



The Study Mong Wai: Karen's Musical Instrument of Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are, 1) to study the history, background, functions and components of Mong wai, and 2) to collect and analyze songs that played by Mong wai in Karen culture. The study and analysis of data collected by surveying and interviewing revealed that;

1. Mong Wai is a percussion musical instrument invented by Karen tribe in Myanmar. Mong Wai has 18 small Gongs with 18 different pitches that orderly, made from alloy and looked similar to Thai Mong (Thai Gong). Mong Wai has big knob at the middle of each Gong, which has different size and produces different musical note. Luk Mong are attached to all three parts of a wooden frame. Mong Wai plays a highly influential role for Karen culture. Mong Wai is usually played as the main instrument in most of the Karen festivals and ceremonies.

2. There are 12 Songs performed by using Mong Wai at different Karen ceremonies, i.e., 1) Paying homage to the teacher 2) End of Buddhist Lent Day 3) Temple fair 4) Fulfill one's vow 5) Songkran festival 6) The funeral. From the song analysis it is found that the major tone of most songs is in $\text{c}\text{F}\text{a}\acute{\text{e}}$ note. The songs generally start with introduction part and also end with the same introduction part. The songs also have a repeat and upbeat rhythm. At all annual festivals, Mong Wai is usually used as the main musical instrument for attracting people to attend the events.

Key words: Mong Wai, Karen's musical instrument, Sangkhlaburi District

Introduction

Culture is closely associated with humans being. It is the combination of concept, practice, life style and behavior of people within the society. The practice which people has followed for long time with the characteristic that suite with the geographical condition and well-being of people in the society. Culture causes the happiness and harmony within the society as well. Culture has been transferred from one

location or individual to other called culture transmission which shown the good association among many levels started from individuals, family, village, district, province, domestic and international level (Panya Rungreang 2001:39).

Music is a cultural heritage that served the society for all language and classes from the past to the present. Music, in the meaning of social sciences, is the intermediary between human and god, for example,

music in the western religious rituals, or Thai society which has a ceremony to pay the respect to the musical instructors (Kanchana Intharasunanon .1989: 63).

Music is a kind of art that can be found in every nations or even in a small society. Music is a content of sound that used auditory perception and interpretation. Similarly to the spoken language, music can be interpreted differently according to individual ideas, recognition and emotions (Sa-Nyad Phukhawthong 1989: 63).

In all societies, ranged from barbarian to civilized society, people learn to sing their national songs which served as their national treasure and also used in religious ceremonies and recreational activities. Dancing and singing are necessary activities that mentally bound people with the society and cannot be ignored. National Singing and dancing of each nation reflect their life style and thinking. We could learn different culture by their songs and music (Phya Anuman Ratchatont 1972: 104).

Kanchanaburi has a border on the west side connected to Myanmar. This area has high migratory movement of ethnic groups from the Myanmar, such as Myanmar, Mon, Karen , Laow or Lawa, India and etc., flooded into Kanchanaburi. Karen tribe is a significant ethnic group of minority who lived in Kanchanaburi for over 100 years with large amount of population (Suttinee Thongsaard. 1988: 34).

Karen songs found at Laiwo subdistrict, SangkhlaBuri district, Kanchanaburi, are both songs with lyrics as well as instrumental music, for example, Rum Tong. Rum Tong is performed by using many musical instruments such as Two-faced Gong, Xylophone, Spinnet, Pipe or Cymbal Tong (bamboo tube with length about 30 cm, and beat for making rhythm). The content of Rum Tong's lyric is about the culture and history of Karen tribe.

Gee Wai and Mong wai are musical instruments from Gong family. They are similar in shape to Gong, but made by different type of metal for Luk Gong. Gee Wai is similar to Thai Luk Gong which has node

or knob at the middle. Mong Wai, however, is similar to Thai Mong which has black-colored surface drawn with a beautiful texture on a Gong (Wanida Phrommabutta. 2009:114). Gee Wai and Mong wai play are major parts in Cha Phu Cha U ensemble for Tong Dance by Karen due to theirs interesting sounds and performed methods.

With rapid change of society and Karen culture, the music culture of Karen has been ignored by new generation and this causes the music culture of Karen merely disappeared.

