



# The Migration, Conservation of Chinese Music in Thailand and Thai Cultural Influence

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## **Abstract**

The cause of the Chinese music migration to Thailand came from the migration of the southern Chinese people, which resulted in the migration of Chinese opera troupes. In the late Ayutthaya era, many troupes, merchants, and lords brought the Chinese operas from Minnan and Yuedong to Thailand and they became popular. The Xiqin (Lantan) was especially popular among the people. In the Thonburi and early Rattanakosin eras, Chouzhou operas, Kuileixi, and Budaixi puppets entered. In the 4<sup>th</sup> reign of Rattanakosin era, the latest Chouzhou operas and Hainan operas entered. In the 5<sup>th</sup> reign, Cantonese operas and music, Gong-tek ceremonies, complete Chouzhou operas, and Sizhu's entered Thailand. After the golden age of Chouzhou operas in Thailand had passed.

The conservation of this musical legacy became very important. This study examined the various lists of objects and activities that had been preserved, as well as their transmission, promotion and the advertising of restorative activities.

In its musical analysis research, this study found that the Thai cultural influences came from the Thai materials used, such as the scale, theme, melodic movement, rhythm, and sound relationship. This influence came from the Thai classical songs in the Chinese style as it used different melodies and scales from those in original Chinese music: predominantly the Hexatonic scale, decreasing the use of Zhi mode (5-mode), and the pentatonic characteristic which is "clear but nonconforming". It increases the pentatonic motif value, the average motif notes being into 4 notes in the motif contour, and thus 3 note motifs less than in the original Chinese music.

This study's results cover all aspects of Chinese music in Thailand. The findings are based on more than 200 years worth of data that show the interaction between Thai and Chinese music, the potential of the Thai music masters, and the value of Chinese music is still present in Thailand today.

**Keywords :** Thailand, Chinese Music

## Introduction

Chinese have long traveled in and traded with the countries of South East Asia, including Thailand. The interaction between China and Thailand has meant that there has been a continuous Chinese cultural influence on Thai culture. Some of the Chinese culture has remained in its original form, whilst some of it has been adapted to fit in with Thai culture, but neither of these forms has undermined original Thai culture. Chinese beliefs and traditional ceremonies have barely been altered whilst Chinese music and entertainment have been strongly influenced by the indigenous Thai culture. Music is present in all aspects of Chinese culture; be it the music of Gong-tek ceremonies (พิธีกึ่งเต็ก), moral pavilions and Chinese temples for religious and ceremonial use or the music in Chinese operas (Ngiu จิ้ว), puppet Theatres and popular festivals. When these Chinese musical styles came to Thailand, they had a definite influence on Thai culture and society. Later the style of the music was changed by the local musical influences. These importance phenomena interested the researcher in the musicological study of the migration, conservation, and Thai cultural influence toward Chinese music.

### **The migration of Chinese music that entered Thailand in the late Ayutthaya to the end of absolute monarchy (A.D.1932)**

The arrival of Chinese music to Thailand came from the migration of the southern Chinese people, which resulted in the migration of Chinese opera troupes. The Chinese were classified in their different language groups as each group had a different role in the causes, procedures, contexts and times of migration. An identical approach was used for all groups concerning people, music and migration in order to create

an overall picture of people and music migration including the migration process including the order of migration.

It was found that Chinese have long traveled in and traded with the countries of southeast Asia before Thai occupied the basin of the Chaopraya river in the early of 19<sup>th</sup> Buddhist century. Most Ngiu had been traveling to Thailand with their traders or noblemen who traded with the Southeast Asia region and China so therefore the early Chinese music entering Thailand were in these Ngiu performance.

