

# **STUDYING ON THAI TRADITIONAL SOCIAL CIRCLE DANCE (RAM THONE) AT BANGKOKTHONBURI UNIVERSITY**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims 1) to study Thai Ram Thone and 2) to teach Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) to Chinese students at Bangkokthonburi University. It took the vocal music Chinese undergraduate students of Bangkokthonburi university as the sample group and surveyed their learning of Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). The research object of this experiment is eight students from Bangkokthonburi university. They are all interested in this research. This research will use guidelines to teach the eight students and observe and collect data.

Research findings showed the guidebook is divided into three parts; each part has a different training content, including knowledge of Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). Learn About Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) and training.

**Keywords:** Thai traditional music; Ram-Thone; Thai traditional social circle dance

## **Introduction**

The traditional music of central Thailand is a significant piece of the Thai social legacy that uncovers the way of life of individuals living in the fields in the North of Bangkok. Traditional music is the tunes and tunes of local individuals. Traditional singing utilizes plain and straightforward language and

regularly includes a trade among guys and females. It is normally sung during celebrations and festivities or joined into local working practices. An assortment of Thai names had been doled out to its various structures, for example, *pleng chao ban*, *pleng peun ban*, *pleng peun mueang*, *pleng patipak*, and *dontri peun ban*. In any case, these terms all fall under the English language class of 'society melodies.' The procedure of *mook-dad ta* has acquired the traditional music of central Thailand. *Mook-dad ta* is verbal transmission and retention with no composed record. The key attributes are the enchanting articulations, profound implications, and clever retorts, despite the effortlessness of the language.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To study Thai Ram Thone.
2. To teach Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) to Chinese students at Bangkokthonburi University.

### **Literature Reviews**

Traditional Thai music elements have their own identity. The Thai modal system is neither pentatonic nor a Chinese or Javanese system. It is diatonic with seven whole tones. The traditional tuning system is not seven equidistant whole tones. Each ensemble has its tuning dialect, and the tuning of intervallic relationships among the seven notes in a scale are different. Thai musicians who perform traditional music have a good sense of the intervallic relationships in the scale and use their ears to perform the correct pitches. The system can be compared to Western tuning systems before equal and just temperaments were developed. In Thai traditional music, the fourth degree of the scale is usually avoided, and the seventh degree is used only occasionally in a melody. Modern scholars Paul Seelig, and Alexander J. Ellis, have tried to compare the Thai tuning system with equal Western temperament. To compare the Thai seven-tone scale and the twelve semitones of the Western chromatic scale in one octave, those scholars use eighty-four as the denominator for the seven tones of the Thai tuning system and the twelve semitones of the Western chromatic scale in one octave (Morton, 1976). (See figure 1.)

