

Abstract

This Dissertation is an anthropological study of Classical Thai Music. [It takes music as an element in culture, and as constituting a culture of its own.] by looking at the mean by which traditional music survives in contemporary society, despite major changes in the social context. Its selects two musical families who have practical music for several generations, namely Phatayakosol and Silapabanleng, and then compare the way music is passed on in each families.

Comparison of the "musical culture" of each family is made by examining 3 issues: organization, form of music, and ritual and attitude about music.

As far as organization is concerned, they differ vastly. Phatayakosol is organised in the tradition of "house of phinphat(xylophone) ensemble" which owns a xylophone ensemble composed of the members of the family and earns its living by performing for temple and household functions. Silapabanleng is organised as a musical foundation whose main activities are to preserve and popularize Thai music by offering courses to the public. Consequently, those who can join the activities of Phatayakosol house are small in number and limited to those who have kinship and personal connections. Thire musical role adheres closely to the tradition of performing in ritual.

Silapabanleng ,on the contrary, manages to broaden scope of their activities and incorporate more outsiders, by presenting their music in a novel role as a passtime activity.

On the level of form, both families differ in the selection of the repertoire of musical compositio being practised and in the transmission of musical skill and knowledge. Phatayakosol concentrates on xylophone and used the repertoire relevant to ritual performances mainly. The method of transmission is solely oral. Silapabanleng on the other hand teaches string instruments mainly and selects non-ritual, and relatively simple composition to suit beginners. Besides, new methods of transmission have been developed to facilitate learning, such as the use of notation or the use of audio-visual aids.

Comparison of belifes and attitutes towards music is made by examining the ritual of pithee wai khru (paying homage to teachers). This is the most important ritual in the life of Thai musician. their rituals differ in form, process and mood expression, which reflect the different worldviews they have towards music. Phatayakosol ritual consists of symbols whose meanings are shared only among members of the group. whreras Silapabanleng ritual attempts to communicate the meanings of their symbols to non-members.

Phatayakosol and Silapabanleng thus adopt a different mode of transmitting traditional Thai music in modern Thai society. Via organization, activities, repertoire, teaching method, ritual, Phatayakosol retrains the conventional mode to the utmost while Silapabanleng shows attempts to modify their music to cater for the changing way of life.