**The late Ayutthaya.** During the reign of King Narai the Great, the popularity of Ngiu was recorded by Monseigneur l'Abbe de Choisy, and by La Loubere, with both using the term "comedie" which signifies drama or comedy which referred to the Chinese shows: Can jun xi 参军戏 (comedy) and Hua ji xi 滑稽戏 (comedy). Europeans thus used the term "comedie" as a reference to the comic aspects of the show. De Choisy's records showed that some of the actors came from Guangdong province, some from "Chincheo" where Xing zhou 星洲 (Singapore) was. The Ngiu and Chinese were traveling back and forth to Siam from China and Singapore at that time, making it easier to put on shows. The Ngiu was Ngiu Hokkien (Min ju 闽剧 Fujian opera) from Min nan 闽南 and Yue dong 粤东 district where Xi qin 西秦 (derived from Shan xi 陕西 area), and Wai jiang 外江 (from the An hui 安徽 area) were spreading. These new Ngiu movements migrated from China to Southeast Asia.

**Thonburi period.** Chazhou Chinese became the largest Chinese community in Thailand and played a crucial role there, as a result of which evidence of their activities and music greatly increased. Chinese music in Thailand included 4 types: Chui da 吹打 (Pipe-drum music

that's similar to Thai Pi-klong ปี่กลอง music), Si zhu 丝竹 (See tek ซีเต็ก in Chouzhou language) (similar to Thai Mahori มโหรี music), puppet Theatre music (either Bu dai xi 布袋戏 glove puppet or Ga le he 傀儡戏 string puppet), and Ngiu music. Ngiu music, especially Xi qin , was used at royal ceremonies and funerals.

**The early Rattanakosin period.** In King Rama I era, the areas from Klong Wat Sam Pleum คลองวัดสามปลื้ม to Klong Wat Sam Peng คลองวัดสำเพ็ง became the biggest Chinese community in Bangkok, where the Chaozhou people were the majority, therefore many troupes of Ngiu from Chaozhou came along with them. A lot of Chinese historical novels were translated into Thai, so Ngius were invited to show these historical dramas in order to correct the translation. Ngiu was performed in popular theatres, in front of gambling houses and at civil and royal celebrations and ceremonies in this reign. Besides there was Ga le he 傀儡戏 of Hokkien, Lion dance of Vietnamese in Siam, and the female Ngiu that was the first “language drama ละครออกภาษา” of Bangkok.

Because Chinese-Thai trade grew during King Rama II era and Chinese people paid less tax than Thais, this persuaded a lot of Chinese to work in Siam. Chinese people built Ban Mor บ้านหม้อ shrine. When Chinese festivals or celebrations arrived, Chinese people hired a Ngiu to reward God (Bun Tao Gong divinity เทพเจ้าปูนเกล้า)’s protection and even troupes of Chaozhou Ngiu from Guangdong performed at Ban Mor shrine for one night before they went to other places in Siam.

Chaozhou people were the biggest group of Chinese settled in Bangkok during King Rama III era and they built two more shrines. The late reign saw the biggest migration of Hokkiens, who

entered the south of Thailand. Chinese-Siam trading grow prolifically during the 1830s AD (140 junks in 1820 AD). The King had tactics for employing his Chinese people by giving an honorary rank to leaders of the Chinese people in Bangkok and the provinces. These Chinese lords, the head of the household, and many people enabled Ngiu performance to spread in Bangkok and the provinces. Most Hokkien people in the south of Thailand worked in the mines. In their free time, they took Po Tae Hee 布袋戏 out to play Chinese historical novels. As for Hokkien’s Ga le he 傀儡戏 dressed in a crimson suit that brought luck) was played , by amateur musicians and performers, more in ceremonies than for entertainment.

