### Melodious Sound of Saw Sam Sai: Recording, Analytical Program Notes and Music Notaion

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### **Abstact**

Saw sam-sai (Three strings-fiddle), a traditional instrument of Thailand, has an extraordinary appearance as well as a remarkable sound. Its construction process requires distinctive materials and a thorough method of craftsmanship. Saw sam-sai has its role in the royal court, serving in the royal ceremonies since the ancient times. Later, its role has expanded to a solo instrument. According to the roles and a long heritage of Saw sam-sai, the research aims to create a recording of significant repertoires functioning in the prominent ceremonies for the purpose of preservation. The repertoire selected for recording are drawn from both the royal court and aristocracy repertoires. The recording procedure was done professionally with sound recording experts. The soloist for this recording is the researcher, who has inherited the traditional performance practice of Saw sam-sai. Accompanying the recording are music scores in western notation that are transcriptions of the performance and a book, Seang sa-nau saw sam-sai, and its English translation. The book provides the history and background of Saw sam-sai in Thailand and the analysis of the repertoires. The result of the research and its performance has been presented in an academic conference to make the heritage of Saw sam-sai known to the public. Moreover, for the benefit of worldwide access, this research is also publicized through YouTube and Dailymotion. Through this research, Thai musical heritage has been made known internationally. Furthermore, it can serve as a model for other researchers who are masters of other Thai musical instruments for the preservation of the Thai national treasure.

Keywords: Thai tradionanl music, Thai Tradional song, Siamese fiddle, Saw sam sai, Thai performance, Melodious Sound of Saw, Pongsilp Arunrat

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### Introduction

The inheritance of performance practices of present day saw sam-sai can be traced back to the reign of King Rama II (Buddha Loetla Nabhalai), spanning eight generations altogether. The legacy of saw sam-sai has been inherited among 2 disciplines: the royal discipline and the aristocratic school. Both have mastered Saw sam-sai and claimed their expertise and distinction of their practices, having their own collection of solo repertoire. Eventually the two disciplines could unite to share their heritages with each other. Although some of their practices have been lost, the significant repertoires survive.

For the royal discipline, the art of learning *saw sam-sai* began in the reign of King Rama II, considered the golden age of arts. The king, himself a *saw sam-sai* master, had laid the standard of the instrument by adjusting its shape to project better sound quality. In the court, the *saw sam-sai* musicians are all female. They were charged with two duties: performing for important ceremonies, such as *Khun-phra-u*, and performing at the King's chamber.

The *Khab-mai* ensemble, comprised of a singer, a *saw sam-sai* player, and a *ban-dau* drum, played for the significant ceremonies. They performed *Cha-look-luang* repertoire. The musicians who performed in this ceremony were from the caste of Brahmin. The repertoire is varied in each ceremony, for example *Tad* repertoire is assigned in the *Song-krueang-yai* ceremony (cutting the hair). As to the repertoire, even though several songs were mentioned, only two songs, *Khab-mai* and *Kra-bong-kan*, survive. Musicians for this ceremony are courtiers in charge of royal ceremonial dresses and hats

The second type of ensemble, blended *saw sam-sai* with *Mahori Luang* (royal) ensemble, comprises a singer, a saw *sam-sai* player, *kra-jab pii*, *klui rong-oo*, and *tab*. This ensemble was developed since the Ayutthaya period and continues to the present. Musicians of this ensemble are usually concubines and courtly ladies. They perform the Mahori music telling the stories drawn from popular literature. Popular Mahori songs are "Nang Nak," "Padcha," "Phra-thong," and "Kham-wan."

After the reign of King Rama III, *sepha* music became a new trend circulating at the court. Many *sepha* songs were composed and sung in alternation with *Kab sepha*, accompanied by *Pii-phaat sepha* ensemble. In addition to *sepha* composition, a new composition technique of augmentation was invented, creating a melodic expansion in longer note durations, resulting in slower rhythm than *song chan* composition. This type of composition is called *sam chan* composition. Some of the *Sepha* songs, such as *Nok-khamin*, *Phaya soak*, *Saratee* and *Kake-mon*, were developed for a solo repertoire of several instruments. This type of solo composition is called *Pleng deo* (solo).

