khmer dances and music were performed in the Paris Expo 1889. The record by Paul Holmes in his book entitled "*Debussy*" (Holmes, 1989:37) shows that:

Debussy visited to the Eiffel Tower, the construction tribute to French technical invention "Eiffel," with Robert Godet (Journalist) and Paul Dukas (composer). They could also explore the area where almost every nation including France's new colonies displayed its culture and products. Debussy and friends heard music that they had never been experienced before. They had heard folk music from every continent and specifically Balinese gamelan played as accompaniment to the shadow puppet performance that made Debussy was fascinated with the improvising rhythmic pattern and its harmonious overtone series. Indonesian's Gamelan and the cultural music and drama of Southeast Asian it had been spotted in published advertising and Europe newspaper.

### Siamese, Cambodia, and Laos Music

Even though there was no substantial evidence that there was the traditional troupe or music ensemble from Cambodia as Khmer had been under France from 1863 to 1954. France's colonial in Southeast Asia beside Cambodia, which had been taken from Siam (Thailand) before further invasion parts, were Laos and Vietnam in 1867. Music and dance of Khmer and Laos had been influenced by Siamese traditional court performance and were indistinguishably related. Certainly, there was no a substantial record that traditional troupe from Cambodia or Laos were presented in the Expo. Khmer had been an important part of France's colonialism and played a culture luxury role in Southeast Asia region. Assumably, Debussy might have heard music that accompanied a court dance troupe from Cambodia and therefore being inspired by the whole-tone melodic structure, propounding quartal-quintal harmonic as well as improvising rhythmic patterns either in Expo 1889 in Paris or Expo 1900 in London. His creativity had been applied into several categories of music especially in *Preludes* (Book I 1909-1910 and Book II 1912-1913), *Suite Bergamasque* (began composing in 1890 and significantly revised before its publication in 1905), *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* (1908), and *La Mer* (1905).

### Whole-Tone Scale

Debussy was not the only pioneer composer who used the whole-tone scale in his music, but Bartók, Berg, Berlioz, Chopin, Elgar, Glinka, Janacek, Liszt, Mahler, and Messiaen among others also experienced the use of 6-note whole-tone scale which believed to commonly share philosophy between the East and the West. Basically, Western tuning bases on 12-note equal temperament in an octave but mainly explores 7 notes in diatonic major and minor scales. However, Thai traditional music plays on 5-note pentatonic mode based on the 7-note whole-tone scale. More importantly, the 7-note whole-tone scale has been used in common in traditional and folk music in those areas mentioned, especially the 5-note Slendro gamelan scale. Moreover, the quartal-quintal harmony and improvising rhythmic patterns are also the heart of Siamese and Khmer music.

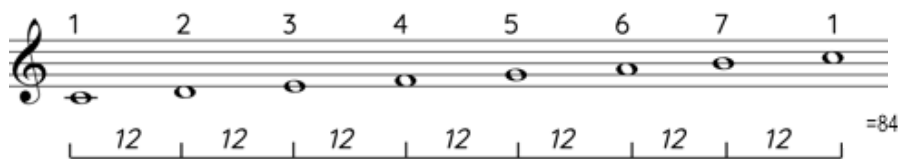


Figure 5. Siamese' 7-note whole-tone scale.



Figure 6. Debussy's 6-note whole-tone scale.

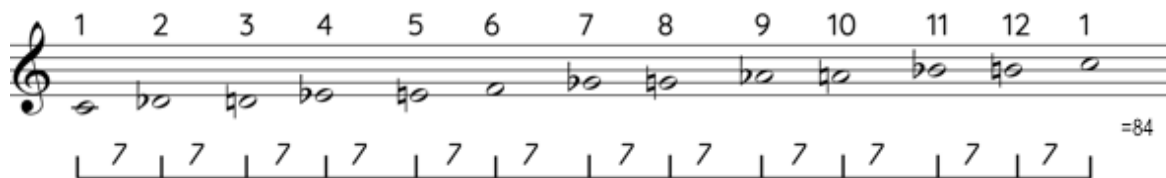


Figure 7. Western music's 12-note chromatic scale.

### Siamese Whole-Tone Music Composers

In 1930, after having been ruled by France for nearly 67 years, the court music of Khmer had been stagnated. At that time King Rama VII of Siam had paid a royal visit to Cambodia and Vietnam, accompanied by Siamese court music master, Luang Pradit Phairoh, the headmaster of the royal court music. King Srisawasdi Maneewongse of Cambodia was highly impressed with the performance of solo Ranad (Siamese wooden xylophone) by Luang Pradit Phairoh in the royal welcoming party held at Angkor Wat for King of Siam.



Figure 8. Luang Pradit Phairoh (1881-1954).



Figure 9. Dr. Klaus Pringsheim (1883-1972), a professor of music at the Tokyo University of Arts.



Figure 10 Prasidh Silapabanleng (1912-1999), student of Dr. Klaus Pringsheim.

French and royal officers kindly asked King Rama VII for the royal permission to let Luang Pradit Phairoh train and revise the missing repertoire of Khmer and Siamese court music. Concerning the royal command, King Rama VII granted a month to complete the mission requested. After an impressive service, King Srisawasdi Maneewongse had great satisfaction of the result; both Khmer and Siamese polished up all the worship and ceremony repertoire as well as playing and tuning systems spectacularly. During that visit, Luang Pradit Phairoh had been accompanied by his son, Prasidh Silapabanleng. Prasidh, who had strong background in Thai traditional music from his father, enrolled the cultural exchange program in Japan in 1934 and met Dr. Klaus Pringsheim, a German composer and conductor, and pupil of the world renown artist, Gustav Mahler (Premananda, 2011:27, 29, 30, 37). Prasidh had studied with Pringsheim at the Tokyo Geidai (Imperial Academy of Music or Tokyo University of Arts at present) and took private lessons until 1937. Upon returning to Thailand, Prasidh invited Pringsheim to stay in Bangkok occasionally. Both of them worked on many compositions based on Thai 7-note whole-tone scale, quartal-quintal harmony, Thai rhythmic patterns, and Thai musical form within the same inspiration as found in Debussy's. The music of Pringsheim that had been influenced by Thai melodic structures included *Concert of Orchestra in C major, Op.32* (concerto for 2 pianos and orchestra), music and opera in one act *Yamada Nagamasa*, and the lost composition tribute to King Rama VIII, *The Royal March. Yamada Nagamasa* (1470-1530) was the true story of a Japanese swordsman and merchant who came to serve King of Ayutthaya Kingdom and became the supreme governor of Nakorn Si Thammarat city in southern Siam. In the meantime, Prasidh composed *Siamese Suite*, a symphony in 4 movements and an overture *Cherd Nai* as a tribute to King Rama IX the Great which was based on his father's composition. The composition enhanced him to be awarded the National Artist in Music Composition later in 1998. Pringsheim passed away in Tokyo in 1972 and Prasidh in 1999, Bangkok and have passed down Pringsheim's School of Composition to younger generations in Thailand. The two impor-

tant disciples who play a vital role in inheriting Pringsheim and Prasidh's philosophy are Prasinee Sakhuntararat and Weerachat Premananda; they both studied with Pringsheim's pupils at Tokyo University of Arts, Manabu Kawai, and Hiroaki Minami. Pringsheim introduced the innovative techniques applying traditional pentatonic scales of both Thai and Japanese music.

### Whole-Tone Scales in Comparison

There are several pentatonic Japanese scales such as the one that is more like jazz music mode called "Hirajoshi" (C, D, Eb, G, Ab, and C). And the one that is similar to Hirajoshi is called "In Sen" (C, Db, F, G, Ab, and C). The "Iwato" is like mode of Western music combined with C, Db, F, Gb, Bb, C. And the one that is closed to Thai pentatonic whole-tone scale is called "Yo" which has been used specifically in traditional Japanese folk songs in contemporary compositions. *Yamada Nagamasa* is one of outstanding examples that combined Thai and Japanese pentatonic whole-tone scales perfectly. The piece had been performed and broadcasted from time to time by the NHK Symphony Orchestra over the past 40 years.



Figure 11. Thai Pentatonic based on 7-notes whole-tone scale.



Figure 12. Japanese "Yo" pentatonic scale.



Figure 13. Debussy's whole-tone scales in different divergence.

The 6-note whole-tone scale of Debussy has the same mode modulation as Siamese and Japanese music. In repertoire of ritual ceremony, Siamese music has moved from 6-note mode to another without accidental tone as played in the white keys. Triads created by 6-note whole-tone scale mostly are augmented chords like C Aug. (C, E, G#), D Aug. (D, F#, A#), F# dim (F#, A#, C) and C7 (Bb, C, E). Therefore, 6-note whole-tone scale needs to com-



bine at least two scales in order to create a tonality and harmonic function; for example, C and Eb whole-tone scales. Moreover, traditional harmony does not suite Debussy's scale. Therefore quartal-quintal harmony is a better solution. Siamese pentatonic scale can easily harmonize themselves following its harmonic series and a tonic note can move itself following the mode of the melodic movement.

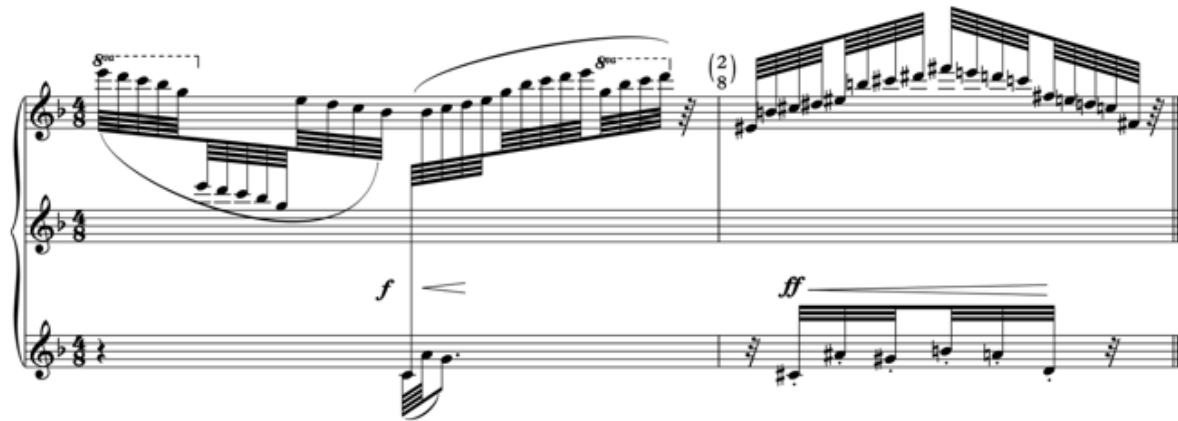


Figure 14. Debussy's whole-tone scale in *Prelude No.12, Book II*.

Siamese traditional music has long been developed from folk music into refined court music. Approximately, it had taken more than 4000 years since Thai people originally resided in southern Yunnan County of China. The uniquely designed musical instruments, the playing technique, and the repertoire had been influenced and shared among Chinese, Indian, Khmer and Mon cultures. Since the year 1238 of Sukhothai Kingdom, Thai music was spectacularly set up its unique form of ensemble that suited to every ritual and ceremony. Many Thai minorities also shared same diction but different dialects or written script. Different combinations of instruments had been recorded in lot of evidences such as stone inscriptions and stone crafting of Angkor Wat (1113-1150). Siamese music had powered over the region called Suvarnabhumi including Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and part of Myanmar in Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350-1767). And the 7-note whole-tone system had played an important role in Southeast Asia. Ayutthaya Kingdom period to the middle of Rattanakosin Kingdom period (1767-1932) has been recognized as the golden age of Thai music. However, Siamese music had faced pessimistic obstacle when Thailand changed from absolute monarchy to democracy ruled by military government of Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram during 1942 to 1957.

The 7-note whole-tone scale of Siamese music had been proved to the world for the first time in 1885 by renown musicologist Alexander J. Ellis (1814-1890) when Siamese ensemble had been invited to perform in London. Ellis used a pitch machine to measure all the registers and recorded that there are 7 notes which equal to the 12-note temperament of Western music. Gamelan and Siamese (Thai) have shared many spectacular things in common. Slendro of Gamelan scale and Thai pentatonic scale are quite similar in both tuning and structure as a whole-tone scale series. The instruments, Gongs have played an important role in both harmonic and melodic progressions. Drums play rhythmic patterns, three-strings bowed instrument accompanies singing, and wooden xylophone plays rhythmic syncopation. When King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V of Siam, 1868-1910) visited Indonesia in 1871, 1896 and 1901, Javanese had composed Gamelan music to pay tribute to His Maj-

esty. Another tile relation between Siamese and Gamelan music was the time when Prince Paribatra (1881-1944), son of King Rama V moved to reside to Bandung city, West Java, Indonesia because of the political incidence in 1932. As a find musician himself in both Thai traditional and Western Music, Prince Paribatra founded a Siamese traditional ensemble in his palace and shared the refine artistic performances among inviting guests and visitors. In the meantime, the royal family member who played an active role in Siamese and Javanese music exchange was Prince Bhanurangsi Savangwongse (1859-1928) who visited Indonesia with his court musician, at the time Luang Pradit Phairoh in 1908 and brought a Javanese bamboo instrument back which later became popular in Siam and known as the angklung.



Figure 15. Stone carving of ancient Khmer musical instruments. (from: [https://hmong.in.th/wiki/Kong\\_von\\_thom#title](https://hmong.in.th/wiki/Kong_von_thom#title)).

At present, Siamese and Javanese music has been recognized worldwide. Every established school of music and university has contained curriculum in both kinds of music. In Bangkok there are several Gamelan ensembles including those of the Srinakharinwirot University among others.

### Conclusion

Whole-tone scale music has played the important role in Southeast Asian cultural sound for centuries. It creates uniqueness of sound characters and stylistic musical forms. Moreover, it possibly expresses spirit and heart of Asian arts. Nowadays, whole-tone music has very much influenced new generation of composers in creating contemporary music techniques and innovative imagination. In the meantime, it also inspires integrating knowledge towards music study in the higher education.

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# The Creation of Solo Piano Compositions

## from Khaen Melodies "Thamnong Khaen"

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### Abstract

This paper aims to present Khaen melodies (an Isan musical instrument) by analyzing the original notes and arranging them for piano, using Western music composition theory to adapt the notes to suit beginner-level piano players. Based on qualitative research and creative music research, the creative process emphasizes preserving the original accents and primary melodies of the Khaen. Additionally, it develops the musical structure and harmonies to align with contemporary Western classical music. The analysis of the original Khaen melodies reveals rapid note values and rhythms, as well as harmonies with more than one voice, accompanied by irregular interval jumps throughout the melody. To make the piano arrangement suitable for both beginners and general enthusiasts to appreciate Isan music's distinctive sound, the following strategies are used: 1) changing the time signature, expanding rhythm values, and adjusting the placement of notes in certain measures; 2) re-arranging Khaen melodies following Western practices including phrases, cadence, motif, and repetition; 3) arranging accompaniment with basso ostinato from drone; and 4) creating chords and progression from solo Khaen melodies. In addition, this music creation supports the development of contemporary piano with Isan attributes and promotes the value of folk music culture in the area. By raising awareness among beginner piano learners or interested individuals, this arrangement makes the music more accessible through easier practice with these notes.

**Keywords:** *Khaen Melodies, Molam, Creation, Piano Pieces, Isan Folk Music, Contemporary Music Composition, Thai Traditional Music*

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## Introduction

The Khaen is a key instrument used to accompany Molam performances or klon lam singing, a traditional form of performance art from Isan (northeastern Thailand) (Cham-padaeng et al., 2014: 718; Office of the National Cultural Commission, 2009:48-53; Miller & Shahriari, 2017:270; Dekievit, 2017:33,40; Binson & Pornprasit, 2010:4-5; Boonrod, 2021:366). Molam culture is one of three major music cultures in Isan, the others being Kan Trum music, and Korat music. Molam belongs to the largest ethnic group in the Isan region, consequently making the Khaen the most widely popular instrument in this area (Kingkaew, 2016). Khaen is a woodwind instrument made from bamboo with free-reed mouth-organ (Yaowapan, 2014:255). Originally, Khaen and Khaen performance comprise melody and drone, both of which are based on five of notes. These notes are divided into two tonal groups, traditionally known as *thang san* (short) and *thang yao* (long), each with its own harmonic notes, known as a drone. The groups feature unique melodic harmonies composed of intervals, including the 4th, 5th, and 8th intervals, along with the main melody (Miller & Shahriari, 2017:264; Klangprasri, 2010). Therefore, Khaen is considered to be a musical instrument that can accompany the melody in the same way that the accordion or the pipe organ can (Adler, 2023:2). Sample drone notes in each mode (called “Lai” in Thai Isan folk music) are as follows:

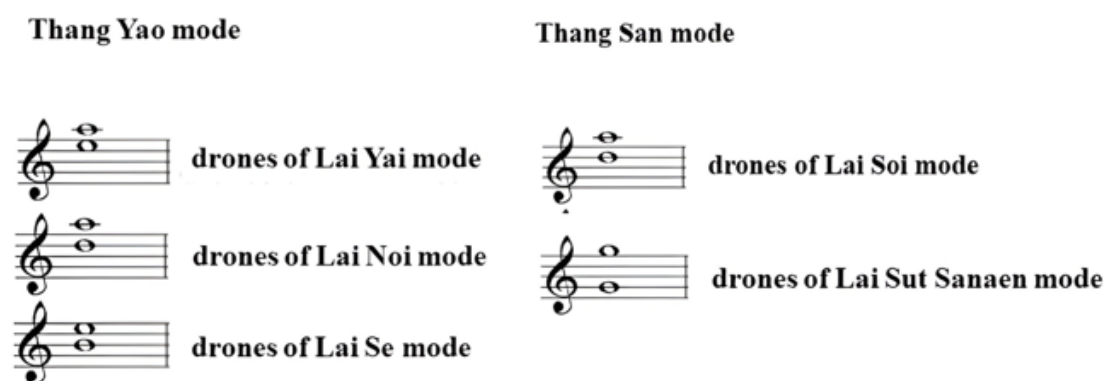


Figure 1. The sample excerpt of drone in each mode (called “lai” in Northeastern Thai traditional music).

The Khaen is used in three types of performances, which are: 1) Khaen to accompany singing (Kingkaew, 2016:34-35; DeKievit, 2017:37; Binson & Pornprasit, 2010:2; 2) Khaen solo (Adler, 2023:10-13; Walker, 2020) the melodies of solo Khaen performances are adapted or used in traditional folk music performances, such as Khaen bands, Pin or Pong Lang bands, and Molam; and 3) Khaen to accompany other music cultures such as ASEAN music bands, popular music bands, and orchestras (Casean Channel, 2016; Walker, 2016).

In addition, Khaen solos and the unique characteristics of the Khaen are rearranged into new compositions using Western composition techniques and are performed with Western musical instruments, particularly the piano. An example of this is the composition *Lai Lam Piano: The Isan Piano Melodies* by Akapong Phulaiyaw, which adapts traditional Isan folk melodies, including Khaen melodies used in Molam performances, such as Pong Lang Lai, Tang Wai Lam, and Mae-Hang Klom Luk Lai. These melodies have been arranged for piano using Western composition techniques (Phulaiyaw, 2021:1-12). This type of music reflects the mixture of music from different cultures, where the melodic structure of the local music or traditional music is the main component of the new music arranged with Western theory and techniques. This preserves important features of music of each region (Lee, 2006:22-71; Scheibert, 2017; Ong, 2011; Socatyanurak, 2005: 540–553; Lin, 2018; Bonnin,

2008; Huan, 2020:1-4; Yilmaz, 2014:3021–3025; Khurmatullina, & Salpykova, 2014:29–41; Adjahoe, 2017: 94–114). Examples of cross-cultural musical fusion in piano compositions have emerged in various areas outside Western music traditions. For instance: (a) Berkant Gençkal drew on the melodies of Turkey's Bursa folk songs to arrange piano for four hands (Demirci, 2016:1986–2001); (b) local Indonesian music was incorporated in children's piano lessons (Pelawi, Sagala, & Beratio, 2017:114); (c) the development of contemporary Turkish piano compositions incorporates elements of traditional Turkish music, drawing from the unique makam scales of traditional Turkish music; (d) the integration of the national pentatonic mode in Chinese piano compositions enhances their distinctiveness (Chen & Zhang, 2019:20–27); (e) the development of Korean music involves blending specific modes of traditional Korean music with the key relationships found in Western music; for example, pyeongjo and major keys convey calmness and freshness, and gyemyeongjo and minor keys signify sadness (The Korea Foundation, 2011:13); (f) Copland incorporated Anglo-American folk music into his contemporary compositions by using popular and distinctive folk melodies, such as the *orquesta típica* and *canción ranchera*. He used segments of these melodies and fragments as melodic-rhythmic motifs in his compositions, creating harmonies, melodic development, and form, as well as managing rhythm in his unique modernist style (Murchison, 2012:196, 197).

In Thailand, empirical evidence and research indicate that the fusion of different musical cultures, specifically Thai music and piano, began during the era of King Rama VI, exemplified by Thai string ensembles combined with piano (Inkhong, 2016:115; Socratianurak, 2005:543-544; Matakunakorn, Amatyakul, Charanyananda, & Natchanawakul, 2018:363). Currently, several composers use traditional Thai melodies to arrange piano pieces in various ways: 1) Sumitra Sucharitkul used Thai traditional music as a major component, complete with accompaniment from Western music; 2) Colonel Chuchart Pitaksakorn weaved many melodies together, including chord progression, use of notes outside of the chord, and accompaniment of Western music (Socratianurak, 2005:543-544; Matakunakorn, Amatyakul, Charanyananda, & Natchanawakul, 2018:364). In Molam music culture, three interesting points are noted: Firstly, arranging Isan folk melodies for beginner-level piano players (level 1-3), while clearly preserving the original structure of these traditional tunes, is still relatively rare. It is found, for instance, in solo piano pieces with Thai string instruments, such as the "Piano Lai Lum" piano set by Akapong Phulaiyaw. (2021). Secondly, some pieces are arranged freely based on the Western practice, with no regard to the practice of Thai Isan folk music (Thuntaweek & Boriboonviree, 2015:515). Finally, some piano compositions are created using Western musical techniques in various styles, such as French and jazz, which shows a lack of musical creations in this form (Chaumklang & Hirunrax, 2021:128; Suddai, 2019: 298-299).

### Objectives

This paper aims to present an arrangement approach for solo Khaen melodies, drawing from original melodies to adapt them for piano and tailoring the notes to suit beginner-level piano players. Using Western music composition theory, it develops a new melodic structure that aligns with Western classical music while emphasizing the preservation of the original accents and main melody of the Khaen. Additionally, it enhances the sound with new harmonies that carry the tone of contemporary Western classical music.



## Methodology

This research was carried out with research integrity and ethics approval from the Office of the Committee for Research Ethics (Social Sciences), Mahidol University, with project number MU-SSIRB 2018/007.0901 obtained on January 9, 2018. The main research question of this paper is: How can solo Khaen melodies be used to arrange piano pieces suitable for beginner-level learners? The methodology follows these steps: (1) select popular songs from the Molam music culture; (2) choose solo Khaen melodies from the basic Khaen practice exercises in Klangprasri (2006), selecting pieces with prominent main melodies and consistent melodic movement featuring steady intervals; (3) analyze and synthesize the solo Khaen melodies; (4) examine the scope of music theory and basic piano skills for adult beginners; (5) arrange a total of 17 piano pieces, comprising 12 solo piano pieces and 5 pieces for two pianos; (6) verify the accuracy of the solo Khaen melodies and the appropriateness of the piano arrangements; (7) validate the results through a connoisseurship process with a panel of 10 experts, including scholars of Western music theory, piano performance instructors, traditional Isan folk musicians, and Khaen instructors.

No.	Approaches and Creation	Results
(1)	Changing the time signature to extend note values by expanding to match the original rhythm and in a free form, along with adjusting the pitch of certain notes independently	Changing the time signature from 2/4 (simple duple meter) to 4/4 (simple quadruple), along with extending note values independently of the original structure in some sections, and adjusting certain pitches to better align with the harmony of the chords. This includes modifying the octave of specific notes to direct the melody in a way that allows for smoother or more continuous finger movement.
(2)	New song rearrangement based on Western music practice, including creating phrases and cadence, and using motif and repetition	Developing the original melody to create more symmetrical phrases or clearer question-and-answer phrases, alongside the use of basic chord structures. This approach leads to cadence points following Western musical principles, such as the I-V or half cadence and the V-I or imperfect authentic cadence.
(3)	Accompaniment arrangement with basso ostinato from drone	Harmonies are created from drone notes based on the harmonic structure of folk music and modified with new methods to produce a fresh sound. Harmonizing notes are placed in new positions, often in the left hand on the bass clef of the piano, while the main melody from the original Khaen tune is set in the melody position on the treble clef. This arrangement allows the main melody to be clearly heard alongside a steady and robust harmony.
(4)	Chord and chord progression creation from solo Khaen melodies	The researcher enhanced the tonal color by blending classical music accents, creating harmonies in the form of an Alberti bass accompaniment along with other chords that complement the main melody's structure. This includes seventh chords and other chords within extended tertian harmonies.

Figure 2. Approaches to create solo Khaen melodies for contemporary piano compositions.



The adjustments are as follows:

1. *changes to the time signature and modifications to certain notes in specific measures.*

Khaen Melody  
(Klangprasri, 2006)

Piano Melody  
(Author, 2019)

A B C D E F G H

Figure 3. Sample Khaen melody that is used to compose a piano piece in Lam Sing song.

Figure 3 provides an example of a Lam Sing melody that is used to compose a piano piece. The use of composition techniques in this paper can be classified into three groups as follows: 1) Changing the time signature from 2/4 to 4/4 retains the original feel of the melody while repositioning certain melodic notes within the same measure to fall on the down-beat, or the first beat of the measure. This adjustment emphasizes alignment with the harmony or chord of that measure, making the harmony more pronounced, as follows: A: half notes are made into whole notes, C: sixteenth notes are made into eighth notes and D: G notes are converted into C notes; 2) Certain note values have been adjusted to align with the strong beat to support practice for beginner-level players. Additionally, some note values have been extended, creating a new melody that closely resembles the original but with a clearer question-answer phrase structure, as follows: B: dotted quarter notes are made into half notes, D: dotted eighth notes are made into half notes, E: sixteenth notes are made into quarter notes and half notes, and G: sixteenth notes (note E) are made into half notes; and 3) Adjusting the octave of certain notes changes the melodic direction to reduce large interval jumps and to simplify fingering for easier practice. For instance, note G3 is used in place of G4.

## 2. *Rearranging the melody following Western practices.*

This research rearranged piano pieces following Western music composition practices, including the creation of phrases and cadences, as shown in the example of the Lam Sing song (Figure 4), and the development of motifs, as demonstrated in the example of Serng Yae Khai Mod Daeng (Figure 6).

Khaen Melody  
Klangprasri, 2006

Figure 4. Part one, Example of how to create phrases and cadence in Lam Sing song.

Figure 4. Part two, Example of how to create phrases and cadence in Lam Sing song.

Figure 4 presents sample notes of Khaen melody in Lam Sing and piano parts. It is evident that the melody is structured with motif, with a rather short and constant rhythm, creating no symmetrical phrases. As such, the researcher developed phrases by adjusting note values or rhythm of the main melody to craft more apparent phrases, in order to allow the melody to reach a cadence. For instance, Phrase A constitutes one big phrase where the long sound occurs at a half note in I-V chord or half cadence before continuing on to Phrase B with the structure of V-I chord or imperfect authentic cadence. This is an outstanding feature of Western music composition, which is supported by the findings of Gianakon (2018:45-46). Gianakon put forward that according to Western classical theory, phrases are driven by harmonies; thus, cadences are related to phrases which lead the melodies to the achievement. In addition, Benjamin, Horvit, and Nelson (2003:242) mention that 'a phrase is a musical thought,' and when two phrases are connected, they typically form a question-answer pair. In this structure, the second phrase usually has a more complete sound than the first, which is referred to as a period as follows:

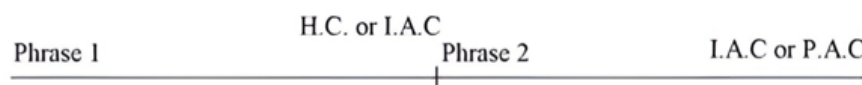


Figure 5. Phrase structure and period form. Benjamin, Horvit, and Nelson (2003:242).

Figure 6. Motif development in Serng Yae Khai Mod Daeng.

Figure 6 demonstrates motif development with repetition technique. In the song *Serng Yae Khai Mod Daeng*, The researcher used a motif from the Khaen melody (at position G), consisting of the notes G, A, and C, as a motif in the piano melody, maintaining the original proportions in the treble clef. Moreover, D5 notes in Khaen melody are used as D3 notes in piano melody in bass clef, which serves as the bass sound and the harmony. Quarter notes and sixteenth notes in Khaen melody are converted into half notes and quarter notes in piano melody. The repetition technique is used with new groups of notes that are short phrases consisting of D, G, A, and C notes to ensure connectivity and harmony.

Motif development with repetition technique is evident in the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67*. This piece employs the initial four notes of the opening motif to craft a melody enriched with melodic and rhythmic variations, as well as shifts in timbre and character. The same motif is found throughout the section (Gianakon, 2018:31). As such, motif development with repetition technique is one of the composition techniques in Western music that results in the simplicity of the melody (Deliège & Wiggins, 2006:373).

### 3. Arranging the sound harmony with basso ostinato from drones.

The figure displays two musical staves. The top staff, titled 'Khaen melody + Drone (Klangprasri, 2006)', shows a melody in 2/4 time with notes G, A, and C in the treble clef, and a drone in the bass clef. The bottom staff, titled 'Piano harmony (Author, 2019)', shows the same melody in the treble clef, with a drone in the bass clef. The drone is labeled 'D5' and 'A3'.

Figure 7. Sample harmony arrangements with basso ostinato from drones in Lam Sing song.

Figure 7 presents sample drones in Lam Sing melody. Here, we notice sound harmony for notes D-A, which are the 5th Inv. and are performed simultaneously with the song melody (Miller & Shahriari, 2017; Klangprasri, 2006; Klangprasri, 2010). Therefore, the researcher set this as a concept in mind when arranging harmony in piano pieces. The steps undertaken are as follows: 1) choose harmony from drones using one note, which is A5; 2) lay it out in bass clef as A3, with its value adjusted and rhythm arranged to create harmony that is synchronized with the main melody adopted from Khaen; and 3) specify notes from the melody of Khaen that are in the 2nd row or another row outside of drones to produce the main melody on treble clef. The main melody and harmony from drone notes are thus created at every rhythm including harmony of 1-2 notes. In fact, drone harmony in Northeastern Thai traditional songs is similar to drones in Indian classical music. Drones developed from local Indian scales are evident, such as Rag Yaman (late evening raga) scale. Moreover, drones composed of C and G notes were also found (Guinane, 2017:3), and Vilayat Khan's method observed drones in between notes that are pronounced with Sa-Pa (C - G) or Sa-Ma (C - F) (Jairazbhoy, 2018:77) (Figure 9).

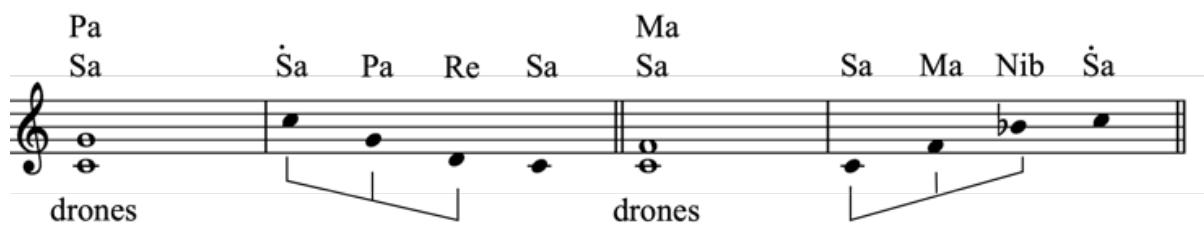


Figure 8. Sample drones in Vilayat Khan's method (Jairazbhoy, 2018:77).

Besides, the method to arrange harmony with basso ostinato from drones coincides with how harmony is produced with drones in bass in the song Mazurka by Chopin. Cintron (2014:28) as cited in Aron, (2001:11) put forward that, "With the original harmony of the song 'Mazurka,' the sound of drones is noticeable all throughout the song along with the harmony of notes of different kinds. This creates sustained notes in bass, or pedal points." Furthermore, Viljoen (2000:78) explained Chopin's song Mazurka further that, "Drone notes in songs developed with Lydian mode where these notes are member notes of the gypsy scale in B-flat key when the sound is Db are in fact drones in bass. These are the 5th pair with Gb note that is the root, and also the 6th pair with B-flat note."

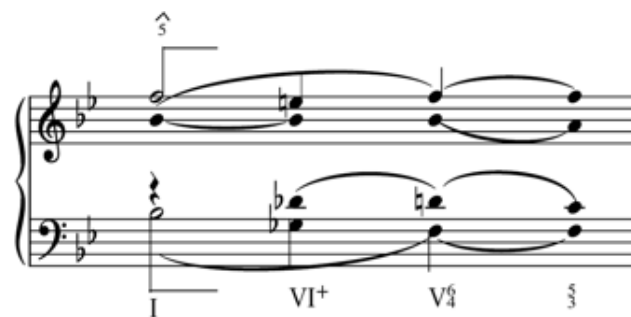


Figure 9. Example of how to arrange harmony with drones in the song Mazurka by Chopin (Viljoen, 2000:78).

#### 4. Creating chords and chord progressions from the song melody.



“Lam Sing” Khaen melody (Klangprasri, 2006)

Figure 10 presents how to create the main melody from Khaen notes, to create chords based on the main melody, and to create arrangements in the form of broken chord or Alberti bass accompaniment, which refers to bass played with the left hand in conjunction and smoothly with the main melody (Hicks, 2003:28; Rogers 2015:15). The approach consists of: 1) A1, A2: The piano melody that is developed from A1, A2 Khaen melody appears in measures 1-3, and the C Major chord serves as the accompaniment in A1, A2 bass. A1 is based on notes in the main melody, which are notes G and C. Similarly, A2 is also based on notes in the main melody, which are notes E, C, and G. 2) B: The piano melody that is developed from B Khaen melody or notes in the 4th measure of the piano song specifies the G7 chord as the accompaniment in B bass. This refers to notes in the main melody, note G, which is the root note of the chord, with the 7th note added to complement the sound. The accompaniment in broken chord. Broken chord is a technique for accompaniment or harmony pattern, as seen in the second movement of Sonata in C (K.545) by Mozart played on the piano (Rogers, 2015:15).

“Bai Sri Su Kwan” Khaen melody (Klangprasri, 2006)

Piano 1: Piano melody

Piano 2: Block chord

Root

Piano accompaniment

Figure 11. Sample new arrangements in block chord in the song Bai Sri Su Kwan (Thai blessing ceremony) by author 2019.

Figure 11 illustrates how harmonic accompaniment is created in block chord based on the main melody of Khaen. The process to create block chord is as follows: 1) Use Khaen melody as the main melody for piano by maintaining the note values and the pitches, and adjusting the note values at the end of phrases to be whole notes; 2) create a chord that synchronizes melodies based on the major key along with tension chords in different chords. For example, the 7th note in the 1st measure of Cmajor7 chord coincides with note B3 of Khaen melody, the 9th note in the 2nd measure of C9 chord coincides with note D4 of Khaen melody, and the 7th note in the 3rd measure of Fmaj7 chord coincides with note E4 of Khaen melody; and 3) two notes are specified for piano, which are root notes of the chord played with whole notes at the 1st beat in bass clef, and block chord played with dotted half notes at the 2nd beat in treble clef of each measure. According to the process above, the researcher managed to maintain the original melody of the song for piano 1 and

create accompaniment with extended chords by adding notes in triad chords with major sound consisting of seven chords, ninth chords, and thirteenth chords. These are based on the member notes of the main melody of Khaen in the song Bai Sri Su Kwan that are drawn to the newly developed chord tone. This is in accordance with the main melody of piano 1, and reflects basic chord progressions comprising chords I, IV, vi, V7 that play along with piano 2. Chord symbols common in popular music are also incorporated. This concept is consistent with piano pieces for two players in Korean traditional music, as seen in Piano Duet: Der blauen Vogel (Blue Bird), Op. 240, No. 3 by Kuk-Jin Kim (b. 1931). The song is made up of the main melody from the main notes in pentatonic scale, and the accompaniment is created with a group of notes or chords developed from notes in the main melody together with notes with new values or triplet notes, 3-4 of which are taken from the main melody (Choi & Kwon, 2013).

