

# A STUDY OF WISDOM IN THAI TRADITIONAL MUSIC THROUGH TACIT KNOWLEDGE OF THE REMARKABLE MASTER, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SANGOBSEUK THAMVIHARN<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This research focuses on the selective artist, Assistant Professor Sangobseuk Thamviharn, including his educational background in Thai traditional music, knowledge of the principal melodies (*mue khong*) of Thai traditional music, and his music compositions to make notated copies of such works and to record some of them as media for online dissemination to systematic storage and dissemination by qualitative research methods. The study findings reveal that he studied both theoretical and practical knowledge in Thai traditional music with many famous masters, especially those who inherited the *mue khong* (a composition with a hand-pattern practice for the *khong wong yai*) and were taught by *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen (Thup Sattanawilai). The study was able to compile written records of the *mue khong* of 250 pieces in the Thai notation system, and 50 pieces from this collection were selected and recorded as media for online dissemination. It also found important tacit knowledge, such as the three unique musical characteristics of Sangobseuk Thamviharn's *mue khong*: the use of *luk kep* in combination with *luk chiao* or *luk Sabat*, which are similar to those used in *khong wong lek* melodies. These techniques were adapted from the distinctive characteristics of the *mue khong* of *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen, which consists of *sabat son*, *sabat ton wak*, and *chiao ton wak* performing techniques. For a musical composition, he has composed the song as follows: *Homrong chaloemphrakiat*, *nathi thong thao*, *hokbot songchan* and *chandiao*, and *toi rup samchan* for *khong wong yai* solo.

**Keywords:** Tacit Knowledge/ Thai Traditional Music Artist/ *mue khong*/ *khong wong yai*/ Sangobseuk Thamviharn

<sup>1</sup> This article is part of the research project Thai Traditional Music Artist Wisdom: Assistant Professor Sangobseuk Thamviharn. This study was supported by Thammasat University Research Fund Contract No. TUTS 4/2564.

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## Introduction

Rapid changes brought on by the globalization process have serious impacts on the political, economic, technological, and cultural scenes of many countries across the world and force them to make certain adjustments, especially cultural adjustments, to ensure the continuity and sustainability of their society. Recognizing the serious threats of globalization to the disintegration, loss, or destruction of intangible cultural heritages such as oral traditions, languages, performing arts, rituals, traditions, and festivals, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, launched the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to deal with such phenomena. Some of this Convention's objectives are to safeguard intangible cultural heritages and to raise mutual awareness and appreciation of their importance at local, national, and international levels. Thailand also introduced the Promotion and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Act, B.E. 2559 (2016), to endorse its participation in the Convention as a member state and to safeguard Thai cultural heritages<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, a comprehensive and systematic measure for the collection, preservation, and knowledge management of intangible cultural heritages has not yet been adequately developed. This is particularly true with regards to artists' tacit knowledge that needs to be recorded, transmitted, and preserved in the document, musical note, audio, and motion picture forms for easy access by interested persons. The scarcity of such knowledge is particularly critical for "Thai traditional music", a form of intangible cultural heritage that is currently under serious threat of disappearing from Thai society. Despite the efforts of numerous Thai traditional music masters to transmit knowledge to a large number of students, Thai traditional music still suffers knowledge loss or distortion as a result of the longstanding standard practice of transmitting both theoretical and practical knowledge through "oral tradition". It can be said that the existing documentation of Thai traditional music is minimal due to the lack of written records of such knowledge.

For these reasons, the researcher is interested in the study and systematic management of Thai traditional music artists' tacit knowledge through qualitative research methods. This type of research (particularly in the field of Thai traditional music) first originated in 2009, when research on the tacit knowledge of three national artists in Thai traditional music, namely, *Khru* Phinit Chaisuwan, *Khru* Samran Koetphon, and *Khru* Chirat Atnarong was conducted. Since then,

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<sup>2</sup> "Promotion and Preservation intangible cultural heritage Act, B.E. 2559 (2016)," Department of Cultural Promotion, accessed November 25, 2022, <http://book.culture.go.th/newbook/ich/ich2559.pdf>. (in Thai)

