

# Sonic Orders in ASEAN Musics

A FIELD AND LABORATORY STUDY OF MUSICAL CULTURES  
AND SYSTEMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Chief Editor : Joe Peters, PhD

Editors : Ramon P Santos, PhD • Sri Hastanto, PhD • Nguyen Phuc Linh, PhD  
• Mohamed Ghouse bin Nasuruddin • Juned bin Haji Ramli • Sayasnin  
Sikhotchounnamany • U Myat Thu Ya • Nat Rachakul

Volume one



This book  
includes

6 CDs

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## THE CENTRAL REGION

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The musical culture in the Central Region includes music originated by folks and that traditionally adapted into classical music in the context of royal palaces, temples, homes, governmental sections and educational institution. Generally, the transmission of classical music of the Central Region was done between a teachers and disciples. It involved a lot of worship in practice based on Buddhism, Brahmanism and other supernatural phenomena. The most interesting is *Piti Krob Kru*, "the initiation rite", and *Wai Kru*, "paying homage to teachers". The rite of initiation is a ceremony for a novice-musician asking permission to begin the musical lessons or to continue his higher practice. It is considered the bounded duty of musicians of all levels and all age to pay annual homage to their Thai classical music teachers. Citation of teachers' outstanding contribution and transferring of the merit earning to the late teachers are also included and extended to the deities who encourage that branch of art and learning. Those musicians who go through these rites would gain the highest possible efficiency and proficiency in music learning and performing.

The context (i.e. in the royal palaces, the mansion of a noble man, community with musical centres, temples) of transferring knowledge of and taste in music in the Central Region from the past up until before the political revolution in BE. 2475 was intensive and powerful. After the revolution, Thailand became democratic with technological and economical development and the strength of these contexts was reduced even though there was transfer of responsibility from the royal palaces to government. New context of the transmission of knowledge and taste of Thai music replacing the old ones was in the government and private sections. Great importance was placed on conservation and promotion particularly by putting music into curriculum of all educational levels. Many music schools and groups of music-lovers were formed by both professionals and amateurs. Thai classical music became the attraction in tourism industry. Mass media played a part in disseminating the

knowledge. All these factors help promote and destroy the taste in music of the Central Region for people in the whole country. The main sites of transmission and development of music in Central Region are Bangkok and the neighbouring provinces.

The music culture in the Central Region in this case also includes folk songs, folk music, classical music and popular music.

Most of the outstanding folk songs in the Central Region are villagers' literary work, which gives more importance to vocal music than instrumental music. Thai folk songs are simple, timely, local and relevant to the lifestyles in residential area. Generally, they may sing solo, duet or in chorus with rhythm provided by instruments or by clapping. Lyrics can be short or long and has varied structures of prosody. These songs are performed in occasions such as *Song Kran* (the water festival), a seasonal festival and a festival related to lifestyle. The style of singing these folk songs vary and further study are recommended.

The pattern and direction of folk music in the past were determined for a certain period of time by the culture in royal palaces. Thereby its structure, pattern and content were improved emphasising on the delicacy and standard which were prominently presented in musical instruments, ensemble, performing procedure, musical composition, pitches, music glossary, prestige of music and musicians, ethics, rituals and values given to music. Even though, later on, the influence of royalty upon the Thai society had lessened, it still remained on the context of folk music in the Central Region at the present time. The classical musical instruments such as *khong wong* (small gongs of different pitches strung in series), *klui* flute, *tapone* (a barrel-shaped drum), the kind of ensembles such as *Piphat*, *Krueng Sai*, and *Mahori* are considered the representative of the Thai Classical music in the Central Region. They are still considered much more important than other folk music in general such as *Piphat Mon*, *Krueng Sai Pasom*, *Unkalung* (a set of bamboo tubes played by shaking), *Khim* (dulcimer), *Trae Wong* (a brass-band). Even though these orchestras and the mentioned instruments were popular among common people, however those with authority in royal culture do not accept them as classical.

The roles of music as found in the Central Region are as follows:

- i. Musical accompaniment to rituals (religious ceremony, the rite of paying homage to teachers, rituals in everyday life of folks)
- ii. Musical accompaniment to performance (the mask play, drama, a Thai musical folk drama, the art of fighting etc.)
- iii. Music for recreational purpose (i.e. music for enjoyment in family or community, music for competition, or as background music in a ceremony)