



# Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong Wai Khru Ceremony Music

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## Abstract

The purposes of this research are 1) to study the history and the cultural elements of Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong (Thai shadow puppetry) 2) to study the music for Wai Khru (paying respect to masters) ceremony of this crew. From the surveys, interviews and analysis, the results can be summed up into two points.

1. Nang Taloong is influenced by ancient civilizations from several countries. Religious beliefs also became a part of the performance. There is no absolute answer about the history of Nang Taloong, but the certain thing is that, in Wai Khru Ceremony, people who will perform the show adhere to the masters they admire with flowers, incenses, candles and Mak Plu (Thai wrapped betel nut) in hands in order to pay respect. The masters test them by making them sing. The ceremony is a crucial tradition of Nang Taloong. People believe it will grant them blessings: they can earn a living efficiently and the audience will favor them. Once, a performance called "Manorah" was almost disappeared because of the new source of entertainment such as televisions and videos. Traditional artists had been forgotten for 5-6 years. However, Pathom Ai Lookmee Team brought the light back to Nang Taloong. The musical instruments used in the ceremony include a Mong (double-gong), Ching (finger cymbals), Glong Thap (goblet drum), Pi Nok (a quadrople), tambourine, drums, keyboard, two electric guitars, and a base.

2. According to the study, there are three instrumental songs in the ceremony. The melody of the songs is led by the sound of Pi Nok and other instruments take the roles of rhyme and rhythm. The songs are played over and over again.

**Key words:** Pathom Ai Lookmee, Nang Taloong Wai Khru ceremony music

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## Introduction

Culture, which is a social inheritance, means everything that displays the communities' way of life. Each community has its own culture composed of knowledge, beliefs, traditions, laws, ethics, and everything people think and do as a part of the cultural community, no matter those things are solid or abstract. The composition of culture contains solid things

as organizations, ceremonies and dimensions. The characteristics of culture derive from learning which requires a transmission to be social inheritances, ways of life or life patterns. They are not stable and can be adjusted to fit changeable situations. Music is also a part of culture. It is a formless thing that use the sound from instruments as its transmitter to tell stories. It is inherited from old times music masters, generations

by generations. It relates to people's lives and is evolved to fit in the present days. From the meaning of culture, it is obvious that human relates to culture and it is difficult to understand and describe (Supattra Supharb 1997: 94). Culture means a man-made thing that comes from learning from each other and develops into progress. In Thai, culture is called *Wattanatham*. It combines the word "wattana", which means prosperity, with the word "tham" which means rules and regulations. Together, it means discipline and the other way around. Culture, traditions, methods and artworks are all inheritances in Thai society. They do not have to be defined by any law and do not have to be activities that depend on governing class; people in lower classes can create them too. Culture is mostly about the past and identities. (Phraya Anumanrachathon 1972: 67)

'Nang Kuan' is the original name of 'Nang Taloong'. In southern region, Thai shadow puppetry still goes by the original name. The recorded evidence revealed an annals noting King Rama VI's journey to the south in 1915. It says...

"...In the evening, provincial police played a shadow puppetry for the king: they set up a screen and acted a show which the governor called Nang Kuan..."

The name 'Nang Taloong' had been first called in the reign of King Rama III. At that time, Praya Pattaloong (Peuak) brought Nang Kuan from Pattaloong to be performed in Bangkok; at Nanglerng which was the land of Pattaloong governor. Bangkokians, in that period of time, watched the puppetry which came from Pattaloong so they called it Nang Pattaloong (Pattaloong movie). Then the name 'Pattaloong' was eroded into only 'Taloong' as it is called nowadays (Narongchai Pitokrachata 1995: 155). The shadow puppetry originally belonged to Java (an island in Indonesia) before 11 AD. It spread to Malay as an entertainment; which Malaysians still call it 'Wayanggulet'. 'Wayang' means a puppet or a leathered picture, while 'gulet' means a shell or an

animal skin, so the whole word means a picture made from animal skin. The puppets that came to Thailand or even in Java would look different from normal human because Javanese believed they should not use human, which they respect, as a model for puppets. Apparently, the puppets do not look like normal human, which still appear in Thai Nang Taloong (Vibul Leesuwana 1984: 180). A shadow movie or play is an old culture of humankind. When King Alexander defeated for Egypt, he used a shadow puppetry show as his celebration of success to declare his prestige. In India, during Buddha's lifetime, Bramans performed a shadow play, based on Ramayana, called Shayanataka to worship gods and praise heroes. In China, during the reign of Emperor Yuan Ti (48 BC. - 32 BC.) Taoist monks performed a similar show to praise the grace of an Emperor's concubine when she departed. In recent periods, shadow puppetry dispersed almost all over southeast Asia. It is sorted into two categories. Puppets in the first category are big with their arms attached to their body, unable to move: Khmer's puppetry called Sabek and Thai Nang Yai. Those in another category appear smaller. The puppets' arms has joints that link with their body and they can move: Khmer's Ayong, shadow puppetry in Java, Bali, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos and those in the southern of Thailand (Naowarat Thongrom 2007: 74-75). Native music always conveys one important characteristic which is 'national identity'. Mentioning this identity we can tell or can guess which nationality or lineage a song belongs to. Nevertheless, there is a condition that the one who gets the answer right or almost right must be truly familiar to various native songs before. The songs analysis contains many levels which have diverse benefits. The first level will get one to know the songs, which is a basic benefit to be familiar with the song other than just listening or playing. If the analysis gets to the next level, it will bring one to understand the songs which is the higher benefit. This level of understanding is necessary for professional musicians or people who learn music in

