

The Recollection of Khun Yuam: Music Evokes Memories

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Abstract

Khun Yuam, a small district in Mae Hong Son, northern Thailand, is known as a wood and border trade area. From 1943-1945, the Japanese army retreated to Khun Yuam, and this period became part of the local people's memories. Furthermore, during music fieldwork in 2021, the researcher interviewed the Ruam Dao Khun Yuam Ensemble, a contemporary Lanna traditional ensemble. Most of the band members were alive during the occupation period. They insisted that they had learnt a song entitled Yipun (Japanese) from Japanese soldiers by oral tradition but there was no evidence of this in the Japanese language pronunciation because of language dynamics combined with the local pronunciation of Tai Yai. The researcher was inspired to examine this by using the Cross-Cultural Music Process, the creative method, which includes 1) Learning the original tunes from local musicians and consulting with language experts, 2) Interpreting by arranging for a string quartet by combining music in the same context, 3) Rehearsing and performing, and 4) Transmission, designing showcases with narration and seeing the reflection. The result was an arrangement for a string quartet in "Recollection", which combined two Yipun and O Te, children's Japanese tunes, which Pang Tanu, a legendary local person, sang. The music demonstrated a human legacy of humanity and empathy that is apparent through the audience engagement during the performances.

Keywords: Recollection, Cross-Cultural Music Process, Khun Yuam

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Introduction

Recall is the information that humans have stored for a lifetime; most forgetting occurs rapidly and then levels off over time, they are not really forgotten but our minds just lose access to them. Recalling recently stored information can be difficult, as human memory is typically approximate rather than literal in nature. People have global memories of conversations or events rather than word-for-word transcriptions. Although humans regret when forgetting something, cognitive psychology or the mind treats long-term remembering as an asset (Neuliep, 2009, pp. 156-60). Likewise, Music is the legacy of humankind entrenched in each culture's roots. The story is revealed through sound, noise, dialect, and song to conserve the philosophies and identities of every era through narratives, lullabies, rituals, traditions, and personal experiences. Music fieldwork experience is the aspect of a continuing transformation in the humanities that moves towards reflection between experience, ethnographers and the people who understand and can share the same story (Kisliuk, 2008, pp. 183-4). This will all be affected by blurred boundaries.

This article will unravel the method of musical field trips and creative approach in a case study located in Khun Yuam district, Mae Hong Son province, upper northern Thailand. It uses the Cross-Cultural Process in Music which is a method of finding by focusing on four processes: Learning, Interpreting, Rehearsing and Performing, and Transmission (Suwanpakdee, 2018). These processes were applied via an in-depth-study and performing techniques to make music culture a contemporary approach and keep the original essence of a musical dialect¹.

Mae Hon Son Province is surrounded by mountains and covered by mist in all the seasons in Thailand; winter, summer, and rain. It has a rich natural and cultural heritage—ethnic people still appear with cultural diversity. Mae Hong Son is regarded as a source of historical knowledge from many eras and attracts people to visit in different aspects as tourists, scholars, or musicians. Historian Nootnapang Chumdee mentioned that there are various ethnicities of people in the Pai, Pangmapha, and Khun Yuam districts, and they can adjust their way of living together with the dynamic changes in societal and cultural contexts (Chumdee, 2015, p. 2445). Following the ethnic group's diversity in Mae Hong Son, music has different kinds of sounds based on the function of their lives in traditions, rituals, and beliefs. Each ethnic group has its style of musical instrument, primarily wind instrument. The footstep pattern for local dance or trance-like movements is usually accompanied by music, performed by gurus who are usually shamans or spirit community leaders. The simplicity of the melody, like the idea of minimalism, can be improved by improvisation. Folk music in Mae Hong Son reflects people's intelligence and nature, which relates to and emphasises the uniqueness of Mae Hong Son.

