# GENDHING TARI SRIVIJAYA: THAI-COMPOSED MUSIC FOR ADAPTATION ON JAVANESE GAMELAN

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the process of transculturation between Thai classical music and Javanese gamelan through the creative adaptation of the *Rabam Srivijaya* repertoire. Originally composed by Montri Tramote as part of the *Rabam Borankadee* to foster a sense of national identity, the music is reimagined here as *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya*. The study utilises an interconnected-music-networks framework to bridge process-centred performer experiences with structure-centred artistic visions. Central to this transformation is the deconstruction of the *tham nong saradtha* (essential melody) and *neua phleng* (basic melody) to identify its *Luktoke* (core target notes), which then serve as the foundation for a Javanese *balungan* (skeletal melody). Structurally, the adaptation systematically aligns Thai rhythmic tiers with Javanese colotomic cycles: the moderate *Song Chan* tempo is transformed into the *Ladrang* form, while the fast *Chan Diao* tempo is mapped to the *Lancaran* form. The studies also address idiomatic differences, such as the inclusion of a Javanese *buka* and the reconstruction of melody positions to compensate for the absence of the Thai classical music technique. Performed in the robust *Soran* style suitable for dance. *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* exemplifies the resilience of traditional forms, highlighting the shared intangible gong culture of Southeast Asia through cross-cultural musical interaction.

**Keywords:** *Gending Tari Srivijaya, Rabam Srivijaya, composition and adaptation, Gamelan, Thai Classical Music*

## INTRODUCTION

Thai music has been influenced by the musical characteristics of various genres across Southeast Asia, Asia, Central Asia, and the West. The origin of music lies in thought; however, conveying musical knowledge requires the imagination of sound. The entire process associated with musical practice is connected to the remembrance of sound. Subsequently, the sonic ideas conceived in thought can serve as the foundation for further creative developments. Moreover, individuals gradually utilise these imagined sounds in listening, performing, composing, or improvising (Hickey & Webster, 2001). In practice, Thai music is categorised as court music, which occupies the highest position in the hierarchical classification system of national music. This music has been elevated to the status of national tradition, while other regional styles are considered folk music. Conversely, following the political changes of 1932, the cultural revolution initiated a top-down approach to cultural adjustments under government directives. Montri Tramote, the inaugural head of the Thai music division at the Fine Arts Department, was responsible for the standardisation of Thai music within modern Thai policy. He composed *Rabam Borankadee*, a collection of archaeological musical pieces intended to symbolise the historical periods of Siam and its prosperity (Moro, 2004). At that time, Montri created numerous repertoires, including overtures, songs for performance, and instrumental pieces.

Economic and social conditions are constantly evolving globally. Different forms of traditional music are often perceived as timeless and unaltered. In the context of postmodern pastiche, traditional music assumes a globalised identity. Although this music is deliberately categorised as traditional, neo-traditional, or locally-rooted popular music (Hutchinson, 2006). Combining traditional forms with innovative elements to create a sense of novelty through the modernisation of tradition (Laing, 1992). The connection between a nation's music and external musical styles is facilitated by cross-cultural contact, which involves combining languages, concrete references, instruments, and performance styles. This phenomenon, often referred to as 'transculturation,' describes how foreign musical elements are absorbed into local cultures. The influence is reciprocal; local and traditional music also shapes the development of new music styles. This system formalises the intersection of local, national, and global influences (Gramit, 2014). The impact of the transnational space on the creativity and diversity of music has encouraged considerable cross-cultural exchange through the presentation of diverse musical styles. Nevertheless, every musical culture showcases its distinctiveness based on unique idiomatic particularities (Wafula, 2019).

Within the sociology of music, musical aesthetics in a world society fulfils a vital social function. Informed by cultural studies and ethnographic research, music

is perceived as a purposeful reflection of society. The contemporary cultural politics surrounding musical homogenization and diversity often interpret local musical forms as expressions of the resilience of national, communal, racial, and gender groups (Erlmann, 1993). José Maceda (1986) stressed that the understanding of time is fundamentally different in Southeast Asian music compared to Western music. In Southeast Asia, time is conveyed primarily through instruments like gongs, metallophones, and Gamelan ensembles. The unique sound produced by the vibration of these instruments defines their character and often reflects court traditions. The sound of gongs also permeates sacred practices, including rituals, ceremonies, and interactions with invisible spirits.