*Khru* Phinit Chaisuwan and *Khru* Samran Koetphon have already passed away, and *Khru* Chirat Atnarong is now 92 years old. The advanced age of these artists and the risk of losing their tacit knowledge of this type of cultural heritage in the near future are the key factors that make studies and systematic management of their valuable knowledge most imperative. This research chose to study the Thai traditional music knowledge of Assistant Professor Sangobseuk Thamviharn, who is a former lecturer at the Division of Music Education, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University. The research is an extension of the researcher's previous academic work. At present, Sangobseuk Thamviharn, a senior musician who has been widely recognized and acclaimed for his *khong wong yai* skills and expertise, is 82 years old. He is the only person that *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen, a famous *khong wong yai* master at the Department of Entertainment (*Krom Mahorasop*) in the reign of King Rama VI, passed on his skills and the entire repertoire of *khong wong yai* solos to Sangobseuk Thamviharn, who also studied Thai traditional music under many other famous Thai traditional music masters such as *Phra* Pranit Wonrasap (Khian Warawathin), *Khru* Son Wongkhong, *Khru* Montri Tramot, and *Khru* Prasit Thawon.

He is known among the Thai traditional music circle as the “mobile Thai traditional music jukebox” for his outstanding memory, which enables him to remember a vast number of melodies and to promptly play them from memory without having to review or rehearse them<sup>3</sup>. This is the main reason that prompts the researcher to conduct a study for systematic management of his Thai traditional music knowledge with the goals of preserving and transmitting this valuable cultural heritage for future generations' appreciation and study. Therefore, the research objectives for the study are as follows: to study the educational background in Thai traditional music, to study the body of knowledge in Thai traditional music, to transcribe in Thai traditional music (score notes) in written and information media forms, and to disseminate the body of knowledge in Thai traditional music (in information media form) through online media.

### Scope of the research

The educational background and body of knowledge in Thai traditional music of Sangobseuk Thamviharn, regarding his Thai traditional music education and practical knowledge only, and other areas as Sangobseuk Thamviharn deems appropriate, are divided

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<sup>3</sup> Assanee Pleinsri, *Pedagogy in Specific field: Assistant professor Sangobseuk Thamviharn* (Bangkok: Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2005). (in Thai)

into two sections. First section is the study of the principal melodies of five categories of Thai traditional music: 1) *phleng homrong*, 2) *phleng Rueang* and *phleng tap*, 3) *phleng thao* and *phleng samchan*, 4) *phleng khon lakhon*, and 5) *phleng naphat*. Second section is the study of the music compositions, consisting of two *phleng banleng mu* (ensemble melodies), two *phleng diao khong wong yai* (*khong wong yai* solos), and one set of (20) practical exercises for basic *khong wong yai* practice.

### Definitions of terms

1) **The body of knowledge in Thai traditional music** refers to the subject matter generated from any practice relating to Thai traditional music or a person's knowledge of Thai traditional music. Such knowledge is divided into two parts: theoretical knowledge, such as the history and compositional techniques of Thai traditional music, and practical knowledge, such as the performing techniques of musical instruments and *mue khong* of Thai traditional music, including the music compositions of Sangobseuk Thamviharn.

2) **Mue khong** refers to a composition with a hand-pattern practice for the *khong wong yai* composed from a principal melodic pattern arrangement that is open to free interpretation and adaptation to suit each type of musical instrument, but the original melodic structure must remain the same.<sup>4</sup>

3) **Mue la-iat** refers to a composition with a hand pattern for the *khong wong yai* in ensemble melodies or solos that involve more various or certain hand patterns than those found in common *khong wong yai* performances. This can include elaborate melodies with rapid hand patterns in a systematic way to highlight the musician's manual dexterity<sup>5</sup>.