The above findings highlight the concept of creating music by blending different music cultures - notably Thai Isan folk music and Western music, which plays an important role in promoting the development of contemporary piano with more Isan musical features. These features are embedded in songs and can be passed on to future generations through piano teaching and learning with practice pieces. Moreover, this serves as a way to promote the awareness and value of the folk music culture. An expert in the field once gave an interview that, "This piece of work is a creation of music because it builds on the national music culture that will help learners to better access their folk culture and unique characteristics of national music" (Interview, April 26, 2018). Another expert put forward that, "The piano pieces that were composed are good resources for a large number of students nowadays who are not familiar with the local musical melodies of Thailand's Isan region. Most are familiar with Western music, so this is a good chance to bring them back to learn about their folk music culture through these piano pieces" (Interview, April 26, 2018). These comments demonstrate the importance of one culture that is built by integrating folk culture with Western culture (Elliott, 2011), and align with the discussion on contemporary piano pieces in China. Ye (2019) remarked that, "Lessons should not only teach learners to be knowledgeable and skillful to play the piano, but should also include content to allow learners to enjoy the beauty of music with creative songs, value of art, and sophistication of that particular piece of work." In addition, the concept to combine folk music with other branches of art not only promotes and spreads folk culture to a wider population, but also supports people to have better quality of life. For instance, health science can be complemented by local performing art to create musical drama with music and lyrics that promote healthy lifestyle among the elderly. Also, musical melodies from different cultures can be complemented by applied Western musical instruments and contemporary technology to reach more new audiences while preserving local attributes (Rotjanasuksomboona, and Chanvorachote, 2022:143; Binson, 2022).

## Conclusion

The development of piano pieces from Khaen melodies presented in this paper is based on the sound structure of Northeastern Thai traditional music, with harmony rearrangements according to Western music, producing pieces that reflect contemporary music with techniques of Western music (from the medieval period up to the 20th century) and structures of popular music. Five major approaches are captured below:

1. Select well-known Northeastern melodies.
2. Apply local Northeastern melodies arranged for basic Khaen as main melodies for piano.
3. Rearrange piano melodies to synchronize with Khaen melodies. Produce new chords and harmony that go along with main melodies with respect to the primary chord.
4. Create accompaniment developed from elements of accompaniment of local Northeastern drone found in Khaen notes.
5. Content on musical features and characteristics is incorporated, such as articulation, dynamic, chord symbol, and pedal sign. This is to prepare learners for higher skills related to the expression of moods and feelings.

Finally, this development of piano music serves as a starting point to support beginner-level piano players, helping to promote and provide young people with the opportunity to learn Isan-inspired piano compositions. As Pramote Phokha (2021) suggests, Thai undergraduate music students should become familiar with Thailand's musical roots to foster cultural preservation. This approach motivates future generations to creatively reinterpret traditional music. Furthermore, integrating historical context or explanations of original melodies into these piano lesson pieces would enhance understanding of both music and national culture from various perspectives (Ye, 2019). Moreover, composers can further develop pieces for higher skill levels to convey the refined accents and unique characteristics of local melodies. An example is the arrangement of Thai melodies for piano by Silapabanleng, an important Thai composer known for skillfully adapting Thai tunes into Western musical style for piano. These works were performed by his student, Apsorn Kurmarohita. The key concept in presenting these pieces is the focus on how pianists can beautifully express the nuances of Thai lyrical accents (Chulapan, 2022).

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# Contextual Reflection of Migration Through Textile Art

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## Abstract

Controlling migration, especially the irregular type, has been an issue of global concern and one of the contending issues in academic discourse today. The study sought to create a reflection of human migration in the national developmental agenda through textile art. As a qualitative study, the Practice-based research design was adopted. Also, conceptual fabrics in the Ghanaian context were used since they add more meaning to stories with their conceptual nature. With immigrants, immigration officers, and refugee camp officers as a target, a sample size of 15 coupled with 105 engaged in an exhibition was considered. Interviews and Observations were used as instruments to solicit information from the participants. The study reveals the suitability of textile art in story-telling on pressing issues using mixed-media and panel concepts of art creation. It is recommended that artists should pay attention to pressing issues like migration in their creations to ensure national development.

**Keywords:** Migration, National Development, Textile Art, Conceptual Art, Visual Art, Ghana

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## Introduction

Necessities and choices invigorate human relocation, either permanent or temporal, in an attempt to stay in tune with the ambiguities, life comes along with. Migration could be defined largely as a permanent or temporal change of home (Lee, 1966; Esses, et al., 2017). Human migration normally comes to mind when one's life expectations are seemingly not reachable within their immediate environment. For thousands of years now in history, humans have kept moving around the world searching for food, escaping from enemies and seeking riches resulting in diseases and cultural dissemination (Ferrie & Hatton, 2013; Chamie, 2020). It is assumed that about a billion people globally, do not work in their country or region of birth as a result of migration (Démurger, 2015). Parents working abroad, however, have a great influence on children's decisions to engage in migration (Clifton-Sprigg, 2022). Most people, especially Africans always have dreams of migrating to European countries (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). This increases the rate of national or 'route' abundance. However, national development largely depends on the citizens of the country and their distinct inputs. Internal migration as ascertained by Asare (2012), involves re-locating to a new residence within one's province, country or continent of origin. This act results in the insufficiency and scarcity of adequate shelter in the cities, especially when the movement involves rural to urban areas, which in turn trample upon national development (Richter et al., 2016). Due to the lack of job opportunities in rural areas, the youth are compelled to engage in internal migration, although it comes with abuses and risks (Assan & Kharisma, 2023). External migration (Asare, 2012), also involves moving to a new residence outside one's province, country or continent of origin. This version of migration happens internationally and tends to affect both the former and the current home of migrants.

According to Démurger (2015), the absence of immigrants may adversely affect the lives of their family members left behind, in the areas of health, education and societal ranks. The author further expresses the good aspect of migration whereby families in the home country benefit economically through financial transfers by the migrant. When the citizens in a country are satisfied, the nation's progression is guaranteed. In the case when migration is propelled by wars and ethnic issues, the life of the migrant is assumed to be safe in the new home. According to Crush & Ramachandran (2010), South Africa and India enjoy economic development through the inputs of immigrants employed in both formal and informal sectors. Migration therefore comes with pros and cons with the latter tending to be a canker to national development. It is observed that migration causes a lot of transformation in cities (Triandafyllidou, et al., 2024). According to the report given in 2019 by the International Organization of Migration (IOM), more than 4,000 fatalities have been recorded annually since 2014. The report again shows that 33,686 migrant fatalities have been recorded from January 2014 to October 2019. The issue of migration therefore needs to be highlighted in the quest for national development.

In Ghana, addressing migration issues has become critical due to the rate at which people are willing to migrate out of the country. Inasmuch as everyone has the right to migrate, the illegal type of migration is highly frowned upon by the Ghana government with emphasis placed on embracing the legal type. With many efforts by the Ghana Immigration Service to mitigate illegal migration, the issue of leaving the country through inappropriate routes and unapproved documents still exists in the country. It is observed that visual arts have the ability to sensitize on pressing issues effectively, especially in the Ghanaian context (Badoe & Boamah, 2021; Buami et al., 2024), hence the need to address the issue from an artistic perspective through story-telling with conceptual arts. It is established that conceptual arts are characterized by materials that might be cheap and not necessar-

ily aesthetically pleasing but tend to send important information as the idea behind the work is paramount (Stigter, 2024). This characteristic of conceptual art makes it a thought-provoking one and draws people to ask more questions for an important engagement. The current study therefore adopts this idea to raise issues on migration.

Scholars have raised many concerns about migration and national development. Abdulai (2018), Asare (2012), Ferrie and Hatton (2013) among others have debated on the sour and sweet packages migration brings. Also, various artworks have been done by artists around the world to address pressing issues including migration. Reference could be made to Jacob Lawrence's 60-panel migration series which talks about the exodus of African Americans to the North from the southern sector. The panels show the struggles the people went through in the migration process. Jonathan Muzikar's exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art, between the periods of October 1st, 2016, to January 22nd, 2017 is also another art installation that addresses the global refugee emergencies. This exhibition was titled; "Insecurity: Tracing Displacement and Shelter". 'Woven chronicles' created between the years 2011 and 2016 by Reena Saini Kallat. It is a wall mat made of yarn, tracking the global routes where migrants have traveled. Edel Rodriguez's Artwork (illustration) produced in 2018; titled 'Strangers'. According to the artist, many immigrants are considered as 'Boat people,' and welcoming strangers can be dangerous.

The aforementioned artists amongst many have added their voices to societal issues through their artworks. On these bases, textile art creation stands the chance of adding to the academic discourse and campaign on the issues regarding migration and its role or effects on national development. This artistic research contextually and visually creates a reflection of human migration through textile art creation with a focus on migration and national development. The objectives of the study are to explore various concepts regarding the causes and effects of migration, select suitable concepts to produce a conceptual art piece under art studio conditions to reflect the issue of migration and national development and evaluate the artistic piece through an exhibition.

### Materials and Methods

The study employed the Practice-based research design. This research design allows one to think critically to come out with new ideas which eventually create room for innovation in research. Candy (2006) noted that practice-based research design is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice. The study involved the exploration of tools and materials such as philosophical fabrics, wood, adhesives, and polyurethane foam at the studio to gain knowledge. Philosophical fabrics were included in creating the art pieces since Ghanaians can relate well to their meanings and link them properly with the interpretations of the artworks. The nature of the current study also required an original investigation regarding migration in the Ghanaian context, specifically with people who have gained experience in the situation at hand. The practice-based research approach was therefore adjudged the best research method since it allows the researcher to gain knowledge and subsequently apply it in artistic creation.

The targeted population for the study was immigrants, refugee camp officers and immigration officers in Ghana. Out of this population, a sample size of fifteen (15) was considered. The sample comprises two (2) immigration officers from Ashanti Regional Headquarters,

ten (10) immigrants from Fetentaa refugee camp, and three (3) refugee camp officers from Fetentaa refugee camp. Also, 105 people were engaged in an exhibition. It became necessary to focus on specific individuals such as immigrants, immigration officers, and refugee camp officers as they are the best people to provide the needed information. Refugee camp officers deal directly with the refugees while the immigration officers have in-depth knowledge of the dos and don'ts of migration. Geographically, the study included Fetentaa refugee camp as it is one of the major refugee camps in Ghana. Interviews and Observations were used as instruments to solicit information from the participants. The participants were anonymously presented in the study by assigning unique codes to aid in referencing. Thus, Ghana Immigration Service Officer (GISO) and Fetentaa Refugee Camp Officer (FRCO).

Again, a conceptual framework named 'CTPEP' was adapted from the 'Universal Design Model' to guide the study. The adapted model is made up of five (5) phases which include the Conceptualisation, Transformation, Production, Evaluation and Preservation phases. Figure 1 shows the Universal Design Model whereas figure 2 presents the adapted conceptual framework used for the study.

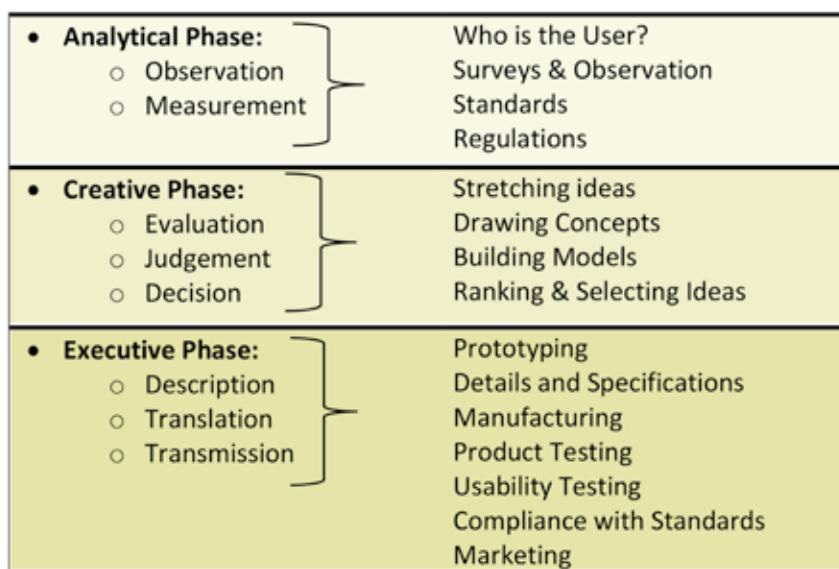


Figure 1. Universal Design Model (UDM). Source: Van-Roosmalen (n.d).

The adapted model was thoroughly assessed by experts in studio-based research who confirmed its suitability in the execution of studio research of this nature. Upon several trials at the studio, it was confirmed that the CTPEP model allows researchers to exhaust the design procedures as far as the UDM is concerned. The model allows the creation of concepts by gathering ideas from a target audience and existing theories toward problem-solving. It also allows researchers to transform ideas gathered from a given locality on pressing issues into tangibles (art pieces) through practices to fully explore the practice-based research approach. At this phase (transformation) of the model, researchers are allowed to create prototypes to establish appropriate means of solving the problem. The selected concept is then produced and allowed to be evaluated for feedback, and subsequently preserved at the final phase for easy accessibility by stakeholders.



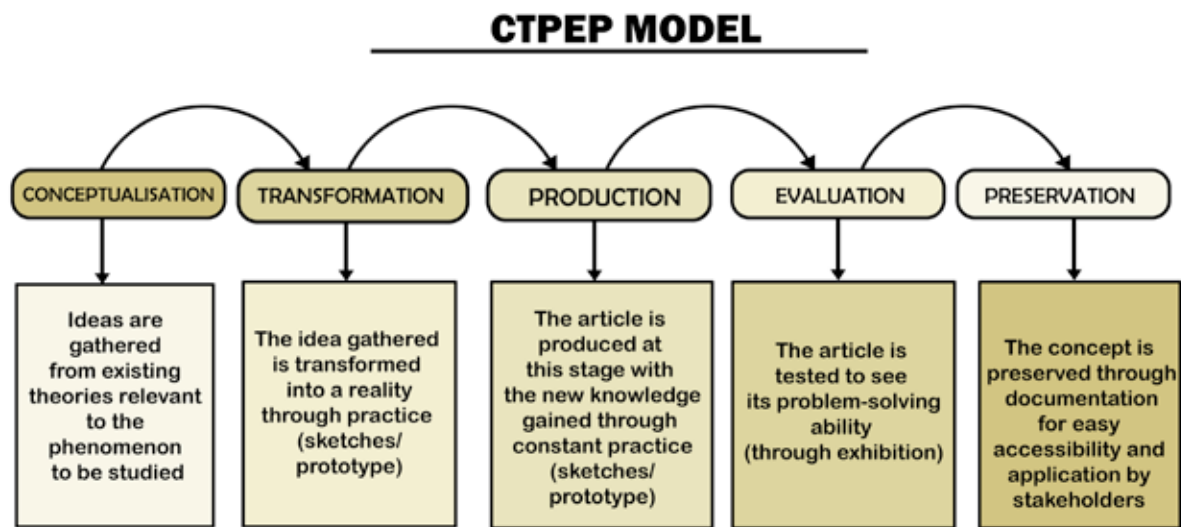


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework (CTPEP Design Model adapted from UDM). Source: Researcher's own construct (2021).

**Conceptualisation Phase:** The concept of the study is clearly stated and ideas are gathered from existing theories significant to the phenomenon to be studied.

**Transformation Phase:** The ideas gathered at the conceptualisation phase are transformed into sketches to gain new knowledge. The best sketch is ranked & selected for prototyping.

**Production Phase:** The article is formed at this phase, paying attention to the details and specifications.

**Evaluation Phase:** Testing is done at this phase to see the capability of the product in problem solving as far as the situation at hand is concerned. It is publicly displayed to allow comments and appreciation from viewers.

**Preservation Phase:** To ensure the product maintains its problem-solving ability, it is preserved at this phase through documentation. This makes it easier for stakeholders to get access to it when the need arises.

### Conceptualisation and Transformation

With the data gathered from primary and secondary sources, various concepts were developed to reflect migration and its impact on national developmental agenda. The concept of the study is 'To Reprove Illegalities with Textile Art to Build a Nation'. With this concept in mind, several ideas were conceived to address the issue of migration, especially the illegal type. Images relevant to the concept were sketched and composed with the adobe Photoshop software after several practices at the studio. This is termed 'Transformation' as far as the conceptual framework for the study is concerned.

### Concept 1

The first concept was built out of theme "Migration: Unbroken Exodus" to suggest the continuous movement of people to and fro the country (Ghana). The concept is made up of five panels in varied dimensions which collectively showcase the causes of migration, Legal migration, Illegal migration and the consequences of both legal and illegal migration. The second panel of the first concept demonstrates the act of illegal migration. It displays the various means through which immigrants get to their destination countries illegally.

These include the use of the desert which is depicted in the concept by three people walking together on a dry land, and the use of the sea represented by a canoe with passengers and loads. The concept again showcases the idea of legal migration in the third panel. It employs images such as an airplane, a passport and a ship to address the issue of legal migration. It is believed that one becomes a potential legal migrant when these things among others are considered in the migration process.

The fourth panel tells a story about the consequences of illegal migration on the individuals who involve in the act. These include death through killing by terrorists and drowning on the sea, persecution, overcrowding of people in destination countries, armed robbery and arrest by security forces. In the last panel (5th panel) is seen the benefits of legal migration to the sending and receiving countries, the individual migrants and their families. The benefits of legal migration may include cultural promotion and knowledge again. Again, the sending countries gain remittances from natives outside the country. Most people acquire well-paying jobs when they migrate legally to other countries. This stands as a major benefit of migration since job hunting is a chief contributor to migration as found in this study. When the individual panels are put together, they tell a full story of the causes and impact of legal and illegal migration on nations and migrants. This concept is simulated in Figure 3. with the theme “Migration: Unbroken Exodus”. It is worth noting that these panels were created without sidelining the information gathered from the participants through the interviews and observations. The major causes of migration and its impact featured in the panels were revealed through an interview with the immigration officers and the refugees. The refugees listed all the issues that triggered their movement into the country and the challenges they encountered. For instance, some of the refugees pointed out in an interview session that they moved to Ghana because of wars and violence, which are all featured in the panels, especially panels 1 and 4. Information gathered from the immigration officers and refugee camp officers was also considered in creating panels 2, 3 & 5.



Figure 3. Simulation of concept (Migration: Unbroken Exodus). 200" x 72". Source: Studio work (2021).

## Concept 2

The second graphical concept bears the theme “Unbroken Exodus II” with the same concept of split canvas in five panels. This concept addresses the Rural-Urban form of migration under Internal migration which is rampant in Ghana. The concept was inspired by data gathered from the Ghana immigration service officers who gave an in-depth insight into the causes and effects of rural-urban migration, especially in Ghana. These were considered to come up with a concept to educate people on the rural-urban type of migration.

In the first panel, the advantages and disadvantages associated with the rural setting are outlined. These among others include Availability of food (normally in perishable forms), no access to electricity which results in less usage of gadgets and less expenditure. Panels 2, 3 and 4 wholistically showcase the causes and impact of Rural-Urban migration on the two settings. The causes among others include job seeking, positions, project, education, job transfer.

In the quest to acquire white collar jobs, people migrate to cities to have their dreams realized. Others also migrate to engage in rural-based jobs such as farming. This brings about a continuous movement of people from rural to urban areas and vice versa. Some leadership positions compel people to engage in Internal migration in order to perform their duties effectively. Chieftaincy and family positions among others sometimes require the presence of the leaders in the area. Developmental projects, education and job transfers are potential causes of internal migration. They cause people to leave their current homes at a particular point in time to another location in order to fulfil a given task. These have been fused artistically within panels 2, 3 and 4 to express the causes of internal migration and its cyclical nature. The panels again show the massive movement of people to and fro urban areas and the impact it has on such areas. The rural areas normally suffer the loss of energetic youth to the urban areas while the urban areas in turn suffer overcrowding and pressure on its amenities. This fact is captured in the panels with human silhouettes where less people are seen in the rural areas and more people in the urban areas.

The fifth panel captures the advantages and disadvantages associated with the urban setting. These include High expenditure, overcrowding, remittances, job creation etc. Living in an urban area demands a high expenditure as compared to living in a rural area. Most bills paid in urban areas are not applicable in rural areas, resulting in a minimal expenditure at the rural setting. Another factor accompanying internal migration (Rural-Urban) is overcrowding of people in cities which results in pressure on government amenities. Nevertheless, remittances are made to families back in the rural areas by immigrants in the cities. Women who travel from Northern to the Southern Ghana engage in kayaye which enables them to remit their families and get gadgets like sewing machines for themselves (GISO 1, 2021). Other immigrants grab the opportunity to create private jobs for personal and national development. The installation of the various panels gives a reflection of internal migration and its impact on national development. It highlights on both the advantages and the disadvantages of Rural-urban and Urban-rural migration on the destination and receiving settings. Figure 4 shows the second concept “Unbroken Exodus II”



Figure 4. Simulation of concept 2 (Unbroken Exodus II). 130" x 65." Source: Field Work.

### Concept 3

The third concept is inspired by Lee's model propounded in 1966 as part of his studies in migration. It depicts the Origin factors, Destination factors and Intervening obstacles which are key factors in migration according to Lee's migration theory. The concept is made up of three panels and communicates effectively when arranged in a landscape manner. The first panel describes the origin factors which push people to migrate to other localities. In the panel is seen silhouette of thatched houses which suggest a village setting with limited opportunities. People in such localities always aspire to migrate to cities where there are a lot of opportunities. In pursuit of acquiring new favorable homes, migrants are posed with several hindrances which Lee describes as "Intervening obstacles". These obstacles are illustrated in the second panel of the concept and may include Distance between the origin and destination settings, means of transportation, etc. The third panel describes the destination setting with pull factors that catch the migrant's attention to migrate at a given time. In relation to the current study, the panels reflect the stories narrated by the refugees in the interview session. It was revealed that the origin factors that led to their relocation were primarily wars and violence. They felt moving to the destination country (Ghana) would provide them with the peaceful living they yearned for. Also, since Ghana shares borders with Ivory Coast, it happened to be their destination country partly because of the intervening obstacles that included a means of transport as mentioned in Lee's assertion to be a key factor. Figure 5 shows the simulation of a three-panel concept of migration inspired by Lee's theory of migration. It gives a picture of the various factors involved in migration in abstract forms. It comes in a dimension of 90" x 65."



Figure 5. Simulation of Concept 3 (Factors Associated with Migration). 90" x 65." Source: Field Work.

### Concept 4

The fourth concept is themed "Agonies on Desert". It gives a picture of the suffering immigrants go through on the desert in their decision to migrate irregularly to their destination countries. The concept is in three separate panels and expresses sad moments in the desert when put together. The agonies are artistically depicted by a person crying in anguish and death people being fed upon by a vulture in the desert. This panel was also created out of the information obtained from the immigration officers who receive news daily regarding the death of irregular immigrants. As narrated by GISO 2, the immigrants go through unfriendly challenges in the desert, where unlucky ones receive their untimely death. The simulated version is shown in Figure 6.





Figure 6. Simulation of concept 4 (Agonies on Desert). 70" x 60." Source: Field Work.

### Concept 5

Again, as narrated by the Ghana immigration officers, reports are received daily about the death of irregular migrants on the sea causing a rise in fatalities regarding migration. Based on these facts, concept five was created to sensitize the dangers involved in migrating illegally on the sea, with the theme "Agonies on Sea". The concept features images of people crying for help as they fall from boats and drown in the sea. Others are purposefully being thrown into the sea by their colleagues who want to survive a sinking boat. These images are incorporated into the concept to create awareness of the sufferings illegal migrants go through on the sea. In instances where illegal migrants manage to hide in ships to be stowed away to their destination countries; the victims take the risk of being killed and thrown into the sea. Reference could be made to a true story in the movie "Deadly Voyage" in 1996, directed by John Mackenzie. The fifth concept was purposefully created to include images evolving around sad true stories on the sea narrated by immigrants. The concept comes in three separate panels with the split canvas idea. Figure 7 shows the computer-simulated version of "Agonies on Sea."



Figure 7. Simulation of concept 5 (Agonies on Sea). 80" x 60." Source: Field Work.

The various Graphical themes and concepts generated out of the study at the idea generation stage, all stand the chance of educating general public on the issues of migration,

especially the illegal type. Both internal and international migration have been addressed to sensitize on their positive and negative consequences. It could be observed from the various concepts generated that, the harm caused by illegal migration has the capacity to hinder human and national development, and therefore must be discouraged in an attempt to create a favorable environment for national development.

After a thorough assessment by experts (Artists), the first concept (Migration: Unbroken Exodus) presented in figure 3 was vetted to be implemented. The choice of the concept was based on its ability to address the causes of migration, illegal migration, Legal migration, the consequences of legal and illegal migration through the various panels.

### Production Phase

The materials required for the implementation of the concept were sourced for and prepared. The major materials among others were wood, fabrics, yarns, polyurethane foam and adhesive. Frames were constructed from wood (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*) for the mounting of canvas which served as a support to the elements captured in the concepts. The frames were constructed according to the dimensions of the individual panels forming the concept. Figure 8 shows the dimensions of the wooden frames used for the concept, while figure 9 shows the constructed frames. A canvas (off-white colored) was stretched on the various wooden frames to create a suitable base for pasting of the various elements.

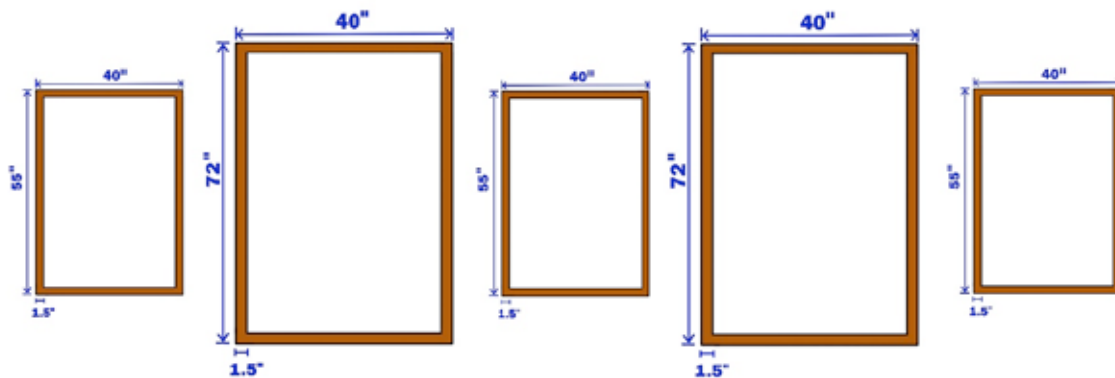


Figure 8. Dimensions of the wooden frames. Source: Studio Work (2021).



Figure 9. The constructed wooden frames. Source: Studio Work (2021).

The intricacy of some images in the concept demanded the use of screen printing method in order to achieve precision. Those images were therefore printed on a white cotton fabric

prior to the cutting and pasting on the canvas. Figure 10 shows the screen-printed images incorporated in the concepts built.



Figure 10. The screen-printed images. Source: Studio Work (2021).

The plain fabrics coupled with the printed fabrics (industrial and screen printed) were cut and pasted on the canvases as simulated with the computer. To create a 3-Dimensional effect, the researchers employed polyurethane foam as a base for some elements in the concept. Polyester yarns (black and yellow) also became significant materials for the creation of special effects in the articles. Black twill-woven fabrics were cut in strips and pasted on the background to create harmony in the concepts.

The first panel showcases the general causes of migration. The screen-printed images relating to the general causes of migration such as natural disasters, violence, job hunting etc. were cut and pasted on the first canvas of a dimension of 40" x 55". The second panel was also created with the aforementioned fabrics and techniques; thus, printed and plain fabrics with a 3-D effect. The panel addresses the illegal type of migration. The third panel showcases the legal type of migration which is widely accepted and encouraged by immigration authorities in all forms of human relocation. This panel has similar features to the first panel and therefore went through the same procedure as happened in the production of panel 1. The fourth and fifth panels were created with inspiration from a tree and fruits. The 3-D concept on these panels was created with usual polyurethane foam and the gluing method using the printed fabrics. The screen-printed images were cut and pasted together with the industrial printed and the plain fabrics to depict the consequences of illegal and legal migration.

### Contextual and Philosophical Discussion

'Unbroken Exodus' constitutes five panel textile art pieces reflecting on the causes and impact of migration on individuals and nations. The theme 'MIGRATION: UNBROKEN EXODUS' explains the nature of migration as part of humans' daily activities. According to Ballyn (2011), migration happens in our daily life and has existed since the inception of time. The mass movement of people to and fro around the world stands unbroken, hence the theme; 'Migration: Unbroken Exodus'. This is visually presented in the concept with a continuous movement of people without a break, although the panels were made separately.



### Printed Fabrics

The pieces forming the concept are composed of textiles materials (printed fabrics, plain fabrics and yarns) and other media which are deemed suitable by the researchers for the creation of conceptual art pieces. As a conceptual art, it boasts of its value from a material cultural perspective; thus, the symbolic meaning of every element and the ideas behind its engagement in the creation of the concepts. The industrial printed fabrics used for the concept are presented in figure 11.

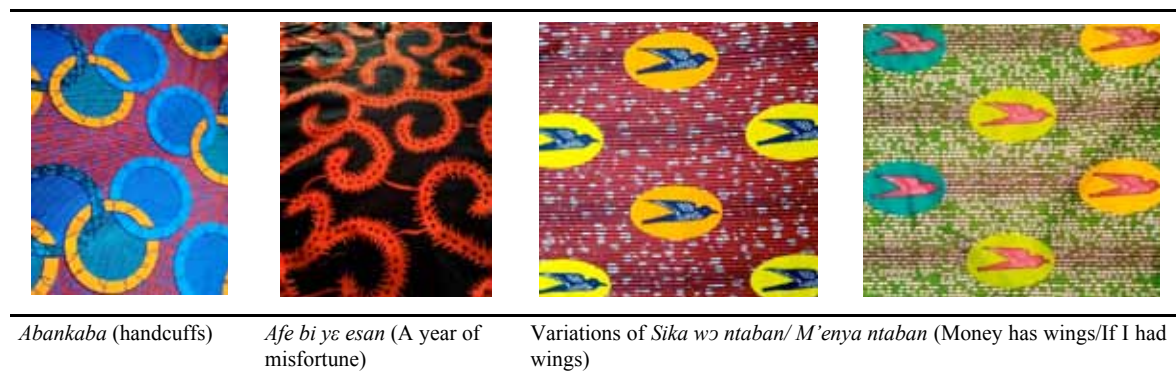


Figure 11. Industrial printed fabrics used in the concept. Source: Market survey (2021).

The names of the printed fabrics and their meaning in relation to the concept are explained below:

***Abankaba (handcuffs)*** – The surface designs in this fabric come in overlapping circles which gives it a handcuff resemblance. This fabric was used to depict the consequences of illegal migration. Immigrants stand the risk of being caught and jailed when they embark on migration with inappropriate routes and unapproved documents.

***Afe bi ye esan (A year of misfortune)*** – The fabric is usually used as a mourning cloth in Ghana when a loved one passes on. It is therefore used to express sad moments in one's life. The fabric is featured in the concept to address unfortunate moments such as the loss of loved ones, assets, jobs etc. which are potential causes of migration. It also draws attention to the fact that, although some people embark on migration by illegal means and are not caught, there will be an unfortunate day for such people where they would be caught and prosecuted.

***Sika wo ntaban/ M'anya ntaban (Money has wings/If I had wings)*** – The fabric comprises flying birds in circles as the main motifs with wax effect and horizontal lines as textures. Two interpretations are drawn from this fabric by the locals based on its surface designs. One school of thought interprets the fabric as 'Money has wings'. This means that, a rich person can become poor sooner than we think when he/she fails to handle money with care. Another school of thought interprets the cloth as 'If I had wings to fly'. This suggests how certain circumstances can deprive people of their desires in life. Poverty is a key initiator of migration and is counted among such hindrances. Two variations of this fabric were used in this project to portray two different settings. The green one suggests migration of people for greener pastures while the orange one depicts the desert. The flying birds in the fabric portray the act of migration at all levels.

The adaptation of the split canvas technique in the implementation of the concept was aimed at presenting varied stories with individual panels, which when merged gives a wholistic message on the causes and effect of migration on individuals and their respective nations. Immigration is pronounced to be among the most pressing issues globally (Castañeda, 2017; Esses, et al., 2017). The inappropriate means of engaging in immigration and its side effects therefore needs to be sensitized on to ensure national development. To this effect, some panels are purposely made bigger in the concept to place emphasis on the messages they carry. These bigger panels address the illegal form of migration and its consequences on the migrant, the origin and the destination country. As people's eagerness to relocate increases, so do they devise means to achieve their aim. These means turn out to include illegal acts which lead to increased rates of mortalities. The concept (Unbroken Exodus) becomes relevant in an environment where verbal sensitization on the harm caused by illegal migration becomes insufficient to draw the attention of people to this big national development canker.

### **Panel One**

Panel one projects the general causes of migration in graphical themes. In this case, the major causes as found in the study are innovatively captured on the panel. The panel comes in a dimension of 40" x 55" and carries messages powered by symbolic African print fabrics, yarns, screen printed images and texts. Also in the concept are plain fabrics artistically adapted in the creation of special effects.

The major elements on the panel include mud houses, collapsed buildings, military men, a job hunter and an academician. These elements reflect the causes of migration at both internal and international levels. Also, in the panel is seen a mass departure of people seeking a new home, a globe and towers suggesting a well-developed setting. The globe signifies the world and attests to the fact that migration happens around the globe. On top of the towers are clouds which conceptually stand for fantasies that draw people to developed cities and countries. Immigrants relocate with assumptions that their aspiring homes have all the solutions to their problems, which may not turn out to be so in reality. The mud houses portray less developed communities within a country with little infrastructure and fewer opportunities which propels people to migrate to cities and developed countries. The mud houses equally stand for developing countries that lack amenities necessary for human development. The collapsed building suggests natural disaster being one of the key causes of migration. Earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions etc. are natural occurrences that may initiate human migration. The military men stand for war and agitation by political leaders. During the interview at the Fetentaa refugees camp, FRCO 1 explained that all the immigrants relocated to Ghana because of political agitations which resulted in war/violence. Figure 12(a) presents panel-1 of the concept (the causes of migration).

### **Panel Two**

Panels two and four were made a bit bigger than the other panels in order to place a focus on the messages they carry. As the study seeks to reprove illegalities regarding migration, the unacceptable and dangerous means of reaching destinations countries are highlighted on the second panel of the concept. It conveys messages with images depicting illegal migration through the desert and on the sea. These two images stand in for several illegalities

in migration ranging from the uses of false documents to the infringement of conditions of residence as opined by Aleshkovski (2013). Casarico, et al., (2015) opines that, any act of migration that is against the legal means laid down for the entry and stay in a given country is referred to as illegal migration.