**The reign of king Rama IV.** The result of the Bowring treaty in 1855 AD gave rise to a monetary economic system, so Siam needed many Chinese immigrant labourers to develop the country. Many Chinese migrated to Siam, meanwhile Chaozhou opera was popular because publishing in Siam developed. Wai jiang xi 外江戏 (Ngiu Ghua gung ฉิวจ้วงก้ง), taken from Chaozhou around 1851 AD to Siam, was popular because its music and instruments consisted of both fighting and scholastic forms. Such instruments as drums, cymbal, and gong were applied to Thai music by Thai teachers for creating new sounds, atmosphere and compositions, whilst the dulcimer: Yang qin 扬琴 appeared clearly in Thai music. Besides in the Gin Jae กิ๊นเจ๊ festival period, Chaozhou opera troupes journeying into Siam fasted in the Chinese fashion too, this influenced Chinese viewers to practice along with them and it became a custom. It was discovered that there were two troupes of Zheng yin Ngiu that entered Siam after 1851 AD.: Lao Shuang xi 老双戏 and Lao Zheng he 老正和. They appeared in Bangkok

as it was a center for journeying to Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia. Later, there were Ngius that journeyed increasingly back and forth among these countries, this enabled Bai zi 白字 Ngius (Child) to enter Siam later. It was found that Hainan Ngiu entered Siam with the Chinese people and Hainan Ngiu troupes between about 1858 and 1864 AD as well as Hainan Ngiu puppets Zhang tou mu ou 杖头木偶.

**From King Rama V era to the finished absolute monarchy year (A.D.1932),** Besides Chaozhou immigrants, there were a lot of Hainan and Cantonese people too. Chinese communities had settled in Bangkok at Bamrung Muang Rd., Charoen Krung Rd., and Yaowarat Rd. where Sam peng สำเพ็ง was the most famous Chouzhou community. The major original Chinese music migrating into Siam in the reign of King Rama V were Music of: 1. Bai zi 白字 Ngiu (Child actor), entering Siam in 1880 AD, 2. Si zhu 丝竹 ensemble called Chinese Mahori music by Siamese, especially Chaozhou Si zhu was a major Chinese Mahori music 3. Guangdong Ngiu (or Yue ju 粤剧) entering Siam in 1890 AD but they could not set up a new style in Siam, so its roles faded out later, 4. Gong Tek 功德 ceremony. The ceremony was to make merit to a dead Chinese person, to enable him to be released from misery to heaven.

1911 AD was the period when the Qing dynasty changed into a republic and was followed by the Japanese invasion. Chao ju (Chaozhou Ngiu) changed their center to Bangkok. Until 1920-1930 AD in the reign of King Rama VII, which was deemed as the first golden age of Chao ju in Siam, there were a large number of Chao ju entering Siam to perform in Yaowarat Rd. After the end of absolute monarchy in 1932 AD, there followed five years later the period of the major Japanese-Chinese war, consequently it gave

rise to the second golden age of Chao ju in Thailand in 1940 AD. At the same time, a rapid growth in demand for new entertainments such as Ngiu discs and Hollywood films affected Chaozhou Ngiu very much in Bangkok and forced them to gradually quit thus leading to Chinese music never being as popular again.

### **The conservation of original Chinese music**

Chinese music has existed in Thailand for a long time so that it has been completely integrated into certain cultural elements: instrumental and symbolic objects, organizations, usages, and the concepts. These 4 contexts mean that Chinese musical culture in Thailand that can be divided into two parts; original music and Altered music. Moreover, the existence of original Chinese music and its conservation have come from the same points which are: 1. Preservation of the original Chinese music, 2. Restoration of the original Chinese music with adaptation to Thai culture.

#### **Preservation of the original Chinese music**

Chinese opera or Ngiu played the lead role in bringing Chinese music into Thailand. The popularity of Ngiu was intermittent and depended on Chinese festivals, ceremonies and the new styles that entered Thailand. There were two periods of the golden age of Ngiu at Yaowarat Rd.; 1920-30 and 1940-60 AD. But at that time there was no one who thought of the conservation of original Chinese music until modern entertainment spread into Thailand.

It was found that the preservation of the original Chinese music consisted of two elements: original materials and their activities.

