

Process on Khaen Accompaniment for Lam Performance in Lao PDR

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at investigating the following : 1) The instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR 2) The difficulties and the ways to develop the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR.

Research areas were Vientiane Metropolitan, Khammuan, Savannakhet, and Champasak Provinces. Field data were gained from observation and interviews with 7 key-informants, 28 casual informants, and 6 general informants. The data were examined by means of a triangulation technique, analyzed according to research purposes and research results were presented by means of a descriptive analysis.

The research results revealed that the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances consisted of 3 steps : preparation, operation, and evaluation. In preparatory step, the non - schooling students were stimulated by their own interest and acquired Khaens (reed mouth organs) by themselves, whereas the in-schooling students were provided khaens and instruction aid materials by their teachers. In operational step, the non-schooling students learned to play the khaens by themselves through listening and observing from non-particular teachers performances, then they started to perform from their memories, whereas the in-schooling students learned to play the khaens under the supervision of their teachers. In evaluative step, the non-schooling students were evaluated by peers and professional molams (Lao-folk singers), whereas the in - schooling students were evaluated by their teachers.

In terms of the difficulties ; the poor - non schooling students lacked the khaens for practicing their musical skills although they had a high level of intention, whereas the in – schooling students did not have the same level of intention, a distinct lack of teachers mastering local styles of Khaen accompaniments for Lam performances, including the khaens players were evaluated by the professional molams and the audience so they should pay a great intention of practicing their skills in khaens accompaniment. These were main difficulties.

As for the ways to develop the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances, the findings suggested that the National Schools of Music should be established

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in all regions of Laos ; for example, in the northern region (from Vientiane Province up to Phong Saly Province), in Vientiane Metropolitan region, in the central region (Bolikhamsay, Khammoun, and Savannakhet), and in the southern region (Salavan, Xekong, Champasak, and Attapue). Famous khaens players and molam performers who had their own performing styles should be invited to teach students. Moreover, the famous khaens players and khaens performers should be extolled, instruction aid materials concerning this field should be created, and good quality khaens should also be provided for facilitating all learners.

Keywords : process, Khaen accompaniment, Lam performance,

Introduction

Khaen or reed mouth organ is a type of musical instrument used as an accompaniment to a Lam or Khap performance (folk – singing performance) of Lao and northeastern – Thai people. It is an outstanding musical instrument of Laos playing an important role in folk – singing performances (Kongduan Nedtawong. 2002 : 4-9). There are many types of Lao – folk singing performances such as Khap Ngum performed in the Ngum River Basin where is located in the northern and the eastnorthern parts of Vientiane Province, Khap Thum Luang Prabang performed in Laung Prabang Province, Khap Sam Nuea performed at Ban Sam Nuea of Hua Phan Province, and Khap Tai Dam of the Tai Dam ethnic group living in the central part of the upper Laos. As for the Lao – folk singing performance called Lam is performed from Vientiane Province to the lower Laos such Lam Ban Sok, Lam Maha Xai, Lam Tung Wai, Lam Salawan, Lam Phutai, Lam Khon Savan, Lam Som, and Lam Si Phan Don (Jarernchai Chonpairot. 1983 : 113-124).

Lam Phaya is the origin of many types of Lao performing arts. It is traditional in Lam Phaya performance, a male performer sings a lyric to ask a female performer and the female performer also answers him through a lyric. These responsive lyrics are developed to many kinds of lyrics for singing in Lam performances. At present, some branches of Lam Phaya were called in the names of Lam Maha Xai, Lam Ban Sok, Lam Khon Savan and others. Each kind of Lam performance needs khaens accompaniment for enhancing an entertaining atmosphere so singing voice plays a role as a swimmer and khaens accompaniment plays a role as water. In a Lam performance, the audience can exchange a jok called Soi with the performer in order to make a friend with each other.

Musical performance of Luang Prabang people consists of three people, one plays the khaens, one sings lyrics, and another plays the claves. Total musical tones of the musical performance are sweet and gentle. The body of the khaens consists of 16 tubes of reeds

arranged in a socket made of sandalwood, on this socket has a hole for blowing, when a musician blows the hole and touches fingers along the holes on the reed tubes, it produces a wide variety of sounds. The Lao khaens and the Thai khaens are not different both their forms, functions, and sounds (Henri Mouhot. 1968).

