

THE MAHORI MUSIC AT BANGKOK THONBURI UNIVERSITY

¹Mi Yang and Panya Roongruang

Bangkok Thonburi University, Bangkok, Thailand

Email: Tooksainet@gmail.com

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Abstract

Objectives of research were: 1. To know the history and developments of mahori music. 2. To know the mahori music traits. 3. To know mahori music of Bangkok Thonburi University. The research methodology was qualitative research consisting of documentary studies and fieldwork. The key informants are three music experts from the Faculty of Music, Bangkok Thonburi University. Research findings were: 1. Mahori music originated in the court of Ayuthaya that was derived from the “khab-mai” ensemble in Sukhothai by adding a krajabpi lute into it to make the mahori quartet, later on, the ensemble got larger by adding more instruments to the previous ensemble, then manifested itself in various kinds of ensemble ranging from mahori quintet to mahori nonet; and finally, at present time mahori ensemble has three sizes, a small ensemble, a double ensemble, and the large ensemble. 2. Music traits: The musical instruments were three kinds of fiddle, flute, xylophones, circle-gongs, and rhythmic percussion: Music genres to be played were the suite, tripartite and miscellaneous tunes except for the ritual music (high naphat): The scale was usually a *thang phieng-aw* (tonic = Bb) in pentatonic mode: The etude for mahori was usually “Tab-ton-phleng-ching” 3. Mahori music of Bangkokthonburi is located in the Faculty of Music and manifested itself in a small ensemble and double mahori ensemble; the members were instructors and students that been performed occasionally: The new piece “Bangkok Thonburi Overture” created by instructors had presented to the public recently.

Keywords: Mahori music, Bangkok Thonburi University

Introduction

Mahori is a kind of Thai classical music, the generic term implies a specific type of ensemble and its musical genre. The origin of the term *mahori* is not quite known but only its meaning said above. This article aims to describe the history, music traits, and function of mahori based on knowledge from studying mahori music at Bangkok Thonburi University.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were:

1. To know the history and developments of mahori music.
2. To know the trait of mahori music.
3. To know the mahori music of Bangkok Thonburi University.

Research Methodology

This is qualitative research consisting of documentary study and fieldwork; the documentary study was studied the relative books and articles, then doing fieldwork by interviewing the key informants at the Faculty of Music, Bangkok Thonburi University. Criteria of the key informant; the key informant must meet the following criteria:

1. Earned at least mastered degree in Thai music.
2. Experienced teaching Thai music for at least 10 years
3. Experienced performing mahori music for at least 10 years

The selected key informants were: Associate Professor Prakorn Rodchangphuen, Ajan Arthorn Thanawat, and Assistant Professor Dr.Chutasiri Yodvised



Prakorn Rodchangphuen

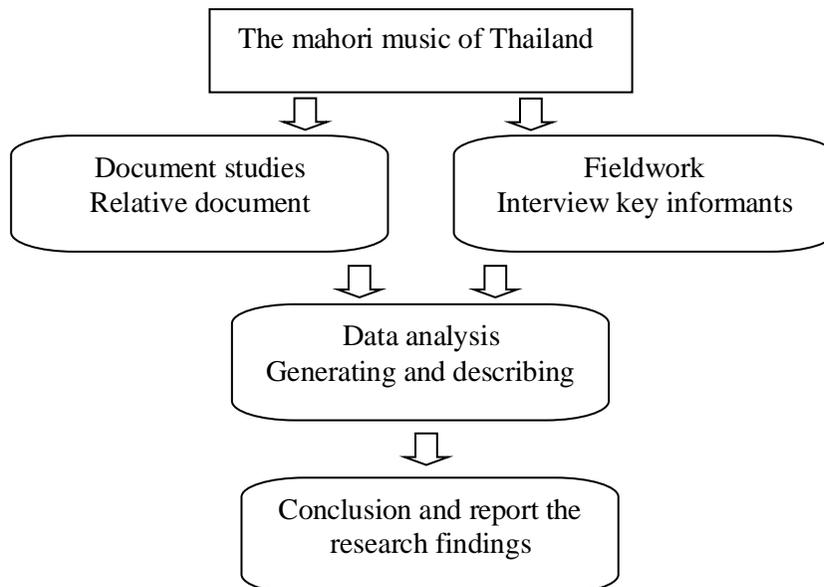


Arthorn Thanawat



Chutasiri Yodvised

Conceptual Framework



Delimitation of the study

The delimitation of study; this research will investigate only the *mahori* music of Thailand by document studies, interview three key informants (Thai music expert of Faculty of Music, Bangkokthonburi University) and generate data by descriptive analysis as well as music analysis in terms of ethnomusicology.