The original materials included: 1. Chaozhou Ngiu troupes having entered Thailand from 1851 AD.

to 2001 AD, approximately 74 troupes, 2. Religious places and Ngiu theatres, especially shrines, about 651 places and Ngiu theatres, about 11 places in Yaowarat in 1940 AD, 3. Famous artists, about 11 artists and 27 actors from 6 troupes, 4. The story, about 11 stories from 6 troupes, 5. Musical notations, at least 104 tunes, 6. Musical instruments .There were martial instruments: the major instruments are many types of gongs, drums, cymbals as well as a wood box, and a clapper, the Gongs consisted of a Qin zi 钦仔, a Shen bo 深波, a couple of Qu luo 曲锣 and scholarly instruments: major instruments are string and wood wind instruments, especially Gu zheng 古筝 being the most popular instrument in Thailand.

Chinese music activities had appeared more clearly in musical form in Chaozhou Ngiu performances since the reign of king Rama V. This resulted in an increase in Chinese instrumental music and music in Gong Tek 功德 ceremony. There was evidence of Ngiu performance contests in the annual celebration of Xuan tian 玄天 God in Sam peng road and in Yuan xiao festival at Jo si gong shrine, Talad noi ตลาดน้อย

Since 1930 AD Chinese music that was present in diverse Ngiu troupes and Ngiu associations of Hua qiao 华侨 (overseas Chinese) in Thailand came from many troupes that travelled to perform there. There were: 1. Ngiu troupes and Singing-dancing troupes from southern China; about 6 troupes, 2. Ngiu associations and school Ngiu associations; 5 troupes.

Since 1979 AD, there have been many troubles, so sponsorship has been needed more than ever. The tactic was to invite Chaozhou Ngius from China occasionally to stimulate the Chinese people's interest in Ngiu and Chinese music in Thailand. There have been no less than

9 performances between 1979 AD and 1991 AD; 62 famous artists and about 72 stories.

### **Restoration of the original Chinese music with adaptation to Thai culture**

As there have been new styles of Chinese music as well as new media like discs imported to Thailand since the 70s, the new generation's opinion is that the Chaozhou music was no longer representative of Chinese music. However, Chaozhou music is still valuable, there have been many restoration projects since 1982 AD at both a small scale level by a single person or a group and on a bigger level under the responsibility of local organizations, and activities for Chinese music restoration.

As for individuals, groups and music troupes who carry on Chinese music traditions, Chinese music in Ngiu and in instrumental music is being restored. On the side of Chinese music in Ngiu, a major individual in the restoration movement is master Zhuang mei long 莊美隆 (明.波巴) (nick named Meng bo ba เม้ง ป.ปลา) who is a famous Ngiu master in Thailand still living today. He started his conservation work by creating a new style of Ngiu using the Thai language in conversation whilst still accompanying it with Chaozhou music. On the side of instrumental music, it is found today that there are major places containing Chaozhou musical activities at least 10 places. As for local organization conservation, it was found that there were many local organizations promoting Chinese music in their community in least 5 places. As for activities for Chinese music restoration, there are 6 places that host the learning and promotion and 2 forms of sponsorship and advertisement; media and live performances.

In the media, since the 70s, the popular Thai songs have been adapted by Mr Chen zi gen xin 陈自更新 using Chinese musical instruments playing together with western instruments. These songs have been released into 4 sets of which the Music of Thailand (ชุดบัวขาว) was the most famous. Later, Mr.Viluk Jalukvorluk (Luk) วิรัช จรัสวรลักษณ์ (ลัก), a musician, arranger and conductor of Tan ta wan ทานตะวัน band, had produced his album “The Forever ชั่วนี้จนนิรันดร”. He mixed Chinese and western instruments together into both English and Thai songs in new versions. Live performances started in 1982 AD in the form of music in Ngiu performances during the activities which were organized by some associations.

From 1972 to 2008, there were 11 sponsorship and advertising activities, 5 music albums , 9 troupes of Chaozhou Ngius, 1 music band from Beijing university, 37 Ngiu stories. Moreover, there are individual shops and companies that have been staging performances of Chinese music and Ngiu recently. Chinese music and Ngiu have adapted to the era in order to survive by using new musical technology along with Chinese instruments to make it more interesting and flexible to the people of the time.

