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Isan Khaen: Knowledge Management for Transmitting Art and Culture

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Abstract

This participatory action research aimed to study the Khaen culture, an ancient culture existing until the present time. The objectives of this study were to (1) study the development of the Khaen and its relationship in Isan cultural ways and (2) investigate knowledge management regarding the Khaen as a form of Isan culture. Data from documents and fieldwork were analyzed and presented by means of descriptive analysis. The results are as follows. (1) The Khaen is an instrument existing along the Mekong River basin culture, especially among Thai-Lao ethnic groups. The playing styles have been adapted according to the culture of each era. (2) Regarding knowledge management, the number of the Khaen makers in the studied area has reduced to only four, which is in risk of disappearance. Meanwhile, there are new generations of want to learn Khaen players, but they need to improve their skills. Both the Khaen-making group and the Khaen-playing group, after participating in this project, realize the Khaen's value and collaborate in systematically keeping teaching and learning to transfer the knowledge and wisdom concerning the Khaen culture. From the activities arranged for the participants, the researchers have compiled sets of knowledge regarding making and playing the Khaen and returned them to the community. In conclusion, the knowledge management concerning the art of making and playing the Khaen helps to transmit these forms of local art and culture to the new generations.

Keywords: Isan Khaen, knowledge management, Isan cultural ways, Khaen making, Khaen playing, inheritance of art and culture.

1. Introduction

The musical instruments in the Khaen family are regarded as a form of local wisdom inherited through generations. These instruments appear in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, all of which share similar characteristics. With complicated creations, they are reed instruments for blowing, which have been highly developed in both the creation process and the art of playing. Thus, in the past, the Khaen was popular in both royal



circles and common areas. The instruments in the Khaen family have cultural relationships among each other. They are widely played in the northeastern region of Thailand and many areas in Laos (Champadaeng et al., 2014). The instruments in the Khaen family appearing in Asia are likely to have evolved for many thousands of years. For the Khaen in Isan (the northeastern part of Thailand), it shares similar features with the Khaen in Laos and northern Vietnam with regard to shapes, sound systems, and some melodies. These characteristics are also related to the history of those ethnic groups. According to Isan history, the Khaen were commonly played in traditions, rituals, and almost all festive occasions. Therefore, this instrument has become one of the unique characteristics of the Thai-Lao people. In 2018, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization registered “Khaen Melody of Laos” as an intangible cultural heritage, a cultural heritage of humankind.

Khaen making is considered an exquisite art regarding physical features and sounds, the quality of which depends on the maker’s skills, focusing on the use of this instrument. Khaen making also serves as a form of economic stimulation. The Khaen making groups in some villages in Nakhon Phanom Province, for example, have employed the skills of Khaen making to generate incomes for their families. As the Khaen has become commodities, the materials for making this instrument in some provinces such as Nakhon Phanom are gradually unavailable. The mass production of this instrument causes the lack of materials (Phoomoon, 2000). Another important site of Khaen making is Srikaew Village, along with neighboring villages, in Roi-et Province, where the Khaen has been made since ancient times. However, it is not known when exactly people in these areas started to make the Khaen. Khaen makers usually started their work after the harvesting season. Unfortunately, (Khunupamacharn, 1968; Phimsen, 1989) stated that the number of Khaen makers has continually decreased. During 1966-1967, 80% of the villagers made Khaen as their supplementary jobs. However, since 1989 this number has decreased because many Khaen makers pursued other jobs, while their descendants refused to inherit the skills due to their dreams of better jobs and the lack of time to learn the art of Khaen making. Despite this fact, the quality of the Khaen made in Srikaew Village is still widely accepted among both makers and players, although the materials are brought from other areas. The high quality of the Khaen made in Roi-et province stems from its long development. In addition, since it has to be played along MoLam (traditional Isan singing) all night long, the makers need to find some techniques to make it sturdy and well-sounding. With its high quality, the Khaen from Roi-et is pursued by players in general (Champadaeng, 2009). The Khaen is vastly popular because it plays a significant role in traditions, ways of life, and entertainment in the Isan society.

Learning to play the Khaen, in the past, learners had to listen, notice, and remember how the players produced the melodies because there was no clear learning system. Those who were interested to play this instrument gradually learned by the previous techniques and guidance from professional players. Learners must have their own instruments to practice during free time. They would bring pieces of melodies which they could remember to play in their own styles. As a result, it can be seen that although the players played the same tunes, there would be some variations. At the present time, there is an official Khaen learning system with the help of Western music notes. The tunes are flexible, created by groups of 2-3 sounds similar to the unit of the Western tune called “motif.” Those tunes are blended together in order to create suitable, beautiful melodies (Chonphairot, 1998). With the evolving learning system, the Khaen is truly part of sociocultural development in the Isan region.