Research Findings

History and development of mahori

This topic divides into two aspects, ensemble, and musical genre.

Ensemble: In the Sukhothai era (13th century), there was a court musical ensemble called *khambai* ensemble consisted of one three string bowed lute or fiddle (*saw-sam-sai*), a waisted drum (*ban-dawh*), and a singer who also plays a bunch of flat thin sticks (*krab-phuang*). This ensemble functions for royal ceremonies and entertainment. After Sukhothai merged with Ayuthaya (a second capital city of Thailand) in the 15th century, the court musician added a plucked long neck lute (*krajabpi*) and a single-headed goblet drum (*thone*) into the *khambai* ensemble, then this ensemble has called “*mahori khruang si*” (*mahori* quartet) which consists of a singer (play *krab phuang*), a *saw-sam-sai*, a *krajabpi* and a *thab* (a single head goblet drum) which is called “*thone*” today. This is the first *mahori* ensemble of Thailand that originated in the court of Ayuthaya.

Later on, the court musician developed the *mahori* ensemble by adding more instruments to it and the ensemble got larger, louder sound and more completed until it become standardized of *mahori* ensemble of today. Until now there are eight kinds of *mahori* ensembles.

1) The *mahori* quartet (*mahori khruang-si*) consisted of *saw-sam-sai* (three-string spike fiddle), *krajabpi* (long-neck lute), *thab* (a small angle head goblet drum) and a singer who also play *krab-phuang* (a bunch of thin wood and metal mixed percussion).

2) The *mahori* sextet (*mahori khruang-hok*) consisted of six performers included; *saw-sam-sai*, - *krajabpi*, *thab* and *krab-phuang* (played by a singer), *khloi* (end blown flute) or *pi-chanai* (double reed short flare oboe derive from Indian *shahnai*). This ensemble was appeared in early Ayuthaya period.

3) The *mahori* septet (*mahori khruang-jed*, seven performers) was appeared after the *mahori* sextet around middle Ayuthaya period which is consisted of; *saw-sam-sai*, *krajabpi*, *Tha*, *krab-phuang* (played by a singer), *khloi* or *pi-chanai*, and *ramana* (frame drum) was added to the existed ensemble.

4) The *mahori* octet (*mahori khruang-paed*, eight performers) developed in the Bangkok period. At this time *mahori* ensemble was expanded into a larger size because of the invention of new instruments; the *mahori* octet consisted of; *saw-sam-sai*, *krajabpi*, *krab-phuang* (played by a singer), *khloi*, *thone*, and

ramana, plus *ranad* (xylophone) and *ranad-kio* (crystalophone) and later it was replaced by *khawng-wong mahori* (medium size)

5) The *mahori* nonet (mahori *khruang-kao*, nine performers) consisted of the instruments in mahori octet plus *jakhe* (floor zither). The *krab-phuang* was replaced by *ching* (finger cymbals) to produce a louder and sharp sound.

During the reign of King Rama III the *ranad thum* (low pitch xylophone) was invented to support the new musical genre; the people put this lower xylophone into mahori ensemble

6) Mahori *khruang khu* (double mahori orchestra) consisted of eleven performers. It was the mahori nonet plus with *ranad thum* (lower xylophone)

7) Mahori *khruang yai* (large mahori orchestra); this ensemble occurs when *ranad-ek-hlek* (high metalophone) and *ranad-thum-hlek* (low metalophone) were added into the mahori *khruang khu* during the reign of King Rama IV.

8. Present mahori orchestra: During King Rama V the *krajabpi* was omitted because the sound is too soft and the sound of *jakhe* go over it. (Sangad Phukhaothong: pp.124-125) This mahori ensemble remains until today and the *krab-phuang* was back to function in this ensemble and the time of bringing back *krab-phuang* into mahori ensemble is unknown.

9. Mahori ensemble of today: There are three standard mahori ensembles of today; the mahori *wong-lek*, mahori-*khruang-khu*, and mahori -*khruang-yhai*

The musical genre: The earliest mahori, mahori quartet derived from the original ensemble of *khab-mai* ensemble that functions to entertain the king and for royal ceremonies that still existed in the Bangkok period. The earlier mahori music as court music it took the same idea as *khab-mai* ensemble that was for the king's entertainment and for royal ceremonies.