4) **Principal melodies** (*thamnong lak*) refer to melodies that portray the structure of sound within that particular melody or authentic melody, consisting of four notes; each note is always placed at the end of a bar.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Montri Tramot, *Montri Tramot's music letter* (Bangkok: Kasikornbank Public Company Limited, 1995). (in Thai); Somneuk Saengaroorn, "Thai Classical Music Composition Content of Lt. Col. Sanoh Luangsuntorn, National Artist," *An Online Journal of Education* 14, no. 2 (July-December 2019): Article ID: OJED-14-02-051, 7, <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/OJED/article/view/195138/158431>. (in Thai)

<sup>5</sup> Sirichaicharn Fachamroon, "Mue khong of Thai traditional music," interview by Assanee Pleinsri, February 20, 2018.; Assanee Pleinsri, *The Characteristics in Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen [Thup Sattanawilai]'s khong wong yai solo* (Pathum Thani: Research Funding Form Thammasat University, 2017). (in Thai)

<sup>6</sup> Chalernsak Pikulsri, *Appreciation for Thai traditional music* (Bangkok: Odeonstore, 1999). (in Thai); Prachakorn Srisakorn, *Saw U Melodies* (Bangkok: Sahathammik Co., Ltd., 2021). (in Thai)

## Preliminary agreement

1) For notation purposes, the leftmost gong (*khong*) on the player's left-hand side, or *luk thuan*, is designated as the first gong, named note D (*siang re*) according to *thang nai* for the main set of the *piphat* ensemble. Other gongs to the right of *luk thuan* (totaling 16 kettle gongs) carry other notes in their respective orders.

2) Music score according to the guidelines in the collected works of the Thai classical repertoire: master version book<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, play a two-score note with the lower line using the left hand and the upper line using the right.

## Research Methodology

The research employs qualitative research methods, commencing with interviews with Sangobseuk Thamviharn<sup>8</sup> as a renowned Thai musician with exceptional abilities who has received the privilege of *khong wong yai* skills and the entire repertoire of *khong wong yai* solos from Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen<sup>9</sup>, Qualified experts, relevant parties, and a literature review of the works on cultural wisdom heritages, knowledge management of Thai traditional music theories, form and analysis of Thai classical music, and relevant interview data were also conducted to derive useful referencing sources and research guidelines.

Subsequently, the researcher recorded the body of knowledge in Thai traditional music in the form of the *mue khong* of 250 pieces, of which 50 songs were selected for recording in information media form using the Thai notation system, four music compositions by Sangobseuk Thamviharn, and one set of practical exercises on basic *khong wong yai* practices using the Thai notation system. Various aspects of such data, such as melodic structures, rhythms, scales, and musical forms, were subsequently analyzed. Finally, the researcher synthesized the findings from the aforementioned study and summarized them in accordance with the research objectives through data analysis. These results were presented in the form of an academic paper and disseminated through online media, following a review by qualified experts.

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<sup>7</sup> Panya Roongruang, *Collected works of the Thai classical repertoire: master version* (Bangkok: Kasetsart University, 2001). (in Thai)

<sup>8</sup> Sangobseuk Thamviharn, "The educational background in Thai traditional music, Mue Khong of Thai traditional music," interview by Assanee Pleinsri, August 10, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Sirichaicharn Fachamroon, "Sangobseuk Thamviharn's body of knowledge in the khong wong yai," interview by Assanee Pleinsri, February 20, 2018.; Pornpawee Junpong, "Analysis of Assistant Professor Sangobseuk Thamviharn's metta (loving-kindness) uniqueness in Thai classical music teaching to teach and nurture moral etiquette" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2019), 53. (in Thai)

## Results

Regarding Sangobseuk Thamviharn's educational background in Thai traditional music, the research reveals that his interest in Thai traditional music was initially inspired by the sounds of the *ranat ek* (Thai tribble xylophone) that his father often played during practice sessions in his home. The *ranat ek* is the first musical instrument that his father taught him when he was 7 years old. His formal education in Thai traditional music began when he enrolled in Elementary level, *pathom sueksa* 4 at the School of Dramatic Arts, the Fine Arts Department called *rongrian nattasin* (currently the College of Dramatic Arts) where he studied majored skill in *piphat* and minored skill in *khitasin* (meaning "singing"). As a student (from 1949 to 1960), he received both theoretical and practical trainings in Thai traditional music from several famous masters, such as *Khru Phra* Pranit Wonrasap (Khian Warawathin), *Khru Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen, *Nang Sanit* Banlengkan (Lamiat Chittasewi), *Khru Thuam* Prasitthikun, *Khru Thiap* Khonglaithong, and *Khru Chirat* Atnarong. For principal melodies (*mue khong*), he was personally taught by *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen, *Khru Son* Wongkhong, *Khru Phring* Kanchanaphalin, *Khru Bang* Luangsunthon, *Khru Montri* Tramot, and *Khru Prasit* Thaworn.