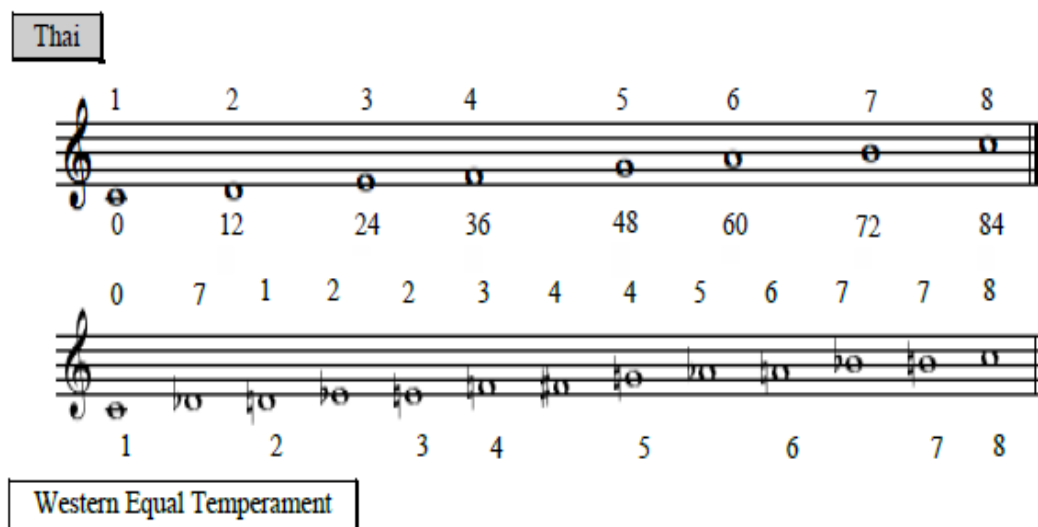


Fig.1 Comparison Using Eighty-Four as the Denominator

Thai traditional music classifies ensemble instruments into four groups according to the characteristics of the musical line and their role in the ensemble. The four groups are melodic percussion, rhythmic percussion, blown instruments, and bowed and plucked instruments. Playing all four groups in an ensemble creates the unique texture of Thai traditional music. The main melody is played simultaneously with the variants of the various sonic strata in a faster or slower rhythm. This is called “polyphonic stratification.” The result is not as discordant as Javanese gamelan music. The relationship of one melody to specific variants of itself, one idea viewed simultaneously within unity, characterizes the Thai Traditional Music ensemble. The technique of simultaneously combining one main melody and its variants is incorrectly described as heterophony; polyphonic stratification seems a more precise since each of the “layers” is not just a close approximation of the main melody but has distinct characteristics and a style of its own. The main melody in Thai traditional music is played by a set of nipple gong kettles (*Khong Wong Yai*), a set of sixteen gong kettles on circular rattan frames. In contrast, the other melodic instruments simultaneously play variants of that melody.

The development of traditional Thai music instruction in earlier periods was perceived as nonacademic. An owner of a Thai musical ensemble trained their family and relatives in the household, transmitting knowledge of how to

play accompaniment for traditional performances, such as Khon, theatrical plays, puppet shows, and *Li-ge*. In this way, they ensured the continuation of their livelihood. Additionally, Buddhist monasteries also played a supporting role in Thai traditional music education, while formal, systematic ensembles could be found within the palaces of royal families or in a noble's residence. These places were where musical art flourished, not only due to the presence of highly skilled musicians but also because of earnest patronage and participation from the royal family and officers. Some of them were established, Thai traditional musicians and composers. Their performances and compositions have contributed greatly to the field. This was the situation until the Siamese coup d'état of 1932, when the status of Thai traditional music was affected by changes and political upheaval (Kosinanont, 1998).

Today, there are well-documented instructions and learning criteria regarding Thai traditional music education at higher levels. In terms of curricula, there is balanced consideration and management between subject content and academic knowledge. Teaching Thai traditional music in higher education emphasizes academic and professional objectives to address the philosophy and aims of each curriculum. The practical aspects are carried out according to the classification of musical instruments, ensemble formations, and learner aptitude. There are instrument-based subjects such as percussion, plucked string, vocal, and ensemble-based subjects such as *pipat*, *khrueng sai*, and Thai vocal practicum (Healey, 1990).

Thai traditional singing is a unique art form due to its ornately complex techniques and requires a fine sense of memory and strenuous training. Several techniques a singer applies to render melodious lyrics and melismata to audiences. These techniques can be transmitted from instructors to learners. Due to a decreasing number of Thai traditional singing students and an aging population of renowned vocal masters, the number of skilled learners is decreasing. The study of instructive methods of Thai traditional singing in higher education reflects the current nationwide situation of Thai traditional singing instruction and also reveals the techniques and instructions of the masters in higher education level. The results will serve as evidence that provides contextual information regarding instruction methods of Thai traditional singing, which will consequently lead to a body of basic information

for improving vocal instruction as well as Thai traditional music education for years to come (Swangviboonpong, 1965).

