



Mythology of Thai Music in Series of Archaeological Dances

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Abstract

The concept of semiology of culture and music iconography were employed to analyze how the composer created the historical sign in the series of archaeological dances and in which way they were signified. It was found that the composer had created the series of archaeological dances for signifying at two levels

1) Denotation level: the composer had created the signifier in the series of archaeological dances to “signify the ethnical sign and ancient state culture” by employing the outline of composition of Thai modern history to adapt in the creation of the series of archaeological dances. Firstly, it represented the point of meaning of the Suvarnabhumi ethnic group through musical intonation. Secondly, implying area, time and qualification in the art and culture of the ancient state in the Kingdom of Thailand by Thai ensemble, choreography and costume design. Thirdly, representing Thai values in the series of archaeological dances through the custom of musical creation and Thai traditional choreography which became a sign of Thai civilization.

2) Connotation level: To signify the nation-state myth by implying Thai values in the series of archaeological dances, that reflects a new meaning instead of the old one as follows; (1) Ancient state cultural area become the Thai nation state by integrating the cultural boundary of the people in the land of Suvarnabhumi in the past and the geographical boundary of the Thais at present and (2) The Ethnic group and diversity of culture becomes one nation state by implying the significance of shared history and culture in the diversity of the group of people in the Kingdom of Thailand at present. The series of archaeological dances are similar to those of historical speech in perceiving Thai values as national art and culture which inculcates national unity in people.

Key words: Thai classical music, series of archaeological dance, myth, semiology, Meaning

Introduction

The concept of semiology of culture (Roland Barthes) has been employed to analyze the series of archaeological dances; Thai traditional performance, that are Dhavaravadi dance, Srivichai dance, Lopburi dance, Chiang Saen dance and Sukhothai dance, which were invented from gathering historical con-

tent, applying the cultural resource of Thai music and dance as instrument. This creation was one of the sign constructions to signify the meaning of Thai national history, not only to tell cultural history directly, but also to be concealed some of considered social ideology inside. Then to study and analyze the meaning system through Thai music and dancing art in this

performance will allow us to clarify the historical signified machinery. The research focused on adopting mythology by reconstructing the series of archaeological dances to investigate “code” or “rule” of the cultural system. The purpose of the research is to clarify our understandings of how works of art are invented and publicized to society.

This research intended to present new guideline of research by integrating the concept of interdisciplinary approach to investigate more differently and widely, instead of concluding the specific theory. Because this research introduces and clarifies the invention of works of art and performance as a historical concept and shows the way to lead to the heart of music in such cultural performance which passed on national attitude, memories, then audiences can apply this method to study other field on art more.

Main Research Question

“ What methodology does the composer create the historical sign in the series of archaeological dances and what do they signify? ”

Objectives

1) To analyze how the composer creates historical signs through music in the series of archaeological dances.

2) To interpret and critique the signs founded in the series of archaeological dances.

Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative research methodology to study the historical signifying system in the series of archaeological dances. Four qualitative data collection methods were used including;

1) Participant and Non-participant Observation: To be an audience and practice as performer occasionally and collecting all techniques of composition, choreography and costume, also investigating the role of and relation between the performance and other

social activities. These revealed the composer’s opinion and audience understanding, included to visit museum, archaeological site, and having field trip.

2) Semi-structured Interviews of which the interviewees are primarily selected to fit the research’s objectives (Purposeful Sampling), divided in three groups; (1) informants who have experienced and have been transferred all knowledge about the series of archaeological dances directly from the composer (Montri Tramot). (2) Modern scholars who keep themselves up to date. (3) informants from the referral of the first 2 groups (Snowball Sampling).

3) Documentary Research from museum, art gallery, and national achieves, all documents collected systemically, researcher has grouped into three topics that are art knowledge, historical knowledge and the concept of theory in research.

4) Information from Audiovisual Materials that the researcher has found and chosen to explain the phenomenon that related to this research. It was primary selected by the relation of information to the topic of research and was allowed to be broadcast to the public.

Results

In regards to data collection and analysis, it was found that the composer had created the series of archaeological dances for signifying in two levels; 1) Denotation level: the composer had created “the signifier in the series of archaeological dances” to “signify the ethnical sign and ancient state culture” and 2) Connotation level: To signify the nation-state myth by implying Thai values in the series of archaeological dances, that reflects new meanings instead of old ones as follows;

1. Denotation level

1.1 Named as code

The name of each dance in the series of archaeological dances were named with regards to memoriz-

ing the introduction as the ancient state history including; Dhavaravadi dance, Srivichai dance, Lopburi dance, Chiang Saen dance, Sukhothai dance, and related to the various resources such as document of annals, antiques, and ancient remains, etc. All documents have been transferred to the audience by using music and dance as code to let them reach and interpret sign in the series of archaeological dances immediately.