Furthermore, he was encouraged to pursue further studies in *ranat ek* solo with *Khun* Banchong thumloet (Plang Prasansap), a former court musician at the Department of Entertainment called *Krom Mahorasop* in the reign of King Rama VI, who passed on to him the ultimate solo playing techniques of *Krao Nai Thao* for *ranat ek* solo and *Krao Nai samchan* for *ranat thum* solo. Sangobseuk Thamviharn is also the only person to whom *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen, a well-known *khong wong yai* master of the Department of Entertainment in the reign of King Rama VI, passed on his skills and the entire repertoire of *khong wong yai* solos. It can be said that Sangobseuk Thamviharn is currently the most knowledgeable and skillful in *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen's *khong wong yai* solos and *phleng banleng mu* or ensemble melodies (orchestration pieces for ensemble).

The research findings on the tacit knowledge encapsulated within Sangobseuk Thamviharn about Thai traditional music are divided into two sections as follows:

**Section 1:** Based on the analysis of 250 pieces of music compositions in five categories, this study identified three key characteristics of Sangobseuk Thamviharn's *mue khong* as follows:

1.1 Firstly, they are distinctive and significantly different styles from the currently common *mue khong* in three main aspects:



(1) *Khru Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen's *mue khong* style was transmitted to Sangobseuk Thamviharn which had been known for the use of *mue la-iat* in some melodic sentences (meaning "the musical structure in the Thai notation system with 8 bars"). Both hands are used to produce more various or more certain hand patterns than those found in common *khong wong yai* performances, such as *luk kep* in combination with *luk Sabat*, which are similar to those used in *khong wong lek* melodies, as shown in the examples.



Example 1 The third sentence in the first movement of *homrong chinlo samchan's mue khong*

Source: by author



Example 2 Common *mue khong*<sup>10</sup>

Source: by author

This finding is consistent with Assanee Pliensri's research finding<sup>11</sup> which stated that *mue la-iat* is one of *Luang* Bamrung Chitcharoen's special techniques and distinctive characteristics of his *khong wong yai* solos. Therefore, it can be said that "*mue la-iat*" is the distinctive characteristic shared by both of his ensemble and solo pieces.

(2) They are the *mue khong* that has been passed on from several Thai traditional music masters, with special melodic patterns in some melodic sentences. These hand patterns (meaning "the style of a right-left hand for playing the *khong wong yai*") are significantly different from the ones used in most common *mue khong*. There are two patterns: one focuses

<sup>10</sup> Thai principal melodies, "Homrong chinlo," YouTube video, 11:15, September 4, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34QHUm0sC2w>. (In Thai)

<sup>11</sup> Assanee Pliensri, *The Characteristics in Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen [Thup Sattanawilai]'s khong wong yai solo* (Pathum Thani: Research Funding Form Thammasat University, 2017). (in Thai)

on the right hand, while the other uses left and right hands instead of intervals, as shown in the examples.

(i) Patterns: focuses on the right hand in a unique pattern that shows hand dexterity.



Example 3 The first sentence in the first movement of *klong nari* and *khaekmon bangchang chandiao's mue khong*

Source: by author



Example 4 Common *mue khong*<sup>12</sup>

Source: by author

(ii) Patterns: use left and right hands instead of intervals; enhance the clarity of idioms, which is often seen in Thai classical music in the Mon or Laos idioms.



