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Rebranding Thai Music:
The Use of Western Music to Recreate a New National Identity in Thai Music After the Siamese Revolution in 1932

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Preface

On 27th October 2020, just a few weeks before the completion of this dissertation, there was a provocative news story in Thailand.[1] At the train station of Ayutthaya province, a 45-year-old woman saw a 15-year-old schoolgirl sitting – instead of standing, as the other people did – while the Thai national anthem was being played. After the anthem ended the women scolded the schoolgirl for not showing proper respect to the country's anthem and angrily slapped her face. Later, the schoolgirl told the police that she was having her period and thus could not stand upright. The police fined the 45-year-old woman for using violence. As the news spread, people privately fundraised on Facebook to support the 'patriotic action' of this woman, who eventually gained more money than she had paid for her fine.[2]

This news, which is not the only case of its kind, is one piece of evidence showing that music plays a great role in defining the national identity of Thai people. Interestingly, it is not the authentic traditional music that validates national identity, but rather the recently invented musical language. Thailand's national anthem is indeed a political product from the nation-building period in the 1930s, and it was deliberately ordered to be composed using western musical language.
During this nation-building period, Thai politics, the Thai education system, Thai arts, Thai architecture, Thai language, as well as Thai rural traditions were also confronted with critical changes. There are several studies and literatures focusing on these phenomena, for instance: Nakarin Mektrirat's *Karn Patiwat Siam 2475* (1992) comprehensively examines the political and social reformation after the revolution, Chatri Prakitnontakarn's *Silapa Sathapatayakarm Khana Rasadorn* (2009) explains the arts and architecture heritage of the revolution government which tried directly and indirectly to eliminate the symbol of kingship, and the study *Letters and State: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Writing Reforms during the 1930s-1940s* by Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt (2018) gives a comparative analysis of how the Thai government after the revolution decided to simplify and standardise Thai language in order to promote the modern nation-state.

Nevertheless, the complex relationship between traditional music, the search for a new national identity, political intervention, the fear of being colonised, and the image of western music as a symbol of civilisation has not yet been greatly studied. Therefore, the motivation behind this dissertation is to investigate this phenomenon, where music became one of the political tools to reshape and emphasise the

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[1] Bangkok Post*, Woman slaps girl for not standing during national anthem,* <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2009919/woman-slaps-girl-for-not-standing-during-national-anthem> [9th Nov. 2020].

[2] Khaosod English, *Royalists send 18,200 baht to Woman Who Slapped Schoolgirl* <https://www.khaosodenglish.com/news/crimecourtscalamity/2020/10/29/royalists-send-18200-baht-to-woman-who-slapped-schoolgirl/> [9th Nov. 2020].

national identity during the aftermath of the Siamese Revolution in 1932. In other words, to reveal the hidden components which make Thai people – at least the woman mentioned in the news above – believe that this music is absolutely ‘Thai’, although it is not ‘Thai’ at all.

Introduction

Research Question and Background

The identity of a country can be found in many different aspects: they can be anecdotes from its history, nuances in the language and dialects, or common practices of the people. For Thailand, its national identity is tied up with certain keywords that set borders around each aspect of identity. With these borders it is possible to cast out a character that does not belong to the wished identity: in other words, to separate foreign members from the local ones. The history of Thailand, for example, is officially counted from the first dynasty of the Sukhothai Kingdom (founded in 1238) onwards, which means, the civilisation prior to this kingdom is excluded from being a part of the national history.[3] What is known as a 'traditional Thai house' (*Ruen Thai*) is mainly used to refer to wooden houses commonly built by the nobles in the central region of Thailand from ca. 1800 onwards.[4] Thai traditional costumes (*Chut Thai*) were invented in the palace in the late 1800s, by adapting British Victorian fashion and combining with the local court attires.[5] Moreover, Thai traditional norms are practices and traditions formed within the framework of Buddhism.[6]

How about Thai music? What are the borders which defines the identity of the national music in Thailand? From where and from whom were these borders derived? Were there any attempts to create regulations, keywords, or musical aesthetic to establish the nationalistic character of Thai traditional music? These are the guiding questions which initiated this dissertation.

The lemma 'Thai music' in the leading German music encyclopaedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, reads:

> Ein grosser Teil der sogenannten *traditionellen Thai-Musik*, die auf Tonträger aufgenommen und von der thailändischen Kulturmission exportiert worden ist, war ausschliesslich höfische Kunst. Mit dem Zusammenbruch der alten Stadtkönigreiche und dem späteren politischen Umschwung im Jahre 1932 […] sind die früher an den Höfen kultivierten Musikformen so gut wie völlig verschwunden. […] Gleichwohl ist die künstlich konservierte Musik Thailands heute

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[3] พระราชพงศาวดารฉบับพระราชหัตถเลขา เล่ม 1 [Thai Royal Annal, first volume], Bangkok: Department of Fine Arts 1999, p. 3.

[4] Wandee Pinijvarasin: 'Tradition and Transformation in Central Thai Houses', in: *Southeast Asian Houses: Expanding Tradition*, edited by Seo Ryeung Ju et al., California: Seoul Selection U.S.A 2017, p. 79.

[5] Maurizio Peleggi: 'Refashioning Civilization: Dress and Bodily Practice in Thai Nation-Building', in: *The Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas,* edited by Mina Roces, Portland: Sussex Academic Press 2010, p. 65-66.

[6] Natpreeya Wichittaphan: *Philosophy of Tradition of Buddhism that Influenced Thai Society*, Department of Buddhism and Philosophy, School Mahamakut Buddhist University 2018, p. 17-18.

> ein wichtiges Symbol thailändischer Eigenstaatlichkeit und der historischen Überlieferungen des Landes sowie eine Quelle des Nationalstolzes.[7]

The quotation above – especially referring to terms such as '*künstlich konservierte Musik Thailands*' (artificially preserved music of Thailand) – raises an existential question which goes directly to the core of the national identity: does the national identity in Thai music really reflect the historical and traditional heritage of the country, or is it merely a deliberate invention by later generations, as in the case of the traditional costumes?

A great obstacle to answering this question is the lack of written notation preserving Thai music: apart from a few songs transcribed into western notation by ear found in the memoirs of French missionaries during the seventeenth century there is no other written evidence – in terms of musical notation – that could tell how Thai music in the past time might have sounded like. More than a century later, in 1900, the first gramophone recording of a Thai traditional ensemble was done in Berlin. Since then western musicians and musicologists started to investigate Thai tonal system and tried to explain its aesthetic from the perspective of western music. One of the main outcomes of this investigation was that Thai music began an intense mutual relationship with western music, which resulted in Thai music becoming inseparable from the western musical language. This does not imply that a Thai traditional dance would sound similar to a Viennese waltz, but that the modern identity of Thai music was formed through the use of western notation – either directly or in a disguised form – in order to maintain its comprehensibility and to be further interpreted. After achieving this goal, the authentic identity of Thai music became distorted because it had to be adjusted to the western tonality. Moreover, Thai music began to expand its existential function: it was not solely for accompanying rituals as it was in a previous time,[8] but the music itself started to be perceived as a concert piece, or an overture, or an anthem etc., and was supposed to be heard with the same auditive attention as when someone listens to a symphony or an oratorio. To carry out this challenging transition it certainly required the implementation of concepts and structures inherent to western music: such as the adaptation of the instrumentation, the integration of western harmonisation, or even the reconceptualization of the musical aesthetic.

Again, back to the former question: how can the identity of Thai music – considering the above-mentioned circumstances – be defined? The period during the first half of the twentieth century is the timeframe of this dissertation. It is the period which confronted Thailand with the crucial political revolution and saw its national identity significantly reformed.

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[7] Judith Becker: 'Südostasien', in: *Außereuropäische Musik in Einzeldarstellungen*, edited by Friedrich Blume, Edition MGG, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1980, p. 331-332.

[8] Sujit Wongthes: ดนตรีไทย มาจากไหน? [Where Does Thai Music Come From?], Bangkok: College of Music - Mahidol University publishing 2010, p. 21.

Thai cultures, including music, initially originated from the ancient civilisation in the Southeast Asia region, starting around 5000 B.C. The so-called 'Suvarnabhumi' region lays between India and China, covering modern-day Laos, Cambodia, Burma, up to some parts of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Therefore, from the ethnological perspective, Thai music and the music of Southeast Asia are a continuity, being inseparable from each other, because they were closely related to the same cultural roots and have been coherently cultivated under common ethnological ancestors for a very long time.[9]

Left: the relief 'Musicians of the Battle of Shonitapura' found in the north gallery of Angkor Wat, caved in the middle of the sixteenth century.[10]
Right: the high-relief: 'Court Female Musicians of Dhavaravadi' found in Ratchaburi, a province in the central region of Thailand, approx. 500 kilometres away from Angkor Wat, caved around 1400.[11]
Both ancient reliefs from modern-day Cambodia and Thailand – despite different musical scenes and genders (during a war and a court entertainment) – depict two common instruments. Namely the zither-like string instrument, with a bowl-part pressed on the breast of the performer while being played, and the pair of small cymbals.

With the emergence of the modern nation-states across the region in the twentieth century, the established national boundaries and the nation-building movement forced each country to establish its own cultural identity and to distinguish its own culture from the neighbouring nations. Nevertheless, the identity of Thai music was still not yet concretised. This was not only because of the lack of written notation, as mentioned before, but also the lack of consciousness of having a 'common nation' among the people. Before 1932, the representation of Thai national identity, or to be precise, the center of the nation, was solely personified by the king. Thai-speaking people realised that they belonged to the same country because they shared a

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[9] Ibid., p. 16.

[10] Martin Knust: 'Urged to Interdisciplinary Approaches: The Iconography of Music on the Reliefs of Angkor Wat', in: *Music in Art* (2010), vol. 35 no. 1/2, p. 41.

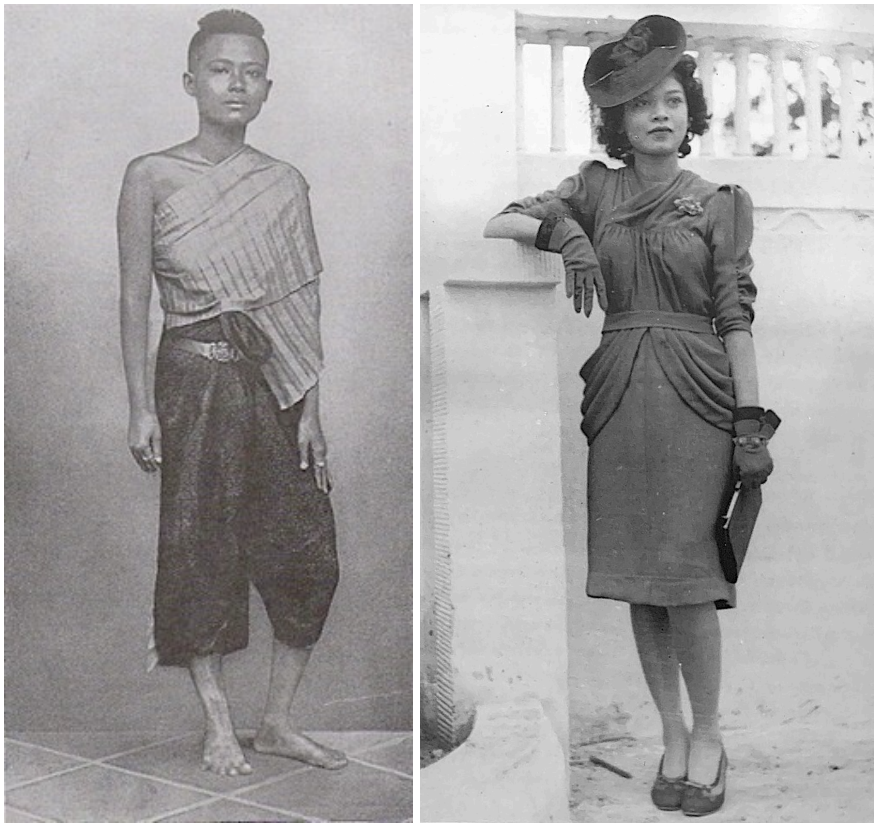
[11] Wongthes, *Where Does Thai Music Come From?,* p. 85.

common king[12], although their traditions, dialects, architecture, as well as music varied from region to region, regardless of the national boundaries. Therefore, the music which was valid to represent the nation was exclusively the music related to the king. Although western music was already introduced into the royal court of Thailand during the middle of the nineteenth century, it was solely applied to reinforce the power of the royal military band. The integration of Thai and western music during that period was not considered as a strategy to establish a new musical language for national and traditional music. It was the revolutionaries in 1932 who attempted to reform and centralise the national identity, and within this movement, there were also attempts to create a new identity for Thai music.

Research Subjects and Methodology

This dissertation focuses on one of the most critical political periods of Thailand's history, namely the Siamese Revolution of 1932, which changed Thailand's governing system from absolute monarchy to democracy – or to be exact: constitutional monarchy with military dictatorship – for the first time. Not only was the power of the highest sovereign reformed, but the political change also had an enormous impact on the culture, the traditions, the way of life, as well as the mentality of the people. The term 'civilisation' was introduced together with the new governing system and this term dominated the social policy of the country. As a result, 'civilisation' was included in the national identity. The term 'civilisation' first meant attempting to be like western countries and this permeated not only all aspects of culture but also of everyday life. The following pictures illustrate a paradigmatic shift between the old 'traditional' and the new 'civilised' attires:

[12] Christ Baker: *A History of Thailand*, Bangkok: Matichon, first edition 2014, p. 110.



Left: a Siamese woman in the court of King Rama IV.[13]
Right: a Thai woman during the nation-building period after the 1932 revolution.[14]

The photo on the left is of a Siamese woman in the court of King Rama IV and shows proper dress for women at that time. They had short hair to prevent lice. Gloves, hats or socks were never included in the attire due to the warm climate. On the right is the photo of the first-prize winner of the public dressing contest (1941), held by the government after the Siamese revolution. Apart from the attires, the postures of these two ladies are also significantly different.

Undoubtedly, Thai traditional music was also affected by the movement towards 'civilisation' after the 1932 revolution, and this is the phenomenon which this dissertation is exploring. Although there were some attempts to transcribe or rearrange Thai music into the western notation in earlier years, there were political actions implemented by the government after the Siamese revolution which led Thai music to undergo a transformation – or rebranding – framed by key concepts extracted from western music which before were foreign to Thai music. Several aesthetic concepts of western music such as tonality, harmony and performance practices, as well as its music notation were the main tools for this rebranding. As a result, the new national identity, as reflected in the traditional music, has surely

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[13] Karl Döhring: *Siam Band 1: Land und Volk*, Darmstadt: Folkwang Verlag 1923.

[14] Paibul Kanchanapibul: อนุสรณ์ครบรอบ *100* ปี ฯพณฯ จอมพล ป. พิบูลสงคราม *14* กรกฎาคม *2540 [Field-marshel P. Phibulsongkram: a century anniversary 14 July 1997]*, Lopburi (Thailand): Paholyothin Artillery Center 1997, p. 184.

profited from being standardised by adapting western elements, but it also revealed certain awkward incompatibilities from being forced into a sort of hybridised culture.
The term 'rebrand', which is used metaphorically to represent the complex change of Thai traditional music in this dissertation, is conceptually related with what rebrand usually means in the marketing field. Rebranding can be considered as 'a market strategy of giving a new name, symbol, or change in design for an already-established brand. The idea behind rebranding is to create a different identity for a brand, from its competitors, in the market'.[15] Although there is no actual commercial market involved in the scenario of Thai music in this dissertation, the evaluation of 'already-established brand' (which means the traditional music) and the struggle 'to create a different identity' remain a core principle in the course of this research.

This dissertation addresses – apart from the historical background and theoretical frameworks – three areas of study, namely: *the national anthem*, *the specific regulations for cultural reformation*, and *the hybridisation between Thai and western tone systems*. In each area diverse specific practices and historical events – together with the relevant examples and case studies – are investigated and analysed. Throughout the research, the framework of tonal western music theory is regarded as a paradigmatic canvas of analysis insofar as its standard terminology will be used as a referential frame. This mainly involves the harmonic function of diatonic scale as well as the idea of musical forms. However, it is not intended, by any means, to judge the aesthetic value of Thai music with the criteria borrowed from western music: the paradigms of western music discussed in this research rather act as a magnifying glass which investigates the dependency of Thai music upon the western musical aesthetic, by reflecting the similarity between them as well as revealing the leaning-towards-western movement of the Thai musical scene during the 1930s.
Besides the musical debates, another significant dimension of this dissertation is national identity. Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined community' is the opening perspective for this dimension. For nations exist, according to Anderson, because of a group of people who believe – or imagine – that they have a common cultural heritage. Traditional music is undoubtedly one of the artifacts determining someone's geographical and cultural origin, as languages, folk tales, or traditional cuisine do. In other words, traditional music can reflect the common identity of a group of people who share the feeling of being united within an 'imagined' boundary. Consequently, traditions, rituals, and cultural practices in an imagined community can act as a tool for manipulating the society as well. Another further sociological aspect from Eric Hobsbawm's concept of 'Invention of Tradition' is also reflected in the dissertation. This emphasises the function of Thai government after the revolution, who initiated and 'invented' several cultural practices to enhance the great nation-building movement.

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[15] The Economic Times, *Definition of 'Rebranding'*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/rebranding> [4th Aug. 2020].

The musical subjects investigated in this research are seen as the representatives of the new ‘Thai-ness’, which – directly and indirectly – correlates with the preference of the sovereign power. However, the creation of this Thai-ness is considered as a symptom of cultural schizophrenia, i.e. that Thai people are eager to achieve a new, modernised cultural uniqueness of their own nationality, but by covering it with characteristics of another culture they consider to be superior. The concept of ‘civilisation’ as opposed to ‘primitive/old-fashioned/uncivilised’ plays a determinant role in the process of nation-building in Thailand after the 1932 revolution. Thus, the desire to be Thai and the desire to be non-Thai are aroused at the same time. This cultural schizophrenia concept, introduced by the Thai contemporary scholar Kasian Tejapira, is the main theoretical perspective for observing and explaining the nationalistic ideas behind the musical works and scenes in the dissertation. Last but not least, the attempt to rebrand Thai music with elements from western music can also be observed as a cultural trade-off: to sacrifice one’s own cultural identity in order to become compatible with western culture and thus to gain international acceptance. For the case of Thailand, it is eventually the duty of the government to convince their people that this cultural sacrifice is – or will be – paid off!

Chapter 1: Historical Background and Theoretical Frameworks on National Identity and Music

1.1 Historical Background

Path to the Revolution

The Siamese revolution in 1932 would not have been considered unpredictable if the domestic and international contexts during that time are taken into consideration. In the nearby Vietnam, there were turbulent uprisings against the colonial French regime in 1930 – the series of uprisings of the Nghệ-Tĩnh-Soviets – which continued for over a year. Also, in the same year, Saya San led a rebellion against British rulers in Burma. Thailand, known as Siam at that time, was the only non-colonial state in Southeast Asia and was fully surrounded by western-dependent neighbours. Therefore, the danger of losing sovereignty was a crucial issue for the Siamese monarchy, their army and the politicians.
The initial discontent that finally led to the revolution began to accumulate because of certain dysfunctionalities during the reign of King Phrajadhipok (Rama VII). The former King Vajiravudt (Rama VI), who reigned Siam during 1910-1925, had spent vast amounts of the royal fortune on his palaces, theatrical plays as well as the funding of cultural activities. Consequently, the national statement of expenditure from 1920 to 1925 had annual budget deficits. King Rama VII, who succeeded the throne after his brother's death, reigned Siam in a difficult situation. Along with the global economic crisis, namely the Great Depression in 1929, Siam faced massive poverty among its population. One of the urgent measures taken to face the severe financial crisis was to reform the structure and situation of authorities and public officers. Accordingly, some government officials as well as military generals either lost their positions or saw their salaries reduced. Apart from that, there were also arbitrary dismissals and replacements of several positions in the government due to interventions from members of the royal family.[16] These movements caused conflicts between the high-ranking officials and the royal court: the conflicts that slowly paved a path towards revolution.

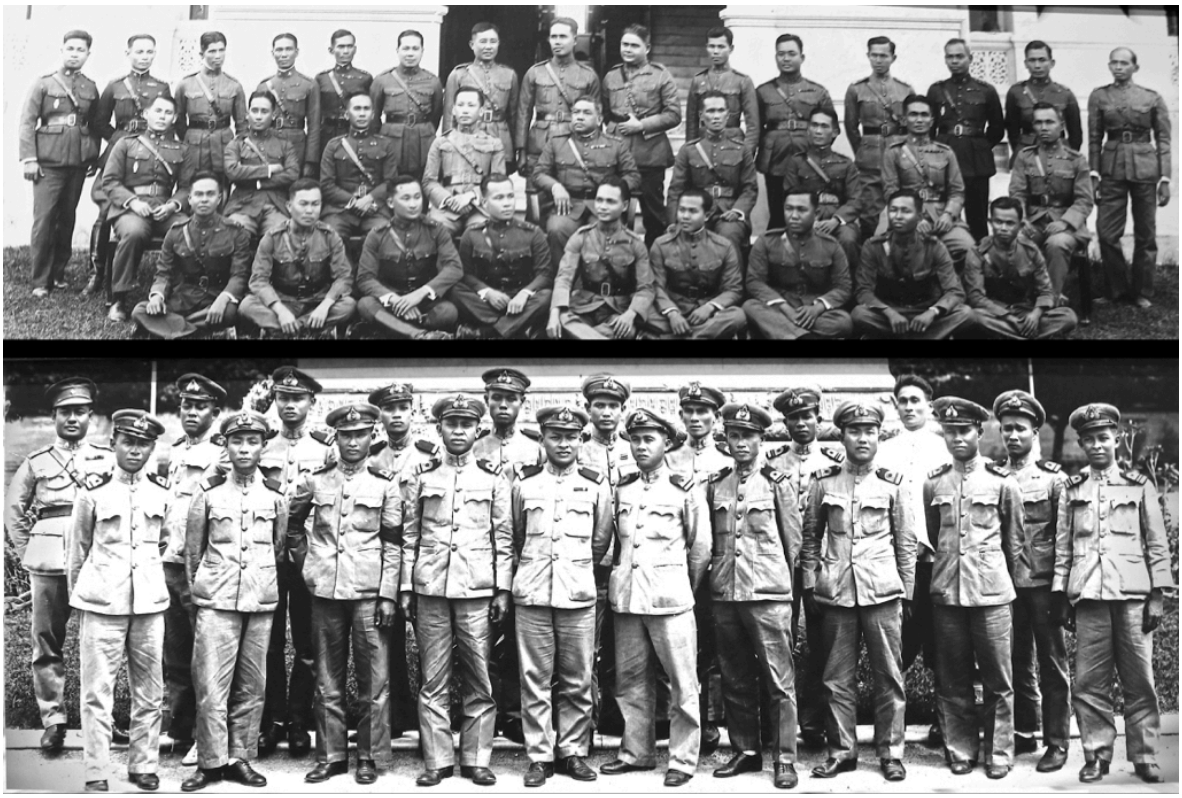
However, the economic inefficiency and the bureaucratic personal conflicts were not the only reason for the Siamese revolution. What Siamese revolutionists had longed for was democracy, a government system which had already been adopted in several western countries. The revolutionists believed that democracy would bring nationwide civilisation and efficiency in governing the country.[17] Although the idea of a voluntary transition from the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy

[16] Kiatichai Pongpanich: *Siamese Revolution of 1932*, Bangkok: Saengdao, second edition 2017, p. 51.

[17] Ibid., p. 73.

was discussed in the royal court since the reign of King Rama V, it had never been developed much further than controversial discussions and attempts to experiment with some democratic scenarios within the royal courts.[18] Furthermore, the launch of a functioning constitution was always denied or postponed under the pretext that Siam would not be sufficiently ready to adapt to the new governing system from the western world.[19]

In the beginning of the reign of King Rama VII there was a strong expectation and rumours among the liberals that the current king would finally allow Siam to have a democratic constitution. But again, King Rama VII, who seemed to be easily influenced by his conservative senior officials, never gave Siam a chance for democracy.[20] This disappointed the noble and well-educated liberals, the high ranked officials and army generals who formerly had conflicts with the government. These groups shared common interests and came out with a plan to form a revolution. They called themselves the 'People's Party' (*Khana Ratsadon*), consisting of 115 men divided into army, navy, and civil factions.



The members of the People's Party: army faction (above) and navy faction (below).
Source: King Phrajadhipok Museum, Bangkok.

[18] In 1884 there was a proposal presented to King Rama V, written by twelve nobles and Thai delegates. They suggested that the king reform the governing system by establishing a constitution. However, the king did not fulfil their wish.

[19] Ibid., p. 36.

[20] Ibid., p. 57.

The revolution took place on the early morning of 24th June 1932, while the king was staying at his vacation palace located 200 kilometres away from the capital, Bangkok. Meanwhile the soldiers of the People's Party 'gently' arrested some royal family members and held them in the palace as hostages.[21]

A senior royal officer, Prince Nakornsawan, who was one of the hostages, decided to sign the manifesto proposed by the People's Party.[22] His rash approval allowed the revolution to succeed without anyone being killed or a civil war breaking out. The manifesto of the People's Party was announced on the same day of the revolution, claiming that the cumulated inefficiencies from the royal palace had led to the national economic crisis. The party foresaw a sustainable solution for the country by replacing the absolute monarchy with a democratic parliament, hence it was necessary to make this revolution. Nevertheless, unlike Lenin's revolution in Russia, the People's Party did not aim to execute the king, or even to abolish the kingship, but rather to reform the country's sovereign power. The party soon invited the king back to the throne, under the condition that he accepted to be under the constitution formalised by the party.[23]

King Rama VII, after being informed about the revolution in Bangkok, agreed to return back to the capital city and continued his reign as the King of Siam. However, the king later had controversial conflicts with the Party and decided to abdicate the throne in 1935, leaving Siam even more unclear about its governmental status.

The First Siamese Constitution and its Regime

Three days after the revolution, the People's Party created a temporary version of a constitution, indicating that the three elements of sovereign power: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, which once entirely belonged to the king, had been shifted to the constitution. However, there was a strong push back against the new regime, due to the reasoning that most of the Siamese population were not prepared for the sudden change of their governing system.[24] According to this argument, the Party planned a road-map to achieve a stable democratic parliament with the three following phases:

Phase 1: The People's Party will hold the sovereign power until Siam reaches Phase 2. By this time the Party alone will nominate 70 parliament members. This phase should not last longer than six months.

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[21] Ibid., p. 98.

[22] The manifesto read: 'People's Party is now holding the entire sovereign power of Siam. Our main purpose is establishing a constitution. We plead all the officers and the people for peaceful reactions and we would like to avoid any kind of bloody violence.' Ibid., p. 103.

[23] Ibid., p. 104-106.

[24] Ibid., p. 110.

Phase 2: Half of the members of the parliament will be elected by the people and the other half are selected members transferred from Phase 1.

Phase 3: When more than half of the entire Siamese population have achieved primary-level education – but not longer than 10 years from the beginning of this temporary constitution – all members of the parliament will be solely derived from the general election by the people.

The first 70 parliament members nominated by the People's Party during the first phase were the Party's own members, high ranking soldiers, as well as some former senior royal officials. Although the members shared certain positive attitudes towards democracy and countenance to the revolution, this alone could not guarantee the stability of the new regime.[25] The very first conflict in the parliament arose already from the nomination of the president of the parliament. Phraya Monopakornnititada, a well-regarded royalist judiciary, was selected for this position by the majority of the Party and thus he became the first Prime Minister of Siam. Meanwhile Prince Baworndeja, another potential candidate who was strongly supported by the military, failed in his attempt. This tension eventually burst out into a rebellion against the government in 1933, in which Prince Baworndeja was one of the main leaders.

However, the regime under Phraya Monopakornnititada was officially (and symbolically) approved by King Rama VII in December 1932, together with Siam's first constitution. Then, the first council of ministers was formed, consisting of 20 ministers selected from the members of parliament. Among those 20 ministers (including the prime minister) the majority of them were either direct members or representatives from the People's Party. From this point of view, the Siamese revolution was merely an act that shifted the sovereign power from the king into the hands of the People's Party. The promised path towards ideal democracy actually lay under the government which was fully controlled by the Party. In other words: it was a switch from the absolute monarchy to the dictatorship of one single political party.

Political Instabilities After the Revolution

The Siamese government after the 1932 revolution encountered steady after-shocks due to their internal conflicts and controversies. A significant crack began with the radical national economic plan proposed by Pridi Banomyong, an important member from the civil faction of the People's Party. The so-called 'academic of the Party', Banomyong designed a special economic plan which more or less resembled those in communist countries. His plan centred on the proposal to transfer the entire farmlands into state ownership. Thus, all the agricultural products were supposed to be traded only by the government. The farmers – without ownership of the lands –

[25] Ibid., p.120.

would earn from the government in the form of bonds, which they could use to pay for their necessities and household goods from the state's common public stores. This strategy would get rid of the involvement of intermediary traders who had been controlling the price of the agricultural products from the farmers. This radical idea split the Party into two: the proponents and opponents. The prime minister was in the latter camp and so was the king, who commented that 'this project [Banomyong's economic plan] is certainly identical with the one used in Russia'.[26] Due to this conflict, the prime minister had to dismiss the first council of parliament in March 1933, just nine months after the revolution.

Another significant consequence from Banomyong's economic proposal was concretised in the Communist Act written in 1933. This marked a critical point of Thailand's political direction: communism is definitely to be denied.[27] Later on, during the stream of national identity building, the term 'communist' was intensively used to defame the government's enemies.

The turbulence within the parliament quickly led Siam to a new Coup d'état on 20th June 1933, just a few days before they could celebrate the first anniversary of the revolution. The People's Party pushed Phraya Manopakornnititada away from the prime minister's seat and replaced him with Phraya Paholpolpayuhasena, their newly preferred leader who was also the highest commander of the Royal Thai Army at that time.

The new government seemed to get along well again with Banomyong. He was allowed to return back to Siam from his exile abroad after having been banned from the country by the previous government due to Banomyong's communistic influences. His return brought up another turbulence, namely the rebellion led by Prince Boworadet, in October 1933. Prince Boworadet's rebellion claimed to protect His Majesty from being insulted by the Party and they priorly required the government to 'eternally maintain kingship in Siam under the constitution' as well as some other conditions to restrain the power of the army and the People's Party.[28]

However, the rebellious act of Prince Boworadet and his supporters was suppressed by the government before they could achieve success. Due to the fact that Prince Boworadet – who was formerly a potential candidate to be the first prime minister, although the majority of the Party did not choose him – was one of the royal members and a relative of King Rama VII, they suspected the king himself was also a supporter of the attempt at rebellion.[29] The relationship between the king and the government became tense since that point. Along with some other disagreements

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[26] Ibid., p.128.

[27] The beginning of the Communist Act, from the Thailand Royal Decree dated on 2nd April 1933, reads: 'His Majesty the king [Rama VII] announces his words: any attempt of initiating communistic movement in Thailand is considered disastrous for the country and the entire population.'

[28] Ibid., p. 145.

[29] Baker, *A History of Thailand*, p. 190-191.

on the newly launched legislation, including stricter heritage laws, King Rama VII finally decided to abdicate his throne in March 1934.[30] The People's Party and the government had to find a solution to drive the Siamese constitutional monarchy forward.

The Rise of Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram's Fascist Regime and the New Nationalism Stream in Thailand

The eldest son of the Mahidol family, Anandamahidol, whose deceased father was a son of King Rama V, was invited by the Siamese government to become the next king after the unexpected vacancy of the throne. The new king, Rama VIII, was only 9 years old at that time and his single-mother family including his younger brother Bhumibol (later King Rama IX) were living in Lausanne. Anandamahidol accepted the coronation but decided to stay in Switzerland to finish his education before making a permanent return. Yet in an unexpected and dramatic turn of events King Ananamahidol was murdered in his bedroom during his temporary visit to Bangkok in June 1946. The murderer has remained unidentified until today but three palace servants were sentenced to death. His brother, Bhumibol, immediately replaced him and the reign of King Rama IX began the very next day.
Between 1935 and 1946 when the young Anandamahidol was spending most of his time in Switzerland and there was no king resident in Siam (the king's position was instead served by the assigned regents), the Siamese government slowly became militaristic. The aftermath resulting from Prince Boworadet's rebellion shifted the focus of the government on to the stability of the sovereign. Therefore, the power of the army was significantly strengthened. The number of Siamese soldiers was doubled during this period.[31]

Plaek Phibulsongkram (1897-1964), who was the minister of defence in 1934 and also a member of the People's Party, increased in popularity and became admiral during this legislature. Phibulsongkram was fascinated by the nationalistic movements in Japan, England and Germany. As minister of defence he founded a national youth army in order to enhance military trainings among the youth, and intensively propagandised about the Siamese army through official radio channels. His motto 'The nation is our home, thus the army is our fence', was repeatedly reported in the media.[32]

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[30] Pongpanich, *Siamese Revolution of 1932*, p. 147.

[31] Baker, *A History of Thailand*, p. 196.

[32] Ibid., p. 196.

Phibulsongkram's nationalistic policies were widely accepted and enjoyed great support. In 1938, after the third election, Phibulsongkram became the third Prime Minister of Siam with 35% support from the electorate.[33]

The political turbulence of World War II challenged the stability of Siam. Japan started to aggressively invade mainland China (1938) and French Indochina (1940). Siam, situated in the middle of the region and already hosting numerous communities of well-established Chinese, had to find an optimal solution to cope with this situation. In order to protect the country from the colonial troops, Phibulsongkram promoted a nationalistic creed of uniting the entire population – including the Chinese living in Siam – under the spirit of one common nation. Moreover, he believed in a radical dictatorial ideology: the whole country could only survive by having only one reliable leader. He entitled himself field marshal in 1942, launched his signature motto 'Trust the leader, then your country is safe!', and required his portrait to be displayed in every household.[34]

Cover of a school notebook with a portrait of Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram, together with the slogan 'Trust the leader, then your country is safe'.[35]

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[33] Nakarin Mektrirat: การปฏิวัติสยาม พ.ศ. *2475 [1932 Siamese Revolution]*, Bangkok: Samesky, fifth edition 2010, p. 444.

[34] Baker, *A History of Thailand*, p. 197.

[35] http://oknation.nationtv.tv/blog/Buzz/2011/04/08/entry-2 [27th Sep. 2020].

After the revolution, the government began to look at Japan as a role model for nation-building. Since Japan, which was already regarded as one of the leading nations of Asia at that time, had developed and modernised the country during the Meji era (1868-1912) mainly by westernisation, industrialisation, as well as militarisation.[36] In 1933, members of the Siamese parliament made an official visit to Japan: visiting four Japanese metropolitans and investigating several industries, public schools, newspaper publishers, and many government institutions. Moreover, a mutually desired military relationship between Siam and Japan also started to grow. Thus Siam – fascinated by the Japanese model – aimed to design its own national development under the new governing system by modernising the national culture, promoting education and economic growth, and at the same time, strengthening its military power.[37]

Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram posed on the cover of the Japanese magazine Shashinshuhou*, released on the anniversary of the Siamese revolution, 24th June 1941.*[38]

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[36] Nattapoll Chaiching: **ตามรอยอาทิตย์อุทัย***:* **แผนสร้างชาติไทยสมัยคณะราษฎร** *[Following Japan: Thailand's nation-building during the time of People's Party]*, Bangkok: Matichon 2020, p. 11.

[37] Ibid. p. 13.

[38] Source: https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-53399231 [27th Sep. 2020].

The government under Field Marshal Phibulsongkram spoke about becoming ‘a great empire’ so that Siam would not be ‘swallowed by the other greater countries’.[39] Accordingly, Phibulsongkram launched a set of twelve cultural mandates, or *Rathniyom* (literally: state customs), in order to establish a civilised culture for Siamese, which he believed to constitute an important key in strengthening the country. These twelve *Rathniyoms*, launched during 1939-1942, left significant imprints on the national identity of Siam and many of those imprints are still perceivable in the present day. Therefore, looking at the following mandates provides essential clues to understanding the dynamic cultural reform of that period:

The first *Rathniyom* (1939) announced the renaming of the country from Siam to Thailand. Since the government wanted to name the country by the race of the people (Thai). Phibulsongkram gave the following reason to the parliament for his wish to rename the country:

> We call our current country name [Siam] just due to our custom. This name is simply delivered from the former generation. We have asked historians to trace back the name, but they could not find out since when this land has been called Siam and by whom. […] Our Thai people, especially in rural areas, do not really use the name ‘Siam’ but rather ‘Thai’. […] Moreover, most other countries do call themselves by their race, therefore I see a conflict in using Thai for the race but Siam for the country.[40]

After changing the name of the country to Thailand, the Royal Institute of Thailand, who was in charge of standardising the national language, added the new terminology ‘Thai’ in the national dictionary, giving its meaning as ‘being independent, or being free from slavery’.[41]

The third mandate (also in 1939) emphasised the unity of Thailand by abandoning regional subcategories of the people, i.e. northern-Thai, southern-Thai, southeastern-Thai etc. Hence forth, all of them were to be called ‘Thai’ without any prefix or suffix to differentiate according to origin or race.[42]

The ninth mandate (1940) focused on Thai language. It read ‘Thai people must praise, respect and admire Thai language, as well as feel honoured when they speak Thai […] and it is everyone’s responsibility to promote Thai literacy to the uneducated people’.[43] Field Marshal Phibulsongkram thus reformed Thai language

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[39] Baker, *A History of Thailand*, p. 207.

[40] Pon Ittarom: จาก *‘สยาม’* มาเป็น *‘ไทย’* แล้วทำไม *‘ไทย’* จึงต้องมี *‘ย’ [From ‘Siam’ to ‘Thai’]*, in: *Silpawattanatham*, <https://www.silpa-mag.com/club/art-and-culture/article_2224> [15th November 2018].

[41] Ibid.

[42] Royal Thai Government Gazette vol. 56, p. 1281, August 1939.

[43] Royal Thai Government Gazette vol. 57, p. 151-152, June 1940.

by simplifying it – thirteen consonants (out of 44) and five vowels (out of 32) were abolished – so that the language became less complicated and more practical for the local people to learn. The strategy to widely promote the knowledge of the standardised national language can be seen as one of the tools to promote nationalism, as well as to introduce the new, modern national identity in the framework of language, in which the old, redundant writing grammars are neglected.[44]

The tenth mandate (1941), titled 'How Thai people should dress', stated that Thais must avoid being seen in public when improperly dressed, such as 'topless, or wearing only underwear or loincloth'. This appearance was considered 'impolite and inappropriate for Thai culture'.[45]

The fourth and eighth mandates (1939 and 1940) which concern the national and royal anthems, and significantly influenced Thai society, are going to be discussed separately in later chapters.

Apart from the cultural reforms officially announced in the mandates, there were also several miscellaneous inventions which were introduced during the regime of Phibulsongkram in order to create a particular national identity. Those inventions included, for example, Pad Thai, or fried noodle in 'Thai style' – normally noodles are perceived in Thailand as Chinese food – or the standardised greeting word 'Sawasdee' which serves exactly the same function as saying 'Hello' or 'Good morning' in English. In the past Thais had no specific greeting phrase. People commonly greeted by asking 'Where have you been?' or 'Have you already eaten?'.[46] Furthermore, the government also symbolised the idea of anti-conservative and the concept of equality under the constitution in several architectural works: by replacing the redundant decorative figures which related to the Siamese aristocratic mythology with simple geometrical patterns, and constructing public buildings with 'plain' design, i.e. avoiding any elements referring to the image of the monarchy, such as gable roofs or curvy ornamentations.[47]

In the aftermath of World War II, Thailand faced an economic crisis and political conflicts. The regime of Phibulsongkram lost its strength and trustworthiness during this period. Phibulsongkram's cultural 'inventions' and the mandates were not highly

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[44] Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt: 'Letters and State: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Writing Reforms during the 1930s-1940s', in: *Humanities Journal* (Kasetsart University) Vol.25 No.2 (2018), p. 308-310.

[45] Royal Thai Government Gazette vol. 58, p. 113, January 1941.

[46] Barai: ที่มาของคำว่าสวัสดี *[The Origin of the Word Sawasdee]*, in: *Thairath*, <https://www.thairath.co.th/content/516944> [8th October 2018].

[47] Chatri Prakitnontakarn: ศิลปะสถาปัตยกรรมคณะราษฎร สัญลักษณ์ทางการเมืองในเชิงอุดมการ *[Art and Architecture from the People's Party - a Political Symbol]*, Bangkok: Mathichon Publishing 2009, p. 208-212.

regarded by the succeeding government as they had previously been. However, the new national identity initiated by the regime of Phibulsongkram had already spread and became ingrained throughout Thai society.

1.2 Theoretical Frameworks on National Identity and Music

How is National Identity Defined?

The definition of 'national identity' is relatively broad and it entwines various discourses. In order to investigate the nationalistic characters in a musical work, it is important to set up a clear direction suggesting how, and at which dimensions, the national identity is regarded. Musical ideas that reflect national identity can appear in several forms, for example: quoting passages from folklore tunes, using specific harmony and rhythms which are related to traditional music, writing lyrics that refer to the history or sagas of the country, or assigning the function of music that serves the country's patriotic purpose etc. However, all these attempts require a certain image of the nation – in other words: the concept of how the nation should be perceived in the composition – so that the entire message of the work moves towards the same goal.
The perspectives on national identity can be roughly divided into two theories: *primordialism*, believing that nation and ethnic are 'given' to individuals by historical experiences and thus they are fixed and unchanging, while *constructivism* argues that nation and ethnic are not historically given, but they are fluid and adaptive qualities. The constructivist camp, also implies that individuals are willing to alter their national identity if this contributes to an economic or political profit to them. Therefore, national identity can be used as a political tool, so that certain interest groups can increase their social acceptance and political power.[48]

In Benedict Anderson's renowned 'Imagined Communities', he suggests that a nation is not a naturally generated entity but an imaginary community. This means that the members of the nation must have a certain common conception about their community in their mind. This idea, according to Anderson, is based on the assumption that the nation has limited boundaries and its own sovereign. Its sovereign power is derived from the enlightenment movements and the revolutions of the past, which had been trying to destruct the legitimacy of the 'divinely-ordained hierarchical dynastic realm'.[49] However, despite continuing inequities and exploitation in the nation, the members of the nation still perceive the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' among them as holding together their imagined community.[50]
From the concept above, Anderson defines the present-day existing nations and nationalities as a modern invention, or 'cultural artifacts of a particular kind', made

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[48] Niti Pawakapan: ชวนถก ชาติและชาติพันธุ์ *[Discussing Nation and Ethnicity]*, Bangkok: Siamparitad 2015, p. 50-52.

[49] Ibid., p. 101.

[50] Ibid., p. 102.

by their governments.[51] This invention is conditioned and standardised by the sovereign power. In addition, effective communication technologies are needed. They are the tools that bind the people of the nation together.

According to Walker Corner, a national bond is nothing apart from a psychological bond. This is created from the 'language of kinship' which also includes music, and literatures.[52] Corner believes that the language of kinship is the medium which convinces people they are ancestrally related and belong to one common extended family. Therefore, the essence of nation is intangible and relates closely to the emotions and subconscious of the members. Since a nation is perceived as a large family with communal ancestors from the past – although this is rather a perception and not a fact – Corner suggests that the term 'nationalism' would be better understood if it is replaced by ‚ethnonationalism'.

Adjacent to Corner's assumption that a nation must have an ancient bond which entwines people of the nation from the past to the present together, the British historian Eric Hobsbawm further suggests that some components of the bond are 'invented'. In 'The Invention of Tradition', Hobsbawm tries to convey that there are traditions which were 'invented, constructed and formally instituted' and traditions which emerged 'in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period'.[53]
Sets of practices, rituals or acts of a symbolic nature are subsets of Hobsbawm's invented traditions. They are controlled either openly or discretely by the accepted rulers who aim to establish certain values and norms in the society. In line with this, those traditions require constant repetitions in order to accomplish the goal. Hobsbawm believes that those traditions 'normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past'. Since the references to the past are mostly artificial, the repetition of the traditions must be mandatory.

National anthems (the British, which is regarded as the earliest one, was introduced around 1740) and national flags are prominent examples. They were created by inventing a set of coherent historic narratives in forms of semi-fictions or legends. Then, with support from musical elements, invented rituals and symbolic representations of colours and shapes – national anthems and flags become a significant identifiable sign of the national identity. An example of this in Thailand is the oldest university in the nation, Chulalongkorn University, whose annual ceremony closely corresponds to Hobsbawm's theory. Before their first semester starts, the freshmen students of Chulalongkorn University attend a ceremony paying

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[51] Ibid., p. 102.

[52] Ibid., p.106.

[53] Eric Hobsbawm: 'Inventing Traditions', in: *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, p. 1.

respect to the former King Rama V, who is regarded as the founder of the university. Although what the king actually founded was merely an internal school for the palace's pages in 1902. It took more than a decade until the school expanded and became a university in 1916. At the ceremony, more than one thousand freshmen and freshwomen, dressed up in the special uniform, gather together in front of the king's statues. They simultaneously recite a pledge of being loyal to their home country and showing gratitude to the former kings, for they established the university. Then the students prostrate on the ground, with the manner used for showing reverence to kings since ancient times. However, this ceremony was actually invented in 1997 and it has been playing an important role in the identity of the students since then. During the ceremony in 2017, some members of the student committee refused to prostrate. Instead, they stood up and bowed, claiming that it is the civilised manner of paying respect. As a consequence, the university's vice-rector dismissed them from the board of the student committee.[54]

Students of Chulalongkorn University paying respect to King Rama V during the ceremony.[55]

[54] Chulalongkorn University order no. 4929/2017, on 30th August 2017.

[55] https://www.chula.ac.th/cuinside/2505/ [30th March 2019].

How is Thai-ness Defined?

Looking specifically into the framework of Thailand's national identity, Kasian Tejapira (1957-), one of the leading contemporary Thai sociologists, proposed a relevant theory. In his 'Sublimation of Thai-ness'[56] Tejapira explains how Thai national identity, during globalisation in the recent decades, has been transformed into a superficial, essence-less crust. In other words, Thai-ness has become something similar to an instant package which is ready to be used for wrapping anything which is irrelevant to Thai culture (i.e. foreign commodities, persons, cultures etc.), so that they could claim themselves 'Thai' and enjoy certain benefits from being so. The benefits of having such a 'Thai-etiquette' may vary: it can produce economic benefits, for a country can promote its consumer and cultural goods easier with a concrete national identity. On the other hand, this Thai-ness can also be a tool for the sovereign to make propaganda and manipulate nationalism: it allows the government to easily fabricate 'Thai-ness' subjects and urge the people to appreciate them, giving the reason that they are the subjects which belong to the national identity.

Due to the stream of globalisation and simultaneous attempts from the government to centralise the national culture, especially in the 1980s, Thailand has faced a strong paradox when trying to preserve its national identity. When Thai people define their national identity, Tejapira theorises, they face the 'desire to be Thai' and 'desire to be un-Thai' coming up at the same time. Hence the term 'cultural schizophrenia' is used to characterise this paradoxical behaviour.[57]
When a Thai person shows his desire to be Thai and tries to convince people to accept that desire, it means he is currently considering himself as someone who is 'not Thai' or 'not Thai enough' and thus wants to become another 'better Thai'. This desire obviously reveals his anxiety and dissatisfaction concerning his own sense of national identity because being Thai is completely valid on its own without desiring to become it again. In short, it is 'the alienation or othering of Thai-ness from oneself'[58] that allows him to invent a new kind of Thai-ness which would be more satisfying to him.
On the other hand, the desire to be un-Thai is aroused by the need to become more competent in the globalised world. In order to survive in the competitive international markets, one must present oneself with an internationally accepted image which mostly differs from his own primitive traditional roots. In this case, the desire to be a 'better Thai' is driven by the desire to become something other than what has been already defined – traditionally or culturally – as Thai. As a consequence, this identity

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[56] Kasian Tejapira: *Consuming Thainess*, Bangkok: Samesky, third edition 2015, p.143.

[57] Ibid., p. 135-138.

[58] Ibid., p. 159.

conflict, i.e. cultural schizophrenia, is followed by two coherent reactions: ‘sublimation of Thai-ness’ and ‘sublimation of un-Thai-ness’.

Tejapira borrows the term ‘sublimation’ from chemistry as a keyword to metaphorically explain this phenomenon. Sublimation is a purification process whereby a solid is heated until it turns into gas in order to get rid of the contaminated substances, then the gas is condensed back to the purified solid state. From this perspective, the sublimation of Thai-ness is when any kind of Thai identities are purified by omitting their less-favourable characters, especially those considered as primitive or rural. Then, this purified Thai-ness is redefined into a rigid, inflexible framework which contains only positive images representing the national identity. These purified images function as a ready-to-use frame: any objects or conceptual ideas can sneak into this frame and they are automatically regarded as Thai.

The purified, solid Thai-frame can be seen in traditional loincloth ‘*Jongkrabane*’, traditional children games, or the classical masked dance ‘*Khon*’. These examples were used as the subjects in an advertisement project for promoting Thai culture in 1994.[59] Tejapira argues that these objects are merely museums-objects which are almost never found alive in Thai society. Thus, the purified image of Thai-ness after the sublimation usually possesses solemn, antique, unchanged and respectful character. Hence it is Thai-ness which is useless, unpractical and dull.[60]

Examples of the purified Thai-ness: a couple of Khon*-dancers in front of a temple, illustrated on the cover of a schoolbook entitled ‘Thai Identity’ (2011).*

[59] Ibid., p. 136.

[60] Ibid., p. 145.

Examples of the purified Thai-ness: a group of Thai children, wearing Jongkrabane*, playing a traditional game in front of an ancient pagoda, illustrated on the cover of an educational publication entitled 'Thai styles: the traditional games' (presumably 2018).*

The sublimation of Thai-ness is actually only one side of the coin. At the same time there is also the 'sublimation of un-Thai-ness' running on the other side. In this part someone's desire to appreciate something non-Thai without losing his own egoistic desire to be Thai is achieved by attaching that non-Thai-ness with images which superficially resemble Thai characteristics. Therefore, the un-Thai-ness becomes compatible with his national identity. Tejapira gives an example of a Thai rapper who wrote his own rap-song with the following refrain: 'who wants to rap then just rap on, but don't ignore to preserve your Thai culture.'[61] This rapper tries to present his desire to be Thai by including in his rap (which is totally not Thai culture) lyrics showing an attitude to preserve Thai-ness. Thus, the un-Thai-ness of the rap is sublimated and his song can be perceived as a 'Thai' rap-song.[62]

To conclude, the process of sublimation of Thai-ness and un-Thai-ness in the age of globalisation gradually creates a new perception of Thai-ness. Thai identity is therefore purified, spiritualised and exteriorised until it results in 'a neutral, practical, but meaningless mantle which is ready for any identity commodity to put on'.[63] The entire process is summarised in the following graphic:

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[61] Billy Ogan: สวัสดีแร็พโย่*! [Sawasdee-Rap-Yo!]*, audiocassette, Bangkok: Kita Entertainment, 1994.

[62] Ibid., p. 143.

[63] Ibid., p. 161.

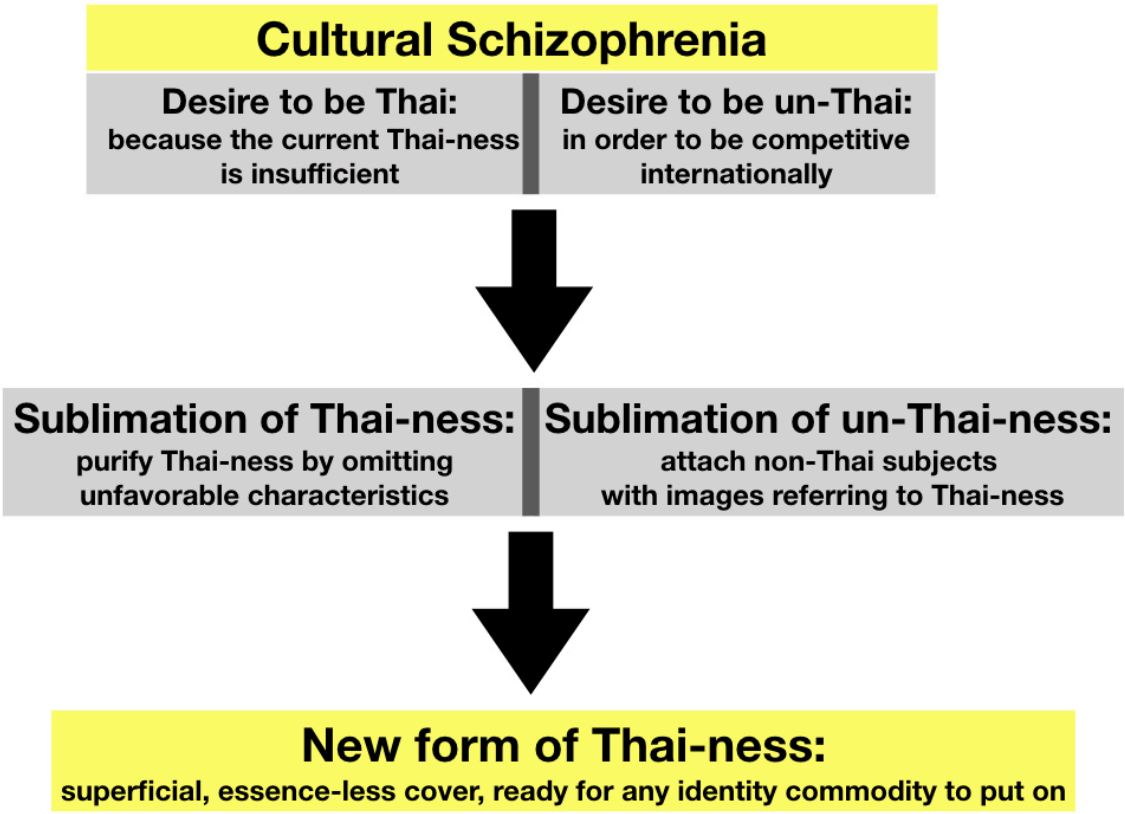


Diagram showing the creation of the new Thai-ness, according to Kasian Tejapira.