According to Chao-phraya Pra-khlang (Hon) who wrote the book entitled "*tamnan mahori*" (the mahori legend) stated that "there were 197 mahori pieces that divided into two kind, the mahori suite and the miscellaneous pieces. The mahori suites contained 23 suites included seven pieces of "the morning teacher greeting" and seven pieces of the "evening teacher greeting"; while the miscellaneous group included 19 pieces in Thai style, 84 pieces in Mon style and six pieces in Chinese style. There were 73 mahori lyrical song texts for mahori singing and one mahori story song text named "the Kaki mahori song texts" which included 36 pieces. (Roongruang. 2002, p25-29)

The major music in Ayuthaya normally consisted of a vocal part and a musical part. The singing style was kind of a syllabic text setting in moderato

(*song-chan* tempo) there was no melismatic text setting like as the present style of singing.

The mahori music traits

Music traits imply characteristics of music; to describe this topic researcher took the mahori etude (a musical exercise) the “the tab ton phleng ching” as a case study.

Tab-ton-phleng-ching has two versions; one is in adagio (*sam-chan*, slow tempo) that has the song texts from Kaki lyric of Chao-phraya Pra-khlang (Hon) containing four pieces of music (*ton-phleng-ching*, *jarakhe-hang-yao*, *tuang-phrathat*, and *nok-kmin*), another is in moderato (*song-chan* tempo) containing five pieces (*ton-phleng-ching*, *jarakhe-hang-yao*, *tuang-phrathat*, *nok-kmin* and *thorani-ronghai*) the lyric is from “*Pra-Rothasen*), composer anonymous.

Instruments: Mahori ensemble consists of any instruments as like as in regular mahori ensemble, high fiddle (*saw-duang*), low fiddle (*saw-ou*), floor zither (*jakhe*), end blown flute (*khlu*), xylophones (*ranad*), circle gong set (*khawng wong*), finger cymbals (*ching*), a couple of single headed goblet drum and a frame drum (*thon* and *ramana*) and a bunch of flat wooden and metal stick (*krab-phuang*). the two instruments are made in special structure, high xylophone (*ranad-ek*) and a medium size gong (*khawng mahori*). The mahori xylophone is similar to the regular one but being tuned in two pitches higher than regular xylophone; the 21 bars xylophone the lowest sound is in B and the top one in a. (<http://tkapp.tkpark.or.th/stocks/content/opendream/instruments>) The mahori gong is smaller than regular circle gong set (*khawng wong yai*) which is consisted of 18 gong chimes, the lowest one is tuned in C and the top one is in f. (<http://www.rapeethai.com/>)

Musical genres and style of performance: Mahori ensemble is able to perform most of Thai compositions such the suite (*phleng-tab*), tripartite (*phleng thao*), grand piece (*phleng yai*), the musical overture (*phleng homrong*), except the high *naphat* music (ritual music) that required special style of performance, special timbre of music and special musical emotion. The mahori style of performance differs from those of piphat ensemble in which gentler melodically sequences in both kinds of melodic music and motivic music.

The melodic contour of music usually appears in undulating form based on specific melodic sequences of a particular composition.

5.2.3.3 Mode and scale: Thai musical scale is called *thang* divides into seven scales from the lowest to the highest resister are 1. *thang nai-lod*, 2. *thang*

nai, 3. *thang klang*, 4. *thang phieng-aw*, 5. *thang nawk*, 6. *thang haeb* and 7. *thang kruad*. As with any Thai ensemble, the mahori music has instruments being tuned in seven pitched equidistant in which every interval (second) of pitch steps are in 171.4 cents (Ellis system) and usually plays on a scale of *phieng-aw* (tonic note is equal to Bb) and normally play in pentatonic mode (five tones scale).

The etude music of mahori

Thai music usually provides some music exercises or etude that are suited to the style of performance of each instrument such as the etude entitled “*thayae* and *mulong*” which is suitable for piphat music that consisted of main xylophones and circle gong set. The normal etude for mahori music is the “*tab ton phleng ching*” as said earlier and the notation is as follows.

Tab thon phleng ching is a suite form consisting of four piece, *ton-phleng-ching*, *jarakhe-hangyao*, *tuang-phrathat* and *nok-kamin*.

Generally speaking, the suite is available in both vocal and instrumental music; the manner of performance, with or without vocal part is based on occasion and it is normal to be heard just only instrumental music. In the case of including the vocal part, the song text is taken from an ancient mahori lyric.

The notation of the instrumental version available here is a generic version that could be performed in various styles of instruments.