Within the study of Southeast Asian musical instruments, Judith Backer highlighted the concept of a "music family." This framework examines regional bronze gong cultures that exhibit striking commonalities in their function, instrumentation, musical ethos, and musical syntax across the entire region (Becker, 1980). Thai *piphat* and Javanese *gamelan* systems illustrate shared intangible cultural heritage and have been studied comparatively, focusing on melodic structures and ensemble configurations. A key area of interest is improvisation, a technique where both traditions demonstrate remarkable similarities and paradoxes. This improvisational approach is vital to the musical process, shaping core theoretical music concepts, defining aesthetics through melodic organisation and logic, and adapting specifically to the requirements of specific instruments (Sumrongthong & Sorrell, 2000). This phenomenon is occasionally referred to as "cross-cultural musical interaction." This cultural exchange process involves key individuals, such as Thai and Javanese diplomatic musicians. Historically, musicology reveals a mutual absorption and adaptation of musical elements between Thailand and Java. The adoption of these elements became more significant through their diplomatic relations, in which musical instruments even served a political function as diplomatic gifts. This cultural borrowing extended to songs, rhythms, melodies, and tuning systems, all of which were mutually adapted (Hughes, 1992). Comparative analysis of Thai *piphat* and Javanese *gamelan* systems tends to focus heavily on identifying analogous traits within their musical repertoires, particularly regarding specific musical phrases and execution techniques.

Sacredness and ritual represent fundamental practices in both Thai and Javanese societies. Repertoire pieces such as the Thai *homrong* and Javanese *talu* are associated explicitly with sacred ritual performances. The *talu* repertoire is crucial to life cycle ceremonies, defined by its melodic structure and temporal organisation. The *homrong*, conversely, typically pertains to spiritual transportation, functioning as an intermediary between human and divine realms. When used with *wayang kulit*, the *talu* accompaniment reinforces the sound's function as a potent mystical symbol (Wong & Lysloff, 1991). The definition of creativity typically begins with a

multifaceted perspective incorporating four key elements: the individual creator, the person, the procedure used to create, the process, the final output, the product, and the context or environment in which the creativity manifests (Hickey & Webster, 2001). Sri Minulya was composed specifically to commemorate King Chulalongkorn's 1901 visit to the Surakarta court. However, the first instance of a gamelan composition based on a Thai melody is typically attributed to the 1929 visit of King Prachatipok. The *Ladrang Siyem* (gamelan version) adapted its musical elements directly from the Thai royal anthem repertoire, *Sanrasoen Phra Barami* (Hughes, 1992).

To provide a deeper understanding of Thai music and its exchange of traits with neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, this paper examines the striking similarities between the Thai *piphat* and the Javanese gamelan. The research aims to enhance the creative songwriting process. It specifically focuses on the Srivijaya repertoire, composed by Montri Tramote (a prominent musician and the first Thai national artist for music). Tramote's work was influenced by a cultural revolution policy aimed at expanding public awareness of Thailand's long-rooted history. Srivijaya is part of Rabam Borankadee, an archaeological musical suite comprising the repertoires of Chiang Saen, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Sukhothai, and Lopburi. This creative composition highlights Javanese *gamelan* ensemble and playing techniques, representing the Javanese influence during the historical Srivijaya kingdom period by utilising selective Thai composition methods adapted for *gamelan* practice.

**LITERATURE REVIEWS**

**Srivijaya in Historical Perception**

The historical polities of Srivijaya, Chiang Saen, Dvaravati, Sukhothai, and Lopburi served as the conceptual foundations for a creative performance commissioned by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand. The production was primarily informed by archaeological investigations conducted across multiple regions of the country. These investigations encompassed site visits, examinations of statues, sculptures, and carvings, as well as extensive documentary research. To oversee the development of the performance, Dhanit Yupho, Director-General of the Fine Arts Department, established a dedicated committee. Within this committee, Montri Tramote was appointed as the principal composer, while Lady Paew Snidvongseni, Lamun Yamakhup, and Chaloi Sukhavanich were assigned responsibilities as choreographers. Additionally, costume design was undertaken by Sanit Disthaphan, and headdress design was executed by Chit Kaewduangyai (Santiatchawan, 2018). The powerful Srivijaya kingdom was established across maritime Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and Asian waters in the late seventh century, as historian George

Cœdès revealed. Recognised in Chinese records as Shih-li-fu-shih and in the Malay Ligor inscription as Srivijaya, the Kingdom was renowned for its economic influence. Its primary importance lay in its role as a vital trading kingdom, which, in the seventh century, facilitated the export of resin from the Middle East to China (Wolters, 1979). Based in Palembang, Sumatra, the Srivijaya kingdom lasted roughly 500 years, from the seventh to the late thirteenth centuries. It expanded into a powerful empire dominating Southeast Asia by securing control over the Malacca and Sunda straits. Economically, Srivijaya integrated into the major trade network connecting West Asia, India, and China. Its political control was solidified through the subjugation of regions such as Malayu-Jumbi and Kedah, enabling it to assert dominance over the Malay Peninsula. The Kings of Srivijaya held great symbolic power, often referred to as the "king of mountains and isles." Their role included legitimising power by adopting hinterland cultural symbols, such as acting as the patron of the nagas. The empire's reputation and influence, particularly its Buddhist affiliations, reached beyond the area of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Kulke, 2016; Hall, 1976).