In some periods, Isan people were influenced by cultures from the outside regarding music and performance, but they adapted them into their own styles. Professional Khaen players will be able to use their skills and musical wits to create new tunes while playing (improvisation). Khaen melodies have been developed with the prosperity of MoLam bands since a century ago

until the present. Skilled and experienced players will create melodies from (1) scales available in the instrument, (2) imaginations regarding nature and ways of life, (3) MoLam tunes, and (4) melodies from music cultures of the outsiders. Currently, the Khaen made in Roi-et still maintains its quality accepted as usual. However, there are only 4 craftsmen who make this instrument in this province, and all of them are elderly. A worrying problem is that there are no new generations who will inherit the art of Khaen making and a lack of marketing plans to bring customers to buy the community's products. In addition, the natural materials immensely decrease due to deforestation. Ancient bronze coins, as the materials for making the reeds, are also hard to find and expensive, and can be unavailable in the future. Although many professional Khaen players in the prosperous eras were recorded in vinyl and cassettes, currently they are very old, and their knowledge and wisdom might die out when they pass away. Therefore, it is very important to study the body of knowledge regarding Khaen in order to pass this form of art and culture onto the next generations.

2. Research objectives

2.1 To study the development of the Khaen and its relationship in Isan cultural ways.

2.2 To investigate the knowledge management regarding the Khaen as a form of Isan culture.

3. Research method

This study was designed as follows:

3.1 Scope of the study: (1) The content was focused on the process of knowledge management of Khaen makers and the works of professional players accepted in the circle of art and culture, development in cultural ways, and the dissection of body of knowledge regarding Isan performance. (2) This study was qualitative research using a case study and the participatory action research method. Data were collected from documents and fieldwork. (3) The area of study was the northeastern part of Thailand (Isan), specific to only Srikaew Village and its neighboring communities. (4) Population and samples were selected from the group of Learn Khaen makers and Khaen players accepted in the research area.

3.2 The research process is as follows: (1) After recruiting the youth to participate in the project, a meeting was held to explain the steps they had to take. Then, the selected community and the participants in the project were contacted. The participants were divided into the basic Khaen-making group, the experienced Khaen-making group, the basic Khaen-playing group, and the experienced Khaen playing group. (2) The researchers designed and created the research tools including surveys, notice forms, and interview forms. Devices used in this research consisted of notebooks, cameras, and video cameras. (3) Data were collected from fieldwork. These included products from the community, musical works performed by the Khaen players, as well as the works recorded in cassettes, CDs, and VCDs. The researchers dissected body of knowledge, reviewed it, and brought it to teach, evaluate, and improve, respectively. (4) The data were managed, analyzed, investigated, and synthesized according to the objectives of the study. (5) The resulted were presented by means of descriptive analysis and disseminated.

4. Results

4.1 The development of the Khaen and its relationship in Isan cultural ways.

The Khaen is an ancient instrument, aging thousands of years, which has existed since Dong Son culture (Nitta, 1994). In addition, Wongtait (2000) wrote about archeological evidence regarding the ancient Khaen in the Metal Age, found in Dong Son culture in Than Hua Province



of Vietnam. This evidence is about 3,000 years old, showing the picture of two kinds of Khaen. There are also the picture of people playing the Khaen and people dancing on a big bronze drum. Moreover, there is a bronze sculpture of a Khaen player. Dong Son culture still influences the belief system of people along the Mekong River at the present time. In addition, there is evidence found in Changcha, Yunnan Province, China, which is a 2,000-year body wearing a special costume. The Chinese government named this body “The Duke of Tai and His Consort.” Beside the body, there are two objects; the first one is a lacquer ware similar to what is found in Chiangmai, and the other one is a musical instrument similar to the Khaen in the northeastern part of Thailand.

The instruments in the mount-organ family are related to the cultural thinking system which have existed for a very long time in the Indochina Peninsula, according to the evidence appearing on a big bronze drum of Dong Son culture in Vietnam, created about 800 years B.C. (Harich-Schneider, 1973). The Khaen has appeared since the ancient times, when Thai people were still in Sechuan, Yunnan, or other upper parts of China, as it was written in the book entitled *The Thai Race* by W.C. Dodd D.D. It is explained in this book that in the southern part of China, Chungchia people raised buffalos to help with farm work and to use for casting lots in festive events. They walked in groups along the river to join the event and had musical instruments made of bamboo, giving beautiful sounds. These instruments are also found in Thailand and Laos.