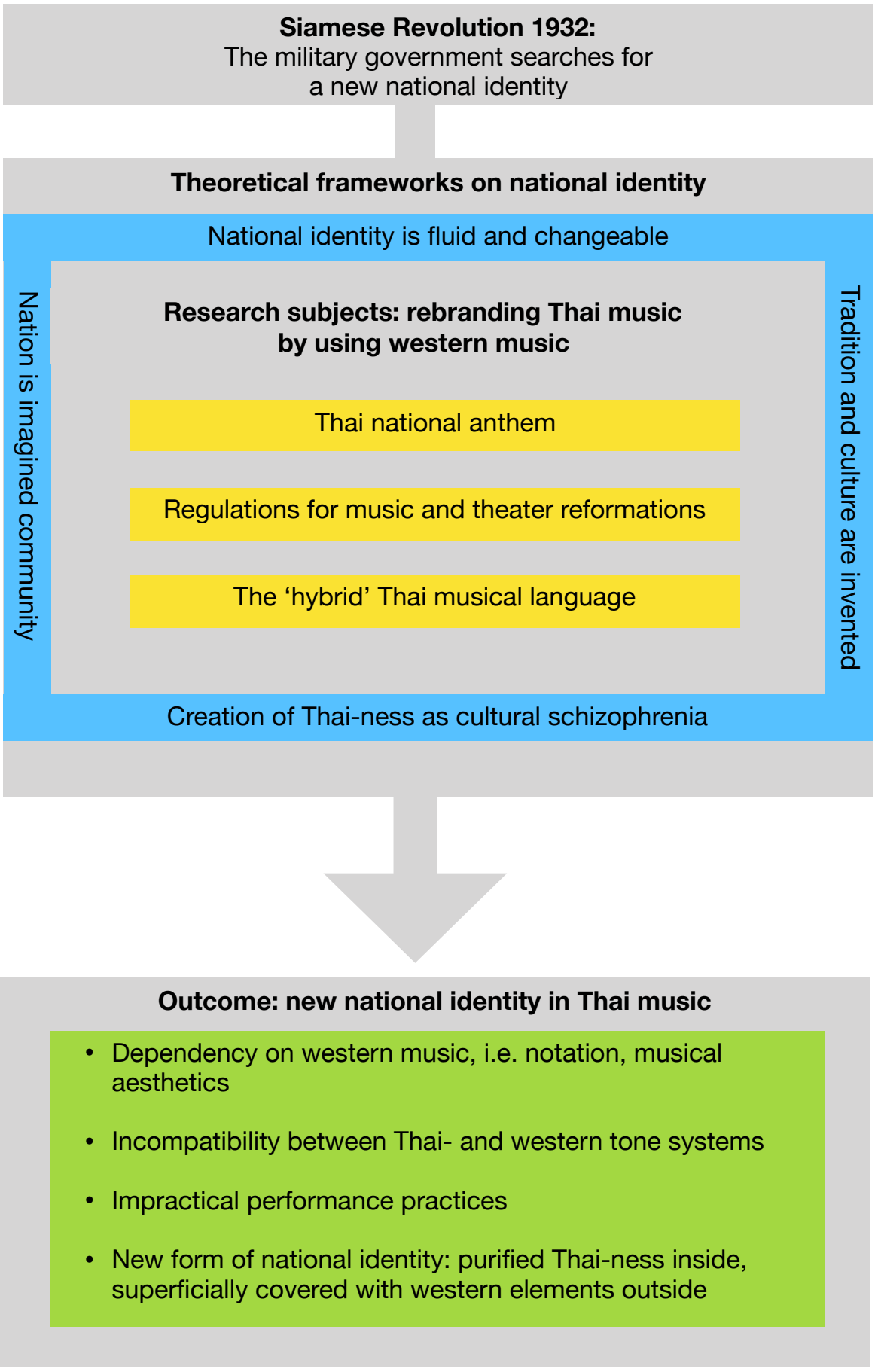
Thai-ness and Thai music

In the research subjects of this dissertation, Thai national identity – seen from the perspective that it is fluid, imaginary, and not fully derived from ancestors but rather newly invented – is the core of the investigation. This perspective guides the direction of musical and historical analysis of each work, as well as the supportive evidence from the social and political contexts surrounding the research subject. Although it is not possible to give a definitive answer to the question: *What is Thai-ness in Thai music?*, this dissertation tries to show that Thai national identity implied in the national music is not at all 'authentic', but rather a product designed by borrowing the elements from the west.

Anderson believes that a nation is an imagined community, this assumption consequently leads to another point: the boundary of Thai-ness in Thai music can be considered an imaginary frame as well! As mentioned before, the music in Thailand and in the other Southeast Asian countries are very similar in terms of their musical language, as well as the instruments. Therefore, it is the task of the sovereign to 'invent' parameters which indicate the authenticity of their national music. Before 1932, during the period of absolute monarchy in Siam, the 'imagined' Thai-ness in music was its relationship with the royal houses. Then the Siamese revolution 'reinvented' the new concept of Thai-ness, by shifting the core of the

nation to the people, as well as trying to prove that Thai culture is not primitive but it is as civilised as western culture. The change of boundaries within Thai national identity, seen in the musical evidence during the 1930s, corresponds to the constructivist perspective, which emphasises that the identity of one's nation is not absolutely authentic nor entirely transferred from the past history, but it is invented and changeable.
Again, to be able to propagandise the new national identity to the people, new traditions had to be invented. Thailand's rulers in the 1930s legislated cultural policies that profoundly affected the domestic musical scene. These policies forced the traditional music and theatrical performances to be confronted with new, unusual practices which aimed to reform the national culture with western aesthetic. Undeniably, this implementation triggered conflicts and incompatibilities. In order to assure the successful establishment of these changes, the new invented tradition had to be intensively reiterated, under strict official control. Therefore, the military-reinforced government derived from the revolution offers an ideal platform to investigate how the rulers instilled their invented tradition and culture on the people and how they used it to design the national identity.

When focusing on the musical language of Thai music, i.e. the tone system and the harmony, it should be noted that Thai music significantly depends on western music. This dependence can be seen, according to Kasien Tejapira, as cultural schizophrenia. Since the government believed that the existing Thai traditional music was not adequate to fulfil their ideal Thai-ness, they had to search for other elements and make them become 'Thai'. The Thai national anthem is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The government rejected all previous anthems written in a traditional style and wished a new anthem that sounded similar to French *Marseillaise*. Furthermore, during that time there were attempts to define Thai music by relating it to the tone system and harmony of western music, in order to make Thai music suitable for western instruments and to be internationally accepted and regarded as 'high culture' like western classical music. As a result, the style and inner structure of Thai music became mutated because many determinant characteristics are not compatible with the tonal system or formal language of western music. Still, this hybrid musical language was validated and appreciated by the government and the elites. It was considered as the new purified Thai-ness they were proud of. It is the Thai-ness which was invented, was imagined to be historically authentic, and was attached to the identity of another nation.
The following diagram roughly summarises the methodological overview of this dissertation:

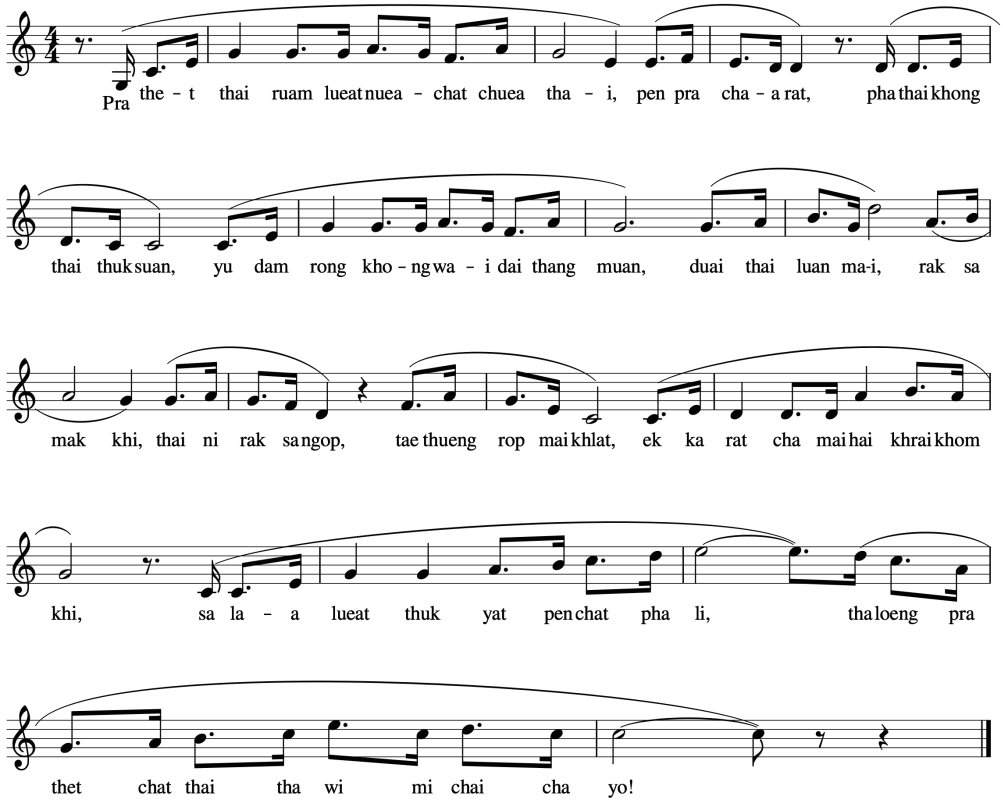


The outline of the methodology of this dissertation.

Chapter 2: The National Anthem of Thailand: The National Identity Between the Notes

2.1 The Anthem and its Current Ritual

It is a daily ritual in every Thai school: all students must gather either in front of their classrooms or in the schoolyard shortly before the first lesson starts. Everyone stands in their own rows with boys and girls separated. Each row begins with the smallest student from each classroom and the tallest stands at the end of the row. Therefore, everyone has to remember the exact order. This typical school morning routine very much resembles a military parade: if it is seen from bird-eye view, it gives a stunning impression of how disciplined Thai students are. Hundreds of students – dressed up properly in their school uniforms – are getting ready for an important ceremony before they are allowed to start their lessons.
Then, the national anthem is played at eight o'clock, either by a student marching band, or from a recording or a radio.[64] The anthem is a lively march: starting with a short, vigorous introduction, a somewhat peaceful melody in the middle, and a heroic phrase rising up to the highest note at the end. While everyone is standing still (during the march-like music being played!) and singing the anthem, the national flag is simultaneously raised slowly towards the top of the pole in front of them.
The melody of the anthem is scored below:



The melody of the current Thai national anthem.

[64] *It could also be 10-20 minutes before 8 am for some schools, as they might start the first lesson earlier.*

During a morning Kao Rop Thong Chat ceremony in a school in Bangkok (2013).[65]

This happens not only in schools, the national anthem is also heard every day at eight o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening in public places such as parks, train stations, markets and government offices. This phenomenon may surprise foreign visitors, especially westerners, when they see the whole mass of local people at subway stations suddenly standing still as the hymn is being played during the morning and evening rush hours. No one would dare to move forwards to the train before the last note ends. The reason for standing still is because if one would move, he or she could arise unpleasant reactions from the surrounding people: as the solemn moment of praising their national symbol is disturbed. An article in an online forum for foreign travellers in Thailand advises about this ritual:

> Thailand takes its national anthem extremely seriously. Played twice a day, morning and evening, every day Thais treat the national anthem with great respect and expect everyone else to do the same.[66]

The ritual is called 'Kao Rop Thong Chat' – literally translated as 'paying respect to the national flag'. It is regarded as an official practice for Thai people since 1939. The regulation was written in the Cultural Mandates from the regime of General Marshal Phibulsongkram:[67]

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[65] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rN59KpC1oaM> [3rd April 2016].

[66] Tasty Thailand, *How to Behave When Thailand's National Anthem Is Played* <http://tastythailand.com/how-to-behave-when-thailands-national-anthem-is-played/> [5th April 2016].

[67] About the Cultural Mandates, see chapter 1, pages 19-21.

> When one hears the national anthem played, either from government's institutions or from private events, one is obliged to pay respect to the anthem […]

and the mandate continues:

> If one notices any people who does not pay respect to the situations stated in the rule no. 3 [the rule mentioned above], one should warn and declare them about the significance of paying respect to the national flag and the anthem […]

Thailand's national anthem, or *Pleng Chat* (literally translated as 'national song'), is regarded as an important social artifact which signalises and emphasises the nationalistic consciousness for Thai people. Although the current version of *Pleng Chat* is an outcome of the 1932 revolution, and the ritual 'Kao Rop Thong Chat' is – as seen from Hobsbawm's perspective – their 'invented tradition', the historical background of having a common song representing the national identity in Thailand can be traced back to the nineteenth century.

2.2 History of the National Anthem: The National Identity Through Five Songs

The Anthems Before 1932: *God Save the Queen*, *The Drifting Moon*, and *Sansern Phra Barami*

God Save the Queen

Before the revolution of 1932, the definition of national anthem was not the same as present-day. 'Nation' was defined and understood differently during the age of absolute monarchy. Under the centralised regime of the Siamese Kingdom – i.e. around the 1890s, when the Siamese dynasties from the middle region had successfully colonised the neighbouring territories along Chao Phraya river – local people were tied to the nation by swearing to serve their lives to the king and to let themselves be protected under his holy power.[68] In short, nationality meant to which king one belongs to. Within this concept, the national anthem before 1932 could not be something other than the music used for representing the king: a royal reception anthem.[69]

The first trace of a Siamese national anthem understood as a royal reception song is dated around 1852, in the era of King Rama IV (1804-1868). The Siamese royal court hired two English soldiers from India, Captain Impey[70] and Mr. Thomas George Knox (1824-1887), to train their army.[71] Impey and Knox simply took the English national hymn *God Save the Queen* as a piece for rehearsing the Siamese military band as well as for practicing their marching. Later on, the hymn was used as reception music for the king.[72] Obviously, these two English men knew the hymn well from their country of origin, therefore it is plausible to suppose that the Siamese military band under Impey and Knox's coaching could render *God Save the Queen* with proper quality, and a relatively original and recognisable version of the hymn would become appreciated among the royals and nobles in the palaces.

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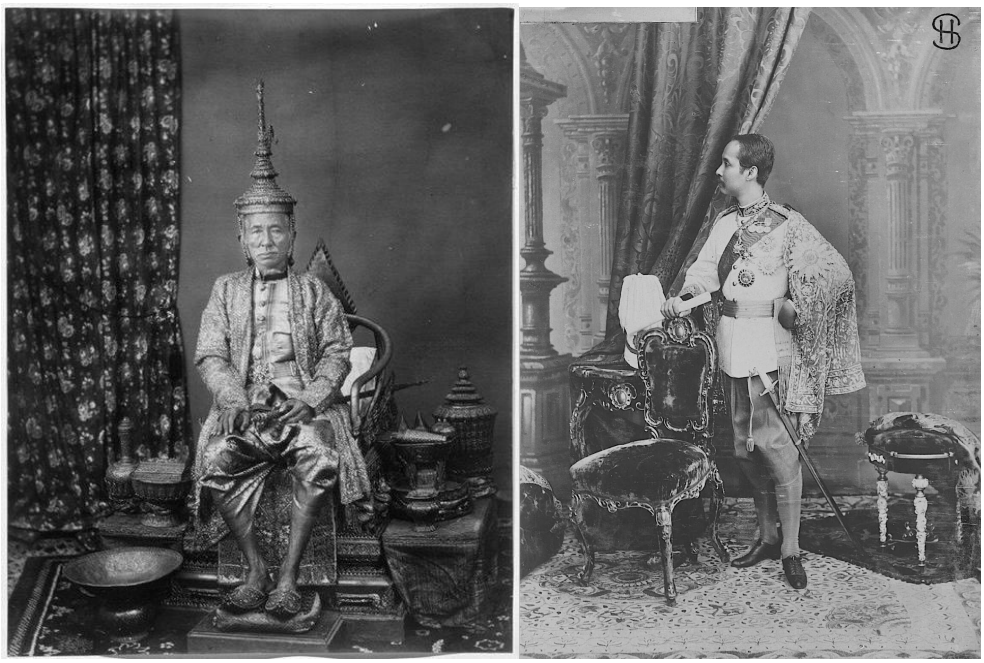
[68] Baker*, A History of Thailand,* p. 134.

[69] *Pleng Sansern Phra Barami,* or *Song to Glorify His Majesty.*

[70] The first name of Captain Impey is not recorded, but probably he was one of the family members of Sir Elijah Impey (1732-1809), the chief justice of the Supreme Court of British India.

[71] Sukree Charoensuk: *National Anthem*, Bangkok: Ruenkaew Publishing 1989, p. 6.

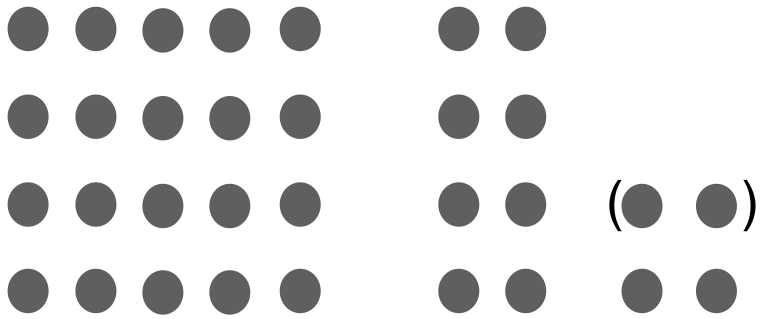
[72] Ibid., p. 6.



King Rama IV (King Mongkut, 1804-1868)[73] and King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn, 1853-1910).[74] The strong influences from western culture can be clearly seen in the costume of the later king.

After the sudden death of King Rama IV, his son, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1853-1910) took over the throne from his father in 1868. To celebrate the new king, Phraya Srisuntornvoharn, the court secretary, wrote lyrics for *God Save the Queen* in Thai language. He tried not only to verbalise the hymn with sophisticated vocabulary, but also to use a traditional poetic form 'Klongseesupap' – a specific kind of quatrain – to frame his lyrics.

Klongseesupap is one of the standard rhymes frequently found in Thai literary art. In one stanza it consists of four lines: the first two lines contain seven syllables in each line, the third line has either seven or nine syllables, whereas the last one has a fixed length of nine syllables. Its unique character is that the poetic rhythm in each line is unsystematically subdivided, namely five plus two, or five plus two plus two syllables. The structure of Klongseesupap is shown in the following graphic:



Structure of Klongseesupap in one stanza.

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[73] <https://www.silpa-mag.com/history/article_487> [15th Dec. 2020].

[74] <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw234273/Chulalongkorn-King-of-Siam?LinkID=mp140923&role=sit&rNo=0> [15th Dec. 2020].

The Thai lyrics for *God Save the Queen* reads:[75]

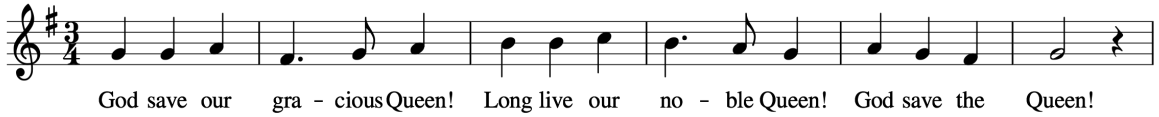
ความสุขสมบัติทั้ง	**บริวาร**	
Khwam-suk-som-bat-thang	Bri-wan	
เจริญพละปฏิภาณ	**ผ่องแผ้ว**	
Chroen-pla-pa-thi-phan	Phong-phaew	
จงยืนพระชนม์นาน	**นับรอบ**	**ร้อยแฮ**
Chong-yuen-phra-chon-nan	Nab-rob	Roi-hae
มีพระเกียรติเลิศแล้ว	**เล่ห์เพี้ยง**	**เพ็ญจันทร์**
Mee-phra-kriat-lert-leaw	Leh-phieng	Phen-chan

English translation:[76]

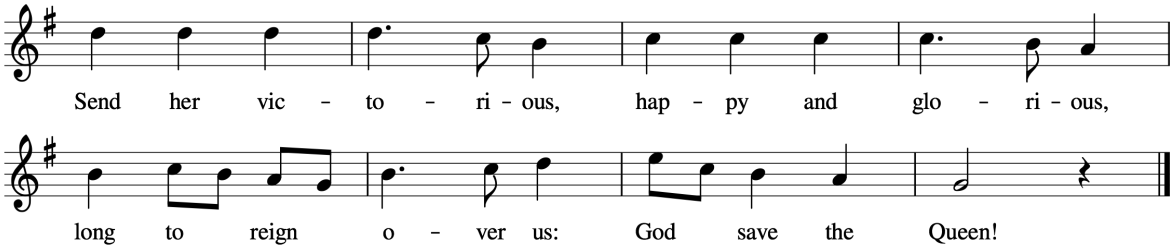
The whole bunch of happiness,
physical, intellectual rises have shown.
Long live towards hundreds of years,
His glory blossoms like the moon shines.

The first national anthem for Siam – or to be more precise: the anthem for a royal reception – is considered as the very first attempt to combine Thai literary art with western music. Looking at the musical phrasing of *God Save the Queen*, the 14-bar hymn consists of two non-symmetrical phrases of six and eight bars consecutively.

The first phrase:



The second phrase:



Thus, it was a challenging task to fit Thai lyrics into the form of Klongseesupap with the musical phrasing of *God Save the Queen*. The result came out as following:

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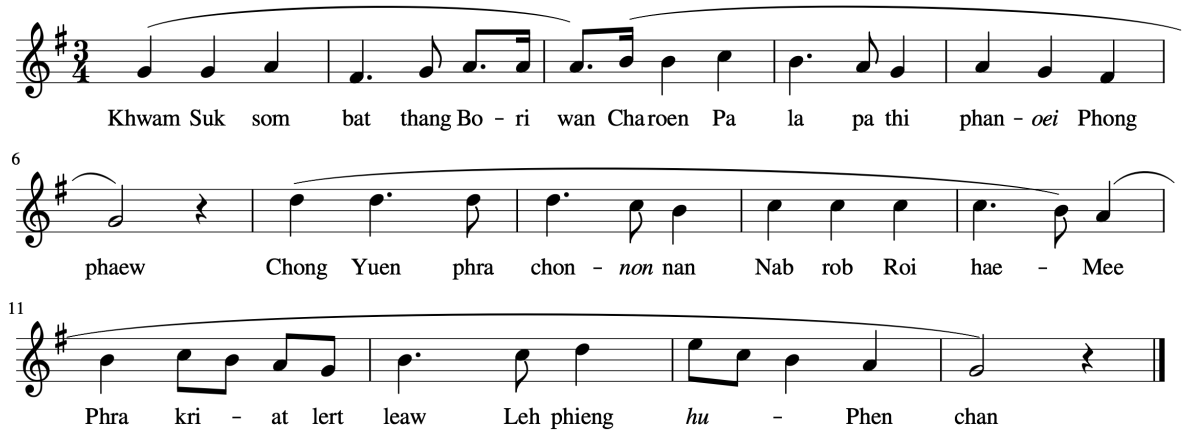
[75] Phraya Srisuntornvoharn also created a hidden sentence in his lyrics. When the first words of each line are read vertically: 'Khwam Chroen Chong Mee' ('ความเจริญจงมี') it means 'the rise is given'.

[76] By Siwat Chuencharoen.



God Save the Queen *with the Thai lyrics by Phraya Srisuntornvoharn (1868), transcribed from the recording from Thai National Flag Museum by Siwat Chuencharoen. There are three additional meaningless syllables – i.e.,* oei*,* non*,* hu *in bar 5, 8, and 13 respectively – added after the words ended with consonant in order to fit the lyrics with the given melody.*

The slur marks in the score are intentionally written to show the verses of the lyrics. The verses are clearly incompatible with the musical phrasing of the hymn: trying to adjust the rhyme of Klongseesupap to the lyrics (as marked by the slurs), results in melody lines unsymmetrically phrased. On the other hand, when trying to perceive the flow of 2-bar phrases in the music, the structure and the poetic rhythm of Klongseesupap in the lyrics does not fit.

It is not only Siam that adopted *God Save the Queen* as musical representation of their national identity. The hymn has been used as a national or royal anthem in more than twenty 'western' countries including Switzerland (until 1961), the German Empire (1871-1918), Russia (1816-1833), and in the commonwealth countries. From this point of view, *God Save the Queen* implies patriotism across the world, without a specific nationalistic undertone. The exact origin of the hymn is unclear. It was printed for the first time as a vocal piece with the title *God Save Our Gracious Queen* in 1744. Several scholars have linked the similarity of the melody with the catholic plainchant *O Deus Optime Salvum Nunc Facito*[77], the keyboard pieces by John Bull (1619)[78] and Henry Purcell (1683)[79], or the Christmas carol *Remember, O Thou Man* (1611).[80]
According to Hobsbawm: the use of ancient materials is one of the common strategies to construct 'invented tradition of a novel type for quite novel purposes'. The resources of old materials, or the 'well-supplied warehouses', as he called it, can be found in official rituals, religion, or folklores. From this point of view, *God*

[77] William H. Cummings, *God Save the King; the Origin, and History of the Music and Words of the National Anthem*, London: Novello and Company Limited 1902, p. 38.

[78] Ibid., p. 10.

[79] Ibid., p. 63.

[80] Ibid., p. 66.

Save the Queen is a high-ranking product from such warehouses, because it shares the storyline among court rituals, religion and 'high' musical culture, before it was 'ritualized, institutionalized and modified for the new national purposes'.[81] It is not to be forgotten that a number of classical composers have shared common appreciation of the hymn. Among them are Salieri, Clementi, Johann Christian Bach, Liszt, as well as Beethoven – who wrote a set of *God Save the Queen* variations for piano (1803) and later quoted the melody in his symphonic work *Wellington's Victory* (1813). In short, *God Save the Queen* is an ancient material which offers a noble label for musical scenes, rituals, or traditions in modern society. This label was appreciated by the Kingdom of Siam for producing its first national representing music. The attempt of rebranding Thai music had therefore started its first act by trying to configure Thai-ness which could fit into the western elements, so that, as Tejapira assumed, the national identity in the national anthem could become a 'better Thai'.

The Drifting Moon

There was another national anthem which was composed in the period of King Rama V. This time, the king himself personally determined the 'style' of his own country's anthem. During His Majesty's official visit in Singapore and Java in 1871, a country colonised by Holland at that time, the Javanese government asked to hear 'our own hymn, and not the one from England [*God Save the Queen*]'.[82] Probably feeling inferior by quoting the English hymn without having been colonised by England, King Rama V decided to abandon *God Save the Queen* and set up a special Thai musicians committee for creating an 'authentic' national anthem.
The committee came up with the idea of adapting a Siamese melody from the ancient time. Tracing back into the same dynasty, it was King Rama II (1767-1824) who was well acknowledged for his artistic achievements, especially in literature, theatre and music.[83] The committee finally chose the traditional song '*Bulan Loyluen'* (literally translated as 'the drifting moon'), which was believed to be composed by King Rama II after having an enigmatic dream. The song was then arranged for playing with western brass instruments. Even though the original melody of *Bulan Loyluen* does not exist in notation (since Siamese musicians only had oral tradition as means of music transmission) and the score of the brass band arrangement by the committee at that time cannot be found, the later transcription may give an impression of the musical shape of *Bulan Loyluen*:

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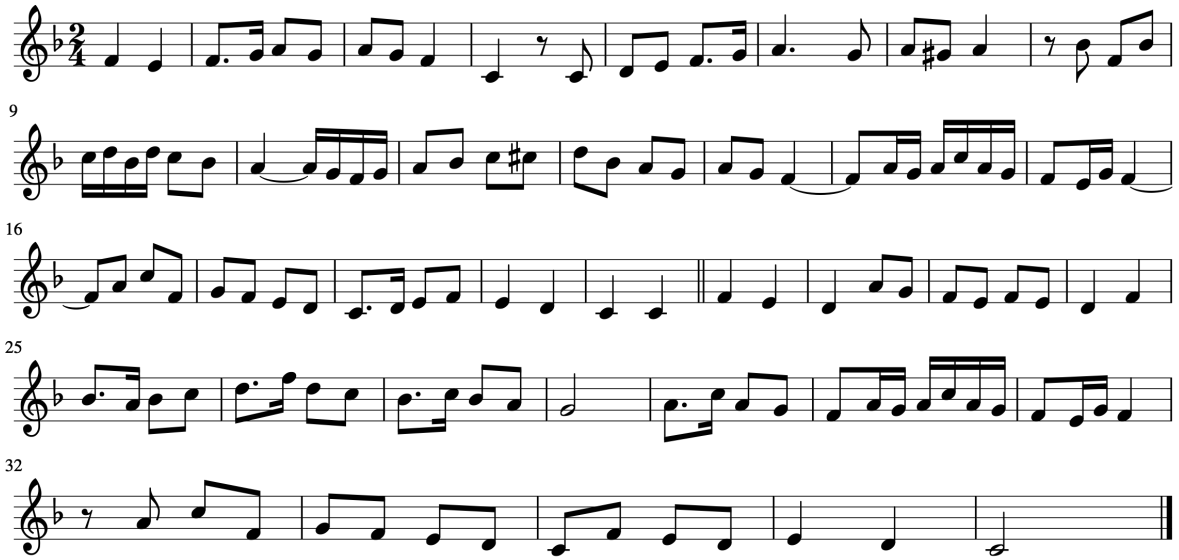
[81] Hobsbawm, *Inventing Traditions*, p. 6.

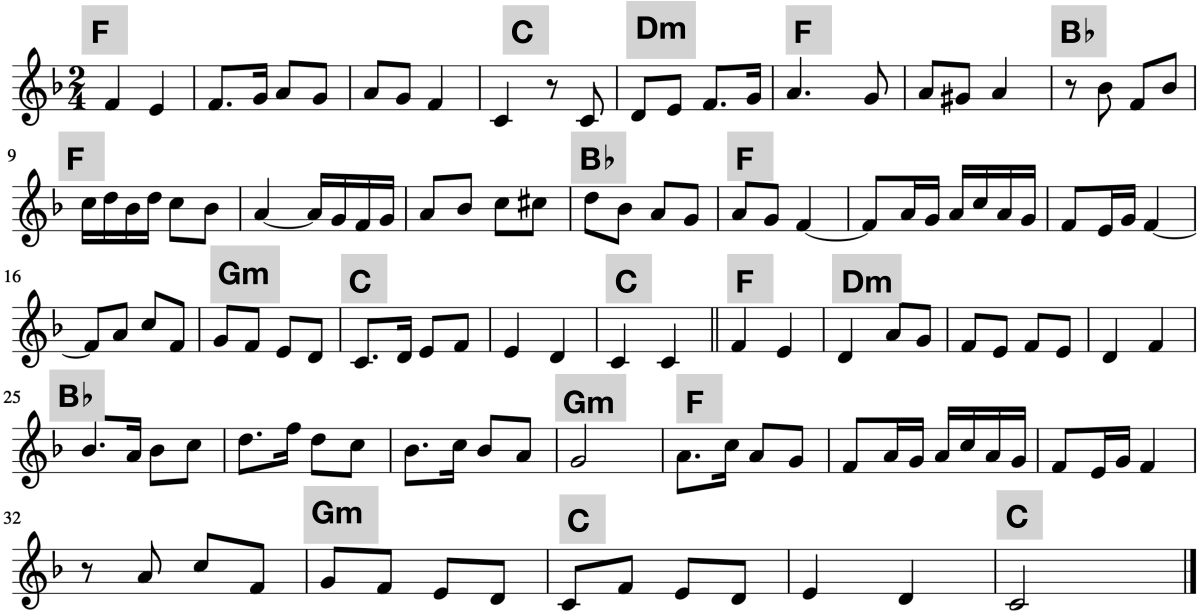
[82] Atibhop Pataradetpisan: 'ที่มาของทำนองเพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมีฉบับปัจจุบัน (?)' ['The origin of the melody of Sansern Phra Barami (?)'], in: Siam Rath newspaper, 10th May 2013, p. 20.

[83] For example, King Rama II wrote theatre plays based on the classical saga of Ramayana and Prince Panji.



Bulan Loyluen – *or* The Drifting Moon*, transcribed for playing by western instruments.*
Source: Sukree Charoensuk, 'National Anthem', Bangkok, 1989.

The transcription above suggests that the piece is not entirely based on pentatonic scales, since there are several semitone intervals giving the effect of a leading note to a tonic (for example, in bars 1-2 and bar 7). Nevertheless, the entire melody obviously does not correspond to the western key of F major. Still, the main chords from western functional harmony: tonic (in this case: F major), mediant (D minor), subdominant (B♭ major), dominant (C major) and submediant (G minor) could be applied directly on this melody without further advanced harmonisation, as suggested in the following score:



Bulan Loyluen *harmonised with the main chords in F Major.*

From 1871 onwards, the *Bulan Loyluen* was regarded as the Siamese national anthem, which eventually referred to the music used for representing not only the nation, but also the king of the nation. However, the royal scholar of King Rama V, Prince Narisara Nuwattiwong (1863-1947), suggested that only one strophe of *Bulan Loyluen* should be performed[84] when used for welcoming general royal members, and only for the reception of His Majesty the king should the piece be heard in its entire length.[85] This difference distinguishes 'the anthem for representing the nation and the king' from 'the anthem for representing just the nation' using the same piece of music. The separation of these two musical functions also plays an important role in the creation of the new 'national' anthem after the 1932 revolution but fostered from the opposite political side.

By rejecting the royal English hymn – *God Save the Queen* – and creating the new national anthem from a melody of a past king that conveyed nobility, *Bulan Loyluen* became the national anthem which is linked with the traditional kingship of Siam. Again, as Hobsbawm assumed, one witnesses the 'use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes'.[86]

***Sansern Phra Barami*: Another National Anthem With Royal Etiquette**

It is not clearly known when and why *Bulan Loyluen* lost its status as the national anthem. Still, during the reign of King Rama V there is evidence of the new anthem: the program booklet of the royal concert in 1888 shows that there was a new instrumental piece prepared for welcoming His Majesty the king. The concert began with this new piece played instrumentally, and ended with the same piece in a grand finale: all the musicians and singers played and sung a new written lyrics for the piece together.[87] This piece had apparently replaced the position of the *Bulan Loyluen* anthem and was considered as the national anthem for Siam until the 1932 revolution.

Despite its significance as the national anthem, the origin of the piece is still unclear. One hypothesis about the origin states that the anthem was written by the Russian composer Pyotr Schurovsky (1850-1908). According to the Thai musicologist Sukree Charoensuk, Schurovsky was working on collecting the national anthems from uncolonised countries.[88] By approaching some influential ambassadors he found out that Siam was looking for a new national anthem. Thus, he sent his composition to the Siamese ambassador in Paris and it was appreciated by King Rama V. The

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[84] Assumably until bar 20, according to the provided transcription.

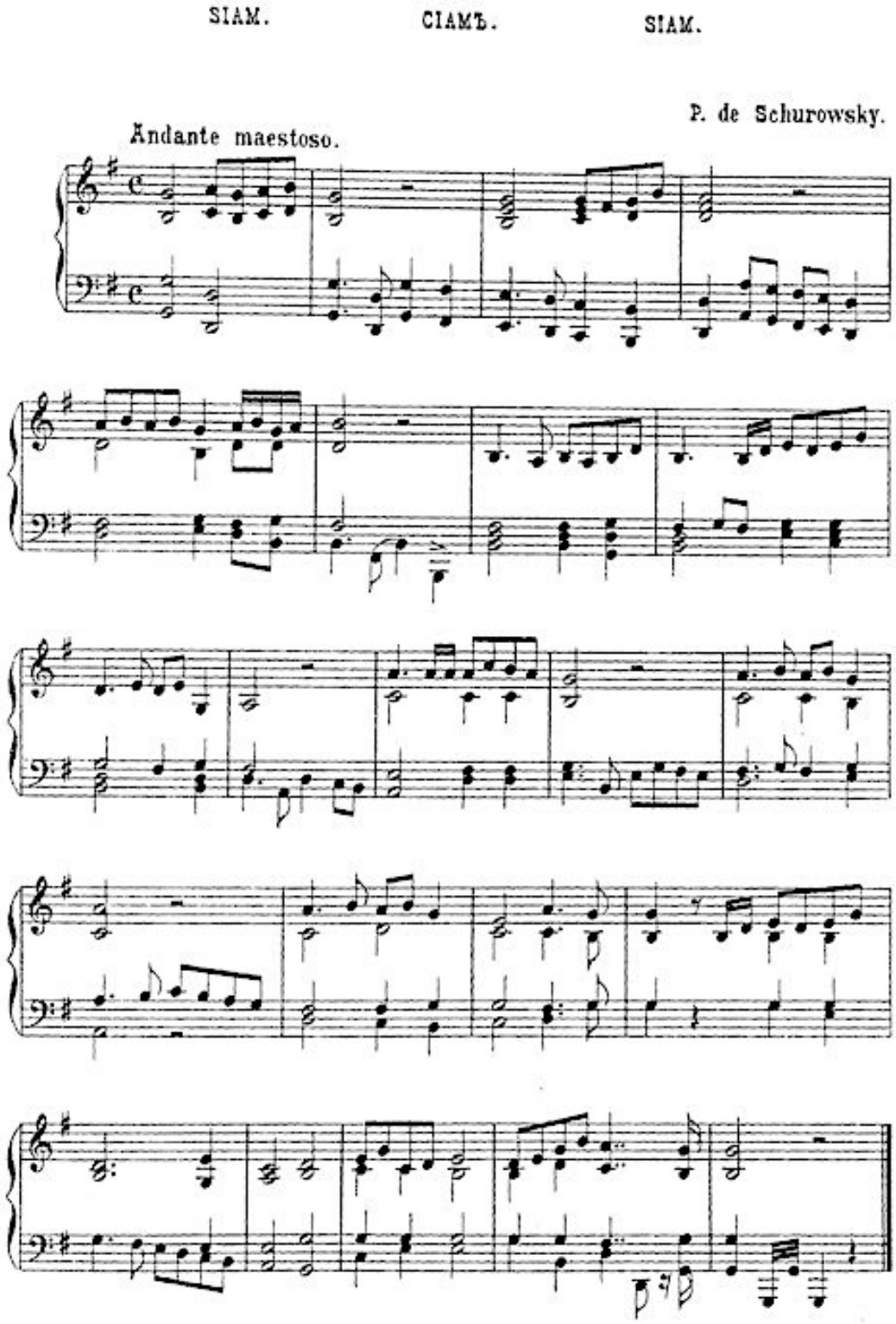
[85] Pataradetpisan, *'ที่มาของทำนองเพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมีฉบับปัจจุบัน (?)'* [,The origin of the melody of Sansern Phra Barami (?)'], p. 20.

[86] Hobsbawm, *Inventing Traditions*, p. 6.

[87] Sukree Charoensuk, 'Pleng Saneren Phra Barami', in *Mahidol Music Journal* Aug. 2017, Vol. 22 No. 12, p. 9.

[88] Ibid., p. 6-7.

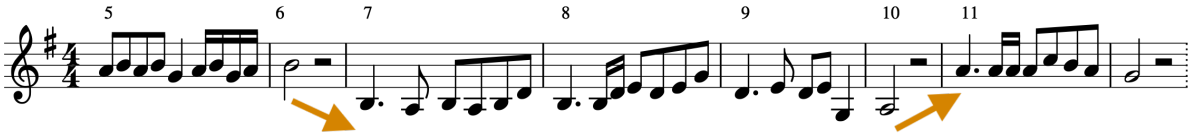
instrumental anthem is known among Siamese as *Sansern Phra Barami* – which means ‘praise the glorification (of the king)’ – since then. The piano-reduction score, entitling Schurovsky as composer, can be found in his collection *Recueil des hymnes nationaux de touts les pays du monde* (1890, published in Russian and French language):



The first publication of the Siamese anthem (Sansern Phra Barami) *by Schurovsky (1890).*[89]

[89] Ibid., p. 7.

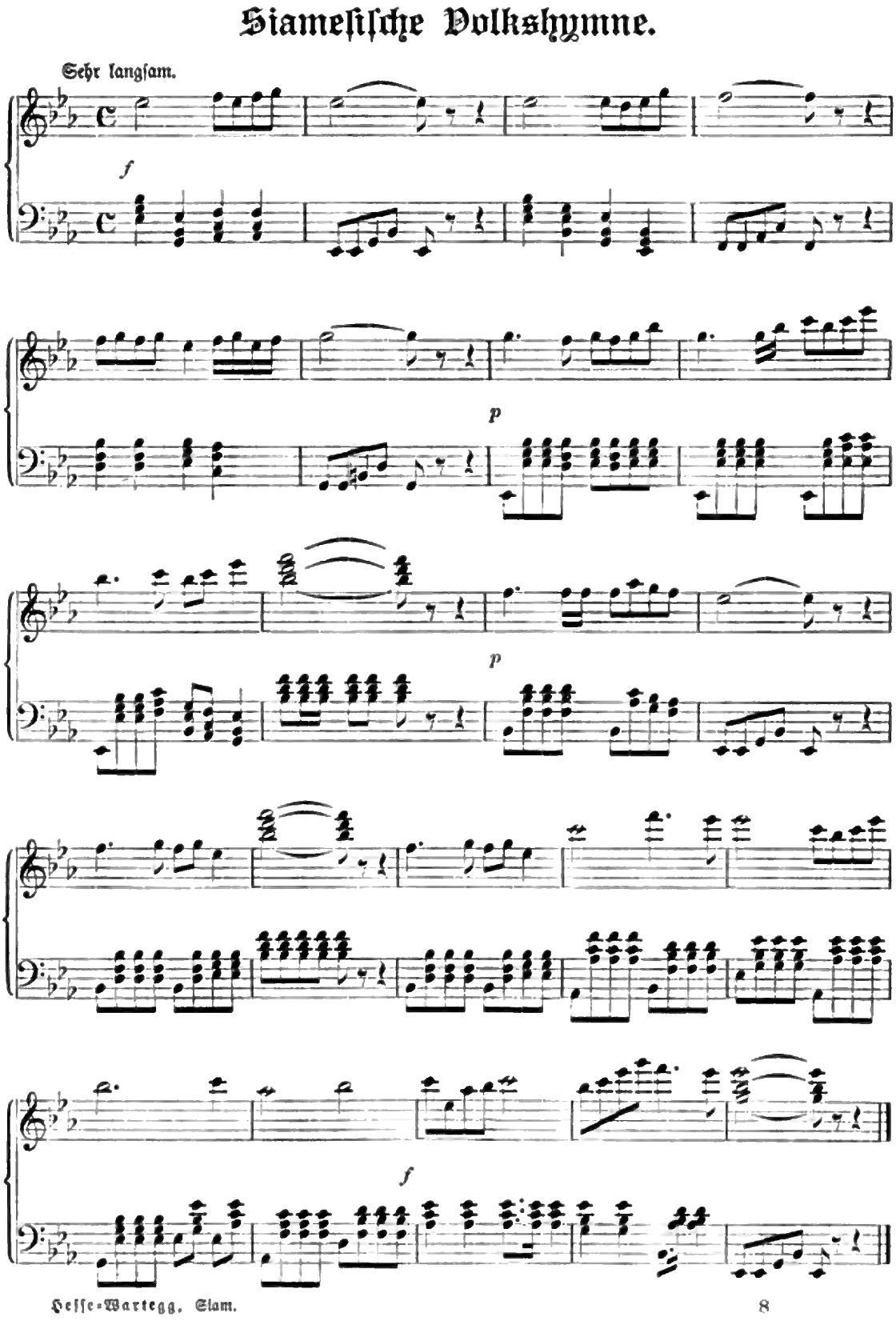
Schurovsky was a renowned composer and conductor of operas in the Bolshoi Theatre during 1878-1882, he made concert tours in several European countries. Before his career at the Bolshoi, Schurovsky studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory with the celebrated masters such as Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Anton Rubinstein. Furthermore, he also studied with Henry Litolff in Paris and Ignaz Moscheles in Leipzig.[90] This exceptional education background and musical career trained Schurovsky in the leading compositional techniques of his time, and fostered his acquaintance with the enriched harmonic style of the music in the Romantic era. From a stylistic perspective, the Siamese anthem proposed in his collection does not fit to the knowledge about Schurovsky's training, it might therefore be at least questionable if it was really Schurovsky who composed this hymn. *Sansern Phra Barami* in his collection published a plain harmonic progression without a clear modulation to the neighbour key (there is no notes with additional accidentals in the entire piece). The phrases from bar 6 to bar 7 seems unskilfully shifted down to the lower octave and then it abruptly turns back to the former register in bar 11. These frequent octave jumps furnish an awkward melodic lacking any smoothness both for singers and instruments.



The melody of Schurovsky's Sansern Phra Barami*, bars 5 to 11. The yellow arrows show the abrupt octave jumps.*

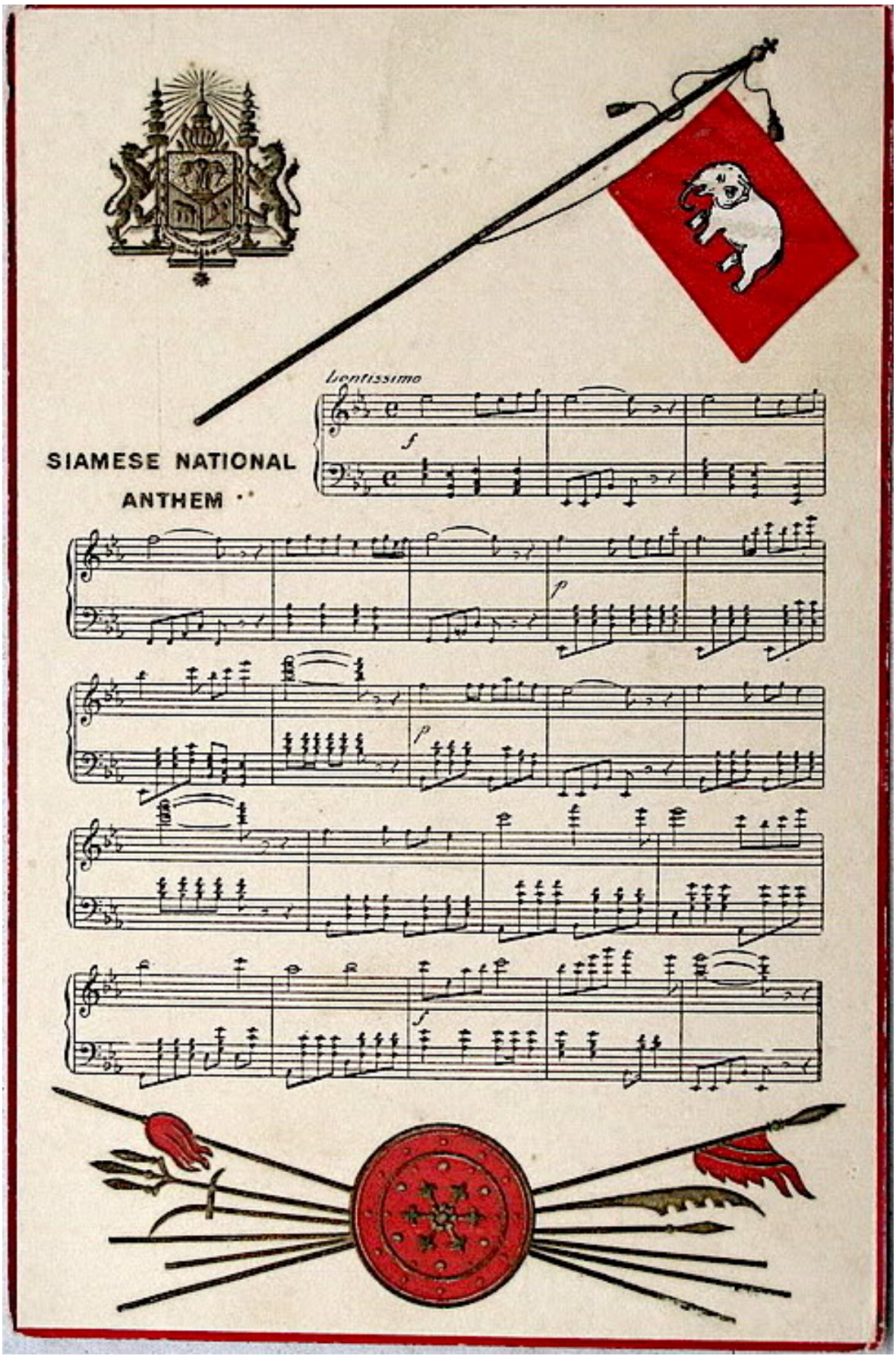
Another reduction score of *Sansern Phra Barami* was found later in *Siam das Reich des weissen Elefanten* (1899) written by the Austrian-Swiss consul Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg (1854-1918), but neither source nor description of the score is provided. In this version, the piece is transposed into E♭ major, and its accompaniment suggests a marching manner – unlike the former one from Schurovsky in G major, that features a rather polyphonic choral texture. Interestingly, Hesse-Wartegg entitled it 'Volkshymne', although the anthem was actually used exclusively to represent the king.

[90] Sh. R. Goizman: 'ЩУРОВСКИЙ' ('Schurovsky'), in: *Kursk-Encyclopedia*, Kursk, <https://www.mke.su/doc/SchUROVSKII%20PA.html> [12th Oct. 2019].



Sansern Phra Barami *shown in Hesse-Wartegg's 'Siam das Reich des Weisen Elefanten' (1899) as an illustration enclosed between pages 113 and 114.*[91]

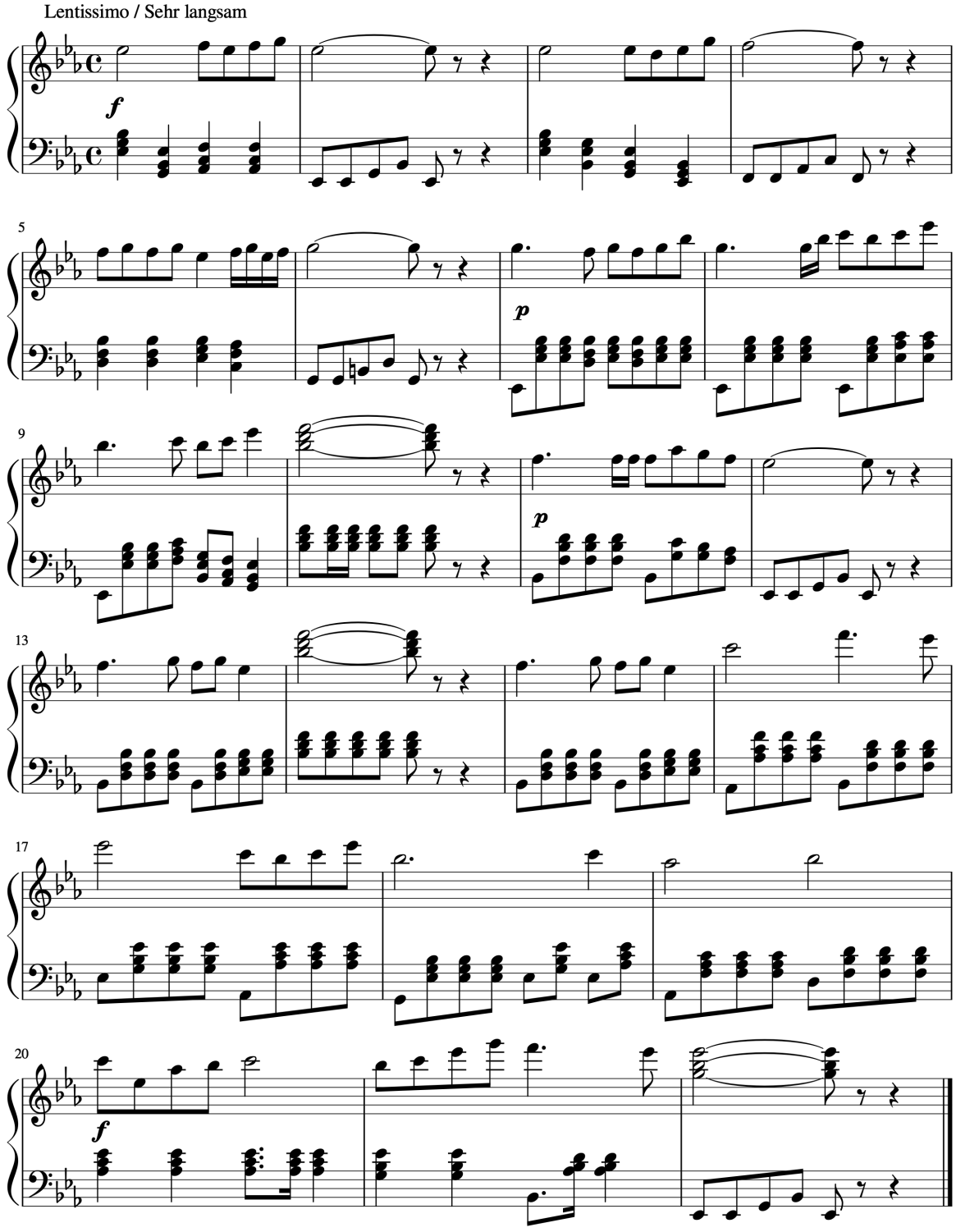
[91] Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg: *Siam: Das Reich des weissen Elefanten*, Leipzig: Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.J. Weber 1899, p. 113-114.



A postcard with the score of Sansern Phra Barami *with the national emblem and the national flag during the reign of King Rama V.*[92]

[92] <https://prachatai.com/journal/2016/11/68933> [9th Jul. 2020].

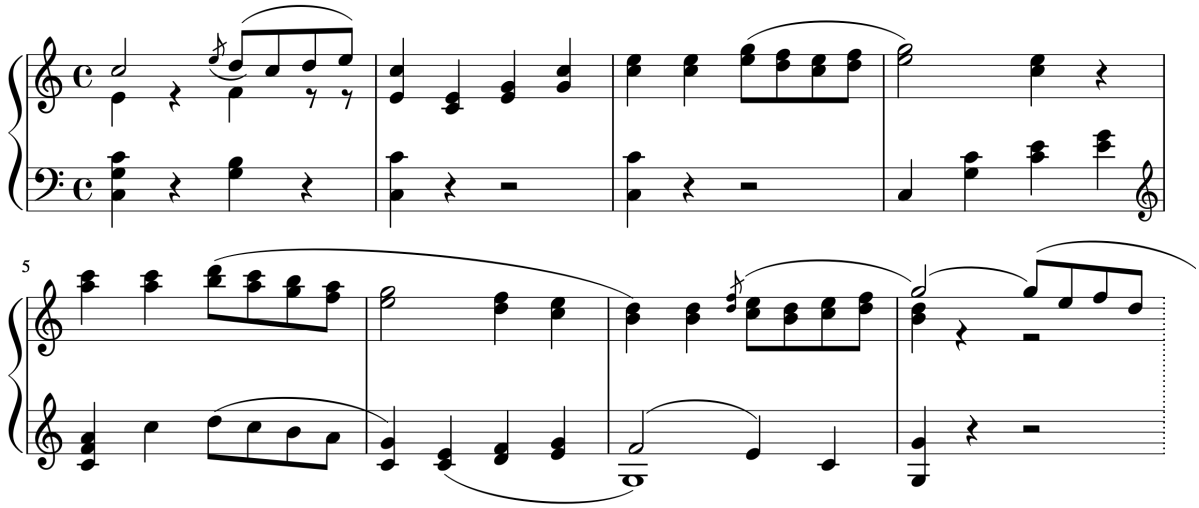
Siamese National Anthem / Siamesische Volkshymne



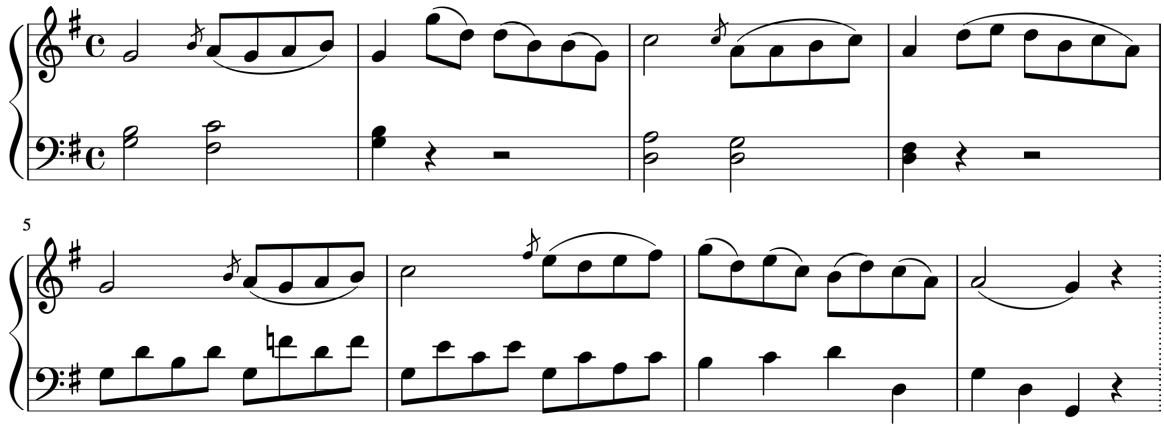
The piano-score of Sansern Phra Barami*, deciphered by Siwat Chuencharoen, from Hesse-Wartegg's book (which is identical with the score on the postcard, only the tempo indication differs in language but not in meaning).*

There are at least two musicological publications that establish a link between *Sansern Phra Barami* and the works of the canonical classical composers: Joseph Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven.

