

From Java to Siam and back Rethinking Thailand-Indonesia Musical Encounters

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Abstract— Musical Encounters and Cultural diplomacy between Indonesia and Thailand appeared in the visit of the Kings of Thailand to Java more than a hundred years ago. In addition, the Indonesian immigrants who has come to Thailand has important factor of musical history of both countries. As a result of these interactions, the exchange of ideas, information, value, system, tradition, belief, and other aspects of culture are in the interest of foster mutual understanding through musical dimension. More precisely, the interaction contributes to the exchange of musical ideas. In the Thai music history, angklung and gamelan is an essential tool for building international relations between the two countries at the community level. The music of angklung and gamelan from Indonesia has positive impact for the development of musical culture in Thailand today. Angklung has been taught in every elementary school in the whole of Thailand, even at the level of junior high school and high school. The ideas of new works by Thailand composers today has inspired many of the gamelan orchestra. Despite the fact may be felt by the people of Thailand that the influence of Indonesian music is so powerful, I found that there are no Thai people who have written about the history of this music as cultural diplomacy. So, that is why I am interested in doing research about music as cultural diplomacy in Thailand. Cultural diplomacy conceived and built in three models of representation: *soft power*, *nation branding*, and *cosmopolitan constructivism*. Ethnomusicologists have seen this social phenomenon via music context and explained the revolution of traditional Thai music differently from the acceptance of music in general. This article reviewed the acceptance of Indonesian music, including Javanese music from Central Java and Sundanese music from West Java, into the Javanese Idiomatic Melody in traditional Thai music and Angklung Thai style.

Keywords— *Indonesian Music, Thai Music, Common Heritage*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, the word Thailand 4.0 is a very common word, also government is very supportive in order to change the country from the current agricultural society to modern agriculture that focuses on management and technology as a Smart Farming or an entrepreneur. Traditional SMEs transformed into Smart Enterprises and startups or high potential emerging companies, traditional services with relatively low value changed to High Value Services, the low-skilled workers changed to workers with knowledge, expertise and high skills. If we look deeply, we will find that they do not think of us and art at all or maybe the Arts is not the goal of this policy or it may mean that artists and economists or technologists look at the future of our country very differently.

The circles of educational especially higher education, Therefore is an important unit to compromise and find a perfect point for the battle between value and worth, which is challenging our direction of all Southeast Asian countries during the Disruption Era that comes with the tremendous power of the digital age that we have heard for a long time, because the Digital Revolution has undergone enormous changes in all areas.

Southeast Asia also cannot avoid this condition and finally, our country may have to change according to the West in the way that still has very different cultural backgrounds.

Our country in Southeast Asia, even if gathered for political reasons, security and economy, but both of similarity or different cultural backgrounds are always been a hero when we want to have a positive dialogue. There are many cultural heritage that have been raised and discussed creatively, Thai Inua and Indonesian Inu, Thai Angklung and Indonesian Angklung, Javanese musical instruments that have been used in the Thai court since the past. These good cultural relations are all important matters but there are some limitations including conversation partners, which country with which country. These issues were not given much importance in the condition of Urbanization is changing its shape that is affected by politics, daily life, the relationship between big cities and small cities, the relationship between nation and nation that are transnationalism.

Higher education is therefore responsible for the middlemen to balance the value not to fall further than the worth especially in terms of culture including cultural diplomacy, common heritage of both Thailand and Indonesia, Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia or Indonesia and other countries in Southeast Asia which is changing the meaning of the nation-state in the dimension of culture in the future, such as ASEAN, Mae Khong sub region or Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle Development (IMT-GT) etc.

II. CULTURAL HARMONIOUS FOR LIVE TOGETHER IN ASEAN COUNTRY

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a large organization large area and has a colorful cultural diversity. ASEAN member countries improve cooperation in culture to establish an ASEAN identity. They are trying to promote ASEAN awareness and a sense of togetherness, preserving, and promoting ASEAN cultural heritage, promoting cultural creativity and industry, and being engage with the community. ASEAN leaders imagine ASEAN as a community of people who care about each other, bound with regional identities together, consciously historical ties, and realize cultural heritage.