Thai traditional singing is considered a unique performing art because of its complex, sophisticated techniques, and these techniques are applied differently across different institutes and masters. Some think Thai traditional singing today is incomprehensible, as though the lyrics are indistinguishable. Superficially, the statement is partly true. Thai traditional singing is a practice of simplicity and, at the same time, expertise. While many advanced technologies have helped many branches of performing arts, musical instruments cannot be manipulated by an outside force in singing. The most important tools for singing are inside the singer. Thus, singing is an art of invisible delicacy which can be perceived only by sound. To become a fine vocalist, apart from possessing natural talent, one must go through the right set of basic training. The following are fundamental principles that should be clarified to aid reader comprehension in later parts of this article. 1) The Main melody: Its length must be precisely complete. The main melody of a musical piece consists of melody, composition, proportion, rhythm, phrase, and correct rhyming scheme. Melodic and vocal variations can always refer to the main melody; 2) Melody is an arrangement of high and low pitches. A good musician should know how to decorate a melodic line, whether ascending or descending, while keeping the original lyrics and melismata intact; 3) Sound: This is the result of a vibration or an interaction between internal organs of the human throat or vocal cord, i.e., the throat, stomach pit, oral palate, teeth, gum, tongue, lips, and chin. The human auditory system can perceive these vibrations. The lower the frequency, the lower the pitch. The higher the frequency, the higher the pitch. A traditional Thai singer must blend with the instrumental melody, which is why it is required to maintain the consistency of vocal sound at any given pitch; Wording and pronunciation. A singer must correctly pronounce every word as written in composition and know the phrasing of different types of poems. A singer must follow correct intonation by controlling their chin, mouth, tongue, and throat. These organs will facilitate the signing process (Latartara, 2010).

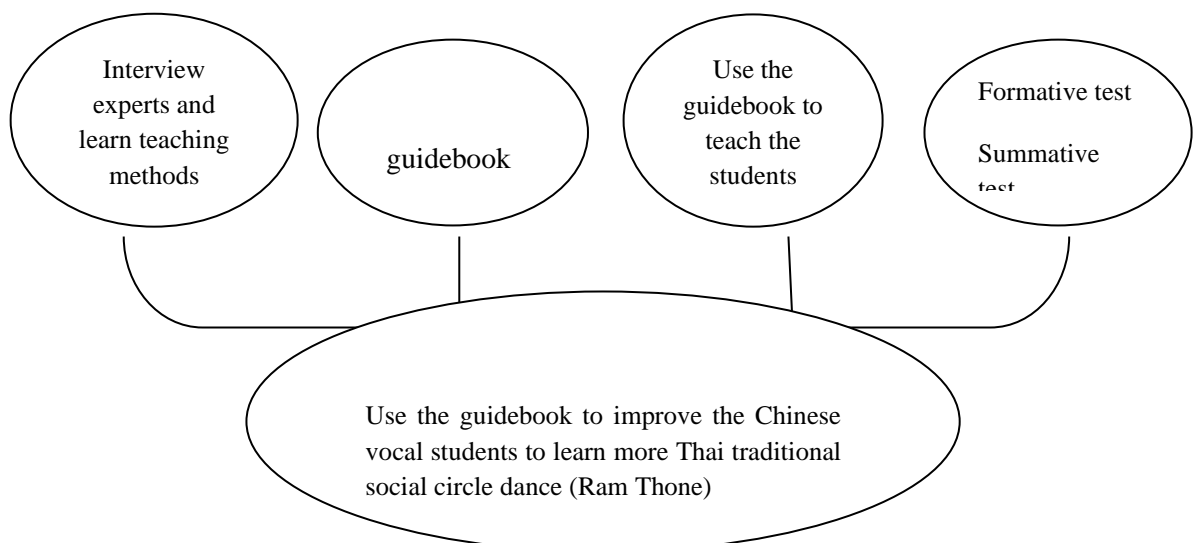
Regarding the emphasis on these techniques, it is up to the singer to decide; 5) Rhythm: This is a constant beat throughout a musical piece. There are two types of rhythm. A regular rhythm is a base for playing musical instruments and singing. Ching rhythm is designated by the sound of the ching to indicate strong and weak beats. Nah Tab rhythm is designated by different kinds of drums and is also used as a unit to measure the length of a composition. A melody is said to be one rhythm long when it completes one cycle of Nah Tab.