Example 5 The fifth sentence in the first movement of *mon ramdab samchan's mue khong*

Source: by author

<sup>12</sup> Pokpong Khamprasert, *Thai principal melodies Vol. 2* (Bangkok: Duean tula Printing, 2022). (in Thai)



Example 6 Common *mue khong*<sup>13</sup>

Source: by author

(3) They are the *mue khong* that have been passed on from several Thai traditional music masters, with the specific characteristic of having unique rhythms in some melodic sentences or sections of the subsequent or backward rounds (*thiao glap*) of performance. The study found significantly different melodic patterns in certain sentences, and some melodies were found to have melodic patterns that are seldom encountered in today's melodies, as shown in the examples.

(i) *mue khong*: significantly different melodic patterns in certain sentences and not commonly found in today's *mue khong*. as exemplified in *choet* (*chandiao*).

Example 7 The last sentence in every movement of *choet's mue khong*

Source: by author

Example 8 Common *mue khong*<sup>14</sup>

Source: by author

<sup>13</sup> Pokpong Khamprasert, *Thai principal melodies Vol. 2* (Bangkok: Duean tula Printing, 2022). (in Thai)

<sup>14</sup> Pokpong Khamprasert, *Thai principal melodies Vol. 1* (Bangkok: Duean tula Printing, 2021). (in Thai)

(ii) *mue khong*: that are seldom encountered in today's melodies, which have been passed down from *Khru Prasit Thawon*<sup>15</sup>, a disciple of *Luang Pradit Phairo* (Son Sinlapabanleng), as exemplified in *lao siangthian chandiao*.



Example 9 The first and second movements in the backward rounds (*thiao glap*) of *lao siangthian chandiao*'s *mue khong*

Source: by author

Moreover, the research also found the *mue khong* that had been passed on to Sangobseuk Thamviharn by several Thai traditional music masters to have certain characteristics that differ from the common *mue khong* melodies. For example, some melodies employ low pitches in the initial round and switch to higher pitches in the backward round (*thiao glap*) of performance to keep up with *piphat* melodies. It is assumed that these are the melodic patterns adopted by the Department of Entertainment (*Krom Mahorasop*) in the reign of King Rama VI or are only used at the College of Fine Arts in the Fine Art Department (*rongrian nattasin*). The *mue khong* of some melodies are assumed to be similar to or to be the original melodies of such songs.

1.2 The unique characteristic of Sangobseuk Thamviharn's *mue khong* is the use of *luk kep* in combination with *luk chiao* or *luk sabat* in specific sentences in a similar manner to *khong wong lek* melodies, which is significantly different from common *khong wong yai* melodies. It was adapted from the distinctive *mue khong* style of *Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen*

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<sup>15</sup> Sangobseuk Thamviharn, "The educational background in Thai traditional music, Mue Khong of Thai traditional music," interview by Assanee Pleinsri, August 10, 2021.

and from some of the melodic sentences passed on from other Thai traditional music masters. This characteristic can be divided into three playing techniques: *sabat son*, *sabat ton wak*, and *chiao ton wak*, as shown in the examples.

- (i) Techniques: *sabat son*, use the technique *sabat* twice in succession.



Example 10 The sixth sentence in the first movement of *kamen photisat samchan*

Source: by author

- (ii) Techniques: *sabat ton wak*, use the technique *sabat* at the first part of the melodic sentences, which is not commonly found in today's *mue khong*.



Example 11 The first sentence in the first movement of *Jumpa tongted songchan*

Source: by author

- (iii) Techniques: *chiao ton wak*, use the technique *chiao* at the first part of the melodic sentences, which is not commonly found in today's *mue khong*.



Example 12 The third sentence in *Soiphleeng songchan (thang pian)*

Source: by author

1.3 Modifications are made to some *mue khong* to suit different types of melodies, i.e., *mue khong* for *songchan* pieces is performed between *phleng thao* and *phleng khon lakhon* in *klom nari songchan*, in *khom songkhrueng songchan*, and between *phleng khon lakhon* and *phleng rueang* in *phleng dokmai thrai songchan*, as shown in the examples. *Klom nari songchan* in the first sentence. There is an application of hand patterns to ensure that the musical melody flows harmoniously in the same direction as the vocal. This alteration emphasizes the significance of the singing and vocal aspects, especially when used in accompanying performances of *khon lakhon*.



