

Summary of Doctoral Thesis

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The Kong Puja Drum: A Musical Communication in the Community of Khon Muang, Nan Province, Thailand

Some musicologists and anthropologists have investigated musical communication of western and non-western music in different cultures by focusing on the meaning of music in terms of a communication process of transmitting messages and connecting people in each society. This communication includes the process of performing music relating to rituals or entertainment and the act of conveying people's emotion through musical performance. However, the study of music for communication has not yet been examined on Lanna music. This dissertation studies the relationship between 'Kong Puja' or 'Puja drum' and the Khon Muang people in Nan Province, Thailand. Kong Puja is a percussion ensemble, which consists of four drums which includes three different sizes of *kong luuk tup* (small cylindrical drums) placed alongside a *kong mae* or *kong luang* (the main large cylindrical double-headed drum). Khon Muang Nan pay respect to Kong Puja as a sacred drum ensemble which they used for Buddhist rituals. They believe that the sound of Kong Puja is messages to communicate with the people in the community and can help people to communicate with non-humans. Recently, they have adopted Kong Puja as their cultural symbol and integrated it into cultural activities of the community.

This dissertation is the qualitative research that examines the importance and value of Kong Puja in Khon Muang Nan society as a musical instrument for communication by looking at the process of preservation and revitalization of their traditional Kong Puja in contemporary society from three aspects: 1) the role of Kong

Puja in the local society based on local beliefs; 2) musical analysis; and 3) the revival of Kong Puja drumming in contemporary society. The data for this thesis were collected from the preliminary fieldwork from February 27 to March 12, 2018, following a full year fieldwork from May 20, 2018, to May 23, 2019, at Pahat Village, Pua District, Nan Province of Thailand. All collected data are critically evaluated and analyzed for using a musical communication theoretical framework based on relevant theories drawn from communication studies, social and cultural anthropology, and ethnomusicology.

This dissertation is the first ethnography on Kong Puja ensemble of Khon Muang Nan, which has written in English, and is composed of seven chapters.

The first chapter, an introductory and literature reviews, defines critical concepts associated with the primary terms and the theoretical framework of musical communication used in this dissertation. This chapter indicates the research's aims, scope, questions, and methodology. This chapter also reviews previous works on drum and Lanna music. This dissertation follows three significant theories to analyze the data including the *communication* theory of James W. Carey (2009) and *musical communication* of Alexander N. Yakupov (2016). These communication theories are primary theories to deal with the social context. In addition, the *music and speech* theory of Vida Chenoweth's (1972) is used to analyze the musical structure and form of Kong Puja drumming, and the relationship between oral rhythmic pattern and drumming sound.

Chapter Two provides an overview of Nan Province with a brief historical and geographical background of the Khon Muang people. The culture, beliefs, and religions of Khon Muang Nan have been influenced by different aspects of political regimes of each period of time according to the historical background of Nan. The history of this place has begun since the foundation of the Varanagara or Pua city since 1282 to 1359 by King Phukha, who was the first king of the Kao Nan monarchy. Kao Nan rulers had governed the Varanagara city from 1300–1448 before Nan was relocated to the southern part of Pua city and was under Chiang Mai monarch (1448–1558). Later, it came under

the Burmese rule from 1560–1727. After that, Nan was under the King of Siam (Thailand) since 1727 before finally becoming one province of Thailand. Even when Lanna or Muang Nan was with Siam, the local people especially Khon Muang Nan have still maintained their traditional way of life regardless the influence from outside their society. The chapter includes a description of the community of Baan Pahat Village, the Theravada Buddhism characteristics of the Yuan cult and their integration with the Khon Muang's spiritual beliefs which motivates Kong Puja drumming.