The distinct differences between an Isan Lam performance of northeastern people of Thailand and a Lao Lam performance are lyrics used for singing, melodies of khaens accompaniments, musical arrangement, and movement of the Khaen player. Generally, the Lao khaens Players and the Lao – folk singers usually perform on the stage in the posture of sitting but the Thai khaens players and the Thai – folk singers only perform on the stage in the posture of standing and move around the stage freely (Duangchampi Wuttisuk. 2008 : 11)

The research concerning instruction process on khaens accompaniment integrated in school curriculum in Laos has not appeared up to now. Some examples of the research which conducted the topics alike this are the research entitled Lao Poetics : Internal Rhyme in the Text of Lam Siphandone Perform of Carol J. Compton (1992), the research entitled Tradition Music of the Lao of Terry E. Miller and Charernchai Chonpairo (1985), the research entitled voyage dans Les Royaumes de Siam, de Laos of Henri Mouhot (1968), the research entitled Mokhaen and Molam in Isan Region of Charernchai Chonpairo, the research entitled Khaen Making : A Case study of

Tambon Si Kaew, Amphoe Mueang, Changwat Roi Et of Surasak Phimsen (1989), and the research entitled Khaen of the Tai Ethnic Group in Greater Mekong Region : The Origin, the Diffusion, and the Ways to Perpetuate and Develop of Suraphon Nesusin (2012). This research may be a pilot study for other researchers to conduct research like this in depth.

The purposes of this research were as the following:

1. To investigate the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR.
2. To investigate the difficulties and the ways to develop the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR.

Materials And Methods

A methodology of qualitative research was used for this investigation. The elements of the research were as follows:

1. Research contents:

1.1 The instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR.

1.2 The difficulties and the ways to develop the ways to develop the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances in Lao PDR.

2. Research areas :

- 2.1 Vientiane Metropolitan
- 2.2 Khammuan Province
- 2.3 Savannakhet Province
- 2.4 Champasak Province

3. Research sample :

- 3.1 7 key – informants
- 3.2 28 casual informants
- 3.3 6 general informants

4. Research instruments :

- 4.1 observation
- 4.2 interviews

5. Research period :

One year

The first stage is a documentary investigation, the researchers searched dissertations and documents concerned for understanding and answering all research objectives. These dissertations and documents were gathered and categorized as a base of knowledge for this research. An observation form and an interview form were based on the information from this base.

The second stage is a creation of research instruments, an observation and an interview form were created in this stage. All forms were examined by the experts and then these forms were improved according to the advice of the experts.

The third stage is a field study, after all appointments had been already made, the researchers began to conduct a field study according to the dates of appointments in the four sites of research areas. This field study period was about 12 months. The data were collected for responding all research objectives.

The fourth stage is a data correction and research synthesis, the data were examined and corrected by using a triangulation technique. This technique used for examining the

relation between situations and dates, situations and places, and situations and persons. When everything was corrected, the researchers began to make a research report until it had been finished.

The fifth stage is a presentation, the researchers presented a research report in the presence of research committee. A descriptive analysis was presented through multimedia. Afterwards, the research report was published by the university press.

Results

The instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances consisted of 3 steps : preparation, operation, and evaluation.

In preparatory step, each school prepared 5 things were these : 1) musical instruments, 2) teachers and students, 3) melodies of khaens accompaniments, 4) instruction aid media, and instruction methods. Most khaens used for students' performing practice were produced by khaens markers called Chang Som Di Luangnikon, Chang Udonsak Paengyalat, and Chang Khoonsi Paengyalat residing at 120 unit 12, Hai Sok Lane 1, Ban Hai Sok, Tha Duea Road, Chanthaburi, Vientiane Metropolitan, including Chang Kikong Khammi residing in Champasak Province. Almost all teachers teaching music graduated from National Teacher's College and National School of Arts and Music. Khaen Accompaniment was a required subject started to teach the first year students of secondary school. Melodies of khaens accompaniments of each communities

were recorded and written in the forms of notes, these notes were musical exercised for students. Instruction aid media concerning how to play the khaens and khaens accompaniment were created in the forms of textbooks and charts of notes.