In China, Khaen is called Sheng, which is a kind of gourd instruments. However, at the present time it is made of wood. It does not have a clear history and origin. There is only a myth about it, believing that Goddess Nuvo was the first one who invented the Khaen. She entered the woods and heard a paradise bird singing a beautiful tune, so she had an idea to invent this instrument. Later, the Khaen culture was spread to Korea and Japan (Chonphairo j, 1998). Regarding the Khaen in Thailand and Laos, there is also a myth about the origin of this instrument. The first inventor of the Khaen was a widow who made a musical instrument from a kind of bamboo and presented it to the king. The spread of the art of playing the Khaen depended of several factors. Art and culture are regarded as the growth resulting from people’s accumulation of experience. Likewise, the Khaen has been developed through the ways of life of the Thai-Lao ethnic groups in different periods.

Despite their similarities, the cultures of the Khaen and MoLam of people in different sides of the Mekong River are somewhat different from each other. Based on the documents and fieldwork, the two sides of the river were separated into two state nations, Thailand and Laos, but it can be said that they were the same cultural area. Isan region has been developed since the pre-historic era. Archeological evidence shows that Isan culture shares many things in common with the Bronze Culture along the Mekong Basin. With its fertile areas suitable for farming, Isan originated prosperous agricultural societies attracting outside cultures, especially the Indian Civilization to enter this area, which became a foundation of cultural creations in the following periods. Around 2200 B.E., the influence of Lan Xang culture spread to the Isan region. Former communities were transformed into cities. There were also immigrations of people into the area as a result of conflicts and wars. Many of the defeated were moved to the central part of the country; these people brought the Indian culture to the central part and the Isan area of Thailand (Meesakul, 1989). During the reign of King Rama IV, major cities in Isan, through the spread of a new school of Buddhism called Dhammayuti, had stronger relationships with the central part. Many of Isan monks went to study in the center. In terms of governance, cities were established as semi-independent tribute states. Then, during the eras of King Rama IV and King Rama V, the country lost some areas to Western countries due to the threat of colonialism. However, in the reign of King Rama V, there was a reformation of the governance by employing the system which divided areas into sub-districts, districts, and

provinces. In addition, religion, education, and transportation were also reformed. Especially when the railway system was expanded to Nakhon Rachasima (an important bordering province between Isan and the central part) in 1900, travelling from Bangkok to other Isan provinces became much more convenient, resulting in an extensive spread of cultures. This also positively affected the Khaen culture in Roi-et in several aspects. (1) People from other provinces came to buy the Khaen in this province because of its great reputation. MoLam singers and Khaen players, in particular, needed high-quality instruments for their careers. (2) Even for Khaen makers who were not yet well-known, they travelled to many areas in Isan or even the central part of the country to sell their Khaen. (3) Khaen makers who married women in other areas brought their knowledge and skills to use as a means to earn extra incomes for their families. (4) The relocation of people in Rio-et to other areas to acquire agricultural land also made their Khaen more well-known because those people made Khaen as their supplementary jobs. These 4 factors brought more fame to the Khaen made by craftsmen with Rio-et descend.

The Khaen also serves as a crucial component of MoLam, a type of Isan performance divided into the following categories. MoLam with the debating content between the male and the female is called MoLam Klom. MoLam telling stories in a narrative style is referred to as MoLam Rueng Tor Klom, which has different melody lines depending on each ethnic group in the region. There is also MoLam used in rituals, such as Lam Phee Faa (for healing rituals), which needs the Khaen to accompany singing. These types of MoLam indicates that MoLam and the Khaen have been part of performing culture for a very long period. The significance of MoLam and the Khaen has brought them into entertainment business. In the Thai-Isan society, Buddhism is blended with rituals, and in Buddhist ceremonies or events, there will be different forms of entertainment, such as MoLam, for people to enjoy. MoLam singers and Khaen players would developed their performing styles to fit the trend in each era. The entertainment business was also booming, making MoLam and the Khaen more popular on a large scale. In the age of vinyl records, Tia Ngegchuan Music Firm, an important firm in entertainment business, recorded folk performances in all regions. In 1939, this firm started to recorded MoLam, the Khaen, and Korat folksongs and brought them to the vinyl business. Until the period when mobile electric generators were available, playing vinyl records in Isan villages became a new business which helped MoLam to reach more extensive audiences throughout the region. Later, MoLam and the Khaen were played on the radio and television. In the most prosperous era, there was a new kind of private business called the “MoLam Office” which functioned as an agent for MoLam bands in finding customers to hire them. At the present time, MoLam Office plays a less significant role in the entertainment business because of modern communication, which allows MoLam and customers to contact each other directly. MoLam was spread to the central part of Thailand after World War II, when the MoLam band named Sunthararom Band was established by Mr. Sunthorn Aphisuntharangkul, an official in the Office of Public Relations. This band travelled to the central part and performed throughout the area. This is because the office wanted Isan people who lived in this area, as well other people who were interested in MoLam, to watch and learn about this Isan performance.