The musicologist Sukree Charoensuk maintains that *Sansern Phra Barami* is based on the main theme from the second movement of Haydn's Symphony in G major Hob. I:100 (also known as *Military Symphony*). At the same time, Charoensuk also agreed with another hypothesis by of Phra Chen Duriyang – the Thai composer of the latest version of the national anthem – who believed that Beethoven's Sonatina in G major WoO Anh. 5 is the musical inspiration of *Sansern Phra Barami*, because both pieces have close similarities in their first motives.[93]



Joseph Haydn: Symphony Hob. I:100, 2rd movement, bars 1-8 (reduction for piano by August Horn).



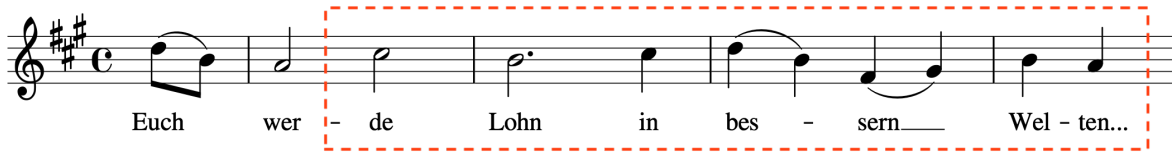
Ludwig van Beethoven: Sonatina Ahn.5 no.1, 1st movement, bars 1-8.

However, it can be assumed that the thematic quotations found in classical music mostly give clearer clues to the audience if the music is inspired or borrowed from another source. Although some compositional techniques – for example, inversion, rhythmic prolongation, switch mode of major into minor etc. – could be adopted to disguise the borrowed theme, skilful composers usually show their intention by letting the same idea appear with certain frequency, or giving the duration of the

[93] Sukree Charoensuk: *99* ปี เพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมี *[99 years of Sansern Phra Barami]*, Bangkok: Department of Music, Bansomdejchaopraya Teachers College 1987, p. 49.

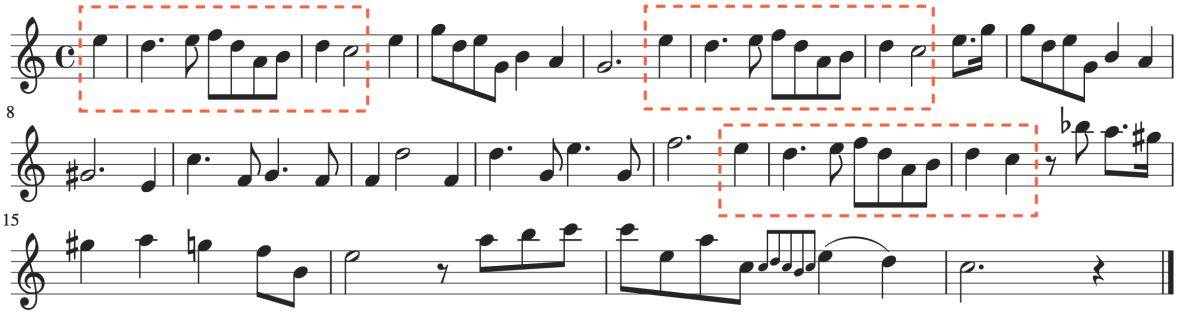
quoted (or inspired) passages enough length, so that the audience could recognise the relevant motive with certainty.

An example here is the piano piece in *Album für die Jugend* Op.68 no.21 by Robert Schumann. Although the composer did not leave any external clue about the inspiration of this piece, its main motive obviously resembles Beethoven's Terzett *Euch werde Lohn in bessern Welten* from his opera *Fidelio*:[94]



Beethoven: Fidelio, Terzett no.13 in the second act.

Schumann veiled the motive slightly by compressing it into the half rhythmic value. On the other hand, he let the motive appear quite frequently, i.e. three times in a 18-bar piece, and this shows his intention of quoting the motive from an external source in a way it will be recognised despite the transformation.[95]



Schumann: Op.68 no.21, melody in the right hand.

Back to the case of *Sansern Phra Barami*, and the motive in the first two bars that eventually resembles a motive of Beethoven's Sonatina and Haydn's Symphony. It appears just in the first four bars and does not function as a main motive which dominates the entire anthem. Moreover, since the motive from the Sonatina and the Symphony have a grace note leaning on the first quaver, it gives an agogic accent on the third beat of the phrase. This characteristic also marks a clearer difference from the phrase of the royal anthem. By considering the lyric on the first two bar, which is one single word containing six syllables: 'Kha-wor-ra-put-ta-chao' (ข้าวรพุทธเจ้า, translation: I, who declares himself as a servant of the lord Buddha), if there would be an agogic accent on the syllable 'wor' it would make the phrase sound unnatural and stop the flow of the whole word.

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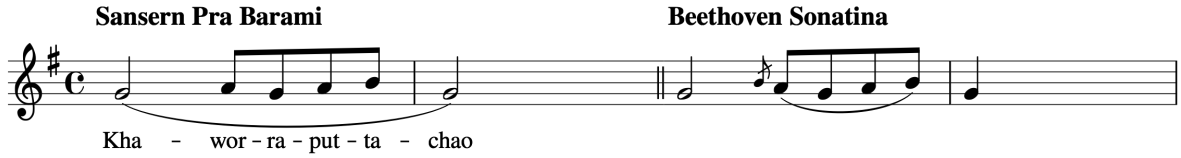
[94] Bernhard R. Appel: *Robert Schumanns 'Album für die Jugend'. Einführung und Kommentar*, Mainz: Schott Music 2010, p. 132.

[95] Schumann actually wrote six measures longer at the end of the piece, in which he quoted the motive four times. However, he decided to delete this part.



The motive from the beginning of Sansern Phra Barami *comparing with the one from Beethoven Sonatina.*

Therefore, the attempt to correlate *Sansern Phra Barami* with the names of Beethoven and Haydn is merely a value-adding strategy without profound regard into the musical content. Another evidence to underpin this assumption is an article about the traces of the royal anthem published in a Thai historical-archaeological magazine in 1987:[96]

The first page of the article 'Sansern Phra Barami. Germany or Russia. Beethoven or who composed it?' *by Sukree Charoensuk. The sub-headline under the Beethoven portrait reads:* **'**Sansern Phra Barami**'** has its blueprint from the **'**Sonatina**'** by **'**Beethoven**'**, the world-leading German composer. Later on, another Russian composer created a new melody from it. How true is this history?

Although *Sansern Phra Barami* was later replaced by another national anthem during the 1932 revolution, it still plays a very important role in Thai society as the 'real' royal anthem. *Sansern Phra Barami* is perceived and used as sounding sign for the presence of the king. The anthem is played not only in the ceremonies involving royal presences, but eventually also in cinemas, theatres, and concert halls: the audiences have to pay respect to the king before they enjoy their entertainment.

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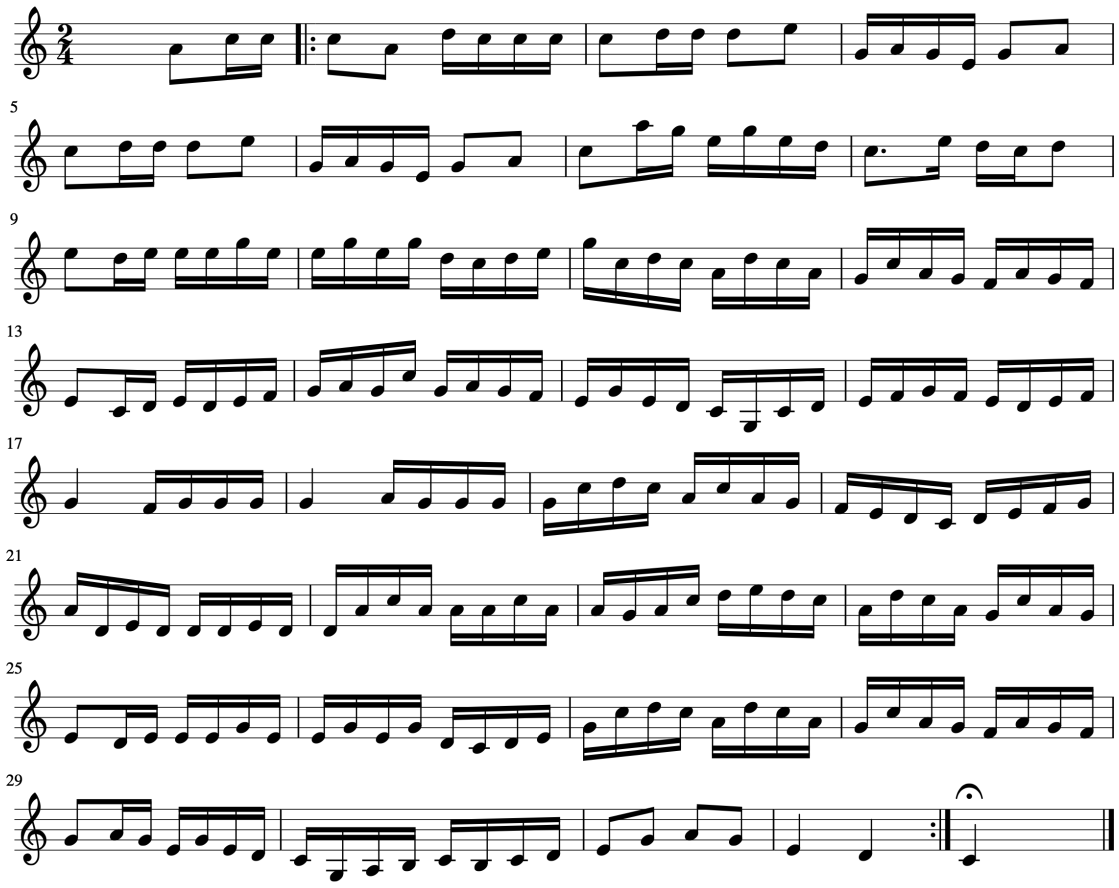
96 In: ศิลปวัฒนธรรม *[Art & Culture] Magazine*, 3rd Jan. 1987, p. 62.

From ‘the Anthem for the King’ to ‘the Anthem for the People’: Two National Anthems After the 1932 Revolution

After successfully shifting the political system from absolute monarchy under the throne of King Rama VII to constitutional monarchy on 24th June 1932, the People’s Party tried to introduce a new concept of the identity of the nation. The national bond of Thai people would not anymore be solely inhibited in the holiness of the king. Instead, the focus was shifted to the united, cohered brotherhood of the entire population in the country. Therefore, the Party urgently looked for a new national anthem to represent this new national concept swiftly after the revolution. In this case it had to be a song which clearly differed – functionally and musically – from the other existing, explicitly monarchic anthems.

Mahachai: Hymn of the Great Victory

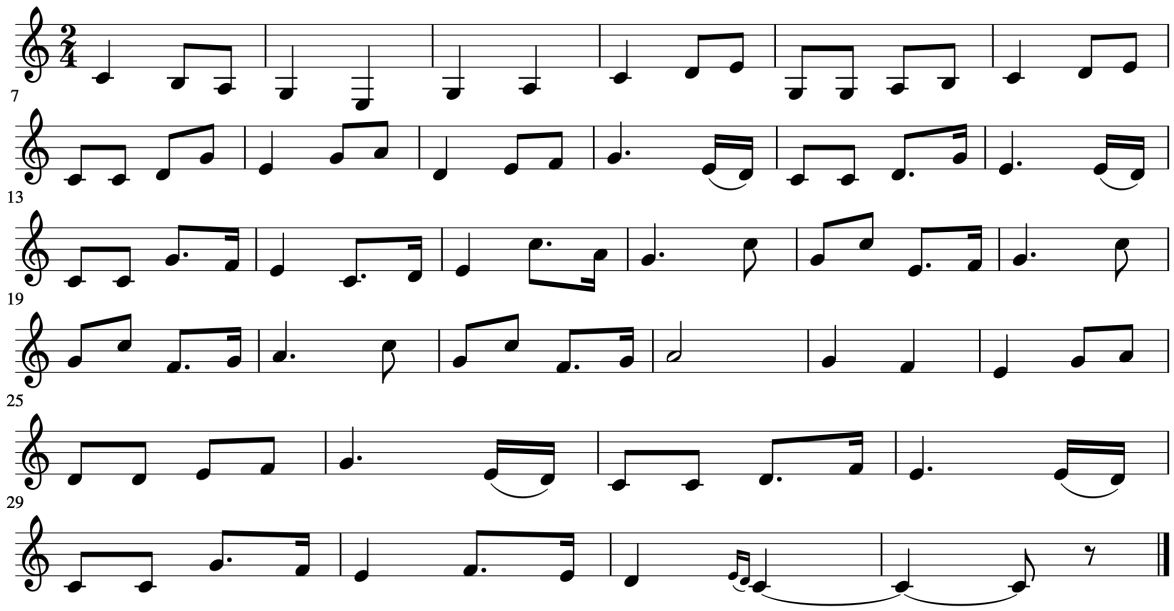
The traditional melody *Mahachai* (literal translation: the great victory) captured the interest of the Party. It is originally an ancient instrumental piece by an anonymous composer which is usually performed as opening music for ceremonies. The transcription of *Mahachai*, as it is played by Thai traditional instruments, is shown below:[97]



The score of Mahachai*, for playing by traditional instruments.*

[97] Charoensuk, *National Anthem*, p. 12.

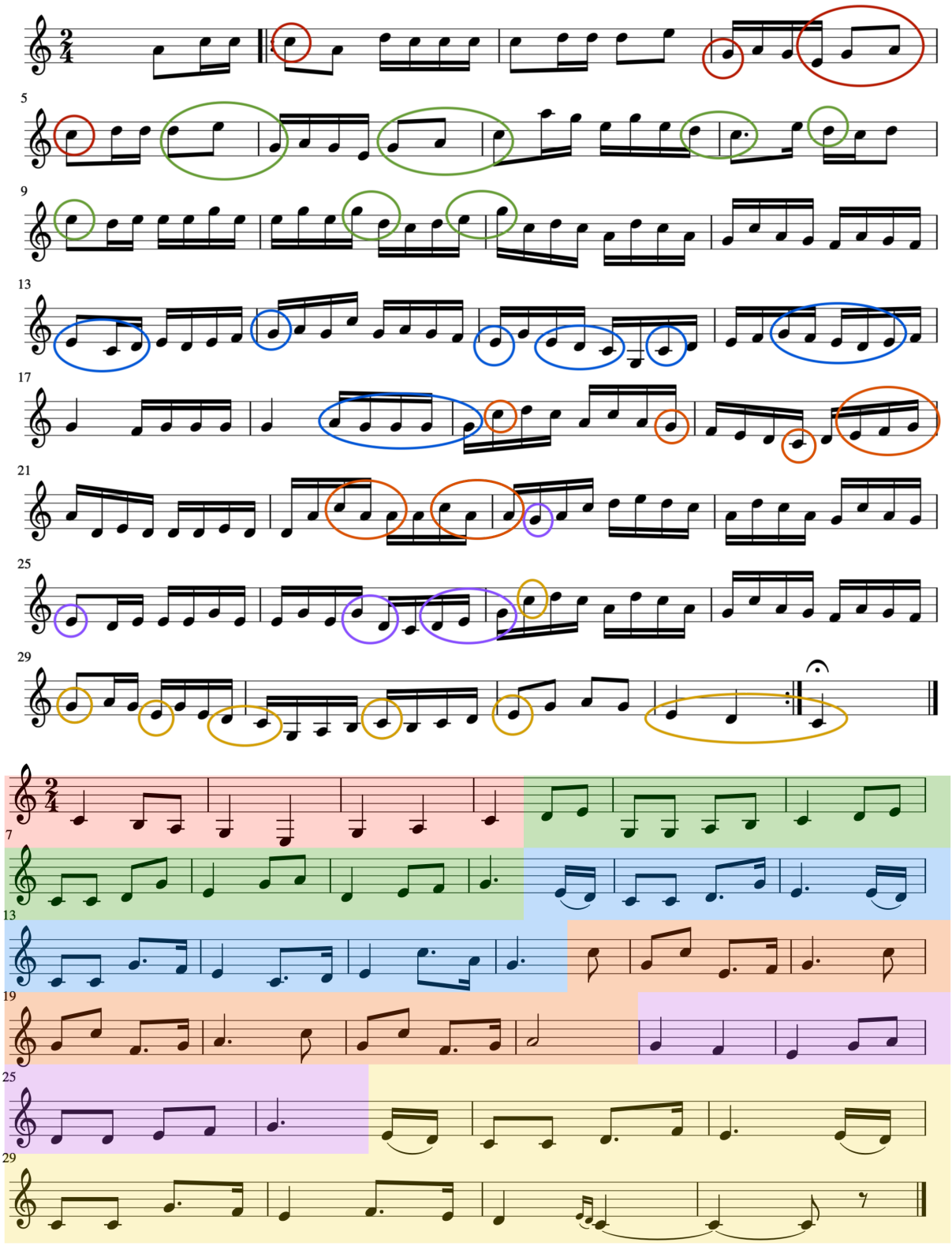
Back to the reign of King Rama VI (1880-1925), the traditional *Mahachai* was adapted for western instruments, i.e. for the court brass band, and it was used as the reception music for the lower-ranked royal members.[98] The 'western' version is shown below:



Mahachai *in 'western' version, published by the National Identity Office of Thailand. The original score is written in F major and in 4/4 time, but the score here is transposed to C major and its time-signature is changed to 2/4, so that it can be easier compared with the 'traditional' version shown in the prior page.*

The relation between the traditional version and the western version of *Mahachai* may not be easily noticed at first sight as it is usually seen in the case of 'theme and variations' in western classical music. Rather, this is a free paraphrase in which the new melody is loosely constructed upon some of the notes taken from the original phrases. In the western *Mahachai*, the pick-up notes are omitted, and the perpetually running notes were reshaped into a more lyrical melody and more variated rhythmic figures. The following scores illustrate the idea behind this transcription, each section is marked with different colours:

[98] Since the reception music for the king and the queen was *Sansern Phra Barami*.



The relation between the traditional Mahachai *and its westernised transcription.*

As the People's Party was looking for a new national anthem following their successful revolution in 1932, Chaophraya Thammasakmontri (1877-1943), who was also selected by the Party to be the first president of the National Assembly of Siam, was assigned to transform this traditional music into a national anthem. Thus, he wrote Thai lyrics for *Mahachai*:

สยามอยู่คู่ฟ้าอย่าสงสัย
Siam yu khu fah ya song sai

เพราะชาติไทยเป็นไทยไปทุกเมื่อ
Proa chat Thai pen Thai pai took mua

ชาวสยามนำสยามเหมือนนำเรือ
Chao Siam nam Siam man nam rua

ผ่านแก่งเกาะเพราะเพื่อชาติพ้นภัย
Phan kaeng koh proa pua chat pon pai

The lyrics are translated as following:[99]

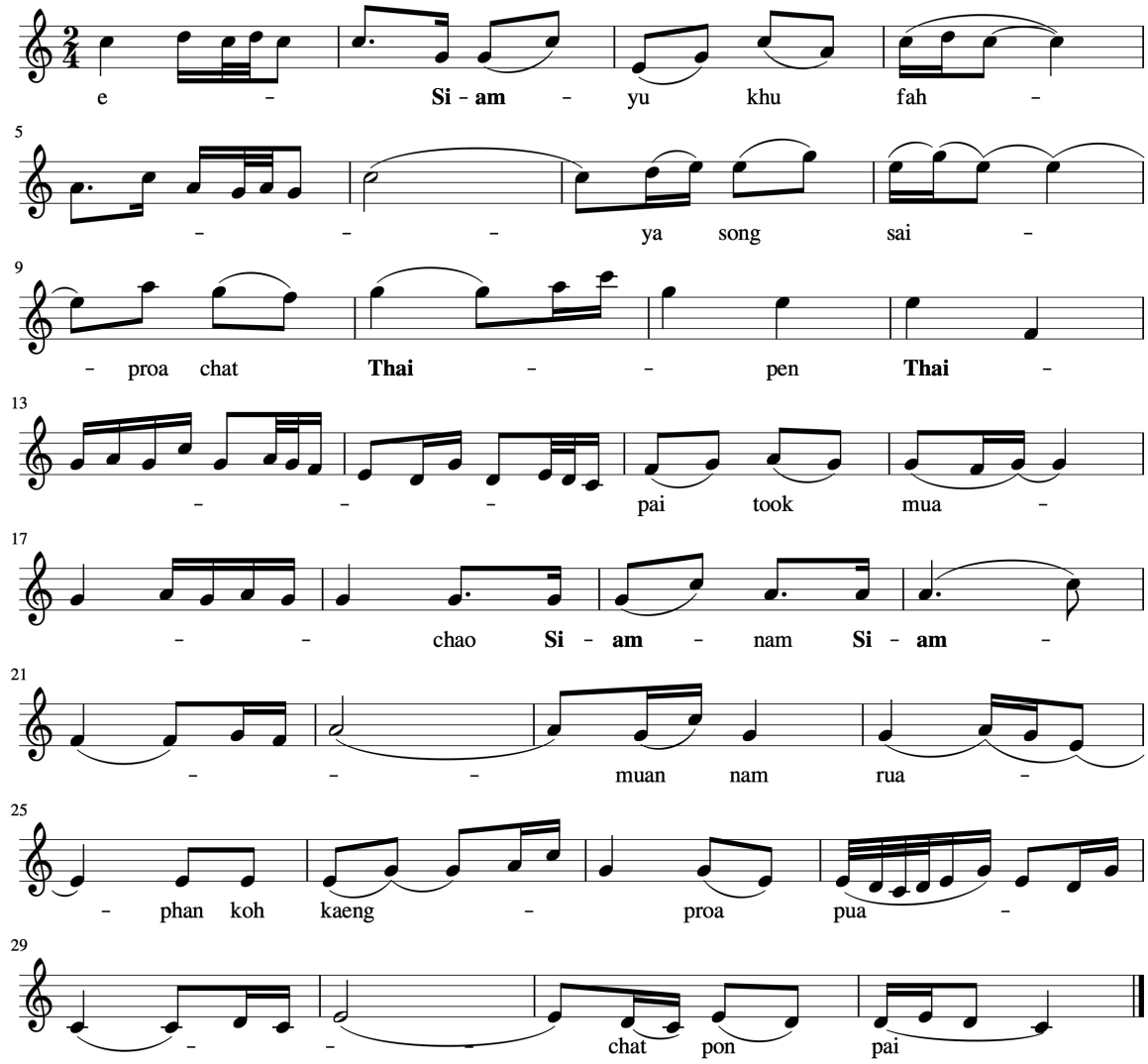
Siam inhabits in the heaven, as long as Thai will be Thai forever,
All Siamese are leading Siam as if a ship is led through cliffs, until our nation is safe.
We all share our hearts, our love, to establish the country's renewal regulations,
Then Siam is victoriously lifted up, and Thailand stays for eternity.

The intention to emphasise the unity of the people rather than the monarch and his divine ancestors is evident. As shown in the second strophe, 'All Siamese' are given the role of leader, who altogether drive the 'ship' – a metaphor for the entire nation – away from the surrounding dangers.[100] Noticeably, the two ethnological terms: 'Siam' and 'Thai' are placed simultaneously at the beginning and in the last strophe of the lyrics, thus both terms represent the same subject (Thailand and Thai people). This redundancy can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy of the People's Party to introduce the new name of the country and enhance its acceptance by the population, before the eventual renaming of the country from 'Siam' to 'Thai' in 1939. Therefore, the lyrics of the *Mahachai* anthem, which was released shortly after the revolution in 1932, were also a sign of rebranding the country.
In order to make *Mahachai* singable with his lyrics, Chaophraya Thammasakmontri had to variate the melody from its 'instrumental' version to let it fit the lyrics, as shown by the following score:[101]

[99] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen.

[100] The dangers here mainly refer to the potential invasions by western countries surrounding Thailand during the turbulent situation of World War II.

[101] Charoensuk, *National Anthem*, p. 13.



The adaptation of Mahachai *with the Thai lyrics by Chaophraya Thammasakmontri. The words 'Siam' and 'Thai', which appear alternately several times, are emphasised in bold letters.*

The above 'singing' version of *Mahachai* is full of melismata, eventually at almost every syllable. This is the technique which allows this one-verse lyrics with only a few words to fit into the 32-bar piece of music without repeating the text. The unique melismata, as they mostly raise upwards with intervals of thirds and fourths, or fall downwards with seconds and thirds, and sometimes enclose with pentatonic phrases, represent the authentic musical nuances of Thai traditional vocal art. However, despite the purposeful lyrics and the authenticity of the music, this type of national anthem could not fully satisfy the political intentions of the new government, presumably because the music lacks the vigour of a march.[102] Thus the national anthem based on *Mahachai* was soon abandoned and the People's Party started to look for a new national anthem again.

[102] Ibid., p. 13.

The Final One: A March in the Style of *La Marseillaise*

While *Mahachai* was sung during the revolution period as a national anthem, the People's Party still looked for an alternative. This attempt resulted in the final version of Thailand's national anthem – a vigorous march in the style of *La Marseillaise*.

Phra Chen Duriyanga, aka. Peter Feit (1883-1968).[103]

The prominent music teacher from the royal court, Phra Chen Duriyanga (1883-1968), was commissioned for this task.[104] The Party obviously made a wise choice, because on the one hand, Phra Chen already enjoyed a high reputation as the leading figure of western music in Siam during that time[105] and on the other hand, he held a great respect for the monarchy and served His Majesty with loyalty.[106] This task aroused a serious ethical conflict for Phra Chen as he was

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[103] <https://mgronline.com/onlinesection/detail/9590000064520> [15th Arp. 2017].

[104] 'Phra Chen Duriyanga' is actually a title given to him in 1922 by King Rama VI. The title literally means 'the master of musical affair'. Phra Chen's original name was Peter Feit. His father, Jacob Feit, was a German who later emigrated to the United States of America and was hired as a music teacher for the military brass band of the court of King Rama V. Phra Chen had learned cello, piano, violin and western music theory mainly from his father, who intensively supported music education for his children. At the age of 20 (1903) he started working as a state officer in the traffic department. Then in 1917 Phra Chen moved to the theatre department and worked there as a western music teacher and a conductor of the royal orchestra under King Rama VI and later King Rama VII.

[105] A review from the Bangkok Times on 7th December 1929 reads: 'Bangkok is unique in this part of the world in having at its disposal an efficient and well trained orchestra [Siamese royal orchestra], capable of giving us good music well played. Phra Chen has trained his players up to good standard […]'.

[106] Mentioned in สยามศิลปิน-พระเจนดุริยางค์ *[Siamese Artist-Phra Chen Duriyanga]*, documentary series by the Office of the National Cultural Commission, broadcasted on 17th Feb.2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkXdg3re_Ds> [8th Nov. 2017].

obliged to compose a new national anthem for the revolutionists – although the royal anthem (*Sansern Phra Barami*) was still in use.
In his memoirs Phra Chen wrote about the situation as following:

> Around the end of 1931 I met a friend of mine – a high-ranked navy officer whom I know rather well [...] At first I did not realise his actual purpose of trying to see me several times. Then one day, this navy friend quietly begged me to write a song which resembles the French national hymn '*La Marseillaise*'. I replied to him this would not be necessary, because we already have *Sansern Phra Barami* [the royal anthem] as our own national hymn. My friend argued that other countries do have several kinds of national anthems, such as flag-song, navy-song, army-song etc. [...] and *Sansern Phra Barami* is the hymn for the king, but we do not have any hymn for our folks yet. I refused his plea. I really cannot do it because this is not an official request [...] The navy officer just let me keep this idea in mind and he would come back to discuss about this subject again in the future […] [My colleague] warned me to be careful about this friend, since many people suspected that he could be a communist. Hence I was extremely shocked, as I realised the true aim of this new anthem […] Around five days after the revolution […] my navy friend appeared in front of me again at Misagawan [Phra Chen's office]. He regretted not having a national anthem to sing on the revolution day. Now he asked me to compose it with urgency. Since the political situation was so insecure, I could no longer deny it. So, I begged him to keep my name confidential and to give me seven days for this task. During those seven days I was very nervous, more than I had ever been before in my whole life. I was not sure about my decision and could not write any notes because of the frustration. In the morning of the seventh day (which I am certain it was Monday), I was on my way to the office at Misagawan as usual […] as I am in the tramway, the melody suddenly flawlessly appeared in my head. I got off the tram and went to the office and noted down this melody right away, so that it is not forgotten. I went to the piano and tried out the harmony. Later, my navy friend came back to see me as he promised. I played this melody on the piano for him and he was satisfied.[107]

The Party did not keep his name confidential at all. Therefore, Phra Chen was dismissed from the royal theatre department four months after he finished the national anthem. His chief, the director of the royal palace, eventually blamed him for 'being thoughtless about the existence of His Majesty'.[108]

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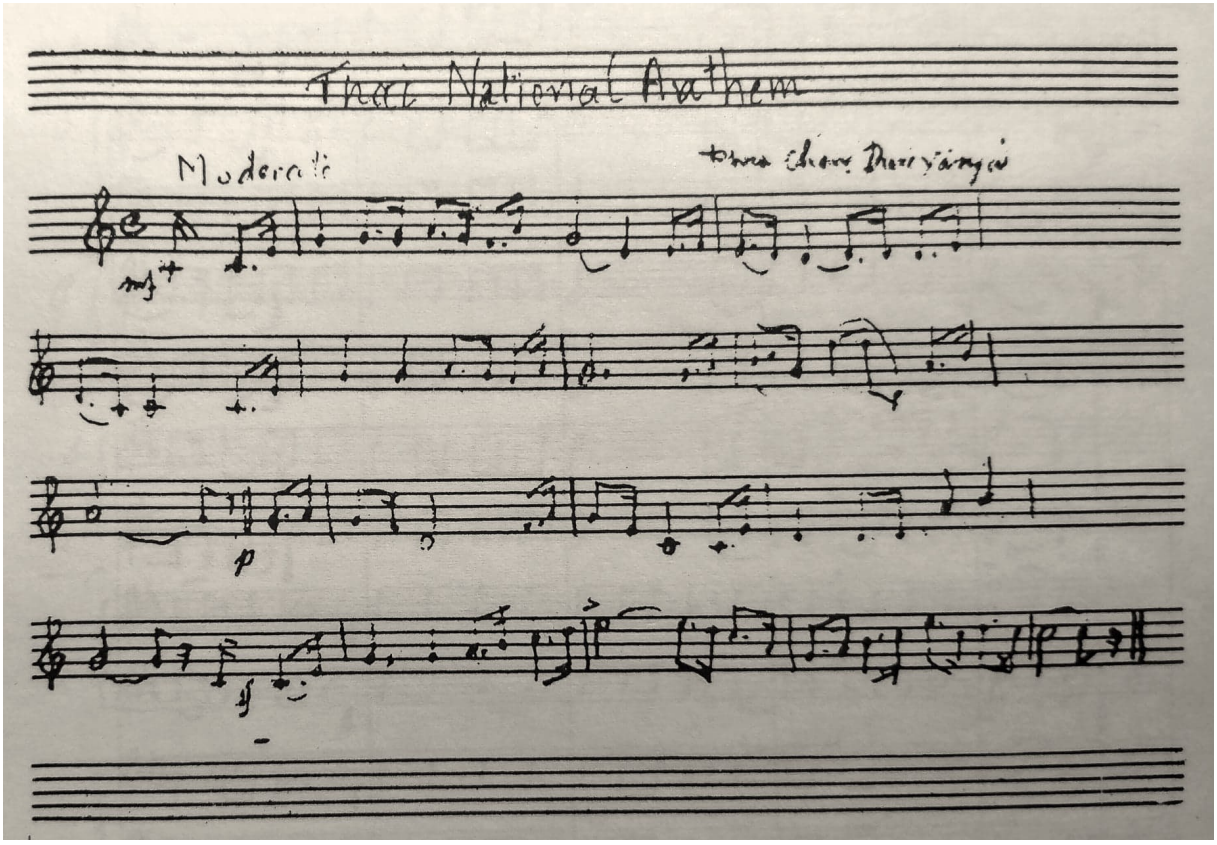
[107] Phra Chen Duriyanga: **บันทึกความทรงจำของพระเจนดุริยางค์** *[The Memoirs of Phra Chen Duriyanga]*, Bangkok: Amarin Printing Group 1990, p. 43-44. This excerpt is translated by Siwat Chuencharoen.

[108] Ibid., p. 45.

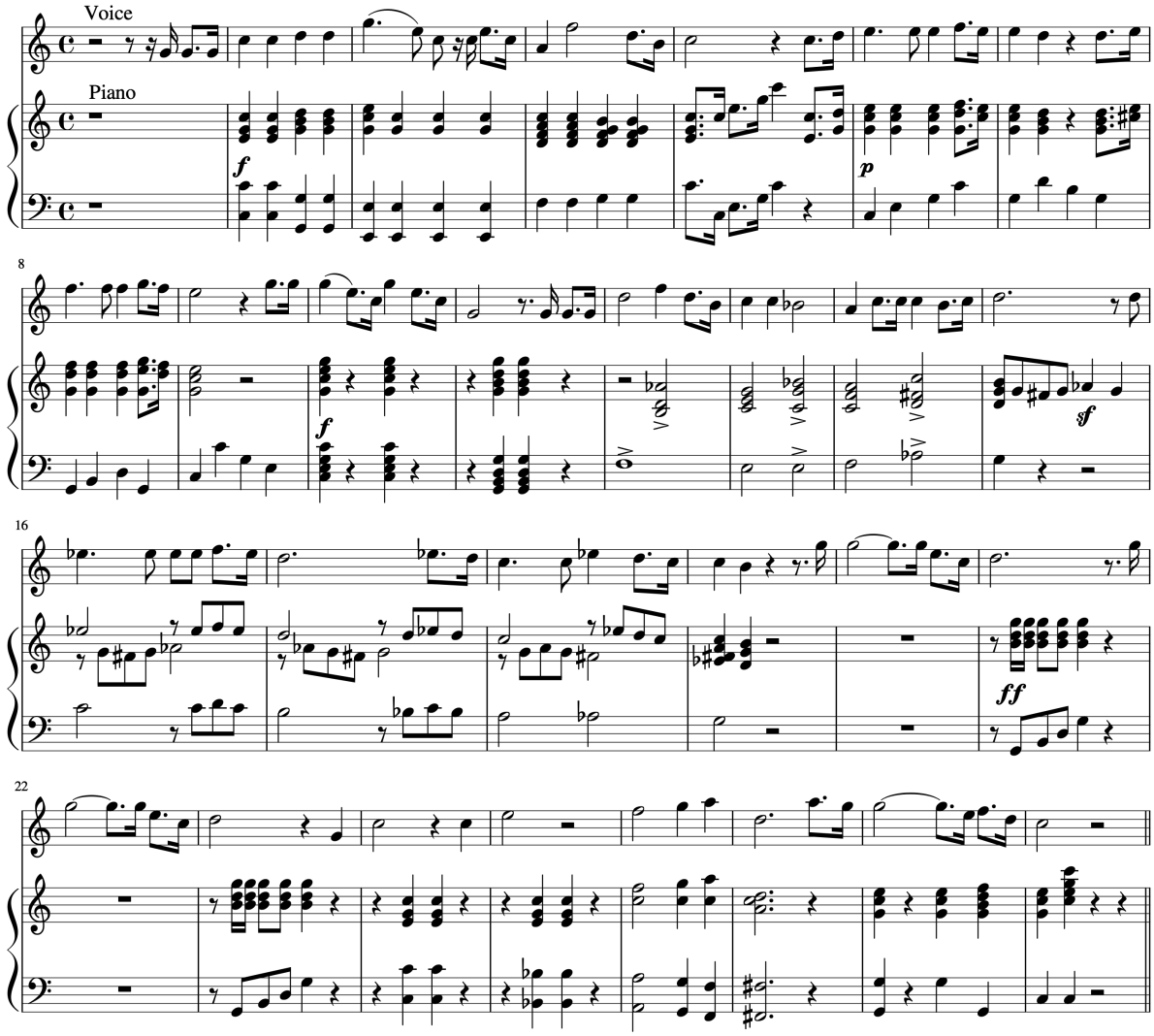


The first draft of the national anthem by Phra Chen, written in his office in the morning of the 4th of July 1932. He finalised the anthem, transposed it to E♭ major and orchestrated it for brass band, which was first performed – for the Party's committee – on 7th July 1932.[109]

Investigating Phra Chen's Anthem:
Similarity to *La Marseillaise*, Problems of Synchronising the Lyrics With the Music, and Aspects About National Identity

Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle (1760-1836) wrote the patriotic chanson *Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin* during the war between Austrian troops and the French Alsatian in April 1792. Its alternative title *La Marseillaise* was derived from the federate troops from Marseille, who sang this song as they marched towards the storming of the Tuileries Palace in Paris in August 1792. *La Marseillaise* was later regarded as the official French national anthem since 1795 until now (with an exception during the Bourbon restoration period, 1814-1830).
In 1825, Rouget de Lisle published his collection of songs for voice with piano accompaniment, including the *Hymne des Marseillaise*. The score is shown below:

[109] Charoensuk, *National Anthem*, p. 15.

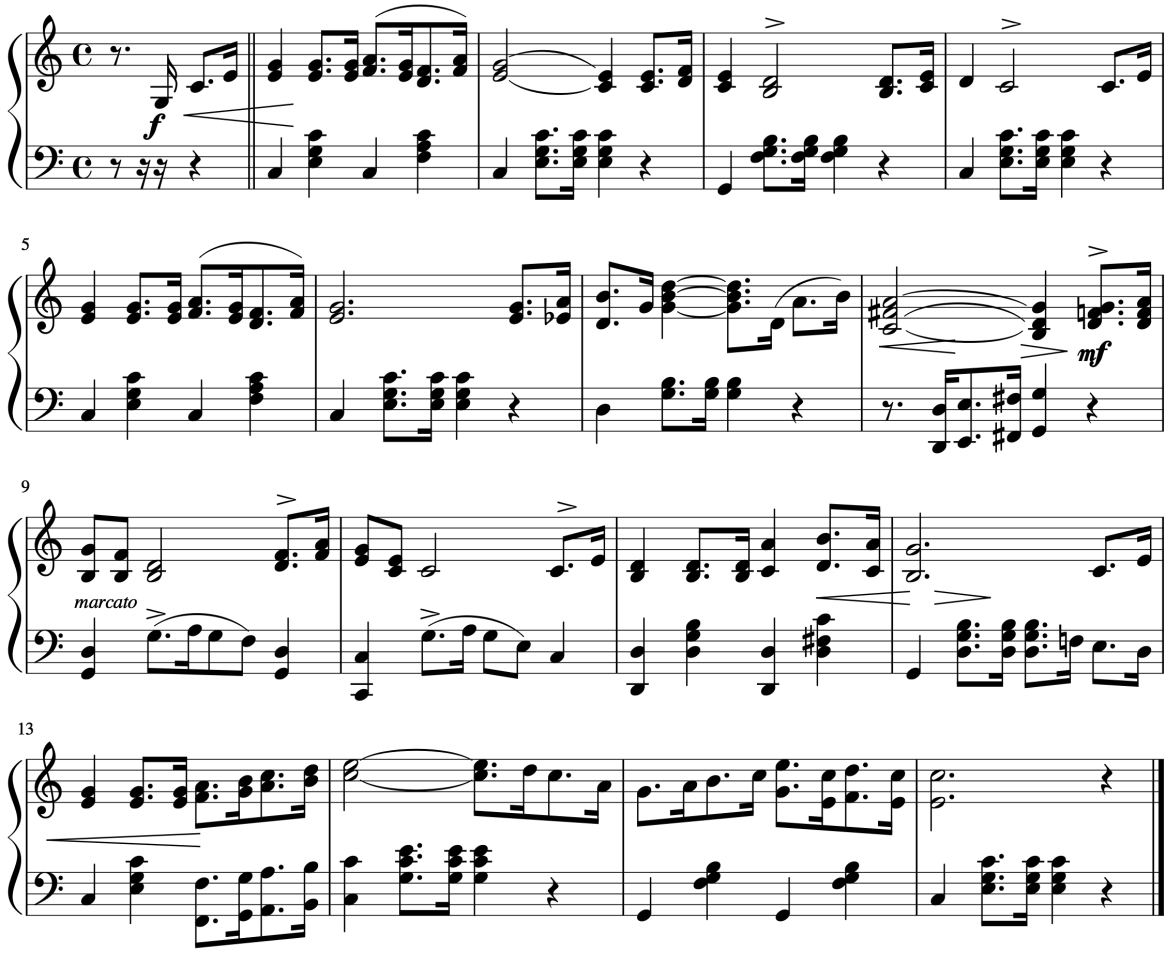


Hymne des Marseillais *from '50 Chants français' by Rouget de Lisle.*[110] *The score here is transposed from its original key of B♭ major into C major in order to facilitate the comparison with the Thai national anthem, which is also written in C major.*

Here is Phra Chen's anthem, in a piano reduction score, which was rendered by Nart Thavornbutr (1905-1981), the pianist in the orchestra under the control of Phra Chen:[111]

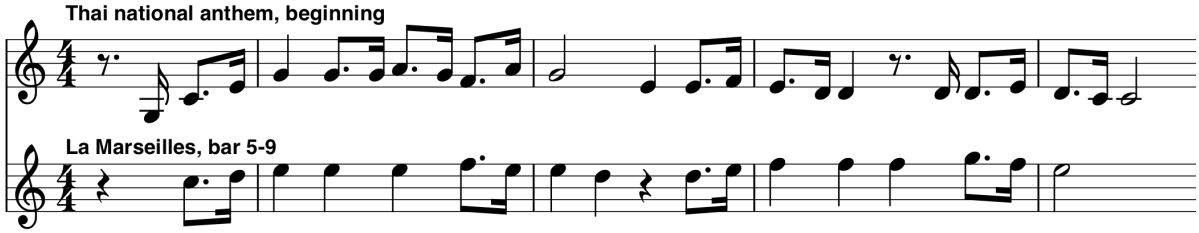
[110] Claude-Joseph Rouget de Lisle: *50 Chants français*, Paris: chez l'auteur 1825, p. 84-85.

[111] Nart Thavornbutr: เพลงประวัติศาสตร์ ใช้ในราชการ รวมเพลงมาร์ชและพิเศษสำหรับปิอาโนโซโล *[Historical Pieces for Official Occasions and Marches for Piano Solo]*, Bangkok: n.p. 1975, p. 17.



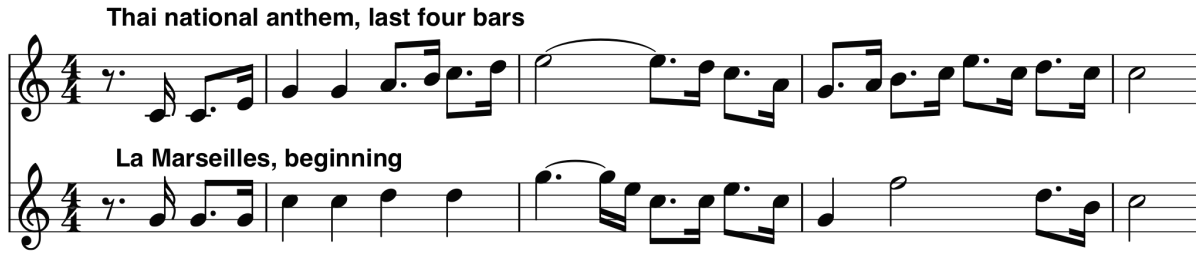
Thai national anthem by Phra Chen (1932). Note that all the accent marks in this score – added by Thavornbutr – are placed on the weak beats (the second or the fourth beats of 4/4 measure) which go against the march-like figures in the left hand. However, these accents may – according to Thavornbutr – correspond to the sentence stress of the lyrics.

As the People's Party wished to hear the new anthem in the style of *La Marseillaise*, Phra Chen fulfilled their requirement by using dotted-rhythm (a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver) as the main character of the piece, whereas the former Thai national anthems rarely had such rhythmic figure. Promptly at the beginning of the anthem, the melody reminds one of the second phrase of the French hymn. It is even possible to play these two melodies simultaneously because they fit harmonically together as if they were a main theme and a countermelody:



Comparison of the beginning of Phra Chen's hymn and La Marseilles.

Another obvious similarity can be found at the end of the Thai anthem, where it reaches the song's climax at its highest note. Phra Chen wrote the last four bars with the same up and downwards direction as in the beginning of *La Marseillaise*. Again, both melodies could be played simultaneously without causing unpleasant dissonance:



Comparison of the ending phrase of Phra Chen's hymn and La Marseilles.

Although the figures with dotted rhythm are constantly heard throughout Thailand's national anthem, the phrases in the middle section – i.e. bars 8-12 – do not share any significant resemblance with *La Marseillaise*. Phra Chen makes conventional modulation from the tonic to its dominant key only two times, in bar 8 and bar 12. Meanwhile there are several harmonic features in the middle section of *La Marseillaise*: for example, the modulation to the sub-dominant key in bars 13-14 and the abrupt switch to the minor key in bars 15-16. These features do not appear in Phra Chen's anthem. He rather created an association with the French march by adapting its themes only at the beginning and at the end of his anthem.

Lyrics of the Current Anthem

It is noticeable that throughout the entire history of Thailand's (and Siam's) national anthems, the music was composed prior to their lyrics, and the lyrics were not written by the composers. This is also the case in the 1930s anthems: the People's Party tried first to configure the desired musical content, then the attempt to get the words fitting to the music was made later.[112] For the lyrics to Phra Chen's anthem, until it finally reached the final version in 1939, the lyrics have been subject to several revisions.

The very first lyrics were written in 1932, immediately after the composition of the anthem, by Khun Wichitmatra (1897-1980), who was a famous journalist and the very first Thai movie director at that time. It consists of two strophes, while the terms 'Siam' and 'Thai' obviously appear alternately in almost every sentence. This also shows the intention to equalise the meaning of both terms. The lyrics with English translation read:[113]

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[112] In western classical music it is mostly the opposite way, for example, in Lieder or opera Libretti the words are written prior to their music.

[113] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen.

แผ่นดินสยามนามประเทืองว่าเมืองทอง ไทยเข้าครองตั้งประเทศเขตต์แดนสง่า
Siam is known as the golden land, where *Thais* have established the country.

สืบชาติไทยดึกดำบรรพ์โบราณลงมา ร่วมรักษาเอกราษฎร์ชนชาติไทย
Our ancestors have protected the independency for us,

บางสมัยศัตรูจู่มารบ ไทยสมทบสวนทัพเข้าขับไล่
Thus, *Thais* are ready to fight vigorously against the invaders,

ตะลุยเลือดหมายมุ่งผดุงผะไท สยามสมัยบุราณรอดตลอดมา
Offering our blood to maintain the glorification of our *Siamese* heritage.

อันดินแดนสยามคือว่าเนื้อของเชื้อไทย น้ำรินไหลคือว่าเลือดของเชื้อข้า
Siam is known as the flesh of *Thai* race. Its rivers flow as if they were our blood.

เอกราษฎร์คือกระดูกที่เราบูชา เราจะสามัคคีร่วมมีใจ
The independence of the country is our worshiped ash. Thus we will move forward together,

ยึดอำนาจกุมสิทธิ์อิสระเสรี ใครย่ำยีเราจะไม่ละให้
To take over the authorities and never give up fighting any tyrants,

เอาเลือดล้างให้สิ้นแผ่นดินของไทย สถาปนาสยามให้เทิดชัยไชโย
And wash them out of *Thailand* with our blood. Cheers for our victorious *Siam*!

However, a year later there was a discussion in the parliament arguing that these lyrics could eventually lead to an undesired interpretation. The phrase 'Thus we will move forward together, to take over the authorities and never give up fighting any tyrants…' in the second strophe could refer back to the act of their revolution – which was the act of overthrowing the legitimate sovereignty from the monarchy – by the People's Party themselves. From this point of view it could give the people a negative remembering about what the Party had done in order to gain power. Therefore, the government decided to immediately prohibit the lyrics in 1933 and renewed the text: the problematic phrase was changed to 'Thus we will move forward together, to keep eyes on the country.'[114]

After renaming the country from Siam to Thailand in 1939 (as well as renaming the term referring to their ethnical race – from Siamese to Thai), the government needed to renew the lyrics of the national anthem again. The goal was to have lyrics which did not create confusion between these two names.[115] In an attempt to achieve this goal, the government launched a national competition searching for the best lyrics (although the estimated literacy-rate of Thai people in the 1940s was merely around

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[114] 'เราจะสามัคคีร่วมมีใจ รักษาชาติประเทศเอกราชจงดี'.

[115] Charoensuk, *National Anthem*, p. 28.

50%).[116] The winner was an internal candidate: Luang Saranuphraphan (1896–1954), a high-rank general who submitted the lyrics on behalf of the Royal Thai Army. His text was selected and became the final lyrics of the Thai national anthem. The lyrics with the transliteration as well as English translation are shown below:

ประเทศไทยรวมเลือดเนื้อชาติเชื้อไทย
Prathet thai rum lueat nuea chat chua thai
Thailand is founded on blood and flesh

เป็นประชารัฐไผทของไทยทุกส่วน
Pen pracha rat phathai thong thai thuk suan
Thai people share every portion of the land that belongs to us,

อยู่ดำรงคงไว้ได้ทั้งมวล
Yu damrong khong wai dai thang muan
Thus we must take a good care of Thailand.

ด้วยไทยล้วนหมายรักสามัคคี
Dual Thai luan mai rak samakkhi
The reason why Thailand still exists is because the Thai people have long loved another and been harmonized.

ไทยนี้รักสงบแต่ถึงรบไม่ขลาด
Thai ni rak sangop tae thueng rop mai khlat
We, All Thai, are peace-loving people. However in the time of war, unfearfully, we'll fight to the bitter end.

เอกราชจะไม่ให้ใครข่มขี่
Ekkarat cha mai hai khrai khom khi
None is allowed to oppress and destroy our independence;

สละเลือดทุกหยาดเป็นชาติพลี
Sala lueat thuk yat pen chat phali
To sacrifice every droplet of blood as a national offering, we are always ready,

เถลิงประเทศชาติไทยทวีมีชัย ชโย
Thaloeng prathet chat thai thawi mi chai chayo!
For the sake of our country's progress and victory. Chaiyo! [Cheers!][117]

Compared to the former lyrics by Khun Wichitmatra, the term 'Siam' is totally eliminated in the final lyrics. Meanwhile the references to ancestors, the association with blood of the people, as well as the passion about vigorous battle remain dominant in both lyrics.

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[116] Unesco: *World Illiteracy at Mid-Century. A statistical study*, Winterthur: Buchdruckerei Winterthur AG 1957, p. 31.

[117] The translation made by Frank Freeman (1966).

To Be Sung With Something Wrong

Since the lyrics of the anthem were written after the music, it becomes a considerably challenging task to write lyrics which not only contain proper meaning and rhyme correctly according to the poetic structure of the text, but also linguistically get along well with the given melodic shape. The first two conditions – the proper meaning and the poetic aesthetic – seemed to be carefully controlled: the special committee from the People's Party actually made additional corrections and revisions upon Luang Saranuphraphan's lyrics before launching them.[118] However, the attempt to synchronise the lyrics with the music, i.e. to maintain the correct pronunciations of the lyrics while being sung, was irrevocably doomed to fail.

The Thai language, similar to other languages from the Indochina region – e.g. Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, peninsular Malaysian or Burmese – features different levels of phonemic tones in its pronunciation. Its precise undulating intonations – similar to the pitch of notes in music – significantly influence the meaning. For example: Thai words 'Khā', 'Khà', and 'Khǎ' which all have the same vowel and consonant but are pronounced with three different intonations. Thus, they have three different meanings: 'to be hung on', 'ginger', and 'leg'. This means, if not precisely pronounced, tone levels can cause the word to sound ridiculous or 'broken' (although one can sometimes understand it from the context).[119]
There are five phonemic tone levels in the standard Thai language, shown in the table below:[120]

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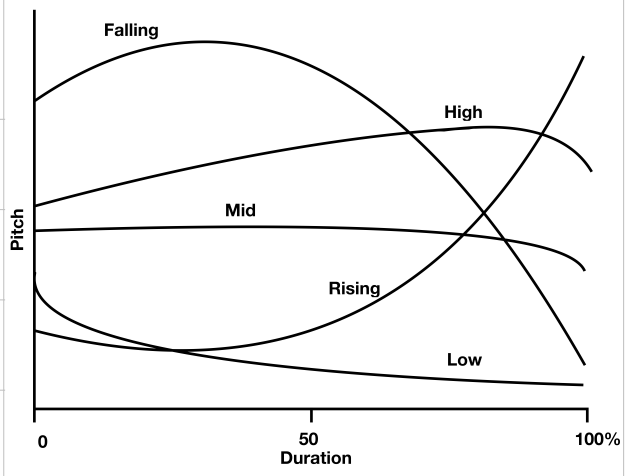
[118] Atibhop Pataradetpisan: '**ข้อสังเกตเรื่องเนื้อร้องของเพลงชาติไทย และความคิดเกี่ยวกับนาวารัฐ**' [Remarks about the lyrics of Thai national anthem and the idea of seeing the state as a ship], in: *Siam Rath newspaper*, 10th Feb. 2012. Online publication, <http://oknation.nationtv.tv/blog/insanetheater/2012/02/10/entry-1> [7th May 2017].

[119] This aspect also shows up in Thai dialects. For instance, in Southern Thai dialect most of the words are pronounced with phonemic tones that differs from the standard Thai language. Taking the same example: 'leg' is spoken '*Khâ*' in the southern region which sounds similar to 'value' in the standard Thai language.

[120] The diagram shown in the table is duplicated and simplified from the original diagram from:
Arthur S. Abramson, 'The Vowels and Tones of Standard Thai' in: *International Journal of American Linguistics* vol. 28 no.2, edited by C.F. Voegelin, Bloomington: Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Indiana University 1962, p. 127.