### **The influences of Thai culture that led to changes in Chinese Music**

The area of study was limited to the Thai classical songs in Chinese style (เพลงไทยสำเนียงจีน) during the reigns of King Rama III to King Rama VII and focused on the Thai musical materials and the quantity of Thai music material influences.

Many classical Thai songs in a Chinese style were created by the Thai music masters, which can be divided into 2 styles: one an original Chinese tune adapted to Thai culture, the other an imitation of original Chinese music.

To know Thai musical materials, researchers collected information about the Thai classical songs in Chinese style performances from fieldwork in order to see the real time performance and the materials that have been passed on to the present day.

The researcher selected the five tunes of the Original Chinese music with Thai cultural influence. 1) Poi Gang Leng โปยกังเหล็ง, 2) Jin Jai Yaw จิ้นไจ่ยอ, 3) Jin Ralaya จิ้นระลาเยา, 4) Jin Wai Zao จิ้นหว้าจ้อ, and 5) Ga Gee Nang กากี้เง้ง to be analyzed and compared to the Original Chinese tunes which corresponded; that were, 1) Guai Gang Leng ก้วยกังเหล็ง 过江龙, 2) Pai Mu Dan ไปหมู่ตัน 白牡丹, 3) Kwai Ler Ter Nong Chun ไคว่เล่อเตอ หนองชุม 快乐的农村, 4) Boi Chow Huay โป้ยโชห่วย 卖杂货, 5) Yig Tao Lor Sua ยิกเท้าเหลาะซัว 日头落山 respectively. In the selection of five Imitation Chinese Tune Compositions which came from the Thai classical songs in a Chinese style: from the reign of Rama 2<sup>nd</sup> to Rama 7<sup>th</sup>, the researcher considered the tunes which contained obvious Thai-musical materials and is famous and popular in Thai music today. 1) Jin Rum Pat จิ้นร่ำพัด, 2) Satugarn Jin สารุกรการจิ้น, 3) Jin Long Nai จิ้นล่องหน่วย, 4) Jin Num Saded (Jin Hoa Hae) จิ้นนำเสด็จ (จิ้นฮ่อแห่), and 5) Jin Kim Lek จิ้นคิมเล็ก.

When thinking over the structural details of a Thai classical song in Chinese style, the researcher knew that the materials of Thai music had been affected by the adjustment, change and creation of the main musical themes: scale and melody. To understand the Thai classical songs in Chinese style and original Chinese music using western musical notations (five-line staff, accidentals etc...), the researcher adjusted both sets of notation methods to be compatible in order to write down the music. In order to get a result the idea was to harmonize as closely as

possible the five tone scale (pentatonic scale) of the equidistant seven-note scale (Thai Chinese music) with the five tone scale (pentatonic scale) of the twelve tone scale of equal temperament (major scale). This method aimed to make the supertonic of both equal. Then the adjusted notes, intervals, and scale were taken to be analyzed.

### Thai-musical materials influencing Thai Classical Songs in Chinese Style tunes and analysis

The materials that Thai music used were researched and these were named as the influence of Thai musical materials, and was researched the degree of influence present, which was as follows:


#### (1) The influence of Thai musical materials

**(1.1) To influence scale:** 1) Pitch of Thai scale: there were differences between each pitch of Thai scale and those of Chinese scale, therefore the sound of an Original Chinese Tune (OCT) changed when in the pitch of Thai scale, 2) Thai musicians played an Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture Adjusting (TCA) in Qing San Liu 轻三六 scale more than Zhong San Liu 重三六 scale.

**(1.2) To influence a main melody or theme:** 1) Thai musicians played an Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture Adjusting (TCA) only in the theme, they did not add notes or embellish the melody (Jiahua 加花) as Chinese, 2) A melody from some measures, phrases of an Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture Adjusting was adapted from those of an Original Chinese Tune.