In the field of education, later, there was an attempt of promote folk music curriculums. The first higher educational institution which offers a degree program in folk music is Maharakham University. Then, there are other educational institutions which offer similar programs and at the same time produce media for teaching and learning. Apart from the educational area, there are groups of people who run business producing and selling Isan musical instruments. Their products are sold at tourist attractions, shopping malls, and goods exhibitions throughout the country. The music works of MoLam, Khaen players, and other Isan artists can be disseminated through these channels. Besides, online communication in the



modern era has offered direct and effective channels for people to contact each other. Artists and business owners in the area of entertainment use these channels to reach their audiences and customers. However, this situation causes some people to create superficial pieces of art for only commercial purposes with less concern about conservation. However, a great advantage of communication technology is that a large number of music pieces and performances by MoLam in cassettes, vinyl records, videos, and other media are uploaded onto YouTube, which has become a huge resource of Isan folk music.

4.2 Knowledge management regarding the Khaen as a form of Isan culture.

The process of collecting data about Khaen makers and Khaen player was divided as follows: community survey and selection, explanation of data collection methods, practice, workshop, evaluation, and presentation. The main area and related areas were studied in order to achieve two important goals, to create body of knowledge regarding the art of making the Khaen and playing the Khaen and to make people realized the importance of transmission of such knowledge to the next generations. The whole process was done as according to the decreasing number of Khaen makers at the research area (Srikaew Village, Muang District, Roi-et Province), which dropped from 12 in 2009 to only 4 at present, it is clear that the art of making Khaen is in risk of disappearance. In terms of Khaen players, it was found that there were youth who could play the instrument, but they needed to improve their skills. The 4 Khaen makers mentioned above and 7 professional Khaen players were selected as teachers who would pass on their knowledge to the participants. The next step was to advertise the project and recruit the participants focusing on students who were studying Isan folk music at Mahasarakham University and Rajabhat Roi-et University, students at the community's school, and general people who were interested in the project. Altogether, there were 20 participants. In addition, the researchers also created a network for promoting the Khaen culture by adding 3 more neighboring villages to collect more data, including (1) Lao Tamyae Village, Srikaew Sub-district, (2) Lao Kham Village, Srikaew Sub-district, and (3) Khiadluang Village, Porphan Sub-district.

4.2.1 Explaining the process of the project. The research team approached and entered the communities to explain the project. The team collaborated with the village heads and leaders and asked for permission to conduct the project. Lao Kham Village, Srikaew Sub-district was select as the project site because this village was the most suitable site in terms of location, community philosophers of the Khaen culture, Khaen makers, and other related people. These people were informed of the process regarding data collection and the practice. There was a meeting to discuss the knowledge package about making the Khaen, the development of center for learning MoLam and the Khaen culture, the 2 levels of making Khaen, the workshop to review and check the data, and the closing of the project and returning the knowledge package to the community.

4.2.2 Knowledge management and teaching. (1) The research team searched for and collected documentary data from libraries and other databases. Then they were verified by experts. In addition, data from fieldwork were studied in accordance with the issue of the Khaen development and its relationships in Isan cultural ways. (2) Khaen-making experts' knowledge was dissected in the following aspects: materials, production process, quality improvement, and problems about inheriting the knowledge. The research team formed the knowledge package from the data, ready to bring to practice. (3) Body of knowledge regarding Khaen playing by national artists and local teachers of folk music and performance was dissected. History and works of renowned Khaen players were studied. The team also looked into their learning processes, practices, playing techniques, and the ways they created melodies. The knowledge package regarding Khaen playing was formed, ready to transmit to the participants.

4.2.3 Practice. Khaen makers must endeavor, notice, and remember the process of making this instruments. They also have to learn from Khaen users who are able to provide feedback and suggestions after using the instrument. The participants who learned the art of making the Khaen were divided into 2 groups based on their experiences. The first group consisted of the beginners, while the second group was comprised of those who had some experiences. In the same way, the participants who learned to play the Khaen were also divided by the same criteria.

4.2.3.1 Khaen making group 1: There were 10 participants in this group who learned from the professional Khaen makers. They learned about material acquisition and preparation. The required materials included a small type of bamboo called Maiphai Hia, a kind of bee wax called Keesood, and pieces of metal which was a combination between bronze and copper for making the reeds. The participants watched the demonstration of melting the metal to make the reeds. Ancient coins, or silver and copper were melted and blended with each other. Then, it was hit until it became thin pieces of reeds. The participants also learned how to select the wood to make Ku Khaen (the part for blowing to make sounds), how to dry it, and how to cut it. All 10 participants repeatedly practiced until they acquired these skills.