Archeologist Rasmi Shoocongdej found that Khun Yuam, before 1957, experienced a period of migration with mainly; Tai Yai and Karen, groups settling in the area (Shoocongdej et al., 2012, pp. 56-8) because of unusual political conditions at the border or due to the trading of wood with the Bombay Burma Company (BBC). The settlers lived in a particular area but as the community expanded they had to find new places to live. In the past, there was evidence

¹ This study was a musical part of an interdisciplinary research method entitled “Upgrading Cultural Heritage for Creative Tourism in Mae Hong Son Province”, supported by Program Management Unit Competitiveness, Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI).

to support the idea that Mae Hong Son had an abundance of natural teak; then, people from outside entered the business, the BBC (Chumdee, 2015, p. 2451), was the wood trade company with the teak concession in the Salween River area (Betgem, 2021). This formed part of the border of Thailand and Myanmar and became Mae Hong Son. The arrival of the BBC established settlements, illustrating that Khun Yuam was a notable community from the past.

The Mae Hong Son area is considered a strategic location for many reasons. Both Khun Yuam and Pai districts served as entry and retreat routes to Burma for the Japanese army during 1943-45; Mae Hong Son was full of Japanese, resulting in stories and relationships between local people and the Japanese (Chumdee, 2013). The study of Kanoksilpatham (2021) et al. found that after 1987, the Khun Yuam community gave precedence to World War II under the flow of tourism such as the renovation of a museum and the expansion of a tourism route. In memory of the Khun Yuam people, there are many reminiscences of places that link to World War II (1939-45); for instance, the Thai-Japanese Friendship Memorial displays Japanese military uniforms, weapons, medical equipment, wrecks, and the appliances of Tai Yai people, which show the traditions and customs of people in Khun Yuam; Wat To Phae was used to print banknotes, a medical facility and a cemetery for Japanese soldiers. A scenic point in this temple, which appeared as a local story, was that when the Japanese army saw this temple, it seemed to be heaven; it means that this area remained inhabited and survived the war. Figure 1 shows the retreat route of the Japanese army; Wat Muai To, the Japanese army constructed a road to Kayah state in Burma. There is evidence that during the period that the Japanese army had retreated to Khun Yuam (1943-45), this temple was used as a medical facility for the Japanese army. An area inside the temple was dedicated to recalling this event through a sculpture, which depicts the moment that Japanese soldiers talked and exchanged food and medicines with Khun Yuam people and thus illustrated the relationship between them. Some stories revealed their relationship, such as a girl who had her hand cut by a knife, and suddenly a Japanese soldier carefully helped her apply the plaster affectionately. In another story, a boy got a samurai sword from a Japanese soldier as a gift to recall their friendship (Kanoksilapatham, Phetluan, Kachajiva, Chumdee, & Suwanpakdee, 2021).



Figure 1: A scenic point at Wat To Phae, Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son.

In an impressive moment of an interview, Jorleeya Uppara, one of the ensemble members, told stories about his memory which recalled meaningfully to him. This memory was from

1943-45; there are many places which connect to World War II whether Wat Muai To, Wat Hua Wiang as field hospitals and many places in his memory. The interview also revealed that more than three thousand Japanese soldiers passed away in the area during this period. At that time, he recalled a Japanese soldier named Ojima, with the characteristic big eyes, tall and overweight in his Japanese military uniform. Jorleeya normally helped to carry water for this soldier for a Japanese bath, with the remuneration at 1.50 Baht per day. Following the interview, the researcher asked if he could turn back time if he want to tell him anything, and he suddenly said, "I want to say, miss you" (Uppara, personal communication, Oct 28, 2021).

In the documentary entitled "Shade and Shadow," Pang Tanu, a legendary local person, was interviewed about remembering things about this event; the passage she said, "We remembered, remembered it in the brain, song O te." (Shoocongdej, 2014). This tune is in Japanese, entitled Kutsuganaru (Teichiku Records, 2010), and it is possible to understand what it is talking about with translation into English as follows:

Holding our hands, we will go together. We walk through the beautiful garden. Birds sing. The wind blows, the children's hair and footsteps tap the floor. Clear sky and clear air, when everyone rejoices, let us play together.

Following Pang Tanu's rendition in the documentary, the researcher was able to approach translation into Western notation as follows; (see Figure 2)



Figure 2: O te theme approached Pang Tanu's sung.