Tone level	Example in Phonemic, according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)	Meaning	Direction of the pitches in each tone level
mid (*Saman*)	/khāː/	to be hung on (คา)	
low (*Ek*)	/khàː/	Thai ginger (ข่า)	
falling (*Tou*)	/khâː/	value (ค่า)	
high (*Tri*)	/khǎː/	to trade (ค้า)	
rising (*Jattawa*)	/khǎː/	leg (ขา)	

Five phonemic tone levels in the Thai language.

In order to write Thai lyrics for western music, the composers must consider the compatibility between the melodic interval and the phonemic tone of the word. So that when the lyrics are sung, the words still maintain the correct meaning. Therefore, when the phonemic tone of the word is distorted in the song by placing it on an improper interval, it not only sounds irritating to the ears of the native speakers, but it also loosens the musical tension by misleading the meaning in the word and making the lyrics illogical.

The lyrics of the Thai national anthem are constructed very closely to one of the typical Thai poetry forms: 'Klon Supap' (literally translated as 'a polite poem'), in which each strophe contains eight syllables (but sometimes seven or up to ten syllables are also acceptable) and the words at the end of each strophe rhyme with the word in the middle of the next strophe. This following chart shows the final version of the Thai anthem's lyrics by Luang Saranuphraphan, with the rhyming structure according to Klon Supap:

*Prathet thai ruam lueat nuea chat chuea **thai**,* *Pen pracha rat, phathai khong **thai** thuk **suan**,*

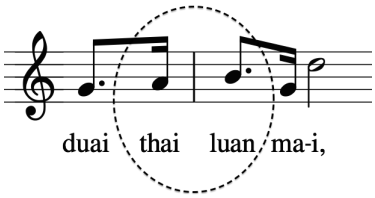
*Yu damrong khong wai dai thang **müan**,* *Duai thai **luan** mai, rak samak**khi**,*

*Thai **ni** rak sangop, tae thueng rop mai **khlat**,* *Ekka**rat** cha mai hai khrai khom **khi**,*

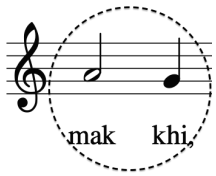
*Sala lueat thuk yat pen chat pha**li**;* *Thaloeng prathet chat thai tha**wi**, mi chai, chayo!*

The lyrics of Luang Saranuphraphan, shown in the structure of Klon Supap.

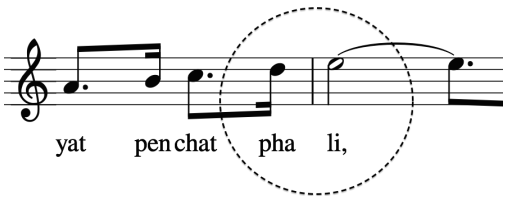
However, the melody of the anthem by Phra Chen does not match the meaning of the lyrics in a way that sounds correct according to the Thai phonemic tones. There are four places in the anthem, where the words are forced to be wrongly pronounced by the given music. Considering these bold words (or syllables) in the lyrics above: ‘luan’, ‘samakkhi’, ‘phali’ and ‘thawi’, they correspond correctly to the rhyming pattern of Klon Supap. Nevertheless, these words can be difficult to understand when sung with the melody of Phra Chen because the melodic intervals written at those syllables rise or sink in the opposite direction of their undulating tones when being spoken. The four problematic words are explained separately below:



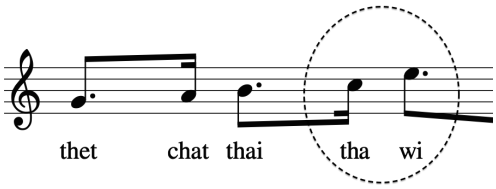
‘Luan’ (ล้วน): pronounced with the high phonemic tone. It means ‘entire’ or ‘overall’. But when this word is sung with the interval of rising major second, it is automatically pronounced in the falling phonemic tone (ล่วน), which apparently does not have any meaning in the Thai language.



‘Khi’ (คี): pronounced with the mid phonemic tone. This is the last syllable from the patriotic word ‘samakhi’ which means ‘being united’. The falling major second at the word flattens its intonation to the low phonemic tone. This radically changes the meaning from ‘united friendship’ to ‘to ride’ (ขี่).



‘Phali’ (พลี): pronounced swiftly as one syllable with the mid phonemic tone. Again, the rising major second shifts the meaning from ‘to sacrifice’ to a meaningless syllable.



'Wi' (วี): the ending syllable of 'thawi', is also pronounced with the mid phonemic tone. The word is distorted by the rising major third in the melody, so its meaning of 'to multiply' becomes a meaningless scream.

In the last two cases – 'Phali' and 'Wi' – such meaningless syllables are directly accentuated at the climax of the anthem, where the highest notes are sung. Despite these errors, the People's Party officially approved these lyrics on 10th December 1939. The protocol of the parliament meeting on 6th December of that year reveals that there were actually eight lyrics taken into the final selection round. In the opinion of the committee, the final lyrics were claimed to have 'only' three words which did not fit with Phra Chen's melody, while the other seven lyrics – despite better poetic quality – had significantly more of such errors, one of them having as many as 16 words.[121]

Since then the national anthem became the very first national music Thai people encounter in their life. The national anthem, together with the 'Kao Rop Thong Chat' ritual (paying respect to the national flag), is normally taught in the first days in kindergarten. This means that Thai children are obliged to sing the anthem approximately 200 times a year.[122]

The Anthem and its Preludes:
A Musical Collage for Presenting the National Identity

Although the ritual of paying respect to the national anthem and the flag was introduced by the People's Party in 1939, the government later ordered to play the Thai national anthem in public places twice daily (8 AM and 6 PM) in 1976. It is the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (also known as Radio Thailand, founded in 1930) who takes the responsibility to broadcast the anthem on all public radio and

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[121] Somsak Jeamteerasakul: 'ความเป็นมาของเพลงชาติไทยในปัจจุบัน' ['History of the Current Thai National Anthem'], in: *Thammasat Journal* 27 (2004), Vol. 1, p. 91.

[122] At the same time of introducing Phra Chen's 'western' anthem, the People's Party was also trying to create another national anthem with traditional characteristic. Jangwang Tua Patayakosol (1885-1938), the prominent traditional court musician of that time, was in charge of this assignment. Similar to the former adaptations of *Bulan Loyluen* and *Mahachai*, Patayakosol did not compose an entirely new piece, but made an arrangement for western instruments from the ancient instrumental melody *Tra Nimit*. The Party actually promoted two national anthems alternately in the radio and propaganda medias after the revolution: the western version from Phra Chen Duriyanga and the traditional version adapted from the *Tra Nimit* melody. However, the Party later reconsidered the situation. By giving the reason that having two anthems at the same time would dilute the holiness of each anthem, they decided to abandon the traditional version and let only the anthem from Phra Chen be approved as the only official national anthem.

television channels.[123] In other words, Thai people cannot avoid becoming familiar with the national anthem through the broadcast of Radio Thailand which they – either directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously – hear or listen to in their daily lives.

Radio Thailand has created an official production of the national anthem under the conduct of the National Identity Office of Thailand.[124] This production is a collage work, consisting of three introductory parts, then followed by the anthem at the end. These three introductory parts – as if they were a set of preludes prior to the anthem – are intended to be the 'music for reminding people of the time' as Radio Thailand named it (i.e., the one who hears it will realise that it is soon 8 AM or 6 PM). Considering them as a piece of music, these preludes and the anthem from Radio Thailand do not come up with a musically harmonised structure, since each element has its own character which does not cohere together. Nevertheless, they supplement some nationalistic ideas and fulfil the ritual of the national anthem with the ideology of Thai identity. Radio Thailand presents the national anthem with the following preludes:

1) The opening announcement

Addressed by a vigorous male voice, the announcement emphasises the importance of the national anthem and justifies the purpose of the ritual 'Kao Rop Thong Chat'. The translation of the announcement reads:

> Since the Thai flag and the Thai national anthem symbolise our Thai-ness, all of us are ready to stand upright and pay respect to the flag. We are proud of the independence of our country, which our ancestors have sacrificed their lives for.[125]

The sentences above propagandise the value of the national anthem by saying that the anthem is an essential part of the national identity. However, the discourses behind several keywords from this patriotic announcement: especially 'Thai-ness', 'the independence of the country' as well as the sacrifice of the ancestor's lives, remain questionable. For example, the anthem with the lyrics written in the central-Thai language can never represent the other dialects actively spoken in the rest of the country. Moreover, the main reason behind Thailand's independency is not the lost lives of ancestors in the past wars, but it is the political and military negotiation

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[123] According to the Royal Thai Government Gazette on 'Criteria for Radio and Television Services' (last revised in 2013).

[124] The year when this production was launched has not been recorded.

[125] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. The original announcement is:
'ธงชาติและเพลงชาติไทย เป็นสัญลักษณ์ของความเป็นไทย เราจงร่วมใจกันยืนตรงเคารพธงชาติ ด้วยความภาคภูมิใจในเอกราช และความเสียสละของบรรพบุรุษไทย'.

between the governments that protected the country from being colonised by western countries or more powerful neighbouring countries.[126]

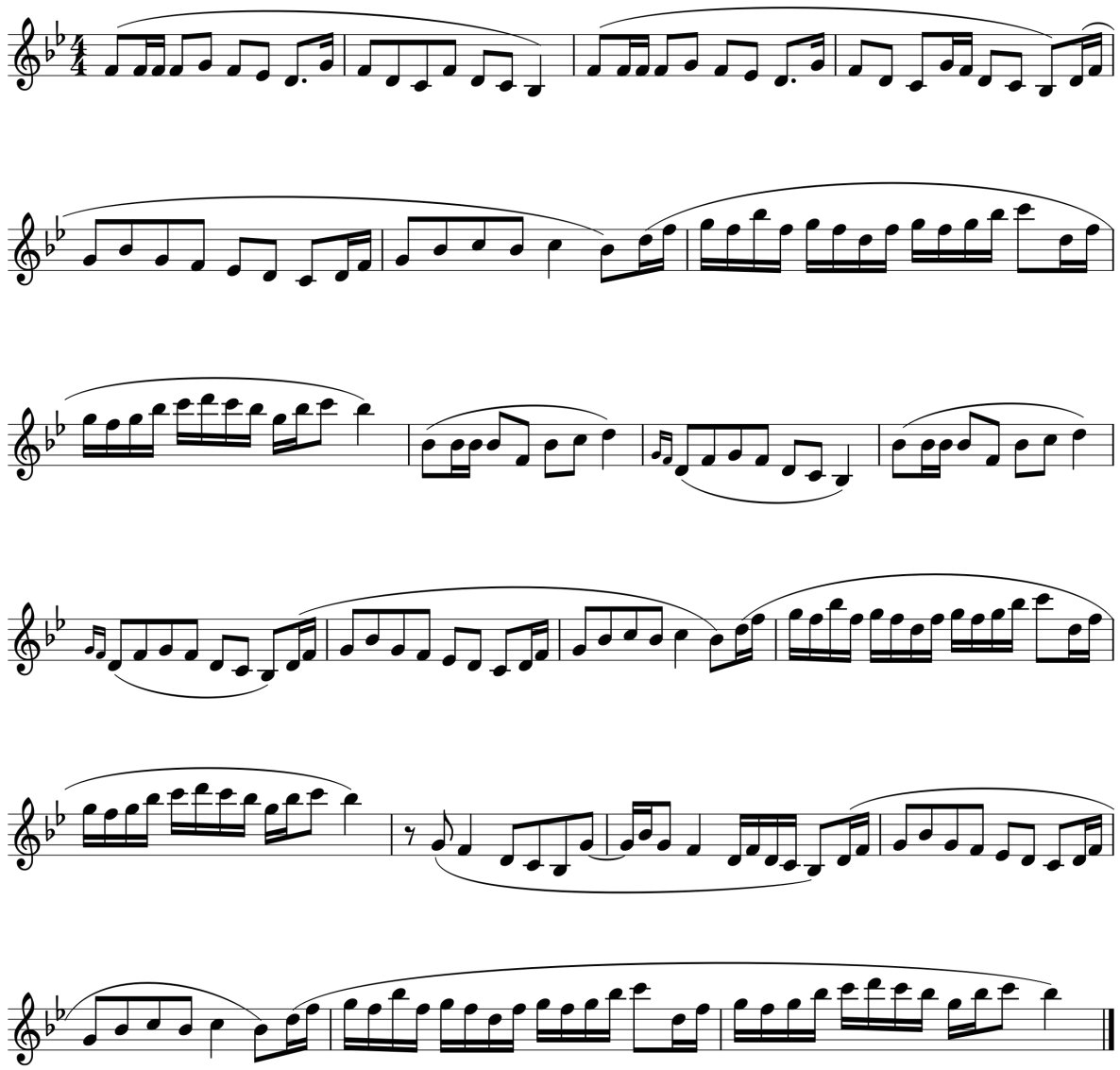
2) The pentatonic intermezzo

After the announcement, a piece of instrumental music is played. This 'music for reminding people of the time' begins with tick-tock sounds (as if it were from a clock, but with a speed of approximately 100 crochets per minute) which runs simultaneously throughout the entire interlude. The music used here is the transcription of the Thai song in Myanmese style: *Brama Phrated* (literally translated: 'The foreign land of Myanmar'). The title of the piece would astonish Thai people when they realise that Myanmese music is included in the presentation of their national anthem.[127] *Brama Phrated* is actually the incidental music written for a Siamese theatre play, telling a story about the life of the last king of Myanmar, Thibaw Min.[128]
Brama Phrated was orchestrated for this purpose by Pha Chen, who transposed the piece into B♭ major. The pentatonic character of the melody is thoroughly heard: with the set of notes B♭, C, D, F and G. Occasionally there are E♭s in some passages as passing notes, but the leading note A is totally omitted. At the same time B♭ is clearly emphasised as the tonic note in the piece.

[126] There were several attempts trying to question the national anthem. A recent example is in 2013: Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, the high school student and the co-founder of the group 'Education for Liberation of Siam', publicly gave critical comments on the meaning of the anthem's lyrics. He and his colleagues were strongly bullied and finally the homepage of the group (http://www.elsiam.org) was forced to close.

[127] Note that, generally speaking, the image of Myanmar is not positive for Thais. Through propagandistic, nationalistic educational mindset, Thai children usually learn in the history class that Burma was Thailand's main invader. Moreover, immigrants from Burma are currently the biggest majority of lower-skilled foreign labour in several Thai mega-industrials and household business.

[128] The play *Thibaw Min* was actually a 'musical theatre' written by the son of King Rama IV, Prince Narathip Phraphanphong (1861-1931). The prince also adapted Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* with the new setting in Siam for another play. He founded the first musical theatre in Siam and his theatre group was active until 1937.



Melody of Brama Phrated*, transcribed from Phra Chen's orchestrated version.*

This music affects the audience with the impression which they will not have later in the national anthem: the 'mood' of traditional Thai music which is derived from the pentatonic character. With this strategy, the association with the 'more authentic' Thai identity is created. The musical language from this prelude tries to convince the audience that the ritual with the anthem also has its roots in the beauty of their own national arts. The intermezzo lasts about one minute – actually longer than the anthem itself – before it fades away without having any proper cadence, and then the next element sneaks in.

3) The Big Ben's ding-dong

The famous Big Ben's bell-ringing theme – also known as the 'Westminster Quarters' or the 'Cambridge Quarters' – is directly quoted. It abruptly changes the mood of the former pentatonic interlude. Again, the effect of having musical unity is

loosened, since the Big Ben melody does not share any similar musical characteristics with the anthem nor with *Brama Phrated*.
Due to its wide-spread use in several churches and clock towers in England as well as the United States of America, this famous bell-ringing tune can be interpreted as a musical etiquette associated with western civilisation. The Westminster Quarters also provide a profound historical background: as the theme was believed to be taken from Handel's *Messiah*, to be precise, the melody from the fifth and the sixth measures of the aria *I know that my Redeemer liveth*.[129] This, looking through the framework of Hobsbawm's invented tradition, is the 'attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past'.[130] Besides, this theme is also associated with discipline and obedience to the authorities. As it is commonly used as an intercom ringtone in school bells and sirens.
After the theme, including six or eight bell strikes (depending on the time, 8 AM or 6 PM respectively), the national anthem begins its first word without the instrumental introduction.[131] The anthem is sung monophonically from a mixed chorus, accompanied by a western orchestra. The entire musical collage – the announcement, *Brama Phrated*, the Big Ben bells and the national anthem – lasts approximately two and a half minutes.

As mentioned before, one loses the effect of having musical unity after hearing the entire suite of national anthem and its preludes. Not only because each element in this collage work does not share similar musical characteristics with the others, but it also lies in the choice of key signature: the interlude with *Brama Phrated* is in B♭ major, the Westminster Quarters are set in B major, and then followed by the anthem in C major. This tonal phenomenon reveals the fact that the idea of conventional key-relationships in western music, i.e. a key is harmoniously related to its dominant, or subdominant, or submediant degree, is not taken into account. With the simple chromatic progression – B♭ - B - C – it hardly serves well-rounded tonal harmony of the entire work. Since the main notes in each key become foreign notes in the upcoming key. However, although the harmonic smoothness in terms of conventional harmony is omitted, B♭ - B - C can also be interpreted as a powerful ascending progression, i.e. in every section of the prelude the tonic note is swiftly heightened in a very short time until it reaches the final goal: the national hymn. The harmonic progression of the national anthem's collage work is depicted in the following notation:

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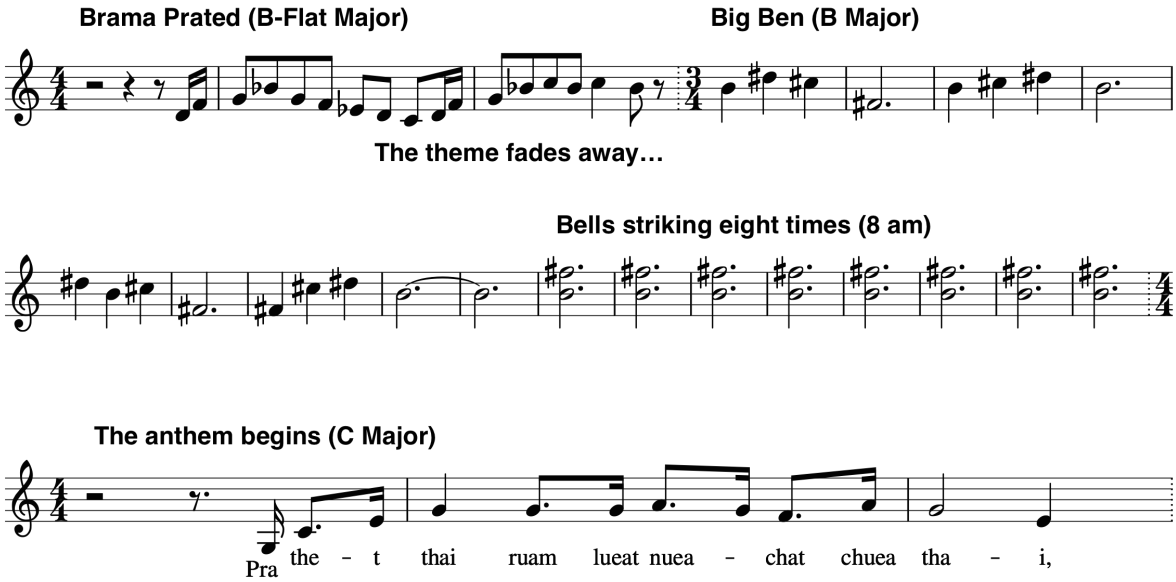
[129] Daniel Harrison: 'Tolling Time', in: *Music Theory Online* Vol. 6, No. 4 (2000), <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.00.6.4/mto.00.6.4.harrison.pdf> [18th Oct. 2020].

[130] Hobsbawm, *Inventing Traditions*, p. 1.

[131] Otherwise the anthem is always played with the introduction, i.e. the orchestra plays the last four bars before the lyrics come in.



Harmonic progression of the preludes and the anthem.

2.3 Conclusion: Rebranding Thai National Anthems

The story of the national anthems of Thailand, until reaching its final version in 1932, involves several discourses. Back into the nineteenth century, Siam did not have the concept of having a common piece of music representing the people's nationality. The closest music regarding this function was the royal reception music, which worked merely as fanfare announcing the presence of the kings. At the beginning, the 'imported' music from England (*God Save the Queen*) could fulfil the task. Later, Siamese kings and their scholars tried to create their own authentic anthems: this was music which tried to create a bond with the monarchy and their glory in the past, and maintained its status as 'the music representing the king' for almost a century.

It was the political influence from the Siamese Revolution which led to the rebranding of the national anthem, by requiring a new perspective: a song for uniting the people. With this intention, the People's Party came up with a top-down approach to render the new national anthem corresponding to their particular preferences. The French revolutionist hymn *La Marseillaise* was the blueprint of the new anthem. Whereas the music was composed with more or less similarity to the French hymn, its lyrics in Thai language cannot befit the given melody. This results in several obvious errors in the phonemic tone of the words when the anthem is sung, and thus the meaning of certain words in the lyrics are distorted.
As per Tejapira's observation on the cultural schizophrenia in Thai society, the search for a new Thai national identity after the revolution always sways between the desire to be 'authentic Thai' and the desire to become westernised in order to be internationally accepted. This phenomenon is also reflected in the way the national anthem is daily broadcasted through the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand. The anthem is attached with another two preludes trying to present the uniqueness of traditional music (in the instrumental piece *Brama Phrated*) and to stimulate 'soundscape' of a western civilised country (with the Big Ben tunes).

In 2005 the Thai government commissioned the largest domestic entertainment company to rearrange the national anthem and variate it into six different 'popular' versions for usage in diverse occasions.[132] These new versions of the anthem were widely unaccepted after the trial launch, although the lyrics were totally unchanged, merely the instrumentation and the type of vocal ensemble were varied in each version. Thus, the project was terminated without success. The public poll regarding this topic said: 79.6% of the people finds it more appropriate to have only one

[132] Those six versions of the renewed national anthem are 1) for official ceremony, 2) for casual occasion, 3) for teenagers: performed by adult singers, 4) for teenagers: performed by young singers, 5) for young children, and 6) for the elderly.

official version of the national anthem for usage for every occasion.[133] From this standpoint, another future attempt to rebrand or reform the national anthem – the musical legacy from the Siamese Revolution – would be a real challenge.

[133] The poll was conducted and published by Bangkok University Research Center (Bangkok Poll), with the sampling of 1,588 people, in May 1995.

Chapter 3: Big Brother Is Watching You! Music and Theatre Reformation in 1943

This chapter talks about the state control of Thailand's cultural reform after the revolution. To assure the new 'civilised' national identity, the military government became strict about the practice of cultural activities by the people. By releasing certain regulations as well as making some adjustments regarding musical and theatrical performances, the government believed that Thai music would become comparable to western music. Nevertheless, this top-down control did not work out as expected. In this chapter the implementation, the incompatibilities, and the mistakes that took place during the cultural reform will be investigated.

Before looking in detail at Thailand, there is an anecdote from a composer in the Soviet Union which deserves to be mentioned. On the first page of his *24 Preludes* Op.38 (1943) Dimitry Kabalevsky quoted a sentence from the prominent Russian writer, Mikhail Lermontov, as follows:

> […] sollte ich mich einmal der Volkspoesie widmen, so werde ich sie sicher nirgends mehr suchen als in den russischen Liedern.[134]

Such an epic cycle – 24 preludes in all major and minor keys – which Kabalevsky wrote in the early years of his career under the rule of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, is regarded as a standard compositional tradition which has been carried out by Johann Sebastian Bach, Chopin, Scriabin, Shostakovich and many others. The idea behind this work is to present the entire tonal system of western classical music. From this point of view, Kabalevsky strongly believed that the folk music from his homeland could be used as core material to represent the whole tonality of western music. His creation of a new musical language which distinguishes 'Russian music' from the German or French schools and which was fuelled by his nationalistic pride was achieved by him discovering his own Russian folk elements and bringing them to a higher cultural platform (i.e. in the form of concert pieces, operas etc.). Thus, in every prelude in his Op.38, folklore singing and dancing melodies can be clearly heard within his enigmatic harmonic creation. In short, Kabalevsky created the national identity in the music by using traditional material to reshape the language of western classical music.

For Thailand, during the same period as Kabalevsky wrote his 24 preludes, the procedure described above was performed the other way round. The traditional music was judged by the government as something uncivilised and primitive. Therefore, western music was utilised to help disguise this primitiveness, or to 'rebrand' Thai music. In December 1942, Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram had

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[134] Dimitri Kabalevsky: *24 Präludien für Klavier Opus 38*, Leipzig: Edition Peters (n.d.), p. 3.

his viewpoint about Thailand's music and theatre written in the royal decree as following:

> Music and theatre are important to the nation. […] They represent the development of the country and reflect the way of life of our people. Nowadays, civilisation in our country and in the world is improving. The relationship between countries is extending as well. Therefore, it is necessary to improve our national music and theatre, until they reach the same level of sophistication as those in developed countries. Music and theatre are not only entertainment, but they are also a tool for moral improvement. Thus, they should be of sufficiently high quality to fulfil these tasks. […] In the past our music and theatre did not have a theoretical background. Anyone could just make a performance at will without having to follow any regulations. Therefore, these arts deteriorated as nobody took care of them. It is true that some kind of music and theatre belong to our authentic tradition. However, if the tradition inhibits the current society, the morals of the people, or the national development, it must be adjusted such that it becomes comparable with the tradition of other developed countries […] The adjustment or improvement of the tradition must be done with the appropriate method, otherwise the result does not make sense. We must look at developed countries, at their globally appreciated culture and use it as the reference for our cultural improvement.[135]

3.1 The Royal Decree on Regulations About Theatre, Music-, Vocal- and Reciting-performances (RDTM)

It is not an uncommon phenomenon for a ruler or a state to take control of their people's practice of arts and music. Around 2000 B.C. in the ancient regime of China, the legendary emperor Shun commanded his court musician Kwei to control the discipline of music practice in the whole empire. The emperor's assignments included the unification of tuning and tone systems, the specification of length and diameter of the pipes for making instruments, as well as the examination of folk songs and musicians and whether they were set in the acknowledged tone system or not.[136] Such control by the regime also took place in Thailand during the political turbulence of the 1932 revolution: the Thai government under the quasi-fascist regime of Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram wanted to abolish 'rural and

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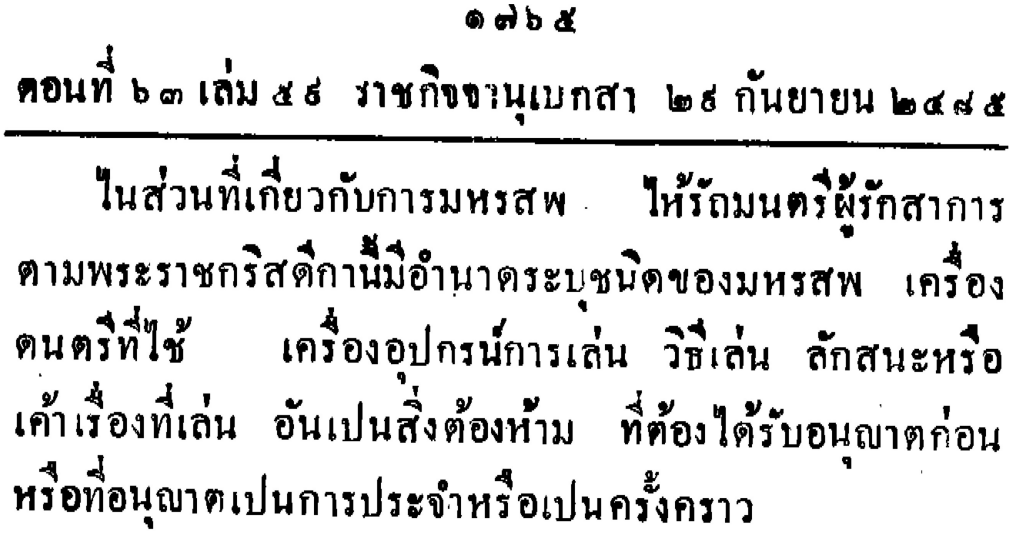
[135] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the decree it is originally written:
เนื่องจากการดนตรีและละคอนเปนงานสำคันของชาติ […] ดนตรีและละคอนยังบ่งสแดงถึงความจเรินของชาติ สามาถไห้หยั่งถึงชีวิตความเปนหยู่ของประชาชาตินั้นด้วย มาบัดนี้ ความจเรินของชาติและของโลกแผ่ขยายยิ่งขึ้น การเกี่ยวโยงระหว่างชาติก็ไพสาลออกไป ดังนั้น ความจำเปนจึงบังคับเราไห้จำต้องปรับปรุงสิลปทางด้านการสแดงละคอนและการดนตรีของชาติเราไห้เข้าสู่ระดับเทียมบ่าเสมอไหล่กับนานาอารยะประเทส […] การดนตรีและละคอนซึ่งแต่เดิมหาได้มีระเบียบแบบแผนกำหนดวิธีการไห้เป็นที่แน่นอนไม่ ไครชอบไจจะจัดการสแดงหย่างไรก็จัดไปได้โดยไม่มีกำหนดกดเกนท์ จึงทำไห้สิลปของดนตรีและละคอนเกิดการลักลั่นขาดการทนุบำรุงเปนล่ำเปนสัน นับวันจะซุดโซมเรื่อยไป จิงหยู่ ดนตรีหรือละคอนบางหย่างเปนประเพนีดั้งเดิมของชาติ แต่ประเพนีนั้นๆหากขัดกับสังคม ขัดกับสีลธัม ขัดกับความจเรินก้าวหน้าของชาติเราก็ต้องปรับปรุงและส่งเสิม ไม่ไช่จะหยุดหยู่แค่ไหนก็แค่นั้นโดยไม่มีเหตุผล แต่จะต้องไห้เข้ากันได้กับของนานาชาติที่จเรินการจะปรับปรุงส่งเสิมนั้น เราต้องทำโดยมีหลักเกนท์ มิฉะนั้น จะดูเปนการเลื่อนลอยหาหลักไม่ได้ ดังนั้น จึงต้องอาสัยหลักของชาติที่จเริน หรือของโลกที่มีผู้นิยมแพร่หลาย เปนมาตรถานเท่าเทียมกันทุกชาติทุกภาสาเปนแนวทาง.

[136] Curt Sachs: *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World: East and West*, New York: Dover Publications, 2008, p. 112-113.

primitive' traditions and promote civilisation by adhering to western practices instead.



๑๗๖๕

ตอนที่ ๖๓ เล่ม ๕๙ ราชกิจจานุเบกษา ๒๙ กันยายน ๒๔๘๕

ในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับการมหรสพ ให้รัฐมนตรีผู้รักสาการตามพระราชกฤษฎีกานี้มีอำนาจระบุชนิดของมหรสพ เครื่องดนตรีที่ใช้ เครื่องอุปกรณ์การเล่น วิธีเล่น ลักษณะหรือเค้าเรื่องที่เล่น อันเป็นสิ่งต้องห้าม ที่ต้องได้รับอนุญาตก่อน หรือที่อนุญาตเป็นการประจำหรือเป็นครั้งคราว

An excerpt from the national gazette written on 29th September 1942, its translation, made by Siwat Chuencharoen, reads:
[…] the minister who is in charge of this gazette has authority to report any kind of entertainment, musical instruments, stage settings, performing techniques as well as synopsis of plays which are morally problematic and need to be verified [by the ministry] prior to their performance.

The 'Royal Decree on Regulations about Theatre, Music-, Vocal- and Reciting-performances' (RDTM) was released during 1942-1943 by the Ministry of Fine Arts.[137] The objective of this decree was to standardise the performances of theatrical and musical works in the country, taking western music as the model, as well as to control moral aspects of the vocal and reciting performances, in order to assure the improvement of Thailand's national arts.[138]

Section I – The Useless Categorisation

The RDTM consists of two main sections. The first section focuses on categorising the music. According to the RDTM, all kind of musical performances may be classified into two rough categories: vocal and instrumental performances. Whereas the vocal category is not further discussed in detail, the RDTM makes great effort to deal with the instrumental performances.[139]

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[137] The decree is called originally in Thai: ‚พระราชกฤษฎีกากำหนดวัฒนธรรมทางศิลปกรรมเกี่ยวกับการแสดงละคร/การบรรเลงดนตรี การขับร้อง และการพากย์'.

[138] Supapol Shorvichit: การรับวัฒนธรรมต่างชาติในดนตรีไทย*:* บทพิสูจน์ลักษณะพหุสังคมของสังคมไทย *[Influences of Foreign Culture in Thai Music: The Proof of Multiculturalism in Thailand]*, Diss., Ramkhamheang University Bangkok 2010.

[139] This part of RDTM (1943) is quoted in:
Narong Khienthongkul: 'การห้ามบรรเลงดนตรีในประวัติดนตรีไทย' ['The Music prohibition in Thai Music History'], in: *Kasetsart University Humanities Journal* (2001), vol. 9 no.1, p. 114-115.

The term ‘instrumental music’ is renamed with the newly invented Thai terminology as *Dontree Ekkated*: ‘Dontree’ means music and ‘Ekkated’ can be translated as isolated or individual. In this sense, *Dontree Ekkated* refers to the music which does not depend on words, i.e. that is only played by instruments without a vocalist. *Dontree Ekkated* is divided into 17 further subcategories by applying the idea of the instrumentation from the western music paradigm. Furthermore, the RDTM also gives – or limits – the specific functions to each type of the ensemble. The following table summarises the RDTM categorisation of instrumental music:

Subcategories of ‘Dontree Ekkated’ (instrumental music), sorted by their functions		
Name pronounced in Thai	Literal translation / declaration	Given functions
A. Maha Duriyang B. Mattayom Duriyang C. Chula Duriyang D. Tanti Duriyang E. Pakinnaka-Duriyang	A. Large size ensemble B. Medium size ensemble C. Small size ensemble D. Ensemble with pattern [?] E. Miscellaneous ensemble [?]	Performed in music-places or in diverse occasions
F. Akarn Duriyang	F. Ensemble played in buildings	Performed in halls
G. Kappa Dontree	G. Chamber music	Performed in rooms
H. Yothavatit	H. Marching band	Performed during marches or other outdoor events
I. Trae Wong	I. Brass band	Performed in armies, schools, or for parades in local areas and places of work
J. Dontree Leelad	J. Ballroom music	Performed for ballroom dances or in diverse occasions
K. Pi Pat	K. Traditional ensemble featuring reed instruments (Pi), without string instruments	Performed in ceremonies or in diverse occasions
L. Trae Sang M. Klong Chana	L. Mussel-horn M. Victory drum	Performed in governmental ceremonies

Subcategories of 'Dontree Ekkated' (instrumental music), sorted by their functions		
N. Krueng Sai	N. Traditional ensemble with various fiddles (Sor)	Performed in diverse occasions
O. Mahoree	O. Full-ensemble with traditional instruments	
P. Duriyang Tang Chat	P. Ensembles from foreign countries	
Q. Pi Klong	Q. Traditional ensemble of a solo reed instrument (Pi) and drums	Performed in sports, for example fencing or boxing

Subcategories of 'Dontree Ekkated' in RDTM.

Traditional instruments mentioned in the RDTM. [140]

The categories A. to J. mainly involve the music played by western instruments, meanwhile the rest (categories K. to Q.) are related to traditional music. However, it is interesting to see that the sub-categorisation above fails to convey the in-depth comprehension of western music.

First of all, RDTM does not provide any further clarification about the criteria specifying the sizes and the characters of those ensembles. The concept behind this categorisation is merely about inventing new terms for referring to different types of ensemble. Some titles contain prefixes which imply different sizes of the ensembles (categories A., B., C., and F.): *Maha Duriyang*, *Mattayom Duriyang*, *Chula Duriyang*, and *Akarn Duriyang*. It is noticeable that the meanings of these titles match with some categories of western orchestra formations very well, namely: symphony orchestra (*Maha Duriyang*), sinfonietta (*Mattayom Duriyang*), chamber orchestra (*Chula Duriyang*), chamber music (*Akarn Duriyang*). While the other categories, *Tanti Duriyang* and *Pakinaka Duriyang* (categories D. and E. respectively), convey vague meanings. 'Tanti' – which means 'pattern' – that could possibly refer to specific

[140] <https://sites.google.com/site/hs2kvo/> [2nd April 2017].

types of ensemble that have fixed 'casts' (western classical string quartet, for example), and 'Pakinaka' – meaning 'miscellaneous' – may refer to any freely formed ensemble. However, there is not a single example nor explanation in the RDTM giving a hint as to what exactly *Tanti* and *Pakinaka Duriyang* can be. Furthermore, for the categories F. and G., the difference between the music being performed in buildings (*Akarn Duriyang*) and the one for rooms (*Kappa Dontree*) is also not mentioned at all.

Moreover, the given functions for each ensemble do not suggest any clear directions nor give any concrete implementations for the music. The sentence '[to be] performed in diverse occasions' is indicated repetitively for several categories. Therefore, it has to be doubted if the real intention of the decree was having the music categorised after certain distinct characterisations: whether the Ministry of Fine Arts really knew exactly how to make use of those specific types of music during the nation-building period or not remains unclear.

While most of the categories are not related to concrete functions, it is noticeable that three of them, which are all ensemble with traditional instruments – *Pi Pat*, *Trae Sang*, and *Klong Chana* (categories K., L., and M. respectively) – are meant to be played in 'ceremonies' and not only just in 'diverse occasions'. Thus, it can be assumed that the music allowed in the traditional ceremonies still featured only traditional instruments. Besides, march, parade, dance, and sports (i.e. fencing and boxing) are the only precise indications in the RDTM catalogue.

The last category – *Duriyang Tang Chat* (category P.) – can be literally translated as 'ensembles from foreign countries'. This categorisation is confusing: since most of the categories provided by RDTM refer to ensembles that in fact were adopted from 'foreign countries'. This is because Thai traditional music at that time already used numerous elements taken from the music of the neighbouring countries. Also, a very large amount of Thai traditional pieces which are performed regularly by *Pi Pat* or *Mahoree* ensembles were eventually named with national titles, for example *Lao* (Laos) *Chomdong*, *Phama* (Burmese) *Ti Klong*, *Khamen* (Cambodian) *Phothisad*, and *Khek* (Indian) *Sarai*. As a consequence, the need to add another subdivision called *Duriyang Tang Chat* is not self-evident. *Duriyang Tang Chat*, nevertheless, could allude to the folk music from the ethnic minorities who live close to the border of the country. For RDTM, *Duriyang Tang Chat* is something similar to the term 'world music' nowadays, i.e. the non-western folk, traditional or popular music that contains ethnic elements and is considered as 'music which belongs to someone else'.[141] Anyhow, a clear explanation for the contradiction of the category *Duriyang Tang Chat* is not provided.

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[141] Carl Rahkonen: 'What is World Music?', in: *World Music in Music Libraries. Technical Report No. 24. Canton, MA: Music Library Association, December 1994, <https://www.people.iup.edu/rahkonen/Ethno/Readings/WorldMusic.htm>* [16th Oct. 2020].

To conclude, RDTM's attempt to discipline the practices of instrumental music in Thailand started with the fundamental method which the western world – dating back to the idea of Aristotle – always uses for approaching any kind of knowledge: to subdivide the inspected objects into different categories. The government gave rather clear instructions only for the music used for marching, dances, as well as the traditional music for ceremonies. But significant details of the other categories of western instrumental music were not indicated, for example: what exactly is the instrumentation? How many instruments should be included? What kind of music is suitable for each category and for which occasion? The answers to these questions cannot be found in the RDTM, probably due to the government's lack of profound understanding of the western instrumentation. Therefore, this systematisation does not lead to any further practical results: the RDTM's categories for western instrumental music from A. to G. are not used nor acknowledged anymore in Thailand nowadays.

Section II – Under the Officer's Control

The second section of RDTM regulates the official permissions needed to perform music:

> The categories of the ensemble from A. to O. can be performed without any official allowance, but they must be under control of the officers from the Ministry of Fine Arts. The categories P. and Q. *[Duriyang Tang Chat* and *Pi Klong*] must obtain the official allowance from the Ministry of Fine Arts before being performed […] For any musical performances other than the above written categories, when the organisers come up with considerable reasons, they have to process a special request indicating their significant details and necessity of the performance to the Ministry of Fine Arts.[142]

Although most of the ensemble types suggested by the RDTM could be performed without prior permission, the Ministry of Fine Arts still reserved their absolute authority to modify, or even to terminate any performances whenever the officers found they were performed 'improperly according to the academic framework'. Nonetheless, their so-called 'academic framework' claimed in the RDTM was actually never clarified and therefore in many cases the criteria derived from rather subjective, spontaneous decisions by the officers.[143] Moreover, the government also

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[142] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the decree it is originally written:
การบันเลงดนตรีตามข้อหนึ่ง (ก) ถึง (น) ให้บันเลงได้โดยมิต้องขออนุญาต แต่ต้องหยู่ไนความควบคุมของเจ้าหน้าที่กรมสิลปากร การบันเลงตามข้อหนึ่ง (บ) และ (ป) ต้องยื่นเรื่องราวขออนุญาตต่อกรมสิลปากรก่อนจึงบันเลงได้ [...] การบันเลงดนตรีที่ผิดแผกจากที่กล่าวนี้ ถ้ามีเหตุผลเปนพิเสส ก็ให้ผู้ประสงค์จะจัดการบันเลงยื่นคำร้องชี้แจงสแดงเหตุผลโดยละเอียดทั้งสแดงความจำเปนพิเสสจิง แล้วยื่นต่อกรมสิลปากร.

[143] Ratthakarn Na Phatthalung: **พัฒนาการของโนราภายใต้นโยบายทางวัฒนธรรมของรัฐไทย พ.ศ.** *2485-2530 [Development of Nora under the cultural policies of the Thai state, 1942-1987]*, Diss., Thammasat University 2011, p. 86.

legitimatised the right of the officers from the Ministry of Fine Arts to visit and inspect any cultural events at any time.[144]
After 8th June 1943, such control became even stricter. It was required that the musicians who participated in all kind of western ensembles, as well as in *Pi Pat* and *Mahoree* (categories K. and O. in RDTM), must have been certified as national qualified artist under the regulations of the Ministry of Fine Arts.

The Actual Case: Prohibition of Nora

One of the cultural reforms led by RDTM was the prohibition of 'Nora' – a rural musical theatre from the southern region of Thailand. In Nora, the performers – usually appearing in groups of 2-5 people or more – combine dances, singing and theatrical scenes. There is an instrumental ensemble sitting on the corner of the stage or hiding themselves behind the curtain who provide musical interludes and some spontaneous rhythmic accompaniment. Nora, assumably inspired by the ceremonial court dances from India, is widely known as the cultural signature of the southern provinces of Thailand. In the performance of Nora, mythical beliefs, rural ceremonies, rhymes, as well as humoristic elements are displayed.

One of the biggest annual Nora performance in Pattalung province, held in May 2016. The two pictures below show a spiritual ceremony of inviting the spirit of the ancient masters to divine in the performance (right) and the musicians with their percussive instruments (left).[145]

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144 In the provinces outside Bangkok and its agglomeration, the officers from each provincial administration office were in charge of this duty.

145 <http://www.manager.co.th/Travel/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9590000052662> [30th March 2017].

Although Nora reflects certain solemn practices relating to the regional beliefs, it also has another characteristic. When Nora is not intended to be played in an official circumstance, or when the ceremonial part of the performance is already finished, it usually features provocative humoresque, vulgar jokes as well as countless erotic messages in order to entertain the audiences. This type of Nora known as 'Nora Puenban' (which means 'rural Nora'), significantly gained more popularity among the people in the rural areas. Therefore, the image of Nora is widely well-known for its naughty, comical character.

Here is an example of a dialogue from a rural Nora. It is believed to have been improvised on the stage, it begins with a free dialogue between three people, then the man suggests the other two women to make a rhyme together. Once the musicians notice their common intention, they start to play a lively rhythmical prelude to generate the appropriate mood. The music lasts around one minute, then it stops and a spoken scene between the three characters begins:

> *The man:* อ๋อ ทำที่น้อง แล้วทำเป็นหินดำ (So you are making a black stone.)
>
> *The woman:* ทำแล้วพี่เอ้อ นี่! หินดำ (Done! Here is a black stone.) (*showing her fist*)
>
> *The man:* อ๋อนี่ร่ำแล้วว่าทำมาเป็นหินดำ! (Aha, you told me that's a black stone!)
>
> *The old lady:* ได้ลูกบ่าว แล้วแม่จะทำหินลาย หินลาย! (After giving birth to my son, then I will make a striped stone. Here is a striped stone!)
>
> *The woman:* สาเหตุที่ได้ลาย? (And why does your stone have strips?)
>
> *The old lady:* ลายเพราะมันเกิดนาน มันด่างๆ เทาๆ (Because it took long time to bare him. Also, there are dots and grey stains.)[146]

The core joke of this scene stems from the ambiguity of the word 'stone'. When pronounced in Thai – 'Hin' – with a little prolongation of its vowel, easily resembles another word which means vagina. This rhyme provides an example of spontaneous and intuitive dirty jokes, which is the popular feature that attracts audiences to Nora. Probably it was this feature that caused the Ministry of Fine Arts to be reluctant about the consideration of Nora as part of the national culture. As a consequence, the government declared the restriction in RDTM, dated on 8th December 1942, as following:

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[146] Transcribed from a live-recording of โนราศรีวิชัยโชว์ *[Nora Srivichai Show]*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs0TMFD3GTg> [23rd Feb. 2017].

> The theatrical performances which can be considered as profession – i.e. the performers can earn income from them […] and they are not intended to be an entertainment in private spheres – must be indicated in the following columns […] [These performances are namely: Opera, Drama (*Nadta Karma)* and Musical (*Nad Dontree*).] Any other kind of performance is not allowed to be performed, unless the performers have received an exceptional allowance from the official institutions.[147]

Two weeks later, on 22nd December 1942, the government released a supplementary document 'to declare the meaning of the types of performances mentioned in the previous decree'. In this document, several canonical western repertoires, for example Verdi's *Aida*, Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* etc. were given as reference for the 'allowed' types of theatrical performance in public.

ก. มหาอุปรากร ได้แก่ Grand Opera (แกรนด์โอเปร่า) คือ การส่แดงเรื่องเล่าโลก ซาบซึ้ง จบลงด้วยการสลดใจ เช่น มหาอุปรากร ไอด้า ของเวอร์ดี้ (Aida Verdi)

ข. นาฏกัมดนตรี ได้แก่ Musical Drama (มิวสิคัลดรามา่า) คือ การส่แดงอุปรากรที่เพลากว่ามหาอุปรากร หมายความว่าบท เพลงง่ายขึ้น เช่น ดัส ไรนโกลด์ ของ วากเนอร์ (Das Rheingold Wagner)

ค. จุลอุปรากร ได้แก่ Operetta (โอเปเร็ตตา) คือ การส่แดงอุปรากรหย่างเบา คล้ายนาฏกัมดนตรี แต่มีตอนที่จบขันเป็น เครื่องบันเทิงบ้าง เช่น เรื่อง เดอะ บาร์เตอร์ด ไบรด์ ของ ส่เมตานา (The Bartered Bride Smetana)

ง. สุขอุปรากร ได้แก่ Comic Opera (คอมิค โอเปร่า) คือ การส่แดงอุปรากรขนิดเบาในท่านองขบขัน แซกบทเจรจาไว้ เช่น เรื่อง เดอ บาร์บิเอร์ เดอ เซวิล ของ รอส์ส์นี่ (Le Barbier de Seville Rossini)

จ. หัส์อุปรากร ได้แก่ Opera Bouffe (โอเปร่า บูฟ) คือ การส่แดงอุปรากรขนิดเบา ในท่านองตลก เช่น เรื่อง ฮันเซล อุนด์ เกรเตล ของ ฮัมเปอร์ดิงค์ (Hansel und Gretel Humerdinck)

Excerpts from the RDTM supplementary document (1942), giving references for the category 'opera', which counted as one of the allowed types of performance. Verdi's Aida*, Wagner's* Das Rheingold*, Smetana's* The Bartered Bride*, Rossini's* Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Humperdinck's* Hansel und Gretel *are seen on these pages as examples.*

Unfortunately, Nora, as well as many other rural theatrical plays, was not included in the legitimate categories stated above. In 1944 the ministry launched an additional regulation 'concerning the rural plays' in order to control those music and theatre performances in remote provincial areas. The relevant specifications of these regulations concerning the rural plays read:

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147 Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the decree it is originally written:
การสแดงละคอนที่จัดทำเป็นอาชีพ หรือมีรายได้ […] และมีลักสนะอันมิใช่เปนการสแดงเพื่อความเพลิดเพลินเปนส่วนตัว ต้องหยู่ในประเภทหนึ่งประเภทใดดังที่กล่าวไว้ […] ห้ามมิให้สแดงเปนหย่างอื่นนอกจากที่กล่าวนี้ เว้นแต่พนักงานเจ้าหน้าที่จะได้อนุญาตเปนพิเสสฉเพาะกรนี.

1. Whoever wishes to perform rural plays must ask for an official permission prior to their performances.

2. Rural plays will be allowed to be performed when they can fulfil all of the following conditions:

A. The play belongs to seasonal occasions and helps promoting Thai civilised culture.
B. The location of performance must be neat, clean and properly decorated. Plays taking place on streets, or by street-sides are prohibited, except if they are set onto proper vehicles.
C. The performance must be civilised: avoiding any misbehaving, obscene and disgusting features.
D. The text recited in the play must be polite and not degrading the moral norms.
E. The costume must be culturally correct and appropriate with the provincial conditions.
F. The musical instruments used in the performance must be civilised, not barbaric nor primitive.[148]

However, many regional officers reported that in several cases they were actually unsure how to distinguish 'rural plays' from the 'standard' ones.[149] As a consequence, there were at least 16 letters between 1942-1946 concerning problems about the implication of regulations on Nora performance which were sent to the Ministry of Fine Arts. The most paradigmatic conflicts contained in those letters are summarised into the three following aspects:

1) Regarding the instruments

Concerning the question in the inquiry received from the sub-district of Naratiwat province, 'what constitutes a proper instrument?', the provincial council replied:

The proper musical instruments must not have sloppy and improper appearance. For example: fiddles made from oil-tanks or aluminium cans, percussive instruments made from bamboo sticks, pot-cover or iron pieces. The performers must refrain from applying such uncivilised instruments.[150]

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[148] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the decree it is originally written:
1. ผู้ประสงค์ที่จะจัดให้มีการละเล่นพื้นเมืองให้ขออนุญาตจากพนักงานเจ้าหน้าที่ก่อนทำการแสดง
2. การละเล่นพื้นเมืองที่จะได้รับอนุญาตให้เล่นได้ต้องประกอบด้วย
ก. การละเล่นที่เป็นการรื่นเริงตามฤดูกาล เป็นการรักษาขนบประเพณีไทยที่งดงามตามอารยะ
ข. สถานที่แสดงต้องเป็นที่ไม่อุจาด มีการตกแต่ง ให้เหมาะสมแก่การแสดง ห้ามแสดงตามถนนหนทาง เว้นแต่จะได้จัดบนยานพาหนะที่เหมาะสม
ค. การแสดงต้องเป็นไปอย่างอารยชน ไม่แสดงโดยอาการวิตถารผิดปกติวิสัย หรือลามกอนาจารอับอายน่าหวาดเสียว
ง. ถ้อยคาที่ใช้ในการแสดงต้องสภาพไม่หยาบโลน หรือเสื่อมเสียวัฒนธรรมและศีลธรรม
จ. การแต่งกายต้องให้ถูกต้องตามวัฒนธรรม โดยเหมาะสมกับสภาพแห่งท้องถิ่น
ฉ. เครื่องบรรเลงต้องมีลักษณะสุภาพเป็นอารยะ ไม่ป่าเถื่อน.

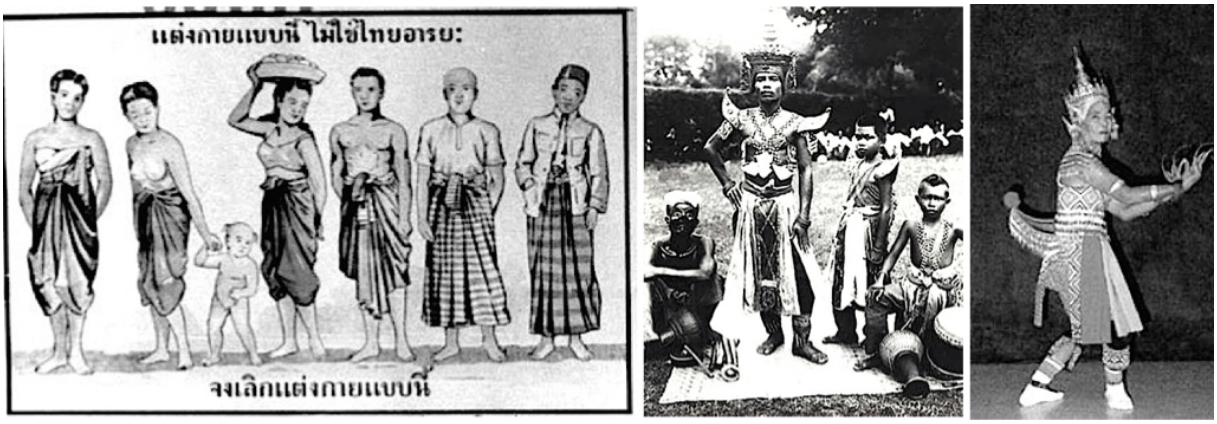
[149] Na Phatthalung, *Development of Nora*, p. 77. Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen.

[150] Ibid., p. 70-71.

2) Regarding the Costumes

Although civilised costumes were required on stage, a cultural officer from Suratthani province asked for an exceptional allowance to be 'top-naked' in the performance – i.e. male performers wearing only traditional loincloths and remain shirtless – in order to perform socially inferior characters in the play, for example, as a person coming from a rural area, or a house-servant etc. The Ministry of Fine Arts refused the request, giving a reason that wearing only a loincloth in public does not belong to the proper national culture.[151]

Another Nora group from Songkla province was arrested for wearing 'Hanghong' (literally 'a swan-tail'), a part of Nora costume which resembles an imaginary bird-like creature. The government was convinced that a performer wearing Hanghong would look like an animal, and thus would be seen as faunal and uncivilised. Besides, the Ministry of Fine Arts strongly encouraged the artists to wear socks instead of showing their bare feet, as well as to wear white shirts under their theatre costumes to conceal their otherwise visible naked skin underneath.[152]



Left: So is not Thai-civilised: please give up dressing so*, a poster propagandising the national building campaign of the People's Party. All three men in the poster wear loincloths.*
Middle: a group of Nora player in the past time, probably in the beginning of the twentieth century (from the collection of Nora-Bandasak Pitaksin, date and photographer unknown).
Right: a Nora dancer wearing Hanghong.

[151] The inquiry from Surattani province, written on 2nd February 1943. Ibid., p. 66-67.

[152] Ibid., p. 83-84.

The obedient one: Nora-Term, a renowned Nora group from Trang province who adopted western costumes and music instruments into their performance. Photo from the collection of Mrs. Warapon Noonkeaw (date unknown).