The trend of *Sepha* and *Pleng deo* composition was diffused all over the royal court. As a consequence, Thai music masters from the other discipline of aristocracy stepped into the court. Among the Thai music masters from this discipline were **Phra Pradit phairoh (Mee Dhuriyangkul)**, who mastered *Pii nai* (folk oboe) and *Saw sam-sai*. There is no evidence to verify his teacher; however, for his position, he was appointed as Thai *Pii-phaat* teacher for King Pin-klao's ensemble and for the ensemble of

Somdej Chao Phya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag). He also composed several *Sepha* repertoires as well as *pleng deo* that derived from *sepha* songs, for example "Kaek-mon." As for the original solo compositions, his most remarkable piece is

"Tayoi Diew."

When solo music performance became popular at the court, *saw sam-sai* as a courtly instrument music had to adjust to the new trend. As such, were Phra Pradit phairoh who was in charge of teaching *sepha* music for Mahori ensemble, also had to compose solo repertoire for *Saw sam-sai*.

Hence, to be selected as courtly ladies, the skill of saw sam-sai was in demand. For example, Chao Jom Prakong, a daughter to Phraya Dhamasarnitipipitpakdee (Tad Amatyakul, 1773-1888), was also a saw sam-sai student of were Phra Praditphairoh. She was one of the ladies who mastered in the instrument before being appointed as the royal concubine to King Rama V. Later, she inherited the knowledge of saw samsai to Phraya Amatyapongthampisarn (Prasong Amatyakul, 1883-1952), her nephew. Likewise, most of the ladies who could perform saw sam-sai were all wives of significant noblemen, including Mom Sud and Mom Piew, etc.

During the reign of King Rama III to Rama IV, **Mom Sud Bunnag** (unknown birth and death date), wife to Somdej Chao Phya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) had possessed an excellent skill in performing *saw sam-sai*. She had advanced her talent while studying with Phra Praditphairoh. and developed her skill at the palace of Somdej Chaophraya. One spectacular lesson she acquired from Phra Praditphairoh. was the "*Tayoi Diew" and "Chednork*." Later on, she passed these two songs to **Mom Piew**, a concubine to Phraya Noraratratchamanit (To Manitayakul).

Mom Piew was a saw sam-sai master at the court of King Rama IV-V. Even though, she was not a courtly lady since she had resigned from the court for her marriage, her expertise in the instrument had made her well-known and was requested to continue teaching saw sam-sai to the ladies at the court. Similar to Mom Sud, Mom Piew had inherited "Tayoi Diew" song to Chao Thep Kanya Buranaphim.

Chao Thep Kanya Buranaphim (1880-1962), was the ninth daughter of Chao UttrakarnKosol (Chao Noi Thepwong) and Chao Mae Kham aiey. At the age of twelve, she came to the royal grand palace with Chao Jom mada Thipkesorn where she had her education along with music study at Chao-Lao palace of Praratchachaya Chao Dararassami. Through saw sam-sai and music lesson with Mom Piew and Phraya Prasarn duriyasap (Plak Prasarnsap, 1860-1924) who studied with Tuek Duriyangkul, a son of Phra Praditphairoh. Chao Thep Kanya became an excellent saw sam-sai player, a leader of Mahori ensemble, and teacher to several princes and princessess. Among her students was Prince Paribatra, a son to King Rama V. Later on, Phraya Prasarnduriyasap sent Praya Bhumeesevin, (Jit Jittrasevi) to study with Chao Thep Kanya for 9 years. He, then had acquired all the repertoires.

**Praya Bhumeesevin, (Jit Jittrasevi**, 1894-1976), a son of Luang Kontapvati (Chang) and Thiab, studied Saw-duang (two-string fiddle) from his father before becoming a royal page in the Pii-phaat ensemble of King Rama VI (during the time he was a crown prince). At the court, he was a student of Phraya Prasarn duriyasap, a Pii-phaat

master and had studied klui and kong-wong-lek with Phraya Prasarn. After King Rama VI ascended to the throne, he was appointed as a supervisor and was confered the title of Phraya Pumeesevin in 1925.