1.2 Signified music and dance as sign

According to the research findings, the composer has created the series of archaeological dances to present meaning in three aspects;

Firstly, to create the signifier of the Suvarnabhumi ethnic that were believed to be founders of ancient state from Dhavaravadi to Sukhothai period in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Secondly, to imply about territory, time and characteristics of ancient state art and culture in the Kingdom of Thailand. That was signified the location and territory through unique work of art in those places believed that to be the former capital or an important city.

Lastly, to conceal Thai values in the series of archaeological dances as Thai roots of civilization since Dhavaravadi and India have had relations for long time. It finally become identity and has been developed to Thai work of art.

1.2.1 To create signifier through music by

1.2.1.1 creating accent to signify ethnic characteristics

The composer has designed the pattern of notation variously to signify ethnic characteristics and imitation by changing the pattern of melody, like the accent of speech in each culture. The difference of patterns of the drum and rhythmic percussion played an important role to make difference of accent as well and reflected emotion in different gesture of dance (Chaiseri, P., 2013; Dhamavihan, S., 2013). Those aspects were used in composing the song in the series of archaeological dances such as Mon accent repre-

sented Dhavaravadi, Java accent represented Srivichai, Khmer accent represented Lopburi, Lao accent represented Chiang Saen and Thai accent represented Sukhothai.

1.2.1.2 Choosing instruments for signifying cultural identity and ancient state territory

The characteristics of some instruments are able to relate song with historical ancient state content by inventing new instruments regarding to the sculpture and using it in performance (Yubhodi, 1967; Boonchanpeth, 2006).

The instruments produced not only the sound expressing different emotion, but also implied the ancient state territory. Beside, some Thai instruments have been chosen to present Buddhist society in Thailand more than some ancient instruments played in Brahman and Hindu ceremony.

1.2.1.3 Holding to Thai music customs in combining ancient state culture and Thai values

To imply Thai values by applying Thai principles of composition as follows;

- Adapting and expanding old song to present relations between old Sukhothai song (Thep Thong) and Sukhothai dance song (Pethsom, 2012).

- Beating rapidly has been occurred to present the rhythmic pattern showed different accent and related to gesture of dance in each culture (Sawangdee, 1999; Jaturapat, 2001).

- Using the pattern of Ching to show identity of Chiang Saen dance for preserving Thai Northern style and using the pattern of drum that suited for each dance (Suboon, 2012).

1.2.2 To create signifier through dance

1.2.2.1 To invent gesture of dance and costume by imitating sculpture to present identity of ancient state culture

To reproduce the picture of ancient state idea, belief, costume, and dance to become reality which also stimulated and related to the audience to antiques and ancient remains easily. Because each

style of dance was as symbol of each culture, they were used to as an indicator of the Thai educational system also.

1.2.2.2 To combine main gesture of dance (from sculpture) and the connective gesture of dance for relating ancient state culture and Thai values.

To highlight Thai values in gesture of dance by linking all main gestures from sculpture and using Thai dance as connective element (Eiamsakul, 2012; Pukaoluan, 2013; Boomchanpet, 2013). Later, that was absorbed into Thai educational system, students became familiar with relationship between ancient dance and Thai dance as representative of ancient state history and Thai history appropriately.

1.3 The series of archaeological dances as Thai civilization sign

The signifiers and signified meaning in the series of archaeological dances played a role in Thai civilization sign because it can be responded audience in many ways as follows;

Firstly, civilization is like an indicator of Thai advancement and evolution:

The reason why the composer has invented the series of archaeological dances by using important work of art as signifiers is to present the cultural advancement through identity of each period of time leading a comparative study of the dances then significance as cultural indicators. It has reflected the order of revolution of Thai cultural arts. When the composer has linked this to historical understanding or other written documents, audiences have got perception about the signified process implying the civilized society in Thailand through the series of archaeological dances.

Secondly, Thai civilization among World civilization:

“Customs or principals” were an important factor constructed by musical components and Thai dance together. As representatives of a great tradition, and also the background of cultural selection in

signified process of little tradition that founded in local instruments, pattern of main and connective gesture of dance and costume design which represented each way of life of different culture from past till now.