Indian and Buddhist intellectual traditions were seamlessly woven into Srivijaya's indigenous culture. This synthesis was particularly evident in the monarchy, where the kings exercised symbolic legitimacy by strategically blending Buddhist doctrine and ritual with the established ceremonial roles and authority of the Sumatran war chieftains (Hall, 1985). Trading states like Srivijaya, where internal improvements such as political coordination or population growth could independently boost trade efficiency, increase local exports (forest, sea products, minerals), and drive demand for imports (Lieberman, 2010). The powerful Srivijaya Empire once significantly influenced the Southeast Asian archipelagos, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and particularly Southern Thailand. Later in Thailand, the city of Nakhon Si Thammarat was identified as a key centre of Srivijaya. Numerous archaeological discoveries in Southern Thailand confirm the former prosperity and enduring Srivijaya heritage in the region. According to Thai historical narratives, this cultural legacy imaginatively extended its influence, connecting with the Sukhothai Kingdom and persisting into the early Ayutthaya period (Nuanla-Ong & Sunthornpiyapan, 2018). The historical period in Southern Thailand began with the Srivijaya Empire. During this era, the region's international relations focused on the Malay Peninsula, where Southern Thailand played a crucial part in the ancient economic system (Boonroeng, 2018). In this context, Srivijaya represents more than just ancient history; it embodies a nostalgic sense of nationhood for the Thai people. Thailand's long and proud history emphasises Thai identity, rooted in culture and civilised traditions. The nation-building efforts following World War II reinforced the concepts of the civilian and the modern nation-state. This nostalgic link to Srivijaya may strengthen national solidarity among contemporary Thai citizens.

**Javanese influences in Thai music and performance**

The adoption of Javanese cultural values is evident in traditional Thai music, including the instrument Pii Chawa (a Thai oboe influenced by Java) and the musical piece Pleng Chawa. This adaptation helped construct and enrich Thai music; for instance, the Chawa music scale was integrated into the Thai 7-tone scale theory, as physically demonstrated by the Pii Chawa's fingering system. For centuries, these Javanese traits have been deeply embedded within Thai society and culture. This established Javanese musical knowledge has subsequently been conveyed through the Malay traditional medium (Tassanawongwara &Nualyai, 2023). On the other hand, evidence from the *Desawarnana* underscores that Java maintained consistent contact with various regions of mainland Southeast Asia during the latter half of the fourteenth century, primarily through maritime trade. Thailand is identified in ancient Javanese records as *Ayutthaya* or *Ayodhyapura*. Similarly, Cham inscriptions dating back to the mid-eleventh century employ the term '*syangka*'—frequently interpreted as '*syam*'—to denote both the region and its inhabitants. Of particular interest is the designation '*dharmanagari*,' a city later identified as *Nagara Sri Dhammaraja*, known today as the southern Thai province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. This name was formally inscribed during the thirteenth-century reign of King *Chandrabhanu* of *Tambralingga*. Historically, the city has also been recognised in Western literature by the name '*Ligor*,' a term derived from Malay speakers (Robson, 1997). From the perspective of Malay historiography, the ancient Kingdom of Srivijaya is traditionally regarded as a Malay state situated on the Indonesian side of the Straits. Whilst much scholarly attention has been focused on the Malay presence within the Peninsula, it is equally vital to examine Malay evidence beyond these borders. Indeed, the migration of the Melayu people encompasses a vast geographic range, extending from the Philippines to the northern reaches of Borneo, Sulawesi, Central Java, and Eastern Indonesia, as well as Sumatra and portions of Vietnam, from about 1500 to 500 BCE (Andaya, 2001).

A notable scholarly connection exists regarding the reconstruction of Southeast Asian musical traditions. During the late colonial era, the official musicologist Jaap Kunst conducted extensive fieldwork in Indonesia, primarily focusing on the courtly art forms of Java, Sumatra, and Bali. From the 1930s onwards, Kunst sought to reconstruct historical performing arts—specifically Gamelan music—by synthesising archaeological, iconographical, and literary evidence. Conversely, in Thailand during the 1920s and 1930s, Prince Damrong advanced a speculative historical perspective, suggesting that traditional music was a common pastime nationwide. During this period, the study of Southeast Asian music began to be framed in a manner comparable to Western musicology, with Javanese Gamelan and Thai music establishing themselves as distinct branches of

the discipline (Kartomi, 1995). Following World War II, Southeast Asian nations underwent a profound socio-political transformation as they embraced the concepts of the modern nation-state. In an effort to consolidate a distinct national identity, Indonesia and Thailand elevated Gamelan and Thai traditional court music, respectively, to the status of national symbols. These musical traditions were carefully curated to foster a sense of shared nationhood—a process rooted in colonial-era perceptions that utilised government-led cultural policies to stimulate nationalism.

