

ปี่ใน ในวงปี่พาทย์ชาวบ้าน

Pi Nai in The Piphat Ensembles of Thai Villagers

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยทางมานุษยดนตรีวิทยา มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาลักษณะของปี่ใน 2) ศึกษาบริบทของปี่ใน และ 3) ศึกษาบทเพลงสำหรับปี่ในดำเนินการวิจัยโดยศึกษาข้อมูลภาคสนามจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างคนปี่จำนวน 12 คน ที่ได้รับการสุ่มแบบเจาะจงโดยใช้เทคนิคสโนว์บอลล์ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ทฤษฎีบทบาทหน้าที่นิยม ทฤษฎีการแพร่กระจายทางวัฒนธรรม ทฤษฎีสุนทรียศาสตร์และทฤษฎีดนตรีไทย นำเสนอข้อมูลโดยการพรรณนาวิเคราะห์ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) ลักษณะของปี่ใน พบว่าปี่ในมีขนาดและระดับเสียงที่แตกต่างกัน 4 ขนาด 2) บริบทของปี่ใน พบว่าปี่ในแพร่กระจายไปในทุกภูมิภาคของไทย ปี่ในเป็นเครื่องดนตรีที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในวงปี่พาทย์และวงดนตรีพื้นบ้าน 3) บทเพลงสำหรับปี่ในมี 4 ประเภท คือ บทเพลงสำหรับฝึกหัดปี่ใน บทเพลงสำหรับวงปี่พาทย์ บทเพลงสำหรับการแสดงพื้นบ้าน และบทเพลงเฉพาะสำหรับปี่ใน ลักษณะทำนองปี่ในมีทั้งการเป่าเก็บ เป่าโหยหวน และแปรทำนองให้มีลักษณะเฉพาะ เทคนิคการบรรเลงของปี่ในแบ่งเป็นเทคนิคที่เกี่ยวกับการใช้นิ้ว เช่น การพรหม การสะบัด การตีนิ้ว เทคนิคที่เกี่ยวกับการใช้ลิ้น เช่น การตอดลิ้น การใช้ลิ้นบังคับเสียง เทคนิคที่เกี่ยวกับการใช้ลม เช่น การใช้ลมต่างตำแหน่ง การตอดลมและการระบายลม

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Abstract

The *pi nai* is a type of musical instrument with a quadruple reed played in the Thai *piphat* ensemble. The objectives of this research are: 1) to study the characteristic of *pi nai*, 2) to study the context of *pi nai*, and 3) to describe and analyze the *pi nai* in local *piphat* ensembles. This dissertation is a qualitative research which employs the methodological study in ethnomusicology. Data were collected based on fieldwork from 12 samples of *pi nai* players. The analysis was based on structural functional theory, cultural diffusion theory, aesthetics theory and Thai music theory. The results of this research are as follows: 1) *Pi nai* is found in 4 sizes; 2) *Pi nai* is found widespread in all regions in Thailand. *Pi nai* has an important role in the *piphat* ensemble; 3) Musical pieces for *pi nai* are divided into 4 groups: melodies for beginners, melodies for *piphat* ensembles, melodies for folk ensembles, and special melodies for *pi nai*. The *pi nai* is played in various styles of melodic embellishment, therefore many patterns of melodic variation, fingering techniques, tongue techniques, and breathing techniques are applied during the performance.

Keywords: *pi nai*, *piphat* ensemble, local culture

Introduction

The *pi nai* is a wind instrument resembling the oboe found in the musical ensembles of Southeast Asia, although its name varies in each of the countries: *pi nai* in Thailand, *salai* in Cambodia, *nae* in Myanmar and *sarunai* in Malaysia. The oldest evidence of the *pi nai* is found in the sculptures at Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, which was constructed during the reign of Khmer King Suryavarman II (1113-1150 A.D.). The earliest record of the *pi nai* in Thailand is found in the engravings at Phra Yuen Temple,

Lamphun Province. These sculptures date to 1370.⁴

The Thai *pi nai* is a hollow wooden cylinder with openings at either end. There are six finger-holes along the shaft of the instrument. In order to make a sound, the player blows into a mouthpiece. There are three other Thai wind instruments that share similar characteristics with the *pi nai*: *pi klang*, *pi nok dam* and *pi nok*, which are each smaller than the *pi nai*.⁵ The *pi nai* is used in a number of different musical ensembles across Thailand, including the Central Thai *piphat* ensemble, the Northeastern Thai *mahori* ensemble and the Southern Thai *nanng talung* and *nora* ensembles.