The clouds in this panel are depicted with a black twill woven fabric with a white plain-woven fabric as borders to create a distinction between the clouds and the background. This was done to depict many uncertainties regarding illegal migration which makes it riskier to engage in. A decision to migrate illegally comes with many unforeseen risks that may lead to death, loss of assets, waste of time etc. However, these are not clearly visible to the immigrants until they become victims, just as the black clouds are not visible in the concept until they are defined by the white borders. The panel comes in a dimension of 72" x 40". As found on the first panel, this panel also has an exodus of people searching for a greener pasture. As established earlier, the orange cloth depicts the desert which is naturally uncomfortable to stay on. This fabric was purposely made to dominate on the second panel to suggest the discomfort nature of illegal migration in all forms. Since many circumstances come to play in illegal migration according to Casarico, et al., (2015) definition, the fabric links the agonies on the desert to the several predicaments associated with illegal migration.

The second dominant fabric next to the orange Sika wo ntaban/M'anya ntaban cloth is the Afe bi ye esan fabric which warns illegal migrants to stay away from the act due to the troubles it may come along with. Although some migrants may succeed to their destination countries safely, this may not turn out to be so all the time. Some years may come with misfortunes as the name of the fabric suggests. Illegal migrants are therefore warned with the second panel to desist from the act. Figure 12(b) shows the second panel which talks about illegal migration.



Figure 12. Left, Panel 1 (Causes of Migration) and Right, Panel 2 (Illegal Migration). Source: Studio Work (2021).

### Panel Three

Panel three outlines the various means by which one can embark on legal migration which is recommended to be the safest. These laid down principles help one to escape the risks involved in illegal migration such as loss of properties, opportunities and above all, loss of life. The size of the panel is 55" x 40" with images reflecting the acceptable means or migrating. These images include; the huts which signify rural and underdeveloped areas, a passport representing rightful documents needed for migration, a ship and an aeroplane signifying the appropriate means of transport among others in both internal and international migration. The white clouds represent the expectations of migrants who relocate with rightful documents and appropriate routes. The green Sika wo ntaban/M'anya ntaban cloth represents greener pastures which is a major drive of migration according to the findings of this study. Figure 13(a) shows the third panel.

### Panel Four

Illegal migrants are exposed to several dangers in the desert and on the sea, which Caraballo (2017) refers to as victimization. These may include attacks from armed robbers, terrorists, smugglers and exploitations by border patrol personnel. The consequences of illegal migration are conceptually and graphically transcribed on the fourth panel to discourage people from forfeiting the formal process of entering destination countries from their countries of origin. To place emphasis on the consequences, the panel was made bigger than the other panels and same dimension (72" x 40") as the second panel which presents the illegal type of migration.

Images on the panel are armed robbers whose target is to rob and harm immigrants who refuse to give out their possessions. Another image on the panel is a hand-cuffed illegal migrant caught by authorities. This image is featured in the panel to create awareness of the existence of the law and the need to abide by it. Both origin and destination countries have their laws that need to be followed, especially in the area of migration. Going contrary to it results in the offender being arrested and prosecuted. Immigrants are therefore advised to stay away from illegal migration as they may be caught in the process and be prosecuted.

The fourth panel again has images of terrorists killing some illegal migrants and inflicting physical pain on others. Terrorism and xenophobia issues are possible consequences of illegal migration (Crush & Ramachandran, 2010; Sheryazdanova, 2015). Illegal migrants are prone to intimidation by terrorists in the desert and on the sea. In the case where they manage to get to their destination countries, they go through a lot of inhuman treatment by their masters in such countries. Other images on the panel are overcrowded people and men crying for help as they drown in the sea. Increased migration leads to overcrowding of people in cities and developing countries, and this is depicted with silhouettes of people moving in different directions. This causes pressure to be mounted on public infrastructure and shorten its lifespan, leading to insufficient amenities in most cities as opined by Richter, et al. (2016). A sinking ship with a hand raised in the air signifies the dangers associated with illegal migration on the sea. One can easily sink and die in the sea.

The tree-like 3-D image at the center of the panel signifies the concept of fruit-bearing. Plants bear fruits of their kind, so does illegal migration brings forth undesired consequences. Figure 13(b) shows the graphical representation of the consequences of illegal migration.



### Panel Five

The last panel exhibits the fruits of legal migration. As seen in the fourth panel, the benefits of legal migration are also arranged like fruits on a tree. The symbolic tree is depicted with polyurethane foam in a 3-D form. When migration is done on legal bases, one is assured to enjoy the benefits outlined in the panel among the numerous. The benefits of legal migration captured on the panel include; Knowledge gain, cultural promotion, employment and remittances. These are regarded as the fruits of legal migration and are the key instruments to national development. Unlike the other panels, this panel conveys messages with texts.

In circumstances where one acquires the rightful documents to study outside his/her country, the results is often knowledge acquisition which in turn leads to personal, professional and national development. Although, international scholarships greatly encourage migration as ascertained by Asare (2012), the benefits thereof are worth developing a nation and need to be encouraged so long as it is done on legal bases.

In addition, Legal migration gives immigrants a recognized platform to proudly showcase their culture and enjoy a full package of other cultures without any intimidation whatsoever. Bhugra and Becker (2005) opine that, migration has served as nourishment to cultural diversity, ethnic and racial matters in developed countries around the globe. This has greatly paved way for the dissemination and adaptation of varied lifestyles among people of different backgrounds.



Figure 13. Left, Panel 3 (Legal Migration), Center, Panel 4 (Consequences of Illegal Migration) and Right, Panel 5 (Benefits of Migration). Source: Studio Work (2021).

Employment and remittances move together as one largely depends on the other. The effectiveness of remittance depends on the employment status of immigrants which subse-

quently determines their level of contribution to national development. Remittance among employed immigrants is therefore expected to be higher than the unemployed. Boswell and Straubhaar (2004) is of the view that illegal migration is the great cause of illegal employment which remains problematic in national development agenda. This suggests that legal immigrants stand the chance of gaining legal employment which positively influences remittances and national development. The fifth panel addresses remittance and employment as fruits of legal migration. Figure 13(c) shows the fifth panel of the concept.

Through the research design employed for the study (practice-based), new concepts/techniques for producing artistic pieces in the context of textiles have been discovered. It is worth noting that textiles have been used over the years to create fashion products with little emphasis on their suitability in artistic pieces such as conceptual art. Although popular textile artists such as Anni Albers, Shiela Hicks, Faith Ringgold, etc. have explored conceptual art production with textiles. These artists are known for the creation of textile art with weaving, fibre art, and quilting techniques respectively. Reference could also be made to Badoe and Boamah (2021), who ventured into creating artistic textile art pieces with mixed-media techniques to sensitize people to good sanitation. It could be said that the current study, apart from creating awareness of the causes and consequences of migration with storytelling art pieces, has revealed an innovative approach to creating textile art that has not received the light of the day as far as previous studies are concerned. Combining materials such as conceptual fabrics, foam, fibres, wood, adhesives, etc. with techniques including printing and gluing is an eye-opener to exploring mixed-media art creation.

#### *Feasibility of the Concept (Through Exhibition)*

To measure the feasibility level of the concept, an exhibition was mounted to involve the public in the assessment of the established concept. The views of the participants were captured with the aid of structured questions and an open section giving them the chance to criticize the concept by putting it into writing. In the structured questions, three variables were established for the rating of the concept. These include Feasible, somehow feasible, and not feasible. Comments were taken from students, lecturers, and individuals from various regions of the county. The responses of the participants revealed a high acceptance of the concept as majority of participants indicated that the concept is feasible. Figure 14 and Figure 15 show the mounted textile art pieces during the exhibition.



Figure 14. Exhibition of the concept created (200" x 72").



Figure 15. Exhibition of the concept created (200" x 72").

The impact level of the concept was determined by a general assessment made by the total number of participants (105) engaged in the exhibition. The results obtained from the overall assessment show that ninety-three (93) participants rated the concept to be feasible as far as issues about migration and national development is concerned. These participants represent 89% of the total. Twelve (12) participants were of the view that the concept is somehow feasible with respect to migration and national developmental agenda. These numbers also represent 11% of the total number of participants engaged in the exhibition. None of the participants regarded the concept as 'not feasible.' With these results, it could be said that the impact of the work towards academic discourse to educate the public on issues pertaining to migration especially, the illegal ones is feasible.

### Research Outcomes

The study has explored various concepts regarding the causes and effects of migration as aimed in the study. Five concepts were developed with inspiration from data gathered from the participants including refugees, refugee camp officers, and immigration officers. The concepts include Unbroken Exodus I, Unbroken Exodus II, Migration factors (partly inspired by Lee's theory), Agonies on Desert, and the Agonies on Sea. These were all created to tell stories regarding migration. One of the five concepts deemed appropriate to sensitize people on migration was selected to produce a conceptual art piece under art studio conditions as a second objective of the study. The selected concept (Migration: Unbroken Exodus) was built with a mixed-media approach under studio conditions and finally assessed to understand its suitability in story-telling through an exhibition. The study confirms the suitability of textile art in addressing pressing issues as successfully achieved by previous studies that addressed the concept in different areas including the struggles of female porters in Ghana (Buami, et. al., 2024), the use of cubism in a textile art installation to educate people on biodiversity conservation (Manu, et. al., 2020), improving urban sanitation with textile art (Badoe & Boamah, 2021), etc.



## Conclusion

Artists are surrounded by diverse techniques and media which inspire their studio creations. This study utilized composite techniques and media at the studio to creatively tell stories of migration in a split canvas concept. It employed industrial and screen-printed fabrics with philosophical interpretations. Yarns and polyurethane foam were employed to complement the printed fabrics to show the extent to which composite materials could be utilized by artists at the studio to achieve great results.

There are different means of creating images on a substrate such as stitching, gluing, etching etc. This study employed gluing technique as the main method of creating images with the textiles materials on the canvas. This method gave rise to images with even surfaces and edges which was the researcher's great desire. The polyurethane foam responded well to the gluing technique in the creation process. The split canvas concept was adopted in this study to communicate societal issues to the public. Five panels with different meanings were created out of the study. These panels tell a common story when installed together to portray the concept of unity in diversity. The study again has proven the feasibility of conceptual textile art creation in addressing pressing national issues. It demonstrates the power possessed by textile materials in awareness creation.

It can therefore be concluded that studio creations of this nature are best implemented with composite materials and techniques. With the Practice-based research design, artists are offered the platform to exhibit their creative abilities and this opportunity could be explored to the maximum when attention is paid to every material surrounding the artist. It is recommended that the conceptual textile art pieces created out of this study should be kept in national museums for education. It is also recommended that artists should pay attention to pressing issues like migration in their creations to ensure national development.

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# Adaptive Reuse as a Tool for Sustainable Urban Development:

*The Case Study of Singapore, Southeast Asia*

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## Abstract

This article aims to explore the application of adaptive reuse as a tool for urban built heritage management through the study of five cases in the city of Singapore, Southeast Asia. At the crossroads of urban strategy, building conservation and heritage management, the cases reveal the complexities of contemporary urban developments in one of the world's leading cities. Five projects are analyzed and compared via thematic and content analysis, drawing from primary and secondary sources. The cases display the potential of adaptive reuse, as well as their connection to the larger context of sustainable urban (re)development, while offering a realistic overview of the possible difficulties associated with this process, such as gentrification and over-commercialization. Ultimately, the authors argue for adaptive reuse as a tool to be considered by built heritage managers and urban developers, as it may strike the right balance between different stakeholders and objectives.

**Keywords:** *Adaptive Reuse, Built Heritage, Sustainable Urban Development, Singapore, Southeast Asia*

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## Introduction, Context and Research Goals

Southeast Asia (SEA) is one of the world's regions which has experienced the shift towards the development of large cities and the centrality of urban life most dramatically, a trend which is expected to continue in the years ahead. Despite the diversity between countries within SEA, all are tending towards this pattern (Lechner et al., 2021). In the 1950s, only about 16% of the population in SEA lived in urban areas, a number which has since more than doubled, and will reach close to 66% in 2050 (Lechner et al., 2021). This represents an additional 70 million people being added to SEA's urban areas by 2025, which will apply increasing pressure on the cities, particularly in terms of land scarcity (ASEAN, 2021; ASEAN, 2022). Given these circumstances, the future of urban built heritage in Southeast Asian cities is uncertain. These cities reflect the region's rich and complex history and their unique urban built heritage sites require proper management, especially in periods of rapid urbanization (UNESCO, 2016). Unfortunately, over the past decades, this heritage has found itself particularly vulnerable to demolition and redevelopment (UNESCO, 2016). The absence of a robust integrated legislative framework, wherein heritage management would fall within the scope of urban planning, combined with a powerful and aggressive real estate market, has led to the destruction of countless structures with many others currently facing imminent threat (Van Mead, 2019; Mahmud, 2023). For example, the 2023 documentary "The Last Breath of Sam Yan" illustrates this complex issue, as students and residents in Bangkok's Sam Yan area came together to try to prevent the demolition of a local shrine to make space for redevelopment projects (Plittapolkransim, 2023). On the other hand, many urban built heritage sites have been able to be preserved across the region, often guided by regional and international charters (ASEAN, 2000). However, although strict heritage preservation has its benefits and its uses, in a rapidly changing urban context with pressing spatial needs, this strategy might not always be the most sustainable or desirable, cf. Lee, Kummer and DiStefano (2018) discussing these issues from Hong Kong.

Within these cities, a wide variety of built heritage can be found with distinct architectural styles and craftsmanship. This heritage reflects the region's past, interwoven layers of cultures with varied influences, notably from Islamic countries and the Indian subcontinent (UNESCO, 2016). Many cities have built heritage remaining from the colonial era (British, French, Dutch, etc.), particularly port cities who found themselves along trading routes. Religious built heritage is also very common, a testament to the region's coexisting belief systems, from Buddhism and Islam to Christianity and Hinduism (UNESCO, 2016). In this context, the city of Singapore is especially relevant due to its unique urban landscape which combines a rich multi-cultural past with a highly modern and rapidly growing urban context. Over decades, subsequent waves of immigration to the island added diversity to its urban fabric, something that is still very much a core part of Singapore's essence. The current communities present in the city, the three major ones being Chinese, Malay and Indian, have each influenced the urban landscape and continue to do so (National Heritage Board, 2018).

It is from this panorama that emerges adaptive reuse (AR), a tool for urban built heritage management that offers an alternative option as it aims to achieve a balance between the demolition and the strict preservation of heritage (Li et al., 2021; Hasnain and Mohseni, 2018; Niu et al., 2018). Simply put, adaptive reuse is the process of reusing a pre-existing structure by adapting its use to contemporary needs. It is unique and innovative in its abil-

ity to frame urban built heritage as a sustainable resource to be utilized by cities in their development (Taylor, 2015). Furthermore, it supports the idea that urban areas are more than only the source of challenges (poverty, pollution, etc.) but also intrinsically have potential for transformational change (Bouteligier, 2012; Revi et al., 2013).

Following the above, this research delves into the AR framework, exploring its relevance in the context of urban sustainable development and applies it to Southeast Asia, with a specific focus on Singapore.

## Conceptual and Literature Review

### Urban Built Heritage and Intangibility

When researching built heritage, especially in urban contexts, it is important to keep in mind both its tangible and intangible aspects. While tangibility is a crucial part of built heritage, especially in the context of land scarcity and city planning, such as in Singapore, its intangible dimensions should not be overlooked. Indeed, built heritage can often be seen as a manifestation of many forms of intangible heritage (craftsmanship, story-telling, art, etc.) (Jigyasu, 2015; Taylor, 2015). It is a way for immaterial knowledge and values to be represented in a physical manner. Spiritual and religious urban built heritage is a clear example of this idea, as such spaces truly come to life through the interaction of tangible and intangible features (Jigyasu, 2015; Taylor, 2015) eventually including ‘creative cities’ initiatives (Tayebeh et al., 2023). Likewise, built heritage often defines its character and derives its significance from features beyond its physical structure, such as the events which took place at a site. This connection between the tangible and intangible qualities of built heritage is particularly important in cities, where people live in very close proximity with the built environment (Oers, 2015). Urban built heritage is often inseparable from daily life and is deeply entrenched in the fabric of communities and their collective identity. In recent times, intangible urban heritage has also been connected to resilience and recovery processes.

### Adaptive Reuse (AR)

Remodeling, adapting, and repurposing structures is an age-old practice; because of the speed at which societies change and develop, structures tend to outlive their original function (Stone, 2019; Plevoets and Cleempoel, 2019). Due to this dissonance in lifespans, throughout history, structures have been adapted pragmatically, cf. Turner (2021) for a theoretical approach to AR and Pérez and Bassols (2023:410), who touch on several aspects of fortresses’ adaptation in colonial Hispanic America. However, the term “Adaptive Reuse” itself emerged in the 1970s and has only gained traction since then, particularly in the last decade with the rise of sustainability discourses in the fields of architecture, design, engineering and planning (Stone, 2019; Plevoets and Cleempoel, 2019). Its adoption as a heritage management tool is also recent (Li et al., 2021).

The essence of AR lies in its ability to infuse new life into an existing structure to meet the needs and wants of the current society. It implies a change in function, a common denominator between all AR projects (Stone, 2019; Hasnain and Mohseni, 2018). A wide variety of different projects can fit under the label of adaptive reuse and the degree to which a structure is adapted varies. Many different types of sites can be altered (industrial, residential, religious, cultural, military, etc.) as well as on different scales (Plevoets and Cleempoel,



2019). When it comes to the adaptive reuse of heritage in particular, a layer of complexity is added due to the meaning and history that the built structures embody (Arfa et al., 2022). In those cases, the goal of the project goes beyond just repurposing the structures through finding new useful functions by also aiming to find a balance between historic preservation and development, paving the way in some cases for community participation (Purwantiasning, 2021)

On a theoretical level, AR as an approach embraces a discourse of heritage where it is seen as a process rather than a static and unchangeable entity which is frozen in time (Smith, 2006). Many argue that the “conserve as found” attitude towards heritage, which is often associated with early Eurocentric approaches to conservation, goes against the nature of heritage itself by only focusing on its tangible qualities. Thus, an emphasis is put on aestheticization and monumentality (Smith, 2012; Jigyasu, 2015), often creating “icons” whose management is not easy in tourist places (Bassols, 2019). Instead, they promote a discourse wherein heritage is seen a process of remembering and creation, where values, memories and knowledge are not only being passed on but modified and added onto at every step of the way (Wollentz and Kuhlefeldt, 2021; Smith, 2006). This organic and cumulative progression occurs as heritage moves through generations (Taylor, 2015). This discourse is reflected in AR as it is a tool for heritage management that has change and transformation at its core. This gives AR the ability to not only embrace the dynamic and evolving nature of intangible heritage but also allow it to be reflected in the tangible heritage through its adaptation of the structures to the current context (Jigyasu, 2015).

### Literature on Adaptive Reuse in SEA

Despite the existence of many of adaptive reuse projects on urban built heritage in SEA, a limited amount of academic research has been done on this topic in the region, with the majority of relevant studies found in Europe. When focusing on Asia, most search results displayed studies done in East Asia (Intaraksa and Ongsavangchai, 2022/2023; Yoon & Lee, 2019; Langston et al., 2008; Yin, 2021; Yung et al., 2014; Gao et al., 2020; Hong & Chen, 2017).

When looking at the studies specifically focused on Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore stood out as popular research locations (Al-Obaidi et al., 2017; Abdulhameed et al., 2019; Rahmadina et al., 2019; Pieris, 2018; Fajarwati et al., 2021), with less cases in other countries such as Thailand (Pattananurot, Khongsaktrakun, 2022/2023). Most of the research was qualitative case studies which used a combination of literature reviews, field work (surveys and observations) and interviews (Fajarwati et al., 2021; Permata et al., 2020; Rahmadina et al., 2019; Yusran et al., 2021; Amalina Hanapi et al., 2022; Henderson, 2011a; Thi and Nguyen, 2021). A little more variety could be observed when it came to the different ways the researchers decided to approach the topic and the themes they engaged with.

Some studies focused on the technical aspects, such as building technique and materials (Al-Obaidi et al., 2017; Rahmadina et al., 2019). For example, Al-Obaidi et al. (2017) sought to evaluate the building performance (air quality, ventilation, lighting, acoustic, water use efficiency, etc.) of heritage shophouses which were adapted into budget hotels in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). Others focused on tourism, with an emphasis on cultural tourism and accommodation (Thi and Nguyen, 2021; Md Ali et al., 2019; Ariffin et al., 2020; Henderson, 2011b; Pattananurot and Khongsaktrakun, 2022/2023). Another group of researchers ex-

amined the aftermath of adaptive reuse projects, paying particular attention to authenticity (Yusran et al., 2021; Permata et al., 2020). Indeed, Yusran et al. (2021) investigated the visual and spatial changes after the adaptive reuse of Javanese vernacular houses into lodging and cafes in Malang (Indonesia). Some studies took a discussion-style approach, delving into themes like colonial heritage and national identity (Henderson, 2011a; Pieris, 2018). Finally, shophouses, commonly found in Southeast Asian cities, were a popular topic (Al-Obaidi et al., 2017; Fusinpaiboon, 2022; Abdulhameed et al., 2019; Zubir et al., 2018; Othuman Mydin et al., 2014). For example, Fusinpaiboon (2022) developed strategies for the adaptive reuse of shophouses in Bangkok (Thailand), and Zubir et al. (2018) investigated the challenges encountered by building owners trying to apply adaptive reuse on their shophouses in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of George Town (Malaysia).

Overall, among the current research on the adaptive reuse of urban built heritage in SEA, there seems to be a shared recognition of the potential and benefits of AR for the region as well as a common awareness of the challenges associated with this tool. Furthermore, most studies called for more research in this area.

## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

Our field work consists of five cases, all of them located in the city of Singapore. Singapore was selected as the geographical focus due to its relevant urban context, where a rich cultural history coexists with a rapidly modernizing landscape (see above). Indeed, not only is Singapore experiencing growth in various ways (population size, economy, global influence, etc.) but it is doing so in a context of land scarcity. This interplay provides a compelling backdrop for the exploration of the topic at hand. Additionally, Singapore was chosen for its extensive availability of online documentation on adaptive reuse practices, and the advantage of English being one of its official languages, enabling easy access to information without the need for translation. Therefore, access to primary and secondary sources was guaranteed. As for field work, the authors undertook extensive research into official documents as well as webpages so as to analyze and lay out the critical junctures of the five studied cases and their broad implications.

Due to its compiling and comparative nature, and the relatively recent completion of the projects, this work is also a chance to reflect on the transformative power of AR at a local scale. The criterion to select cases was their variety in original uses, adapted uses and locations.

For the sake of an easy comparison among projects, each one will be presented under three headings: background, restoration process and current use.

### Context: Singapore as a Case Study

Located at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore consists of a main island spanning 710 km<sup>2</sup> and 64 islets, with a population of nearly 6 million people (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.; Leinbach et al., 2023), see Figure 1. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), established in 1974, oversees and manages the development of Singapore's urban landscape, including land use planning, design, and sales (Urban Redevelopment Authority, n.d. - a).



Figure 1. A map locating Singapore in Southeast Asia and the five studied cases within the city of Singapore.

Source: Authors of a free map by D-Maps.

Singapore's built fabric reflects not only its history as a maritime trade hub and a British colony, but also embodies the multicultural community which emerged from centuries of exchanges (Ken, 2020). Juxtaposed with modern structures, this heritage contributes to Singapore's unique urban landscape and plays a key role in shaping the city's character and defining the nation's identity (National Heritage Board, 2018). Singapore separates its urban built heritage into three categories: UNESCO World Heritage Site, National Monuments and conserved buildings (National Heritage Board, 2018).

Urban built heritage preservation, conservation and management is overseen by two bodies, the National Heritage Board (Preservation of Sites and Monuments Division) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Across websites and documentation, these organizations outline strict guidelines on the appropriate usage of the tool and highlight best practices. For example, Volume 1 of the Conservation Technical Handbooks has a section defining and describing adaptive reuse as well as its purpose, its opportunities, and its challenges, and labels it as a "key conservation planning strategy" (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2017, 109) when trying to rejuvenate a structure whose original use is now obsolete. Similarly, adaptive reuse is mentioned in the strategic document Our SG Heritage Plan as a tool which has been used in the city. The document acknowledges "that there will always be a need to balance heritage preservation with future developments, especially given Singapore's land constraints" (National Heritage Board, 2018, 25).

### Case studies: Examples of Adaptive Reuse Projects in Singapore

#### Case Study #1: The NUS Baba House

##### Background

Built in the 1890s, the NUS Baba House is a conserved building located in the residential historic district of Blair Plain. The three-storey townhouse was originally the ancestral home of a prominent Straits Chinese family from Singapore's Peranakan community (a community composed of people with mixed Indonesian/Malay and Chinese heritage, see

Koh, 2013). Strait-Chinese is a sub-group of the Peranakan community referring to those who were born or lived in the Straits Settlements, a group of British colonies (Singapore, Penang, Malacca, etc.) (Koh, 2013). In 2006, the building was acquired by the National University of Singapore (NUS) with the intent of restoring and curating the townhouse and opening it up to the public as a museum. The conservation was an interdisciplinary project involving many departments within the university as well as the URA.

### **Restoration Process**

Before the restoration even began in 2007, researchers and students carried out excavations and surveys (iconography, original paint colors, etc.) to gather information. The project meant to find a balance between preserving the spatial and visual features of the townhouse to safeguard authenticity and modernizing the structure to ensure a safe and usable environment for visitors. It officially opened in 2008. The first and second floors contain over 2 000 artefacts displayed in their original context, allowing the visitors a glimpse into a typical 20th century Peranakan home. These artifacts, known as the Straits Chinese Collection, consist of a variety of objects (furniture, photographs, books, paintings, porcelain, etc.). A large proportion of the original objects which belonged to the Wee family, who owned the house for decades, are found in this collection, along with donations from other individuals within the community. The third floor was transformed into a gallery space welcoming exhibition on topics connecting to built heritage conservation, urban development and Peranakan history. The space is intended to promote and to foster engagement with heritage.

### **Current Use**

Today, in addition to proposing guided visits of the townhouse and neighborhood heritage tours, the NUS Baba House hosts a wide variety of programs open to the public pertaining to local art, history and culture. These include talks, film screening, volunteering, etc. Furthermore, the space still welcomes students and researchers interested in pursuing academic endeavours.

## **Case Study #2: The Warehouse Hotel**

### **Background**

The Warehouse Hotel is a boutique hotel located in the Robertson Quay area, along the Singapore River, born out of the restoration of a conserved building, namely a warehouse complex built in 1895 (Wong, 2021a). Composed of three structures, the warehouse, colloquially referred to as a “godown,” was originally used as storehouse along a spice route between Malaysia and Singapore, reflecting the city’s history as a maritime trading hub. For the next decades, the site was used for a variety of activities before closing down in 1995.

### **Restoration Process**

In 2013, The Lo & Behold Group, a Singaporean hospitality firm, was selected to carry out the project of turning the warehouse into a boutique hotel, supported by Asylum, a design agency, and Zarch Collaboratives, an architectural firm (Wong, 2021a). Under the guidance of the URA, the project focused on protecting the site’s legacy while using creativity and innovation to offer a contemporary twist on industrial heritage. Indeed, the aim was to create a space which would actively contribute to the neighborhoods’ vibrant social and dining scene while safeguarding the built urban landscape and managing the heritage associated

with it. The three-peaked silhouette of the warehouse, as well as many other character-defining features (wooden beams, metal roof trusses, louvre windows, moldings, signage, etc.), were conserved and complemented with modern additions (Wong, 2021a).

#### **Current Use**

The hotel opened to the public in 2017 and won the URA's Architectural Heritage Award for "Restoration & Innovation" the same year thanks to the project's ability to thoughtfully "celebrate the heritage of the warehouse and the Singapore River while adapting the building to a new use". It is a 5-star luxury hotel with 37 rooms, which aims to offer their guests an insight into local culture and heritage within the setting of modern comforts.

### **Case Study #3: The Khong Guan Building**

#### **Background**

The Khong Guan Building emerged through the rejuvenation of a conserved edifice built in 1952, namely, the Khong Guan Biscuit Factory. The factory was a symbol of local entrepreneurship, being owned by the home-grown biscuit company Khong Guan, which was established in 1947. Located at the tip of MacTaggart Road and Burn Road, the three-story factory, whose architecture strongly reflected the post-WW2 modernist movement, was a landmark in its neighborhood. While the lower floors were used as a shopfront, an office and a storeroom, the upper floors housed members of the Chew family, the owners.

#### **Restoration Process**

Led by Lua Architects Associates and META Architecture and completed in 2017, the project consisted of, in addition to restoration work, the integration of an extension to the original building. The extension contained multiple floors with balconies and some greenery. The focus was on enhancing the existing structure and allowing the story of the site to continue by creating a sense of continuity between the old and the new. Many distinctive features of the original building, such as the mosaic tiles and the metal grille gate, were restored and conserved. In 2018, the project won the URA's Architectural Heritage Award for "Restoration & Innovation," highlighting the seamless and respectful incorporation of the extension into the original heritage building (Zaccheus, 2018).

#### **Current Use**

Although the biscuits are no longer produced or sold in the building, parts of the building are still used by the biscuit company, now called Khong Guan Limited, as their headquarters. The rest of the building is open to be rented, mostly as office spaces. In 2019, a coffee shop called Alchemist opened on the first floor, where the old biscuit storefront was located.

### **Case Study #4: The National Gallery Singapore**

#### **Background**

National Gallery Singapore is a Southeast Asian art and culture museum created from the adaptive reuse of two national monuments, the former Supreme Court and the former City Hall (Wong, 2021b). Built in 1939 on the site of the former Grand Hotel de l'Europe, the Supreme Court was designed by British architect Frank Dorrington Ward and was one of the last classical buildings constructed in Singapore (Wong, 2021b). It was used as a courthouse until 2005, when the Supreme Court was moved to a new building. Also designed by a Brit-

ish architect, the City Hall was built in 1929 and served as offices for multiple government departments over the years, including colonial administration, until it was vacated in 2006. Many of Singapore's most important historical events took place in this site such as the official surrender of Japan in 1945 and the swearing in of Singapore's founder Lee Kwan Yew as Prime Minister, leading Singapore's first independent government. In 1992, both buildings attained the status of National Monuments.

### **Restoration Process**

The project was announced in 2006 by the government, quickly followed by the launch of an international design competition, eventually won by StudioMilou who led the project supported by CPG Consultants. The focus of the project was finding minimal architectural interventions which would allow for the conservation of as much of the buildings' original structures as possible while adapting to the new uses. This was achieved through the addition of a steel and glass roof structure placed above the monuments and suspended bridges, linking them together, all of which are minimally visible from the outside. To further reduce the changes made to the buildings, underground levels were built to not only facilitate circulation between the galleries, but to also accommodate new features such as parking spaces, auditorium passages and various amenities (bathrooms, lockers, ATMs, elevators, etc.). Naturally, bringing the monuments up to date in terms of construction regulations, which can be quite stringent for large museums due to safety risks (theft, vandalism, fire, terrorism, etc.) and conservation norms (ventilation, lighting, air temperatures, etc.) resulted in some necessary modifications. It officially opened to the public in 2015.

### **Current Use**

Today, the National Gallery Singapore holds the largest public collection of Singaporean and Southeast Asian modern art in the world with more than 8000 artworks from the 19th century to the present (Wong, 2021b). In addition to two long term exhibitions ("Siapa Nama Kamu?" and "Between Declarations and Dreams"), the museum presents a series of new and different exhibitions and is involved in diverse activities (performances, workshops, panel discussion, school programmes, etc.). A rooftop garden was also added to the National Gallery Singapore, where exhibitions and other various projects are occasionally located.

## **Case Study #5: CHIJMES**

### **Background**

Located in the downtown area, CHIJMES (pronounced "chimes") is an entertainment and lifestyle complex housed in the former Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus. It was established in 1854 by French Catholic nuns as a girl's school. The site contained three main buildings, namely, the Caldwell House, the chapel and the orphanage. Designed by George Drumgoole Coleman, a colonial architect, the Caldwell house was a two-storey building used by the nuns to receive visitors as well as to perform other daily activities (reading, sewing, writing, etc.) and is characterized by its semi-circle façade and neo-classical architecture. The orphanage, also a two-storey building, welcomed abandoned infants and children, many of whom were left at the Convent's door, nicknamed the "Gate of Hope". Finally, at the center of the complex lies the chapel, a massive neo-gothic structure with Corinthian columns, a cross-vaulted ceiling and stained-glass windows. Many pieces from the buildings, such as the stained glass, were crafted in Europe and brought to Singapore (CHIJMES, n.d.).



### Restoration Process

After operating for almost 130 years, the nuns left the site in 1983 to relocate to another area of the city. The convent was handed to the government and both the Caldwell house and the chapel became National Monuments. The rest of the site was gazetted for conservation. Restorations began shortly after and lasted until 1996, when it opened to the public. The project focused on transforming the convent into a functional and successful commercial complex while conserving the heritage through a thorough and sensitive restoration process which focused on the original craftsmanship (UNESCO Bangkok, n.d.). For example, when working on the glass stained windows of the chapel, repairing the broken pieces was favored over replacing them with new materials. Similarly, artisans from France and Italy were consulted to guarantee technical and material authenticity (UNESCO Bangkok, n.d.). Any new elements added for structural stability, such as steel beams, or for its new use, such as exhibition lights, was done in ways to keep them hidden or blend in with the original character of the buildings (UNESCO Bangkok, n.d.). Different landscape features such as open walkways and courtyards were also added. In 2002, the convent received a Merit Award at the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The property was later sold to a private company but kept the same use.

### Current Use

Today, CHIJMES is a lifestyle venue which allows the public to engage in contemporary activities within a historical setting. It hosts a variety of restaurants, bars and cafes as well as providing spaces for events (seminars, functions, performances, weddings, etc.).

### Discussion

In this section, an analysis and comparison of the AR framework applied to the five cases are conducted. The below table shows the comparative overview.

NAME	TYPE OF HERITAGE	ORIGINAL USE	ADAPTED USE
<b>NUS Baba House</b>	Residential Heritage	Ancestral Home	Museum, Gallery & Research Centre
<b>The Warehouse Hotel</b>	Industrial Heritage	Warehouse	Hotel
<b>Khong Guan Building</b>	Industrial/Commercial Heritage	Factory & Store	Offices & Café
<b>National Gallery Singapore</b>	Political Heritage	Government Buildings	Museum
<b>CHIJMES</b>	Religious & Educational Heritage	Convent, School & Orphanage	Entertainment & Lifestyle Complex

Figure 2. Comparative Overview of the Case Studies in Singapore. Source: Authors.

When comparing the five example projects on Table 1, a few observations can be made. Firstly, it is interesting to notice how each project began with a different type of heritage, as well as different original uses, displaying AR's ability to be utilised for a wide variety of structures. This highlights how diverse urban areas can offer many opportunities for unique creative transformations within the AR framework. Secondly, when looking at the adapted uses, it can be observed that every single heritage structure offers products and services which are compatible with the tourism industry. Due to the challenges that can be brought upon a city through the development of its tourism sector, it is worthwhile to examine whether some heritage structures, after being adapted, should stay spaces whose use is designed for local communities (housing, community center, public library, etc.). By the same token, it is relevant to reflect on the fact that, although these spaces are open to the public, many are still privately owned and their accessibility is limited by the costs associated with the different products and services they offer, which could potentially alienate lower-income groups.