The reciprocal sharing of musical knowledge and tradition between Java and Siam was a hallmark of their historical connection, flourishing primarily through the refined channels of royal courtly relations. In examining the framework of cross-cultural musical interaction, David W. Hughes (1992) explores the historical, cultural, and musicological contexts defining the relationship between Thai and Javanese traditions. Both cultures belong to the broader Southeast Asian 'gong culture', distinguished by ensembles that feature instruments such as the Thai Khong Wong and the Javanese Bonang. A clear structural parallel exists between the two; the Khong Wong Yai is regarded as the provider of the basic melody, much in the same way that the *balungan*—or 'skeletal melody'—serves as the foundation in Gamelan music, typically performed on the Saron, a melodic metallophone. The central court of Surakarta developed several Gamelan repertoires with a distinct foreign orientation, specifically designed for significant state occasions. Notable examples include *Gendhing Bangkok* and *Gendhing Siyem*, both of which contain direct references to Thailand. Of particular significance is *Ladrang Siyem*, a work intentionally composed to commemorate King Prajadhipok of Siam's state visit. This piece appears to emulate the melodic structure of the nineteenth-century Thai royal anthem, *Sansoen Phra Barami*. In this Gamelan adaptation, the Javanese composers incorporated the primary melody while integrating traditional Javanese elements, such as the Buka (instrumental introduction), an idiomatic feature absent in the Thai original. Similarly, Thai musical culture clearly adopts Javanese influences in its own repertoires. The historical connection to Java (referred to as *Chawa* or *Yawa* in Thai) is evidenced by several compositions, including *Yawa Lek*, *Yawa Kao*, and the *Tap Chawa* (Javanese suite). Of particular note is *Yawa Kao*, which is an almost entirely melodic imitation of the Javanese *Ladrang Bima Kurda*. Furthermore, the tuning system employed in these pieces uses a full seven-tone scale, which approximates the Javanese *Pélog* scale.
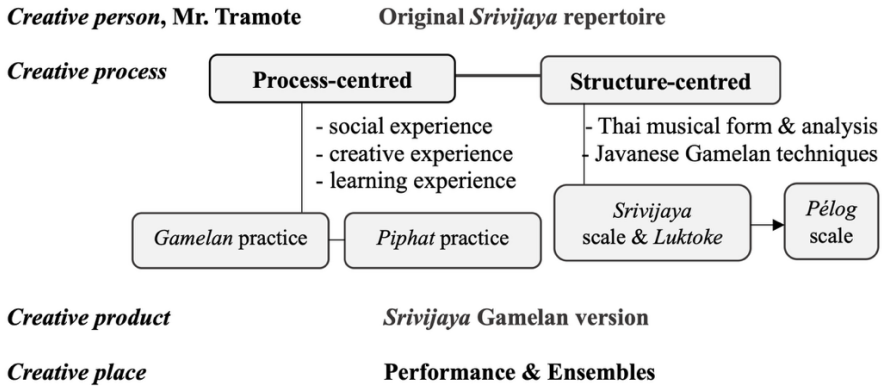
The inspired creativity in the musical relationship between Java and Thailand is best seen in how pieces like Ladrang Bima Kurda overcome the barriers posed by disparate tuning systems. While Javanese compositions have successfully integrated Thai melodic roots, the Thai musical arena continues to be shaped by Javanese adaptations. Interestingly, few Thai works have drawn upon Javanese

history with the same archaeological nostalgia found in Montri Tramote's Srivijaya. This work is a hallmark of Thai composition, capturing a 'sense of Java' through traditional Thai composition techniques. By deconstructing the structures of the Thai Srivijaya, one can begin to reconstruct it for the Gamelan. This paper, therefore, seeks to analyse the musical forms of the original Thai piece and outlines the creative process of transforming its melodic skeleton (balungan) into Srivijara, a dedicated Gamelan arrangement.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Creativity is generally viewed through two primary lenses: the cognitive originality of the individual and the innovativeness of the resulting output. To fully understand creativity, one must examine the 'Four Ps': the person, the process, the product, and the place (Hickey & Webster, 2001). This paper uses 'interconnected-music networks' as a framework for understanding the creative development of the *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* (Weinburg, 2005). Given that music-making is a social activity, a shared community event, and a medium for communication (Akuno, 2000), the 'interconnected-music networks' framework is particularly fitting.