In some ASEAN countries, cultural heritage has a co-root that strengthens friendship and diplomacy. Culture has become a valuable tool for diplomacy especially for public diplomacy and as a soft power contributor, due to spreading cultural diplomacy distinctive national identity; growing importance of the cultural dimension of economic interests and the intrinsic cultural attractiveness to the population of globalization.¹

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), Indonesia and Thailand are members, aims to contribute to realize the ASEAN Community, people-oriented and socially responsible. ASCC intent is to achieve enduring solidarity and unity between the people and the ASEAN member countries. This is an attempt to establish a common identity and build a caring and share community to improve the livelihoods and welfare of the public. ASCC focus on the maintenance of human resources, culture and nature for sustainable development in ASEAN harmonious and people-oriented.² Relations between the two countries is similar to the relationship between two people so that emotions are the key methode in cultural diplomacy.

The Cultural diplomacy between Indonesia and Thailand began to appear since the visit of the Kings of Thailand to Java more than a hundred years ago. In addition, the Indonesian immigrants who come to Thailand are also an important factor that influence musical history of both countries. As a result of these interactions, the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture is in order to foster mutual understanding through musical dimensions. More precisely, the interactions contribute to the exchange of musical ideas. In the Thai music history, angklung and gamelan are essential tools for building international relations between the two countries at the level people to people.

III. ANGKLUNG FROM INDONESIA TOWARD THE COMMON HERITAGE OF MUSIC BETWEEN INDONESIA AND THAILAND

Contexts of Indonesian musical influences in Thai music history has eluded observations of Thai historian. The historians are more interested in the field of national, political, religious, and so forth. Meanwhile, the music has a positive impact for the development of culture in Thailand today. Angklung has been taught in every elementary school in the whole of Thailand, even at the level of junior high school and high school. The

¹Simon Mark, 2008:ii, *A Comparative Study of the Cultural Diplomacy of Canada, New Zealand and India*.

² ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta:
<http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/category/asean-ministers-responsible-for-culture-arts-amca>.

ideas of new works by Thai composers today are inspiring many of the gamelan ensemble. The people of Thailand said that the influence of Indonesian music is so powerful, but so far no Thai person who wrote about the history of this music as cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy conceived and built in three models of representation: *soft power*, *nation branding*, and *cosmopolitan constructivism*.

Traditional Thai music experiencing growth through interaction with the inclusion of variety of concepts and materials of music from other nations, such as China, Myanmar, Khmer, Eropa (Barat), and Jawa.³ Interaction between Thai and Indonesian musical tradition has been proven by the inclusion of musical instrument angklung from West Java by using the concept of Javanese gamelan. The existence of angklung by using the concept of gamelan in Thailand that have played more than a hundred years did not forget the origin of Java, so the music played by the angklung called the "*Pleng Jawa* (Song of Java)".

Angklung and gamelan are important music in the relation between Indonesia and Thailand, especially cooperation between the two countries. Gamelan is learned in college campuses that have a tradition of music program. In this case, Luang Pradit has greatly contributed to the popularity of Javanese music at college campuses in Thailand.

Angklung in Thailand is currently very popular among young people, schools in Thailand, especially elementary school students, as well as government and private institutions. In addition to learning, angklung also contested, recorded, performed in various events. Development of angklung form has also performed in a variety of shapes and how to play. All of it is an effort made by the people of Thailand to adjust the angklung music culture and tastes of the local community.

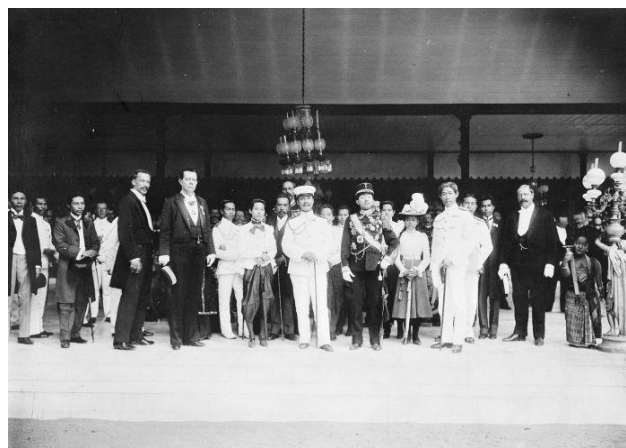


Figure 1
Pakubuwana X (military uniform) and King Chulalongkorn of Thailand, in the Journey to Java, 1896.