Figure 1. Material preparation (Drying the bamboo and Selecting wood for Ku Khaen)

4.2.3.2 Khaen making group 2: This group consisted of 10 participants who had some experiences, expecting to improve their skills. After the Ku Khaen and the reeds had been prepared, the participants learned to adjust the reeds by cutting and scratching with suggestions from the experts. Then, they learned to insert the reeds into Ku Khaen and cut the hole for blowing. After that, this part was tuned into different notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, and B. Then, Tao Khaen (the part for holding) was made from the main root of a Padauk tree. Different parts of the Khaen were assembled by Keesood before it was tuned again. The whole process was evaluated and supervised by the professional Khaen makers. Regarding the tools for making Khaen, initially, they only used axes, knives, saws, and chisels which made the making process quite slow. Later, modern tools, such as electric planers, electric dills, and sandpaper were used in order to make it more convenient. In addition, Western music tuners were used, so that the Khaen could be played with modern popular songs.

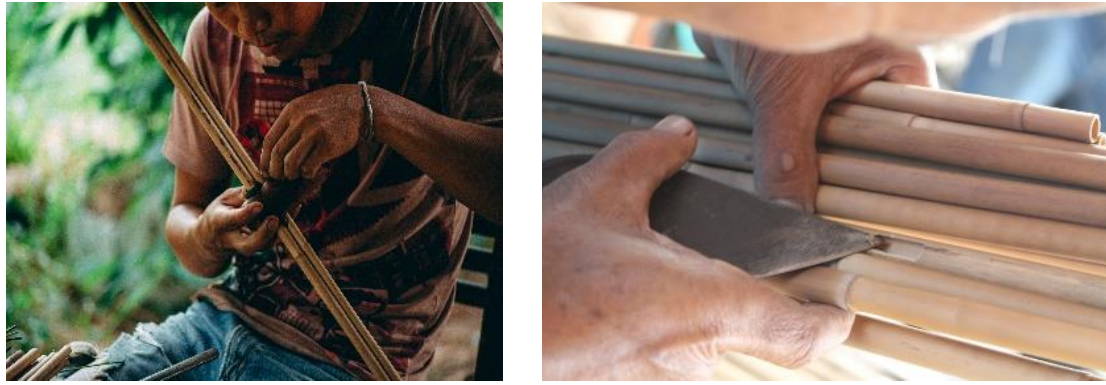


Figure 2. Assembling and tuning the Khaen

4.2.3.3 Khaen playing group 1: There were 10 participants in this group, who were from secondary schools in the research area and did not have any experience in playing the Khaen. Isan Khaen has the Western music sound system with C, D, E, F, G, A, and B notes, each of which has its octave. For example, the C note consists of the low C and the high C. The practice process is as 1) The participants practiced holding the Khaen in the right position, so that it would be easy for them to make any movements while playing. They would fold up their hands to support the Khaen and use both palms to hold Tao Khaen. The 10 fingers were left freely, ready to open and close the holes in order to play different notes. 2) The participants learned to play the Khaen by blowing the air into it and open and close the holes correspondingly, starting from C to B notes. Then, they learned and practiced three basic songs—Ponglang, Toeykhong, and Maengphu Tormdork—from the experts. After gaining some skills, the participants started to play with rhythm in preparing themselves to form a band. The whole process was supervised and evaluated by the experts who served as the Khaen teachers in this project.

4.3.2.4 Khaen practicing group 2: This group was comprised of Khaen players who needed advanced skills. This group also needed a lot of practices in order to improve their skills which required imagination while playing the melody. They also learned techniques for melody creations and adjustments to form beautiful tunes. This process would become a foundation for their improvisation. There were many techniques which constituted highly skillful players. The first thing was how to blow the air into the Khaen. There might be several characteristics of blowing the air, such as a smooth blow without waves, a smooth blow combined with a harsh blow, cutting the air by the tongue, and the use of the tongue to create particular tunes and prevent the player from tiredness while playing constant and clear sounds. In addition, the participants learned advanced skills, such as how to create melodies, form different cords, and play with both Isan folk bands and Western bands.



Figure 3. Learning techniques from Mr. Sombat Simla, a professional player

4.2.4 Knowledge transmission for inheritance of art and culture. This process was done through the practice of the participants discussed above. Body of knowledge was collected and brought to practice before it was returned to the community in order to create a learning center. The results are as follows:

4.2.4.1 Group 1: Body of knowledge for beginners. Historical information regarding MoLam and the Khaen was arranged into documents and made into videos. As for the art of making and playing the Khaen, both basic and advanced levels, it relied on explanation from the experts. The data from fieldwork were systematically validated. Then they were arranged and made into videos for learning and teaching. Manuals for making and playing the Khaen were created to use in the project activities before they were returned to the community and disseminated to the public. Extra contents to add into the activities were created. Such contents were about the culture of MoLam and the Khaen, composed into MoLam the erroneous words songs for each activity of the project. In addition, they were used as media for project advertisement played from the beginning until the end of the project.