The Cross-Cultural Music Process

Besides, Learning from the background of the study area as above. The researcher developed the idea of a Cross-Cultural Process in Music to correspond to this study by designing a structured interview for the learning process. In the fieldwork, the researcher interviewed members of the Ruam Dao Khun Yuam Ensemble, a contemporary Lanna traditional ensemble in Khun Yuam, on 25th October 2021 at the house of Weerapol Boonpitak, the ensemble leader and a retired civil servant. The evidence from the interviewing found that this ensemble has performed in various styles in traditional Tai Yai, Lanna and contemporary music. The instrumentation in the band included vocals, Salo, a Lanna spiked fiddle with three strings; So, Thai string fiddle; Seung, a northern Thai musical string instrument like the mandolin; Ching, finger cymbals made from brass; Tapone, two framed-drum play by hands; Krup, wood percussion instruments, usually played on the down beats; Banjo and Accordion (Figure 3).

The ensemble has usually performed for entertainment to represent love, remembrance, welcoming and consoling. The music demonstration mostly applied to contemporary music; the researcher found a collection that systematically used Thai musical notations with the lyrics. The researcher found that one song has no notation, appearing in the title Yipun in Thai or Japanese. The ensemble demonstrated by playing their musical instruments and insisted that there was no lyric for this piece. Once the music repeated, some musicians began to sing, and then, all the musicians slowly joined in by singing along. The researcher immediately recorded this music, while trying to pronounce the lyrics correctly, which was then examined and verified by local musicians. Then, the researcher notated the melody by approaching the pitches and duration, two beats per bar or 2/4 as Figure 4. The interview and evidence of the music demonstration showed that most musicians in the ensemble had good memories of their childhood when the Japanese army retreated to Khun Yuam in 1943-45 (Boonpitak, personal communication, Oct 25, 2021).



Figure 3: Fieldtrip, interviewing the Ruam Dao Khun Yuam Ensemble.



Figure 4: Yipun, notation approach by the pronouncing of the Ruam Dao Khun Yuam Ensemble.

For the interpretation process, the researcher approached the melodic line onto the Western notation approach. Secondly, examining the musical lyric, with the Japanese language expert Siriwon Munintarawong, Thammasat University, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Japanese Section, it was found that words and contents in the lyric were incomplete because the grammar structure in the Japanese language is unclear. The function of each word does not show clear functions in the sentences. The expert interestingly suggested that it might be another Japanese accent, which may be a dialect that is not the standard lingua of Japanese (Munintarawong, personal communication, Nov 14, 2021).

Likewise, the analysis, researcher and expert tried to assume a word that apparently sounds "Mandalay Sakuna", meaning "flower of Mandalay", as a creative approach—a reason which supported the approach using the Japanese culture's context, for instance; "Uta", in Japanese, is the presence of words that is indicating the seasons in the song or poem (Figure 4). Furthermore, the idea of "Sakura", a flower in Japanese culture, namely the Sakura, will bloom in spring for only one week at the beginning of April, which means that when it blooms, it will wither away; Sakura will represents love, bloom, and the transition of time; therefore, Japanese people compare life to people who are uncertain. Following the discussion, the researcher was able to compare the dialect of Tai Yai, used by the ensemble when singing, with the Japanese language which resulted in the meaning by a creative approach (Table 1). The result of a creative approach to the meaning of the Yipun tune follows.

In Japanese,

春よ、沙也と里、沙也と里、マンダレー桜、今日は離れるよ
(haruyo, saya to sato, saya to sato mandare sakura, kyo wa hanareruyo)

In English,

“Oh, springtime, today, I must say goodbye to my Mandalay Sakura.
I miss my home and Saya, my love.”

