

# Comparison of the Music Sound System between Thailand and Vietnam

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**Abstract**—Thai and Vietnamese music had been influenced and inspired by the traditional Chinese music. Whereby the differences of the tuning systems as well as the music modes are obviously known. The research examined the character of musical instruments, songs and culture between Thai and Vietnamese. An analyzing of songs and modes and the study of tone vibration as well as timbre had been done accurately. This qualitative research is based on documentary and songs analysis, field study, interviews and focus group discussion of Thai and Vietnamese masters. The research aims to examine the musical instruments and songs of both Thai and Vietnamese as well as the comparison of the sounding system between Thailand and Vietnam.

The finding of the research has revealed that there are similarities in certain kinds of instruments but differences in the sound systems regarding songs and scale of Thailand and Vietnam. Both cultural musical instruments are diverse and synthetic combining native and foreign inspiring. An integral part of Vietnam has been highly impacted by Chinese musical convention. Korea, Mongolia and Japan music have also play an active and effectively influenced as their geographical related. Whereas Thailand has been influenced by Chinese and Indian traditional music.

Both Thai and Vietnamese musical instruments can be divided into four groups: plucked strings, bowed strings, winds and percussion.

Songs from both countries have their own characteristics. They are playing a role in touching people heart in ceremonies, social functions and an essential element of the native performing arts. The Vietnamese music melodies have been influenced by Chinese music and taken the same character as Chinese songs. Thai song has specific identity and variety showed in its unique melody. Pentatonic scales have effectively been used in composing Thai and Vietnamese songs, but in different implementing concept.

**Keywords**—Music sound system, Thailand, Vietnam.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE music is the result of human behavior. That is based on values, attitudes and beliefs of people in different cultures. Music is affected via contact between society and culture. A cultural change occurs as a result of globalization, where cultural ideas may transfer from one society to another, through diffusion or acculturation. The expansion of culture has had an influence on music in Asian countries. The study of music in Asian countries can assist in understanding their culture, beliefs, traditions, rituals and other aspects which is important to the ASEAN Community in 2015.

The scale of Asian music and the sound system is the researchers field of interest. Each country has a unique theoretical model but certain musical instruments of Thailand and Vietnam have been affected by Chinese music tradition.

The contrast of character of musical instruments, songs and

culture between Thai and Vietnamese music forms the basis of my current research, where there is extreme variety and a great deal of difference. Studying the differences in the music sound system can be further applied to create a better understanding of the Asian countries including the culture, belief and wisdoms of these countries. This research aims to study the musical instruments and songs of Thai and Vietnamese music and to compare the music sound system between Thailand and Vietnam by analyzing songs and scales, and studying the tone of musical instruments. The research result can present about the sound systems and culture of each country.

## II. METHOD

This qualitative research is based on documentary analysis, field study, song analysis, interviews and focus group discussions. This information was collected from Thai and Vietnamese music masters who are highly regarded in their field as they have much expertise concerning the musical sound system. No less than 5 people in each country provided information for this research.

Documentary analysis was the first step in studying history of music to gain an understanding of the background including culture, beliefs, rituals, musical instruments and songs of Thailand and Vietnam. After that, a field study was conducted in Vietnam, which was very important because it provided opportunity to interview, observe, practice and play some Vietnamese musical instrument. Listening and playing the instruments were an important part of the methodology. Perceiving the elements of music and aesthetic music made it possible to compare the sound of music system by rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, tone color and song form. Finally, in-depth interview enabled the finding of answers for this work.

Data were investigated using content analysis and theoretical music analysis. Descriptive research was used to describe the primary results of historical cultural and musicology aspects of musical interaction between two cultures. In conclusion, the final results were recorded as written analysis and musical notation. The reliability of this research was confirmed by using focus group discussion of Thai and Vietnamese music masters who shared this expertise.

## III. RESULTS

The finding of this research revealed that there are similarities in certain kinds of instruments but differences in the sound systems regarding songs and scale of music from Thailand and Vietnam. Vietnamese and Thai musical instruments are diverse and syncretic combining native and foreign influences. An integral part of Vietnam has been highly impacted by Chinese musical convention. Korea,

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Mongolia and Japan have also been the influence. Whereas Thailand has been the influence by Chinese and Indian musical tradition.

Both Thai and Vietnamese musical instruments can be divided into four groups: plucked strings, bowed strings, winds and percussion.

There are many kinds of Thai musical instruments, first, plucked strings instruments, such as, Jakhay, Krajappi, Phin, Serng.



Fig. 1 Jakhay  
<http://www.webpostthai.com/> [1]

Second, Bowed strings instruments in Thailand are Saw Sam Sai, Saw u, Saw Duang, Salaw.



Fig. 2 Saw Sam Sai  
<http://www.patakorn.com/modules.php> [2]

Third, Thai percussion instruments consist of Ranat Ayk, Ranat Thum, Ching, Chap, Hhawng Wong Yai, Hhawng Wong Lek, Glawng That, Taphon, Thon, Rammana, Glawng Khaek, Sawng Na.