4.2.4.2 Group 2: Body of knowledge for advanced learners. It was very difficult to transcribe the advanced techniques of both making and playing the Khaen into documents because of their specific natures. Therefore, the participants had to dissect the knowledge from the experts in the art of making and playing the Khaen in order to come up with guidelines for the next generations to learn. Since it was difficult to transcribe the knowledge, demonstrations were used as main methods for transmission. The demonstrations of making and playing the Khaen were divided into short steps, according to the levels. The participants noticed how the steps were done and repeatedly practiced. The knowledge was brought into practice for both the basic and the advanced groups. The participants practiced making or playing the Khaen, depending on the purpose of their groups, with the guidance and supervision of the experts. The participants gradually learned and improves themselves until they gained the expected skills. In the end, the improvements of the participants in each group were close to each other. The practice for professional entertainment purpose was done with only the advanced participants of the Khaen playing group because it was a traditional practice which needed complicated techniques. To be a professional player who can accompany MoLam singing, the learner needed musical wits in creating the tunes in harmony with the singing. The participants in this group received suggestions and guidance from experienced MoLam singers and Khaen players. The body of knowledge, as a form of local wisdom, was also transmitted through learning centers. Houses of Khaen makers in the communities are open for those who are interested in acquiring the knowledge which is also publicized through online media such as

YouTube with the aim to expand the knowledge on a larger scale. In the closing activity, the body of knowledge was returned to the communities before the conclusion of the project, which brought about networks for the conservation of local art and culture.

Comparison table of Khaen Playing n the old way, the new way

Khaen Playing in the Old Days	Khaen Playing in Modern Days
<p>In the old days every village had a lot of khaen players. One will hear khaen playing at night time throughout the villages. Many young men carried their musical instruments along while going for courting in the evening. They played their music while they were walking along the walkways in the village. Everybody had opportunities to hear and to learn the music if they wanted.</p>	<p>Because of the changes of the society, economic, and technologies, kahaen music has less roles in Isan society. There are no more kahaen players in the villages. There are less number of professional khaen players, because of many reasons. One reason is that the young people turn their interest to Western culture. They want to learn Western instruments, such as guitar, rather than a khaen of Isan. MoLam mu troupe prefer keyboard and other Western instruments, not a khaen any more. Even in MoLam sing, a new style of MoLam entertainment, it still uses a khaen for the accompaniment, but it is just a symbolic. The real accompaniment is the percussion, not the meoldic instruments.</p>
<p>When the Isan people had festivals, they hired MoLam entertainments to perform during night time. This performance might be a duet of lam singing between male and female with a khaen accompaniment for each singer or the performance of a MoLam troupe, similar to a Western opera.</p>	<p>The only place for khaen music is in MoLam klon performance. It consists of two MoLam singers, male and female, and two khaen players. This type of lam singing khaen music has the most imoportant role. A MoLam singer cannot sing without a khaen accompaniment. The khaen player has to provide support for MoLam singer by mean of kahaen introduction, khaen interlude, as well as harmonious accompaniment. Unfortunately, the MoLam klon entertainment is dying, it is appreciated by only the audience of older generation with no economic power.</p>
<p>The performance started about 9 o'clock in the evening and ended when the sun rised. The audience, both young and old, enjoyed watching the MoLam performance throughout the night. Some of them might get tired and got sleep there at the courtyard, mostly temple ground.</p>	<p>Since the change of technologies and economic system, most of careers and jobs belong to young people, not the older ones anymore. Old people cannot make a living with their old professions. They have to rely on their sons and daughters who work in Bangkok. Therefore, they cannot support or hire MoLam klon (with khaen accompanimet) to perform even if they wish.</p>