3) Regarding the Qualification of Performers

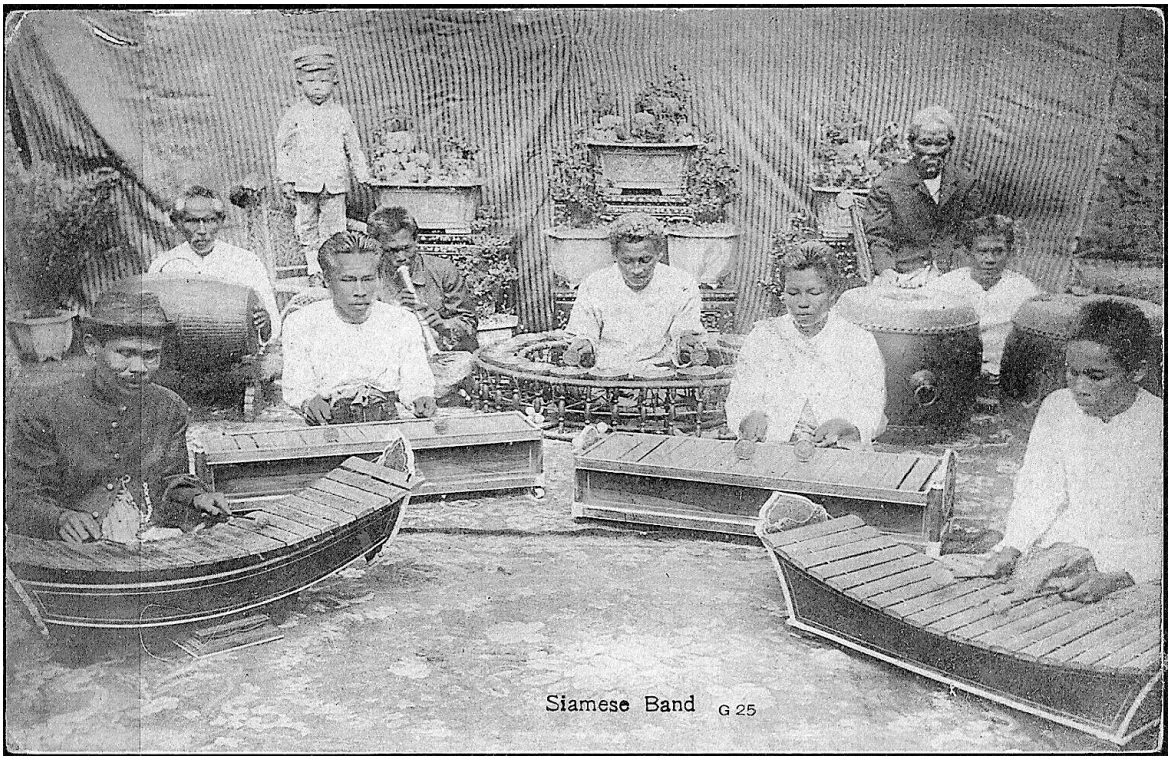
Despite the strong complaints about the inconvenience and inefficiency caused by the multiplication of bureaucratic processes, the Ministry of Fine Arts firmly insisted that the official allowance to perform Nora was valid only in the province in which the document had been issued. As a consequence of this, Nora groups who wanted to perform in other provinces or pursue performance-tours had to obtain the allowance in each province of the intended tour separately.[153]
In order to obtain the 'official certificate of being a professional artist', the performer had to attend the obligatory artistic training organised by the Ministry of Fine Arts. The training could last up to 90 days and the participant had to write a final examination to complete the course. However, there were no Nora performers capable of obtaining this official certificate. Some regional officers had claimed that the Ministry of Fine Arts usually delayed the provision of the obligatory training, causing serious inconveniences for those who were pursuing Nora as their main profession. Due to this trouble, the ministry made a compromise by issuing a 'temporary artist certificate' which allowed the artists to temporarily do their profession legally while waiting for the obligatory training to be offered in their region. 41 Nora performers from Chumphon province, among them seven children, applied for this temporary certificate.[154]

[153] The inquiry from Trang province, written on 5th August 1943. Ibid., p. 69-70.

[154] Ibid., p.76.

‘Besides, Sitting on the Floor is Prohibited!’

In Thai traditional ensembles the musicians normally play their instruments while sitting on the floor, and so do the singers. The required sitting position (cross-legged or putting both legs to the side) actually has nothing to do with the performing techniques nor the musical aesthetic, but it conveys the social status of the musicians – who are regarded as servants. Thus, they must not stay on the same plateau as their masters but on the ‘lower’ level. The posture of sitting while playing instruments remains the standard practice for playing Thai traditional music, even for the independent musicians who are not hired as ‘servants’ at someone’s house.



A postcard illustrating a Siamese band, probably printed around 1903. The child and the old man at the back, wearing noble dresses (the suit and the hat), stay on the ‘higher’ level than the musicians.

In the context of the cultural reform, the Ministry of Fine Arts also addressed this aspect. Therefore, it is legislated in the RDTM in the following words:

> Musicians, singers and narrators must adjust their costumes properly corresponding to our national convention. Besides, sitting on the floor is prohibited while playing instruments, singing, or narrating. There must be stands provided for the music instruments so that the musicians can sit gracefully [on the chairs] as a civilised one during the performance.[155]

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[155] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the decree it is originally written:
ผู้บันเลงดนตรี ผู้ขับร้อง และผู้พากย์ ต้องปติบัติการแต่งกายไห้ถูกต้องตามรัฐนิยม ห้ามมิไห้นั่งบันเลง ขับร้อง และพากย์บนพื้นราบ ต้องจัดที่วาง.

The concern of being considered as 'not being civilised', especially in the perception of the westerners, can be traced back to the reign of King Rama V. In 1873, for the first time in the history of Thailand, King Rama V abolished the prostration practice. The king's aim can be read from the Royal Siamese Government Gazette in that year:

> The practice of prostration in Siam is severely oppressive. The subordinates have been forced to prostrate in order to elevate the dignity of the *phu yai* [the superiors]. […] The subordinates find the performance of prostration a harsh physical practice. They have to go down on their knees for a long time until their business with the *phu yai* ends. They will then be allowed to stand up and retreat. This kind of practice is the source of oppression. Therefore, I want to abolish it.[156]

The gazette quoted above widely impacted many kinds of Siamese's common practices and social etiquettes since then. Yet, the traditional musicians could not profit from the physical comfort granted by the King Rama V's Gazette at that time. They had to wait for seventy years till the People's Party initiated the first prohibition of sitting while performing instruments in the RDTM.
However, the RDTM remained effective only for a few years. In 1946, these regulations were completely abolished by the new government. Then in 1947, due to the political turbulence caused by the sudden and unsolved death of the King Rama VIII, Thailand had another coup d'état. This time, the People's Party faced its decline and Thailand's sovereign power was pushed back to the hands of the conservative royalists. Hence the practice of traditional Thai music consequently returned back to its roots: sitting on the floor turned to be more and more appreciated and finally became the standard manner for the traditional ensembles again until today. Although nowadays, sitting on the floor while playing traditional music is not understood as a symbol conveying lower social status anymore, but this is the evidence showing the victory of the conservatives, who tried to eliminate the legacy of RDTM.

In 1962 the annual traditional music festival 'Thai Music in the Universities' was held for the first time. These concert series, where professional musicians and music students from the leading universities annually gathered and performed together, can be seen as a high standard artistic platform for Thai traditional music which still continues in the present day. However, the following review from the festival in 1978 reveals the situation of Thai traditional music after RDTM had lost its effect:[157]

> Despite the supportive friendship among the musicians from 17 institutions, there is no new creativity in terms of the development of Thai traditional music. How the music was 11 years ago remains unchanged as 11 years have passed by. No one is eager to write new songs nor

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[156] Pavin Chachavalpongpun: 'Chulalongkorn abolished prostration', in: *New Mandala* (2011), <http://www.newmandala.org/chulalongkorn-abolished-prostration/> [23rd March 2017].

[157] Bangsue, Jew: *Banlengrom Volume 2*, Bangkok, Matichon Publishing 2004, p. 366.

> new forms of composition. For example: the singers used to sing one phrase long, then the instrumentals replied. This year they also sang one phrase long, and then the instruments replied again. Could the Thai music festival led by higher education institutes ever contribute something newer than what we had in previous times?[158]

In 2010 the Ministry of Fine Arts, together with the Office of the Higher Education Commission published a national guideline to standardise Thai traditional music. Some of the main objectives from this guideline are 'to maintain the unique identity of Thai music' as well as 'to adjust the former [performing] regulations to current social norms and future trends'.[159] However, the very first criteria used for evaluating skills of all traditional instruments, including vocalist, in this guideline is 'the [correct] sitting posture'.[160]

From those two examples mentioned above it can be deducted that any voluntary attempt to liberate the elite-preferred conservative image of Thai traditional music could be considered as a cultural damage, which is unpleasant and unacceptable for them. Therefore, the RDTM – in the eyes of the current Thai conservatives – was merely a ridiculous anecdote in Thailand's history.

The opening concert of 'Thai Music in the Universities' in 2019. Princess Sirindhorn is playing xylophone (Ranad) in the middle. Everyone sits on the stage floor, except the princess that sits on the higher podium the in the middle, thus the hierarchy among the musicians is clearly displayed.[161]

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[158] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. In the review it is originally written:
ท่ามกลางความเป็นกันเองของนักดนตรีด้วยกันเองจาก 17 สถาบัน กลับไม่มีความแปลกใหม่ที่จะเป็นผลต่อพัฒนาการดนตรีไทยเกิดขึ้น 11 ปีที่แล้วครูสอนกันมาอย่างไร 11 ปีผ่านไปก็ยังคงเป็นเช่นนั้น ไม่มีใครสนใจคิดประดิษฐ์เพลงใหม่หรือรูปแบบใหม่ๆในการแสดง เช่นเคยร้องเพลงไปหนึ่งวรรคแล้วดนตรีรับ ก็ยังคงร้องไปหนึ่งวรรคแล้วดนตรีรับ งานดนตรีไทยอุดมศึกษาไม่ได้มีอะไรแตกฉานงอกเงยจากเดิมบ้างเลยหรือ.

[159] Thailand Office of the Higher Education Commission: *National Guideline for Thai Traditional Music 2010*, Bangkok 2010, p.7.

[160] Ibid., p. 38-41.

[161] <https://www.mhesi.go.th/home/index.php/pr/news/579-44-75> [30th April 2019].

King Rama IX (King Bhumibol), is playing the clarinet with his loyal saxophonist, Ass. Prof. Dr. Pathorn Srikaranonda de Sequeira sitting on the floor. The king's daughter, Princess Sirindhorn is on the guitar.[162]

[162] <http://www.thairath.co.th/content/807396> [28th March 2017].

3.2 The Overture: An Attempt to Say That 'They' Were Wrong

Since the decline of the People's Party in 1947, the royalist politicians and intellectuals tried to establish a new ideology for Thai culture, and at the same time, to eliminate the cultural legacy of the revolutionists. During the academic seminar at Thammasat University in 1983, the People's Party was denounced by a prominent aristocratic politician as he made the opening speech for the seminar as follows:[163]

> For Thai art after 1932, if I have to speak about it honestly and patriotically, I think it is our most declining epoch of art. To be more precise: there was nothing such as Thai art at all during this period. The leaders of the revolution went to study abroad and they just came back from France. Therefore, their taste of art was formed in Parisian street cafés. The images they considered beautiful were nude pictures.[164]

The attempt to accuse the People's Party of destroying 'Thai music' can be seen in the movie *Homrong* (literally translated as *The Overture*), released in 2003. The movie raised a negative perception of the intervention of the People's Party on the traditional music. The movie's crucial point focuses on the agony of the protagonist, as, according to the narrative of the film, playing Thai traditional music was officially prohibited under the Party's regime.

Poster of the movie Homrong *(The Overture) with the tagline 'the poet's weapon, the country's music'.*[165]

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[163] Kukrit Pramoj: 'ปาฐกถานำ ศิลปกรรมสมัยใหม่' ['Opening Speech: The Modern Arts'], in: *Proceedings of the Seminar on Thai Fine Arts from 1932 to the present,* by Thai Khadi Research Institute, Bangkok: Thammasat University 1985, p. 11.

[164] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. The original speech reads:
สำหรับศิลปกรรมของไทยหลัง 2475 นั้น ถ้าจะพูดกันตามตรง พูดกันด้วยความรักชาติตามสมควร ก็จะต้องบอกว่าเป็นยุคของศิลปกรรมที่เสื่อมโทรมที่สุด คือ ไม่มีศิลปกรรมไทยเกิดขึ้นในยุคนี้ ผู้นำปฏิวัติก็เท่ากับนักเรียนนอก กลับมาจากฝรั่งเศส รสนิยมในทางศิลปะอะไรของท่านเหล่านั้นอยู่แค่คาเฟ่ริมถนนที่กรุงปารีส ภาพที่เห็นสวยงามก็ภาพโป๊.

[165] <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-40397261> [24th Jun. 2018].

Homrong is a biopic featuring the musician Sorn Silapabanleang (1881-1954), an exceptionally talented xylophonist (Ranad), whose brilliant virtuosity led him to become a leading musician in the court of King Rama V when he was only 19 years old. The movie frames his biography within the political situation after the 1932 revolution – by that time Sorn had become a prominent and respected music master – when the RDTM came into effect: The key biographical drama arouses from the government's prohibition of playing Thai traditional music because they considered it rural and uncivilised. Meanwhile the western classical music was praised and appreciated. The movie blames the Party for 'wishing to become a civilised country by insulting our own cultural roots' and 'letting the regulations [for music] be written by those who have no clue', as the protagonist summarised in the last scene. Thus, in hindsight, the intervention of the People's Party is an act of the enemy who painted the dark spot on Thai culture. At the end of the movie, the protagonist Sorn gives his moral statement to the officer from the Party:

> A big tree can stand strongly and defend the outer force due to its deep and solid roots. Without protections of our own roots, I do not see how we can survive. [166]

With its clear offensive standpoint against the cultural policy of the People's Party, the movie *Homrong* attracted great attention and won numerous national prizes. Among them are 'The Best Picture' and 'The Best Screenplay' from the prestigious 'Thailand National Film Association Awards' (2004).[167] Although its synopsis is loosely based on the actual historical circumstances, the movie was officially acknowledged by the Thai Film Archive as part of the national filmography legacy, since it deserves to be 'the cultural heritage and intellectual property of the country'.[168] Moreover, *Homrong* was later reproduced as a television-series as well as a musical.[169]

However, it is based on a misrepresentation of historical facts, RDTM did not prohibit playing Thai traditional music. What the Party prohibited and strictly inspected was actually not the traditional music itself but what they considered as uncivilised manifestations in the performances, such as, inappropriate costumes, primitive-looking instruments as well as impolite texts in songs and theatre

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[166] Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen. The original script reads:
ไม้ใหญ่จะยืนทะนงต้านแรงช้างสารได้ ก็ด้วยรากที่หยั่งลึกและแข็งแรง ถ้าไม่ดูแลรักษากันไว้ให้ดี เราจะอยู่รอดกันได้แบบไหน.

[167] *Homrong* was also submitted as the official selection to the 77th Oscar Academy, but it was not further nominated.

[168] **พระราชกฤษฎีกาจัดตั้งหอภาพยนตร์ พ.ศ.** *2552 [Thailand's royal decree: Establishment of Thai Film Archive 2009],* in Royal Thai Government Gazette, vol. 126, June 2009.

[169] The musical version was restaged two times during 2015 - 2017, giving total 52 performances, which is considerably a high number for Thailand, where there are not more than 15 professional theatres in the whole country.

dialogues. The dramatic conflict in *Homrong* was presumably exaggerated by using anecdotes of Sorn's biography.[170] Moreover, Sorn's daughter once spoke about the People's Party and the RDTM as following:

> They [the People's Party] considered Thai music out-of-date, primitive and they felt embarrassed. Therefore the Party launched the official prohibition of playing some sort of Thai traditional instruments, only the western music was allowed to be played […] It was such a strict control from the government, that Thai musicians were prohibited to play Thai music. Even if they play it in their own house, if the sound leaked outside, they might be found guilty.[171]

Other anecdotes can be read from the memory booklet of Sorn's funeral. His admirers expressed their opinions towards the intervention of the Party: 'only the fools and the ignorants will find Thai traditional music disgusting and try to prohibit the performances or the instruments of Thai music' and 'Thai music may not imitate western music […] Our traditional music is not a wretched art and lacks of harmony as *some group of people* think'.[172] Again, this defamation is not correlated with the implication of RDTM, but it is rather a furious reaction towards the cultural control caused by the RDTM.

The movie *Homrong* is an example of historical revisionism, in which the People's Party's intention behind the cultural reform is reinterpreted – or even calumniated – by the Party's opposition who later became the sovereign. The attempt to create a new national identity and to rebrand the traditional music with western music was blamed to be an act of destroying the 'authentic' national culture. In this case, Thai conservative revisionists not only tried to damage the public perception of the Party by claiming to preserve their untouchable root of the nation, but they also tried to manipulate history by attributing false conclusions to the implementation of the RDTM. *Homrong* is therefore an effective propagandising tool for this movement.

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[170] Atibhop Pataradetpisan: 'จอมพล ป. กีดกันดนตรีไทยจริงหรือ?' ['Did Marschal Plaek really prohibit Thai music?'], <https://atibhop.wordpress.com/2015/05/29/may2015_matichon/> [10th March 2020].

[171] Anan Nakkhong et al.: หลวงประดิษฐไพเราะ *(ศร ศิลปบรรเลง)* มหาดุริยกวีลุ่มเจ้าพระยาแห่งอุษาคเนย์ *[Sorn Silapabanlaeng, the great composer of the south-east],* Bangkok: Matichon Publishing 2004, p. 234-235. Translated by Siwat Chuencharoen, it is originally written:
ท่านหันมาพิจารณาเรื่องศิลปะ เห็นว่าการดนตรีของไทยนั้นคร่ำครึ ล้าสมัย ป่าเถื่อน เป็นที่น่าอับอายแก่มวลมิตร ท่านก็เลยออกคำสั่งเป็นทางราชการห้ามเล่นเครื่องดนตรีไทยบางชนิดทั่วประเทศ จะเล่นได้ก็แต่ดนตรีสากลเท่านั้น […] การที่ทางการสั่งห้ามนักดนตรีไทยเล่นดนตรีไทยนั้นเป็นคำสั่งที่เด็ดขาด ขนาดที่จะแอบเล่นเองภายในบ้านก็ไม่ได้ เพราะถ้ามีเสียงดังลอดออกไปนอกบ้านอาจมีความผิด.

[172] Memorial booklet from Sorn Silapabanlaeng's funeral on 10th March 1955, Bangkok: Mahamakut Foundation 1955, p. 18 and 45-46.

3.3 Conclusion: Another Big Brother!

To conclude this chapter: The *Royal Decree on Regulations about Theatre, Music-, Vocal- and Reciting-performances* (RDTM) was a top-down measure for cultural reformation during the rise of the People's Party. They tried to standardise traditional music and rural theatrical plays by eliminating 'primitive and uncivilised' elements from those arts. This procedure correlates with Tejapira's 'sublimation of Thai-ness': as the Party tried to purify the national identity by omitting those characteristics considered inferior according to the Party. Yet, the military government did not show profound artistic understanding in the RDTM: the systematisation of instrumental music is imprecise and superficially conceptualised, and the attempt to control the rural performances reveals inefficiency concerning the bureaucratic procedures. Therefore, RDTM could not firmly establish a new Thai-ness for the traditional music. This proves that only the strict regulation on the performance practices alone was not sufficient to create a new form of national identity. Moreover, the other parallel procedure from Tejapira's theory: 'sublimation of un-Thai-ness' – i.e. to attach non-Thai subjects with images referring to Thai-ness – is not pursued here. In short, under the RDTM, the reformation of Thai music did not work through its musical, aesthetic content, but it was merely sovereign control on the performance discipline which caused trouble for the musicians because they were subject to excessive bureaucratic processes. As a consequence, after the decline of the People's Party and the renaissance of the royalist conservatives, Thai traditional music has been fully reinstalled to its former 'royal format'.[173]

The movie *Homrong – The Overture* – is indeed a small intermezzo in the timeline of Thailand's history after 1932. The show goes on: the attempt to eliminate the trace of the 1932 revolution still continues. In April 2017, the People's Party memorial plaque which was pinned down on one of the palace squares in Bangkok was 'secretly' removed without anybody taking notice of it. The government was not able to identify the robber. Then, a week later it was also 'secretly' replaced by a new plaque from an 'unknown source'. Still, the government gives no explanation where the new plaque came from.

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[173] Krit Lekakul: '**พัฒนาการดนตรีไทยหลัง พ.ศ. 2475**' ['The development of Thai music after 1932'], in: *Department of Cultural Promotion*, <http://www.culture.go.th/culture_th/mobile_detail.php?cid=11&nid=3092> [12th April 2020].

Left: the original plaque, commissioned by the People's Party in 1936 as a memorial of the birth of Thailand's constitution. It is written on the plaque: 'Here, at dawn on 24 June 1932, the People's Party has brought forth a constitution for the progress of the nation'. As the new plaque appeared, the relevant municipal office denied the action. The National Fine Arts Department refused their responsibility for the former plaque, giving the reason that the plaque was not included in their reservation list.
Right: the new plaque, anonymously placed at the same spot after the old one was removed.[174]

The new plaque is engraved with a new text, calling the country with its former name 'Siam'. Considering the fact that 'Siam' was changed to 'Thailand' by the People's Party, the message on the new plaque consciously reveals the intention of this mysterious act. The text reads:

> Long live Siam forever. Happy, fresh-faced citizens build up the power of the land. Loyalty and love for the Triple Gems is good, for one's state is good, for one's clan is good and having a heart loyal to one's king is good. These are the tools to make one's state prosper. [175]

[174] <https://www.khaosod.co.th/lifestyle/news_300460> [18. Oct. 2020].

[175] The texts engraved on both plaques are translated by Anna Lawattanatrakul, <https://prachatai.com/english/node/8312> [28th March 2020].

Chapter 4: Thai Tone System: The Hybrid of Thai and Western Musical Languages

It has been presented in the previous chapters how the political intervention after the 1932 revolution brought a new concept of national identity to the music and musicians of Thailand. In this chapter, the new musical language, which is the cultural product derived from this political transposition, will be investigated. It is a new kind of musical language for Thai music: the 'hybrid' tone system between western and Thai traditional music.

The regime of Field Marshal Phibulsongkram once claimed 'our music and theatre did not have a theoretical background'.[176] Indeed, this statement is not completely wrong because Thai traditional music did not have a standardised written notation at all, and the musicians learned the pieces from their masters by ears and played them by heart.[177] However, due to the fact that oral tradition is actually capable of transferring several musical elements which eventually cannot be written down, for instance nuances of rhythm, timbre, and emotional intensity[178], this does not imply that Thai music is totally theory-less. The government's main concern was presumably that Thai music – unlike western music – lacked of 'written' evidence. Thus, they were afraid that their authentic musical legacy would be lost or forgotten.

The knowledge about western music had been introduced in Thailand since the seventeenth century. However, during the nation-building period after the 1932 revolution, the identity of Thai traditional music became significantly dependent on the framework of western music. This chapter tries to connect the dots of how this hybrid musical language was established.

Prior to the 1930s there were European missionaries, travellers, musicians, and ethnologists who investigated Thai music and tried to figure out its tone system and its aesthetic – from the western music's perspective. Then, based on the results of their investigation, Phra Chen Duriyang came up with a theory explaining how Thai music can be fitted in the western musical language. Furthermore, his transcriptions of Thai traditional music into western notation are the evidence that reveals the cultural-schizophrenic character of this hybrid tone system: the attempt to create a new Thai-ness by covering the authentic Thai-ness with western imported aesthetic.

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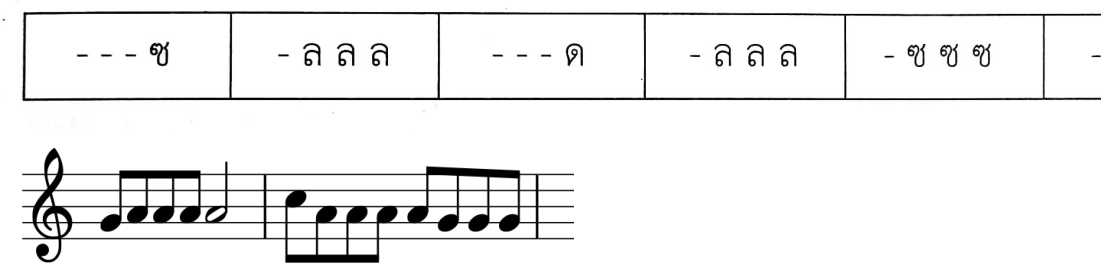
176 In the Royal Decree of 22nd December 1942.

177 Phra Chen Duriyanga: *Thai Music*, Bangkok: The National Culture Institute, second edition 1953, p. 7.

178 Anne Dhu McLucas: 'Oral tradition', in: *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002292603> [8th Nov. 2020].

4.1 Introduction: How the Hybrid Looks Today

Does Thai traditional music have its own musical language or its own notation? The answer to this question is not unambiguous. All Thai musicians nowadays are learning their traditional music using only the Solfège syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti (without accidentals) for identifying the pitches – similar to the 'fixed Do' system where Do represents the note C in western music. Although the pitches corresponding to the Do, Re, Mi syllables in Thai music are close to the notes C, D, E in western music, they are not identical and thus not compatible. Besides, vertical and horizontal harmony – i.e. chords and harmony progression – is not the fundamental concept of the aesthetic of Thai music as well. Nevertheless, a special notation system is used for dictating pitches and rhythm. This system, which was introduced in 1907 by a court musician of King Rama V[179], shares some similarities with the system of measure and staff in western notation, as shown below:

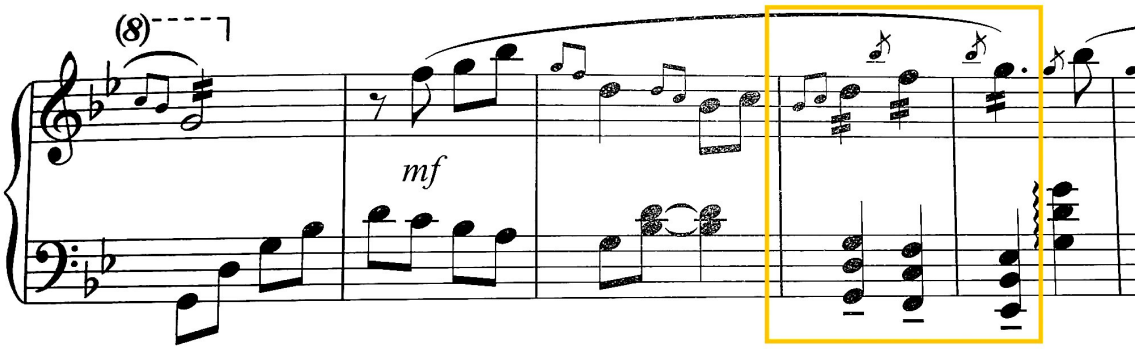


The standard notation of Thai music used by traditional instrumentalists nowadays.[180] They are alphabets representing notes (i.e. Do, Re, Mi etc.) packed in four-beat-bars. This notation derives its layout from the western system, although tremendously simplified. The above example could be approximately executed as the standard notation shown underneath.

Since the notes are named with Solfège syllables, it facilitates western instruments to approach Thai music. But, when Thai music is played by western instruments, there are attempts to fit the traditional tunes with the so-called western harmony. The excerpt here is one of countless examples, in which the traditional melody is accompanied by western harmonisation:

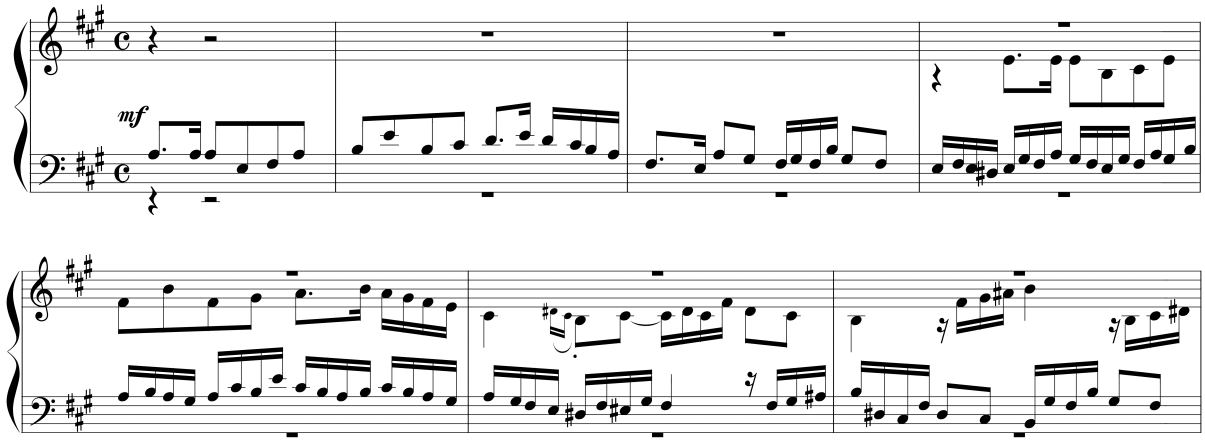
[179] Written in the royal Thai music treatise *Dontree Wittaya,* by Phra Apaipolrop (1860-1916).

[180] Pichit Chaiseri: สังคีตลักษณ์วิเคราะห์ *[Form Analysis of Thai Music]*, Bangkok: Chula Press 2016, p. 9.



A transcription of a traditional song for solo piano by Prof. Natchar Pancharoen (2005). The tremolo on single notes (which is pianistically not that practical!) is used for imitating the effect of the traditional instrument (probably a xylophone). Besides, there is a progression of parallel fifths surrounded by G minor harmony in the left hand (in the yellow frame).[181]

There are also several attempts to transform Thai traditional music to western classical compositional concepts. For example, the *Concerto Maharaja* for *Ranad* (Thai xylophone) and orchestra (composed 1999 by Narongrit Dhamabutra), *Chaopraya Concerto* for Thai traditional ensemble, piano and western orchestra (1982, by Bruce Gaston), as well as numerous transcriptions of traditional melodies. Another example shown below is the beginning of a fugue, which its subject is taken from the ancient song *Ton Vorrachet*:[182]



Excerpt from the arrangement of an ancient song Ton Vorrachet *for violin and piano by Dnu Huntrakul (2001). The composer managed to write the exposition of this fugue with a logical key structure: The subject begins in A major, and the second voice quotes the subject in its dominant key, E major.*

The examples mentioned above show that Thai traditional music – despite its uniqueness of tones and musical languages – has been transferred into the platform of western classical music. Similar to jazz music in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) or Claude Bolling's *Sonata for two [classical- and jazz-] pianists* (1973) and many other examples, they are considered as *cross-over music* but at the same time they are presented and perceived in the framework of classical music.

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[181] Natchar Pancharoen: สดับถ้อยเพลงไทย *[Thai Music for Piano]*, Bangkok: Ketsarat Publishing 2015, p. 35.

[182] Dnu Huntrakul: ต้นวรเชษฐ์ (ฉบับทาบกิ่ง) [Ton Vorrachet (Tabking version)], Bangkok: Songsmith n.d.

In order to achieve this transformation – or *rebranding* – a tone system compatible with western music is needed. The main point of this chapter is to reveal the historical timeline of the tonal system in Thai traditional music. This process started a few hundred years ago as the music in Siam was observed by the westerners as something primitive and strange. Then, within the stream of the political and cultural reformation in the 1930s, the music faced an essential turning point: the concepts of western music were applied to identify the aesthetic of Thai traditional music, and the result of this process is still valid in the perception of Thai music until today.

The storyline of this chapter goes through two periodical sections: *1) Before the 1930s*: the investigations and characterisation of Thai (Siamese) traditional music made by the westerners, and *2) During the cultural reformation in the 1930s*: the attempts to rebrand Thai traditional music within the structural framework of western notation.

4.2 Before the 1930s: Thai Traditional Music Observed by Westerners

Witness in the Ceremonies

The very first sources mentioning about Thai (or precisely saying: Siamese) music can be dated back to the sixteenth century, which is also the period when Siam began to be known by the Europeans.[183] However, most of the evidence reported about music in the Kingdom of Siam were just simply descriptive stories without sophisticated analysis into the compositional design and structure of the music.
The earliest letter about Siamese music appeared in 1558, written by the Portuguese traveller Fernão Mendes Pinto. He recalls his experience at the funeral of King Chao Fa[184] as following:

> […] this was accompanied with so horrible a din of cries, great Ordnance, Harquebuses, Drums, Cornets and other different kinds of noyse, as it was impossible to hear it without trembling.[185]

Another source written by an agent of the Dutch East India Company, Joost Schouten, describes an impressive scene witnessed during a procession of the king in 1663:

> When he [the King] goes by land, the procession is led by two hundred Elephants, each attended with three armed men; these are followed by many Musitians [sic] with Gonmies [gongs?], Pipes and drums, and a thousand men richly armed, and provided with Banners […] Two hundred Japan Soldiers follow these with bright Arms and rich Colors, and much noise of Instruments […] which is followed by many Servants loaded with fruits and presents for the Sacrifice, accompanied with a sweet consort of Musick [sic].[186]

Although these references from the sixteenth and seventeenth century do not give further clues about the auditive aspects of the music, they do reveal the oldest image of the musical practice in Siam, i.e. the function of music, which played an evident role during certain ceremonies, as well as the rough idea of the instrumentation. At least the Siamese were already acquiescent to make noise with their musical setting (i.e. drums, trumpets, gongs) by that time and on the other side, they were also able to appreciate the sweet consort effect from those instruments.

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[183] Marco Polo made a journey much earlier, between 1275 and 1295, to Burma, but he did not visit Siam.

[184] Pinto probably means King Yodfa (1536-1548), the young king of Ayutthaya kingdom who was believed to be murdered by his throne's successor.

[185] Terry E. Miller: 'Reconstructing Siamese Musical History from Historical Sources: 1548-1932', in: *Asian Music*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1984), p. 33.

[186] Ibid., p. 34.

French Missionaries

With the aim of promoting Christianity (Roman-Catholic) in the Indo-China region, the *Société des Missions étrangères de Paris*, led by Bishop of Beritus, Lambert de la Motte, arrived in Siam in 1662. The group could make a closer inspection of Siamese music. One of the mission members, Joachim Bouvet, who was obliged to attend a court performance and to stay until the end of all the shows, wrote the following critique:

> After having entertained His Excellency with all these different spectacles, Mr.Constance wanted again to give him the diversion of some concerts of instruments of various nations. The Siamese, Malayans, Peguans, and Lao made heard their music each in his turn trying to surpass the others. Their instruments are only a little different from ours but they are more imperfect, and they have spoiled them. The one that pleased us more was an instrument with a dozen suspended reels mounted on it, which being lightly struck with small beaters, gave a quite harmonious sound. Finally the scene was closed with a kind of Chinese tragedy which bored the spectators and us in particular, who were obliged to attend all these shows.[187]

Bouvet's critique actually describes a scene from a noble concert where the music stands purely for the entertainment and not just for an auditive input in ceremonies. Similar to the music in Baroque suites, various characters from the neighbouring countries play a central role in such musical enjoyment. However, his favourite instrument mentioned above may refer to a 'Khong Wong', which is considered as the leading melodious instrument for the standard Thai traditional ensemble even in the present time.

Khong Wong: 'An instrument with a dozen suspended reels mounted on it, which being lightly struck with small beaters, gave a quite harmonious sound', as described by Bouvet.[188]

[187] Ibid., p. 34-35.

[188] <https://www.europeana.eu/de/item/09102/_SMS_MM_F484> [22nd May 2018].

Later, King Louis XIV (the Sun King) intensively expanded intercultural diplomatic relationship between France and other non-European countries. These countries included Turkey, Morocco, Algeria and Persia – with Siam being his most distant destination. Although the attractive location of Siamese trading ports as well as the attempt to convert the Siamese king to Catholicism were the political interests of the Sun King, the French ambassadors also paid great attention to the cultural activities – including music – of the Siamese, which would have been considered as the most exotic culture in their imagination at that time.[189] Two publications from this period, namely *Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam* (1688) and *Du royaume de Siam* (1691) are the primary resources which extensively provide evidence from this historical cultural exchange.

In 1688 Nicolas Gervaise published his journey book *Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam* after returning from his 4-year missionary stay in Siam (1681-1685). He described how a Siamese band looked like:

> Les Siamois, quoy qu'ils nous semblent un peu melancoliques, ne laissent pas d'aimer la joye, souvent ils font des courses de Balon sur la Riviere, qu'ils rendent fort agreables par des Concerts de Voix, d'Instrumens de Musique, & de battemens de mains qu'ils font en cadence. Celuy de tous ces Instrumens qui peut plaire d'avantage, rend un son à peu prés semblable à celuy que rendroient icy deux Violons d'un parfait accord, que l'on toucheroit en même temps; mais il n'y a rien de plus desagreable que le diminutif de cet Instrument, qui est une espece de Violon à trios Cordes de fil d'Archal. Leurs Trompettes de cuivre ressemblent assez par le son qu'elles rendent aux Cornets dont nos Paysans se servent pour appeler leurs Vaches; Leurs Flustes ne sont guere plus douces, ils font d'ailleurs un carillon avec de petites Clochettes, qui réjoüit assez quand ils ne semeslent point au son de leur Tambour de terre, qui ne fait pas tant de bruit: c'est un pot de terre bien cuite, qui a une gueule longue & fort étroite, mais qui n'a point de fond: Ils le couvrent d'une peau de Buffle, & le battent avec la main de telle manière, qu'il leur sert ordinairement de Basse de Viole dans leurs Concerts.[190]

However, Gervaise wrote more than just a descriptive text about the instruments. He also transcribed a Siamese song using western notation. The song consists of 16-bar- alla breve melody, with a bass line accompanying the entire melody, and its lyric transcribed in the roman alphabet. The score of this song is shown below:

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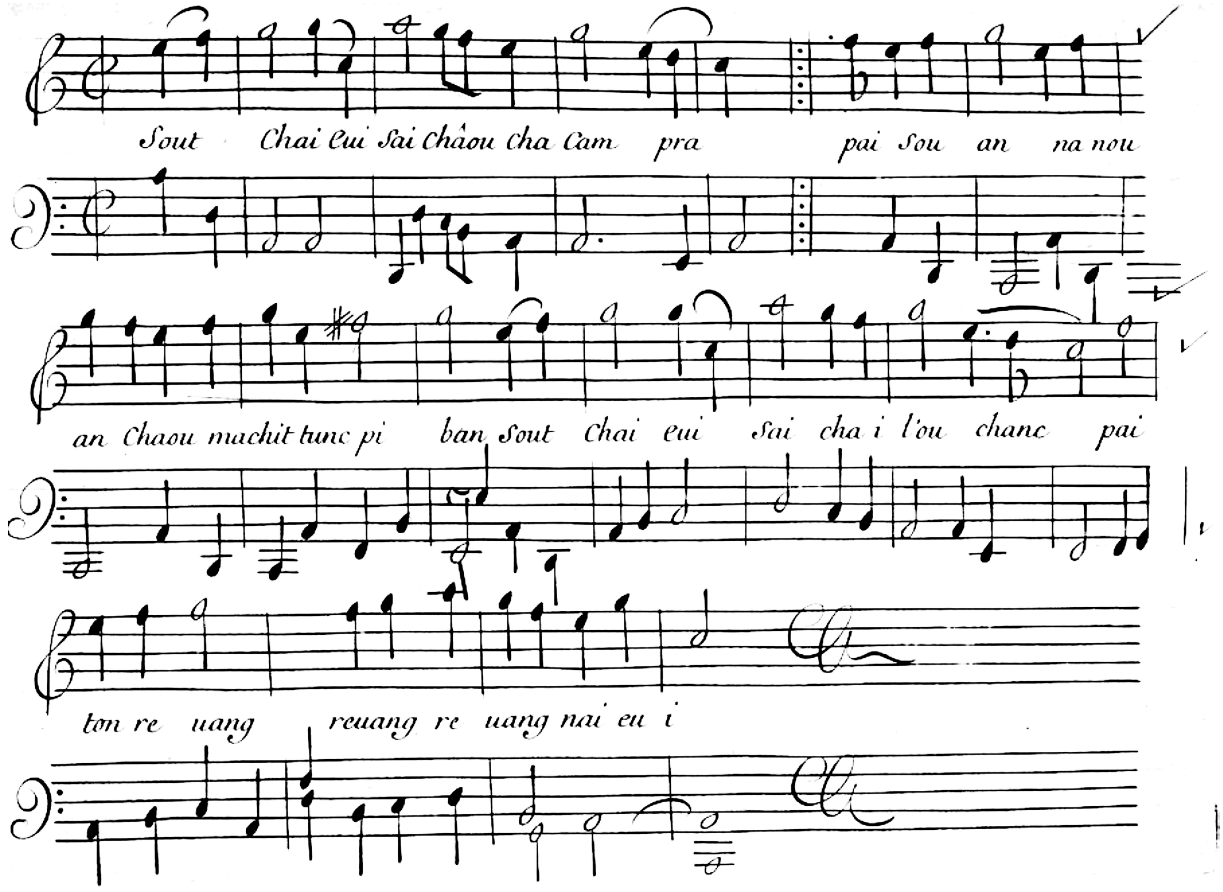
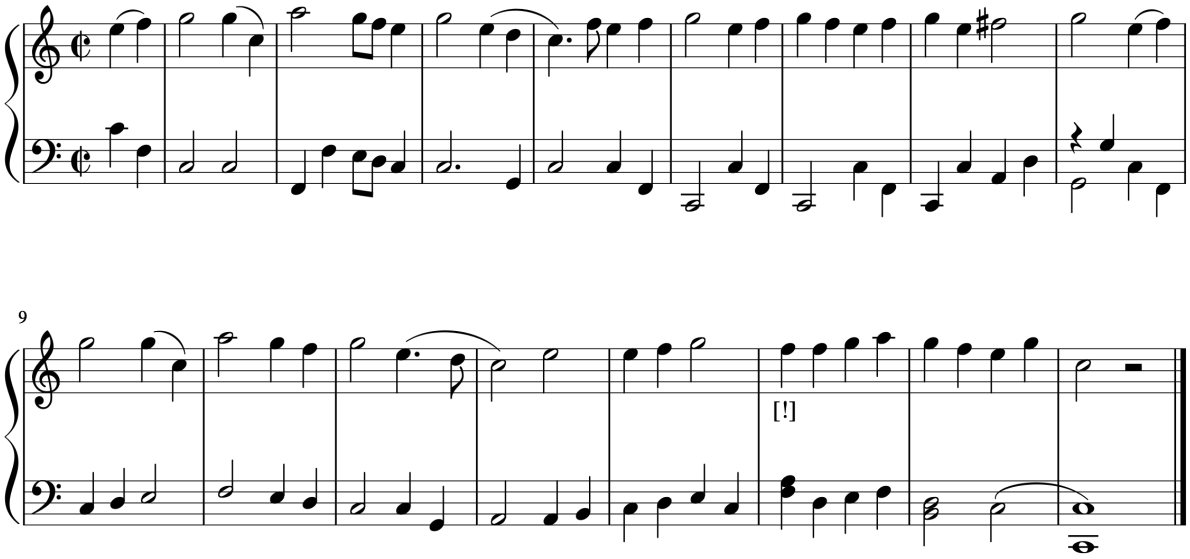
[189] David R.M. Irving: 'Lully in Siam: music and diplomacy in French-Siamese cultural exchanges, 1680-1690', in: *Early Music* (2012), Vol. XL, No. 3, p. 393 and 396.

[190] Nicolas Gervaise: *Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam*, Paris: de l'Imprimerie de Pierre le Mercier 1688, p. 129 -130.



The score of Sout Chai *(literally translated as* 'the entire heart'*) from Gervaise's Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam (1688), between pages 130 and 131.*



Sout Chai *rewritten in the standard notation by Siwat Chuencharoen. In bar 14 the first note on the treble clef is additionally added to complete the missing beat in that bar.*

Although Gervaise's score *Sout Chai* is considered as the first evidence of Siamese music ever notated, Gervaise obviously transcribed this Siamese tone adapting it tacitly to the metrical and melodic syntax of European music. The harmonic progression of C major, namely tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant chords are

placed properly in the entire piece, with a short modulation into G major situated precisely in the middle of the song (bar 8). Furthermore, its phrasing structure is also very well balanced: they are regularly four-bar-phases with two pick-up beats.
Thus, due to this familiar musical structure, it would be no surprise if any musicians back in his homeland could play and appreciate *Sout Chai* – in the version of Gervaise – easily. However, since the Siamese could preserve their music only by memorising and delivering it just by oral tradition to the next generation, it is completely unknown how the 'authentic' *Sout Chai* sounded. The only extant source about this ancient air – thanks to the writing system from the west – was written by the hands of the French missionary.

Another member of the Missions *étrangères,* Simon de La Loubère, inspected Siamese music with a broader point of view, especially in terms of Siamese's reception of the music. In his journey book *Du royaume de Siam* (1691) La Loubère wrote:

> La Musique n'est pas mieux entendue à Siam, que la Geometrie & l'Astronomie. Ils font des airs par génie, & ils ne les savent pas noter. Ils n'ont ny cadence, ny tremblement non plus que les Castillans: mais ils chantent quelquefois comme nous sans paroles, ce que les Castillans trouvent fort étrange: & à la place des paroles, ils ne disent que *nóï, nóï*, comme nous disons *lan-lá-lari*. Je n'y ay pas remarqué un seul air, dont la mesure fût à trois temps, au lieu que ceux-là sont sans comparaison les plus familiers aux Espagnols. Le Roy de Siam entendit sans se montrer plusieurs airs de violon de nos Opera, & l'on nous dit qu'il ne les avait pas trouvez d'un mouvement assez grave: néanmoins le peuple Siamois n'a rien de fort grave dans ses chants; & tout ce qu'ils joüent sur leurs instruments, mesme dans la marche de leur Roy, est assez vif.
>
> Ils ne connoissent pas plus que les Chinois la diversité des chants pour les diverses Parties d'un corps de Musique: ils chantent tous à l'unisson. Leurs instruments ne sont pas d'ailleurs bien recherchez, & il faut croire que ceux, où il paroît quelque connoissance de la Musique, leur sont venus de dehors.[191]

In general, La Loubère considered the Siamese as an inferior race who were still primitive, i.e. who lived depending on rural myths and superstition, naively following the rules of their ancestors. Therefore, his observation on the music also reveals certain deficiencies in Siamese music regarding the European standards. In La Loubère's opinion stated above, it could be assumed that Siamese music should sound incomparably different from European music. Also, he noticed that the Siamese had no notation for their own music (*ils ne les savent pas noter*) nor concept of polyphonic harmony (*ils chantent tous à l'unisson*).
La Loubère eventually mentioned some barbaric characters of the music he heard in Siam:

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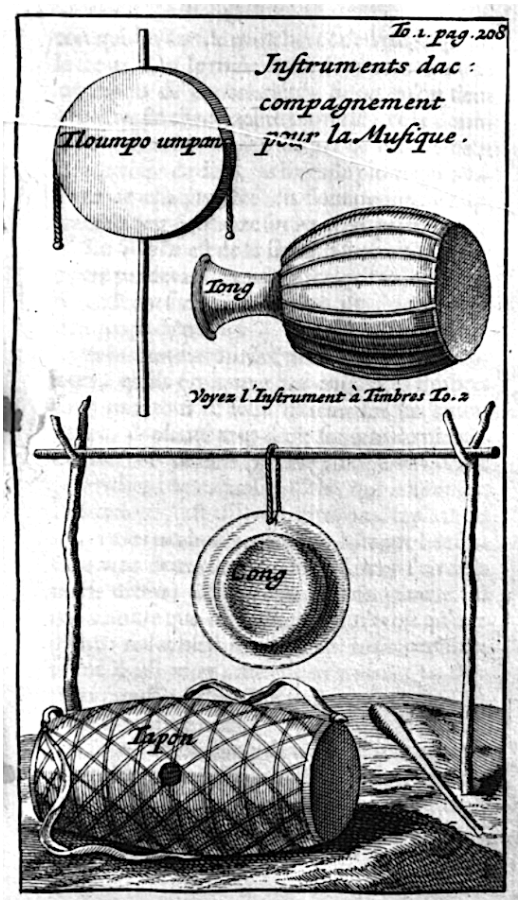
[191] Simon de La Loubère: *Du royaume de Siam*, Amsterdam: Chez Abraham Wolfgang, prés de la Bourse 1691, p. 207-208.

> C'êtoit un charivary de tous ces instruments ensemble [*Trô, Pi, Schoungschang, Cong, Tlounpounpan, Tapôn*][192], que la marche que l'on sonnait à l'entrée des Envoyez du Roy: on la sonne toute pareille à la suite du Roy de Siam, & ce bruit tout bizarre qu'il est, n'a rien de desagreable principalement sur la riviere.[193]

He described a percussive instrument which gives 'noise of certain copper Basons' and called it 'Schoungschang' – a typical teasing phrase which some teenagers nowadays use for mimicking Asian languages. Indeed, this instrument may refer to a grandiose Victory-Gong (Khong Chai). He also reported that the Siamese displayed their instruments in front of the French Ambassadors only to convey a sense of power and magnificence without actually using them:

> Le jour de la premiere audience des Envoyez du Roy il y avoit dans la court la plus intérieure du Palais, une centaine d'hommes prosternez, les uns tenant pour la montre de ces mauvaises petites trompettes qu'ils ne sonnoient point, & que ja soupçonnay être de bois; & les autres ayant devant eux, châcun un petit tambour, sans le battre.[194]



Siamese percussive instruments, from above: Tloumpo umpan, Tong, Cong, and Tapon, displayed in La Loubère's Du royaume de Siam*.*[195]

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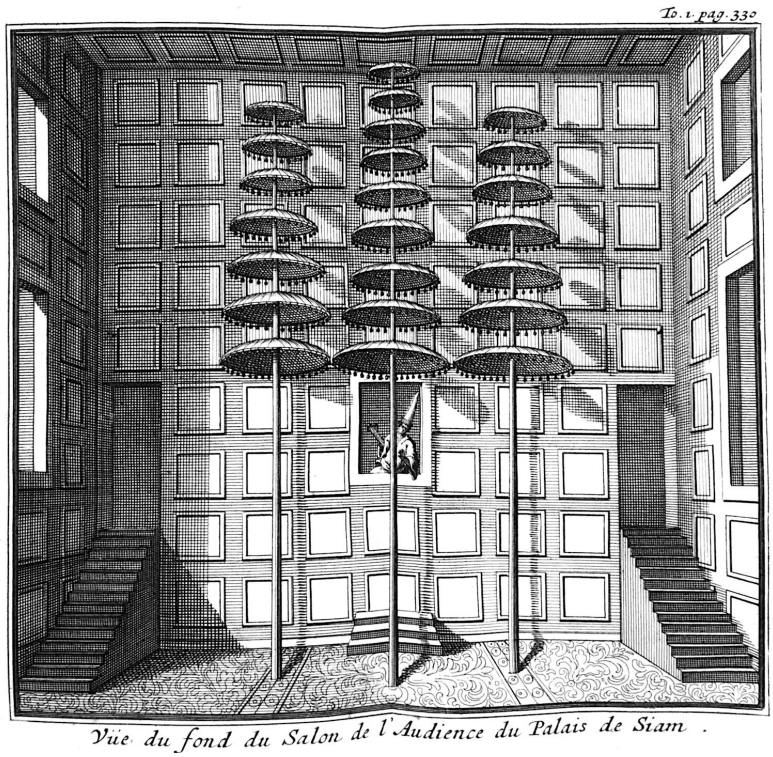
[192] The instruments are fiddles, reed-instruments, gongs, and diverse types of drums.

[193] Ibid., p. 209-210.

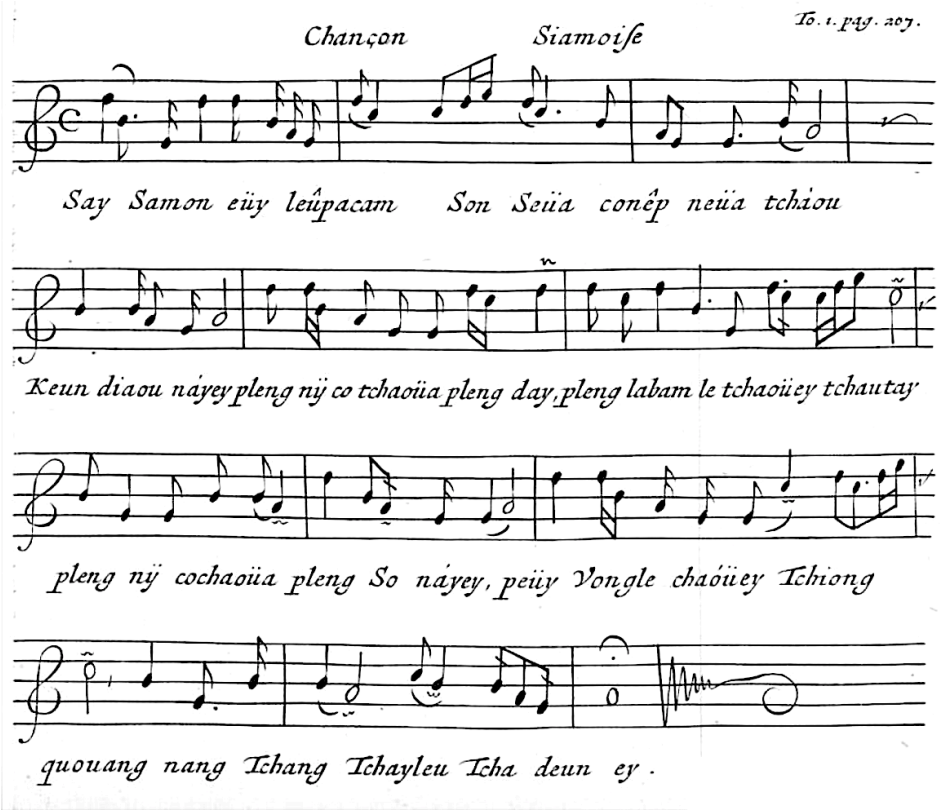
[194] Ibid., p. 210-211.

[195] Ibid., p. 208.