Fig. 3 Ranat Ayk  
<http://www.thaigoodview.com/node/50264> [3]

Finally, wind instruments, such as, Khlui, Pi, Khaen,



Fig. 4 Khlui  
<http://ชุดเครื่องดนตรี.siamvip.com/> [4]

Plucked strings of Vietnamese musical instruments, such as, Tranh zither- 16 strings, Moon-Shaped Lute or Dan Nguyet, Dan Day, Dan Bau, Dan Tam, Dan Ty Ba, etc.



Fig. 5 Tranh zither- 16 strings  
 Troung Ngoc Thang : Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group [5]

Bowed strings instruments in Vietnam are Dan Nhi, Dan Gao, Dan Co lon, Dan Co liu.



Fig. 6 Dan Nhi  
 Troung Ngoc Thang : Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group

Percussion Instruments in Vietnam consists of T'rung - Đàn T'rung, 36 string zither, PhongYeu drum, Com drum, Sam drum, etc.



Fig. 7 T'rung - Đàn T'rung

Troung Ngoc Thang : Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group

Vietnamese Wind instruments are Khen Mong, K'long Put, Sao, Ken Bau, Tieu, Sao ngang, Tu va.



Fig. 8 Sao ngang

Troung Ngoc Thang : Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group

There are some kinds of musical instruments which are similarity between Thailand and Vietnam, for example, Pong Lang in Thailand and T'rung - Đàn T'rung in Vietnam, Saw U and Dan Gao, Khlui and Sao ngang.



Fig. 9 Pong Lang

<http://ponglang.com/web/product.php> [6]



Fig. 10 T'rung - Đàn T'rung

Troung Ngoc Thang  
Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group



Fig. 11 Saw U

[http://www.thaitambon.com/tambon/tsmepdesc.\[7\]](http://www.thaitambon.com/tambon/tsmepdesc.[7])



Fig. 12 Dan Gao

Troung Ngoc Thang  
Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group



Fig. 13 Khlui

<http://www.siamvip.com/>



Fig. 14 Sao ngang

Troung Ngoc Thang : Traditional Musical Instrument of Viet Ethnic Group

Songs from both countries have their own characteristics. They are utilized in ceremonies and are an essential element of the performing arts. The Vietnamese music melodies have been influenced by Chinese music and take on the same characteristics of Chinese songs. Thai songs however have a specific identity and variety in melody.

There are 7 tones in the both of musical sound of Thai and Vietnamese music but there are different sound in each step of musical instruments.

For Example about musical instruments

Jakhay is a plucked string instrument of Thailand. There are 3 strings, the 2 strings used to be made of silk and 1 string is metal. The strings are tunes as follow: C, G, and C2. It has 11 frets, each fret can be divided in each sound. The range of the instrument covers two octaves from C to G2. The strings are struck with stone, wood or ivory .

The 36-string zither is a percussion instrument of Vietnam. There are two staggered lines of 18 bridges on the sound board. The strings are of metal. Those on the left, numbering 18, are tuned as follows: C, D, E, F-sharp, G-sharp, A-sharp, C1, D1, E1, F-sharp 1, G-sharp 1, A-sharp 1, C2, D2, E2, F-sharp 2, G-sharp 2, A sharp 2. The 18 strings on the right are tuned as follows: C-sharp, D-sharp, F, G, A, B, C-sharp 1, D-

sharp 1, FI, GI, AI, B1, C-sharp 3, D-sharp 2, F2, G2, A2, B1. The range of the instrument covers three octaves from C to B2. The strings are struck with two thin flexible bamboo sticks tipped with felt.

Pentatonic scales are used to compose Thai and Vietnamese songs. The Vietnam model scales lie in two major systems, "Bae and Nam", and the music scale make extensive use of a 166-cent scale step which corresponds to 5/3 semitones. There are 7 main themes, "Tang", in Thai model scales but they use a 171-cent scale step, which has 2 semitones in each interval.

About songs, both countries used pentatonic scale but the scale of Thai songs are 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 but the scale of Vietnamese songs are 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. For example, in Thai songs used C, D, E, G and A but Vietnamese songs used C, D, F, G and A.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is very interesting to study the contrast of character of musical instruments, songs and culture between Thai music and Vietnamese music. As discussed above, there are similarities and differences that can be applied to research in other Asian countries.

There is increasing interest in the study of musical context. This can be explored through the wider study of musical context in countries other than Thailand and Vietnam. This can be further applied to the study of other areas (such as dance) in a variety of Asian countries to create a better understanding of the ASEAN Community in the future.

#### APPENDIX

Thai and Vietnam music have their own unique repertoires which related to cultural transformation within the region. Having been taken over two thousand years to develop and perfectly utilize newly discovered knowledge and experiences. People of both countries have shared the common interest in traditional dramatic arts and music. Whereby music has played an important role in uniting people in society dramatically. Thai and Vietnamese has a very tight diplomatic and trade relations for centuries. There were a number of Vietnamese migrations into Thailand in the reign of King Rama III.. Therefore, Vietnamese cousins and music have always been parts of Thai's everyday life.

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