Table 1: Implementation by a creative approach

Lyric sung by Ruam Dao Khun Yuam Ensemble	Approaching to the Japanese language		Meaning
Haleeyo	Haru / Hare	春	Vivid / Spring
Saya	Saya	沙也	Saya (name of woman)
Sato	Sato	里	Homeland
Mandalay Sakuna	Mandalay Sakura	マンダレー桜	Flower of Mandalay
Keaw na	Kyo wa	今日は	Today
Hariyo	Hanareruyo	離れるよ	Goodbye / Getaway / Apart

From the inspiration in Kun Yuam's context, two tunes, including O te or Kutsuganaru, which Pang Tanu sang, and Yipun, a hidden tune approached by the creative method that represents the camaraderie that Khun Yuam people felt in the period of the Japanese army pullback to Khun Yuam. The researcher was inspired by those two tunes, which made an impression on the researcher, reminded him of the beauty of human empathy, and recalled the memory of the Khun Yuam people, especially in friendship between them and the Japanese soldiers.

In an arrangement of "Recollection" for a string quartet, the introduction begins with the padel tone played by the viola to represent an expressive moment for the audience before the coming of the O Te tune played by the cello for the first time. Then, changing the audience's perception into syncopation on the cello line and following with the theme to feel a little movement forward like walking; the melody comes the second time on the first violin and the second voice or accompaniment played by the second violin and viola, which is making the dialogue with the melody, while the cello working on the stressing usually weak beat (Figure 5). The transition transformed from time signature 4/4 into 6/8, compound time to present the second theme of Yipun by using the pizzicato on the open-string (Figure 6). Modulation by

using the common chord to be the E major key signature aims to combine those two melodies by changing the colour of sound to a vivid mood (Figure 7).

Figure 5: Demonstrating that the melody on the first violin corresponds to a second voice on the second violin, and syncopation appears on the cello line.

Figure 6: Transition by using the compound time to change the idea of the arrangement.

Figure 7: Demonstrating combining two tunes between O te, and Yipun tunes.

In the Rehearsal and Performance process, according to the research with the team, this piece is performed in two concerts entitled Uplifting Tunes, Vivid Reminiscence, and Misty Town to promote cultural tourism in Mae Hong Song. The repertoire contained new compositions and arrangements by the researcher written for other districts in Mae Hong Son, including Pangmapha, Mae Sariang, Mueng Mae Hong Son, and Khun Yuam, respectively.

There were two performances, performed by Ensemble Music Makers. The first concert was on Saturday, 12th February 2022, at the Language Learning Centre, Chankalay, Mae Hong Son Community College. The performance combined the original music and new compositions/arrangements, which were developed with the influence of folk tunes and Western classical music; This performance opened the space for folk music gurus to perform in the concert to share the original idea and musical styles with the audience (Figure 8). The feedback was good; on the whole, the audience gained new experiences.

The second performance was on Wednesday, 1st June 2022, at the Thai-Asian Music Centre, Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music (PGVIM) in Bangkok. The concept of this performance was concert and commentary, narrating the story of field study in each district as mentioned above. A highlight was in the *Recollection* piece, which represented Khun Yuam district; the researcher invited the audience to participate as performers in the show by singing Yipun's lyrics originally sung by the Ruam Dao Khun Yuam ensemble. This was achieved by using shortened workshops with the audience through the idea of oral tradition, and then singing together with the string quartet (Figure 9). Moreover, *Recollection* was recorded and released in streaming together with the other three compositions and arrangements, which are conveyed by Mae Hong Son, in the album entitled "*Uplifting Tune, Vivid Reminiscence and Misty Town*" on the streaming platforms Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube, for long-term transmission.



Figure 8: First performance in Mae Hong Son featuring local music gurus.



Figure 9: Singing workshop to the audience for participating in the performance.

Result and Discussion

Firstly, the researcher designed the questionnaire to evaluate both performances. The evaluation was divided into seven questions as follows: 1) quality of organisation, 2) suitability of performance period, 3) generation of interest and benefit to musical knowledge, 4) musical content, 5) importance of cultural tourism in Mae Hong Son, 6) utilising knowledge and experience from the concert, and 7) willingness to participate in the subsequent activities. The audience evaluated each topic on a Likert scale. It was divided into five levels of agreement: 5 -strongly agree, 4 -agree, 3 -neutral, 2 -disagree, and 1-strongly disagree.