The historical meaning of the series of archaeological dances has long period of time since the great Indian civilization has expanded especially in South East Asia. Religion has played important role to cultural art, thought, and belief and finally adapting to local wisdom then become unique work of art slowly. The composer has intervened knowledge of World civilizations of art evolution by using antiques and ancient remains that were influenced by Indian culture to present the interaction between great tradition and little tradition in the series of archaeological dances. Then audiences were able to link Thai civilization to the Silk Road; the introduction of world culture including Chinese, Persia, and Indian civilization, through Indian Ocean (Sriaraya, 2012). This has demonstrates the development of ancient culture in the Kingdom of Thailand at the same time as other cultures and become Thai civilization signifier of Thai civilization.

2. Connotation level

The historical nationalism has influenced the structure of the series of archaeological dances because the composer has applied knowledge of modern state history to invent the series of archaeological dances. When audiences have understood the area of interpretation; the relation of meaning between the way of composition, gesture of dance design and Thai history then becoming meaning of nation-state myth and Thai value, the signifier was able to signify well.

Not only to present ancient culture in Thai work of art, the series of archaeological dances have also presented Thai nation-state concept through the meaning of Suvarnabhumi ethnic, territory, period of time and ancient state art style hidden in the series of archaeological dances. This phenomenon of Bathes called the appropriation process as follows;

2.1 Ancient state cultural territory has become Thai nation state

The composer has focused on the data-collected area selection by choosing the cultural boundary divided by historical art style, also considering under modern state map of the Kingdom of Thailand. The composer has intended to invent the series of archaeological dances from Suvarnabhumi people before divided to country so they has collected the data remained their own culture such as Mon; the oldest culture in Dhavaravadi before becoming Lopburi, Chiang Saen, and Sukhothai. When the series of archaeological dances has been performed in order according to the period of time, the concept of territorial state has been represented by integrating cultural boundary of people in the land of Suvarnabhumi in the past and geography boundary of Thais at present.

2.2 Ethnic group and diversity of culture become one nation state

The signified system that changed the primary meaning about ethnic group with diversity of culture has become new signified system that signified Thai nation-state myth by implying Thai value through shared history and culture of audiences. The series of archaeological dances has background from ethnic groups and represented as Thai national culture then the composer used this to create the historical signifier to stimulate audience for perceiving Thai civilization development.

Even the primary meaning was created through signifier; the series of archaeological dances, to signify the similarities and differences of ethnic and ancient-state culture signifier, the new meaning of Thai value was placed on and present through Thai music and dance. Those made audiences considered the unity and ethnic group with different culture in detail and finally developed to be one's own identity.

Also, the series of archaeological dances has presented the concept of Thai history by shortening historical content and reproduced to public and allowed audiences to interpret by using one's own experience.

The audiences have been perceived that Sukhothai period was the beginning of Thai art and culture from merging diversity of culture. This has stimulated audiences to understand about Politicization of Ethnicity then become the cultural unity.

The signified system of Thai value in the series of archaeological dances has reflected that the primary meanings about ethnic and ancient state cultures were not hidden and the concept of Thai nation-state history could be happened all the time. Moreover, myth was the social product of politic system which determined policy for people to follow in society. The myth of the series of archaeological dances are similar to one of historical speech in perceiving Thai values as national art and culture which inculcates national unity to people naturally and effectively.

Discussion

The series of archaeological dances: Appreciation and Meaning

The series of archaeological dances was like the work of art combined with sound and picture then become language to present the concept of Thai history under educational system and other mass communication. So it played important role in reflecting beliefs and Thai historical ideology.

The results found that the signified process through the series of archaeological dances has related to the structure of history composition. The composer has found out the way to transfer historical content, so it has been created to present written history in the past including content from ethnic groups, territory, ancient art and other culture characteristics. Also, the composer has been inspired by historical surroundings under nationalism ideology to transfer as musical and dance language. Then the series of archaeological dances was the reproduction of historical ideology by the composer using sound and motion to present the concept of interdisciplinary history, as said that "art is manmade inspired by sur-

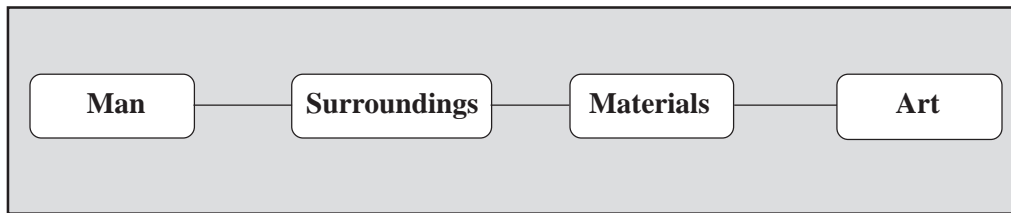


Figure 1: Map of relation of art creation (Chaiyonyot, 1995)

roundings”.