When looking at the case studies overall, Singapore seems to have been able to capture some of AR's potential. Indeed, in terms of urban regeneration, all the specific projects described in the cases have resulted in the establishment of new businesses and activities, thus contributing to the local economy. The five projects demonstrate the URA's commitment and expertise towards adaptive reuse and display its ability to cultivate urban regeneration opportunities. Next, regarding heritage conservation, although all projects seem to have kept the heritage as a core component of the process, the NUS Baba House stood out through the creation of its gallery space and through its promotion of research activities at the site. This shows a commitment towards, not only fostering contemporary connections with local culture, but also facilitating opportunities for the community to analyze, reflect and discuss the heritage. The National Gallery Singapore also showed commitment towards supporting programmes and activities which allow people to explore and connect with the heritage. These two projects stand out in part due to the new use which was selected for the heritage structure. For all projects, a deeper engagement with the intangible features of the heritage could bring an interesting dimension to the new uses, and could further protect the subtleties of the urban landscape. Similarly, the NUS Baba House and the National Gallery Singapore seem to reflect the ideas of community building and participation the most, especially through NUS Baba House's inclusion of faculty and students into the restoration process itself. Additionally, the creation of a café on the first floor of the Khong Guan Building, where the storefront used to be, can be a good way to continue to allow the community to have access to the heritage building. Overall, finding more ways to include the local community in a manner which gives them agency and empowers them would be beneficial to Singapore's approach to adaptive reuse.

Furthermore, the city seems to have been able to tackle some of the difficulties and obstacles which can arise when using AR as a tool to manage built heritage. Firstly, the challenges surrounding regulatory frameworks and governance are the ones that Singapore has dealt with to the greatest extent. The case studies display how the city's regulations regarding not only adaptive reuse, but also heritage management in general, are very clear, precise and detailed, while still allowing for unique transformations. Moreover, these regulations, in addition to documentation regarding best practices, are readily available online to support heritage owners, project managers, architects, and so on. Having such a struc-

tured framework can offer a lot of guidance and ensure a consistent level of quality across the city. Still, it is interesting to wonder whether such a strict top-down approach in these projects limits community consultation and hinders active community involvement, potentially weakening the gathering of information regarding intangible heritage aspects. The projects described nevertheless showed thorough and extensive research and planning processes, and demonstrated a commitment towards finding conscientious ways to integrate new features into the original structures. This was found in, for example, the roof structure and bridges added to link the two buildings in the National Gallery Singapore or the extension mounted on top of the Khong Guan Building. A lot of attention was also dedicated to the craftsmanship found in all the heritage structures. In the context of these case studies, it can also be relevant mention the challenges of over-commercialization and gentrification that can arise in adaptive reuse projects. Indeed, the case studies consistently revealed a certain degree of heritage commercialization.

### Conclusion

This research work has demonstrated the potential that adaptive reuse has in the city of Singapore while presenting a realistic overview of the possible difficulties associated with this process. Although adaptive reuse is not appropriate for every single site, it should still be considered as a key tool for heritage management, especially in rapidly growing and modernizing cities. Not only do the findings of each of the cases in this study contribute to the research gap on this topic in this particular geographical context, but the insights are especially useful for stakeholders beyond academia, particularly those involved in urban planning and heritage management beyond the SEA region.

This study presents two avenues for future research. Firstly, the finding that most of the AR projects studied are geared towards the tourism industry and include some form of commercialization is an interesting trend to be further analyzed: do all Singaporeans have an equal access to adapted buildings, when considering that these structures are part of their identity? Can this trend of monetizing repurposed structures be observed elsewhere in the city or in Southeast Asia? Secondly, other future research topics may include further investigating the potential of AR projects to include climate-adaptive solutions such as nature-based solutions (green roofs, bioswales, raingardens, etc.) or passive green design (ventilation, natural lighting, building orientation, etc.) (Attmann, 2010; World Wildlife Fund, 2021; European Commission, 2021). For the five case studies presented here, this aspect was the one that was capitalised the least on. Although the projects did reflect aspects of urban circularity, which are in part inherent to adaptive reuse, green design techniques and nature-based solutions were not mentioned in most of them, at least not in a manner which made them a core feature of the process.

Ultimately, adaptive reuse gives the possibility to not only rethink the role of heritage in cities, but to also consider its role in the larger context of sustainable urban development. It is through tools such as adaptive reuse that ways can be found to integrate the past with the present to create a better future.

### Data and Image Availability

The complete list of primary documents used as well as some images of the five studied cases are located here: <https://tinyurl.com/yb9wn3j7>.

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# Unveiling the Creative City Potential of Buriram:

## *An Analysis of Its Cultural and Creative Ecosystems*

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### Abstract

This study discusses findings from a three-month study, from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. Commissioned by UNESCO, this study aims to firstly, analyze the Cultural and Creative Industries ecosystem and map cultural resources by applying the Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework in Buriram Province and secondly, offer a set of recommended interventions toward the achievement of the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. The results show that Buriram is abundant in cultural assets that could be used as a foundation for the growth of the creative economy in the city, but it is still lacking in human capital and support infrastructure that allow the culture and creative industries to grow. Subsequently, three interventions are suggested: 1) Integrate the creative economy into development plans; 2) offer space to create, collaborate and grow; and 3) build a creative coalition.

**Keywords:** *Creative City, Buriram Province, Cultural and Creative Ecosystems, Sustainable Development, Thailand*

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## Introduction

The concept of the creative city, first discussed by Charles Landry in the early 1990s, became popular across the world after successful applications in the United Kingdom, continental Europe and North America. It emerged as a solution to urban problems in post-industrial cities, but the surrounding conversation has shifted to using creativity for economic development in cities. The launch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Creative Cities Network in 2004, together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s Creative Economy Programme, amplified both interest in and understanding of, the creative city among policymakers around the world. This includes policymakers in Asia who have since adopted policies and models from Europe and North America with varying degrees of success (Landry, 2008; Landry and Bianchini, 1995).

Referred to as a “borrowed term” and a “traveling discourse” by scholars, Asian policymakers, especially those in the Global South, have been criticized for appropriating the concept of creative city in a cookie-cutter approach without considering socio-economic differences, unique social structures and political climates (Kong, 2014; Kong and O'Connor, 2009; Wang, 2004). The result is a much narrower focus that prioritizes the cultural consumption of the citizens and the attraction of global corporations to the cities (Gu, 2020). In the case of Thailand, where development policies have been rapidly shifting focus as government heads have changed nine times in the past 20 years, it is not surprising that concepts such as creative economy, creative industries, creative city, smart city and the digital economy are not clearly understood by citizens or the government officials who have been unsuccessful in bringing them to fruition.

## The Creative City-Related Policies in Thailand

The creative economy was the first concept to enter Thailand's economic policy discourse. When Thaksin Shinawatra was the Prime Minister of Thailand, this new and promising concept was eagerly discussed. The Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC) was founded in 2005 to foster economic and social development through the integration of Thai culture and creativity with modern design and technology and to create opportunities for Thai citizens to have access to knowledge that will inspire creativity (TCDC, 2017). The idea of creativity as being one of the key drivers of value creation in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors was put forward in the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), developed by Thailand's national planning agency, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). In the following years, the notions of creative economy, creative industries and creative city were publicized through TCDC's various exhibitions, lectures, workshops, publications and online resources. Subsequently, the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) was then formulated focusing on the creative economy. Government agencies such as TCDC, the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) and the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD) at the time were key actors in advancing the idea of the creative economy in Thailand. However, after the military coup led by General Prayuth Chan-O-Cha took place in May 2014, all projects related to the creative economy were suspended, even though the cultural and creative industries were increasingly prominent in development policies around the world.

The creative industries reappeared in “Thailand 4.0,” a new economic model proposed by the government that aims to create a value-based economy that is driven by innovation, creativity, high-quality services and technology. The government suggested that the new economy would boost the quality of life, raise international competitiveness and release the country from the trap of middle income, inequality and imbalance (Jones and Pimdee, 2017). The concept of the creative city also re-emerged in a 2016 project created by TCDC, but instead of focusing on building a creative city, TCDC initiated the Co-Create Charoenkrung Project which serves as a model for creative economy growth within a single district. Experts in the creative city concept, designers and stakeholders in the neighborhood were brought together to brainstorm development plans that align with local needs. Charoenkrung, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Bangkok, was designated as a creative district and the location for the expanded version of TCDC, the Creative Economy Agency (CEA), founded by the Office of the Prime Minister in August 2018. Various ongoing events and activities created by CEA have stimulated the growth of creative businesses, such as galleries and studios and increased opportunities and sales for local vendors in the Charoenkrung district.

The CEA, an organization aiming to drive the creative economy policy forward through collaboration with public and private sectors, has been promoting the development of creativity and innovation through its ongoing activities. It organized the first CEA Forum in 2019 to serve as a platform for knowledge and experience exchange regarding the development of the creative economy, including policymaking, the formation of creative spaces for businesses and communities and the utilization of creativity as a means to gain a competitive advantage (Creative Economy Agency (CEA), 2019). CEA was also active in providing research and insights to the city authorities of Bangkok and Sukhothai in the application of UNESCO Creative Cities. In 2019, the two cities were designated “Creative City of Design” and “Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art,” respectively. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Application Guideline, created by the CEA after its successful execution in Bangkok, has been used to help local authorities understand and complete the application process. Subsequently, Phetchaburi became the latest city in Thailand to be listed as a member of the Creative Cities Network in 2021.

The CEA, an organization dedicated to driving creative economy policies through collaboration with public and private sectors, has been actively promoting creativity and innovation through its initiatives. In 2019, the CEA organized its first CEA Forum to provide a platform for knowledge and experience exchange on creative economy development, including policymaking, the creation of creative spaces for businesses and communities and leveraging creativity for competitive advantage (Creative Economy Agency, 2019). The CEA played a pivotal role in supporting research and offering insights to city authorities, leading to the successful applications of Bangkok and Sukhothai to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which already included Phuket as a Creative City of Gastronomy (since 2015) and Chiang Mai as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art (Since 2017). In 2019, Bangkok was designated a Creative City of Design, while Sukhothai was recognized as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art. Building on these successes, the CEA continued to support other Thai cities, contributing to the designation of Phetchaburi as a Creative City of Gastronomy in 2021 and most recently, Chiang Rai as a Creative City of Design and Suphanburi as a Creative City of Music in 2024.



The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Application Guideline, developed by the CEA after the successful designation of Bangkok, has since been used to help local authorities across Thailand understand and complete the application process. However, despite the growing interest in achieving UNESCO Creative City status, there remain some misconceptions among city authorities in Thailand about what this designation truly entails. While UNESCO recognition brings honor, prestige and opportunities to boost tourism in the cities that receive it, becoming a member of the Creative Cities Network requires a strong commitment from city stakeholders. They must work collaboratively to place creativity at the heart of their urban development strategies.

In the case of Thailand's heavily tourism-reliant economy, creative city development models can be adopted to aid the country's recovery after COVID-19. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have hit the tourism industry hard, resulting in a significant drop in international travelers and subsequently, a loss of foreign tourism income amounting to almost 60 percent of all tourism spending and the loss of jobs and businesses both directly and in adjacent industries (Saxon, Sodprasert and Sucharitakul, 2021). In the recovery, cities and small towns need to reconsider growth strategies that move away from fragile large-scale tourism to new models that capture new and varied sources of travelers through differentiated travel experiences, designed and offered by the local community, utilizing their unique cultural assets and creativity. This paper aims to identify the potential growth areas and opportunities for Thailand to utilize the Creative Cities framework set out by UNESCO, in a way that truly benefits the people of Thailand.

#### **Piloting Cities, Culture, Creativity Framework in Buriram Province**

This study presents findings and analysis from a three-month investigation, conducted from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. Commissioned by UNESCO, the study aims to first analyze the cultural and creative industries ecosystem and map cultural resources by applying the Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework in Buriram Province. Second, it offers a set of recommended interventions to achieve the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. In previous issues of this journal (*Journal of Urban Culture Research*), numerous efforts have explored various strategies and offered recommendations for building resilient creative cities, drawing on creative city discourse, sustainable development theories and additional frameworks such as social capital theory (see Khoo and Chang 2023; Lei 2021; Tayebbeh et al. 2023). This paper focuses primarily on the CCC Framework, which has proven to be both comprehensive and effective in helping policymakers and other stakeholders efficiently identify key areas for improvement.

The process undertaken in this study can be summed up in four main steps. Beginning with the literature review, the UNESCO and the World Bank position paper "Cities, Culture and Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth," released in May 2021 was examined, together with creative city-related resources and case studies. Initial research on Buriram Province was collected before in-depth interviews with stakeholders and field observations were conducted between November and early December 2021. Secondary data were obtained from creative city-related literature, government policies and documents and online sources, while the primary data were collected from ten individuals who represent key stakeholders for creative city devel-

opment including the government sector, private sector, academic sector and CSOs). Qualitative data was then arranged and analyzed. Thematic analysis, a technique for identifying, analyzing and constructing meaningful themes within qualitative data, was employed according to the guiding principles of the CCC Framework (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2020; Braun et al., 2019). Finally, a set of recommendations has been offered, focusing on interventions for long-term resilience.

### **The Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework**

The CCC Framework employed in the analysis is the result of a collaboration between UNESCO and the World Bank. This framework is for policymakers who recognize that the development of creativity can contribute to economic growth as well as a better quality of life for city inhabitants. Drawing from case studies of nine diverse countries, it provides guiding principles that allow city authorities and other stakeholders to realize the city's full potential in order to achieve the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. The Framework can be used across the following steps:

1. Map the cultural resources and the existing cultural and creative industries
2. Identify key constraints to the growth of these resources and industries
3. Prioritize interventions and sequence implementation to tackle key constraints
4. Build and empower a coalition comprising representatives from the government sector, private sector, institution sector, CSO sector and local communities

Long-lasting spatial, social and economic benefits can be realized when a city's local government fully endorses policies and creative projects and the coalition effectively implements interventions. The Framework can help the coalition to boost city competitiveness and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the short term, as well as to leverage the city's full potential for long-term sustainable development (UNESCO and World Bank, 2021).

The CCC Framework shows that a creative environment is made up of creative assets and resources, supported by six enablers that include different players and city characteristics. The position paper demonstrates how the combination of six enablers has led to spatial, economic and social benefits in nine cities that are presented as case studies. These cases demonstrate that there is no one pathway to success. Any key actor in the creative ecosystem can initiate creative city strategic plans, whether it is private chefs in Lima, Peru, or a newly established institution that focuses on the protection of heritage in Madaba, Jordan. The approach can be top-down, bottom-up or a combination of both. Moreover, the size and density of a city, the types of assets or industries and whether the city is situated in a developed or developing country have no significance within the CCC Framework (UNESCO and World Bank, 2021). The situation analysis and recommendations or suggested interventions that follow will focus on the six enablers within the framework and the potential outcomes specific to Buriram (Figure 1).

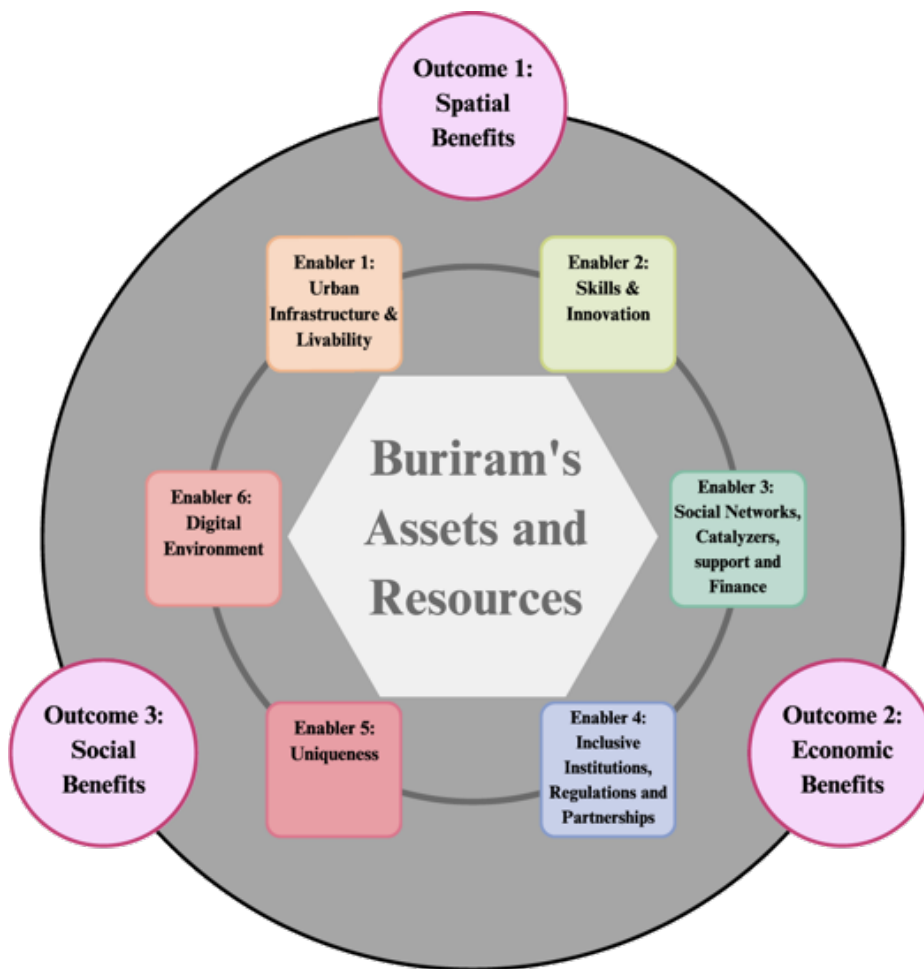


Figure 1. Cities, Culture and Creativity Framework (Adapted from UNESCO and World Bank, 2021).

### Buriram Cultural and Creative Ecosystems

Buriram is known for its archaeological sites, with more than 60 sandstone sanctuaries around the province, its quality rice and agricultural production and for having a great quantity of manufacturing factories. In recent years, however, Buriram has gained more international fame for its football club, Buriram United, one of the top performing football teams domestically and in the region, the FIFA-level football stadium and international sports events, such as Thai MotoGP, TA2 Thailand, Thailand Super Series and the Buriram Marathon.

Located in the lower part of the northeastern region of Thailand, about 400 km northeast of Bangkok, Buriram Province covers a total area of approximately ten thousand square kilometers, ranked 17th biggest province in the nation. Buriram is part of a group of provinces named Southern Isan, along with Nakhon Ratchasima, Surin, Sisaket and Ubon Ratchathani. This multicultural region is home to the Thai-Laos community which has been influenced by beliefs in Buddhism and Hinduism. Heritage from the ancient Khmer

civilization that has made this region unique is a group of sandstone sanctuaries scattered in the provinces. Creative city literature has shown that diversity is a driver of creativity and innovation and Southern Isan is a true melting pot of cultures, featuring ethnic groups Thai Korat, Lao, Khmer and Kui who speak different dialects. The diversity of inhabitants gives rise to a diversity in cultural traditions.

The history of Buriram is culturally rich, if poorly documented. From the 7th to 11th century a moated Dvaravati city was established by the Mon people. The influence of the Khmer Empire reached the area by the 10th century and central Thailand was invaded by King Suryavarman II of the Khmers (the builder of Angkor Wat) in the early 12th century. Buriram became part of the Khmer Empire, with sandstone ruins from this period still in existence today. It finally came under Thai rule in the early Bangkok period and was given its present-day name, Buriram which translates from ancient Sanskrit to “city of pleasantness” (Buriram Provincial Office, 2021).

With such a variety of cultural and creative assets present in the province, each seems to have its own ecosystem that is mostly separate from others. According to the data collected, what brings them together is Buriram United, a professional football club (BRUTD FC), which is the biggest event organizer, fundraiser and investor in Buriram. Newin Chidchob, Chairman of Buriram United, through his many visionary creative projects that aim to make Buriram an all-year-round travel destination, has been spreading the benefits of the recent increase in the popularity of Buriram to local craft producers (BRUTD FC merchandise and local products sold in events) and rural villagers (homestay providers and local guides). His latest idea explores experiential tourism, which will allow visitors to engage with the local community and learn about their way of life. He is one of the most influential individuals in Buriram who is not only able to convince the local government and city authorities to support his city development ideas but is also able to see them through to fruition with his own financial backing and financial support from private sponsors.

The provincial and local government agencies involved with the culture and creative industries, such as the Buriram Provincial Cultural Office, Buriram Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports and Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization follow directions from the central government but also lend support to Chidchob's ideas and projects that align with the local government's vision and development strategies. However, there does not seem to be any attempt to integrate the various cultural and creative assets and promote a unified unique identity for the city, the policy and financial support available appear disjointed.

Another key stakeholder that is directly involved with the development of creative workers and the preservation of traditions and crafts is Buriram Rajabhat University, the biggest educational institution in Buriram. Students in the Bachelor of Education Program in Dramatic Arts are trained in traditional and local dramatic art forms and they are expected to become teachers after graduation. During their five-year program, they are given opportunities, through Buriram University's Office of Arts and Culture, to practice their craft in local festivals and events and earn extra income. Research related to culture conducted by academic staff and students is also key to the preservation and promotion of local heritage. Examples include research on maximizing local food products to stimulate the economy within a rural community (Tahom, Dhurata, Bungtong and Wongsas, 2018), a study on the

local cultural knowledge around conserving the community forest (Tahom and Dhurata, 2016) and a case study on a local musical band (Kengkaew, 2020).

It is worth noting that when it comes to pinning down the identity of Buriram, each stakeholder thinks of it quite differently. The local government put five assets and characteristics in its slogan, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TTT) focuses on heritage, crafts and architecture, Buriram United wants to highlight sports and tourism (cultural and experiential), the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) sees Buriram as a venue for international events and the Provincial Cultural Office is focused on preserving and protecting heritage, traditions and culture, but only from the past.

### **Analysis**

After mapping the cultural and creative resources of Buriram, this section discusses strengths and opportunities concerning the six categories of creative city enablers in the CCC Framework.

#### ***Unique Value Proposition***

Out of the six enablers, uniqueness is already present in the forms of crafts, archaeological sites and architecture. For Buriram, the official slogan of the province is “Stone castle town, volcanic land, beautiful silk, rich culture, excellent sports city” (Buriram Town Municipality, 2018), a phrase that highlights cultural assets that could be used as a foundation for the growth of the creative economy in the city. In addition, the city has been promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand as “the town of two-era castles”<sup>1</sup> because of their ancient sandstone Khmer temples and the recently built Buriram Stadium (also known as Thunder Castle Stadium). The sandstone sanctuaries that represent the ancient Khmer civilization are complemented by a series of traditional rituals and ceremonies, such as the Khao Phanom Rung Festival which takes place when the sun aligns perfectly through the doors of the temple. This intrinsic uniqueness attracts the interest of visitors to the city and marks Buriram as one of the 20 “creative cities” in Thailand according to the Department of Intellectual Property (Department of Intellectual Property, 2011). As the location of the greatest number of extinct volcanoes in Thailand (six), it is truly a city deserving of the name “volcanic land.” Volcanic soil can also provide uniqueness to local products, such as rice and silk, which are dyed using volcanic soil to create a distinctive orange color. In recent years, the growing popularity of Buriram United, the football stadium and a range of world-class sports events has provided Buriram with another uniquely unrivaled image.

With many unique values, Buriram is experiencing an identity crisis and there is not one unique asset that stands out and represents a distinguishable image of the city. Moreover, while it is clear that Buriram has abundant cultural and creative assets, the link between these assets, the creative industries and the concept of the creative city did not seem apparent to the local government officials and city authorities during the interviews that took place in November-December 2021. The archaeological sites, crafts and architecture were mentioned only in connection with tourist activities, suggesting that they are valuable only to those from outside of the city, or even the country and there is no use for them identified outside the context of tourism. The traditional crafts such as the variety of silk products or culinary traditions, though unique to the local community, are not considered by the city authorities to have much creative potential or growth opportunity.

### *Urban Infrastructure and Livability for Creativity Development*

In Buriram, local crafts such as silk products are made by community enterprises or Farm Women Groups in villages. The finished products are then distributed either directly by the producers or through intermediaries. Customers can purchase them at local markets and retailers in the city or from retailers nationwide. The products are also increasingly available online. Culinary products, such as salty fermented shrimp, are distributed similarly. Craftmakers prefer working in their own houses or community spaces close to home. City authorities support this way of working, because of the prohibitive costs associated with providing new spaces. Additionally, with the increase in experiential tourism seen in remote villages, witnessing the silk-making process in a village represents an opportunity to deliver a more authentic travel experience. That being said, being far from urban areas which have better digital connectivity, cultural venues and educational and health services, limits creative development. Even though Buriram Rajabhat University has helped train villagers to improve creativity and create new products from silk materials,<sup>2</sup> ongoing training and exposure to new ideas and inspirations are important for creativity to thrive.

The lack of a physical and spatial environment that supports creativity and the exchange of ideas and experiences, which is Enabler 1 in the CCC Framework, leads to the underdevelopment of skills and innovation, or the second enabler related to human capital. There are both formal and informal education opportunities within the creative fields present in Buriram, particularly at Buriram Rajabhat University and in villages. However, access to the necessary skills that align with the evolving demands of contemporary creative and cultural markets remains constrained. Craftspeople and service providers associated with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) can no longer depend exclusively on physical, on-site visitors to sustain their livelihoods. The integration of digital technologies and strategic marketing competencies can enable these workers to effectively engage with and expand their potential customer base.

The improvement of the digital environment, or Enabler 6, can make a significant impact on local cultural and creative workers. However, Buriram is still lacking in this area. While internet access is available throughout Buriram, the speed and quality of the connection vary greatly from area to area. In the 2025 revised version of the development plan (2566-2570 BE) (Buriram Governor's Office, 2023), out of 110 planned activities, three are specifically related to setting up a digital skills training center, conducting short digital skills courses for farmers and organizing camps for youth. These activities have been allocated a combined budget of 39.2 million baht, which represents only 0.5% of the total five-year plan budget of 7.78 billion baht. However, it is important to note that there is no mention of digital technologies in the Local Development Plan (2566-2570 BE) prepared by the Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization (2021a). This suggests that city authorities do not regard digitalization as crucial to improving the quality of life for citizens.

Digitalization promotes innovation and creativity, lowering barriers and increasing accessibility, as seen in the 2018 project "Buriram B-Stay," in which a Buriram United affiliation B-Stay partnered with Airbnb to help local villagers manage homestay services for global visitors for the MotoGP and sports tourism events. Because of limited access to the internet and digital skills, B-Stay helps local hosts create and manage listings on the Airbnb platform.<sup>3</sup> Relying on intermediaries to help them connect to their online customers takes



more time and can be costly, however. When locals are taught to be able to use online platforms to list their products and services, they can become more independent from intermediaries, reduce costs, effectively respond to customers' needs and generate revenue through diverse online methods.

### ***Support Infrastructure and Inclusive Regulations***

Enablers 3 and 4 (Social networks, catalyzers, support and finance; inclusive institutions, regulations and partnerships) are seen as soft but crucial complements to the physical and spatial environment and the human capital previously discussed. Creative professionals grow and evolve when they can gain access to financing and business development services and when they can form a creative community in which they can inspire one another and connect with other stakeholders. Moreover, their creativity needs to be supported and enhanced within the overall framework of city development strategies. Currently, in both the Provincial Development Plan of Buriram Province (2566-2570 BE), created by the Governor's Office (2023) and the Development Strategies of Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization (2566-2570 BE) (2021a), there is no mention of the creative economy, creative industries or creative city. The main development goals in both of these plans are to promote Buriram as a major tourist destination for ancient Khmer civilization and global-standard sports. Two additional goals for these organizations are improved agricultural production and quality of life for the citizens.

Data collected in this study shows that access to financing and business development services is extremely limited for artists, especially those who specialize in contemporary art. An example of this is an art exhibition called "Thani Art Light"<sup>4</sup> which took place in March 2021. It was organized by a group of young creatives who turned an abandoned building into an art venue with various rooms, using lights and decorations to convey various themes. The event was well-received by visitors, but the organizers received no financial support from any public or private organization. On the other hand, traditional craft-makers and performers, or those working in local festivals, are more likely to receive funding support from the local government, the Cultural Office and the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports. However, the process can be lengthy and complicated. When the local government does not see the benefits of creativity and potential contribution to the local economy, all while promoting social cohesion and quality of life, it makes it extremely difficult for the culture and creative industries to grow. Additionally, when the strategic plans do not include any support for creative goods and services, there is no budget allocated to the development of the creative fields.

However, for Enabler 3, there seem to be strong networks among the local communities, catalyzed by Buriram United. This football club brings together not only its fans but also the city inhabitants who put their trust in Newin Chidchob personally. Recently, he came up with an idea to develop a group of local guides in the "Gu Guide" program.<sup>5</sup> The application process is open to anyone in Buriram who has a service mindset and owns a vehicle. These applicants will then be trained to be local guides for visitors to the province. Through this initiative, he aims to increase tourism potential, generate more income for the community and promote social and economic development in Buriram.

Although many of the projects initiated by Buriram United are labeled as tourism development, it is clear that creativity plays a big part in both ideation and execution. An influential and visionary leader who makes great use of his creativity is a signature strength of Buriram. Partnerships between the private sector and other stakeholders are critical. This is especially true of the local government, which can establish policies and regulations to enable the cultural and creative industries to thrive. What appears to be lacking is not the presence of creativity-related initiatives, but an understanding of what the cultural and creative industries are and the potential of their spatial, economic and social benefits in the long run.

Having Buriram United, a private entity, as a true community leader is a strength in this regard. With a large amount of support and financial backing, digitalization can take place faster and more efficiently than if it were led by the local government. Once local communities are better equipped with computer skills and network access, they will be able to operate businesses catering to an increased tourism demand in Buriram. They can also source materials and reach customers directly via online platforms to sell their products and services. More training in marketing could be provided to boost audience reach and engagement.

### **Planning the Route to a Creative City**

After identifying challenges and opportunities for enabling creative cities, the next step in the CCC Framework is to prioritize interventions that will support the long-term development of the cultural and creative industries. Using the findings gained from the data analysis, a set of interventions is recommended in this section, for Buriram to drive the cultural and creative industries forward and receive the spatial, economic and social benefits that those industries offer.

#### ***Intervention 1: Integrate the Creative Economy into Development Plans***

This first intervention is related to Enablers 3 and 4, network and support infrastructure and institutional and regulatory environment. The city authorities need to realize that the push for the creative economy can co-exist with a focus on tourism development, as cultural tourism is part of the cultural and creative industries. The projects that Buriram United has initiated have been driven by creativity, though by specific individuals, not a collective. The direction that the city is moving toward through creative initiatives aligns perfectly with the principles of the creative city: whether it is the design of souvenirs that makes use of local crafts, or the “Gu Guide” projects that utilize local resources to respond to tourist demands. By integrating creativity into tourism development policy, more budget can be allocated to the development and professionalization of creativity, which can include improved infrastructure and workspaces, fund mechanisms and marketing campaigns for local products.

When creativity grows within the tourism industries and craft design and production, it leads to a more distinctive value proposition for travelers. More local employment and sales opportunities will follow, which will attract more creative individuals and private entities to invest in local products, generating more income for the local community in a virtuous cycle. More interactions with other creative workers can lead to collective inspiration that enhances innovation and growth.

### *Intervention 2: Offering Space to Create, Collaborate and Grow*

This intervention is concerned with the physical and spatial environment, human capital and the digital environment, which are enablers 1, 2 and 6. As seen in the success of the project “Thani Art Light,” unused spaces in the city can be transformed into creative spaces. Some young artists are enthusiastic about offering something new and creative for the city and with affordable spaces supported by private and public entities, creativity can be enhanced. Currently, craft makers create their products in their own community, often in rural areas, with little access to new creative ideas or inspiration. This makes it more difficult for innovation to take place. Offering workspaces for these craftspeople in the city, where they can interact and collaborate with young creative students from Buriram Rajabhat University, receive up-to-date training and be able to pass their wisdom and creative techniques to the younger generation will enable inspiration and creativity to flow more freely in the local community. Being in the city and having better access to the internet can improve sales opportunities and allow them to further advance their skills both in production and in business.

Rajabhat University has its own Southern Isan Cultural Centre that serves as a learning center for the preservation, promotion and continuation of arts and culture of the Southern Isan Region.<sup>6</sup> This center can provide learning opportunities for not only the creative workers but also the audience. It can help the local communities hone their crafts, provide spaces for learning and sharing between communities or artists from different fields, potentially resulting in unique crossover innovations.

By allocating workspaces for craftspeople, creative workers and those working in ICH-related jobs, the local government will see noticeable improvements socially, economically and spatially. Greater social cohesion can be expected when creative individuals can exchange ideas and learn from one another. More income can be generated for those living in rural areas when they are given a chance to work and provide services and products in the city. The opening of new creative spaces can draw more businesses and revitalize key areas.

### *Intervention 3: Build a Creative Coalition*

This intervention is related to Enablers 3 and 4; networks and support infrastructure and partnerships. While strong networks among the local communities are already present, led by Newin Chidchob, launching a coalition supported by the local government that includes representatives for all stakeholders, as well as experts in the fields of creative tourism and creative economy, will allow the community to most effectively leverage the local cultural and creative assets for sustainable development. Each member of the coalition would bring unique expertise, viewpoints and strengths to the table and together they will be more able to effectively coordinate successful creative city initiatives.

In terms of value proposition, there are many options for Buriram to choose from, but a more unified identity needs to be agreed upon. When all stakeholders are brought together to discuss the future and position of the city with the support and perspectives of experts, everyone will have a much clearer understanding of where the city is headed from the perspective of culture and creativity. Development strategies and project plans that result from this coalition will be more precise and they are more likely to be successful and lead to economic growth and a better quality of life for locals, in a shorter amount of time.

## Conclusion

The findings presented in this report are the result of a three-month study, from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. The CCC Framework in the UNESCO and the World Bank position paper “Cities, Culture and Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth,” released in May 2021 has been used as the analytical framework for the study. Secondary data were obtained from creative city-related literature, government policies and documents and online sources, the primary data were collected from ten individuals who represent key stakeholders for creative city development including the government sector, private sector, academic sector and CSOs.

Out of the six enablers in the CCC Framework, Enabler 5 – uniqueness - is the strongest and most prominent for Buriram. But when the local government does not appear to recognize the benefits of creativity and potential contribution to the local economy, it makes it extremely difficult for the culture and creative industries to grow. Additionally, when the strategic plans do not include any support for creative goods and services, there is no budget allocated to the development of the creative fields (Enablers 3, 4). Training opportunities for skills that accommodate the demands of creative and cultural markets are limited (Enabler 2) and being far from urban areas which have better digital connectivity, cultural venues, educational and health services, craftspeople cannot get inspired or further develop their skills (Enablers 1, 6).

Based on the analysis of the cultural and creative industries ecosystem and the enabling environment, three interventions are suggested: 1) Integrate the creative economy into development plans; 2) offer space to create, collaborate and grow; and 3) build a creative coalition

The application of the CCC Framework has been instrumental in assessing Buriram's creative city potential. By using the framework, city authorities and other stakeholders can better understand and leverage the city's unique assets to foster economic growth and improve the quality of life for city inhabitants. Furthermore, fostering effective collaboration between policymakers, cultural institutions and local community stakeholders is crucial, as it can lead to both immediate benefits and long-term resilience.

## Acknowledgements

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## Endnotes

- 1 <https://d.dailynews.co.th/article/638171/>
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# Searching for Traces of Ecological Nodes in the Formation of Resilient *Coastal Areas: Gulf of Saros*

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## Abstract

Building the resilience of a dynamic environment is a difficult task, but coastal areas shaped by natural formations have existing resilience points. This article attempts to find traces of elements that identify points of resilience. The method applied in this effort is the mapping method. In line with this method, it is aimed to investigate the traces of ecology nodes by overlapping the map information of the place with different elements with axonometric graphical expression. The Gulf of Saros, which is on the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea, was selected as the sample area of the study. The geographical environmental values of the Gulf of Saros were examined. As a limitation, the traces of the ecological node points of the Erikli district, which are areas with different environmental values in the Gulf of Saros, were researched, and other settlements were not evaluated within the scope of the study. In this direction, the protection, development and environmental sustainability of the traces of ecological nodes will increase the resilience of the coastal city against disasters that may occur.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Ecological Node Points, Coastal City, Gulf of Saros, Turkey

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## Introduction

Today, coastal city plans are insufficient due to negative climate effects. Resilient urban plans that can prevent the fragile structure of coastal cities and eliminate the dangers that may occur are needed. It is necessary to protect and develop the traces of ecological corridors in the formation of resilient urban planning.