Chapter Three deals with social and cultural contexts of Kong Puja drumming in the Khon Muang community by presenting the functions of Kong Puja drumming, the traditional process of learning and the different ritual ceremonies concerning the drum, the masters of drum-making and how they teach new drummers. As Kong Puja is a set of different sizes of drum, this chapter also explains the different settings of *kong luuk tup* positioned beside *kong mae*. These setting include the pattern of *phi um noang* (three *kong luuk tup* are arranged in the form of a triangle), *mae um luuk* (three *kong luuk tup* are placed in a vertical line), and *say nam* (three *kong luuk tup* are set in a horizontal line). Khon Muang Nan arrange Kong Puja in the *say nam* pattern. It is a metaphor of the horizontal flowing of the Nan River. As a result, this horizontal arrangement enables the drummers to move their arms and bodies more freely which will in turn create beautiful and attractive movements during their performance. This setting pattern of *say nam* has been found only in Nan, which distinguishes Nan's Kong Puja from that of other provinces.

Chapter Four explores the continuing of professional Kong Puja makers in Nan Province and discusses a decline in the number of drum makers, the fabrication of Nan's Kong Puja, the structure of drums and their components, and the gongs and cymbals accompanying Kong Puja drumming. This chapter also discusses the concept of auspicious numbers and proportion in the making process, the materials used, the acoustic sound, and the illustrations of Kong Puja. This chapter explains two significant

ritual ceremonies relevant to Kong Puja, namely the magical heart storing ceremony and the Kong Puja relocating ceremony. These two ceremonies show that Khon Muang Nan believe in the supernatural power which can make the drum sacred and change the status of Kong Puja from a normal musical instrument to a highly respectful musical instrument.

Chapter Five analyzes traditional rhythmic patterns of Nan Kong Puja drumming relating to the structure of *rabam* (Kong Puja drumming rhythmic patterns) which is an oral recitation of traditional poetic verses or short stanzas of drum speech in Kong Puja drumming, improvising techniques, the physical placement of drums, and body movements during the performance. The musical analysis of this study employs infographics by using a visual illustration symbol to transcribe and analyze music. Three main drumming styles has been found in Nan Kong Puja including *rabam puja* (a traditional drumming style performed in the nighttime along with other gongs and cymbals), *rabam long naan* (a short cycle drumming pattern playing along with gongs and cymbals in the nighttime), and *rabam faatsae* (a fast-rhythmic pattern in duet drumming style of Kong Puja with other bamboo stalk players without any other accompaniment performed in the daytime).

Chapter Six discusses the recontextualization of Kong Puja drumming in the contemporary Nan society including Kong Puja drumming competitions, the use of Kong Puja as a core musical instrument in music compositions in the collaborative Kong Puja performances of the Nan's youth network and the external composers, and the learning processes of traditional Kong Puja drumming by a youth group at Pahat Temple. Since Kong Puja has been considered a cultural heritage and identity of Nan, some government and private organizations have provided their financial support to promote the performance of Kong Puja. Local and national composers have created new music using Kong Puja and its drumming patterns are mixed harmoniously with traditional Thai ensemble, the Western orchestra, or even many sets of Kong Puja. In addition, to

widely promote the traditional Kong Puja, Nan Province has presented the Kong Puja performance in many cultural events organized by the province. Sometimes, there are also Kong Puja drumming competitions of the young generations. These Kong Puja drumming competitions are another flourishing cultural safeguarding project that encourages cooperation among school students, local monks and novices, and community people.

Final discussions and conclusions are drawn in the last chapter. This thesis has been reached by emphasized the importance of Kong Puja drumming as well as the relationship of Kong Puja drumming and Khon Muang's society within the study's theoretical framework.

The results of this dissertation show that Khon Muang Nan uses Kong Puja as an important device for communication within three ways: the transmission information mode in sending messages by drumming *kong sanyaan* to tell time or make a signal alarm, the ritual communication mode in part of ritual ceremonies by drumming *kong phithii*, and the cultural communication mode in a performance regarded as a representative of the local culture by drumming *kong sadaeng*. Kong Puja's rhythmic structure is intended to express messages; cultural characteristics; aesthetics; ritual symbols; and Khon Muang tradition, art and culture.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Kong Puja drumming can transmit messages, be an integral part of ritual, and represent cultural identity of Khon Muang Nan through musical communication. The local people can express their cultural characteristics through the performances, which will create empathy among people in their own group while they may also communicate their culture to people of other groups. The revival of traditional performing arts reflects the cultural trends of creating art and cultural value for the benefit of people in the local community, such as cultural tourism development, community collaboration, and community solidarity.