On the other hand, the series of archaeological dances have been created by applying political ideology, especially influenced by the policy of Fine Art Department to motivate audiences to study and gain knowledge about history from antiques and ancient remains. Even the composer was able to create many performances, Rabum (the name of dance of the series of archaeological dances) has been chosen because the composer could create more independently with one’s own techniques and creation. Moreover, because the series of archaeological dances has no lyric, it could stimulate audiences to imagine by linking meaning between art performance and knowledge of history. Music has power to present emotional feeling to audiences then it allowed audiences to relate their appreciation experience to their knowledge independently.

The audiences are able to reach the meaning of the series of archaeological dances in various levels depending on their relation between the intertextuality of knowledge of history and experience of art and dance performance appreciation. This research identified two factors effecting to ability of reaching the historical meaning of the series of archaeological dances as follows;

1) The ability of musical element discrimination; the audiences need the understanding of Thai song composition theory to signify through rhythm and melody as language we have used to communicate in daily life.

2) The knowledge of Thai history; it is important to stimulate the audiences’ understandings of musical accent, history and instrument development,

musical identity. The audience need this to link the signifier of the series of archaeological dances, which the composer has taken from Thai history study under Thai educational system, with their knowledge. This also support the audience to understand neighbor country’s history so that they are able to reach the meaning of being Thai through understanding of various ethnic and cultures.

The historical signification through art has been used under the political concept that support art theory called restrained art as national art or traditional arts. This represents identity to signify the advancement and the unity. The series of archaeological dances not only is the uniqueness of Thai art, it also entertains audiences and gives them an appreciation. Then it has become famous and was applied in many occasions.

Moreover, the reproduction was occurred in different way such as applying in performance celebration of Loy Krathong festival at Sukhothai historical park that presented the great era of Kingdom of Sukhothai; the birthplace of Thai community in the past. Likewise, in the educational system, some teachers have taken this for being part in performance to teach Thai culture as in Concordian International School; Ms Uthairath Tippawan has been interviewed and mentioned about applying Sukhothai dance into the performance in the school. Not only to entertain students and celebrate the festival but also to tell Thai history related to the appreciation of King in the short time effectively (Tippawan, 2013).

In other words, using the series of archaeological dances not only teach history directly but also stimulated audiences by entertaining them. It was a political phenomenon reflecting and merging cultural

art in each period of time appropriately.

The series of archaeological dances: Power of Thai national- theatrical state

In Suvarnabhumi society before modern history, the progress of cultural art was identified in relation to the virtue of King. As the article of Nidhi Eiamsriwong has revealed one of concept about South East Asian state before modern period; theatrical state, state was used as theatre to present how great they are or the virtue of King, in the other hands, state was like the model of universe while King was as god who had the greatest power. In addition, he has explained about ancient South East Asian King more that, with no the real power such as military, telecommunication, etc, the ceremony presentation has been occurred regularly as sign of power instead (Eiamsriwong, 2012).

The important path of state power construction of Suvarnabhumi was signification of model of Universe and God and was changed from religion to real power in society to compare with power of King. This ancient state-power construction has reflected the attention of human to create the great ancient remains, not only attractiveness but also being easy to control all people.

During 19 A.D., Western imperialism influenced to South East Asia; the new rule called modern state has occurred (Wantana, 1948; Kamutpitsamai, 1982), the theatrical state has still remained as a royal ceremony or other social activities. It has been represented identity, sovereignty, civilization state to avoid the pressure of Western imperialism. In the past, we had modeled world of God through antiques and ancient remains, told the stories through architecture, sculpture. The remains were as historical resources and human's life-attitude collection as well. These data has been influenced to next generation to interpret and find out the truth of way of life. The development of archaeology enabled reflection on human behavior of seeking for fact including technology and methodology for gaining more truth of all phenom-

enons occurred in the past.

The main principle of creating the series of archaeological dances was interpreting ancient cultural music and art then signified the cultural identity of each ancient state through music and art. The modern theatrical state has been created by the composer's ability to forecast. Even they have changed content, the structure has still remained. As the research finding, the series of archaeological dances is Thai national-state myth signified Thai value and supported the concept of nationalism. This has made people be in unity by sharing same culture and history then the ethnicization of the Polity has supported state to be able to control people easily after the politicization of Ethnicity finished. In the other hands, in the past music and art has played important role in cultivating faith and belief to people under ruled.