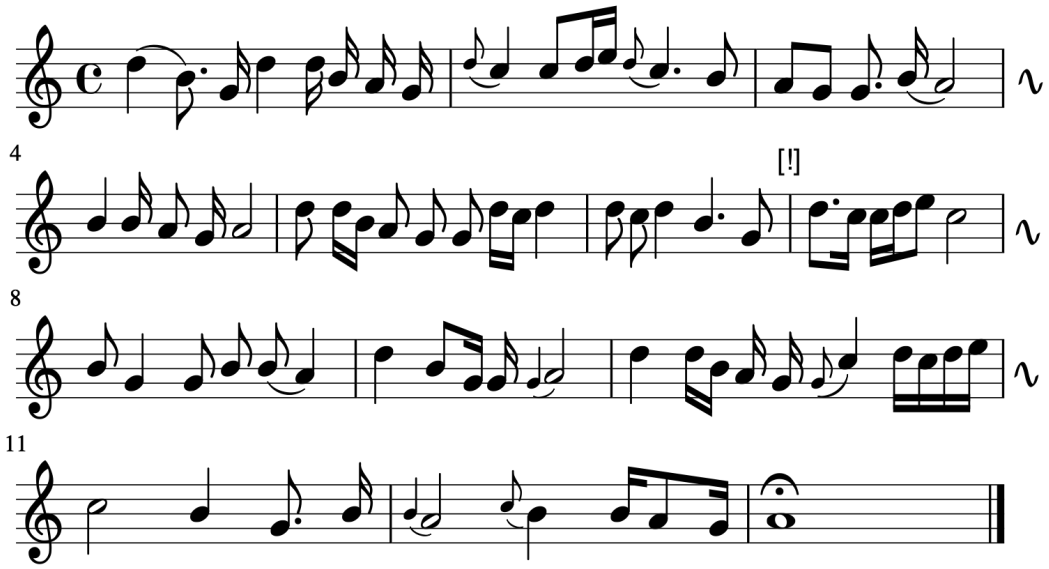
The hall in the Siamese palace.[196]

In spite of his obvious negative opinions concerning the music and the people, La Loubère included further evidence on the history of Siamese music: a transcription of a folklore melody, *Saysamorn*:



Saysamorn*, transcribed by La Loubère, in* Du royaume de Siam, p. 207.

[196] Ibid., p. 330.

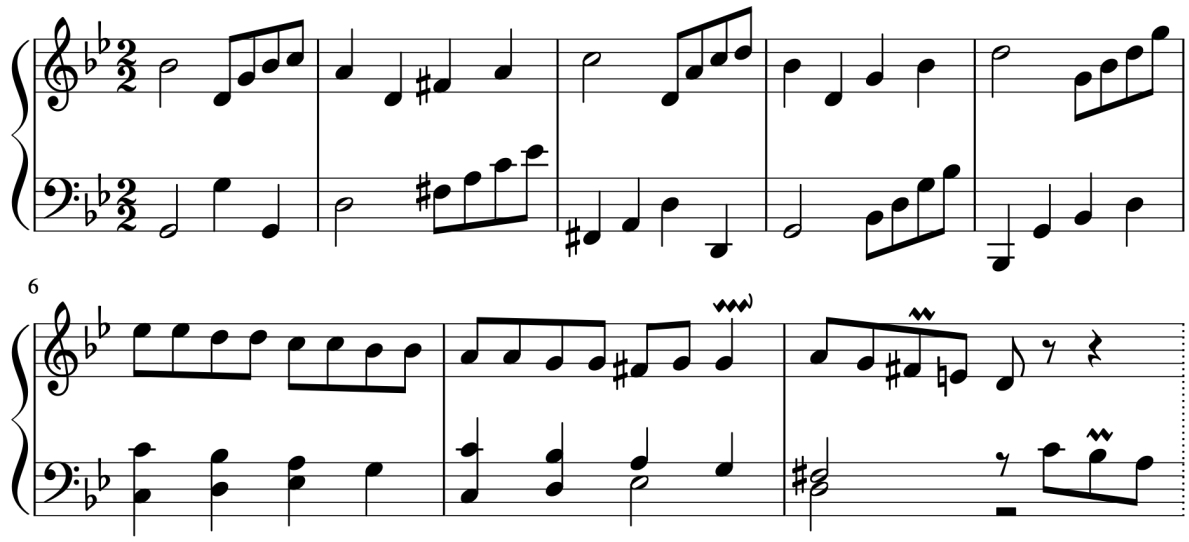


Saysamorn *rewritten in the modern notation by Siwat Chuencharoen, with some adjustments by transforming some exceeded notes into appoggiaturas. The bar-line of bar 7 is also added to correct the 4/4-time signature.*

Saysamorn is regarded, after *Sout Chai* by Gervais, as the second evidence of Siamese music written down in notation. La Loubère's *Saysamorn* transcription conveys harmonious tones for the westerner's ears. Two-tone slurs are eventually noted at several words (or syllables) which help expressing their melodic nuances. There is no trace of strangeness, noise nor barbaric character as he negatively commented about the Siamese music before in *Du royaume de Siam.*

Again, the music is adjusted to fit in the framework of how European music should be. La Loubère tries to balance the piece by fitting each phrase into three bars, although the summed length of the notes in the last bar of the second phrase (bar 6 from the manuscript) obviously exceeds its time signature. Furthermore, the piece could be easily harmonised with simple chords, i.e. tonic, dominant and sub-dominant chords of G major, without causing any irritation for the ears. Even the fact that the melody does not end with G, the tonic, does not contradict this appreciation, because it could end on D major with a conventional imperfect-cadence.

The idea of suggesting such a musical *souvenir* using the European musical language to represent exotic soundscapes can be seen in another example: Jean-Philippe Rameau's Ballet-Opera *Les Indes galantes* (1735). The ceremonial music of the savages (*Forêts paisibles*) in the final act (*Les Sauvages*) is accompanied by a standard Rondo-formed movement in G minor, with a common time (4/4) and well-balanced 8-bar phrases. Similar to the transcription of *Sout Chai*, the musical language of *Les Sauvages* actually does not convey any foreign characteristics in terms of harmonic progression, rhythm, and melodic shape:



The first eight bars of Rameau's Les Sauvages *(version for keyboard by the composer). The music itself is so conventionally structured and thus it would not represent any trace of foreignness as the title does.*

Instruments From Exhibitions

In the nineteenth century the investigation of Siamese music, especially about its scale system, would develop into more precise analysis. Thanks to the series of 'World's Fairs', starting from 'The Great Exhibition' in London (1851) and the other nine exhibitions which continually took place in European countries until 1900. By having exotic musical instruments and even real traditional bands exposed in front of their eyes and ears, several ethnologists were attracted to unseal the undiscovered musical languages from those faraway lands.

Alexander John Ellis

The English philologist Alexander John Ellis (1814-1890) was the first one who investigated Siamese music instrument and tried to systematise their scale system as accurately and authentically as possible, not just roughly transform it into European diatonic scales as seen in the prior transcriptions by Gervais or La Loubère. The logarithmic unit he developed: 'Cent' system (1875), allowed him to measure and concretise the pitches that are not found in the conventional western chromatic scales.
At his first attempt, Ellis measured the pitches of a Siamese wooden xylophone (Ranad) kept in the South Kensington Museum (1885). Its eight bars in a row gave the following results:[197]

[197] Alexander John Ellis: 'On the musical scales of various nations' in: *Journal of the Society of Arts* No. 1,688 Vol. 33 (1885), p. 506.

Bar	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII
Pitches measured from the xylophone (Hertz)	323	348	379	433	491	504	585	666
The closest notes from an equal-tempered scale (A = 440 Hertz)	E, 329.63	F, 349.23	G♭, 369.99	A, 440	B, 493.88	B, 493.88	D, 587.33	E, 659.25
Pitch-differences compared with the xylophone (Hertz)	+6.63	+1.23	-9.01	+7	+2.88	-10.12	+2.33	-6.75
Cents, calculated from the xylophone	0	129	277	508	726	771	1029	1254
Cents, calculated from an equal-tempered scale	0	150	250	500	700	800	1000	1200

The pitches of the Siamese wooden xylophone in South Kensington Museum, measured by Ellis.

'This scale is quite enigmatical', was Ellis' commentary on his findings.[198] However, the intonations from this Thai xylophone have certain similarities with the western pitches. For example, bars VII and XII would sound nearly similar to the notes F (349.23 Hz) and D (587.33 Hz) respectively, due to their tiny frequency differences from the well-tempered scale. Thus, bars VI and XIII, they produce an octave-like interval to the ear of western listeners. Still, there are obviously unusual steps within this scale. As the frequency differences fluctuate randomly in both plus and minus directions: some notes are sharper than the western tempered ones and some other notes sound just flatter. One could hear very small differences between bar X and bar XI, as if they were almost the same note (but the latter one is somewhat flatter). Also, the interval between bar VIII and bar IX would sound similar to a minor-third (G♭ – or in this case F#, and A), although they are placed diatonically next to each other.
A few months later Ellis admitted that this particular xylophone from the South Kensington Museum was actually critically damaged, since a certain number of laid pieces attached under the wooden bars for tuning its pitches were either lost or had fallen down from the instrument.[199] But, by all means, this attempt set the first footstep towards a new perception of Siamese music.

Later, the Inventions Exhibition held in London in 1885 gave Ellis an opportunity to closely investigate a Siamese band sent by King Rama V to the exhibition as a cultural representation. From observing the instruments, interviewing the band master and their musicians and hearing their live performances several times, Ellis was able to unveil sophisticated aspects of the music from the Kingdom of Siam that had never been investigated before by westerners.

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[198] Ibid., p. 507.

[199] Ibid., No.1,719, p. 1103.

Equal Step Scale

Fortunately, Ellis obtained two Siamese xylophones in proper condition from the exhibition.[200] His observation on these two instruments gives a satisfying result, which helps conceptualising the more comprehensible structure of the Siamese scale – *an equal step scale*:

Bar	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Xylophone I. Pitches (Hertz)	285	316	358	386	421	458	511	562
Xylophone II. Pitches (Hertz)	285	317	349	383	429	471	522	577
Pitches of the theoretically equal step scale, starting from the same first note (Hertz)	285	315	347	383	423	467	516	570

The pitches of the other two Siamese xylophones which were in a better condition than the first instrument Ellis had measured.

The findings above show that both xylophones feature nearly the same pitches throughout their series of bars in an almost perfect octave. The pitches are also very close to the theoretically equal step scale. The differences between the actual pitches and the theoretical ones fluctuate mostly within ten Hertz which is of course not tolerable for the standard of European musicians, but the intention of tuning the scale in a certain direction is still clearly recognisable.

Ellis also compares the intervals between each note in Cents as shown in the table below. A perfect equal step scale should have 171 Cents between each note of the scale. Although the results from both xylophones do not precisely resemble the theoretical number (171.43 Cents), they reveal again the intention to tune the intervals between each note as equally as possible and at the same time to maintain the last note of the scale (bar VIII) sounding one octave higher as the first note (which theoretically has an interval of 1200 Cents).

[200] They are *Ranad Lek* and *Ranad Ek*, or metal and wooden xylophones respectively.

Bar	I and II	II and III	III and IV	IV and V	V and VI	VI and VII	VII and VIII	Accum-ulation in one octave (Cents)
Xylophone I. Pitch differences (Cents)	177	219	127	150	149	148	167	1137
Xylophone II. Pitch differences (Cents)	185	165	160	200	159	178	174	1221
Pitch differences of the theoretically equal step scale (Cents)	171.43	171.43	171.43	171.43	171.43	171.43	171.43	1200.01

Pitch differences in Cents of both xylophones.

From the investigation on the real instruments from the exhibition, Ellis concluded that: 'the ideal Siamese scale is, consequently, an equal division of an octave into seven parts, so that there are no semitones and no [whole] tones'.[201]

Do, Re, Mi?

Ellis considered the Siamese scale – similar to those used in Europe, Arabic countries, and India – as 'heptatonic', i.e. by interposing six notes between a certain note and its octave and thus it creates a scale consisting of seven different notes. His assumption distinguishes Siamese music from that which was present in China, Japan and Java, which he regarded as 'pentatonic'.[202]
When exactly Thai music began to adopt Solfège syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti to name the notes (there is no # and ♭) has not been found out yet. It is an interesting and historically relevant question, taking into consideration the crucial structural differences between both scale systems. Nowadays Thai traditional musicians perceive their music entirely within this Do-Re-Mi system[203] and they do not have any other alternatives for calling the notes they play anymore. Unlike, for example, Indian classical music where the musicians still have their own names for the notes (i.e. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni, Sa).
Back to 1885, Ellis also revealed how Siamese musicians called each note in their seven-note-scale:

[201] Ibid., p. 1105.

[202] Ibid., p. 491.

[203] Fixed Do.

- The first note was called *T'hang*. Ellis translates it as *sound*, but the word literally means *way* or *path*.
- The second note: *Rong T'hang*. The translation by Ellis as *second* or *under sound* seems correct. 'Rong' – which literally means being placed under something – also refers to the second important position of something, similarly to *vice* in *vice-president*.
- The third note: *Oat*, which Ellis gave its meaning as *voice*. But 'Oat' is generally understood as voices with agony or overwhelming expression, i.e. to mourn or to cry.
- The fourth note: *Klang*, means *center* or *middle*.
- The fifth note is entitled *Phong Oar*, an assumably meaningless word in Thai. Ellis also noted that this name is without any other special significance known to the musicians.
- The sixth note: *Kruert*, translated by Ellis as *sharp sound*. This word, similar to *Phong oar*, is also difficult to trace back to its original meaning in Thai.[204]
- The seventh note: *Nork*, directly means outside. In several contexts 'Nork' is also understood as something *foreign* or *strange*.
- Then the eighth note is considered as *T'hang* again, similarly to the European concept of an octave.

Although the names of these seven-note-scale do not match with Solfège syllables, they could somehow reflect certain functions that resemble a western diatonic scale: *T'hang* note – giving the other notes the main path so that they can fit in properly – can be seen as a *tonic* in the western scale. The Siamese perhaps perceived the *Oat* note (mourning) auditively in the same way western musicians hear of thirds. And *Nork* (the seventh step) is considered somewhat strange, similar to the dissonant effect when a tonic and a leading tone are played together.

Harmony and Counterpoint

Ellis commented on the concept of having a key-note (tonic) in Siamese music as following:

> The pieces of music do not appear to have different names according to the notes which they begin or end. There are no scales corresponding to our major and minor [...] Although there is no key-note, or tonic proper, there seems to be in every air a principal note called the *Sieng Yeun* or main standing tone. The principal note changes, but the act of changing is called simply change. As a rule, however, the principal notes in all airs are alike, although exceptions are to be found. The tunes and airs are not named after their principal notes.[205]

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[204] There are two types of wooden flutes (Klui) which are called 'Klui Phieng Oar' and 'Klui Kruert'. Klui Phieng Oar often gives a tuning note for the other musicians in the ensemble, and Klui Kruert has a higher range.

[205] Ibid., p. 1106.

From the quotation above, it is clear that Siamese music did not establish a principal note with the same tonic function as the note C in a C major scale, but changing of the key-note (modulation) does happen. Eventually this 'simply change' does not work in the same way as a harmonic modulation from one key to another as when a note F is heightened to F# in order to introduce a modulation from C major to G major.
Ellis also emphasised that Siamese music does not have harmony (in terms of the art of sounding different pitches simultaneously). The music establishes its tone-colours by having 'all notes of the same name strictly unison',[206] an effect which Ellis interprets as being closer to the music of the ancient time:

> [Siamese music] having its own peculiar but decidedly non-harmonic character, that gives a European, so accustomed to harmony that he is apt to forget it is a comparatively recent discovery, an opportunity of appreciating what must have been the effect in early times when people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music playing together, and relying for their effects, not on harmony, but on diversity of quantity of tone for the same note, or its Octave, or flashing away into labyrinths of eccentric discant, but returning duly to the original theme of which these flourishes were but the embroidery.[207]

His inspection gives the similar impression as what La Loubère's already mentioned almost two centuries ago: *Ils ne connoissent pas plus que les Chinois la diversité des chants pour les diverses Parties d'un corps de Musique: ils chantent tous à l'unisson*.[208]

Carl Stumpf

A German psychologist, who later became a professor at Universität zu Berlin, Carl Stumpf (1848-1936) was a prolific author of ethnomusicological studies. In 1900 he came across Siamese music from the theatre group sent by King Rama V of Siam in order to display the national culture in Berlin. In his article *Tonsystem und Musik der Siamesen* (1901) Stumpf tries to underscore Ellis's assumption that a Siamese scale consists of seven notes with equal steps between each note. Stumpf took four Siamese xylophones from the theatre's ensemble and measured their average pitches of the middle octave. The table below shows Stumpf's result, in comparison with the other two xylophones acquired by Ellis and the theoretically correct pitches of an equal-stepped scale:

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[206] Ibid., p. 1105.

[207] Ibid., p. 1103.

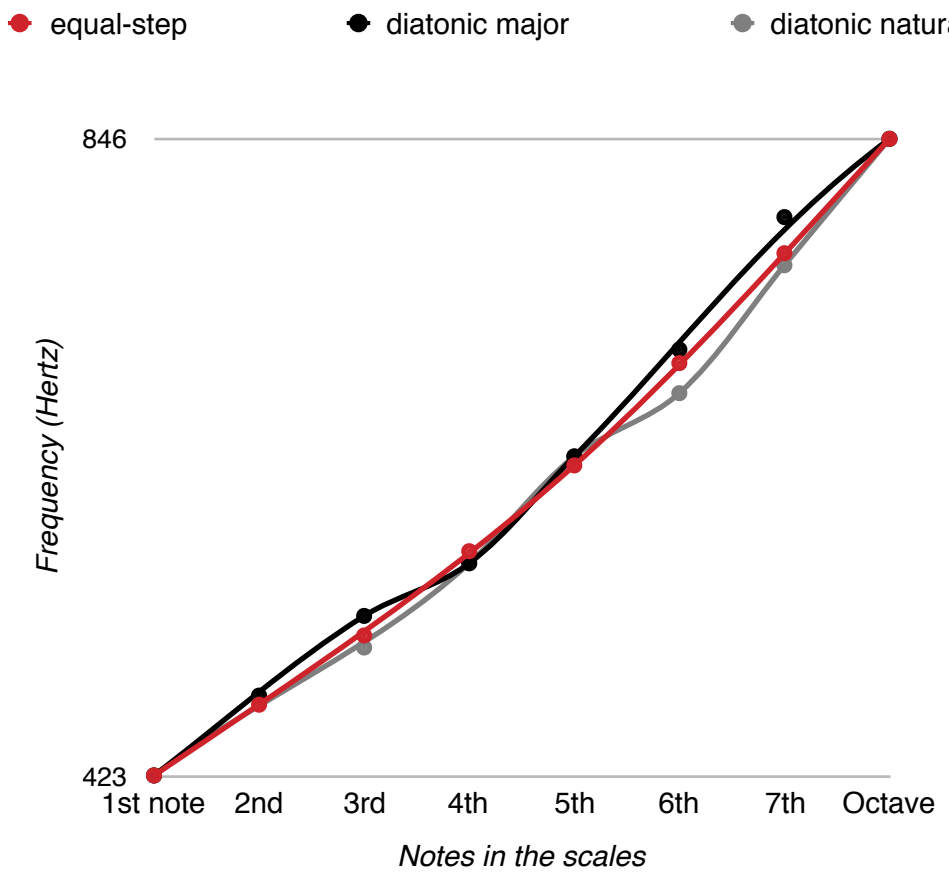
[208] La Loubère: *Du royaume de Siam,* p. 208.

Pitches of the notes in the scale (Hertz)			
Ellis: Xylophone I	Ellis: Xylophone II	Stumpf: Average pitches of the four xylophones	Stumpf: Theoretically calculated equal-stepped scale
421	429	423	423
458	471	470	467
511	522	516	516
570	570	572	570
632	634	629	629
716	698	697	695
772	766	770	767

Comparison of the pitches of Siamese xylophones measured by Ellis and Stumpf.

According to the third and the fourth columns, one sees that the average pitches measured by Stumpf are very close to the theoretical equal-stepped scale (and some of them eventually have identical pitches). At the same time, most of the pitches from Ellis's instruments differ just only a few Hertz from Stumpf's results. The only exception is the sixth note from Ellis' xylophone I. (716 Hertz), this may be due, as Ellis himself also admitted, to a missing piece of massive laid on this particular bar of the xylophone. Therefore, Stumpf convincingly assumes that Siamese scales, as Ellis has already proposed three decades before him, consist of seven notes (heptatonic) with equal steps between consecutive notes.

Due to this characteristic, the Siamese scale sounds differently from the western diatonic one, especially at the third, the sixth and the seventh steps: the notes that are harmonically significant in order to differentiate a major key from a minor key and a leading-note. The graph below shows the comparative pitches between an equal-step scale, a diatonic major scale and a diatonic natural minor scale:

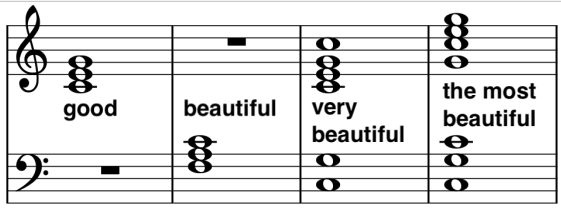
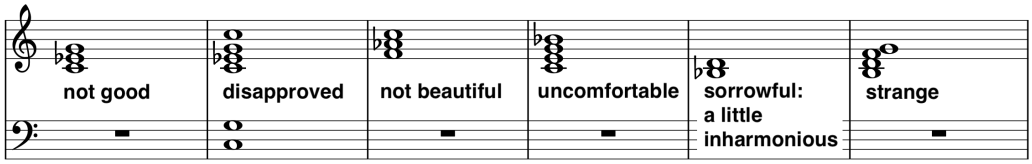
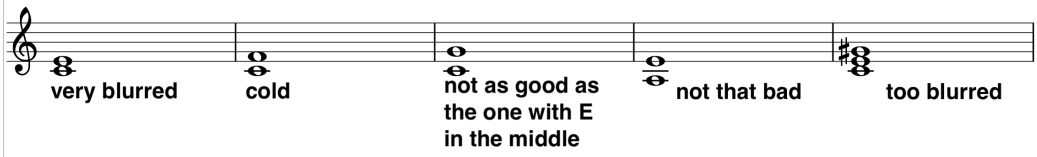


Pitches of an equal-step-, a diatonic major-, and a diatonic natural minor scales.

From the graph, the third- and the sixth notes of the equal-step scale (the red line) lay just in between those notes in major- and minor scales (the black and grey line respectively). Given the first note of an equal-step scale as C*, this means the pitches of E* and A* are in between E♮ and E♭ and between A♮ and A♭ respectively. Whereas the fourth and the fifth notes (F* and G*) are nearly the same pitches as the subdominant (F) and dominant (G) from the diatonic scale.
Since the frequencies of the third and the sixth notes of the equal-step scale stay in the middle between the frequencies of those notes from the major and minor scales, it is not possible to define the tonality within the major-minor dualism, i.e. when hearing the scale with the expectation of western harmony, they have lost the significant characteristic of being major and minor: they are neither one of them.
Moreover, regarding the seventh note (B*) which is closer to the one from the natural minor scale (B♭), there could be no effect of a perfect-cadence, where the seventh note sharply leads to the tonic within only a half tone-step.

The differences among these scales are also reflected in the auditive perception of western harmony by Siamese musicians. Stumpf invited a professional Siamese xylophonist to his home and played several chords on the piano for him. Then the

xylophonist was asked for his impression from hearing those harmonies. The following table summarises Stumpf's results from his interview: [209]

Positive impressions	
Negative impressions	
Other	

Impressions of a Siamese musician after hearing different kinds of western chords.

Generally, the Siamese xylophonist commented on minor chords negatively every time he heard them, and the major ones made a positive impression on him. Dominant-seventh chords seemed to be unfamiliar to their ears. Furthermore, intervals of major-thirds and perfect-fourths did not sound delightful for him, although they are considered perfect consonant intervals in western music.

The Siamese xylophonist also commented to Stumpf, when the later played some Siamese melodies on the piano with additional simple (western) harmonisation, that it sounds for him ‘not bad, but just too many notes [at a time]’.[210] Another similar situation was also reported by La Loubère (1687), when the Siamese ambassador under the reception of Louis XIV politely offered his opinion on the court’s instrumental concert in France: ‘it was such a pity, since the accompaniment from other instruments made the beauty of the solo-melody unclear.’[211] In short, the harmonisation by simply making unisons or doubling octaves seems to be the most appreciable for the Siamese's ears.

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[209] Carl Stumpf: ‘Tonsystem und Musik der Siamesen’, in: *Beiträge zur Akustik und Musikwissenschaft*, ed. Carl Stumpf, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth 1901, p.106.

[210] Ibid., p.107

[211] Ibid.

4.3 During the 1930s: The Period of Cultural Reformation

During the chaotic events of the 1932 revolution, not only did the sovereign power shift from right to left as well as the change of the country's name from Siam to Thailand occur, there were also massive cultural reforms taking place in several branches of arts. Some were influenced more directly by the surrounding political situations, and some were less politically driven.
In the 1930s there were two eminent projects devoted to the transcription of Thai music into western notation that came out successfully in publications. One of them was edited by Paul Johan Seelig and the other one is by Phar Chen Duriyang. Although both projects were initiated from two different sponsors, they do share some common elements which reveal their acquaintance with the aforementioned findings by Ellis and Stumpf.

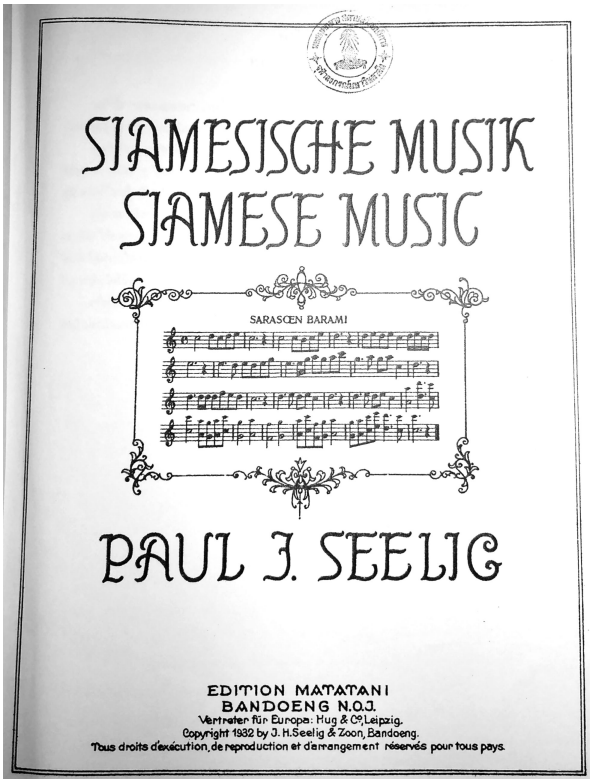
Paul Johan Seelig's Collection *Siamesische Musik*

Paul Seelig, whose compositions include a Concerto for piano and orchestra (1937), a Javanese Rhapsody for orchestra (1913) and many songs based on Malaysian, Chinese and Indonesian music.[212]

The project was initiated by Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandh (1881-1944), the 33rd child of King Rama V who grew up with a profound love for the Siamese traditional music he heard in his father's palace and later spent many years pursuing higher military education in Germany. The prince commissioned Paul Johan Seelig (1876-1945), a German well-renowned musician and composer who spent almost his entire musical career in Indonesia, to make the transcription. The virtuoso

[212] <http://www.forbiddenmusicregained.org> [28th May 2018].

Siamese xylophonist Changwang Tua, regarded as one of the best players of his generation, played the melodies from a xylophone. The transcription was probably done at the prince's residence in Bangkok. Prince Sukhumbandh, certainly a convinced royalist, had to flee and stay in exile until his death in Indonesia due to the revolution. The collection of 150 Siamese tunes written in western notation, entitled and prefaced in German as *Siamesische Musik* was published in Indonesia in 1932, in the same year as the revolution. The book is considered the first published Siamese music in western notation.[213]



The cover of Seelig's collection of Siamesische Musik *(1932).*[214]

Looking through *Siamesische Musik*, there are some interesting features revealing how Seelig related the aesthetic of western classical music to his Thai music transcription:

Andantino Cantabile: Rendering Shape and Expression in the Melody

Seelig does not provide many critical interpretation guidelines in most of the pieces, almost all of them contain only the notes without signs specifying articulation, dynamics or agogic. There is just only one piece, *Tayea,* where he gave deliberated instructions on tempo markings, suggested dynamics, articulations and phrasing:

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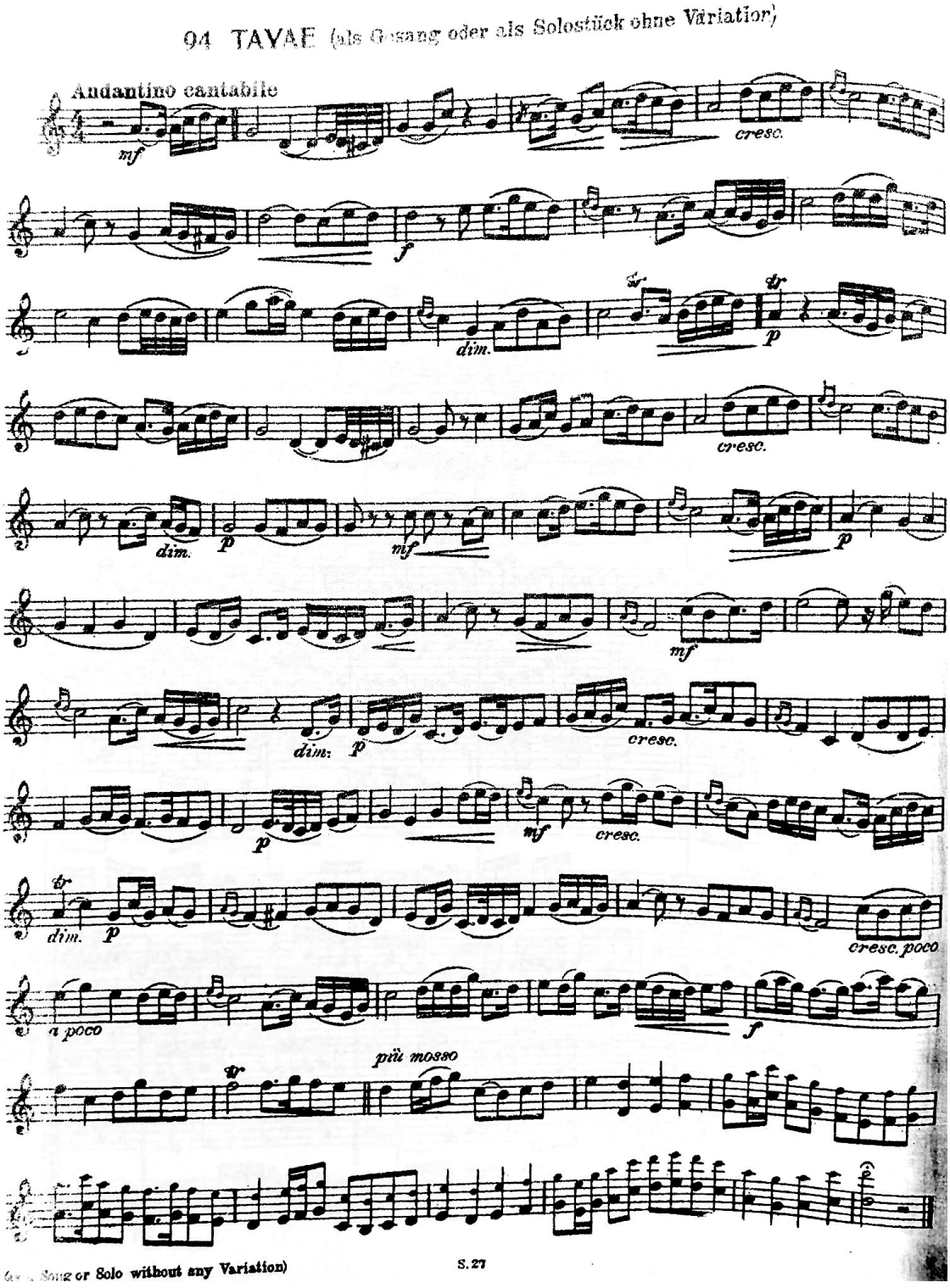
213 According to the preface for the reprinted edition of 'Siamese Music', written by Sukree Charoensuk (1997).

214 Paul Seelig: *Siamesische Musik*: Edition Matatani Bandoeng 1932, Reprint Nakorn Prathom: College of Music, Mahidol University 1997.



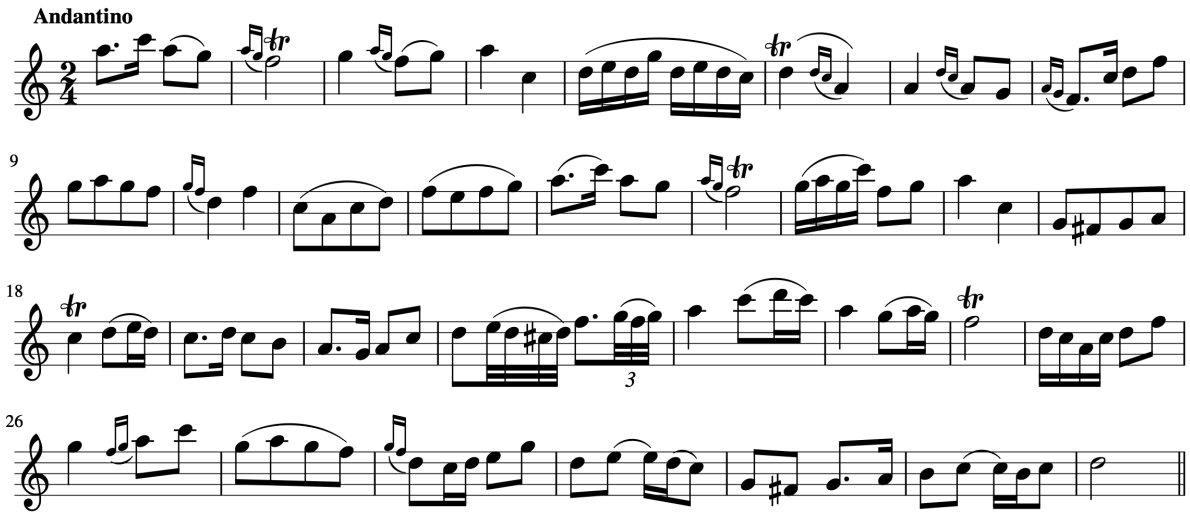
Transcription of Tayea*, with abundant articulation and dynamic markings*, *in Seelig's* Siamesische Musik*, p. 66.*

The score of *Tayea* is very instructively written down, especially concerning the dynamics, which are indicated at almost every phrase. The idea of building a phrase by making crescendo towards the higher note and then decrescendo back to the lower one certainly secures the nuances and aesthetic of the western lyrical passages. It is noticeable that all of the *crescendo* markings ('*cresc.*') do not clearly specify to which notes the crescendos should lead.

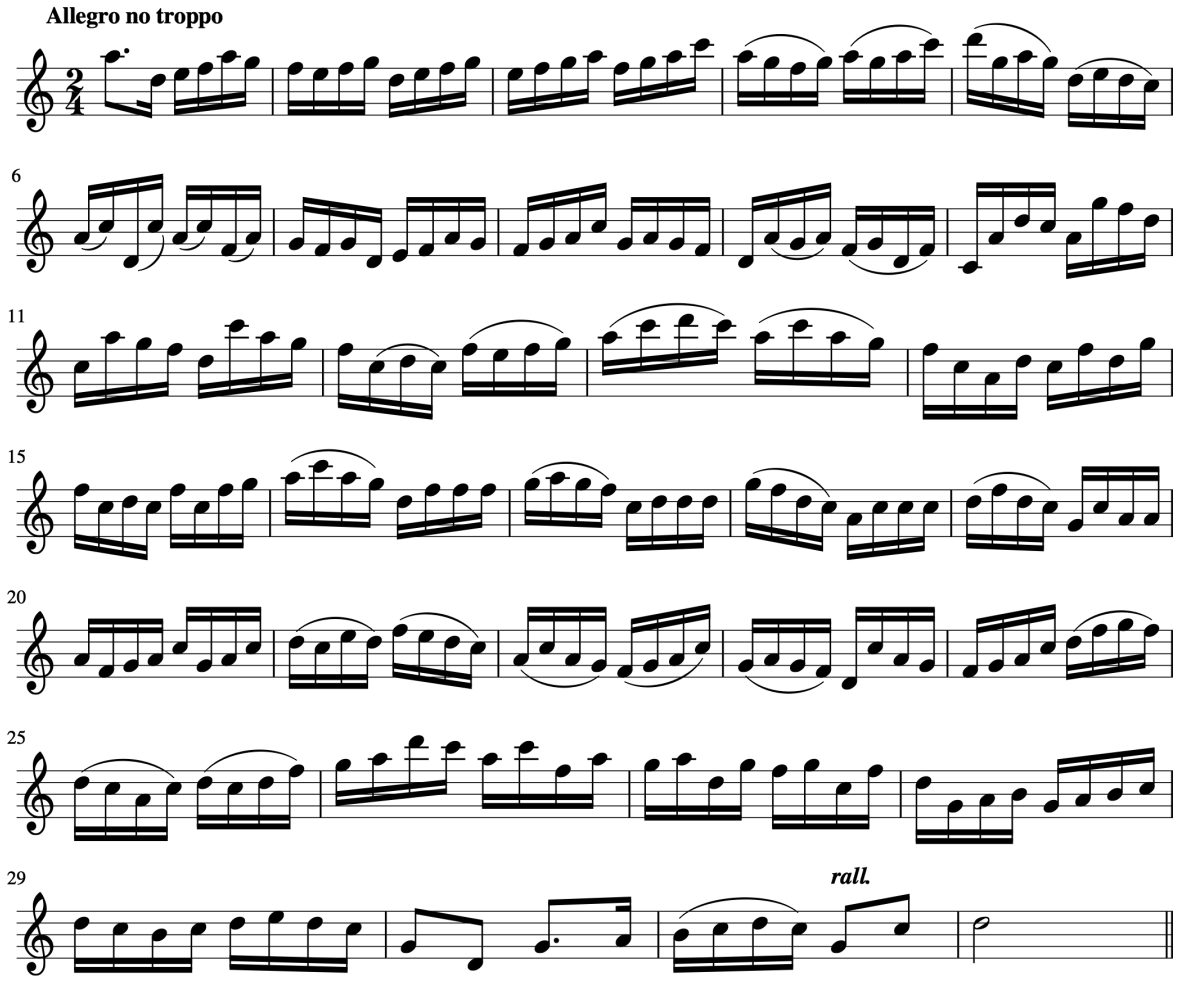
Theme and Variation: The Art of Developing a Melody

Considering musical form, the pieces in *Siamesische Musik* book are hardly composed in conventional forms as western music does: i.e. not in strophic-, nor binary-, nor ternary form. They are rather ‘through-composed’ without symmetry in terms of the musical form. Nonetheless, variation form is evident in this collection: there are three set of *Themes and Variations* found here. This type of form reveals the compositional technique in Thai music, especially how the music is developed. Here is one example of them, *Sarathi no.2*:

Theme:

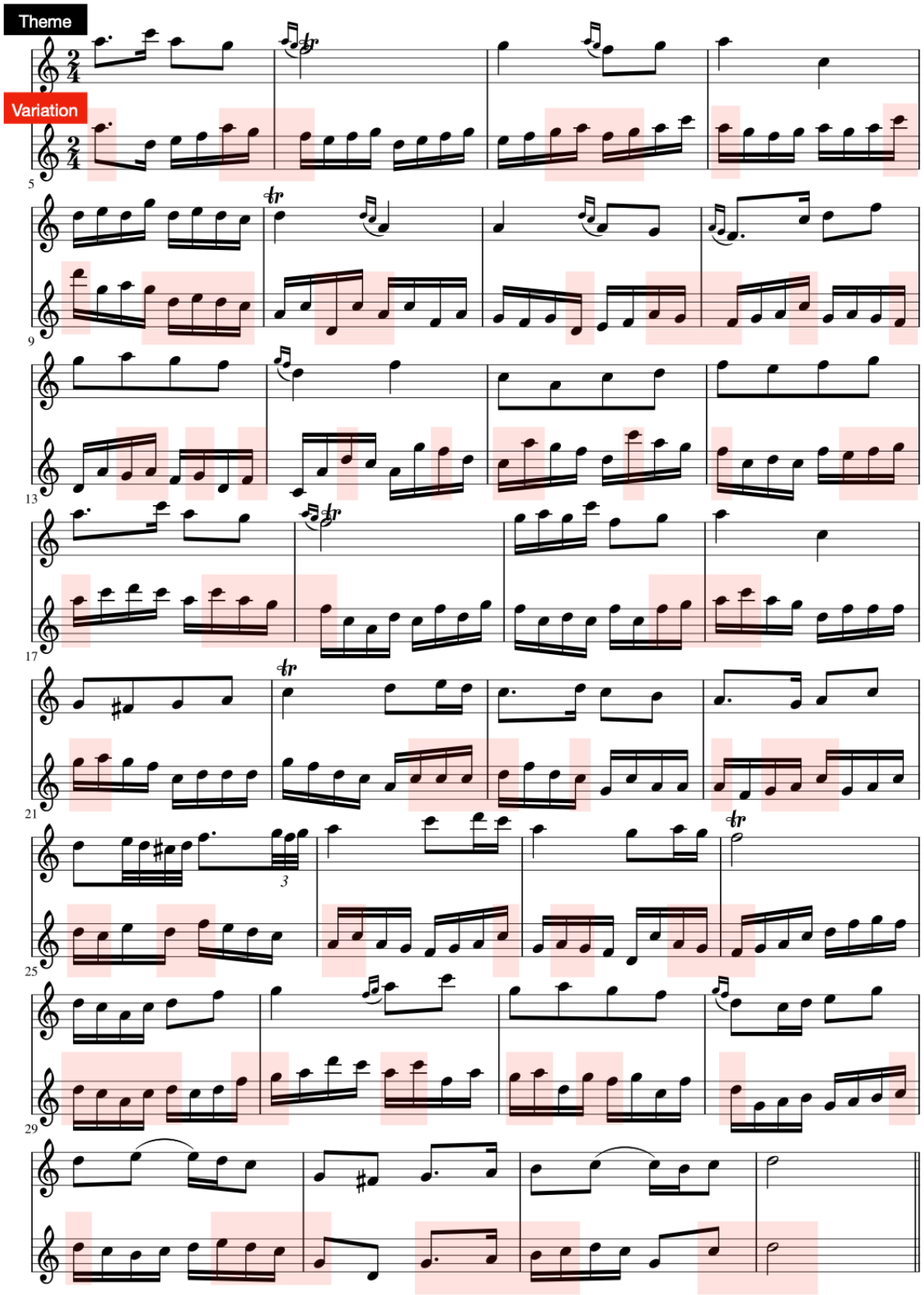


Variation:



Sarathi no.2: *Theme and Variations, Ibid., p. 61.*

The variation above contains exactly the same amount of bars as its theme, which means the theme is varied maintaining the metric structure of the bars one by one. When a theme is varied (mostly just only one variation), the melody is filled up with semiquavers running restlessly until the end, meanwhile the main notes from the melody appear constantly in almost every beat – but not always *on* the beat – of the variation. The score below displays the correlation between the theme and its variation. The notes in red markings in the variation are the main notes derived from the theme:

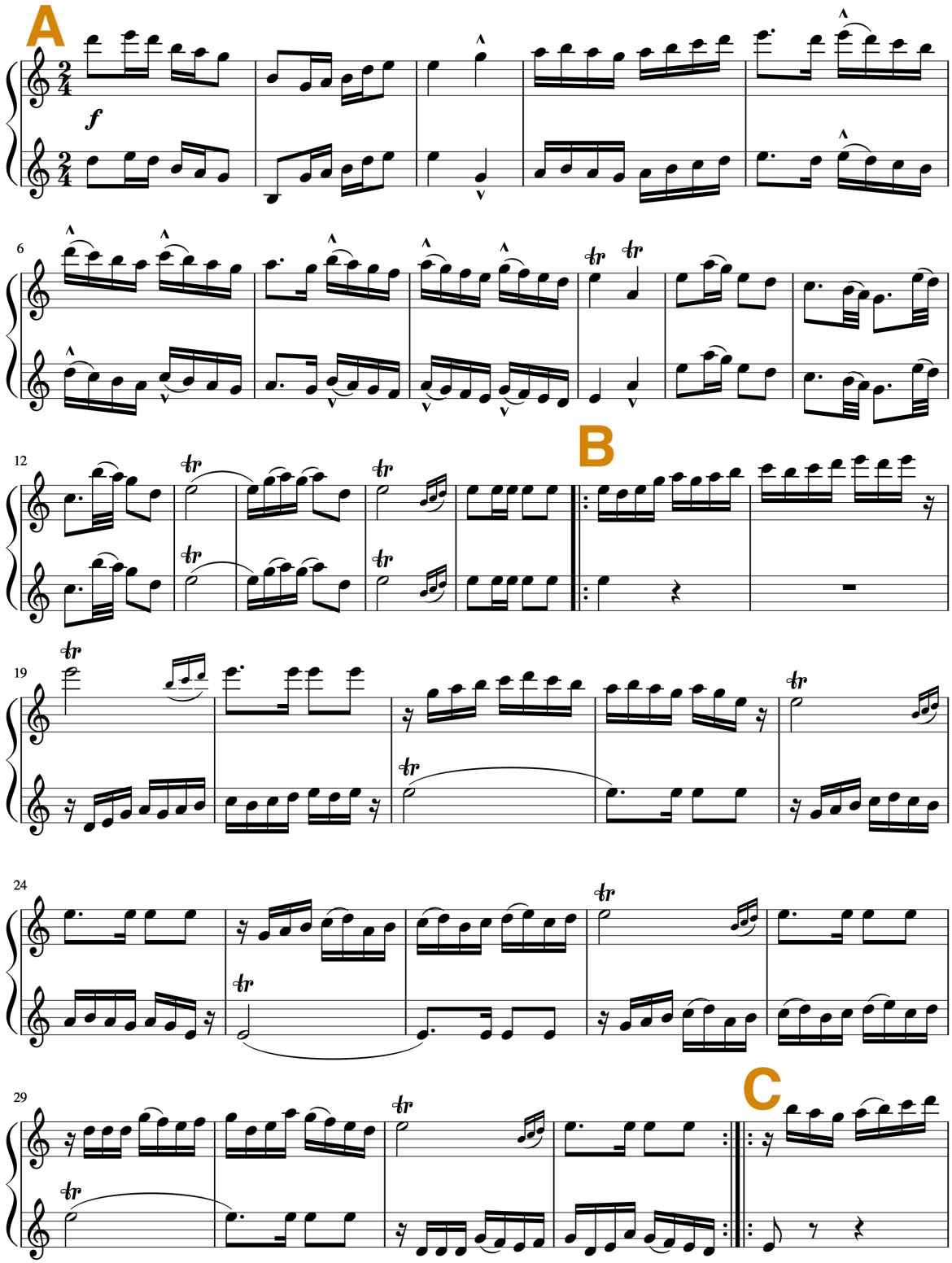


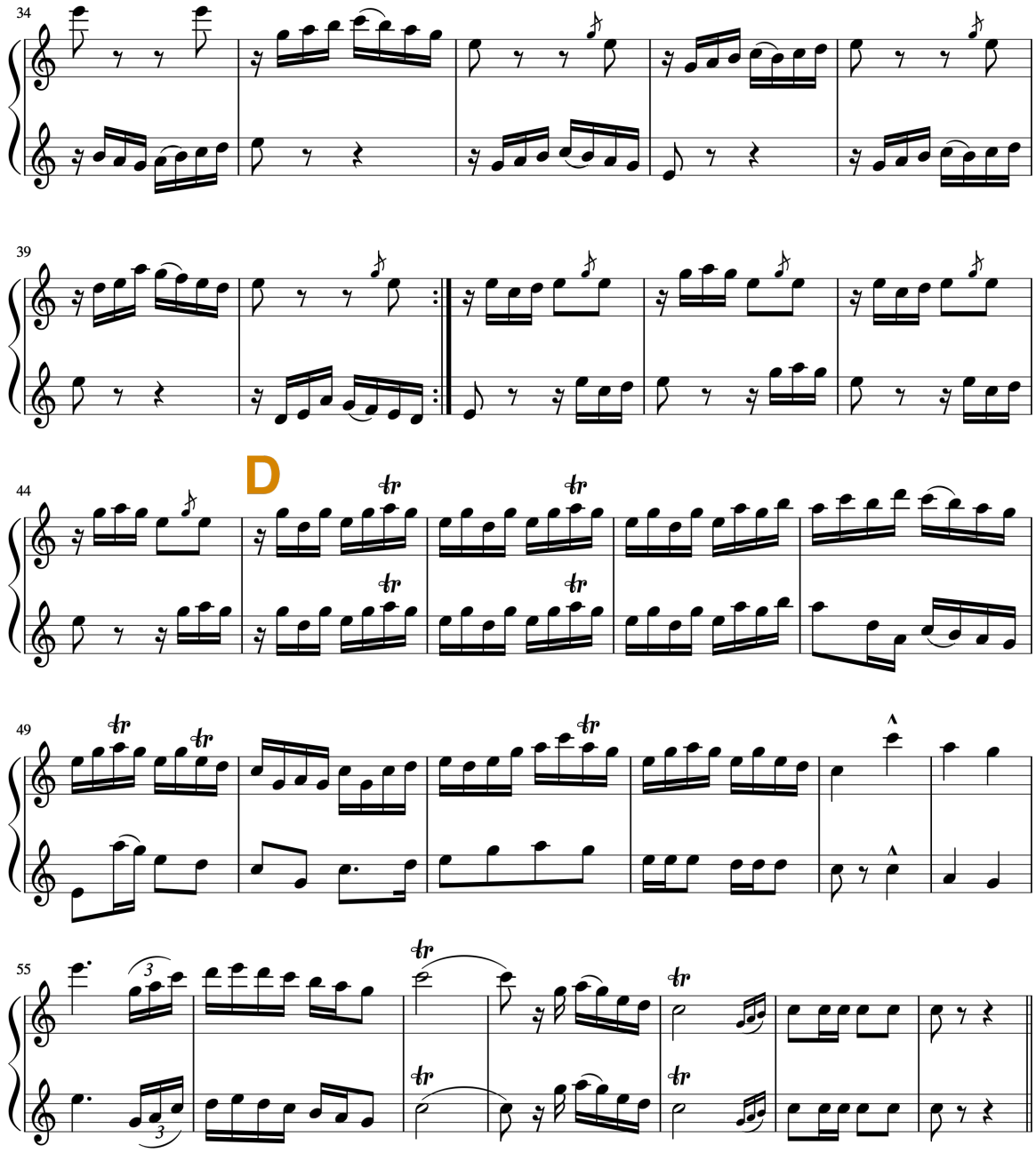
The correlation between the theme and its variation of Sarathi *No.2.*

Despite the close dependence in terms of form and the original notes of the theme, in the variation, it loses all accidentals which have appeared in the theme before, which are the F# in bars 17 and 30, as well as the C# in bar 21. This dyes its former tonality and lets the variation go through almost purely pentatonic scales (i.e. F-G-A-C-D, with E occasionally as a passing note in bars 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 21, 29). Such phenomena is a noticeable characteristic of this piece, since the variation – which is based closely on the same notes of the preceding theme – renders a totally different tonality as the theme.

2-Voice and 3-Voice Polyphony: Searching for Vertical Harmony

The aesthetic of how a melody is varied becomes the fundamental concept of the polyphonic passages in *Siamesische Musik*. Seelig also transcribed some pieces for two, three and four voices. The following piece: *Phama* (Burma) is an example of a piece for two voices.


A
f
6
B
12
19
24
C
29

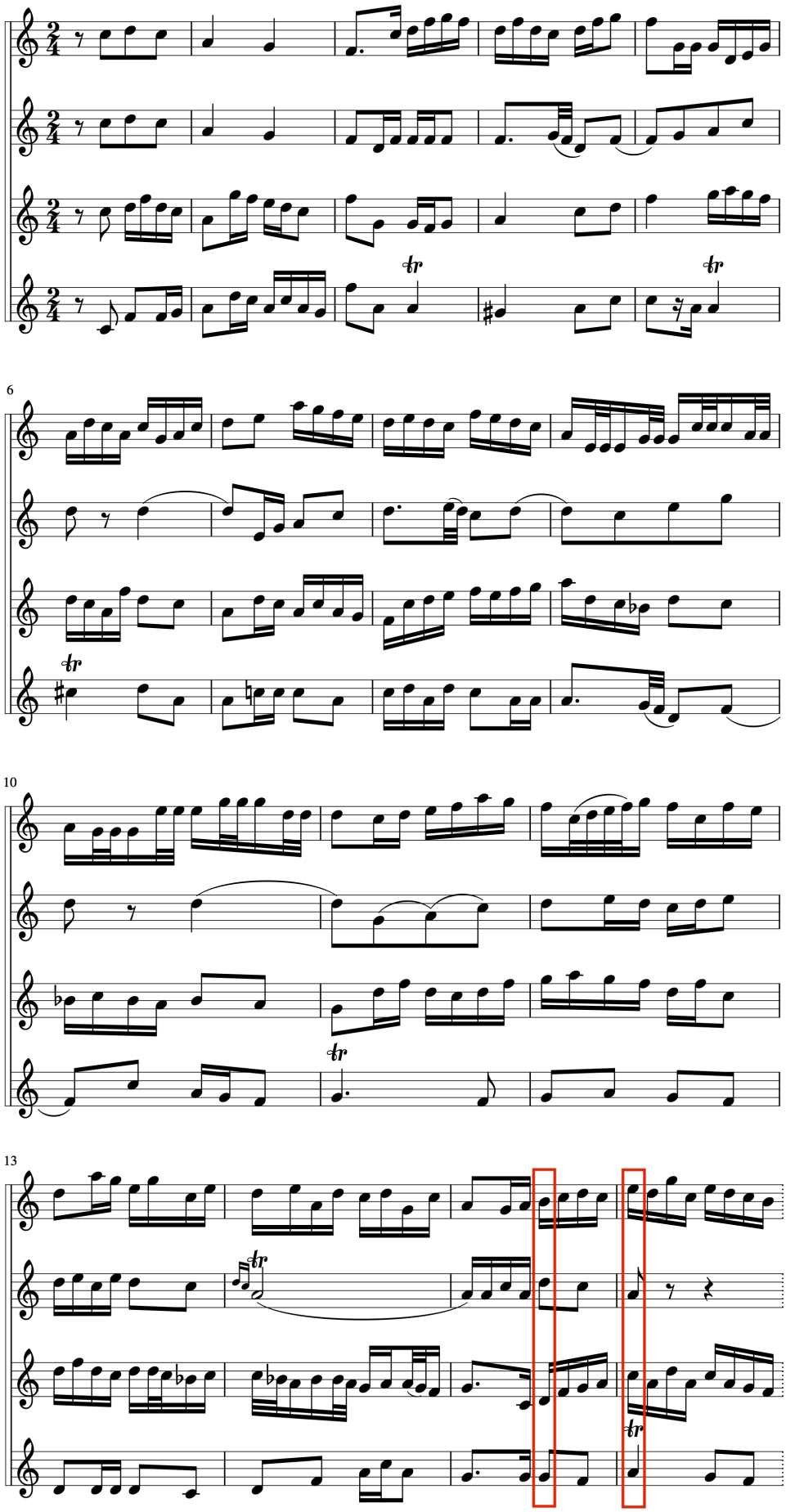


Excerpt from the two-voice piece Phama*, Ibid., p. 114-115.*

Although Seelig did not indicate any instrumentation for the score and it could be assumed that this virtuosic piece should be transcribed directly from xylophone playing, i.e. by the virtuoso Changwang Tua, there are several places where the notes of both voices are played together in the same octave which is obviously uncommon for one xylophone (for example: bars 10-16). Moreover, the trill markings within two voices is also nearly impossible to execute on one xylophone: when the piece is supposed to be played on one xylophone, the trills would rather be done by tremolos instead. Thus, this transcription could rather be performed by two different instruments, i.e. as a duet.