**(1.3) To influence sound in a scale:** Thai musicians adapted an Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture Adjusting (TCA) to make a new

sound, for example, to arrange the line melody of Thai music in order to substitute the third interval of Chinese melodic movements .

**(1.4) To influence rhythm:** 1) To use the pattern of Thai music by using Ching ฉิ่ง and Klong tuk กลองตุ๊ก, 2) To use “Thai swing” rhythm called “Mayong ม้าย่อง”  that was an important rhythm of an Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture adjusting (TCA)

**(1.5) To influence the relation of sound in a melody or melodic idiom:** 1) To use a Thai style melody such as LukTao ลูกเต๋า, LukYon ลูกโยน, 2) To play a Theme by using a melodic technique called “Tang geab ทางเก็บ” (Thai style improvisation by using sixteenth note), 3) To use the melody in the style of Thai music such as a melodic idiom, Klon Tumnonng กลอนทำนอง (melodic poetry).

Thai music materials that were found in Thai music influencing **Original Chinese Tunes (OCT)** became Thai classical songs in Chinese style: **Original Chinese Tune with Thai Culture Adjusting (TCA)** and **Imitated Chinese Tune Composition (ICTC)**. The study enabled to know the quantity of the influence as follows:

#### (2) The quantity of Thai music material influences

**(2.1) Tonal System:** 1) Tonal Weight. It was found that in each group the notes “7” and “4” were employed little. It was mainly the characteristic of Pentatonic scale that was present in all of them, but the influence of Thai musical materials changed tonal weights (occurring notes) of notes in TCA and ICTC to different notes, 2) Scale System. It was found that most structures of TCA’s and ICTC’s were Diatonic scale and Hexatonic scale, but Pentatonic scale when in the practical reality. This was an important Chinese characteristic. The influence of Thai musical

materials were focused on using Hexatonic scale, but Thai musicians were able to create a tune in Pentatonic scale that resembled the Chinese style, and became an ICTC with Chinese characteristic whose quantity depended on the Thai musicians requirements, 3) Mode. The result of comparisons between an OCT and an TCA represented that the OCT focused on using the 5-mode (Zhi mode), but TCA decreased the use of 5-mode by changing to other modes, and it was similar to the result of comparisons between an OCT and ICTC. In addition, the influence of Thai musical materials represented mostly “clear but unconformist” in the Pentatonic characteristic. 4) The percentage of Motif Pentatonic Quotient (MPQ). The influence of Thai musical materials changed the MPQ of OCT (64.3%) to TCA (74.5%), and appeared clearly in the creation of Thai music that were 86.7% in ICTC.

### (2.2) Contour.

1) Motif contour. The results presented Thai musical materials influence on OCT and ICTC clearly, their Motif contour were changed but type7 (two notes contour) had the least appearances in both. The influence of Thai musical materials changed the average of the notes in a motif of OCT (3.4) to TCA (4.2), in the other word, from 3 notes to 4 notes in a motif

of TCA. Besides, the motif contour of OCT was mostly type 4 (three-point contour or three notes contour), and it was changed to type1 (four-point contour or four notes contour) in TCA. As for type7 (two-point contour or two notes contour), it occurred very little in each group, 2) Motif Direction. The motif direction of “b” (the initial note of a motif contour is higher than the final one) was the most in each group, and c, a were subordinate in the order. The influence of Thai musical materials changed OCT “a=15.9” to TCA “a=18”, but ICTC “a = 11”.

(2.3) Motif Compass. The average of motif compass of OCT= 3.4 meant that it was a 3-note motif compass, and was a Chinese Characteristic. The result of comparison between each other showed that there were the most 3-note motif compass in OCT . This showed that the characteristic of Chinese music was in OCT more than TCA and ICTC whilst Thai musical materials influence ICTC more than TCA because TCA still maintained the original Chinese theme.

By using a scientific method to analyze Thai classical songs in a Chinese style, this study shows the potential of the Thai music masters. So all aspects show the value of Chinese music which

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