In ancient ensembles, the *pi* was accompanied by drums and percussion instruments. Over time, striking instruments were added to the ensemble, such as the gong circle (*kong wong*) and xylophone (*ranat*), which form the basis of the modern *piphat* ensemble. As one of the primary instruments in the ensemble, the *pi nai* plays the melody of the music, usually paired with the *ranat* and often leading the performance. The Thai *pi nai* is played with a special technique to produce a long, continuous sound. This technique, with no pause for breath, is called circular breathing (*garn rabai lom*). The effect is achieved by breathing in through the nose, while simultaneously releasing air stored in the cheeks through the mouth. The *pi nai* can be used to produce eerie, violent, sombre and high-spirited music, according to the aims and intentions of the performer.⁶

There are two types of performance for the *pi nai*: performance within the ensemble and solo performance. The former is largely as an accompaniment to acting or dance performances or as part of traditional ceremonies. The latter is to showcase

⁴ Marti Patel, "Wat Phra Yuen at Lamphun," accessed August 13, 2017, <https://sanuksanuk.wordpress.com/2011/07/26/wat-phra-yuen-at-lamphun/>.

⁵ Tanit Yoopote, *Thai musical instruments and international musical instruments* (Bangkok: O.S. Printing House, 2002), 68.

⁶ Anan Sobreuk, *History and development of the Thai pi* (Bangkok: Mahidol University Press, 1990), 44.

the skills of the musician, the playing technique or a particular piece of music. In solo performances, the *pi nai* is still usually accompanied by a pair of small cymbals (*ching*) or gong, which keep the beat.

There is still a lack of modern research into the *pi nai*. Physical studies of the instrument's characteristics include the work of Anong Jitmanee, who studied the procedure for creating the instrument⁷, the research of Wichian Onlamoon, who studied the *piphat* ensemble⁸, and the investigation of Krit Lekagoon, who studied the creation of sound using the *pi nai*.⁹ There have been investigations into the music created for the *pi nai*, including analyses by Peep Konglaitong¹⁰ and Chatchawan Sanitsantiya.¹¹ There is also a body of literature concerning the artists and teachers of the *pi nai*.¹²

While research has centered around the instrument itself, or the famous faces to have played the instrument, very few studies have concerned the role of the *pi* as a local instrument and its role in local lifestyle. Given this absence of information, the researchers elected to conduct this investigation into the role of the *pi nai* in the Thai village *piphat* ensemble.

⁷ Anong Jitmanee, *Production methods of peenai* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2005), 3.

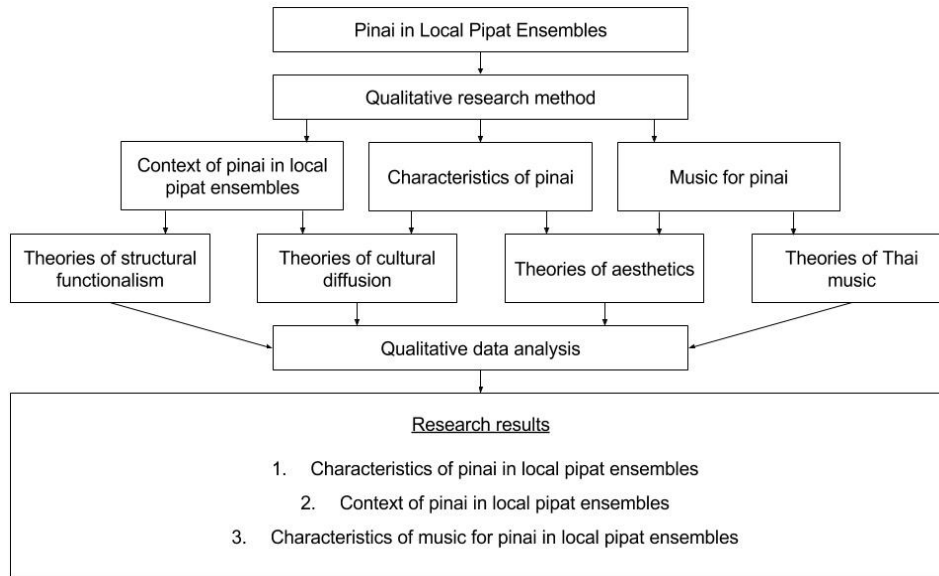
⁸ Wichian Onlamoon, *Piphat* (Bangkok: Chandrakasem Rajabhat University, 1997), 25.