Praya Bhumeesevin had his saw sam-sai lessons in courtly style with Chao Thep Kanya with additional guidance for saw sam-sai repertoires from Phraya Prasarn duriyasap. Additionally, he studied for more special techniques such as "new chang" and bowing from Chao Jom Prakong. Besides persuing expertise in Thai music Praya Bhumeesevin also studied violin with Phra Chen Duriyank (Piti Vatayakorn). Throughout the knowledge he acquired from his study, he intellectually invented a standard form of bowing and techniques, fingering, and systemized saw sam-sai education from beginning to advanced. His method has been called 'School of Phraya Bhumeesevin,' an excellent source for saw sam-sai music and learning. Many renown students of his school are Khru Tuean Patayakul, Khru Charoenjai Sunthonvathin, Professor Dr. Utit Narksawad, Khru Chalerm Muangpraesri, and Khru Siripan Palakawongse na Ayutthaya, etc. Among his students, Professor Udom Arunrat (1935-2006) is the only disciple who inheritted all the saw sam-sai repertoires from him

**Professor Udom Arunrat** was a son of Champii and Tham Arunrat. Professor Udom had his Bachelor of Education, majoring in Secondary School Education, from the College of Education (Srinakharinwirot University) in 1966 and recieved an Honorary Doctorate degree (Music) from Mahidol University in 2003.

He started learning Klui from his father. During the years 1946-1956, he had Jakee lessons with Khru Rueang Kasemsuk (unknown birth and death date), a well-known strings teacher at the Ayutthaya province. He became involved with saw sam-sai when he studied with Praya Bhumeesevin. Appreciating his student's talent and effort, Phraya Pumeesevin passed down all his saw sam-sai knowledge both, the techniques and the repertoires, to Professor Udom. Furthermore, he continued studying with Pavas Bunnag (1924-1994), the former Vice Principal Private Secretary, the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary. His teacher, Ajarn Pavas had his saw sam-sai study from Khru Tevaprasit Patayakosol (1907-1973), whom had inherited another discipline of saw sam-sai from Phraya Amatyapong thampisarn (Prasong Amatyakul). Through this study, Professor Udom had acquired new repertoires including "Surindrahu," "Kaek Mon," and "Krabongkan." With all of the saw sam-sai heritages from both disciplines and from generation to generation, Prof. Udom had become one of the most respected and the best saw sam-sai musician in the realm of Thai music.

Having devoted his life to educate the younger generation about Thai music, Professor Udom became a faculty member of the Department of Dramatic Arts, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University. He created a great number of valuable publications and was appointed Professor of Thai Traditional Music in 1994, considered to be the first professor of Thai Music under the Office of Higher Education of Thailand. After his retirement, he was invited as a Thai music expert to join the Thai music faculty at the College of Music, Mahidol University. There, he was charged with both lecture and performance classes in all levels from undergraduate to graduate programs.

With the mind to develop and create new art, he composed a number of solo repertoires for saw sam-sai from fundamental to advanced pieces, for example; "Mon plang," "Chorakae Hangyao," "Tuangpratart," "Khamen Pikeaw (Sakrawa), "Phraya rampueng,"," Sud Sa-nguan," "Chandrahu," "Lao Kaen," and "Ramajitti Ramluek." His efforts have strengthened Thai music education and made the name of his school notable in Thailand. Among his students, several are outstanding music teachers, including Professor Dr. Natchar Panchareon, Boontuan Sriworapoj, Suporn Chanapantu, and **Professor Pongsilp Arunrat**, his only son whom has inherited all the repertoires

### Project: The Recording of "Seang Sanoh saw sam-sai"

The purpose of recording "Melodious Sound of Saw Sam Sai or *Seang Sanoh saw sam-sai*" is to preserve national heritage with the objective of collecting all the saw sam-sai repertoires. The repertoires can be classified into 4 categories.

### 1. Repertoire for the royal ceremony

Repertoire for the royal ceremony comprises of songs that functioned in the royal ceremonies since the ancient time. In this repertoire, *saw sam-sai* is performed together with the *ban-dau*, a hand drum designated only for use in the royal ceremony.