The above 60-bar-excerpt from this Siamese (but entitled Burmese) two-part invention shows an exceptionally interesting, elaborated musical structure. At the opening – A-section – the piece begins with 16 bars unison. Then in the middle of the piece – B- and C-section – imitations between both voices are performed. The upper voices first give a two-bar motive, which is suddenly imitated by the lower one (bars 17-20) and this manner continues until the end of B-section. Then in the C-section the motive is shortened to only one bar (bars 41-44), and later only a half-bar. These accelerating motives bring the music to its climax at the D-section, where all the voices reunite in unison again and rejoice with non-stop three bars of semiquavers (bars 45-47). Then the lower voice loosens its tension by playing longer notes (bars 48-52) and the whole excerpt ends with the relaxing – i.e. less embellished – unison passage (bar 53 onwards).
The piece actually has 711 bars in total, being the longest piece in Seelig's collection. As Siamese musicians only played and learned their music by heart since there was no notation, it required an extremely gifted memory to achieve memorisation of such a demanding piece. Possibly, it could be merely a kind of pentatonic improvisation *a piacere*. If then, the one who transcribed this improvisation – if done without using phonograph recording – must also have been capable of great memory and even greater endurance. However, this piece can be regarded as a virtuous concert-piece, full of brilliance and dexterity. But there is no tension nor progression of harmony in the sense of western music. Since the main harmonic ideas in the piece are not far beyond unison, octave and imitation.

In the pieces with three- and four voices, of which there are just three of them in the book, the extra voices do not always repeat the others in unison or in octave. Harmonisations with consonant intervals: thirds, fourths, fifths and sixths are often found on the down-beat notes. There are dissonances with seconds and sevenths as well. However, triads are hardly found here. The following excerpt from the four-voice piece: *Bulan* (a Javanese word which means *the moon*) depicts how polyphony in Siamese music could look like. Only two triads of G major and A minor appear in the whole piece, in bars 15 and 16 respectively (marked in the red frames), and they are obviously not relevant for establishing any central harmony of the piece:



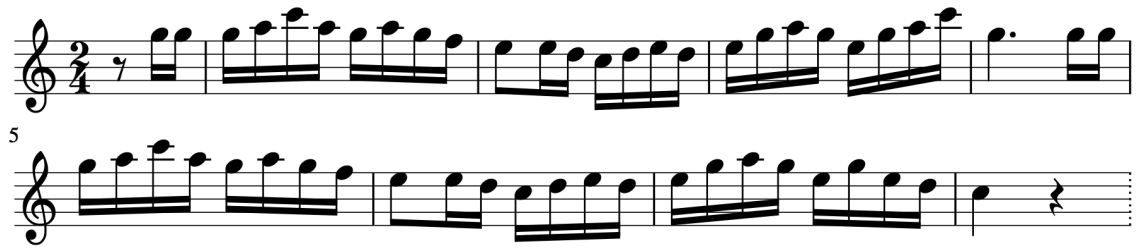
The four-part score of Bulan, Ibid.*, p. 130-131.*

Therefore, it can be seen that the polyphonic characteristics of Siamese music transcribed by Seelig do not totally correspond with the concept of western harmony. Although they seem to have some overlapping harmonic elements, they do not share the same function nor the same aesthetic effect.

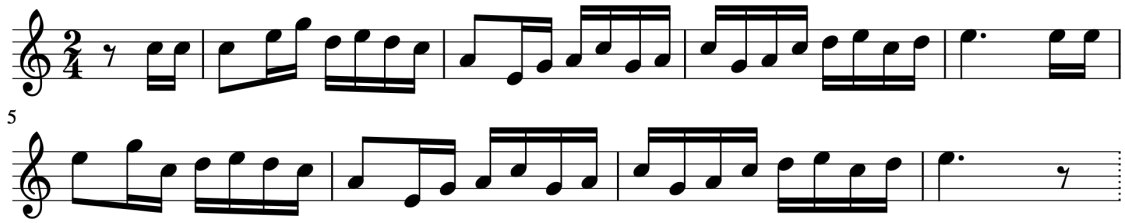
Multinational Titles: The Attempt to Differentiate the Music, at Least With Their Titles

Most of the pieces in Seelig's *Siamesische Musik* are referred to by their regional origins, may it be real or attached to the piece by some kind of tradition or convention. From a total of 150 pieces, 16 are entitled with *Laos*, 15 with *Cambodian*, 8 with *Indian*, 5 with *Burmese* and 3 with *Farang* – or foreign, which explicitly means western people. However, the musical differences between those pieces are not very distinct to an ear not used to the nuances of the style. The following examples are 8-bar excerpts from the Burmese (*Phama*), Laos (*Lao*), and Cambodian (*Kamen*) pieces. Several common characteristics between them can be found easily: in terms of the pentatonic tonality on the note C (i.e. C,D,E,G, and A) as well as the rhythmic structure (in 2/4 time with mostly two semiquavers at the beginning of the phrases).

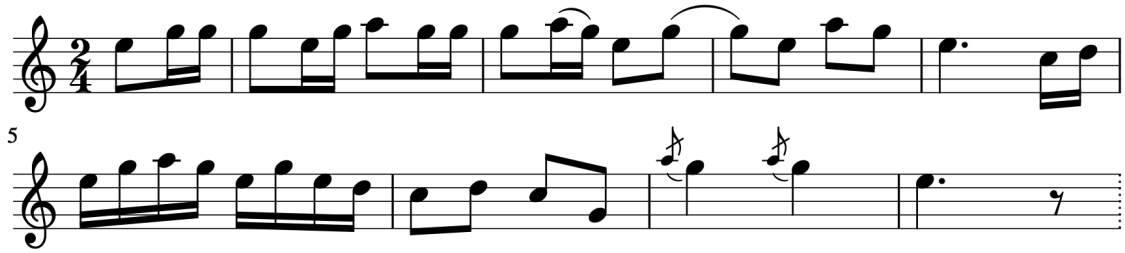
Phama:



Lao:



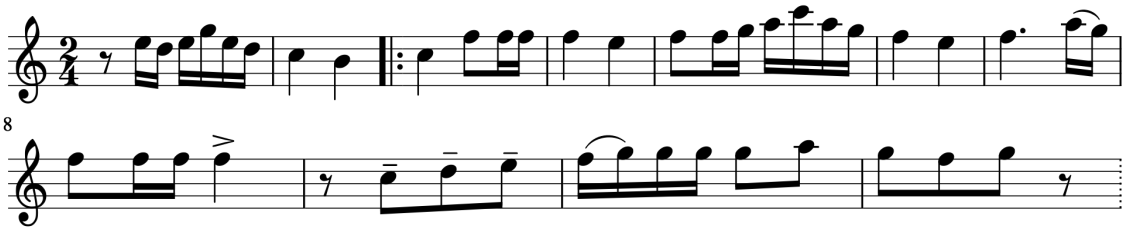
Kamen Pothisad:



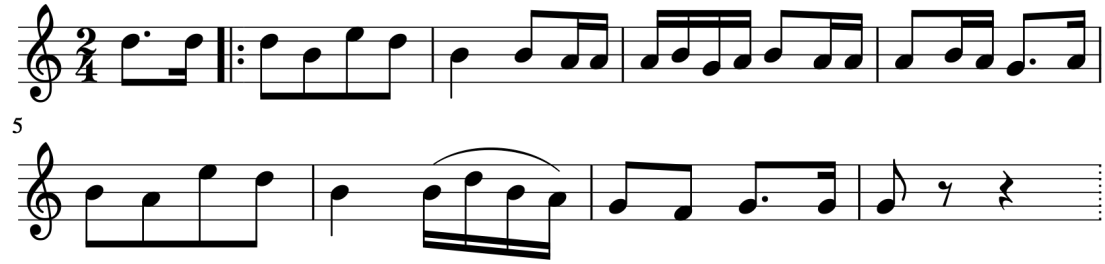
Examples of the melodies entitled Burmese, Laos, and Cambodian.

However, the pieces that are entitled ‘Farang’ – the term which refers to people of Caucasian race – have another remarkable trait. Their melodies obviously involve intervals of second and this would sound as if there were the fourth- and the seventh steps from a western diatonic scale in the melodies. This feature expands their tonality beyond the scope of pentatonic.

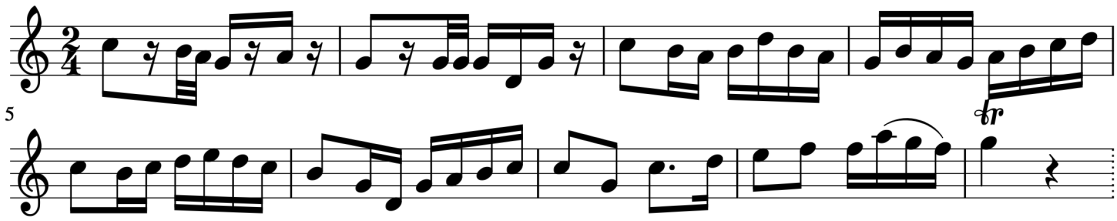
Farang Khuong:



Farang Ok Tahan:



Farang Lam Tao:



Examples of the melodies entitled Farang*, the title which refers to people from western countries.*

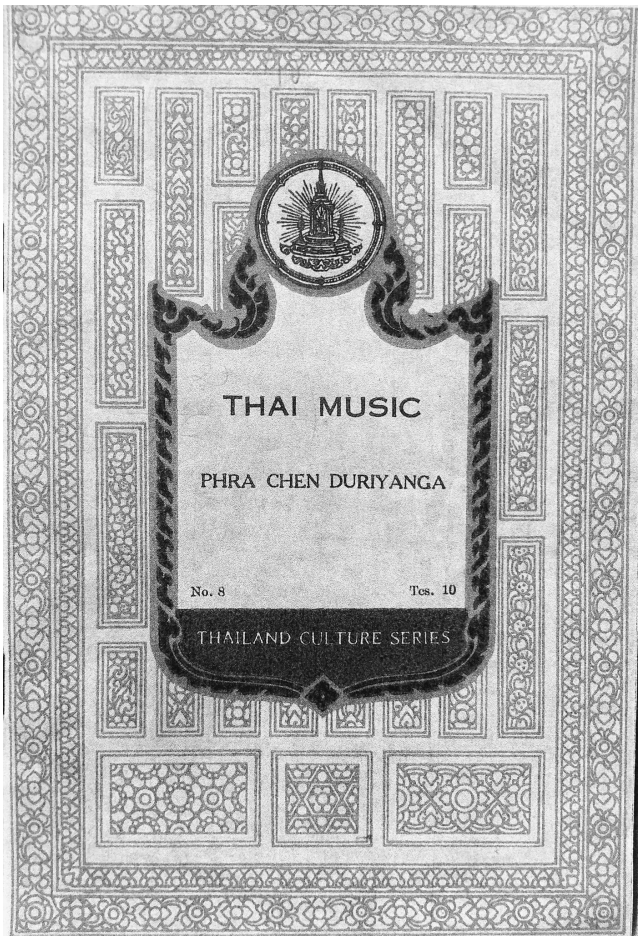
Therefore, it could be assumed that those titles may indicate the origin where the music came from, but the tunes itself were mixed-up, changed, and generalised so that they do not contain their unique features anymore. As a consequence, those titles are rather descriptions or labels that enhance the attractiveness and variety within the repertoires.

Phra Chen Duriyang's Treatise *Thai Music*

The next object to be investigated is the treatise *Thai Music* by Phra Chen Duriyang (1948). The following quotation from this treatise summarises how Thai music was perceived by western-trained musicians at that time:

> Thai musicians are trained to memorize the main melody of a tune by ear, as there is no system of registering their music in a notation.[215] There is no system of harmony in it [Thai music].[216]

Thai Music was a part of the *Thailand Culture Series*, which was a set of ten English booklets commissioned by the Ministry of Fine Arts during the stream of cultural reforms in the 1930s. Its purpose was to provide a clearer understanding and recreate certain images of Thai culture for the international platform (therefore they were only published in English). The subjects of this publication series include literature, architecture, rural festivals, Buddhism, and certainly, music. It was Phra Chen Duriyang, the prominent musician and the composer of the final version of the Thai national anthem (1932), who was commissioned to write a treatise explaining the theory of Thai music.



Front cover of the treatise Thai Music *(1948).*

[215] Phra Chen: *Thai Music*, p. 52-53.

[216] Ibid., p. 44.

Phraya Anumanratchathon (1888-1969), who was the main editor of *Thailand Culture Series*, wrote a very determined statement in the preface that the treatise *Thai Music* aimed to clarify some misunderstandings in the mind of 'foreign music-lovers who come to our shores'.[217] In his opinion, the main issues regarding Thai music are:

- Thai music seems to be generally considered primitive by foreign people.
- Thai traditional music is unique! Its style and its expression should not be compared with the western or even with the music from other races. Therefore, it is mandatory to find an appropriate way to let people understand the essences of Thai music correctly, in order to be able to develop their appreciation for this art.
- It is necessary to find some methods to preserve the traditional music.
- There is a 'regrettable trend in the taste of Thai people that deterred them from the love of their own art'.[218] Thus, at the first stage, the original national music should be written out with proper notation, so that it becomes ready for any further creative development.

Those issues actually reveal a contradiction in Phraya Anumanratchathon's attitude: while he seems to be very proud of Thai traditional music and wants to sustain its authentic beauty, he still needs some influences from western music to rebrand it in the way it could be properly preserved and well-accepted.
Although *Thai Music* is a treatise that was commissioned to fulfil his ambiguous wish, the book does not work totally as an all-round theory book about Thai music, but rather as a rough guideline suggesting how Thai music could be understood from the perspective of western music. However, the attempt to rebrand Thai music seen in this treatise, although written by the most professional musician in the whole country at that time, apparently reveals some questionable applications of the western music theory which will be further discussed in detail. Still, the bold dignity on the national arts seems to be the core message that lies under the entire narrative throughout this work.

Phra Chen, who eventually confessed that he was not an expert on Thai music and he had no teacher to give him the necessary instruction, imposes certain assumptions on Thai music, as the following:

- It is possible to register Thai music in the western notation.
- So far (by 1947) no book about the theory of Thai music and no instruction on playing Thai instruments and singing technique had ever been written.
- Learning Thai music had been done exclusively orally, i.e. a pupil heard the pieces played by his master, then he replayed it from memory.

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[217] Ibid., p. 3.

[218] Ibid., p.3.

To accomplish the goal of having Thai music understood within the musical framework of western tradition, the three following aspects – Thai scale, pentatonic and its modulation, and the possibility of playing Thai music with western instruments – are the important connecting points between both sides.

Thai Scale

Phra Chen believed in the theory of Ellis and Stumpf, therefore he insisted that Thai traditional music relies on a special diatonic scale which consists of seven notes with equal steps. Because of the missing semitones, the scale cannot be judged either as major nor minor.

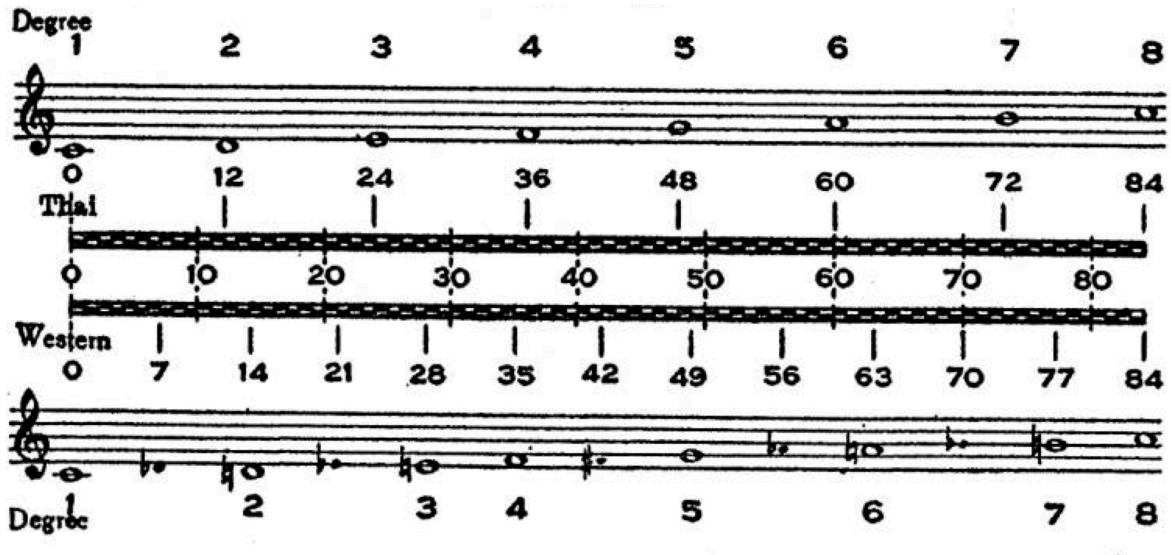

Diagram comparing Thai- and western scale in Phra Chen's Thai Music*, p. 40.*

His further remarks regarding the above diagram are:

- The fourth and the fifth notes from the Thai scale are very similar to the western ones. Therefore, Thai music can be harmonised by sub-dominant and dominant chords without unpleasant effect.
- Thai melodies cannot be distinguished in terms of major and minor because the third and the sixth notes are positioned between ♭ and ♮.
- The Thai seventh note is much lower than the leading note from the normal diatonic scale. There is no possibility to create an effect of a perfect cadence.

From the above remarks, which resemble Stumpf's opinion, Phra Chen develops a clear standpoint: it is impossible to perform Thai traditional instruments together with western instruments, since they will never be in the same harmony.[219]

[219] Ibid., p. 8.

Pentatonic and Modulation

The use of pentatonic scales is not totally unusual to western classical music, it 'has been explored by several European composers, notably Chopin, Debussy, Puccini, Ravel, and Stravinsky, often in pursuit of an exotic flavour'.[220] Although pentatonicism can have various meanings in musical works, it can refer to the scales of the Chinese, Scottish, or aboriginal American, or it can be just an alternative tonal material for the composers to experiment and expand their compositional style.[221] However, in the nineteenth century, pentatonicism has been used constantly as the main tone material in several classical compositions depicting the oriental world. This has resulted in the strong association of pentatonic with the image of the far-east continent since then.
Although a greater number of Asian instruments do facilitate pentatonic passages, it is evident that pentatonic scales are not the only scale system used in Asian music. As mentioned before, Ellis considers Siamese music as *non-pentatonic* but rather *heptatonic*, for the instruments usually provide six notes placed in between a note and its octave. On the other hand, Phra Chen tries to stick the pentatonic-label to Thai music in his treatise, arguing that Thai melodies usually avoid using the fourth and the seventh notes of the scale (or use them just occasionally). Thus, Thai music is considered partly pentatonic, but not 100% pentatonic.
The use of pentatonic elements allows Phra Chen to be able to make Thai music compatible with another crucial term – *modulation*. He explains that the appearance of the fourth note or the seventh note of the scale is actually the signal of when Thai music begins to modulate – or change the key-note. The former fourth note becomes the new key-note (tonic) and consequently there will be a new pentatonic scale based on that new key-note. The same rule also applies with the seventh note. Therefore, Thai music – according to Phra Chen's opinion – actively uses modulation.

The following example – the melody of *Maha Chai* transcribed by Phra Chen – explains his idea of modulation. He assumes that the beginning of the piece has G as a key-note, thus G-A-B-D-E are the pentatonic notes based on G. At the end of bar 6 comes C – the fourth note of G-scale – and at this moment the music modulates from the key-note G to C. So, the piece continues from bar 7 on in the pentatonic series based on C, which are C-D-E-G-A. Then, with the reappearance of B (which is the seventh note of the C-scale) in bar 12, the piece modulates back again to G.

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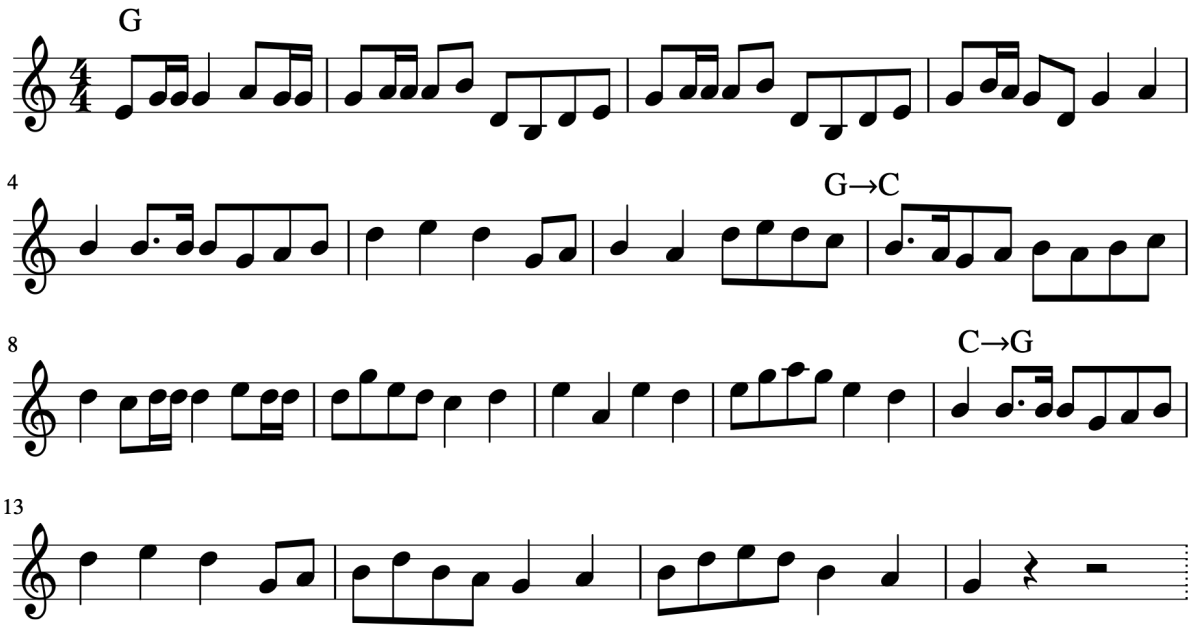
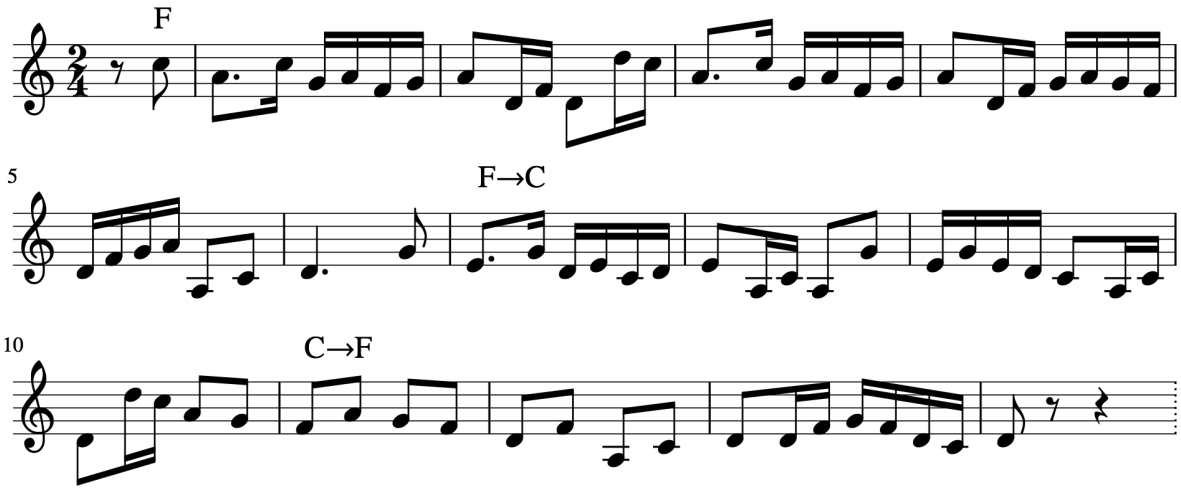
[220] Jeremy Day-O'Connell: *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press 2007, p. 1.

[221] Ibid., p. 1-2.



Excerpt from Phra Chen's Maha Chai *transcription which shows the modulation from the key-note G to C, and then back to G. In* Thai Music*, p. 46.*

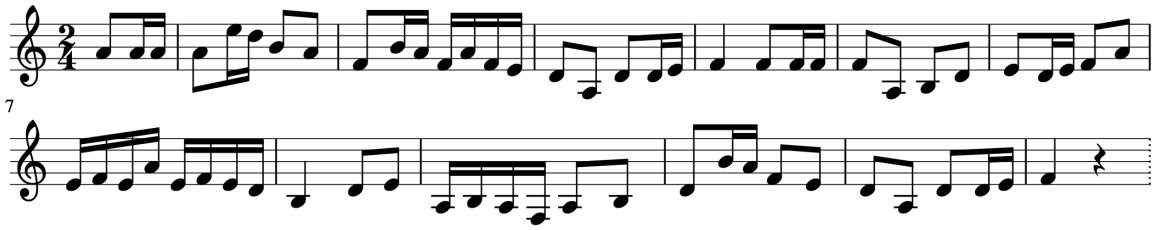
Another example – an excerpt from the song *Lao Phaen* – demonstrates the modulations from pentatonic-F (F-G-A-C-D) to pentatonic-C (C-D-E-G-A) by the turning point at E in bar 7, and then it returns to pentatonic-F at bar 11 due to the F at the beginning of the bar:



Lao Phaen*: the example showing the modulation from pentatonic-F to pentatonic-C, Ibid., p. 46.*

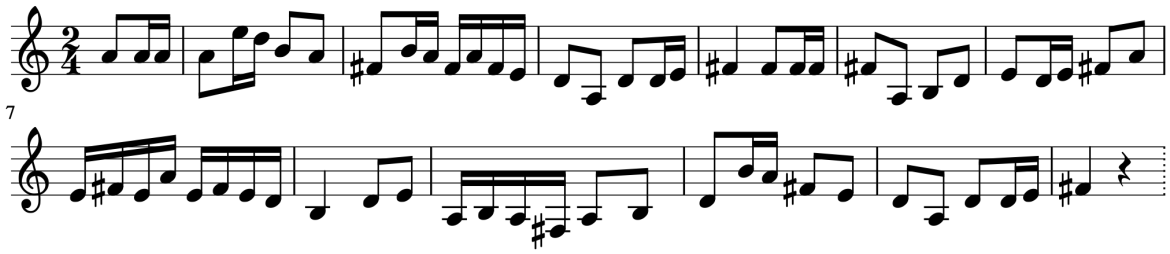
Regarding Playing Thai music With Western Instruments

As Phra Chen had clearly mentioned before, Thai music cannot sound good in a harmonious sense when being performed by mixing Thai and western instruments together. Nonetheless, he suggests that his national music, after being transcribed into western notation, is easily accessible and applicable for western instruments, as in the following example:



The example of a Thai melody when being played by traditional instruments, Ibid., p. 10.

Due to the equal steps in its scale, 'when Thai diatonic scales change their key-notes [tonic] these changes do not affect the arrangement of their scale steps.'[222] This means that Thai traditional instruments are able to play those notes directly without altering anything.
But to adapt it for the western instruments, it is necessary to play the notes using accidentals (in this example: F#) in order to smooth the entire melody properly into a diatonic scale and not let it sound like an ancient church modes. Therefore, the above excerpt should be played by western instruments as following:



The same melody should be adjusted with accidentals when being played by western instruments, Ibid., p. 10.

This means, for example, a note F on the score would result in different pitches depending on the type of instruments. Thai instruments play the F and it sounds *Thai F* which is always fixed. Meanwhile on western instruments the F can become both F♮ or F#, depending on the context of the notes around it. In short: Phra Chen admits that the tone systems of Thai and western music are not identical. The westernisation of Thai music's notation by using Solfège syllables does not unite these two tone systems. Any given note does not always represent the same 'tone' depending on what kind of instrument is playing it. A piece of Thai music written out in western notation sounds authentic when played on traditional instruments. But when played on western instruments, Phra Chen finds it is acceptable to sacrifice the tonal authenticity of Thai music by alternating the notes so that it becomes compatible with the western musical language. Thus, Phra Chen confirms this aspect in his treatise 'western musical instruments can be made to play Thai music satisfactorily'.[223]

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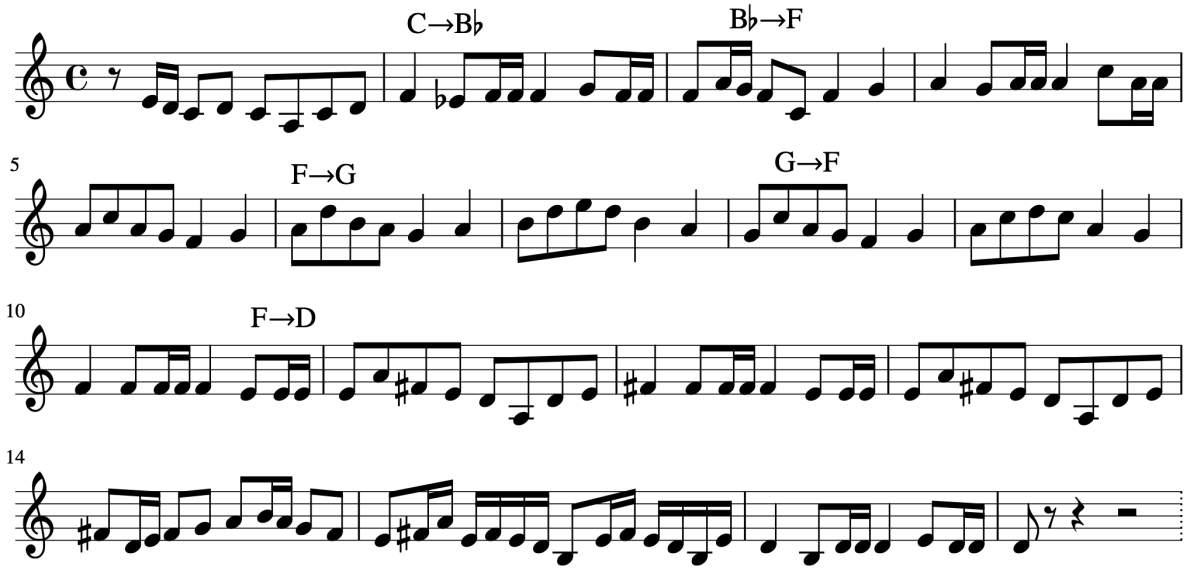
[222] Phar Chen: *Thai Music*, p. 10.

[223] Ibid., p. 45.

Here is another interesting example about modulation in Thai music. Would this Thai melody, together with its accidentals and modulation plan suggested by Phra Chen, sound properly according to the conventional western harmonisation?:



Phra Chen's example showing how Thai music modulates, Ibid., p. 47.

The passage includes many irritating key-note changes: from C to B♭ directly after the first bar, from F to G and back to F again within the length of three bars as well as from F to D in bar 10. Moreover, the abrupt switches between E-E♭ and F-F# rather make the passage sound enigmatic and probably even more irritating to hear than if it would have been played just without any accidental.

However, Phra Chen finds this western modulation actually 'not quite in harmony with the Thai tone conception but it is nevertheless quite tolerable to Thai ears and understandings'.[224] But still, he insists that the western instruments must adjust Thai melodies using accidentals like # and ♭: 'unless this is done, the passage will not sound Thai'.[225] This obvious contradiction reveals his strong intention to rebrand Thai music within the framework of standard western harmony. On the other hand, it could also mean that he considered Thai music uncivilised if it sounded similar to the music using medieval church modes. This strategy is completely different to the compositional developments of other composers who wanted to establish unique tone systems based on their own national music. The folkloric works of Bela Bartok (1881-1945) and Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) are good examples. These two composers have developed unique harmonic systems for their canonical compositions without being attached to the western conventional harmonisation.

[224] Ibid., p. 9.

[225] Ibid., p. 10.

Last but not least, Phra Chen does not agree with the idea of transposing all Thai melodies into C major in order to avoid the additional accidentals in the original key because it 'would only result in the music being disconnected and disfigured'.[226] For him, Thai music remains authentic when it 'adhere[s] to the movement of the written part, as closely as possible'.[227] In this case, his transcribed notes from the traditional music must be fixed, which means non-transposable, and probably also non-variable in the rhythms and the ornaments. Phra Chen somehow achieved the task to rebrand Thai music for westerner's eyes and ears, yet the conflict between keeping the traditional music unique and letting it become widely acknowledged still seems to be unresolved.

But what if Phra Chen's assumptions about the key-note and modulation in Thai music are entirely wrong from the beginning? What if the perspective could be changed to the other direction? Would it be possible that Thai music is actually heard and perceived, from both players and listeners, totally without the idea of a predominant key-note? If then, the essential beauty of Thai music simply emerges from the flow through the set notes, in which they are not urged to identify their certain boss, but each of them is there to bond a chain of musical elements together. Therefore, the concept of a modulation for them would not make sense, for there is no concept of having a key-note. These questions evoke thoughts passing resemblance to something in Debussy's mind, as he once wrote about Gamelan music to his friend:

> Do you not remember the Javanese music, able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades, and which make our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts? [228]

Thai Music Perceived in Western Notation: Phra Chen Duriyang's *Suite Sollenelle*

Suite Sollenelle, or in Thai '*Tham Kwan'*, is a 'musical suite to be performed during a ceremony for invoking spiritual bliss', as written on the cover page. This suite is considered as the first transcription of Thai music into western notation, which was pursued during 1930-1936.[229] Phra Chen Duriyang took part as one of the project's main leaders, who was in charge of controlling the correctness of western notation in the transcription.[230]

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[226] Ibid., p. 11.

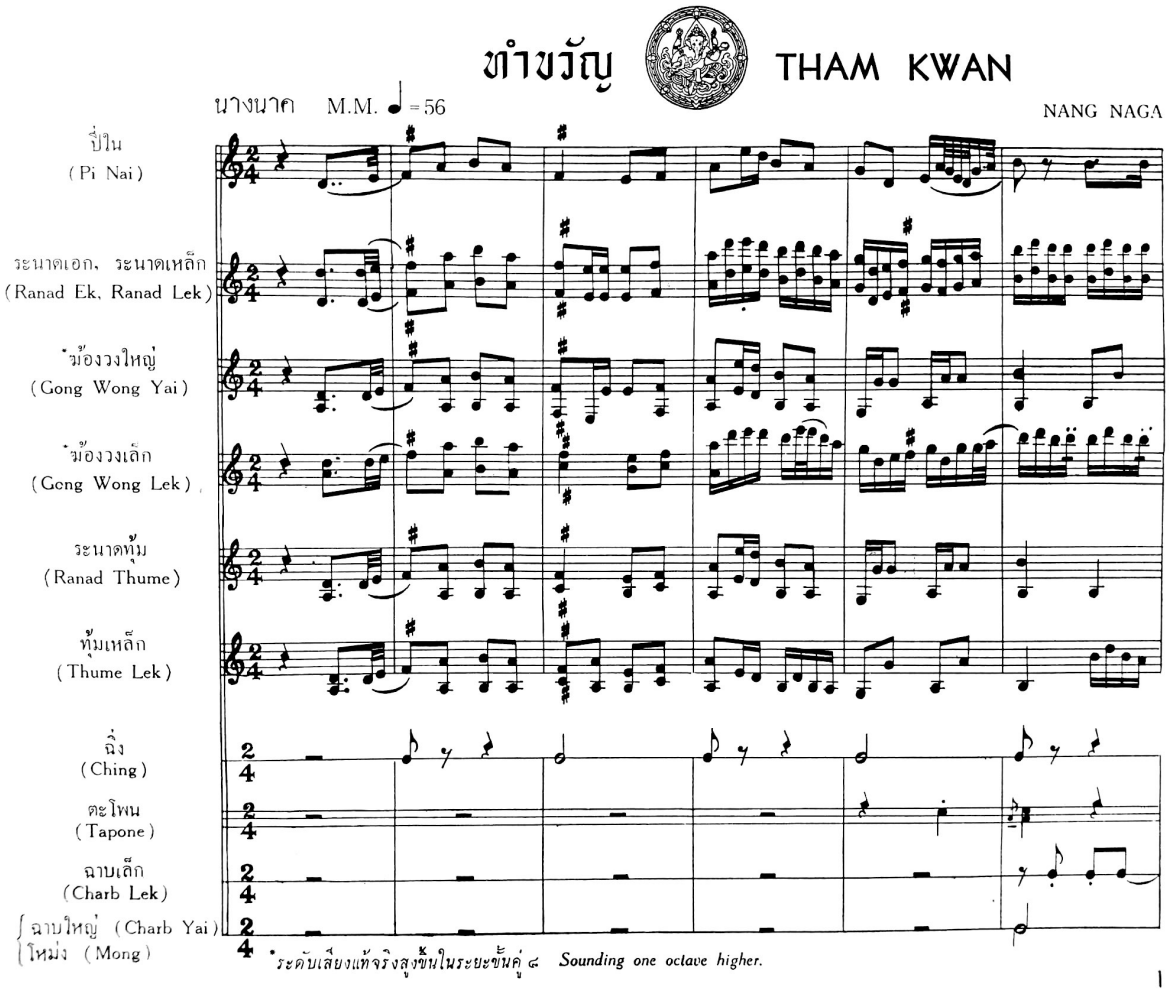
[227] Ibid., p. 11.

[228] Cooke, Mervyn: *Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten*, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer 2001, p. 4.

[229] Phra Chen Duriyanga: เพลงชุดทำขวัญ *[Suite Sollenelle]*: Ministry of Fine Arts 1954, Reprint Nakorn Prathom: College of Music, Mahidol University 1994.

[230] Phra Chen later summarised the theoretical aspects from this project and published his treatise music *Thai Music* in 1947.

The wish to have *Suite Sollenelle* transcribed into western score actually came from the nobleman Phraya Damrong Rachanubhap (1862-1943), who was the president of the *Royal Society of Siam*. Because traditional music was only orally taught and many pieces were already lost or forgotten, his main purpose was to conserve the national pieces by putting them into concrete and standard notations. The project, involving skilful traditional ensembles as well as western-trained musicians, ran regularly two times a week starting on 19th February 1930. Unfortunately, it had to be terminated in 1932 due to the revolution. However, two traditional suites – namely *Evening Overture* and *Suite Sollennelle* – were completely transcribed into a form of orchestra scores for Thai traditional instruments. Although the project was abandoned, it significantly established certain concrete assumptions and general standards to integrate Thai music into the framework of western aesthetic.

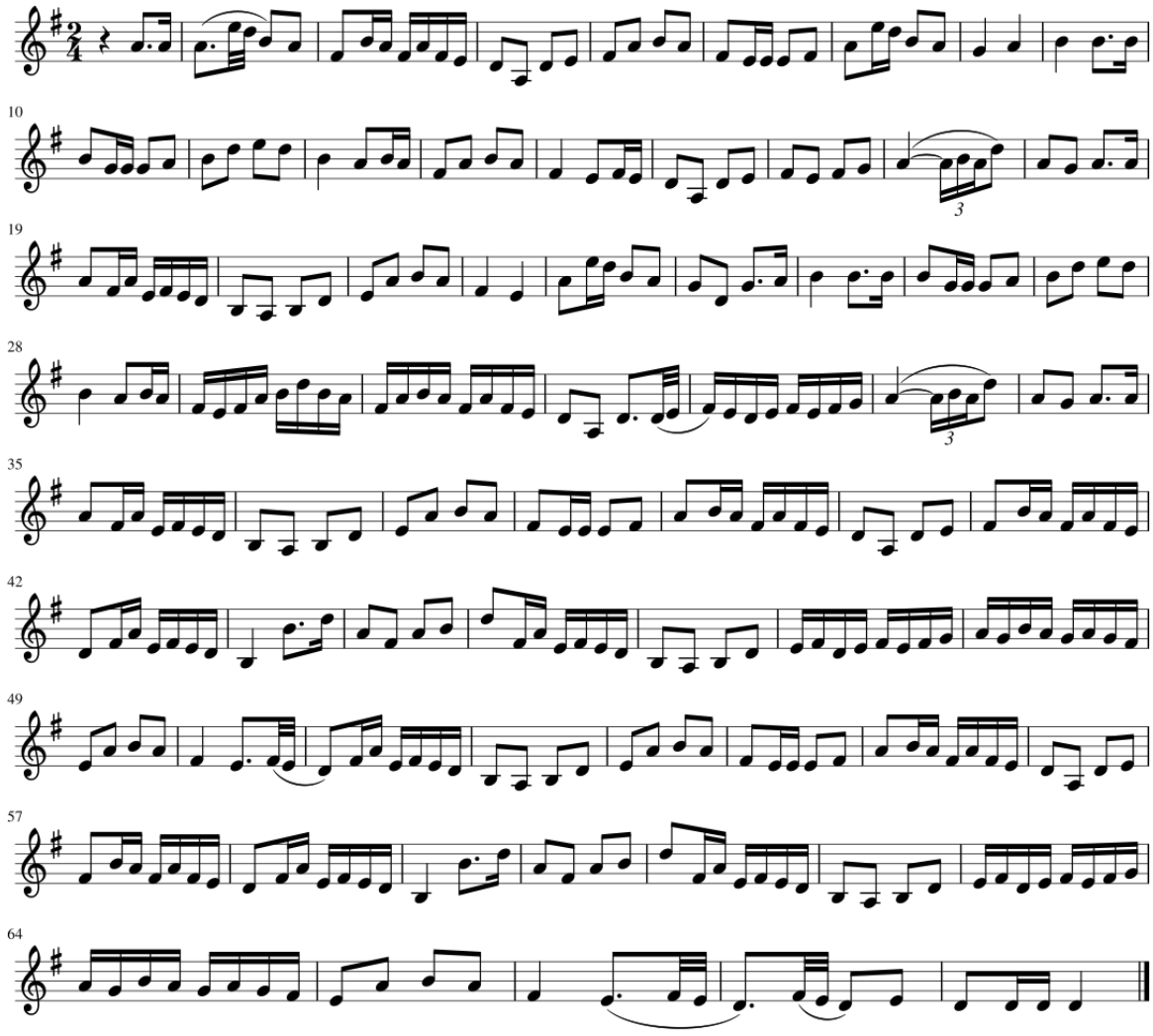


The first page of Suite Sollennelle *which shows the beginning of the first piece of the suite: 'Nang Naga' (Naga lady). This piece is an overture, welcoming the Naga lady who, according to the myth, visits occasionally the human realm and delivers them a new-born hero.*

The second piece of the suite: *Maharoek* is the focus of this part. The analysis of this movement will reveal relevant overlap between Paul Seelig's and Phra Chen's theories on Thai music.

***Maharoek*: The Melodic Structure**

Phra Chen transcribed *Maharoek* – which literally means the great occasion – by assigning the main melody entirely to the 'Pi Nai', an oboe-like instrument, as shown below:

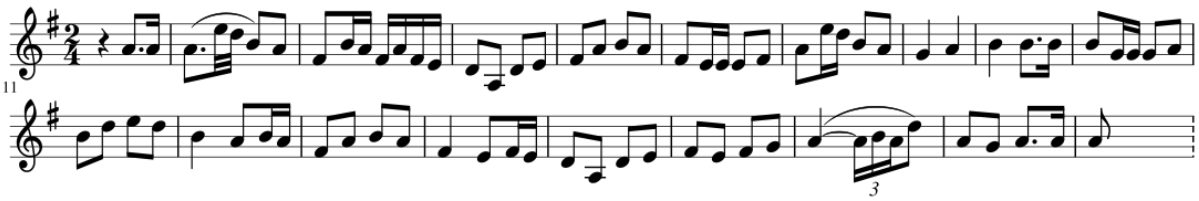


The melody of Maharoek *in Phra Chen's transcription.*

Pi Nai, a leading instrument in Thai traditional ensemble. It has double-reed, producing oboe-like, melancholic tone.[231]

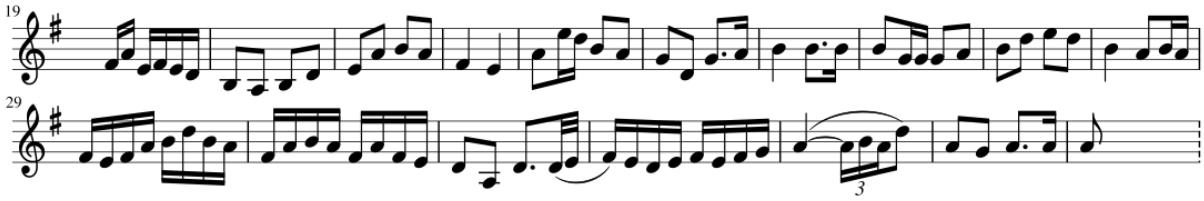
231 <https://www.musicologie.org/sites/c/chalumeaux.html> [30th Oct. 2020].

The reappearance of two types of motives reveals the structure of this melody. The first section, bar 1-19, begins and ends with dotted quaver and semiquaver rhythms:



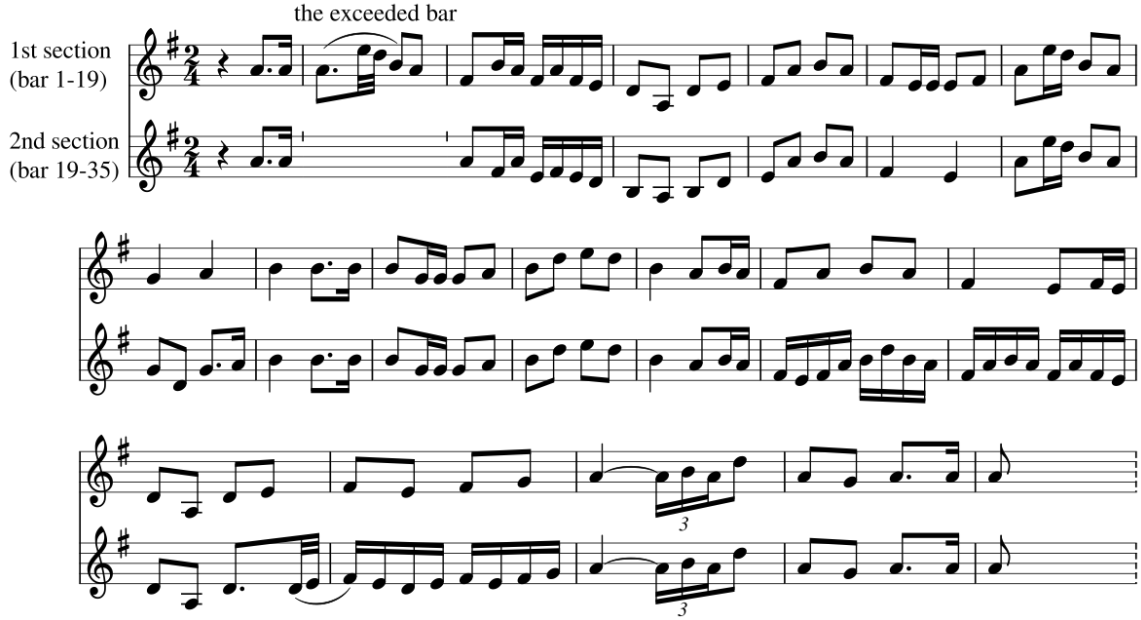
Maharoek*, the first section (bar 1-19).*

The second section begins from the semiquavers pick-up into bar 20. The dotted rhythm on A, which is exactly the same motive as the beginning and the end of the prior section, marks a clear ending of this section in bar 34-35:



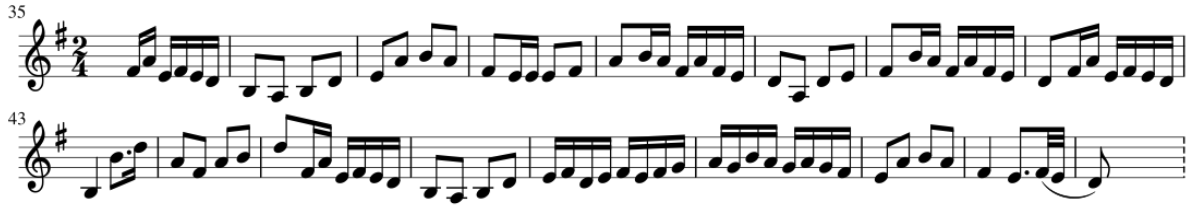
Maharoek*, the second section (bar 19-35).*

The first two sections mentioned above can be interpreted formally as ‘theme and variation’, of which the first part acts as the main theme. The second part is slightly variated, mainly by using passing notes in some passages. This compositional concept is also found in many pieces in Seelig’s *Siamesische Musik*. However, both sections are not structurally identical. There is obviously one bar more in the ‘theme’. This excess bar appears at the beginning, i.e. bar 2, and can be seen as a prolongation of the opening motive. The score below displays the relationship between the theme and its variation:



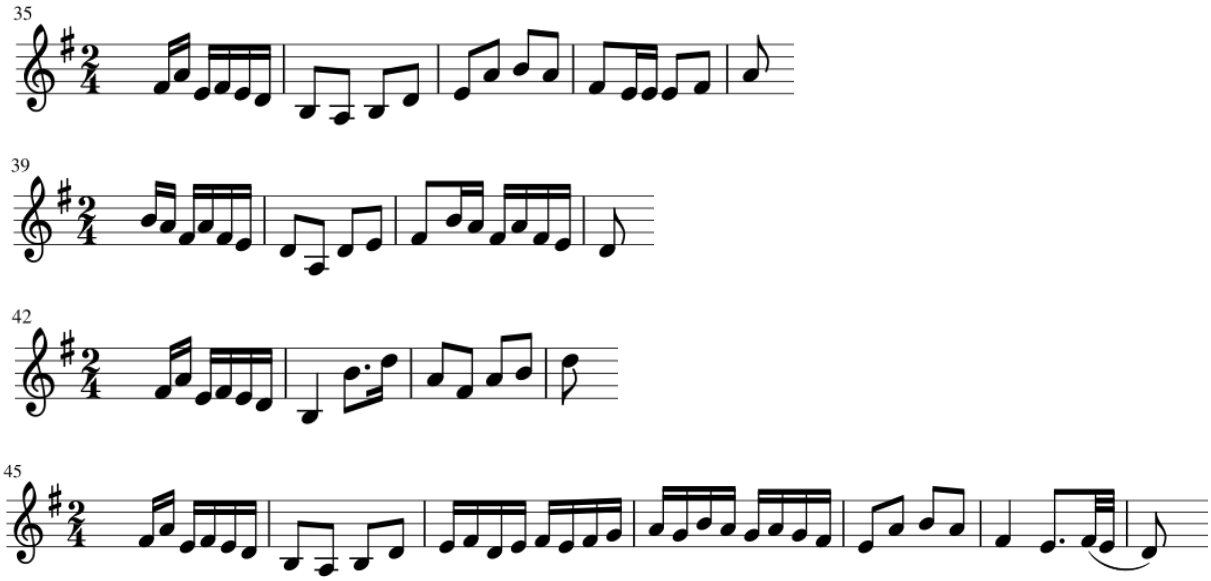
The comparison between the first and the second sections of Maharoek*.*

The third section ranges from bar 35 to the first note of bar 51:



Maharoek*, the third section (bar 35-51).*

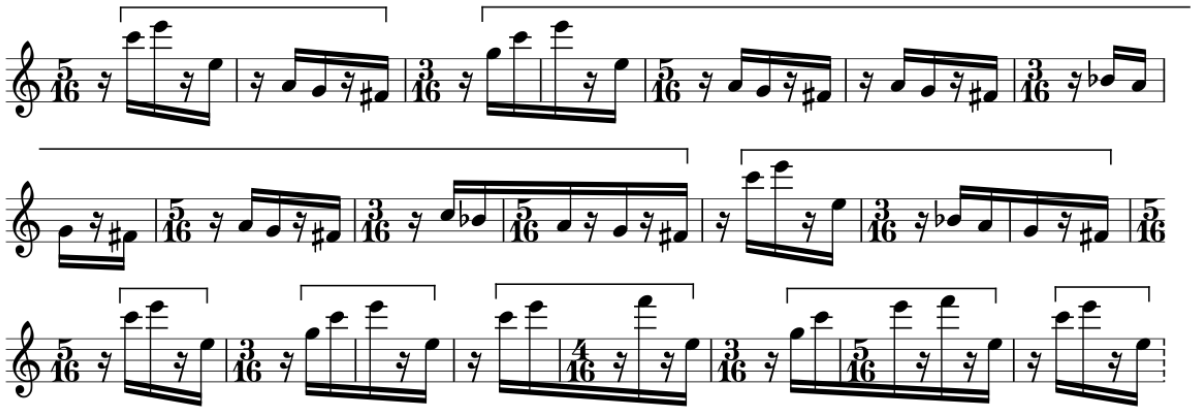
The unique characteristic of this section is steady repetition of the semiquaver motives, which mark the beginning of the musical phrase. A set of quasi-similar melodies can be recognised which begin with the same rhythmical motive, but each of them has different lengths and different endings:



Four themes in the third section of Maharoek*. Each of them begins with a similar rhythmic motive in the pick-up beat, then develops in a totally different direction.*

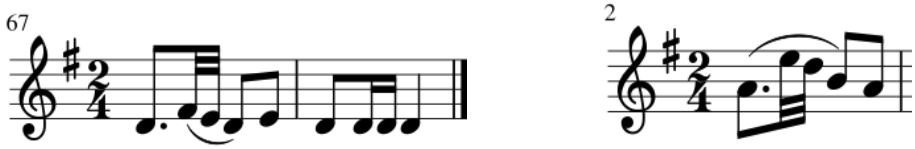
This kind of effect is not commonly found in the western classical music from the Baroque period, where the lengths of the phrases are well-balanced. A similar example can be heard in *Danse sacrale*, the finale of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* (1913), which once was claimed as 'a laborious and puerile barbarity'.[232] The jumping C-E motive (or sometimes G-C-E) marks the beginning of the phrase. The same motive is heard repeated over and over again till the end of the piece. Each time this motive reappears it is followed by asymmetric lengths and different harmonic tensions, as shown below:

[232] Thomas Forrest Kelly: *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres,* New Haven: Yale University Press 2000, p. 307.