From the above rationale, it is important to conduct the in-depth study of Mong wai as well as collection of Mong Wai's songs for those who has interested in this musical instrument and culture of Karen tribe, as it is now merely extinct due to the changes of society.

Objectives

1. To study the history, background, role and components of Mong Wai in Karen culture.
2. To collect and analyze songs which have been performed by Mong Wai.

Methodology

1. Data collection

1.1 Prepare the research topics by reviewing related literature and documents from various sources, i.e., Srinakarinwirot University Library, Mahasarakham University Library, and National Library of Thailand

1.2 Gather data by interviewing with experienced lecturers and other informants who lived in the Karen community using;

- Interview Record Device
- Digital still Camera
- Video Camera

2. Data review and study

2.1 Review and study the concept and theory for music analysis.

2.2 Review and study the related documents

on Karen's musical culture

2.3 Review and study interviewing data

2.4 Transform the recorded Karen songs into

Thai music notes

3. Data analysis

3.1 Study the history and background of Mong Wai

3.1.1 Summarize/rewrite the history of Mong Wai from the interview and evidence

3.1.2 Summarize/rewrite the content related to components of Mong Wai which have three major parts, i.e.,

- Components and Physical characteristics of the Karen musical instrument

- Elements of music playing method; Sound system and Music playing method

3.1.2.3 Composition of song

- Collected song and lyrics

3.1.3 Study the roles of Mong wai in Karen culture; roles and duties to society

3.2 Analyze song's lyrics from the recorded musical notes. The details of the analysis are :

3.2.1 Basic information of song, for example,

- Music pattern

3.2.2 Music analysis of the song by using the music theory, for example,

- Music phrase and ending tone

- Rhythmic pattern

- Melodic pattern

The result are subjected for an analysis as;

3.1 Background and components of Mong Wai

3.1.1 Study and summarize the background of Mong Wai

3.1.2 Study and summarize the components of Mong Wai which has three main parts, i.e.,

3.1.2.1 Components of the Karen musical instrument

- Physical characteristics of the musical instrument

3.1.2.2 Elements of music playing method

- Sound system of Mong wai.

- Music playing method

3.1.2.3 Composition of song

- Collected song and lyrics

3.1.3 Study and summarize the roles of Mong Wai in Karen cultures

- Roles and duties in society

3.2 Analyze song lyric from musical notes as the following details :

3.2.1 Basic information of song for learning content and meaning of song.

- Music pattern

3.2.2 Details of the analysis which has brought the music theory to consist with the analysis

- Music phrase and ending tone

- Rhythmic pattern

- Melodic pattern

1.3 Study the role of Mong wai in Karen culture

1.3.1 Social roles in Karen culture

1.3.1.1 Be the medium to gather Karens people and makes the seasonal rituals such as celebration of agricultural crops

1.3.1.2 Be the spiritual anchor of Karen people to maintain their identity for being sustainable in future

1.3.1.3 Be the important thing to build up moral in their profession and lead to the harvest celebrations

1.3.1.4 Be the medium for annual ritual and worship the spirit of Karen and reflect the well-being and gratitude

1.3.2 Role to society of Mong Wai in Karen culture

1.3.2.1 Mong Wai has been used as the main musical instrument of Cha puu Cha ou ensemble

1.3.2.2 Mong Wai is served as a medium for people to join a Religious ceremony through Cha Puu Cha Ou ensemble

1.3.2.3 Mong Wai is served as a medium

for people to join a Religious ceremony of Karen community such as Katin Ceremony, Rum Tong dance, New house celebration and merit, Songkarn festival, etc.

Results and Discussion

The results from the study of Mong Wai, the Karen's musical instrument, in Sangkhla Buri District, Kanchanaburi shown can be summarized as follows:

Part 1 Background and components of Mong Wai

1.1 Mong Wai background and components from the interviews and related literature

From an interview with Mr. Somchai Srisuk (2012), it is found that the current Karen musical instrument has been invented by Karen in Myanmar. They used local materials to fabricate the instrument which provide a sound with international music notes. From the literature review, it is found that the wooden xylophone has been invented at the Era of King Ta-Beng-Chavety and Mong Wai has been invented in the era of King Pa-Dung of Myanmar.