<p>The young people who were interested to learn to play a khaen or to sing a lam singing, they used these opportunities for their experiences. They could absorb the knowledge of the arts, little by little, from occasion to occasion, by listening and by memories. The ones of better memories had better chances to succeed in learning.</p>	<p>Isan people of younger generation don't have experience with khaen music. They enjoy the performance of popular music or MoLam mu with pop music, not with khaen music. When these young people come back to their villages, they prefer popular music or MoLam with popular music, not traditional MoLam. It is clear that khaen music is not popular among the young people.</p>
<p>Then if someone is really interested in learning to play a khaen, he would buy a khaen from a khaen maker or from a khaen seller. After that he would try to work on the instrument little by little. He would play from his memory. When he did not know or did not understand on some points, he would go to ask from a mo-khaen player in the village.</p>	<p>In school system, especially, at college level, young people also prefer popular music. Only in few places such as at drama college, they still teach Isan instrumental and vocal music. But most college ensembles still support Isan music of popular style rather than traditional style.</p>
<p>Most khaen players learned their arts by mean of memory, since there was no music notation. The problems arose, because many people who wanted to learn to play a khaen did not have good memory. Besides, the kahen music was very charming and beautiful. The audience enjoyed its melody, harmony, and rhythm. When the music ended, the audience could not rebember how the melody was.</p>	<p>Concerning khaen solo of professional level, it is very difficult to preserve. There are many reasons for this phenomenon. One reason is that because of Western influence. Thai people look down on their own culture, especially village life. Many Thai people, old and young, try to make themselves look as they are westernized. Otherwise they are out off fashion. They forget Thai traditions, including khaen music.</p>
<p>Therefore, when this situation happened, the young men who wanted to learn the khaen but they did not have good memories had to find their teachers in order to get through the obstacle of learning process. One might have to learn the magic formula called o-pong, meaning, a "mantra for cleverness".</p>	<p>The second reason is that a khaen maker cannot make a living with khaen playing career. Since khaen music has its role only in lam klon singing. When lam klon singing is fading away, there is no place for khaen players. Besides, Thai tradition do not hire instrumental music to celebrate the occasion, they prefer dance and theatre. They consider that music is only the supplementary role.</p>
<p>Some teachers might creat some kind of mnemonic notation, kaen laen kaen ..., to help the students to remember the difficult passages. Some teachers might use two khaens of the same pitch level, then the student could imitate the teacher or playing along at the same time. However, the most effective type of learning to play a khaen depened on good memory, good creativity,</p>	<p>If each of them can help the society by giving one night income of their performance to the society or the foundation. This will make the foundation works. The society or the foundation should arrange special week for Isan culture festival, inviting famous artists to perform. Then we can raise money for the foundation, helping needed persons and</p>



diligent, patient, and a lot of listening to the playing of the masters.	supporting young persons who are interested in Isan culture.
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5. Discussion

The results were found both corresponding to and different from concepts, theories and research studies in 3 aspects: the results based on the objectives of the study, the body of knowledge which was found, and attitudes about the inheritance of art and culture concerning the Khaen.

5.1 Discussion according to the objectives of the study.

Development of the Khaen and its relationship in Isan cultural ways. Khaen is an ancient musical instrument popularly played along the Mekong River and spread to other areas. This is in line with the concept of cultural diffusion. According to Wannasiri (1997), factors supporting cultural diffusion include transportation, communication, economy and trading, politics, and values. In terms of the culture of MoLam and the Khaen, these factors help to diffuse it to large areas. Khaen is also regarded as a sacred instrument used for communication with Pheefaa and Phaya Thaen (healing ghost and god of rain), as can be seen in the healing ritual and the Isan Rocket Festival held to ask the god of rain to bless people and give abundant crops. As suggested by Champadaeng (2018), Pheefaa and Phaya Thaen are believed to be gods rather than ghosts, who create things on earth and always help people when disasters happen. People will communicate with these gods through rituals with a person as a medium. These rituals are always accompanied by the Khaen. The belief in supernatural powers also has a function of controlling members of society. This notion is in agreement with Na Thalang (2009), who stated that myths with supernatural characters, such as gods and ghosts, are often related to the belief system regarding supernatural powers, sacred beings, religions, and rituals in particular societies. Rituals are also regarded as a cultural mechanism which unites community members. The myths which explain the rituals usually offer power to boost morale and promote social unity.

In addition to the role of the Khaen in the rituals above, this instrument also depicts the player's imaginations regarding socio-cultural contexts, traditions, and ways of life. Highly skillful players will employ improvisation techniques to express their feelings and imaginations to the audience.

Isan Khaen has been developed alongside the development of MoLam, as it is undeniable that these two things are culturally related to each other. In the prosperous period of Molarm, the Khaen-making career vastly spread in Srikaew Sub-district, which was the research area of this study, as well as neighboring areas. Later, the number of people making the Khaen has declined, especially among the new generations, because the process of making the Khaen is very complicated. Meanwhile, there are other careers which are easier for them and offer more income. In addition, the new generations tend to give more value to education which is believed to offer better job opportunities. These factors result in the problem about the inheritance of the Khaen culture. Eventually, this career is expected to disappear from this community. In similar fashion, Champadaeng, Yodmalee, and Samdaengdej (2009) stated that Srikaew Sub-district is one of the centers of Khaen making in Isan. Unfortunately, the number of Khaen makers dramatically decreases, and Khaen making as a career might be lost in the future. However, the good news is that the activities in this research project have made the youth interested more about the Khaen-making career.