In the formation of resilient city plans, there is a need for resilience management - known as resistant thinking - to manage systems against shocks that may occur (Walker and Salt, 2006; 2012). The idea of resilience is the creation of systems of staying within the existing ability of urban components, including stable and critical thresholds, being resistant to the risks that will occur, and adaptability and stability (Folke et al., 2010). At the same time, the idea of resilience includes understanding the harmony of the social and ecological systems used in the formation of the city plan (Walker and Salt, 2012) in the principle of sustainable working together and the resistance of the different components that make up the whole to work together in times of confusion and turmoil (Holling, 1973;1986).

The original environment that makes up the cities has natural, built and social environment components. The human perspective in nature and social-ecological systems is integrated systems (Berkes and Folke, 1998). In this sense, ecological resilience is directly related to human life, that is, to the sustainable city plan. In the sustainable urban planning, ecological node points that are part of ecological systems, ensuring the sustainability of these phenomena by preserving them are an important step in the formation of resilient urban plans.

Accordingly, in this study, the importance of coastal urban planning in ensuring its resilience in the urban plan was studied by searching for ecological traces. The Saros Gulf Erikli coastal area was determined as the sample area because the Erikli coastal settlement is a natural environment with unique environmental components. This natural environment is the intersection point of forest, sea and land. This intersection point has the ecological values of the rich potential provided by three different combinations (forest, sea and land). It is of vital importance to preserve the ecological values of coastal areas and transfer them to future generations. The total length of the Turkish coasts, including the Black Sea (1719 km), the Marmara Sea (1474 km), the Mediterranean Sea (2025 km) and the Aegean Sea (3265 km) coastal regions, is 8483 km (Simav and Seker, 2013). There are a total of 28 coastal settlements in these regions and the Erikli coastal settlement is an area with ecological values and a coastline on the Aegean Sea.

## Methodology and Approach

The aim of this study is to search for traces of ecological node points in order to understand the environmental welfare and environmental authenticity impacts in coastal areas. The overlapping relationship between the concepts researched and the ecosystem, resilience and components of coastal, marine and forest areas was examined. Traces of ecological components of coastal areas were tried to be read by mapping method. The map information of the different plans was researched by finding them one-on-one in the area: they were provided by photographing the areas and making readings on the maps. The Gulf of Saros was selected as the sample area. The geographical environmental values of the Gulf of Saros were examined. As a limitation, the traces of the ecological node points of the Erikli district, which are areas with different environmental values in the Gulf of Saros, were researched; other settlements were not evaluated within the scope of the thesis. Infor-

mation on sample areas was obtained through field visits. The current situation has been mapped by on-site observation. The indicators of the traces of the ecological node points created by the different plans were determined. In this direction, the necessary suggestions have been presented to protect, develop and ensure the environmental sustainability of the traces of ecological node points.

### **Literature Review: The Relationship Between the Concepts of Resilience and Ecology**

Although the concepts of resilience and ecology are perceived as different concepts, it is seen that they have similar points when the literature researches are examined. The concept of resilience has different dimensions as social, economic, ecological and spatial resilience (Tümer Ergün, 2020). When looking at ecological resilience, it is understood that it is defined as designing margins that can meet minimum losses in crises in order to create the durability of the urban plan, providing the ability to maintain or transform the desired situation and ensuring the sustainability of the new system (Zurlini, et al., 2013; Sharifi and Yamagata, 2018). The concept of sustainability was emphasized in the report of the Brundtland Commission of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 by preserving renewable resources and carrying them to the next generations (UN. Secretary General, 2000). It is emphasized that environmental protection is the main characteristics of sustainable development and states that there is a balanced approach among the environmental components. It is expected to develop strategies for the transportation axes, structures and city boundaries (sea, forest) that make up the urban fabric and to bring the sustainability perspective with it. It is understood that the authors who study sustainability argue that it is necessary to ensure the resilience of the factors that disrupt sustainability (Anderson, 2011).

Although the concept of resilience was first seen as an engineering and ecological term, resilience is seen as adapting to vulnerability and reducing losses (Chelleri, 2011). The concept of sustainability can be interpreted as ensuring the continuity of the existing one by preserving it. However, ecological approaches establish the link between the factors of sustainable development (Dudley et al. 2017). Ecological knowledge and studies are an important part in order of not breaking the durability of natural resources. In this sense, sustainability is not possible without ecology (Inogwabini, 2019). In parallel with these relationships, we can say that the concepts of resilience and ecology complement each other and have similar aspects.

The resilience of the cities of the future in the face of risks is important in the sustainability of the city. The resilient city plan is expected to measure how ecological systems can respond to fractures (Walker and Salt, 2012). It is the basic element of resilient cities to be able to recognize possible disruptions that cause crisis in the city and to be aware of how they can adopt their strategies and cope with these problems.

### ***Resilience Approach into Coastal City Planning***

The concept of city: It is defined as settlements where different civilizations and cultures can be read by where layering, built environment factors and natural environment components meet; the artificial environment dominates nature and a society consisting of different social layers lives in accordance with the laws of urban life (Ertürk and Tosun, 2009). Throughout history, cities have settled in suitable geographies and an urban pattern has

developed. In this direction, cities characterized by geographical effects have been formed. The definition of "coastal city" is formed. Accessibility to water has been important in history as well as today. Civilizations have developed in these settlements, for example: Egypt in the settlement of the Nile River, Mesopotamia in the settlement of the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers (Köroglu, 2018).

Coastal cities have been known as the settlements preferred by people as living spaces throughout history. The potentials provided by water have provided civilization to coastal cities. Coastal cities have socio-cultural and economic values in terms of the development of humanity (Dogan et al., 2005; Glaeser, 2008). It is seen that the unique coastal areas where soil and water meet have always been at the forefront throughout history. People first began to settle in coastal areas and established states and empires there, especially along the seashore or oceans to access water. People migrated from the plains surrounded by mountains to settle by the sea. While coastal cities are the starting point of people's production and trade, they are also places that increase people's curiosity to discover new places (Dogan et al., 2005; Glaeser, 2008). Throughout history, coastal cities, which are accepted as the points where civilizations have developed (Gaber and Özge, 2023), have become their own original and dynamic environments. A good understanding of the environmental compositions that make up the unique and dynamic nature of coastal cities and ensuring sustainability are important for the coastal city and its development (Pirenne, 2012).

Coastal cities are sensitive areas with their unique environmental characteristics. Rapid development on the coast, increasing settlement and unplanned development increase the pressures on the environment in coastal areas. This situation leads to many environmental problems in terms of the physical (natural and built) and social environment. Coastal cities are natural environments with natural, built and social environments (Aslanoglu 1998). These environmental formations contain ecological details. The combination of different ecological points constitutes the ecological node points.

**Node point:** Nodes are strategic places that visitors can enter; they are usually intersections of roads or natural formation clusters. Although theoretically they look like small points as in the plan of a city, they can actually be large areas or quite long linear lines, and even the intersection of ecological phenomena from a bird's eye view of the city. In fact, when the environment is looked at on a national or international level, it can become a holistic intersection point at the borders of the city (Lynch, 1964).

**Intersection points (nodes):** In the urban scale, urban or rural transportation axes intersect with each other at some points and form important junction areas called intersection points. These areas can be the frequently used edges (coastal-sea-forest) that make up the cities or squares as urban-scale meeting areas are examples of these. The intersection of ecological areas constitutes the node points. The node can sometimes be seen spatially seen as a line (Lynch, 1964), for example, the coastline of the city.

**Edges:** Edges are separating elements. They are located in a horizontal plane like roads, but in contrast to the unifying feature of roads, edges are used as separators. Examples of these are the coastal-forest and urban boundary, which are ecological boundaries (Lynch, 1964).

Considering the ecological boundaries of the coastal city, it is seen that the natural environment (forest area, seas), built environment (urban settlement) and social environment factors create them (Kıslalıoğlu, and Berkes, 1993).

Establishing the resilience of ecological nodes in ensuring the sustainability of the city will reduce its vulnerability in the face of crises that the city may experience.

The concept of resilience is found in research areas in all disciplines. Global problems experienced around the world focus on the resilience approach in urban planning so that cities can increase their defense against a wide range of hazards (Sharifi and Yamagata, 2014; 2018).

#### *Traces of Ecological Node Points - Erikli Coastal Settlement-Gulf of Saros/Turkey*

Erikli coastal settlement: It is located 140 km from Edirne city center and 30 km from Kesan's city center. The Erikli settlement is located southwest of Kesan, on the shore of the Aegean Sea, the Gulf of Saros, on the Mecidiye-Erekli coastal road 22.55. The length of the coast is about 3 km. The population of the settlement is seen as 496 in 2022 (Çekmez, 2009); (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Location of Erikli coastal settlement (Google Maps, 2022).

Erikli is a coastal settlement based on agricultural activities. It developed in the 1970s when Kesan Municipality started to design restaurants and hotels in coastal areas. Considering the potentials of the Erikli coastal settlement, the fact that the Gulf of Saros is on a deepening slope, non-rocky coastal area, ecological values in the combination of forest, sea and land, clear water free from algae and harmful marine life, golden sand dunes, as well as a natural shelter for herons, pelicans and flamingos, and the presence of Lake Tuzla prepare a natural and original environment. The Erikli settlement is becoming an attrac-

tive point in the tourism industry with its potentials. In this direction, the area is a coastal settlement that stands out from the coastal settlements of the Gulf of Saros region by rapidly growing with the opening of municipal facilities, secondary residences, hotels and tourism facilities (Kocaman, 2011).

Erikli, the most important coastal settlement of the Gulf of Saros, is seen to have traces of ecological node points in the formation of natural potentials (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Node points of ecological traces of Erikli coastal settlement (www.ilcelerikoyleri.com; improved by Alali).

Ecological traces are sought by drawing the city boundary, transportation axes, coastline and urban texture traces of the Erikli settlement area in the plan plane. Ecological traces: The regions where the city intersects with the green, water and land parts were mapped and the contributions of the ecological values to the urban complex were questioned by overlapping the axonometric graphical expression of the drawings in the plan plane (Skylstad, 2017). The aim of this technique is to determine the traces provided to the city by 3D (axonometric plane) of the existing ecological traces with 2D (plan plane). The forest boundary, urban texture, transportation axes and beach lines were examined in the planned city layers (. Ecological node traces when we look at the forest strip, those that appear as positive ecological node traces, the endemic vegetation that exists on the forest border are the existence of green areas. What appears to be negative are: the fact that urban expanse is based on the forest boundary: the fact that deforestation, uses forest lands as construction land, and the fact that the loss of forest lands causes local climate change. Considering the urban texture and transportation axis analysis, the positive ones in terms

of the traces of the ecological node points of the analysis are the accessibility of the settlement to water. The negative ones are: the expanse of the urban areas to the green area, not using the slope in the construction; material used in the construction of the coastal area; formation of temperature corridors in the urban texture; and transportation axes parallel to the coast. Considering the beach strip analysis, the positive ones in terms of the traces of the ecological nodes of the analysis are the public use of the coastal areas, the presence of the sea area, and the intensity of the use of the coastal area. The negative ones are the cleanliness of the coastal area. When we look at the overlap and intersection of all maps, the traces seen as positive are the endemic vegetation on the forest border, the presence of green areas, the water accessibility of the settlement, the public use of the coastal areas, the presence of the marine area, and the intensity of the use of the coastal area (Figure 3). In order for this study to occur, field studies, on-site observation, and mapping of the layers of urban components were analyzed.

When the observations made in the area, on-site detection and drawings in the axonometric plane are evaluated, it is understood that the Erikli coastal settlement is integrated with the forest area. There are secondary residences in the coastal settlement. Secondary residences close after the end of the tourism season and are not used until the next season. Buildings in this area are exposed to moisture that causes corrosion, spread of fungus and mold, and are also exposed to the effects of temperature fluctuations caused by climate change.

At the ecological junction where the forest, the coast and the residential area meet, the road forms a dividing line between the buildings and the sea, and the beach is narrow and almost absent (Figures 4 and 5). One of the risks the environment faces at this ecological juncture is the cutting down of trees that adversely affect the environment and the construction of new buildings, as it requires the flattening of the soil. The construction of new buildings also results in solid wastes that are environmentally difficult to recycle, as they consume large amounts of water and increase the need for sewage networks, as well as putting pressure on them to form a new road network. As well as the construction of new buildings, it generates the need for logging and soil levelling, which reduces vegetation, and this leads to an increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and local climate change. This leads to environmental problems that negatively affect coasts and vegetation. For this reason, at this stage, environmental sustainability should be ensured by reducing the construction on the coast, protecting the vegetation, and keeping the coast clean from wastes. It is necessary to take correct measures to protect the buildings against corrosion and to use moisture and salinity resistant materials. Tourists and day visitors should be made aware of the importance of a clean environment and minimizing the harmful effects of pollution on the beach and urban area. For this reason, tourists should be made aware of the need to protect the environment, to throw out waste on designated areas and not to leave them on the beach (see table in figure 6).



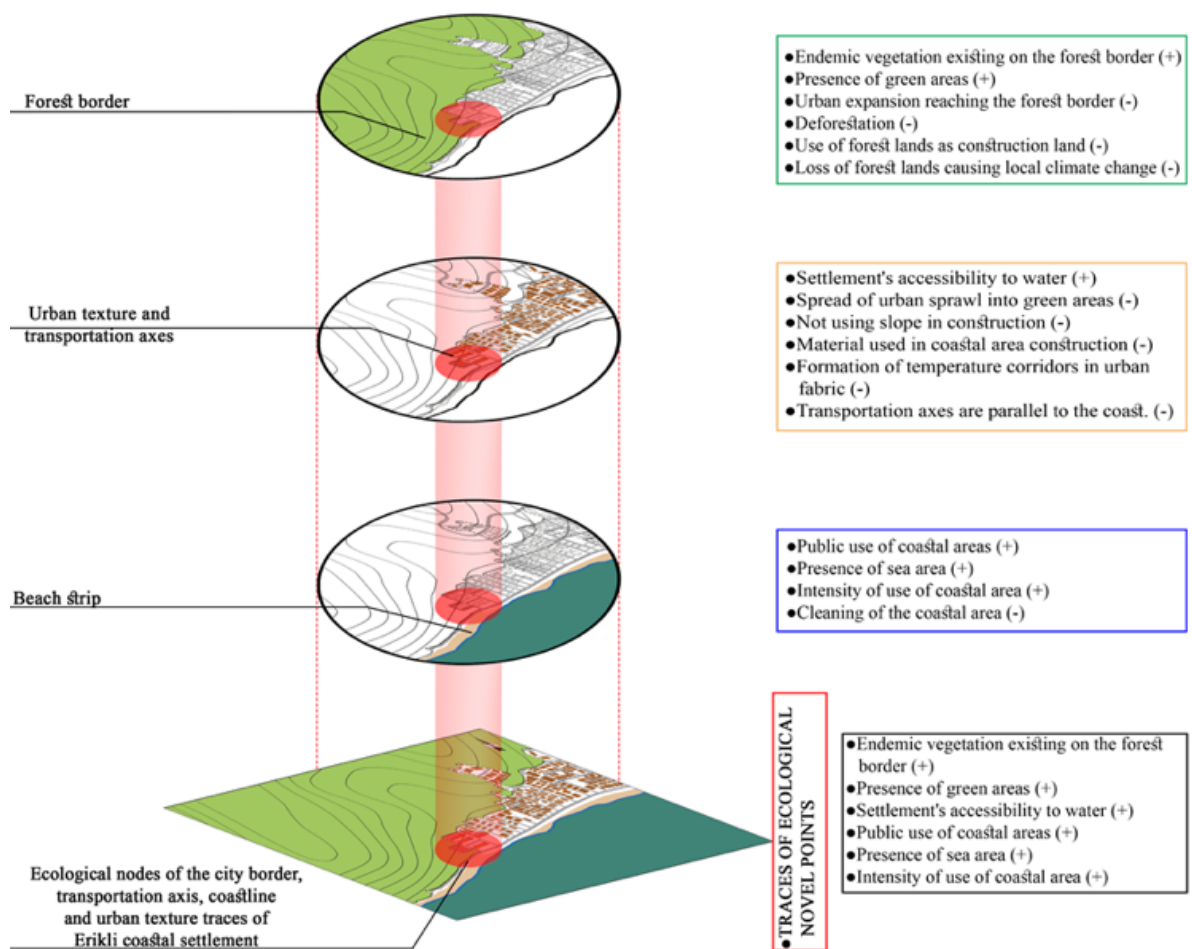


Figure 3. Axonometric drawing of the ecological nodes of the city boundary, transportation axis, coastline and urban pattern traces of the Erikli coastal settlement.

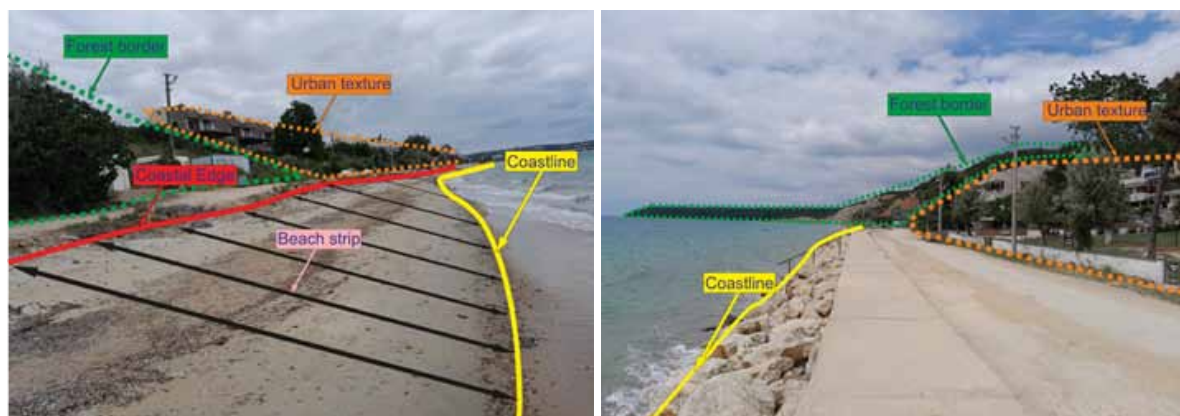


Figure 4. The meeting point of the city border and the forest and coastal border (Alali, 2024).





Figure 5. Wastes left in the area by visitors (Alali, 2024).

Current situation	Potential problems	Suggested solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Availability of original vegetation</li><li>▪ Existence of construction in the coastal area</li><li>▪ Formation of thermal corridors created by climate change</li><li>▪ Unplanned coastal areas used for tourism purposes</li><li>▪ Sea water is pure and clean</li><li>▪ Environmental pollution</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Lack of sewerage network</li><li>▪ Environmental wastes created by new construction</li><li>▪ Unplanned construction</li><li>▪ Deforestation by logging</li><li>▪ Uncontrolled use of environmental plastics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensuring and maintaining the sustainability of the traces of ecological node points</li><li>▪ Prevention of construction in the coastal area</li><li>▪ Vegetation protection</li><li>▪ Location-specific use of construction material</li><li>▪ Reduction of environmental waste</li></ul>

Figure 6. Table of the current state of the ecological node point, problems and proposed solutions.

Evaluation

In this study, the Erikli coastal settlements were examined as a sample area. Traces of the intersection points of the Erikli coastal settlement, the city border, the transportation axis, the coastline, the sea border and the ecological areas with the forest border were searched in the city plan. Inferences in this direction:

- The spread of the coastal settlement towards the forest should be stopped and the forest border should be protected as an ecological corridor.
- Urban texture should be well planned and site-specific construction should be allowed.
- Transportation axes should be developed in a way that will not harm ecological areas.

- Coastal areas should not be exposed to intensive uses and should be included in tourism planning by preserving it as an ecological environmental value.
- Temperature corridors should not be allowed in urban settlements and ecological traces should be protected.

The protection of the traces of ecological areas is an important point in ensuring the sustainability of the urban plan and the formation of a resilient urban texture.

### Conclusion

Coastal areas are important strategic areas today as in history. The potentials and resource richness of coastal areas lead to the formation of dense settlements in these areas. Coastal areas play an important role in the economic, visual, functional and social development of the urban areas. In addition, coastal areas, which have become a point of attraction, cause rapid population growth. Uncontrolled increase in coastal areas damages coastal environmental values, destroys the natural environment, creates water and air pollution, ensures the extinction of plants and animals, and causes climate change problems. This situation emphasizes the necessity of ensuring the protection and sustainability of coastal areas.

The concept of ecology, which emerged as a branch of science that examines the relationships between the environment and its compositions, has begun to be questioned under the title of ecological architecture, including the discipline of architecture, which is known as the art of organizing the environment. Projects that adopt sustainable design approaches taking environmental values into account in coastal area planning are emerging. Ecological coastal urban planning is an integrated planning approach that aims to reduce the environmental footprint, uses renewable energy sources, and respects sustainable development and the environment. Environmental City respects the principles of sustainable development and environmental construction, combining working methods and sustainability of eco-friendly cities, social, environmental, economic and cultural dimensions of the creation of ecologically healthy cities, and creating a comprehensive vision of sustainability. This approach states that it is important to use the ecological node point to improve coastal areas and ensure their sustainability.

The importance of ecological elements in the evaluation of urbanization and the environmental effects of this urbanization in coastal areas is understood. The relationship of ecological environmental components with each other creates an ecological node point. It is important to find the traces of these nodes and to use the sustainability of these traces effectively in the coastal city plan. Because the sustainability of cities ensures the protection of environmental values, it is important to transfer the protected values to the next generations.

The holistic evaluation of the Saros Gulf and the Erikli coastal settlement in the combination of forest, land and sea, the protection of existing environmental values and planning in a sustainable plan vision are important in terms of ensuring the vitality of the area.

The study shows that the search for traces of ecological node points will provide viable options and create opportunities to raise awareness among investors, architects and plan-

ners as well as for those working in academics in the direction of protecting environmental values about the importance of improving and ensuring urban sustainability.

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# Case Study of Essential Character Design Elements to Communicate

*the Identity of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy – Phetchaburi, Thailand*

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## Abstract

Character design plays a vital role in design, particularly, in the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. This specialized design represents the values, culture, people, lifestyles, and products associated with the city. It is essential to consider how a global audience perceives the intended message. To explore this, a thorough analysis was conducted, evaluating the design of 24 characters from the Phetchaburi Mascot and Creative City Logo: International Design Competition 2021. The winning character was selected to promote Phetchaburi for the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy campaign and various tourism initiatives. The primary aim of this research is to identify design configurations that effectively communicate the identity of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, using Phetchaburi as a case study. The resulting design attributes can provide valuable insights for future character design applications and city mascots aspiring to join the UNESCO Creative City Network.

**Keywords:** *Character Design, Phetchaburi Mascot, UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, Identity Essential Elements*

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## Introduction

Being a member of the UNESCO Creative City is regarded as a prestigious privilege that numerous cities aspire to acquire, recognizing the immense advantages it brings to the city itself (Thawipat, 2021). Hence, the design of a mascot character serves as a strategic mechanism to effectively propel Phetchaburi City toward its objectives (Maksawat, 2021). At present, urban areas accommodate over 50% of the global population and account for 75% of its economic activity, encompassing a significant portion of the creative economy. The vital significance of cities in advancing sustainable development with a people-centered approach and engaging local communities and stakeholders is prominently acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda encompasses 17 goals, one of which is dedicated to a specific objective of ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ (The Global Goals, 2023). Cities aspiring to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network must demonstrate their commitment and capacity through a comprehensive application. The Network encompasses 7 creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music. The organization requires member cities to develop a thematic focus to develop their cultural identity. Member cities are dedicated to achieving the goals outlined in the UCCN Mission Statement and contribute to the local implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as UNESCO partners (UNESCO, 2023). Character design is an undeniable factor in the market share and global proliferation of brand identity. The animation, film, comic, merchandise, and gaming fields all rely on a solid character design. According to Professor Eunkyoo Lee of marketing and associate dean for global initiatives at the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University measuring the Value of Franchise Film Characters using the screen times determined the amount of money each Marvel character generates from each Marvel movie. Some of the characters like Iron Man are worth almost 1 billion USD (Lee, 2018). Japanese companies are renowned for their exceptional ability to effectively commercialize character designs in the mainstream market. A prime example is the ownership of the Gundam franchise by Bandai Namco Holdings. By the year 2000, this franchise had achieved an astonishing retail sales revenue of over \$5 billion, merely one year after its introduction to the US market (The Expositor, 2000). Bandai has not limited its collaborations to popular Japanese characters like Doraemon by Fujiko F. Fujio (Shiraishi, 1997), Godzilla by Akira Watanabe and Teizo Toshimitsu (Ryfle, 1998), Mazinger Z by Go Nagai (Kenichi, 2024), and Macross by Studio Nue (O’Mara, 2020) but Bandai has also successfully partnered with Western companies such as Disney to secure licensing rights for globally recognized characters such as Star Wars. These characters have transcended the confines of comic books and films, permeating various facets of consumer products such as books, toys, stationery, fashion items, kitchenware, and gaming platforms.

How can the mascot character design for the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy be different from others? This analysis will provide insight into the character design process utilized in the UNESCO competition, comparing the results to those utilized by the commercial animation industry.



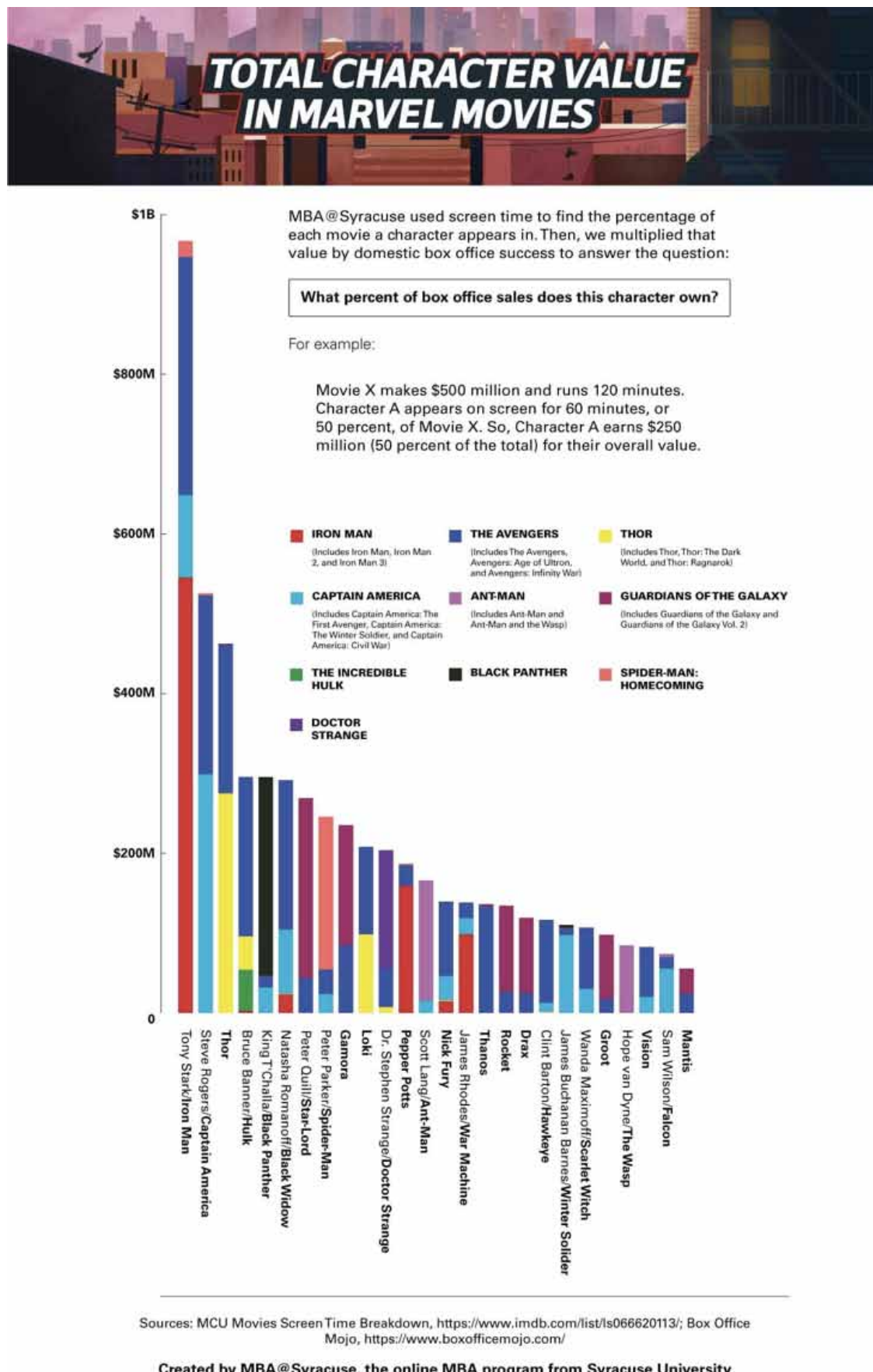


Figure 1. Total Character Value in Marvel Movies. Source: <https://onlinegrad.syracuse.edu/blog/marvel-character-values>.





Figure 2. The creators of Doraemon and multiple license applications, such as films, toys, and lifestyle products.



Figure 3. Godzilla, Mazinger Z and Macross Characters in different variations and applications.

## Methodology

1. Review character design principles, and related literature to summarize essential character design attributes.
2. Collect data on the character designs from the Phetchaburi Mascot and Creative City Logo: International Design Competition 2021 and conduct in-depth interviews with stakeholders.
3. Gather all mascot character designs from participants, and extract silhouette outline and color scheme for visual analysis.
4. Compare analysis of mascot character designs with essential character design attributes.
5. Conclude with results of essential character design elements that communicate the identity of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

## Review of Related Literature

Character Design, which originates from drawing, takes inspiration from real life to effectively convey messages. It is not an exaggeration to state that this form of expression is almost as old as human civilization itself. The iconography of game animals inscribed by our ancestors in ancient caves has been radio-carbon dated to be 32,410 years old. The Chauvet Cave, discovered in December 1994, stands as one of the earliest known sites of prehistoric cave paintings. Its captivating imagery depicts grazing, running, and resting animals, such as wild horses, bison, mammoths, bears, panthers, owls, deer, aurochs, woolly rhinoceroses, and wild goats. Occasionally, human figures, both male and female, are also present.

This creative expression and its evolution paved the way for symbolic languages and arts in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egyptian culture (Stokstad, Marilyn, 2014). Throughout human history, numerous renowned characters have been utilized for diverse purposes. In the modern era, character design has developed into animated visuals for communication and recreation, commonly referred to as animation. The forms vary across mediums, including digital media, printed materials, television broadcasting, and online platforms. Regardless of the format, characters remain the essential conduits for conveying narratives. This research endeavor focuses on exploring the advantages of character design and its diverse elements.

Prior to initiating the character design process, it is essential to address some important questions: What role does the character play in the story? It could be a hero, heroine, villain, comic foil, sidekick, or supporting character. What traits define the character's personality? These could include optimistic, dysfunctional, passionate, loving, and courageous. Are there any narrative elements that influence the design? For instance, this notion is illustrated in Dumbo's prominent ears, Pinocchio's elongating nose, and Shrek's unconventional appearance. Gathering this information aids in commencing the design formulation (Bancroft, 2006). Reality Is Overrated takes inspiration from the real world when crafting animated characters and narratives, but modifies and customizes them instead of merely imitating them. Reality serves as a reference in illustration and animation, which allows for enhancement and refinement. It is important for animated characters to possess plausibility rather than realism. In animation, the principles governing gravity and physics can be altered. A character has the ability to float effortlessly in a state of emotional euphoria

or transform its physical form, color, or size to reflect its changing mood. Visual exaggeration, caricature, and stylized actions hold greater intrigue than faithfully reproducing natural movements.

This form of streamlined symbolism reduces complex ideas into easily understood icons, making seemingly simple forms into dense vehicles for larger ideas. This process has the additional benefit of sparking cultural curiosity. As an example, a child watching the modern Thor films becomes interested in Norse mythology and begins a journey of self-guided research through the history and geography of the region. Thus, the fictional stories designed for entertainment overlap with the scientific, political, and economic systems in the real world. It encourages engaging with ideas that captivate and fascinate, rather than producing narratives that conform to the expectations of studios or audiences. Authentic animation arises from artists who infuse their creations with passion and impulsive creativity (Beiman, 2007).

The primary aspect of character creation: The primary rationale behind our fascination with a character stems from our inherent curiosity regarding individuals. Scientific findings have long confirmed that humans possess an innate inquisitiveness. Without this curiosity, the realms of scientific progress, Shakespearean literature, and even the discovery of new territories would not have thrived. This becomes even more apparent when considering characters such as elves, individuals endowed with extraordinary abilities, historical figures, or any character that has captured your attention. Most character designers and storytellers adeptly utilize this phenomenon (Tillman, 2019).

Besides the storyline, character creation has also emerged as a fundamental element of animation. Character development encompasses the entire portrayal, including attire, accessories, and weaponry, all of which are typically influenced by cultural aspects, such as indigenous garments and the warrior's choice of sword, symbolizing the character's status (Mohd Khalis and Mustaffa, 2017). According to Liang, Hui-E, and Cui, Rong-Rong, traditional attire plays a crucial role in the evolution of contemporary clothing culture, merging practicality and visual appeal. The research focused on the design of Chinese traditional costumes, highlighting their significance (Liang et al, 2006). These have the potential to generate increased economic value through merchandise sales, fashion industry collaborations, and licensing agreements. Furthermore, character design can deeply communicate about culture, way of living, and social value to the new generation, raise awareness, and attract admirers of such soft power.

As per a visual game character design study in 2017, the main concept behind character design is to merge aspects of Malay culture with a modern approach (Mohd Khalis and Mustaffa, 2017). This can serve as a means to communicate anti-corruption principles to young individuals, particularly those belonging to Generation Z. Psychologically speaking, it encompasses a character's mindset based on their individuality, the methods employed to establish typical portrayals and patterns of characters that possess tangible attributes capable of symbolizing Malay culture, and display social standing denoting anti-corruption conduct, such as integrity, diligence, and accountability (Eva, et al., 2023). This game has the potential to positively influence society uniquely.

These character design effects can contribute to individuals and society by enhancing economic value and improving quality of life. Besides their economic and social significance, character design involves creating a concept for a character's personality traits, behaviors, and physical attributes before bringing it to life (Coursera, 2023). The aesthetic aspect of character design holds significant importance. Deguzman proposed a classification of key elements in good character design, categorizing them into three groups: silhouette, color palette, and exaggeration (Deguzman, 2021). This classification aligns with the 10 principles of character design outlined by Melling, which encompass silhouettes and exaggeration along with additional details such as shapes, lines, proportions, scale, shading, texture, and color (Melling, 2019). The combination between proportions and exaggeration can be significant (Williams, 1989). Furthermore, the inclusion of expressive qualities to narrate a story is emphasized as an integral component. This notion is supported by Shah, who acknowledges the role of expression and storytelling in endowing characters with uniqueness, vitality, and the ability to convey specific objectives within the realm of character design (Shah, 2021).

Veteran animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston popularized several key design components in their book "Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life." This work has had a lasting impact on the industry and its principles of animation have become an important tool for all aspects of design. One such term used in the book is appeal. This notion refers to a subjective quality that enhances the likability or interest of a character among the audience. Because the public's taste is ever-changing, there is no definitive formula for creating an appealing character. However, certain factors have been observed to contribute to appeal, including symmetry, large eyes, soft features, and vibrant colors. Appeal in cartoon characters can be equated to the charisma in actors. An appealing character does not necessarily have to be sympathetic; even villains or monsters can possess appeal. What matters most is that the viewer perceives the character as genuine and captivating. Various techniques contribute to enhancing a character's connection with the audience. For likable characters, a symmetrical or baby-like face tends to be effective. Conversely, a complex or difficult-to-read facial expression may diminish the character's appeal or the overall impact of the pose and character design. (Thomas and Johnston, 1981). The appearance and essence of the character also must be taken into account, ensuring harmony with the character's inherent qualities in a game or animation. Archetypes exist for various character types depending on the genre of the media. It remains crucial to possess a strong conceptualization and comprehensive comprehension of fundamental artistic principles (Levanier, 2021).