Currently, Karen people, who has been immigrated from Myanmar to Kanchanaburi, produces many types of musical instrument and teaches their youth in order to keep the Karen culture exist.

1.2 Components of Mong Wai

1.2.1 Physical characteristic

Mong Wai has 18 pieces of small gong, made from alloy and looked similar in shape to Thai Mong. It has knob at the middle of each Gong, called Luk Mong, which causes with different tone according to its size. Luk Mong is attached with wooden frame for at all three parts and connected as a panel which consists of

1.2.1.1 Luk Mong Wi, made from alloy with thickness about 0.5 cm, is similar in shape to Thai Mong which has knob at the middle.

1.2.1.2 Wooden frame is rectangle in shape with three pieces for attaching with Luk Mong

1.2.1.3 Stick is about 20 cm in length

and sharpened at its head. Sometime it is covered with cloth for softening its voice.

1.2.2 Sound system of Mong Wai

Sound system is recognized by different size of Luk Mong. The tone of Mong Wai has 18 small Gons with 18 different pitch that orderly, in which Mong Wai consists of three parts as described below Part 1: Three large-sized Luk Mongs for Fa , Sol and La notes.

Part 2: Seven medium-sized Luk Mongs for Si, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol and La notes.

Part 3: Eight large-sized Luk Mongs for Si, Do, Re, Mi, Fa , Sol, La and Si notes.

1.2.3 How to play Mong Wai

Sitting position : Sit with cross-legged (Hunker down) or sit with one's kness up at the center of Mong Wai.

Hold the Stick: Hold the Stick at prone position (lay palm down), not too tight or too loose, with the thumb on the side of the Stick. Fingertip is on the side or top of the stick and lay hand down to let both arms aside the body.

1.2.4 Elements of the songs played by Mong Wai

The songs played by Mong Wai from music collection and from interviewing with Ser La Peaw can be classified as

1.2.4.1 Music for Teachers worship ceremony

- Ba-Puay

1.2.4.2 End of Buddhist Lent Day

- Mei La Kra

- Phu Jai Ta Mai

- Posa Waa

- See Ta miae miae

1.2.4.3 Temple festival

- Pado Yong

- Sein Jiao Ye

1.2.4.4 Fulfill one's vow

- Si Tong Piaow

1.2.4.5 Songkran Festival

- Mieae Nata

1.2.4.6 Funeral

- Look kuay Tawa Song

- Jong le Bong wew

- Song doe mie

1.3 Study the role of Mong Wai within Karen culture

1.3.1 Social roles in Karen culture

Role of Mong Wai as the medium to gather Karen people and makes the seasonal rituals such as celebration of agricultural crops, act as the spiritual anchor of Karen people to build up moral in their profession and lead to the harvest celebrations. Mong Wai also acts as the tool for annual ritual for worshipping the spirit of Karen and reflect the well-being and gratitude.

1.3.2 Role to society of Mong Wai in Karen culture that act as the main musical instrument of Cha puu Cha ou ensemble for joining religious ceremony. Part 2 The analysis of song that has been played by Mong Wai in Karen Culture in SangkhlaBuri, Kanchanaburi

From the analysis of 12 Karen songs played by Mong Wai in Sangkhlaburi, Kanchanaburi on, it can be summarized as follows;

1. Music Form

There is the variety of music forms which is

usually repeated twice. The second round is played with faster melody than the first round.

2. Music phrase and ending tone

There is the variety of music phases. The most common note is Fa.

3. Rhythmic pattern

There is a variety of Rhythmic patterns and melodic patterns. The most common Rhythmic pattern is

- x - x	- x - x	- x - x	- x - x
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4. Melody characteristic

The songs have a repeat and up beat rhythm.

Recommendations

The research provides an insight knowledge and data regarding life style, background and culture of Karen people. The suggestions for further study are;

1. Study different types of music which are unique for Karen.
2. Study other music instruments of Karen-culture.
3. Compare the Karen culture with other culture in Sangkhlaburi District, such as Mon, Myanmar, etc.

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