Our understanding of musical interconnectivity is driven by two primary motivations, categorised into process-centred networks and structure-centred networks. Process-based music stems from the philosophy that music is an emergent and procedural art form. In this approach, the composer shares creative control by establishing specific rules that allow the piece to take shape organically. Consequently, the musical outcome is deeply rooted in the performers' lived experiences, reflecting their unique social, creative, and educational backgrounds (local context involvement). On the other hand, structure-centred networks prioritise the final musical outcome and the individual achievements of the musicians. This perspective is often associated with 'high-art' traditions, where the composer's primary focus lies in a distinct artistic vision, meticulous compositional arrangement, and technical excellence in performance (Weinburg, 2005). The creative reimagining of the Sivijaya Gamelan version seeks to bridge the gap between process-centred and structure-centred networks. By navigating these two frameworks, the composer Mr Tramote, Sivijaya, in the Thai version, has reinterpreted and rearranged traditional Thai compositions into an appropriate Gamelan format. This approach honours the classicised-court traditions of both Thailand and Java, while remaining deeply rooted in the local interconnected musical experiences and shared cultural values of Southeast Asia.

Traditional music often serves as a powerful symbol of national identity, linking cultural heritage to a nation's history and evoking a strong sense of nostalgia. Interestingly, Thai traditional music, its performance, and its performers have been both challenged and shaped by the dual pressures of modernisation and nationhood. A prime example is the Srivijaya repertoire, part of the *Rabam Borankadee* performance (archaeological suite). This compositional work, a Gendhing Tari Srivijaya repertory piece, was selected for study and rearrangement because it embodies the historical and musical ties of interconnectivity between Thailand and Java, specifically referencing the ancient Srivijaya Kingdom and the historical expansion of Thai influence. Although it evokes an ancient era, the repertoire was composed approximately 60 years ago using contemporary Thai compositional methods for the current era. The creative process of the Gamelan version began with a rigorous analysis of the original score, utilising the theories of Thai musicologist Manop Wisuttipat and Thai philosophical music scholar Pichit Chaiseree. By deconstructing the music of Srivijaya's skeletal melodic form, the study was able to preserve the essential Thai scales and Luktoke (core pitches), providing the foundational material as balungan for the new Gamelan arrangement.

## METHODOLOGY

### Srivijaya form and analysis

While many study Thai music, only a few scholars have dedicated themselves to the rigorous, systematic musicology required to understand its complex structures. Effective analysis of traditional and classical repertoires must rely heavily on local music knowledge and local music practice. Recognising this, the present study adopts a framework rooted in authentic local traditions, specifically focusing on the unique Thai tuning system and its seven distinct scales, each built upon a five-note core structure. Furthermore, we employ the concept of *Luktoke* to deconstruct and

analyse the underlying musical phrases. By applying the selective approach to musical form, the paper ensures that the unique character of the repertoire is preserved, offering a comprehensive overview that maintains its original authenticity of Srivijaya.

**Theoretical concepts of a traditional Thai music analysis**

A customary practice in Thai music composition involves creating *Khong Wong Yai* melodic patterns. These patterns, composed using the *Khong Wong Yai* method, are widely recognised as the main melody. The main melody consists of established skeletal musical phrases, which are organised into melodic phrases and sentences. Pichit Chaisaree, a distinguished musical scholar, categorised the core melody in Thai music composition into two main concepts: *neua phleng* (basic melody) and *tham nong saradtha* (essential melody). Both concepts are expressed through the *Khong Wong Yai* (Sumrongthong & Sorrell, 2000). The heartbeat of traditional Thai music is built on rhythmic cycles that shift the metre across three distinct levels. No matter the tempo, every musical phrase always wraps up with a '*Luktoke*' (Miller & Sam, 1995). *Luktoke* serves as the melodic anchor in Thai music. It is the specific target note that signals the end of a musical phrase —the final note that ties the entire phrase together (Tassanawongwara & Kanchanapradit, 2020). The foundation of Thai composition lies in its scales. Following Manop Wisuttipat's (2016) framework, Thai music utilises a five-tone scale system—much like a pentatonic scale—extracted from a seven-tone octave. On the other hand, Pichit Chaisaree uses the term 'penta-centric' to describe this system. He argues that while Thai music is technically based on a seven-tone diatonic scale, it typically avoids the fourth, using the seventh degree only on rare occasions (Chaisaree, 2016).

Rather than creating a brand-new work, this paper focuses on reinterpreting the traditional *'Rabam Srivijaya'* melody by Montri Tramote into a Javanese *balungan* structure of Gamelan. The process starts by analysing the original piece through the lens of the Thai composition method, extracting its melodic skeleton—the *tham nong saradtha* and *neua phleng*. By identifying the core scale and the *Luktoke* (ending notes), the process can then use these elements as the foundational material to structure a Gamelan version of Srivijaya. This work conceptualises music as a shared, interconnected practice, focusing on the creative dialogue between Thai melodic traditions and Gamelan structures. It views composition not as an isolated act but as an interconnected practice in which the techniques of one culture can find a new voice within another.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, we will investigate the significance of the transformation from Rabam Srivijaya to Gendhing Tari Srivijaya through a comparative perspective. This will allow us to go deeper into the topic. This is accomplished by comparing the melodic characteristics of two different musical cultures, namely *tham nong saradtha* and *luktoke* in Thai classical music and *balungan* in Javanese gamelan, to investigate the intricate details of melody and song structure in the context of intercultural transformation.