Secondly, The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the evaluation of two groups, namely the audiences for the first and second concerts. In the first concert, twenty of the audience members responded to the questionnaire and twenty-nine audience members responded from the second concert. The statistical value (W) was compared to the different scores between the two audience groups. The comparison provided a p-value of less than 0.05, meaning the two groups differed significantly (Table 2).

Table 2: Evaluation comparison between two concerts

Topic evaluation	Statistical values (W)	p-value
1) quality of organisation	195	0.77
2) suitability of performance period	195	0.79
3) generation of interest and benefit to musical knowledge	165	0.19
4) musical content	158	0.13
5) importance of cultural tourism in Mae Hong Son	214.5	0.60
6) utilising knowledge and experience from the concert	133	0.04*
7) willingness to participate in the subsequent activities	213.5	0.70

*The p-value < 0.05, means significant difference

Table 2 indicated that the first concert's audience expected to utilise the knowledge and experience differently from the second concert's audience at a level that was significant (p-value = 0.04). The information indicated that the average score of utilising knowledge and experience from the first concert was 4.00 which was less than the second at 4.48. The other evaluation topics showed that the audience understood the story through music. However,

many people have yet to experience Khun Yuam, and the performance could add to the audiences' perceptions through music. Although the same performance repertoire is designed in different curations, performance venues and audience experiences, music can evoke memories and allow people or the audience to feel emotion through sound experience, which depends on each personal background and narrative; here, musicians function in this way. A development for the second concert was the inclusion of a narration of the story of Khun Yuam by an expert, which demonstrated the adaptation of the stage for both performance and transmission. These processes are important for conveying the concept effectively.

There were comments from the experts on different aspects of development in the further study of this. Archeologist Rasmi Shoocongdej, noted that the identities are essential for examining the evidence investigated to understand more in-depth knowledge as the origin of the contexts, which should come before applying it to the product and is definitely essential to creative research. Applied ethnomusicologist Anant Narkkong, illustrated the performance that the audience's experience is the most important in the concert and can encourage them to open their ears to listen, which is the least investment of humankind. Auditory perception always happens from various human perspectives through the story and history of Mae Hong Son from different approaches. This study has shown how the value of ethnomusicology can be added, which should be practised as one of many methods of anthropology, whereas it must come across as creativity. This is consistent with the opinion of composer and music activist Anothai Nitibhon, who mentioned that the addition of music provides a wrapping that helps people to understand the telling of a story. Folk music can be uplifting, combining the narrative and musical material and provoking the story through sound. Correspondingly, Composer and Music Theorist Jiradej Setabundhu mentioned in this study that Recollection is usually an emotional attachment, and discourse may not be an exact representation of reality; nevertheless, it offers a creative perspective that can delve deeper into philosophical ideas. The study unravelled a revisit of something, here meaning the people of Khun Yuam preserve the memory of their past through thoughts that evoke the ideas and emotions of that time.

Conclusion

Recall is more of a memory situation that touches people's minds. Music can cross a bridge to connect the dialogue to the people, even though they may have different accents or dialects, to evoke the people's memories or stories. From the initial case study of Khun Yuam to the collective music arrangement, the Recollection, inspired by tunes O te, or Kutsuganaru and Yipun, underpinned by memories that may not be accurate; but which nevertheless, can create value based on these existing informative facts.

This study has evolved through the development of the Cross-Cultural Music Process. It has involved an in-depth learning process by undertaking fieldwork, which found many stories from the local people in which they shared empathy and kindness to others. Then, in the Interpreting process, the research found the meaning of tunes which were changed by the language dynamics. The creative approach can be a method to uncover meaning, and in the music side, using the elements of music material and idioms to arrange music, making it possible to use a contemporary creative approach. For the rehearsal and performance process, the curation can change to suit the audience in different venues and provide different audience experiences. The knowledge gained from fieldwork can be effectively transmitted to the audience through simplified methods, such as encouraging audience participation in

concerts. A creative approach, in addition to uncovering accurate information, can help to stimulate interest in the subject and ensure its continued transmission.

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