Knowledge management for transmitting art and culture. This participatory action research, which was conducted through a clear process, yields significant body of knowledge including

a set of documentary information regarding history and evolution of the Khaen culture and the transmitting process to the youth who participated in the project. This results in a new generation of Khaen makers in the crisis of being lost. In addition, there are more Khaen players arising from this project, who will help inherit the art and culture of Khaen. This project will fully benefit the community if local organizations and government sectors in the area of art and culture provide more support to the conservation and development of local wisdom. This agrees with Lertgrai et al. (2020: 1187-1188) who proposed that 1) organizations and agencies at the local level should support the development and management of wisdom in economic and social aspects, and 2) at the district level, government agencies should encourage learning people to have opportunities to learn and “simulate methods of thinking, analyzing and developing small experiments from the context of community wisdom”.

The participants in this project, both the Khaen-making group and the Khaen-playing group, were guided by professional makers and players. Apart from the knowledge gained, they have to pursue further knowledge and continually improve their skills. In doing so, it is important to learn new songs and notice how other professional players create their tunes while playing. According to Kongsukkam (2013), Mr. Buasinchai Kaewsaenchai, a renowned player, learned to play the Khaen by noticing and practicing until he became highly skillful. In addition, Phali (2012) suggested that the Khaen learning process starts from practicing blowing, using fingers, and creating tunes. The learners must practice until they master the skills. Since the learners need to remember the techniques and melodies from the teachers through the traditional learning process, the respect to the teachers is very important for the learners, which has become a crucial belief regarding learning the Khaen.

Both Khaen players and MoLam singers respect their teachers who are still alive as well as those who have already passed away. This is an old tradition which still exists at the present days. The respect to the teachers also provides moral support to the artists. Therefore, every time before performing, they will present an offering called Khai-Or to worship their teachers. As explained by Pheanchana (2011), the belief about this offering, which is also a form of magical spells, is a combination between Buddhism and Brahma. The spells are divided into 4 categories including a spell to boost memory, a spell to attract people, a spell for protection, and a spell for destroying enemies. These spells are believed to help the artists to achieve their goals, especially in terms of memory which was very important for the learners in the ancient times when people lacked effective writing systems and literacy. At the present time, it is much more convenient because there are many books, manuscripts, and manuals for people to learn from.

In the ancient times, the Khaen players learned from listening, noticing, memorizing, and inquiring the expert little by little. Currently, both beginners and advanced learners can learn from notation which are represented in either numbers or Western notes. In the age of technology, some learners also learn from software packages. It can be said that the modern learning systems also help to record the melodies and at the same time conserve the Khaen culture. As Sri Watini et al. (2020: 407) explained, technology plays an important role in the world of education. For example, YouTube can create provide opportunities for people to create artistic works and learn from each other in the form of audio-visual art for education.

5.2 The new knowledge discovered.

This participatory action research offered the participants an opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas. In particular, the youth gained experience through the synthesizing process. They also improved their skills by repeatedly practicing and learned to be patient through this process. They realize the importance of inheriting art and culture which need to



be conserved; such realization arose from the collaborative learning process in which they had a chance to plan, practice, and admire their own works. As stated by Assem et al. (2020); Girgin, (2020), it is crucial for the young generations to learn and appreciate the values of art and culture in order to preserve and grow them in the future. Therefore, the readiness its policy network has the potential to develop into a learning city (Kaewhanam, et.al., 2022).

5.3 A view from this study.

The Khaen culture should be supported and promoted by various organizations. There should be scholarships for people who are interested in the Khaen-making and Khaen-playing careers. In addition, learning centers as well as cultural networks should be created. Information regarding the Khaen culture should be continuously published through digital media. Systemic learning systems should be arranged at both local levels and higher levels. For the beginners' learning process, the learners should learn from Western notes along with noticing, listening, and creating their own tunes. The learning process should be evaluated in every step. According to Ponkhet (2014), the process of learning the Khaen consists of 3 steps including preparation, practice, and evaluation. Although it might not be easy for the learners to practice, the teachers should find and develop teaching techniques to facilitate the learners.

6. Conclusion

The Khaen is a musical instrument which has a long development and relationship among the Thai-Lao ethnic groups. With this significance, UNESCO has enlisted it as a cultural heritage of humankind. This research project has collected body of knowledge from local wisdom learned regarding Khaen making by employing modern tools to make the working process more convenient and quicker. The youth who participated in this project has created art and culture for the community. For the participants in the Khaen-making group, it can be said that they took part in the transmission of knowledge regarding Khaen making for the beginners and skilled makers who can keep this art as their career. Meanwhile, the participants in the Khaen-playing group had dissected body of knowledge and special techniques. The beginners' skills are satisfactorily improved, while the advanced learners are able to apply and play the Khaen along with Thai classical music and Western music.

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