Following an analysis of design attributes on character design, drawing from key components of effective character representation and principles applied in diverse media contexts such as advertising, animation, illustration, and film, the findings of this investigation can be distilled into three discerning criteria, as described below.

### Character Uniqueness

Because the market is swarming with competition, an effective design must possess distinctive unique traits that make it stand out from the crowd. Ideally, these details also contain relevant depth and meaning, deepening the character's cultural value. Thainess is the objective to be perceived by the audience. The color palette sets mood and tone of the character, while the scale is the comparison that makes the viewer understand the relationship of the character and its environment. If colors and details are removed, and the character outline is filled with solid black, an effective character design can remain recognizable. This means the shape, line, size, and scale have to be working together to make the character unique. The term silhouette refers to the outline of the overall form. Designers often begin with this method, refraining from detailing, but concentrating on the solid black shape before adding refinements. The silhouette is an effective way to determine how well the design can be interpreted visually and recognized by the viewer, even at a glance. The ability to project a distinct form based solely on their silhouette is considered indicative of good character design.

### Telling a Story

The character's story, meaning, personality, and objective have to be aligned with the concept of character design. In order to provide characters with a clear motivation, it is essential to construct a comprehensive backstory encompassing various aspects such as their origin, the circumstances of their position in the story, significant events within the narrative, their place of residence, occupation, and some personality traits.

### Exaggeration

Exaggeration effectively utilizes distinct characteristics to deliberately elicit emotional and psychological responses from the audience towards a particular character. Employing Exaggeration is intimately linked to character expression: exaggeration breathes life into characters, engaging the audience. The researchers converted each character design from the contest from full-color details to silhouettes and color themes for reviews based on the three criteria described above.

### Design Comparisons Analysis

Data collection involved gathering information on Character designs from the Phetchaburi Mascot and Creative City Logo: International Design Competition in 2021. Subsequently, the silhouette outline and color scheme of the Character designs were extracted for visual analysis. This study focuses on comparing the mascot character designs based on their essential design attributes.



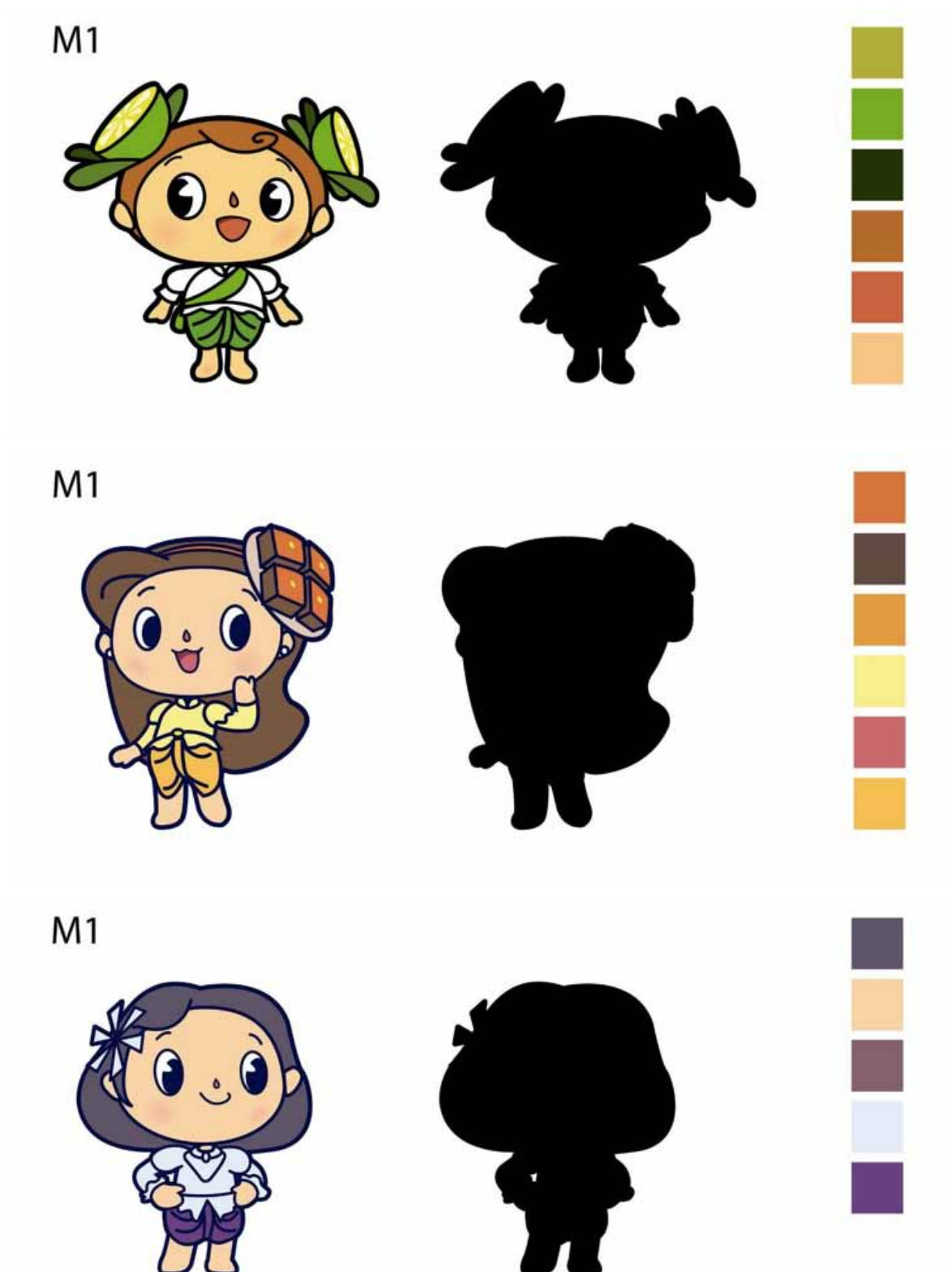


Figure 4. Design Participant Character: M1 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color schemes.

### M1 Design

The designer created a set of three female characters. Each can be recognized from the shapes, lines, and colors very easily. The hairstyles can tell the story of the character's objectives, which is to represent sour, sweet, and salty. Moreover, traditional Thai costumes can also be recognized. The exaggeration of the head size makes the characters easier to identify. Designing three characters, instead of just one, makes it harder to utilize and remember. The color palette could be simplified.

### M2

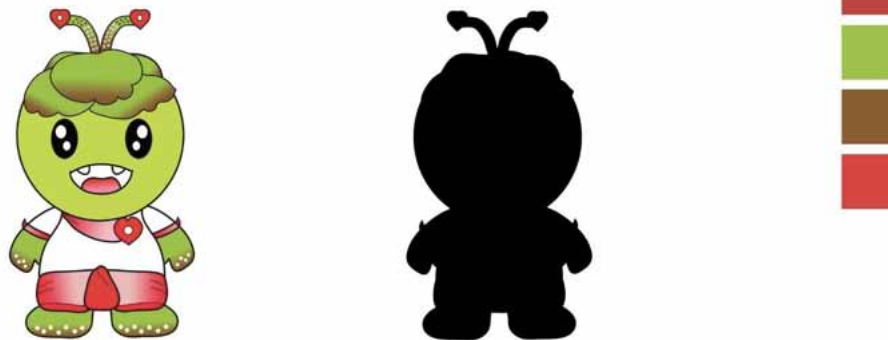


Figure 5. Design Participant Character: M2 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M2 Design

The designer tried to integrate the Toddy Palm fruit shape into the character, as well as traditional Thai costumes. Unfortunately, it can be recognized as some kind of alien monster. The Thai color palette stands out quite prominently with complementary colors. The character's proportions are quite typical for a body, without much exaggeration.

### M3



Figure 6. Design Participant Character: M3 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M3 Design

The character design is easy to recognize with the body representing a palm tree, as well as its accessory properties. Unfortunately, the character does not quite communicate Thainess or the Phetchaburi key messages. The color palette and exaggeration make the character more unique and easier to remember.



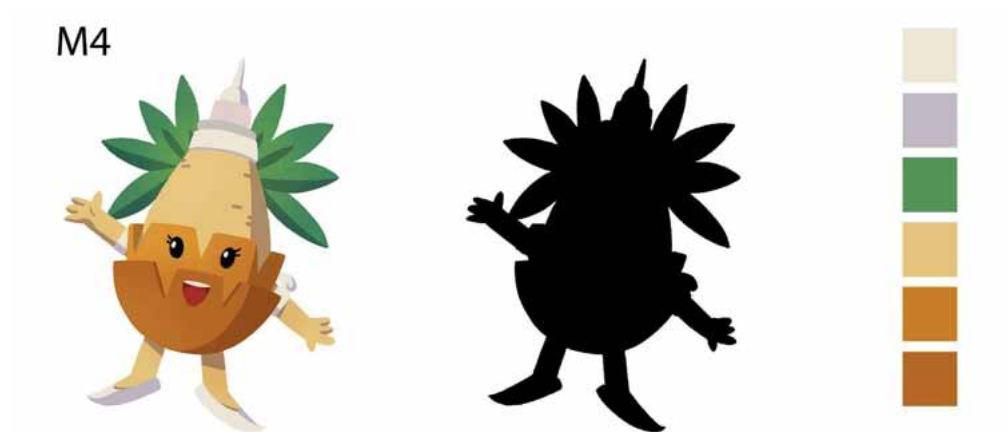


Figure 7. Design Participant Character: M4 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M4 Design

This character design effectively employs shape, color, and scale. The overall shape of the character is easily identifiable. However, the intended meaning and narrative purpose are unclear, and it does not effectively convey Thainess. The character's body lacks clarity in representing either a tree or a pagoda. Additionally, the colors in the character design can be too heterogeneous.



Figure 8. Design Participant Character: M5 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M5 Design

This character functions effectively within the overall design elements. The shape, colors, and scale harmonize well together, despite the slight excess of colors used. The essence of Thainess is seamlessly integrated into both the facial features and the costume. However, the head is somewhat indistinct, making it challenging to discern whether it represents a toddy palm fruit or a pagoda.

M6

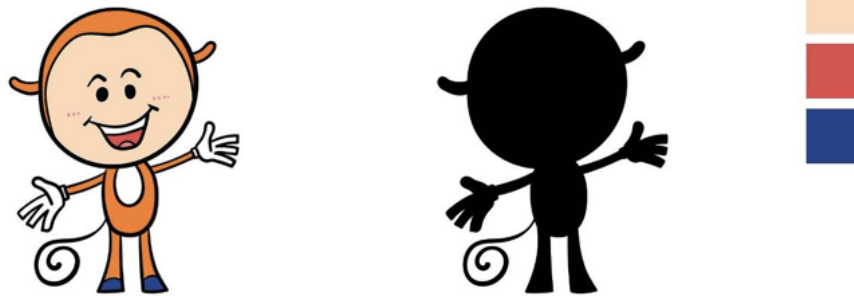


Figure 9. Design Participant Character: M6 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M6 Design

This character works well in terms of general character design standards. It is easily recognizable, utilizing shape, color, and scale effectively. However, the character fails to convey the essence of Thainess or reflect the creative city of gastronomy that is Phetchaburi.

M7

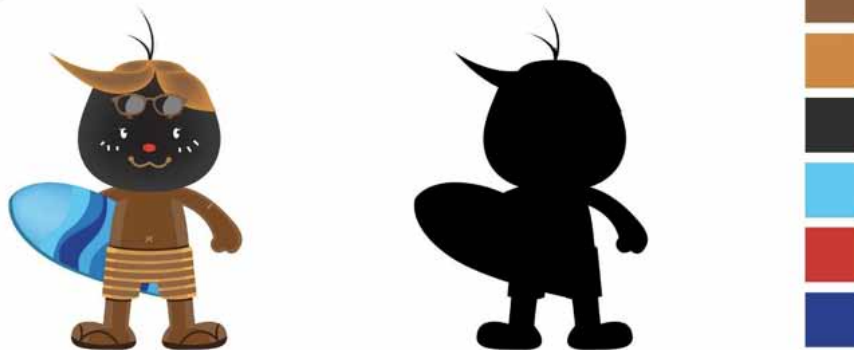


Figure 10. Design Participant Character: M7 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M7 Design

This design is easily recognizable as a beach boy due to the strong costume and surfboard accessory of the character. However, the attempt to incorporate a toddy palm fruit as the character's head falls short in effectively conveying the story of Phetchaburi, or capturing the essence of Thainess in the design. The small eyes can make emotions difficult to perceive. Additionally, there is an excessive use of colors in the character, which detracts from its overall appeal.



Figure 11. Design Participant Character: M8 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M8 Design

The character design is easily recognizable, as the designer has successfully incorporated multiple iconic shapes of Phetchaburi tourist attractions into the crown of the character. Additionally, the cloth has been designed to resemble ocean waves. However, the variety of colors being used diminishes the uniqueness of the design.

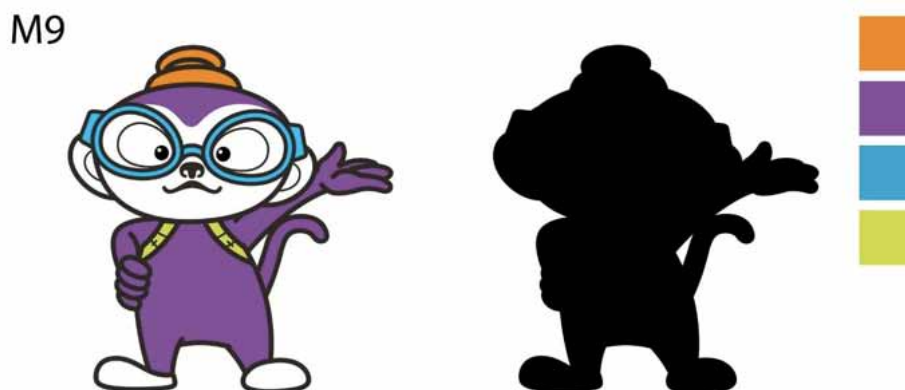


Figure 12. Design Participant Character: M9 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M9 Design

The character design creates the shape of an easily recognizable monkey. The facial expressions and gestures effectively convey mood and personality. However, there is no connection between the design and the objective concept or the story of Phetchaburi, the creative city of gastronomy.



Figure 13. Design Participant Character: M10 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M10 Design

The character itself is unique and intriguing. The designer endeavors to employ shape, color, and scale to effectively convey the story and objectives. The design functions admirably in capturing the essence of gastronomy, although it lacks a connection to Phetchaburi, as well as Thailand.

### M11

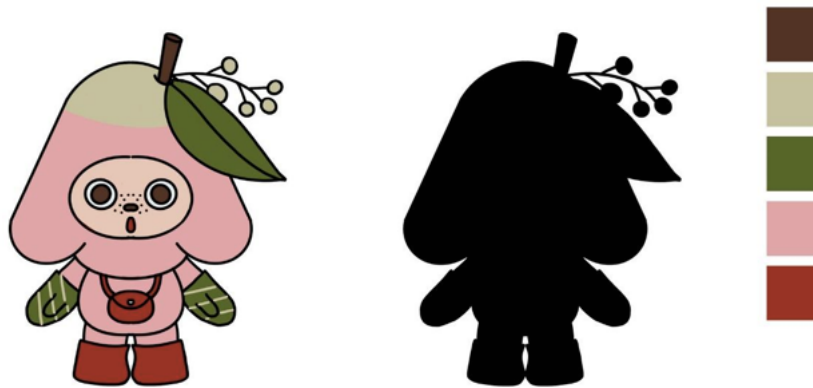


Figure 14. Design Participant Character: M11 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M11 Design

The designer utilizes shape, color, and scale to effectively convey several ideas through the character head of Rose Mango and the cooking glove, thus communicating the concept of gastronomy. However, in order to establish a stronger connection with Thainess and Phetchaburi, additional elements are required for proper recognition.

### M12



Figure 15. Design Participant Character: M12 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M12 Design

The characters have a strong sense of identity, shape, color, and scale working effectively together. The color scheme is minimal and effective. The characters look like babies with toddy palm fruit helmets. But they could communicate the identity of Phetchaburi or Thainess more effectively.

## M13

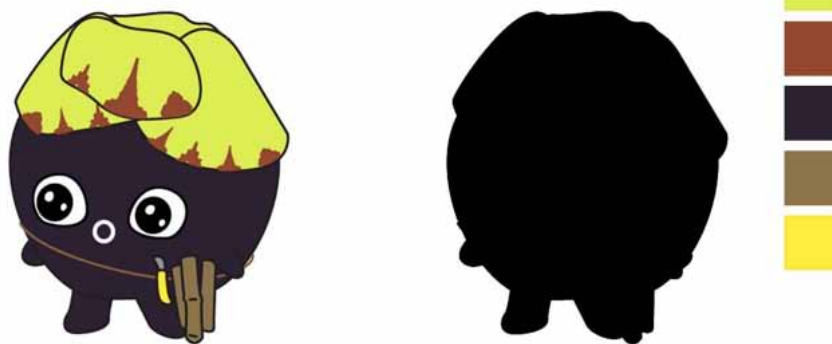


Figure 16. Design Participant Character: M13 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

## M13 Design

This design exemplifies an evident utilization of exaggeration in the toddy palm fruit's body head, facilitating its recognition as illustrated in the silhouette outline. Additionally, the designer incorporates the shapes of pagodas, palaces, and iconic landmarks as integral components of the character's hat.

## M14

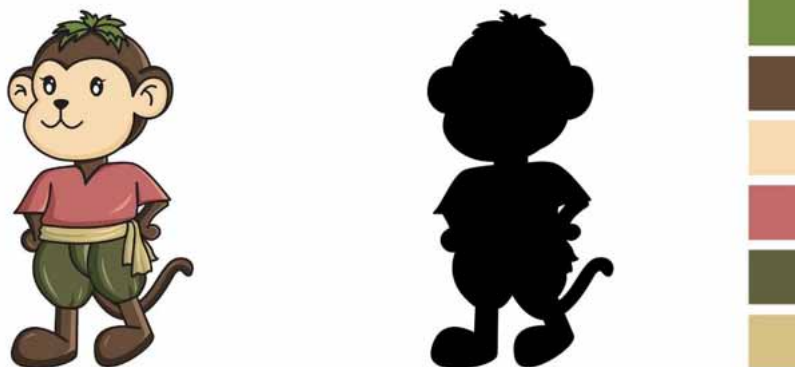


Figure 17. Design Participant Character: M14 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

## M14 Design

This particular monkey character appears relatively generic, featuring a traditional Thai costume. It serves to establish a connection with Thailand, albeit not specifically with Phetchaburi or its gastronomy. The character and details lack elements of exaggeration.

## M15

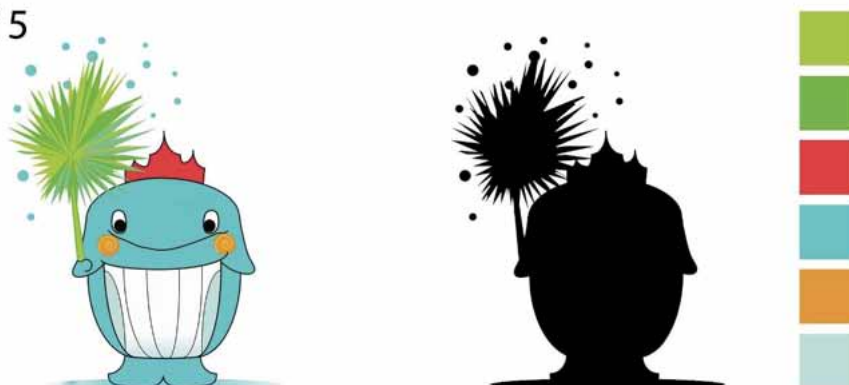


Figure 18. Design Participant Character: M15 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M15 Design

The design features a whale as the central character, holding a palm tree and wearing a crown in the silhouette of the Kao Wang Palace. This could pose a challenge for international tourists in comprehending the narrative behind the design; the excessive use of colors in the character could also be an issue.

### M16

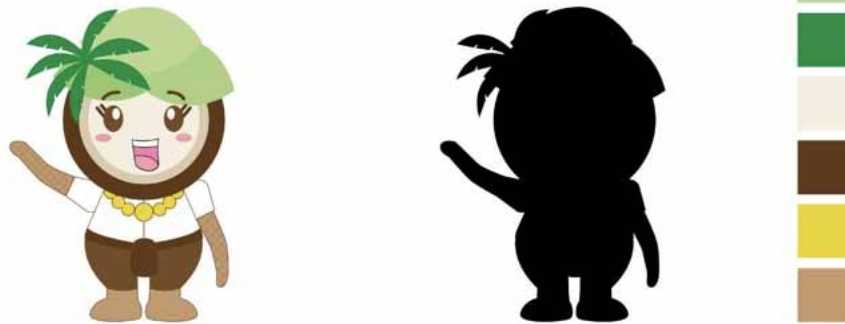


Figure 19. Design Participant Character: M16 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M16 Design

The designer utilizes the toddy palm fruit as the central concept for the character. Each component represents different parts of the tree, including a leaf on the head, the face, and the hands. The body seamlessly incorporates Thai traditional costumes. While it can be recognized as a character from Thailand, it would benefit from further development to establish a connection with gastronomy. The color palette employed is slightly excessive.

### M17

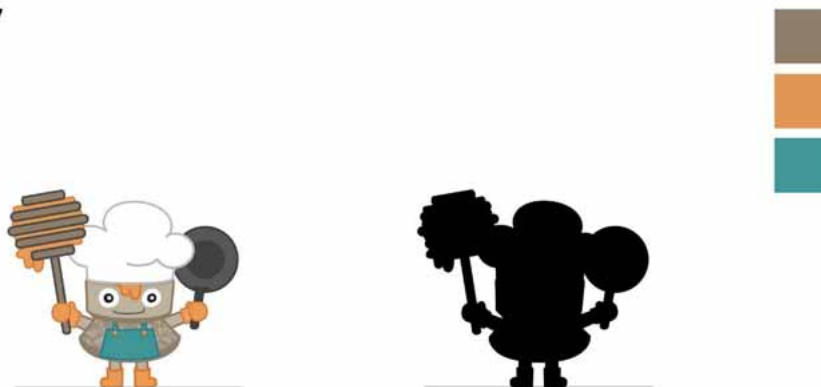


Figure 20. Design Participant Character: M17 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M17 Design

This is a meticulously designed character with a strong form that is intricately connected to gastronomy, making it easily recognizable. It exhibits an intriguing implementation of scale, color theme, and exaggeration. There is an absence of Thainess, which would serve as the connecting link between the character's purpose and narrative, effectively promoting Phetchaburi as a city renowned for its creative gastronomy.

## M18



Figure 21. Design Participant Character: M18 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M18 Design

This character is easily identifiable, depicted as an elephant holding a large spoon. The animal is adorned in an Asian-style costume, although not significantly associated with Thailand or Phetchaburi in particular.

## M19



Figure 22. Design Participant Character: M19 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M19 Design

This character design incorporates a recognizable shape derived from the Ramayana Story. However, the details are not limited to Phetchaburi province; there are other provinces that exhibit a stronger connection to this character. From a design perspective, the creator integrated various elements to align with the intended concept, although they could establish a more distinct uniqueness.

## M20



Figure 23. Design Participant Character: M20 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.



### M20 Design

This character is easily recognizable as a bear surrounded by cakes, candies, and various types of food. However, the connection to Thainess, Phetchaburi, and gastronomy is quite limited. Additionally, the unevenness of the details, in particular the eyes, can challenge the connection with the viewer.

### M21



Figure 24. Design Participant Character: M21 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M21 Design

The character attempts to establish a connection with the local custard cake of Phetchaburi; however, the shape can appear confusing. It is challenging to discern its nature and how it relates to Thainess or Phetchaburi. Additionally, the character's mood and actions do not align with the story and its objectives.

### M22



Figure 25. Design Participant Character: M22 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

### M22 Design

This character design is based on the shape of a toddy palm fruit, adorned with a traditional Thai costume and accompanied by traditional Thai kitchenware. It effectively establishes a connection between the concept, objective, and distinctive design, despite the slight overuse of colors and details.



Figure 26. Design Participant Character: M23 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M23 Design

This character is based on the traditional toddy palm cupcake as its head. It displays a strong personality and potential for emotional connection. However, it is challenging to discern its clear identity and it lacks a connection to Thainess and the objectives of the design. Additionally, an excessive number of colors have been employed for the character.



Figure 27. Design Participant Character: M24 is depicted in two-dimensional color, silhouette, and color scheme.

#### M24 Design

This character possesses a distinctive shape, readily recognizable. The designer endeavors to seamlessly incorporate it into the upper portion of the character's head. However, the design and colors can struggle to establish cohesive links between the concept, objectives, and Thainess.

## Overall Score Results

Design	Character Uniqueness					Telling a story			Exaggeration		Score
	Recognize	Shape	Thainess	Color	Scale	Meaning	Personality	Objective	Character	Story	
M1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
M2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	7
M3	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
M4	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	6
M5	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
M6	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	6
M7	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	6
M8	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
M9	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	7
M10	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8
M11	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	7
M12	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8
M13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	8
M14	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5
M15	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
M16	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	6
M17	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	7
M18	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8
M19	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	9
M20	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
M21	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
M22	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
M23	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	6
M24	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	7
Design Score	24 (100%)	23 (96%)	8 (33%)	12 (50%)	20 (83%)	23 (96%)	22 (92%)	15 (62%)	21 (87%)	7 (29%)	

Figure 28. Results of Character Design Comparison Scores.

## Results Summary

The table provides a comprehensive evaluation of 24 designs, from M1 to M24, based on various design aspects. Criteria such as character uniqueness, telling a story, exaggeration, and use of colors were assessed. Notably, designs M1, M5, M8, M19, and M22 achieved the highest score of 9, showcasing exceptional performance across multiple categories. In contrast, designs M14 and M21 received lower scores of 5 and 6, respectively.

When looking into the details of each design criteria:

### Character Uniqueness

In terms of recognizability, all designs achieved 100%; for shape, they reached 96%: regarding these two sub-criteria, every design performs very efficiently. When it comes to Thainess, which involves some Thai background and traditional visual elements, the scores drop to 33%, while color schemes reach 50%, which requires some research with a solid background in art and design. Finally, the use of scale scores 83%.

### Telling a story

This part requires some research on several aspects: objective, city history, and people's lives. The meaning sub-criteria scored 96%, whereas the personality criteria reached 92%, which is considered very high. However, regarding the objective, only 62% of the design pays attention to this critical part.

### Exaggeration

This category has two sub-criteria: personality and story. The participants score fairly well concerning capturing a personality, with a total score of 87%. Conversely, many designers struggle to incorporate a narrative component, which scores lower at 29%.

Overall, the evaluated designs demonstrate diverse levels of proficiency in meeting the principles of character design and visual uniqueness, But the key lies in deeper research and story connection.



Figure 29. Left, 3D printed model and color rendering, a design winner. Right, Life-size 3D color model, a design winner.

### Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, the following conclusions can be suggested to enhance character design for the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. The essential key configurations of character design to communicate the identity of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy consist of in-depth research of a unique story that ties into the character shapes and lines, proportions, and the application of exaggeration, expressions, and color schemes for their local representation.



Figure 31. The working mascot suit of the character design winner.

A character that possesses a narrative reflecting their local community, culture, heritage, or aspirations can strengthen its uniqueness. Effective and coherent utilization of shapes and lines can evoke emotions and movement, with sharp angles conveying aggression and rounded shapes suggesting approachability. The combination of sharp angles and smooth rounded shapes with Thai art patterns can generate a strong personality; utilizing them in character design can effectively communicate the notion of Thainess.

Silhouettes play a crucial role in the recognizability of the character, as they are the initial visual impression, enabling characters to stand out against backgrounds. If uniquely recognizable, it can convey the key message. Proportions and exaggeration contribute to realism and fantasy; grounding characters or emphasizing their cartoonish or fantastical nature. Facial expressions and body language convey emotions, fostering a strong viewer connection. The scale provides depth and perspective, where larger characters command power and significance. The color selection establishes mood and tone, as well as a connection to the location's background. By adhering to the above principles, character designers can create visually appealing, memorable, and captivating characters to communicate about a unique city. Besides, mascot character designs can possess additional functionalities, including a comfortable set of proportions that reflect the human body, articulations that enable natural movement, and expressive details embedded in the design, such as details, accessories, and patterns. Furthermore, the costumes based on the designs need to remain lightweight, durable, and easy to maintain.

## Recommendations

For future research in character design for the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, consider the following:

### Cultural Exploration:

Exploring local culture and gastronomic heritage can add unique elements to character designs.

### User Perception:

Gathering feedback to understand how characters are perceived can enhance the viewer's engagement.

### Cross-cultural Influences:

Referring to characters from Japanese manga or Chinese kung fu graphic novels can strengthen the character's cultural appeal.

### Emotional Impact:

Analyzing design elements that evoke emotional responses can foster meaningful connections with the audience.

### Storytelling Techniques:

Exploring different techniques to enhance narrative aspects can create an immersive experience. Using new technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), or artificial intelligence (AI) can engage and enhance the audience's perception.

### Artificial Intelligence (AI) as Research and Design Tools:

Advancements in AI technology, such as Chat GPT and Generative AI Models, enable researchers to gather and analyze data in unprecedented ways. AI's ability to automate routine tasks such as image editing, data visualization, and layout design is seen as a positive development. It frees artists and designers to focus more on the creative aspects of their work. Additionally, AI can act as a creative catalyst, sparking unique ideas and helping explore new design possibilities (Binson, 2023)

Research in these areas can improve the visual representation and communication of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy's gastronomic identity.

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# From Textile Art to Sound: *The Bhusa* Composition

*Inspired by Kachama Perez and Lanna Music*

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## Abstract

This paper presents the artistic research on the creation of a music composition *The Bhusa* for woodwind and piano chamber ensemble as inspired by the contemporary weaving artist Kachama Perez and Lanna traditional music. Lanna is a term defining the earlier independent kingdom during the 13th to 18th centuries. Its center consists of today's northern part of Thailand, and its cultural heritage is unique. Nowadays, the heritage of Lanna textiles is better preserved and collected, but Kachama Perez is one of the prominent artists who preserves the textile art by infusing the local textile techniques with new ideas and forms. *The Bhusa* is developed around the artwork and life of Kachama Perez and uses the sound of Pi Jum, the traditional Lanna woodwind instrument, as a model. Impressionism and the Pi Jum sound style are studied and utilized to create the composition.

**Keywords:** Lanna, Woodwind, Chamber Music, Pi Jum, Textile Art, Kachama Perez, Thailand

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## Introduction

Lanna is a term which defines the earlier independent kingdom during the 13th to 18th centuries. The center consists of today's northern part of Thailand. The Lanna Kingdom once spanned from the south of China, eastern Myanmar, and western Laos down to Thailand's Lamphun province. The northern region of Thailand is believed to have been the habitat of various human races since prehistoric times. It consists of mountainous terrain and narrow plains alternating on both sides of the main river, suitable for settlements. The Thai-Laos people, particularly the Yonok or Tai Yuan people, who believed in choosing the proper point of compass and the right natural energy for settlement, were able to establish a community there even though the plains are not as wide as the central Thai region. This belief was rooted in Chinese influence, which continued well into the King Mangrai period. King Mangrai was the first king of the Lanna Kingdom who established Chiang Mai as its capital in the early 1200s AD. King Magrai's successors ruled Lanna for a long time until, for a period of about 200 years after the mid-16th century, it became Burma's tributary state. Lanna Kingdom later merged into Siam in the late 18th century until now.

With its own long history, Thailand's northern region therefore has its own customs, traditions and beliefs. Their way of living, such as architecture, food, or clothes are unique and different than that of the central Thailand. As well as other necessities of life, clothes and fabrics are parts of their daily life from birth to death, from weaving the first diaper of a baby to the last shroud. The craft of cloth-weaving is therefore inseparable from the lives of the Lanna people. Cloth-weaving ability is an important quality of women in communities along the Mekong River, including Lanna people. The most important clothes in Lanna people's life are clothes that are used for important events such as marriage ceremony and monks' robes, and other religious purposes. These clothes should be made by hand to honor each important event in life.

There are several ethnic groups that settled in the Lanna Kingdom: the Tai-Yuan ethnic group is the largest race who settled in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang provinces, while the second largest is the Tai Lue, who lived in Chiang Rai, Phayao, and Nan. For women, wearing the traditional wrapped skirt, or "Sinh," with the traditional top, or "Sabai," is prevalent in almost every ethnic group of northerners, but the style of the Sinh is varied by each group. The evidence of Lanna people wearing Sinh and Sabai was found in many northern Thai temple frescoes, such as in Wiharn Lai Kham, Wat Phra Singh (Phra Singh Temple) in Chiang Mai, or Wat Buak Krok Luang (Buak Krok Luang Temple), Chiang Mai. In addition to creating wearable clothes, cloth-weaving is also done for other purposes, such as scripture wrapping and creating bed sheets. Other techniques, such as quilting and knitting, are also used to create quilted blankets and knitted "Tung" or flags for various traditions.

There are various hill tribes that are scattered around the different mountain areas in the Lanna region. One of the hill tribes such as the Karen uses a backstrap loom, an ancient technique found in many countries, for hand weaving. Hill tribes' clothes are often adorned with silver accessories, beads, seeds or flowers. Their main materials are cotton and other natural fibers such as hemp, dyed with colors from leaves, fruits and flowers to give its base color. All clothes are hand-made, and are made exquisitely through their skill of embroidery. Clothes that are woven neatly and beautifully is an indicator of a woman's ability to take care of her family. Hill tribe women must be able to weave and embroider beautifully and neatly, otherwise no men would want them as their wives.

For a long period after the Lanna kingdom merged onto Siam, the traditional Lanna textile art were not much mentioned and preserved. Much of the traditional textile art was abandoned with the encouragement of the Thai Cultural Revolution of the Pibunsongkram Regime. The Lanna awakening of their own people that wants to return to their roots were after the end of World War II. Lanna fabrics were rediscovered and studied after Her Majesty Queen Sirikit the Queen Mother had popularized Thai textile. Local textile artists received more supports from both public and private sectors after there were more demands for traditional Thai fabrics. Collectors seek out old handmade clothes for their collection, which serve as design resources to recreate and combine old and new designs, resulting in a new fabric that is truly functional. The development of traditional Thai-Lanna textile art has been supported and advanced by a diverse group of local intellectuals and Thai-Lanna textile experts, for example the celebrated archeologist Paothong Thongchua, collector Komol Panichpan, and collectors Wiluck and Anchalee Sripasang.

Kachama K. Perez is one of the prominent northern Thai artists who also dedicates her work to the study of Lanna textile art. She applied the traditional technique to recreate new pieces of contemporary textile art and connect them with the modern art world. The researchers are a group of musicians in Thailand who have always incorporated Thai traditions into western-style musical compositions and performances. The researchers have also sought connections between different types of art. This leads to an interest in composing and performing music to express the work of Kachama Perez's textile art, to be performed by woodwind quintet and piano. *The Bhusa*, which derives from a Thai-Sanskrit word meaning clothes, was created to translate Kachama's life and textile art into sound. The researchers used Lanna musical culture as a model for the composition.

### Objectives

To create a new music composition for woodwind quintet and piano to express the textile art of Kachama Perez.