Tad repertoire, the most prominent repertoire for royal ceremony is functioned. At present, most of the songs in Tad repertoire have been lost, except 2 pieces: "Kuhmei"

present, most of the songs in *Tad* repertoire have been lost, except 2 pieces: "Kubmai" and "Krabongkan." In addition to these, an important piece, "cha look luang." is used in the Khun phra-u ceremony. Three more significant songs are also included such as "Pra-satwai," with "Kubmai," and "Krabongkan," "Chalukluang," with "Orachorn."

### 2. Solo saw sam-sai repertoire for fundamental level

The pieces for Saw sam-sai beginners comprise of *song-chan* and *sam-chan* repertoires. Even though, the fundamental pieces have uncomplicated melodies and are rather simple to play, having clear fingering function, and practical bowing, to make beautiful music is not easy. A highly skillful performer is needed to create the beauty of sound. Nine pieces are selected for this fundamental level including "Monplang," "Hokbot," "Tonplengching," "Chorakae Hangyao," "Tuangphratart," "Nok Khamin," "Bulan loyluean," "Buntomprai," and "Khamen Pikaew (Sakrawa).

### 3. Solo saw sam-sai repertoire for intermediate level

The intermediate repertoire is for the student who has efficiently passed the fundamental training. Music in this category is mainly in slow tempo of *sam-chan* rhythm; therefore, they are longer in duration compared to the fundamental pieces. More advance techniques are used in term of fingering, bowing, and interpreting emotional expression of the piece. Ten intermediate pieces are drawn from both the royal court and the aristocratic disciplines: "Tayae," "Platong," "Sud Sa-nguan," "Phaya Kruan," "Phaya Soke," "Phaya Rumpueng," "Sansanoh," "Chantarahu," "Surindrahu," and "Kaekmon."

### 4. Solo saw sam-sai repertoire for advance level

These are solo music pieces that require a high level of skill due to the difficulties in both bowing, and fingering. Generally, these repertoires contain Lao and Song-mai rhythmic pattern, as well as a free rhythm. Five pieces are selected, arranged according to their level of difficulty, which are "Lao Kaen," "Ramajitti Ramluek," "Thayoi Diew," "Chednork," and "Kraonai tao." Phaya Bhumisevin specified that, if a player started learning "Thayoi Diew," they must have a *Hwai Khru* ceremony (ceremony to pay respect to teachers). The students have to prepare the payment of one *chang* to the teacher. The purpose of this payment is to help the students understand that the Thayoi Diew is the supreme piece in the Thai literature and should not be modified or changed in a disrespectful way. After finishing "Thayoi Diew," then the student can proceed to "Cherd nork" and "Kraonai."

This spectacular recording has selected 15 prominent pieces from the royal court discipline and the Phraya Bhumeesevin discipline, along with 9 major pieces composed by Professor Udom Arunrat. Additionally, three pieces of the aristocratic discipline: "Krabong-kan," "Surindrahu," and "Kaekmon," are included. These 27 pieces display Thai national heritage and can preserve the treasure of the nation.

It is characteristic of Saw sam-sai music to be performed twice, the first in a Cantabile style, called "tiew hwan." This refers to an imitation of vocal style by using bowing and fingering to match the lyric. The bowing has to be done with exaggerated expression. The second repeat, called "tiew keb," by contrast to the first, is performed with melodic variation. The nature of the variation is to create fast forward moving melody, which requires high skill techniques in bowing and fingering. Both "tiew hwan" and "tiew keb" have to be performed with additional percussion instruments of ching, tone, and "Kubmai," for "Pra-satwai," (except with and "Krabongkan," ramana "Chalukluang.", the ban-dau is used instead of those percussion instrument). Only Ramajitti Ramluek is performed without percussion as the composer specified.

The analysis also provides keys to emotional expression, which could be varied in each repertoire. The analysis presents an intellectual research, providing new information to the realm of Thai music. This following liner note accompanying the recording could provide a new appreciation to *saw sam-sai* music.