depth. The highest level of analysis will make one able to evaluate the value of the songs which is a benefit for clearly understandings to know the values of the songs. (Kaisaeng Sukkawattana 1998: 7)

Nang Taloong is a traditional art in the southern of Thailand telling stories composed into tales. It is proceeded with local poetry sang in local accents which is called ùWa-botû. It may be intervened by conversations and it has music as an important element of the play. It has been popular for a very long time, especially before people have electricity access throughout every village like today. It can be shown both at auspicious ceremonies and funerals. Therefore, in temple fairs, funerals or big celebration, there will always be Nang Taloong shows. Every shadow puppetry team will throw a Wai Khru ceremony every year to commemorate their masters and to pay respect to them. Music is the crucial part in the ceremony. Nang Taloong is a medium to tell stories of communities varied from histories, religions until ways to earn a living. From this research, we can learn about the characteristics of musical instruments, ways to play and the songs in Wai Khru ceremony. Nowadays, Nang Taloong in the south becomes less and less famous after western culture came in. Thus, it is an urge to study and gather all the knowledge in order to make them remain and to implant conscious in people in the communities to see the value of this traditional art as a cultural inheritance from now on.

From aforementioned, they are the researcher's determinants to study the music in Pathom Ai Look Mee ùs Nang Taloong Wai Khru ceremony which has its own uniqueness of Nang Taloong. It is almost forgotten since the society changes from time to time. The cease of inheritance and the reduction of its role in musical society may result in the loss of this culture. The researcher realized the significance of learning, so it has been researched. It is also interesting to learn about playing methods and techniques, and to gather songs from Pathom Ai Lookmee's ceremony to spread out for people who are interested.

## Objectives

1. To study the history and the cultural elements of Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong.
2. To study Wai Khru ceremony music of this crew.

## Methodology

### 1. Studying and gathering information

#### 1.1 Sources

1.1.1 Interview the performers, the musicians of Pathom Ai Lookmee and the specialists who experienced Nang Taloong.

1.1.2 The research references

- Central Library Srinakharinwirot University
- Thaksin University Library
- Khunying Long Athakravisunthon Resources Center, Prince of Songkla University
- Songkla Rajabat University Academy Resources Center
- The Institute of Southern Thai Studies
- Nakhon Si Thammarat Provincial Public Library
- Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabat University Academy Resources Center

#### 1.2 Collecting Information Process

1.2.1 Attended a show to observe the show procedure

1.2.2 Noted the essential information

1.2.3 Recorded the sound, photos, videos and music in western style

#### 1.3 Tools

### 2. Studying the collected data

1. Compiled data information from documents and researches, information from the observation, recorded files, photos, videos and notes from the show and interviews.

2. Presented the data on Pathom Ai Lookmee Wai Khru ceremony music to be recorded in western style.

## Results and Discussion

1. The analyzed details of Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong are classified into the following.

1.1 The history of Pathom Ai Lookmee .

1.2 The culture elements of Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong.

1.2.1 Order of Wai Khru ceremony

1.2.2 Wai Khru accessories.

2. The information on Pathom Ai Lookmee's Wai Khru ceremony music is sorted as follows.

2.1 The musicians' profiles.

2.2 The musical instruments.

2.3 The songs

2.3.1 sPacha

2.3.2 Aok Rusee (Hermit Song)

2.3.3 Aok Isuan (A Braman God, Shiva, Song).

### Nang Taloong's Culture

The southern region has many traditional performances, histories and good traditions showing folk wisdom in the old times. Southern traditional performances include Bok Song (singing a song telling Songkran is coming), Manorah, Nang Taloong, Forest Likay (Southern Likay), Hulu Likay, Ronggeng. Each traditional performance differs from one another, depending on geographic types, economy and society. Religious ceremonies and beliefs are also involved in the performances.

### Wai Khru Ceremony

Wai Kru Ceremony is believed to be a ceremony that derived from Braman belief which influenced Thai way of life. It is a ceremony where students show their gratitude to teachers or masters who give them knowledge because teachers enlighten students by teaching them ways to succeed in life.

### The purposes of Wai Khru Ceremony

Nang Taloong Wai Kru Ceremony is where students pay respect and gratitude to their masters, who

grant them knowledge to bring prosperity to their lives, by worshipping. It is an extremely insignificant ceremony for artists.

There are five purposes to be concluded.