### Methodology

1. The researchers studied the work and life of Kachama Perez, including the background story and her techniques.
2. The researchers studied the sound and technique of Lanna woodwind instrument Pi Jum.
3. Kachama textile art and life story were applied into the musical composition by using the model of Impressionistic music as the composition framework and translating Pi Jum's sound and technique to create new colors through the western double-reed instruments.

### The Life and Work of Kachama Perez

Kachama K. Perez is a renowned contemporary textile artist from Chiang Mai, Thailand. Her interest in traditional Lanna weaving art was rooted in the time when she was young; her mother had the ability to weave handmade clothes. As her father was a doctor who traveled to different hill-tribe villages to check on his patients, Kachama had the chance to follow her father and was always surrounded by the tradition of handcrafted clothes and cloth-weaving in the hill-tribe villages. She continued her studies in higher education in interior design at the Tokyo Mode College in Japan in the 1990s. After she graduated, she worked for a Japanese design company for many years. Kachama collaborated with Thai weavers to create her design of small household products for the Japanese company, until

she realized that all the works had been labeled with the Japanese brand, even though most products were made by Thai craftsmen. Therefore, she decided to return to Thailand, especially to Chiang Mai, where she grew up, to learn more about traditional textiles so that she could create designs by herself.

It took several years of study and experience before she could incorporate the techniques of hill tribes weavers, such as those from the Karen and Katu ethnic groups, and the techniques of local northern Thai weavers into her works. Kachama started with small products and small looms before she explored using a few bigger looms installed in her workshop. In her artworks, she uses all handmade weaving techniques, from the process of spinning cotton and silk into yarn to natural dyeing and hand weaving into clothes with her loom. Additionally, she integrates recycled materials, including food, feathers, weeds, and waste, into her work to produce each unique textile art creation. Her art pieces are varied in size, from smaller ones to as long as 50 meters.

"I think (my work) is unique because of my wildness. I didn't think it could be sold or that anyone would buy it. I did what I wanted to do and what created emotions at the moment... Everyone says that only crazy people (like Kachama) can do it. I create my work out of passion, and I enjoyed my work. What others don't do, I want to."



Figure 1. Example of textile art by Kachama Perez exhibit at Jim Thompson's showroom in Bangkok.

Figure 1 shows two examples of Kachama's work. The work on the left has the top and bottom parts using the hill-tribe "Hmong" embroidery technique combined with the use of silk, mulberry paper, and bamboo. The work on the right uses part of the bamboo sticks, mulberry paper, rope, coconut stem, and peacock feathers. Kachama's artworks are mostly abstract but sometimes portray clear pictures. She chooses the material that will tell the story as she intends, and her work has been commissioned worldwide. Since the first exhibition of her works under her own name around 2000 AD, she has gradually been sought after by interior designers and collectors, both locally and internationally, such as WOHA architectural practice in Singapore and Jim Thompson. Her works have continuously been exhibited both in Thailand, such as at Tammarind Village, Kalm Village, and Gallery ATT15, and internationally, such as at The Hong Kong Museum Textiles Society, The National Handicrafts and Hill Tribes Center in Taiwan, and the Textile Museum in Lyon, France.

### Lanna's Pi Jum

Since the researchers wanted to emphasize Lanna aspects of Kachama's textile art, the researchers began to study the traditional Lanna music in order to use it for the soundscape of the composition.

Lanna musical culture has its own defining differences that lie in its own musical instruments, ensemble types, and tone system. As with other traditional music, most Lanna music was used in their own cultural ceremonies, both by the common people and by the royals. The Lanna music-making tradition was mainly transmitted orally from generation to generation. In the past, it was very difficult to identify Lanna music's uniqueness and even more difficult to define what its centralized meaning was. The standardization of Lanna music was done after the encouragement of Rod Aksornat, the music teacher from the court of Chao Dara Rasmi and Chao Kaew Nawarat, where the ensemble types were set in accordance with the central Thai traditional music. To date, the setup of Lanna ensembles consists of several types, such as the Pi Phaet Lanna or Phaet Khong ensemble, the Salor Sor Seung or Salor Seung Klui ensemble, the Klong (Percussion) ensemble, and the Pi Jum ensemble, among others.

After mid-20th century, more scholarly research is conducted to explain about Lanna music, when western music scholars and musicologists resided and worked in Thailand. With globalization effects, the flood of western cultural influence into Lanna region naturally is inevitable. Not only folk and pop music were mixed with traditional Lanna music, but also the classically-trained composers seek to use Lanna inspiration in their compositions. Along with the spread of Christianity and the construction of missionary schools and hospitals, more western music teachings and schools are opened in northern Thailand, especially Chiang Mai. Thai musicians and contemporary composers are increasingly exposed to Lanna cultural resources. Lanna musical elements and culture are consequently being used to compose "serious" music, such as music for the orchestra, music for wind ensembles and even jazz music. Renowned classically-trained composers in Thailand such as Bruce Gaston, Nat Yontarak, or Narongrit Dhammabutr used some of the Lanna cultural elements in their compositions. Younger generations of Thai composers such as Yos Vaneesorn, Chaipruk Mekara, Krit Buranavitayawut and Adiwach Panapongpaisarn among others, used Lanna cultural elements as the main subject of their musical compositions.



The Lanna cultural elements are sometimes used in contemporary musical compositions as the main subject, but sometimes more broadly used as a portrait of northern Thailand. These Lanna elements are characterized by the famous traditional Lanna melodies, the Lanna folklore, or the imitation of the sound from Lanna traditional instruments. *The Bhusa*, likewise, is using the sound from the traditional instruments to create a new musical composition. The researchers choose to focus on the Pi Jum because of the researchers' musical background of playing wind ensembles and chamber music. Pi Jum, therefore, is chosen as the main feature of the study.

"Pi" (pronounced /pi/) is a Thai word describing the reed woodwind instruments in general. "Jum" or "Chum" is the northern Thai vocabulary which means "being together," thus "Pi Jum" means the group of reed woodwind instruments in different sizes playing together. The traditional Lanna Pi Jum ensemble consists of 3-5 instruments of Pi in different ranges and pitches. Nowadays the ensemble is also accompanied by a "Sueng" or a type of traditional Lanna guitar to give the sound more variety and audibility. Pi Jum's body is made out of Thai bamboo (*Thyrsostachys siamensis*); its reeds are made out of one piece of metal cut into two small sections which will vibrate when they are blown. The traditional way of playing Pi Jum in any sizes is to keep the whole top part of the flute and the reed inside the mouth to facilitate the circular breathing technique. The musicians, as a result, will hold the flute inside of their cheeks.



Figure 2. Pi Jum reed.

In the past, Pi Jum were always used as accompanying music for the "Khap Saw" or the repartee singing of the Lanna tradition. Khap Saw are closely related to the life of the common people. The story used as the main subject of improvised poems and singings varies from religious subjects, celebrations, courting and teaching of traditions, among others. Even until today, northern Thai people still perform Khap Saw in various celebrations and



ceremonies, and Pi Jum ensembles still accompany Khap Saw in the traditional style. Khap Saw tradition has many “Tum Nong” or melodies structured on their repartee poems. The word “Tum Nong,” even though literally means melody in Thai, could be translated as the rhyming structure and the syllables’ tone marks of the sung poems, not the exact musical melody. Today the most popular Tum Nong are “Tung Chiang Mai,” “Japu” and “Lamai,” among others. Nowadays Pi Jum are also adapted as a solo instrument in contemporary styles, such as in folk and pop style, accompanied by western instruments such as piano or guitar.

The teaching and performing of Khap Saw traditions are much varied by distinctive schools of playing, teachers, and provinces due to the tradition of oral transmission. There is no single set of standard in tuning and key, as it will be related to each repartee singer’s style. The key of each Pi Jum ensemble will be tuned to fit the singer’s voice, whether it is high or low. Since all instruments are hand-made, each instrument will be tuned by ear, and each interval will not be tuned equally. Each Pi Jum instrument is capable of producing 7-8 notes. There are 5 sizes of Pi Jum. The largest size, known as Pi “Mae,” which translates to “mother,” is the only one that cannot reach a complete octave. Similar to the scales of other South East Asian traditional music, most of Pi Jum and Khap Saw melodies use mainly 5 selected notes as the main note group (Penta Centric). The melody revolves around one main note. It can be approximately categorized as a major pentatonic scale (scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 of a major scale), but each scale degree is not tuned exactly like the major scale of Western Art Music.

Pi Jum’s specific techniques are tonguing, portamento (i.e. sliding), and free ornaments. For Pi Jum’s portamento technique, the sliding sounds is produced by both hands and mouth. Through tonguing, different articulations are created by putting the tongue onto the reed inside the mouth. The free ornaments or improvisation playing are stylized in accordance with each singer.

### **Impressionistic Musical Style**

To portray Kachama Perez’s artwork and Lanna musical style through the performance of western instruments, the researchers chose to use the standard western music compositional framework as the structure of the piece. Since the researchers wanted to emphasize the infusion of the local and global aspects of Kachama’s artworks and the instrumental colors of the Pi Jum on the western double reed instruments, Impressionistic musical style was chosen as the model of the composition.

Impressionism is a musical style pioneered by French composer Claude Debussy towards the end of the 19th century. The word, which Debussy himself disliked, is somewhat ambiguous in reference to music. It was used as an analogy with the contemporary French painting style of Monet and others. Impressionistic style can be defined with static harmony, an emphasis on instrumental timbres and colors, melodies that lack directed motion, and the use of ‘exotic’ scales such as the whole-tone, modal, and pentatonic. Impressionism can be viewed as a reaction against the high Romantic style, breaking the rule of traditional harmonic progressions.

Tone painting, sometimes known as word painting, is the use of changing timbres and sound as symbolism in the creation of musical effects, particularly in program music and Impressionistic compositions. Tone painting has been used to describe both secular and

sacred musical lyrics and narrative since the Middle Ages. Pitches and rhythm are employed to express thoughts and meanings in both the melody and accompaniment. A set of notes, for example, can represent humiliation, death, resurrection, heaven and hell, angel and Satan. High sound can be used to portray hills, long sound for plains, and low sound for valleys. Different tempos and rhythms can portray various types of movements, while pauses and articulations can symbolize crying or sighing.

In *The Bhusa*, Impressionism was chosen as the main model due to its accommodating ideal for the piece, and tone painting technique were chosen to set up the overall texture.

### Scope of Work

*The Bhusa* is composed for standard woodwind quintet ensemble and piano. The instrumentation of woodwind quintet ensemble includes flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon and French horn. The piano is added to expand the range of colors, rhythms and harmony.

### Results and Discussion

The composition of *The Bhusa* can be discussed as follows.

#### Form

*The Bhusa* uses ternary form as the main structure of the composition. The structure of the piece represents Kachama's life story, which is divided into 3 phases: Kachama's childhood and study, her reflections of her hometown in northern Thailand, and the infusion of traditional art and modern art in her works.

The introduction represents Kachama's childhood in her hometown in northern Thailand. It is shown in the solo oboe introduction, which uses the melodic idea from the traditional melody of Pi Jum.

In the A section, the main motive represents Kachama's travels to study and work in Japan (Figure 3). The melody, set upon a tonal center F in the piano accompaniment, avoids both the use of dominant chords and the motion towards the leading tone, signifying the Impressionistic style.



Figure 3. Main motive of section A (mm. 20-23).

In the interlude, the solo melody of the oboe and bassoon returns in the Pi Jum style, representing Kachama's reflections of her hometown and her aspiration to come back to northern Thailand. The music propels into section B, which features a new motive in tonal center C. Once again, the use of the leading tone is avoided in this motive (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Main motive of Section B (mm. 48-50).

The music then moves towards the same motive of section A, but modulates to B-flat major. This section is also the climax of the piece, representing the development of Kachama works with the increasing sizes and complexity. This climax also represents the combination of the traditional and modern art style in her work. The music concludes with the calm Coda, implying that her work still continues.

The sections of the piece can be shown in the below table (Figure 5).

Section	Bar number
Introduction	1-11
A	12-35
Interlude	36-41
B	42-59
A' (Climax)	60-68
Coda	69-72

Figure 5. The form of *The Bhusa*.

### Harmony

To translate the traditional scale of Pi Jum through western music notations, the researchers chose to use the pentatonic note group "B-flat, C, D, F, G" as the main material of the piece, with the B-flat as the tonic of the scale. These main notes are reflected in the melodies by using the third mode starting from D (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The mode used in *The Bhusa*.

During the introduction and interlude, improvised-style melodies are included in the oboe and bassoon parts, using the note group revolved around this mode. (See Figures 7 and 8)

The repeated note pattern of “C-D-F” is derived from the pentatonic note group “B-flat, C, D, F, G,” representing the fabric patterns of the textile art that Kachama creates. This pattern, sometimes used in sequences, are apparent throughout the composition both in the piano and the woodwind parts.

### Instrumental Timbres

In addition to the note group derived from Pi Jum and the Khap Saw tradition, Pi Jum’s techniques, colors and timbres are also reflected in the cadenzas of the oboe and bassoon. In the introduction, the impression of the sounds of Pi Jum on the oboe is conveyed by the articulations of the slurs and staccato. For the indication of “rubato” in the score, the composer allows the musicians to interpret the timing, the portamento, and the vibrato by themselves to imitate the sound of Pi Jum (Figure 7).

Figure 7. The Introduction of *The Bhusa* (mm. 1-6).

In Figure 8, the interlude features cadenza-like solo passages in the oboe and bassoon parts. Slurs and staccato are written to indicate the portamento-like effect on the double reeds to imitate Pi Jum’s style of playing. Again, “rubato” in measures 37 and 39 are meant to give the musicians more freedom to interpret the piece as they perform.

The musical score for 'The Interlude' (mm. 36-43) is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 36-40) features a woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon) and a piano accompaniment. The woodwinds play a melodic line marked 'rubato' and 'mf' starting at measure 36. The piano accompaniment features a running eighth-note melody in the right hand, marked 'p' and 'mf', and a more active bass line. The second system (mm. 41-43) shows a transition to 'a tempo' and includes a piano solo section marked 'p' and 'mf'.

Figure 8. The Interlude (mm. 36-43).

### Tone Painting and Texture

Through tone painting, *The Bhusa* conveys the underlying impression of clothes weaving that is prevalent in Kachama's life. The clothes weaving action is portrayed by the running notes in the piano accompaniment: each moving melody represents the repeating actions of the weaver on the loom, such as Figures 3 and 4 above.

At the climax of the piece, the composer intended to create the impression of Kachama's textile art, which was being developed in her creativity, in the complexity of weaving techniques, and also in sizes. Furthermore, the composer wanted to bring out the impression of the gallery visitor who has seen Kachama's work as a whole. The gallery visitor will see the details of the fabric when they look closely, but if one wants to enjoy the bigger picture of the textile art of Kachama, one must look at it from distance. One will be struck by the larger view of the art piece.

Both her developed artwork and the impression of a larger view of Kachama textile art are portrayed in the climax of the piece. The composer presents these messages through the increasing density in the musical texture of the piece. In the first A section, the theme is presented by a solo oboe with piano accompaniment. Towards the climax, there is a gradual increase of texture in the bridge section, where more than three independent voices are presented at the same time. In the climax (Figure 9), with the setup of the dominant function of F11 (E-flat Major chord with F root), the theme from Section A returns in B-flat major, representing the bigger view of Kachama's artwork that is clearer when looking from far away. The melody is presented by the flute, clarinet, horn, and piano over the full ensemble's accompaniment. The action of clothes weaving in the repeating running notes accompaniment is always prevalent throughout the piece.

Figure 9. The Climax (Section A') (mm. 60-63).

### Rehearsal and Interpretation

The musicians and the composer had previously collaborated, and due to the composer's extensive experience with wind ensembles, the score posed minimal challenges during the rehearsal. Overall, the ensemble executed the tempo successfully, and the dynamics provided clear direction. The only tempo choice that needed to be made was during measures 69-73, or the coda, where the composer indicated *Andante* without a metronome marking. The ensemble decided to play slower than the A section, or at 66 beats per minute, with the quarter note receiving one beat, to give a feeling of closure.

The performers have made a few practical interpretation decisions and score changes to enhance the effectiveness of the actual performance. The initial instance is in the introduction (see Figure 7), where the composer specifies *rubato* in a manner that is quite ambiguous and allows for the performers to develop their own interpretations. The oboist chose to start with slow vibrato and then going faster on long note D, followed by an *accelerando* and *ritardando* the last 4 notes towards the fermata in measure 3. In measures 4-5, the oboist performed a portamento on the D-F intervals, mimicking the style of Pi Jum. (Figure 10)

Figure 10. The interpretation of the Introduction (mm. 1-6).

The second instance is in the interlude (see Figure 8). In measures 36-39, the composer only stated rubato for the oboe and the bassoon, while the piano played a few notes. During the rehearsal, these piano notes sounded quite bland and were challenging to execute effectively. Therefore, to express more of Kachama's deep thoughts about her hometown, the pianist opted to pluck the piano strings while sustaining the pedal, creating an atmospheric sound in space. Given that a chord follows the three notes at the end of the interlude, the pianist chose to return to playing the notes normally in measures 40-41, thereby transitioning towards the B section. The oboist decided on playing a small accelerando and then ritardando toward the fermata, while the bassoonist also accelerated the repeated notes and ritardando toward the fermata as well, creating an improvised feel for the solo sections before both instruments returned to tempo in measure 41. (Figure 11)

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Figure 11. The interpretation of the Interlude (mm. 36-43).

### Performance

*The Bhusa* was performed at the International Double Reed Society 2022 Conference. It was presented within a program of the Chamber Recital by Sawasdee Woodwind Quintet on July 30th, 2022 at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado, USA.

### Conclusion

*The Bhusa's* main objective is to create the impression of textile art by Kachama K. Perez, the prominent northern Thai textile artist. To depict the textile art that was mainly appreciated with hands and eyes, the researchers used different compositional techniques to recreate the listening experience via sound, including Impressionism and inspiration from traditional Lanna music. Impressionistic elements that were applied in this composition are the main melodies that lack directed motion, the static harmony, the emphasis on instrumental timbres derived from Pi Jum, and tone painting. In parallel with Kachama

Perez's work to reinterpret local textile art to be presented globally, the composition and performance of *The Bhusa* were aimed at inviting audiences, especially in a more serious western classical music world, to connect with the rich and unique Lanna cultural heritage from northern Thailand.

### Acknowledgements

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# Shaping Minds Through Art:

## *A Systematic Review of Aesthetic and Cognitive Interactions*

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### Abstract

This study explores the implication and application of art education to enhance cognition through aesthetic development via a systematic literature review. Articles published from 2018 to 2023 were gathered from Scopus, Academic Search Ultimate, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. Initial keywords inquiries, “aesthetic” and “cognition” were 2,553 articles. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 12 articles remained for review. Findings indicate aesthetic is a form of cognition, that combines emotions and senses. Aesthetic and cognition can arise and develop at any age. A person’s level of personal aesthetic development increases with age and experience, varying among individuals. Some research found that various factors such as age, experience, environment, and art education promote the experiential interplay between aesthetic and cognition, this means developers could use experiential programs to increase aesthetic. Aesthetic development benefits society, individual’s health, and well-being. Moreover, aesthetic experience involves sensory, motor, emotional, and memory faculties.

**Keywords:** Art Education, Aesthetic Development, Aesthetic-Cognitive Relationship, Well-being Implications, Experiential Programs

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## Introduction

National population ageing is one of the main problems of 21st century and defined as a process which increases the proportion of old people within the total population and the viability of long-living societies will depend on the adaptability of labour markets and the sustainability of social protection systems (International Labour Organization 2009). It affects both developed and developing countries which appears on the agendas of world summits or international conferences at every regions, United Nations states that the challenge for the future is “to ensure that people everywhere can grow old with security and dignity and that they can continue to participate in social life as citizens with full rights”. At the same time “the rights of old people should not be incompatible with those of other groups, and reciprocal intergenerational relations should be encouraged.” (United Nations, World Population Ageing 1950-2050, Population Division).

Since 2009 at that time till now, due to reports of the (International Social Security Association (ISSA) (2023) to present Priorities for social security Global 2022 Trends, challenges and solutions, the COVID-19 pandemic has made its indelible mark on the 2020 – 2022 triennium even as social security institutions continued to respond to persistent as well as evolving challenges in social security but demographic ageing is still an inexorable trend that has wide-ranging and diverse impacts on different regions. The graying of the population has highlighted the urgent and increasing needs of the elderly, the importance of rethinking pension and long-term care models, and the imperatives of promoting healthy ageing.

## Aging Society Comes with Higher Expense

There are fears that public expenditure could rise as ageing in OECD countries accelerates, public expenditure on health soaks up a large part of government budgets. According to an OECD report, the over-65 age group accounts for 40-50% of healthcare spending and their per capita healthcare costs are three to five times higher than for those under 65. Health transition, also known as “epidemiological transition” is defined as a series of interconnected changes which include the change from high to low fertility rates, a steady increase in life expectancy at birth and at advanced ages and a transition from predominantly contagious diseases to non-transmitted diseases and chronic conditions (International Labour Organization 2009). Consequently, it is necessary to prepare for dealing with the changes both mental and physical cause. The elderly are valuable human resources in society because they have potential to develop the country, even the economy and society more efficiently. The difficulty in caring for the elderly lies in the differentiation between care system and requires a high level of technical competence, and social support for the activities of daily living.

According to the 2011 Royal College Dictionary, aesthetics means beauty in nature or art, which everyone can understand and feel. It is the relationship between emotions, mind, and one's personal perception and appreciation of beauty. This may develop further to the point of appreciation, admiration, or even obsession, which have an effect on personality, taste, emotions, values, and decision-making. These are the result of “aesthetic experience,” which is expressed in people's behavior. In addition to feeling and perceiving beauty, aesthetic experience also extends to other sensations, such as sadness, revulsion to ugliness, or the attraction to cuteness. Moreover, there are senses of humor, mystery, fun, unattractiveness, enjoyableness, boredom, ambitiousness, inspiration, and forgetfulness. Having senses of ordinary, everyday feelings or emotions can also create aesthetic experiences (Wattananarong 2013).

Insofar as a sense of aesthetic can be created and developed at any age, it increases with experience, which differs with each person. Many scholars have studied aesthetic development, and proposed different theories for the individual level of sensitivity of each person. Two good examples are Parsons (1987) and Housen (2007). Parsons argues for five aesthetic developmental stages, which are 1) Favorite (Favoritism), 2) Beauty and Realism (Beauty and Realism), 3) Expressiveness, 4) Style and Form, and 5) Autonomy. These are very much like the concepts of Housen, who also proposed five stages, 1) Accountive: viewers are storytellers by observation about works of art; 2) Constructive: viewers support their observations about works of art with a framework of evidence; 3) Classifying: viewers identify works of art with art history knowledge, and are analytical and critical of art information; 4) Interpretive: viewers identify works of art by using their critical skills with regard to the elements of art, art experience, art identification and interpretation; 5) Re-Creative: viewers reflect on works of art, speculate, or contemplate works of art with regard to their personal experience and the world at large. Using these conceptions for a framework for stages of aesthetic development, it was found that aesthetic development occurs in the individual in sequential order, and develops with increasing age, throughout each stage of life, from childhood to adulthood. These insights are important reference points for art educators to use pedagogically in designing curricula to educate learners. While there remains the question of how teachers can give learners an aesthetic experience that teaches them to appreciate an art object or nature, frameworks such as Parsons' and Housen's are an important element that will help learners use personal aesthetic experiences to create new knowledge.

Cognition is a learning process in which the process of understanding and perceives various information. Incorporating the body's senses, our minds employ various ways of thinking to understand information, such as critical thinking, reasoning, and decision-making. Problem solving, planning, and cognition enable humans to learn things, and apply what they have learned to their daily lives. Cognitive development varies, depending on factors such as experience, parenting, genetics, and one's environment (Patphol 2015). Cognitive stimulation involves stimulating various parts of the brain related to cognition. Cognitive functions, such as memory, attention, direction, calculation, decision-making, language, and the executive functions, are regular training for the brain in the use of memory, helping to stimulate the brain, thereby enabling more effective cognitive function (Spector et al. 2003).

The development of aesthetics and cognition are interrelated, and proceed with age and experience. At present, there are still very few studies that take any interest in the collection of research works that are related to the relationship between aesthetic and cognition. Analyzing research methods by doing a Systematic Review (SR) is helpful in gaining knowledge about the impacts of the relationship between aesthetic and cognition that appear in the research. The research then guides those professionals involved in educational management in applying it to learning and development.

### Research Purpose

The main purpose of this research is to review the relevant literature on the relationship between aesthetic and cognition. The review will focus on various areas of specialization, such as the relationship between aesthetic and cognition for the developing consciousness,

aesthetic and cognition in the elderly, how aesthetic increases cognition, the aesthetic experience and cognition, how to enhance and increase aesthetic experiences in the elderly, how to teach aesthetic experience to the elderly, and the relationship of aesthetic and cognition to automatic learning.

### Research Framework

This literary review examines the relationship between aesthetic and cognition. The method of systematic review (SR) was used, which involved the following steps: (1) Defining the objectives and review questions, (2) Defining the framework for searching for the information, (3) Setting criteria for the selection of works and defining search terms, (4) Identifying the database(s) to be searched, (5) Assessing the quality of the participant studies, and (6) Summarizing and synthesizing the knowledge from the research results.

### Methodology

The extant research on aesthetic and cognition was systematically reviewed according to the defined research questions. The acquired samples were then passed through inclusion and exclusion criteria. Key particulars included:

1. Using English keywords,
2. Searching international academic databases, such as Scopus, Academic Search Ultimate, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink,
3. Using search terms and limiting search results, as specified in the defined criteria,
4. (Systematically synthesizing the collected research works, and summarizing the results accordance to research objectives.

### Data Collection Procedures and Methods

Articles related to aesthetic and cognition were compiled, using the following selection methods and criteria:

1. Searched for research articles published in foreign online databases, including Scopus, Academic Search Ultimate, JSTOR, ScienceDirect and SpringerLink, using “aesthetic and cognition” for keywords,
2. Entered commands into the Search Field(s) to search for the keywords as Title, Abstract, and Article keywords,
3. Selected only research articles published in English, and for which it was possible to access the full text,
4. Selected only research articles related to aesthetic development, aesthetic level, and cognitive level, based on the topic of the paper that identified as described in the abstract,
5. Selected only articles that matched the research question, this study provides a systematic literature review of the research question on the relationship between aesthetic and cognition.

Applying the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram, data collection and inclusion/exclusion criteria are illustrated in the below figure.

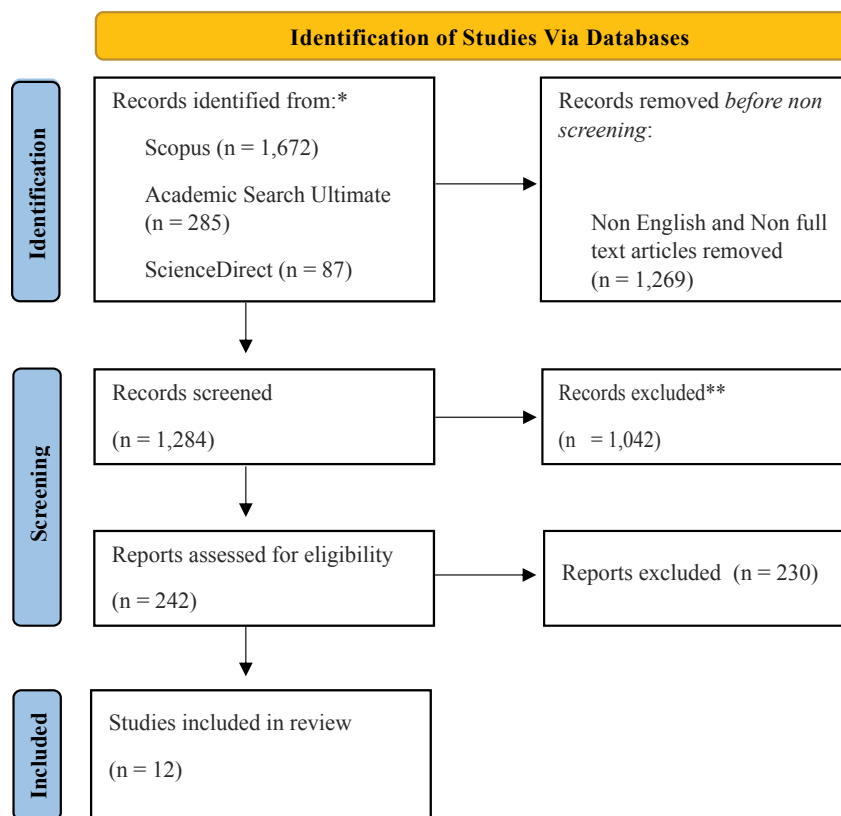


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

## Research Results

The initial search of the international academic databases listed obtained 2,553 papers. The following is a summary of the papers on topics that were considered most relevant for the purposes of this literature review:

Study	Type of Study	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Sample Population	Keywords	Findings on Aesthetic-Cognition Relationship
Silveri et al. (2015)	Experimental study	Neuropsychological tests, art appreciation tasks	Neuropsychological test battery and art appreciation tasks	16 Alzheimer's patients and 15 caregivers	Aesthetic Preference; Alzheimer's Disease; Art; Dementia; Emotional memory enhancement; Memory; Memory disorders; Neuroaesthetics	Aesthetic perception remains despite cognitive impairment
O'Connell et al. (2013)	Mixed-Methods Study	Questionnaires and patient interviews	Aesthetic and Cultural Seeking Participation Questionnaire	38 stroke patients	Stroke; Aesthetics; Arts; Culture; Leisure	Aesthetic activities can enhance cognitive recovery via sensory and emotional processes
Root-Bernstein (2002)	Theoretical analysis	Literature synthesis	Theoretical analysis	NA	Philosophy of science; Aesthetics; Intuition	Aesthetics supports intuition and "synosia" by improving interface usability and cognitive load.
Deng & Wang (2020)	Empirical, Quantitative	Kansei principles, evaluation of screen interfaces	Kansei-based quantitative evaluation	25 design experts	NA	Six aesthetic factors enhance interface usability and cognitive strain.

Figure 2. Summary of the Literature Review on Aesthetics and Cognition. Continued next page.



Study	Type of Study	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Sample Population	Keywords	Findings on Aesthetic-Cognition Relationship
Almeida-Rocha et al. (2020)	Developmental Study	Interviews and analysis of drawings	Parsons' aesthetic development framework	100 students, 4–20 years old	Aesthetic development; Aesthetic experience; Arts; Developmental psychology; Painting	Support Parsons' theory, Aesthetic development is associated with cognitive development in different stages.
Rashid et al. (2014)	Experimental study	Cross-Cultural, Experimental	Visual stimuli	75 female students, 7–17 years olds	Aesthetic development; Education; Painting; Art	Cognitive styles in aesthetic perception are different by age and culture.
Brady, E. (2023)	Theoretical Analysis	Using theoretical analysis to investigate aesthetic values as relationship values.	Literature review and theoretical frameworks	NA	Aesthetic value, cognition, reflexive relations, sensory perception, imagination, natural sublime	Aesthetics enhance cognition by integrating sensory, emotional, and intellectual engagement,
Christensen, A. P., Cardillo, E. R., & Chatterjee, A. (2023).	Experimental and Taxonomy Development	Semantic-free association tasks with network analysis	Semantic network analysis; Likert scales	899 participants (aged 19–77)	aesthetic cognitivism; affect; cognition; semantic network	The relationship between aesthetics and cognition is described as a dynamic interplay where the emotional and cognitive dimensions of art engagement inform and enhance each other
Chuang, H. C., Tseng, H. Y., & Tang, D. L. (2023)	Experimental Study	Eye-tracking experiment using Gestalt theory.	Eye-tracking metrics; Likert scale	33 college students	Photography, gestalt, eye tracking, closure, visual perception	Aesthetics and cognition are explored through the impact of Gestalt principles, which significantly affect visual cognitive processes.
Qiao, Q., & Jiang, Y. (2023)	Quantitative research study	A questionnaire survey	Likert scale surveys	1,060 college students	Humans *Cognition *Students/psychology Emotions Universities Surveys and Questionnaires	Aesthetic cognition positively impacts behaviors and emotions by enhancing cognitive processes and developing creative and critical thinking.
Stobbe, E., Lorenz, R. C., & Kühn, S. (2023).	Experimental Study	Randomized experiment with fMRI and cognitive tests	Aesthetic preference questionnaires	30 participants	Attention restoration Environmental sound fMRI Cognitive performance Negative emotions Stress reduction	Aesthetic experiences improve cognition, reduce negative affect, and restore attention, reducing stress and neural efficiency.
Li, L., & Wang, H. (2024)	Experimental Study	Event-related potentials	Reaction times	27 right-handed college students	Humans *Beauty Electroencephalography Esthetics Evoked Potentials/physiology *Judgment/physiology Metaphor Aesthetic judgments ERPs Hand actions Metaphorical association	This study shows how physical movements improve aesthetic judgment ability and how aesthetic experiences enhance cognition.

Figure 2. cont. Summary of the Literature Review on Aesthetics and Cognition.

## Findings

The findings from this systematic review, enriched by additional synthesis from recent studies, provide a comprehensive understanding of how aesthetics enhances cognition. This discussion integrates the findings from the reviewed articles with broader theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to highlight the relation between aesthetics and cognitive processes.

The research on childhood development, including that studied by Almeida-Rocha, Peixoto, and Neves Jesus (2020) and Rashid, Worrell, and Kenny (2014), demonstrates that aesthetic experiences encourage cognitive abstraction and symbolic reasoning. Younger children focus on visual realism, while older adults transition to more complex evaluative processes. Li and Wang (2024) propose evidence of embodied aesthetics, demonstrating that mental connections between horizontal movements and beauty judgements increase neural performance and cognitive agility. This is demonstrated by rapid reactions and promoted cognitive responses. Stobbe, Lorenz, and Kühn (2023) and Christensen, Cardillo, and Chatterjee (2023) argue that viewing natural environments and aesthetic consistent designs increases attention, emotional regulation, and memory recall by reducing cognitive stress. As well as Chuang, Tseng, and Tang (2023) found that harmonious visual layouts based on Gestalt principles enhance cognition and decision-making by utilizing perceptual preferences. Silveri et al. (2015) studies show that art engagement improves Alzheimer's patients with memory recall, and Deng and Wang (2020) research shows that aesthetic experience corresponds to improved creative problem-solving. Overall, these studies highlight that aesthetics, with its potential for involving sensory, affective and cognitive processes, provides a significant part in improving different elements of cognition.

## Discussion

### Philosophers' Theories Regarding Aesthetic Development

The philosophers' theories most commonly used by researchers regarding aesthetic development:

#### *Parsons' Theory of Aesthetic Development:*

Parsons proposed a hierarchy of aesthetic development, outlining five stages: Favoritism, Beauty and Realism, Expressiveness, Style and Form, and Autonomy. These stages demonstrate a progression from simplistic, concrete evaluations to more abstract, critical, and self-aware interpretations of aesthetic experiences.

#### *Housen's Stages of Aesthetic Development:*

Housen also identified five stages of aesthetic growth: Storytellers (accountive viewers), Creators (constructive thinkers), Classifiers (classifying forms), Interpreters (engaging interpretively), and Re-Creators (making aesthetic re-creations). These stages highlight the progressive development of individuals interpretative and analytical abilities over a period of time.

#### *John Dewey's Aesthetic Experience:*

Dewey highlighted that aesthetic experiences are comprehensive and essential to cognitive and emotional development. Regarding to aesthetics as a way of communicating with the environment in a meaningful way, encouraging exploration and personal development.

This theory supports findings on how aesthetic engagement in educational and therapeutic settings promotes cognitive development and emotional balance.

#### ***Immanuel Kant's Aesthetic Judgment:***

Kant argued that aesthetic judgment requires the interaction of creative thinking and consideration, enabling abstract reasoning and appreciation of beauty beyond sensory awareness. Researchers use Kant's framework to link aesthetic experiences with higher-order cognitive processes like abstraction and symbolic interpretation.