(Photo: KITLV, in Journey to Java by a Siamese King, 2012)

³The word "Jawa" in Thailand refers to everything that comes from Indonesia, especially those associated with music and language.

IV. JAVANESE *GAMELAN* AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

In 1929, a complete set of Javanese *gamelan* Surakarta Model, donated by Susuhunan (sultan) Pakubawana X (P.B. X) to H.M. King Prajadhipok, has arrived in Thailand following the latter's return to Thailand (National Archives of Thailand 1929). Being the first *gamelan* to have imported to Thailand, The set contained instruments of two tuning systems: *pelog* and *slendro*. Later on this *gamelan* was separated into two groups because the Thais understood to have received two different sets of Javanese musical instruments (Amatyakul, personal comm). One of them used to be displayed in the National Museum, Phra Nakhon, but is now being stored elsewhere, while the other was in the custody of the Music Division, Fine Arts Department who used it occasionally to accompany *Inao* and perform various Javanese-accented pieces composed by Thai music masters.



Figure 2

*A set of first gamelan in Thailand from P.B. X Surakarta
at the Pra Nakhon National Museum, Bangkok
(Photo: Surasak, 2012)*

The division of one unitary set of Javanese *gamelan* into two smaller sets posed certain intriguing points worth studying. Originally, typical Javanese *gamelan* contains two tuning systems: the seven-pitch *slendro* and the five-pitch *pelog* whose pitches are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, respectively. Due to great discrepancy, the two tuning systems cannot be played together. Except for pitch of the note number 6 or *nem* which is identical in both systems, pitches of all corresponding notes are tuned differently. The partition the *gamelan* done by the Thai government, however, neither conformed to the tuning system nor followed the Javanese ensemble formation, making the so-separated sets contain *slendro* as well as *pelog* system. Even if one divides instruments correctly based on two tuning configurations, the entire set of *gamelan* should not have been separated from the first place because there are instruments used in both tunings, i.e. *kendang* (drum), some *kempul* (suspended gongs), and *gong*.



Figure 3

Saron at the Music Division Department of Fine Arts, Thailand

Photo: SurasakJamnongsarn, 12 April 2015



Figure 4 Retuned Saron

Photo: SurasakJamnongsarn, 12 April 2015

Unlike the set of Javanese *gamelan* once displayed in the National Museum, Phra Nakhon, which was treated merely as exhibition items, the set of Javanese *gamelan* under the custody of the Music Division, Fine Arts Department is being taken care of by Thai music masters and is more in playable condition than the other. The set has been re-tuned to match tuning system of Thai music. This has enabled the instruments, as a representation of Java, to accompany *Inao*, a Thai court play, by playing Thai repertory along with *piphat* ensemble (Phachoen Kongchok 2015, personal comm).

V. CLOSING

Relationship between nations has constantly adapted. The national anthem of one country has been played with a band of another country for a long time, such as on the visit of His Majesty the King (H.M.) Prajadhipok (King Rama the 7th) in Surakarta, Central Java, was shown for the first time using a gamelan composition 'Ladrang Siyem'. This composition is the work of Kangjeng Wiryadinigrat, Raden Ngabehi Atmamardawa, Raden Ngabehi Wirapradangga, and Mas Lurah Reksapangrawit influenced by Thailand royal anthem song: Sanrasoen Phra Barami. This piece was created to celebrate and honor the arrival of the H.M. Prajadhipok to Surakarta palace during the reign of Paku Buwana X. Paku Buwana X also provided a set of gamelan to the king of Thailand. This gamelan was then the first in Thailand, as it is written in *Serat Saking Gotek* Jilid VI by R.Ng. Pradjapangrawit.

Whenever this song is in the Royal anthem of Thailand, all Thai people have to stand up straight as a sign of respects to the song and Thai King. The status of the song will be challenged when played by the Javanese Gamelan ensemble. That means the borders of our country moved towards each other by music repertoire for a long time.

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