Example 13 In the case of *khon lakhon*

Source: by author



Example 14 In the case of *phleng thao*

Source: by author

The research findings for this part also found the principal melodies of 20 pieces of music, which had been passed on from several Thai traditional music masters but are no longer performed by current musicians. This group of principal melodies consists of two *phleng homrong*, five *phleng samchan*, nine *phleng khon lakhon*, and four *phleng naphat*, such as *phleng homrong kratae taimai (ok khap nok) songchan*, *phleng ton bonrathet samchan*, and *phleng pathom dusit (phleng naphat)*.

**Section 2:** The music compositions of Sangobseuk Thamviharn were analyzed using a systematic approach<sup>16</sup> comprising melodic structures, rhythms, musical forms, style and musical characteristics, whose details are as follows:

2.1 Four music compositions for ensemble and solo performance:

(1) *Homrong chaloemphrakiat* was composed in 1992 to honor Her Majesty the Queen Mother on her 60th birthday anniversary celebration. It is a 3-movement overture in *nathap song mai* with 8 beats in Movements 1 and 2, which were adapted from Movement 1 of *lao duangduean songchan* with Movement 3 added to create an overture of 12 beats. Since its melodies were augmented from *tei khong* it still carries *isan* idioms. It is a combination of sweet melodies with sustained notes (*thang kro*) and elaborate melodies with staccato notes (*thang kep*) containing *luk lo* and *luk khat*. This overture is suitable for musical ensembles with a soft and melodious sound and a moderate tempo, such as the *khrueng sai*, *piphat mai nuam*, or *mahori* ensembles. The musical characteristics of this overture are: 1) it is a *phleng homrong sepha songchan* in the *nathap song mai* 2) it has shifting melodies (*thang plian*); and 3) it uses a special melody that is added before the ending.

(2) The composition of *nathi thong thao* was inspired by Sangobseuk Thamviharn's appreciation of the royal benevolence of His Majesty King Rama IX, who discovered a wastewater treatment method to revive the water quality in canals and rivers within the country. The main theme was composed in 1996. He also wrote its choral lyrics in *thep thong* melody to describe the royal achievements of King Rama IX. *Thep thong* is followed by the cheerful "*ten kam ram khiao chandiao*", aiming to enhance the enjoyment and liveliness in accordance with full *phleng thao* performed by a *piphat mai khaeng* ensemble. *Nathi thong thao* is a song with compulsory melodies (*phleng bangkhap thang*) in the form of combining *thang kro* and *thang plian* melodies, interspersed with the Mon idiomatic style in various rhythmic patterns. The repetitive round of the performance is played in the "*klap ton nai tua*" style (meaning "repeating to the beginning with a melody that differs from the initial round"). Its unique musical characteristics are the use of shifting melodies (*thang plian*) in all sections for the entire series and the use of a "*thao to*" melodic pattern (meaning "a melodic pattern that serves as a transitional bridge between sentences or vocal") in its *samchan* section to pave the way for the singer. *Nathi thong* is a 2-movement with 4 beats in *nathap propkai* in each movement.

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<sup>16</sup> Phichit Chaiseri, *Form and analysis of Thai classical music* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2016). (in Thai)



It was adapted from *khu babon songchan* with some of the melodic augmentation and diminution to complete the *phleng thao* series. The melodic line was given a new name, “*phleng Nathi thong thao*” with shifting melodies (*thang plian*) in the backward rounds (*thiao glap*) of each section for the entire series (*phleng thao*). Outside and middle scales are used with the compulsory melody, which is a combination of *thang kro* and *thang plian* interspersed with Mon idioms. This piece of music is suitable for *piphat mai khaeng* musical ensembles as it can produce swift and vigorous tunes. The distinctive unique musical characteristics of *nathi thong thao* are: 1) there are shifting melodies (*thang plian*) in all sections and the series, which is known as the “*klap ton nai tua*” melody; 2) “*thao to*” melodic phrases in *samchan* temporal meter are the cadential conclusion to the end of Movement 1 to pave the way for the singer in Movement 2.