⁹ Krit Lekagoon, *A study of the sound system and sound characteristics of the pi nai* (Bangkok: Mahidol University Press, 2009), 5.

¹⁰ Peep Konglaitong, *The pi chui chai song: Musicological analysis and reflection of aesthetics* (Bangkok: Mahidol University Press, 1995), 33.

¹¹ Chatchawan Sanitsantiya, *Single analysis of the krau nai sam chan music of Kru Jamnien Sritaipan* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2010), 1.

¹² Jare Ookaew, *Pi nai learning and teaching process in higher education institutions* (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 2004), 10.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the investigation

Research Objectives

This investigation has three research aims: 1) to study the characteristics of *pi nai*; 2) to study the context of *pi nai*; and 3) to describe and analyze the *pi nai* in local *piphat* ensembles.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative investigation adopting both ethnomusicology and musicology research methods. Data for this investigation was collected from both field study and document analysis. The research sample for the investigation was purposively selected and divided into three groups: key informants, casual informants and general informants. The key informant group was composed of 12 academics specialising in traditional Thai music. The casual informant group was composed of 12 *pi nai* players, three from each of the four regions of Thailand. These individuals were selected according to three criteria: 1) They had at least 10 years of experience playing the *pi nai* as part of a *piphat* ensemble; 2) They learned how to play the *pi nai* from

an expert player in the locality, without formally studying at an education institution; and 3) They played as part of a *piphat* ensemble that had been established by local villagers. The general informant group was composed of 13 other members of *piphat* ensembles (non-*pi nai* musicians), 8 formally educated *pi nai* musicians, 4 other formally educated Thai musicians and 8 other related personnel (including *pi* makers, radio presenters and family members of *pi nai* musicians). The investigation was conducted from March 2014 to July 2015.

The primary data collection methods adopted in the field were observation and interview. Both participant and non-participant observation methods were used. In-depth interviews were conducted using a snowball technique. *Pi nai* performances were also recorded for further analysis. All collected data was validated using methodological triangulation and categorised according to the research aims. The data was analysed by inductive analysis and typological analysis. The results are presented below as a descriptive analysis.

Results

Physical characteristics of the pi nai

The shaft of the *pi nai* is made from wood and is usually between 40 and 44 centimeters in length. The shaft is hollowed with an entry hole and exit hole at opposite ends. There are 6 finger holes, four towards the upper-middle of the shaft and two towards the lower-middle. Within each set of finger-holes, the openings are spaced evenly, one *luad* apart from each other (*luad* is the name for marked intervals on the shaft, which are for decoration and increased friction). The shaft of the *pi* is called the *lao pi* in Central, Northern, and Northeastern Thailand. It is called the *bawk pi* in Southern Thailand. The opening for the mouthpiece is called the *tood pi* in Central, Northern, and Northeastern Thailand. It is called the *ood pi* in Southern Thailand. The opening at the opposite end of the *pi nai* is known as the *bak pi* in all regions of the country (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Physical characteristics of the *pi nai*.



In the Central and Northern regions of Thailand, the shaft of the *pi nai* is commonly carved from the wood of the *dalbergia oliveri* tree due to its durability. Other tree species used in these regions include the Siamese rosewood and *afzelia xylocarpa*. In Southern Thailand, wood from near the family home is used to create the *pi nai*. This is usually from mango trees, *bouea oppositifolia*, velvet tamarind or Siamese cassia. It was found that local *pi nai* musicians in Southern, Northeastern, and Northern Thailand prefer to use instruments that have been passed down through the generations. These older *pi nai* tend to be smaller and straighter than their modern equivalents and were usually handmade by local artisans. However, Central Thai musicians prefer the heavier, more ornately finished instruments of the modern craftsmen.

The mouthpiece of the *pi nai* is a separate section of the instrument that generates the unique sound of the *pi* class of instrument. It is made of two component parts: the *lin* and the *kampuad*. It is made from 4-6 layers of folded Asian palmyra palm leaves stuck to a metal straw about 5-6 centimetres long (4 layers in Northern and Northeastern Thailand, 6 layers in Southern Thailand). The ends are 0.2 and 0.6 centimetres wide respectively (Figure 3).