In addition, the research found that human unification under power constructed process, knowledge of history and political ideology has occurred all the times even reasons have been changed. The study of the series of archaeological dances has indicated that all former culture had shared the same roots. After developed to state or kingdom and country, culture and traditional discrimination has occurred, and then culture has become indicator of both similarities and differences. In the study of Myths in work of art is important for audiences to understand meanings hidden in the performance and that was such a great power of good sense cultivation.

In the future, the group of Suvarnabhumi people will become together under new myth called "ASEAN Economic Community: AEC", this is for supporting business growth while two countries in Asian group are having the territorial dispute. Both phenomena could be happened at the same time because those are under different historical speech absolutely. When they are under different myth, people may be able to accept to be both friends and enemies at the same time as well.

Studying the series of archaeological dances, not

only lets the audience understand the historical signification through art, it also teaches us to understand meaning of everything in society. Because there are many levels, forms of meanings and different in each society, understanding in connotation level is like being mindfulness in Buddhism. Man; the signifier creature, need to be aware of similarities and differences and know how to live in society under conflict with open-mindedness.

Conclusions

Thai classical music is the cultural product relating Thai ways of life for a long time that is why we can study and learn knowledge of social science, humanities, and economics, and through it. However, if the researcher has a chance to employ the idea of interdisciplinary to the research broadly, it will bring new knowledge and findings with various points of view. Then it will reflect the audience and students to be interested, having agreement, argument reasonable more in academic style.

This research indicates that the perception of art happens because of many components, especially the history knowledge and experience of appreciation. The important components that support the audiences' understandings are the composer or state that creates the art, the artist, and the audience who has the background to understand the sign in art effectively.

As the composer

1) The artist is as the instrument to cultivate the ideal to people in society. Also, the art has been related to history, power, belief, the state is responsible for art work production so that it is as the national identity. In addition, state plays the important role to drive the idea of cultural production which is able to cultivate the harmony in society by absorbing the ideal hidden in art and finally become people's behavior.

2) The art is a part of intertextuality with other knowledge then the curriculum need to be developed by integrating all field of study for the highest advantages to learners. Besides, the change of the way of

study from recitation to integration and learning by doing will allow learners to understand and be able to recognize faster and accurately.

3) Thai music and dances will be easier to understand and reach for teenagers because of mass communication. Because most of teenagers lack of experiences to be the audiences, the support from mass communication will give them more chance. When they have more understanding then they have ability to criticize as well.

4) The composer, Montri Tramot is the real artist who is the good model of the music innovation inventor. He understood the root of Thai traditional methodology of composition and applied to be the guideline to transfer the historical concept by creating the sign through melody. Then the good composer should have motivation of searching for information, understand what they do, have imagination and the good taste on musical appreciation. These components indicate the way to think out of box that the present artist should realize and follow then be able to criticize correctly and appropriately.

As the artist

1) The artists need to understand the performance before performing. The result of this research found that there are many melodies which are different from other song. Because the main point of Thai musical culture is improvisation, the musicians need to know every detail of the song so that they can adapt and pass on the meaning of the song as the composer's desire.

Like the musician, the dancers need to know the main gesture of the performance from the ancient sculpture. Then they freeze themselves while dancing to transfer the composer's desire and show the gentle Thai dance beautifully. This reveals that it is important for the artist to understand the composer's desire before pass on the message to the audiences.

2) The series of archaeological dance is important to the historical knowledge. The performers are able to apply to the new technology to support the

process of historical signification appropriately.

As the audiences

The important role of audience is the creative consumer. Even there are many wonderful Thai performances, it will be nothing unless the audience understand and has the good background about it.

Then the signification hidden in the art will disappear and the art became meaningless. Hence, the audience should be open minded and always develop oneself to increase more experience of art appreciation by seeking for an opportunity to take part in the performance as the audience, finally the efficiency of art relation will increase appropriately.

Recommendations

1. To research more about the signification pro-

cess of Thai song or other work of art. This will bring us greater understanding about work of art as the cultural product which plays important role in cultivating thought, belief or ideology and finally are able to see through myth and know how to consume wisely.

2. To signify in composition the need to apply the intertext creation process. Then the interdisciplinary research should be supported more to give audiences more opportunities to reach the value of work of art conveniently and effectively.

3. To support the researcher to employ various theories from other fields of study so that the new method of analysis will be more advantage not only for musical education, it also will bring new point of view in various dimensions.

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