# **Recording Studio**









## Music scores in western notation

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### Summary of the three disciplines for solo saw sam-sai repertoires

The analysis of the compositions in this recording project has provided valuable knowledge of *saw sam-sai*. Twenty-seven *saw sam-sai* works are selected; all contain their affiliation with the three major disciplines with clear explanation and classification of their roles and function in the royal ceremony, as well as their level of difficulty ranging from basic, to advanced. For the selection, fifteen compositions are drawn from the royal court and Phraya Phumeesevin disciplines; three compositions are from the aristocratic school; and nine are drawn from the works of Professor Udom Arunrat. The identical characteristics of each discipline could be summarized as follows.

The fifteen solo saw sam-sai compositions of Phraya Phumeesevin (Jitara Jittasevi) are all Thai repertoires that are not associated with foreign accent songs (*Pleng oak* phasa). His philosophy is to provide a strong fundamental saw sam-sai education to the students. He has inherited the composition styles from Phraya Prasarn duriyasap (Plak Prasarnsap). All of his works aim to improve the skill of students step-by-step by classifying the songs into repertoire for beginner, starting with a fundamental string repertoire, "Ton pleng ching" before moving forward to "Hok bot," which he had modified from Phraya Prasarnduriyasap's thiew-keb for pii (folk oboe). He also composed solo saw sam-sai for "Bu-lan loi luean" but blended it with the western style of "San-sern suea paa" in thiew-keb of the return sections with additional techniques of neu rude (which he called 'neu karn-baan' for students to practice by themselves). His effort reveals his devotion in laying a foundation for saw sam-sai education for students to develop their skill and technique in a systematic way from basic level to advanced, similar to western education in instrumental performance. Realizing that many popular compositions, such as "Nok kha-min," "Tha-yae," "Phaya kruean," and "Phaya soke," were all modified for solo instruments, except "Ban-thom phrai," "Pla-thong," and "Saen sa-nau," which were not in the interest of the composers. For this reason, Phraya Phumeesevin modified these works for solo saw sam-sai to present differences from other composers who prefer creating their solo composition on popular songs, such as "Su-rin tha-ra-huu," "Khaek morn," and "Sa-ra-thii." He saw that these popular solo works were already masterpieces, therefore it was not necessary to create new ones to overthrow the great works. This concept was passed down to him by his teacher, Phraya Prasarn duriyasap, "If any compositions are already masterpiece works, there were no need to compose a new one to replace what are considered the best. Composers should honor the great masters and their works. Instead of composing new ones, they should encourage students to study the piece in-depth." Hence, he decided to create solo saw sam-sai for unknown works to avoid duplication of the existing compositions and to pay respect and honor to other saw sam-sai teachers. This attitude should be kept in the minds of all the Thai musicians.

For advanced solo saw sam-sai repertoires, including "Tha-yoi deo," "Cherd no-ok," and "Krao-nai," are all modified as solo repertoire for every instrument. Phraya Phumeesevin had inherited "Tha-yoi deo" and "Cherd no-ok" from Chao Thepkanya Buranaphim, whom derived it from a saw sam-sai master of the royal court, which is believed to be Phra Praditphirau (Mee Dhuriyangkul) when he was a saw sam-sai master at the royal court. As for the "Krao-nai" composition, he received it from Phraya Prasarn duriyasap. The composition has been regarded as the supreme

repertoire of saw sam-sai. It could be said that the identity of the solo saw sam-sai repertoires of Phraya Phumeesevin is to elevate the main repertoires (Thai repertoires or *Pleng sam-neang Thai*) to be the masterpieces of solo saw sam-sai.

The solo works from the aristocratic discipline which are derived from Khru Theyaprasit Phatayakosol and have survived today, are 3 compositions: "Kra-bong kan," "Su-rin tha-ra-huu," and "Khaek morn." "Kra-bong kan" is in the category of Thad repertoire similar to "Khab-mai" song, which are both compositions for royal ceremonies. The compositions were passed down from Luang Kanlayanamittavas (Chaokrom thab). The style is different from other "Kra-bong kan" that are usually performed by *Pii-phaat*. It is considered a significant treasure of the nation. "Su-rin morn" tha-ra-huu" and "Khaek the works of Phraya Thammasarnnitiphipitphakdii (Tard Amatayakul). Both are regarded as splendid solo works of Morn-accented compositions (sam-neang morn) that have been passed down to Khru Thevaprasit Patayakosol and were among his favorite solo saw sam-sai pieces. Since these songs are popular, there are several versions circulating among Thai musicians, creating suspicion of their authenticity. The reassurance has been given by Ajarn Phavas Bunnag, who insisted that he is the one who received "Su-rin tha-ra-huu" and "Khaek morn" directly from Phraya Amatayapongthamphisarn (Prasong Amatayakul). Khru Theva prasit inherited *Morn* style in *thiew-hwan* on the last rhythm of the second section from Phraya Sanau Duriyank, then composed thiewkeb for both the first and the second section based on the Pii-nai composition that he derived from Phraya Prasarn duriyasap (Plak Prasarnsap). Ajarn Phavas was also another person who obtained the piece from Phraya Prasarn duriyasap.