Figure 3 The mouthpiece of the *pi nai*.



In most Thai regions the *pi nai* is fixed in an upright position and commonly played by the player putting at least half of the mouthpiece inside the mouth (Figure 4). This is referred to in the South as *dak-pa*. Some musicians wrap a respiratory diaphragm around the mouthpiece to aid breathing. In Southern Thailand, the mouthpiece is fixed laying down and the musician blows on just the tip of the mouthpiece (Figure 5). In Southern Thailand, it is also popular for musicians to wrap a cloth around the mouthpiece end of the instrument to prevent any air from escaping from the *pi nai* and to prevent tiredness in the player. The function is similar to the respiratory diaphragm used in other parts of the country.

Figure 4 The *pi nai* played by the player putting at least half of the mouthpiece inside the mouth.



Figure 5 The *pi nai* played by the musician blowing on just the tip of the mouthpiece. The differences in the physical characteristics of the *pi nai* and the playing techniques in different regions is summarized in table 1.



Table 1 Difference in the physical characteristics of the *pi nai* in different regions of Thailand

Region	Classes of <i>pi nai</i>	Shaft length	Shaft width	Number of mouthpiece layers	Playing Technique
Central Thailand	4	30-43cm	3.5-4.5cm	4	Musician places at least half mouthpiece in the mouth
Northern Thailand					
Northeastern Thailand	2	35-42cm		6	Musician plays with lips touching end of mouthpiece
Southern Thailand	3	35-47cm			

Sound of the *pi nai*

From analysis of the playing techniques and sounds created by the *pi nai*, the researchers have been able to draw the following conclusions:

1. The local villagers play using the seven solfège names: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, te. The *pi nai* allows notes from low fa (low f) to high re (high d). However, the low fa was only found to be played by one musician in the central region. Similarly, the high re was found to be played by one musician in the southern region. Low sol and low la were notes played only by musicians in central and northern Thailand. All notes from low te to high do were found in each of the four regions.

2. The musicians from different regions have different fingering methods for creating the middle sounds. The musicians have similar fingering techniques for creating the high sounds. The notes sol, high do, high mi, high fa, high sol, high te and high do were found to be created using the same fingering techniques across the four regions.

3. For the most part, musicians within the regions used the same fingering techniques, although these differed for certain notes, namely mi, la, te and high la.

4. Musicians from the South, the Northeast and some parts of the North created the note for low te in the same way. Musicians from the centre of the country and the remaining parts of the North created the same sound in a different way. Similarly, high re was played the same way in the North, South, and Northeast. It was played differently in the central region.

5. The note for fa was played with the greatest number of variations, a total of three throughout the country.

Context and analysis of the *pi nai* in local *piphat* ensembles

The *pi nai* is played in a number of provinces in each of the four regions of Thailand. As such, it is impossible to state the home of the instrument. It is just as difficult to trace the origins of the *pi nai* to a particular date and time. The *pi nai* has

a role in the *piphat* ensemble, the *mahori* ensemble of Northeastern Thailand and the *nora* and *nang talung* music of the South. The *pi nai* is the leader of the *piphat* ensemble and gives its name to the type of music. The instrument is integral to some of the highest traditional forms of the Thai performing arts. Its importance therefore goes beyond music to the fields of literature and language. In addition, the *pi nai* is a vital component of religious ceremonies and the traditional belief systems of local villagers.

Despite its importance, there are few local *pi nai* players. The main reason for young people to take up the instrument is having an ancestor who plays the *pi nai*. Older players wishing to pass on their skills will teach a member of the extended family and the inheritance often passes through the generations. In addition, being a musician can generate much needed supplementary income and young people are encouraged to use the skill for financial benefit. If there are no family members who play the *pi nai*, interested young people will go to learn with local experts in the same or a nearby village. The local *pi nai* players educate young generation musicians by oral transmission. The class will be set at home after daily work. Mostly, lessons begin by studying the *gong wong yai*, practicing the *pi nai* fingering system, learning some beginning musical pieces, and joining the ensemble by playing the same melody as *gong wong yai*.