The musical style of Sangobseuk Thamviharn’s *phleng homrong* and *phleng thao* compositions is characterized by “shifting melodies” (*thang plian*), which are clearly represented in both of the above-mentioned melodic organizations.

(3) *Hokbot songchan* with *chandiao* was composed for *khong wong yai* solos corresponding to the *khong wong yai* Solo Skills V course of the Bachelor’s Degree in Education Program (Music Education) of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, between 1992-2020. *Hokbot songchan* and *chandiao* are structured as a single solo melodic section with 8 beats in *nathap propkai*. It strictly adheres to the prescribed various scale systems and principal melodies (*thamnong lak*). Adapted *khong wong yai* solo melodies are apparent in many melodic sentences without any alienation or deviation from the *thamnong lak*. Refined and sweet melodies (*thiao wan*) are used in the initial round, while thrilling and elaborate melodies (*thiao kep*) are usually reserved for the subsequent round of performance.

A total of 14 special solo performing techniques are used with the highest number of cross-hand patterns (*khwai mue*), followed by *sabat* and *chiao* hand patterns respectively. The song relies on precise hitting of the gongs and sharpness of the sound quality to show off the player’s skills and expertise. The musical characteristics of this solo piece are: 1) the use of “*mue la-iat*,” which are adapted from Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen’s distinctive *khong wong yai* performing technique; and 2) the use of a cross-hand performing technique similar to the one used with *khong wong lek* melodies (refer to example 15), which is rarely found in other versions of *khong wong yai* solos. It is a suitable melody for basic *khong wong yai* exercises, which is the intention of the composer.



(4) *Toi rup samchan* for *khong wong yai* solo was composed for the 30<sup>th</sup> *kharusat* Concert organized by the Division of Music Education, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University in 2009. This composition consists of three sections in *nathap propkai*. There are 4 beats in Movement 1 and Movement 2, and 6 beats in Movement 3. To retain the original melodic style, it adopts the same scale as the principal melody (*thamnong lak*), using sounds that are not utilized within the pentatonic scale (*lum siang*) to connect melodies in the same sentence or between sentences for more harmonious tunes. Adapted *khong wong yai* solo melodies are apparent in many melodic sentences without any alienation or deviation from the *thamnong lak*. Solo melodies are also found in some sentences to create a unique identity for supplemental melodies or to clearly mark the end of a melodic section. Mon idioms are included in all solo sections in compliance with the style and intonation of *toi rup samchan*, especially in the second movement. Since there are two versions of the principal melody (which are significantly different in sentences 5-6 of each version), both versions are adopted as the *thamnong lak* for both the initial and subsequent rounds of performance to create a variety of solo melodies.

In the initial round of performance, the sweet melodies (*thiao wan*) are used to create a sweet and mellow sentiment, which uses the technique that emphasizes the creation of the sharpness of the sound quality, such as *ti prakhop mue*, while elaborate melodies (*thiao kep*) are used in subsequent rounds of performance. They use the technique “*ti khwai mue*,” which involves accurate hitting and dexterity of the hands. A total of 29 special solo performing techniques are employed, with the highest number of *ti sabat*, followed by *ti chiao siang ting* and *ti chiao* techniques to show off the player’s hand movement skills and expertise in direct and precise beating of the gongs to produce clear sounds.

The musical characteristics of this solo composition are: 1) the use of repeated *ti chiao siang ting* technique and *lak changwa* rhythm to mark the end of the song; 2) the use of “*mue la-iat*,” or rapid hand patterns, which were adapted from *Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen*’s distinctive *khong wong yai* performing technique, which are rarely found in other versions of *khong wong yai* solos (refer to example 16). The exceptional skills required for the playing of this solo piece, which is comparable to the *khong wong yai* solo of *khaekmon samchan*, are suitable for showing off the player’s skills.