1. Masters and students can make merit together for ancestors and masters who already passed away.

2. Students who attend the ceremony will not disrespect their masters both before and behind them.

The reason is that they believe although their masters do not know, gods know.

3. It give students opportunity to get together, which brings unity among them.

4. Students will firmly believe in knowledge the masters granted. For example, they will dare to hold music competition in the middle of the night.

5. It give masters and students a chance to forgive. However they are estranged, after the ceremony, they are all forgiven. Then they continue their good deeds.

## Conclusions

The results of the study on Pathom Ai Lookmee's Wai Khru ceremony music are concluded in two parts.

**Part I** concerns the history and culture elements of Pathom Ai Lookme's Nang Taloong.

1. Pathom Ai Lookme's Nang Taloong is a traditional performance of local people in Thailand. The evidence confirming when it existed has not been discovered yet. Scholars assumed it appeared in early Ratanagosintra because Nang Taloong's poems are mostly eight syllables poems which were not popular in Ayuddhaya period. Especially, in the south, traditional literatures were all composed in different verses. Eight syllables poems became popular just after Sunthorn Pu publicized Phra Apai Manee (during King Rama II period). It is not clear when was the first time Nang Taloong existed in the south. Pathom Ai Lookme's Nang Taloong has been popular for no less than 40 years. Nowadays, there are several Nang Taloong teams appear, but Pathom Ai Lookme's Nang Taloong still earns its popularity and fame from local

people. It still performs Wai Khru ceremony, which is crucial, every year. Both Nang Taloong and the ceremony are parts of local people's culture that is worth conserving for new generations to continue practicing.

2. Wai Khru ceremony procedure begins with building a theatre and preparing the place for the ceremony by the musicians. At the place, a set of altar table must be ready for the ceremony. The table must be set, incenses and candles must be lightened for worshipping the Threefold refuge. All performers wear white. They will begin chanting the "Namo" prayer. After the prayer, they will sing the "Wa-bot" to commemorate and pay respect to both living and departed masters, and also to bless themselves. The performers believe this will grant them prosperity: they will earn a living easily and become popular. Monks chant Chaimongkol blessing, then continue with Chayanto for the performers' and the attendants' luck. After that, monks anoint the performers and the attendants' forehead, then end with Chaimongkol blessing. The performers bid farewell to monks and masters to start Krob Khru ceremony (the masters put the mask on the performers' heads). Then only one performer will perform the sending ceremony. He will sit in front of the altar table and sing "Wa-bot" to the old hermit mask and put the mask on monks, performers, and all the students' heads. Patcha, Aok Rusee and Aok Isuan will be played in order. After the ceremony, Nang Taloong will be performed to commemorate and pay respect to masters for the attendants to see.

3. The equipments in the ceremony includes old hermit mask, a hermit statue, Nang Taloong puppets, two gold covered beak cocks, a gold covered mouth pig head, two pomelos, two coconuts, two hands of Cultivated bananas, topkot sweets, squared nuts, Go Pai (sweets), Thai sweetmeat, Foi Thong, Morgang (sweet made with coconut milk), tangerines, liquor and water, rice and flowers, a grilled fish, an offering set, cooked rice, chicken and banana stalk curry,

boiled coconut milk banana stalk, pig bones and preserved cabbage soup, southern fish curry, vegetables, durian juiced rice, coconut, a pack of cigarettes, Mak Plu, Daorueng flowers, white fabrics for the ceiling and for the worshipping, a pillow for prostrating masters, a whetstone, a mat, threads and needles, a razor, a ceremonial thread, a candle jar, incenses and candles.

**Part II** concerns Nang Taloong Wai Khru ceremony music with the case study of Pathom Ai Lookmee.

1. Most musicians live in Nakhon Si Thammarat. Their professions are Nang Taloong musicians, general workers for wages and gardeners. They are mostly buddhists. Their ages range from 26 to 78. Their attitudes about Nang Taloong music and traditional music vary, but the majority are grateful and proud to conserve their old traditions. Despite the fact that Nang Taloong becomes less popular by now, all the musicians are still willing to pass it on to new generations in order to show the importance of inherited local culture.

2. The musical instruments are categorized into two groups: rhythmic instruments and melodic instruments. Rhythmic instruments consist of Mong (double-gong), Ching (finger cymbals), Glong Thap (goblet drum), tambourine and drums. Melodic instruments contain a Pi Nok (a quadropole), keyboard, two electric guitars, and a base.

3. There are three songs in their ceremony: Patcha, Aok Rusee and Aok Isuan. All the songs are recored in western style. They are essential for the ceremony for a very long time.

## Recommendations

From the study, the researcher learned a lot about the history and the culture of Pathom Ai Lookmee's Nang Taloong. Hence, there are some suggestions offered for people who are interested or want to research more.

1. Research more in depth. Other aspects such as the language, its role in the society, and the songs

can be learned more deeply.

2. There should be more researches about other

traditional performances in this region and also in other regions.



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