**Holistic structure**

The structure of the *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* presented below is adapted from Thai classical music melodies, as previously mentioned. By the nature of *Rabam Srivijaya*, this song has two melodies for the whole composition. The first part is the *Song Chan* melody, which is known as the moderate tempo, and the second part is *Chan Diao*, which is known as the fast tempo. Then, thinking and working on both Thai and Javanese musical theory, we decided to directly compare and transform '*Song Chan'* to the '*Ladrang'* type with '*Irama Tunggu'* tempo, and '*Chan Diao'* to the '*Lancaran'* type with '*Irama Lanca'* tempo. In defining the structural form of Javanese gamelan music, this instance specifically utilises the *Ladrang* form for the first melodic section, while the Lancaran form is employed for the second section with a more compact tempo. Both forms represent proportions within the chronicle cycle, known as the 'Colotomic cycle,' of a Javanese gamelan composition, with the *Gong Ageng* serving as the significant point for indicating the time cycle. This cycle is referred to as '*Gongan'* or the area of Gong. The details identifying the '*Ladrang'* type are characterised by one section of the song, or one Gongan, consisting of *32 balungan* melodies and *3 Kenong*, followed by *1 Gong* strike. Similarly, the details identifying the Lancaran type are characterised by one section of *Gongan*, consisting of *16 balungan* melodies and *3 Kenong*, followed by *1 Gong* strike, as shown in the melodic example. By comparing and representing the musical styles that are consistent with the musical theories of the two cultures, the music in this work is defined as '*Ladrang*,' which would refer to a moderately concise tempo rate and a melody structure that is consistent with *Song Chan, and* of course, '*Lancaran*,' which would refer to a fast concise rhythm rate with a melody structure that is consistent with *Chan Diao*.
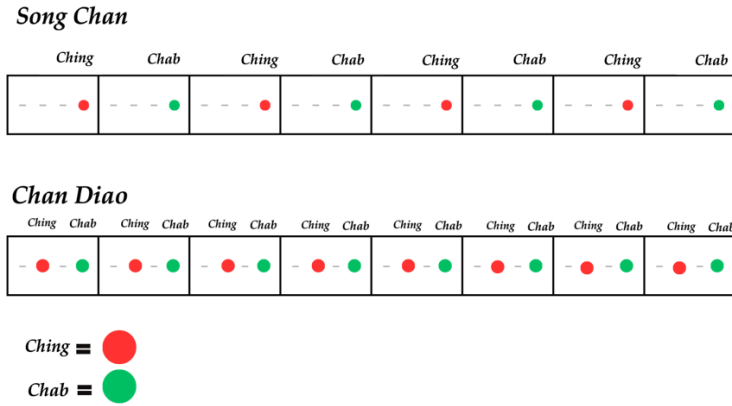
**Figure 1: Song Chan and Chan Diao cycle of Thai classical music**
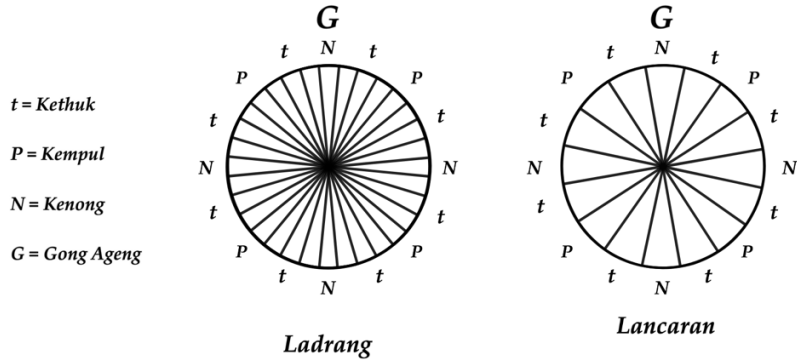(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)



**Figure 2: Colotomic cycle of Ladrang and Lancaran**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

## The repertoire details

The *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* begins with the *'Buka,'* which signifies 'Open.' This is the traditional and theoretical way in which Javanese gamelan begins performing a song. The *Buka* melody uses the final 16 balungan melodies in the last section of the song as a symbol of its beginning; these are shown in Figure 3. Subsequently, all instruments will progress to the end note together with the Gong Ageng, as in the oval example in figure 3, then continue the whole melody in every section throughout the song. However, this differs from *Rabam Srivijaya* in Thai classical music, as when the ensemble performs this piece, they begin with the first section of the melody, rather than from the end.