Example 15 An example of using *mue la-iat* in *hokbot chandiao* for *khong wong yai* solo

Source: by author



Example 16 An example of using *mue la-iat* in *toi rup samchan* for *khong wong yai* solo

Source: by author

The musical characteristics of the *khong wong yai* solo compositions of Sangobseuk Thamviarn are the use of “*mue la-iat*,” which is similar to *khong wong lek* solos and was adapted from Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen’s distinctive *khong wong yai* performing technique, which is rarely found in other versions of *khong wong yai* solos.

## 2.2 A set of practical exercises for basic *khong wong yai* practice (20 exercises).

The research found the practical exercises created by Sangobseuk Thamviarn to be suitable for students with no previous background in Thai percussion instruments. They are student-centered exercises designed to provide students with different levels of practical *khong wong yai* knowledge and skills, recognition and understanding of various types of hand patterns, and *mue khong*. After completing these exercises, students can continue practicing to improve their skills, eyesight, precision, and agility. Some of these exercises were created from melodic sentences found in common Thai traditional songs. Once students have mastered basic *khong wong yai* performing skills, they can quickly learn and play *songchan* or *samchan* melodies. This is a complete and perfect set of exercises for the learning and practicing of basic *khong wong yai* skills, as shown in example exercise 19. For this practice exercise, students are required to have completed previous exercises and possess a basic level of *khong wong yai* skills. This technique is used to practice the octave (*tikhu paet*) technique known as *kot sai poet khwa*, where the left-hand hits to stop the sound. While the right-hand gives automatically a resonant

sound and was historically referred to as *ting non*. Begin the practice of hitting from low to high pitches, and then reverse from high to low pitches to enhance precision in hitting the *khong wong yai*. Moreover, it can be stated that the “*ting non*” serves as a metric or symbol that signifies the level of expertise and skill of a musician who plays *khong wong yai*.



Example 17 Exercise 19 for basic *khong wong yai* practice

Source: by author

This research documented 718 pages of knowledge in the *mue khong* of 250 Thai traditional songs in the Thai notation system, consisting of 10 *phleng homrong*, 5 *phleng rueang*, 10 *phleng tap*, 30 *phleng thao*, 20 *phleng samchan*, 80 *phleng Khon Lakhon* (songchan

and *chandiao*), 5 *phleng rabam*, 3 series of *phleng homrong* (*phleng naphat*), 7 *phleng tra homrong*, and 20 *phleng naphat*. Fifty of these songs were selected and recorded in media form, which can be viewed online (on YouTube) by using the QR codes listed below.



Figure 1 QR Code for fifty of these songs in media for online dissemination

Performer: Thirawit Anthasiri

Source: by author

## Conclusion & Discussion

This study is able to extract tacit knowledge encapsulated within Sangobseuk Thamviharn about Thai traditional music that is important in both theory and practice, as imparted by several distinguished Thai traditional music masters and preserved with unwavering dedication over the past 70 years. The body of knowledge of Sangobseuk Thamviharn about the “*mue khong*” of Thai traditional music is most valuable for being an excellent source that can compile written music scores and records of the principal melodies passed on, from past to present, through the “oral tradition” method of transmission. Such knowledge was analyzed and synthesized into a significant academic work on the history and musicology of Thai traditional music. It is hoped that this work will become part of the effort to minimize the risk of loss of an important cultural heritage so that it can be retained and preserved for the next generation to appreciate and study. The music compositions of Sangobseuk Thamviharn reflect his remarkable expertise in using unique compositional methods to compose both ensemble and solo pieces of music. In the *khong wong yai* solos, in the initial round, sweet melodies (*thiao wan*) are used, while elaborate melodies (*thiao kep*) are used in the subsequent round, according to the tradition of Thai traditional music<sup>17</sup>. The characteristic hand patterns for *khong wong yai* solo in his compositions reflect the fact that Sangobseuk Thamviharn is the only disciple who received knowledge and personal training in *khong wong yai* performing skills and special techniques from Luang Bamrung Chitcharoen and applied them to the techniques of *khong wong yai* solos. His music compositions clearly exemplify his contribution to the continuity, extension, and development of the practical knowledge of Thai traditional music.

<sup>17</sup> Phichit Chaiseri, *The composition of Thai classical music* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2013). (in Thai)

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