The melodic outline excerpted from Dance sacrale*, the last part of* Le sacre du printempts*.*

Back to *Maharoek*, the whole section is repeated, from bar 51 onwards, identically. There is an extra phrase added at the end of the piece (bar 67-68), emphasising the note D which can be heard as the 'key-note' of this section. Interestingly, this 'additional ending' resembles the same rhythmic figure – a dotted quaver and two demisemiquavers, followed by two quavers – in the excess bar at the beginning of the piece (bar 2):

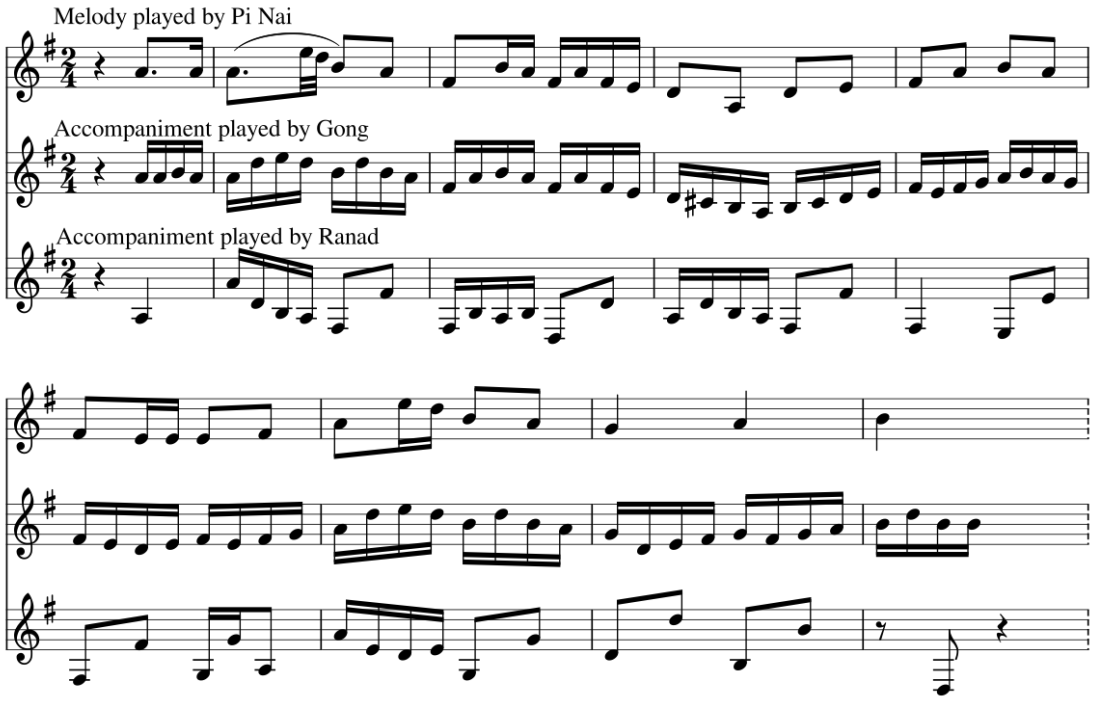


The ending phrase (left) of Maharoek *emphasising on the note D. Its rhythm of a dotted quaver following by two demisemiquavers is heard also in the beginning phrase of the piece (right).*

In short, the melodic structure of *Maharoek* is set in an understandable musical form. The first two sections acting as melodious theme followed by its clearly recognisable variation. The last section – quasi a *coda* – is based on a lively rhythmic motive which frequently reappears, each time with different melodic development, and it gives the piece an exciting ending. Besides, the motive with a dotted quaver and two demisemiquavers which only appears at the very beginning (bar 2) and the end (bar 67) is also a convincing piece of evidence that the entire piece is written from a well-thought out compositional plan.

***Maharoek*: The Accompaniment and Harmonic Structure**

Apart from the main melody played by Pi Nai, there are two types of accompaniment played by Ranad (xylophone) and Gong: a kind of *perpetuum mobile*, consisting of continually running semiquavers, and the more rhythmical passages containing plenty of crotchets and quavers.



The melody, played by Pi Nai, and the other two accompaniments, played by Gong and Ranad, at the beginning of Maharoek*.*

These accompaniments from Gong and Ranad can be considered as variated versions of the melody. They frequently double the same notes from the main melody from Pi Nai. This characteristic is also constantly found in Paul Seelig's *Siamesische Musik* transcriptions. Indeed, the strategy to flourish a given tune by adding passing notes between the main notes is an ancient ornamentation technique in western music too. Musicologists termed this technique during the Baroque period as 'diminution' – i.e. to 'diminish' the length of notes – and it is an important tool to display the virtuosity of the musicians, especially in the pieces with soloistic parts.[233]

Generally speaking, virtuosity is more easily perceived when the diminution appears after the original melody is already heard, as it normally does in Baroque music. Yet, for the case of *Maharoek*, the abundantly ornamented melodies are played simultaneously with the main melody, creating a heterophonic texture. Thus, the virtuosic effect is less obvious in terms of soloistic music. One rather hears from the entire ensemble a monotonous musical tune: melodic and virtuosistic at the same time.

However, despite frequent unisons in the transcription of *Maharoek*, there are also numerous places where different notes are played together at the same time, giving an effect of a 'chord'. Such evidence observed from a western point of view, reveals a clue to understand the vertical harmonic structure of the piece. The following score summarises the 'chords' which can be found on almost every down-beat of the entire piece:

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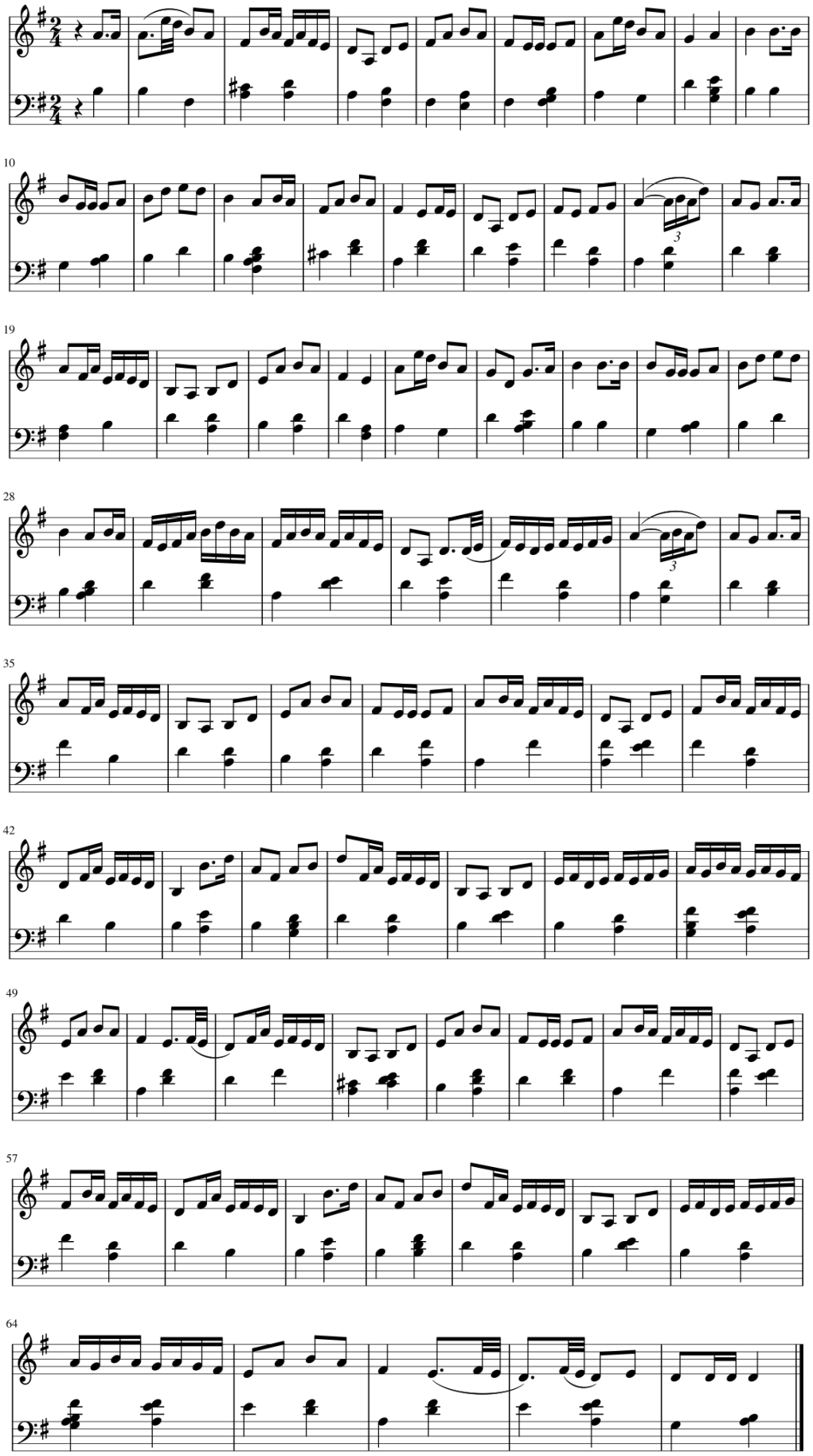
[233] Karl Kaiser: *Basiswissen Barockmusik Band 1: Zur Instrumentalmusik des Hoch- und Spätbarock,* Regensburg: ConBrio Verlagsgesellschaft 2010, p.114.

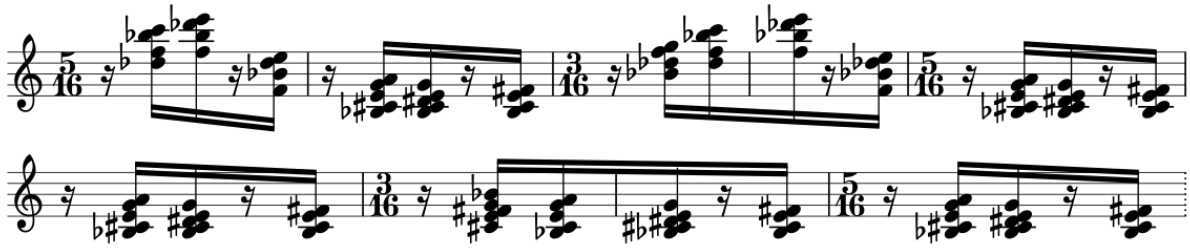


Phra Chen's transcription of Maharoek*, rewritten into a form of piano-reduction score by Siwat Chuencharoen.*

To make a conventional harmonic analysis for the above score is a challenging task, but the following aspects reveal some interesting characteristics of the harmony in *Maharoek*:

- Back to the critical question: does the piece have a tonic note, or a tonic key? When only the melody is considered, the note A has an important role – by starting and ending the whole phrase – in the first section (from the beginning to the first note of bar 19). Then, in the second section (from bar 19 onwards) the central note moves to D and the piece firmly ends upon this note. The repeating D in the last bar underpins the importance of this note. However, there is not a single C# in the entire melody. This is the only note from the diatonic scale which is avoided, thus the 'leading tone' is missing.
- Looking at the accompaniment, some conventional triads such as D major, G major, B minor, and E minor can be found (in bar 3, 4, 29, and 44). But these chords do not act in the same function as in western music: The D major chords in *Maharoek* are not always placed under the central note (D) in the melody, and the other relevant triads do neither indicate the harmonic progression nor any modulation.
- The principle of harmonic tension (dissonance) and resolution (consonance) cannot be traced here. There are plenty of dissonant chords: some of them are conventional seventh-chords, for example in bar 12, 53, and 60, and some of them are sets of strong dissonance, such as D-E-F# played together in bar 30 or B-C#-D-E in bar 52. These dissonances do not act as a leading faction to the next resolving chords. Besides, there are only three chords containing C# in the piece (in bar 3, 13, and 52) and again, all of the C# do not lead to the central note D in the melody line.

The analysis shows that the harmonic aesthetic of *Maharoek*, transcribed from the traditional ensemble by Phra Chen, is far from conventional western music. Phra Chen's attempt to adjust the tonality, i.e. alternating F and C to F# and C# respectively, is not the means to bring the piece into the harmonic framework of D major. The 'chords' used in *Maharoek* are rather arbitrary mixtures of notes, decorating the melody with chucks of tones, without having correlation with the consonant- and dissonant combinations from western harmony.
Besides the similarity of the melodic outline, the wild effect of having 'chunks of tones' underneath the melody can be eventually heard in Stravinsky's *Danse sacrale* as well:



The harmonic outline of the melody of Stravinsky's Danse sacrale from Le sacre du printempts*.*

Stravinsky harmonised this theme alternately with B♭ minor- and C# diminished seventh chords. Although this shows that the composer has a systematic harmonic plan hidden behind his music, the passage is rather perceived as 'clusters' or 'chunks of notes' because of its continuous dissonant harmony on every note of the melody which does not resolve to any consonant destination. Besides, the combination of the notes B♭ and C#, respectively D♭, can be heard constantly in the passage. This creates an effect of a 'pedal point' and thus the harmonic development here becomes static.

The same auditive effect is also heard in many places in Phra Chen's *Maharoek* transcription. For example, in the first phrase in bar 1-7 the note A is played constantly in the melody and in the accompaniment. Thus, the harmonic framework of this passage can be heard as A – acting as the pedal point – and the chucks of notes around it. Then, in bar 9-12 the pedal point shifts to B. Unlike *Danse sacrale*, the pedal point in *Maharoek* – which is not always on the same note – is not evident throughout the piece. This is the significant difference which distinguishes these two 'chunks of notes' passages, in *Danse sacrale* and *Maharoek*, in terms of harmonic structure.

4.4 Conclusion: How the Hybrid Looks Today, in the Case of *Maharoek*?

The adaptation of *Maharoek* is an excellent example to conclude this chapter. *Maharoek*, an originally Siamese traditional instrumental piece dated from the reign of King Rama VI, went through several transformative interventions towards a style compatible to western music. Certain national identities in this music were lost or heavily disguised, but this sacrifice was executed to ensure that *Maharoek* would become acknowledged as 'better Thai' music. As a result – looking through Tejapira's new Thai-ness perspective – *Maharoek* has become a superficial 'cover' which is ready to be further adapted within the western musical language.

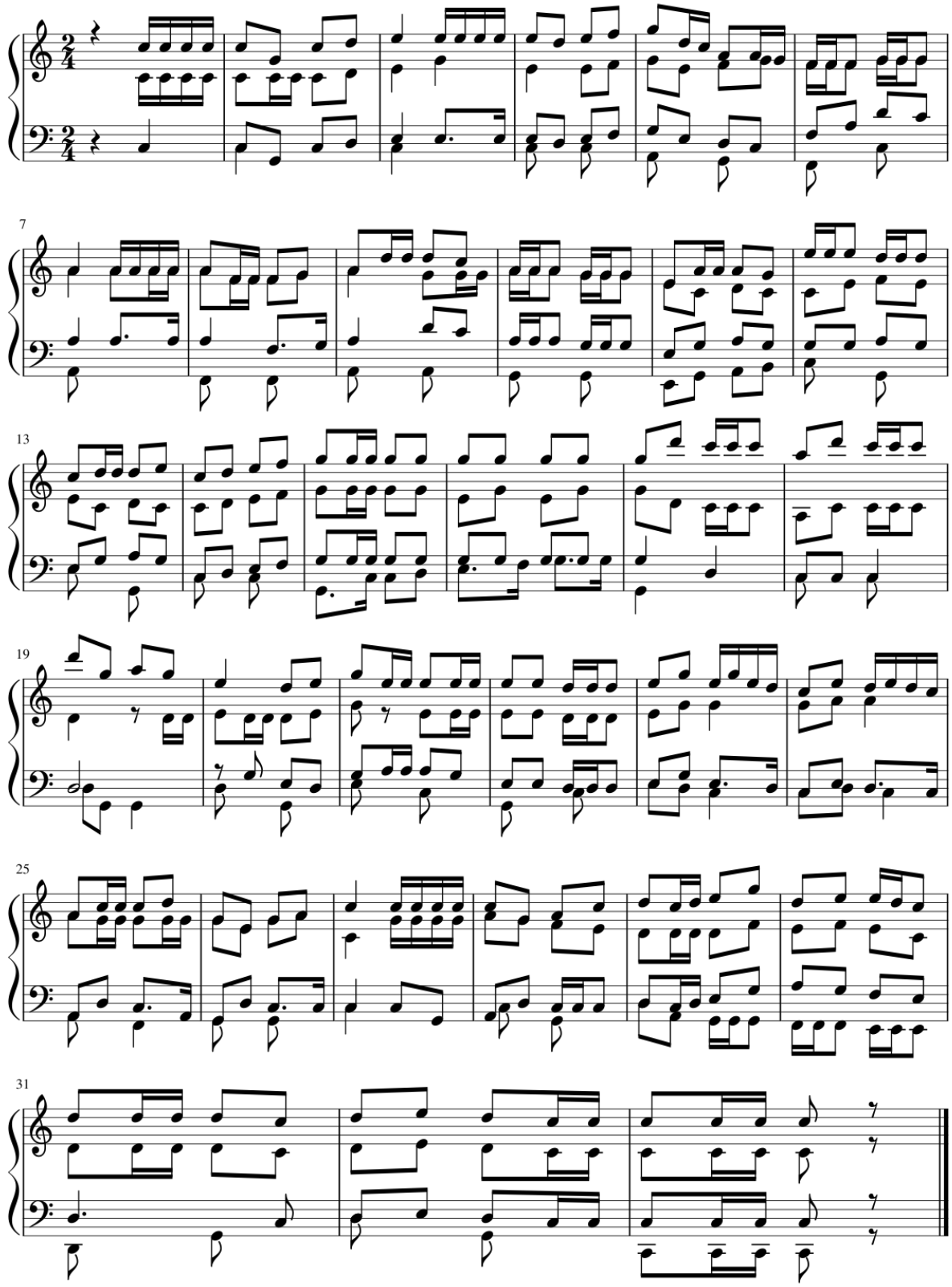
The transcription from Phra Chen's hands (1932) shows that *Maharoek* – although he adjusted every note to be compatible with the western diatonic scale (in this case D major) – has its own vertical harmonic structure which does not correspond to the conventional tonal harmony in western music. This strategy contradicts what Phra Chen – who claimed that he has conceptualised Thai music theory from what he had learned from this transcription project[234] – wrote in his treatise *Thai Music*: 'Thai musical composition, in the sense of western musical technique, is modulative'.[235]

The traditional version of *Maharoek* was rearranged into 'western style' by the musically well-trained Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu (1881-1944, the 33rd child of King Rama V) for the use in a military brass band. The piano-reduction score of this arrangement is shown below:[236]

[234] Phra Chen: *Thai music*, p. 7.

[235] Ibid., p. 43.

[236] The date of this arrangement is unknown, but Prince Paribatra was active – besides his leading positions in the military and the parliament – as a composer and musical patronage during the same period as Phra Chen's occupation as a court musician.

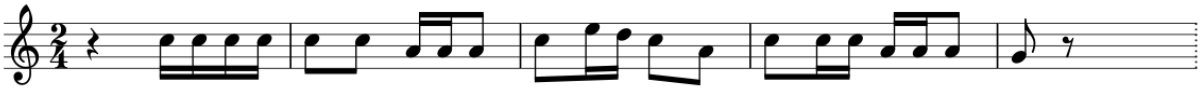


The western-style Maharoek, *arranged for brass-band by Paribatra Sukhumbandhu. This piano-reduction is made by Siwat Chuencharoen.*

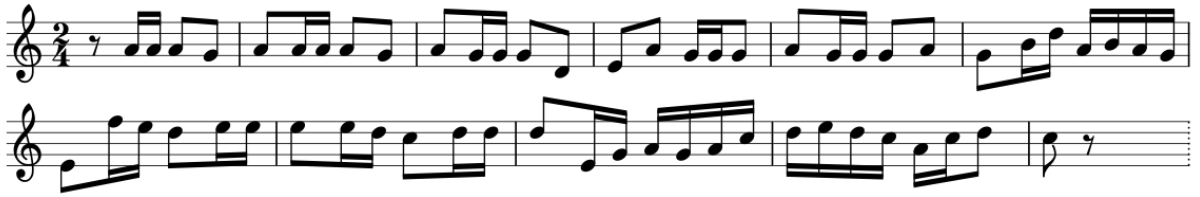
Prince Paribatra significantly reshaped several musical characteristics of *Maharoek*. The melody in the upper line was shortened to become almost half as long, leaving out all the virtuosic running passages. There are four repeated semiquavers marking a pickup beat at the beginning of several phrases (bar 1, 3, 7 and 27). The gallop

rhythm – a quaver followed by two semiquavers, or vice versa – also remarkably dominates the entire piece. This rhythmic feature serves *Maharoek* a new straightforward 'marching' mood: the graceful and playful melodic shape which is seen in Phra Chen's transcription is completely lost.

Noticeably, this melodic outline by Prince Paribatra shares certain similarities with the collection of *Siamesische Musik* by Paul Seelig.[237] The prince transposed *Maharoek* to C major, as almost every piece in Seelig's collection. Phar Chen, on the contrary, assumably sticked to the original notes played by the traditional instruments, for he did not prefer transposing Thai music into C major.[238] Thus he provided his *Maharoek* transcription in a variant of D major, i.e. a scale featuring F# and C# instead of F and C respectively.
A great number of repeated notes on gallop rhythm as well as four repeated semiquavers are found in Seelig's transcriptions. These are two examples:



Excerpt from Puang Noi*, no. 100 in Seelig's collection of* Siamesische Musik*. The theme begins with four repeated C. The prince begins his* Maharoek *with exactly the same figure.*



Excerpt from Plaeh*, no.114 in Seelig's collection of Siamese music. There are continuous gallop rhythms followed by running pentatonic figures. The similar melodic structure can also be heard in* Maharoek*.*

However, the harmonic framework of this westernised *Maharoek* steps nearer towards western functional harmony. Prince Paribatra firmly establishes the tonic of the piece with the note C, which appears at the beginning. Exactly in the middle of the piece – bars 15-17 – the main note shifts to G, and then it returns back to C in the end. Although every part is played in unison for most of the time, there are chords which sound nearly as C major and G major in several places, and they carry out the functions of tonic and dominant respectively (for example, bars 12-13, 23 and 32-33).

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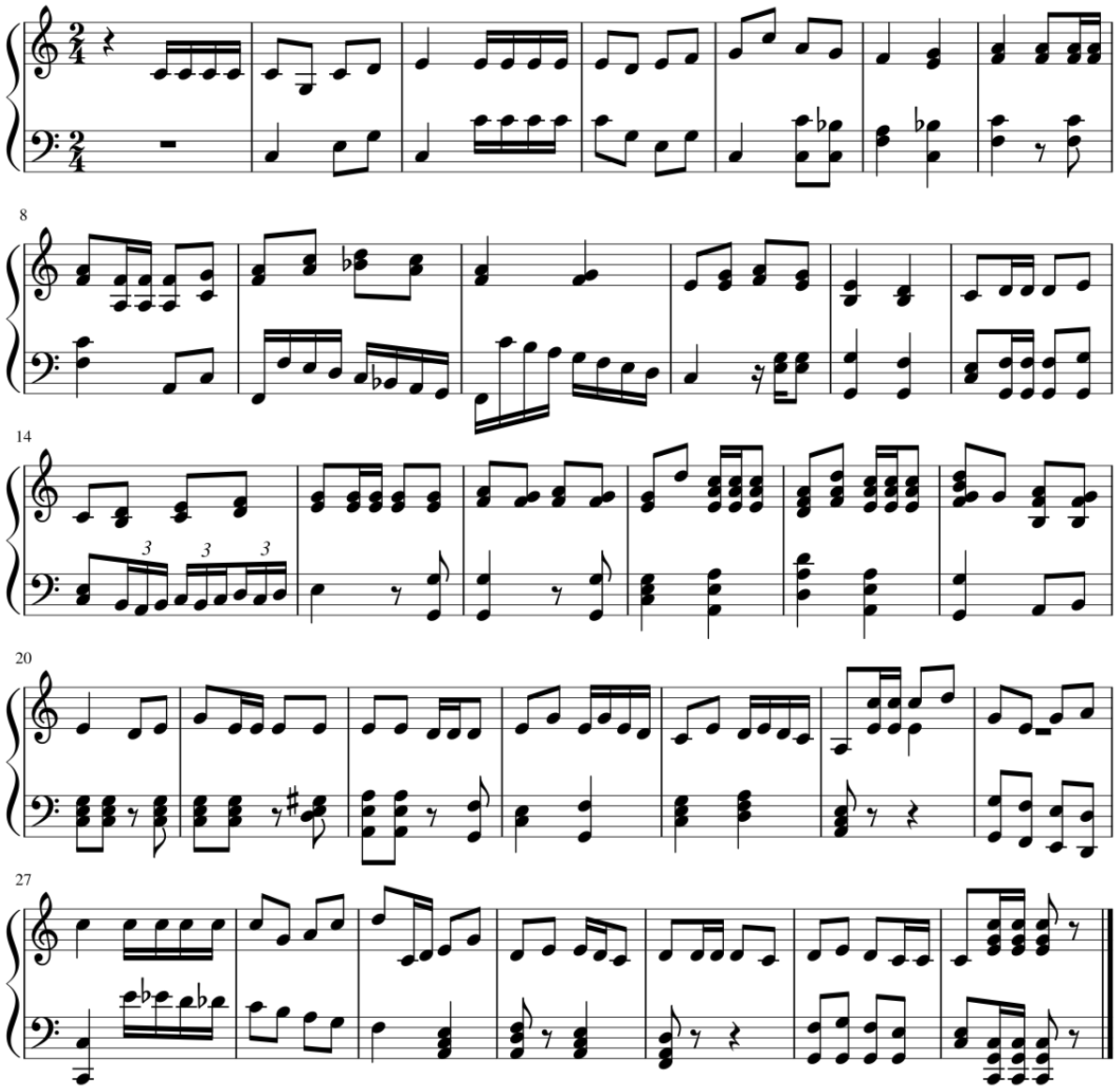
[237] Prince Paribatra and Paul Seeling were friends. The prince fled after the 1932 revolution to Bandung, Indonesia, the city where Seelig lived.

[238] Phra Chen: *Thai Music*, p. 11.

There is another interesting attempt to rebrand *Maharoek*. Based on the 'paraphrased' melody by Prince Paribatra, Nart Thavornbutr – a court musician who worked with Phra Chen – made an arrangement of *Maharoek* for piano solo:



Maharoek*, arranged for piano solo by Nart Thavornbutr.*[239]

In this version the western tonality is clearly established – C major. Thavornbutr used the conventional tonic-, dominant-, subdominant-, as well as submediant chords to harmonise the piece. Furthermore, his intention to make *Maharoek* sound 'western' is stressed by the avoidance of unisons, and the use of intervals constructed according to the aesthetic of western music which accompany the melody. For example, the thirds-, sixths- and fifths parallels which give an effect of horn-call in bars 8-9, or the repeated F in bar 16, which enhances a full dominant seventh chord (G7) in order to complete a C major cadence.

[239] Thavornbutr: *Historical Pieces for Official Occasions and Marches for Piano Solo*, p. 21.

Another provoking harmonic aspect in this arrangement is the pentatonic passages. On closer inspection it is noticeable that Thavornbutr tried to ‘westernise’ the harmony at the pentatonic passages. The upper melody in bars 9-11, for example, is a pentatonic set of C-D-E-G-A, meanwhile the left hand plays F major and C major scales underneath. This disguises the characteristic of pentatonic by covering up the uneven intervals between those five notes with the whole structure of diatonic scale. The same effect is also found in bars 19-20, 26-27, and 28-29, where the notes B and F in the left hand significantly weaken the flair of the pentatonic melody above them. Despite some unskilful chord progressions in his *Maharoek* arrangement, i.e. parallel fifths in the left hand in bars 17-18 and 24-25, Thavornbutr shows his attempt to realise Phra Chen’s assumption: that Thai music does have a key-note (tonic) and thus can modulate. Last but not least, there is a short chromatic passage in the left hand of bar 27. This implies the courage to expand the compatibility of Thai music: Ellis’s and Stumpf’s assumption about the ‘equal step scale’ in Thai traditional music is challenged by confronting it with the chromatic steps. The result here is not just a chuck of sounds as it is found in Phra Chen’s transcription, but Thavornbutr deliberately created dissonances which corresponds to western music.

Therefore, the variated versions of *Maharoek* discussed above are evidence revealing how the traditional music was continuously rebranded – with the aim to become ‘better’ Thai – by trying to be compatible with the musical language of the western world. To conclude: the attempts to conceptualise what ‘authentic' Thai music is, dating back to the French missionaries in the seventeenth century till Phra Chen’s treatise, were consistently done by pressing it into the framework of western music. The notation, the tone system and the harmonic aesthetic of western music play a crucial role in determining the identity of this new and civilised Thai music.

Epilogue

This dissertation has shown – by looking at the historical background as well as the analysis of other relevant work – how Thai traditional music has been modified following the Siamese revolution. This modification, or 'rebranding', reveals a particular dimension which is hidden in the fluctuating national identity, that is: the urge to be labelled as a civilised, internationally accepted country, but at the same time also to be proud of the uniqueness of one's own cultural legacy. Therefore, the great dependence on western music can be traced in this process, because western music gives Thai music a suitable etiquette as well as a proper notation to be understood elsewhere. The rebranding effort can be considered as a part of the cultural reformation which was pursued by the quasi-fascist government after the revolution. Since the search for a new national identity was conceptualised under the abrupt political changes and pressure from the colonised neighbours, the government did not have a lot of time to profoundly reform the culture from its roots. Instead, they implemented a top-down approach, demanding the traditional culture to be westernised and standardised. As a result, the 'rebranded' Thai music became something similar to a hermit crab moving out of its original shell and trying to fit itself in a new, exotic one.

The metaphor of a moving hermit crab implies incompatibility as well. There are several contradictions, disharmonies and vaguenesses found in the rebranded Thai music, and in the way it was implemented. This distorts the genuineness of the music, and eventually contaminates its aesthetic. However, with the help of its western-made shell, this hermit crab can profit of something in return: Thai music has gained a new musical language which corresponds to the western-oriented national identity which the government was looking for. Moreover, the metaphor of a hermit crab also depicts Kasian Tejapira's theory of the search for new Thai-ness. The cultural schizophrenia – the desire to be Thai and the desire to be un-Thai appearing at the same time – finally forces traditional elements to become just a superficial crust, which is merely used as an etiquette for achieving a new identity.

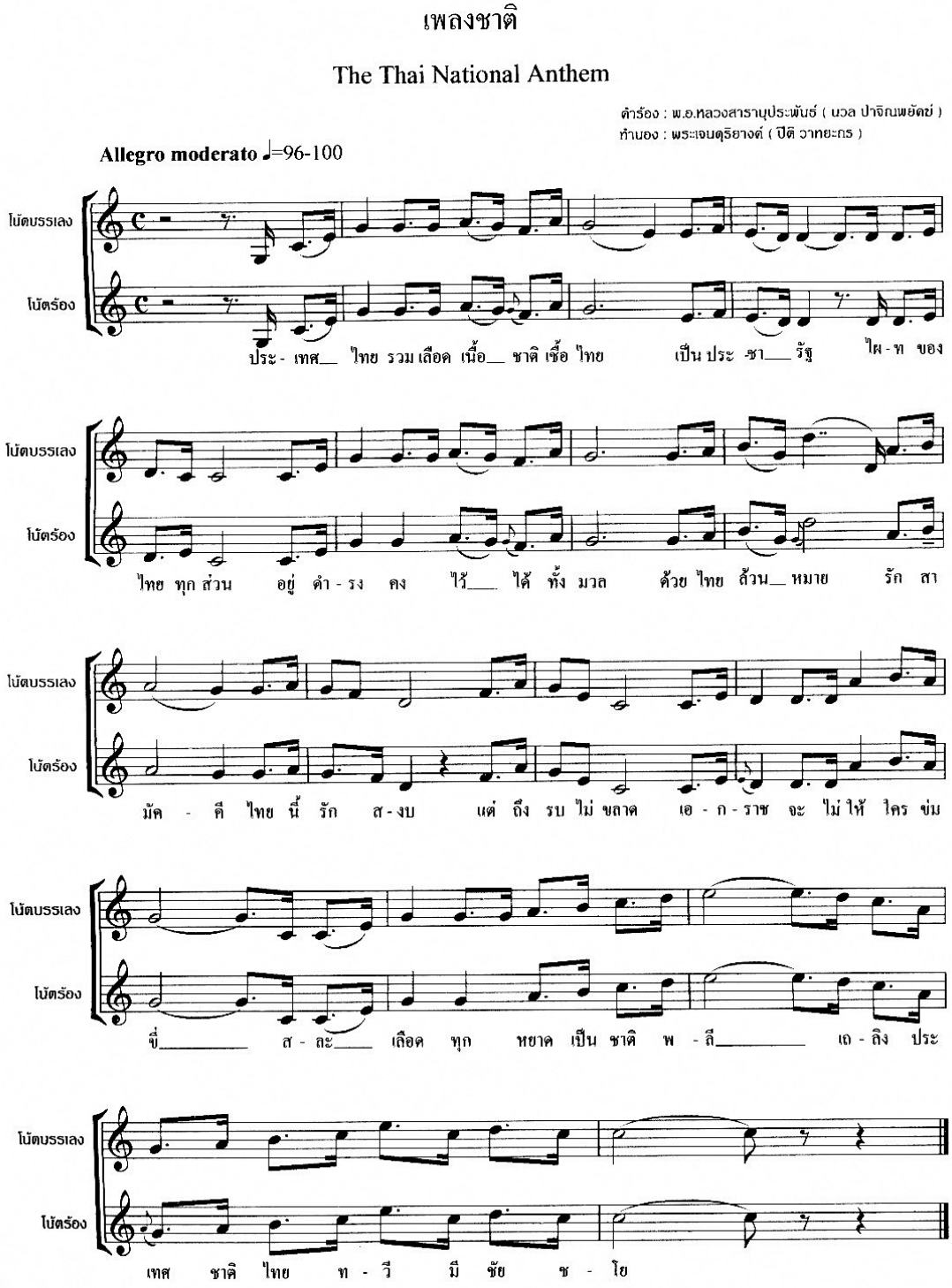
The Great Songs of the Nation

This dissertation concludes its reflection about the complex and paradoxical relationship between western and Thai music with a piece of final but paradigmatic evidence. It is a booklet called *The Great Songs of the Nation*, which was published in 2003 by the government's particular institution 'The National Identity Office'. This booklet reveals some interesting aspects of the musical works which have been discussed in the previous chapters.

Two patriotic sentences: 'The aim of this project is to let all Thai people become proud of being born Thai.' and 'The entire population, especially the younger generation, is able to get to know the lyrics and the melody of those songs correctly, and they keep being proud of their country.' can be read in the preface of *The Great*

Songs of the Nation.[240] This illustrates that the government – over 70 years after the Siamese Revolution – consciously considers music as a crucial tool for establishing the national identity. So did the revolution group, as they were looking for a national anthem.

Thai national anthem is listed as the first song in the booklet. A noticeably peculiar score is provided:



Thai National Anthem, provided in The Great Songs of the Nation.

[240] The National Identity Office: เพลงสำคัญของแผ่นดิน *[The Great Songs of the Nation]*, Bangkok: Public Relations Department of Thailand 2003, p. 1.

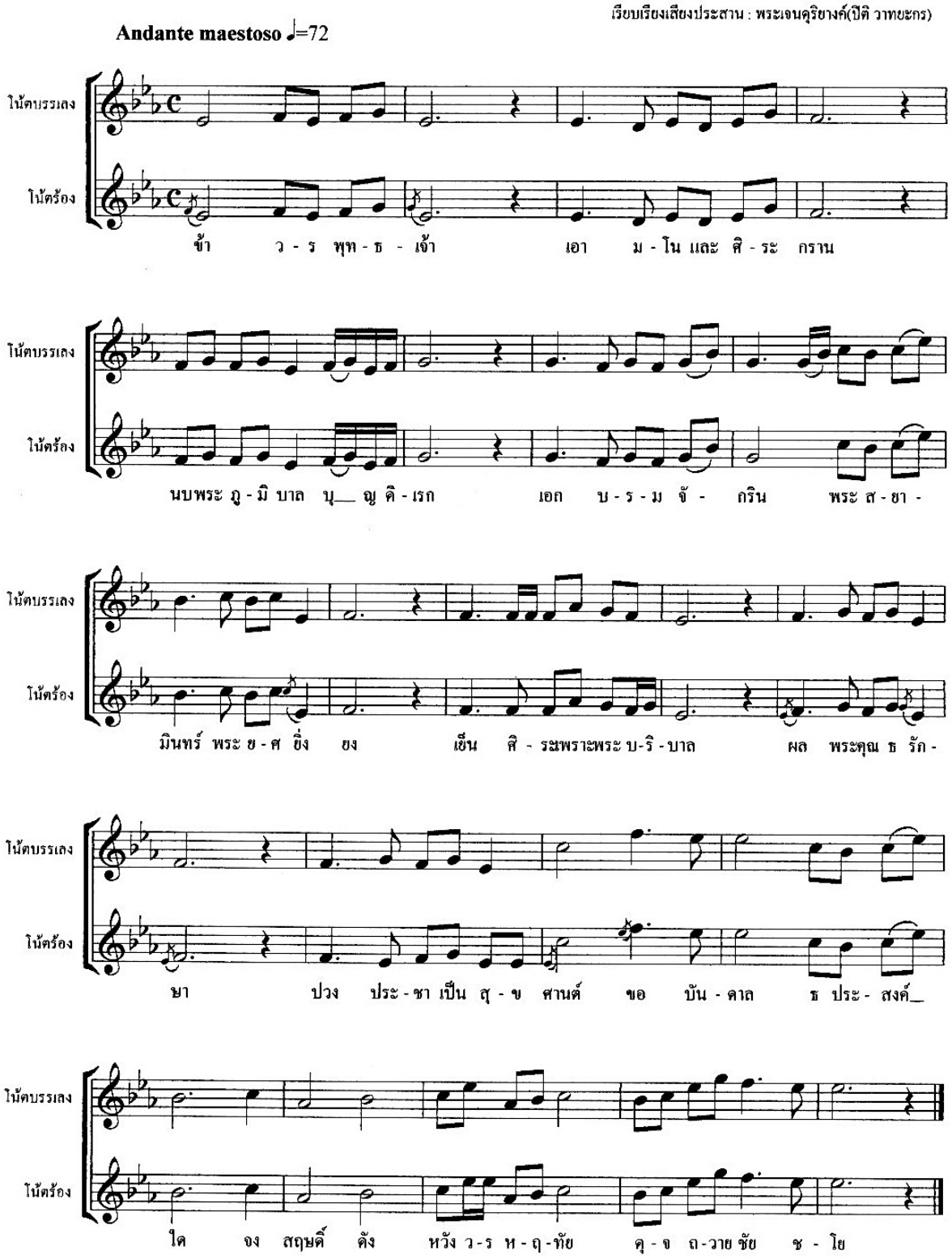
At the upper staff ‘notes for playing by instruments’ is indicated, while ‘notes for singing' is provided at the lower staff together with the lyrics underneath. Although they seem to be overall identical, these two melodies are notated with several variants. The appoggiaturas added in the singing line do not function here as musical ornamentation, but they allow the words in this given melody line to be pronounced as correctly as possible according to the Thai phonemic tone levels. The same reason also explains the alteration of notes, for example in bar 5, where D-C-C is written for instrument but D-E-C is assigned for singing, as well as the elimination of the singing notes at the end of some phrases, such as in bar 3 where there is no E at the third beat, or bar 8 with the lower D. In short, The National Identity Office realised the incompatibility between the lyrics and the melodic construction of the anthem, but they respect the legacy of Phra Chen and regard the melody as the core feature of the anthem. Therefore, the lyrics – written in the native language – have to adapt themselves to the music originally inspired by a French march.

The same phenomenon is also found in the score of *Sansern Phra Barami* – the former national anthem before 1932 which later became known as the royal anthem – in this booklet. Noticeably, there are appoggiaturas added in almost every phrase of the singing line:

เพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมี

The Thai Royal Anthem

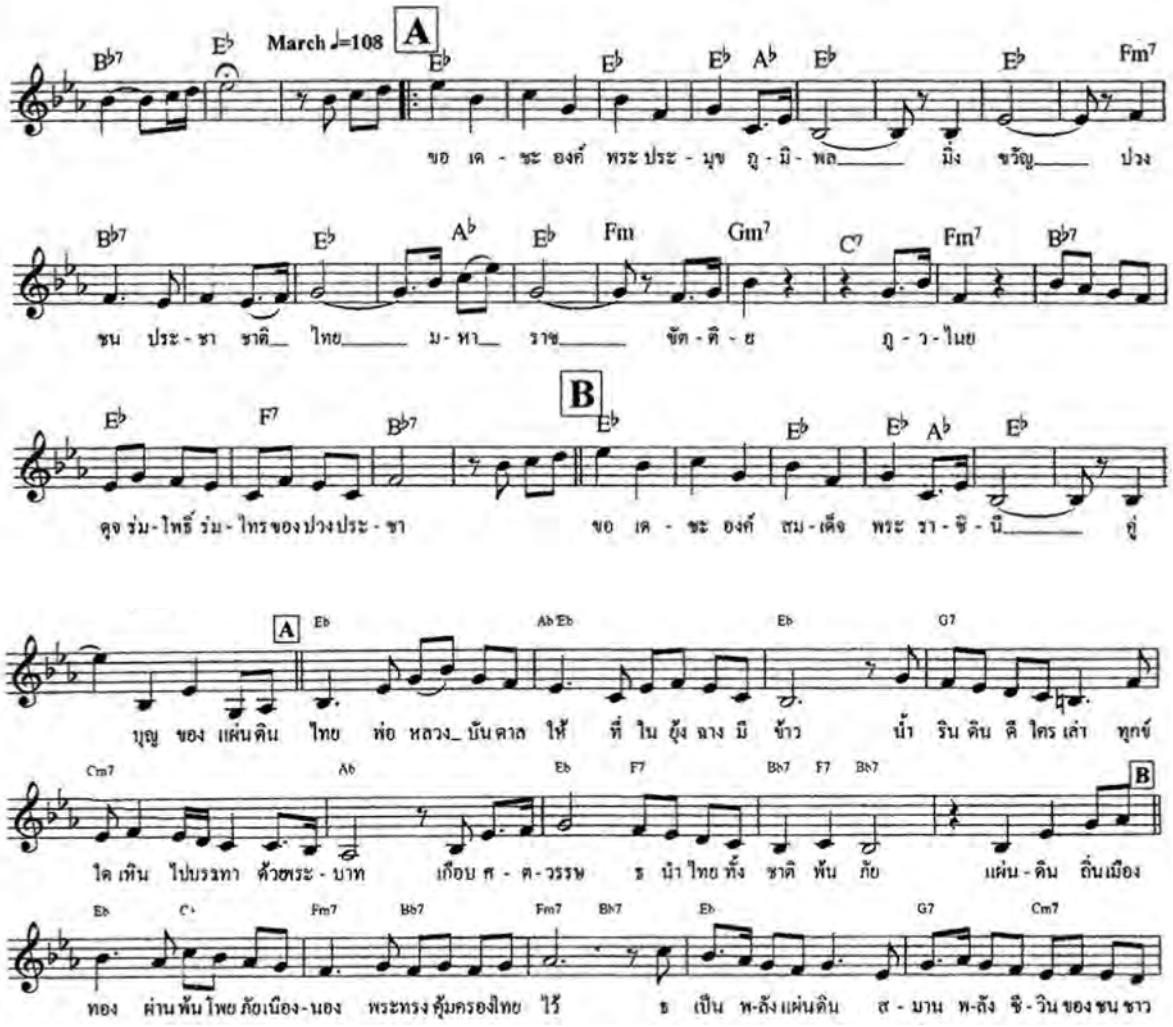
คำร้อง : สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ เจ้าฟ้า
กรมพระยานริศรานุวัดติวงศ์
เรียบเรียงเสียงประสาน : พระเจนดุริยางค์(ปิติ วาทยะกร)



Sansern Phra Barami*, provided in* The Great Songs of the Nation*.*

Despite several attempts to relate the background of Sansern Phra Barami *with the western origin, the score above does not indicate the name of the composer nor the resource of the anthem (only the names of the lyrics writer and the song-arranger are written next to the title).*

Apart from the aspect about the melodic alternation, it is interesting to notice how The National Identity Office deals with the harmony of this music. *The Great Songs of the Nation* includes two other songs which were composed later in 1964 and 1999 for glorifying King Rama IX. The scores of these two pieces clearly indicate the harmony, in the form of chord-symbols, at every bar, as shown in the excerpts below:



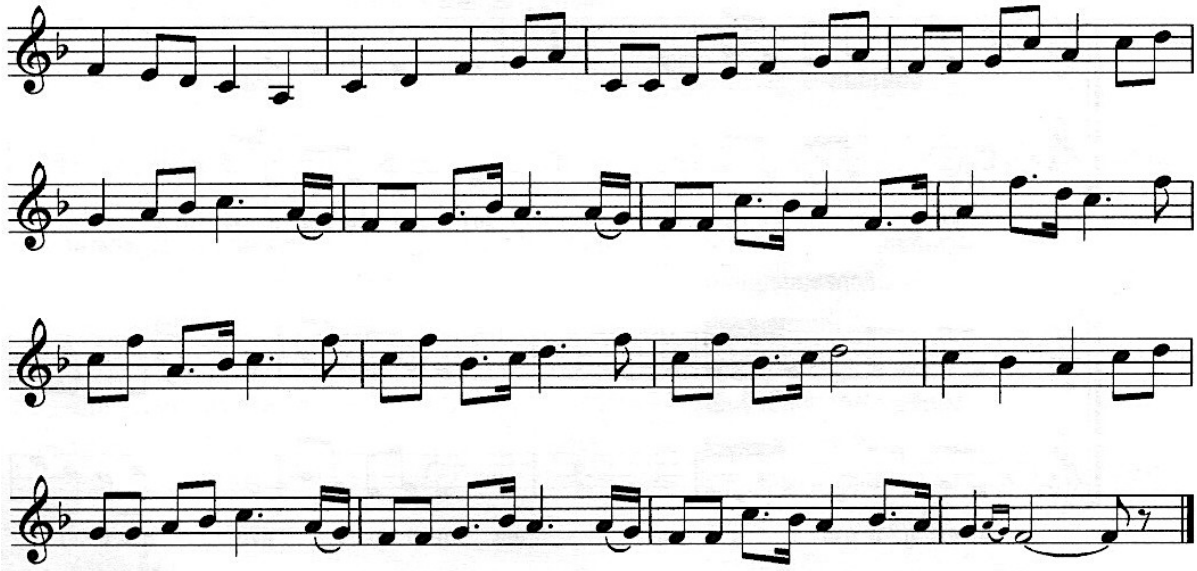
Excerpts from Sadudee Maharacha *(1964, above) and* Bhumpaendin Nawamin Maharacha *(1999, below) which are in the book of* The Great Songs of the Nation*. Composed by Thai composers after the revolution period, the lyrics and the melody are synchronised seamlessly without separating the singing melody from the instrumental melody, as it does in the national- and the royal anthems.*

It could be a coincidence or a lack of carefulness that the harmony (i.e. chord symbols) in the national anthem and *Sansern Phra Barami* are neglected in such a publication, whereas it is not the case for the other pieces in the same book. Nevertheless, the other two 'great songs', namely *Mahachai* (the former version on national anthem) and *Maharoek*, apparently affirm the intention of leaving out the harmony of the pieces:

เพลงมหาชัย

ทำนอง : สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ เจ้าฟ้ากรมพระยา
นริศรานุวัดติวงศ์ ทรงพระนิพนธ์ดัดแปลงจาก
เพลงไทยเดิม

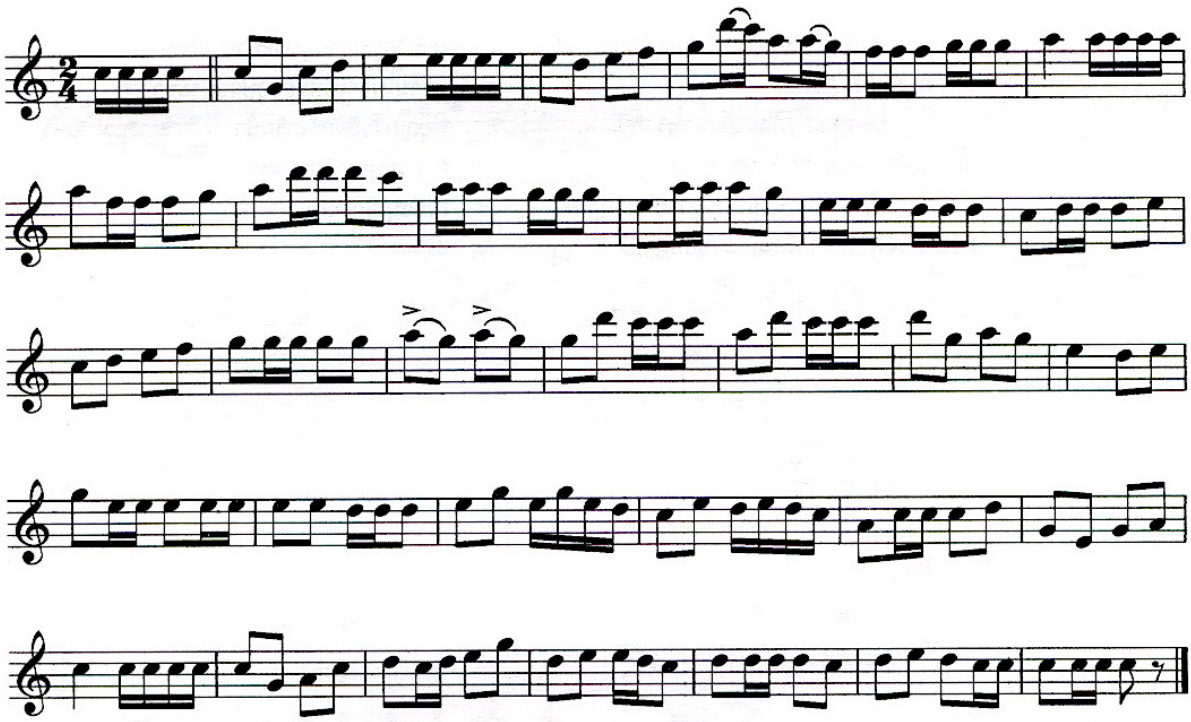
Andante ♩=76



เพลงมหาฤกษ์

ทำนอง : จอมพล สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ เจ้าฟ้าบริพัตรสุขุมพันธุ์
กรมพระนครสวรรค์วรพินิต ทรงพระนิพนธ์ดัดแปลงจาก
เพลงไทยเดิม

Allegro ♩= 108



Mahachai *(above) and* Maharoek *(below), provided in* The Great Songs of the Nation.

Regardless of the fact that all the four no-chord-pieces shown in this booklet were actually rearranged and harmonised in many versions with western harmonic progression nowadays, one can assume that the government, as they initiated this publication, still could not come up with the complete concept of how the musical language for the national music should be. As a result, the musical pieces used to shape the national identity – the musical legacy from the cultural reformation in the 1930s – have been rendered here only as plain melodies: a musical surface which has freedom to be further harmonised in any form, and the musical sense of Thai-ness can still be adhered to.

Last but Not Least: The Legacy of the Rebranding

A couple of decades after the turn of the twentieth century there is a stream of repertoires in which the composers could lift up their traditional and folk musical cultures and successfully represent their national identities onto the platform of serious classical music: De Falla's *El Amor Brujo* (1915), Ravel's *Tzigane* (1924), or Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) are some examples among them.[241] However, the changes within the Thai musical scene during the same period were not solid enough to bring about the equivalent results as those masterworks mentioned above. There must be, of course, certain social and cultural infrastructures which are required for the music industry in a country to flourish, but at the same time, a profound and reliable musical language is also a significant parameter for such an achievement. The hybridisation of Thai traditional music – which was originally orally transmitted and thus no written form for its notation existed – with the western tonal system has opened the first door for Thai music to make further progress. Nevertheless, this new musical language was not developed much further during that period. As shown and discussed before, there are incompatibilities and questionable rationales behind the result of the attempt to rebrand Thai music. Moreover, the main objective of rebranding Thai music followed the desire to fulfil the ideals of a particular political movement. This made it even harder to maintain a sustainable national musical development when the political leader is changed – as in the case of Thailand after the 1932 revolution – very frequently.

In the present day it is not easy to give a straightforward, comprehensive answer to the question: what defines Thai music? or how does the national music of Thailand sound? Thai traditional instrumentalists, Thai musicians playing western instruments and Thai contemporary composers would ponder and answer these questions differently. Some might rely on the unique pitches of the instruments, others might

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[241] There are different historical contexts behind the creation of the musical language based on folkloric elements of those repertoires which led them to international success: the music of De Falla as well as the scent of gypsy music could convince the French of its exoticism, which was a popular subject in the arts since the nineteenth century. Also, the already widespread Broadway Musicals in the 1920s opened up a platform for Gershwin's classical-jazz hybrid.

mainly care for the pentatonic character in the melodic line regardless of the western major-minor chords accompanying it, and others might bring forward the historical roots of the piece, regardless of how much it had been changed in the past. However, the answers to these questions have something in common: they all rely on the legacy of Elias, Stumpf, Phra Chen, and Seelig, who attempted to conceptualise and rebrand the traditional music with help from western music. From these people – along with the stimulation from the political circumstance of the Siamese Revolution – Thai music did get a new coat. A coat which is practical and easy to put on. Cloaked with this coat, the music can represent the 'real Thai-ness' when authenticity of the national identity is asked for, and at the same time, it can also represent the 'westernised Thai-ness' when observed from the view point of its compatibility and the eagerness to compete with the western world – a symptom of cultural schizophrenia.

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Glossary

Thai vocabulary in the dissertation written in Thai alphabet

Akarn Duriyang	อาคารดุริยางค์
Bhumpaendin Nawamin Maharacha	ภูมิแผ่นดิน นวมินทร์ มหาราชา
Brama Phrated	พม่าประเทศ
Bulan Loyluen	บุหลันลอยเลื่อน
Chula Duriyang	จุลดุริยางค์
Chut Thai	ชุดไทย
Dontree Leelad	ดนตรีลีลาศ
Duriyang Tang Chat	ดุริยางค์ต่างชาติ
Farang	ฝรั่ง
Gong	ฆ้อง
Hanghong	หางหงส์
Homrong	โหมโรง
Jongkrabane	โจงกระเบน
Kao Rop Thong Chat	เคารพธงชาติ
Kappa Dontree	คัภดนตรี
Khana Ratsadon	คณะราษฎร
Khon	โขน
Khong Wong	ฆ้องวง
Khong Chai	ฆ้องชัย
Klang	กลาง
Klon Supap	กลอนสุภาพ
Klong Chana	กลองชนะ
Klongseesupap	โคลงสี่สุภาพ
Klui Kruert	ขลุ่ยกรวด
Klui Phieng Oar	ขลุ่ยเพียงออ
Krueng Sai	เครื่องสาย
Maha Duriyang	มหาดุริยางค์
Mahachai	มหาชัย
Maharoek	มหาฤกษ์
Mahoree	มโหรี
Mattayom Duriyang	มัธยมดุริยางค์
Nad Dontree	นาฏดนตรี
Nadta Karma	นาฏกรรม
Nang Naga	นางนาค
Nora	โนรา
Nora Puenban	โนราพื้นบ้าน
Nork	นอก
Oat	โอด
Pad Thai	ผัดไท
Pakinnaka Duriyang	ปกินกะดุริยางค์

Phu Yai	ผู้ใหญ่
Pi	ปี่
Pi Klong	ปี่กลอง
Pi Nai	ปี่ใน
Pi Pat	ปี่พาทย์
Pleng	เพลง
Pleng Chat	เพลงชาติ
Ranad	ระนาด
Rathniyom	รัฐนิยม
Rong T’hang	รองทาง
Ruen Thai	เรือนไทย
Sadudee Maharacha	สดุดีมหาราชา
Sansern Phra Barami	สรรเสริญพระบารมี
Sawasdee	สวัสดี
Sieng Yeun	เสียงยืน
Sor	ซอ
T’hang	ทาง
Tanti Duriyang	ตันติดุริยางค์
Tham Kwan	ทำขวัญ
Trae Sang	แตรสังข์
Trae Wong	แตรวง
Yothavatit	โยธวาทิต