The researcher aimed to study traditional Thai social circle dance (Ram Thone) to teach Chinese students Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) using the right ways. Let the students know what is Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) and know more about Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone).

## Research Methodology

This research used a qualitative research approach and collected data by interviewing three expert teachers and listening to their opinions and suggestions on the Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone), learning the teaching methods of three expert teachers. The experimental population was eight vocal music undergraduate Chinese students at Bangkokthonburi university.

## Conceptual Framework



## Research tools

1. The questionnaire for the vocal music undergraduate Chinese students at Bangkokthonburi university.
2. An interview form about Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) experts.
3. The formative test and summative test

## Results

The researcher interviewed three expert teachers, learned expert teachers' teaching methods, and collected the expert opinion from the guidebook. Eventually, the guidebook is designed into 3 parts, a total of 10 classes, each part corresponding to a training topic, which contains knowing Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone), learning Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone), and complete Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). With expert advice, the guidebook was designed for Chinese vocal students at Bangkoktonburi university. The 10 courses in the guidebook are:

**Part 1:** Listen to Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). (one lesson)

**Part 2:** Learn the basics of Thai music. (two lessons). Learn how to pronounce Thai music lyrics. (one lesson). Pick Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) and listen to them. (one lesson). Learn selected Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) (two lessons).

**Part 3:** Complete the selected Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). (two lessons). Show completed Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) (one lesson).

**Formative tests results:** During the whole teaching process, the researchers to guidebook each part of the teaching effects evaluated. At the end of each part of the teaching to the student, the formation test, compare the former test results, use the guidebook to teach students to have played an important role in improving students' grades.

**Summative test result:** Through a period to learn and consolidate, in the final summative tests, experts on student performance are assessed, through test and comparison with the former test, to get the conclusion that using the

guidebook for students in teaching to improve students' to learn Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) better and faster.

**Expert evaluation:** The researcher reported the experimental results to the expert group after the experiment, and the expert's evaluation of the results of this study is as follows:

The compilation of the guidebook is rich in content and clear in thinking. The difficulty of the course in the guide is distributed from simple to relatively difficult, and the arrangement is reasonable so that students can get the correct learning direction after class.

## **Discussion**

From the point of view of the design of the guidebook fit the characteristics of the vocal music Chinese undergraduate students at Bangkokthonburi university taught.

First, it is very important for Chinese students to be interested in Thai music. Because the music of each country has its characteristics and style, Chinese students should accept Thai music at the beginning. For Thai music, there are many styles. Researchers choose one of these styles," Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone)," as the content of this study. Researchers let Chinese students understand the basic knowledge of Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). Second, the Thai language has become a big problem after becoming interested in Thai music. Therefore, researchers should correct the basic pronunciation of Thai for Chinese students. Third, the researchers selected some traditional Thai social circle dances (Ram Thone) to listen to Chinese students and learn Thai traditional social circle dances (Ram Thone). Finally, Chinese students need to follow the steps of the guidebook to complete their study of Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone).

From the test results, using the "Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) guidebook" can improve the learning efficiency of Chinese students in many ways, and learn Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) simply and quickly.

According to the results obtained, using the guidebook teaching can improve students' efficiency, and using the guidebook is feasible. This also



shows that the guidebook has certain quality assurance. In addition to the opinions given by experts and teachers, researchers have also repeatedly examined the difficulty of the guidebook, which is suitable for students' learning.

## **Conclusion**

The Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) guidebook contains 10 classes, teaching content around Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone). The course is designed with step-by-step process. The researcher should make not only Chinese students interested in Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) but also let Chinese students learn Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) quickly and easily. According to the suggestions given by experts, researchers apply this to the guidebook. Good design can improve students' interest in learning and cultivate students' ability to active learning. In the teaching process, teachers should participate in students' discussions, find and solve problems in time, and better control the content of the course.

The guidebook is divided into three parts; each part aims for Chinese students to learn Thai traditional social circle dance (Ram Thone) better and faster, which makes the training purpose of the whole guidebook clear. The training goal is the premise of effective training, which greatly improves learning efficiency.

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