#### **How Aesthetic Experiences Enhanced Cognition**

Aesthetic experiences enhance cognition by reduce cognitive burden, increasing attentional focus, and improving memory retention. Studies by Stobbe, Lorenz, and Kühn (2023) and Chuang, Tseng, and Tang (2023) found that consistent designs and natural sounds enhance cognitive ability by providing a mentally therapeutic conditions. Similarly, Li and Wang (2024) demonstrated how embodied aesthetics, which include conceptual connections between physical movements and aesthetic judgments, improve brain efficiency and cognitive agility. These findings indicate that aesthetics improves cognitive processes by engaging sensory, emotional, and cognitive systems, allowing for increased cognitive engagement as well as cognitive efficiency.

#### **The Aesthetic Experience and Cognition**

Aesthetic experiences are unique in their ability to create a comprehensive a cognitive engagement by integrating sensory perception, emotions, and cognitive evaluation. The findings from the research investigated support this point of view, demonstrating that interaction with visual arts and aesthetics enhances creativity, innovative problem-solving, and abstract reasoning. The relationship is evident across all age demographics, suggesting that aesthetics universally enhances cognitive development.

#### **Enhancing Aesthetic Experiences in the Elderly**

To maximize the cognitive benefits of aesthetics for the elderly, it is essential to create opportunities for sustained and meaningful engagement. Activities such as participatory art workshops, exposure to natural soundscapes, and structured interactions with aesthetic stimuli can enhance neural activation and emotional well-being. Incorporating technologies like virtual reality to simulate immersive aesthetic environments or guided art therapy sessions tailored to individual preferences can further optimize these experiences

#### **Conclusion**

This study concludes by highlighting the important relationship between cognition and aesthetic at every developmental stage. One effective way to promote automatic learning, maintain cognitive function in the elderly, and increase perceptual abilities is through aesthetic experiences. Enhancing the cognitive benefits of aesthetic, especially for the elderly population, requires the development of focused treatments and instructional strategies that encourage sustained engagement and meaningful interaction with visual stimuli. These efforts aim to enhance our understanding of the general significance of aesthetic regarding cognitive growth and learning processes, in addition to promoting personal well-being.

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# Sedulur Sikep Fights for the Environment & Livelihood

*Through the Javanese Pop Song "Ibu Bumi"*

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## Abstract

The issue of environmental preservation is an important topic in global issues. The role of all parties is needed to support environmental preservation because it has an impact on welfare. One of them is conducting a struggle through songs, which this effort is carried out by the indigenous community of Sedulur Sikep (Javanese sub-tribe) in Indonesia. An ethnographic method was utilized through a qualitative approach. We use the theory of symbolic resistance to discuss. The results showed that they made a song entitled "Ibu Bumi" as symbolic resistance by applying the cultural perspective of Sedulur Sikep to invite listeners to be sensitive to environmental issues that have a big impact on community livelihood and protect the earth with real actions.

**Keywords:** *Sedulur Sikep, Javanese Indigenous People, Javanese Pop Song, Ibu Bumi, Environment Issue, Resistance Movement*

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## Introduction

Extractive sectors are still predominant contributors to the economic structure of several countries with abundant natural resources (Narula, 2018; Özkaynak, 2021). Nevertheless, they hurt the environment and life, such as in damage to ecosystems, cramping agricultural lands and water springs, shifting socio-cultural life, and decreasing livelihood (Singgalen, 2022; Leynseele & Olofsson, 2023; Shiva, 2016).

In Indonesia, cases of natural damage by mining are quite numerous and varied (Amir et al., 2019; Firdausy, et al., 2024) such as the Monsanto Group in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi (Glover, 2007; Meirison, 2018); PT Freeport Indonesia in Papua (ICP, 2020); PT Newmont Minahasa Raya in Buyat Bay, North Sulawesi (Welker, 2009; Idris, 2015); PT. Semen Gresik in Tuban, Central Java (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021); PT Semen Tonasa in Pangkep, South Sulawesi (Saeni, Hasyim, and Arya, 2020). Mining operations not only damage the environment but are also often a factor in human rights violations, especially for local indigenous tribes (Asrawijaya, 2020; Amir and et al., 2019; ICP, 2020).

This condition gave rise to a resistance movement. The conflict between custom communities and industrialization, according to Boonstra (2022); Lucas & Waren (2013); Overbeek, et al., (2012) is that associated with access to land between local communities and industries. The conflict mainly transpires in developing countries (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021; Overbeek, et al., 2012). Besides, it constitutes an agrarian issue between the local peasant community against planting or mining corporations which are under the protection of the authorities (the state) (Peluso, 2017; Prause & Billon, 2020). Actors emerged who were able to build resistance and carry out peasant movements (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021).

Sedulur Sikep, also known as the Samin community, is an indigenous group originating from Central Java, particularly in Pati Regency. They adhere to principles of simplicity, peace, and harmony with nature. These teachings are rooted in the philosophy of Samin Surosentiko, a prominent figure who resisted Dutch colonialism in the 19th century. Samin advocated peaceful resistance, such as refusing to pay taxes and avoiding forced labour (Benda & Castles, 1969; King, 1973; Korver, 1976). The Sedulur Sikep community continues to preserve their distinct beliefs, language, and lifestyle, which emphasize honesty, humility, and non-violence. They are also known for rejecting excessive modernization, upholding local values, and maintaining environmental stewardship (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021; Putri, 2017).

The peasant resistance movement comes with different patterns, as revealed in some case studies. Some actively resist, such as the Zapatista movement, the MST movement, the coca farmer movement in Latin America (Septiani & Asrawijaya, 2023; Arce, 2017; Fernandes, 2021), and others opt for orchestrating in silence such as covert peasant resistance in Southeast Asia (Scott, 2019). Nonetheless, they have the same goal to maintain the ecosystem and local economy.

Correspondingly, Sedulur Sikep chose to carry out a resistance movement (Adam & Bagir, 2022). Livelihood and environmental problems are the two main issues giving off the movement (Asrawijaya, 2020). The Sedulur Sikep community has expressed concern over two cement companies, Semen Indonesia and Sahabat Mulia Sakti, which plan to construct a factory in the Kendeng Mountains (Sedulur Sikep's residence). The establishment acquires



rejection from Sedulur Sikep, which perceives local economic threats and environmental damage due to the building. Their resistance takes various forms, including demonstrations, long marches, foot casting, theatrical performances, legal actions, and musical recitals. (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021).

Sedulur Sikep fosters social movement one of them uses through a song as a subject matter. People employ songs as one of the ways of expressing their feelings and ideas, which cannot find a way to be manifested (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018). In a social movement, songs function as performative expressions representing those historically disregarded, marginalized, and suffering from bad experiences (Lyon, 2018). Collin (2013) conveys that songs can serve as a vehicle for social movement. They impel the spirit of the oppressed against the oppressing. Furthermore, songs or music, can act as media for expressing resentment, frustration, and anger (Juslin, 2013; Kampf, 2019).

Several communities also fight for justice and the environment through songs (Gervin, 2017). We can find two open music festivals in Southern Australia: Woodfork Folk Festival in Queensland and the world music festival WOMADelaide. The festivals construct ecological discourses in an eco-musicological framework. They represent a space in which popular music and the living environment can be inextricably entwined. Those participating in the festivals recite satire foregrounding social justice and living environment issues (Bendrup & Weston, 2015). In the meantime, in China, there is the Original Ecology Folksong, glossing over environmental themes and sung by the locals performing other local songs too. People combine the song's rhythm, laden with traditional elements, with modern songs. Urban academicians have kicked off the movement since 2004 (Rees, 2016). Meanwhile, India has a very inspiring environmental song called *Gaon Chodab Nahi* (We Will Not Leave Our Village). Bhagwan Majhi, a leader of the anti-bauxite mining movement in Kshipur, Odisha, composed the song. The song lyrics narrate the stance of the local tribes, who are determined to retain the area even if industries in India continue to destroy their living resources (Chandra, 2017).

The paper notifies that Sedulur Sikep conduct education and campaigns through the song "*Ibu Bumi*" to be sensitive to environmental issues that have a big impact on society and protect the earth with real actions. This song also voices a message from the point of view of small farmers as a critique of extractive industries that exploit the Earth but ignore nature. We collected ethnographic data through in-depth interviews with the song composer and several Sedulur Sikep members and participant observation of some agendas of environmental preservation events initiated by Sedulur Sikep.

### Symbolic Resistance

Cassirer's philosophy saw man as a symbolic being (Lenk, 2020). In his explanation, humans behave and communicate always using symbols to convey messages to other parties. It can be said that symbols are very close to humans in interaction. Symbols can be used to convey positive or negative messages depending on the context in which they are used (Prasetyoningsih et al., 2021). In this context, humans are also referred to as symbol-using creatures (Klyukanov, 2021).

Scott (2019)) explains that humans often use symbols in their rejection of injustice. He wrote about how peasant resistance in Southeast Asia was carried out in certain ways, such as disobedience, stealing, gossiping, and other passive forms as symbols of resistance.

According to him, veiled resistance achieved greater results than overt resistance. Foucault offers a concept on how to understand resistance, no longer having to face the meeting of two forces directly, but resistance can be carried out by anyone in various forms. One of which is symbolic resistance, this form of resistance is usually cultural because the strategies built are based on community habits and norms (Sellars, 2020). Foucault give an example the self-isolation movement (Lum, 2020).

Symbolic resistance as revealed by Scott and Foucault were also carried out by Sedulur Sikep during the Dutch colonial era. Sedulur Sikep, who at that time was better known as the Samin people, carried out a movement to refuse to pay taxes followed by other covert movements such as disobeying of rule (Korver, 1976; Shiraishi, 1990). However, in the current era, resistance to injustice is carried out by following trends, one of which is through songs (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021).

Songs can be a powerful symbolic resistance (Kampf, 2019). Through their lyrics, they can highlight social phenomena and injustices within society, resonating with deep emotional strength (Leeuw, Janicke-Bowles, & Ji, 2022). Typically, such songs address themes like environmental issues, labour struggles, farmers' rights, human rights violations, and other forms of inequality (Darmawan & Albar, 2020; Sammy, 2021). Thus, songs are not merely entertainment, but also a medium to document social realities, voice opinions, and express dissent. They embody a spirit of idealism, protest, and critical reflection on prevailing social conditions. Moreover, songs have the potential to inspire and mobilize the masses (Kok, 2022).

## Discussion

The provincial government has carried out some campaigns through which it remarks on mining potential for elevating the local community welfare in Pati (Putri, 2017). As a reward, mining enterprises offer benefits to the government in the form of a substantial amount of local revenue to trillions of Rupiah. Once realized, the amount may buoy the government's need to develop the city. Therefore, the state strives to manifest a fluent cement factory construction by all means. It thus alters several regulations, allows uncomplicated licensing, and elicits community support by luring them with job opportunities and high salary levels.

The government appreciates the cement factory building in that it assumes there will be thriving economic growth once the plan for exploring Pegunungan Kendeng runs. The assumption is based on the report suggesting that Semen Gresik and Holcim Company have contributed to Tuban regional revenue by 90% (Samhadi, Hartati & Arif, 2008). The logic of economic growth acceleration implemented by the Central Java government brings on the environmental permit to build cement factories. It is in correspondence with the Indonesian government's economic project striving to quickly improve the state's economic growth. High economic growth and increased regional revenues will promote public development and other areas in Pati. The government's action bears on commercialism. Therefore, through its movement, the community Sedulur Sikep is endeavoring to make the government and community aware of the potential cost the state may suffer once it caters to what is being requested by mining industries. We will discuss how the Sedulur Sikep explains to the public that the construction of a cement factory will cause environmental damage and threaten the farming profession.

### Ibu Bumi Song and Its Meaning

Gufman proposes that what we see backstage is as opposed to what we see at the front or main stage. The main stage is where actors perform an artificial performance design for an aesthetic and eye-pleasing purpose. Meanwhile, the backstage exhibits reality (Chovanec, 2020). In this context, the main stage is analogous to the hegemony of the authorized and corporates playing their roles in making a scheme as auspicious as possible. They strive to construct a good image of cement factory development which can manifest welfare by augmenting the community's standard of living. The factory development can seemingly open more job opportunities, a modern lifestyle, and insured well-being. Responding to the main-stage image, Sedulur Sikep endeavors to feature the facts by unraveling what lies at backstage. Standing backstage, people will be able to pour over more lies from the dreams and future offered by both the authorized and corporations. A raft of evidence indicates how the local community can be more oppressed after their living resources and land are taken over.

The standpoint underlies the creation of the song "*Ibu Bumi*." The song, inspired by Sedulur Sikep experience, narrates the persistent marginalization of his community since the Dutch colonial era to date. He perceives the paramount importance of land for his community, ascribing the land as a living and cultural resource. Thus, being a peasant indicates more than life choice and profession. Rather, by being a peasant, one should maintain and nourish nature, as argued in Sedulur Sikep teachings, that the community should act as a life-balancing agent.

The song "*Ibu Bumi*" comes with meaningful lyrics. The lyrics, written in Javanese, state: "*Ibu Bumi wis maringi, Ibu Bumi dilarani, Ibu Bumi kang ngadhili*." It can be translated to: "Mother Earth has provided, Mother Earth has been harmed, Mother Earth will bring justice." The lyric, accordingly, delivers the idea that once human beings destroy the Earth as the living source which furnishes them with benefits, such as food, clothes, and residences, there will be no peace left as a result of damage and disaster threats lying ahead. As such, we should nurture and exploit nature wisely. This lyric reminds us not to commit excessive exploitation of nature. It is simple but laden with meanings.

The address "*Ibu Bumi*" delineates the analogy of the Earth as a *mother* who is always sincere and affectionate in giving. In the Javanese culture, the concept of "mother" visualizes an adult and mature woman. The address "mother" has a high social value, considering her roles in giving birth, raising, and educating children. A mother is the first love of her children. In addition, the address "mother" is reminiscent of gentleness and affection. The motives underlie why the composer leverages the address "mother" to symbolize the Earth.

The clause "*Ibu Bumi wis maringi*" manifests that the Earth plays contributive roles for human beings. Human beings, as the party that benefitted from the Earth, can use crops, such as rice, corn, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables, and water as food sources. Besides, they can also deploy crops to keep up their needs for clothes and housing. The Earth or land they retain and inherit from ancestors from hundred years ago has socio-cultural values. In this way, the Sedulur Sikep community, consisting of peasants, depends on the land and views it as Mother Earth, who sustains their lives. They nurture the land by cultivating it carefully and allowing it to rest before planting again.

A land, sustained by social, safety, and psychological aspects, is a place whereby the community can find identities. Besides, it is wherein they can construct self-existence within a society and execute self-management because it is where they were born and matured as human beings (Lazarus, 2014; Christophers, 2016). Thus, external threats from industrial activities potentially harm ecosystems, typically agricultural lands, and adversely affect their economic and social conditions.

The lyric "*Ibu Bumi dilarani*" translated as "The Mother Earth has been hurt" points out the phenomenon in which humans present greediness and no concern for the living environment harmed by industrialization. Capitalism is a potential enemy, as having been warned by Sedulur Sikep's ancestors. Sedulur Sikep must resist being swept away by modernization, but can still utilize it as a tool to broaden their knowledge and contribute to protecting their community. Sedulur Sikep, as a movement, represents the peasants' dissatisfaction and resistance against marginalization caused by the state's unfair land use policies, which permit industrial activities to encroach upon and degrade their land.

Neoliberal influences scale up unemployment rates and cause peasants to lose land (Dunaway & Macabuac, 2022; Bélair, 2021). They breed threats for Sedulur Sikep, which may have to be steered away from their lands and experience the scarcity of water they deploy to farm. The resistance they carry out is the manifestation of the teachings of their ancestor, Samin Surosentiko. The song thus represents the principle of not allowing damage to occur in the Kendeng Mountains and the peasant profession to disappear in the land of Kendeng because the profession is one of the doctrines from Sedulur Sikep's elders as an attempt to maintain the balance of nature.

The lyric "*Ibu Bumi kang ngadhili*," meaning "Mother Earth will judge," signifies that Mother Earth, like a compassionate parent, will endure her children's misdeeds and guide them with reminders and warnings. However, when her children exceed acceptable limits, she will respond with unwavering firmness. Analogous to Mother Earth, the Earth constantly reminds humans to always act wisely and ask others to nourish nature and prevent damage. By interplaying with nature, human beings will acquire local knowledge of how to employ it auspiciously. However, instead of being wise, humans are exhibiting greediness by exploiting nature inordinately and disregarding whatever nature damage turns up as a result of their unruly behaviors.

Through the song, Sedulur Sikep warns us that the wrath of nature will wreak havoc and disasters on human beings. Natural disasters, such as floods, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and pandemics, may ensue. Even Sedulur Sikep believes that the COVID-19 pandemic attacking human beings is because of their greedy activities and destructing nature.

In the teachings Sedulur Sikep adheres to, find the terms "*ngajeni*" (respecting), "*ngopeni*" (nurturing), and "*demunung*" (being ungreedy). One who is "*ngajeni*" or respecting will invariably bear in mind that the universe is one of God's blessings. The concept is analogous to the concept of venerating nature as how to venerate a mother. One of the efforts is to

retain the peasant profession as the main one because being a peasant allows them to realize natural stability. Peasants should apply an eco-friendly and sustainable farming system in the best interest of humans, the universe, and all living creatures, such as plants and animals.

“Ngajeni” connects to spirituality, the values of which remind humans of the obligation against excessive exploitation of nature. Humans should maintain a strong relationship with nature, considering how they greatly require it. Such a relationship can be embodied by incorporating it into custom ecological practices. The practices are possible as long as humans ignore their anthropocentric and egocentric affairs and put others’ interests before theirs. “Ngajeni” or respecting nature, accordingly, is crucial in that we highly rely on nature.

As regards the “ngopeni” concept, Sedulur Sikep maintains the ecosystem and environment nearby to nurture nature. The community nurtures agricultural resources to build healthy agriculture. They are determined to retain Kendeng Mountains, making the mountains homes for plants and animals. They also take care of the extant water springs and maintain soil fertility. They strictly espouse the Javanese teaching of “*Sadhumuk bathuk sanyari bumi* (the principle in the life of the Javanese is "honor" and "land" which will be defended tooth and nail) ,” mandating them to take a stand for what they have until death. The philosophy, as such, reflects how inextricable the relationship between Sedulur Sikep and the land they own is.

Additionally, Sedulur Sikep abides by the principle of “*sacekape*,” namely living moderately. As peasants, the community endeavors to retain harmony with nature. They are careful in treating and exploiting nature. It is because they believe in the wrath of nature that may punish them for misbehaving. They also comply with the teaching “*Sapa kang nandur bakal ngundhuh. Ora ana nandur pari thukul jagung. Nandur pari mesti ngundhuh pari*,” which means “Who acts shall bear the consequence. Planting rice will not give you corn, it will give you rice.”

### Criticism Symbol

In today’s era, ones can express social critics through arts, for example, theatrical performances, poetry, paintings, murals, and the like (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023; Wearing, 2022). Another kind of art frequently exerted is music or songs. For example, with its global followers, punk and underground music can inspire a social movement (Ambrosch, 2015). Sedulur Sikep make social critical actions against the government and mining corporations through a song. The song, thus, plays an elemental role in constructing solidarity and acts as a subtle resistance expression. Sedulur Sikep leverage it as media to deliver critics from the vantage point of those.

Environmental damage, land loss, natural disaster threats, and loss of profession as peasants are the focal points of the protesting song. The song evolves as part of the movement to solidify idealism and emotional bond between members and serves as a bastion that reminds the listeners in order not to be lured by the tricks of mining industries that promise well-being. The sense of resistance and the messages being delivered are observable by the music genre. The song “*Ibu Bumi*” comes with a gentle and soft rhythm as that of Javanese songs prevalently. Wadiyo et al., (2022) explained that Javanese songs can be part of the as-

pects of supporting their existence in Java communities.. Notwithstanding the representative theme landed with resisting politics, the song retains a simple, mature, and meaningful style. The profound word elements in the lyrics of the song are sung gently, delineating a figure of a mature woman, namely a gentle mother.

In the context of the song "Ibu Bumi," used by the Samin community as a protest against the construction of a cement factory, the composition integrates traditional Javanese musical elements to convey a profound message of peace and resilience. The song's rich melodies and simple rhythms evoke tranquility and strength, aligning with the community's commitment to protecting nature. Key features such as intonation, slow tempo, and contrasting dynamics represent the stillness of nature that the Samin people seek to safeguard. The vocal delivery emphasizes a soft, gentle singing style typical of Javanese traditions, with vibrato variations adding emotional depth and enhancing the song's connection to its meaning. The arrangement remains intentionally simple, centering the lyrics as the primary vehicle of expression. The repetitive melodies, reflective of local traditions, encourage introspection on the importance of environmental preservation. This approach underscores the values of authenticity and simplicity, which are fundamental to the Samin community's cultural and environmental ethos.

The song "Ibu Bumi" raises social critics usually delivered through actions against cement corporations. Some exemplary actions are demonstrations at Istana Jakarta and Central Java Governor's Office, the Kamisan movement in Semarang, Commemorating Yu Patmi, and so forth. The social critics are not only reflected through the music and lyrics of the song but also expressed through active social movements by the activists concerned. As such, the song inspires their resistance. It has an incredible influence on peasants and the young generation. It possesses a special charisma giving different impressions from that of other music since vesting a robust imagination of living adversities.



Figure 1. The song "Ibu Bumi" (Mother Earth) was performed during a demonstration against a cement factory outside the Central Java Governor's office. Romo Aloysius Budi Purnomo, a well-known Catholic religious leader and artist, joined the peaceful protest held on December 23, 2016.

Employing such a song is effective for self-prevention from unrealistic material persuasion (Okazaki, 2019). The song asks its listeners to grasp humanity's values in each of its lyrics. Delivering messages through a song associated with the environment is more acceptable among the pros. The song, which originally recounts the tradition of Sedulur Sikep, is self-modifying into the means of expressing and delivering struggle and environment-related messages to the community. The modification can break out because music constitutes an aesthetic facility for the community's cultural sense (Anne, Ian & Jordan, 2021). Music allows efficient communication, decorates interaction, strengthens love, and accelerates value novelty (Schäfer et al., 2013; Kalanjoš, 2022).



Figure 2. The band *Efek Rumah Kaca* performed the song "Ibu Bumi" in collaboration with Kendeng peasants during their solo concert in Semarang on August 19, 2017.

Sedulur Sikep builds the pattern for internalizing values accepted by Kendeng peasants based on familiarity, friendship, and deliberation. From the viewpoint of social movement, the basis influences the process of song value internalization by the peasants, who will decide to either conduct the value or understand it as new knowledge. The lyrics of the song "Ibu Bumi" entice the listeners to live better by complying with the social and environmental values they deliver. After affording the information on environmental values to Kendeng peasants, Sedulur Sikep can then ask other peasants, the young generation, artists, cultural practitioners, and other communities to sustain Kendeng as nature by refusing cement factory construction. The song showcases maturity and morality in harmonizing with nature.

To demonstrate unity and concern for the environment, religious and cultural figures performed "Ibu Bumi," a touching song highlighting the damage to ecosystems and its threats to farmers in the Kendeng Mountains. Romo Aloys Budi, a respected religious leader, emphasized the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of preserving the delicate balance of nature. He recognized that the ecological destruction in the Kendeng



Mountains harms the environment and endangers the farmers who depend on its ecosystems for their livelihood. By participating in the performance of "*Ibu Bumi*," Romo Aloys Budi sent a powerful message of solidarity and support to those fighting to protect their land and way of life. Sujiwo Tejo, a cultural observer deeply connected to tradition and heritage, also understood the profound significance of the land in the Kendeng Mountains. Through their participation in this heartfelt expression of concern, shared via YouTube, Romo Aloys Budi and Sujiwo Tejo demonstrated that by uniting our voices, we can amplify our message and inspire positive change in the world, with the hope that their voices will resonate with and mobilize a wider audience.



Figure 3. Religious figures (Romo Aloys Budi) and cultural observers (Sujiwo Tejo) participate in singing "*Ibu Bumi*" song as an expression of their concern for the destruction of the ecosystem and its threat to farmers in the North Kendeng Mountains.

The song, raising the community's moral awareness, reminds the state and corporations of moral anxiety. Moral anxiety is attributed to anxiety about self-conscience (Kurth, 2015). Those with a better-evolving conscience will regret their immoral behaviors once they do them. Accordingly, through the song, *Sedulur Sikep* invites the government to be concerned about mining activities and manage the activities well and appropriately, averting environmental damage, such as soil, water, air, marine, and forest damage.

The song delivers an allusion to mining industries run in Indonesia to earn high profits but cause harm to nature. Decreased natural-balancing resources, such as forest, water, and soil, are over much of the product of mining activities generating a large number of pollutants from the early exploitation to the production process. The allusion is also against the government's ban on traditional mining and supports massive mining with more severe impacts compared to that of the first. Additionally, *Sedulur Sikep* is also criticizing how the government plays with some regulations; as proven by independent studies of KHLS (Stra-

tegic Environmental Assessment) and RTRW (Spatial and Territorial Planning), the Kendeng mountain area is infeasible for mining practices due to its composition of karst (lime). Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Living Environment Protection and Management states there shall be no mining activities in the karst mountains because it will cause natural damage and biodiversity loss.



Figure 4. Sedulur Sikep youth unfurled posters calling for caring for the earth and rejecting mining which destroys nature on the theme "Ibu Bumi" at a discussion event discussing KHLS (Strategic Environmental Assessment) and RTRW (Spatial and Territorial Planning) in Pati, Central Java.

Through the song "Ibu Bumi," Sedulur Sikep expresses its criticism of the government's policy concerning the environment. The policy is influenced by certain interests. As the corollary, the government willingly overlooks environmental issues. Once it issues policies underpinning detrimental parties that damage nature, it also contributes to the existing problems. Women casting their feet in the struggle tent highlight the urgency of the issues. When humans humanize others, there will be no nature damage or community suffering. The government should, accordingly, issue community-advocating policies. The community should engage in policy-making. And yet, it is oftentimes abandoned, generating conflicts. Development should come after a good analysis. Environmental impact analyses should be fairly made and allay investors' interests. Peasants do not call for fine buildings; rather, they demand clean water, air, and fertile farming land. However, investors develop based on the economic interests of several parties and disregard public interests. Hence, they should fight to protect Kendeng Mountains.

## Conclusion

The elaboration above sheds light on how there is a war on welfare concepts between Sedulur Sikep and the state. Sedulur Sikep regards the peasant profession as uncontested, and establishment of a cement factory intervening with it will confound the ecosystem. Meanwhile, the state claims investors as those who will augment local and regional foreign exchange and open more job opportunities.

Cultural resources manifested in the song “*Ibu Bumi*” offer political dialectics with the community, government and corporations. The dialectics of the community offer knowledge about nature based on Sedulur Sikep teachings and values. The song focuses on evoking awareness of humanism by imparting the apprehension of social reality and the meaning of life. Dialectics with the government and corporations is carried out through a narration representation of social reality linked to principal issues of humanism, ecosystem, livelihood, and culture. Sedulur Sikep strives to deliver advising messages, namely “God allows humans to deploy nature to cater to their needs,” “Employing natural resources should be offset by being mindful of nature and others,” and “Inordinate nature exploitation will lead to big disasters.”

The song “*Ibu Bumi*” inspired and fostered solidarity among peasants, motivating them to resist the establishment of the cement factory. This song serves as a tool to raise awareness about environmental movements. It embodies the Sedulur Sikep's commitment to an activist vitalist ideology – taking proactive steps to protect their community and others. It narrates the alliance of two powerful forces: investors (manufacturers) and the state (government), which mutually reinforce each other to create a dominant central power. Sedulur Sikep criticizes this alliance for its harmful impacts on their community's economic, social, and cultural aspects.

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# Journal Policies

## Journal Policies

### About JUCR

The Journal of Urban Culture Research is an international, online, double-blind, peer-reviewed journal published biannually in June & December by the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Thailand's Chulalongkorn University in conjunction with the Urban Research Plaza of Osaka City University, Japan. JUCR offers its readers two categories of content. One is a window into the latest international conferences and reviews of related sources – books etc. along with guest articles, special features and case studies. Secondly, its main core is a range of peer-reviewed articles from researchers in the international community. No fees are charged.

### The Aims of JUCR

This journal on urban culture aims at establishing a broad interdisciplinary platform for studies of cultural creativity and the arts that brings together researchers and cultural practitioners to identify and share innovative and creative experiences in establishing sustainable and vibrant, livable communities while fostering cultural continuity. The journal embraces broad cultural discussions regarding communities of any size as it recognizes the urban community's rural roots. JUCR encourages researchers and the full range of artists in visual art, design, music, the creative arts, performance studies, dance, cultural studies, ethnomusicology, and related disciplines such as creative arts therapies and urban planning. Articles related to either the academic or wide vernacular interpretation of urban culture and the arts as a tool promoting community and individual well-being, health, and diversity are welcome.

JUCR has the objective of stimulating research on both the theory and practice of fine and applied arts in response to social challenges and environmental issues as well as calling for solutions across the creative realms. Moreover, JUCR supports advocacy processes, improvements in practices, and encourages supportive public policy-making related to cultural resources. JUCR intends to offer readers relevant theoretical discussions and act as a catalyst for expanding the knowledge-base of creative expression related to urban culture.

### Review Process

1. JUCR promotes and encourages the exchange of knowledge in the field of fine and applied arts among scholars worldwide. Contributions may be research articles, reports of empirical studies, reviews of films, concerts, dances, and art exhibitions. Academic papers and book reviews are also acceptable. Articles are typically only considered for publication in JUCR with the mutual understanding that they have not been published in English elsewhere and are not currently under consideration by any other English language journal(s). Occasionally, noteworthy articles worthy of a broader audience that JUCR provides, will be reprinted. Main articles are assessed and peer reviewed by specialists in their relevant fields. Furthermore to be accepted for publication, they must also receive the approval of the editorial board.

2. To further encourage and be supportive of the large diverse pool of authors whose English is their second language, JUCR employs a 3-stage review process. The first is a double-

blind review comprised of 2-3 international reviewers experienced with non-native English writers. This is then followed by a non-blind review. Thirdly, a participative peer review will, if needed, be conducted to support the selection process.

3. All articles published in the journal will have been fully peer-reviewed by two, and in some cases, three reviewers. Submissions that are out of the scope of the journal or are of an unacceptably low standard of presentation will not be reviewed. Submitted articles will generally be reviewed by two experts with the aim of reaching an initial decision within a two-month time frame.

4. The reviewers are identified by their solid record of publication as recommended by members of the editorial board. This is to assure the contributors of fair treatment. Nominations of potential reviewers will also be considered. Reviewers determine the quality, coherence, and relevancy of the submissions for the Editorial Board who makes a decision based on its merits. High relevancy submissions may be given greater prominence in the journal. The submissions will be categorized as follows:

- Accepted for publication as is.
- Accepted for publication with minor changes, no additional reviews necessary.
- Potentially acceptable for publication after substantial revision and additional reviews.
- Article is rejected.
- A notice of acceptance will be sent to submitting authors in a timely manner.

5. In cases where there is disagreement between the authors and reviewers, advice will be sought from the Editorial Board. It is the policy of the JUCR to allow a maximum of three revisions of any one manuscript. In all cases, the ultimate decision lies with the Editor-in-Chief after a full board consultation.

6. JUCR's referee policy treats the contents of articles under review as privileged information and will not be disclosed to others before publication. It is expected that no one with access to articles under review will make any inappropriate use of its contents.

7. The comments of the anonymous reviewers will be forwarded to authors upon request and automatically for articles needing revision so that it can serve as a guide. Note that revisions must be completed and resubmitted within the time frame specified. Late revised works may be rejected.

8. In general, material, which has been previously copyrighted, published, or accepted for publication elsewhere will not be considered for publication in the main section of JUCR.

9. The review process shall ensure that all authors have an equal opportunity for publication. The acceptance and scheduling of submissions for publication in the journal shall not be impeded by additional criteria or amendments to the procedures beyond those listed above.

10. The views expressed in articles published are the sole responsibility of the authors and not necessarily shared by the JUCR editors or Chulalongkorn University.

### Submission Requirements

- Worthy contributions in the urban culture arena are welcome from researchers and practitioners at all stages in their careers. A suggested theme is announced prior to each issue.
- Manuscripts should generally not exceed 7,000 words including the abstract and references. Tables, figures, and illustrative material are accepted only when necessary for support.
- Manuscripts need to use our template for submission. Please download from our website's submission guidelines page. Details are described in the top half of the first page with sample text following. Documents not using the template will be returned for reformatting.
- All manuscripts are required to include a title, abstract, keywords, author's byline information, an introduction and conclusion section along with a Chicago formatted reference list. Manuscripts with existing footnotes and in-text references may retain them as a resource for readers, but are not required. Footnotes are to be relocated as non-standardized endnotes listed before references.
- Manuscripts should have all images, figures, and tables numbered consecutively. Reference lists need to conform to The Chicago Manual of Style ([www.chicagomanualofstyle.org](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org)) as detailed in our template. We recommend the free online formatter for standardizing ones references. See [www.bibme.org](http://www.bibme.org).
- Each author should send with their manuscript an abstract of 150 words or less together with a submission form providing their biographical data along with a maximum of six keywords.
- All manuscripts submitted for consideration need to be accompanied by a completed and signed Manuscript Submission form found on our website.
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- Authors should strive for maximum clarity of expression. This point cannot be overstated. Additionally, authors need to bear in mind that the purpose of publication is the disclosure and discussion of artistic knowledge and innovations that expands the realm of human creativity and experience.

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### Criteria and Responsibilities for Editorial Board Membership

#### Overview

The Editorial Board is comprised of members who have significant expertise and experience in their respective fields. Editorial Board Members are appointed by the Executive Director with the approval of at least 60% of the Editors and Editorial Board.

### Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for appointment shall include:

- Demonstrated scholarly expertise and ethical leadership in an area not over represented on the existing Editorial Board.
- Published three or more papers in scholarly publications.
- Demonstrated excellence in the review process, based on independent evaluations of the Editors and Associates.
- Stated commitment to contribute to issues affecting the management of JUCR.

### Responsibilities

Members of the Editorial Board are directly accountable to the Managing Editor. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Provide input on editorial needs and review manuscripts as requested.
- Complete assigned reviews in a timely fashion. Offer mutually respectful and constructive review of manuscripts to assist in providing the highest quality of papers.
- Maintain confidentiality and objectivity with regard to manuscripts and the JUCR review process.
- Participate in the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of JUCR so as to help sustain the highest level of excellence.
- Once appointed to the Editorial Board, members are encouraged to submit at least one paper during their tenure.

### Nomination Process

Nominations are submitted in writing (via email or post) and addressed to the Editor in Chief or any member of the Editorial staff. Candidates/applicants must submit a CV including a statement addressing her/his interests and suitability for Board membership. JUCR assumes the general readership would be able to identify the candidate by her/his reputation for scholarship in an established line of inquiry.

When a candidate is approved by majority vote of the current JUCR board members, she/he will be invited to serve by the Editor in Chief for a specified term of three years. The Dean of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts in turn will finalize the appointment. Continued membership of the Editorial Board will be reviewed every three years by a member of the Editorial Board with a decision about candidates submitted annually. The number of Editorial Board members will not exceed 20 unless otherwise agreed upon.



Journal of Urban Culture Research

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JUCR aims at establishing a broad interdisciplinary platform for studies of cultural creativity and the arts that brings together researchers and cultural practitioners to identify and share innovative and creative experiences in establishing sustainable and vibrant, livable communities while fostering cultural continuity. The journal embraces broad cultural discussions regarding communities of any size as it recognizes the urban community's rural roots.

JUCR encourages researchers and the full range of artists in visual arts, creative arts, music, dance, theater together with those in urban studies and planning to seek cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural practices.

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