In the present day, the variations in the styles in each region are due to the differences in traditions and popularity of music. Contemporary trends in the spread of central urban style to the other regions indicate changes in tastes of performance practice. Musical pieces for *pi nai* are divided into 4 groups: melodies for beginners, melodies for *piphat* ensembles, melodies for folk ensembles, and special melodies for *pi nai*. The *pi nai* is played in various styles of melodic embellishment, therefore many patterns of melodic variation, fingering techniques, tongue techniques, and breathing techniques are applied during the performance.

Nowadays, the *pi nai* is less popular in traditional ensembles than it once was.

This is due to greater public demand for the *pi chawa* and *pi mon*, which are more suitable for the increasingly popular *pi mon* ensemble. Local *pi nai* players are thus forced to play the aforementioned instruments in response to social trends. In addition, modern musical ensembles have replaced *piphat* ensembles in popular culture and it is more common to see jazz bands, disc jockeys and keyboard ensembles at local events. Some local performers also prefer to use the central Thai *pi* due to its more convenient shape and aesthetically-pleasing design. Ultimately the insecurity of the local music profession means that a large number of traditional *pi* players are forced to concentrate on their main jobs to earn income for their families. Traditional *pi nai* playing thus takes a back seat and becomes a hobby rather than an occupation. The local players are not unaware of this situation and have taken steps to form a network of *pi nai* players and send relatives to higher education institutions in the hope of promoting and safeguarding the instrument, and consequently traditional local Thai culture for future generations.

Discussion

There are distinct regional differences in the playing techniques and physical characteristics of the *pi nai* in Thai villages. In a similar study concerning the Javan Gamelan, Sutton attests that, despite an increasingly blended and dispersed musical heritage, regional identities and peculiarities remain.¹³ This is a phenomenon the terms “musical pluralism”. Sutton’s theories¹⁴ are largely influenced by the work of Umar Kayam¹⁵, who argued that, in a country of Indonesia’s geographic scope and diversity, national identity must be considered in terms of plurality rather than some singular homogenous concept.

¹³ Richard Anderson Sutton, *Traditions of gamelan music in Java: Musical pluralism and regional identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21.

¹⁴ Richard Anderson Sutton, “Musical Pluralism in Java: Three Local Traditions,” *Ethnomusicology*, 29, 1 (1985): 80-83.

¹⁵ Umar Kayam, *Seni, Tradisi, Masyarakat (essays)* (Jakarta: Penerbit Sinar Harapan, 1981), 124-126.

Actually, musical pluralism is a concept born out of the converging musical styles of the late twentieth century. “Musical pluralism was the direct result of the decimating of boundaries between the genres during the seventies and early eighties, which resulted in much exciting music; but by the late eighties, pluralism was having the effect of clouding the musical issues composers needed to address rather than clarifying them.”¹⁶ Nonetheless, the term is equally well applied to the simultaneous evolution of the *pi nai* in local villages of Thailand.

Much of the reason for differing styles and characteristics is down to the inheritance method. As the *pi nai* is learnt by word of mouth and passed on from generation to generation through observation and apprenticeship, the skills transferred are specific to the teacher overseeing the transfer. While cultural heritages of smaller cultural and minority groups are threatened by modernization and the spread of dominant cultures, the regional variations of the *pi nai* have been preserved precisely because their original inheritance methods have not changed.¹⁷ It is also important that the *pi nai* is central to such a variety of different traditional musical performances, which means that it is inherited by a whole spectrum of local musicians, each with their own variations of playing method.

Suggestions

Following this investigation, the researchers would like to make a number of suggestions for practical implementation of the research results and further topics for investigation. Despite the need to protect regional identity, the body of knowledge of *pi nai* characteristics and playing techniques should be collated and produced in a catalogue. *Pi nai* professionals should also form a network and analyses the effects

¹⁶ Bernard Gendron, “The Downtown Music Scene,” in *The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene, 1974–1984*, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 63.

¹⁷ Huang Lihui, “Inheriting Traditional Folk Performance in Modern Society,” in *Multidisciplinary Research Perspectives in Education*, ed. Indika Liyanage and Badeng Nima (New York: Springer, 2016), 144-145.

of their playing styles on the music to determine if any one method is superior. Further study should be conducted to compare the playing methods and characteristics of the *pi nai* in other countries throughout Southeast Asia. Similarly, the techniques and methods practiced by local villagers should be compared to the methods promoted in higher education institutions.

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