In operational step, teachers taught students how to play the khaen, the basis of khaens accompaniment, performing techniques of khaens accompaniment for Lam performances, and notes. Students rehearsed together with their friends in a form of performing group under a strict control of the teachers. And then when they mastered khaens accompaniment, they were allowed to perform in the presence of the public. A master group of khaens accompaniment would be frequently hired to perform on the stage with Lam performance. The more they performed, the more they mastered it and became the famous khaens players. Thus, it can say that the high achievement of each student is to be a famous khaens accompaniment player.

In evaluative step, an achievement of khaens accompaniment performance of each student would be evaluated by the teachers focused on student's performance both in and out class, especially when he or she performed in the presence of the public. Musical skill in khaens accompaniment performance, good memory of notes for performing khaens accompaniment, on - stage good manner, good entertainer and musician, in - class good attention, and good appearance were main criteria used for evaluating the learning achievement of each student.

The difficulties of the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances revealed that the main difficulties were the poor non schooling students could not acquire their khaens so they borrowed them from their friends for practicing khaens accompaniment. Although they had a high level of intention, they could not rehearse their skill continuously. The non – schooling students needed a strong ambition to reach their achievement. The in – schooling students had their good opportunity more than the non – schooling students in case of the school provided all instruction aid media for them but some of them had a low level of intention, a distinct lack of teachers mastering local styles of khaens accompaniments for Lam performances because almost all of them graduated from National University of Laos and National School of Arts and Music where taught all types of Arts and Music but not taught directly in the major of Khaen Accompaniment, a lack of instruction aid media concerning Khaen Accompaniment because the teachers had many works to do and had no time to create some media concerning this subject. Thus, both non – schooling and in-schooling students needed more and more intention to practice their skill because they would be evaluated by professional molam and the audience finally.

As for the ways to develop the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances, many workshops concerning the difficulties of the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances

in Lao PDR were held. The appropriate ways derived from these workshops were National Schools of Music should be established in all regions of Laos ; for example, in the northern region (from Vientiane Province up to phong Saly Province), in Vientiane Metropolitan region, in the central region (Bolikhhamxay, Khammoun, and Savannakhet), and in the southern region (Salavan, Xekong, Champasak, and Attapue). These schools would play a role of a center of transmitting a particular knowledge on Khaen Accompaniment for Lam Performances for both in – schooling and non – schooling students in order to perpetuate this knowledge for a long time. Famous khaens players and molam performers who had their own performing styles should be invited to teach students in order to transmit their particular techniques to younger generations and persuade them to perpetuate this type of performing arts. These famous khaens players and molam performers should be extolled as the National Artists, instruction aid materials concerning this field should be created, and good quality khaens should also be provided for facilitating all learners.

This research focused on a field study through observation and an interview about the phenomena which were related to research objectives. In terms of the instruction process on Khaen accompaniment for Lam performances, it indicated that the achievement of each student depended on a level of intention. This is consistent with Thisana Khammani (2012 : 323), she suggested that the

achievement of all learners depended on instruction process design of instructor so the instructor should understand learning style of each learner and designed learning aid media which was compatible with the learning style of the learner. Surasak Phimsaen (1989 : 80) commented that the transmission of khaens accompaniment to the learners focused on the person who transmitted its techniques and the quality of khaens (reed mouth organ) used for performing, both perfection would lead to the perfect learning.

Conclusion And Discussion

The research entitled Guidelines for The Development of Instruction Process on Khaen Accompaniment for Lam Performances in Lao PDR suggest appropriate ways to develop instruction process on Khaen Accompaniment. It is not only suitable for Laos but it also suitable for neighboring countries where use khaens as the musical instrument for accompanying with performing arts. These findings benefit both state and private organizations concerned in case of they can adapt some ideas from this research to their affairs.

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Figure 1 student playing a khaen



Figure 2 student playing a khaen



Figure 3 student playing a khaen