As for Professor Udom Arunrat's solo repertoire for *saw sam-sai*, nine pieces are drawn from *Morn* and *Lao* repertoires. The purpose in creating solo repertoires for *saw sam-sai* is to provide appropriate repertoires to meet the skill of all levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Professor Udom had seen that most of the solo pieces for saw sam-sai from the royal court discipline by Phraya Phumeesevin and the aristocratic discipline by Ajaran Phavas Bunnag are all masterpieces; however, they are too difficult for the new generation to earn the scholarship step-by-step. Therefore, he has assigned study repertoires to build up the skill from the basic level to the advanced one; that is, assigning "Morn plang" after learning "Ton pleng ching" and study "Jo-ra-ke hang vao" and "Tuang phra-tat" after finishing "Morn plang." Also, "Jo-ra-ke hang yao" and "Tuang phra-tat" can blend with the collection of "Ton pleng ching" and "Nok kha-min" by Phraya Phumeesevin to complete the "Tab Ton pleng ching," a standard repertoire for the basic level of string instruments. He also created "Kha-men piikaew tang sa-ka-ra-wa" for basic level of solo saw sam-sai and assigned "Tha-vae" and "Pla-thong" of Phraya Phumeesevin for the intermediate repertoire for saw samsai. He created "Sud sa-nguan," a one-section composition in an intermediate level. Students at this level are required to manage the song before performing "Phaya soke" and "Phaya kruean" which are also one-section compositions and require a sliding technique (neu rude) as well as demanding a good ear. Besides "Phaya kruean" and "Phaya soke," Professor Udom created a solo saw sam-sai version for "Phaya ram-pueng" to complete the collection of "Tab Sam Phaya," one of the Tabs popular at Phraya Prasarn duriyasap's school. After he had inherited solo repertoires of "Su-rin tha-ra-huu" and "Khaek morn" from Ajarn Phavas, he realized that both

songs bear a great deal of differences from the versions of Phraya Phumeesevin. Thus, he decided to create another solo work on "Jan-ta-ra-huu," a paired-song with "Su-rin tha-ra-huu," and required students to master the song to adjust their level before starting to learn "Su-rin tha-ra-huu." He had set "Su-rin tha-ra-huu" as a model in creating "Jan-ta-ra-huu." When students have finished learning "Jan-ta-ra-huu," they can manage "Su-rin tha-ra-huu," and "Khaek morn" without any problem.

The advanced repertoires for solo saw sam-sai comprises three compositions: "Tha-yoi deo," "Cherd no-ok," and "Krao nai." Professor Udom proposed more repertoires to be added in this level; therefore, he created a solo saw sam-sai piece on "Lao kaen". He invented new techniques of saw sam-sai in this song. When students have completed learning "Lao kaen," "Ram jit-ti ram-ruek" is placed as the next composition.

He also adopted "Sa-thu-karn" chan deo as the response in solo works. This composition is very special since it has no rhythmic pattern accompanying. The style of this song is similar to "Tha-yoi deo," so when students finish "Lao kaen," they can continue with "Tha-yoi deo." Moreover, he had added "Ched nai" at the end of the "Ched nok" composition, increasing it by 3 figures, added to the original 2 to complete 5 figures, similar to the tradition of Khone Nang loi that ended with Chednai. In summary, the solo repertoire for saw sam-sai of Professor Udom is the integration of both the royal court discipline and aristocratic discipline in order to provide a full contribution of saw sam-sai for the benefit of the new generation. Thus, his method is still in practice today.

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