**Figure 3: Buka Gendhing Tari Srivijaya Compared to Rabam Srivijaya (in the upper staff)**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

In Gendhing Tari Srivijaya, the modification of the tham nong saradtha was essential to adapt the melody to the sound ranges of Javanese gamelan instruments. These gamelan instruments include the *peking, saron, and demung*, which are metal xylophones with a range of one octave and are primarily responsible for executing the *balungan* melody and elaborated melodies. The original composition states that the composer composed the entire melody with the intention of directing it in a particular direction. This was the composer's thought process and intention. As a result, certain sections of the melody that are composed have the characteristics of the direction of the melody that moves by several octaves in accordance with the experiences that the composer has had with the culture of Thai classical music, as shown in blue boxes in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: The original intention melody of Montri Tramote**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

On the other hand, when arranging a melody for a Javanese gamelan ensemble, one important factor to consider is preserving the song's essence, particularly the *luktoke*. However, merely organising melody direction is not the same thing as incorporating various octaves when transforming the *tham nong saradtha* of *Rabam Srivijaya* into the *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya balungan* melody. The melody was adapted to suit the gamelan's performance techniques and instruments, thereby contributing to a sound that is uniquely characteristic and differentiated from the original, as illustrated by a jumping melody that jumps over more than 4 sounds. This was achieved by adjusting the melodic direction to better accommodate performance on gamelan instruments. The example is shown in the red boxes in figure 5.



**Figure 5: The appropriate adapted melody for *balungan* instruments**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

Another important facet that exemplifies the difference in transforming the Thai classical melodic pattern and its conditions is that the former is significantly different from the latter. There is a specific method of playing and producing sound in Thai classical music that is referred to as "*Kro.*" This term refers to a method of performing Thai classical music that is used to sustain the sound long enough to connect each separate melody part with the others. Additionally, this method, shown in figure 5 at the half-note position in the blue square, is used in the Rabam

Srivijaya. However, in Javanese gamelan music, the playing technique on the instrument used to sustain a sound similar to "Kro" does not exist, unlike in the red square.
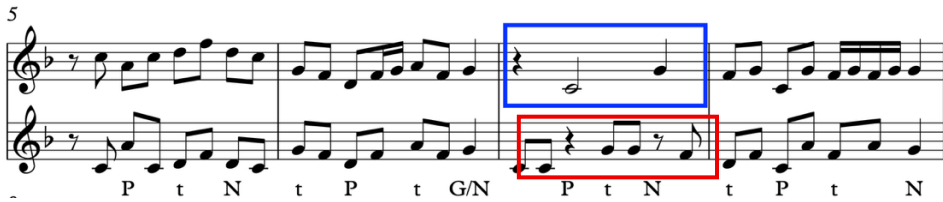


**Figure 6: *Kro* technique notation**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

However, to preserve a particular section of the original melody, we decided to reconstruct its position in the gamelan version while still paying close attention to the *luktoke* concept. Through the modification of the original melody in the form of balungan, which was positioned as the first downbeat of the melodic phrase, followed by the abrupt occurrence of the end note at the upbeat position of the subsequent melodic phrase, and allowing the *kempul* (P) and *kenong* (N) to fulfill the same end note of *balungan* at the following downbeat position in the same melodic phrase (example in orange circle), the original melody was transformed into a new structure as shown in figure 6.



**Figure 7: Preservation the *luktoke* by using gamelan colotomic structure**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

For the last 2 parts of the *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya,* as mentioned previously, the second part employed 'Lancaran' and '*Irama Lanca*' as the structure of the song, and the melody was arranged by strongly following the *luktoke* concept *but* adapting the form of the *Lancaran* melodic pattern style to transform the original melody of *Rabam Srivijaya Chan Diao* to be suitable with the gamelan performing on *Irama Lanca*.

**Figure 8:** *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya Irama Lanca* **part 1**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)



**Figure 9:** *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya Irama Lanca* **part 2**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2025.)

Last but not least, the drum pattern in *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* in both *Irama* was still utilising the same. *Klong Khake* and *Ta-pon Thai* were used as percussion instruments to perform the 'ostinato' rhythm pattern of the Thai classical drumming style in the original *Rabam Srivijaya* style, which represents the sound or accent of

Java in the Thai classical music tradition. Moreover, another reason for using the same Thai drum pattern relates to the dancers' perception. By the same rhythmic pattern, all dancers could be held and connected with the familiar beat and rhythm in the middle of complexly interlocking melodies from the whole Javanese gamelan ensemble.

**The playing style**

*Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* was invited to perform on a Javanese gamelan ensemble when the arrangements were made. Even though this repertoire originated in Thai classical music, which later evolved into the Javanese gamelan style, certain aspects of the performance still employ elements characteristic of Thai classical music. These elements include drumming and percussion patterns. On the other hand, the rhythmic pattern has the potential to clearly and distinctly represent the sound of Thai classical music. A rhythmic pattern is included in the pattern, which is why this is the case. Additionally, we selected the performing style that would be most suitable for this piece. This was accomplished by comprehending and interpreting the manner in which *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* ought to be presented. Consequently, the term "Soran" is used to describe a performance style in Javanese gamelan music that is characterised by loud, robust instrumentation and performance. This style can be described as a detailed, meaningful concept of playing style that follows three key reasons.