Ton-Phleng-Ching Suite

Note by Mi Yang

$\text{♩} = 60$

5

9

13

17

Jarakhe Hangyao

Note by MiYang

$\text{♩} = 60$

5

9

13

17

21

Detailed description: The musical score is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The second staff is marked with the number 5. The third staff is marked with 9. The fourth staff is marked with 13. The fifth staff is marked with 17 and features a more complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed eighth notes. The sixth staff is marked with 21 and ends with a double bar line.

Tuang-Prathat

Note by Mi Yang

$\text{♩} = 60$

5

9

13

The musical score is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The second staff is marked with a measure number of 5. The third staff is marked with a measure number of 9. The fourth staff is marked with a measure number of 13 and ends with a double bar line. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some slurs and ties.

Nok-Khamin

Note by Mi Yang

$\text{♩} = 60$ **A**

5

9

B

13

17

C

21

25

Mahori music at Bangkok Thonburi University

General information: Mahori ensemble of Bangkokthonburi University belongs to the Faculty of Music. It is a small ensemble or *mahori-wong-lek* consisting of one instrument of each kind; *saw-sam-sai*, *saw-duang*, *saw-ou*, *jakhe*, *khlui-phieng-aw*, *ranad-ek*, *ranad-thum*, *khawng-wong-yai*, *khawng-wong-lek*, a couple of *thon-ramana*, *ching* and *krab-phuang*.

In the previous years, most members of the ensemble were Thai music major students plus western music major students who were interested in Thai music and some instructors; right after the pandemic of Covid 19 virus the ensemble has shrunk remaining only instructors and a few students and also practice for performance occasionally.

The new composition: The Bangkokthonburi mahori ensemble has produced a brand new composition that had presented to the public year ago. The composition entitled “*Homerong Krungtheptonburi*” (Bangkokthonburi Overture) was composed by Assistant Professor Dr.Chutasiri Yodvised together with Ajan Arthorn Thanawat. The composer was inspired by a few Thai classical compositions in order to create the institution overture to symbolize the academic potential of the higher institute as the center of multi-disciplines in light of Thai classical composition. Each musical phrase represents each discipline which is mixed up together for the completion of the new piece.

The composer borrowed some fragments of Thai pieces and reproduced them in a kind of composing technique such as rephrasing, intension, and extension of the melody even creating the new melodies and putting them up together in form of the overture. The overture has two movements; each movement contains four sets of adagio tempo in *probkai* rhythmic pattern.

The instruments used to perform this piece and notation is as shown below:



ซอด้วง



ซอสามสาย



ซออู้



ระนาดเอก



ระนาดทุ้ม



ซ้องวงใหญ่



ซ้องวงเล็ก



จระเข้



ขลุ่ยเพียงออ



ฉิ่ง



ฉาบ



กรับพวง

Pictures credit: http://110.170.81.29/instrument_detail/1427199834572/th/word

Music Notation Bangkokthonburi Overture, Generic version

โหมโรงกรุงเทพมหานครบุรี

โน้ตกลาง

$\bullet = 60$ ①

5

9

13

17

21

25

29

33

1. 2. ②

โน้ตกลาง

2

37

41

45

49

53

57

61

65

1.

2. rit.

Conclusion

Bangkok Thonburi Overture analysis is based on theory of “systematical analysis” which appeared in the book entitled “Principle of Ethnomusicology” (Roongruang: 2013, p 25-29) Topics of analysis are as followed.

Medium: The medium is from a double mahori ensemble consisting of string instruments (three kinds of fiddle), wind instruments (end-blown flute), and percussion including rhythmic and melodic instruments such as xylophones and circle gong sets (see the picture of instruments) that produce a clear, wide range, strong and gentle sound.

Melody: The melody of this piece is performed in pentatonic mode on a scale of *phieng-aw-bon* bases on seven pitches equidistant tuning system of A.J.

Ellis. The range is between G below the tonic note and c above the leading note as appeared on staff notation.

The melodic contour of the piece is undulating conjunctive style, having a variety of ornamentation found on a particular instrument and the canonic style of both fulfillment and syncopation style appeared on a particular part of the piece.

Tempo: The tempo of this piece is a tempo giusto, isometric throughout the piece except at the last phase that slows down at the given sign (rit).

Texture: Texture of the piece is an “idiomatic heterophony” in which each instrument plays its own style of a musical idiom that has derived from the main theme of the large circle gong set to make various variations of a musical idiom

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