- *Instrumental Emphasis:* The *'soran'* style focuses on instruments that are struck with mallets, such as the *saron, bonang* (racked gongs), and Gong kempul (large hanging gongs). These instruments can produce a strong, clear, and projecting sound through a robust-sounding performance.
- *Performance Context:* According to the above, the *'soran'* style is traditionally used for outdoor events, processions, and dynamic sections of performances, such as accompanying *tari* (dance), where a powerful, penetrating sound is needed for dancers to connect their movement with a strong beat and sound along with the ensemble playing.
- *Aesthetic:* While the Javanese gamelan ensemble performed loud (*soran*) dynamics and timbres. This variation in style provides a rich aesthetic experience and can represent the perfectly representative images and sounds of real Javanese gamelan.

By considering all of these key concepts, we can conclude that they fruitfully highlight and clearly show the significance of the 'soran' style's choice and its direct relationship to Gendhing Tari Srivijaya.

**The public performance**

Gendhing Tari Srivijaya was composed entirely by 1st June 2019 and firstly performed in the 'ONE LAND ONE SOUL' concert on 1st July 2019 organised by the Master of Arts Program in Ethnomusicology (M.A. Ethnomusicology), Srinakharinwirot University. The performance was executed entirely by a full ensemble of Javanese gamelan known as *'Karawitan Prasanmitr'* and dancers from the Department of Art Education, Srinakharinwirot University.



**Figure 10: Gendhing Tari Srivijaya Performance.**
(Source: Teerawit Klinjui, 2019.)

**CONCLUSION**

The *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* represents a sophisticated milestone in Southeast Asian musical culture, successfully bridging Thai classical music with the Javanese gamelan tradition. By reinterpreting Montri Tramote's *Rabam Borankadee* through the interconnected-music networks framework, the work moves beyond simple imitation to a profound structural transculturation. It systematically maps Thai melodic anchors—the *Luktoke*—onto Javanese *balungan* structures and aligns Thai rhythmic tiers (*Song Chan* and *Chan Diao*) with Javanese colotomic cycles (*Ladrang* and *Lancaran*). This holistic reconstruction preserves the spiritual essence of the *Gendhing Tari Srivijaya* while expanding its sonic palette through the robust *soran* performance style.

In practice, these works serve as influential tools for contemporary performance. They demonstrate that traditional national symbols are not fixed entities but dynamic elements that can evolve within a globalised context. By resolving the structural paradoxes between Thai classical music and Javanese gamelan, this project establishes a foundation for a more comprehensive "Southeast Asian sound" that respects historical traditions while fostering a collaborative, transnational future. Such an approach ensures that traditional music remains relevant, resilient, and influential in the 21st century.

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**NOTES**

*Song Chan*

**Definition**: *Song Chan* is the intermediate rhythmic cycle in the Thai classical music system (which means the *Thao* system or the three rhythm ratios of Thai classical music melody structure).

**Context**: It represents the standard or "normal" version of a melody. It is twice as compact as the Sam Chan (the large tempo rhythm ratio) and twice as large as the *Chan Diao* (fast and small tempo rhythm ratio).

**Ching (Thai cymbal) Pattern**: In *Song Chan*, the rhythmic pattern of the *Ching* is played at a moderate pace, typically falling on every 4th downbeat in each notation room with a 4-beat measure continually.

*Chan Diao*

**Definition**: *Chan Diao* refers to the tiniest and fastest of the normally rhythmic cycles in the *Thao* system of Thai classical music.

**Context**: It is the "shortest" version of a normal melody. It is twice as fast as the *Song Chan* and four times as fast as the *Sam Chan*.

**Ching (Thai cymbal) Pattern**: In *Chan Diao*, the rhythmic pattern of the *Ching* is played at a fast pace and is the most compact, typically falling on the 2nd and 4th beats in each notation room with a 4-beat measure continually.

*Irama Tunggu*

**Density Ratio**: In this level, the saron panerus (or peking) typically plays two notes for every single note of the balungan.

**Tempo and Feel**: While it literally means "waiting" or "moderate" rhythm, it feels faster than the subsequent Irama Dadi but slower than Irama Lancaran.

**Musical Role**: It often serves as a "bridge" during a piece. Musicians typically start a composition at a faster level, and then the drummer signals a transition into Irama Tunggu as the tempo begins to slow down, allowing elaborating instruments to start filling the space.

## *Irama Lanca*

**Density Ratio**: In this level, the saron panerus (or peking) typically plays one note for every single note of the balungan.

**Tempo**: It is played at a fast laya (tempo), often described as seseg (very fast).

**Musical Form**: It is the standard irama for the Lancaran form, which is a 16-beat cycle characterized by a lively, driving rhythm.

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